

Need For Developing Ibibio Symbols in Clip Art: Example of Plant Grouping

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Abstract- Symbols are very essential in our daily lives. They help communicate important information without using words to people – literate and non-literate class alike. In view of the value of symbolism, it is necessary to develop cultural symbols in clip art packages to meet with the demands for effective design, whether local or western. Clip art is a readymade package with keywords and categories of different fields of pictures, illustrations, and images. In modern graphics practice, symbols, images or visuals are stored in clip art environment and are retrieved, therefrom, for use as the need arises. However, in many cases, it is difficult to find suitable clip art images. The most affected are clip art with local or traditional contents such as that of the Ibibio symbols that have not been pre-made and stored for retrieval purposes. This gap therefore, constrains Ibibio designers to use images that are not suitable in most designs with traditional Ibibio themes. It is against this backdrop that this study was undertaken. The objectives of the study were to discuss the need for Ibibio symbols in clip art; discuss compatible and mismatched symbols in Ibibio designs; and illustration of select Ibibio symbols of plant in clip art with their manifest meaning. The study depended on primary and secondary data. The study recommends that more illustrations of Ibibio cultural background clip art should be created; and profusely used by Ibibio designers, and others, in their design content so as to promote Ibibio symbols. The findings reveal that with the subsequent creation of Ibibio symbols in clip art package alongside their manifest meanings, it is possible, with time, to curb the mismatch or misuse of western contents in local design contents.

Index Terms- Clip Art, Plant Grouping, Symbols.

I. INTRODUCTION

The importance of symbols, images or visuals in design cannot be overemphasized. The representation of a thing, especially an object or an abstraction is known as a symbol. It is also an object that has cultural relevance. These symbols on cultural relevance could be food, attire, behavioural

patterns, houses, and the like. The necessity and act of preserving these symbols pave way to developing clip art for easy accessibility of the visuals whenever the need arises. In modern graphics practice, symbols, images or visuals are stored in clip art environment and are retrieved therefrom for use as the need arises.

The practice of cutting images from pre-existing printed works for use in design gave birth to the term clip art. Clip art can be summed up as a collection of different ready-made copyright free images, graphic or objects cut, compiled and arranged in a categorical format to aid a designer or user of the clip art environment in a work or works. This study sought to redress the scenario by developing culturally relevant clip art packages for the use of graphic designers in our locality in order to dissuade the use of western clip art in the design content of Ibibio people. The study also emphasized the use of clip art for effective design and message propagation.

Clip art ensures suitability of images in a given work. It involves different photographs, illustrations, drawing, scripts and fonts. It facilitates effective delivery of design not only in graphics as a descriptive medium but whenever two-dimensional design is desired. Thus, it is relevant in Architecture, Building, Urban and Regional Planning, Engineers, indeed in all fields of human endeavour where designing is sacrossant.

Admst the relevance of symbols and clip art, there is a challenge of non-availability of other Ibibio symbols in clip art package or environment. Whenever Ibibio symbol is brought to the lime-light the famous, prominent and most known among the symbols is *ayei* or *akpin* (palm frond). This is probably; because it is a widely used medium in the rural and urban communities. The dearth of other

Ibibio symbols, images or visuals in clip art has made most Ibibio designers to use images and symbols which do not fit most designs with Ibibio themes. Such works which are misfits are also not delivered within deadlines as the designer would have to spend time looking for visuals. As a result of non-availability of the local content(s) the western contents override the design. In attempt to check these practices, this paper sought to bring in other numerous Ibibio symbols by highlighting thus, clip art and symbols, computer application, relevance of clip art, misuse and expected use of symbols in ibibio design, above all, a table on illustration of select Ibibio symbols with a keyword 'plant' and a category on 'musical instruments', 'royalty' and 'tree/shrubs' in clip art. A contiguity principle of aligning words to the corresponding graphics is applied in the table for proper encoding and decoding, hence, the manifest meaning. The study depended on primary and secondary sources of data. The findings reveal that with subsequent creation of Ibibio symbols in clip art package with the manifest meaning by other designers or computer analysts, with time, it is possible to curb the mismatch or misuse of western contents in local design content as plant grouping in clip art for Ibibio designs is made possible by this study.

