DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my wife, Susie, and my children, Ben and Juliet.

DECLARATION

This study represents original work by the author and has not been submitted in any form to another University or Technikon. Where use is made of the work of others it has been indicated in the text and acknowledged by means of complete references.

.....[redacted].....

signed by Piers Christian Carey

this.....19.....th day of .....March.....2003

at Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

The financial assistance of the National Research Foundation (NRF) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed in this thesis and conclusions arrived at, are not necessarily to be attributed to the NRF.

Many thanks are due to my supervisors, Rick Andrew and Ian Sutherland, for their advice and help; and to the long-suffering librarians at the Durban Institute of Technology (DIT), in particular Anita Kromberg and Anushie Moonasar; further to my Heads of Department, Brian Andrews and later Ian Sutherland; and to the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Tony Starkey, for their support for the whole project.

Acknowledgement is hereby made to the Centre for Research Development of the former Technikon Natal for their financial aid.

ABSTRACT

This project has investigated African graphic systems, both writing systems and systems of symbolic graphics. These systems are commonly used in Graphic Design, but those of African origin have been largely ignored in both the applied discipline, and in its History and Theory. The project has attempted to explain this in historical and theoretical terms: its motivation is described in terms of countering the exclusion of African visual culture in the face of historical and ideological factors such as colonialism and globalisation.

The project's research aims were to collect as much information as feasible on these systems; and to classify them according to such criteria as their language or cultural group, their location, and the functional nature of the systems. From this body of information a smaller number of representative systems were selected for further description and discussion, in order to highlight the variety of systems existing in Africa, their historical development, and techniques and materials used. These selected systems were then used as inspiration and raw material for a body of applied Graphic Design work, which is intended to provide a visual introduction to the material, and to promote and advocate the revaluation of this cultural material.

Information has mainly been gathered by means of library and internet search, in order to establish approximately the extent of the literature in the public sphere. Because of the obscurity of most of this information, it has been gathered from such other disciplines as Linguistics, Anthropology, or History. The project has established the existence of a large number of graphic symbols and systems, and gathered a body of literature and references about them. Many are poorly documented, if at all, and even those for which extensive literature

exists are not widely known.

The project has attempted to counter the current situation of ignorance by gathering this information; by making a case for the inclusion of these systems in the History and Theory of Graphic Design in the Department of Graphic Design at the Durban Institute of Technology (DIT); by producing a range of applied visual Graphic Design material for use in promoting and advocating academic and public awareness of the material; and by providing some indications for further research.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND MOTIVATION

This Chapter introduces the project and discusses the motivation for it in broad terms, in particular its intended application to the History and Theory of Graphic Design in the Department of Graphic Design at the Durban Institute of Technology (DIT). The motivation is based on a perception of the History of Graphic Design as a cultural construct, and therefore selected cultural, ideological, historical and educational contexts are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

This project has as its subject matter African graphic systems. These systems are defined for the purpose of this project as alphabetic and syllabic writing systems, and other non-linguistic systems of drawn, painted, or written visual communication by means of graphic signs – abstract and/or symbolic signs, pictographs and ideographs. The project concentrates on systems indigenous to Africa, and therefore excludes the Roman and Arabic alphabets.

The project's first aim was to produce as comprehensive as possible a listing of indigenous African graphic systems; and a classification of them by language groups, modes of representation of meaning, and locations. This section also discusses some of the theoretical material on graphic systems and writing systems. Amongst these, works on writing systems such as Peter T. Daniels and

William Bright's *The World's Writing Systems* (1996) provided the most comprehensive general information, but where African alphabets were concerned David Dalby's three papers, *A Survey of the Indigenous Scripts of Liberia and Sierra Leone: Vai, Mende, Loma, Kpelle and Bassa* (1967), *The Indigenous Scripts of West Africa and Surinam: Their Inspiration and Design* (1968) and *Further Indigenous Scripts of West Africa: Manding, Wolof and Fula Alphabets and Yoruba 'Holy' Writing* (1969) covered most of the West African scripts in more detail. Of the works on non-linguistic Graphic Systems, Clementine Faik-Nzuji's *Symboles Graphiques en Afrique Noire* (1992) detailed the application of Graphic Symbols in their ritual and social contexts, and her *Tracing Memory* (1996) gave a broad collection of signs and symbols from most of Sub-Saharan Africa.

The project has been limited to a discussion of writing systems and pictographic/ ideographic systems of symbolic graphics in Africa, but even this limitation has provided far more material than could be covered in detail. This investigation indicates that the range of systems, symbols, techniques and substrates is vast: graphic systems are applied to skin, cloth, wood, stone, and other unfamiliar materials, as well as paper. Consequently, detailed discussions have been limited to a small number of typical systems, including where possible their historical development, socio-cultural interrelationships, and design characteristics.

The project's second aim was to demonstrate through practical application of this research material its suitability for use in contemporary graphic design. To this end the project includes a body of applied design work. This consists of firstly, a series of posters, which provide a visual introduction to those systems discussed in more detail. The posters were developed as visual introductions to graphic systems which have largely been ignored, for educational and advo-

cacy purposes in classrooms, libraries, and so on. Secondly, a number of pieces were designed exploring the graphic and visual qualities of individual characters from some of these systems. These pieces include a small number of posters designed for hypothetical graphic design applications, and typographic exercises in applying characteristics from well-known fonts to the design of some of the African characters. They also have an informative and advocacy purpose: to demonstrate that despite the unfamiliarity of these graphic systems, they possess sufficient visual interest to inspire attractive and effective applied graphic design.

This work is given a theoretical background which discusses in brief some relevant aspects of recent theoretical discourse such as Modernism, Post-Modernism, and post-Colonialism; and attempts to situate the project with regard to them. This includes the relationship between African Graphic Systems and the discipline of the History of Graphic Design, and the latter's relationship with certain ideologies, such as colonialism and globalisation. Finally, the project seeks to locate these graphic systems within the ambit of Graphic Design education, firstly by means of comparison with traditional subject matter, and secondly by the production of applied design work in the form of the educational/advocacy posters and other work.

At this point cognisance should be made that this research project was developed in a region where historically the visual mark has not been privileged to the extent common in Western society. Classifications of this material have been used which may not correspond with conceptual categories of visual symbols used in the societies studied, because these societies have too varied a range of thought to fit the limits of the study.

From a research point of view, it is problematic that primary sources are unavailable. Consequently this research project has had to rely on published reproductions. One cannot be certain that these reproductions are accurate, as some scripts appear to have been copied quite roughly in the first place. Likewise the comparative rarity of available literature written from 'inside'the cultures studied may mean that erroneous 'outsider' perceptions and conclusions have been included. Lack of access to the producers or designers has also been problematic.

Furthermore, the aesthetic concepts and technological norms that have been grafted on in the process of digitising examples of these systems are inescapably Western. European aesthetic notions of penmanship or typographic design norms (thicks and thins, serifs, consistent baselines, etc) may or may not be appropriate, relevant or acceptable in any given case. The only way to determine this would be to consult with users of the systems, before any attempt to design, digitise or produce a font or other design work derived from one of them. Dalby states that only two of the alphabets he describes from West Africa are still in use today (1968:197). Hence this body of work presumes that no-one would be offended if such a system were adapted.

Finally as a member of the Western, English-speaking culture, can only have, at best, a partial understanding of the societies whose cultural and graphic production is discussed in this thesis.

MOTIVATION

The History and Theory of Graphic Design is a recent discipline which has developed in the last three decades in Europe and the United States of Ameri-

ca. Hence it is not surprising that the approach taken by writers of History and Theory of Graphic Design has been one of paying very little attention to "Non-Western" subject material. "Non-Western" in this case is intended to indicate cultural material from other than "First World" societies. Texts such as Philip B. Meggs' *A History of Graphic Design* (1998), James Craig and Bruce Barton's *Thirty Centuries of Graphic Design* (1987), or Josef Muller-Brockmann's *A History of Visual Communication* (1971), give a miniscule percentage (3–8%) of their pages over to material from outside the dominant geographic area. What is included from Africa is largely limited to Ancient Egypt.

A survey of History and Theory of Art texts indicates that they are slightly more generous to Africa, although even here the highest proportion seems to be the three chapters of African material out of twenty-nine, in Marilyn Stokstad's *Art History* (1995). Any further interest in African visual expression seems to require access to more specialised publications, such as Susan Preston Blier's *Royal Arts Of Africa* (1998), or Frank Willett's *African Art* (1971). The lack of importance given to African sources implies that Africa is to be seen as marginal in the development of both History and Theory of Graphic Design and of History and Theory of Art.

The English historian Arthur Marwick describes history as being "to society as memory is to the individual" (2001: 80). A student of Graphic Design is training to join a community within society: by studying the history of the discipline, students may gain consciousness of themselves as members of this subsociety. If the History and Theory of Graphic Design is situated within the wider history, the student may also gain an understanding of the relationship of the profession to the world in general. Marwick sums this up when he states that: "Only through a sense of history can communities establish their identi-

ty, orientate themselves, understand their relationship to the past, and to other communities and societies"(2001: 80).

Thus, students of Graphic Design need to gain an understanding of the international history of the discipline because practitioners from developed societies have hitherto defined the profession. However this research project maintains that South African students also need to locate themselves as designers in an African and South African context and as part of a developing South African culture.

As a lecturer in History and Theory of Graphic Design for the last eight years at Technikon Natal and at the newly formed DIT, I is acutely aware of the need for Graphic Design students to be provided with the background context to the discipline-specific material in order to understand how, when, where and why Graphic Design developed in terms of historical, technological or contemporary professional issues. Finally, they need a theoretical framework that can be used to view and criticise these bodies of work in order to analyse and criticise their own work, their profession, and the society in which they and their work exist. This will assist in enabling students to make up their own minds, and to challenge conventional or stereotyped views.

Aspects of South African history, up to the present.

This thesis understands that the term "Graphic Design in South Africa" means the practice of the profession, the education of Graphic Designers, and the history of both. These disciplines or professions are taken as products of their societies, and such societies as products of both their history and of contemporary external influences, as well as of internal struggles and developments. Therefore, in order to examine the current condition of Graphic Design in

South Africa, some of the most important historical and contemporary influences must be mentioned.

Two Western misconceptions about Africa are particularly relevant to this project: that Africa produced neither any history of itself, nor any form of writing or graphic communication, until both were introduced by Europeans. Professor H.E. Egerton of Oxford claimed in the nineteenth century that colonialism was "the introduction of order into blank, uninteresting, brutal barbarism" (Egerton quoted in Davidson 1995: xxiii). As Coupland put it,

> the main body of the Africans, the Negro people who remained in their tropical homeland between the Sahara and the Limpopo, had... no history. They had stayed, for untold centuries, sunk in barbarism... Nowhere in the world, save perhaps in some miasmic swamps of South America or in some derelict Pacific Islands, was human life so stagnant. (Coupland (1928), quoted in Reader 1997: 649)

For the duration of both the colonial and apartheid periods, colonial apologists as well as successive rulers and governments of South Africa had a vested interest in maintaining this ahistorical fiction. Even now great ignorance remains in South Africa, regarding the history and culture of the rest of the continent. Inevitably this attitude has been carried over into both the professions of Graphic Design and of education, which has only recently been addressed by art and design historians.

However, Marwick's description above allows history to take many forms, and allows many media to carry it. During the colonial period, the established thinking was that history could only exist in written form, and that therefore no society without alphabetic writing could have any. By the late 20th Centu-

ry, advances in archaeology, linguistic analysis, and analysis of oral history and a more inclusive view of documents from non-Western cultures had transformed this view. Huge panoramas of sub-Saharan African history have now been added to the canonical sum of knowledge about ancient Egypt. Contact and trade between sub-Saharan Africa and Europe was far more extensive in ancient and medieval times than may have been popularly believed.

The Sahara was not always an impassable barrier: in fact, there were many periods in the past when the Sahara was home to permanent water, and supported plentiful vegetation and wildlife. Human beings also inhabited the area (Reader 1997: xix, 149, 166 - 177), before being forced away to the North, South and East by the desert's expansion. Trade networks were established in these humid periods, and one of the principal exports to Europe was gold, which "now became a staple export to Europe: and without it there would have been no general use of gold as a medium of exchange in high medieval times" (Davidson 1995: 76). Nor, presumably, would it have been used as a medium of art and prestige.

However, Moslem closure of trade routes to West Africa and Asia to Christian travellers, following the crusades in the Tenth to Twelfth Centuries, encouraged Europeans to seek the support of the fabled "Prester John", identified as the Christian ruler of Ethiopia, against their Moslem opponents; as well as alternative means of acquiring the gold of West Africa, and the spices and other desirables of Asia. It was this attempt to find alternative routes to the sources of silk, spices, and gold that led Portuguese and Spanish mariners around Africa or across the Atlantic.

Adas comments that early accounts gave little hint of what might interest a

Graphic Designer, focussing on:

> social patterns that could be readily observed: marriage customs, modes of warfare, religious ceremonies ...the main task for Sixteenth - and Seventeenth - Century observers was often simply to record their impressions of the bewildering variety of strange new worlds that the Europeans had rather abruptly been forced to reconcile with their constricted medieval vision of the earth. (1989: 24 - 25)

Commentators of the period frequently denigrated the peoples they met on the basis of their paganism: "Whether they were merchants or missionaries, European travellers in this era viewed their Christian faith ... as the key source of their distinctiveness from and superiority to non-Western peoples" (Adas 1989: 22). In these circumstances it would have been almost impossible for them to ascribe worth to indigenous graphic systems. European explorers could only have understood such graphic devices or systems as satanic, because of the intricate and inextricable links between them, the religions of the different African societies, and indeed their entire world-views.

Nonetheless, the Europeans at first treated their hosts, or at least their leaders, with respect. Some African states, such as Benin and Kongo impressed the explorers a great deal.

> When the Dutch took over the main European trade with Benin from the Portuguese in the seventeenth century, they found the king a very great man. His palace and apartments had galleries 'as big as those on the Exchange at Amsterdam', ...while the city had many wide streets and large houses... [The king] was seated on an ivory throne under a canopy of Indian silk. (Davidson 1995: 176-177)

Unfortunately, this attitude was not to last, as the Europeans augmented their religious sense of superiority with awareness of the greater effectiveness of their technology, whether navigational or military. Adas describes "the awe and fear that European weapons instilled in coastal peoples, who could not believe that it was possible to kill at such distances" (1989: 38).

The relationship of trade thus began to be corrupted into exploitation and slavery. Davidson refers to this period as an "African Middle Ages", which ended

> at different times in different places. For the Western Sudan it may be placed in the 1590s with the destruction of Songhay [by the Moroccans]. For the Guinea Coast it came a little later with the wide expansion of the Atlantic [slave] trade. For the East Coast it struck as early as 1498 with the arrival of Vasco da Gama and the years of ruin that immediately followed. In North Africa, [it] may be thought to occur at the Ottoman conquests of the early and middle sixteenth century, while for southernmost Africa it can be fixed as late as 1652, when the Dutch made their small settlement on the Cape of Good Hope. (1995: 226)

The consequences for these regions still echo today, but for this study were more important in some areas than others. The Arabic script remained in use in Northern Africa and on the East coast and, overlaying older graphic means, in the Western Sudan: the consequences of the Dutch settlement for Southern Africa's Bushman graphic traditions are well documented elsewhere. As a result, it is the Guinea Coast region and the less directly affected interior areas of the continent, that concern this study most.

The Guinea Coast, from Senegal to southern Angola, is the primary region of

the Atlantic Slave Trade. By the Eighteenth Century it encompassed the forcible removal of an average of 60,000 people a year. The total population of Africa in AD 1500 has been estimated at only 47 million (Reader 1997: 429). A rough parallel, then, would be for contemporary South Africa to suffer the annual loss of this many of the healthiest and most productive individuals in society, but concentrated in a small area (as the Atlantic coast is a small part of Africa's total area).

The Atlantic trade might thus compare with the violent removal of sixty thousand people from, say, the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) coast every year. This figure would exclude those killed before sale, or rejected as unsalable after abduction and abandoned. The ramifications of this activity spread throughout the continent, exacerbating political instability and encouraging warfare (Reader 1997: 429). Some indigenous societies profited from the Slave Trade, such as Dahomey, the Calabari Efik of the Niger Delta, and others further West: many others were destroyed (Davidson 95: 229-236).

The consequences for West and Central Africa of the Atlantic slave trade were grave and long-lasting, in terms of depopulation (Illiffe 1995: 137-138) and for the economies concerned (Davidson 1995: 221). For this study, however, the most important consequences were the social disruptions, migrations and collapses that took place during the Slave Trade era and the subsequent period of Colonialism: destruction of knowledge of many graphic systems may be assumed in the consequent loss of cultural wealth, if the surviving variety is anything to go by.

The final consequence of slavery for Africa was the development of racism, in particular the invention of the so-called "scientific" variety. Racism developed

more or less contemporaneously first with the slave trade and then colonialism. Ashcroft et al. define it as "a way of thinking that considers a group's unchangeable physical characteristics to be linked in a direct causal way to psychological or intellectual characteristics, and which on this basis distinguishes between 'superior' and 'inferior' racial groups" (1998: 199).

They make an explicit connection between the development of racism and the colonial/imperial ideology: that racism is:

> particularly pertinent to the rise of colonialism, because the division of human society in this way is inextricable from the need of colonialist powers to establish a dominance over subject peoples and hence justify the imperial enterprise ... With the rise of European imperialism...the need to establish such a distinction between superior and inferior finds its most 'scientific' confirmation in the dubious analysis and taxonomy of racial characteristics. (1998: 198–199)

The ascription of subhuman or bestial characteristics to African peoples was thus used in order to justify their horrific treatment in the slave trade.

Nineteenth Century 'scientific' racism identified certain desirable characteristics, that the ruling elites of a small number of Western European nations ascribed to themselves, as indicating physical, moral, technological, spiritual and cultural superiority. Ostensible criteria included Christianity, advanced technology, literacy and free enterprise, and, of course, a pale skin. Any identifiable group diminished in humanity the more they differed from these idealised norms. Such groups included black Africans, Jews, Frenchmen, the Irish, 'foreigners' in general, and even members of their own working classes (see Ashcroft et al. 1998. 198 - 206).

The purpose of this for Africa was to justify the colonial effort. If the colonised peoples could be characterised as inferior, they could either be enslaved or even exterminated as part of "not only an inevitable but a desirable unfolding of natural law" (Ashcroft et al. 1998: 201); or, if docile enough, subjected to the 'civilising mission' of the 'white man's burden'. Whichever category a people fell into, it was seen as right for the colonial power to exploit both them and their resources.

It is a fairly straightforward matter to trace the ancestry of the apartheid system in South Africa to this thinking. Under classical apartheid black people were effectively if not legalistically enslaved, confined to menial work, their movements monitored and controlled, and education and voting rights denied.

> The [National Party government's] first measures sought to attract further white support, banning mixed marriages (the notorious Immorality Act), creating procedures for universal racial classification, and setting up machinery for compulsory segregation under the Group Areas Act. (Illiffe 1995: 279)

Liebenow (1986: 102) comments further that Apartheid dictated "along racial lines whom persons may marry, where they may live, what kind of jobs they may hold, how freely they may travel about their own country, and how they relate to fellow nationals in religious, political and social terms". In particular, First World education, including Graphic Design, was limited to white students: the "Bantu Education" policy was devised to confine the majority to menial work.

The apartheid and colonial periods still affect South Africa. The country owes

its political and economic existence to Dutch, Huguenot and British colonialists and their policies, and the colonial relationship remains pervasive in economic and cultural relations. The consequences of South African history for a Department of Graphic Design also revolve, however, around a number of more contemporary factors. One of the most powerful of these is globalisation. This has been defined as

> the process whereby individual lives and local communities are affected by economic and cultural forces that operate world-wide.... Some analysts embrace it enthusiastically as a positive feature of a changing world in which access to technology, information, services and markets will be of benefit to local communities, where dominant forms of social organisation will lead to universal prosperity, peace and freedom, and in which a perception of a global environment will lead to global ecological concern [but] others reject it as a form of domination by 'First World' countries over 'Third World' ones in which distinctions of culture and society become erased by an increasingly homogeneous global culture, and local economies are firmly incorporated into a system of global capital. (Ashcroft et al. 1998: 110-11)

Globalisation has many features related to older political concepts like colonisation or imperialism, such as its "political domination and economic and cultural control" (Ashcroft et al. 1998: 113), but differs in that it is largely driven by multi-national corporations, instead of governments. As Hertz (2001: 21) has pointed out "corporations are not society's custodians: they are commercial entities that act in the pursuit of profit, not ethical considerations. They are morally ambivalent". This pursuit of profit drives the cultural aspects of globalisation as well as the economic. Global culture becomes increasingly homogeneous because it is increasingly controlled by a small number of corporations whose

products are cultural.

The concept of Cultural Imperialism provides another tool for analysing this situation. This concept contains the notion of a relatively small group of individuals or, more often, corporations using their political and economic power to export their values, and the cultural products which embody them; the populations to whom these values and products are exported do not, because of their lesser economic power, have the ability either to export their own values and products on equal terms, or to resist the imposition of the values and products from elsewhere successfully (see Barker 1999: 37 - 44).

Globalisation is a successor to older processes, such as colonialism, which have prepared the way for it by establishing the cultural and economic hegemony of Western industrial countries. Graphic Design is an economic, creative and cultural form that has been developed and defined by the First World. As such, it has been exported to the rest of the world, and is now part of the 'developed' economy of South Africa. As a result of this process, it in general maintains and reproduces the functions defined for it in those First World countries, whether in practice or education.

There is, however, a need to alter the balance between the global and the local. This is seen in the problems experienced by the significant number of students at the DIT who are not first language English speakers, i.e. who are not born part of the globally dominant English speaking culture. The DIT is an English-medium institution, and thus requires all such students to study in a second or third language. This requirement reproduces the process of exclusion of those languages and cultures, which began with colonisation, and which is now justified by bowing to the demands of globalisation.

These students and their parents both see Imperial languages and cultures such as the English-speaking oneas the ladder to material success, but educationalists are increasingly concerned at the harmful effects of this process on students themselves. Potenza and Pretorius have both highlighted the "silencing and loss of a great deal of their home and community experiences, of their cultures and identities" (Potenza 2001: 4). Mother tongue teaching of science, by contrast, is described as "making a huge difference to pupils' performance in the subject" (Pretorius 2001: 19). Their suggestion seems to be that although pupils need to understand and be able to work in English, their original understanding of a subject should be in their own language. Countries like France and Germany educate students in their own languages, but the students also have to learn enough English to access academic texts in English. Needless to say, such a level of language learning is very high, but could be made easier by the development of discipline-specific glossaries and introductory texts in the relevant languages.

Having taught both practical and theory subjects, I have seen similar problems at Technikon Natal (TN) and more recently at the DIT. Not only are many students required to study in a foreign language(i.e. English), but almost nothing from their lives, cultures or histories is valued enough to be studied. Success is defined, and indeed their whole existence is validated, by how well they imitate and absorb the foreign culture. Most learn to devalue their own cultures and languages before they reach tertiary education. Pretorius quotes an anonymous 16-year-old student: "We don't find our mother tongue to be that important. You don't make overseas calls in your mother tongue; you don't use it in everyday life. It's not useful" (2001:19).

However, the National Department of Education is required to promote multilingualism. Mosibudi Mangena, Deputy Minister of Education, referring to the South African situation, has suggested that culture is inseparable from language, and that it is almost impossible to appreciate the culture of others without understanding their language (2001: 19). Nonetheless, appreciation of others' cultures is also dependent on explicit education in those cultures, and so African cultures need to receive comparable intellectual attention to colonial ones. As a lecturer in Graphic Design, and having co-responsibility for the History and Theory of Graphic design in the Department of Graphic Design at all levels, this researcher believes that the best way to contribute to this process is to integrate into our curriculum some of the huge range of African visual communication material that meets the functional and aesthetic criteria of Graphic Design, and thus merits inclusion in the subject.

To sum up, the effect of recent history on the majority of the population, at least of South Africa and probably of much the continent, appears to have convinced them that most if not all of their cultures, languages and economic practices are intrinsically inferior to those of Western countries, and that therefore those are the only ones worth studying and emulating. One needs only to cast a glance at a classroom full of students to observe this: whether it's a question of speech, clothing, music, sport, or anything else important to a young adult, the influence is overwhelmingly that of the West.

As mentioned earlier, the History and Theory of Graphic Design, as distinct from both the History of Art, or Graphic Design practice, is a very young discipline. The earliest specialised textbook I found was Josef Muller-Brockmann's *History of Visual Communication* (1971), and the current standard text, Phillip Meggs' *History of Graphic Design*, was first published in 1983. In gener-

al, therefore, a large body of critical literature yet to be developed. Meggs has made his criteria for the production of his text quite explicit: "My goal, as a design educator teaching design history beginning in the early 1970s, was to construct the legacy of contemporary designers working in the United States" (Meggs, quoted in Heller and Pettit 1998: 89).

He further admits to having cut "whole sections" because of a decision to concentrate on "presenting the lineal historical relationship to contemporary design practice in [the USA]" (Meggs, quoted in Heller and Pettit 1998: 92). He was not trying to produce a universally relevant volume, and so it is to his credit that his book has become as widely used as it is. Likewise, he does not claim or wish to have canonised his own selection of work, but it has largely become so for lack of an alternative.

This thesis maintains that a History of Graphic Design for South Africa needs to be different from that for the USA or any where else. This is not to say that currently used material needs to be jettisoned, but that in South Africa the relevance of all overseas History of Graphic Design material should be critically assessed. At the same time, there is a need to research and assess the relevance of material from many other fields. Studies have been done on aspects of visual communication and Graphic Design in such varied fields as linguistics, communication, cultural and media studies, anthropology, sociology, education and philosophy, in addition to overlaps with Art History and Theory. It can be argued that Graphic Designers and Graphic Design educators have ignored this work at our peril, because it has allowed specialists from these other fields to assume more authority about our work than we can ourselves.

In the field of applied Graphic Design, as in Graphic Design education, we

have inherited our definitions and practices from developed countries. South African designers still look to authorities such as Paul Rand or David Carson as much as our academics have looked to Philip Meggs. We have also inherited a bias towards commercial Graphic Design as the core of what we teach. The American graphic designer and design educator Katherine McCoy has commented on the ideological emphasis implicit in this:

> A dangerous assumption is that corporate work of innocuous content is devoid of political bias. The vast majority of student projects deal with corporate needs, placing a heavy priority on the corporate economic sector of our society. Commerce is where we are investing time, budgets, skills and creativity. This is a decisive vote for economics over other potential concerns, including social, educational, cultural, spiritual and political needs. This is a political statement in itself, both in education and practice. (1994: 111)

This position is rewarding commercially, but it must be seen that it is a position, and an ideological one. Graphic Design has always carried theoretical or critical baggage, but it did not carry, until recently, much reflection or analysis. We speak of "branding" and "unique selling points" regardless of whether we are discussing work for a local charity or for Coca-Cola. Students internalise the cast of thought that all is based on the functions of commerce. This is not necessarily inaccurate, but it should be made explicit that:–

1) it is an ideological, even political, position;

2) it is only one of many available;

3) it is conservative in ideology; and

4) it limits students' conceptions of their potential range of careers.

Ironically, serious study of the visual cultures of Africa that seeks genuine

understanding of, and gives intellectual value to, the cultures investigated could be beneficial for our students, because of the potential for producing original work, that brings to the world's notice the fact there are alternative visual and intellectual traditions from which it may benefit.

This work can only be genuine in nature if its creators understand such 'other' traditions. Attempts to bring 'local colour' into South African Graphic Design, have ranged from the crass 'guinea fowl' style, that is explicitly aimed at tourists, to the approach taken by Garth Walker and Orange Juice Design (OJD) in the trade journal *i-jusi*, which is still based more on impression and aesthetic curiosity than systematic research. It is therefore necessary to at least begin the process of gathering substantive information about genuine African graphic cultural elements, and disseminating this through our students, via their working lives, to the wider culture.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This Chapter discusses the theoretical background to the project – in particular a number of recent theoretical discourses that are relevant to Graphic Design and its history, principally: Modernism and Post-Modernism; Cultural and Communication Studies; and Post-Colonial Studies. However, before one can deal with these issues it would be useful to define certain fundamental concepts.

DEFINITIONS.

Discourse

This term, according to the French philosopher Michel Foucault, refers to a complex set of rules, signs and practices which organises and controls the existence and reproduction of some aspect of knowledge and/or society. A discourse defines what is "true", "valid" and "relevant", and therefore what can be discussed or accepted within the bounds of a subject. For Foucault, a subject or discipline, such as Graphic Design, is "constituted by the set of what it has been possible to say in the group of all the statements that named it, delineated it, described and explained it, gave account of its development, indicated its diverse correlations, judged it, and eventually allowed it to speak" (Foucault in Faubion, ed. 1998: 312).

It is similar in meaning to a paradigm, except that term tends to be applied

more widely, to a society's mindset as a whole (See Sim 1998: 246, and below). It could be described as a socially and psychologically controlling paradigm within a particular field or discipline. Foucault believes that such a discourse controls every field of human thought and activity: a conceptual power structure that sets the limits of what is acceptable in that field. The most important aspect of a discourse for him is the power or control over a discipline that control of the discourse gives (see also McHoul and Grace 1993: 26, 31 - 56; and Ashcroft et al. 1998: 70 - 72).

Paradigm

The relevant usage of the term "Paradigm" was introduced by Thomas Kuhn, in his text *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962). He describes the progress of scientific development in terms of occasional ground-breaking works, which establish a new or different way or area of research: an example would be Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*. As Bloor describes them, such works:

> leave many problems unsolved, and hence allow the growth of research traditions in which their concepts are refined to account for new results and applications. Kuhn calls this process of articulation and exploitation 'normal science', because it is what most scientists do most of the time. (1987: 114)

Since Kuhn's formulation of the concept, however, the term has come to refer in popular usage to the new world-view or mindset established by the paradigm, rather than the paradigm itself. It has also become widely understood to mean any work which is so revolutionary that it allows the establishment of a completely new field or way of understanding an existing one, and affects the perception of that field by society. Thus Darwin's work affected the views of

the whole of society on creation and evolution, not just those of biologists.

The change from one world view or mental framework to another, caused by the appearance of the paradigmatic work, is referred to as a paradigm shift. For Graphic Design, the development of the letterpress printing process around 1450 A.D. (Clair 1999: 45 - 49) had a paradigm-shifting effect on the field of visual communication. Gutenberg's Forty-Two Line Bible may be considered the paradigm of the new method, as the development of Aldus Pagemaker, the first DeskTop Publishing (DTP) programme, had a similar effect on redefining Graphic Design starting in the 1980s.

Hegemony

According to Ashcroft et al. this term is now used to mean "domination by consent", particularly in situations where it is against the interests of those dominated (1998: 116). This usage was coined by the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, who used it to explain the willingness of peasant workers to co-operate with the Italian authorities against striking industrial workers in 1920. According to Marxist theory, such peasants should have supported the strike, in their own interests, but instead believed the ruling class' version of the 'right thing to do'. The term has become essential for understanding how a society may have cohesion without coercion:

> Hegemony is the power of the ruling class to convince other classes that their interests [i.e. those of the ruling class] are the interests of all... the ruling class's interest is presented as the common interest and thus comes to be taken for granted. (Ashcroft et al. 1998: 116)

The two essential elements of hegemony are first, the establishment of the rul-

ing ideology as 'natural' or 'common sense', so that questioning it becomes seen as perverse or even 'unnatural', and second, the use of this belief to establish a set of relationships beneficial to the ruling elite. Gramsci himself commented : "The group in power in society always insists that intellectual discussion shall take place in the kind of language which it uses, which it understands, and which represents its way of seeing, interpreting, and dominating the world" (Gramsci quoted in Thody and Course 1997: 102).

Grossberg et al. add that Gramsci considered this process of the legitimation of power by means of ideological consensus, rather than by force, to have begun with modernisation (1998: 50). The notion of hegemony can be applied to many aspects of society: in discussing First World-Third World relations,

> Euro-centric values, assumptions, beliefs and attitudes are accepted as a matter of course as the most natural or valuable. The inevitable consequence...is that the colonised subject understands itself as peripheral to those Euro-centric values, while at the same time accepting their centrality. (Ashcroft et al. 1998: 117)[1]

Hegemony is useful as a concept for understanding the nature of most cultural, economic, or educational relations between South Africa and the First World, but also between English-speaking society and other cultural or language groups within South Africa, or between South Africa and other less powerful countries in the region. In this context most Graphic Design, and advertising in particular, can be seen as reproducing and reinforcing these hegemonic values, no matter how destructive they may be to most South Africans.

Values such as the ecologically and financially unattainable ideal of endless

consumption; the unattainably perfect physical self image promoted by the beauty industry; or the conscience-free pursuit of selfish individualism all serve the profit interests of large companies, at the expense of damage to society, both at the collective and individual level, and to the environment. Despite this, they are accepted and promoted in all the publication media via the work of graphic designers.

THEORETICAL DISCOURSES.

The theoretical discourses discussed in this Chapter fall into two broad categories, Modernism and Postmodernism. They are not as clearly separated as this division may imply: each has been influenced by others. These terms were first created as names for cultural movements, but have been subsequently enlarged to form paradigms for understanding the world.

Modernism

The term "modern", in the sense of "being of the present day and reacting against the past" was first used by the French writer Baudelaire in 1849, when he described what he saw as the artist's role in society (Encyclopedia Britannica 1978: **19**/473). "Modernism" thus became a general description for a series of movements in Fine Art and Architecture in the late Nineteenth Century. It was seen as a revolutionary means of breaking with traditions of representation, construction and narrative, such as illusionary realism, linear narratives, Renaissance perspective, and so on. However, the term has recently been linked with the sister concepts of "Modernisation" and "Modernity", and the three have come to be understood as interrelated umbrella terms for the whole thought pattern that describes West European culture, since the Renaissance break with the Medieval mindset.[2]

These three concepts are now used to refer to the interrelated complex of changes and developments since the Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution in particular, including the development of industry, capitalism, new markets, communication and transport, scientific and technological progress, and their social effects; and political, social and cultural events.

Thus, for Grossberg et al. "Modernisation" describes a range of recent historical forces: the Industrial Revolution, capitalism, colonialism, industrialisation, and changing modes and relations of production (1998: 50-51). It also includes new economic modes of distribution and consumption, new technological and scientific developments, and resulting political and cultural events. "Modernism" refers to all the cultural developments that took place, particularly in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries, as people attempted to understand, interact with, or even avoid the results of modernisation. These cultural practices and products were influenced by the new social factors and technologies brought by modernisation.

Modernism includes developments in both elite forms such as fine art, literature, and architecture; and popular ones such as the pulp novel, comics, popular films, jazz, and radio shows. "Modernity" describes the social realities that people experienced and how these changed; and the relationships between these on the one hand and modernism and modernisation on the other. "It attempts to describe what it felt like to live in the new modern world, a world that attempted to break away from the customs, norms and traditions of earlier generations." (Grossberg et al. 1998: 51).

Modernism was characterised by a fascination with these new forms and

methods, and laid great emphasis on unity of different kinds, within the society, culture, movement, etc, under a single great theory or narrative. The great "universal" theories or ideologies developed during the Modern era to explain how the world was, or should be, have subsequently been named "Grand Narratives" or "meta-narratives" because of their attempts to explain everything that mattered, and their "absolute, universal and all-embracing claims to knowledge and truth" (Strinati 1995: 227). Examples of these include Capitalism, Socialism, Darwin's Theory of Evolution, or Newtonian science and its mechanistic conception of the physical universe.

Unfortunately, the Modern paradigm, via its Grand Narratives, also came to be characterised by a belief in opposites or dualities, which allowed a very straightforward and practical approach to acting in the world, but left out other peoples' beliefs, multiple possibilities, and most subtleties. In particular, people divided the world into characteristics of "us" and "them", where all the good characteristics were reserved for one's own group, country, race, sex, etc, and all the bad ones were loaded or projected onto whichever group, etc, one opposed at the time. This process is called "othering", and the development of racism, as previously described, is a prime example (see also Ashcroft et al. 1998: 169 - 173).

One consequence or feature of the Grand Narratives was the development of ideologies of dominance, primarily amongst the nations of Western Europe, and later in the United States and other countries: such as Imperialism, Colonialism, and Neo-colonialism. These are political ideologies, and offshoots of the Modernist paradigm: that there could be one right way of doing things, that more detailed scientific and technological knowledge implied innate genetic superiority, that man had the right to exploit nature without thought

for consequences, that possession of political or military power entitled its use, and so on. The history of South Africa as mentioned in Chapter 1 requires that they be summarised.

Imperialism means the formation of empires; the ideology and practice of one powerful region or country taking over and ruling distant territories, and the exploitation of the conquered region so as to increase its own wealth and power. However, the term has come to refer to an economic practice of taking over and controlling markets and resources, rather than a military and political one (see Young 2001: 25 - 43; and Ashcroft et al. 1998: 122 - 127).

Colonialism developed as a result of significant changes which occurred in European Imperial practice during the Nineteenth Century. These changes included:

1) The development of the European claim and belief that their society was morally superior to any other, instead of simply more advanced in technology, or stronger militarily. This allowed them further to claim that taking over other countries was 'for their own good', and they were thus helping the 'barbaric' or 'savage' countries by taking them over. This reinforced and was reinforced by the Slave Trade and racism.

2) The export of people from the colonial centres to the conquered territories, which were maintained as though vacant for this human surplus. The imperial centre thus exported its poor, leaving itself wealthier, and by privileging the settlers over the indigenous people, tied the colony more closely to itself. The colony was then organised as a permanent settlement, in which the original inhabitants became either slaves, second-class

citizens, or at worst were physically exterminated, as was attempted in North America and Australia, and with the Bushmen in South Africa[3].

3) The combination of colonialism with modern industrial capitalism. As described by Ashcroft et al., colonies were maintained as captive markets for the "mother" country's manufactured goods, and the development of indigenous industry was discouraged, if not actively suppressed. Typically the colony exported its raw materials to the colonial country, which processed and re-exported them back to the colony as manufactured goods (1998: 45 - 51). The export of cotton from Africa and India to the UK and the export of manufactured cotton cloth and clothing to those countries is an example: it imposed a net drain of wealth from the colonies to the colonial centre, because the raw materials were priced so low in comparison to the finished items. First World countries maintained control over the prices of raw materials, so that colonies were unable to swing the financial relationship in their favour. This was in addition to direct exploitation of natural or agricultural resources (see also Young 2001: 15 - 24).

During this phase, great public emphasis was laid on the 'civilising mission' of colonialism, in terms of religion and education, but in practice this was rarely the case, and teachers and missionaries who took the welfare of indigenous peoples seriously were often regarded as a subversive threat to the colonial order. However, during the Second World War in particular, the European countries and the USA laid great emphasis on fighting for "Freedom", and although many colonies were far from the fighting, they still experienced this propaganda. Many people, both in the colonies and in the colonising countries, came to believe that this freedom should be extended to the colonies; despite

this, it still took more than half a century of political and military struggle before they all gained political freedom.

Neo-Colonialism. At the time of independence, few, if any, ex-colonies were sufficiently developed to compete with the colonial countries, which had had centuries to develop, enrich and educate themselves. The colonial countries also controlled international trade, and did not want to lose such profitable forms of trade and industry. These countries and the multi-national corporations based in them therefore generally kept economic control over their ex-colonies, manipulating their economies via commodity prices, import tariffs, and so on, and their cultures through educational and cultural programmes.

The result was that few of the "Third World" countries (as ex-colonies came to be called) could prosper economically or culturally. Direct control of the colonies became unnecessary, because the economic, social and cultural relationships of dependency were already in place. The dependence of South African Graphic Design on "First World" examples is a feature of this condition. In this contemporary Neo-Colonialist phase, the vast majority of the international norms, standards, prices, measurements, contracts, manufacturing procedures, patents, and cultural and educational beliefs are controlled by the ex-colonial powers, to their own advantage (see Young 2001: 44 - 56, and Ashcroft et al. 1998: 162 - 163).

