

= Igbo people =

The Igbo people , often erroneously spelled and pronounced " Ibo " (because certain Europeans had difficulty making the / ? ? b / sound) , are an indigenous linguistic and cultural people of southern Nigeria . Geographically , the Igbo homeland is divided into two unequal sections by the Niger River ? an eastern (which is the larger of the two) and a western section . Culturally and linguistically , the Niger River has provided an easy means of communication and unity amongst the Igbo natives on both sides , as well as promoted ancient trade and movement of peoples between Igboland and rest of the world .

Known as Ndi Igbo in the Igbo language and sometimes identified by their respective Igboid dialects or subgroupings , such the Anioma and the Ngwa , the culture of the Igbos has been shaped primarily by Igboland 's rainforest climate , its historic trades , ancient migration folklores and social ties with its neighbours as well as far @-@ flung trading and political allies and lately with the Europeans through colonization and the entire Western World through globalization . They speak Igbo , which includes various Igboid languages and dialects . The Igbo homeland is almost surrounded on all sides by other ethnic peoples of southern and central Nigeria namely , the Ijaw , Edo , Itsekiri , Ogoni , Igala , Tiv , Yako , Idoma and Ibibio .

The Igbo people are one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa . In rural Nigeria , Igbo people work mostly as craftsmen , farmers and traders . The most important crop is the yam ; celebrations take place annually to celebrate its harvesting . Other staple crops include cassava and taro . The Igbos are also highly urbanized , with some of the largest cities and metropolitan areas in Igboland being Onitsha , Enugu , Aba , Asaba , Owerri , Orlu , Nnewi , Port Harcourt , Umuahia , Abakaliki and Agbor .

Before British colonial rule , the Igbo were a politically fragmented group . There were variations in culture such as in art styles , attire and religious practices . Various subgroups were organized by clan , lineage , village affiliation , and dialect . There were not many centralized chiefdoms , hereditary aristocracy , or kingship customs except in kingdoms such as those of the Nri , Arochukwu , Agbor and Onitsha . This political system changed significantly under British colonialism in the early 20th century ; Frederick Lugard introduced Eze (kings) into most local communities as " Warrant Chiefs " . The Igbo became overwhelmingly Christian under colonization . Chinua Achebe 's Things Fall Apart is one of the most popular novels to depict Igbo culture and changes under colonialism .

By the mid @-@ 20th century , the Igbo people developed a strong sense of ethnic identity . Certain conflicts with other Nigerian ethnicities led to Igbo @-@ densely populated Eastern Nigeria seceding to create the independent state of Biafra . The Nigerian Civil War or the Nigerian @-@ Biafran War (6 July 1967 ? 15 January 1970) broke out shortly after . With their defeat , the Republic of Biafra once again was part of Nigeria . MASSOB , a sectarian organization formed in 1999 , continues a non @-@ violent struggle for an independent Igbo state .

Due to the effects of migration and the Atlantic slave trade , there are descendant ethnic Igbo populations in countries such as Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea , as well as outside Africa . Their exact population outside Africa is unknown , but today many African Americans and Afro Caribbeans are of Igbo descent . According to Liberian historians the fifth president of Liberia Edward James Royce was of Igbo descent .

= = Identity = =

The Igbo people have had fragmented and politically independent communities . Before knowledge of Europeans and full exposure to other neighbouring ethnic groups , the Igbo did not have a strong identity as one people . As in the case of most ethnic groups , the British and fellow Europeans identified the Igbo as a tribe . Chinua Achebe , among other scholars , challenged this because of its negative connotations and possible wrong definition . He suggested defining the Igbo people as a nation although the Igbo do not have an officially recognized physical state of their own .

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populations in countries such as Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea , as well as outside Africa ; many African Americans and Afro Caribbeans are believed to be partially of Igbo descent .

The most common name for the Igbo in English was formerly " Ibo " . They have also been known as the " Iboe " , " ' Ebo " , " Eboe " , " Eboans " , or " Heebo " . Their territory and main settlement have often also been known by their name .

