

FORUM

A STUDY ON THE ETYMOLOGY OF “VĂN HIẾN”

Trần Trọng Dương¹

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Abstract

This article studies the origin and meaning of the word "văn hiến" (文獻) from the perspective of historical linguistics and etymology. The surveyed corpus includes modern Vietnamese dictionaries, and Chinese corpus in Confucian classics, as well as Sinitic literary from the 15th to the 19th century. Research results show that "văn hiến" is a Sino-Vietnamese word with the original meaning of "books/cannons and talented people" in Song Confucian classics. The Sinitic literary written by Vietnamese scholars shows that "văn hiến" has quite a broad connotation, including: language, script, books - classics, literature, law, customs, education - examinations, talent, costumes. Since Confucianism was abolished in the early twentieth century, "văn hiến" has gradually narrowed its meaning and is tending to merge with "culture" and "civilization".

Keywords: etymology, Vietnamese, Confucianism, Sinitic literacy, culture.

“Văn hiến” (文獻) is a concept often used in many research projects, especially research on Vietnamese cultural history in the Middle Ages. This is a Confucian term that has probably been used in Vietnam for nearly two millennia. The purpose of the article comes from the conception: when researching any field, the researcher should place himself in the context of the era as well as the knowledge context of that

era and that ethnic group. This will help us gain an inside view, avoiding the “modernized” vision of later generations. Therefore, this article will examine the etymology of “văn hiến” to partly account the connotation of this concept in the past, thereby contributing to the study of văn hiến in particular and traditional culture in general.

This article investigates the concept of văn hiến in a diachronic

¹. School of Languages - Tourism, Hanoi University of Industry; Email: trantrongduonghn@gmail.com

dimension. Our research method includes the following steps. The first step is to study the ways of understanding "văn hiến" through the records of dictionaries compiled after Confucianism was abolished. The second step is to examine the concept of văn hiến in the cultural and linguistic context of classical Chinese, thereby distinguishing the content of this concept between the Vietnamese language and the Sinitic one. The third step is to study this concept through the recognition of the dictionary system and literature of the Vietnamese language along the line of history. The fourth step is to conduct research in the contexts of the literary Sinitic used by Confucian Vietnamese writers (through historical records, Confucian doctorate inscriptions, văn sách đình đối (庭對策文 - a type of professional essay in the form of discussion to be performed at the palace examination), and other literary texts, from which to segment the semantic fields of this concept from the context of Confucian knowledge.

1. THE WORD "VĂN HIẾN" IN VIETNAMESE DICTIONARIES

Văn Hiến is a vocabulary of classical Chinese origin written as 文獻, was a multicultural, multi-religious political community (Trần Trọng Dương, 2023: 18; Kelley L.C. 2005: 94–96). Since Confucianism was abolished in Vietnam in 1919, and especially since the Han script and Nôm script were completely replaced in 1945, văn hiến and other words of Chinese origin have suffered

the same fate. It is known as a break from its original history. In addition, that separation has caused etymology to encounter a lot of difficulties; not to mention other losses and damages for reading comprehension and research about the Vietnamese language. In this section, the article will review the definitions of some Vietnamese dictionaries compiled in the twentieth century, to understand more about the history of definitions for this concept.

The Great Vietnamese Dictionary by Nguyễn Như Ý (2008: 1744) inherits and supplements "văn hiến": n. A long cultural tradition, with many talented people."

The Sino-Vietnamese Dictionary by Lại Cao Nguyên and Phan Văn Các (2007: 534) and the Vietnamese Dictionary (2007) of the Vietlex Dictionary Center (2007: 1697) records: "văn hiến adj.n. long and fine cultural traditions."

The Vietnam Encyclopedia (1995, vol.4) records: "văn hiến" - good and long-standing cultural traditions. Zhou Xi of the Song Dynasty annotated a sentence in the book entitled "Analects" as follows: "Văn writing in Chinese is điển tịch 典籍 - books & written recordings for keeping rites given by the previous kings; hiến means goodness and genius" (sic). Thus, "văn hiến" originally means super literature and great books, preserving long-standing cultural traditions."

The Vietnamese Dictionary of Institute of Linguistics (2000: 1110) of the Institute of Linguistics records:

“văn hiến d. long and fine cultural traditions.”

The Vietnamese Dictionary (1977: 846) revised and supplemented by Văn Tân and Nguyễn Văn Đạm states: “văn hiến. adj. aka. Văn vật (文物). Love for literature and culture: Vietnam is a văn hiến country.”

Bửu Kế's *Etymological Sino-Vietnamese Dictionary* (1999: 2309) records: “văn hiến - Văn: books on history. Hiến: geniuses... A country with many geniuses and books on history is called “văn hiến country”.

The Vietnamese Dictionary of Ban Tu Thư Khai Trí (1971: 911) records văn hiến also means civilization.

The Popular Vietnamese Dictionary by Đào Văn Tập (1951: 689), after the correct accounting of the original word văn hiến, segmented the meaning of this word: “imply the good things in a life, worthy of being an example”

The Vietnam's new Dictionary by Thanh Nghị (1951: 1428) records: “văn hiến. Good books and good figures, a broad meaning similar to civilization: a thousand years of văn hiến.”

Vietnamese-Chinese-French Dictionary by Gustave Hue (1937: 1113) notes văn hiến = civilization.

Simple Sino-Vietnamese Dictionary by Đào Duy Anh's (1932: 537) records: “văn hiến: books and good intellectuality in a lifetime.”

Vietnam Dictionary of the Khai Trí Tiến Đức Association (1931: 626) records: “văn hiến 文憲 means education, talent and virtue. A place of văn hiến”. However, while preparing the print template, the original Chinese characters were wrongly selected due to homophones, 獻 was mistaken for 憲. This is the earliest dictionary to have this entry. The dictionaries from A. de Rhodes (1651) to Huỳnh Tịnh Của (1898) do not find any records of this word.

It can be said that modern Vietnamese dictionaries only separate the meaning of this concept with a vague general meaning. In particular, there is a lack of clear distinction between the two concepts of culture and văn hiến 文獻, and the idea that văn hiến is considered as a prolonged, good culture. Recently, to commemorate the 1000th anniversary of Thăng Long - Hanoi, the book entitled “Compendium of Thousand Years of Thang Long Văn hiến” was published with a number of pages up to 8,000 pages, in which the working spirit of the authors seems to bear the same conceptual ambiguity.

