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AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE NIGERIA STATE

The Nigerian state is a colonial creation. The historical background of Nigerian 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 pre-colonial Nigeria comprises 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 the Oyo Empire in the west and several ethnic identities in the Benue valley.

When a 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 civilization. The stone age can be divided

into several periods, they are; early stone age 3,000,000 – 35,000BC; middle stone age, 35,000 – 15,000BC and late stone age, 15,000BC.

The man who lived in Nigeria during those years worked hard to cope with his environment. First, he needed food. For the purpose he began to hunt the animals and to gather fruits. He soon began to invent tools consisting of pebbles made into chopping and cutting tools. Archaeologists called the tools the Oldowan-type tools. This is because this type of tools was first identified by the archaeologists in the Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania. There is evidence of more advanced technology in various parts of Nigeria during the bronze and iron age. Indeed, one of the most active periods of technological efforts in Nigeria was during this period, around 500BC to 200AD.

Information on the major landmarks in early Nigerian history was made possible through the excavation work done on places where man lived in Nigeria in the very remote past. Some of the places where man lived in Nigeria in the very remote past include: Nok, Igbo Ukwu, Ife and Benin among others. They are usually referred to as centers of ancient civilization. The history of these ancient civilizations presents us with the scientific and technological developments of early Nigerian societies.

The Yorubas are one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria and are united by language. The Yoruba people traced their origin to Oduduwa who was the founder of the Yoruba kingdom. Ile-Ife is regarded as the ancestral home of the Yoruba people. According to Johnson, Yorubas originally came from the North-Eastern area of Africa. With them the east is Mecca and Mecca is the east. It is from Egypt, after several years of journey that the Yorubas finally settled in Ile-Ife in Nigeria. Oduduwa is believed to be the first leader that led the Yorubas to Ile-Ife and subsequently sent his sons and grandsons to found other Yoruba

kingdoms. The government of the old Oyo empire is a typical example of the pre-colonial administration in Yoruba land. The organs are; the Alaafin administration, the original cult's administration, the army...

The Igbo people are best known for their segmentary or acephalous way of life. This is because from the ancient times, they had no centralized states. One of the most popular versions of the migratory stories of origin of the Igbo people is the one that points to Israel. This assumption is based on the so-called similarities between the cultures of the Igbo and the ancient Hebrew. The Igbo society has always been known as acephalous. Moreover, there were very limited professional historians as at that periods. There were no equivalents of Oba and Alaafin or of palaces over most parts of Igbo land. In the Igbo traditional society, there was no highly centralized 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.

Hausa land is located in northern Nigeria. Hausa land, before 1804 was made up of fourteen states and they were of two distinct groups. The first group consists of seven states called "Hausa Bakwai" states that is, Hausa legitimate states. The second group consist of the remaining seven states. The second group consist of the remaining seven states and were known as Hausa "bakwai" states are Daura, Biram, Zaria, Katsina, Kano and others. 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.