Development of Emblems for Longevity for County Governments in Kenya

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ABSTRACT
The emergence of county governments in Kenya has seen the development of emblems for each county. These emblems exhibit the spirit of the counties, however they cannot be said to be successful because they are not well executed, do not adhere to the principles of heraldry and are not registered. A coat of arms, logo or emblem, can fail in its object if its spirit is not shared, when the design elements are not well executed and do not communicate. Heraldry, is a symbolic language used by institutions as an embodiment of their heritage, achievements and aspirations. The design typically has a shield, helmet and crest and may include other things. Once registered, the herald has authority. Countries without heraldic authorities to grant arms, usually invoke copyright laws to protect and coat of arms, emblems and logos that serve similar purpose. In Africa, the Egyptian pharaohs and Adinkra community for example, were identified by symbols that are heraldic. In Kenya, some of the common symbols or imagery that have been applied include animals, vegetation and people. Using a sample of 5 counties this paper analyses the emblem and the extent to which they serve their heraldic and design functions. The paper is mainly qualitative and the findings are presented under specific headings . It is proposed that guidelines or policy be developed to align the county emblems.

Key words: Design, Coat of arms, emblems, heraldry, county governments.

INTRODUCTION

An emblem is a visual identity that expresses certain elements of communication between persons and communities in a specific manner. It is a graphic representation of elements held together in a specific style that is fashioned around the principles of heraldry. The elements include drawings, colour, texture, artefacts, environmental aspects such as mountains, water or vegetation. Emblems, once developed are registered within their jurisdictions for protection and also to guard against duplication and misuse. Related to emblems are coat of arms and logos. The Coat of arms bears more authority while logos carry much less authority.

There are several legal provisions in the Laws of Kenya that provide guidelines for the use, development and design of Coat of Arms. These include the College of Arms act of 1968, the Act No. 2 of 2002 and the Emblems and Names Act (CAP 99) of 2012. The 2012 Act is, "An Act of Parliament to prevent the improper use of the National Flag and of certain emblems, names, words and likenesses for professional and commercial purposes, and to prohibit the display of certain flags." All the counties adopted this Act as part of recognition of their new status as government with authority.

In South Africa, a provincial Coat of arms is the highest visual symbol of a province that operates very much like the Kenya county governments except that there are 9 provinces unlike the 47 counties in Kenya. The design and development of their coat of arms, badges, emblems and other accessories followed a process that involved several institutions and stakeholders after which the designs were registered and protected under the Heraldry (Act No. 18 of 1962). The act defines 'Coat of Arms' as '...any object or figure being a symbolic representation displayed in colours on a shield in conformity with the principles and rules of Heraldry, with or without a crown, helmet, crest, mantling supporters, motto or other accessories.' In the absence of a Coat of Arms, then there is reference of emblems, that include 'pennant, gonfalon, decoration, medal, seal, insignia of rank, any official rank...or kindred symbolic representation,' (National and Provincial Symbols, South Africa). Detail of the Coat of arms are registered. 'Damages and misuse of registered heraldic representations, names, special names for uniforms' and penalties that arise from misuse are spelt out in the Act.

The design process for example, in Gauteng Province in South Africa involved the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology requesting for ideas from the general public. With additional input from the Cabinet, a brief was drafted and sent to a few agencies identified through the Design South Africa. The ideas were presented to the Cabinet who settled on one. The final Coat of Arms that was registered is full of meaning from the blue shield, to the gold colour and cornet. Two lions support the shield, and on the banner below is the motto, 'Unity in Diversity.' It may be noted that the name of the province is not part of the Coat of arms as can be seen in Figure 1.
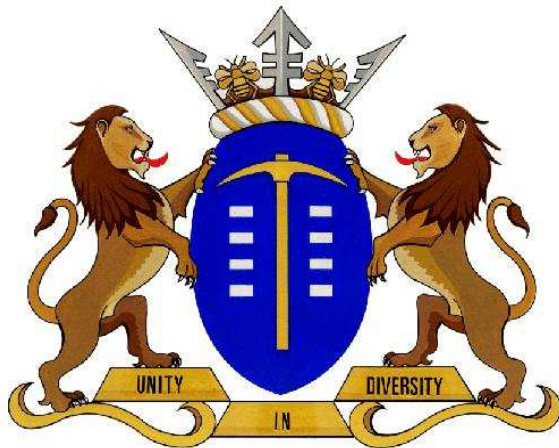

Figure 1: Gauteng Province Coat of arms

Institutions involved in the design process for Guateng Province, for example, included the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, the Cabinet, the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) and the Design South Africa and professional designers.

The research questions

For the development of county emblems in Kenya, several approaches may have been used, however, the emblems are not serving their purpose effectively; do not adhere to design principles and heraldic principles. Research has not been undertaken to establish the most appropriate development process that guarantees acceptable Coat of arms. This paper attempts to answer the questions below:

What was considered in the design and development of the emblems?
Were there any policy guidelines provided for the design and development of the emblems?
Were design professionals or institutions involved in the design and development of the emblems?
Are the Coats of arms registered and grant issued by the College of arms?

METHODOLOGY

This paper is an exploratory exposition that attempts to highlight the process of design and development of Coat of arms that can serve multiple purposes. The author is informed by several years of professional design practice, research and training. The paper responds to voices of dissent that are rising against some of the emblems that have been developed for the counties. data was collected mainly using secondary sources. However, discussions with professional designers drawn from alumni of the universities in Kenya was held. They are also members of Design Kenya Society that is one of the professional design associations in Kenya that aims to promote professional practice and lobbies for more recognition of design as a key driver for economic growth.

DISCUSSIONS

The Kenya Government Coat of arms

With the promulgation of the new constitution in 2010 and the creation of 47 county governments, many of them sought to hurriedly develop visual identities that used the National coat of arms or emblem (Figure 2) as a reference point with the two lions, flag in the middle and a *motto* at the base. Up to that time, the Government Printers were the only authorised printers for all government documents. The use of one appointed printer ensured the reproduction and adherence to certain guidelines on use of Coat of arms. However, this monopoly was revoked to allow other business entities benefit from government printing tenders. As a result, it was noted that, "What has suffered badly since, is the misapplication of usage guidelines. Perhaps the worst thing that design can bring to an official document, is to make it unofficial," (ARK, http://arkafrica.com). To illustrate the misapplication, the ARK agency put the two representations side by side (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Two presentations of the coat of arms.

The Coat of arms on the right side uses the heraldic lion representation with flamed tails. On the left is the "African" lion version with black manes and clawed feet. The colour hues is also markedly different whereas on the right, the lions are more golden in colour and the green is "richer" and the background at the base is more red, on the left, there is a more pronounced yellow, a paler green and the background at the base is brown. These flaws in design amount to misrepresentation. Pantone Colour chart, a global colour reference library, provides a coded guide for the over 5,000 colours for standardized colour reproduction. Each colour has a code for example PANTONE 18-3838 Ultra Violet (www.pantone-colours.com) that has been declared the colour of the year 2018. It may be noted that the county emblems have little consideration for colours and colour combinations. Those that have registered Coat of arms, have not registered the colours according to the pantone range. The registration in this case is important because it guides designers and printers during reproduction and representation.

