

**“SAVING ENDANGERED PHILIPPINE NATIVE SCRIPTS IN A MODERN DIGITAL WORLD THROUGH TYPOGRAPHY, TECHNOLOGY, AND STANDARDIZATION.”**

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**Abstract**

As indigenous populations increasingly becomes exposed to technological advancements in communications and social networking, the convenience of global writing systems -- such as the Latin Script, Chinese, Cyrillic, Arabic, and a few others -- has become an even more pervasive influence on the decline of endangered writing systems than ever before.

Modern gadgetries are readily embraced and adapted by the younger generation. Cellular phones, Computers, and Internet connectivity have been slowly making their way into the most remote areas of the world and are onto the hands of indigenous peoples. The majority of these devices come pre-loaded with default typeface/fonts and keyboards that displays the major writing system used in the country that the tribal lands of said indigenous folks resides within. As the ease of texting or typing modern alphabets prevails, the practice of manually handwriting or carving native scripts declines. It is of utmost importance to develop fonts and applications for endangered scripts to be able to compete with such pervasive influences.

Of the thousands of typefaces that existed prior to the advent of computers and the Internet, and the thousands more fonts that have been developed since; precursory searching on the Internet reveals that many indigenous writing systems are under-represented and only an iota of these fonts and its developers are devoted to the preservation of endangered writing systems.

Two decades ago, a handful of Baybayin typefaces based on samples from historic archives and manuscripts were digitized (by Paul Morrow) into computer fonts. Then a small number of designers and independent font developers (including myself) has, in the recent decade, increased the number of modern Baybayin fonts by tenfold and more. The proliferation of these fonts, and their host websites which also contained information regarding the old writing system, sparked the revitalization of Baybayin usage among many Baybayin enthusiasts.

My colleagues and I have developed several software applications, like transliteration tools, Unicode readers, and keyboard layouts for these fonts. Embedding Baybayin for web-design, word-processing, and graphics has become easier and convenient for commercial publishing. Utilization of the Unicode range encoding in these tools and apps made it possible to type and communicate using Baybayin fonts in online chats, facebook, and mobile devices, etc. Interacting with a community of Philippine script enthusiasts has led to collaborations and informal standards, increasing practical usage and permanence of Baybayin.

On a visit to Mindoro, I saw tribal youths texting with Latin script. I hope an increase in “convenience” could be similarly implemented soon for the endangered Philippine scripts; Mangyan, Palawan, and Kapampangan. I am currently working with Mangyan & Kapampangan scholars & supporters and created a handful of fonts for them to use. However, progress is slow, facing current technical, financial, and logistical limitations. In time, with help, I hope to bring a Philippine Script Font Foundry into fruition.