

# Sino-Vietnamese Bilingual Dictionaries from the Middle Ages to the Present

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## Abstract

Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries, spanning the Middle and Modern Ages, are crucial sources for studying East Asian Chinese character lexicography evolution. Despite their significance, this article addresses the scholarly community's limited attention to this area. Focusing on General Survey, Developmental Stages, and Intrinsic Value, we explore Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries' historical trajectory, categorizing it into three key epochs. These epochs are further divided based on regional disparities and different compilers, offering a nuanced exploration of major historical events in Vietnam. The goal is to present a comprehensive panorama, laying a solid groundwork for future scholarly inquiry.

**Keywords:** Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries, comprehensive Exploration, staging, Middle Ages, Modern Ages

## Povzetek

Sino-vietnamski dvojezični slovarji od srednjega veka do moderne dobe služijo kot ključni viri za preučevanje razvoja dvojezične leksikografije v okviru kitajskih pismenk v vzhodni Aziji. Kljub njihovi pomembnosti je znanstvena skupnost temu področju namenila le omejeno pozornost, pri čemer je pustila številne vidike neizkoriščene. Ta članek ponuja celovit pregled trenutnega stanja, pri čemer se osredotoča na tri osnovne perspektive: splošni pregled, razvojne faze in osnovno vrednost le-teh. Zgodovinski razvoj dvojezičnih kitajsko-vietnamskih slovarjev razdelimo na tri ključna obdobja, ki jih dalje delimo na različne podkategorije glede na regionalne razlike ter variacije, ki so posledica različnih sestavljavcev. Glavni cilj članka je predstaviti celovit pogled na dvojezične sino-vietnamske slovarje od srednjega veka do moderne dobe ter položiti trdne temelje za nadaljnje znanstveno raziskovanje in napredek.

**Ključne besede:** sino-vietnamski dvojezični slovarji, celovit pregled, razvrstitev, srednji vek, moderna doba



## **1 Introduction**

East Asian dictionaries trace their origins to China, serving as repositories of knowledge and vital sources of clarification. With the diffusion of Chinese characters and culture to neighboring countries, diverse Chinese dictionaries found their way to Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, facilitating enhanced interpretation and mastery of the Chinese language. During this period, Chinese characters assumed the role of the official script in each country. As linguistic and writing environments matured, individual nations developed distinct writing systems grounded in Chinese characters, tailored to the idiosyncrasies of their respective languages.

Subsequently, to enhance the comprehension of Chinese characters and texts, successive generations of scholars engaged in the interpretation, translation, and exegesis of Chinese characters within their linguistic frameworks, giving rise to bilingual dictionaries elucidating Chinese characters. Notably, Vietnam, profoundly influenced by Chinese culture, assimilated Chinese characters and cultural elements into its local ethos. However, the compilation of dictionaries in Vietnam commenced later than in Japan and Korea and has received limited scholarly attention.

Vietnam's tropical climate and tumultuous historical backdrop, marked by conflicts, have contributed to the scarcity of surviving ancient texts and a paucity of scholarly articles on Sino-Vietnamese characters in bilingual dictionaries from the Middle Ages to the Modern Ages.

## **2 Research overview and general survey of dictionaries**

Sino-Vietnamese characters featured in bilingual dictionaries from the Middle Ages to the Modern Ages constitute a vital and indispensable resource for delving into the realm of East Asian Chinese dictionaries and the historical trajectory of dictionary compilation. An examination of existing research outcomes pertaining to Sino-Vietnamese characters in bilingual dictionaries of the Middle Ages and the Modern Ages underscores the limited scholarly attention devoted to this subject. The number of scholars engaging in such study remains notably modest, particularly in China, where the broader Vietnamese aspect of East Asian Chinese literature is comparably underexplored.

This article endeavors to present the collective findings of prior generations and esteemed scholars, offering a macroscopic perspective that encompasses both domestic and international scholarly endeavors.

## 2.1 Overview of research in China

Studies on extraterritorial Chinese dictionaries in China, particularly analytical investigations into the historical evolution of Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries from the Middle Ages to the Modern Ages and their distinctive characteristics, still need to be explored. Despite the limited scholarly output, certain scholars have endeavored to explore and examine this subject, contributing valuable information and research insights.

Liang Maohua (2017) provides a succinct overview of the compilation style and characteristics of four notable Sino-Vietnamese characters in bilingual dictionaries, namely *Chi Nam Ngoc Am Giai Nghia* 指南玉音解义, *Tam Thien Tu Giai Am* 三千字解音, *Tu Duc Thanh Che Tu Hoc Giai Nghia Ca* 嗣德圣制字学解义歌, and *Dai Nam Quoc Ngu* 大南国语. The analysis reveals significant divergences in the layout of Sino-Vietnamese characters when compared to ancient Chinese dictionaries, notably their organization into alternating six and eight rhymes for enhanced recitation and memorization. While this article provides a brief introduction to the four dictionaries, it refrains from in-depth thematic examination, thereby offering a foundation for future research. Additionally, Liang Maohua's doctoral thesis, entitled *A Study of the History of Vietnamese Script Development*, incorporates a subsection exploring the characteristics of the dictionaries as mentioned above. In conclusion, he posits that the distinctive layout features of Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries diverge significantly from their Chinese counterparts, rendering them a valuable resource for understanding the trends and usage characteristics of Nom characters' development.

Furthermore, by centering the investigation on *Chi Nam Ngoc Am Giai Nghia*, Wen Min (2017) discerned that this dictionary meticulously preserves a multitude of lexical items dating back to the Tang, Song, Yuan, and Ming dynasties, rendering it a valuable resource for historical research. Numerous words within the dictionary have undergone a process of Vietnamization and are identified as Nam-origin words. The study extends its focus to an examination of the vocabulary contained in this dictionary, revealing discernible traces of cultural exchange between the two nations, thus serving as a crucial reference for the compilation of Chinese dictionaries. Within the realm of philology, the author expounds upon the preservation of Vietnamese Chinese character patterns and conducts comparative analyses between Chinese characters and Nom characters, laying the groundwork for future research endeavors.

## 2.2 Overview of research abroad

The outcomes within this category are scant in number and predominantly concentrate on traditional Chinese dictionaries from the Middle Ages, thus needing more focused results.

Phan Van Cac (1994) provides a concise overview of *Chi Nam Ngoc Am Giai Nghia*, Dao Duy Anh's *Chinese-Vietnamese Dictionary* (1932), Van Tan's *Chinese-Vietnamese Dictionary* (1957), and Phan Van Cac's *Chinese-Vietnamese Dictionary* (1994). The author delineates the fundamental strengths and weaknesses of each dictionary. In conclusion, the article briefly addresses lexical issues within Chinese lexicography, encompassing Chinese characters and typography, serving as a valuable reference for future compilations of similar dictionaries.

Le Anh Tuan (2002) conducts a quantitative and categorical analysis of Sino-Vietnamese bilingual books, with a specific focus on dictionaries. Utilizing *Chi Nam Ngoc Am Giai Nghia* and *Ngu Thien Tu* 五千字 as exemplars; the author classifies them into various sub-categories. While serving as a concise introduction to Sino-Vietnamese bilingual books, the article serves as a catalyst for future research in the domain of dictionaries.

In a study aligning with the subject and methodology similar to this research, Tran Trong Duong (2017) categorizes Sino-Vietnamese dictionaries into four distinct types: monolingual dictionaries, Chinese-Nom dictionaries, Chinese-Nom-Thai multilingual dictionaries, and Chinese-Nom-Latin/French multilingual dictionaries. The article underscores the Chinese-Nom bilingual dictionary as a distinctive document originating in Vietnam during the Middle Ages, emerging within a bicultural, bilingual, and bi-literate milieu. Notably, it functions as a unique hybrid of dictionaries and textbooks, aimed at instructing Chinese characters and basic Confucian Chinese. This insight underscores the distinct functional disparity of Sino-Vietnamese characters in bilingual dictionaries compared to their counterparts in China, Japan, and Korea.

