NALANDA-SRIWIJAYA CENTRE
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EXPLORING CAM NARRATIVE SOURCES FOR HISTORY OF THE CAM DIASPORA OF CAMBODIA

The Cams keep the memory of their history and can still read and write the traditional Cam script. Photo taken by author in Kompong Chhnang province, a Cam village in Cambodia, during fieldwork in 2008.

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Exploring Cam Narrative Sources for History of the Cam Diaspora of Cambodia

Nicolas Weber

Abstract

The Cams have a long history in Cambodia, their presence dating back to, at least, the 10th century AD. Strangely enough, very few historical sources in Cam exist and one must rely almost exclusively on Khmer Royal Chronicles which reflect only a partial picture of the Cam Diaspora from the 16th to the 19th century. However, the Cams possess a number of texts documenting their modern history, which offer valuable insights into their political and cultural situation within Cambodia from the late 18th century until the establishment of the French in the Indochinese Peninsula in the 19th century. This paper proposes to examine two sets of documents that are extremely useful to understand the history of the Cam Diaspora in Cambodia: late 18th and 19th century personal narratives and non-official accounts and royal genealogies. Written in verse, narrative texts cover a crucial historical period between King Ang Chan (1797–1835) and King Norodom (1860–1901). These texts give precious insights into the involvement of the Cams in Cambodian political affairs and provide invaluable information on the Cams migrations within and outside Cambodia. Furthermore, the texts provide information regarding the foundation of settlements that still exist in present day Cambodia and Southwestern Vietnam. As to the royal genealogies, although the reliability of documentation is questionable, this material is worth mentioning as it reflects the Cams' attempts to legitimize their presence in Cambodia by linking the memories of their past in Campā and its former kings to their installation in Cambodia. In combination with the genealogies extant, an interesting testimony of the Cams' perception of the past as a historical continuum that contextualizes their current cultural and political perceptions is revealed.

Introduction

The Cams are one of the most important minorities in Cambodia. They number approximately from 300,000 to 400,000, settled all over Cambodia, with large concentrations in Kandal, Kompong Chhnang, Kompong Cham and Battambang, provinces.

The Cams are Austronesians. Their ancestral homeland is the kingdom of Campā, which is an ancient multi-ethnic kingdom whose existence is recorded from the 2nd

century. The kingdom of Campā was located in present-day central Vietnam. Its territory included the coastal plains and the highlands, from today's Hoành Sơn to Biên Hòa. At the time of its apogee, its territory was composed of five principalities: from north to south, Indrapura (from present-day Quảng Bình to Thừa Thiên), Amarāvatī (Quảng Nam to Quảng Ngãi), Vijaya (Bình Định), Kauṭhāra (Phú Yên to Khánh Hòa) and Pāṇḍuraṅga (Bình Thuận and Ninh Thuận). Campā was progressively absorbed by Vietnam. The last semi-independent principality of Pāṇḍuraṅga disappeared in 1832.

Although Cam presence in Cambodia is attested since at least the 11th century, reconstructing the history of the Cam Diaspora in Cambodia using vernacular sources can be quite challenging. The Cams are a people with rich literary and cultural heritage but lack first-hand historical documents. They do not possess historical textual traditions comparable to the Khmers (the Royal Chronicles, for instance) and, therefore, the reconstruction of their history is difficult. All the sources written in Cam that are available nowadays date from the 19th century and only feature events that happened in that century. For information on the Cam community before the 19th century, one must rely on Khmer Royal Chronicles. These documents offer valuable insights of the gradual involvement of Cams in politics, particularly from the 16th century. However, they are partial, and consider the Cams as a monolithic block.

For the purpose of this paper, I have worked on two types of documents. The first type is composed of six Cam narratives written in verse and dealing with events that happened throughout the 19th century. These texts provide a mine of information on the socio-political situation of the Cams, and also on Cambodia in the 19th century. They can be investigated from various angles: political, diplomatic, economic, etc., and their contribution to the study of political, social and economic developments in a wider Indochinese and Southeast Asian context makes them highly interesting. The second type of documents I worked with is royal genealogies. Royal genealogies are interesting not so much as historical documents *per se* but as testimonies of the memory of the exile in Cambodia and the Cams' attempts to link their past in Campā to their present in Cambodia.

