

# Proposal for Reclassifying the Buginese Script

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## I. Proposal Identity

- Script Name: [Buginese](#)
- Unicode Script Code: [Buginese](#)
- Current Identifier Type in UAX #31: [Excluded](#)
- Proposed Identifier Type: [Recommended](#)

## II. Proposal Summary

This proposal seeks to elevate the status of the Buginese script from *Excluded* to *Recommended* based on evidence of active, widespread, and everyday use by the Buginese-speaking community, especially in digital and online contexts. The script is currently used in formal education, social media, official government documentation, and community-driven digital platforms. The evidence demonstrates that Buginese script is actively employed in communication and information processing by a sizable and engaged user base.

## III. Introduction

Language and script play a vital role in human life, not only as tools of communication, but also as carriers for cultural values, spirituality, collective identity, and social expression. Traditional scripts serve as mediums through which a nation's collective thought, knowledge, and historical memory are preserved and passed down through generations. In an era of rapid modernization and globalization that increasingly erodes cultural boundaries, traditional scripts are crucial cultural markers that sustain continuity and strengthen the resilience of local identity (UNESCO, 2003).

South Sulawesi Province is a region rich in cultural diversity, with an ethnic composition predominantly consisting of the Bugis, Makassar, Toraja, and Mandar peoples. According to data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS) in 2023, the

province is home to more than 9 million people, with the Bugis being the majority ethnic group—renowned for its high literacy civilization dating back to the 13th century.

The **Buginese script**, also known as **Lontaraq**, is one of the traditional scripts with a long-standing history in South Sulawesi. It has been widely used in various classical manuscripts, such as customary law texts (*adeq*), genealogies (*attoriolong*), religious treatises, and monumental literary works like *Sureq Galigo*, which is recognized as one of the longest epics in the world (Pelras, 2006; Koolhof, 2004). These manuscripts were typically written on palm leaves or on special European paper known as *galigo paper*.

Structurally, the Buginese script belongs to the Brahmic family but has a unique phonetic system that reflects the characteristics of Austronesian languages. The script consists of 23 base characters and uses an abugida (syllabic) writing system with no word spacing. As such, reading Buginese script is not merely a linguistic practice but also demands contextual understanding of Bugis cultural identity.

In the education sector, the Buginese script has long been introduced as part of the local content curriculum in several districts and cities in South Sulawesi. The Provincial Department of Education and Culture has institutionalized the teaching of Buginese script within formal education curricula. In public spaces, the script is also widely used, such as on street signs, government buildings, and cultural parks, serving as a visible manifestation of Bugis identity in daily life (Disbudpar Sulsel, 2022).

Alongside technological advancements, the Buginese script has also evolved within the digital sphere. With support from cultural communities, academics, and younger generations, the script has found new life through digitized classical manuscripts, online learning apps, social media campaigns, and integration into visual arts and modern graphic design (Rahim, 2020).

Regulatorily, the South Sulawesi Provincial Government has demonstrated a strong commitment to preserving the Buginese script through various policies and strategic programs, including its recognition as intangible cultural heritage, regional literacy festivals, and the reinforcement of culture-based education curricula (South Sulawesi Governor Regulation No. 29 of 2020 on Local Culture Preservation).

In the realm of technology, the Buginese script has been internationally recognized through Unicode standardization since version 4.1 in 2005, assigned within the code range U+1A00 to U+1A1F. This has opened significant opportunities for its use across digital devices, from computers to smartphones. Several fonts, such as **BugisA** and **Noto Sans Buginese**, are now freely available to support its usage in the digital space. However, the current status of Buginese script in Unicode remains classified as “*Excluded*”, indicating that global support is still restricted and not yet fully integrated across major operating systems and digital platforms (Unicode Consortium, 2024).

#### IV. Background and Current Usage

The Buginese script, which is part of the Brahmic script family of South and Southeast Asia, has a long-standing history within the Bugis civilization in South Sulawesi. To this day, the script continues to be used in various cultural, educational, religious, and even governmental manuscript contexts.

1. Classical Buginese manuscripts were written in Buginese script on palm leaves or European paper (*galigo paper*), playing a significant role in traditional rituals, the preservation of customary law (*adeq*), and the cultural education of Bugis society. These manuscripts contain a wealth of ancestral narratives, philosophical teachings, royal genealogies, and life guidance that shaped the social order of the Bugis people. They include religious texts, treaties, royal edicts, and one of the most well-known manuscripts, *Sureq I La Galigo*.

