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**The Mỹ Sơn and Pô Nagar Nha Trang Sanctuaries:
On the Cosmological Dualist Cult of
the Champa Kingdom in Central Vietnam
as Seen from Art and Anthropology**

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**The Mỹ Sơn and Pô Nagar Nha Trang Sanctuaries:
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Trần Kỳ Phương & Rie Nakamura

Trần Kỳ Phương has, as an art historian, been studying the historical artefacts and architecture created and left to us by the Cham people. Rie Nakamura, an anthropologist, is a scholar of the culture of the Chăm people living in contemporary Vietnam. Though studying in different fields, and specializing in different subjects, they have come to share a common idea --- that dualism is the key to understanding Cham culture. This jointly written paper is their attempt to demonstrate this key concept of dualism as found in Chăm society and in their art.

In our attempt to detail the dualism we see in the cosmology of both the Cham monuments and more recent Chăm^[1] society, it is intended first to outline the dualistic cults as represented in two royal sanctuaries, Mỹ Sơn in the north and Pô Nagar Nha Trang in the south of the Champa kingdom. This dualism will then be compared with that manifested in various aspects of contemporary Chăm society. This will allow us to observe this cosmological dualism through both historical and contemporary lenses.

^[1] In this paper we use the terms Champa or Cham to indicate historical aspects associated with the Champa kingdom, such as Cham art, Cham royal sanctuary, and so on; and the term Chăm for aspects of Chăm ethnicity, such as Chăm language/Chamic, Chăm people and so on.

THE MỸ SƠN SANCTUARY: THE ROYAL CULT OF THE NORTH CHAMPA STATE

The Mỹ Sơn complex is a major temple site of the kingdom of Champa and is one of the earliest ritual sites of the kingdom. The most ancient inscription of Mỹ Sơn relates to King Bhadravarman who was called Phạm Hồ Đạt in Vietnamese and Fan Hu-ta in Chinese historical records, and dates from circa 380-413 CE. The inscription records that the king erected a temple dedicated to the god Bhadresvara (Siva); and confirmed that the endowment of land was for the purpose of maintaining the temple, and that the land thus gifted was bounded by the holy mountain in the south of the valley, named Mahaparvata/Great God of the Mountain.¹ Nowadays, the local people call the mountain Răng Mèo Mountain/ Cat Mountain or Hòn Quắp.

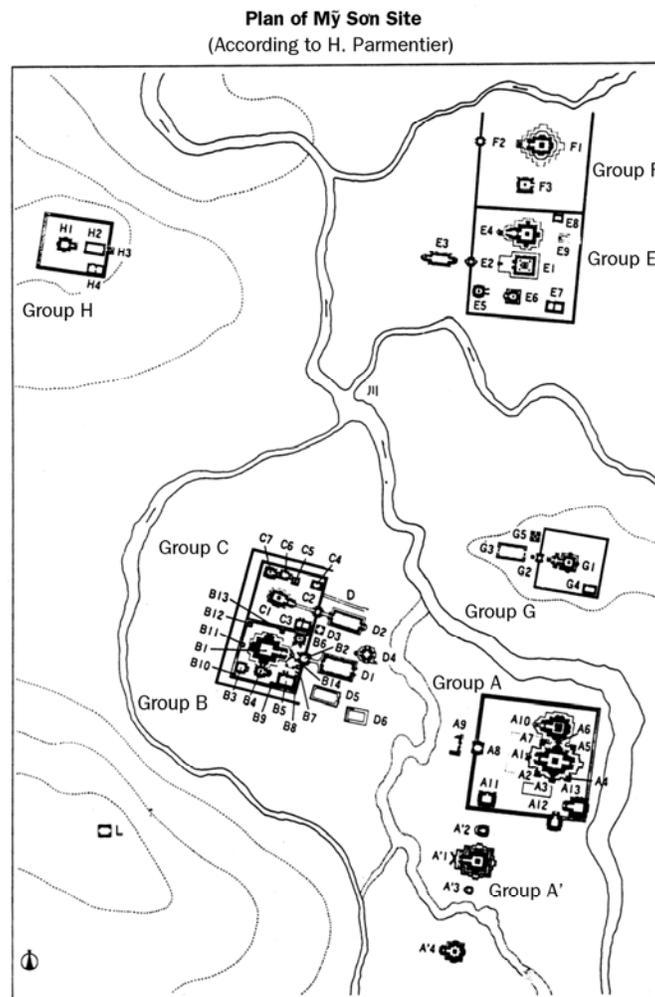


Mỹ Sơn Sanctuary and The Holy Mountain Mahaparvata (Photo: Trần Kỳ Phương)

¹ See Inscription EFEO C.72. See also R.C. Majumdar *Champa: history and culture of an Indian colonial kingdom in the Far East 2th -16th centuries AD* (Delhi: Gian Publishing House, 1985 reprint), Inscription #4, pp. 4-8; Claude Jacques, *Études Épigraphiques sur le pays Cham (réunies par Claude Jacques)*, (Paris: l'École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1995), pp. 5, 204; Trần Kỳ Phương, *Vestiges of Champa Civilization* (Hanoi: Thế Giới Publishers, 2004), pp. 3-5, 33-5.

