



Ozi Ikòrò

AFRICAN HISTORY · CULTURE · INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

CULTURAL HERITAGE

The Ntezi and Orring People: *Exploring Their Rich History, Language, and Cultural Identity*

By Idenze Ezeme

Ozikoro.com · Cultural Heritage · 4 min read

FEATURE
IMAGE

NO FEATURED IMAGE IN THE RECORD

The article carries no featured image, so this panel is left as an honest empty space rather than filled with one.

Ozi Ikòrò
THE NTEZI AND ORRING PEOPLE

The Ntezi and Orring People: Exploring Their Rich History, Language, and Cultural Identity

By Idenze Ezeme · Cultural Heritage · Ozikoro.com



Oviode Festival in Ntezi. Photo by Hilspress

Ntezi is an Ebonyi community situated on the eastern outskirts of Ishielu Local Government Area in Nigeria. It has its significance well demonstrated through its culture. The Ntezi people are part of the bigger Orring ethnic group. They speak a special language, have strong traditions, and a history that connects them with a larger culture in West and Central Africa.

Ntezi, also known to the locals as Eh-teh-ji (Eteji), is just one of the many groups that make up the Orring people. They are found in some parts of Benue, Cross River, and Ebonyi States in Nigeria and some parts of Cameroon.

The Orring People: A Historical Overview

The Orring people are believed to be the original settlers of the Abakaliki region in Ebonyi State. Before the arrival of the Abakaliki group, they dwelled alongside their neighbors—the Mbembe and Ekoi communities. With time, living in each other's vicinity has helped tie the groups through intermarriage. It has similarly led to sharing culture and developing common customs, beliefs, and practices. These experiences have indeed created mixed cultures that illustrate the rich history of the region.



Professor Adiele Eberechukwu Afigbo

The Ntezi people speak a language called K'eteji. It is a sub-dialect of the Korring language, which is used by the Orring people in various places in Nigeria and the Republic of Cameroon. Korring belongs to the Benue-Congo language family. It is sometimes regarded as a part of the Bantoid languages because of the similarity it shares with languages spoken in Central and West Africa. Language experts like A.E. Afigbo and A.I. Alagoa have seen these linkages, especially the

interrelationships between Korring and Bantu languages. The Kwararafa Empire spoke the languages from the Benue River to the Cameroon mountains.

The Ntezi community speaks Orring in five main villages: Agaga, Ulepa, Iyokpa, Amata, and Biledeba. These villages are further divided into minor units and lines of families called Lè má, each having their own farms and social areas. The extremity of Ntezi also contains two other villages, namely, Umuezeka to the southwest and Umuezekoha to the southeast. All these places depict the connectedness of the Ntezi people with their culture despite interacting with other communities around them.

Identity and Cultural Integration

Before colonialism and during the Nigerian Civil War, the Orring people of Ebonyi State always identified with the wider Igbo culture. Though they speak a different language, they consider themselves part of the Igbo nation because of the similarities in customs, language features, and cultural values. That is what the saying goes: Anyo eke Igbo!—a saying showing the pride that the Orring people take in their Igbo heritage.

For most people from Orring, being Igbo is always a part of who they are, even if they speak in a different way.

The Korring language, used by the Orring people, is perceived by its speakers to be a form of Igbo language. This connection shows in similar words used in Korring and Igbo alike, such as greetings and ways to show respect, both key aspects of Igbo culture.

The Orring people, like the Igbo people, believe in living together as a community, showing respect for the elderly, and considering family important. Although they speak in their own way, the Orring community feels that they belong to the greater nation of Igbo, which shares great symbols of identification, such as language and custom, and common ancestry.

The Korring language, or K'orring, is a significant part of the identity of the Ntezi people. It is classified under the Benue-Congo language family and therefore belongs to the wider grouping of Cross River-Benue Congo languages. These are spoken in southeastern Nigeria and in parts of Cameroon. The relatedness of Korring with other Bantu languages was identified by language experts such as Joseph H. Greenberg, and historians at Ebonyi State University. In particular, they noted the similarities in grammar and vocabulary.

Such links with other languages give proof of the history between the Korring people and the ancient Bantu cultures of Central Africa.

For example, the Korring word for 'people' is *banuo*, which is similar to the Bantu root *Bantu*, also meaning people. These linguistic affinities highlight a very plausible historical connection of the Korring people with the larger Bantu-speaking peoples that once covered extensive regions from the Benue River right to the Cameroon mountains.

Cultural Connections and Expansion

The Ntezi people, like many other groups in Nigeria, have historical and cultural links with neighboring groups in Benue, Cross River, and other parts of Nigeria. These ties include not only linguistic affinities but also intermarriage between groups, trade, and shared spiritual beliefs.

The Ntezi people are related to various places in Nigeria: the Okpoto people of Ishielu LGA, the Amuda people of Ezza North LGA, and the Effium people of Ohaukwu LGA. In Benue State, they are related to the Ogbia, Ufia, and Utonkon people. They also relate with the Ukele, Wanikom, and Izekwe people of Cross River State.

The aforementioned kinship ties make the claim stronger, bringing together cultural and language entities within one umbrella that transcends present national and territorial borders, pointing out how these people are truly interconnected throughout Benue-Cross River.



- Greenberg, J. H. (1972). Linguistic evidence regarding Bantu origins. *The Journal of African History*, 13 (2), 189–216.
- Nkamigbo, L. C. (2012). Lexicostratigraphy: Tracing geographical location and linguistic change in Korring. *Ogirisi: A New Journal of African Studies*, 9 (1), 135–150.
- Ajifo, N. (n.d.). Intergroup relationship of Ntezi and her neighbors. *Nigerian Journal of History*.

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
