

## **A Study on Religious Strands of Malay Muslim Cham in Cambodia**

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**Abstract:** Research on Malay Muslim Cham is very interesting to be known as there are limited number of studies, books, journals, and articles related to them. In addition, the study will contribute to the Muslim minorities and as a bridge to unite the diverse Malay groups. This article aims to explore the religious strands of the Malay Cham, consisting of two main groups in Cambodia, the Sunni and Jahed, where both were Cham ethnic originating in Vietnam. Therefore, this study will explore their history by focusing on their background, the premises of religious life, relationships, and differences. Mixed methods were used to obtain the data and information; first, in the form of documents such as books, articles, and journals. Secondly, interviews and surveys have been also conducted to support the arguments. Upon the findings, both of these were from the same lineage originating as Cham Balamon in Vietnam. They later differ from one to other due to several factors. For instance, the Cham Jahed, originally Sunni, has been influenced to an amalgamated version of religion by incorporating other elements of teaching into their worshipping, and was seen strongly adhering to the religion of their forefathers. While Cham Sunni is seen as completely abides to the teachings of *Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*. It is hoped that this research will make the Islāmic countries, including the Malay world, to be more aware of the existence

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of a Malay community in Cambodia and this study to become an added reference for the students, future researchers and the Muslim scholars to utilise the information provided in relation to the Malay Muslim Cham of Cambodia.

**Keywords:** Cham Sunni, Cham Jahed, Religious life, Cambodian Muslim, Religious strands.

### **Introduction**

The Cham community has been diasporas and resided in many places for a long time. Originally from the Kingdom of Champa in Central Vietnam, the Cham migrated to several places including Cambodia in numerous phases. This was when the Kingdom of Champa was defeated by Vietnam in 1693 CE, and the Cham people moved to neighbouring countries such as Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia. According to Maunita and Rosita, the earliest record of migration to Cambodia took place from the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup> to early 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> The Cham Muslims of Vietnam and Cambodia are often unknown as a part of the Muslim *ummah* (community) in comparison with other Muslim minorities such as in the Soviet Union, China, and India; due to their large numbers and majority-minority tensions, and even sometimes due to the smaller Muslim communities in Thailand, Myanmar, Singapore, and the Philippines.

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<sup>1</sup> It was around the time of the reign of King Cheychetha III (1677-1709). See Eng, K. T. January 2013. **From the Khmer Rouge to Hambali: Cham Identities in a Global Age**. State University of New Jersey. P102.

<sup>2</sup> Maunati, Y; Sari, B. R. June 2014. **Construction of Cham Identity in Cambodia**. Suvannabhumi. Vol. 6 No. 1. P108.

As a result of no significant things happening to this society, they were easily forgotten. As mentioned earlier, there were two things that could have cause this. Firstly, due to their small number in a majority non-Muslim country. Secondly, they have been relatively quiet politically and economically. This argument supported by Willoughby in accordance with the reality,

“It seems that people have never heard of the Muslims of Indo-China, as their numbers have never been large and because they have never really had any political or economic influence or power in their native lands.”<sup>1</sup>

The official status was ‘religious’ and not an ‘ethnic’ minority. According to the population survey done by Eng, he counted as many as 340,450 Muslims in Cambodia, which yielded a figure of 2.5% of the total population,<sup>2</sup> although some Muslims in other parts of the world are not aware of the Cham’s existence, not to mention their history, culture, or religious practices, even though they share the same religion.

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<sup>1</sup> Willoughby, J. **The Cham Muslims of Indo-China**. The Message International. Accessed on 25.1.2018.  
<http://www.muslimpopulation.com/library/History/The%20Cham%20Muslims%20of%20Indo-China.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> According to Eng, this full figure of the Muslim population includes additional factors and information such as the number of villages with less than 20 families, the number of Muslims in Prey Veng and Svay Rieng, of Muslims living among other ethnic groups, and an assumed number of 10,000 people in order to align the number for migrating Muslims. See Kirchner, L. M. 2015. *Living on the Margins: On the Status and Standing of Minorities an Indigenous Peoples in Cambodia*. International Conference Mainland. P8.

## The Early Religions of The Malay Cham Community

The history of Southeast Asia and the religions found in the region have long been studied by scholars. The studies were supported by several documents and sources either found in the region itself or notes from outsiders. One thing that has long been known is that apart from Indian influence, the region was also influenced by animism; believing in the mystical and magical beings and forces that are typically interacting phenomena in animistic contexts. According to Stringer,

“Animism<sup>1</sup> is the religious belief of objects, places and creatures all possess an istinct spiritual essence.”<sup>2</sup>

These beings are spirits which include gods, ancestors, ghosts, totemic spirits, nature spirits, angels, demons, and Satan while forces are impersonal powers. This belief later led to the use of magic, astrology, witchcraft, evil eye, and other related phenomena. Animism’s foundation according to Kamps’s studies was based on power and in power personalities.<sup>3</sup> Since the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, the Cham used spiritual power in almost always malevolent means to cause suffering.<sup>4</sup> This is why some members of the majority

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<sup>1</sup> Potentially, animism perceives all things—animals, plants, rocks, rivers, weather systems, human handiwork and perhaps even words—as animated and alive.

<sup>2</sup> Stringer, M. D. 1999. *Rethinking Animism: Thoughts from the Infancy of our Discipline*. In *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*. 5 (4): P541.

<sup>3</sup> Kamps, T. J. 1986. **The Biblical Forms and Elements of Power Encounter**. M.A. thesis, Columbia Graduate School of Bible and Missions: Columbia. SC. P5.

<sup>4</sup> Animism is a belief system through which reality is perceived. This belief system assumes that the seen world is related to the unseen, an

Buddhist community and other minority ethnic groups in present time reportedly continued to view the Cham with suspicion and superstition as purported practitioners of ‘black magic’.<sup>1</sup> This is a common thing that happens in most Southeast Asian regions as they have been practicing these kinds of practices for so long. There are even some places and groups of people that are still practising this kind of activity even though they have embraced a religion that prohibits them from doing such things.

Later, the most significant religion in the early Champa’s history appears to have been Shaivism,<sup>2</sup> going back at least the 4<sup>th</sup> or beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> This impact of Hindu influence can be seen today, where the major Hindu temple complex was located at My Son, where the temples are

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interaction exists between the divine and the human, the sacred and the profane, the holy and the secular. Personal spiritual beings and impersonal spiritual forces are everywhere thought to be shaping what happens in the animists' world. Animists live in continual fear of these powers. See Cambodia Research Network - CRN. 2007. *The Peoples of Cambodia*. Cambodia: CRN. PXVII.

<sup>1</sup> **Cambodia 2015 International Religious Freedom Report**. United States Department of State: Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. P4.

<sup>2</sup> Shaivism (Śaivism) is one of the major traditions within Hinduism that reveres Shiva as the Supreme Being or its metaphysical concept of Brahman. The followers of Shaivism are called “Shaivites” or “Saivites”. See Raju, P. T. 1985. *Structural Depths of Indian Thought*. State University of New York Press. P 10–14, P509–516; also Flood, G, (Ed.). 2003. *The Śaiva Traditions*. The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, P200-201.

<sup>3</sup> Some account mentioned Indian traders in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries introduced Hinduism, and the Cham began worshipping the Hindu Shiva, Brahma, and Vishnu. See Apeopleloved. **The Western Cham of Cambodia**. Accessed 1.2.2018 [www.apeopleloved.com](http://www.apeopleloved.com)

usually dedicated to Shiva.<sup>1</sup> Remaining Cham sculpture from their early history shows the central role of Shiva in religious devotion,<sup>2</sup> where the inscriptions of Champa are in two languages, Cham and Sanskrit.<sup>3</sup> The Cham society was formed of two distinct parts, a strongly Hinduised absolute monarchy which were ruled according to India's law of Manu, and observed the caste system. Shiva was the supreme god-king and scholars were expected to be conversant with Sanskrit, Buddhist texts, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and the important works of Hinduism. The Cham masses, on the other hand, remained largely untouched by this high culture and continued to follow their traditional folkways and customs.<sup>4</sup> This is what can be seen now, the mixture and blend between Hinduism and the impact of animism.