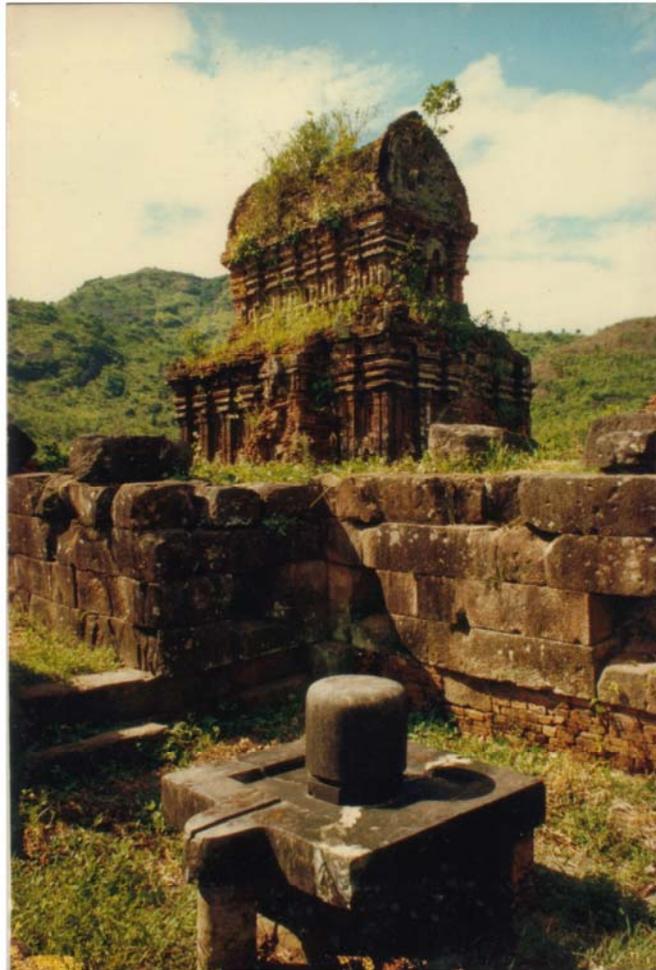
The first temple of King Bhadravarman, which would have been made of wood, enshrined a *linga* of Bhadresvara. The title given to the *linga* was likely composed by coupling the proper name of King Bhadravarman with Isvara, another name of Siva: *Bhadravarman + Isvara = Bhadresvara (Siva)*.

Mỹ Sơn is a narrow and isolated valley, about 2 kilometres in diameter, surrounded by a range of high mountains. A stream flows through the site from the Holy Mountain of Mahaparvata in the south into the Holy River of Mahanadi or Thu Bồn in the north.²



² See Inscription EFEO C.147. See also Majumdar (1985), Inscription #4, p. 7; and Jacques (1995), p. 204.

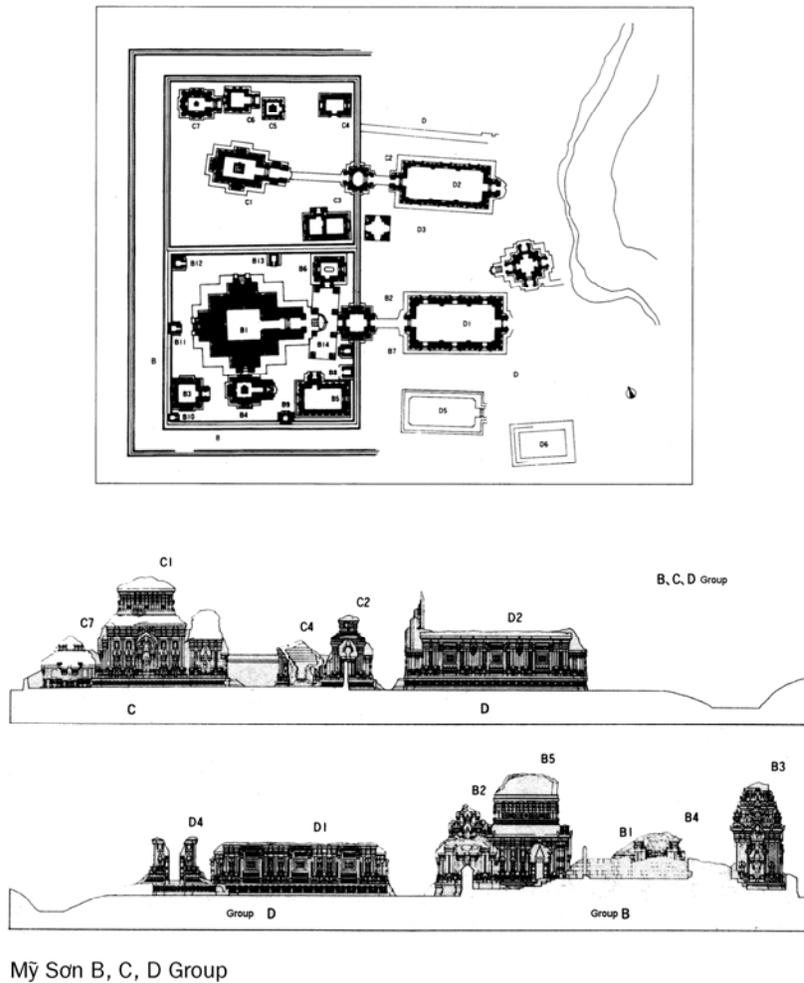
The temple-towers of M̃y Son were built successively from the late 4th /early 5th centuries until the 13th /14th centuries. The M̃y Son B group, which was built and restored continually from the 9th until the 13th /14th centuries, comprises the following complex: the ceremonial long hall/ *mandapa* D1 + the gate- tower/ *gopura* B2 + the main temple/ *kalan* B1; the secondary temples of B3 and B4; the tower of the repository for offering / *kosagrha* (called a *fire-tower* by Chẵm people) of B5; the tower of the ritual holy water reservoir of B6; and the seven small temples of B7-B13 dedicated to the worship of the seven gods of the planets/ *navagrahas* or *saptagrahas*.



