

Universal Multiple-Octet Coded Character Set
 International Organization for Standardization
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 Международная организация по стандартизации

Doc Type: Working Group Document**Title: Towards resolution on the name of U+FDFF****Source: Michael Everson and Roozbeh Pournader****Status: Individual Contribution****Action: For consideration by JTC1/SC2/WG2 and UTC****Date: 2002-12-09**

Ireland and Iran provided conflicting comments on the spelling of the name of this character in the ballot on Amd. 2 of Part 1 of ISO/IEC 10646. Neither country thought that the spelling ARABIC LIGATURE BISMILLAH ARRAHMAN ARRAHIM was appropriate for this character name in the UCS.

Ireland proposed:

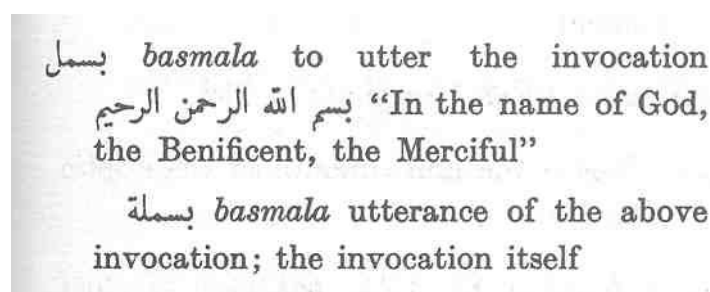
ARABIC LIGATURE BISMILLAH AL-RAHMAN AL-RAHIM

Iran proposed:

ARABIC LIGATURE BESMELLAH ERRAHMAN ERRAHIM

ARABIC LIGATURE BESMELLAHERRAHMANERRAHIM

The issue of whether to use transliteration or transcription, and if so, *which* transliteration or transcription, can be avoided easily. As it happens, the phrase or formula itself has its own *name*, *Basmala*, which is used in the Arabic language. We give below four samples, provided by Tom Milo.



Text showing the word in Arabic, spelt BEH-SEEN-MEEM-LAM when used as a verb, and BEH-SEEN-MEEM-LAM-TEH MARBUTA when used as a noun. Both are transliterated as *basmala*. This spelling is different from the spelling used in the phrase itself.

besmele the formula *bismillahirrahmanirrahim*. — çekmek (demek, okumak) to pronounce this formula. — görmüş şeytana dönmek to be frightened to death. besmelesiz 1. without pronouncing the formula *bismillahirrahmanirrahim*. 2. good-for-nothing, bad (person); bastard.

Text showing the word in Turkish, in contrast with the phrase itself, with slightly different spelling which reflects Turkish pronunciation and orthography.

BASMĀLA; the formula *bismi 'llāhi 'l-raḥmāni 'l-raḥīmi*, usually translated “in the name of God, the merciful and compassionate”, is called the *basma* or *tasmiya*. The readers and jurists of Medīna, Baṣra and Syria, Zamakhsharī tells us, do not consider it a verse at the beginning of the *fātiḥa* or other Suras. They hold that it is only placed there to separate the Suras and as a benediction. This is also the opinion of Abū Ḥanīfa and this is why those who follow him do not pronounce these words in a loud voice in prayer. On the other hand the readers and jurists of Mecca and Kūfa consider the *basma* a verse at the beginning of the *fātiḥa* and other Suras and utter it with a loud voice. This is Shāfi‘ī’s opinion and is based on the fact that these words were written on the leaves on which the Qur’ānic texts were collected while the word *Āmin* was not written.

The entry **BASMALA** from *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1st edition (1913-1936).

The entry **BASMALA** from *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition (1960-).

The illustrations here show that even in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* there is no consensus about the Latin representation of the formula *bismillahirrahmanirrahim*. In both editions the Latin representation uses a curious mixture of transcription and transliteration.

It is our considered view that the most reasonable UCS name for this character would be its ordinary name, thus:

ARABIC BASMALA

This should be acceptable to all users of the standard.

BASMALA is the formula *bi’smī llāhī l-rahmānī l-rahīmī*, also called *tasmiya* (to pronounce the [divine] Name). Common translation: “In the name of God, the Clement, the Merciful”; R. Blachère’s translation: “In the name of God, the Merciful Benefactor”, etc. The formula occurs twice in the text of the Qur’ān: in its complete form in Sūra xxvii, 30, where it opens Solomon’s letter to the queen of Sheba: “It is from Solomon and reads: In the name of God, the Merciful Benefactor”; on a second occasion, in its abridged form in Sūra xi, 43: “(Noah) said: Ascend into the ark! May its voyaging and its anchorage be in the name of God”. Finally in its complete form, it begins each of the Qur’ānic Sūras, with the exception of Sūra ix.

The invocation of the *basma*, at the beginning of every important act, calls down the divine blessing upon this act and consecrates it. It gives validity, from the Muslim point of view, to a very widespread custom, invalidating the Arab formulae of the *djāhiliyya*: “in the name of *al-Lāt*” or: “in the name of *al-‘Uzzā*”; and even the formulae where the name of a deity did not appear, such as the invitation to a wedding feast *bi ‘l-rifā wa ‘l-banīn* or again *bi ‘l-yumn*. The Meccans, when they were not yet converted to Islam, protested against the reference to *al-Rahmān* (see below). At the treaty of Hudaibyya (6/628), they succeeded in having *bismika Allāhumma* (“in your name, O my God”) adopted.

In writing it is customary to omit the initial *alif* of the word *ism* “name” (*bismi*). Tradition rests this orthography on the authority of ‘Umar, who is