

THE RELATION BETWEEN ANCIENT CHAMPA KINGDOM AND SOME WESTERN COUNTRIES DURING THE XVI AND XVII CENTURIES

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Abstract. Champa was an ancient kingdom that existed in Central Vietnam from the end of the 2nd century to the beginning of the 19th century. In its most prosperous period, the territory of this kingdom stretched from the land of current Quang Binh to Binh Thuan province in the Central and a part of Highlands in Vietnam. From the material and spiritual elements, we could see that Champa culture was deeply influenced by Indian culture. In addition, in the process of existence and development, Champa also had strong relations with many other countries, noteworthy, besides the traditional relations with the countries in the East, during the XVI - XVII centuries, Champa also had relations with some Western countries such as Portugal and Netherlands. However, there seems little knowledge of such relations in the field of history and culture. Based on the sources of available documentation, this research aims to describe the relation between the ancient Champa kingdom and some Western countries in the XVI – XVII centuries. It specifically focuses on the content of the causes, process, nature and result of this relation. The results of this research can significantly contribute to enriching the understanding of the existence of the Champa as an ancient kingdom as well as its multi-dimensional diplomatic relation during the XVI – XVII centuries. In addition, this research can enrich material documentation about this ancient kingdom in the field of history and culture.

Keywords: Champa, diplomatic relations, the West, the XVI-XVII centuries.

1. Introduction

Champa was an ancient kingdom in central Vietnam (from Quang Binh to Binh Thuan) and part of the present-day Central Highlands, from the end of the second century to the beginning of the nineteenth century AD. Champa culture was deeply influenced by Indian culture, especially Brahminism. Although it was finished now, the kingdom of Champa has left many unique cultural heritages, typically temples, ramparts, sculptures. Since the middle of the

late nineteenth century, scholars and foreigners, especially the French, have been interested in researching some issues of Champa history and culture, and so far, the study of Champa history and culture continues to be of interest to researchers in and around the world many issues that have not been clarified and unified, including the problem of the relationship between Champa and the West.

Based ondocumentation available, the author would like to research and clarify the relationship between Champa and some Western countries in the XVI – XVII centuries to clarify some related issues such as the causes, process, expression, nature and result of this relationship.

2. The context of Western countries and Champa in XVI – XVII centuries

- The Western countries: At the end of the XV century, feudalism in some Western countries began to fall into crisis, the movement of struggle often broke out threatening the survival of feudalism. The commodities-money economy in Western Europe developed strongly, the process of accumulation of primitive capital occurred quickly, leading to contradictions in the West European feudalism, so some countries such as Portugal, Spain, Netherlands, France and England sought to invade the new territories, expanded beyond to search for new lands to rob looters or to establish their places to exchange and trade, at the same time to escape or mitigate the situation of crisis, to distort the people in the country [4, p. 8]. On the other hand, the failure of the Crusades led the Holy See to lose its former privilege. Islam grew so rapidly that the Catholic Church also wanted to quickly recapture its former lands and to broaden the spread of Christianity around the world. In addition, marine engineering had a long step forward in this time: technology of determining the coordinates, nautical index, and timetable of the tide; the development of large-scale, fast-paced shipbuilding techniques; the rise of productivity in society and the rise of geographic knowledge had helped push the West over thousands of miles in search of new horizons in Asia, Africa, and the Americas. In those areas, the East was one of the most important targets of Western countries, because this was the land that was famous for gold, silver, agarwood, precious wood, and precious fragrances... which would bring Great profits for traders and the aristocracy of Western Europe, and at the same time, was also the "white land" of Christianity.

It can be said, "the motive of these expeditions is to seek more commercial profits than political or military ambitions, religious reasons are also highly praised, so it can be said that "the cross and flavors" are the main motives of Western countries in general (except the Netherlands), Portugal in particular, on the way to the East" [4, p. 18].

- Champa: According to history sources, after the capture of the capital Vijaya (Do Ban) in Binh Dinh of Champa in 1471, King Le Thanh Tong expanded the border of Dai Viet to the Ca Pass (Phu Yen), used Thach Bi mountain as the boundary between Dai Viet and Champa. However, in reality, the Le dynasty controlled only the northern part of Cu Mong Pass (the boundary between Phu Yen and Binh Dinh at present), while in Phu Yen, Le dynasty established the vassal state with the name Hoa Anh [12, p. 328]. Some current researchers in Maspero's [9] view said that the event of 1471 marked the end of the kingdom of Champa, but recent studies of Champa history suggested that Champa still survived as an independent country after the XV century in the south area of the Ca Pass. Commenting on the event of 1471, Lafont said that it only ended the existence of an Indochinese Champa, after the XV century, Champa still existed with a new period which he identified as the native Champa period. Furthermore, he also said that the history of Champa lasted until 1832, when the last emirate of Champa - Panduranga was completely merged into the territory of the Nguyen dynasty under Minh Mang [7, p. 134]. This view is widely accepted, notably Po Dharma [14].

The existence of the Champa after the XV century was not only documented by Vietnamese sources but also by Western documents about the presence of Champa merchants in the Malacca (present-day Malaysia); on the shores of the Nguyen's territory in peaceful periods; in the emirate of Pattani (north of present-da Malaysia); at the door of Ménam Chao Phraya (Thailand); in Indonesia (Indonesia) and Johor (Malaysia) [7, p. 120, 121]. In the commercial maps of Portugal in the XVI-XVII centuries, the name of Champa kingdom was clearly marked, with a clear distinction from Khanh Hoa to Binh Thuan today, distinct from Dang Trong of Lord Nguyen. On the other hand, after the XV century, Champa tower was still built in the territory of this kingdom such as Po Rome Tower (Hau Sanh village, Phuoc Huu commune, Ninh Phuoc district, Ninh Thuan province) (XVII century).



Figure 1. Po Rome temple - tower (Ninh Thuan), XVIIth century [Source: https://www.bing.com/images/search?]

According to an inscription found in Bien Hoa (Dong Nai) in the early XV century, taking advantage of the war situation between the Minh and Ho in the north, the Champa king Virabhadravarman (Ba Dich Lai) used army to attack Cambodia and occupied Baria and Daung Nay of this kingdom, corresponding to today's Bien Hoa [2, p. 687], put the southern territory of Champa to Mount But, the mountain that the Portuguese merchant ships said to be the eastern border between Champa and Cambodia from the early XV century to the early XVII century¹. According to sources in Vietnam, in 1578, taking advantage of the civil war in the Le dynasty in the north, Champa had retaken Ho (Phu Yen), expanding the northern border of Champa to Phu Yen. In 1611, pleading with the excuse that Champa harassed the border, Nguyen Hoang brought troops to occupy Phu Yen, bringing the southern border of the Nguyen lord to Ca Pass. After reoccupying the Phu Yen land, Nguyen Hoang set up Phu Yen government house to rule Dong Xuan and Tuy Hoa districts [15, p. 36]. In 1629, Lord Nguyen Phuc Nguyen put an administrative unit in Phu Yen (Tran Bien Palace) [15, p. 44]. In 1653, taking advantage of the event King of Champa, Ba Tam, possibly Po Nraop in the Cham chronicle, attacked Phu Yen, Lord Nguyen

¹ According to the Chronicle of Cambodia Royal, under the rule of King Paramaraja VII between 1602 and 1619, Cambodia had reclaimed the land of Bien Hoa today [7, p. 120].

Phuc Nguyen had counterattacked Champa troops, occupying the eastern part of present Khanh Hoa territory, setup Thai Khang Palace, consisting of two palaces: Thai Khang (now Ninh Hoa) and Dien Ninh (now Dien Khanh), brings the southern border of the Nguyen lord to the Phan Rang River, while the western part of Cam Ranh wass still Champa's occupation [15, p. 62]². This border existed until the existence of Champa ended.

