

Comment on L2/13-130: Writing classical Tamil in Arabic script

I am reading Roozbeh Pournader's proposal to encode three characters in Arabic script so that Tamil, one of the two classical languages of India (the other being Sanskrit) can be written in Arabic script. Tamil, the leading language of the Dravidian language family was/is written in a variety of scripts including Arabic, Grantha and Roman (with or without diacritics (standardized in ISO 15919) besides Tamil script itself. Tamil was the first language to be declared as the Classical language of India in Indian Parliament in 2004. For example, here is University of California Prof. George Hart's letter on Tamil as one of the two classical languages of India:

<http://tamil.berkeley.edu/tamil-chair/letter-on-tamil-as-a-classical-language>

Later Sanskrit was declared as Classical by Govt. of India, and the most recent one is Malayalam two months ago by Gov. of India. The scholarly documents seeking Classical status for Malayalam includes statements by several Malayalam scholars about Malayalam being written in Grantha script for 1500 years. While UTC debates about encoding two different code points of Vocalic LL (for which there not any words even in Sanskrit), major class of classical languages of India, i.e., those belonging to Dravidian family, does not have the capacity to be written in Unicode fonts for Grantha as of now. Since major web sites are writing Dravidian languages in Grantha now, and publishers are moving to modern Unicode fonts and printing their books straight from Unicode fonts, hope Grantha fonts also can be used to print Dravidian such as Tamil and Malayalam. Just like Arawi script, the Tamil name for Arabic. One of the main reasons for writing Tamil in Arawi script is Religion with Tamil Muslims writing the Tamil and Quranic religious passages to be written in Muslim tombstones in Arabic script. The same reason holds for Tamil (and other Dravidian languages) Saiva religion also. See Thevaram web sites displaying the holy and sacred verses being written in the religious script, Grantha which is continuing of a 1300 years old tradition among Tamils. Tamil gets written in Arawi and Grantha for religious reasons for centuries, and it is very good that Unicode Arabic fonts will have the capacity to write Tamil in Arabic script. Reading Dr. Lisa Moore's letter on Meetei Mayek (L2/13-162) suggests that Tamil can be written in the future web, email applications in plain text format in Arabic and Grantha scripts as the current practice of Thevaram writing shows. Right now, the Publishers from Chennai don't have Grantha chart fonts yet.

Roozbeh mentions about other potential characters for Arwi (arawi) script. If there are any more letters that need to be encoded to fully write Dravidian/Tamil language, the author of the Arwi characters proposal can consult with Dr. Torsten Tschacher, Germany. Thanks.

References:

- (1) On the Arabic script writing Tamil language,
<http://www.suedasien.uni-halle.de/SAWA/Tschacher.pdf>
- (2) T. TSCHACHER, THE IMPACT OF BEING TAMIL ON RELIGIOUS LIFE AMONG TAMIL MUSLIMS IN SINGAPORE, the author's PhD thesis is here,
http://scholarbank.nus.edu.sg/bitstream/handle/10635/16170/PhD_4.0.pdf

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