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CHAPTER 2

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 while the colonial era refers to the period of colonial administration.

The Nigerian state is a product of colonialism. The Europeans in their struggle to steal our natural resources created Nigeria. Before the creation of the Nigerian state, colonial Nigeria consisted of different independent chiefdoms, states, kingdoms and empires. Eg: the Hausa states, Borno empire, Sokoto caliphate, the igbo segmentary, Benin kingdom etc. they all differ in their historical, social and cultural make-ups. Nigeria is an African country on the gulf of guinea, has many natural landmarks and wildlife reserves. It is a sovereign country in west Africa bordering Niger in the north, chad in the northeast, Cameroon in the east, and Benin in the west. Its southern coast is on the gulf of guinea in the Atlantic ocean. It stretches roughly 700 miles from west to east and 650 miles from south to north, covering an area between 3° and 15° E longitude and between 4° and 14° N latitude.

There are archaeological evidences from different parts of Nigeria which points to the fact that man had settled in the region now known as Nigeria since the palaeolithic period 500000-9000BC. It was confirmed that Nigerians took part in the stone age; this is because of the stone tools and skeletons dated 12000 years at Iwo Eleru near Akure in Ondo state found by archaeologists.

People who lived in Nigeria during the stone age strived to survive. In order to provide food for himself, he hunted animals and gathered fruit. He used stones and pebbles to produce cutlery for himself. These tools were called “oldowan” type tools. They were first discovered in Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania. After this, they proceeded to invent another type of tool called sangoan (it was first seen at sango bay on the west shores of lake Victoria in Uganda, east africa) which was more effective in cutting than the existing tools. It has been seen in upper Sokoto river in Sokoto state. The most active period in Nigeria was around 500BC – 200AD. During this period, sculptures of all kinds were made, most especially human heads of different sizes. They were found in the village of Nok.

MAJOR LANDMARKS IN EARLY NIGERIAN HISTORY

Excavation work was done in places believed to have been inhabited by man. Some of them include: Nok, Igbo Ukwu, Ife and Benin. They are usually referred to as centers of ancient civilization.

Nok culture

The discovery of terracotta head of a monkey by tin miners in Nok in 1936 prompted more discoveries in other places such as Wamba, Afa and Jema. The Nok culture is believed to be the

combination of the stone and iron age as tools made with both items were discovered. It existed between the 5th and 2nd century BC.

Benin civilization

Benin was prominent for its art work. The craftsmen carved with wood and ivory and cast objects in bronze and brass. Historians claim that bronze casting was introduced in Benin by an Ife artiste. They made the ivory mask that was used as the Festac symbol in 1977.

Ife civilization

Terracotta and bronze heads were found in ife. Objects such as stools and figures were carved on hard stone called quartz while animal and human figures were carved from granite. Eg: Opa Oranmiyan. It is believed that Ife art originated from Nok culture because of its similarities.

Igbo Ukwu civilization

While digging a pit toilet in igbo ukwu in 1919, bronze ornaments were discovered. This discovery led to an investigation led by Thurstan Staw who discovered three sites including a burial chamber which had skeletons that was believed to have been the remains of the king and his five slaves. It was stated that the sites excavated have been in existence since the middle of the 9th century.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE PRE COLONIAL POLITICAL SYSTEM IN YORUBA LAND.

Yoruba is one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria. It is believed that they originated from Oduduwa who is the founder of Yoruba kingdom. Ile-ife is regarded as the home of the Yoruba people. There are different beliefs about the origin of the Yoruba people. According to Johnson, the Yoruba's originated from the north eastern Africa. They came from egypt with Oduduwa as their leader and after several years of travelling they settled in Ile-ife, Nigeria.

Oke Oramfe is a part if Ile-Ife. It is believed to be the center from which the world was created. According to this version, there was a period of time that the world was covered by water. God then sent his messengers to the world and they included Obatala or Orisa Nla or Orisa Alase and 16 oye (immortals). They were given 5 pieces of iron, a lump of earth tied to a white piece of cloth and a cockerel. On their way to earth, Obatala got drunk with pal wine and Oduduwa seized power and led the messengers to earth. They landed in Oke Oramfe in ile ife and Oduduwa set down the iron and put the lump of earth of them. The cockerel then spread the lump of earth throughout the earth. After the earth was formed, Oduduwa became the leader and extended his authority to other Yoruba towns and villages.

