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GOVERNMENT

CHAPTER 2

ASSIGNMENT

A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE NIGERIA STATE

The historical background of Nigeria government and politics involves the pre-colonial period

and the colonial period in Nigeria. The pre-colonial period is the period before the coming of the

colonialists to Nigeria while the colonial period refers to the era that the colonial administration

was established in the country Nigeria.

The Nigerian state is a colonial creation. It is a product of a historical arrangement that arose

out of European adventure with its eventual culmination in the colonization of Africa. Pre-colonial Nigeria comprises of different independent chiefdoms, states, kingdoms and empires.

Nigeria is bordered to the south by the Bights of Benin and Biafra, which are on the Gulf of

Guinea in the Atlantic Ocean. On the west by Benin, on the north by Niger and on the east by

Cameroun. In its extreme northeastern corner, Lake Chad separates the Nigeria from the country

of Chad. Nigeria stretches roughly 700 miles from west to east and 650 miles from south to

north, covering an area between 30

and 150

E longitudes and between 4

0 and 140N latitude.

The archeological evidences from different parts of Nigeria which pointed to the fact that man

settled in the region now known as Nigeria since the Paleolithic period 500,000-900,000BC. It

was further confirmed by the archaeologists that Nigerians also took part in the Stone Age

civilization. Divided into: Early Stone Age 3,000,000-35,000BC; Middle Stone Age, 35,000-

15,000BC and; Late Stone Age, 15,000-500BC. The first man who lived in Nigeria during those

years worked hard to cope with his environment. First, he needed food, and then began to hunt

the animals and to gather fruits. Then invented tools consisting of pebbles made into chopping

and cutting tools.

Archeologists called the tools the OLDOWAN-TYPE TOOLS. This is because this type of

tool was first identified in Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania. Then man began making hand axes.

Similar tools had been located earlier by archeologists who worked outside Nigeria at a site in St

Acheul in Northern Nigeria. Then the early men proceeded to invent another tool called heavy chopper which was more efficient in cutting than the existing tools. There is evidence of more

advanced technology in various of Nigeria during the bronze and metal age. This period was one

of the most active periods in Nigeria around 500BC to 200AD. Sculptures were made then by

many Nigerians in form of heads and figures. The figures were made by terracotta and all

possesses a distinctive artistic style.

There are Scientific and Technology Development of Early Nigerian

societies;

☒ Major Landmark in Early Nigerian History

☒ Nok culture/ civilization

☒ Benin civilization

☒ Ife civilization

☒ Igbo ukwu civilization

There are also three major traditional Political Institutions in Pre-colonial Nigeria; the

Yoruba, the Igbo and the Hausa-Fulani. The Yoruba's are one of the largest ethnic group in

Nigeria and are united by language. Yoruba origin is traced to Oduduwa who was the founder of

the Yoruba kingdom. Ile-ife is regarded as the ancestral home of the Yoruba people and

Oduduwa is believed to be the first leader that led the Yoruba to Ile-ife. The Igbo people are best

known for their segmentary way of life. They had no centralized states, due to the ancient times.

They operated a kind of government without king.

The Igbo are grouped into five sub-culture, they are;

☒ The Igbo of Eastern Nigerian

☒ The Igbo of South-Eastern Nigeria

☒ The Igbo of North-Eastern Nigeria

☒ The Western Igbo

☒ The Northern Igbo

In the Igbo traditional society, there was no highly centralized authority but instead they had

what could be called a diffusion of authority into different groups.

The Hausa land is located in the Northern part of Nigeria. it was made up of fourteen states

before 1804, and there are two distinct groups involved. 'Hausa Bakwai' was the first group

which consist of seven states which include; Daura, Biram, Zaria, Katsina, Kano, Rano, and

Gobir. The second group consist of the remaining seven states known as 'Hausa Banza' which

include Nupe, Gwari, Yauri, Bauchi, Zamfara, Kebbi, and Yoruba.

Oral tradition attributed the origin of the Hausa states ton a man named Bayajidda, an Arab

prince who travelled to the Sahel from Baghdad. He killed a monstrous snake that oppressed the

people of Daura, and he married the queen and became the first king. The combined kingdoms of

Hausaland were sometimes called the Daura, since Daura is the place where Bayajidda supposedly founded the Hausa people. The killing of the sacred serpent might imply a change in

the people's religious beliefs and practices.

The 'Sarki' was known as the head of any typical Hausa state. He worked with a retinue of

officials in a well-organized court. Sarkin Kasar, which means 'ruler of the land,' was the full

title given to any effective and efficient head of Hausa State. The Sarkin Kasar combined both

political and religious/spiritual functions. The judicial administration of Hausa-Fulani was based

on the Islamic legal system called Sharia. Sharia courts were established throughout the Emirates

and each was headed by a trained Sharia Court Judge called Alkali. The Chief Justice of the Sharia

courts was called Grand Khadi.

### Colonial Administrative and Indirect Rule System in Nigeria Historical Background

The British who have often been credited with the creation of Nigeria

were not the first

European to land in Nigeria. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive Nigeria through

Bini Kingdom. The Atlantic Slave Trade was the trade carried on across the Atlantic Ocean

between the Europeans and Africans. It became more important in the 15th century with the

arrival of the Portuguese. Trans-Atlantic slave trade was the unfortunate channel that first put the

British in contact with Nigeria. The trade got to maturity in the 16th century. It was established in

the early decade of the 17th century.

### The Birth of Nigeria as a Geo-Political Entity

Before the year 1900, all the different parts of Nigeria conquered by the British were still

under their original administration. The May 1906 amalgamation is known as the first ever

amalgamation of the British in Nigeria. British government amalgamated Lagos colony and

protectorate with the protectorate of Southern Nigeria to form the new colony and protectorate of

Southern Nigerian. Tamuno (1980) observes that the primary aim of the

1906 amalgamation was

purely economic, that is, 'to use the better financial position of the protectorate of Southern

Nigeria to cover the costs of administration and development in the financially weak colony and

protectorate of Lagos, then saddled with the white elephant of a railway in need of extension

since 1901.'

The second amalgamation was that of 1914. In January 1914, the British government

amalgamated Northern and Southern Nigeria. The principal reason for this is the same as that of

May 1906. The Northern protectorate was not as economically buoyant as the colony and

protectorate of Southern Nigeria. That was why, for the British imperial offices, since the

Southern trade was booming, amalgamation would allow the surpluses acquired in the south. Sir

Fredrick Lugard (later became lord) is best known as the father of the 'January 1914'

amalgamation. Britain, therefore governed Nigeria by means of a system popularly referred to as

'Indirect Rule.' Indirect rule may be a system of Britain ruling her colonies through local

traditional rulers. The British officers defined the framework of the policies to be adopted and

left the implementation to the local personnel or the rulers.