⿻⿻⿻⿻ | NSIBIDI WORKBOOK [IGBO]

⿻⿻⿻⿻⿻⿻⿻ | The Reformed Nsibidi Script

This is the reformed nsibidi script for use with the Igbo language. Each character (symbol) represents an Igbo word, usually monosyllabic verbs that make up much of the Igbo language. Each character has a reading. For example, 荓 is 'and' (⿻⿻ / nà). By pairing the symbols together you create a sentence. Akagu, the nsibidi derived alphabet, is used to support the nsibidi, like in this case where the readings of each character are given in green. Akagu is an nsibidi derived short hand that's used for learning, and the akagu elu, or capitalised akagu form, is for non-Igbo words that wouldn't have nsibidi characters such as non-Igbo names.

The main use of nsibidi is to take away the ambiguities from the vast amount of homophones in the Igbo language. Fully phonetic writing systems, such as Latin and other alphabets, do not disambiguate words very well, even with diacritics (tone marks like ´ in á). In the case of tone marks, there are still Igbo words with the same tone marks such as nà (⿻⿻) (and) nà (⿻⿻) (a conjunction, like 'that' in English), and nà (⿻⿻) (in), nsibidi represents these as 荓, 冊, and 圐。 The ambiguity of Igbo words doesn't affect speech very much because of context, and writing small sentences is not too much of a problem, but in large documents, there is an extra effort to decipher words. And then there are the different Igbo dialects. Because each nsibidi symbol represents an Igbo word, readings of one character can be done in multiple dialects. For example 荓, 'and' can be read as nà or là. The system was partly born out of the intention to create new Igbo words and to keep words from fading, especially due to ambiguities.

There are around 2500 characters in this system. While this may sound like a lot, and there would be considerable memorisation needed, most of the symbols are formed from a handful of symbols which form as the base or radicals of each character. Within each symbol, there is a kind of story using ideographs and pictograms that are mostly from the original nsibidi in terms of aesthetic and function.

This is a proposed script. The value in learning it, in addition to the aforementioned functionalities, is to keep a very old indigenous communication system alive in a reformed way that can be used to write not just Igbo, but the languages of the area that historically used nsibidi, today. This way, this would be a continuation and also a conscious effort to preserve something that has been passed down for centuries, if not millennia.

aa : aa | ii : ii | uu : uu | ee : ee | oo : oo

a	A	i	I	u	U	e	E	o	O

p	P	KP		b	B	g	G	GB		GH		GW	

d	D	r	R	t	T	k	K	KW		f	F	h	H

w	W	NW		y	Y	m	M	MM		n	N	NY	

NN		I	L	v	V	j	J	SH		CH		z	Z

s	S	Ñ		HNW		X		HNY	

AH	IH	UH	EH	AW

Diacritics for vowel tone ('e', 'E', 'ee' example)

Diacritics for nasal 'h' and 'H'

Diacritics for 'MM' and 'NN'

〆〈〒〰〶〷〲〒 | Simple Introductory Characters and Sentences

These are simple nsibidi characters which will be used to form simple Igbo sentences here. The method here is to memorise the readings of each symbol (the largest ones in the top left of each section) which are in akagu in green and in Latin characters under that.

Each symbol can be seen to represent a sort of story, like in the ideographic use of the original nsibidi symbols these characters are derived from. To the right of each section, the story of the making up of the character is revealed. Each character is made from a radical which aids in memorising each character. The radicals are only there to help, they don't need to be memorised, only the general idea. A sentence utilising the characters you are about to learn will follow which serves as an example of nsibidi writing for Igbo. It would be good to copy these characters out.

1

工		
madu (madu) human		

—	(akagu)	A person has a head.
|	(akagu)	A person has a body.
—	(akagu)	And legs.

2

王		
nwe (nwe) have		

工	(akagu)	A person.
—	(akagu)	A person holds something like a stick.

