

View and Recommendation on Issues Raised for Ethiopic Typesetting

Abstract

The digital age has given rise to an ever increasing corpus of Ethiopian language literature. This corpus is being developed by the full spectrum of amateur and experienced professional writers. While this is a very positive development, the Ethiopic documents produced suffer from a lack of quality consistency and conformance to typesetting traditions. Many of these deficiencies stem from the lack of support for Ethiopic conventions in publishing software. The specification of the typesetting requirements for Ethiopic manuscripts will help software providers improve the presentation quality of the Ethiopic documents they produce.

Status of this document

This is a draft document and has *not* been reviewed by the Ethiopian Writers Association.

Table of Contents

- Abstract
 - Status
 - 1. 1 Introduction
 - 1.1. Purpose of this document
 - 1.2. Background on the Ethiopian Writers Association
 - 1.3. Conventions used in this document
 - 2. 2. Issues, Views and Recommendations
 - 2.1. Ethiopic Comma Usage
 - 2.2. Ethiopic Numeral Practices
 - 2.2.1. Ordinal notation
 - 2.2.2. Ethiopic numeral bar rendering
 - 2.3. Ethiopic Ordered List Styles
 - 2.3.1. List sequences
 - 2.3.2. List extension to modern languages
 - 2.3.3. List Item markers
 - 2.4. Ethiopic Abbreviation Styles
 - 2.4.1. Terminal punctuation on abbreviations
 - 2.4.2. Appropriate abbreviation formation
 - 2.5. Formatting of Ethiopic Wordspace
 - 2.6. Rules of Ethiopic line breaking
 - 2.7. The use of non-Ethiopic Symbols in Ethiopic Writing
 - 2.7.1. Appropriateness of Ethiopic stylizing of non-Ethiopic symbols
 - 2.7.2. Symbol Preference for parenthetical expressions
 - 2.8. Rare Symbols in Ethiopic Writing
-

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose and scope of this document

This document identifies issues that impact the typesetting quality of Ethiopic documents and provides recommendations. It is not the intention that this document be a comprehensive work on Ethiopic typesetting. Rather, specific issues are raised stemming from experience with modern word processing and publishing software and noting deficiencies as well as points of ambiguity collected from observations of common practices of modern writers. These gathered issues are then put before The Ethiopian Writers Association for an expert comment and recommendation.

Desktop publishing software developed for the requirements of the English speaking world apply typesetting rules that are otherwise sufficient for Ethiopian writing practices. The issues raised here identify those differences that occur under Ethiopian conventions. The recommendations given here will then satisfy the requirements for the typesetting of Ethiopian literature.

1.2 Background on the Ethiopian Writers Association

The Ethiopian Writers Association was established in 198X by members of the writers community of Ethiopia. The Association is headquartered at Addis Ababa University where many members are also faculty. The association is the only organization in Ethiopia dedicated solely to promoting good writing in the languages of Ethiopia ...Ato Dereje should complete this section

1.3 Conventions used in this document

The recommendations given in this document address specific issues raised for Ethiopic typesetting. The identified issue is presented first, with an example as needed. The issue will be addressed as “Ethiopic” when language neutral, otherwise addressed as per the applicable language (e.g. “Amharic” would indicate that the issue is specific to the Amharic language applicability to other languages is unknown).

Following an introduction of the issue topic an opinion will be expressed followed by a formal recommendation.

2. Issues, Views and Recommendations

2.1 Ethiopic Comma Usage

Issue: In Ethiopic writing, two symbols have been used in the role of an Ethiopic “comma”. The two symbols are the “Netela Serez”, and “Neus Serez”, the later has also been referred to as an Ethiopic “colon” in the Unicode standards and elsewhere. Confusion over the identities and appropriate usage of the symbols has lead to inconsistent and sometimes confusing application.

View: It is the view of the Ethiopian Writers Association that both symbols are syntactically a “comma” and identical. The Netela Serez form is appropriate for all modern Ethiopic documents while the “Neus Serez” form be used for the delimitations of Biblical literature in keeping with tradition.

Recommendation: It is the recommendation of the EWA that the Netela Serez form of comma is the preferred and should be the default form where commas are used. The Neus Serez form should also be available to computer users.