Some authors, even after discussing the etymology of the concept of văn hiến, are still willing to attribute all fields such as mathematics, architecture, commerce, traditional occupations, urban design, and... patriotic spirit into the connotation of văn hiến 文獻 (Nguyễn Vinh Phúc, 2009). Furthermore, that exceeding way of understanding also leads to the author using concepts (văn hiến, civilization, culture, material culture,...) in a mixed way according to

the pen-holder's inspiration and emotions. Đỗ Trọng Huề (1998) defined văn hiến as follows: "Văn hiến 文獻 is the cultural level of a people that has escaped the darkness of prehistory to enter the light of the historical period".

Especially, before that, văn hiến 文獻 was also created by philosopher Kim Định according to his philosophical thinking style, regardless of historical truth and the allowable limits of etymology as well as cultural studies and ideological history. He wrote: "Văn hiến are those who sacrifice their bodies and minds for culture and are respected and followed by people in the country. It is a type of apostles and it can be said that the particular features of the Vietnamese Confucian culture can be found here. Although India is also a văn hiến country, it does not rise to the highest position in society, which is still reserved for Brahmana monks. Europe is even worse in terms of

lacking 'văn hiến,' having only great writers and common writers." (Kim Định, 1979: 303) Kim Định's definition comes from his understanding of the etymology of văn hiến 文獻. He understood văn as culture (in a broad and quite modern sense), and hiến as hy hiến (sacrifice-dedicate) (hy in the word hy sinh 犧牲 (sacrifice), hiến with its basic meaning in Chinese is dedication). He considered văn hiến to be a noun that refers to a person (a person who sacrifices, such as a famous writer or an ordinary writer), showing that he also knew the second original meaning of the word that the ancients understood (hiến also refers to a sage). But his pure speculative thinking is too strong!

It can be said that văn hiến 文獻 is a concept that is quite vague to modern people, especially when it is compared with a number of other concepts such as culture "văn hóa" 文化¹, civilization "văn minh" 文明²,

¹ Văn hóa 文化 is an abbreviation for the phrase (văn chương giáo hóa 文章教化-: that is, using literature to teach, to persuade and transform the spiritual life as well as the material life of a person or a social community. The Dictionary of the Khai Trí Tiên Đức Association (1931: 626) records: "Văn hoá: education through literature that has penetrated deeply into people's minds." Sino-Vietnamese Dictionary by Đào Duy Anh (1931: 537) records: "Văn hoá: literary objects and educate, using writing to educate people." "Great is the spread of cultural display, lofty is the great Confucian war." [The epitaph naming the Confucian doctor of the Quy Mui Examination Session in the 4th year of Quang Thuận (1463) engraved in the 15th year of Hồng Đức (1484) was composed by Đào Cũ]

² Temporarily, the etymological meaning of the word văn minh (civilization - 文明) can be segmented as follows: the first meaning is brilliant. Cái đức của nó cương kiện và văn minh, ứng với trời thì mùa vận hành, cho nên đứng đầu và hanh thông (Its virtue is strong and civilized, corresponding to

heaven, the seasons operate, so it is at the top and easy & lucky) (Kinh dịch 易經 – Book of Changes), quẻ (魁 – hexagram) Đại hữu (大有 - prosperous and rich). 2. Adj. Shining and brilliant (used for morality, Confucianism), Vua Thuần uyên thâm và văn minh (King Thuần is a very profound and civilized scholar) (Tuần triết văn minh - being wiser than others and civilized) (Kinh Thư - 書經). 3. Adj. A state with education, ethics, rituals, and rules. Thánh Tông Thuần Hoàng Đế sáng lập pháp chế, mở ra muôn đời văn minh (Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư – 大越史記全書 - Complete Book of the Historical Records of Đại Việt, henceforth ĐVSKTT) (Thánh Tông Thuần Hoàng Đế (聖宗淳皇帝) founded the law, opened up civilization for generations). The Đinh family (丁姓) by origin was a senior class family, held distant lands, admired civilized customs, often expressed a desire to depend on China. (Khâm định Việt sử thông giám cương mục - 欽定越史通鑑綱目 - is a set of official history books of the Nguyễn Dynasty). Phong tục văn minh của đất

material culture “văn vật” 文物¹. In fact, the above basic terms of cultural studies all come from Confucian classics.

As discussed above, văn hiến 文獻 is a Confucian term, this term has entered the Vietnamese vocabulary system quite deeply. So deep that many Vietnamese people (nearly 100 years ago) seem to have completely forgotten its etymological meaning, which has been used for a very long time. This is an example of the cultural rupture caused by the abandonment of traditional writing (Sinitic and Nôm scripts, and many other traditional writing systems).

We believe that the word văn hiến 文獻 has entered the Vietnamese since a long time ago. Theoretically, this word could have been introduced into our country along with Confucian scriptures 2,000 years ago, at least since the time of Sĩ Nhiếp (士燮: 137 - 226). But the word “văn hiến” has really been an element of the Vietnamese language, perhaps only

since the past 1,200 years (Nguyễn Tài Cẩn 2001: 401-411; Trần Trọng Dương, 2019: 175-188). To determine the time of its entry, we can conduct research in two dimensions. The first dimension is to find its specific corpus in a Vietnamese text through those texts written in Nôm characters. The second dimension is to find its specific corpus in Vietnamese texts written in Chinese. But before conducting the above research, the article will focus on exploring the meanings of this concept in the history of the Chinese language and Chinese culture.

2. THE WORD “VĂN HIẾN” IN CHINESE CANNONS AND BOOKS

2.1. In part entitled Bát Dật of the book entitled Analects, we can find a passage in which Confucius wrote: ngô năng ngôn chi, Kỷ bất túc trung dã; Ân lễ, ngô năng ngôn chi, Tống bất túc trung dã; văn hiến bất túc cổ dã 子曰夏禮吾能言之杞不足徵也殷禮吾能言之宋不足徵也文獻不足故也 meaning: “We can discuss the rites of

Lĩnh Nam bắt đầu từ hai thái thú ấy (The civilized customs of Lĩnh Nam started from those two thái thú (太守 - district chief). (ĐVSKTT). Sino-Vietnamese dictionary by Đào Duy Anh (1931: 537) records: “the ray of morality discovered in politics, law, academia, rules and regulations,...”.