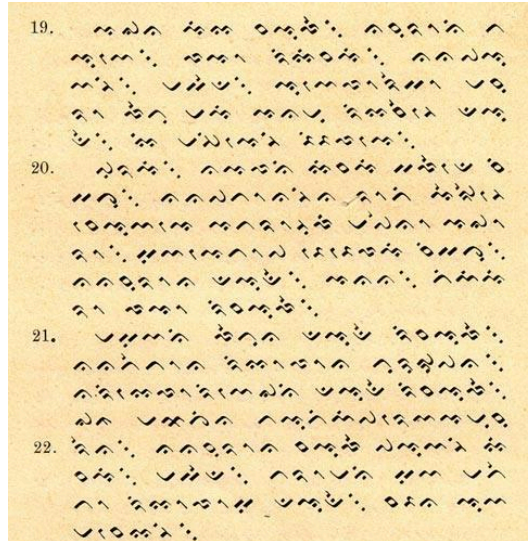


Figure 1. Bible in the Buginese Language Printed by the Dutch Missionary Society, 1893



Figure 2. Loan deed with Buginese Script and Seal from the Kingdom of Boné, 1864

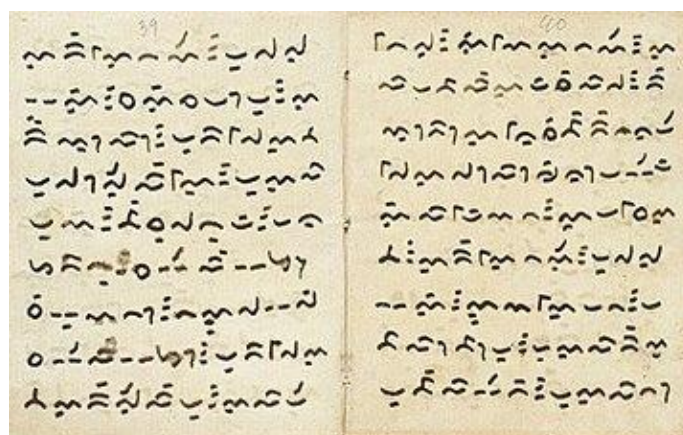


Figure 3. *I La Galigo* Manuscript, on Palm Leaf (right) and European Paper (left)



Figure 4. *Kutika* Manuscript on Calendrical Calculations

2. The Buginese script is widely used in public signage across various regions of South Sulawesi. In cities and regencies with predominantly Bugis communities, the script can be seen adorning street signs, government buildings, cultural parks, and community spaces. The placement of Buginese script alongside Latin writing serves not merely as a cultural ornament, but as a strong visual statement of local identity and cultural pride among the Bugis people.



Figure 5. Nameplate Under the Ministry of Education and Culture in Makassar City





Figure 6. Street Name Signs in Various Regencies and Cities



Figure 7. Makassar City Police Headquarters (Polrestabes)



Figure 8. Tourist Information Center at Sultan Hasanuddin International Airport

3. The Buginese script is taught formally in schools across South Sulawesi through local content subjects in Regional Languages. Students are introduced to the script's characters, reading methods, and writing techniques using textbooks developed by local education authorities. The curriculum includes exercises in copying, reading simple texts, and exploring Bugis literature such as *elong* (poetic songs) and proverbs. Some schools also organize Buginese script reading and writing competitions.



Figure 9. Local Content Teaching Materials for Elementary to Secondary School Levels



Figure 10. Poster Competition Featuring Buginese Script in Soppeng Regency

4. In the realm of pop culture, the Buginese script has become more inclusive and appealing to younger generations. Its use is evident in various creative

products such as t-shirt designs, tote bags, stickers, and accessories that feature Buginese characters as primary visual elements. On social media, local creators have popularized the script through educational and visually aesthetic content, including memes, digital comics, and short videos on TikTok or Instagram. In music and performing arts, several musicians and artists have begun incorporating Buginese script into album covers, song lyrics, and stage visuals. This development demonstrates that the script is no longer confined to historical artifacts but has become a symbol of Bugis identity—adaptable and relevant in the digital age.