2.2 Ethiopic Numeral Practices

2.2.1 Ordinal notation

Issue: In Ethiopic writing ordinals of both Ethiopic and Latin numerals are found to be marked both with superscripted notation and without. For example: 5^ኛ and 5^ኛ in Amharic and 5^ይ and 5^ይ in Tigrinya. A recommendation for a preferred style of ordinal demarcation will help make Ethiopian literature more consistent.

View: The superscripted notation is found primarily in computer typed documents, perhaps wrongly following the English convention for ordinals. This is not an Ethiopian convention and has no precedence in Ethiopian literature.

Recommendation: There are no recommended uses of subscript and superscript in Ethiopic writing. The use of subscript and superscript formatting should be avoided in Ethiopic writing practices.

2.2.2 Ethiopic numeral bar rendering

Issue: In handwriting, and hand written manuscripts, the line written above numerals is sometimes joined (similar to Roman and Coptic numerals). Typesetting technology has not supported this practice but it is now possibly with software based systems. A recommendation on the proper rendering of Ethiopic numerals would help improve the quality of Ethiopic documents.

View: The practice of joining numeral bars is not acceptable in modern Ethiopian literature.

Recommendation: For modern Ethiopian literature only the disjoint style of numeral rendering should be used.

2.3 Ethiopic Ordered List Styles

2.3.1 List sequences

Issue: Ordered lists will follow either the “ሀለሐመ” or “አበገደ” sequence. The more archaic “አበገደ” sequence is generally found in more specialized, academic, literature and its relevance to modern Amharic writing is not well understood. A recommendation on the applicable use of the “አበገደ” sequence will benefit clarity and comprehension of Ethiopic documents.

View: Listings in the “አበገደ” sequence are obsolete and are relevant only to Ge’ez literature.

Recommendation: It is recommended that only the “ሀለሐመ” sequence be applied in modern Ethiopian literature.

2.3.2 List extension to modern languages

Issue: Alphabetic ordered lists are sometimes extended beyond the Ge’ez character set to encompass the letters of document language. The orderings of the language specific extensions are found to vary from author to author. A recommendation on the proper use of alphabetic ordered lists will help improve the consistency found in Ethiopian literature.

View: Language specific list orders are appropriate for modern Ethiopic literature.

Recommendation: When a language context has not been indicated for a document, and in a language neutral document or section, the Ge'ez list order should be the default. Language specific list orders should also be an available option to users and may become the default when a language context is known. Endorsed list orders for Ge'ez, Amharic and Tigrinya are as follows:

Ge'ez	Amharic	Tigrinya
ሀ	ሀ	ሀ
ለ	ለ	ለ
ሐ	ሐ	ሐ
መ	መ	መ
ሠ	ሠ	ሠ
ረ	ረ	ረ
ሰ	ሰ	ሰ
ቀ	ሸ	ሸ
በ	ቀ	ቀ
ተ	በ	ቐ
ኀ	ሸ	በ
ነ	ተ	ሸ
አ	ቐ	ተ
ከ	ኀ	ቐ
ወ	ነ	ኀ
ዐ	ኘ	ነ
ዘ	አ	ኘ
የ	ከ	አ
ደ	ኸ	ከ
ገ	ወ	ኸ
ጠ	ዐ	ወ
ጰ	ዘ	ዐ
ጸ	ዠ	ዘ
ፀ	የ	ዠ
ፈ	ደ	የ
ፕ	ጀ	ደ
	ገ	ጀ
	ጠ	ገ
	ጨ	ጠ
	ጰ	ጨ
	ጸ	ጰ
	ፀ	ጸ
	ፈ	ፀ
	ፕ	ፈ
		ፕ

Comment: Not clear in the EWA response if the “አጠጋጂ” sequence should be available for Ge’ez.

Comment: It would be useful also if the EWA would define a style for up to four levels of ordering. Something like:

ሀ/ First Level

፩/ Second Level

1. Third Level

(ሀ) *Fourth Level*

Note that the fourth level starts the sequence over but applies a different list item marker and goes into italic. For comparison, the following two styles are standard with MS Word:

1) First Level

a) Second Level

i) Third Level

(1) *Fourth Level*

I. First Level

A. Second Level

1. Third Level

a) *Fourth Level*

2.3.3 List item markers

Issue: The list item marker most frequently found in Ethiopian literature is “/”, however, “.”, “)” and “:-” are also found. It is uncertain which style is the most appropriate for modern Ethiopian writing. A recommendation would benefit the consistency of Ethiopian documents.

