ON/OFF NATIONAL TYPE

ROMAN BIRICKAI

Although every classification in the Latin script type is concerned with either a period, forms, or shapes of letterforms, and no category deals with the national feel of type, the absence of such a category does not exclude the existence of faces with emotional impact on viewers as well as their specific targeting capability. What is a national font? Are there any national fonts? Are there any fonts resembling a culture, a country, or a nation? The importance of having fonts resembling national feel, look and characteristics tends to be more adequate and urgent these days than it was in history. Behind the shapes and forms (Fig. 1) of a vast variety of different fonts, there must be some of them which not only prove to carry national features, but show the ability to be recognised by viewers as a label of a country, the origin of products and companies, or as communities with similar beliefs or interests. The power of faces' visage might be underestimated in the world of globalisation we are living in, and when strong marketing campaigns can rely on type with its ability to show characteristics of products, companies, or even governments.

It is a well-known phrase repeated again and again that the image is worth of thousand words, but what if it is true the other way round? Type is not a formless, structureless, and meaningless entity not able to express both visual and written form or words. Even one simple glyph can be enough to bring endless visions and imaginary pictures into viewers minds and initiate the visual decoding. A simple lowercase 'f' letterform (Fig. 2) could have been a simple sans-serif 'f' a couple of decades ago. Today placed in a small blue rectangle, it immediately links to a social network used by millions of users. But what if we change the face of that lowercase 'f' from sans serif to a script face (Fig. 3)? Would the link still be to this social network? Or would it rather address jazz music lovers and especially those not only playing the guitar, but more importantly recognising the f as 'f holes' (Fig. 4) on guitar bodies? This trivial change might alter the targeting point of view, just within the shapes the message might be hidden in. This is the case of type, which in fact could possibly reveal, once decoded, national attributes, features, or characteristics. Since Facebook's ambitions were to be international, there could not be the intention to code it in the font, which is why a neutral sans serif font was chosen.

Fig. 1 (p. 34): William Caslon's Type Specimen Sheet (Facsimile), Mergenthaler Linotype Company, New York, 1923. The specimen includes Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Armenian, Arabic, Samaritan or Syrian scripts.

Fig. 2 (left) Icon of the social network Facebook.

Fig. 3 (middle) Collaged icon. The original font was substituted by Mercurius extra bold.

Fig. 4 (right) Washburn jazz guitar with 'f' holes in the body.

MILESTONES OF TYPE IMPORTANCE

The importance of any type, not only in its forms and shapes, but also in the ability and necessity to convey a message to a viewer is more intense and profound than it was before. Is it possible to link typefaces to nations and cultures undoubtedly at all? Was it possible to connect them to any written language in history? Were the milestones in design history the factors influencing it? What are those factors which inevitably need to be present to show national features of a typeface?

Looking back in history, we can assume that any written form of a language functioned mainly for the communication purpose. The cuneiform from 2100 B.C. was written on a tablet (Fig. 5) using a wedge-shaped form. When we compare two dominating but different nations later in history, Greek (Fig. 7) and Roman (Fig. 6), the stones of the written text reveal similarities of the two scripts. Even connections to the cuneiform are partially visible. Especially the stone carving was done with similar features of creating serifs. This method of creating letterforms was predominantly responsible for having similar features in the written form despite two different scripts and nations. The milestones in design history were those that determined the direction and later the variety of shapes and forms used for different purposes besides communication and writing down the content. In Gutenberg's time around 1450, when the invention of movable type saw the light in Europe, not only in Germany but worldwide, this invention enabled type to be widespread and to be designed in other shapes and forms than it was done previously by hand. German blackletter, which was used in Gutenberg's bible (Fig. 9), plays an important role in conjunction with a German potential national type. However, it was not the purpose to create it to be seen as national. The way in which scribes used their quill was a method of putting ink on a piece of writable material and not the way how to express Germanness. At this time, the body type was the prevalent one and definitely not indicating the national feel. The other important type in that period was the Roman type primarily connected to Italy. The same message and content expressed by different typefaces open new angles of perception, a view and eventually the understanding of the message. This is the power and capability of typefaces covered and hidden in every single letterform. Was Francesco Griffo concerned with the actual feel while creating the first italic typeface (Fig. 8)? He might have been preoccupied with the aesthetics, proportions, and the form of letters, but it is doubtful he did mean it to be Italian—expressing the nature, land or nation—possibly encrypted in his glyphs.

If the country of the type's origin would be the factor determining the perception of typefaces to be seen as national, these days we would probably have thousands of national fonts, but with no national feel. However, in the 15th century this kind of perception might have been working fine and be acceptable, because there were only couple of different typefaces around. Thus, for example, those typefaces created in Italy could have been meant to be Italian, those in France French, those in Germany German, those in the Netherlands Dutch, and so on.

P.V.M. GEORGICORVM LIBER PR
MVS AD MOECENATEM

Vid faciat letis segres, quo s'da
terram,
Verrere Moecenas, ubi usq; ad
gere vites,
Conueniat, quae circa boum, q
oillus habendo

S it pecori, atq; apibus quanta experientia parcis,

Fig. 5 (top left): Cuneiform tablet listing expenditure of grain and animals, c. 2100 B.C.

Fig. 6 (top right): Carved inscription from the base of Trajan's column, c. 114 A.D.

Fig. 7 (middle left): Design excellence of Greek inscriptions, 5th century B.C.

Fig. 8 (bottom left): Francesco Griffo, the first italic typeface, based on chancery script handwriting, 1501.

Fig. 9 (center): Johann Gutenberg, pages from the Gutenberg Bible, 1450-55.

The next milestone was paramount for letting type to be seen and perceived everywhere by everyone as well as designed and used in an unprecedented way. It was the industrial revolution in 1880s. It was the era when presses, wood type, lithography, and first sans-serif typefaces appeared and eventually Mergenthaler's invention enabled type to be set faster than ever before (Fig. 11). That was the time when hundreds of new specimen (Fig. 10) emerged and the purpose of usage changed dramatically, allowing type to be in bigger size or as a display type. Especially, moving from only a body type to a display type with various forms along with attributes, gave typefaces certain feel. One of the attributes expressed by a display type might have been nationality and the emotions or feelings encrypted in those various letterforms. But was it really done that way? What is more than certain is the fact that Europe, which was biased to Latin scripts, began to produce specimen (Fig. 12) of Eastern civilisations' scripts including Cyrillic, Arabic, or Hebrew. This was an inevitable precondition for creating Latin scripts transforming glyphs from non-Latin scripts with a national feel. The 20th century is, however, the key turn in recognising type with national features.

Fig. 10 (top left): Specimen of Printing Types, H. W. Caslon & Company Limited, London, 1862.

Fig. 11 (bottom): 75 Jahre, printing & communication in Leipzig, Germany, 1894.

Fig. 12 (right page): Specimen of Printing Types, William Caslon, London, 1785. The specimen includes Greek, Latin, Hebrew, music and floral decorations.

[illegible]

Long-Primer Syriac.

