African Alphabets

LANGUAGE ID **47** LANGUAGE **FULANI** FULFULDE SCRIPT **LATIN**

LANGUAGE **BARIBA** SCRIPT **LATIN**

LANGUAGE **BAMILEKE** SCRIPT **LATIN**

AFRICAN LANGUAGES

Language IDs, names and alternate names

533	1	Adangme	Ga-Adangme-Krob
	3	Afar	Afaraf, Danakil, De
	5	Akan	Fanti, Fante, Mfant
	292	√Alur	Lur, Aloro, Alua, Alu
	10	• Amharic	Abyssinian, Ethiopia
		Balante	Balanta, Balant, Bala
	11		Alante, Frase
	12	Bamabara	Bamana, Bamanakan
	535	Bamileke	(Group)
		Bariba	Baatonu, Baatonun, B
			Baatombu, Baruba, Ba
	14	√Baule	Bogung, Bargawa, Bor
	537	Beja	Baoule, Bawule
			Bedawi, Bedawiye, Beda
	15	Bemba	Beni-Amer, Beni-Amir, B
	24	Chichewa	Chibemba, Ichibemba, W
	25	Comorian	Chewa, Nyanja, Chinyanj
			Comores Swahili, Komoro
	29	Dagbani	Grande Comore
	31	Dinka	Dagbane, Dagomba, Dagb
			Northeastern: Padang, Whi
			South Central: Agar, Centra
	538	Djerma	Southeastern: Bor, Eastern
			Southwestern: Rek, Western
	32	Duala	Zarma, Dyerma, Zerma, D
	34	Edo	Zarbarma
	35		Douala, Di
	39	Efik	

desired:
hoch   tief   steigend   fallend

older: ǎ   š   (probably omit)

African languages & alphabets

Approximately one third of the world's recorded languages are spoken in sub-Saharan Africa.

The great majority of these are in danger of extinction as dominant regional and trade languages replace minority local languages.

Many of languages remain unwritten, or are written only by linguists studying the languages.

Most written African language use extended Latin alphabets, most derived from 20th century standards introduced by linguists and missionaries and embraced by post-colonial African governments.

The majority of African languages are tonal; tone and other aspects of pronunciation may be indicated in writing, usually optionally and in the context of pedagogy.

Karl Richard Lepsius' Standard Alphabet (1855, r.1863)

ʽ ³ h hʽ q k g ṅ χ γ ṙ kʼ gʼ ń

ǵ š ś γ́ ž ź y lʼ ṭ ḍ ṇ ṣ ẓ̌ ṛ ḷ t̲

d̲ s̲ z̲ δ̲ t d n s z θ δ r l p bʼ

m f v w ⊙ | ! ‖ ‡

Vowels use regular Latin letters. Vowel length may be indicated by macron or breve, open vowels by a line below the letter, and central vowels by an ogonek-like hook. Rounded front vowels are marked by a diaeresis, above or below as other marks necessitate…

Africa Institute Alphabet (1928)

a b ɓ c d d e ɛ ə f ƒ g ɣ h x i j k l

m n ŋ ɔ c p r s ʃ t u ʋ w y z ʒ

A B Ƃ* C D Đ E Ɛ Ǝ F Ƒ G Ɣ H X I J K L

M N Ŋ Ɔ C P R S Ʃ T U Ʋ W Y Z Ʒ

Niamey 'African Reference Alphabet' (1978 & 1982)

AFRICAN REFERENCE ALPHABET
Capitals and lower case

Aa Ɑɑ Bb Ɓb Cc Çç Dd Ḓḓ Đđ Dɗ Ðð

Ee Ɛɛ Əə Ff Ƒƒ Gg Ɣɣ Hh Ḥḥ Ii Ɩɩ

Jj Kk Ƙƙ Ll Mm Nn Ŋŋ Oo Ɔɔ Pp Qq

Qɋ Rr Ɍɼ Ss Ṣṣ ʃʃ Tt Ṭṭ Ƭƭ Ŧŧ Θθ Uu

Ʊu Vv Ʊʊ Ww Xx Ҳҳ Yy Ƴƴ Zz Ẓẓ Zʐ Ʒʒ

1982 revision presented as unicameral (lowercase only).

Niamey 'African Reference Alphabet' (1978 & 1982)

AFRICAN REFERENCE ALPHABET
Capitals and lower case

Aa Ɑɑ Bb Ɓɓ Cc Çç Dd Ḍḍ Đđ Dɗ Ðð

Ee Ɛɛ Ii Ɩɩ

Jj Kk Pp Qq

Đð Ðð

Qɋ Rr Ɍɍ Ss Ṣṣ ∫∫ Tt Ṭṭ Ƭƭ Ŧŧ θ ɵ Uu

Uu Vv Ʊʊ Ww Xx X̱x̱ Yy Ƴƴ Zz Ẕẕ Ƶƶ Ʒʒ

A B Ɓ C D Ɗ E Ǝ Ẹ F G H I Į J K Ƙ L M
N O Ọ P R S Ṣ T U Ụ V W Y Z

a b ɓ c d ɗ e ə ẹ f g h i į j k ƙ l m
n o ọ p r s ṣ t u ụ v w y z

Vocalisation marking

Generally optional, but very important for language and literacy education.