Bhadresvara Linga at My Son B1 Photo: Tran Ky Phuong

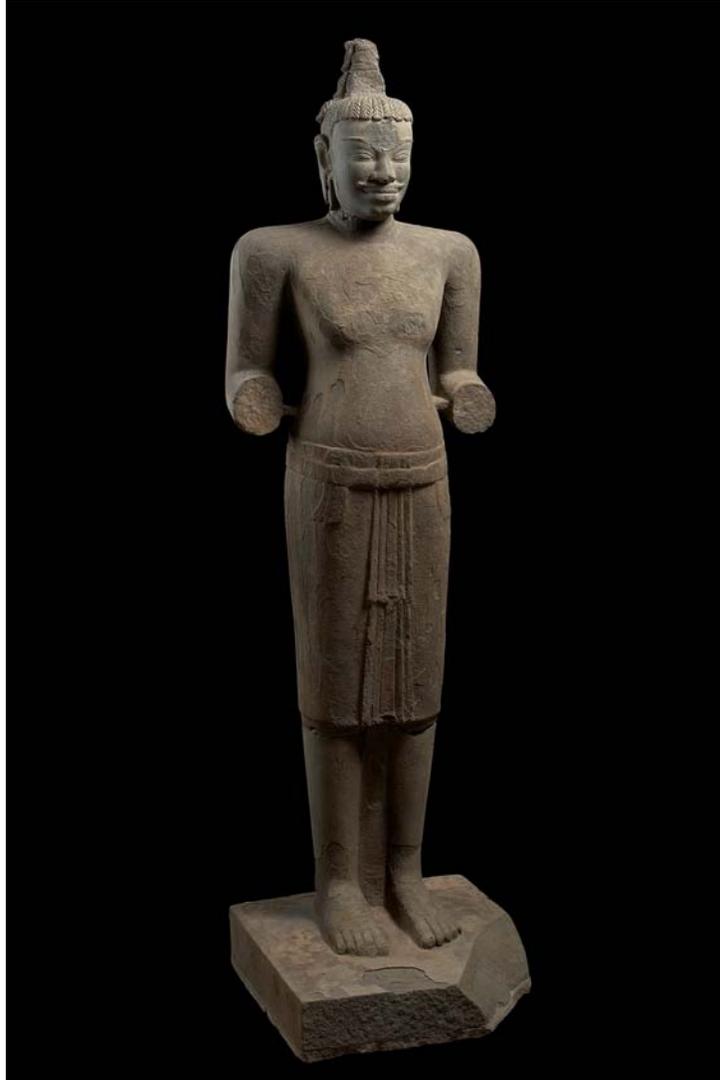
The biggest temple of M̃y Son -- that designated B1 -- is considered to have been the main temple of the sanctuary because of its decorative fragments, which on stylistic grounds and from associated inscriptions can be dated from the 7th to the 13th / 14th centuries, as well as its large area and its central situation on the site. The temple of M̃y Son B1, which has a huge

sandstone foundation-base likely dating from the 12/13th century, enshrines the *yoni-linga* called Bhadresvara (Siva) *linga* mentioned above. The large pedestal of the *yoni-linga* is set in a square hole at the centre of the temple's sanctum to drain the sacred water of the rituals.



Like the M̃y Son B group, the M̃y Son C group was erected on an east-west axis. The M̃y Son C group constitutes a similar complex to the M̃y Son B group but is simpler; it includes the main temple/ *kalan* C1 + the gate-tower/ *gopura* C2 + the ceremonial long hall/ *mandapa* D2; fire-tower/ *kosagrha* C3; a secondary edifice C4; and the secondary temples of C5, C6, C7. The main temple/ *kalan* of the M̃y Son C group -- M̃y Son C1 -- is a reconstruction

which re-used some of the previous architectural fragments such as a lintel, a tympanum/pediment and so on. The temple of M̃y Son C1 enshrines an anthropomorphic icon of Siva. The sandstone image of the anthropomorphic Siva is a round standing statue installed on a large square *yoni* pedestal. This is one of the masterpieces of Cham sculpture and measures 194 cm high. Some archaeological findings suggest that the icon was ornamented with a set of golden jewellery during rituals.³



**The round standing statue of Siva of My Son C1
Exhibiting at Museum of Champa Sculpture in Danang, Vietnam.
Photo courtesy of Musee Guimet, Paris**

³ Jean Boisselier, *La Statuaire du Champà: recherches sur les cultes et l'iconographie* (Paris: l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient, 1963). See p. 138-39.

Siva's costume is a long *sampot* reaching to his knees; the front and the rear parts of the *sampot* are long, and a belt holds the cloth on the right. This representation of the *sampot* was popular in Cham art for only a short period during the end of the 8th century. The face of Siva has thick joined eyebrows, large eyes with round pupils, a straight nose, thick lips with a charming moustache, and a hairstyle woven in the shape of rice flowers, called *jata-mukuta*. These are the typical features of Cham sculpture in the early period, before the *Đông Dương* style, appearing from the last quarter of the 8th to the first quarter of the 9th centuries.⁴

By comparing the two temples of M^ỹ Sơn B1 and M^ỹ Sơn C1, I argue that the installation of these temples reflected a dualistic cult of Siva where he is represented by both his *linga* and his anthropomorphic statue.⁵ This phenomena might be interpreted to suggest that the Cham kings emphasized their absolute belief in the Almighty God of Saivism -- the tutelary god of their dynasties -- by representing him as both a cosmological symbol / Siva *linga* as well as a deified human image/ Siva anthropomorphic statue. Further, in this context, it might also be suggested that while the Siva *linga* icon represented the god Siva himself, the anthropomorphic icon represented the deified Cham king as an incarnation of Siva. .

