Recommendations for Maghrebi Arabic alphabet

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STANDARD MAGHREBI
NEW RECOMMENDATIONS ABOUT WRITING DARJA IN ARABIC SCRIPT

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INTRODUCTION

I have published a standard spelling system for Darja in Arabic script before, however, after using these recommendations in real life and trying to write Darja in Arabic script, it became clear to me how defective the writing system is. In this brief work, I introduce some new recommendations for writing Darja—or Standard Maghrebi—in Arabic script.

Although the standard orthography for Maghrebi using Latin script is actually more faithful for the pronunciation and easier to learn, an Arabic-based writing system might be helpful in some situations and it might even be preferred over the Latin script.

The Hebrew and the Aramaic spelling systems inspired me for introducing these new recommendations. I also reviewed users’ contributions to Algerian Wikipedia in the Incubator. Any rule that is not reformed here can be found in Standard Written Maghrebi (Arabic script).

THE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The letters ذ and ث are no more used; unless when replacing them with د and ت results in homographs.
2. The Arabic letter ng is always used to write /g/ in foreign non-Arabic words.
   a. Foreign toponyms follow the writing tradition of the country, hence, gafṣa is written with Qaf with three dots above even if it is from Capsa.
3. The Arabic letter tcheh is used as an equivalent to Latin script Ğ.
4. The Arabic letter seen with three dots below and three dots above is used as an alternative for Latin script Č.
5. The letter آ is now replaced with أ, even when it is stressed. E.g. أنا
6. The vowel /i/ is now always written إ at the beginning of the word; it is never followed by a Ya to mark length (in MSA) or stress (in Maghrebi). E.g. إمān from Arabic إمāن and إسلام from Arabic إسلام.
   Note that both Maghrebi words are pronounced with the same initial vowel.
7. The vowel /u/ is now always writtenؤinitially. E.g. يؤستاد وؤریثة
8. The initial Alif indicates an epenthetic schwa, which is dropped in Latin script. It can never occur in an open syllable. E.g. استقلال
9. When adding the invariable article إل, the Hamza is not dropped. E.g. الإمان (pronounced liman).

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1 The Arabic rule is to write foreign name with an Alif. However, in a language as mixed as Darja, it is confusing when to use Alif and when not. So, I decided to drop the final Alif in most words.
10. Vowels, which are an original part of the word and not just a way to make pronunciation easier, are written as long ones. E.g. مصدري، مكتبي، ماهية، خارطة، خازن، موصل، موظف، موفده... that some speakers pronounce with a long /a/ (mektabi/mketbi). Note that there is a difference in meanings between معلم and معلم which are borrowed from the same word².

11. /a/ at the end of a word having at least three radicals is written -ه. E.g. مكتبی
   a. In construct state, the ending becomes -ست. E.g. مکتبی
   b. If the stress falls on the /a/, it is spelled using an Alif. E.g. مکتبی
   c. If the /a/ is originally an /i/, it is spelled using a Ya Maqsura. E.g. مکتبی
   d. If the /a/ is originally an /u/, it is spelled using an Alif. E.g. مکتبی
   e. If the /a/ is invariable when adding a dialectal suffix or becomes stressed in one of its dialectal forms, it is spelled using Alif. E.g. مکتبی
      i. Huwa is spelled هوّا and hiya is spelled هیّا
   f. When a noun's last consonant is Ya or Wa, it is can be followed by an Alif or an Alif Maqsura, but never by -ه. E.g. مکتبی
      i. If it has the sequence awa or aya, it can be spelled with ای

12. The final silent Alif is dropped in past verbs when they end with the diphthongs aw or ay. E.g. مشاوا

13. L-li is spelled الّی

14. The personal pronouns are أنا، أيّا، هوّا، هيّا، حنا، نتوما، هوما

15. The first singular possessive pronoun -يا is spelled میا

² A similar situation is kartå and karița, which are both from Greek, however, the former is borrowed from French and the latter is from Arabic.