



Issue 3

August 2006

Editor: Curlyjimsam



## **Kardii alphabet** *Script of the Month*

**ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:**

Alurhsa: featured language.

Lingua Ignota: a 900-year-old conlang.

Reality conlanging: what it actually came to.

The Conlanger.com Journal  
Issue 3  
August 2006

Publication hosted on Conlanger.com. Domain property of Aszev.  
All original content (images and text) and constructed language/script  
examples copyright © their respective creators.  
Hildegard of Bingen illumination and Litterae Ignotae images in public domain.  
All other non-credited content copyright © the Editor (Curlyjimsam). Credits for  
Kardii script sample and writing desk image (pg. 1) to Jayelinda Suridge  
(‘nortala’). Credits for IPA chart image (pg. 14) to the International Phonetic  
Association. Credits for Conlanger.com homepage design (image pg. 21) to  
Aszev. Credits for birthday cake image (pg. 21) to Microsoft Corporation.  
Credits for Credits for image of *How Language Works* cover (pg. 23) to  
Penguin Books Ltd.  
Permission must be sought from the relevant parties before reproducing any  
copyrighted part of this publication.

# Contents

In this issue of the *Conlanger.com Journal*.

**Page 4: The Editor writes ...**

Another introduction from Curlyjimsam.

**Pages 5-7: Alurhsa - Featured Language**

The Editor's opinions on Halyihev's main conlang.

**Pages 8-10: Script of the Month**

A look at Nortala's Kardii alphabets.

**Page 11: 'Ukana'akau Script Update**

More information on last issue's Script of the Month.

**Page 12: Conworlding for me and you**

Sibkevsad's own experiences in the conworlding hobby, and some tips for those wanting to create their own.

**Page 13-15: Sound Advice**

The Editor gives some pointers on producing phonologies.

**Page 16-17: The Unknown Language**

The Editor explores a nine-hundred-year-old conlang, the Lingua Ignota.

**Page 18-21: Reality Conlanging Update**

Tzirtzi and Ceresz unfortunately did not manage to finish the project, but we print the communication they did achieve.

**Page 22: Conrecipe Page**

Make your own peppered lemon juice, the national drink of Atlia.

**Page 23: Editor's Review**

*How Language Works* goes under the eyes of Curlyjimsam.

# The Editor writes ...

Hello again from me.

Sorry for the slight delay to this issue - it's largely my fault; had I been able to force myself to make the finishing touches a bit quicker it could have been out earlier.

Attentive readers will notice a change in appearance from previous issues - we are now using a Microsoft Sans Serif font instead of Arial. The change has basically been made for practical reasons - the new font has IPA capabilities; the old one did not. Hopefully the change will not affect the overall appearance of the *Journal* too much.

It has become a regular part of this feature for me to gripe at readers for not submitting enough material for publication, and I'm afraid I'm going to do this once again. This issue is written almost entirely by me - I must extend my heartfelt thanks to those few who have helped out. At present this isn't too much of a problem - I'm on holiday at the moment, and can afford to spend large amounts of time writing for the magazine (though to be honest I'd much rather be working on my own conwork rather than commenting on other people's), but unfortunately I am not blessed with permanent time off. Very soon a time will come when I once more have obligatory work again - and then, whilst I will be able to save enough time for my basic editorial responsibilities and if necessary to write a few articles, I almost certainly will not be able to write twenty-odd pages of stuff as I have had to for this issue. That is why I am *begging* you to please, please send in something if you can. An hour, or half an hour, of your time can make all the difference.

The situation is not helped by the fact that we now have competition - a ZBB project by the name of the *KneeCap*, which, I fear, could easily deluge the *Journal* if it goes ahead. The ZBB is far larger than the CBB - which, of course, comprises most of the *Journal's* contributors - and hence would logically be expected to produce a great deal more articles, thus drawing those who would otherwise contribute away to the bigger project. Although a dead *Journal* would be rather a lot less work on my part, I don't really want to see it happen. Please, don't be tempted by the *KneeCap*, and continue to support the *Journal* in every way you can.

On a happier note, I do think we have quite a lot of interesting stuff in this issue - although, as I said, I have written most of it myself and am therefore not really qualified to make such assertions. Hopefully you'll still find it an entertaining read - but remember, only you can ensure that that continues. OK, that's an exaggeration, but you get the point ...

Share and enjoy,



Curlyjimsam,  
August 2006.

# Alurhsa - Featured Language

The Editor reviews Halyihev's main conlang.

Although I'd long taken it for granted as one of the Great Internet Conlangs, I must admit that I'd never really looked at Alurhsa in any detail prior to selecting it as this issue's 'featured language' last month. One of the things I had looked at, however, was the language's phonology and Romanised orthography - which, to be frank, are very different from your average conlang-on-the-street.

Why? It's simple - the size. With seventy different sounds, Alurhsa phoneme inventory is twice as large as most of what I've ever attempted. Yes, I made a language with a similar number of vowels (though not consonants) to Alurhsa once, but that was really just to see how far I could stretch the boundaries - and it really wasn't very good. Surely no *serious* conlanger would ever attempt this on his or her *main* project?

Clearly, Halyihev thinks differently. The really amazing thing is that it actually works. For all its enormity, it does seem like a natural system - albeit a rather large one. There are larger phoneme inventories in real life, of course. It just for me, there's always been an unwritten rule that all that the most peripheral or experimental projects should be reasonably typical in terms of real-life languages: no OSV word orders or anything strange like that. This isn't the case with Alurhsa's phonology - but it works. I think it's fair to say that the more atypical an aspect of a language is, the more difficult it is to pull it off well. Halyihev has pulled it off very well indeed.