Figure 11. Shirt Featuring Buginese Script Design



Figure 12. YouTube Music Video Featuring Lyrics in Buginese Script

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFX7EITtMGQ>





Figure 13. Exhibition of Accessories and Souvenirs Featuring Buginese Script Designs



Figure 14. Buginese Script Mural in an Alleyway in Makassar City



Figure 15. Music Concert Featuring a Band that Uses "Bugis" as Its Name



Figure 16. Folktale Book Written in Buginese Script

5. The use of Buginese script in regional government logos is a growing affirmation of local cultural identity in South Sulawesi. Several regencies such as Bone, Wajo, and Soppeng have integrated elements of the script into the logos of government institutions, cultural departments, or regional programs. The script is typically featured as part of mottos or supporting text alongside Latin script, emphasizing the region's cultural uniqueness. Its presence serves not only as a visual ornament, but also as a message that local governments recognize and value the Bugis written heritage as part of their official identity and symbolic representation in public spaces. This initiative also strengthens the role of the Buginese script in shaping visual narratives rooted in local values.



Figure 17. Example of Regional Government Logos Featuring Buginese Script

6. The use of Buginese script on social media and in the digital sphere has grown in line with rising cultural awareness among the younger Bugis-Makassar generation. On platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, the script appears in motivational quotes, Bugis-language memes, and educational videos that introduce Buginese characters in creative and engaging ways. Numerous content creators, cultural communities, and local educational accounts combine Buginese script with modern visual design to capture the interest of digital audiences. The availability of digital fonts like “Noto Sans Buginese” and the inclusion of the script in Unicode have also facilitated its use in graphic design and web development. Through social and digital media, the Buginese script has become a vibrant expression of identity and cultural pride in the digital age.



Figure 18. Facebook Users Using Buginese Script for Their Profile Name

[https://web.facebook.com/search/top?q=%E1%A8%95%E1%A8%98%E1%A8%81%E1%A8%97&locale=id\\_ID](https://web.facebook.com/search/top?q=%E1%A8%95%E1%A8%98%E1%A8%81%E1%A8%97&locale=id_ID)



Figure 19. A Facebook User Posting a Status Update Using Buginese Script  
<https://web.facebook.com/share/p/15kKMYTTbC/>



Figure 20. A Website Using Buginese Script  
<https://www.basaugi.id/>



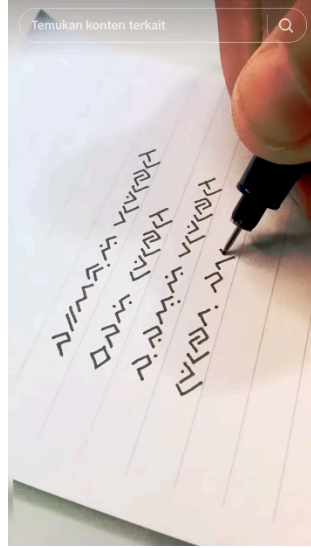


Figure 21. TikTok Content Featuring the Buginese Script

<https://www.tiktok.com/@mwmhstory/video/7453799721036008712>

## V. Justification for Elevation

The proposal to elevate the status of the Buginese script to **Recommended** in Unicode is strongly justified:

- 1. Government support and regulation:** The use of Buginese script in education and public spaces has received strong support from various regional governments in South Sulawesi. Regencies such as Bone, Wajo, and Soppeng have implemented Buginese script instruction through local content curricula in primary and secondary schools. The City of Palopo has enacted Regional Regulation No. 7 of 2023 regarding the position of Buginese script as part of the school curriculum. Additionally, South Sulawesi Provincial Regulation No. 5 of 2023 addresses literacy in Buginese script. The script is also used on signage for government buildings, cultural parks, and regional festivals. The provincial government and cultural departments have further promoted training and preservation activities through regional language revitalization programs. This demonstrates a solid policy foundation for recognizing Buginese script as part of the region's official identity.

- 2. Cultural and Historical Importance:** The Buginese script has a long history as the primary writing system of the Bugis people since the 14th century. It has been used in various important documents, including customary law manuscripts (*ade'*), noble genealogies (*patturioloang*), and monumental literary works such as *Sureq I La Galigo*, which has been recognized by UNESCO as a Memory of the World. The presence of this script reflects the high level of literacy achieved by the Bugis in earlier times and stands as a testament to a civilization that recorded its knowledge, beliefs, and social systems in written form.
- 3. Modern Relevance:** In the modern era, the Buginese script is no longer seen solely as a relic of the past but is being revived as a symbol of ethnic identity and pride. Today, the script appears in various aspects of daily life, including graphic design, visual campaigns, murals, and local product branding. Young Bugis generations have begun to adopt the script as a form of creative expression that fosters emotional and cultural connection to their ancestral heritage. This demonstrates that the Buginese script remains relevant and continues to evolve amid the dynamics of contemporary society.

