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**CHAPTER 15: AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE NIGERIA STATE**

The historical background of Nigerian government and politics involves the precolonial and colonial period in Nigeria. The pre colonial period refers to the period before the coming of the European colonialist to Nigeria while the colonial period refers to the time that colonial administration was established in Nigeria. The Nigeria state is a colonial product that arose out of European adventure with its eventual culmination in the colonisation of Africa. before the amalgamation by lord Fredrick Lugard in 1914, pre-colonial Nigeria comprised of different independent chiefdoms, states, kingdoms and empires which were significantly different in their history, social and cultural make ups. E.g. Borno empire. The Hausa states, and the Sokoto caliphate in the north, the Igbo segmentary societies in the east, Benin kingdom and Oyo empire in the west, and several ethnic identities in the in the Benue Valley. 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 longitude and between 4 and 14N latitude

The time at which 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 n this region known as Nigeria since the Palaeolithic period 500,000-9000BC. Further artefacts such as the skeleton found at Iwo Eleru near Akure in Ondo state found by archaeologists indicates that Nigerians also took part in the stone-age civilisation.

Living was not generally easy for the early man as he had to work hard to cope with his environment. Man needed food to survive, thus he began to hunt animals and farm. He started to create farming tools such as pebbles made into chopping and cutting tools. The early man advanced from early stone age to middle stone age when he began to make hand axes which were oval and pointed in shape and had a cutting edge which were trimmed from both sides.

As time went on, the Nigerian man developed into the metal and bronze age which was the active periods of technological efforts in Nigeria. This period dates around 500BC to 200AD. During this period many people who lived in Nigeria made sculptures many of which are human heads and figures. Some of the places where man lived are referred to as centres of ancient civilisation. These places are Nok, Ife, Benin and Igbo Ukwu among others.

**The 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. The Yoruba people trace their origin to Oduduwa who was the founder of the Yoruba kingdom with Ile Ife being the ancestral home of the Yoruba people. There are different versions of the traditions of origins. Some believe the Yoruba people came from the north eastern part of Africa. They believe that it is after several years of journey from Egypt that the Yoruba people finally settled in Ile Ife. However, some scholars believe that the origin of the Yoruba people can be traced to the Oke Oramfe’s version which teaches that the earth was full with water, the almighty God decided to send some of his messengers to the world and they included Obatala as the leader and sixteen immortals. They were given five pieces of iron, a lump of earth tied to a white piece of cloth, and a cockerel. The version o the story says that Obatala the leader on his way to the world got drunk with palm wine and Oduduwa seized the symbol of authority from him and led the others to the world.

The Yoruba political structures were similar in nature. Each consisted of a capital town, subordinate towns, villages and farmlands. Each town had a king known as Oba who resides in the place called Aafin. His paraphernalia of office include a beaded crown (Ade), a slippers (Bata), a horse tail (Irukere) and sceptre (Opa Ase). The political system in the Yoruba land is a decentralised one with checks and balances. The king’s powers are often limited and regulated by the Oyomesi, which are otherwise known as the king makers, a council of seven members headed by the Bashorun who acted as the prime minister

**Historical background of pre-colonial political system in Igbo land**

The political structure used in the Yoruba system is different from the Igbos. The Igbo people are best known for their segmentary or acephalous way of life. Some version of the origin of the Igbo people points to Israel because of the similarities between the cultures of the Igbo people and the ancient Hebrews who migrated southwards. According to the Nri version, the ancestor of the Igbo people, Eri descended from the sky and sailed down 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.

Although here was no highly centralised authority, some socio-political institutions existed in each village to perform legislative, judiciary, military and executive functions which included the family, council of elders, age grades and secret societies. The family was the smallest political unit in the Igbo traditional society which was headed by an “Ofo” title holder. The age grade consisted of the children who were born at the same time. They performed duties such as clearing of paths, streams and acting as police. The official religion practiced in the Igbo land is the traditional religion.

**The historical background of precolonial political system in the Hausa land**

The Hausa land is located in northern Nigeria. Before 1804, the Hausa land was made up of fourteen states and they were of two distinct groups. The first group of seven sates called “Hausa Bakwai” states which means Hausa legitimate states and include Daura, Biram, Zaria, Katsina, Kano, Rano and Gobir. The second group consist of the remaining seven states which were known as the “Hausa banza” sates, which means illegitimate and consist of Nupe, Gwarri, Yauri, Bauchi, Zamfara, kebbi and Yenogoua.

According to the oral tradition, the origin of the Hausa state is attributed to a man named Bayajidda, an Arab prince who travelled to the Sahel from Baghdad and killed a monstrous snake that oppressed the people of Daura. He later married the queen who had had six sons already and then produced another son with Bayajidda and each of these sons ruled each of the seven Hausa city-states becoming the first kings. The Hausa states may have been founded by Berber immigrants from the north of Sahara, or by people coming from east Africa. The Hausa were polytheists from their early history. Islam was introduced to the system in the 14th century, by the 15th century it was accepted as the religion of the ruling class. The jihad of Uthman Dan Fodio in 1804 further strengthened 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 the Fulani emirate in the northern Nigeria.

The “sarki” is known to be the head of any typical Hausa state. He worked with a reutine 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 judge of the state. He was also the chief and judge of the state. He 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 was an absolute monarch in his emirate, he was the political, administrative and spiritual leader.

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive Nigeria in Bini kingdom. The Trans-Atlantic slave trade was the unfortunate channel that put British in contact with Nigeria. For close to three centuries, coastal Nigeria’s relations with the British were dominated by the trans-Atlantic slave trade which was later abolished in the early decade of the 19th century.

After the slave trade the British proposed legitimate commerce with the Nigerians in which their intention was to control the affairs of the Nigerian state and exploit them. In 1861, Lagos was taken as their colony and by may 1906, the first amalgamation occurred which merged the Lagos colony and the protectorate of the southern Nigeria to form the new colony and the protectorate of southern Nigeria. The principal reason for the amalgamation was solely economical. The people were not consulted regarding their views if they supported the amalgamation or not. In January 1914, the British government amalgamated the Northern and southern protectorate to become Nigeria.