Similar phenomena to those observed in the B and the C groups, can also be found in the A' and the E groups at M^ỹ Sơn. The M^ỹ Sơn A' group includes several temple-towers built during the early periods. The double cult of Siva can be seen at the M^ỹ Sơn A'1 and A'4 temples. The M^ỹ Sơn A'1 temple is dedicated to a Siva *linga* while the M^ỹ Sơn A'4 temple is dedicated to an anthropomorphic Siva statue. The *linga* of M^ỹ Sơn A'1 has been removed from the temple but an anthropomorphic statue of Siva was found at the M^ỹ Sơn A'4 temple. The sandstone Siva image is a standing statue in the round placed on a high square *yonis* pedestal, and thus its costume as well as its face can be compared with the features of the Siva statue of M^ỹ Sơn C1. Technically, the sculpting of the Siva statue of M^ỹ Sơn A'4 is more sophisticated than that of the M^ỹ Sơn C1 statue although both might have been made in the same period. Like the Siva statue of M^ỹ Sơn C1, the Siva statue of M^ỹ Sơn A'4 is considered to be a masterpiece of Cham art.⁶

⁴ Trần, Kỳ Phương, *Mỹ Sơn trong lịch sử nghệ thuật Chăm (Mỹ Sơn in the history of Cham arts)* (Đà Nẵng: Nhà Xuất Bản Đà Nẵng, 1988), pp. 32-3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 34-5.

⁶ Boisselier, *La Statuaire du Champà*, p. 54.

Similarly, in the M̃y Son E group, the M̃y Son E1 temple was dedicated to worship of the Siva *linga* while the M̃y Son E4 temple had an anthropomorphic Siva statue as the object of worship. The M̃y Son E1 temple is one of the earliest extant structures in the M̃y Son Sanctuary, and its pedestal is considered a masterpiece of Cham art. Both the temple and the pedestal were made in the first half of the 8th century. The pedestal, which consists of a *yonilinga* set, was reconstructed by Henri Parmentier at the beginning of the last century.⁷

The M̃y Son E4 temple is located on the northern side of M̃y Son E1. The architectural fragments of the temple, such as the large lintel and pediment in sandstone depicting the royal court and the image of the goddess Devi reveal the specific art features and structural techniques that date the temple to the second half of the 11th century.⁸ It was possibly built during the reign of King Harivarman II, of whom it was noted “...*he has re-established the edifices and the city of Champa during the troublesome days of the war...and seeing Śrīśānabhadreśvara despoiled of all his possessions at the end of the war, he came to worship the god with a pious heart...*” This passage is found in an inscription of Harivarman II at M̃y Son, dated 1081 CE.⁹

The M̃y Son E4 temple enshrines an anthropomorphic Siva image, comprising a sandstone standing statue in the round atop a high square *yonilinga* pedestal which is decorated with a row of female breasts that symbolize the goddess Uroja, the founder of the state. The costume of the statue is a kind of a long *sampot* falling to the ankles; the front part of the *sampot* is large, and the central fold is decorated with Z-shapes, which are features of Cham art style during the late 11th and early 12th centuries.¹⁰

Thus, the Siva *linga* icon and the anthropomorphic Siva statue worshipped at the temples of M̃y Son B1 and C1; A’1 and A’4; and E1 and E4 appear to represent a dualistic Siva cult that was practiced in the M̃y Son Sanctuary between the 8th and the 12th / 13th centuries.

⁷ Henri Parmentier, *Inventaire descriptif des monuments Chams de l’Annam*, vol. II. *Étude de l’art Cham* (Paris: Leroux, 1918), pl. CXX.

⁸ Boisselier, *La Statuaire du Champà*, p. 212-13.

⁹ Inscription EFEO C.90. See also Majumdar (1985), Inscription # 62, pp. 161-67; and Jacques (1995), pp. 115-22.

¹⁰ Boisselier, *La Statuaire du Champà*, p. 212.

Among all the Cham religious sites, the Mỹ Sơn Sanctuary is unique in the dualistic Siva cult. While there are some images representing Hindu goddesses on pediments at Mỹ Sơn, there are no examples of goddess statues in the round having been found in the main sanctuaries. This suggests that Hindu goddesses did not play an important role in this royal sanctuary.

THE PÔ NAGAR NHA TRANG SANCTUARY: THE ROYAL CULT OF THE SOUTH CHAMPA STATE

The Pô Nagar Nha Trang Sanctuary is approximately 450 km south of the Mỹ Sơn Sanctuary, and is located in Nha Trang city, Khánh Hòa province. The site is located on a small hill next to the estuaries of the Cái and the Hà Ra rivers, the two largest rivers of this region.

According to inscriptions, the first wooden temple of the sanctuary was destroyed by a fire in 774 CE; then in 784 CE the temple was reconstructed with bricks and stones. Based on the results of the archaeological excavation conducted at the beginning of the 20th century by the École française d'Extrême-Orient, there have been ten structures built on this 500 m² hill.¹¹

Today, following war damage and the depredations of time, only five structures remain. They include the main temple in the north (A tower), a secondary temple in the south (B tower), a small temple in the south (C tower), a secondary temple in the north-west (F tower), and brick pillars from a large *mandapa* (M edifice) in the front of the main temple at the foot of the hill.

¹¹ Henri Parmentier, *Inventaire descriptif des monuments Chams de l'Annam: vol. I. Description des monuments* (Paris: Leroux, 1909), pp. 111-32.



