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**Chapter 2: An Historical Analysis of the Evolution of the Nigeria State**

The Historical background of Nigeria 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 colonialists to Nigeria while the colonial period refers to the era that colonial administration was established in the country Nigeria.

The Nigerian state is a colonial creation. It is a product of a historical arrangement 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, kingdoms and empires. These among others include the Born Empire, the Hausa States, and the Sokoto Caliphate in the North; the Igbo segmentary societies in the East; Benin Kingdom and the Oyo Empire in the West.

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 Paleolithic period 500,000-9000BC. The artefacts, mostly stone tools ,found by archaeologists further confirmed that Nigerians also took part in the stone age civilisation. The Stone Age can be divided into several periods. These are: Early Stone Age 3,000,000-35,000; Middle Stone Age 35, 000- 15,000BC and Late Stone Age 15,000-500BC.

The man who lived in Nigeria during those years worked hard to cope with his environment. First, he needed food. For this purpose he began to hunt the animals and to gather fruits. But he soon began to invent tools consisting of pebbles made into chopping and cutting tools. Similar tools had been located earlier by archaeologists who worked outside Nigeria at a site in St Acheul in Northern Nigeria. There’s evidence of more advanced technology in various parts of Nigeria during the bronze and metal age. Indeed, one of the most active periods of technological efforts in Nigeria was during this period, around 500BC to 200AD. During this period there were many people who lived in Nigeria who made sculptures.

The major landmarks in early Nigerian history was made possible through the excavation work done on places where man lived in Nigeria in the remote past. Some of the places where man lived in Nigeria in the remote past included: Nok, Igbo Ukwu ,Ife and Benin among others. They are usually referred to as centres of ancient civilisation.

The discovery of a terracotta (burnt clay) head of a monkey by tin miners in Nok in 1936 prompted more discoveries in other places such as Wamna, Kastina-Ala and Jema. The Nok culture is believed to be a transitional civilisation between the Stone Age and the Iron Age in Nigeria because of the presence of a combination of stone and iron objects.The craftsmen of Benin carved in wood and ivory and cast objects in bronze and brass. Art historians claim that bronze casting was introduced into Benin by an Ife artist. They cast wooden doors and ivory masks , one of which was the ivory mask used as FESTAC symbol in 1977. Ife is important because of its terracotta and bronze heads. Most of the bronze and terracotta heads were said to be life-size decorated with facial marks and natural hair. Some of the bronze heads were said to be portraits of some of the rulers-Oooni. Some bronze objects and ornaments were accidentally discovered while digging a pit toilet at Igbo Ukwu in 1939. This eventually led to the excavation of three sites in the area by an archaeologist called Thurstan Shaw. The three sites included a burial chamber, a pit and a compound wall.

In this section the three majority ethnic groups of Yoruba , Igbo and Hausa-Fulani in Nigeria traditional political system of government shall be examined. The Yoruba people trace their origin to Oduduwa who was the founder of the Yoruba Kingdom. Ile-Ife is regarded as the ancestral home of the Yoruba people. Oduduwa is believed to be the first leader that led the Yoruba to Ile-Ife and subsequently sent his sons and grandsons to find other Yoruba Kingdoms. The political structures of the Yoruba Kingdoms were similar in nature. Each consisted of a capital town, subordinate town, villages, and farmlands. Each town has a king known as “Oba” who resides in the palace called ”Aafin”. The Oba enjoyed may privileges but certain limitations were placed on his powers. These limitations known as “eewo” were designed to curb the despotism and tyranny on the part of the King. If a King violates any “eewo” it could lead to his death. The town (ilu) was the basic political unit while the subordinate towns were the bedrock on which the administration of the whole Kingdom was based. The pattern of administration were hierarchical.

The Igbo people are best known for their segmentary or a cephalopod way of life. This is because from the ancient times, they had no centralised states. According to Nri version of origin, the ancestor of the Igbo, Eri, descended from the sky and sailed down the River Anambara. When he arrived at Aguleri, he met some autochthonous group of people who had no living memory of their own and settled with them. As their population increased, some groups migrated to other parts of Igboland to establish their own settlements. In the Igbo traditional society, there was no highly centralised authority but instead they had what could be called a diffusion of authority into different groups. The family was the smallest political unit in Igbo traditional society. Each family was headed by an ”Ofo” title holder. Age grade was organised on a village basis. The age grades were strongly organised among the northern and southern Igbo peoples. Ohaneze was a form of general assembly in traditional Igbo society. The elders formed the core of village administration. The official religion practiced in pre-colonial Igbo land was the traditional religion. The Igbo has great respect for the deities and the departed ancestors.

Hausa land , before 1804 was made up of fourteen states and they were of two distinct groups. Hausa land is located in Northern Nigeria. Oral tradition attributed the origin of the Hausa states to a man named Bayajidda , an Arab prince who travelled to the Sahel from Baghdad. The Hausa states may have founded by Berberine immigrants from north of the Sahara, or else by people l coming from East Africa . The Sarki was known as the head of any typical Hausa State. Sarkin Kasar, which means ruler of the land, was the full title given to any effective and efficient head of state. The Sarkin Kasar combined both political and religious /spiritual functions. Islam was introduced to Hausa land in the fourteenth century, and by the fifteenth century it was accepted as the religion of the ruling class. The Jihad of Uthman Dan Fodio of 1804 further strengthened and consolidated the religion in this area. There is the introduction of a new system of selecting and appointing rulers described as Emirates to rule the caliphate. The sultan supervised the administration of the emirate system. The Emir was an absolute monarch in his emirate. He controlled economic activities within his emirates. The judicial administration of Hausa-Fulani was based on the Islamic legal system called Sharia.

The Atlantic Slave Trade was the trade carried on across the Atlantic Ocean between the Europeans and Africans. It became more important in the 15th century with the arrival of the Portuguese. Demand for slaves could be traced to the introduction of plantation system of agriculture in places like Brazil, Jamaica, and Haiti among others. In 1441, a Portuguese voyager, Gonzalves presented 10 African slaves to Prince Henry the Navigator as gifts. Sources of slaves included condemned criminals, political prisoners, victims of kidnapping and relatives sold to redeem debts. The struggle among the European powers for colonies led to the partitioning of Africa among them in the 19th century. Each of the European powers was given the opportunity to establish colonies where it had vested interest. Britain colonised Nigeria, Ghana , the Gambia and Sierra Leone in West Africa. As from 1898, the British government sought to establish and maintain a colonial state in Nigeria .

Before the year 1900, all the different parts of Nigeria conquered by the British were still under their original administration. But by 1900, the whole Nigeria was under the responsibility of the British Colonial Office. The May 1906 amalgamation is known as the first ever amalgamation of British in Nigeria. The second amalgamation was that of 1914. In January 1914, the British government amalgamated Northern and Southern Nigeria. Sir Frederick Lugard ( later became Lord) is best known as the father of the “January 1914” amalgamation. Britain, therefore, governed Nigeria by means of a system popularly referred to as “Indirect Rule” . Indirect rule may be is a system of Britain ruling her colonies through local traditional rulers. The British officers defined the framework of the policies to be adopted and left the implementation to the local personnel or the rulers.