

R Shape & R Objects-Images Represented in the World: [R, Я, Ꝛ, ꝛ]

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INTRODUCTION

Capital letter R, which in this study is a Shape or Image, is the concern of this article. The work therefore is a description of **R Shape**. This is part of an ongoing research project on Shapes or Images (ref. *The Strait and Kurve Shapes: Shapes as Objects and Objects as Shapes: A Lexicon, Awuku forthcoming*). This project takes/adopts the letters or symbols of the phonetic alphabets as Shapes or Shorthand or Abbreviated images of real objects or things in the world. This work aims eventually at an R Album and therefore is a compilation of R Shape positions and representative images or objects in the world. The work is a descriptive work (which can be applied to theory where associations or relatedness can be found).

Observation and Hypothesis/Hypotheses

The Shapes project, whether R Shape or other (e.g. small r, A a; B b; C c; T t etc) has a common underlying observation spelt out in previous articles (Awuku, 2011:152; Awuku, 2020) which is also found in the Shapes Book (forthcoming) and repeated below:

...the forms or shapes of written language that we see are not arbitrary representations invented by linguists. In other words, when one considers or looks at language shapes, whether in codified forms (i.e. alphabetic writing systems, using letters, linguistic transcriptions, fonts), or in images (e.g. signs), and the like, what we see is that these shapes are “redundantly and consistently” represented in terms of smaller shapes or atomic parts that I call the Strait and Kurve building blocks. These Strait and Kurve (coinages from respectively, ‘straight’ and ‘curve’) themselves can be conceived of as shaped, or “architected” in a certain way. These shapes are not only found in language shapes, but are also available in object shapes (i.e. the objects that language names in the world in general). ..The Strait and the Kurve atomic shapes are shown respectively as follows: **I Ꝛ**.

Again, the atomic or underlying Shapes are as follows:

A Strait: |

A Kurve: < or C (the Kurve can be a V-like image).

Therefore, a capital R letter-Shape is composed of a Strait and a somewhat complex Kurve as follows:



Previous Studies and the Issues of Arbitrariness & Redundancy in Language: the Case of R

The first issue that can be raised here is that, on the whole, R spelt words and names, in English (and in many languages) seem to be **arbitrary** in previous studies. For example, why spell “Rabbit” (a small animal with long ears, short tail) with R¹ and not with T or S or M as shown below?:

***T**abbit ***S**abbit ***M**abbit etc.

Again, why is “Rice” for instance, in the English dictionary (Hornby 2006) spelt with R and not as shown below:

***S**ice ***T**ice ***B**ice etc.

Even though a lot about R can be explained by virtue of etymology/history, borrowing, and other language specific issues (including R spelt words such as **R**eturn, **R**edo; leade**R**, sende**R**; **R**ay; brave**Ry**, rival**Ry**, sca**Ry**; u**R**, **R**e etc. which are non-arbitrary because of their morphemic nature), yet, in general, many words spelt with R in English and in alphabetic spelling, as a whole, appear to be arbitrary. Remember that this research is not intended to be English specific even though English language examples are used.

Awuku (ibid) makes the point that even though arbitrariness may be found in spelling, certain objects-images in the world, by careful observation or scrutiny, do not show arbitrariness. Observation shows that some object forms or Shapes bear resemblance to their spelt letter-Shapes. These therefore represent the letter-Shape in a non-arbitrary way. Therefore, one can stipulate that there are (1) **typical letter-Shapes** (which are shorthand forms or abbreviations) of their real images-objects in the world (due to resemblances or associations), and (2) **atypical letter-Shapes** (which are arbitrary representations and are not abbreviations) of the images-objects they spell-name in the world. The current work/album is part of a research project which concerns the typical letter shapes.

The second issue relates to **redundancy**. In previous spelling and transcription norms in linguistics in general and in R spelt words in particular, positioning a letter differently amounts to it being a different letter or form. Therefore, there are many and several redundant forms. For example, in Linguistics and spelling norms, each of the following forms or symbols would be considered as a different symbol or alphabetic letter:

[R, Я, Ꝛ, ꝛ]

In Shape’s terms, there is only one Shape with a difference in positioning. Similarly, small letter r and variants in Linguistics, as shown below, are but a single Shape in this current reasoning, where the capital R and the small **r** are different Shapes.

[r, ꝛ, ꝛ, ꝛ, ꝛ]

Therefore, where commonalities are sought, a Shape’s perspective reduces or eliminates redundancy. In this light, the typical letter-Shape is a written representation of objects in the world and therefore is shorthand or an abbreviation. Positioning the Shape differently does not

¹ Capital letters are being used here because the Letter-Shape described in this article is Capital R Shape.

redundantly produce a different Shape (even though explanation can be found for why there is a different positioning).

