**NAME:** USMAN MAIMUNAT MARYAM

**MATRIC NO.:** 19/law01/262

**COURSE:** Government and Political Institutions

**COURSE CODE:** GST 203

**CHAPTER 2**

The historical background of Nigerian government and politics includes the precolonial period and the colonial period in Nigeria. The precolonial period is the period before the coming of the colonialists to Nigeria while the colonial period refers to the era that the colonial administration was established in the country. The precolonial period consists of different independent chiefdoms, states, kingdoms and empires. These among others, include the Borno Empire, the Hausa states and the Sokoto Caliphate in the North; The Igbo segmentary societies in the East, Benin Kingdom and Oyo empire in the West and several other identities in the Benue valley. This ethnic grouping significantly differs in their historical, social and cultural make-ups. Nigeria stretches roughly 700miles from west to east and 650miles from south to north covering an area between 3-degree and 15-degree E longitude and between 4-degree and 14-degree N latitude.

The exact time when man began to live in Nigeria is unknown but they are archaeological evidences from different parts of Nigeria. The evacuation of a stone age skeleton at Iwo Eleru near Akure in Ondo State has shown more light to the earliest occupation of Nigeria.

Information on the major land marks in early Nigerian history was made possible through the excavation work done on places where man lived in Nigeria in the very remote past. These places are referred to the country’s centres of ancient civilisation.

The discovery of terracotta monkey heads was made by tin miners at Nok in 1936. Through carbon dating, it was discovered that Nok culture as in existence between 2nd and 5th century BC. Benin was also well known for its artwork as its smiths and artistes carved wood and ivory and cast objects in brass and bronze. Ife was important because of terracotta and bronze heads and stools and figures carved from quartz while human figures were carved from granite decorated with iron nails. The discovery of Igbo Ukwu art was accidental while digging a toilet pit at Igbo Ukwu in 1939. It consequently led to an excavation by Thurstan Shaw at three different sites. Bronze sculptures and decayed skeletons of a king and three slaves were excavated.

There are many creation stories of the Yoruba kingdom. They are one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria who are united by language. They trace their origin to Oduduwa an Ile-Ife is regarded as their ancestral home. According to the legend of the Oke Oramfe version of the Yoruba creation, there was a period when the world was covered by water and Olodumare sent Obatala and 16 immortals, with 5 pieces of iron, a lump of earth and a cockerel, to the world. On their way Obatala got drunk and Oduduwa seized the symbol of authority and led the immortals to the world. On getting there he fulfilled Olodumare’s instructions. Consequently, the world was formed and it was from Ile-Ife that he extended authority to other towns and villages. The Oyo empire is a good example of one of those towns and the precolonial political structure of the Yoruba land. The Alaafin was the king, the Oyomesi were the king makers, the Bashorun was the prime ministers, the Ogboni cult was the Alaafin’s cabinet, the army was headed by the Are-Ona-Kankafo and the provisional governors were called the Baales

The Igbos are located at the eastern region of Nigeria. The society is known to be acephalous. According to the Nri version of their creation, their ancestor, Eri, descended from the sky and sailed down the River Anambra to Aguleri. When he arrived at Aguleri, he met some autochthonous groups of people who had no living memory of their own and settled with them. As the population grew, some groups migrated to other parts of the Igboland and established their own settlements.

There was no centralised authority in the Igbo land. The family was the smallest political unit headed by an “Ofo” title holder. Amongst all Ofo title holders, the eldest is known as the Okpara. The Okpara presides over the council of elders’ meetings. Age grade is an association of people who were born around the same period. They also form a political organization. As well as the oha-na-eze which formed a general assembly of male adults who meet for legislative functions. Then there were secret societies like Arochukwu, ubinuknabi, diviners’ masquerades etc.

The Hausa land is located at the northern part of Nigeria. It was made up of 14 states before 1804, 7 legitimate sates called Hausa Bakwai (Daura, Biram< Ziram, Katsina, Kano, Rano and Gobir) and 7 illegitimates states called Hausa Banza (Nupe, Gwari, Yauri. Bauchi, Zamfara, Kebbi, Yorubawa)

In the Hausa state, the Sarkin Sakar was known as the ruler of the land. It was a combination of the political and religious functions. The emirate system had a more organised system of leadership.

Emir- ruler

Sarkin Fada- speaker of the Emir and organiser of the palace workers

Waziri- prime minister

Galadima- administrator of the capital city

Madawaki- commander and head of the army

Magaji- treasurer

Sarkin Dan Doka- inspector general of police

Sarkin Ruwa- minister in charge of water and fishing

Sarkin Pawa- head of chairman of butcher’s abattoir

Yari- superintendent of the prisons

The British who are credited with creation of Nigerian weren’t the first Europeans to land there, the first were actually the Portuguese through the Bini kingdom in 1441, a Portuguese voyager Gonzales presented 10 African slaves to prince henry the Navigator as gifts. By 1460 up to 800 had been exported from West Africa. The Atlantic trade was the first contact between Nigeria and Britain.

It was through this trade that subsequent relations were made with Nigeria and it became a British colony. The first amalgamation was that of the Lagos colony and the southern protectorate in 1906 while the second was in 1914. This was the amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates by lord Fredrick Lugard. The name Nigeria was given by his wife, Flora Shaw. Britain therefor governed by a popular means known as indirect rule. It was system of most colonial states used to rule their colonies through local traditional rulers. The British officers defend the framework of the policies to be adopted and left the implementation to the local personnel or the rulers.