



Further Notes on 'Nsibidi Signs with Their Meanings from the Ikom District, Southern Nigeria.

Author(s): Elphinstone Dayrell

Source: *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 41 (Jul. - Dec., 1911), pp. 521-540

Published by: [Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2843186>

Accessed: 10/02/2015 16:34

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



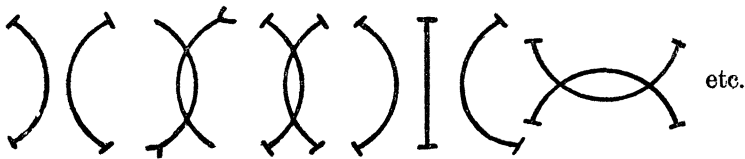
Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

FURTHER NOTES ON 'NSIBIDI SIGNS WITH THEIR MEANINGS
FROM THE IKOM DISTRICT, SOUTHERN NIGERIA.

BY ELPHINSTONE DAYRELL, District Commissioner, F.R.G.S.

In studying 'Nsibidi in the Ikom District of Southern Nigeria it will be found that there are several different kinds. The various societies which play 'Nsibidi have many of their own particular signs, which strangers belonging to another society would not understand. There are, however, a large number of signs common to all the societies, such as :—



which are known to most of the natives ; these are the signs which are most often tattooed on the face, arms, and legs, etc., of the people.

The men who understand 'Nsibidi are very reticent about giving any information on the subject, and it is only through natives whom I have known several years that I have been able to obtain the signs now given. When the signs are being explained the men are most particular that no other natives should be near for fear they might tell other people. The young men are also afraid that they might be fined or punished by the chiefs of the society if they were found giving information to strangers.

In the Ikom District women are not allowed to know 'Nsibidi, as may be seen on referring to sign No. 118, which represents an 'Nsibidi chief who went mad and was tied up because the members were afraid that he might tell the women or the strangers the secrets of the society. One of the very few women whom I have come across in the district who knew the meanings of any of the signs is a singing and dancing girl, of Okuni, called Ennenni, who is also well versed in native folk-lore, and has related to me several stories. The members have a secret pantomimic code by which they can communicate with one another. It is acting in dumb show, the fingers, hands, and both arms being used, also the head. The way many of these signs have been given to me is as follows :—The

sign having first been drawn, one member points at it with the index finger of his right hand, but does not speak. The other member then points at the sign with the first and second fingers of his right hand, remaining in that position with his arm out for a few seconds, he then proceeds to make different motions with his hands, etc., explaining the meaning of the sign to the other member. This goes on for a short time in silence until the interpretation is complete. The first member who pointed at the sign then translates the meaning. This performance is repeated after each 'Nsibidi sign is made.

Bets are frequently made about 'Nsibidi, and many of the signs have reference to strangers who have broken the 'Nsibidi laws, and who have to pay goats or gin. In the year 1909, the Rev. J. K. Macgregor, B.D., published an article in the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, giving ninety-eight signs of 'Nsibidi with their meanings, several of which are similar to some of those collected by me. There does not appear to be any stigma attached to a knowledge of 'Nsibidi in the Ikom District as would appear to be the case in Calabar, according to Mr. Macgregor, and this is probably because 'Nsibidi is so intimately connected with the Egbo society. The other societies which use and practise 'Nsibidi in the Ikom District are the Ukpotio, Ukwa, and Isong Esil societies. In trying to trace 'Nsibidi, and to find out in which countries it is known, I have recently collected and copied from various natives a number of 'Nsibidi signs mostly depicted on women. These signs are tattooed on natives from countries extending from the German Cameroons on both banks of the Cross River, down as far as Akunakuna on the left bank, and inland for a considerable distance into the Ibo country on the right bank.

The following is a list of the various countries showing whence came the natives who bore the tattooed marks reproduced by me :—

<i>Country.</i>		<i>District.</i>
1. Efik	...	Calabar.
2. Enfitop	...	Ikom.
3. Attam	...	Obubra.
4. Olulumo	...	Ikom.
5. Inde	...	Ikom.
6. Indem	...	Obubra.
7. Ibo	...	Bende.
8. Akunakuna	...	Afikpo.
9. Inkum	...	Ikom.
10. Adda	...	Ibo tribe.
11. Injor	...	Ekoi tribe, Ikom District.
12. Akparabong	...	Ikom.
13. Abu	...	Boki tribe, Ikom District.
14. Ogada	...	Obubra.
15. Akam	...	Ikom District.

Many of the signs reproduced are connected with one another, and form short stories. When these signs are drawn by the natives they are grouped together, but in no regular order, and their positions relative one to another do not seem to alter their meanings.

The only exception that I know is the sign No. 155, which represents two women sleeping together, if, however, this sign were upright, it would mean a man and a woman.

It will be observed that the signs Nos. 118 to 141 are of a much more elaborate and pictorial design than those given by Etime, a Calabar man (Nos. 33 to 85). They are also quite different from the fifty-five signs which were collected by me and published in *Man*, August, 1910, Vol. X, No. 8. The native, Insoh Agara, of Okuni, who gave the signs Nos. 118 to 141, is well versed in 'Nsibidi, and is also an expert in the secret pantomimic code of communication. I have on several occasions watched this man, unnoticed by him, conversing, apparently freely, with other members of the society, who understood the code, for several minutes together.

Sign No. 61, representing five rods, in 'Nsibidi, is quite a common sign on the Cross River, and it is frequently to be seen in native houses marked up many times on the walls in white chalk, representing so many cases of kernels or bottles of gin, etc. This sign is also used on the steamers on the coast for tallying goods.

The signs Nos. 191 to 199 are very much like the signs Nos. 212 to 215, tattooed on an Inkum woman. As these signs are so different from those commonly in use in the district, knowing that the Inkum people are not related to the Ibo, I asked the woman if she could explain the reason, but, unfortunately, she could give me no information, except that she did not know any Ibo man and did not understand the meaning of the signs.

All the signs have been very much reduced in size, and the lines should be of a uniform thickness.

On the 27th May, 1911, whilst visiting the Inde country, an old woman, called Abbassi, informed me that she knew 'Nsibidi well, and explained the meanings of several of the signs to me. In order to prove that she knew 'Nsibidi, without being asked, she went outside the rest house and shortly afterwards returned with her hands crossed behind her. She stood in the doorway without speaking or moving for a short time, and then looked slowly round the room, moving her head from the right to the left, she then turned round and left the room. When she returned she told me that the meaning of her acting was that if she had had the 'Nsibidi medicine in her mouth and many people had been present in the room, some of whom knew 'Nsibidi, those people would have greeted her and she would have returned their greeting without speaking. She also informed me that had she wished to speak to any man present who knew 'Nsibidi, that this particular man would have got up and followed her out of the room, although she had not spoken or made any signal as far as could be seen. She said that

when the man followed her out of the room all the people who did not understand 'Nsibidi would have been very much surprised. It is extremely doubtful whether this old woman would have given me any information about 'Nsibidi but for the fact that she had known me for over nine years.

