Public Review Issue Feedback

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re: Draft Unicode Technical Report #30 Character Foldings
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Proposed addition to DiacriticFolding.txt data file

027F;   0069 # ɿ → i   LATIN SMALL LETTER REVERSED R WITH
FISHHOOK → LATIN SMALL LETTER I

0285;   0069 # ʅ → i   LATIN SMALL LETTER SQUAT REVERSED ESH →
LATIN SMALL LETTER I

02AE;   0075 # ɥ → u   LATIN SMALL LETTER TURNED H WITH FISHHOOK
→ LATIN SMALL LETTER U

0285;   0075 # ɥ → u   LATIN SMALL LETTER TURNED H WITH FISHHOOK
AND TAIL → LATIN SMALL LETTER U

Rationale

These four characters [ɿ, ʅ, ɥ, ɥ] represent apical vowels, which are particularly frequent in Sino-Tibetan languages including standard Mandarin (Putonghua). They are typically historically derived from, and/or phonetic realizations of, the /i/ and /u/ phonemes.

Although standard IPA practice suggests that they be represented with a syllabic z [$z̩$, $z̩$, $z̩^w$, $z̩^w$], Chinese linguists think this does not properly convey their vocoid nature and have extended IPA with these symbols.

Standard Chinese dictionaries use these symbols when writing phonetic pronunciations. The following example shows Mandarin words written in Hanyu Pinyin (HP), the standard Roman transcription of Mandarin,

- Phonetic Chinese IPA transcription
- the corresponding Chinese character
- its code point in Unicode, and
- an English gloss.

HP	Chin. IPA	Char	Unicode	Eng. Gloss
zī	[tsɿ˥]	资	U+8D44	'to subsidize, support, aid'
cī	[tsʰɿ˥]	疵	U+75B5	'defect, flaw'
sī	[sɿ˥]	思	U+601D	'to think, consider'
zhī	[tʂʅ˥]	知	U+77E5	'to know about, be aware of'
chī	[tʂʰʅ˥]	吃	U+5403	'to eat'
shī	[ʂʅ˥]	诗	U+8BD7	'poem, poetry, verse'
rì	[ʐʅ˥˩]	日	U+65E5	'sun; day'

Note: The tone letters ˥ and ˥˩ correspond to tones 5,5 and 5,1. The phonemes [ɿ, ʅ] are not found in standard Chinese. A minority language family in China with these sounds is the Yi (Loloish) languages.

Reference

Encyclopedic Dictionary of Chinese Linguistics (in Chinese) ISBN 7-5392-0811-2/H.9. The IPA chart on p.1089 shows how the apical vowels are classed as a special set separate but related to the other 'dorsal' vowels. (A scanned image of this chart can be sent upon request).