Post-modernism

Post-modernist ideas began to arise after World War 2 when it began to become clear that various aspects of the Modernist mindset simply could no longer be true. For example, Modernists believed that "a pattern of progress" (Strinati 1995: 227) was continuous, always improving things and making life

better, and that as a result, people themselves were developing continuously into a morally as well as physically better form of humanity. These ideas began to disintegrate during World War One, as people saw so-called progress contributing only to the industrialisation of death. Poison gas was used for the first time, and soldiers lived in indescribable conditions of filth and disease.

The continuing history of the Twentieth Century made it increasingly clear that very few of the ideas or ideals of modernism could be sustained. No matter what material progress was made, in science, technology and so on, no social or moral progress could be guaranteed or even conclusively related to those developments. The collapse of these kinds of ideas accelerated after World War Two. Change could no longer be assumed to mean progress, but the increasing pace of change means that people have to be more or less continuously training or educating themselves, even if this is only to use a new cellphone.

Some scientific and technological developments, despite their rational origins, even contributed to the Modernist order of the world collapsing: for example, employment in the economic circumstances provided by electronics (the internet, the world-wide web, robot machines, decentralised offices, temporary employment) simply cannot continue as before, with huge factories and offices, lifetime employment at a single company, and so on. Such circumstances are much less reliable than in the Modernist period, and so uncertainty is also a feature.

Perhaps more significantly, developments in the supremely rational science of physics played an important part in the collapse of the Newtonian model of the universe. Einstein's theory of relativity and in particular Heisenberg's

"Indeterminacy Principle" – the impossibility of being able to measure with certainty both the position and velocity of a sub-atomic particle at any given moment – were sparks of a much greater philosophical uncertainty: for if rationalistic science, one of the foundations of modernity, could not be sure of something as fundamental as this, how could certainty in it or any of the other rationalistic Grand Narratives be maintained? (Encyclopedia Britannica 1978: 8/746)

Despite the huge changes in the Modernist period, Post-modernity deals with changes of a new kind, in which our perceptions and beliefs may be as important as anything material, and virtual or media reality (TV, movies, video and computer games, etc) may seem more real than the actual physical world.

Post-modernism, despite its fractured and contradictory nature, displays amongst other conditions:

i) an openness to a multiplicity of 'voices' or points of view; an ethos referred to as pluralism (as opposed to Modernism's one "right way" of doing things);

ii) the collapse of European Grand Narratives as organising principles, or at least their reduction to the same level as the metanarratives of 'others';

iii) the collapse of the individual "subject", the author, as authority, in the face of persistent reinterpretation of texts or other cultural products by consumers;

iv) the replacement of a clearly understood external 'reality' by what Bau-

drillard describes as "Hyperreality": the existence of hyperreality is "sheltered from the imaginary, and from any distinction between the real and the imaginary, leaving room only for the orbital recurrence of models and the simulated generation of difference" (1983: 4). Hyperreality equally negates any distinction between between signs and what they refer to in the real world. Baudrillard suggests that the representational image sign goes through four successive developmental phases:

> a. it is the reflection of a basic reality;
>
> b. it masks and perverts a basic reality;
>
> c. it marks the absence of a basic reality;
>
> d. it bears no relation to any reality whatsoever– it is its own pure simulacrum".
>
> (1983: 11)

He suggests that contemporary visual culture has reached this position.

v) the existence of an economic and technological context vastly different from the Modern: information technology and globalised capitalism have combined and developed in a way that makes national borders, nation states, opposing ideologies and even time redundant. Part of the response to technology is the development of what the American cultural critic Neil Postman has described as 'Technopoly': "It consists in the deification of technology, which means that the culture seeks its authorisations in technology, finds its satisfactions in technology, and takes its orders from technology." (1993: 71)

Appignanesi and Garratt further refer to three further problems of "real" Post-modernism. As described, these problems refer to Post-modern Fine Art, but

they are relevant to all forms of visual culture:

a) The dilemma of reproducibility, in which the question is raised of the authenticity or originality of a work of art, or in fact any kind of intellectual property, when any such item can be easily and endlessly reproduced; and whether such a work can retain its power to affect us when it is endlessly reproduced;

b) The consumerism of images, which notes that, in the above circumstances, images seem to lose their power with increasing speed, and as a result more images must be produced and reproduced in order to maintain an overall level of affectiveness. Consequently, any individual image becomes proportionately less powerful even when new. Historical images are also recycled with increasing speed and a corresponding loss of power and meaning; and this whole process is merged more and more into the world of commerce.

c) The question of legitimation, which addresses the issue of how authority in cultural matters can be established and maintained in such a situation. Increasingly, in a world where everything is commercialised, it is those who control the commercial process who say what is legitimate, authentic, "real", or not, regardless of factual accuracy or truth. Appignanesi and Garratt give the example of how legitimation in the "Art world" is now almost entirely controlled by those who market Fine Art – gallery owners and curators in particular – rather than artists or consumers (1995: 53). This power is also seen in more popular forms. The commercial and popular-cultural power of Hollywood, for example, legitimates its version of any historical event, such as the D-Day landings, or the

> Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour – regardless of any historical mistakes – over more accurate accounts or even personal experience, because of the comparative cultural/economic weakness of historians and individual participants (Appignanesi and Garratt 1995: 48 - 53).

In this sense, while academic acceptance would legitimate this study within the academic world, its legitimation in the world of professional Graphic Design would require its successful marketing, sale and use in commercial Graphic Design practice of the material gathered, as image or type fonts, or similar. Ironically, this legitimation would expose it to the process of consumption of images mentioned above. Irony is, of course, also characteristic of Postmodernism.

In terms of visual culture, Post-Modernism has also been characterised by "pastiche", an irreverent and often facile or superficial combining or imitating of past styles.

A final element that must be mentioned is the pervasiveness of the communications media. It was the case in the past that one could escape from the media in rural or private situations. Nowadays, however, it is more or less impossible to be out of sight of some evidence of media for more than a few hundred metres or more than a few seconds. For example, in October 2001, on the road between Hillcrest and Durban, a distance of some thirty kilometres, it was only possible to achieve this once, for about half a kilometre. For the rest of the route, signs were continuously visible.

It could be argued that it is significant that most Post-modern theorising during the second half of the Twentieth Century has taken place in France. France

was the only major colonial power that had a combination of a profound history of support for and interest in philosophy and intellectual contest, an education system geared to develop intellectuals, *and* which bears the historical and psychological scars of having been a physical battleground in both World Wars.

Some commentators from other parts of Africa, such as the Nigerian writer Dennis Ekpo, have taken the view of Post-modernism that it merely demonstrates the metropolitan intellectuals' loss of control of the discourse of modern culture, in the aftermath of decolonisation. Quayson quotes Ekpo:

> For cultures (such as ours) that neither absolutized ... human reason in the past nor saw the necessity for it in the present, the postmodern project...cannot at all be felt like the cultural...earthquake that it appears to be for the European man...Nothing therefore stops the African from viewing the celebrated postmodern condition a little sarcastically as nothing but the hypocritical self-flattering cry of the bored and spoilt children of hypercapitalism. (Quayson 2000: 132 - 133)

Similarly, Baudrillard's simulacrum can be viewed as simply the inability of spoilt technopolistic Westerners to tell the difference between the real, the unreal, and the hyperreal – conditions that the brute realities of life in Africa clarify more than somewhat. A further problem in South Africa is that all these phases coexist simultaneously: people may experience the Pre-modern (i.e the orally based, rural society), the Modern, and the Post-modern all at the same time.

However, whether one views Post-modernity, as a positive philosophical development which has encouraged the growth of multiple viewpoints and

discourses; or that these discourses have developed as a result of the weakening and collapse of the European hegemonic endeavour; the fact remains that Post-modernism gives scope for this M.Tech project in a way which would not have been possible under the Modernist dispensation. The subject matter simply would not have been recognised as equivalent to its European parallel. This study thus must take the Post-modern point of view that there is no single "right" or "correct" way of understanding the world, only a series of competing, continuous and open-ended discourses (see also Table 2.1. , p 38, for further suggested comparisons.).

Post-colonialism

Post-colonialism refers not just to ideas that have arisen after colonialism (the literal meaning) but also to ideas that are trying to criticise and replace it (Ashcroft et al. 1998: 186 - 192). Post-colonialism is mostly a cultural movement or theory, whereas Neo-colonialism refers more to politics and economics. A country can be both post-colonial, in having formal political independence and in struggling to establish cultural and economic independence, and yet also neo-colonial, in remaining economically and/or culturally dependent despite such efforts (see also Young 2001: 57 - 69). Post-colonialism is discussed in this project in the context of Post-modernism, rather than of Colonialism and Neo-colonialism, because it appears to exhibit Post-Modern features, such as the collapse of meta-narratives, the acceptance of a multiplicity of voices, and the pastiche of styles.

Post-colonialism analyses the effects of colonialism on the cultures and societies of both the former colonies and colonising countries. It can be described as a theoretical or cultural contest over the effects of the colonial process. Post-colonial thinking seeks to demonstrate that while the Western nations may be

Modernism	Post-modernism
mechanical	electronic
industrial	post-industrial
one job for life	many temporary jobs
work for others	self-employed / freelance
clear life path	life path rarely clear
education then work	education while working
firm gender roles	fluid gender roles
linear	web or net
one authority or voice	many and/or none
continuous progress	continuous change
confident	uncertain
science and technology will solve all mankind's problems	new problems will continually crop up as old ones are solved
centralised	dispersed
manufacturing products	providing services/ communicating information
physical	intellectual
simple	complex
pure	hybrid
depth	surface
exclusive	inclusive

Table 2.1. Some suggested comparisons between Modernism and Post-modernism (Carey 2003)

more powerful, and therefore able to foist their cultures and economic systems on the rest of the world, they are not necessarily in any sense better: i.e. of greater moral value. In consequence, indigenous or local cultural practices are just as worthy of recovery, production, discussion, research or promotion, regardless of whether they date from before or during the colonial period, or more recently in response to it. Post-colonial practice tends to accept the changes wrought by the colonial period, and to value whatever responses peoples have made to it, regardless of how much of a mixture may result. This willingness to treat all cultural practices equally is referred to as "Cultural Relativism". This compares closely to the" multiplicity of voices" described as a feature of Post-modernism, and so Post-colonialism is seen as closely allied to that paradigm.

Post-colonialism can be said to have originated with Edward Said's text, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (1978) , in which he built on the work of Marx and, particularly, Foucault to analyse the relationship between Western Europe and the Arab world, "Europe's deepest and most recurring image of the Other"(1978: 1). This Other, the Orient and its inhabitants, was characterised in its most clearly defined form by Nineteenth Century politicians and other public figures as "silent, available to Europe for the realisation of projects that involved but were never directly responsible to the native inhabitants, and unable to resist the projects, images, or mere descriptions devised for it" (1978: 94). Its inhabitants were contrasted with the stalwart Imperialists:

> On the one hand, there are Westerners, and on the other, there are the Arab-Orientals: the former are, in no particular order, rational, peaceful, liberal, logical, capable of holding real values, without natural suspicion; the latter are none of these things. (1978: 49)

In his writings Said demonstrates the notion of the "Orient" as a construction of European culture, an imposed description of generalised characteristics, which Europe's growing power over the centuries allowed it to impose on the Islamic regions. The doctrine, or ideology, of Orientalism built on Medieval fears of Moslem invasion and strangeness to become a self-perpetuating justification for Empire, as mentioned above in reference to Colonialism (p. 28 - 30). Orientalism became "the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorising views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism [is] a means of dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient" (1978: 49).

Said's text encouraged the growth of Post-colonial criticism both in the ex-colonies and the ex-colonial countries, but the projection of various pre-conceptions about the "Third World" onto its different communities continues. Sub-Saharan Africa has suffered from a similar range of controlling pre-conceptions to those foisted onto the Islamic world. Annie Coombes, for example, in her text *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture, and Popular Imagination*, describes how "Africa was uniformly reproduced through a series of tropes as a 'land of darkness', 'the white man's burden', peopled with savages of an inherently inferior order, both intellectually and morally, to the white coloniser" (1994: 2). These stereotypical images not only described the colonial relationship, but limited its definition to them, so that accepting the possession of culture by such "savages" became inconceivable. The discourse of colonialism thus excluded such cultural productions as Graphic Systems from the consciousness of the colonisers.

Even today, similar attitudes can be found. In a report on Liberia, *Time magazine* (July 28, 2003: 12) illustrated its report with a photograph captioned "A

government militiaman eats raw meat to prepare for battle" (see figure 2.1). However, the person in the photograph is not armed; he is accompanied by laughing children; and the meat in the colour photograph could as easily be cooked or pickled as raw. The rest of the report is more or less factual, but the use of a caption such as this panders to stereotypes of African "savagery" in a way that a less emotive or more illuminating treatment could have avoided.

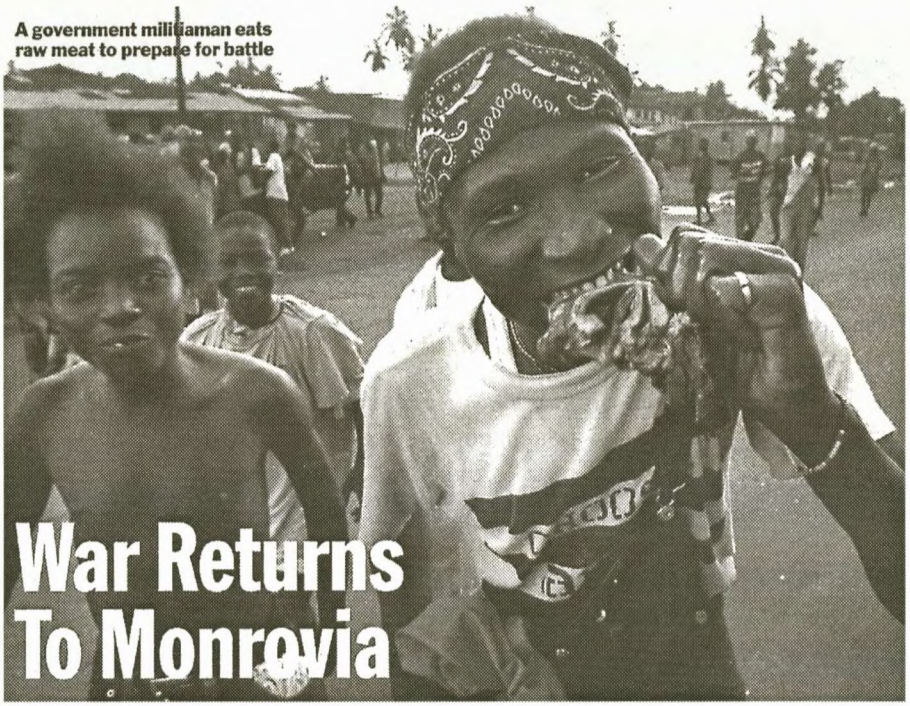

Figure 2.1. The use of images in order to reinforce prejudice towards Africa can still be found. (Time magazine July 28, 2003: 12)

The conceptual and cultural power of these discourses of domination and exclusion have made it extremely difficult for African cultural productions such as Graphic Systems to be taken seriously, until relatively recently.

Said's concept of Orientalism has also provided a means of interrogating less obvious facets of the Post-colonial relationship: "by bracketing the question of what may or may not be true about 'the Orient', Said opens for interrogation an extraordinary range of writing – 'not only scholarly works but also works

of literature, political tracts, journalistic texts, travel books, religious and philosophical studies" (Said quoted in Sim 1998: 329). In fact, it could be argued that anything which can constitute a 'text', in post-modern terms, i.e. any attempt at representation, may be deconstructed in terms of Postcolonialism as it developed from Said's work.

Post-colonialism has sought to encourage thinking independent of and yet equal to European intellectual norms. Ekpo's attitude, quoted on page 36, can be seen as an example. It also examines relative attitudes between cultural groups, however these may be defined, even within a country or society. In South Africa this could include: South African responses to the West, white peoples' attitude to blacks and vice versa, Afrikaners' attitudes toward English-speakers within South Africa and again vice versa, the views of Black people in America vis-a-vis Blacks in Africa, and so on.

For visual culture, and Graphic Design in particular, possibly the most relevant technique of Post-colonial cultural production that I have found is termed "Appropriation": adapting a cultural form or means of production derived from a colonial or First World society, such as the novel, the soap opera, the film, or the comic, as a means of establishing an independent culture, and/or criticising the relationship with the colonial originators (Ashcroft et al. 1998: 19 - 20). This latter function is important, as the term does not include those cultural productions from Post-colonial countries which merely imitate the originals.

Much Graphic Design in South Africa merely imitates "First World" examples, and so cannot be described as "appropriating" them for independent purposes. However, this project intended to use "First World" forms of Graphic

Design, such as the poster, and its computers, printers, software and other technological paraphernalia, in order to recover, publicise, and advocate African graphic systems. Thus it is hoped that the applied design work produced has contributed to these discourses of independence from and criticism of colonialism and Neo-colonialism.

Graphic Design, through such forms as advertising, comics, films, posters, TV programs, etc, could contribute to the "appropriation"of imported cultural forms, although this ideal is not yet popular in South Africa. It could be argued that Post-colonial theory has had some success in developing independent forms of culture in some countries, but it has clearly not yet succeeded anywhere in the establishment of an independent form of economy. This has to be seen as its major weakness.

COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE

This part of the Chapter discusses the nature of communication and culture and their interrelationship; in particular the relationship between visual communication and visual culture.

Communication

Communication is the purpose of Graphic Design. If effective communication does not happen, the design has failed. Graphic Design is a form of visual communication, and is sometimes referred to by that name. The nature of visual communication and communication itself must therefore be clarified first.

Communication in general has been described as a process that happens when one individual affects the world in some way, in such a way that another indi-

vidual is influenced, and understands the experience in a similar way to the first individual. The process has been compared to a process of **Transmission** or transportation; in that the message, information, effect on the world or experience is sent by a sender by some intervening medium to a receiver. This "transmission model" of communication was described by Lasswell as:–
"Who / says What / to Whom / through what Medium / with what Effect?" (Lasswell 1948, quoted in Grossberg et al. 1998: 17).

What is sent in the communication process is **Information** of some kind, which is taken for this study as:– a stimulus received by any of the senses, interpreted by the brain, and understood by the mind. This is a much broader sense than is used in electronics, where it refers to digital information in some electronic medium; or in the sense of consecutive verbal or textual communication.

Culture

The last essential element in communication is Culture. It is essential because the cultural context is what enables one person to understand another's message. For example, the Russian, or Cyrillic, script is not part of the common culture in South Africa so using it would be a waste of time for communication (see Figure 2.2).

Culture is notoriously difficult to define, and is the subject of a whole academic discipline, Cultural Studies. On a biological or palaeological level, Crosby has described culture as: "a system of storing and altering patterns of behaviour not in the molecules of the genetic code but in the cells of the brain. That change made [human beings] nature's foremost specialists in adaptability" (1986: 14). Various contributors to Cultural Studies have added their own definitions: Williams defined culture as including:–"the organisation of produc-

tion, the structure of the family, the structure of institutions which express or govern social relationships [and] the characteristic forms through which members of the society communicate" (Williams 1958, quoted in Sardar and van Loon: 1997: 5).

Figure 2.2. An example of Cyrillic text from a 1920s Russian poster. (Anikst 1987: 102)

The idea of culture used to be more or less synonymous with the ideas of 'civilisation', in that a 'cultured' person would uphold the 'civilised' values of that society – notions of honour, piety, right behaviour and manners, and so on. This sense of the word is connected to the notion of 'cultivation'; of consciously developing or improving the desired form of a plant or animal. Grossberg et al. give meanings for the word 'culture' that are more common today, particularly in disciplines such as Graphic Design (1998: 18 - 20). These include, firstly, that of the collection of creative and intellectual activities and products most valued by a society, and by which its members validate themselves; and, secondly, the idea of the whole way of life of a society, whether the activities, etc, that make this up are considered to be of great worth and value or not.

However, the first of these can be criticised for the arbitrariness of the defini-

tion of what constitutes 'the best': the principle of hegemony would suggest that generally it is set in any given society by those who are in power. This has led to the concept of "high culture" – fine arts, opera, classical music, serious live theatre, etc – which is produced by named individual artists, and is supposed to be of greater moral, creative, and intellectual worth than "popular culture" – films, television, sport, popular music, video and computer games, and so on – which are largely produced by anonymous employees of commercial corporations for profit. "High culture" has often been tied to the old notion of culture, to proclaim that a 'cultured' person must necessarily be familiar with and adhere to its norms.

The second notion of culture lends itself to geographical or national definitions: as in 'European' cultures, or 'Japanese' culture; or by referring to smaller groups within a society, such as 'West Indian' culture in the UK. These categories can be useful in setting boundaries to what is being studied, but they also raise the risk of harmful 'othering' of people thus defined.

There are considerable differences between the cultures of Western Europe as represented by the colonial and neo-colonial experiences and/or modern technological capitalism, and those of the Black peoples of Sub-Saharan Africa, whether pre-colonial or contemporary. Some simplified and generalised differences between the two types of cultures are suggested in Table 2.2. (p. 47). These are given in the way that I believe them to be popularly understood within the respective societies (not referring to views held in one society about the other), except for the separate section covering Western stereotypical (often derogatory) views of African/oral societies. The societies are described as "literate" and "oral", firstly because the dominant forces in Western culture depend heavily on alphabetic literacy and its technologies to establish and

CATEGORY	ORAL	LITERATE
	African	Western
Social emphasis	communal	individual
Perception of Knowledge in each society	potentially dangerous; qualified access	generally neutral; mostly beneficial freely available
Perceptions of Memory	mental internal human faculty	physical external technological faculty
Nature of Communication	multi-sensory live direct	visually biased recorded/ mediated indirect
Nature of Visual communication	fluid dynamic conceptual personal mnemonic rich/whole pictographic/ ideographic aids direct communication	fixed inert factual impersonal recorded reduced alphabetic/ syllabic replaces/supercedes direct communication
Socio-political labels (as applied by Western writers)	traditional tribal rural primitive pre-colonial	modern national urban developed colonial / post-colonial

Table 2.2. Some dualities between Oral and Literate Societies. (Carey 2003)

maintain both their control of subject cultures, and their sense of superiority over those cultures. This literacy is deeply embedded in Western colonial and neo-colonial culture. Secondly, most indigenous societies in sub-Saharan Africa maintained oral cultures, and used graphic systems in a contextual, discursive fashion that carried as precise and detailed information as alphabetic writing, but in which each sign is not limited to a single meaning.

Colonialism altered these cultures severely, but their relationship with alphabetic literacy is still looser than that of Western societies. The most significant contrasts between these cultures for this study deal with communication in general and visual communication in particular. These differences stem from the social emphasis in the societies, and the consequent relationship with particularly religious or spiritual knowledge, which is considered in oral societies to be intrinsically dangerous. Knowledge must be integrated beneficially into an oral society: an anti-social or individualistic person may even be considered to be using witchcraft in order to pursue their selfish ends. Thompson describes witchcraft as "a metaphor for selfish individualism and antisocial irresponsibility. The witch runs counter to the norms of co-operation, sharing and generosity" (1974: 209).

Such knowledge is mostly the preserve of respected elders in the group, who have been through the ascending stages of initiation into the mysteries of the group's history and culture. An example of the graphic means employed in such societies is the *Lukasa* or "Memory Board" of the Luba people of the Democratic Republic of Congo (See Figure 2.2). These are either inscribed with patterns of beads or carved with geometric patterns and occasionally pictographs in order to represent:

the spatial paradigm of the Luba royal court...[which] presents a mental geography that maps and orders the universe, the kingdom, human relations, and the mind. The physical and conceptual layout of the court encompasses the structure and order of Luba cosmology, while – like a conceptual pinball machine, – the beaded studs positioned upon it allow for the passages, contours, random excursions, exits, entrances, rebounds, ricochets and thresholds that characterise the active social processes of memory. (Roberts and Roberts, 1996: 41)

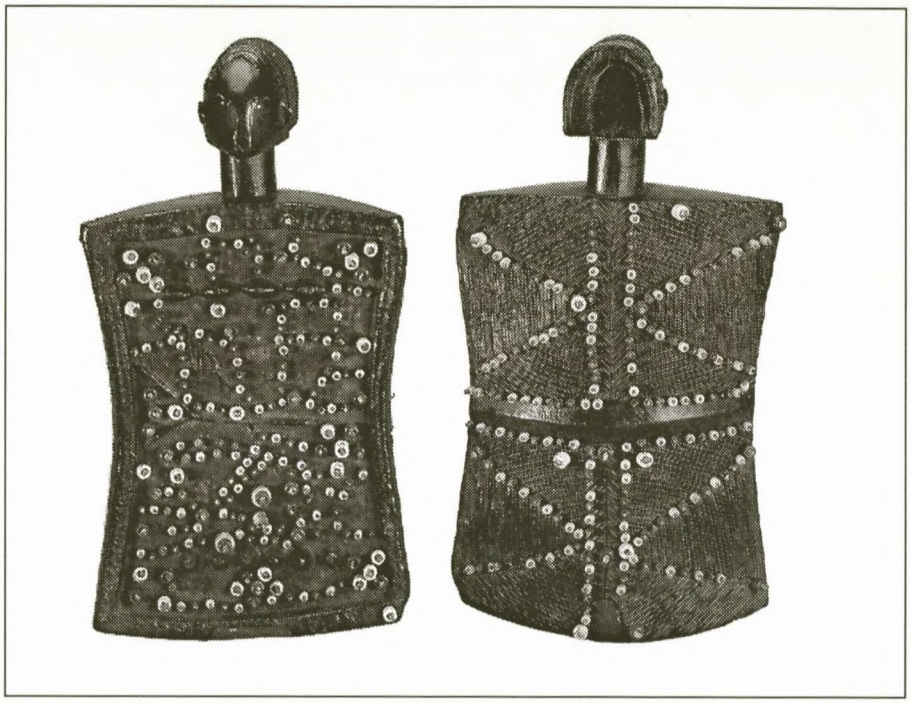

Figure 2.2. An example of a Lukasa or Memory Board made by the BaLuba of the DRC. (Nooter 1993: 55)

The beads or carved patterns on a *Lukasa* acquire meaning by their position in relation to other beads or marks, and such meaning is also contingent on the occasion of their 'reading', its location, the reader and his audience, and various other factors. Yet it is also a fixed record of what is held in memory, and in this sense can be considered just as much a text as a book. Roberts and Roberts (1996: 41) describe memory as "an art of negotiation and rhetoric, not an 'abstract presentation of truth'", but it may be more accurate to describe it as a contextual

truth formed from the ever-changing interrelationship between remembered events.

Graphic systems in oral societies generally function similarly: their truth is not fixed in the way that an alphabetic text is supposed to be, but a continuously contemporary process that overtly reinterprets history and knowledge for each event. In oral societies this kind of knowledge is often highly secret, and part of its communication serves to signal its secret and dangerous nature. In these circumstances, graphic signs must obviously *not* be easy for the uninitiated to understand. In some cases, this reasoning has meant that researchers from outside the society have also been unable to gain access to this sort of material. During the colonial period such sensitivities would have been scorned, but contemporary researchers feel that these beliefs should be respected, although there is a considerable risk that an outsider may misinterpret information that is sos specific to a particular unfamiliar culture.

These functional differences in the relationship between knowledge, communication and society have led to the development of different kinds of graphic systems at various times and places in Africa, but all still fall within the general category of Visual Communication.

Visual Communication

Visual Communication is simply all those forms of communication which take place primarily through the sense of sight. Thus, it is the basis of Graphic Design, but the term covers a far wider range than Western Graphic Design normally utilises. Visual means of the communication of meaning used in Africa include:– gesture, facial expressions and body language; dance, theatre or some other performed ritual; markings on the body such as tattooing, scar-

ification, or body paint; sculpture and other three-dimensional forms; symbolic use of colour and substances in clothing, jewellery and other forms of personal adornment; messages written, drawn or painted, and sent, by hand; and messages created and transmitted using some mechanical or electronic means (including printing, film and television). This project concentrates on the written, drawn and painted form, but reference is also made to others.

Direct visual communication can be defined for this study as functioning without any form of intervening media (whether manual, mechanical or electronic); in other words, in the physical presence of all participants, using the physical capabilities of the human body, and taking place in real time; i.e. not recorded in a fixed text. Indirect visual communication comprises those categories in which some intermediary technology is used. This may be something as simple as a piece of cloth or pencil and paper, or as complex as satellite TV transmissions.

Figure 2.3. Yoruba egungun representing a white couple. (Drewal, Pemberton, & Abiodun 1989: 180)

As can be seen from Figure 2.3, oral societies tend to favour direct forms of communication. Drewal, Pemberton, & Abiodun give the example of humorous or satirical *egungun* (Yoruba danced masquerades associated with ancestral rites) depicting white people: the man of the pair is shown as clutching a pen and message pad "in order to write messages to his lover, for writing, rather than dancing, is the mode of communication of the *oyinbo*, the white man" (1989: 180). The implication of this is that for the Yoruba, dance is the proper or normal way for people to communicate.

Graphic communication is a sub-category of visual communication which is limited to those indirect forms produced by the use of some form of marks on a surface; beginning with simple handmade marks, and now including complex forms of printing and the electronic 'marks' on the TV, computer or movie screen. What delimits the further sub-category of Graphic Design are those characteristics mentioned below.

Notions such as discourse, paradigms and hegemony, as detailed in the previous chapter, can be used in a discipline such as Graphic Design to analyse both actual examples and the criteria its practitioners have used in delimiting the field. Another approach is an examination of the function, or purpose, of material already included in a "canon" of approved works by authorities such as the US historian Philip Meggs. Functional criteria such as those set out in the Mission Statement of the Department of Graphic Design at the former Technikon Natal may also be applied (Andrews 1996: 1). One can then dovetail these approaches, and apply the resulting criteria to the African material for assessment.

Work included in histories of Graphic Design concentrates on the communication of information by visual means. It may achieve this communication by

representational, symbolic, pictographic, or typographic means, or some combination or variation of these. This information may have been recorded and transmitted to serve, as Katherine McCoy enumerates, "social, educational, cultural, spiritual, political or commercial needs" (1994: 111). Generally these categories cover the whole range of Graphic Design. The mission statement of the Department of Graphic Design at the former Technikon Natal further defined Graphic Design as existing "to inform, educate, entertain or persuade" (Andrews 1996: 1).

Further societal criteria may be suggested: 1) the work must accomplish its visual communication with its intended audience in order to be considered good or successful; 2) the work is mostly commissioned or intended to elicit commissions, and 3) is done with the expectation of reward. Nowadays this reward is almost always money, and this is where the emphasis on commerce is cemented: but in the past the reward might have been spiritual, social (for prestige or status), or in some other form. It is the contention of this study that the writing systems and systems of symbolic graphics described in the following chapters fulfill these criteria, and thus deserve study as part of the History and Theory of Graphic Design and Visual Communication in Africa.

A further example of the means by which Graphic Design may be analysed is by the discipline of **Visual Culture,** a critical theory that according to Barnard accepts the study of all visual material, as part of the visual environment, and thus worthy of study (1998: 10 - 31). It includes areas, styles, geographical regions or kinds of work that have been dismissed or ignored as trivial, tasteless, or otherwise inferior. These affect the viewer and express information about the society or culture in which both the visual phenomenon under discussion and the viewer exist. Any hierarchical structure of culture is removed.

The theory allows the study of all sorts of "cultural production" that would have been ignored by "High Culture", such as situation comedies on television, children's comics, the visual aspects of sport, and so on. It further removes the geographical bias towards the First World, by which elite notions of worth or beauty from those countries have been projected onto external situations.

Visual Culture tends to make use of techniques developed in Structuralist and Post-Structuralist linguistic philosophy, which have been central to Post-modernism. They have also occasionally been used in teaching Graphic Design since their introduction in the 1980s at Cranbrook College of Art in the USA, by Katherine and Michael McCoy; "centred around readings in post-Structuralist French literary theory and post-Modern art criticism. The emerging ideas emphasised the construction of meaning between the audience and the graphic design piece, a visual transaction that parallels verbal communication" (1990: 15). Although the layering and unconventional layouts that resulted rapidly became a superficial style in imitators' hands, the McCoys' efforts stimulated a re-examination of the relationship between designers and the public, the nature of visual communication, the subjectivity of both the production and consumption of Graphic Design and of the "authorial" position of both type and image, the relationship between "high" and "low" art, and other aspects of the Graphic Design process.

Semiotics

One of the most powerful tools in the analysis of examples of both visual communication and of visual culture is the concept and practice of Semiotics, the science of signs and sign systems or codes. The sign is a basic unit of meaning in communication, composed of two elements: the signifier, which is the mate-

rial aspect – the spoken sounds or the written combination of letters; and the signified, which is the mental concept to which the sound or marks refer. Neither refers to the real thing. If such exists with reference to a particular sign, it is called a referent. Cobley and Jansz give the example:

> If we take the word "dog" in English (made up of the signifiers /d/, /o/ and /g/), what is engendered for the hearer is not the "real" dog but a mental concept of "dogness": canine, quaduped, barks, has sharp teeth, buries bones... The "real" dog might be a Great Dane,...etc rather than a general dog. ...The mental concept of a dog need not necessarily be engendered by the signifier which consists of the sounds/d/, /o/, and /g/. In fact for French people the concept is provoked by the signifier "chien", while for Germans, the signifier "hund" does the same job. (1997: 11 - 13)

The cultural position of the signifier may also be important: to a Westernised family, "dog" might signify a friendly family pet, but for many black people in South Africa the same concept might signify a vicious threat.

Semiotics can also be used to analyse visual signs, but a semiotics of visual signs is generally one level more complex than linguistic semiotics, because a visual sign must be examined and understood first in terms of the language and culture from which it comes, and an analysis of the visual sign must take place on top of the analysis of the linguistic sign(s) to which it refers. To be successful, therefore, a semiotics of visual signs from another culture requires a detailed knowledge of the culture, language, fashions, and norms of the society in which the sign or sign system functions. Semiotics also assumes that all signs are linguistically mediated or understood, which is questionable.

In his classification, Fourie (1996) distinguishes between signs on the basis of the relationship between signifier and referent, as being Iconic, Indexical, Symbolic, or Arbitrary. An iconic sign is one which resembles what it stands for; an indexical one is related to what it stands for by association, e.g. lightning and speed, or by cause, such as smoke signifying fire; while a symbolic sign has a conventional link with the referent, e.g "=" for "is equal to", or the cross symbolising Christianity. Symbols owe their meanings to the history and culture of their society, and represent the essence or idea of a thing or typify it. Finally, an arbitrary sign is one where there is no iconic or causal link between signifier and referent, simply one which is agreed in the society. Linguistic signs typify this category (40 - 43).

Lester gives a further series of critical "perspectives" for analysing Visual Communication and Graphic Design:–

a. Personal: a gut reaction to the work based on subjective opinions.

b. Historical: the importance of the work based on the medium's time line. (i.e. its historical significance for its medium or field)

c. Technical: the relationship between light, the recording medium used to produce the work, and the presentation of the work [i.e. how well it utilises the technology and the light by which we perceive the work].

d. Ethical: the moral and ethical responsibilities that the producer, the subject, and the viewer have of the work.

e. Cultural: an analysis of the symbols used in the work that convey meaning within a particular society at a particular time.

f. Critical: the issues that transcend a particular image and shape a reasoned personal reaction. (2000: 94 - 97)

Analysis of visual material has also had a long tradition within the History of Art: one of the most useful approaches for Graphic Design is Erwin Panofsky's version of **Iconography**, "the study of the meanings of images" (Fernie 1995: 345). According to Fernie, Panofsky analyses iconography theoretically and thereby relates it to sign theory or Semiotics. He describes Panofsky's categorisation of visual material into three levels of meaning:

> The primary /natural /pre-iconographic level involves description which ...requires a minimum amount of specialised knowledge. The secondary /conventional /iconographic level involves a greater degree of specificity, with identifications and labels. The intrinsic/symbolical/iconological level is less specific than the other two, and involves establishing the meaning which inheres in the overall character of the work . (1995: 345)

This approach has been limited to Fine-Art subject matter, but it can still be usefully applied to pictorial aspects of Graphic Design (see Figure 2.4).

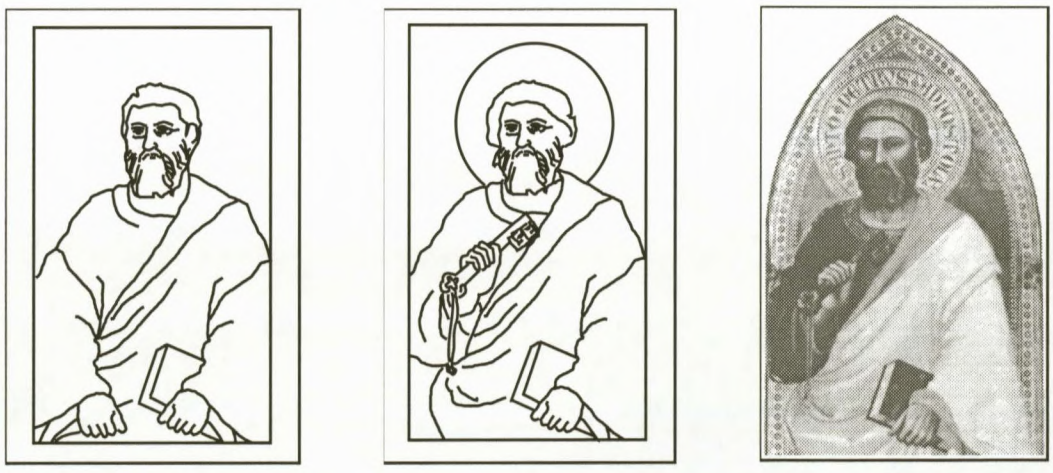

Figure 2.4. Iconography: Examples of Panovsky's three levels of iconography: a figure of a man; a figure of a man with a halo, and holding keys, which indicates that he represents St Peter; and a painting of St Peter in a particular style, indicating the character of an artist, society or age. Adapted from Fernie, 1995: 345. Picture: St Peter, by Nardo di Cione . (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1978: ***14****, 154)*

These theories and discourses provide an overview of some means available for analysing works of Graphic Design as well as other visual disciplines. They may be applied equally to the material collected in the course of this project, which is discussed in the next Chapter.

Notes

1. The "Subject" here means the individual.

2. The term West European culture here includes its colonial or ex-colonial offshoots, particularly the USA and the white Commonwealth members.

3. The terms 'Bushmen' or 'Bushman' are used without any derogatory intent, and in a sense that recognises that alternatives such as 'San' or 'Khoisan' may also be considered inappropriate.

4. The concept of the 'Other', as mentioned before, refers to: "those who are excluded from positions of power, and are often victimised within a predominantly liberal humanist view of the 'subject'...the 'Other' in this context are homosexuals, women, the clinically insane, non-whites and prisoners"(Sim 1998: 181). By 'liberal humanist', Sim seems to mean that post-Enlightenment modernist 'individual' condemned by radical critics as the source of the division of the world into 'the self' and 'the other'.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY OF THE PROJECT AND THEORY OF GRAPHIC SYSTEMS

This Chapter discusses the methodologies used for the historical research, and the theory of writing systems and systems of symbolic graphics. Contemporary political boundaries rarely parallel cultural links, and so have been used as a means of describing the location only of a system or culture. Both visual examples and textual material dealing with these systems have been collected largely by means of searches of libraries, databases and internet references. A number of potentially useful documents remained unobtainable within South Africa, such as Griaule and Dieterlen's pioneering work *Signes Graphiques Soudanaises* (1951, Paris, Cahiers de l'Homme).