Closely related to phonology in the eyes of many conlangers is orthography. Similarly, here I would expect a system with so many different sounds to be a mass of diacritics that just don't seem to fit together, and ugly polygraphs that make it a hell to read. Then again, most large phoneme inventories are probably carried out by inexperienced conlangers who don't really know what they're doing - but with nearly three decades of practice, one would expect Halyihev would know what he was doing very well indeed. It shows. Alurhsa samples don't look like kitchen-sinky random jumbles of letters. They look as if they could be real - highlighting the conlanging mastery of their creator.

But enough of sounds and letters, something anyone who's been in the conlanging community for more than a few months must have had plenty of by now. For me, it's morphosyntax that's really interesting - and the grammar document in front of me has no shortage of that. Forty narrow-margined pages, covering the various topics in impressive detail - and it's not even finished, though I'm guessing its creator does have some idea of the missing parts in his own head or private notes. Even my most detailed conlang is only fifty pages *in total*. Halyihev deserves yet another pat on the back.

The morphosyntax part of the document begins with nouns, detailing the six cases - nominative, genitive/locative, dative, accusative, instrumental, ablative. Some conlangers would leave the descriptions at that, and certainly superficially the system doesn't look like much. Yet

again, my initial interpretations turn out to be just plain wrong. Halyihev certainly makes imaginative use of the cases, and includes details that others will often forget (or perhaps not even realise they have to worry about) - for instance the use of the nominative with an appositive noun (that is, one following another, e.g. in the sentence **ghelÿ jevnán**<sub>ACC</sub> **Áláná**<sub>NOM</sub> /gɛlʲ 'dʒɛvnan a'laná/, 'I see Citizenness Áláná'); the use of the dative as a secondary direct object with causatives; or the use of the accusative with the subjects of infinitive verbs in subordinate clauses. A historical split in the genitive/locative, and a former dual number (as opposed to the modern-day singular and plural), with some remnants in the current language, are also covered - the sort of detail that really helps to make Alurhsa seem alive. The language also makes interesting use of a suffix **-ár** /ar/, used to form collective plurals as opposed to the usual plural form. These are generally regarded as singular, and are used to show cohesive groups rather than more random collections of more than one noun - e.g. **bóyenár** /'bojenar/ indicating a cohesive group of people as opposed to the standard plural **bóyenó** /'bojeno/ which simply indicates the concept of 'more than one person', without the connotations of a more organised grouping. Again, such details and intricacies make the language so very much more interesting, and its creator should be applauded for including them.

It is pronouns that are discussed next. This, I find, really is impressive - this section of the document covers no less than *nine* pages (even the complex verbal system only manages six, excluding irregular forms). This is not because Alurhsa has a particularly large pronominal selection, but because of the amount of detail put into describing the minutiae of the pronouns' use. It's far more than just a table of the personal pronouns in each of the different cases and genders (which are not distinguished in the morphology of nouns themselves). Although these are included (albeit not in tabular form), they are accompanied by notes on their usage - something most conlangers seem to take for granted - and irregularities in the paradigms. The document goes on to cover possessive and reflexive pronouns, again leaving far fewer details to be assumed by the reader based on their knowledge of other languages than most conlang grammar. Numerous other non-personal forms are discussed.

After verbs (a description of the verbal system will not fit here, though again it shows the same detail and innovation as the rest of the language), the grammar details two sets of particles also found in the language - positionals (similar to adpositions, but found alone and with verbs as well as with nouns) and syntactics, covering a range of different uses equating to articles, conjunctions and certain adverbs in English. I personally have never come across anything like this before, and yet it seems to work perfectly - it certainly deserves commendation.

Even something as seemingly basic as the number system is covered in a great deal of detail. Aside from the basic roots, other information given includes compounding rules (more complex than in most languages, with certain roots reduced to simplified affixes), and suffixes used to represent other features of the number system: ordinals (English 'first', 'second' etc.), fractionals, multiples ('once', 'twice', 'fifty times') and repetatives ('one, two, etc., *at a time*'), among others. There are also

generic numerics, which are used in the same way but do not refer to actual numbers - e.g. **ává** /ava/, 'more' and **nísál** /nisa/, 'a bit of'.

Further areas covered by the grammar as it currently stands are word formation - Alurhsa forms its words from a number of 'fundamental roots' and various affixes, again not unimpressively covered - personal names, and time and dates. Once more, there has to be something to be learned here for many conlangers - these last two areas take up 1½ and 2½ pages of the document respectively.

Alurhsa also has a well-developed vocabulary, with over 7700 words, which makes the dictionaries (both English-Alurhsa and Alurhsa-English) a highly impressive feat in themselves. The language also has its own runic-style script - as large as the phoneme inventory it represents - complete with number signs and its own unique punctuation.

It's not just Alurhsa's construction that makes the language notable. In terms of age, it outstrips most conlangs on the Internet by decades. Additionally, it must be one of the most used constructed languages - Halyihev makes no secret of the fact that he uses it regularly in everyday life: for note-taking, stories and his personal diary, and - recently - an entire paper for a class studying the patterns and symbolism in myths. One of the best ways to see how complete a language is is of course to use it, and the very fact that Alurhsa's creator has been doing this for so long is in itself a mark in favour of its quality.

