Proposal to Encode Syriac in ISO/IEC 10646

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To Add Syriac in Unicode and ISO/IEC 10646.

- Merging a previous proposal worked on by Hasso, McGowan, and Everson with a proposal created by **Kiraz and Nelson.**

- Enhancements to the 1992 Exploratory Proposal:

    - Adding vowel, overstrike and punctuation marks.

    - Additional characters for writing non-Syriac languages (Christian Palestinian Aramaic, Garshuni, modern Neo-Aramaic dialects).

    - Joining rules (especially for *Alaph*); ligature rules.

    - Abbreviation rules for the abbreviation mark.

- Mandaean should have its own block (Everson is working on this).

• Why Syriac?

Long history:

- Syriac belongs to the Aramaic family of languages.

- Earliest datable Syriac writing: inscriptions from Birecik, A.D. 6.

- Earliest literary MS: Nov. A.D. 411 with unbroken tradition of writing till the modern time.

Why Syriac? (Cont.)

Used Today:

- Liturgical language of the Syrian Orthodox, Assyrians, Maronites, Syrian Catholics and Chaldaeans – Middle East; Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara – Southeast India.

- In various dialectical forms: native language of a million or two (albeit no reliable statistics found).

- Used by scholars who study the Syriac tradition.

- Web pages, albeit in graphics due to the lack of a standard.

• Languages using Syriac Scripts

- Literary Syriac. Two dialects: East and West.

- Neo Aramaic Dialects: Swadaya, Turoyo, etc.

- Garshuni: Arabic written in Syriac.

- Christian Palestinian Aramaic (CPA): also known as Palestinian Syriac.

- Other languages: Armenian and Persian dialects.
  Used by Syriac Christians for Arabic, Ottoman Turkish, Malayalam.

Syriac Scripts & Modern Usage

- Estrangela: Used in ancient MSS.

  – For titles, headers, subtitles (by all communities).

  – Standard script for Western scholarship.

- Serto (West Syriac). Emerged in 8th c.

  – West Syriac-speakers (Syrian Orthodox/Catholics, Maronites).

- East Syriac. Features appear 6th c.; became unique 12/13th c.

  – East Syriac-speakers (Assyrians, Chaldaeans).

  – West Syriac-speakers for headers, titles, subtitles.

NOTE. Avoid nicknames ("Nestorian" for East, "Jacobite" for West), originally used opprobriously.

• Proposal Issues

- Coverage: Literary Syriac, Neo-Aramaic dialects, Garshuni, CPA.

- Marks: The minimum set of diacritic marks used in manuscripts and modern usage. Composite marks are not included.

- Naming: East Syriac for letters. Descriptive for marks, why?

  - Different diacritics have the same function across dialects.

  - Same diacritic has different names across dialects/history.

  - Same diacritic used for many purposes, each with a different name (e.g., DOT ABOVE has over 10 Syriac names!).

  However, when unambiguous we use Syriac name (e.g., SEYAME, RUKKAKHA, QUSHSHAYA, etc.).

Technical Issues

•Syriac is NOT part of the Arabic block.

•5 non-combining Arabic characters
  •Duplicate in Syriac block?
  •Follow them by RTL mark?

•Syriac Abbreviation Mark

Syriac Abbreviation Mark - SAM

- Used for abbreviations

- Rules

- Required for unambiguous plain text rendering

- Assigned to the Syriac block rather than General Punctuation.

Backing Store:

Reversed:

Rendered: