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AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE NIGERIA 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 colonialist to Nigeria while the colonial period refers to the era that the colonial administration was established in Nigeria.

The Nigerian state is a colonial creation. It is a product of historical arrangements that arose out of European adventure with its eventual culmination in the colonisation of Africa. Prior to the emergence of the Nigerian state, pre-colonial Nigeria comprises of different independent chiefdoms, state, kingdoms and empires. These include Borno Empire, the Hausa states and a few to mention. X

Early Man In Nigeria: The exact time when man began to live in Nigeria is unknown but there are archaeological evidences from different parts of Nigeria which pointed to the fact that man had settled in the region now known as Nigeria since the palaeolithic period 500,000-9000BC. Artifacts like stones found by the archaeologists also confirmed that Nigeria took part in the stone age civilization. The excavation of a stone age skeleton at Iwo Eleru near Akure in Ondo State has thrown more light on the earliest occupation of Nigeria. The skeleton was dated some 12,000 years ago and this suggests that the country has been long inhabited.

The Achievements of Early Man: Man who lived in Nigeria those years worked hard to cope with his environment. He was in need of food. He started with hunting and gathering of foods. Then later invented food that will make living easier. The archaeologists called those tools Oldowan- type tools because this type of tools were first made by archaeologists in Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania. Early Man made axes for chopping which were pointed and oval in shape. Small stone tools used for hunting were located in How, Plateau state and Iwo Eleru in Ondo State. Early man also made heavy choppers. It can be found in Sokoto River.

The Scientific and Technological Development of Early Nigerian Societies:

Major Landmark in Early Nigeria History: These are places where man lived in Nigeria in the remote past. Some of these places include Nok, Igbo, Ukwu, Benin and others. They are referred to as the centres of ancient civilisation.

Nok Culture/Civilization: the discovery of terracotta (burnt clay) head of a monkey by tin miners in Nok in 1963 prompted more discoveries in other places like Wamba.

Benin Civilization: Benin was known for its art-work. The craftsmen of Benin carved in wood and wrought and cast objects in bronze and brass.

Ife Civilization: Ife is important because of its terracotta and bronze heads. Objects like stools and figures were carved from granite and decorated with iron nails.

Igbo Ukwu Civilization: bronze objects and ornaments were accidentally discovered while digging a toilet pit at Igbo Ukwu in 1939.

Traditional Political Institution In Pre-colonial Nigeria

Historical Background Of Pre-colonial Political System In Yoruba Land.

Yorubas are one of the largest ethnic group in Nigeria and are United by the language. The Yoruba origin is traced to Oduduwa who is the founder of Yoruba kingdom, Ile-Ife being the ancestral home of the Yoruba people. According to Johnson in his book (History of Yoruba) in 1950, he traced Yoruba vto the east. East being Mecca and Mecca being the East. It is believed that Oduduwa is the first leader that lead Yoruba to Ile-Ife and subsequently sent his sons and grandsons to find the Yoruba kingdom.

Political Structure of the Pre-colonial Yoruba Land

Each Yoruba kingdom had a capital town, village and farmlands. Each town has a king called Oba who resides in a palace called Aafin. His equipment included a beaded crown (Ade), a slippers (Bata), horsetail (Irukere) and Sceptre (Ase) . The oba is the both spiritual and political head of the kingdom. The Oba had 'eewo' which were his limitations. There were lesser rulers who wore crown made from white beads. The Baales and Oloja were the 3rd and 4th rankers.

The Oyo Empire: the first organ of government in the oyo empire was the king Alaafin of Oyo.

(I)The Alaafin Administration: Oyo empire was very unique and exceptional in its system of government. In the 16th century, Oyo was one of the rare empires that had in-built checks and balances and this contributed to it's stability for centuries.

(II)The Ogboni Cult's Administration: it played a mediatory in any conflict between the Oyomesi and the Alaafin. It was a kind of counter power to the Oyomesi aswell .

(III)The Army: the army head was conferred with the coveted title of Ara-Ona-Kankafo. It is made up of infantry and cavalry. The army was created for performing important functions which included stability of the empire, expansion aswell as keeping dissident territories in check.

Historical Background of Pre-colonial Political System In Igbo Land

Igbo people are well known for their segmentary or acephalous way of life because from their ancient times they had no centralised states.

Igbo is grouped into 5 sub cultures

I.The Igbo Eastern Nigerian. II. The Igbo South Eastern Nigeria III. The Igbo North-Eastern Nigeria IV. The Western Igbo Nigeria V. The Northern Igbo.

Some Igbo scholars consider themselves vas off shoots of the lost tribes of the Hebrews who migrated southward. In Igbo traditional society, the practice direct democracy and or a decentralised system of government because there was a no tradi ruler. Each family was headed by an 'Ofo'. The family sees itself as having one common ancestors. Age grade was organised on a village basis. The association or age grade grew from childhood and took a common name to commemorate an event associated with time or birth. The Igbo believe in

reincarnation. The religious lives of the Igbos were surrounded by mysticisms and superstition.

Historical Background of Pre-colonial Political System In the Hausa Land.

Hausa land is located in Northern Nigeria. Hausa land, before 1840 was made up of fourteen states and they were of two distinct groups. The first group consists of seven states called "Hausa Bakwai" states. They are the legitimate states. The second group consists of the remaining seven states known as "Hausa Banza". They are the illegitimate states.

Political Structure of The Pre-colonial Hausa Land

The Sarki was known as the head of typical Hausa State. He worked a retinue of officials in a well organized court. Sarkin Karsa which means 'ruler of the land' was the full title given to any effective and efficient head of The Hausa State.

Emirates System of Government Among The Hausa People

Islam was introduced to Hausa land in the 14th century and was accepted in the 15th century. Village heads settled minor disputes in their village but more serious and criminal cases were referred to the Emir for final and adequate settlement.

Colonial Administration and Indirect Rule System In Nigeria Historical Background

The British who have often been credited with the creation of Nigeria were not the first European to land in Nigeria but the Portuguese through Benin Kingdom. The struggle among the European powers for colonies led to the partitioning of Africa among them in the 19th century. Each European Power given the opportunity to establish colonies where it had invested interest. Britain colonised Nigeria. As of 1898, the British government sought to establish and maintain a colonial state in Nigeria.

The Birth Of Nigeria As A Geo-political Entity

Before the year 1900, all parts of Nigeria conquered by the British were still under original administration. By 1900 the whole Nigeria was under the responsibility of the British Council office. The May 1906 amalgamation is known as the first amalgamation of the British in Nigeria. British government amalgamated Lagos colony and protectorate with the protectorate of southern Nigeria to form New Colony. The Second amalgamation was that of 1914. In January 1914, the British government amalgamated Northern and Southern Nigeria with the same reason as May 1906. The British offices defined the framework with the policies to be adopted and left the implementation to the local personnel or the natives.

