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AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE NIGERIAN STATE

The history of Nigeria cannot be described without discussing the pre-colonial period and the colonial period in Nigeria. The colonial period is the period before the coming of the colonialists while the colonial period refers to the era that colonial administration was established in Nigeria. Before the emergence of the Nigerian state, pre-colonial Nigeria comprises of different independent chiefdoms, states, kingdoms and empires. These include the Borno Empire, the Hausa states, and the Sokoto Caliphate in the North; the igbo segmentary societies in the east; Benin Kingdom and the Oyo Empire in the West and several ethnic identities in the Benue Valley. The country Nigeria is bordered to the south by the Nights of Benin and Biafra, which are on the Gulf of Guinea in the Atlantic Ocean. On the west, Nigeria is bordered by Benin, on the north, by Niger Republic, and on the east by Cameroon. Nigeria also 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.

The exact time when people began to live in Nigeria is unknown but various archaeological evidences from different parts of Nigeria which shows that man settled in Nigeria first since the Paleolithic period 500000-9000BC. The first occupation which was done by the man who lived in Nigeria during those years was hunting and gathering of fruits since he needed food to survive. Later on, he began to invent tools consisting of pebbles made into chopping and cutting tools. This tool was named by archaeologists as the Oldowan -type tools, because, they first identified it in the Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania. From there the early man started making hand axes which was believed to be used for hunting by people in His, Plateau state and in Iwo Eleru in Ondo state.

Some of the places where man lived in Nigeria in the very remote past includes: Nok, Ukwu, Ife and Benin amount others. They are usually referred to as centres of ancient civilization and the history of these centres of ancient civilization presents us with the scientific and technological developments of early Nigerian societies. The first is the Nok civilization, this culture is believed to be a transitional civilization between the Stone Age and the iron age in Nigeria because of the presence of a combination of stone and iron objects. It was discovered through the use of carbon dating, that Nok culture existed between the 5th and 2nd century B.C. The next is the Benin civilization, which was important for its art-work. The craftsmen of Benin carved in wood and ivory and cast objects in bronze and brass. The Ife civilization is important also because of its terracotta and bronze heads. Some of the bronze heads were said to be portraits of some of the rulers- Iono. It is believed by art historians that Ife art originated from the

Nok culture because of some similarities such as beaded neck, wrist and ankles. They also believe that it was from Ife that Benin probably learnt bronze sculpture. Some bronze objects and ornaments were accidentally discovered while digging a toilet pit at Igbo Ukwu in 1939. The archaeologist, Thurston Shaw then later excavated three sites which include a burial chamber, a pit and a compound wall and in these places many objects made of bronze were later discovered.

To fully understand political institutions in Pre-colonial Nigeria, the three major ethnic groups of Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa-Fulani in Nigeria shall be examined. The Yorubas are one of the largest ethnic group in Nigeria and are united by language. The Yoruba's trace their origin to Oduduwa who was the founder of the Yoruba kingdom while Ile-Ife is regarded as the ancestral home of the Yoruba's. There are different versions of the traditions of their origin and one of them is the Oke Orange's version of the Origin of the Yoruba. Oke Orange is located in Ile-Ife, it is believed to be the centre from which the world was created. According to the legend, there was a period when the world was covered by water. The Almighty God then decided to send some of his messengers to the world and they included Obatala or Orisa Nla or Orisa Alase (as the leader) and sixteen Oye (immortals). They were given five pieces of iron, a lump of earth tied to a white piece of cloth, and a cockerel. On their way to the world, the leader, Obatala, got drunk with palm wine and so his symbol of authority was seized by Oduduwa who then became the leader. When they arrived, Oduduwa set down the five pieces of iron and placed the lump of earth on them, the cockerel then spread the lump of earth with its feet throughout the earth. Consequently, the earth was formed and Oduduwa, who became the ruler.

The government of the old Oyo Empire is a typical example of the pre-colonial administration in Yorubaland. The first organ of government in Oyo Empire was the king known as Alaafin of Oyo. The Alaafin was the head of the empire, and was resident in the capital. He sometimes had an autocratic tendency, but in practice, his powers were often limited and regulated by the Oyomesi, a council of seven members headed by Bashorun who acted as the Prime Minister. The members of the Oyomesi were king makers as well. At the demise of the Alaafin, they were the ones to select his successor. Apart from the Alaafin cabinet, members of the Oyomesi cult constituted another arm of government. The ogboni cult had a very vital position in Yoruba society. It played a mediatory role in any conflict between the Oyomesi and the Alaafin. The Army was another arm of government in traditional Yoruba society. It was very organized. The head was conferred with the title Are-Ona-Kankanfo. The Army was credited with performing important functions which included stability of the empire, expansion, as well as keeping dissident territories in check.

The Igbo people are best known for their segmentary way of life. This is because from the ancient times, they had no centralized states. The Igbo are grouped into five cultures: 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 Israel. It is due to the assumption on the so-called similarities between the cultures of the Igbo and the ancient Hebrew. However, Professor

M.A Onwuejeogwu(2000) regards the Bri version as the only authentic version of origin in the oral tradition of the igbo. According to Nri version, the ancestor of the igbo, Eri, descended from the sky and sailed down the River Anambra. When he arrived Aguleri, he met some autochthonous group of people who had no living memory of their own and settled with them. As their population increased, some groups migrated to other parts of igboland to establish their own settlements. In the igbo traditional society, they practised direct democracy or a decentralized system of government because there was no traditional rulers.

The Hausa land is located in Northern Nigeria. Before 1804, it was made up of 14 states and they were of two distinct groups. The first group consists of seven states called "Hausa Bakwai" states, that is Hausa legitimate states. The second group consists of the remaining seven states known as "Hausa Banzai", that is Hausa illegitimate states. Oral tradition attributed the origin of the Hausa states to a man named 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 the queen. The queen had six sons already and she produced another son with Bayajidda, and each of these sons ruled one of the seven Hausa city states becoming the first kings. The "Sarkis" was known as the head of any typical Hausa state. The Sarkis Kasar combined both political and religious/spiritual functions. Islam was introduced to Hausa land in the 14th century and by the 15th century it was accepted as the religion of the ruling class. There is the introduction of a new system of selecting and appointing rulers described as Emir's to rule the caliphate who owed allegiance to Dan Fodio and his two representatives at Sokoto and Gwandu. Important title holders in the Emir's cabinet include: Sarkin Dada, Waziri, Galadima, Madawaki, Magaji, Sarkin Dan Doka, Sarkin Ruwa, Sarkin Paws and Yari.

The British who have often been credited with the creation of Nigeria were not the first Europeans to land in Nigeria. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive Nigeria through Bini kingdom. They introduced slave trade. The struggle among the European powers for colonies led to the partitioning of Africa among them in the 19th century. Britain colonised Nigeria, Ghana, the Gambia and Sierra-Leone in West Africa. By 1900, the whole Nigeria was under the responsibility of the British Colonial Office. By May 1906, they amalgamated Lagos colony and protectorate with the protectorate of the Southern Nigeria and this was done without consultation with Nigerians regarding their views. The second amalgamation was also by the Britain's in 1914. Sir Frederick Lugard is best known as the father of the January 1914 amalgamation and later on, Britain governed Nigeria by means of a system popularly referred to as Indirect Rule which is a system of Britain ruling her colonies through local traditional rulers.