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**CHAPTER 2**

The historical background of Nigerian government and politics involves the pre-colonial period and the colonial period in Nigeria. The Nigerian state is a colonial creation. It is a product of a historical arrangement that arose out of European adventure with its eventual culmination in the colonization of Africa.

The exact time man began to live in Nigeria is unknown but there are archeological 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 500,000-9000BC. The artefacts, mostly stone tools, found by the archeologists further confirmed that Nigerians also took part in the stone-age civilization.

The man who lived in Nigeria during those years worked hard to cope with his environment. The first and basic need was food so he began to hunt animals and gather fruits for this basic purpose. But soon he began to invent tools consisting of pebbles made into chopping and cutting tools. Archeologists called these tools the oldowan-tools because they were discovered in the Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania. Early man in Nigeria advanced from the early Stone Age, he began making axes. The early man again proceeded to make another type of tool, which is a heavy chopper. It was more efficient in cutting than existing tools. In summary the early man upgraded as he lived.

Information on the major landmarks in early Nigerian history was made possible through the excavation work done on places where man lived in Nigeria in the very remote past.

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. The Nok culture is believed to be a transitional civilization between the stone and iron age in Nigeria because of the presence of the combination of stone and objects.

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.

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 iron nails.

Igbo ukwu civilization: Some bronze objects and ornaments were accidentally discovered while digging a toilet pit at igbo ukwu in 1939.

Yoruba land: The Yorubas are one of the largest ethnic group in Nigeria and are united by language. The Yoruba people trace their origin to oduduwa who was the founder of the Yoruba kingdom. Ile-ife is regarded as the ancestral home of the Yoruba people. Oduduwa is believed to be the first leader that led the Yoruba people to Ile-ife and subsequently sent his sons and grandsons to found other Yoruba kingdoms. Oke oramfe is located in Ile-ife. It is believed to be the center from which the world was created. The political structure of the Yoruba kingdoms were similar in nature. The structure is as follows; the oba, the oyomesi, the ogboni, aare ona kankanfo. The government of the Oyo empire is a typical example of the pre-colonial administration in Yoruba land. The organs are: the alaafin administration, the ogboni cult’s administration, the army.

Igbo land: the igbo people are known for their segmentary or acephalous way of life. The igbo are grouped into five sub-cultures: the igbo of eastern Nigeria, the igbo of south-eastern Nigeria, the igbo of the north-eastern Nigeria, the western igbo and the northern igbo. In the igbo traditional society, there was no highly centralized authority but instead they had what could be called a diffusion of authority into different groups. They practiced direct democracy and/or decentralized system of government.

Hausa land: Hausa land is located in northern Nigeria, hausa land before 1804was made up of 14 states, and they were of 2 distinct groups. The first group consists of 7 states called ‘hausa bakwai’ and the second half was called ‘hausa banza’. The sarki was known as the head of any typical hausa state. He worked with a retinue of officials in a well-organised court. Islam was introduced to hausa land in the 14th century, and by the 15th crntury it was accepted as the religion of the ruling class. The emir’s cabinet included; sarkin fada, waziri, galadima, madawaki, magaji, sarkin dan doka, sarkin ruwa, sarkin pawa, yari.

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 to arrive in Nigeria but through the Bini kingdom. The Atlantic slave trade was the trade carried on across the Atlantic Ocean between the Europeans and Africans. The trans-Atlantic slave trade was the unfortunate channel that first put the British in contact with Nigeria. The struggle among the European powers for colonies led to the partitioning of Africa among them in the 19th century.

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. The second amalgamation was that of 1914, in January 1914, the British government amalgamated northern and southern Nigeria. The principle reason was the same as that of May 1906. Britain, therefore governed Nigeria by means of a system popularly referred to as ‘indirect rule’.