

## **The Significance of Igbo in the Bight of Biafra Slave-Trade: A Rejoinder to Northrup's 'Myth Igbo'**

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The old assumption that the transatlantic slave-trade randomly aggregated highly diverse African populations is being hotly contested. The assertion of 'anthropological creolization' theorists, namely Sidney Mintz and Richard Price and their followers, that any shipment of captives tended to constitute a crowd of cultural strangers who shared little socially or culturally other than their enslavement, is no longer assumed arbitrarily to be true.<sup>1</sup> Given the recent outpouring of new work on the numbers, origins, and distributions of enslaved Africans,<sup>2</sup> and most importantly, the publication in 1999 of the Du Bois CD-ROM database of over 27,000 slaving voyages,<sup>3</sup> and buttressed by burgeoning research over the past decade in a wide range of disciplines exploring historical transatlantic cultural connections throughout the African diaspora,<sup>4</sup> the evidence is mounting that the transatlantic slave-trade was much more patterned and much less random (and randomizing) than previously had been simply assumed, thereby resulting in a greater likelihood of historical influences of groups of Africans in the formation and conservation of particular cultural patterns in the Americas.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, there now appears to be a concerted effort to shift the nexus of randomization away from the Middle Passage experience, thus preserving the central assumption of 'anthropological creolization' in the face of all of this new (and in some cases, not-so-new) evidence. One approach is to emphasize the random distribution of Africans upon landing in the Americas, such as in the Chesapeake, though this too is contrary to new evidence.<sup>6</sup> Another approach, reflecting older 'tribalist' assumptions about Africa and Africans, is what John Thornton has called the 'maximum-diversity' position. As he wrote,

the degree of diversity in Africa can easily be exaggerated. The older anthropological tendency to see each ethnolinguistic group as a

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separate 'tribe' and to ignore such factors as multilingualism or nonlinguistic cultural sharing have tended to force the real diversity beyond its true limits.<sup>7</sup>

One such example is the article by David Northrup in a previous issue of this journal. Northrup does emphasize inter-ethnic exchange and cross-cultural borrowing among peoples in the hinterland of the Bight of Biafra, and does reject the idea that pre-twentieth century peoples could be considered 'tribes'. The thrust of his argument is that the terms used to describe Africans from the Bight of Biafra 'greatly enlarged and simplified African identity groups in the era of the Atlantic slave trade', and that historians must pay greater attention to the diversity of locally specific 'identities that people from this important trading coast would have brought with them'. The evidence which he presents, however, is a useful reminder that the apparent diversity of ethnic groups in the hinterland of the Bight of Biafra, with their many languages and dialects, mini-states and sub-ethnies, and generalized ethic of cultural dynamism, actually masks a greater uniformity or homogeneity in historical cultural practices (lived experience) than one might otherwise assume for the region. Ironically, Northrup's secondary argument for extensive inter-cultural exchange and pragmatism undermines his main point; the extreme cultural heterogeneity of the region. Unfortunately Northrup also tars with the brush of supposed tribalism, accusing myself, and to a lesser extent Michael Gomez, of thinking that 'something closely resembling the ethnolinguistic "tribes" of twentieth-century nationalist politics emerged in the Americas', even though Gomez and I certainly use neither this kind of language nor thinking in our work. However, it is telling, perhaps, that in his own article Northrup constantly resorts to the terminology of tribalism, using the words 'tribe' or 'tribal' at least a half-dozen times in the first several pages, and then liberally throughout his text, though in quotes.<sup>8</sup>

The seeming embeddedness of Northrup's perspective within a tribalist paradigm, moreover, is further reflected in his presentist conception of the collective identities of groups of Africans in the diaspora. Whereas elsewhere I argue most explicitly that these groups should be seen precisely as nascent ethnic-groups (and not as nations) and indeed on strictly analytical grounds that they cannot be equated with 'tribes', Northrup labors to dissuade us that enslaved Africans 'did not possess the ethnolinguistic "tribal" identities of today', as if anyone believes such was the case. Indeed the major scholars working on the question of ethnicity in the diaspora do not accept the nominal ethnic designations simply at face value or statically, nor do they assume that these terms meant the same things in all times and places, but rather that they were contingent and contextual.<sup>9</sup> Northrup, however, reasserts that Gomez and I are guilty of 'assuming the existence

of modern "tribal" identities in an earlier period'; presumably the problem here is one of chronology rather than of conceptualization. To extend a metaphor which Northrup introduces, that is, that enslaved Africans did not go 'pre-packaged in large identity units', it would seem that in his view the terms used to denote these diasporic groups were simply 'brand-names' imposed by Europeans. Therefore, presumably, such Africans were simply victims, without effective agency, passively accepting whatever they were called. Northrup assumes that these ethnonymic terms were ascribed by Europeans, inscribed by European stereotypes, and describe little more than social fictions. Hence, for Northrup, apparently, enslaved Africans were passive victims of European domination rather than active agents in contesting such domination through collective cultural means. In his interpretation, therefore, there is little room for historical agency, much less irony or contingency or complexity.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, in criticizing my 1997 article in a previous issue of this journal, apparently for suggesting that Igbo could be studied as a distinct ethnohistorical group in the diaspora, Northrup pointedly ignores my suggestion of ethnogenesis, or the historical creation of new ethnic identities, as an unintended consequence of the slave-trade.<sup>11</sup> In fact, Northrup's historiography is rather suspect and quite unreliable, with a tendency to oversimplify and even to distort arguments beyond recognition, and to rely at times on anachronisms to make his point. Three examples will suffice.

Northrup criticizes Thornton for reviving Herskovits' concept of cultural complexes, based on shared languages. Rather than arguing that African cultures were 'static' and transferred wholesale, and specifically that Eastern Kwa languages were mutually intelligible,<sup>12</sup> Thornton actually argues that many people were multilingual, noting that 'linguistic boundaries are always a bit flexible and confused' and that other aspects of culture, such as aesthetics and artistic production, were significant. Although Thornton does divide Atlantic Africa into three main cultural zones (and seven sub-zones), he notes that sometimes political or economic commonalities, cultural sharing and multilinguality crosscut purely local linguistic boundaries. In fact, Thornton sees a spectrum. Upper Guinea was the most linguistically heterogeneous region (but with much non-linguistic inter-cultural exchange), with Lower Guinea also linguistically diverse (though less so than modern ethnographers would have it), while the West-Central African (Congo/Angola) coast was comparatively homogeneous linguistically though diverse politically. Although Northrup cites the same section, he pointedly ignored Thornton's summary statement that the slave-trade took some groups 'far more frequently than others and often had the effect of bringing people of similar backgrounds together more than a maximum-diversity hypothesis will allow'.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, it is demonstrably untrue that Thornton argues for seeing diasporic Africans in terms of 'pre-packaged static cultures'. Although in his article Northrup cites the page numbers in which Thornton describes these collectivities as 'neo-African', he distorts Thornton's summary statement that 'African nations in the New World *were new and unique to the Americas* and did not correspond well to political or social units in Africa, in that they were based on language alone', by characterizing the passage in a note as 'an imaginative description of how African "nations" recreated themselves on the basis of language'. What Thornton argues is that enslaved people *reinvented* themselves, though clearly not from scratch, and in terms of language- communities. Thornton can be criticized for over-relying on language as the basis of ethnicity, and for thinking of those neo-African groups specifically as 'nations', criticisms that I have made elsewhere, but he does not assert that those groups were simply 'pre-packaged' or 'static' cultures transferred wholesale into the diaspora.<sup>14</sup>