3

ⴾ		
kwu (kwu) speak		

工	(akagu)	A person.
( )	(akagu)	A person opens their mouth to speak.

4		⊥	𝓈𝓊𝓏𝓊. 𝓈ᵌ𝓊𝓃.	Two people.
		( )	𝓈𝓊𝓏𝓊. 𝓈ᵌ𝓊𝓃 𝓈𝒾2𝒾 𝓃𝓈𝓊 𝑒𝓏𝓊.	Two people opened their mouths to speak.
	ꞵ𝓏𝓊 (okwu) speech			

5		⊥	𝓈𝓊𝓏𝓊. ∩𝓊2𝓊 𝓈𝓊 𝓊𝓍𝓊 𝓁.𝓏𝓁.	A person (woman) bends to the left.
	𝓊.𝓍ℓ. (anyi) female			

6		⊥	𝓈𝓊𝓏𝓊. ∩𝓊2𝓊 𝓈𝓊 𝓊𝓍𝓊 𝓃2𝑒.	A person (man) bends to the right.
	ꞵ𝓍𝒾 (oke) male			

7		ꓛ	2𝓊.𝓍ℓ.	A woman.
		C	𝓈𝓊 2ꞵ𝓍𝒾.	And a man, together.
	ℓ. (yi) join (together)			

8

工

ⵏⵉⵀ.

(ukwu)

leg

| 工 | ... | The bottom half of a person. |

9

工

(ga)

go

| 人 | ... | A leg. |
| 工 | ... | A person is below the legs. |

10

工

(nwa)

child

| 工 | ... | A big person holds a little person. |

11

(kwu)

embrace

| ... | ... | The sound of kwu (speak). |
| ... | ... | And the idea of unification. |

〷北岱尾沭米卜 | Example Sentence From the Previous Characters

Now that you've seen some simple nsibidi characters (symbols), these Igbo sentences written in nsibidi should be readable.

First, a simple word. The reading of each character is given in akagu in green, the meaning in English underneath:
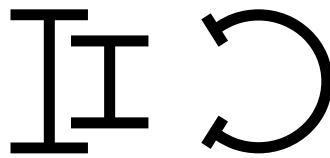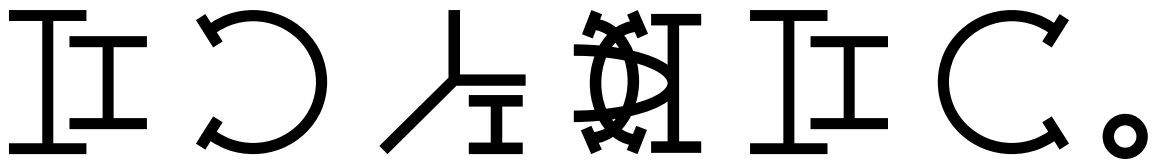
woman

You should have been able to read the characters above as woman in Igbo, nwaanyi, or any dialectal variation of these two words that form the word for woman in Igbo. Now that you may have gotten the idea of how words are formed and then read in nsibidi, the following are some sentences, this time without the English translation.
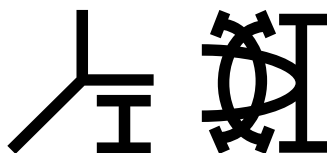
In case the meanings of the two characters in the middle are not clear, this means to go towards.

go towards

The 岱 is a suffix or verb that means going towards.

Some more examples. This time without any akagu or English translations, and in the smaller size that would be typical in documents. These symbols have all been previously explained above. You can go back for reference.

ⳐⅭ王⼂。
Ⱞ北ⱐ。
工王北。
ⳐⅭ王北。

This is the way to write Igbo in the reformed nsibidi, with some other notable feature here and there. Everything is written in this way, sentences, names, notes, etc., with akagu to help.

⊣⊢甲燶弐圊 (see more at) blog.nsibiri.org