

TITLE: Additional Comments on the AVESTAN SEPARATION POINT

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ACTION: For consideration by WG2

DISTRIBUTION: ISO/IEC JTC1/SC2/WG2

Executive Summary: Avestan contains a single dot between words; it also contains other marks of punctuation designating junctures. To typeset critical editions, Geldner and before him, Westergaard, introduced various marks of punctuation but in particular, distinguished two dots: one for the word separator and another one separating clauses or sentences. Both dots were displayed on the baseline, but were distinguished by size. Hence, to represent the content of these editions, two dots are needed. Unicode already has sufficient dots available: 2E31 (or 00B7) can be used for word separator, and 002E can be employed as clause/sentence separator. To typeset facsimile editions of Geldner, various options are available, including using fonts with larger or smaller glyphs or alternative characters. Expert feedback has shown scholars are not in favor of proliferating more baseline dots; Geldner can be read and understood in plain text without encoding them.

Background

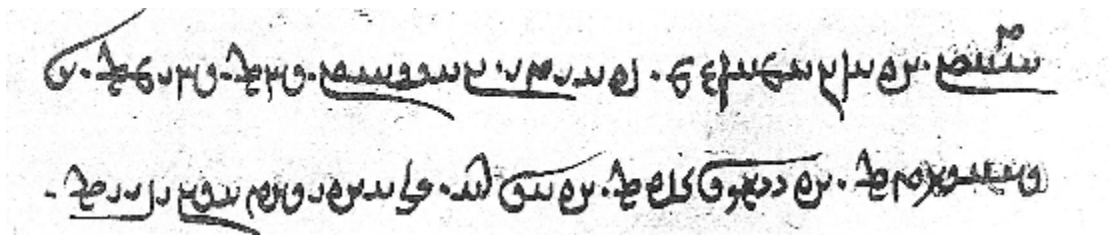
The AVESTAN SEPARATION POINT was proposed in documents N3193 (L2/07-004) and N3197 (L2/07-006). Expert feedback on this character was provided in L2/07-304 (N3336). The character remains in the Avestan block in Amendment 5 (N3349R, L2/07-322R), currently with the annotations “used in Geldner’s edition of the Avesta” and “baseline character, smaller than a full stop.” This document reviews the background of this character within the context of Avestan punctuation as well as typesetting practices.

Avestan Punctuation

In Avestan texts, words are separated by a dot, and sentences are separated by a group of dots or other marks (Skjaervo 2003: 2).

a. Word Separator Dot

The following manuscript shows the word separator dot:



(Source: Vendidad 2 from <http://avesta.org/gifs/vd2.jpg>)

In typeset editions, word separator dots appear at two locations:

(a) raised, as a middle dot (see figure 1 from a primer by Prof. Skjaervo, with the point equidistant between words, and figure 2, in which the dot follow each word closely), or

(b) on the baseline, such as is found in Geldner (*Avesta: The Sacred Book of the Parsis*, figure 3) and a number of other handbooks (A.V. Williams Jackson, *An Avestan Grammar*, Darmstadt, 1968 and Hans Reichelt, *Avestisches Elementarbuch*, Heidelberg 1967). The dot in these examples closely follows each word.

Hence, there is a range in location of the word separator dot in typesetting. (Note the discrepancy in the location of the dot in documents N3193 [L2/07-004] and N3197 [L2/07-006]: it is located on the baseline in N3193, but above the baseline in N3197.)

b. Sentence/Clause Separators and Method of Typesetting Them

Avestan manuscripts contain other dots (or marks) to distinguish junctures in the text. N.L. Westergaard, a predecessor of Geldner, described the punctuation in the Avestan manuscripts thus:

In the manuscripts each word is separated from the next by a dot; and a large stop is used, generally in the shape of [low ring] or [one ring over two rings], either to distinguish the passage of the text from the accompanying translation or else at the end of chapters, verses or other divisions. [p. 25]

Westergaard goes on to describe the “improvement” he makes in his edition by using a small dot after each word, a larger dot at the end of a clause, and a raised ring symbol at other junctures:

This peculiarity I have wished to improve by employing two dots -- a very small one after every word and a larger at the end of the clause, with a [raised ring] after a period or series of clauses, -- and by substituting in all compound words a hyphen in place of the usual dot. This punctuation I have employed everywhere, as the context in my opinion might require, regardless of the manner of subdividing used in the translations. [pp. 25-26]

In his edition, Geldner has adopted the convention of using a small dot after each word and, to designate the end of a sentence, either a “heavy point” or a combination of two dots over one, though he states the sentence delimiter was used only consistently in the Vendidad, not in the Yasna texts (p. liii).

In a footnote on p. liii, Geldner gives credit to Westergaard for the introduction of the heavy point, but admits that the heavy point “has not, however, turned out successfully, as in the proof sheets it sometimes could not be distinguished from the fine point used in dividing words.”

Indeed, a careful review of handbooks (Jackson, Reichelt, and Skjaervo) demonstrates that they do not continue the “larger dot” of Geldner and Westergaard in their editions, but maintain the word separator dot, as well as configurations of dots for delimiters. And in private communications, Prof.

Stephanie Jamison admitted she had never noticed the difference in dots. Prof. P. O. Skjaervo in N3336 saw no point in maintaining the “larger dot” and uses only two marks of punctuation in his font: a single dot and a three-dot mark.

