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AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE NIGERIAN STATE

The pre-colonial period and the colonial period in Nigeria makes up the historical background of the Nigerian state and politics. The pre-colonial period refers to the time before the coming of the colonialists and the colonial period refers to the period the colonial masters came. Nigeria is a colonial creation. It was created during the England adventure in the colonization of Africa. Before their coming, there were several ethnic groups that were present who had different historical, social and cultural backgrounds. Nigeria is bordered on the south by the Bights of Benin and Biafra, to the west by Benin, to the north by Niger and east by Cameroon and 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 4° and 14° latitude.

Early man in Nigeria: It is unknown the exact time that men began to live in Nigeria but from the archaeological findings it shows that man has inhabited Nigeria since the Paleolithic period 500,000-9,000 BC. From the finding of artefacts like the stone tools, it also shows that Nigerians took part in the stone-age civilization which is divided into early Stone Age, middle stone age and late Stone Age. The extension of a Stone Age skeleton at Iwe Eleru near Akure, Ondo state has shown the earliest occupation of Nigeria.

The achievements of early man: in order for man to survive during these early times and provide food for himself, he had to hunt animals and gather fruits. He began to invest some made of pebbles used to cut and chop, these tools were known as Oldowan-type tools because they were first identified in the Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania. Men advanced from the early age in Nigeria and began to hand axes which served several purposes. Similar tools have been identified at a site in St Achouli in northern Nigeria. These tools were refined during the middle stone age and late Stone Age. Small tools for hunting have been located in Jos, Plateau state and to Iwe-Eleru in Ondo state. Early men invented another type of tool which is a heavy chopper is more efficient than other efficient tools which is known as the sango because it was identified in Sango Bay on the west shores of Lake Victoria in Uganda East Africa. It has also been found in the Upper Sokoto State. There is evidence of more advanced technology during the bronze and metal age around 500BC to 200AD one of the active periods of technological efforts in Nigeria. During that period, people made sculptures many of them of human heads and figures. They varied from

smaller stone tools to heavy tools. The site in where the figures were found was the village of Nok. Similar findings were found in parts of Ile-ife, Jebba, Esie, Igbo-ukwu and Benin.

Traditional political institutions in pre-colonial Nigeria

The Yoruba historical background of pre-colonial political system: The Yorubas are one of the largest ethnic group in Nigeria. They are united by language and trace their origin to Oduduwa, who is the founder of the Yoruba kingdom. According to Johnson in his book “History of the Yoruba (1960)”, Yoruba originated from the East and to them Mecca is the east. It is from Egypt that they finally settled in Ile-ife. There are different versions of the origin of the Yoruba kingdom. The Oke-Oramfe’s version of the origin of the Yoruba that god sent some of the messengers to the world and they include Obatala who got drunk on the way and Oduduwa seized the symbol of authority and led the others. Five pieces of iron, a lump of earth tied to a white piece of cloth and a cockerel were given to them. They landed at Ore-oramfe which is located in Ile-ife, the earth was formed and Oduduwa was became the ruler.

The political structures of the various Yoruba Kingdoms are similar. Each of them consisted of a capital town, subordinate towns, villages and farmlands. It was headed by a king known as resides in the palace called “Alaafin”. He is both the spiritual and political head of the kingdom. The powers of the king is the “Oba” who resides in the palace “Alaafin”. He is both the spiritual and political head of the kingdom. The powers of the king is limited by what is known as “eewo’ and it could lead to his death if breached. His symbols of the office were the crown, slippers, horse tail and scepter. He king had been rulers who were in change of subordinate towns and wore white beaded crown known as “sese ofun”. We had the Baales and the Oloja who were the third rank and fourth rank respectively. The town were divided into words which were headed by ward heads known as “ijoye”, these words were further divided into compound headed by the most senior male member of the family. The chief acted as an adviser to the king and link between the king and member of the ward. The pattern of administration was hierarchical.

