
Quốc tự (quốc ngữ)

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Chinese: 利瑪竇

The Vietnamese alphabet (literally national language script) is the currently official writing system for the Vietnamese language. It is based on the Latin script, with some digraphs and nine accent marks.

From the 13th century onwards, the Vietnamese used the script for writing classical Chinese (chữ nho), supplemented with characters developed in Vietnam (chữ thuần nôm, proper Nom characters).

In 1527, Latin script was used by Portuguese Catholic missionaries in Vietnam to transcribe the Vietnamese language for teaching and evangelization purposes. These informal efforts led to the present Vietnamese alphabet, largely by the work of French Jesuit Alexandre de Rhodes, (1624 - 1644).

In spite of this development, chữ nôm and chữ nho remained dominant until the early 20th century. In 1869 the French government in Vietnam decreed that quốc ngữ be the official language in the South.

The Tonkin Free School, set up by nationalists in 1907, taught quốc ngữ. Primary schools in Tonkin began teaching quốc ngữ in 1910, and Emperor Khải Định declared chữ nôm and chữ nho abolished in 1918.