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**AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE NIGERIAN STATE**

Nigeria has her history divided into two eras, pre-colonial and colonial.

The colonial period refers to the era that colonial administration was established in the Nigeria.

The pre-colonial period is the period before the coming of the colonialists. It comprises of independent chiefdoms, states, kingdoms and empires. They include: the Borno Empire, Hausa states and Sokoto Caliphate in the North; the Igbo segmentary societies in the East; Benin Kingdom and the Oyo Empire in the West and others in the Benue Valley. All these differ in historical, social and cultural make-ups.

Nigeria is bordered to the south by the Bights of Benin and Biafra, on the west by Benin, on the North by Niger and on the east by Cameroon. In its extreme northeastern corner is Lake Chad.

**EARLY MAN IN NIGERIA**

According to archaeological evidences man had settled in the region since the Palaeolithic period 500,000-9000BC. The evidences mostly stone tools show that Nigerians took part in the stone-age civilization.

The Stone Age can be divided into several periods:

Early Stone Age 3,000,000- 35,000BC; Middle Stone Age 35,000-15,000BC and; Late Stone Age 15,000- 500BC

Major Landmark in Early Nigerian History

* Nok Culture/Civilisation: The discovery of a terracotta (burnt clay) head of a monkey by tin miners in Nok in 1936 prompted their discovieries in other places and any area as such is call Nok civilization area.
* Benin civilization: It was important for its art-work. They carved in wood and ivory and cast objects in bronze and brass.
* Ife Civilization: Is important for its terracotta and bronze heads. Objects such as tools and figures were carved on hard stone called QUARTZ while animal and human figures were carved from granite and decorated with iron nails.
* Igbo Ukwu Civilization: In 1939 many bronze objects and ornaments were discovered accidentally at a burial chamber, pit and a compound wall including also the remains of skeleton of presumably a king and fives slaves who were buried with him.

**Historical Background of Pre-Colonial Political System in Yoruba Land**

The Yorubas are one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria. They trace their origin to Oduduwa as the founder of Yoruba kingdom. According to Johnson from his book History of Yoruba they originated from the North-Eastern Africa and then settled finally in Ile-Ife. It is believed by the Yorubas that Ile-Ife is the centre from which the world was created.

**Political Structure of the Pre-colonial Yoruba Land**

Their political structures were similar in nature in the kingdoms, it consists:

A capital town is headed by the Oba who is both the spiritual and political head of the kingdom. He resides in the Aafin (palace).

Subordinate towns headed by other rulers of lesser rank and status

Villages headed by the baale( third rand of rulers) and Farmlands which were headed by the Oloja( fourth rank of rulers). Chiefs acted as advisers to the King and serve as a link between the king and the members of the ward. The town is the basic political unit and the subordinate towns are the bedrock upon which the administration of the kingdom is based. The pattern of administration is Hierarchical.

**Oyo Empire**: This 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.

**Historical Background of Pre-Colonial Political System in Igbo Land**

Igbos are known for their segmentary way of life as a result of them having no centralized states from ancient times. Igbos are broadly grouped into Igbos of: Eastern Nigeria, South-Eastern Nigeria, North-Eastern Nigeria, Western Igbo and Northern Igbo. The most popular origin story point to Israel however others believe Igboland as the original Homeland.

**Political Structure of the Pre-Colonial Igbo Land**

There were no traditional rulers as the practiced a decentralized system of government. However in each village existed some socio-political institutions to perform legislative, executive, administrative, military and judicial functions, such institutions include the family (headed by an Ofo), council of elders, age grades( youths and young children who cleaned, collected debts, retrived runaway wives, carried out farm work etc) and scret societies( consisted of diviners’ masquerades, they performed rituals). The official religion in pre-colonial Igboland was traditional religion.

**Historical Background of Pre-Colonial political System in Hausa Land**

Hausa land is located in Northern Nigeria and before 1804 it was made up of fourteen states divided into two groups

* Hausa Bakwai( Legitimate states): Daura, Biram, Zaria, Katsina, Kano, Rano and Gobir.
* Hausa Banza( Illegitimate states): Nupe, Gwari, Yauri, Bauchi, Zamfara,Kebbi, Yoruba.

Oral tradition attributed the origin of the Hausa states to a man named Bayajidda an Arab prince and Daura is the place where he founded the Hausa people.

**Political Structure of the Pre-Colonial Hausa Land**

A Hausa state is headed by the Sarki. Sarkin Kasar( ruler of the land) is the full title given to an effective head of Hausa state. He performed both political and spiritual functions and was also the chief executive and judge of the state. However, between 14th and 15th centuries when Islam was adopted many new political institutions arose and it also influenced its judicial system for instance the Sharia law took shape.