Markings may appear, in any combination, for vowel length, nasalisation and tone.

Vowel length

Some orthographies regularly indicate long vowels, usually by doubling of vowel letter, *e.g.* Dagaare. Diacritic systems are also used, typically with a macron; breve may be used to indicate short vowels, but this is less common.

ā ē ā ē ɛ̄ ə̄ ī ɪ̄ ɨ̄ ɨ̄ ʟ̄ ʟ̄ ō ø̄ ɔ̄ ū ʉ̄ ʊ̄

Vowel nasalisation

The Niamey conference recommended the tilde to indicate nasalisation, and this has been adopted for some languages. Others, based on missionary or linguist practice, use a cedilla; ogonek is apparently not used, but could be in future.
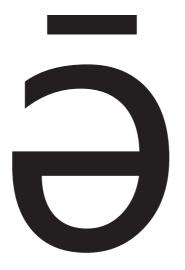
ã ẽ ã̄ ẽ̄ ɛ̃ ə̃ ĩ ī̃ ɨ̃ ɨ̄̃ ɫ̃ õ ø̃ ɔ̃ ũ ʉ̃ ʊ̃

ą ę ǫ ȩ ɛ̧ ə̧ į į̄ ɨ̧ ɨ̧̄ ɫ̧ ǫ ø̧ ɔ̧ ų ʉ̧ ʊ̧

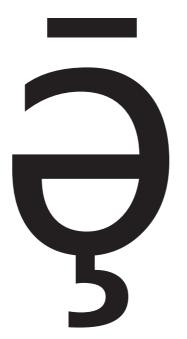ą ę ǫ ȩ ɛ̧ ə̧ į į̄ ɨ̧ ɨ̧̄ ɫ̧ ǫ ø̧ ɔ̧ ų ʉ̧ ʊ̧

Vowel tone

Typical tone patterns involve some combination of rising, falling, rising-falling, and falling-rising tones. These are usually marks with visually mnemonic diacritics.

á é ǽ é́ ɛ́ ə́ í ꟾ́ ɨ́ ɨ̵́ ḷ́ ł́ ó ǿ ɔ́ ú ʉ́ ʊ́

à è æ̀ è̀ ɛ̀ ə̀ ì ꟾ̀ ɨ̀ ɨ̵̀ ḷ̀ ł̀ ò ǿ̀ ɔ̀ ù ʉ̀ ʊ̀

â ê æ̂ ê̂ ɛ̂ ə̂ î ꟾ̂ ɨ̂ ɨ̵̂ ḷ̂ ł̂ ô ø̂ ɔ̂ û ʉ̂ ʊ̂

ǎ ě æ̌ ě̌ ɛ̌ ə̌ ǐ ꟾ̌ ɨ̌ ɨ̵̌ ḷ̌ ł̌ ǒ ø̌ ɔ̌ ǔ ʉ̌ ʊ̌

Vocalisation combinations

Marking for vowel length, nasalisation and tone may be combined to create complex diacritic forms, *e.g.*

ə

Vocalisation combinations

Marking for vowel length, nasalisation and tone may be combined to create complex diacritic forms, *e.g.*

ə̄

Vocalisation combinations

Marking for vowel length, nasalisation and tone may be combined to create complex diacritic forms, *e.g.*

ə̨̄

Vocalisation combinations

Marking for vowel length, nasalisation and tone may be combined to create complex diacritic forms, *e.g.*

ə̂̄̃

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The WRIT approach

Research and document language- and region-specific orthographic requirements and glyph preferences.

Pros Fascinating

Cons Massively time consuming; virtually inexhaustible; non-generative

Encoding and diacritic display recommendations

Build from codepage(s).

Provide precomposed glyphs for any diacritic letters encoded as such in Unicode.

Provide precomposed glyphs for any diacritic letters in which combining marks merge with letter, *e.g.* ą ę ǫ ę ȩ etc.; build these using the GSUB <ccmp>layout feature.

Handle everything else with dynamic mark positioning, *i.e.* GPOS <mark> and <mkmk> layout features.

Consider simpifying GPOS mark positioning lookups by contextually decomposing precomposed diacritics when followed by stackable combining marks, *e.g.*

ā /amacron/ –> â̂ /a/macroncomb/acutecomb/

Eng shapes

The default form of the uppercase eng differs from the European form; other variants are also encountered and may be preferred by some communities:

Other possible variant letterforms

http://scripts.sil.org/HooktopYVariants
http://scripts.sil.org/AfrGlyphVars