The Mother Goddess of Champa:
Po Inâ Nâgar

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[*Abstract*]

This article utilizes interdisciplinary methods in order to critically review the existing research on the Mother Goddess of Champa: Po Inâ Nâgar. In the past, Po Inâ Nâgar has too often been portrayed as simply a "local adaptation of Uma, the wife of Śiva, who was abandoned by the Cham adapted by the Vietnamese in conjunction with their conquest of Champa." This reading of the Po Ina Nagar narrative can be derived from even the best scholarly works on the subject of the goddess, as well as a grand majority of the works produced during the period of French colonial scholarship. In this article, I argue that the adaption of the literary studies strategies of "close reading", "surface reading as materiality", and the "hermeneutics of suspicion", applied to Cham manuscripts and epigraphic evidence—in addition to mixed anthropological and historical methods—demonstrates that Po Inâ Nâgar is, rather, a Champa (or 'Cham') mother goddess, who has become known by many names, even as the Cham continue to re-assert that she is an indigenous Cham goddess in the context of a majority culture of *Thành*

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Mẫu worship.

Keywords: Hinduism, Localization, Goddess worship, Champa civilization, Vietnam, Cham

Ⅰ. Scholarly Positioning and Introduction

There has been rising trend of popular *Thành Mẫu* goddess worship in Vietnam during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Thanks to this trend, the mother goddess of the classical Champa civilization [II-XIX c.], known as Po Inâ Nâgar, has been well researched in an ever deepening scholarly literature published in French, Vietnamese, and English. Before the reunification of Vietnam in 1975, research on Po Inâ Nâgar appeared mostly in turn-of-the-century French works, such as those by Etienne Aymonier (1980; 1891; 1893), Antoine Cabaton (1901), MP-EM Durand (1903), and Henri Parmentier (1902; 1906; 1909). Scholarly production slowed during the First World War and the global economic crisis of the 1920s, although the goddess was featured in the studies of RC Majumdar (1927) and Paul Mus (1931). The Second World War, decolonization, as well as the First and Second Indochina Wars then stunted scholarly production again, although the goddess was featured in the work of premier French Art Historian, Jean Boisselier (1963). However, after 1975, the scholarly audience of the goddess broadened. She appeared in works by American, Japanese, Korean, French, Vietnamese, and Cham scholars, such as: David and Dorris Blood (1976; Dorris Blood 1981), Inrasara (1994), Nguyễn Thế Anh (1991; 1995), Rie Nakamura (1999), Phan Quốc Anh (2004; 2010), Ngô Văn Doanh (2011), and Sakaya (2004; 2010; 2013; 2014).

The above summarized body of literature is quite interdisciplinary. It includes studies of literature, archeology, art history, philology, religion, history, and language. Despite this broad disciplinary base, there appears to be little printed acceptance that multi-disciplinary approaches are necessary to future scholarship on the goddess. Furthermore, there is little attempt to revise the

accepted “historical trajectory” of the goddess. In too many studies, Po Inâ Nâgar is portrayed as “simply a local adaptation of Uma”. In too many studies she is just “the wife of Śiva.” She is too frequently portrayed as “abandoned by the Cham”, “adapted by the Vietnamese” with the a strong implication that the goddess is a “prize” for the historical victory over Champa. In this article, I will adapt the literary strategies of “close reading”, “surface reading as materiality,” and the “hermeneutics of suspicion” as I explicate Cham manuscripts and epigraphic evidence—while at the same time using anthropological and historical methods—to argue that Po Inâ Nâgar is rather a Champa (or ‘Cham’) mother goddess, who has become known by many names, even as the Cham continue to re-assert that she is an indigenous Cham goddess in the context of a majority culture of *Thành Mẫu* worship. Therefore, this article begins with a close reading of the Cham manuscript *Damnây Po Inâ Nâgar*.

Ⅱ. Close Reading *Damnây Po Inâ Nâgar*

“Close reading” has been adapted from literary studies into such fields as Anthropology, History, and Religious Studies. It has frequently been used as a means to turn assumptions on their heads. To perform a close reading of a Cham manuscript an individual needs the following: a high degree of knowledge of Cham language, culture and history, as well as knowledge of the genre being read. In the case of Cham manuscripts, the genre of the manuscript is always indicated by the first word of the title. A *damnây*[1] is an ode to deity, whereas a *dalikal*[2] is a short story.[3] Both may have their historical, semi-historical, mythic, and religious tropes. The difference, however, lies in how the genres are performed. *Damnây* are meant to be performed in devotion. *Dalikal* are generally preformed, by contrast, in more mundane settings. The

1) ꨆꨮꨝꨕꨚ

2) ꨆꨣꨮꨟꨛ

3) The phrase may be a truncated version of a similar Malay phrase: *dahulu kala*, meaning ‘once upon a time’ (Marrison 1985: 48).

indication, from the title of this manuscript, therefore, is that it is intended to be devotional.

When Cham manuscripts are titled, the genre of the manuscript is then usually followed by its main character. In this case: Po Inâ Nâgar. We can't assert much from the name of the character, except that "Po"[4] is a Cham honorific title used for earthly and heavenly figures, "Inâ"[5] is an archaic Cham word for "mother" and "Nâgar"[6] is a Cham word for "country, land, or earth", derived from the Sanskrit word *nāgara*. In other words, even though we cannot derive much from the title of the manuscript, we can at least assert that it is intended as a hymnal for the Cham mother goddess. These hymnals can also be called *adaoh yang*[7] in Cham. In her contemporary form, the Cham mother goddess is unquestionably Indic influenced, as with mother goddesses in other Southeast Asian cultures (Thai, Khmer, Balinese, Dayak, and even Vietnamese).

The version of the *Po Inâ Nâgar* manuscript I studied most closely was collected during a Toyota Foundation research project on Cham manuscripts in the early 2000s. Since that time, this sample manuscript had been used in Cham language programs for urban youth in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. In 2012, I first began to study language in a "traditional" fashion. The setting was a "home-school" (C.: *sang prasit*)[8], one-on-one with a teacher (C.: *gru*).[9] First the manuscript was hand-copied, studied slowly, and translated into Vietnamese and then eventually into English. In conjunction with studying a collection of Cham manuscripts in this fashion, I visited Cham communities to build my vocabulary. As it turns out, the very manuscript under consideration, is in fact *not* a hymnal. It is too prosaic, and fits the exact form of the *dalikal* genre (Inrasara 1994; Sakaya 2010; 2013; 2014).

