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BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BRAHMANISM IN THE CHAM COMMUNITY IN VIETNAM

***Abstract:** Brahmanism is a major religion formed in India. In the historical process, this religion has been introduced into the ancient Champa kingdom since the early years of AD. However, after being introduced to Champa, Brahmanism was localized, becoming a national religion that was completely independent and different from the original. Currently, indigenization has been reflected in the life and practices of beliefs and religions of the Cham- the descendants of the ancient Champa kingdom's inhabitants. Therefore, Brahmanism's elements in the Cham community also have many unique features. These characteristics are clearly expressed in the belief system, religious philosophy, rituals, practices, norms, and morality of this community. This article sheds light on specific aspects of Brahmanism in the spiritual and cultural practices of the Cham people today.*

***Keywords:** Brahmanism; Cham community; Vietnam; characteristics.*

Introduction

From the perspective of belief and religion, the Cham in Central Vietnam is classified into four main groups¹: Cham Jat² (the Cham still maintain indigenous beliefs and are not influenced by any foreign religion), Cham Ahiér³ (often called Cham Brahman), Cham Awal⁴ (often called Cham Bani influenced by Islam), Cham Islam (Sunni sect).

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The Brahmanical Cham community has a rich spiritual life with many unique features not found in any other community. It is a mixture of folk beliefs with some elements of Brahmanism, even influenced by Islamic elements from the Bani Cham community according to a dichotomous, dual structure. The most basic characteristics are expressed in the belief system, religious philosophy, rituals, practices, standards of life, ethics, etc.

1. Belief

The Cham in general and the Brahmanical Cham in particular have an extremely rich spiritual life with many mystical spiritual elements. The Cham's view of life and the world demonstrates polytheistic thinking associated with legends of gods and the birth of all things, including human beings. Currently, the Brahmanical Cham still maintain many versions of creation myths: the primitive creation myth, the creation myth of Po Kuk or Po Kut Aulua Huk, the creation myth of Po At Maheket and Po Aulua Huk, Po Ina Nâgar legend.

“... In the beginning, the universe was nothingness (elak), then the universe gave birth to the genie of heaven (Po Lingik) and the genie of earth (Po Tanah Riya), then the genie of heaven combined with the genie of earth and the mother genie combined with father genie, creating of all things and humans (Adam)...” - the primitive creation myth [Sakaya, 2010: 221].

The legend of Po Kuk says: “... The ancient universe was a void, dark, and misty space. Po Kuk, Po Aulua, and other genii illuminated the universe and made all things proliferate. Po Kuk also sent Po Inâ Nâgar to earth to establish the country, the land of the Cham...” [Sakaya, 2013: 102].

The legend of Po Atmahekat recounted: “... At the beginning of the world, the universe was wild, Po Atmahekat was born by himself; Po Kuk, Po Aulua Huk were born from the Mosri tree; Po Kuk gave birth to Po Inâ Nâgar; Po Aulua Huk gave birth to Po Aulua and Po Nabis... Po Aulua then gave birth to all things and human; Po Inâ Nâgar descended to earth to create the homeland, the country...”⁵

In addition, there are also versions related to Po Inâ Nâgar's descent into the world, giving birth to heaven and earth, all living things, genii, and humans, teaching people how to farm and embroider...⁶ Thus, the Cham's view of the world is expressed in legends with the main idea and motif being the creation of the supreme genii from the upper world. This is the basic conception of the Cham's worldview, especially the Brahmanical Cham. In that conceptual system, belief in the existence of genii is an important one. They believe that the entire world, the country they live in, and everything in that world, including human, are created, controlled, and protected by genii.

In addition to polytheistic thinking, the worldview of the Brahmanical Cham is deeply influenced by dualistic thinking that the Cham calls the law of Tanaow-binai/lakei-kamei (Male-female/masculine-feminine) [Po Dharma, 2015; Trần Nguyễn Khoa, 2019]. This rule in structural pairs in the above-mentioned creation myths of the Cham is the creation of the world, with heaven-earth (Po Lingik-Po Tanah Riya), father genie-mother genie (Po Yang Amu - Po Inâ Nâgar) and the combination of gods and goddesses in the divine system [Đồng Thành Danh, 2018: 32-49]. Dualistic thinking is also shown by viewing entities and phenomena in nature from the perspective of opposing pairs: sky-earth, light-dark, hot-cold, dark-light... Dualistic philosophies bring opposing thinking from the perspective of spiritual ideas affecting the organization, institutions, and practice of beliefs and religions in the Brahmanical Cham community.

