

ISO/IEC JTC 1/SC 2 N3431

L2/08-087

To: UTC and ISO/IEC JTC1/SC2 WG2

From: Deborah Anderson, SEI, UC Berkeley and Prof. Donald Mastronarde, UC Berkeley

RE: Comments on L2/08-049 (N3382) Egyptological Yod and Cyrillic Breathings

DATE: 28 January 2008

Document N3382 recommends a property change for U+0485 COMBINING CYRILLIC DASIA PNEUMATA and U+0486 COMBINING CYRILLIC PSILI PNEUMATA from "Script=Cyrillic" to "Script=Inherited" and asks for annotations to be added, including one for U+0486: "used with i for Egyptological yod."

Background: The original proposal for Egyptian transliteration characters, L2/00-293 (N2241, but building on discussion contained in L2/99-246, N2043) proposed a separate EGYPTOLOGICAL YOD character. This character was rejected by the UTC at the October 2005 meeting because it was determined that the letter "I/i" with a diacritic could suffice. I was tasked (action item 105-A48) with relaying this decision to the user community and asking them which combining character was their preference for representing YOD: U+0313 COMBINING COMMA ABOVE or U+0357 COMBINING RIGHT HALF RING ABOVE. My inquiry was sent over the EEF email list in March 2006, and I also queried various Egyptologists, including those at the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago. Responses were sent to myself and Professor Donald Mastronarde at UC Berkeley, who maintains a font that can be used for Egyptian transliteration (New Athena Unicode). For those who replied, the results were fairly evenly split between these two combining diacritics, with opinions primarily based on glyph shapes in available fonts. (I did notify a few people who had responded about the Cyrillic characters as another option, but did not hear from anyone actively using the Cyrillic diacritic.)

Summary: Because the user community was not able to come to an agreement regarding diacritic should be used, Donald Mastronarde and I would strongly recommend against an annotation specifying COMBINING CYRILLIC PSILI PNEUMATA be used for YOD. Indeed, users would be more likely to look in the Combining Diacritical Marks block than in the Cyrillic block for the appropriate combining diacritic. Regarding font issues: I would expect (and recommend) a specialized font for Egyptian transliteration be created that would permit the appropriate placement of the diacritic.