1. A young man and his sweetheart.

2. A man and woman sleeping together, the woman was the wife of another man,

3. Four men who caught the man and woman in No. 2 sleeping together. The woman belonged to one of the four men. And the man who was found with her had to bring a calabash of tombo, represented by the circle, and repay the bride price to the husband.

4. A man and woman in bed who are tired of one another, lying back to back, it is the usual sign of a quarrel. When a woman makes this sign for a man it means that she does not want him to come to her house again.

5. Bush leg irons.

6. The man who put the leg irons on the woman.

(Explanation of signs 4 to 6. The woman in No. 4 would not allow the man to have connection with her, so he sent the man in No. 6 to put the bush leg irons, No. 5, on the woman.)

7. Three women and one man. One woman was old and her husband wished to get rid of her, and would not give her food as he wanted a young girl to live with him. The old woman therefore called her two friends to meet the man and settle the palaver.

8. A man and a child. A stranger had come to the house, so the man told the child to go to the place where he kept his yams, No. 9, and bring some. The child refused to do what he was told so the man knocked him down.

9. The small circle in the centre is the place in the house where the yams were kept, and the long line represents the stranger.

10. The Egbo dress.

11. A man married two wives, he was fond of one of them who had a child by him and lived with her, entirely neglecting the other woman and treating her very badly. This woman having a pain in her knee went to a lot caster who told her to sharpen a stick and pierce her knee with it. When she had done this a child came out of her knee and the woman took the child to her friends in the town. When the woman's husband heard of the birth of the child he asked the woman who had given her the child, as he had not had connection with her himself.

12. The man said to the mother of the child, if this child is mine let him go to the thunder and get me an elephant's tusk. The child went and met a sick woman in the ferry boat. She told the child to wash her back, and the child did so. She then told him to wash his hands, but he refused and rubbed his body instead. The woman then told the boy not to salute any chiefs, but to walk straight on until he met the thunder, whom he must salute.

13. The boy told the thunder that his father had sent him to get an elephant's tusk. The thunder gave him a tusk and told him to stay where he was. The boy said he would sleep with the goats that night, but he slept with the slaves instead. At night the thunder killed all the goats and thought that he had also killed the boy, but in the morning the boy told the thunder that he had slept near his head and had nearly been killed.

14. The boy started home with the tusk and a gun on his shoulder. The thunder made lightning six times, trying to kill the boy, and each time the lightning came the boy fired his gun, the last shot cut the thunderer's head off so the boy carried the head and tusk to his father and told him what had happened. The father still wished to kill his son, so he got seven spears and told his son to do the same. He then called all the people together and in their presence threw all the spears at his son, but could not hit him. The boy's last spear killed his father; then the boy, having killed his father, climbed up a long rope into the sky.

(Signs Nos. 11 to 14 were given by Agbor of Abia, who pointed out the various parts of the signs with their meanings as he told the story.)

15. A fan which is used to remove the dust from the place where the 'Nsibidi is put.

16. The half circle is the place where the tombo is poured on the ground. One of the strokes opposite is the man who poured out the tombo, the other stroke is the man who drank it.

(The line in the middle is the centre with two chiefs sitting at the top and two at the bottom.)

17. A man and a woman sleeping together who have had a quarrel.

18. Fan used by the Orbon Society in their plays.

19. A man holding the Egbo stick. The man on the right is holding two goat's horns in his hands. The man on the left says he is not holding them properly and wants to take them from him, but is not allowed to do so. The top fork is the forked stick which is used in the Egbo play to push a man's legs with.

20. The half circle, etc., on the right is the Orbon rattle. The cross is the man holding the rattle. The sign at the bottom of the circle is a man who knows the Orbon play well. The sign on the top of the circle is a man who does not know the play. The circle is the mark made by the man who understands. When the man has placed his hand twice upon the mark, he is told that that is the Orbon sign.

21. The Egbo tortoise.

22. A man and woman sleeping together with their arms round one another.

23. A man and woman sleeping together on a native bed, it was very hot so they put their arms outside, the short strokes at the bottom are the legs of the bed.

24. A woman had a baby by her husband. He got tired of her and told her to go into the bush and leave the baby with him, but she refused to do so.

25. A woman went out walking and a man followed her.

26. The man met a small boy with a small girl and tried to take the girl for himself, but the girl feared to go with the man and held on to her boy lover.

27. The boy kept the girl as his friend until she grew up. He then married her and they lived together and made their bed with a pillow for the head and feet.

28. He joined the Egbo Society and put the head-dress near the bed so that his wife could see that he belonged to the society.

29. A gun.

30. The cross at the top is a man who went into the bush carrying his gun, another man went with him who carried his bag.

31. A man and his friend went into the town to get two girls. One of the men got a girl and took her home with him. The other man could not find a girl, they therefore parted and went different ways.

32. A man and a woman sleeping together. The woman did not like the man to be near her so she put a pillow between them.

(Signs 1 to 32 were given and explained by Agbor, a native of Abia, Ekoi tribe.)

33. A question by the Egbo Society. When this sign is made on the ground it means that rum is required, and the man who makes the sign with the four small strokes is high up in the Egbo Society.

34. The circle represents a table in the Egbo house with a bottle of gin on it, and the crossed lines show the way a man walks in the Egbo house when a question is asked; he cannot walk straight. The two round balls at the end of the lines are the particulars about which the question is asked by a man high up in the society shown by the four small lines.

35. When this sign is made on the ground it is covered with a cloth, and no one may lift the cloth unless they understand Egbo. The sign means a man's heart. The man stands with his arms spread out to show that he knows more about Egbo than any other man. The dots represent the blood in the heart.

36. A man standing with his feet crossed. The dotted lines are the blood, bones, hair, etc. The sign at the bottom on the right is the man's testicles and the sign on the left is the penis, the sign on the top is the man's head and neck.

37. The 'Nsibidi sign for welcome.

38. A man bending down, when the Egbo is playing, with one hand on the ground and one foot behind. The attitude of a man starting to run a race.

39. A watchman who prevents anyone who does not belong to the Egbo Society from entering the Egbo house while the play is going on.