**a. Digital Keyboards**

For Windows operating systems, Buginese characters are mapped onto standard QWERTY keys (QWERTY overlay) using a customized layout, allowing users to type Buginese characters by pressing designated keys. On Android and iOS systems, the Buginese script is arranged according to syllabic or phonetic order (non-QWERTY layout).



Figure 22. Buginese Script Keyboard Layout on the Windows Operating System

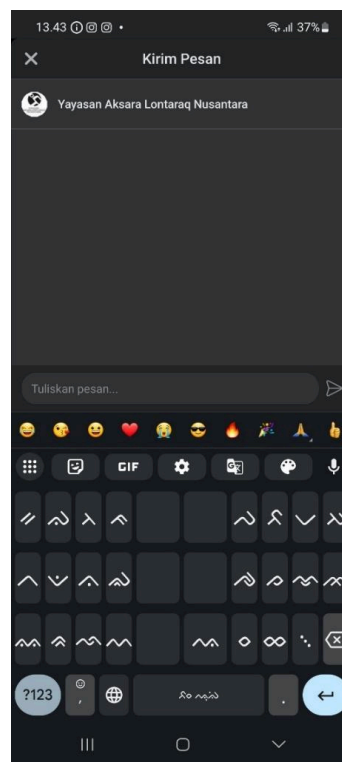


Figure 23. Buginese Script Keyboard Layout on the Android Operating System

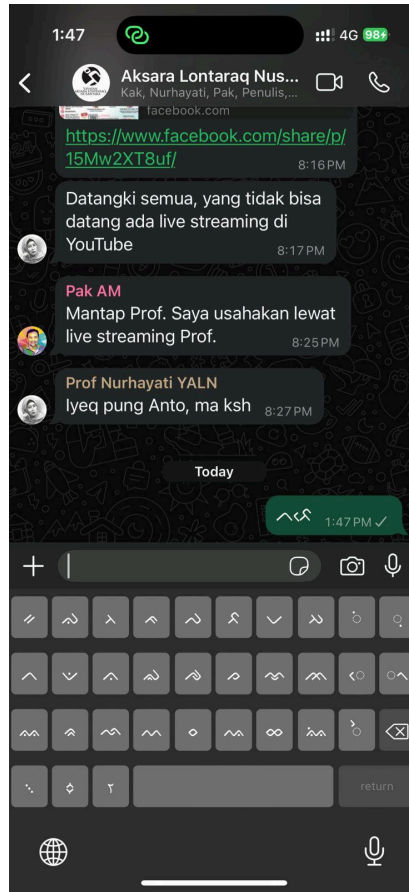


Figure 24. Buginese Script Keyboard Layout on the iOS Operating System

#### b. Buginese Script Fonts

Several fonts are currently available to support the Buginese script:

- **Bugisa.ttf:** Developed in 1995 by Andi Mallarangeng and Jim Henry at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Northern Illinois University.
- **Noto Sans Buginese:** A Unicode-compliant font developed as part of Google's Noto font family to support global scripts, including Buginese.

#### c. Buginese Digital Dictionaries

Several communities have developed Buginese-script-based digital dictionaries. These digital dictionaries utilize the Buginese script to represent the Buginese language. Currently, available versions on various



platforms include translations from Bugis to Indonesian and Bugis to English.



Figure 25. Bugis–Indonesian–English Dictionary

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=personal.laskowske.dictionary.bugis&hl=id&pli=1>

#### 4. National Standardization

At the national level, the Buginese script has been recognized as part of the Nusantara script family and is listed as intangible cultural heritage by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek). It is also taught at the university level, including at Hasanuddin University and Makassar State University, as part of regional language and literature programs. The involvement of formal institutions in

developing standardized learning materials positions the Buginese script as an important element in Indonesia's cultural landscape.

