

BOOK REVIEW

Alex Egodotaye Asakitikpi and Aretha Oluwakemi Asakitikpi. *Modern Nigeria: Understanding Modern Nations*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2024. xix + 380 pp. Appendix. Bibliography. Index. \$90. Hardcover. ISBN: 9781440865565.

Modern Nigeria is one of Bloomsbury's series in Understanding Modern Nations which thematically explores the geographical attributes and historical antecedents of contemporary Nigeria, including the social, political, economic, religious and cultural values and aesthetics of the Nigerian people. The duo of Alex Asakitikpi and Aretha Asakitikpi have passionately navigated all facets of Nigerian terrain as well as the geopolitical and cultural dynamics of the people to project the distinct designation of the nation among others in Africa, and the world. Reading this volume alongside others in the Bloomsbury series with topical interests in *Modern France*, *Modern Germany* and *Modern Philippines* (Bloomsbury, 2022); and *Modern Brazil*, *Modern Japan* and *Modern Saudi Arabia* (Bloomsbury, 2024) will enable a clearer understanding of the diversity of these nations in relation to their historical, sociocultural, economic, and political landscapes.


The book is constituted by an introductory section and sixteen topical sections. While the introduction gives readers an easy ride through the contextual foundations of the volume in a synoptic manner, each of the topical sections dwells on the key indicators of nationhood: geography, history, government and politics, economy, religion and thought, social classes and ethnicity, culture, education, language and literature, sport, media and popular culture. Also, within a significant portion of the volume, constituting Appendices A, B, C and D are highlights of the daily life of Nigerians of different callings, that is, farmer, housewife, student and businessman; glossary of key terms, mostly indigenous vocabularies; facts and figures; and a list of holidays observed in the nation. The book is of extraordinary value to researchers across diverse academic disciplines—arts and humanities, social science, and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields. The volume is a credible source of reference for foundational knowledge in research inquiries related to the Nigerian ecosystem. Apart from the interdisciplinary outlook of the volume which establishes its inestimable value to researchers, the prosaic language and expository structure, coupled with the succinct subsection discussions qualify the volume as a bosom companion amidst relaxation and voyage. The book is beneficial to cross-cultural readers; its in-depth evaluation of the cultural aesthetics of Nigerians will help in bridging the gap on cultural knowledge and understanding.

Alex Asakitikpi and Aretha Asakitikpi's exploration of the geographical attributes of Nigeria encompasses highlights of the climatic conditions across seasons, meteorological conditions, biodiversity, ecological landscapes, population distribution,

geo-political divisions and boundary areas. The authors' account of these features is critical; they evaluate how the geographical features shape the everyday life of the people. The historical account of modern Nigeria from authorial perspectives reflects how a confluence of human occupation, migration, and industrialization and material culture embody the transitional process to contemporary Nigeria. The contemporary Nigeria, however, is characterized by political consciousness and struggle, constitutional development, national policy development and planning. Relating the economic attributes of the modern Nigeria, the authors identify trade domestication and internationalization through foreign investments as a key financial tool, with mining, agriculture and oil and gas as the major drivers of the national economy. Trade unions and labor movements serve as the regulator and the people's voices, to ensure the upkeep of the people's fundamental rights within the nation.

Among the valuable contributions of this volume is the authors' account of the social stratification system, religion, ethnicity and sociocultural orientations relating to sexuality, marriage and etiquette. Their portrayal of education, language, literature, arts and architecture of Nigerians provides a window into how the sociocultural variables define the people as distinct groups with a common identity and interest. Alex Asakitikpi and Aretha Asakitikpi's voyage into the evolution of Nigerian sports from the traditional period to the present day is a means of establishing the originating perception of sport as an aspect of the communal culture, aimed at maintaining the spirit of communal integration; a virtue which sporting activities in Nigeria still maintains to date. Lastly, the authors' discussion of the media and popular culture of Nigerians across the years has provided a strong foundation for the core argument that the turn in techniques and styles in the media productions and entertainment outputs is evidence of transformation geared towards globalization.

The exploration of the key indicators of nationhood across the geographical, historical, political, socioeconomic, religious and educational facets, which gives the text an interdisciplinary outlook, is a major strength. The topical spread constituting a wide variety of disciplines is of great potential to diverse categories of audience. However, an identifiable vacuum is the superficial presentation of the historical aspects of Nigerian culture. The authors have failed to explore major aspects of the Nigerian culture, including the naming culture and dance culture, which are valuable heritages among the Nigerian people of enormous divides. The same applies to the authors' discussion of the indigenous festivals, which are key aspects of the everyday lives of Nigerians. Among the existing cultures of Africans, the cultures of Nigerians are distinctively vast; therefore, it is expected that a subsequent volume of the book, after revision, will encompass the identified as missing aspects of Nigerian heritages. Be that as it may, much is to be appreciated in Alex Asakitikpi and Aretha Asakitikpi's prosaic account of modern Nigeria. The authors' abundant deployment of clear and concise linguistic forms is highly impactful and compelling.

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[doi:10.1017/asr.2024.222](https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2024.222)