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**GOVERNMENT**

**CHAPTER 2**

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. It is a product of a historical arrangement that arose out of European adventure with its eventual culmination in the colonisation of Africa. 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 seminary societies in the East; Benin Kingdom and the Oyo Empire in the West and several ethnic identities in the Benue Valley. These ethnic groupings significantly differ in their historical, social and cultural make-ups. The country 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, Nigeria is bordered by Benin, on the north, by Niger, and on the east, by Cameroon. In its extreme north eastern 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 and 15 E longitudes and between 4° and 14" N latitude.

**Early Man in Nigeria**

The exact time when man began to live in Nigeria is unknown but Sere are archaeological evidences from different parts of Nigeria inch pointed to the fact that man had settled in the region now known Nigeria since the Palaeolithic period 500,000- 9000BC. The artefacts, mostly stone tools, found by archaeologists further confirmed that Nigerians also took part in the stone-age civilisation. The Stone Age can be divided into several periods. These are: Early Stone Age 3,000,000- 35,000BC; Middle Stone Age, 35,000, 15,000 BC and; Late Stone Age, 15,000-500BC.The excavation of a Stone Age skeleton at Iwo Eleru near Akure in Ondo state has thrown more light on the earliest occupation of Nigeria. The skeleton was dated some 12,000 years ago, and this suggests that the country has been long inhabited.

**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. But he soon began to invent tools consisting of pebbles made into chopping and cutting tools. Archaeologists called the tools the Oldowan-type tools. This is because this type of tool was first identified by the archaeologists in the Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania. Early man in Nigeria advanced from the Early Stone Age. He began to make hand axes. These were tools which were oval and pointed in shape. They also had a cutting edge and were trimmed from both sides. It seems likely that these tools were used for many purposes by the man who made them. Similar tools had been located earlier by archaeologists who worked outside Nigeria at a site in St Acheul in Northern Nigeria. These tools were made during the Early Stone Age, but they were later refined during the Middle Stone Age and Late Stone Age. Small stone tools believed to be used for hunting have been located in Jos, Plateau State and in Iwo Eleru in Ondo State. Early man then proceeded to invent another type of tool, which is a heavy chopper. It was more efficient in cutting than existing tools. The type was first seen at Sango Bay on the west shores of Lake Victoria in Uganda, East Africa. This is why it is called the Sagoan. One has been found in the Upper Sokoto River in Sokoto State. There is evidence of more advanced technology in various parts of Nigeria during the bronze and metal age. Indeed, one of the most active periods of technological efforts in Nigeria was during this period, around 500BC to 200AD. During this period there were people who lived in Nigeria who made sculptures. Many were of human heads and figures. They varied greatly in size, from small-sized objects of only two and a half centimetres to huge objects. The site in which the figures were found was the village of Nok. The figures were made of terracotta and they all possessed a distinctive artistic style. Forms of ground stone axes and smaller stone tools, iron axes and tools, were also found on the sites. Similar findings have been made in parts of Ile-Ife, Jebba, Esie, Igbo-Ukwu and Benin

**The Scientific and Technological Development of Early Nigerian Societies. Major Landmark in Early Nigerian History.**

Information on the major land marks 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. They are usually referred to as centres of ancient civilisation. The history of these centres of ancient civilisation presents us with the scientific and technological developments of early Nigerian societies.

**Traditional Political Institutions in Pre-Colonial Nigeria**

In this section, the three majority ethnic groups of Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa-Fulani in Nigeria traditional political system of government shall be examined.

**Historical Background of Pre-Colonial Political System in Yoruba Land**

The Yorubas 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 the Yoruba kingdom. Ile-Ife is regarded as the ancestral home of the Yoruba people. There are different versions of the traditions of origin. In his book, History of the Yoruba (1950), Johnson traced the origin of the Yoruba to the "East." According to him, the Yoruba originally came from the North-Eastern area of Africa. With them the East is Mecca and Mecca is the East. It is from Egypt, after several years of journey that the Yoruba finally settled in Ile-Ife in Nigeria. Oduduwa is believed to be the first leader that led the Yoruba to Ile-Ife and subsequently sent his sons and grandsons to found other Yoruba kingdoms.

