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**CHAPTER 2: AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE NIGERIAN STATE.**

**This chapter talks about the evolution and development of the Nigerian state, how it was before all the different tribes were put together by the colonialists. It also talks about how people lived in pre-colonial Nigeria, the different political system of the various tribes in Nigeria, particularly the three major tribes of the country-Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo. I would be**

**The historical background of Nigerian government and politics involves the pre-colonial period and the colonial period in Nigeria. The Nigerian state is a colonial creation. It is a product of historical arrangement that arose out of European adventure with its eventual culmination in the colonisation of Africa. Before the colonisation of Nigeria, pre-colonial Nigeria was made of different independent chiefdoms, states, kingdoms and empires i.e. the Hausa States, the Benin Kingdom and the Oyo Empire in the north, east and west respectively.**

**The exact time when man began to live in Nigeria is unknown but there are archaeological evidences from different parts of Nigeria which point to the fact that man had lived in the place now known as Nigeria since the Palaeolithic period 500,000-9000BC. The stone tool artefacts confirmed that Nigerians took place in the stone-age civilisation-Early stone-age, Middle stone-age and Late stone-age. The excavation of a Stone Age skeleton at Iwo Eleru near Akure in Ondo state that was dated some 12,000 years ago has thrown more light on the earliest occupation of Nigeria.**

**The man who lived in Nigeria during those years worked hard to cope with his environment. First, to provide food for himself, he began to hunt animals and gather fruits and soon he began to invent tools consisting of pebbles made into chopping and cutting tools. Archaeologists called the tools the Oldowan-type tools because it was first identified by the archaeologists the Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania. Early man in Nigeria advanced from the early stone-age and began to make hand axes. These tools were oval and pointed in shape. Similar tools had been located earlier by the archaeologists at a site in Acheul in Northern Nigeria. Another tool called the heavy chopper was first seen at Sango Bay, this is why it is called the Sagoan. There is also evidence of more advanced technology in various parts of Nigeria during the bronze and metal age. During this period, there were people in Nigeria who made sculptures made of human heads and figures. These figures were found in the village of Nok and were made of terracotta.**

**Information on the major landmarks in early Nigerian history was made possible through the excavation work done on places lived in Nigeria in the remote past. Some of these places are; Nok, Igbo Ukwu, ife and Benin among others. These places are usually referred to as centres of ancient civilisation.**

**Traditional Political Institutions in pre-colonial Nigeria.**

**Yoruba**

**The Yoruba’s are one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria and are united by language. The Yoruba people trace their origin to Oduduwa who was the founder of their Yoruba kingdom and Ile-Ife is regarded as their ancestral home. According to the Oke Oramfe’s version of the origin of the Yoruba, at the beginning the world was covered in water. Then the almighty God sent some of his messengers to the world and they included Obatala as leader and sixteen Oye (immortals). They were given five pieces of iron, a lump of earth and a cockerel. On their way, their leader Obatala got drunk with palm wine and Oduduwa seized the symbol of authority and led the party to the world. The site where they landed is traditionally known as Oke Oramfe in Ile-Ife. They then used the materials given to them to form the earth. It was from Ile-Ife that Oduduwa extended his authority to other Yoruba towns and villages.**

**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 place called ‘Aafin.’ The king also had rulers of lesser rank and status. The lesser rulers were in charge of subordinate towns and they wore white beads. Another group of rulers were the Baale and the Oloja and they were in charge of the villages and the farmlands respectively. Each town was divided into smaller units or wards to facilitate smooth administration. These wards were under ward heads known as ‘ijoye.’ The wards were in turn sub-divided into compounds and they were headed by a Baale. Each compound was a group of patrilineal related people known as ‘idile.’ The chiefs acted as advicers to the king and served as a link between the king and the members of the wards.**

**The pattern of administration was hierarchical. At the lowest level were the compound heads (Baales), next in line was the ward head and at the apex was a group of civil chiefs (igbimo ilu) headed by the king. The government of the old Oyo Empire is a typical example of the pre-colonial administration in Yoruba land. The first organ of government in Oyo empire was the king known as Alaafin of Oyo. The Alaafin was the head of the empire and he was assisted in his administration by a retinue of officials made up of priests, officials and eunuchs. Sometimes the Alaafin had an autocratic tendency, but in practice his powers were often limited and regulated by the Oyomesi, a council of seven members headed by the Bashorun who acted as the Prime Minister. The members of Oyomesi were kingmakers and they also had the power to remove any Alaafin especially when he appeared dictatorial or transgressed the laws of the land. He was expected to commit suicide.**