In traditional explanations about the beliefs and religion of the Cham, Awal, and Ahiér are two opposing but supportive entities, in which Awal is the Cham Bani community and Ahiér is the Cham Brahmin community. According to their structure, Awal and Ahiér are not just two community groups that practice two different, opposing forms of belief and religion, but instead, they have complementary characteristics and elements, closely linked to each other like husband and wife, male and female, masculine and feminine. Not only is it a

structure used to classify ethnic groups, the Awal-Ahiér structure also becomes the most basic structure, regulating and encompassing other dualistic structures in the belief and religious system of the Cham, as well as in the Cham culture. Thus, Awal-Ahier is a binary, dual structure of the spiritual culture of the Cham, a model that regulates the way of cohesion between a Hinduism community and an Islam community. This makes the opposition, contradictions, and even conflicts between two faith and religious communities; Instead, it is about attachment, combination, assignment, and support in daily spiritual life.

The next specific form of expression that is often considered to illustrate the Awal-Ahiér structure is the image of dignitaries representing two community groups: Acar (Cham Awal) and Basaih (Cham Ahiér). From explanations related to the costumes, lifestyle, and ritual practices of the Acar and Basaih dignitary groups, studies show that Acar represents mothers and wives, and have female or feminine; On the contrary, Basaih represents fathers and husbands, according to masculinity, male [Sakaya, 2003: 7, 36; Rie Nakamura, 2009: 90-91]. The images of Acar and Basaih dignitaries can explain the relationship between Awal and Ahiér from a gender perspective, the most unique and prominent aspect in the visualization of the Awal - Ahiér structure that we are analyzing. From this image, Awal is seen as a symbol of the female principle (Kamei), feminine (Binai), and Ahiér carries the male principle (Lakei), masculine (Tanaow). This relationship is even deeper when Awal is defined as the wife, and Ahiér as the husband; The wife must go together with her husband and be attached to him. This principle is a key principle and this relationship is the fundamental relationship in the entire dualistic structure of Awal and Ahiér.

Regarding their view of life, the Cham believes that all things have souls, including human, so when they die, they will go to heaven where the gods and ancestors reside. The world in which people live is only a “temporary world”; “nao ikak” philosophy views life as just a trading trip, the heavenly world - where people return after death - is

eternal [Guga, 2004: 170-180]. Thus, from a spatial perspective, the universe is divided into two levels: (1) heaven (suer liga), where the gods and deceased ancestors reside; (2) the earthly realm (dun-ya) where people are “temporarily living” to wait for the day they will ascend to the upper world after the cremation rite during the funeral ceremony (ndam cuh) and the Kut entrance ceremony... [Đồng Thành Danh, 2018: 31-3; 2019: 85-100].

In addition, the Brahmanical Cham also believes in the souls of all things. They believe that plants, animals, and entities in nature all have a soul or the protection of a deity, so they all have a sacred nature that can support or harm human. The Brahmanical Cham believes that perennial plants are the residence of genii or demons. They worship the soul of rice plants and respect animals in the forest such as tigers and elephants... They also worship genii in nature such as the direction genie (Yang Dar Dik), river genie, sea genie, mountain genie, etc.

The custom of totemism is expressed through the worship of the Areca tribe (Kramukavamsa) and the Coconut tribe (Narikelavamsa). The Cham lineages today still have two major lineages: Atuw Cek (Mountain lineage) and Atuw Tathik (Sea lineage). In the worship rituals of these two lineages, there are some differences. This is considered a remaining trace of the ancient custom of totem worship among the Cham, still retaining some influence in the Rija ceremonies (dance offerings to the genie) of the clan.

The custom of stone and tree worship is a primitive form of belief found in many ethnic groups. Among the Cham, the custom of stone worship shows through Lingas and Kut stone (Patuw Kut) in the Kut campus (according to the mother’s family line of the Brahminical Cham). The custom of stone worship is often associated with totems, polytheistic beliefs, Animism, and fertility beliefs. Remaining traces of tree worship among the Cham are found in the totems of the Areca and Coconut tribes, through the symbol of the divine Kreh tree, symbolizing the soul and survival of the Champa Kingdom mentioned in the legend of King Po Ramé.

Remnants of totemism are also expressed through the belief in worshiping totems among clans. They also believe in the ability to communicate between gods and humans through the phenomenon of trance (*trun puec*), and belief in charms and incantations, thereby forming a magical system of divination, harm, and healing. These are the basic characteristics of Shamanism.

2. Practices

2.1. Rituals in the community and family

Corresponding to the gods, the Brahmanical Cham worships and organizes rituals according to customs with their offering ways and ritual procedures. At the village level, they often organize the Rija Nâgar New Year dance ceremony, Po Nai, and Po Riyak worship ceremonies according to the ritual of worshiping Yang biruw (new genii), meaning the genii are influenced by Islam; In addition, the Brahmanical Cham also worships the deities of temples and towers (Yang bimong-Kalan, Yang klak) in ceremonies such as Katé, Cambur (on temples, towers, in villages and each family), and especially the ritual at Po Inâ Nâgar Hamu Mâbek temple - the deity can be considered the most important one in the divine system. The institution of worshiping this deity is a form of combining the beliefs of mother worship (Mother God of the Land), and goddess worship with the beliefs of worshiping village gods and tutelary genius (deities who have built and defended villages).

First of all, there are rituals to worship local genii according to indigenous polytheistic beliefs in temples and towers on a community scale such as tower opening ceremonies (*Peh mband yang*), island praying ceremonies (*Yuer Yang*), Kate feast, and Cambur feast [Sakaya, 2003:127; Bá Minh Truyền, 2014: 136-148]. These rituals have two levels: performed at temples and towers that gather many villages to worship together; Temples and towers are worshiped by each village. For example, in Ninh Thuan, Po Klaong Garai, Po Ramé Towers, and Po Inâ Nâgar temple are places where many villages are responsible for offerings. Besides, in each village, one or more

temples is worshipping other deities that the people of each village are responsible for worship. Therefore, in ceremonies at temples and towers, especially Kate and Cambur, after holding ceremonies at the three main temples and towers, each village will hold ceremonies at the village's god temple.

The general structure of most rituals to worship the gods follows these steps: the procession of the god's clothing, the ceremony to open the temple (or tower), the ceremony of bathing the statue and dressing the god, the grand ceremony, reading of the hymns praising merit and offering to the gods [Sakaya, 2003: 165-166; Bá Minh Truyên, 2014: 136-148]. The master of ceremonies at temples and towers is usually the Basaih, in which the main host is the Po Adhia (Po Guru), the other Basaih are assistants, and there is also the assistant of Kadhar master, Muk Pajau, and Mr. Camanei (temple keeper). The Basaih's task in these ceremonies is to read prayers to carry out detailed rituals such as worshipping the fire god, purifying temples and towers, reciting prayers during the Yuer yang ceremony, and asking permission for Po Ginuer Mantri to open the tower door during the Kate and Cambur ceremonies. [Sakaya, 2003: 130-133, 138, 150; Sử Văn Ngọc, 2010: 136]

Besides the god-sacrifice ceremonies at temples and towers, there are god-sacrifice rituals according to the indigenous beliefs of some clans such as Puis, Payak... and buffalo-sacrifice ceremonies to the gods. These ceremonies often take place at temporary ceremony houses (made of wood, thatch, bamboo, etc.) that the Cham call Kajang, which are set up in an empty piece of land in the village and are the place for ceremonies; At the end of the ceremony, people remove it. In these rituals, the Kadhar is the master of ceremonies, Muk Pajau always walks beside the Kadhar masters and supports them in each ritual. Kadhar master's duty in these rituals is to sing hymns of invitation, praise for merits, and finally send the gods off to the upper world. Muk Rija is responsible for pouring tea and wine as offerings and sometimes dancing to offer to the gods while the Kadhar plays the

Rabap and sings hymns. [Sakaya, 2003: 64-75; Sủ Vãn Ngọc, 2010: 101-108; Bá Vãn Quyén, 2015: 66-71]

The above sacrificial rituals are usually for local gods influenced by Hinduism or local beliefs. After Islam was introduced to Champa, the Cham also began to worship figures of Islamic origin or from Malaysia such as Po Auluah (Allah), Po Nabi Mohamad, Po Ali, Po Ban Gana, Patra, Patri.... In addition, several characters who came from Champa but studied Islam and were influenced by Islam had many merits to the nation and were also deified and became new gods to be worshiped such as Po Riyak, Po Tang Ahaok, Po Haniim Par... Most of these gods are worshiped during Rija ceremonies such as Rija Nâgar (country dance ceremony), Rija Praong (big dance ceremony), Rija Harei (daytime dance ceremony), Rija Dayep (night dance ceremony)... All of these ceremonies are of Malay origin even though they have many indigenous elements.

The master of ceremonies who often appears in Rija ceremonies is Master Mâduen (Baranang drum master), combined with Master Ka-ing (in both Rija Nagar and Raja Harei ceremonies) and Muk Rija (in Rija Praong and Rija Dayep). On these occasions, Master Mâduen takes turns beating the drum and singing hymns to invite the gods, especially local gods influenced by Islam (sometimes there are also gods from the old tradition, but not common). When Master Mâduen sings to any god, Mr. Ka-ing and Muk Rija take turns dancing to celebrate those gods. Ceremonies of this type also take place in ceremony houses (Kajang), accompanied by hymns and dances. Similar to the Puis and Payak worship ceremonies presided over by Master Kadhar, the gods of the Puis and Payak ceremonies are old gods, that is, gods of local beliefs (mixed with Hinduism), while the gods in the ceremony Rija are mostly influenced by Islam. [Sakaya, 2003: 76-117; Sủ Vãn Ngọc 2010: 116-134]

In addition, at the family and clan level, the Brahmanical Cham also organizes rituals to worship land and ancestors... The custom of offering land takes place at the beginning of the new year to ward bad things off and pray for peace for homeowners. The land offering

ceremony is presided over by shamans (gru urang); Offerings include two chickens, sticky rice, wine, eggs, betel and areca, and rice and soup. Ancestor offerings come in many forms such as the Éw Praok custom. This ceremony is presided over by Mrs. Rija (family medium). Mrs. Rija poured tea to pray to the master (Po Gru), the earth god (Po Tanah Riya), and ancestors (Po Praok Likei - Kamei). Offerings to Po Praok are quite simple, only sticky rice, bananas, and betel leaves and areca nuts. In addition, ancestors are also worshiped during the Katé and Cambur ceremonies. The ceremony is presided over by the clan heads or older men in the family with offerings of a pair of chickens prepared into five trays accompanied by various types of sticky rice, sweet soup, cakes, etc.

2.2. Life cycle rituals

In addition to community and family rituals, life cycle rituals are also very important to the Brahmanical Cham, such as offerings to the mother at birth and wedding ceremonies. The most unique and important are the funeral (cremation), death anniversary ceremonies (cip padhi) and then entering Kut. The funeral of the Brahmanical Cham takes place with rituals as the following: the shaman (gru kaleng) performs the ritual of giving water (laik aia) to the dead, followed by the bathing ritual (pamânei), wearing clothes, also known as the great shroud ceremony (pambeng anguei) for the dead; Finally, there is a rite of temporary burial for two or three years. After the temporary burial time expires, the family holds a cremation ceremony. The cremation ceremony is performed by the senior clergy (Po Adhia) or deputy clergy (Po Bac) and Basaih dignitaries.

According to the customs of the Cham, the cremation ceremony is performed in the fourth month of the Cham calendar. However, currently, due to the large population, cremation ceremonies are performed in every month of the year, except the first and eleventh months of the Cham calendar. Performing the cremation ceremony are Basaih dignitaries, headed by Po Adhia or Po Bac; The location is an empty lot in the village. Offerings include vegetarian and meat food.

Vegetarian food includes fruit cakes, bananas, and sweet soup. The meat food includes chicken, eggs, fish, “lá môn” soup, etc.

