

# Appraisal of Selected Ibibio Symbols of Communication for Clip Art Environment

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*Abstract - Communication, be it in the rural, urban, traditional or contemporary setting involves the sharing of information. It makes common to two or more what, abinitio, was the monopoly of one. This involves symbols, signs and, of course, graphics at large. It is basically a continuous process of passing on information from one generation to another, persons to persons, communities to communities and from organisations to organisations through symbols. Man has always taken great pains in developing records; this is to prevent his economic, social and cultural achievements from being erased from human memory. Carvings made on stone in the caves by ancient men, for instance, were a kind of record meant to preserve their ideas and achievements. Amidst these achievements, Ibibio traditional symbols of graphic design seem to be grossly ignored due, perhaps, to western ideologies. Till today, most people are conditioned to see the traditional communicative media as being fetish or as not being fashionable. Nevertheless, human achievements including advancement in culture will continue to be recorded and preserved for the benefit of future generations. This informs the need for the appraisal of selected Ibibio symbols of communication for clip art environment. It was against the framework of dissuading the obnoxious thinking, and to prevent the cultural memory of the symbols from erasure that this study was undertaken. The objectives of the study were to identify Ibibio symbols of communication for clip art environment; discuss the functions of some Ibibio symbols of communication for clip art environment and; present selected Ibibio symbols of communication with similar meaning to the ones in the west and oriental worlds. The study depended on primary and secondary sources of data which was presented through descriptive methods. The paper recommends that graphic artists should not lose sight of the symbols from their respective local environments. They should allow their environments to have some degree of influence on them. The study also made a plea to contemporary designers of communication systems to include Ibibio symbols of communication in their design contents. The study found out that constant documentation of the Ibibio traditional symbols of communication would get the symbols to global visibility.*

**Keywords:** Appraisals, Clip Art Environment, Communication, Ibibio Symbols.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The existence and development of any society, be it ancient or contemporary, hinges on the ability of that society to invent and use symbols. This is because all social, cultural, political, economic activities can only be successfully carried out through symbolism. Humans do a lot of things with symbols. As a symbol making animal, man has from his first appearance on earth been searching for a means of communication, the discovery of which has made his development beyond mere animal existence. Undoubtedly, all human beings within certain limits of understanding have the same communication needs. As with other ethnic groups, Ibibio has always had some patterned ways of sharing ideas, information, knowledge and thoughts that are understood and observed by members of the group. Extensive use was made of vegetable and animal products as mediums of communication because of their rain forest region which influenced the Ibibio people of old to use the products of their environment in designing their communication system.

There is seemingly insufficient attention to Ibibio traditional symbols in a computer based-technology driven world like ours. One thing that is always clear to the mind is the fact that a system of communication, whether simple or sophisticated, serves essentially the same purpose the world over. Ibibio symbols should not be a stand alone on this situation. Therefore, an appraisal of Ibibio symbols of communication for clip art environment is a way to bring them up for use in that capacity.

Aware of the myriad functions of communication, the traditional Ibibio people came out with symbols that could act as channels for achieving their communication needs. It is out of this rich vocabulary of symbols that related ones were selected for study, discussion and appraisal. The primary concern of this study was the appraisal of

Ibibio traditional symbols. It consequently discussed briefly how Ibibio people created and exchanged information/messages using their own codes or symbols. Beyond fronting the Ibibio symbols globally, the study also geared towards making the said communication system traditional in content, yet modern in style by incorporating these symbols in visual communication design. The objectives of the study were to identify Ibibio symbols of communication for clip art environment; discuss the functions of some Ibibio symbols of communication for clip art environment and; selected Ibibio symbols of communication with similar meaning to the ones in the west and oriental worlds. Survey and descriptive methods were employed for the accomplishment of the study.