The Cham initially received influence from India through Hinduism and Buddha,<sup>5</sup> and they were a part of the Malay

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<sup>1</sup> Renfrew, C. *The Cambridge World Pre History*. Cambridge University Press. Part 3.

<sup>2</sup> Collins, W. 1996. **The Chams of Cambodia**. In *Interdisciplinary Research on Ethnic Groups in Cambodia*. Phnom Penh: Center for Advanced Study. P18.

<sup>3</sup> Vickery, M. March 2005. *Champa Revised*. Singapore: Asia Research Institute, The National University of Singapore. P7.

<sup>4</sup> Willoughby, J. **The Cham Muslims of Indo-China. The Message International**. Accessed on 31.1.2018.

<http://www.muslimpopulation.com/library/History/The%20Cham%20Muslims%20of%20Indo-China.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Indian traders came not only to carry their merchandise but also to Hinduise (spread their religion and traditions). Later, trade relations gradually became more lucrative, and then Hinduised kingdoms began to spring up: Fou-nan (located in present-day Cambodia), Tien-sun or Tun-sun (on the Malay Peninsula), Langya-hsiu or Langkasuka (on the Malay Peninsula), Tambralinga (on the eastern side of the Malay Peninsula), and Takkola (to the north of these other kingdoms). Further

world and Hindu culture before turning into an Islamic state.<sup>1</sup> As mentioned before, Hindu was the first religion adopted by the Cham since the establishment of the Champa Kingdom. Hindu temples could be found during the kingdom's era and were known as *Bimong* in Cham language, or were commonly referred to as *tháp* 'stupa' in Vietnamese. The priests during that time were divided into three levels, where the highest rank was known as Po Sá, followed by Po Tapáh, and the junior priests Po Paséh.<sup>2</sup> There were also Buddhism in the kingdom, which played a central role in Champa from a very early date. The booty from a Chinese invasion of Lin-Yi in 605 CE included Buddhist texts written in an Austronesian language.<sup>3</sup> It was followed later by Mahayana Buddhism, which appeared to have flourished in Champa after the 8<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup> These Hindu and Buddhist traditions dominated the Champa Kingdom from its earliest period until the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Then by the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Persian and Arab trade in the region, as well as contact with Sufi missionaries from Gujerat and

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to the east, located in the southern coastal parts of present-day Vietnam, lay Champa. See Renfrew, C. *The Cambridge World Pre History*. Cambridge University Press. Part 3. See also Musa, M. Z. 2 December 2012. **Perkembangan Islam di Asia Tenggara: Kajian Kemboja**. In Salam Jurnal Studi Masyarakat Islam. P216.

<sup>1</sup> Yaacob, M. @ Siti Meriam; Hassan, F.; Abu Bakar, S.; Abd. Manaf, A. 24-26 June 2010. **Masjid Kampung Laut: Warisan Malaysia dan Masyarakat Champa**. Universiti Sains Malaysia. In Malay Heritage in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Vietnam. Cambodia: Phnom Penh. P201.

<sup>2</sup> Asia Pacific Religious Freedom Forum (APRFF). 20th February 2016. **The Cham Muslims, Bani and Hindus of Vietnam**. P1.

<sup>3</sup> Gungwu, W. 1958. *Journal of the Malayan Branch Royal Asiatic Society*. P64.

<sup>4</sup> Willoughby, J. **The Cham Muslims of Indo-China**. The Message International. Accessed on 25.1.2018.

<http://www.muslimpopulation.com/library/History/The%20Cham%20Muslims%20of%20Indo-China.pdf>

Bengal and from the Middle East, introduced the Cham to Islamic teachings for the first time.<sup>1</sup> So it can be concluded that there were several beliefs adopted by this society before the coming of Islam. First, animism, then Hinduism, and later, Buddhism. These three beliefs have left a significant impact on the society where some of the Cham are Hindus and Buddhists, while some practised Islam but were still influenced by animism, Hinduism, and Buddhism approaches.

### **Islamisation of The Malay-Cham Community**

It is not known exactly when Islam arrived in the Kingdom of Champa, although several reports have mentioned the existence of a Muslim community in the kingdom.<sup>2</sup> French colonial scholars concluded that much of the glorious chapters of the Indianisation of the Chams came to an end in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, where later, a period of gradual decline was detected in many aspects, including arts, architectural skills, and religious practices. The original Hindu beliefs of the Cham gradually lost their grip, and slowly Islam was adopted when it was introduced. The Cham converted to Islam as it swept eastward into islands and peninsular Southeast Asia.<sup>3</sup> However, according to Cabaton, there were still people who practised Hinduism but some lost the purity of Hinduism.<sup>4</sup> Even the practice of Islam during that time

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<sup>1</sup> Collins, W. 1996. **The Chams of Cambodia**. In *Interdisciplinary Research on Ethnic Groups in Cambodia*. Phnom Penh: Center for Advanced Study. P24.

<sup>2</sup> Musa, M. Z. 2 December 2012. **Perkembangan Islam di Asia Tenggara: Kajian Kemboja**. In *Salam Jurnal Studi Masyarakat Islam*. P216.

<sup>3</sup> Minority Rights Group International, 2014. *World Directory of Minorities: Asia and Oceania*. MRG Directory: Cambodia: Cham. P10.

<sup>4</sup> According to the Hindus, there were among the Hindus inserting some elements of Islam into their religion.



was considered to be a poor reflection of the religion and deviated from the common practices of the *Shafi'i* sects of insular Southeast Asia, including the Malay Peninsula.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Coming of Islam to Champa**

To this day, it is uncertain how and when exactly Islam arrived and was embraced by the people of Champa. Sources on the arrival of Islam to this kingdom can be based on Arab voyage stories, Cham and Khmer legendary stories and folklore, as well as reports by Chinese and Vietnamese scholars.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, it is pivotal to mention the key opinions among scholars and researchers on the historical arrival of Islam to Champa through chronological timelines.

The first opinion is that Islam came to the Kingdom of Champa as early as the 8<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> Another opinion is that Islam arrived in Champa in the 9<sup>th</sup> century CE, and the spread of the religion in the kingdom went faster after the capital of Champa, Vijaya, fell to Vietnam, in 1471 CE.<sup>4</sup> Since the Cham converted to Islam during that time, Islam

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<sup>1</sup> Ken, D. W. T. 2008. **Research on Cham History in Malaysia**. In *Asian Research Trends: New Series* (The Toyo Bunko, Tokyo). No. 3. P29. See also Cabaton, A. 1901. *Nouvelles Recherches Sur Les Chams*. Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient. P4-9.

<sup>2</sup> According to Cabaton, the Chinese chronicles were more accurate and provided more insight. See Musa, M. Z. 2 December 2012. **Perkembangan Islam di Asia Tenggara: Kajian Kemboja**. In *Salam Jurnal Studi Masyarakat Islam*. P218.

<sup>3</sup> Yaacob, M. @ Siti Meriam; Hassan, F.; Abu Bakar, S.; Abd. Manaf, A. 24-26 June 2010. **Masjid Kampung Laut: Warisan Malaysia dan Masyarakat Champa**. Universiti Sains Malaysia. In *Malay Heritage in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Vietnam*. Cambodia: Phnom Penh. P204.

<sup>4</sup> Musa, M. Z. 2 December 2012. **Perkembangan Islam di Asia Tenggara: Kajian Kemboja**. In *Salam Jurnal Studi Masyarakat Islam*. P218.

swept towards the east into islands and the peninsular Southeast Asian peninsular.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, Hindu-Buddhist culture in Champa was replaced by Islamic civilisation, resulting in the decrease in the number of the Hindu-Buddhist followers in the kingdom.

Another opinion stated that the coming of Islam into this kingdom was during the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Among the scholars is Ed Huber, who stated,

“Islam entered Champa during the tenth century.”

He based his argument on Chinese records:

“There were many water-buffalos that lived on the mountain (in Lin-Yi). They (the buffalos) were not used to cultivate the land but as sacrificed objects to the gods. When the water-buffalo was killed, they invoked the name ‘Allahu Akbar’.”<sup>2</sup>

This was among the pieces of evidence that were reported throughout Chinese records. Another scholar who believed the coming Islam to Champa was during the 10<sup>th</sup> century was Maspero. He stated that some Cham may have converted to Islam as early as the era of Sung dynasty China. This argument was supported by the existence of two *Kufic* inscriptions found in what was southern Champa, dated

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<sup>1</sup> International Centre for Ethnic Studies. 1995. *Minorities in Cambodia*. An MRG International Report. P1.

<sup>2</sup> Huber, E. 1903. Note sur un témoignage de l’islamisation du Campa, *Annales des Song*. See Phuong, B. T. Summer 2006. **The Cham Bani of Vietnam**. In *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 23:3. Ed. Bruckmayr, Philipp; Petersen, Kristian; Ma, Haiyun; Cuthbert, Ross. Association of Muslim Social Scientist: International Institute of Islamic Thought. P1.

around 1030 CE, which indicated the existence of the Muslim community in Champa in the 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> Others believed that Islam came in the 11<sup>th</sup> century based on the discovery of two tombstones dating 1025 CE, 1035 CE, and 1039 CE in Phanrang.<sup>2</sup> They believed Islam reached Champa in the 11<sup>th</sup> century based on the tombstones and according to some accounts there were Cham found in Cambodia who had already embraced the religion.<sup>3</sup> Another opinion stated that it was during the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the time when the Persians and Arabs traded in the region, and there were contacts between the Cham with Sufi missionaries from Gujerat and Bengal and from the Middle East, where they introduced the Cham to Islamic teachings for the first time.<sup>4</sup> This is not surprising, given that Islam was brought to many places in Southeast Asia by Muslim traders.

Some reported that the arrival of Islam to Champa was during the 15<sup>th</sup> century. During the loss of their capital

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<sup>1</sup> Manguin, P. Y. 1985. **The Introduction of Islam into Champa**. JMBRAS. Vol. LVIII. Part 1. P1; see also  
Marrison, G. E. 1985. **The Chams and their Literature**. JMBRAS. Vol. LVIII. Part 2. P55.

<sup>2</sup> Yaacob, M. @ Siti Meriam; Hassan, F.; Abu Bakar, S.; Abd. Manaf, A. 24-26 June 2010. **Masjid Kampung Laut: Warisan Malaysia dan Masyarakat Champa**. Universiti Sains Malaysia. In Malay Heritage in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Vietnam. Cambodia: Phnom Penh. P204.

<sup>3</sup> Musa, M. Z. 1994. **Masyarakat Melayu-Cam dan Kelantan Dilihat dari Sudut Agama**. In Warisan Kelantan. No. XIII. Kota Bharu: Perbadanan Muzium Negeri Kelantan. P33-48. Also, Marrison, G.E. 1985. **The Chams and Their Literature**. In JMBRAS. Vol. LVIII-2. P45-70.

<sup>4</sup> Collins, W. 1996. **The Chams of Cambodia**. In Interdisciplinary Research on Ethnic Groups in Cambodia. Phnom Penh: Center for Advanced Study. P24.

Vijaya in 1471 after years of fighting with Vietnam that led to a first migration of the Chams to Cambodia,<sup>1</sup> there was a report that Islam had entered Champa. However, the Chams had not been entirely Muslims when they first arrived in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Nonetheless, they were influenced by religious and cultural practices by Malay people that had converted to Islam in Cambodia.<sup>2</sup> This led to the widespread of Islam among the Cham refugees in Cambodia.<sup>3</sup> This argument was supported by Tze Ken. He stated that while the rulers of Malacca had converted to Islam in 1414, Islam had not yet made major inroads into Champa. He said,

“Islam would later become important, however, in the strong connection between the Chams and the Malays. By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it would be the main factor in rallying Malay help for the Chams in resisting Vietnamese domination.”<sup>4</sup>

On another account, it was said that Islam came to Champa in the 16<sup>th</sup> century as reported by the Priest Escalona O.F.M. who claimed that he was attacked by Muslims when passing Champa in 1640 CE,<sup>5</sup> but this opinion only mentioned the

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<sup>1</sup> Champa, however, existed until 1835 when the last enclaves of its territories were taken by Vietnam.

<sup>2</sup> Kirchner, L. M. *Living on the Margins: On the Status and Standing of Minorities an Indigenous Peoples in Cambodia*. 2015. International Conference Mainland. P12.

<sup>3</sup> Cabaton credited the Malays with the conversion of the Cham refugee population to Islam. See Cabaton, A. 1960. **Indochina**. In Encyclopedia of Islam. Vol.3. P1209.

<sup>4</sup> Ken, D. W. T. **Vietnam-Champa Relations and the Malay-Islam Regional Network in the 17th-19th Centuries**. P8.

<sup>5</sup> Yaacob, M. @ Siti Meriam; Hassan, F.; Abu Bakar, S.; Abd. Manaf, A. 24-26 June 2010. **Masjid Kampung Laut: Warisan Malaysia dan**

existence of Muslims in Champa, not the date of the coming of Islam. Meanwhile, French scholar Pierre Yves Manguin had a different opinion, he suggested that the Cham only converted to Islam in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, almost three centuries after the Malays. But Islam was introduced into Champa at an earlier, undetermined date.<sup>1</sup> Lastly, there was also a Cham classic entitled *Nai Mai Mang Makah* (The Princess from Kelantan) which tells the story of a princess from Kelantan who tried to convert the Cham king to Islam. However, the event was not dated. Po Dharma and Gerard Moussay believed that the event took place between the 1693 CE, the fall of Champa and the 1771 CE, Tayson rebellion.<sup>2</sup> All this supported the suggestion that Islam in Champa came a bit late compared to some other places, due to strong adherence towards Hinduism and Buddhism.

Even though the date of Islam's arrival to this kingdom is inconclusive, Islam has come to Champa with the open arms of the people. In addition, neighbouring kingdoms that embraces Islam had good relations with the Chams. Moreover, Manguin suggested that Malay migration into Champa played its part in influencing the people to convert to Islam. Accordingly, the Cham were also influenced by the Malays to adhere to the Sunni *Shafi'i* school. Manguin also believed that Malay migration to Champa was much more restricted, especially after Champa was absorbed by

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**Masyarakat Champa.** Universiti Sains Malaysia. In Malay Heritage in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Vietnam. Cambodia: Phnom Penh. P204.

<sup>1</sup> Ken, D. W. T. **Vietnam-Champa Relations and the Malay-Islam Regional Network in the 17th-19th Centuries.** P18.

<sup>2</sup> Dharma, P.; Moussay, G. Karim, Abdul (Eds.). 2000. **Nai Mai Mang Makah** (Tuan Puteri dari Kelantan). Kuala Lumpur: Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient and Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism Malaysia. P29-30.

Vietnam,<sup>1</sup> which led only one way for Islam to be spread, with the Cham's migration. It was also mentioned that the Malays in Cambodia were descendants of Islamic missionaries and traders from Nusantara<sup>2</sup> including the Malay Peninsula.<sup>3</sup> This meant that their migration to neighbouring countries may have made conversion to Islam much faster. On another account, Syed Naquib al-Attas claimed that the revolt between farmers against the Tang Dynasty forced the Chinese Muslims to flee to Champa, Kedah, and Palembang. He claimed that some 120,000 Muslims were in Canton during the Tang Dynasty.<sup>4</sup> This meant that the connection between the Cham and foreign Muslims had formed into a Muslim community in this kingdom.

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<sup>1</sup> Ken, D. W. T. **Vietnam-Champa Relations and the Malay-Islam Regional Network in the 17th-19th Centuries**. P10.

<sup>2</sup> Malay Archipelago.

