



Ozi Ikòrò

AFRICAN HISTORY · CULTURE · INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

HISTORICAL STUDIES

Stories of Diaspora Igbo: *Jamaica, Sierra Leone, United States*

By Idenze Ezeme

Ozikoro.com · Historical Studies · 4 min read

FEATURE
IMAGE

Cane Cutters in Jamaica. Photo: National Maritime Museum

Article image · caption retained from the published Ozikoro article

Ozi Ikòrò
STORIES OF DIASPORA IGBO

Stories of Diaspora Igbo: Jamaica, Sierra Leone, United States

By Idenze Ezeme · Historical Studies · Ozikoro.com

The Igbo people of southeastern Nigeria have a long history of resilience, culture, and survival. During the transatlantic slave trade, many Igbo individuals were forcibly taken to different parts of the world, including Jamaica, Sierra Leone, and the United States. Despite the harsh realities of slavery and displacement, many of them managed to preserve their heritage, contribute to their new societies, and leave lasting legacies. This article explores the stories of three Igbo descendants: Archibald Monteath in Jamaica, the Okrafo-Smart family in Sierra Leone, and Teresa Kemp's connection to the Igbo blacksmithing tradition in the United States.

01

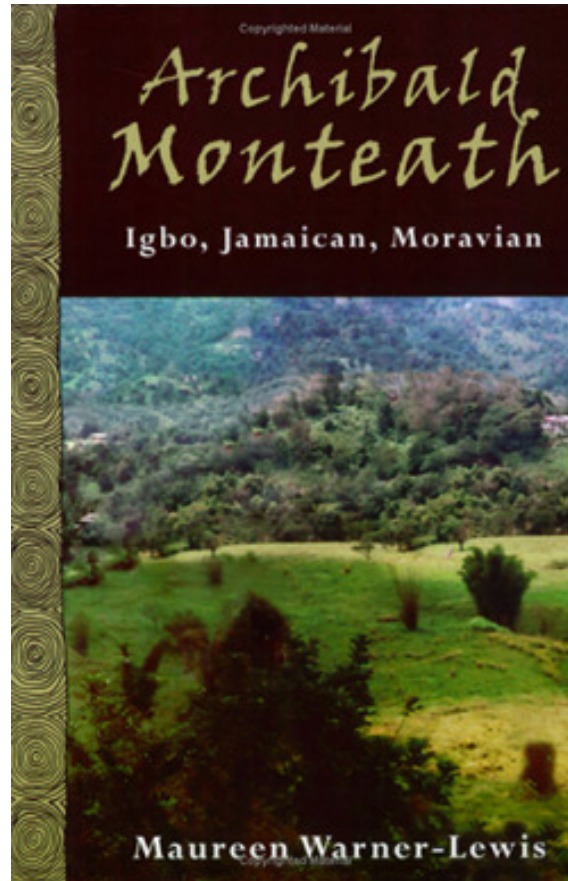
Archibald Monteath: From Igboland to Jamaica

Archibald Monteath was born around 1792 in Igboland, southeastern Nigeria, under the name Aniaso. As a child, he was captured, sold into slavery, and taken to Jamaica around 1802. Once in Jamaica, he was purchased by the Monteath family, who renamed him Toby. Like many enslaved Africans, he suffered the harsh realities of forced labor and loss of identity. However, he did not lose his resilience and determination.



The grave of Archibald Monteith, a former slave who shared his life story with a missionary in 1854. As a child, he was taken from Igboland and sent to work on Jamaican sugar plantations. He arrived on one of the last slave ships before Britain banned the trade in 1807.

Monteath found solace in Christianity, particularly in the Moravian Church, where he was baptized in 1821 and took the name Archibald John Monteath. His faith played a key role in his life, offering him a sense of identity and purpose. By 1837, Monteath was able to purchase his freedom, just one year before slavery was abolished in Jamaica. He later became a respected church leader, dedicating his life to the Moravian Church and helping others in the community.



Archibald Monteath: Igbo, Jamaican, Moravian by Maureen Warner-Lewis

His story was later reconstructed by historian Maureen Warner-Lewis in *Archibald Monteath: Igbo, Jamaican, Moravian*, which provides detailed insights into his life and struggles. In 2007, one of Monteath's descendants, David Monteith, traveled to Calabar, Nigeria, where Archibald had recorded being sold.