II. CLIP ART AND SYMBOLS

Clip art is seen as a collection of graphics that can be copied and added to brochures, newsletters, and other documents created with the programmes. It has a wider variety of collections that are available; some are packaged with programmes, others can be purchased separately. Depending on the programme, clip art images may be disassembled to allow a person to use only a part of an image. Ekong (2024) opines that clip art is time-saving, most people view images faster than text; and the image lives in the memory longer than text. No wonder the use of of symbol – the almond tree in Bible book of Jeremiah 1:11. It was easier for Jeremiah to understand symbols and images – when a branch of an almond tree was shown to him as well as when a pot of boiling water spilling from the north was shown to him.

Webster (2017) sees clip art as “ready-made usually copyright-free illustrations sold in books or as part of a software package from which they may be cut and pasted or inserted as artwork. Ekong (2022) also affirms that clip art is a ready-made package that contains visual symbols and images which are designed professionally for ease of graphic design; hence, the need for development of Ibibio symbols in clip art for Ibibio – based designs. According to techterms (2017) clip art is a collection of pictures or images that can be imported into a document or another programme. Clip art galleries may contain a few images to hundreds of thousands of images. Clip art is typically organized into categories, such as people, objects, animals, insects, plants, which is helpful when browsing through thousands of images (Ekong, 2024). Thankgod (2015) in Ekong (2022) sees clip art as not just for graphics convenience but as a means of history documentation which has to do with the culture and its global projection.

Most clip art images also have keywords associated with them. A picture of a female teacher in a classroom, for example, may have the keywords “school teacher”, “woman”, “classroom”, and “students” as the case may be. Most clip art programmes allow one to search for images or symbols based on the relevant keywords as provided. When one finds a desired clip art image, it is copied to the computer’s clipboard and pasted unto another programme or environment. Such programmes or environments are Photoshop, CorelDraw, Microsoft Word or other packages within the system that are user interface friendly. The image or object may also be exported to the desktop environment or another folder on the hard-disk for use.

The submissions on the meaning of clip art by the various authorities point to the fact that it is a ready-made image or symbol prepared to aid a designer at work. The design could be done either by illustration or photography since it is a picture or symbol that could be imported from other environment to a document or design. It is an art, an image or symbol that is made by various artists to fit numerous different categories such as people, animals, schools, buildings, toys, cars (both animate and inanimate forms and objects) that can be copied and inserted into a document or design (Ekong, 2024).

A symbol is a pictorial art form that expresses one's ideas at a glance. A graphic designer communicates the purpose of a company or an organization's distinct and memorable appearance through symbols. Preble and Preble (2004) in Ekong (2019) see a trademark based on letter form as logo or logotype; while an identifying mark based on picture is called a symbol. According to Halim (2012) in Effiong (2016) symbol is "an adopted tangible or abstractive objects, letters, or inscriptions which serves as an identification of an object or idea". Effiong (2016) stresses the importance of adapting symbols for use in any programme or scheme as it helps in simplifying and making understanding easier. The source buttresses that even advertisers should adopt the symbols as tools to establish designs for integrity and identity which speaks volume and imagery to portray intentions. Symbols reduce the stress of reading and incite one the curiosity to flip through the pictures, just like in children's story books. A symbol that is seen often is generally easily interpreted more and faster than words; it sticks to the memory and makes recall simple. Symbols are very essential in our daily lives because they help communicate important information without words to travelers or foreign people, and to literate and non-literate class alike.

III. RELEVANCE OF CLIP ART

Clip art is a collection and compilation of readymade graphic images, pictures, drawings, photographs, for storage and retrieval in a computer or other electronic devices. The importance of clip art in every field of studies is inexhaustible. These readymade graphics aid in reducing heavy text writing in a given subject. Ekong (2024) maintains that clip art does not only aid in reducing the amount of text writing but it also helps in breaking the monotony of text on a given subject or design. The source also opines that the use of clip art is an aspect of computer graphics technique that makes it easier for the user of the system to drag a readymade symbol into a given design without looking for an illustrator to be paid for an effective design to be achieved. In today's dissemination of information, clip art is widely used in various platforms, such as face book, WhatsApp, instagram, twitter, blogs, tik-toks, websites and any other social media platforms either local or global.