= = History = =

= = = Origin = = =

Pottery dated at around 2500 BCE showing similarities with later Igbo work was found at Nsukka , along with pottery and tools at nearby Ibagwa ; the traditions of the Umueri clan have as their source the Anambra valley . In the 1970s the Owerri , Okigwe , Orlu , Awgu , Udi and Awka divisions were determined to constitute " an Igbo heartland " from the linguistic and cultural evidence .

= = = Nri Kingdom = = =

The Nri people of Igbo land have a creation myth which is one of the many creation myths that exist in various parts of Igbo land . The Nri and Aguleri people are in the territory of the Umueri clan who trace their lineages back to the patriarchal king @-@ figure Eri . Eri 's origins are unclear , though he has been described as a " sky being " sent by Chukwu (God) . He has been characterized as having first given societal order to the people of Anambra . The historian Elizabeth Allo Isichei says " Nri and Aguleri and part of the Umueri clan , [are] a cluster of Igbo village groups which traces its origins to a sky being called Eri . "

Archaeological evidence suggests that Nri hegemony in Igboland may go back as far as the 9th century , and royal burials have been unearthed dating to at least the 10th century . Eri , the god @-@ like founder of Nri , is believed to have settled the region around 948 with other related Igbo cultures following after in the 13th century . The first Eze Nri (King of Nri) Ifikuánim followed directly after him . According to Igbo oral tradition , his reign started in 1043 . At least one historian puts Ifikuánim 's reign much later , around 1225 AD .

Each king traces his origin back to the founding ancestor , Eri . Each king is a ritual reproduction of Eri . The initiation rite of a new king shows that the ritual process of becoming Ezenri (Nri priest @-@ king) follows closely the path traced by the hero in establishing the Nri kingdom .

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The Kingdom of Nri was a religio @-@ polity , a sort of theocratic state , that developed in the central heartland of the Igbo region . The Nri had seven types of taboos which included human (such as the birth of twins) , animal (such as killing or eating of pythons) , object , temporal , behavioral , speech and place taboos . The rules regarding these taboos were used to educate and govern Nri 's subjects . This meant that , while certain Igbo may have lived under different formal administration , all followers of the Igbo religion had to abide by the rules of the faith and obey its representative on earth , the Eze Nri .

= = = Traditional society = = =

Traditional Igbo political organization was based on a quasi @-@ democratic republican system of government . In tight knit communities , this system guaranteed its citizens equality , as opposed to a feudalist system with a king ruling over subjects . This government system was witnessed by the Portuguese who first arrived and met with the Igbo people in the 15th century . With the exception of a few notable Igbo towns such as Onitsha , which had kings called Obi , and places like the Nri Kingdom and Arochukwu , which had priest kings ; Igbo communities and area governments were overwhelmingly ruled solely by a republican consultative assembly of the common people . Communities were usually governed and administered by a council of elders .

Although title holders were respected because of their accomplishments and capabilities , they were never revered as kings , but often performed special functions given to them by such assemblies . This way of governing was immensely different from most other communities of Western Africa , and only shared by the Ewe of Ghana . Umunna are a form of patrilineage maintained by the Igbo . Law starts with the Umunna which is a male line of descent from a founding ancestor (who the line is sometimes named after) with groups of compounds containing closely related families headed by the eldest male member . The Umunna can be seen as the most important pillar of Igbo society .

Mathematics in indigenous Igbo society is evident in their calendar , banking system and strategic betting game called Okwe . In their indigenous calendar , a week had four days , a month consisted of seven weeks and 13 months made a year . In the last month , an extra day was added . This calendar is still used in indigenous Igbo villages and towns to determine market days . They settled law matters via mediators , and their banking system for loans and savings , called Isusu , is also still used . The Igbo new year , starting with the month ? ? nw? ? M ? b? ? (Igbo : First Moon) occurs on the third week of February , although the traditional start of the year for many Igbo communities is around springtime in ? ? nw? ? Ágw? ? (June) . Used as a ceremonial script by secret societies , the Igbo have an indigenous ideographic set of symbols called Nsibidi , originating from the neighboring Ejagham people . Igbo people produced bronzes from as early as the 9th century , some of which have been found at the town of Igbo Ukwu , Anambra state .

