NAME: ZOAKA SARAPHINA DAUDA.

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CHAPTER 2

Nigeria is a result of colonial creation. That is why even the description of Africa’s is divided into the pre-colonial and colonial period in Nigeria. The pre-colonial Nigeria was a characterized by independent chiefdoms, states, kingdoms and empires. However, man was said to settle in Nigeria since the Paleolithic period 500,000 – 35,000BC due to the archaeologist findings and those archaeological findings confirmed that Nigeria took place in the stone age civilization.

In other to live, man had to cope with his environment and that lead to various achievements by man. Firstly, man had to eat in other to live that is why he invented chopping tools and cutting tools that he could use while chopping down fruits and tools to enable him hunt animals. The tools are referred to as the Oldowan-type tools after being discovered by archaeologist. Asides that, man invented another tool known as the heavy chopper, called the Sagoan and it became more efficient than the existing tools.

Centers of Ancient civilization are those places where man was traced to have lived and, those centers civilization contributed to the shaping of Nigeria and they include; Nok civilization, Benin civilization, Ife civilization and Igbo Ukwu civilization. The Nok civilization, is known for the discovery of terracotta which is burnt clay in form of a monkey’s head in 1936. This led to other discoveries. The nok civilization is believed to be a transitional civilization between the stone age and iron age. Nok culture existed between the 5th and 2nd century BC. The Benin civilization was important for its art work because the craftsmen carved in wood and ivory and the also casted things in bronze and brass. The ife civilization is known for its terracotta and bronze heads. Carved stools and figures on hard stone were called Quartz, while human and animals’ figures were carved from granites and they were decorated with iron nails. The Igbo Ukwu had some bronze objects and ornaments that were discovered while a toilet pit was dug at Igbo Ukwu in 1939.

There are three major ethnic groups in Nigeria and there are the Hausa- Fulani, the Yorubas and the Igbos. The Yorubas trace their origin to Oduduwa, who is the founder of the Yoruba kingdom even though another version believes the Yorubas migrated from the East. The Yorubas regard Ile Ife as their home and they also trace the worlds creation from Ile Ife. The political structure of the Yoruba kingdoms was similar. Each kingdom had an Oba who was the king, group of rulers called Baale and Oloja and, the town was the basic of political unit: divided into smaller wards under heads known as ijoye. The administration pattern is hierarchical. Baale (compound heads) the lowest level to ward heads who were in charge of the ward on behalf of the kind and at the highest level is the civil chiefs headed by the king and those chiefs had different title in various Yoruba towns. An example of a typical pre-colonial administration is in Yoruba land. The Oyo empire had a unique system of government. The Oyo empire had unique features like the principles if checks and balances which contributed to its stability. The Oyo empire was headed by the Alaafin who was also regarded as the lord of many lands. He was assisted by other authorities. The principle of checks and balances was imposed in the king as it is carried out by the Oyomes, a council of seven headed by the Bashourun. The Oyo Messi had the right to remove the Alaafin if the Alaafin abuses his power and the Alaafin is expected to commit suicide if caught abusing his power. Apart from the Oyo Messi, the Ogboni cult administration serves as another arm of government. It was a strong cult group that had vital position in the society. The army was another arm of government headed by the Are-Ona-Kankafo. The military were in charge of maintaining stability. In case of any defeat during a war the Are-Ona-Kankafo is expected to kill himself.

The Igbos are known for their segmentary way of life. The Igbos had no centralized states from the ancient times and the later operated government without kings. The Igbos are grouped into five sub-cultures and there are the Igbo of eastern Nigeria, south-eastern Nigeria, north-eastern Nigeria, western Igbo and Northern Igbo. The Igbos points their origin to Israel and there is an assumption that sates that there are similarities between the cultures of Igbo and ancient Hebrew. The Igbo society has always said to be acephalous. The Nri version is known as the most authentic version states that the ancestors of the Igbos descended from the sky and sailed down the river of Anambra. However, the political system of the Igbos has no central authority instead the power was distributed into different groups. The practiced a decentralized system of government where social-political institutions that performed legislative, executive, military, administrative and judicial functions. The family was smallest political unit in the Igbo society. The senior who is the Okpara, hell over the ozo title and presided over the council of elders meeting. Age grades was organized on a village basis. The communities organized themselves through age grades for work, war and government. Youths kept the community clean and they also serve as police. The elders enforced decisions, fought on the battlefield and they collected fines from offenders. Seniority was of great social importance. The Oha-na-eze was a general assembly in the Igbo community. Oha-na-eze’s meetings are held at village squares and any decision taken there is final. In the society, the rich are highly respected. The secret societies played an intermediary between the ancestors and the living. Anyways, Igbos believe in reincarnation and their religious lives were surrounded by superstition and mysticism. The Hausas are located in the northern Nigeria. The Hausas trace the origin from Bayajidda. Bayajidda is an Arab prince who travelled to Sahel from Baghdad. He killed a snake that prevented the villagers of daura from fetching water and as a reward the queen of Daura married him. Bayajidda had seven legitimate sons with the queen of daura and there are referred to as the Hausa Bakwai and seven illegitimate sons and there were referred to as Banza Bakwai. The political structure of the Hausas was headed by the “Sarki”. Sarkin Kasar meaning ‘ruler of the land’, was an official name to any ruler of the Hausa state. After the adoption of Islam, hausa states took another shape. This led to the establishments of new offices. Asides the establishment of offices, Islam was accepted as the religion of the ruling class. In 1804, Uthman Dan Fodio embarked on a Jihad. The jihad led to the conquest of old hausa states and establishments of caliphate and Fulani emirates in northern Nigeria and the hausa ruler was replaced with the emir. Impacts of the jihad includes; establishment of centralized political system, basic political organization was improved on, emirs were referred to as head of government, division of hausa kingdoms into two confederations, the Emir became the absolute monarch and the administration was carried out due to the provisions of the sharia laws. Important title holders in the emir’s cabinet are Sarkin Fada, Waziri, Galadima, Madawaki, Magaji, Sarakin Dan Doka, Sarkin Ruwa, Sarkin Pawa and Yari. Another official is the Hakimi who functioned on behalf of emirs at the headquarters or districts. However, the judicial administration was based on sharia.

Despite the British contributions to the creation of Nigeria, there were still not the first Europeans to land in Nigeria. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive Nigeria through Bini kingdom. In the 15th century, the Atlantic Slave Trade became more important with the arrival of the Portuguese. African slaves were needed to serve on plantations and the also served as gifts to colonial masters. Unfortunately, the trans-Atlantic slave trade was the first contact Africa had with the British. For closely three centuries Nigeria’s coastal relationships with the British was characterized by the trans- Atlantic slave trade. In the 19th century, slave trade was abolished and was replaced with legitimate trade. With European involvement in Africa, struggle for colonies started between the Europeans otherwise known as the partitioning of Africa. By 1900, different parts of Nigeria were conquered by the British. And since then the British controlled the Nigerian government. The amalgamated Nigeria twice, in 1906 and in 1914. The reason for the amalgamation was because the wanted the wealth of the south to benefit the north.