

Igbo land of african americans homeland

[Sociology](#), [Slavery](#)



The traditional homeland of the Igbo people lies in the south-eastern region of Nigeria. The geographical location of Igboland lies between the great River Niger and Cross Rivers State, with the Ibibio, Ijo, Igala, Idoma, and Edo as their neighbours. The ancient settlement at Igbo-Ukwu in Eastern Nigeria was an outpost for West African's long-distance trade routes, one of which was the Trans-Saharan trade routes. The main items traded were gold, slaves, salt, cowry shells (the major unit of currency). Others are weapons, expensive clothes, pepper, ivory, kola nuts and leather goods. [pic] The arrival of Europeans on the Coast of West Africa undermined the Saharan trade, but did not finally finish it until well into the 19th century. This also made the south-eastern region to flourish, primarily trading on slaves. After the abolition of slave trade in 1807 the direction of trade was then turned to trading in palm products, timber, elephant tusk and spices. Middle and long distance trade used a network of trade routes. Trade with the groups to the north of the area either used the river Niger, which is thought to have constituted a regular trade route since the fifteenth century, or one of the main land routes through Nsukka, which linked the central and eastern parts of the region with the north. Other trade routes linked the interior to the communities on the coast. One of the major commodities transported via those routes was slaves, who were exported both to the south to the trading states on the coast, and to the north. From the north, horses were imported, while food and other products were also handled. It was through the slave trade, long before the establishment of colonial rule in Southeast Nigeria, that the Igbo first became known to the Europeans. However, since the area was located in the interior there was no direct contact between Europeans

on the coast and the communities in what is now Igboland. The population of the area participated in the slave trade, and many inhabitants of the area were exported, but their dealings with Europeans were conducted through the middle men from the coastal communities. The slave trade was dominated by one specific group from the area: the Aro. The Aro community have their headquarters in Arochuku on the eastern fringe of the Igbo area, near the Cross River. It has been argued that they have been heavily influenced by their non-Igbo neighbours, and even that they are 'not really' Igbo. Probably from the eighteenth century onwards, the Aro have specialized in long distance trade in slaves, salt and luxury items imported from Europe. They developed a network of trade routes, along which Aro traders travelled in caravans for their safety. Along these trade routes a number of Aro communities or colonies developed, the inhabitants of which called themselves Aro and traced back their origin to Arochuku. Although the Aro are known as traders, a number of the Aro colonies have specialized in agriculture. The Aro are thought to have contributed to the homogenization of Igbo culture since they had settlements in many villages and linked different communities through trade. Furthermore, the Arochuku oracle was consulted by many inhabitants of the region. However, it was often regarded as one oracle among others, and not as the most important oracle in the area. In the south of the area, it appears that Umuoha's Igwe ka ala oracle held the greatest influence. Furthermore, the influence of Arochuku was limited to a part of the present Igbo area, and within this area only a limited number of fixed trade routes were used, ignoring a considerable part of the population. On the other hand, the influence of Arochuku was not limited

to the Igbo area: their trade network included a part of the current Ibibio territory, the Cameroons, and Tiv, Igala, and Idoma areas. 44 The oracle in Arochuku also attracted people from groups which were situated to the east, south, and north of the present Igbo area. Other groups were also active traders. Groups such as Awka, Nri, and Nkwere had their own trade specialties and areas of influence. The Awka blacksmiths operated a trade network which extended from their home town Awka in all directions, usually crossing the boundaries of the present Igbo area, to places such as Igala in the north and Benin in the west. The travelling Awka men were not just blacksmiths, but also acted as agents for the Agbala oracle. A similar network was operated by the blacksmiths from Nkwere town. In part of the southern Igbo area, trade was dominated by the Nkwere. Non-Nkwere traders travelled under Nkwere pax and as Umu Nkwere (Nkwere sons).