¹ Văn vật: 1. N. Archaeological evidence shows the culture of a dynasty (An Nam chí lược 安南志略 Brief treatise on An Nam)// Vua khéo biết kế thừa, cho nên thời cuộc đi tới thái bình, chính trị trở nên tốt đẹp, văn vật chế độ ngày càng thịnh vượng, cũng là bậc vua tốt của triều Trần. (ĐVSKTT) 2. Dt. Các di vật cổ có giá trị về lịch sử và nghệ thuật. Hà Nội nghìn năm văn vật. Hội Khai Trí Tiến Đức’s dictionary note văn vật has the same meaning as văn hiến. Sino-Vietnamese dictionary by Đào Duy Anh (1931: 539) records: “cultural products such as ceremonies, music, rites and political regimes”. Văn vật (文物- material culture) 1. N. Archaeological evidence shows the

culture of a dynasty. Our Thái tổ Hoàng đế (太祖皇帝 - Thái tổ Emperor) was ceded to the throne by the Zhou Dynasty, reputation and material culture changed back to the way they were before. [Lê Tắc 黎則, An Nam chí lược 安南志略 Brief treatise on An Nam, Siku quanshu ed., orig. comp., 1333)// The king knew how to inherit well [the career of previous kings], so the times came to peace, politics became better, the Confucianism culture and regime became more and more prosperous, he was also a good king of the Tran Dynasty. (ĐVSKTT) 2. n. Ancient relics with historical and artistic values. Hanoi is of thousands of years of material culture. KTTĐ (Khai Trí Tiến Đức Association) notes that material culture is equal as văn hiến (文獻). Đào Duy Anh’s Sino-Vietnamese Dictionary records: “products of culture such as ceremonies, music, and regimes” (p. 539)

the Xia Dynasty, but the Kỷ state (descendants of the Xia Dynasty) is not enough to testify; We can also discuss the rites of the Yin Dynasty, but the Song state (the descendants of the Yin Dynasty) is not enough to testify. That's because the văn hiến of those two countries is not enough." Chu Hy notes: Văn 文 means điển tịch dã (典籍也) which refers to books for recording rules and regulations); hiến is hiền dã 獻賢也 (Hu Quang 1418: 14b) which means people who are virtuous, talented, and have contributed a lot to society.

This passage shows a very important idea about văn hiến 文獻. In that, we should pay attention to the relationship between hiến and rites/ceremony. Combined with Chu Hy's notes, we can have the following syllogism:

Paragraph 1:

Văn hiến 文獻 = Lễ 禮 Rites

Paragraph 2:

Văn 文 = Điển tịch 典 ;

Hiến 獻 = người 人

Paragraph 3:

Văn hiến 文憲 = điển tịch 典籍

(records of rites) + người hiền 賢才
(people who prepare and perform rites)

This can be considered the prime meaning of the word văn hiến 文獻 from the knowledge context of Chinese Confucianism, and it can also be considered a closely coincide concept between Early Qin Confucianism and New Confucianism.

2.2. Mã Đoan Lâm 馬端臨 (1254-1330) composed a famous book called "Văn hiến thông khảo 文獻通考" [Comprehensive investigations based on literary and documentary sources]. The compilation period lasted from 1285 to 1307. This book is about the history of the regime and classic chapters, including 348 volumes, with the contents of each chapter written about: taxes on farm land 田賦, currency 錢幣, the royal ancestral shrine 宗廟, the Confucian classics 經籍, ceremonial rites and regulations 王禮,... The compilation method combines the collection and editing of book materials (文), gathering discussions of Confucian predecessors (called 獻) from the fashionable ancient times until the Gia Định 嘉定 era (1208-1224) of the Southern Song Dynasty, so the book's name is "Văn hiến thông khảo 文獻通考". Mã Đoan Lâm also made notes from his point of view. Thus, the title of the book itself, the method of writing history, and the annotation of the book clearly express the view of "văn hiến". (Mã Đoan Lâm, 1307)

2.3. The book entitled Vũ cống đồi chỉ 禹貢錐指 (volume 19) of Hồ Vị in the Qing Dynasty: 自兩漢以降嶺南之風氣漸移犀象毒冒珠璣銀銅果布之湊於是乎在魁奇忠信材德之民於是乎生一以為脂膏之地一以為文獻之邦 meaning: "from the Han Dynasty onwards, the atmosphere (phong khí 風氣) of Lĩnh Nam¹ gradually changed; therefore, rhino horn, ivory,

¹ Lĩnh Nam (嶺南): refers to the entire land from the south of the Ngũ Lĩnh range back, including parts of Guangdong, Guangxi and our country. For 108

Vietnamese people, the word Lĩnh Nam is also used to refer to their country's national territory. The history of Đại Nam quốc sử diễn ca (大南國史演歌

tortoiseshell, jade, gold, copper, and fruits have accumulated in abundance; many sages, loyal, talented & virtuous people also appeared, [Lĩnh Nam] can be considered both a fertile land and a văn hiến country.” (Hồ Vị 1778)

This paragraph emphasizes people - the subjective element that makes up a country's văn hiến. Those people must be noble ones, possessing loyalty and talent according to Confucian conceptions.

2.4. The Dictionary of Etymology (1998: 0737)- A popular dictionary compiled in the early 20th century, accounted on the basis of Chu Hy's definition, so it writes: “văn refers to documents related to the canon of regimes, hiến means those who listen widely and know a lot”.

The above definition of Ciyuan is to absorb the spirit of Chu Hy. However, the definition of hiến (referring to those who listen widely and know a lot) has a slightly narrower meaning than in reality. A sage is of course an erudite scholar, a full knowledge one; but knowledge is only one element. Besides, a sage must also meet many other criteria such as virtue, temperament, administrative merits (chính tích 政績), and trứ thư lập ngôn (著書立言 - write books to pass on ideas and knowledge to future generation).

2.4. Cihai Dictionary (2002: 1860), after explaining the etymology, notes

Vernacular verse on the history of Đại Nam) has a saying: Lĩnh Nam is our separate court.