In Northrup's discussion of Gomez's *Exchanging Our Country Marks*, he distorts the important point about the proportion of Africans taken from the Bight of Biafra to Virginia. It has been well known since the 1930s that slaves from the Bight of Biafra represented about 38–40 per cent of all Africans taken to Virginia.<sup>15</sup> But Northrup either fails to understand the math or simply has misrepresented Gomez's use of this conventional figure. Rather than referring to the percentage of Biafrans among all Africans taken to Virginia between 1710 and 1760, as Gomez stated, Northrup would have us believe that Gomez referred to the proportion of *Igbo* within the Biafran population taken to Virginia. This distortion therefore allows Northrup to contest my general argument that, over all, the *Igbo* proportion of Biafran slaves exported approached 80 per cent, by claiming that Gomez argues for a 40 per cent *Igbo* share of Biafrans, with Northrup then adding his own lower estimate that 25 per cent of Biafrans taken were *Igbo*. Northrup writes: 'the proportion of *Igbo* speakers among slaves entering the Chesapeake would have been more like 25 per cent than Gomez's 38 to 40 per cent or Chambers's 80 per cent'.<sup>16</sup> This kind of distortion of 'the facts' is unacceptable.

In fact, new evidence suggests that between 1698 and 1774, Africans from the Bight of Biafra accounted for over 44 per cent of all enslaved Africans taken to Virginia, and they tended to be concentrated in particular times and places, especially before 1740 and in the York and James river basins, where they formed a majority of 'saltwater' slaves. For example, between 1696 and 1740, they were 53.4 per cent of Africans imported (whose provenances are known). At other times and places in the colony, Biafran Africans comprised even larger majorities of those imported, ranging from 58 per cent (Rappahannock, 1719–30) to 71 per cent (South

Potomac, 1746–70). In a telling number, of those Africans imported to Virginia with the receiving colonial district unknown, some 49 per cent came from the Bight of Biafra.<sup>17</sup> The point is significant, because a reliance on Northrup's account of Gomez's work would halve the hypothetical number of Igbo in colonial Virginia. By my estimate, which is not simply 'arbitrary', there were likely to be something on the order of 25,000–30,000 Igbo in colonial Virginia, and they would have constituted the largest group of Africans in the colony, and would have been concentrated in the interior tidewater and central and southern Piedmont regions, areas which later became Virginia's 'black belt'.<sup>18</sup>

Given these numbers, it is intriguing that archaeologists working in the lower York and James rivers region of Virginia are finding artefacts in colonial-era slave quarters that can be linked to Igbo spiritual traditions. One site dating to the second quarter of the eighteenth century, where slaves from the Bight of Biafra are known to have lived and in a county with a large black majority as early as 1750, included a sub-floor pit with high concentrations of grape tannin in the soil (suggesting the possibility of libations poured into 'the earth'). Of some 30 pewter spoon handles recovered at this site, 18 were incised with designs which are very similar to, and apparently in some cases identical to, Igbo religious and decorative motifs, as well as to designs in the secret *nsibidi* language of blacksmiths and diviners, in particular those used to denote *Chukwu* (supreme creator), and which were possibly used as divining tools. In addition, other designs are reminiscent of precolonial Igbo male and female body cicatrization patterns. An archaeologist with extensive field-work experience in the Chesapeake recently concluded that these ubiquitous sub-floor pits, which now are considered nearly diagnostic in defining sites as 'slave sites', were likely to have been 'personal and ancestor shrines'.<sup>19</sup>

Although Northrup would criticize such explorations of possible cultural connections as anachronistic, based as they are in part on early twentieth-century ethnography, Northrup himself relies at times quite uncritically on anachronisms to make his points. One example is his assertion, in dismissing my argument that Igbo brought the Efik and Ibibio term for 'white man' (*mbákara*) into English as 'buckra', that *beke* was actually 'the equivalent Igbo word' for 'white man'.<sup>20</sup> In the era of the slave-trade, however, Igbo peoples had no single term for 'white man', which probably reflected a lack of direct contact with Europeans. In the nineteenth century (and today), people used a variety of terms, including *oyibo* (stranger, foreigner), *onye-ocha* (white-coloured person), and after 1854 *nwambéke* or *beke* (children of/ beke). The oldest term would seem to be *oyibo*, which in the mid-eighteenth century signified 'red men living at a distance' and in 1832 among the Niger Igbo was used to mean 'white man'.<sup>21</sup> The term *beke*,

however, was a neologism coined by Igbo peoples in the Niger River area after encountering the first white man to come to the region, William Baikie, who led an expedition up the Niger in 1854.<sup>22</sup> Several years later, though, when the Revd J.C. Taylor was resident at Onitsha as a missionary (1857–8), he was called by many terms, including *oyibo* and *beke*, as well as ‘moa’ (*mmuo*) or ‘spirit’, and *eze* (‘master’).<sup>23</sup> Although by the early twentieth century the term *beke* was used to mark new things that Europeans introduced to Igboland, especially in the riverain Igbo dialects, the word itself was not coined until well after the slave-trade era had ended. Even today *beke* is not the exclusive Igbo word for whites/Europeans/Westerners, as people still commonly use *oyibo* and *onye-ocha*.

In the Brass or Orú dialect of Ijo, however, a term for ‘European’ was *beke*, with connotations of ‘yellow-coloured’, and which may be dated to the later eighteenth century. And the word *beke* (and related forms) is known in the diaspora, though its use is highly restricted, as it is found only on the islands of Dominica, Grenada and St Lucia.<sup>24</sup>

The term ‘buckra’ (with many slight variations), however, was widely distributed in the transatlantic diaspora, especially in the Anglophone Americas. Seemingly wherever there were English colonies, the African slaves introduced a version of ‘buckra’ into the plantation creole language. A quick survey demonstrates the use of ‘buckra’ (or derived versions) can be documented for **South Carolina** (1773–74, 1783, 1864, 1930s), **Pennsylvania** (c.1782), **Jamaica** (1788, present), **Suriname** (1794, 1928–29), **Guyana** (c.1910, present), **Virginia** (1930s), **Tobago** (present) – that is, from South America through the West Indies to mainland North America.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, the word was a staple of English-based Atlantic creole languages, while it is largely absent from non-English creoles. In many places, such as the USA, ‘buckra’ gave way to ‘white-folks’ (and other terms such as ‘cracker’ or even ‘whitey’ and ‘ofay’) though the cultural and linguistic work of the African-derived etymon continues.<sup>26</sup>

As common as the word was throughout the anglophone Americas, however, nowhere was it pronounced exactly as it was in the original Efik.<sup>27</sup> In fact, the only example of ‘*mbákara*’ in its Efik phonography is a ritual title within the specialized language of the Afro-Cuban Abakuá secret-society, which is well known to be directly derived from the *Ekpe* masquing society of the Old Calabar environs.<sup>28</sup> Everywhere else, the term (in its many varieties) drops the unstressed first syllable, which is a common linguistic phenomenon called aphaesis, and suggests that the term was in fact a loan-word borrowed from the original language by others. As the Efik called both themselves and the ‘Calabar’ river by the term *Iboku*, or ‘those who quarrel with the Ibo’, and as three of the four principal interior markets for slaves resold at Old Calabar in the years 1785–87 were geographically

positioned to draw on the densely populated Igbo country to the north-west (Ekrikock and Inneiong were on the western side of the river, while Umon was across from the Igbo area), and at a time when exports of slaves were peaking at astronomical annual levels, it seems quite likely that Igbo predominated among those who were captured or purchased and sold away to the *Iboku* settlements.<sup>29</sup> There they would have encountered *mbákara* for the first time (both personally and lexically), and then carried an aphesic version of the term as a loan-word into the diaspora.

