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GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

HISTORICAL ABALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION IN THE NIGERIAN STATE

Easy Nigeria is a colonial creation. It consisted of both the pre colonial period, which was the period or Era before the Colonial masters came into Nigeria and the Colonial masters(administration) was established in the country. Colonial Nigeria comprises of the European rule and formation of Nigeria while Pre colonial Nigeria consists of different independent chiefdoms, states, kingdoms and empires.

The Early man settled in Nigeria right from 500,000-9000 BC. Nigeria apart from that time, also made use of the Stone age civilization- the Early Stone Age(3,000,000-35,000 BC), the middle stone age (35,000-15,000 BC) and the late Stone Age(15000-500 BC).

The Early man who lived in Nigeria during these years worked very hard to cater for themselves and cope with their environment. He fed through animals he hunted and fruits he gathered. Gradually, the Early man graduated from the use of stones to making metallic tools. They developed further from the Stone Age to the bronze and metal age. Sculptures of human heads and figures of the Nok village were also made during this age.

Now, some places in Nigeria had a lot of work done in those places. They are usually referred to as centers of ancient civilization(they include : Nok, Igbo Ukwu, Ife and Benin, among others). The origin of these places tells us about the specific and technological developments of the Early Nigerian societies.

The Nok culture: They brought about a Terracotta head of a monkey by tin miners in 1936. This culture mostly had their works dealing with Terracotta. The Nok Culture existed between the 5th and 2nd century BC, thus it was believed that the Nok culture was a transitional civilization between the Stone age and the Iron age in Nigeria because of the presence of stone and iron objects.

The Benin Civilization: Benin mostly made art works out of wood, ivory, bronze and brass. The FESTAC symbol in 1977 depicted the Ivory mask casted by the Benin people. It was said by Art historians that bronze casting was brought about by an Ife artist into Benin.

Ife Civilization: It is necessary because of its Terracotta and bronze heads. Objects like stones were carved on hard Stone while human and animal figures were carved from granite and decorated with iron nails.

Igbo Ukwu Civilization: The ancient site of Igbo Ukwu is situated in the modern day homelands of Igbo people of Southern Nigeria. Archeological finds were discovered at this site in 1939 when an Igbo farmer mistakenly found some objects while digging up a toilet pit at Igbo Ukwu. It was in 1959 that the archeologist, Thurstan Shaw excavated this site and discovered that it must have been part of a storehouse for ritual objects(Shaw 1977). Dated to the 9th or 10th century A.D. Igbo Ukwu represents one of the earliest examples of bronze casting in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The pre colonial Era consists of traditional political institutions in Nigeria which include the three major ethnic groups: The Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa-Fulani ethnic groups

The Yoruba: One of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria. Their political institutions included the Alaafin who was the ruler of the Yoruba people and kingdom. Other administrators include the Ogboni(the judicial aspect. Involves settlement of disputes and conflict and punishment of offenders) and the Oyomesi who checked on the powers of the Alaafin. The Army was also included in the administration of the Yoruba kingdom.

The Igbo: They usually operated a government without kings. The Igbo are grouped into five subcultures. The Igbo of Eastern Nigeria, the Igbo of South Eastern Nigeria, the Igbo of North Eastern Nigeria, the Western Igbo and the Northern Igbo. The Igbo people are one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa

They are mostly craftsmen, farmers and traders.

In the political system of Igbo, there were no traditional rulers in the form of kings. The largest political unit was the village. Here, powers were not centralized. The various institutions that exercised governmental powers included family heads, the Council of elders or the ofo title holders, the age-grades, the ozo title holders as well as the lineage heads.

The Hausa: Prior to the Jihad or the Holy war of 1804, the territory now known as the Northern sector of Nigeria was ruled by the Hausa under fourteen independent kingdoms and they were of two distinct groups namely “the Hausa Bakwai states” and the “Hausa Banza states”. The structure of the system includes the Emirate headed by an Emir, who made laws and enforced them with the aim of maintaining peace and order in the Emirate. Other subdivisions of the Emirates follows suite :the Supreme headquarters, direct administration, village heads, legislative function, executive function and the Centralized administration.

There was a colonial administration in Nigeria. Indirect rule was applied in this case. It involved the administration used by the British Colonial government to govern people through the use of traditional rulers and traditional political institutions. The indirect rule was brought into Nigeria by Lord Frederick Lugard who was known to be the father of indirect rule in Nigeria.

Nigeria was amalgamated first in May 1906, by the British where the Lagos Colony and protectorate with the protectorate of Southern Nigeria were to form the new Colony and protectorate of Southern Nigeria. Then, the second amalgamation in Nigeria was that of 1914, where the British government amalgamated Northern and Southern Nigeria.