I. Cam Narratives

Cam sources recording history are extremely limited. However, 19th century Cam narratives offer an important contribution for the reconstruction of the Cam Diaspora history in Cambodia. All the narratives I have used are copies of manuscripts kept in the École Française d'Extrême-Orient and Société Asiatique libraries in Paris. These narratives have been catalogued by a French group of researchers and can be found under the description 'Misfortunes of the Cam of Cambodia imputable to Cambodians' (Lafont, Po and Nara 1977). This description is quite misleading. Even if the texts generally do not describe happy stories, they also do not offer a catalogue of Cam sufferings in Cambodia but feature events that affected some groups of Cams during the 19th century. By no means do these texts feature the expected sufferings of a 'minority', i.e. the Cams, oppressed by a 'majority', i.e. the Khmers. These texts offer the Cam view of events that shook Cambodia throughout the 19th century.

Traditionally, Cam texts do not bear titles and our narratives are no exception. Narratives are written in verse and called *baruna*. Etienne Aymonier and Antoine Cabaton,

prominent pioneers in Cam studies, indicate in their dictionary that the origins of this term come from the Sanskrit *varṇa* (Aymonier and Cabaton 1906:328). I personally think that the origin of the term is *varṇana*, 'description, account', which totally corresponds to the nature of our narratives. The Cam Diaspora used *baruna* form not only for narratives, but also for love poems, moral treaties and recommendations. *Baruna*s are unique to the Cams of Cambodia. The Cams in Central Vietnam do not possess such writings. The closest literary form that can be compared to the *baruna* is *ariya*. *Ariya*s are versified texts as well. In the 19th century, the *ariya* form was used to record events such as anti-Vietnamese revolts (*Ariya Tuen Phaow*[1] or *Ariya Po Baruw* for instance), history of the two last rulers of Pāṇḍuraṅga (Po Klan Thu and Po Phaok The),[2] and the assimilation of Campā after 1832,[3] which make these texts comparable to the Cam Diaspora's *baruna*s. I found quite a few similarities with other versified Southeast Asian writings, such as the two 19th century Khmer family chronicles, *Sastra Voat Kroch* and *Sastra Lbaœk Rôba Khsat*, written by the Venerable Bâtum Baramey Pich.[4] Although the language and form of the Khmer texts and the Cam *baruna*s are radically different from each other, the way that the events are featured and the authors' beginning and ending statements show interesting similarities. Furthermore, just like the Khmer texts mentioned above, Cam *baruna*s seem to indicate that they were meant to be chanted or recited before an audience. One of the texts I studied ends with a statement from the poet saying that the text was composed to be recited (Cam: *bac*). The orality of these texts seems quite clear. Most of the *baruna*s start with the two Cam words *gap yac* (CM38[8]:49; CM39[36]:534; CM38[18]:303), 'O people', as a direct address to a public, and these two words may be repeated throughout the text. Cam poets occasionally add the phrase *pang baik*, 'Listen well' (CM38[8]:49–50 etc.), to emphasize on a particular situation, which further confirm the orality of the text.

One characteristic of the *baruna*s narratives is that they are anonymous but appear to have been written by men who had a direct experience with the events they described. Narratives are personal accounts. They offer 'snapshots' of a community or a group of Cams at a particular time and a particular place. They are trustworthy as they are personal accounts and were not written for the benefit of a patron. Furthermore, Khmer, Vietnamese and French sources confirm the events mentioned in the narratives. Finally, all narratives are dated. For the record, the Cams (both in Cambodia and Vietnam) use a duodecimal cycle in which each year is designated by the name of an animal: Rat (Cam: *tikuh*), Buffalo (*kabaow*), Tiger (*rimaong*), Dragon (*nagaray*), and so on. This 12-year cycle shows striking similarities with the Vietnamese and Chinese lunar calendar. It should be noted that this is the only dating system used in the manuscript: the Cams of Cambodia never indicated in their traditional writings the dates of the Cambodian kings' reigns, neither did they use the Buddhist or Islamic dating systems. Therefore, for a modern reader, in order to be fully understood, Cam *baruna*s must be used together with Khmer, Vietnamese and French historical sources.