The Oke Oramfe's Version of the Origin of the Yoruba

Oke Oramfe is located in Ile-Ife. It is believed to be the centre from which the world was created. In their paper Yoruba land Akinjogbin and Ayandele (1980) gave a full picture of what Oke up to 1800, Oramfe's version is all about. 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 messengers to the world and they included Obatala or Orisa Nla or Orisa Alase [as the leader) and sixteen Oye [immortals]. They were given fives 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 cockerel 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 other Yoruba towns and villages.

**Political Structure of the Pre-colonial Yoruba Land**

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. He is the supreme authority in the kingdom and his words are laws and biding on everybody. 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,

The King also had other rulers of lesser rank and status. The lesser rulers were in charge of the subordinate towns and wore crowns made of white beads known as "sese ofun." Another group of rulers were the Baale and the Oloja, the Baales were the third rank of rulers and they were in charge of the villages. The Oloja were the fourth rank of leaders and they ruled over the farmlands. The town (ilu) was the basic political unit, while the subordinate towns were the bedrock on which the administration of the whole kingdom was based. 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 (agbo-ile) under the compound heads, known as Baale. Each compound was a group of patrilineal related people known as "idile," headed by the most senior male member of the family. The chiefs acted as advisers to the king and served as the link between the king and members of the ward. The pattern of administration was hierarchical. At the lowest level were the compound heads (Baale). The Oyo Empire 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.

i. The Alaafin Administration

Oyo Empire was very unique and exceptional in its system of government. For instance, in the sixteenth century, Oyo was one of the rare empires that had in-built checks and balances, and, this contributed to its stability for centuries. The Alaafin was the head of the empire, and was resident in the capital. He was also regarded as "Lord of many lands." The Alaafin was assisted in his administration by a retinue of officials made up of priests, officials and eunuchs. He had a well-organised court as well. Theoretically, the Alaafin was the fountain of authority and was therefore regarded as the "companion of the gods." (Ekeji Orisa). Sometimes, he had an autocratic tendency. But in practice, his powers were often limited and regulated by the Oyomesi, a council of seven members headed by Bashorun who acted as the Prime Minister. The members of Oyomesi were king makers as well. At the demise of the Alaafin, they were the ones to select his successor. The Oyomesi also had the power to remove any Alaafin especially when he appeared dictatorial or transgressed the laws of the land. Usually the deposed Alaafin was expected to commit suicide.

ii. The Ogboni Cult's Administration;Apart from the Alaafin cabinet, members of the Oyomesi cult constituted another arm of government. It was a very powerful cult. It was composed of free and prominent members of the society as well as members of the Oyomesi. The Ogboni cult had a very vital position in Yoruba society. It played a mediatory role in any conflict between the Oyomesi and the Alaafin. It was a kind of counter power to the Oyomesi as well.

iii. The Army; The Army was another arm of government in traditional Yoruba society, It was very organised. Its head was conferred with the coveted title of Are-Ona-Kankanfo. It was made up of infantry and cavalry. The Are Ona-Kankanfo was expected to live outside the capital. The Army was credited with performing important functions which included stability of the empire, expansion, as well as keeping dissident territories in check. Oyo Empire also had provincial governments. They were modelled after the central government. They were administered by princes, minor kings and Baale (provincial governors). All of them were subject to the overlordship of the Alaafin. The provincial governments enjoyed considerable autonomy. But the Alaafin had personal agents, Tlari, all over the provinces. The Alaafin used the Bere annual festival periods to acknowledge the renewal of allegiance of the provincial governors to him.

**Historical Background of Pre-Colonial Political System in Igbo Land**

The Igbo people are best known for their segmentary or acephalous way of life. This is because from the ancient times, they had no centralised states. Consequently, they operated a kind of goverment 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

One of the most popular versions of the migratory stories of origin of the Igbo people is the one that 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.The Igbo society has always been known as acephalous. Moreover, there were very limited professional historians as at that period. There were no equivalents of Oba, and Alaafin or of palaces over most parts of Igboland. This is why it is very difficult to reconcile all these various versions. Others believe that the Igbo people had been in their present abode from the beginning. Therefore, Igboland is the original homeland. Professor M. A. Onwuejeogwu (2000) regards the 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 Pre-colonial Igbo Land