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4) ꨆꨮꩍ
5) ꨌꨮꨡ
6) ꨡꨤꨮꨡ
7) ꨄꨆꨮꨌꨯꨟ ꨤꨯꩍ
8) ꨤꩍ ꨕꨯꨣꨭꨟꨕꨭꨟ
9) ꨕꨯꨣ

Dalikal themselves are possibly one of the oldest forms of Cham literature and were revived in the 1950s and 1960s, intimately linking Cham sources to the larger, global "folk revival" of visual art, music, and literature. In other words, the global trend influenced the relatively large number of *dalikal* that were reproduced at the time. Another possibility is that the conditions of the Second Indochina War created a preference for short stories that were easy to memorize. Regardless, it follows that by naming the manuscript a *damnây* rather than a *dalikal*, the manuscript maintained some of the devotional connotation despite the shift in genre. But, how devotional was the actual manuscript in question? What follows is a glossed translation of the *Damnây Po Inâ Nâgar* manuscript, as a sample of the *dalikal* genre:

> Allow us to introduce the story of a man and a woman who had no children. They were chopping trees down for an *apuh* farm on Galeng Mountain, in the countryside of Aia Trang, on the side of a hill that the Vietnamese now call Đại An. At that time they planted watermelon every year.
>
> One night, while they were sleeping, they heard a noise. So, they went to investigate the watermelon. They found some of the stems had been broken and some of the fruits had been smashed. There were footprints in the earth, but there was no one to be found in the garden. They wondered: "How is this possible?" Then, in the clear light of the full moon they saw a young woman who drifted downward from the moon to the earth and walked into the *apuh* garden. She could have been just twelve years old and wore plain clothes. This young lady, she picked up a watermelon and tossed it in the air! Just for fun!
>
> The man and woman were very happy and stepped forward slowly to catch the young lady. So, they grabbed hold of her and brought her home to raise as their child. The couple loved her more than anything. So, she lived with them and two or three years passed. But, in the fourth

year, there was a tremendous storm in Aia Trang—and each day the young lady took stone brick to play as if building a *kalan bimong* Cham temple tower.

The man and woman began to scold her, but she didn't listen. So, they lectured her harshly. She began to sulk and ran away along the seashore where the waves crashed. Suddenly a piece of *gahlau* driftwood landed on the shore. The young lady felt sorry for herself and sat down on the *gahlau* and drifted away to the land of *Laow* [China].

The *Laow* people crowded three to four hundred people around the piece of wood. As they talked so much about it, their prince heard the news. He went to investigate the *gahlau* wood and found the crowd there, totally silent.

There was a starting of the heart. Fluttering up and down as a small flame grew.

The prince tried to go home to meet his father, as he was to receive a promotion. But he began counting the days and months. Time passed them without food, without sleep, and without peace. He asked a fortune teller to give him a reading. The fortune teller alerted the house of the king to the coming of a princess.

Every night when the prince slept, there was beautiful singing and the prince found fortune weighing on his heart as he waited each day, all day, for the sound of that song. Upon hearing the song, he could no longer hold himself back and the two began to whisper together.

As the two [the prince and the princess] began to grow closer and closer together, the prince tried to talk to his father. His father witnessed the thousands of beautiful expressions in the faces of the young lady and his son. So, they became husband and wife and gave birth to two children: a son, name Cei Tri and a daughter named: Kuik. The prince followed the path of that Po Nai [the princess], but she always remembered the mother and father who had raised her. She brought her two children and the

gahlau back to the mountain of Galeng at nightfall. But she could not find her parents planting watermelon where the tower was built nearby Đại An. So, [the princess] made [her own] tower in her parents' memory.

At that time the Cham did not know how to plant or cultivate [rice]. They found this Po Nai [the princess] planting vegetables, weaving and farming…all these important skills were taught [by her] for twelve years and the Cham people began to have enough to shelter themselves. The community was happier [than ever] and since that time, the Cham people built towers and for her [Po Inâ Nâgar], for the children of the people to worship [her] at Aia Trang.

[At this time] her husband then returned, but could not find his wife. With his heart filled with love, he [still] did not known when she would return to the land. So, he ordered his men to look for her. When they arrived to the territory of Aia Trang, near the mountain of Gelang where she was born and raised, there was a sense of a spirit that followed the soldiers, making more problems for the prince. Po Nai [the princess] then created a spell of protection, sinking the boats of his [the prince's] men.

She [Po Inâ Nâgar] found solace in the sinking of the boats, as there were rocks that appeared [suddenly] out of the water and *Akhar Cam* appeared on the rocks. Occasionally she would read these writings with her husband and her two children. She wanted to return to the paddy of Hamu Janah in the village of Yok Yang (for the Vietnamese: the village of Bình Thủy).

After the Cham and Bani, the Vietnamese were in this land. [But] Po Nai [the princess] and the children had enough sense to give the Cham people enough of a livelihood, and they remember her for this, even though they now worship Po Nâger in a different place.

Even at the most basic level the *Damnây Po Inâ Nâgar*

manuscript teaches about the Cham language, agricultural practices, culture, and religion, and offers an important revision to the history of the mother goddess of Champa. Key terms in the text that fall within the theme of these categories are: *apuh,*[10] *gahlau,*[11] *kalan,*[12] *bimong,*[13] *Aia Trang*[14] and *Akhar Cam*.[15]

Apuh is a Cham word for a plot of light farming. It is a term that is also common to the Churu and Roglai ethnic minority languages (Churu: *apuh*; Roglai: *apu*). *Apuh* is frequently translated into Vietnamese as the term *rẫy*, meaning "swidden agriculture". More importantly, the cultural context of contemporary Roglai villages seems to fit the Vietnamese connotations of *rẫy* quite closely. Meanwhile, the Churu word *apuh* has been translated as "garden" (Vn.: *vườn*) and seems to fit the Cham context more closely. Contemporary *apuh* are generally small vegetable and fruit gardens out front of a Cham house, close to the road. *Apuh* are also generally contrasted with *hamu*[16] or rice paddy land. This does not mean that Cham methods of traditional farming do not incorporate the "controlled burn" methods of swidden agriculture. To start a new *apuh* plot, particularly on a mountain side, such as in the vicinity of Đại An, Khánh Hòa province, one would have to begin by cutting down all the trees in the area. The remaining brush and roots would then be turned up and burned to create ash fertilizer. Next, fruit and vegetable crops would be planted, such as the watermelon (C.: *tham-makay*)[17] crop of the old couple. In contemporary contexts, both the Roglai and the Cham have shifted away from creating *apuh* in previously forested areas. Regardless, *apuh* farming remains popular today, even though it is being threatened by the introduction of small scale commercial

10) ꨆꨠꨛꨔꨯ
11) ꨕꨠꨟꨰ
12) ꨓꨝꨘꨘꨘ
13) ꨚꨰꨝꨠꨛꨚꨯ
14) ꨆꨠꨰ ꨕꨭꨛ
15) ꨆꨛꨝꨠꨘ ꨀꨛ
16) ꨘꨘꨯ
17) ꨀꨛ ꨚꨭꨛꨛꨘ

farming that prefers the use of pesticides and large scale mechanized farming of cash-crops, such as rice, dragon fruit, grapes, and corn.