1 For a presentation and a translation of this text, see Weber 2003.

2 See Po 1987.

3 See Weber 2012.

4 For a presentation and a translation of these two texts, see Khin 2002.

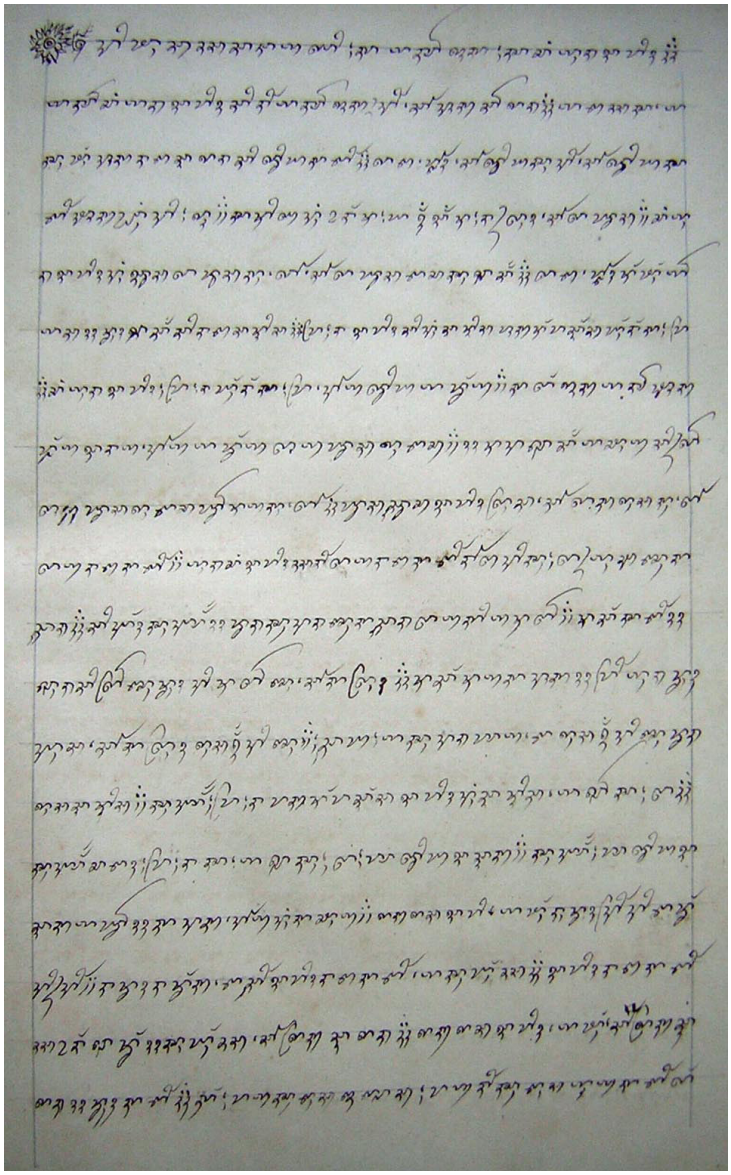

Figure 1. First page of the text CM38(8), Société Asiatique de Paris.

I have worked on six texts. Each of them features a specific period in the history of the Cam Diaspora in Cambodia and, in some cases, Southwestern Vietnam. Of the six narratives I studied for the purpose of this article, three deal with the exile of Po Cei Brei, former ruler of Pāṇḍuraṅga, to Cambodia in 1795–6; his sojourn in the mountainous region of Donnai (or Đồng Nai in Vietnamese) and his final installation in Tây Ninh in 1812–3 (Cam[27], CM39[24] and CM39[38]). One narrative recounts the migration of a group of Cams and Malays from Phnom Penh to Southwestern Vietnam, in Châu Đốc area more precisely, in 1843–4 (CM38[8]). This migration occurred while Cambodia was under Vietnamese Protectorate (1820–48) and was organized by the Vietnamese to populate the military colonies of Southwestern Vietnam. Another narrative explains the consequences of the revolt of Tuan Him and his brothers against of King Ang Duong (1841–60) for the Cam clients of Ang Duong. They also highlight their relocation from Thbaung Khmum province (Kompong Cham) to Kompong Chhnang province. Finally, the narrative offers

