

Re: intrinsic advantage of Latin alphabet over bopomofo (for Chinese)??

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- *From:* phoglund@xxxxxx
 - *Date:* 4 Mar 2007 12:14:12 -0800
-

Peter T. Daniels wrote:

On Mar 4, 11:47 am, phogl...@xxxxxx wrote:

Peter T. Daniels wrote:

On Mar 4, 5:53 am, phogl...@xxxxxx wrote:

Herman Rubin wrote:

I do not know if much larger alphabets than the Latin one have been successfully placed on typewriters.

As I am supposed to learn Amharic one of these days, I wonder how a typewriter would handle fidal, i.e. the Amharic syllabary.

Olympia manufactured an Amharic typewriter; its keyboard layout is included in the catalog reproduced in the back of Beeching's *Century of the Typewriter*. Have you not noticed that there is a considerable amount of regularity in the composition of the characters?

Of course there is. As I understand the idea, it is somewhere between a pure syllabary and an Arabic-like system, where (short) vowels are written (if at all) by adding diacritics. In the Amharic writing system, there are no diacritics, but rather modifications of the basic

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letter forms (like, adding a hook on the right side, or shortening a branch on the left side).

Actually,
the whole thing – I mean fidal – looks
terribly crude and unreadable
to me.

Haven't you learned your lesson _yet_ about broadcasting
bigoted
statements here?

You are the only bigot here. I am familiar with several alphabets, and they all have their shortcomings. Arabic alphabet is excellent for Semitic languages, but it is hardly bigoted to say that a more vowel-friendly writing system would suit better for, say, Iranian languages.

Funny, the Iranians have never felt that way.

AFAIK some Kurds do use the Latin alphabet for their language, which is unmistakably Iranian. And there are Latinization schemes for Farsi, too.

Even though the Avestan alphabet was available to them several centuries before the Arabic script.

It certainly was, but if I am not very much mistaken, Middle Persian (Pahlavi) used a script that represented vowels at least as inadequately as the Arabic alphabet.

Cyrillic alphabet is very good for Russian, but it is tiring to read.

Thanks to uninspired typographers.

Just for this once, I completely agree with you.

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Georgian alphabet is otherwise great, but it does not distinguish upper- from lower-case letters, which in my opinion reduces readability.

Hardly any of the world's writing systems distinguish majuscules and minuscules.

It might be my natural Latin bias, yes.

Javanese has an interesting alternative.

Javanese? If I am not very much mistaken, they had a special set of characters for writing important proper names.

I would prefer to write Amharic in the Arabic alphabet.

Even Ethiopian Muslims don't use an Arabic-derived script.

Well, I guess I'd better learn the fidal then and stop complaining. There are lots of calligraphy books for learning to write Arabic, but I have failed to find any for Amharic. Probably calligraphy is not their cup of tea?

It looks more elegant and is easier to read, and I think it would be no problem to modify the Arabic alphabet for use in Amharic. But of course, for saying that you will call me a crypto-Muslim fundamentalist bigot.

No, your bigotry is exposed by such words as "crude," "unreadable," and non-"elegant."

People have these things called aesthetic preferences, and I very much prefer the Arabic alphabet – for aesthetic reasons. But then I have always been fascinated by calligraphy.

Are you not aware that the Ethiopic script was the very first offshoot of the West Semitic "alphabet" to include complete and consistent vowel notation? And that it has been in use in virtually unaltered form for more than 1750 years — a claim that no other script can

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make!

Well, of course I might be plain wrong, and probably I just need more practice in order to appreciate the script aesthetically.

Has it been directly computerized from manuscript characters, or something?

Did you bother to investigate? Not long ago I downloaded a completely serviceable Amharic font and IME, from a website gathering links to all sorts of Unicode-related fonts. Type C and then V, and the correct letter appears.

<http://www.alanwood.net/unicode/index.html>

Thank you. I'll have a look at that.