

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

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- *From:* "Peter T. Daniels" <[grammatim@xxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:grammatim@xxxxxxxxxxxxx)>
  - *Date:* 6 Mar 2007 12:42:07 -0800
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On Mar 6, 12:55 pm, phogl...@xxxxxx wrote:

On 6 maalis, 16:22, "Peter T. Daniels" <[gramma...@xxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:gramma...@xxxxxxxxxxxxx)> wrote:

On Mar 5, 11:31 am, phogl...@xxxxxx wrote:

On 5 maalis, 17:34, "Peter T. Daniels" <[gramma...@xxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:gramma...@xxxxxxxxxxxxx)> wrote:

I am not trying to score points, as you usually are. I am only pointing out a fact that might be significant.

"Prove a point" and "make a point" have nothing to do with "scoring a point."

I am not entirely convinced that you know the difference yourself.

I've been speaking the language for nearly 55 years. You obviously haven't.

You are quite right – I have spoken English habitually only during my seven-months stay in Ireland some eight years ago. I have always found English more like a code than a language – I read books in it, but I

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

don't really speak it. It is not a "language" for me, in the sense that Irish, German, Swedish, or Amharic for that matter, is a language. English is a necessary evil; but if you acquire a real Language, you have accomplished something.

Shakespeare.

Need I go any further?

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

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

as  
inadequately  
as  
the  
Arabic  
alphabet.

Oh, don't  
even go  
there. I  
doubt you  
have the  
slightest  
idea how  
Pahlavi  
represents  
the Iranian  
languages it  
was used  
for.

You might be correct,  
because my knowledge of  
Pahlavi is limited to  
seeing the alphabet a couple  
of times in reference works.  
It is not a  
very widely known script  
after all.

Read Skjaervo's account in WWS. It's not  
exactly transparent, but he  
doesn't seem able to write for the  
non-specialist. But there really  
isn't anyone else who can write on these  
subjects at all —  
fortunately (I suppose), he seems never to  
turn down an invitation to  
contribute to a reference work.

I guess I need to read it, then.

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

You mean, you've been pontificating about Pahlavi without having learned anything about it?

I do not think I have been "pontificating" about anything. I have some idea of Pahlavi, and that is all there is to it – I gladly leave the pontificating part to you, if you have something interesting to say, or teach, about Pahlavi. I take it however that you are more keen on poking fun at other people's ignorance than on disseminating knowledge.

What would you like me to do, post the text of Skjaervo's article here (minus the examples, of course)? I don't think the copyright owner (Oxford University Press) would appreciate that.

I doubt I'll ever learn Middle Persian, but Modern Persian is one of the languages I have started years ago but never quite got on with them. (Irish used to be one, too.)

I see. However, I would appreciate an elementary guidebook to writing Amharic, which would show in what order the lines should be drawn.

Monica Devens showed me on a napkin in 5 minutes one day. Start at the top left. See WWS p. 575.

At the top left? I'll have a go at it. Am I supposed to use a paintbrush, or will a normal biro pen do the job?

You're "supposed" to use a pen. Do you know what a "paintbrush" is? Do you suppose that the brush used for writing Chinese resembles a "paintbrush" in anything other than having bristles mounted in a handle?

I do not suppose anything, and I know "paintbrush" is probably not the

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correct English word. The appearance of the characters does leave the impression that the desired forms are only attainable by using some kind of special calligraphic instrument.

It's called a "pen." Probably a reed pen.

Have you never even had any training in using a broadedge pen?

I am not entirely sure if the instrument I use for writing Irish Gaelic script and German Black Letters is called a broadedge pen in English. Would you be so kind as to give me a description of a "broadedge pen"?

Its nib has a broad edge rather than a point. It can meet the paper at any angle with respect to the baseline from 0 to 90 degrees. For italic, the angle is typically 45 deg. For roman, 30 deg. For Irish uncials and half-uncials, 10 deg. for blackletter, 20 deg. or so. For Ethiopic, probably close to 0 deg.

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

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

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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.

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

But  
then  
I  
have  
always  
been  
fascinated  
by  
calligraphy.

"Crude" and  
"unreadable"  
are not  
aesthetic  
judgments.

Please do not try to  
intimidate me. You know I  
am not afraid of you  
anymore.—

Oh, you mean you don't know the meanings  
of the words "crude" and  
"unreadable"? Then you shouldn't be using  
them.

Okay. Let's make it "difficult to read for the untrained eye"

Um, wouldn't that apply to any script in the world that you haven't  
been "trained" in?

Not exactly. I am about as untrained in reading Georgian letters as in  
reading Ethiopian writing, but I can guarantee that I find Georgian  
letters more readable at this stage.

How unique of you.

BTW, Ethiopic script is often seen to be very similar to Armenian  
script, even to the extent that it has been attributed to Armenian

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

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missionaries, but since there is no resemblance in sound between similar-looking letters, that makes no sense.

and  
"aesthetically somewhat less pleasing than Arabic  
calligraphy". Happy  
now?–

Chacun a son gout. There's no tradition of rendering Ethiopic texts unreadable for the sake of esthetic impression.

Calligraphy is not by definition the same as "rendering unreadable".–

Most Islamic calligraphy is not readily readable, and some resists all attempts at interpretation.

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