Pô Nagar Nha Trang Sanctuary (Photo: Trần Kỳ Phương)

Through the inscriptions, we know that the first Goddess Bhagavati¹² image was erected at this sanctuary during the reconstruction of the sanctuary by King Satyavarman in 784 following his victory over Javanese (?) pirates in 774 CE.¹³ Subsequently, icons of the goddess were installed in the years 817¹⁴ and 918.¹⁵ In 950, the golden icon of the goddess was despoiled by the Khmer; and in 965, King Jaya Indravarman re-erected her image in sandstone.¹⁶ In 1050, the title of Yapu-Nagara/ Yang Pu Nagar was conferred upon the goddess by King Sri Parameśvaravarman;¹⁷ in 1084 by King Paramabodhisatva;¹⁸ in 1160 by King Jaya Harivarman;¹⁹ then in 1256, 1267²⁰ and 1275 by Princess Ratnāvalī.²¹

¹² Bhagavati is a respectful title offered to the Goddess Parvati, the consort of Siva. See Gosta Liebert, *Iconographic Dictionary of the Indian Religions: Hindu-Buddhism-Jainism*, (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1986), p. 36.

¹³ Inscription EFEO C.38. See also Majumdar (1985), Inscription #22, pp. 41-4.

¹⁴ Inscription EFEO C.31. See also Majumdar (1985), Inscription #26, pp. 61-4.

¹⁵ Inscription EFEO C.33. See also Majumdar (1985), Inscription #45, pp. 138-9.

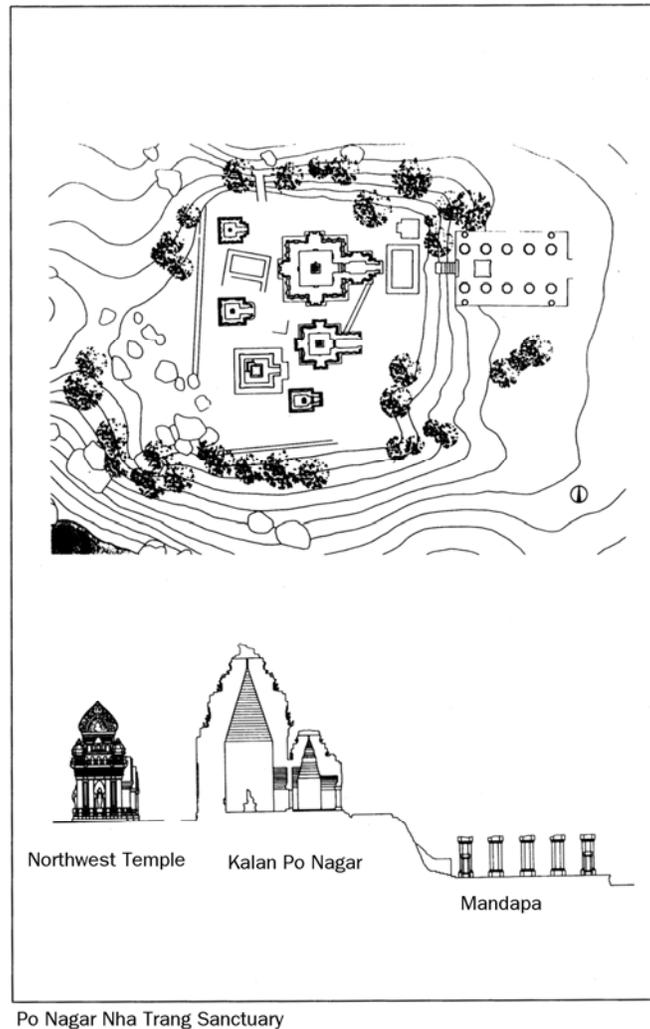
¹⁶ Inscription EFEO C.38. See Majumdar (1985): Inscription # 47, pp. 143-44.

¹⁷ Inscription EFEO C.29. See Majumdar (1985): Inscription # 55, pp. 151-53.

¹⁸ Inscription EFEO C.30. See Majumdar (1985): Inscription # 64, pp. 168-69.

¹⁹ Inscription EFEO C.32. See Majumdar (1985): Inscription # 76, pp. 194-95.

²⁰ Inscription EFEO C.31. See Majumdar (1985): Inscription # 97, pp. 213-14.



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²¹ Anne-Valérie Schweyer, 'Po Nagar de Nha Trang', *Aséanie*, no. 14, Décembre 2004, Éditions du Centre d'Anthropologie Sirindhorn, Bangkok.

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Thus, the worship of the goddess Bhagavati is attested for the years 784, 817, 918, 965, and thereafter, in the years of 1050, 1160, 1256 and 1275, under the title Pô Yang Inu Nagar/ Yapu-Nagara. This continuing practice over centuries indicates the important role of the goddess as ‘*Mother of the state*’ at this royal sanctuary.³²

The main statue at the Pô Nagar Nha Trang Sanctuary represents the goddess Bhagavati, and it is enshrined at the main temple.³³ The statue is made of hard sandstone. The head has been restored and its style reflects the artistic style of the Việt or Kinh people. The statue depicts a ten-arm goddess sitting on lotus petals on a square *yonī* pedestal, and she leans on a prop decorated with the motif of *kala-makara*. Of her forward two hands, the left one turns upward on her knee in the hand gesture of *varada-mudra*; while the right one turns frontward on her knee in the hand gesture of *abhaya-mudra*. The other hands hold attributes. On the right they hold, from bottom to top, a dagger, an arrow, a disk/ *cakra*, and a lance; on the left, they hold a small bell, an axe/ *ankusa*, a conch (?), and a bow. The statue is dated to between the 10th and the 11th centuries.³⁴ The statue of the goddess Pô Nagar Nha Trang is a masterpiece of Cham sculpture. Its scarce base material as well as its excellent craftsmanship emphasize the important role of the statue in the Cham royal sanctuary.

²⁶ Inscription EFEO C.38. See Majumdar (1985): Inscription # 47, pp. 143-44.

²⁷ Inscription EFEO C.29. See Majumdar (1985): Inscription # 55, pp. 151-53.

²⁸ Inscription EFEO C.30. See Majumdar (1985): Inscription # 64, pp. 168-69.

²⁹ Inscription EFEO C.32. See Majumdar (1985): Inscription # 76, pp. 194-95.

³⁰ Inscription EFEO C.31. See Majumdar (1985): Inscription # 97, pp. 213-14.

³¹ Anne-Valérie Schweyer, ‘Po Nagar de Nha Trang’, *Aséanie*, no. 14, Décembre 2004, Éditions du Centre d’Anthropologie Sirindhorn, Bangkok.

³² Some researchers believe that the Hinduization of the cult of Pô Yang Inu Nagar was a transitional phase in a longer period of worship of the indigenous deity by the Cham both before and after contact with Hinduism. See Nguyễn Thế, Anh 1995, ‘The Vietnamization of the Cham Deity Pô Nagar’, *Asia Journal*, Vol. 2, No.1 (1995), The Center for Area Studies, Seoul National University, p. 55.

³³ Le Bonheur, Albert, ‘L’art du Champa’, in *L’art de l’Asie du Sud-Est* (Paris: Citadelles & Mazenod, 1994), p. 225.

³⁴ Boisselier, *La Statuaire du Champa*, pp. 207-09; and Trần Kỳ Phương ‘Về ngôi đền chính của nhóm tháp Pô Nagar (Nha Trang- Phú Khánh)’ [On the main temple of Pô Nagar (Nha Trang –Phú Khánh province)], in *Những phát hiện mới về khảo cổ học năm* (Hà Nội, Viện Khảo Cổ Học, 1986), pp. 380-82.



Goddess Po Yang Inu Nagar or Bhagavati at Pô Nagar Nha Trang
(Photo: Trần Kỳ Phương)

Related to the Pô Nagar Nha Trang Sanctuary is the legend of the goddess that has been popularized among the Chăm as well as the Việt or Kinh communities living in the region of Khánh Hòa, Ninh Thuận, and Bình Thuận provinces. The legend runs generally as follows:

“...She was born from the clouds and the waves, appeared in the Dai An Mountain, and was fed by a woodcutting couple. She was a pretty girl. During a flood, she was transformed into a tree of aloe-wood which floated to the Northern Sea. The tree of aloe-wood was picked up by the local people and offered to the Crown Prince of the Northern Sea State. On a moonlit night,

she appeared from the tree of aloe-wood and the Crown Prince fell in love with her. They then had two children. One day, she missed her homeland and, together with her children, they were transformed into a tree of aloe-wood which floated back to the South. In her homeland, she taught her people to grow rice and how to weave.

Coming back from his battles, the Crown Prince knew that his wife and his children had returned to her homeland and he sent his fleet to search for them. However, because the Prince's soldiers abused her people, she used her supernatural powers to destroy the fleet of the Prince. The remains of the fleet become the rocks which are today seen in the estuary. She was the creator of the earth, of aloe-wood and of rice... To show respect to her the local people built the temple to worship her and her children... ”³⁵

The annual festival for the goddess takes place at the Pô Nagar Nha Trang temple on the 23rd day of the 3rd lunar month (usually in the solar month of April). During the festival, there are many ceremonies dedicated to the goddess, such as bathing her statue, changing her dress, and traditional singing and dancing. It is mainly the Việt or Kinh people who participate in the three-day festival. The name of the goddess Pô Yang Inu Nagar has been Vietnamized into Thiên Y A Na and the sanctuary is called Tháp Bà (The Lady's temple) by the Việt or Kinh people.

In Central Vietnam, from Thừa Thiên –Huế to Khánh Hòa provinces, the cult of the goddess Thiên Y A Na is popular among the Việt or Kinh people. Most of the temples dedicated to the goddess are built near riverbanks or estuaries. Many scholars argue that the cult of the

³⁵ See Inrasara *Văn học Chăm (Chăm Literature)*, (Hà Nội: Nhà Xuất Bản Văn hoá Dân tộc, 1994), pp 36-39; Nguyễn Thế, Anh 1995, 'The Vietnamization of the Cham Deity Pô Nagar', p. 55; and Lý Việt Dũng, 'Truyện bà Tiên Thiên Y A Na (The story of Thiên Y A Na)', *Tạp chí Thông tin Khoa học và Công nghệ*, Số 2 (28) (2000), pp. 115-26. From then legend, one can learn that, in the past, there were two independent states -- one in the South and one in the North of the Champa kingdom. These states may have been unified by marriage alliances; but there was also likely discord between them... The main motifs of the legend, such as: *femaleness/ heavenly girl/ the South* compared with *maleness/the Prince/ the North*; *aloe-wood, the Northern Sea, the inter-marriage*, as well as the South having an advantage over the North (the fleet of the Prince being destroyed), and so on, reflect the cosmological dualist concept of the legend. Most previous researchers having explained the Northern Sea in the legend to be a reference to China. However, if we consider the story in the context of two states/ *mandala* existing in the kingdom, we can interpret the Northern Sea to be a reference to the Amaravati State in the north of the Champa kingdom in what is today Quảng Nam Province.

goddess Thiên Y A Na as practiced in Central Vietnam has its origins in the worship of Pô Yang Inu Nagar by the Cham inhabitants.³⁶

Nowadays, the Chăm people in Ninh Thuận and Bình Thuận provinces, still worship the goddess Pô Nagar as one of their three main indigenous divinities, together with Pô Kloong Garai and Pô Rame.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COSMOLOGICAL DUALIST CULT OF THE TWO ROYAL SANCTUARIES OF THE CHAMPA KINGDOM

Together with the above-mentioned evidence from artistic representation and geography, one can see the respective locations of the two sanctuaries reflecting their own characteristics of cosmological dualism. Mỹ Sơn is located in a deep valley surrounded by mountain ranges; while the Pô Nagar Nha Trang sanctuary is located on a riverside hill near an estuary. Mỹ Sơn belonged to the Amaravati state in North Champa; while the Pô Nagar Nha Trang sanctuary belonged to the Kauthara state in South Champa.³⁷ Thus, from the 8th until the 13th centuries, the two royal sanctuaries of the Champa kingdom manifested their dualistic characteristics as follows: Mỹ Sơn = *Bhadresvara (Siva)/ Mountain/ Father*; Pô Nagar Nha Trang = *Bhagavati-Pô Yang Inu Nagar/ Sea/ Mother*.

