

# **DESIGNING A TYPEFACE FOR VIETNAMESE CULTURE**

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# ABSTRACT

## keywords

*Typography, typeface design,  
cultural identity,  
practice-based research,  
Vietnamese language*

Owing to the long history of being colonized by China and France, the Vietnamese language has been exposed to the cultural conception of other nations. It has been separated by great gulfs in time, geography, different social and political systems, and language divides. Within Vietnam's typographic landscape, such influences have evidently been carved into both the visual and identity of every letter created. Informed by this context, this research applies the current Vietnamese written language as a rudiment to develop a platform for conversations and insights of Vietnamese visual culture.

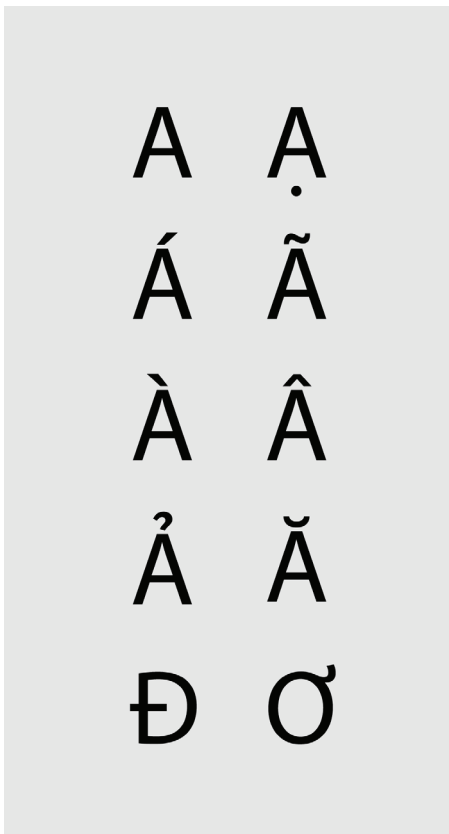
Through secondary research and practice-based research located in the studio, this thesis document presents the process of developing Tre Việt (Vietnamese bamboo), a cultural-specific typeface that draws on characteristics from Vietnamese language and traditions. By reflecting on the intrinsic nature of the letterforms and informed by the Vietnamese cultural symbol, the research seeks to enhance the beauty of the country's culture. At the intersection between communication design and Vietnamese conventional visual elements, the body of work described has sought to reflect the Vietnamese culture. Study and consideration of the intrinsic nature of Vietnamese letterforms and cultural symbols has informed the work. The result is a character set consisting of upper case, lower case and diacritic marks. A cultural book and visual samples provide a general look at the final outcomes and scenarios where this typeface is applicable. Finally, there are the discussions about future developments of Tre Việt typeface and the research question: *How do I use typography as a means to support and reflect the Vietnamese cultural identity?*



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# GLOSSARY



**Figure iv.** Vietnamese diacritic marks. First column from the top: Unmarked tone, acute, grave, hook above and dyet. Second column: Underdot, tilde, circumflex, breve and horn.

**Serif:** a serif is the little extra stroke found at the end of main vertical and horizontal strokes of some letterforms. (Serif, n.d.)

**Diacritic mark:** is a glyph added to a letter, or basic glyph. (Diacritic, 2018).

**Glyph:** a symbol intended to represent a readable character. (Glyph, 2018)

**Saigon:** Former name of Ho Chi Minh City before 1976.

**Acute:** A Vietnamese diacritic mark, part of the diacritic system. (Fig. iv)

**Grave:** A Vietnamese diacritic mark, part of the diacritic system (Fig. iv).

**Hook above:** A Vietnamese diacritic mark, part of the diacritic system (Fig. iv).

**Dyet:** A Vietnamese diacritic mark, part of the diacritic system (Fig. iv).

**Underdot:** A Vietnamese diacritic mark, part of the diacritic system (Fig. iv).

**Tilde:** A Vietnamese diacritic mark, part of the diacritic system (Fig. iv).

**Circumflex:** A Vietnamese diacritic mark, part of the diacritic system (Fig. iv).

Breve: A Vietnamese diacritic mark, part of the diacritic system (Fig. iv).

Horn: A Vietnamese diacritic mark, part of the diacritic system (Fig. iv).

Type design: The art and process of designing typeface. (Type Design, 2018)

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# **INTRODUCTION**

# Introduction

I was born in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. I have lived in Vietnam for nearly three decades and, until recently, have rarely interacted with the outside world. In mid 2017, I moved to Vancouver to pursue my graduate studies at Emily Carr University of Art + Design. This transition - from Vietnam to Canada - has greatly affected my perspective - the way I see the world. Interacting with fellow students in a multicultural environment has been a refreshing experience. Through casual conversations in the studio, cafeteria and classroom, we have shared and learned about each other's culture. We have discussed how our communities have shaped and constructed our cultural narratives and traditions. We have also noted how these narratives are conveyed both verbally and non-verbally. For my part, these discussions brought me to think about how intricate my mother language is. I became increasingly interested in how I might depict these complexities - how I might apply this, as a designer, to my mode of communication: typography.

Visual language has long been inextricably linked to our daily life from the early times to the modern world. It exists as part of our evolving culture and is capable of influencing our current cultural landscape. My research trajectory emerged while exploring the possibility of adopting typography - as part of the visual language - as an approach to discover human's emotional response. From here my work progressed and expanded, becoming increasingly rooted in Vietnamese cultural context that I had left behind.

As a Vietnamese, I never thought too deeply about my origin: what my culture is, or how precious our language is. It was only after leaving that I began to consider these things. My new journey in a foreign place (Canada) and interaction with an unfamiliar cultural diversity led me to think about presenting Vietnamese cultural tradition in a relevant way, through the pragmatic eyes of a communication designer.

*How do I use typography as a means to support and reflect the Vietnamese cultural identity?*



As a communication designer, I have been working with typefaces for many years, yet this is the first time I thought about creating a typeface to address this question. This document details my design process at a first attempt to challenge myself in developing a cultural specific typeface that might act as a platform for a better understanding of Vietnamese traditional culture and philosophy.

My thesis has been led by a series of studio practice explorations and learnings, in turns informed my design direction and led to the initial development of lower case letters, upper case letters, and diacritic marks appropriate to Vietnamese language and cultural expression. My work has been inspired by a common visual feature of life and cultural symbol in Vietnam – bamboo. Based on the exterior features of bamboo, I have developed the letterforms and diacritic marks. A cultural book and some visual samples were also developed as a means of demonstrating applications of the type.

# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

This section introduces various underlying theories which ground my studio practices as well as the framework for my design. First, I investigate the mutual influences of typography and culture. In order to understand the picture in a more thorough way, I then searched for information about the history of Vietnamese language, modern Vietnamese typography and discussions about other relevant issues that might be connected to my interest in language and typography. Lastly, I conducted a preliminary exploration into the typographic landscape through a series of photographic journeys around Vancouver in order to frame my research.

# The influence of typography and culture

*"Type design is a cultural act, not just a few lines of data in the corner of a hard disk." (Jean-François Porchez, 2002)*

The reciprocal influence between typography and culture is undeniable. Ertep (2012) stated that *"Typography, like many aesthetic preferences, is a cultural reflection of society"*. Typographic choices in specific locations are influenced by their connotative meanings. These are informed by a social group, a particular historical period, or a particular culture (Van Leeuwen, 2005). Ertep further noted that the meanings of a font can be narrowed down in particular contexts – that cultural knowledge becomes a resource to understand these meanings. The long-lasting relationship between typography and culture is associated by the written language. This had consistently been used to establish meaning within our environment (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001).

Fig. 1 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The image removed is a screenshot from [https://www.behance.net/gallery/59011313/L'Hanoienne-Type-face-\(Free-Multilingual\)](https://www.behance.net/gallery/59011313/L'Hanoienne-Type-face-(Free-Multilingual))

L'Hanoienne is a typeface designed by Vietnamese type designer Manh Nguyen (Fig. 1). Manh gives considerations to the visual culture of the French colonization period in Vietnam by *"bringing back the old style yet futuristic vibes of hand-painted retro panels and banners"* (Nguyen, 2017). In this case, the French period becomes the cultural context and the typeface is created as a means to enhance the cultural connection to that particular point in time. In the book *Culture+Typography: How culture affects typography*, Villagomez (2016) describes her interest in the peculiarity of the cities' typographic objects. Through photographic journals, Villagomez discusses signages and wayfinding signs found throughout the world. Paying close attention to visual identities, she notes the way in which typographic landscapes are influenced and gradually shaped by local cultures in specific cities – how these inform and create visual identities.

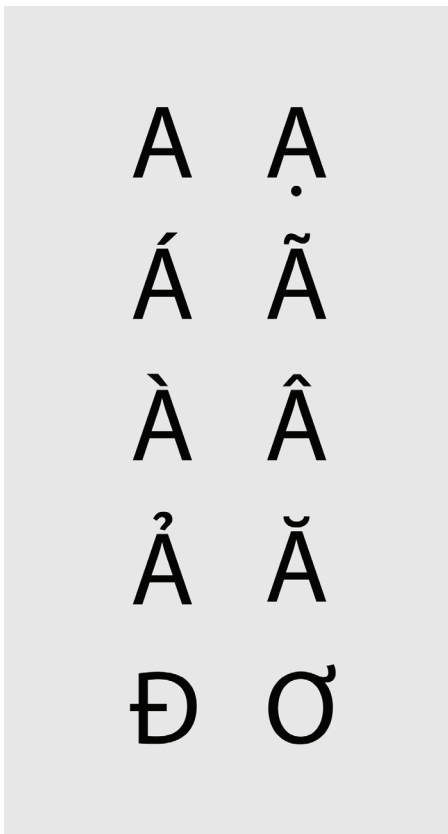
**Fig.1.** L'Hanoienne, a retro typeface made in consideration of the French colonization period.  
*Translation: L'Hanoienne, a Vietnamese font with multilingual support.*

# Vietnamese language and modern Vietnamese typography

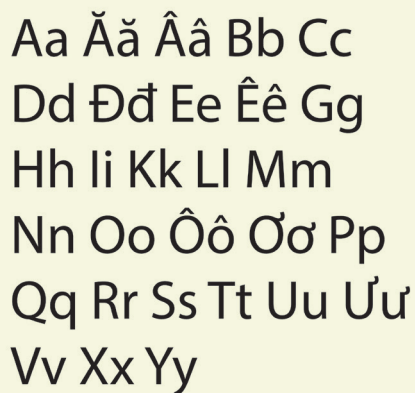
The current Vietnamese is the social language of Vietnam. It is widely spoken by more than 75 million people and an additional two million people who are part of the Vietnamese diaspora, in France, Australia and the United States. (Kirby, 2011). The earliest recorded systematic phonology of Vietnamese was conducted by de Rhodes in 1651. Vietnamese, however, did not become an official recognized language until the beginning of the 20th century, during a time when Vietnam was subjected to the colonization of France.

Although Modern Vietnamese letterforms (Chữ quốc ngữ) use Latin script as the foundation, they do not share meanings with other Latin-based languages. Instead, Vietnamese contains many foreign words from Chinese (Alves, 2007). Sino-Vietnamese (Hán-Việt) words are derived from Chinese words put within the context of the Vietnamese Latin alphabet: For example the Vietnamese term *Ái Quốc*, meaning patriot, is derived from the Chinese words *Ái* (Love) and *Quốc* (Country).

The Vietnamese alphabet consists of twenty-nine letters, seventeen consonants and twelve vowels. Vietnamese distinguishes itself through a wide array of diacritic marks that indicate subtleties of the spoken language: unmarked tone, acute, grave, hook above, tilde, underdot, dyet, circumflex, breve and horn (Fig. 2). These diacritic articulations are at the core of the Vietnamese writing system. While many other languages also use diacritics, Vietnamese diacritics are often unique in form and also far more heavily relied on than in other languages (Truong, 2016). In written Vietnamese the meaning of words and sentences change drastically from letter to letter, and word to word. In addition, the different sets and significant numbers of combinations of diacritics yield very different sets of meaning. Considering all this it is easy to understand how the diacritic system plays a crucial role in the development of this project. Without these additives, Vietnamese it not Vietnamese. Such differentiation could be seen from simple words such as *cá* (fish), *cà* (tomato) and *cà* (to rub). In this context, “*Type is the manifestation of the language*” (Cheng, 2005).



**Fig. 2.** Vietnamese diacritic marks. First column from the top: Unmarked tone, acute, grave, hook above and dyet. Second column: Underdot, tilde, circumflex, breve and horn.



Aa Ăă Ââ Bb Cc  
Dd Đđ Ee Êê Gg  
Hh Ii Kk Ll Mm  
Nn Oo Ôô Ơơ Pp  
Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Ưư  
Vv Xx Yy

**Fig. 3.** Romanized Vietnamese  
Alphabet with some diacritics

Preliminary research into Vietnamese typography yielded valuable information. As modern Vietnamese typography springs from Latin script and only came into significant use as such in the beginning of the 20th century, I chose to focus on the period between the twentieth-century and early twentieth-first century. Generally, this period of time can be categorized into two sections: pre-1975 and post-1975. Pre-1975, Vietnam was heavily influenced by French culture, with the expansion of hand-painted signage, printed propaganda posters, and newspapers using international typefaces. Post-1975, Vietnam is signified by the collapse of Saigon, leading to the total liberation of the country and beyond. In the period subsequent to 1975 the new regime's political stances obscured the continuity of the earlier European influences on typography in the Vietnamese landscape. As a consequence, contemporary Vietnamese typography has not retained the earlier style. Rather than that, digitized and international (non-Vietnamese specific) typefaces are most commonly used. Some of the rare samples of modern Vietnamese typefaces are ones that draw on retro inspirations - namely hand-painted letterings, as a way to preserve the long fading typographic style of the pre-1975 period (Saigoneer, 2016).

My impetus for designing a typeface came from the scarcity of supporting typefaces for Vietnamese language. In his interview with TypeThursday, Donny Truong confirmed his frustrations regarding this matter (TypeThursday, 2016). This statement is in line with my own personal experience as a working designer in Vietnam. Looking at the several Vietnamese texts, what I found was popular typefaces in most circumstances have been modified to support Vietnamese language such as Arial, Helvetica, Times or any default fonts. Upon a close examination of Fontchu, Vietnam's largest font distributor with an extensive of over two thousand Vietnamese fonts (Fontchu, n.d.), most of them fell into this category. Regardless of the efforts of the translators to create glyphs for individual letters, it is difficult to find relevant visual reference and connection to Vietnamese culture.