In the Igbo traditional society, there was no highly centralised authority but instead they had what could be called a diffusion of authority into diferent groups. In other words, they practiced direct democracy and or a decentralised system of government because there were no traditional rulers in the form of Oba as in the case of the Yoruba, and so no hereditary claims to the traditional stools as there was never an Igbo kingdom or empire. Although, there was no highly centralised authority, some socio-political institutions existed in each village to perform legislative, executive, administrative, military and judicial functions, such institutions included the family, council of elders, age grades and secret societies.The family was the smallest political unit in Igbo traditional society. Each family was headed by an "Ofo" title holder. The family itself as having one common ancestor. This principle is also present in the minimal lineage. Here households see themselves as belonging to one family and thus having a common father. This is extended to the major and maximal families. Thus, the whole village believes that it has a common ancestor. The inhabitants come together to take decisions on issues of common interest as brothers. Among the "Ofo" title holders, one of them was recognised as the most senior to others. He was known as the "Okpara" who held the "Ozo" title and presided over the council of elders meeting where issues affecting the lives of the people were discussed. Age grade was organised on a village basis. The association or age grade grew from childhood and took a common name to commemorate an event associated with the time of their birth. The age grades were strongly organised among the northern and southern Igbo peoples. The communities organised themselves through the age grade, for work, war and government. Those who were still youths cleared path and public places, streams, and also served as police. The elders enforced the elders' decisions, and in war, guarded the settlements and fought on the battlefield. They collected fines from offenders. Seniority was of great social importance Age grades not only enforced discipline among themselves but they also guarded public morality The age group was thus a society of companionship and protection. It redeemed members who had lost their money, recovered runaway wives, carried out farm work and collected debts, 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. In ancient times, the Ohana-ere's meetings were held in the open village square. All the decisions taken during those meetings were absolute and final. As a democratic society, the life of every individual was highly respected. More so, the recognition of an individual in the society was based on individual capability and age rather than family background. The elders formed the core of village administration. They were highly respected accordingly. Hardworking and wealthy individuals were respected and given important responsibilities in the society as well. The youth, middle age or able-bodied men and elders constituted age-sets or age groups. Each age-set had its own special rights, duties, obligations and responsibilities in matters affecting the village.The secret societies consisted of the diviners' masquerades, "Ubinuknabi" at Arochukwu, the "Amadisha" of Ozuzzu, and so on. They all played significant roles in the Igbo traditional society. They acted as intermediary between the living and the ancestors. They performed rituals or offered sacrifices at different shrines intended to ward off evil and or appease the gods and goddesses, whenever they were angry, and thereby atone for the sins of members of the community. The official religion practiced in pre-colonial Igbo land was the traditional religion. They had chief priests who performed sacrifice from time to time to appease the gods. The Igbo has great respect for the deities and the departed ancestors. The chief priests were the link between the people and the deities, as well as the departed ancestors. The Igbo believe in re-incarnation. Profaning of deities was a very serious offence among the Igbos. The religious lives of the Igbos were surrounded by mysticisms and superstitions.

**Historical Background of 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 illegitimates 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, Yoruba

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. It is unclear how much history is preserved in the Bayajidda legend. The Hausa states may have been founded by Berber immigrants from north of the Sahara, or else by peoples coming from East Africa, Despite the story that Bayajidda came from Baghdad, for most of their early history the Hausa were polytheists; Islam was not introduced to the region on any discernible scale until the eleventh century. This legend probably refers to the successive infiltration of new comers into Hausa land or the conquest of the area by invaders. The killing of the sacred serpent might imply a change in the people's religious beliefs and practices.

**Political Structure of the Pre-colonial Hausa Land**

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. It is worthy of note that 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. The Islamisation of Hausa land also influenced its judicial system. The Sharia law started taking shape. Some new titles such as Alkali and Qadi's (judges) became commonplace in the administration of justice. Emirate System of Government 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 and the establishment of the Caliphate and Fulani emirates in Northern Nigeria. In every state conquered, the former Hausa ruler was replaced by a Fulani Emir. After the conquest, a centralised political system of government was introduced. However, the basic political organisation was not destroyed, but improved upon. There is the introduction of a new system of selecting and appointing rulers described as Emirs to rule the caliphate. Each of the Emirs owed allegiance to Dan Fodio and his two representatives at Sokoto and Gwandu. The whole of the former Hausa kingdom was divided into two confederations. The Sultan supervised the administration of the emirate system, he arbitrated in disputes within and between emirates. He, however, had little control over the affairs and day to day administration of the emirates. The Sultan acted in advisory capacity and appointed Emirs over the emirates