It is precisely my point that a *historical* (rather than Northrup's anachronistic) perspective suggests that because Igbo-speaking peoples had no single term for 'white man' they appropriated one that they encountered on the coast (or which had become a common usage on the coast or among middlemen traders such as the Aro), and one with a subtext that would have made sense to them as captives, and then brought the term in its creolized form into the diaspora. The term 'buckra', again, was not a 'tribal survival' or a 'retention' or a 'carryover', but a creolism (though African-derived). The British dominance of the Biafra slave-trade was reflected in the ubiquity of the 'buckra' term in the anglophone Americas.<sup>30</sup> And since the diasporic term was never pronounced something like 'ùmbákra' or 'mákara', it is highly likely that some other linguistic group borrowed the word, altered its pronunciation in an expected way (by aphesis), and brought it into English-based plantation creoles as such. Because the British dominated the Biafra slave-trade, and Igbo predominated within the populations of captives sold as slaves throughout the region, including at *Iboku* before 1810, it seems highly likely that Igbo were the ones who appropriated Efik *mbákara* and turned it into the familiar 'buckra' in the diaspora.

### Significance of Igbo in the Biafra Slave-Trade

Other peoples from the Bight of Biafra hinterland were thrown into the diaspora in some numbers, especially Ibibio ('Moko'), but also Ijo and to the east Ekoi, Efut, Ejagham and others even further eastward in the Cameroonian grasslands, though mostly in very small numbers (except for Ibibio) and at the margins of slaving (chronologically and geographically).<sup>31</sup> However, it seems clear that Igbo predominated in the Biafra slave-trade, especially in the 'long eighteenth century' (1680–1810).

Estimates of the Igbo share of slaves sold into the diaspora from the Bight of Biafra have varied widely. Northrup once suggested 60 per cent or more, though apparently he now thinks the Igbo proportion was 25 per cent.<sup>32</sup> Inikori argued for no more than a one-third share, though his slave-trade estimates in general have been strongly criticized, while Boniface Obichere suggested that Idoma and Tiv from the sparsely populated Middle

Belt region, rather than the densely populated Igbo, were the major source populations, but without offering any real evidence to that effect.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, based on the data available to me at the time, I estimated that a likely 80 per cent of slaves exported were Igbo, especially after 1700. Rather than being simply 'arbitrary', this estimate derived from a combination of several kinds of indirect evidence. These included the changing patterns of slaving on the coast, which were reflected in socio-political changes both in the coastal polities and in the main hinterland region (Nri-Awka and Isuama), demographic modelling, and some limited though suggestive data on ethnicity in the diaspora.<sup>34</sup> On reviewing new evidence, it now seems that my initial overall estimate of 80 per cent was a little too high. New data from the Du Bois Database suggests that 75 per cent is a more plausible estimate of Igbo among all slaves exported, although the figure of 80 per cent is reaffirmed for the years between 1701 and 1810. Overall, however, the new data call for a slight downward revision in the total proportion of Igbo, to 75 per cent. The new estimates incorporate lower proportions for Igbo slaves sent from Elem Kalabari, Old Calabar and the Cameroons in several periods, as well as different frequencies in the different periods. However, the figure of 80 per cent for Igbo for 1701–1810 remains highly probable and, together with the revised total proportion of 75 per cent, is predictive. In general, then, a summary estimate of 'about 1.3 million' Igbo (or '75 to 80 per cent') out of 'about 1.7 million' captives exported from the Bight of Biafra seems highly likely. Tables 1 and 2 show the revised estimates.<sup>35</sup>

Even with the weighted percentages for the different major periods, ranging from 25 per cent to 80 per cent, the overall figure of 75 per cent approximates to the sum of the 'Igbo' column in Table 2. In other words, whereas estimating an 80 per cent share of the Biafra total exports would yield a target figure of 1,325,373, or 5.3 per cent greater than the derived estimate of Igbo exported as per the weighted proportions, if one assumes a 75 per cent share (1,242,537), then the derived sum exceeds the target figure by a mere 1.3 per cent. Therefore, based on the evidence of this sample from the Du Bois Database, not only is the 75 per cent share of Igbo plausible, but so are the percentages for the different periods and entrepôts between 1662 and 1840. In general, then, it is highly likely that something on the order of 'about 1.3 million' Igbo were thrown into the diaspora, with fully 750,000 of them being taken between 1751 and 1810.

In criticizing my earlier estimates of Igbo proportions in the Biafra slave-trade, Northrup intemperately claims that I engage in 'questionable manipulations of the evidence'. He dismisses my estimates as simply 'arbitrary' attempts to 'inflate the number of Igbo transported', and asserts that in order for them to be true 'every single slave from the two main ports



TABLE 1  
ESTIMATES OF SLAVES, AND IGBO, EXPORTED BY PERIOD, 1470–1867

Years	Number from Biafra	% Igbo	Number of Igbo
1470–1600	20,000	25	5,000
1601–1650s	25,000	33	8,250
1662–1700	89,296	65	58,042
1701–1750	273,580	80	218,864
1751–1810	939,240	80	751,392
1811–1860	354,600	65	230,490
	1,701,716	75	1,272,038

Source: After Chambers, 'Igbo Exiles', p.76.

Note: The following statements are comparisons with my previous estimates of the frequencies of Igbo. A downward revision for 1470–1600, to reflect the predominance in Sandoval of non-Igbo; probably the majority were Ijo and other delta peoples (Andoni, Okrika, Ogoni, Engenni etc.); see E.J. Alagoa, *A History of the Niger Delta: An Historical Interpretation of Ijo Oral Tradition* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Ibadan University Press, 1972), pp.140–1. Also a downward revision for 1600–1650s; but still reflects that Owerri Dapa of Kalabari knew the 'secrets' of trading with the Europeans (which undoubtedly included those connections with the 'upland Blacks' that brought slaves down), and which he had imparted to Asimini of Ibani. Figure for 1660s–1699 reflects the 'Kamalu' Endeme dynasty of Elem Kalabari; as well as the 'Kamalu' dynasty at Bonny; importance of the 'Hackbous Country' reflected in Barbot's 1699 map; see P.E.H. Hair, Adam Jones and Robin Law (eds), *Barbot on Guinea: The Writings of Jean Barbot on West Africa 1678–1712*, II (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1992), and also David Northrup, *Trade Without Rulers: Pre-Colonial Economic Development in South-Eastern Nigeria* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), pp.43, 52, 53. But because this was also a time of conflicts between the coastal groups, especially Elem Kalabari, Ibani, Andoni, and Okrika, probably more like 2/3 rather than 3/4; thus a slight downward revision. Figures for 1700–1749 are unchanged, reflecting initial Aro expansion, and rapid expansion of exports from Bonny. The rise of the Amakiri dynasty at Elem Kalabari would have reduced significantly the enslavement of Ijo, and certainly encouraged the incorporation of Igbo; as was the case for the new Perekule (Pepple) dynasty at Bonny. The projected proportion is unchanged for 1750–1809, reflecting Nri-Awka/Aro/Bonny axis, and Bonny's domination of exports, which was reflected in turmoil in Nri ambit, and the nearly complete shift from Ijo to Igbo in the littoral polities, as per observations in Crow and Adams about the putative Igbo origins of Kalabari and Ibani. A significant downward revision for 1811–67, derived from the strong cultural presence of non-Igbo *Carabalí* in Cuba, embodied in the Abakuá society and in references within *Regla de Ocha* ('Santería') *patiki* ('myths'); and see also some very limited data in Northrup, *Trade Without Rulers*, p.231. The total revised estimate of Igbo exported is 74,842 less (or 5.6 percent) than the one in Chambers, 'Igbo Exiles'; and representing a proportion of 74.8 percent (rather than 78.7 percent).