Conducting a fundamental investigation, both quantitative and qualitative, of the lexical components in Sino-Vietnamese characters within bilingual dictionaries through the lens of lexicographical theory, Ha Dang Viet (2014) provides a comprehensive summary of the common attributes inherent in this series. The research material employed encompasses *Nhat Dung Thuong Dam*, *Tu Duc Thanh Che Tu Hoc Giai Nghia Ca*, *Nam Phuong Danh Vat Bi Khao*, and *Dai Nam Quoc Ngu*. Predominantly, the noteworthy features of nineteenth-century Vietnamese dictionaries lie in their character as 'political' texts, imparting instruction on fundamental Chinese characters and catering to imperial examination needs. The scope of this article encompasses a rudimentary exploration of the lexicon exclusively, leaving untouched the core aspects of

characters, exegesis, and phonology. Nonetheless, it represents a foundational reference material for examining Vietnamese Chinese dictionaries.

Moreover, La Minh Hang (2017) offers an observation grounded in Chinese lexicography theory, concurrently analyzing *Dai Nam Quoc Ngu*, *Nhat Dung Thuong Dam*, and *Nam Phuong Danh Vat Bi Khao*. The study identifies three predominant characteristics inherent in Vietnamese dictionaries, of which the first is that Vietnamese dictionaries do not align with the attributes of Chinese encyclopedias. The second characteristic is that Vietnamese lexicographic tools are categorized into various types, including dictionaries, language dictionaries, language thesauruses, encyclopedic dictionaries, and reference books. Finally, Vietnamese dictionaries from the Middle Ages predominantly adhere to the three talents, namely heaven, earth, and man as the prevailing editorial paradigm, featuring a macro structure organized hierarchically from larger to smaller entities.

Hoang Thu Thuy (2019) delineates the present status of Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries from the Middle Ages, briefly shedding light on features such as rhyming in the carrier form and the multifunctionality embodied in the microstructure. However, the exploration remains confined to an introductory level and does not delve into ontological research.

Additionally, Trinh Khac Manh (2011) conducts a chronological study that categorizes the development of Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries into distinct stages. The argument posits the initiation of Sino-Vietnamese characters in the fifteenth century, extending until the nineteenth century. This period is principally divided into two parts, the first being a tool for interpreting the Chinese language in Nom script and the second a tool for compiling Vietnamese history, geography, culture, and education in Chinese characters.

Moving into the twentieth century, both Chinese characters and Nom characters gradually waned, with Quoc Ngu characters assuming dominance. Consequently, all Sino-Vietnamese language tools were compiled in Quoc Ngu characters, and were further categorized into four groups; 1. tool for interpreting Chinese characters, 2. Chinese character font cross-reference toolkit, 3. specialist tool, and 4. tool for professional study and research in Chinese and Nom characters.

The author holds an optimistic perspective on the tools for Chinese and Nom characters, intending to develop an extensive toolkit for the Chinese and Nom characters corpus. Despite recognizing the potential for advancement in Chinese and Nom script tools, the author acknowledges that limited human resources, inadequate funding, and a scope that does not cater to a broad audience remain challenges.

The only comprehensive chronological division of Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries is presented by Tran Van Chanh (2018), who categorizes them into three distinct periods. Early dictionaries belong to the period before 1930 and are exemplified by works such as *An Nam Dich Ngu* 安南译语, *Chi Nam Ngoc Am Giai Nghia*, *Nhat Dung Thuong Dam*, etc. Following is the transitional period from 1930 to 1950, which is represented by Dao Duy Anh's *Chinese-Vietnamese Dictionary* (1932), Nguyen Tran Mo's *Nam Hoa Dictionary* (1942), Thieu Chuu's *Chinese-Vietnamese Dictionary* (1942), etc. Finally, works like Van Tan's *Chinese-Vietnamese Dictionary* (1957), Nguyen Van Khon's *Chinese-Vietnamese Dictionary* (1960), Ly Van Hung's *New Chinese-Vietnamese Dictionary* (1960), etc. feature the last period, the so-called period of modern dictionaries from 1950 to the present.

The author appears to designate Dao Duy Anh's *Chinese-Vietnamese Dictionary* (1932) as a pivotal point, demarcating ancient dictionaries that precede it and modern dictionaries that succeed it. A concise overview of representative works from each period is also provided. The study extends its scope to encompass various specialized dictionaries, including Buddhist dictionaries, medical dictionaries, scientific dictionaries, and specialized tools, contributing some reference value to the historical understanding of the compilation of Chinese dictionaries in Vietnam.

Essentially, these investigations represent an initial foray into the fundamental dimensions of Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries from the Middle Ages to the Modern Ages. They establish a foundation and offer conceptual frameworks for further in-depth inquiry, providing a preliminary understanding of the developmental history of Vietnamese dictionaries. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the current research is foundational, needing a detailed reflection of the distinctive characteristics and core values inherent in each chronological period. This lacuna offers a promising avenue for subsequent research to delve into and elucidate the intricacies of the subject matter.

### **3 Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries: Stages of compilation through time**

The complete abolition of the Vietnamese imperial examination system in 1919 marked a significant turning point. This era also witnessed the initial invasion by French colonists from 1858 to 1945, followed by the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in 1945 and the resolution of the war in the North. Subsequently, from 1945 to 1954, the South experienced a re-invasion by French colonists, leading to the establishment of the Republic of Vietnam

from 1954 to 1975. The culmination of these historical events unfolded with the complete reunification of Vietnam in 1975. This article explores the compilation of Sino-Vietnamese characters in bilingual dictionaries in the Middle Ages and the Modern Ages, situated amidst the nexus of these pivotal events in Vietnamese history.

### 3.1 Classical bilingual dictionaries of Sino-Vietnamese characters (approx. 1600-1950)

Since the introduction of Chinese characters to Vietnam and their adoption as the official script, they served as the primary means of recording Vietnamese politics, history, and culture until 1919. The ancient Vietnamese held a deep admiration for Chinese culture, often referring to Chinese characters as ‘Confucian characters’ or ‘sage characters’, among other designations. These characters were utilized for transcribing Chinese classics, crafting Vietnamese literature, and even forming Nom characters based on components of Chinese characters. In the pursuit of understanding the classical Chinese language, engaging with classical Chinese literature, and participating in imperial examinations for career prospects, Vietnamese scholars compiled an array of tools spanning different eras. Unfortunately, due to Vietnam’s humid climate and the numerous wars, the preservation of ancient dictionaries has been scarce.

The seventeenth-century work, *Chi Nam Ngoc Am Giai Nghia*, is currently acknowledged by scholars as the oldest extant Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionary. However, the exact origin of traditional Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries remains to be determined, even though their zenith likely occurred between the eighteenth and early twentieth centuries.

At a macroscopic level, the period under consideration for Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries predominantly encompasses resources aimed at children’s literacy. However, it also extends to encyclopedias, rhyming books, Buddhist dictionaries, and script dictionaries.

Children’s literacy dictionaries, such as *Tam Thien Tu Giai Am* 三千字解音 (1831), *Tu Hoc Huan Mong* 字学训蒙 (1877), *Tu Hoc Cau Tinh Ca* 字学求精歌 (1879), *Thien Tu Van Giai Am* 千字文解音 (1890), *Tu Hoc Tu Ngon Thi* 字学四言诗 (1882), *Tam Thien Tu Giai Dich Quoc Ngu* 三千字解译国语 (1915), etc., are primarily composed in the Vietnamese *lục bát* (six-eighths) poetic style for facile memorization. These dictionaries are both captivating and informative, covering a wide spectrum of subjects, including astronomy, geography, human ethics, flora, fauna, and rituals. Noteworthy examples like *Tam Thien Tu*

*Giai Am* and *Thien Tu Van Giai Am* utilize a gloss reading approach, where a Chinese character corresponds to Nom characters or Quoc Ngu characters.

