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

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 colonial administration was established in the country Nigeria. The Nigerian state is a colonial creation. It is a product of a historical arrangement that arose out of European adventure with its eventual culmination in the colonisation of Africa. Prior to the emergence of the Nigerian state, pre-colonial Nigeria comprises of different chiefdoms, states, kingdoms and empires.

The exact time man began to live in Nigeria is unknown 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.

The man who lived in Nigeria during those years worked hard to cope with his environment. First, he needed food. For this purpose he began to hunt the animals and to gather fruits.soon, he began to invent tools consisting of pebbles made into chopping and cutting tools. There is evidence of more advanced technology in various parts of Nigeria during the bronze and metal age.

Some of the places where man lived in Nigeria in the very remote past included: Nok, Igbo Ukwu, Ife and Benin among others. They are usually referred to as centres of ancient civilisation. The history of these centres of ancient civilisation presents us with the scientific and technological developments of early Nigerian societies.

**Traditional Political Institutions In Pre-Colonial Nigeria.**

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

The Yorubas are one of the largest ethnic group in Nigeria and are united by language. The Yoruba people 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.

**Political Structure Of The Pre-Colonial Yoruba Land.**

The political structures of the Yoruba kingdoms were similar in nature. Each consisted of a capital town, subordinate towns, villages and farmlands. Each town has a king known as ‘’oba’’ who resides in the place called ‘’Aafin’’. His paraphernalia of office included a beaded crown (Ade), a slippers (bata), horse tail (irukere) and sceptre (Ase). The King also had rulers other rulers of lesser rank and status.

**Historical Background Of Pre-Colonial Political System In Igbo Land**

The Igbo people are best known for their segmentary or acephalous way of life. This is because from the ancient times, they had no centralised states. Consequently, they operated a kind of government without Kings. The Igbo are grouped into five sub-cultures: The Igbo of Eastern Nigeria, The Igbo of South-Eastern Nigeria, The Igbo of North-Eastern Nigeria, The Western Igbo, The Northern Igbo.

**Political Structure Of The Pre-colonial Igbo Land**

In the Igbo traditional society, they had what could be called a diffusion of authority into different groups. They practised direct democracy or a decentralised system of government. Some socio-political institutions existed in each village to perform legislative, executive, administrative, military and judicial functions. Such institutions included the family, council of elders, age of grades and secret societies.

**Historical Background Of Pre-colonial Political System In Hausa Land**

Hausa land is in Northern Nigeria. Before 1804, Hausa land was made up if fourteen states and they were of two distinct groups. The first group of seven states called “Hausa Bakwai” states, that is, Hausa legitimate states. The second group consist of the remaining seven states and were known as “Hausa Banza” states, that is Hausa illegitimate states.

**Political Structure Of The Pre-Colonial Hausa Land**

The “Sarki” was known as the head of any typical Hausa state. He worked wih a retinue of officials in a well-organised court. Sarkin Kasar which means “ruler of the land”, was the title given to the effective and efficient head of Hausa state. The islamisation of Hausa land influenced its judicial system.

**The Birth Of Nigeria As A Geo-Political Entity**

Before the year 1900, all the different parts of Nigeria conquered by the British were still under their original administration. By 1900, the whole Nigeria was under the responsibility of the British colonial office. The May almagamation is known as the first ever British amalgamation in Nigeria. The second almagamation was that of 1914.

**Colonial Administration And Indirect Rule System In Nigeria**

The British were not the first Europeans to land in Nigeria. The Portuguese were the first to land Nigeria through the Bini Kingdom. The trans-atlantic trade was the unfortunate channel that first put the British in contact with Nigeria.