Unicode request for Afaka block

Kirk Miller, kirkmiller, gmail.com   2025 March 04

We request a Unicode block of 64 cells be assigned to the syllabic Afaka script of Suriname. A proposal for Afaka is being drafted.

There are two authoritative versions of the script, one released in 1910 and a second in 2024. The first is a partial syllabary of 56 letters that had come to the inventor of the script, Atumisi Afáka, in his dreams during the previous two years. This is the version is published in accounts of the script, most notably Dubelaar & Pakosie (1999). It is taught as grade-1 Afaka and is all that is known to most *bukuman* (people literate in the script). Among other gaps, it ignores syllable-final nasal consonants, only distinguishes the vowels *o* and *u* in a few cases, and sometimes conflates the vowels *e* and *i* as well.

The second version is a full syllabary of over 200 letters (exact number unknown) that were designed by André Pakosie, the current *edebukuman* (keeper of the script). The additional letters are transparently derived from the initial 56 through rotation, reflection, and added or extended strokes (Pakosie 2024). It is taught as grade-2 Afaka but it has not been published and is known only to six level-2 students that Pakosie was teaching as of last week.

Pakosie reports that in 1977, after he discovered that the syllabary could not distinguish all Ndyuka words, he was commissioned to expand it so that all words could be written unambiguously, but by 2019 he had created only 6 new letters (Pakosie 2019). These were included in L2/12-228 (Everson 2012), but many early grade-2 letters would later be replaced, and it is unknown if the ones listed in L2/12-228 are still in use. Pakosie says that earlier *bukuman* (writers of the script) who say they know the expanded script do not, as the letters they learned are no longer in use. We also cannot predict whether grade-2 will disseminate into the broader public sufficiently for encoding.

Currently the Roadmap to the SMP allocates a provisional 8 columns / 128 cells at U+16C80.. U+16CFF to Afaka script. This is both too much and potentially not enough: It is twice what is needed for grade-1, but only half what is needed for grade-2. We therefore request that the block be reduced to the allocation of 4 columns at U+16C80..U+16CBF that had been originally requested (L2/10-476). With 8 columns, if grade-2 is not encoded half the space will be wasted, and if it is encoded a second block will still be needed for full coverage, leaving both blocks incoherent – an initial Afaka block consisting of grade-1 plus grade-2 syllables from A to K, and an Afaka Supplement block for grade-2 syllables from L to Z.

I therefore request that the current provisional allocation be reduced to 4 columns. That is sufficient for grade-1, with 6 unassigned cells left for possible future additions such as the historical punctuation mark ❙ listed in L2/12-228 that Pakosie reports has not been used since Afáka's day. The entirety of the 2024 expansion, which as noted is not in widespread use, should be left to a future supplementary block of somewhere around 10 to 12 columns if and when it is ever encoded. That way both blocks will be coherent – one for the traditional script as it has existed for over a century, and a second for the new characters that are graphically derived from them.

References

Cornelius Dubelaar & André Pakosie (1999) *Het Afakaschrift van de Tapanahoni Rivier in Suriname*. Utrecht.

Michael Everson (2012) Revised proposal for encoding the Afáka script in the SMP of the UCS. L2/12-228.

André Pakosie (2019) Corrections, additions and/or comments on the revised proposal for encoding the Afáka script in the SMP of the UCS.

André Pakosie (2024) The Levels of the Afáka Script and How to Become the Edebukuman, Part 2. YouTube, www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojPdoRNIDl8.

Characters

The grade-1 characters are as follows. Included are a dingbat and a single punctuation mark. A second punctuation mark is not needed (Pakosie 2019).

Names are preliminary and are composed of the syllables that the letters transcribe. These include CVN syllables: Nasal codas are ignored in traditional script, but are distinguished in grade-2 and so are best spelled out in the names. More precise grade-2 letters, if/when proposed, would presumably be named for the single syllable they transcribe. This way, no matter how syllables are split off in grade-2, the grade-1 names will remain unambiguous.

The letters are arranged in Ndyuka Latin alphabetic order, with vowel-only syllables first. There is a traditional alphabetic/mnemonic order that follows the sequence in which Afáka created the letters, but it is only taught at Level 3 of instruction, which few students ever advance to, and therefore does not seem to be a useful basis for the Unicode encoding order. If this changes, it will of course not affect the size of the block needed.