According to Chăm legends, the Champa kingdom was ruled by two clans.³⁸ The first clan was the Areca or male clan, called Pinang in the Chăm language (Kramuk Vansh in Sanskrit), which was descended from a mountain clan (Stau Chok or Mountain King). The second clan was the Coconut or female clan, called Li-u in the Chăm language (Narikel Vansh in Sanskrit), which was descended from a sea clan (Stau Thik or Sea King).³⁹ Based on the prominent characteristics of the two royal sanctuaries, I argue that the Areca clan was associated with Mỹ Sơn, or North Champa; while the Coconut clan was associated with the

³⁶ Nguyễn Thế, Anh 1995, 'The Vietnamization of the Cham Deity Pô Nagar,' pp. 55- 67; Nguyễn Hữu Thông et al. *Tín ngưỡng thờ Mẫu ở miền Trung Việt Nam (The cults involving worship of the Holy Mothers in Central Vietnam)*, (Huế: Nhà Xuất Bản Thuận Hoá, 2001), pp. 138-66.

³⁷ Anne-Valérie Schweyer, 'Po Nagar de Nha Trang', p. 116.

³⁸ Jacques, "Études Épigraphiques sur le pays Cham", pp. 207-12.

³⁹ Trần Kỳ Phương, *Vestiges of Champa Civilization*, pp. 4-5.

Pô Nagar Nha Trang sanctuary, or South Champa.⁴⁰ In other words, the specific functions of the two royal sanctuaries reflected aspects of the cosmological dualist cult of the ruling clans of Champa throughout her history.

Inscriptions found in M̃y Son and Pô Nagar Nha Trang and created during the 12th and the 13th centuries, indicate that several kings restored temples and offered images to both royal sanctuaries. For example, in 1113-1149 CE, King Jaya Indravarman III restored temples in both M̃y Son and Pô Nagar Nha Trang;⁴¹ and from the 1220s, King Jaya Parameśvaravarman re-erected all the *linga* in the South dedicated to the goddess Pô Yang Inu Nagar (Pô Nagar Nha Trang) as well as ones in the North dedicated to the god Śrīśānabhadreśvara (at M̃y Son).⁴²

The dedications of the kings of Champa to the two royal sanctuaries in the North as well as in the South of the kingdom suggests that they worshipped both the god and goddess in order to protect the whole kingdom. This reflected the co-existence of dualist states/clans and manifested the cosmological dualist cult. These aspects are shown in the following table.

Table 1: M̃y Son and Pô Nagar Nha Trang

M̃y Son/ Male	Pô Nagar Nha Trang/ Female
Bhadresvara/ Siva	Bhagavati/ Parvati/ Pô Yang Inu Nagar
Mountain	Sea
Father	Mother
Areca	Coconut
North	South
Valley	Riverside hill near estuary

⁴⁰ Based on the principles of *yin-yang*, the coconut with its empty heart should belong to the yin/female; on the other hand, the areca with its solid heart should belong to the yang/male. Therefore, the Coconut clan should have an association with the female; while the Areca clan should be associated with the male.

⁴¹ Inscription EFEO C.28. See Majumdar (1985) Inscription # 71, pp. 177-78.

⁴² Inscription EFEO C.86. See Majumdar (1985) Inscription # 90, pp. 208-09. See also Albert Le Bonheur, 'L'art du Champa', in *L'art de l'Asie du Sud-Est* (Paris: Citadelles & Mazenod, 1994), p. 272 and Anne-Valérie Schweyer, 'Po Nagar de Nha Trang', pp. 123-25.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COSMOLOGICAL DUALISM ADOPTED IN CONTEMPORARY CHĂM SOCIETY

Similar to that described in the two significant royal sanctuaries of Champa, cosmological dualism can also be widely observed in contemporary Chắm communities along the South-central coast of Vietnam which was the last territory of Champa and is nowadays part of Ninh Thuận and Bình Thuận provinces. The Chắm people of this region are divided into two groups based on their religions. One group, called *Chắm* or *Bà-la-môn* (*Brahmanist*) are adherents of an indigenized form of Hinduism. They worship the god called *Pô Yang* and they deify kings in the old temples which were constructed between the 13th/14th and the 16th / 17th centuries in that region. They are supposed to observe a taboo on beef. Usually they are cremated when they die. The other group called *Bani*, are adherents of an indigenized form of Islam. They worship *Pô Alwah* (Allah) at their mosques called *thang muki* in their villages. They are supposed to observe a food taboo on pork. When they die, they are buried rather than cremated.

