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ASPECTS OF CHAM CULTURE

Doris E. Blood

The Eastern Cham of South Vietnam are divided into two main groups, the Chăm and the Bani, on the basis of their religious systems. The Chăm (technically kaphiêr) are descendants of those who embraced a form of Hindu worship which probably came to the area in the 2nd century A. D. The Bani are descendants of those who followed the Moslem religion, also embraced in ancient days but after the Hindu influence.[1] Cham forms of Hindu and Moslem worship differ greatly from corresponding beliefs and practices outside the area. There is, however, a small group of the Bani, known as the Islam, which developed among the Cham who had lived in Saigon and had followed more traditional Moslem practices.

The Chăm and Bani live in separate villages, with the exception of one village in the Phan Rang area which is divided into Chăm and Bani sections. Many customs are followed by both groups, but in relation to religious practices, they are distinct. In this paper, only the Chăm, or Brahmanist, practices are described.

Cham subsistence is based upon wet-rice agriculture, social organization upon matrilocal residency and matrilineal descent. In addition to recently devised romanized alphabets, the Cham have an ancient system of writing which was introduced by 2nd-century Hindu grammarians. Some ancient script writings on bamboo are still in existence. In more recent decades, the script has been passed on by individual families in the form of handwritten texts in composition books. Women do not traditionally learn to read or write the script, though in a recent revival of interest in the script, its use was advocated for all children in elementary schools.

The Cham attach great importance to maintaining themselves as a distinct people in a world perceived to be hostile to them. This is seen in the reluctance of their daughters to marry outside the Cham community and in their desire for many children. Use of the Cham script also serves to maintain their identity (Cf. Blood, this volume).

One Cham legend tells of their last great king who lost much of the kingdom to the Vietnamese. In the legend there was a magic tree which was never to be cut down. But ignoring established rules and practice, the king cut it down and lost the kingdom as a result. This reminder from history may possibly have its affect on present-day Chams who desire to hold strictly to the rules and practices handed down to them by their ancestors.

SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

The Cham of the eastern part of southern Vietnam live in two main areas, Phan Rang and Phan Ri. Near Phan Rang there are 30 villages in an area stretching from near the ocean to the foothills. These villages range in size from a few hundred to over 2,000 inhabitants. Of the 30 villages, seven are Bani (Moslem).

Vietnamese live on the outskirts of many Cham villages, some with small stores to sell needed items, others probably existing as money lenders because of the Cham need for large sums of money for funeral expenses.

Areas within villages are indicated by high fences which surround each compound. Fences were traditionally built of sturdy poles, some as high as ten feet. Cross poles were tied at the three- or four-foot level. Fifty cartloads of poles would be needed for an average compound. The height and durability of the fence indicated to a stranger the economic status of the family. It kept out undesirable people and protected livestock from theft or from being eaten by other animals. In the last decade fences made of concrete blocks have gained in popularity, so that relatively few stick fences remain. This has undoubtedly come about, in part, because of the difficulty of going to the mountains to get proper poles.

The maze of pathways in a village which results from the compounds being fenced is broken by entrance passageways into the compounds. To enter a compound one always enters to the north. If the lane runs north and south, a passageway runs at right angles to the lane for 15 or 20 feet and then turns north for a few more feet before reaching the gate. Even if the lane runs east and west, a gateway is not made directly

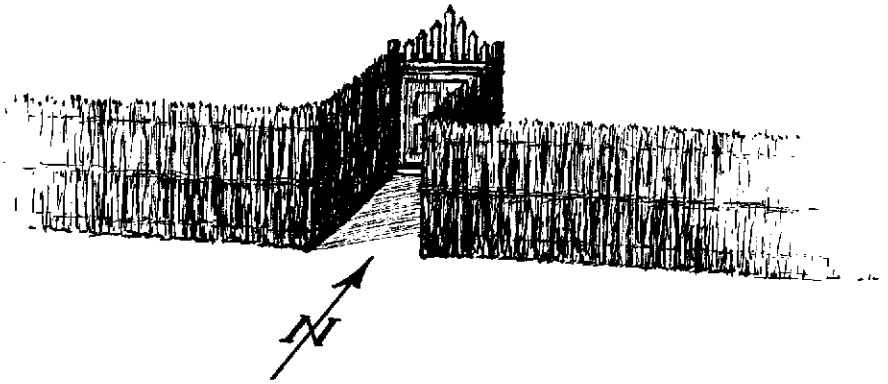

Figure 5. Entrance Gate to Cham Compound.