View: The list item marker in Ethiopic writing should be consistent, our view is that forward slash “/” is the most appropriate symbol.

Recommendation: In an Ethiopic list the most appropriate list item marker is the forward slash “/”. When a numeric list applies western numerals in an Ethiopic document the “.” should be an option for the list item marker.

2.4 Ethiopic Abbreviation Styles

2.4.1 Terminal punctuation on abbreviations

Issue: In Ethiopic writing abbreviations formed with full stop will be found both with and without the full stop at the end of abbreviations (e.g. አ.አ.ዩ. vs አ.አ.ዩ). It is uncertain which style is the most appropriate for modern Ethiopian writing. A recommendation would benefit the consistency of Ethiopian documents.

View: Abbreviations in Ethiopic text should always be terminated with “.”.

Recommendation: Abbreviations in Ethiopic documents should apply the first letter of each word and be delimited, and terminated with “.”

2.4.2 Appropriate abbreviation formation

Issue: In Ethiopic writing a number of abbreviation styles can be observed. It is uncertain which style is the most appropriate for modern Ethiopian writing. A recommended abbreviation formation rule would benefit the consistency of Ethiopian documents.

View: Two abbreviation styles are acceptable for Ethiopic writing. The styles are dependent on the word or word phrase and are determined by historic precedence in some cases though a general rule may be applied in other cases.

Recommendation: The formation of an Ethiopic abbreviation will be determined from the following rules:

In the abbreviation of a multiword phrase:

A.B.C. –where “A”, “B” and “C” are the first letter of their respective words.

Examples: አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ ⇒ አ.አ.ዩ.

In the abbreviation of a single word:

A/B –where “A” is the first letter of the word and “B” the last letter.

Examples: ወይዘሮ ⇒ ወ/ሮ, ወይዘራት ⇒ ወ/ት

In the abbreviation of a compound word:

A/BCD –where “A” is the first letter of the phrase or compound-word and “BCD” is the last word in full.

Examples: ፍርድቤት ⇒ ፍ/ቤት

Comment: I think the above rules need to be expanded to accommodate cases like:

ቤተመንግሥት ⇒ ቤ/መ

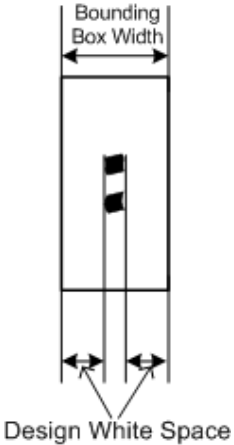
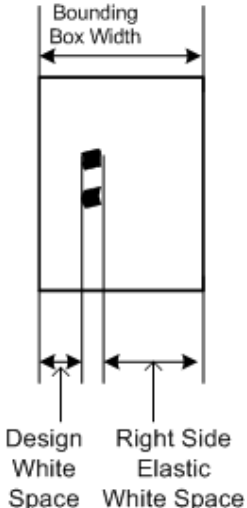
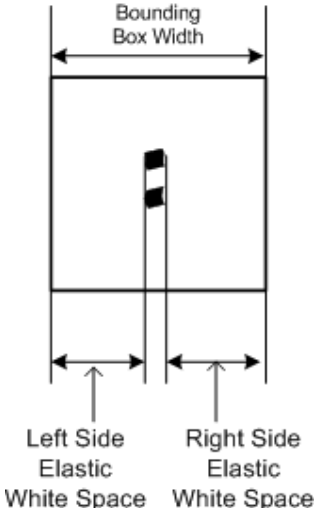
ቤተክርስቲያን ⇒ ቤ/ክ

ጠቅላይ ሚኒስትር ቢሮ ⇒ ጠ/ሚ/ቢሮ

Or do the above have errors?

2.5 Formatting of Ethiopic Wordspace

Issue: When Ethiopic wordspace is used in documents two alignment styles are found when text is fully justified. The wordspace will either be centered between words or will have whitespace added only to the right side of the symbol (see illustration). The whitespace padding may also be applied to regular Ethiopic punctuation. A recommendation on the use of whitespace padding would benefit the consistency and quality of Ethiopic documents.

