**History J.S.S 2**

**Age: 12yrs**

**Topic: NON-CENTRALIZED STATES IN NIGERIA {IGBO}**

The Igbo people inhabited the forest belt area between the Cross river, east of the Niger and between the Igala to the north and the Delta city-states to the South. There had been confusion on the Igbos are real indigenes of the places they are occupying today or whether they are from somewhere. Even if, they are real indigenes of these places they are occupying, the time of their occupation is uncertain. The recent archaeological discoveries in Igbo Ukwu with a team researchers led by professor Thurstan Shaw of Ibadan University, it is believed that some ancient Igbo people had settled in Igbo Ukwu before 9th century A.D. And that further research will provide interesting information of the Igbos and those of the ancient Egyptians or the Hebrew. The Igbos today live in five {5} pure Igbo states which are: Anambra, Imo, Enugu, Abia and Ebonyi states of Nigeria. They can also be seen in other states like Delta, Cross River, Bayelsa and Rivers states but in a very small number. According to some anthropologists, the early Igbo settlements started at Nri, Anambra State or Isuma in Imo State.

The dominant physical features of the Igbos are thick forest. This environment has greatly influenced the history of the Igbo people because it provided natural defense against any attack from external enemies. So, there was no empire that conquered the Igbos which could have resulted in establishment of an empire. They have intense love of personal freedom and very strong for autocratic government over them. As a result, they preferred living in small village republics where every grown-up male was regarded as important as everyone else.

**SOCIO-POLITICAL ORGANIZATION OF THE IGBO**

There are two types of socio-political organization which existed in Igbo land before the coming of the European.

The Monarchical System- This system existed in areas as Aboh, Agbor, Asaba, Onitsha, Nri, Oguta and Arochukwu. They were no absolute rulers because they were taking advice of their chiefs and were believed that the king belonged to the masses, and the masses also belonged to the king. The chiefs, who made up the council of state, were drawn from various lineage groups.

The Village Republic- This was common and widespread in Igbo land. They were communities that managed their affairs without the help of other communities. They were usually small in number and had small population.

The Igbo had four main levels of government outside the family organization which are:

The minimal lineage group {umunna}: This was made up of nuclear family which existed from the same father. The eldest in this group is the Okpara. He calls for family meeting, keeps the ‘ofor’, the symbol of truth and justice. All adult male members were free to participate in this meeting.

The major lineage group [Ebo]: This was presided over by the oldest of the heads of the minimal lineage group. Members of this group were descendants from the ancestors.

The maximal lineage group [Mba]: This was the meeting point of people at the village level. All adult males can attend the meeting

The village group [Obodo]: This was the highest level of government in Igbo land. Members of the village group were the representatives of the villages. The meeting was presided over by the heads of the senior village. The assembly as well as issues of war and peace.

**ECONOMIC ORGANISATION IN IGBO LAND**

The major occupations of the Igbos are farming, trading, metal-work, hunting, salt making, fishing, carving, cloth weaving and pottery. Those who live near the forest, farming was their popular activities. They grew food crops like yam, cocoyam, cassava, maize, plantain and vegetables.

Trading was also a very lucrative business. Both men and women engaged in it. They were experts in metal work especially in iron, copper and bronze. Awka was a famous town in blacksmithing and towns like Igbo ukwu, Ezira, Nkwerre and Abiriba were known for metal work. Fishing was also an important occupation among those who live near the river. The fishes caught were not only for eating but for sale to other people who live far from the rivers.

**URHOBO**

Urhobo people traced their origin from three sources which are Edo country of Izon, Benin, Igbo land and Izoland. They live within the evergreen forests that are dominated by oil palm tree. They had remote link with Benin or Ijo and it seems to be true.

**SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATION OF URHOBO PEOPLE**

The Urhobo have no history of a centralized government. Both their social and political system is based on their village system. They have the smallest unit of social group which is the compound where the father is the head. The community had an age grade system which they used to control their affairs of the people and also, each has specific duties to perform.

There are four age grades in Urhobo community which are:

1. Otu Imitaye or Otu emaha- This is the smallest and the youngest age grade that are made up of young boys of the age of 15 years, and their duty is mainly to keep the village street clean.
2. The Urbie or Evrawa- This is second age grade. It was the age of 15-35 years of age.
3. Out ekpako- This is the highest and the most senior age grade which comprised of elderly men of 50 years and above. It was led by the oldest man in the village who was called “Okanro”. They were known as policy makers and constituted the majority of the village council and it performed the judicial functions in the village. Title taking was seen in Urhobo land but only for male members who could afford to pay enrolment fees. Trade in slave s and palm oil made them very rich.
4. The clan assembly: This is the largest political unit. It was a collection of villages and consisted of delegates from the villages. They took important decisions which were beyond the village powers. The clan council president was known as “Ovie” and was assisted by “Otoba” the council spokesman.

**ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES OF URHOBO**

As they were found in mangrove swamp forest region with Izon and Itsekiri as their neighbours, they engaged themselves in many economic activities like farming, fishing, palm oil production, canoe building, hunting and trading. Farming was a popular activity and both men and women participated in that. They produced yams, cassava, maize, pepper and banana. Fishing was also very important; they engaged themselves in fishing in various Creeks and rivers in Delta states. Fishes caught was not for eating but also for selling. Palm oil was also very lucrative business. They made lots of money during the time of palm oil trade. They sold palm kernel to the people of Izon for the production of local pomade known as “Ori”. They also practiced canoe building in Urhobo land. Trading was also very important in Urhobo kingdom. Both men and women took part in long distant trade. They also practiced indirect slave trade and palm oil business which they sold to the Europeans.

**IJAW [IJO]**

The Ijaw people the Niger Delta area of the present Nigeria today. People found in this area are the Brass, Nembe, Kalabari, Bonny and Warri. There are many stories of their origin, some say they came from Benin, some say Yoruba, some say they are from Igbo, Benin and Yoruba who migrated and expanded the central Delta to other areas of east and west of Niger Delta.

**IJAW POLITICAL ORGANIZATION**

The environment of the economy affected the political developments in the new areas of Ijaw. First, the fishing villages retained the old structure of the assembly of all adult male members. But, the president was no more the old member of the group in the central Delta but the head of the lineage. The new title of the eastern lineage head was “Amanyanabo” while the village elder of the central Delta was “Amaokosowa”. Because of this stage of socio-political developments of the Ijaw society, various communities became known as City-states which means House-system. It was a kind of trading corporation which had its head as its executive. Each had all kinds of governments which enabled it to maintain law and order, administer justice, and make war and peace.

**IJAW ECONOMY**

Ijaw people were mainly fisher men, hunters and gatherers of the products of the river line environments. They were also known for long distance trade which brought them into close contact with the coastal hinterland. They exchanged salt, snail, fish and other products for vegetables, palm oil, iron implements and craft materials from Igbo land and Ibibio areas. The wealth from the slave trade brought a lot of competition among members of the house and rivalry between city states. It also made the families who became rich as a result of the trade, to start claiming the throne of the community.