<sup>3</sup> Musa, M. Z. 2 December 2012. **Perkembangan Islam di Asia Tenggara: Kajian Kemboja**. In Salam Jurnal Studi Masyarakat Islam. P216.

<sup>4</sup> Yaacob, M. @ Siti Meriam; Hassan, F.; Abu Bakar, S.; Abd. Manaf, A. 24-26 June 2010. **Masjid Kampung Laut: Warisan Malaysia dan Masyarakat Champa**. Universiti Sains Malaysia. In Malay Heritage in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Vietnam. Cambodia: Phnom Penh. P204.

## The Main Sources of Islamic Influence on The Malay Cham People

As mentioned earlier, there was an opinion that the conversion of the majority of the Chams actually took place in Cambodia, after they migrated from Vietnam.<sup>1</sup> According to Arab and Persian sources, Muslim people were domiciled in Champa in the 8<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, the Chvea, known as Javanese, a large Muslim population, were already living in Cambodia in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> This Chvea, or the Malay of Cambodia, were responsible for influencing and converting the people of Cham on a large scale into Islam. In general, there were two theories regarding the coming of Islam to Indochina; firstly, through the traders coming to the region, and secondly, marriages between the local people and Muslim Arabs, Persians,<sup>4</sup> Indians, and Malay<sup>5</sup>. Southeast Asian Muslim scholars have a tendency to view the Arabs as the mediators of Islam, while European scholars see India as the filter of Islam to Southeast Asia.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Filippi, J. M. **Long Tragedy of Cham History**.

The source can be found at:

<http://kampungmuseum.wordpress.com/2012/03/27/the-long-tragedy-of-cham-history/>

<sup>2</sup> Scupin, R. 1995. **Historical, Ethnographic, and Contemporary Political Analyses of the Muslims of Kampuchea and Vietnam**. Sojourn. Vol. 10. No. 2. P304.

<sup>3</sup> Their origin is unclear as nowadays they all speak Khmer and don't have a language of their own.

<sup>4</sup> 10-12<sup>th</sup> centuries.

<sup>5</sup> 14-16<sup>th</sup> centuries.

<sup>6</sup> Reid, A. 1993. **Islamization and Christianization in Southeast Asia**. The Critical Phase 1550-1650. In Anthony Reid (ed.) *Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. P151.

There was an opinion that it was the Chinese who brought Islam to Champa. Muslim Chinese trade had become so large scale by the 9<sup>th</sup> century, and many ships were making frequent voyages between the two nations, the Kingdom of Champa and China. As ties between the countries involved in this trade network increased, so did the number of Muslims in the port cities and as the years passed, Islam began to spread inland. It was said that Champa had one product which these merchants wanted: aloë wood, which was considered by many Muslim geographers at the time to be the best in the world.<sup>1</sup> In addition, Muslim sailors and merchants have always made Sanf ports in the Champa kingdom, as well as the Sanf Fulaw Islands, as a stopover before China.<sup>2</sup> In its glorious days, Kingdom of Champa's port was indeed a popular harbour.

Another opinion stated that it was the Malay people from neighbouring countries who spread Islam to Champa through trades and visits. It was the time when the kingdom was busy fighting with its northern neighbour from the 10-15<sup>th</sup> centuries; the Malays, on the other hand, arrived in Champa around the 14<sup>th</sup> century and were very piously spreading the teachings of Islam to the Chams.<sup>3</sup> Their

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<sup>1</sup> Willoughby, J. **The Cham Muslims of Indo-China**. The Message International. Accessed on 6.2.2018.  
<http://www.muslimpopulation.com/library/History/The%20Cham%20Muslims%20of%20Indo-China.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Sanf is known for its fine timber. See Wan Ali, W. Z. K.; Ismail, A. Z.; Han, J. December 2013. **Masyarakat Muslim Melayu Cham di Vietnam: Kajian Mengenai Isu dan Cabaran Dalam Pemikiran Islam Era Globalisasi Cham**. In Jati. vol.18. P3.

<sup>3</sup> Musa, M. Z. 1991. **Kehadiran Orang Melayu dan Orang Cam di Kemboja Hingga Awal Abad ke XIX**. In Jebat. No.19. Bangi: UKM. P3-13.



spirituality was strengthened by the Malays bringing Islam to the kingdom. The teaching was considered to be important to both worlds, in this life and the hereafter.<sup>1</sup> One of the factors of Champa's conversion was because the Champa sailors had links with Muslim communities stops at the ports of the Malay Archipelago and Champa, where traders from Brunei and Banten had also been trading from Champa.<sup>2</sup> According to Willoughby, Islam was brought to Hindu/Buddhist Champa by Arab and Persian sailors and merchants who plied the rich Asian trade routes during the first Islamic century.<sup>3</sup> It was said that it was the Muslim traders, scholars, mystics and others who travelled far and wide from the last years of the 13<sup>th</sup> century until the establishment of European domination over the area in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup> They have spread Islam during their time in Southeast Asia and managed to attract people to embrace Islam without any compulsion.

According to a different source, the introduction of Islam into Champa was done mainly by Persian Shi'ites.<sup>5</sup> A remark by al Dimashqi (1325):

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<sup>1</sup> Farina, S. 2014. **Cham Muslims in Malaysia and Thailand: Then and Now**. University of Massachusetts Lowell. P230

<sup>2</sup> Lafont, P. B. 1995. **Hubungan Antara Campa Dengan Asia Tenggara**. In *Dunia Melayu dan Dunia Indocina*. P213.

<sup>3</sup> Willoughby, J. **ISIM Newsletter 2/99**. Regional Issues. P14.

<sup>4</sup> Willoughby, J. **The Cham Muslims of Indo-China**. The Message International Accessed on 6.2.2018.

<http://www.muslimpopulation.com/library/History/The%20Cham%20Muslims%20of%20Indo-China.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Willoughby, J. **The Cham Muslims of Indo-China**. Accessed on 6.2.2018.

<http://www.muslimpopulation.com/library/History/The%20Cham%20Muslims%20of%20Indo-China.pdf>

“The country of Champa is inhabited by Muslims, Christians, and idolaters. The Muslim religion came there during the time of Uthman. And the Alids, expelled by the Umayyads and by Hajiaj, fled there.”<sup>1</sup>

According to Dimashqi, the first representative of Muslim sent to Vietnam was during the time of the Caliph ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan in 29 H/650 CE, followed by the Umayyad period and al-Hajjaj,<sup>2</sup> and it was said that the escaped refugees of the oppression and massacre by the Umayyad comprised the descendants of the ‘*Alawiyyah*.<sup>3</sup> In conclusion, although Islam was brought in by the Persians, Arabs and Indian through trades and marriages, Islam was also brought into the Champa Kingdom by the Malay Muslims of the region.

### **The Shaping of The Malay Islamic Cham Identity: Their Place and Role in The Kingdom of Champa**

Throughout the history of Islam in Champa, regardless of who first introduced Islam into the kingdom, most scholars believe that Islam never made any significant progress until after the disastrous defeat of Champa by the Vietnamese in 1471. Over the years, more and more Cham became Muslims, and during the late 16<sup>th</sup> century and all during the 17<sup>th</sup> century the upper classes, including the royalty,

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<sup>1</sup> Nakamura, R. 2000. **The Coming of Islam to Champa**. In Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. P5.

<sup>2</sup> Ali, Z. 1991. **Notes on Islamic Arts of Campa**. In Le Campa et Le Monde Malais, Paris. P123-133.

<sup>3</sup> Wan Ali, W. Z. K. 1996. **Perkembangan Syi’ah, Pengaruh dan Kesannya di Dunia Islam dan di Asia Tenggara**. In Jurnal Sejarah. Kuala Lumpur: FSSS, Universiti Malaya.

eventually converted to Islam.<sup>1</sup> Various efforts have been done by Muslims who often travelled to this kingdom until finally succeeding in converting the king to Islam. Shortly after that, the king declared Islam to be the official religion of the Cham.<sup>2</sup> Although their king converted, the power of the king at that time did not manage to bring his people to embrace Islam although the people were very obedient to the king. Only some of the people of Champa embraced Islam, due to the strong influence of the traditional religion, customs, and the teachings of their previous religion. Even animism continued to be observed and practised in the kingdom at the time.

When Islam arrived and the king converted to Islam, according to Mohamad Zain, in the Kingdom of Champa, there was a Champa king who bore the name of *Po Uvalvah* or *Po Ovlah* (King Allah) who reigned at *Sri Banay* for 37 years (1000-1036). The Cham people tried to raise the status of their kings, as done earlier in Hinduism, by giving the king a name in relation to their god.<sup>3</sup> This was due to the influence of Hinduism. Another evidence of Muslim in the kingdom, there was a tombstone of a person known as Abu Kamil dated 29 Safar 431 H/ 20-21 November 1039 CE in Phang Rang or Panduranga,<sup>4</sup> an important port city of

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<sup>1</sup> Willoughby, J. **The Cham Muslims of Indo-China**. The Message International. Accessed on 7.2.2018.  
<http://www.muslimpopulation.com/library/History/The%20Cham%20Muslims%20of%20Indo-China.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Cambodia Research Network - CRN. 2007. *The Peoples of Cambodia*. Cambodia: CRN. P25.

<sup>3</sup> Musa, M. Z. 1991. **Kehadiran Orang Melayu dan Orang Cam di Kemoja Hingga Awal Abad ke XIX**. In Jebat. No.19. Bangi: UKM. P3-13.

<sup>4</sup> The capital of the southernmost of city-states of Hindu-Buddhist Champa was located.

Champa in the past.<sup>1</sup> This showed that they had already possessed a part of Islamic identity by having tombstones around the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Another piece of evidence found was an announcement to the local Muslim community on the need to pay taxes, done in a hybrid *Kufic-Nashi* script.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, Chinese texts spoke of several men with Muslim names: Pu Ho San,<sup>3</sup> who served as the ambassador of the Cham king in 951 CE, and again in 960 CE wanted to present tribute or conduct some diplomacy with the Chinese emperor, Pu Lo E,<sup>4</sup> who was said to have led approximately 100 foreigners from Champa (it was not known if these were Muslims or not) at a time of internal trouble; and Hu Xuan,<sup>5</sup> who led 300 more northwards the following year.<sup>6</sup> The use of Arabic names during this time proved that Islam had a place in the kingdom even though not all of the population embraced Islam, while the identity of Islam started to evolve around them.

The Muslim identity at the beginning of the Islamised Kingdom of Champa was not as so strong and pure until the arrival of Muslims from neighbouring countries. This

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<sup>1</sup> Hassan, H. **Peranan Aceh dalam Pengembangan Islam di Nusantara**. In *Sejarah Masuk dan Berkembangnya Islam di Indonesia*. P332.

<sup>2</sup> Willoughby, J. **The Cham Muslims of Indo-China**. The Message International. Accessed on 6.2.2018.  
<http://www.muslimpopulation.com/library/History/The%20Cham%20Muslims%20of%20Indo-China.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> A Chinese transliteration of Abu al-Hasan.

<sup>4</sup> A Chinese transliteration of Abu Ah.

<sup>5</sup> A Chinese transliteration of Hussain.

<sup>6</sup> Willoughby, J. **The Cham Muslims of Indo-China**. The Message International. Accessed on 6.2.2018.  
<http://www.muslimpopulation.com/library/History/The%20Cham%20Muslims%20of%20Indo-China.pdf>

connection between Muslim neighbouring countries lasted for a long time, even until the time of migration of the Cham to several places.<sup>1</sup> Regarding the appeal of the Islamic faith at this time of crisis, scholar Raymond Scupin noted that as the Cham capital fell and many of the Cham fled to Cambodia, Melaka, and Java:

“The Cham were exposed to the intensive wave of Islamisation that affected other Malayo-Polynesian-speaking people in the Malay and Indonesian coastal states. More than likely, Malayan and Indonesian Muslims were successful in demonstrating the spiritual efficacy and the possibilities of social unity of the Islamic tradition to these Cham refugees”.<sup>2</sup>

As their community, and subsequently their identity, was under attack by invading forces, converting to Islam became a symbol of resistance against the Vietnamese and a means of asserting a distinctive Cham identity.<sup>3</sup> This led them to appeal towards Sufi ideas as Sufi cults of saints, veneration of the dead, and their emphasis on spiritual charisma was a primary vehicle for further Cham conversions to Islam that continued to occur into the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>4</sup> Faced with the impossibility of regaining their mythical territory, the religion of Islam brought them closer to the Islamised

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<sup>1</sup> Cambodia Research Network - CRN. 2007. *The Peoples of Cambodia*. Cambodia: CRN. Pix

<sup>2</sup> Scupin, R. 1995. **Historical, Ethnographic, and Contemporary Political Analyses of the Muslims of Kampuchea and Vietnam**. In *Sojourn*. Vol.10. No.2. P305.

<sup>3</sup> Setudeh-Nejad, S. 2002. **The Cham Muslims of Southeast Asia: A Historical Note**. In *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*. No.2. P453.

<sup>4</sup> Taylor, P. 2007. **Cham Muslims of the Mekong Delta**. Singapore: National University of Singapore Press. P109–110.

Austronesian world, an ethnolinguistic family whom the Cham belonged to and which grouped together Malay, Indonesians, *Jawi* from the south of Thailand, and Filipinos, in contrast to the China-influenced culture of Vietnam and the Theravada Buddhism of Cambodia. In addition, the Malay Muslims allowed the Cham to keep their identity within immigration to their country.<sup>1</sup> The relationship between fraternal neighbours has played a big role in the formation of Islamic identity among the Champa society, where its great influence can be seen in various aspects of life.

### **Current Religious Strands within The Malay Cham Community**

The Cham community has inhabited Cambodia for a long time. They lived in several villages where the majority are Malay Muslims, such as at Kampong Cham, Thbaung Khmum,<sup>2</sup> banks of the Tonle Sap Lake, and the Mekong River, as well as in Kampot Province. As Muslims in Cambodia, they maintained their traditions and religion since their migration from the Champa Kingdom. Therefore, it is fair to say that the religion they adopted today was mostly as it is during their time in Champa. Therefore, we can see Islamic words were used even during the time in Champa, for instance, the word *Kauthara* (City of Champa),

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<sup>1</sup> De Féo, A. April 16 – 17, 2007. **Transnational Islamic Movement in Cambodia**. Centre de Sciences Humaines (CSH) and India International Centre (IIC) Dynamics of Contemporary Islam and Economic Development in Asia, From the Caucasus to China International Conference. P3.

<sup>2</sup> Before Thbaung Khmum was a part of Kampong Cham province.

which was taken from *Surah al-Kawthar*.<sup>1</sup> In viewing their religious life in Cambodia, no conflict or religious tension can be seen between followers of Islam and the majority of the Cambodian people who follow Buddhism. They live in mutual respect and prosperity, strengthened by the leadership of Hun Sen that promotes religious freedom to the Cham community. In fact, Hun Sen's government has helped the Muslims in education and religious issues.

In general, the development of religion among the Cham people in Cambodia can be considered as stagnant. Despite some efforts to give the best understanding of Islam among the Cham community, they still need support from the outsiders to place a system for them, to help build their own Islamic offices, aid in terms of Islamic education. As noted in the previously, the Cham people are divided into several branches although all consider themselves as Muslims; among them are *Sunnis*,<sup>2</sup> *Jahed*<sup>3</sup>, *Shi'ites*, *Qadiani*, and so on. On this basis, the researcher will try to illustrate this community, and focus specifically on the related issues involving the Cham *Sunni* as well as explain about the Cham *Jahed*, the second largest Muslim group in Cambodia.

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<sup>1</sup> Noseworthy, W. B. **Seeking out 'Cham Space' in Southeast Asian History**. P38.

<sup>2</sup> Ninety percent of Muslims in the country, or 95 % according to Mohid Sofr. See Kirchner, L. M. *Living on the Margins: On the Status and Standing of Minorities an Indigenous Peoples in Cambodia*. 2015. International Conference Mainland. P10.

<sup>3</sup> Known also as Cham Sot, Cham Tujuh, Kaum San and they related to the Cham Bani in Vietnam.

### Religious Strands in Cambodia

As stated earlier, the two biggest Muslim communities in Cambodia were the Cham *Sunni*<sup>1</sup> and the Cham *Jahed*. It should be noted here that the term Cham Muslim or Cham Sunni may refer to both the Malay Cham<sup>2</sup> and the Chvea,<sup>3</sup> while Cham *Jahed*<sup>4</sup> refers to a group that is well known for maintaining Cham customs, traditions, and rituals that could be found at Kampong Chhnang, Pursat, Battambang, Kandal, Kampong Tralach, and Orussey Keo Province. They were regarded as strongly influenced by elements of Brahmanism (Buddhism), Hinduism, Islam, Batiniyyah *Shi'ism* and ancestor worshipping. In contrary to the Cham *Sunni* who maintained connections with the rest of the Muslim world through pilgrimages to Mecca, or studies abroad to Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, and Brunei, the latter (*Jahed*) did not have much contact with the Islamic

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<sup>1</sup> Known also as Cham 5 in Cambodia to differentiate between them and Cham 7, the Cham Jahed.

<sup>2</sup> The Cham who use Cham, Malay, and Khmer language and follow Sunni teaching, and pray five times a day.

<sup>3</sup> The Chvea, Javanese descendants or Malays, are also known as 'Khmer Islam', a term coined by the late King Sihanouk in the 1960s. Chvea is the Khmer word for Java. Chvea does not have ethnic ties with the Kingdom of Champa and do not generally speak Cham. They also follow Sunni teaching and pray five times a day. See Maunati, Y; Sari, B. R. June 2014. **Construction of Cham Identity in Cambodia**. Suvannabhumi. Vol. 6 No. 1. P24.

<sup>4</sup> Cham Jahed/ Kaum San are referred to also as Cham Tujuh (7) or Kaum Jum'at (from the Malay language, which means 'Friday group'), referring to the tradition of praying only once a week, on Fridays. They use Cham language in their religious teachings. They made up nearly 10% of the Cham population (30,000-40,000 across 39 villages), some stated that they have slowly accepted Sunni teachings due to the younger generation being sent to study abroad.



world.<sup>1</sup> In 2010, *Shi'ites* were reported to have taken the advantage of Muslims in Cambodia, attempting to convert *Sunnis* to *Shi'ites* in Kampong Cham province. However, their intentions were quickly realised by the Muslims and the Mufti office, and received strong opposition by the Cham Sunni. This resistant of being converted to *Shi'ites* shows that they have enough understanding of Islam to cope against any sedition.

### **Cham Sunni (Cham 5)**

As a general view of the Cham *Sunni* in Cambodia, they are considered as an orthodox branch of Islam (*Ahlussunah wal Jama'ah*). They are similar to the Islamic practises with the majority of Muslims around the world. The Cham Sunni Muslims are divided into four major schools of thought: *Hanafî*, *Shafî'i*, *Maliki*, and *Hanbali*.<sup>2</sup> However, the majority of the Cham Sunni in Cambodia are followers of the *Shafî'i* School of Thought, which is also the dominant school of thought in Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia and several others in Southeast Asia. In terms of theology, the Cham Sunni of Cambodia mostly follow the theological school of *Ash'arites* (followers of the school of orthodox theology formed by *Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari*) and *Maturidites* (follows *Abu Mansur al-Maturidi's* systematic theology [kalam], a school of theology within Sunni Islam). Nonetheless, a group in Cambodia also follows the Salafi

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<sup>1</sup> Yoshimoto, Y. December 2012. **A Study of the *Hôi giáo* Religion in Vietnam: With a Reference to Islamic Religious Practices of Cham Bani.** In *Southeast Asian Studies*. Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University. Vol.1. No.3. P488.

<sup>2</sup> *Hanafî* is prevalent in South Asia, Central Asia, Turkey, and the Balkans, *Shafî'i* is practiced mainly in Southeast Asia, *Maliki* is followed in North and West Africa, while *Hanbali* is mostly observed in Saudi Arabia.

trend of theology among the Cham, which is also one of the Sunni Islam branches. This is because students who went abroad received education in the Middle East, such as Saudi Arabia and Southeast Asia, such as Malaysia and Thailand. Moreover, this number has risen as the interest of students going abroad to further their studies has increased.

The most important distinction between the *Salafi*, also known as *Kaum Muda*, and the *Ash'arites and Maturidites*, also known as *Kaum Tua*, is only small parts of understanding towards several issues in Islam, yet, both belong to the Sunni school of thought, the *Shafi'i*.<sup>1</sup> While there was grave opposition between the two in the 1990s, conflicts have declined over time, although, controversies are still present until today.<sup>2</sup> Among the supporter of the *Kaum Tua* was the *Tablighi*.<sup>3</sup> Despite all the controversies and differences, the Sunni Muslims remained intact and lived harmoniously under one roof, the religion of Islam. Both groups followed the Sunni school of thought in their daily lives, followed the teachings of Islam, have the same

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<sup>1</sup> Most Cham follow the *Shafi'i*, 90-100% of Cham according to Ustaz Bunyamin are *Shafi'i* in Kampong Cham. In the whole of Cambodia, about 90% are followers of the *Shafi'i* sect. There were reasons behind this, following the KR regime, scholars and religious intellectuals had been killed, the Cham received supports and aid especially in terms of religious materials from Malaysia and Indonesia, both of which follow *Shafi'i* school of thought, in addition to the encouraging numbers of students going abroad to study religion, this trend continued and more students began to follow the *Shafi'i* school of thought.

<sup>2</sup> Kirchner, L. M. *Living on the Margins: On the Status and Standing of Minorities an Indigenous Peoples in Cambodia*. 2015. International Conference Mainland. P11.

<sup>3</sup> Some of the Sunni understood *Kaum Tua* as *Tablighi* due to their similarities. Although, there are several differences between *Kaum Tua* and *Tablighi*.

belief towards the pillars of *Islam* and *Iman* (faith), and rejected any misleading teachings. Furthermore, the *Sunni* Chams have their own Islamic religious and community leader, the Mufti, and deputies for every province, who take charge of mosques and community affairs such as marriages and settle disputes in their respective communities. There were also imams, who led prayers, *Hakim*, and *Ustaz* among the *Sunni Cham*.

### ***Kaum Tua and Kaum Muda***

The tensions between *Kaum Muda* and *Kaum Tua* was basically often caused by conflicting ideas in beliefs or practices and the question of who practised more as *Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jamaah*. It was mainly caused by the *Kaum Tua*, who have been practising Islam for a long time and received criticism from students coming from abroad. Their conflicts were mainly in *al-Asma wa as-Sifat* (names and attributes of Allah) and the understanding of *Bid'ah* (innovations in religion). These conflicting ideas were often attributed to the generational gap since the young generation began to study Islam from outside of Cambodia. These young generations felt that they were telling 'the right way' because it was what they have learned.

For the *Kaum Tua* in Cambodia, most practised Islam through the books of *Shafi'i* in *Jawi*,<sup>1</sup> which they received from Malaysia and Thailand. The majority of mosques and Islamic schools in Cambodia followed the *Kaum Tua*, and had benefitted the Muslims for a long time. However, *Kaum Tua* did not necessarily refer to the member's old age,<sup>2</sup> but

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<sup>1</sup> Jawi is an Arabic alphabet for writing Malay, Acehnese, Banjarese, Minangkabau, Tausug, and several other languages in Southeast Asia.