اے مجھ: لاہوتی، صحتی بھلی۔ مہیا مٹھن
 ڈاھا ماٹھن دے۔ مہیا مٹھن دے مہیا مٹھن
 اے اٹھ کھن۔ خڑا کھن اٹھ اٹھن، لا مٹھن
 اے مٹھن اٹھن، مٹھن مٹھن، مٹھن
 اٹھن۔ مٹھن مٹھن مٹھن، مٹھن
 مٹھن مٹھن مٹھن مٹھن مٹھن

English Arabic.

لعلم ابها الاخ الحبيب القاري اللبيب * ان الاب الفاضل
الكلّي احترامه والذابح في كافة العلوم نام * كبر كبر
اثاناسيوس البطريرك الانطاكي على الملة الرومية في الامصار
الشامية * قد اصرف اتعابا جسدية ومجاهدات عظيمة في
نظام الكتب الالهية والسفر المبعية * لغادة الشعوب المس
حبة * الموتى على سياستهم بغيرة الابوية * فابرز منذ

Pica Armenian.

Չանքապառ խաղացմու նա աստուածայնոցն՝
ի քեզ չնորհացն, և զանդուլ հոգւոյն՝ ի վե-
րայ քոյ ինացո՞ւնածոցդ զշարժմունս՝ ծանեայ
ի ձեռն գերեցեիկ խնդրոյս, առաստ քան զմ-
արհնոյդ, զհոգւոյդբնիկայեալ զճանօթնութի-
որևսիրելի իմոցիսկ խորժակայացէ, առաւ-
ել ևս սովորութեցաւ Վն որոյ, և ոչ միայն գ-

Pica Samaritan.

[illegible]

Pica Gothic.

ATTĀ NNSAK ƆN ĩN HIMINĀM: VEIH-
NĀI NĀMƆ ƆEIN: UIMĀI ƆINDINASSNS
ƆEINS: ƆAIKƆĀI ƆIĀƆĀ ƆEINS SƆE ĩN
HIMINĀ ƆĀH ĀNĀ ĀIKƆĀI: HĀĀIF: NN-
SAKĀNĀ ƆĀNĀ SINTEINĀN ĒIF: NNS
HIMMĀĀĀĀ: ƆĀH ĀĒĒET NNS ƆĀTEI
SKNĀĀNS SIGĀIMĀ. SƆĀ SƆEƆĀH ƆE-
IS ĀĒĒETĀM ƆĀIM SKNĀĀM NNSAKĀ-

Pica Coptic.

Πενωτ ετθεννι φνοτι÷- εερεφ τοτδ-
οιχε πεκραπ÷- εερεσιχητεκεεε τοτρο÷-
πετεγπακ εερεφωπι εφρι† δεν τφ-
επεε εχιεπικαδρι÷- Πενωικ ητερα† ε-
νιγπαπ εεφοοτ οτογ χανητεροπ παπ εδ-
ολ εφρι†ωι πτεπχω εβολ ηνκτηε÷-
οτοο επερτεπε δωτ επιρασεοσ÷- αλλα
παρεεπ εβολ δενπιπετρεεοτ÷- Πενυ-

Pica Æthiopic.

እሱና፡ ዘበአጫዎት፡ ይትቀደገ፡ ሽሎብ፡፡ ትጽጸእ፡ ሙንግ ሠትኩ፡፡ ይኹኑ፡ ፋቃደክ፡ በከመ፡ በሐጫይ፡ ወበጽድርኒ፡፡ ሲሳየና፡ ዘለለ፡ ዕለተኑ፡ ሀበኑ፡ ዮሥ፡፡ ኂድግ፡ ለኑ፡ ለበሐኑ፡ ከመ፡ ኣሐኑና፡ ኣኂድግ፡ ለዘ፡ ለበሐ፡ ለኑ፡ ወሊቲብለኑ፡ ውዝተ፡ ሙኢት፡፡ ሕለ፡ ስድኅኒና፡ ወባልሐኑ፡ ስሎሹሉ፡ ሕኩቱ፡ ለከመ፡ ዚሸከ፡ ይሕቲ፡ ሙንግሠት፡ ኃይል፡ ውዝብ ሐቱ፡ ለዓለመ፡ ዓለሙ፡ ስሙኑ፡፡ ሕኩና፡ ዘበአጫዎት፡ ይ ትቀደገ፡ ሽሎብ፡፡ ትጽጸእ፡ ሙንግሠትኩ፡፡ ይኹኑ፡ ፋቃደ

Etruscan.

PD M T QD C P K L M A N V T J B E H
 T I N K E A Y M R D O T B C E K E A
 M A I B D B D F E W M A B D L I M
 B M H T B T M A Y N A I K A C A
 Z E P L P L E N I F T Z I P Y T I T P 8
 A D A R

Fæder ure þu þe eart on heofenum. Si þin
nama gehalgod. To-becume þin rice. Gep-
urðe þin willa on eorþan. swa swa on heo-
fenum. Ure daghræmlican hlaf syle us
to dæg. And forgyf us ure gyltas. swa swa
þu forgyfað unum gyltendum. And ne
gelædde þu us on costnunge. ac alyf us of

Pica Saxon.

Fæder ure þu þe eart on heofenum. Si þin nama
gehalgod. To-becume þin rice. Gæpurnðe þin
willa on eorþan. swa swa on heofenum. Urne dæ-
ghpamlican hlaf syle us to dæg. And forgyf us
ure gyltas. swa swa þe forgyfað urum gylten-
dum. And ne gelædde þu us on cortnunge. ac

Long Primer Saxon.

Fæder ure þu þe eart on heofenum. Si þin nama gehalgod,
To-becume þin rice. Leofuðe þin willa on eorþan. gpa gpa
on heofenum. Urne ðæghpamlcan hlaf gyle ur to dæg.
And forgyf ur ure gyltas. gpa gpa þe forgyfað unum gy-
ltendum. And ne gelædde þu ur on cortnunge. ac alyf ur

Brevier Saxon.

Fæder une þu þe eart on heofenum. Si þin nama gehalgod. To-becume
þin rice. Gefrepe þin willa on eorþan. gpa gpa on heofenum. Urne
dægþamcan hlaf ryle ur to dæg. And forþy ur une gyltar. gpa gpa
þe forþyð unum gylcenum. And ne gelædde þu ur on cernunge. ac
alþy ur of yfele. So ðlice. Fæder une þu þe eart on heofenum. Si þ-

Two-Line Great-Primer Black.

And be it further he

Double Pica Black.

And be it further hereby enacted, That the Mayors, Bai-

Great Primer Black.

And be it further hereby enacted,
That the Mayors, Bailiffs, or o-

English Black.

And be it further hereby enacted, That the Mayors, Bailiffs, or other head Officers of every Town and place corporate, and City within

English Black. No 2.

And be it further hereby enacted, That the Mayors, Bailiffs, or other head Officers of every Town and place corporate, and City

Pica Black.

And be it further hereby enacted, That the Mag-
gors, Bailiffs, or other head Officers of every
Town and place corporate, and City within

Pica Black. No 2.

And be it further hereby enacted, That the Mayors, Bailiffs, or other head Officers of every Town and place corporate, and City within this Realm, being

Small Pica Black.

And he it further hereby enacted, That the Mayors, Bailiffs, or other head Officers of every Town and place corporate, and City within this Realm, being

Long Primer Black.

