

**Doc Type:** Work in progress

**Title:** Revised Proposal for encoding the Tifinagh Scripts in the UCS

**Source:** Madi Mohammed

**Status:** Expert Contribution, Native Speakers

**Action:** For consideration by UTC

**Date:** 2003-02-07

This document is based on the proposal written by Michael Everson, ISO/IEC JTC1/SC2/WG2 N1757, dated 1998 / 05 /04.

## **Administrative**

### **Title**

Revised Proposal for encoding the Tamazight AKA “Berber” script named Tifinagh.

### **Requester’s name**

Madi Mohammed “Tawalt Foundation”

### **Request type**

Expert contribution, Native speaker

### **Submission date**

2003-03-01

### **5. Requester’s reference**

#### **6a. completion**

This is completion of a proposal by Mr. Michael Everson (“Encoding the Tifinagh Script,” N1757).

#### **6b. More information to be provided?**

Yes

## **Technical – General**

### **1a. New script? Name?**

Tifinagh

### **1b. Addition of characters to existing block? Name?**

No

### **2. Number of characters**

(38)

### **3. Proposed category**

### **4. Proposed level of implementation and rationale**

The Tifinagh script requires Level 1 implementation as the Tamazight “Berber” script.

### **5a. Character names included in proposal?**

Yes

### **5b. Character names in accordance with guidelines?**

Yes

### **5c. Character shapes reviewable?**

Yes (see Attached)

**6a. Who will provide the computerized font?**

Madi Mohammed “Tawalt Foundation”.

**6b. Font currently available?**

Yes (by the association Afus deg Wfus – Solidarité)

**6c. Font format?**

TrueType.

**7a. Are published examples (such as samples from newspapers, magazines, or other sources) of use of proposed characters attached?**

Yes

**8. Does the proposal address other aspects of character data processing?**

**Technical – Justification**

**Contact with user community?**

Yes, Madi Mohammed.

**Information on the user community?**

Yes

**3a. The context of use for proposed characters?**

History

**3b. Reference.**

See bibliography below.

**4a. Where?**

In Egypt (Siwas, Gara) Libya (Adrar Nafusa, Zwara, Ghadamse, Ghat, Sokna, Ojila) Tunisia, Algiria, Morocco, Canary Island, Mali, Niger, Mauritania, Chad, Burkina Faso as well as Tamazight “Berber” community in North America and Europe.

**5a. Characters should be encoded entirely in BMP?**

**5b. Rationale**

**6. Should characters be kept in a continuous range?**

Yes, they should be encoded in a single block as proposed.

**7a. Can the characters be considered a presentation form of an existing character sequence?**

No

**7b. Where?**

**7c. Reference**

**8a. Can any of the characters be considered to be similar (in appearance of function) to an existing character?**

**8b. Where?**

**8c. Reference.**

**9a. Combining characters or use of composite sequences included?**

Yes. (see letter Yetch)

**9b. List of composite sequences and their corresponding glyph images provided?**

Yes

**10. Characters with any special properties such as control function, etc. included?**

Yes, one accent used above all the consonants and oo the vowel A to produce the Arabic letter (Ain).

## **E. Proposal**

### **User community**

The Tamazight "Berber" script Tifinagh (AKA Libico-Berber, Numidian) has a very interesting story behind it. Ancient Tifinagh is thought to have sprung from the Punic<sup>1</sup> script roughly around the 6th century BC. The earliest attached inscription is 138 BC from Dogga, the capital of the kingdom of Micipsa. It also was used for coins and on the tombs of kings and so on.

The Tifinagh script was used throughout North Africa until the 3rd century AD, when it was supplanted by the Roman alphabet, and then later by Arabic alphabet, which was brought by Islam. But Tifinagh has been restricted to use by Berber women of the Southern Imazighen (AKA Touargs) till today.

Historically Tifinagh has not been widely used for literature or any other use, but after the revival of the Tamazight community throughout North Africa, they looked back into history in order to revive their language and history. One of the most important things they did was the reconstruction of their language, including the alphabet. From the late 19th century and early 20th century on they experimented with the re-use of the Tifinagh alphabet.

A variety of associations developed their own alphabet<sup>2</sup> based on ancient Tifinagh, using what was considered needed by the community.<sup>3</sup> That is one of the reasons why we see a variation of the Tifinagh scripts. Having said that, I must state also that in the past 20 years most of the community has agreed to use the Tifinagh script the way we use it today. The "Association Afus deg Wfus" created a font for the common use of Tifinagh in the community. However, this does not mean at all that all the community is using the same script, there are some small differences in the usage but these different communities don't represent a noticeable percentage. I have to say the majority of the community is using the Amazigh script we are providing in this proposal.

### **Structure**

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<sup>1</sup> The word Tifinagh is believed to be derived from the the word "Punics" (Phoenicians of North Africa). If we take the first two letters (*ti*) used by Imazighen to indicate a feminine words and in borrowed foreign words, it will give us a word very similar to the word "Punic" (*finagh*). But some of Imazighen have been led to believe that the word Tifinagh is an Amazigh word. *Tif/ Tuf* is a suffix that means 'more than' or 'beyond', and *finagh* means 'drawings', so the combination of the two words means 'beyond drawings', which make sense since most writing systems originally started as drawings.

<sup>2</sup> These associations to my knowledge don't provide any explanation or include any documentation of why they did what they did to further develop the characters, with the exception of association Afus deg Wfus.

<sup>3</sup> Tamazight dialects do not use the same alphabet, some add one or more letters and some exclude one or more letters.

### **Directionality**

As Mr. Everson mentioned in his proposal, the Tifinagh script historically has been written RTL and TTB and I have to add also from LTR and BTT. But today we can say with complete confidence that all the Tamazight community is in agreement of the use of the script **from** LTR (see all attached examples).

### **Ordering**

The order of the Tifinagh script is still preserved by the Amazigh community of the south (AKA Touarg) and also has been adopted by some scholars, such as Mohammed Shafiq, Muloud Mamry (see attached). Some put the letters in an order based on shape (i.e., circular shaped letters are grouped together, as are letters with dots, U- shaped letters, etc.) (see attached) but the most commonly used system is the Latin alphabetical order which Mr. Everson has mentioned. The Tamazight community doesn't pronounce the alphabet like we do in English, "ABC" and so on, we pronounce them like this: "Aghra," "Yeb," and so on (see examples).

### **Punctuation**

There is no special character or ligatures in the new Tifinagh script but the old script did have a few ligatures, such as BT and JT and so on (see Mr. Everson's proposal), but today we don't use any of those letter combinations anymore, with the exception of one ligature used by the Kabyle "regional dialect" (see regional examples).

We have one accent in Tifinagh characters, which is used on the top of all consonants to repeat them, like (dd) or (kk) and so on. The closest thing to that in Arabic would be Shadda, (0651) and it's used with the vowel A to produce the Arabic letter Ain (0639).