<sup>2</sup> As the word 'tua' in Malay language means Old.

rather their idea of protecting their heredity belief. Since *Kaum Muda* were mostly influenced by the scholars who studied in other countries, who learned something new and practised what they have learned, unsurprisingly, there will be conflict between both since one practised religion that followed their ancestors' ways as it was considered the *Shafi'i* way for them, while the other wanted to make changes from what they have seen in their country.

As stated before, among the supporter of *Kaum Tua* was the *Tablighi*. Both *Kaum Tua* and the *Tablighi* were quite 'traditional' in ways of religious practice. In today's time, the terms *Kaum Tua* and *Kaum Muda* have evolved in Cambodia into *Tablighi* and *Wahabi*, and the tension within a Cham community has remained as it was. These conflicts had been asserted by American Institutes for Research in an interview:

“At the village level, before, (the) older people were practising Islam with limited education about Islam. Now we send many students outside to learn about Islam and they have a much greater understanding about it. However, some of the more traditional Cham beliefs contrast with Islamic law, so when students come back and say to elders that this or that is wrong, it can cause some tensions within villages.”<sup>1</sup>

In the origin of its first conflict, the Muslim Cham were known to have a close relationship with the Malays in the Peninsular, especially Kelantan, and have sent their young people to study Islam since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Normally after

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<sup>1</sup> American Institutes for Research. October 2008. *Assessing Marginalization of Cham Muslim Communities in Cambodia*. USAID. P33.

studying in Kelantan, the Cham's youth would return to Cambodia and continue to teach the younger generations. For the *Kaum Muda*, in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, two young men from Kampong Cham went to Pattani and Kelantan to learn Islam. Once they returned to their hometown, they became famous with the title Imam Musa and Imam Ahmad India.<sup>1</sup> Imam Ahmad was known for his Indian title as he continued his master's degree at Darul Uloom Deoband, Uttar Pradesh, India after his graduation in Kelantan. After completing his studies in Pattani, Imam Musa brought new understanding to the people in his village and in his native Cambodia. This new teaching was an understanding of Islam brought by *Kaum Muda* in Pattani, where *Kaum Muda* was actively engaged in Southeast Asia in those days.

The new understanding and interpretation brought by the *Kaum Muda* led by Imam Musa has undermined the position of the old religious leaders. Following this, the Muslim community split into two groups, *Kaum Tua* and *Kaum Muda*. In the beginning, as a result of this dispute, there were separations between family members, including divorce between husband and wife. Imam Musa and his followers were later accused of practising doctrines contrary to Islam and were also accused to be disbelievers (*Kufur*). All of this happened mainly because the Muslim Cham at the time were not aware of the diversity of schools of thoughts and assumed that whatever was taught apart from what they knew were wrong. Nonetheless, according to Zain Musa, Imam Musa and their followers, they believed that there were old practices that were inaccurate with the teachings of

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<sup>1</sup> Also known as Ahmad Hind.

orthodox Islam, which made the Muslims of Cambodia backward.<sup>1</sup>

However, according to the researcher's interview with one Muslim Cham Sunni, Zain Solleh, the conflicts have softened over time. Even though there were no dialogues conducted among the two, *Kaum Muda* and *Kaum Tua*, the two now realised that they were bound by Islam, and both were considered as the follower of *Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jamaah*. Both respected one and another, although the 'label' might still exist until today. This 'label' has led to several villages being called *Kampong Kaum Muda* (village of the *Kaum Muda*), and *Kampong Kaum Tua* (village of the *Kaum Tua*).<sup>2</sup> The conflicts nowadays between the two groups in Cambodia can be considered as non-extreme. In general, their situation is nearly the same as the situation of Muslims in other countries, where the clash was caused by differences in *Furu'* (branches issues in Islam), not the pillars.

### **Cham Jahed (Cham 7)**

#### ***Cham Jahed: Background***

As mentioned earlier, the Cham *Jahed*<sup>3</sup> in Cambodia had unique practices of religious rituals and heterodox traditions, such as, praying only once a week, every Friday at noon.<sup>4</sup> This led to another group, the Sunni, to consider the *Jahed*

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<sup>1</sup> Musa, M. Z. 2 December 2012. **Perkembangan Islam di Asia Tenggara: Kajian Kemboja**. In Salam Jurnal Studi Masyarakat Islam. P219.

<sup>2</sup> Researcher's interview with Mohamed Zain Solleh, 19.3.2018.

<sup>3</sup> Believed as being derived from the Arabic word *Zahid*, which means recluse or ascetic.

<sup>4</sup> Maunati, Y; Sari, B. R. June 2014. **Construction of Cham Identity in Cambodia**. Suvannabhumi. Vol. 6 No. 1. 23.

to be less orthodox in their practice of Islam. Since the French colonial period, academia, missionaries, and colonial administrators have researched this group, where they stated that the Cham *Jahed*, or according to them, “les Chams musulmans du Sud-Annam”, are:

“A group that recites the Qur’an and believes in Allah, yet do not strictly follow the Islamic faith. They do not recite prayers five times a day; during Ramadan, only monks fast. For these reasons, the Cham *Bani (Jahed)* are described variously as ‘Shi’ites’.”<sup>1</sup>

Even this statement on being influenced by Shi’ites was supported by several interviewees, such as with the Sunni Grand Mufti, Sos Kamry and Ustaz Abdullah Syafa’ah, who did master’s research regarding the background of the Cham *Jahed*. As mentioned by Sos Kamry, during the time of the Champa Kingdom, the Iraqi Shi’ites of *Batiniyyah* came to convey Shi’ism to the Cham.<sup>2</sup> Some of the Muslims during that time were influenced by them and started to mix Islam with Hinduism, Buddhism,<sup>3</sup> and Shi’ism. According to Syafa’ah,<sup>4</sup> the Cham *Jahed* were originally *Sunni*, based on

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<sup>1</sup> As for this, the Jahed were known also as Batiniyyah. See Yoshimoto, Y. December 2012. **A Study of the *Hôi giáo* Religion in Vietnam: With a Reference to Islamic Religious Practices of Cham Bani.** In *Southeast Asian Studies*. Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University. Vol.1. No.3, P489.

<sup>2</sup> Researcher’s interview with Sos Kamry, 21.3.2018. This was also supported by the remarks of Dimasqhi on the coming of the ‘Alawiyyah, see Wan Ali, W. Z. K. 1996. *Perkembangan Syi’ah, Pengaruh dan Kesannya di Dunia Islam dan di Asia Tenggara*. In *Jurnal Sejarah*. Kuala Lumpur: FSSS, Universiti Malaya.

<sup>3</sup> De Féo, A. September 23—October 6, 2005. *The Syncretic World of the ‘Pure Cham’*. In *Phnom Penh Post*. No.19. P3.

<sup>4</sup> Researcher’s interview with Abdullah Syafa’ah, 19.3.2018.

some evidence such as a manuscript consisting of sermons which belonged to the Cham *Jahed* that subsisted *Sunni* influence. A caliphate Muslim's name during that time, *Mu'tasim Billah*, was written on the bottom side of the manuscript.

In its root, the Cham *Jahed's* ancestors were known as members of the royal Champa family. When they came to Cambodia, they migrated after converting to Islam and settled in Cambodia in the former Khmer capital of Udong with permission from King Ang Duong in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Its members were the followers of *Imam San*,<sup>1</sup> an old and devout Cham who later died and was buried on Udong Mountain, near the former royal palace. He was believed to be a close friend of King Norodom.<sup>2</sup> While other Muslims in Southeast Asia accepted the *Shafi'i* school of thought completely, they remained in their ways, and amalgamated their new and old religion, customs, and traditions.

### ***Cham Jahed's Religious Life***

As stated before, the Cham *Jahed* were followers of *Imam San*, who prayed once a week on Fridays,<sup>3</sup> used the Cham language and script versus Arabic prayer books,<sup>4</sup> and was led by their own Mufti, or Oknya,<sup>5</sup> Kai Team. According to Kai

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<sup>1</sup> Nineteenth century Imam who secured the recognition in Cambodia through his partnership with the Khmer king, Ang Duong. See Noseworthy, W. B. Autumn 2014. *The Newsletter*. No.69. The Study.

