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Other Wise:

Towards a Meeting of Graphic Design and Indigenous Knowledge

Introduction

This paper will discuss selected issues of transformation and Graphic Design education at the Department of Graphic Design, Durban University of Technology (DUT), and draw preliminary conclusions from recent research. It will begin by discussing the context in which both transformation and Graphic Design education take place at this institution, particularly with regard to the pressures of Globalisation. It will then discuss certain problems of the relationship between Graphic Design and Indigenous Knowledge, and suggest some methodologies derived from recent projects in our department, as possible ways forward. The Indigenous Knowledge of the amaZulu people is the source consulted in this case. The paper seeks to demonstrate the importance of Indigenous Knowledge to Graphic Design research in the contemporary context of the department and KwaZulu-Natal in general, whether that knowledge itself be contemporary or historical; and the value of integrating Indigenous Knowledge with Graphic Design as a potential means of promoting transformation in the department.

The Context of Graphic Design Education at the DUT: International Influence and Transformation

To illustrate why transformation may be necessary, consider the academic procession or graduation ceremony of an academic institution. At the DUT, it includes Medieval European costume, best suited to unheated buildings in a cold climate, and extremely uncomfortable in the Durban heat; and singing in Latin, a language long dead and incomprehensible to virtually everyone who hears it.

This example symbolises at a superficial level the European domination of the culture of tertiary education. The degree structure, the teaching methodology, and even the perceived status of different disciplines are all based on norms first established in Europe or North America. As far as Graphic Design specifically is concerned, virtually all the models, norms, theory, methodologies, techniques and technologies come from the Western world, i.e. from Western Europe and/or North America, both in academia and in practice. English is the language of instruction at the DUT, on government instructions, and is also the primary language of Graphic Design practice in the Durban area, in both cases regardless of the language spoken by the designer.

It thus seems reasonable to describe Graphic Design as a European, if not actually Eurocentric, cultural construction, to which various African cultures such as the Zulu have been required to conform, with as little alteration as possible on the part of Graphic Design itself. It also seems reasonable to describe Graphic Design as part of a general system utilised by a Globalised culture, or Monoculture, to establish and maintain influence over countries such as South Africa. The ecologist Helena Norbert-Hodge has described the "goal of economic globalization as a "world of homogenous consumption" in which people everywhere eat the same food, wear the same clothing, (and use) the same Western education… the same language… the same media images… the same values… the same thoughts: monoculture." (Norbert-Hodge, 1996)

If this is the effect of Graphic Design, there would seem to be a conflict between the external realities of a globalised or monocultural discipline and the pressures exerted by it, and the cultural aims of the transformation process. Pityana (2004) describes the purpose of transformation in tertiary education, as the establishment of "an inclusive community of academics and learners reflecting the social demographics of our society". He further comments that principles of demographic transformation have "not yet translated into curriculum and research priorities. The curriculum in many universities has hardly changed over the last decade. The result is that the vision and mission statements of many institutions which profess to become African universities or ones that reflect their African consciousness become empty slogans. The redesigning of curriculum has become an urgent imperative if the integrity of higher education is to be achieved" (Pityana 2004).

If an African consciousness within a demographically appropriate academic community is the aim of transformation, we must recognise the potential for conflict between this aim and the influence of the globalised discipline of Graphic Design. I think we can be confident that we in South Africa would no longer be taken seriously at an international level if we attempt to change the basic structure of academia. The risk then is that the transformation process is co-opted into a neo-colonial attempt simply to spread the previous psychological conditioning of the white community to the whole of the population. In this mindset, the future domination of the world's economy, culture and education by European/American influences would be willingly reproduced and maintained by the whole population of South Africa, rather than just by Whites working against the rest of the population, as in the past. As far as an academic department is concerned, this would mean a change in the colour of the student body and faculty, but no change in the curriculum: new bottles, same old wine.

International influences on students in terms of fashion, music, and other aspects of popular culture show how serious this risk is. Already the English language has become entrenched as the language of status in South Africa, both in the DUT (as already mentioned) and amongst the young. The attempt by the Nationalist government to impose Afrikaans-medium teaching famously sparked the 1976 uprising, but English-medium teaching is often insisted upon by the very same section of the population which resisted that measure, despite the well documented disadvantage that non-mother tongue education imposes on students; and the fairly clear condemnation of indigenous languages and culture to inferior status in the process. Potenza, in commenting on this, says that it is "crucial for children to learn to read and write in their home languages and then gradually make the transfer to English", and that unless this is done they "often remain functionally illiterate in both languages" (Potenza, 2001: 4).