Some Other Accounts of R in Previous Studies

These reports are relevant in clearly distinguishing or situating R Shape even though they may not be exhaustive of works on R. In order to report, I ask the following question: What do we know previously, in scientific readings and anywhere relevant about Capital R or letter R in general? The section briefly reports on the following:

- i. Writing systems and R shape: tracing the development
- ii. Capital R letter as an alphabet and in Linguistics as Sound and Symbols

Writing systems and R shape: tracing the development

The forms in the first line of the table below illustrate Phoenician, Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, and Arabic forms of the R. The next line in the table shows versions of R currently in use in spelling, transcription norms or other forms of writing.

Table 1: R Shape development

Phoenician rush		Hebrew resh		Aramaic resh		Syriac resh		Arabic Ra	
									
r	ⱱ	Ɱ	Ɱ	Ɱ	Ɱ	Ɱ	Ɱ	R	Ɱ

The second line of the table is represented below from Pullum and Ladusaw (1986:131-139) who have several descriptive labels for R:

Table 2: Pullum and Ladusaw (1986)

Form	Name/Description (Pullum & Ladusaw 1986)
r	Lower case R
ⱱ	Turned R
Ɱ	Turned long legged R
Ɱ	Turned R with right tail
Ɱ	R with long leg
Ɱ	R with right tail
Ɱ	Fish-hook R
Ɱ	Not available ...
R	(Small) capital R
Ɱ	Inverted (small) capital R

In Shape's terms, each of the small r forms is more or less a single Shape while capital R is also another Shape. Thus small r and capital R are different Shapes in this Shape's project.

Capital R letter as an alphabet and in Linguistics as a Sound and Symbol

As an alphabet, R is the 18th letter symbol of, for example, the Indo-European English alphabet. It also occurs in French and Ewe (using these languages as examples only). These three languages distinguish capital R from small r. Pronunciations vary from language to language. If

we take Ewe language, which is Niger-Congo Kwa, even though modern usages show several occurrences of R forms, yet, traditional usages show few R forms (as part of the R alphabet or sound). In the few cases, often L is substituted for R (often in initial positions in Ewe language). Borrowed words may retain their original R initial form in this language.

Additionally, we see many varieties of R in other previous works. For example there are cursive R forms besides regular writings of R. The cursive forms are rather picturesque, presenting beauty or artistic creations.

Table 3: Artistic R:

 https://www.google.com/search?q=Alphabet+R&oq=Alphabet+R&aqs=chrome.69i59j0l7.5086j0j4&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8	https://pixabay.com/fr/images/search/letter%20r/
	

Furthermore, the gender distinction made below (for a gender marking language such as French) is not available for English or Ewe.

R est un nom féminin quand on prononce cette lettre *èr* et masculin quand on la prononce selon la nouvelle épellation *re*. Toutefois, en France, *èr* semble être la prononciation la plus en usage et une écrasante majorité de la population considère ce nom ainsi prononcé comme masculin,

la plupart des dictionnaires faisant peu à peu de même...([https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/R_\(lettre\)](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/R_(lettre))).

In general, in the Anglo-Saxon usages, the first pronunciation (somewhat modified) is used in calling the alphabet while the second is used when calling the sound in Linguistics (letter **ar** and linguistic sound **re-**).

Association of Sound with Form R

This is a question about how our ancient writers came to **associate sound with form** and for that matter, particularly, how they came to associate the sound R with the form R? I am not here assuming that there is a consistent sound R which is assigned consistently to a form R, NO! My concern here is a generic one: on a general basis, how did we come to have these matches; between sound and form, where the sound used in speech/language, became a written form?

One answer to this question is found in previous studies: **arbitrariness** (as mentioned above) where there is no direct link between the form/name/label/language and the sound/real entity sound/object in the world. This is Saussure's signifier-signified relationship (Lepschy 2003: 506-507). This association is by **convention** (of the different cultures/users or the body of researchers who agree to adopt the norms of usage). On this note, it is important to stress that norms agreed upon often change as those who convene on these norms see better conventions. Conventions are therefore subject to change and do change to adapt to age, new insight, better lifestyle and order-structure. This way, there is eradication of unfitting norms for a new age/era; norms which have been lived already.

