Playing with the Shavian Alphabet

Recently I discovered the Shavian alphabet, and passed a few days playing with it. One result is an Emacs Mule input method, which I developed for this alphabet.

My first intention was to apply the familiar SAMPA ASCIIzation; yet in order to simplify the input I adopted a few modifications.

In order to avoid frequent upcasing in `I, aI, eI`, I use the `ee` digraph for [i:] (i.e. 𐑇), thus freeing `i` for [ɪ] (i.e. 𐑦). Hence I can use the simpler `ei, ai` etc combinations. The same holds for `oo` and `u` instead of the SAMPA's `u` and `U` (and hence the simpler `au, ou`).

Similarly, `y` is used for [j] (i.e. \, *yea*) so that the deep letter `j` can be used for [ʤ] (*judge*, 𐑡); and the "tall" upper-case `J` becomes the unvoiced [ʧ] (*church*, 𐑗).

Most ligatures are the normal SAMPA combinations:

are [ɑr] `Ar` → 𐑮 ; `Or` → 𐑹 [ɔr], [ɔər] *or*

array [ər] `@r` → 𐑺 ; `i@r` - 𐑻 [ɪər], *ear*

Ian [i.ə] `i@` → 𐑾, etc.

If for some strange reason you have to avoid merging a combination into a single Shavian letter, you can enter and erase a space between the combining characters; that will break the sequence, and the inputs shall be disjoint. E.g.

```
A SPC BS r
```

shall input two consecutive letters 𐑭𐑪, not a single *are* ligature (𐑮).

The input method module is available here: shavian-ucs.el. Put it somewhere in your Elisp `load-path` hierarchy; and evaluate (add in your `.emacs`) the method specification:

```
(register-input-method
 "shavian-ucs" "utf-8" 'quail-use-package
 "𐑖8" "A SAMPA-like method to input Shavian letters"
 "shavian-ucs")
```

You can choose an input method by `C-x C-M C-x`; thereafter you shall be able to toggle the input methods by `C-\`.

There are several Unicode fonts for the Shavian alphabet. Unfortunately none of them has kerning for the Shavian part, and most use the stingy interword spacing traditional in the English-language typography (0.3 em, which is too narrow; the Russian norm is 0.5 em). In this situation monospaced fonts could be more readable than the proportional ones.

I also like to play with the esperantic version of the project, la Ŝava alfabeto.

Below is the result of an input exercise I used to check my input method.

𐑞 ·𐑖𐑱𐑝𐑾𐑯 𐑨𐑤𐑓𐑩𐑚𐑧𐑑

𐑑𐑷𐑤 𐑯 𐑛𐑰𐑐 𐑤𐑧𐑑𐑼𐑟:

𐑐𐑰𐑐 𐑚𐑦𐑚
𐑑𐑪𐑑 𐑛𐑧𐑛
𐑒𐑦𐑒 𐑜𐑨𐑜
𐑓𐑰 𐑝𐑬
𐑔𐑲 𐑞𐑱
𐑕𐑴 𐑟𐑵
𐑖𐑫𐑼 𐑥𐑧𐑠𐑼
𐑗𐑻𐑗 𐑡𐑳𐑡
𐑘𐑱 𐑢𐑴
𐑣𐑳𐑙 𐑣𐑭-𐑣𐑭

𐑖𐑹𐑑 𐑤𐑧𐑑𐑼𐑟:

𐑤𐑪𐑤 𐑮𐑹
𐑥𐑲𐑥 𐑯𐑳𐑯
𐑦𐑓 𐑰𐑑
𐑧𐑜 𐑱𐑡 𐑨𐑖 𐑲𐑕
𐑩𐑛𐑵 𐑳𐑐 𐑪𐑯
𐑴𐑒 𐑢𐑫𐑤 𐑵𐑟 𐑶𐑤 𐑬𐑑 𐑭 𐑷

𐑤𐑦𐑜𐑩𐑗𐑼𐑟 (= 𐑤𐑦𐑜𐑩𐑑𐑿𐑼𐑟 = 𐑤𐑦𐑜𐑩𐑑𐑘𐑫𐑼𐑟):

𐑸 𐑹 𐑺 𐑻 𐑼 𐑽 𐑾 𐑿

𐑐𐑨𐑙𐑜𐑮𐑨𐑥𐑟

(This traditional pangram, of course, is no pangram for the Shavian alphabet, but anyway:)

> 𐑞𐑩 𐑒𐑢𐑦𐑒 𐑚𐑮𐑬𐑯 𐑓𐑪𐑒𐑕 𐑡𐑳𐑥𐑐𐑕 𐑴𐑝𐑼 𐑞𐑩 𐑛𐑪𐑜.

(I do not like this pangram, but I do not know anything better:)

> 𐑼𐑱𐑟 𐑝 𐑗𐑬𐑛𐑼-𐑣𐑱𐑑𐑦𐑙 ·𐑚𐑴𐑣𐑰𐑥𐑾𐑯𐑟 𐑓𐑽 𐑢𐑻𐑒, 𐑘𐑧𐑑 𐑑𐑶𐑤 𐑦𐑯 𐑺, 𐑢𐑷𐑑𐑼, 𐑓𐑲𐑼, 𐑯 𐑻𐑔, 𐑷𐑤 𐑓𐑹 𐑩 𐑒𐑳𐑐 𐑝 𐑒𐑪𐑓𐑦 𐑞𐑨𐑑 𐑩 𐑕𐑸𐑡𐑩𐑯𐑑 𐑚𐑮𐑵𐑛, 𐑖𐑫𐑼𐑤𐑦 𐑩 𐑐𐑤𐑧𐑠𐑼 𐑓𐑿 𐑓𐑹𐑜𐑴.
>
> (Arrays of chowder-hating Bohemians fear work, yet toil in air, water, fire, and earth, all for a cup of coffee that a sergeant brewed, surely a pleasure few forgo.)

𐑸𐑑𐑦𐑒𐑩𐑤 1 𐑝 𐑞 ·𐑿𐑯𐑦𐑝𐑻𐑕𐑩𐑤 𐑛𐑧𐑒𐑤𐑼𐑱𐑖𐑩𐑯 𐑝 𐑣𐑿𐑥𐑩𐑯 𐑮𐑲𐑑𐑕

> 𐑷𐑤 𐑣𐑿𐑥𐑩𐑯 𐑚𐑰𐑦𐑙𐑟 𐑸 𐑚𐑹𐑯 𐑓𐑮𐑰 𐑯 𐑰𐑒𐑢𐑩𐑤 𐑦𐑯 𐑛𐑦𐑜𐑯𐑦𐑑𐑦 𐑯 𐑮𐑲𐑑𐑕. 𐑞𐑱 𐑸 𐑦𐑯𐑛𐑬𐑛 𐑢𐑦𐑞 𐑮𐑰𐑟𐑩𐑯 𐑯 𐑒𐑪𐑯𐑖𐑩𐑯𐑕 𐑯 𐑖𐑫𐑛 𐑨𐑒𐑑 𐑑𐑩𐑢𐑹𐑛𐑟 𐑢𐑳𐑯 𐑩𐑯𐑳𐑞𐑼 𐑦𐑯 𐑩 𐑕𐑐𐑦𐑮𐑦𐑑 𐑝 𐑚𐑮𐑳𐑞𐑼𐑣𐑫𐑛.

(All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. *Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.*)

Sergei Pokrovsky ·𐑕𐑻𐑜𐑱 ·𐑐𐑭𐑒𐑮𐑷𐑓𐑕𐑒𐑰
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