Similarly, Pretorius quotes an anonymous student: "We don't find our mother tongue to be that important. You don't make overseas calls in your mother tongue; you don't use it in everyday life. It's not useful" (2001: 19). Attitudes such as these typify the "third stage" in the endangering of languages described by David Crystal, which lead directly to the phenomenon of "language death". Referring to the "third stage" in this process, he describes "the younger generation (becoming) increasingly proficient in the new language, identifying more with it, and finding their first language less relevant to their new needs. This is often accompanied by feelings of shame about using the old language on the part of the parents as well as the children."(Crystal, 2000: 79) Clearly, in this situation, there is a risk that transformation may come too late for the indigenous culture, because if a language, the vehicle of culture, is at risk, then so will the culture itself be, along with most of the indigenous knowledge it carries.

Graphic Design, Typography and Language

If a spoken language is vulnerable to extinction, its written or printed form will be equally endangered. While the latter may not have been relevant to pre-scribal cultures, neither speech nor writing can be both usable and given status without the other, in a modern culture, and this is one area where Graphic Design can make a contribution. By researching as many aspects of indigenous culture as possible and integrating them into its practice, it can play a part in re-valuing that culture.

There are a number of aspects of Graphic Design that would need to be reconsidered. In South Africa, whatever language we teach and design in or for, we use the Roman alphabet almost exclusively. The indigenous language that concerns Graphic Designers most in the Durban area is isiZulu, the Zulu language. The Roman alphabet is a poor fit as orthography for isiZulu because it lacks signs for a number of sounds in that language. These have had to be allotted to letters already connected to other sound values, which can led to great confusion (e.g. the clicks now represented in writing and print by 'c', 'x', and 'q', and the guttural, similar to the 'ch' in the Scottish 'loch', represented by both 'r' and 'h'). Likewise, isiZulu makes use of certain letters more than English does, such as 'm', 'n', 'h', and 'u', as can be seen from the Durban telephone directory. The repetitive shapes of these letters, as they are currently designed, make it harder to distinguish between them, particularly for a newly-literate reader.

English-language typographic norms are also ill-adapted to isiZulu. The average English word is shorter than in isiZulu, which contains more lengthy compound words. A sample from a recent KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government speech, bilingual in the two languages, provides a useful illustration (South Africa. KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Department of Transport, Community Safety & Liaison. 2006: 5-9, 47-51) (See Figure 1.). The sample in English has an average word length of 4.8 letters, whereas the isiZulu version has an average of 8.2. Over the same line length, long words are harder to typeset neatly without unsightly ‘rivers’ (gaps that run down the page between words) unless hyphenated. The isiZulu page in Figure 1. can be seen to be more ‘gappy’. Other languages that use long compound words, such as German, routinely use widely accepted rules for hyphenating line-end word-breaks, but hyphenation does not seem to be commonly used for Zulu. No hyphens are used in this way in this sample. The result is typography that militates against legibility and readability, as large gaps between words interrupt the eye’s movement along the line (Martin 89:28). The typographic norms and letter shapes have been established for European languages, and make effective typesetting much more difficult for isiZulu.

These examples summarise how typography adapted for English seems to me to be inadequate for one particular South African language, and demonstrates a lack of concern in typography for the needs of a culture such as that of isiZulu. Similar examples could be given for the European norms of most other aspects of the visual language used in Graphic Design. This lack of concern might have been expected in the colonial or Apartheid eras, but it is difficult to see how the sort of transformation envisaged by Pityana can be achieved if the most important culture in this province remains so excluded from current communication and education forms.

A means of contesting and/or critiquing the current situation is therefore needed, which simultaneously acknowledges the contradictory necessity of continuing to work with the technologies and forms in current use. One possible strategy can be found in Post-Colonial studies, where the term “Appropriation” has come to mean the adoption of a cultural form, such as the novel, the soap opera, the feature film, and its adaptation for use as a way of helping consciously to establish an independent culture and critique the dominant one (see Ashcroft, Griffith, & Tiffin. 1998:19-20). In our case the relevant forms would include typography, Graphic Design, and/or the academic structure. As part of both practice and the academic structure of education and research, a Graphic Design department could use these forms to generate, recover, re-value, and/or promote the kind of African consciousness to which Pityana refers, and in doing so, contest the globalised overseas influences. In order to do so, it would need to engage with the indigenous culture in far greater depth than has generally been the case so far, in order to identify or generate effective appropriations. However, some examples of recent research offer pointers towards suitable approaches.