TABLE 2  
DERIVED DECENNIAL ESTIMATES OF IGBO EXPORTED, 1662–1860

Years	Biafra	%	Igbo
1662–70	34,471	<b>.65</b>	22,406
1671–80	24,021		15,614
1681–90	18,689		12,148
1691–1700	12,115		7,875
1701–10	23,130	<b>.80</b>	18,504
1711–20	51,410		41,128
1721–30	59,990		47,992
1731–40	62,260		49,808
1741–50	76,790		61,432
1751–60	106,100		84,880
1761–70	142,640		114,112
1771–80	160,400		128,320
1781–90	225,360		180,288
1791–1800	181,740		145,392
1801–10	123,000		98,400
1811–20	95,200	<b>.65</b>	61,880
1821–30	127,300		82,745
1831–40	112,700		73,255
1841–50	12,100		7,865
1851–60	7,300		4,745
	1,656,716	<b>.76</b>	1,258,789

Source: Figures for 1662–1700 from David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.166; for 1701–1810 are after David Richardson, 'Slave Exports from West and West-Central Africa, 1700–1810: New Estimates of the Volume and Distribution', *Journal of African History*, 30 (1989), p.17; for 1811–1860 are after David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp.250–2.

of Bonny and Old Calabar would have to have been an Igbo, which ... is demonstrably untrue'. In fact, an 80 per cent Igbo share in 1701–1810 demonstrably does *not* require the extreme condition that Northrup asserted. In fact, by my calculations, and based on a sample of 583,928 slaves exported, as is shown in the tables below, at *not one* of the principal entrepôts were Igbo the sole exports. As might be expected, Old Calabar exported the largest number of non-Igbo, followed by Bonny, and then the trade-sites in the Cameroons, and lastly Elem Kalabari. Rather than supposing that 'every single slave from ... Bonny and Old Calabar' had to be Igbo, an 80 per cent share of Igbo for the whole coast between 1701 and 1810 only required a 70 per cent Igbo share from Old Calabar and a 90 per cent share from Bonny, both of which are well within the bounds of plausibility (see Table 3). In the nineteenth century, there undoubtedly were more non-Igbo sent as slaves, especially at Old Calabar, though it remains

quite likely that at Bonny and Elem Kalabari Igbo slaves remained at least 80 per cent of those exported (Table 4). Between 1811 and 1840, moreover, Igbo were still a large majority, though at an estimated 65 per cent of slaves transported.

There is also some highly suggestive, though limited, evidence on the frequency of Igbo among Biafran Africans in the diaspora that dovetails with the estimated slave-exports data. In a sample of nearly 5,500 slaves (1718–1822) from colonies throughout the Atlantic world, Igbo comprised about 75 per cent of Africans from the Bight of Biafra hinterland (see Table 5). Furthermore, data on some 3,028 recaptive Africans (of whom 64 per cent were Igbo) in Sierra Leone after 1821 approximates to the estimated proportion of 65 per cent Igbo in the last generation of Biafran slave exports (cf. Tables 1 and 4).<sup>36</sup> Though further research in notarial, parish and plantation records, as well as fugitive slave advertisements, is required to substantiate these initial conclusions on ethnic frequency among Biafran

TABLE 3  
DERIVED ESTIMATES OF IGBO AND NON-IGBO EXPORTED BY ENTREPÔT,  
1701–1810

	Number exported	% Igbo	Number Igbo	Number non-Igbo
Elem Kalabari	54,644	.85	46,447	8,197
Bonny	340,260	.90	306,234	34,026
Old Calabar	164,575	.70	115,203	49,372
Cameroons	24,449	.00	0	24,449
	583,928	.80	467,884	116,044

*Source:* After David Eltis, Stephen D. Behrendt, David Richardson and Herbert S. Klein (eds), *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 'embarked' by port/region. The sample represents 74 per cent of the dataset for Biafra 1661–1840.

TABLE 4  
DERIVED ESTIMATES OF IGBO AND NON-IGBO EXPORTED BY ENTREPÔT,  
1811–40

	Number exported	% Igbo	Number Igbo	Number non-Igbo
Elem Kalabari	1,674	.80	1,339	335
Bonny	48,123	.80	36,092	12,031
Old Calabar	20,640	.45	9,288	11,352
Cameroons	1,496	.00	0	1,496
	71,933	.65	46,719	25,214

TABLE 5  
 FREQUENCY OF 'IGBO' AMONG BIAFRAN AFRICANS IN THE DIASPORA,  
 c.1720-1820

Place/Time	N=	% Igbo
Louisiana 1720-1810	757	69.5
St Domingue 1721-97	1,212	93.2
Jamaica 1718-1814	337	61.4
South Carolina 1732-75	89	79.8
St Lucia 1815	1,250	71.5
St Kitts 1817	608	72.4
Berbice 1819	182	61.0
Sierra Leone 1821-22	1,008	68.6
Total	5,443	74.8

Sources: Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, 'The Louisiana Slave Database and the Louisiana Free Database: 1719-1820', in Hall (ed.), *Databases for the Study of Afro-Louisiana History and Genealogy, 1699-1860* [CD-ROM] (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2000); David Geggus, 'Sex Ratio, Age and Ethnicity in the Atlantic Slave Trade: Data from French Shipping and Plantation Records', *Journal of African History*, 30 (1989), p.32; fugitive slave advertisements in Jamaican newspapers (*Weekly Jamaica Courant*, 1718-30, 1754; *Cornwall Chronicle*, 1776-7, *Jamaica Mercury* 1779); Douglas B. Chambers (ed.), 'Abstracts of Jamaican Fugitive Slave Advertisements, c.1791-1814: A Compilation From Original Sources' (typescript, Special Collections, Campus Library, University of the West Indies-Mona, Kingston, Jamaica, 1999); Daniel C. Littlefield, *Rice and Slaves: Ethnicity and the Slave Trade in Colonial South Carolina* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), after pp.118-20, 146-9; B.W. Higman, *Slave Populations of the British Caribbean 1807-1834* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), after pp.443-6, 454-5; David Northrup, *Trade Without Rulers*, p.231.

Africans in the diaspora, it seems highly probable that Igbo did in fact predominate.

To understand the 'cultural baggage' that Africans from the Bight of Biafra brought with them into the diaspora, it is not enough simply to catalogue the changing ethnonymic terminology of the slave-trade. One must instead comprehend and interpret structural changes in the patterns of the trade over time, by taking a regional and diachronic (and comparative) approach, in order to identify likely source populations.

