

Title: Comments on N4407R Proposal to Encode Variants for Siddham Script  
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This is a letter provide our perspective (Shingon Buddhist International Institute and Koyasan Shingon Tenchiji Temple) on the Revised Proposal To encode Variants for Siddham Script.

The Current efforts of the SAT Daizo-kyo- Text Database Committee (led by Prof. Masahiro SHIMODA, University of Tokyo) and the other Siddham experts including Taichi KAWABATA, Toshiya SUZUKI, Kiyonori NAGASAKI is truly a remarkable undertaking. They have significantly contributed to Japanese Buddhist Scholarship reflecting not one but all of the Buddhist sects. We wish to convey our deep gratitude for their continued efforts.

It is our intention to be supportive of this effort.

Siddham is a very complex script that has many levels of meaning and variations in how each glyph has been written in the last 1400 years.

We have translated over 30.000 pages of Japanese/Chinese texts (that have Siddham) into English in the last 20 years. These span the period from the sixth century to modern times.

We have translated and taught in English the Koyasan Chu-in Shogyo ( The Koyasan Shingon Complete Collection of Rituals (259 rituals), also known as the Ichi-ryu Denju) as an authorized Koyasan Denju Ajari (Transmission Acarya). This includes over 3,000 mantras and Dojokan Visuals for over 200 rituals most that use a Siddham shuji. This included 1200 pages of Procedures (Shidai) and 3,000 pages of Commentaries.

We have been teaching Siddham meditations based on ancient texts to both Priests and Lay People for over 10 years.

This has provided us with many challenges to translate and then teach the Siddham Texts. The reason that we proposed the Siddham Script to Unicode was to assist others by sharing our experience. We are committed to Translating all of the Siddham texts that have historical and esoteric information in them into English and Siddham.

There are many texts that relate to pronunciation based on Chinese sounds. Since we can go directly to the Siddham sound these texts will be a lower priority.

We have found that Siddham has many styles.

## 1. Basic Glyphs

Represent the characters and their underlying spiritual meaning. There are many sacred texts that outline the Glyph and some that also include the sacred meaning. In Japan it was faithfully reproduced but it has many variations based on where the original script came from. A variant glyph may come from a different lineage or text and consequently may have a different underlying meaning. If all glyphs are standardized this subtle shift in meaning may be lost.

I have attached a very rough pdf (Attachment 1) of Siddham Variations from The Jogon Siddham Commentary text San Mitsu Sho. Jogon included 36 separate textual sources for different styles of glyphs. These include the following textual sources that have variants in them.

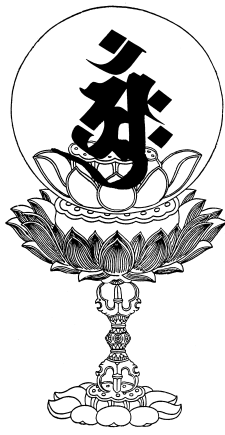
**Southern India/南天, Separate Body/別躰, Ryaku Ki/略記, Alternative/或, "shidai ki (the book of Daishi's interpretation of meanings), New/新, Old/Butsutetsu/佛哲, Daishi Daishittan shō/大師大悉曇章, Garbhakoṣa mantra /胎藏真言, Daizugudarani/大隨求陀羅尼, Monju mon/文殊問, Daishi/大師, Chikō/智廣, Zenshin/全真, Zenga/全雅, Keiyū/景祐, Keiyū India's Syllabary source/景祐天竺字源, Kujiyaku Kyō/孔雀經, Great Body/大躰, Shaku ki/釋記, Sanzō/三藏, Siddhāṃ/悉曇, Kongōchō/金剛頂, Syaku gi/釋義, I Hsing/一行, Ji ki/字記, Yōshū ki/要集記, Chierin/智慧輪, Nanda/Sōei/Hōgetsu etc., Record of Shingaku/心覺記, Zō 8/藏八, Brāhmī scripts/梵文**

This is only one commentary. The Annen Commentary has additional Variants.

As you can see from Attachment 1 there are many variations based on the source of the text for almost every character.

## 2. Mandala Glyphs

Represent the seed (JP: Shuji or Sanskrit: Bija) that manifests a particular Deity within the Mandala. As an Example the letter “a” as written by Kukai (The founder of Shingon Buddhism) is represented differently in the Mandala and in the Varnapatha (The Alphabet). This is the foundation of all of Siddham. Everything begins from the unproduced state of the letter a.



This is a representation of the Siddham letter āṃḥ. This is a variant used in the Garbha Mandala. It is based on the combination of the four forms of a (a ā aṃ aḥ). The additional forms (or ornaments) are an abbreviation of a visualization.



### 3. Shuji Glyphs

Are contained in Deity descriptions and the Dojokan (Altar Procedure Meditation) for invoking a deity. One such collection can be found at the following URL <http://www.lib.ehime-u.ac.jp/SUZUKA/316/index.html>

As an example, this is a variant of i. If you view the Butsuzo you will find many variations from the Basic Glyphs.