#### Identification of Ibibio Symbols of Communication for Clip Art Environment

It is pertinent for graphic designers and other users of symbols in designs to identify, be familiar with, and appreciate the functions of Ibibio symbols. It is worthwhile for them to also incorporate these symbols in traditional design and adapt them for effective communication. Culture from any perspective is centred on the totality of ways and manner people live and make meaning out of their existence considering varying cultural symbols which act as means of identity. Therefore, there is need for the Nigerian users to be associated with their traditional heritage while interacting with contemporary technologies (Kashim, Oluwafemi & Ogunwole, 2015). The source also adds that cultural symbols are fascinating, but they represent concepts that are unique to the different traditions. Igwedibia (2021) submits that signs and symbols are more prominently used for aesthetic values than communication and therefore recommends that motifs and symbols can be exploited for their communicative values, especially in the field of advertising.

The adaptation of the vast array of Ibibio symbols to graphic design would create wide awareness and usage in the contemporary era and beyond. It would equally dissipate the fears of these symbols being fetish. The following Ibibio symbols of communication were identified for clip art environment: *aye, nnuk enin, ebot, nkoi ebiong, utere, akarang abasi, nnung esien, ekoong ebuk eyop, orok mmiang, ekiko unen, ntakan nnang,*

*ududu, abomonkuku, ntia-ntia, ukpe ukot, obong ikpaisong, ekpo, akua ekpo, ete idung, mbopo, oku inam, abia idiong, akata, utuk, ababat, ebre, mme, akangkang, nsing obong, nkrong ekpo, ekuriku, ntinya, ekpurikpu, adaha ubong, ndo, edet ekpe, ikpa ekpe, utigha ndo idang, udak, ayang, ntung, nyoro, atananta, nsei, ukpok, ayei, ikim, mkpatat, ntakrok, nkporo, obodom, ibit ekpo, ibit isong, unwang, awat ubeng, itumo, okono, isara, iyoro.*

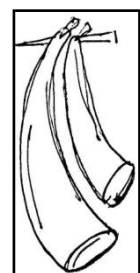
The identification was done through expert consultation, by asking experts in the field and by using museum collections to identify unique and relevant items. Data driven identification technique was also employed to identify the symbols. Thus, archival records/literature and relevant datasets were used.

#### Functions of Selected Ibibio Symbols of communication for Clip Art Environment

Symbols play vital role in the human existence. It is a language that is easily seen and understood in major parts of the world. Igwedibia (2021) asserts that cultural signs and symbols are systems of representations that are common among a people which are also part and parcel of their cosmology. This means that a culture cannot exist without symbols. The source also adds that whether this culture or signs or symbols come in form of a natural language, rituals or symbols, that it signifies a specific meaning within a specific context. The meaning of any symbol depends on the user's cultural belief. Members of the same cultural group create their own signs and symbols in order to establish unity and integration. Therefore, this paper according to Ekong (2019) identifies the following Ibibio symbols with the different meaning of each symbol to establish unity and conformity of the society.

##### 1. *Nnuk Enin* (elephant tusk):

*Nnuk Enin* was particularly useful as a symbol for stopping feuds between two warring villages. It was the clan head, *Obong Ikpaisong's* instruments of peace and was custodied by him. Whenever there was an inter-village dispute or fight, the *Obong Ikpaisong* in council with the elders of the



clan, would send the *nnuk enin* through his messengers to the warring villages and order them to declare a cease-fire. In such cases a day was normally fixed for the hearing of the case. Such cases were generally heard in the parent village or clan. The *Obong Ikpaisong's* elephant tusk did not only stop the hostilities, but also provided the messengers with a safe-conduct pass throughout the clan and beyond. Any disrespect for the tusk, *nnuk enin* was tantamount to rebellion against the *Obong Ikpaisong* and generally resulted in a serious case against the culprit because the elephant tusk was part of the symbol of the *Obong's* authority (Udo, 1983; Ekong and Okpo, 2019).