The ARK, a branding company, proceeded to provide an accurate copy of the Kenya Coat of arms for public use that "allows the rich and meaningful detail of the elements of the Coat of arms" for use in print and digital applications. One major element that ARK corrected was the two lions from the heraldic lions to the African lions. The misapplication of the National Coat of arms, is one of the signs of derision of design principles. ARK decried that, "the misrepresentation of the Coat of arms - the state's logo, so to speak – reflects badly on us. It results in diluting the authority of the agency or office involved, and risks ending up as comic fodder in the annals of social media. We feel that it is our patriotic duty to provide a high quality vector format for both applications of the Coat of arms." Although the ARK has provided the accurate Coat of arms as seen in Figure 3 free in various versions for reproduction, mistakes and misrepresentations are common.
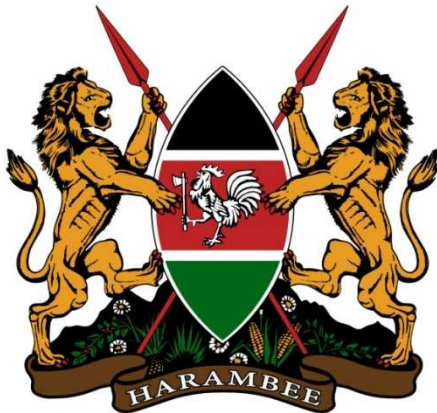
Figure 3: The Kenya Government coat of arms

This paper takes the view that the Kenya counties find themselves caught in this weak design foundation for the development of their Coats of arms and as a result most of them do not meet the good design threshold.

Coat of arms are designed and fashioned around heraldry principles of design that can be traced back to the 15th Century Europe. Heraldry, is a symbolic language used by institutions as an embodiment of their heritage, achievements and aspirations. Heraldry, "is a broad term, encompassing the design, display, and study of armorial bearings" (Wikipedia, Coat of arms). Armorial is an illustration of heraldic achievement, also referred to as the "Coat of arms" or symbol of sovereignty as more commonly used today. The design typically would feature "a shield, helmet and crest, together with any accompanying devices, such as supporters, badges, heraldic banners and mottoes" (Wikipedia, Coat of arms).

Armorial Bearings

The armorial bearings on the Kenya Coat of arms include an African shield that has two sharp ends (top and bottom) accompanied by two crossing spears. It also borrowed heavily from tribal symbols by introducing a cockerel. The motto of the independent Kenya *"Harambee"* was introduced to symbolize the unity of purpose that was needed to develop the newly independent Kenya. The coat of arms, adhered to the heraldic principles and was duly registered. The Coat of arms may be used by Government ministries and agencies, statutory and non-statutory authorities, the parliament, law courts and tribunals. However, ARK agency notes that, few of these agencies pay attention to the identity symbol, and there is no provision to designers of tangible stuff to work with in the form of guidelines. As a result there is misuse and abuse of the instruments. The ARK gave an example of misspelling and slanted orientation of the Coat of arms. Visual elements and legal instruments of the country such as the map have been represented slanted in orientation by government agencies, in some instances the map is split (see Figure 5).

Figure 4: Coast Water Services Board

Consultation with specific agencies or stakeholders such as design institutions or professionals. This can be seen in the case of Gauteng province of South Africa. They contacted ten design agencies for expert input and advice before completion and registration of their Coat of arms.

Figure 5: National Irrigation Board logo

The National Irrigation Board use a logo that depicts the country split into two with a water drop in the middle (see Figure 5). It is a depiction of the irrigation process. Although it has achieved a strong graphic representation, it also portrays an equally strong communication of a "divided" country (dysfunctional). Chapter 99 of the laws of Kenya articulates the use of national Flag, Emblems and Names Act. The act is silent or assuming on the image of the map of Kenya and boundaries. For this reason, logos like that of Coast Water that depict the country Kenya in this form may be contravening a law or if not, then there is a need for a law to prevent this form of visualization that misrepresents the country.

Design principles applied

Graphic elements include the use of or combination of form, texture, layout, colour, symbols and lines. the resulting emblem or Coat of arms should exhibit design principles and these include aesthetics, harmony and balance. In the process, it is expected that the outcome will be communicating. To illustrate this point we can reference the Nike logo' designed in 1971, by Carolyn Davidson, a graphic design student by then. It is a "simple" tick is full of meaning. In Greek mythology, Nike is the Winged Goddess of Victory. The mythology associations for the brand Nike are flight, victory and speed." (www.magneticstate.com).

The second example is the Rio Olympic logo that was designed in 2016 by Tatil Design de Ideias and Dalton Maag focused on the people of Brazil, the host country, Gelli, the creative director said, "the logo was not designed for designers, but for everybody in the world, it represents Brazil's energy and how we receive people," (McCue, 2016). Gelli explained that the curves in the logo were from the mountains in Rio de Janeiro, the infiti design is iconic and has good meaning in all the cultures, and with an intended 3-D essence. On the colour, Gelli explained that Rio is a very colourful city and culture, the colours connected with their nature, green for the nearby forest (Tijuca Forest), blue for the ocean that inspires them, and yellow/orange from the warm temperature. The design explored 3-dimensional form in a 2-dimensional object and results in an animated logo that is "alive".

Figure 6: The Rio 2016 Olympic logo created by Tatil Design
Source: 99u.com

Abstraction

Abstraction is used in design when manipulating images and obscuring realistic representation as a means of graphic communication. Abstraction typically starts with a 'known' realism and

progresses into abstract representation. This popular art form can be traced to the Cubist period with famous artists such as Picasso. In the Nike logo in Figure 6, visual elements are reduced to basic non-representational non-realistic images through abstraction. The angle of the stroke, the thinning of the stroke and the thickness of the stroke converge to create the Nike logo. The known reality in the Rio logo of mountains, and ocean is abstracted into three 'simpler' forms floating in bliss. Distorted proportion is also closely associated with abstraction. An example of this is where, insects are illustrated as larger than human beings or human beings are made to be larger than buildings.

Aesthetics

Aesthetics is important to design communication because it can define style and identity. It is diverse and each culture has rules and traditions that define the material, style, and scale of application. In application, one aesthetic may be considered different from another aesthetic by another person. This is because judgement and appeal is subjective and maybe influenced by exposure, culture and environments. However, several products, arts and environments have been able to achieve broad acceptance across cultures as aesthetic. It can also be said that increased exposure and cultural interaction has expanded the scope of acceptance of aesthetic. The more typical African aesthetic may refer to enchanting land and seascapes, environments, wilderness, green and floral kaleidoscope of colours, irregular and sinuous lines and sculpted forms for example, the clawed lion or bird feet on furniture. Community chiefs and leaders had their own sets of symbols understood by the clan and community.

Heraldic inference between the western heraldry and African heraldry can be seen in Egyptian pharaohs such as King Tutankhamen (1341 BC - 1323 BC), fondly referred to as King Tut, whose artefacts influenced the Art Deco movement and continues to influence global design trends. The young pharaoh wore a royal cobra headdress (URAEUS) and held a shepherds crook and flail (symbols of royalty). These were symbols of supreme power in Egypt. On the golden adornment in which the mummified body of King Tut was found, were Egyptian hieroglyphic writings. The discovery of King Tut's tomb shed a lot of light on African symbolism.

Another graphic example of African symbolism can be seen in the Adinkra symbols of Ghana. Each of the symbols, origin, meaning, use and method of production or reproduction were embedded in the traditions of the Ashanti. The symbols have been broadly applied to jewellery, architecture, fashion, interiors and furniture.

The Coat of arms development by counties in Kenya

For the development of county Coat of arms in Kenya, some counties opted to run competitions to identify appropriate emblems, others looked inwards to inherent local talent. Donna Pido, a design professional in Kenya, gives examples of Kilifi and Tana River counties Coat of arms as more successful (Pido, 2017). The two are fashioned around the European heraldic principles (see Figure 7).
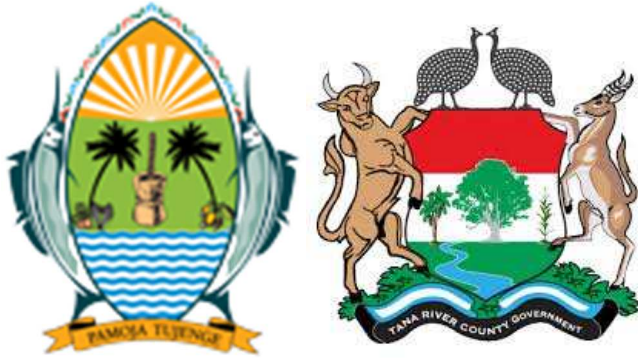
Figure 7 Kilifi county and Tana River county Coat of arms