Regular Justification	Full Justification	
 <p>Design White Space</p> <p>Regular Style</p>	 <p>Design White Space Right Side Elastic White Space</p> <p>Left-Bounded Style</p>	 <p>Left Side Elastic White Space Right Side Elastic White Space</p> <p>Centered Style</p>

View: The Ethiopic wordspace is no longer used in modern literature. It is however important for the reproduction of older literature and works in Ge'ez language. When the wordspace is used with full text justification the left-bounded style is preferred.

Recommendation: When text is fully justified, the “left-bounded” style is appropriate for Ethiopic wordspace as well as for Ethiopic punctuation.

2.6 Rules of Ethiopic Line Breaking

Issue: In classical Ethiopic writing words may be split across lines at arbitrary positions within the word. The Ethiopic wordspace used in classical writing would help insure that no ambiguity could occur. In modern Ethiopic writing where whitespace replaces Ethiopic wordspace it is not always certain if a word has been split across lines or if two independent words are present. A recommendation of rules to follow for Ethiopic line breaking would help benefit clarity and the processing of Ethiopic documents.

View: Line breaking in modern Ethiopic writing should not be arbitrary and good line breaking rules need to be promoted.

Recommendation: The Ethiopian Writers Association recommends that line breaking of Ethiopic text be governed by the following rules:

- *A word is split at a location where the user would not be able to infer from context whether one or two words appears across lines. I.E. a split should not occur at the boundary of a compound word.*
- *The hyphen symbol should be applied when a word is split over lines.*
- *Numbers are not split over lines.*
- *Words of a single syllable are not split over lines.*
- *Words of two letters are not split over lines.*
- *Only letters, numbers, or opening punctuation may start a new line.*

2.7 The use of Non-Ethiopic Symbols in Ethiopic Writing

2.7.1. Appropriateness of Ethiopic stylizing of non-Ethiopic symbols

Issue: In modern Ethiopic writing it is common to find non-Ethiopic punctuation and numerals in use along with Ethiopic text. When non-Ethiopic symbols are applied in Ethiopic text these symbols are sometimes weighted and stylized to visually complement the Ethiopic typeface (also referred to as “Ethiopicized”). A view and recommendation on this practice would benefit the quality and consistency of Ethiopic documents.

View: Rules for the Ethiopic stylization of non-Ethiopic symbols have to date not been established. It is within the Ethiopian Writers Association scope to recommend what symbols to stylize and when, but not how the stylization should be.

Recommendation: Ethiopic stylized text for non-Ethiopic symbols follows the rules:

- *Guillemots are stylized around Ethiopic words.*
- *Guillemots are not stylized around Latin words.*
- *No other Latin symbols are stylized for Ethiopic text.*
- *When mixed Ethiopic and Latin words occur in a document, the punctuation and numbers used in Ethiopic sections will apply the Latin font.*

Comment: A new question here would be to indicate the preferred single and double quotation mark symbols. Around Ethiopic text and for around Latin text. The answer indicates that both guillemots and double quotes are acceptable around Latin text but a preference should be indicated.

2.7.2. Symbol preference for parenthetical expressions.

Issue: In modern Ethiopic writing it is common to find parenthetical expressions that apply in similar frequency parenthesis, “(“ and “)”, as well as forward slash, “/”, to encompass an expression. The preferred mechanism for parenthetical expressions is unclear. A recommendation on how parenthetical expressions should be formed will benefit quality and consistency in Ethiopic documents.

View: The parenthesis are recognized as the most appropriate symbols for parenthetical expressions in Ethiopic documents.

Recommendation: In Ethiopic documents parenthetical expressions should be initiated with a left parenthesis, “(“ and terminated with a right parenthesis “)”.

2.8 Rare Symbols in Ethiopic Writing

Issue: A number of syllables (ሄ, ኀ and ሄ) , and punctuation (፳, ፳ and ፻), and are defined for Ethiopic but their relevance to modern Ethiopic writing is uncertain. An opinion on their relevance and recommendation on their correct usage would benefit the quality of modern Ethiopic documents.

View: These symbols have no use in modern Amharic. They are historical artifacts of the writing styles of the past.

Recommendation: These letters and symbols should not be used in modern writing.