Pointers from Recent research at the Department of Graphic Design, DUT.

In recent years, a significant number of BTech and MTech students have developed personal projects that examine and reflect on various aspects of the interrelationship between Graphic Design and South African society as a whole. This year 11 students, nearly 40%, would fit into this broad category, and of this figure four are concentrating on health-related issues. A further 11 projects from previous years would also fit into the health category.

The interests of these students in health and society are significant, because for most of its recent history, Graphic Design has primarily concerned itself with work for commerce. Katherine McCoy has commented shrewdly on the ideological aspect of this relationship: “Design is not a neutral, value-free process. A design has no more integrity than its purpose or subject matter. (…) A dangerous assumption is that corporate work of innocuous content is devoid of political bias. The vast majority of student projects deal with corporate needs, placing a heavy priority on the corporate economic sector of our society. This is a decisive vote for economics over other potential concerns, including social, educational, cultural, spiritual and political needs. This is a political statement in itself both in education and practice.” (Myerson (ed) 1994: 111)

Part of the contestation, appropriation, and transformation of the received nature of Graphic Design, then, may be in its purpose. Graphic Design for social purposes has a substantial and respectable history, but it has been overshadowed in recent decades. Our situation in South Africa, however, requires us to look afresh at this. Not only is there the imperative of Transformation, received from above, as it were, but there is also the calamitous epidemic of HIV/AIDs welling up from below. Figures of 75-80% infection rates amongst new admissions to hospitals (Hartzell 2006) and the period of eighty years suggested as a likely duration for the pandemic (Wells 2005: np) remind us of its terrifying importance, but HIV/AIDS is only one of the social, health and environmental issues that threaten South African society, and further threaten the continuation of the commerce we have concerned ourselves with. A healthy society must have commerce in order to function, but commerce must have a healthy society in which to function. If Graphic Designers take seriously the idea of ourselves as “problem solvers” through visual communication, then these issues are amongst the most serious that could confront us. For these reasons, in Southern Africa today, I believe that Health is as important as Commerce as an arena for Graphic Design.

If one accepts this conclusion, some important corollaries arise. Firstly, the most vulnerable section of the population is the rural poor, who are also because of a range of linguistic, educational, cultural and economic reasons generally the most isolated from the communication practices graphic designers take for granted, such as literacy in English or access and habituation to information in print. Secondly, in many instances conventional, i.e. Westernised, responses to the various problems of communications of health issues simply have not worked, in as far as we can tell. Thirdly, one of the important factors that contribute to this failure is the cultural inappropriateness of much of the design work that has been done; and finally this inappropriateness comes as a result of ignorance or neglect of the culture of the intended audience: in other words, as a result of a failure of research.

Dr. James Hartzell of the PEPFAR project at the UKZN Medical School has described, for example, the shrugs and laughter that greeted his questions about whether his (Zulu-speaking) informants understood the message of recent “LoveLife” billboards or whether they would make any difference to people’s behaviour or understanding of HIV/AIDS (Hartzell 2006). This example may be anecdotal, but it is clear that successful visual communication work in this vital area requires highly detailed and empathetic understanding of the cultures and populations making up the desired audience.

Ideally, ‘Market Research’ should identify target audience concerns, beliefs, and needs, and ‘Good Design’ should take these into account. However, without specific training, most people take their own beliefs and values, their own culture, as ‘natural’, and find it difficult to understand and empathise with cultures substantially different from their own. This is likely to be the case in South Africa, where the majority of designers are unlikely to have been educated to value indigenous cultures such as that of the amaZulu. It seems unlikely that such ‘outsider’ researchers could gain a sufficient ‘insider’ understanding of intrinsic cultural distinctions and values that are meaningful to Zulu people, particularly rural people less accustomed to urban White values, without very detailed and immersive study that goes well beyond the level of normal questionnaires and surveys. Designers from within the audience (i.e. Zulu designers, in this case) already in the possession of such understanding, can only be effective if the design community in which they work values it.

Santos (2003: 55-62), although not expressing an interest in similarly transforming his society, makes comparable points in his review of the problems facing “Anglo” (English-speaking) designers in producing effective work for the Hispanic population of the South-Western USA. He details a number of the cultural differences likely to cause communication problems: issues of language, family structures, methodology, and so on. His point of reference is that of advertising and marketing for commercial purposes, but many of the issues he raises are common to all attempts at cross-cultural communication. “The key is to avoid mistakes based on cultural ignorance […] long term competitive advantage (for which may be read, long term effective communication) comes from research that illuminates key cultural differences” (Santos 2003: 62).

