

Introduction to the Bugis Script



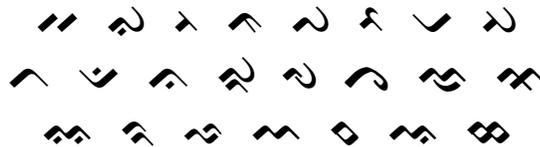
This short introduction to the Bugis script, or Buginese, is intended for people with no prior experience but can be used by anyone looking for more information on this unique script. It is based on the current Unicode proposal to encode Bugis and the successful implementation of the Buginese script by XenoType Technologies on a Macintosh running OS X 10.2.x. The Bugis script as proposed is intended to provide support for the Buginese and Makassarese languages — our use of the term “Bugis” or “Buginese” should be understood to include the Makassarese language also.

The main purpose of this document is to provide information for software developers in an effort to promote the support of Bugis-enabled operating systems and support applications. We will not however delve into the specifics of programming support for Bugis — the information herein should provide an adequate starting point regardless of the operating system or technology involved.

To this end, we will frequently diverge from traditional linguistic terminology in an effort to point out or emphasize certain features of this script. Linguists and purists will have to forgive us.

Consonants

As currently proposed, the Buginese script consists of 32 basic shapes, or nominal glyphs, which can be further divided into consonants, vowel signs, diacritics and punctuation marks. The 23 base glyphs are shown here:



The Makassarese language does not use four of these characters (𐌒 𐌔 𐌖 𐌘).

Vowels

The Buginese script uses 5 different dependent vowel signs. When these vowels occur at the beginning of a word or syllable, they are written with the character 𐌚. Both forms are illustrated below:



Only one vowel sign 𐌚 requires reordering before a base glyph. Three of the remaining signs 𐌚 𐌚 𐌚 are combining marks that are best supported through ligatures and the fifth one 𐌚 is a spacing glyph that requires no special treatment. The vowel 𐌚 does not occur in Makassarese.

A sixth vowel is encoded in the Unicode Buginese block to accommodate a unique compound character. This additional vowel sign is exactly the same shape as the vowel Ꞓ but its position over the base glyph Ꞓ dictates its unique pronunciation. It should be noted that this appears to be a modern distinction that is not supported by any historical texts.

Diacritics

The only diacritic — the Buginese virama — encoded in the current proposal is a modern invention. It is designed to function like a typical virama and was added to facilitate the teaching of the Buginese language.

Although this diacritic serves an important purpose, it never occurs in any historical manuscripts which is unfortunate because the traditional script provides no way to indicate a final consonant — this must be ascertained from context and acquired knowledge.



The glyph shape that we've chosen is different than the one illustrated in the Unicode proposal but we feel that it is more in keeping with the overall design of the traditional script. It is also the shape used in a Bugis grammar from 1991 (though notably the only sample texts are in the Indonesian language).



Digits

There are no known digits for the Buginese script.

Punctuation

There are only two punctuation marks proposed for the Buginese block.



The first character occurs everywhere in Buginese text and functions much like a period or comma. The second character is found in samples of Buginese by the Imprimerie Nationale where a different typeface is also used. Clearly, the character must have been in use for some specific purpose but it is interesting to note that it doesn't occur in any original texts that use the standard Tetterode typeface used throughout this document (nor do type sheets from the Tetterode foundry include it). The form indicated above has been constructed to match this typeface but there is no historical typographic evidence, that we're aware of, to support it.

Although there are no additional punctuation marks included in the current proposal, there are several other unique symbols that warrant discussion. A Bugis grammar book shows several sample sentences to illustrate the use of the Bugis question mark (Ꞓ), exclamation point (Ꞓ), comma (Ꞓ), colon (Ꞓ) and semi-colon (Ꞓ).



Some or all of these glyphs could potentially be included in the Unicode proposal but, even if they are not adopted, they can be supported by including these variants in their normal Unicode positions and applied through a typeface selection.

Sample Text

Below is a sample text that illustrates a traditional use of the Bugis script.