And he it further hereby enacted, That the Mayors, Bailiffs, or other head Officers of every Town and place corporate, and City within this Realm, being Justice or Justices of Peace, shall have the same authority by vertue of this Act, within the limits and precincts of their

Brevier Black.

And be it further hereby enacted, That the Mayors, Bailiffs, or other head Officers of every Town and place corporate, and City within this Realm, being Justice or Justices of Peace, shall have the same authority by virtue of this Act, within the limits and precincts of their Jurisdictions, as well out of Sessions, as at their Sessions, if they hold any, as is herein limited, prescribed and appointed to Justices of the Peace of the County, or any two

During the 20th century, among that immense number of different typefaces, some start to show national features. A first glimpse could be seen in the poster of the Beggarstaff Brothers (Fig. 13) which shows a Latin font reminding Asia. But it is only the last milestone—the digitalisation—and the era of computers, which allowed to design fonts, especially display fonts, with the intention to be national. However, this attitude is only present in transforming non-Latin scripts into the Latin script. Rudolf Koch's Neuland typeface (Figs. 14–16), which Meggs (2006, p. 185) described as unexpected new design, was created in 1922–23 and is connected to his medieval manuscript admiration. The Lithos typeface (Fig. 17) was designed by Carol Twombly in 1989 and was inspired by ancient Greek inscriptions on temples. However, none of these typefaces are used primarily for expressing and visualising Greek or German culture, but for rather uncultivated, even primitive, African culture creating stereotypes or clichés. Once typefaces designed and used over a substantially long period of time might create the associations with nations through marketing. Subsequently, the repetition and reproduction all over the world is capable of establishing those necessary visual connotations. However, the visual stimulus must be strong and repeated enough to create the bridge.

The most important seems to be a division of typefaces according to the scripts they are formed with, the Latin and non-Latin. Some contemporary foundries call other than Latin as "Orientales". According to Bilak (2008) these terms have more or less colonial overtones, which would suggest the idea of "the other". This way, as he adds, only typography continues to be biased towards western civilisation shamelessly. For focusing on a national type the Latin and non-Latin groups is crucial to show the origin of typefaces and their potential transformation from the non-Latin to the Latin version.

LITHOS, CAROL TWOMBLY

THE QUICK BROWN
 LITHOS Light
 THE QUICK BROWN
 LITHOS Regular
 THE QUICK BROWN
 LITHOS Bold
 THE QUICK BROWN
 LITHOS Black
 THE QUICK BROWN

Fig. 13 (top right): *A Trip to Chinatown*, Beggarstaff Brothers, variant of Mandarin script, 1899.

Fig. 14 (top left): *Madagascar Escape 2 Africa*, Dreamworks, "Escape", "Africa" words set in Neuland typeface, 2008.

Fig. 15 (p. 41): Rudolf Koch, *Specimen of Neuland*, 1922–23.

Fig. 16 (bottom left): *Specimen Book of Continental Types*, Continental Typefounders Association, New York, 1930. Neuland typeface by Rudolf Koch.

Fig. 17 (bottom right): Carol Twombly's *Lithos* typeface inspired by old Greek inscriptions, 1989.

DENN EINE JEGLICHE KUNST
ODER WERK WIE KLEIN
SIE SEIEN ★ DAS SIND ALLE
SAMT GNADEN UND WIR
KET SIE ALLESAMT DER HEI-
LIGE GEIST ZU NUTZ UND
ZU FRUCHT DER MENSCHEN
+ WÄRE ICH NICHT EIN PRIE-
STER UND WÄRE UNTER
EINER VERSAMMLUNG + ICH
NÄHME ES FÜR EIN GROSSES
DING ★ DASS ICH SCHUHE MA-
CHEN KÖNNTE UND ICH
WOLLTE AUCH GERNE MEIN
BROT MIT MEINEN HÄN ★
DEN VERDIENEN KINDER
★ DER FUSS NOCH DIE HAND
DIE SOLLEN NICHT DAS AUGEN
SEIN WOLLEN EIN JEGLI-
CHER SOLL SEIN AMT TUN
DAS IHM GOTT ZUGEFGÜGT.

Fig. 18 (left): *The Ewige Jude*, the most famous Nazi propaganda film, 1940.

Fig. 19 (middle): *Die Hebräische Schrift*, H. Berthold AG, Berlin, Leipzig, Stuttgart, Vienna, Riga, 1924.

Fig. 20 (right): *Die Hebräische Schrift*, H. Berthold AG, Berlin, Leipzig, Stuttgart, Vienna, Riga, 1924.

NON-LATIN SCRIPTS

These days, non-Latin alphabets, as for instance Hebrew (Figure 19, 20) and their scripts with all characters, are highly prone to be mimicked, imitated, or faked to have a look of the Latin type. Quite often these fonts are called fake or pseudo, which could suggest the fact they are not real. The more accurate expression for them would be “transformed” referring to their ability to transform the emotional aspect of the original language and form. Among the most frequently transformed scripts are Cyrillic, Arabic, Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese, Korean, Greek, Hebrew, Indian, Thai or Bengali. Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese and Korean are quite often referred as “Asian” scripts. Adding typical or characteristic features or glyphs that simply evoke the feeling as though they were written in that particular language create the glyphs of the Latin version of these fonts usually. However, they usually do not have anything in common with original script writing techniques, as for example, the Chinese calligraphy. These fonts, mainly display typefaces, are in most cases created as free fonts and not by type designers or foundries, which is why their proportional and aesthetic criteria are questionable. However, the purpose of creating these fonts resides in the emotional aspect and ability to transform the feeling, not in the proper form or technique. Transformed fonts with a national resemblance are often used for marketing and promotional purposes, tourism, propaganda, parody, or inability to read the original script.

GREEK SCRIPT

It is quite surprising how easily the letterforms could be substituted, however, not all transformed Greek fonts (Fig. 22) use the same method. Some transformed Greek fonts use shapes of letterforms, which are dominated by diagonal strokes instead of having curves. The Greek script has curves in beta, theta, omicron, rho, phi, omega and partially psi considering uppercase glyphs, which are mainly transformed. Lowercase letters seem to be too distinct for the transformation. The trick to fool the viewers mind can be done with Greek alphabet quite easily. Two E letters in the word Greek could be substituted with sigma (Fig. 24) and the feel of the word becomes Greek, even if the sigma represents completely different sound in Greek. A slight change of letterforms can provide the illusion of nationality and in fact the uppercase Es still retain their shape. The word Greek is entirely legible, even without knowing the Greek script. American university campuses often use Greek alphabet for their sororities and fraternities; however, they are used in an appropriate form. For people not knowing the Greek alphabet, it might be quite difficult to read such letters as phi, gamma, or sigma.

A 0065	B 0066	C 0067	D 0068	E 0069	F 0070	G 0071	H 0072	I 0073	J 0074	K 0075	L 0076	M 0077	N 0078
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N

O 0079	P 0080	Q 0081	R 0082	S 0083	T 0084	U 0085	V 0086	W 0087	X 0088	Y 0089	Z 0090	
O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	

a 0097	b 0098	c 0099	d 0100	e 0101	f 0102	g 0103	h 0104	i 0105	j 0106	k 0107	l 0108	m 0109	n 0110	o 0111
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O

Fig. 21 (center left): *Indice de Caratteri*, *Stampa Vaticana*, Andreas Brogiotti, Roman, 1628.

Fig. 22 (top): *Dalek*, font resembling the Greek script.

Fig. 23 (center right): *Die Hebräische Schrift*, H. Berthold AG, Berlin, Leipzig, Stuttgart, Vienna, Riga, 1924.

Fig. 24 (bottom right): *E* letters substituted by Greek Sigma on and advertisement, 2010.

A 0065	B 0066	C 0067	D 0068	E 0069	F 0070	G 0071	H 0072	I 0073	J 0074	K 0075	L 0076	M 0077	N 0078	O 0079	P 0080	Q 0081
ઢ	ઠ	ટ	વે	દ	ફ	હ	ઠ	િ	જે	કે	ી	લ	ઠ	ઠ	પ	વ
R 0082	S 0083	T 0084	U 0085	V 0086	W 0087	X 0088	Y 0089	Z 0090								
ઠ	इ	त	प	च	ळ	ख	गु	ख

Fig. 25 (bottom): Type Styles, Gujarati Type Foundry, Bombay, 1930.

Fig. 26 (top): Samarkan, font resembling the Hindi script.

HINDI SCRIPTS

Transformed Hindi fonts rely on one main feature carried over from the original Hindi scripts (Fig. 25). There is a dominant horizontal cross stroke, which is present across all letterforms. When letters are set and placed one after another these cross strokes in each letter create a visually very strong horizontal line appearing where an imaginary x-height line would be. The overall contrast is quite low, the stress is oblique and the tone is quite dark due to the close placement of letters. There is a feel of calligraphy present. The look of transformed Samarkan (Fig. 26) Hindi font is truly Indian; however, there are more variations of transformed Hindi.

CHINESE (ASIAN) SCRIPTS

Asian languages and their scripts have a wide range of forms, which results from the fact that there are quite a lot of different languages even within one country and all these nations and ethnic groups use different kinds of scripts. For western civilisation it is easier to call them Asian in order not to differentiate among so many various scripts. These fonts have nothing in common with, for example, Chinese calligraphy (Fig. 27). They rather imitate Chinese inventions such as chop sticks or Asian cultural prides such as pagodas or even natural resources such as bamboo trees. (Fig. 28 and 29) Locally these fonts were give special names. In America with strong Asian communities they are known as ‘Chop Suey’ fonts because they could be found on many Asian restaurants (Fig. 30). According to Shaw (2009) ‘Chop Suey’ became famous in connection with San Francisco’s China Town. Shaw also added, ‘It was Chinese-American restaurateurs who were choosing the chop suey lettering (and serving the dish), conferring a bit of authenticity on two American inventions.’ It is apparent that these days the competition on market dictates different strategies and it is not an exception to see Asian lettering on different products or promotional materials. As China becomes stronger as a country in its production and influence on world’s market this becomes more apparent. The average person cannot read or write Chinese, so obviously the Chinese use Latin script to be understood and for marketing purposes they might use typefaces that would immediately reflect their culture.

Fig. 27 (bottom left): Chinese poem, regular style, calligraphy.

Fig. 28 (top): Faux Chinese Regular, font resembling the Chinese (Asian) script.

Fig. 29 (middle): Chinese Menu, modelled after an old sign on a building in New York City, 2009.

Fig. 30 (bottom right): Yu Shan Chinese Restaurant, Chicago, 2007.

On the other hand, there are not only small sole traders or companies attempting to use this national type approach, but also big corporations. An example would be the Lidl company, which runs a chain of discount supermarkets all over Europe and belongs to a bigger corporation called Schwarz, which owns for example Kaufland. Lidl does not only create their campaigns on weekly basis according to a national culture product range such as “Mexican”, “Asian”, or “Greek” week (Fig. 31), but they also have products with the logo (Fig. 32) created from transformed Asian lettering. In this case it is Vitasia, which is registered brand under Lidl company. Even if there was no pagoda as a background image on the logo, the type itself would suggest the place of the origin, not mentioning the word Asia incorporated in logotype. Vitasia definitely did not want to leave any doubts where their products come from supporting them with an image, name and typeface resembling Asia.

Fig. 31: Asian week on Lidl's marketing bulletin, localised in Slovak Republic, 2012.

Fig. 32: Vitasia logo used on one of their products, 2012.

CYRILLIC SCRIPTS

The Cyrillic script (Figs. 34 and 35) is mainly linked to the Russian culture, but the origins and roots can be traced back to Slavs and Slavic origin languages. Among others Cyrillic script is used in Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Mongolia, Montenegro, Serbia, Tajikistan or Ukraine. Many of these countries and nations belonged to previously known state called U.S.S.R. (The Union of Soviet Socialistic Republics) or the Soviet Union. It existed between 1922 and 1991. The wider spread of Cyrillic alphabet can be backlinked to Russian constructivism and its representatives who uses the Cyrillic script in their posters or other marketing materials at the beginning of the 20th century.

The typefaces, which show the transformation of Cyrillic scripts (Figs. 36 and 37) into Latin alphabet rely on letterforms, which can be read in Latin, but in Cyrillic have different pronunciation or meaning. When we take for example Latin “R” and we flip it horizontally we get Cyrillic “Я”, which is read “ya”, but still looks like “R”. This apparently means that reading this kind of transformed script needs a bit more imagination, although a viewer is familiar with the form.

Fig. 34 (top left, p. 47): Schriftproben, Schriftgiesserei und mechanische Werkstätte J. H. Rust & Co., Vienna, 1887.

Fig. 35 (top right, p. 47): Schriftproben, Schriftgiesserei und mechanische Werkstätte J. H. Rust & Co., Vienna, 1887.

Fig. 36 (center, p. 47): Kremlin Alexander, free font resembling the Cyrillic script.

Fig. 37 (bottom, p. 47): Soviet, free font resembling the Cyrillic script.

КРЕПЬИ ДЪЖАНЪЕР

First seen on DaFont: 11-04-2008

A 0065	B 0066	C 0067	D 0068	E 0069	F 0070	G 0071	H 0072	I 0073	J 0074	K 0075	L 0076	M 0077	N 0078	O 0079
Д	В	С	Д	Е	Г	У	Н	І	Э	К	Ь	М	И	О
P 0080	Q 0081	R 0082	S 0083	T 0084	U 0085	V 0086	W 0087	X 0088	Y 0089	Z 0090				
Р	Q	Я	З	Т	Ц	У	Ш	Ж	У	Ъ				

ΣΦVIET

First seen on DaFont: before 2005

A 0065	B 0066	C 0067	D 0068	E 0069	F 0070	G 0071	H 0072	I 0073	J 0074	K 0075	L 0076	M 0077	N 0078	O 0079	P 0080
А	Б	С	Д	Е	Г	У	Н	І	Ј	К	Л	М	И	Ѓ	Р
Q 0081	R 0082	S 0083	T 0084	U 0085	V 0086	W 0087	X 0088	Y 0089	Z 0090						
Q	R	З	Г	У	В	W	Х	У	З						