Related to the agricultural context of terms such as *apuh*, an examination of the Cham term *gahlau* illuminates a history of Champa-highland trade relations and socio-religious importance. The term is most closely used to indicate either "eaglewood" or specifically "aloeswood". In the *Damnây Po Inâ Nâgar* manuscript, the *gahlau* driftwood that appears seems to be mystical. The *gahlau* is driftwood, but it is able to carry the protagonist all the way to China! Here, we can hypothesize that the "*gahlau* carrying her to China" is a metaphor. *Gahlau* trade was critical to the Champa polities. Harvested from the highlands, *gahlau* quickly became an internationally recognized incense product and an essential element of Cham religious rituals. *Po Gahlau* is a Cham royal title that was associated with Po Romé's [r. 1627-1651] Churu-Cham-Malay creolized lineage that he left behind in the courts of Kelantan, but *gahlau* itself would have travelled much further, from Japan to Arabia, as it were (Aymonier 1981; Maspero 1928; Sakaya 2010). As such, *gahlau* would have been traded with the Chinese courts, and "riding the *gahlau*" can simply be taken to be the same as "riding the trade winds".

As with *gahlau* another cultural symbol of the Cham are the Cham *kalan bimong* temple-tower complexes. These *kalan-bimong* dot more than fifty archeological sites, strewn along the coast of Vietnam and trace into the highlands of the Annamite Chain. The *kalan bimong* were constructed from the seventh through the seventeenth centuries and include such archetypically "Cham" sites as Po Romé, Po Klaong Garai, Mỹ Sơn, Trà Kiệu, Po Dam, and Po Sah Inâ. At the largest of these towers, the *kalan* refers only to the central worship hall, which often includes a decorative *sikhara* constructed on the top. Also, *Kalan* only has one entry way. Meanwhile, the *bimong* refers to the "second tower" in the construction. A *bimong* is usually smaller in height and has two doorways. It is possible to have *kalan* without a *bimong*, but the reverse is not possible. Colloquially, some individuals also use

kalan bimong to refer to the entire complex. Normally, these towers were explicitly constructed for the purpose of the veneration of an individual, as was eventually the case with the *Kalan Bimong Po Inâ Nâgar* that was constructed for the goddess at Nha Trang, Khánh Hòa province, Vietnam (Schweyer 2004; Ngô Văn Doanh 2011; Ngô Văn Doanh 2002; Amonier 1891). However, in the narrative of *Damnây Po Inâ Nâgar* we are confronted with a problem: Po Inâ Nâgar herself was constructing towers "just for fun"! The differentiation between constructing the *kalan bimong* for cultural and religious purposes, versus constructing them for "fun," is a demonstration of the supernatural nature of Po Inâ Nâgar, in that she is not bound by the expectations of "normal" Champa (or Cham) society. Furthermore, before the end of the narrative, we learn that she had a reading knowledge of *Akhar Cam* or Cham[pa] writing systems, which would have further elevated her status. Finally, that she is able to raise a storm to sink the Chinese princess' ships, as well as teach the Cham weaving and rice agriculture, which gave her attributable "traits", confirm her status as a deity.

The final category of terms that can be drawn from *Damnây Po Inâ Nâgar* are geographical and of particularly socio-historical significance. For example, the Galeng Mountain is recorded as in the vicinity of the contemporary Vietnamese settlement of Đại An. Meanwhile, the Vietnamese city "Nha Trang" originates from the Cham name *Aia Trang*. Tonalization shifted the pronunciation of the Cham *Aia*[18] to the Vietnamese *Nha. Trang*,[19] however, can be well represented in the natural phonemes of both languages. In Vietnamese, the meaning of the name is ambiguous. In Chamic languages, however, *trang* is a location where either, hot and cold water mix, or, where sweet and salt water mix. In fact, many local toponyms have been transferred from old Cham words into simple Vietnamese approximate pronunciations of these words. Nha Trang is just one example. Regardless, this process in the manuscript is indicative of a longer history of Vietnamese appropriation of the territory of the former peoples of

18) ꨀꩌꩍ

19) ꨕꨮꩍ

the Champa civilization, including the Cham.

Preliminary Vietnamese incorporation of former Champa territories in the vicinity of Khánh Hòa province may have began as early as the sixteenth century. The 1594 "Map of the Pacified South" (Vn.: *Bình Nam Đồ*) labels the *Kalan Bimong Po Inâ Nâgar* as the "Tower of the Pearl Princess" (Vn.: *Chúa Ngọc Tháp*).[20] The map suggests that as early as the sixteenth century, Vietnamese who were new migrants to the area began to re-interpret Po Ina Nagar as "the Princess Pearl". The label "Princess Pearl" or "Lady Pearl" has since stuck with Vietnamese representations of the tower's goddess. *Aia Trang* had been a center in the Champa *negara* polity of "Kauthara" [7th – 17th century]. The first Nguyễn lord, Nguyễn Hoàng conquered a portion of Kauthara in 1611 and renamed it "Defense of the Frontier Province" (Vn.: tỉnh Trần Biên). Almost immediately afterward, this portion of the "frontier province" was renamed "Phú Yên". However, it seems that the local Cham and Bahnar (highland Austroasiatic) peoples would not accept Vietnamese rule so close to the Po Inâ Nâgar temple. They revolted in 1629 and attempted to retake the control of the area, although the Vietnamese quickly put down this revolt and used it as a pre-text for another assault on Champa polities further southward from the late 1640s through 1653. Several of these assaults occurred during Po Romé's reign, although he did fend them off until his capture, leading to his imprisonment and eventual death in Quảng Nam province in 1651. The last two years of battles, then, fought under Po Romé's successors, led up to the further incorporation of the remaining areas of what are now Phú Yên and Khánh Hòa provinces. Nevertheless, Sakaya (2013) has suggested that Cham records indicate significant Cham worship of Po Inâ Nâgar in *Aia Trang* through the time of the Tây Sơn rebellion at the end of the eighteenth century. According to Nguyễn Thế Anh (1995), the governor Nguyễn Văn Thành then dedicated a local shrine at nearby Diễn Mountain to the "Lady