An initial survey reveals that a closer attention to the comparative chronology of the Biafra slave-trade suggests overlapping patterns which connect changes on the coast with those in the hinterland, and vice versa. Significant new institutions, such as the *Ekpe* society in the lower Cross River region, and perhaps the 'canoe-house' as it operated at Bonny, as well as new political dynasties (Amakiri at Elem Kalabari, Perekule/Pepple at Bonny, the rise of 'Duke Town' at Old Calabar) and the expansion of Aro colonies in the Igbo heartland, are all associated with the first half of the

eighteenth century, when the numbers of slaves exported began to expand exponentially. The second half of the century, when Bonny was the dominant entrepôt in the flood of slave exports, saw further shifts in socio-political power in Old Calabar and the hegemony of 'new' men there, and deepening crises within the Nri religio-polity (Awka/Isuama region), with important consequences for regional and diaspora history. The collapse of Nri and its ancient pacifist traditions roughly correlates with the slave-trade era, that is, from the late seventeenth through the early nineteenth centuries, and it is clear that the largest Aro colonies (which served as collecting-points for enslaved people) such as Ndizuogu and Ndikelionwu were located to draw on the densely populated areas of Nri-Awka and Isuama.<sup>37</sup> It is quite likely, then, that in the era of maximum exports, extending from the 1740s to 1808, Igbo communities in the Nri-Awka/Isuama area (and within the Nri cultural ambit) were a major source for people thrown into the slave-trade from the hinterland of the Bight of Biafra. As with the raw numbers, in general, these sets of related social and political changes underscore the predominance of Igbo in the slave-trade, and especially so for the Nri-oriented heartland in the 'long eighteenth century'

### Conclusion

In general, the tendency has been to see the slave-trade, and the horror of the 'Middle Passage' or Atlantic crossing experience, as a barrier between Africa and the Americas. Indeed within the theory of 'anthropological creolization' there is little or no room for 'continuities' on other than the most generic level of abstraction, which itself contributes to the continuing intellectual construction of a generic 'Africa'. Those who would deny the historical agency of African ethnicities are the ones who 'homogenize' Africans, both on the continent and in the diaspora. If one accepts the formulation that the 'birth' of African American culture was on the ships that crossed the sea, then there is no inherent reason to pursue African history in any but the most generalized way (for Americanists), and such has been an all-too-common assumption. The logical trap that follows is to then posit a universal 'slave culture', often in a static way, or to see groups of Africans as merely transitory, as simply 'moments' that faded away, rather than as significant historical actors in the formation of diverse African American cultures. Writing in homogenized 'Africans' simply means constructing early modern African Americans as homogenized 'slaves'.

On the other hand, Africanists may help to provide answers to questions of great interest to Americanists, especially on issues of language, religion, social practice, cultural praxis, material culture and other historical aspects

of 'lived experience' and 'habitus'. We must reject out-of-hand the argument that the subjects of Africa and of Africans, in all their diversity over time and space, whether on the continent or in the diaspora, are too complex for meaningful research. As Northrup noted, 'both continuity and change are the hallmarks of living societies'; categorically denying the former, or even the heuristic potential of studying the former, constitutes a greater intellectual error than a determined focus upon it. And certainly the work of the three authors that Northrup criticized situates 'continuity' specifically within the context of 'change', as must be the case. The apparent opposition or contradiction between the two (continuity, change) is not theirs, but Northrup's.

If critiques like Northrup's are intended to forestall further research on bridging the early modern histories of peoples on the eastern and western landfalls of the Atlantic, whether from the Bight of Biafra hinterland or elsewhere, then such critiques should be strongly contested, if not dismissed outright. If, however, they serve to encourage research on the various African backgrounds of slaves in the Americas with a greater attention to chronology and historical specificity, and perhaps irony and contingency, then they should be welcomed.

## NOTES

The author wishes to thank the editors of this journal for the opportunity to present this rejoinder, and to Linda Heywood and John Thornton, and Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, for comments on an earlier draft. Any mistakes are my responsibility.

1. Sidney W. Mintz and Richard Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press 1992), pp.18, 47, 51. For example, see Philip Morgan, 'The Cultural Implications of the Atlantic Slave Trade: African Regional Origins, American Destinations and New World Developments', *Slavery and Abolition*, 18 (1997), pp.122–45. However, cf. with Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake & Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), p.442.
2. Including Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African Life: Occidental, Oriental, and African Slave Trades* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Joseph E. Inikori and Stanley L. Engerman (eds), *The Atlantic Slave Trade: Effects on Economies, Societies, and Peoples in Africa, the Americas, and Europe* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992); José C. Curto, 'A Quantitative Reassessment of the Legal Portuguese Slave Trade from Luanda, Angola, 1710–1830', *African Economic History*, 20 (1992), pp.1–25; David Eltis, 'The Volume and African Origins of the British Slave Trade before 1714', *Cahiers d'Études africaines*, 35 (1995), pp.617–27; David Richardson and Stephen D. Behrendt, 'Inikori's Odyssey: Measuring the British Slave Trade, 1655–1807', *Cahiers d'Études africaines*, 35 (1995), pp.599–615; Larry Gragg, "'To Procure Negroes": The English Slave Trade to Barbados, 1627–60', *Slavery and Abolition*, 16 (1995), pp.65–84; Trevor Burnard, 'Who Bought Slaves in Early America? Purchasers of Slaves from the Royal African Company in Jamaica, 1674–1708', *Slavery and Abolition*, 17 (1996), pp.68–92; Robin Law, 'Ethnicity and the Slave Trade: "Lucumi" and "Nago" as ethnonyms in West Africa', *History in Africa*, 24 (1997), pp.205–19; Douglas B. Chambers, "'My own nation": Igbo Exiles in the

- Diaspora', *Slavery and Abolition*, 18 (1997), pp.72–97; Stephen D. Behrendt, 'The Annual Volume and Regional Distribution of the British Slave Trade, 1780–1807', *Journal of African History*, 38 (1997), pp.187–211; Ivana Elbl, 'The Volume of the Early Atlantic Slave Trade, 1450–1521', *Journal of African History*, 38 (1997), pp.31–75; David Eltis and David Richardson, 'West Africa and the Transatlantic Slave Trade: New Evidence of Long-Run Trends', *Slavery and Abolition*, 18 (1997), pp.16–35; David Eltis and David Richardson (eds), *Routes To Slavery: Direction, Ethnicity and Mortality in the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (London: Frank Cass, 1997); John Thornton, 'The African Experience of the "20. and Odd Negroes" Arriving in Virginia in 1619', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 55 (1998), pp.421–34; Lorena S. Walsh, 'The Chesapeake Slave Trade: Regional Patterns, African Origins, and Some Implications', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 58 (2001), pp.139–70.
3. David Eltis, Stephen D. Behrendt, David Richardson and Herbert S. Klein (eds), *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); derived largely from shipping and naval records, and hereafter referred to as DBDB. For another important digital database, utilizing notarial and other parish records from Louisiana, see Gwendolyn Midlo Hall (ed.), *Databases for the Study of Afro-Louisiana History and Genealogy, 1699–1860* [CD-ROM] (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2000); however it is not nearly as user-friendly as DBDB.
  4. Richard Allsop, 'African Linguistic Survivals in the Caribbean', in Alan G. Copley and Alvin Thompson (eds), *The African-Caribbean Connection: Historical and Cultural Perspectives*, (Bridgetown, Barbados: Department of History, University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, 1990), pp.144–61; Maureen Warner-Lewis, *Guinea's Other Suns: The African Dynamic in Trinidad Culture* (Dover, MA: The Majority Press, 1991); Jerah Johnson, 'New Orleans' Congo Square: An Urban Setting for Early Afro-American Culture Formation', *Louisiana History*, 32 (1991), pp.117–57; John Michael Vlach, *By The Work of Their Hands: Studies in Afro-American Folklife* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1991); Daniel C. Littlefield, "'Abundance of Negroes of that Nation": The Significance of African Ethnicity in Colonial South Carolina', in David R. Chesnut and Clyde N. Wilson (eds), *The Meaning of South Carolina History: Essays in Honor of George C. Rogers, Jr.*, (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), pp.19–38; John K. Thornton, 'African Dimensions of the Stono Rebellion', *American Historical Review*, 96 (1991), pp.1101–13; Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1992); Hall, 'The Formation of Afro-Creole Culture', in Arnold R. Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon (eds), *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization*, (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), pp.58–87; Michael Mullin, *Africa in America: Slave Acculturation and Resistance in the American South and the British Caribbean, 1736–1831* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Leland Ferguson, *Uncommon Ground: Archaeology and Early African-America, 1650–1800* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992); William D. Pierson, *Black Legacy: America's Hidden Heritage* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993); Joseph E. Holloway and Winifred K. Vass (eds), *The African Heritage of American English* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993); Salikoko S. Mufwene (ed.), *Africanisms in Afro-American Language Varieties* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1993); Wolfgang Binder (ed.), *Slavery in the Americas* (Würzburg, Germany: Konigshausen und Neumann, 1993); Thornton, "'I Am the Subject of the King of Congo": African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution', *Journal of World History*, 4 (1993), pp.181–214; George Brandon, *Santeria from Africa to the New World: The Dead Sell Memories* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993); Matthew C. Emerson, 'Decorated Clay Tobacco Pipes from the Chesapeake: An African Connection', in Paul A. Shackel and Barbara J. Little (eds), *Historical Archaeology of the Chesapeake* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), pp.35–49; Sandra Greene, 'From Whence They Came: A Note on the Influence of West African Ethnic and Gender Relations on the Organizational Character of the 1733 St John Slave Rebellion', in George Tyson and Arnold Highfield (eds), *The Danish West Indian Slave Trade: Virgin Islands Perspectives* (Virgin Islands Humanities Council, 1994), pp.47–67; Sterling Stuckey, *Going Through the Storm: The Influence of African American*

*Art in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Michael A. Gomez, 'Muslims in Early America', *Journal of Southern History*, 60 (1994), pp.671–710; Anne E. Yentsch, *A Chesapeake Family and their Slaves: A Study in Historical Archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Marvin L. Michael Kay and Lorin Lee Cary, *Slavery in North Carolina, 1748–1775* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Stephan Palmié (ed.), *Slave Cultures and the Cultures of Slavery* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1995); Colin A. Palmer, 'From Africa to the Americas: Ethnicity in the Early Black Communities of the Americas', *Journal of World History*, 6 (1995), pp.223–36; Theresa A. Singleton and Mark D. Bograd (eds), *The Archaeology of the African Diaspora in the Americas* (Ann Arbor, MI: Society for Historical Archaeology, 1995); Maria Ines Cortes de Oliveira, 'Viver e morrer no meio dos seus: Nações e comunidades africanas na Bahia do século XIX', *Revista USP* [Brazil], 28 (1995/6), pp.174–93; Mervyn Alleyne, *Africa: Roots of Jamaican Culture* (Chicago, IL: Research Associates School Times Publications, 1996); Joseph E. Harris et al., *The African Diaspora*, eds Alusine Jalloh and Stephen E. Maizlish (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1996); Jean Besson and Barry Chevannes, 'The Continuity-Creativity Debate: The Case of Revival', *New West Indian Guide*, 70 (1996), pp.209–28; Patricia Samford, 'The Archaeology of African-American Slavery and Material Culture', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 53 (1996), pp.87–114; Linda F. Stine, Melanie A. Cabak and Mark D. Groover, 'Blue Beads as African-American Cultural Symbols', *Historical Archaeology*, 30 (1996), pp.49–75; Amy L. Young, 'Archaeological Evidence of African-Style Ritual and Healing Practices in the Upland South', *Tennessee Anthropologist*, 21 (1996), pp.139–55; Laurie A. Wilkie, 'Secret and Sacred: Contextualizing the Artifacts of African-American Magic and Religion', *Historical Archaeology*, 31 (1997), pp.81–106; Cheryl J. LaRoche and Michael L. Blakey, 'Seizing Intellectual Power: The Dialogue at the New York African Burial Ground', *Historical Archaeology*, 31 (1997), pp.84–106; Jane Landers, 'Africans in the Spanish Colonies', *Historical Archaeology*, 31 (1997), pp.84–91; Jerome S. Handler, 'An African-Type Healer/Diviner and His Grave Goods: A Burial from a Plantation Slave Cemetery in Barbados, West Indies', *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, 1 (1997), pp.91–130; C.E. Orser, Jr., 'The Archaeology of the African Diaspora', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 27 (1998), pp.63–82; Allan D. Myers, 'West African Tradition in the Decoration of Colonial Jamaican Folk Pottery', *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, 3 (1999), pp.201–23; Sandra T. Barnes (ed.), *Africa's Ogun: Old World and New*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997); Lorena S. Walsh, *From Calabar to Carter's Grove: The History of a Virginia Slave Community* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1997); Michael A. Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1800*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Jerome S. Handler, 'Life Histories of Enslaved Africans in Barbados', *Slavery and Abolition*, 19 (1998), pp.129–41; Jay B. Haviser (ed.), *African Sites Archaeology in the Caribbean* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Weiner Publishers, 1999); Gerhard Kubik, *Africa and the Blues* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1999); Theresa A. Singleton (ed.), *I, Too, Am America": Archaeological Studies of African-American Life* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1999); Paul Lovejoy (ed.), *Identifying Enslaved Africans: The "Nigerian" Hinterland and the African Diaspora* (London: Continuum, 2000); Joseph C. Miller, 'Africa, the Slave Trade, and the Diaspora', in William R. Scott and William G. Shade (eds), *Upon These Shores: Themes in the African-American Experience, 1600 to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2000), pp.21–60; David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Linda M. Heywood (ed.), *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, in press).

5. For examples of how this recognition has altered North American narratives which otherwise are still based on 'creolist' assumptions, see Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp.103–8, 111–12, 122–3; Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, pp.62–101, 442–63. Cf. with



