Comments on L2/20-284 regarding disunification of KAWI VOWEL SIGN AA

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First of all I would like to appreciate the authors and the team worked on document L2/20-284 "Proposal to encode Kawi". They did an amazing job.

The proposal is very well written and also the evidences of usages are solid. But there is an issue that I find it bothersome, and that is the proposal authors decided to disunify the vowel sign aa (*tarung*, *tedong*, *panolong*) into two separate codepoints: U+11F34 KAWI VOWEL SIGN AA (represented as ꣴ) and U+11F35 KAWI VOWEL SIGN ALTERNATE AA (represented as ꣵ).

The font used for the Kawi text in this document is the one made by Aditya Bayu Perdana, one of the proposal author, based on the late-era style often be seen in copperplate inscriptions. The font is chosen because that is the only font in my font manager that distinctly differentiate ꣴ and ꣵ.

Meant to be illustrative.

The point made by the proposal authors in section 5.3.1 is showing that the difference of ꣴ and ꣵ is a matter of legibility and stylistic choices, yet the proposal authors just suggested that it's up to the end-user to choose the desired form, so they proposed to disunify the vowel sign. It "might" be great if it's used for transcribing old manuscripts perfectly, but it's troublesome in pragmatic point-of-view.

Take a look at figure 24 as the example of the same word with different stylistic choices. The word *boddhi* is rendered as both ꦧꣴꢝ and ꦧꣵꢝ in different manuscript style, which are semantically the same but logically different if the vowel sign is disunified. As we all know that unnecessary disunification will result in unnecessary mess in finding, sorting, and indexing.

Not to mention that although Kawi is considered as a "dead, ancestor script", there are revival movements (mostly run by enthusiasts) to bring back the usages of the script, especially in the contemporary purpose and in digital world, and by the inclusion of the script in the Unicode

Standard, such usages are expected to be higher. If the disunification will make it to the standard, it will lead to the confusion in the end-user side.

What I would like to suggest is make the vowel sign aa unified, just in the one single codepoint. To address the difference between ɔ and ᩁ, it's in the hands of font developers to apply the "shaping grammar" to the font, not in the hands of the end-user by disunifying the vowel sign. And this might be a great idea: to "override the shaping grammar" to make the vowel sign as a particular form, just apply a font feature for example OpenType's cvXX feature.

And also we need to educate the end-user that both ɔ and ᩁ are the same vowel sign both semantically and logically.

I hope that this commentary will be helpful.

Thank you.