¹ Sĩ Nhiếp 士燮 (137-226) had Ngạn Tín as an alias, a native of Quảng Tín, Thương Ngô district, was the Governor of Giao Chi from 187 to 226 (late Eastern

that the current meaning of the word văn hiến in the Chinese language today only has an expanded meaning which is “data of material culture with historical value such as: history of văn hiến, at the same time, it also refers to data collected from important books related to a specific scientific field, for example: medicine documents (Y học văn hiến 文獻醫學). Now, văn hiến [in Chinese] is also the common name for any form of material that uses writing, pictures, and badges to convey knowledge and information such as: publications, magnetic tapes, CDs, video tapes, clay plate print.”

In short, it can be said that the word Văn hiến 文獻 in the Chinese language has narrowed the original meaning of Confucianism, and generally refers to documents that store information. The word Văn hiến 文獻 in modern Vietnamese dictionaries compiled during the 20th and early 21st centuries shows inconsistency and ambiguity in terms of concept as mentioned above.

3. THE WORD “VĂN HIẾN” IN HISTORICAL VIETNAMESE

We found literature dating as early as the 17th century in the book Thiên Nam Ngữ Lục 天南語錄 - vernacular poetry on Southern State completed in the late 17th century when writing about Sĩ Nhiếp/ Tiếp 士燮¹. This work praised Sĩ Nhiếp (士燮) was honored

Han Dynasty, early Three Kingdoms period in history China). Sĩ Nhiếp was most appreciated for his contribution in maintaining peace and stability in Giao Chi during the extremely complicated period of the Three Kingdoms civil war in China that lasted more than half a century. That achievement helped Sĩ Nhiếp almost become an autonomous king of

as one of the figures who paved the way for Confucianism in Đại Việt, honored as the "Nam Giao Học Tổ" 南交學祖 as follows:

Being a military mandarin but also is our teacher,

Being the domain Governor alias Sĩ Vương

The country became "Domain of Manifest Civility" (文獻之邦),

Ability to civilize people by education does not yield to Đậu Thị in Hà Tây (Sentences: 1930-1933)

Praise Sĩ Nhiếp (士燮) in different aspects:

There's nothing to worry about this period

Confucian moral principles have been revealed, laws have been identified

The yearly tax has been fixed

Military mandarins and soldiers know the rules, the masses know the way

Regulate regime and disciplines (綱)

Educating treasure has been opened, human moral relationships (人倫)

have been enlightened" (Sentences. 1924-1928)

The above verses praise Sĩ Nhiếp (士燮) as a king, because he had great merits in educating people and turned

Giao Chỉ into a "Domain of Manifest Civility" (文獻之邦). Formally speaking, he is a "military mandarin", but in reality he is our sư biểu (師表 - our exemplary teacher). That exemplary teacher used morality to help our people clearly understand the "rules" and "laws". The word mỗi giềng (綱紀 - law and order) is translated from the word cương thường (綱常: short for 三綱五常: 三綱 (君臣, 父子, 夫婦) the proper relations between the king and his ministers, between father and son, and between husband and wife; 五常 the five cardinal virtues of 仁義禮智信). Thus, văn hiến (文獻) here can be temporarily divided into the following meanings: 1. Cương thường (nhân luân - 倫常/ 人倫 - Moral rules); 2. Laws (for soldiers and the masses); 3. Education. In particular, three moral bonds and five constant virtues were often considered as institutions related to bloodline and social ethics. Laws were legal norms and state administrative management.

Histories in the past all praised Sĩ Nhiếp (士燮) as a good mandarin,

Giao Châu, completely free from the influence and orders of the Han Dynasty. That is shown in the letter of Viên Huy, who was a Han Dynasty mandarin at that time in Giao Châu, sent to Han Dynasty Minister Tuân Úc in the year of Đinh Hợi, in the 12th year of Kiến An (207). The letter read: "Sĩ Nhiếp- the Governor of Giao Châu district, had extensive education and political understanding. During times of great chaos, he was able to maintain an intact district for more than twenty years, nothing happened to the territory, and the people did not lose their careers, the guests from far away who came to stay could rely on his favors, even Đậu Dung, who held the land of Hà Tây was no better (than Sĩ燮). When the mandarin's work was a bit leisurely, he looked closely at books, letters and stories. When never encountering unclear writings in book entitled

Xuân Thu Tả Thị Truyện (春秋左氏傳- The Commentary of Zuo on the Spring and Autumn Annals - the China's earliest work on history reflecting the period from 722 BC to 468 BC.), (I) always asked him for help, he clarified all the doubts with master's understanding and clear and concise explanation. As for those books, like the one entitled Thượng thư, or both ancient and contemporary books whose deep and great meanings were comprehended by him in a thorough and complete way." He was considered a talented ruler and was later was honored as one of the figures who paved the way for Confucianism in Đại Việt by feudal Confucian scholars. He is still worshiped in many places in Việt Nam.

very prestigious among the people. Ngô Sĩ Liên wrote in the *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* (大越史記全書 Complete Annals of the Great Việt): “The king (Sĩ Nhiếp 士變) was generous, humble, respectful of scholars, loved by people in the country, and was called king. Hundreds of famous scholars of the Han Dynasty who avoided mishaps, took refuge and asked for help”... Our country mastered *Kinh thi* (詩經 - Book of Poetry), and *Kinh thư* (書經 The Book of History), learned music and rituals, and became “Domain of Manifest Civility” (文獻之邦). Thus, *văn hiến* started from Sĩ Vương. That merit not only exists at the time but will also be passed onto future generations, isn't it great? The above paragraph gives us two more meanings of the concept of *văn hiến* (文獻):

1. *Thông thi thư* (thông 通 means learn by heart; *thi* 詩經 means the Book of Poetry; *thư* means *Kinh thư* 書經 (The Book of History); 2. Learn Rites and Music.

The second Vietnamese context that we know appears in the sacred writings of *Thánh mẫu* (聖母 - the Holy Mother) in 1923, with the opening paragraph as follows:

Nhị River, Nùng Mountain, the country with four thousand years of *văn hiến* (文獻):

Hồng and Lạc's descendant, twenty million fellow citizens of our nation (đồng bào 同胞- people came from the same fetus). (Đào Duy Anh 1989: 216-218)

This context does not provide any additional meaning to the concept of *văn hiến* (文獻). For the time being, we will not discuss the period of time that has been extended by the fundamentalist national mentality. The value is that this is the earliest Vietnamese context in which the phrase “four thousand years of *văn hiến* (文獻)” appears.

4. THE CONCEPT OF VĂN HIẾN (文獻) THROUGH THE TEXTS OF VIETNAMESE CONFUCIANISM

4.1. *Dư Địa Chí* (輿地志 Gazetteer of Đại Việt) by Nguyễn Trãi (1442: 30a-30b), commented by Lý Tử Tấn in which the following passage can be found: “Since the Yuan entered China, people later started speaking the Hồ language 胡言語 and wearing Hồ clothes. No change can only be found in our country together with the Chu family in Kim Lang and the Zhao family in Kim Sơn. When Minh Thái Tổ (明太祖- the Ming Dynasty's founder) ascended the throne and sent Dịch Tế Dân to establish diplomatic relations, King Dụ Tông sent Doãn Thuần Thần to pay tribute to the Ming Dynasty. The King of the Ming Dynasty asked and comforted the ambassador to praise the customs and clothes that were still similar to the Chinese civilization, and conferred him a poem saying:

安南際有陳
風俗不元人
衣冠周制度
禮樂宋君臣

An Nam tế hữu Trần
Phong tục bất Nguyên nhân
Y quan Chu chế độ
Lễ nhạc Tống quân thần.

The land of An Nam has the Trần
Dynasty
Customs do not follow the Yuan people
Robes and hats¹ still followed the Zhou
Dynasty regime
The music and ceremonies are still the
same as those of the Song Dynasty.
(Nguyễn Thanh Tùng 2010: 1014-1027)

Then bestowed the four words a
"Domain of Manifest Civility" (文獻之
邦), and promoted the Đại Việt's
envoy three levels higher than the
Korean one.

This is the commentary that Lý Tử
Tấn added to Nguyễn Trãi's main text,
which indirectly discussed văn hiến (文
獻), specifically as follows: "People
in the country are not allowed to
imitate the language and clothing of
the countries namely Ngô [means The
Ming Dynasty], Champa, Laos, Siam,
Chenla to disrupt customs in the
country.

The above passage tells us some
information as follows: 1. The term
"văn hiến" (文獻) was used for Đại
Việt (the Great Việt) at the end of the

Trần Dynasty, this proves that 2.
Confucian scholars of the late Trần
Dynasty more or less created the
knowledge context as well as like the
Confucian cultural context to a certain
extent, to the point that King Minh
Thái Tổ (明太祖) himself wrote a
poem (thơ ngự chế 嗽御製 - poem
created by the king) and personally
bestowed the four words "Văn hiến
chi bang 文獻之邦" in the first year of
Đại Trị (1368) (Ngô Sĩ Liên 1479: 28a)
3. Thus, this is the earliest written
document that has been examined
(contrary to the previous popular
belief that the word văn hiến (文獻)
first appeared in the work entitled
Bình Ngô Đại Cáo (平吳大誥 - the
Great Proclamation upon the
Pacification of the Wu) by Nguyễn
Trãi).

The above passage also provides
some specific information about the
connotation of the concept of văn hiến
(文獻) in the context of Confucian
knowledge. Those are four elements:
1. Customs; 2. Robe regime; 3. Rites
and Music Regulations²; 4. Language.

¹ Robes and hats: In ancient times, kẻ sĩ (几士 - Intellectuals in feudal times) wore hats on their heads, which people used to indicate the clothing of this class of people. (2). specializes in formal attire. (3). Replace the name for sĩ đại phu (士大夫 - were politicians and court officials appointed by the Chinese Emperors to carry out day-to-day political affairs). (4). refers to civilization and religion. The Dictionary of Etymology cites the sentence in the book of Analects: "The gentleman wears his official clothes and hat neatly", which notes the place where the emperor listens to official matters. (Ciyuan 1998: 1528)

² "That is, Rites and Music which are the political and moral categories of Confucianism. Rites are due to the rules, regulations, and rituals developed from the Western Zhou period onwards. Thuyết văn

(說文- is a Chinese dictionary that appeared in the early 2nd century during the Han Dynasty) writes: "Lễ (禮/礼 - rites) means Lý (裡 - The rules and intentions of things). Lễ was used to worship gods and pray for blessings." Thus, Lễ initially referred to worshiping gods, then expanded to Lễ nghi (禮儀 - is one of the thirteen classics of Confucianism, the content records various rituals before the Qin Dynasty, mainly recording the rituals of scholars). Later, Lễ gradually separated from Nghi (儀- rituals, ceremonies) and had the political meaning of "Trị quốc an bang 治国安邦- rule the country and bring harmony and solidarity to all the people of the country". Nhạc (樂 - music). Thuyết văn: "Music is the common name of the five tones and eight sounds." Trịnh Huyền notes: Lễ Ký – Nhạc Ký (禮記 - 樂記 - are two books in the Five Classics of Confucius): "The eight sounds that arise together in

4.2. The word “văn hiến” (文獻) was introduced into literature in the work “Bình Ngô Đại Cáo” (平吳大告, written in 1428)) by Nguyễn Trãi (1380 – 1442):

維我大越之國

實為文獻之邦

Duy ngã Đại Việt chi quốc

Thực vi văn hiến chi bang

Mean:

Like our Đại Việt country

Truly is a “Domain of Manifest Civility”.

Also in the 15th century, on the Confucian Doctor's stele at the Văn Miếu (Confucius Temple), the 4th Quang Thuận examination session (1463), there was the following passage: “Lucky learners whose names were engraved on this stone stele must in the name of fame and position, correct virtue and imitate the habit of preserving văn hiến” (文獻).

However, the above two contexts do not manifest the semantic content of the concept of văn hiến (文獻). Bình Ngô đại cáo (平吳大誥) provides a remarkable historical information, which is the recognition that the Great Việt “claimed its văn hiến (文獻) for a long time”. Is this the important (only!) evidence for modern dictionaries to segment the meaning of the word văn hiến (文獻) into

“long-standing cultural tradition” as mentioned above?