40. This sign is sent by a man playing Egbo to someone who has called him. It means that he cannot leave the Egbo house.

(The signs 33 to 40 were given to me by Etim, a native of Calabar.)

41. A pair of Egbo handcuffs and two men who have had a quarrel. A chief is in the middle.

42. Plantains and the knife with which they were cut.

43. A rod.

(Signs 41, 42 and 43 together mean : Two men had a quarrel and called for the handcuffs. The chief came and said that the handcuffs were not to be brought. He then told his wife to cook some plantains for the men. The man who was in trouble got a rod to give to some one to teach him 'Nsibidi. He gave the rod to the chief.)

44. The 'Nsibidi Egbo drum and the stick which is rubbed round on the top of the drum and causes a curious noise.

45. Four men playing with the 'Nsibidi stick.

46. The 'Nsibidi knife.

47. The Egbo looking-glass and a man who does not understand Egbo.

48. (a) A man came from a far country.

(b) A man holding up his hand.

(c) When the stranger saw this sign he knew that it was 'Nsibidi.

49. A woman who ground up 'Nsibidi medicine.

50. The 'Nsibidi medicine.

51. Leaves and other things forming part of the medicine.

52. The large stone for grinding up the medicine (the mortar).

53. The small stone held in the hand for grinding the medicine (the pestle).

54. The man keeps the medicine.

55. A man who asked the owner why he kept the medicine.

56. This is the 'Nsibidi dressed like an Egbo with a netted dress. He holds a whip in his right hand. When the woman was asked for the medicine she would not give any answer until the 'Nsibidi came. The 'Nsibidi then made the next sign (57) on the ground.

57. When the woman saw the sign she would not answer. (a) The rods ; (b) the gin ; (c) the legs of the table ; (d) the three 'Nsibidi sticks.

58. The glass out of which to drink the gin.

59. This sign was sent round to say that the 'Nsibidi Society would play on a certain day.

60. The messenger who was sent to tell the people, but as he did not go quickly and stayed away he was fined five rods.

61. The five rods the messenger was fined.

62. The 'Nsibidi drum which was played at the meeting.

63. The 'Nsibidi box which holds all the medicine and dress and other things belonging to the society.

Explanation.—A stranger came from a far country and wished to attend the 'Nsibidi play but he was not a member of the Egbo Society. A woman was told to grind up the 'Nsibidi medicine consisting of leaves, etc., in a stone mortar with a stone pestle which she held in her hand. When she had ground up the medicine

she gave it to a man to keep. Then another man asked her why she kept the medicine, but she would not answer so he went to the 'Nsibidi who made the sign representing the rods, gin, etc. (and the glass out of which the gin would be drunk), which the woman would be fined if the medicine were not forthcoming. A messenger was then sent round to all the members with the sign showing that a meeting was to be called. As he did not go quickly and did not return for the play, he was fined five rods. The play was held and the drum was beaten; after the play was over, all the medicine, the dress, and the other things belonging to the society were collected and put back in the 'Nsibidi box.

(Signs 47 to 63 were given and explained by Etim, a native of Calabar.)

64. A round roll of native cloth placed on the head when carrying loads.

65. Egbo fan.

66. 'Nsibidi name written.

67. The frog which is always calling people.

68. A guard outside the door of the Egbo house to keep strangers away.

69. (a) The centre beam of the Egbo house, the short strokes being the rafters.

(b) The Egbo bell.

(c) The carving at the ends of the beam.

70. A hooked stick for gathering native pears.

71. A stick carried by members who belong to 'Nsibidi.

72. A large leaf used for putting native pears in, to carry them to the house.

73. A man with his arm out, sleeping with his back to a woman. The cross below being a small native bed.

74. Two women sleeping together with pillows on either side, with their arms round one another. If this figure were upright it would be a man and woman.

75. A carved piece of wood placed firmly in the ground near the entrance of the Egbo house, it is decorated with camwood and yellow wood and tie-tie, it has also a red cap on its head.

76. Six 'Nsibidi leaves which were placed on the path by two men. The two broad lines in the centre are the two men.

77. An Egbo table. The crossed lines are pieces of tie-tie which the members throw from one to the other. The hooks at the corners are the handles.

78. A hollowed out piece of wood containing medicine. The triangle on the left is the cover. The strokes on the side are sticks which are used for sprinkling the medicine about.

79. A messenger who was sent to the two men in the story.

80. The two men standing together talking.

81. A big chief died and was held in the arms of his friend. His body was then placed in the grave, which is represented by the outside lines, and the 'Nsibidi himself went to bury the chief.

82. A woman in the fatting house, with a looking-glass on the wall, with a camwood frame.

83. The fat woman sleeping with her man, back to back, he does not have connection with her. The six small dots are the chalk marks on the woman's face.

84. The fat woman's hand with which she made the next sign.

85. The place where the fat woman washed and the gutter where the water ran away.

(Explanation of signs from 76 to 85, including Nos. 72 and 74.) (76) Two men took six 'Nsibidi leaves and made them into different shapes so that each man should know his own leaf. These leaves were to tell the people to come to the 'Nsibidi play. The leaves were placed in the road and when the six men returned from the farm they each took their leaf and went to the Egbo house. (77) Then the pieces of tie-tie were handed about from one member to the other, and (78) the members were sprinkled with the medicine out of the box with the sticks. (79) A messenger was then sent to one of the two men in (80) to ask why the native pears in (72) had been picked before they were ripe, so the man, to whom the messenger had been sent, left his friend and ran to the woman in (74), who had picked the unripe pears and was going to beat her, but she ran away and slept with the other woman in (74). There was a strong law that no one should play with the table in (77), unless he were a member of the society, but one stranger did play with it. Then the chief in (81) died and was held in the arms of his friend. So the 'Nsibidi called all the members together and attended the funeral of the chief himself. A new law was then passed that no one should play with the table in (77) until another chief had been appointed. (82) There was a woman in the fatting house who had a looking-glass, framed in camwood. She told the man she was going to marry, that if she had not been in the fatting house, and in consequence was not allowed to go out, that she would have gone to the funeral of the chief. (83) She slept with her man that night, but he did not have connection with her. They slept back to back, and in the morning after he had left her she went to the place to wash, but she found that the place where the water ran away was dirty, so she made the two signs 84 and 85 on the wall to let her man know that the place was not clean. The man then cleaned the gutters and when he met the woman again at night said to her: "Since you have been in the fatting house I have always been with you, and have looked after you properly without having connection with you, and after we are married I want you always to live with me and never to go to any other man.

(The signs 64 to 85 were made and explained to me by Etim, a native of Calabar.)