*Nnuk Enin* was also used for announcing the outing of *ekpo* masquerade in most communities. At the sound of this symbol of communication, women and non-initiates of *ekpo* masquerade in from the community would remain indoors. It is interesting to note that the sound could cover upwards of 10 km radius, especially, when blown in the night; and its source or origin could be identified by all who hear it at anytime of the day (Ekong and Okpo, 2019). Besides, it was also used for alerting members of the society whenever danger loomed. This could be incursion by thieves or armed robbers or invasion of enemies. Thus, at the sound of *nnuk enin* at odd times, all able bodied men would position themselves in readiness for a counter attack (Asukwo, 2016). In some communities, *obodom* was used while others used *nkwong*; for this purpose (Udoekong, 2002).

2. *Ekiko Unen* (cock):

This is a reliable time-teller. The cock crows four times before dawn and crows sparingly at peak hours of the day (Okpo, 2019). This seems to transcend cultures. Bird cited in D'Costa observes thus:



The use of cockcrows in the pre-dawn period to reckon time is extremely widespread, and has been ethnographically documented. The Bororo of Brazil keep track of time after midnight through the gradual increase in intensity and frequency of crows between the first cockcrow and dawn; the Ifugas of the Philippines state that cocks crow around four o'clock in the morning; and among the Saramaka, a maroon group in Surinam, cockcrow is an auspicious time for sharing secrets in the pre-dawn hours (D'Costa, 2011).

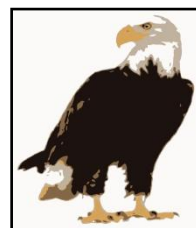
For the telling of time, *ekiko unen*, *ududu*, *abomonkuku* were and are still indispensable communication media. The sound of any of these birds symbolizes the dawn of a new day or hour as the case may be.

3. *Ntang-nkanda* (peacock's feather): *Ntang-nkanda*, is a feather from a peacock bird which symbolizes royalty in Ibibio-land. This was and still maintains as one of the paraphernalia of the *Obong* (king) in Ibibio-land.



4. *Ntrukpom* (eagle):

This is a large majestic bird that is active in the day and can soar high in the air. Urua *et al.* (2012) assert that *ntrukpom* is a kind of large forest bird that can beat the air with its wings and make a great noise. It is as an eagle. It is seen universally as a symbol of vigour and strength, it is also seen as such in Ibibio-land. Its feathers are used as attachments to royal crowns, and royal ceremonial apparels.



5. *Akarang-Abasi* (sparrow), *Utere* (vulture), *Akarang-abasi*: Mme (2002) identifies these birds, *utere*, *akarang-abasi* and *nnung-essien* as messengers of the people's deities and birds with positive symbolism. The source opines that the attendance of *utere* (vulture) in the final celebration of an *Oku Inam* meant that the celebrant had not defiled himself and that the rites were

religiously handled. On the other hand, the absence of the sacred bird, *utere*, would mean that the celebrant may not have been the right person for *inam* order or he had defiled himself. The source maintains that *utere ado abasi inam*: which means that the vulture is the god of *inam*. He goes further to mention one Chief Udoibok Akpan Ntan Utio who died during *inam* confinement because he had killed Akpan Akpan Ntan Utio during a feud over a parcel of land. This according to Mme was revealed by an *abia idiong* (chief priest) (Ekong, 2003).

*Akarang-Abasi* and *nnung-essien* were and are still symbols of peace, fertility and abundance. The presence of either of them in a person's compound meant that there were going to be many children and wealth in the family. With this belief, the birds were never chased away whenever they were found making nests in a person's compound (Asukwo, 2016; Ekong, 2003).

6. *Akepkep* (light bug): An insect that is believed to carry bad omen when found in the house. Mme (2002) in Ekong (2003) identifies light bug (*akepkep*) as a bad omen if it entered someone's house. The



source maintains that they were carriers of evil spirits that could harm members of the family, especially, the children. The belief is still strong in some homes and societies up till this day (Asukwo, 2016; Inyon, 2017).

