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GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

**Chapter Two**

**An Historical Analysis of the Evolution of the Nigerian State.**

The Nigerian historical background is divided into two periods: The pre-colonial period and the colonial period. The precolonial period is the time before the British colonized Nigeria while the colonial period is when the colonist had already colonized Nigeria. This means that Nigeria is product of colonialism. It is a product of a historical arrangement that arose out of European adventure into and colonisation of African countries.

 During the Precolonial administration, Nigeria comprised of different independent chiefdoms, states, kingdoms and empires. Some included, the Hausa states, the Borno empire, the Oyo empire and so on. They all were very different to each other and the country shared borders with the south by the Bights of Benin and Biafra.

When human existence started in Nigeria is unknown by archaeologists but they suspect it was around the Palaeolithic period in 500,000 to 9000 BC as they have found evidence to prove this. The artefacts- stone tools, depict that Nigerians were in existence during the stone Age. This was further proven by the evacavation of a stone age skeleton at Iwo Eleru dated 12,000 years ago.

The man living in early Nigeria did a lot to survive. First, he provided his food by gathering fruits and hunting animals with tools he made from pebbles, today called Oldowan-type tools as it was discovered by an archaeologist called Olduvai.

Through the evacavation of major landmarks of the early Nigeria information of the scientific and technological development of the end Nigerian societies was gotten. These included; Nok, Igbo, Ukwu, Ife, and Benin among others. Nok culture was found to be prominent for terracotta as a burnt clay monkey head was found in the tin mines in Nok.

 In the Benin civilisation, artworks like wood, ivory and objects cast in bronze and brass were found like doors one of which is a symbol of FESTAC. In the Ife civilisation, terracotta and bronze heads were prevalent. Also, in the Igbo Civilisation some bronze objects were found while digging a toilet pit.

The early Nigeria also had their own traditional institutions. The Yoruba’s are the largest ethnic group in Nigeria and are united by their language and common ancestor in Oduduwa. Johnson, in his book “History of Yoruba" originally came from Mecca. According to Oke Oramfe, Yoruba land originated from when the land was covered with water and God sent his messengers to the world who created the world.

All Yoruba kingdoms are similar in political structures. They were all headed by an Oba or Alaafin who wore his Ade, bata, irukere, and Ase. The king had rulers of lesser ranks in charge of subordinate's towns who wore white beaded crowns. The pattern of administration was hierarchical Ns the lowest were the compound head, the Baales.

In the Oyo empire, there was the Alaafin administration where the Alaafin was the head of the empire and was assisted by his priests, officials, and eunuchs. The Oyomesi the power to remove any Alaafin who broke the laws of the land.

The ogboni was a very powerful cult that played a mediatory role in any conflict of power between the Oyomesi and the Alaafin. Lastly, the Aare-Ona-Kankanfo, the army was in charge of protecting the empire from external attacks, expansion and keep the stability of the empire.

The Igbo people are best known for thier segmentary or acephalous way of life as they had no centralized states. It is popularly believed that they migrated from Israel. According to the Nri version, they descended from the sky and sailed down the River Anambra and settled with the autochthonous people of Aguleri.

The Igbo society is highly decentralized in authority as they diffused authority into different groups thus they operate on a direct democracy. The family is the smallest unit in Igbo traditional society. Each family was headed by an “Ofo” title holder, the most senior men in the families.

The Age grade grew from childhood and took a common name to commemorate an event associated with the time of their birth. They were in charge if communal work, wars and government. The Oha-na-eze was the general assembly of the Igbo society. They met at the market squares and a decision taken during these meetings were final. The secret societies consisted of diviner's masquerades. They are the intermediaries between the living and the ancestors.

The Hausa land was made up of fourteen states and they were divided into two distinct groups; the “Hausa Bakwai", also known as the Hausa legitimate states and the “Hausa banza", also known as the Hausa illegitimate states. The “Sarki" was the head of the typical Hausa state and he worked with a retinue of officials in a well-organized court. He combined being the political and religious head.

Islam was introduced to Hausa in the 14th century and in the 15th, century was accepted as a religion of the ruling class. This was strengthened by Usman Dan Fodio in the Jihad of 1804 which led to the conquest of the existing old Hausa Kingdom.

In every state conquered, the former Hausa ruler was replaced by a Fulani Emir. However, the basic political organisation was not destroyed but improved upon. Each emir was owed allegiance to Dan Fodio and his two representatives at Sokoto and Gwandu.

The Emir was an absolute monarch in his Emirates. He was the political administrative and spiritual leader. He administered his Emirates in accordance with the provisions of the Islamic and Sharia law. The emir controlled economic activities with his Emirates. He maintained law and order in his domain and was assisted by a group of district heads buddy of counsellors and council of advisors. The members of the council were project officers appointed by Uthman Dan Fodio and all had a special title. They included;

The Sarkin Fada- head of palace workers; the waziri- the prime minister of the Emirates; the galadima-:the administrator of the capital city; the madawaki- the commander of the Army; the Magaji- Treasurer; Sarkin Dan Doka-Inspector of Police Force; Sarkin Ruwa- Minister of water resources or fishing; Sarkin pawa- Head of chairman of Butchers; Yari- Chief Superintendent of Prisons.

Emir was appointed by the emir to reside at the headquarters and Head the district on behalf of the Emir. Each district was further subdivided into villages, each village into wards for administrative purposes.

The Hakimi appointed village heads to assist him in collecting taxes for Emirates. They have no power to make laws but the enforce laws made by the Emir. They do settle minor cases, customary case of inheritance and divorce but were obliged to refer all serious cases to Alkali courts at the state level.

The judicial administration of Hausa Fulani is based on Islamic legal system called Sharia. They are established throughout the emirate and each was headed by a trained sharia court judge called the Alkali. The chief justice is called the Grand khadi.

The first Europeans in Nigeria were the Portuguese through Bini kingdom. The Atlantic slave trade became more important than the arrival of the Portuguese. Demand Force it for slaves, could be traced to the introduction of plantation system of agriculture in places like Brazil, Jamaica, on Haiti among others. The transatlantic slave trade was the unfortunate channel that puts first the British in contact with Nigeria the trade got to maturity in the 16th century. After three centuries of the shameful slave trade came the so-called period of legitimate Commerce. There was another Golden opportunity for Europeans to get more directly involved in the affairs of the African state. Europeans first introduced the gunboat politic. Is wrong

The struggle among the European powers for colonies led to the partitioning of Africa among the 19 century each of the European powers were given the opportunity to establish colonies where it vested interests. The scramble for Africa by these European powers led to the partitioning of Africa after the Berlin conference of 1884 to 1885. Britain colonise Nigeria Ghana and Gambia and Sierra leone in West Africa. Before the year 1900, all the different parts of Nigeria conquered by the British were still under the original administrations. 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 Omega mission was that of 1914. In January 1914 the British government amalgamated northern and southern Nigeria the principal reason for this is the same as the may 1906. the northern protectorate was not as economically buoyant as the colony of the protectors of southern Nigeria.

Indirect rule may be a system of Britain ruling her colonies through the local authorities. The British officers defined the framework of the policies to be adopted and left the implementation to the local personnel or rulers