- earlier descriptions, such as Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680–1800* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), pp.317–51.
6. Walsh, 'Chesapeake Slave Trade'.
  7. Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, p.191.
  8. David Northrup, 'Igbo and Myth Igbo: Culture and Ethnicity in the Atlantic World, 1600–1850', *Slavery and Abolition*, 21 (2000), pp.1–20, esp. pp.1, 3, 7–14, 15–17.
  9. For citations, see relevant notes in Douglas B. Chambers, 'Ethnicity in the Diaspora: The Slave Trade and the Creation of African "Nations" in the Americas', *Slavery and Abolition*, 22/3 (Dec. 2001), pp.25–39.
  10. Northrup, 'Myth Igbo', pp.6, 18.
  11. Chambers, 'Igbo Exiles', p.90.
  12. However, I would note the comment of A.G. Leonard nearly one hundred years ago, who was certainly in a position to know intimately the situation on the ground, viz., that 'the grammatical construction of Efik and of Ibo are, for practical purposes, at all events, absolutely identical'; Leonard, *The Lower Niger and its Tribes* (London: Macmillan, 1906), p.65. In the mid-twentieth century, another long-time observer noted that Igbo and Ibibio social/political structures were largely the same: G.I. Jones, *The Trading States of the Oil Rivers: A Study of Political Development in Eastern Nigeria* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp.16–17.
  13. Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, pp.183–91, 192.
  14. Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, p.321 (my emphasis). Cf. Northrup, 'Myth Igbo', p.20 n41; Chambers, 'Ethnicity in the Diaspora'. And for that matter, neither did Herskovits – see *The Myth of the Negro Past* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1941), passim.
  15. Elizabeth Donnan (comp.), *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, IV, *The Border Colonies and the Southern Colonies* (1935; repr. New York: Octagon Books, 1969), pp.176–234; see also Walter Minchinton et al. (comps.), *Virginia Slave-Trade Statistics 1698–1775* (Richmond, VA: Virginia State Library, 1984). Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), pp.156–8; Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, pp.320–2.
  16. Northrup, 'Myth Igbo', pp.5, 14; cf. Gomez, *Country Marks*, p.115. The only other way to interpret Northrup's statement is that Chambers suggested that 80 per cent of Africans taken to Virginia were from the Bight of Biafra, which I certainly have never done.
  17. After Walsh, 'Chesapeake Slave Trade', Table 1 (pp.166–7); and DBDB, query 'Where slaves disembarked = Virginia' (quinquennia, 1671–1775).
  18. Contra Northrup, 'Myth Igbo', p.4. Based on total imports (1690s–1770s) of 79,302, and an 80 per cent share of Igbo among the Biafrans imported. Overall, Africans from the Bight of Biafra were 40.5 per cent of imports between 1671 and 1695, and 53.4 per cent between 1696 and 1740, and 33.7 per cent between 1741 and 1775. See DBDB; Douglas B. Chambers, 'The Transatlantic Slave Trade to Virginia in Comparative Historical Perspective, 1698–1778', in John Saillant (ed.), *Afro-Virginian History and Culture* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1999), p.6; Walsh, 'Chesapeake Slave Trade', after pp.166–7; Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, pp.98–9.
  19. The spoon handles were recovered from the Kingsmill Plantation site, near Williamsburg, VA, though a similar group of artefacts have been found at a site in Bertie County, NC. See Walsh, 'Chesapeake Slave Trade', pp.162–3; Patricia Samford, 'Strong is the Bond of Kinship: West African-Style Ancestor Shrines and Subfloor Pits on African-American Quarters' (unpublished typescript, Fourth World Archaeological Conference, Cape Town, South Africa, 1999), pp.6–9; Samford, 'Power Runs in Many Channels: Subfloor Pits and West African-Based Spiritual Traditions in Colonial Virginia' (Ph.D. dissertation, Anthropology Department, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2000), pp.207–12, 228–31, 285. By 1750, black people in this area of Virginia comprised over 60 per cent of the population, which remained the case at least until 1820; Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, p.99; Douglas B. Chambers, "'He Is an African But Speaks Plain": Historical Creolization in Eighteenth-Century Virginia', in Harris et al., *African Diaspora*, p.118. On *nsibidi* see Robert Farris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy*

- (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), pp.227–60; J. K. Macgregor, 'Some Notes on Nsibidi', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 39 (1909), pp.209–19; Elphinstone Dayrell, 'Further Notes on 'Nsibidi Signs with Their Meanings from the Ikom District, Southern Nigeria', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 41 (1911), pp.521–40. For the argument of sub-floor pits as shrines, see Samford, 'Power Runs in Many Channels', pp.167–78, 206–24, 269–77, 283–5.
20. Northrup, 'Myth Igbo', p.4.
  21. See the following: Northcote Thomas, *Anthropological Report on the Ibo-Speaking Peoples of Nigeria*, II, *English-Ibo and Ibo-English Dictionary* (1913; repr. New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), pp.104, 299; Elizabeth Isichei (comp.), *Igbo Worlds: An Anthology of Oral Histories and Historical Descriptions* (Philadelphia, PA: Pennsylvania: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1978), p.346; John E.E. Njoku, *A Dictionary of Igbo Names, Culture and Proverbs* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1978), p.71. The term *oyibo* was remembered by Equiano as 'Oye-Eboe' (c.1755), and heard by Oldfield (c.1832) as 'Oh, Eboe': Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings*, ed. Vincent Carretta (New York: Penguin Books, 1997; orig. pub. 1789), p.37; R.A.K. Oldfield, 'Mr. Oldfield's Journal', in Macgregor Laird and Oldfield, *Narrative of an Expedition into the Interior of Africa*, I (London: Richard Bentley, 1837), p.394.
  22. F.C. Ogbalu, *Okowa-Okwu, Igbo-English English-Igbo Dictionary*, (Onitsha, Nigeria: University Publishing Co., 1962), p.27; Njoku, *Dictionary*, pp.3–4. See William B. Baikie, *Narrative of an Exploring Voyage up the Rivers Kwora and Binue, Commonly Known as the Niger and Tsadda, in 1854* (1856; repr. London: Frank Cass, 1966). There had been several earlier expeditions, one by the Lander brothers (1831–2) down the river, and another by Allen up the Niger with a total of four steamships (1841), though apparently Baikie (1854) had the greatest impact: see Richard Lander and John Lander, *Journal of an Expedition to Explore the Course and Termination of the Niger*, 2 vols. (New York: J. & J. Harper, 1832); Capt. William Allen, *A Narrative of the Expedition Sent by Her Majesty's Government to the River Niger in 1841*, 2 vols. (London: Richard Bentley, 1848); Captain [John] Beecroft, 'On Benin and the Upper Course of the River Quorra, or Niger', *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, 11 (1841), pp.184–92; T.S. Hutchinson, *Narrative of the Niger, Tshadda, and Binue Exploration* (1855; repr. London: Frank Cass, 1966).
  23. 'Journal of the Rev. J.C. Taylor at Onitsha', in Rev. Samuel Crowther and Rev. John C. Taylor, *The Gospel on the Banks of the Niger – Journals and Notices of the Native Missionaries accompanying the Niger Expedition of 1857–1859* (1859; repr., London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1968), pp.247, 251, 261, 264, 281.
  24. Richard Allsopp (comp.), *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp.91, 213. See also the use of the phrase 'Beckeyes or White Men' by a captured Dominican maroon leader in 1786; quoted in Mullin, *Africa in America*, p.47.
  25. Sources are: Capt. Hugh Crow, *Memoirs of the late Captain Hugh Crow, of Liverpool* (1830; repr. London: Frank Cass, 1970), pp.9, 22; *Oxford English Dictionary* (Compact Edition), p.283; Allsopp, *Dictionary*, p.61; Mary Boykin Chesnut, *A Diary From Dixie*, ed. Ben Ames Williams (1949; repr. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), p.457; James Barclay, *The Voyages and Travels of James Barclay, Containing Many Surprising Adventures and Interesting Narratives* (Dublin, 1777), p.26; J.L. Dillard, *Black English: Its History and Usage in the United States* (New York: Random House, 1972), pp.89, 117, 118, 137 n11; Virginia Writer's Project, Works Progress Administration, Acc.1547, Special Collections, Alderman Library, University of Virginia; Melville J. Herskovits and Frances S. Herskovits, *Rebel Destiny: Among the Bush Negroes of Dutch Guiana* (New York: Whittlesey House of McGraw-Hill, 1934), p.347.
  26. Dillard, *Black English*, p.121. I have encountered the word 'buckra' in Jamaica personally, where its subtext is the cross-racial equivalent of the epithet 'nigger' applied to whites.
  27. A 'normal' stress on the initial phoneme, *mb*, would render the word to English-speakers as something like 'mákarra', as was the case for two Englishmen who encountered the word on the Cross River above Old Calabar in 1841; Capt. [John] Beecroft and J.B. King, 'Details of Explorations of the Old Calabar River, in 1841 and 1842, by Captain Becroft [sic], of the