Some counties advertised for design proposals in the media. The advertisements however did not provide enough guidance for effective design and development. Some advertisements excluded individuals and groups who may have made better contribution to the design. For example, Kakamega county advert specified that the designer must be a resident of Kakamega and they could only submit one design each. The advertisements sometimes restricted the designs to come from specific interest groups within the counties (such as youth) and they excluded some institutions such as universities and they did not provide enough guidance on the armorial bearings.

It is also thought that many of the counties were rushed to develop the Coat of arms. In 2011 (a few months after the creation of the counties), the then Attorney general, urged the counties to urgently develop their Coats of arms as, "The use of Coat of Arms, especially in the disciplined forces and churches, serves as a sense of recognition, pride, belonging and an encouragement of a lifestyle based on honour and recognition of the responsibility and service to others," (Wako, 2011).

Figure 8: Nandi County Coat of arms

Nandi County referenced the National Coat of arms in their design. The armorial bearings are similar for example the symmetrical balance, shield and lion, except that one lion is replaced with a Nandi warrior. The Nandi warrior is historically significant in the history of the Nandi people. The other visual elements in the design are the milk gourd, cow and maize and tea that symbolize farming. Green is a dominant colour probably because farming is the major economic activity. The lion is rendered in two dimension while the warrior has a more realistic rendering. The warrior is holding a shield that is barely visible and a spear. In a departure from the National Coat of arms design, the 'Nandi County' is clearly written in bold on a banner as the header in the emblem. At the base is 'Nandi gaa Kaburwo' which serves as the motto in the heraldic principles. The warrior is the weakest aspect of the emblem because of the grey colour and the detail that the designer tried to capture such as the facial expressions. The black outline on the bigger shield also 'over power' the thinner lines on the warrior in visual weight.

Many counties have depicted farming activities and livestock because, in general Kenya is an agricultural country. Other animals that have been depicted include camels, chickens, goats and sheep. Tea and coffee are found in some parts of the county and they are also depicted in their emblems.

Figure 9: Trans Nzoia county Coat of arms

Trans Nzoia county Coat of arms (Figure 9) has a visually symmetrical arrangement and can be said to have referenced heraldic principles. Two antelopes anchor the shield very much like the lions anchor the shield in the National Coat of arms. Within the shield, the armorial bearings that represent the economic activities of the county are placed. The Nandi county Coat of arms is a stronger and more calculated visual representation because they have kept fewer images or elements, a cow, *"mursik"* (sour milk)*,* grain and an indigenous musical instrument. The choice and contrast in colours in the Trans Nzoia Coat of arms is more appealing than the Nandi Coat of arms colours that are very strong. The Trans Nzoia county with the text reversed out of a soft tan colour, makes it less visually strong but more restful and stable and contemporary. When reduced further, the words may not be legible. Like the Nandi emblem, the name of the county is on the top banner and motto at the base. The Coat of arms is contained within a black border line.

West Pokot county have all the economic and livelihood activities represented in their Coat of

arms. The *motto* is in the form of a pronounced word, "government" followed by a whole sentence, "Transforming lives through sustainable development." ideally, that sentence should not be part of the Coat of arms (See Figure 10).

Figure 10: West Pokot coat of arms

When you give design considerations for reducibility and legibility then the Coat of arms will lose clarity and become a blur. There is an acceptable level of clarity of elements or armorial bearings and the sentence cannot serve the purpose well in that regard.

