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**AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE NIGERIA STATE.**

The historical background of Nigerian government and politics involves the pre-colonial period and the colonial period in Nigeria. Prior to the emergence of the Nigerian state, pre-colonial Nigeria comprises of different independent chiefdoms, states, kingdom and empires. On the west Nigeria is bordered by Benin, on the North, by Niger, and on the east, by Cameroon and in the extreme Northeastern corner Lake Chad

It is unknown at what time man began to live in Nigeria, but there are archaeological evidences from different parts of Nigeria which pointed to the fact that man had settled in the region now known as Nigeria since the Palaeolithic period 500,000-9000BC.

Man began to hunt animals and gather fruits, soon he began to invent tools which were used for many purposes. The tools invented where found in many places such as St Acheul in northern Nigeria, Jos Plateau state and Iwo Eleru in Ondo state.

Information on the major landmarks in early Nigerian history was made possible through the excavation work done on places where man lived in Nigeria in the very remote past, places like Nok, Igbo Ukwu, Ife and Benin among others. Nok was found in places such as Wamba, Kastina-Ala and Jema. The 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. Benin was important for its artwork. The craftsmen of Benin carved in wood and ivory and cast objects in bronze and brass. Ife is important because of its terracotta and bronze heads. Objects such as stools and figures were carved from granite and decorated with iron nails. Some bronze objects and ornaments were accidentally discovered while digging a toilet pit at Igbo Ukwu in 1939.

The Yorubas are one of the largest ethnic group in Nigeria and are united by language. They trace their origin to Oduduwa who was the founder of the Yoruba kingdom. Ile-Ife is regarded as the ancestral home of the Yoruba people. There are different versions of the traditions of origin some of which include Johnsons version in his book, the Oke Oranfe’s Version and so on. The political structures of the Yoruba kingdoms were similar in nature. Each town has a king known as “Oba” who resides in the palace called “Aafin”. Another group of rulers were the Baales who were in charge of villages and the Oloja who ruled over farmlands. The first organ of government in Oyo was the king known as Alaafin of Oyo. The Alaafin was the head of the empire and was resident in the capital, he was also regarded as “Lord of many lands.” The Alaafins powers were often limited and regulated by the Oyomesi, who acted as the Prime Minister. Apart from the Alaafin cabinet, members of the Oyomesi cult constituted another arm of government. It was a very powerful cult. It was composed of free prominent members of the society as well as members of the Oyomesi. The Army was another arm of government in traditional Yoruba community. It was very organized and its head was conferred with the coveted title of Are-Ona-Kankanfo.

The Igbo people are best known for their segmentary way of life. They are grouped into 5 subcultures; The Igbo of Eastern Nigeria, The Igbo of South-Eastern Nigeria, The Igbo of North-Eastern Nigeria, The Western Igbo and The Northern Igbo. One of the most popular versions of the migratory stories of origin of the Igbo people is the one that points to Isreal. There is also the Nri version which Professor M.A Onwuejeogwu regards it as the only authentic version. In the Igbo traditional society there was no highly centralized authority but instead they practiced direct democracy. Each family is headed by an “Ofo” title holder. The “Okpara” is the most senior who holds the “Ozo” title and presides over the council of elders. The age grades were strongly organized in the southern and northern Igbo peoples. Oha-na-eze was a form of general assembly in which all the male adults usually meet in this assembly to perform legislative functions. The secret societies consisted of diviners masqurades, “Ubinuknabi” at Arochukwu, the “Amadisa” of Ozuzzuand so on. They acted as intermediary between the living and the ancestors.

Hausa land is located in Northern Nigeria, before it was made up of 7 states called “Hausa banza” states, that is legitimate houses and the second remaining 7 states were known as “Hausa bakwai” states that is illegitimates states. The “Sarki” was known as the head of any typical hausa state, Sarkin Kasar which means “ruler of the land” was the full title given to any effective head of the Hausa state. Emirs ruled the caliphate and there were title holders in the Emirs caliphate which include; Sarkin Fada, Waziri, Galadima, Madawaki, Magaji, Sarkin Dan Doka etc.

The trans- Atlatic slave trade was the unfortunate channel that first put the British in contact with Nigeria. For close to 3 centuries, coastal Nigeria’s relations with the British were dominated by the trans-Atlatic slave trade. In 1861, they took Lagos as a colony, but the bulk of the Nigerian territory was occupied in the late 19th century. This happened through treaties that were signed with some Nigerian leaders, and through military conquest of states and deportation of their rulers. As from 1898, the British government sought to establish and maintain a colonial state in Nigeria. Before the year 1900, all the different parts of Nigeria conquered by the British were still under their original administration. The May 1906 amalgamation is known as the first ever amalgamation of the British in Nigeria. 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. Sir Fredrick 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”.