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AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE NIGERIAN STATE

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 of Nigeria.

The Nigerian state is a colonial creation. It is a product of a historical arrangement that arise out of European adventure with it's eventual culmination in the colonisation of Africa. Before colonisation, what is now called Nigeria was made up of chiefdoms, kingdoms and empires. So we had the Botno 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 Venue valley. These ethnic groupings significantly different their historical, social and cultural makeups. The country is borded to the South by the Bight of Benin and Biafra, on the west, Nigeria is borded by Benin, on the north by Niger and on the East by Cameron.

Early man in Nigeria

The exact time when man began to live in Nigeria is unknown but there are archaeological evidences from different part of Nigeria which pointed to the fact that man had settled in the region Nigeria since the palaeolithic period 500,000 - 9000 BC. The artifacts mostly stone tools, found by archaeologists confirm that Nigerians also took part in the stone age civilization

The achievements of Early man

1. He needed food, so he began to hunt animals and gather fruit.

2. Invention of tools consisting of pebbles made into cutting and cutting tools, they are called Oldowan - type tools and axes

3. Sculpture making, Terracotta

Excavation has also revealed where men first settled in Nigeria.

Places first Settled in Nigeria

Some of the places where man lived in Nigeria included Nok, Igbo Ukwu, Ife and Benin. They are called Centres of Ancient Civilization.

Traditional Political Institution in Pre- colonial Nigeria

Three majority ethnic group of Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa - Fulani in traditional Political system of government will be examined.

Historical background of pre- colonial system in Yoruba land

- The Yorubas trace their origin to Oduduwa.

- Ile- Ife is regarded as the ancestral home of the Yorubas.

Stories about origin of the Yoruba people are diverse

1. There is a story of their migration from East. This is the belief that the Yoruba people migrated from the North- East so from Mecca, through Egypt leading to a final settlement in Ile - Ife.

2. The Oke Oramfe version … that the Earth was full of water and God, Olodumare, sent servents who were given some objects with which the world was created.

Political Structure of the Yoruba

The political structures of the Yoruba kingdoms were similar in nature. Each consisted of a capital town, subordinate towns, villages and farmlands. Each town has a king known as Oba who resides in the palace called Aafin. His paraphernalia of office included a beaded crown ( Ade), a slippers ( bata), horsetail ( irukere) and sceptre ( Ase). The Oba is both the spiritual and political head of the kingdom..

Historical background of pre-colonial political system in Igbo land

The Igbo people are best known for their segmentary or acephalous way of life because they had no centralized states. The Igbo are grouped into 5 sub cultures:The Igbo of Eastern Nigeria,The Igbo of South - Eastern Nigeria, The Igbo of North - Eastern Nigeria,The Western Igbo,The Northern Igbo.

Origin of the Igbo

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. Some Igbo scholars consider themselves as off- shoots of the lost tribes of the Hebrews who migrated South ward.

The Nri version as the only authentic version of origin in existence in the oral tradition of the Igbo. The ancestor of Igbo, Eri descended from the sky and sailed down the River Anambra, 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 their own and settled with them. As their population increased, some groups migrated to other parts of Igbo land to establish their own settlements.

Political stucture of the Igbo people

There is no highly centralized authority. What they have is a diffusion of authority into diverse groups. Although, there is no highly centralized authority, some sociopolitical institutions existed in each village to perform legislative, executive,administrative, military and judicial functions, such institutions included the family, council of elders, age grades and secret societies.

The Hausa People

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 consist of seven states called Hausa Bakwai states that is legitimate states. The second group consist of the remaining Sven states and we're known as Hausa Banza states that is Hausa illegitimate states. The Hausa Bakwai states are Daura, Biram, Zaria, Katsina, Kano, Rani and Gobir while the Hausa Banza states are Nupe, Gwari, Yauri, Bauchi, Zamfara and Kebbi

Origin of Hausa People

Oral tradition attributed the origin of the Hausa states to a man named Bayajidda an Arab prince who travelled to the Sahel from Baghdad. He killed a monstrous snake that oppressed the people of Daura and he married the queen. The queen has 6 sons already and she produced another son with Bayajidda, and each of these sons ruled one of the seven Hausa city - states, becoming the first kings. The combined kingdoms of Hausa land were sometimes called the Daura.

Political Stucture

The sarki known as the head of any typical Hausa state. He worked with a relative of officials in a well - organised court. Darlin kasrar, which means ruler of the land, was the full title given to any effective and efficient head of Hausa State. The Sarkin Kasar combined both political and religious/ spiritual functions. It is worthy of note that between 14 the and 15 the centuries, the socio- political organization of Hausa States took another shape. For instance, Islam was adopted and this gave birth to many new political institutions such offices of the galadima, madawaki, magayi, Dogari, Yari Sarki and Sarki Yau.

Islam was introduced to Hausa land in the fourteenth centuary and by the fifteenth century it was accepted as the religion of the ruling class. The jihad of uthman Dan Fodio of 1804 furthered strenghtned and consolidated the religion in this area.

Colonial Administration of Nigeria

The British who have often been credited with the creation of Nigeria were not the first Europeans to land in Nigeria. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive Nigeria through Benin kingdom. This, the trans - Atlantic slave trade was the unfortunate channel that first put the British in contact with the Nigeria. The transatlantic slave trade was abolished in the 19th centuary.

The struggle among the European powers for colonies led to the partition of Africa among them in the 19th century. Each of the European powers was given the opportunity to establish colonies where it vested interest. The scramble for Africa, by these European powers led to the partitioning of Africa after the Berlin conference of 1884-85.

The Birthing of 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 almagamation is known as the first ever almagamation of the British in Nigeria. British government almagamates Lagos colony and protectorate with the protectorate of southern Nigeria to form the new colony and protectorate of southern Nigeria.

The second almagamation was at 1914. In January 1914, the British government almagamates Northern and Southern Nigeria.