Chapter 2: A Historical Analysis of The Evolution of The Nigerian State.

The Nigeria State is a colonial creation. The historical background of Nigerian government and politics involves both the pre-colonial and the colonial period. Nigeria is a product pf of the historical arrangement that came about out of European adventure with its eventual culmination in the colonization of Africa. Before the colonialism of Nigeria, it consisted of different independent chiefdoms, kingdoms or empires such as Borno Empire, The Hausa states, the Oyo Empire, the Igbo segmentary societies in the east and so on. Man had settled in the region now known as Nigeria as early as 500,000-900,000BC (Palaeolithic period). This shows that Nigerian man came from the early stone age where stones and pebbled where made into tools for cutting and fruits were eaten as food. Gradually, the times evolved and technology became better little by little.

The centres of ancient civilisation involve the very remote places where man lived in Nigeria during the early times. Such places are Nok, Igbo Ukwu, Ife, Benin and so on. The Nok culture/civilisations has to do with the discovery of terracotta which is burnt clay and it also believed to be the transition ofc civilisation from the Stone Age to the Iron Age. It existed between the 5th and 2nd century B.C. there is the Igbo Ukwu civilisation where bronze objects and ornaments were accidentally discovered. This civilisation existed in the 9th century. The Ife civilisation where art was common. Ife art which originated from Nok art consists of objects being carved out of hard stones, bronze and terracotta. Finally, the Benin civilisation is also important for its artwork. The craftsmen of Benin carved in woods and ivory and cast objects in bronze and brass.

There are three main ethnic groups in the Nigerian traditional political system of government which are Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo. The Yorubas are one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria and are united by language. The ancestral home of the Yoruba people is Ile-Ife and they trace their origin back to Oduduwa who is founder of the Yoruba Kingdom. After many years of journey from Egypt, they settled in Ile-Ife. The political structures in the Yoruba kingdoms are similar. There is the Oba(king) who lives in the Aafin(palace) and has bata(slippers), Ade(crown) and irukere(horse tail). Limitations to the King’s powers are known eewo. The people under the king are known as Sese Ofun. There are also the Baales and Olojas who are the third and forth rank of rulers. The Oyo Empire was unique and stable for centuries because it had in-built checks and balances. The Alaafin also known as Lord of the Lands was the head of the empire and was the resident in the capital. The Alaafin was the fountain of authority but sometimes was limited by the Oyemesi. It is a council of seven members headed by Bashorun(Prime minister). They were the king makers meaning they had the power to remove and select a King. The Ogboni cult consisted of the Oyomesi and other prominent members of the society who played a mediatory role between the Alaafin and Oyomesi. The Army was very organised with the head carrying the title of Are-Ona-Kankanfo. The army ensured stability of the empire, expansion and keeping dissident territories in check. The Ilari are personal agents of the Alaafin.

The Igbo people had no centralised government in the pre-colonial political system which is why they are known for their segmentary or acephalous way of life. The Igbo are grouped into five sub-cultures namely; the Igbo of Eastern Nigeria, the Igbo of South-Eastern Nigeria, the Igbo of North-Eastern Nigeria, the Western Igbo and the Northern Igbo. The Igbo traditional society practiced direct democracy or a decentralised government system because there was no centralisation of authority. The family was the smallest political unit with the head known as Ofo. There is also the Age grade which are strongly organised for work, war, and government. It is a society of companionship and protection. The Oha-na-eze consists of all the male adult members who meet and perform legislative functions. The secret societies act as intermediary between the living and the ancestors.

The Hausa land is located in Northern Nigerian. There was the existence of fourteen states before 1804. In the Emirate system of government, the emir was an absolute monarch. He was the political, administrative and spiritual leader. The Emir had a cabinet which includes the Sarkin Fada who was the spokesman of the Emir and the organiser of the palace workers, there is the Waziri who was the prime minister, the Galadima was the administrator of the capital city, the Madawaki was the commander and head of the emirate army, the Magaji was the government treasurer, the Sarkin Dan Doka was the inspector general of police force, the Sarkin Ruwa was the minister in charge of the water resources, the Sarkin Pawa was the head of chairman of butchers and lastly, the Yari was the chief superintendent of prisons in the Emirate. The Emirate was later divided into districts. The Judiciary administration of Hausa-Fulani was based on Islamic legal system called Sharia which had a court with the chief of justice called Grand Khadi.

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to come to Nigeria but the British colonialised Nigeria. This was when the slave trade occurred. The struggle among the European powers for colonies led to the partitioning of Africa among them in the 19th century. Due to this, the Berlin Conference of 1884-85 commenced. It was concluded that Britain will colonise Nigeria, Ghana, the Gambia and Sierra-Leone in West Africa. Nigeria was under Britain and there was the first amalgamation in May 1906 of the British in Nigeria. Then, there was a second amalgamation in 1914. The British amalgamated the Northern and Southern Nigeria because of the same economic reasons as the first. Britain governed Nigeria through Indirect rule which means a system of Britain ruling her colonies through 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.