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**CHAPTER 2: AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUSION OF NIGERIA STATE**

The history of government and politics in Nigeria can be classified into two; the pre-colonial and the colonial period. 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 Nigeria. Nigeria is a colonial creation that arose out of European adventure. Nigeria is bounded to the south by the bright of Benin to the west by Benin republic the north by Niger and to the east by Cameroon. The exact time man began to exist in Nigeria is not certain but there are archaeological evidences that man settled in the region since the Palaeolithic period 500,000- 9000BC.

One of the most active periods in Nigeria was during 500BC – 200AD and the people who lived at the time made different sculptures from human heads and figures in different shapes and sizes and some of these figures were found in the village of Nok, Benin, Ile Ife, Jebba, Esie, Igbo Ukwu. Some of the Nok sculptures were made out of burnt clay, the Benin sculpures were made of wood and ivory and cast objects in bronze and brass, the ile ife sculptures were made of granite, iron nails and bronze.

**TRADITIONAL POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS IN PRE-COLONIAL NIGERIA**

The three major ethnic groups will be examined in this session

Yoruba

The Yorubas were one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria and are united by language. They trace their origin to Oduduwa who as the founder of the Yoruba kingdom. Ile Ife is regarded as the ancestral home of the Yoruba people. Some believe the oke oramfe version of the history of the Yoruba origin and traces it down to Obatala and his sons. The political structure of the Yoruba land is similar in nature. Each town had a king who is known as “Oba” he resided in the palace called “Aafin”, he had his crown called “Ade” his slippers called “bata” his horse tail called “Irukere”, his scepter called “Ase”. He enjoyes many privileges and also has many limitations known as “Eewo”. His words are laws and binding on all inhabitants of the town. The king had rulers of lesser ranks and status and they include: Baale, Oloja etc. In the Oyo empire, some of the political administration they had in the pre-colonial era were the Alaafin administration, the Ogboni cult administration, the army “ Are-ona kankanfo”.

Igbo

The igbo’s are best known for their acephalous way of life. They operated a kind of government without kings. Features of the Igbo political structure includes: diffusion of authority into different groups (direct democracy and decentralized system of government), socio political institutions existed (family, council of elders, age grade and secret societies). The family was the smallest unit and was headed by the head called the “ofo” and amongst the Ofo title holders was the most senior called the “okpara” who held the “Ozo” title and presided over the council of elders meeting where issues were discussed. Age grade was organized on a village basis. It was a means they used to organize themselves from childhood. The youths served as police, the elders served as decision makers. Seniority was a great social importance. The secret societies consisted the masqurades who played significant roles in the traditional society. They acted as intermediary between the living and the ancestors. They practiced traditional religions and believed in re-incarnation.

Hausa

The Hausa land is located in the northern part of Nigeria. Islam was introduced and accepted to Hausa land and was the religion of the ruling class and after the Jihad od 1804 the religion was strengthened and consolidated in this area. The Jihad led to the conquest of the existing old Hausa kingdom, the overthrow of the political leadership by Fulani emirates in northern Nigeria. Each emirates owed allegiance to Dan Fodio and his two representatives in Sokoto and Gwandu. The Emir was an absolute monarch in his emirate he was the political, administrative and spiritual leader. He administered according to the sharia and Islamic law.

**Colonial Administration in Nigeria**.

Britain was not the first to arrive Nigeria instead it was Portugal and they arrived through the Bini kingdom. The trans-atlantic slave trade was the unfortunate channel that put the British in contract with Nigeria and in the 19th century, the British abolished slave trade. The Europeans got the opportunity to get more directly involved with the affairs of the state. They introduced “gun-boat” politics. The British first formally annexed Nigeria territory in 1861 they took Lagos as a colony but the bulk of Nigerian territory was occupied in the late 19th century. The scramble for Africa by the European powers led to the partitioning of Africa after the berlin conference of 1884-1885. Britain, therefore governed Nigeria by means of a system popularly referred to as “Indirect rule”. Indirect rule may be a system of Britain ruling her colonies through local 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.