

TITLE: Comments on the Avestan Separation Point
SOURCE: Deborah Anderson, Script Encoding Initiative, UC Berkeley (Liaison member to SC2)
ACTION: For consideration by WG2
DISTRIBUTION: ISO/IEC JTC1/SC2/WG2

Summary:

In the comments accompanying the US negative vote on PDAM5, the US NB stated its opposition to the encoding of the AVESTAN SEPARATION POINT, suggesting rather that U+2E37 WORD SEPARATOR MIDDLE DOT be used. Ireland is in support of the Avestan character. In order to get feedback from the scholars who would be using such a mark, three specialists were asked about it. Two felt it was unnecessary to encode yet another dot. Prof. Skjaervo's font, used in his *Introduction to Young Avestan*, only includes two dots: the word separator and the two dots over one dot. He suggests that if one wanted to distinguish the sentence divider of Geldner (from the word divider), one could use SMALL TWO DOTS OVER ONE DOT PUNCTUATION (one form that Geldner used) or a font with a larger dot. The responses of the specialists are included below under #1, #2, and #3.

Lastly, the two proposals which discussed this mark (N3197 and N3193) were not consistent, so in the very least a discussion clarifying this mark's location is warranted. (The discussion is included below under #4.)

1. P. Oktor Skjaervo, Aga Khan Professor of Iranian, Harvard University, who has created a font for his Avestan manual (which was sent to Jost Gippert):

Dear Debbie,
if you have a (fat) period [in your font] to correspond to a period and a triple dot (two dots over a period) you're fine for most practical purposes. I sometimes use the triple dot UC char 61689 (in Wingdings 2) when I transcribe, which, however, is "fuzzy." If there is one with smooth dots, it might be better. Attached [below] are the dots in my Avestan font. Forget about Geldner's "larger" point.
Oktor

[Image of the dots in his font]



2. From Stephanie Jamison, Prof., Head of Program in Indo-European Studies, Asian Languages and Cultures, UCLA

[Images from Geldner's figure 15 were sent]

[F]rankly I don't see any reason to produce any more dots than already exist. I think most people in transliterating Avestan just use a period, and since as far as I know there's no confusion if the wrong size dot is used (and in fact for most of us with aging eyes, we're lucky to see dots at all, much less distinguish their different sizes), I think this would be needlessly multiplying entities.

3. Jost Gippert, head of TITUS project and Prof. at University of Frankfurt

Dear Debbie,

> I have two questions:

> a. If you have input Avestan text, what did you use for the word divider dot?

> If you haven't, what would you use for the word divider in the TITUS texts?

> Would you use a full stop or ?

In the transliteration, we did use the full stop of course. In an Avestan encoding I would prefer to have a special dot marker reserved for this purpose.

> b. What would you use for Geldner's sentence divider (which he describes in his Grammar as a larger dot or two dots over one)?

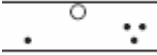
In the Latin transliteration, we used a :: (i.e., two times :) for the latter variant; this will have to be replaced by an adequate character in the original script. We did not distinguish single dots used as sentence dividers and word dividers, both being represented by a plain full stop. This is a shortcoming dating from the eighties when the texts were input, and it must be overcome when an encoding of Avestan is possible.

All the best,
J.

Prof.Dr. Jost Gippert, Vergleichende Sprachwissenschaft
Universitaet Frankfurt
Postfach 11 19 32
D-60054 Frankfurt
gippert@em.uni-frankfurt.de
<http://titus.uni-frankfurt.de>.

4. Other Comments on the AVESTAN SEPARATION POINT

a. N3197 distinguishes this mark from the FULL STOP as being smaller and low, “like the bottom dot in the SMALL TWO DOTS OVER ONE DOT PUNCTUATION,” and includes an image of this mark situated above the baseline:



N3193, however, says it “sits on the baseline as does U+002E FULL STOP”.

Hence, there is a discrepancy between the two documents regarding the location (on the line or above the line) of the AVESTAN SEPARATION POINT.

b. The examples in the proposals show a variety of locations for this word divider (Reichelt in figure 5, shows a middle dot, as does Fossey in figure 14 [N3197], but Pietraszewski figure 11 [N3197] shows a baseline dot). Since these all are used for a word separator dot, the user community should decide which character to use. They could opt, for example, for U+2E37 (with a lowered glyph, if desired) for an Avestan word separator or use an already encoded dot.