Thus, in the middle of the XVI century (1578), the territory of Champa stretched from Phu Yen to Bien Hoa (Dong Nai), but by the beginning of the XVII century, this territory left only the land from Khanh Hoa to Binh Thuan today; it means that, basically, corresponding to the two Kauthara and Panduranga regions recorded in the Champa inscription. In terms of geography, this was a narrow, arid region with the lowest rainfall in the Vietnam nowday; most of the area was mountain and forest, narrow plain, not so fertile, and sandwiched between the grip of Lord Nguyen³. But in return, there are several large rivers, running east-west like the Cai River (Khanh Hoa); Dinh River (Ninh Thuan), Cai River (Binh Thuan); and some important ports and estuaries in such as Ninh Chu (Dinh River), Cua Lon/Dai Cu Huan, Cua Be/Cu Huan (Cai River) Cam Ranh; Phan Rang, Phan Thiet, La Gi (Binh Thuan), creating favorable conditions for developing the merchant economy. In the mountains, there are many precious forest products, most notably aquilaria. It can be said that aquilaria in Vietnam is the best in the world⁴ and aquilaria in Khanh Hoa is the best in Vietnam, so Khanh Hoa was dubbed "the land of aquilaria" [17]. Aquilaria is a precious source of medicinal herbs, very popular among Chinese, Japanese, Arabian and Western merchants and is indispensable in the trade of the merchant ship. Owing to such a valuable source of merchandise, the Champa kingdom was well-known in the international market from an early age. This is a good condition for Champa to establish trade with many countries in the world, including Western countries in this period.

On the other hand, after the fall of Vijaya in 1471, Dai Viet's territory under the Le dynasty expanded to Deo Ca (the boundary between Phu Yen and Khanh Hoa today), Champa's territory was severely narrowed, only the two emirates of Kauthara and Panduranga. From the middle of the 15th century, the influence of Brahminism gradually declined, instead of indigenous factors often associated with the land and the area of residence. The upper classes were no longer interested in Brahminism, but believed in idolatry, often confused with forms of folk belief.

² Danny Wong Tze – Ken supposed that the southern border of Lord Nguyen was east of Cam Ranh at that time [5].

³ In 1623, Lord Nguyen took control of the Prei Nokor customs area (Sai Gon today) [7, p. 124].

⁴ "In 2003, in the international conference on agarwood in Vietnam, scientists have made the following statement: "Agarwood of Vietnam is the best, the output of the world's dependence on Vietnam and Vietnam is seen not only as the kingdom of agarwood in the past but also the source of the world today and in the future, because agarwood is a superior medicine and aromatherapy which can not be substituted" [10].

After the territory was narrowed to Phu Yen, Champa lost control of a number of important ports in the north, and its economic potential declined. The relationship with China is no longer as deep as before, the political and military pressure of Dai Viet is increasing. In addition, in the XV century, Champa overcame the country on the economic base under the control of the country of Malacca (Malay). In that context, finding new trading partners to contribute to its existence is an urgent need. At the same time, with its potential, especially in gold and spices, Champa also attracted the attention of Western merchants.

3. Relation between Champa and the Western countries in centuries XVI - XVII

Due to the limited source of documentation writing about Champa in this period, there are few studies mentioning the relation between Champa and the Western countries. On the other hand, it may be due to the attraction of Dang Ngoai and Dang Trong, which owed important ports such as Pho Hien, Thanh Ha, Hoi An, Qui Nhon and potential for missionarying, the merchants and priests paid little attention to the land of Champa. Therefore, the Western record of Champa in this period is not significant. In addition, the chronicles of Vietnam also mention very little of this issue. Chronicles written in Cham about Champa until the end of the XVII century no longer contain so-accurate data, especially geographic location and date of events [7, p. 120]. This gives difficulties to restore the relationship between Champa and the West during this period.

