

# Feedback on Malayalam Anusvara Above Proposal

## L2/14-003

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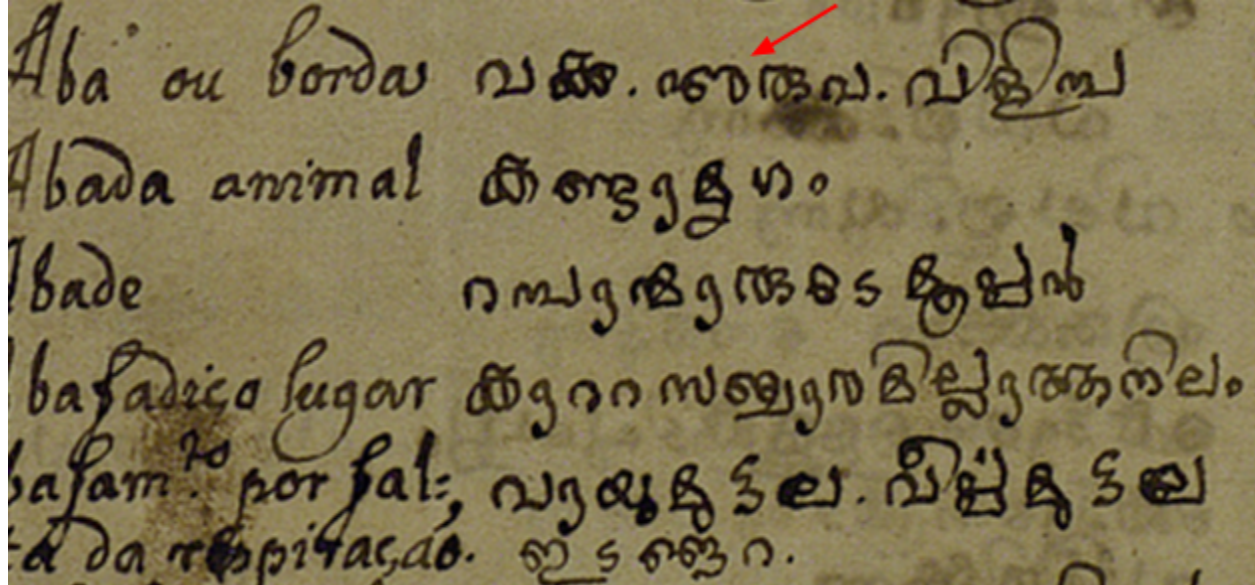
Here are few thoughts on the proposal for Anusvara Above. I do not accept or object the proposal. I am discussing few implications of accepting it.

### Western Grantha or Malayalam?

The attestations in the proposal are one of the oldest one w.r.t to Malayalam section of Unicode. Author does not have very accurate dating; it is assumed to be around 400 years old.

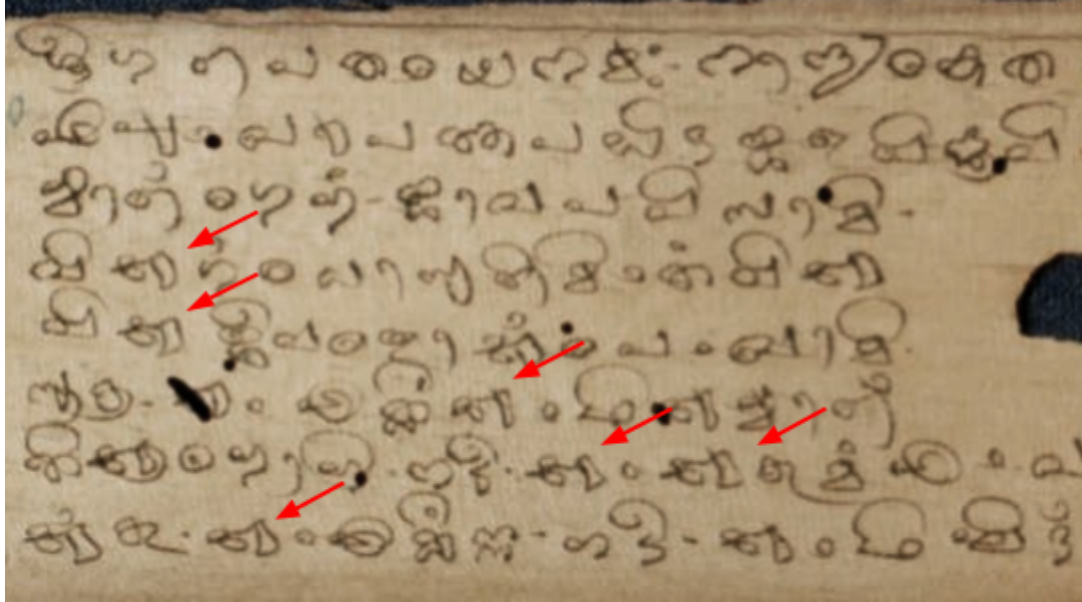
Comparing with the Hanxleden's manuscript from the period 1700-1730, it definitely seems much older than that. Some of the glyphs are quite difficult for me to read as being a native Malayalam user.

