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Traces of Igbo Names from the Slave Ships

By Idenze Ezeme

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The Atlantic slave trade, despite its vast erasure of African identities, left behind fragments like names that offer glimpses into the lives of the people stolen from their homelands. Some of these names preserved in historical records belonged to Igbo individuals who were intercepted by anti-slavery patrols before reaching the Americas.

The African Origins project (african-origins.org) compiles names of African people recorded during the transatlantic slave trade, including those aboard ships intercepted by anti-slavery patrols. Many of these individuals were Igbo, their names painstakingly identified by researchers and descendants.

Among them was 11-year-old Amacca (likely Amaka), and 18-year-old Uchando (identified as Uchendu), transported from Bonny but “liberated” in Freetown, Sierra Leone, after British Royal Navy forces seized the ship. Tragically, many “liberated” Africans died shortly after arrival due to harsh conditions.

There also another record of a 10 year old girl recorded Ahsombah, later identified as Asomba. She was aboard the slave ship *Temerario*, which departed from the port of Bonny before being intercepted and redirected to Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Also recorded is Eguay, a 12-year-old whose name has been identified as Igwe, a royal title in Igbo culture meaning “sky” or “king.” A 22-year-old named Imbakay, likely Mgbeke, is also listed, Mgbeke being a traditional Igbo name for women, often tied to the eke market days.



These names are more than entries in a database; they are echoes of stolen lives, clues to disrupted histories, and symbols of the resilience of identity. The African Origins project invites the public to help recover these names and reconstruct lost African heritage.

References African Origins. (n.d.). African names from the transatlantic slave trade [Archived website]. Internet Archive.

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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