02

The Okrafo-Smart Family: From Igboland to Sierra Leone

Another remarkable Igbo diaspora story is that of the Okrafo-Smart family, descendants of an Igbo man named Okoroafor. Okoroafor was rescued from a slave ship around 1816 and was taken to Freetown, Sierra Leone, where he was resettled among other freed Africans. His descendants, known as the Okrafo-Smart family, became well-known

for their contributions to religion, education, and politics in West and Southern Africa.



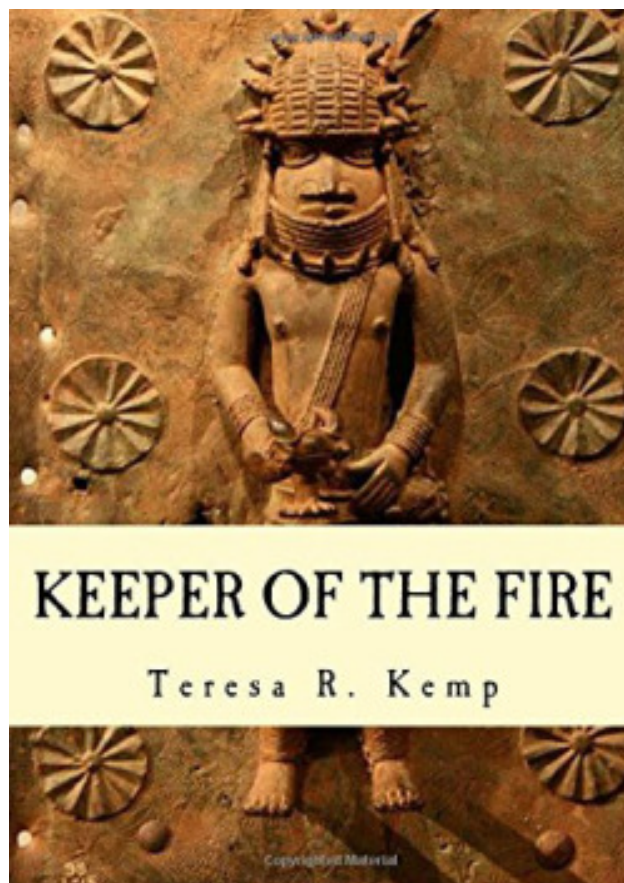
Over a Century in the Lives of a Liberated African Family by Okrafo.

Victor S. Weeks, in his book *Okrafo: Over a Century in the Lives of a Liberated African Family, 1816-1930*, traces the family's history, showing how they became active in missionary work, education, and governance. Many members of the Okrafo-Smart family became teachers, political figures, and medical professionals, helping to shape Sierra Leone and other African countries. Their story highlights how freed Igbo individuals and their descendants played key roles in the development of African societies after the end of the transatlantic slave trade.

Teresa Kemp: Preserving the Awka Blacksmithing Tradition in the United States

Teresa Kemp's family history traces back to Awka, a town in southeastern Nigeria known for its skilled blacksmiths. In pre-colonial times, Awka blacksmiths were famous for making weapons, farming tools, and ceremonial items. Many Awka blacksmiths were captured during the transatlantic slave trade, bringing their skills to the Americas, even in slavery. One of Kemp's ancestors was among those taken to the United States.

Kemp has dedicated her life to preserving her family's blacksmithing heritage. In her book *Keeper of the Fire: An Igbo Metalsmith from Awka*, she documents how her ancestors maintained Igbo traditions despite being enslaved in America. Through oral history, surviving techniques, and cultural practices, Kemp has been able to reconnect with her Igbo ancestry. Her work serves as a reminder of how African traditions have survived and evolved in the diaspora.



Keeper of the Fire by Teresa Kemp.

The stories of Archibald Monteath, the Okrafo-Smart family, and Teresa Kemp demonstrate the resilience of the Igbo people across generations. Despite being forcibly removed from their homeland, these individuals and their descendants have preserved their cultural identity and made significant contributions to their societies. Their stories reflect the strength, adaptability, and enduring legacy of the Igbo diaspora in Jamaica, Sierra Leone, and the United States.

- Kemp, T. (2014). *Keeper of the Fire: An Igbo Metalsmith from Awka*. Self-Published.
- Warner-Lewis, M. (2007). *Archibald Monteath: Igbo, Jamaican, Moravian*. University of the West Indies Press.
- Weeks, V. S. (2007). *Okrafo: Over a Century in the Lives of a Liberated African Family, 1816-1930*. Africa World Press.
- Ukpuru. (n.d.). *Stories of Diaspora Igbo: Jamaica, Sierra Leone, United States*.

**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.



Ozi Ikòrò

History worth reading.

African history · culture · indigenous knowledge