Encyclopedic dictionaries from this period encompass notable works such as *Chi Nam Ngoc Am Giai Nghia* (17th century), *Nhat Dung Thuong Dam* (1827), *Tu Duc Thanh Che Tu Hoc Giai Nghia Ca* (1897), *Dai Nam Quoc Ngu* (1899), *Nam Phuong Danh Vat Bi Khao* (1901), *Chi Nam Bi Loai* 指南备类 (unknown), *Tu Loai Dien Nghia* 字类演义 (unknown), and others.

Buddhism dictionaries include *Van Phap Chi Nam* 万法指南 (1894) and *Dao Giao Nguyen Luu* 道教源流 (1845).

During this period, bilingual dictionaries of Sino-Vietnamese characters exhibit distinctive characteristics:

1. Prevalence of children's literacy and encyclopedic dictionaries: The era is marked by a notable abundance of children's literacy dictionaries and encyclopedic dictionaries while rhyming dictionaries and script dictionaries are comparatively fewer. Children's literacy dictionaries predominantly incorporate commonly used Chinese characters, and most encyclopedic dictionaries are of medium size.

2. Nationalized nature of children's literacy and encyclopedic dictionaries: Children's literacy dictionaries and encyclopedic dictionaries often exhibit a nationalized character. They employ unique Vietnamese poetic styles, such as the alternating six and eight, or double seven, six, and eight rhymes, serving as carriers. The content is interpreted either in Nom characters or Quoc Ngu characters. While a minority of dictionaries may employ a blend of Chinese characters and Nom characters, the predominant usage remains with Nom characters.

3. Predominant compilation by private Confucian scholars: The majority of dictionaries during this period were compiled by private Confucian scholars, with a relatively low percentage attributed to official dictionaries.

4. Influence of Chinese style and content: Dictionaries from this period bear evident traces of Chinese style and content. The style mirrors that of contemporary Chinese texts, and the content closely resembles the selection found in Chinese texts. However, as this period progresses, dictionary compilers begin to consider the distinctive characteristics of the Vietnamese language and the language habits of the people. Consequently, the selection of phonetics, vocabulary, and script aligns more closely with the practical needs and preferences of the Vietnamese populace. The content and style progressively localize, emphasizing practicality, modernity, and simplicity.



5. Association with other texts: Dictionaries from this period did not hold high status independently but were often appended to scriptures and other texts. For instance, *Tang Dinh Au Hoc Tu Tri Tap Tu Thai Tran Dai Toan* 增订幼学须知杂字采珍大全 is attached to the end of *Nhat Dung Thuong Dam* 日用常谈, and *Tam Thien Tu Toan Yeu* 三千字纂要 is appended to the end of *Dao Giao Nguyen Luu* 道教源流.

### 3.2 Emerging paradigms in bilingual dictionaries of Sino-Vietnamese characters (approx. 1950-)

The abolition of the imperial examination system in 1919, the diminishing influence of Chinese characters in Vietnamese society, and the pervasive influx of Western culture collectively contributed to the complete departure of Chinese characters and Nom characters from the historical narrative. Concurrently, as the movement advocating for the Quoc Ngu character gained prominence, bilingual dictionaries of Sino-Vietnamese characters underwent a transformative phase during the early twentieth century, signifying a pivotal shift from traditional to modern (Western) codification.

During the initial decades of the twentieth century, only a handful of Confucian scholars persisted in upholding Confucian education, while Western missionaries actively propagated Western education on a grand scale. This catalyzed the emergence of numerous Confucian scholars in Vietnam who possessed proficiency in both Chinese and Western languages. Truong Vinh Ky stands as a prominent representative of this era, contributing significantly to the compilation of numerous Chinese-Western, Chinese-Vietnamese, and Western-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries.

Simultaneously, Western missionaries engaged in compiling a considerable number of Chinese-French, Chinese-Vietnamese, and French-Vietnamese dictionaries to promote Catholicism and disseminate Western knowledge. The early twentieth century thus stands as a critical juncture in the evolution of Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries, marking the transition from traditional to modern frameworks influenced by Western linguistic paradigms.

#### 3.2.1 A transitional dictionary for missionaries (approx. 1900-1950)

Alexandre de Rhodes's *Dictionarium Annamiticum Lusitanum et Latinum* (1651) among foreign scholars stands as the pioneering effort in the compilation of dictionaries related to the Vietnamese language. Subsequently, with the onset and progression of Western colonial rule, a wave of Western missionaries arrived in Vietnam. While engaged in preaching, these missionaries undertook

the compilation of dictionaries, primarily intended to facilitate the dissemination of their teachings.

During this missionary period, there was a deliberate acknowledgment of Traditional Sino-Vietnamese in bilingual dictionaries. Missionaries often fused traditional Chinese bilingual dictionaries with new Western dictionaries, extracting the strengths of each, resulting in the creation of several new bilingual dictionaries tailored for Vietnamese readers.

Depending on the thematic focus of the compilation, these dictionaries are broadly categorized into four main types. Firstly, radical arrangement following the Kangxi dictionary can be found in G. Pauthier's *Dictionnaire étymologique Chinois-Annamite Latin-Français* (1867) and Charles Edouard Bailly's *Dictionnaire Chinois - Français* (1889). Following are the dictionaries arranged in Latin alphabetical order, such as Jean-Louis Taberd's *Dictionarium Anamitico-Latinum* (1867) and F. M. Génibrel's *Dictionnaire Annamite-Français* (1898). The third are children's literacy dictionaries, of which Edmond Nordemann's *Petit vocabulaire Chinois-Annamite-Français* (1895) is the best representative. Finally, the fourth type are Nom-foreign dictionaries, such as the one by Jean Bonet's *Dictionnaire Annamite-Français* (1899-1900).

During this era, bilingual dictionaries of Sino-Vietnamese characters exhibit the following characteristics:

1. Dominance of Western missionary compilation: The majority of the new type of bilingual dictionaries of Sino-Vietnamese characters from this period were crafted by Western missionaries who arrived with colonial influence.

2. Rich and diverse content, varied styles: These dictionaries boast abundant and diverse content, often adopting either Kangxi dictionary headings or Latin alphabetical phonetic order for organization and accessibility.

3. Locale-centric characteristics: Chinese characters within these dictionaries exclusively represent native Vietnamese characters, and the pronunciations are rooted in southern Vietnamese dialects. The meanings employed in these dictionaries predominantly align with southern Vietnamese vocabulary, establishing a more localized essence compared to traditional Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries.

4. Shift from traditional compilation style: The new type of bilingual dictionaries of Sino-Vietnamese characters marks a decisive departure from the traditional style of dictionary compilation, signaling a transition towards contemporary Vietnamese dictionary methodologies.

5. Initiative by Vietnamese scholars in the Enlightenment period: Concurrently, Vietnamese scholars undertook the independent compilation of

new dictionaries during the Enlightenment and Development period, spanning from the early twentieth century to 1975.

### 3.2.2 Independent compilations: New dictionaries by Vietnamese scholars during the Era of enlightenment and development (1900-1975)

During the period from the early to mid-twentieth century, a dynamic interplay unfolded between Western missionaries compiling the new type of Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries alongside their traditional counterparts, and Vietnamese Confucians, influenced by these developments, began contemplating the compilation of this innovative genre. Possessing a Confucian education, these scholars found themselves at the intersection of tradition and modernity as Vietnam underwent increased colonization. Fluent in both Western languages and Quoc Ngu characters, they diverged from the traditional Confucian stance and exhibited receptiveness to the new type of Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries crafted by Western missionaries.

From the early twentieth century until 1975, these intellectuals, often referred to as the new Confucians charted a course aligned with the trajectory of the evolving dictionaries. Grounded in the practicalities of Vietnam's evolving landscape, they spearheaded the compilation of a new type of Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries.

Between 1945 and 1975, cultural development in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (Northern Vietnam) experienced a temporary slowdown as post-war economic recovery took precedence, with the entire population engaged in social and productive construction. Consequently, the compilation of dictionaries was briefly suspended, although individual scholars authored noteworthy dictionaries. In contrast, the Republic of Vietnam (Southern Vietnam) witnessed stable social development, a relatively robust economy, and a conducive academic research environment. Confucianism found widespread acceptance in the South during this period.

