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**Chapter 2**

**An Historical Analysis of the Evolution of the Nigeria state.**

An 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 Nigeria 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. Prior to the emergence of the Nigerian state, pre-colonial Nigeria comprises of different independent chiefdoms, states, kingdoms and empire. These 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. This ethnic groupings differ in their historical, social and cultural make-ups.

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. Nigerians are confirmed to have took part in the Stone Age civilization.

The man who lived in Nigeria during those years worked hard to cope with his environment. First, he needed food so he began to hunt the animals and gather fruits and in the process, he began to invent tools consisting of pebbles made into chopping and cutting tools, these tools are called the *Oldowan-type tools.* Then, early man in Nigeria moved from the Early Stone Age. He began to make hand axes. These tools were oval and pointed in shape, they also had a cutting edge and were trimmed from both sides. These tools were later refined during the Middle Stone Age and Late Stone Age. 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 Scientific and Technological Development of Early Nigerian Societies**

***Major Landmark in Early Nigerian History***

The major land marks in early Nigerian history includes *Nok (existed between the 5th and the 2nd century BC), IgboUkwu (1939), Ife* and *Benin (1977)*. They are usually referred to as centres of ancient civilization. The history of these centres of ancient civilization presents us with the scientific and technological developments of early Nigerian societies.

**Traditional Political 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 group in Nigeria and are united by language. Oduduwa is said to be the founder of the Yoruba kingdom. 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. Ile-Ife is regarded as the ancestral home of the Yoruba people. There are different versions of the traditions of the origin.

***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. According to 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 and Orisa Nla or Orisa Alase [the leader] and sixteen Oye [immortals]. They were given five pieces of iron, a lump of earth tied to a white piece of cloth and a cockerel. 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. They landed in a site which is known as *Oke Oramfe* in Ile-Ife. On their 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. The earth was formed and Oduduwa became the ruler. Then, 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 known as *“Aafin”*. His equipment of office includes *crown(Ade), a slippers(Bata), horse tail(Irukere)* and *Sceptre(Opa ase)*. The Oba is both the spiritual and political head of the kingdom and 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 known as *“eewo”* were placed on his powers and if the 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”.* The Baales were the third ranks 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 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 wards to facilitate smooth administration. These wards were under ward heads known as *“ijoye”*. The wards were subdivided 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 the king’s advisers. The pattern of administration was hierarchical.

***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.

Oyo Empire was very unique and exceptional in its system of government. The Alaafin was the head of the empire and was the resident in the capital. He was also regarded as “Lord of many lords” and “companion of the gods (Ekeji Orisa)”. The Alaafin was assisted in his administration by a routine of officials made up priests, officials and eunuchs. His powers were often limited and regulated by Oyomesi, a council of seven members headed by Bashorun who acted as the Prime Minister. The members of the Oyomesi were king makers.

Apart from the Alaafin cabinet, members of the Oyomesi cult constituted another arm of government called “the Ogboni Cult”. It was a very powerful cult and had a very vital position in Yoruba society. The Army was another arm of government in the traditional Yoruba society. It was made up of infantry and calvary and it was headed by Are-Ona-Kakanfo.

***Historical background of pre-colonial political system in Igboland***

The Igbo people are best known for their segmentary and acephalous way of life. This is because they are not centralized. They operated a kind of government without kings. 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. There were very limited professional historians as at that period. Some people believe that the Igbo people had been in their present abode from the beginning. Therefore, Igboland is the original homeland.

***Political Structure of the pre-colonial Igbo land***

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 family was the smallest political unit in Igbo traditional society. Each family was headed by an *“ofo”* title holder. Among the “ofo” title holders, one of them was recognized 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 organized 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.

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, “Ubinuknabi” at Arochukwu, the “Amadisha” of Ozuzzu and so on. They acted as intermediary between the living and the ancestors. The official religion in the pre-colonial Igbo land was the traditional religion. The religious lives of the Igbos was surrounded by mysticisms and superstitions.

***Historical background of Pre-Colonial political system in Hausa Land***

Hausa land is located in the Northern Nigeria. Oral tradition attributed the origin of the Hausa states to a man named Bayajidda, an Arab prince who travelled to Sahel from Baghdad. He killecd a monstrous snake 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. 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 discernable scale until the eleventh century.

***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-organized court. Sarkin Kasar, which means ‘ruler of the land’ was the full title given to any effective or efficient head of the Hausa state, the Sarkin Kasar combined both political and religious/spiritual functions.

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 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 was assisted by a group of district/village head, a body of councilors, and council of advisers. The members of this council were project officers appointed by Uthman Dan Fodio and each held a title specifying functions he performed.

Each emirates was divided into districts and an official known as “Hakimi” and was appointed by the emir to reside at the headquarters and administer the district on behalf of the Emir. The judicial administration of Hausa-Fulani was based on the Islamic legal system called Sharia.

***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. The Trans-Atlantic slave trade was the unfortunate channel that first put British in contact with Nigeria. The trade got to maturity in the 16th century but the British decided to abolish the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the early 19th century. Britain colonized Nigeria, Ghana, the Gambia and Sierra-Leone in West Africa and the British government sought to maintain a colonial state in Nigeria as of 1898.

By the year 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 and the second amalgamation was that of 1914, the British amalgamated Northern and Southern Nigeria. Sir Federick Lugard is best known as the father of the “January 1914” amalgamation. Britain governed Nigeria by means of a system known as “Indirect Rule”. Indirect rule 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.