86. The body of a dead chief lying on a platform at the top of a ladder with a fire underneath.

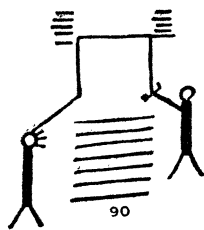
87. The ladder leading up to the platform. The chief's wives sat round the body with fans to keep the flies away.

88. The circle is the fire placed under the dead body to smoke and preserve it, and the three strokes are the sticks making the fire.

89. A bamboo stick with the leaves turned backwards. This sign was sent to a stranger in a far country so that he might know that the chief was dead.

(Signs 86 to 89 were given and explained by Odidi, a native of Okuni.)

90. The hollow square is the path leading to the bush, represented by the five small strokes on each side. The two figures on the right and left are two men who are touching two pieces of wood fixed upright in the ground on each side of the path. When a man who understands 'Nsibidi sees this sign he takes seven steps forward and then touches the post.



91. Two men who had many secrets which they spoke about together when alone, but they were not allowed to tell anyone else as the secrets belonged to the society. But at last one of the men told the secrets to everybody so he was not trusted with any more and it was determined to watch him. Although these two men were great friends and always gave one another food, one day the man who had told the secrets refused to give his friend food, so he made up his mind to poison him, he therefore placed poison in his food which killed him.

92. This is the two friends who have quarrelled, showing the poison given by the man to his friend. The poison is represented by the two round balls.

93. A tree with a bees' nest containing honey. The bees' nest is represented by the half circle on the right hand side of the tree.

94. A man who tried to take the honey from the nest, but the bees came out and stung him, which caused him to bend backwards with the pain of the stings.

95. The man then got a burning stick and set fire to the tree, and when the bees had been smoked out, he gathered the honey which he placed in,

96. A calabash and took it home.

(The signs 90 to 92 were made and explained by Ogoji, a native of Okuni, and signs 93 to 96 were given by Odidi, of Okuni.)

97. A man and woman sleeping together with their legs crossed over one another, the woman was underneath.

98. She asked the man to give her a looking-glass so that she could see herself.

99. She also asked the man to give her a native comb.

100. Native handcuffs. The man told the woman that he was so fond of her that if she slept with any other man he would put the handcuffs on her.

101. A spider which was sent on in front by the 'Nsibidi members to a town where they were going to play. The spider was told to spin his web so that if anyone touched it, the members would know that the person who did so did not understand 'Nsibidi.

102. Two snakes, one on each side of the road, so that if a man had two hearts (*i.e.*, if he had a bad ju-ju and wished to kill any member of the society) one of the snakes would bite him and he would die.

103. The head chief of the 'Nsibidi Society, standing up with his arms and legs spread out so that no one could pass unless they belonged to the society.

104. A long snake. This chief asked a stranger who came to see the play if he understood 'Nsibidi, and the stranger said that he understood, but he told a lie, so the chief left the long snake in front of him. The chief also told the stranger that he must kill a goat for the members to eat, as he had broken their law.

105. The stranger killed the goat with the stick with knobs at each end. If he had taken the stick with the fork at the end it would have got hung up in the bush.

106. A stranger who came to see the 'Nsibidi play, but he did not belong to the society.

107. The owner of the ground who told the stranger not to go to the play. This caused a quarrel and the stranger said, "I am a man and insist upon seeing the play, you are no better than I am, and if you think you are you can try me by 'Nsibidi.

108. The 'Nsibidi box containing all the emblems, etc., of the society. This box could not be opened until the head chief arrived.

109. Two 'Nsibidi hooks. As the two men in 106 and 107 had quarrelled, the head chief gave them the two 'Nsibidi hooks to hold, and then took them to the big drum where the playing and dancing was going on.

110. The big drum.

111. The rattle which was played by the beater of the big drum.

112. The man who played the big drum, when the play was over he wiped his arms with the drum stick, which he held in his left hand, to show the people that the dancing and playing were finished.

113. A small river with a bridge over it leading to the place where the 'Nsibidi play was being held. Before any one could pass this bridge they were asked if they understood 'Nsibidi.

114. The 'Nsibidi stick which stood upright in the water. If a man understood 'Nsibidi he would take the stick in both hands before he crossed the bridge to see the play.

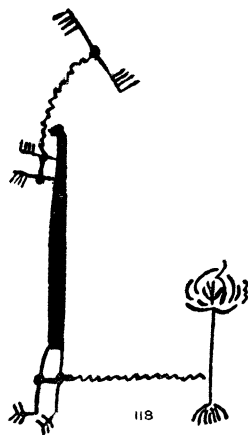
115. The native razor used by the man who beat the big drum (112) before he went to the play.

116. The stone fastened down by sticks upon which the razor was sharpened.

117. The bag in which the razor was kept.

(The signs from 97 to 117 were made and explained to me at Okuni by Odidi.)

118. A chief who knew 'Nsibidi well. He became mad and the members told him to go away, because they were afraid he might explain 'Nsibidi to the women and to people who did not belong to the society. The mad chief refused to go away and tried



to get into the 'Nsibidi house, so the members put native handcuffs on him and tied him up to the rafters, but the tie-tie broke, so they put native leg irons on him and fastened him to a tree with the 'Nsibidi chain.

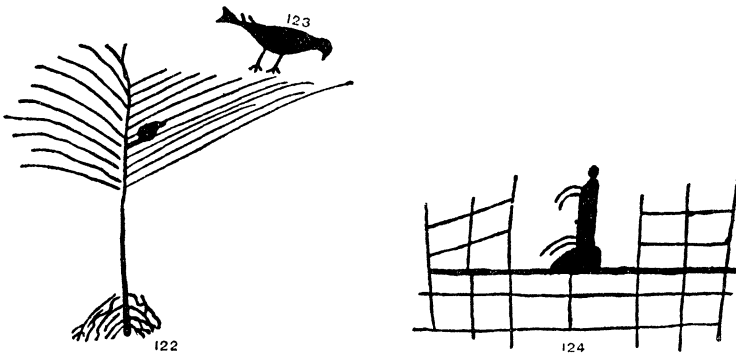
119. The rat for which a trap should be set.

120. A rat trap set to catch the rat which ate the corn in the house. Any visitor who made this sign on the ground would mean that the owner of the house should set a trap in that place to catch the rat.

121. A grave with a dead body in it. When a member makes this sign to another member it means that his brother is dead and that his body has been placed in a grave. The small strokes represent the earth, which has been thrown out of the grave on both sides.

