From: Mansour, Kamal
Date: 2004-02-02 01:49:21 -0800
Subject: Coptic Comments

Hi Debbie,

Following are my comments on Prof. Emmel's document. Please feel free to
use during the UTC meeting. Thanks for contacting me.

Kamal

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Since Prof. Emmel and his colleagues rank among the top coptologists of
the world, I take their contribution very seriously. I will restrict my
remarks to the points on which I am sufficiently qualified to comment. In
general, I agree with most of the proposed additions & deletions of
characters; in the case of combining characters, however, we need to
clarify some potential ambiguities and deficiencies.

I.4. The Sahidic style described by Emmel derives from Greek uncial, which
is essentially caseless. The past 200 years of typography has imposed a
dual-case (i.e. upper & lower) paradigm on the Latin alphabet, and by on
extension on Cyrillic, Greek, as well as Coptic. As a result, adding a few
caseless alphabetic characters to the dual-case Coptic repertoire might
prove problematic. Since most Coptic dialectes --especially Bohairic and
Sahidic-- share the majority of the same alphabetic characters, even a
Sahidic-style font must be able to cope with case variations even if it
displays the same glyph for both cases of a case pair. If it is decided to
encode the newly proposed "caseless" characters, it might be wise to
reserve additional code points for the potential upper case characters in
the future.

II.1a. There is good reason to unify Nubian with Coptic since Nubian was
dependent on Coptic tradition and did not evolve its own use of Coptic
script into a distinct system.

II. 1b. The appearance of the so-called circumflex cited in the examples
is quite distinct from the Latin circumflex while it resembles one of the
possible shapes of the Greek perispomeni. It would be advisable to encode a
distinct combining circumflex for Coptic, not to mention an additional
circumflex that spans two characters.

II. 2a. I agree with the removal of U+2C9A (Capital Ro stroke) because it
is strictly symbolic, not alphabetic. However, I am not so convinced we
should delete U+2C99 (Capital Akhmimic Khei) because that would break the
dual-case paradigm. Also, Akhmimic Khei is not part of the Old Coptic
repertoire which definitely predates any use of upper case.

II. 2b. Other reference book confirm the error in the name for U+2CBD; it
should indeed be "Stavros". The initial and final "c" in the symbols stand
for the /s/ at the start and end of "stavros".

II. 2f. All the listed additions seems reasonable. We should investigate
whether "O UA" should be encoded in both upper and lower cases. Certainly,
if it appears as alphabetic in Bohairic, it needs to be in two cases.

II. 2g. (ii). We can reassure the contributors that variations in the
width of the supralinear stroke can be handled nowadays through intelligent
font technology such as OpenType.

II. 2g. (iii). Variations in alignment of dot-above ("jinkim") should be accomplished through three distinct characters since in (iv) Emmel states that Coptologists suspect that these are more than glyphic variants.

Regarding the supralinear combining stroke, I fear there might be some confusion here. I believe there are two types of supralinear stroke which can be typographically distinct: one is a syllabic marker (as over a syllabic, nasal consonant), while the other is an abbreviation mark as in one of the proposed symbols, Coptic Symbol COIS. We need to clarify which of these two uses is visible in the example resembling "MNT".

II. 2h. I do not think it is necessary to encode the trema (dieresis) combinations with Iauda and Ua since these can be dynamically composed.

Are the "combining grave accent above right" and "combining comma above right" merely graphic variants of the same character, or do they need to be distinguished in plain text?