God’s power Tamaraukuro Prezi
Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State, Nigeria
University of Malta, Msida, Malta

Introduction to Izon Language and Culture

Abstract
This paper aims to introduce Izon to the world audience. We note the status of Izon as a “main” language, the geographical location of the Izon people in the Niger Delta of Nigeria, the occupations of the Izon, the consonants, vowels, vowel harmony and nasalized vowels in Izon. We observe that in Izon a vowel becomes nasalized when it occurs in the environment of a nasal; that a high tone marked (´), and a low tone marked (´) perform both lexical and grammatical functions in Izon; that Izon has S-O-V word order; that each word category is written separately; that the negative gha is marked on the verb; and that borrowed words, names of places and languages are nativised. We throw some light on the Izon numerical system, namely: the traditional cardinal numbers such as óyí (10), sí (20), ande/onde (400) and ande/rímba onde/rímba (160,000); the modern standardized numbers such as 100 odo, 1,000 ogidi, 1,000,000 ipamu and 1,000,000,000,000 enderí and the ordinal numbers, bulo 1st and mamu karamo 2nd. Next we look at the kinship, persons, religious, colour, body parts, cooking, occupational and other terminology in the lexicon of Izon. Finally we observe some salient aspects of Izon culture such as their dressing, religion, food, festivals, dances, traditions, and customs.

Keywords: Izon, vowel harmony, nasalized vowels, tones, sí.

Introduction: The Izon people and language

Nigeria has over 150 million people who speak 521 languages. In terms of number of speakers, the three “major” languages are Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba. The six “main” languages are Izon, Fulfulde, Tiv, Kanuri, Efik/Ibibio, and Edo. All others are termed “minor.” Izon is a Niger-Congo language. Izon refers both to the people and to the language. It is the fourth largest ethnic group in Nigeria, and has a population of
over three million people who speak 27 different dialects. The language is endangered by the attitude of its people who prefer to use English rather than Ịzọn, for economic reasons.

The main occupations of the Ịzọn are fishing, palm-wine tapping, gin-making, canoe-carving, net making, thatch making, basket weaving, harvesting palm fruits, farming and trading along the rivers, creeks and coastlines of the Niger Delta.

Ịzọn means "truth" and connotes honesty, trustworthiness, intelligence, courage, and eloquence. The Ịzọn people in Nigeria spread from Bayelsa and Rivers State in the East to Ondo state in the West, and from the coast of the Atlantic Ocean in the South to Elemebiri on the River Niger in the North (Donwa-Ifode 2005). Ịzọn is therefore a cluster of dialects spread over a wide geo-political area known as the South-South Geo-Political Zone. Although mutual intelligibility decreases in some cases over wide geographic areas and across dialectal boundaries, the people are ethnically one.

Ịzọn is currently spoken, used in broadcasting on radio and television, studied as a subject, and used as a medium of instruction in Bayelsa, Delta, Edo, Ondo and Rivers State in Nigeria. It is the main language of Yenagoa, Southern Ijaw, Kolokuma/Opokuma, Sagbama and Ekeremor Local Government Areas (LGA) of Bayelsa State; Burutu, Bomadi, Patani and Warri North LGAs of Delta State; the Ovia South West LGA of Edo State; the Ese-Odo LGA of Ondo state, and the riverine LGAs in Rivers State bordering Bayelsa State.

Apọị, Bassan, Biseni, Bụmọ, Egbema, Ekpetiama, Fụrụpagha, Gbarain, Ikibiri, Kolokuma, Koṣ, Kumbo, Ogboin, Ọkọdịa, Olodiama, Operemo, Oporoma, Oyiakiri, Seimbiri, Tarakiri and Tungbo dialects are spoken in Bayelsa State. Iduwini, Isaba, Kabu, Ogbotebe, Ogb-Ijoh, Ogulagha, Oporoza (Gbaranmatu), Mein and Tuomo are spoken in Delta State. Apọị and Arogbo are the only Ịzọn dialects that are spoken in Ondo State, a majority Yoruba-speaking State.