Figure 11: Baringo County Coat of arms

Baringo county armorial bearings include two revered animals namely the ostrich and rare kudu antelope anchoring a shield. At their feet is a Turkana stool/headrest and a milk gourd. It does not have too many elements or features, however, the proportions are disturbing (Figure 11). The ostrich and antelope are much larger than in proportion to the shield and the other elements. The representation of the ostrich and antelope are good, however the same cannot be said of the headrest and gourd that are placed against the green backdrop. The map of the county is placed in the middle of the shield. Unlike Nandi and Trans Nzoia, Baringo County Government is on the base banner, where the *motto* would have been.

Figure 12: Turkana county emblem

The Turkana county emblem has taken the form of a work of art, depicting a man and woman, the 'cradle of mankind' imagery, mountain, camel among other things (Figure 12). Replacing the shield is a cloak that is typically worn by women. The motto at the base of the banner, 'pamoja tujijenge', is hand written. Unlike the other counties, Turkana county is not written on the emblem. So, whereas, detail is good, a graphic representation is more desirable for purpose of the emblem. The tip of the walking stick held by the woman is surprisingly close to the face a situation that could be sorted by graphic representation. This also includes abstract representation and block colours that are easily distinguishable away from the grey scale drawing. The images in the middle section below the camel are too small and crowded thus they cannot serve their purpose well. At this stage of devolution, maybe it is important to have the name of the county as part of the emblem.

Machakos county, boasts an urban populace partly because of its closeness to Nairobi County that is the economic hub of the country. Much like the Turkana County emblem, "Machakos County" is not stated on the Coat of arms or emblem. It has an assortment of armorial bearings that includes a cow, ostrich feathers, Akamba traditional bows and arrows, a *moran* knife, a cow horn among other things (Figure 13). An attempt was made at maintaining symmetrical balance although the bearings appear too busy in their visual rendering. The *motto* banner is written in Kamba dialect, 'Kyaa kimwe kiyuaa ndaa.'

Figure 13: Machakos county Coat of arms

The text is not well executed, it looks handwritten. The border also is not well executed. The base of the Coat of arms has several technical flaws apart from the border line. The spear heads sticking out at the two ends do not fit well into the Coat of arms. The cow atop the shield is not appropriate. It would be expected that an animal such as the cow would have its feet on the ground. Pido commented that, "Machakos county has digitally distorted the image of a European shield, placed too many elements on it and has manipulated images of what look like ostrich feathers in a way that makes them unrecognizable."

Design observation and recommendations

From this brief presentation of county Coat of arms, it can be seen that several design observations can be made. The inspiration for the design in most of the Coat of arms is good because they draw from indigenous culture, environment and their individual diversity.

Most of the counties did not have *access* to the much needed design expertise that would have assisted in the arrangement of the armorial bearings, consideration of heraldic principles and design principles. It would have ensured the text is well rendered and arranged.

There is need for *consistency* in the basic design principles for the Coat of arms. This should include the inclusion or exclusion of the name of the counties within the Coat of arms. The placement of the name if considered needs to be defined so that the name of the county is not made to look like it is the *motto* or that the vision is part of the Coat of arms.

For purpose of *reduction and reproduction*, colours used within the Coat of arms need to be clean, clear and reproducible. Reference to Pantone colour range is necessary for reference and consistency in reproduction.

Arrangement of armorial bearings within the Coat of arms, needs professional design input before registration. This may involve manipulation and abstraction of elements so that the Coat of arms is aesthetic and in harmony.

The *advertisements* for the provision of design for Coats of arms were biased and did not favour some groups who may have made better contribution to the design. The advertisements need to be better developed with the focus on the effectiveness of the Coat of arms.

The general *technical execution* of the Coats of arms is not acceptable. There are counties that have pictorial renderings of various features as their armorial bearings. Some of them have elevated paintings into armorial bearings. The typefaces and text used are not well executed.

Poor or inadequate *manipulation* of graphic elements resulted in the Coat of arms looking more like emblems and logos and thus not serving their purpose. The emblems are not ready to be escalated into heraldic symbols that can be registered as Coat of arms.

The *College of arms* and other relevant government institutions need to establish minimum standards for the development of Coat of arms and related visual elements before registration.

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