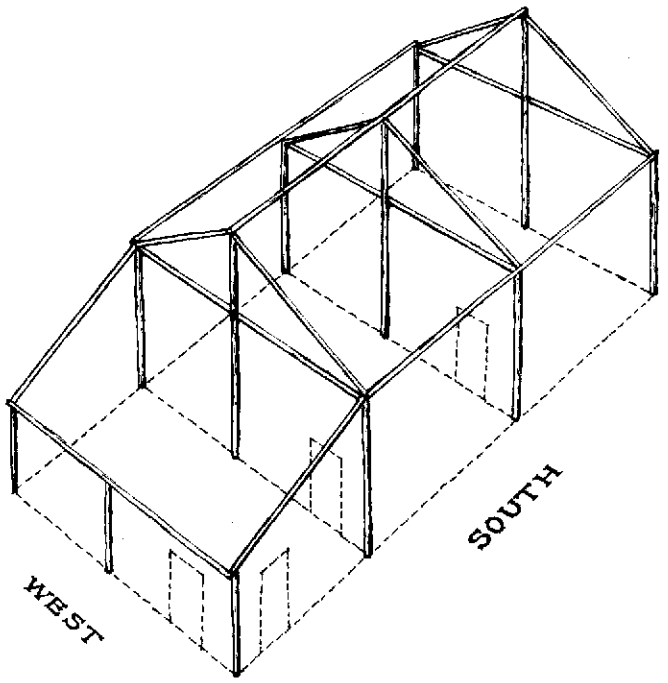

Figure 6. Arrangement of Traditional Cham House.

in the fence on the north side, but a short fenced lane leads off to the north to make a private passageway to the gate. The eastern gate post is said to be the male (panrong) or the general, the western one the female (bia) or the queen. Amulets are placed in the ground when planting the posts and on either side of the top crossbar of the gate.

As one enters a well-established compound, the first house on the left is the thang tôông (thang means 'house'). The entrance of this house faces east. It is the house in which the parents live and entertain their guests. Rooms in the house are occupied by the older children of the family.

Opposite this house and to the north is the traditional house called thang yơ. This house is considered somewhat sacred to the family. It is in this house that a married couple first spend time together, entering by the west door. It is here that people die and exit by the other door. This house has three adjoining rooms with two exterior doors on the west end, one on the west side, the other on the south side. When our lone Cham friend was asked about this house, he said, "You have never been in my thang yơ. I would not dare invite guests there since I have a thang tôông."

The thang yơ is a female structure with the twelve supporting posts representing the twelve body openings: 2 ears, 2 eyes, 2 nostrils, 1 mouth, 2 breasts, 1 navel, 1 genital orifice and 1 rectum.

Adjacent and adjoining the thang yơ to the south is the thang mayau. This house may provide housing for the extended family and for guests.

Another type of house, considered to be among the four main types but apparently not common, is the thang binai. This house is purported to be the largest and the best and is used for reading the script. It very probably would be a gathering place for Cham scholars.

The kitchen house (thang ging) is also an integral part of every compound. It is a small, mud-walled building which is replaced as the need arises. The kitchen house serves all the family units in the compound, but only three cooking

places are allowed in the building. A cooking place consists of three stones placed in the packed earth to form a hearth.

Families eat together on one of the porches of the buildings, most commonly that of the thang mayau. A mat is spread on an elevated wooden bed upon which the family sits. Food is placed in the center of the mat and each person serves himself from the main rice pot and other smaller dishes of vegetables and meat. Guests would usually be served on the porch of the thang tông.

In former days, a birth house was built in the middle of the compound for the time of birth and the following days of 'lying by the fire', after which the house would be torn down and burned. At present, since birth clinics are common even in small towns, Cham women go to the nearest town or the province center for the birth of their children. Purification rites may be performed after the wife returns home in five or ten days, but the uncleanness of the birth has taken place elsewhere so she can be secluded in the house, possibly the thang mayau, when she returns.