Starting points for gaining this illumination must be respect for the audience's experience and understanding; patience; and humility in interaction. Humility may be the most important of these qualities, because it must spring from the realisation that designers and researchers, the so-called experts, in these instances actually know less than the so-called subjects, whose experience and expertise within their own culture is essential for successful communication. Outsider designers may have to suspend entire mindsets and belief systems in order for the communication to be effective: certainly it is likely to require extensive negotiation between researcher/ designer and audience, in a way that may for example be commonplace in disciplines such as anthropology but is still fairly new in Graphic Design. The point to emphasise here is that the successful communication that Graphic Designers claim they aspire to may only be possible if it functions in terms that the audience understands, even if those terms are ones that the designer does not understand. Thus, when designing communication material for an audience whose culture may be "other" to that of the designer, Indigenous knowledge is as important as Graphic Design ability. This is particularly so when health and other issues of social importance and sensitivity are at stake.

"Other Wisdom" – The Siyazama Project and the Traditional Health Practitioners' Council

The pathfinder for this way of doing research in our case was the Siyazama Project led by Kate Wells (see http://www.siyazamaproject.co.za/ and Wells, Sienaert, and Conolly 2004), It was started in 1996/7 as a means of providing rural Zulu women beadworkers with the skills and materials necessary to improve the quality and thus marketability of their Craft produce. In the course of these workshops, the women's conversation revolved around the problems in their lives, and significantly around the widespread "Slim's disease" – HIV/AIDS. Wells realised that they desperately needed both information about the disease and a means of communicating about it, because the traditional customs of 'hlonipha' made it taboo for them openly to discuss matters of a sexual nature. Further workshops were acceptable because they came from outside the community, and they successfully imparted the detailed information needed. However, it was only "because the communication mode in which the women were skilled (i.e. beadwork) also was the mode used traditionally and historically to circumvent the female social taboo on discussion of matters of emotional and sexual intimacy, (that the project) developed of its own accord into an effective HIV/AIDS intervention". (Wells, Sienaert, and Conolly 2004: 77) The practice of beadworking, in effect, was an internal code, which allowed the necessary discussions to take place.

"While knowledge is traditionally imparted primarily through the performed media of song and dance, storytelling and proverbs, taboo topics are expressed in the mediated form of beadwork, an intricate and detailed form of fixed communication describing, communicating and facilitating ideas of an intimate and sexual nature". (Wells, Sienaert, & Conolly 2004: 76) (My emphasis).

In this instance, verbal forms of communication in the society were not available to these women for cultural reasons. Printed information using standard Graphic Design methodologies would also have been ineffective, even if produced in Zulu, because of the women's high rate of illiteracy. It seems likely, in fact, that "normal" Graphic Design would not communicate scientific health information effectively to much of the rural population for the same reasons: cultural inappropriateness, gender dynamics, lack of literacy, and differing modes of communication.

A further issue of appropriateness in communication has become apparent in one of our BTech projects: that sources of information have an appropriate authority and influence – in other words, that they are believable. Our student Samantha Robertson for this reason engaged with the KZN Traditional Health Practitioners Council, and particularly their secretary general, Queen Ntuli, as a means of accessing and assisting this authority. Department of Health figures claim that about 80% of the population prefer to consult Traditional Healers for health problems (e.g. in Tshabala-Msimang 2005). If so, then it is clear that the estimated 200,000 Healers in the country are by far the most influential profession in the struggle against HIV/AIDS, whether for good or ill. They can also be the most effective avenue of communication for information about the epidemic, provided that the information is appropriately conceptualised and designed. Lastly it must be accepted that this information must be conceptualised according to the logic, mindset, and beliefs in existence within that culture, rather than as an attempt to impose the logic or belief systems of an external agency such as Westernised Graphic Design. It is simply irrelevant whether or not Ms Robertson, or any other graphic designer, follows these beliefs or not. Communication must make sense to the audience. In this case it is the designer who is the outsider regardless of status in academia or the Western-influenced section of South African society. Acceptance of this outsider status has required Ms. Robertson's project and participation to be approved by consultation with the 'amadlozi' (ancestors); she has attended traditional ceremonies in appropriate attire; and she is currently undergoing training as an 'itwasa' (apprentice healer or 'sangoma') herself. This is all part of establishing a relationship of trust and acceptance necessary to the successful development of the communication material.

