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Daniel E. Harmon. *Nigeria, 1880 To The Present: The Struggle, The Tragedy, The Promise.* Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2001. 144 pp. Ages 12 and up. $29.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7910-5452-9.

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An Outsider's Image of Nigeria

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This book is one of the titles in the series, "Exploration of Africa: The Emerging Nations," published by Chelsea House, a subsidiary of Heights Cross Communication. Other volumes feature Angola, Central and East Africa, the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, North Africa, South Africa, Southeast Africa, Sudan and West Africa. The involvement of Dr. Richard E. Leakey, Chairman of the Wildlife Clubs of Kenya Association, and the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) of London, will certainly draw attention to this book and the others in the series. Without in anyway trying to diminish the stature of the author himself, I think that the starting point in the review is to highlight the role of RGS and Dr. Leakey.

Deirdre Shields, a contributor to the book, writes about the RGS, providing a sort of appendix that tells its history and contributions. Unfortunately, the historic photographs that the RGS made available to illustrate the book are not listed in the table of contents. For researchers and others already familiar with Nigeria, the major contribution of this book lies in the photographs, most of which are published for the first time. There are a total of fifty-six photographs in the book, on different aspects of the country. Among the subjects covered in the photographs are ancient figures, ordinary people, kings and chiefs, children, occupations, houses, crafts, animals, soldiers, railway, rivers, markets, and others. In spite of the beauty of the photographs, readers need to be aware of two limitations. To start with, the author fails to use the photographs to adequately illustrate the stories and histories in the book, failing to even refer to them to buttress his points. Thus, the photographs and the narratives do not necessarily present a coherent picture of Nigeria.

The second problem is the choice of the photographs: The account is intended to offer a modern history, but most of the photographs are about the "traditional" period. Many of the photographs express an offensive fascination with half-naked or nude people, huts, and exotic images. The choice is a reminder that the presentation of Africa is for a Western audience–as is the "dark continent"–the unfortunate title that opens the book. Some photographs would require detailed explanations to young readers, to present images and practices in their proper contexts. Why do naked kids appear in the market place, why do the people wash their domestic utensils at the bank of the great River Niger, why do women dance in public, why do kings keep harems? These and other questions derive from the photographs presented, without any attempt to provide adequate contexts to make them suitable learning experiences to younger people.

Dr. Leakey wrote the foreword. His emphasis on geographical expeditions will be of interest to curious students and young people. He embodies the hero status that white missionaries and explorers enjoy due to their "discovery missions" in Africa. Dr. Leakey himself explored some parts of Africa, coming across people who are indifferent to modern and Western cultures. Unlike events on the moon and other planets where remote sensing and digital intelligence are at work, explorers have to travel and see things for themselves in various parts of Africa. Leakey talks about the early explorers. However, if European explorers claim that they "discovered" Africa, Leakey is quick to point out that it was actually Africans who first discovered other parts of the world, that human origins started here, and people migrated elsewhere. Leakey points to the contributions of Africans to civilization, such as the history of Egypt and the kingdoms of Zimbabwe. The most interesting aspect of the contribution regards his various suggestions to learn more about Africa's past. Leakey shows that our knowledge of indigenous medicine and food is poor. He notes how indigenous remedies worked for centuries and how we can collect information on them and use them in the modern world. He points to the fact that we have ignored the study of African plants and crops, and that if we understood them, we would be able to add to the list of the

major plants that we now all depend upon–corn, wheat, rice, yams, potatoes, and bananas. A number of drought-resistant African plants would add to the list of available food items, and thus reduce the problem of food shortage. Dr. Leakey makes a strong case for the study of vanishing species in Africa, as part of sustained research efforts to understand tropical ecology and biodiversity. Dr. Leakey closes his foreword with an important remark that "The time has come to regard African history in terms of what has happened in Africa itself, rather than simply in terms of what non-African individuals did when they first traveled to the continent" (p. 13).