7. *Akuok* (bee): Mme (2002) maintains that traditional Ibibio people used or saw certain species of insects or birds as



communication media. *Akuok*, for instance, was seen as a bad omen if it perched in or very close to one's home, or appeared suddenly where bees were rather uncommon. Mme (2002) cites examples of people who discontinued work in their farms or fishing ports on account of bees

hovering around them. The source also mentions one Ukibe Akpa Etuk who was said to have been drowned in water following his refusal to suspend a fishing expedition even after his fishing crew members had downed their tools for the day due to an ominous sign from two bees that hovered around them while in the boat (Ekong, 2003).

8. *Ekoong ebuk eyop, atongtong* and *orok mmiang*: Mme (2003) identifies *ekoong ebuk eyop, atongtong*, and *orok mmiang* as birds with bad omen. The source observes that the sound of *atongtong* in the day time symbolizes quietness and loneliness, while the presence of the sound of *ekoong ebuk eyop* or the sound of *orok mmiang* in residential areas symbolizes death. The sound of any other birds in the neighbourhood would mean that someone in the neighbourhood was going to die or something very disastrous was going to happen.

9. *Mbopo* (young maiden): *Mbopo* is a young maiden in seclusion preparatory to marriage. It is also a term used to describe the passage rites of maidens. It is equally used to address a plumpy, pretty,



well rounded lady. Though this practice is not very common today in most parts of the Ibibio-land, one should not lose sight of what the tradition is. History has a vital part to play in one's psyche. Moreover, the name, *mbopo* is still akin to a young maiden who looks healthy and pretty, both in character and in physical appearance. Okonofua (2013) sees *mbopo* in Ibibio "as a celebration involving drumming, clapping, singing, dancing, in fact, it is a social event entirely wrapped up in music orchestra promoting shared communal experiences". Egonwa (1994) in Okonofua (2013) sees *mbopo* as "traditional African way of life or rites of passage as aesthetic behaviours". This rite is aesthetically demonstrated as the parents of the maiden would dance out with their child in honour

and being proud of their child because she has kept their face from shame. It is a rite often done by virgins. It is of little wonder that Ita, Ita and Inyang (2016) submit that *mbopo* is the preparation of young women for successful marriage, motherhood and socio-economic survival in most parts of southern Nigeria. Ita, Ita and Inyang (2016) list Uyo, Oron, Okobo and Uruan as the areas in Akwa Ibom State that still practice *mbopo* rites of passage. They state that this ceremony lasts from 1 – 3 months for the target females of pre-marital years of teens and 20s.

10. *Ebre*: *Ebre* is the vernacular word for water yam in the Ibibio land of Akwa Ibom State. This variety of yam is often allocated to the Ibibio women as their share of the yearly new yam harvest. The word *ebre* is also used to describe a dance which women were taught to expose social, political and economic ills through different entertainments fora which involved satirical drama, dance, costumes and musical instruments. *Ebre* association is often said to be the mirror of the society, reflecting the respectable values of the women folk and also served as a platform for exposing anti-social characters of women. The association became so powerful and influential that every husband paid special honour and respect to any wife that was worthily acceptable therein. Any woman devoid of high standard of morality was never initiated unto the *Ebre* association. They were publicly exposed of their ills. Indeed, members were and still seen as people whose morals are unquestionable (Eshiet, 2009).

Ufford (2013) asserts that *ebre* institution is highly revered in Ibibio society. The institution is composed of virtuous women whose duty it is to chat a worthy path for other women to emulate. They use dance and music to make salient statements to the society. Ufford (2013) also adds that *ebre* women are unrepentant on checking moral laxity in their society; hence, thieves, adulteresses and women of unquestionable character cannot be admitted into the group. If any member is caught in an illicit act, the group ridicules her through songs

and dances at open places. The source asserts that *ebre* dance is performed during ceremonies including new yam festivals. The source also confirms that these women dance, entertain and deliberately protest against male domination.

The *Ebre* Women's Festival had a great impact on the Ibibio-land. Very serious moral lessons were touched during performance. Humorously, vices were criticized thereby teaching the audience the accepted values of the community. Their songs have moral and satirical undertone. Consequently, the girl-child in the society should be a good and caring mother in training. Acts such as stealing, adultery, arrogance, and irresponsibility are condemned by making the suspect an object of ridicule to prevent members and others from engaging in such anti-social acts. The songs expressed some historical truths, culture and customs of the Ibibio people. *Ebre* women's intention was to make people inculcate moral behaviour, thereby restoring sanctity in the society.

11. *Ekuriku* (staff): This is a staff usually used by royalties. The staff is named after the tree, *ekuriku* from which it is made. It is a small but hard wood that is characterised by spikes on its stem. It has strong resistant to water, dampness, as well as termites (Effiong and Udofia, 2017). It also symbolises strength and it is given as award to gallant warriors after conquests.



12. *Mkpatat (salaginella scandens)*: This is a creeping plant with tiny leaves used by the *ekpo* society. It is also prepared and used as garland to be worn during chieftaincy coronation or any celebration of successful attainment. It is believed to have some protective prowess.



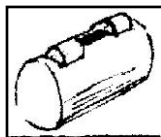
13. *Ntiatia*: This is a plant that opens its flowers at 12 noon. *Ntiatia* plant tells farmers and tappers the time. As cited by Ekong (2003), Sunday Udofia Ukrok (2002) submits that as a farmer and a palm wine tapper he depends on *ntia ntia* and his

freehold roosters for time telling. The source observes that as soon as *ntia ntia* opens its flowers, it is known that it is time for *ukpe ukot* which usually takes place between 12.00 noon and 1.00 pm.

14. *Ntakrok*: *Ntakrok* is a small wooden instrument that makes a special sound when hit with a stick. It is used to summon members of a particular *ekpuuk* to a meeting. It is used for passing information from the village council, from one corner of the street, *efak* to the other. It is also used for communicating information concerning *efak*. The town-crier would first hit the small wooden instrument, *ntakrok* with a stick, this is to capture the attention of every member of the society. At the end of three to four double strikes of the *ntakrok*, he would shout out the message. At meetings and other official gatherings this object is also used for calling people to order. When *ntakrok* is used for this purpose, no verbal accompaniment is required for decorum to be maintained in a meeting (Ekong and Okpo, 2017).



15. *Obodom* (wooden drum): *Obodom* is used for the same purpose as *ntakrok*, but it is used at the instance of the village head, *Eteidung* for matters that affect the whole village. This could be information from the village council or clan council. It is a wooden drum often used by Ibibio traditional dancers. Jacob (2013) affirms that they are heavy and made of wooden materials and used for traditional displays and announcement. The source identifies its variation one as *obodom enyong*. This type of symbol according to him is usually very big and may be kept on top of a tree or roof when using for announcement/declaration of a state of emergency. *Obodom-ibime* is peculiar to Osuk Ediene village according to Udoekong and Umoren (2002) in Ekong (2003). This type of *obodom* is kept by



*ibime* priest and is brought out for use in the months of May to July when the pond, *ibime* is set for the annual frog hunting expeditions. During this period, the priest would visit the pond after a heavy down pour to assess the level of water in it. His assessment would determine the hunting 'jamboree' the next morning. If by his assessment there are enough frogs, he would release some "rub-a-dub" with the *obodom* in the early morning hours about 4.30 am. By this "music", which is unique and also peculiar to the expedition, every male native of the village who intends to attend the hunting jamboree would wake up and move straight to the venue, *ibime*.

Akpan (2017) maintains that some instruments do communicate and direct the dancers dance steps. As in *Akata, ababat, utuk* cultural dances/plays, the *obodom* drummer would, through peculiar sound, call out a dancer of his choice for demonstration. With the peculiar sound of the *obodom*, the *obodom* player would tell the dancer the kind of dance steps and actions expected of him (the dancer).