البحري العربي

First seen on DaFont: before 2005

A 0065	B 0066	C 0067	D 0068	E 0069	F 0070	G 0071	H 0072	I 0073	J 0074	K 0075	L 0076	M 0077	N 0078	O 0079	P 0080
ه	ظ	غ	خ	ع	ف	ظ	ت	ز	ك	ل	م	ن	ة	پ	
Q 0081	R 0082	S 0083	T 0084	U 0085	V 0086	W 0087	X 0088	Y 0089	Z 0090						
ق	ر	ي	ث	ن	و	ت	لا	لآ	خ

ARABIC SCRIPT

It is quite difficult to imitate Arabic scripts (Figs. 38 and 40) because of the curves and strokes of the original script and the direction of writing from left to right, which are not used in the Latin script. Nevertheless, there are couple of fonts able to transform the form of the Arabic script and the feel of such font is quite comparable to the official script. The main methodology of creating fonts with the Arabic resemblance (Fig. 39) is in placing a substantial amount of dots, which are not meant to be used as diacritical marks, above or below the letterforms, wider shapes and also imitating a handwritten feel and look.

Fig. 38 (center), Fig. 40 (bottom left):

Arabisch-Türkisch, type specimen from D. Stempel, Frankfurt, Leipzig, Vienna, Budapest, 1922.

Fig. 39 (top): Pseudo Saudi, free font resembling the Arabic script.

LATIN SCRIPTS

While non-Latin scripts (Figs. 41 and 42) are driven by transformation of letters or sounds to resemble the look of the original script enabling them to be written in Latin script, the Latin alphabets cannot imitate the feel by transformation—it has to be already present in the form. The variations of forms in Latin scripts are so elaborate that identifying a Roman script or simply giving it a label “national” seems to be more difficult than it might appear at first sight. Apparently, a simple substitution of glyphs used in languages is not possible, particular Latin font has to bear national features in the form. It also has to convey the meaning and to show the ability evoking a national feel and look via attributes covered or hidden behind shapes of individual letterforms. The variety of opinions on the national feel could start to increase when larger countries or nations are investigated and willing to express their nationality via type. In other cases the typefaces are given a status of being national despite the fact that the initial intention of designing them had absolutely no connection to nationality. The question resides in a point whether typefaces can be marked as national and whether they were created and designed with this attribute. On the contrary, whether they were given this status after the constant use, the perception of viewers or a famous era they were mainly used in, is fundamental. The confusion might start when we would like to mark some fonts as “American”, “Italian”, “French”, “Mexican”, “Egyptian”, “German”, or otherwise.

Once the characteristics of a nation are followed while designing a typeface it should be possible to give glyphs features evoking feelings of a nation. However, whether they would be perceived only by members of that nation or by a wider audience, would really be a matter of a worldwide recognition. The usage of typeface and its inevitable displaying should be one of the most important factors when linking the typeface to a nation or a nationality. Is Garamond typeface able to reflect the French? Or is Bodoni typeface (Fig. 43) able to express Italians and their temperament, skills, and nature? None of Latin origin typefaces appear to be designed for reflecting nationalities. Once the typeface was designed according to general or specific rules of aesthetics, balance, mathematics, or geometry, the irrelevance of the place, person and country would only confirm the fact of having typefaces created with similar feel regardless of nationality. Following this assumption suggests that viewing typefaces as national or giving them national features must have been the result of long-term process mainly viewed and credited only in the modern world.

Fig. 43: *Manuale tipografico, Volume Primo*, Giambattista Bodoni, Parma, 1818. The thin strokes of the Bodoni were made the same weight as the serifs, creating a dazzling contrast.

Fig. 44: *Ja!*, Nazi referendum poster, 1938.

Heller (2004) pointed out that the Nazis had the most successful national “identity” and a visual propaganda ever designed. It is not a coincidence that they had chosen German blackletter (Figs. 44–52) or German “Fraktur” as it was called as the typeface representing and resembling their nation. It can be found on almost all pre-war and war posters, newspapers and even in books. (Fig. 45) When we look at German blackletter, we could see precision, a tradition, a skill and solidness—the virtues that could describe a German nation or their products. Even the proximity of letters, which are closer to each other, would suggest the compactness and coherence of a German nation. According to Shaw and Bain (1998, p. 17) there was no Roman type designed as successful as Fraktur despite the fact that a lot of experiments were done in the 20th century.

The beginning of the 20th century, just after the boom of printing and during the flourishing time of hundreds of new typefaces occurring in foundries, Germans were still designing their versions of blackletter. There are numerous variations with different names, however, in many cases when a typeface included a word German in their name, it was blackletter. They usually called them “Deutsche”, “Neue Deutsche”, or “Germania” (Figs. 47–51) and this way the name of the typeface reflects the nationality. When Europe was surrounded and clothed in Art Nouveau with its graceful, seductive and warm shapes, Germans were able to accompany this gracefulness with their blackletter as we can see in the calendar (Fig. 52).

Despite the fact that blackletter itself is the type with a questionable readability and overall poor legibility, it is very nicely and skilfully drawn and once accustomed to it, as Germans over centuries were indeed, it becomes less difficult to read. This is why Germans also used blackletter in book prose. Would German blackletter guarantee a true Germanness when used on labels, logotypes or posters? It definitely shows part of their history, traditions, precision and skilfulness; and in most cases the link would certainly find its way to Germany.

Fig. 45 (top left): *Der Grüne Heinrich*, Gottfried Keller's novel written in blackletter (Schwabach), 1898.

Fig. 46 (top middle): *Der Stürmer*, anti-Semitic weekly in Nazi Germany, 1941.

Fig. 47 (top right): *Neu-Deutsche Schriften und Ornamente*, Genzsch & Heyse, Hamburg, 1901.

Fig. 48 (middle left): *Germania*, Aktiengesellschaft für

Schriftgießerei und Maschinenbau, Offenbach am Main, 1905.

Fig. 49 (middle): *Eine Deutsche Schrift*, Gebr. Klingspor, Offenbach am Main, 1910.

Fig. 50 (middle right): *Eine deutsche Schrägschrift*, Gebr. Klingspor, Offenbach am Main, 1912.

Fig. 51 (bottom right): *Deutsche Anzeigerschrift*, D. Stempel AG, Frankfurt am Main, 1924.