**The second organ is the Ogboni cult’s administration. It was composed of free and prominent members of the society as well as members of the Oyomesi. It played a mediatory role in any conflict between the Oyomesi and the Alaafin and it was a kind of counter power to the Oyomesi. The third organ was the army. It was headed by the Are-Ona-Kankafo and he was expected to live outside the capital. The army performed functions like, ensuring the stability of the empire, expansion as well as keeping dissident territories in check.**

**Igbo**

**The Igbo people are best known for their segmentary or acephalous way of life because from the ancient times, they had no centralised states. The Igbo people 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. The igbo society as always been known as acephalous, there were no equivalents of Oba and Alaafin or palaces over most of Igbo land. Professor M.A. Onwuejeogwu regards the Nri version as the only authentic version of origin in existence in the oral tradition of the Igbo.**

**According to this 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 Igbo land to establish their own settlements.**

**The Igbo traditional society had no highly centralised authority but instead they had what could be called a diffusion of authority into different groups. In other words, they practiced direct democracy. Although there was no highly centralised authority, some social-political institutions existed in each village to perform legislative, executive, administrative, military and judicial functions. These institutions include; the family, council of elders, age grades and secret societies.**

**The family was the smallest political unit and each family was headed by an ‘Ofo’ title holder. Among the ‘ofo’ title holders was the ‘Okpara’ who was seen as the most senior. Age grade was organized on a village basis. It was strongly organized among the northern and southern Igbo people. The community organized themselves through the age grade for work, war and government. 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 consisted of the diviners’ masquerades they acted as intermediary between the living and the ancestors. The official religion practiced in pre-colonial Igbo land was the traditional religion. They had chief priests who performed sacrifices from time to time to appease the gods.**

**Hausa**

**Hausa land is located in Northern Nigeria. It was divided into 14 states before 1804.**

**These states were of two distinct groups-the Hausa Bakwai and the Hausa Banza. Oral tradition attributed the origin of the Hausa states to a man named Bayajidda. On his arrival to Baghdad, he killed a monstrous snake that oppressed the people in Daura and he married the queen. Their sons then ruled the Hausa states becoming the first kings. The ‘Sarki’ was known as the head of any typical Hausa state. He performed both political and religious functions and was also the chief executive and judge of the state. He was aided by a council of state. At the district level, the government was modelled after that at the national level.**

**Islam was introduced to Hausa in the 14th century and was accepted as the religion of the ruling class in the 15th century. The jihad of Uthman Dan Fodio of 1804 brought about the Emirate system of government. In every state conquered the former Hausa ruler was replaced by a Fulani Emir. Each Emir owed allegiance to Dan Fodio and his two representatives at Sokoto and Gwandu. The Sultan arbitrated in disputes within and between emirates. The Hakimi was appointed by the Emir to reside at the headquarters and administer the district on behalf of the Emir. The Hakimi appointed village heads to assist him in collecting taxes for the emirate. The judicial administration of the Hausa-Fulani was based on the Islamic legal system called Sharia. The Sharia court was headed by a judge called the Alkali and the chief justice of the sharia court was called the Grand Khadi. Apart from the village/district heads, the Emir was also assisted by a body of councillors and council of advisers. Some of the members of this council were; Sarkin Fada, Waziri, Galadima, Magaji, Yari among others.**

**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 the Bini Kingdom. The Trans-Atlantic slave trade was the unfortunate channel that first put the British in contact with Nigeria and the trade got to maturity in the 16th century. The struggle among the European powers for colonies led to the partitioning of Africa among them in the 19th century. 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. The second amalgamation was that of 1914 with the coming together of the northern and southern protectorate. This amalgamation was mainly for economic reasons just like the first one. Sir Frederick Lugard is best known as the father of the ‘January 1914’ amalgamation. Britain governed Nigeria through the system of ‘Indirect rule.’ Indirect rule is a system of Britain ruling its colonies through local traditional rulers.**