In these instances, then, the knowledge of the audience is paramount. Because there is in this particular case a two-stage communication process that must take place, between western health personnel and the traditional healers, and between the traditional healers and the population that consults them, there is a particularly complex and sensitive communication problem to be solved. The position of the healers is particularly important in the process because of their intermediary role. Their willingness to develop communication materials with the designer is also vital, because of their deep understanding of the mindsets of their patients. Finally, the healers' authority within the culture and their acceptance of the project gives it a level of approval that would otherwise be difficult to obtain. In this situation, the communication models that Ms. Robertson is working to develop will be those that the healers believe will be most effective. The outcomes may not therefore take a "normal Graphic Design" form.

As a form of research methodology, this means of working, although closely focused on the local, can be said to follow internationally accepted academic models of both research methodology and communication theory. The research model that Noble and Bestley describe as "Context-Definition" (2005: 56) relies on intensive preparatory work before formulation of specific design briefs. Both Wells' and Robertson's projects required just such a methodology, involving extensive preliminary research into the needs, mindsets and culture of their audience before development of briefs. Likewise, this type of research project corresponds with the communication theory model discussed by Barnard (2005:24-28, 85), which also requires a negotiated partnership for the communication process, rather than an authoritative sender and a passive recipient. Such negotiation may need to be more protracted and intensive in projects such as ours, than in the kind that these authors may have envisaged, but the methodologies are basically similar.

More to the point for the transformation process, however, they can also be described as accepting, requiring and engaging with the "other wise" nature of indigenous knowledge, and vice versa. Both Graphic Designers and their audiences are "other", in these circumstances, to each other. The open and positive engagement of both partners in projects like these results, certainly, in a transformation in the way Graphic Design is done. We also believe that it offers at least a preliminary model for a transformed Graphic Design education and practice in action.

Indigenous Historical Context for Visual Communication and Graphic Design

By revaluing today's indigenous knowledge, we believe this research work will benefit from situating itself in a living cultural and historical context and revaluing that context. We hope that this growing culture of research, and inclusion and revaluing of indigenous knowledge will result in new and effective forms of design outcome; and that Graphic Design will be altered in this process to become a visual communication profession that will serve the whole population. In the long term, this would result not only in transformation of the educational process within the department, but if extended outwards, would influence the profession. Such an aim speaks to the present and the future, but there is also a historical background to the whole issue of "who is the authority", or "whose voice is heard".

The subject of History and Theory of Graphic Design in my department formerly concentrated on European and American examples, because of international influence on the discipline. In the past the only African material would have been Ancient Egypt and San Rock Art, perhaps, at the beginning. Study of contemporary Graphic Design might have included South African work, but until recently there was little awareness of the history of visual communication across the African continent or the societies from which it comes.

References however exist to over eighty African peoples or language groups who had developed graphic systems (Carey 2004: 84-89). These were either linguistic or symbolic systems: alphabetic and syllabic systems represent linguistic sounds in the same manner as the Roman alphabet; whereas the symbolic systems represent concepts and clusters of concepts in many different areas. These range from the most complex and solemn aspects of religion and cosmology through politics, law and social status, to gossip and jokes.

Some have been studied in detail, such as the Ge'ez or Ethiopic script of Ethiopia (e.g. Haile 1996: 569-576, or Bekerie 1997) (See Fig.3); others are scantily documented if at all. Some represent continuous cultural traditions dating back hundreds of years, such as the Berber Tifinagh syllabary, or syllabic alphabet (see Figure 4, and Brett & Fentress 1996, or O'Connor 1996:112-116); others were developed as recently as the 1950s or 60s, such as the Bété syllabary invented by Frédéric Bruly-Bouabré of Cote d'Ivoire (Dalby 1968)(See Figure 5). Some systems consist of hundreds of signs or characters, such as the four hundred and eighty signs and seven versions of the Bamum syllabary (Dugast & Jefferies 1950)(Figure 6); for others only a single reference to a single sign could be found, such as that for the Yaka of the DRC (Faik-Nzuji 1996: 97) (See Figure 7).

