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CHAPTER TWO

The historical background of Nigerian government and politics involves the pre-colonial period and the colonial period in Nigeria. The pre-colonial period is the period before the colonialist that is the British came to Nigeria while the colonial period is the period where colonial administration was established by the British in the country Nigeria. Before the emergence of the Nigerian state, pre-colonial Nigeria comprised of different independent chiefdoms, states, kingdoms and empires such as Borno Empire, the Hausa States and Sokoto Caliphate in the North. The exact time when 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 in the region now known as Nigeria since the Palaeolithic period 500,000-9000BC. Due to the stone tools found by archaeologists, it is confirmed that Nigeria also took part in the stone-age civilization.

The man who lived in Nigeria during the years of stone age worked hard to cope with his environment. First of all, he began to hunt and gather food because he needed food. He eventually started inventing tools consisting of pebbles used for chopping and cutting. The excavation work done in places like Nok, Igbo Ukwu where man lived in Nigeria in the very remote past made it possible to have information on the major land marks in early Nigerian history. Nok culture as mentioned earlier, is very significant in explaining the early history of Nigeria. The Nok culture is believed to be a transitional civilization between the Stone Age and The Iron Age in Nigeria. The discovery of a burnt clay head of a monkey by tin miners in Nok in 1936 prompted more discoveries in other places such as Wamba, Katsina- Ala and Jema. The Benin Civilization is also very significant. Benin was important for its art-work. Other civilizations that had significance to the early history of Nigeria are; Ife Civilization, Igbo Ukwu Civilization.

 The Historical Background of Pre-colonial Political System in Yoruba land

Yoruba is one of the largest ethnic group in Nigeria. The people trace their origin to Oduduwa, the founder of the Yoruba kingdom while Ile Ife is the ancestral home of the Yoruba people. There are numerous versions of the origin of the Yoruba people. One given by Johnson and also the Oke Oramfe’s version. The political structures of all Yoruba kingdoms were similar in nature. They all consisted of a capital town, subordinate towns, villages, and farmlands. Each town had a King called ‘Oba’ who resided in the palace called ‘Aafin’. The government of the old Oyo empire is a typical example of the pre-colonial administration in Yoruba land. The first organ of government was the king known as Alaafin of Oyo whose powers were regulated by the Oyomesi. The next organ was the Ogboni Cult then the Army.

The Historical Background of Pre-Colonial system in Igbo Land

The Igbo people are best known for their acephalous way of life. There was no centralized state. There are numerous versions of the origin of Igbo people but the most popular is the one that points to Israel. In Igbo traditional society, there was diffusion of authority, there was no highly centralized authority. The family was the smallest political unit in Igbo traditional society and each family was headed by an ‘Ofo’ title holder.

Historical Background of 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’ was the full title given to any effective and efficient head of Hausa state. He was also the chief executive and judge of the State Islam was introduced to Hausa land in the fourteenth century, and by the fifteenth it was accepted as a religion of the ruling class. The Jihad of Uthman Dan Fodio of 1804 further strengthened and consolidated the religion in this area.

Colonial Administration and Indirect Rule System in Nigeria

The British were not the first Europeans to land in Nigeria as we thought but rather, the Portuguese landed first through the Bini kingdom. The Trans- Atlantic slave trade was the unfortunate channel that first put the British in contact with Nigeria. This trade got to maturity in 16th century. The British first formally annexed Nigeria territory in 1861. They took Lagos as a British colony. The struggle among the European powers for colonies led to the partitioning of Africa among them in the 19th century. Each of the European powers had the power to establish colonies where it had vested interest. This led to the partitioning of Africa after the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885.

Before the year 1900. All the different parts of Nigeria conquered by the British were still under their original administration but by 19000, the whole Nigeria was under the responsibility of the British Colonial Office. The first amalgamation of the British in Nigeria occurred in May 1906. The British amalgamated Lagos colony and protectorate with the protectorate of Southern Nigeria to form the new colony and protectorate of Southern Nigeria. This was done without consulting Nigerians. The second amalgamation was that of 1914. In January 1914, the British Government amalgamated Northern and Southern Nigeria. Sir Frederick Lugard is best known as the father of the ‘January 1914’amalgamation.