122. The 'Nsibidi palm tree. When the society is going to play, a man is sent out to get palm wine for the members to drink. The calabash collecting the palm wine can be seen in the branches of the tree.

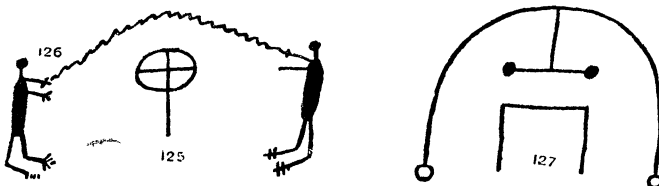
123. A bird which was feeding on the palm tree, but when it saw the man climbing up the tree to get the palm wine it flew away.



124. The man in the centre is the head chief of the 'Nsibidi, sitting on a chair in the middle of the native benches, represented by the crossed sticks.

125. The 'Nsibidi spear stuck in the ground.

126. Two men standing on either side of the spear holding the 'Nsibidi chain. If anyone who did not know 'Nsibidi passed this chain he would have to kill a goat for the members to eat. A person who knew 'Nsibidi would go up to the man on the left of the spear and bending down would place both hands round the man's knees and then throw his left hand over his left shoulder. He



would then do the same to the man standing on the right of the spear, and having thrown his right hand over his right shoulder, would lift the 'Nsibidi chain and pass underneath.

127. The outside line is the 'Nsibidi house, and the two circles at the ends are the holes into which the posts at the entrance are inserted. The line from the top with the two balls suspended is the 'Nsibidi lamp.

128. A man holding a club in his hands, ready to kill a goat.

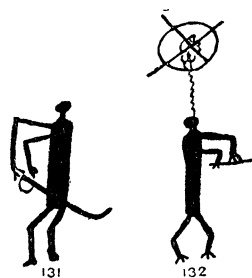
129. The goat given to the society by the chief in 124.

When the two signs 128 and 129 are made for a man it means that he must kill a goat for the members to eat.

130. The 'Nsibidi elephant represented by a man dressed up.

131. A man with a sword watching the man who was dressed up to represent the 'Nsibidi elephant to see that he did not hurt anyone, and to prevent any harm happening to him.

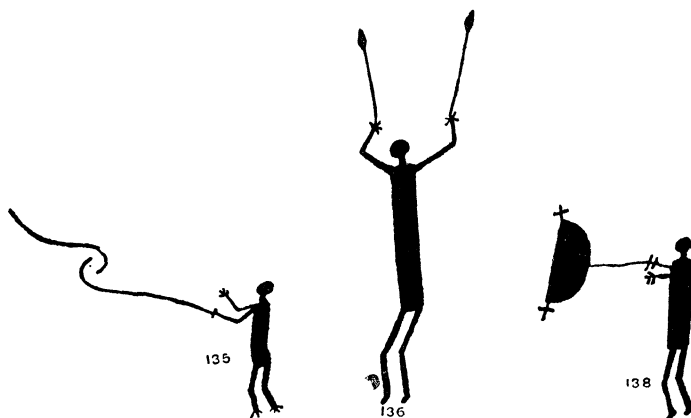
132. When 'Nsibidi is about to be played, the members take a certain root from the ground and place it on a man's head. If the root stands up straight then they know that the 'Nsibidi is good and they may play; but if the root bends over to one side or the other they must not play.



133. The 'Nsibidi wheel which is held up behind the man in 132 by a member to protect him. When this sign is made on the ground it means that a man is required to carry a load.

134. The 'Nsibidi bridge which is made over streams to enable the members to cross to the play. If a man should fall into the river the members throw him the 'Nsibidi stick, which is shown underneath the bridge.

135. A man with the 'Nsibidi hook in his hand. This hook is always used when the members play. When this sign is made it means that a man has to go to a distant country to get something for the members.

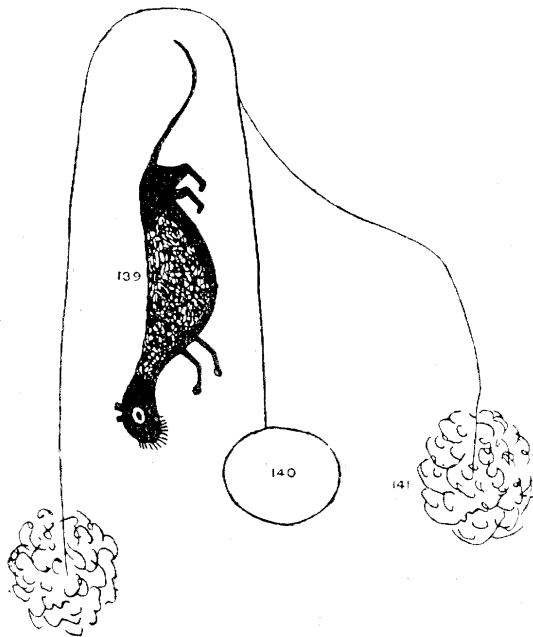


136. The head chief of the country dancing with a spear in each hand to show the people that all the country belongs to him. When he has finished dancing the play stops.

137. The 'Nsibidi symbol which is shaken in the hand, it has poison inside, and when it is presented to anyone he runs away.

138. A man holding the 'Nsibidi looking-glass, made out of a board, coloured black, upon which medicine has been spat. When the members play everyone has to look upon it. When the man bends down to put the looking-glass on the ground, the play stops.

139. The 'Nsibidi leopard. A man dressed up represents the leopard and goes out before the play commences, to drive anyone away who is not a member. He dances backwards and forwards.



140. A ring which is placed round the leopard's neck and is attached to 141.

141. A cloth with ornamented ends which is held round the man representing the leopard, by two other members of the 'Nsibidi Society to stop the leopard from going too far, or in the wrong direction.

(The signs 118 to 141 were given to me by a native of Okuni, named Insoh Agara.)

142. A leper, he had no nose or mouth, his fingers were eaten away, and one leg was gone.

143. One day he saw his hair in a looking-glass and thought he would like to comb it.

144. But when he had bought the native comb he could not hold it in his hands as his fingers had been eaten away.

145. (a) A native canoe.
(b) The seats in the canoe.
(c) Two boys who were in the canoe and were very frightened when it rolled about.
(d) The shelter in the canoe made from palm leaves with the three bent wood supports.
(e) The stern of the canoe where the boy sat to steer the canoe.

(The signs 142 to 145 were made and explained to me by Ennenni, a dancing and singing girl from Okuni. This girl is also well versed in folklore and has related several stories to me.)

The following 'Nsibidi signs were tattooed on the bodies of natives and were copied by me. The names of the natives and the countries they came from are given in each instance, together with the dates when the signs were copied.