A system of indentured servitude existed among the Igbo before and after the encounter with Europeans . Indentured service in Igbo areas was described by Olaudah Equiano in his memoir . He describes the conditions of the slaves in his community of Essaka , and points out the difference between the treatment of slaves under the Igbo in Essaka , and those in the custody of Europeans in West Indies :

? but how different was their condition from that of the slaves in the West Indies ! With us , they do no more work than other members of the community , ? even their master ; ? (except that they were not permitted to eat with those ? free @-@ born ;) and there was scarce any other difference between them , ? Some of these slaves have ? slaves under them as their own property ? for their own use .

The Niger coast was an area of contact between African and European traders from the years 1434 ? 1807 . The Portuguese were the first traders , then the Dutch and finally the British . Prior to European contact , Igbo trade routes stretched as far as Mecca , Medina and Jeddah on the continent .

= = = Transatlantic slave trade and diaspora = = =

The transatlantic slave trade , which took place between the 16th and late 19th centuries , had huge effects on the Igbo because so many young people were taken , and warfare increased for the taking of captives . Most Igbo slaves were taken from the Bight of Biafra (also known as the Bight of Bonny) . This area included modern day southeastern Nigeria , Western Cameroon , Equatorial Guinea and parts of Northern Gabon . Major trade ports for goods and slaves in the area included Bonny and Calabar Town . A large number of slaves from the Bight of Biafra would have been Igbo . Slaves were usually sold to Europeans by the Aro Confederacy , who kidnapped or bought slaves from Igbo villages in the hinterland . Most Igbo slaves were not victims of slave @-@ raiding wars or expeditions , but were sometimes debtors and people who committed what their communities considered to be abominations or crimes . Igbo slaves were known to the British colonists as being rebellious and having a high rate of suicide to escape slavery . For still unknown reasons , there is evidence that traders sought Igbo women .

Contrary to common belief , European slave traders were fairly well informed about various African ethnicities , leading to slavers ' targeting certain ethnic groups which plantation owners preferred . Particular desired ethnic groups consequently became fairly concentrated in certain parts of the Americas . The Igbo were dispersed to colonies such as Jamaica , Cuba , Saint @-@ Domingue , Barbados , the United States , Belize and Trinidad and Tobago , among others .

Elements of Igbo culture can still be found in these places . For example , in Jamaican Patois , the Igbo word *unu* , meaning " you " plural , is still used . " Red Ibo " (or " red eboe ") describes a black person with fair or " yellowish " skin . This term had originated from the reported prevalence of these skin tones among the Igbo but eastern Nigerian influences may not be strictly Igbo . The word *Bim* , a colloquial term for Barbados , was commonly used among enslaved Barbadians (*Bajans*) . This word is said to have derived from *bém* in the Igbo language meaning ' my place or people ' , but may have other origins (see : Barbados etymology) . A section of Belize City was named Eboe Town after its Igbo inhabitants . In the United States , the Igbo were imported most commonly to the Chesapeake Bay colonies and states of Maryland and Virginia , where they constituted the largest group of Africans . Since the late 20th century , a wave of Nigerian immigrants , mostly English and Igbo @-@ speaking , have settled in Maryland , attracted to its strong professional job market .

= = = Colonial period = = =

The 19th @-@ century British colonization effort in present @-@ day Nigeria and increased encounters between the Igbo and other ethnicities near the Niger River led to a deepening sense of a distinct Igbo ethnic identity . The Igbo proved decisive and enthusiastic in their embrace of Christianity and Western education . Due to the incompatibility of the Igbo decentralized style of government and the centralized system including the appointment of warrant chiefs required for British indirect rule , British colonial rule was marked with open conflicts and much tension . Under British colonial rule , the diversity within each of Nigeria 's major ethnic groups slowly decreased and distinctions between the Igbo and other large ethnic groups , such as the Hausa and the Yoruba , became sharper .

Colonial rule transformed Igbo society , as portrayed in Chinua Achebe 's novel *Things Fall Apart* . British rule brought about changes in culture , such as the introduction of Warrant Chiefs as Eze (indigenous rulers) where there were no such monarchies . Christian missionaries introduced aspects of European ideology into Igbo society and culture , sometimes shunning parts of the culture . The rumours that the Igbo women were being assessed for taxation sparked off the 1929 Igbo Women 's War in Aba (also known as the 1929 Aba Riots) , a massive revolt of women never encountered before in Igbo history .