The sources of information about the relationship between Champa and the West, though not rich, also tell us that the first contact between the Portuguese and Champa port and Vietnam in 1516 and the first official contact with the Champa coast took place in 1523 [8, p. 2], [18, p. 106]. Thus, the Portuguese were the first of the West to come to the Champa. This was closely related to the Inter Caetera edict of 4th May - 1493 of Pope Alexander VI (1492-1503)⁵, which allowed Portugal the right to evangelize in Asia and Africa without any competition. The patronage of the Catholic Church was predominantly a matter of evangelizing, but in practice Portugal had the power to control trade and maritime affairs [4, p. 20].

⁵ This distinction has divided the world into two for Spain and Portugal: The boundary is from an island on the west of the Acores Islands (Atlantic), taking the West of the 30th meridian, extending an imaginary line to the North Pole and down to Antarctica. This road divides the world to East and West: the West belongs to Spain including America, the East belongs to Portugal including Africa and Asia [4, p. 20].





[Source: Trần Kỳ Phương (2016), Văn minh và Nghệ thuật Champa: Nhìn từ sưu tập điêu khắc Chàm của Bảo tàng Cổ vật Cung đình Huế [Champa Civilization and Art: Viewed from the collection of Cham sculptures of the Hue Museum of Royal Antiquities, Bài trình bày tại Bảo tàng Cổ vật Cung đình Huế [Presentation at Hue Imperial Palace's]



Figure 3 a – b. Map of Portugal's maritime routes in the South China Sea XVI - XVII centuries [Source: Manguin, Pierre - Yves (1972), *Les Portugais sur les côtes du Viêt-Nam et du Campa : étude sur les routes maritimes et les relations commerciales, d'après les sources portugaises (XVIe, XVIIe, XVIIIe siècles)*, L'École Française d'Extrême - Orient, Paris, p. 325 - 326].

Due to limitations of documentation, we do not know exactly when commercial trade between Portugal and Champa was formally established, but according to Pierre Yves Manguin, the Portuguese began to engage in trade activities with Champa around 1540, before the Portuguese controlled the trade center Macau (China) in 1550. In 1540, Fernando Mendes Pinto went to the seaports Sidréio (Phan Thiet) and Pandeirio (Phan Rang) (Champa) to import ebony [8, p. 236]. In 1545, "on a ship sailed from Malacca, 200 Portuguese sailors were present in the Chinese sea [Mer de Chine] and visited Faifo-Tourance" [1, p. 184], but we are not sure whether they have visited Champa or not? Although, there were official trade activities between the Champa and Portugal but for unknown reasons, according to the memoirs of the Dutch, a Champa king they did not identify, sent a squad to help the emperor of Johor (Malaysia today) in 1594 against the Portuguese [7, p. 120]. However, this event did not significantly affect the relationship between Champa and Portugal, which had already been established.

The first contacts between Portugal and Champa were mainly commercial exchanges, and at present, there is no evidence of missionary activity carried out on Champa territory. Because, *first of all*, the Champa was soon famous as a wealthy country, with a lot of forest resources, especially aquilaria, gold, ebony and ivory, which is a great attraction for traders, including Portuguese traders. *Secondly*, due to the lack of potential for agricultural economic development, but with more favorable conditions for the development of the sea merchant economy, Champa has taken this economy to the advantage very early and has created a foundation for Champa to survive and develop in the context of many changes in the territory and politics. *Third*, since the XV century, Champa was a country located on the economic globe, under the control of the Malacca Kingdom (now Malaysia). Since then, Champa has been constantly integrating into the Malaysian trade network connecting countries located on the South Sea [7, p. 121]. Thus, after occupying Malacca in 1511, Portugal continued to maintain this relationship. Because of the importance of Champa, the map of the Portuguese shipping lanes from Malacca (present-day Malaysia) to Macau (China) and Nagasaki (Japan), went through Vietnamese waters during this period, Champa was always an indispensable link.