20) There was a historical precedent for this. A Hán Việt inscription dedicated to Thiên Mụ in 1601 can be found in the vicinity of the former Champa polity of *negara* Indrapura (Lê Đình Hùng & Tông Nữ Khánh Trang 2014: 529)

Princess Pearl" in 1797, in exchange for "eliminating tigers" in the area. It is not clear if these "tigers" were literal, or metaphoric, but it is clear that the Vietnamese had begun their process of adapting Po Inâ Nâgar into "Thiên Y Â Na." Thiên Y Â Na was interpreted by French scholars to be a Vietnamese approximation of *Deviyana*, who, when conflated with Po Inâ Nâgar, the Daoist mother of the Fairies Xi Wang-Mu, Queen of Heaven Tian-fei and Tian Hou Sheng Mu, became very popular. Based on readings of the nineteenth century Gia Đình Nhất Thống Chí, Thiên Y Â Na was even more popular than the Vietnamese goddess Liễu Hạnh from Quảng Bình province southward. Mandarin Phan Thành Giản even dedicated an 1856 inscription to "Thiên Y A Na Diễn Phi Chúa Ngọc Thánh Phi" at Nha Trang. As the process of intentional conflation continued, Thiên Y Â Na was later blended with Liễu Hạnh and some authors have argued for her influence on the image and worship of Bà Xứ in southern Vietnam (Po 1988: 62; Po 1989: 128-135; ĐNNTC 2012: 63-86, 125-159; Nakamura 1999: 90; Phan Khoảng 2001 [1967]: 296-299,303,321; Phan An 2014; Phan Thị Yến Tuyết 2014).[21)]



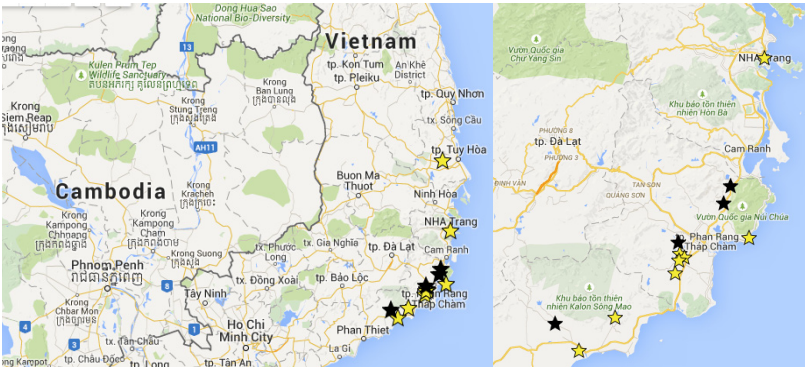
<Figure 1> Cham priest at the tower in Nha Trang, Vietnam (April, 2014). Photo by author.

Harsh Nguyễn Vietnamese restrictions on Cham travel were in place throughout much of the mid-nineteenth century. So, it is not surprising that while the late nineteenth century Cham scholar Hợp Ai did seem to recognize the importance of the cosmological geography of Nha Trang in his epic travelogue poem *Ariya Po Pareng (1885)*, he did not record Cham worship of Po Inâ Nâgar at the tower site. The adoption of Po Inâ Nâgar, and intentional conflation of her

21) Sakaya (2014: 517) argues that she was also blended into the worship of Hò Chén in Huế; Bà Thu Bồn in Quảng Nam province; and Cổ miếu thờ Thiên Y A Na in Bình Thuận province.

image, much later, with Liễu Hạnh was a factor in the *Vietnamization* cultural processes described by historian Nguyễn Thế Anh (1995[1991]). Phan Đặng Nhật (2013) has also demonstrated that the Cham worship of local village deities in Vietnam has been strongly influenced by Cham practices. It seems this *Chamization* of the local Vietnamese population was also a way of reinventing Vietnamese identity for settlement populations as they moved into what were deemed as "frontier territories". At the same time, based upon our close reading of the *Damnây Po Inâ Nâgar* manuscript, in combination with hundreds of pages of other Cham manuscripts, the removal of Cham lands from Cham hands, particularly spiritually potent lands, was a critical factor in the construction of a theme of "dispossession" in Cham socio-historical memory. Meanwhile, there has never been an archeological dig that has been able to locate the supposed "original site" of the tower that Po Inâ Nâgar is thought to have built at Galeng Mountain (Vn.: Đại An). The manuscript does indicate that both Hindu oriented "Cam" and Islamic oriented "Bani" populations used to live in this area, but "now", the Cham worship Po Inâ Nâgar is "in a different place."

Given my own initial travels to Nha Trang in 2008 and later field work in Southeast Asia between 2012 and 2015, it is clear that there is a need to update on the existing, rather detailed, scholarly outline of the Po Inâ Nâgar narrative above. Indeed, Po Inâ Nâgar seems to be worshipped, still, at Nha Trang, by not only by Vietnamese and Chinese populations, but also Cham, Bahnaric peoples, Rhadé, and many other "non-locals" who travel to visit the sacred site of Po Inâ Nâgar during the festival dedicated to her, roughly in April, each year (photo above: Cham worship of Po Inâ Nâgar at Nha Trang in April, 2015). There are also no less than thirteen sites of Po Inâ Nâgar worship throughout Cham and Roglai communities in Phú Yên, Khánh Hòa, Bình Thuận and Ninh Thuận provinces. In this map, Cham sites are set in gold stars and Roglai sites are set in black stars:



<Map 1> Sites of Cham goddess worship marked by yellow stars. Sites of Raglai goddess worship marked by black stars. Map made by author using google.maps.

The above map was compiled through the works of Vietnamese Anthropologist Phan Quốc Anh (2010), then later corrected and confirmed, mostly by the work of Cham Anthropologist Sakaya (2013) and my own work. Two important but commonly ignored points were raised by this study: 1) both Cham and Raglai communities are still worshiping Po Inâ Nâgar throughout Bình Thuận and Ninh Thuận provinces at a number of locations, more than as mapped above; and, 2) Cham are still worshiping Po Inâ Nâgar in Khánh Hòa province, although there has been some controversy about this lately. According to "Cham law" (*Adat cam*), the worship of Po Inâ Nâgar should occur four times a year in accordance with the Cham calendar (C.: *sakawi*).[22] The largest ceremonies are in the fall (*Katé*), winter (*Chambur*), and spring (*Rija Nâgar*). There is also a fourth, smaller ceremony in the spring. The most popular location for worship is usually in Palei Hamu Tanran (Vn.: làng Hữu Đức, tỉnh Ninh Thuận). Individuals who critically informed Phan Quốc Anh's (2010) work suggested that he confused the Cham villages of Hamu Ram (Vn.: Mông Đức) and Hamu Tanran (Vn.: Hữu Đức). However, Vietnamese and Cham divisions of space are not always in agreement with each other. Cham space is measured by terms of