16. *Ekere*: *Ekere* was used during *ubuk ese* (citation). It symbolizes awareness, dignity, knowledge and power. According to Jacob (2013) *ekere* is a small gong made of iron. It produces a resounding tone when struck with a special wooden hammer. Ekwere (2000) stresses that *ekere* was and is still one of the prime symbols for knowledge and communication in Ibibio land. Therefore, its eloquent appearance in the University of Uyo's logo (Figure 1) is in application; a symbol of education as an instrument for communication (Ekwere, 2017). It is an instrument which is used during celebrations in Ibibio-land.

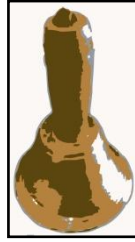
17. *Nkporo*: Jacob (2013) identifies *nkporo* as another wooden gong that sounds very much like its name. Jacob adds that in literally term it may be seen as an 'onomatopoeia'. This





symbol is mostly used by women for proclamations.

18. *Nkanika* (bell): This symbol, bell is used in people to call to summoning a meeting or order. Jacob (2013) states that *nkanika* is a traditional communication instrument that may either be used by the town criers for the purpose of dissemination of information or for the performances of masquerades or other traditional plays. It is used in some societies for calling people to order in meetings (Asukwo, 2016). During masquerade outings, it used as a dependable signal to the coming of an *ekpo* masquerade. This would alert women and non-initiates so they can run as the bell which was one of the paraphernalia of the *Akpan ekpo* would ring *ku maang, ku maang, ku maang, ku maang* as the masquerade walked (Inyon, 2017).
19. *Okpoho* (manila): *Okpoho* is one of the symbols of authority given to *Obong ikpaisong* (clan head) as he assumes office. There are some symbols used in Ibibio land that has turned out to be symbols of wealth, *okpoho* is one such symbols. These are mostly commodity currencies that were used for business transaction in pre-colonial Ibibio. Udo (1983) confirms this submission and writes “the various media of exchange in pre-colonial Ibibio land can still be seen today at the funerals of chiefs, when they are spread out as exhibits of past family wealth or as the chiefs regalia or simply as ornaments”. The source enumerates such items as follows: *idang, ntung, nyoro, okpoho*, bracelet and armlets, copper wires and manilas. According to Udo (1983) most of these symbols were displayed during Chief Nyong Essien’s funeral in November, 1976.



Nicklin (undated:66) writing on the adoption of *okpoho* (manila) as decorative motif on masks, armoral bearings and commercial sign board states categorically that “in these contexts the manila is a symbol of wealth and security”. The source also mentions the use of gold manila at the funeral of King Jaja of Opobo. The source affirms that large forms of the *okpoho* are often referred to as “King” and “Queen” manilas owned only by the rich and wealthy people and the display of them at the funeral of kings and queens. More so, manilas were valued during traditional marriages, and were presented as one of the gifts to the new couples. This is usually seen at ceremonial burials of the rich and wealthy citizens of Ibibio-land. They are continually unearthed in most parts of the State where graves and other earth openings are made (Asukwo, 2016).

20. *Akangkang* (sword): This is the king’s instrument of authority. It symbolizes defence, bravery, war, royalty and strength.
21. *Niinya* (crown): This is a closely fitted raffia cap worn by *Obong Ikpaisong, Eteidung* and selected members of the village council (Ekong, 2003). This symbolizes royalty, strength and authority.
22. *Ikid* (tortoise): Encarta (2009) describes a tortoise as “a slow-moving land dwelling reptile with a large dome-shaped shell into which it can retract its head and limbs”. This symbol, tortoise is commonly referred to as being cunning. In Ibibio-land the name *ikid* is usually derogatively used for a person who is cunning, tricky and clever in character and in action.

