

In this zine I am focussing on Arabic, but the points made here are valid for many scripts (as can be seen in the photographs) which have been oppressed and neglected in research and design for too many years. It is problematic to dress up Latin type to make it look like a marginalized script, as it is like blackface or drag queens; the dominant hegemony dressing up as the oppressed minority. When asked to make something look more 'exotic', question whether the origins of your client justify it to propagate a certain typographic culture, and whether you're the person with the right background to design this. Do not use an appropriating font, you're a better designer than that.



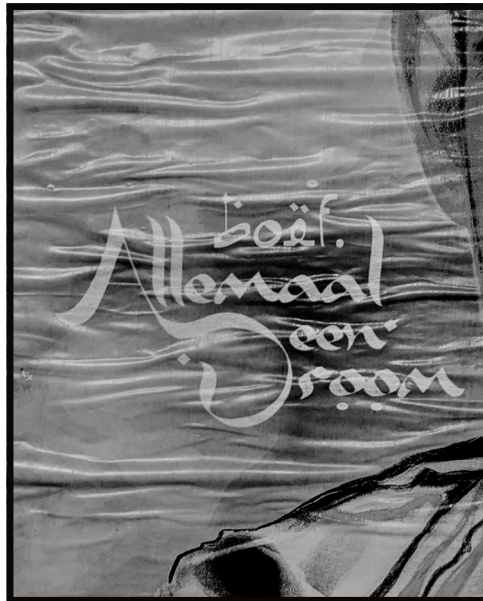
RAISING AWARENESS

Today there is still a lack of high-quality Arabic fonts, whereas there is an abundance of Latin typefaces available. From both moveable to digital type, Arabic saw waves of simplification that significantly changed the script in comparison to its source. Arabic letterforms sacrificed their sophistication to fit the European technology instead of further to work for the Arabic script. Due to a lack of unified technical standards that are universally shared by different technology suppliers, simple things Latin users take for granted, like copy-pasting can break an Arabic text and result in it becoming illegible.



THE STATE OF ARABIC TYPE TODAY

### HISTORY OF EUROPEAN INFLUENCES IN ARABIC TYPE DEVELOPMENT



The printing press was invented in Korea by Choe Yun-ui, a full 150 years before Gutenberg was even born. Gutenberg's press however spread from Europe to the Middle-East, but this printing press was designed for the Latin script. The evolution from written to printed type was not smooth for Arabic. Starting in the 16th century and continuing for the next 200 years, Arabic fonts were made exclusively by Europeans and used for faith-based propaganda to convert Muslims to Christianity or for scholarly work addressed to a Western audience. This printing activity actively coincided with a great cultural, political and economic decline in Islamic empires.



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 for sources and further reading.

# Stop Typographical Appropriation

About the privileged Latin script, the oppression of the Arabic script and how to: