

Progress report on Loma language and script activity**July 3, 2023****Charles L. Riley**

This report summarizes current work on the Loma script (and the Loma language).

A preliminary proposal for Loma was submitted in 2010 [L2/10-005](#). Additional documents were submitted in 2016 and 2017:

[L2/16-201](#) Update on encoding the Loma script in the SMP

[L2/17-003](#) Further updates on encoding the Loma script in the SMP of the UCS

[L2/17-059](#) Towards an encoding of the Loma script in the SMP

[L2/17-233](#) Cumulative chart of the Loma script (WG2 N4837)

As summarized by Michael Everson in L2/16-201 and later documents:

Essentially there are two issues: one, the glyph shapes, which show variation in 1943–1967, but which differ in many particulars in images available today. The other issue is the repertoire, both in terms of identification of the vocalic and consonantal readings of the characters, and in terms of the completeness of the syllabic matrix.

Charts with the four Loma syllabaries appear in L2/17-059, with a consolidated chart in that document and L2/17-233.

Beginning in January of this year, a course on field methods linguistics research has had the Loma language as the focus of its study, under the guidance of Assistant Professor Natalie Weber, with the participation of Loma speakers Balla Koevogui and Jean (“John”) Dopavogui, postdoctoral associate Patrick Hall, and lecturer Lydia Newkirk. I presented to the class in February regarding the history and use of the Loma script, and brought them up to date on current research and encoding proposals. I introduced them to recordings of my field research, known sources of the Loma script in use, and the open access journal *Mandenkan* as a source of information and possible outlet for their own publishable work that may be produced.

The class recorded videos of stories with Balla and John, and gave presentations at the end of the semester. Their presentations centered on themes that included mutational consonants in Mande

languages, phonological identification of vowels, the relationship between subject pronouns and auxiliary verbs, and semantic analysis of the *-ge* particle.

Separately, a group of Loma speakers has been active by e-mail, and this has yielded productive efforts on creating a font encoded in the Private Use Area of the Unicode Standard by the participation of Jason Glavy and Craig Cornelius. A display of how the characters are mapped out to Latin script keyboard inputs may be found here: <https://languagetools-153419.appspot.com/lom/kbtransforms/>, with a keyboard test application here: <https://languagetools-153419.appspot.com/lom/>. A full, comprehensive character repertoire has not been finalized as yet, but efforts to define one are getting closer to fruition and may be significantly helped by scheduling a virtual meeting in the near future.

Pema Toupou, as an active user, has been one of the key figures involved in the e-mail discussions, and has sent a scan of a six-page handwritten letter to me in Loma script. The letter has yet to be translated, but it is a clear indication of continued interest in pursuing revitalization and working toward a stable encoding.