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CHAPTER TWO

# **INTRODUCTION**

A historical background of Nigerian government and politics involved in 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. Period to the emergence of the Nigerian states, pre-colonial Nigeria comprises of different chiefdoms, states, kingdoms and empires. These, among others include the borno empire, the hausa states, and the sokoto caliphates in the north, the igbo segmentary societies in the east, benin kingdom in the empire in the west and several ethnic identities in the benue valley.

**The Achievement of Early Man**

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. Archaeologists called the tools the oldowan type tools. This is because this type of tool was first identified by the archaeologist in the olduvai Gorge in Tanzania.

# **MAJOR LANDMARK IN EARLY NIGERIAN HISTORY**

They are usually referred to as centres of ancient civilization. The history of these centres of ancient civilization presents us with the scientific and technological development of early Nigerian societies.

**NOK CULTURE**

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.

**BENIN CIVILISATION**

Benin was important for it’s art work. The craftsmen carved in wood and ivory and cast objects in bronze and brass. Art historians claimed that bronze casting was introduced into benin by an Ife artist.

**IFE CIVILISATION**

Ife is important because of it’s terra corter and its bronze heads.

**IGBO UKWU CIVILISATION**

Some bronze objects and ornaments were accidentally discovered while digging a toilet pit at Igbo ukwu in 1939.This eventually led to the excavation of three sides in the area by an archaeologist called Thurstan Shaw. The three sites include a burial chamber, a pit and a compound wall.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE PRE-COLONIAL POLITICAL SYSTEM OF THE YORUBA LAND.**

The Yoruba people are one of the largest ethnic group in Nigeria, and they are mostly united by language. The Yoruba people trace their origin to Oduduwa who is the founder of the Yoruba kingdom. Ile ife is regarded as the ancestral home of the Yoruba people.Their are different versions of the origin.

**THE OYO EMPIRE**

The government of the old oyo empire is a typical example of the pre-colonial administration in Yoruba land. The first organ of government in oyo empire was the king known as alaafin of oyo.

1. The Alaafin Administration

The alaafin was the head of the empire, and was resident in the capital. He was also regarded as the lord many lands. The ogboni cult had a very vital position in the Yoruba society. It played a mediatory role in any conflict between the oyomesi and the alaafin.

1. The Army

The oyo empire also had provisional government. They were modeled after the central government. They were administered by princes and baale. All of them were subjects people the over lordship of the alaafin.

**The pre colonial structure of igbo land:**

The igbo people are an ethnic group native to the present-day south-central and southeastern Nigeria. Geographically, the Igbo homeland is divided into two unequal sections by the Niger River– an eastern (which is the larger of the two) and a western section. The Igbo people are one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa.

The Igbo language is divided into numerous regional dialects, and somewhat mutually intelligible with the larger “Igboid” cluster. In rural Nigeria, Igbo people work mostly as craftsmen, farmers and traders. The Igbos are also highly urbanized, with some of the largest metropolitan areas, cities and towns in Igboland being Onitsha, Enugu, Aba, Owerri, Orlu, Okigwe, Port- Harcourt, Asaba, Awka, Nsukka, etc.

Before British colonial rule in the 20th century, the Igbo were a politically fragmented group, with a number of centralized chiefdoms such as Nri, Arochukwu, Agborand Onitsha. Frederick Lugard introduced the *Eze* system of “Warrant Chiefs”. Unaffected by the Fulani War and the resulting spread of Islam in Nigeria in the 19th century, they became overwhelmingly Christian under colonization. Traditional Igbo political organization was based on a quasi- democratic republican system of government. In tight knit communities, this system guaranteed its citizens equality, as opposed to a feudalist system with a king ruling over subjects.

With the exception of a few notable Igbo towns such as Onitsha, which had kings called Obi, and places like the Nri Kingdom and Arochukwu, which had priest kings; Igbo communities and area governments were overwhelmingly ruled solely by a republican consultative assembly of the common people. Communities were usually governed and administered by a council of elders.

## **Igbo Pre-Colonial Political System**

As a result of the existence of many political institutions in Igbo land, there was no centralization of power among the Igbo. Instead, political institutions were performing similar or different functions. There were no traditional rulers in the form of Kings (as among the Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani) and so no hereditary claims to traditional stools. In this setting, there was never an Igbo Kingdom or Empire. The largest political unit was the village.

The various institutions that exercised governmental power included family heads, the council of elders or the ofo title holders, the age-grades, the ozo title holders as well as the lineage heads. The**Igbo pre-colonial political system** was described by many scholars as an ‘**acephalous political system**‘ which can be translated as ‘a leaderless or chiefless political system’.

  Each family head in the village held the ‘**Ofo**‘ title and altogether formed the **council of elders.** Among the council of elders, one was recognized as the most senior to others. He was the ‘**Okpara**‘. Another level in the Igbo political administration were the ‘***Ozo***‘ title holders. This expensive title was conferred on wealthy and influential men in the community who after getting the title become recognized and could then preside over meetings with the village elders.

THE PRECOLONIAL STRUCTURE OF HAUSA LAND;

Prior to the Jihad or the Holy War of 1804, the territory now known as the Northern sector of Nigeria was ruled by the Hausas under fourteen (14) independent kingdoms. The defeat of the Hausas in the Holy War by the Fulani under the able leadership of a great Muslim leader called Othman Dan Fodio led to the abolition of the Hausa Kingdom and the establishment of the Fulani Emirates. Each emirate was headed by an Emir. Sokoto and Gwandu were made the two (2) headquarters for all the emirates.

The Emirs of the other emirates were appointed either directly by the Emirs of Sokoto and Gwandu or appointed by the local people subject to the ratification of either Emirs of Sokoto or Gwandu. All these Emirs paid allegiance and annual tributes to the Emirs of Sokoto and Gwandu.

For administrative convenience, Othman Dan Fodio divided the Fulani Empire into two (2): the Eastern and the Western section. The Eastern section included: Kano, Katsina, Zaria, Bauchi, Gombe, and Yola with Sokoto as its capital. On the other hand, Ilorin, Kotangora and Argungu with Gwandu as the capital were included in the Western region.

Mohammed Bello, son of Othman Dan Fodio, was given the administration of the Eastern section with its capital at Sokoto while Abdullahi, Dan Fodio’s brother, took charge of the Western section with Gwandu as its headquarters. Othman Dan Fodio, who was installed the Sarkin Muslim (The Commander of the Faithful), retired from political life but stayed in Sokoto.

### THE STRUCTURE OF THE SYSTEM

1. **The Emirate:** The Caliphate was divided into emirates and each was headed by an Emir. He had the responsibility of making laws, enforcing them and maintaining peace and order in the Emirate. He was expected to administer the emirates in accordance with provision of the Islamic and Sharia laws. In fact, he was believed to have divine right to rule.

However, each Emir was assisted in the administration of the emirates by a number of advisers. These were:

* Waziri (Head official or Prime Minister).
* Galadima (Administrator of the Emir’s palace).
* Hakimi (Official in charge of districts, collection of taxes, maintenance of law and order).
* Sarkin Fada (Head of palace officials).
* Sarkin Pawa (Official butcher head).
* Sarkin Ruwa (River fishing official).
* Maaji (Emir’s treasurer).
* Dogari (Chief of police).
* Alkalis (Interpreters of the Sharia law).