A search of the National Research Foundation (NRF)'s database of higher qualification projects did not show any other South African researchers working in this field (http://www.hsrc.nc.za/nexus.html) The only other writer on this material from a Graphic Design perspective who could be located in the Southern African region is the Zimbabwean Graphic Designer Saki Mafundikwa. Although his Yale University Master's Thesis on African writing systems was unobtainable, his website (www.ziva.org.zw) provided brief references to some twenty systems. His website gives sample characters of seven systems, all of which he refers to as writing. One of his examples has been excluded because it is a system developed by the Djuka people of Surinam in South America, a group of West African origin. The remaining two systems referred

to were unfamiliar: the Bambara "Ma-sa-ba" script, which Mafundikwa reproduces, and the Gerze script, which is not illustrated. Reference sources are not given. Mafundikwa is in the process of publishing his work as "Afrikan Alphabets", due to be published in September 2003[1].

Amongst the other websites that deal with material relevant to this project, that put up by the African Writing Systems project in collaboration with the John Henrik Clarke Africana Library at Cornell University is possibly the widest-ranging (http://www.library.cornell.edu.africana/Writing_ Systems. html.). This website, under the editorship of Ayele Bekerie, gives information on three varieties of the Ethiopic script, and on the Mende, Vai, and Bamum (Shumom) systems, as well as on *Nsibidi* signs. Illustrations of these systems are given, but no information to add to that covered in detail in Dalby (1967, 1968, and 1969) for Mende and Vai, Dugast and Jeffries (1950) or Schmitt (1963) for the Bamum, or Thompson (1974 and 1983) for *Nsibidi*. It also presents examples of the bark drawings of the Wabuti of the DRC, again without analysis.

An important intermediate stage in the project was the translation of documents from other languages, particularly French. Former imperial languages remain the commonest medium of expression for African researchers, and for some regions very few publications are in English. Translation is thus vital when dealing with research referring to former French-controlled areas of West Africa, for example. Generally, more material was published about Francophone former colonies than about Anglophone ones, although the reasons for this are not clear. Fortunately, my own knowledge of the French language enabled me to identify which documents to have translated, but where documents were in another language such as German or Italian, their possible relevance could not be assessed, and thus it was not possible to use them.

Once the documents were translated, relevant visual material was collated, according to language or culture groups. Sometimes this was straightforward, as for example with the Luchazi systems, which were covered with in a single document (Kubik 1987). However, the material on the *Nsibidi* symbols from the Cameroon/Nigerian border,was gathered from several different documents[2]. During the course of this research, large numbers of symbols for both these systems could be found. Sadly, in other cases, such as the Royal Emblems of the Fon, only a few relevant examples could be located. Generally it was not clear whether the examples found were the only signs used by that people, whether they were the only ones collected, or the only ones reproduced.

When classifying signs or symbols by peoples, one of the most troublesome problems is that of nomenclature, as the names of peoples and their graphic systems can be rendered in a number of different ways in the literature:

1) The identity of a people may be changeable and unclear. The concept of a 'tribe' as understood in Western culture, can be inaccurate when describing the culture of groups of people. One author may include several groups under the umbrella of one 'tribe', whereas another, writing about the same people, would describe them as separate. For example, Willett refers simply to the "Bakuba" (1971: 8), whereas Faik-Nzuji discusses this group under nine separate names before mentioning their relationship (1992: 139).

2) Grammatical structure: many sub-Saharan languages, the Niger-Congo or "Bantu" languages in particular, construct related nouns and other parts of speech from a common root form, by adding prefixes and/or suf-

fixes, depending on the desired meaning. Thus from the root 'Zulu', the Zulu-language term for that people is 'amaZulu', and for their language is 'isiZulu'. South Africans may know this particular construction, but names in less familiar languages are likely to be confusing, particularly when the root form, the plural or singular constructions of the name of the people, or the form for the language may be used.

3) When the name of a people is rendered into one of the colonial languages, that orthography is used; i.e. its conventions for rendering sounds into letters. The orthographies of English, French, German and Portuguese differ considerably, and so the name of a particular group may appear quite different if written by an English, French or German-speaking author. For example: Dos Santos, writing in Portuguese, refers to the "Quiocos", where most English speaking authors refer to the "Chokwe" of Angola (Dos Santos quoted in Kubik 1987: 262). Orthographies also change over time. In the Nineteenth Century, it was common to see "Zulu" written "Zooloo", and although this is easy to understand, Willett's reference to the Chokwe as "BaJokwe" is less so (1971: 8).

4) Related peoples may also have similar, but slightly differing names given to them by different authors: in West Africa, there are peoples and/or languages confusingly described as Manding, Mandinka, Mandingo, Maninka, Minyanka, Malinke, Mande, and Mende; some of which are alternate names for the same group. The *Encyclopedia Africana* gives "Mande" as the overall language group, with "Manding", "Mandingue" and "Mandekan" as synonyms; and "Mandinka" (with synonyms "Malinké" and "Mandingo") and "Mende" as separate languages within the group (Gates and Appiah, eds. 1999: 1242 - 1245).

5) Graphic systems, if used by a number of different 'tribes', may be referred to as belonging to any one, and so I had to check references to all of them. The *Nsibidi* signs are referred to by different authors as the invention of variously the Ejagham or Ekoi, the Igbo (or Ibo), the Efut, and the Ibibio/Efik, or as common to any combination of them.

6) They may also be referred to by the name given to them in the language of the people concerned: again, the Ejagham people refer to their sign system as *Nsibidi*, and it is mostly referred to as such in the literature.

7) It is also possible that a given people may use several systems, which may be of more than one type.

The next stage was the functional classification of the signs and systems: that is, how they carry meaning. Marks on a surface may be too complex or individualistic to be included in systems, either in terms of their physical representation or their conceptual nature. In general, they may convey meaning in any of the following ways.

Amongst the different forms of mark are the following:

a) Representational: attempts to show the subject in as "realistic" a way as possible. What constitutes "realistic" varies from culture to culture, and versions of this attempt have comprised a large proportion of what has come to be seen as "Art" over the centuries (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1. Representational:
This San image of eland is a closely observed depiction of individual animals, produced by someone closely familiar with them, and to whom eland were central to their culture. Despite the symbolic beliefs regarding eland, this is a "realistic" representation.
(Carey 2003)

b) Symbolic: simplifies the subject as the process of symbolisation develops, and emphasises features that are important to the culture. This leads to purely symbolic representation, but is generally still not systematic, i.e. the same "subject" may be represented in different ways (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2. Symbolic:
A heraldic image of a lion like this is not intended to be representational; rather it symbolises a range of beliefs to do with royalty, "Englishness", and/or "nobility" for the English and other European cultures.
(Lyon et al. 1969: front cover)

c) Pictographic: utilises a simplified and standardised representation of an object. Many Egyptian hieroglyphs are good examples. Once the idea of standard representations of concepts takes hold in a culture, systems can be elaborated to include numerous individual signs (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3. Pictographic:
These San pictographs show trancing shamans, represented according to conventions of simplification and depiction common in San art. They show no individualisation of figures, and very stylised representation of faces.
(Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989: 40)

d) Ideographic: represents an idea or abstract concept. Often functions as a "mnemonic" or memory-aid for a range of related concepts, whose connections may not be immediately clear, either within the culture or to outsiders. Such ideographs are often performed: that is, some initiated person uses them in a live enactment of the concepts dealt with by the signs (Figure 3.4 below).

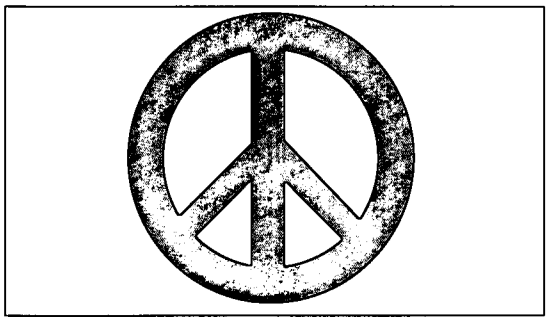

Figure 3.4. Ideographic:
The "Peace Symbol" was in fact designed as a logo for the British Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, but it has come to represent a range of ideas summed up in its popular name.
(Redrawn Carey 2003)

e) Rebuses: pictograms combined to produce a new sign for a word with an unrelated meaning, but which sounds the same as the words represented by the original pictograms, or which is made up of the initial sounds of those words. Rebuses are also often used for abstract concepts, and may indicate the beginning of a phonographic, i.e. linguistic emphasis. An imaginary example of this would be the use of a pictograph for "sea", followed by one for "sun", which would then mean "season" (Figure 3.5).

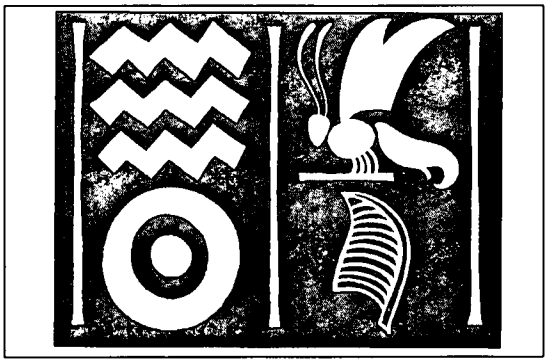

Figure 3.5. Rebus:
A Rebus combines simple pictographs to represent more complex or abstract concepts that use similar sounds. These hypothetical examples combine "sea" and "sun" to show "season"; and "bee" and "leaf" to show "belief".
(Meggs 1998: 18)

f) Logograms: represent whole single words, but not necessarily in a specific language (Figure 3.6).

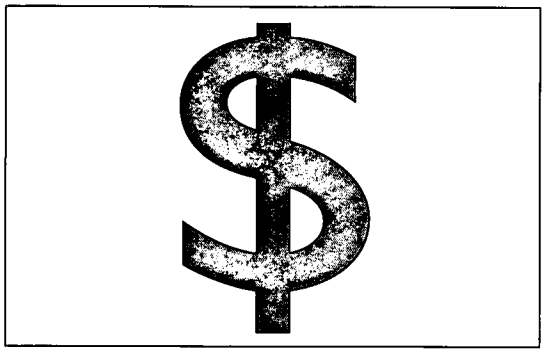

Figure 3.6. Logograms:
Logograms represent a whole word in a single sign: this sign represents the word "dollar". Much of the Chinese writing system is composed of such signs. Their meaning is independent of the language that uses them.
(Carey 2003)

g) Phonographs: represent sounds, and are combined to represent meanings in a specific language. Individual phonographs, like the Roman letters, therefore tend to be meaningless until combined into written words. Phonographic systems include such subdivisions as syllabaries, abjads, abugidas and alphabets (see Daniels 1996: 4 and Figure 3.7).

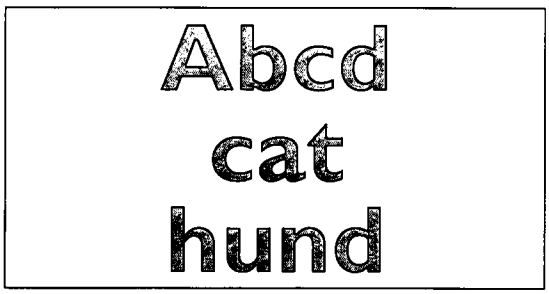

Figure 3.7. Phonograms:
As they represent sounds, letters of the Roman alphabet and other phonograms depend for meaning on being assembled into recognisable words in a specific language. such words are mostly not comprehensible in other languages.
(Carey 2003)

Many cultures combine a number of these categories to represent meaning, for example the graphic language of Western society uses pictograms as company logos or religious symbols; alphabets; rebuses, and so on, all together. Individual graphic symbols may be invented in isolation, to express some important concept within a culture, but more often they form standardised systems of

signs or symbols, which represent meanings in a conventionalised way within the society. All such individual signs communicate, but they can only be considered as elements of a visual language if part of a system.

In this study, up to five criteria have been used to describe graphic systems:

i) the language classification of the people or peoples who developed a system, as one means of understanding cultural and historical relationships between systems and peoples;

ii) the functional relationship with language and meaning: i.e. whether it carries meaning primarily through language or independently of it;

iii) formal or aesthetic qualities;

iv) the materials and substrates used, where available;

v) the system's primary role in the society: religious, political, cultural, etc.

The functional classification distinguishes between linguistic and non-linguistic systems. Writers on this subject such as Daniels and Bright (1996) Dalby (1967, 1968, 1969) have generally concentrated on writing systems, while others such as Roberts and Roberts (1996) and Thompson (1974 and 1983) have emphasised the aesthetic or anthropological aspects of the non-linguistic systems, with few attempts at an overall classification.

Gaede (1998) refers to the typology proposed by Pettersen for languages used in mass communication:

> audial language – expressions based on sound
>
> verbal language – expressions based on words, which may be either written (lexigraphic), or spoken (oral)
>
> visual language – expressions based on sight (1998: 47).

However, Gaede's example, of the pictures in a newspaper constituting the 'visual' element, and the text the 'verbal', could lead to confusion in that both elements in print are in fact visual. A clearer distinction for graphic designers might have been between the 'pictorial' and the 'typographic'; or between Dalby's 'textual/linguistic' and contextual/non-linguistic'. Gaede continues with a further apparent confusion from Barry (quoted in Gaede 1998: 47) where he describes the development from Egyptian hieroglyphs to the Roman alphabet as showing that "an evolution of abstraction can be demonstrated in language": what they actually do is show abstraction in the *representation* of language in graphic form, not in the language itself.

Dalby proposes a different "terminological hierarchy" to cover "the whole range of graphic symbols from pictograms to alphabetic characters and diacritics" (1967: 2 - 3), which seems more appropriate to this study. His primary division is between individual Graphic Symbols and Graphic Systems. These are then subdivided as shown in Table 3.1.

Dalby's typology has to be amended, however, by more recent work on writing systems. Daniels and Bright point out that the concept of an "ideogram" should not be used in discussing linguistic, i.e. writing, systems, because in these systems a character has a specific word-meaning in the language (1997: 9). This project suggests that it is however still valid for non-linguistic systems in view of the wide range of connected ideas that such a symbol may signify, which may not all be summed up in a single word.

Graphic Symbols
1. pictograms /2. ideograms a) isolated b) as elements in a graphic system 3. syllabic characters a) primary characters b) secondary (derived) characters 4. alphabetic characters (consonantal or vocalic) a) primary b) secondary 5. diacritics (phonetic or tonal)
Graphic Systems
1. contextual (non-linguistic) systems: two-dimensional arrangement 2. textual (linguistic) systems or 'scripts': linear arrangement a) non-phonetic (i) pictographic/ideographic b) phonetic (ii) syllabic (iii) alphabetic c) mixed

Table 3.1. Dalby's Typology of Graphic Symbols and Systems (Dalby 1967:3)

For example, Faik-Nzuji refers to a sign that refers to "private property, individuality" (1996: 95). To a Western mind these ideas may not be closely linked, and no further information is given. But given Thompson's comment's on individualism in Chapter 2 (p. 48), and that Faik -Nzuji gives two other signs that refer to wealth (1996: 84 and 127) it seems likely that the first sign is dealing with negative connotations of wealth and property. This range of meaning cannot be summed up in a single English word, so "ideogram" seems an accurate categorisation (see Figure 3.8).

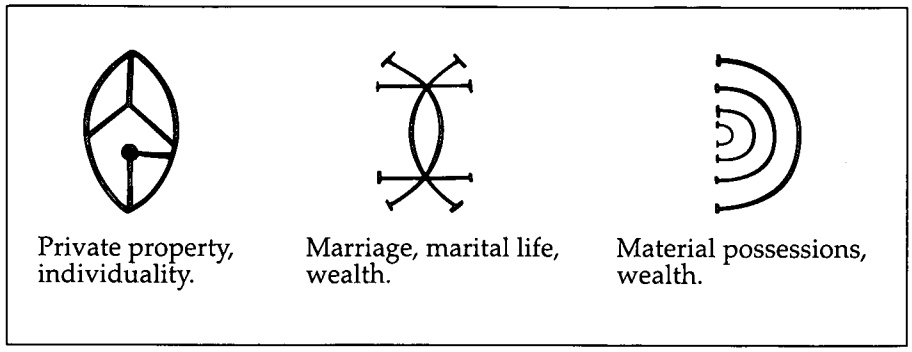

Figure 3.8. Examples of Nsibidi ideographs. (Faik-Nzuji 1996: 95, 84, 127).

A non-linguistic graphic system, or system of symbolic graphics, is defined by Dalby as a series of graphic marks representing various meanings without expressing them in the words or sounds of the language concerned (1968: 159). Thus the language of the system's users is not vital to understanding, although their culture and belief system may be even more so, in order that conceptual links may be understood.

These systems typically refer to the cultural and religious beliefs of the society, in the broadest sense: including their understanding of what Western people would call knowledge, cosmology, history, science, law, art, politics, in fact most of the factors that affect or make up human society. The signs are standardised, in that the sign is drawn the same way every time, and conventionalised, in that the design of the sign is agreed and understood by the system's initiates; but not all systems attempt to represent everything, and so they don't generally apply the sort of systematic logic that a linguistic system attempts.

A writing system, or linguistic graphic system, is defined as a system of graphic marks used to convey a spoken language, using marks or signs that represent sounds and thus meaning in that language. Writing systems are primarily intended to represent a whole language – its grammar, pronunciation, and

so on; and so depend on an understanding of that language (Daniels 1996: 3).

This is the case even when the same alphabet or series of marks is used for different languages. The characters of the Roman alphabet, for example, can now be read and seen as separate from the cultural milieu in which they developed. Each represents one sound at a time, (although each letter may represent different sounds in different contexts) and it is only when they are correctly assembled into syllables, words and sentences that they can convey meaning. The individual letters, taken individually, are thus truly abstract: they are meaningless out of context. This is not the case with a pictographic or even a syllabic system as many of the symbols represent not only words or concepts, but a whole network or web of relationships between concepts.

Neither category can be said to be "better" than the other, only more or less abstract. This study follows the view of Albertine Gaur –

> All writing is information storage... If all writing is information storage, then all writing is of equal value. Each society stores the information essential to its survival, the information which enables it to function effectively. There is in fact no essential difference between prehistoric rock paintings, memory aids (mnemonic devices), wintercounts, tallies, knotted cords, pictographic syllabic and consonantal scripts, or the alphabet. There are no primitive scripts, no forerunners of writing, no transitional scripts as such..., but only societies at a particular level of economic and social development using certain forms of information storage. (1984: 14).

Functionality, or fitness for purpose, is affected by simplicity or flexibility: The fact that only twenty six letters may represent the languages of Western Europe is sometimes used to suggest that the Roman alphabet is superior to more

lengthy systems. However, in English alone, the alphabet does not have anything like a rational or logical orthography: the syllable "ough" can be pronounced in at least eight different ways according to the word context in which it is used (see Table 3.2).

Different pronunciations of the written syllable "ough":	
written word	rhyme
cough	off
tough	buff
bough	cow
through	too
thorough	uh
thought	saw
dough	blow
lough	loch

Table 3.2. Inconsistencies in English pronunciation. (Carey 2003)

There are in any case considerably more than 26 letters involved in expressing meaning in the Roman alphabet. Upper and lower case letters and Roman and Italic versions of many characters are of sufficiently different design to pose considerable recognition problems for those learning to use the system, to say nothing of the huge visual differences between typefaces. If the Roman alphabet was truly phonetic, i.e. there was a one-to-one correspondence between sound and written character, it would not be possible to write any European language with just the twenty-six letters, as the International Phonetic Alphabet makes clear (see Table 3.3).

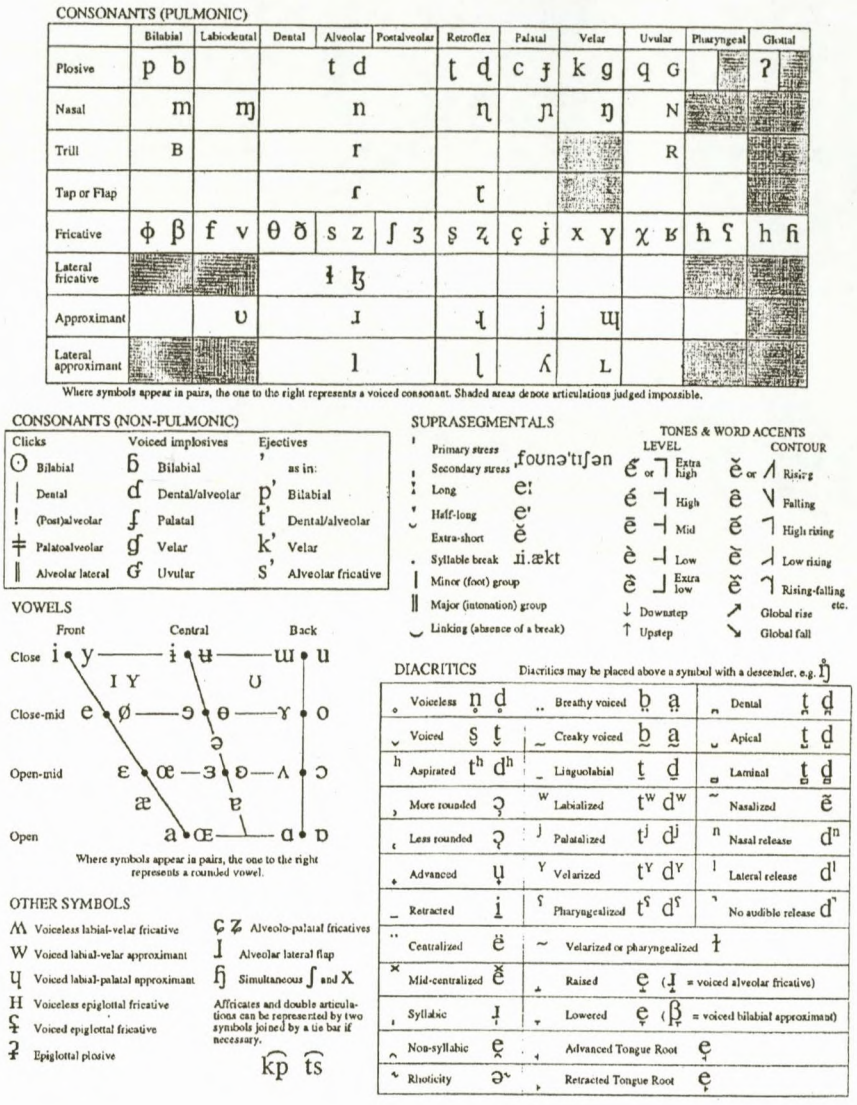

Table 3.3. The International Phonetic Alphabet. (Daniels and Bright 1996 : endpapers)

Writing African languages must also deal with the frequent inadequacy of the Roman alphabet for representing the full range of sounds and tones that the spoken languages utilise, many of which do not occur in European languages. Accordingly, letters and various accents and other diacritical marks must be added to the character list in order to represent the languages fully.

A number of writers and organisations have attempted to solve these issues by

devising viable writing systems based on the Roman alphabet and/or the standard typewriter/ computer keyboard. Examples include the Africa alphabet, first published in 1930 by the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures (IIALC) in London, and the Pan-Nigerian alphabet, devised in the 1980s by the German typographer Hermann Zapf (see Tables 3.4 and 3.5).

Roman.	*Italic.*	*Written Forms.*	*Roman.*	*Italic.*	*Written Forms.*
a A	*a A*	*a a*	l L	*l L*	*l l*
b B	*b B*	*b B*	m M	*m M*	*m m*
ɓ Ɓ	*ɓ Ɓ*	*ɓ ɓ*	n N	*n N*	*n n*
c C	*c C*	*c C*	ŋ Ŋ	*ŋ Ŋ*	*ŋ ŋ*
d D	*d D*	*d D*	o O	*o O*	*o o*
ɖ Ɖ	*ɖ Ɖ*	*ɖ or d D*	ɔ Ɔ	*ɔ Ɔ*	*ɔ ɔ*
e E	*e E*	*e e*	p P	*p P*	*p p*
ɛ Ɛ	*ɛ Ɛ*	*ɛ ɛ*	r R	*r R*	*r or ɾ ʀ*
ə Ə	*ə ə*	*ə ə*	s S	*s S*	*s or ſ ſ*
f F	*f F*	*f f*	ʃ Σ	*ʃ Σ*	*ſ ſ*
ʃ Ƒ	*ʃ Ƒ*	*ſ f*	t T	*t T*	*t t*
g G	*g G*	*g g*	u U	*u U*	*u u*
ɣ Ɣ	*ɣ Ɣ*	*ɣ ɣ*	v V	*v V*	*v V or ν U*
h H	*h H*	*h h*	ʋ Ʊ	*ʋ Ʊ*	*ɤ ʊ or ʋ ʊ*
x X	*x X*	*x x*	w W	*w W*	*w w*
i I	*i I*	*i i*	y Y	*y Y*	*y y*
j J	*j J*	*j j*	z Z	*z Z*	*z z*
k K	*k K*	*k k*	ʒ Ʒ	*ʒ Ʒ*	*ʒ ʒ*

Table 3.4. The Africa Alphabet.
(Coulmas 1996: 3)

à b ɓ c d ɗ e ə ẹ́ f g

À B Ɓ C D Ɗ E Ǝ Ẹ́ F G

h i î ị́ j k ƙ l m n ò ọ

H I Î Ị J K Ƙ L M N Ò Ọ

p r s ṣ t û ụ̄ v w y z

P R S Ṣ T Û Ụ̄ V W Y Z

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 ₦

[. , : ; (& ' " * ' " %) — - ! ?]

Table 3.5. The Pan-Nigerian Alphabet, as used for Hausa.
Designed by Hermann Zapf. (Coulmas 1996: 197)

Coulmas describes the limitations of the standard keyboard as having been a major factor in the failure of the former to achieve wide acceptance (1996: 2), but makes no comment on the success of the latter other than to say that the Hausa language "is now written" using this font (1996: 196 - 197). The continuing relevance of this question is indicated in a number of contemporary websites dealing with either the special letters used in various African languages, or the related problem of typesetting these languages.

At the African Studies Center web-page of the University of Pennsylvania (http://www. sas.upenn.edu/African_Studies/Lang_Courses/African_Writing_10203.html), Ali-Dinar describes continuing research into special characters used. Most of those mentioned are to be found in either the IIALC system or the Pan-Nigerian, although Ali-Dinar writes as though unaware of both. Taylor, in a review of his report on the subject, describes his work on the specific question of typesetting African languages, and the varying levels of difficulty in doing this, ranging from languages that can be typeset with standard fonts to examples like the Ethiopic script which require entire purpose-designed fonts (http://www.ideography.co.uk/library/afrolingua.html).

A pictographic system does not have to deal with these problems. The meaning of the symbols can be understood by someone with no knowledge of the writer's spoken language, although the context, overtones, and the sense of this meaning may not be clear if the reader has no knowledge of the writer's culture. The farther apart the writer and reader are in cultural terms, the more of an obstacle this will be.

Where pictographs are used to represent a limited number of concepts, they

may be easier to use than an alphabet, but the large character set required to show the whole range of concepts in a culture or language, becomes extremely unwieldy. The Egyptian hieroglyphic system, for example, had over seven hundred different characters (Meggs 1998: 13).

Another factor affecting fitness for purpose is the relationship between accuracy and standardisation: Pictographs do not represent sequence in a standardised way: phonographic systems normally have a standard direction of writing – e.g. from left to right, from right to left, from top to bottom, or boustrophedon (writing in different directions on alternate lines). Standardised writing and reading directions, combined with the link first with sound and only then with meaning, allow alphabets to convey meaning in a precise, repeatable, way that pictographs cannot. If this precise repeatability is accepted as the most important criterion for the value of a system, then alphabetic systems can be accepted as superior, but if any other purpose (such as, for example, the social enactment of a "text", in societies like the BaLuba of the DRC) is prioritised, then this superiority can be questioned.

Notes.

1. It has not been possible to date to see more than a brief review of the book at the website of the publisher, Mark Batty. (http://www.markbattypublisher.com/ servlet /book_ view?number=9)

2. Dalby, D. 1968. "The Indigenous Scripts of West Africa and Surinam: Their Inspiration and Design", in *African Language Studies*, **9.** pp 156 - 197. London: University of London. Faik-Nzuji, C. M. 1992. *Symboles graphiques en Afrique noire.* Louvain-la-Neuve: CILTADE; and 1996. *Tracing Memory.* Hull (Canada): Canadian Museum of Civilisation. Thompson, R. F. 1974. *African Art in Motion.* Los Angeles: University of California Press; and 1983. *Flash of the Spirit.* New York: Vintage.

CHAPTER 4:
A SURVEY OF GRAPHIC SYSTEMS IN AFRICA.

This Chapter consists of a survey which I developed of a number of writing systems and systems of symbolic graphics in Africa. This survey is made up of maps showing the locations of the system, and tables showing their relationships with the language groups that use or have used them, the locations of those language groups, the linguistic or non-linguistic function of each system, and the reference sources from which the information on each was collected. It is followed by Chapters 5 and 6, which are made up of commentary on selected examples of representative systems of the two functional types. The project has been limited in this way because of the large quantity of reference material found in the course of this research, which made it impossible to cover in detail all the systems found.

Societies at all levels of development have developed complex systems of graphic signs and symbols, both linguistic and non-linguistic, throughout Africa and throughout history. Some systems have been in continuous use for hundreds if not thousands of years, such as the Ethiopic script from Ethiopia (Haile 1996: 569 - 576), while others may not have been widely used even within their own societies, for example the Bété system from Cote d'Ivoire (Coulmas 1996: 44). The survey has included both historical and contemporary systems.

The maps that I prepared show the approximate locations of the language

groups which have produced the various systems: Map 1 (Figure 4.1, p. 80) covers the non-linguistic systems, and Map 2 (Figure 4.2, p. 81) locates the linguistic types.

As can be seen from Map 1, non-linguistic systems, or systems of symbolic graphics, are numerous and widely spread across Sub-Saharan Africa. It is also likely that other systems exist in areas where none are marked. This ubiquity is not surprising. Jung's view is that humanity "produces symbols unconsciously and spontaneously", and that "all religions employ symbolic language or images" (1964: 21). Most societies have systematised such imagery over time.

The category of non-linguistic systems includes graphic systems that fulfill a wide variety of symbolic functions. As described in Chapter 5, they may describe events on levels ranging from humorous daily events via legal and political functions to the most solemn cosmological concepts (p. 93 - 96). They also vary from numerically very small – the Fon Royal emblems number about a dozen – to hundreds of characters, in the case of the pictographic systems of the Bamum of Cameroon.

Map 2 details the locations of the linguistic systems. It shows that such systems are much more unevenly distributed. The reasons for this vary, but systems in this category are either very ancient or comparatively recent. For examples, Egyptian hieroglyphs have been dated to c. 3100 BC (Ritner 1996:73); the Tifinagh alphabet of the Touareg to c. 200 BC (O'Connor: 1996: 113); and the Ethiopic script, to c. 350 AD (Haile 1996: 571). Most of the West African scripts, on the other hand, date to the colonial period (Dalby 1967, 1968, 1969).

Map 1.
Locations of Graphic Systems
Non-Linguistic
(Pictographic/Ideographic)

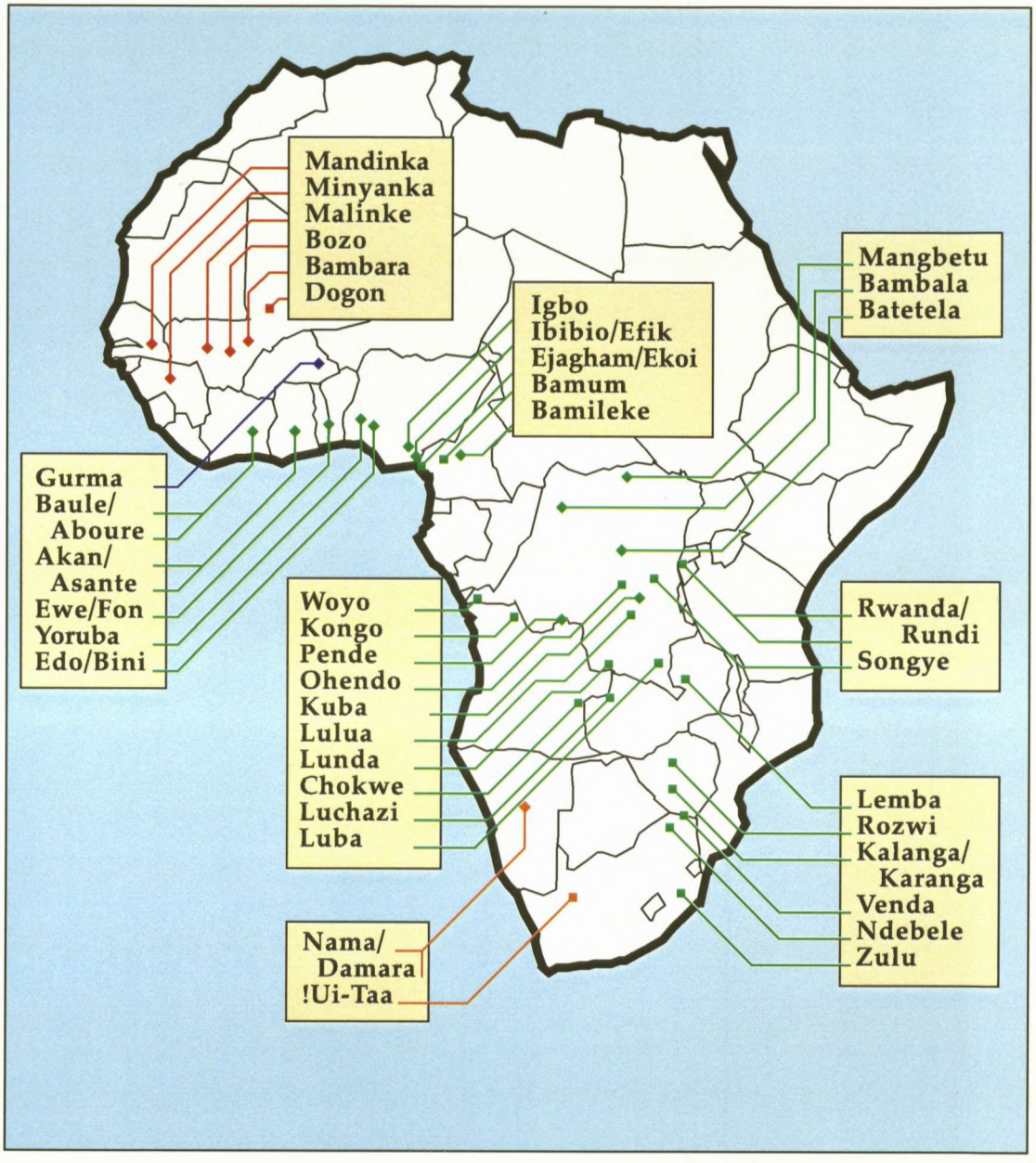

Figure 4.1: Map 1 – Non-linguistic Graphic Systems (Carey 2003)

Map 2.
Locations of Graphic Systems Linguistic (Syllabic/Alphabetic)

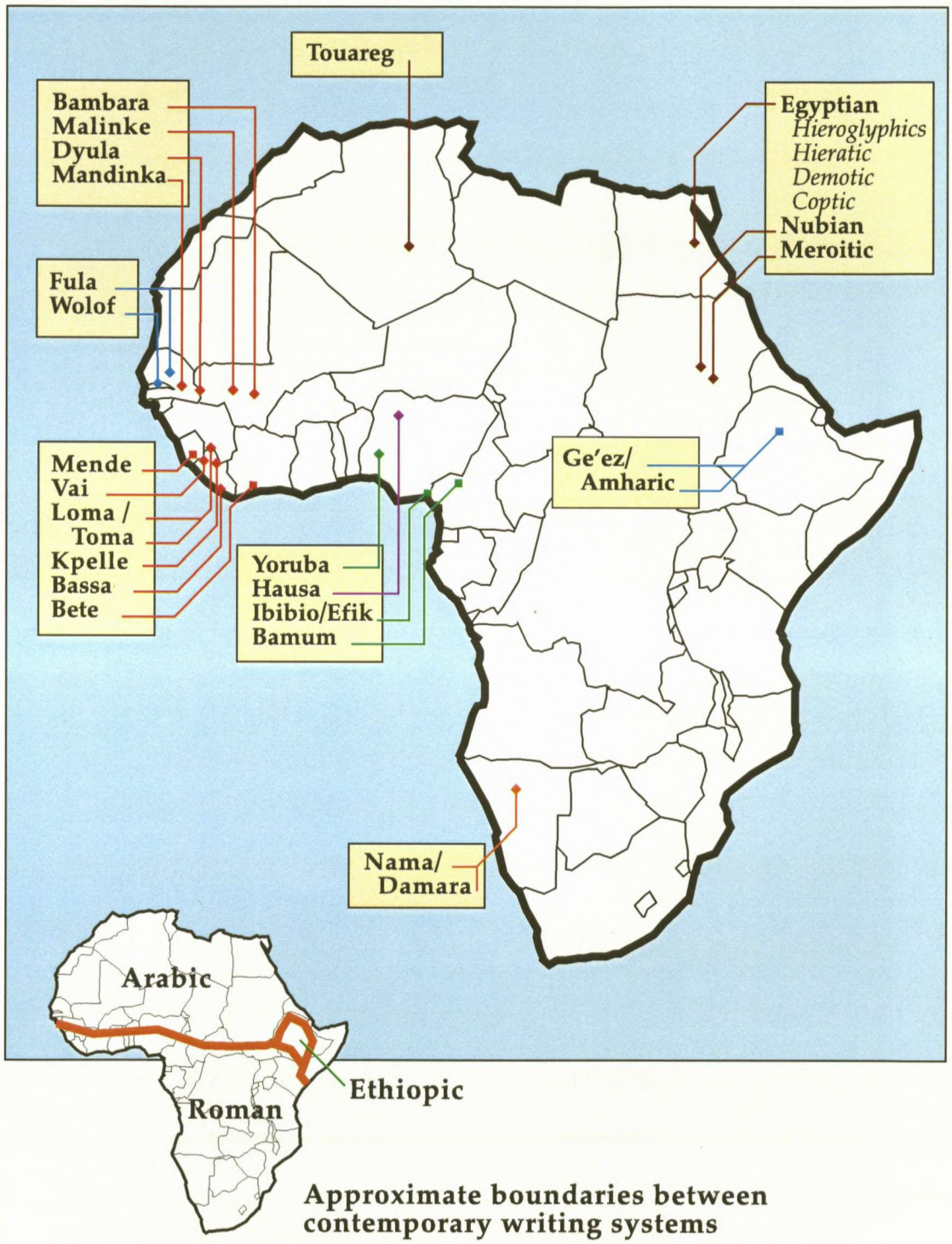

Figure 4.2: Map 2 – Linguistic Graphic Systems (Carey 2003)

Tables 4.1 a - f (p. 84 - 89) list eighty-three language groups in Africa whose use of graphic systems is recorded, whether they have invented, imported or adapted the systems concerned. Visual examples have been found from sixty-seven of these groups, giving examples of seventy-three systems. Forty-four are non-linguistic (see Chapter 5), while twenty-nine are linguistic (see Chapter 6).

These tables are the result of the collection of information about graphic systems. They were compiled using secondary sources, and are certainly incomplete. Numerous systems may still be undocumented, although it is likely that many have already disappeared due to various external cultural influences and cultural destruction. The tables demonstrate the large amount of existing material: some references are merely a mention in text, such as Faik-Nzuji's single example for the Yaka of the DRC (1996: 97); while others range up to book size and include detailed illustrations, such as Schmitt's three volume study of the Bamum scripts (1963). However, none of the literature found attempts to survey both linguistic and non-linguistic systems, or cover the whole Continent, as this body of research attempts to do. Nor, with the exception of Mafundikwa's work, is this material examined from a Graphic Design perspective elsewhere (see Chapter 3, p. 59)[1].

It must be mentioned that certain certain categories of graphic systems used in Africa are excluded. The project concentrates on indigenous systems, and so the original Greek, Arabic and Roman alphabets have been excluded, although adaptations of these systems for use with African languages have been included. Such systems as Ethiopic and the Tifinagh system of North Africa are believed by the majority of authorities to stem ultimately from roots outside Africa, but they are included because they have acquired a distinctive visual character, as a result of development or adaptation by African peoples over a

very long period, and therefore may be discussed as "indigenous" for the purposes of this study.

