

# THE GE'EZ FIDEL AND THE MILLENNIUM

By Mathza(02/14/08)

I have two objectives for writing this brief piece. The first is to draw attention of the Ge'ez fidel (script) in relation to the celebration of the Ethiopian 2000 Millennium. I have no idea if there is a program related to the fidel. If none it should be formulated and implemented before the end of the year 2000. After all as an important feature that characterizes Ethiopia and its people, this unique script in black Africa deserves to shine during the Millennium celebrations. Contributions to answers to questions and observations and suggestions in this writing could serve among the inputs to the program.

The observations and suggestions on the fidel below are from a layman in the script and Ethiopic languages. I have no doubt that the linguists and those who designed the Ge'ez software have considered these among many other possibilities and changes. My second objective in writing this brief piece is, therefore, to prompt Ethiopian linguists and Ge'ez software designers to educate us about the history and development of the fidel and its incorporation in the cyber world. For example, what is the origin of the fidel? How does it relate to other Semetic scripts? What did the original fidel look like? When were the vowels added? How did the fidel expand to its present form, apparently, accommodating many new sounds? How many groups were and are involved in developing software for the fidel? At what stage is the development of the soft ware? Has a standardized software been agreed upon?

## Observations

Of the 33 consonants and their syllables in the fidel some of them appear to be duplications. These are shown in bold faced italics here below and in the fidel at the end of this presentation:

1. ***ሀ, ሐ, ኀ, ሠ, ሰ, ዐ, አ, ጸ*** and their syllables of which ***ሐ, ኀ, ሠ*** or ***ሰ, ዐ, ጸ*** or ***ሀ*** seem not to be needed in Amharic.

2. The same goes with **ገ**, **ሠ** or **ሰ** and **ጸ** or **ፀ** and their syllables in Tigrigna.
3. **ሐ** and **ፀ** and their syllables are used in Tigrigna.
4. In Tigrigna, unlike in Amharic, the consonants **ሀ**, **ሐ** and **ፀ** have sounds different from the corresponding **ሃ**, **ሐ** and **ቃ**.
5. The special letters presented below (additional to the 33 consonants and their syllables) are cumbersome and unnecessarily complicate the fidel.

**ሏ ሟ ሠ ሡ ሢ ሣ ሤ ሦ**  
**ጐ ጑ ጒ ጓ ጔ ጕ ጖ ጗ ጘ**  
**ከ ኣ ኤ ኦ ኧ**

**Suggestions**

1. The consonants **ገ**, **ሠ** or **ሰ** and **ጸ** or **ፀ** and their syllables could be done away with provided there are no other languages using them—including those which have adopted and will be expected to adopt the fidel. Of course, any one of these could be designated to accommodate sounds in other languages that are not available in the fidel.
2. Some letters, especially when printed in small characters, could be confused with letters having similar structures. **ሰ** and **ሠ** and **ፀ** and **ፁ** fall in this category. In view of this, **ሠ** may be preferred to **ሰ** and **ጸ** to **ፀ**.
3. The special letters can be written by combining the relevant ‘huletbet’ or ‘sidistbet’ letters with **ፆ**. For instance, **ሏ** can be written as **ሠፆ** or **ሏፆ**.

Getting rid of the 21 letters in 1 and the 21 special letters in 3 could cut down the number of letters in the fidel by 42. Similar and/or other combinations for the 16 odd letters shown below (excluding those in the

fourth column already included in the special letters) could reduce the bulky Fidel by 58 or by over 21%.

ከ።	ከ፣	ከ፡	ከ፤	ከ፥
ገ።	ገ፣	ገ፡	ገ፤	ገ፥
ቈ።	ቈ፣	ቈ፡	ቈ፤	ቈ፥
ኀ።	ኀ፣	ኀ፡	ኀ፤	ኀ፥

**The Ge'ez Fidel (Script)**

ሀ	ሁ	ሂ	ሃ	ሄ	ህ	ሆ
ለ	ሉ	ሊ	ላ	ሌ	ል	ሎ
ሐ	ሑ	ሒ	ሓ	ሔ	ሕ	ሐ
መ	ሙ	ሚ	ማ	ሜ	ም	ሞ
ሠ	ሡ	ሢ	ሣ	ሤ	ሥ	ሦ
ረ	ሩ	ሪ	ራ	ሪ	ር	ሮ
ሰ	ሱ	ሲ	ሳ	ሴ	ሰ	ሶ
ሸ	ሹ	ሺ	ሻ	ሼ	ሽ	ሾ

ቀ	ቁ	ቂ	ቃ	ቄ	ቅ	ቆ
በ	ቡ	ቢ	ባ	ቤ	ብ	ቦ
ተ	ቱ	ቲ	ታ	ቲ	ት	ቶ
ቸ	ቹ	ቺ	ቻ	ቼ	ች	ቾ
ኀ	ኁ	ኂ	ኃ	ኄ	ኅ	ኆ
ነ	ኑ	ኒ	ና	ኔ	ን	ኖ
ኘ	ኙ	ኚ	ኛ	ኜ	ኝ	ኞ
አ	አ	አ	አ	አ	አ	አ

ከ	ኩ	ኪ	ካ	ኬ	ክ	ኮ
ኸ	ኹ	ኺ	ኻ	ኼ	ኽ	ኾ
ወ	ወ፡	ዊ	ዋ	ዌ	ው	ዎ
ዐ	ዑ	ዒ	ዓ	ዔ	ዕ	ዖ
ዘ	ዙ	ዚ	ዛ	ዛ፡	ዝ	ዞ
ዠ	ዡ	ዢ	ዣ	ዤ	ዥ	ዦ
የ	የ፡	የ፡	ያ	ዬ	ይ	ዮ
ደ	ደ፡	ደ፡	ዳ	ዴ	ድ	ዶ
ጀ	ጀ፡	ጀ፡	ጃ	ጄ	ጅ	ጆ

ገ	ገ፡	ገ፡	ገ፡	ገ፡	ገ፡	ገ፡
ጠ	ጠ፡	ጠ፡	ጠ፡	ጠ፡	ጠ፡	ጠ፡
ጨ	ጨ፡	ጨ፡	ጨ፡	ጨ፡	ጨ፡	ጨ፡
ጸ	ጸ፡	ጸ፡	ጸ፡	ጸ፡	ጸ፡	ጸ፡
ጸ	ጸ፡	ጸ፡	ጸ፡	ጸ፡	ጸ፡	ጸ፡
ፀ	ፀ፡	ፀ፡	ፀ፡	ፀ፡	ፀ፡	ፀ፡
ፊ	ፊ፡	ፊ፡	ፊ፡	ፊ፡	ፊ፡	ፊ፡
ፐ	ፐ፡	ፐ፡	ፐ፡	ፐ፡	ፐ፡	ፐ፡