Familiarity with and revaluation of these graphic systems and their underlying symbolic universes can add depths of cultural resonance and appropriateness seldom found in contemporary South African Graphic design. The value to Graphic Design research of this material stems from an understanding of the role of history. History in general has been described as being "to society as memory is to the individual…Only through a sense of history can communities establish a sense of their identity, orientate themselves, [and] understand their relationship to the past, and to other communities and societies" (Marwick 2001: 80). Similarly, gaining awareness of contemporary Graphic Design work from other countries in Africa would encourage our students to value the continent where they live and its work, instead of looking automatically to the West. Virtually no-one in this Department has even heard of designers from neighbouring Zimbabwe such as Saki Mafundikwa or Chaz Maviyane-Davies, despite their international reputations.

If students and researchers value and engage with the contemporary worldviews of the research partners involved in projects such as those mentioned, or with the historical sweep of African visual communication material, a different understanding of a designer's place in South Africa becomes necessary. Projects such as those of Wells and Robertson accept that the realities and knowledges of their intended audiences differ substantially from those of the Graphic Design tradition, and that effective communication requires working within and valuing these realities. For a Durban Graphic Design student, a process of learning about other cultures, both within South Africa and elsewhere, and situating that knowledge in an awareness of the historical development of visual communication in the continent implies gaining consciousness of themselves, on the one hand as citizens of Africa and South Africa; and on the other hand, simultaneously, as members of the community of Graphic Design. If followed in enough projects, then, the process could potentially contribute to solving the apparent conflict between the demands of transformation and the demands of the global discipline.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to describe the dilemma faced by the Graphic Design department at the DUT, in trying simultaneously to balance what might be seen as the conflicting pressures of inescapable international or globalised influences on the one hand, and the requirements of political and demographic transformation on the other. It has located this problem firstly in the vulnerability of indigenous languages, using isiZulu as an example, and relating this to Graphic Design by describing some of the hindrances to readability posed by English-language-based typographic norms. This is suggested further as an example of the way in which such languages and cultures have been marginalized in the past, by neglect if not intentional oppression. The concept of 'Appropriation' was introduced from Post-Colonial Studies as one strategy used by researchers in the department as a means of countering this situation, and examples given, in the work of Kate Wells and Samantha Robertson, of its application to real-world research and design projects. The centrality of Indigenous

Knowledge to the process and success of these projects and the importance of intensive engagement with it by designers was discussed. That these methodologies are internationally acceptable has been demonstrated by their comparability with Noble and Bestley's (2005: 56) method, and Barnard's (2005:24-28, 85) discussion of communication theory. The paper further recommends the study of the History of Visual Communication design and its contemporary expression in the wider continent of Africa, as a means of reinforcing a reassessment of Indigenous Knowledge and culture, and its value to visual communication. If integrated, these two areas of applied research demonstrate the potential for both academically acceptable research work and for a historically contextualized form of Graphic Design practice. Although not claiming that these would be sufficient in themselves, the paper contends that they stand as a model that can aid in the transformation of the Graphic Design department and the industry it serves.

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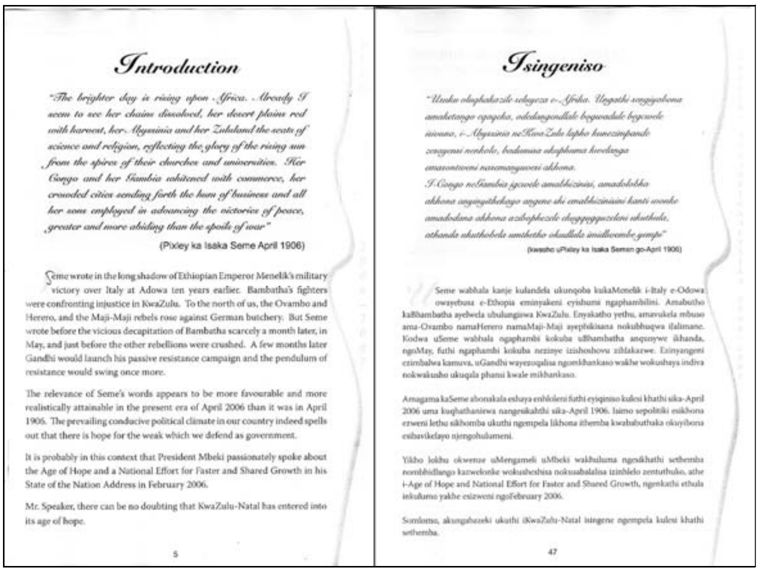
Illustrations



