

# CHAPTER NINE

## EVOLUTION OF NIGERIA AS A POLITICAL ENTITY

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### INTRODUCTION

Before Colonialism, there was no Nigeria as we have today. Until 1914, the various peoples living within the geo-political entity now called Nigeria had their separate existence. They had no connections with one another. The only thing that connected them, according to Dudley (1982), was “bitter internecine warfare between them”. It is the Europeans that forced the natives into an uneasy union when they took over the territory.

### The History of Nigeria

The history of Nigeria dates back to the early 2000 BC. During the pre-historic age, the Niger area was populated mostly by the nomadic tribes who grazed their cattle and cultivated crops. From 800 BC the culture of the Nok came into existence. In the history of Nigeria, the Nok were the most well-known ancient settlers within the country's region. They started the trend of making bronze and terracotta sculptures. Gradually, Nigeria history started to take a tangible shape as the different regions of the country started to emerge into prominence, and population started expanding.

During the early 11th Century, many ethnic groups migrated from other countries to the mainland of Nigeria. In the Benin and Oyo regions of Nigeria, kingdoms started growing and Nigerian rulers started expanding their territories to other parts of the country. These rulers were an integral part of the Nigerian history, for under them, famous architectural and historical monuments were built.

Though there is archaeological evidence that societies have been living in Nigeria for more than twenty-five hundred years, the borders of modern Nigeria were not created until the British consolidated their colonial power over the area in 1914. The name Nigeria was suggested by British Journalist Flora Shaw in the 1890s. She referred to the area as Nigeria, after the Niger River, which dominates much of the country's landscape.

The earliest inhabitants of Nigeria were highly civilized people who specialized in different kinds of art forms such as making sculptures out of terracotta

and bronze. There were innumerable kingdoms that were set up by the local rulers of Nigeria, for instance the Benin kingdom and the Yoruba kingdom.

### **The Coming of the Europeans**

The history of Nigeria will be incomplete without an account of British colonial plunder in the “Niger area”. The area now called Nigeria lay in serenity until the coming of the Europeans. The holocaust of the Europeans to the Niger area in particular and Africa in general can be traced to capitalist imperialism which was a direct outcome of the Industrial Revolution in Europe.

Around the 19th Century, the development of capitalism had reached a crisis point. Due to overproduction of goods which is in-keeping with the character of the capitalist system – the production of goods mainly for profit following the law of indefinite expansion – European economy became saturated with goods and given the law of demand and supply; this reduced the prices and consequently the profits of the capitalists.

Consequently, more profitable markets as well as sources of cheap raw materials to replace the depleted stock for their factories, and cheap labour as replacement for the over-exploited and atrophying labourers due to increasing deaths among them from hunger, malnutrition and industrial accidents, were sought for to dispose of the surplus goods produced in Europe. This is what brought the Europeans to the Niger area in particular, and Africa, in general. Before this time, Western explorers had reached Africa and discovered its wealth of human and natural raw materials and cheap labour for European industries.

From the time the British, Portuguese, Dutch and French colonialists arrived within the “Niger Area”, it could no longer hold on to its autonomy. The freedom of the people was disrupted and their history and distinctive existence were disrupted by these colonial powers.

The ubiquity of European powers that sought territories and trade routes to control in Africa led to clashes among them. The resolution of this scramble for Africa and the consequent partitioning of Africa among the European powers at the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 gave Britain formal authority to control the Niger area.

1861 therefore has been accepted as a critical period in the “making” of Nigeria. This was the year Britain formally annexed Lagos as a crown colony in pursuance of the agreements reached at the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885. At this conference, Africa was partitioned among the various European Powers that were struggling to control trade routes in Africa. The ‘Niger area’, which was very strategic, fell under British influence.

This however did not keep other European traders out of the area. To actuate its control of the area and keep other European traders out of the area, Britain had to set up formal administrative paraphernalia in order to have effective control of the area. This was not accomplished without a fight due to the resistance of the natives. After subduing the natives through a series of military expeditions, the British government took over direct control of the territory from the Royal Niger Company

in 1900 and thereafter declared the protectorate of Northern Nigeria in 1903. It went further to declare the protectorate of Southern Nigeria in 1906. This was merged with the colony of Lagos. The stage was set for Nigeria to be delivered as a baby born in due time. In 1914, Sir Lord Lugard, as an adroit political midwife, amalgamated the protectorate of Northern Nigeria with the protectorate of Southern Nigeria to form present-day Nigeria.

Unfortunately, this was done in utter disregard for distinctiveness of the various peoples that formed the union. What was paramount to Lord Lugard and imperial Britain was the reduction of the cost of administration in order to make the exploitative relationship between it and the inhabitants of the area cheaper to the British Crown. But instead of the union helping the natives, it had re-enforced sub-groups identity thereby keeping the people more divided till date.

In 1900, the British government took over direct control of the territory from the Royal Niger Company. In 1903, it declared the protectorate of Northern Nigeria. In 1906, the protectorate of Southern Nigeria was also declared. This was merged with the colony of Lagos. The stage was set for Nigeria to be delivered as a baby born in due time. This took place in 1914 when Sir Lord Lugard amalgamated the protectorate of Northern Nigeria with the protectorate of Southern Nigeria.

There is therefore, no gainsaying the fact that Nigeria is a colonial creation. It was brokered by Imperial Britain for administrative convenience in order to facilitate the exploitative relationship between it and the inhabitants of the area. But instead of the union helping the natives, it had re-enforced sub-groups identity thereby keeping the people as divided as ever.

## **History of Nigerian Colonization**

From the time the British, Portuguese, Dutch and French colonialists arrived within the “Niger Area”, it could no longer hold on to its autonomy. The Nigerian people were subjugated by the foreign colonizers and were transported to other countries as slaves. Slave trade along with the trade in other goods were carried out by the foreign colonialists.

### **The Trans-Sahara Slave Trade**

The trans-Sahara trade with North Africans and Arabs began to transform Nigerian northern societies greatly. Increased contact with the Islamic world led to the conversion of the Kanem-Borno Empire to Islam in the eleventh century. This led to a ripple effect of conversions throughout the north. Islam brought with it changes in law, education, and politics.

The trans-Sahara trade also brought with it revolutions in wealth and class structure. As the centuries went on, strict Islamists, many of whom were poor Fulani, began to be tired of increasing corruption, excessive taxation, and unfair treatment of the poor. In 1804 the Fulani launched a jihad, or Muslim holy war, against the Hausa states in an attempt to cleanse them of these non-Muslim behaviours and to reintroduce proper Islamic ways. By 1807 the last Hausa state had

fallen. The Fulani victors founded the Sokoto Caliphate, which grew to become the largest state in West Africa until its conquest by the British in 1903 (Abiola, 2003).

In the south, the Oyo Empire grew to become the most powerful Yoruba society during the sixteenth century. Along the coast, the Edo people established the Benin Empire (not to be confused with the present-day country of Benin to the west), which reached its height of power in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

As in the north, outsiders heavily influenced the societies of southern Nigeria. Contact with Europeans began with the arrival of Portuguese ships in 1486. The British, French, and Dutch soon followed. Soon after their arrival, the trade in slaves replaced the original trade in goods. Many of the coastal communities began selling their neighbours, whom they had captured in wars and raids, to the Europeans in exchange for things such as guns, metal, jewelry, and liquor.

The slave trade had major social consequences for the Africans. Violence and intertribal warfare increased as the search for slaves intensified. The increased wealth accompanying the slave trade began to change social structures in the area. Leadership, which had been based on tradition and ritual, soon became based on wealth and economic power.