details of the participation of the Cam clientele of Ang Duong (1841–60) to the fights that Prince Norodom and Prince Sisowath led against their half-brother Si Votha as well as Acar Sva (CM39[36]). The last narrative studied provides an account of the conquest of Southern Vietnam by the French from 1861 and its consequences for the Cams (CM39[37]).

Cam narratives are a mine of information. Besides highlighting important moments in the history of Cambodia or Southern Vietnam, *barunas* more specifically focus on events that had a major impact on Cam communities. I have selected a few points that are important for our understanding of the history of the Cam Diaspora.

All Cam narratives commemorate an exile, a displacement or a migration. These are key events at the community or village level which represent major disruptions in the lives of small communities and ordinary people, and therefore constitute a moment of great significance. Cam narratives illustrate that leaving one's village or place of origin is a traumatic experience and it leads most of the time to the loss of peace and happiness. Their narratives make it quite clear: painful memories linked to exile have to be remembered always. Exile or displacement must be commemorated and put in verse in order to be read by the next generations and thus facilitate the transmission of memory (CM38[8]):49, 89; CM39[37]:539). Furthermore, besides memorializing exiles, narratives are invaluable journal of migrations. They offer important testimonies of the itineraries followed by the Cams—whether from Pāṇḍuraṅga to Cambodia, Cambodia to Southwestern Vietnam or within Cambodia, and the settlement of Cam communities.

Cam narratives show that the Cams were deeply involved in Cambodia's political and administrative affairs. Although the Cams were of a distinct origin, practiced a different religion and traditions, and spoke a different language, these never prevented them from being fully integrated into Cambodian society. Narratives show that many Cams were appointed as court officials, and were also present at the provincial level as assistants of the governor of province (Cam: *mbalat* from the Khmer: *balat*), lieutenants or chiefs of village (Cam: *banya* from the Khmer: *ponhéa*); chiefs of cantons (Cam: *masraok*; Khmer: *mésrok*) and representatives of the ministry of Justice (Cam: *manu* from the Khmer: *menou*) (CM39[36]). Some Cams were also part of the army: a narrative records that a Cam was bearing the title *Sina Jei Jian* (CM39[36]), which means approximately 'the general that knows how to vanquish'. This indicates that he had probably been appointed by the king himself to serve in the army.

In 19th century Cambodia, Cam political action and influence has been made possible by the patron–client system. Texts show that the Cams were clients of Khmer kings, royal princes, queens, and high officials. By choosing a Khmer patron—a member of the royal family or a high-ranking official—the Cams could enjoy protection and be offered positions in the administration, the army and at the court. On the other hand, by incorporating Cams to their clientele, Khmer patrons were offered a dense network of family ties and village associations. They had no blood or familial ties with members of the royal court and therefore were open to any kind of association. In times of crisis, the Cams were easy to mobilize. Narratives show that the Cams rallied around monarchs such as King Ang Chan or Queen Ang Mei (CM38[8]) and royal princes such as Norodom, Sisowath and Si Votha (CM39[36]). Khmer or Cam or Malay officials such as the Oknya Bara Ansa Him, or Tuan Him (CM39[36]), who led a revolt against King Ang Duong in 1858–9, were also patrons for the Cams. The Cams gathered around people outside the circles of powers too and, for instance, joined the ranks of popular leaders such as Acar Sva (Assoua). Narratives make clear that patron–client ties and loyalty has been largely

used by the different powers within and outside Cambodia as both the Vietnamese and the French used them for their own agendas. However, whomever they chose to follow, the Cams always had to bear the consequences of their loyalty and sometimes were punished collectively. For instance, the population of the village from which the 1858–9 rebellion's leaders (Rokapopram) originated was brutally punished. A narrative reports that people were turned into slaves and had to endure all sorts of humiliations. They were arrested, separated from each other and deported to various places. The royal forces shamed them and imposed on them signs of infamy that are normally used for traitors:

> They were separated from each other and reduced to *ra-mbep*. Boys and girls were massacred and houses of officials were seized. As for the *tuen* and *mbalat*, their hands were tattooed. They were reduced to *ra-mbep*. All were locked up [in jail]. [The Cams] were forced to take off their *khan* [= sarong] and unhull rice. Their hair was cut […] They were forced to open their granaries and feed [the army with their supplies]. […] All the population [of the rebelling villages] was evacuated. [Men] were tied up and decapitated without any reason (CM39[36]:601).

The author uses the term *ra-mbep*, which is the Cam spelling for the Khmer: *rebeb*, loosely translated as 'slave'. It designates however an individual which has been stripped of his official functions and condemned to slavery as a punishment. War prisoners are also called *rebeb* and their punishment is similar: members of their families were dispersed and reduced to slavery; their bodies were tattooed and their hair cut.

Narratives point out that patrons (being Khmer, Cam or Malay) used the Cams for their military skills and often for security purposes, i.e. as personal escorts. After the Siamese attack in 1812–3, Cams and Malays were escorting Ang Chan's boat on his way from Phnom Penh to Bến Nghé (Gia Định) (Cam 27:[36] and CM39[24]:338). Large groups of Cams were also used in case of serious conflict. In 1858–9, for instance, King Ang Duong asked the Cams of his party to help him to crush the rebellion in Rokapopram. His Cam clients were allowed to lead their own armies and use their own weapons to help the King (CM39[36]:476). In 1861, after Prince Sisowath defeated one of Si Votha's followers, Yothéa Kâmhêng, he ordered the Cams who helped him during the fights to settle in Chhruy Changvar, a little peninsula on the Mekong river that faces the royal palace in Phnom Penh (CM39[36]:514). By asking the Cams to settle there, Sisowath was securing the palace. In case of an attack, the Cams just had to cross the river to be at the palace's gates. Furthermore, during the fights that opposed Prince Norodom to Prince Si Votha, Norodom did not hesitate to hire Cams to protect him (CM39[36]:515–6).

Narratives indicate that the Cam Diaspora was not only involved in Cambodian internal politics, but also played a significant role in its external politics. Texts inform us that throughout the 19th century, some Cam groups had particular relationships with the Vietnamese. The Cams have been used by the Vietnamese to populate their military colonies of Southwestern Vietnam: Tây Ninh and Châu Đốc. Throughout the 19th century, the Cams have always been channeled to these two main areas. Vietnamese historical sources confirm that the Cam Diaspora was meant to play a role in the colonization of Southwestern Vietnam. With the settlement of the Cams in Tây Ninh and Châu Đốc, the Vietnamese were able to defend their frontier and administrative centers, while simultaneously increasing Vietnamese-controlled settlements in areas populated by

Khmers and other ethnic groups (such as the Stieng).[5] The installation of Po Cei Brei, former ruler of Pāṇḍuraṅga, in Tây Ninh was no coincidence: he was meant to be chief of a military colony. He was given all the privileges bestowed on founders of new colonies: he and the Cams under his jurisdiction were exempted of corvée (Cam 27:39). Vietnamese authorities further honored Po Cei Brei and offered him silk and rifles (CM39[38]:546). After the establishment of Po Cei Brei in Tây Ninh, he was asked to defend it against possible Khmer attacks but was also expected to crush any anti-Vietnamese rebellion, like those of Phauw Bo and Sulutan (CM39[38]:544–5). Another example, in 1843–4, when the Vietnamese took the decision to transfer the Cams and Malay population from Phnom Penh to Châu Đốc, they ordered the Cams to found new hamlets on the way (CM38[8]:50, 58, 63). It is quite clear that they were meant to be used firstly to protect the Vietnamese while they were withdrawing their forces to Southern Vietnam and secondly when the Vietnamese would come back to Cambodia. Once they were established in the military colonies of Châu Đốc, the Cams were given weapons (CM38[8]:87), which confirms the defensive role of the new Cam settlers. Both Cam and Vietnamese source make clear that even after the end of the Vietnamese Protectorate of Cambodia (1847), the Vietnamese tried to maintain their particular relationships with some groups of Cams and settled in Châu Đốc all Cam political opponents. Therefore, it is probably not a coincidence that the Cam and Malay chiefs of the 1858–9 rebellion in Cambodia took refuge to Châu Đốc and were helped by local officials (CM39[36]:503).