4.3. The preface of Tân đính Lĩnh Nam chí quái tự (新訂嶺南摘怪序, written in 1492) by Vũ Quỳnh in the book Lĩnh Nam chí quái (嶺南摘怪, Arrayed Tales of Selected Oddities from South of the Passes) has the following passage: 《嶺南摘怪》之書，所以稽考古奇幻之事，憑諸俗話，出於群儒記載，蔓引輯述不一。蓋我越文獻最古，較諸國甚遠。其怪誕遺編，默付前鑒皆得於偶語常談。

Meaning: The book entitled Lĩnh Nam chí quái¹ aims to examine the strange things of the past, often based on folk tales, written by Confucian scholars, are numerous and inconsistent. Like our Domain of Manifest Civility (文獻), which is very ancient, compared to other countries. So many strange things, recorded, reflecting the past, are stories of daily exchanges of those periods.

In the above contexts, văn hiến (文獻) is considered as records (thư tịch 書籍 – books and documents) of folk tales.

4.4. The epitaph names a Confucian Doctor of Đình Mùi examination session in the 5th year of Cảnh Trị (1667) composed by Nguyễn Kiều²

harmony are called music. Ceremony and music collectively refer to the common form of social consciousness and moral norms, caste system, and dharma of slave and feudal societies. Its social effect is “to manage the country, stabilize society, maintain order among the people, and benefit future generations. (kinh quốc gia (to manage the country, stabilize society, maintain order among the people, benefit future generations).” (Lao Tử, Thịnh Lê, 2001: 728)

¹ That means the original book from the Trần Dynasty, anonymous author, that Trần Thế Pháp was able to copy and titled in the year of the Rat, era name: Hồng Đức 23 (1492), i.e. the poem Cổ Thuyết tựa dẫn, quoted in the back of the book entitled Lĩnh Nam Chí Quái (嶺南摘怪).

² “Nguyễn Kiều (1695-1752, alias Hạo Hiên, from Phú Xá commune, Từ Liêm district (now belongs to Phú Thượng ward, Hồ Tây district, Hanoi city). He

and engraved in the 13th year of Vĩnh Thịnh (1717) has the following paragraph: 洪惟國朝：仁義建國，文獻著風。進士之科其設尙矣；題名之制其規宏矣。。。寔賴。。。一德文修；百度具舉。國家善政；賁飾煥明。天下英賢豐賴泰拔。。。肆今，皇尚光膺寶曆，勵竹平基。操議禮之權；廸尊賢之義。。。是知：聖朝制作風化。。。“Respectfully think that our Royal Dynasty of humanity built the country with extremely famous far and wide văn hiến (文獻). The Confucian doctoral exam sessions were set up a long time ago, stone carving with names of those who successfully passed the exams on a large scale ... Truly remember to cultivate virtue with a heart, hundreds of things were expanded and developed, righteous politics of the country changed radiantly, talented and virtuous people in every corner of the country flocked back... Up to now, the emperor has gloriously inherited the throne, has done his best to build his kingdom, holds the right to discuss rituals, in a manner that honors noble people... That's enough to know the crafting process of the Holy Dynasty is related to phong hoá (風化 - public morals, social customs)” (Trịnh Khắc Mạnh 2006).

The above paragraph shows some facts about the concept of văn hiến (文獻) as follows: 1. Khoa cử (科舉 -

Imperial Examination (“subject recommendation”); 2. Văn vật (文物 - Material culture (stone carvings); 3. Hiền tài (賢才 - Virtual & Talented people; 4. Nghi lễ (儀禮 - Rites; and 5. Phong hoá (風化 - customs & cultivation) (Cihai 2001: 1851)

4.5. In the 19th century, in the book *Lịch triều hiến chương loại chí* (歷朝憲章類誌 - Rules & Regulations of dynasties registered according to classification), Phan Huy Chú (1820) wrote: “When the Lê Dynasty established the country, culture again gradually prospered, more than 300 years of being carefully and completely crafted, văn hiến (文獻) ranked first in Zhonghua, The state's legal regime makes the whole dynasty shine (Phan Huy Chú, 2007: 379).

4.6. A following engraved poem can be found in Thái Hòa Palace 太和殿 (Huế) of the Nguyễn Dynasty:

文獻千年國
車書萬里圖
鴻龐開闢後
南服一唐虞

Transcription:

Văn hiến thiên niên quốc
Xa thư vạn lý đồ
Hồng Bàng khai tịch hậu
Nam phục nhất Đường Ngụ

Meaning:

The country has a thousand years of văn hiến (文獻)

was the husband of poetess Đoàn Thị Điểm, and at the age of 21 years old, he earned the title of Confucian doctor at Ất Mùi Vĩnh Thịnh Examination Session 11 (1715) during the reign of Lê Dụ Tông, worked as an official of the Left Department of the Army and was sent as an ambassador to the Qing Dynasty. He was the author

of 4 Confucian doctoral epitaphs from the Examination Sessions (1667, 1683, 1697, 1713).” (Trịnh Khắc Mạnh. 2006)

The miles away unified country has enjoyed uniformed legal regime.
 Hồng Bàng family established the country long ago

The Southern State is no different from a peaceful time of Đường Ngu

This can also be considered another definition of văn hiến (文獻). Among them, the most important concept is Xa Thư (車書). Xa 車 is the chariot, Thư 書 is the book. Xa Thư originally cited from part entitled Trung Dung 中庸 in book entitled Lễ ký (禮記 - Book of Rites): kim thiên hạ xa đồng quỹ thư đồng văn 今天下車同軌書同文 meaning “now in the whole country: chariots has the same size axle, books has the same writing”, further, xa thư indicates the state's legal institutions following the Confucian model. In terms of etymology, that legal institution includes writing, ancient written documents and social rules. The book Đại Nam quốc sử diễn ca (大南國史演歌 - Vernacular verse of history of Đại Nam) by Phạm Đình Toái (1818 - 1901) has the sentence: dôi truyền một mối xa thư (follow and pass on the unification of the people in the whole country under one bond, one dynasty to future generations), it also talks about the văn hiến of Đại Nam country (the 文獻 of the Great Việt State). 唯傳沒緹車書，渌嫩潭蔭霽霽太平 (Phạm Đình Toái 1870: 3a)

4.7. Văn miếu - Quốc tử giám Hà Nội (文廟 - 國子監 - a Confucius Temple and the Imperial Academy in Hanoi) has a couple of parallel sentences:
 南邦文獻千年國; 東魯儒宗萬世師
 Nam bang văn hiến thiên niên quốc;
 Đông Lỗ nho tông vạn thế sư

(Nam Bang is a country with a thousand years of văn hiến; The founder of Confucianism in Đông Lỗ, is an exemplary teacher forever.)