For further introduction and discussion on Ịzọn dialects, see also Prezi (2014b: 262–275), Agbegha (2009: 91–103) and Okaba (2008: 9–10).
1. The phonemes of Ịzòn

1.1. The consonants of Ịzòn

The following are the phonemic consonants of Ịzòn and examples of words which contain them, along with their glosses in English.
Example | English gloss
---|---
1. /p/ | p
   paa | 'appear; go out'
   paan | 'to denigrate by hooting at'
   piri | 'give'
   pẹrẹ | 'rich/wealthy'
2. /b/ | b
   ba | 'kill'
   bẹrẹ | 'to complain'
   bẹlẹ | 'pot'
3. /t/ | t
   tin | 'tree'
   tubọu | 'child'
   tukpa | 'lamp'
4. /d/ | d
   dada | 'father'
   dawai | 'to dream'
   dii | 'rope'
   dumoun | 'hair'
   dumu | 'spear'
5. /k/ | k
   ka | 'mature'
   korọ | 'to fall; alight'
   kiri | 'ground'
   kàyá | 'to carve'
   kírí | 'to chop finely'
   kόró | 'rafia palm tree'
   kọọwei | 'leopard'
6. /g/ | g
   ga | 'worship'
   goo | 'to read'
   gidẹ | 'fish basket'
7. /m/ | m
   mọ | 'and'
   mọunn | 'hunger'
   maamụ | 'two'
8. /n/ | n
   nama | 'possess'
   nini | 'nose'
   noun | 'needle'
9. /ŋ/ | ng
   angị | 'egg'
   noun | 'needle'
10. /f/ | f
    fa | 'lost'
    firi | 'work'
    fẹrụ | 'smell'
    fọnu | 'fence'
11. /v/ | v
    vumuye | 'catapult'
    vinmọ | 'to quench'
    aviinviin | 'dragonfly'
12. /s/ | s
    sara | 'funnel'
    sango | 'demijohn (glass jar)'
    sibiri | 'alligator'
13. /z/  
zuye  'type of fish trap'  
zi i  'to give birth'  
a zu zu  'fan'

14. /kp/  
k pap uye  'scissors'  
akpa  'bag'

15. /gb/  
gbuka  'shoes'  
gb ag u  'narrow'  
g boro  'plant' v.  
egbelegbele  'horn'

16. /j/  
yowej  'paddle'  
 yi i n  'mother'  
yabasi  'onion'

17. /w/  
 war i  'house'  
wer i  'to abuse'

18. /l/  
 la (verb)  'to reach'  
 l o o  'to massage'  
 ololo  'bottle'

19. /r/  
raga  'fish trap'  
ariri  'fishing net'  
ar u  'canoe'

20. /N/  
g h a  'not'  
 bogha  'did not come'  
agbegha  'it does not fit'

21. /h/  
a haan  'rallying cry or call'  
Not e that 'h' is used only i n exclamations and ideophones

22. /ny/  
 n g h  'hornbill'

See also Prezi (2011a, 2011b, 2014a, 2014b: 262–275) and Agbegha et al. (2011: 6) for further discussion.

1.2. Ịzọn vowels

1.2.1. Oral vowels

There are nine phonemic oral vowels in Ịzọn: /a, e, i, o, u, ẹ, ị, ọ, ụ/. i.e. a, e, i, o, u, ẹ, i, ọ, ụ. The first set of vowels: /a, e, i, o, u/ a, e, i, o, u are wide vowels while the second set /ẹ, ị, ọ, ụ/ ẹ, i, ọ, ụ are narrow vowels. There is vowel harmony of the eight non-open (non-low) vowels in Ịzọn so that only narrow or wide vowels normally occur together in a simple word. Wide vowels and narrow vowels do not co-occur in a simple word. However, the low (open) vowel /a/ is neutral to vowel harmony and co-occurs with either set.