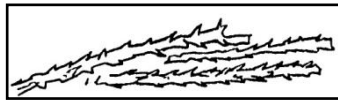


Some Ibibio Symbols of Communication with Similar Meaning to the ones in the West and Oriental Worlds

- i. *Inim* (parrot, cockatiels): Cockatiels is a type of parrot native to Australia. They are popular pets because of their affectionate personalities and ability to whistle basic melodies or speak simple words (Encarta, 2009). *Inim* has the ability to signal the arrival of a visitor or danger to its owner, that is why, in traditional Ibibio, it is noticed in most homes as one of the pet animals because they are not wild, but, rather very friendly. It is widely used for similar purposes in Australia and the Aborigines (Encarta, 2009).



- ii. *Ekuriku*: This is a staff or scepter held by the *Obong ikpaisong* (king) as a symbol of authority, power and posterity. The Egyptians also use a similar staff in representing their scepter. This is called *Was-scepter*. *Was-scepter* ensures continuance of the king's prosperity, authority and rulership (<http://mythologian.net/egyptian-symbols-meanings>, 2017).



- iii. *Ntang-nkanda* (peacock feather): *Nkanda* is a very beautiful bird with multi-colours with which it is always very proud. According to Ukpong *et al.* (2001) the Efiks are proud people. They adopt the word 'Ebrutu' as a suffix to their names, hence, Efik Ebrutu. They believed that they are culturally endowed; and economically strong and powerful. The Efik people, therefore, attach long feather, *ntang-nkanda* to their cap as a symbol of pride. Similarly, the Egyptians use *Maat's feather* which is a kind of bird for their symbol of truth, justice, morality and balance (<http://www.crystalinks.com/egyptsymbols.html>, 2015). *Ntang-nkanda*, on the cap of an Ibibio *Obong* (chief) symbolizes the height of



morality, justice, equity and truth. It equally, signifies economic freedom.

- iv. *Utere* (vulture): This is one of the birds in Ibibio-land that is seen as a messenger of the gods. This bird symbolizes peace and acceptance in a ceremony. It is a good omen at functions. When a ceremony is ongoing, and the bird arrives, it means the celebrator is upright; but the absence of the bird in a ceremony signifies that the celebrator is not of good conduct. In Egyptian culture, the bird, *Nekhbet* is a goddess that symbolizes peace and protection. Still on the use of a bird symbol, the people of Zimbabwe believe in birds as a symbol of good omen, protective spirit and a messenger of the gods. They believe that a bird is an ancestral link to the heavens and is sometimes called *Shiri ya Mwari* (the Bird of God) (Peels and Peels, 2017).



- v. *Ntiantia*: This is a plant that opens its flowers between 12 noon and 1.00 pm. It is a plant that tells the time. Most farmers depend on this plant for telling of time. It is also noticed that the Egyptians have a lotus flower, *Sesen* which symbolizes the sun, creation and rebirth. They believe that at night, the flower closes and sinks underwater, while, at dawn it rises and opens again (<http://www.crystalinks.com/egyptsymbols.html>, 2015).

- vi. *Akangkang*: *Akangkang* is a sword. In Ibibio, it symbolizes royalty, authority, majesty, protection and dominion. This sword is held by the *Obong ikpaisong* (king). It is also noticed in the Military and Para-military settings as a symbol of authority, power and dominion. It is most times handed on to a successor after the demise of the predecessor. It is given to Ibibio princes by royal families as a symbol of protection. Thus, he should protect his people (Asukwo, 2017). The Egyptian has a similar meaning in their "Flail and Crook" which symbolizes royalty, majesty and dominion





(<http://www.crystalinks.com/egyptsymbols.html>, 2015).

Source: University of Uyo Information Bulletin, (1992)

- vii. *Ayei*: This is seen as an injunction. It is a warning sign depending on how it is knotted. In case of war, *aye* is sent to the warring village to declare a ceased fire. In Yoruba land, palm frond tied to a weapon symbolizes a warning of an imminent war (Yoruba Symbols of Communication, 2015). *Aye* in the University of Uyo's logo traditionally, signifies peace, injunction during feud, as well as discipline (University of Uyo Information Bulletin, 1992). In Christianity they signify the triumph of Christ over death and sin, celebrated every Palm Sunday. In Egypt it heralds new beginnings and fertility.