146. Two young girls carrying water pots on their heads.

147. The water pot.

148. Two sticks crossed before the door of the Egbo house.

(Signs 146 to 148 were copied from the left fore-arm of Ekua-efa, an Okuni woman.)

149. Egbo sticks.

150. The sign of love. A man and woman sleeping together. On right leg of Ekua-efa.

IKOM.

151. On left arm of Ejen Eba, an Ikom woman. Ebima mark.

ENFITOP.

152. Ebima mark.

153. Rods.

154. Love. A man and girl sleeping together. The man brought a rod for the girl, but she refused it and left the man.

152, 153, and 154. On left arm of Omum, an Okanga woman.

155. Two girls sleeping together.

156. Emang. An iron symbol held by a chief in his hand. There is a ju-ju in the middle of the handle.

155 and 156. On left arm of Ekoma, an Okanga woman.

157. The 'Nsibidi House. On both breasts of Ekoma.

ATTAM. (OBUBRA DISTRICT.)

158. A house with a man and woman in it. There were also rods and a looking-glass in the house.

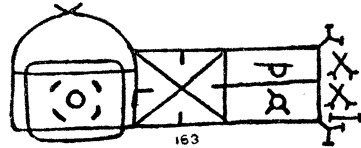
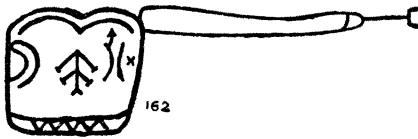
159. Two children in a house.

160. A sick boy and girl sleeping together.

158, 159, and 160. On left arm of Abaiye, a woman from Ofun Attam.

161. A sick boy and sick girl, in a house, with a looking-glass, and the rods the boy gave to the girl. On right arm of Abaiye.

162. Testicles and penis. A man and woman had a quarrel, the woman had a baby. Across the breast of Abaiye.



OLULUMO.

163. House with a girl dressed up, and a looking-glass. The crossed lines on the right represent beads and other ornaments. Across the breast of Ewor Obiri.

INDE.

164. A looking-glass.

165. Two lovers in a house.

164 and 165. On right arm of Agum, an Inde woman.

166, 167, and 168. On left arm of Agum.

169. A sick man and girl, = the Inde mark. On right breast of Agum.

INDEM. (OBUBRA DISTRICT.)

170. A hawk.

171. A horn for blowing.

170 and 171. On right arm of Neji, an Indem woman.

172 to 175. On left arm of Neji.

176 to 178. On left hand of Neji.

179. The cross is a water pot in the room, with a man and woman sleeping together, with a pillow at the head and foot. On left leg of Neji.

180 to 183. On right leg of Neji.

184. The woman told her daughter that she must marry a certain man, but the girl refused. The man took one pillow and the woman took two pillows.

185. Tie-tie.

186. A looking-glass.

184 to 186. On breast and body of Neji.

187. On right arm of Intun, an Indem woman.

188. On right leg of Intun. An iron pin made by the Oka blacksmiths, tuck in the hair.

189. On left leg of Intun.

190. On left arm of Intun. Two razors on a looking-glass tied round with tie-tie.

BENDE (IBO TRIBE.)

191 to 195. On left fore-arm of Okenwa, a native of Bende.

196 to 199. On side of left arm of Okenwa.

INDE.

200. A man and woman sleeping in a house with a calabash of water brought by the man represented by the cross on the top. On left thigh of 'Mbana, an Inde woman.

201. On calf of left leg of 'Mbana.

202. An old man. On right fore-arm of 'Mbana.

203. Okereuki.

204. On left fore-arm of 'Mbana.

205. A looking-glass. On left wrist of 'Mbana.

206. On left thigh of 'Mbana.

AKUNAKUNA. (AFIKPO DISTRICT.)

207. On right fore-arm of Abo Abassi, an Akuna Muna man.

BENDE DISTRICT. (IBO TRIBE.)

208. On left breast of Essem, a Bende man (a man offered two rods to a woman, but she refused them and turned her back upon him).

209. A tortoise. On left arm of Essem.

210. Steering wheel on a steamer with iron supports. On left fore-arm of Essem.

INKUM.

211. On right breast of Eyang, an Inkum woman.

212 to 215. On right fore-arm of Eyang.

ADDA. (IBO TRIBE.)

216. Love, with pillow at head and foot. On right cheek of Okibe, an Addaman.

217. On left breast (a woman's ovaries).

218. On left shoulder (an anchor).

219. The 'Nsibidi house in which the keys were kept. On right cheek.

INJOR. (EKOI TRIBE.)

220. Iron symbol held by a chief.
 221. The handle.
 222. 'Nsibidi feather worn in cap.
 220 to 222. On left arm of Eba, an Obokum woman.

AFIKPO DISTRICT. (IBO TRIBE.)

223. An accordion. On left arm of 'Mgbor Ichuku, an Afikpo woman.
 224. Native razors.
 225. A man tied up to the 'Nsibidi stick.
 226. A man bound with his arms and legs round a post.
 224 to 226. On left fore-arm.
 227. A bad palaver man.
 228. The propeller of a steamer.
 229. A turtle.
 230. A bad man.
 231.
 232. The nest of a goose.
 233. Same as No. 228.
 229 to 233. On right fore-arm.
 234. On calf of right leg.
 235. On both cheeks of face.

IBO TRIBE. (EDDA.)

236. Quarrel between husband and wife.
 237.
 238. Ekpai stick.
 236 to 238. On left fore-arm of Okure, an Edda woman.
 239.
 240. Beritowa, a native-made matchet.
 239 and 240. On right fore-arm.

AKPARABONG.

241. On right breast of Edi, an Akparabong woman—keys.
 242. A man and woman in a house. On left breast.
 243. A stranger sleeping with a girl. On right fore-arm.
 244. Same as No. 241. On left fore-arm.
 245. A calabash of water hung up with sticks. On calf of right leg.

BOKI TRIBE.

246. A sick man and woman who will not sleep together. On right cheek of 'Mboa, an Abu woman.

247. On left cheek.

248. A pool of water with three birds drinking out of it. On left arm.

OGADA. (OBUBRA DISTRICT.)

250. A looking-glass.

250 and 251. On left arm of Ekuna, an Ogada woman.

INJOR-. (EKOI TRIBE.)

252. Two lepers sleeping together. On right leg of Eba, an Obokum woman.

253. "Ato Kerenki." On left leg.

254. Ato Kerenki.

255. Decoration.

IKOM.

256. A house with four doors. A man and woman sleeping together ; the woman has a looking-glass in her hand. On right breast of Bogor, an Ikom man.