Unfortunately it hasn't been possible to cover every detail of Alurhsa in this article, but I very much recommend taking a closer look at it. The language has received a lot of praise over the years, and I feel it deserves all of it. A conlang like this is no mean feat.

Information on the Alurhsa language, world and culture can be found online at [alurhsa.org](http://alurhsa.org).

### **STOP PRESS: Official Statement from the *Conlanger.com Journal*.**

Issue 1 of this publication featured an article entitled 'Queen of Conscripts' (pp. 20-21) displaying images of various constructed writing systems purporting to be the creations of the artist known to the online constructed languages community as 'Serali'. Developments since this issue's release have thrown the authenticity of this attribution of the scripts into doubt, some having been proven to have been the work of other artists. Similar charges of plagiarism have been levelled at other writing systems (not featured in the *Journal* itself) on the website referenced in the article, namely [www.xanga.com/blue\\_frog88](http://www.xanga.com/blue_frog88).

The staff at [Conlanger.com](http://Conlanger.com) are treating this incident with the utmost of severity, and would like to confirm to the general public that we in no way encourage or tolerate such behaviour. The *Journal* would like to apologise to the true creators of the wrongly-attributed scripts, and will be willing to extend credit to said artists once the scripts' true origins are verified. The images themselves are for the present to be retained in the interest of archival completeness; should their removal be requested by the original copyright holders the staff of the *Journal* would be willing to oblige.





words in the sentence receive the strikethrough, as follows:

~~ብልጽግታዎን ገብረኛል፤ ገብረኛል ገብረኛል፤ ገብረኛል ገብረኛል፤~~  
*ፆጠራ ጠራጠራ! ጠራጠራ ጠራጠራ!*

'Get out of the house! The roof's going to collapse!'

Kardii represents closed questions by writing the word *kay* at the beginning of the sentence. This word is not read aloud. It is sometimes used for open questions as well.

Kardii's use of the apostrophe is particularly imaginative. It acts primarily as a syllable barrier, but its usage is more complicated than that. In the combinations *j'C* and *sh'C* (where C is any consonant), the *j* or *sh* is pronounced with slightly extended duration and not followed by any vowel sound, but counts as a separate syllable for purposes of stress. *m'* and *n* behave in a similar way to *j'* and *sh'* when the syllable contains no other sounds. *k'* and *p'* can also occur syllabically, though they tend to be followed by a faint voiceless [ə]. Syllabic consonants cannot carry stress. If a word begins with a consonant followed by an apostrophe and the preceding word ends in a vowel, the consonant is pronounced as if it were at the end of the first word rather than at the beginning of the second, without affecting stress - this is more noticeable in the southern Kardii dialect, where final stops lose the aspiration which is otherwise present.

The apostrophe is also used in the representation of /j/, written *i'* or, after *m* or *n*, just *i* (*i'* after these letters is pronounced [ij]). After other consonants the pronunciation of /j/ is in free variation between [j] and [i].

The Kardii alphabets derive from the system used to write the lilkana language. Although this is a separate script, the twenty-one *nan paneva* ('common letters') are shown below, for comparison, along with their names. The Kardii hyphen derives from the symbol used in lilkana to separate words.

†	n	'na'	Ɔ	v	'eva'	Ɔ	p	'pa'
ጸ	u	'una'	ጸ	s	'isa'	ጸ	z	'eza'
ጸ	o	'ona'	ጸ	sh	'isha'	ጸ	l	'ila'
ጸ	a	'ana'	ጸ	k	'ka'	ጸ	w	'iwa'
ጸ	i	'ina'	ጸ	j	'eja'	ጸ	d	'da'
ጸ	e	'ena'	ጸ	f	'ifa'	ጸ	h	'iha'
ጸ	t	'ta'	ጸ	r	'ira'	ጸ	y	'iya'

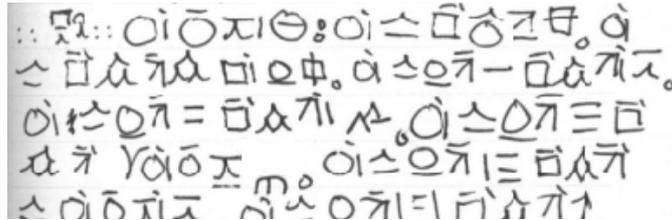
In short, the writing system used for Kardii is a very interesting one, and a lot of inspiration can be gained from studying it. Nortalala should be congratulated on this, and all conscripters would do well to remember that their own creations would benefit massively from this sort of detail.

The Kardii language and other works by Nortalala are hosted on her website, [www.kadrealia.com](http://www.kadrealia.com).

# 'Ukana'akau Script Update

The transliteration, gloss and translation of last issue's Script of the Month,  
by Sectori.