## **5. Global Digital Inclusion**

The Buginese script has been officially included in the Unicode Standard since 2005 (Unicode Consortium, 2005), within the block U+1A00–U+1A1F. However, it is currently still classified as “Excluded” within the Unicode system (Unicode Consortium, n.d.), which results in limited technical support across global operating systems such as Android, iOS, and common word processing platforms. Elevating the status of the Buginese script from “*Excluded*” to “*Recommended*” would enable broader support in global software, font systems, and other digital products (Pandey, 2018). This step is essential for promoting fair digital inclusion for speakers and users of Indonesia's local scripts, as also highlighted in studies on the digitalization of local scripts (Pramartha et al., 2021).

## **6. Digital and Online Usage**

The Buginese script is now used across various digital platforms, including the digitization of manuscripts, local cultural websites, and language learning applications. Unicode fonts such as Noto Sans Buginese have been developed to facilitate digital writing. On social media, the script is featured in educational memes, visual designs, and engaging video content. These advancements indicate that the digital ecosystem for the Buginese script is growing and ready to expand further—provided it receives adequate technical infrastructure support.

## **7. Community Support**

Cultural communities in South Sulawesi have shown strong enthusiasm in preserving and promoting the Buginese script. Various local organizations, regional language teachers, and digital creators actively organize training sessions, workshops, and independently publish Buginese script learning materials. Activities such as the Buginese Script Festival, the production of

children's books in Buginese script, and palm-leaf manuscript digitization projects demonstrate that this preservation effort is not solely the responsibility of the government, but also a strong and sustainable grassroots movement.

## **VI. Technical Aspects of Unicode Integration**

The Buginese script has been technically incorporated into the Unicode Standard, making it compatible with various modern digital systems. Several key technical advancements support its eligibility for status elevation:

### **1. Keyboard Development**

Various composition-based keyboard layouts have been developed to support Buginese script input on digital devices. Efforts by local researchers and developers including integration into Android and desktop systems have improved accessibility and expanded its usage.

### **2. Semantic Digital Tools**

Online dictionary applications and transliteration tools using Buginese script have been developed by leveraging Unicode. These tools enable semantic search and cross-language translation, indicating that the Buginese script is capable of adapting to modern information technology needs.

### **3. Rendering and Display Issues**

Although most modern systems can recognize the Buginese script, challenges remain in achieving consistent rendering across platforms. Elevating its status to the "Recommended" category would encourage developers to enhance font rendering, expand compatibility, and make the Buginese script more accessible for use in graphic design, social media, and messaging applications.

With an upgraded Unicode status, the use of Buginese script can be broadened and its sustainability across digital domains can be better ensured.

## VII. Stakeholders Support

The proposal to elevate the Unicode status of the Buginese script has received strong support from various sectors of society and institutions:

1. **Government Institutions:** The Provincial Government of South Sulawesi and several regencies/cities within the Bugis region have issued various regulations and cultural preservation programs that include the Buginese script. These initiatives involve the use of Buginese script in public spaces, education, and official documents.
2. **Cultural Organizations:** Traditional institutions, literacy communities, and cultural organizations actively organize Buginese script training, digitize classical manuscripts, and promote the script through both online and offline media.
3. **Educational Institutions:** Several schools and universities in South Sulawesi have begun integrating Buginese script instruction into local curriculum and extracurricular activities. These efforts reflect a commitment to pass down the script to younger generations.
4. **Digital Creators:** Designers, writers, researchers, and app developers have started incorporating Buginese script into digital products—including fonts, educational games, and local social media content.

The Buginese script is not only a symbol of cultural identity in South Sulawesi but also a heritage of Nusantara knowledge rich in historical, philosophical, and literary values. Elevating its status from *"Excluded"* to *"Recommended"* in the Unicode Standard is a crucial step to ensure its sustainability in the face of digital globalization.

This proposal aligns with national cultural preservation policies and is reinforced by the enthusiasm of local communities to revitalize the use of the script in the digital era. By addressing technical challenges, expanding digital



support, and ensuring global visibility, the Buginese script will remain relevant in modern life while staying rooted in the noble values of Bugis culture.

Through this Unicode status upgrade, we bridge ancestral tradition with technological advancement, making the Buginese script a link between a valuable past and an innovative future.

## **VIII. EGIDS Justification and Language Use**

Based on data from Ethnologue and field information, the Buginese language is classified as EGIDS Level 2: Provincial Language, meaning it is actively used in daily communication at the provincial level, supported by institutional backing, and maintained through continuous intergenerational transmission. The language has more than 5 million active speakers spread across South Sulawesi and surrounding regions.

