TITLE: Comments on Nüshu Proposal by the Chinese NB N3287
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ACTION: For consideration by WG2
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As head of a project at UC Berkeley, the Script Encoding Initiative, I have solicited comments from U.S. specialists on the Nüshu proposal (N3287). I present the feedback below, in order to assist the authors of this proposal.

General Comments
The collection of books on Nüshu is impressive, and the proposal reflects progress on the script scholastically. Basically, specific details on the characters (their syllabic values, stroke counts, mappings) is needed.

Comments on Characters
II.4. Order rules
"The basic and allograph are in good order by the amount of strokes from small to multi separately." The chart begins with 1 stroke characters, then 2 stroke characters, but then it gets unclear on how the strokes are identified and counted in this order, as well as the basis for sub-ordering within a given stroke count. There seems to be a grouping by a notion of component, as well as in terms of stroke count. Please make explicit the stroke count (and components) of the characters, and how these were determined.

"449 characters are coded in all": Please break down this number into the number of basic characters and the number of allographs. It appears that 1B000..1B180 (385) are the basic characters and 1B181..1B1C1 (64) are variant allographs. If this is so, provide this information in the proposal. (The number of basic characters and allographs should also be inserted elsewhere in the proposal where the total number of characters is mentioned, as on p. 1, "Every Nüshu elder woman just used no more than 400 basic characters [about from four hundred to five hundred with allograph included]".)

II.3 Choosing the related allograph
Please identify which characters are allographs of which basic characters. Also, give the reasons for encoding only certain allographs. For example, the niang example under II.3.b is 1B050, with only the first allograph encoded. However, the y example under II.3.c is 1B054 and shows a total of 3 allographs, but only the 2nd allograph seems to be in the table (1B189); the 3rd one doesn't seem to be included in the table. Why is only the second allograph of y encoded and not the third?

III.2. Relationship between Nüshu and Chinese characters
It is important to explicitly identify which Chinese characters are connected to which Nüshu character. If, for example, the Chinese translation on page 6 reflects the standard practice for identification of the Chinese characters for those in Nüshu, then a mapping table must be included, showing which Chinese character corresponds to which Nüshu character.

III.3. Names
Since Nüshu works syllabically, please provide the syllables in the names of the Nüshu characters (rather than just using "Nüshu-1BXXX").

In sum, the following should be provided:
A. Mapping to source Chinese character
B. Mapping to Chinese character used in transliteration (if different)
C. Syllabic value
D. Mapping of allographic variants to their respective bases
E. Stroke counts
F. Rationale for ordering within stroke counts, including
   any notion or radicals or components involved

For mappings, include print-source mappings and specific lexical sources. If you rely on a single lexical print source, then discuss in the proposal what -- if any -- other lexical print sources you might have consulted, and why not. For mappings of variants to one another, provide specific print-sources which make the variant relation determination.

Other Comments
1. Comment on VIII Nüshu sample on p. 5
A note clarifying the example would be very helpful ("The Nüshu sample on the left is a transliteration into the local dialect of two classical Chinese poems [by Li Bai and Wang Zhihuan], shown on the right").

Also, well-known English translations of the two poems are available, and it would be nice to include these:

     a. by Burton Watson

     Moonlight in front of my bed--
     I took it for frost on the ground!
     I lift my eyes to watch the mountain moon
     lower them and dream of home.

     b. by Witter Bynner:

     Mountains cover the white sun,
     And oceans drain the golden river;
     But you widen your view three hundred miles

By going up one flight of stairs.

2. Clarification on English
p. 1
"women-only Character Set" => "character set used only by women"
"female characters" => set of characters developed and used by women?