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MATRIC NUMBER: 19/Mhs02/107

DEPARTMENT: Physiology

COURSE TITLE: GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS (GST 203)

AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE NIGERIAN STATE

The historical background of Nigerian 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 colonial administration was established in the country Nigeria. The Nigerian state is a colonial creation. Prior to the emergence of the Nigerian state, pre-colonial Nigeria comprises of different independent chiefdoms, states, kingdoms and empires. These, among others, include the Borno Empire, the Hausa states, and the Sokoto Caliphate in the North; the Igbo segmentary societies in the East; Benin Kingdom and the Oyo Empire in the West and several ethnic identities in the Benue Valley. Nigeria is bordered to the south by the Blights of Benin and Biafra, which are on the Gulf of Guinea in the Atlantic Ocean. On the west, Nigeria is bordered by Benin, on the north, by Niger, and on the east, by Cameroon. In its extreme northeastern corner, Lake Chad separates 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 3^o and 15^oE longitude and between 4^o and 14^oN latitude.

EARLY MAN IN NIGERIA

The exact time when man began to live in Nigeria is unknown but there are archaeological evidences from different parts of Nigeria which pointed to the fact that man had settled in the region now known as Nigeria since the Paleolithic period 500,000-9000BC. The artifacts, mostly stone tools, found by archaeologists further confirmed that Nigerians also took part in the stone age civilization. The stone age can be divided into several periods. These are: Early stone age, 3,000,000-35,000BC, Middle stone age, 35,000-15,000BC and Late stone age, 15,000-500BC

THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF EARLY MAN

The man who lived in Nigeria during those years worked hard to cope with his environment. First, he needed food. For this purpose, he began to hunt the animals and to gather fruits. He soon began to invent tools consisting of pebbles made into chopping and cutting tools. Early man in Nigeria advanced from the early stone age. He began to make hand axes. These tools were later refined during the middle stone age and late stone age. During this period, around 500BC to 200AD, there were people who lived in Nigeria who made sculptures. Many were of human heads and figures. The figures were made of terracotta and they all possessed a distinctive artistic style.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF PRE-COLONIAL POLITICAL SYSTEM IN YORUBA LAND

- The Yoruba people trace their origin to Oduduwa
- Ile-Ife is referred to as the ancestral home of the Yoruba people.
- There are different versions of the traditions of origin but two are mostly used:



1. Migration story from the East: Here, it is believed that the Yoruba people migrated from the North-Eastern area of Africa (from Mecca through Egypt) and finally settled in Ile-Ife in Nigeria.
2. The Oke Oramfe's version: This version states that the earth was initially covered by water and Olodumare (The Almighty God) sent some of his messengers to the world including Obatala who was the leader, and sixteen other immortals. They were given five pieces of iron, a lump of earth tied to a white piece of cloth and a cockerel. Along the way, Obatala got drunk with palm wine and Oduduwa seized the symbol of authority from him with which he led the party to the world. They landed in Oke Oramfe in Ile-Ife where they placed the materials they were given as they were instructed and the earth was formed and Oduduwa became the ruler. From Ile-Ife, he extended his authorities to other Yoruba towns and villages.

POLITICAL STRUCTURE OF THE YORUBA

The political structures of the Yoruba kingdoms were similar in nature. Each consisted of a capital town, subordinate towns, villages, and farmlands. Each town has a king known as "Oba" who resides in the palace called "Aafin." His paraphernalia of office included a beaded crown (Ade), a slippers (bata), horse tail (irukere) and sceptre (Ase). The Oba is both the spiritual and political head of the kingdom. The Oba enjoyed many privileges but certain limitations were placed on his powers. These limitations known as "eewo" were designed to curb the despotism and tyranny on the part of the King. If a King violates any "eewo", it could lead to his death.

