

A COMMON LANGUAGE FOR MASS COMMUNICATION IN GHANA—VERBAL OR VISUAL

G.W.A. Owusu, BA, DAE
 Department of Architecture,
 Faculty of Environmental and Developmental Studies,
 University of Science and Technology, Kumasi.

ABSTRACT

A careful study of the Mass Media of Ghana discloses the following facts:

1. *That Ghana has inadequate infrastructural facilities for effective use of the electronic and printed media for mass communication.*
2. *That the media in Ghana uses only 5 of the 45 or more indigenous languages, which most Ghanaians speak.*
3. *That only 5 of these 45 languages with their numerous dialects are written and taught in the schools in Ghana.*
4. *That the few written indigenous languages, have such complex phonetic sounds as have to be modified by diacritical marks in order to bring out the appropriate meanings of words, but the country's printing presses do not have the technical facilities for printing all these marks.*

These facts indicate that the Ghanaian media cannot safely depend on the local languages for effective mass communication in this country. In searching for an alternative mode of communication for the country, the Paper examines the great variety of the international and traditional symbols. Discovering the symbolic power of the Adinkra and other designs the Paper satisfies itself of the possibility of the development of such a language and proceeds to make recommendations for the implementation of the idea.

Keywords: Communication, media, press, information, symbol, language.

INTRODUCTION

Communication means to make common or share something among several people. It also means to transmit information through inter-personal contact, or by technical facilities such as the morse, telephone, radio or fax. It is a way of life noticed in all animals - from the microbiological organisms such as ants, bees and termites, to the higher animals like monkeys. The habit is necessary among these creatures for their concerted efforts to provide shelter and food, organise a force to resist intrusion or invasion, express delight or fear and ensure their welfare and continued existence.

This fundamental process is also required in man for his individual improvement and social organisation. Man, like all these animals has to communicate with his kind to form a

society, and all societies at local, district, regional, national and international levels, require communication for their operations, self-expression and the development of their social and political structures [1]. It is therefore evident that any system designed for the improvement of human life in any culture, be it economic, educational or political, should have communication as one of its essential elements. The neglect, stagnation or underdevelopment of the communication system in any country may therefore lead to misinformation and its attendant social evils: misunderstanding, dissatisfaction, dissension, suspicion, hatred and violence among people in all spheres of life, and ultimately result in under-production and the general under-development of a country.

Speech, the only faculty which distinguishes man from the lower animals, is the commonest medium of communication, but not always the most useful because of its many limitations. The young baby who has not yet developed his faculty of speech uses a cry, smile and other expressions to convey his feelings of displeasure, want or satisfaction to the external world. The Portuguese and other European traders who first set foot on this coast in the 15th century, used miming, other than speech, to barter their wares for local goods, since they and their trade partners had different languages and did not understand each other. Also to convey vividly and precisely, information on the condition of roads to motorists, bold road signs, instead of words with their minute characters of letters, are used. Similarly, at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, Lord Nelson found it most appropriate to convey his famous message: 'England expects that every man will do his duty ... [2] to the Navy by means of flags.

Besides, modern society with all its advanced linguistic knowledge of the world's leading languages, finds a white flag the best medium for communicating the idea of surrender or peace in any military confrontation. A language for communication could therefore be oral or visual depending on the purpose of the information and the circumstances under which it is conveyed. However, as we approach the threshold of the 21st century which might be the pinnacle of this scientific age where education, industrial promotion and economic prosperity will bring about information boom, there is the fear that the Ghanaian Press - the electronic and printed media - cannot handle the formidable volume of information that will be required every second, everywhere. The need for visual communication by means of signs and symbols therefore becomes urgent.

THE VERBAL LANGUAGE

Development

The development of a verbal language is a long, laborious process, which begins after birth and goes on, hand in hand with the physical and mental development of the child.

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At the beginning, the child responds to pain, discomfort, anxiety or anger with a cry, and to satisfaction and pleasure with a smile. When the child cries, the nursing mother's immediate duty to him, is to identify the state of need in which he is, and the corresponding goal which will satisfy it.

At a later stage of his development, the child may use images for expressing himself to other people. In this medium, he may represent the shape, outline, mass, colour and texture of his image two-dimensionally on a flat surface, or three-dimensionally in clay or some other plastic material. The child may have a large store of images including dreams and memory or after-images, some of which may not be understood by adults. This might impair the effectiveness of his communication to the external world. The child later acquires a vocabulary of a few words and phrases, which he supplements with actions to express himself. At this stage, his speech is characterised by the use of single words to express a desire, indicate a want or state the condition in which something is. 'Hot' for instance, may mean 'The tea is hot' and 'Di' in Twi, may stand for 'I am hungry'. Afterwards, he may be able to use two-word sentences such as 'Mama, anna'. Which in Lɛtɛ means 'Mummy is gone away'.

As his environment broadens and his experiences increase, his ability to communicate improves, since all learning is motivated by experience. The rate and success of learning in children is dependent on the depth of the impression the experience makes on the individual child. Thus the richer the experience, the deeper the impression and the better the learning. Certain children may possess some element of insensitivity and might not be able to remember experiences, which easily make indelible impressions on others' minds. This may also impair learning in those unfortunate children.

The child may finally acquire a vocabulary of words and phrases, which he could combine to form sentences for his self-expression. Studies have proved that up to the age of three years, girls are more advanced than boys in their language development [3].

In learning his own native language therefore, the child faces a host of difficulties. He struggles with a limited vocabulary, which sometimes makes his expressions unintelligible and vague. He continues in this frustrating situation for years before he acquires enough vocabulary for communication. After going through this ordeal in his infancy, the child might lose interest in any further linguistic studies later at school, and find lessons in such studies tedious and boring. The problem becomes more serious at adulthood when learning a second language involves the mastery of the alphabet: an artificial system of writing in which the connection between the speech sounds and their corresponding characters - the individual letters - is conventional. [4] Unlike picture-writing the sounds bear no relationship to the characters which they represent. Above all the Latin alphabet is very complex and difficult to learn for it passed through long period of evolution. Having apparently taken its roots from the Phoenician system of writing, it first developed into the Etruscan and then the Greek characters before it reached this stage of perfection. This development was incidentally parallel to the evolution of the Cretan and Egyptian Hieroglyphics, and other oriented systems of writing.

VOICE TRANSMISSION

The Electronic Media

A study of oral communication reveals that it is inadequate for providing the country's information needs. It is momentary, and thoughts expressed by word-of-mouth, cannot be revived except by repetition, which is sometimes impossible. It is also limited by space and can take place only among people who are in close proximity with others. In large gatherings therefore, such as at an assembly of students or political rallies, speakers resort to the use of the public address system to ensure that their messages are heard by their audiences. Consequently, these instruments have become a regular feature of church services, society weddings, durbars and funerals in this country. The successful use of the public address system however, depends on the constant supply of electricity from the Volta River Dam which unfortunately cannot be guaranteed these days, in view of the recent intermittent power-cuts which the country is experiencing, due to the low-level of water in the Volta Lake.

Voice Transmission through the radio, which was invented in 1927 and established in this country in 1935 [5] also has many disadvantages as a sound system of mass communication in Ghana. The reason is that the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation provides broadcast services to subscribers only in the urban centres. The Corporation is unable to reach people in the farming settlements in the remote areas of the country with its news because of the absence of adequate infrastructural facilities for this service. Besides, it broadcasts in only five of the 45 or more local languages with their numerous dialects - Akan, Ga, Ewe, Nzema, and Dagbani. Guan, for instance, which is spoken by a broad section of the population, but not used for broadcast by the Corporation, has not less than eight dialects: Lɛtɛ, Kere, Eɛtu, Awutu, Ntwumuru, Krachi, Nkonya and Ngbaniito.

Thus the scarcity of funds for the procurement of copper-wire, rediffusion boxes, Akɛsanoma Radio sets and telephone receivers, delays or hinders the relay of news to the Head-office of the Corporation for dissemination to consumers. It is therefore assumed that vital information for community development and individual self-improvement, is withheld from many rural communities.

