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CHAPTER TWO

AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE NIGERIA STATE

The historical background of the Nigerian government and politics involves the precolonial and colonial period in Nigeria. The Nigerian state is a colonial creation. Before colonization, Nigeria comprised of the Borno empire, the Hausa states, and the Sokoto caliphate in the north, along with the Benin kingdom in the south and the Oyo empire in the west among others. These ethnic groups had a lot of differences in their culture and history as well as their social make ups.

EARLY MAN IN NIGERIA

The exact time that man started living in Nigeria is unknown but there are archeological evidences that it was since the Paleolithic period (500,000 -9000BC). Archeologists confirmed that Nigerians took part in the stone age.

THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY NIGERIAN SOCIETIES

The history of the centers of ancient civilization presents us with the scientific and technological developments of early Nigerian societies. Nok culture, Benin civilization, Ife civilization and the Ukwu civilization. These were the very first civilizations in Nigeria and they form the major landmarks of Nigerian history.

TRADITIONAL POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS IN YORUBA LAND

There are three majority ethnic groups; Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa-Fulani.

Yoruba land: This is one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria and they are united by language. There are different versions of their origin. Some believe Oduduwa was the first to settle in ile ife and he sent his children to found the other Yoruba kingdoms. Some believe God sent Obatala and sixteen immortals with five pieces of iron, a lump of cloth and a cockerel into the world which was submerged in water at the time. Each gown in Yoruba land has a leader called the Oba that lives in a palace called the Aafin. There were lesser rulers who wore the sese efun and others like the Baale and the Oloja. Yoruba lands had different names like Oyomesi etc.

The first organ of the Oyo empire was the king known as Alaafin Oyo. He was assisted by officials like priests and eunuchs in a well-organized court. He was regarded as the companion of the gods but his power was limited by the Oyomesi, a council of seven members. They had the power to remove any Alaafin. The Oyomesi also constituted an arm of government known as the Ogboni cult which had a very vital position in the society. The head of the army was the Are Ona Kankanfo.

Igbo land: They operated without kings and are grouped in five subcultures. The Igbo of Eastern Nigeria, South-Eastern Nigeria, North-Eastern Nigeria, Western Nigeria and Northern Nigeria.

In the Igbo society there was no centralized authority, they had a diffusion of authority this includes the family, council of elders, age grades and secret societies.

The family was headed by the Ofo. Households that believed they were related formed a family. Among the Ofo holders one known as the okpara held the ozo title.

The age grade grew from childhood and took a common name associated with the time of their birth. They organized themselves for work war and government. They performed most of the duties in the village. The secret societies consisted of diviners, Ubinuknabi at Arochukwu, the Amadisha of Ozuzzu and so on. They all played significant roles in the society. They were believed to be the bridge between humans and the gods. They performed rituals and offered different sacrifices at shrines intended to ward off evil and appease angry gods.

Hausa land: it was made of fourteen states and they were of two distinct groups. The first group was called Hausa Bakwai, legitimate Hausa states (Daura, Biram, Zaria, Katsina, Kano, Rano and Gobir) while the second was Hausa Banza illegitimate Hausa states (Nupe, Gwari, Yauri, Bauchi, Zamfara, Kebbi and Yoruba). The origin of Hausa states that a man named Bayagidda, an Arab prince from Baghdad killed a snake that oppressed the people of Daura and married the queen. Their sons ruled the legitimate Hausa states. A typical head in a Hausa state was called Sarki. He was aided by a council of state. Islam was what introduced the sharia law into Hausa land and also titles like alkali and qadi judges and it was introduced in the fifteenth century.

COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION AND INDIRECT RULE SYSTEM IN NIGERIA

The British weren’t the first Europeans to land in Nigeria, it was the Portuguese. They arrived through the Bini kingdom in the second half of the fifteenth century. About 800 slaves were exported to Portugal yearly, they mostly included prisoners of war, criminals and people sold to pay debts. In the early 19th century the British decided to abolish the trans-Atlantic slave trade and started forming colonies instead. This happened through trestles that were signed by community leaders.

THE BIRTH OF NIGERIA AS A GEOPOLITICAL ENTITY

The first amalgamation was in 1906, the joining of Southern Nigeria and the Lagos colony because the south had more financial benefit. The north was also not as financially buoyant as the south so it was agreed in 1914 by Lord Lugard, that the excesses from the south will be used in the north. This was done without the knowledge of the Nigerians.