Aspects of Igbo culture such as construction of houses , education and religion changed following colonialism . The tradition of building houses out of mud walls and thatched roofs ended as the people shifted to materials such as cement blocks for houses and zinc roofs . Roads for vehicles were built . Buildings such as hospitals and schools were erected in many parts of Igboland . Along with these changes , electricity and running water were installed in the early 20th century . With electricity , new technology such as radios and televisions were adopted , and have become commonplace in most Igbo households .

= = = Nigerian ? Biafran War = = =

A series of ethnic clashes between Northern Muslims and the Igbo , and other ethnic groups of Eastern Nigeria Region living in Northern Nigeria took place between 1966 and 1967 . Elements in the army had assassinated the Nigerian military head of state General Johnson Aguiyi @-@ Ironsi (29 July 1966) and peace negotiations failed between the military government that deposed Ironsi and the regional government of Eastern Nigeria at the Aburi Talks in Ghana in 1967 . These events led to a regional council of the peoples of Eastern Nigeria deciding that the region should secede and proclaim the Republic of Biafra on May 30 , 1967 . General Emeka Odumegwu @-@ Ojukwu made this declaration and became the Head of state of the new republic . The resultant war , which became known as the Nigerian Civil War or the Nigerian @-@ Biafran War , lasted from July 6 , 1967 until January 15 , 1970 , after which the federal government re @-@ absorbed Biafra into Nigeria . Several million Eastern Nigerians died from the pogroms against them , such as the 1966 anti @-@ Igbo pogrom where between 10 @,@ 000 and 30 @,@ 000 Igbo people were killed . In their struggle for self @-@ determination , the people of Biafra earned the respect of a generation ,

and figures such as Jean @-@ Paul Sartre and John Lennon , who returned his British honor , MBE , partly in protest against British collusion in the Nigeria @-@ Biafra war .

In July 2007 the former President of Biafra , General Emeka Odumegwu @-@ Ojukwu , renewed calls for the secession of the Biafran state as a sovereign entity . " The only alternative is a separate existence ... What upsets the Igbo population is we are not equally Nigerian as the others " .

= = = Recent history (1970 to present) = = =

The Nigerian ? Biafran War left Igboland devastated . Fighting had completely destroyed many hospitals , schools , and homes . In addition to the loss of their savings , many Igbo people faced discrimination from other ethnic groups and from the new non @-@ Igbo federal government . Some Igbo subgroups , such as the Ikwerre , started disassociating themselves from the larger Igbo population after the war . In the post @-@ war era , people of eastern Nigeria changed the names of both people and places to non @-@ Igbo @-@ sounding words . For instance , the town of Igbuzo was anglicized to Ibusa . Due to discrimination , many Igbo had trouble finding employment , and during the early 1970s , the Igbo became one of the poorest ethnic groups in Nigeria .

Igboland was gradually rebuilt by its citizens and some contribution from the Nigerian government over a period of twenty years and the economy prospered again due to the rise of the petroleum industry in the adjacent Niger Delta region . This led to the establishment of new factories in southern Nigeria . Many Igbo people eventually took government positions , although many were engaged in private business . Since the early 21st century , there has been a wave of Nigerian Igbo immigration to other African countries , Europe , and the Americas .

= = Culture = =

Igbo culture includes the various customs , practices and traditions of the people . It comprises archaic practices as well as new concepts added into the Igbo culture either through evolution or outside influences . These customs and traditions include the Igbo people 's visual art , use of language , music and dance forms , as well as their attire , cuisine and language dialects . Because of their various subgroups , the variety of their culture is heightened further .