Example English gloss

1. /a/  
aba  'fish species'  
aka  'tooth, maize'  
 ada  'paint'  
agurà  'star'  
aré  'name'  
akpa  'bag'

Note that ‘gh’ is extremely weak in pronunciation

Note that ‘h’ is used only in exclamations and ideophones
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Example English gloss

2. /e/  e  ele  ‘gorilla’
edepé  ‘draughts’
esé  ‘trouble’

3. /i/  i  nini  ‘nose’
bi  ‘ask’
di  ‘look’
sibiri  ‘alligator’
diri  ‘medicine’

4. /o/  o  obori  ‘goat’
ofoni  ‘bird, fowl’
koro  ‘fall’
ogboó  ‘land, union’
ologbo  ‘cat’

5. /u/  u  oku  ‘heavy’
furu  ‘steal’
burú  ‘yam’

6. /ε/  ĝ  efeğé  ‘enamel’
peğé  ‘cut, stop’
peré  ‘king, rich’
ereké  ‘fishing basket’

7. /I/  ī  kịmị  ‘person’
fi  ‘eat, die’
firi  ‘work’
IGINÁ  ‘pepper’
dị  ‘skill’

8. /ɔ/  ɔ  korọ  ‘raphia palm’
tolo  ‘pick up an object’
loṣi  ‘head gear’

9. /u/  ū  furú  ‘smell, odour’
aru  ‘canoe’
baru  ‘pond’
burọ̀  ‘fireplace’

For further discussion on oral vowels see also Prezi (2011a, 2014a, 2014b: 262–275) and Agbegha et al. (2011: 4–5).

1.2.2. Nasalized vowels

There are nine phonemic nasalized vowels in Ìzon, represented orthographically as: ā, ē, ĕ, ī, ọ, ō, ū, ū. In Ìzon, when a vowel occurs in the environment of a nasal, the vowel becomes nasalized. When two vowels occur in a word before the final nasal, both vowels are affected by the nasalization. Usually, in the orthography, nasalised vowels are shown by writing the consonant “n” at the end of the syllable or at the end of the word as illustrated below.
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Example | English gloss | Example | English gloss
--- | --- | --- | ---
1. ã | kan | cf. | ka | ‘tear’ | ‘mature’
 | saan | cf. | saa | ‘urinate’ | ‘debt’
 | fan | cf. | fa | ‘twist’ | ‘finish, unavailable’
 | tan | cf. | ta | ‘gather, pack’ | ‘wife’
 | paan | cf. | paa | ‘to denigrate by hooting at’ | ‘appear; go out’
2. è | geen | cf. | see | ‘brightly-light’ | ‘all, scrape’
 | egëni | cf. | pìi | ‘visitor’ | ‘deny’
3. ĝ | see'n | cf. | see | ‘shave’ | ‘deny’
 | pîn | cf. | sii | ‘crowded’ | ‘go fishing’
4. ñ | piin | cf. | piin | ‘vomit’ | ‘go fishing’
 | sìnn | cf. | sìi | ‘to denigrate by hooting at’ | ‘go fishing’
5. ī | pin | cf. | fìi | ‘tap (palm wine)’ | ‘die, death’
 | fìïn | cf. | fìi | ‘ringworm’ | ‘plead; beg’
 | tìnn | cf. | tìi | ‘tree; wood’ | ‘read’
 | ondo | cf. | odo | ‘last long’ | ‘plead; beg’
6. õ | goon | cf. | goo | ‘be extra bright, of light’ | ‘read’
 | fũn | cf. | fũu | ‘book’ | ‘reason’
7. ō | ton | cf. | kọọ | ‘measure’ | ‘remain’
8. ū | fũn | cf. | tu | ‘stretch’ | ‘reason’
9. ū | sìnn | cf. | sìi | ‘stretch’ | ‘reason’
 | fuggestion | cf. | sìu | ‘ashes’ | ‘fight’
 | kpụn | cf. | fũu | ‘to pull’ | ‘caustic potash’

See also Prezi (2011a, 2014a: 38, 2014b: 262–275) and Agbegha et al. (2011: 3–4) for further discussion on the topic.

