

Note on Kawi Sign Vocalic L U+11F3C and Possible Cognate of U+1B00

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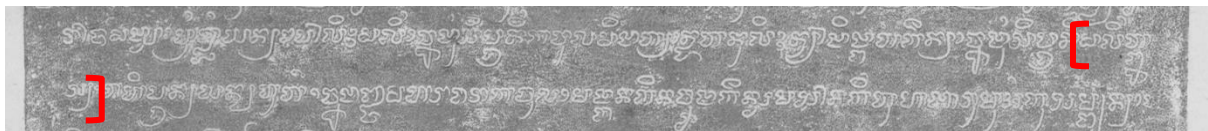
23rd September 2021

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Vowel Sign Vocalic L

Submitted comment by M. Mahali Syarifuddin proposed to empty codepoint U+11F3C in the Kawi block, which [we proposed](#) to be filled with KAWI VOWEL SIGN VOCALIC L. This is based on the apparent confusion that this would cause as the proposed character is incompatible with modern Balinese and Javanese graphical analysis the character. Similar concern was also sent by Ageng Gumelar Wicaksono via personal communications.

As Mr. Syarifuddin and Wicaksono explained in each correspondence, the contrast between conjunct VOCALIC L and diacritic VOCALIC L in modern Balinese and Javanese is understood as follow: conjunct is used between words while diacritic is used word internally.¹ In Kawi, both of those characters are relatively rare. The character that we proposed is based on an attestation in [Tuhanyaru Inscription](#), found in East Java dated 1245 ŚE (1323 CE). The relevant passage can be found in an estampange kept by Leiden University Library labelled Kern E25h-verso, line 4-5:



- [illegible]

We read these lines tentatively as:

4. rāja maṁsāḥ mraṇ mdaṇ yaṇ· poliḥ malīṇ, wnaṇuṇ sīmma niṇ kawula miṇat·, nda tan uliḥnyā ṇiṅgatakēṇ·, wnaṇuṇ sīmma niṇ **maliṇ t!**
5. **s·**, ta hīmmaṇ yaṇ pahutaṇ, wnaṇaṇja maharare kawulā maṇkana kinawūṇakēṇ samasāṇak iṇ tuha ṇaru muan ku sambyan·

The relevant parts (highlighted red) seem to be a contraction of *malij tēlēs*,² or possibly a toponym as it refers to a plot of cultivated land (*sīmma*) in *malij tls*. In both possible reading,

¹ It is curious why contemporary Balinese teaching often don't recognize conjunct form of vocalic *l*, as it clearly attested in the relatively renowned copy of *Nāgarakṛtāgama* palmleaf manuscript kept in the National Library of Indonesia (NB 9), *pupuh* 8, stanza 2. The functional distinction mentioned in the [Proposal to Encode Balinese](#) is between conjunct and diacritic of vocalic *r*.

² Attested in Zoemulder's *Old Javanese-English dictionary* (1982:1982). In Zoetmulder, [lě] is equivalent to [l]

the character in question is used word internally, thus fulfilling Syarifuddin's and Wicaksono's functional definition of vocal diacritic.

Wicaksono provided the following attestation in [Patapan I Inscription](#) for glyphic representation that is more in line with modern Balinese cognate U+1B3C BALINESE VOWEL SIGN LA LENGA ᮊᮥ, which can be analysed as conjunct LETTER LA + VOWEL SIGN EU:



ᮊᮥᮊᮥᮊᮥ saṅka niṅ paṅlĕk

However, the authors deferred to Ida Bagus Komang Sudarma's opinion that treatment of conjunct LETTER LA + VOWEL SIGN EU as allograph for VOWEL SIGN VOCALIC L has not been documented in Kawi script; it is a later Javanese and Balinese analysis that may not be applicable to Kawi.³ Therefore, we opinionated that the attested shape in Tuhanyaru inscription is better to be considered as vowel sign instead of conjunct, distinct from conjunct LETTER LA + VOWEL SIGN EU attested in Patapan I, even though it seems to produce similar readings.

We do not completely agree with Syarifuddin that the removal of VOWEL SIGN L should be based on the notion that this aspect of Kawi must be aligned with modern Balinese glyph analysis, as well incompatibility issues with given example of experimental font. However, we understand that the attested diacritic/conjunct in question is indeed ambiguous. Basing the encoding on this one sample may not be desirable, as we have not found other samples to compare and clarify.

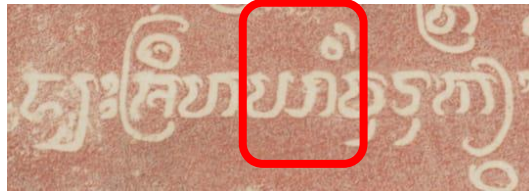
Therefore, we accept that the proposed U+11F3C KAWI VOWEL SIGN VOCALIC L is better to be unencoded for now, reserving the codepoint for future findings or consensus. The character can still be entered indirectly through CONJOINER + LETTER VOCALIC L.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{ᮊ} + \text{ᮊ} + \text{ᮊ} &= \text{ᮊ} \quad t! \\ \text{ᮊ} + \text{ᮊ} + \text{ᮊ} &= \text{ᮊ} \quad t!ě \end{aligned}$$

Possible Cognate with Balinese Ulu Ricem Sign

In personal communications, Wicaksono pointed a character in [Canggu Inscription](#) that some epigraphers has read as Kawi cognate of U+1B00 BALINESE SIGN ULU RICEM ᮊ, distinct from KAWI SIGN CANDRABINDU ᮊ which is cognate to to U+1B00 BALINESE SIGN ULU CANDRA ᮊ:

³ Personal communications dated July 28 2020. To quote Sudarma: "Penampakan gantungan la plus pepet sebagai alograf | itu belum pernah ditemukan."



ស្រីហាយ័យុរុក śrī hay^{yām} wuruk

The attestation is part of a well-known Majapahit king's name Hayam Wuruk, but here it is rendered in a nasalization sign resembling an inverted CANDRABINDU instead of MA + KILLER combination normally used in other inscriptions. However, the inscription in question does not seem to have contrasting sample of "normal" upright CANDRABINDU. Thus, we opiated that this sign could have been considered as glyphic variant of CANDRABINDU that may not be considered distinct as with modern Balinese ULU CANDRA and ULU RICEM. Examples from other materials are unknown at the moment.

Returning to the case of KAWI LETTER AU in our original proposal and KAWI VOWEL SIGN VOCALIC L in previous part, encoding this character based on this one attestation may be undesirable and we currently prefer not to include this character. However, it is worthy to note for future inclusion should there be further evidence of distinction or other considerations.

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