Rock Art is found over most of the African continent, but Southern Africa is the only region where any of it can be ascribed to a language group with any degree of accuracy. This is because of the tenuous survival of some Bushman or KhoiSan peoples to the present day, and the timely study of some extinct groups and their art before their disappearance. North of the Limpopo the ascription of rock art to any language group can only be tentative because of its antiquity, and because of the movements of peoples over the years. Rock art from these areas is thus omitted from the tables. Although Rock Art and Egyptian Hieroglyphics are mentioned in these tables, they have both been extensively studied elsewhere, and so have been excluded from further discussion here.

The tables use a simplification of the classification of African languages used by Heine and Nurse (eds.) in their text, *African Languages: an introduction* (2000), firstly by omitting those language categories for which no examples of or references to graphic systems were found. Heine and Nurse's distinctions of the extremely complex language groupings in the Nigeria-Cameroon area have been simplified for convenience. This area contains a large number of both languages and graphic systems, some of which have spread across linguistic boundaries.

Because of the extremely large number of languages in the Bantu language family (between five and seven hundred, according to different writers) of the Niger-Congo phylum (which itself is the largest in the world, with 1436 languages, according to Williamson and Blench) writers on this group can only

mention clusters or sub-groups of languages: not all the individual languages are listed (2000: 11). This means that the languages whose speakers have produced graphic systems may be omitted, and so the languages of this family have been listed in an approximate geographic fashion, from North-West to South-East.

Classification by language has been chosen because this method shows which peoples have developed or used a system, without alluding to "tribes", several of which may use the same language. Generally language groups and the graphic systems they have devised occur in the same areas, but where a system has been used by several language groups, such as the *"Nsibidi"* signs, it is mentioned under each group that makes use of it.

Under the first column in the tables, "Language Family", the name of the language family has been given in 15 point underlined Roman type, and any subfamily in underlined 11 point italic. Individual languages are listed in 11 point type to indicate one referred to in the literature as having produced graphic signs or systems of which examples have been found. Italic has been used for those for which no visual examples could be located. Bold type has been used to indicate those systems discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. These conventions are repeated across the other columns. The locations of the peoples concerned are listed in the second column. The third column indicates the non-linguistic systems, while in the fourth column, linguistic systems, where a system has been adapted from an exotic, e.g. the Roman alphabet, the prefix "ad." (for "adapted") is given to the source system. Thus, for example, the written version of Nama/Damara is described as "ad. Roman Alphabet". The final column contains references for the systems. In some cases, not all the references found have been included, in order to save space[2].

CLASSIFICATION OF GRAPHIC SYSTEMS BY LANGUAGE RELATIONSHIPS

Niger - Congo Phylum

Language Family *Sub-family* Language Name	Location	Non-linguistic Systems & Signs	Linguistic Systems	Reference
Mande				
Mande	West Africa	Komo initiation society signs		Faik-Nzuji 96: vp
Mandinka	Senegal		"Nko" alphabet	Dalby 69: 162 - 164
Dyula	Mali		" "	" " " "
Bambara (1)	Mali	Primordial Signs– 1)"Gla-gla-zo" 2)"Dye sira gale"		Dalby 68: 179 - 180, Faik-Nzuji 96: vp, Bonnefoy 91: 118-120
" (2)				
" (3)			"Nko" alphabet	Dalby 69: 162 - 164
" (4)			ad. Roman alphabet	Coulmas 96: 36 - 37
" (5)			"Ma-sa-ba" script	Mafundikwa 01: 2 - 3
Malinke (1)	Mali	Primordial Signs		as Bambara (1)&(2)
" (2)			"Nko" alphabet	Dalby 69: 162 - 164
Bozo	Mali	" "		as Bambara (1)&(2)
Minyanka (1)	Guinea/Mali	" "		as Bambara (1)&(2)
" (2)		Initiation/ Divining System		Faik-Nzuji 96: vp
Keita		Ideo-/pictographic system		Faik-Nzuji 96: vp
Koranko	*Guinea*			*Dalby 68: 178*
Vai	**Liberia/S.Leone**		**Syllabary**	**Dalby 67: 4 - 18**
Yalunka	*Guinea*			Dalby 68: 178
Kpelle	Liberia		Syllabary	Dalby 67: 29 - 31
Loma / Toma (1)	Liberia/Guinea		Syllabary	Dalby 67: 25 - 28
" " (2)		Ideographic system		Faik-Nzuji 96: 17, 18
Guro	*Cote d'Ivoire*		*script (unknown type)*	*Singler 96: 593* Mafundikwa 01:2
Mende	Sierra Leone		Syllabary	Dalby 67: 18 - 25

Table 4.1/ a (Carey 2003)

CLASSIFICATION OF GRAPHIC SYSTEMS BY LANGUAGE RELATIONSHIPS (contd)

Niger - Congo Phylum (contd)

Language Family *Sub-family* Language Name	Location	Non-linguistic Systems & Signs	Linguistic Systems	Reference
Atlantic				
Fula (1)	Senegal –		"Dembele" alphabet	Dalby 69:168 - 173
" (2)	Cameroon		"Ba" alphabet	Dalby 69:173 - 174
" (3)			ad. Arabic alphabet	Coulmas 96: 5
Wolof	Senegal/Gambia		"Faye" alphabet	Dalby 69:165 - 168
Serer	Senegal	isolated symbols		Faik-Nzuji 96: 114
Gola	*Sierra Leone*			*Dalby 69:180 - 181*
Dogon				
Dogon	Mali	Primordial Signs		as Bambara (1)&(2)
Kru				
Bassa	Liberia		Alphabet	Dalby 67: 31 - 39
Bete	Cote d'Ivoire		Syllabary	Dalby 68: 158
Gur/Voltaic				
Gurma	Burkina Faso	Divination signs		Cartry 63: 276 - 305
Mossi	*Burkina Faso*			*Dalby 68: 178*
Kwa				
Akan	Ghana	Adinkra symbols		Faik-Nzuji 96: vp,
Asante	Ghana	" "		Glover 92: 1
Baule	Cote d'Ivoire	" "		as Akan/Asante;
Aboure	Cote d'Ivoire	" "		Faik-Nzuji 96: 56,113
Ewe	Ghana/Togo	"Ifa" divining signs		Andah 91: 113 - 116
Fon (1)	**Benin**	**Royal emblems**		**Blier 98: 98 - 121**
" (2)		Vodun diagrams		Thompson 83:188
" (3)		"Ifa" divining signs		Andah 91: 113 - 116

Table 4.1 / b (Carey 2003)

CLASSIFICATION OF GRAPHIC SYSTEMS BY LANGUAGE RELATIONSHIPS (contd)

Niger - Congo Phylum (contd)

Language Family *Sub-family* Language Name	Location	Non-linguistic Systems & Signs	Linguistic Systems	Reference
Benue-Congo:				
West Benue-Congo				
Yoruba (1)	Nigeria	"Ifa" divining signs		Andah 91: 113 - 116
" (2)			"Holy Writing"	Dalby 69: 174-177
Igbo	**Nigeria**	**Nsibidi symbols**		**Thompson 83: 227-268**
Edo / Bini	Nigeria	Traditional iconography		Dalby 68: 178
Cross River				
Ibibio-Efik (1)	**Nigeria**	**Nsibidi symbols**		**Thompson 83: 227-268**
" " (2)			"Oberi Okaime"	Dalby 68: 156 - 169
Annang	*Nigeria*			*Faik-Nzuji 92: 30*
Bantoid				
Ejagham/Ekoi	**Cameroon/ Nigeria**	**Nsibidi symbols**		**Thompson 83: 227-268**
Bamum (1)	**Cameroon**	**Pictographic system**	**Syllabary**	**Dugast &Jeffreys 50: all; Schmitt 63: all**
" (2)		Traditional iconography		Geary 83: 35 - 8, 92 - 5
Bamileke	Cameroon	Isolated symbols		Faik-Nzuji 96: 46, 55
/Bagam	*Cameroon*		*Syllabary/alphabet?*	*Dalby 68: 158*
Bantu				
Mongo	*DRC (North)*			*Faik-Nzuji 92: 38 - 39*
Batetela	DRC (E-Cent.)	Isolated symbols		Faik-Nzuji 96: 43
Kongo	DRC (West)	Isolated symbols		Faik-Nzuji 96: 27,etc
Pende 1)	"	Isolated symbols		Faik-Nzuji 96: 56
2)		*Ground diagrams*		*Thompson 83: 189*

Table 4.1 / c (Carey 2003)

CLASSIFICATION OF GRAPHIC SYSTEMS BY LANGUAGE RELATIONSHIPS (contd)

Niger - Congo Phylum (contd)

Language Family *Sub-family* Language Name	Location	Non-linguistic Systems & Signs	Linguistic Systems	Reference
Bantu contd				
Woyo	DRC	Isolated symbols		Faik-Nzuji 96: 40,41
Bambala	"	Isolated symbols		Faik-Nzuji 96: 53,93
Yaka	"	Isolated symbols		Faik-Nzuji 96: 97
Amfutu	"			*Faik-Nzuji 92: 89*
Basho	"			*Faik-Nzuji 92: 89*
Ikela	"			*Faik-Nzuji 92: 89*
Topoke	"			*Faik-Nzuji 92: 89*
Rwanda/Rundi	Rwanda/ Burundi	Isolated symbols		Faik-Nzuji 96: 36, 39, 114
Bakwele	DRC (Kasai)	Isolated symbols		Faik-Nzuji 96: 32 etc
Kuba	DRC (Kasai)	Ideographic system		Faik-Nzuji 96: vp
Luba	DRC (Shaba)	Ideographic system		Faik-Nzuji 92: 86-8
Hemba	*DRC (Shaba)*			*Faik-Nzuji 92: 59*
Kanyok	*DRC (Shaba)*			*Faik-Nzuji 96: 103*
Lulua	DRC (Kasai)	Isolated symbols		Faik-Nzuji 92: 79 - 82
Ohendo	DRC (Kasai)	**Ideographic diagram system**		**Faik-Nzuji 96: vp** **Faik-Nzuji 92: 94-99**
Songye	DRC (Kasai)	Isolated symbols		Faik-Nzuji 96: 29,39,72
Bena-Lulua	DRC/Angola	Isolated symbols		Faik-Nzuji 92: 102,103
Lunda	DRC/Angola	Ground diagrams		Faik-Nzuji 92: 83
Chokwe	" "	Ground diagrams		Kubik 87: 229 - 285
Luchazi	**Angola/Zambia**	**Ground diagrams**		**Kubik 87: all**
Balwena	Angola	Isolated symbols		Faik-Nzuji 92: 89
Ndembu	*Zambia*	*Ground diagrams*		*Thompson 83:188 - 189*
Lemba	"	Isolated symbols		Faik-Nzuji 96: 106
Rozwi	Zimbabwe	Isolated symbols		Faik-Nzuji 96: 106
Kalanga	"	Isolated symbols		Faik-Nzuji 96: 106,107
Karanga	"	Isolated symbols		Faik-Nzuji 96: 107
Venda	" / SA	Isolated symbols		Faik-Nzuji 96: 106,107

Table 4.1 / d (Carey 2003)

CLASSIFICATION OF GRAPHIC SYSTEMS BY LANGUAGE RELATIONSHIPS

Niger - Congo Phylum (contd)

Language Family *Sub-family* Language Name	Location	Non-linguistic Systems & Signs	Linguistic Systems	Reference
Bantu contd				
Ndebele	South Africa	Picto/ideographic symbols		Powell 1995: 46 - 73 v. Wyk 1993: 81 - 97
Zulu (1)	**South Africa**	**Picto/ideographic script**		**Mutwa 64: vp**
" (2)		*Isolated symbols*		*Msomi 00: 12*

Nilo-Saharan Phylum

Central Sudanic				
Mangbetu	DRC	Isolated Symbols		Faik-Nzuji 96: 137
East Sudanic				
Nubian	Egypt/Sudan		Ad. Greek alphabet	Coulmas 96: 356 - 357
Meroitic 1)	Sudan		Ad. Egyptian Hieroglyphs	Coulmas 96: 337
" 2)			Meroitic cursive	Millet 96: 84 - 86

Khoi-San Phylum

Khoe				
Nama-Damara(1)	Namibia		Ad. Roman alphabet	Guldemann & Vossen 00: 99 122
" " (2)	"	Rock Art		Lewis-Williams & Dowson 89: 13 - 17 etc; Guldemann & Vossen 00: 100
San				
!Ui-Taa (Southern)	S A/Namibia /Botswana	Rock Art		

Table 4.1 / e (Carey 2003)

CLASSIFICATION OF GRAPHIC SYSTEMS BY LANGUAGE RELATIONSHIPS (contd)

Afro-Asiatic Phylum

Language Family *Sub-family* Language Name	Location	Non-linguistic Systems & Signs	Linguistic Systems	Reference
Berber Touareg	Algeria/Libya/ Tunisia/Niger/ Mali/ B. Faso		Tifinagh alphabet	Brett & Fentress 96: 37 - 41; O'Connor 96 (2): 112 - 119
Chadic Hausa 1) 2)	Nigeria		ad. Arabic alphabet "Pan-Nigerian"	Coulmas 96: 196 - 197 Coulmas 96: 196 - 197
Egyptian Egyptian 1) " 2) " 3) " 4)	Egypt, Sudan		Hieroglyphs Hieratic Demotic Coptic (ad. Greek)	Ritner 96: 73 - 84 Coulmas 96: 92 - 94
Semitic *South Central* Arabic	N. Africa(see Map 2)		Arabic alphabet	Bauer 96: 559 - 564
South (Ethio-Semitic) **Ge'ez/Amharic**	**Ethiopia**		**Ethiopic alphabet**	**Haile 96: 569 - 576**
Cushitic *Somali* 1) " 2-9)	*Somalia*		*Ismaaniya Script* *8 other scripts*	*Dalby 68: 166*

Table 4.1 /f (Carey 2003)

Notes.

1. All indigenous graphic systems for which reference was found are included in the tables, with the following exceptions:

a) a number of peoples for whom reference to graphic systems was found, but whose language classification could not be located, had to be omitted. These include the Efut of Cameroon/Nigeria, the Dagawa of Burkina Faso, the Masaba of Kenya, the Gerze of Guinea/Senegal/Mali, the Wabuti of the DRC, and the Songo of Mali.

b) the table also omits systems that either could not be linked to any languages; which were used or were intended to be used with a number of languages (such as the Africa alphabet and the Pan-Nigerian alphabet); or which were never used.

2. On page 2 of this table, (Table 4.1/ b, p. 85), the term "Atlantic" refers to a language family, rather than the ocean. On Pages 3 - 5, (Tables 4.1/c - e, p. 86 - 88), the term "Bantu" is a linguistic term referring to the family of languages, and is not intended to have any derogatory connotations.

CHAPTER 5: NON-LINGUISTIC SYSTEMS

This Chapter aims to trace cultural contexts of a selected number of the non-linguistic systems collected and represented in Tables 4.1 a - f, including developmental sequences, history, and methods and materials.

Meaningful graphic marks, whether representational or symbolic, have been part of humanity's means of learning about, externalising, communicating and recording understanding and meaning for at least thirty thousand years (Chauvet, Deschamps and Hillaire 1996: 122). As mentioned earlier, any of the earliest forms of graphic marks are now lost because of their impermanence, but some have survived into modern times. Along with prehistoric Europeans and present day Australian Aboriginals, many African peoples drew diagrams and signs on the ground, on rock faces, and on the human body.

It may be impossible to prove which of these practices came first. It seems likely that they came into existence at about the same time, as a short-term means of marking the environment, including the body, with the fingers. Permanent forms are likely to have followed with the development of the necessary tool-using thought processes and technologies, assuming that the sort of spiritual and/or cosmological ideas for which these graphic forms are typically used arose before the development of techniques and the conscious, deliberate use of meaningful marks. This seems reasonable if the ideas existed before the intelligent use of marks was required to communicate or record them.

The first four examples in this Chapter deal with the development of non-linguistic graphic systems and variations amongst them: some examples are given and discussed in terms of salient features. For example:–

1) temporary forms: ground diagrams e.g. Luchazi;
2) construction of religion/cosmology, e.g. Ohendo;
3) construction of society, e.g. Ejagham *Nsibidi* symbols;
4) construction of royalty/politics, e.g. Fon royal symbols.

The last system discussed is a pictographic one published by a Zulu individual, which is discussed last because of its problematic nature.

Many graphic traditions disappeared during the colonial period, but a few, such as the *Tusona* of the Luchazi people, described below, persisted until quite recently in remote regions. Deliberately temporary media, such as ground diagrams, can only be recorded if still in existence in a culture. When the last practitioners die, so does the form, unless it is recorded by some other means. Such systems generally occur in oral, or non-literate, societies. Because of this, graphic signs and symbols have a different relationship with meaning to that existing in literate societies. Whereas in literate societies the meaning of a particular sequence of signs, a text, is supposed to be fixed and precise, in oral societies such a 'text' serves more to establish a field or range of meaning which is capable of great variety of interpretation, depending on tone and gesture, context and who is doing or performing the text, when and how and why.

African non-linguistic graphic systems typically illustrate for the society in question a nexus of beliefs regarding religion and cosmology; memory and his-

tory, particularly with reference to the founding story of the people and the legitimacy of their leadership; law and the proper regulation of civil society; and the means of social advancement, generally through initiation into knowledge of these areas. Such initiatory symbols, like *Tusona*, are often temporary. Although they have been photographed painted on walls, rock faces, and other surfaces, this seems to be unusual at least in recent times, and it is not clear whether such painting would be intended as permanent.

The *Tusona* Symbols of the Luchazi

Gerhard Kubik, in his text *Tusona – Luchazi Ideographs: a graphic tradition practised by a people of West-Central Africa* (1987), has described the *Tusona* system of ideographic ground diagrams produced by the Luchazi people of Eastern Angola and Northwestern Zambia and by the neighbouring Chokwe, Lunda, and other peoples (see Appendix 1, Figures 1 - 5). He learned of this tradition from a Zambian researcher, Kasombo kaChinyeka, who had been unable to follow up an interest in it. The tradition had been earlier described in Portuguese, but Kubik only discovered this subsequently. He recorded not only the visual appearance of each *Kasona* (plural: *Tusona*) but also the process of drawing and the explanation that accompanied it. *Tusona* were not recorded in Luchazi culture: the drawing of each one was part of the performance of its meaning, and each diagram would normally be erased when finished, although Kubik does reproduce two photographs of *Tusona* painted on buildings (Kubik 1987: 242, 284). However, the elders who demonstrated the practice for Kubik and his assistants agreed that he should record them.

Tusona are diagrammatic and geometric in form, composed mostly of dots and circumscribing lines which follow prescribed paths around and between them, according to mathematical rules. They often represent or symbolise concepts

from the Luchazi view of society, and the laws and other traditions that govern it (Figure 5.1). These concepts are expressed through stories, proverbs, or some other form of allusion, often using animals as symbolic characters. It is worth quoting Kubik's description of their functions at some length:–

> Tusona often make the inner, perhaps we should say essential order in situations, events, institutions and human interaction visible to the eye. ... there is really no single term in a European language that would exactly match the semantics of the word [tusona] in the entirety of its associated social, artistic and communicative aspects. To describe them as drawings may be formally correct...To qualify them as a form of ideographic writing is equally correct...a social game... indigenous mathematical or geometrical experiments...structures stimulating meditation...visualisations of the content of stories, or of philosophical observations, and thus as a kind of mnemonic aid to an otherwise oral literature. (1987:192 - 193)

It can be seen from this that these graphic devices function in a multiplicity of ways, and that a single definition of them would be extremely difficult. In terms of subject matter, *Tusona* range from illustrating the most complex cosmological concepts to children's games, and jokes from daily life. For example, Faik-Nzuji refers to the *kasona* known as "*Kalunga*" (Figure 5.1). This design encompasses "the lexico-semantic field of 'the sacred' and of the words designating 'God'" (Faik-Nzuji 1992: 83). At the top is the figure of Kalunga, or God; man is at the bottom. The dots in the squares represent all the creatures in the world, past, present or future, circumscribed by a single endless (infinite) line. The sun and moon are at left and right respectively. This kasona represents the Luchazi creation story, and its rendering is usually accompanied by a recital of this myth, which also explains the sun and moon's cycles, and why man dies[1].

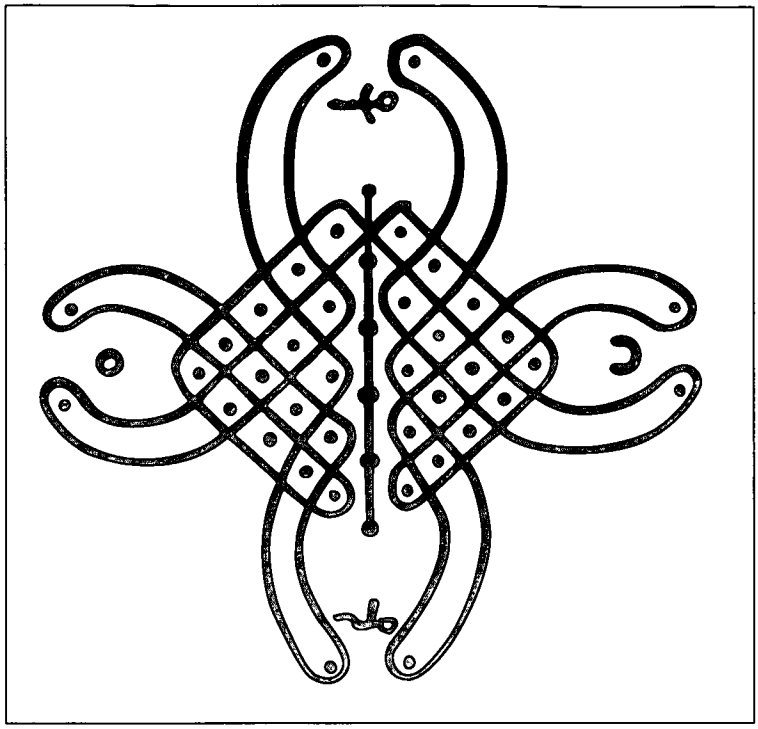

Figure 5.1. The Luchazi Tusona ideogram "Kalunga".
(Faik-Nzuji 1992: 83)

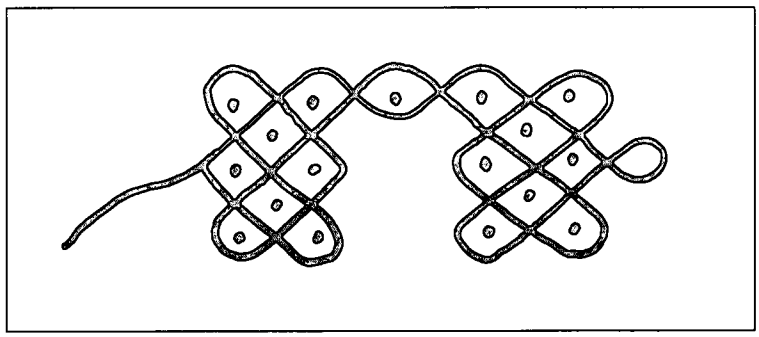

Figure 5.2. "The genet has decayed at the waist".
(Kubik 1987: 135)

Figure 5.2, which refers to a less serious theme, finds humour in a hunter discovering that his trapped prey, a genet, is already rotten by the time he finds it. These examples indicate the range and variety of subject matter dealt with by *Tusona*.

What was already problematic by the time Kubik was undertaking his research in the late Nineteen Seventies, was that this system was nearly extinct. In Zambia only a few old people remembered examples in any detail: between them Kubik's informants could only remember a couple of dozen *Tusona*, out of what may have originally been hundreds.

In Angola, the ancestral home of the Luchazi as well as the current home of the Chokwe and related peoples, the extended civil war had already destroyed villages known to have housed practitioners of Tusona (Kubik 1987: 25). It thus seems highly unlikely that by the present day any knowledgeable practitioners survive.

Graphic Symbols of the Ohendo

A further demonstration of the variety of graphic devices and systems in Africa can be seen in the complex series of symbols utilised by the Ohendo people of the Sankuru river region of the DRC. (see Appendix 1, Figures 6 - 8). Their system includes both simple and composite symbols, made up of signs that have individual meanings, but which acquire further connotations or layers of meaning depending on their purpose, how they are composed with other signs, where they are placed and on what materials, and so on. Faik-Nzuji, in her text *Symboles Graphiques en Afrique Noire* ("Graphic Symbols in Black Africa"), describes a symbol essential to two vital rituals in Ohendo life, that of the investiture of a new chief, and that of the initiation of boys into manhood (1992: 94 - 99) (Figure 5.3). The symbol is made up of five elements, some composed of further sub-elements with their own meanings.

Briefly, these elements refer to a) the sun, symbol of the infinite, which also refers to the primordial "gifts from God", and the ancestors, linked by the ver-

tical line to b) the sign of the leopard, its mouth open to receive wisdom from the "gifts of God"; c) the ancestors' constant contact with both the human and the divine; d) the divine origin of mankind, supported above and below by the "hands of the invisible", and in contact again with e) the ancestors, representing the human origin of mankind.

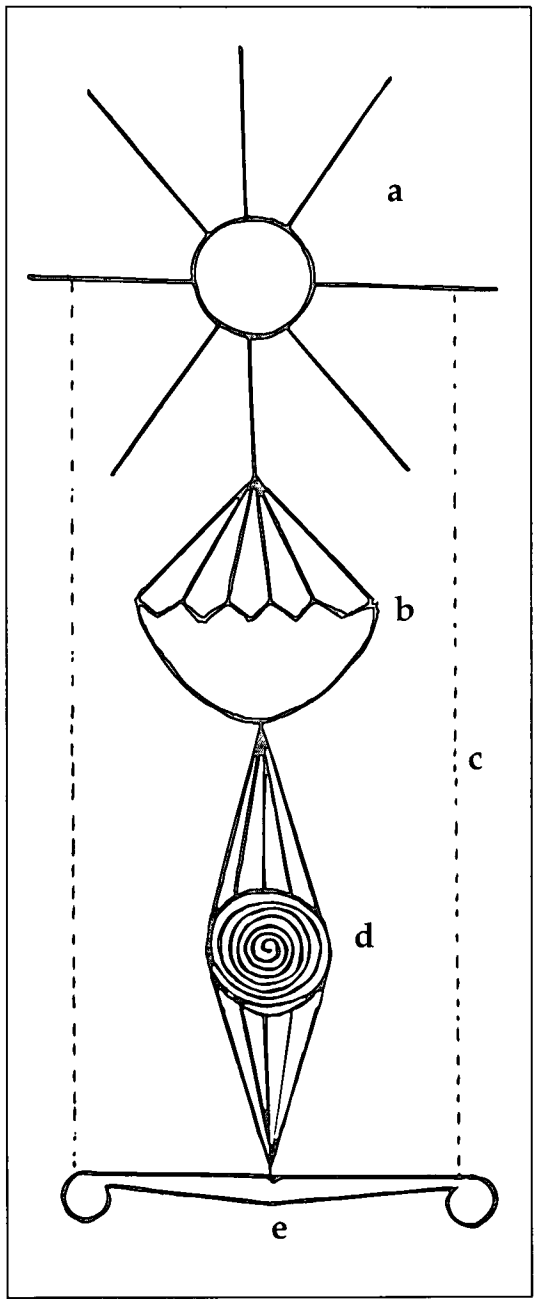

Figure 5.3. "The Sign of Knowledge, or the Sign of Mission.".
(Faik-Nzuji 1992: 94 - 99)

This diagram is inscribed on "a sort of apron" worn by the official presiding at both these rituals: it is also marked on a cloth on which the chief-to-be rests his left foot during the ceremony, while his right foot rests on a leopard skin, symbol of the power which he inherits. The "text" of this composite sign invokes not only political power in enthroning the new chief, but his relationships with his people, the ancestors, God, and the Universe:

> Here are your ancestors, here is your creator, here you are yourself as the chief, and here is the universe. Learn that every thing has its origin, and that all that is within you comes from that origin. By your contact with them, you receive the power and the knowledge that you must pass on in order that all may be splendour and radiance. But do not forget that you fulfill your role under the protection and the control of the ancestors. (Faik-Nzuji, 1992: 99)

Neither ritual can occur if the diagram is omitted. These signs thus represent not only significant facets of Ohendo religious beliefs and cosmology, but also how these beliefs should be applied, and to what degree, to the construction of important aspects of their society, such as socio-political status (i.e. rank and function of a chief) or the attainment of adulthood.

Other signs, such as those shown in Appendix 1, Figures 6 - 8, may be scarified on members of the society, marked on houses, and so on. The system therefore bridges the divide, if one exists, between temporary and permanent forms of graphic communication.

The Royal Symbols of the Fon

A more purely political use of symbolic graphic devices is found in the Royal emblems of the Fon kings of Danhomé, or Dahomey, in what is now the republic of Benin (see Appendix 1, Figure 9.). Since the kingdom was founded in the early seventeenth century, each king has adopted a visual motif that symbolised some particular event or circumstance surrounding his crowning, generally expressed verbally in a sort of proverb or saying. It is used to symbolise and legitimise his rule. For example, the symbol of King Tegbesu shows a buffalo wearing a shirt or covering (Figure 5.4).

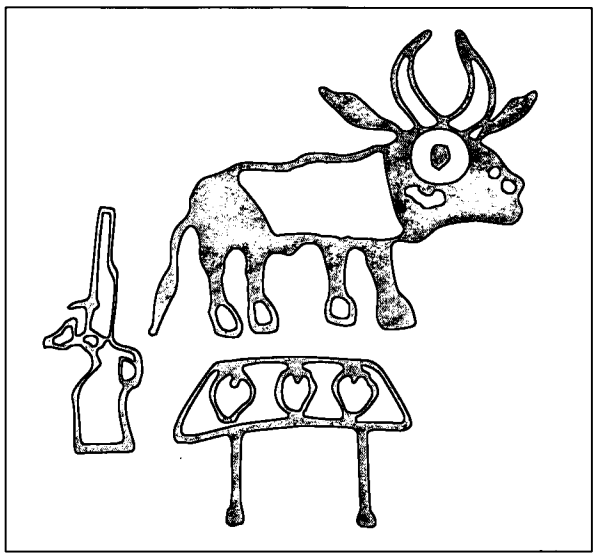

Figure 5.4. The Royal Emblem of King Tegbesu of Danhomé.
(Blier 1998: 105)

This refers to an attempt to subvert his coronation made by some of his brothers. They put a poisonous plant inside the coronation garment that he had to wear, hoping that he would take it off to ease the pain, and so disqualify himself from the throne. His refusal to do this shows the kind of strength that a buffalo may symbolise (Blier 1998: 105 - 106).

In the absence of paper, printing, and other graphic methods or materials, the

Danhomé, or Fon, typically utilised these graphic devices as cloth appliqué on banners, flags, wall hangings, royal parasols, and so on, and as clay relief sculptures built into the wall of important buildings, utilising a recognisably similar style regardless of the medium.

Figure 5.5. King Agoli Agbo of Danhomé, in the 1950's, with Royal emblems in use. (Blier 1998: 98)

Another version of King Tegbesu's sign, together with other Royal emblems, can be seen in Figure 5.5. Here the appliqué emblems can be seen on the parasol shading the king, and on the doorframe behind. They functioned in an analogous way to modern commercial logos, or to the coats of arms produced by medieval heralds: to identify and symbolise both the role and importance of the king. Their proverbial allusions further reinforced this role amongst the

population, for whom this sort of reference would have been very familiar.

The Fon made use of a further system of Graphic symbols, the "Fa" or "Ifa" divination system. According to Andah et al. this system uses groups of single and double parallel lines in 256 different sign combinations for sixteen main verses, or *Odu*, each of which has sixteen sub-verses (1992: 114 - 115) (Figure 5.6).

Serial No.	Odu-Ifa	Signs/	General theme
1.	Ejiogbe	II II II II	Doubt
2.	Oyeku Meji	II II II II II II II II	Happiness
3.	Iwori Meji	II II I I I I II II	Hatred
4.	Odu Meji	I I II II II II I I	Love
5.	Osun Meji	I I I I II II II II	Advice
6.	Owonrin Meji	II II II II I I I I	Success

Figure 5.6. Examples of "Fa" divination diagrams. (Andah et al. 1992: 114)

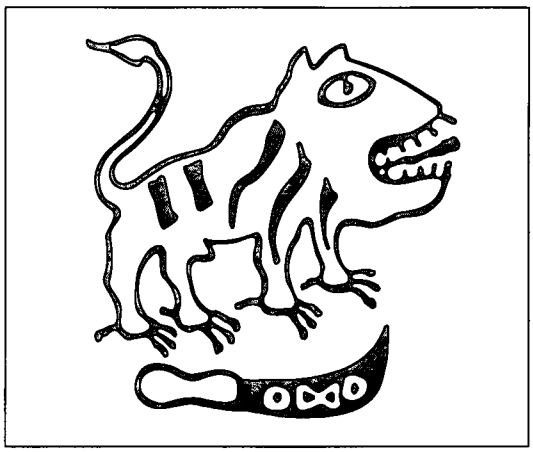

Figure 5.7. The Royal Emblem of King Glele of Danhomé. (Blier 1998: 105)

Blier describes the meaning of a sign being explained in terms of a series of phrases, verses, parables and short stories, in order to predict the course of a life (1990: 42 - 43). The phrases or aphorisms that relate to a sign may also inspire the Royal emblem of a king. Blier's example is of King Glele, whose life's sign, Abla-Lete, encompasses the expression "No animal displays its anger like the lion", which in turn gave rise to Glele's emblem (Figure 5.7.).

The *Nsibidi* Signs of the Ejagham, Efik-Ibibio and Igbo.

The royal symbols of the Danhomé are a fairly straightforward example of graphic devices being used to cement and legitimise a political structure. Other systems may be used in a wider social context, to construct and/or enforce a legalised ordering of the society. The Ejagham/Ekoi, Efik-Ibibio, and Igbo peoples live in an area that ranges from South West Cameroon to South East Nigeria. They use the wide range of signs described as *Nsibidi* (see Appendix 1, Figures 10 - 12) in the work of the *Ngbe* (leopard) society, described by Thompson as "an all-male brotherhood devoted to the making and keeping of law, the maintaining of village peace, the hearing of disputes, and, above all, the pleasurable dancing in public of secret signs of magical prowess" (1974: 180).

Nsibidi is a complex term, as Thompson makes clear:

> *Nsibidi*, in the Ejagham language, means roughly "cruel letters". *Sibidi* means "cruel" in classical Ejagham, according to Peter Eno ... P. Amaury Talbot, an English author, discovered while travelling through Ejagham country that *sibi* meant "bloodthirsty". Consider nisibidi writing, then, as justifiable terror in the service of law and government. (1983: 227)

> symbolise ideas on several levels of discourse. First, there were signs most people knew, ... signs representing human relationships, communication, and household objects...secondly there were serious signs of danger and extremity, the "dark signs", and these were often literally shaded. Shaded signs designated danger: both to speak of the pain caused by the departure of a family member, and to prepare the path to assuagement...Finally there were important Nsibidi signs of rank and ritual among the higher branches of Ngbe. (1983: 244 - 247)

Most of the signs are either pictographic or abstract and linear, but even these often relate to gestures with similar meaning. "For instance, the sign of love is rendered by hooking both forefingers together. The sign of hatred is conveyed by opposing the backs of the hands, thumbs down, 'showing one's back to the husband'" (Thompson, 1974: 181). A similarity can be seen between these gestures and both the signs shown in Figure 5.8.

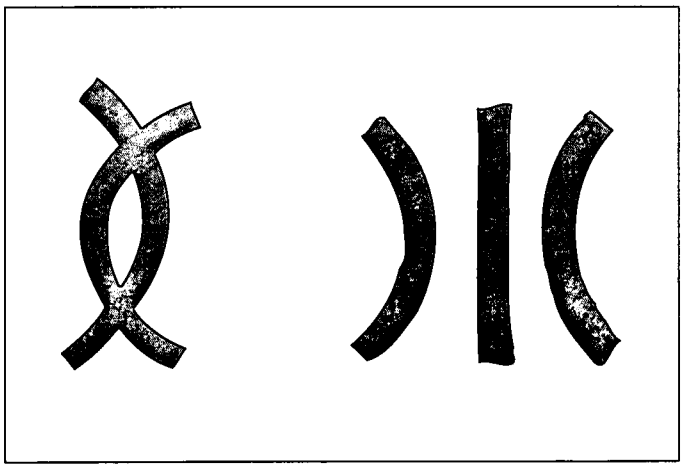

Figure 5.8. Left: The Nsibidi sign for love; right, the sign for hatred. (Thompson 1974: 181)

The "dark" signs mentioned by Thompson above are mostly linked to con-

cepts of crime and justice, as the examples below indicate (See Figure 5.9). In these examples it is just possible to see a pictographic element, but many of the signs are completely abstract.

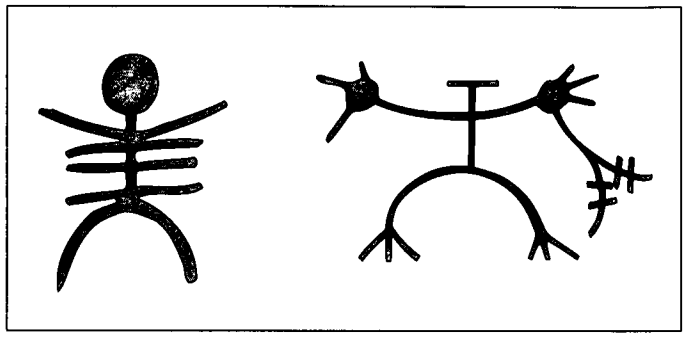

Figure 5.9. Left: "A man being flogged", or "A prisoner"; right, "A murderer detained". (Thompson 1983: 245)

The codification of *Nsibidi* signs means that they are capable of being joined in groups of linked concepts, and thus to form "texts", but they do not reproduce language, only ideas. They thus remain in Dalby's category of "contextual" or "non-linguistic" systems, as opposed to "linear" or "linguistic" ones.

Thompson does not give an age for the *Nsibidi* system itself: nor do other writers. Thompson does, however mention that the *Ngbe* society which uses the system was passed from the Efut to the Calabari Efik as early as 1750 A.D. (1983: 239), and that it is documented as having arrived in Cuba as early as 1839 (1983: 228). It seems likely from this that the system was passed to the Efik at the same time as the rest of the appurtenances of the *Ngbe* society, and that it therefore dates from before this time.

The system is found on a number of surfaces: Thompson describes its use in pyrogravure (heat-engraving on calabashes and wood with hot metal implements) and appliqué (1983: 230 - 232), chalked on floors or the ground and drums (1983: 228, 236 - 237), and even tattooed on the skin (1974: 180).

The Zulu: Credo Mutwa's Symbol Writing.

The final example of non-linguistic systems is also one of the more problematic. In 1964, Credo Mutwa published his seminal text *Indaba, my children,* in which he presented a mixture of oral history, myths, and folktales from different parts of sub-Saharan Africa, and a number of pictographic symbols, which he described as "Bantu symbol writing"(see Appendix 1, Figures 13 - 20). He assembled messages from these to illustrate a number of the stories recounted in the book. The signs have been grouped by approximately related concepts for this study.

The system is pictographic/ideographic. There are a total of 246 signs, several of which are shown more than once. This figure does not include minor variations with identical or almost identical meanings, but includes different signs given for the same meaning. Mutwa gives no indication whether this figure is a complete collection of the symbols, or how many more there might be. Neither does he give any indication whether the system follows any grammatical rules, such as those of isiZulu, or what effects such rules might have on its comprehensibility across languages and cultures.

The individual signs are mostly drawn within an imaginary square or rectangle, and utilise two visual styles. One is a pictographic simplification of the subject of the sign, and the other, used mostly for abstract concepts, uses a more decorative abstract style similar to Ndebele art. Some of the signs are used for a number of related concepts, and may also be compounded from two simpler signs to form a more complex meaning. The sign for "marriage", for example, combines the signs for "man" and "woman" (see Figure 5.10).

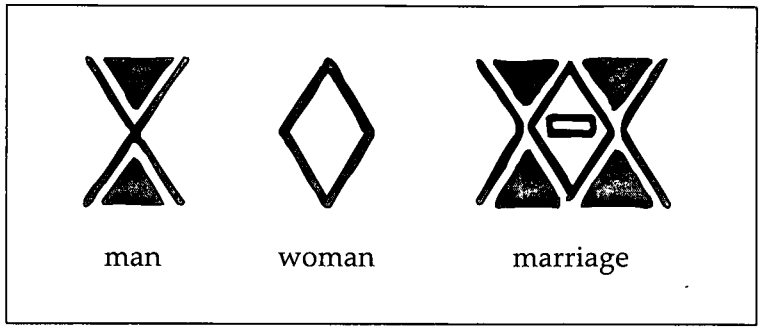

Figure 5.10. Related symbols in Zulu "symbol-writing".
(Mutwa 1998: 669, 671)

Mutwa describes these symbols as part of a "Bantu symbol-writing" system that: "is the same for all tribes in Africa, irrespective of language. A Zulu can read and understand anything recorded by a Lunda from Angola, even though he might not understand the spoken language" (1964: 664).

This system is claimed to have been in use, by about a third of the population, until the early part of the last century. It then died out "as the people learnt the European alphabet"(1964: 664). There are some problems with this account. Firstly, I have not found literature that suggests that the pre-colonial Nguni peoples or the colonial-era Zulu generally possessed much by way of such complex graphic systems, although S'thembiso Msomi has mentioned visual symbols used on ceramics. (2000: 12). This would correspond with the general absence of material culture and art forms found in largely pastoral societies, with the exception of small items (see Kennedy 1993: xxxviii and 11).

Secondly, these signs are claimed to have been used, amongst other purposes, to send messages in time of war. The ornate design of some characters makes this unlikely. Even the simpler designs would be too time-consuming to draw for use in wartime.

Furthermore, there is no mention, in any account found in the course of this project, of this system in use amongst any of the other peoples Mutwa mentions, who include the Hutu, Tutsi, and the Lunda. Nor has it been possible to find examples or references in any other works on Zulu culture. However, this may more accurately show that there is a gap in the literature or that the perspective taken by researchers has not been able to accept this kind of material as a graphic system. In any case, these symbols have been accepted as historically genuine by several non-academic publications, generally for the tourist market. One message from Mutwa's book is included, for example, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Economic Development and Tourism's website (http://www.kzn-deat.gov.za/tourism/zululand/usiko/symbols.html).

It would be important and exciting, for South African culture, to research and verify the historical authenticity of this system, but there is an important sense in which its supposed pre-colonial origin does not matter. Whether these signs are an ancient product of a wide-ranging pre-colonial society, or the product of one individual's response to life in apartheid South Africa of the late 1950s and early 1960s, they possess an interesting visual character and constitute a considerable body of creative work. They are thus deserving of study, but such study would need to ascertain their history, if possible, the full extent of the system, their author or designer, the tools and materials used, and so on. The late stage of the project at which this text was located has precluded any primary research into the system, but it has been included for these reasons.

Notes.

1. The full story is given in Kubik 1987: 246.

CHAPTER 6: LINGUISTIC SYSTEMS

This Chapter discusses examples of linguistic systems found in Africa. The first, the Bamum systems, discusses its development from a non-linguistic basis to a linguistic one. The next two examples are syllabic alphabets or syllabaries: the Vai and Ethiopic.

The link between linguistic and non-linguistic systems is problematic. In one sense it would seem to be logical to expect the graphic system(s) of a society to develop from simple to complex, and from lesser to greater efficiency. However, very few systems seem to have developed from the non-linguistic category to the linguistic, perhaps because very few societies have developed from an oral condition to an alphabetically literate one with no outside stimulation or coercion. When outside impulses have been the motivation, they have almost always also provided the graphic system with which to establish a literate society. The adoption and adaptation of the Roman, Greek, Arabic, and other systems by colonised or culturally influenced societies all provide examples of this process.

The Scripts of the Bamum

Sometimes, however, the outside stimulus can result in very creative results, including systems that have developed with great rapidity from one category to the other: for example those of the Bamum people of the Grassfields region of Northwest Cameroon (see Appendix 1, Figures 21 - 26).

The Bamum are believed to have come across the idea of alphabetic or linguistic writing first from Moslem Hausa and Fula merchants from the north of Cameroon, who travelled frequently through the kingdom. In the late Nineteenth Century, King Nsangu, is known to have bought a number of Korans or other Arabic volumes from these travellers (Dugast and Jeffreys 1950: 3). The writing systems of the Bamum were developed over a period of about thirty years, beginning near the end of the nineteenth century, by their then King Njoya (see Figure 6.1) and a group of his advisors.

Figure 6.1. King Njoya receiving a visitor.
(Blier 1996: 167)

Njoya's first attempt at the invention of writing, dated to about 1895 or 1896, was a collection of over 500 signs, which functioned more as pictographs or ideographs than as letters (Dugast and Jeffreys 1950: 4). Despite the single meanings given for them in the literature, many were polysemantic, i.e. represented a number of meanings. A number of the signs were also used as syllables, to extend the range of possible meanings (Figure 6.2).

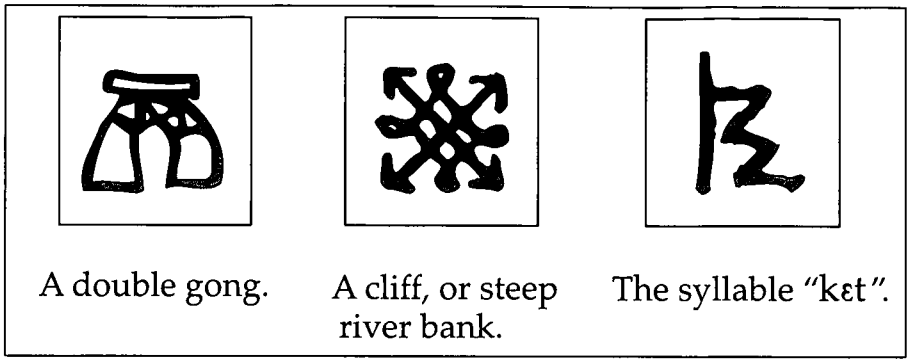

Figure 6.2. Examples of early Bamum characters, showing their different modes of representation. (Dugast and Jeffreys 1950: 6, 93)

Geary quotes Njoya's own account of the inspiration for the script:

> In the old days, the Bamum did not know how to write. The script used today was invented by King Njoya. One night he dreamt that a man came to him and said, "King, take a tablet and draw a man's hand, wash what you have drawn, and drink." The King took the tablet and drew a man's hand, as he had been instructed. Then he handed the tablet to that man, who wrote on it and returned it to the king. There were many people seated there, all of them pupils with pieces of paper in their hands, on which they wrote and which they then gave to their brothers.
>
> The following day, the King took a tablet, and drew a man's hand thereon, washed the tablet, and drank the water he had used to wash it with, as he had been instructed to do in the dream.
>
> The King called together many people and said to them, "If you draw many things and name them, I will make a book that speaks without a sound." ... They went and did as the King commanded. When they had finished, they presented

> their work to the King. Meanwhile the King had also made some efforts of his own. He called in Mama and Adzia to help him in the comparison of the work done by the others. Five times the King tried to achieve some result, but in vain. It was the sixth attempt that succeeded. Writing had been discovered. The King gathered together many people and taught them the new characters. The people learned well to the great satisfaction of King Njoya. (1983: 35)

The notion of the syllabic sign enabled Njoya to simplify his system: over the next decade he revised the script four times, reducing the total number of signs to about two hundred. He converted some signs to conventional or syllabic use, and simplified the appearance of the characters. The conversion or omission of signs mostly affected those for polysyllabic words, which could now be assembled in writing from monosyllabic signs.

By this time German colonialists had begun to arrive, and they had marked out the boundaries of the territory of "Kamerun" as early as 1893, but an expedition only reached the Bamum capital, Foumban, in 1902. Trade with the South of Cameroon began shortly, and by the next year a Swiss missionary station was established. By 1907 the missionary Gohring had published an account of the Bamum script.

The most important revision of the script was to come a couple of years later. In 1910, Njoya abruptly reduced the number of signs to eighty (Dugast and Jeffries 1950: 24). Most of these were monosyllabic words which were also utilised as abstract phonetic syllables. This alphabet also introduced an accent (similar to the French circonflex) which was used to denote tonal or other phonetic differences between similar syllables, or glottal stops between syllables. Gestual expression was however not accomodated, which must have eliminated a con-

siderable range of meaning. Some signs were dropped completely, and others changed phonetic value to replace the more visually complex ones. This alphabet was known as *"a ka u ku"*, after the first four signs in its conventional order.

Dugast and Jeffreys seem to consider the reduction in the number of signs and the increasing alphabetization as a positive development, without recognising the accompanying loss of expressive variety:

> By this psychological process (of converting the pictographic nature of the script to a phonetic basis) it became possible, beginning with the a ka u ku alphabet, to reduce the number of signs to eighty. The syllable, now used without meaning, that we call the syllabic phoneme, could from now on be associated with vowels, and allows in this way the transcription of new sounds – all the sounds of the language. Alphabetical signs kept their significance, and continued to transcribe the corresponding monosyllable. But because this serves also as a simple syllabic phoneme, an infinite number of combinations become possible, and thanks to these, it becomes possible for us to say that the writing has almost become alphabetic. (1950: 27)

The final development of the script, in 1918, was the Mfemfe, or "new" alphabet, which was largely a simplification of the design.

The scripts were used successively to begin the process of converting the Bamum into a literate society. Books of history, culture, law, technology, and pharmacology, and a multitude of court documents were produced. Njoya had maps created of his territory and set about translating Western texts into his language and script, for use in the schools he established. Starting with the court, Njoya had taught his script to an increasing proportion of his people,

and he even negotiated with other local peoples to teach them his script.

It was clearly his intention to establish an independent literacy, not relying on either the Roman or the Arabic alphabets. When he first invented the script, he had not seen the Roman alphabet, and insisted that his writing should be from left to right in order to distinguish it from Arabic, which is written from right to left. The script therefore must be considered one of the so-called "arts of contact", a consequence of stimulation by outside influences, but this should not detract from the achievement of Njoya and his co-workers. The development of the script appears to have been entirely their work, despite the presence in the area during the later period of development of Christian missionaries, who might have taken an interest in the project.

Unfortunately, Njoya's early friendly relations with the German colonists meant that he was regarded unfavourably by the French, who took over the territory after the First World War. After many years of experiment and trial and error, printing type of the script had been created to his instructions, either by his technicians, according to Dugast and Jeffreys, (1950: 29); or as Coulmas maintains, by French printers (1996: 38). A viable printing press was also invented, but all this was destroyed at the insistence of the colonial authorities even before Njoya was exiled in 1931. He died in 1933. Over the years the script was forgotten, although one recent report, referring to the script as "Shumom" (the thing of the Bamum people), suggests that the Bamum are trying to revive it (French, 1997: 22).

In comparing or analysing these traditions, one runs again into the different attitudes towards knowledge between Western and pre-colonial African cultures. As Nooter puts it,

> the ability to obscure knowledge is a communication skill [in oral Africa]. Knowledge can be dangerous; in the wrong hands, it can be used for personal gain, to the detriment of society as a whole. The liberal disclosure of knowledge is considered irresponsible. (1993: 49).

Again, Njoya and the Bamum are unusual for having embraced the Western notion of the dissemination of knowledge, despite Njoya's invention of a secret 'court' language and script for private use.

The literature does not mention what pens or writing implements were used, and this cannot be told from the reproductions, with the exception of the title page of the *Livre du Sultan Njoya*, in which the king and his advisors collected a huge quantity of historical and cultural information about their country and people. The script on this page seems to have been written with a flexible-nibbed pen, perhaps the sort of steel nibbed dipping pen in common use amongst Europeans at the time, as thick and thin strokes formed by such a pen can be seen (see Figure 6.3.).

Unfortunately the date of this page cannot be ascertained precisely, as the book was worked on over a period of about twenty years, from 1910 until the 1930s. It appears from this and other reproductions of the script that it was formed between only two guidelines, like Roman capitals. There are a couple of characters that don't regularly touch the baseline, but it's not clear whether this is a design feature or an idiosyncrasy of a particular scribe.

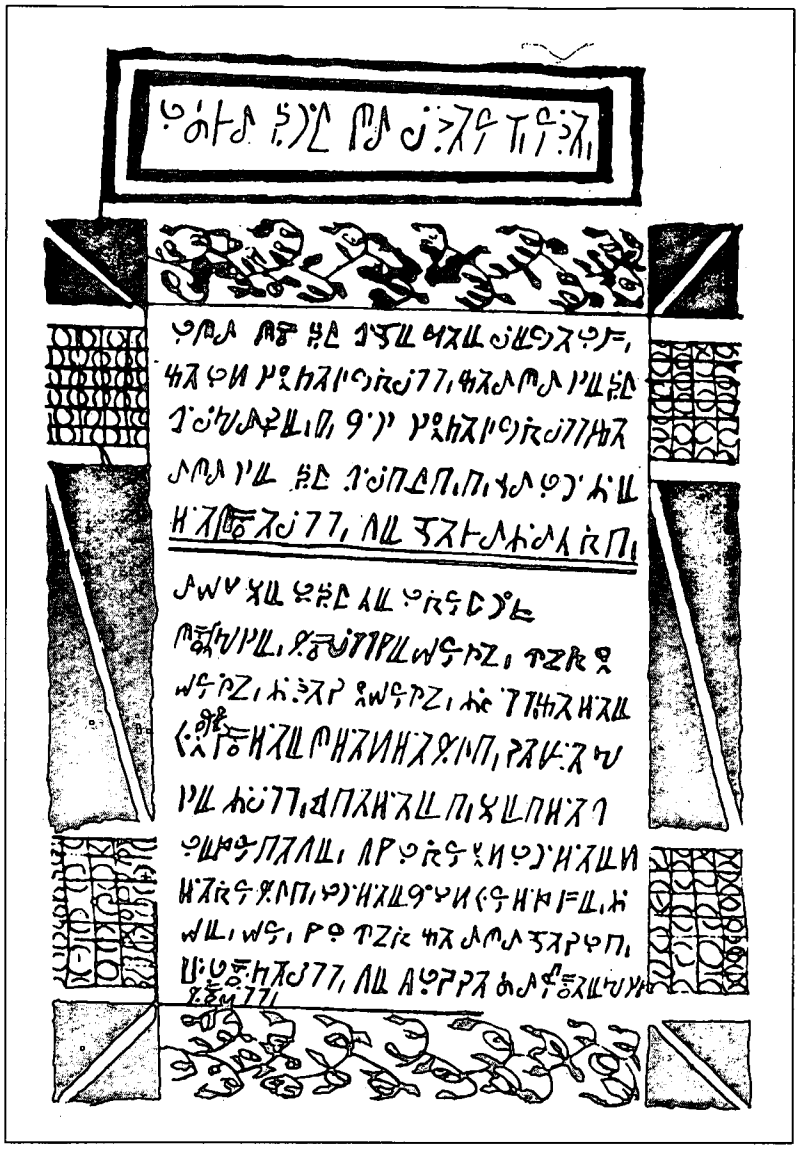

Figure 6.3. The title page of the Livre du Sultan Njoya.
(Schmitt 1963: 56)

The literature also omits to what extent Njoya and his associates drew on pre-existing pictographic symbols or other aspects of a visual tradition, when beginning their script. Geary discusses aspects of traditional Bamum iconography, used in woodcarving, beadwork and other kinds of court art; but there seems to be no correspondence between the designs discussed and the signs or letters developed in the script (1983: 92 - 95). This iconography is witness to the existence of a previous symbolic visual tradition, but Geary does not make

clear how extensive or standardised this was. Most of the peoples of the area seem to have had such an iconography, but the Bamum seem to be alone in the region in developing an actual script. The Bamum are unique in moving from the "contextual use of... non-linear graphic systems, which may convey a message by the use of one or more graphic symbols but which do not record the spoken sequence of a particular language" to a script, that is, a "linear system of writing, recording the spoken sequence of a particular language" (Dalby 1968: 159).

Dalby does mention the existence of a script among the Bagam, a neighbouring people, but unfortunately he believes that no records exist of it (1968: 158) (Dugast and Jeffries 1950: 9). His comments make it seem likely that it was derived from the Bamum script rather than being an independent invention.

Of the systems in the literature, *Nsibidi* signs may be the most comparable to the early stages of the Bamum script. They are found close to the Bamum country, amongst peoples who speak quite closely related languages. The Bamum in fact have a parallel to the *Ngbe* society, called *Mutngu*, which also serves a policing and lawmaking function, but there is no indication in the literature that its members made use of the *Nsibidi* kind of visual communication. There seems to be no consistent link between the designs of the respective signs, but a comparison of the function of *Nsibidi* signs in Ejagham society, with those functions in Bamum life, might prove differently.

The Vai Script of Liberia

Further examples of indigenous scripts can be found in the Liberia/ Sierra Leone/Cote d'Ivoire region of West Africa. Again the stimulus to the invention of scripts was external, but in these societies the inventors moved straight to

the syllabic model, without preliminary pictographic/ideographic stages.

The oldest, and a major influence on several of the others, was that of the Vai people of Liberia and Sierra Leone (see Appendix 1, Figure 27). The Vai speak a Mande language, as do the majority of the other inventors of scripts in this region. Their script was invented by Momolu Duwalu Bukele and others in about 1833. Like Njoya, Bukele claimed that the inspiration for the script came in a dream. He was also acquainted with the idea of writing, Liberia having a sizeable Muslim population, and having been open to missionaries, trading and slavery since the seventeenth century. According to Dalby, Bukele:

> was much impressed by the way in which [Europeans] were able to communicate over long distances by letter, and he became consumed by the idea that the Vai people should have their own form of writing. It seems almost certain that the main impetus behind the ... Vai script was the desire to acquire the power and advantages that were seen to belong to the literate Europeans, Afro-American settlers and Mandingo Muslims with whom the Vai came in contact. (1967: 9)

Bukele and Njoya thus probably had similar motivations in developing their systems: the acquisition of power, knowledge, cultural independence, and a secret communication method for their own people.

These men must have believed that linguistic systems had a comparative advantage over pictographs, in terms of accuracy, a comparatively small number of signs to learn, precise repeatability and detail, and secrecy from those unfamiliar with the script, for which they were willing to sacrifice the greater richness of expression found in oral traditions. This advantage only became significant with the arrival of the competing Arabic and Roman scripts, in the

hands of more powerful societies who used these very capacities of alphabetic or scribal literacy as a means of establishing and maintaining power over the Vai, e.g., "the way in which they were able to communicate by letter over long distances", (Dalby 1967: 9) was an obvious advantage over non-literate peoples, whether for purposes of politics, trade or culture.

The Vai, like other Mande-speaking peoples, are believed to have made use of pictographic symbols, but the generally secret nature of such systems hinders comparison with the scripts. However, it is clear that the Vai script was developed in syllabic form from the beginning, without the early pictographic stages used by the Bamum.

The Vai and Bamum scripts are both syllabaries, and both are written from left to right, but there is little other comparison. As given by Dalby, the 1962 version of Vai consists of approximately 210 signs, some of which have alternate versions (1967: 40 - 43). Coulmas gives 220 (1996: 538). These are combinations of the seven vowels with the twenty-six consonants and six nasals of the Vai language. The script was extensively revised and clarified during the first half of the Twentieth Century, principally by Momolu Massaquoi and A. Klingenheben. Many of the 1962 characters are completely different to those originally designed by Bukele, but the revisions seem to have helped the Vai script to maintain its popularity, at least up until the mid-1960s when Dalby was writing. This is particularly remarkable because the Vai are also literate in both the Roman and Arabic scripts.

Klingenheben also had a set of Vai type cast in Germany, but according to Dalby, it seems never to have been used (1967: 14). He gives no further information, and no other source found mentions its fate, so it is not clear whether

it still exists. No information on contemporary usage of the system has been found, or on whether it has been converted to digital type. The fact that all the examples found have been reproductions of hand-written characters further means that it is impossible to tell whether the system uses a consistent baseline or cap line. It appears not to use separations between words, and the punctuation marks introduced by Massaquoi are not consistently used. These features are, however, found in many of these scripts, because they have not had time to become as formalised as the Roman alphabet.

The Ge'ez or Ethiopic Script

The syllabic type of writing system seems to have been the most popular amongst the inventors of scripts in West Africa. Despite the alphabetic form of both the widely used Roman and Arabic scripts, which together cover almost the whole continent, all but one of the Mande-based systems have been syllabaries. This is probably because of the structure of their languages, which use the syllable as the morpheme, or basic unit of language for constructing meaning. The syllabic form has a very long history in Africa: it is used by one of the oldest extant scripts in the continent, the Ge'ez or Ethiopic script of Ethiopia (see Appendix 1, Figures 28 - 29).

The study of Ethiopic is very different to that of the Bamum or Vai scripts. Ethiopic has been researched since at least the eighteenth century. Much of this investigation has been related to archaeology, linguistics, or theology and has generally been conducted by Europeans, but Ethiopic has a large body of indigenous scholarship to make its own case.

Ethiopic has been in use for writing the Ge'ez language since at least the Fourth Century AD, although it has been adapted to contemporary Amharic,

the official language of Ethiopia, and some of the other Ethiopian tongues (Haile 1996: 569). Its origins are not agreed in detail, although it is related to the ancient South Arabian Sabaean script. Haile suggests that it is derived from this or a similar script from the Arabian peninsula (1996: 569), but Bekerie, taking an Afrocentric approach, argues vociferously that the script originated in Ethiopia and spread to Arabia from there (1997: 31 - 52). O'Connor gives a 'family tree' of Epigraphic Semitic scripts which provides an earlier date for the Arabian scripts than for Ethiopic, but does not provide any evidence to back up his dates and chronology (1996 (1): 89).

Ethiopia and South Arabia seem to have shared a common culture for much of the millenium before the Christian Era, and decreasingly for about four hundred years after. Davidson suggests the Fifth Century BC for the beginnings of the Ethiopian society, which "owed much to southern Arabia"(1991: 44). He describes the Ethiopian version of the Biblical legend of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, in which the Queen bore a son, Menelik, by Solomon. Menelik then became the founder of the Ethiopian royal line. Sheba, or Saba, was supposed to be in Southern Arabia, but this begs the question of why an apparently only son would abandon his own country to found another at such a distance. It seems more likely that there was a common society on both sides of the Red Sea at this time, and according to the Encyclopedia Britannica (1978: 6/1007) the borders of the Ethiopian State of Aksum did cover this very area during the Fourth Century AD.

However, the process of cultural differentiation from Southern Arabia had begun as early as the Fourth Century BC with the arrival of Greek contacts, and was accelerated by the arrival of Christianity in the Fourth Century AD on the African side, and by the explosion of Islam in the Eighth Century AD on

the Arabian. With the Arab invasion of Egypt and the subsequent isolation of Christian Ethiopia, Ethiopic was to continue without subsequent outside influence; indeed, the external pressure of Islam encouraged the Ethiopians to maintain a fixed version of their script as part of defending their culture and beliefs.

Both the earliest version of Ethiopic and the South Arabian script lack any indication of vowels. In this they are similar to a number of the Semitic scripts, including Hebrew, Arabic, and Berber, although these scripts are all believed to have developed from Phoenician, the root script also of the Roman alphabet. Haile does not give dates for Ethiopic inscriptions without vowel signs, so one can't assess the accuracy of his sequence of development (1996: 569 - 571). The 'alphabetic' or conventional order of Ethiopic differs quite radically from the Semitic scripts, which all follow the order ABGD (see Appendix 1, Figures 28 - 29).

The original Ge'ez script had 26 consonant symbols, now increased to 31 for Amharic. Vowel signs appear to have been developed contemporaneously with the arrival of Christianity in Ethiopia (c. 350 A.D.), and Haile infers that this development is likely to have been occasioned by the expansion in teaching caused by the new religion. These vowel signs, or additions to signs, take a variety of forms within two main types: small horizontal lines, with a bend downwards at the end; or a small circle or half-circle, attached to various places on the consonant character.

In some cases, a leg or downward extension of the vertical stroke is added to carry these. The placing of these diacritical marks determines the vowel. There are general rules in the system, so that as can be seen from the table, for example, the vowel *'u'* is indicated by attaching a short horizontal line to the mid-

dle of the right hand side of the letter; or to the bottom of the right hand side of the letter to show *'i'* (Figure 6.4.).

	l(v)	h(v)	m(v)	r(v)	s(v)
u					
i					

Figure 6.4. Examples of Ethiopic vowel marks (circled).
(Derived from Haile 1996: 573)

However, many of the characters have been altered over the course of time – the *'i'* marks are now often carried on a leg extending downwards from what would have been the base of the character, for example (see 'li' character above, for example). There are also a large number of inconsistencies or very loosely constructed rules, e.g.

> Two signs to represent the vowel 'o' are discernible. The rule for their distribution is not clear. With some characters...it is a circle...placed on or near the top of the character. If the character has two or more legs, the sign is a vertical line attached to the middle bottom of the character or to the end of the left leg. (Haile 1996: 572).

Further inconsistencies can be found in Appendix 1, Figures 28 - 29, so that the system has to be described as 26 consonants times the seven vowels, plus 20 signs for diphthongs. There were also numeric signs, but Arabic numerals are now used. There appears to be no zero in Ethiopic.

Visually, Ethiopic has a strong vertical emphasis, with pronounced thick and

thin strokes, derived from the vertical positioning of the broad nibbed bamboo or feather pen traditionally used. This is softened somewhat by the many curved or circular characters, but the emphasis remains noticeable whether the script is written or printed: there is no cursive version of the script, because there are rules for drawing the characters.

> The characters should be drawn starting at the upper left side and proceeding forward and down to the lower right side; that is, the stroke of the pen should be, as a rule, from top to bottom, never from bottom to top or from right to left. No part should remain on the left or on top to be added. The stroke from top to bottom may be slightly angled at its two ends if necessary only to connect that part with the remaining body of the character. (Haile 1996: 575)

There is no upper or lower case. The characters mostly lie on a common baseline, but vary considerably in height, giving quite an uneven appearance. There are also several characters which hover above the baseline, and others whose main body is supported only by a leg or vowel mark, making them look unbalanced to the outsider's eye. Words are separated by two dots arranged vertically, like a colon; sentences likewise by four dots, like a double colon. No other punctuation is mentioned in either Bekerie or Haile, although Bekerie does ascribe pictographic, ideographic, astronomic, numeric and syllabic qualities to the script, plus functions of philosophy, astronomy, numerology and aesthetics, as well as grammar and linguistics (1997: 74 - 100).

There are, of course, very many handwritten examples of the system on historical paintings, manuscripts, and so on (see examples, Figures 6.5 and 6.6). The script was converted to lead type as early as 1539 by Portuguese typefounders in Lisbon, after a printing press had been imported into Ethiopia in

Figure 6.5. Miracles of Mary (17th Century) : the tale of the Bishop who cut off his hand. (Grierson (ed.) 1993: 86)

Figure 6.6. (±Turn of 14th Century) Acts of Saints and Martyrs: Saint Eupraxia. (Grierson (ed.) 1993: 151.)

1515 (Febvre and Martin 1984: 212), and again in the Eighteenth or Nineteenth Century at the Imprimerie Royale in Paris (Southall 1997: 39 - 40). It is the official Ethiopian writing system and so, unusually for African scripts, it has been converted to digital type: one example is the Ethiopic CDS font produced by Ecological Linguistics, and used by Haile (1996: 569 - 575).

Ethiopic was isolated in East Africa for hundreds of years, confined by surrounding Islamic influences and hostile geography. This isolation and the sense of threat which it encouraged contributed to the system remaining unchanged for most of its existence. Ethiopia was also one of the only countries in Africa that maintained its independence throughout the colonial period, some regions remaining unconquered even during the Italian occupation (1935 - 1941). The West African writing systems have all been in existence for much shorter periods, and of course their societies all felt the effects of colonialism. Whether Ethiopic's numerological, astronomical, religious, and other overtones are due to its isolation, or to links with writing systems with similar overtones (e.g. Hebrew) is unclear. Despite the similar cosmological/social/political roles of the non-linguistic systems in the rest of the Continent, their writing systems appear not to have developed these features. This could be because they are simply too recent, or possibly their inventors saw these systems as such a break with the past and its ways of thinking about graphic symbols, that they no longer saw these kinds of connections as relevant. The design of Ethiopic clearly represents an attempt at the construction of a much more systematic way of combining vowels and consonants in single signs, despite its inconsistencies, than any of the other systems.

These sample systems serve as an introduction to the large amount of material on graphic systems in Africa, and as a means of indicating further potential

research. This chapter has attempted to show the great variety to be found amongst these systems, and yet in functional terms they are consistently comparable with many of the graphic systems, particularly from Europe, that form the basis of the History of Graphic Design in the Western world.

CHAPTER 7: APPLIED DESIGN WORK

This Chapter begins with an explanation of the applied design work undertaken as part of the project (Appendix 2). It also the methodologies used in the design, it describes the purpose and intention of the applied work, the process of development used and the rationale for that process. The work produced in this research project has a number of purposes. Firstly, its intention is to publicise and promote awareness of the existence of the considerable body of African graphic communication systems, which have largely been ignored in global History and Theory of Graphic Design texts. Specifically it is intended for inclusion in the new approach to Design History in the Department of Graphic Design at the DIT. Secondly, this body of design work hopes to demonstrate through application that these characters and systems can be relevant and useful to contemporary South African Graphic Design practice.

In addition it is intended primarily that this applied work should be used in an educational setting, and in this context it is intended to provide a balanced view for South African students. However, the wider it can be spread beyond this limited audience, to schools, libraries, or any kind of creative workshop, the more effective it can be in advocating the cultural value of these systems. The development of the posters makes this feasible.

The applied section of this project consists of three main elements:

1) a series of informative posters (see Appendix 2, figures 1 - 8). These illustrate the graphic systems discussed, with brief background information on each. This set of posters is intended as a visual introduction to the project. It was not intended that they should carry comprehensive factual information. The posters cover the non-linguistic systems of the Luchazi, Ohendo, Fon, Ejagham and Zulu; the Bamum systems, as an apparently unque example of a people developing a system from a non-linguistic to a linguistic basis; and two examples of syllabaries: Vai and Ethiopic.

2) a number of mostly smaller pieces showing how selected individual characters could be developed and used (see Appendix 2, figures 9 - 12a). These attempt to clarify the characters visually, in view of the fact that only reproductions (and in many cases photocopies of reproductions) were available, and thus accuracy was in question. They represent an attempt to adapt and develop sample characters for the computer medium, as opposed to the original manual methods of production. A palette of bright colours and blends was used for these, in order to create eye-catching and visually attractive imagery.

A small number of others have been handled in a much more analytical fashion in developing them as typographic characters (Appendix 2, figures 13 a - d). The typographic characters have also been restricted to a much plainer use of colour, in order to focus attention on their design.

Adapting a complete system for the computer would pose a number of problems, particularly the number of characters. None of the writing systems has anything close to as few characters as our own alphabet, and so fitting all the characters onto the standard keyboard would present diffi-

culties. Conversely, some of the pictographic and ideographic groups, on the other hand, have too few examples to form an extensive font. Electronic clip-art might thus be more feasible.

Some of the characters from the Bamum systems (as an example) have been further developed into more decorative posters, illustrating some uses that could be made of them, if applied to contemporary Graphic Design (Appendix 2, figures 12 b – d).

3) Design work of various kinds was also required to illustrate parts of this dissertation, including the illustrations of the eight systems discussed, the tables of systems (Tables 4.1 a - f, p. 84 - 89), and the maps showing their locations (Figures 4.1 and 4.2, p. 79, 80.). The eight systems discussed had to be collated, scanned, converted from the pixel-based scan to vector format, in order to reduce the file size, and then the figures and tables displaying them had to all be designed and produced.

The maps were the most time-consuming of all the applied work. Firstly, it was necessary to scan and retrace a line political map of the continent. The various language groups had to be classified, as mentioned earlier, and each language group located, then placed on the map. Some language groups extend over a wide area, so the location given is typical, rather than the only one. All the language groups in a given family were identified by the same colour, to show the linguistic relationships even where the languages may be separated geographically.

Use of Software.

The process of the practical work on the systems themselves began by scanning the character into an Apple Macintosh computer and converting it from the pixel-based scan to vector artwork by means of Adobe Streamline, then transferring it into Macromedia Freehand for further work. Characters are typically reproduced in the literature at sizes of from 5 - 10mm, and so must be greatly enlarged to be big enough to work on. Enlargement can distort the image, which must then be corrected, but a vector image can be clarified or simplified further if necessary. Some guesswork was involved when the original was of poor quality or more than usually small. This process was used for all the characters reproduced, whether left at this stage and used in the text or on the posters, or analysed and developed further for the experimental pieces.

Next, a structural diagram of the character was superimposed, to show its construction as far as could be ascertained. From this point on a more aesthetic approach was used. Coloured backgrounds, layering of the different stages, multiplication of the image and so on, were all employed to investigate some of the possible visual effects. Simple Freehand techniques were used, as it was intended to emphasise the visual nature of each character, rather than the effects possible in such programmes. Vector artwork was also desirable because of the small files generated, for ease of handling and printing. For example, no use has been made in the final pieces of Adobe Photoshop, one of the most popular graphics programmes, because of the large file sizes it produces, and because of the problems of enlarging pixel artwork.

A small number of characters, particularly from syllabaries, were given a different treatment. Once the character was "cleaned up" via Streamline and Freehand, it was then altered according to design characteristics of a particular

Roman alphabet typeface. The intention of this was to discover whether the visual nature of the character could be retained, when subjected to the sort of development that a Roman letter has undergone over time, and thus whether the idea of digitising these scripts might be visually acceptable. In the design of a contemporary digital version of, for example, the Palatino typeface, individual letters may have changed a great deal, sometimes over hundreds of years. The changes in the Roman alphabet render many ancient or historical letterforms unintelligible to the modern eye: for example the German Textura (Figure 7.1.).

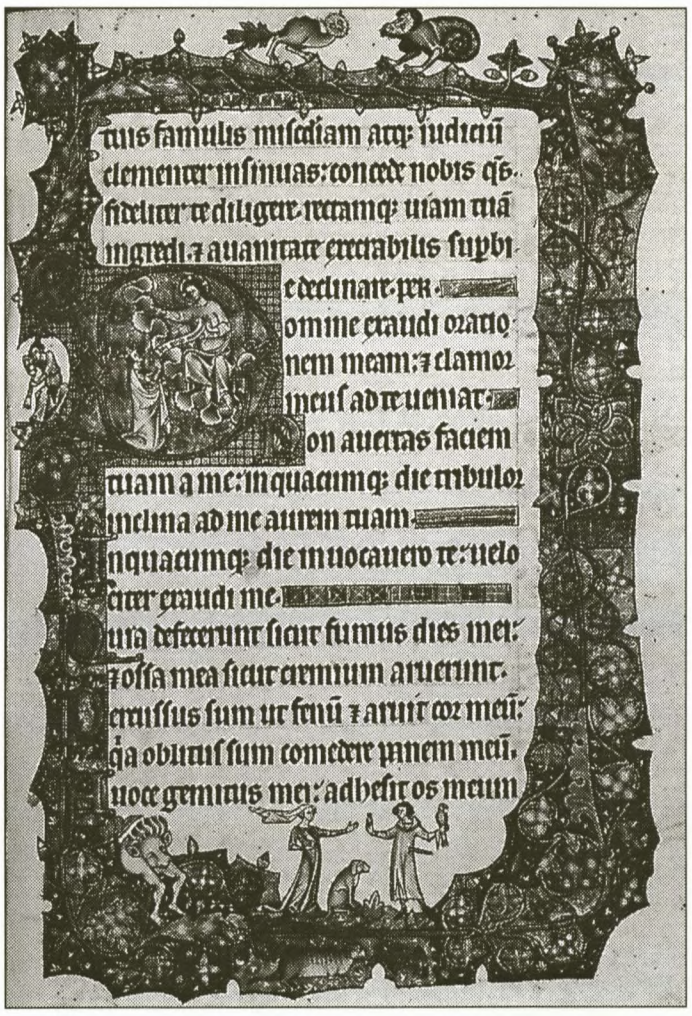

Figure 7.1. An example of the Medieval "Textura" script.
(Meggs 1998: 51)

The reference typefaces were limited to well-known faces of strong character, that were suggested in the design of the African scripts themselves: for the Vai and Kpelle characters Times (italic and bold), Palatino, Bodoni and Gill Sans were used. Gill is less successful than the serif faces for the syllabic characters, as these syllabaries have a character that suggests a serif face. Gill Sans was also used as a basis for adaptations of some of the Bamum pictographs, where its strong geometric character seemed more appropriate (see Appendix 2, figure 13 a - d).

Generally this process was not used for the posters, as it was intended that the characters shown should be closer to the original. These posters employed a graphic identity consisting of : a series logo; a descriptive title; a small map of Africa, showing the location of the system; and a text panel describing the system and/or the particular character(s) shown; arranged on a three/four column grid. Elements of this identity were repositioned from poster to poster as necessary for compositional reasons. Each design centred around a single large character from the system and the elements of the identity, in combination with other smaller characters and a range of backgrounds and borders.

The rationale for this process was that it was intended to establish cohesion for the series, yet to introduce enough variation that each system's poster would be distinctive; and to display both the imagery and the text in a legible and attractive fashion. The visual aspect of the posters was emphasised over the textual, because I felt that these posters were aimed mostly at a visually-oriented audience, many of whom would be resistant to a text-heavy approach.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

This study had as its main research aim the collection, analysis and classification of information about indigenous African systems of symbolic graphics and writing systems. It further attempted to situate these systems within the discourse of Graphic Design, and its History and Theory. Finally, it made use of examples of the systems and characters found, in the production of a body of applied Graphic Design work, which could subsequently be used to promote awareness of this body of cultural production and advocate its further use and study.

The motivation for the project has been described in some detail in Chapter 1, beginning with the lack of attention paid to material of African origin in texts of both History and Theory of Graphic Design and of Fine Art. The necessity for history in the study of Graphic Design has been discussed, situating both local and international aspects in relation to Marwick's description of history as being "to society as memory is to the individual" (2001: 80).

Consequently, the history of Africa has been briefly summarised as far as it is likely to have affected the production and survival of Graphic Systems. This summary has mentioned the relationships between early European explorers and their African hosts, and how that relationship was corrupted into the Slave Trade, and some of the effects of that period on the continent. Changing attitudes to the "Other" have been described in terms of the development of

racism, particularly the so-called "scientific" version of the Nineteenth Century Colonialist period.

The study has been further motivated by some of the consequences of Globalisation, such as the effects of the increasing use and importance of English, described by Potenza as causing the "silencing and loss of a great deal of [non-first-language-English students'] home and community experiences, of their cultures and identities" (2001: 4); and the related emphasis on international culture and commerce. This emphasis has been taken by this study as having an ideological element, following McCoy's comment (Chapter 1, p. 19), and it has thus concluded that there is a necessity to revalue the cultural material collected in the course of the study.

The nature of communication, culture, and visual and graphic communication have been described in this thesis, as they function in both oral and literate societies, particularly when dealing with the dissemination of knowledge. Some aspects of the theoretical background to graphic systems have been discussed with reference to how they represent meaning, and the resulting classification. This study largely follows the typology proposed by Dalby (1967: 3) and reproduced in Chapter 3, p. 69, as Table 3.1. The aim of these discussions was to clarify the criteria for inclusion in a field such as Graphic Design, and by identifying these criteria in the African material collected, situate it within Graphic Design. This process thus allows for the inclusion of such material in the syllabus of the History and Theory of Graphic Design course at the DIT.

The results of the data collection phase of the project, and the subsequent analysis and classification of the systems found, have been summarised in Tables 4.1 a - f, which list the systems for which reference was found, and has

classified them according to language group, location and main function, i.e. whether they are linguistic or non linguistic. Systems from eighty-three language groups have been included in this table, ranging from some consisting of reference to only a few pictographs, to others covering hundreds of symbols, or complex syllabic alphabets. As such, these tables, as well as the other information collected in the course of the research, are valuable as teaching material for the Graphic Design course at the DIT.

