**NAME:** BIOKORO ELOHOR BLESSING  
**MATRIC. NUMBER:** 19/LAW01/050  
**COLLEGE:** COLLEGE OF LAW  
**DEPT:** LAW  
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**CHAPTER 2: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE NIGERIAN STATE.**

The historical background of Nigerian government and politics involves the pre-colonial period, which was the era before the coming of the colonialists to Nigeria, and the colonial period, which refers to the era when colonial administration was established in Nigeria.

Nigeria is a colonial creation and a product of the historical arrangement that arose out of European adventure with its eventual culmination in the colonization of Africa. Pre-colonial Nigeria comprised of ethnic groups that significantly differ in their historical, social, and cultural make-ups. Evidence of when man began to live in Nigeria can be dated back to the archaeological findings from different parts of Nigeria since the Palaeolithic period (500,000-900BC). The artifacts, mostly stone tools, suggest that Nigeria took part in the Stone Age.

Early man had to cope with his environment and so he needed food. He gathered fruits and hunted animals. Soon, he began to make chopping and cutting tools from pebbles. He also made axes and similar tools were found in St. Acheul in Northern Nigeria. One of the most active periods of technological efforts in Nigeria was during the period around 500BC-200AD. People who lived in Nigeria during this period made sculptures. The site in which the figures were found was the village of Nok. Forms of ground stone axes and smaller stone tools, iron axes and tools, were also found on the sites. Similar findings have bee seen in Ile-Ife, Jebba, Esie, Igbo-Ukwu, and Benin. These places were referred to as centers of ancient civilization.

Nok culture is characterized by terracotta sculptures. It is believed to be a transitional change between the Stone Age and the Iron Age in Nigeria because of the combination of stone and iron objects. Benin craftsmen carved in ivory and wood and cast objects in bronze and brass. Ife is important because of its terracotta and bronze heads. Stools and figures were carved on hard stone called quartz and animal and human figure heads were carved from granite. Igbo-Ukwu bronze objects and ornaments were accidentally discovered while digging a pit in 1939.

The Yorubas are one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. Their ancestral home is Ile-Ife. They trace their origin to Oduduwa. He is regarded as the leader that led the Yoruba people to their ancestral home. Yoruba kingdoms consisted a capital town, subordinate towns, villages and farmlands. Each town has a king called the Oba, who was regarded as the spiritual and political leader. He was recognized by a beaded crown (Ade), a slippers(Bata), horse tail (Irukere), and a sceptre (Ase). His powers and actions were limited by “Eewo" to prevent tyranny and despotism. There were lesser rulers who wore crowns made of white beads and were in charge of the subordinate towns. The Baales were third rank rulers that were in charge of the villages. The Olojas were fourth rank rulers and were in charge of farmlands. The Ijoyes headed the wards. Under these wards were compounds headed by Baale. All these jointly administered the Yorubaland along with the Oba.

The Oyo empire had a very organized system of government which also made provisions for checks and balances. The Alaafin was the head of the empire. He was the fountain of authority and regarded as the companion of the gods. His powers were limited and regulated by a council of seven called the Oyomesi, headed by Bashorun who acted as the Prime Minister. They were also king makers. The Ogboni cult played a mediatory role in any conflict between the Oyomesi and the Alaafin. The army was led by Aare-Ona-Kakanfo.

8 The Igno people had no form of centralized government and thus were regarded as acephalous in nature. The Igbo people trace their origin to Nri. It is believed they have been in their place of residence since the beginning of time and hence the Igboland is regarded as their ancestral home. They had what could be called a diffusion of authority as they had no centralized authority. The family was the smallest political unit and was head by am Ofo title holder. Among the Pfo title holders, the most senior to all of them was known as the Okpara who had the Ozo title. The communities organized themselves through age grade for work, war and government. It enforced discipline and guarded public morality.

Oha-na-eze was a form of general assembly which all male adults attended and performed legislative functions. Decisions made were final. The elders formed the core of village administration. Each age group had it’s own special rights, duties, obligations and responsibilities in matters affecting the village. The secret societies consisted of masquerades of divines such as Ubinuknabi at Arochukwu and so on. They acted as intermediaries between the ancestors and the living. The official religion of the Igbos in the pre-colonial period was traditional religion. They had great respect for the deities. Profaning of deities was a serious offence among the Igbos.

The Hausas trace their ancestral origin to Bayajidda. Hausa was made up of 14 states and they were of two distinct groups. The Hausa Bakwai were the legitimate states and they comprised of Daura, Biram, Katsina, Kano, Rano, Zaria and Gobir. The Hausa Banza which were the illegitimate states comprised of Nupe, Gwari, Yauri, Bauchi, Zamfara, Kebbi and Yoruba. The Sarki was the head of the Hausa state. Sarkin Kasar was the title given to any effective and efficient Head of State and it meant ruler of the land. He was the Chief Executive and Judge of the State but was aided by a council of state. The introduction of Islam in Hausa land reshaped the socio-political organization of the Hausa states. It also influenced the judicial system in Hausa land.

After the 1804 Jihad, the old Hausa kingdom was overthrown and the Sokoto Caliphate and Fulani Emirates in Northern Nigeria. The Emir was the head of the Caliphate. He was an absolute monarch. He was assisted by the Sarkin Fada, Waziri, Galadima, Madawaki, Magaji, Sarkin dan Doka, Sarkin Ruwa, Sarkin Pawa, Yari, and Hakimi. All these officials helped in the administration of the emirate. The judicial administration of the Hausa-Fulani was based in the Sharia legal system. Sharia courts were established all through the Caliphate and were presided over by a trained Sharia Court Judge called Alkali. The chief justice of the Sharia court was the Grand Khadi.

The British colonialists came into Africa for economic purposes and for this reason they had to take charge of the administration of the country and its people. The struggle by European powers for Africa led to the partitioning of Africa among the colonial powers. This gave them the power to establish colonies where it had interests. As from 1898, the British government sought to establish and maintain colonial rule in Nigeria and to achieve this they had to remove any form of opposition to this goal.

By 1900, Nigeria was under the responsibility of the British Colonial Office. Lagos colony was amalgamated with the Southern Protectorate of Nigeria in 1906 and in 1914, the Northern and Southern Protectorates were amalgamated. This was because the Northern protectorate was not as economically buoyant as the Southern. To allow the surpluses which the Southern enjoyed, amalgamation was necessary. British governed Nigeria by a system known as Indirect Rule. This is a system of British ruling her colonies through the local traditional rulers. The framework of policies to be adopted was stated by the British officers and this was implemented by the local rulers.