The Buginese script is a traditional writing system that has been used for centuries in royal records, religious manuscripts, and local literature. Today, it remains in use within educational contexts as a local content subject in primary and secondary schools, and is visibly present in public spaces through signage, official documents, and traditional ceremonies.

Local governments support the preservation of this script through regional regulations, cultural revitalization programs, and digital publications. Its use is not limited to cultural preservation but has extended into public and formal domains in local contexts.

Considering the number of speakers, government support, educational transmission, and the script's presence in public life, we conclude that the Buginese script meets the criteria for EGIDS Level 2 (Provincial Language) as defined by Unicode and SIL International.

## **IX. Analysis of Alternative Scripts**

In the Buginese-speaking community, the Latin script is widely used for general communication, especially in digital and official contexts. However, the Buginese script plays a symbolic and cultural role, particularly in ceremonial texts, regional literature, and local identity expression.

Buginese script is actively preserved through education, traditional documentation, and revitalization initiatives. In this context, Latin does not replace the function of Buginese, but serves as a technical bridge for official interaction.

Therefore, the Buginese script maintains a distinct and relevant usage domain that complements, rather than competes with, the Latin script. This supports its continued recognition as a living script deserving broader digital and identifier inclusion.

## **X. Confusables Analysis**

The Buginese script (Unicode block U+1A00–U+1A1F) consists of distinct syllabic characters with angular and symmetrical shapes. A systematic analysis was conducted to assess potential confusables with characters from other identifier scripts, including Latin, Cyrillic, and Greek.

Based on shape, structure, and Unicode confusables.txt references, no significant visual confusables were identified. The unique geometry of Buginese—consisting of open loops, spiked arcs, and limited use of vertical stems—minimizes risk of spoofing or visual collisions in identifiers.

We conclude that the Buginese script presents no critical security risk in identifier environments and should be considered safe for inclusion in Recommended status scripts.

## **XI. Checklist Summary of Supporting Evidence for Buginese Script**

This checklist summarizes the supporting evidence submitted in the proposal to elevate the Buginese script from Excluded to Recommended status in Unicode UAX #31. Each category is accompanied by examples and the relevant page references in the main proposal document.

Table 1. Checklist Summary of Supporting Evidence for Buginese Script

<b>Category</b>	<b>Evidence Provided</b>	<b>Correct Page Reference</b>
Education	Use in school curriculum (local content textbooks, competitions, workshops)	p.5–7
Media & Community	Social media campaigns, TikTok/Instagram content, YouTube videos using Buginese script	p.7–9, 13
Government Use	Signage, official documents, regional regulations (Provincial Reg. No. 5/2023, Palopo City Reg. No. 7/2023)	p.3–6, 14
Online Tools & Apps	Mobile learning apps, digital dictionaries, Unicode-based keyboards (Windows, Android, iOS)	p.7–10
Fonts & Rendering	2 Unicode-compliant fonts (BugisA, Noto Sans Buginese)	p.11
Confusables Analysis	No significant confusables with other scripts; unique geometry reduces spoofing risk	p.16–18

Corpus Evidence	Digital manuscripts, online dictionaries, blogs in Buginese script	p.7–9, 13
Cultural Visibility	Festivals, cultural branding, public murals, and creative products using Buginese script	p.4–5

The Buginese script is an integral part of Indonesia’s cultural and historical legacy, reflecting the identity, traditions, and intellectual heritage of the Bugis people. Upgrading its Unicode classification from “Excluded” to “Recommended” is an important step to maintain its relevance, expand its application, and strengthen its adaptability in the digital era. This proposal highlights not only the script’s historical and cultural significance, but also its growing role in global communication and modern technology.

The initiative aligns with ICANN’s principles and is supported by strong regulatory frameworks at both provincial and municipal levels, including South Sulawesi Provincial Regulation No. 5 of 2023 and Palopo City Regulation No. 7 of 2023. The active engagement and commitment of the Buginese community further reinforce the case for this elevation. Addressing technical challenges, encouraging digital innovation, and ensuring fair representation of the Buginese script across global platforms will increase its visibility and usability.

Advancing the Unicode status of the Buginese script will connect cultural heritage with technological progress, ensuring it remains a dynamic symbol of Bugis identity and an active part of today’s interconnected, technology-driven world.

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### **XIII. Acknowledgement**

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