After the cremation ceremony, the family must hold a death anniversary funeral (*ngap patrip*). The first is the *patrip talang* ceremony (the first death anniversary ceremony performed on the day of cremation), followed by the *patrip bak bilan* ceremony (the first full month death anniversary), *patrip klaoh thun* (the death anniversary next year), *patrip palao* (the death anniversary before entering Kut) and finally *patrip talang tapuen* (the last death anniversary before entering Kut). Offerings for the funeral include goat meat, boiled chicken, rice placed in a betel box called *lisei hop*, soup, and fruit cakes, a tray with a *klaong* box containing the dead person’s forehead bone, a layer of rice underneath, and a set of clothes on top so that the deceased can have food and not be hungry or thirsty while waiting to enter Kut. After completing the cremation ceremony, within 30 days, Basaih dignitaries and their clan members abstain from performing clan rituals, do not eat the meat of animals that give birth, and abstain from eating basil and other types of egg-plant.

The Kut entry ceremony is one of the major and important rituals of the Brahmanical Cham, marking the end of a series of the Cham’s life cycle rituals. When they die, they have a cremation ceremony, keeping only nine pieces of forehead bone - like coins to enter the Kut (mother lineage cemetery). The time to enter Kut depends on the clan, but on average it takes about 10 - 20 years or more when the clan has gathered many *klaongs*.⁷ The Kut entry ceremony is presided over by Po Adhia. After Po Adhia put the bones into each Kut stone divided by gender, social position, and bad or good death status, Mr. Kadhar takes over the singing of the ceremony, Muk Pajau invites the gods to witness the ceremony and dances for joy.

3. Life and ethics in the community

Along with the system of beliefs, associated with objects of worship and rituals, the Brahmanical Cham, especially dignitaries,

must follow regulations on life and ethics. All these regulations constitute canons and taboos related to the community's common life, activities, and eating.

The first rule and taboo is the custom of worshiping and not eating beef, which all dignitaries and Brahmins must follow. This ritual originates from the Hindu belief in worshiping cows (of Indian origin). In Indian mythology, there is a sacred cow named Nandin. It is a male bull with white fur and an eye in the middle of the forehead, the mount of Shiva, one of the three supreme gods of Hinduism. That's why Hindu Indians respect cows very much. They never eat beef or kill cows. Some Indian families even create statues to worship cows. Every year, they also organize many ceremonies in which cows are the object of worship [Cao Huy Đình, 2003: 124].

For the Cham, Nandin is called Kapil, associated with legends that are unique to the Cham. In folklore, there are many versions related to Kapil. The most popular legend tells that there was an old, infertile couple who thanks to divine grace, became pregnant and gave birth to two children: a cow named Kapil, and a human named Kraong. Unfortunately, when giving birth to Kapil and Kraong, the exhausted mother passed away. Kapil and Kraong grew up herding buffalo together, experiencing much harms from their stepmother and the cruel king. Kapil was killed by the king, but his spirit always helped his younger brother until the day Kraong killed the evil king and became king. After that, the two brothers held a solemn funeral for their deceased mother; Kapil was the animal that walked behind the carrying beam to see her off to heaven.⁸ [Phan Văn Dốp - Phan Quốc Anh - Nguyễn Thị Thụ, 2014: 67]. Therefore, in the funerals of the Brahminical Cham, the image of the Kapil is drawn and pasted on the pole carrying the deceased for cremation, with the concept that Kapil will take the dead to heaven. That's why the Brahminical Cham never eats beef.

In addition to this general rule, Brahmin dignitaries such as Basaih, Kadhar, and Pajau also have their taboos and abstinence to become the

elite class, taking on the role of making offerings and performing rituals for the whole community. Most of these dignitary groups must maintain lineage. If their clan becomes a dignitary, their descendants will continue to join the corresponding dignitary team; the Basaih line makes Basaih; the Kadhar line makes Kadhar. As for Ms. Pajau, she must be a virgin and cannot marry when serving as a dignitary. This ensures the purity and innocence of this dignitary to serve the gods and the community. To join these ranks, dignitaries must also have good virtue and know Cham literacy to learn scriptures, hymns, prayers, etc. They must go through many ordination rituals to enter or advance in their dignitary group.⁹

In daily life, dignitaries of Basaih, Kadhar, and Pajau must comply and abstain from many specific things such as: not eating beef, not eating amphibians such as catfish, toads, eels..., dead animals, animals associated with Cham legends and ancient stories; fruits such as bananas, papaya, figs, squash, purslane, and amaranth; Do not attend ceremonies such as birth ceremonies, wedding ceremonies, and Rija ceremonies; When urinating, you must lift your skirt and squat (representing women - belonging to the yin); when defecating, you must take off your hood; when going to the bathroom, you must check the date. In married life, it must also comply with the principles of the Basaih ranks. Before eating and before sleeping, you must recite the mantra. When sleeping, you must not turn your head to the South because the Brahminical Cham considers the South to be the “direction of the dead” (when a person dies, the body must be placed with its head facing the South). [Phan Quốc Anh, 2004]

Dignitaries must follow these abstinences not only in daily life but also in preparing food and offerings. They are not only the ones who preside over and perform the ceremony but are also the ones who use the symbolic offerings or use those items after offering.

In addition to the above dignitaries, in the Brahmanical Cham community, there are also folk religious dignitaries serving deities imported from Islam and Malaysia, namely Mâduen and Rija.

To become a Mâduen dignitary, the first criteria for an individual is that the body must be healthy, not disabled; must have a wife and children; have prestige in the community, and must go through mandatory rituals in the Mâduen dignitaries system. The first thing is to perform the Pahuel nik ritual (body cleansing ritual and the first performance to join the ranks of Mâduen dignitaries); This is the ritual before initiation; its purpose is to worship the ancestors, yang (deity), the first founder of the Mâduen sect and studied rituals, ceremonies, hymns... Next is to perform the *Ndung akaok* ritual - an important ritual - through the *Ngap noja patruh Mâduen* ritual (official ordination ceremony to become a Mâduen dignitary). After this ceremony, Mr. Mâduen can perform Rija rituals in the family and community. The highest-ranking Mâduen dignitary is Mr. Mâduen Gru. To become a Mâduen Gru dignitary, one must go through the *Ngap noja tagok Mâduen gru* enthronement ceremony.

Muk Rija is their clan's medium. Each Cham clan has its own Muk Rija who is responsible for performing ancestral worship rituals in the family and is the keeper of the *ciét atau* (bamboo and rattan baskets containing ancestral clothes to perform dance ceremonies) of the clan. In the Cham's traditional Rija rituals, Muk Rija is the one who dances and offers offerings to the deities and prays to the deities to give their clan many blessings and to overcome disasters, etc. Muk Rija has the following ranks: Muk Rija anâk (Beginner) and Muk Rija Gru (Senior). From Muk Rija anâk to Muk Rija gru, there is no time limit but depends on time Muk Rija meets all the conditions such as understanding customs and traditions, having good moral behavior, and then being promoted to Muk Rija gru through *Rija patruh* and *Rija hala auen* rituals (ordination rituals and celebration dances).

In daily activities, Mâduen and Mrs. Rija have many very strict taboos, from the way they speak to their clothes, especially in eating and drinking such as do not eat the meat of dead animals, lizards or pork, catfish, figs, etc. Explaining the abstinence from eating pork and lizards, Muslims believe that pigs are unclean and dirty, while

lizards are classified as agama and salamander (hermaphrodites), so eating these animals is taboo; Muslims call it Haram. [Sakaya, 2010: 425] However, when this custom was introduced to the Cham community, their explanation was completely different from the indigenous perspective that folk legends often mention. There are many different versions of these legends. According to materials of Ninh Thuan Center for Cham Cultural Research, pigs gave milk to Po Ali and Phuatimah's children. Another legend explains that pigs and lizards gave Muhammad and his soldiers food and water during times of hunger and thirst on the battlefield. [Phan Văn Dóp et al., 2014: 67]

Another legend explains that pork and lizard were not used in sacrificial rituals related to the origin of the Cham Ahiér and Awal people. According to this legend, because the Acars, after a period of practice, on their way down the mountain saw a dead person lying in the middle of the road, they washed, wrapped the body, and buried it. Meanwhile, the pig helped them dig a hole in the ground to bury it, and the lizard brought water bubbles from the mouth of the cave to help them wash the death body. From this action, Po Nabi Muhammad warned the Acars (as well as the Cham Awal people) not to eat pork and lizards. [Sakaya, 2018: 152-154] Regardless of the explanation, Cham legends all say that pigs and lizards helped the Cham Awal people, so these species are remembered, respected, and avoided by them. The deities in the Rija Nâgar ceremony are ones according to Awal Islam, so the worship tray does not contain these types of meat.

