

Pointing out a major inconsistency on past decisions to encode new symbols

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Introduction. This document is made in response to the rejection of the proposal for the set of pieces to represent the game of shogi. Here, I will present several examples of symbols that did not meet the same standards that my proposal was submitted to, but were accepted anyway. I intend for this to show that the rejection criteria are not applied uniformly and might be a good idea to reconsider them.

Shogi proposal. The proposal I am talking about is ([L2/18-170](#)), the committee's rationale for rejection was that: "the symbols in question were not attested in lines of text". I write this, to point out to the committee that other symbol proposals were accepted, despite that they did not meet such criteria. Indeed, I will go slightly further and try to argue that it is not a good "requirement" to have.

Examples. In no particular order:

- **Symbols for Chinese folk religion ([L2/14-278R2](#)):** None of the attestations of the document include the symbols inside lines of text.
- **Xianqi ([L2/16-255](#)):** Same as above. This is particularly odd, since they are symbols used to represent a very popular board game in East Asia with great glyphic variation, unified into a single set of symbols.
- **Mahjong, Domino, and Draughts ([L2/07-171](#)):** Of the three sets of symbols, the proposal only included evidence, in lines of text, for the domino tiles. The Mahjong tiles are in separate illustrations on the original sources. And the draughts are nowhere to be seen.
- **Neptune form two ([L2/17-191R](#)):** Of the four figures included for the proposal, only one has the symbol in lines of text.

What to do when going forward. I suggest that the requirement, for the symbol to be included in lines of text should be dropped completely. One can make the case that there was never a requirement at all, but rather a criteria to consider.

As one can see in the document: *Criteria for Encoding Symbols*, what I believe to be a strengthening criteria in question says: "Always occurs together with text or numbers (unit, currency, estimated)"; the key word here is "strengthen", this is to leave it open to the discretion of the committee as to what qualifies, so that that it is not overly-constrained. But as we have seen above, this lends itself to inconsistent decision making.

I would modify the criteria like so:

- **Retire two criteria:** Searchable or indexable (redundant, since all characters must comply, not just symbols. And it is a hard requirement not just a "strengthening" criteria) and Tabular use (redundant, already a part of the "notational system" criteria).
- **Consolidate two criteria into one:** Well defined semantics and computer processing (it serves no good purpose to keep them separate).
- **Clarify two criteria:** Occurring together with numbers and letters (clarify that the proposed character must not be already representable) and Part of a notational system (clarify that the notational system in question, must be relevant in some sense).
- **Add two criteria:** Glyphic unification and Appearance in plain text.

The relevant section would therefore end up like this:

The symbol(s) in question:

- Is typically used as part of computer applications (e.g. CAD symbols)
- Has well defined user community and usage
- Either unifies a set of glyphic styles into one or has a well defined glyph
- Has well-defined semantics, that lend themselves to computer processing
- Always occurs together with text or numbers, and cannot be represented or composed by existing characters (e.g. unit, currency, estimated)
- There is evidence that it occurs in lines of text in different sources
- Must be searchable or indexable
- Is customarily used in tabular lists as shorthand for characteristics (e.g. check mark, maru etc.)
- Is part of a popular or otherwise significant, notational system

- ~~Has well defined semantics~~
- ~~Has semantics that lend themselves to computer processing~~
- Completes a class of symbols **that are** already in the standard
- Is letter-like (i.e. should vary **or stand out** with the surrounding font style)

It would be ideal if there is also some clarification, that it is not mandatory that the character satisfies *all* criteria, but only the majority.

So, I propose the previous changes the document; such a change may need to open a PRI for feedback. If done, it would have other positive effects such as a swifter submission process.

I believe that the new criteria, would much better reflect the intent of the Consortium, and that it excludes more symbols than it includes (compared to the old one).

If this proceeds, the aforementioned examples would comply; in particular, the shogi pieces would also comply, and so the consortium could reconsider including the proposed shogi pieces as specified in the proposal above (a slightly updated proposal may be submitted if necessary).

I thank the committee in advanced for their time and energy, and hope to receive a proper response this time.