A legend explaining the origin of the division between the *Chắm* and *Bani* indicates that the division was aimed at bringing peace to their society at a time when people had been constantly fighting. In the legend, *Chắm* and *Bani* are referred to as *Ahier* and *Awar*, respectively. Both words originate in Arabic. *Ahier* means “back, behind, or after” and *Awar* means “front or before”. In the legends, *Ahier* is expressed as male and *Awar* is expressed as female. Many Chắm people express the similar idea of *Ahier* being men and *Awar* being women. The elderly people in Chắm villages today claim that *Ahier* and *Awar* are just like the positive and negative terminals of a battery; as we have to have both to make a machine function. Similarly, society must have *Ahier* and *Awar* to function.

Doris Blood who lived among the Chắm people for several years before 1975 pointed out a dualistic tendency in Chắm cosmology based on two realms: father’s realm and mother’s realm.⁴³ During her field research, Rie Nakamura has realized that these two opposing concepts are essential to the way the Chắm people understand their world. In the Chắm lunar calendar, each month is divided into two sections: the first 15 days are called *bingun* which is

⁴³ Doris Blood, ‘Aspects of Cham Culture’, in *Notes from Indochina on Ethnic Minority Cultures*, (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics), 1981, pp. 43, 48.

characterised as *Ahier*, and the last 15 days are called *klam* characterised as *Awar*. Similarly, the first three days of a week, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday are considered to be *Ahier*, while the last three days -- Thursday, Friday, and Saturday -- are considered to be *Awar*. The human upper body from the head to the navel is called *akhar*, belonging to *Ahier*; while the lower body from the navel to the feet is called *tanuh riya* and belongs to *Awar*.

The maleness of *Ahier* and femaleness of *Awar* are also represented by the two separate groups of priests. The gender roles of *Bà-la-môn* priests and *Bani* priests are expressed by their clothing and behaviour. A *Bà-la-môn* priest who is a key person in performing a ritual, will wrap his head with a white turban in a special way, so that the shape of the turban symbolizes a *linga*. The *Bani* priests wear an extra cloth on their turban called *khan djram*, which is the cloth which *Bani* women wear. The *Bani* priests will wear the *khan djram* in the same way the *Bani* women wear it. Further, *Bà-la-môn* priests always sit with crossed legs as men do during rituals, while *Bani* priests sit with their feet under them and to the side as women sit during rituals.



Cham Brahmin in festival . Photo: Tran Ky Phuong

It is quite interesting that, although *Bà-la-môn* priests symbolize *Ahier* (male) and *Bani* priests symbolize *Awar* (female), they also carry things to indicate the opposite group (sex). Each *Bà-la-môn* priest has a yellow rectangular bag as a part of their attire while each *Bani* priest has three bags as a part of their attire. One of the three bags is slightly larger than the other two which are tied by the same cord. The *Bà-la-môn* priests' bag symbolizes the uterus, and the *Bani* priests' bags symbolize the penis and testicles. The priests' bags -- both *Ahier* and *Awar* -- symbolize their acceptance of their counterparts, and this is similar to the notion of "complementary dualism" by Janet Hoskins who studied indigenous notions of gender and agency among the Austronesian language-speaking Kodi people at the Western tip of Sumba in the Lesser Sunda island chain (Indonesia). She explained the notion of recursive complementary dualism by quoting James Fox: "A great deal of the symbolic elaboration of dualistic structure in eastern Indonesia involves playing with this principle of recursive complementarity: Male contains Female, Female contains Male; Inside contains the Outside, the Outside the Inside; Black, White, White, Black."⁴⁴



The Hon-kan

⁴⁴ Janet Hoskins, 'Complementarity in this World and the Next: Gender and Agency in Kodi Mortuary Ceremonies', in M. Strathern (ed.), *Dealing with Inequality*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 197.

There is a magical talisman used by priests and shamans during various rituals and is one way in which Chẵm people express the Chẵm people's world. This talisman is called a *Hon-kan*.⁴⁵ The *Hon-kan* is composed of two numbers and two figures. The centre of the symbol is a circle which indicates the sun, and underneath the sun there is a crescent moon. On the top of the sun there is the number 6 and below the crescent, there is the number 3. The sun and the number 3 belong to *Ahier* and the crescent and the number 6 belong to *Awar* (see figure). The Chẵm people consider that the number 9 is the most complete number. Thus, the symbol of the *Hon-kan* which comprises the symbols of both *Ahier* and *Awar* indicates the most complete form of existence: unity, balance, stability and peace. In other words, when *Ahier* and *Awar* coexist, the world of the Chẵm finds unity.⁴⁶

Table 2: *Ahier* and *Awar* and Their Attributes

Ahier/ Chẵm (before/front)	Awar/ Bani (after/behind)
Male (father's realm) <i>Paseh</i>	Female (mother's realm) <i>Pô Char</i>
First 15 days of a month, <i>Bingun</i>	Latter 15 days of a month, <i>Klam</i>
Sunday, Monday, Tuesday	Thursday, Friday, Saturday
Hot, Fire, the Sun	Cold, Water, the Moon
From the dawn until the noon	From the noon until the sunset
Upper body	Lower body
Number 3, the sky, father	Number 6, the earth, mother
Death (?)	Life, birth

Source: Rie Nakamura, "Cham in Vietnam: Dynamics of Ethnicity", p. 96

The dualism found in the Chẵm cosmology and world view, and the notion of unity and peace by acceptance or inclusion of opposing realms found in Chẵm rituals, and also as symbolized by the *Hon-kan* talisman seem to provide a possible explanation of the dualism found in the Champa sanctuaries and also the reason why King Jaya Indravarman and King Jaya Parameśvaravarman made dedications to both the M̃y Son and Pô Nagar Nha Trang sanctuaries.

⁴⁵ 'Hon-kan' means 'magical sign' in the Chẵm language.

⁴⁶ Rie Nakamura, "Cham in Vietnam: Dynamics of Ethnicity", Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, Seattle, 1999, pp. 87-92.