April		Mai		Juni	
M	1 Theodora	F	1 Phil. u. Jakob	M	1 Nikodemus
D	2 Theodosia	S	2 Sigismund	D	2 Marquard
F	3 Christian	S	3 2. Mij. Dom.	M	3 Erasmus
S	4 Ambrosius	M	4 Florian	D	4 Ulrike
S	5 5. Judika	D	5 Gotthard	F	5 Bonifatius
M	6 Sirtus	M	6 Dietrich	S	6 Benignus
D	7 Cölestin	D	7 Gottfried	S	7 Hl. Pfingstfest
M	8 Heilmann	F	8 Stanislaus	M	8 Pfingstmontag
D	9 Bogislaus	S	9 Hiob	D	9 Barnim
F	10 Ezechiel	S	10 3. Jubilate	M	10 Quatember
S	11 Hermann	M	11 Mamertus	D	11 Barnabas
S	12 6. Palmarum	D	12 Pankratius	F	12 Klaudina
M	13 Justinus	M	13 Servatius	S	13 Tobias
D	14 Tiburtius	D	14 Christian	S	14 Trinitatis
M	15 Obadiah	F	15 Sophia	M	15 Vitus
D	16 Gründonnerst.	S	16 Honoratus	D	16 Justina
F	17 Karfreitag	S	17 4. Kantate	M	17 Volkmar
S	18 Florentin	M	18 Liborius	D	18 Fronleichnam
S	19 Hl. Osterfest	D	19 Sara	F	19 Gerv. u. Pr.
M	20 Ostermontag	M	20 Franziska	S	20 Raphael
D	21 Adolf	D	21 Prudens	S	21 1. n. Trinitatis
M	22 Lothar	F	22 Helena	M	22 Achatius
D	23 Georg	S	23 Desiderius	D	23 Basilus
F	24 Albert	S	24 5. Rogate	M	24 Johannes d. T.
S	25 Markus Ev.	M	25 Urban	D	25 Elogius
S	26 1. Quasimodo.	D	26 Eduard	F	26 Jeremias
M	27 Anastasius	M	27 Beda	S	27 Sieben Schläf.
D	28 Therese	D	28 Himmelfahrt	S	28 2. n. Trinitatis
M	29 Sibylla	F	29 Maximilian	M	29 Peter u. Paul
D	30 Josua	S	30 Wigand	D	30 Pauli Ged.
		S	31 6. Erandi		

DIACRITICS AS A NATIONAL INDICATOR

Although diacritics and their usage might show nationality, is not achieved by the feel of the script, but simply by adding diacritical marks above or below some characters. Fonts these days contain a large number of diacritics. Some of these diacritical marks such as acute, caron or diaeresis are very common in languages, even English uses them when foreign words appear in the text. There are certain diacritics, which are not so common, but still used more languages as for example "ogonek" (Fig. 53), a little tail, which is used in Polish, Kashubian, Lithuanian, and in Native American languages. Regardless of usage and appearance in the text, the viewer or reader does not have to be familiar with all these diacritical marks thus not able to accommodate them with the nation. Because of huge variety and elaborate appearance of diacritics in Latin script, it is quite difficult to associate them with a certain nation. Even if we do not know the language, do not speak or write in it, according to particular diacritical marks we might be able to be directed to one of Latin scripts used by some nation.

Fig. 53 (left): Ogonek, diacritical mark used i.e. in Polish language.

Fig. 55 (center): Steele Savage, WWII propaganda poster, 1944.

Fig. 56 (right): Red Monarch, a film poster designed by John Gorham, 1983. The poster is meant to be a parody.

PROPAGANDA TYPE

Expressing national consciousness or behaviour applies to a form of marketing, which does not involve products or companies, but rather countries, their leaderships or movements via political or other parties. It is propaganda—naturally hidden marketing point of view or rather only a view of thoughts and beliefs based on impact, urge, pressure and brainwash. Nonetheless, type excluding the importance of content would depend on the form and shape used for propaganda materials. The Soviet Union, Germany or the United States behaved according to propaganda principles during “wars” on the highest level.

The highest presence of propaganda is evident before and during war times and was enormously used around two world wars in the 20th century. Type in propaganda played as important role as the imagery or the content itself. The national type or the type showing national features reinforced the idea. The German identity, as mentioned before, was highly dependant on their German blackletter.

Fig. 52 (p. 53) : Neue Jahreszeiten Bilder, Gebr. Klingspor, Offenbach am Main, 1909.

Fig. 54 (left) : British war poster, 1940.

Fig. 58 (right): Example of a fictive communist propaganda poster.

Although England, France or the United States were not so preoccupied by type as their identity a small traces of carefully chosen typefaces with strict origin of their country was outlined in some of the posters as for example Gill sans used in the British poster Mothers (Fig. 54). The feel was also important and with the ability to address the message, yet identifying some of the war posters (Figs. 54 and 55) by national type, could have been the intention of designers. In case of the Russian Propaganda, it is quite common to see a parody (Fig. 56) or a poster, in which it is difficult to say whether it is supposed to be a parody or a legitimate, serious and credible poster. To demonstrate this situation I designed a possible communist propaganda poster (Fig. 58).

A small experiment with type on imaginative propaganda posters (Fig. 57) was executed to show the power of targeting via type. Four different nations have been chosen to represent the countries, in which the propaganda could be spread. The colours, images, and the background are purposefully let the same in order to dissolve the importance of other elements except type. Furthermore, all countries have a flag with same colours, so the only difference is in type used.

Since the only difference resides only in the shapes of the individual words on each poster, their targeting audience is clearly specified. Would, however, a viewer be able to determine the countries, in which these posters could appear? If one would the nationality in type could be used as a strong targeting factor.

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GLOBALISATION OF TYPE

Marketing happens on more levels—from small street corner shops or shop windows and signage (Fig. 59) to huge corporation marketing campaigns trying to target a specific audience as well as specifying promoted products or services. One of the ways to advertise or promote anything is via a nice imagery. However, typography is as important as the image. It not only supports images, but it can evoke the feeling of the country and subsequently its traditions, which might be hidden in letterforms of a transformed non-Latin script and also in some Latin scripts. Transformation is possibly done for western civilisations' sake, for those who do not speak oriental languages. Apparently, any kind of the Latin script can be chosen for this purpose, but in certain cases it is more than desirable to pick the one, which is written in one of transformed scripts (Figs. 31 and 32). In this case, this very specific targeting immediately evokes the feel of the nation and subsequently its features or characteristics.

Viewers because of constant use made products or companies, which became recognised outside the country's border, recognisable and perceivable in different media. Such a company with long tradition and history is Coca-Cola. The logo of the company has not changed much since the end of the 19th century and became one of American icons. In this sense the script font used for letterforms Coca-Cola could be subconsciously connected to the United States and the American nation. It is not its attribute or role to be national, nor a mission to evoke Americanism, nationalism or patriotism. It has simply grown into this status and wide recognition has made our brains to look for links. It is true that not everybody should be aware of the product, but because of its long history and globalisation it is highly probable to be widely recognised and eventually associated with the United States. Any product with similar font might be able to evoke a feeling of being American. Although not meant to be strictly national, it is a secondary accompanying phenomenon being able to show the place of origin via type.

As an example of viewers' perception, for illustrative purpose, two brands' logotypes along with its type could have been changed to see the impact and importance of the form used in fonts. The interchange (Fig. 62) of the script used for Coca-Cola wordmark with the blackletter used for Jägermeister could serve as a visual demonstration of the font expressiveness and a fair national indicator. If not directly determining the country of origin or the nationality, a viewer might see and feel a definite difference not only in the look and the whole visual appearance, but almost the change in the taste. Coca-cola written purely in the blackletter is quite capable of suggesting a stronger alcoholic drink and not a soft drink. The same might be applied to lettering on bottles of Jägermeister, but in reverse. Paradoxically, famous trademarks or brands with long history become localised to be closer to a nation or the country they are distributed in. This leads to either transformation of their brand names into different scripts or using the same font in a different language (Fig. 60). Another option is, if a brand feels to be strong enough in its recognition, completely leaving out typography and thus relying solely on the provided image (Fig. 61).

BEVER VEGETARIAN DHABA

Fig. 59 (top): A restaurant signage in Latin script imitating the Indian script.
Fig. 60 (center): Variations of Coca-Cola logo and its wordmark according to the country where it is distributed.

Fig. 61 (bottom left): The new Starbucks logo without any wordmark.
Fig. 62 (bottom right): An illustrative example of typefaces interchange in Coca-Cola and Jägermeister wordmarks.

SMALL vs LARGE

As the adjectives could suggest, the larger the country or the nation, the more designers and foundries work are there, and therefore more typefaces can be designed. Not only a large variety of ethnical groups could be located in larger countries, but also any groups possibly willing to represent themselves by a certain font. Could these fonts mirror the behaviour, character, merit or even multiculturalism of the groups living in a huge society? American football and its connection to universities introduce an archetype of manliness, masculinity, strength, endurance, and a certain degree of aggression. Is it a coincidence that fonts used by these groups show these features? A majority of football teams at Universities and the national league use either slab serif fonts or so typical geometric sans-serif faces with diagonal cuts instead of curved shapes, usually in bold or heavy weights. Having sharp edges and only straight lines instead of curved lines suggest the aggression but also determination and purposefulness. When "football" word is placed in the search engine of "Fontshop.com", the results of the search show typeface family ITC Machine Western (Fig. 63). The fonts help to express the attitude; in fact, they could scare the opponent and show who is stronger. Would choosing this kind of font show Americanism and or the American nation? As far as we regard a sample group within a nation as a part of the society they are live in with certain patriotic and national feel, using this kind of font should indeed create connotations and a bridge to the American culture in whatever situation. However, not only football and universities use these fonts, but also they are present in ice hockey, basketball and partially in baseball (Figs. 64 and 65). It seems to be that American team sports and especially contact sports try to visualise the features of their team and game by very same fonts. A jersey is a good place expressing and sending feelings to the audience.

SALINGER
MY HARD NOSE, GLASS JAW, AND SOFT HEART

Fig. 63 (top): ITC Machine Western typeface. This kind of typeface and similar ones are often used in American sports.

Fig. 64 (bottom left): American National Football League jersey with typical robust lettering.

Fig. 65 (bottom right): NHL jersey with type frequently used in American sports.

22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	:	;	,
33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42
,	?	0	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53
I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64
T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	[	]	]

A B C D E a b c d e 1 2

Fig. 66 (top left): The Dutch national football team jersey with numbers in De Stijl style.

Fig. 67 (top right): P22 Destijl Regular typeface designed by Theo van Doesburg, Richard Kegler and Michael Want.

Fig. 68 (bottom): Menhart Regular typeface designed by Oldřich Menhart and which was supposed to be distinctly Czech typeface.

Apparently, this attitude is present not only in the United States, but can be found in other countries. An example would be the Netherlands, which in contrast to the United States is a small country, however, as Unger states, ‘Holland today has more type designers per capita than any other country in the world, a remarkable fact considering that there is now not one surviving Dutch type foundry’ (cited in Bilak, 2004). It might not be a coincidence that the Dutch national soccer team play in jerseys (Fig. 66) with numbers reminding of the De Stijl movement (Fig. 67) from the beginning of 20th century and connected to the Netherlands. However, one might argue that these kinds of numbers are only a reflection of our modern digitalized era and reminiscent of numbers on digital devices. The Dutch went even further in utilising their designers and their strong national heritage in type design when the Dutch government decided to unify all their departments and ministries by one typeface. The new typeface should not have been more legible and space economic only due to a huge number of printed materials used in all departments, but according to Baumann (2008) it should be recognisable as the ‘government’. If in this sense the government represents the nation the ‘Dutchness’ can be reflected in type or at least carry on the national features. Particularly, in case of governments, choosing or commissioning an artist or a designer to produce a typeface reflecting the country’s features might be questionable because the ‘Dutchness’ does not have to be perceived by other nations, only by the Dutch. However, during the process of visualisation and displaying the typeface, which is in constant contact with foreigners, can such a typeface slowly be adopted and perceived as Dutch by other nationalities in future.

Comparable situations might have happened or happens in other countries, and the intentions to design a typeface being able not only to reflect the nation as a collection of features, but also their attitude and expressiveness in perception of viewers, can be desirable. This was the case in Czechoslovakia in the beginning of the 20th century when according to Bilak (2006) Menhart Roman (Fig. 68) was supposed to be a true Czech typeface in its expressiveness. At that time, this approach to type design was blessed, because before that period there was a strong German influence in the country. There is no doubt that smaller nations were forced to rely on something that was believed to be working and done with the utmost precision, the mastery of craft and long history of the usage. This was exactly the case of the blackletter type. Howsoever successful in constructing and designing new typefaces with the intention to be national, or at least carrying certain national features and attributes of a nation, a designer's typeface stood before a long journey of the constant usage and inclusion into designs of other artist being able to transfer those national intentions and characteristics into a trustworthy message reflecting them.

NATIONAL TYPE SURVEY

The aim of this survey was to get the feedback on the ability to associate fonts with nationalities. The variety of fonts was presented in 17 questions (Fig. 69) comprising both transformed non-Latin and Latin fonts. The neutral sequence “Type by Nationality” offered the opportunity to find the connection to nations. All respondents were asked to fill in their nationality and the area they work or study in. There were 27 different nationalities answering the survey—Slovak, Czech, Bosnian, Vietnamese, Ukrainian, Malaysian, Hungarian, Portuguese, American, Ecuadorian, Russian, Uzbekistani, Circassian, Croatian, Swiss, French, British, Mexican, Chechen, Latvian, Armenian, Canadian, Iranian, Moldovan, Serbian, German, and Slovenian. 60% of respondents were from a country where Latin script is used primarily and 40% were from non-Latin script using countries. Paradoxically, nationalities using non-Latin scripts in their country can write and read Latin scripts, but it is not true in reverse. The gathered information was very valuable for drawing the results globally and according to nationalities or respondents’ working/studying area. The choices for choosing the national look were described as American, Italian, Greek, French, Russian, Dutch, Czech, English, African, Asian, Hebrew, Arabic, German, Swiss, Indian, Mexican, Egyptian, or none/other. Three categories of respondents were chosen to reflect their perception of typography and graphic design history. Designers or people working in media were in contrast with IT personnel, who work with typography and fonts but not necessarily know their origin, and with people from any other areas.

The global results (Fig. 70) only underlined the expectations and the comparison analysis of non-Latin and Latin scripts, especially when linked to nations. The most successful in showing the link to nationalities are fonts transformed from non-Latin scripts. Globally, the highest percentage showing the ability of connecting the font to a nation had the Asian font, which was filled in by more than 70% of respondents. This high percentage was seen across all groups of respondents. Due to expanding Asian culture and more dominant

Fig. 70: Global results from the National Type Survey which was conducted online.

