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Proposal to add the Phaistos Disk Script to Unicode/ISO-IEC 10646

The Phaistos Disk was discovered in an archaeological dig in Phaistos, Crete, in 1908. It's a clay disk about 16 cm in diameter and 1 cm thick with 242 signs stamped onto the two sides. The 242 signs consist of 45 different characters separated by lines into a total of 61 groups of two to seven characters.

The disk has been dated to the mid-18th century B.C. and is contemporary with Linear A. Indeed, it was found among Linear A tablets.

There is universal agreement that the symbols on the script are an example of writing, but despite the continued interest of classicists, professional and amateur, for nearly ninety years, the writing has not been deciphered, nor have any other examples of this writing been discovered.

Some guesses can be made about the writing system of the disk. It was probably a syllabary and likely consisted of about fifty to sixty symbols on the whole. Nor should the Phaistos Disk be taken as the only possible specimen of this script—the fact that somebody went to the trouble to create stamps with which to write it implies that it was used for more than one document. (Indeed, Chadwick goes so far as to call it the world's first typewritten document.)

Given the uniquely low utility of this script, encoding anywhere other than Plane 1 is unthinkable.

Issues

The fundamental issue, of course, is should this be encoded at all? There is exactly one extant document in this script, and a short one at that. That could change at any minute, but given the failure of any other document written with this script to surface in nearly a century, it doesn't seem likely.

On the other hand, that single document is rather famous and the writing system used on it of

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interest. It is rather the Fermat's Last Theorem of Aegean archaeology—a sure course to fame and fortune is to decipher it and solve the mystery.

Words on the Phaistos disk are separated by vertical lines. It may be desirable to encode a PHAISTOS DISK WORD SEPARATOR at 0001 xx00 and then shift everything else.

References

References to the Phaistos disk and reproductions of it are remarkably easy to come by. (A Web search of "Phaistos disk" or "Phaistos disc" is very educational.)

Bennett, Emmett L. (1996). "Aegean Scripts." In *The World's Writing Systems*, edited by Peter T. Daniels and William Bright. Oxford: University Press.

Chadwick, John. (1987). *Linear B and Related Scripts* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Gaur, Albertine. (1984). *A History of Writing*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Name Chart

0001	xx00	PHAISTOS	DISK	SYMBOL	1
0001	xx01	PHAISTOS	DISK	SYMBOL	2
0001	xx02	PHAISTOS	DISK	SYMBOL	3
0001	xx03	PHAISTOS	DISK	SYMBOL	4
0001	xx04	PHAISTOS	DISK	SYMBOL	5
0001	xx05	PHAISTOS	DISK	SYMBOL	6
0001	xx06	PHAISTOS	DISK	SYMBOL	7
0001	xx07	PHAISTOS	DISK	SYMBOL	8
0001	xx08	PHAISTOS	DISK	SYMBOL	9
0001	xx09	PHAISTOS	DISK	SYMBOL	10
0001	xx0A	PHAISTOS	DISK	SYMBOL	11
0001	xx0B	PHAISTOS	DISK	SYMBOL	12
0001	xx0C	PHAISTOS	DISK	SYMBOL	13
0001	xx0D	PHAISTOS	DISK	SYMBOL	14
0001	xx0E	PHAISTOS	DISK	SYMBOL	15
0001	xx0F	PHAISTOS	DISK	SYMBOL	16
0001	xx10	PHAISTOS	DISK	SYMBOL	17
0001	xx11	PHAISTOS	DISK	SYMBOL	18
0001	xx12	PHAISTOS	DISK	SYMBOL	19
0001	xx13	PHAISTOS	DISK	SYMBOL	20

0001 xx1D PHAISTOS DISK SYMBOL 30
0001 xx1E PHAISTOS DISK SYMBOL 31
0001 xx1F PHAISTOS DISK SYMBOL 32

0001 xx20 PHAISTOS DISK SYMBOL 33
0001 xx21 PHAISTOS DISK SYMBOL 34
0001 xx22 PHAISTOS DISK SYMBOL 35
0001 xx23 PHAISTOS DISK SYMBOL 36
0001 xx24 PHAISTOS DISK SYMBOL 37
0001 xx25 PHAISTOS DISK SYMBOL 38
0001 xx26 PHAISTOS DISK SYMBOL 39
0001 xx27 PHAISTOS DISK SYMBOL 40
0001 xx28 PHAISTOS DISK SYMBOL 41
0001 xx29 PHAISTOS DISK SYMBOL 42
0001 xx2A PHAISTOS DISK SYMBOL 43
0001 xx2B PHAISTOS DISK SYMBOL 44
0001 xx2C PHAISTOS DISK SYMBOL 45
0001 xx2D (This position shall not be used)
0001 xx2E (This position shall not be used)
0001 xx2F (This position shall not be used)

Code chart

	0	1	2
0			
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
A			
B			
C			
D			
E			
F			

Examples



The front of the disk



The back of the disk