After more than 350 years of slave trading, the British decided that the slave trade was immoral and, in 1807, ordered it stopped. They began to force their new found morality on the Nigerians. Many local leaders, however, continued to sell captives to illegal slave traders. This led to confrontations with the British Navy, which took on the responsibility of enforcing the slave embargo. In 1851 the British attacked Lagos to try to stem the flow of slaves from the area. By 1861 the British government had annexed the city and established its first official colony in Nigeria.

As the non-slave trade (called legitimate trade by the British) began to flourish, so, too, did the Nigerian economy. A new economy based on raw materials, agricultural products, and locally manufactured goods saw the growth of a new class of Nigerian merchants. These merchants were heavily influenced by Western ways. Many soon became involved in politics, often criticizing chiefs for keeping to their traditional ways. A new divide within the local communities began to develop, in terms of both wealth and politics. Because being a successful merchant was based on production and merit, not on traditional community standing, many former slaves and lower-class people soon found that they could advance quickly up the social ladder. It was not unusual to find a former slave transformed into the richest, most powerful man in the area.

During the 19th century, battles for independence took place between the Nigerian nationalists and the British colonizers. Britain established its colonies in almost every part of Nigeria and after phases of gritty and committed fights and political upheavals, Nigeria was finally proclaimed independent on October 1st in the year 1960. Thereby set in motion rule of law in Nigeria; rule of law is one of the attractions of democracy (Willie, Mboho and Udom, 2023).

## **The Nationalistic Movement**

The spread of overt colonial control led to the first and only time that the ethnic groups in modern Nigeria came together under a commonly felt sense of national identity. Nigerians then began to see themselves not as Annang, Efik, Ibibio, Hausa Igbo, or Yoruba, but as Nigerians in a common struggle against colonial domination.

Increased urbanization and higher education brought large multi-ethnic groups together for the first time. As a result of this coming together, these Nigerians saw that they had more in common with one another than they had previously thought. This sparked unprecedented levels of inter-ethnic teamwork. Nigerian political movements, media outfits, and trade unions whose purpose was the advancement of all Nigerians, not specific ethnic groups, became commonplace.

As calls for self-determination and a transfer of power into the hands of Nigerians grew, Britain began to divest more power into the regional governments. As a result of early colonial policies of divide and rule, the regional governments tended to be drawn along ethnic lines. With this move to greater regional autonomy, the idea of a unified Nigeria began to crumble. Regionally and ethnically based political parties sprang up as ethnic groups began to wrangle for political influence.

## **Location**

Nigeria is in West Africa, along the eastern coast of the Gulf of Guinea, and just north of the equator. It is bordered on the west by Benin, on the north by Niger and Chad, and on the east by Cameroon. Nigeria covers an area of 356,669 square miles (923,768 square kilometers), or about twice the size of California, U. S. A.

Nigeria has three main environmental regions: savanna, tropical forests, and coastal wetlands. These environmental regions greatly affect the cultures of the people who live there. The dry, open grasslands of the savanna make cereal farming and cattle herding a way of life for the Hausa and the Fulanis. The wet tropical forests to the south are good for farming fruits and vegetables – main income producers for the Yoruba, Igbo, and others in this area. The small ethnic groups living along the coast, such as the Ijaw and the Kalabari, are forced to keep their villages small due to lack of dry land. Living among creeks, lagoons, and salt marshes makes fishing and the salt trade part of everyday life in the area.

The Niger and Benue Rivers come together in the center of the country, creating a "Y" that splits Nigeria into three separate sections. In general, this "Y" marks the boundaries of the three major ethnic groups, with the Hausa in the north, the Yoruba in the southwest, and the Igbo in the southeast.

## **Population**

Nigeria has the largest population on the African continent. In July 2007, Nigeria's population was estimated at more than 135 million people. At about 345 people per square mile, it is also the most densely populated country in Africa. Nearly one in six Africans is a Nigerian. Despite the rampaging effect of diseases, Nigeria's population has a growth rate of 2.6 percent each year. The Nigerian

population is very young. Nearly forty-five (45) percent of its people are under age fourteen.

The birth rate among the Nigerian people is about 43.26 per 1000 people, while the death rate is 12.01 per 1000 people. The life expectancy for the total population of the Nigerian people is 55.98 years, with 54.69 years for males and 57.3 years for females. The fertility rate is about 6.31 children born per woman. The population growth rate is 3.16%. However the unity among the Nigerian people, in spite of being ethnically diverse, is definitely something unique.

### **Ethnic Breakdown**

With regard to ethnic breakdown, the Hausa-Fulani make up 29 percent of the population, followed by the Yoruba with 21 percent, the Igbo with 18 percent, the Ijaw with 10 percent, the Kanuri with 4 percent, the Annang, Efik and Ibibio together with 3.5 percent, and the Tiv with 2.5 percent. More than 250 ethnic tribes call present-day Nigeria home. The three largest and most dominant ethnic groups are the Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo. Other smaller groups include the Fulani, Ijaw, Kanuri, Annang, Efik, Ibibio, Tiv, Edo etc.

Prior to their conquest by Europeans, these ethnic groups had separate and independent histories. Their grouping together into a single entity known as Nigeria was a construct of their British colonizers. These various ethnic groups never considered themselves part of the same culture. This general lack of Nigerian nationalism coupled with an ever-changing and often ethnically biased national leadership, have led to severe internal ethnic conflicts and a civil war. In recent past, bloody confrontations between or among members of different ethnic groups have been experienced.

There was, and there still is, a sharp distinction between the various regions of the country, (formerly three: the North, the West and the East; now six).

The whole of the North was, and is still occupied by the Hausa-Fulani, the West by the Yoruba and the East by the Igbo. The characteristics of these regions re-enforce the gulf among them. The North has savannah vegetation, while the South and the East have a Mangrove or Rain forest vegetation. Moreover, within these three regions there exist other sub-groups who maintain their separate identity.

The customs of these major groups and also those of the sub-groups are in contra-distinction to one another. Their languages, mores and beliefs are different. The major religion in the North is Islam and that of the South is Christianity. In dress, diet and deportment, there are marked differences among these groups. While the major dress of the Hausas is “babariga” and the major food is “tuwo shinkafa”, the major dress of the Yorubas is “sokoto” and “buba” and their major food is “amala”. “Usobo” or loin cloth is very popular with the Efiks, the Ibibios and the Annangs of South-South Nigeria for dress while “Ekpang Nkukwo” is their major food.

Over and above all these, the different groups had their distinctive political organizations which prove that they had nothing to do with one another before the Europeans came. An understanding of these facts, will enable one to appreciate the



plural nature of the Nigerian nation-state. The faulty foundation upon which the disparate ethnic groups were crammed together to form the country today called Nigeria has created the central political problem for the country since independence (Ojiako, 1981). This problem is the problem of ethnic pluralism.

It has been difficult to find a means of bringing about real integration of these disparate peoples. Concretely, from Akwa Ibom State in the South South to Sokoto in the North West and from Bornu State in North-East to Lagos State in the South West, one still encounters the diverse tongues and conflicting cultures (Ojiako, 1981). Thus, Nigeria is a highly pluralized and fractionalized nation-state. It is not only split along ethnic lines, but also along cultural, linguistic and religious lines. Due to this segmentation and cleavages, conflicts connected with cultural values, social identity, material rewards, etc are deep-rooted in the country's body-politic.

Ethnic conflicts and communal divisions among the various regions of Nigeria have bred a lot of ills in the country. Military coups, corruption and improprieties in public life can be traced to these disparities. The political hegemony of the North over the South till 1999 has resulted in power imbalance, until the recent ascension of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo and latter, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan to the Presidency. Before this time, the hegemony of the North had created frustration that had threatened to tear the country apart, in order, to correct the mistake of 1914 as politicians would say.

