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An historical analysis of the evolution of the Nigerian state in salient issues in Government and Nigeria’s politics**.**

The historical background of Nigerian government and politics involves the pre-colonial period and the colonial period in Nigeria. The pre-colonial period is the period before the coming of the colonialists to Nigeria while the colonial period refers to the era that the colonial administration was established in the country. The pre-colonial period consists of different independent chiefdoms, states, kingdoms and empires. These among others, include the Borno Empire, the Hausa states and the Sokoto Caliphate in the North; The Igbo segmentary societies in the East, Benin Kingdom and Oyo empire in the West and several other identities in the Benue valley. This ethnic grouping significantly differs in their historical, social and cultural make-ups.

The exact time when man began to live in Nigeria is unknown but they are archaeological evidences from different parts of Nigeria. The evacuation of a Stone Age skeleton at Iwo Eleru near Akure in Ondo State has shown more light to the earliest occupation of Nigeria.

The man who lived in Nigeria during those early years worked hard to cope with his environment by finding food shelter and clothing. Tools were made during the Stone Age but they were later refined during the middle age and late stone age. They were civilization in different places like Benin, Ife and Igbo ukwu.

The political systems in the precolonial age of Nigeria were majorly the three ethnic groups of Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa/Fulani.

**YORUBA**

Before the advent of the British in Yoruba land, Yoruba kingdoms maintained an orderly and unified political system which is still in effect till today. A Yoruba kingdom (e.g. the Oyo kingdom) was made up of a headquarter (i.e. Olu-Ilu) and other local towns and villages. However, its political administration consisted of a central level and subordinate units.

The central level was headed by the Oba (king) and assisted by a handful of chiefs and other political figures in the administration of the kingdom, while the subordinate units, headed by Baales, concentrated only on the administration of the towns and villages in the kingdom. Like the Oba, the Baale also had a group of chiefs that assisted him in his area of jurisdiction.

However, the Baale of each town and village is entitled to pay annual homage (isakole) to the Oba at the central level. Any erring Baale can be relieved of his post or sanctioned to certain punishment respective of his offense since all Baales were responsible to the Oba at the central level, but this must have the consent of some offices in the administration.

The Yoruba political administration was also based on the ultimate principle of ‘check and balance’ which implies that each of the administrative levels can check, challenge or nullify actions of other levels irrespective of their administrative hierarchy, for example, in the political system of the Oyo empire, the Oyomesi (the 7 hereditary kingmakers headed by Bashorun) and the Are-Ona-Kakanfo (head of the army) acted as checks to the Alaafin who can be deposed by being presented an empty calabash or parrot’s egg if found incompetent or guilty of impeachable crimes, for example, Are-Ona-Kakanfo Afonja, with the help of some of the Oyomesi, presented an empty calabash to Alaafin Aole signifying his rejection as the king which was to be followed by his suicide. However, it can be safely concluded that the Yoruba political system had a semblance to the modern federal system of government.

**THE ALAAFIN:**

The Alaafin was seen as the political head of the empire. He was chosen by the Oyomesi. It was claimed that he could only appear three times a year in public and that was only during some historic festivals.

**The Aremo:**He is the eldest son of the ruling Alaafin but cannot succeed his father at his demise. He can only help his father in the administration of the empire.

**The Oyomesi:**These are the seven hereditary kingmakers in the Oyo empire. Their leader was Bashroun. They were responsible for installing a new Alaafin.

**Baale or Oba:**Each province was administered by Ajele or Oba. They guaranteed the payment of tribute and homage to the Alaafin. There was the claim that these rulers had the power to threaten any hardened Alaafin or chief by invoking the god of thunder and lightning through the cult of Sango, a deified Alaafin.

**The Army (Eso):**Are- ono kankanfo was the head of the army. Oyo had for long maintained a strong army that had been used in winning different wars. It was claimed that if the army should suffer any defeat, the Are- ona- kankanfo was to commit suicide or go on exile.

**The Ogboni Society:**This society posses’ judicial powers and was involved also in policy making. The maintenance and preservation of the cultural