### 1.3. Tone in Ìzọn

Tone, according to Williamson (1989a: 253–278), is the pitch of the voice that makes a difference in the meaning of the words which have the same segmental phonemes. Egberipou and Williamson (1994) also give further insights into the tone patterns in Ìzọn.

There are two basic tones in Ìzọn, high and low. These two tones perform both lexical and grammatical functions in Ìzọn. High tone is marked (´) as in bárá ‘hand.’ The low tone (´) is usually left unmarked for the sake of convenience as in eni ‘my.’

When a long series of high tones occur in a word, we usually mark the first high tone (´) to show continuing high. Thus, amánànanàwéí could be simply marked amánànanàwéí.

Tone in Ìzọn performs both lexical and grammatical functions.

#### 1.3.1. Lexical tone

The pitch of the voice can make a difference to the meaning of words whose segmental composition is the same. The following minimal pairs contrast:
1. Low tone:  
Ada  ‘Edo, Bini’  
Abó  ‘a kind of bag woven from raffia or leaves of screwpine’  
Áma  ‘you!’ (used in addressing a woman whose name is not known)  
Àri/éméné  ‘bridge, raised platform or one of the ribs’  
Agbada  ‘a species of fresh water fish’

2. High tone:  
Adó  ‘basket’  
Abó  ‘canal’  
Amá  ‘right side’  
Àri/éméné  ‘you’ (Pron.)  
Abá  ‘a kind of bag woven from raffia or leaves of screwpine’

1.3.2. Grammatical tone
Tone plays a significant grammatical role in the grammar of Ìzòn. In addition to distinguishing the meaning of lexical items, as in the examples above, tone also distinguishes the meanings of sentences, such as statements and questions (cf. 1 and 2) below:

1. émịnị  eye  femịnị  ‘I am eating’
   1sgS sg. PRES.PROG.-eat
2. émịnị  eye  femịnị  ‘you (sg) are eating’
   2sgS sg. PRES.PROG.-eat

For further discussion on tone in Ìzòn see also Prezi (2014b: 270–271) and Agbegha et al. (2011: 10).

2. The word order of Ìzòn
Ìzòn is an SOV language, e.g.  
Kidnị  obori  bami
Man-the goat killed
‘The man killed the goat’

2.1. Morphology
Each word category is written separately. The negative gha is marked on the verb. Borrowed words, names of places and languages are nativised. For further discussion on the morphology of Ìzòn see Prezi (2011b) and Agbegha et al. (2011: 7–12).

3. The numeral system of Ìzòn
The Ìzòn use both the traditional and modern counting systems. As Evilewuru (2008: 52–56) observes, two important terms, fëni which means ‘remainder’ or ‘extra’ and mọ which is the conjunction ‘and’ dominate the counting system. Most numbers Ìzòn are made up of two parts: first, the counting bundle (called kiẹn pou); second, an extra or remaining part which is not up to another complete bundle, to which the term fëni is applied. The traditional major counting bundles (pou) in Ìzòn are oyi ‘ten’ (10), si ‘twenty’ (20), ande ‘four hundred’ (400) and andeŋiemandë ‘which is one hundred and sixty thousand (160,000).
3.1. The cardinal numbers

The cardinal numbers in Ịzọn are:

1. *kẹnị*
2. *maamụ*
3. *tááru*
4. *nein*
5. *sọóňrön*
6. *sóndié*
7. *sóñómo*
8. *niína*
9. *isé*
10. *óyí*
11. *óyí / óí kẹnị fẹní* (ten and one)
12. *óyí maamụ fẹní* (ten and two)
13. *óyí tááru fẹní*
14. *óyí nein fẹní*
15. *óyí sọóňrön fẹní* (also, die)
16. *óyí sóndié fẹní*
17. *óyí sóñómo fẹní*
18. *óyí niína fẹní*
19. *óyí isé*
20. *sí*
30. *sí óyí fẹní*
40. *ma sí / maa sí* (two twenties)
50. *ma sí mọ óyí mọ*
60. *tááru sí*
70. *tááru sí mọ óyí mọ*
80. *nií sí*
90. *nií sí mọ óyí mọ*
100. *sọóňrön sí*
110. *sọóňrön sí mọ óyí mọ*
120. *sóndía sí*
130. *sóndía sí mọ óyí mọ*
140. *sóñómo sí*
160. *niína sí*
180. *iséna sí*
190. *iséna sí mọ óyí mọ*
200. *óyía sí*
220. *óyí kẹnị sí fẹní*
250. *óyí ma sí fẹní mọ óyí mọ*
300. *óyí sọóňran sí fẹní (dia sí)*
399. *óyí iséna sí fẹní mọ óyí isé fẹní mọ* (i.e. 380 and 19 = 399)
3.2. The standardized counting system

Introduced by Williamson et al. (1990), the standardized counting system makes use of the terms for the cardinal numbers written against them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>100</th>
<th>ọdọzọ'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1000</td>
<td>ọgịzị'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000,000</td>
<td>ịpámụ'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000,000,000,000</td>
<td>endẹřị</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3. The ordinal numbers

The ordinal numbers, excluding the one denoting ‘first,’ are formed by combining the cardinal numerals with karamọ ‘taking’ or ‘coming’ to form phrases. In these phrases, the cardinal number comes first, and it is followed by karamọ. For example, mamụ karamọ means ‘taking or coming number two.’

1st  bułọ
2nd  mamụ karamọ
3rd  taărụ karamọ
4th  nein karamọ
5th  soọnron karamọ

4. The lexicon of Ịzọn

Without being exhaustive and going into detailed discussion, the following are the equivalent words found in the lexicon of Ịzọn.

4.1. Kinship terminology

Parents, elders
father dau
grandfather opu dau [from opu ‘big’ and dau ‘father’]
mother yin
grandmother opu yin [from opu ‘big’ and yin ‘mother’]

Siblings, spouses, extended family relations
husband yei
wife ya
co-wife yanfaran
child tubou
foster child sibe tubou
son yai
daughter embau
grandchild ta / tau-tubou
uncle (mother’s brother) yabi

By marriage
father-in-law (one’s husband’s father) yei-daù
mother-in-law (one’s wife’s mother) yaforo
brother-in-law (one’s husband’s mother) yei-yin
sister-in-law ago-omega
wife of one’s brother, or a brother or sister of one’s husband yado *ambiguous

Relation bina bo
brother bina owei
older brother okosu owei
younger brother tu owei
sister bina araù
older sister okosu araù
younger sister tu araù

4.2. Persons

human being kimi
man owei kimi
woman eyorokimi; eyoro-ere
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male
female
child / offspring
male child / boy
female child / girl
new-born baby
infant / very young child
old man / elderly man
old woman / elderly woman
slave-wife
regularly married wife

ovei
eyọrọ
tụbọụ
oweitụbọụ
eyọọtụbọụ
ayapidi / ayatụbọụ
kalatụbọu
okosukimi
okosuere
biṣa-ere
ekiy-e erye

4.3. Religious terminology

catholic
tamaraụ karị kimị
christianity
tamaraụ karị bọ
pagan
oru karị kimị
paganism / idolatory
oru karị bọ
priest
karị owei / ekian sin owei

4.4. Colour terminology

colour
european; white; yereyere (conspicuously red)
orange
iselebeni
ago; vili
yellow
balabala; odoón; ope
blue
now; bulo (bulo)
black
dirimo; kpili kpi (very black)
white
piña; alo (white cloth)
brown
ekẹl kẹle; daki
pink
kimi ebinọ erein
grey
founbíroubeni
purple
agun-agún