The ethnic scene has been dominated by rivalry and hostility among the major ethnic groups. These are reflected in attacks and recriminations in Newspapers controlled by them and in their struggles for leadership of labour unions, political parties and professional organizations (Okwudiba, 1980). Political processes such as elections are characterized by vehement violence and serious fraudulent practices designed to secure advantages for the political parties representing the interests of these groups. Thus, the principal causes of violence in Nigerian politics are ethnic chauvinism and self-aggrandizement.

P.C. Lloyed in (Oyediran, 1979) observed that "Nigeria's problems do... derive in large measure from the tensions which have arisen between the large ethnic groups". But he added; that hostility derives... not (solely) from the ethnic differences, but from competition between peoples of wealth and power. Those who possess either pecuniary power or political power had resorted to using their ethnic base as a launching pad to catapult themselves into greater heights while subjugating those from other ethnic groups.

Self-aggrandizement and materialism is a very outstanding characteristics of the Nigerian society. The crave for wealth has become deep-seated nay, epidemic that every profession is affected. The ethics of some professions have been mortgaged for the desire to get rich quick: from the Police Force to the Armed Forces and from banking to business. In government, efficiency has been exchanged for settlement politics. This phenomenon has eaten deep as a cancer into the Nigerian polity.

## **Cultural Areas of Nigeria and their Characteristics**

Though there is archaeological evidence that societies have been living in Nigeria for more than twenty-five hundred years, the borders of modern Nigeria were not created until the British consolidated their colonial power over the area in 1914 (Oyediran, 1979). The name Nigeria was suggested by British journalist, Flora Shaw in the 1890s. She referred to the area as Nigeria, after the Niger River, which dominates much of the country's landscape. The word *niger* is the Latin word for black.

### **Origin Stories of the various tribes.**

Every ethnic group in Nigeria has its own stories of where its ancestors came from. These vary from tales of people descending from the sky to stories of migration from far-off places. Archaeologists have found evidence of Neolithic humans who inhabited what is now Nigeria as far back as 12,000 B.C. (Blyden, 1967).

The histories of the people in the Northern and Southern Nigeria prior to colonization followed vastly different paths. The first recorded empire in present-day Nigeria was centered in the north at Kanem-Borno, near Lake Chad. This empire came to power during the eighth century A.D. By the thirteenth century, many Hausa states began to emerge in the region as well (Blyden, 1967).

### **The Hausa/Fulani**

The Hausa and Fulani people are located mostly in the Northern part of Nigeria in cities like Kano, Kaduna, Zaria, Sokoto, Kastina, Jos etc. With a population of over 20 million, they have the largest population in West Africa because of their intermarriages and constant interaction with different peoples even outside the country. Their cultural similarities however allowed for significant integration between the two groups, who in modern times are often demarcated as "Hausa-Fulani", rather than as individual groups and many Fulani in the region do not distinguish themselves from the Hausa.

### **Igbo**

Igbo land is the home of the Igbo people and it covers most of Southeast Nigeria. This area is divided by the Niger River into two unequal sections – the eastern region (which is the largest) and the mid-western region. The river, however, has not acted as a barrier to cultural unity; rather it has provided an easy means of communication in an area where many settlements claim different origins.

The Igbo people have historical heritage dated back to the Stone Age and they are industrious people with vibrant and colourful cultural display. It is also surrounded on all sides by other tribes like the Bini, Warri, Ijaw, Ogoni, Igala, Tiv, Yako, Annang and Ibibio.



## **Yoruba**

The Yoruba people live mostly in Southwest Nigeria. They have developed a variety of different artistic forms including pottery, weaving, beadwork, metalwork, and mask making. Most artworks are made to honour the gods and ancestors. There are more than four hundred and one (401) known gods and deities among the Yoruba people. From this context, there are many sculptures and artworks to depict these deities. Because of the multiplicity in the number of gods and deities, the Yoruba have been compared to the ancient Greeks in the number of gods and deities and in the similarities between the structures of the gods and deities (Dudley, 1982).

## **Pre-Colonial Political Structure/the Traditional Systems of Government**

Before 1861, the people of Nigeria in particular and Africa in general had developed well-functioning political organizations that adequately met their need for self-government. Thus, the claim by apologists of colonialism that the African was like a minor that needed a tutor is a misnomer.

The fact that the different ethnic nations in Nigeria had clear, distinct and adequate systems of government is proved by the action of the British Government when it formerly annexed the territory now called Nigeria. Realizing the adequacy of the already existing political organization, the colonial government went ahead to adapt them to suit its purpose. In effect, the policy called “Indirect Rule” was not an attempt by Britain to bequeath the Nigerian people with a political system which they did not have but an attestation by the colonial power that the indigenous political organization was adequate and could be adapted without modifications to suit its purpose.

All these prove that these disparate peoples had no common identity before the coming of the Europeans. According to Dudley (1982), “the only historical link between the sub-groups within each of the major groups was that of bitter internecine warfare between them”. This was the situation that the Europeans met when they came.

## **The Traditional Political Organization in Northern Nigeria**

The pre-colonial political system in Northern Nigeria was based on the Emirate system. It was a system where power was concentrated in the hands of an individual called the Emir. The initiator of this system was Uthman Dan Fodio, a Fulani who waged an Islamic Holy war called Jihad to subdue and subjugate the hitherto dominating Hausas.

The Emirate was divided into two Empires administered from Sokoto and Gwandu by the two sons of Uthman Dan Fodio. It is from these two centers that other Emirates which were either deputed to Sokoto or to Gwandu were created.

Under the Emirs, who were the paramount authorities of the emirate, were the “Hakimis” who were appointed by the Emir to rule, maintain law and order and

collect taxes and tributes for the Emir in the various districts that make up the Emirate. The Hakimis in turn had the village heads appointed by them to oversee the affairs of the various villages under their districts subordinate to them.

Apart from the Hakimis, the Emir also had other office holders directly responsible to him. These officers which were either in charge of routine daily administration, defense and military matters, or served as advisers to the Emir were usually consulted by the Emir before major decisions were taken. The Emir necessarily consulted with these officers before taking important decisions because an unpopular decision can lead to his dethronement by a concert of his subordinates.

The Emir was both a political and religious leader. He ruled the Emirate by the Sharia or Islamic law, but also made supplementary laws where the Sharia Law had no express provision. The Sharia laws were interpreted by the Alkalis who were specially trained in Islamic Laws and Principles. They ran the Alkali courts in the Emirate and punish offenders according to Muslim laws. The Emir was required to be personally present in court when cases like settlement of land disputes that were not covered by the Islamic law were considered.

The Hausa kingdom was characterized by farming, works of craftsmen, traders and kings. King Mohammed Rumfa of Kano who reigned from 1463 to 1499 is credited by the *Kano Chronicles* with impressive innovations. These included the extension of the city walls, building of a new palace and the building of the Kurmi market, the main market of Kano City. His military innovations included his instructions to his foot soldiers to accompany the horse and take over among them (Eminue, 2005). From the foregoing, one discovers that the Hausa system was Monarchic with indigenous modifications of decentralization for proper control.

### **The Igbo Political System**

The Igbo system was an epitome of Western democracy. All male adults participated in government. At the regular village assembly meetings, which patterned the Greek "*Ekklesia*", there were popular political discussions. Decisions were arrived at by the elders who met to consider the various opinions made by all the adults in the general assembly. After consultation, the elders returned with a verdict for the waiting assembly. There was no hierarchy of positions. This gave the Igbo political organization a republican or democratic characteristic.

For the Igbo, the village, made up of the kindred, "the umunna", a group of families that originated from one father was the largest political and social unit. Each village was independent of the other. They had no political, military or ancestry figure that welded them into a whole like the Hausas or Yorubas. Each small village had its own myths.

