

## ESTABLISHMENT OF BANI RELIGION AND THE CHAM BANI'S RELIGIOUS CHARACTERISTICS

***Abstract:** There have been many studies on Bani religion. Therefore, this topic is quite familiar to researchers on religion. In this article, the author inherits the results of previous research, bases on the text and oral history documents of Cham people to generalize materials on the origins of Bani religion. This paper also indicates some common characteristics of the Cham Bani community.*

***Keywords:** Bani; Cham Bani; characteristics.*

### **1. The process of forming Bani religion and its origin name**

Until now, there are still many arguments related to time of formation of the Cham Bani community. However, Bani is a religion that worships Allah, so it can be confirmed that the time of Bani religion was closely associated with the process of introducing and shaping Islam in Champa. Nevertheless, the question here is that when did the process of introduction and shaping take place?

From the eighteenth century onwards, the Kingdom of Champa possesses its geographical position outside the Indochina peninsula, where the East Sea (known as the South China Sea) is a must-go route in the busy trade between China and the Malay world, Middle East, India, this famous maritime route is also known as the “silk road on the sea”. It makes Champa an ideal stopover place for merchant ships and foreign missionaries (Anthony Reid 2000: 39-

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45; Majumdar 1963: 8-9; Aymonier 1891: 1-2). In the course of its history, Champa has become the center of the region, where major world religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, are present here.

It is necessary to remind that when Hinduism began to introduce into Champa in the second century, Champa residents harmoniously accepted Hinduism since the religion has many religious characteristics similar to local religions, such as worshiping of mixed gods (vạn vật), worshiping of linga and yoni, and worshiping of natural gods. Initially, the ruling class used Hinduism as a tool for the consolidation of power, class demarcation, administrative organization, and the deification of kings. Consequently, it seems that only the upper classes, nobility, rich people follow the religion. It was not until the eighth century that Hinduism took shape, from which it began to influence on the ordinary people (Boisselier 1902: 32-34), and its influence was so significant that many people only identified the Hinduism's characteristics in Champa culture (expressed through folklore, worship system, *Basaih* dignitaries, abstinence from beef, etc.). Over the centuries, indigenous beliefs and a number of Hinduism's characteristics intertwined, making them a kind of religion - beliefs are hard to distinguish between foreign and domestic characteristics. (PB Lafont 2011: 71).

When Hinduism intertwined with folk beliefs into kind of indigenous beliefs, Islam began to introduce Champa. However, the time of forming Islam officially in Champa is still a controversial issue. By reviewing the sources of collected-documents, the paper divides the process of adopting Islam of Champa into two phases.

*The first phase*, from the tenth century to the fourteenth century, is the period when Champa began to interact directly with Islam introduced from the Middle East or North Africa. The argument is supported by:

*First*, it bases upon the Chinese historical documents. Specifically, the historical documents of Song Dynasty narrated buffalo sacrifices in Champa. The main idea is that at the time of the sacrifice, they have prayed "Allah Akbar". It is the prayer verse of the Muslims affirming and honoring Allah as the only Supreme Being. Based on that, it can be argued that Islam has been introduced to Champa since the tenth century (Maspero 1928: 13-14). The historical documents of Song Dynasty also mentioned the messengers, whose family name Bô, Bó to imply that the Arabs come from Champa in the thirteenth century (Huber 1911).

*Second*, it bases on the annals of the royal family of Panduranga<sup>1</sup>, it is said: *Po Awluah* (or Allah of Islam), is classified into 5 legendary Cham kings, took the throne in the year of the Rat (Tý), reigned 37 years (from 1000 to 1036) in the Bal Sri Banay capital, then he returned to Heaven<sup>2</sup>. The authors based on the annals argue that Islam was introduced to Champa as early as the tenth century (Aymonier 1890: 145-206).