257 and 258. On left breast.

259. On left wrist.

260. A man tied up to a stick with his legs through holes ; a prisoner. On back of neck, down spine.

261. A flower to place in the hair. On left breast of Egom, an Ikom woman.

262. On left fore-arm.

BOKI TRIBE.

263. On left breast of Bobnor, an Iso-Bendinge man.

268. Rods in a house.

264 to 268. On left arm.

AKPARABONG.

269. The moon. On right breast of Adda, an Akparabong woman.

270. A man and woman with an infant. On left arm.

271. 'Mbannig Ajassa Anne, a bird. On right breast of Agbor, an Akparabong woman.

272. A young boy and girl together in a house which they had built. On left breast of Manku, an Akparabong woman.

273. On right arm of Adda, an Akparabong woman.

274. On chin.

275. A boy and girl together, who had a looking-glass, which was hung up on a nail. On left arm.

276 and 277. On left fore-arm.

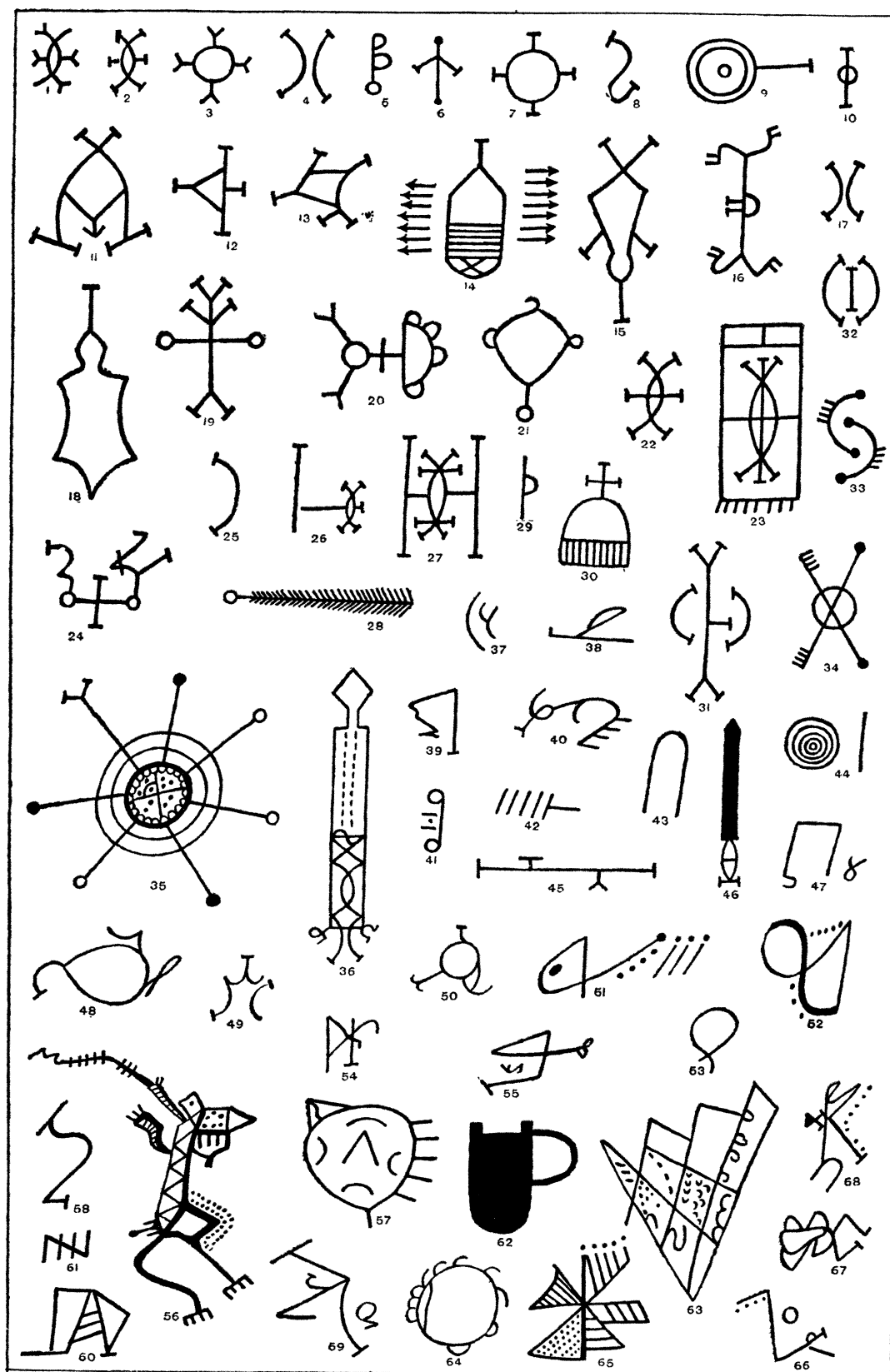
278. On right thigh.

279 to 281. On calf of left leg.

