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**AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE NIGERIA STATE (CHAPTER 2)**

This chapter explains the early history and background of the Nigerian government and politics which entails the pre-colonial and colonial period that is, the period before and after the coming of the colonialists and the establishment of colonial administration in Nigeria. As we know, Nigeria is as a result of colonial creation and involvement and before this all happened, there was an existence of a pre-colonial Nigeria which comprised of different chiefdoms, states, kingdoms and empires for example the Borno Empire, the Hausa states, the Igbo segmentary societies in the East; Benin kingdom and Oyo Empire in the West. These ethnic groups differed in their history, social and cultural make-ups. The country had its borders and is bordered to the south by Bights of Benin and Biafra, on the west Nigeria is bordered by Benin, on the north, by Niger and on the east by Cameroon.

Although there is no exact time proven to be known for when man began to live in Nigeria, there existed different archaeological evidences which came from various parts of Nigeria. Through this the Palaeolithic period 500,000-9000BC was known to be the period since when man had started living in Nigeria. There was also a Stone Age civilization divided into; Early Stone Age (3,000,000-35,000BC); Middle Stone Age (35,000-15,000BC) and Late Stone Age (15,000-500BC).

The early man in Nigeria made several achievements as he was known to work very hard in order to cope with his environment and survive. The search for food led to the invention of tools for cutting and chopping using pebbles and these tools were known by Archaeologists as Oldowan-type tools. From there hand axes to different tool inventions and they were later refined during the Middle Stone Age and Late Stone Age. Small stone tools, heavy choppers (which was for better efficiency) were made and more advanced technology was evident in the bronze and metal age. One of the most active periods for a lot of technological efforts in Nigeria was around 500BC to 200AD where lots of creative sculptures were made in various sizes. Various sites for these findings were Nok, Igbo-Ukwu, Benin, Ile-Ife, Jebba. These places were equally known to be the centres of ancient civilization.

The Nok culture involved the discovery of a terracotta (burnt clay) head of a monkey by tin miners in 1936 in Nok and this encouraged more discoveries in places like Wamba, Katsina-Ala and Jema. The Nok culture is a transitional civilization between Stone Age and Iron Age in Nigeria and through carbon dating, it was found that Nok existed between 5th and 2nd century B.C. Benin civilization was also notable as Benin had a lot of art work. Wood, ivory, bronze and brass were used to craft and cast objects. Ife was also an important area because of its terracotta and bronze heads. Quartz were used to carve stools and granite for carving human figures decorated with iron nails. Example is the Opa Oranmiyan in Ile-Ife. Many heads were known to be life sized and decorated with facial marks and natural hair. Igbo Ukwu was a site known for the accidental discovery of some bronze objects and ornaments while digging a toilet pit. Three sites known as a burial chamber, pit and compound wall were excavated by Thurstan Shaw. These sites at Igbo Ukwu were dated to the middle of 9th century A.D.

We then examine the three major ethnic groups of Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa Fulani in Nigeria traditional political government system. For the Yorubas, they are known as one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria and are language united. They trace their origin to Oduduwa and their ancestral home is Ile-Ife. The Oke Oramfe believed their land to be the centre of the creation of the world were Oduduwa took the symbol of authority and led others to the world. They landed in Ile-Ife and then extended to other towns and villages. In each Yoruba town there was an Oba (king) living in Aafin. The Oba is the supreme authority, spiritual and political head of the kingdom.

In the Oyo Empire, we have the Alafin of Oyo who is the King. Oyo was one of the rare empires that had in-built checks and balances and contributed to stability for centuries. It had the Oyomesi, a council of seven members acting as the Prime Minister. There was also existence of the Ogboni cult which was a kind of counter power to the Oyomesi. The Army was another arm of government in Yoruba Empire and its head was Are-Ona-Kankanfo. The Army helped in stability, expansion and keeping dissident territories in check.

For the Igbos, they’re known for their segmentary way of life as they had no centralized states. The Igbo are grouped into five sub-cultures namely; Igbo of the Eastern Nigeria, Igbo of South-Eastern Nigeria, Igbo of North-Eastern Nigeria, Western Igbo and Northern Igbo. Some Igbo Scholars traced their origin to Israel as they consider themselves off-shoots of lost tribes of Hebrews who migrated southward. The Igbos practiced direct democracy and decentralized system of government but there existed some socio-political institutions in each village to form legislative, executive, administrative, military and judiciary functions. This included family, council of elders, age grades and secret societies. The family was the smallest political unity and was headed by the “Ofo” title holder. Among the “Ofo” title holders, the most senior was the “Okpara” who held the “Ozo” title. The age grade societies had their various roles for example; the youths cleared the path and public places, streams and served as police, the elders enforced elders’ decisions, guarded settlements and fought on the battlefield. The Oha-na-eze was a form of general assembly where all decisions taken there were final. There were also secret societies which had diviners’ masquerades. They acted as intermediary between the living and the ancestors and the official religion practiced in pre-colonial Igbo was the traditional religion headed by the chief priests and they believed in re-incarnation.

The Hausa land is located in Northern Nigeria and was made up of fourteen states before 1804. They were of two distinct groups where the first group consist of seven states called “Hausa Bakwai” states (legitimate states) and the second group consists of the other seven states known as “Hausa banza” (illegitimate states). Hausa bakwai states are Daura, Biram, Zaria, Katsina, Kano, Rano, and Gobir while Hausa banza states are Nupe, Gwari, Yauri, Bauchi, Zamfara, Kebbi, Yoruba. An Arab prince named Bayajidda was known to be the founder and originator of the Hausas in a place called Daura. Islam was not introduced immediately until the eleventh century. The head of any typical Hausa state is the “Sarki” and the Sarkin Kasar is the full title given to any effective head of Hausa State. Between the 14th and 15th centuries, the socio-political organization of Hausa States took another shape, Islam was adopted and gave rise to many political institutions such as the offices of the Galadima, Madawaki, Magaji, Dogari, Yari Sarki and Sarki Yau. The Jihad of Uthman Dan Fodio of 1804 led to the conquest of the existing old Hausa kingdom. In every state conquered, the former Hausa ruler was replaced by a Fulani Emir then a centralized political system of government was introduced. The Emirs were appointed to rule the caliphate and the Emir was an absolute monarch in his emirate. Important title holders in the Emir’s cabinet included; Sarkin Fada (spokesman), Waziri (Prime Minister), Galadima (Administrator of the capital city), Madawaki (commander and head of Emirate Army), Magaji (Government treasurer), Sarkin Dan Doka (inspector General of police), Sarkin Ruwa (river fishing official), Sarkin Pawa (Head of chairman of Butchers at abattoirs), Yari (Chief Superintendent of prisons in the Emirate). The Hakimi was appointed by the Emir to reside at the headquarters and administer the district on behalf of the Emir. Sharia courts were established throughout the Emirates headed by the Alkali. The chief justice of the Sharia courts was the Grand Khadi.

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive Nigeria through the Bini Kingdom. The Atlantic Slave Trade was the trade carried across the Atlantic Ocean between the Europeans and Africans while the Trans-Atlantic slave trade was the unfortunate channel that first put the British in contact with Nigeria and the trade got to maturity in the 16th century. The May 1906 amalgamation is known as the first ever amalgamation of the British in Nigeria. The second amalgamation was that of 1914, January where the British government amalgamated Northern and Southern Nigeria. Sir Frederick Lord Lugard is best known as the father of the January 1914 amalgamation. The British therefore governed Nigeria by means of “Indirect Rule” where the British rule their colonies through local traditional rulers.