The government was in the hands of the male adults who were representatives of their families. The method by which decisions were arrived at during the regular village assembly meetings where all those present had a say gave the Igbo political organization a Republican characteristic. The council of Elders

which shared political offices was responsible for the resolution of conflicts concerning land tenure, market disputes, divorce and succession.

Even though there were people appointed as chiefs over the villages, such chiefs were only nominal heads without real executive powers. They did not enjoy the privilege of taxing or getting tributes from the people. The only privilege they enjoyed was having the age-grades to work for them during the farming season.

The adult population was divided into age-grades to take charge of communal property, police the villages and look after the roads, etc. The Igbo system was the most equalitarian and achievement-oriented system in pre-colonial Nigeria. The Western liberal democratic principle of personal achievement was the mark of distinction in Igbo land. Birth and old age were not the criteria for social mobility. Physical prowess was demanded of leaders. Hence, leaders were to constantly distinguish themselves through greater achievements or else they were superseded by aspiring young men.

### **Political Organization of the Yoruba**

The Yoruba system was not so centralized like that of the Hausas. It was made up of kingdoms, each consisting of a capital town and a number of subordinate towns and villages. By the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the political systems of the Yoruba Kingdoms were fully developed and needed a hierarchical arrangement to be made. The various Kingdoms of Oyo, Egba, Ijebu, Ife, Ijesha, Akoko, and Ekiti with Oyo as the centre subsumed under the Yoruba kingdom had similar political organizations when compared.

Each Kingdom consisted of a capital town, a member of subordinate towns and villages. Each of the major Kingdoms was ruled by Obas who can trace their linkage to Oduduwa. Ruling of various towns and villages was delegated to Obas of lesser ranks and Baale, respectively. Next to the ranks of the Baale were the Olosa who constituted a fourth rank of rulers. Thus, the Yoruba system was Oligarchic. Each Oba had his supporting chiefs who advised him on various political issues. They were usually grouped into two: (1) Those on the right hand who represented the Oba's interest, and, (2) Those on the left hand who represented the interest of the commoners.

The leaders of the two ranks constituted the Oba's Supreme Council. There were also religious chiefs called Ota in Ife and Owo in other kingdoms. They were not allowed to sit with the other chiefs in the council, but sat separately in other parts of the palace. Civil and religious affairs in the Yoruba kingdom were, however, inseparable. No major political decision can be taken without the consent of the religious chiefs who consulted various deities before such decisions could be taken. There were also chiefs who acted as chairmen or presidents of various trades or professions in the Yoruba Kingdom. Below the town chiefs were the heads of families. They were represented in the council or sit in time of emergencies.

In Summary, the chain of command went through the chiefs to the Baale, then to the citizens and in some circumstances, through the presidents of the various

occupations to the members. It is pertinent to say that each person stood in a well defined and recognized relationship with others. The Oba enjoyed certain privileges but they also had certain limitations placed on their powers. These limitations were included in the “*eewo*” which were recounted to them during installation ceremonies. This “*eewo*” were designed to check despotism on the part of the Obas and his immediate family, to promote harmony among various elements in the town, most especially when the monarchy appeared to have displaced the earlier ones in order to ensure orderly existence of the people.

Just as the Oba had his *eewo*, which he must not violate (the violation of the *eewo* carries a penalty), the other chiefs also had theirs. A king who violated the *eewo* was to vacate his throne and have his life taken from him. This is so because any Oba dethroned will have to die because he would not be able to stay with the people as a common man. The chief who violated the *eewo* must also vacate his throne and another person in his family will be installed. But when the crime committed is seen as something very serious, the whole family will not be allowed to enjoy the chieftaincy institution and political privileges. The throne will be given to another family. The rulers of any Kingdom will ensure that no town violates its *eewo*, for it is believed that the violation could bring untold or serious hardship and even can cause the destruction of the time.

### **The Benin Kingdom**

In the Western forest belt were the “Bini” speaking people of the Benin kingdom. Just like the Hausas, they had a centralized system. The hundred years between 1450 and 1550 were a period of social reforms and of innovations in statecraft in the Benin Kingdom. Like their contemporaries elsewhere in Africa, the Benin kings of that era were busy expanding and consolidating their rule, curbing unruly nobles, elevating the king’s men to important offices, establishing or reforming imperial administrations, and creating professional, full-time armies to replace the draft armies of their past (Chinweizu 1978).

One of these men was Oba Ewuare of Benin who came to power in 1440. Oba Ewuare went on an expansionist campaign, after ascending the throne of Benin. The result was that two hundred new towns were conquered and integrated into his kingdom. He built good roads in Benin City, added new walls and ditches to the city’s defenses and also encouraged wood and ivory carving. He established the State Council of Benin, thus giving to the Kingdom a strong central government

In 1504, Oba Ewuare was succeeded by Oba Esigie. Oba Esigie came to power after a dynastic struggle. Due to this experience and his desire to stop future disputes over succession, he dissolved the *Uzama*, a body of influential nobles who served as King-makers; instituted succession by primogeniture or by royal accession and replaced rule through independent nobles with rule through palace chiefs and town chiefs who owe allegiance to the throne. Through these reforms the Esigies’ Benin was consolidated into a wealthy, large and powerful Kingdom (Hall, 1974).

### **The People of the Niger Delta**

This area can be classified into two groups: (1) The people of the lower Niger area; the Ijaws, the Itshikiris, the Urhobos; and, (2) The people of the upper delta area. The upper delta area is the homeland of the Isokos, the Ikwalis and the Robo. From this classification, we can say that the people of the Delta area are not homogeneous in terms of linguistic and other cultural activities. The area is heterogeneous.

Their social and political institution can be identified as; (1) The kingdom of Agbor and Isukuri; (2) Fragmented system of government. The basic unit of social and political organization among the above is the village groups that are made up of people who claim descent from a common ancestor.

In recent times, the Niger Delta has come to the fore in the Nigerian politics due to the activities of oil prospecting and oil exploration companies that are exploiting oil that is present in abundance in the Niger Delta offshore and the attendant effects of oil exploration on the people and the ecosystem of the Niger Delta which has not been adequately compensated for.

The Niger Delta derives its name from the delta of the Niger River in Nigeria where it is located. It is a densely populated region sometimes called the Oil Rivers because it was once a major producer of palm oil. The area was the British Oil Rivers Protectorate from 1885 until 1893, when it was expanded and became the Niger Coast Protectorate.

The Niger Delta, as now defined officially by the Nigerian government, extends over about 70,000 km<sup>2</sup> and makes up 7.5% of Nigeria's land mass. Historically and cartographically, it consists of present day Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers States. In 2000, however, Obasanjo's regime included Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Cross River, Edo, Imo and Ondo States in the region. Indigenous people (ethnic groups) of the Niger Delta are the Efik, Ibibio, Annang, Oron, Ijaw, Itsekiri, Urhobo and Kalabari with a population of over twenty million people. With migration, there are about thirty-one million people in the Niger Delta Area of Nigeria and more than forty ethnic groups including the indigenous Niger Delta people.

The South-South Niger Delta, also known as the "South South Zone", includes Akwa Ibom State, Bayelsa State, Cross River State, Delta State, Edo State and Rivers State. The delta is an oil-rich region, and has been the centre of international controversy over devastating pollution, kleptocracy (notably by the Abacha regime), and human rights violations in which Royal Dutch Shell has been implicated.