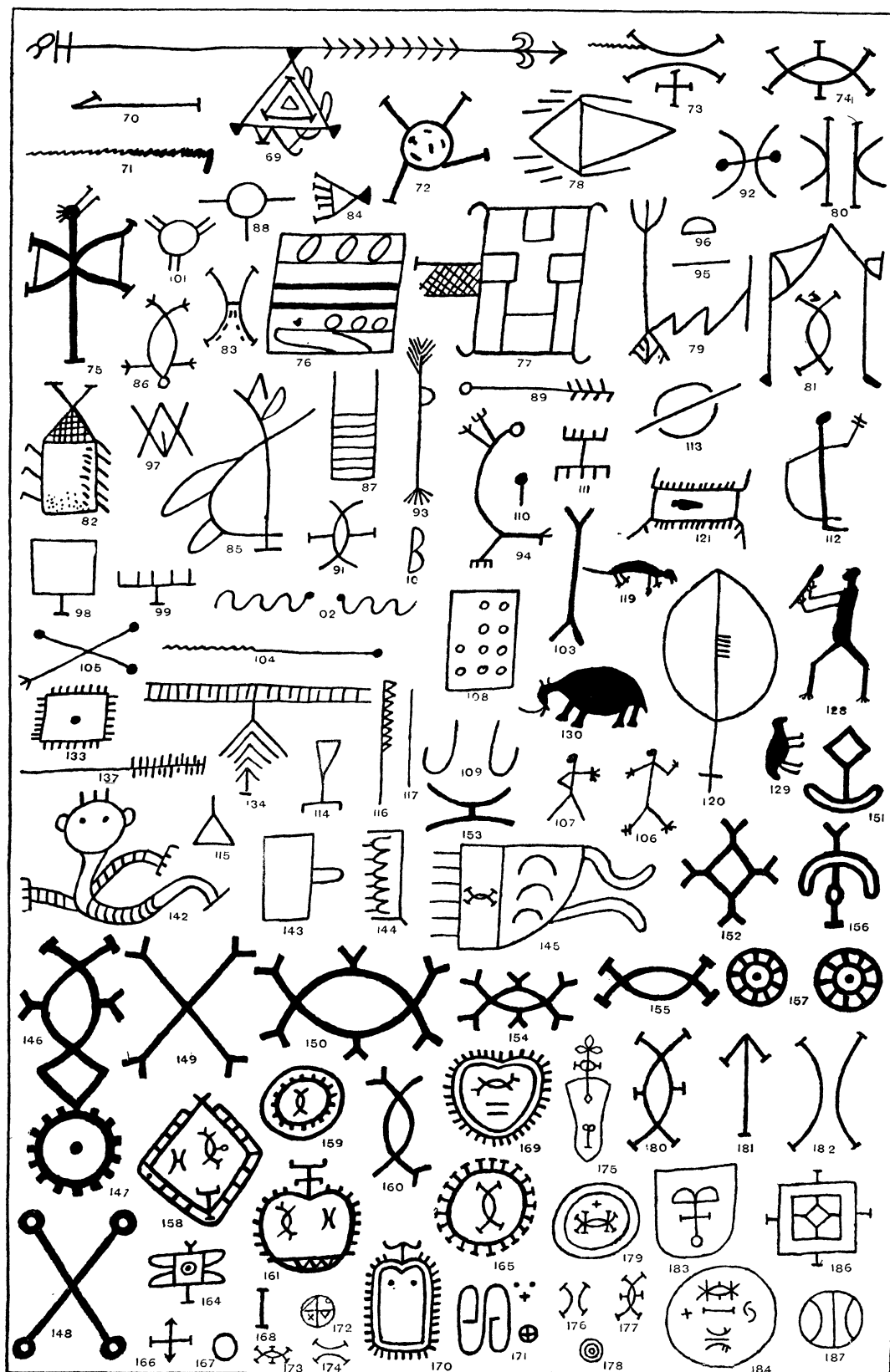
INDEM. (OBUBRA DISTRICT.)

282. "Emang," a brass symbol of authority belonging to a powerful chief.
On right breast of Kandem, an Indem woman.

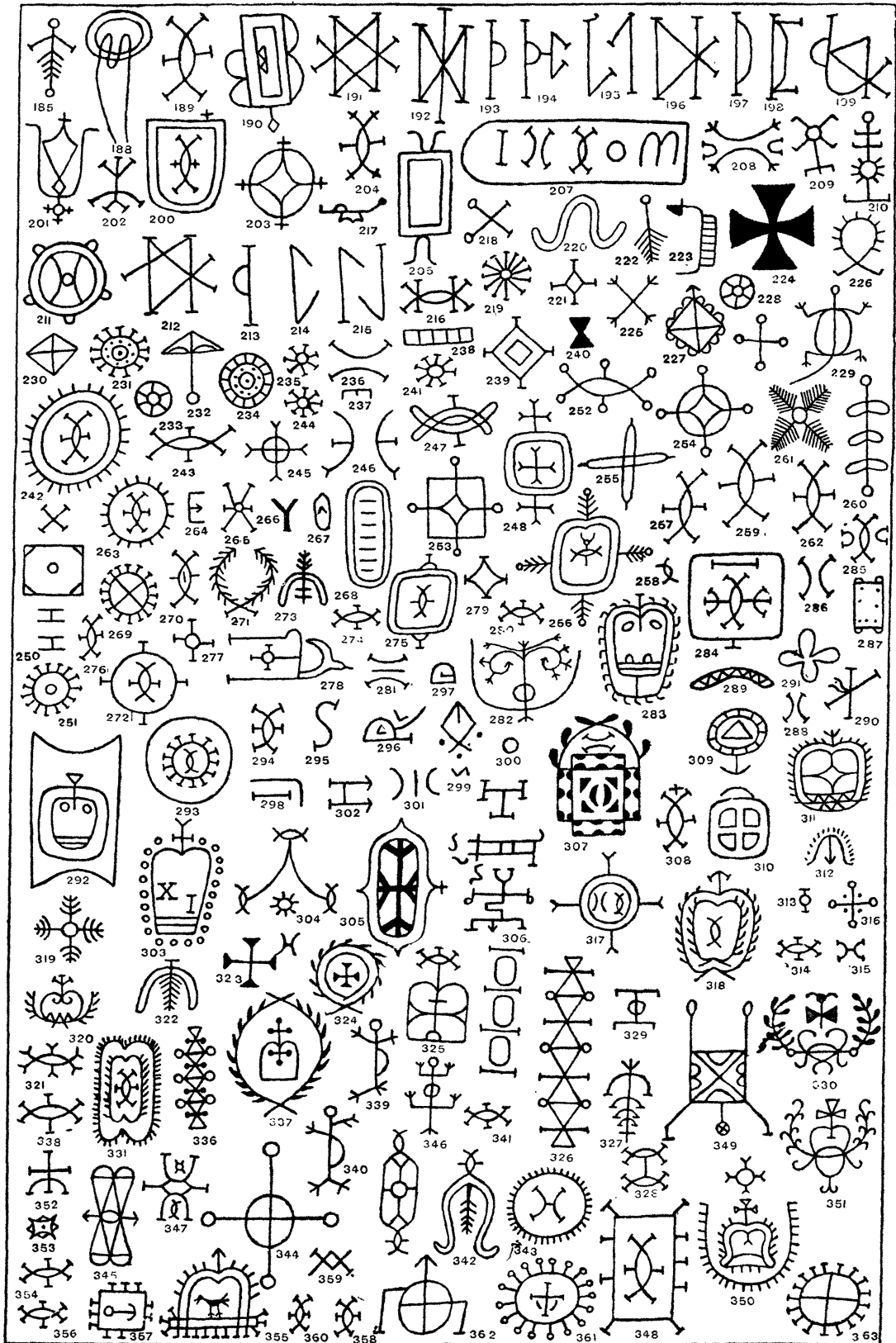
283. "Epupu," an earthenware pot with decorations. On left breast.



FURTHER NOTES ON 'NSIBIDI SIGNS.



FURTHER NOTES ON 'NSIBIDI SIGNS.



FURTHER NOTES ON 'NSIBIDI SIGNS.