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The Igbo-Ukwu Bronze Treasures: *A Window into Africa's Ancient Past*

By Chuka Odike

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FEATURE
IMAGE

Pot made with leaded bronze rediscovered in what is purported to be an uncovered shrine at Isaiah Anozie's compound in today's Igbo Ukwu, Anambra State. The pot has since been dated to around the 9th

century and was made by unknown artists and for unknown reasons.

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In 1939, an extraordinary discovery was made in Igbo-Ukwu, a town in present-day Anambra State, Nigeria. Isaiah Anozie, while digging a cistern in his compound, unearthed a collection of intricate bronze objects. These artifacts were initially thought to be “good medicine” by the locals, with some neighbours taking a few pieces. The remarkable find later caught the attention of J. O. Field, an Assistant District Officer, who collected and reported them in the journal MAN.

Subsequent investigations by archaeologists, including Kenneth Murray and Thurstan Shaw, revealed that the objects were part of a shrine, now regarded as one of Africa's most significant archaeological sites. Among the finds was a pot made of leaded bronze, dated to the 9th century, crafted by unknown artists for unknown purposes. The complicated designs on the pot and other objects showcased the advanced metallurgical skills of the Igbo people long before European contact.

Today, most of the artifacts are housed in the National Museum, Lagos, while others are kept in the British Museum and Jos Museum. These treasures highlight the rich cultural and technological history of the Igbo people and provide insight into early African civilization. The Igbo-Ukwu bronzes remain a testament to the ingenuity of the region's ancient artisans and their profound contributions to African heritage.

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Eyo, E., & Willett, F. (1980). Treasures of Ancient Nigeria. New York: Knopf.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chuka Odi

I'm a dedicated civil engineer with a passion for infrastructure development and community empowerment. With a strong background in engineering, my work focuses on creating sustainable solutions for urban and rural development projects. Outside of my professional career, I'm deeply interested in Igbo history and culture. I actively explore ways to impact society by using historical lessons to inspire and educate others about the rich cultural heritage of the Igbo people, aiming to bridge tradition and modern development.



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