Please contrast the shape of vowel letter A:



Vowel letter A from Johann Hanxleden's Portuguese-Malayalam dictionary<sup>1</sup> (1700-1730)

<sup>1</sup> [http://bdigital.sib.uc.pt/bg3/UCBG-Ms-1090/UCBG-Ms-1090\\_item1/P11.html](http://bdigital.sib.uc.pt/bg3/UCBG-Ms-1090/UCBG-Ms-1090_item1/P11.html)



Vowel letter A from attestations in the proposal from the Bhasha project<sup>2</sup>

Comparing above glyphs with the chart of vowel A glyph used for dating manuscripts:

Table 4.1.

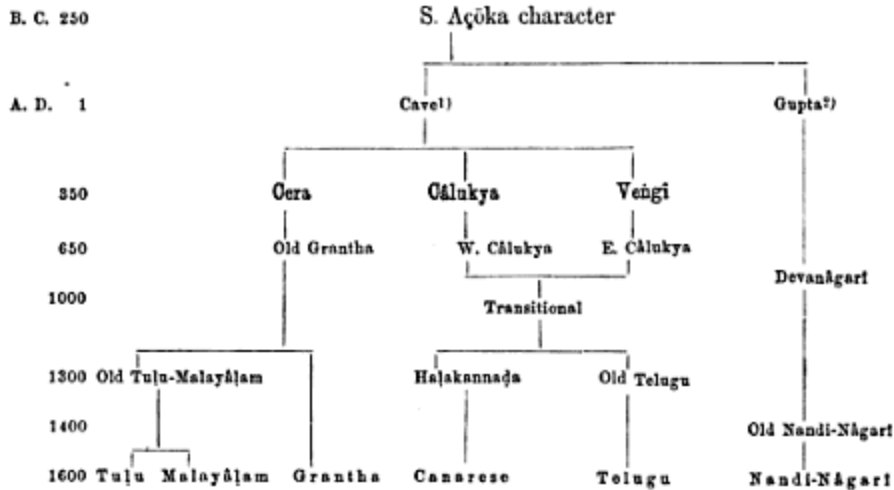
Manuscript:	Ms. TR 22848	Ms. TR 10720	Ms. TR 12356	Today's font
Age:	ca. 1500 AD	1650 AD	1896 AD	2008 AD
a	ᱠ	ᱡ	ᱢ	ᱣ
ka	ᱤ	ᱥ	ᱦ	ᱧ
kka	ᱨ	- <sup>31</sup>	ᱩ <sup>s2</sup>	ᱪ
kra	ᱫ	ᱬ	ᱭ	ᱮ

From South Indian Drama Manuscripts<sup>3</sup> by Anna Esposito

This would put the attestations in the proposal at around 1500s.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bhasha.indologie.uni-wuerzburg.de/mss/17622/70.html>

<sup>3</sup> <http://books.google.com/books?id=FaZs3T8hRToc&pg=PP1&pg=PA95#v=onepage&q&f=false>



Burnell's chart<sup>4</sup> describes approximate periods where scripts diverged.

Comparing that period with the above chart, we can see that this attestation very well could be before Tulu-Malayalam separation. BTW, Tulu-Malayalam is also called Western Grantha. Considering the Tulu-Malayalam attestations as Malayalam has its implications. In fact, for encoding purposes multiple groupings are possible with respect to Tulu-Malayalam/Western Grantha:

1. {Malayalam, Western Grantha}, {Eastern Grantha = Grantha}
2. {Malayalam}, {(Western Grantha, Eastern Grantha) = Grantha }
3. {Malayalam}, {Western Grantha}, {Eastern Grantha = Grantha}

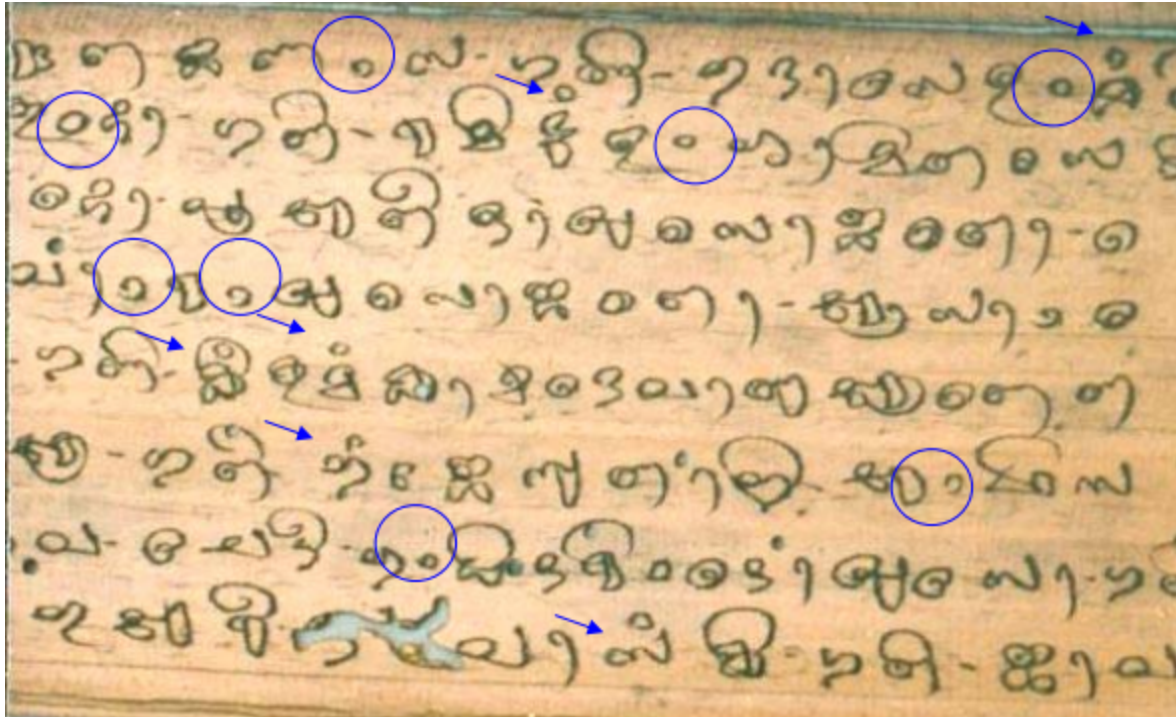
By accepting this proposal, we are setting the precedence for the grouping 1.

## Glyph variant of Anusvara?

We can very well see that the Anusvara Above is a glyph variant of the existing Anusvara (0D02). Only the position is changed from right of the letter to above the letter. Can Anusvara Above be considered as a glyph variant of Anusvara?

## Is the contrasting usage of Anusvara in the attestation really an Anusvara?

The attestation has got many Anusvara(0D02) like symbol next to the letters. Marked in the picture below by blue circles.



However, that is not Anusvara; it is gemination sign. This sign indicates that the consonant after that should be doubled/stressed. Essentially the proposal is attempting to encode the glyph visually as opposed to logically.

The alternate encoding choice is to encode this gemination sign and consider Above Anusvara as a glyph variant of existing Anusvara. Of course, the gemination sign could be confusable with existing Anusvara. However, Unicode is already in the business of encoding various kinds of circles :)