Narratives confirm that exile/migration/displacement were often the result of a 'political obligation'.[6] When Po Cei Brei took refuge in Vietnam after the Siamese invasion of Cambodia, he submitted himself to Emperor Gia Long (Nguyễn Phúc Ánh, his former ally) (CM39[38]:540). Po Cei Brei accepted to recognize Gia Long as his King and to be just one of his captains of garrison (Cam: *cang* from the Vietnamese: *chưởng cơ*) (CM39(38):546). His final installation in Tây Ninh is the result of his renewed political obligation towards Gia Long. He had no choice but to accept his new place of residence and take over his new responsibilities as chief of a military colony. In 1843–4, a large group of Cams and Malays was displaced from Phnom Penh by the Vietnamese in order to follow a patron—most probably Queen Ang Mei (1835–47), which the texts call *tuanku*—in exile in South Vietnam(CM38[8]:59). The term *tuanku*, 'our Lord', is interesting insofar as it is a Malay term used for both kings and queens. The use of this term shows that Phnom Penh's Cam community was mixed with Malays. The narrative mentions clearly that the Cam and Khmer population was displaced to be at the service of the Queen (Cam: *gun putao*) (CM38[8]:49). The Cams were eventually settled in the military colonies of Vietnam, and Châu Đốc in particular. In 1858–9, after the revolt of Thbaung Khmum and the deportation of the population of the rebelling villages (CM39[36]:500), King Ang Duong ordered his own Cam allies to leave their village in Thbaung Khmum (Pring) and settle near the royal capital Oudong, in Prey Pis and Chhuk Sar (CM39[36]:499). King Ang Duong made a perfect use of 'political obligation' and loyalty. His decision was highly strategic. By ordering his allies to move there, he made sure that they were not far from the royal residence. In case of another conflict or an attack, they could quickly intervene to protect the royal palace. Nevertheless, moving the Cams around Oudong was also a

5 See Weber 2011.

6 I am taking this phrase from Shklar 1993.

clever way to break up existing community and village networks in Thbaung Khmum and put the Cams under control.

Cam narratives are useful for the social history of the Cams. They document massive movements of Cam population within or outside Cambodia and offer vivid and invaluable descriptions of the feelings and difficulties faced by the Cams before and after displacement. Here is an extract depicting the feelings of the Cams of Phnom Penh in 1843–4 just before being displaced to Châu Đốc:

> We did not know if we had to leave the country. [If we were leaving] we would never see our village again. Listen to what I say: everything was destroyed. We had to leave the village in single file. We were leaving the village tripping [on our own feet]. Listen carefully: we all had to leave the village, and we were moving forward in an endless single line on the roads… Some [of us] were cowering as we were leaving the country. Others were weeping, calling [the names of] their children and grandchildren. Some were [extremely] troubled and ran away to hide. Others had forgotten that their boats were pierced [but still wanted to use them to escape]. Others were pulling them [out] to flee. (CM38[8]:49).

The same text informs us on the difficulties faced by the Cams after being displaced to Southwestern Vietnam. In 1843–4, the Cams found themselves considerably impoverished:

> We had not kept any of our possessions. We were thinking that we would be able to buy [things by selling our properties]. Unfortunately, nothing was left. [We were not able] to buy paddy. We began to [suffer from] starvation. Nobody had a penny to buy [paddy]. We were deprived of rice. The Việt had rice in abundance. We were on the verge of going back, as without money, we could not buy the rice that was in abundance for the Việt (CM38[8]:83).

