**Introduction: Early Man and Technological Development in Nigeria**

The pre-colonial and colonial period era informs the history of governance and politics in Nigeria. Before colonization, chiefdoms, states, kingdoms and empires were what stood. Some of the kingdoms that stood in pre-colonial Nigeria were the Borno empire, Sokoto Caliphate, the Hausa states, Benin kingdom, Oyo empire, the segmentary Igbo societies. The culture and history of these ethnicities differed. Bights of Benin and Biafra on the Gulf Guinea in the Atlantic Ocean, border Nigeria on the South. On the west, Nigeria is bordered by Benin, on the north by Niger, the east by Cameroun. Nigeria covers a large land mass. The first appearance of man in Nigeria is unknown. However, archeological proofs-artefacts show man has lived in Nigeria since the Paleolithic period and took part in stone age civilization. Stone age is divided into three-early, middle and late stone ages. An excavated stone age skeleton over 12,000 years old found at Iwo Eleru showed an early occupation in Nigeria. Early men in Nigeria needed to survive and worked to do so. They began gathering fruits and hunting animals. Soon, they invented chopping and cutting tools made from pebbles what archeologists call Oldowan-type tools because it was first seen in Olduvai Gorge in Tanazia. After advancement from the early stone age, they made hand axes. The tools were oval and pointed in shape, had a cutting edge and were trimmed at both sides. Identical tools were found at a site in St Acheul in Northern Nigeria by foreign archeologists. The early stone age tools were later refined in the middle and late stone ages. In Jos, Plateau, Ondo, small stone tools for hunting were found. Man went on to produce heavy choppers which was better than the cutting tools at that time. One was located at Upper Sokoto River in Sokoto state. A tool type was first seen at Sango Bay in Uganda leading to it being called Sagoan. Proof of technological advancement through the bronze and metal age exist in Nigeria. Technological inventions were prevalent in 500BC-200AD. In this period, sculptures mostly human heads and figurines were made. They differed in size. Figurines were found at Nok and all had distinguished art styles. Terracota was used to make them. Ground stone axes and smaller stone tools were also found on the sites. Similarly, findings have also been made at Ile-Ife, Jebba, Esie, Igbo-Ukwu and Benin. Excavation helped the sourcing information about Nigeria’s history. The places were man lived in the past are called centers of ancient civilization. An example of a center is Nok. In 1936, tin miners in Nok civilization area found a terracotta head of a monkey. As a result, more discoveries were made at Jema, Wamba and Katsina-Ala. The combination of stone and iron objects made the Nok art to be believed to be a transition between the stone and iron ages in Nigeria. Carbon-dating, made possible the discovery that Nok culture had existed between 5th and 2nd century BC. Benin is known for its art work. Benin craftsmen cast objects in bronze and brass. They carved in wood and ivory. Assertions by art historians prove that an Ife artist introduced bronze casting to Benin. Ivory masks and wooden doors were casted, one of which is the mask used as the FESTAC symbol in 1977. Ife is known for terracotta and bronze heads. Tools and figurines were carved on quartz. Animal and human figures were carved from granite and decorated with iron nails e.g Opa Oranmiyan in Ile-Ife. Many bronze and terracotta heads were decorated with natural hair and facial marks. Some of the heads were said to be portraits of traditional rulers. Art historians think Ife art came from Nok art because of similarities between them, especially beaded neck, wrist and ankles. It is also believed that bronze casting was learnt from Benin. In 1939, while digging a toilet pit at Igbo-Ukwu, some bronze objects and ornaments were found by accident. The discovery led to the eventual excavation of three sites by Thurstan Shaw, an archeologist. The three sites were a burial chamber, a pit and a compound wall. Many bronze artefacts were found in these sites including remains of decayed skeleton suggested to be that of a king and five slaves buried with him. The sites have been dated to the middle of 9th century AD.