## The 'Ukana'akau Creation Myth



*Part of the text.*

*'la si ka'iaki: 'i k'aki k'a ta'aka nu nuta'u.*

in dat./loc.-sing. beginning: past create nom.-plur. god acc.-sing. world

*'I k'aki k'a pu'a na pu'a k'iu si 'at'i.*

past create nom.-plur. 3P from dat./loc.-sing. nothing

*'I k'aki una 'aki k'a pu'a n'i tu'ai.*

past create card.>ord. one nom.-plur. 3P acc.-plur. water

*'I k'aki una k'ua k'a pu'a n'i ku'ai.*

past create card.>ord. two nom.-plur. 3P acc.-plur. land

*'I k'aki una nai k'a pu'a n'i utani 'ia su ki'u.*

past create card.>ord. three nom.-plur. 3P acc.-plur. bird in dat./loc.-sing. sky

*'I k'aki una ki'au k'a pu'a n'a ina 'ia s'i tu'ai.*

past create card.>ord. four nom.-plur. 3P acc.-plur. fish in dat./loc.-plur. water

*'I k'aki una a'uni k'a pu'a n'u kanu.*

past create card.>ord. five nom.-plur. 3P acc.-plur human

*Au 'i kinu k'a ta'aka 'ui s'u kanu: "Aka k'iki k'u ti'u t'i ka'i n'i k'aki; t'i ka'i n'u k'inu."*

and past say nom.-plur. god to dat./loc.-plur. human: subj. prosper nom.-plur. 2P gen.-plur. 1P acc.-plur. creation; gen.-plur. 1P acc.-plur. child

*Au 'i kinu k'u kanu: "U k'iki k'i ka'i p'a ta'aka."*

and past say nom.-plur. human: fut. prosper nom.-plur. 1P voc.-plur. god

*Au 'i iku k'u kanu 'ia su nuta'u au 'i ipuku k'a pu'a na pu'a nu'i.*

and past go nom.-plur. human in dat./loc.-sing. world and past make nom.-plur. 3P acc.-sing. 3P good

*In the beginning: the gods created the world.*

*They created it from nothing.*

*First they created the waters.*

*Second they created the land.*

*Third they created the fish in the waters.*

*Fourth they created the birds in the sky.*

*Fifth they created humans.*

*And the gods said to the humans: "May you prosper, our creations; our children."*

*And the humans said: "We shall prosper, O gods."*

*And the humans went into the world and they made it well.*

# Conworlding for me and you

Sibkevsad talks about his own conworlding experience, and gives some advice for others.

Conlanging is an activity requiring great intelligence and creativity. Many people have made great conlangs and been famous for them. We can go as far back as J.R.R. Tolkien, to Mark Rosenfelder, creator of the ZBB, whom I'm sure most of you have heard of.

But Tolkien and Mark Rosenfelder are also known for their fabulous conworlds. To think that an entire, somewhat logically plausible, and beautiful planet with millions of years of history just like our own could be created in the life span of one person.

Hello, this is Sibkevsad, returning from the black abyss of playing video games all day to talk about conworlding. Many people have made great languages that appeal to a large audience, but not many have had the genius to be able to create an *entire world* (that contains, as our world and most conworlds obviously do, many different languages and other aspects). Languages are but a tiny part of the world.

I too, have wanted for some time of creating an entire world of my own. I used to work on one, before I figured that it just wasn't right. It had a language family, but that was its only strong point, and even then, the languages were mostly codes or *ciphers* for English. I had only really worked on one conlang, Saonian (those who know of it referred to it as "saón" which was the name of the language in the language itself).

My advice to aspiring conworlders - take it easy; don't give up. Yes, I know, that's about the most overrated piece of advice ever given, but it's all that works. Making a great conworld takes a lot of time and dedication. Hell, J.R.R. Tolkien spent more than half his life working on Middle-Earth, and Mark Rosenfelder alike has spent many years working on and expanding Almea.

There are a few ways you can start working on your conworld. Some people choose to stick with one aspect of a world at a time, e.g., they work on geography and make many maps of their world, then they start planning their races, and so on, in a sort of chronological order (obviously the world was made first, then people started inhabiting it, then cultures and languages developed).

Some people choose a more sectioned approach. For example, they make one area (country, continent, who knows?) of their world, then make a race, culture and language for them, then move on to the next area. Either way, there's no right method of designing a good conworld. Both methods listed take an equal amount of time and effort.

All in all, conworlding is a long, mind-boggling process, but it's well worth the wait. It doesn't matter if you're the writing type, or the more technical language type, there's something in it for everyone. You could even try grabbing a few friends and making a collaborative conworld. Even if your world doesn't attract many people, as long as you're proud of yourself for making it, it's a great thing, because you put your efforts in there. That's what makes a great conanything.

# Sound Advice

By the Editor

*"I think many of us would benefit from tips on how you make up your phonologies, as a newer conlanger, I'd love some pointers." – Plexus*

I came across this quote whilst browsing the ZBB, and it occurred to me that if what Plexus is saying is true, it could make a useful article for the *Journal*.

So, how do you go about making up phonologies? Obviously, I can't speak for every conlanger, but I can say what I, personally, do – whether or not it's 'right', or whether I'm particularly good at it, is always going to be a matter of opinion.

Someone in the ZBB thread which Plexus posted on suggested researching common sound changes, and regular readers will remember my article 'A Diachronic Condition' in the last *Journal*, in which I stressed the importance of giving conlangs a history. Whilst I have no intention of overturning that advice, you have to start somewhere. Unless you are deriving your language from another (either natural or created by someone else), there's going to have to be a point at which the phonological detail is simply 'made up'. It's this point I'm going to concentrate on mainly in this article, although I will still include sound change references.

Personally, my phonologies always start with the phonemes, generally laid out in a table. But how do you come up with your phoneme inventory? It is probably the most important part of any phonology – the only other feature that is absolutely necessary is a syllable structure, which needn't be any more detailed than '(C)V' – and the one that I would expect a lot of people to spend the most time on.