*Third*, in line with the above legendary, two written-Arab stelae are found in the Central of Vietnam. After the stelae were sent to Paris for their appraisal, P. Ravaisse surmised that they originated in southern Champa. The first stele is a tomb of a man named Abu Kamil dating from 1039. The second stele dates back to around 1025 - 1035; its content shows how Muslims should treat the indigenous people when interacting with them. Since then, one concludes that the Champa kingdom has been introduced to Islam since the 11th century (Ravaisse 1922: 247-289). *Fourth*, from the thirteenth century, some studies have shown that the Champa king Jaya Sinhavarman IV (known as Ché Mân)<sup>3</sup> married a Jawa princess, known as Tapasi Beer (queen Tapasi), thereby some researchers argue that Islam has existed in the Champa court since the thirteenth century (Maspero 1928: 13, Luong Ninh 2004: 100-101).

In the first phase, there is a very weak basis to argue that Islam developed in Champa although a Cham Chronicle written in the

nineteenth century<sup>4</sup> narrated that from the tenth century Champa had followed Islam, since at that time almost Cham people believed in Po Awluah (*Allah*) as the top god in their god list. Thus, it is not surprised that they exceptionally consider Po Awuah as the first (legendary) king in the history of founding the country. Indeed, the period from the fifteenth century onwards was the peak of an Indianized Champa. Therefore, before the 15<sup>th</sup> century, I argue that Islam had only introduced into Champa in the role of exchanges, belief and cultural interactions, and commodity exchanges but not at the level of acculturation.

*The second phase*, from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, is the period of Islam being introduced into Champa most directly and entirely from the Malay world. Many literary and historical documents demonstrate that the introduction of Islam into Southeast Asia only took place from the fifteenth century.

In 1979, P.Y. Manguin objected to P. Ravaisse's viewpoint of the origin of two eleventh-century stelae found in the central of Vietnam, by proving that the two stelae did not originate from the kingdom of Champa, but from another country (Manguin 1979: 255-257). In 2011, the origin of the two stelae was controversial debate again at the international conference on Southeast Asian stele held in Kuala Lumpur. Based on the content and style of the stele, Ludvik Kalus (Sorbonne University, Paris) asserts that the two Arab stelea do not derive from the Champa kingdom but the town of Kairouan of Tunisia, a country located in North Africa. Consequently, the Champa kingdom could not follow Islam in the 11th century.

Tracing back at the history of the Malay-originated countries, early in the 15th century, Hinduism showed signs of decline and Islam began to introduce into these countries. In 1458, Islam was considered the official religion of Malacca and it became the center of propagating Islam in Southeast Asia (Truong Van Mon 2012: 44). Champa and Malay-originated countries have had long-lasting

relations on many aspects of economy, politics, culture and national defense, so it is very easy to receive Islam directly from the Malays. Haji Adi Taha (1998), Malay author, argued that Islam was introduced to Champa from Malay sailors, or by Champa people who directly learned the religion from the Malays. According to many sources of documents, Champa and Malaysia had very close relationships at that time, including the information related to Islam in the fifteenth century, which is the visit of King Po Kabrah (1460-1494) came to Malayu, and his sister - Princess Po Sah Ina - was married to Po Haniim Pan, a Malay-originated Muslim (Po Dharma 1999: 5).

The two aforementioned events just proved the relationship between Champa and the Malay countries in the fifteenth century, not yet confirmed the formation of a Cham Muslim community. Manguin (1979), via studying a number of Malay, Persian, Arab, and Portuguese sources of documents, pointed out that, by the end of the sixteenth century, some Cham people had taken up Muslim culture directly from Malays, resulting in the formation of a community called “Bani” in Panduranga and possibly the Kauthara region (Manguin 1979: 266-267). Many authors, such as P-B. Lafont (1988, 2007), Po Dharma (1999), Rie Nakamura (2000), Truong Van Mon (2012), etc., pointed out that the Champa people at the end of the sixteenth century had followed Islam enough to form groups of Bani people living alternately with the majority of the traditional religious residents. However, a question raised here is that does Cham Muslims (self-identified as Bani) in this period completely follow orthodox Islam?

Perhaps, the status quo of Cham Bani as today only was formed after the policy of religious fusion of King Po Romé in the seventeenth century. The Cham texts<sup>5</sup> specifically focus on highlighting Islam during King Po Romé's reign (1627 - 1651). Many important events are recorded such as the event when King Po Romé visited Kelantan, married a Malay princess and learned

Islam. Most Cham generals in the Panduranga region at that time, such as Po Tang Ahaok, Po Haniim Par, Po Rayak, etc., went to Makah - Kelantan (Malaysia) to learn about religion, talisman, and military (Sakaya 2013: 592 ). Besides, royal chronicles and Malay royal genealogies such as *Hikayat Seri Kelantan* (genealogy of the emirate Kelantan), *Sejarah Melayu* (history of Malayu) recorded that the Ma generals Lai also went to Champa like Ungku Omar, Abdul Hmid to teach Islam to the local people (Truong Van Mon 2012: 43-44, Sakaya 2013: 626).

According to the oral tradition of Cham people, the word Bani appears as early as in the time of King Po Romé. Specifically, the oral historical document refers to a Po Romé queen, Bia Than Cih<sup>6</sup>, the daughter of King Po Mâh Taha (1622 - 1627), a Bani believer. Currently on the Po Romé temple complex<sup>7</sup> still has a small temple to worship her. According to the inscription on the tower and the legend, because she refused to cremate with her husband, she was worshiped outside the temple-tower, unlike another queen who was worshiped inside the temple-tower with the king. However, I argue that the Bani queen who refused to cremate with her husband was not because she was afraid of death or because she was unfaithful to her husband as many speculated, but because it was different from the Brahmanism's custom of cremating the dead. The Cham Bani burial is carried out according to the customs of Islam, the dead's face is towards the Mecca. Consequently, it can be affirmed that at that time, Bia Than Cih was a devout Bani believer.

The historical document also refers to the two talented- Bani generals of King Po Romé, but they stopped working as a mandarin of the court because of dissatisfaction with the king's delusion. In July 2010, an archaeological team of the Center for Sustainable Development of the Southern region excavated around the monument of Po Romé tower and discovered a tomb area identified as *Ghur* of the Cham Bani people. The initial hypothesis was that it was Ghur of the above Bani Queen (Ba Van Quyen 2011: 174-

176). Thereby, we can argue that, at least at the beginning of the seventeenth century, a Bani community existed, and based on a distinct type of burial. Therefore, it demonstrates that this community had a distinct religious practice.

Another data proving that Bani appeared during this period was the fact that King Po Romé resolved the conflict between the two old and new religious communities. While some the Champa residents began to accept Islam and self-identified as Bani, the majority of the remaining residents, following the traditional religion (the combination of the Brahmanism's characteristics and indigenous beliefs), did not accept new believers who abandon customs, worship new gods, and receive foreign cultural elements. The conflict is getting bigger, leading to deep divisions within the ethnic community. As a result, Champa society is seriously divided. It was not until 1627 when he came to the throne that Po Romé had the right and effective policies, applying "dual thinking" in the indigenous culture to help reconcile the long-running conflict between the two religious communities.

The Po Romé's policy has created Cham people a kind of harmonious religious - belief form that Cham people still practice to the present day. Accordingly, he obliged followers of Islam (the group self-identified as *Bani*), in addition to their teachings, to retain traditional beliefs. For the old religious group, he also asked them to worship more gods of the new religious group, the Cham people called *Yang Baruw* (new gods). Since then, the Cham considered those who worshiped Allah before the reign of King Po Romé as *Cham Awal* (meaning "first, early" in Arab language). And the Cham people worshipping Allah after the policy of King Po Romé was considered as *Cham Ahiér* (meaning "last, ultimate" in Arab language)<sup>8</sup>. The "dual thinking" makes the two Awal - Ahiér communities become an inseparable pair of beliefs according to the Tanaow - Binai (masculine - feminine) philosophy of the Cham people. Localized Islam and localized Hinduism of the Cham

people became a very unique form of religion, completely different from orthodox Islam and orthodox Hinduism in the world.

In short, it can only be affirmed that up to the sixteenth century, Islam from Malaysia was introduced into Champa, although, from the 10th century there was evidence that traders from Arab went to the kingdom. Perhaps after the event in 1471, when the capital of Vijaya fell, the Champa kingdom shrunk in the small state of Panduranga, so the Champa court began strengthening the relationship with the small states in the Malay Archipelago in search of looking for allies to fight Đại Việt. As mentioned above, some Malay states in this period have transformed themselves from Hinduism into the Muslim centers of Southeast Asia. In order to get Islamic States' help, there will be inevitably open policy for Islam to penetrate into Champa. Based on the above sources, I argue that the Cham Bani groups appeared as early as the end of the sixteenth century, but Bani religious - belief community existed as today only formed after the religious reconciliation policy of King Po Romé in the early seventeenth century.

According to R. P. Durrand (1903), the name *Bani* is derived from the Arabic word “Beni”, meaning “son”. Thus, the Bani people self-identified as Adam’s sons<sup>9</sup>, confirming through a verse in the Bani Sutta that “Ya Bani Adam”<sup>10</sup>. There are also other arguments that “Bani” in Cham language means “to have religion, people have converted into the religion”, to distinguish them from the *non-Bani* Cham people, which means non-religion. In fact, the Cham people perceived that before they converted into the Bani religion, all Cham people were *Cham Jat*, meaning the original Cham<sup>11</sup>. The term to refer to the practice of Bani in Cham language is “tamâ Bani” meaning “converted into Bani”.

Researching on the Cham Bani people in the early seventeenth century, Lafont (2007) argued that: “Cham people at that time only imported into their indigenous beliefs a number of chapters of the Koran that most texts wrote by Cham language in combination with

Arabic language with full of spelling errors. In addition, one sees that Allah appearing in Cham literature does not mean a sense as the only God in the broad sense of the doctrine of Islam but only a supernatural figure leading their list of gods in Panduranga. Besides, the Cham Bani only performs some basic dogma of Islam, such as almsgiving (zakat) but its meaning does not keep intact. They do not pray five times a day. The fasting ceremony in Ramadan is only for Imams and monks. The circumcision ceremony for their male is just a symbolic ritual. Nor do they carry out pilgrimage to Mecca in the Middle East, since their presence will lose the sanctity of this holy place. Although they self-identified as Muslims, they continue to maintain matriarchy, a system of family and social organization that goes against Islamic tradition. Moreover, no one can convert into Bani, unless their mother is a Bani believer (CAM microfilm 6-2). Finally, although Cham Bani is a distinct religious community, they associate closely with Brahmanism, accepting Po Auluah (Allah) as their local creator. The Cham Bani also often participate in the rituals of Cham Brahmanism although this ceremony has no association with the teachings of Islam. On the occasion of the Rija dance (CAM 27-30) or the Than Nong sacrifices, Cham Bani dignitaries, such as Po Gru, Imam and Katib, are present in these rituals along with the Cham Ahier dignitaries” (p. 81-83).

So what about the Cham Islam group present in parallel with Cham Bani today? From the second half of the seventeenth century, the constant war, the kingdom of Champa was on the brink complete collapse, the Champa people fled scatteredly. Most of them fled to Cambodia for their refugee. In Cambodia, due to frequent contact with orthodox Muslims on the world, especially from Malaysia, they gradually lost their traditional identity, and most of them follow orthodox Islam. By the middle of the eighteenth century, a group of the Cham in Cambodia returned to settle down in An Giang province, and later emigrated

to the Southeastern provinces, forming the Cham Islam group in Southern Vietnam as today. The presence of Cham people in Saigon was mentioned by Trinh Hoai Duc (1765 - 1825) in “Gia Định Thành Thông Chí”. In the 1960s of the twentieth century, when some Cham intellectuals came from Central Vietnam to work in Saigon, contact with Cham Muslims, they brought orthodox Islam to the Cham Bani community on the way of their return. And again, some Cham Bani believers converted into Cham Islam, living alternately between the Cham Bani villages in Ninh Thuan today.

## **2. Some religious characteristics of the Cham Bani community**

The formation of today's Bani religion is based on the combination of main indigenous beliefs and some Islamic elements. After hundreds of years of non-contact with orthodox Islam, until the religion returned to the Central Vietnam in the middle of the twentieth century, the Cham Bani people considered Islam as a strange and unacceptable religion. Therefore, in the beginning, Islam repropagates to Cham villages in Ninh Thuan, causing conflicts and even bloodshed. Until the present day, more than half a century over, orthodox Islam has only formed a small number of followers, living in small clusters interspersed in several Cham Bani villages in Ninh Thuan province. However, within this article, only a very general overview of some characteristics of the Cham Bani people is included.

### ***2.1. The Divine***

Islam brings Cham people new gods called *Yang Baruw* such as Po Kuk Ulahuk, Po Awluah, Mohamat, Ali, Fatimah, Ibrahim, Po Tang Ahaok, etc. All are worshiped by both the Cham Bani (Awal) and Cham Brahmanism (Ahiér). Unlike orthodox Islam, the Cham Bani do not consider Po Awluah (Allah) as to be the only being supreme God, but only a leading supernatural figure in the list of important Cham gods.

Besides, stemming from the polytheistic beliefs of the residents of wet rice agriculture, the Cham generally worship a lot of gods. They worship from the natural gods, such as earth god, water god, fire god, sea god, river, mountain, forest, and thunder gods, etc., to human-originated gods, in which the king-gods and ancestors play an important role, or worship supernatural gods such as Mother of the Land *Po Inâ Nâgar*, and the god of creation *Po Yang Amâ* created all things in the world, etc. (Nguyen Thi Thu et al. 2010, Phan Van Dop et al. 2014, Sakaya 2013).

## **2.2. The Scriptures**

The Bani scriptures is a collection of verses drawn from the Qur'an of Islam, called the Kuraân. The Scripture is written in Arab, with many variations, often with alternating paragraphs written in Cham Akhar Thrah for its guidance goals. However, the Bani monks just learned Kuraân by heart and did not understand the meaning in each passage (Lafont 2007: 81, Durand 1903: 55-62). The content of Kuraân is divided into three portions:

(1) *Jalan Pajiéng* includes prayers and rites performed in the rituals, such as *Aitkarak* (ritual for men memorize 20 *khun Akhar rah* and *khun Akhar da-a Mukkei*), *Athaw bah* và *Athaw hét* (cleansing ceremony), *Kareh* and *Katat* (converting ceremony), *Likhah* (wedding ceremony).

(2) *Jalan Akhirah* includes prayers and rites performed in the rituals, such as *Ndam padhi* (funeral ceremony), *padhi tanâh riya* (land-worship ceremony), *du-a muk kei* (ancestor worship ceremony), *du-a padhi & wakawa* (worship by the week).

(3) *Agal bac* consists of prayers and rites performed during the big feast day (harei Suk) in Ramâwan month, inauguration of the mosque (Sang mägik), ordination ceremonies (Suk yeng), repentment ceremony (ndik sé lihik bah), etc.

In addition to the above scriptures belonging to the *Po Acar* class, the folk Shamans also store quite a lot of sutras and mantras to use in the Cham people's folklore ceremonies.

### 2.3. *The Mosques*

The Cham Bani have their own mosques in each village. The Bani mosque (Sang Magik) is not completely influenced by the style of orthodox Islamic mosques. Unlike the orthodox mosques, which are always open for Muslims to pray five times a day and are considered a center of religious activities, the Bani mosques are only open during the month of Ramâwan and their important holidays. Each Bani mosque has a group of monks serving the god Po Awluah, known as *Po Acar*.

### 2.4. *The Clergy*

The Bani *Po Acar* dignitaries classified into 5 levels, from low to high, including: Acar, Madin, Katip, Imam, Gru.

*Acar* is a new class of monks who newly joined the Bani clergy. Depending on the time of practice and the ability to memorize the scriptures, Acar is divided into four levels: *Jamâak*, *Talavi*, *Po Sit*, *Po Praong*. The level-up ceremony conducts during the month of Ramâwan (Ba Trung Phu 2007: 54).

*Madin* is in charge of announcing the day and time of the service to the dignitaries in the mosque. Besides, Mandin also have the duty of opening and ending ceremony in the mosque.

*Katip* is allowed to perform some rituals inside and outside the mosque; responsible for giving lectures on teachings and reporting on issues related to religion.

*Imâm* is a monk who has spent at least 15 years practicing and has memorized all the Kuraân and is capable of performing all the rituals in the Cham Bani religion.

*Po Gru* (elderly monk) is the only-highest dignitary in a village or a mosque of Bani Islam. Po Gru is only one who can decide most of the religious and life matters and fix the date to conduct religious ceremonies.

The Bani monks wear a white long dress with 3 buttons in the middle (Aw luak), a white skirt (Po Gru's skirt legs has a red

pattern border), a white headscarf (khan mathem) with red fringes on both sides (taibi), with *kadung* before the chest (a cluster of 3 small cloth bags used to contain incense and amulet to protect the body). Particularly Acar only wear a white headscarf without fringes and has no *kadung*. The Bani monks shave his hair and do not have a beard. According to custom, each Cham Bani clan must have a monk to replace the clan who takes on the duty to Po Awluah and perform the rituals, such as prayers, marriage, and funeral ceremonies, etc., in the family. The Po Acar is very respected by Cham Bani and Cham Brahmanism. They are both the representative of Po Awluah in religious rites and the representatives of Cham Bani and Cham Brahmanism in mastering many folk rituals.

### **2.5. The Adherents**

Cham Bani adherents are officially admitted to the religion when they conducted the Kareh ritual for women and Katat for men, usually between 12 and 15 years old. The Bani adherents hardly depend on Islamic law (Sharia law). They do not practice the five “pillars” that the duty of an orthodox Muslim must conduct, including Allah is the only-supreme being; Muhammad is the messenger of Allah; Pray (*Sambahyang*) five times a day; Fasting (*Ek*) for the whole month of Ramadan; Almsgiving (*Zakat*) to help people who are in need; Pilgrimage to visit Mecca (if possible). The reason for all Bani adherents do not practice these pillars is because they argue that doing the above pillars is the work of the monks. Accordingly, the monks have replaced them in fulfilling all their duties to God. That is why, as mentioned above, every clan must have at least one person involved in the *Po Acar* monk class.

### **2.6. The Rituals and Festivals**

The Cham Bani have a diverse and complex system of rituals, festivals. They perform rituals influenced by Islam and perform rituals of folk beliefs. Not only that, most of these rituals are interwoven with each other's religious and belief elements (such as

Ramâwan rituals are interwoven with ancestor worship; weddings, funerals and conversion ceremony have both indigenous and Islamic elements). Therefore, the division of rituals and festivals of the Cham Bani people are only relative. Within the scope, the paper gives an overview of the following rituals and festivals of the Cham Bani people:

The festivals within the mosque consist of *Ramâwan* ceremony (Lenten season), *Suk Bilan* ceremony (Friday-reading Scriptures ceremony)<sup>12</sup>, *Suk Yeng* ceremony (the meeting of all Bani monks, in turn, in the mosque)<sup>13</sup>. In particular, the most prominent is the Ramâwan festival season - derived from the holy month of Ramadan for Muslims. However, the Cham Bani community has localized the ceremony into two portions: conducting the ancestor worship in families and the Lenten period (*mùa Chay niêm*). Before entering the Lenten season, they cleaned the graves of their ancestors (*Ghur*), and invited them to the family's party (*Pambang Mukkei*). After two days of ancestor worship, they will enter the Lenten season. Unlike Islam, the Lenten season of Cham Bani lasts for three months and ten days according to the principle of *Sa dalam, dua lingiw, pluh harei ikak Waha tati tatang* (one month in the mosque; two months outside the mosque; strict abstinence for ten days). The fasting month in the mosque, the Po Acar prays 5 times a day. During the first 3 days, they completely abstain from eating and drinking during the day time, but after sunset, they can eat and drink normally. The following days they do not have to abstain from eating and drinking during the day time, but to abstain from eating meat. At the end of the fasting month in the mosque with the *Talaik Ek* ceremony (to step out the fasting ceremony), the Po Acars go back home to engage in normal activities but have to spend time studying the scriptures, especially *Kitab marat* (the scriptures explain the death). They end the Lenten season of three months and ten days by holding the *Talaik Waha* ritual (finishing the Lenten season ceremony).

*The life-cycle rituals:* From birth to death, the Cham Bani perform many rituals, including: *Éw Praok* (a prayer to the ancestors when the child is one month old) - but the researchers have not seen any Bani family offering goat to the ancestors when the child is one month old (In the haircut ritual to name seven-day-old newborn, Cham Islam offers two sheeps for boys and one sheep for girls), *Pather pabah* (oral clearing ceremony for boys aged 3-10 and women aged 12-15, performed after the Kareh ritual), *Kareh* (hair-cutting ceremony, naming initiation for girls), *Katat* (circumcision ceremony for men aged over 12), *Ndam Lakhah* (wedding ceremony), *Athaw Bah* (optional cleansing ritual for Bani adherents aged over 60), *Ndam Padhi* (funeral ceremony). In short, the life cycle rituals of the Cham Bani are a combination of many religious elements from folklore, Islam, and even Hinduism.

*The rituals associates with agriculture:* As an agricultural inhabitant, living in the driest geographical region of the country, heavily dependent on natural world, the Cham in general have a dense system of agricultural rituals. These are fertility rites and cults (nghỉ lễ phồn thực), praying for rain, inauguration of water channels, rituals worshiped natural gods, rituals associated with the cycle of paddy rice. It can be divided into two types:

The first ritual associates with praying for rain, praying for successful harvest, sacrifice ceremony for fire god, buffalo sacrifice, such as *Palao kasah* (praying for rain), *Pakap halau Kraong* (water-cutting ceremony), *Yuer Yang* ritual (praying for harmonious wind and rain), *Ngap kubaw yang patao* ritual (buffalo sacrifice at white-stone Mountain), *Rija Nâgar* ritual (pray for harmonious rain and wind at the beginning of the Cham calendar), *Po Nai* sacrifice, *Po Riyak* sacrifice (wave god).

The second ritual associates with to the growth cycle of rice plants, including worshipping ceremonies before and during the land-making period (such as *dam worship ceremony*, *land-started-making ceremony*, *built-hut ceremony*, *furtive plowing ceremony*),

worshipping ceremonies during the sowing period (*rituals of sowing*), worshipping ceremonies during the period of caring for rice plants (*immature rice worshipping ceremony, mature rice worshipping ceremony, and exterminated-mouse ceremony*), worshipping ceremonies during the harvest period (*rituals of rice harvest, rituals of leaving the rice fields, the ceremonies welcoming the rice grains to home*). Most of these rituals can be found in ethnic groups in the Central Highlands today but are quite absent in the Cham region (Truong Hien Mai et al. 2002, Sakaya 2003: 13, Phan Van Dop et al. 2014 : 161-167).

*The rituals of clan* is to worship patron god of the clan, influenced by Islam (*Yang Baruw - New God*), *Yang Atuw* and *Praok Patra*. The ritual is performed by the contribution of money and effort of the clan. Some different rituals belong to the clan, such as the *Thrua patruh* ceremony with a aim of paying tributes *Po Praok* of the clan and other Yangs; *Rija Dayep* (night worshipping ceremony) and *Rija Praong* (large worshipping ceremony) to pray to the gods for the family escape calamities and illnesses. The *Rija Praong* ceremony to honor the *Muk Rija patruh bruk* of the clan. The dignitaries performing the ritual are the *Muk Rija* and *Mr. Mâduen*. Besides, the *Po Acar* also participates in the *Rija Praong* ceremony (Sakaya 2012, Phan Van Dop et al. 2014: 169).

### **Conclusion**

The paper, with the aim of contributing to the knowledge about Cham Bani, has clarified the process of forming the Cham Bani community and generalized some of the most common characteristics about their beliefs. Based on the previous studies, Cham text documents and oral histories among Cham people, the study has generalized about the noun “Bani” appeared in the late sixteenth century and the Bani religion seems to be shaped as today only after the policy of religious syncretism of *Po Romé* in the early seventeenth century. Since then, Cham Bani also known

as *Cham Awal* existed in parallel with the *Cham Ahier* community as an inseparable pair of religions - beliefs according to the philosophical duality *Tanaow - Binai* (Male - Female) of the Cham people.

In the process of adopting Islam, the Cham Bani accept selectively the principles of orthodox Islam, but always based on their inherent beliefs as the foundation, converting Islam into a religion of their own, called Bani or Awal. It can be said that Bani is a belief - religious syncretism, which reflected the combination of the elements between Islam, pre-Islam and even Brahmanism. Consequently, the Cham's system of rituals and festivals is very diverse, taking place all year round with different types, containing many levels from primitive to modern religions. All these beliefs and religions intertwined in the way that they feel most satisfied with their spiritual needs. /.

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**NOTES:**

- 1 Panduranga: Southern states of Champa, including present-day Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan provinces.
- 2 The Cham text Sakkaray dak rai patao (History of kings) recorded in Akhar Thrah, handed down the manuscript in many Cham intellectuals; denoted Cham Text 84, see Thanh Phan (2007), page. 168.
- 3 According to TS. Po Dharma, École française d'Extrême-Orient (Viện Viễn đông Bác cổ), many studies argue that King Indravarman III is inaccurate.
- 4 Based on the last dynasty recorded as Po Saong Nhung Ceng (1799-1822).
- 5 Adaoh yang dalam Raya, Damnay Po Klaong, Po Romé, Po Tang Ahaok, Po Haniim Par (The songs and biographies of the gods - Cham king, Po Romé, Po Tang Ahaok, Po Haniim Par, Po Rayak, etc.)
- 6 According to Cham language, the word "Bia" means Queen.
- 7 Now Located in Hau Sanh village, Phuoc Huu commune, Ninh Phuoc district, Ninh Thuan province.
- 8 Hawkins J. M. (2004), *Kamus Dwibahasa Oxford Fajar: Inggris - Melayu, Melayu - Inggris*, Oxford University Press, page. 13.
- 9 Adam was the first angel sent by Allah to earth. The last angel was Muhammad.
- 10 Accordingly to Nguyen Hong Duong (Editor) (2007), Some basic issues of religion and belief of Cham people in the two provinces of Binh Thuan and Ninh Thuan today, Social sciences Publishing House, Hanoi, page. 129.
- 11 Jat is derived from Sanskrit Jati: original.

- 12 The Cham Bani people in Binh Thuan do not perform the ritual.
- 13 The Cham Bani people in Ninh Thuan organize this ritual every three years, but in Binh Thuan every year.

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