Unfortunately, foreign clip arts are mostly employed in local designs that should normally use local symbols. The Ibibio symbols are not harnessed in clip art packages for digital storage and retrieval. In order to avoid misfits in Ibibio subject/themes, there is need for readymade repositories of Ibibio clip arts to be developed where one can easily pick and use with ease as the need arises. Therefore, there is need for Ibibio designers, artists and computer software designers to work hand in hand to create and produce Ibibio clip art data base. When this is done, Ibibio clip art package would be profusely used by Nigerian designers thereby popularising Ibibio symbols and culture for posterity and also curb the profuse misuse of symbols in Ibibio based designs.

IV. COMPATIBLE AND MISMATCHED SYMBOLS IN IBIBIO BASED DESIGNS

Whenever symbols, images, illustrations, pictures, fonts or texts are mentioned, graphics resonate in the mind of people. Graphics is a discipline that seeks to communicate visually, it is not just a visual communication but a vivid display of information to be properly harnessed and decoded. For information to be properly decoded, a multimedia principle should be harnessed. Sorden (2012) in Ekong (2019) affirms that multimedia theory concerns the building of mental representations from words and pictures. Mayer (2005) in Sorden (2012) asserts that people learn more deeply from words and pictures than from words alone. This is referred to as the multimedia principle. The words can be spoken or written, and the pictures can be any form of graphical imagery including illustrations, photos, animation, or video. This principle is to help beholders understand the message in design. This underscores the need to discuss, with examples, the correctly applied and misapplied symbols in Ibibio design(s). Figure 1, for instance, is an example of mismatched Ibibio symbols on a poster design, "Experience the native drink *UKOT NSAÑ* in Akwa Ibom State"; while Figure 2 is an example of compatible Ibibio symbol on poster "Experience the native drink *UKOT NSAÑ* in Akwa Ibom State". Notice a poster design using non-traditional content, (plastic, see arrow in Figure 1). Also notice a re-worked demonstration on the

poster design using Ibibio symbol, (*ikim*, see arrow in Figure 2).

In this study, three examples representing the areas where mismatched symbols are prevalent in poster design, invitation cards and handbills for relaxation centers, traditional marriage and child dedication. These are presented in Figures 1 – 8 alongside their respective compatible versions.



Figure 1: Poster design captioned, Experience the Native Drink *UKOT NSAN* in Akwa Ibom State. Notice the use of plastic keg in the poster. See the arrow.

Designer: Edidiong Stanislaus (2017)



Figure 2: Re-worked: Poster design captioned, Experience the Native Drink *UKOT NSAN* in Akwa Ibom State

Notice the use of *ikim* in the poster. See the arrow.

Designer: Itoro Domobongse (2017)

Another example of mismatched symbol is where an image of a modern house is shown or used instead of a thatched house (Figure 3). This applies to situation where the house being described is a mud/thatch house; and where the event being advertised is a Traditional Marriage (TM) which the contents should normally be traditional.

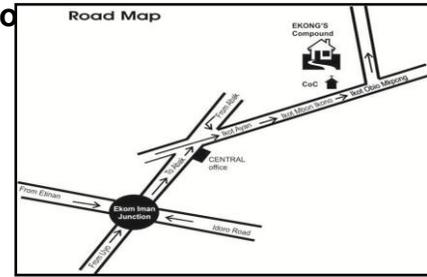


Figure 3: Sample of an Invitation Card showing direction to the venue of a traditional marriage, the card uses a western symbol

Designer: Itoro Domobongse (2017)

This was designed intentionally by the author for the purpose of explaining mismatched symbols in designs.