4.5. Body parts terminology

body
hair
head
face
eye
ear
nose
mouth
lip
tooth / teeth
tongue
neck
angọ
ti bi dumoun (head); etemé (body)
ti bi
andị
to rú
beri
nini
bi bi
bi bi-api ran (also bi bi-odu)
a
mu lọ; mọ lọ
kun; ko n
4.6. Bodily fluids, wastes

blood  asịnj
urine   saan dinayaj

4.7. Cooking terminology

cook    tọọ
boil    tajọ
fry     gbana
slice   kere; kè
chop    pele
pound   temi; titi
peel    kara
butcher baa
grind   san

4.8. Utensils

pot     bèlẹ
cutlery adeịn
spoon   kayere; engasị
dish    fooku
plate   kpamanku; panụ

4.9. Names of some animals

crocodile egere
dog       obiri
elephant  opuobori
fish      endi
lamb      anana
lion      adaka
pig       oporopo
shark     afurumo
snake     seiyę; kiriwei
tiger     kụnụwei / kọnọwei
4.10. Vehicles and accessories

bicycle azigere
canoe arụ
bus; car; train ogboyọaru / ogboaru
aeroplane efin bekaru / efin-arụ

4.11. Parts of a house

door ogige
bedroom okpo
sitting-room (parlour) warjiiri

4.12. Clothing / clothes and ornaments

bag akpa
brassiere endouserimeye(-mueye)
cap / hat tun
cloth or wrapper bidę
eye-glasses toru-tuaye
gold golu
head-tie losi
pant kolukapa
shirt aru
shoe agbuka
shorts afu
silver siliva
trouser saka

4.13. Cardinal points (directions)

North konoaku
South amabira aku or amaku
East dymaku (du) or tybaku
West tamu aku or tamu

4.14. Diseases / illnesses

cough alọu
cold odidi
catarrh niniyai

4.15. Occupations / professions

fishing endi baa
farming kiri gboro
palm-wine tapping koro pijin
teaching toluwu
carving eyi kara
blacksmith asima-wei
5. Salient aspects of Ịzọn culture

According to Bouchard (1998: 19–39), the three fundamental features of the ethnic identity are race, language, and religion. The Ịzọn language serves as an identity to the Ịzọn people. It is among the first things a child learns in Ịzọnlant. The Ịzọn culture is transmitted to the child through a gradual socialization process. Thus, the Ịzọn child acquires or learns various useful skills such as building of mud/thatch houses, story-telling (at moonlight), and any other art or cultural activities from their parents, guardians and elders in society. See also Prezi (2014b: 265).

The natural identity of the Ịzọn is in their language and dressing. Ịzọn people dress decently. Traditionally, the Ịzọn man normally wears a long-sleeve shirt on his body, wears an expensive cap called Atakala or a bowler hat on his head, ties a big George wrapper of six yards called igburu (egburu) bidẹ on his waist, wears shoes on his feet, and carries a good walking-stick (called akọlọ) in his hand as his dressing. Sometimes the men wear “up and down” ashoke, with a costly cap or hat and beautiful beads known as ebọlọ. The Ịzọn woman, on the other hand, normally ties two well-designed Hollandaise wrappers on her waist, the outer one is tied shorter (i.e. tied up to the knees – middle of the leg), the inner one is tied longer than the other (i.e. tied downward to the ankles), and she wears shoes. She wears a blouse on top of the wrappers, and wears beautiful beads or necklaces on the neck, and earrings on the ears. She plaits her hair and wears a head-gear (called head-tie or scarf) to cover her head. Traditionally, Ịzọn ladies were expected to dress decently. There is a kind of dressing expected of a father, mother, young girl, young boy and elderly man or woman in different situations, e.g. when going for a burial ceremony, marriage ceremony, and so on.

The traditional Ịzọn man is expected to stand for the truth at all times, and talk with confidence and dignity. He loves peace and lives a peaceful life. He loves festivals such as fishing festival, masquerade festival, dance festival, etc.

The traditional Ịzọn man values women, marries many wives, and consequently has many children who assist him in the business of distilling gin. Although polygamous, he tries to love his wives equally as much as possible. He pays the dowry (bride-price) on each of his wives. He does an introduction on which occasion he pays the love fee, and later does a traditional marriage for each wife. Increasingly nowadays, however, the youth do church wedding and many additionally register their marriages in court.