The government of the Old Oyo Empire is typical example of the pre-colonial administration in Yoruba land, we have the Alaafin who was the head of the empire and resided in the capital. He was also known as “Lord of many lands”. He was assisted by a retinue of officials made up of priests, officials and eunuchs. The Alaafin was seen as the fountain of authority and also known as the “Companion of the gods”. His powers were limited by the Oyomesi, who were the seven kingmakers headed by the Bashorun who acted as the prime minister. They had to remove any Alaafin who act wrongly. A deposed Alaafin is meant to commit suicide. They also have the power to select a new king. The Ogboni cult’s administration was a very powerful cult composed of free and prominent members of the society as well as members of the Oyomesi. They served a vital role in the Yoruba society. They served as a mediator between the Oyomesi and the king. The Army is another arm of government in the Yoruba society. They were very organized. It is made up of infantry and cavalry. The Are-Ona – Kakanfo lived outside the capital. The army maintained the stability of the empire, they were subject to the command of the Alaafin

Historical Background of Pre-colonial political system in Igbo land

The Igbo people are best known for their acephalous or decentralized system of government. They operated a system without kings. They are divided into five sub-cultures: The

Igbo of Eastern Nigeria, South-Eastern Nigeria, north-eastern Nigeria, the western Igbo and the northern Igbo. The popular versions of the migratory stories of the Igbo people is the one that points to Israel because of its similarities with the Ancient Hebrew. The Nri version of the origin of the Igbo people seen as the only authentic version of the origin according to Professor M.A Onwuejeogwu. According to the version, the ancestor of Eri descended from the sky and sailed down the River Anambra. At Aguleri, he must some group of people who had not past memory of been on their own and sections with them.

They had a decentralized system of government that consists of social-political institutions that perform legislative, executive, and judicial functions. These institutions include the family, council, of elders, age-grades and secret societies. The family was the smallest political unit in the Igbo society headed by an Ofo title holder. They make up the village and believe they have a common ancestor. The Ofo title holders were headed by the Okpara who was the eldest. The age grade was organized on a village basis. They organize communal functions, provide security and functions as a society of companionship and protection. The Oha-na-eze was a form of general assembly in traditional Igbo society. They were highly respected in the society. The secret societies consisted of the diviners' masquerade and act as a intermediary between the living and the ancestors. They perform rituals to appease the gods.

Historical background of pre-colonial political system in Hausa land: The Hausa land is located in Northern Nigeria before 1804. It was made up of fourteen and they were of two distinct groups known as the Hausa Bakwai and Hausa banza states. The origin can be served to Bayajidda, an Arab prince who killed a monstrous snake that oppressed the people and marked to the queen of Daura. He had a son with the queen, who had six sons already which founded the Hausa bakwai states and the sons with her handmaid formed the Hausa banza sates. Islam was not introduced in the 19th century in the Hausa land. The Sarki was the head of any typical hausa state. sarkin kakar was known as the ruler of the land who worked with other officials. There was a great change in the administration between 14th and 15th century and new titles came into place. Islam was introduced in the 14th century and was accepted as the religion of ruling class. The Jihad led by Uthman Dan Fodio in 1804 further strengthened the religion in the area. The caliphate was divided into two: Sokoto and Gwandu with Emirs headed them. The sultan supervised the emirate. The Emir was an absolute monarch and both a political and spiritual leader. He had other officers working under him performing specific functions appointed by Uthman Dan Fodio. They were Sarkin fada, waziri, galadmina, madawaki, Magaji, Sarkin dan doka, sarkin ruwa, sarkin pawa and yari. To make the local government efficient, an official known as 'Hakimi' was appointed by the Emir who in turn appoint village heads. The judicial administration of Hausa-Fulani was based on Sharia law. The chief justice of the Sharia courts was called the khadi. Village heads were settled minor disputes while serious ones were carried to the Emir.

Colonial Administration and Indirect Rule System in Nigeria Historical Background: The Portuguese were the first Europeans to land in Nigeria through Bini kingdom. The Atlantic slave trade was the trade carried on across the Atlantic Ocean between Europeans and Africans and it became important in the 15th century with the arrival of the Portuguese. The trans-Atlantic slave trade was the means by which British came in contact in Nigeria. It was later abolished in the 19th century by the British West African Naval Squadron. In 1861, Lagos was made a colony. The struggle for Africa states led to the portioning of Africa in the Berlin conference of 1884-85. Britain colonized Nigeria, Ghana, Gambia and Sierra-Leone in West Africa.