#### Compilation of new-style dictionaries in Northern Vietnam

The primary entity involved in the compilation of new dictionaries in northern Vietnam was the Khai Tri Tien Duc Society (1919-1945). This society played a pivotal role in fostering the cultural advancement of Northern Vietnam, comprising key members who were influential ministers of the Nguyen dynasty and officials of the Indochina political office in Northern Vietnam. Among their influential contributions, the *Vietnamese Dictionary* (1931), edited by Pham Quynh, Nguyen Van Vinh, Tran Cong Kim, and Duong Bac Khao,

stands out prominently. This dictionary has significantly shaped the subsequent development of Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries, serving as a foundational reference.

Organized in Latin phonetic order and spanning 663 pages with 24,500 entries, the Vietnamese Dictionary marked the inception of self-compiled Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries in Vietnam. Noteworthy for not only recording general vocabulary but also incorporating specialized terms encompassing Western thought and mechanical technology, the dictionary further includes vocabulary from the diverse dialects of North, South, and Central Vietnam. Its launch sparked extensive scholarly commentary at the time and underwent multiple reprints by Tan Van Publishing House and Mac Lam Publishing House upon reaching the southern regions of Vietnam. This enduring reprinting attests to the significant value of the Vietnamese Dictionary in the study of the history of the Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionary compilation.

Another influential work during this period in northern Vietnam was the *Chinese-Vietnamese Dictionary* (1932), also known as *The Chinese-Vietnamese Dictionary in Brief*, authored by Dao Duy Anh. This dictionary, a collaborative effort with his wife, compiled generic Chinese and Vietnamese words from various sources, including *Nam Phong Tap Chi* 南风杂志, classical texts like *Cung Oan Ngam Khuc* 宫怨吟曲 and *Truyen Kieu* 传翘, and Chinese dictionaries such as *Ci Yuan* 辞源, *Kangxi zidian* 康熙字典, and *The Dictionary of the Chinese State Language* 中国国语大辞典. Beyond compilation, Dao Duy Anh provided interpretations for each collected Chinese and Vietnamese word.

The *Chinese-Vietnamese Dictionary* garnered significant attention from contemporary scholars and has maintained enduring relevance, evidenced by its continuous reprinting. Compiled with the explicit goal of revitalizing Confucianism, the dictionary provides straightforward explanations for over 5,000 individual characters. Its focus lies predominantly on meanings applicable in contemporary society, avoiding in-depth explorations of the original character meanings. Dao Duy Anh's work also introduces some challenges regarding the pronunciation of numerous Chinese characters, reflecting either the author's pronunciation or the prevailing vernacular of the time, diverging from the original Chinese pronunciation. Examples include 吃 (pronounced ngật, originally cật) and 诤 (pronounced công, originally hồng)

Another notable bilingual dictionary from this period in northern Vietnam is Thieu Chuu's *Chinese-Vietnamese Dictionary* (1942). Compiled to promote Buddhist culture and facilitate scripture reading, this dictionary exhibits distinctive features compared to its predecessors. One of such features is that it predominantly comprises "explanatory single characters," 8,318 characters in

total. It also utilizes the traditional 214 radical ordering instead of the prevalent Latin phonetic ordering and focuses the interpretation section on the ancient meanings of words rather than their contemporary meanings in Vietnam. It further retains Fanqie pronunciation for words, although an allophone and a vernacular pronunciation accompany some characters, incorporates examples from Buddhist scriptures or other classical texts, and employs simple and comprehensible illustrations to convey concepts that may be challenging to articulate verbally.

Despite its merits, Thieu Chuu's dictionary does have certain drawbacks, notably the absence of a phonetic checklist at the end of the book. This omission hinders reader searches and complicates usability.

Additionally, there is the noteworthy *Tam Nguyen Tu Dien* (1941) by the northern Vietnamese scholar Le Van Hoe. This publication represents an etymological exploration of Vietnamese words derived from Chinese origins, presented in Latin alphabetical order. Delving into the original meanings of these words, the work also investigates their etymological roots, the principles behind their construction, and the evolution of their meanings. As such, it stands as a valuable resource for comprehending words of Chinese origin.

During this era, the characteristics of Sino-Vietnamese characters in bilingual dictionaries are delineated by:

1. A relatively limited number of dictionaries were produced in northern Vietnam, primarily concentrated before 1945, with a notable scarcity in production between 1945 and 1975.

2. With the exceptions of Thieu Chuu's *Chinese-Vietnamese Dictionary* and Nguyen Tran Mo's *Nam Hoa Dictionary*, all other dictionaries adopt a phonetic arrangement. This pattern suggests that the compilation of Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries during this period predominantly followed the Western missionary approach.

### **Compilation of new-style dictionaries in Southern Vietnam**

In contrast to the 844-year history of Confucianism in northern Vietnam, the southern region's connection with this philosophical tradition spans a shorter duration of 52 years. The prominence of Confucianism is evidently more deeply entrenched in northern Vietnam than in the South. However, the widespread dissemination of Confucianism in the southern region, despite its relatively shallow historical roots, holds significant implications for understanding the characteristics of dictionaries in this period. Therefore, it is imperative to analyze the factors contributing to the extensive reach of Confucianism in the South, where its historical foundations are less profound.

Several factors elucidate the widespread influence of Confucianism in southern Vietnam. Following the establishment of the socialist system in northern Vietnam, Confucianism was viewed as conservative, antiquated, and feudal, prompting continuous suppression. Many Confucian scholars relocated to the South and played a role in the establishment of the Republic of Vietnam. Consequently, Confucianism regained importance in the early years of the state. The renewed study of Confucian classics and the founding of Confucian-related associations, such as the Vietnam Confucian Association (VAC) and Vietnam Association of Ancient Studies (VATS), further fueled the development of Confucianism in the southern region.

The stable social development, relatively advanced economy, and conducive academic research environment in the Republic of Vietnam (South) contributed to the resurgence of Confucianism. Additionally, southern Vietnam's global connections, frequent exchanges with Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan, along with an increasing population of Chinese expatriates, played a role in fostering the development of Confucianism during this period.

In the context of southern Vietnam's robust promotion of Confucianism, the compilation of Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries during this period served multiple purposes, such as Confucianism promotion, where the dictionaries aimed to promote Confucianism, aligning with the prevalent influence of this philosophical tradition in southern Vietnam. Another objective was the preservation of ancient cultural heritage, safeguarding traditional values and linguistic elements. The third objective was the enhancement of Vietnamese and French language skills for Overseas Chinese. The dictionaries, in other words, sought to aid the overseas Chinese population in southern Vietnam by improving their proficiency in both Vietnamese and French languages. Facilitation of Western Missionary activities, in which these dictionaries served as instruments to facilitate Western missionaries that operated in the region.

A noteworthy example is Phan Duc Hoa's *Thi Luat Thong Ngon* (1886), a distinctive handwritten dictionary spanning 649 pages. It includes a French preface, a table of 214 radicals, the main text, stroke checklists, and Latin letter checklists. Intriguingly linked to Samuel Wells Williams's *A Syllabic Dictionary of the Chinese Language* (1874), the *Thi Luat Thong Ngon*, organized by 214 radicals, cross-references the page numbers of the *Poetic Rhyme Book* for each included word. The dictionary incorporates Chinese Vietnamese, Pekingese, Cantonese, and French Pekingese sounds.

The pioneering bilingual dictionary of Sino-Vietnamese characters in southern Vietnam during this period was Paulus Huinh Tinh Cua's *Dai Nam Quoc Am Tu Vi* (1895-1896). This two-volume work arranged phonetically in

Latin alphabetical order, employs a word-governing-words approach, listing relevant vocabulary under each word. The Chinese characters are annotated with 'A' for Annamite (indicating a Nom character) and 'C' for Chinois (indicating a Chinese character). The dictionary draws from classical Vietnamese literature and contemporary spoken language, spanning ages to encompass prevalent and archaic vocabulary. Notably, *Dai Nam Quoc Am Tu Vi* includes numerous vulgar characters, reflecting common scripts in Vietnamese society and providing valuable material for modern vulgar character studies.