The invention of the Television by Paul Nipkow in Germany in 1884, its first demonstration for the transmission of moving pictures in half-tones by electricity in England by J. L. Baird, and its introduction into this country in the early 1970s when about 275,000,000 TV receivers were put into circulation throughout the world, [6] brought some hope for the improvement of the electronic media of Ghana. For while radio broadcast listeners, are unable to see what they hear about, and experience, the television presents to the viewer, a two-dimensional image of the subject accompanied by sound. Unfortunately, the prohibitive prices of Television sets in this country have reserved Television news as a privilege of the affluent Ghanaian.

The Print Media

The Printed Media of this country comprising daily and weekly newspapers, fortnightly and monthly journals, also has its limitation as an effective system of communication in the country. It is urban oriented and carries more news on

urban events than on rural activities. The absence of good roads to villages in the hinter-land, hinders the easy access of reporters to these remote areas for rural news.

Furthermore, as a result of lack of competition between the two most popular newspapers: 'The Daily Graphic' and 'The Ghanaian Times', as well as between the state-owned and independent papers, there is little or no variety in the news that reaches the consumer. Moreover, as long as the Government maintains control over the Ghanaian Press, and exerts political influence over it, it cannot represent independent opinion as it does in the developed countries such as the United States of America. Above all, these newspapers, magazines and journals are rendered valueless as media for mass communication to a broad section of the Ghanaian public, by the high rate of illiteracy especially in English and Akan, the two languages mostly used by the Printed Media.

Finally, to make any literature in Akan easy to read and understand, a great number of diacritical marks have to be employed to indicate tone, pitch or accent and the nasality of vowel sounds. Similarly rhythm, tempo and stress should also be indicated to bring out clearly the meanings of some words. In Table 1 below, marks are used to indicate different tones of the words: tow, siw, ba, and dome in Twi, as well as ba, be, bɔ and so in Lete.

Table 1: Different Vowels Sounds and their Importance in Akan and Guan

Tone and Pitch of Vowel Sounds			
Twi	English	Lete	English
Tow	throw	Ba	sew
Tow	tax	Ba	fence or hand
Siw	pound	be	come
Siw	mound	be	proverb
Ba	come (vi)	bɔ	crow (vi)
Ba	offspring	bɔ	hill
Dom	be a member of	so	on (prep)
Dom	host/army	so	ear

In Table 2, other marks are used to indicate the nasality of some vowel sounds in certain Twi and Lete words, in order to change their meanings. Unfortunately, the Printing Houses in this country are ill-equipped with the technical facilities for the printing of these indispensable features of our languages.

Table 2: Nasality of Vowel Sounds and their Importance in Akan and Guan

Twi	English	Lete	English
osa	War	Kkɔ	one
osa	Larva or moth	Kkɔ	fight (n)
bon	Crow	Bɔ	inform (vt)
bon	Smell	Bɔ	flood/be full
kya	Bead	Be	come
kya	Walk majestically	Be	clip (vt)
so	On (prep)	Bbɔ	cripple (n)
so	Is big (adj)	bbɔ	hole

It is now certain that Verbal Communication in particular and the Ghanaian Press in general, are inadequate for providing the country's information needs. The complexity of the Latin Alphabet, the limitations of the spoken word and other problems associated with language acquisition on the one hand, and the exorbitant prices of Television sets, as well as the inability of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation to reach the four corners of the country with information on development and national policy on the other, are some of the obvious reasons for this shortcoming. Additionally, the failure of the Corporation to broadcast news in most of the Ghanaian languages, the country's financial constraints which limit the development of the Printed Media, and the complex phonetic nature of the local languages, coupled with the high rate of illiteracy in these languages and in English, make the Ghanaian Press impotent as an effective instrument for mass communication in the country.

THE VISUAL LANGUAGE

The reality of the imperfection of the Mass Media of Ghana as an effective system of mass communication for Ghanaians, calls for serious consideration of the Visual Language as an alternative system. A careful examination of the following elements of this visual language is therefore essential.