Fig. 69 (p. 61): 17 typefaces were chosen to show the national feel and look, including non-Latin and Latin script.

question 4

Type by Nationality

question 5

TYPE BY NATIONALITY

question 6

Type by Nationality

question 7

TYPE BY NATIONALITY

question 8

Type by Nationality

question 9

TYPE BY NATIONALITY

question 10

Type by Nationality

question 11

Type by Nationality

question 12

TYPE BY NATIONALITY

question 13

TYPE BY NATIONALITY

question 14

Type by Nationality

question 15

TYPE BY NATIONALITY

question 16

Type by Nationality

question 17

type by nationality

question 18

Type by Nationality

question 19

Type by Nationality

question 20

Type by Nationality

position of Asian corporations operating globally in the world, as well as spreading of Asian people integrating in other countries' societies, creating strong ethnic groups results in reliable recognition of transformed Chinese, Vietnamese or Korean. The trend of using these transformed Asian fonts is increased in marketing (see Figs. 31 and 32), which also helps to link and recognise these fonts despite the fact of not showing an exact representation of the original script. In fact, Asian people to resemble their country often create these fonts. Transformed Arabic, Indian, and Cyrillic scripts were also very well recognised by the respondents, however, the chosen transformed Cyrillic font was also marked as Greek. There are more variations of the transformed Cyrillic and Greek scripts which might be difficult for people to recognise as Russian or Greek. On the other hand, the transformed Greek script was also felt as Egyptian or Mexican.

Interesting partial findings were seen in three groups of respondents divided by their work or field of study. The most visible difference was in the perception and the feel of fonts. Respondents from non-design areas were more prone to choose the option, which either reminded them other nationalities as those listed or none of them. Alternatively, fonts could have been chosen and felt as neutral, expressing no national feel. This only indicates that for majority of people it was really complicated to pick and link any of the available options. It also leads to a fact that although the emotions and feelings coming from typefaces are perceptible, the national feel is so sophisticated, comprising more than one emotion, that it is hard to feel nationality in general.

What is national for one person does not have to be for the other one.

The fact that nationality might be felt and recognised by members of the nation more reliably is evident. This is applicable for Latin scripts and even more for non-Latin scripts transformed into the Latin version. Asian, Arabic, and Cyrillic transformed fonts were the most successful and reached the highest percentage (Fig. 72).

Fig. 71: Design/Media group results from the National Type Survey conducted online.

Fig. 72 (top): Other or non-design group results from the National Type Survey conducted online.

Fig. 73 (bottom): IT group results from the National Type Survey conducted online.

The New York Times

Fig. 74 (top left): The New York Times wordmark written in blackletter typeface.

Fig. 76 (bottom left): Big Chill logo used on refrigerators in USA.

The Telegraph

Fig. 75 (top right): The Telegraph, British newspaper wordmark is constructed from blackletter.

Fig. 77 (bottom right): "Ouky Douky," a secondhand book shop with vintage American lettering.

Designers, artists, or people working in media were less “none/other” oriented in their answers; they tend to link the fonts according to their feel or even knowledge. The results of transformed Asian, Arabic, Cyrillic, and Hebrew were very close to the results of other groups, which means that these “exotic” scripts, even transformed into the Latin form, are easier to connect to a nation than any of the Latin scripts. According to the strong German national identity presented throughout centuries and especially during world war times in the 20th century, when German Fraktur (blackletter) was used almost everywhere, the expectation was to feel this kind of font as truly German. However, as the survey revealed (Fig. 71), the answers were not as single-valued. Although one third of respondents felt it as German, an English feel was chosen quite often as well and was placed as second. This might be because the occurrence of blackletter in British Isles, the United States and partially in other countries, but never in such extent as in Germany. The blackletter is still quite popular nowadays in the publishing, especially in newspapers with long tradition and history such as The New York Times (Fig. 74), The Washington Post, Chicago Tribune, The Daily Telegraph (Fig. 75), Daily Mail, Le Monde, and many others.

The feel and look of the Latin script is extremely difficult to bridge to a certain nation or nationality

The lowest number of respondents was from the IT group, but the answers were also very important for strengthening the overall results (Fig. 73) from previous two groups. Although the IT area uses fonts quite a lot, whether in a web territory, applications, on displays of various devices or in the software development, they felt non-Latin scripts almost identically as other groups. The highest percentage was achieved by the transformed Asian script, which only mirrored the results from previous groups, followed by the transformed Arabic, Cyrillic, and Indian scripts. The decision-making around Latin scripts was more hectic than guiding and there was no clear winner in this category of scripts. This fact suggests as well as confirms that the feel and look of the Latin script is extremely difficult to bridge to a certain nation or nationality.

CONCLUSION

When we walk down the streets, open newspapers, magazines, books and these days it is more about laptops, smart phones and all kinds of pads—it is there—though we might not notice it at first sight, but type which reflects or at least is trying to reflect the nationality, culture, or an ethnic group is present. Although the classification of typefaces does not mention nationality as a feature or characteristics, it does not exclude its existence with the possibility to use it. However, the major difference is whether the typeface was made and designed with the knowledge and intention to reflect the national spirit, attributes, feel and possibly the history, or the chain of events of the constant use on products or in printed materials created this status. Once it reached this status, it is not entirely clear whether everyone would be able to perceive it in that way.

So is there a safe choice when a designer or practically anyone could choose a font representing a nation and this way the viewers would perceive it reliably as national? The answer is quite prosaic—yes and no. But besides, would such a font help to visualise a product, a film, a company, a shop or a printed material better? The non-Latin scripts, which are made into the “transformed” Latin version are recognised by viewers in the world as national more than fonts in the Latin script supposed to carry the national feel. The significance of the look and feel is noticeable in displaying the name of the second-hand bookshop (Fig. 76). Although okey-dokey is written phonetically, the intention and the message are clear. The typeface reminding 50s American cars or refrigerators (Fig. 77) must have been chosen purposefully to depict American vintage look. However, it is not certain that this kind of font would show the link to America for everyone. The globalisation of fonts and their use around the world guaranteed their wide recognition, but also redoubled the connotations. The only safe choice of the Latin script font would be its proprietary use for certain products or materials and not having the ability of using them anywhere else. In that case the font could slowly build the phenomenon of national linking. Or the other option, which is quite difficult these days, would be a dominant use of the font by a country as it was in case of Germany and the blackletter. That is why it is not a coincidence that from the Latin script just the blackletter has the highest chance to be recognised and connected to a nation.

Nationalism, patriotism, traditions, or inner beliefs can be implemented in type, but if present, they would only underline the fact of being able to evoke certain feelings in viewers and more importantly in the content with the “national” connotation. Any emotional aspect reflected in type might be perceived individually and since national feel is a collection of emotions it is quite difficult for readers or viewers to distinguish among those feelings as well as among nationalities dressed in some typeface. Since transformed non-Latin scripts are more or less imitations of shapes and forms and perhaps dominant cultural phenomena, it is their purpose to act as national. But in case of Latin scripts and a huge variety of different typefaces it is more complicated to find the link to their nationality. More prominent than elaborate reflection of nationality is in the ability to show a visage of medieval, western, romantic, or modern looks. Paradoxically, in the world of globalisation we live in, even if there would be clear fonts with national feel they will sooner or later, inevitably, might become international. ■

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IMAGE LIST

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