

Book Review

The Cham of Vietnam: History, Society and Art
edited by Trần Kỳ Phương and Bruce M.
Lockhart (Singapore: NUS Press, 2011. Pp 460
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Bookended by the penetrating and sweeping historiographical analyses of Michael Vickery and Bruce Lockhart (ARI and NUS), the contributors to this volume have broken new ground in scholarship on Cham studies, which, as Lockhart writes “pose[s] a thorny and awkward problem for scholars of Vietnam” (1). These original peoples (*Dân Tộc Bản Địa*) were at one time the dominant cultural force in the territory of the contemporary Vietnamese state before they were reduced to a culturally significant, yet comparatively small, minority population (*Dân Tộc Tiểu Số*). To move beyond this problem, Lockhart’s essay “Colonial and Post-Colonial Constructions of Champa” enlightens our understanding of French Orientalist and Vietnamese scholars who have seen Champa “From Hà Nội” and “From Saigon.” Lockhart develops some of the latest trends in scholarship on Champa, which include a greater emphasis on Cham as equally in contact with both the Indic and the Sinitic spheres and a greater emphasis on the unique vestiges (*dị tích*) of Cham culture.

With new archeological analysis provided by Ian Glover, Nguyễn Kim Dung, Yamagata Mariko, William Southworth, Allison Diem, Trần Kỳ Phương, John Guy, and Thành Phần, this volume fills in gaps in one of Southeast Asia’s most complex and incomplete records. Evidence is compiled such that a cultural continuity is delineated through the Neolithic record of the Sa Huynh, the early kingdom of Lín Yì, the apogee of the highly Indianized *negara* of Vijaya, and the last independent *negara* Panduranga, which overlaps with the homeland of the contemporary Cham Balamon Hindu and Bani Muslim populations of Bình Thuận and Ninh Thuận provinces. With the proliferation of new archeological digs within the past decade, our understanding of Cham material culture has increased

and the evidence can no longer be considered punctuated and fragmentary.

The findings presented at Gò Cẩm are of particular importance as a collection of Indo-Roman rouletted pottery shards is presumed to link Champa to Indo-Roman culture through trade connections with Tamil Nadu, India. Furthermore, a collection of possible Sa Huynh shards discovered in 1990 at the same site is presumed to link the classical Cham culture of these areas back to the Neolithic culture of the Sa Huynh. The connections between the Sa Huynh, Indic, and Cham civilization are already well versed in scholarship. However, the most recent findings of ovoid jars, Han style bowls, a high-fired shard bearing a Chinese Wuzhu stamp (sign of the yellow god), Han seals stamped on high-fired shards, earrings (*erdang*), and pieces of clay (*fengni*) used to seal a document that appear with Han characters at Gò Cẩm (2000-3), indicate a more heavily Sinitic cultural influence in the region during this period, an influence often “overlooked” in the early history of the Cham (65-78).

William Southworth’s excellent contribution focuses on the analysis and critique of an early state formation model developed by Bennet Bronson in 1977. Seeking to explain the development of early states throughout Southeast Asia, Bronson based his theoretical model on an analysis of trading patterns throughout coastal sites. The center of the polity was presumed to be at estuaries, with outlying centers moving up along the branches and the smallest settlements appearing along streams. According to Southworth, this model accurately explains many major archeological settlements of early Cham culture. Two deviations, however, occur. First, Bronson’s model presumes a certain universality or equality of choice among estuaries. According to Southworth’s analysis, this does not fit archeological evidence, where the size and length of the Thu Bồn River along with its central location combined to make it a preferential site for development. Although this deviation may appear as slight, the second is more prominent. As naval technology developed over time, coastal centers became more vulnerable to attack, and the centers of coastal polities moved inland, using river mouths as an important natural defense (111). Therefore, Southworth concludes, Bronson’s essay remains relevant to the period of Cham culture between the late Sa Huynh and the third century. However, as

inland centers later became more prominent this model falls out of favor. We are, therefore, left with the question: what is the next model to describe Champa?

Scholars in the field of Southeast Asian Studies will recall earlier research that considered the Indic elements present throughout the region to be the end result of a cultural conquest. Although the theories of cultural conquest have long been critiqued and debated, those scholars who prefer to focus on proliferation of the Indianized elements of Cham civilization from the fourth to the eleventh century will be delighted by the combined archeological analysis of Trần Kỳ Phương and John Guy, which provides a complex picture of early influence on Champa's social structure, religion and cosmology; this includes the often overlooked movements of early historical Pan-Asian Buddhism and the Bodhisattva cult of Avalokitesvara, incorporating evidence stretching into the contemporary highland province of Kontum.

A systematic reassessment of Chinese historical documents by Geoff Wade and Momiko Shiro provides a reorientation of Champa's relations with the middle kingdom from the eighth through the fifteenth century. Momiko Shiro's essay picks up on the discourse of porous borders and O.W. Wolter's critique of the 'cultural conquest' of Indianization as a process that swept Southeast Asia. Here, Shiro breaks significant ground based on her analysis of Chinese sources to argue that this process was in fact a "Self-Indianization" that was in turn balanced through a "deliberate China-oriented policy" (124). Importantly, this Sinitic orientation in Shiro's argument suggests that the perception of the decline of Champa beginning with the eleventh century collapse of highly Indianized Indrapura is overly simplistic. In reality, *Mandala Champa* was characterized through a series of close relations to the Sinitic sphere from the eighth to the fifteenth century, to the extent that a proliferation of Chinese language sources provided not only detailed accounts of toponyms, but also variation within; *Wamabo* and *Baopiqi* both being used to refer to Amaravati, for example. Shiro concludes that a difference in terminology does not always indicate a difference in geographic location, and that a Sinitic orientation was used to maintain localized centers of power (129). Significantly, Champa has been redefined here as oriented rather more northward in its gaze and cultural orientation.

The recasting of the Cham-Vietnamese relationship through an in depth historical analysis of Vietnamese documents by John K. Whitmore, Danny Wong Tze Ken, and Trần Quốc Vương highlights the complexities of the conquest narrative of the Vietnamese (*Nam Tiến*). Whitmore's contribution highlights the monumental victories of the early conquest of Ché Bông Ngã, which nearly eradicated Vietnamese culture toward the end of the fourteenth century. Whitmore's work reminds us that the *Nam Tiến* was not smooth, but rather a punctuated movement. Finally, the works by Ken and Vương further recast the conquest narrative of the *Nam Tiến* to remind us that pre-colonial Southeast Asian history was not all about slaughter, with narratives of shared cultural contacts between the Vietnamese and the Cham peoples that included art, artifact, and music.

Researchers and scholars interested in the development of uniquely Cham cultural practices ought to pay particular attention to Yoshimoto Yasuko's analysis of the Cham calendar and Dr. Thành Phần's analysis of the Cham *kut*. Both of these essays draw on significant Cham language source analysis in order to demonstrate unique cultural tropes that have remained among Cham populations up until the present. Finally, Gerard Diffolth's analysis of the "Westward Expansion of Chamic Language in Indochina" is not only revolutionary, but also refreshing as it demonstrates linguistic borrowing not only between Chamic and neighboring Bahnaric language groups, but also linkages to the Kautic languages of the highlands of Northern Vietnam and Laos, where populations show little to no memory of the historic state of Champa.

Despite the tremendous accomplishments of this volume, one wonders why the scholarship of Inrasara, Po Dharma, and Nicholas Weber on the Cham manuscript tradition of *Akbar Thrah* was not brought out more explicitly in this collection. The works of Inrasara and Po Dharma in particular have been at the forefront of the analysis of *Akbar Thrah* (Cham language) manuscripts for the past two decades. Moreover, Nicholas Weber of the University of Malaysia Kuala Lumpur has broken new ground on this topic through two recently published articles in the *Journal of Social and Economic History of the Orient* (54) 2011 and the *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* (43) 1 (February 2012). Among the in depth historical analysis

presented in these articles, Weber includes the Cham *Ariya* on his list of documents used to provide a narrative account of the processes of interaction between the Cham and the Vietnamese populations in South Central Vietnam and the Mekong Delta. This minor critique aside, *The Cham of Vietnam* is not only an essential contribution to the fields of Cham studies and Southeast Asian Studies, but also to a greater understanding of the historical linkages across Asian cultures.

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