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DEPARTMENT: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND DIPLOMACY

ASSIGNMENT: REVIEW OF CHAPTER TWO IN SALIENT ISSUES IN GOVERNMENT AND NIGERIA’S POLITICS

Nigerian history and its evolution involves the pre-colonial period and the colonial period. The pre-colonial period comprises of different independent chiefdoms, States, kingdoms and empires.

The early stone age 3,000,000- 35, 000BC; Middle stone age, 35,000- 15,000BC and; Late stone age 15,000-500BC, were significant periods in the evolution of Nigerian civilization. Archaeologists have proven through several research and the existence of evidence that early Nigerian societies went through the scientific and technological development. information on the major landmarks in early Nigerian history was made possible through the excavation work done on places where man lived in Nigeria in the very remote past. Some of the places where man lived in Nigeria in the very remote past included: Nok, igbo Ukwu, Ife and Benin among others as they are referred to as the centres of ancient civilization. The discovery of a terracotta (burnt clay) head of a monkey by Tin miners in Nok in 1936, the craft men of Benin carved in wood and ivory and cast objects in bronze and brass. Ife civilization created objects such as tools and figures were carved on hard stone called quartz while animal and human figures were carved from granite and decorated with iron nails. Some bronze objects and ornaments we accidentally discovered while digging a toilet pit at Igbo Ukwu in 1939.

**YORUBA PRE COLONIAL SYSTEM.**

according to the legend there was a period when the world was covered by water. The almighty god then decided to send some of his messages to the world and they included obatala or orisa Nla or Orisa Slade (as the leader) and sixteen oye(immortal). They were given five pieces of iron a lump of earth tied to a white piece of cloth and a cockerel. Somewhere on their way to the world the leader obatala got drunk with palm wine. Oduduwa seized the symbol of authority from him and eventually led the party to the world. The site on which they landed is traditionally known as Oke Oramfe in Ile-Ife. On arrival at the site, Oduduwa set down the five pieces of iron and placed the lump of earth on them. the cockrell then spread the lump of earth with its feet throughout the earth. Consequently, the earth was formed and Oduduwa, who became the ruler. It was from Ile-Ife that he extended his authorities to the other Yoruba towns and villages.

Before the advent of the British in Yoruba land, Yoruba kingdoms maintained an orderly and unified political system which is still in effect till today. A Yoruba kingdom (e.g. the Oyo kingdom) was made up of a headquarter (Ilu) and other local towns and villages. However, its political administration consisted of a central level and subordinate units. The central level was headed by the Oba (king) and assisted by a handful of chiefs and other political figures in the administration of the kingdom, while the subordinate units, headed by Baales, concentrated only on the administration of the towns and villages in the kingdom. Like the Oba, the Baale also had a group of chiefs that assisted him in his area of jurisdiction. However, the Baale of each town and village is entitled to pay annual homage (isakole) to the Oba at the central level. Any erring Baale can be relieved of his post or sanctioned to certain punishment respective of his offense since all Baales were responsible to the Oba at the central level, but this must have the consent of some offices in the administration.

 Yoruba political administration had a decentralized structure i.e. power was constitutionally shared among all political levels/sections of the kingdom ranging from the highest to the lowest unit unlike the Hausa political system which was highly centralized. The Yoruba political administration was also based on the ultimate principle of ‘check and balance’ which implies that each of the administrative levels can check, challenge or nullify actions of other levels irrespective of their administrative hierarchy. Of all the kingdoms and empires in Yorubaland, the Oyo political system was the most popular and outstanding as it was able to influence issues in other kingdoms. Here is the pre-colonial political administration of the Oyo empire:

**The Alafin**: The Alaafin was seen as the political head of the empire. He was chosen by the Oyomesi. He was regarded as the lord of many lands.

**The Ogboni Society**: This society possess judicial powers and was involved also in policy making. The maintenance and preservation of the cultural values of the people were also delegated to them. They influence a lot of issues in the society.

**The Army**: Are- ono kankanfo was the head of the army. Oyo had for long maintained a strong army that had been used in winning different wars. It was claimed that if the army should suffer any defeat, the Are- ona- kankanfo was to commit suicide or go on exile.

**IGBO PRE-COLONIAL SYSTEM**.

The Igbo political system may be seen as a fragmented political system. Many constitutions were in place and political authority was shared among them. For example, the Ofo title holders (council of elders), Ozor title holders, age grades, etc. were all involved in the power sharing exercise. No wonder then, that the term “acephalous” was ascribed to or used to describe the organisation of the Igbo political system. There was the absence of centralisation of power and authority in the Igbo political system as it was more of the people’s direct participation in their government (direct democracy).

The Family Group is one of the most recognized institutions in pre-colonial Igbo society as the basic unit of every political institution. It comprised people of the same family. Not only that, each family group was autonomously headed by the title holder called ‘OKPARA’. The Okpara controls the family and judges any family disputes. He performed ritual and ceremonial functions on behalf of the family.

Village Council is popularly known as council of elders, it comprised of all the family heads in the village. However, the most important thing is that each village was administered as a sovereign entity and each family heads (Okpara) were reckoned or named an ‘Ofo’ title holders in the village. They had the responsibility of discussing the matters that affected the life of the citizens. They also helped in maintaining law and order in the society as well as settlement of dispute between or among group of families. The chairman of the council was known as the oldest of the OKPARAS.

Ozo Title Holders was seen as the highest title of honour which was given to the specific individuals in pre-colonial Igbo society. To become an Ozo title holder, one must be prestigious, popular and wealthy. The most amazing thing is that the position wasn’t hereditary. Ozos were highly influential. They settled and adjudicated on different disputes. Not only that, they rendered valuable advice to the family heads (the Okparas). Age grade was another important institution in pre-colonial Igbo society. They are group of young men on the basis of age. Oha-na-eze was a form of general assembly in traditional Igbo society. All the male adult members usually met in this assembly to perform legislative functions. The secret societies also played significant roles in the Igbo traditional society. They acted as intermediary between the living and the ancestors.

**HAUSA PRE-COLONIAL SYSTEM.**

Hausa land before 1804 was made up of fourteen states, and they were in two groups Hausa Bakwai(legitimate states) and Hausa Banza (illegitimate states).

The Sarkin was known as the head of state, Sarkin Kasar the ruler of any Hausa sate combined both political and religious functions. Between the 25th and 15th century Islam adopted new political institutions like; Galadima, Madawaki, Magaji, Dogari, Yari Sarkin, Sarkin Yau. And the Sharia law started taking place. After the jihad war by usman Dan Fodio the emir became an absolute Monarch, and the Hakimi was appointed by the emir to administer at the villages.

**COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION AND INDIRECT RULE IN NIGERIA**

After three centuries of slave trade, came the so called period of legitimate commerce. This was another golden opportunity for the Europeans to get more directly involved in the affairs of the African state. The struggle among the European powers for colonies led to the partitioning of Africa among them in the 19th century. Each of the European powers showed was given the opportunity to establish colonies where it had vested interest. To achieve this, a number of measures were to be taken, for example, removal of all visible opposition to the imposition of the colonial rule, expansion and consolidation of British authority over the territory later known as Nigeria.

 Before the year 1990, all the different parts of Nigeria conquered by the British were still under their original administration. But by 1990 the whole Nigeria was under the responsibility of the British colonial office. After the first and second amalgamation, Britain governed Nigeria by means of a system referred to as indirect rule. Indirect rule may be a way the Britain used in the ruling their colonies through local traditional rulers. The British officers defined the frame work of the policies to be adopted and left the implementation to the local personnel or rulers.