Through the content of the couplets and verses above, it can be seen that Đại Việt's văn hiến (文獻) is always compared and contrasted with the oldest ancient prosperous era of Đường Ngu (in the Chu Dynasty) with ideal figures and Confucian saints like Chu Công (周公 - Zhou Cong) and Khổng tử (孔子 - Confucius). Obviously, văn hiến (文獻) is a Confucian concept, and is used by devout Confucians. Văn hiến (文獻) is used to praise a scene of political peace, social stability and human sentiment. Placed in such a context, the symbols and meaning of this concept have gradually become clear.

4.8. In the argumentative essay (văn sách đình đối 會試庭對策文) written by Vũ Tông Phan (1800 - 1851) at the Bính Tuất Examination Session in the seventh Minh Mệnh era (1826), we can find the following passage: 又以我越觀之：丁平使君之亂，李稱文獻之邦，黎撫太平之運，治日何多也 meaning: Let examine [the history] of our country Vietnam, the Đinh Dynasty quelled the warlord's rebellion, the Lý Dynasty claimed a văn hiến country, the Lê Dynasty was devoted to peace and prosperity, so why did their reigns last so long? (Quốc triều đình đối sách văn, VHV.318/1)

At this point, we see that ancient books and documents have recorded praising passages, confirming that our country is a “văn hiến state” from the time of Sĩ Nhiếp to Lý, Trần, Lê, Nguyễn.

4.9. In the an argumentative essay (văn sách đình đối) written by Doctor Nguyễn Đình Dương (1844-1886) at the Canh Thìn Examination Session in the thirty-third year of Tự Đức era (1880), the following passage can be found: 我國素稱文獻而人間書籍之傳實覺果漏不維外國諸書人所罕見而經史子典亦所罕見 (*Quốc triều đình đối sách văn*, VHv.318/1) Meaning: Our country by origin claims to be văn hiến (文獻), but the circulation of books among the people is actually very little. Not only are foreign books rarely seen, but sutras, histories, ancient philosophies and ideologies, and rules are regulations also rarely found.

5. FRACTIONAL STRUCTURE OF MEANING OF THE TERM "VĂN HIẾN"

In terms of etymology, Văn (文) has four meanings: văn tự 文字 (writing), ngôn ngữ 言語 (language), văn thư 文書 (clerical work), and văn chương 文章 (literature) [40], as well as referring to documents in general related to the regime's canons, hiến (獻) denotes talented & virtuous people - educated and creative subjects. On the other hand, from the data cited above, in the context of Confucian knowledge, we can temporarily break down the meaning of the concept of văn hiến (文獻). The conceptual structure of văn hiến (文獻) can be represented through the following model:

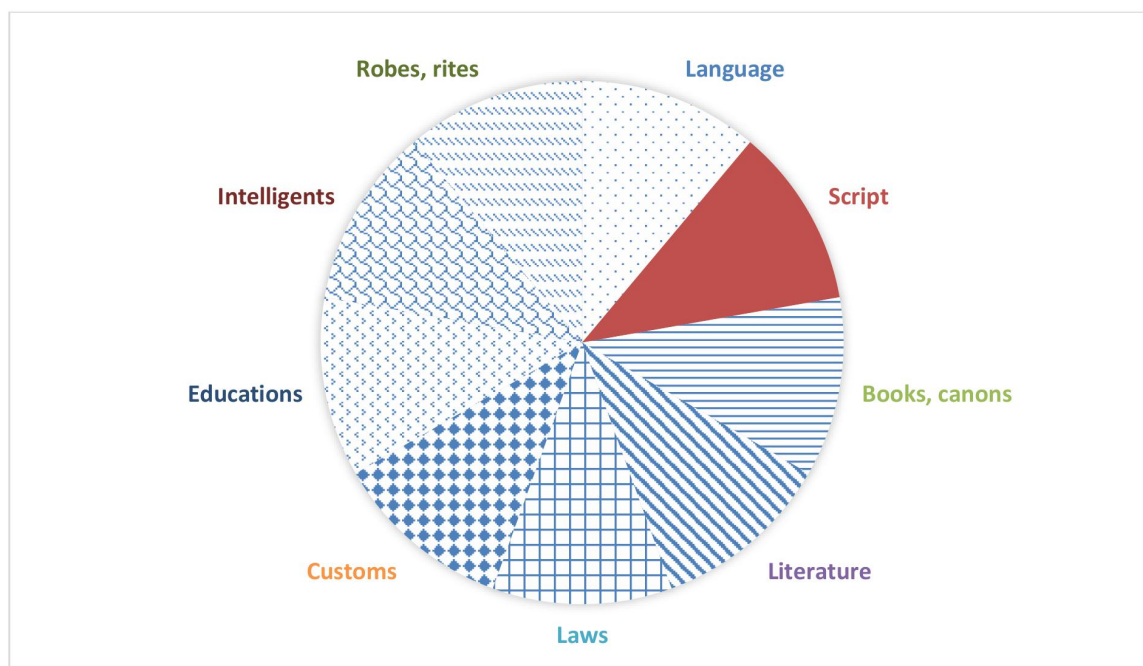


Figure 1: The conceptual structure of văn hiến

1. Văn tự 文字- Writing/Script; 2. Ngôn ngữ 言語 Language; 3. Thư

tịch 書籍 ancient books, canons; 4. Văn chương 文章 Literature; 5. Law ;

6. Phong tục = 風俗 - Established Customs; 7. Giáo dục 教育 (Education) and Khoa cử 科舉 = Nominated Examinations in feudal times); 8. Người hiền tài = 賢者 - Intelligents, Exceptional talented and virtuous people; 9. Điển chương chế độ (典章 - Refers to the robes and rites of a country);