### 4. Ligatures

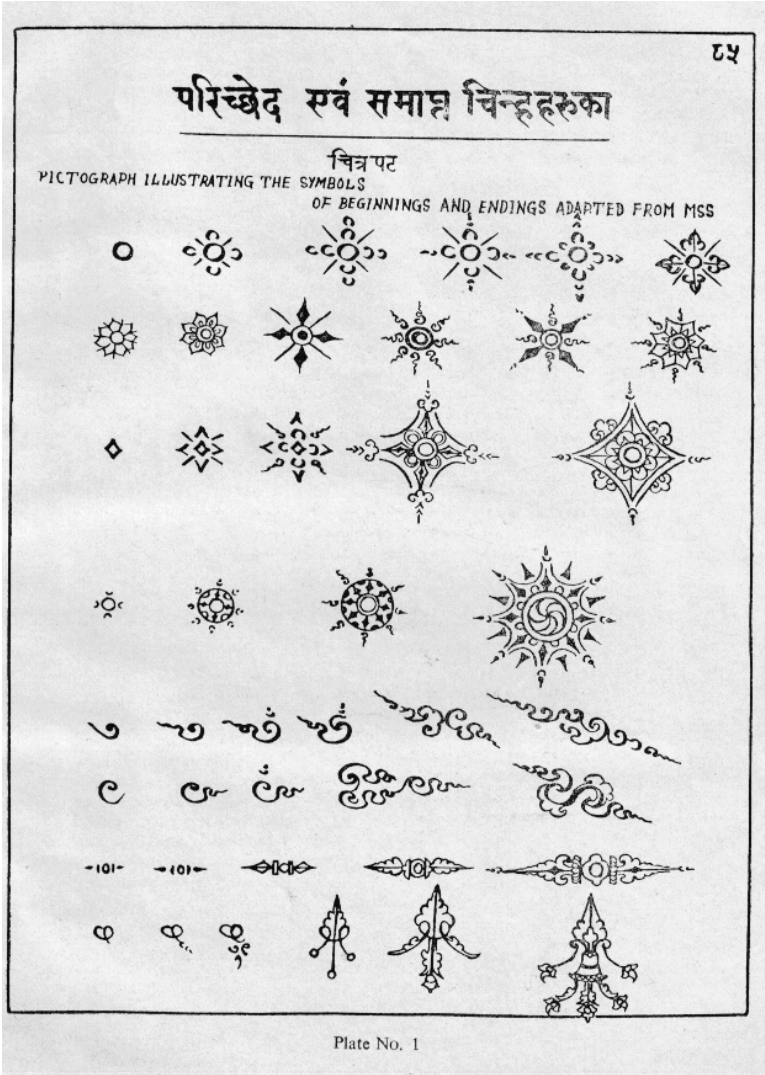
Invoke a particular set or pair of Deities or a stylized form of letter combinations. an example is ham mam. This represents Acala Vidya Raja (JP: Fudo Myo-o). These were often written on swords or clothing as a spell of protection asking the Deity to protect the wearer.

### 5. Chinese words

Represent the character based on sound. The Chinese character 阿 often represents the Siddham letter a.

There are many Chinese letters that represent characters. Every Siddham sound has at least one Chinese Sound character and some have numerous sound characters.

6. Special Meditation or Ritual related symbols



These are in the text or ritual. Some of these have been included in the Siddham encoding but there are many more that were not included. This is from the following book:

Roth, Gustav. (1986) 'Mangala-symbols in Buddhist Sanskrit Manuscripts and Inscriptions' in Bhattacharya, G (ed.) Deyadharma : Studies in Memory of Dr D. C. Sircar. Sri Satguru Pubs. Delhi, p. 239-250.

## The TENCHIJI Approach to Siddham

Our approach is to have separate fonts for each Glyph Variant based on its original source. We estimate that this would mean about 50 fonts. The source could be a text, a mandala or a visualization based on a collection or a ritual procedure. Although this seems like a large project, many sources only have a few changes and so the base font would be used for the majority of Glyphs.

We believe that our approach will be able to handle the first three types of Glyphs; Basic Glyphs, Mandala Glyphs and Shuji Glyphs and partially the sixth type Special Meditation or Ritual Symbols. For the rest of the Sixth type (Special Meditation or Ritual Symbols) we will develop a specialized “Wingding Style Font” Perhaps Siddham Meditation to handle these very specialized glyphs.

The majority of all translation work will be using the Basic Glyph form but the others are very significant.

We believe that this will be the most elegant solution.

We are seeking advice on the following:

1. We would like guidance and a consensus on how to handle the Ligatures and decorative glyphs from an encoding perspective.
2. How to differentiate Siddham based on Chinese sound like characters versus Siddham text.
3. We would like to coordinate these issues with the Taisho DB SAT Project.

Although we believe that the separate font is the most elegant solution, we also feel that the Taisho DB SAT project is of utmost importance and look forward to their perspective. In the past we have found that it is best to present what we need and how it will be used and then let the encoding specialists figure out the simplest way of getting to the ultimate outcome that we need.

Elegant solutions are the result of open minds.