

Subject : Feedback on the "Preliminary Proposal to encode Vattezhuththu - L2/16-068"

From: Tamil Virtual Academy (TVA) , Government of Tamil Nadu, India. (<http://tamilvu.org>)

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It was quite interesting to see the preliminary proposal L2/16-068 of Mr.Anshuman Pandey to encode Vattezhuththu, placed in the document register for expert feedbacks. TVA in principle, welcomes and appreciates the Tamil Vattezhuththu (T-VTL) encoding initiative. Hence, TVA conducted a meeting to evaluate the proposal with an expert team of eminent Epigraphists of Tamil Nadu who possess great expertise on T-VTL, and sought their feedbacks on L2/16-068.

The expert team has provided their observations as follows.

1) The proposed T-VTL script given in the proposal L2/16-068 lacks orthographic precision. In fact many glyphs in the proposal are incorrect.

2) Shapes of many of the glyphs as given are controversial. For example, the basic vowels A, AA, I, II themselves have serious orthographic and shape concerns.

3) T-VTL has its own natural script properties, fundamentals and evolution since 5th century C.E. Its regional variations are worth a detailed attention. The proposal appears to have considered only a few inscriptions that belong to later period when the T-VTL was in decline. It also appears that the proposal contains a random period mix of glyphs selected from few inscriptions here and there. Further, it is important that a more systematic study that includes T-VTL's historical development from Thamizhi, chronology and regional variations and the influence of writing on various writing materials.

4) The vowel sign model as shown in the proposal is inconsistent and it seems to be a forced technical solution to fit into the current model of Tamil encoding. This is a serious concern which will not enable a proper Unicode migration of historical T-VTL records into the digital form.

Given these expert observations, TVA understands that T-VTL proposal requires a lot of native expertise on Tamil Epigraphy, History and Archaeology. TVA strongly believes that the encoding cannot be a simple assembly of technical shapes of convenience. As you are aware, T-VTL script has always been used to record Tamil documents of Tamil Nadu and other Tamil speaking lands. This script had presence over many centuries since 5th century C.E. Further, TVA is of the opinion that the merits of such an archaic script should be fully reflected in the Unicode encoding, so that the records of T-VTL are correctly migrated into digital form.

Hence, while appreciating the initiative of Mr. Anshuman Pandey, TVA wants to take up the responsibility of correctly encoding T-VTL through a suitable encoding model and submit a proper proposal in about 6 months time from now, using the abundant native expertise available in Tamil Nadu. TVA has already constituted a subject expert panel to come out with such a proposal. Hence, TVA requests UTC to allow TVA/Government of Tamil Nadu to submit a new proposal, and put L2/16-068 on hold.

For Tamil Virtual Academy

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