= = = Language and literature = = =

The Igbo language was used by John Goldsmith as an example to justify deviating from the classical linear model of phonology as laid out in The Sound Pattern of English . It is written in the Roman script as well as the Nsibidi formalized ideograms , which is used by the Ekpe society and Okonko fraternity , but is no longer widely used . Nsibidi ideography existed among the Igbo before the 16th century , but died out after it became popular among secret societies , who made Nsibidi a secret form of communication . Igbo language is difficult because of the huge number of dialects , its richness in prefixes and suffixes and its heavy intonation . Igbo is a tonal language and there are hundreds of different Igbo dialects and Igboid languages , such as the Ikwerre and Ekpeye languages . In 1939 , Dr. Ida C. Ward led a research expedition on Igbo dialects which could possibly be used as a basis of a standard Igbo dialect , also known as Central Igbo . This dialect included that of the Owerri and Umuahia groups , including the Ohuhu dialect . This proposed dialect was gradually accepted by missionaries , writers , publishers , and Cambridge University .

In 1789 , The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano was published in London , England , written by Olaudah Equiano , a former slave . The book featured 79 Igbo words . In the first and second chapter , the book illustrates various aspects of Igbo life based on Olaudah Equiano 's life in his hometown of Essaka . Although the book was one of the first books published to include Igbo material , Geschichte der Mission der evangelischen Brüder auf den caraischen Inseln St. Thomas , St. Croix und S. Jan (German : History of the Evangelical Brothers ' Mission in the Caribbean Islands St. Thomas , St. Croix and St. John) , published in 1777 , written by the German missionary C. G. A. Oldendorp , was the first book to publish any Igbo material .

Perhaps the most popular and renowned novel that deals with the Igbo and their traditional life was the 1959 book by Chinua Achebe , *Things Fall Apart* . The novel concerns influences of British colonialism and Christian missionaries on a traditional Igbo community during an unspecified time in the late nineteenth or early 20th century . Most of the novel is set in Umuofia , one of nine villages on the lower Niger .

= = = Performing arts = = =

The Igbo people have a musical style into which they incorporate various percussion instruments : the udu , which is essentially designed from a clay jug ; an ekwe , which is formed from a hollowed log ; and the ogene , a hand bell designed from forged iron . Other instruments include opi , a wind instrument similar to the flute , igba , and ichaka . Another popular musical form among the Igbo is Highlife . A widely popular musical genre in West Africa , Highlife is a fusion of jazz and traditional music . The modern Igbo highlife is seen in the works of Dr Sir Warrior , Oliver De Coque , Bright Chimezie and Chief Osita Osadebe , who were among the most popular Igbo highlife musicians of the 20th century .

Masking is one of the most common art styles in Igboland and is linked strongly with Igbo traditional music . A mask can be made of wood or fabric , along with other materials including iron and vegetation . Masks have a variety of uses , mainly in social satires , religious rituals , secret society initiations (such as the Ekpe society) and public festivals , which now include Christmas time celebrations . Some of the best known include the Agbogho Mmuo (Igbo : Maiden spirit) masks of the Northern Igbo which represent the spirits of deceased maidens and their mothers with masks symbolizing beauty and ljele .

Other impressive masks include Northern Igbo ljele masks . At 12 feet (3 @. @ 7 m) high , ljele masks consist of platforms 6 feet (1 @. @ 8 m) in diameter , supporting figures made of coloured cloth and representing everyday scenes with objects such as leopards . ljele masks are used for honoring the dead to ensure the continuity and well @-@ being of the community and are only seen on rare occasions such as the death of a prominent figure in the community .

There are many Igbo dance styles , but perhaps , Igbo dance is best known for its Atilogwu dance troops . These performances include acrobatic stunts such as high kicks and cartwheels , with each rhythm from the indigenous instruments indicating a movement to the dancer .

= = = Visual art and architecture = = =

There is such variety among Igbo groups that it is not possible to define a general Igbo art style . Igbo art is known for various types of masquerade , masks and outfits symbolising people , animals , or abstract conceptions . Bronze castings found in the town of Igbo Ukwu from the 9th century , constitute the earliest sculptures discovered in Igboland . Here , the grave of a well @-@ established man of distinction and a ritual store , dating from the 9th century AD , contained both chased copper objects and elaborate castings of leaded bronze . Along with these bronzes were 165 @, @ 000 glass beads said to have originated in Egypt , Venice and India . Some popular Igbo art styles include Uli designs . The majority of the Igbo carve and use masks , although the function of masks vary from community to community .

Igbo art is noted for Mbari architecture .

Mbari houses of the Owerri @-@ Igbo are large opened @-@ sided square planned shelters . They house many life @-@ sized , painted figures (sculpted in mud to appease the Alusi (deity) and Ala , the earth goddess , with other deities of thunder and water) . Other sculptures are of officials , craftsmen , foreigners (mainly Europeans) , animals , legendary creatures and ancestors . Mbari houses take years to build in what is regarded as a sacred process . When new ones are constructed , old ones are left to decay . Everyday houses were made of mud and thatched roofs with bare earth floors with carved design doors . Some houses had elaborate designs both in the interior and exterior . These designs could include Uli art designed by Igbo women .

One of the unique structures of Igbo culture was the Nsude Pyramids , at the town of Nsude , in

Abaja , northern Igboland . Ten pyramidal structures were built of clay / mud . The first base section was 60 ft. in circumference and 3 ft. in height . The next stack was 45 ft. in circumference . Circular stacks continued , till it reached the top . The structures were temples for the god Ala / Uto , who was believed to reside at the top . A stick was placed at the top to represent the god 's residence . The structures were laid in groups of five parallel to each other . Because it was built of clay / mud like the Deffufa of Nubia , time has taken its toll requiring periodic reconstruction .

= = = Religion and rites of passage = = =

Today , the majority of the Igbo people are Christian , although many also retain belief in their traditional religion . Over half of the Christians are Roman Catholic . There are a small population of Igbo Jews , who claim descent from ancient Jewish traders who married their women . This claim is based on population genetics that shows Igbos has L1c gene which is one of the original Eve genes L1 , L2 , L3 . Recent books use ethnolinguistics and paleoanthropology to demonstrate that Hebrew language was formed from Igbo language consonants .

The Igbo religion and traditions are known as Odinani . In Igbo religion the supreme God is called Chukwu (" great spirit ") ; Chukwu created the world and everything in it and is associated with all things on Earth . They believe the Cosmos is divided into four complex parts : creation , known as Okike ; supernatural forces or deities called Alusi ; Mmuo , which are spirits ; and Uwa , the world .

Chukwu is the supreme deity in Odinani as he is the creator , and the Igbo people believe that all things come from him and that everything on earth , heaven and the rest of the spiritual world is under his control . Linguistic studies of the Igbo language suggests the name Chukwu is a compound of the Igbo words Chi (spiritual being) and Ukwu (great in size) . Each individual is born with a spiritual guide / guardian angel or guardian principle , " Chi " , unique to each individual and the individual 's fate and destiny is determined by their Chi . Thus the Igbos say that the siblings may come of the same mother but no two people have the same Chi and thus different destinies for all . Alusi , alternatively known as Arusi or Arushi (depending on dialect) , are minor deities that are worshiped and served in Odinani . There are many different Alusi , each with its own purpose . When an individual deity is no longer needed , or becomes too violent , it is discarded .

The Igbo have traditionally believed in reincarnation . People are believed to reincarnate into families that they were part of while alive . Before a relative dies , it is said that the soon to be deceased relative sometimes give clues of who they will reincarnate as in the family . Once a child is born , he or she is believed to give signs of who they have reincarnated from . This can be through behavior , physical traits and statements by the child . A diviner can help in detecting who the child has reincarnated from . It is considered an insult if a male is said to have reincarnated as a female .

Children are not allowed to call elders by their names without using an honorific (as this is considered disrespectful) . As a sign of respect , children are required to greet elders when seeing them for the first time in the day . Children usually add the Igbo honorifics Mazi or Dede before an elder 's name when addressing them .

= = = Burials = = =

After a death , the body of a prominent member of society is placed on a stool in a sitting posture and is clothed in the deceased 's finest garments . Animal sacrifices may be offered and the dead person is well perfumed . Burial usually follows within 24 hours of death . In the 21st century , the head of a home is usually buried within the compound of his residence . Different types of deaths warrant different types of burials . This is determined by an individual 's age , gender and status in society . For example , children are buried in hiding and out of sight ; their burials usually take place in the early mornings and late nights . A simple untitled man is buried in front of his house and a simple mother is buried in her place of origin : in a garden or a farm @-@ area that belonged to her father . In the 21st century , a majority of the Igbo bury their dead in the western way , although it is not uncommon for burials to be practiced in the traditional Igbo ways .

