

TITLE: Expert Feedback on AVESTAN SEPARATION POINT by Profs. Skjaervo, Jamison, and Watkins

SOURCE: Submitted by Deborah Anderson, University of California, Berkeley (liaison member)

STATUS: Liaison contribution

ACTION: For consideration by WG2

DISTRIBUTION: ISO/IEC JTC1/SC2/WG2 N3425

DATE: 13 April 2008

The following are two letters from experts providing feedback on U+103B8 AVESTAN SEPARATION POINT, currently in Amendment 5. Background discussion on the AVESTAN SEPARATION POINT (with alternative options for users) is provided in document N3443. This mark was proposed in N3197 (Revised proposal to encode the Avestan script in the SMP of the UCS) and discussed in N3193 (Proposal to add Medievalist and Iranianist punctuation characters to the UCS). I provided earlier feedback in document N3336.

To: Mike Ksar, ISO WG2 Convener, and Lisa Moore, Chair, Unicode Technical Committee

RE: Avestan Separation Point

Dear Ms. Moore and Mr. Ksar,

At the request of Deborah Anderson, I am writing to you as Aga Khan Professor of Iranian at Harvard University and someone who has studied Avestan for close to half a century (beginning in high school), witness my *An Introduction to Young Avestan* and *An Introduction to Old Avestan* (<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~iranian/>). I am also one of very few today (if any) who have read the entire Avesta from manuscripts to the extent they are available.

With regard to the "Avestan separation point," this is a typographical detail used by the typesetters employed by Geldner for his edition of the Avesta, but which does not correspond to a separate sign, at least in the majority of Avestan manuscripts. If one wants to imitate (to some extent) the manuscript punctuation (which varies from manuscript to manuscript), one single dot is needed to separate words and a more complex group of dots for the sentence/clause separator. A more complicated system would be redundant and misleading. In sum, the Avestan separation point is not needed.

Sincerely,

P. Oktor Skjaervo
Aga Khan Professor of Iranian
Harvard University
Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations
6 Divinity Ave.
Cambridge, MA 02138

To: Unicode Technical Committee and WG2
From: Stephanie Jamison and Calvert Watkins, UCLA
RE: Avestan Separation Point

Dear UTC and WG2,

As professors and scholars of Indo-European linguistics and philology, we are strongly against encoding additional baseline dots for Avestan. We feel including more dots would introduce unnecessary distinctions which would only confuse Iranian scholars and would be a disservice to the community, particularly since the distinction made by Geldner between the smaller word separator dot vs. the larger dot separating sentences is not only not important for reading of the text, but was never noticed by either of us until it was brought to our attention.

Sincerely,

Stephanie W. Jamison
Professor of Asian Languages and Cultures
Head, Program in Indo-European Studies
UCLA

Calvert Watkins
Professor Emeritus of Linguistics and the Classics
Harvard University

Professor-in-Residence of Indo-European Studies and Classics
UCLA