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CHAPTER 2: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE NIGERIAN STATE.

Nigeria’s governmental and political historical background involves the pre-colonial period and the colonial period in Nigeria. While the pre-colonial era is the era before the colonialists to Nigeria, the colonial era is the era that colonial administration was established in Nigeria. Prior to the emergence of the Nigerian state, the pre-colonial Nigeria comprised of different kingdoms, empires, states and so on. There was the Hausa state, the Igbo segmentary societies in the east, Sokoto caliphate in the North, the oyo empire in the West.

The particular time that man started living in Nigeria is not known but archaeologists from parts of Nigeria have pointed out that man settled in Nigeria since the palacolithic period 500000-9000BC and they were also said to have taken part in the stone-age civilisation. This shows that the country has been inhabited for long. There were also scientific and technological developments in early Nigerian societies in places like Ife, Benin, Igbo ukwu among others.

There were three majority ethnic groups; the yoruba, Igbo and Hausa-fulani.

The yoruba’s are the largest ethnic group in Nigera and their origin can be traced to Oduduwa. Even though there are different storries that explain their history, Oduduwa is believed to be the first leader that led the yoruba’s to Ile-ife; which is known as their ancestral home. According to the history of the yoruba’s, yoruba was the centre of the world and the earth was covered with water. Then God sent Obatala and sixteen lesser gods to create the earth. They were also given some items; lump of earth, cokerel, piece of iron and so on. On their way to earth, Obatala which was the leader got drunk with palm wine, Oduduwa then seized the mantle of leadership from him and led the party to the world and they landed at Oke oramfe, Ile-ife. The earth was formed with the materials given to them and Oduduwa became the ruler. The political structures of the yoruba kingdoms were similar in nature. The king of each town was called the Oba. The oba was the spiritual and political head of the kingdom. The oba was a powerful ruler but had limitations to his power which was designed to stop tyranny on the part of the king. The limitations were called eewo. The oba had other rulers of lesser rank which were incharge of subordinate towns. The pattern of administration was hierchical. The oyo empire was a typical example of pre-colonial administration in the yoruba land. The king was knwn as the Alaafin of oyo. The Alaafi had authocratic tendencies but his powers were limited by the oyomesi; a council of seven members headed by Bashorun who was the prime minister. The members of oyomesi were alsom king makers and they had poer to remove the king. There was also the ogboni cult which could be a mediator in a conflict between the oyomesi and alaafin, It could also counter the power of the oyomesi. The army was another am of government which was led by the Are-ona-kakanfo. The Are-ona-kakanfo was in charge of stability of the empire, keeping dissident territories in check and so on.

The Igbo people were known for their acephalous way of life, because there was no centralised state. They had 5 different sub-cultures; The Igbo of eastern-igeria, Igbo of North-eastern Nigeria, Igbo of south-eastern, Western Igbo and Northern Igbo. The most popular migration story in the origin of the Igbo’s points to Israel. This assumption is based on the so-called similarities between the Igbo cultures and the ancient Hebrew. The Nri version of origin of Igbo’s is the most authentic version. According to the Nri version the ancestor; Eri, descended from the sky and sailed down the River Anambra and arriveda at Aguleri where he met a group of autochonous people who had no memory of their own and settled with them. In the Igbo society, there was no highly centralised authority but authority was diffused into different groups. But there were some institutions like the family, council of elders, secret societies and age grade that were put in place to perform legislative, executive,administrative, military and judicial functions. The family was the smallest political unit and the head of each family was an “ofo” title holder. The age grade was organised on a vilage basis. The communities organised themselves through the age for work, war and government. The youth cleared paths and public places and served as the police, while the elders enforced elders’ decisions.

The Hausa land is located in Northern Nigeria. Before 1804, the hausa land consisted of fourteen and they were of two distinct groups. The first group consist of seven states called ‘Hausa bakwai’ which was the illegitimate hausa state. Oral tradition attributed the origin of Hausa states to a man named Bayajidda, an Arab prince who travelled from Baghdad to the Sahel. He killed a snake that oppressed the people of Daura and later married the queen. The sarki was known as the head of Hausa state. Sarkin kasar was the ruler of the land. He combined both political and spiritual functions. He was also the chief executive and judge.

Between the 14th and 15th centuries the socio-political organisation took another shape. Islam was adopted, sharia law started taking shape. Islam was introduced to Hausa land and was accepted in the 15th century as religion of the ruling class. The jihad of Uthman Dan Fodio of 1804 also strengthened religion in hausaland.

The Emir was an absolute monarch in his emirate. He controlled political, administrative, spiritual, economic activities with the emirates. There were other title holders that performed specific functions within the emirate e.g sarkin fada, waziri, yari, sarkin puwa, galadima, madawaki and so on. The judicial administration was based on the islamic legal system called sharia. The sharia courts were established and headed by a trained sharia court judge called Alkali and chief justice of the court was called Grand Khadi.

The British have been credited with the creation of Nigeria but were not the first europeans to land in Nigeria. The portugese were the first europeans to arrive in Nigeria at the Bini kingdom. The trans-Atlantic slave trade was the first contact of Nigeria with the British. After three centuries of the slave trade, there was anther opportunity for the europeans to get more directly involved with the African states. They introduce ‘’gun-boat” politics after which the British annexed Nigeria in 1861. The struggle among European powers for colonies led to the partitioning of Africa in the 19th century. In 1900 Nigeria was under the british colony,In 1906 there was the first amalgamation, with the second amalgamation taking place in 1914 under the rule of Sir Fredrick Luggard. Britain governed Nigeria by means of the indirect rule whivh is a system of Britain ruling her colonies through local traditional rulers.