===== Marriage =====

The process of marrying usually involves asking the young woman 's consent , introducing the woman to the man 's family and the same for the man to the woman 's family , testing the bride 's character , checking the woman 's family background , and paying the brides ' wealth . Marriages were sometimes arranged from birth through negotiation of the two families .

In the past , many Igbo men practiced polygamy . The polygamous family is made up of a man and his wives and all their children . Men sometimes married multiple wives for economic reasons so as to have more people in the family , including children , to help on farms . Christian and civil marriages have changed the Igbo family since colonization . Igbo people now tend to enter monogamous courtships and create nuclear families , mainly because of Western influence . Some Western marriage customs , such as weddings in a church , take place either before or after the Igbo cultural traditional marriage .

===== Attire =====

Traditionally , the attire of the Igbo generally consisted of little clothing , as the purpose of clothing originally was simply to conceal private parts.Uli body art was used to decorate both men and women in the form of lines forming patterns and shapes on the body .

Women traditionally carry their babies on their backs with a strip of clothing binding the two with a knot at her chest , a practice used by many ethnic groups across Africa . This method has been modernized in the form of the child carrier . Maidens usually wore a short wrapper with beads around their waist and other ornaments such as necklaces and beads . Both men and women wore wrappers . Men would wear loin cloths that wrapped round their waist and between their legs to be fastened at their back , the type of clothing appropriate for the intense heat as well as jobs such as farming .

In Olaudah Equiano 's narrative , Equiano describes fragrances that were used by the Igbo in the community of Essaka ;

" Our principal luxury is in perfumes ; one sort of these is an odoriferous wood of delicious fragrance : the other a kind of earth ; a small portion of which thrown into the fire diffuses a most powerful odor . We beat this wood into powder , and mix it with palm oil ; with which both men and women perfume themselves . " Olaudah Equiano

As colonialism became more influential , the Igbo adapted their dress customs . Clothing worn before colonialism became " traditional " and worn on cultural occasions . Modern Igbo traditional attire , for men , is generally made up of the Isiagu top , which resembles the Dashiki worn by other African groups . Isiagu (or Ishi agu) is usually patterned with lions ' heads embroidered over the clothing and can be a plain colour . It is worn with trousers and can be worn with either a ceremonial title holders hat or with the conventional striped men 's hat known as Okpu Agu . For women , a puffed sleeve blouse along with two wrappers and a head tie are worn .

===== Cuisine =====

The yam is very important to the Igbo as the staple crop . There are celebrations such as the New yam festival (Igbo : Iwaji) which are held for the harvesting of the yam . During the festival , yam is eaten throughout the communities as celebration . Yam tubers are shown off by individuals as a sign of success and wealth . Rice has replaced yam for many ceremonial occasions . Other indigenous foods include cassava , garri , maize and plantains . Soups or stews are included in a typical meal , prepared with a vegetable (such as okra , of which the word derives from the Igbo language , Okwuru) to which pieces of fish , chicken , beef , or goat meat are added . Jollof rice is popular throughout West Africa and Palm wine is a popular alcoholic traditional beverage .

===== Demographics =====

== Nigeria ==

The Igbo in Nigeria are found in Abia , Akwa Ibom , Anambra , Benue , Cross River , Ebonyi , Edo , Enugu , Imo , Delta and Rivers State . The Igbo language is predominant throughout these areas , although Nigerian English (the national language) is spoken as well . Prominent towns and cities in Igboland include Aba , Enugu (considered the ' Igbo capital ') , Onitsha , Owerri , Abakaliki , Asaba and Port Harcourt among others . A significant number of Igbo people have migrated to other parts of Nigeria , such as the cities of Lagos , Abuja , and Kano .

The official data on the population of ethnic groups in Nigeria continues to be controversial as a minority of these groups have claimed that the government deliberately deflates the official population of one group , to give the other numerical superiority . The CIA World Factbook puts the Igbo population of Nigeria at 18 % of a total population of 177 million , or approximately 32 million people .