Grade-1 letters

ɑ	16C80	AFAKA SYLLABLE A-AN
M	16C81	AFAKA SYLLABLE E-EN
P	16C82	AFAKA SYLLABLE I-IN
O	16C83	AFAKA SYLLABLE O-ON
ʀ	16C84	AFAKA SYLLABLE U-UN-WO-WON
℘	16C85	AFAKA SYLLABLE BE-BEN
△	16C86	AFAKA SYLLABLE BI-BIN
∅	16C87	AFAKA SYLLABLE BO-BON-BU-BUN
℅	16C88	AFAKA SYLLABLE DA-DAN
ὑ	16C89	AFAKA SYLLABLE DE-DEN
ᵬ	16C8A	AFAKA SYLLABLE DI-DIN
ɯ	16C8B	AFAKA SYLLABLE DO-DON-DU-DUN
℘	16C8C	AFAKA SYLLABLE DYO-DYON-DYU-DYUN
ᵰ	16C8D	AFAKA SYLLABLE FA-FAN
ℰ	16C8E	AFAKA SYLLABLE FE-FEN
ℱ	16C8F	AFAKA SYLLABLE FI-FIN
ɰ	16C90	AFAKA SYLLABLE FO-FON-FU-FUN
ℊ	16C91	AFAKA SYLLABLE GA-GAN
℧	16C92	AFAKA SYLLABLE GE-GEN
℘	16C93	AFAKA SYLLABLE GI-GIN
⋂	16C94	AFAKA SYLLABLE GO-GON-GU-GUN
Ψ	16C95	AFAKA SYLLABLE KA-KAN
Ɓ	16C96	AFAKA SYLLABLE KE-KEN
ℓ	16C97	AFAKA SYLLABLE KI-KIN
ℕ	16C98	AFAKA SYLLABLE KO-KON-KU-KUN
Ʊ	16C99	AFAKA SYLLABLE KWA-KWAN-GWA-GWAN
⊦	16C9A	AFAKA SYLLABLE LA-LAN
Ӿ	16C9B	AFAKA SYLLABLE LE-LEN-LI-LIN
θ	16C9C	AFAKA SYLLABLE LO-LON-LU-LUN
Ⴚ	16C9D	AFAKA SYLLABLE MA-MAN
Ʊ	16C9E	AFAKA SYLLABLE ME-MEN-MI-MIN
Ɔ	16C9F	AFAKA SYLLABLE MO-MON-MU-MUN
₹	16CA0	AFAKA SYLLABLE NA-NAN
+	16CA1	AFAKA SYLLABLE NE-NEN
Ѱ	16CA2	AFAKA SYLLABLE NI-NIN

Þ 16CA3 AFAKA SYLLABLE NO-NON-NU-NUN

ε 16CA4 AFAKA SYLLABLE NYA-NYAN

ʊ 16CA5 AFAKA SYLLABLE PA-PAN-BA-BAN

Ⱶ 16CA6 AFAKA SYLLABLE PE-PEN

Ᵽ 16CA7 AFAKA SYLLABLE PI-PIN

ᵿ 16CA8 AFAKA SYLLABLE PO-PON-PU-PUN

ℰ 16CA9 AFAKA SYLLABLE PU-PUN

ᵠ 16CAA AFAKA SYLLABLE SA-SAN

ᶈ 16CAB AFAKA SYLLABLE SE-SEN-SI-SIN

ℱ 16CAC AFAKA SYLLABLE SO-SON-SU-SUN

𝑙 16CAD AFAKA SYLLABLE TA-TAN

ʋ 16CAE AFAKA SYLLABLE TE-TEN

8 16CAF AFAKA SYLLABLE TI-TIN

�千 16CB0 AFAKA SYLLABLE TO-TON

Ж 16CB1 AFAKA SYLLABLE TU-TUN

ᶂ 16CB2 AFAKA SYLLABLE TYA-TYAN

ᒉ 16CB3 AFAKA SYLLABLE WA-WAN

ℯ 16CB4 AFAKA SYLLABLE WE-WEN-WI-WIN

ᶊ 16CB5 AFAKA SYLLABLE YA-YAN

ℚ 16CB6 AFAKA SYLLABLE YE-YEN

ᶇ 16CB7 AFAKA SYLLABLE YO-YON-YU-YUN

Punctuation

| 16CBE AFAKA PUNCTUATION MARK

Afaka dingbat

☀═ 16CBF AFAKA COMET SYMBOL

Chart

This chart assumes the four columns of the SMP originally proposed in <u>L2/10-476</u>.

Afaka

16C80   **16CBF**

	16C8	16C9	16CA	16CB
0	ɑ	ɰ	ɾ	४
1	M	⸽	+	Ж
2	ⸯ	ʊ	Ϥ	ϕ
3	O	⸬	þ	₹
4	⸰	⸱	ℰ	⸲
5	⸳	Ψ	⸴	⸵
6	△	Ᏸ	⸶	⸷
7	∅	⸸	⸹	↑
8	⸺	⸻	⸼	
9	⸽	ℭ	⸾	
A	⸿	⊦	⸈	
B	⸰	X	⸉	
C	⸊	ə	⸋	
D	⸌	⊟	∅	
E	⸍	Ѱ	⸎	│
F	⸏	⸐	⸑	⸒

5