However, each element also needs to be specifically delineated. What types of books does the thư tịch (書籍) include? According to the Confucianism classification, 書籍 is divided into Kinh (經 - Confucian canons); Sử (史 - Includes books on history, geography, and policies); Tử (子 - includes books written by philosophers); Tập (集 - includes books written by individuals (or many people) over the generations in the genres of poetry, prose, literary commentary, etc.,) which mean classic books, books on history, renowned books written by kẻ sĩ (士人 - Confucian scholars) and other recompiled books. Over time, thư tịch (書籍) are divided into two types: 1. Cổ thư 古書 (Ancient books - books left by ancient people) and 2. Kim thư 金書 (Contemporary books - books compiled by contemporaries). Therefore, when studying the văn hiến (文獻) of a certain generation in terms of thư tịch (書籍), there will be two research dimensions. Firstly, the study of ancient books belongs to bibliographic research. This research dimension relies on the bibliographies of each era to know the amount of knowledge of that era. The second is to carry out research on

books and famous works in that specific historical period. And finally, for researchers, thư tịch (書籍) also includes books collected or compiled about that era by later generations.

On the other hand, the relationship between the elements of the concept of văn hiến (文獻) also needs to be discussed. Written language is considered a prerequisite for a văn hiến country. Especially writing/script is one of the most important inventions to determine the level of development of a state. If you have writing, you can sign and copy books. Books that are traditional, have an influence on many people, and are a model for all generations are called classics. The classics of the ancients are the most important source of knowledge to accumulate knowledge and create a source for the intelligence of a community. Once they have achieved a certain position in an official political system, the intellectuals will make an important contribution to recreating and implementing the classics of the ancients; at the same time, they will also create new regimes, new rules, and new regulations. In addition, any mandarin who followed the ancient academic style was also a writer. Therefore, books compiled by each individual can also be considered a bibliographic source contributing to the culture of that time. Whether literature, history or books of philosophical thought, all revolve around the aspect of canonical teachings, with the function of "literature to convey doctrine" and "strengthen kingdom". Books contribute to give birth to talents with

the norms of the past, talents rely on old norms to establish a new system of norms (with the color of the ancients) and compile new books. This can be considered a closed model of cyclical regeneration and creation of cultures influenced by Confucian power.

It can be seen that văn tự (文字 - Writing/Script), thư tịch (書籍 - ancient books, documents), hiền tài (賢才 - Exceptional talented and virtuous people) và điển chương chế độ (典章 - Refers to the general rules and laws of a country) are products and results of political-cultural behaviors. They are the surface, the visible part of social activities. Specifically, thư tịch (書籍) are the

result of the process of compilation, creation in writing, and translation of individuals as well as the governments. Talented and virtuous people are both a self-made product and an official product of the imperial examination regime. The regime's canons are an accumulated element of dynasties, through many times "making rituals and music, determining court regulations" (i.e. the act of establishing legal regulations and administrative systems). The above processes of social and cultural activities can all be attributed to the process of văn hiến (文獻) creation. This can be seen clearly through the model below.

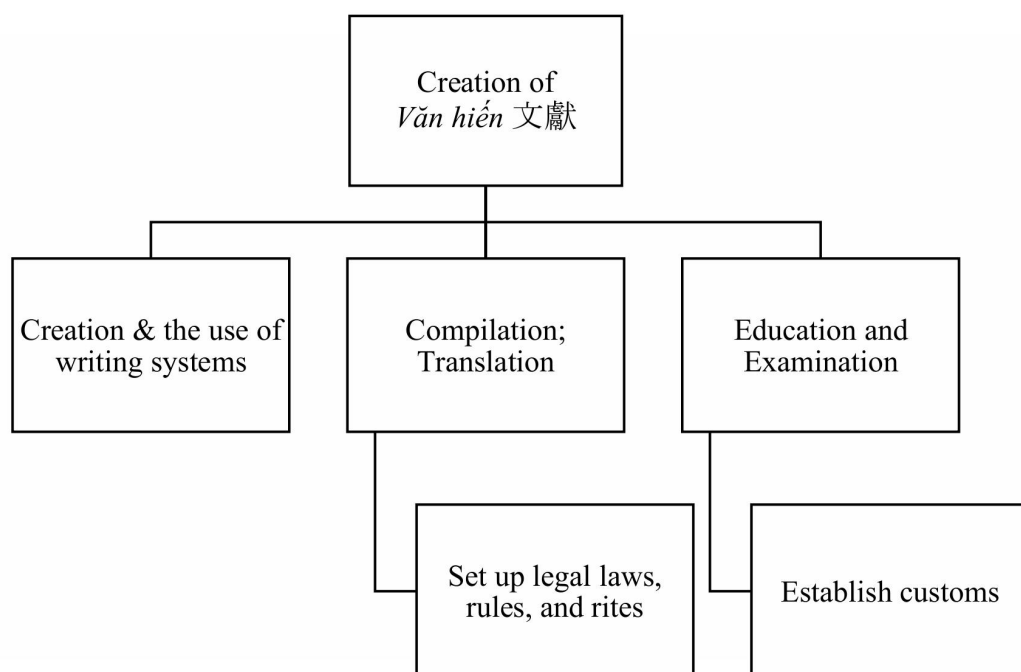


Figure 2: The process of văn hiến creation

The above model of văn hiến (-文獻-) and văn hiến construction (文獻建造) can temporarily be considered as a standard gauge to conduct a survey of each criterion through each specific case for certain historical periods. This survey is based on the remaining ancient books and documents, and sometimes includes the inheritance of previous research results.

Conclusion:

The article, from a survey of the contexts in which the term “văn hiến” (文獻) appears in Confucian books and other written documents, has analyzed eight meanings of this concept in the knowledge context of the compilers (Confucian scholars) in a history of about 600 years. This survey is only of an operational and methodological process, and does not cover all of Vietnam's ancient books and documents in the Middle Ages, so the conclusions and models are given temporarily limited to the documents we currently have come across. Applying the model of cultural structure from the context of Confucian knowledge as well as surveying the cultural creation activities of previous monarchies needs to be examined through each specific character or era from there, allowing us to have an initial image of a văn hiến in pre-modern Vietnam, contributing to the comparative study of cultural contact between Vietnam and China in the ancient past.

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