Actions and Gestures

While dirges and appellations sounded by the Atumpan, Kyenesin and Petepire drums and horns in honour of the fallen traditional heads and heroes of the state are perfectly understood without any signs, Adowa, the popular dance of the Ashantis, done to the sounds of drums, is accompanied by actions. Every step of the dancer, coupled with rhythmic body movements and gestures, conveys to his partner, sentiments of love, admiration and respect, or dislike disappointment and anger. Communication by actions and gestures is therefore an important aspect of the oral tradition of this country, and its popularity is reflected in the expression: "Actions speak louder than words".

Body Adornment

Body adornment with ornaments of gold, silver, copper and valuable beads is a commonplace in Ghana. It is customary for Chiefs, Queen mothers, and other traditional heads to be profusely adorned with such ornaments before they appear in public, and most often, the type of ornament worn, portrays the status of the user and his role in the society. Body marks, which constitute another form of body adornment, are also common especially in Northern Ghana. They were primarily used as symbols of identification and self-expression by the various ethnic peoples of that region, but are becoming obsolete.

Signs and Symbols

There is an incredibly broad spectrum of signs and symbols, which function more effectively as elements of the universal language of Visual Communication. These include Trademarks, and Corporate Identity Symbols or Logos, used by industrial and commercial houses, advertising agencies and socio-cultural organisations. They are bold signs with diverse



Fig. 1 Symbols: Trademarks

Compiled from Peter Wilbur's *Trademarks and Walter Diethelm's Form and Communication*

fascinating shapes, which combine force with the simplicity and clarity required by every image. With colour and the necessary graphic treatment, they are rendered powerful and attractive.

Signs and symbols have evolved for graphic and express communication, as a result of man's tireless search for ways and means of speeding up information on food, clothing, weather, jobs, entertainment, sports and other necessities of life, imposed on him by modern living habits. Unlike letters of the alphabet, which represent only speech sounds, they function as words, phrases and sentences and convey thoughts and messages. Notice Figure 1.

Besides these images which represent private organisations in individual countries, there are international symbols which are universally recognised, and clearly understood in all languages and creeds. These include:

- i. The Cross: a religious emblem used as a symbol of the Christian Church.
- ii. The Red Cross: a symbol of the hospital and an international voluntary organisation devoted to the care of the sick, poor and afflicted.
- iii. The Crown: a symbol of royalty, nobility, authority and sovereignty.

- iv. The Crescent: a symbol of Constantinople and the Islamic religion.
- v. The Circle: a symbol of the Sun.
- vi. Five Interlacing Circles: a symbol of the International Olympic Games.
- vii. Cross-bones: an emblem of pirates and a symbol of death.
- viii. Red Flag/Red Light: a symbol of danger.
- ix. The Hand: a symbol of insurance.
- x. White Flag: a symbol of peace.



Fig. 2 International Symbols

Highway and Traffic Signs

These are another set of symbols, which should be considered for inclusion in this collection. They are essential information required by motorists for careful and safe driving. They are known and used in all countries and therefore international also.

As warning signs, they compel motorists to stop at traffic lights and level crossings, and drive carefully over narrow bridges, steep descents, in dangerous curves and at pedestrian crossings. These signs employ simple geometrical shapes such as circles, triangles and arrows executed boldly in attractive colours to convey their messages. They are therefore rendered clear, and could be easily noticed from considerable distances by motorists. Notice Figure 3

Flags

Flags have gained such international popularity as symbols of communication that they cannot be overlooked in a study such as this. This belief is enshrined in the quotation: "Symbols are sacred things, and one of them, which we should, all hold dear, is our national flag". [2].

