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Report Type: Feedback on an Encoding Proposal
Opt Subject: Proposal for a compromise of the recent Old Hungarian proposal

This is a response to the document L2/21-115. The document proposes changing the name of all the characters in the block and dding some more. Of course, changing the name is out of the question, given the stability requirements, nevertheless I think there is a compromise that leaves Unicode and the Hungarian experts happy.

The proposal history of the script is quite a lengthy one, where the Hungarian experts were asking for the characters to be named like they are named here (SZEKELY-HUNGARIAN ROVAS) as well as including other characters that were deemed to be either variants or ligatures that could be represented someway else. In my opinion, when it comes to the name, it's quite unfortunate the committee went with the name "Old Hungarian" but what is done is done.

Here is the compromise I propose:

1. Add a note that applies to the whole block stating "This script is in contemporary use. The preferred name of this script by Hungarian users is 'Skekely-Hungarian Rovas'." This should not be controversial, since it has been done for other blocks.

2. Amend the glyphs of the capital and small letters closed eh, as stated in the proposal. This also should not be controversial, since glyph corrections happen all the time. I would also recommend making a relevant errata notice so that the correction is more visible sooner. The fact that this has not been corrected yet (despite the community asking) is deeply problematic.

3. Amend the informative aliases and bullet notes to reflect what the experts are stating in the proposal. This is subdivided like so:

  A) NIKOLSBURG OE: Add a note stating "the term 'Nikolsburg' can be omitted from the name, since this is considered the conventional letter". A formal alias omitting the term is also a good way of stating this.
  B) RUDIMENTA OE: Add an informative alias "= Csikszentmihaly oe" (or a similar formal alias) to the capital and small letters and adding a note stating "the term 'Rudimenta' is misleading since it refers to a subsequent handwritten variant of this letter"
  C) NIKOLSBURG UE:Add the missing note "also used for Ü" to the capital letter Add on to the already existing note by stating "used for Ö in Kajoni's first alphabet" and add a new note stating "the phonetic value in the Nikolsburg alphabet is ambiguous"
  D) RUDIMENTA UE: Make the informative alias read just "= Ü" since that is the only value accepted today and add a note stating "before the 20th century, this was also used for representing UEE /Ű/ but has since been made to just represent Ü". Add yet another note stating "the term 'Rudimenta' can be omitted from the name, since this is considered the conventional letter". Adding new formal aliases omitting the term may be warranted too.
  E) ENT SHAPED SIGN: Add the informative (or formal) alias "= tprus" to both lowercase and uppercase. Also add the proposed note reading "the name of the letter is 'TPR-' in the Nikolsburg alphabet, with a contraction sign which in the earlier literature was interpreted as '-US'; therefore the denomination of the glyph is generally 'TPRUS' currently". And add yet another note stating "the claim that this was used as an abbreviation for 'temperius' is dubious and not accepted by experts"

4. Accept for encoding the character for 500, but with the name "OLD HUNGARIAN NUMBER FIVE HUNDRED". The name change follows the same rationale as for the extra letters. The codepoint at 10CBF, is ideal for leaving room for the extra letters. The original exclusion of this character is not very well explained, it should have been included originally. A simple search reveals that this numeral was included along the others from a while back.

5. Accept for encoding the two letters for UEE but with the names "OLD HUNGARIAN CAPITAL/SMALL LETTER UEE" as well as the corresponding informative aliases "= Ű" and "= ű". Sadly with the immutability of the names of the existing letters, it would cause a lot confusion not to follow the same naming convention for any new letters (it would look like as if the new letters aren't part of the same script). Nevertheless, the attestations of these letters are good, so there's no reason to exclude them. The note under the RUDIMENTA UE can be adjusted to redirect to this character too. The glyphs also seem fine.

6. Accept for encoding the letters for DZ, DZS, Q, W, X and Y, but following the same naming convention of already existing letters. This letters were originally excluded because they were considered ligatures of other letters, this reasoning however does not apply for this case. While Unicode does have a policy of avoiding to encode ligatures (unless they are for legacy compatibility) if the function is merely aesthetic, it is also understood that orthographic letters whose origin was a ligature, are indeed inadmissible for encoding. Just to mention a few examples we have 04B4 Ҵ CYRILLIC CAPITAL LIGATURE TE TSE, A732 Ꜳ LATIN CAPITAL LETTER AA, A728 Ꜩ LATIN CAPITAL LETTER TZ, 02A4 ʤ LATIN SMALL LETTER DEZH DIGRAPH, A64A Ꙋ CYRILLIC CAPITAL LETTER MONOGRAPH UK, 11D2E 𑴮 MASARAM GONDI LETTER KSSA. These and many other letters were encoded because as time went by, they attained their own separate paleographic identity, so that users would not necessarily think of the parts composing the letter. Hence their status became equal to the other letters, to the point that users would protest if they needed to use two codepoints for them. Given that this rationale applies to the proposed letters, the fact they were excluded for so long is deeply problematic.

7. (optional) Add a reference to the roman numerals on the Hungarian numerals, ONE, FIVE and TEN

I believe that the entire reason things are like this, is because the proposal process; instead of being a cooperative endeavor, became a tedious and lengthy adversarial process between Michael Everson and the Hungarian experts. Since Everson was a better known name in Unicode, his opinion won, but it's clear now that he made some mistakes. This is yet another example of the importance of engaging the community respectfully, when they have different opinions; the other example being the Western Cham proposal. Had Everson just listened and try to improve his proposal with the Hungarian experts feedback; instead of merely asserting they were wrong, this would have never happened. The Hungarian experts opinions, should have been given more weight overall, they had the necessary credentials on the topic after all.

That would be all.