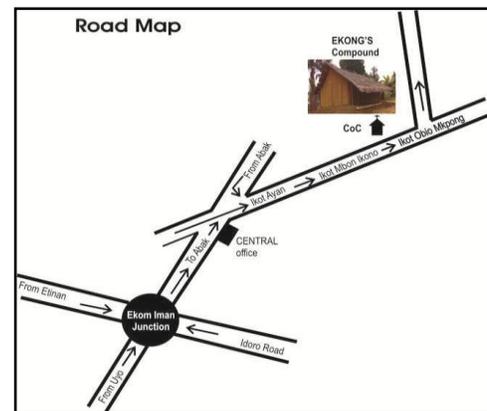


Figure 4: Invitation Card showing direction to the venue of a Traditional Marriage using local symbol (content) – thatch house

Designer: Itoro Domobongse (2017)

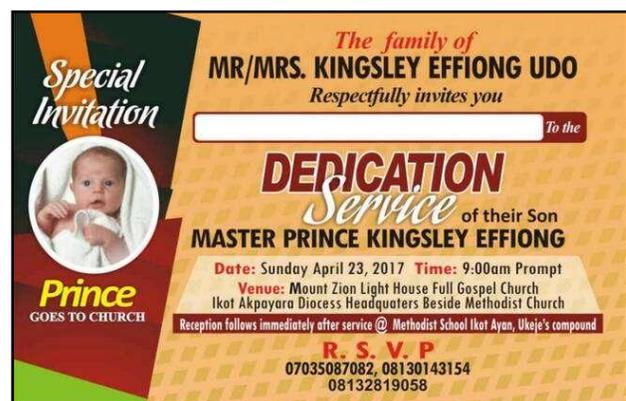


Figure 5: Sample of an Invitation Card for a baby dedication. Notice the image of a white baby
 Source: Emmanuel Ndem's Collection (2017)

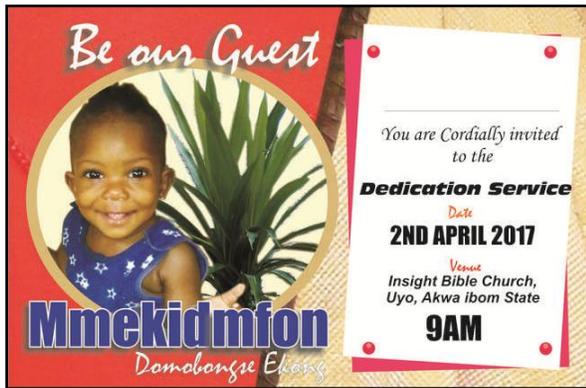


Figure 6: Sample Invitation Card for baby dedication using traditional contents – *okono* leaf and photograph of a black baby
 Designer: Itoro Domobongse (2017)



Figure 7: Invitation Card on baby dedication – illustration of black baby
 Designer: Itoro Domobongse (2017)

Ekong (2019) assesses the function of *okono* tree as a boundary demarcator and the placing of its leaves in front of a house signifying the presence or arrival of a new born baby in the house. Thus, the design of the card in Figure 6 which uses the *okono* leaves in its full bloom signifies the vitality and celebration of the new born baby. It also uses the photograph of a black baby itself. The card can also be done using illustration of a black baby as shown in Figure 7.

Thankgod (2015) laments the short supply of clip art in Nigerian cultural design items in global circulation. The source observes that “extant clip art in the World Wide Web (www) tend pervasively

towards Westernisation. This is akin to visual neo-colonialism”. Similarly, this study agrees that visuals of indigenous culture appear not to be found in clip art environment. Undoubtedly, there are very many things in indigenous culture that can be placed on the clip art environment which can bring the culture up to compete favourably with what obtains globally.



Thankgod (2015) frowns at some designs with unrestrained use of Western images instead of Nigerian visuals/symbols. Figures 8 – 11 show some of the designs.



Figure 8: Flourish Day Care Center, Banner, Flex (Sighted at Madam 190 Street, Osubi – Delta State)
 Source: Thankgod (2015)

Figure 9: Children Praying Ministry, Banner, Flex (Springhill School, Akemu Street – New Layout Effurun, Delta State)
 Source: Thankgod (2015)

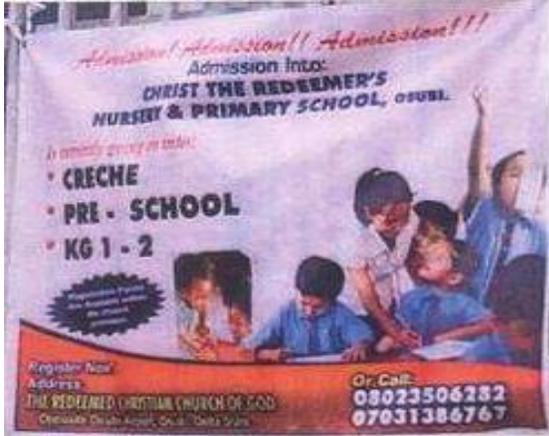


Figure 10: Christ The Redeemer's School, Banner, Flex (Redeemed Christian Church Opposite Osubi Airport, Delta State)
 Source: Thankgod (2015)



Figure 11: Man in Suit with Nigerian Flag (Fotosearch Stock Illustration) Clip art - (Foreign Dress Culture)
 Source: Thankgod (2015)

In order to checkmate or reduce the misuse or mismatch of western symbols in Ibibio contents or designs, illustration of Ibibio Symbol of Plants in Clip Art with the Manifest Meaning becomes imperative. Therefore, this study attempted a selection of the symbols. Ibibio symbols of plants were sourced for and broken down in a file format that can interface with the user of the system to achieve the expected use of symbols in Ibibio traditional design contents. See Tables 1, 2 and 3. The keyword here is plants. Thus, the focus is on plant and its products. The illustration is presented in three categories, namely, musical instruments, royalty and tree/shrubs.

Table 1: Illustrations of Select Ibibio Symbol of Plants in the Musical Instruments Category in Clip Art with the Manifest Meaning

KEYWORD: PLANTS

Symbols	Ibibio name	English equivalent	Manifest meaning
	Ntakrok	Small wooden instrument	Entertainment, communication, sound, music, alarm
	Eka ibit	Big drum	Entertainment, sound, music, alarm

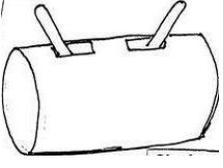
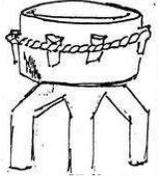
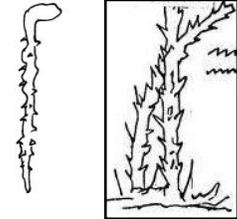
	Nsak	Rattle	Entertainment, celebration, music
	Obodom	Wooden drum	Entertainment, announcement, celebration, alertness, music
	Nsing obon	Three legged drum	Entertainment, announcement, celebration, alertness, music, sound

Table 1: Some Ibibio Symbols of Plant in clip art application on musical instruments
 Source: The writer's compilation (2018)

Table 2: Illustrations of Select Ibibio Symbol of Plants in the Royalty Category in Clip Art with the Manifest Meaning

Symbols	Ibibio name	English equivalent	Manifest meaning
	Ayang	Broom	Royalty, strength, authority
	Ekuriku	Stave	Authority, power and posterity
	Ntinya	Crown	Authority, power and posterity