From the beginning of the XVI century to the mid-XVII century, Champa was a potential trading market for the Portuguese, a country that produced the spices and luxuries which was increasingly required by the European market. Among these, Champa had provided a large amount of gold and money which Suma Oriental of T. Pires mentioned [8, p. 240]. A large part of this amount was exported to Malacca and then transferred to other places. Champa was also the leading kingdom in providing aromatic wood (Bois d'aloès) or Calambac for export to India, Arabia, Europe, China and Tonkin. Eucalyptus (bois de santal), ivory, animal skins and rhinoceros horn [7, p. 122]. Until the mid-seventeenth century, the Champa - Portugal trade had certain developments that brought significant returns to the Champa and also to Portugal. 80

However, there is the fact that trade between the Champa and Portugal was not so much, irregular and heavily dependent on trade between Portugal and China and Japan which had the coordinator centers Malacca – Macau – Nagasaki, especially in the period prior to the adoption of Japan's Border Patrol (Land forbidden/sea forbidden) policy in 1639. After this point, trade between Vietnam, Champa and Portugal were more prosperous as Portuguese traders could no longer trade with Japan, they switched to Southeast Asia, Macassar and Larantuka - Solor – Timor [18, p. 106]. The sources in 1636 and 1639 indicate that the commercial relationship between Portugal in central Macao and Champa was still on going [8, p. 236]. In 1644, the existence of Portuguese merchant ships in Champa continued to be recognized and sponsored by the Champa government [7, p. 122]. However, thed documentation sources virtually have no record of commercial activity between the Champa and Portugal during the XVII century, so we can not know more.

In addition to its relationship with Portugal, during the XVI - XVII centuries, we can also find that Champa also set trade relations with the Netherlands, as evidenced by the fact that in 1644, the Champa king Po Ramé (1627 - 1651) allowed the Dutch merchant ships to trade with Champa but provided that they should not attack Portuguese merchant ships in this country's ports [7, p. 122]. However, this does not exclude that the Dutch having had trade relations with Champa before. Thus, compared with Portugal, the Netherlands established relations with Champa later and also only in the field of trade. One question should be raised is why only until 1644 did the Netherlands established trade relations with Champa while the presence of Dutch traders in Dang Trong and Dang Ngoai was very early? This can be explained by, first, Portugal had a close commercial relationship with Champa and had strongly influenced the economy here; secondly, the main trade item of Dutch traders in Vietnam was silk [18, p. 106-114], which Champa was not an important source of supply. *Thirdly*, before this time (1644), the Netherlands mainly focused on trade in both the commercial markets of Dang Trong and Dang Ngoai – where there was the concentration of great sources of silk. However, from 1638 until the death of Lord Nguyen Phuc Lan (1635 - 1648), relations between the Netherlands and Dang Trong became extremely bad, due to the Lord Nguyen's confiscation of four Dutch ships wrecked near the coast of Dang Trong (02 in 1635 or 1636 (?), 02 in November 1641), seized the sailors and especially the Dutch helped the Lord Trinh in Dang Ngoai to attack Dang Trong in 1642, 1643 [18, p. 111, 228-230]. Therefore, the Dutch must shift their trade to Champa.

After 1644, we no longer see documents referring to trade relations between Champa and the West. And perhaps, Champa's commercial relations were severely weakened after the event that Lord Nguyen Phuc Tan merged Khanh Hoa Province into the territory of Dang Trong in 1653, bringing the southern border of Nguyen to Phan Rang River; Champa no longer owned the important ports in Khanh Hoa/Kauthara. This is also an important reason why Champa was no longer the attractive destination of the merchant fleet from the mid-seventeenth century onwards.