Huynh Thuc Tram's *New Dictionary of Chinese and Vietnamese* (1951), spanning 1446 pages, distinguishes itself from other dictionaries as a compilation of common Chinese terminology from the 1840s and 1850s. This dictionary encompasses traditional Chinese words as well as introduces numerous new terms, including some of Vietnamese origin. Covering a spectrum of fields such as science, technology, economy, finance, industry, agriculture, medicine, and the names of domestic and foreign institutions, it reflects a comprehensive linguistic landscape.

Nguyen Van Khon's *Chinese-Vietnamese Dictionary* (1960), consisting of 1,156 pages with 10,000 single words and 40,000 words under its jurisdiction, follows the layout of Dao Duy Anh's *Chinese-Vietnamese Dictionary* but incorporates additional terms. Some content is drawn from Dao Duy Anh's work, but Nguyen Van Khon introduces several new terms. Chu Van Can's *New Chinese and Vietnamese Dictionary*, spanning 2229 pages, maintains a similar style to Ly Van Hung's *New Chinese and Vietnamese Dictionary* but boasts a larger word count.

Bao Ke's *Tam Nguyen Tu Dien* (1968) draws inspiration from Ly Van Hoe's earlier work to delve into the origins of Chinese words. Alongside explaining the meanings, the dictionary incorporates relevant poems and allusions from ancient texts to support word interpretations. While the Chinese characters corresponding to the words of Chinese origin are not explicitly indicated, the dictionary provides a phonetic checklist for scholars. Moreover, it offers aliases for over 70 Sino-Vietnamese sounds, presenting a distinctive feature.

Lac Thien's *Hoa Viet Thong Dung Tu Dien* (1972) compiles 6,000 general characters. The arrangement follows the 132 radicals in Jiang Zhongqiong and Lu Yiyian's *The Little Dictionary of the Improved Radical Standard Guoyin* (1936), utilizing phonetic symbols for pronunciation and indicating Sino-Vietnamese sounds. The unique interpretation section uses Roman numerals to sort words with multiple meanings. Additionally, the author specifies the word's associated part for convenient reference and retrieval.

Nguyen Quoc Hung's *New Chinese-Vietnamese Dictionary* (1975), spanning 872 pages, employs a dual format, initially organized in Latin alphabetical phonetic order, further segmented between homophones by radical. It exhibits a close association with the *Kangxi Dictionary*, relying on it for word selection and meanings. This dictionary showcases numerous archaic and variant characters, emphasizing their original meanings, often supported by relevant examples from classical texts. With an extensive collection of Sino-Chinese words paired with Vietnamese meanings, it elucidates these terms within the context of Nom literature.

During this epoch, the Southern Vietnamese population saw a surge in Overseas Chinese residents. With the purpose for better economic and cultural communication with the local populace, numerous bilingual dictionaries were crafted to aid Vietnamese Chinese in learning and referencing the Vietnamese language. A prominent example is Pho Can Tham's *Vietnamese Chinese New Dictionary* (1955), a 428-page compendium drawing from a diverse array of Vietnamese dictionaries and literary works. Leveraging strengths from various sources, it incorporates a plethora of words prevalent in Vietnamese society, meticulously organized in Latin alphabetical order.

In this era, bilingual dictionaries of Sino-Vietnamese characters are characterized by:

1. The lexicon and its content exhibit extraordinary richness, and encompass not only reference dictionaries for the study of Chinese disciplines but also pragmatic dictionaries applicable to societal communication.
2. Diverging from the earlier phase of dictionary compilation that leaned towards capturing the original and archaic meanings of words, this stage emphasizes a nuanced equilibrium between the ancient and the contemporary. It incorporates both classical terms and words commonly employed in the societal milieu of the time.
3. The target audience has gradually broadened. While traditional Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries and those created by Western missionaries were often designed for the indigenous Vietnamese population in previous stages, dictionaries in this era also cater to Overseas Chinese. The objective is to assist them in acquiring proficiency in Vietnamese and enhancing their communication skills.



### 3.2.3 Contemporary Bilingual dictionaries of Sino-Vietnamese characters (approx. 1975-)

Since the complete reunification of Vietnam in 1975, there has been a remarkable surge in the compilation of dictionaries. Over the past five decades, there has been a proliferation of Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries, showcasing a diverse array of styles and content.

In this period, bilingual dictionaries of Sino-Vietnamese characters are characterized by the following.

1. The primary objective of these dictionaries has shifted from learning and promoting Sinology to acquiring proficiency in modern Chinese.
2. Unlike earlier dictionaries that drew upon ancient texts such as the *Dai Nam Quoc Am Tu Vi*, *Sino-Vietnamese Dictionaries*, and *Kangxi Dictionary*, contemporary dictionaries now reference modern Chinese dictionaries like the *Modern Chinese Dictionary* 现代汉语词典 and *Xinhua Dictionary* 新华字典.
3. The level of innovation in the dictionary compilation process has diminished, with compilers relying more on modern Chinese dictionaries, resulting in less creativity in interpreting word meanings.
4. These dictionaries exhibit clear distinctions compared to Vietnamese and Nom dictionaries.

From 1975 to the present, the proliferation of Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries has led to a diverse array of categories with detailed content. However, the originality in dictionary compilation has faced limitations, as a significant number of dictionaries are essentially direct translations of Chinese dictionaries. This can be attributed to three plausible reasons. Firstly, the passing of the older generation of Confucian scholars, coupled with the emergence of a new generation educated in a different system, less proficient in Chinese characters and Chinese studies. This has necessitated the compilation of Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries that are more suitable for Vietnamese readership through direct translations of Chinese dictionaries. Secondly, a substantial shift in the purpose of compilation. In contrast to the preceding stages, which focused on the study of Sinology and the transmission of culture, the current stage witnesses a transformation. The widespread use of the Vietnamese national script has rendered Chinese characters and the Sinology they embody subjects of study for a select group of specialist scholars. Thirdly, The diminishing demand for Chinese characters due to intermarriage with locals, a decline in the number of Vietnamese Chinese, and the emergence of a new generation unfamiliar with Chinese and Chinese characters. To cater to the specific needs of this evolving readership, direct

translation using modern Chinese dictionaries has become the most efficient approach in practice.

#### **4 Bilingual dictionaries of Sino-Vietnamese characters: Their significance through time**

It is unfortunate that Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries from the Middle Ages to the Modern Ages have not received adequate attention from the academic community and have remained in a 'frozen' state for many years. There needs to be more references to these resources in subsequent dictionaries. The exact count of Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries has yet to be officially conducted, and only sporadic studies and monographs on specific topics have emerged. As a result, the true value of these resources has yet to be fully recognized, and the present generation has not fully harnessed their potential. In this context, I aim to systematically summarize the dual value of Middle Ages Chinese character research, encompassing both documentary contributions and the dissemination of Chinese characters.

The academic community has progressively deepened its comprehension and exploration of modern Chinese characters, designating them as the Clerical stage of Chinese characters. This period, ranging from the early Han dynasty to the May Fourth Movement, emphasizes the examination of modern Chinese characters in terms of their form, structure, usage, and origin. The focus of modern Chinese character studies lies particularly on clerical variants and vulgar characters (Jing, 2013, p. 309).

Bilingual dictionaries of Sino-Vietnamese characters from the Middle Ages to the Modern Ages are situated within this historical context. Spanning from the *Chi Nam Ngoc Am Giai Nghia* (17th century) as the earliest example to the *Tam Thien Tu Giai Dich Quoc Ngu* (1915) as the latest, these dictionaries reflect the evolution from ancient Confucian scholars to Western missionaries. The transition is observable from the exclusive use of Chinese characters to the coexistence of Chinese, French, and Vietnamese characters. Even before 1945, this evolution is notable.

As authoritative, standardized, and exemplary resources, the Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries from the Middle Ages to the Modern Ages hold immense value for the exploration of Middle Ages Chinese characters. These dictionaries, serving as the most official and comprehensive materials, significantly contribute not only to the understanding of Middle Ages Chinese characters but also to the broader study of extraterritorial Chinese characters.

## 4.1 Glyphology

Vietnamese Chinese characters exhibit similarities with their Chinese counterparts, featuring not only the predominant use of traditional characters but also the presence of numerous national characters. These vulgar characters find application in normative and authoritative dictionaries. Although most Vietnamese Chinese dictionaries were compiled by folk Confucians, with few official compilations, it is evident that Vietnamese vulgar characters were extensively utilized by the populace and even in more formal settings. The preserved forms within these dictionaries thus offer insights into the usage of Chinese characters in Vietnam. The examination of forms in Vietnamese Chinese dictionaries also presents valuable material for the study of Vietnamese typography.

Contribution to the Compilation of Vietnamese Chinese Character Variation Patterns. In the process of transmission and printing, the constituent elements of glyphs are often transcribed into similar or identical components, contrasting with the distinctive features of Vietnamese vulgar glyphs. For instance:

食 is written as 𠂇: 𩚑 → 𩚒; 餅 → 𩚓; 饒 → 𩚔.

虫 is written as 虫: 蛇 → 𧈧.

足 is written as 足: 露 → 𧈨; 路 → 𧈩.

龍 is written as 竜: 瀧 → 𧈪.

Several Vietnamese components are also present, such as 疑 is written as 𧈫, 凝 is written as 𧈬, 義 is written as 𧈭, 哥 is written as 𧈮, 羅 is written as 𧈯, 學 is written as 𧈰.

Additional Resources on Uncollected Glyphs in the Dictionary. During the collation of ancient Vietnamese dictionaries, it has come to light that certain characters cannot be located in Chinese dictionaries. Therefore, the compilation of this resource aims to supplement materials that have yet to be included in existing dictionaries, for example 𧈱 𧈲 𧈳 𧈴 𧈵 𧈶.

## 4.2 Phonetics

Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries from the Middle Ages to the Modern Ages were crafted by Vietnamese scholars using various approaches. These dictionaries were composed either entirely in pure Chinese characters, interspersed with Nom characters, or as a combination of Chinese, Nom, and French characters within a Vietnamese context. They were compiled with the primary aim of facilitating the study of the ancient Chinese language and classical literature and serving as a supplementary tool for imperial examinations. Representing a carrier of traditional knowledge transmission, Sino-Vietnamese bilingual annotate individual words with phonetic readings to enhance clarity. These dictionaries predominantly rely on the phonetic systems of *Fanqie* 反切 and *Zhiyin* 直音, offering materials rich in linguistic value.

Since the Song dynasty, rhyming books have been introduced to Vietnam through various means, leading Vietnamese Confucians to inherit much of the traditional Chinese phonetic notation for their dictionaries. However, they have made slight modifications to align with local language integration. To incorporate the nuances of the local language, the phonetic transcriptions of both *Fanqie* and *Zhiyin* are typically standardized based on Sino-Vietnamese phonology. Sino-Vietnamese phonology represents a phonetic system closer to that of the Chinese language, influenced by the Chinese language during the Middle Ages. An illustrative difference between the two can be seen in the following examples:

### (1) Differences on *Fanqie*:

Vietnamese ancient dictionaries	Chinese ancient dictionaries
嘷, 楚尺切 <i>Nam Phuong Danh Vat Bi Khao</i>	嘷, 楚夬切 <i>Guangyun</i> 广韵
掇, 古禾切 <i>Nam Phuong Danh Vat Bi Khao</i>	掇, 奴禾切 <i>Jiyun</i> 集韵
搞, 近交切 <i>Nam Phuong Danh Vat Bi Khao</i>	搞, 丘交切 <i>Jiyun</i> 集韵

### (2) Change the script in *Zhiyin*:

Vietnamese ancient dictionaries	Chinese ancient dictionaries
覬, 音覷 <i>Tu Duc Thanh Che Tu Hoc Giai Nghia Ca</i>	覬, 音覷 <i>Leihai</i> 类海
栗, 音茱 <i>Tu Duc Thanh Che Tu Hoc Giai Nghia Ca</i>	栗, 浮 <i>Jiyun</i> 集韵

### (3) Additions:

Vietnamese ancient dictionaries	Chinese ancient dictionaries
晷, 洽又畱 <i>Tu Duc Thanh Che Tu Hoc Giai Nghia Ca</i>	晷, 音畱 <i>Yupian</i> 玉篇

## (4) Change the sound:

Vietnamese ancient dictionaries	Chinese ancient dictionaries
颺, 音足 <i>Tu Duc Thanh Che Tu Hoc Giai Nghia Ca</i>	颺, 音肅 <i>Jiyun 集韻</i>
眇, 止了切 <i>Tu Duc Thanh Che Tu Hoc Giai Nghia Ca</i>	眇, 土了切 <i>Jiyun 集韻</i>

Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries from the Middle Ages rely on homophonic substitution according to Vietnamese phonology. Prosody can be viewed as a synthesis of homophonic substitution and supplementary pronunciation.

Sino-Vietnamese pronunciation is further categorized into two readings. The textual pronunciation 文读 adheres to the evolution of medieval sounds and is characterized by regularity and standardization. Conversely, the vulgar pronunciation 白读 represents the Chinese pronunciation transmitted to Vietnam before the Middle Ages or the pronunciation that has undergone Vietnameseization. The coexistence of textual and vulgar pronunciations, persisting to the present day, results in instances where a single word may be read multiple times. Some of these sounds have fused into Vietnamese words, rendering them challenging to discern.

For instance, the word 尻 is documented in *Nam Phuong Danh Vat Bi Khao* as 丘切 but in *Guangyun* as 苦刀切. The ancient sound of 尻, belonging to the *Youbu* 幽部 category, transformed during the Middle Ages, dividing into *Haoyun* 豪韻 and *Youyun* 尤韻. Initially represented by the same ancient sound, [uw], it later evolved into [eu] and [iu]. These two distinct sounds are preserved in the Sino-Vietnamese phonetic system.

Vietnamese influence on pronunciation is evident in instances such as the word 紬, marked in *Nam Phuong Danh Vat Bi Khao* as 交切, but in *Guangyun* as 徒刀切. In Vietnamese dictionaries and rhyming books, the character 刀 is often substituted with 交 in *Fanqie*, reflecting the prevalent pronunciation [zau<sup>55</sup>] in the northern Vietnamese dialect. Due to the vulgar pronunciation of [jau<sup>55</sup>], where all [j] is pronounced as [z], these characters are interchangeably used. Similarly, the pronunciation of the word 韜, marked as 師交切 in *Nam Phuong Danh Vat Bi Khao*, aligns with the interpretation of the word 刀 as 交 in the *Tu Duc Thanh Che Tu Hoc Giai Nghia Ca*. Consequently, Vietnamese Chinese dictionaries frequently incorporate the most commonly used sounds of the time, offering invaluable insights into the phonological study of Sino-Vietnamese characters during the interregnum.

It is noteworthy that Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries from the Middle Ages employ an incomplete *Fanqie* system, omitting one of the phonetic components. While this practice is justifiable, occasional omissions in

engraving and printing occur. For instance, the pronunciation of 嚼 and 痞 in *Dai Nam Quoc Ngu* is marked as 雀切 and 洱切, respectively. Similarly, the pronunciation of 錘 and 槽 in *Nam Phuoc Danh Vat Bi Khao* is marked as 洽切 and 登切, and the pronunciation of 頑 and 汞 in *Tu Hoc Tu Ngon Thi* is marked as 還切 and 孔切. This phonetic notation method warrants further exploration in future studies.

### 4.3 Glossary and exegesis

Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries from the Middle Ages exhibit distinctive features in terms of glyphs, phonetics, and extensive Chinese glossaries. These glossaries, encompassing Vietnamese words and their meanings, trace their origins to the Song, Yuan, and Ming dynasties, notably popularized through vulgar glossaries like *Sui jin xi* 碎金系 ‘Shattered Gold Words’ and *Za zi xi* 杂字系 ‘Miscellaneous Words’. Dictionaries compiled during the French colonial period by Western missionaries as well as those created by Vietnamese scholars offer insights into the evolution of the usage, selection, and meaning of Vietnamese Chinese words. These resources play a pivotal role in Vietnamese Chinese lexicography and exegesis, shedding light on a field that currently lacks scholarly attention.

Contemporary scholars have conducted minimal research on the exegesis of Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries. This article aims to draw attention to this neglected area through its introduction and collation.

Dictionaries serve as the foundation of exegesis, delving into the interpretation of word meanings. Beyond this, they analyze the structure of vague words and sentences, offering material for subsequent grammatical studies. The interpretative process encompasses the analysis of sentence readings and grammatical explanations, contributing to the study of rhetoric and modes of expression. Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries primarily use their language, employing Nom characters or Chinese characters. Some dictionaries provide explanations in Chinese or French for educational purposes. The variety of interpretations includes general interpretations, Chinese-Vietnamese equivalents (including Nom characters and Chinese characters), homophonic interpretations, and comprehensive interpretations. Traditional dictionaries often integrate these interpretations with the Vietnamese folk rhyming system of alternating six and eight rhymes. Notable examples include *Tu Duc Thanh Che Tu Hoc Giai Nghia Ca*, *Chi Nam Ngoc Am Giai Nghia*, *Tam Tu Kinh Giai Am*, *Ngu Thien Tu Giai Dich Quoc Ngu*, *Thien Tu Van Giai Dich Quoc Ngu*, *Tam Thien Tu Giai Dich Quoc Ngu*, etc. Additionally, some dictionaries adopt non-poetic forms to explain word meanings, such as *Dai*

*Nam Quoc Ngu*, *Nam Phuong Danh Vat Bi Khao*, *Nan Tu Giai Am*, *Nhat Dung Thuong Dam*, etc. Modern dictionaries, compiled by Western missionaries and Vietnamese scholars, adhere to contemporary formats and standards.

Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries primarily draw upon extensive traditional Chinese character references and rhyme books, including significant works like *Shuowen Jiezi* 说文解字, *Erya* 尔雅, *Zhengzitong* 正字通, *Kangxi Dictionary* 康熙字典, *Tang Yun* 唐韵, *Ji Yun* 集韵, *Hongwu Zhengyun* 洪武正韵, among others. Notably, *Tu Duc Thanh Che Tu Hoc Giai Nghia Ca* illustrates various citation methods, categorized into seven types:

1. *Original text type citation*: Direct quotations from sources.

(5) Vietnamese ancient dictionaries   Chinese ancient dictionaries

藋，鹿藿也；	藋，鹿藿也；
岑，山小而高 <i>Shuowen Jiezi</i>	岑，山小而高 <i>Shuowen Jiezi</i>
飀，風聲； 睽，電光 <i>Yupian</i>	飀，風聲； 睽，電光 <i>Yupian</i>

2. *Abbreviated citation*: Shortened references for brevity and clarity.

(6) Vietnamese ancient dictionaries   Chinese ancient dictionaries

晷，堅也	晷，餘堅也 <i>Shuowen Jiezi</i>
晷，照也	晷，日照 <i>Yupian</i>

3. *Change the character citation*: Instances where characters are altered or modified from the source.

(7) Vietnamese ancient dictionaries   Chinese ancient dictionaries

昶，日永也	昶，日長也 <i>Shuowen Jiezi</i>
霪，辰雨	霪，時雨 <i>Jiyun</i>

4. *Mixed citation*: A combination of different citation methods for comprehensive coverage.

(8) Vietnamese ancient dictionaries   Chinese ancient dictionaries

𪚩，鳥似雉蛇化為雉也	𪚩鳥似雉 <i>Jiyun</i> + 化為雉也 <i>Jinshu: Zhuanghuazhuan</i> 晋书·张华传
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## 5. *Rewritten citation*: Reinterpretation or paraphrasing of sources.

(9) Vietnamese ancient dictionaries	Chinese ancient dictionaries
耨，鋤也，布秧後以此摩之，使土合覆也	耨，摩田器，布種後以此器摩之，使土開發處復合覆種也 <i>Shuowen Jiezi</i>
* The term 布種 in <i>Shuowen</i> was rewritten as 布秧, and the words 器, 開發復合 and were omitted.	

## 6. *Note type citation*: Explanations provided in the form of notes, offering additional insights.

(10) Vietnamese ancient dictionaries	Chinese ancient dictionaries
騮，赤馬黑鬣獵馬頸毛也赤馬黑毛尾也	赤馬黑毛尾也 <i>Shuowen Jiezi</i> 騮，赤馬黑鬣尾也 <i>Noted by Yan Shigu</i> 顏師古
朏，月三日明生之名	注 朏明，月三日明生之名 <i>Noted Shu: Zhaogao</i> <i>by Kong Yingda</i> 書-召浩

## 7. *Other types of citation*: Instances where Chinese characters are explained without specifying a clear source.

(11) Vietnamese ancient dictionaries
櫺，門兩旁挾門短限也 虹，白而赤謂之虹

These distinctions serve as a valuable resource for research and argumentation within the field of exegesis. They facilitate comparative analyses between the meanings of specific words and those found in traditional Chinese literature. Furthermore, these differences enable a comprehensive and scientific exploration of the genuine meanings of words, contributing to a deeper understanding of their evolution over time.

## 4.4 Documentation and communication

Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries extensively refer to ancient Chinese texts in their interpretations, providing unique insights into historical figures and narratives when viewed from the Vietnamese perspective. While many interpretations align with corresponding Chinese records, analyzing the



discrepancies allows us to comprehend the diffusion and transformation of ancient Chinese thought and culture in Vietnam.

As mentioned earlier, the connection between Vietnam and Chinese characters spans over 2,000 years, forming an inseparable bond. Chinese characters have held a significant position for more than a millennium, serving not only as a universal medium for linguistic expression but also as a carrier of profound cultural messages. Within the Middle Kingdom, it encapsulates Chinese civilization, and beyond its borders, it becomes a disseminating seed influenced by various factors. Genetic mutations necessary for adaptation to diverse geographical conditions have resulted in variances between Chinese characters within and outside the Middle Kingdom, including Vietnam. Beyond slight alterations in shape, pronunciation, and meaning, the enduring feature is their ability to convey cultural messages, showcasing the beauty of Chinese character transmission.

Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries frequently incorporate and reproduce a broad spectrum of cultural, historical, and geographical information related to the Middle Kingdom. This practice aims to enhance the clarity of Chinese word meanings and serves as a mechanism for spreading Chinese characters throughout the region. Examining the dissemination of Chinese characters in Vietnam through these dictionaries also sheds light on cultural characteristics and the evolution of cultural interactions across generations. This exploration contributes to bridging gaps in local Chinese literature, attesting to the profound influence of Chinese characters and culture on the construction of civilizations within the Chinese cultural sphere.

## 5 Conclusion

This article provides a comprehensive overview of the present state of research on Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries from the Middle Ages and the Modern Ages, categorizing the discussion into three main themes: an overview of current research, historical staging, and the intrinsic value of dictionary research. Additionally, it delves into the historical context of the compilation of Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries during the Middle Ages and the Modern Ages, aligning these compilations with significant events in Vietnamese history. The exploration proves instrumental for an in-depth understanding of the contemporaneity of Sino-Vietnamese bilingual dictionaries in both the Middle Ages and the Modern Ages within the realm of Chinese characters. While acknowledging certain limitations in this article, future efforts will involve an extensive review of additional literature to address any gaps and enrich the scholarly discourse.

## Acknowledgments

This work was supported by the National Social Science Foundation of China "Research on Chinese Character Resources in Vietnam and Related Topics 越南汉字资源整理及相关专题研究" (17ZDA308).