Firstly, they could be included in general cultural material aimed at exposing students to the richness and variety of African cultures, from which South Africa remains largely isolated, and promoting uderstanding of those cultures and their ways of thinking. Examples of non-linguistic systems, such as the Luchazi, Fon, Nsibidi, or early Bamum symbols, are comparable with many of the non-linguistic signs and symbols used in contemporary commercial Graphic Design, and so can serve to illuminate the process of developing these marks and the layers of meaning that they can carry.

Similarly, the linguistic systems would provide comparative examples for students studying the development of the Roman alphabet, in terms of different approaches to the graphic representation of sound and speech. The late Bamum, Ethiopic, Vai or any other of the West African syllabaries and alphabets would be useful here. Finally, these systems could provide inspiration for students wishing to explore relatively unknown ground in the process of designing typefaces, logos and other forms of Graphic Design, such as have been developed in the applied design aspect of this project (Appendix 2).

As mentioned earlier, the applied design work produced for the project can also be utilised both as teaching material within the Department, and as advo-

cacy material in a wider context. The intentions in developing it included its use in public or community settings, as a way of increasing the general societal awareness of this aspect of the African cultural heritage, as it is one that remains largely unknown. The posters and other design work could be distributed to schools, other colleges and libraries, and could accompany public lectures or similar presentations.

A great deal of information about a wide range of linguistic and non-linguistic graphic systems produced or adapted in Africa was collected in the course of the study. There is far more information than could be presented in this thesis or the applied work, in fact far more than this researcher would have thought possible when starting. Most of this information has not been collected together in any single published form that could be found. As mentioned, at least eighty-three language cultures are on record as having made use of at least one graphic system. The problem is that many of them have either not been researched or written up at all, or only in passing reference to another system or subject.

Tantalising clues to further systems continue to crop up: in the *London Review of Books* of 12th December 2002, in a book review of *The 'Diligent': A Voyage through the Worlds of the Slave Trade,* by Robert Harms, Megan Vaughan writes of a script invented by King Agaja of Danhomé, as early as the 1720s. No further information is included, but the incidental nature of the reference confirms that further information can still be found. Again, two footnotes in Dalby refer without examples to two collections of a further *eighty-four* and *fifty-six* alphabets respectively, from Arabic sources of the 11th and 12th centuries AD (1968: 171,172). Clearly, Arabic sources could provide a wealth of information on North and perhaps East African systems, if accessible and translated.

Most of the information on these systems has not been extensively studied from the point of view of Graphic Design. Dalby's work (1967, 1968, 1969), comparing the formal nature of the systems and individual characters, and the conclusions he draws concerning possible influences and relationships, is a rare example of the sort of analysis that would be useful to Graphic Designers and historians of Graphic Design and visual communication in Africa. The consequence of this omission is that this study can contribute to an expansion of the content of the subject. Study of these systems in comparison with Roman-alphabet typography, or the use of pictograms in the processes of design may provide fresh perspectives for designers, and the historical study of the systems certainly has a part to play in the recovery and re-evaluation of African culture(s). The study therefore suggests, in the quantities of clues and incomplete information about many of these systems, that vast amounts of research could still be done.

Suggestions for further research

With a subject as broad as this, there are obviously many gaps in the study. Despite the best efforts of our librarians, it has not always been possible to locate all the references needed. Even such a well-known pioneering work as Griaule and Dieterlen's text *Signes Graphiques Soudanaises* (1951), has not proven possible to access. As a result it has not been possible to cover the full, extremely over-ambitious range intended for the project. The research has continuously turned up additional references to more and more systems, and in order to bring the project to a conclusion, many of them could not have been followed up. Consequently, the scope for further research is vast.

In addition, the study would have been improved from a practical point of

view by the extension of the visual analysis to cover all the characters of the systems covered, so that a comprehensive assessment and comparison of the systems could have been carried out. Dalby (1967, 1968, 1969), as mentioned, has attempted this with regard to the systems he covers, and Faik-Nzuji has compared a number of systems in terms of individual characters' meanings, in her text *Tracing Memory* (1996) but there remains no single work covering meaning, design and social context of both linguistic and non-linguistic systems, as far as this study could ascertain.

From a general point of view, the most obvious and overwhelming conclusion to be drawn from this project is the huge quantity of material that exists in Africa that could be studied, and should be before it disappears under the onslaught of global media culture or of political upheaval. Many areas that could be extremely promising as research destinations, such as the Liberia/Sierra Leone home of several indigenous scripts, or the Democratic Republic of Congo source of numerous non-linguistic systems, are off-limits because of the violence and anarchy prevalent there (October 2003).

Much of the research that has been done is now dated, and it would be valuable to discover what changes have occurred since, for example, Griaule or Dalby conducted their research in the 1950s and 1960s. Given that recent publications such as Daniels and Bright (1996) still refer to this research suggests that no more recent material exists. In South Africa itself, it is also clear that there is scope for research into indigenous forms of visual communication, as a means of extending the local History and Theory of Graphic Design.

In addition to primary research into the history, social context, development and design of graphic systems, there is scope for analysis of how visual com-

munication functioned in both traditional or pre-colonial African societies, and today's post-colonial ones. Comparisons could be made with the ways that these forms of visual communication function in Western societies, with a view to making Africa's versions more accessible to a modern audience. There is some material on this subject, but either it is produced mostly within social-science disciplines such as anthropology or archaeology, rather than creative or visual ones; or it tends to be fairly superficial accounts for tourists, concentrating on the stereotype of "colourful natives", rather than any serious investigation of a visual culture.

Similarly, there is a need to collect and analyse material which deals with contemporary Graphic Design or visual communication from different parts of Africa. Again, there is some material on this, but it mostly concentrates on aesthetics, or even collectibility, rather than visual communication in a social context. Even within South Africa, which has possibly the most 'developed' society (according to Western definitions) in Africa south of the Equator, little has been written on the history of more typical contemporary forms of Graphic Design and advertising within the dominant culture, let alone any other sections of society. All this work could be collated into a history of Visual Communication or Graphic Design for Africa.

I believe that this research would not only be of academic value: there could be significant social and cultural value for both the students or academics who conduct it, and for the general reader. Studying this material produces a new respect for the societies from which it sprang. Its richness and variety, its great conceptual and cultural range, and the awareness of the history of the continent and its peoples, all contribute to an eye-opening experience, and this researcher believes that it cannot fail to evoke pride in Africa's achievements.

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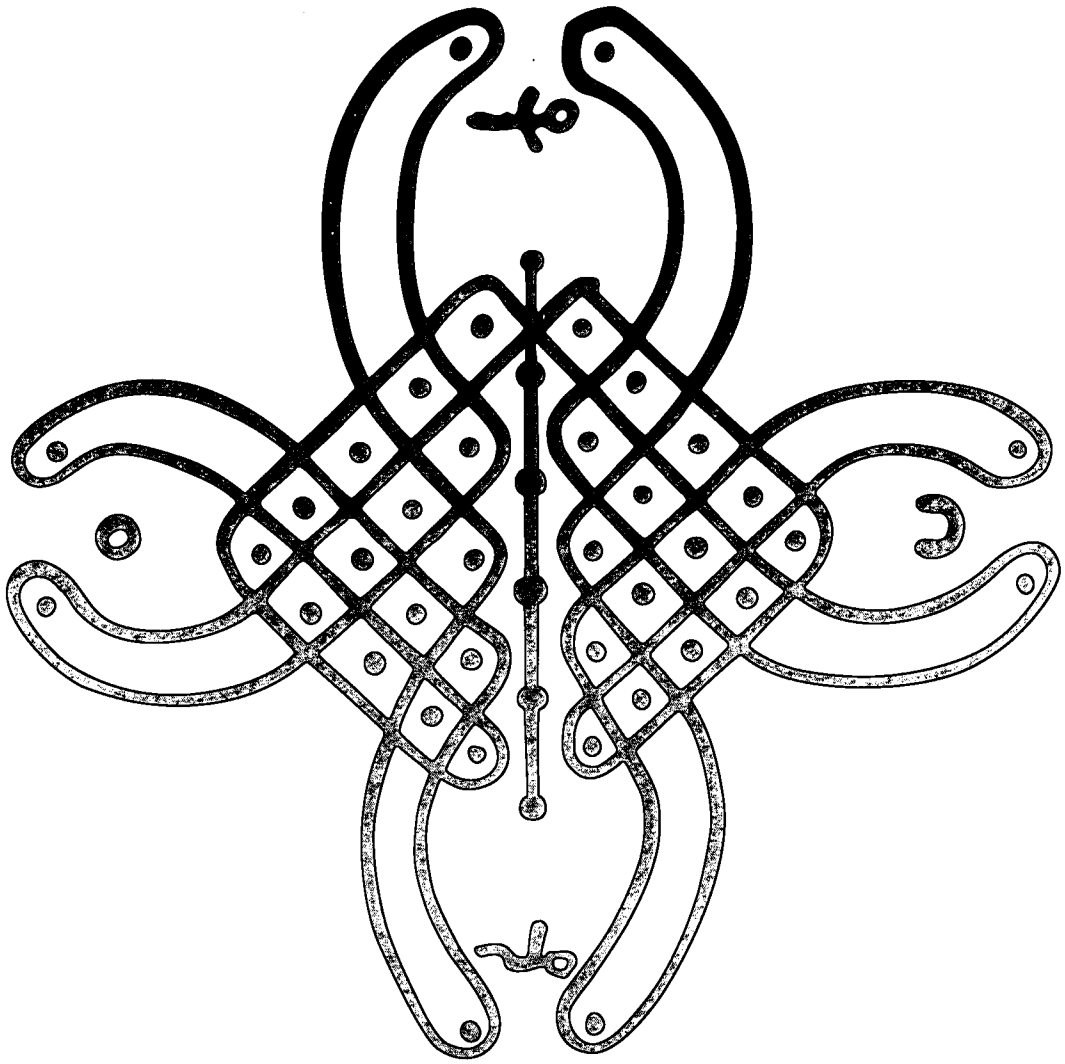
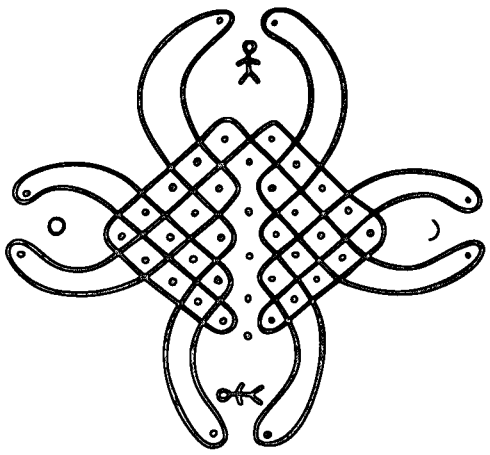
APPENDIX I:

The Graphic Systems described in Chapters 5 and 6.

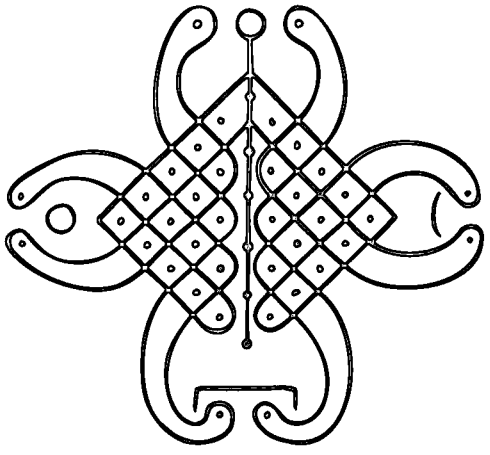


"The Luchazi, Chokwe and Lunda, who live in the East of Angola, the South Centre of [the Democratic Republic of Congo], and the North-West of Zambia refer to this symbol as *Kalunga*, ...which makes up the lexico-semantic field of "the sacred" and of the words designating "God". The *Kalunga* symbol represents the primordial Being, the infinite, a "thing without beginning or end", which contains all creatures within itself. The small sign at the top represents *Kalunga*, the Creator himself; the small sign at the bottom represents man; the small circle at the left is the sun, and the crescent at the right is the moon.
The vertical line at the centre marked with six dots indicates the route that leads to God. The dots in each of the little squares represent all the creatures which have existed, exist now, or are to come. These little squares are circumscribed by a continuous line that surrounds everything and returns to itself. It has no beginning or end: it is infinite, eternal. Drawing the *Kalunga* symbol is normally accompanied by a mythic recital which explains why the sun comes up every day, why the moon has a 28-day cycle, and why man has to die." (Trans. from Faik-Nzuji 1992: 83-4)
NB: For this story in full, see Kubik 1987: 246.

Appendix 1, figure 1. Tusona – Luchazi ideograms 1

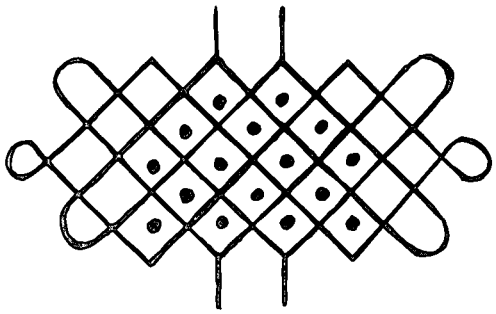


"The top of this design indicates the realm of God, whom the Tu-Chokwe, like the Bakongo, call *Kalunga*. There a human figure is shown standing. Twinned serpentlike forces mark the cosmic criss-cross, framing the centre of the design where nucleated lozenges iindicate the sign of the muyombo tree. Myth says that God asked the stars "On which side of the cosmos is man found?"And the stars replied, "On the side opposite yours." God observed: "Then man will die," thus identifying the bottom of the ideogram as representing the realm of the dead, and explaining why the human figure therein represented lies in a recumbent pose of eternal sleep." (Thompson 1983: 189)

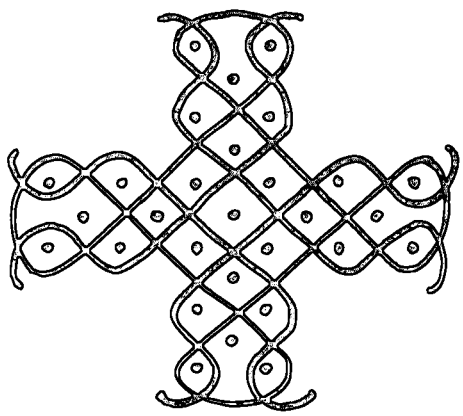


The Luchazi of Angola refer to this symbol as *Kutanga* – Creation:"At the top and centre of the creative cycle is God – the Creator. On each side of Him there are creative "Arms" with a "Creative Agent" in each arm – again forming a Trinity. These agents create the Sun on the left, the Moon on the right, and, at the bottom, the Servants of God, represented by a bench on which they are seated while awaiting summons. The "Servants" include all created beings. In the middle lie the heavenly and earthly kingdoms in their varied spheres of activity. Extending down from God is the "*Nkoua*" the umbilical cord, the lifeline through which the Divine power flows and which energizes and makes possible the creative process. Through the lifeline He also communes with His creation and reveals himself in His manifold attributes." (Pearson 1977:25, reproduced in Kubik 1987: 246)

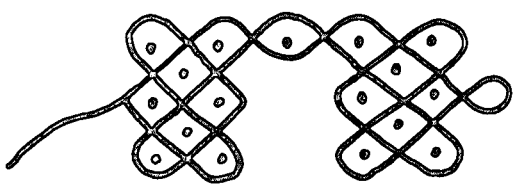
Figure 2. Tusona – Luchazi ideograms 2.



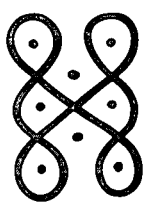
The duiker of bad omens
"This kasona portrays a frightening genetic mutation: a duiker born with two heads, something double, mirrored. And it cries with the opposite head when it is beaten. This is the 'duiker of bad omens', or 'duiker of mysteries',... Whoever meets such a monstrous creature is to be very unlucky." It is "*Chiyovo* ...something unnatural, unreal, even surreal, a perversion of how things shold normally behave, something monstrous which is at the same time amazing and miraculous. For anyone who sees such a thing it means misfortune, bad omen or bad destiny." (Kubik 1987: 46)



Vamphulu, the wildebeests.
"War came to the country. So they (the wildebeest) said, it has come to kill people. And they ran away into the forest.(...starting at the bottom and moving counterclockwise,...) When they heard the sound *mbi* they said, this is surely a gun! So then one of them said: 'What is this?' The other replied: 'I have heard *mbi*'. 'You have heard *mbi*?' 'Yes'. 'Hey, let us run away, over there they are just killing people!' Then they were off, scattered, in a moment they had run away. So they fled into the forest and survived." (Kubik 1987: 86)
Recorded in 1979, at the height of fighting in neighbouring Angola, ancestral home of the Luchazi.

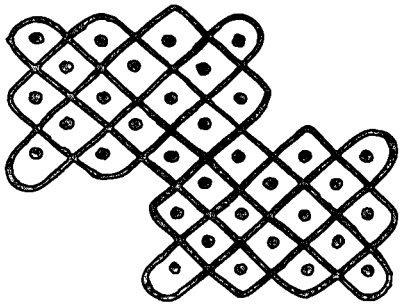


The genet cat has decayed at the waist
'[I]t died in the log fall trap.[Some time] after it had died in the trap came the very person who had set it. When he seized it at the neck , however, and shook the dust off, this genet disintegrated at the waist. "Friends! What a shame! My genet is rotten at the waist!" (Laughter)'
(Kubik 1987: 135)

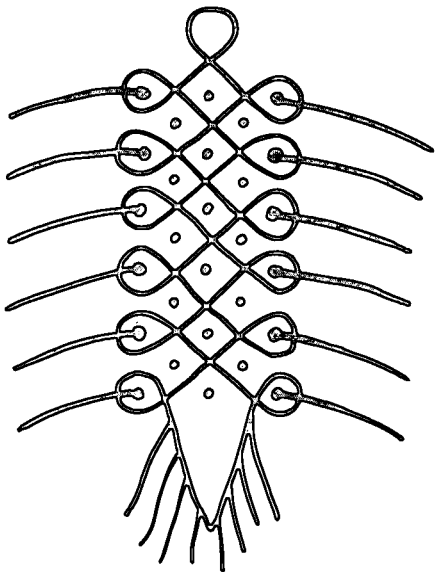


Two birds in the same nest.
(Dos Santos 1961: 63 , reproduced in Kubik 1987: 261)
No extensive comment given.

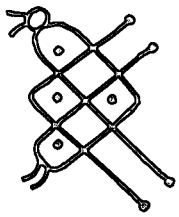
Figure 3. Tusona – Luchazi ideograms 3.



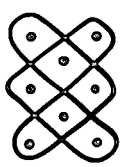
The Dassie in the rock
"*Kambava* is an animal living in the forest, it entered inside a rock. If one eats the head, it tastes very nice. If one eats the tail, it tastes very nice. It entered inside a rock. If one hacks at it body with an axe, *puzu!* a large piece is chipped off! And the corpse decayed in the rock."
(Kubik 1987: 87, 91)



The porcupine
"The porcupine is an animal of the forest, and it has quills.It is a big animal comparable to the pig. The quills are like its feathers. If you cross its way from the side it can kill you with its quills. The quills rise by themselves. Even a dog can die, if it crosses its way from the side."(Kubik 1987: 138)

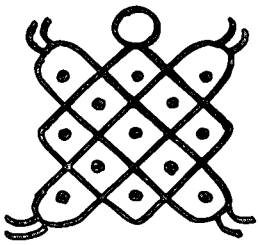


Kalumba, the hare
(Kubik 1987: 40)
No extensive comment given.

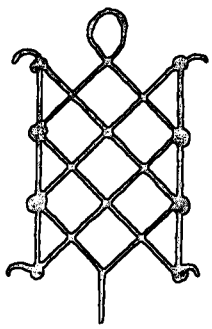


The one who pierces the intestines.
...a small animal which can kill the goats in the pen...of the type of animals which used to stay in the holes of trees.
(Kubik 1987: 120,122)

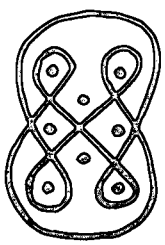
Figure 4. Tusona – Luchazi ideograms 4.



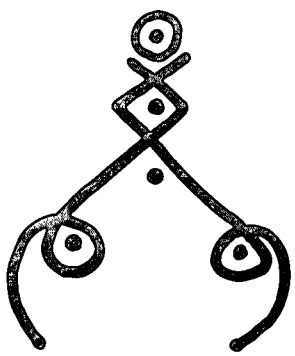
Suwangongo, the tortoise.
"The tortoise is a figure known from numerous Luchazi trickster stories. There is one cycle of stories devoted to the tortoise: *visimo vyambati* (stories of the tortoise)...*suwangongo* is a large land tortoise." (Kubik 1987:48, 50)



Mbati, the turtle.
This animal "is much used as a divining agent. The turtle ordinarily used is the small box turtle...When it is to be used for divining, all the flesh is removed and the shell is allowed to dry. The diviner then fills the shell with magical 'medicines' consisting of herbs, fat, seeds, etc. He then perforates the bottom of the shell so that it will spin on a pin and the movements and stations will be interpreted..."*Mbati*" is the untier of the knots and problems...The ancestral spirit is of course the real agent."(Pearson 1977: 81, reproduced in Kubik 1987: 265)

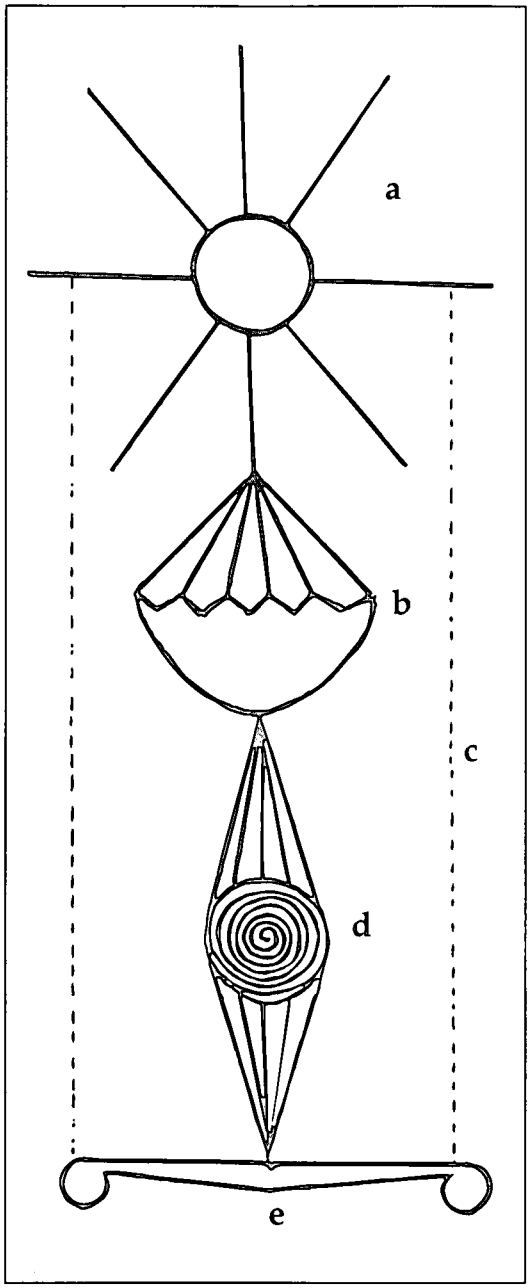


The nest of the *ndzili*-birds
(Kubik 1987: 37)
No extensive comment given.



Chambamba, the nightjar (a night bird)
(Kubik 1987:41)
No extensive comment given.

Figure 5. Tusona – Luchazi ideograms 5.



Sign of knowledge, or sign of mission.

This complex sign, used in the investiture of a new chief and the initiation of boys into adulthood, is made up of a number of lesser signs:

a) the horizon, the infinite, or the shining sun: the symbol of the sun's radiance, endless in time and space. The vertical line links this radiance with the speech of the chief; the diagonal lines represent the original gifts from God, with which the chief acquires the knowledge that he must dispense in all directions; the horizontal line permits contact with the ancestors.

b) the sign of the leopard, composed of the leopard's five teeth, which recall the five original divine gifts, and its mouth, open to receive the gifts and learn the knowledge received.

c) the ancestors, represented by the two vertical dotted lines, which mark human contact with them.The ancestors must constantly monitor the chief's speech, to ensure that his knowledge is passed on as it has been received.

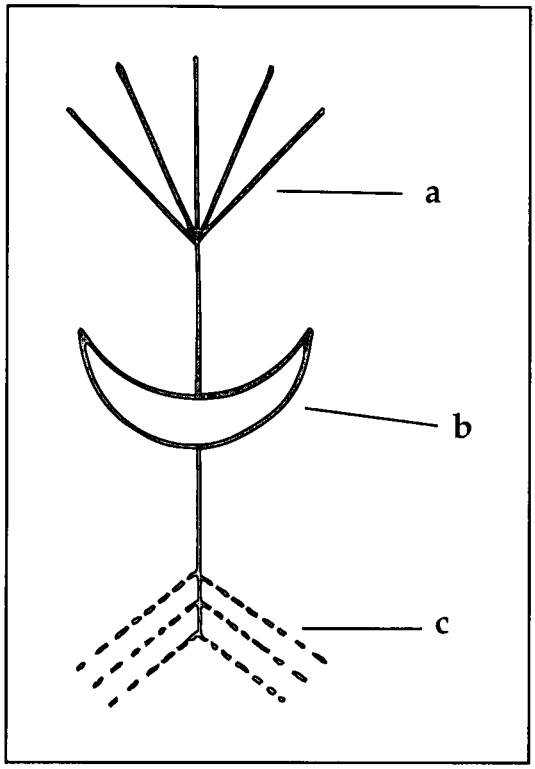
d) the divine origin of mankind, further composed of the spiral, which symbolises the origin itself, and two symbols of the 'hand of the invisible' on either side of the spiral. The base of one symbol touches the sign of the ancestors below; they return to the 'primal source ' the gifts received in their lives in order that they may be redistributed to the living. The other symbol gathers up these gifts and passes them on to the sign of the leopard.

e) the symbol of the human origin of mankind. Representing the ancestors, this sign symbolises the biological and cultural origin, parenthood and lineage. The ancestors are the support for every individual, the foundation on which every balanced community is built.

"Here are your ancestors, here is your Creator, here you are as chief, and here is the universe. Learn that everything has its origin, and those which are in you come from that origin. By your contact with them, you receive the power and the knowledge that you must pass on in order that all may be radiance and light. But do not forget that you fulfill you functions under the protection and control of the ancestors."

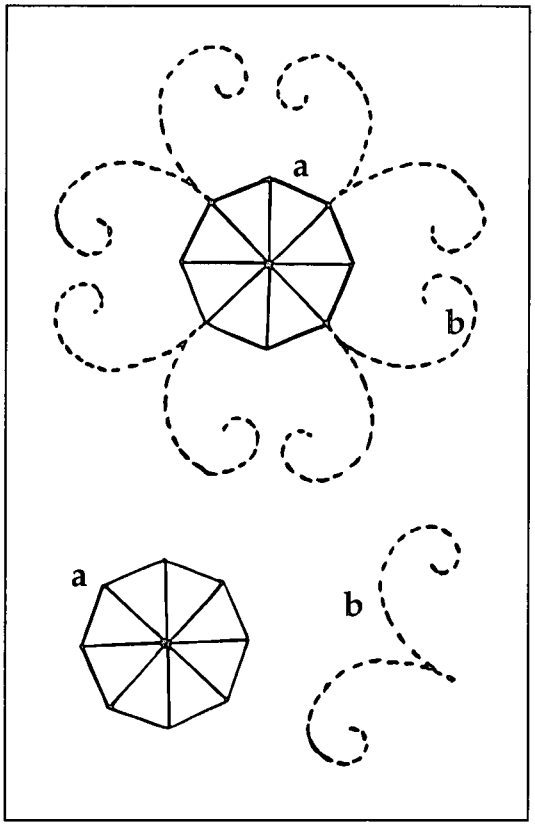
(Faik-Nzuji 1992: 94-99)

Figure 6. Ohendo Ritual Ideographs 1.



Sign of interdiction that protects.

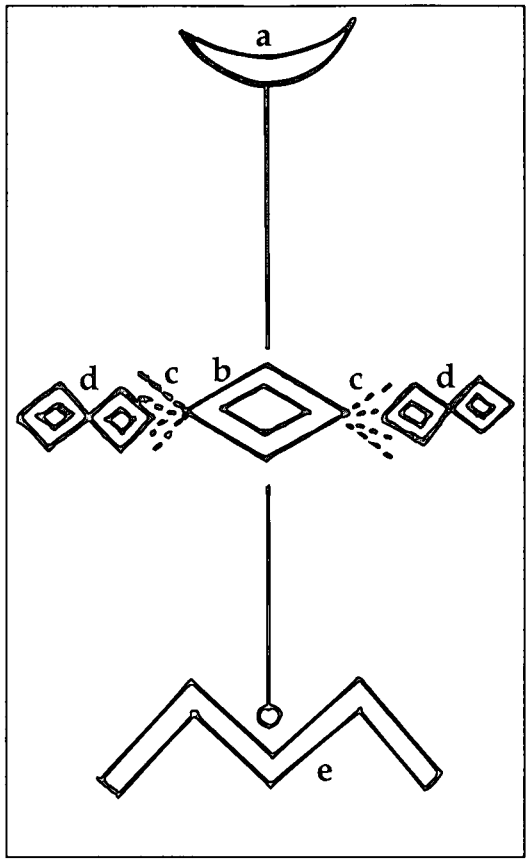
The symbol is composed of the following elements: a) the "hand of the invisible", symbol of divine gifts, and the protective hand of God (see previous example);
b) the crescent, the nocturnal face of God, symbol of fertility governed by the Ancestors in concord with the Spirits of nature;
c) the Ancestors and the Spirits of nature that watch over humans.
(Faik-Nzuji 1996: 99)



Sign of mutual aid or solidarity.

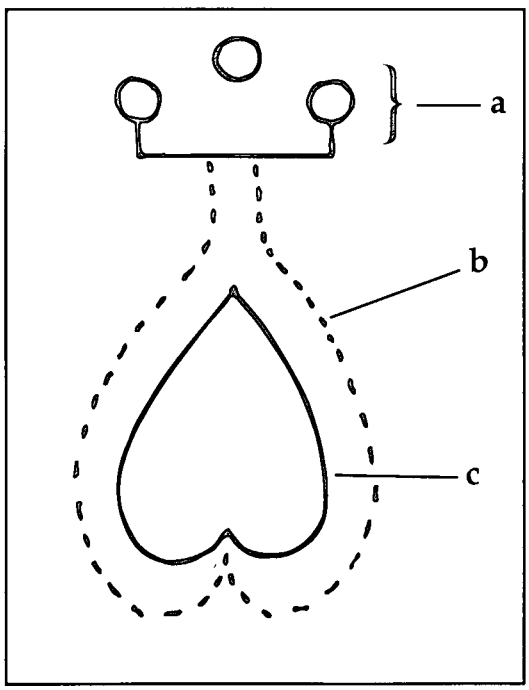
This symbol refers to concepts of "mutual aid, solidarity amongst members of the same community, between men, and with the dead."
It is made up of "two autonomous elements:
a) an octagon representing the union of all those who, while remaining quite distinct, recognise their common origin;
b) the four "ears of the Ancestors" symbolising the availability of the Ancestors and Spirits and their aid to the living."
(Faik-Nzuji 1996: 122)

Figure 7. Ohendo Ritual Ideographs 2.



Tondongo, a women's scarification.

Scarifications are deliberately produced scars in meaningful designs. Because of their permanence, they are often applied in stages corresponding to socially important events in a person's life. Tondongo is a seriese of related designs for women, four applied before marriage, and one after the first child.
a) *Lowawale*, "the new moon", and the vertical line which supports it refer to the lunar spirit who confers beauty, love and fertility on right-living young women.
b) *Isúka-ntónga*, "the navel-support" signifies the union of man and woman in marriage, the only acceptable institution for child bearing. The design surrounds the navel, each individual's entrance to the world.
c) *Towota*, "the son's house", refers to children and is applied after the first birth. The name further refers to every woman's refuge in case of divorce or widowhood.
d) *Longengéndé*, "fish trap style", expands the meanings of b): it refers to a woman's spirit and human husbands, and explains the prohibition on sex during the day; the name refers to woman's role and work: a fish trap is considered the epitome of solidity.
e) *Lonkonkondo*, the banana or banana plant, is considered the quintessential female attribute and is a core element of the female initiation process: it mirrors the care expended on her and the fertility hoped for.
(Faik-Nzuji 1992: 122-124)

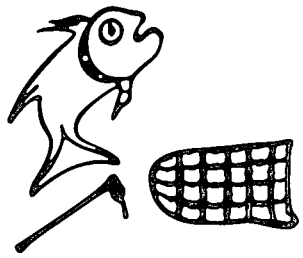


The sign of Communion

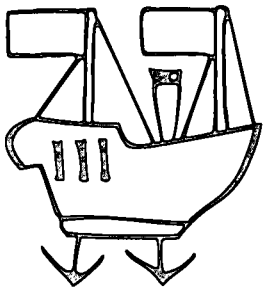
This sign symbolises, "the communion of beings, accord, faith in the Ancestors, unity and union".
The top of the symbol (a) is composed of three elements, represented by circles: in the centre, God the Creator; on the left, the Cosmos and all it contains; on the right, the Spirits and the Ancestors. The broken line (b) represents the Spirits and Ancestors, enveloping and protecting the community, who are represented by the inverted heart shape (c) in the centre.
(Faik-Nzuji 1996: 121)

Figure 8. Ohendo Ritual Ideographs 3.

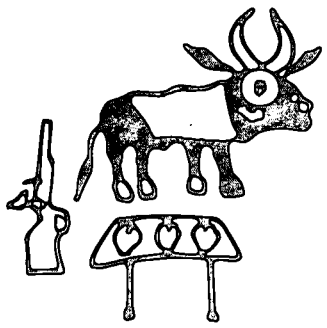
Some of the Graphic Symbols used by the Fon Kings of Danhomé, in West Africa



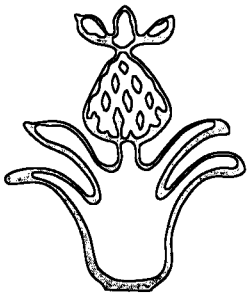
Huegbadja (ruled 1645 – 1685)



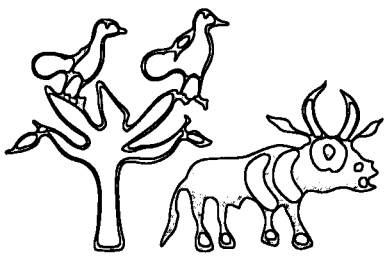
Agaja (1708 – 1732)



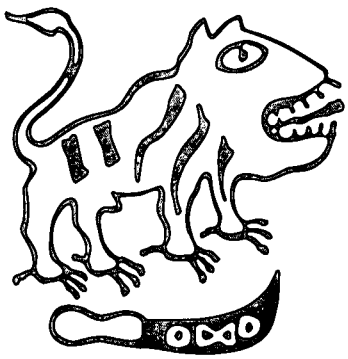
Tegbesu (1732 - 1774)



Agonglo (1789 – 1797)



Guezo (1818 – 1858)

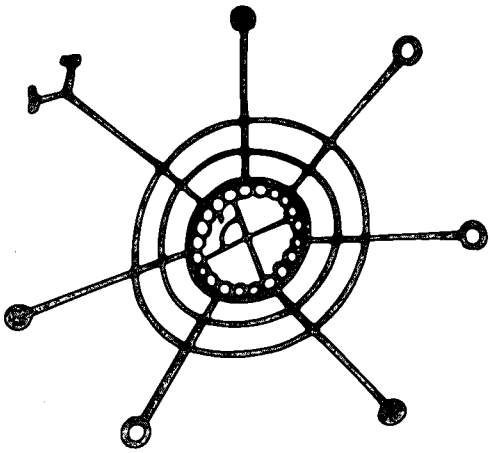


Glele (1858 – 1889)

Gbehanzin (1889 – 1894)

Blier 1998: 98– 121

Figure 9. Fon Royal Emblems.



Heart of Man §

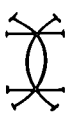
The Janus of sky and earth, male and female, the four eyes of clairvoyance. #

Private property, individuality.†

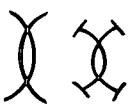
A person*

Revelation: the sign of Idiok, the baboon, who revealed the Nsibidi signs. †

The sign of love or marriage. #

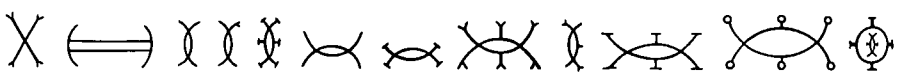


Marriage, marital life, wealth.†

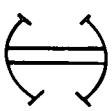


Sexual intercourse*

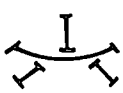
Physical love: a man and a woman sleeping together.†



Love, unity, comparability.‡



Goodness, kind-heartedness, love, affection, charity, generosity. †



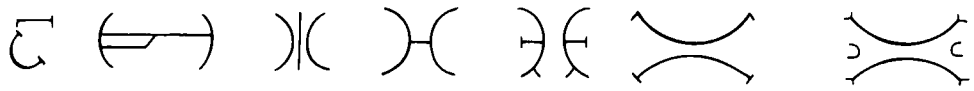
Compassion, consolation, sympathy: visiting the sick. †

Pregnant woman*

Material possessions, wealth. †

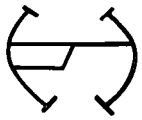
Sources: * = Dalby, 1968:185–191; § = Faik-Nzuji, 1992: 57; † = Faik-Nzuji, 1996: various pages; ‡ = Thompson, 1983: 242–260; # = Thompson, 1974: 181

Figure 10. Ejagham Nsibidi signs 1.

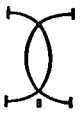


Hatred, disunity, divorce. ‡

The sign of hatred or divorce. #



Heart without love.†



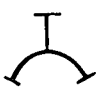
Adultery: the vertical bar represents a man trying to seduce a married woman. †

Marriage difficulties, separation, problems within the couple.†

Marital dispute, separation: the sign shows the one who is the cause of the separation. †

Madness, insanity, folly, disarray, dispersion, over-indulgence.†

Imprisonment, bewitchment, possession.†



A harlot*

A stranger. *

A dead body. ‡

A dead friend or relative. *

Nsibidi mirror.‡

A captive.*
A man being flogged. ‡

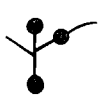
"All this country belongs to me".‡

A man to be sold as a slave. *

"Prevent danger". ‡

Death of a friend. ‡

A murderer detained. ‡



"Flog your son". ‡

Murder weapon. ‡

Figure 11. Ejagham Nsibidi signs 2.