- viii. *Nnuk enin* (elephant tusk): In chieftaincy coronation, paraphernalia such as *nnuk enin* is given to *Obong ikpaisong* as symbol of peace, authority and power. Since the office is of high status the occupants are also seen as such and are not expected to be seen indulged in any act that are not worthy to emulate. In the same vein, some Igbo Red Cap Chiefs are given *nnuk enin*. They are not expected to misrepresent, cheat or engage in any thing that can lead the traditional formation into disrepute (Jannah, 2017).

*Nnuk Enin* in the University of Uyo's logo traditionally, also, symbolizes peace and dignity. The crossing of the two tusks stand for intra-communal peace, (Figure 1) (University of Uyo Information Bulletin, 1992).



Figure 1: University of Uyo logo showing *nnuk enin* and *ekere*

- ix. *Ekere* (small talking gong): This instrument is used during citations (*ubuk ese*) in Ibibio community. Little wonder the designer of the University of Uyo Logo, Sunday Ekwere, a lecturer of painting in the Department of Fine and Industrial Arts, centrally and prominently located the *ekere* in the logo as a tool of communication which signifies the importance of effective communication in the process of imparting and acquiring knowledge (University of Uyo Information Bulletin, 1992).

- x. *Ntrukpom* (eagle): This is a very large bird that is very active in the day and can soar very high in the air. Its feathers are used as attachments to royal crowns, and royal ceremonial apparels. The eagle is energetic in nature because of its vigour and strength. Little wonder the Bible says "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31, King James Version). An eagle, therefore, is a bird that is known for its strength in most cultures including the Jewish culture. The Zimbabweans also use the eagle for their country's emblem as a symbol of freedom (Peels and Peels, 2017).



## II. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

There are several ways of disseminating information. It could be through short video clips, audio, visuals, clip art, symbols, signs or multimedia approach. For communication to be effective, the right visuals or tools must be properly placed. Communication involves the sharing of information. It is the process of passing down information by writing, or speaking, or using symbols or signs. It consists of inter-related, inter-dependent and inter-locking communicative elements. These communicative elements include encoder and decoder which are symbols, or clip art, or instruments or mediums of communication.

Many Ibibio people, till today, detest the word 'tradition'. Some feel ridiculed by an observation

that they behave or act in a traditional way, whereas there is no civilization and modernity that is not rooted in culture or tradition. This paper successfully identified selected Ibibio symbols of communication, discussed the benefits and usage of Ibibio symbols of communication for clip art environment and presented some Ibibio symbols of communication with similar meaning to the ones in the west and oriental worlds. The study has provided a reference point to artists and designers involved in adapting symbols in modern communication system. It would also help planners/designers of communication systems to include traditional Ibibio symbols in their contents. It would also help software designers to develop computer softwares with Ibibio traditional symbols for the populace to lessen the use of western symbols where traditional symbols would have been preferred. The symbols could be utilised for the development of excellent designs for ceramics, textiles, paintings and other forms of visual arts.

The study reveals that constant documentation of the Ibibio traditional symbols of communication and employment in clip art environment would catapult them to global visibility. This is in consonant with Kashim, Oluwafemi & Ogunwole's (2015) submission that there is need for the Nigerian users to be associated with their traditional heritage while interacting with contemporary technologies. The study also aligns with Igwedibia's (2021) opinion that signs and symbols are more prominently used for aesthetic values than communication; and thus recommends that motifs and symbols can be exploited for their communicative values, especially in the field of advertisement. This recommendation is amplified by this study.

Finally, this paper succeeded in stimulating a full scale documentation, in book form, of Ibibio traditional symbols of communication, hence, the clarion call. It thus recommends that graphic artists/visual communication designers should attempt blending Ibibio symbols with modern ones in their works. The writer's submission is that effective communication involves the exchange of meanings among individuals or groups through the use of symbols common to them. Therefore, the use of symbols of Ibibio origin should not be an exception.

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