The Cham calendar sets aside certain days during the month when house building can be begun. The family calls upon the spirits when the house is erected and also when it enters the house to live in it. After three years, the family employs priests to perform a ceremony designed to make the earth clean at the site of a new house.

MARRIAGE

A fellow and a girl traditionally check their zodiacal birth designations before considering marriage, to ensure that the marriage will endure. In one Cham legend, a woman had lost a number of husbands and all of her children in death. This was attributed to her not having carefully examined how her husbands' years of birth fit with hers. Even today, this is a factor to be considered in marriage.

According to the lunar calendar, each year is associated with a zodiacal animal called nathăk. In a twelve-year cycle the animals are ordered as follows: rat, water buffalo, tiger, rabbit, dragon, serpent, horse, goat, monkey, chicken, dog, and pig. These are the same animals as in the Chinese

cycle, though the two lunar calendars do not coincide. Five elements called băng are included with each of the animals: water, iron, wood, earth, and fire. As an example of the kind of consideration made in choosing a mate, any year associated with water would be avoided by one whose nathăk was related to fire, since water extinguishes fire.

The girl's family makes request for marriage from the boy's family. Girls from sixteen through twenty are marriageable and able to ask for (pôch) a man. Men from ages eighteen through twenty-five are marriageable. To go unmarried beyond these ages is cause for ridicule.

A boy may get acquainted with a girl to whom he is attracted by going to her compound to talk with her. He has permission to stay on the compound, but if the girl is not interested, she gives him the silent treatment and he does not pursue the friendship. When a girl has decided on the man she wants to marry, she tells her mother and arrangements are made between the two families. This is not to suggest that young men and women have free choices concerning their mates. There are still families that make marriage arrangements for their children, even though the young people may not be acquainted. The parents may resort to sanctions to assure that their children go through with an arranged marriage.

The girl's family chooses an intermediary, usually an older, knowledgeable man skilled in speech, who goes to the boy's home to ask not only his parents but the boy as well. The young man has the privilege of declining. If there is agreement, arrangements are made for the time of the wedding. Possible wedding days are limited by the Cham calendar.

Both bride and groom traditionally dressed in white for the wedding, but currently, the man wears a dark suit.

Two men are chosen to officiate at the wedding, one for each family. These men are not of a religious order, but are teachers (gru).[2] The official from the groom's family leads him to the room set aside for the couple in the bride's village and turns him over to the official from her family. There the latter official gives the exhortation:

> Best wishes for a long life. May you live till your hair is silver and your teeth have fallen out. May you always have enough to eat. Be united in your life together and stay close to each other. Work to become rich and bear many offspring.

The groom then takes liquor and other drinks out, presenting them to family representatives, old men, and relatives.

The bride and groom spend three days and nights in the special room prepared for them. Traditionally it was in this room that the couple got acquainted for the first time. They share a tray of food, but abstain from sexual intercourse for the three days.

The groom's family are expected to present gifts to the couple--gifts of money, jewelry or clothes. Wealthy families give water buffalo or gold, and a limited number of fields.

During the wedding feast, chicken, squash or any foods mixed together are taboo. Friends of both families are invited to the two days of the wedding feast.

After the wedding, the bride and groom live in rooms set aside for them in the compound of the girl's mother. The couple eventually build their own house on the compound if that has not already been done.

The wife occasionally goes to her husband's village to visit his parents for a few days, taking a gift for her mother-in-law, but the couple live for the most part in her parents' village. When asked about his village, a man gives the name of the village of his birth but adds that he married a girl from another village.

An unmarried woman does not hold the respect of the community. If she is married, she has status in dealing with other Cham people. If she has land through inheritance from her mother, she needs a husband to oversee it.

Figure 7. Traditional Cham Dress.

CHILDREN

Female children are preferred by the Cham because of the security they bring by having husbands join the family later on. Some male children are desirable also, but a very sad home is one in which all the children are males who must leave their parents, following their wives to other compounds. This pressure is so strong that a girl who has not married may enter into a liaison with a man to produce daughters, even though she may not marry him. One young woman whose husband had died, leaving her with a small boy, 'played' with a man until she had a daughter, thus providing for continued lineage for her family and security for her old age. This may not be standard practice, but neither is it necessarily condemned because a young woman is still under the protection of her mother's home and continues contributing to that household.

