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CHAPTER 2: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF NIGERIAN STATE

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 colonization of Africa. The historical background of the 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 exact time when man began to live in Nigeria is unknown but there are archaeological evidences from different parts of Nigeria which proves that man had settled in a place now known as Nigeria. The artefacts, mainly stone tools found proves that Nigerians took place in the stone age civilization. The stone age can be divided into three periods namely; early stone age, middle stone age and late stone age.

The man who lived in Nigeria during those years worked hard to cope with his environment. Firstly, he needed food. For this purpose, he began to hunt animals and gather fruits. Soon, he began to make tools consisting of pebbles made into chopping and cutting tools. It seems likely that these tools were used for many purposes by the man who made them.

THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY NIGERIAN SOCIETIES

Information on the major land marks in early 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 civilization.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF PRE- COLONIAL POLITICAL SYSTEM

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. The Yoruba people trace their origin to Oduduwa, who is the founder of the Yoruba kingdom. Ile-Ife is regarded as the ancestral home of the Yoruba people. There are different versions of traditions of origin.

According to Oke Oramfe's version of origin, there was a period when the world was covered by water. The Almighty God sent his messengers to the world and they included Obatala and sixteen Oye (immortals). They were given five pieces of iron, a lump of earth tied to a white piece of cloth and a cockrel. Somewhere on their way, Obatala got drunk and Oduduwa seized the symbol of authority from him and led the party to the world. The site they landed on is traditionally known as Oke Oramfe in Ile-Ife. On arrival, Oduduwa set down the five pieces of iron and placed the lump of the earth on them. The cockrel then spread the lump of the earth with its feet throughout the earth. Consequently, the earth was formed and Oduduwa became the ruler. It was from Ile-Ife that he extended his authorities to other towns and villages.

Political Structure of the Pre-Colonial Yoruba Land

The political structures of the Yoruba kingdoms were similar in nature. Each town has a king known as "Oba" who resides in the palace called "Aafin". His paraphrnia of office included a beaded crown (Ade), a slippers (bata), horse tail (irukere) and scepter (Ase). The Oba is both the spiritual and political head of the kingdom and his words are laws and binding on everybody. Though, certain limitations were placed on his powers known as "eewo" designed to curb the despotism and tyranny on the part of the King. If a king vilolates any eewo, it could lead to death.

The King also had rulers of lesser rank and status who were in charge of surbodinate towns. Another group of rulers were the Baale (in charge of villages) and Oloja (rules over farmlands).

The Oyo Empire

The government of the old Oyo empire is a typical example of the pre-colonial administration in Yorubaland. The first organ of government in Oyo empire was the king known as Alaafin of Oyo. The systems of government under this administration includes; the Alaaafin administration, the ogboni cult's administration and the army.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF PRE-COLONIAL SYSTEM IN IGBO LAND

The Igbo people are best known for their acephalous way of life. This is because from the ancient times, they had no centralized states. Consequently, they operated a kind of government without kings.

According to the Nri version of origin, which is regarded as the only authentic version of the origin of existence; 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, they practice direct democracy and a decentralized system of government because there were no traditional rulers in the form of Oba as in the case of Yoruba.

However, some socio-political institutions existed in each village and they included the family, council of elders, age grades and secret societies. The family was the smallest political unit in igbo traditional society and is headed by an “Ofo” title holder. Among the Ofo title holders, the most senior is known as the “Okpara” who held the “Ozo” title and presided over the council of elders meeting. Age grades are the youths who enforced discipline among themselves. Oha-na-eze was a form of general assembly consisting of all male adult members in performing legislative functions.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF PRE-COLONIAL POLITICAL SYSTEM IN HAUSA LAND

Hausa is located in Northern Nigeria. Hausa land before 1804 was made up of 14 states, the first seven called “Hausa Bakwai” that is legitimate states and the second known as “Hausa Banza” that is illegitimate states.

Oral tradition has it that a man named Bayajidda, an Arab prince who travelled to Baghdad 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 were sometimes called Daura.

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 head of Hausa state. The Sarkin Kasar combined both political and religious functions. He is also the chief executive and judge of the state, but is aided by a council of the state.

Important title holders in the Emir’s cabinet included: Sarkin Fada (the spokesman and organizer of palace workers), Waziri (the prime minister of the emirate), Galadima (the administrator of the capital city), Madawaki (the commander and head of the emirate army), Magaji (government treasurer), Sarkin Dan Doka (inspector general of police force called doka), Sarkin Ruwa (minister-in-charge of water resources), Sarkin Pawa (head of chairman of butchers at the abattoirs) and Yari (chief superintendent of prisons in the Emirate).