Trade relations between Champa and the West seemed to have subsided after 1653, but on the opposite, Catholicism began to emerge in Champa territory, thanks to the merits of the Portuguese missionaries. In early 1665, a very enthusiastic community was formed in Phan Ri with over 400 lay people, not to mention the 22 nuns [3, p. 181-182]. This shows that Catholics has certainly presented in Binh Thuan today before 1665. The sources also indicate that Binh Thuan was part of the Diocese of Dang Trong from 1659 to 1844 [6]. In the years 1665 - 1697, Phan Ri became the entrance gate and the stop of the missionaries, before entering the land of Nguyen Lords. On 03-02-1665, three Jesuit priests, Pedro Marquez (1613-1679), Ignace Baudet (1618-1679) and Domenico Fuciti (1625-1696), visited the community of 400 parishioners. In October 1665, two priests from the Paris Missionary Society, Louis Chevreuil (1627-1693) and Antoin Hainquez (1639-1670), stopped by Phan Ri [20, p. 109] before going to Dang Trong. On 01-09-1671, before entering the kingdom of Dang Trong, Bishop Lambert de la Motte had to go through Phan Ri gate [16, p. 117]. In 1685, Christians were almost present throughout Binh Thuan: Phan Ri 100 Catholics, Phan Thiet 1500 and La Gi with 300 Catholics [6].

Thus, though appear after trade, in the XVII century, missionary activity has also appeared in the territory of Champa, at least from the mid-XVII century.

4. Conclusion

Written sources, especially those of the West, Portugal's navigable charts, and material data show that Champa still existed as an independent nation during the XVI-XVII centuries. During this period, Champa actively took part in the regional shipping lines, and was an indispensable link in these shipping lanes. Many sources have documented that Champa ships had presented in many countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and vice versa, Chinese, Malaysian, Indonesian, Portuguese and Dutch merchant ships had presented at the ports of Champa during this period.

Although the documentations are few and not continuous, they have shown us the relationship between Champa and some Western countries in this period such as Portugal, the Netherlands. In particular, Portugal was the first to establish the relationship with Champa, the longest and the closest. And the relationship between the two countries in the period before the middle of the XVII century, mainly trade relations, had not seen any evidence of official evangelism before 1653, such as in Dang Trong and Dang Ngoai but did not exclude the informal activities of the clergy preparing for later evangelization. However, the early missionary activities

in Champa also encountered many difficulties and hardships. "This is the hardest area for missionary activities. Hard not because of the large number of Christians, because there are only seven or eight small communities, but because of distances. And because there were no villages on the way, there was no resting place, so we had to sleep outside, in the sand, and during the journey, in addition to the church decorations, we had to carry everything necessary for life, even drinking water and cooking water ..." [6]. It is possible that, prior to the arrival of the Portuguese, the Champa people were deeply receptive to Hindu culture, and at this time Muslims also strongly influenced the Champa people. Therefore, the reception of a new and strange religion was a difficult thing to do when the traditional religious beliefs were deeply ingrained in the blood of the Champa. The presence of Catholics in the land of Champa was firmly recognized in 1665. It should be added that, in the Cham community in Ninh Thuan, Binh Thuan, the proportion of people who are Catholic is not significant⁶. The relationship with the Netherlands was belated, lasting for a short time and just a commercial relationship. As in Dang Trong and Dang Ngoai, Portuguese merchants to Champa did not represent any company and did not come to live or build any trading firm, they only went through intermediaries to collect goods or trade. We also do not see evidence that the Dutch open any trading firm in Champa, unlike in Dang Trong and Dang Ngoai.

Thanks to active integration into the merchant shipping lanes in the region, the establishment of trade with Portugal and the Netherlands helped Champa to have a strong economic potential to survive and develop in the period from the mid-XV century and until the mid-XVII century, in the context with many changes in territory and political-military pressures from Lord Nguyen. At the same time, through these relationships, Catholics entered the Champa area, which later became Khanh Hoa, Ninh Thuan, Binh Thuan.

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⁶ According to the census in 2009 of Population and Housing Census of the General Statistics Office of Vietnam, the number of Cham people in Ninh Thuan province is 67,274, of which the number of people who have been baptized is more than 350 people, now scatter in the villages of Thanh Y, Thanh Tin, Phuoc Nhon, Binh Nghia, My Nghiep, Bau Truc... [11], [19, p. 11-15].

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