It is the mother's responsibility in the home to teach the girls, the father's responsibility to teach the boys. Girls were not often able to go to public school beyond the early grades until recently because of their responsibilities in caring for younger children. They are taught the rudiments of cooking, washing, carrying water, and weeding the rice fields with their mothers. They also go along with the whole family at harvest time. When a girl reaches puberty, she is introduced to the ways of revering ancestors.

Young girls often dress in trousers and overblouses as do the Vietnamese, but sometimes even very small girls wear the traditional Cham dress, which is quite distinct from the Vietnamese: a long-sleeved tunic dress reaching between mid-calf and ankle, worn over a long ankle-length underskirt. The traditional style has a V-neck with a gusset from under the arm extending clear to the hem, causing tightness in the bodice but more fullness through the waist and hips. In recent years a fitted-bodice and varieties in neckline have been borrowed from the Vietnamese. Modern underskirts are made of black or white satin, but some of the older women still wear dark, hand-woven sarong skirts under the tunic dresses. Vietnamese conical hats are worn by Cham girls and women as protection from the sun, but they protect their hair from dust and exposure by scarves which are tied about the head in several different ways.

A boy works with his father, preparing the fields for planting rice, as well as working in the garden. He is often responsible for trapping rats, lizards and birds, and is used by his family to watch the water buffalo or goats. A boy traditionally began to study the script with an older man when he was old enough to watch the buffalo, that is at about twelve years of age.

Boys dress as other boys do in Vietnam. Working in the fields or teaching school, a Cham man usually cannot be distinguished from a Vietnamese in a similar occupation. Only for special ceremonies do men wear traditional sarongs and brocaded jackets. Boys wear local caps or hats in the sun while their fathers may tie towels around their heads for work in the fields. The headcloth for special occasions often is red and is tied in a manner distinctive of the Cham.

The father is the head of the family, but he must confer with his wife concerning matters related to land. If she is not in agreement, he cannot act alone. The wife may also overrule her husband in religious matters. Though she has no standing in the Cham religious system, she may call upon a priest and then the husband will follow along with whatever ceremony the priest recommends in properly worshipping the ancestors or appeasing spirits.

MULTIPLE MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

A Cham man may take a second wife with the permission of his first wife, who shows her willingness by going to ask for (pôch) the new wife. The second wife is called the 'little' wife. As a general rule the two wives are not from the same village. For this reason, the practice is not looked upon with great favor because of the husband's need to commute.

Present-day divorce among the Cham is handled in accordance with Vietnamese government regulations. In former days, if a couple wished to divorce, they called relatives on both sides together to convey their intent. The paper of divorce was written in the Cham script and the marriage was ceremonially severed by the breaking of a chopstick.

Remarriage is possible either after the death of a partner

or after divorce. Children do not go with their father after the death of the mother, but are reared by one of their mother's sisters. When both parents die, if the oldest child is a girl who is fairly mature, she will take over the property and raise the younger children.

DEATH, CREMATION, AND BURIAL

The Brahmanist Cham distinguish death from sickness and death from accident, death in youth and death in adult years. Death in older years brings blessing, but not so a child's death or any death from accidents such as being killed by a tiger, gored by a buffalo, trampled by a horse, killed by a falling tree, or by drowning.

There are three different funeral ceremonies. Đam jăp brah is the ceremony performed for children up to age sixteen and for those who die as a result of accident. Historically, this was the ceremony for the lowest peasant or for slaves. This is the only one of the three ceremonies where the body is buried. The ceremony is further distinguished by not having gongs and by fewer people participating. The body is placed in a casket and covered with a cloth. The morning after the ceremony, the casket is carried outside the village by two men stripped to the waist and wearing sarongs and head cloths. One carries a Cham bushhook, the other a highland bushhook. Burial may take place on certain Tuesdays or Sundays.

Đam prŏng 'big ceremony' (technically đam răp chêng-hagăr) is the desired way for a Cham person to be cremated. This ceremony is the more auspicious and expensive, named because of the use of gongs. Drums and gongs are beaten during the time the priest does his work or when he puts out food and drink for the deceased person.