22) ꨨꨮꨛꨯ

proximity to the "village center" or "sacred space" of the community, while Vietnamese governmental officials have attempted to impose modern (and/or contemporary) understandings of border divisions on land. Additionally, many families from Palei Hamu Ram and Palei Hamu Tanran intentionally intermarried with each other, attempting to build communal relations, increasing the size of the two small villages to small towns, and eliminating the tract of forest that used to divide them. Nevertheless, following contemporary standards, in the above map, I equated the town of Palei Hamu Tanran with Hữu Đức and the town of Palei Ram with Mông Đức, as Sakaya and most contemporary local Cham officials have agreed to do. As a final note on this process, using the Roglai worship of Po Inâ Nâgar as a spring board,[23] it is possible to hypothesize a future exploration of "earth goddess worship" among Churu, Rhade, Koho, and Jarai cultures. However, not much work has been done on this to date, in direct connection to Cham studies. To prepare for a deeper scholarly examination of the subject, it is helpful to adapt the strategy of *surface reading as materiality*.

Ⅲ. Surface Reading as Materiality: Periodizing the Production of Po Inâ Nâgar Manuscripts (19th – 21st centuries)

Anthropologist Rie Nakamura (1999: 155) has argued that "Cham intellectuals place ultimate authority in the texts…" where "… real, original Cham culture is only found in the texts, and if one is seeking 'correct' cultural information of the Cham people, one should learn to read the Cham scripts." An emphasis on literature likely increased through contact with Indic, Chinese, Arab and French cultural influences, although, "knowledge of manuscripts" has not remained the penultimate value of Cham scholars in the decades after Nakamura's work. Travel, education, level of professional training, and work experience, became equally prized

23) See: Trần Kiêm Hoàng (Chamaliaqriya Tiẻng) (2011: 166-172) provides a description of rice ceremonies that may be linked to 'mother goddess' worship among the Roglai of Khánh Hòa province.

means of asserting the cultural authority. Knowledge of the Cham script has become a "given", for individuals who claim status, although it may fade entirely as a "requirement". Still, Nakamura's observations highlight the important role that priests and cleric classes maintained for centuries in Cham communities, even as the nature of the manuscripts produced on the goddess Po Inâ Nâgar changed.

Adapting the methodology of *surface reading as materiality* from literary studies is helpful in analyzing changes in manuscript production. This does not mean, literally, reading the material of the manuscripts, although these details are also important. For example, the oldest and highest quality Cham manuscripts, influenced by Indic-Hindu traditions, are manuscripts made of palm leaves (C.: *agal bac*).[24] The oldest Arabic-Islamic influenced manuscripts tend to be produced on composite paper, bound with goatskin. Cham royal chronicles were often produced on Chinese paper, which was popular in the 17th to 19th century. By the French colonial period, the *cahier* notebook became increasingly popular.

Surface reading of materiality is more concerned with the following: the author, date, title, and genre of the text. These data can be used to write a history of pieces of literature, a group of authors, a group of texts, or even a script (Best & Marcus 2009: 1-21). Using the strategy of *surface reading as materiality,* and combining it with bibliographic information of Cham manuscripts available in French, Cham and Vietnamese, I was able to further break down the periodization of the majority of existing Cham manuscripts into essential five categories: 1) those composed before the collapse of Panduranga; 2) those composed from the fall of Panduranga through the time of the Cham scholar Hợp Ai [c. 1832/1835-1880s]; 3) those composed between the time of Hợp Ai and Bố Thuận [1880s-1920s]; 4) those composed by Bố Thuận and his contemporaries [1930s-1960s] and 5) those composed by late contemporaries of Bố Thuận, his students and their students [1960s-present]. Combining

24) ꨨꨮꨯ ꨩꨭ

these periods with Nakamura's findings adds weight to the theory of a transfer of cultural authority. As the Cham royal lineages were loosing power, cultural authority shifted more completely into the priestly-scholarly class.

References to the goddess Po Inâ Nâgar do not appear frequently in manuscripts that can be dated in their origins to the time before Hợp Ai. Hợp Ai is most famous for his epic travelogue *Ariya Po Pareng* (1885), which is a proto-ethnographic text that records the journeys of the Cham scholar all the way from the south-central coast to Hải Phòng, nearby Hà Nội, where the Red River meets the sea. Hợp Ai's contemporaries Kau Tai, Ja Mul Cak and Cei Mah, recorded similar texts, although Cei Mah's text was recorded in the Western Cham (Cambodia) variant of the Cham script. Hợp Ai was also a contemporary of Etienne Aymonier, although the revolt at Huế in 1885 halted Aymonier's travels up the coastline. Hợp Ai's travels continued despite this. Hợp Ai was able to provide a record of the *Kalan Bimong Po Inâ Nâgar* temple-tower complex, where he also mentioned that his party arrived on the "sixth day of the first month in the year of the rooster" [1885] (CAM 172; Inrasara 2006). The manuscript indicates that Hợp Ai was unable to read the old Champa script on the temple walls, although his collections indicate that he was able to read Cham standard script (Akhar Thrah) and the Cham Indic script used to inscribe amulets (Akhar Rik) (CAM 168; Inrasara 2006). A third Hợp Ai manuscript (CAM 30) records the history of Cham communities from the 1830s onward in considerable detail, and that from the middle of the 19th century onwards, the Roglai living in the area took care of several objects associated with the worship of Po Inâ Nâgar during ceremonies in the fourth month of the Cham calendar (*Ni Akhar di tapuk…tok ricauw balan pak*). This manuscript was apparently completed in Bình Chủ, an old Cham community on the coast (CAM 30). Bình Chủ was evacuated during the times of Minh Mệnh. Today, the area is little more than a beach strip of restaurants, shops, and hotels just outside of Phan Rang, Ninh Thuận province.

