Brahmi Letter LLA glyph in TUS – Comment on document L2/12-106

by Naga Ganesan

I am just reading S. Sharma's request to change Brahmi letter LLA glyph shape (L2/12-106). As I mentioned here before, the change is needed for LLA shape.

(1) Oldest attested glyph for LLA in India and its Origin:

Basically, LLA, LLLA, NNNA, RRA are the four Dravidian letters
added to Indo-Aryan letters to write Indian languages.
For example, the recently made Adinathan font in Brahmi code block
for Tamil uses these letters and short e & o (even tho' unattested
in Brahmi) with a puLLi dot. The same thing is true when Brahmi got
adapted to write Tamil script in Chola period, and also in Grantha script
later to write Dravidian (12th century onwards. See documents by
Prof. S. Raasu, Dr. Nagaswamy, ... on Grantha encoding.)

The Brahmi LLA glyph comes in two classes. Those who knew
the linguistic relationship that -LL- transforms into -DD- and
-LL- is the source for -DD-. Hence in India, naturally, Dravidian letter
LLA gets first attested in Dravidian lands & shows LLA originates from

LA by adding a hook to the right.   The oldest form of LLA
in India and its origin from LA can be documented in the Section
on Brahmi script. Since it is the earliest attested LLA in India
and this letter is Dravidian per linguists, it shows as the first glyph
in Indoskript list with a blue background. Then the obvious question
is why not use the earliest attested glyph for LLA in Brahmi
for Brahmi code chart?
http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/falk/

Because retroflex consonants, LLA & LLLA of Dravidian (in Tamil, Malayalam, Grantha,
for example) change to DDA in Indo-Aryan, Brahmi derives the shapes from DDA:

1101F　ꠇ　BRAHMI LETTER DDA

(2) Origin of LLLA & LLA in Brahmi from DDA by adding a circle diacritic:

Brahmi letter LLLA is gotten by adding a circle to the top of the Brahmi letter DDA (shown above), The original name of the Dravidian goddess is *izhaa (Tamil: இழை).* Goddess, izhaa, possibly from Indus valley bronze age deity, gets into the Rgveda when Aryans ingress into Punjab (now split into Punjabs of Pakistan and India). To represent izhaa in Veda properly, we need LLLA in Grantha repertoire, See the evidence of LLLA in Veda itself written in Grantha given by Prof. Asko Parpola, reputed Indologist. Because the Dravidian substratum gradually got forgotten in the North India, Izhaa comes to be written as iLaa (with LLA) or some times as iDaa (with DDA).

Like retroflex approximant LLLA in Brahmi gets a circle at the top of DDA, the Dravidian retroflex letter LLA in Brahmi gets a circle (or half-circle) at the bottom of letter DDA

This bottom circle is sometimes written as half-circle also, as seen in the hand-written

glyph of LLA

So, the glyph for Brahmi LLA in Unicode Brahmi chart can show the DDA added with a half-circle (or circle).

It is very significant that ancient Brahmi repertoire creators and Indian grammarians who taught them knew the intimate relationship of retroflex LLA and LLLA and their relationship with DDA, as many scores of Dravidian words originate with -LL- or -LLL- as second syllable, but in the north they turn into words with -DD-. As it is only Indian languages and scripts that show systemic retroflexion, this may also be a pointer towards Origin of Retroflexion in Indian languages such as Sanskrit or Hindi and their Dravidian substratum when North India switched their native languages to Indo-European when Aryans entered 3500 years ago & co-opted with elites for the language conversion. Technology of religion was a basic factor that went into this language change in India, rather than violent wars (as we see in Americas when the native American Indians switched to Indo-European),

(3) Brahmi LLA from Mirror image of LA:

This is not noted in L2/12-106 by Sharma. And, these shapes also
can be documented in Brahmi section in TUS so some Brahmi fonts
can make use of these.

Rotation with respect to vertical axis, LLA is got from LA & a horizonatal
bar is added. And, this is in many Brahmi inscriptions as well:
http://www.ancientscripts.com/brahmi.html
http://www.crystalinks.com/brahmi.html

Summary:

LLA is formed essentially in two ways:

(a) LLA from LA [Sections (1) & (3)] :

Section (1) glyph is the earliest attested in Brahmi script and this can be used
for *Brahmi code chart in TUS*, while (3) can be documented in Brahmi section.

(b) LLA from DDA [Section (2)]:

Section (2) LLA glyph is formed by adding a circle or half-circle diacritic mark to Brahmi
DDA, and this can be documented in Brahmi section. Note that this LLA glyph
from DDA **is centuries later than (1)** in Brahmi script, and in the Brahmi
code chart, LLA representative glyph recommended for use in Brahmi
code chart is the ancient glyph given in Section (1) while glyphs from Sections (2) & (3)
and their origins can be documented in Brahmi section of TUS for use by Brahmi font
makers.

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