**OKUNOYE, IBUKUNOLUWA OLUWABUSOLAMI**

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**SMS - INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND DIPLOMACY**

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**Chapter 2**

**A historical analysis of the evolution of the Nigerian State**

Nigeria stretches roughly 700 miles west to east and 650 miles north to south and is bordered at different corners by the bights of Benin and Biafra, Benin republic, Niger and Cameroun. The Nigerian state, a colonial creation, has a history that comprises a colonial and pre-colonial period, with pre colonial Nigeria consisting of autonomous chiefdoms, empires and kingdoms such as the Benin Kingdom and Sokoto Caliphate.

The exact time that the early man began to live in Nigeria is unknown, but archaeological evidence infers that from the Paleolithic period (500000-9000 BC) as well as the Stone Age (early, middle and late), man had settled in the region now known as Nigeria. In this period, man was able to use things in his environment to simplify his life with the invention of objects such as hand axes, stone tools and heavy choppers. These tools and the sculptures that man eventually cast, were later discovered through excavation work in sites such as the upper Sokoto River and St Acheul in Northern Nigeria, called centres off ancient civilsation. These centres serve as an insight into the technological and scientific developments of those early Nigerian societies, such as the Benin, Ife and Igbo-Ukwu civilizations important for their sculptures commonly done in Bronze. In 1936, a terracotta head of a monkey was discovered in Nok and this prompted more excavation and discovery in other sites such as Wamba and Katsina Ala. It was then concluded that the Nok culture is a transitional civilization between the Stone Age and Iron Age in Nigeria.

The Yoruba, one of the largest groups in Nigeria, trace their origin to Oduduwa, though different versions of their origin abound, as some believe they migrated from North East Africa and others say Olodumare sent them to the world. It is however commonly agreed that Ile-Ife is their ancestral home. In Yoruba land, the town “ilu” was the basic political unit and it was divided into smaller units called wards in order to facilitate administration. All around the kingdom, they had similar structures comprising a capital, sub-towns, ruled by “sese ofuns” and villages, ruled by “Baales” with farmlands ruled by “Olojas” . At the head of the capital’s administration, there was an Oba called “Aafin” who had power and privileges which were limited by “ewon” that prevented him from tyranny.

The Oyo Empire is a popular and great example of pre colonial administration in Yoruba land and was unique because of the in built checks and balances that contributed to continued stability. It was headed by the Alaafin , who was regarded as “Ekeji Orisa” or companion of the gods. He was assisted by the Oyomesi, a council of seven elders headed by the Basorun or Prime Minister and they served to regulate the Alafin’s power. The powerful Obion cult, cpmposed of prominent societal figures and Oyomesi members, played a mediatory role in conflicts between the Alaafin and Oyomesi. The army, comprising both infantry and calvary, was headed by the Are Ona Kakanfo or war leader and had the functions of imperial expansion and territorial control.

The Igbos are grouped into sub cultures; the Igbos of Eastern, south eastern and northeastern as well as the western and northern Igbos. Because of similarities existing between the Igbos and ancient Hebrews, a popular migration story claims they originated from Israel, though the Nri version of origin is regarded as the authentic version. The Igbos are best known for their acephalous way of life as there was instead, a diffusion of authority into different groups and the practice of direct democracy. Even though there was no highly centralized authority, institutions that performed legislative, executive, judiciary and administrative functions existed.

The family was the smallest political unit and was headed by the “Ofo” title holders. In a meeting of “ofo” holders, the “okpara” who was the most senior, presided over the discussion of issues affecting the peoples’ lives. The age grade, an institution comprising people of the same age, also organized for war, work and administrative purposes. The Ohana-eze was a general assembly held in the open village square where adult males met to perform legislative functions. The secret societies such as “Amadisha” of Ozuzu acted as intermediaries between the living and the ancestors as the religious lives of the Igbos was characterized with superstition.

Located in Northern Nigeria, Hausa land prior to the Jihad of 1804 was made up of 14 states; 7 “bakwai” or legitimate and 7 “banza” or illegitimate states. Oral tradition credits their origin to either Berber immigrants from the North of the Sahara or Bayajidda of Baghdad who killed a snake in Dura, married their queen and had sons who became the states of Hausa land.

Prior to the 14th and 15th century, Sarki kasar was the head of state or ruler ofa all and in serving political and religious functions, he was assisited by numerous officials in his court. After the adoption of Islam and the Jihad of dan Fodio, the Hausa ruler was replaced with a Fulani Emir and a centralized system of government was introduced. The kingdom, headed by a Sultan, was then divided into two, with the Sultan arbitrating in disputes and appointing emirs. The emir was an absolute monarch who had political, administrative and spiritual functions. His cabinet members included the Waziri or Prime minister, the magaji or treasurer, the galadima or minister of the capital, waziri or prime minister and hakimi or district heads. Sharia courts headed by Alkali (judges) were used to administer justice.

The Portuguese were the first to arrive Nigeria through the Bini kingdom in the 15th century when they acquired slaves for the Trans Atlantic slave trade, which was what put Britain in contact with Nigeria. After, slave trade, the period of legitimate commerce enabled the British to involve themselves more in African affairs and introduce the gun boat “policy” which then led to their annexation of Lagos in 1861. This was soon followed by the occupation of Nigerian territory in 19th century in which they sought to remove all opposition to the colonial rule and consolidate Britain’s authority.

In May 1906, the British amalgamated the colony of Lagos with the protectorate of Southern Nigeria and in January 1914, the protectorates of both Northern and Southern Nigeria were amalgamated as well. These joinings were done with economic objectives in mind and the Nigerian people were not consulted. When they had successfully occupied Nigeria, the British began to use the system of Indirect Rule (rule through local traditional rulers) to administer their colonies.