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Nigerian government and politics historical background 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.

Nigeria is a product of a historical arrangement that arose out of European adventure with its eventual culmination in the colonization of Africa. Prior to the emergence of the Nigerian state, pre-colonial Nigeria comprises of different independent chiefdoms, states, kingdoms and empires. These, among others, include the Borno empire, the Hausa states, and the Sokoto Caliphate in the North; the Igbo segmentary societies in the ethnic identities in the Benue Valley. These ethnic groupings significantly differ in their historical, social and cultural make ups. The country is bordered to the south by the Bights of Benin and Biafra, which are on the Gulf of Guinea in the Atlantic Ocean. On the west, Nigeria is bordered by Benin, on the north by Niger and on the east by Cameroon.

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 Paleolithic period 500000-9000BC. The artifacts, mostly stone tools, found by archaeologists further confirmed that Nigerians also took part in the Stone Age civilization. The Stone Age can be divided into several periods. These are: Early stone age 3000000-35000BC; middle Stone Age, 35000- 15000BC and late Stone Age 15000-500BC. The excavation of a Stone Age skeleton at Iwo Eleru near Akure in Ondo state has thrown more light on the earliest occupation of Nigeria.

The humans who lived in Nigeria during those years would have to work really hard to cope with his environment. To begin with,he needed food. For his purpose he began to hunt the animals and to gather fruits. But he soon began to invent to hunt the animals and to gather fruits. But he soon began to invent tools consisting of pebbles made into chopping and cutting tools. Archaeologists called the tools the Oldowan type tools. This is because this type of tool was first identified by the archaeologists in the Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania. Early man in Nigeria advanced from the early Stone Age. Invention of certain tools-stone, metals (axes), sculpture making, terracotta, excavation has revealed where men first settle in Nigeria. Some places where man lived in Nigeria in the very remote past include; NOK, IGBO UKWU, IFE AND BENIN among others. They are usually referred as the center of civilization. The history of these centers of ancient civilization presents us with the scientific and technological developments of early Nigerian societies.

TRADITIONAL POLITICAL INSTITUTIONDS IN PRECOLONIAL NIGERIA

YORUBA

The Yoruba’s traced their origin to Oduduwa. They are the largest ethnic group in Nigeria and are united by language. Ile Ife is regarded as the ancestral home of the Yoruba’s. Stories about the origin of the Yoruba people are diverse; i) there is the Oke Oramfe version… That the earth was full of water and God, Olodumare sent servants who were given some objects which the world was created ii) there is the story of their migration from the East. This is the belief that the Yoruba people migrated from the North- East…so from Mecca, through Egypt leading final settlement. The political structures of the Yoruba kingdoms were similar in nature. Each consisted of a capital town, subordinate towns, villages, and farmlands. Each town has a king known as “Oba who resides in the palace called “Aafin.” His paraphernalia of office included a beaded crown (Ade), a slippers (bata), horse tail (irukere) and sceptre ASE). The Oba is both the spiritual and political head of the kingdom. The army was another arm of government in the traditional Yoruba society it was much organised its head was conferred with the coveted title of Are Ona Kankanfo. It was made up of infantry and cavalry.

The Igbo

The Igbo people are best known for their segmentary or acephalous way of life. The Igbos has no centralised state. One of the most popular versions of the migratory stories of origin of the Igbo people is the one that points to Israel. This assumption is based on the so-called similarities between the cultures of the Igbo and the ancient Hebrew. Some Igbo scholars consider themselves as off-shoots of the lost tribes of the Hebrews who migrated southward. Nri version as the only authentic version of origin in existence in the oral tradition of the Igbo. According to Nri version, 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. There is no highly centralised authority.What they have is a diffusion of authority into diverse groups.Although, there was no highly centralised authority, some socio-political institutions existed in each village to perform legislative, executive, administrative, military and judicial functions, such institutions included the family, council of elders, age grades and secret societies.

The Igbo are grouped into five sub-culture

· The Igbo of Eastern Nigeria, the Igbo of South-Eastern Nigeria, the Igbo of North-Eastern Nigeria, the Western Igbo and the Northern Igbo.

Hausa people

Hausa land is located in Northern Nigeria. Hausa land, before 1804 was made up of fourteen states, and they were of two distinct groups. The first group consist of seven states called “Hausa Bakwai” states, that is, Hausa legitimate states. The second group consist of the remaining seven states and were known as “Hausa banza” states, that is Hausa illegitimates states. The Hausa “bakwai” states are Daura, Biram, Zaria, Katsina, Kano, Rano, and Gobir while the Hausa “Banza” states are Nupe, Gwari, Yauri, Bauchi, Zamfara, Kebbi. Oral tradition attributed the origin of the Hausa states to a man named Bayajidda, an Arab prince who travelled to the Sahel from Baghdad. He 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 of Hausa land were sometimes called the Daura, since Daura is the place where Bayajidda supposedly founded the Hausa people. The “Sarki”was known as the head of any typical Hausa state. He worked with a retinue 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 head of Hausa State. The Sarkin Kasar combined both political and religious/spiritual functions. He was also the chief executive and judge of the State, but he was aided by a council of state. At the district level, the government was modelled after that at the national level. It is worthy of note that between 14th and 15th centuries, the socio-political organisation of Hausa States took another shape. For instance, Islam was adopted and this gave birth to many new political institutions such as the offices of the Galadima, Madawaki, Magaji, Dogari, Yari Sarki and Sarki Yau.

Colonialism

The British who have often been credited with the creation of Nigeria were not the first Europeans to land in Nigeria. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive Nigeria through Bini Kingdom. Thus, The Trans-Atlantic slave trade was the unfortunate channel that first put the British in contact with Nigeria. The trans-Atlantic slave trade was abolished in the 19th century. 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 was given the opportunity to establish colonies where it had vested interest. The scramble for Africa, by these European powers led to the partitioning of Africa after the Berlin Conference of 1884–85. Before the year 1900, all the different parts of Nigeria conquered by the British were still under their original administration. But by 1900, the whole Nigeria was under the responsibility of the British Colonial Office. The May 1906 amalgamation is known as the first ever amalgamation of the British in Nigeria. British government amalgamated Lagos colony and protectorate with the protectorate of Southern Nigeria to form the new colony and protectorate of Southern Nigeria. The second amalgamation was that of 1914. In January 1914, the British government amalgamated Northern and Southern Nigeria.