



*From the MixCache.com library*

SAMPLE COPY

# A History of Nigeria

MixCache.com

SAMPLE COPY

## Table of Contents

- **Introduction**
- **Chapter 1** Early Human Settlement and the Paleolithic Beginnings
- **Chapter 2** The Rise and Legacy of Nok Culture
- **Chapter 3** The Kingdoms and Empires of Northern Nigeria
- **Chapter 4** The Hausa City-States and the Spread of Islam
- **Chapter 5** The Yoruba: Ile-Ife, Oyo Empire, and Political Organization
- **Chapter 6** The Edo Kingdom of Benin: Artistry and Power
- **Chapter 7** Igbo Societies: Decentralization and Community Governance
- **Chapter 8** Trade Networks: Trans-Saharan and Transatlantic Connections
- **Chapter 9** Slavery and the Atlantic Slave Trade
- **Chapter 10** European Contact: Early Encounters and the Age of Exploration
- **Chapter 11** The British Advance: Protectorates and Company Rule
- **Chapter 12** The Amalgamation: Uniting the North and South
- **Chapter 13** Colonial Administration and Indirect Rule
- **Chapter 14** Society and Economy under Colonialism
- **Chapter 15** The Emergence of Nationalism and Political Movements
- **Chapter 16** Progress to Self-Government
- **Chapter 17** Nigeria's Independence and the Founding Fathers
- **Chapter 18** The First Republic: Promise and Problems
- **Chapter 19** Military Coups and Political Upheaval
- **Chapter 20** The Nigerian Civil War (Biafran War)
- **Chapter 21** After the War: Reconciliation and Reconstruction
- **Chapter 22** The Era of Extended Military Rule
- **Chapter 23** The Second Republic, June 12, and Democratic Setbacks
- **Chapter 24** The Return to Democracy and the Fourth Republic
- **Chapter 25** Contemporary Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects

## Introduction

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, is a land endowed with an intricate and compelling history. Spanning thousands of years, Nigeria's past is shaped by waves of human migration, the rise and fall of ancient kingdoms, the havoc and connections wrought by global trade, colonial domination, and the turbulent path to self-rule. Its diverse peoples—over 250 ethnic groups speaking some 500 languages—have contributed to a national story marked by dynamic change, vibrant culture, and persistent challenges, all of which continue to inform contemporary Nigerian society.

Much of Nigeria's complexity lies in its pre-colonial foundations. From the earliest inhabitants—whose history can be traced back to Paleolithic times—through the sophisticated societies exemplified by the Nok culture, the region now called Nigeria has long been a crossroads of civilization. Its people established great empires and city-states, such as Kanem-Bornu, Oyo, Benin, and the Hausa city-states, each developing unique political, social, and artistic traditions. The influence of Islam in the north and enduring indigenous beliefs in other regions contributed further to Nigeria's multifaceted identity.

The arrival of Europeans on Nigeria's shores in the 15th century initiated centuries of trade, including the brutal commerce in enslaved people that altered the course of countless lives and reshaped societies both locally and across the Atlantic. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Nigeria fell under British domination through a process marked by treaties, conquest, and ultimately forced amalgamation of north and south in pursuit of imperial administrative convenience. Colonial administrators imposed new forms of governance, economic exploitation, and cultural change, setting the stage for both cooperation and conflict among Nigeria's many peoples.

Emerging from colonialism, Nigerian nationalists, intellectuals, and political leaders orchestrated a difficult but determined push toward independence. Nigeria achieved statehood in 1960, but the challenges of forging national unity, reconciling ethnic and regional diversity, and harnessing the nation's immense economic potential soon became evident. The first years of independence brought promise but also deepening rivalries, leading to political instability, military intervention, and eventually, a devastating civil war whose legacy is still keenly felt.

The post-war era was defined by cycles of military rule and attempts at democracy, with leaders wrestling with the task of rebuilding, reconciling, and propelling the nation forward. Despite setbacks—including coups, political repression, and corruption—Nigeria continued its quest for more inclusive and participatory governance. The return to democracy in 1999 marked a significant turning point and

ushered in the Fourth Republic, a period of relative political stability but persistent economic and social challenges.

The story of Nigeria is ultimately the story of its people—strong, creative, and enduring in the face of adversity. This book seeks to provide a comprehensive yet accessible account of Nigeria’s history, from ancient beginnings to the complexities of the present day. In doing so, it aims to illuminate not only the pivotal events and personalities that have shaped the country, but also the enduring threads of resilience, ingenuity, and hope that bind its past, present, and future together.

SAMPLE COPY

## CHAPTER ONE: Early Human Settlement and the Paleolithic Beginnings

The story of Nigeria begins not with nations or empires, but with the faint echoes of the earliest human footsteps. Long before the bustling markets of Kano or the artistic mastery of Benin, the vast and varied landscapes that now constitute Nigeria were home to ancient peoples, their lives shaped by the rhythms of the Paleolithic era. This period, often referred to as the Old Stone Age, stretches back hundreds of thousands of years, a time when early humans were mastering the fundamental technologies for survival: crafting tools from stone, harnessing fire, and navigating their environment as hunter-gatherers.