### **The Niger Delta Struggle**

During the colonial period, the core Niger Delta was a part of Eastern Region of Nigeria, which came into being in 1951 (one of the three regions, and later one of the four regions). This region included the people from colonial Calabar and Ogoja divisions, which are the present Ogoja, Annang, Ibibio, Oron, the Efik people, the Ijaw, and some Igbo communities. The National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) was the first ruling political party that dominated the region. NCNC later became the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens, after western Cameroon

decided to withdraw from Nigeria. The party did not seek to preclude the withdrawal; it even encouraged it (Noah, 1988).

In 1953, the old Eastern Region had a major crisis due to the expulsion of Professor Eyo Ita from office by the majority Igbo tribe of the old eastern region. Eyo Ita from Calabar was one of the pioneer nationalists who fought for Nigerian independence. He was an Efik man. The minorities in the region, the Ibibio, Annang, Efik, Ijaw and Ogoja, demanded a State of theirs, and the Calabar-Ogoja-Rivers (COR) State. The struggle for the creation of the COR State continued and was a major issue on the status of minorities in Nigeria during debates in Europe for Nigeria independence. A second phase of the struggle saw the declaration of an Independent Niger Delta Republic by Isaac Adaka Boro during Ironsi's administration, just before the Nigerian Civil War.

During the Nigerian civil war, Southeastern State of Nigeria was created (also known as Southeastern Nigeria or Coastal Southeastern Nigeria), which had the colonial Calabar division, and colonial Ogoja division. Rivers State was also created. Southeastern State and River State became two states for the minorities of the old eastern region, and the majority Igbo of the old eastern region had a State called East Central State. Southeastern State was renamed Cross River State and was later split into Cross River State and Akwa Ibom State. Rivers State was later divided into Rivers State and Bayelsa State (Ojiake, 1981).

Phase three saw the request for justice and the end of marginalization of the area by the Nigerian government with Ken Saro Wiwa as the lead figure for this phase of the struggle. The indigenes cried for lack of development even though the Nigerian oil money is from the area. They also complained about environmental pollution and destruction of their land and rivers by oil companies. Ken Saro Wiwa and nine (9) Ogoni leaders were killed by the Nigerian Federal Government under General Sani Abacha. Unfortunately, the struggle got out of control, and the present phase, the phase four, has become militant. Summarily, the States typically considered part of the Niger Delta region are: Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo, Rivers.

### **Western (or Northern) Niger Delta**

Western Niger Delta consists of the western section of the coastal South-South Nigeria which includes Delta, Edo, and Ondo States. The western (or Northern) Niger Delta is an heterogeneous society with several ethnic groups with Ijaw as the majority. Other ethnic groups include Urhobo, Ezon, Igbo, Isoko, Itsekiri, and Ukwuani groups in Delta State, along with Yoruba in Ondo State. Their main occupation is fishing and farming. History has it that the Western Niger was controlled by chiefs of five separate powerful nations with whom the British government had to sign separate "Treaties of Protection" within their formation of "Protectorates" that later became southern Nigeria. The five Chiefs were the Chiefs of Itsekiri, Isoko, Ukwuani, Ijaw and Urhobo (Ojiako, 1981).



### **Central Niger Delta**

Central Niger Delta consists of the central section of the coastal South-South Nigeria which includes Bayelsa and Rivers States. The Central Niger Delta region has the Ijaw (including the Nembe-Brass, Ogbia, Kalabari, Ibanis (Opobo, Bonny etc.), Okrika, Andoni, the Ogoni, the Ekpeye, Ndoni, Etche, Ikwerre, and Ndoki in Rivers State (Kougoulas, 1971).

### **Eastern Niger Delta**

Eastern Niger Delta Section consists of the Eastern (or Atlantic) section of the coastal South-South Nigeria which includes Akwa Ibom and Cross River States. The Eastern Niger Delta region has the Efik, Ibibio, Annang, Oron, Ogoja (including Ekoi and Bekwara) people, who are all related with a common language and legendary ancestor (Rodney, 1995).

Generally, in Nigeria today, as the scope of socio-economic competition widens, the number of individuals who need the solace of ethnic group identity increases. With such an increase, “the effective size of the competing groups enlarges and their competitive power becomes more formidable. The result is that ethnic tension is exacerbated (Okwudiba, 1980:226).

### **The People and Culture of Akwa Ibom State**

Akwa Ibom is a State in Nigeria. It is located in the coastal South-Southern part of the country, lying between latitudes 4°32'N and 5°33'N North, and longitudes 7°25'E and 8°25'E East. The State is bordered on the east by Cross River State, on the west, by Rivers State and Abia State, and on the South partly by the Atlantic Ocean and partly by Cross River State (Rodney, 1995).

Akwa Ibom is one of Nigeria's thirty-six (36) States with a population of over five (5) million people and more than ten (10) million people in Diaspora. It was created in 1987 from the former Cross River State and is currently the highest oil and gas producing State in the country. The State's capital, Uyo has over five hundred thousand (500,000) inhabitants. Akwa Ibom has an airport, Akwa Ibom International Airport (AKIA) and two major sea ports on the Atlantic Ocean with a proposed construction of a world class seaport, the Ibaka Seaport. Along with English, the main languages spoken here are Ibibio, Annang, and Oron languages (Rodney, 1995).

Uyo is the capital city of Akwa Ibom State. Eket, Ikot Ekpene, Oron, Abak, Ibeno, Ikot Abasi, Mkpato-Enin, Ukanafun, Etinan, Ika are a few of many prominent cities.

### **Administrative Areas**

Akwa Ibom is divided into 31 Local Government Areas: Abak, Eastern Obolo, Eket, Esit-Eket, Essien Udim, Etim-Ekpo, Etinan, Ibeno, Ibesikpo-Asutan, Ibiono-Ibom, Ika, Ikono, Ikot Abasi, Ikot Ekpene, Ini, Itu, Mbo, Mkpato-Enin, Nsit-Atai, Nsit-Ibom, Nsit-Ubium, Obot-Akara, Okobo, Onna, Oron, Oruk Anam, Ukanafun, Udung-Uko, Uruan, Urue-Offong/Oruko, and Uyo (Nkoyo, 2002).

## **History and Demography**

History has it that the people of Akwa Ibom State arrived in what is now Nigeria between 1200 and 1500 BC. Akwa Ibom State was created out of Cross River State on September 23, 1987. The main ethnic groups of the state are Ibibio, Annang and Oron. The people are predominantly of the Christian faith. The Ibibio are the largest group, whilst the Annang, which form the second largest group, speak a variant dialect of the Efik language. The Oro [Oron] is an ethnic group (akin to Efik) found in five of the State's Local Government Areas. Located at the Ocean and contiguous to Oron is a group of Ibibio called Eket. The Annang, Efik and Ibibio languages belong to the Benue-Congo language family, which form part of the Niger-Congo group of languages (Nkoyo, 2002).

Despite the homogeneity, no central government existed among the people of what is now Akwa Ibom State prior to the British invasion in 1904. Instead, the Annang, Efik/Oron, Ibibio were all autonomous groups. Scottish missionaries arrived in Calabar in 1848. The British did not firmly establish control until 1904. In that year, the Enyong Division was created encompassing the area of the current State of Akwa Ibom, with the headquarters at Ikot Ekpene, an Annang city described by the noted Africanist Kaanan Nair, as the cultural and political capital of Annang and Ibibio. Thus, history has it that Ikot Ekpene was the first created Local Government Authority in Nigeria (Nkoyo, 2002).

The creation of Enyong Division, for the first time allowed the numerous ethnic groups to come together. This further provided avenue for the creation of the Ibibio Welfare Union, later renamed Ibibio State Union. Though the social organization was first organized as an improvement union and a forum for the educated groups who were shut out from the colonial administration in 1929, some historians have wrongly pointed to the union to buttress their argument on the homogeneity of the groups in the area. In all, when Akwa Ibom State was created in 1987, Uyo was chosen as the State capital in order to spread development as much as possible.