- Merchant Steamer "Ethiope," and Mr. J.B. King, Surgeon of that Vessel. Drawn up by Mr. King, and communicated by Mr. R. Jamieson, of Liverpool', *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, 14 (1844), p.261.
28. Harold Courlander, 'Abakwa Meeting in Guanabacoa', *Journal of Negro History*, 29 (1944), p.469; Lydia Cabrera, *La Lengua Sagrada de los Nāñigos* (Miami, FL: V & L Graphics, 1988), pp.333-4.
  29. G.I. Jones, 'The Political Organization of Old Calabar', in Daryll Forde (ed.), *Efik Traders of Old Calabar* (London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1956), p.121; Donald C. Simmons, 'An Ethnographic Sketch of the Efik People', in Forde, *Efik Traders*, p.1; 'The Diary (1785-8) of Antera Duke', in Forde, *Efik Traders, passim*. Duke recorded a total of 7,511 slaves shipped off by Europeans between February 1785 and January 1788; Simmons, 'Ethnographic Sketch', p.7. In the mid-nineteenth century, the combined population of Duke and Creek Towns was estimated at only 7,000; Simmons, 'Ethnographic Sketch', p.1
  30. The British took an estimated 80 per cent of all slaves from the Bight of Biafra. Eltis and Richardson, 'Transatlantic Slave Trade', p.21.
  31. That is, in the earliest and latest periods (pre-1650, post-1820), and in places like Berbice (for the Ijo), or Cuba (for the Ekoi, Ejaghah and others from east of the Cross River); see for example Ian Robertson, 'The Ijo Element in Berbice Dutch and the Pidginization/Creolization Process', in Mufwene, *Africanisms*, pp.296-316; Thompson, *Flash*, pp.227-68.
  32. He noted that non-Igbo/non-Ibibio accounted for 'not more than a quarter of the nineteenth-century total, less in the eighteenth century'; David Northrup, *Trade Without Rulers: Pre-Colonial Economic Development in South-Eastern Nigeria* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p.102. Cf. with Northrup, 'Myth Igbo', pp.8, 14.
  33. Joseph E. Inikori, 'The Sources of Supply for the Atlantic Slave Exports from the Bight of Benin and the Bight of Bonny (Biafra)', in Serge Daget (ed.), *De La Traite A L'Esclavage: Acts du international sur la traite des Noirs, Nantes 1985*, II (Nantes, France: Centre de Recherche sur l'Histoire Colloque du Monde Atlantique, 1988), p.35; Richardson and Behrendt, 'Inikori's Odyssey'; Paul Lovejoy, 'The Volume of the Atlantic Slave Trade: A Synthesis', *Journal of African History*, 23 (1982), where he wrote about Inikori's earlier estimating, that 'this kind of manipulation of statistics cannot be accepted' (p.476); Boniface Obichere, 'Slavery and the Slave Trade in Niger Delta Cross River Basin', in Daget, *De La Traite*, p.50.
  34. Douglas B. Chambers, "'He Gwine Sing He Country": Africans, Afro-Virginians, and the Development of Slave Culture in Virginia, 1690 to 1810' (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1996), pp.155-63 and notes.
  35. For sources of 'Number from Biafra' see Chambers, 'Igbo Exiles', p.92 n17; the slight downward revision in the numbers of slaves exported reflects new evidence for 1662-1700 in Eltis, *Rise of African Slavery*, p.166. The basic source for 1701-1810 remains David Richardson, 'Slave Exports from West and West-Central Africa, 1700-1810: New Estimates of the Volume and Distribution', *Journal of African History*, 30 (1989), p.17, with a slight shift in chronology in order to be comparable with the Du Bois Database. Estimates of total exports from Biafra range from a low of 1.56 million [combining the figures in Richardson, 'Slave Exports'; Chambers, 'Igbo Exiles'; and Behrendt, 'Annual Volume'], to a high of 1.97 million; for the latter see Stephen Behrendt, 'Transatlantic Slave Trade', in Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates (eds), *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 1999), p.1867. This suggests that a figure of 1.7 million is highly likely.
  36. The first sample omits the dataset from Trinidad (1813), even though it is detailed and large (5,490 Biafran Africans), because it has long been recognized that the pattern of slave imports to the island were atypical; see Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), pp.66-7; David Watts, *The West Indies: Patterns of Development, Culture and Environmental Change since 1492* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p.296. Likewise the second sample does not include the 657 'Hausa' that Curtin included in the Bight of Biafra category for the 1848 Census of Sierra Leone; their inclusion in that category is highly anomalous and other evidence strongly suggests that 'Hausa' should be counted in either the Bight of Bénin or the

- Gold Coast geographical regions. Sources for the Sierra Leone numbers are Northrup, *Trade Without Rulers*, p.231; Curtin, *Atlantic Slave Trade*, p.245.
37. Preceding paragraph based on the following: Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of the Igbo People* (London: Macmillan Press, 1976); Kannan K. Nair, *Politics and Society in South Eastern Nigeria 1841–1906: A Study of Power, Diplomacy and Commerce in Old Calabar* (London: Frank Cass, 1972); A.J.H. Latham, *Old Calabar 1600–1891: The Impact of the International Economy upon a Traditional Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973); David Northrup, 'The Growth of Trade Among the Igbo Before 1800', *Journal of African History*, 13 (1972), pp.217–36; J.N. Oriji, 'The Slave Trade, Warfare and Aro Expansion in the Igbo Heartland', *Transafrican Journal of History*, 16 (1987), pp.151–66; Kenneth Onwuka Dike and Felicia Ekejiuba, *The Aro of South-eastern Nigeria, 1650–1980: A Study of Socio-economic Formation and Transformation in Nigeria* (Ibadan, Nigeria: University Press, Ltd., 1990); G. Ugo Nwokeji, 'The Biafran Frontier: Trade, Slaves, and Aro Society, c.1750–1905' (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1999); E.J. Alagoa, *A History of the Niger Delta: An Historical Interpretation of Ijo Oral Tradition* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Ibadan University Press, 1972); Susan M. Hargreaves, 'The Political Economy of Nineteenth Century Bonny: A Study of Power, Authority, Legitimacy and Ideology in a Delta Trading Community from 1790–1914' (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Birmingham, UK, 1987); Johnston A.K. Njoku, 'The Material Culture and Oral History of Slave Routes from the Igbo Hinterland to the Slave Port of Bonny: Preliminary Findings, Proposed Research Program and Methodology', *Repercussions of the Atlantic Slave Trade: The Interior of the Bight of Biafra and the African Diaspora*, Enugu, Nigeria (unpublished typescript, July 2000); A.E. Afigbo, *Ropes of Sand: Studies in Igbo History and Culture* (Ibadan, Nigeria: University Press Ltd., 1981), pp.31–67; M. Angulu Onwuejeogwu, *An Igbo Civilization: Nri Kingdom and Hegemony* (London: Ethnographica, 1981).