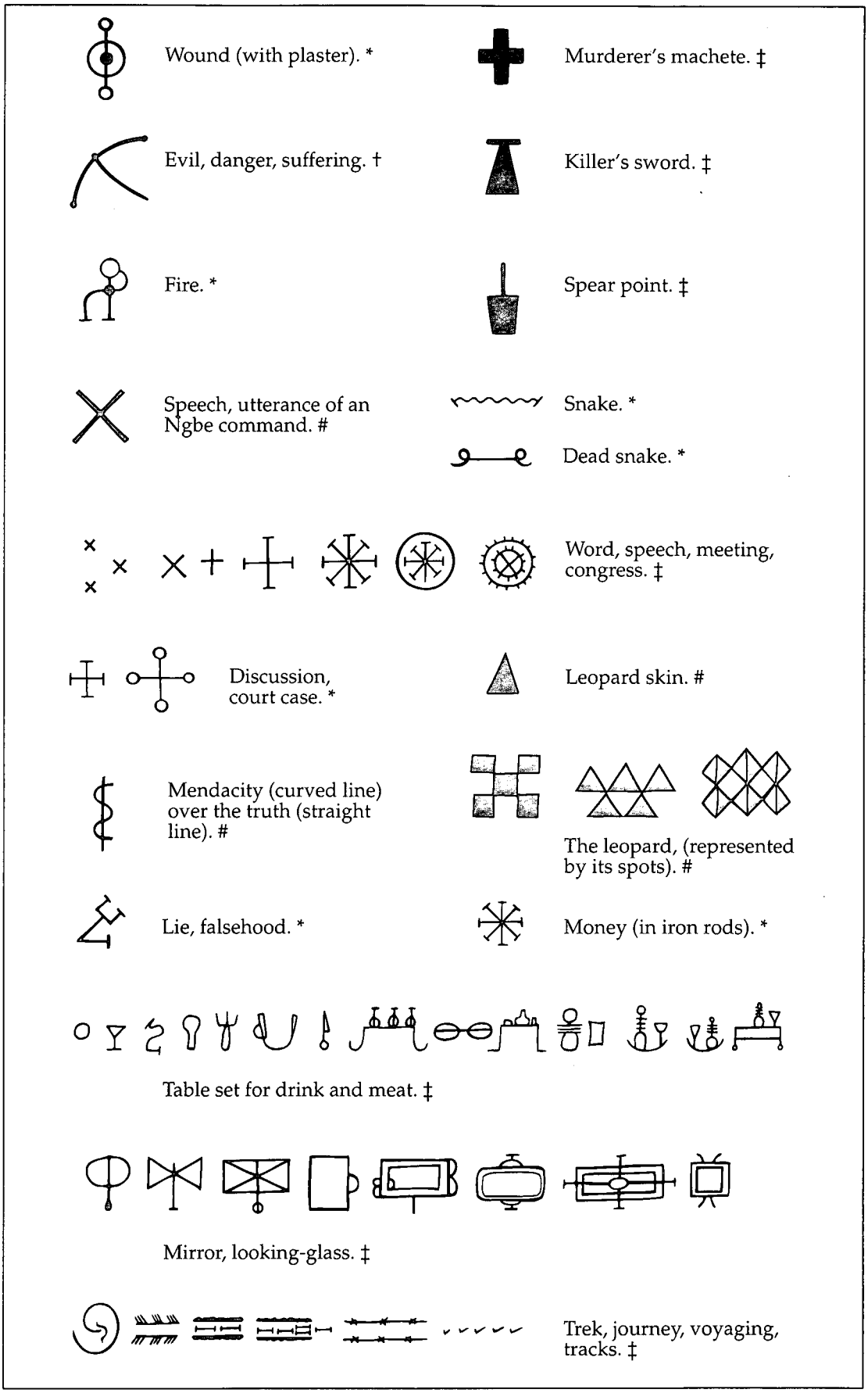


Figure 12. Ejagham Nsibidi signs 3.

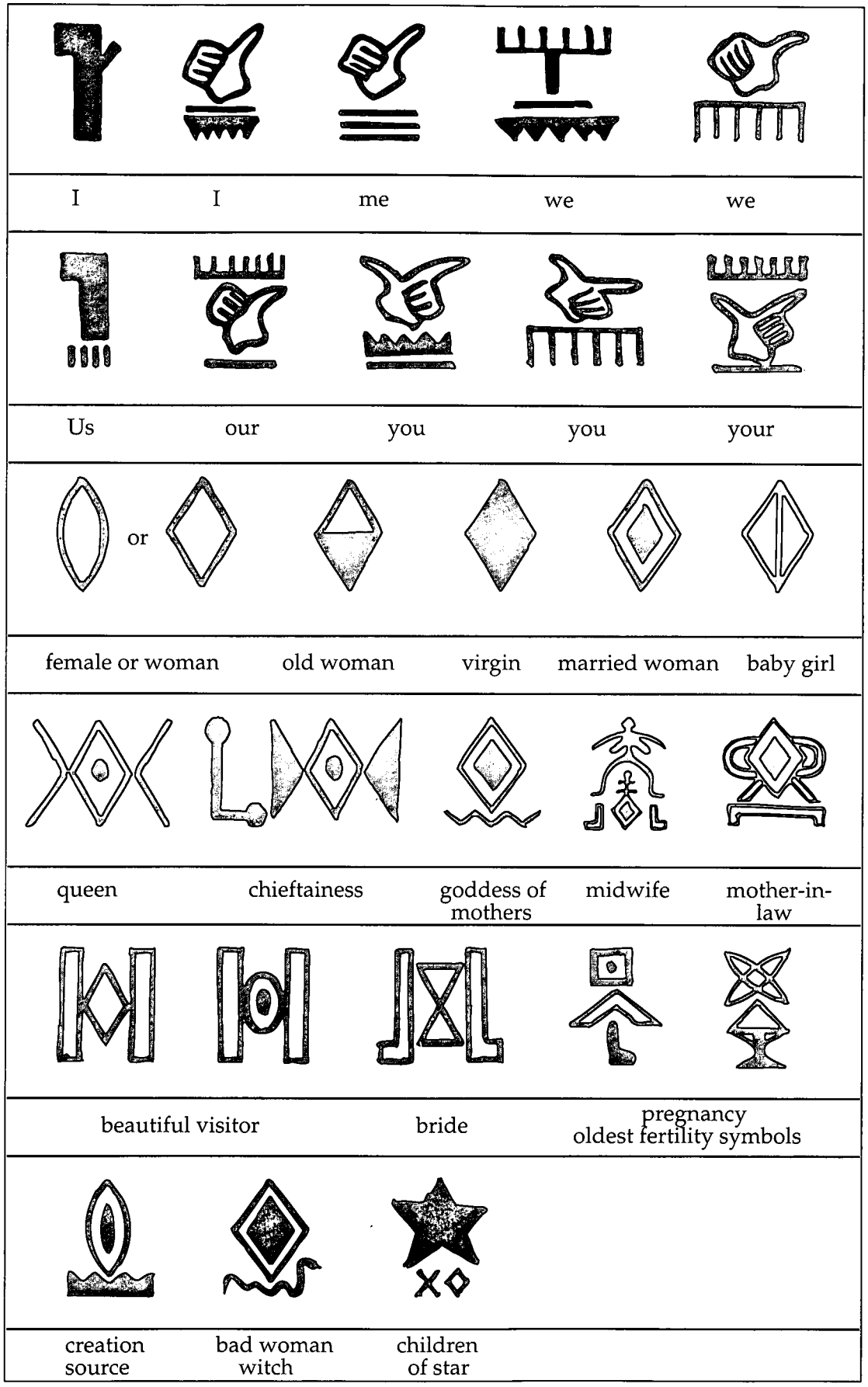


Figure 13. Credo Mutwa's Zulu Symbol Writing. Collated from Mutwa 1964: various pages.

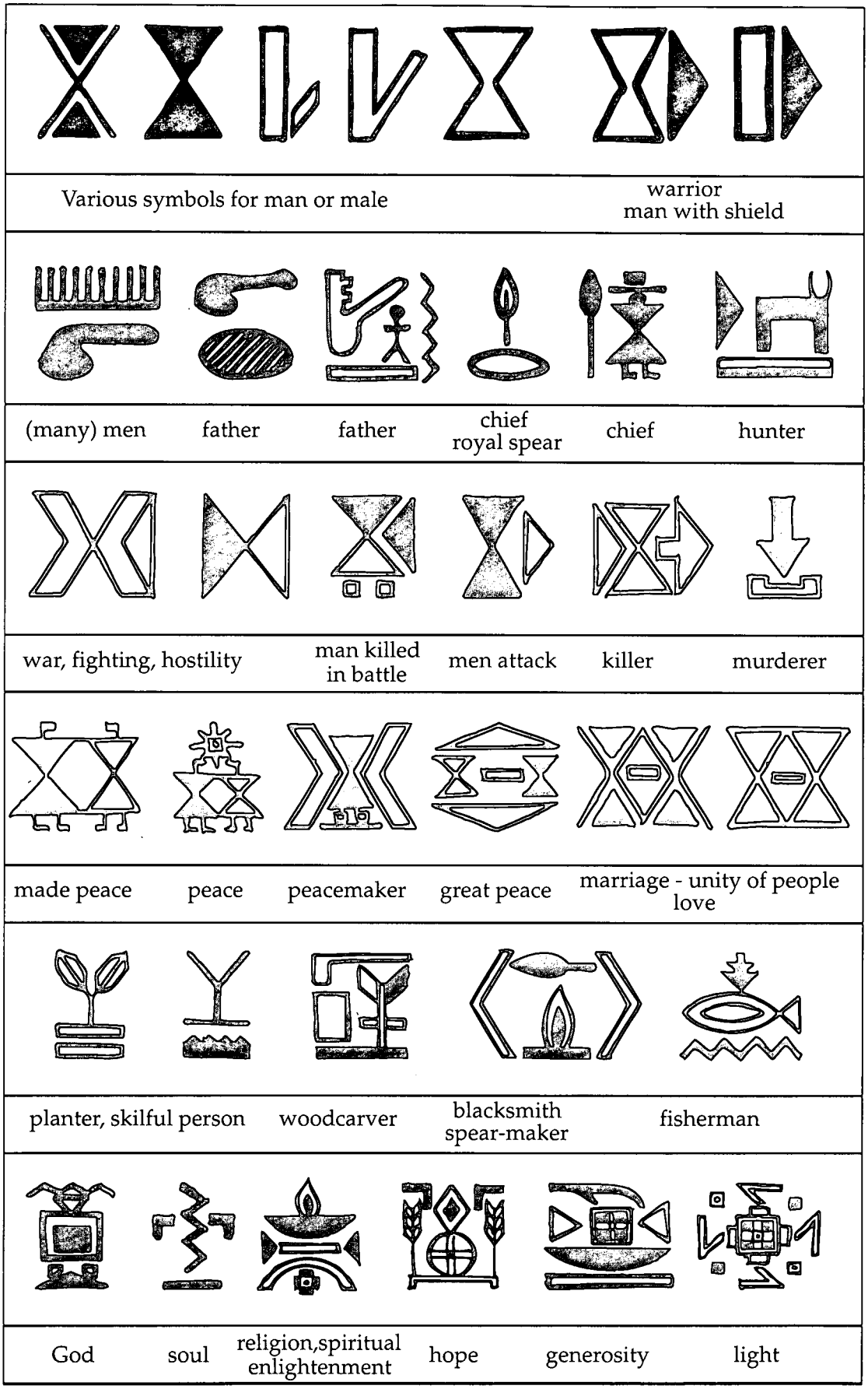


Figure 14. Credo Mutwa's Zulu Symbol Writing (contd.).

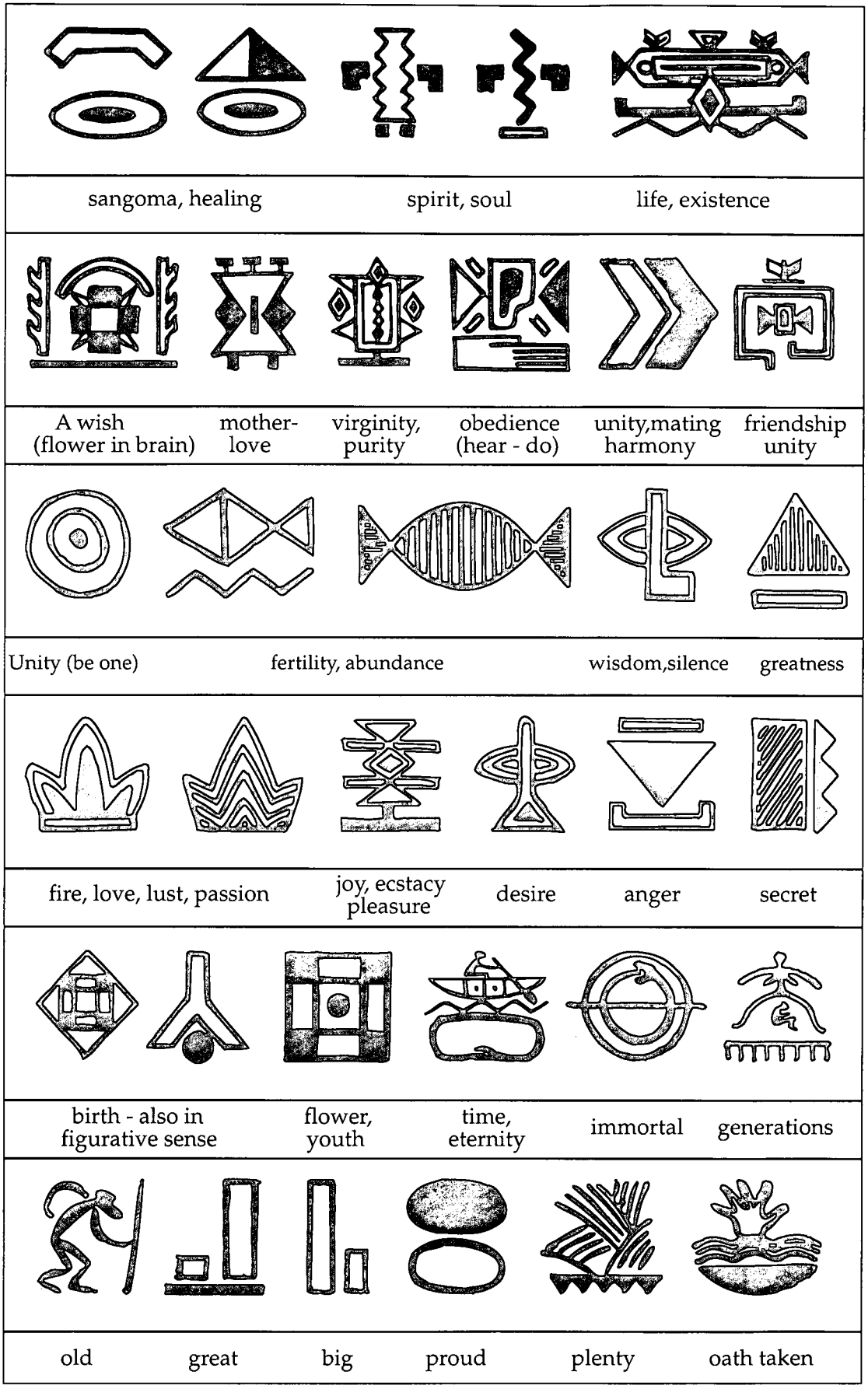


Figure 15. Credo Mutwa's Zulu Symbol Writing (contd.).

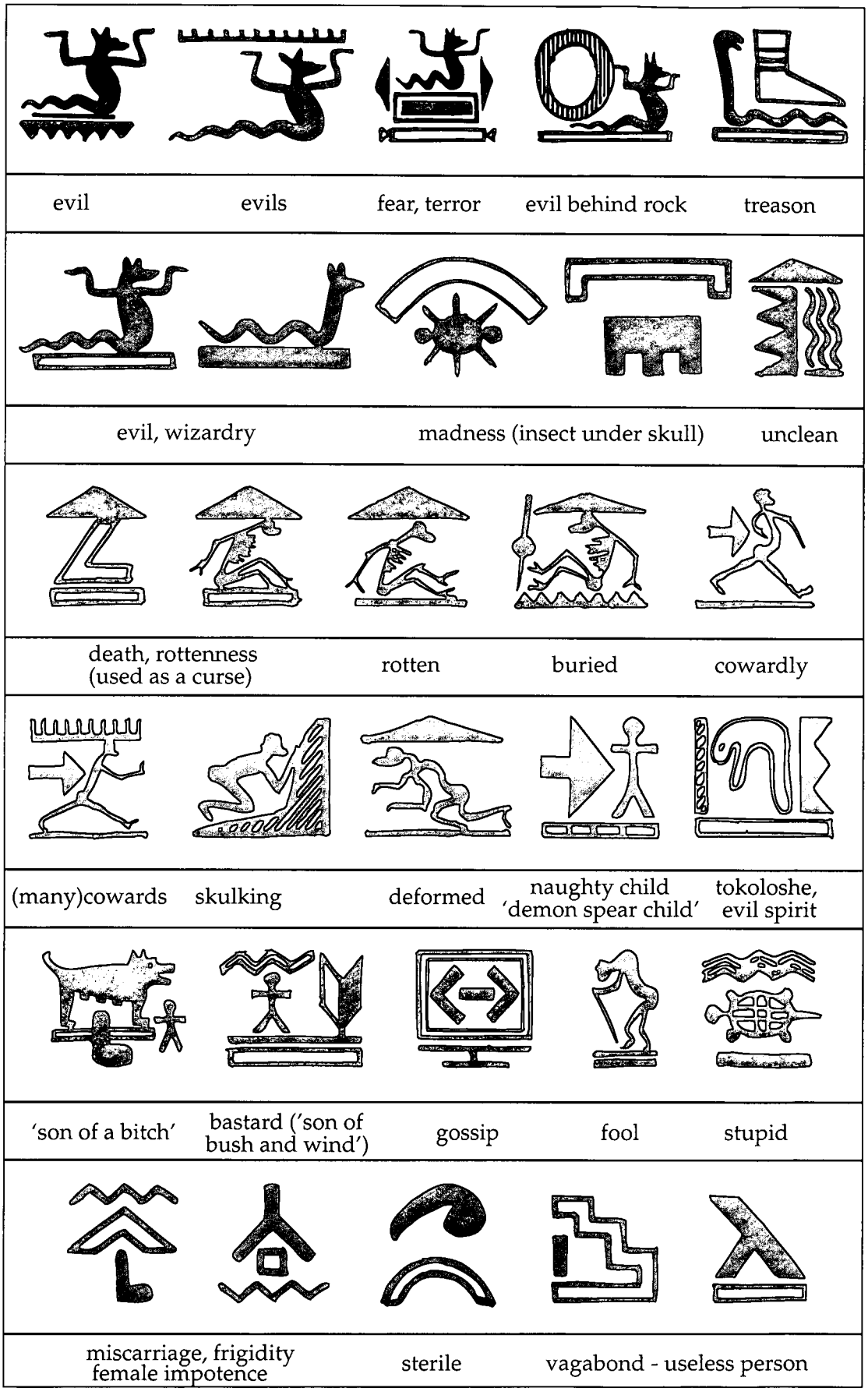


Figure 16. Credo Mutwa's Zulu Symbol Writing (contd.).

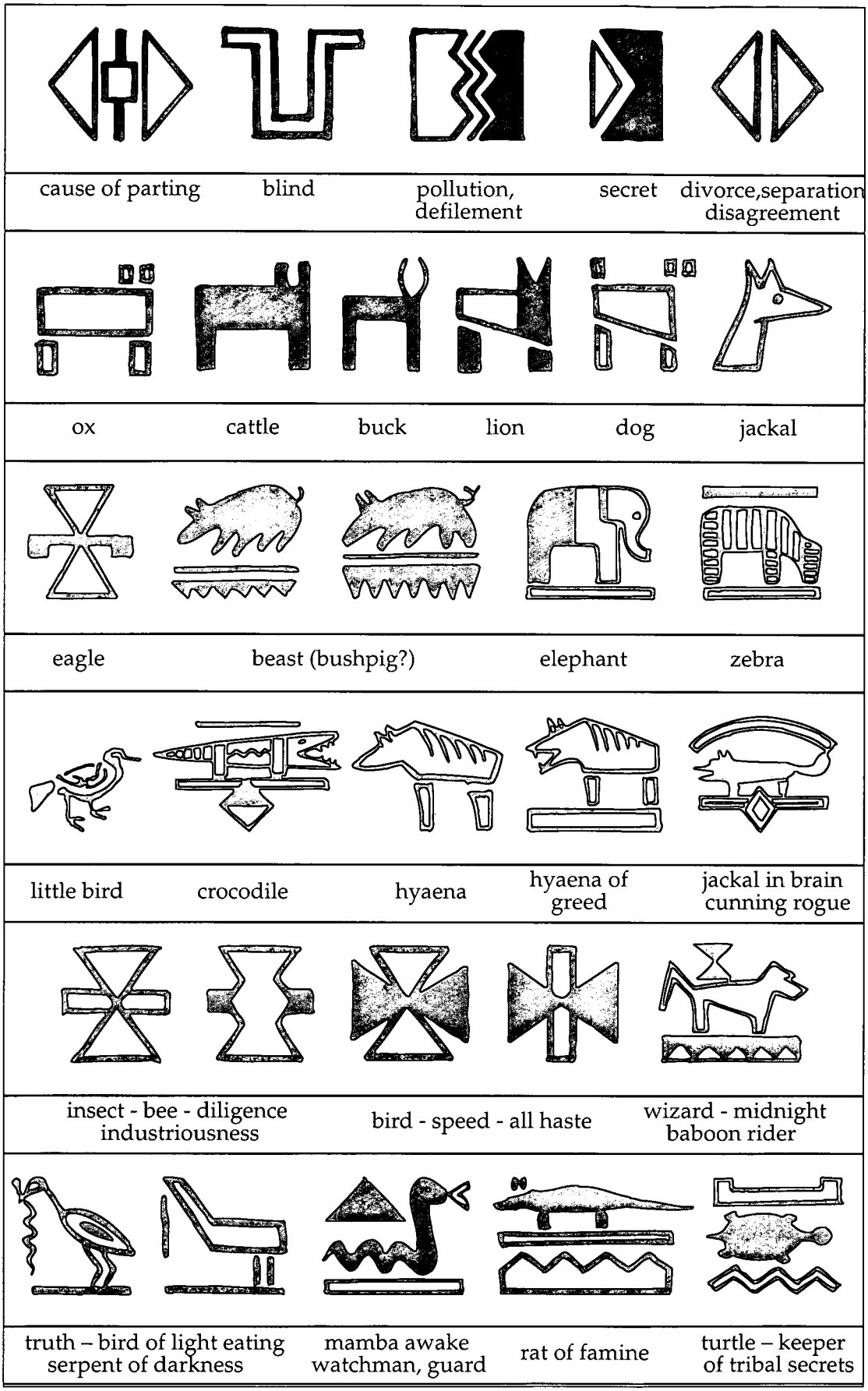


Figure 17. Credo Mutwa's Zulu Symbol Writing (contd.).

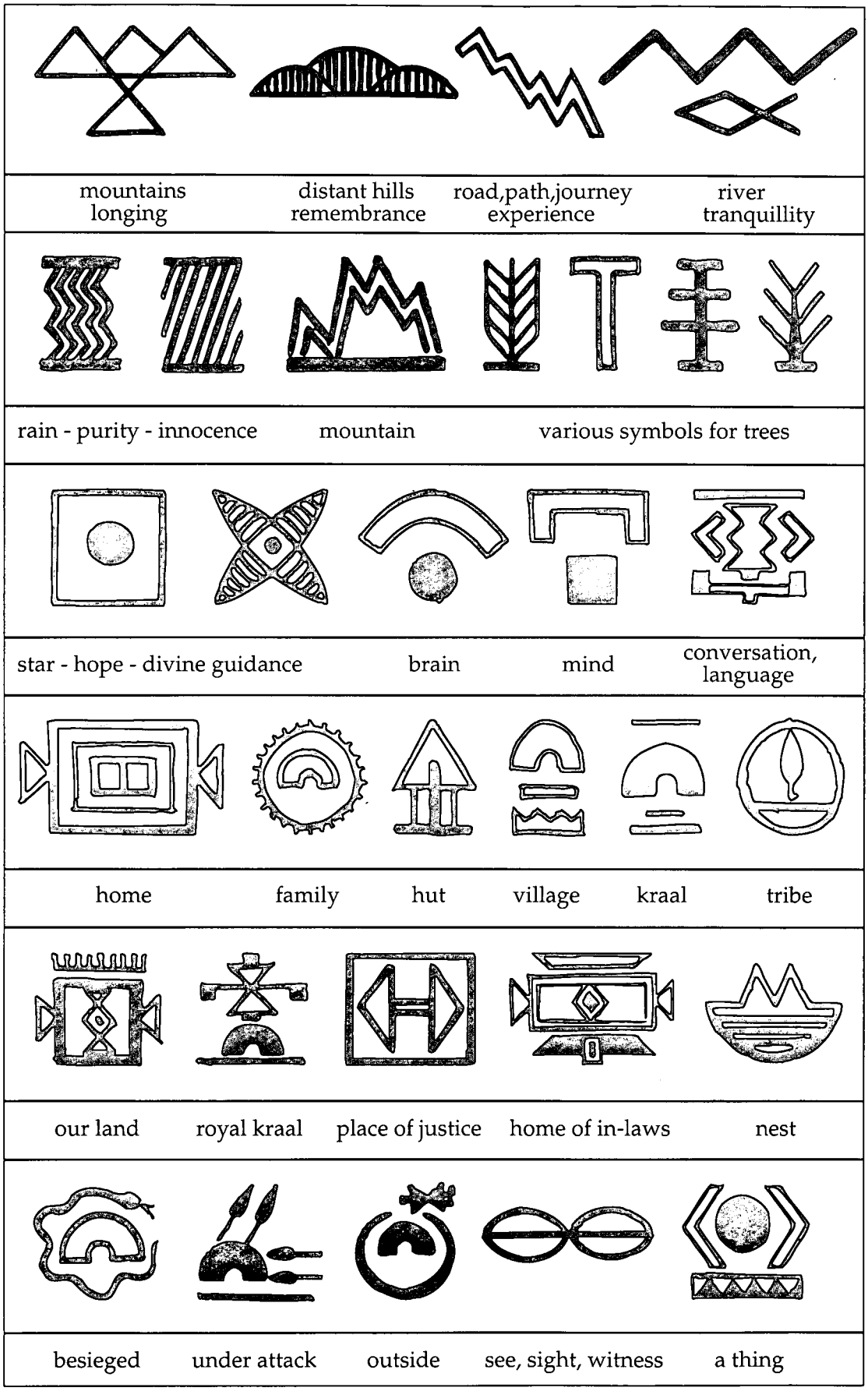


Figure 18. Credo Mutwa's Zulu Symbol Writing (contd.).

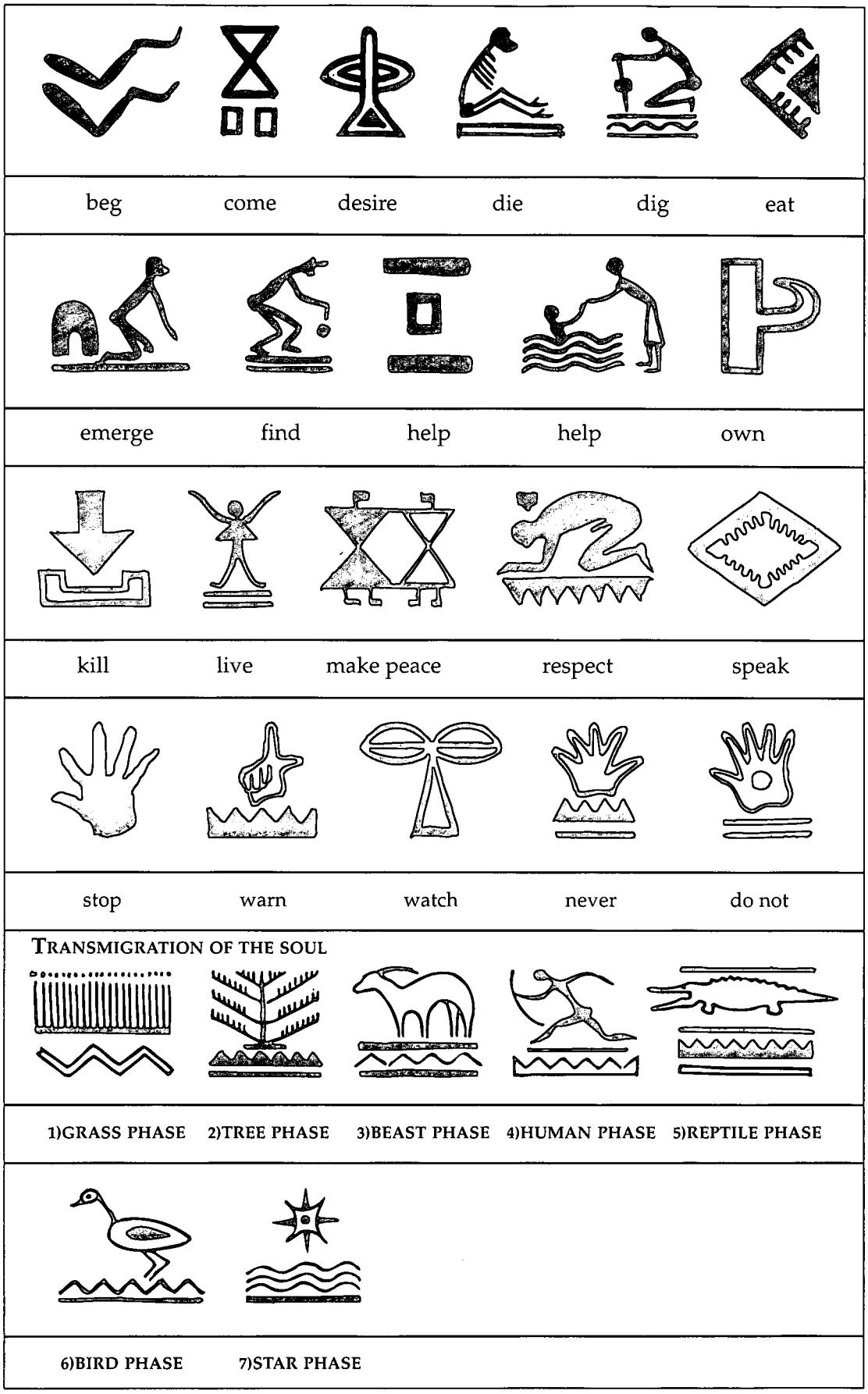


Figure 19. Credo Mutwa's Zulu Symbol Writing (contd.).

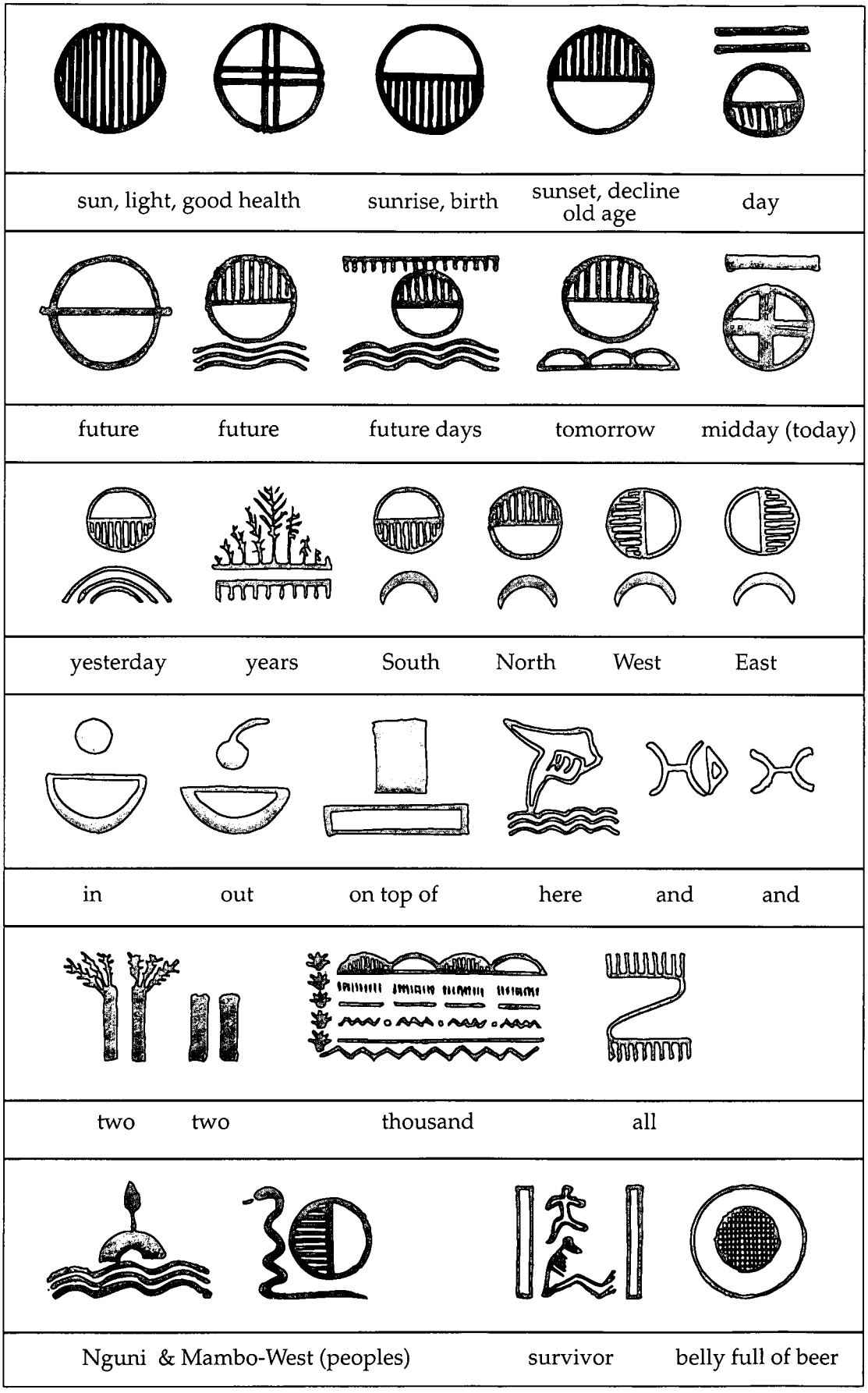


Figure 20. Credo Mutwa's Zulu Symbol Writing (contd.).

The second script: the meanings of the pictographs are given in Dugast & Jeffreys, 1950, pp 73-98.

Figure 21. Bamum – King Njoya's second script.

The sixth script: "a ka u ku".
This system consists of seventy one linguistic signs and ten linguistic/numeric signs. All signs had both a plain and an accented version. The accent resembled the French circonflex (^), and mostly changed the sound of the plain sign either by introducing a glottal stop to the end of the sound, by altering the vowel value slightly, or by changing the tonal value of the sound. (see end of table)

KEY

	sign	
plain		
accented		
	sound of sign	meaning of sign

Phonetic symbols

ʔ	glottal stop
ə	as in 'above'
ɔ	as in 'pot'
ɛ	as in 'set'
ʒ	as in 'measure'
ʃ	as in 'bash'
ɯ	as in 'soot'
ŋ	as in 'song'
ɣ	gargling sound as in Spanish 'abogado'

Other letters as in normal English pronunciation.

Redesigned from Dugast & Jeffries, 1950: 7, 24-26, 32a, 32b.




a	(vowel)	ka	grill, roast	u	(vowel)	ku	(phon.syll.)
aʔ	(vowel)	kaʔ[˙]	calabash	uʔ	(vowel)	kuʔ	(phon.syll.)




e	(vowel)	re[˙]	look	tɔ[.]	you & I	ɔ	(vowel)
eʔ	(vowel)	ren[˙]	old	tɔʔ[˙]	key	ɔʔ	(vowel)

Figure 22. King Njoya's sixth script 1.

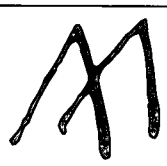
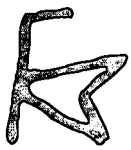
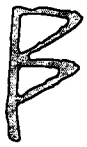
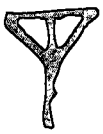
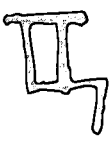
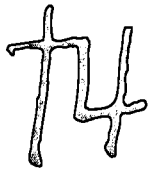
							
nyi [˙]	enter	i	(vowel)	la	(phon.syll.)	pa	(plural)
nye [.]	press	i?	(vowel)	la? [˙]	homeland	pa?[˙]	weave
							
rii [.˙]	show	rie [˙]	say	lɛɛ [.˙]	bitter	me [.]	arrive
ri? [˙]	heat	z	(phoneme)	le?	(phon. syll.)	me? [˙]	swallow
							
taa [.˙]	leave	ndaa [..]	my hut	nʒəm [.]	behind	m	(phoneme)
ta? [.]	snail	nda?	(ind. future)	yəm	(phon. syll.)	n	(phoneme)
							
su [.]	tooth	mu [˙]	fire	ʃii	(phon. syll.)	si[˙]	black
su? [˙]	pour	mu? [˙]	fall, spill	ʃi [˙]	stay	si? [˙]	descend
							
ʃɯ	(phon. syll.)	sɯ [˙]	before	kye [.]	gift	kɛt	(suffix)
yɯ [˙]	eat	sɯ? [˙]	hiccup	kye? [.]	limp	ke? [˙]	deny

Figure 23. King Njoya's sixth script 2.

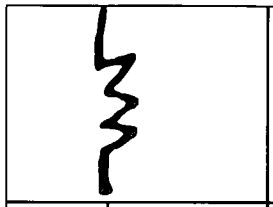
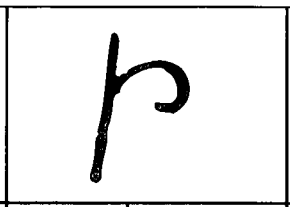
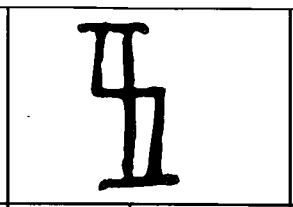
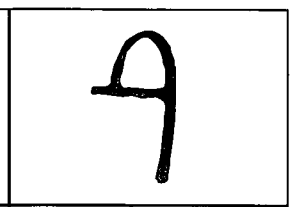
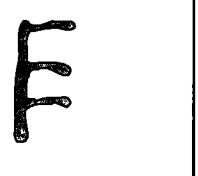
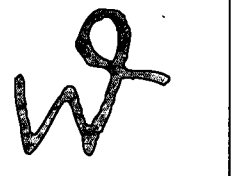
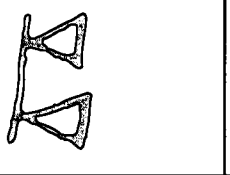
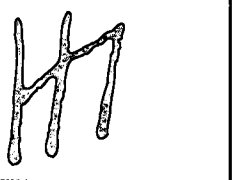
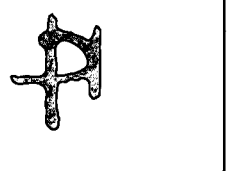
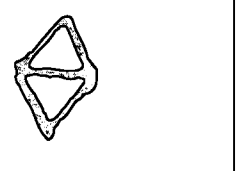
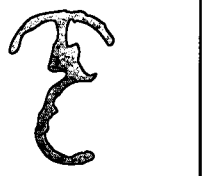
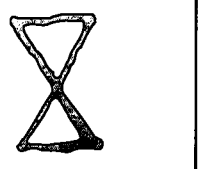
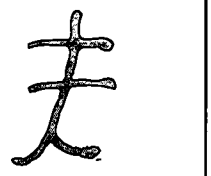
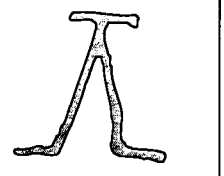
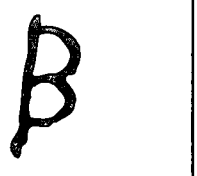
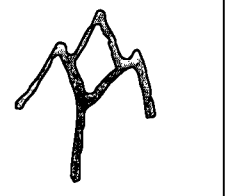
							
nuə [¨]	wood	nu [.]	to you	nʒuə [¨]	penalty	yɔ? [.]	swim
ŋuə [ˈ]	snake	nu? [.ˈ]	dirty	yuən [¨]	see	yɔ? [ˈ]	anoint self
							
ʃu [ˈ]	sit down	yu [ˈ]	listen	ya [.]	yours	ʃa	(phon. syll.)
ʃu? [ˈ]	(phon. syll.)	yun [ˈ]	buy	ya? [ˈ]	spayed goat	ʃa?	(phon. syll.)
							
kɯ [ˈ]	force	pɯ	(phon. syll.)	nʒe	(phon. syll.)	nte [ˈ]	posture
ɣɯ,ɯ	(phon.syll. &vowel)	pɯ?	(phon. syll.)	nʒe?	(phon. syll.)	nte?	(phon. syll.)
							
pü [.]	we	wü [.]	his, to him	pe [ˈ]	faithfulness	fe [.]	burnt
pü? [.]	(phon. syll.)	ü?	(vowel)	pe? [ˈ]	clap, bang	fe? [ˈ]	palm nut
							
ru [ˈ]	channel	lu [ˈ]	thumb piano	mi [ˈ]	that	ni [ˈ]	with(out) him
ru? [ˈ]	glutton	lu? [ˈ]	begin	mi? [ˈ]	porcupine	nɛn? [ˈ]	bar the way

Figure 24. King Njoya's sixth script 3.