Truong further inquired that *“Vietnamese has been Romanized and most of its letters are the same as the Latin, how come most typefaces do not support its characters?”* (2016). Another consideration worth noting: while a few Vietnamese specific typefaces are available, many of these have been neglecting to incorporate the Vietnamese diacritic marks as part of the design (TypeThursday, 2016). There are two factors which contribute to these issues. Firstly, the lack of awareness amongst the Vietnamese designers of font choices. It is highly likely that many of them do not differentiate or pay attention to specific types of fonts and probably opt for the default, pre-installed fonts that come with Windows or Mac operating systems. Secondly, there is lack of formal training options for designers interested in type design in Vietnam. Despite my extensive research, I could not find a formal type design program in Vietnam. Most Vietnamese typographers and type designers are self-taught based on their working experience. Although the scope of my research concentrated on process of developing the typeface in cultural space and does not include these factors, I would like to address them in the next stages of the development.





**Fig. 4.** Granville island entrance  
(Photographed by Truong  
Nguyen, 2016)

## Typographic landscape exploration

Early on in my Master studies I instigated a series of photos of Vietnamese and English signages around Vancouver as a means to open up insights. The photos were taken in three weeks non-consecutively. I began this survey starting with the area around Granville Island, Vancouver (Fig. 4). In the second week of this photographic journey, I increased my radius, and began exploring Downtown Vancouver. For the third week, I shifted my focus to Vancouver's Vietnamese community area located along Kingsway Street. The main purpose for these expeditions was to assess the typographic differences in these culturally rich areas.



**Fig. 5.** Signage on Granville Island  
(Photographed by Truong Nguyen, 2016)



**Fig. 6.** Signage on Granville Island  
(Photographed by Truong Nguyen, 2016)



**Fig. 7.** Signage on Granville Island  
(Photographed by Truong Nguyen, 2016)

In his paper on graphic ideologies, Jürgen Spitzmüller (Social Semiotic, 2015) notes that *“Typographic landscapes consist of emplaced and inter-semiotically linked typographic forms: typography connected to other semiotic artefacts and a particular location, which itself is loaded with ascriptions.”*

It can be inferred that when typography interacts with a specific location under a specific form, the meaning can be understood in a particular and local way. This can be testified by the result of my exploration. I noticed some differences between the signage I found in the three locations. A number of the signages on Granville Island is hand-painted (Fig. 6), more playful and expressive. Meanwhile, the ones in Vancouver’s downtowns business area, in contrast, lack that kind of playfulness. Instead, they are more formal, some of them also feature delicate decorations which were not found in the other two areas (Fig. 8). Upon close examination, signage on the Kingsway provides a totally different kind of feeling. These signs are more practical in which they focus less on the visual aesthetics but more on the information they provide. For example, some of them try to fit in the phone number, logo, and specialties in two or three different languages in one single signboard. This makes the signage cluttered but also effective in conveying key information. In addition, There is less differentiation between signs – they look very similar to each other. These signages are also almost always bilingual or trilingual (Vietnamese and Chinese or English) and often appear at small independently family owned restaurants and shops (Fig.12). My three-week study clarified that local signage within the context of Vancouver is influenced by several sets of underlying cultural contexts (Kingsway Street, one of the largest Vietnamese community in Vancouver), set up by the forms they were made (hand-painted or printed on acrylic boards) and utilizes a wide array of different kinds of typefaces. There were, thus, more opportunities to further seek out appropriate cultural images to situate my own design work. In addition, consideration of the bilingual characteristic of signage in a Vietnamese context is something necessary for future cultural circulation of my typeface.





**Fig. 8.** Embossment outside of a building, downtown.  
*(Photographed by Truong Nguyen, 2016)*



**Fig. 9.** Building with the texts "Lying on top of the building", downtown.  
*(Photographed by Truong Nguyen, 2016)*



**Fig. 10.** Signage on  
Kingsway Street  
(Photographed by  
Truong Nguyen, 2016)



**Fig. 11.** Signage on  
Kingsway Street  
(Photographed by  
Truong Nguyen,  
2016)



**Fig. 12.** Signage on  
Kingsway Street  
(Photographed by  
Truong Nguyen,  
2016)

# STUDIO PROTOTYPING

In the first year of my study, I spent most of my time exploring through different sets of making in the studio context. This section will detail a series of studio prototypes conducted during the course of my studies. These explorative prototypes provided me hands-on practice and also addressed some of the broader interests I had which is related to Vietnamese culture. While they were not directly connected to iterative development of my final design, they certainly contributed essential insights to the framework that shaped my design's directions and deliverables.



# Typographic linocut



**Fig. 13.** Texts carved on lino board  
(Photographed by Truong Nguyen, 2017)

My foray into typographic linocut work was informed by my previous exploration around Vancouver (see the above section). I tried to understand the significance of putting designed linocut letterforms into different contexts and to use this as a means to observe changes in how the way letters were viewed and subsequently given associated meanings. Having not worked on linocuts previously, I found plunging into this unfamiliar practice of making a challenge. The time-consuming process of carving and technical imperfection of the result informed me of how traditional letterforms were constructed and also how those forms influenced my visual perception. I chose the words *“The invisible types”* as a reference back to my own view of typography and Vietnamese culture - as a person who had been immersed in Vietnamese traditional tales and stories. Those stories were mingled with my inner-self and formulated me into who I am – almost unconsciously.

There were three components for this practice: The word with additional decorations (Fig. 15), the word with deformed letters (Fig. 15) and finally the translated Vietnamese version of the letters (Fig. 16).

## Insights and reflections

Exchanging feedbacks with my peers revealed several unexpected outcomes:

The texts with additional decorations: While they appreciate the aesthetics of the design, there were a lot of additional details that distracted their attention.

The texts with more deformed letters: Although there were fewer details here, the deformed letters brought out difficulties. My peers were unable to relate or think of any specific culture context to the forms I had created. There is a high probability that the visual aspect of the letters overwrote any significant meaning it might provide.

*The last prototype was the same text in Vietnamese (Chữ vô hình), created based on typeface Posterama, a series of sans serif, geometric typefaces, and “inspired by events, movements and typography of the 20th century” with “a softness reminiscent of letterpress, phototype and other forms of printing” (Monotype, n.d.). This is the least deformed version; some of the viewers even recognized the forms of the letters although they did not know what typeface has been used. What I learned from this practice is that the more I tried to stylize a set of letters, the more difficult it becomes to create a relationship with the meaning I want to imbue. I came to realize the importance of attaining a balance between the need for modification of the shape of the letterforms and keeping their familiar aspects – all with the goal of imbuing them with a culturally relevant quality.*



**Fig. 14.** Imprinting the words onto linocutting board using transfer paper.  
(Photographed by Truong Nguyen, 2017)



**Fig. 15.** Printed texts on artboards. On the left is the deformed texts and the right is the texts with decorations  
(Photographed by Truong Nguyen, 2017)



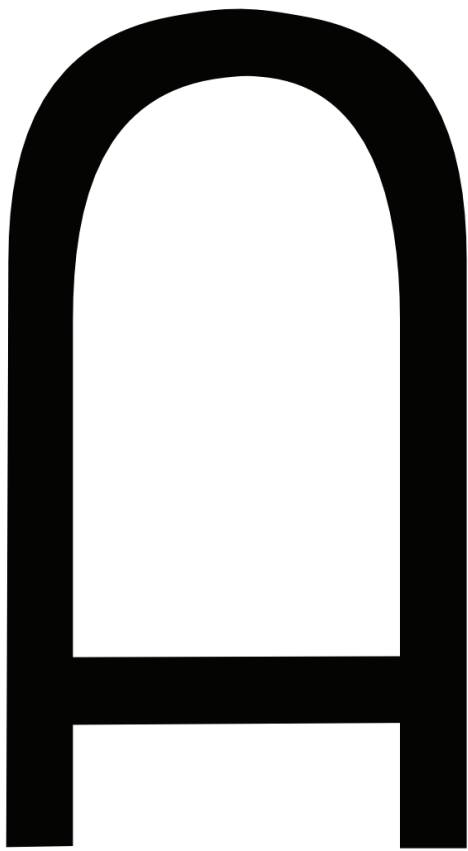
**Fig. 16.** Printed texts on artboards. Chữ Vô Hình, the translated Vietnamese version of the word "Invisible type".  
(Photographed by Truong Nguyen, 2017)



## Prototype Typeface: Ben Thanh Market



**Fig. 17.** Ben Thanh Market. Northern Gate (Cửa Bắc).  
(Photographed by *Truong Nguyen & Van Nguyen*, 2013)



**Fig. 18.** Letter “a”. Part of Ben Thanh Market typeface

Based on insights from the previous practices, the experiment described below was an attempt to challenge myself to create a prototype typeface based on a symbolic location. The work was to address both historical or cultural backgrounds of the site. Influenced by my personal experience and the selection criteria I had set, I chose Ho Chi Minh City, my birthplace and also known dearly by most residents by its previous name “Saigon”.

The symbolic location I chose was Ben Thanh Market. This market is one of the biggest and oldest markets in Saigon. Ben Thanh Market is the mixture of the entire city’s surroundings: busy, chaotic and uplifting. It also reflects the city’s history of more than 300 years, carried over from the previous colonial period.

One of the most notable features of this location are the customized names of the 4 gates: Eastern Gate (Cửa đông), Western Gate (Cửa tây), Southern Gate (Cửa nam) and Northern Gate (Cửa bắc) (Fig. 17). A closer examination reveals the Art Deco style influenced by the French throughout the body of work. Curiously, I began my work by studying and reproducing the structure of the letterforms of the typeface used for these gates. I was interested in the curves, the odd shapes and how they form words. However, the more time I spent on this practice of reproduction, the more I deviated from the original forms of the letters on the gates. Intuitively, I seemed to be trying to fit the shapes and forms of the letters to a different set of expectations - to be less ‘crude’ and more conventional, mindful of the legibility. I imagined how my revised versions might look like within the contexts of a book or a poster - how I might situate them within other graphic elements. Pouring my own personal preferences and contemporary context into the design reshaped them. In other words, I had participated in an act of medication and reinterpretation.

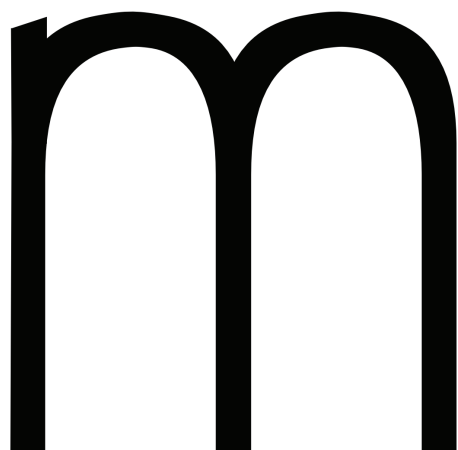


### **Insights and reflections**

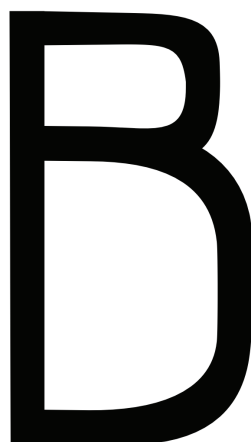
As I continue working, I realized that my own development of a typeface in response to the earlier precedent (the gate signes) was hindered due to other external circumstances:

Firstly, I was faced with navigating through a myriad of different interpretations of the hand-painted letterings. I was not able to locate secondary sources of information regarding the origin of the hand-letterings I was so interested in. While these have part of Ben Thanh Market since I can remember there seemed to be no record of their origin. It was this point that I realized that these signages were not what represented Ben Thanh Market the most wholesome. They are part of Ben Thanh Market now, but they were not created at the same time as the market itself. What I created was not made up from the essence of Ben Thanh Market's cultural identity but the signage which share only a part of the market's culture.

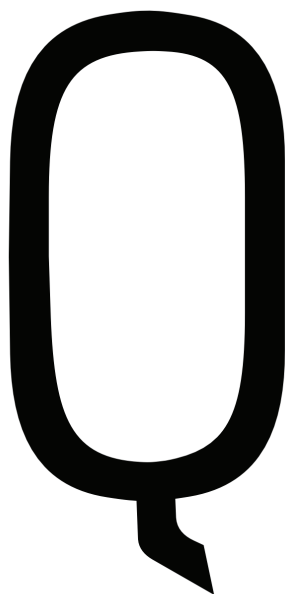
Secondly, although the diacritic marks were considered a part of the typographic system used for the design, there is a high degree of difficulty to apply them across all letters as the number of letters augmented. The hand-painted signs took an approach that had the diacritic marks molded directly into the letters (as opposed to sitting above or below) which caused the letters with diacritic marks lower than other characters, resulted in the collapse of balanced structure in longer texts (Fig. 22 ).

A large, bold, black lowercase letter 'm' from the Ben Thanh Market typeface. The letter has a thick, rounded top and a straight vertical stem.

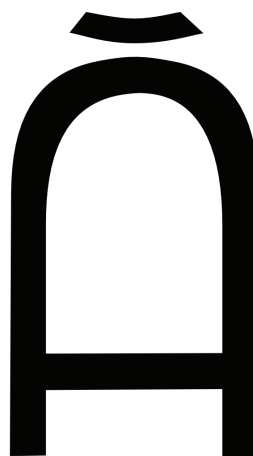
**Fig. 19.** Letter “m”. Part of Ben Thanh Market typeface

A large, bold, black uppercase letter 'B' from the Ben Thanh Market typeface. The letter has a thick, rounded top and a straight vertical stem.

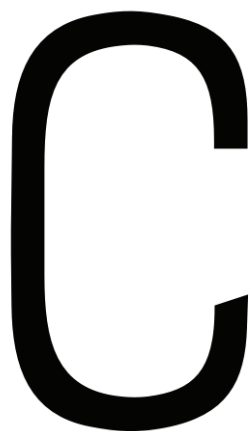
**Fig. 20.** Letter “b”. Part of Ben Thanh Market typeface

A large, bold, black lowercase letter 'q' from the Ben Thanh Market typeface. The letter has a thick, rounded top and a straight vertical stem, ending in a small, sharp, downward-pointing tail.

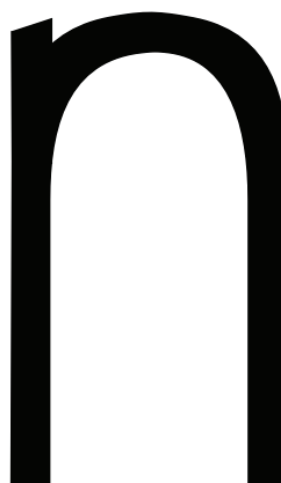
**Fig. 21.** Letter “q”. Part of Ben Thanh Market typeface

A large, bold, black uppercase letter 'A' from the Ben Thanh Market typeface, featuring a lower breve mark (a small, curved line) above the letter. The letter has a thick, rounded top and a straight vertical stem.

