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Summary : An historical analysis of the evolution of the Nigerian state.

Nigeria state is a colonial creation, comprised of the pre-colonial period (period before the coming of the colonialists to Nigeria) and the colonial period(refers to the era that colonial administration was established). Nigeria comprises of: Borno Empire, Hausa state, Sokoto caliphate in the North, the Igbo segmentary societies in the east, Benin kingdom and Oyo Empire in the west and several ethnic identities in the Benue valley. Nigeria is bordered to the south by bights of Benin and Biafra , west by Benin, North by Niger, East by Cameroon.

Nigeria stretches roughly 700 miles from west to east and 650 miles from south to north, covering an area between 3◦ and 15◦E longitude, 4◦ and 14◦ latitude. Although the exact time man began to live in Nigeria is not known, archaeological evidences from different parts of Nigeria point to the fact that man settled in the region since the Palaeolithic period(500,000-9000BC) and findings also prove that Nigerians took part in stone age civilization.

Man needing food began to hunt animals and gather fruits and soon after began to hunt animals and gather fruits and soon after began to invest tools for his daily activities like the oldowan type tools first identified by archaeologists in the Olduvai gorge in Tanzania.

Places first is inhabited in Nigeria, according to excavation done are:

1. Nok civilization: discovery of terracotta(burnt clay) head of a monkey by tin miners of Nok (1936). Nok culture is believed to be a transitional civilization between the stone age and iron age in Nigeria because of the presence of a combination of stone and iron objects.
2. Benin civilisation: important for its art work, art historians claim that bronze casting was introduced into Benin by an Ife artist.
3. Ife civilisation: known terracotta and bronze heads. Art historians believe that Ife art originated from Nok culture because of their similarities especially beaded neck, wrist and ankles.
4. Igbo-Ukwu: some bronze objects were accidentally discovered while digging a toilet pit at Igbo Ukwu in 1939; lead to excavation of three sites in the area by an archaeologist “Thurstan Shaw”

Traditional political institutions in pre colonial Nigeria.

1. Yoruba: one of the largest ethnic group in Nigeria and are united by a common language. The Yoruba’s trace their origin to Oduduwa (founder of Yoruba kingdom). Ile Ife is the ancestral home of the Yoruba people. There are different versions of the traditions of origin, Johnson traced origin to the east “mecca” and after some years settled in Ile Ife.

**Oke oranfe’s version.**

Located in Ile ife, believed to be centre from which the world was created. There was a period the world was covered by water. God then decided to send some of his messengers to the world: Obatala or Orisa nla or Orisa alase(leader) and sixteen Oye(immortals). He gave them 5 pieces of iron, a lump of earth tied to a white piece of cloth, a cockerel on their way to the world, Obatala got drunk with palm wine and Oduduwa seized symbol of authority from him and Oduduwa seized symbol of authority from Oduduwa and led the party to the world’s first place they landed is Oke oramfe in Ile ife; on arrival he set the 5 pieces of iron down and placed the lump of earth on them. The cockerel then spread the lump of earth on them. The cockerel then spread the lump of earth with its feet throughout the earth and the earth was formed.

Political structure of the Yoruba’s: similar in nature, consist of a capital town, subordinate town, villages and farmlands. Each town has a king(Oba) residing in the palace(Aafin); his paraphernalia of office includes a beaded crown(Ade), slippers(Bata), horse tail(Irukere), sceptre(Ase). Oba is the supreme authority in the kingdom and his words are laws, Oba has limitation known as eewo to curb despotism and tyranny. If a king violates any eewo, it could lead to his death. The king has helpers in charge of subordinate towns; Baale and Oloja. Bales were 3rd rank of rulers in charge of the villages, Oloja(4th rank) ruled over farmlands. The town Ilu is the basic political unit and each town is divided into smaller units which were under compound heads known as Baale. each compound was a group of patrilineal related people known as idile headed by most senior male member of family.

Pattern of administration: operates a hierarchical structure.at the lowest level, the compound heads (baale) formed lowest consultative group in town affairs. At the apex was a group of chiefs (igbimolu) heads by a king. This body in variation towns were different names: Oyomesi, Ewarefari

**Oyo empire**

The first organ of government in oyo empire was the king known as alaafin of oyo. Alaafin (Ekeji orisa) is the fountain of authority and its primary aim is checks and balances and was assisted by priests , officers, eunuchs and a well organised court.

Ogboni cults administration: played a mediatory role in conflict between oyomesi(king makers). Alaafin is a counter power to oyomesi. Are-ona-kankanfo was the head of the imperial army.

2.Igbo: political administration ; practice a segmentary way of life . the Igbo is divided into 5 sub-groups:

a. Igbo of eastern Nigeria

b. Igbo of southern Nigeria

c. Igbo of northern eastern Nigeria

d. Igbo of western igbo Nigeria

e. Igbo of northern Nigeria

Some believe Igbo come from Israel due to similarities between cultures. Others believe, Igbo have being in their present land from the beginning.

Nri version: ancestor of Igbo “Eri” descended from sky and sailed down to river Anambra, arrived at Aguleri, met some autocontous group of people and settled with them.

The family is the smallest political uint, each family was headed by “Ofo”. No highly centralised authority: family, council of elders, age grades, secret societies.

1. Hausa: located in northern Nigeria. Hausa land before 1904 was made up of 14 states and were of 2 district groups: 7 Hausa Bakwai states (legitimate states) including; Daura, Biram, Zaria, Katsina, kano, Rano, and Gobir and 7 Hausa Banza states(illegitimate states) including; Nupe, Gwari,Yauri,Bauchi,Zamfara,Kebbi,Yoruba.

History of the hausa’s: bayajidda an arab prince travelled to Sahel to Baghad and killed a snake oppressing the inhabitants of daura and was the given the queen for marriage as a reward for the snake he killed. The queen had 6 sons already and produced another 6 with Bayajidda. Islam came in the 11th century

Political structure of the Hausa’s: Sarka “head of any typical Hausa state” was chief executive and judge aided by council of state. At 14th and 15th centuries Islam was adopted and political structure changed.

**Colonial administration and indirect rule system in Nigeria**

Historical background:

Portuguese were first Europeans to arrive in Nigeria through the Bini kingdom. Atlantic slave trade was the trade carried on across Atlantic ocean between Europeans and Africa and became more important in the 15th century with the arrival of the Portuguese. The Trans- Atlantic slave trade was the unfortunate channel that first out the British in contact with Nigeria, the trade got to maturity in the 16th century. British first formally annexed Nigerian territory in 1861(took Lagos as a colony)

**Birth of Nigeria as a zeo political entity**

Before 1900, all part of Nigeria was conquered by the British were still under their original administration but by 1900 the whole Nigeria was under responsibility of British colonial office. May 1906 is first ever amalgamation. Lagos colony which was done without consulting Nigeria was the second amalgamation.