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

Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa are the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria. Yorubas trace believe they originated from Oduduwa, the founding father of the Yoruba kingdom. The ancestral home of the Yorubas is Ile-Ife. Varying versions of the traditions of origin exist. Johnson, in his book, History of the Yoruba(1950), traced the origin of Yoruba people to the East. The Yoruba people believe Oduduwa was the first leader that led them to Ile-Ife and sent his sons and grandsons to found other Yoruba kingdoms. Oke Oramfe is located in Ile-Ife. It is believed that it is the centre from which the world was created. According to legend, water once covered the earth. God decided to send his messengers- Obatala, Orisa Alase or Orisa Nla(the leader) and sixteen Oye(immortals). God gave them five pieces of iron, a lump of earth tied to a white cloth and a cockerel. On their way, Obatala got drunk with palm wine. Oduduwa seized the symbol of authority from and led the group to the world. When they got to Oke Oramfe, Oduduwa set the pieces of iron down and placed the eath lump on them. The cockerel spread the lump of earth around the earth with its feet. The earth was formed. Oduduwa became the leader and later sent his sons to found other Yoruba kingdoms. The political structure of the Yoruba kingdoms were similar. Each had a capital town, subordinate towns, villages and farmlands. A king called “Oba” who lived in the palace “Aafin” headed each town. His symbols of authority were a beaded crown(Ade), slippers(Bata), Horse tail(Irukere) and scepter(Ase). The Oba was the political and spiritual head. He had many privileges but limitations known as “eewo” were placed to curb tyranny. If he went against any “eewo” it could lead to his demise. The king had rulers of lesser ranks and status. These rulers presided over subordinate towns and wore white beaded crowns “sese ofun” Other group of leaders were the Baale and Oloja. Baales presided over villages and were third in rank. Olojas ruled farmlands and were fourth in rank. The town “ilu” was the basic political unit. Administration was based on subordinate towns. Each town was divided into smaller wards for smooth administration. These small wards were headed by Ijoyes. The wards were divided into compounds(agbo-ile) headed by Baales. Each compound was a group of people related paternally called “idile” headed by the eldest male in the family. Chiefs acted as the king’s advisers and served as a link between the kings and ward members. Administration in Yorubaland was hierarchical. The lowest level were the compound heads and they formed the lowest consultative group in town affairs. They administered the compound on the king’s behalf but were subject in instance to the ward head in the quarter. The ward was next in line and established his ward on the king’s behalf. At the top was a group of civil chiefs(igbimo ilu) headed by the king. They were referred to Oyomesi, Ewarefa etc in diverse Yoruba towns. The king known as Alaafin was the first organ of government in Oyo empire. Oyo was one of the few empires with checks and balances in the 16th century. This character led to many years of stability. Alaafin alias Lord of many lands was the head and resided in the capital. In his assistance were priests, officials and eunuchs. He also had an organized court. The Alaafin was referred to as “Ekeji Orisa” meaning companion of gods. He had despotic tendencies but was limited by the Oyomesi headed by the Bashorun(Prime Minister) who had the power to remove a despotic Alaafin. The Oyomesi were seven kingmakers. When the king died, they appointed his successor. A deposed Alaafin was expected tocommit suicide. The Ogboni was the second organ of government. It was a powerful cult. It was made up by free, prominent members of society and members of the Oyomesi. It played the role of a mediator in cases of conflict between the Alaafin and the Oyomesi. It could also counter the Oyomesi’s powers. The army was the third arm. It was headed by Are-Ona-Kankanfo who was to live outside the capital. It was composed of infantry and cavalry. The functions of the army were insurance of the empire’s stability, expansion and check of dissident territories. The Oyo empire had provincial governments subject to the Alaafin modelled after central government. They had considerable autonomy. The Alaafin had agents “ilari” in provinces. The annual Bere festival was used to acknowledge the renewal of allegiance of provincial governors to the Alaafin.

Igbos are known as acephalous. They had no centralized states, no kings. Igbos are divided into five groups-western, northern, eastern, south eastern, north eastern Igbo. The story that points the origin of the Igbos to Israel is one of the most popular because of the similarities between the two cultures. Some people opine that Igbos had been in their place in the beginning and it was their homeland. They lack of professional historians or kings during the pre-colonial era makes it hard to reconcile the varying versions. The Nri version is said to be the only authentic version of the origin of Igbos. The version says that Nri, Igbo ancestor descended from the sky, sailed down the River Anambra and arrived at Aguleri where he met an autochthonous group who had no living memory of their own and settled with them. As population grew, people migrated to other settlements. Igbos practiced direct democracy and a decentralized system. It was not hereditary. Institutions existed in each village perform governmental functions. The institutions included family, council of elders, age grade and secret societies. Family was the smallest political unit headed by an Ofo title holder. Villages saw themselves as people with a common ancestor. Together they discussed and made decisions. Okpara, the eldest Ofo title holder and Ozo holder presided over elders’ meetings where issues were discussed. Age grade was on a village basis. They served as police, they fought wars, enforced the elders’ decisions, ensured discipline among themselves, fined offenders. Seniority was important. Age group was a group of companionship and protection. The Oha-na-eze performed legislative functions. It was composed of adult male members who formed a general assembly. Meetings were held in village squares. The decisions made during meetings were final. Every individual’s life was respected. Age and capability were the basis for recognition. Elders were higly respected. Igbos respect hardworking and wealthy individuals. Youths, middle age and elders made up the age groups. Each group had its responsibilities. Secret societies consisted of diviners’ masquerades. They were intermediaries between the living and dead. They performed sacrifices to ward off evil. They appeased angry gods and atoned for the people’s sins. Igbos practiced traditional religion predominantly. Igbos had high respect for deities and ancestors. The chief priests were links between the ancestors, deities and the people. They believed in reincarnation. Disrespect of gods was an offence. Igbos’ religious lives were shrouded in mystery and superstition.

Before 1804, 14 kingdoms made up Hausaland. They were divided into 2 groups-Hausa Bakwai and Hausa Banza. The first seven were legitimate, the rest were illegitimate. The origin of Hausa is traced to Bayajidda, a prince who killed a snake that tormented the people. He married the queen who already had six sons. They had a son together and the seven son ruled each of the 7 Hausa states. The kingdoms were sometimes called Daura. Before the introduction of Islam in the 11th century, Hausa people were polytheists. Sarki Kasar was the head of the Hausa state. He worked with officials in an organized court.He had religious/spiritual functions. He was the executive and judge aided by a council. Between the 14th and 15th centuries, the socio-political make up changed. Islam was adopted. The judicial system changed and Sharia court was established. In 1804, a jihad led by Uthman Dan Fodio led to the conquest of Hausaland. After the conquest, a centralized government was introduced. Emirs who accounted to Dan Fodio and his 2 representatives at Sokoto and Gwandu became rulers of the caliphate. Hausaland was divided into 2. The Sultan had supervisory and advisory roles. He had little control of daily activities in the emirate and appointed Emirs. He settled disputes between emirates. Emir were absolute monarchs. They used Sharia law in administration, controlled economics,maintained law and order. He was assisted by some officials who had specific roles. Some of the officials were the Waziri, Galadima, Madawaki etc. Hakimis were district heads who administered districts. The judicial administration was based on Sharia law. Sharia courts were headed by judges “Alkalis”. The Emir had the final say in critical cases.

The Portuguese were the first foreigners to land in Nigeria. They came in to the Bini kingdom. The Atlantic slave trade occurred on the Atlantic ocean between Africans and Europeans. Slave demand became rampant in the 15th century due to the introduction of plantation agriculture in places like Brazil. Slave sources included condemned criminals, political prisoners. Trans-Atlantic slave trade led to the contact between the British and Nigeria. For three centuries the British engaged in slave trade. In 19th century they abolished it through the use of the British West African Naval Squadron. They introduced gun boat politics. Soon, they annexed Nigeria. 1861, Lagos became a British colony. However, many territories were occupied because of signed treaties between the community leaders and the British as well as conquest of some territories. The struggle among Europeans led to the partition of Africa after the Berlin conference in 1884-1885. They were given powers to establish themselves in their colonies of interest. In 1898, they took measures to maintain a colonial state. By 1900, Nigeria was fully under the British. Nigeria was first amalgamated in May 1906. Lagos colony and Southern protectorate were to form the protectorate of Southern Nigeria. This was done without the consultation of Nigerians. The amalgamation was an economic move. In 1914, the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria became the 2nd amalgamation for the same reason as that of 1906. Lord Lugard is known as the father of the 1914 amalgamation. The British adopted indirect rule for the administration of Nigeria. Indirect rule is the use of traditional rulers to rule colonies subject to instruction and control of the British.

Chapter 2 explores the analysis of the evolution of Nigeria. The pre-colonial and colonial eras as explained in the chapter makes up Nigeria’s history.

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