Introduction

"The brighter day is rising upon Africa. Already I seem to see her chains dissolved, her desert plains red with harvest, her Abyssinia and her Zululand the seats of science and religion, reflecting the glory of the rising sun from the spires of their churches and universities. Her Congo and her Gambia whitened with commerce, her crowded cities sending forth the hum of business and all her sons employed in advancing the victories of peace, greater and more abiding than the spoils of war"

(Pixley ka Isaka Seme April 1906)

Seme wrote in the long shadow of Ethiopian Emperor Menelik's military victory over Italy at Adowa ten years earlier. Bambatha's fighters were confronting injustice in KwaZulu. To the north of us, the Ovambo and Herero, and the Maji-Maji rebels rose against German butchery. But Seme wrote before the vicious decapitation of Bambatha scarcely a month later, in May, and just before the other rebellions were crushed. A few months later Gandhi would launch his passive resistance campaign and the pendulum of resistance would swing once more.

The relevance of Seme's words appears to be more favourable and more realistically attainable in the present era of April 2006 than it was in April 1906. The prevailing conducive political climate in our country indeed spells out that there is hope for the weak which we defend as government.

It is probably in this context that President Mbeki passionately spoke about the Age of Hope and a National Effort for Faster and Shared Growth in his State of the Nation Address in February 2006.

Mr. Speaker, there can be no doubting that KwaZulu-Natal has entered into its age of hope.

5

Isingeniso

(kwasho uPixley ka Isaka Seme ngo-April 1906)

Seme wabhala kanje kulandela ukunqoba kukaMenelik i-Italy e-Odowa owayebusa e-Ethopia eminyakeni eyishumi ngaphambilini. Amabutho kaBhambatha ayelwela ubulungiswa KwaZulu. Enyakatho yethu, amavukela mbuso ama-Ovambo namaHerero namaMaji-Maji ayephikisana nokubhuqwa iJalimane. Kodwa uSeme wabhala ngaphambi kokuba uBhambatha anqunywe ikhanda, ngoMay, futhi ngaphambi kokuba ezinye izishoshovu zihlakazwe. Ezinyangeni ezimbalwa kamuva, uGandhi wayezoqalisa ngomkhankaso wakhe wokushaya indiva nokwakusho ukuqala phansi kwale mikhankaso.

Amagama kaSeme abonakala eshaya enhloleni futhi eyiqiniso kulesi khathi sika-April 2006 uma kuqhathaniswa nangesikhathi sika-April 1906. Isimo sepolitiki esikhona ezweni lethu sikhomba ukuthi ngempela likhona ithemba kwababuthaka okuyibona esibavikelayo njengohulumeni.

Yikho lokhu okwenze uMengameli uMbeki wakhuluma ngesikhathi sethemba nomhlahlandlela kazwelonke wokusheshisa nokusabalalisa izinhlelo zentuthuko, athe i-Age of Hope and National Effort for Faster and Shared Growth, ngenkathi ethula inkulumo yakhe esizweni ngoFebruary 2006.

Somlomo, akungabazeki ukuthi iKwaZulu-Natal isingene ngempela kulesi khathi sethemba.

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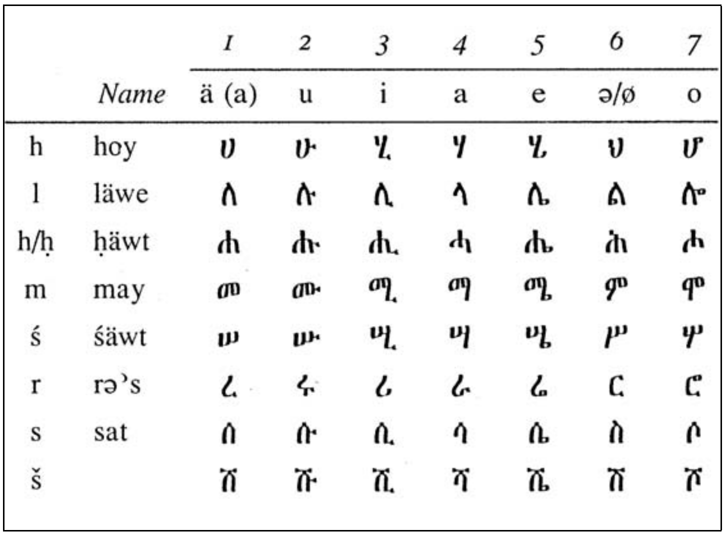
Figure 1. Comparison of Zulu and English versions of bilingual speech.
(from: South Africa. KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government Department of Transport, Community Safety & Liaison. 2006: 5,47)



