

# **Reading and Writing**

## **Elige (Alege)**

**A proposal for writing the Elige language**

**Inviting your comments and suggestions**

Elige (Alege) Language and Bible Translation  
Project  
Obudu LGA,  
Cross River State

**A proposal for the Writing of the Elige language**

**Inviting your comments and Suggestions**

**Elige Language Project**

**Cross River State**

**And**

**Luke Initiative for Scripture Translation**

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## **BRIEF HISTORY OF ELEGE PEOPLE**

The Elege people are found among the inhabitants of Obudu Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. The speakers of the language refer to themselves as “Elege” while the language is called “Elige.” According to the two sources, *Ethnologue*, and the Joshi’s project 2016, the Elege people numbered 16,300 and 17,000 respectively.

Considering the two reports, it can therefore be argued that the difference of 700 would have been covered by the year 2017 and the projected population should be more than 17,000 by 2018.

### **Origin/Location**

According to oral tradition, the Elege people originated from the man Elige who was the first son of Egbo also called Agba. As it has always been with other ethnic groups, Egbo migrated with his four children from East of Obudu Local Government in search of a greener pasture. The names of the children were Elige, Bette, Ebegang, and Egede. This language group today is still found in the southern part of Obudu Local Government. Their environs or neighbours comprise of Utugwang, Okworogung, and Bukyi people in the west, and also Bukyi in the east and Bette in the north.

It is orally reported also that when their father Egbo died, the four children went west of Obudu. When they reached Inyanya River, they stopped and consulted the Oracle. The Oracle forbade Elige and Bette from crossing the river, while Ebegang and Egede were allowed to cross all in search for a conducive place to stay. Reaching Retserekpe, Elige and Bette separated, Elige headed toward south while Bette took eastward down to the former place they lived when their father Egbo was alive.

As Elige went eastward, he settled on a mountain known as Irriom Elige where he had a peaceful living with his children. After a long period of time, Elige grew old and died. And the bond of peace that existed among the children was broken. As a result they deserted Irriom and each went to the direction of his choice. Today the villages of Elege people bear the names of some of their forefathers such as Emungkwo, Eraru, Ukikwo, Echuang, Ukodem and Ukpe.

Regarding the last born of the family Ukpe, controversies exist even today that he is not the true son of Elige. Those who support this story claimed that Ukpe was a Tiv who somehow came to the family of Elige. However, others maintain that Elige married a Tiv woman and one day the woman ran away with Ukpe when he was young. After sometime, Elige decided and brought his child back.

As Ukpe was growing, whenever his brothers ridiculed him he cried in Tiv language *mkpe mkpe* and he was named following the sound of his cry. Still others argued that Ukpe left Irriom earlier than all and settled far from his brothers due to misunderstanding. This therefore made his family a little different when they speak, however, the customs and social lives remains the same.

### **Religion**

Before the coming of Islam and Christianity, the Elige people were traditional worshippers. Among the traditional festival observed then was *Bigwen and New Yam festival* to mention but few. Christianity first came to Elege land between 1930 and 1959 by the Catholic Church breaking the ground, and the Assemblies of God following. Other Churches such as the Presbyterian Church, Church of Christ Mission, Good News Church etc. were all established in the land much later.

According to the internet source, 70% of the Elige people are Christians and 30% still practice ethnic religion till date.

**a) Occupation**

The Elige people are mostly farmers who grow mainly Yam, Cassava, Groundnut, Cocoa, Cola nut, Pears, Palm oil etc. They also rear different kinds of animals. Apart from these, the Elige People are good hunters.

## **Principles of Good Writing System (Orthography)**

We have followed the following four principles for developing the writing system:

- 1) accuracy
- 2) consistency
- 3) convenience
- 4) conformity

We briefly discuss here each of these four principles to help all understand the basis for our recommendations.

1. **Accuracy.** We believe that our writing system is accurate because we have thoroughly examined the sound system of Elige and the alphabet is based on this examination.
2. **Consistency.** We believe that the representation of all contrastive sounds of the language is consistent because each sound has its own letter and each letter represents only that one sound.
3. **Convenience.** We believe that our writing system is convenient because it is easy to write and type.
4. **Conformity.** We adopted as far as possible letters that are familiar to readers of English because these are the other language that Elige people read and write.

5. The fifth Principle worth consideration is

**Acceptance.** It is believed that the leaders of the Elige people should consider the proposals and deliberate upon them, and if they agree, they should recommend the alphabet to all Elige people for their use. The language development and Bible Translation team is ready to accept and use any recommendation or alternatives that would improve the spelling of the language.