Conclusion

The belief system and philosophy of the Cham Brahmans is a whole set of thoughts on polytheistic ideas, and dualistic philosophy mixed with animism, totemism, and shamanism. That system is a combination of indigenous beliefs and faiths influenced and adapted from outside religions such as Hinduism and Islam. However, in the structure of common rituals of that spiritual life, indigenous elements and folk culture are still the dominant elements. Besides the Cham's

general characteristics of the spiritual life, this characteristic makes unique features of the Brahmanical Cham's system of folk beliefs and religions./.

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NOTES:

- 1 Up to now, there have been many ways to classify the Cham, of which the most popular is the way to classify the Cham according to local groups. However, in this article, we use Sakaya's classification of Cham people into four groups based on beliefs and religions, because this classification fully demonstrates the nature, characteristics, and differences between Cham groups. Regarding this classification, Sakaya (2010), *Văn hóa Chăm: Nghiên cứu và phê bình* [Cham Culture: Research and Criticism], Hanoi: Women Publishing House, pp. 219 – 220.
- 2 The term “Jat” means “natural, clean, pure”, referring to the pure Cham people, the Cham do not follow foreign religions. See: E. Aymonier – A. Cabaton (1906), *Dictionnaire Cam – Français*, Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, p. 143; Bùi Khánh Thế (1995), *Từ điển Chăm – Việt* [Cham - Vietnamese Dictionary], Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House, p.196.
- 3 The term “Ahiér” means “after, the last part, last”, referring to the Cham people who have not converted to Islam, but influenced Hinduism, that is, the Cham Brahmin community. Rie Nakamura (2009), “Awar – Ahier: two keys to understanding the cosmology and ethnicity of the Cham people (Ninh Thuan province, Vietnam)”, in *Champa and Archaeology of Mỹ Sơn*, Hardy - Cucarzi, & Zolese (co-author), Singapore: NUS Press, p. 86; Sakaya (2010), *ibid*, p. 217; Thành Phần (2014), “Bảo tồn và phát huy nét đẹp văn hóa truyền thống qua lễ tục Ew muk kei, lễ hội Katé – Ramawan và lễ hội Rija Nagar”, trong *Những vấn đề văn hóa – xã hội người Chăm ngày nay*, Nxb. Trẻ, Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, tr. 7. [“Preserving and promoting traditional cultural beauty through Ew muk kei rituals, Katé - Ramawan festival and Rija Nagar festival”, in *Cham Cultural and Social Issues Today*, Ho Chi Minh City: Trẻ Publishing House, p.7]
- 4 The term “Awal” means “before, the first, first part, early”, referring to the Cham absorbing some Islamic elements, becoming a Cham community influenced by Islam, that is, the Bani Cham community. See: Rie Nakamura (2009), *ibid*, p. 86; Sakaya (2010), *ibid*, p. 217; Thành Phần (2014), *ibid*, p. 7.
- 5 Mr. Truong Ton and Thien Sanh Thanh's handwritten documents (collected by the author).

- 6 Interview information with Po Gru Hán Đô (Hau Sanh village, Phuoc Huu commune, Ninh Phuoc district, Ninh Thuan).
- 7 Boxes holding frontal bone.
- 8 Another version of this legend says that, at the beginning of the world, the Kapil cow helped saint Bara Hummah cross the Khaw Phar river to paradise.
- 9 Interview information with Po Gru Đông Bạ (Phuoc Dong village, Phuoc Hau commune, Ninh Phuoc district) and deputy Po Gru Thiên Sanh Thanh (Nhu Ngoc village, Phuoc Thai commune, Ninh Phuoc district, Ninh Thuan).

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