Phonemes, then (I'll concentrate on consonants for the time being). There are certain sounds, of course, which nearly all languages have: /p t k m s/ – though there's nothing to say you can't skip out on one or two of these. After this, the rest is a series of decisions. What other common sounds should be included – which of /q ʔ n ɲ ŋ f ʃ x h w j l ʎ r/, or maybe some others? Should any of these sounds (particularly plosives, and to a lesser extent fricatives) have voiced and unvoiced counterparts? Do you want aspiration on plosives? Anything else from the 'diacritics' section of the IPA chart? Long or geminate consonants? A retroflex series? Lateral fricatives (/ɬ ɮ/, or perhaps some others?); Affricates or double articulations? Clicks, implosives, ejectives? Do you really want /r/, or would another rhotic be better? Or more than one? And what about the rarer sounds, not necessarily in series but just as one-offs? Maybe you don't want any of these? If you have /y/, and also /w j/, do you also want /ɥ/, for symmetry (remember, though, that languages are rarely completely symmetrical)?

This is where sound change can play a part, even if you never actually construct the ancestral language. Many languages lack /p/ and /g/

(or even both), because they've weakened to /f/ and /ɣ/. You might choose not to have /j/ or /w/, but have a historical sound change turn them into fricatives - /ʒ/ and /v/, maybe. You might have a voicing distinction, but only finally - because a historical sound change voiced all plosives between vowels (retained as an allophonic rule) and then all final vowels were lost. *Do* research sound changes - they can give you a lot of ideas.

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Postalveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
Plosive	p b			t d		ʈ ɖ	c ɟ	k ɡ	q ɢ		ʔ
Nasal	m	ɱ		n		ɳ	ɲ	ŋ	ɴ		
Trill				r					ʀ		
Tap or Flap				ɾ		ɽ					
Fricative	ɸ β	f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ	ʂ ʐ	ç ʝ	x ɣ	χ ʁ	ħ ʕ	h ɦ
Lateral fricative				ɬ ɮ							
Approximant			ɹ	ɻ		ɻ	j	ɰ			
Lateral approximant				l		ɭ	ʎ	ʟ			

*The pulmonic consonant section of the IPA chart. An alternative process to the one above is to delete unwanted sounds - remember, however, that phonemes usually come in series.*

Onto vowels, where a similar process applies. It's fairly safe to start with /a i u/, though /a e o/ would also be a possibility. Then just - add in series. Do you want /e o/? /ɛ ɔ/? Some or all of /ə ɨ ʉ/? Front rounded vowels (you could have /y/ but no /u/, as a result of a historical fronting)? Back unrounded vowels? Lax vowels? A length distinction? Nasalisation (generally you'll have less nasal vowels than oral ones)? /ɑ/ instead of /a/? Diphthongs? Some of the rarer sounds, like /ɜ/ or /ə/? A bit of interesting asymmetry? Or maybe you'd rather just keep it simple? One of the rules here has to be: don't go over the top - unless you're fully aware you're doing so (and, hopefully, can justify it with plausible diachronics).

Another area that needs to be considered is tone. You may choose not to have it, but remember that it is a very common feature in natural languages. I won't pretend to be an expert on tone, and I won't go into detail here, but a similar process can be taken to that used to develop vowels and consonants.

After the phonemes are done, we move on to the rest of the phonological detail. I usually start with syllable structure and phonotactics. The more complex the basic syllables the more work is required. Choose (C)V and if you want you can leave it at that - though you don't have to. Choose (C)(C)(C)V(V)(V)(C)(C)(C) and the work is likely to be rather a lot more difficult - because chances are the language won't allow any combination of three consonants or three vowels. If you choose a syllable structure that allows clusters, the next stage has to be - which ones?

There are three different sets of clusters to consider - initial, medial (including across syllable boundaries) and final. In theory, you can simply draw up all possible clusters in a long list or table, and get rid of the ones you don't want. This has two main problems - firstly it can take a very long time, and secondly it's rather unsystematic.

Better, then, to decide on your clusters in a series of generalised rules. 'Any plosive plus any fricative', for example. Or 'any plosive plus any fricative of the same voicing'. Or 'any plosive plus any fricative of the same voicing at the same place of articulation'. Maybe have the odd one-off rule, or introduce a few exceptions - providing you can explain them in some

way (your language might allow /pj/ and /kj/ but not /tj/, because all instances of that cluster have become /tʃ/, for example). One thing I have done occasionally is to display legal clusters in a table - consonants in the top row can only be followed by those in the column or columns directly below them on the next row. Final clusters are often the inverse of initial clusters - research sonority hierarchies for more information on how this works and for some more ideas on structuring your clustering rules. You might also want to introduce regular morphophonemic rules regarding what happens when derivation or inflection results in an illegal sequence of vowels or consonants being produced - the insertion of a glottal stop or epenthetic vowel, for example, or perhaps a form of assimilation - this can be seen as a relic of historical sound changes. Alternatively, you could decide that these otherwise 'illegal' sequences are simply exceptions to the rule, caused by analogy with other forms.

After syllable structure, I will tend to move on to a stress rule. This can be very simple - on the final syllable in all cases, for example - or far more complicated, from having numerous different stress locations depending on (for example) the number of syllables in a word or the presence or absence of long vowels or consonant clusters to making stress a completely irregular phonemic feature varying in each individual word.

There is one major feature remaining: allophony. This is another area where sound change comes in useful - in fact, you can think of allophony as conditional sound change that hasn't yet had the right factors to become phonemic. Research common sound changes and you are in many ways researching common allophonies, and vice versa. There are numerous different possible allophonic rules - voicing of plosives between voiced sounds, lengthening of vowels in stressed syllables, palatalisation of consonants before /i/ and /j/ ... As I said, research sound changes for inspiration. Remember, though, that certain sound changes can't be reflected as allophony - the unconditional shift of a phoneme to another place of articulation, for example, or the loss of a sound in final position (though the may have a morphophonemic effect).