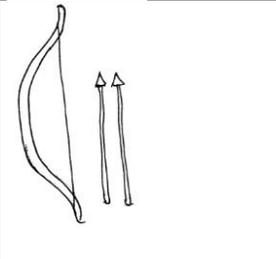
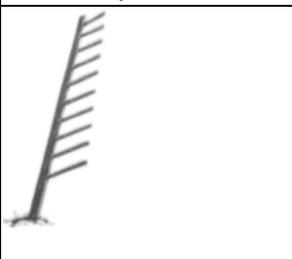
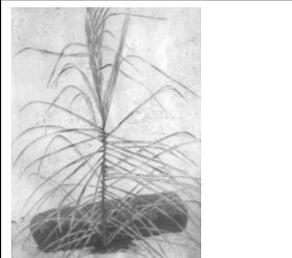
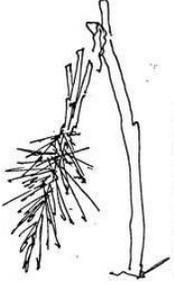
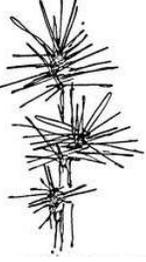
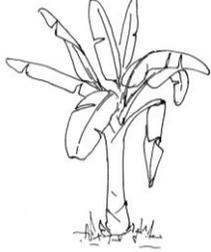
	Udak	Wooden necklace	Royalty, authority, power, wealth
	Utigha ndo idang	Bow and arrow	Royalty, strength, authority, war
	Ikim	Calabash	Celebration, entertainment, merriment

Table 2: Some Ibibio Symbols of Plant in clip art application on royalty
 Source: The writer's compilation (2018)

Table 3: Illustrations of Select Ibibio Symbol of Plants in the Tree/shrubs Category in Clip Art with the Manifest Meaning

Symbols	Ibibio name	English equivalent	Manifest meaning
	Awat ubeng	Palm frond	Warning, no trespass
	Ayei	Palm frond	Prohibition, injunction, no trespass, peace, triumphant entry

	Isara	Shrub	Flag, warning, restraints
	Iyirọ	Short pieces of sticks tied together	Warning against destruction and pilfering
	Okono 1	A kind of tree	Boundary demarcator, peace, new born, rebirth
	Okono 2	A kind of tree	Boundary demarcator, peace, new born, rebirth
	Ukom	Plantain	Warning, injunction

	Unwang	Dried plantain leaf or palm frond	Warning, no trespass
	Mkpatat	A creeping plant, selaginella scandens	Protection, healing, warding off evil, spiritual purposes, adornment
	Ufok nkanya	Thatched house, roofing mat	Shelter, safety, protection, coverage, serenity

Table 3: Some Ibibio Symbols of Plant in clip art application on tree/shrubs
 Source: The writer's compilation (2018)

V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Symbols are used in preserving culture for the next generation and, for aesthetic display of artistic ingenuity. Symbols are beneficial to human existence. It constitutes the cultural background of a given society. Some of them are stored in clip art package for use in design. Clip art is the practice of cutting images from pre-existing printed works for use in designs. It is a ready-made package that contains visual symbols and images which are designed professionally for ease of graphic design. It involves different photographs, illustrations, drawing, scripts and fonts, which are used to facilitate effective delivery of design. Traditional symbols of most tribes and cultures of the world are available in clip art packages. Cooperate symbols of most organizations groups and professional bodies are also made available in clip art, in spite of all these availability of symbols in clip art, the Ibibio symbols are lacking in the package; hence, the illustrations of some Ibibio symbols in clip art environment which this study undertook. In alignment with Sorden

(2012) concerning the representation of words and pictures, the study came up with illustrations for clip art. The study has successfully documented some Ibibio symbols under the keyword, Plants. Three categories under the keyword were identified for ease of reference. These are musical instruments, royalty and tree/shrubs alongside their respective manifest meanings for easy identification. Data were sourced through primary and secondary sources.

Besides, the study discussed, with visuals, some examples of mismatched symbols as vividly shown in Figures 1, 3 and 5. This corroborates Thankgod (2015) and Ekong (2019). Examples of compatible symbols in designs are also clearly shown in the study (Figures 2, 4, 6 and 7). The study revealed that it is possible to create illustrations by using Ibibio symbols for computer applications in clip art. It was possible to develop culturally relevant clip art package to curb the use of western clip art in the design contents of Ibibio people. Therefore, the paper recommends that more Ibibio symbols of different keywords and categories should be created, not just to ease the designers, but for posterity and artistic ingenuity. The study has therefore justified

the need for developing Ibibio symbols in clip art with focus on plant grouping.

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