Đam sit 'small ceremony' is called technically đam dua urang paseh. It is a cremation ceremony similar to the đam prŏng but gongs are not used in this ceremony, nor are the two standards placed at the front of the ceremonial house.

Cremations can only occur on certain Wednesdays or Saturdays. Thus it is often necessary to wait a number of

days for the proper day. The ceremonial house (kajang) is built and the body laid inside in its appointed position (cf. Fig. 8). Family members keep vigil over the body until the appropriate day arrives. The stench of the decomposing body often becomes overwhelming, and the most auspicious ceremonies burn an expensive incense to help alleviate this problem.

Friends of the deceased person and his family come to pay their respects during the two days of the actual ceremony. Gifts of money for the deceased's family are acceptable.

There are some exceptions to immediate cremation of the body. If a family does not have the money to pay for this ceremony, they may bury the body. The body remains buried for at least a year, sometimes many years, and then the bones are dug up for the proper cremation ceremony.

On the second day of the ceremony, the body is transferred to the cremation house (thang thôr), which is constructed like a house with a cloth roof. Gifts for the deceased are placed with the body. These may be clothing, towels, Cham woven cloth and other things to enhance the person's departure. The house is carried on the shoulders of four men by means of two poles. The men are dressed like those who carry the body in đam jăp brah described above.

The body is burned outside of the village, and afterward nine pieces of the forehead about the size of a half-dollar are chipped out by the priest. These bones are placed in a small pot (klŏng) made in former times of silver, brass, or gold, now of less expensive metal. This pot is taken home for five worship ceremonies (padhi) which take place one week, one month, when the year nears its end and again after a full year. The last one is some months after that, and it is a ceremony like that of sending someone off on a trip. The total time is about three years. Then the pot is taken to the burial place (kŭt) of the bones, where the bones are removed from the pot. The skull bones of husband and wife are not buried together, but his go to the burial place of his parents, hers to the place of her mother's family.

The burial place is a square plot of sand inside a foundation, over which there is a flat roof. All bones are placed

here mixed together but divided by sex. The middle stone is a marker of division with stones on either side designating males or females. Those who have been deformed in any way cannot be buried in the family burial place. They are buried in a special place (kŭt lihin) for the unfortunate. The ceremony of taking the bones to the burial place is attended by a priest both at home and at the burial site. This final ceremony may take place for several family members at one time.

There is a taboo in connection with the death of father or mother which consists of abstaining from eating chicken for one month and from marriage of sons or daughters for a year thereafter.

BRAHMANIST PRIESTHOOD

The Brahmanist priesthood is not set apart from the rest of Cham society economically or in other aspects of everyday life. The priests marry, have families, and work their fields. Their distinctiveness in the society is seen in their ceremonial functions, especially in activities related to the feast of the royal ancestors, ceremonies for the spirits of the dead, and cremation ceremonies.

The hierarchy of the priesthood is as follows:

pô dhia (pronounced sia)--three high priests, each one assigned to one of the royal deities. Their main duties center on the yearly feast of the ancestors, but they are also the ones to hand down decisions on when a proper day for cremation would be.

ông paseh--priests who officiate at other Cham religious ceremonies. There are perhaps fifty paseh in the Phan Rang Cham area. The paseh together with the pô dhia are distinctive because of the clothing they wear all the time: white sarongs, robes, and red turbans.

ông kadhăr, divided between ông kadhăr gru, the teacher, and ông kadhăr sit, the younger--men classified as officiating musicians. The ông kadhăr is the one to chant the history of the kings at the yearly ceremony.

muk pajau--a woman responsible for caring for the wine at religious ceremonies. In other languages of the area the word means 'sorceress'.

ông madôn--a male musician who plays the drum.

ông ka-ing--a male dancer. These last two are also in the Moslem (Bani) hierarchy.

Membership in the priesthood is by selection and not by kinship relationship, except incidentally. A man advancing through the ranks of paseh, which takes many years, is eligible for the office of pô dhia when one of the three incumbents dies. There does not seem to be advancement from one position in the hierarchy to another--only the paseh are in line for the pô dhia position. Part of the qualification for advancement for the paseh is skill in the ancient Cham script. The selection is made by vote in a representative body of Cham citizens, with overtones of politics. This may be an occasion for strife in the area. When one of the pô dhia died in 1974, the man chosen as his successor was not pleasing to one village. Fighting erupted between groups of individuals which lasted for some months.

