

Re: Ugaritic Affiliations

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2007-09/msg00235.html>

- *From:* "Richard Wordingham" <jrw0602@xxxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Sat, 08 Sep 2007 22:07:39 GMT
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"Peter T. Daniels" <grammatim@xxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

On Sep 8, 9:17 am, "Richard Wordingham" <jrw0...@xxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

"Peter T. Daniels" <gramma...@xxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

> On Sep 6, 6:55 pm, "Richard Wordingham" <jrw0...@xxxxxxxxxxxx>
wrote:

>> Digging around, it seems that there 31 characters representing 28
>> consonants – three for the glottal stop – 'a, 'i and 'u, and two for >> s^
>> (s
>> hacek), namely Unicode U+1038C UGARITIC LETTER SHIN, and a
form >> 'without
>> serpent' that is interchangeable with it. (I wouldn't bet on
>> interchangeability.)
> How many times have you been warned about using Unicode documents as
a
> source for any sort of information at all about writing systems?

Unicode documents are a pretty reliable source of ISO 10646 character
names,
which can be useful when there's uncertainty as to which character is meant.
These names are stable – perhaps too stable, as there are infamous examples
where names have been transposed compared to normal usage.

(Only to computer engineers and anyone else who might be in the thrall
of Unicode. To linguists, they usually look ridiculous, not least
because they use English values of the vowel-letters.)

Do you know a more convenient standard? Being a character list rather than a glyph list, it does have the
disadvantage that glyph variants are not covered, so that for neo-Assyrian, for example, one has to use to
supplementary tables, such as the alphabetically-ordered one at

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<http://www.sumerisches-glossar.de/download/SignListNeoAssyrian.pdf> .

- > There are 30, not 31, letters in the Ugaritic script, and they
- > represent the 27 letters of "Proto-Canaanite" plus two extra aleph
- > letters (when aleph is followed by i or by u) and an extra sibilant
- > not used in Semitic words.

Brian Colless, though prolific, has not attracted any adherents to his "decipherments" of, inter alia, Byblos hieroglyphs or the Wadi el-Hol inscriptions.

So, what is the status of this reported 31st letter? Glyph variant? I tried looking through the Unicode archives to see if there was any discussion of it, but I could find none. What does this form look like? Is the image shown at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ugaritic_script with the label aina correct? I see that the Wiki page has illegitimately assumed that it has an encoding in Unicode. There is at present not even a proposal to add it.

At first glance the image of the 31st letter does indeed appear to be the word divider. That seems to be a mistake, but I am looking for confirmation based on some understanding of the basis of this 31st letter.

Just one more reason not to bother with wikipedia!

Did you look, for instance, in WWS? or any Ugaritic grammar — Gordon, Segert, Sivan, Tropper magna, Tropper parva? or the Woodard encyclopedia, or the Hetzron volume?

This 31st letter is described as a 'new discovery by Brian Colless'. That renders silence on the part of 20th century texts uninformative. I don't know what the ASCII artwork 'o' is meant to represent – normal winkelhaken on the left plus reversed winkelhaken on the right? Normal SHIN with the left-hand wedge omitted? A pair of oblique wedges meeting at the bottom?

Peter Daniels wrote of Arabic and Ugaritic, 'Their consonant inventories are in fact identical'. What is the basis for equating SSU with Arabic dad? Or is it some other Ugaritic letter that is being equated with dad?

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Do we know what Mesopotamian cuneiform syllabograms were used for Ugaritic SSU in Hurrian? Frank Zeeb's report of Tropper's belief as to its phonetic significance and the account of Hurrian in WWS suggests that they were SA, SI and SU.

Who's Frank Zeeb?

Perhaps he'll tell us. Otherwise, we can only go by his publications.

Is the use of SA/SI/SU for third-s different from the cuneiform equivalents of the other s's?

What do you mean by the second-s? SHIN (a), SADE (c) or even THANNA (o)?

Perhaps I need to be more specific and say the Mitanni Hurrian syllabary. According to WWS, Hurrian had three sibilants, /s/, /f/ and /ts/. Syllable initially, /s/ was written using ZA/ZI/ZU as appropriate, /f/ was written using SHA/SHE/IGI/SHU as appropriate, and /ts/ was written SA/SI/SU as appropriate.

Now I don't know how Hurrian /s/ and /f/ were written in the Ugaritic script. I had naïvely been thinking they would be written using SAMKA and SHIN, possibly with ZETA for the voiced allophone of /s/. Is the graphic correspondence more complicated?

Richard.

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