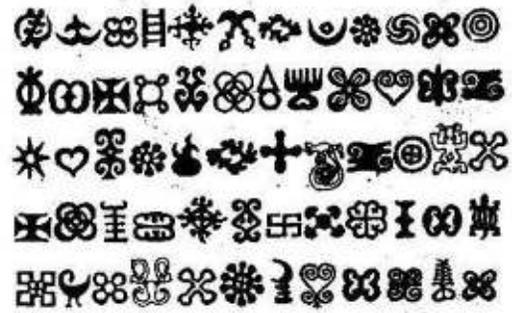


Fig 3. ADINKRA WRITING PROVERBS AND STATEMENTS

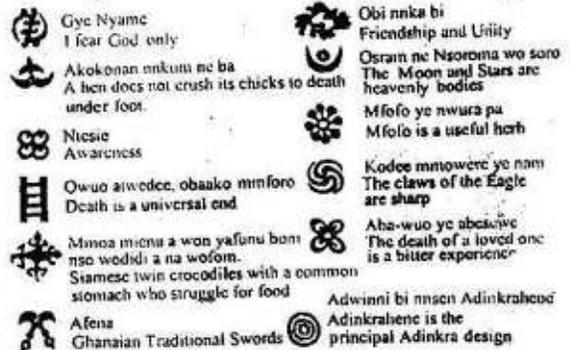
INTERPRETATION; FIRST LINE

Akan

1. Gye Nyame: 2. Akokonan nikum ne ba 3. Niesie 4. Owuo atwodec, obaako mmforo 5. Funtun-funafu Denkyem-funafu; mmoa mianu a won yafunu bom, nso wodidi a na wofom. 6. Afena 7. Obi nka bi 8. Osram ne Nsoroma wo soro. 9. Mfofo ye nwura pa 10. Kodec numoware ye nam. 11. Aba-wuo ye abeawo. 12. Adwinni bi nnsen Adinkrahene

English

1. I fear only God. 2. A hen does not crush its chicks to death with its foot.
3. Awareness 4. Death is a universal end. 5. Siamese twin crocodiles with a common stomach who struggle for food. 6. Ghanaian Traditional Swords
7. Friendship and Unity 8. The Moon and Stars are celestial bodies
9. Mfofo is a useful herb 10. The claws of the eagle are sharp
11. The death of a loved one is a bitter experience 12. Adinkrahene is the principal Adinkra design.



Besides, their national and international use as symbols of identification of the individual independent states of the world, they are employed by families and groups of people to portray their pride and social status. Flags are in addition, used to identify various units of the army, boy-scouts, boys brigade and similar organisations in parades, processions, celebrations and sports. Besides, they are erected on public and industrial buildings as symbols of honour and prestige. The easy identification of flags with countries, organisations, families and industrial and commercial houses

is ensured by their unrivalled colourfulness, attraction and popularity.

The use of flags as a language for communication commenced probably about two centuries ago, and by the beginning of the 19th century, information on the state of the sea at various times, could be conveyed with nautical flags to sailors and other seafarers. In 1805, Lord Nelson conveyed his famous message: 'England Expects That Every Man Will Do His Duty, Engage The Enemy More Closely' [2] to the British Navy at the Battle of Trafalgar, by means of flags. In view of their many colours, and broad surfaces, flags might however require some simplification for easy representation and identification. Like other symbols, they could be regarded as being in their primary stage of evolution. Notice Figure 4

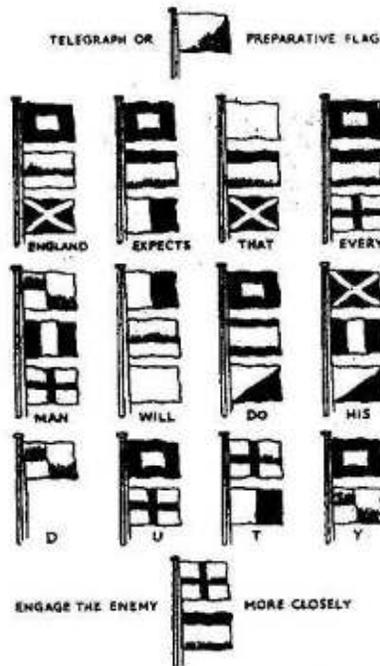


Fig 4 Lord Nelson's Famous Message of Flags
By Courtesy of K.C. Sankaran

Colour

Colour is, as mentioned above, an essential aspect of visual communication. Its beauty, vitality and reality facilitate perception and identification of objects. Children therefore colour their drawings to bring them into closer relationship with themselves. Besides its significance as a symbol of danger, red conveys the feeling of grief, sorrow, sin and death, while white symbolises, in addition to peace, victory, triumph, happiness, truth, purity innocence, cleanliness, holiness and godliness. Many of the other colours also have interesting connotations. Green in many cultures, stands for life and safety, and yellow, its popular ally, stands for gold or wealth.