The Emir was an absolute monarch in his emirate, he was the political, administrative and spiritual leader. He administered his emirate in accordance with the provisions of the Islamic and Sharia law. The Emir controlled economic activities within his emirates. He maintained law and order in his domain. However, in performing these functions, the Emir was assisted by a group of district/village heads, a body of councillors, and council of advisers, with which consultation is made regarding matters affecting the emirate. The members of this council were project officers appointed by Uthman Dan Fodio and each held a title specifying the specific functions he performed. Important title holders in the Emir's cabinet included:

1. Sarkin Fada:- The spokesman of the Emir and organiser of palace workers

2. Waziri:- The Prime Minister of the Emirate;

3. Galadima - The Administrator of the capital city:

4. Madawaki"- The commander and Head of the Emirate Army  
5. Magaji:- Government Treasurer in-charge of the government treasury

6. Sarkin Dan Doka:- Inspector General of Police Force Called Dan Doka

7. Sarkin Ruwa:- Minister in-charge of Water Resources or theriver fishing official

8. Sarkin Pawa:- Head of Chairman of Butchers at the Abattoirs,

9. Yari:- Chief Superintendent of Prisons in the Emirate. Furthermore, to make the local government efficient, and effective cach emirates was divided into districts and an official known as "Hakimi" was appointed by the Emir to reside at the headquarters and administer the district on behalf of the Emir. Each district was further subdivided into villages, each village into wards, for administrative purposes. The "Hakimi" appointed village heads to assist him in collecting taxes for the emirate. The village heads had no power to make laws, but only to enforce the laws of the Emir. However, they settled minor cases, customary case of inheritance, and divorce but were obliged to refer all serious cases to Alkali courts at the state level.

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 Emir, despite the provision, remained the head who had the final say in deciding critical judgments. The chief justice of the Sharia courts was called Grand Khadi. Village heads settled minor disputes in their villages but more serious and criminal cases were referred to the Emir for final and adequate settlement.

**Colonial Administration and Indirect Rule System in Nigeria Historical Background**

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. According to Hodgkin, the second half of the century (fifteenth) saw the arrival of the first Europeans in Benin, the Portuguese Ruy de Sequeira in 1472 in Ewuare's reign and Alfonzo de Aviero in 1484 in Ozolua's reign." 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. Demand for slaves could be traced to the introduction of plantation system of agriculture in places like Brazil, Jamaica, and Haiti among others. In 1441, a Portuguese voyager, Gonzalves presented 10 African slaves to Prince Henry the Navigator as gifts. By 1460, about 700 to 800 slaves were exported annually to Portugal from West Africa. Sources of slaves included condemned criminals, political prisoners, The Trans-Atlantic slave trade was the unfortunate channel that victims of kidnapping and relatives sold to redeem debts first put the British in contact with Nigeria. The trade got to maturity in the 16th century. For close to three centuries, coastal Nigeria's relations with the British were dominated by the trans-Atlantic slave trade. But in the early decade of the 19th century, the British decided to abolish the trans-Atlantic slave trade. They did so through the operations of the British West African Naval Squadron. After three centuries of shameful 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 States. Europeans first introduced the "Gun-boat" politics, To them, this was important because some "ering" African states were threatened with attack and in some cases, were actually attacked. It was under the umbrella of such happenings that the British first formally annexed Nigerian territory. In 1861, they took Lagos as a colony. But, the bulk of Nigerian territory was occupied in the late 19th century. This happened through treaties that were signed with some Nigerian community leaders, and through military conquest of states and deportation of their rulers. 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. Britain colonised Nigeria, Ghana, the Gambia and Sierra Leone in West Africa. As from 1898, the British government sought to establish and maintain a colonial state in Nigeria. To achieve this, a number of measures were to be taken, for example, removal visible opposition to the imposition of colonial rule, expansion and consolidation of British authority over the territory later known as Nigeria.

**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. 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. However, this was done without consultation with Nigerians regarding their views as to whether or not they supported the amalgamation. Besides, 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 Nigerian 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 Frederick 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 is 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.