## **Education**

Akwa Ibom State like old Calabar region encountered western education first with the establishment of Hope Waddel Training Institute, Calabar in 1895, Methodist Boys High School (MBHS), Oron in 1905 and other top flight schools like the Holy Family College, (HOFACO) Abak, etc. Currently various higher educational institutions are spread across the State. Some higher Institutions of learning in the State include:

- I. University of Uyo
- II. Maritime Academy of Nigeria, Oron
- III. Akwa Ibom State University
- IV. Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic
- V. Obong University, Obong Ntak Inyang
- VI. Uyo City Polytechnic
- VII. Apex Polytechnic

- VIII. School of Nursing; Uyo, Eket, Oron, Ikot Ekpene, Etinan
- IX. Akwa Ibom State College of Education, Afaha Nsit
- X. School of Basic Studies
- XI. College of Arts & Science, Nnung Ukim

### **Politics**

Politics in Akwa Ibom State is dominated by the three main ethnic groups, the Ibibio, Annang and Oron. Of these three, the Ibibio remains the dominant and has held sway in the State since its creation. However, in 2007, Chief Dr. Godswill Obot Akpabio, CON, an Annang son is happily and successfully piloting the affairs of governance till 2015 with his uncommon transformation strategies.

### **The Ibibios**

The Ibibio people are an ethnic group in the south-south Nigeria. They are closely related to the Annang and the Efik peoples. "Ibibio" may also refer to those who speak the Ibibio language. During the colonial period in Nigeria, the Ibibio Union was formed asking for recognition by the British as a sovereign State (Noah, 1988). The Annangs, Efiks, Eki, Oron and Ibeno share similar names, culture and tradition with the Ibibios. They understand Ibibio language and most can speak same.

### **Geography**

The Ibibio people are found predominantly in Akwa Ibom state and are made up of the related Annang community, the Ibibio community and the Eket and Oron communities, although other groups generally understand the Ibibio language. Because of the larger population of the Ibibio people, they hold political control over Akwa-Ibom State, but government is shared with the Annangs, Eket and Oron. The political system follows the traditional method of consensus. Even though elections are held, practically, the political leadership are pre-discussed in a manner that is beneficial to all.

### **Location of Ibibio Land**

The Ibibio people are located in Southeastern Nigeria also known as Coastal Southeastern Nigeria. Prior to the existence of Nigeria as a Nation, the Ibibio people had self-government. The Ibibio people became a part of the Eastern Nigeria under British colonial rule. During the Nigerian Civil War, the Eastern region was split into three states. Southeastern State of Nigeria (one of the original twelve states of Nigeria after Nigerian independence) was where the Ibibio were located. The Efik, Annang, Oron, Eket and their brothers and sisters of the Ogoja District, were also in the Southeastern State. The State (Southeastern State) was later partitioned into two States (Akwa Ibom State and Cross River State).

### **History and Origin of the Ibibio**

The Ibibio people have lived in the Cross River area of modern day Nigeria for several hundred years, and while written information about them only exists in colonial records from the late 19th century on, oral traditions have it that they have been in the region much earlier than this. With common ancestors, the Ibibio also include the Eket and Ibeno.

"Ibio-ibio" means short or brief and doesn't have anything to do with height of the Ibibios. The name was given due the Ibibio's brief way of doing things. There are many areas in Ibibio land that have their dialectical differences. In some places, a family is called *ekwere*, "Ikot" and *ekpuk* in other areas. Goat is called *ibut* in Eastern Ibibio Ikono (present day Ikono Local Government Area) but called *ebot* in others. Head is pronounced *iwud* in some areas but called *ibuot* in others. Road is called *okpo-di-ghe* and *usung* in other places. In Ibeno, house is called "ulok" and while it is called "ufok" by some other Ibibio groups. The name "Ikot" often replaces "the house of... or the people of", referring to their origin or ancestors. Another meaning for Ikot in Ibibio land is bush.

### **Economy**

The main economic staple in the region is the palm tree, the oil of which is extracted and sold to external markets. Among the Ibibio, those of the highest rank in the Ekpo society, Amama, often control the majority of the community wealth. The Amama often appropriate hundreds of acres of palm tree for their own use and ensure with the profits they earn that their sons achieve comparable rank, effectively limiting access to economic gain for most members of the community. The Ekpo society requires that its initiates sponsor feasts for the town, which fosters the appearance of the redistribution of wealth by providing the poor with food and drink for the period. In effect, this allows the disparity in wealth to be perpetuated in Ibibio society.

### **Political System**

While "kingship" and chieftaincy among the Ibibio are modern creations (introduced during colonialism), traditionally Ibibio society consists of villages and towns ruled by a group of elders (Ekpo Ndem Isong) and the heads of extended families. Their decisions are enforced by members of the Ekpe society who act as messengers of the ancestors (ikan). Ekpo members are always masked when performing their policing duties, and although their identities are almost always known, fear of retribution from the ancestors prevents most people from accusing those members who overstep their social boundaries. Membership is open to all Ibibio males, but one must have access to wealth to move into the politically influential grades.

### **Religion – Pre-Colonial Era**

Ibibio religion is based on paying tribute to the village ancestors. Failing to appease these ancestors will result in the wrath of the Ekpe society. The most

important ancestors are those who achieved high rank while living, usually the house heads. They may control the fortunes of the descendants and are free to afflict those who fail to make the proper offering or those who fail to observe kinship norms. *Ikpa Isong* is the earth deity and is appeased through *Obom* ceremony, which is believed to make children plentiful and to increase the harvest. It is performed in the middle of the year, every eighth day for eight weeks by each section of the village in turn.

The Ibibio as well as the Annang and Oron Nations practiced the killing of twins before it was abolished during the colonial era, with the help of missionary Mary Slessor. It was common practice for twin babies to be taken to their community's local evil forest and left to die as it was a taboo for twins to be born. This belief corresponds with the same taboo that had been found with the Igbo people.

### **Religion –Colonial and Post-Colonial Era**

The Ibibios were introduced to Christianity through the work of early missionaries in the 19th century. Samuel Bill started his work at Ibeno. He established the Qua Iboe Church which later spread to places in the Middle Belt of Nigeria. The Methodist Church, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Presbyterian Church rode into the Ibibio hinterland. Later, other churches were also introduced, for example, the Apostolic Church. Independent churches, like Deeper Life Bible Church, came into the area in the second part of the 20th century. Today Ibibio people are predominately Christian.

### **Written Language and Art Form of Ibibio People**

The official language of Ibibio people is the Ibibio-Efik Language (or Efik-Ibibio Language). A variant dialect of their language includes Eket (also known as Ekid). The masks and accouterments of the Ekpe society make up the greatest works of art in Ibibio society. Drumming and music are also important elements in Ekpe ceremonies. The wooden sculpture from this area is also very detailed, and artists are just as likely to capture beauty as they are the hideous forms of evil spirits.

### **The Annangs**

The Annang (also spelled Anaang) is a cultural and ethnic group that lives in the Coastal South-South Nigeria (former Southeastern State of Nigeria). At present, the Annangs have eight local government areas of the present thirty-one local government areas in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria (Akwa Ibom State Local Government Areas), namely Abak, Essien Udim, Etim Ekpo, Ika, Ikot Ekpene, Obot Akara, Oruk Anam and Ukanafun in the Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. They were formerly located in the former Abak and Ikot Ekpene Divisions of the Annang Province, in the former Eastern Region of Nigeria.

