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CHAPTER TWO

AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE NIGERIAN STATE

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 coming of the colonialists to Nigeria while the colonial period refers to the era that colonial administration was established in the country Nigeria.

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 East; Benin Kingdom and the Oyo Empire in the West and several ethnic identities in the Benue Valley. On the West Nigeria is bordered by Benin, on the North, by Niger, and on the East, by Cameroon.

Societies

Major Landmark in Early Nigerian History

Information on the major land marks in early Nigerian history was made possible through the excavation work done on places where man lived in Nigeria in the remote past. Some of the places where man lived in Nigeria in the remote past included: Nok, Igbo Ukwu, Ife and Benin among others. They are usually referred to as centres of ancient civilization. The history of these centres of ancient civilization presents us with the scientific and technological developments of early Nigerian societies.

1. Nok Culture/Civilization

The discovery of a terracotta (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 area where these terracotta figurines were found is called the Nok culture or civilization area.

2. Benin Civilization

Benin was important for its art-work. The craftsmen of Benin carved in wood and ivory and cast objects in bronze and brass. Art historians claim that bronze casting was introduced into Benin by an Ife artist. They cast wooden doors and ivory masks, one of which was the ivory mask used as FESTAC symbol in 1977.

3. Ife Civilization

Ife is important because of its terracotta and bronze heads. Objects such as stools and figures were carved on hard stone called quartz while animal and human figures were carved from granite and decorated with facial marks and natural hair.

4. Igbo Ukwu Civilization

Some bronze objects and ornaments were accidentally discovered while digging a toilet pit at Igbo Ukwu in 1939. This eventually led to the excavation of three sites in the area by an archaeologist called Thurstan Shaw. The three sites included a burial chamber, a pit and a compound wall.

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 their Language. The Yoruba people trace their origin to Oduduwa who was the founder of Yoruba Kingdom. Ile-Ife is regarded as the ancestral home of the Yoruba people. There are different versions of the traditions of origin. In the book, History of the Yoruba, Johnson traced the origin of the Yoruba to the "East". According to him, the Yoruba originally originated from the North-Eastern area of Africa.

Historical Background of Pre-Colonial Political System in Igbo Land

The Igbo people are best known for their segmentary or 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. One of the most popular versions of the migratory stories of origin of the Igbo people is the one that points to Israel.

Historical Background of Pre-Colonial Political System in Hausa Land

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 banza".