One thing I haven't discussed in this article is orthography, which is often very closely linked with phonology. Sometimes people will devise phonologies with orthography in mind - picking a certain sound because they like the letter or letters they wish to use to represent it, and so on, or to avoid problems later on - ten vowels with a complex tone distinction and irregular stress can be an awful pain to represent in an æsthetic manner. On the other hand, natural languages obviously never evolve with their future orthographies in mind, and a truly realistic conlang would never have its 'true' spoken form affected by considerations for the writing system. Creating an orthography from a 'difficult' phonology can also be an enjoyable challenge. Thus there are arguments for both positions, and I will recommend neither one over the other - I have used both in my own work.

I hope this proves useful for 'newer' conlangers like Plexus, and maybe some more experienced conlangers as well. If anyone has any questions, I'm not against helping out, and I wish all readers the best of luck with their work. And apologies if I've misled anybody.

# The Unknown Language

The Editor looks at one of the world's oldest known conlangs - which may not get as much recognition as it should.

It is tempting, perhaps, to think of conlanging as a modern hobby - dating back a few hundred years at most. Certainly the 'communal' form we know today is a very recent development, emerging only once the Internet appeared. If we look through the 'Year' category on Langmaker.com, one language stands out - the twelfth-century **Lingua Ignota** ('unknown language'), created by a certain Abbess **Hildegard of Bingen**, dating from four hundred years earlier than the next on the list. I first came across this language a few months ago whilst casually browsing Wikipedia (something I do often) - I don't know how well known it is in the conlanging community as a whole, though the fact that it apparently escaped my attention for the best part of two years suggests 'not very' (one the other hand, it consistently scores well in Langmaker's page-views ranking system).



*Hildegard with the monk Volmar*

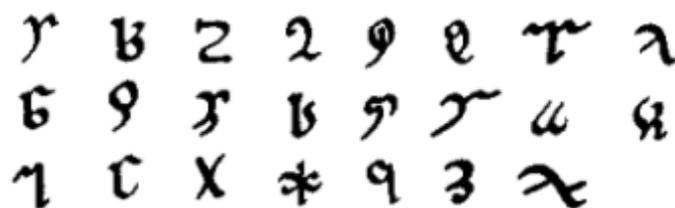
The Lingua Ignota (I use the article here, though it is by no means necessary – nor, in some trains of thought, correct) is noticeable on several counts. Firstly, and perhaps most obviously, is its age. If there are older extant conlangs, I have not come across them; it is also worth noting that it dates from a pre-Renaissance era, the only such language listed on Langmaker. Secondly, it does not appear to have served any practical purpose – it was not (to my thinking) a 'stealth' language, an auxiliary language or even a philosophical language, unlike the vast majority of extant conlangs created before the twentieth century and the 'Tolkienian revolution'. The evidence suggests that Hildegard may have been the only person who ever spoke the language. At the same time, however, it does not appear to have been an 'artistic language' as are relatively common in the post-Tolkien world. Rather it was a mystic language (a 'mystlang', perhaps?), attributed by the visionary Hildegard to divine inspiration – she

claimed similar of her music, which has also gone down in history. Thirdly, she was a woman. Female conlangers seem rare enough even today, and certainly most of the well-known partakers in the hobby (in the community and in the world at large) are men. Transpose this back to the male-dominated society of the Middle Ages and her achievements stand out even more – although admittedly less so in language construction terms (she achieved success in several other areas), because there are no other known contemporary conlangers of either sex to compare her with.

Viewed objectively, perhaps, the *Lingua Ignota* is not much of a language in terms of content - I find it in some ways reminiscent of some of my earliest conlanging attempts, at the age of seven or eight. The words are mostly nouns, with a few adjectives - only once is the language actually seen in use, as isolated words within a text otherwise written in Latin. It has been suggested that the *Lingua Ignota* was created as a secret language, though exactly why will probably always be mystery.

The only 'complete' list of words in the language includes 1011 different lexemes - as most conlangers would probably agree, a fairly impressive figure - listed with Latin or occasionally German glosses. The words themselves appear to be basically *a priori* and do not recall any particular natural language (though some Indo-European similarities can be seen); many end in -z. They cover a number of different semantic fields, including many living things (especially plants) - quadrupeds are strangely lacking. Two partial glossaries are also available. However, four of the five words in the only extant sample are not included in Hildegard's original wordlist on which the glossaries are based, suggesting the vocabulary was actually significantly larger.

Some examples of derivational morphology and related lexemes can be seen in the samples, e.g. *hiliz-maiz*, 'step-mother', from *maiz*, 'mother'; *peuearrez*, 'patriarch', from *peueriz*, 'father'. The words in the sample appear to take inflections similar to those of Latin.



*Hildegard's twenty-three 'Litterae Ignotae' ('unknown letters') - an early conscript, used to write her language.*

Whilst the *Lingua Ignota* may not compare structurally to many modern conlangs, it should still hold a special place in the history of language construction. Hildegard, then, is an important figure in that history - perhaps she could even be called the patron saint of conlanging. Remind me to take a day off on September 17th - her feast day. And to petition the Pope to officially canonise her.

More information on the *Lingua Ignota* is available at [www.rickharrison.com/language/ignota.html](http://www.rickharrison.com/language/ignota.html) and on Wikipedia.

