

Chapter Two

AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE NIGERIA STATE

The historical background of Nigeria government and politics is a component of pre-colonial and colonial era in Nigeria. The pre-colonial period is the era before the coming of the colonialists while the colonial era is the era of colonial administration in Nigeria.

The Early Man in Nigeria

Archaeological discoveries has proven of an existence of life in the area known today as Nigeria between 500000BC and 9000BC. This Nigerian early man was very familiar with his environment that he made use of some stone fashioned tools like oldowan-type tools for farming, hunting and gathering.

Scientific and technological development of early Nigerian societies

Culture/Civilization	Place of discovery	Year of Discovery	Materials discovered
Nok Culture	Nok	1936	Terracotta
Benin Culture	Benin		Bronze and brass castings
Ife Culture	Ife	1938	terracotta and Bronze heads
Igbo Ukwu Culture	Igbo Ukwu	1939	Bronze ornaments and Royal skeleton

Based on archaeological discoveries, it was discovered that man lived in Nigeria in the very remote past. Some of this discoveries presents Scientific and technological development of early Nigerian societies:

Traditional Political Institutions in Pre-Colonial Nigeria

Historical background of pre-colonial political system in Yoruba land

The historical origin of Yoruba has many legends behind it but it is the Oke Oramfe's version that is widely accepted. It states that God sent his messengers to the world and they included Obatala and 16 Oye, Obatala got drunk and Oduduwa seized the opportunity and went for the mission, he first landed at Ife and this made Ife to be regarded as the ancestral home of the Yorubas. There existed an Oyomesi (council of seven members) headed by the Bashorun who has the power to remove an Alafin.

Political Structure of Pre-colonial Yoruba Land

The political structures of Yoruba kingdoms had same thing in common as capital town, subordinate towns, villages and farmlands. Each town has a king that performed both political and spiritual responsibilities. His power had limitations known as **eewo** upon any violation of it might lead to the death of the Oba. Other rulers helped the Oba to control subordinate towns, villages ruled by the **Baales** and farmlands ruled by the **Oloja**. The leadership style here was simply hierarchical.

Pre-colonial Yoruba Land (Oyo Empire Case-study)

Characteristics

- Administration by the Alafin: Alafin is the head of the kingdom and must be resident in the city.
- The Ogboni Cult's Administration: mediated between the Oyomesi and the Alafin
- The Army headed by the Are-Ona-Kakanfo

Historical background of pre-colonial political system in Igbo land

The Igbo historical background is best characterized by their segmented way of life as they had a non-centralized political structure, hence the axiom; “Igbo has no kings”. The Igbo are grouped into five sub-cultures:

- i. The Igbo of Eastern Nigeria
- ii. The Igbo of south-eastern Nigeria
- iii. The Igbo of North-eastern Nigeria
- iv. The Northern Igbo and
- v. The Western Igbo

There are many ancestral stories of the Igbos but the most recognized is of the Nri ancestry where the Igbo God Eri was said to have landed and sailed to Aguleri via River Anambra from where the other Igbo settlements were occupied after an increased population.

Amidst the non-centralized political structure in the pre-colonial Igbo setting, the Igbo people at the time practiced **diffusion of political authorities** amongst some socio-political institutions in every village in the land as:

The Family: the smallest political unit headed by an Ofo title holder, amongst all the Ofo title holders, an okpara was selected and held the title of Ozo.

Age grade: youths among them enforced the decision of the elders, guarded settlements during war, performed sanitation of public places like streams and bush paths

Oha na eze (general assembly): constituted by adult males of the land and performed legislative functions

Secret societies: performed religious functions as the beliefs of the people were mystique and superstitious

Historical background of pre-colonial political system in Hausa land

The Hausa land is located in the northern Nigeria and it is made up of 14 states divided into two groups of Hausa Bakwai and Hausa Banza. Stories has it that they originated from a man named Bayajida who arrived and settled in Daura who killed a sacred snake in a well.

Political Structure of the pre-colonial Hausa land

The Hausa Land has a centralized political structure headed by the Sarki. He performed both political and spiritual functions. There was a change in the socio-political structure of the pre-colonial Hausa land between 14th and 15th century. It was at this point that Islam was adopted as the religion of the land and some other political offices as the Magaji, Madawaki, Dogari, Yari Sarki and Sarki Yau came into existence. Sharia law was implemented at this point. The sultan supervised the administration of an emirate system.

Emirate system of government among the Hausa people

The jihad of ‘Uthman Dan Fodio in 1804 strengthened Islam in Hausa land and each city he conquered, the Hausa leader was removed and replaced by a Fulani Emir. After the conquest, the centralized political system that has been existence was improved upon by an institution of a caliphate and the appointment of Emirs who owned allegiance to Dan Fodio and his representatives in Sokoto and Gwandu.

Colonial Administration and indirect rule system in Nigeria

Nigeria was first amalgamated in the year 1906 by amalgamating Lagos colony and the southern Protectorate to form the protectorate of southern Nigeria. The second amalgamation now took place in January 1914 when the northern and southern Nigeria was amalgamated and an indirect rule was instituted which is a way the British colonies administered her colonies through traditional chiefs.