There may be a set fee for the services of the priesthood, but we have also heard of paseh asking for a gold ring or a water buffalo for their services.

Fig. 8 shows the floor plan of the ceremonial hut (kajang) for cremation. There is rigid placement of people and objects during the two or three days of ceremony before the actual cremation. This plan is for the 'large' ceremony (đam răp chêng-hagăr) with paseh priests and the presence of gongs in locations 16 and 17. The people present would be of the priesthood with the possible exception of those assigned to locations 7, 8, 9, and 10.

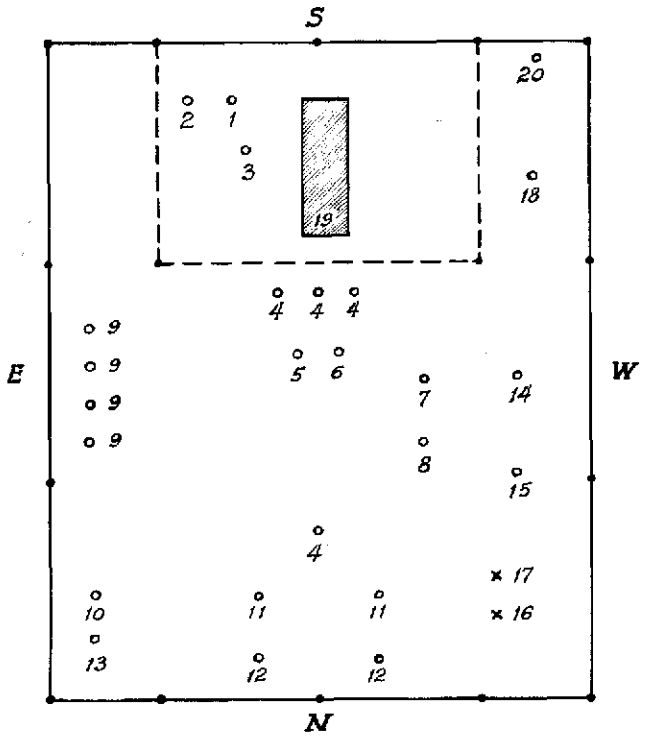

Figure 8. Arrangement of Large Cremation Ceremony.

1) paseh pahuăk - paseh attending the body
2) paseh ralang - same
3) danok padăng ka urang matai - things set up for the dead person
4) thông hla - flowers
5) paseh săng - paseh who blows the conch shell
6) paseh găr - paseh who beats drum or gong
7) ragay phun - one in charge of the cremation house
8) ragay jung - another in charge of the cremation house
9) hlăk chăr - four men who carry the cremation house to the burning
10) pô jamưn
11) urang doh - singers
12) urang uăk kanhi - players of the 2-string turtle shell instrument
13) ông hăng - man with some function in the ceremony

14) muk buh - woman in charge of wine
15) urang pôk lithay - man in charge of rice
16) danok hagăr - place of the gongs
17) danok chêng - another type of gong
18) thang thôr - cremation house
19) kakung - casket or bier
20) kaya-kal ka urang matai - things to be burned with the body

SPIRIT WORLD

Though spirit worship does not pervade everyday life, the times and seasons are strictly followed by the Cham.[3] As one ceremonial dancer (muk rija) told me, "Oh, we could never change our ways. Our ancestors passed them on to us."

An example of their strict observance of customs regarding spirits is the cremation ceremony. Two kinds of spirit emanate from the deceased, yang and bhut. Although yang are said to come from intelligent people and bhut from stupid people, it is evident upon examination that bhut originate when proper ceremonies have not taken place. Bhut are free to go around and enter into other persons so that they die. They bear the names of dead persons. Bhut are fearful spirits, but can be cast out by magic. Relatives must provide for proper cremation, not only to avoid bringing the stigma of bhut upon the deceased, but also to prevent danger to the entire community.

Human beings have three parts: body (thap), the part of the person which maintains life (suan), and that part which the Cham are concerned with after death (bingŭk-yawa).