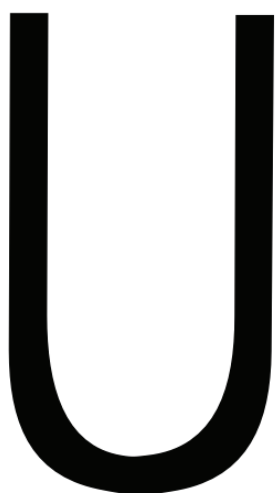
**Fig. 22.** Letter “ä” with a lower breve mark. Part of Ben Thanh Market typeface



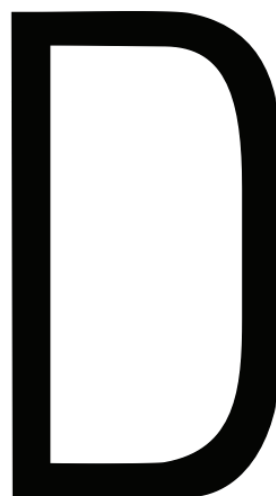
**Fig. 23.** Letter “c”. Part of Ben Thanh Market typeface



**Fig. 24.** Letter “n”. Part of Ben Thanh Market typeface



**Fig. 25.** Letter “u”. Part of Ben Thanh Market typeface



**Fig. 26.** Letter “d”. Part of Ben Thanh Market typeface

## Prototype Vietnamese house: Searching for the Vietnamese cultural symbols

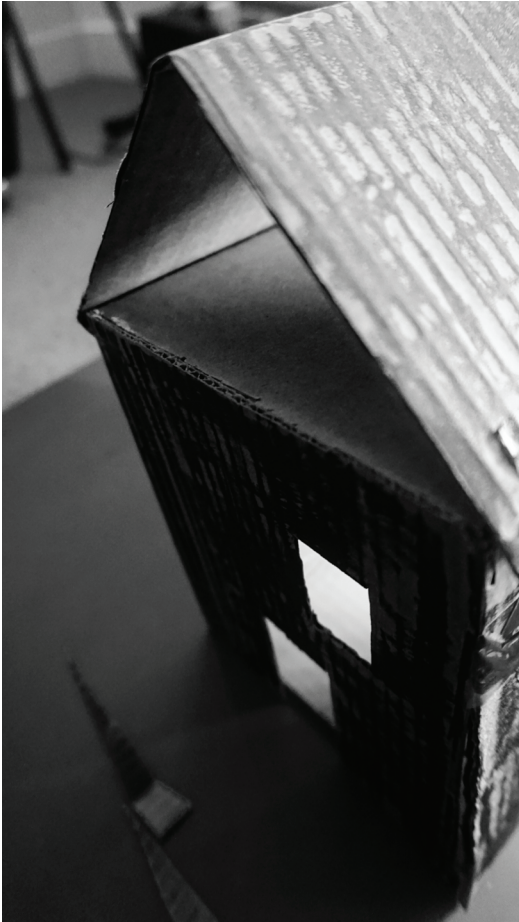
*"A cultural symbol is a physical manifestation that signifies the ideology of a particular culture or that merely has meaning within a culture. What is culture, you may ask? Culture is an accumulation of the beliefs, traditions, language and values of a particular group of people." (Cultural Symbol: Definition & Examples - Video & Lesson Transcript, n.d.)*

In this studio practice, I tried to assimilate the Vietnamese diacritic marks with closely resemble images of a Vietnamese cultural symbol: the Vietnamese traditional rural house.

Images of simple, mundane objects can have significant meanings under different contexts. The initial conception of a house and the rice paddy field represent the backbone of the Vietnamese countryside's picture:

*"As well as being somewhere to eat, entertain and sleep, a stilt house is where a family worships its ancestors and works at tasks like weaving and embroidery." (Vietnamese Culture, 2014)*

In that rurality, the stilt house is a symbol of families and ancestors (tổ tiên). The house (nhà) does not only mean physical body of materials, but also the "home" (tổ ấm), attachments and belongings. In Vietnamese tradition, this concept even transcended: the house signifies the lives dwelling in it, the soul of Vietnamese people and their lifestyle rooted in wet-rice cultivation culture.



**Fig. 27.** Low-fidelity mock-up of the Vietnamese house.

*(Photographed by Truong Nguyen, 2017)*



**Fig. 28.** Association between diacritic marks and the features of the house.

*(Photographed by Truong Nguyen, 2017)*

I constructed a low-fidelity house prototype based on those concepts. The house was made by cardboards, loosely incorporated features based on a typical rural Vietnamese house's image. I took inspirations from the triangle shape of the gable roof, the location of the window and door are situated as part of the entire structure and the paddy field which is frequently present in Vietnamese traditional literature. The features of the house left a strong impression in my mind, which I incidentally began to deconstruct and associate them with the Vietnamese diacritic marks I am so familiar with (Fig. 28).

### **Insights and reflections**

Ultimately, this experiment has been pivotal in narrowing down the scope of my investigation. Beside looking for objects or locations of cultural significances, more considerations should be given to the shapes and forms. Moreover, the cultural symbol I was anticipating needs to be specified in how interrelated their characteristics were and in what way they might inform the design.

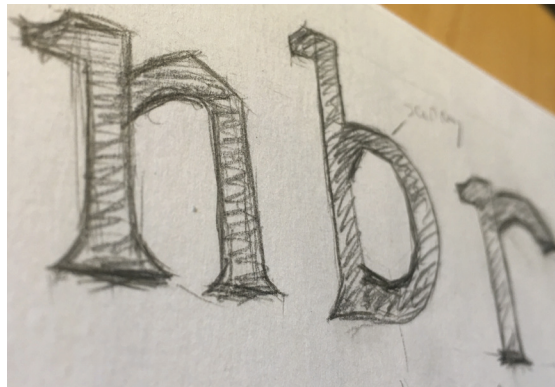
# TRE VIỆT TYPEFACE DEVELOPMENT

The studio practices I have taken on have provided me with significant insights. In particular, the prototypical typeface and visual contextualization of a house detailed in the section above made me reconsider the research direction. In this section, the research entails a dynamic process of conversations, feedbacks and reflections going back and forth between my supervisor and me, whereas insights are obtained from the expert and used for decision-making during iterations.

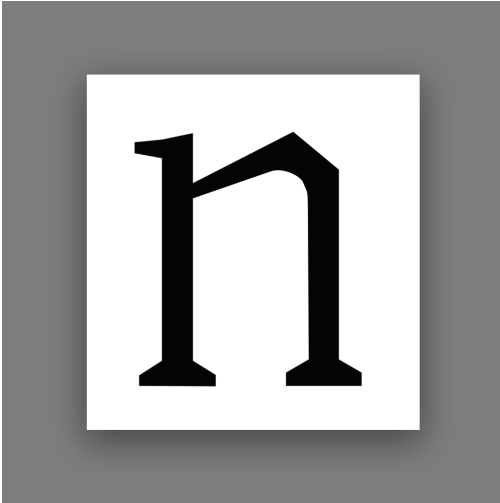
## First iteration

Based on the insights set out by the previous explorations and my own experience immersed in Vietnamese culture, I identified bamboo as a cultural symbol to build upon. I decided to use it in my construction and development of a new typeface: Tre Việt. Bamboo is a flexible material and *“an emblem of the Vietnamese countryside being closely associated with Vietnamese people’s life”* (VOV5, 2012). For the Vietnamese it symbolizes the vitality and tenacity of our people. In his paper “Cultural symbols and Cultural power” (2016), Lizardo states that a cultural symbol consists of two components: the cognitive meaning and the external form, whereas both of them are interrelated. He further explains that the external form of a cultural symbol should be considered as the key characteristic to be observed, in turns serves as a prompt for meaning construction. It could be stated that the bamboo’s physical form represents the distinct features which set it apart from other kinds of plants and act as a meaning interpreter in specific contexts - in this case the Vietnamese culture. Its exterior structure exerts both the sharpness and flexibility of the movements which is in line with the visual image of my typeface.

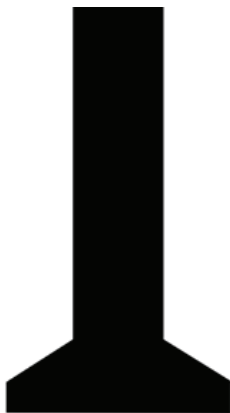
During summer 2017, sketching served as my means to initially ideating the foundation for Tre Việt. In his essay on typography and writing, Gerrit Noordzij describes the stroke as a “basic element in writing instead of letters or characters” (Letterletter, 2000). Building on this notion, I tried to allow my own pen strokes to be informed by the visual image of the bamboo.



**Fig. 29.** First sketch of letter n, b, r.  
(Photographed by Truong Nguyen,  
2017)



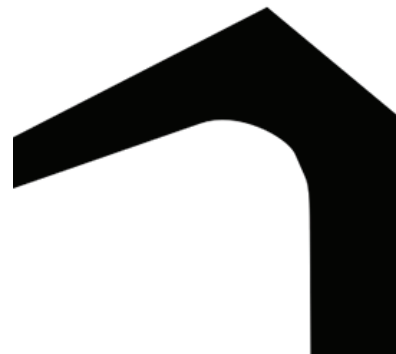
**Fig. 30.** First draft of letter “n”. There is less contrast between the thinnest part and thickest part of the stroke.



**Fig. 31.** First draft of letter n. The serif part at the foot of the letter.

I paid attention to the varying thicknesses of the strokes I made to form a solid basic letter forms. I tried to control this variation of thickness in a proportional way – evening the thinner parts out as they led into the thicker parts. Doing this, however, caused some letters to lose their distinct and inviting characteristics (Fig. 29). I realized that I have been too restrictive in how I visualized the forms of the letters. Playing too safe has instead backfired on what I wanted to do initially.

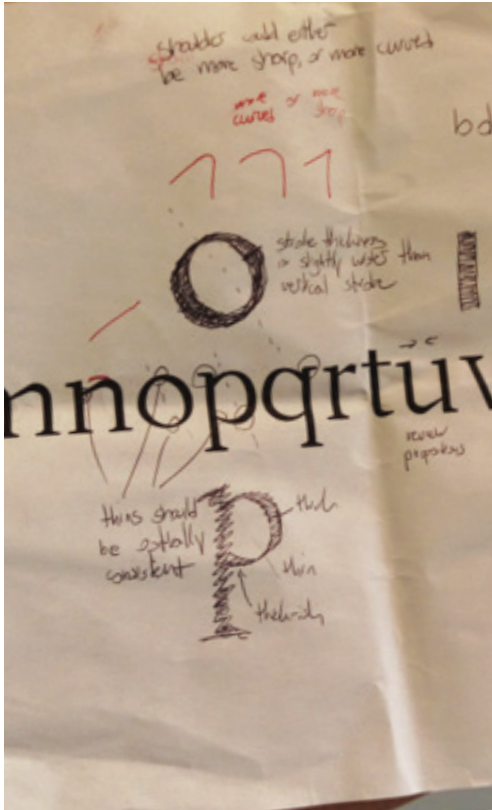
After the initial sketching stage, I moved to digitalize my work using Glyphs, a type manufacturing software. Concurrently, I further developed my type forms based on feedbacks and discussions with my supervisor. My first draft heavily emphasized the calligraphic nature of the letters and served as the foundation for the design. At this point, I realized that the moment I began to incorporate more cultural implications to the letters, the calligraphic foundation also became less apparent. A good example of this can be demonstrated in my development of the lower case “n” (Fig. 30). Within all of the letterforms there were two sites where I intended to implement from bamboo: in the serifs and also along the exterior edge of the letter form. As I implemented this tactic to my letterforms, they looked less calligraphy-like and became a new form that was much more similar to the original ideation I had done by hand on paper. However, as I applied the sharpness characteristics of the bamboo's exterior, the overall shape of the letter became much bulkier (Fig. 31-32).



**Fig. 32.** First draft of letter n. Sharp-looking exterior.



## Second iteration



**Fig. 33.** Notes from feedbacks with the typographer.  
(Photographed by Truong Nguyen, 2017)

In my second iteration, I selectively developed letters that had distinctive strokes and could be used for the development of other characters. I made deliberate adjustments and was conscious of my use of high contrast between thick and thin strokes. As with earlier iterations, I faced with the difficulty of harmoniously creating distinct features prominent across all letters. Feedback from Kenneth Ormandy, a typography expert made me realize that it was important to not overdo the number of symbolic features I would like to implement to the design. Overemphasizing the distinction between individual letters resulted in more struggles to retain the consistency. I was also encouraged to consider the possibility inherent in the negative spaces of the character. It was then pointed out that the white space within the interior of the character (the counter) needed to be fairly uniformed in order to avoid an “out-of-place” occurrence when different letter combinations were put together to create words. The result is some letters might look bolder than others when putting together in the same sentence or line.

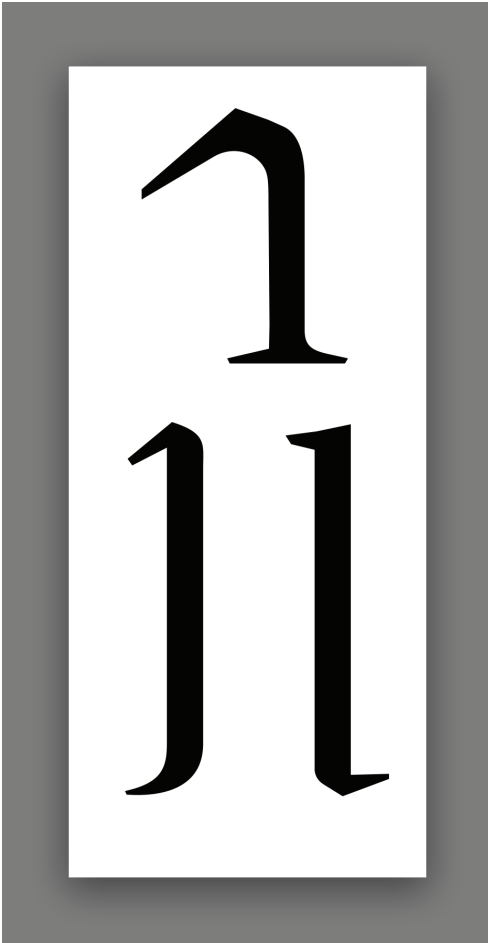
Based on earlier insights I removed some of the sharpness and the letters became remarkably more refined: the top of the “n” became less sharp, some of the corners of the letter-forms were tuned to be more rounded. Yet again, however, they looked less distinct (Fig. 34). I intuitively tried to stay away from the consistency problem, but at the same time, limited the potential spaces I could have explored. Through these developments I grew to understand the role of balance and consistency in creating a typeface, and the aspects that need to be considered in order to achieve this.



n o p d r f

**Fig. 34.** Letter n, o, p, d, r and f were developed first because their strokes can be used to create other letters. Removal of the sharpness caused the overall look too refined.

## Final iteration

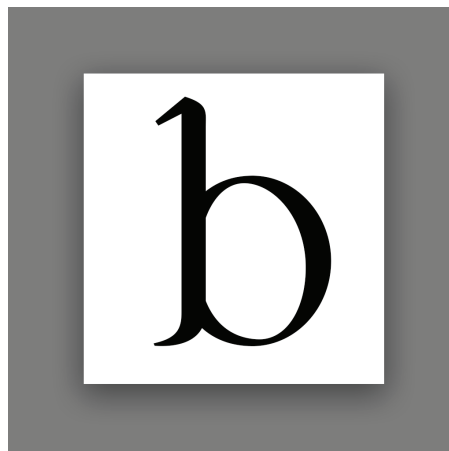


**Fig. 35.** Strokes from letter n, j and d.

The approach I took towards my final, most recent iteration was to create balance and consistency between letters without compromising the key characteristics taken from the bamboo's exterior feature. For that purpose, the first distinction I created was a very thin, long serif in order to counter-balance the prominent sharpness of the letters, which were applied consistently across all letterforms. Such sharpness characteristics can be noticed in most letters. For example, the top of letter “n”, “m”, or the serifs of letter “d”, “p”, “q”. It also conveyed a sense of ‘hand’ - of less control and precision and moved the letter form to convey a more vernacular visual language.

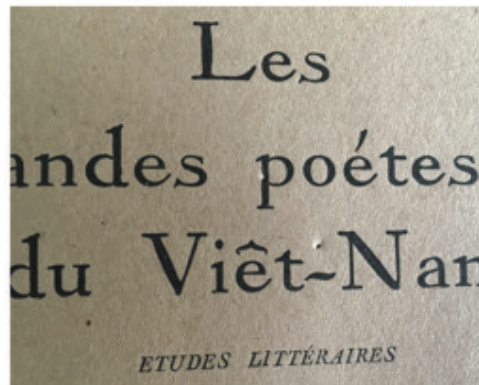
In the case of the lowercase “n”, which contained two strokes, the gestures of these marks are more abrupt: part of the stroke is rounded while the other parts are much sharper (Fig. 35). In the case of the letter “b” and other similar shaped letters, their strokes also relied on similar distinction: the upper serif is sharp while the lower one is more rounded (Fig. 36). As a result, the letters became fairly balanced.

Considerations were also given to the sharpness of the outer stroke and smoothness of the inner one (Fig. 36). Such contrasts represented Vietnamese characteristics (also reflected in bamboo as a symbol): endurance (*kiên cường*), flexibility (*dẻo dai*), the weak and the strong.



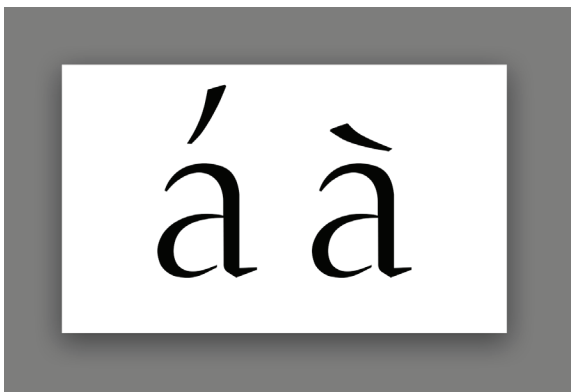
**Fig. 36.** Letter b with contrasting serifs: The upper one is sharp while the lower one is more rounded

## Considerations for the diacritic system



**Fig. 37-38.** Classic literatures with some details on the unusual shapes of the letters and diacritic marks. In picture: high rising acute, e and s with long extensions.

(Photographed by Phan Dao, 2017)

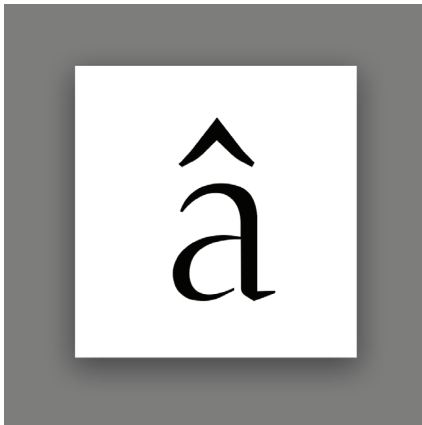


**Fig. 39.** Sample diacritic marks. High-rising acute, low-rising grave.

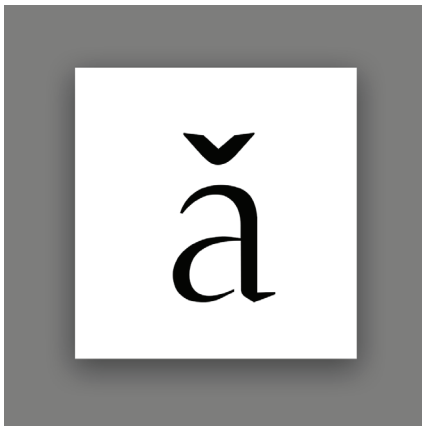
Vietnamese has a wide range of diacritic marks: unmarked tone, acute, grave, hook above, tilde, underdot, dyet, circumflex, breve and horn, which have been introduced in figure 2 from the 'Vietnamese language and modern Vietnamese history' section. This section aims to expand more on the diacritic system of Tre Việt, with the exception of the unmarked tone which consists of letters without any additional mark.

*"The design of diacritical marks, and their seamless integration into the typeface, is crucial in making Vietnamese writing clear and legible. The marks must be consistent in the entire font system to create uninterrupted flow of text."* (Truong, 2016)

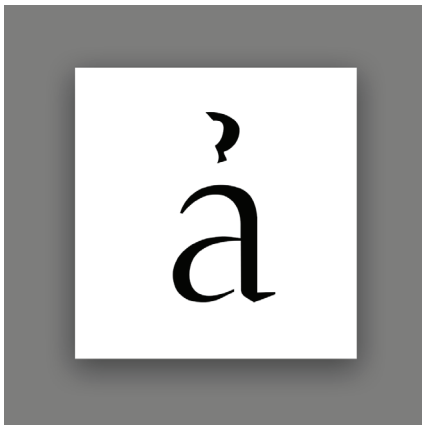
Understanding the importance of the diacritic marks to Vietnamese letters, I have been mindful in keeping the diacritic system consistent with the rest of the letterforms. The diacritic marks for Tre Việt drew inspiration from Vietnam's pre 1975 period. Upon studying some classical literatures from that time, I noticed they made use of some unusual letterforms and diacritic marks. Figure 37-38 shows sample texts from the collection of famous Vietnamese poets which dated back to the 1950. In the case, the 'acute' in these classical texts often raises much higher than the 'grave', standing tall, making it very distinct, recognizable and infuses a vernacular quality when combined with various letterforms. This distinguishes itself to more frequently seen typefaces where the 'grave' in these texts is almost a reflection of the 'acute' symmetrically. Further investigation in this space reveals that these literature texts incorporate calligraphic features (Diacritics, n.d.). Therefore, their 'acute' and 'grave' do not need to be a mirror image of each other. Keeping this knowledge in mind, I created the 'acute' and 'grave' with distinct shapes and position in order to enhance the harmony between letters (Fig. 39).



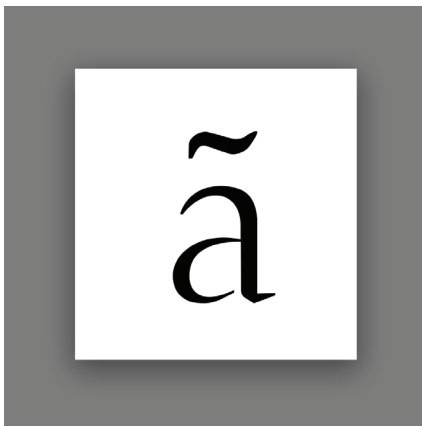
**Fig. 40.**  
Letter a  
with the  
'circum-  
flex'



**Fig. 41.**  
Letter a  
with the  
'breve'



**Fig. 42.**  
Letter a  
with the  
'hook  
above'

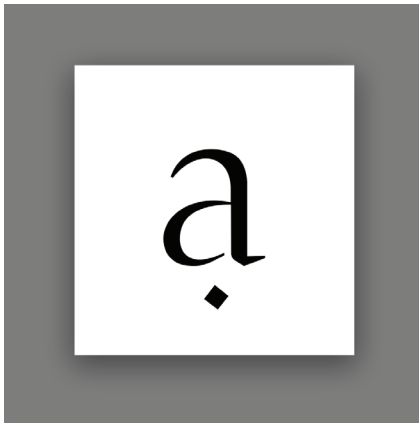


**Fig. 43.**  
Letter a  
with the  
'tilde'

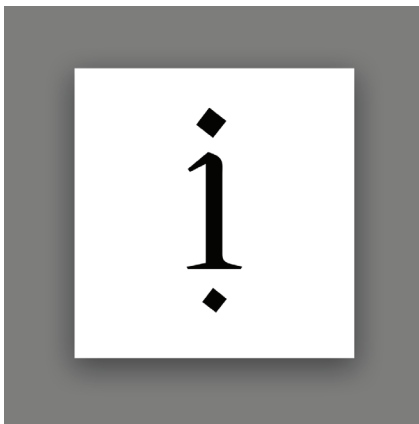
Similarly, the shapes of the 'circumflex' (Fig. 40) and the 'breve' (Fig. 41) are also different, whereas I instinctively created the 'circumflex' with a sharp and pointy top, inspired by the image of the Vietnamese traditional house's gable roof. The 'breve', on the other hand, was created as a sharp contrast to the 'circumflex' by making it thicker and rounder. The intention behind the the rounder bottom of the 'breve' is to prevent visually conflict with the letterforms it belongs to that are usually curvy.

Unlike the pairing of 'acute' and 'grave' or 'circumflex' and 'tilde', the 'hook above' (Fig. 42) and the 'tilde' (Fig. 43) do not share any common feature. The 'hook above' was created based on calligraphic stroke and intended to not resemble a question mark. On the other hand, the 'tilde' was made using a single calligraphic stroke with uneven curves to invite a vernacular feeling.

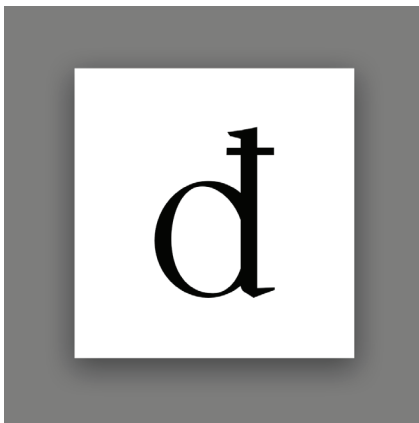
The 'underdot' (Fig. 44) is usually identical to the period and placed directly under the letter. However, in the case of Tre Việt, the 'underdot' was shaped as a square. The purpose for this significant change is to align the harmony look with the rest of the letters. The sharpness represents the exterior feature of the bamboo. In consideration of letters with 'tittles' (the little dot on top of the lower case i and j), the 'underdot' is slightly smaller than those 'tittles' to differentiate between these two marks (Fig. 45). Another reason to create a small 'underdot' is to avoid clashing with the line directly below the texts, whereas lines with 'acute' or 'circumflex' might rise too high.



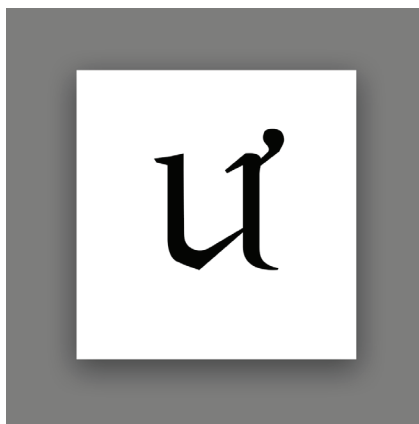
**Fig. 44.**  
Letter a  
with the  
'underdot'



**Fig. 45.**  
Letter i  
with the  
'underdot'



**Fig. 46.**  
Letter d  
with the  
'dyet'



**Fig. 47.**  
Letter u  
with the  
'horn'

The last two diacritic marks are the 'dyet' and 'horn' (Fig. 46 & 47). These marks are special in which they only appear in very limited letters: the 'horn' is only used for letter u and o, while the 'dyet' is for letter 'd'. The 'dyet' is one of the easier marks to make as it only contains one single line. However, I had to make sure it does not stay too close to the serif on top of letter 'd'.

The difficulty in developing the 'horn' is that I had to pay attention to how it integrates in a harmonious way to the rest of the letters. As there are multiple combinations for Vietnamese characters, I had to make sure the 'horn' does not interfere with those combinations. An example is the word 'hứa' (promise). There is the combination of the 'acute' and 'horn' within the word. The 'horn' needs to be balanced in a way that it stands out enough to ensure it is recognizable but also needs to be appropriate in size so that it does not overwhelm other diacritic marks within the word.

One of the most difficult problems encountered by type designer in developing Vietnamese diacritic marks is the sheer number of combinations. Hannas notes that *"the system 'piles up' so many diacritics that the syllabic units on which they are based seem almost as complicated as Chinese characters"* (Hannas, 1997). There are so many combinations of diacritics and letters to create different words that they often end up being in visual conflict with one another. In addition, some letter forms require different positioning of the diacritic marks' themselves on the letterform. This variance of position means that even for a single diacritic form, adjustments need to be designed and considered in relation to the individual letters themselves. Some sample combinations of the diacritic marks are illustrated in (Fig. 48-50) below.



mực

**Fig. 48.** The word 'mực'  
(ink)



phiền

**Fig. 49.** The word 'phiền'  
(bothersome)



hùng hực

**Fig. 50.** The word 'hùng  
hực' (fiery)

# FINAL OUTCOMES

After several months of ongoing testing and refinement in-between the three iterations mentioned in the previous section, constant feedbacks and insight exchanges resulted in the final deliverables, which consist of a specimen of lower case and upper case, along with the diacritic glyphs in regular weight. In addition, there are several mock-up applications to compliment the typeface. The full details of letters can be found in the appendix.



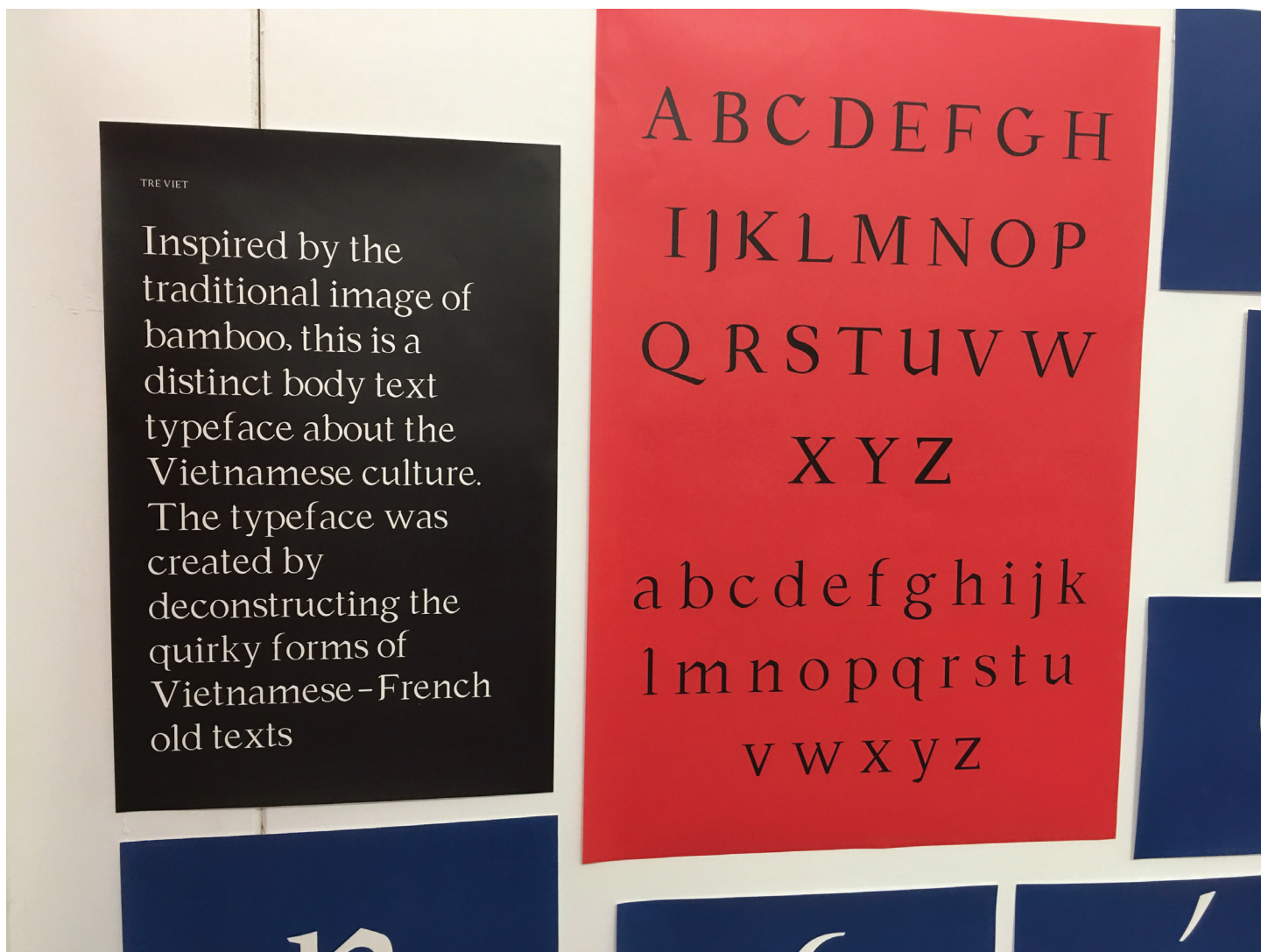
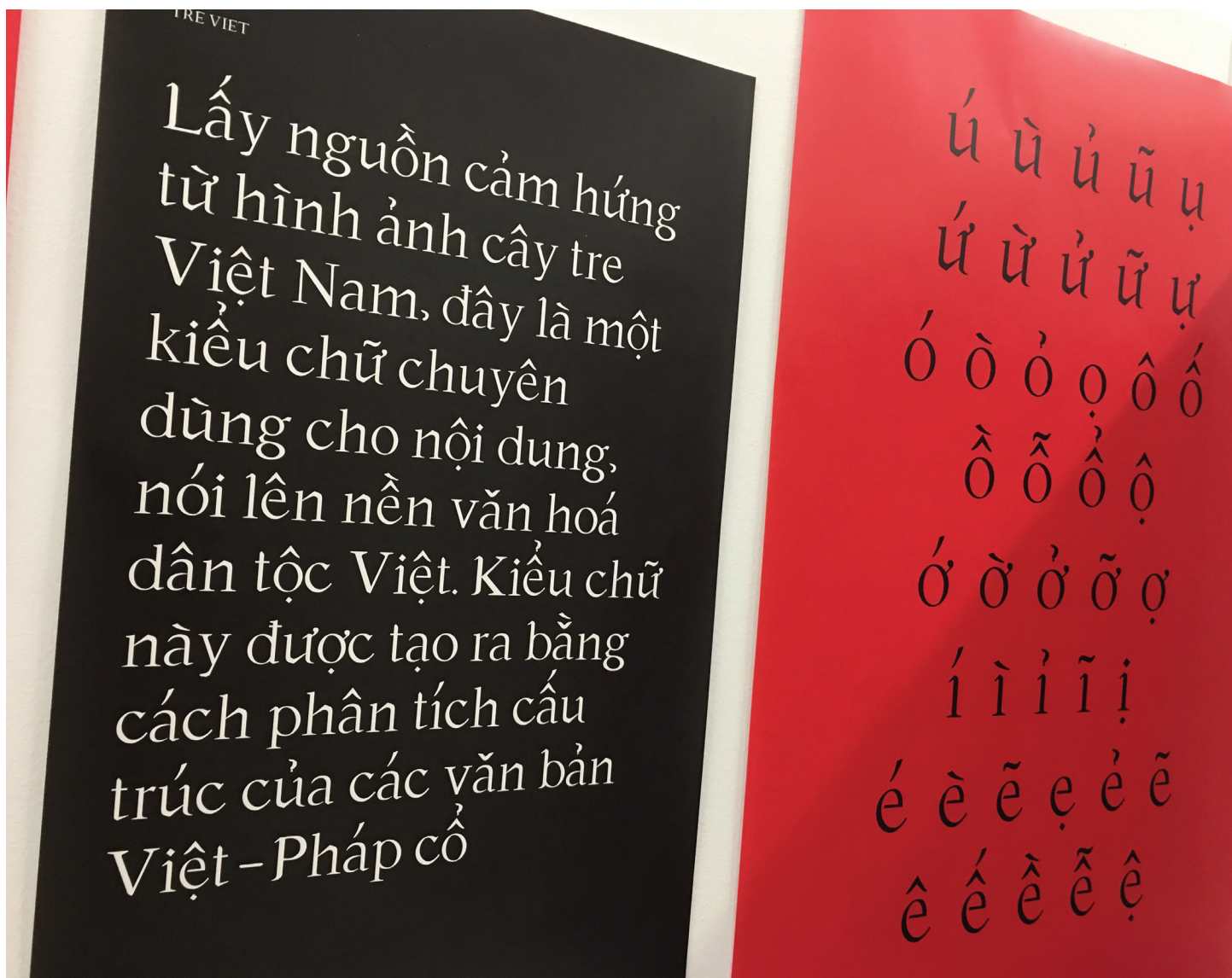


Fig. 51. Type specimen. Posters of the alphabet and introduction to Tre Việt typeface in English





**Fig. 52.** Typographic poster. An introduction to Tre Việt in Vietnamese.  
(Photo was taken by *Truong Nguyen*, 2017).



## Specimen: lower case



**Fig. 53.** Type specimen.  
Lower case set



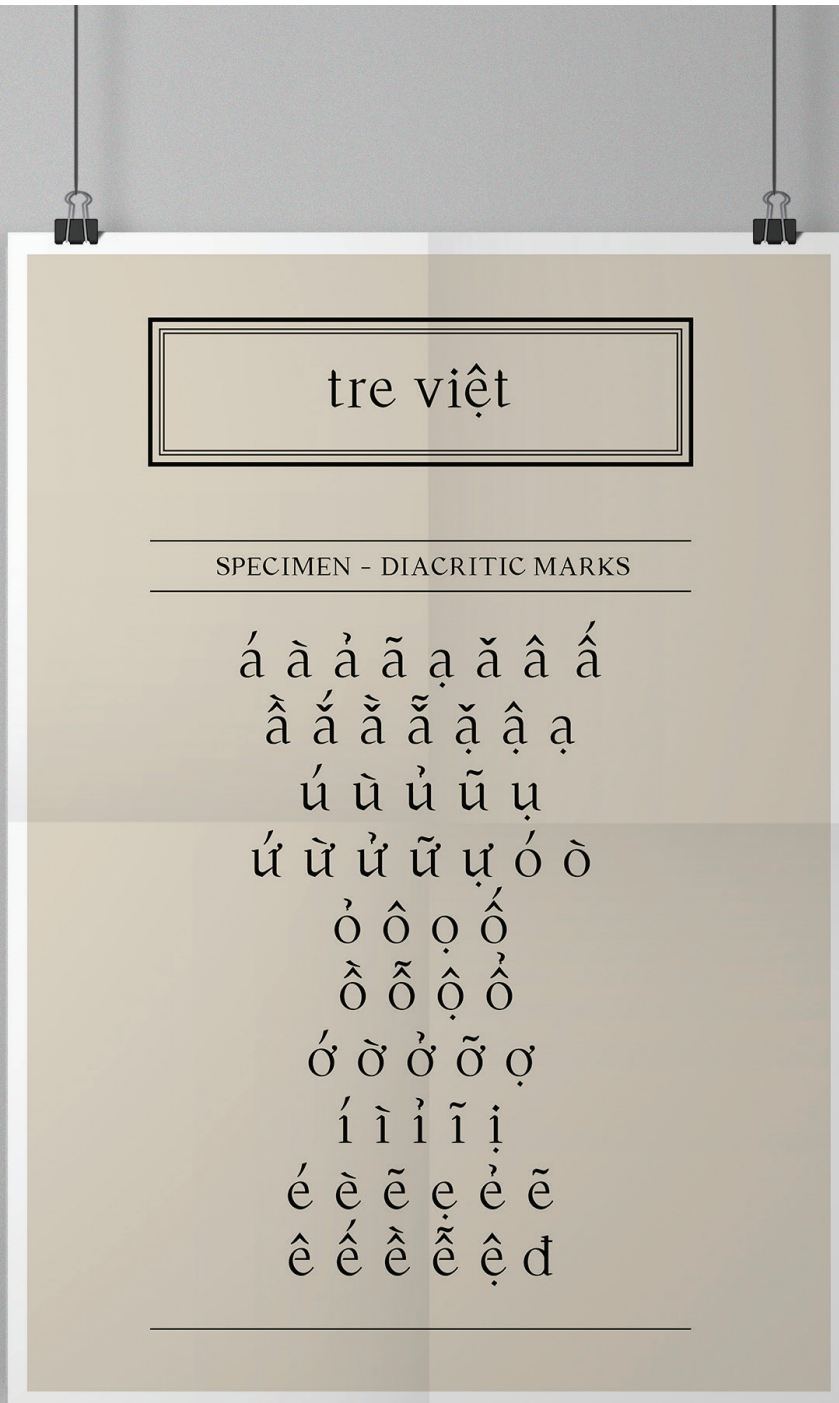
## Specimen: upper case



**Fig. 54.** Type specimen.  
Upper case set



## Specimen: diacritic marks



**Fig. 55.** Type specimen. Lower case diacritic marks.



## Specimen: diacritic marks

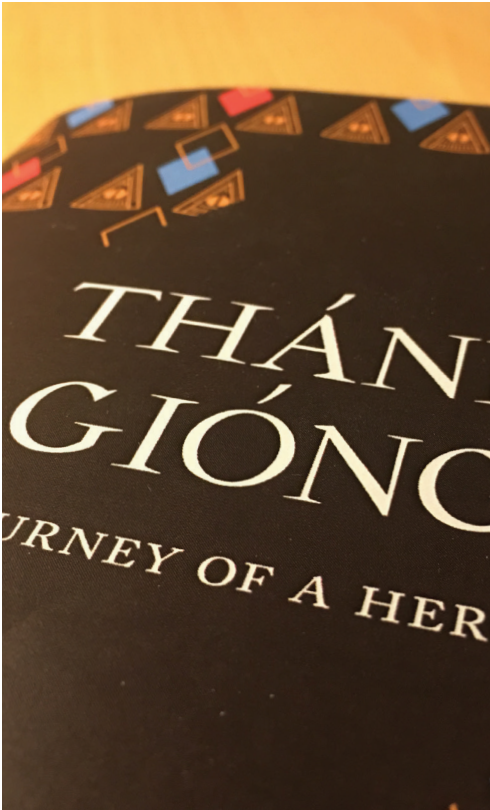


**Fig. 56.** Type specimen.  
Upper case diacritic  
marks.



## Typeface application: Cultural book

Ultimately, the goal for this thesis is to support the Vietnamese culture. As such, I have been thinking about how I could use Tre Việt typeface in a way that disseminates Vietnamese cultural knowledge to the Vietnamese communities. The first possible direction is through a folktale book. Vietnamese folktales are collective forms of long-established knowledge and most of them are told through words of mouth. For this application, I chose a story called Thánh Gióng (Saint Giong) (CSB/SJU, n.d). The decision to choose this particular story is inspired by the instilled image of the bamboo throughout the story which resonates with the letterforms of Tre Việt, this couples with my desire to convey this traditional, cultural-riched story to the Vietnamese communities around the world. Furthermore, it would add another layer of depth on top of the intangible cultural heritage lying in the story. The book can also be used as study material for people who want to learn more about Vietnamese culture and tradition. In light of those points, two important components were considered: the cover and the layout of the book. These components are illustrated by figures in this section. (Fig. 57-61).

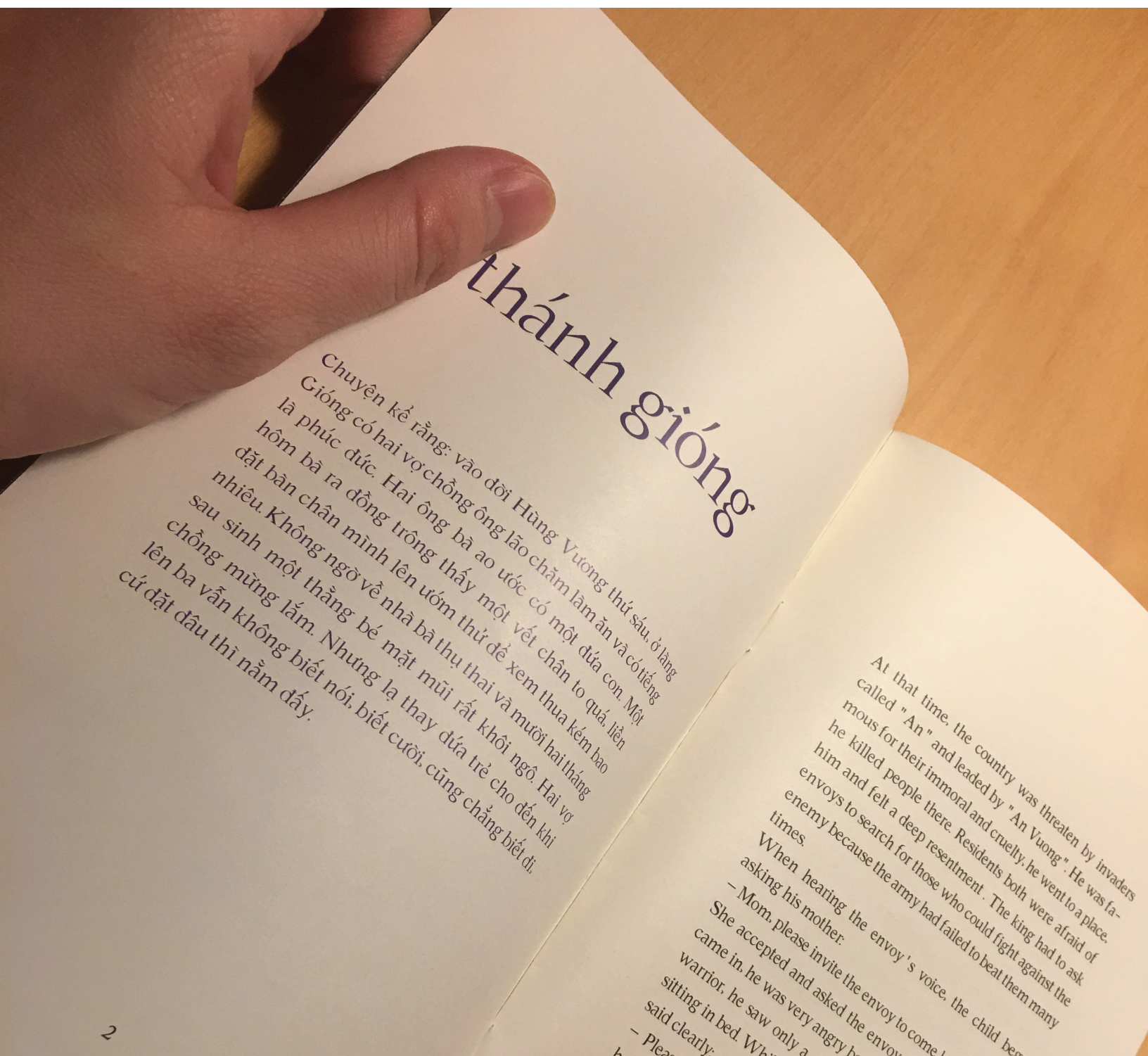


**Fig. 57.** Cultural book.  
The title is in upper case,  
dominantly placed on black  
background.  
(Photos and images were  
taken by Truong Nguyen,  
2017)

**Fig. 58.** Cultural book. Inspired  
by the Vietnamese drum (Trống  
đồng), the patterns were made  
based on the engraved deco-  
rations on the upper part and  
stylized to make it appropriate  
for this project.  
(Photos and images were taken  
by Truong Nguyen, 2017)



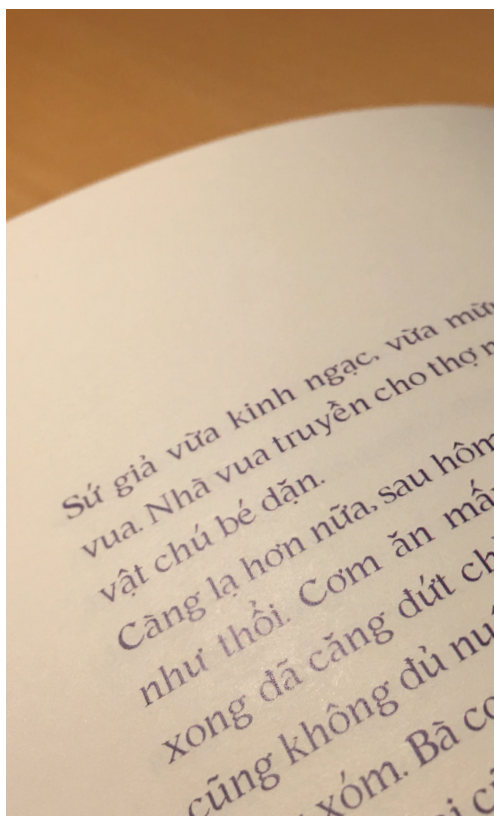




**Fig. 59.** Cultural book. The book was made bilingually in Vietnamese and English, separated into two pages side by side. Characters were set at moderately large size for ease of reading.

*(Photos and images were taken by Truong Nguyen, 2017)*





**Fig. 60.** Cultural book.  
Sample page of the Viet-  
namese texts.  
(Photos and images were  
taken by Truong Nguyen,  
2017)



**Fig. 61.** Cultural book. Sample Viet-  
namese and English pages.  
(Photos and images were taken by  
Truong Nguyen, 2017)

# Typeface application: visual samples

These visual samples are intended to assure that certain aspects of the typeface are considered and used in ways that encourage and fully expose its potential in the cultural sphere. They are not intended to be rigid instruction manuals but, rather as flexible guides that can be modified by users. Due to its essence as a cultural specific typeface, Tre Việt is intended to provide typographic support for events with Vietnamese cultural circulation purposes or provide bilingual options where they are applicable. These would take the form of: leaflets, posters, hanging typographic pictures, cultural books, historical books. I have developed some visual examples to show how the typeface might be used in certain environments:

**The sample book and CD in figure 62-63** are photographic records of rarely seen aspects of Ho Chi Minh City. The photo book reflects the perspective of an old city amidst the industrialization - where a younger and newer image starts taking over. It contains mostly images of French architecture buildings in black and white, alternates with coloured photos of modern buildings and sceneries. The book appreciates the beauty of the old city's culture and aims to preserve these be-gone days of the past. Tre Việt was used throughout the book in title page and narratives for each section.

**Figure 64** shows samples of Tre Việt in used bilingually on business card in certain cultural-related positions such as Vietnamese cultural exchange center.

**Figure 65-66:** A tri-fold advertising mockup for a cultural show called "The Water Puppetry". The water puppetry is a Vietnamese traditional show dated back to the eleventh century. The fascinating characteristic of this show is that everything happens underwater. The puppeteers control water-proofed puppets made from wood using a large rod. This makes the puppet appear as if they were moving on top of the water. The stories being told through the acts are usually Vietnamese folktales, legends or historical events. In this context, Tre Việt was used as a pair with Caslon typeface. Caslon was used as a footnote and title to provide better legibility, where-as Tre Việt was used as the main body text.

**Figure 67** is mock-up of a Vietnamese cultural tourism website. The website provides services to cultural destinations: Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi, Hue and Hoi An with the focus on Ho Chi Minh City. The attractions include various local cultural festivals: Tết nguyên đán (Lunar New Year), Hội Vua Hùng (Hung King Temple Festival), Hue Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, Wandering-soul festival. Other activities include Vietnamese traditional food sampling, visiting Ben Thanh Night Market and pilgrimage to famous pagoda in Ho Chi Minh City vicinity. In this case, Tre Việt was used in the logo mark and entire of the body text to enhance the vernacular visual characteristics of the website.



**Fig. 62-63.** Book and CD photo documentations around Ho Chi Minh City. Tre Việt was used as body text and title. (Photos and images were taken by Truong Nguyen, 2018)





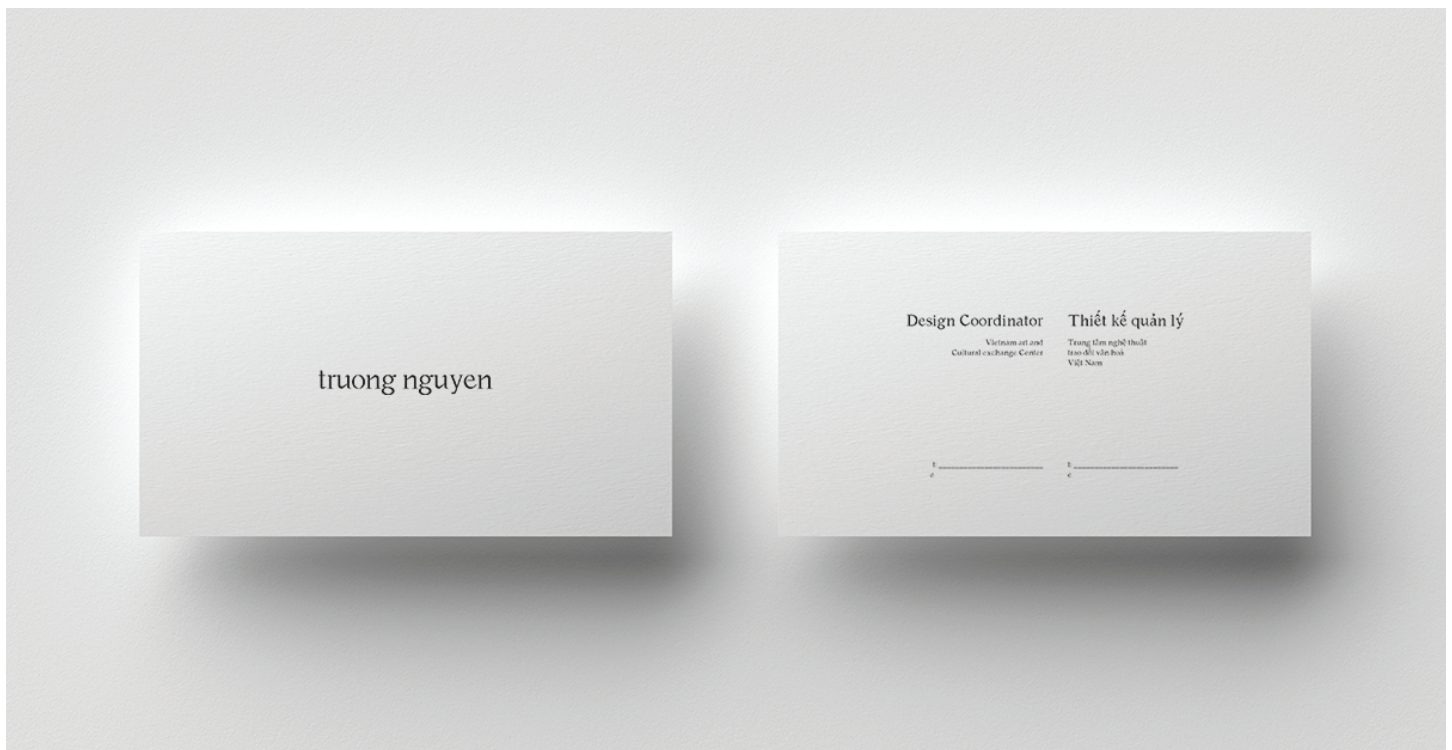


Fig. 64. Business card mock-up in English and Vietnamese.

Tiểu ("chú" means nan, boy or Mr. in Vietnamese) is a recurrent character in water puppetry. Tiểu means "laugh" in ancient Vietnamese. He is a jester who provides witty comments on political and social realities, especially officials' corruption.

The theme of the rural and has a strong reference to Vietnamese folklore. It tells of day-to-day living in Vietnam and Vietnamese folk tales that are grandparents to grandchildren. Stories of harvest, of fishing, of festivals are highlighted.

Legends and national history are also told through short skits. Many of the skits, especially those involving the tales of day-to-day living often have a humorous twist.



Fig. 65-66. Tri-fold flyer mock-up. Pairing of Adobe Caslon and Tre Việt in body texts and title. (Exerpts from *Water puppetry*, 2017. Puppet's photo was taken by *Truong Nguyen*, 2014).



**Fig. 67.** Mock-up of a Saigon tourism website. Typeface was used in logo and heading.  
*(Photo was taken by Truong Nguyen, 2014).*







Bamboo tree is a significant symbol in both Vietnamese culture and daily life. It exists almost everywhere in Vietnam, though mainly in rural areas. The solid, straight and high bamboo trees represent the resilience, indomitability and bravery of the Vietnamese people. Also, as the bamboo trees often grow in clusters with a strong vitality, it represents the solidarity of Vietnamese people as well as their diligence and loyalty to their homeland.

Bamboo tree clusters are also popularly known as the emblem of Vietnam's rural areas, together with banyan trees, rice paddy field or village pond. These symbols always recall a peaceful, rustic village in the mind of Vietnamese wherever they are.

Bamboo tree is also used widely in Vietnamese everyday life. The body of the tree is often treated as a valuable material to build houses and make household equipments such as table, chair, bookshelves, or agricultural tools such as shovels, hoes or plows. It has also become a material for interior decorations such as lamps, plates, chopstick and other souvenirs.

In the resistance against invaders, the body of the bamboo tree was sharpened to make bamboo thorns and traps. In addition, bamboo tree has nutritional values as bamboo shoots are commonly found in Vietnamese kitchen.

Bamboo trees position themselves in the mind of Vietnamese people as an inspiration for cultural and artistic works. Vietnamese children are familiar with many fairy tales involved a bamboo tree like "Cây tre tram dot". The hundred partition bamboo or "Trăm Giòng" - The story of Giòng. Bamboo tree is also used to create many traditional instruments like flutes, T' Rung. The famous bamboo dance is well known both in Vietnam and internationally. Until today, bamboo tree remains closely connected to Vietnam's culture.

Bamboo is engraved in Vietnamese culture and daily life, providing protection and representing resiliency. Bamboo can be manipulated in any shape or form to assist in the simplest or most complex of functions. Here in Vietnam, and especially in the countryside, bamboo is used for everything - from chopsticks, to chairs, to agricultural tools, to roofs, to cultural instruments, to home decorations.

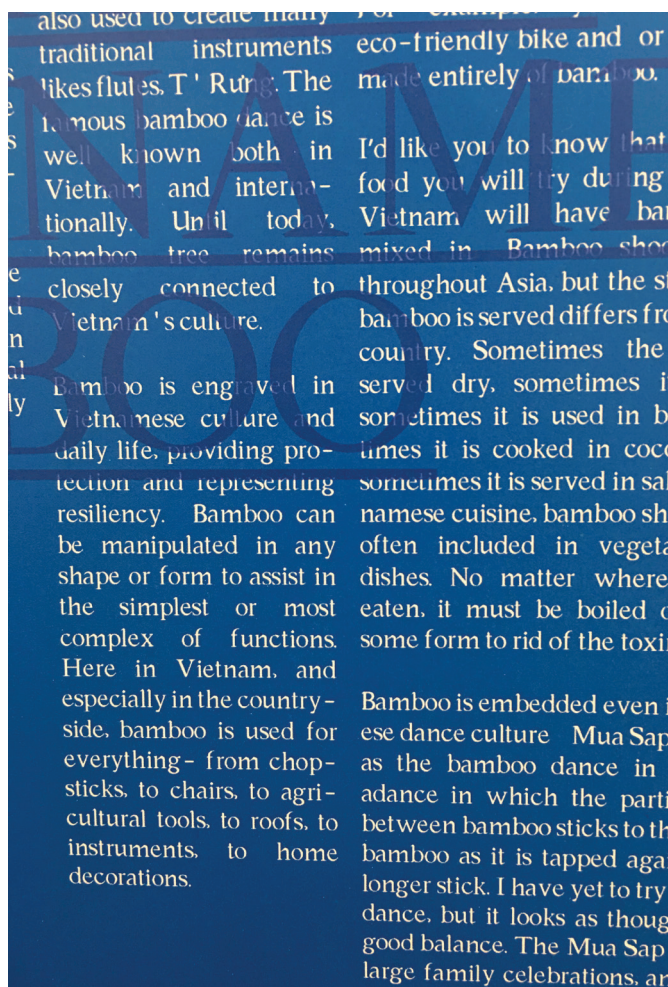
Bamboo's functions have evolved with time. Historically, bamboo trees were sharpened, and used to create weapons and traps, but today you can see bamboo in the most unique of forms. For example, you may see an eco-friendly bike and iPod speakers made entirely of bamboo.

I'd like you to know that much of the food you will try during your visit in Vietnam, will have bamboo shoots mixed in. Bamboo shoots are eaten throughout Asia, but the style in which bamboo is served differs from country to country. Sometimes the bamboo is served dry, sometimes it is canned. Sometimes it is used in broths, sometimes it is cooked in coconut oil, and sometimes it is served in salads. In Vietnamese cuisine, bamboo shoots are most often included in vegetable stir-fry dishes. No matter where bamboo is eaten, it must be boiled or cooked in some form to rid of the toxins.

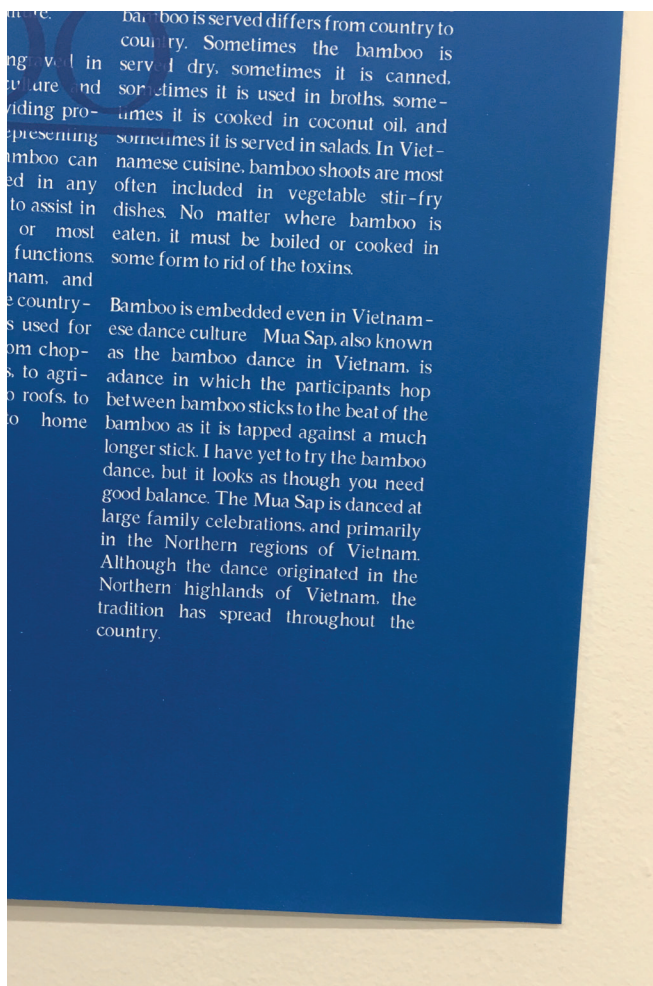
Bamboo is embedded even in Vietnamese dance culture. Múa Sạp, also known as the bamboo dance in Vietnam, is a dance in which the participants hop between bamboo sticks to the beat of the bamboo as it is tapped against a much longer stick. I have yet to try the bamboo dance, but it looks as though you need good balance. The Múa Sạp is danced at large family celebrations, and primarily in the Northern regions of Vietnam. Although the dance originated in the Northern highlands of Vietnam, the tradition has spread throughout the country.

**Fig. 69.** Typographic poster. The cultural significance of Vietnamese bamboo in daily life. (Excerpts from Tien, Q. L., 2016 & Armbruster, C., 2016. Photo was taken by Truong Nguyen, 2018). Photo was taken by Truong Nguyen, (2018).





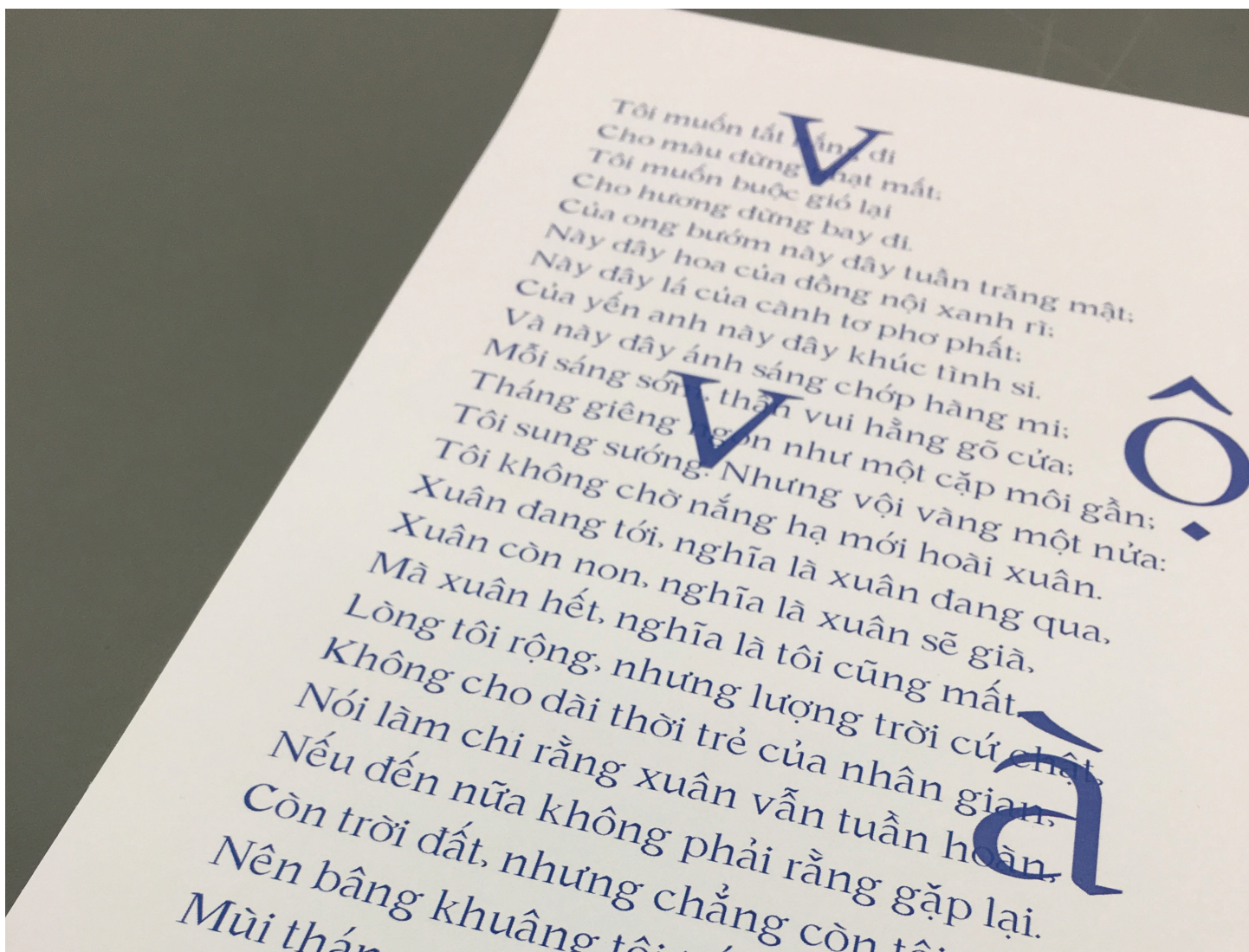
**Fig. 70-71.** Typographic poster. The cultural significance of Vietnamese bamboo in daily life.  
(Exerpts from Tien, Q. L., 2016 & Armbruster, C., 2016. Photo was taken by Truong Nguyen, 2018).





**Fig. 72.** Typographic poster. A Vietnamese heritage photo contest. (Photo was taken by Truong Nguyen, 2018).





ghĩa là xuân đang qua,  
 nghĩa là xuân sẽ già,  
 nghĩa là tôi cũng mất.  
 lượng trời cứ chật,  
 ời trẻ của nhân gian,  
 xuân vẫn tuần hoàn,  
 ng phải rằng gặp lại.  
 ng chẳng còn tôi mãi.  
 g tôi tiếc cả đất trời;  
 đều rớm vi chia phối.

ăng sợ độ phai tàn sắp sửa  
 bao giờ, ôi  
 bao giờ nữa  
 thôi  
 nửa ngả chiều hôm  
 ốn ôm  
 sống mới bắt đầu mơn mơn;  
 ốn niềm mây đưa và gió lượn,  
 ốn say cánh bướm với tình yêu,  
 ốn thâu trong một cái hôn nhiều.  
 ớn nước, và cây, và cỏ rạn,  
 chéng choáng mùi thơm, cho đã đầy ánh sáng,  
 no nê thanh sắc của thời tươi;  
 i xuân hồng, ta muốn cắn vào người

Fig. 73-75. Typographic poster. 'Vội vàng', a poem by Xuân Diệu. (Exerpts from Vforum, n.d. Photo was taken by Trương Nguyễn, 2018).



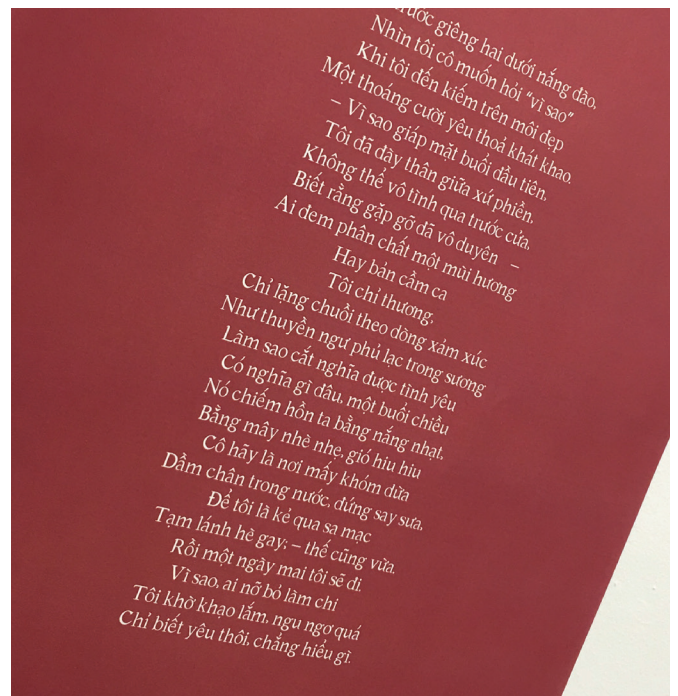
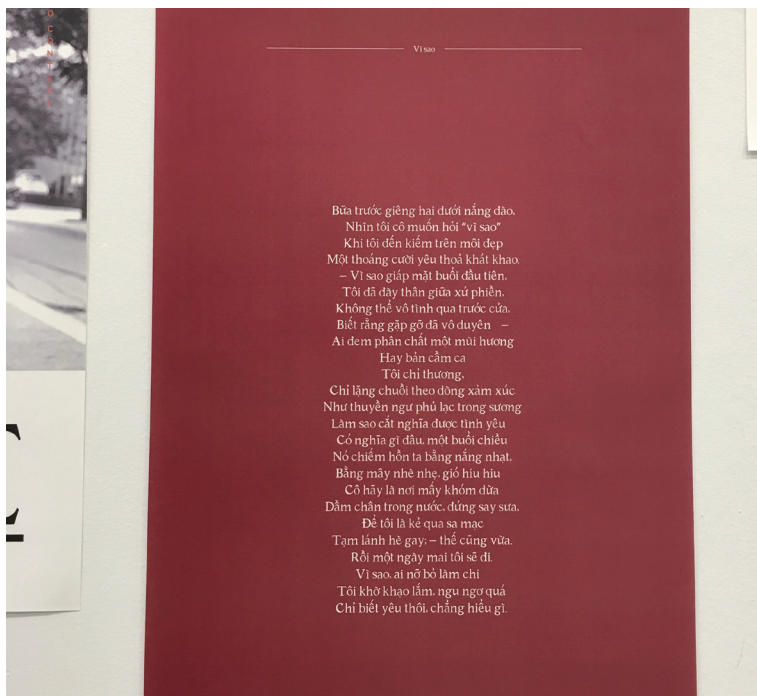


Fig. 76-78. Typographic poster. 'Vị sao', a poem by Xuân Diệu. (Exerpts from *Vforum*, n.d. Photo was taken by *Truong Nguyen*, 2018).