		1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*
	Name	ä (a)	u	i	a	e	ə/ø	o
h	hoy	ሀ	ሁ	ሂ	ሃ	ሄ	ህ	ሆ
l	läwe	ለ	ሉ	ሊ	ላ	ሌ	ል	ሎ
h/ḥ	ḥäwt	ሐ	ሑ	ሒ	ሓ	ሔ	ሕ	ሖ
m	may	መ	ሙ	ሚ	ማ	ሜ	ም	ሞ
ś	śäwt	ሠ	ሡ	ሢ	ሣ	ሤ	ሥ	ሦ
r	rəʾs	ረ	ሩ	ሪ	ራ	ሬ	ር	ሮ
s	sat	ሰ	ሱ	ሲ	ሳ	ሴ	ስ	ሶ
š		ሸ	ሹ	ሺ	ሻ	ሼ	ሽ	ሾ

Figure 2. Sample of the Ethiopic Script (from: Haile 1996:573)

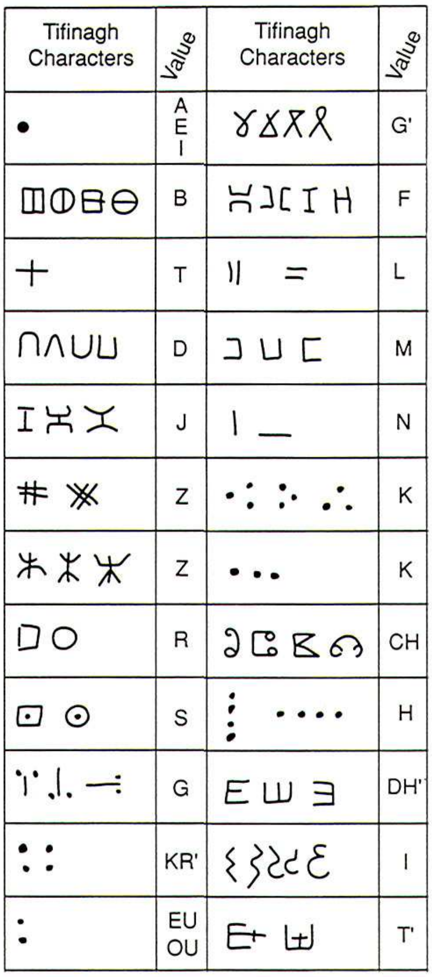

Tifinagh Characters
Value
Tifinagh Characters
Value
A E I
G'
B
F
T
L
D
M
J
N
Z
K
Z
K
R
CH
S
H
G
DH'
KR'
I
EU OU
T'

Figure 3. The Tifinagh alphabet (from: Brett & Fentress 1996:38)

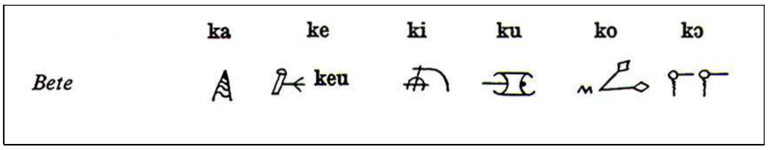

ka
ke
ki
ku
ko
kɔ
Bete
keu

Figure 4. Sample of the Bété syllabary (from: Dalby 1968:156)

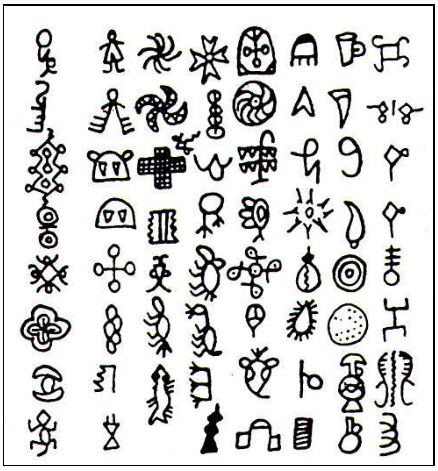


Figure 5. Sample of the 1st Bamum script (from: Dugast & Jefferies 1950: 6)

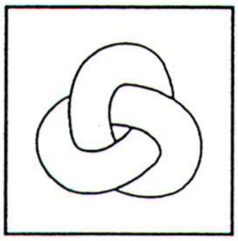


Figure 6. The Yaka sign for the universe, the infinite. ((from: Faik-Nzuji 1996: 97)