The Cham speak of suan-thap, meaning the body and its life. They are thought of as being bound together. The suan lives in the heart and never leaves the body except in death. Animals also have suan.

The bingŭk-yawa lives in the body someplace and has intelligence. It is possible for the bingŭk-yawa to leave the body even when a person is alive. It can come out while one is sleeping, or if there is an accident it becomes afraid and leaves. A person who has lost his mind has also lost

his bingŭk-yawa. When a soldier dies in battle, his bingŭk-yawa will have no place to go, and may enter a horse or a water buffalo. After death, the bingŭk-yawa watches the funeral from outside the body. It is this part of a person which goes to heaven. If a person is good, his bingŭk-yawa goes to heaven; if bad, it is taken and tied in hell. One of the reasons for the importance of cremation is that without it the bingŭk-yawa cannot go to heaven.

Considerable care is taken of the bingŭk-yawa in case of serious illness. If a person is ill and does not get well, it must be because of sin. First a ceremony of offering a chicken (ngăk manŭk) is held by the paseh of the priesthood to offer the animal to God for the release of the sin from the bingŭk-yawa (not from the thap), lest at a later time, following death, the bingŭk-yawa be punished and return to attack the children of the family with sickness and death. If offering a chicken is not successful in restoring health, offering a goat (ngăk pabe) and offering a water buffalo (ngăk kabao) follow.

Because children have a special funeral service and are not cremated, care is taken to call upon their bingŭk-yawa after death. A service of this kind would be held once a year, presided over by the woman (muk pajau) in the priestly hierarchy. This is called êu prok. The bingŭk-yawa is called and ordered not to bother other children. It is felt that because the bingŭk-yawa was acquainted with other children, it can come back to misguide and hurt them.

The cremation ceremony starts a dead person's bingŭk-yawa on its way toward becoming an ancestral spirit, one of the muk-kay. After performance of the prescribed padhi ceremonies following the cremation and extending over a period of several years when the skull bones are taken to the burial ground, the deceased becomes an ancestor spirit. From then on during the yearly feast of the ancestors this spirit is revered with others of the ancestors. It is during the time of the padhi that the Cham perform ceremonies called ngăk yang, appeasing the bingŭk-yawa lest it decide to cause trouble.

Kamlai are the bingŭk-yawa of animals and do things animals would. They cannot be seen except in the behavior of

the people whom they have entered. They make people do wrong things. They cannot be destroyed but they can be controlled by use of incantations, using the names of any one of the twelve zodiacal animals. Two other spirits greatly feared are the jin and the mala-un. The jin is not good and very troublesome. It is like a tiger. The mala-un, the biggest of the kamlai, is like a pig. It is related in some way to committing incest.

Abileh are another category of spirits whose king is called abileh Sai-tăn. He has a following of an unknown number of abileh. Abileh Sai-tăn originated when God drank liquor and when he slept, saliva came out of his mouth and became Sai-tăn.

Abileh live above, in the heavens, and come down to enter people. They too are related to animals but are intelligent. They make people strong so that they are not afraid of anything. Their presence is known because people change in their behavior and show signs of the strength abileh give. They can be driven out by magic formulas of a teacher (gru). The teacher gets a bottle of clean well water and holds a staff and the bottle over the head of the afflicted person, giving information about the person to the god he is invoking. He asks his god to send down magic words for casting out the spirit. Then his god produces something supernatural in the water. When the person washes his face and drinks the water, the abileh becomes afraid, and the words of the magic formula are able to cast it out.

Women and children often wear amulets around their necks to ward off harmful spirits. The amulets are written or drawn by one of the old scholars and then encased in material. A very common warning to children from their mothers is a Vietnamese borrowing qui, meaning 'evil spirit', whenever their actions may be out of line.

There seems to be dissatisfaction among young men with the spirit appeasement ceremonies which they see in their villages, but if they marry Cham girls, they are caught up in it as their life becomes embroiled in the ceremonies for which their wives will be responsible. A decade ago, a young man in his teens stated that he wanted to get away and

go to a progressive country. Now he is a married man living in a Cham village with an established family. He is perhaps somewhat disillusioned by the ceremonies for the spirits; but as is customary, he is going along with his wife in whatever her mother has passed on to her as accepted worship of ancestral spirits.