PRE-COLONIAL POLITICAL SYSTEM IN IGBO LAND

- The Igbo people are best known for their segmentary or acephalous way of life and this is because from the ancient times, they had no centralised states and they consequently operated a kind of government without kings.
- The Igbo are grouped into five sub-cultures:
 - The Igbo of Eastern Nigeria
 - The Igbo of South-Eastern Nigeria
 - The Igbo of North-Eastern Nigeria
 - The Western Igbo and
 - The Northern Igbo
- There are two popular versions of the tradition of origin and these are:
 1. The migratory stories of origin of the Igbo people which points to Israel: This assumption is based on the so-called similarities between the cultures of the Igbo and the ancient Hebrew. Some Igbo scholars consider themselves as off-shoots of the lost tribes of the Hebrews who migrated southward.
 2. The Nri version: Nri version as the only authentic version of origin in existence in the oral tradition of the Igbo. According to Nri version, the ancestor of the Igbo, Eri, descended from the sky and sailed down the River Anambra. When he arrived at Aguleri, he met some autochthonous group of people who had no living memory of



their own and settled with them. As their population increased, some groups migrated to other parts of Igboland to establish their own settlements.

POLITICAL STRUCTURE OF THE IGBO PEOPLE

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. They practiced direct democracy because there were no traditional rulers in the form of Oba as in the Yoruba land. Some socio-political institutions existed in each village to perform legislative, executive, administrative, military and judicial functions and these institutions included the family, council of elders, age grades and secret societies.

PRE-COLONIAL POLITICAL SYSTEM IN HAUSA LAND

Hausa land is located in Northern Nigeria. Hausa land, before 1804 was made up of fourteen states, and they were of two distinct groups. The first group consist of seven states called "Hausa Bakwai" states, that is, Hausa legitimate states. The second group consist of the remaining seven states and were known as "Hausa banza" states, that is Hausa illegitimate states. The Hausa "bakwai" states are Daura, Biram, Zaria, Katsina, Kano, Rano, and Gobir while the Hausa "Banza" states are Nupe, Gwari, Yauri, Bauchi, Zamfara, Kebbi.

Oral tradition attributed the origin of the Hausa states to 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. The queen had six sons already, and she produced another son with Bayajidda, and each of these sons ruled one of the seven Hausa city-states, becoming the first kings. The combined kingdoms of Hausa land were sometimes called the Daura, since Daura is the place where Bayajidda supposedly founded the Hausa people.

POLITICAL STRUCTURE OF THE HAUSA PEOPLE

The "Sarki" was known as the head of any typical Hausa state. He worked with a retinue of officials in a well-organised 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. He was also the chief executive and judge of the State, but he was aided by a council of state. At the district level, the government was modelled after that at the national level. Between 14th and 15th centuries, the socio-political organisation of Hausa States took another shape. For instance, Islam was adopted and this gave birth to many new political institutions such as the offices of the Galadima, Madawaki, Magaji, Dogari, Yari Sarki and Sarki Yau.

ISLAM AMONG THE HAUSA PEOPLE

Islam was introduced to Hausa land in the fourteenth century, and by the fifteenth century it was accepted as the religion of the ruling class. The Jihad of Uthman Dan Fodio of 1804 further strengthened and consolidated the religion in this area. The Jihad led to the conquest of the existing old Hausa kingdom, the overthrow of the political leadership by the Fulani Emir. After the conquest, a centralised political system of government was introduced.

COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION OF NIGERIA

The British who have often been credited with the creation of Nigeria were not the first Europeans to land in Nigeria. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive Nigeria through

Bini Kingdom. Thus, The Trans-Atlantic slave trade was the unfortunate channel that first put the British in contact with Nigeria. The trans-atlantic slave trade was abolished in the 19th century. 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 was given the opportunity to establish colonies where it had vested interest. The scramble for Africa, by these European powers led to the partitioning of Africa after the Berlin Conference of 1884–85.

THE BIRTHING OF NIGERIA

Before the year 1900, all the different parts of Nigeria conquered by the British were still under their original administration. But by 1900, the whole Nigeria was under the responsibility of the British Colonial Office. 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 Nigeria. The second amalgamation was that of 1914. In January 1914, the British government amalgamated Northern and Southern Nigeria.

