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Ndi Igbo: *Meet The Igbo People*

By Idenze Ezeme

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NDI IGBO

Ndi Igbo: Meet The Igbo People

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Who are the Igbo people? The Igbo people are native to the southeastern part of Nigeria. They are one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa, known for their rich cultural heritage, artistic traditions, and entrepreneurial spirit. The Igbo language, which is one of the four official languages of Nigeria, is spoken by more...

The Igbo people are native to the southeastern part of Nigeria. They are one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa, known for their rich cultural heritage, artistic traditions, and entrepreneurial spirit. The Igbo language, which is one of the four official languages of Nigeria, is spoken by more than 30 million people both within Nigeria and in the Igbo diaspora around the world. The Igbo traditionally have a decentralised system of governance, with a strong emphasis on community and family ties.

Igbo Sub tribes, Percy Amaury Talbot, The Peoples of Southern Nigeria: A Sketch of Their History, 1926

The Igbo people primarily inhabit the Southeastern region of Nigeria, specifically in the following states:

01

States in the Southeast Region of Nigeria

1. Abia State 2. Anambra State 3. Ebonyi State 4. Enugu State 5. Imo State

02

Igbo-speaking areas in neighbouring states:

1. Rivers State (particularly Rivers West, Rivers East, and Rivers South East) 2. Delta State (specifically, the Igbo-speaking areas of Delta North)

From left: Theresa Uwadia (Omu Onicha-Uku), Obi Martha Dunkwu (Omu Okpanam/Anioma), and Obi (Dr) Ada Nwanneamaka Biosah (Omu Asaba).

03

States with significant Igbo populations:

1. Kogi State 2. Benue State 3. Cross River State 4. Akwa Ibom State 5. Bayelsa State (although not predominantly Igbo, there are significant Igbo communities)

The Igbo people are also part of Equatorial Guinea and are a small but significant community. They primarily reside in the coastal towns of Malabo, Bata, and Mongomo. They are mostly descendants of Igbo slaves who were brought to the island of Bioko (formerly Fernando Pó) by Portuguese colonisers in the 18th century.

There are also Igbo descendants in the Caribbean and America, as a result of the transatlantic slave trade that forcibly brought millions of enslaved Africans, including Igbos, to the Americas and the Caribbean. Notable places like Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Haiti in the Caribbean, and the Lowcountry region of South

Carolina and Georgia in the USA.

04

Cultural Regions of Alaigbo (Igboland)

Igboland is home to diverse cultural regions, each with distinct dialects, traditions, and sub-ethnic identities. While united by core Igbo heritage, the people of these regions developed unique social structures, spiritual practices, and historical roles. Below is a regional mapping of these divisions, highlighting their cultural zones and key areas.

- Cross River Igbo (Aro)
 - – Eastern Igboland (near Cross River)
 - – Notable Areas: Arochukwu, Ohafia, Afikpo, Bende
- Northeast Igbo (Ogu Ukwu)
 - – Northern Ebonyi & Abia States
 - – Notable Areas: Abakaliki, Ikwo, Izzi, Ishiagu
- Northern Igbo (Wawaa)
 - – Northern Igboland (Anambra, Enugu, Imo, Kogi, Benue)
 - – Notable Areas: Nsukka, Awka, Nnewi, Okigwe
- Riverine Igbo (Oru)
 - – Niger Delta and Riverine zones (Anambra, Rivers, Delta)
 - – Notable Areas: Onitsha, Oguta, Aboh, Ndoni
- Southern Igbo (Isu-Urata)
 - – Southern Abia, Imo, Rivers States
 - – Notable Areas: Owerri, Aba, Umuahia, Port Harcourt
- Western Igbo (Anioma)
 - – Delta State and parts of Edo & Anambra
 - – Notable Areas: Asaba, Agbor, Igbuzo, Ogwashi-Ukwu

05

Notable Igbo descendants in the Caribbean and America include:

1. Olaudah Equiano (Nigerian Igbo, enslaved in the Caribbean and later became an abolitionist) 2. Igbo Landing (a site in Georgia where enslaved Igbos resisted slavery) 3. Mavis Staples (American singer, descendant of Igbo slaves) 4. W.E.B. Du Bois (American sociologist, descendant of Igbo slaves)

06

Igbos also have a significant presence in various countries, including:

– United States – United Kingdom – Canada – Australia – Other countries in Africa, Europe, and Asia.