Southeastern Nigeria , which is inhabited primarily by the Igbo , is the most densely populated area in Nigeria , and possibly in all of Africa . Most ethnicities that inhabit southeastern Nigeria , such as the closely related Efik and Ibibio people , are sometimes regarded as Igbo by other Nigerians and ethnographers who are not well informed about the southeast .

== Diaspora ==

After the Nigerian @-@ Biafran War , many Igbo people emigrated out of the indigenous Igbo homeland in southeastern Nigeria due to an absence of federal presence , lack of jobs , and poor infrastructure . In recent decades the Igbo region of Nigeria has suffered from frequent environmental damage mainly related to the oil industry . Igbo people have moved to both Nigerian cities such as Lagos and Abuja , and other countries such as Gabon , Canada , the United Kingdom and the United States . Prominent Igbo communities outside Africa include those of London in the United Kingdom and Houston , Baltimore , Chicago , Detroit , Seattle , Atlanta and Washington , D.C. in the United States .

About 21 @, @ 000 Igbo people were recorded in Ghana in 1969 . A small number (8 @, @ 680) in Bioko island in 2002 . Small numbers live in Japan making up the majority of the Nigerian immigrant population based in Tokyo . A large amount of the African population of Guangdong , China , are Igbo @-@ speaking and are mainly businessmen trading between factories in China and southeastern Nigeria , particularly Enugu . Other Igbo immigrants are found in the Americas (Igbo Canadian , Igbo American , Igbo Jamaican) and elsewhere .

== Genetics ==

Genetic studies have shown the Igbo to cluster most closely with other Niger @-@ Congo @-@ speaking peoples . With genealogy tracing by means of DNA testing , the roots of the African diaspora is being uncovered by descendants of the victims of the Atlantic slave trade who are researching their family history . In the 2003 PBS programme African American Lives , Bishop T.D. Jakes had his DNA analyzed ; his Y chromosome showed that he is descended from the Igbo . American actors Forest Whitaker , Paul Robeson , and Blair Underwood have traced their genealogy back to the Igbo people .

== Organizations ==

The 1930s saw the rise of Igbo unions in the cities of Lagos and Port Harcourt . Later , the Ibo Federal Union (renamed the Ibo State Union in 1948) emerged as an umbrella pan @-@ ethnic organization . Headed by Nnamdi Azikiwe , it was closely associated with the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) , which he co @-@ founded with Herbert Macaulay . The aim of the organization was the improvement and advancement (such as in education) of the Igbo and

their indigenous land and included an Igbo " national anthem " with a plan for an Igbo bank .

In 1978 after Olusegun Obasanjo 's military regime lifted the ban on independent political activity , the Ohaneze Ndi Igbo organization was formed , an elite umbrella organization which speaks on behalf of the Igbo people . Their main concerns are the marginalization of the Igbo people in Nigerian politics and the neglect of indigenous Igbo territory in social amenities and development of infrastructure . Other groups which protest the perceived marginalization of the Igbo people are the Igbo Peoples Congress (IPC) . Even before the 20th century there were numerous Igbo unions and organizations existing around the world , such as the Igbo union in Bathurst , Gambia in 1842 , founded by a prominent Igbo trader and ex @-@ soldier named Thomas Refell . Another was the union founded by the Igbo community in Freetown , Sierra Leone by 1860 , of which Africanus Horton , a surgeon , scientist and soldier , was an active member .

Decades after the Nigerian @-@ Biafran war , the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) , a secessionist group , was founded in September 1999 by Ralph Uwazurike for the goal of an independent Igbo state . Since its creation , there have been several conflicts between its members and the Nigerian government , resulting in the death of members . After the 2015 Nigerian general elections a group known as the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) became the most prominent vocal group for the agitation of the creation of an independent state of Biafra through a radio station named Radio Biafra . For the promotion of the Igbo language and culture , the Society for Promoting Igbo Language and Culture (SPILC) was founded in 1949 by Frederick Chidozie Ogbalu , and has since created a standard dialect for Igbo .