

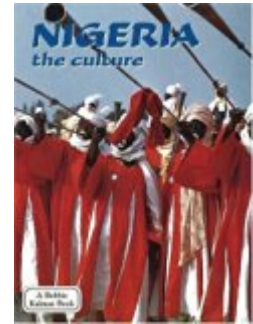
H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Bobbie Kalman, Anne Rosenberg. *Nigeria the Culture*. The Lands, Peoples and Cultures Series. New York: Crabtree Publishing Company, 2001. x + 32 pp. \$7.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-86505-329-8.

Reviewed by Elizabeth Akingbola (School of Teaching and Learning–Language, Literacy and Culture Social Studies/Global Education, The Ohio State University)

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<cite>Nigeria the Culture</cite>

Nigeria the Culture

This book on Nigerian culture is another book in the Land, Peoples and Cultures Series. This text provides a good introduction to Nigerian culture. It begins by describing Nigeria as a mix of cultures with over 470 different ethnic groups. Traditional religious beliefs are depicted accurately. The text provides information about Islam and Christianity in Nigeria. Pleasantly, readers learn that Nigerians often combine traditional religious beliefs with Islamic and Christian teachings. Key festivals and celebrations are discussed, notably the Oshun Festival, Ramadan and the Yoruba Naming Ceremony. As a reference, the text would benefit by suggesting the following website: <http://www.si.edu/folklife/vfest/africa/start.htm>. This website provides additional information about a Yoruba naming ceremony held in Washington, D.C. a few years ago. It can be used to help students and teachers see how traditional cultural practices in Nigeria have survived in the Diaspora. Vibrant, colorful photographs accompany the entire text but are particularly gratifying to the eye with respect to Nigerian art and crafts. An array of musical styles are presented, but the text does not take advantage of the opportunity to discuss how these styles have influenced music in other parts of the world—namely the Caribbean, Latin America and the United States.

The book provides a good discussion of language and literature in Nigeria. On page twenty-eight, readers will

learn that over 400 languages are spoken in Nigeria. Specific attention is given to the three dominant languages of Nigeria: Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa. A chart provides students with translations in Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba of basic English greetings and introductions. Students learn that Nigerians do not only speak several languages, but are introduced to a practice called “code switching.” In addition, students learn about two prominent Nigerian authors, Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe. The text concludes with a beautiful illustration and story of a Yoruba creation myth. A good resource for examining Nigerian culture. I recommend using this text with upper elementary students.

Points of Concern: the book’s coverage of polygyny is rather brief and does not provide contextual information about this marital practice. From reading the description about polygyny, it implies that men are the beneficiaries of this practice. What is not discussed is that men who are polygynists must be able to provide and spend quality time with all wives and children equally, meaning that they must provide housing, education, food, healthcare etc., for all of their dependents. In addition the text fails to reveal that the practice of polygyny was an economic and historical necessity when economic production was family-based and that the labor-intensive nature of the primary agricultural production of the family meant that the larger families could produce more and be more prosperous. Also students do not learn that polygyny is no longer as popular a practice

as it once was due in part to the influence of Christianity and the economic constraints of having larger families. Furthermore, while polygyny is practiced in Nigeria the book fails to mention that most men in Nigeria are monogamists, meaning that they only have one wife.

While the book provides a good description of everyday clothing in Nigeria it would be useful to provide visual images of such clothing—i.e. a wrap-around skirt, sashes for carrying babies etc. Lastly, the book is rather sexist with regards to exposing students to Nigerian literature. The literary works of Buchi Emecheta would be a

nice addition. Overall, I would recommend this book for students and teachers interested in learning about Nigerian culture.

Reviewer's Overall Impression of Series

I would recommend this series primarily as a supplemental resource. Good for a country study of Nigeria. I suggest using other supplemental resources for the purpose of enhancing what is covered in the books, especially as it relates to Nigeria's ethnic diversity and the current/past.

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