Evidence of this deep past in Nigeria is found primarily in the scattered remnants of their activities – the stone tools they left behind. While the fossilized bones of these early inhabitants are rare in West Africa, the enduring nature of stone provides crucial clues. These artifacts, unearthed at various sites, offer glimpses into the presence and movements of archaic humans across the region.

One significant location for uncovering these ancient traces is the Jos Plateau in central Nigeria. This elevated area, with its distinct geological formations, has yielded important findings. Here, among the gravel deposits, stone tools dating back to the Early Stone Age have been discovered. These include Acheulean bifaces, characteristic handaxes that represent a key technological development of this period, indicating sophisticated tool-making skills among the inhabitants.

The presence of Acheulean tools on the Jos Plateau, sometimes found at considerable depths during activities like tin mining, suggests a long history of human occupation in this area. While precise dating for all these finds remains a challenge, the types of tools connect the inhabitants of ancient Nigeria to broader patterns of early human behavior observed across Africa and beyond.

Moving further back in time, some researchers propose the possibility of even earlier stone tool traditions in West Africa, perhaps akin to the Oldowan culture found elsewhere on the continent. However, definitive evidence for this remains elusive, making the Acheulean finds some of the earliest well-documented signs of a sustained human presence.

The Paleolithic period wasn't static; it was a dynamic era of evolving human capabilities and adaptations. Following the Early Stone Age, the Middle Stone Age saw the development of more refined tool-making techniques. In Nigeria, sites like those

on the Jos Plateau, including Nok and Zenabi, have yielded artifacts from this period, characterized by the use of disc-cores and blades. These tools were often smaller and more specialized, reflecting a growing understanding of how to work stone for different purposes.

The transition from the Middle Stone Age to the Late Stone Age, which in West Africa began tens of thousands of years ago, is another important phase. This period is marked by further technological advancements, including the production of microliths - small, geometric stone tools that were often hafted to create composite tools like arrows and spears.

One of the most compelling pieces of evidence for Late Stone Age habitation, and indeed for the physical presence of early humans in what is now Nigeria, comes from the Iwo Eleru rock shelter in southwestern Nigeria. Here, archaeological excavations uncovered human skeletal remains. Radiocarbon dating of associated materials initially suggested an age of around 11,200 years before the present, placing it firmly in the Late Stone Age.

However, further analysis, including uranium-series dating and morphological studies of the skull, have presented a more complex picture, suggesting a potentially older age and a mix of archaic and modern human features. This discovery at Iwo Eleru is particularly significant as it represents one of the few known Pleistocene human fossils from West Africa and has fueled discussions about the diversity and complexity of early human populations in Africa. The individual from Iwo Eleru, an adult male, was found in a burial context, indicating intentional interment and suggesting a level of social complexity and possibly ritualistic behavior among these early inhabitants.

The environment of Nigeria during the Paleolithic would have been considerably different from today, with fluctuating climates influencing the types of landscapes and resources available. These early inhabitants would have been highly mobile, moving across savanna, forest, and transitional zones in search of food and shelter. Their survival depended on a deep knowledge of their surroundings, the behavior of animals, and the availability of edible plants.

Archaeological evidence beyond stone tools is scarce for these early periods due to the challenges of preservation in the climate. However, the discovery of animal bones and mollusk shells at sites like Iwo Eleru provides some clues about their diet and the ecosystems they inhabited. These people were adept hunter-gatherers, utilizing the resources of their environment to sustain themselves.

The Later Stone Age, in particular, shows increasing signs of regional diversification in toolkits and potentially in subsistence strategies. While still largely mobile, some populations may have begun to exploit resources more intensively in certain areas, perhaps foreshadowing later developments in sedentism and agriculture. Sites on the

Jos Plateau, for instance, show evidence of Late Stone Age occupation in rock shelters and on hilltops, suggesting a degree of settlement and adaptation to specific landscapes. Circular rock formations found at some hilltop sites have been interpreted as possible house foundations, hinting at more settled communities, although many hilltop settlements also served as refuge sites during later periods of conflict.

The study of the Paleolithic in Nigeria is an ongoing process, with new discoveries continually adding layers to our understanding. The lack of extensive fossil records compared to other parts of Africa presents challenges, but the archaeological evidence, particularly the stone tool assemblages and the rare human remains like those from Iwo Eleru, provides compelling insights into the deep roots of human history in this part of the world. These early inhabitants, through their ingenuity and resilience, laid the groundwork for the diverse societies that would later flourish on the land.

SAMPLE COPY

*This is a sample preview. Purchase the book to read the full content.*

Visit [MixCache.com](https://MixCache.com) to purchase the complete book.

SAMPLE COPY