

# Re: Invention of the Alphabet

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*Source:* <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2005-08/msg00140.html>

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- *From:* Lee Sau Dan <[danlee@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:danlee@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)>
  - *Date:* 01 Aug 2005 23:25:12 +0800
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>>>> "Harlan" == Harlan Messinger <[hmessinger.removethis@xxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:hmessinger.removethis@xxxxxxxxxxx)> writes:

>>> Do you have any trouble reading Thai or Chinese? No word  
>>> divisions in either script. -- Peter T. Daniels  
>>> [grammatim@xxxxxxx](mailto:grammatim@xxxxxxx)  
>> Am I misunderstanding you? Thai "script" may very well have no  
>> word divisions, but how can you say the same for Chinese? Every  
>> word has its own character

Harlan> That's a misconception. Many words in Chinese consist of  
Harlan> multiple syllables/characters, such as Chong1guo2, the  
Harlan> name for China,

Aren't Chong1 and guo2 themselves root-words? It's comparable to  
"United Kingdom". Two words used together to refer to something  
specific. Is "United Kingdom" one word? 2 words?

Harlan> or ci2dian3, a word for "dictionary",

Isn't <ci2> a word? Isn't <dian3> a word? <ci2dian3> is just a  
compound. Comparable to English "word list". Is "word list" one  
word, or two?

Harlan> or fu2wu4yuan2, a word meaning "waiter".

Again, just a compound of 3 root words. Compare that with "bus driver  
license". Is that one word? 3 words? 2 words? or what?

And English doesn't mark the boundary of "book store", "bus fare",  
"washing machine" "train station", etc. with other expressions before  
or after them. How is Chinese that different? (BTW, is "washing  
machine" one word or two words? What are the criteria?)

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• **Follow-Ups:**

- ◆ **Re: Invention of the Alphabet**  
    ◇ From: Harlan Messinger
- ◆ **Re: Invention of the Alphabet**  
    ◇ From: Peter T. Daniels

• **References:**

- ◆ **Invention of the Alphabet**  
    ◇ From: Dennis
- ◆ **Re: Invention of the Alphabet**  
    ◇ From: Peter T. Daniels
- ◆ **Re: Invention of the Alphabet**  
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- ◆ **Re: Invention of the Alphabet**  
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