Experiments have shown that certain combinations of colour enhance legibility and clarity in perception, a fact that has influenced all visual artists including printers in their choice of colour for their work. The popular traditional combination of black-on-white used by printers are in fact, the

sixth in the order of clarity and readability of the combinations known. The first is black-on-yellow [8]. Notice Table 3

Table 3: Order of Readability of Colour Combinations in Printing

No	Colour of Ink	Colour of Paper	No	Colour of Ink	Colour of Paper
1	Black	Yellow	8	White	Red
2	Green	White	9	White	Green
3	Red	White	10	White	Black
4	Blue	White	11	Red	Yellow
5	White	Blue	12	Green	Red
6	Black	White	13	Red	Green
7	Yellow	Black			

By courtesy of Walter Sargent

Adinkra Symbols

The Adinkra symbols are another potential resource for the formulation of this visual language. These traditional designs are by themselves, elements of a language of beliefs, proverbs and truths, which constitute an essential dimension of the oral tradition of the Akans. Like letters of the Latin alphabet they are generally abstract signs which symbolise parts of the human body, animal and plant forms, traditional artifacts and celestial bodies. They appear on fabrics, pottery and carvings, and could also be identified in mural decoration.

The Adinkra symbols are by tradition associated with sorrow, particularly the celebration of funerals - hence their name 'adinkra', which in Akan means 'parting with someone'. These sophisticated designs apparently evolved from simple primary motifs. Evidence of this evolution is noticed in the existence of several versions of some of the designs and the perfection in the latest forms. Notice Figure 5. Since Adinkra designs are based on the conventions of the Akans, they have Akan names: Gye Nyame, Ohene Aniwa, Osram-ne-Nsoroma, Denkyem, Afena and Adinkrahene are a few of these. Notice Figure 6.

In Adinkra symbolism, different forms and levels of the experience of a reality and our relationship to it, are linked together. The resulting picture then functions as a representation of the reality or truth, which it reveals gradually. [8] The Gye Nyame, symbol for instance, is a sign of the omnipotence of God, while Ohene Aniwa - a sign pointing in all directions represents the universality or authority of the Chief. Similarly Osram-ne-Nsoroma is a token of the phenomena, 'the Moon and Stars'. The symbols Gye Nyame, Ohene Aniwa and Osram-ne-Nsoroma are therefore certificates representing the ideas 'God Omnipotent', 'The Universality and Authority of the Chief' and 'The Moon and Stars'.

The value of the Adinkra symbols as a language for instruction in religious beliefs, social conventions and universal truths, and as an instrument for the preservation of traditions, makes them useful elements of communication: a potential Ghanaian alphabet. They could develop into a sound system of writing, for even at their present stage of development, they compare favourably with the old Babylonian sign Writing and Chinese ideographs in character, clarity and precision. Notice Figure 7. Their full potential as elements of the envisaged visual language should therefore be explored along side the international symbols, road and traffic signs, trademarks and other symbols.

It is a common belief among Ghanaian intellectuals that these traditional symbols would have developed into an effective system of writing if the Whiteman had not intervened in their development by their untimely interruption of the Ghanaian traditional life with European cultures. Traditional drumming, dancing and dressing are only few of the numerous conventions of the Ghanaian social life, which are discouraged on the grounds that they were incompatible with Christianity. Today traditional drums, percussions and flutes are being commonly used in harmony with western musical instruments for worship in both the charismatic, Pentecostal and orthodox churches. Much tribute must be paid to the late Dr. Ephraim Amo of Peki, who pioneered the use of the Akan traditional dress - the Cloth - for preaching in the Presbyterian Church and suffered dismissal from his post as lecturer at the Presbyterian Training College, Akropong, Akwapim.