The main part of the book is divided into an introduction and four chapters. The story starts in the 1880s, not with the history of Nigerian nations and peoples, but with the Berlin conference convened to partition the continent. The author introduces beginners to the role of Prince Otto von Bismarck, the Chancellor of Germany, in convening the 1884-85 Berlin conference where Africa became a chessboard. The European nations established the rules to make claims over an African area, based on two major conditions: "The nation making the claim had to officially notify the other nations of its claim. It had to demonstrate that it actually held authority in the region" (p.19). The author informs students that Europe was interested in Africa "because it was so vast and seemed so available." The European nations wanted Africa's wealth. The European Christian denominations also regarded Africans as primitive peoples whose ways of live must be changed. The scramble for Africa followed after the mid-1880s, and by 1900 Africa had been divided into about forty political units.

In chapter one, the author organizes the content around a question used as the chapter title: "What brought Europeans to Nigeria?" We are introduced to Nigeria for the first time in the book, with a description of the country's location. A review of the European contacts with Nigeria follows, covering the early history of European penetration, the slave trade, the abolition of the slave trade during the nineteenth century, the spread of Christian missionary activities and the exploration of the Nigerian hinterland. The chapter primarily stresses the activities of Europeans, and the author points out the gains and limitations of the contacts. The author turns to how the British began the process of conquering Nigeria from the 1880s onward.

He praises the activities of George Goldie, an Englishman who established a successful company in Nigeria that not only engaged in trade but in territorial acquisition that later formed part of Nigeria. He analyzes the fragility of the early administration, and how the first influential high commissioner, Frederick Lugard, used force to subdue a number of areas in the northern region. The chapter closes with a discussion on the administration, a system of indirect rule in which the British and Nigerian chiefs established a partnership to govern. In the north where the system began, the British allowed the continuation of Islamic laws, curtailed the spread of Christianity, and allowed the use of Hausa for official business. Traditional kings and chiefs retained their old powers, as long as they respected the wishes and orders of the British. A brief discussion of the impact of British rule closes the chapter. The British used their control and power to promote trade. In some Nigerian cities, the British lived a privileged life, with houses and clubs segregated from the people they governed. As far as the author is concerned, colonial rule was rather benevolent, and many Africans did not even realize that they were under foreign rule.

Chapter two discusses Nigerian societies before the imposition of colonial rule, a case of putting the horse after the cart. The chapter's aim is to present Nigeria as it would have appeared to the colonizers and explorers seeing it for the first time. The author describes the landscape (land, rivers, climate, wildlife), early history, notable kingdoms, cultural diversity, art, music, and the economy. The three leading ethnic groups–the Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo–are discussed as well as the diversity that they represent. A common theme, however, does not emerge in the discussion of the various ethnic groups.

Chapter three examines the impact of British rule. The major topics covered include the creation of a separate class of British officers with access to good houses, hospitals, and social clubs; the establishment of modern schools; economic changes; and the rise of nationalism. The chapter also discusses the road to independence in 1960, with the formation of political parties, the role of educated Nigerians, and the constitutional conferences of the 1950s that transferred power to Nigerians.

The final chapter summarizes the history of Nigeria in the last one hundred and twenty years. It covers many possible topics that may interest readers, although each is discussed in brief. The author provides information on the modern economy, transport system, urban living, cuisine, cities, the media, judiciary and government, education, medicine, military rule, the civil war of the 1960s, and corruption. A chronology of major events closes the author's narratives.

In sum, each episode in the book is well told. The author's use of language makes the stories both lively

and understandable. Those unfamiliar with Nigeria will find the book a good introduction to the country. However, words such as "natives" and "tribal" re-appear in this book, in spite of the objections to their use by many scholars. Moreover although major issues are covered, the stress is on the activities of Europeans in Nigeria. The brutalizing and exploitative elements of colonial rule are ignored. The short list of books on further reading ignores all leading Nigerian authors and historians, a rather unwise decision.

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