# Reality Conlanging Update

'Reality conlanging' may have seemed a strange name, but in the end reality itself caught up with it - **Ceresz's** computer crashing and rendering him unable to continue. All too like 'real' language construction, alas - he and **Tzirtzi** can't be the only ones to have their work suffer from technological problems. We reproduce here the pure, minimally edited high- and lowlights of what they did manage before the project's unfortunate and untimely end.

Hey Skurai (...Still think of you as Skurai rather than Ceresz :P)

Well, we might as well get started :D

What kind of language would you like to do? A-priori or a-posteriori? I'm quite happy to do either - a-priori would be likely to be more free, but a-posteriori gives lots of material to work with from the start. So whichever is cool :).

Were we to do a-posteriori, then I wondered about deriving a language from Old English? But that's probably something that an English speaker particularly would be interested in :P. Else, I'm quite happy to do whatever. If you'd like to do an a-posteriori language, then what kind of natlang resources do you have? I have stuff for Sanskrit, OE, Latin, Ancient Greek, Scots Gaelic, Welsh, Italian, Spanish, a bit for Arabic, a bit for Middle Egyptian, a bit for Old Church Slavonic... So if we do want to do a-posteriori, I guess we should aim to do something we can both get resources for?

I reckon I should warn you that I'm kinda obsessive about realism and detail :P. Whenever I do a synthetic language, I always have to have derived it through sound changes from an ancestor sketch... :P. Etc. What are your feelings on this? Are you more into interesting ideas, or internal realism? :)

Beyond choices on exactly what kind of language we want to do, methinks we need to sort out how we're going to do it. The obvious method, t'would seem to me, is if we split up jobs and then go off and do them - then send the stuff to each other as we do it. Then the other can read, and make any suggestions etc. Sound ok? :) Then stuff like word-building we can just both do as we go along. Also, once we're finished (or as we go along), I can put it online if that'd be cool? I own [www.d20-dragon.co.uk](http://www.d20-dragon.co.uk), [www.leoht.co.uk](http://www.leoht.co.uk), and co-own [www.placid-acid.com](http://www.placid-acid.com) - so would be able to put stuff on either of the first two, or a subdomain of the last.

Apologies, btw, that we'll have to do our communication in my native language :P. Always feels a bit rude...

Tzirtzi x

*Hehe, call me whatever you want man :D*

*What kind of language I would like to do? Hmm, I have always wanted to make a language based on an existing language. So I would say a posteriori would be cool ;) About what language to start from, I guess we could base it on Old English, or any other language that we have resources for. I have resources for Old Norse (only Wikipedia ;/...)... and... hmm, Welsh, Japanese... and of course Swedish :D Oh, and Spanish.*

*Continued →*

*(These are the languages I can speak or have books on). Then there's also Wikipedia :) I guess we could start by using the basic phonology of a language, then add or remove sounds we like or don't like. Then we could design our own grammar and vocabulary, and keep it real as you said :P*

*Yes, you could upload the vocabulary to a website, that would be great :D  
And about communicating in English, don't worry about, I can handle it ;)  
~Ceresz (Or Skurai :P)*

Cool :P

Well, as we both have resources for Spanish and Welsh, what about one of those? In which case, what about doing a future-Spanish or future-Welsh, either with a specific set of other natlang influences or just as an isolate? Wikipedia is a little limited, I generally find, though for something as big as ON it certainly might do...

So, cool :).

I'll set up something on leoht.co.uk...

Tzirtzi x

(Though, having researched a bit, the OE and ON resources on Wikipedia are actually very good - so those could be options too :P)

*Yes they would :D*

Well, as I don't actually speak any Welsh but, similarly, speak some Spanish.. Sounds like Spanish :D

So, how exactly shall we do this? A future Spanish, a creole with something, or a close relative? (which, of course, would be easier if there are some resources around for old Spanish..)

*Yeah, Español sounds great.*

*I don't know if there are any reasorses for Old Spanish... I will have to look into it :/*

*Anyways, I would like to do (eaiter one of these), a future Spanish, a close relative, a language loosely (mostly phonology, some grammar) based on Spanish.*

*I guess it's up to you, which one of these would you like to do the most? Since I'm up for whatever :D*

Right.. thus, because I am not very decisive: Pros and Cons :P.

Close relative - old Spanish resources extant ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old\\_Spanish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Spanish)) but not extensive. given the Latin>Spanish sound changes in the ZBB Correspondence Library, t'would be possible. Includes doing sound changes, which I like :P. quite a lot of work.

Future Spanish - just uses modern Spanish, which is easier (if perhaps slightly less cool). Again, uses sound changes, which again I like :P. again, quite a lot of work.

Loosely based - lets us make everything up (thus no resources needed). Less work as no sound changes needed. Lot more work for vocab.

So, ... do you like doing sound changes, or do you like making lots of vocab?

*Hmm, I like both...*

*Continued →*

*However, I go for doing a new Spanish from old Spanish using sound changes :D*

Kay, excellent :D

So what point shall we break off? \*goes to look at the linguistic history of spanish page..\*

*Hard to say... I will have to have a look at it too :S*

*Who knows, maybe we will be able to begin tomorrow :D*

Aye, I hope so :)

I've attached a file with all the posts in the correspondance library on Latin>Spanish in it. Should be useful to browse... Along with [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old\\_Spanish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Spanish) it should be enough, I think.

I'm starting on trying to work out a rough order of sound changes :P But it's pretty bloody hard, the mess they're in from that post :S.