It should also be noted that Geldner’s “heavy point” is not, strictly speaking, the same as the FULL STOP that appears at the end of the sentence, but is larger than it:

indicated the same either by a larger point (.), or by ∴
where the sentence ends. I regret that I did not do this

Typesetting Avestan Texts

Hence, in order to typeset Avestan manuscripts, one needs (a) a word separator dot and (b) another dot or combination of dots to denote the sentence/clause delimiters. Unicode already contains adequate dots to cover these (and combinations of dots have been recently approved to cover the sentence delimiters). To reflect the difference in dot sizes – if the distinction was deemed important to maintain – different characters and/or fonts with different glyph sizes can be used.¹

If one wanted to strictly maintain the contrast between the two dots of Geldner or Westergaard, one could use:

- For word separator, 2E31 WORD SEPARATOR MIDDLE DOT (or 00B7 MIDDLE DOT) with smaller and/or lowered glyph, if desired
- For sentence separator, 002E FULL STOP with enlarged glyph

Alternatively, another pair of characters could be employed, if the baseline position was desired:

- For word separator, 002E FULL STOP (with smaller glyph)
- For sentence separator, 2E31 WORD SEPARATOR MIDDLE DOT with lowered and enlarged glyph

Although less precise in reflecting the original text (but clearer for the reader than the “heavy dot”), one could instead use one of the variants listed by Geldner and Westergaard for the clause/sentence delimiter : 10B3B SMALL TWO DOTS OVER ONE DOT PUNCTUATION [cited by Geldner, p. liii], 10B3F LARGE ONE RING OVER TWO RINGS PUNCTUATION or 2E30 RING POINT [cited by Westergaard, p. 25]).

¹ Since the “heavy point” is not maintained in current handbooks and is easily confused with the word separator (already noted by Geldner), it would only be needed if one desired to typeset Geldner or Westergaard exactly. As noted above, Geldner’s “heavy point” is different from his FULL STOP, so the suggestion of unifying these two in L2/07-006 (N3197) and L2/07-004 (N3193) is not technically correct. However, the idea of creating a new “heavy point” seems extreme. Again, using a font with a glyph that has been enlarged would suffice, if the distinction was desired.

Figures

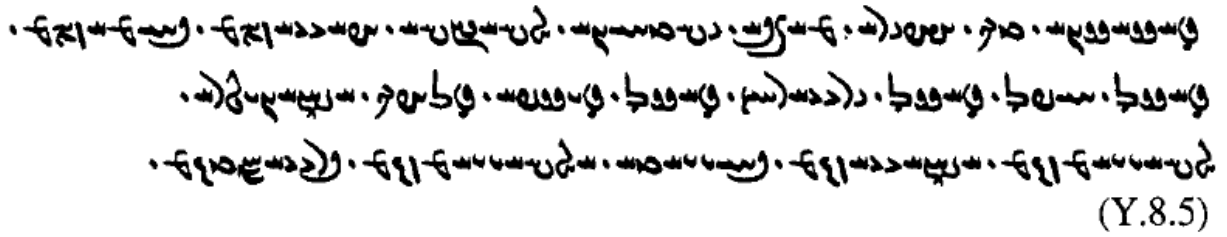


Figure 1: Showing middle point for word separator dot. Source: P. O. Skjaervo’s *An Introduction to Young Avestan* (<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~iranian/Avesta/index.html>).

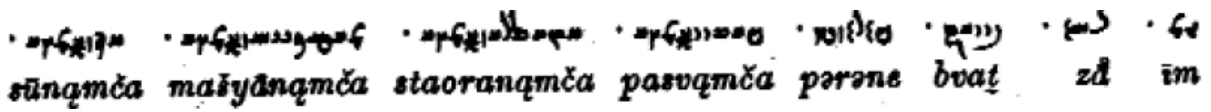


Figure 2: Showing middle dot as word separator in Reichelt’s *Avesta Reader* (Strassburg, 1911).

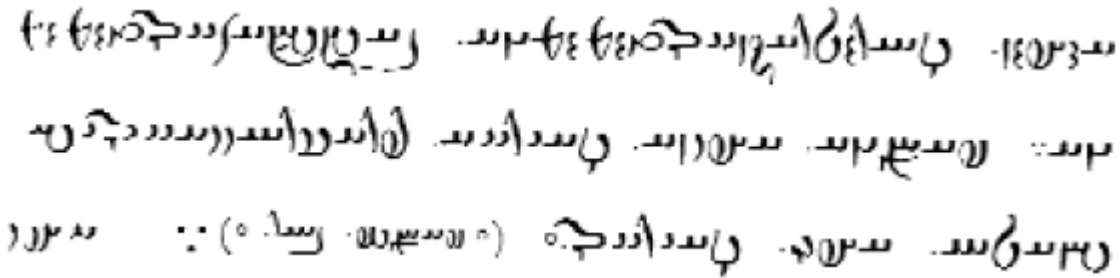


Figure 3: Sample from Geldner, showing baseline dot between words.

Bibliography

Geldner, K. F. *Avesta: The Sacred Book of the Parsis*. Stuttgart 1889-96.
 Jackson, A.V. Williams. *An Avestan Grammar*. Darmstadt, 1968.
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http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~iranian/Avesta/a04_lesson1.pdf
 Westergaard, N. L. *Zendavesta or The Religious Books of the Zoroastrians*. Vol. I: *The Zend texts*, edited by N. L. Westergaard. Wiesbaden, 1993. [originally published 1852-54]