## Culture

Annang society is patriarchal. Individuals locate their place in the social world from the womb, literally translated as *Idip*. Thus a brother or sister from the same *Idip* means that they can trace their origin to the same mother or father. Since polygamy is practiced in the society, those who can so trace their ancestry to the same parents form *Ufok* (literally a house or compound). Several *ufoks* make up *Ekpuks* or extended family and several *Ekpuks* (extended families) make up "Idung" (meaning village) and several villages make up the "*awio*" or clan.

Leadership at the family, lineage, village, or clan level remains the prerogative of the men, and lineage ties extend to women even after marriage. There are many societies and associations (*Nka*) for men and women which are very important in traditional village life. Individuals are measured by both the number and types of memberships in *Nka*'s and by the achievements of one or more *Nkas*. Governance is done by elderly males who act as the legislative arm called *Afe Isong*, directed by the *Obong* or *Obong Isong* (Village Chief and Clan Chief) who is the head and the chief executive but without the authority beyond what the *Afe Isong* gives.

A chief can be appointed by the *Afe* or can be an inherited office. The strength of any individual, family (or group for that matter) is typically based upon a consensus of the village or clan through this complex social system. In all this, Annang women are not completely subordinate to men. Instead Annang women are partners and leaders in many aspects of Annang tradition, including serving as female chief priests "*Abia Idiong*" in the Idiong cult or as healers in the healing cults. The first-born female known as *Adiaha* is important and commands respect in the family and lineage. Some traditions hold that a woman's first birth should take place in her mother's compound. Women organizations such as "*abi-de*" and "*Nyaama*", and "*Isong Iban*" play important roles in giving the women voice and status in society. There are no traditional or cultural barriers that prevent women from attaining high offices or positions. Indeed, traditionally Annang women have a great deal of economic independence from men.

Annangs value the ability to speak well and oratory ability using proverbs is highly desirable, especially among the leaders. The American anthropologist, Peter Farb, (1989) stated that the name "Annang" among this group means 'they who speak well'. An individual who has the gift of eloquent speech is often complimented as *Akwo Annang* meaning the singer of Annang.

The Annangs are known for the efficacy of their charms, prowess in trading, and their renowned art. This extends to mural paintings, raffia, masks, cement sculptures, markets, ceremonies and exceptional food. Above all, Annang people possess unparalleled academic and scientific knowledge.

## Languages

There are more than 250 languages spoken in Nigeria. English is considered to be the official language. However, it is notable that a little above 50% of the populations are able to speak in English. Every tribe has its own language, which they prefer following as the standard mode of communication among themselves.



However, English is used in all government interactions and instruction in state-run schools. In a country with more than two hundred and fifty (250) individual tribal languages, English is the only language common to most people.

In northern Nigeria many people who are not ethnic Hausas speak both Hausa as well as their own tribal language. Hausa is the oldest known written language in West Africa, dating back to before 1000 C.E.

The dominant indigenous languages of the south are Yoruba and Igbo. Prior to colonization, these languages were the unifying languages of the southwest and southeast, respectively, regardless of ethnicity. However, since the coming of the British and the introduction of mission schools in southern Nigeria, English has become the language common to most people in the area. Today those who are not ethnic Yorubas or Igbos rarely speak Yoruba or Igbo.

Pidgin, a mixture of African languages and English, also is common throughout Nigeria. It basically uses English words mixed into Yoruba, Igbo or other grammar structures. Pidgin originally evolved from the need for British sailors to find a way to communicate with local merchants. Today, it is often used in ethnically mixed urban areas as a common form of communication among people who have not had formal education in English.

### **The Nigerian Flag and National Symbolism**

Because there is little feeling of national unity among Nigerians, there is little in terms of national symbolism. What exists today was created or unveiled by the government as representative of the nation. The main national symbol is the country's flag. The national flag of Nigeria comprises two different colours: two vertical green stripes along with a white stripe in between. The green stripes of the Nigerian flag connote that the land is full of lush green vegetation and the white symbolizes sanctity and a sense of togetherness and solidarity. Other national symbols include the national coat of arms, the national anthem, the National Pledge (similar to the Pledge of Allegiance in the United States), and Nigeria's national motto: Peace and Unity, Strength and Progress.

The Nigerian Flag was first hoisted on 1st October, 1960 when Nigeria was proclaimed independent by the British colonizers. The flag of Nigeria is hoisted all over the country during festive occasions, especially on the Nigerian Independence Day anniversary.

### **Description of the Nigerian Flag**

The design of the Nigerian flag was taken into consideration in the year 1959, when a competition was held on the Nigerian grounds. This flag was chosen among 2870 other flags. The designing of the flag was done by an Ibadan student named Michael Taiwo Akinkunmi. The size of the flag is quite large and its width is as much as its length.

### **Flag Laws of Nigeria**

There are certain laws governing the usage of the Nigerian national flag, which symbolizes power and authority. The flag laws are kept intact by the “Coat-of-Arms” statute. The Nigerian national flag has one of the most authentic national connotations that remind Nigerians of their glorious past and the freedom struggle carried out by the freedom fighters of the nation against the British colonizers.

### **The Nigerian Economy**

The Nigerian economy is going through a phase of development in recent years. Nigeria has been traditionally dependent upon agriculture and animal farming to a large extent. Most of the lands in Nigeria are utilized for farming and grazing purposes. The agricultural economy of Nigeria allows hundreds of rural people to take up farming and cultivation as the main source of their livelihood.

Since the 1960s, Nigeria's economy has been based on oil production. As a leading member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Nigeria has played a major role in influencing the price of oil on the world market. The oil-rich economy led to a major economic boom for Nigeria during the 1970s, transforming the poor African country into the thirtieth richest country in the world. However, falling oil prices, severe corruption, political instability, and economic mismanagement since then have left Nigeria no better off today than it was at independence.

Since the restoration of civilian rule in 1999, Nigeria has begun to make strides in economic reforms. While hopes are high for a strong economic transformation, high unemployment, high inflation, and more than a third of the population living under the poverty line indicate it will be a long and difficult road.

Oil production has had some long-lasting ethnic consequences as well. While oil is Nigeria's largest industry in terms of output and revenue, oil reserves are found only in the Niger Delta region and along the coast. The government has long taken the oil revenues and dispersed them throughout the country. In this way, states not involved in oil production still get a share of the profits. This has led to claims that the minority ethnic groups living in the delta are being cheated out of revenue that is rightfully theirs because the larger ethnic groups dominate politics. Sometimes this has led to large-scale violence.

More than 50 percent of Nigeria's population works in the agricultural sector. Most farmers engage in subsistence farming, producing only what they eat themselves or sell locally. Very few agricultural products are produced for export.

While the federal government has the legal right to allocate land as it deems fit, allocation of land and land tenure remains largely a local issue. Most local governments follow traditional land tenure customs in their areas. For example, in the north, which is predominated by Hausa society, title to land is not an absolute right. While communities and officials will honour long-standing hereditary rights to areas of land traditionally claimed by a given family, misused or abandoned land may be reapportioned for better use. Land also can be bought, sold, or rented. In the west, the Yoruba kings historically held all the land in trust, and therefore also had a

say in how it was used for the good of the community. This has given local governments in modern times a freer hand in settling land disputes. In present day south-south of Nigeria, land is held in trust by family heads. Therefore, traditionally, only men hold land, but as the wealth structure continues to change and develop in Nigeria, wealthy women do purchase land for themselves.

### **The Nigerian Civil War**

Nigeria gained full independence from Britain on October 1, 1960. Immediately following independence, vicious fighting between and among political parties, created chaos within the fledgling democracy. On 15th January 1966 a group of army officers, most of whom were Igbos, staged a military coup, killing many of the government ministers from the western and northern tribes. Six months later, northern forces within the military staged a counter coup, killing most of the Igbo leaders. Anti-Igbo demonstrations broke out across the country, especially in the north. Hundreds of Igbos were killed, while the rest fled to the present-day southeast.

