

Proposal to change the representative glyphs of the Latin letter tone six (U+0184/0185)

Karl Pentzlin – karl-pentzlin@acssoft.de – 2019-07-04

referring to: L2/19-201: Juechen Zhong: Proposal to correct LATIN SMALL LETTER TONE SIX (U+0185)

Introduction

The letter pair:

U+0184 LATIN CAPITAL LETTER TONE SIX

U+0185 LATIN SMALL LETTER TONE SIX

resembles somewhat the general shape of the Cyrillic soft sign, hard sign, semisoft sign, and neutral yer.

The following figure 1 shows the representative glyphs for these letters according to the Unicode 12.0 tables.

Fig. 1: Latin Letter tone six and similar Cyrillic letters

ᄁ	ᄂ	ᄃ	ᄄ	ᄅ	ᄆ	ᄇ	ᄈ	ᄉ	ᄊ
0184	0185	042C	044C	042A	044A	048C	048D	A64E	A64F

The distinguishing feature is the left-pointing triangle at the top. Moreover, while the capital letter does not show full height, the small one is higher and has a larger bowl in width as well as in height, the latter one being the full x-height.

As it was already explained in L2/19-201, this shape is not supported by the original letter shapes used 1957–1982 actually, when this letter was a part of the official orthography to be used for the Zhuang language.

The following figure 2 is a contrast enhanced part of the figure shown on page 1 of L2/19-201, showing a scan of: *Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet (《僮文方案》)*. The official standard for the old Zhuang orthography. Published in 1958. This shows the standardized forms for the letter “tone two” to “tone six”, for the capital and small printed letter forms (row 1 and 2), cursive forms (row 4), and small printed letters in context (row 5).

Fig. 2: Zhuang tone letters as devised in a Chinese standard document from 1958

印刷体	大楷	2	3	4	5	ᄁ
	小楷	2	3	4	5	ᄂ
書写体	大草					
	小草	2	3	4	5	ᄁ
字母名称		ha2	na3	ma4	gva5	daᄁ

It shows clearly that the intended height of the capital letters is the usual full caps height for Latin capital letters, and that the intended height of the small letters is the x-height (the same one as for the letter “a”).

Fig. 3: Enlargements from fig. 2, row 1 and 2, showing the glyphs of the Latin letter tone six



As these enlargements show, the distinctive feature is a line starting at the top, slanted to the left, reaching to the height of the upper rim of the bowl. This is also valid for the cursive form in row 4. Also, the bowl of the capital letter has the height of the whole small letter (i.e., x-height). The bowl of the small letter has about 2/3 of the total letter height, in fact slightly more than the relative bowl height of the Cyrillic soft/hard signs. It is to be noted that the triangle as distinctive feature occurs nowhere in the figures (except fig. 1).

This form also reflects the actual use, as shown in the following examples:

Fig. 4: Gvangjih Minzcuz Bau (weekly newspaper) from 1959, title page.
 Downloaded 2010 from (possibly no longer available):
<http://hub.hku.hk/bitstream/10722/31897/1/FullText.pdf>, p.86, from:
<http://hub.hku.hk/handle/10722/31897>



Fig. 5: Certificates from 1961
 (submitted to me privately; original download link unknown)



Other specimens show glyph variants where the line expanding from the top to the left is not slanted. This feature resembles glyph variants found for the Cyrillic soft sign (where a symmetric top is more common).

Fig. 6: Detail of a Chinese banknote (5 Wu Jiao) from 1980

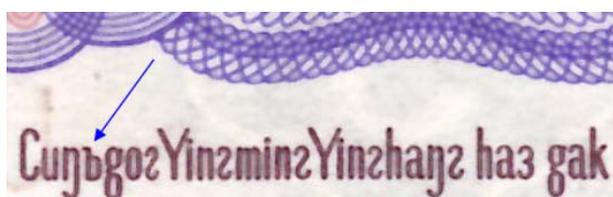
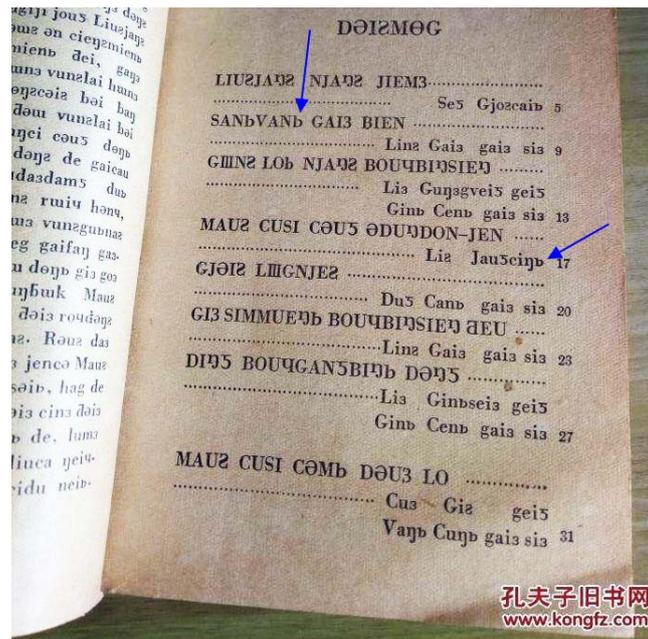


Fig. 7: Photo of a book

(submitted to me privately; original download link , book title and year unknown)



Proposal

There are two possibilities, which I would leave the UTC to decide:

Proposal A:

Retain the identity of the “letter tone six” by displaying its distinctive feature (the slanted line at the top).

Thus, change the representative glyphs of:

U+0184 LATIN CAPITAL LETTER TONE SIX

U+0185 LATIN SMALL LETTER TONE SIX

resembling the shapes in fig. 3, and according to the annotations given there.

Note: This would clarify that the Latin letter tone six is a different letter from the one which resembles the Cyrillic soft sign, and which is proposed as:

- LATIN capital/small LETTER YERU in L2/08-404R and L2/10-356
- LATIN capital/small LETTER KOMI BACK I in L2/19-224.

Proposal B:

Regard the slanted or horizontal line as glyph variation, and otherwise regard the basic form of the letter to be the same as the Cyrillic soft sign.

Thus, change the representative glyphs of:

U+0184 LATIN CAPITAL LETTER TONE SIX

U+0185 LATIN SMALL LETTER TONE SIX

to the glyphs used now for the Cyrillic soft sign U+042C/044C.

Note: This would result in an unification of the “letter tone six” with other Latin letters resembling the Cyrillic soft sign, as they are proposed as:

- LATIN capital/small LETTER YERU in L2/08-404R and L2/10-356
- LATIN capital/small LETTER KOMI BACK I in L2/19-224.