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## Appendix: List of dictionaries

Date	(Title in characters (Hán-Nôm)) Title in Vietnamese alphabet (Quốc Ngữ) Title in simplified Latin script	Author(s)
3rd cent. BC	尔雅 Erya	
100 AD	说文解字 Shuowen Jiezi	许慎 Xu Shen
1627	正字通 Zhengzhitong	张自烈 Zhang Zilie
543	玉篇 Yupian	顾野王 Gu Yewang
618–907	唐韵 Tang Yun	
960–1279	集韵 Ji Yun	
1368– 1644	洪武正韻 Hongwu Zhengyun	
16th century	安南译语 An Nam dịch ngữ An Nam dịch ngu	会同四译馆 Huitong Siyiguan
17th century	指南玉音解义 Chỉ nam Ngọc Âm Giải Nghĩa Chi Nam Ngọc Âm Giai Nghia	
1651	Dictionarium annamiticum lusitanum et latinum	Alexandre de Rhodes
1660	万法指南 Vạn pháp chỉ nam Van phap chi nam	释了一 Shi Liaoyi
1772	Dictionarium Anamitico Latinum	Jean-Louis Taberd
1827	日用常谈 Nhất dụng thượng đàm Nhat dung thuong dam	范廷琥 Phan Đình Hồ Phan Dinh Ho
1827	增订幼学须知杂字采珍大全 Tăng đính ấu học tu tri tập tự thái trân đại toàn Tang dinh au hoc tu tri tap tu thai chan dai toan	范廷琥 Phan Đình Hồ Phan Dinh Ho

1831	三千字解音 Tam thiên tự giải âm Tam thiên tu giai am	吴时任 Ngô Thời Nhiệm Ngo Thoi Nhiem
1838	Dictionarium Anamitico- Latinum	Jean-Louis Taberd
1839	钦定辑韵摘要 Khâm định tập vận trích yếu Kham dinh tap van trich yeu	范文谊等 Phạm Văn Nghi et al Pham Van Nghi et al
1867	Dictionnaire étymologique Chinois-Annamite Latin-Français	G. Pauthier
1868	Dictionnaire élémentaire annamite-français	Legrand de la Liraye
1877	Dictionarium Anamitico-Latinum	Jean-Louis Taberd
1877	Dictionnaire annamite-français	Louis Caspar
1879	字学训蒙 Tự học huấn môn Tu học huan mong	黎直 Lê Trực Le Truc
1880	字学求精歌 Tự học cầu tinh ca Tu học cau tinh ca	杜辉琬 Đỗ Huy Uyển Do Huy Uyen
1882	字学四言诗 Tự học tứ ngôn thi Tu học tu ngôn thi	黎直 Lê Trực Le Truc
1884	Petit dictionnaire français-annamite	Trưởng-Vĩnh-Ký Truong Vinh Ky
1886	Index des caractères Chinois contenus dans le dictionnaire Chinois Anglais de Williams avec la pronunciation Mandarine Annamite	Phan Đức Hoá Phan Duc Hoa
1887	Vocabulaire franco-tonkinois	Gaston Kahn
1887	Vocabulaire annamite-français	Trưởng-Vĩnh-Ký Truong Vinh Ky
1889	Dictionnaire Annamite-Français	Charles Bailly
1890	千字文解音 Thiên tự văn giải âm Thien tu van giai am	
1893	Vocabulaire annamite-français	M.Génibrel
1895	检字 Kiểm tự Kiem tu	杨嘉训 Dương Gia Huấn Duong Gia Huan
1895	Petit vocabulaire Chinois-Annamite-Français	Edmond Nordemann

1895– 1896	大南国音字汇 Đại Nam quốc âm tự vị Dai Nam Quoc am tu vi	Huỳnh Tịnh Của Huinh Tinh Cua
1897	嗣德圣制字学解义歌 Tự Đức Thánh chế tự học giải nghĩa ca Tu Duc Thanh che tu học giai nghĩa ca	嗣德 Tự Đức Tu Duc
Unknown	古愚正误四言诗 Cổ Ngu chính ngộ tứ ngôn thi Co Ngu chinh ngo tu ngon thi	黎直 Lê Trực Le Truc
Unknown	指南备类 Chỉ Nam bị loại Chi Nam bi loi	
Unknown	村居便览 Thôn cư tiện lãm Thon cu tien lam	
Unknown	难字解音 Nan tự giải âm Nan tu giai am	
Unknown	字类演义 Tự loại diễn nghĩa Tu loi dien nghĩa	
1898	Dictionnaire Annamite-Français	M. Génibrel
1899	大南国语 Đại Nam quốc ngữ Dai Nam quoc ngu	阮文珊 Nguyễn Văn San Nguyen Van San
1899– 1900	Dictionnaire Annamite - Français	Jean Bonet
1900	Nouveau vocabulaire français-tonkinois et tonkinois-français	P.Crépin
1902	南方名物备考 Nam phương danh vật bị khảo Nam phuonq danh vat bi khao	邓春榜 Đặng Xuân Bảng Dang Xuan Bang
1906	Petit lexique de poche français-annamite	M.Génibrel
1908	三千字解译国语 Tam thiên tự giải dịch quốc ngữ Tam thien tu giai dich quoc ngu	
1909	五千字解译国语 Ngũ thiên tự giải dịch quốc ngữ Ngu thien tu giai dich quoc ngu	阮秉 Nguyễn Bính Nguyen Binh

1909	千字文解译国语 Thiên tự văn giải dịch quốc ngữ Thien tu van giai dich quoc ngu	
1909	Technique du peuple Annamite	Henri Oger
1914	常谈日用汉字烈歌 Thường đàm nhật dụng Hán tự liệt ca Thuong dam nhut dung Han tu liet ca	胡玉谨 Hồ Ngọc Cẩn Ho Ngoc Can
1931	Từ điển Việt Nam Vietnamese Dictionary	Pham Quynh, Nguyen Van Vinh, Tran Cong Kim, Duong Bac Khao (Eds.)
1932	漢越辭典 Hán - Việt Từ Điển Chinese-Vietnamese Dictionary The Chinese-Vietnamese Dictionary in Brief	Đào Duy Anh Dao Duy Anh
1936	The Little Dictionary of the Improved Radical Standard Guoyin	Jiang Zhongqiong, Lu Yiyian
1941	Tam Nguyên Tự Điển Tam Nguyen Tu Dien	Lê Văn Hòe Le Van Hoe
1942	Từ Điển Trung-Việt Chinese-Vietnamese Dictionary	Thiều Châu Thieu Chau
1942	Từ Điển Nam Hoa Nam Hoa Dictionary	Nguyễn Trần Mô Nguyen Tran Mo
1942	Chinese-Vietnamese Dictionary	Thieu Chau
1951	Từ Điển Mới Trung-Việt New Dictionary of Chinese and Vietnamese	Huỳnh Thúc Trâm Huynh Thuc Tram
1955	Từ Điển Hoa Việt Mới Vietnamese Chinese New Dictionary	Phó Cận Thẩm Pho Can Tham
1957	Từ Điển Trung-Việt Chinese-Vietnamese Dictionary	Vạn Tân Van Tan
1960	Từ Điển Trung-Việt Chinese-Vietnamese Dictionary	Nguyễn Văn Khôn Nguyen Van Khon
1960	Từ Điển Mới Trung-Việt New Chinese-Vietnamese Dictionary	Lý Văn Hùng Ly Van Hung
1968	Tam Nguyên Tự Điển Tam Nguyen Tu Dien	Bảo Kế Bao Ke
1972	Từ Điển Hoa Việt Thông Dụng Hoa Viet Thong Dung Tu Dien	Lạc Thiên Lac Thien

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1975	Từ Điển Mới Trung-Việt New Chinese-Vietnamese Dictionary	Nguyễn Quốc Hưng Nguyen Quoc Hung
1994	Từ Điển Trung-Việt Phan Văn Các Chinese-Vietnamese Dictionary	Phan Văn Các Phan Van Cac

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