Feedback on L2/16-294

The author of L2/16-294 proposes changes to 0A75 GURMUKHI SIGN YAKASH. He does provide some evidence as to why it should be changed, but the evidence is a bit misleading.

But before getting into that, here are some things that must be considered:

- The Gurmukhi script was established mainly for use in Sikh Scriptures.
- For Sikhs, the preservation of their scripture in their original form is essential. In fact, even a small alteration by one of the Guru’s son caused him to be excommunicated.
- In the original form of these scriptures, the YAKASH is resembled much better in its current form in Unicode than it is by the proposal author’s version, which doesn’t resemble the YAKASH in the original texts at all (you’ll see this in the pictures provided in this document).
- Changing the YAKASH to the author’s proposed version will push Sikhs away from using Unicode for their scriptures. In fact, they are already constrained to using ASCII fonts for their scriptures due to some other issues with Unicode, changes for which will be addressed in the near future.

Also, refer to the original YAKASH proposal (http://www.unicode.org/L2/L2006/06037-yakash.pdf) L2/05-167 for more information. The author makes the use and appearance of the YAKASH clear.

Manuscripts
Below are some pictures of several old manuscripts of Sri Guru Granth Sahib (the Sikh’s holy scripture) that show how the YAKASH is supposed to appear.

The same passage is used in each picture, to make it easier to compare, but there are an estimated 268 total times that the YAKASH is used in Sri Guru Granth Sahib.
From the above pictures, you can see that the current YAKASH appears to be better than the proposed change. There are a total of 420 manuscripts of Sri Guru Granth Sahib on Panjab Digital Library (see panjabdigilib.org). You can look through all of them, and see if you find even one YAKASH that like the one by the author of L2/16-294.
Modern Printing

The examples provided by the author of L2/16-294 were examples of modern printing and the claim is that printers now tend to print the YAKASH in the way that the author described, but it is notable that all of the examples he used were prints from one particular sect in Sikhi (known as the AKJ). That sect may print it that way, but the overall Sikh community doesn’t.

Currently, the only ones allowed to print Sri Guru Granth Sahib are the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), an organization established in 1920 whose main purpose was to manage the security, financial, facility maintenance and religious aspects of Gurdwaras (Sikh place of worship).

If you go to their website, they have downloadable Gurbani text files available (see http://sgpc.net/downloads/). If you open their file for Sri Guru Granth Sahib, you go through and view how the YAKASH is supposed to appear. It is also notable that they are using an old version of Unicode for this document (probably one before YAKASH was introduced). You can see this to be true since they have characters inputed in the wrong order (like GURMUKHI VOWEL SIGN I showing up before characters) and they have YAKASH inputed as a conjoined-YA. They do, of course, have them displaying properly with the software/fonts they are using. This shows that these examples aren’t simply just showing up this way because of Unicode, but that they purposefully have gone and changed the YAKASH to display properly.
These along with all the other occurrences of YAKASH in the document show that the YAKASH is not supposed to show up as the author of L2/16-294 says it is supposed to.
On top of this, if you look at the actual Sri Guru Granth Sahib in the printed form (again, printed by SGPC), you’ll see the same YAKASH there as well:
**Conclusion**

So, in conclusion, the YAKASH should not be changed as requested by the author of L2/16-294. The only ones that absolutely would need the YAKASH to show up a particular way are the Sikhs, for their scriptures. Regular authors writing in Gurmukhi don’t really seem to be too concerned about how the YAKASH shows up. Even if they do, it should be a different character and not a replacement of the current YAKASH, which is essential for Sikh Scriptures. With that in mind, I request that the Unicode Consortium not accept the change.