Adinkra writing would have most probably been in the retrograde direction, that is, read from right to left, since right-handedness is very important in Ghanaian culture. It is customary to eat, receive gifts, point to things, salute and shake hands with the right hand. It is also customary to begin from the right, when shaking hands with people in a gathering. Notice Figure 8: Adinkra writing.



Fig 8. Adinkra writing proverbs and statements

EFFORTS OF OTHER COUNTRIES

A world with a visual language is a universal revelation of this century, for the need for this language is experienced not only by this country but also other countries, which are more developed and scientifically advanced than Ghana. The efforts of Japan towards the realisation of this objective has yielded a set of pictographs for use at its new international airport in Tokyo, for conveying instantly information on flight schedules, flight procedures and the various services provided at the airport. Notice figure 9. There are similar picture signs for the Swiss Telephone Directory in Switzerland. Notice Figure 10.

There are in addition, the Hobo Signs - a secret visual language of Tramps, who were a homeless gang of people in the United States of America without a regular occupation and moved from place to place in search of a livelihood. Notice Figure 11.

Besides, individual students of art and professional Graphic Designers in various countries are seriously engaged



FIG. 9. DIRECTION PICTOGRAPHS FOR THE NEW TOKYO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. Compiled from W. Diethelm's Form and Communication.



Fig. 10. Pictographs for the Swiss Telephone Directories. Compiled from W. Diethelm's form and communication.

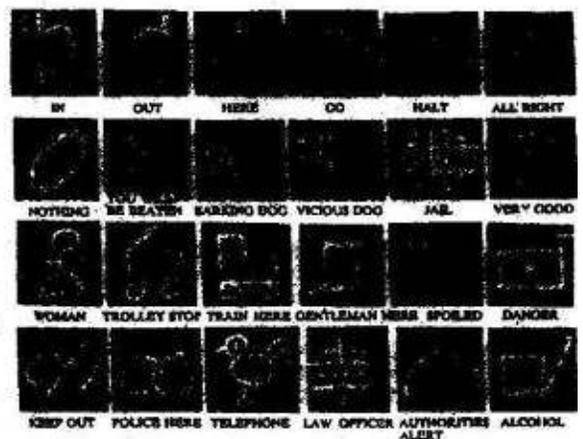


Fig. 11. Hobo Signs: The sign language of Tramps. By Courtesy of Walter Diethelm.

in the design of sets of symbols either for information or self-expression. Symbols for classifying and promoting advertisements have been suggested by Stephan Geissbuhler formerly a student of the Philadelphia College of Art in Philadelphia, U.S.A. Notice Figure 12. The simplest, most thorough and interesting example is Semantography, an international symbolic language that was designed by Charles Bliss in Sydney, Australia. It is the easiest of all, for it employs as its symbols, the commonest elements in the human environment: fruits, vegetables, animals, birds, chairs, stairs, cars, ships and planes. It makes use of such international symbols as the sun and stars, and its geometrical nature makes it easy to write. Above all, it could be reproduced on the typewriter for effective mass communication. Notice Figure 13.