07

Religious Beliefs of the Igbo People

The Igbo people are predominantly Christian, with estimates suggesting that over 90% identify as Christians, mostly Catholic or Anglican, due to strong missionary influence during and after colonial rule. However, a minority, roughly 5-10%, still actively practise *Odinala*, the traditional Igbo religion, which centres on the worship of *Ala* (Mother Earth), *Chukwu* (Great God) and lesser deities and the

veneration of ancestors. Many Igbo Christians also retain traditional beliefs and rituals, resulting in widespread religious syncretism. Even the Catholic and Anglican churches have integrated some Igbo traditional beliefs and rituals into their practices to suit the environment.

08

Natural & Mineral Resources in Igbo Cultural Regions

The Igbo Nation is blessed with an abundance of resources, including human capital and solid minerals. Here's a breakdown of natural and mineral resources found in each of Alaigbo's six major cultural regions (Igboland). These include minerals, forests, rivers, and other extractive or naturally valuable resources.

09

1. Cross River Igbo

(Mainly Arochukwu, Ohafia, Afikpo, Abiriba, Bende, Isiana, Nguzu-Edda — in Abia & Ebonyi States)

- Lead/Zinc – Abakaliki axis (spills into Afikpo and parts of Ohafia)
- Limestone – Afikpo, Nguzu-Edda
- Salt – Uburu (near Afikpo), Okposi
- Kaolin – Afikpo
- Clay – Arochukwu, Bende
- Forest Resources – Timber, Raffia palm, Kolanut

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2. Northeast Igbo (Ogu-Ukwu)

(Mainly Abakaliki, Izzi, Ikwo, Ishiagu, Okposi, Onicha, Ezza – Ebonyi State)

- Lead/Zinc – Abakaliki, Ishiagu
- Limestone/Marble – Ishiagu, Nkalagu
- Salt – Okposi, Uburu
- Granite – Ezza, Izzi
- Kaolin & Clay – Ikwo, Ezza
- Agricultural resources – Rice, Yam, Cassava

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3. Northern Igbo (Wawaa)

(Mainly Nsukka, Nri, Awka, Udi, Enugu, Agulu, Idemili, Okigwe – Anambra, Enugu, Imo, and parts of Benue)

- Coal – Udi, Enugu
- Limestone – Nkalagu, Udi
- Natural Gas & Petroleum (possible traces) – Anambra Basin
- Clay & Kaolin – Nsukka, Agulu
- Laterite & Ironstone – Udi, Nsukka
- Palm produce & Agricultural fertility – Awka, Idemili

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4. Riverine Igbo (Oru)

(Mainly Oguta, Onitsha, Aboh, Ndoni, Omoku, Egbema – Rivers, Delta, Anambra)

- Crude Oil & Natural Gas – Oguta, Egbema, Ndoni, Omoku, Aboh
- Tar Sand – Oguta
- Saltwater/brine – Ndoni, Ogbaru
- Fishery & Aquatic Life – Ogbaru, Omambala River
- Palm produce, Raffia, Timber

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5. Southern Igbo (Isu-Urata)

(Mainly Owerri, Aba, Mbaise, Ikwerre, Etche, Ngwa, Umuahia – Imo, Abia, Rivers)

- Crude Oil & Gas – Owerri, Mbaise, Etche, Ngwa
- Clay & Glass Sand – Ngwa, Owerri
- Kaolin – Mbaise, Isiala Ngwa
- Palm produce, Rubber, Cocoa
- Cassava & Yam (agricultural dominance)

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6. Western Igbo (Anioma)

(Mainly Asaba, Agbor, Ogwashi-Uku, Igbuzo, Ukwuani – Delta & parts of Anambra/Edo)

- Lignite (low-grade coal) – Obomkpa, Ogwashi-Uku
- Petroleum & Gas – Kwale (Utagba Uno), Ndokwa areas
- Glass Sand & Clay – Illah, Asaba
- Laterite & Limestone – Ika region
- Palm produce, Yam, Maize

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Idenze Ezeme

Nze is an Igbo history and culture enthusiast with an in-depth passion for exploring the rich cultural heritage, traditions, and historical narratives of the Igbo people. His works is mostly focused on pre-colonial Igbo societies, traditional belief systems, leadership systems, and the impact of European colonialism.



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