Some manuscripts produced by contemporaries of Hợp Ai were collected by the missionary scholar MP EM Durand during his research in Cham areas between 1900-1907. They were used, along with ethnographic observations and consultations with Cham scholars, to write publications for the journal of the School of the Far East [*BEFEO*]. Two manuscripts in particular were dedicated to the worship of a form of Po Inâ Nâgar at Palei Hamu Ram (Vn.: Mông Đức) the first is on Po Dara (alt. sp. Bho Dara), the "goddess of the students" (CAM 22; CAM 23). The second indicates that the scholar who penned it was orphaned and divorced. He invoked the goddess Po Dara to bless the students as well as grant long life (CAM 23). The evidence seems to indicate that the goddess of Po Inâ Nâgar at Palei Hamu Ram during the French colonial period held additional importance as Po Dara, a facet of the being of Po Inâ Nâgar that has been restored to the temple at Aia Trang in contemporary times. The evidence of CAM 22 and CAM 23, combined with Hợp Ai's analysis, suggests that during the French colonial period, Cham travel and worship to Nha Trang remained relatively sparse, compared to the regular worship of the goddess at Nha Trang today. This view is complicated by the manuscript MEP 1189/6, which was penned by [P]o Phak Tho, who gave offerings to the goddess Po Kuk (alt. sp. Po Kok) at Nha Trang in the year of the dog [1898]. A fourth manuscript is a record of Po Nâgar Taha, who is worshiped in the village of Palei Hamu Tanran (MEP 1190/4). There is a fifth one, a general chronicle of Po Inâ Nâgar, which was used by MP-EM Durand in an 1907article. (Durand, *BEFEO* 1907). This last manuscript refers to Po Inâ Nâgar in the context of the Cham holy book, "the book of Noursirvan", a Cham treatise influenced by Sufi Islam, and predominantly mystical and astrological in content. Nevertheless, there are elements of this story that similar to the contemporary "standard" Po Inâ Nâgar narrative, such as the detail where she spent "three years in China and married a Chinese prince" (Durand 1907: 339-345; Po, Vija & LaFont 1977: 215). In summary, by the early twentieth century, Sufi influence was being blended with Indic culture in the localized worship of Po Inâ Nâgar in at least three forms: Po Kuk at Nha Trang, Po Dara at Hamu Ram,

and Po Nâgar Taha at Hamu Tanran. The evidence suggests an emergence of multiple forms of Po Inâ Nâgar in the Cham community at the turn of the century, all increasingly localized.

While turn of the century *Po Inâ Nâgar* manuscripts indicate an emphasis on devotional material, new genres appeared in historical records dating to the period of Bố Thuận's collections and the collections of his contemporaries [1930s-1960s]. Bố Thuận was the Cham son of Etienne Aymonier and the research partner of Paul Mus. The clearest collaborations between Bố Thuận and Mus were in the early 1930s, when Mus was a young man, travelling in Cham areas and nearby uplands. At least two manuscripts penned by Bố Thuận, dating to 1931 and 1932, made their way to Paris. The first of these manuscripts (CAM 113) includes a *Damnây Po Dara*, or a hymnal to Po Inâ Nâgar in the form of the "goddess of the students" worshipped at Palei Hamu Ram at the turn of the century, and is now worshiped at the *Bimong Kalan Po Inâ Nâgar* in Nha Trang today. However, by the 1960s, a new version of the narrative seems to have appeared: a *Dalikal Po Inâ Nâgar*, penned in collaboration with Nguyễn Khắc Ngữ in the 1960s, during Nguyễn Khắc Ngữ's significant research among Cham populations [1950s-1960s]. However, it is not clear what differences the two manuscript versions had, besides that *dalikal* manuscripts tend to be generally shorter than *damnây* hymnals, and are more prosaic in nature.

There were at least four manuscripts describing the worship of the goddess Po Kuk, all of which were contemporaneous with works of Bố Thuận and collected by Paul Mus. The first two were penned by scholar Mbian [A]puei (CAM 56) and Ranik Ki Kumbar Pajuh (CAM 101). There were also versions of the "creation of the world according to Po Kuk" by Po [A]car Nai and Po [A]car Baih Wa, called *Ariya Po Kuk* (CAM 138; CAM 143). The version by Po [A]car Wa also began with the Arabic: *bismillahi r-rahman r-rahim* and included a legend of Po Inâ Nâgar, as an element of *Ariya Po Kuk*. Two other manuscripts collected by Paul Mus were an *Ariya Po Dara* (CAM 62) and another *Damnây Po Nâgar* (CAM 142[2]). All these suggest that

by the 1930s, forms of Po Inâ Nâgar, Po Nâgar, Po Dara, and Po Kuk were worshipped as various elements of the "mother goddess" among Cham populations.

Perhaps due to the period of wars in the middle of the 20th century, no versions of Po Inâ Nâgar manuscripts were penned and preserved between the 1940s and 1959. Although we do presume Cham manuscripts were still penned during this time, we assume that they were destroyed by wars, weather, or some other reasons. Additionally, it appears that as the story continued to be passed on, it continued to change, though very slightly. Despite this, there was at least one version of *Dalikal Po Nâgar* that can be dated to 1960, another version of the narrative in Dã Trường Vi's three-page *Legend of the Betel Nut of the Cham People* (1973). Văn Đình Hy penned a two-page *Po Inâ Nâgar* manuscript in 1979 while Bạch Cúc penned a six-page *Nai Muk Juk* manuscript (1987).[25] Furthermore, oral recountings of the story have also been recorded and transcribed in Cham script, such as Kim Xuân Kết's *Dalikal Po Inâ Nâgar* (Nguyễn Thị Thư Vân 2005: 87-90; 280-291). Nguyễn Thị Thư Vân (2005) argued that from the time of the Bố Thuận manuscript (1960) through the present, though details of the story may vary, the general outline was quite similar. A research team working with the UNESCO Center for Research and Preservation of the Cham Culture transcribed one version of the manuscript in 2012, before translating it into Vietnamese and English. Then, a comparative language assessment was made upon the manuscript that we worked on with the transcribed oral version of Nguyễn Thị Thư Vân from (2005). The two were found to contain virtually the same plot points, although they were quite different in word choice. To determine the potential source of our manuscript version, we examined the *Catalogue of Cham Manuscripts in Vietnam* (Thành Phần 2007), reproduced and studied through Toyota Foundation Anthropological grant research funding that was funneled into the Cham community in the early 2000s.

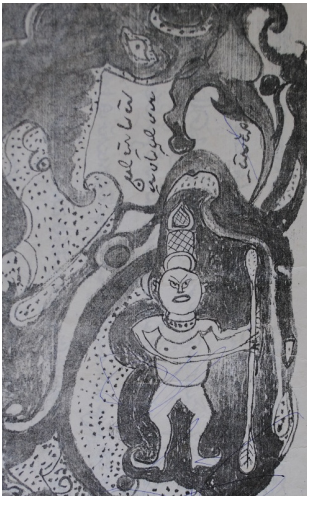
25) Muk Juk is also conflated with the Vietnamese Bà Đên and the Khmer Neang Khmau goddess, all of whom are representations of Kali (Sakaya 2014: 520-522).

Using this catalogue, we compiled a list of existing Cham manuscripts for the variations of the "mother goddess" in the forms of Po Inâ Nâgar, Po Kuk and Po Dara.