Fig 12. Advert Signs
Compiled from Diethlm's Form and Communication

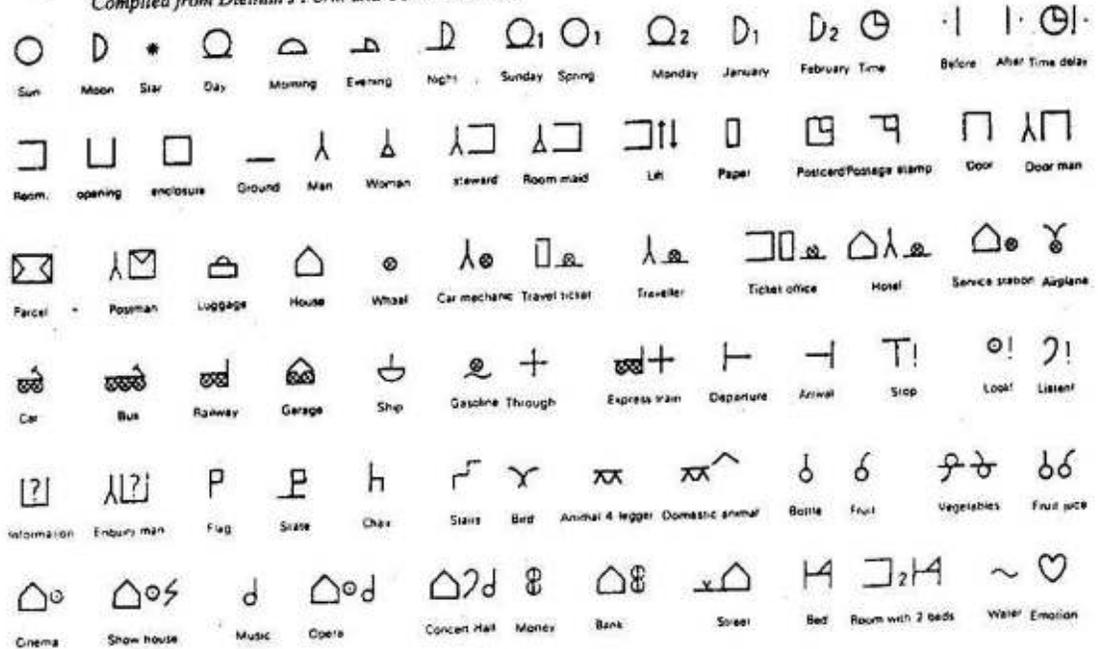


Fig 13. Semantography: International Symbolic Language
Compiled from W. Diethlm's Form and Communication

RECOMMENDATIONS

Ghana's quest for a visual language is real, and should be encouraged. While the international symbols, trademarks, road-signs and Adinkra designs provide some information on the subject, the efforts made by individual countries towards the formation of this language, offer Ghanaians great inspiration for this search.

The following recommendations are consequently made as a suggested approach to the development of this language.

1. A National Congress of renowned Ghanaian Visual Artists, Journalists and other communication experts should discuss the idea of a visual language and outline a policy for research into the international, traditional, and other symbols.
2. Regional workshops of professional artists, organised by these experts, should locate, retrieve, study and develop the available designs.
3. A committee of selected few experts should then be organised to review and finalise the ideas presented by the various workshops as the rudiments of this language.
4. The on-going development of this essential language should be encouraged and guided through further research in a laboratory at a Department of Visual Communication in the College of Art of the University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, where audio-visual equipment and experts would be available.



Fig 5. A possible evolution of the adinkra symbols



Fig 7. Similarities between the Adinkra Symbols and some ancient systems of writing



Fig 6. Adinkra: Ghanaian Traditional Symbols

Selected from a chart by Prof. Solace Glover

CONCLUSION

The need for effective communication in a developing country such as Ghana cannot be over-emphasised. Information on the basic necessities of life and on all modes of self-expression, and the various frameworks, within which they take place, has to be communicated to all people of all communities. Ghana unfortunately being a developing country with a middle-level national income lacks the resources for procuring the infrastructure required for the modern methods of mass communication. Ghana's communication problem is compounded by the heterogeneous nature of its population, the complexity of its many languages and its high rate of illiteracy.

The country's need for a national visual language is consequently more urgent than that of Japan, Switzerland, Britain, Australia and the United States of America whose illiteracy rates are negligible and yet are leading in the search for a visual language. Moreover, to communicate by means of symbols has an advantage over communication by the written word, for while the word tree is by convention accepted only among English-speaking people as a plant with a single woody stem, a drawing of a tree is a symbol for communicating to the whole world, the same idea - a plant with a single woody stem. Ghana should therefore embrace and develop the idea of a visual language for mass communication in the country.

Internet could instantly transmit such a language on Fax Lines, both nationally and internationally and even to future tourist centres on the moon, Mars and other planets. It would further unite the various ethnic peoples and the fanatics of the various religions and churches, and promote cultural exchanges, education, international trade, and tourism, and restore peace and harmony in traditional life.

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