

NIGERIAN PEOPLES AND CULTURES



Edited by:

AKINJIDE OSUNTOKUN & AYODEJI OLUKOJU

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PREFACE

This book is a collective effort to satisfy a need arising from the paucity of information on a university-wide course on Nigerian peoples and cultures. We have decided to package the information in a highly readable and thematic form in order to provide in-depth analyses of the various topics treated. A combination of the thematic and chronological approaches enables even those studying history for the first time to appreciate the various factors which have shaped the history of the peoples of Nigeria from antiquity to the present.

We hope that readers of this book will find it so educative that they would be challenged to read more about the topics covered. Even without any further reading, they would have acquired reasonable knowledge of Nigeria's peoples and cultures. While this book is directed at non-specialists, it still has great value for those familiar with Nigerian history not least because of the innovative approaches adopted and reappraisals done by the various contributors. Being at the frontier of knowledge of Nigeria's history and contemporary politics, the book rightly recommends itself to those interested in gaining solid knowledge of the peoples and cultures of the most populous, vibrant and authentically black African country.

The publication of this book was made possible by the co-operation of the academic and non-academic staff of the Department of History, University of Lagos. The efforts of the contributors, and the secretarial assistance of Mrs. I.I. Aderiye, Mrs. F.M. Falola, and Mrs. R. Okoli, who worked under pressure to meet various deadlines, are hereby acknowledged.

University of Lagos,
November 1997

Akinjide Osuntokun
Ayodeji Olukoju

INTRODUCTION

Akinjide Osuntokun and Ayodeji Olukoju

Any book on Nigerian peoples and cultures is bound to attract attention in academic and non-academic circles given popular and academic interest in this fascinating subject. But this collection has a special appeal and an additional strength in considering its subject from a historical perspective. While a multidisciplinary co-operative effort has its merits, the adoption by scholars in the same discipline of interdisciplinary approaches offers no less illuminating insights. In the current case, the contributors, many of whom are renowned scholars in their respective areas of specialization, shed light on the subject of the book from various interdisciplinary perspectives.

In the first of the sixteen chapters of this book, Dr. Tunde Oduwobi and Obi Iwuagwu provide a survey of the Nigerian ethnic medley. This is accompanied by a checklist of the over two hundred ethnic nationalities and their geographical location across the country. In chapter 2, Professor A.I. Asiwaju provides a penetrating analysis of the dynamics of Nigerian culture from the precolonial period to the present. His wide sweep of the country's cultural development points in the direction of "the progressive achievement of an overall Nigerian cultural unity" within the wider contexts of regional, continental and global dynamics. The linkage between political culture, urbanisation and current environmental problems is powerfully articulated in the next chapter by Professor Akinjide Osuntokun. He warns that urbanisation at the present pace without the appropriate safeguards would lead to an environmental catastrophe.

In chapter 4, L.C. Dioka explores various dimensions of inter-group relations among Nigerian peoples, buttressing Asiwaju's view of the essential cultural unity of the commonwealth of Nigerian peoples. In the next chapter, Dioka also draws attention to disappearing aspects of our culture, many of which are useful to our national life. He acknowledges, however, that others are better forgotten. While Professor T.G.O. Gbadamosi and M.O. Junaid highlight in chapter 7 the Islamic factor in Nigerian society, Dr. Ayodeji Olukoju examines, in the next chapter, the impact of Christianity. These foreign religions have had to come to terms with