<sup>2</sup> Reigned between 1860AD and 1904AD.

<sup>3</sup> They believe that they are already close to Allah so there is no need to pray five times a day.

<sup>4</sup> American Institutes for Research. October 2008. *Assessing Marginalization of Cham Muslim Communities in Cambodia*. USAID. 32.

<sup>5</sup> Khmer word for Mufti.



Team, there are currently 53 mosques and *surau* that belong to them in Cambodia. In terms of prayers, they still pray facing *Mecca* and put emphasis on Friday prayers as the most important religious practice for them. Their prayers were performed differently, where only the leader would pray and they did not perform ablution pre-prayer. According to them:

“If everybody prays five times a day, who’s going to keep the tradition of the prayer once a week?”

Also, a scholar of Cambodia/ Headmaster of Al-Ihsan Association for Islāmic Education and Development stated that the *Jahed* believed that it is more important to pray in their hearts, where they believe Allah will always be,<sup>1</sup> like Buddhists have Buddha in theirs. This belief is a form of influence of the *Batiniyyah* of Shi’ism.

Their beliefs are a mixture of mysticism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism,<sup>2</sup> and Shi’ism. For instance, they would hold a ceremony called the ceremony of possession (*chai*) in relation to ancestral spirits. Aspects of Hinduism also manifest itself in their culture, especially relation to Shivaism. In addition to these, there are also rituals such as the *ong chowe* initiation ritual for those who would pray inside the mosque,<sup>3</sup> which shows that there was a process of religious amalgamation, of blending heterogeneous beliefs

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<sup>1</sup> Researcher’s interview with Mohamed Salleh, 22.3.2018.

<sup>2</sup> Some greet each other with the *sampeah*, or palms-together gesture of the Theravada Buddhists.

<sup>3</sup> De Féo, A. September 23—October 6, 2005. **The Syncretic World of the ‘Pure Cham.’** In *Phnom Penh Post*. No.19. P4.

and practices.”<sup>1</sup> Apart from Oknya, there are also *acars* (priests), who are responsible for safeguarding their religion from corruption.

This group also believe in Allah, which they called *Po Auloah*, without its *al-Asma wa as-Sifat*, and they also believe in the angels, the Qur'an, the saints (viz., the Forty Imams), and the deities (*yang*).<sup>2</sup> They are not very strict in following Islam as their version of the *Qur'an* is incomplete, where there were only several collections of *surahs*. This is due to the priests relying on their memorisation to write down the *surahs*, which consists of only *surah* 96 to 114. It was handwritten in the Kufic style, and the *acars* themselves do not understand what the scriptures say, and they read it without *waqaf* (stopping) in the end. They read the letter 'Ro' (ر) as 'Ghain' (غ), 'Dod' (ض) as 'Waw' (و). Therefore, when they read the *Qur'an* it will sound different from the orthodox way of reading. They call Prophet Muhammad as *Mbi Muhammad* (Nabi Muhammad). They only have some knowledge on the prophet, including knowing that he was sent by Allah. Interestingly, they know about Sayyidina Ali, and believed that Prophet Muhammad and Ali were on the same level. Even in their sermons, they will mention Fatimah's name next to Ali, although they have no clue who she is.

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<sup>1</sup> Van der Veer, P. 1994. **Syncretism, Multiculturalism and the Discourse of Tolerance**. In *Syncretism/Anti-Syncretism: The Politics of Religious Synthesis*. Rosalind Chaw and Charles Stewart (Eds.) New York: Routledge. P208.

<sup>2</sup> Phuong, B. T. Summer 2006. **The Cham Bani of Vietnam**. In *American Journal of Islāmic Social Sciences* 23:3. Ed. Bruckmayr, P.; Petersen, K.; Ma, H.; Cuthbert, R. Assosiation of Muslim Social Scientist: International Institute of Islāmic Thought. P127.

The Cham *Jahed* call the month of Ramadan as *Ramüivan*, and during this month they would worship Allah, and dedicate their sincerity to the Forty Imams. Also, during this month, every *acar* will stay inside their mosque throughout the month, where there will be visited by the Cham Hindu priests, called *ong sak* and *ong seh* (high priests). In terms of Hajj or pilgrimage to Mecca, it is not compulsory to go there, instead, it is recommended to pray at their own mosque in their village. Among their famous celebrations are the two *Mawliids*. Firstly, to commemorate the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, and secondly, to mark the death of *Imam San* where, they will gather at Udong Mountain.<sup>1</sup>

### **Relations between Cham Sunni and Cham Jahed**

Throughout the years, the Cham *Sunni*, among them the *Salafi* and *Tablighi*<sup>2</sup> tried to bring the Cham *Jahed* to a more orthodox version of Islam. However, they ran against stiff resistance,<sup>3</sup> although today, this *Jahed* group is in danger of being assimilated into the *Shafi'i* group. According to Kai Team, their number is decreasing due to conversion to other Islamic groups. Firstly, due to the younger generation continuing their studies abroad and beginning to realise that their religion is different from other Muslims in the world. Secondly, some organisations provided funds to develop this

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<sup>1</sup> **From the Khmer Rouge to Hambali: Cham Identities in a Global Age.** State University of New Jersey. P53.

<sup>2</sup> Filippi, Jean Michel. Long Tragedy of Cham History.

The source can be found at

<http://kampotmuseum.wordpress.com/2012/03/27/the-long-tragedy-of-cham-history/>

<sup>3</sup> Willoughby, J. **The Cham Muslims of Indo-China.** The Message International. Accessed on 6.6.2018.

<http://www.muslimpopulation.com/library/History/The%20Cham%20Muslims%20of%20Indo-China.pdf>

community with conditions, where the *Jahed* must follow their Islamic practices, for example, to pray five times a day.<sup>1</sup> However, they usually had to reject the donations from foreign Islamic NGOs,<sup>2</sup> even though they actually needed it. They were informed that these foreign preachers who came from Arab countries, Pakistan, Thailand and Malaysia had come to try and convert them.

In relation to the Cham *Sunni*, the Grand Mufti of *Sunni* and *Jahed* had met and travelled together before to attend a seminar. Although they were not that close, there was a sense of *da'wah* that could be seen carried out by Sos Kamry and other *Sunnis*. According to Musa Ahmad and Abdul Halim, it was hard to see the close relationships between the Cham *Sunni* and *Jahed*, since they lived in their own villages, and were completely different.<sup>3</sup> As stated by Deputy of Mufti, Bunyamin Solleh:

“They can speak to each other, but not that close. They (the Cham *Jahed*) see the *Sunni* as outsiders. However, there are no clash or fight between the two groups in Cambodia.”<sup>4</sup>

Although the *Jahed* have a direct link to the ancient Champa Kingdom, as being of ‘pure Cham’ origin, they are also being overseen by the other Muslims for some of their

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<sup>1</sup> **From the Khmer Rouge to Hambali: Cham Identities in a Global Age.** State University of New Jersey. P53-55

<sup>2</sup> De Féo, A. September 23—October 6, 2005. **The Syncretic World of the ‘Pure Cham.’** In *Phnom Penh Post*. No.19. P1.

<sup>3</sup> Researcher’s interview with Musa Ahmad and Abdul Halim, 22.3.2018.

<sup>4</sup> Researcher’s Interview with Bunyamin Solleh, 23.3.2018.

beliefs.<sup>1</sup> As a result, the *Jahed* group seem indeed to be closer to the Buddhists, and Hindus in Cambodia and the Cham *Bani* in Vietnam rather than the Cham *Sunni*, due to their similarities and acceptance of those religions. In conclusion, with the majority of *Sunnis*, the number of Cham *Jahed* in Cambodia have undergone some changes despite their isolation where some have already begun to convert to *Sunni* due to several factors.

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<sup>1</sup> De Féo, A. September 23—October 6, 2005. **The Syncretic World of the ‘Pure Cham.’** In *Phnom Penh Post*. No.19. P1.

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