# CONCLUSION

## Implications & limitations

This thesis aims to develop Tre Việt, a Vietnamese cultural-specific typeface by utilizing practice-based studio projects. It seeks to establish a connection between Vietnamese culture and Vietnamese typography. Work on Tre Việt explored means to imbue letterforms with appropriate markers of vernacular Vietnamese culture. The symbolic role of bamboo and the study of hand painted signages served as the basis for the construction of this typeface. In addition, the diacritic marks, which act as a crucial part in Vietnamese letters are also incorporated by studying Vietnamese classical literatures. As a result, a prototypical typeface consisting of the upper case, lower case and the diacritic marks was developed. My hope is that this project will help to foster an alternative way to provide support for written Vietnamese culture and also enrich the Vietnamese typographic landscape.

Upon reflecting on the suggested outcomes, I also realized several limitations which might open up for future investigations. As this is the first typeface I develop, the process of making has been unstable due to technical constraints by the lack of knowledge in type design as well as a more in-depth understanding of Vietnamese culture. The most difficult obstacle has been searching for a way to incorporate an element of culture, which is an abstract concept, with the practical side of type making. Furthermore, by establishing a specific cultural symbol, I have unintentionally created a barrier for the Vietnamese culture, and as a result limited myself from exploring beyond that. Perhaps, the Vietnamese culture is not simply limited nor indicated by these measurements but reach out far beyond those.

## Future directions and conclusion

It is clear that this typeface requires significant further development in order to achieve my set out goal. My aim is to complete a full glyph set which supports different weights as well as an italics version. Another goal further down the road is to create an alternative Display version of Tre Việt, which can be used in tandem with Tre Việt to provide more choices for users.

The second direction is to introduce this typeface to the typography enthusiast communities and events. By obtaining a greater number of feedbacks, it is possible to reach out to the potential Vietnamese type designers and typographers who are interested in this particular process. Likewise, I can involve them in future iterative processes, utilize and learn how to improve the current outcomes.

Finally, I hope this research will inspire and empower Vietnamese type designers, typographers and aspiring designers to find new means to address and further develop typefaces that disseminate Vietnamese culture in wholesome and thoughtful ways.

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# **APPENDICES**

Character set: lower case

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Character set: lower case

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Character set: lower case

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Character set: lower case

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Character set: lower case

A large, bold, black uppercase letter 'Z' centered within a light gray square background.A large, bold, black uppercase letter 'V' centered within a light gray square background.

Character set: upper case

A

B

C

D

E

F



Character set: upper case

I

H

G

J

K

L

Character set: upper case

M

N

O

P

Q

R

Character set: upper case

S

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Character set: upper case

A large, bold, black uppercase letter 'Z' centered within a light gray square background.A large, bold, black uppercase letter 'V' centered within a light gray square background.

Character set: diacritic system

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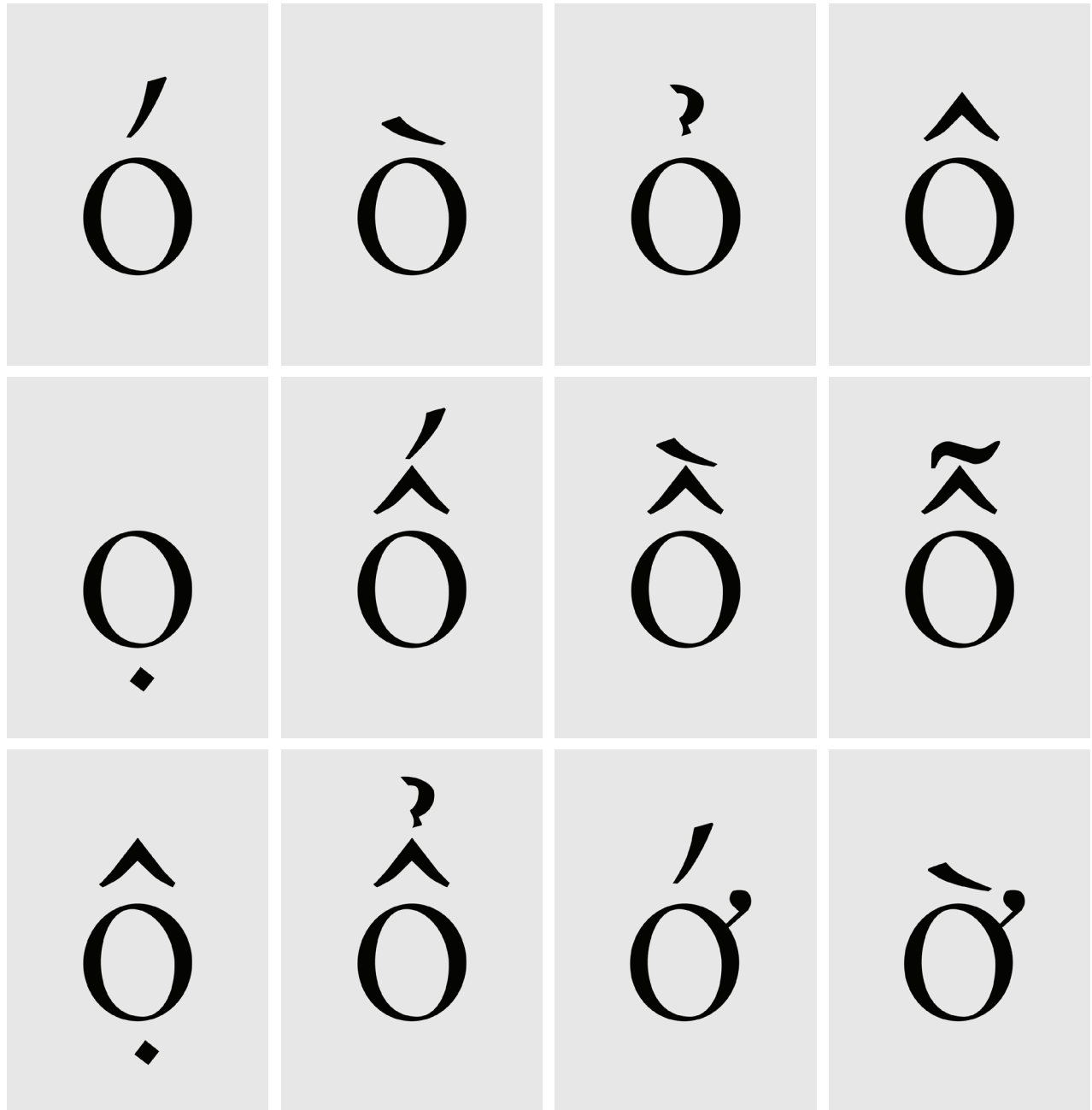
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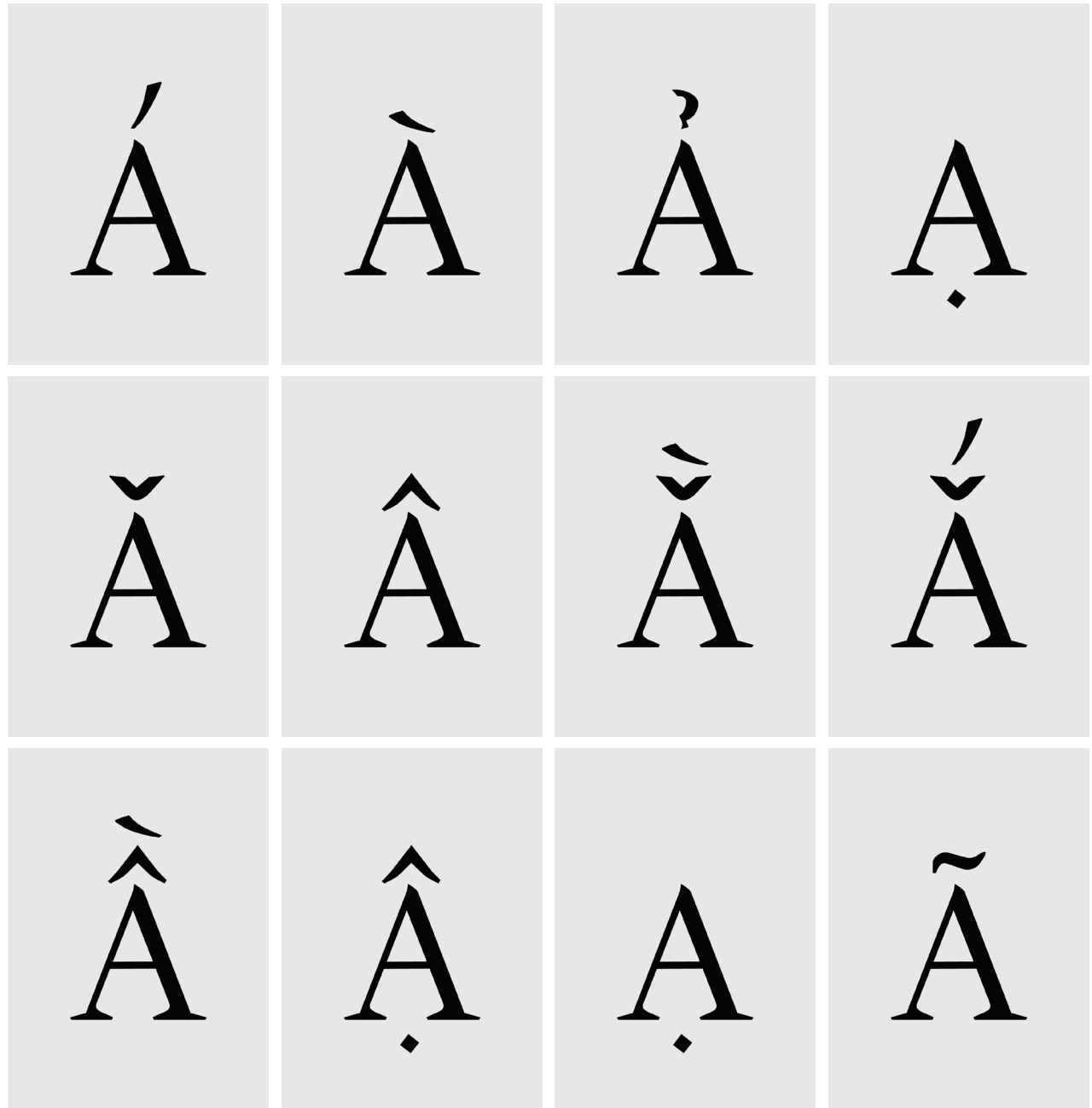
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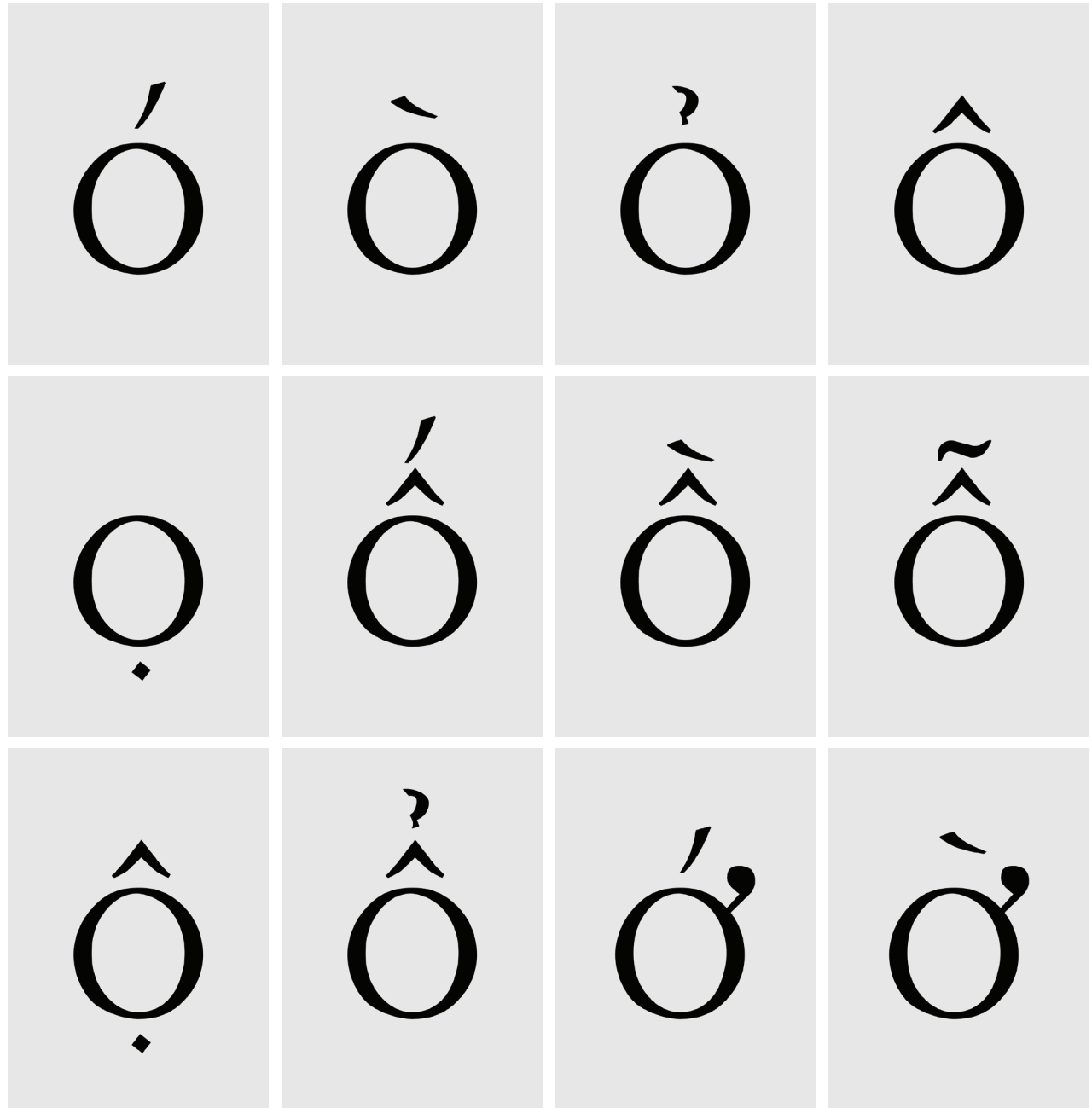
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