APPENDIX

Attending a Cham Feast for the Royal Ancestors

It was the first day of the seventh Cham lunar month (mid-September). We were invited to attend Băng Katê Yang in a Cham village in southern Vietnam by a teacher (gru) friend. Before attending the ceremony we were told that there are three places where the Cham people make offerings to the spirits of the three deceased rulers who have become lords or gods: one at the tower of King Pô Klong Girai, one at the tower of King Pô Rame and one at the substitute worship house of Queen Po Inư Nagăr. The authentic tower of this last spirit has been taken over by Vietnamese Buddhists; its substitute is some 100 kilometers away in the village of Hưu Đức or Palay Hmu Tanrăn.

Upon arrival at Palay Hmu Tanrăn, the home village of our teacher friend, we were ushered to the one-story concrete block building whose total area is perhaps 700 square feet. The main room was crowded with people and had little light and less air. It was necessary for us to watch from the hallway. A spirit of camaraderie was there. One person called to my husband. Another woman invited me to chew betel.

We saw that on the far side of this room seven Cham young women were dancing. They were dressed in white, except for the lead dancer who was wearing a colored dress. Each wore sashes around her waist and over the shoulder. They were barefoot and carried two fans each. The accompaniment to the dancing was the same as that used in other religious ceremonies, a shrill melody played on a short wind instrument accompanied by drums. The hagăr is a long wooden drum covered with skins on either end, one end beaten with a stick, the other with the hand. The other drum is flat and round.

After watching the dancing for a time, our attention was directed to the man who played a two-stringed instrument (kanhi) made from the shell of a golden turtle. He was in the company of several priests, but there did not seem to be any activity going on there. We were also shown a statue of sorts, apparently meant to represent Queen Inư Nagăr. It

was an upright pillar with a garishly painted face, wrapped around with brightly colored cloth to represent garments. There were no offerings in evidence, nor were people gathered around the statue.

Later on, while outside waiting to be seated for the meal, we noted that the women were all dressed in their best, and probably, new dresses. Many of the Cham men were wearing the traditional sarong topped by brightly colored brocade jackets made in Chinese style. Turbans were also brightly colored, most often red.

The young ladies again entertained with dancing on mats placed outside. In addition, the Cham national assemblyman, an elected political officer, did a similar dance with red cloths. His motions were neither graceful nor smooth, perhaps because of his age.

Generally speaking, foreign guests were seated at a special table or ushered to other seats. All, including the lady foreigners, were served beer. When I declined quietly, as did the wife of the district chief, seated nearby, they brought me a drink made from irrigation water with ice, sugar and pickled limes. The food was served in Vietnamese-Cham style--large bowls of rice generously distributed down the table, with small bowls of vegetable and meat dishes accessible to each guest without passing them. The meat served was goat meat, prepared in four or five different ways. Salad greens were also served, and food was eaten with chopsticks from rice bowls.

After eating, the crowd began to disperse and we were invited to the home of the teacher to drink tea and visit with his family.

At a later time we had opportunity to ask him more about this ceremony of remembering the rulers. There are three important parts to the actual worship. Ông kathăr, the man we saw with the turtle instrument, chants a biographical history of the gods, apparently accompanied by the kanhi. The muk pajau, the woman participant, presents liquor and betel to invite the spirits to partake. The pô dhia, or high priest, says the prayers and leads the ceremonies in other

ways. Three high priests are assigned to the three rulers, so each presides in the place where that ruler is worshipped. These three men hold the highest places in the Brahmanist-related religious group.

None of these ceremonies were visible when we were there, so the general public is invited afterwards, though apparently it would not be taboo to be there if an outsider were bold enough to go without being invited. In the days following the priestly ceremonies, Cham families worship their ancestors in their own homes in what is called ɓăng katê muk-kay.

NOTES

[1]Maspero (LeBar, et al. 1964:245) quotes Huber as follows: "two Kufic inscriptions were found in what was southern Champa dated around 1030 A.D., and there is some indication of a Muslim community in Champa in the tenth century."

[2]Although the term gru may refer to public school teachers, it more often means older Cham men who are scholars in the script and knowledgeable of Cham customs.

[3]For information on similar beliefs of a related group, the Roglai who live west of Nha Trang, see Cobbey (1972).

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