

# Re: Ugaritic Affiliations

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*Source:* <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2007-09/msg00265.html>

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- *From:* "Peter T. Daniels" <[grammatim@xxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:grammatim@xxxxxxxxxxxxx)>
  - *Date:* Sun, 09 Sep 2007 22:37:40 -0700
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On Sep 9, 9:03 pm, "Richard Wordingham" <[jrw0...@xxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:jrw0...@xxxxxxxxxxxxx)> wrote:

"Peter T. Daniels" <[gramma...@xxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:gramma...@xxxxxxxxxxxxx)> wrote:

On Sep 9, 3:06 pm, "Richard Wordingham" <[jrw0...@xxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:jrw0...@xxxxxxxxxxxxx)> wrote:  
Unicode is very much a case of GIGO.

Hurling abuse from outside the computing industry does not help. Timely, reasoned arguments are needed.

It should have been done at least 15 years ago. Instead, untrained computer engineers bulled ahead with what they thought might be useful approaches.

Why should I need a licence? Ideally one should have similar tables for Hittite and Neo-Babylonian, and probably other stages.

Right, those are the only three "stages" you've ever heard of?

The Mesopotamian cuneiform repertoire in Unicode 5.0 is known to have significant coverage gaps for stages before Ur III, so I didn't think it was worth mentioning earlier stages. The Unicode charts represent the Ur III stage, with the ticklish problem that anything later should be projected back to an Ur III form.

It doesn't come in "stages." There were no analysts sitting down and deciding every 500 years or so what the inventory of cuneiform signs should look like.

2) It is possible to make an alphabetic order using sign shapes.

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I don't know what you mean. I've never discovered who first arranged a signlist according to the arrangement that's standard today (followed by von Soden, Labat, Borger, ..., with horizontals before angles before verticals), but it is neither the ancient order (which you'll find in the transcript of Syllabary A in WWS) nor the order used the first time someone assembled a cuneiform signlist (1807).

You've just demonstrated that you understood what I meant!

No. Any ordering by shape is completely arbitrary with no reason to favor it over any other. (The order of Chinese characters certainly seems completely arbitrary and isn't by shape, sound, meaning, or anything else.)

3) I know where

to find a list of signs, moreover, one in alphabetic order of sign shapes.

Regardless of whether it reflects any sort of epigraphic, philological, or linguistic reality!

So what convention are they working to then?

Who?

For Ur III forms one might hope to use the Unicode charts, though I don't doubt that the shapes of some of the signs, signs that are not attested (and don't exist) for Ur III, are Michael Everson's invention.

Oh, no, he's started meddling in cuneiform now, too???

He seems to steer clear of CJKV stuff.

Thank heaven for small favors? Does that mean he won't go near things

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that millions of people know about, but things that 50 people know about are fair game?

Why can't you use Nissen and Green's signlist, with the corrections from Steinkeller's review?

URL, please.

It is a BOOK. In a library. I'm sure Heimpel and Englund can set you straight. (If you don't know who they are, you have no business at all discussing the computerization of cuneiform.)

The 31st letter is clearly Colless's added 'sh'. I suspect the image in the Wiki page is derived by taking Colless's list, the 31 characters in the Ugaritic block of Unicode, putting 2 and 2 together, and making 5.

As opposed to going to ANY reliable source, such as a Ugaritic grammar.

What use is a grammar that predates 'Colless's discovery'? I'm not even sure that he actually claims any such discovery.

There IS NO discovery. There is NO reason to consider it for even a moment.

Everything I've seen, apart from the image on the wiki page, tells me that it is a variant of SHIN. I would not expect to see the two 'sh' letters in the same abecedary.

Since when are "variants" included in the list of letters in an alphabet?

When it is not clear that the variation is free when it is not conditioned.

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Eh? What other alternatives are there?

Practical systems may be even more forced to include variants, as with the 'long s' in the Roman alphabet or the special final letters in the Hebrew and Greek writing systems.

Those are clearly rule-governed conditioned variants (allographs).  
This Ugaritic invention is not.

I'm not sure how to quote an additional post, but the following post has been accessed using  
URL <http://groups.google.com/group/sci.lang/msg/8910eba34d128d67>:

A: On Sep 4, 11:30 pm, "Peter T. Daniels"  
<grammar...@xxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:  
A> On Sep 4, 3:47 pm, Yusuf B Gursev  
<y...@xxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:  
A> > On Sep 4, 7:53 am, "Peter T. Daniels"  
<grammar...@xxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

A> > > If you don't know how similar Ugaritic and Arabic are (their consonant inventories are in fact identical), then you have no business making  
A> > > any comments whatsoever touching on Semitic linguistics.

A> > according to my sources ugaritic has 3 non-emphatic sibilants but no  
A> > Dad.

A> You haven't consulted a Ugaritic grammar. Dad was marginal but had a  
A> letter.

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[Richard again]

Classical Arabic has 28 consonants. The Ugaritic script has  
28  
characters.

Correction: The Ugaritic distinguishes 28 consonants.

Just how little is known about what SSU represents.

IT DOES NOT REPRESENT ANYTHING IN THE UGARITIC  
LANGUAGE.

So do you withdraw your claim that Ugaritic and Arabic have the same  
consonant inventory? Do you still claim that Ugaritic had a 'dad'? If so,  
what letter was it written with? (My understanding is that Ugaritic SADE  
corresponds to both Arabic sad and dad etymologically.)

Look it up in a grammar of Proto–Semitic.

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