Another answer to the sound to form or language association is **iconicity** (e.g. onomatopoeia, picture words, idiophones, kinesthetic meaning in sign language (Sidhu & Pexman 2017) etc. In Sidhu and Pexman (2017) for example, we see rounding of the lips as a feature which gives the name/form round vowels to these sounds. Thus, less arbitrariness is seen here with sound and form or form and meaning. A similar finding by Blasi, Wichmann, Hammarstrom, Stadler, and Christainsen (2016), shows that there is much iconicity in sound and form across a wide range of languages. This observation therefore diminishes the significance of the view that the linguistic sign (involving signifier-signified) is arbitrary. Additionally, using data from "individuals with different types of severe visual impairment", the authors titled and showed that "Shape-sound associations depend on early visual experiences" (Ramesh Kekunnaya, Idris Shareef et al, 2019).

Sound Symbolism (aka, sound archetype) study is another relevant indication of the association between form and meaning on a non-arbitrary basis. Wikipedia defines sound symbolism as follows:

In linguistics, sound symbolism, phonesthesia or phonosemantics is the idea that vocal sounds or phonemes carry meaning in and of themselves.

Let us recall that in linguistics, the phoneme or sound level does not carry meaning. Meaning is found at the level from morphology.

Finally, **Numerology** studies (which may not be regarded on the same note with Scientific objective sciences) may suggest and have useful insight on how Form and sound/meaning associations occur or what language forms/shapes and numbers depict. Numerology is a practice and a study of the language of numbers and their symbolic significance. This same domain looks at Alphabets and what they signify including how their shapes came about. Wikipedia.org defines the domain as follows:

Numerology is any belief in the divine or mystical relationship between a number and one or more coinciding events. It is also the study of the numerical value of the letters in words, names, and ideas. It is often associated with the paranormal, alongside astrology and similar divinatory arts.

(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Numerology>)

The problem or criticism for this domain is its lack of **evidence** for the objective-empirical sciences. However, there is a lot of wisdom to be gleaned from the domain. Thus, for example, letter R is described as follows: (small letter r has been included here, even though R and r are different Shapes in this work. Images have also been cropped to include only the desired illustrative information)

Table 4: Numerology Representation of R and r

The majuscule (capital) letter R is a picture of Heru, the HawkGod, walking...

The majuscule letter **R** is a picture of the whole figure of Heru striding. ...Heru, the HawkGod, is



nearly always shown walking. Even when Heru is depicted as a hawk on a perch, he is drawn with his legs in motion. Heru was the symbol of wisdom-in-action. The hawk is a wisdom symbol because of its power of vision. ..The majuscule letter **R** represents Heru as the **god** of wisdom-in-action. The hawk is often a symbolic representation of the sun god or heaven because of its high soaring capabilities. In all of his forms and manifestations, Heru is an action figure. The words **hero**, **arrow**, **harrow**, **heir**, **hour**, and the **-araoh** in **Pharaoh** are all derived from the name of **Heru**.



The minuscule letter **r** is a picture of a bird on a perch. The sound of letter **r** is derived from the sound of hawk's wings.... A hawk that has captured prey makes an action sound. ...(The) powerful wing thrusts to gain altitude carrying its load. The wing feathers of that hawk in action make an **ur**, **ur**, **ur** sound as it thrusts for altitude. The sound of letter **r** in our alphabet is derived from the **ur** sound of hawk's wings thrusting to gain altitude.

Alphabet R. <http://www.resurrectisis.org/R1WebPage.htm>

Certainly, the striding positioning of Heru is suggestive of the form of capital **R** just as the bird position suggests the form of **r**. However, the association of the sound made by the bird to the bird represented as **r** (an abbreviated image representation) can also be described as a metonymy (something about the image/bird is used to describe it).

Therefore, even though our modern eyes cannot see and remember, yet other insights (e.g. Numerology) and not typical Science alone can assist our understanding of form/shape of the sound. In calling on Numerology studies or findings, it is not to say that Science or knowledge is “anything goes.” No! We call on the useful where science alone falls short of providing all the answers.

R SHAPE AND DIFFERENT POSITION OCCURRENCES: AN INVENTORY OF R POSITIONS

Shape R has or shows the number 12 in this current work (if a number designation is required). This is different from R being the 18th letter in the English alphabet as mentioned above. Again, the R Shape and its associative number 12 is exactly non-arbitrarily so if you separate the Strait from the Kurve in the Shape.

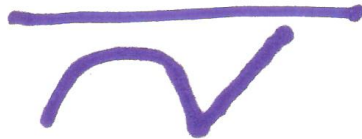
As the title of this section says, the Shape can occur differently. Positioning the Shape differently does not amount to it being a different Shape. Table 1 illustrates an inventory of R positions or occurrences. Tentative descriptive labels or explanations have been provided for the positions or occurrences.

Table 5: Inventory of R Positions (R itself is architected from the Strait and Kurve atoms)

R Shape		
Number	R Shape Position	Brief Explanation
1.	 R I + ʘ + \	A vertical Strait combined with a top right Kurve and a slanting Kurve down. A vertical Capital Arr facing right
2.	 Я	A vertical Strait combined with a top left Kurve and a slanting Kurve down. A vertical Capital R facing left
3.	 I + ʘ	A vertical Strait combined with a down right Kurve and a slanting Kurve up. A vertical Capital Arr facing right with head down.

	+ /	
4.		A vertical Strait combined with a down left Kurve and a slanting Kurve up. A vertical Capital Arr facing left with head down.
5.		A horizontal Strait combined with a right- underneath Kurve and a slanting Kurve left. A horizontal Capital Arr with a right Kurve underneath.
6.		A horizontal Strait combined with a left-underneath Kurve and a slanting Kurve right. A horizontal Capital Arr with a left Kurve underneath.
7.		A horizontal Strait combined with a left-top Kurve and a slanting Kurve right. A horizontal Capital Arr with a left Kurve on top.
8.		A horizontal Strait combined with a right-top Kurve and a slanting Kurve left. A horizontal Capital Arr with a right Kurve on top.

Observe that a Shape such as below is not R Shape.



Even though this is describable in terms of the Strait and Kurve atoms, it doesn't have R Shape or simply doesn't look like R. The image is simply a horizontal Strait with a complex Kurve (number 2 beneath it). This reasoning applies to all descriptions of the other Shapes: where an example is not fitting a particular Shape description, it is not attributed to it.

R OBJECTS-IMAGES IN THE WORLD: A SAMPLE ALBUM

This section presents a small sample album or lexicon of R shaped objects or images in the world. Some explanation of the lexicon/inventory is provided in the table. These objects are researched in natural as well as fabricated, artificial objects. Some objects occur more in

artificial designs rather than in natural setups. The conclusion after this section provides some evaluation and proposals for future work on R Shape and Shapes in general.

Table 6: R Objects in the World

Number	R Shaped Object	Brief Explanation (where necessary)
1a.	 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Routledge	The image/object shows a body part with head and chest area including or supported by a back bone.
1b.		Same as 1a observed in a gestalt view (overall view), not in its details.
2.		A cropped image from: http://www.resurrect.org/R1_Web_Page.htm
3	 https://www.google.com/search?q=Things+that+look+like+capital+R&tbm=isch&source=...	R looks here like part of a structure of a building. A decorative design.

4.	 https://www.google.com/search?q=Things+that+look+like+capital+R&tbm=isch&source=...	Another decorative design of a building frame.
5.	 http://spellitphotoart.ca/create/r/	In a gestalt (overall) view, the part of this armchair facing observation looks like R.

CONCLUSION

This study or article has described R as a Shape. The study (ongoing) has taken its inspiration from the forms or shapes of written language whether in codified forms (i.e. alphabetic writing systems using letters, linguistic transcriptions, fonts etc.), or in images (e.g. signs). These have been reanalyzed in this study as Shapes. Therefore, this is a Shape's project which proposes a meta-language of two atomic Shapes called "the Strait and the Kurve." These atomic Shapes are "redundantly and consistently" represented in written language and in the objects or images in the world (i.e. the objects that language names in the world in general). These Strait and Kurve (coinages from respectively, 'straight' and 'curve') themselves can be conceived of as shaped, or "architected" in a certain way. The Strait and the Kurve atomic shapes are shown respectively as: **I** **Ɔ/V** (where **C** is an unstructured Kurve while **V** is a structured Kurve).

The brief Lexicon or inventory of R Shaped objects in the world has shown or found the following (even though a lot remains to be studied and explained about R Shape and Objects):

- i. Limited time constraints (due to Corona-virus confinement and therefore limited exposure for research) has affected findings for the current project which has

- yielded **some results** but not exhaustive ones. This means that the project can be taken up again on a larger front with more data for the album.
- ii. R objects exist in the world but much more in artificially constructed objects (this can be a hypothesis for further research)
 - iii. Thus, R as a Shape is not arbitrarily represented in the world
 - iv. R Shape can be positioned differently but this is context based and context based phenomena must be differentiated (and explained in its own right) from the Shape.
 - v. Even though R spelling (whether capital R or small r), may be arbitrary, some R spelt words of objects (the object spelt R) may carry or bear a typical R/r Shape. Therefore, a **lexicon** of R spelt words in which the R Shapes can be identified/sorted out, can be useful to the project. Suggestively, some R spelt words may have non-arbitrary associations with R Shape in terms of other phenomena.

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