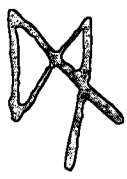
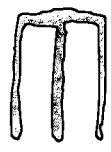
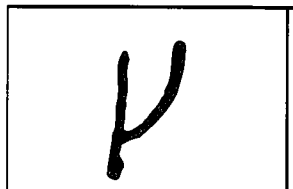
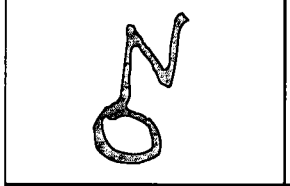
							
rɯ	(phon. syll.)	rə	(phon. syll.)	kɛn [.]	law	ŋkwən[.]	back
rɯʔ [.]	growl	rəʔ	evil	kɛn [˙]	tiredness	ŋuət [¨]	body
							
ŋga [.]	owner	ŋa [.]	here	ʃɔ	(phon. syll.)	puə	hand
ŋgaʔ	(exclamation)	ŋaʔ [.]	tomato	ʃɔʔ [˙]	lend	puʔ [˙]	parcel
							
fu [.]	medicine	fɔm [.]	ruins	wa [.]	(a flower)	na [˙]	but
fuʔ	hole in tree trunk	mvɔp [˙]	powder	waʔ	(phon. syll.)	naʔ [.]	ox
							
li [˙]	name, eye	pi [˙]	lift	lɔʔ	go away!	kə	(phon. syll.)
liʔ [˙]	poison	pin [˙]	dance	lɔʔ [˙]	drum	kɔʔ [.]	(phon. syll.)
							
mbɛn [.]	camp	rɛn [.]	a lot of	mɛn	(phon. syll.)	ma [˙]	be quiet!
pɛn [˙]	maize cereal	rɛn [˙]	clean	mɛn [˙]	(phon. syll.)	maʔ [˙]	throw

Figure 25. King Njoya's sixth script 4.

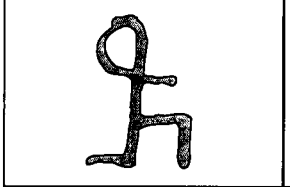


ti	(phon. syll.)	ki [˙]	look
tɯ	(phon. syll.)	kiʔ [˙]	tortoise

mɔ [.]	one	mbaa [.˙]	two
mɔn [.]	child	mba [.]	cloud



tɛn [.]	five	ntuu [˙]	six
tɛn [˙]	(sickness)	tuʔ [˙]	draw from

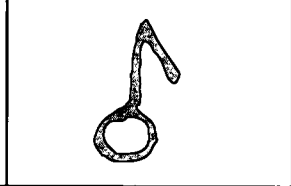


vü	nine (phon. syll.)	ɣɔm	zero (phon. syll.)
fü [˙]	(phon. syll.)	ŋgɔm [.]	(a fruit)

"Nʒəmli" symbol

This symbol is used 1) to indicate names of individuals or peoples; 2) to show which of two words that sound the same is referred to in text. The sign is prefixed to the more 'noble' of the two.

tɛt [.]	three	kpa [˙]	four
tɛt [˙]	cook	ŋma [˙]	greedy



samba[..] sa [.]	seven long	faamə[...] fa [.]	eight give
saʔ [˙]	discussion	faʔ [.]	work

"Kɔʔndɔn" accent.

This sign, or accent, is used 1): to show glottal stops, 2): to separate similar or identical sounding words, and 3): to allow syllables and sounds that cannot be shown with the unaccented symbols alone.

Figure 26. King Njoya's sixth script 5.

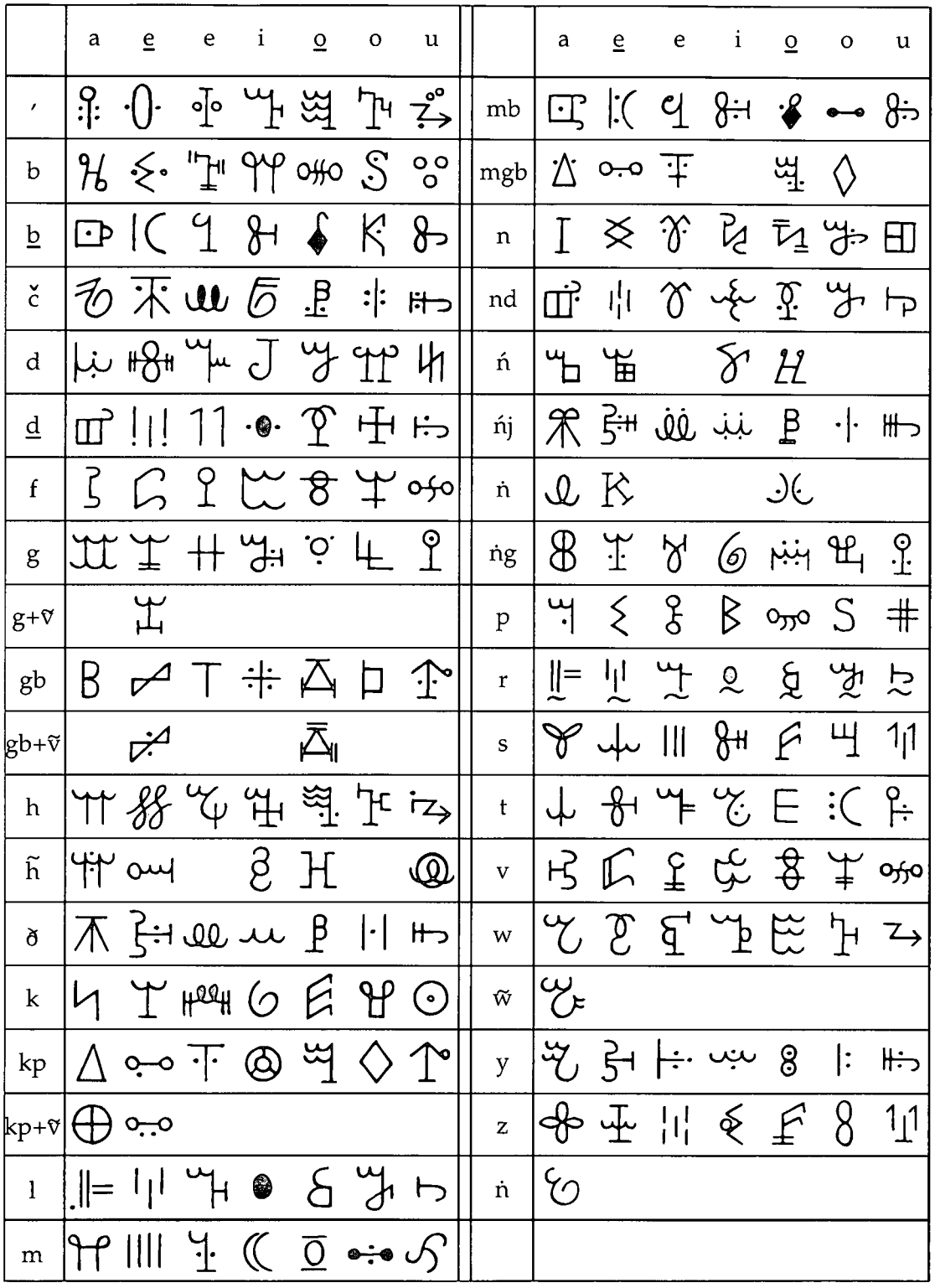


Figure 27. Momolu Bukele's Vai syllabary. Redesigned from Coulmas 1996: 538.

	Name	ä(a)	u	i	a	e	ə/ø	o
h	hoy	ሀ	ሁ	ሂ	ሃ	ሄ	ህ	ሆ
l	läwe	ለ	ሉ	ሊ	ላ	ሌ	ል	ሎ
h/ḥ	häwt	ሐ	ሑ	ሒ	ሓ	ሔ	ሕ	ሖ
m	may	መ	ሙ	ሚ	ማ	ሜ	ም	ሞ
ś	śäwt	ሠ	ሡ	ሢ	ሣ	ሤ	ሥ	ሦ
r	rəʾs	ረ	ሩ	ሪ	ራ	ሬ	ር	ሮ
s	sat	ሰ	ሱ	ሲ	ሳ	ሴ	ስ	ሶ
š		ሸ	ሹ	ሺ	ሻ	ሼ	ሽ	ሾ
q	qaf	ቀ	ቁ	ቂ	ቃ	ቄ	ቅ	ቆ
b	bet	በ	ቡ	ቢ	ባ	ቤ	ብ	ቦ
t	täwe	ተ	ቱ	ቲ	ታ	ቴ	ት	ቶ
č		ቸ	ቹ	ቺ	ቻ	ቼ	ች	ቾ
h/ḫ	ḫärm	ኀ	ኁ	ኂ	ኃ	ኄ	ኅ	ኆ
n	nähas	ነ	ኑ	ኒ	ና	ኔ	ን	ኖ
ñ		ኘ	ኙ	ኚ	ኛ	ኜ	ኝ	ኞ
ʾ	ʾälf	አ	ኡ	ኢ	ኣ	ኤ	እ	ኦ
k	kaf	ከ	ኩ	ኪ	ካ	ኬ	ክ	ኮ
h		ኸ	ኹ	ኺ	ኻ	ኼ	ኽ	ኾ
w	wäwe	ወ	ዉ	ዊ	ዋ	ዌ	ው	ዎ
ʿ/ʾ	ʿäyn	ዐ	ዑ	ዒ	ዓ	ዔ	ዕ	ዖ
z	zäy	ዘ	ዙ	ዚ	ዛ	ዜ	ዝ	ዞ
ž		ዠ	ዡ	ዢ	ዣ	ዤ	ዥ	ዦ
y	yämän	የ	ዩ	ዪ	ያ	ዬ	ይ	ዮ
d	dänt	ደ	ዱ	ዲ	ዳ	ዴ	ድ	ዶ

Figure 28. The Ethiopic or Ge'ez script 1. Redrawn from Haile 1996: 573.

...continued

	Name	ä(a)	u	i	a	e	ə/ø	o
ǧ		ጀ	ጁ	ጂ	ጃ	ጄ	ጅ	ጆ
g	gäml	ገ	ጉ	ጊ	ጋ	ጌ	ግ	ጎ
ṭ	ṭäyt	ጠ	ጡ	ጢ	ጣ	ጤ	ጥ	ጦ
č̣		ጨ	ጩ	ጪ	ጫ	ጬ	ጭ	ጮ
ṗ	ṗäyt	ጰ	ጱ	ጲ	ጳ	ጴ	ጵ	ጶ
ṣ	ṣädäy	ጸ	ጹ	ጺ	ጻ	ጼ	ጽ	ጾ
ṣ/ẓ	ḍäṗṗa	ፀ	ፁ	ፂ	ፃ	ፄ	ፅ	ፆ
f	äf	ፈ	ፉ	ፊ	ፋ	ፌ	ፍ	ፎ
p	psa	ፐ	ፑ	ፒ	ፓ	ፔ	ፕ	ፖ

: diphthongs

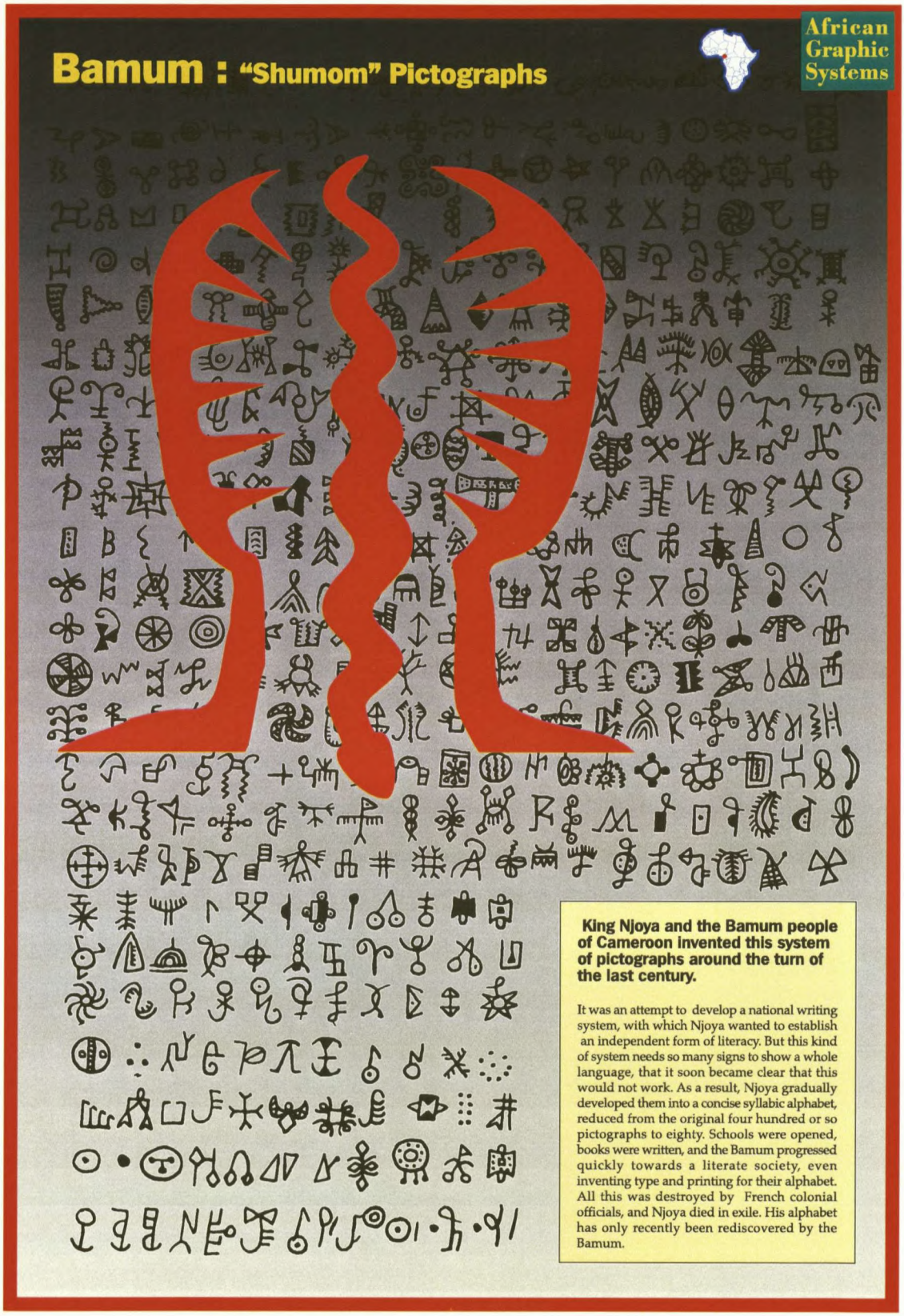
	Name	uä	ui	ua	ue	uə
q	qaf	ቈ	ቍ	ቋ	ቌ	ቍ
h/ḫ	ḫärm	ኈ	ኍ	ኋ	ኌ	ኍ
k	kaf	ኰ	ኵ	ኳ	ኴ	ኵ
g	gäml	ጐ	ጕ	ጓ	ጔ	ጕ

Figure 29. The Ethiopic or Ge'ez script contd. From Haile 1996: 573.

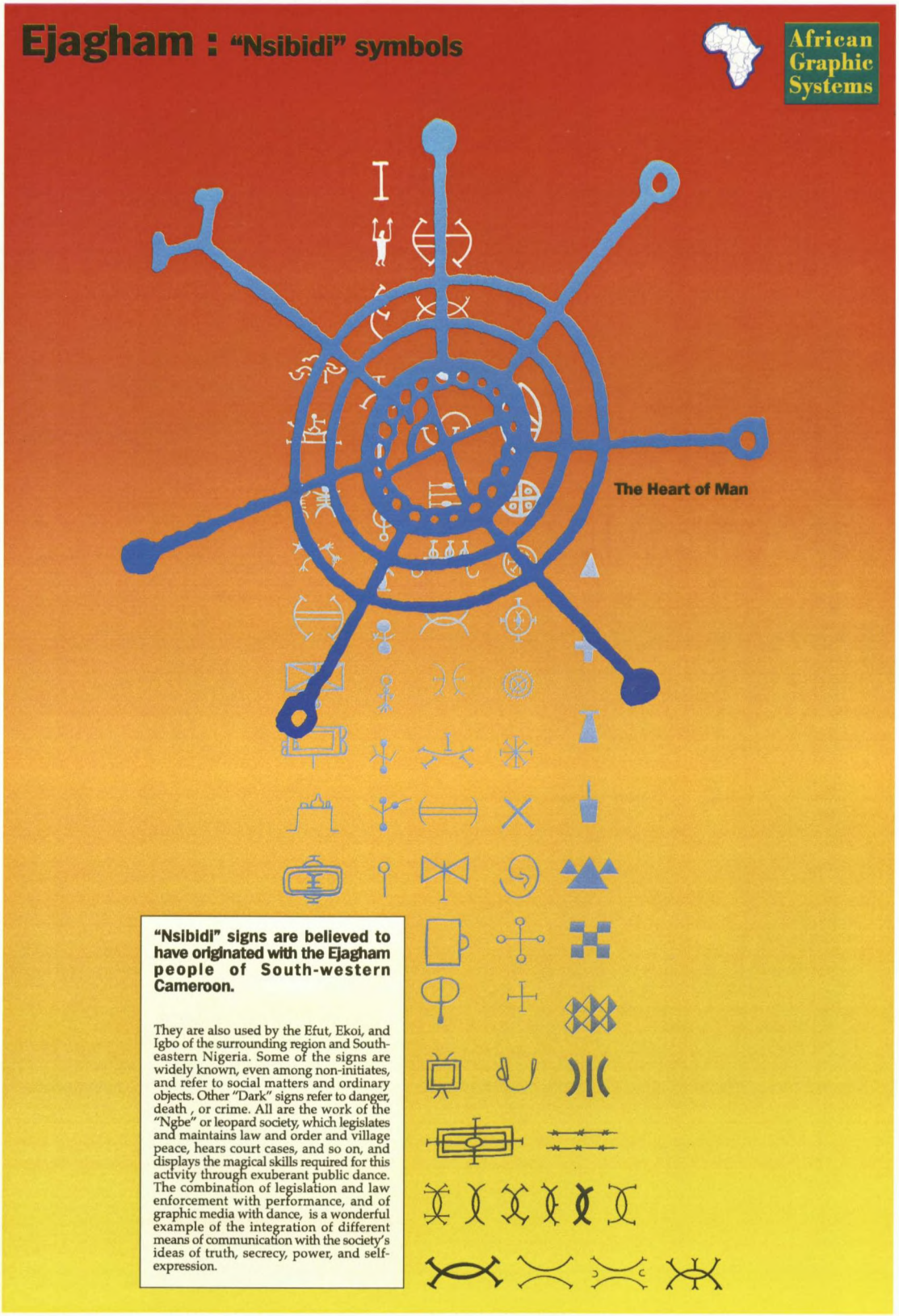
APPENDIX 2:

Reproductions of applied Graphic Design work as described in Chapter 6.

1)	Posters	Figures 1 – 9
2)	Bamum Pictograph prints	10 – 12 a
3)	Music posters	12 b – d
4)	Type characters	13

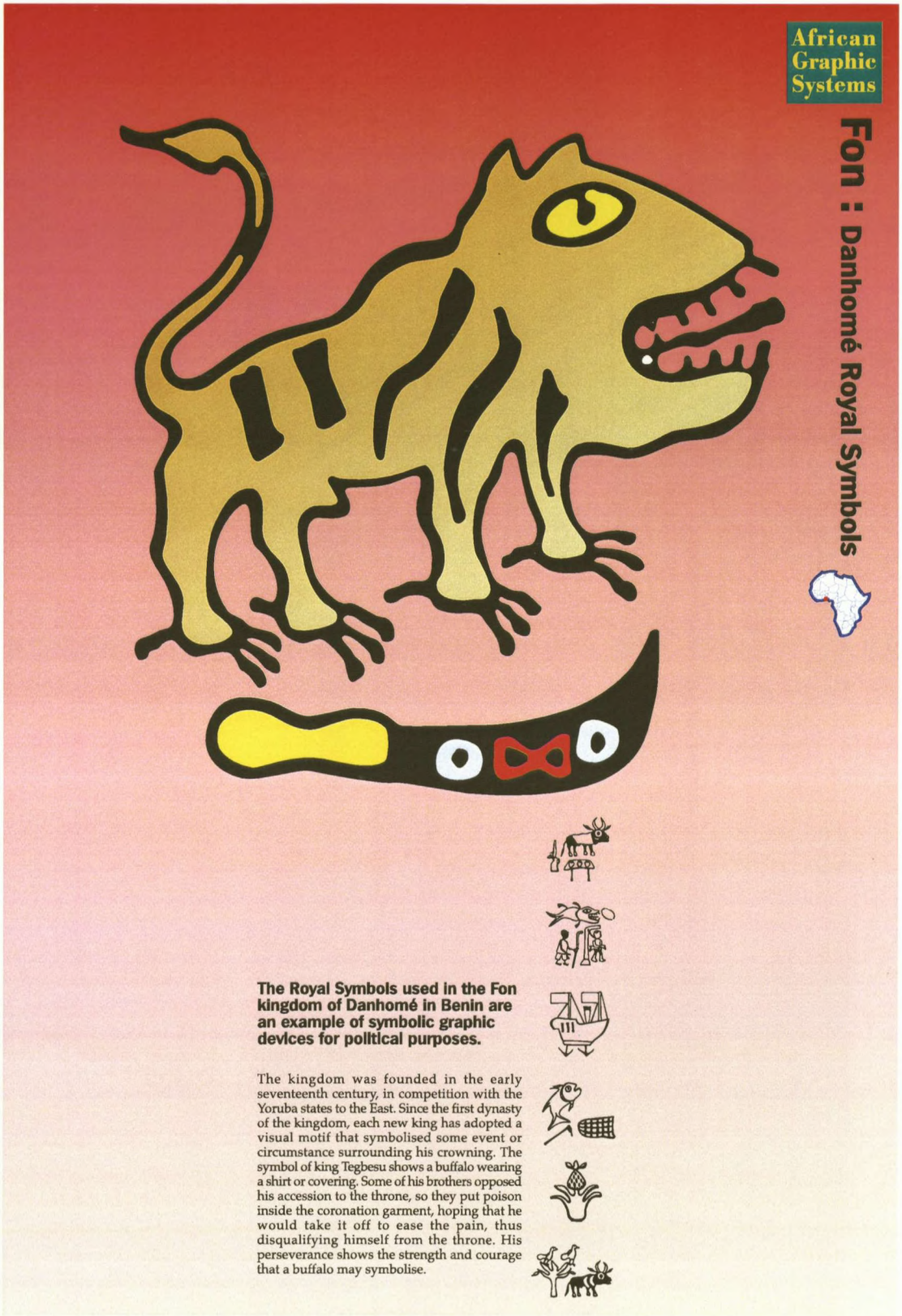


Appendix 2, figure 1: Bamum poster



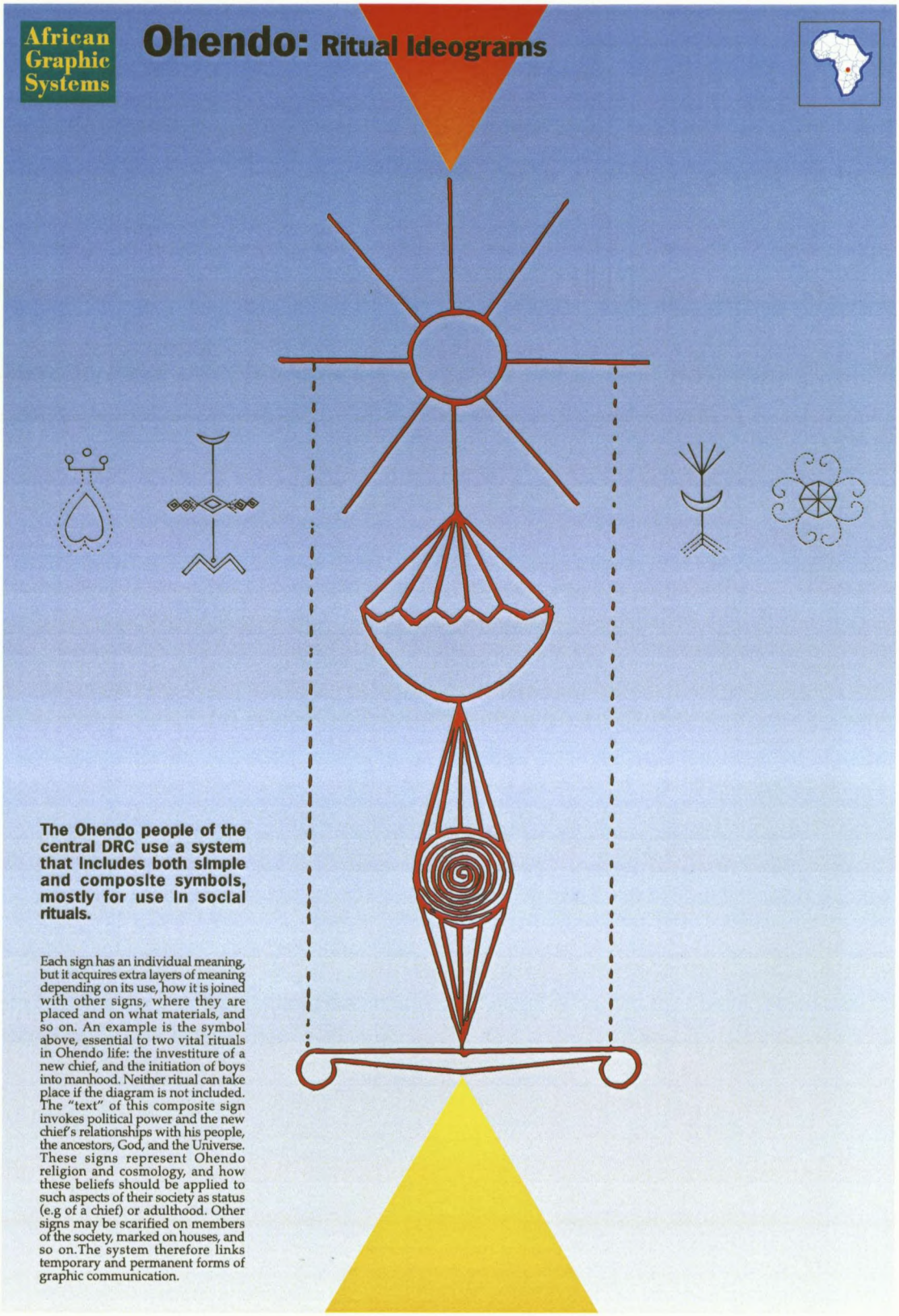
Appendix 2, figure 2: Ejagham poster

Appendix 2, figure 3: Ethiopic poster

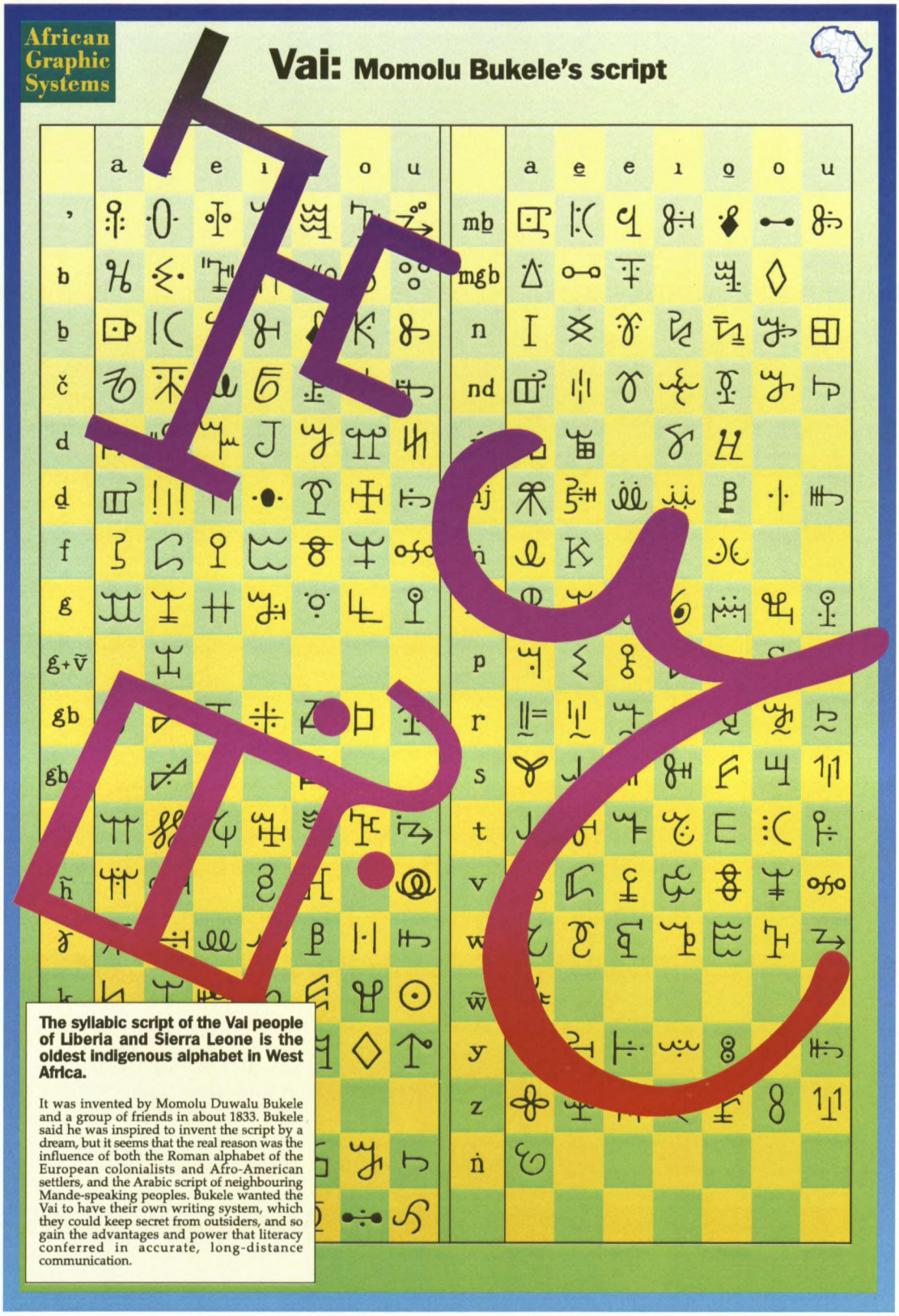


Appendix 2, figure 4: Fon poster

Appendix 2, figure 5: Luchazi poster



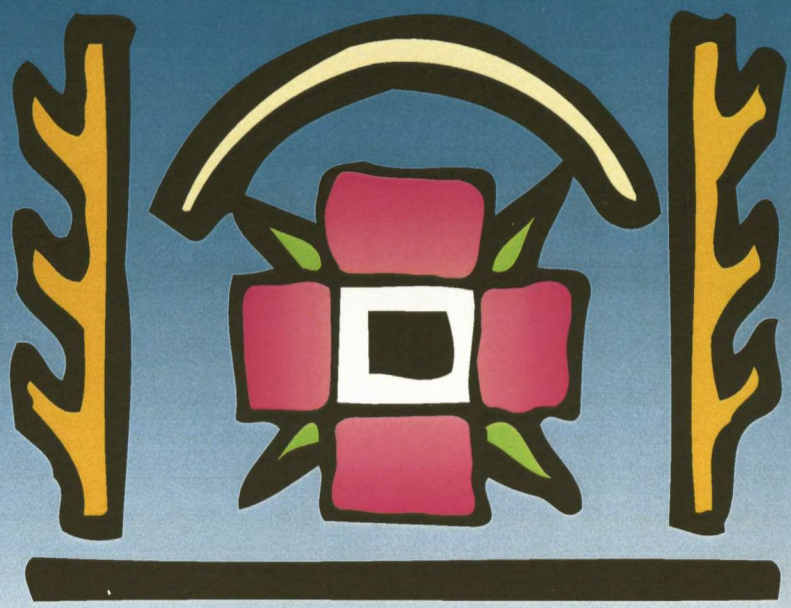
Appendix 2, figure 6: Ohendo poster



Appendix 2, figure 7: Vai poster

Zulu : Credo Mutwa's "Bantu Symbol writing"

African Graphic Systems

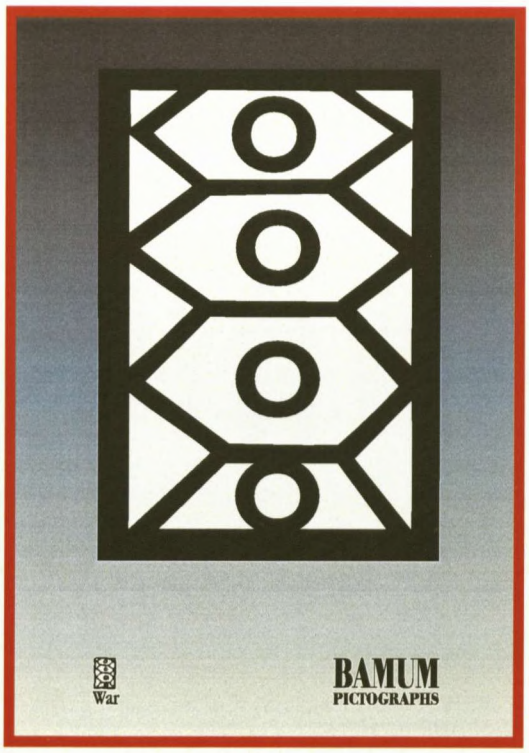


These are samples of the graphic system published by Credo Mutwa in the book, "Indaba, My Children". Mutwa says that they were used by many peoples across Southern and Central Africa before the colonial period.

These signs are used by Mutwa in his book to illustrate some of his stories, in which they are mostly described as being used for messages in times of war. The system is an example of pictographic writing, although it includes a number of ideographic signs. The illustration above shows the sign for a wish, conceived as "a flower in the mind". Here the curved element above the flower represents the skull. Like most pictographic systems it needs a huge number of signs to depict the whole vocabulary of the language. Over two hundred and fifty signs are reproduced in this book, which must be only a fraction of those necessary.

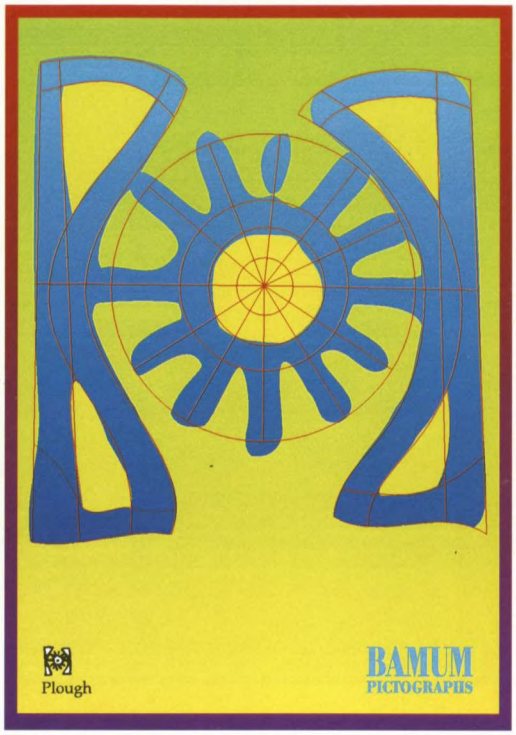
Appendix 2, figure 8: Zulu poster

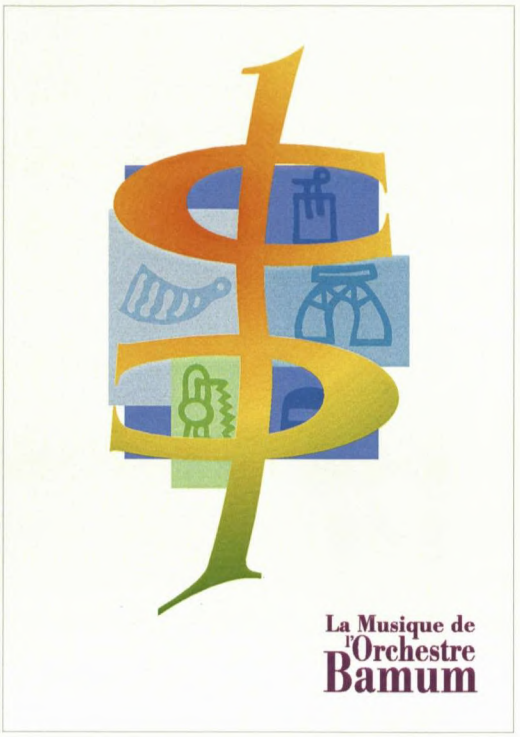
Appendix 2, figure 9: Nsibidi Renaissance poster



Appendix 2, figure 10 a – d: Bamum pictograph prints

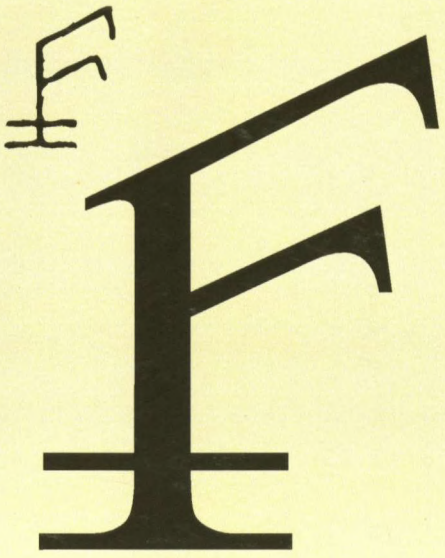
Appendix 2, figure 11 a – d: Bamum pictograph prints



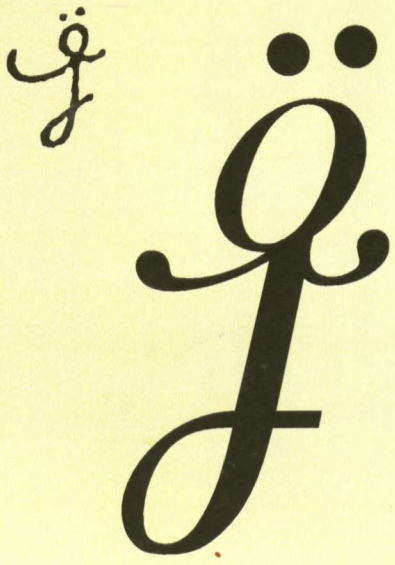


Appendix 2, figure 12 a: Bamum pictograph print; 12 b – d: Music posters.

Vai character 1:
syllable "zo"

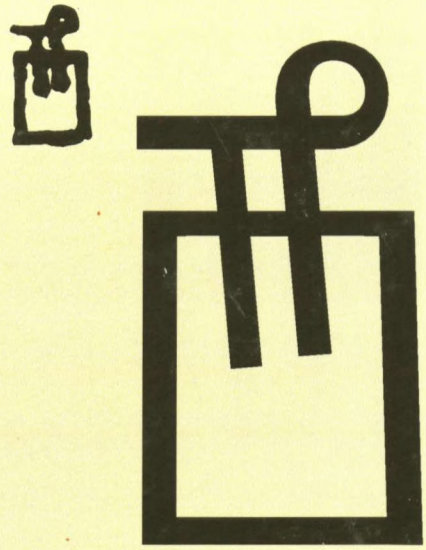


Kpelle character 1:
syllable "kpe"



Vai character 2:
syllable "we".

Bamum character 1:
"Sanza" (thumb piano)



Appendix 2, figure 13 a – d: Type characters