Tzirtzi x

Well... There seemed to be lack of communication yesterday, but I had a go at those Spanish sound changes anyway (and ended up asking for help on teh ZBB, as you might have noticed...:P)

I've attached the changes so far. They're not finished, but getting there. I'll also attach the semi-Vulgar Latin vocab I've been using to test it. One of the current main problems is the when and the how of lenition to nothing of intervocalic d, like in the 2ndp. pl. pres. verb endings.

Hope you're all good and such :)

Tzirtzi x

[The changes themselves have not been submitted to the *Journal*-Ed.]

¿Donde estas?!

Fraid I'm necessarily going to be mostly unavailable over this weekend. I'll do my best to keep checking my email, but I'll be at a friend's house and I don't know what his internet access is like...

Hope everything's ok, and you still want to do this project.. :P

Tzirtzi x

*That's okay, and great job so far ;)*

*Sorry for not responding but I have been a bit busy lately, not been able to check my mail :)*

*And yes, I still want to do this project :D*

*-Ceresz*

Cool. Well, want to have a go at the remainder of the Latin>Spanish sound changes, or shall I continue with them?

Also, where do we want to split this off? I would suggest early enough so as not to have Spanish's merger of b/v/w, and early enough that we can have a few interesting

divergent sound changes...

What would you say to using these to expand the vowel system a little? Five vowels, no length distinction = boring :P.

Tzirtzi x

*Damn, I'm afraid I won't be able to finish this :(  
My computer crashed a while ago, and it's not fixed yet.  
I'm sending you this from a friend's computer...  
Sorry, I mean it, I was really excited about this :(  
-Ceresz*

Public interest has meant that further Reality Conlanging projects may be held in the future. Those interested should contact the Editor.

## The *Conlanger.com* Journal

would like to celebrate

# ONE YEAR OF CONLANGER.COM

and to thank and congratulate all those who have helped out over the last twelve months.



Happy birthday! - Grattis på födelsedagen! - Bon anniversaire! - Feliz cumpleaños! - Herzlich Glückwunsch zum Geburtstag! - Tanjobi Omedeto!  
- Hyvää syntymäpäivää! - Wszystkiego najlepszego z okazji urodzin! -  
Buon compleanno! - Per molts anys! - Gelukkige verjaardag! - ...

# Conrecipe Page

A dish from Curlyjimsam's conworld.

**Lemon juice** is the stereotypical Atlian drink not without good reason. This peppered variety (*rymau buume*, /ɹi:mau bu:me/) is often drunk out on the lawn on hot tropical evenings. The recipe is a simple one, though it may be difficult to get hold of the best-quality lemons on Earth.

## Ingredients:

*Makes one serving.*

3 medium-sized lemons

1 pinch pepper

1 stick celery

Serve with shortbread\* and salad (lettuce, spinach, cucumber, etc.)

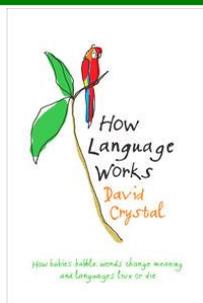


## Method:

1. Squeeze the juice from the lemons. Discard the rind and any remaining flesh.
2. Chill the juice at around 5°C/40°F for at least 30 minutes.
3. Pour the juice into a glass, and add the pepper. Stir well.
4. Cut the celery to approximately a 10cm/4in length. The remainder may be used in the salad. Place in the glass.
5. Serve on a plate with a small amount of shortbread and salad. Eat/drink at leisure, leaving the celery stick until last.

\* - Atlian shortbread is traditionally made with riceflour, although other flours may also be used.

# Editor's Review



David Crystal's *How Language Works* is for a large part an abridged and reordered version of his earlier work, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language* (incidentally the book I credit with really kick-starting my linguistic hobby). This is by no means a bad thing. I have never read the *Encyclopedia* in its entirety - never really being hugely interested in the physical and biological processes involving in speaking and listening, reading and writing - and *How Language Works* gives a less in-depth overview of these areas that caters better for my sort of approach. There are other areas it covers that I am similarly less well-versed in, largely because they do not feature greatly in conlanging (although perhaps they should) and I have had less reason to research them: pragmatics, language ecology and acquisition, sociolinguistics, and so on. Even in the areas which I am reasonably familiar with - phonology, morphosyntax, semantics - there are some new insights for me, or at the very least things I regularly forget in my own 'creative linguistics'.

However, the book is obviously intended as an *introduction* to linguistics - and the more one has studied the subject, the less one will find of interest. Prof. Crystal seems to have some strange views in some places - but then again, he is a professional and I am not. I only recently purchased the work, in fact - I had heard of it previously, but it seemed no more a good way to spend my money than the numerous other, more in-depth, linguistics books out there. It was only after attending a talk by the author - who, incidentally, gives off an aura of being very much the 'wise old professor' of fiction - about the book, at my hometown's annual Festival, that I was persuaded to make the purchase: the talk was certainly very interesting and I naturally wanted to find out more. I'm still not entirely sure whether or not it was 'worth it'. Yes, it has some good points, but who's to say another book of the same price wouldn't have more? (I'm not entirely sure of this; two University textbooks on historical linguistics contained very little of relevance to conlanging that I hadn't picked up already.)

I think for most people it's going to be a case of how much they know already. For someone just entering linguistics it should certainly be very interesting, and worth the money. More experienced readers might get less out of it.

*How Language Works* is available from all good online bookstores.