On May 26, 1967, the Igbo-dominated south-east declared its secession from Nigeria to form the Republic of Biafra. This torched off a bloody civil war that lasted for three years. In 1970, on the brink of widespread famine resulting from a Nigeria-imposed blockade, Biafra was forced to surrender. Between five hundred thousand and two million Biafran civilians were killed during the civil war, most dying from starvation, not combat.

Following the war, the military rulers encouraged a national reconciliation, urging Nigerians to once again become a unified people. While this national reconciliation succeeded in reintegrating the Biafrans into Nigeria, it did not end the problems of ethnicity in the country. In the years that followed, Nigeria was continually threatened by disintegration due to ethnic fighting. These ethnic conflicts reached their height in the 1990s.

After decades of military rule, elections for a new civilian president were finally held on June 12, 1993. A wealthy Yoruba Muslim named Moshood Kashimawo Abiola won the elections, beating the leading Hausa candidate. Abiola won support not only from his own people but from many non-Yorubas as well, including many Hausas. This marked the first time since Nigeria's independence that Nigerians broke from ethnically based voting practices. Two weeks later, however, the military regime of Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida had the election results annulled and Abiola imprisoned. Many commanders in the Hausa-dominated military feared losing control to a southerner. They played on the nation's old ethnic distrusts, hoping that a divided nation would be easier to control. This soon created a new ethnic crisis. The next five years saw violent protests and mass migrations as ethnic groups again retreated to their traditional homelands.

The death of Nigeria's last military dictator, General Sani Abacha, on June 8, 1998 opened the door for a transition back to civilian rule. Despite age-old ethnic rivalries, many Nigerians again crossed ethnic lines when they entered the voting booth. On February 22, 1999 Olusegun Obasanjo, a Yoruba who ironically lacked

support from his own people, won the presidential election. Obasanjo is seen as a nationalist who opposed ethnic divisions. However, when he ascended as president he was believed to have favoured his own ethnic group, the Yoruba.

Unfortunately, violent ethnic fighting in Nigeria continues. In October 2000, clashes between Hausas and supporters of the Odua People's Congress (OPC), a militant Yoruba group, led to the deaths of nearly a hundred people in Lagos. Many also blamed the OPC for sparking off riots in 1999, which killed more than a hundred others, most of them Hausas.

### **Nigerian Politics**

Politically, Nigeria is divided into thirty-six states and the Federal Capital City of Abuja. The nation's capital was moved from Lagos, the country's largest city, to Abuja on 12th December 1991. Abuja is in a federal territory that is not part of any state. While Abuja is the official capital, its lack of adequate infrastructure means that Lagos remains the financial, commercial, and diplomatic center of the country. Major urban centers include Lagos, Ibadan, Kaduna, Kano, and Port Harcourt.

Structurally, Nigeria is a republic, with the president acting as both Head of State and Head of Government. Nigeria has had a long history of coups d'états, military rule, and dictatorship. However, this pattern was broken on 29th May 1999 when President, Olusegun Obasanjo, took office following popular elections. Thereafter, he was succeeded by late Alhaji Umaru Musa Yaradua and later by Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan following the death of Alhaji Umaru Musa Yaradua. This trend has continued till the present government of President Muhammadu Buhari who took over office on the 29th of May, 2015 and has ruled for two consecutive terms.

Under the current constitution, presidential elections are to be held every four years, with no president serving more than two terms in office. This may be altered by the on-going debate for a single tenure of five years by the legislature. The Nigerian legislature consists of two houses: a Senate and a House of Representatives. All legislators are elected to four-year terms. Nigeria's judiciary is headed by a Supreme Court Judge, while other members are appointed by the President of the country. All Nigerians over age eighteen are eligible to vote.

A wealthy political elite dominates political life in Nigeria. The relationship between the political elite and ordinary Nigerians is not unlike that between nobles and commoners. Nigerian leaders, whether as members of a military regime or one of Nigeria's civilian governments, have a history of doing whatever it takes to stay in power and to hold on to the wealth that this power has given them.

Urban Nigerians tend to be much more vocal in their support of or opposition to their leaders. Urban problems of housing, unemployment, health care, sanitation, and traffic tend to mobilize people into political action and public displays of dissatisfaction.

### **Nigeria's Military**

Nigeria's military consists of an army, a navy, and an air force. There is also a police force that is not strictly military. The minimum age for military service is eighteen. The Nigerian military is the largest and best-equipped military in West Africa. As a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Nigeria is the major contributor to the organization's military branch, known as ECOMOG. Nigerian troops make up the vast majority of the ECOMOG forces deployed to restore peace following civil wars in Liberia, Guinea-Bissau, and Sierra Leone. Public dissatisfaction with Nigeria's participation in the Sierra Leonean crisis was extremely high due to high casualty rates among the Nigerian soldiers. Nigeria pulled out of Sierra Leone in 1999, prompting the United Nations to send in peacekeepers in an attempt to stem the violence. Although the foreign forces in Sierra Leone then came under the mandate of the United Nations, Nigerian troops still made up the majority of the peacekeepers.

### **Nigeria's Socio-Economic Challenges**

Severe poverty, Human Rights violations, and corruption are some of the major social ills that have plagued Nigeria for decades. Because Nigeria is in the midst of a major political change, however, there is great hope for social reforms in the country (Atairet, Mboho and Aborh, 2021).

Right from President Obasanjo's administration to the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan, the Federal Government of Nigeria has been focusing much of its efforts on changing the distorted image of Nigeria. One of such efforts is the Federal Ministry of Information's gingle, "Nigeria, Good People, Great Nation". Many foreign companies have been reluctant to invest in Nigeria for fear of losing their investments due to political instability. The government hopes that if Nigeria can project the image of a stable nation, the country can coax foreign investors to come to Nigeria and help bolster the country's failing economy. When Udoh and Mboho (2020) examine the problem and prospects of community development and socio-economic well-being of rural dwellers in Nigeria, they agree that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) also work with Nigeria to develop economic policies that will revitalize the nation's economy.

Rooting out corruption in all levels of government therefore becomes one of the top priorities of the Nigerian government. To this end, President Obasanjo signed the Anti-Corruption Act in June 2000, creating a special commission for investigating charges of corruption brought by ordinary Nigerians against government officials.

In general, labour is divided in Nigerian society along gender lines (Mboho, 2021a, b). Very few women are active in the political and professional arenas. In urban areas, an increasing number of women are becoming involved in the professional workforce, but they are greatly outnumbered by their male counterparts. Women who do manage to gain professional employment rarely make to the higher levels of management.

However, women in Nigeria still play significant roles in the economy, especially in rural areas. Women are often expected to earn significant portions of the family income. As a rule, men have little obligation to provide for their wives or children. Therefore women have traditionally had to farm or sell homemade products in the local market to ensure that they could feed and clothe their children. The division of labour along gender lines even exists within industries. For example, the kinds of crops that women cultivate differ from those that men cultivate. In Igbo society, yams are seen as men's crops, while beans and cassava are seen as women's crops.

Modern Nigeria is a patriarchal society. Men are dominant over women in virtually all areas. While Nigeria is a signatory to the International Convention on Equality for Women, it means little to the average Nigerian woman. Women still have fewer legal rights than men. According to Nigeria's Penal Code, men have the right to beat their wives as long as they do not cause permanent physical injury. Wives are often seen as little more than possessions and are subject to the rule of their husbands. However, women can exercise influence in some areas. For example, in most ethnic groups, mothers and sisters have great say in the lives of their sons and brothers, respectively. The blood relationship allows these women certain leeway and influence that a wife does not have.



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