The Ịzọn man eats ample food. He settles near rivers and engages in fishing. Owing to the hard works the Ịzọn people engage themselves in, they usually eat foods that contain carbohydrates and other energy-giving foods. The favourite foods of the Ịzọn are palm fruit (banga) soup, oil soup, pepper soup and plantain. He usually eats in a group with his sons, especially the grown ones. He loves to have a lot of pepper in his food. That is why he loves pepper soup so much. Before and after meals, they wash their hands according to age-seniority. Drinks, meals, fish and meat are always shared according to seniority.

Ịzọn men eat alligator pepper and kola nuts when they take their favourite hot alcoholic drinks such as native gin, Schnapps, Bertola, etc. They also drink a lot of the palm wine which they tap.

In ancient times, the Ịzọn worshipped idols, gods and deities (oru) such as Benikurukuru – the chief deity (Amananaoru), Obudou – the producer of fog for protection, Ingozu and Anumu – the gods of
wealth, Osun – the god of thunder, amadasu, Mamiwata – the god of the waters, Opuogula, Onanaowei, Gbanagha, aluta bubu, odele, and egbesu the god of war. They also used to make masquerades such as awọziowu “giver of children”, Burutu-ogbo and ọkẹlẹkẹ. Nowadays majority of the Ižon are Christians and no longer participate in the worship of idols.

The Ižon people have chiefs of families, compounds or quarters (egede) called Alaowei, and they have kings (Pẹ́rẹ́) who preside over clans made up of several towns and villages.

The favourite pastimes of the Ižon are story-telling in moonlit nights and wrestling after processions to both ends of the community, especially during the dry season.

The best known Ižon musicians are late King Robert Ebizimor, Chief I. K. Belemu, Barrister S. Smooth and Bestman Doupere. The Ižon culture and people have different types of dances such as Ungu sei, in which they use water pots and other materials to produce music for the dancers. The Ižon culture also has Owigiri as one of the major cultural dances.

When an Ižon man sees his fellow Ižon man, they greet each other. The younger person shows a sign of respect to the elder person by kneeling down or by genuflecting. The younger person (whether male or female) greets the senior and announces ukoide meaning ‘I am on my knees’; ‘I kneel’; genuflection – sign of respect to the elder person. The elder person then says seri or seri ție meaning ‘rise or get up.’

The ethical practices and other useful traditional skills and knowledge are deliberately transmitted to younger generations through myths, proverbs, pithy-sayings and ceremonies.

Some forbidden things in Ižon tradition are as follows:

1. An Ižon man does not have sexual relations with a woman who is under her menstruation. The Ižon claim it weakens a man's spirit, but this may also be due to unhealthiness of a menstrual flow.
2. An Ižon man does not pass under women's clothes when they are spread to dry. The Ižon claim it weakens the man's spirit.
3. An Ižon man is not expected to see the placenta and afterbirth when a woman delivers a child. This is a superstitious belief.
4. Ižon persons do not use the left hand to take, give or pass on something. The Ižon feel it is disrespectful.
5. An Ižon man does not have sexual relations with a woman during the period of war. The Ižon claim it weakens the man's spirit, and could result in the untimely death of the man if he goes as a soldier to the war front.
6. An Ižon man does not use a bathing bucket or basin to fetch drinking water or store food items. This may be due to traditional wisdom concerning the unhealthiness of using such bath items because germs and bacteria could be contained therein.
7. When a war-boat or war-canoe sets out from its community for its destination, it is not expected to berth at any other community. The Ižon claim it dampens the morale of the soldiers. Additionally, the men could be dissuaded from proceeding to the battlefront.

See also Evilewuru (2008), Okaba (2008) and Prezi (2014b) for further discussions on Ižon culture.
References


Prezi, God'spower T. (2011b) “Strategies for Marking Negation in Ijọ.” Being a Ph.D. seminar paper presented to the Graduate Board of Studies, Department of Linguistics, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria.


