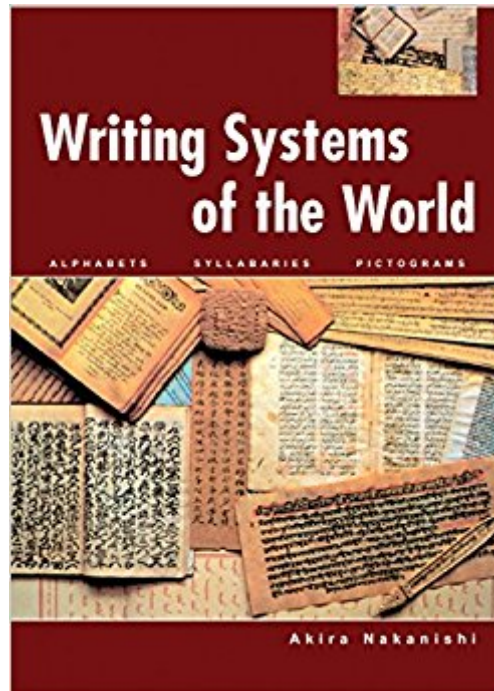


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# Writing Systems Of The World: Alphabets, Syllabaries, Pictograms



## Synopsis

This unique, ambitious and entertaining book presents twenty-nine scripts in detail and offers examples of a hundred more. Written in nontechnical prose and organized into brief but comprehensive sections, it will serve as a handy reference for world travelers, stamp collectors, and calligraphers, along with providing hours of reading enjoyment to those who are fascinated by the written symbol itself. The scripts covered here are from all over the world. A few, like Greek or the Cyrillic script used for Russian, may be familiar to readers of Western languages. But others may seem strange, such as Pakistan's Urdu, which is written in a style so fine that newspapers are not typeset but reproduced from pages laboriously written out by hand. Each of the script sections includes charts of the symbols, reading tips, forms of numerals, and other features that help explain how the language is written. Further enhanced with maps, illustrations, a glossary, and useful appendixes, *Writing Systems of the World* is a remarkably concise and organized look at what is perhaps mankind's greatest achievement, the written language.

## Book Information

Paperback: 122 pages

Publisher: Charles E. Tuttle Company, Inc.; 3rd prt. edition (1990)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0804816549

ISBN-13: 978-0804816540

Product Dimensions: 7.2 x 0.4 x 10 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 21 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #608,891 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #96 in [Books > Reference > Words, Language & Grammar > Handwriting](#) #295 in [Books > History > Historical Study & Educational Resources > Study & Teaching](#) #399 in [Books > Reference > Words, Language & Grammar > Alphabet](#)

## Customer Reviews

"A joy to read. Easy to navigate, easy to compare systems. Clear, lucid prose. Excellent examples."  
#8212 Goodreads

Text: English, Japanese (translation) --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

It is sometimes convenient to have a catalogue type book that includes images of the written format of a language. I have a real pleasure with this subject and advise anyone who enjoys languages, their differences as well as similarities to purchase this beauty. A quick glance may help you search in the right direction which is all you need sometimes. Enjoyable and I do hope to find more book of the sort.

If you are looking for an inexpensive guide that shows all of the modern writing systems, this is it. Even though it has not been updated in over 25 years, it still has almost everything you would want from such a book. The examples of newspaper front pages for many of the major languages is a great way to see the various writing systems in modern use. This book belongs on the shelf of anyone interested in internationalization or written languages in general.

our students really live this book

Great book about the world's writing systems.

Oldie but a goldie.

Mr. Nakanishi has done a superlative job of gathering native print samples from a vast array of different languages. For many languages he shows actual print samples, typically from a newspaper printed in that language. There are comparisons of languages and groupings into language families. For many languages he lists the "alphabet" (or syllabary or what have you for the given language) and includes a phonetic transcription of the individual characters. On the inside cover of the hard cover edition, there is a color map showing which scripts are predominantly used in different places around the Earth. The same map is in black and white in the back pages of the paperback edition. If you are looking for a book that shows you how characters look in many different languages, then this is the book for you. For just linguistic curiosity, it's a fascinating book, and extraordinarily helpful as a language/print reference source.

This book serves well as a compact catalog of the major writing systems in the world. It's not the reference I was looking for, however. It's quite brief, and the examples are almost always newspapers. The other issues I have are: 1. It's kind of out of date - the information is all from the

eighties. There's been some redrawing of the borders and changes in fonts and conventions since then.<sup>2</sup> The quality of the reproductions is poor. Many of the beautiful scripts in here are not shown in their best light. The plain fonts and photocopy-quality examples just don't do the scripts justice. Still, it does contain reproductions of a lot of alphabets. It would be really handy in identifying an unknown sample of writing, for example.

This delightful, short (116 pages, including glossary) reference book is a good read and a useful, quick tool to look up what is on that stamp, coin or maker's mark you want to decipher. It is frustratingly out of date. The Japanese original, of which this is the 1980 translation, predates major events like the fall of the Soviet Empire and the birth, rebirth or change in government of many countries and their subdivisions with consequent changes for official languages and scripts. Much scholarly work would require changes in the material. For example, linguistic analysis in the 1980's calls into question whether Thai should be classified as Sino-Tibetan. The recent Yale discoveries of early Semitic graffiti and much archaeological work in Central Asia, the Near East and elsewhere needs incorporation in a revised volume. Some detail known at the time of publication was omitted that would be of interest, like the alphabetic core of the Egyptian hieroglyphic system. The lack of mention of "Cretan" [it was found in profusion at Mycenae on the Greek mainland, also] Linear B being a syllabary used to write early Greek is another puzzling omission. So is the relationship of Etruscan writing to the Germanic runic alphabets not to mention the Roman alphabet. The statement on page 106 that there was no contact between the Americas and the "Old World" before the 15th century was known to be inaccurate at the time of publication and much more evidence of contact has been discovered since. In short, this is an enjoyable book with a delightful presentation. As should be clear, I want to see a new edition with a few corrections, some short elaborations and modernization of the material.

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