Each Yoruba kingdom consisted of a capital town, subordinate towns, villages and farmlands. All the towns had a king known as Oba (a spiritual and political leader) who resided in the palace called Aafin. He was known by his beaded crown (ade), slippers (bata), horse tail (irukere) and sceptre (ase). Eewo were the limitations placed on the Oba to prevent abuse of powers. The king had rulers of lesser rank. They ruled subordinate towns and wore crowns made with white beads (sese ofun). The third and fourth rank of rulers were called Baale and Oloja respectively.

The precolonial system of the Igbo land

The Igbo people are best known for their segmentary or acephalous way of life. This because from the ancient times, they had no centralized states. The Igbos operated a kind of government without Kings.

The Igbo are grouped into five sub cultures:

- i. The Igbo of eastern Nigeria
- ii. The Igbo of southern eastern Nigeria
- iii. The Igbo of northern eastern Nigeria
- iv. The western Igbo
- v. The northern Igbo

The Igbo traditional society had no centralized authority but instead they had what could be called a diffusion of authority into different groups. In other word, the Igbo practiced direct democracy and or a decentralized system of government because there were traditional rulers in the form of oba as in the case of the Yoruba, and so no hereditary claims to the traditional stools as there was never an Igbo kingdom or empire. There was no highly centralized authority, some socio-political institutions existed in each villiage to perform legislative, executive, administrative, military and judicial functions, such institutions included the family, council of elders, age grades and secret societies. Historical background of pre-colonial political system in Hausa land; Hausa land is located in the 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 banza states ,that is Hausa illegitimate states. Oral tradition attributed the origin of Hausa states to a man name 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 a queen. The queen had six sons already, and she produced another son with bayajidda, and each of these sons ruled one of the seven kingdoms of the hausa city states, becoming the first kings. The sarki was known as the head of any typical Hausa states. He worked with a retinue of officials in a well organized court. Sarkin kasar, the chief executive and judge of the state, but he was aided by a council of state. Islam was adopted and gave birth to many new political institutions such as offices of the galadima, madawaki, magaji, dogari, yari sarki and sarki yau. The islamisation of hausa land also inclined its judicial system. The sharia law started taking shape. Some new titles such as alkali and qadi's (judges) became commonplace in the administration of justice. Colonial administration and indirect rule system in Nigeria historical background; The British who have often been credited with the creation of Nigeria were not the first European to land in Nigeria. The portuguese were the first European to arrive Nigeria through Benin kingdom. According to Hodgkin saw the arrival of the first Europeans in Benin, the Portuguese in 1472 in ewuare reign and alfonzo in 1484 in ozolua reign . The Atlantic slave trade was the trade carried on across the Atlantic Ocean between the Europeans and Africans. It became more important in the 15 century with the arrival of the Portuguese. Demand for slave could be traced to The introduction of plantation system of agriculture in places like Brazil, Jamaica, and among others. By 1460, about 700-800 slaves were exported annually to Portugal from west Africa sources of slaves included condemned criminals, political prisoners, victims of kidnapping and relatives sold to redeem debts. Before the year 1900, all the different centers conquered by the British were still under there original administration. But by 1900, the whole Nigeria was under the British government amalgamated Lagos colony and protectorate of southern Nigeria. However this was done without

the consultation with Nigerians regarding their views as to whether they were in support of the amalgamation or not. The second amalgamation was that of 1914. In January 1914, the British government amalgamated northern and southern Nigeria. The principal reason for this is the same as that of May 1906. The northern protectorate was not as economically buoyant as the colony and protectorate of southern Nigeria. That was why for the British imperial offices, since the southern trade was booming, amalgamation would allow the surpluses acquired in the south. Sir Lord Frederick Lugard is best known as the father of the "January 1914" amalgamation. Britain, therefore, governed Nigeria by means of a system popularly referred to as "indirect rule". Indirect rule may be a system of Britain ruling her colonies through local traditional rulers. The British officers defined the framework of the policies to be adopted and left the implementation to the local personnel or the rulers.