Based on the analysis of the collection of Thành Phần's (2007), we found the variant forms Po Dara, Po Dara Nai Anaih, Po Nâgar Taha, Po Nâgar, Po Nâger, and Po Kuk, although all appear to have been closely linked in worship. The manuscript version that we received was paginated 142 to 147 in the Ong Quảng Văn Đại manuscript (C: Palei Baoh Dana, Panrang, Panduranga; Vn.: Chất Thường, Phước Hậu, Ninh Phước, Ninh Thuận). The majority of manuscripts I studied matched the pagination and style of Ong Quảng Văn Đại's manuscripts— and seem to have been widely copied because his collections have few errors. Ong Quảng Văn Đại is the older brother of internationally-acclaimed Cham historian Po Dharma. It seems that using *surface reading as materiality* enables a retracing of the intellectual heritage of Cham scholars up to the present. At the same time, when the above analysis was completed, a relationship between Po Inâ Nâgar and Po Kuk was established, contrary to initial understanding that the later was simply another manifestation of the former. All throughout the process, we consulted with Cham scholar Ja Tu di Hamu Liman, who directed a reading of the *Dalakal Po Kuk* manuscript.

Ⅳ. *Dalakal Po Kuk di Ja Tu di Hamu Liman*

The *Dalakal Po Kuk di Ja Tu di Hamu Liman* manuscript differs substantially from Nguyễn Thị Thư Vân's (2005: 347-353) thesis. The Ja Tu di Hamu Liman manuscript was photographed in the fall of 2013 (No. 4005 to 4080) and may be divided into three parts: 05-30, with 30 being an illustration of Po Kuk (pictured at right); 31 – 37, with 34 being a repeated (and deleted) photograph, 37 being a visual depiction of mystical invocations, and 38-80. What follows is a glossed translation of selected content from the first two sections:



<Figure 2> Po Kuk

Ariya Mâkal lak Cam mâk Danaok padieng Po Kuk:
"This is an ariya about the goddess of creation: Po Kuk. Before there was Po Uwluah and before there was Po Sapilai… before there was the spirit of the water and the spirit of the rocks…before there was the spirit of the sky and the spirit of the earth… before there was the spirit of the sea and the spirit of the mountains…before there was Po Inâ Nâgar and before there was Po Lingik… before there was the sun and the moon and the sky and the stars…before there was Po Uwluah and before the sang magik…before there was the Ahier and the Awal priests… before there was the Bani and before there was the Cham…before there was the Rhade, the Churu and the Lao and the Laow and the Jawa and the Kur…before all of this…there was Po Kuk – and Po Kuk created all of these things, as Po Kuk is the creator, the goddess who creates everything…" (05-14)

In these sections of the manuscript, several "*wa suk*" phrases may be noted intermittently throughout. Reconstruction from Austronesian Cham into Arabic is difficult, but it is possible that these are references to *tawassul* or the concept of "drawing near to Allah". However, the manuscript is also discernably not "Muslim", and certainly "Indic" influenced, although the emphasis on goddess worship harkens back to the days of pre-Vedic culture. Nevertheless Po Uwluah (from "Allah") is understood to be the "creator" of the "Bani"—or Islamic-influenced—elements of Cham culture, while Po Nâgar—the shortened form of Po Inâ Nâgar—is understood to be the creator of the Indic elements of Cham culture. Nevertheless, the manuscript maintains that the supreme creator is the goddess Po Kuk.

After establishing the role Po Kuk as creation goddess, the manuscript goes on to defining the *act* of creation, in a section titled *Ariya ngap piéh Adam krân thun bilan*. It begins with the creation of all of the units of time, days, months, years, the sun

and the moon, the earth and the heavens, the ground and the human realms, as well as the animals, followed by lines indicating the creation of the entirety of the universe. The human realm was then divided in terms of responsibility between Po Uwluah and Po Nâgar. However, there are some notable details of the manuscript. For example, Po Nâgar has four daughters in this manuscript, rather than two or three, as seen in the other versions of the Po Nâgar narrative. Finally, a distinction between Po Inâ Nâgar as being secondary to Po Kuk was not necessarily clear in other manuscript versions. However, it is clear that in this manuscript, Po Kuk and Po Inâ Nâgar are two different figures. A researcher may discern these characters, or gods, as different, even if some believers would not. To be discerning with this sort of vision requires an application of the *hermeneutics of suspicion*.

Ⅴ. Hermeneutics of Suspicion: Questioning linkages between Po Inâ Nagar and Uma

As drawn from the field of literary studies, the *hermeneutics of suspicion* implies that the study of the text must be critical of the content (see Felski 2009: 28-35). In this article, I am applying the *hermeneutics of suspicion* to the idea that the Champa/Cham goddess Po Inâ Nâgar as may be corresponding to Uma. We have already established that in the cosmology of the Cham, Po Inâ Nâgar has many names: Po Nâger, Po Nâgar Taha, Po Nâgar Dara, Po Nâgar Hamu Nih, Po Nâgar Hamu Mârau, Po Nâgar Hamu Mârom, Po Nâgar Hamu Kut, Po Nâgar Hamu Ram, Po Nâgar Hamu Tanran, Po Nâgar Hamu Nai, Po Nâgar Hamu Gin, Po Dara. She is possibly even linked to Po Kuk. However, the standing scholarly assumption is that Po Inâ Nâgar is simply a version of “Bhagavathi Uma” or “Bhagavathi”. This presumption can be found in a number of English, French, and Vietnamese language studies. In order to explain the complete lack of evidence for a link between the two goddesses, most scholars have inherited their arguments from French colonialists who concluded that the

Cham "do not know Uma" or "have forgotten her". The deepest studies make mention of an "older" or likely "forgotten" version of the Po Inâ Nâgar story, where the goddess has ninety-seven husbands and thirty-nine daughters (Cabaton 1901; Sakaya 2013). During my years of research, I never encountered a single individual who did not recognize the name "Uma"—and consequently equate Uma with Po Inâ Nâgar. In the most complex explanations, individuals viewed Po Inâ Nâgar as a local *avatar* of Uma, who had descended to earth in historical times, lived through the events of the *Dalikal Po Nâgar* narrative, and then re-ascended to the heavenly realm upon her death. What is the most surprising is that scholarship on the topic, as a whole, has been perfectly content to create pejorative assumptions of Cham culture, without rigorously pushing for better scholarly explanations of the linkages between Po Inâ Nâgar and Uma.

What is most notable about pre-colonial evidence on Cham religion, is that there appears to be no indigenous mention of Uma at the Nha Trang temple. One potential mention of Uma in epigraphic records would be the name "Uroja", which many scholars take to be a "Chamization" of Uma as worshiped in the vicinity of Mỹ Sơn. Meandering through possible reconstructions, perhaps "Uroja" is a truncation of *Umaraja*, although this seems only "possible" at best, without further evidence. Furthermore, through an examination of the temple tower complex at Nha Trang, it appears that there were not even hints at the explicit mentions of "Uma". There were however mentions of a Śri Satya Mukhalinga [709 śāka, 787 CE], "Bhagavathi" [739 śāka, 972 śāka], Ya Pu Nāgara [1082 śāka], Pu Nāgara [1155 śāka, 1178 śāka, 1179 śāka, 1189 śāka], Bhagavathi Matrilingeśvari [1178 śāka, 1256 CE], and Matrilingeśvari [1189 śāka, 1267 CE] (Sakaya 2004: 196-219; Ngô Văn Doanh 2011, Parmentier 1902; Majumdar 1963[1927]; Sakaya 2014: 518). It is important to note that contrary to the popular use of the term "Bhagavathi" in scholarship (and in Vietnam), the term does not necessarily always equate to Uma. Bhagavathi is a title that simply indicates "the goddess" in Sanskrit. There are many Bhagavathi, which include: Bhagavathi Lakshmi, the consort of Vishnu; Bhagavathi Kali, goddess of

destruction; Bhagavathi Saraswati, Brahma's consort and goddess of wisdom. There is also Bhagavati Durga, the buffalo slayer (Monier-Williams 2005[1899]: 743-744). Coincidently, there is a "buffalo slayer" who appears to be pictured on the outside entry way of the *Kalan Bimong Po Inâ Nâgar* central tower in Nha Trang (Parmentier 1909).

With the multiple meanings of "Bhagavathi" in mind, we may begin to question such influential commentaries by Paul Mus that argued about a wave of Indic influence that swept over the Champa civilization and then receded in antiquity, with the end result that his contemporary Cham "…were quite content to make her [Po Ina Nagar] the spouse of Śiva, to call her Uma or Parvati…" (Mus 1933: 52-53). Mus's commentary is intended to refer to classical times. However, he was in close partnership with Cham scholars in the years before his famous 1933 lecture and the evidence suggests that the collaboration between French and Cham scholars contributed to a "re-Indianization" of the Cham population at an intellectual level, through recasting history with an Indic filter on top, blocking out other possible cultural influences (from China or Arabia). Looking back further, Etienne Aymonier may have been the first French scholar to equate the worship of Po Ina Nagar with the worship of Uma via the record of Bhagavathi Matrilingesvari [1178 śāka] and Matrilingesvari [1189 śāka], and hence, by proxy, Śiva worship. However, Po Inâ Nâgar, in Aymonier's research, also had the ability to take on the form of the Cham goddess *Muk Juk*, which Aymonier saw as an incarnation of Bhagavathi Kali (Aymonier 1891: 35). The evidence raises three points that should be taken into account with the analysis of Aymonier and others. First, his audience was already biased towards religions with substantial institutions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism. Second, his audience was biased against local traditions, viewing them as pagan-like and backward. Third, there is some substantial, non-textual, evidence that suggests that the Cham would have more readily equated Po Inâ Nâgar with Kali or Durga (both consorts of Śiva) than with Uma or Parvathi, while Saraswati may have been well represented through the form Po Dara (Marrison 1985: 52; Sakaya 2014).

Today, Vietnamese administrators in Khánh Hòa province have restricted access to the towers at Nha Trang, but not in a way that benefits Cham worshippers. Contrary to Cham traditions, the goddess is clothed and viewable at all times, for a small fee. Traditionally the goddess would have only been ceremoniously bathed, clothed, and may be viewed during religious ceremonies. Contemporary circumstances are not amenable with Cham and Chamic minorities in the area. These same circumstances also prevent scholars from making any assessments of the statue from the perspective of Art History. It seems that as early as 1901, Antoine Cabaton was able to fully photograph the statue. Although it is difficult to make out the objects held in each of the goddess' hands—a typical means of identifying Indic deities—the photograph does appear to resemble more "standard" portrayals of Kali, and not Uma. Henri Parmentier (1909: 127-128) nevertheless described the statue as a beautiful representation of Uma (see also: Parmentier 1902; 1906). However, he was careful to initially qualify his conclusion as an "assumption" (Parmentier 1902: 45), a detail that has been overlooked by researchers ever since.

Conclusion

This article has highlighted the scholarly assumption of a rather simplistic transition between Uma, Po Inâ Nâgar, and the Vietnamese goddesses Thiên Y A Na and Liễu Hạnh. Up to the end, the paper also highlighted that the initial stance by French scholars regarding the association between Uma and Po Inâ Nâgar was merely an assumption. Indeed, the peoples of Champa likely worshiped many "mother goddesses" by many different names, some equated with Parvati-Uma, while others with Durga, Kali, or Saraswati. In particular, the potential association between Po Dara and Saraswati may warrant further examination in light of localizations of Saraswati worship that have occurred in the Hindu-influenced cultures of Bali and Borneo.[26] Additionally, the

26) Marrison (1985) also believed that this comparison was necessary, and could begin with an analysis of the works of Antoine Cabaton and C. Hooykaas. However, to date, the only comparative work between Cham culture and Bali that

continued examination of epigraphic records may well reveal new conclusions about the complexities of Indic influence in pre-colonial Champa, just as the continued examination of Cham manuscripts highlight the complexities of Cham versions of the Po Inâ Nâgar goddess, as well as her relationship to the goddesses Po Kuk and Po Dara. Utilizing certain reading strategies such as the *hermeneutics of suspicion, surface reading as materiality* and *close reading* helps scholars gain a better picture of the history of Po Inâ Nâgar worship over time, as well as help demonstrates that just as Champa religion transformed over time, Cham religion since the 17th century has also been 'changing,' as new interpretations of gods and goddesses are frequently developed. To that end, the intermingling of religious content with history also makes it possible to write histories of the elements of the Cham religion, and better understand how forms of Po Inâ Nâgar have proliferated over time, continuing to influence Vietnamese populations, which led to a recent revival of Cham worship of the goddess Po Inâ Nâgar at the original tower site in Nha Trang. The contemporary ceremonies have all been conducted in accordance with the protection granted to ethnic and religious minorities under Vietnamese law. Thus, there is no reason to assume that these ceremonies will not continue to grow in popularity. Continuing to research on this subject can only shed more light on the understanding of localization of Indic tradition in Southeast Asia, goddess worship in Vietnam, and the complex history of religion in Southeast Asia.

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Received: Feb. 15, 2015; Reviewed: Apr. 15, 2015; Accepted: May 1, 2015