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The Enugu-Ezike Migration from Enugwu-Ukwu

By Chuka Odike

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FEATURE
IMAGE

**Enugu-Ezike welcome signpost,
photo by BBC Igbo.**

Article image · caption retained from the published Ozikoro article

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Nestled in the northern part of Enugu State, Nigeria, lies Enugu-Ezike, a community renowned for its rich cultural heritage and historical significance. With a population exceeding 300,000 and comprising over 36 villages, Enugu-Ezike stands as one of the largest single communities in Sub-saharan Africa. Its origins, deeply rooted in Igbo history, trace back to Enugwu-Ukwu, a prominent town in present-day Anambra State. This narrative explores the migration journey of the Enugwu-Ezike people from Enugwu-Ukwu, shedding light on their ancestral connections, cultural evolution, and enduring legacy.

01

Ancestral Origins in Enugwu-Ukwu

Enugwu-Ukwu, situated on the hilly terrains of Anambra State, is historically recognized as the first son of the UmuNri clan, a lineage central to Igbo civilization. Oral traditions and historical accounts affirm that the Enugu-Ezike people originated from Uruekwo village in Enugwu-Ukwu over 700 years ago. They initially settled in a place known as “Ofia Ezike” before embarking on their migratory journey to their current location in Enugu State.

The bond between Enugu-Ezike and Enugwu-Ukwu remains palpable. In 1935, nine elders from Enugu-Ezike traveled to Awka to testify in a land dispute between Enugwu-Ukwu and Enugwu-Agidi.



Their testimony emphasizes the historical ties and ancestral lineage connecting the two communities.

02

The Migration Journey

The migration from Enugwu-Ukwu to the present-day Enugu-Ezike was not a singular event but a series of movements influenced by various factors, including the search for fertile land, communal expansion, and socio-political dynamics. The journey spanned several regions, with the migrating groups traversing through parts of present-day Kogi State, including Idah, before settling in the hilly terrains of Nsukka.

Upon reaching the Ugwueke hills in Amube, the migrants found a conducive environment for settlement. The elevated landscape provided strategic advantages, including natural defense and fertile land for agriculture. This new settlement was named “Elugwu Ezike,” meaning “hill of Ezike,” signifying both the geographical feature and the ancestral lineage.

03

Formation of Clans and Villages

Ezike Oba, the progenitor of the Enugwu-Ezike people, had multiple wives, but it was through Ayigwa and Osegbe that he bore four sons: Ezzodo, Itodo, Essodo, and Ozzi. These sons became the patriarchs of the four primary clans that constitute Enugwu-Ezike. Over time, these clans expanded, giving rise to numerous villages, each maintaining its unique identity while preserving the collective heritage.

1. Aguibaje 2. Aji 3. Amachalla 4. Amaja 5. Amube 6. Amufie 7. Ezzodo

8. Ezillo 9. Igbele 10. Igogoro 11. Ikpamodo 12. Ikpuiga 13. Imufu 14. Inyi 15. Isugwu 16. Itodo 17. Nkpamute 18. Ogbodu 19. Ogurute 20. Okata 21. Okpo 22. Olido 23. Onicha Enugu 24. Owerre Eze 25. Ozzi 26. Uda 27. Ufodo 28. Ugbaike 29. Umachi 30. Umuagama 31. Umuida 32. Umuogbo Agu 33. Umuogbo Ekposhi 34. Umuogbo Inyi 35. Umuogbo Ulo 36. Umuopu 37. Umuopu Agu 38. Uroshi

These villages, while distinct, share common cultural practices, dialects, and traditions, reinforcing their shared ancestry.

04

Cultural Heritage and Traditions

Enugu-Ezike is renowned for its vibrant cultural practices, many of which have been preserved through generations. The community places significant emphasis on oral traditions, with folklore, proverbs, and songs serving as vessels for transmitting history and values.

One notable aspect of Enugwu-Ezike's cultural heritage is its traditional leadership system. Unlike centralized monarchies, Enugwu-Ezike operates a gerontocratic system, where the eldest male, known as the "Onyishi," holds spiritual and administrative authority. This system emphasizes wisdom, experience, and communal consensus.

The community also celebrates various festivals that highlight its rich traditions. These festivals often involve masquerades, dances, and rituals that pay homage to ancestors and deities, reinforcing communal bonds and cultural identity.



05

Interactions with Neighboring Communities

Over the centuries, Enugwu-Ezike has interacted with neighboring communities, including the Igala people of present-day Kogi State. These interactions have led to cultural exchanges, evident in shared musical instruments like the Ariwa and similar traditional music forms such as Okanga and Okeregwu.

Despite these exchanges, Enugwu-Ezike has maintained its distinct Igbo identity, with its customs, language, and traditions reflecting its unique historical trajectory.

06

Contemporary Developments

In recent times, Enugu-Ezike has witnessed significant developments in infrastructure, education, and commerce. The community has produced notable figures in various fields, including politics, academia, and business. Efforts have been made to document and preserve its rich history, ensuring that future generations remain connected to their roots.

The migration of the Enugwu-Ezike people from Enugwu-Ukwu is a testament to the resilience, adaptability, and unity of the Igbo people. From their ancestral origins in the hills of Enugwu-Ukwu to their establishment in the valleys of Nsukka, the Enugu-Ezike community embodies a rich tapestry of history, culture, and tradition. By preserving their heritage and embracing progress, they continue to honour their ancestors while charting a path for future generations.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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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 explores 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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