The recently displaced Cams had to rely on Vietnamese authorities for their survival. The Cams were exempted from military obligations for some time, as they needed to cultivate the fields and try to find a way to sustain themselves (CM38[8]:87). Vietnamese authorities also gave rice once a week to impoverished Cam families (CM38[8]:87, 89). However, in spite of the help of the Vietnamese local officials, the Cams were very surprised to find little, if no compassion from the Vietnamese settlers. Texts report that some Cams begged the Vietnamese to give them rice but were driven away (CM38[8]:88–9).

Displaced communities within Cambodia had a hard time as well. Most of the time, the journey itself led to significant loss of men and also tremendous impoverishment:

> Rice [was missing] and we had to eat *garathaok* [= a jungle creeper]. We used to go by day in the forest to collect [the *garathaok*]. We brought it at night [to the village] peeled it and chopped it. Our descendants cannot sleep peacefully. Seeing this, we were regretting the times when we could buy things without thinking. Now we see our children crying. We shed tears of compassion. Some [of us] prepared stews [with whatever they could find]. Some had nothing to eat, [others managed to find] sweet potatoes and eggplants. The poorest men chopped their boats in order to sell them piece-by-piece and get paddy. They were tired of chopping and were starving. We were forcing ourselves to keep walking but starvation had weakened us. Some were thinking [of finding a solution] and decided to go far and cut trees. Cut wood could be used as a

> loan and allowed [families] to eat. Hunger did not allow people to look down on other people. Women were not at peace (CM39[36]:525).

Impoverishment and hunger were not the only issues. Cohabitation seems to have been a major problem, especially for the Cam refugees in Southwestern Vietnam. In 1820–1, Po Cei Brei and his followers were given some privileges by the Vietnamese authorities to ease their installation (such as exemption of taxes, gift of rice etc.), and the care they were given infuriated the Vietnamese settlers. The situation was so tense that Po Cei Brei and his followers had to move their settlement a bit further (CM39[38]:543). In Châu Đốc, in 1843–4, relationships with the Vietnamese settlers were extremely tense: for the Cam, the Vietnamese had deliberately tried to let them starve to death (CM38[8]:88). Even if these accounts have to be taken with a pinch of salt, they show issues faced by new migrant communities and conflicts that arose between recent migrant communities and older migrant communities.

II. Cam Royal Genealogies

The Cam Diaspora's royal genealogies, *sawa-nda* or *phongsawa-nda*, from the Pali/Khmer word *rājabaṅsāvatā/réachea pungsawada* ('royal chronicle'), are rather puzzling documents. Royal genealogies are composite texts intermingling lists of legendary kings, reminiscence of episodes of Campā history, and lists of Cam royal descents in Cambodia.

Royal genealogies are read aloud during a specific celebration, the *mamun*, while mediums possessed by the spirits of the kings of Campā enact episodes of Campā history. The ceremony is conducted each year in the O Russei village in Kompong Chhnang province. At the end of the ceremony, three young men, who are supposed to be of royal descent, are then given the knowledge of the genealogies[7]

Although actively used during ceremonies, genealogies are not purely mnemonic devices that help in recalling events but makes significant connections to the Cam sense of identity and history. Royal genealogies transmit the experience of exile and installation in Cambodia. Through the narration of the list of kings and their deeds (most of the time, fights with the Vietnamese), Cam exile in Cambodia becomes 'intelligible and justifiable textually'.[8] The royal genealogies of the Cam diaspora explain the reasons of the exile of the Cams in Cambodia and the loss of the ancestral homeland. Moreover, by linking the exile to a mythical past in Campā, Cams place the exile as a logic development of Cam history and not as a major disruption. Unlike narratives, the Cam Diaspora's royal genealogies are not reliable as historical sources. But they are the only documents that provide a historical perspective of the Cam Diaspora.

I have worked on four texts: Cam 26 from the École Française d'Extrême-Orient collection; CM39(25) and CM38(10) from the Société Asiatique collection; and M/E07/014 from a private collection,[9] Kai Mal's, from the village of O Russei, Kompong Chhnang province. These texts are quite different from one another: the length of the list of kings as well as the details in the incorporated tales vary considerably. Some versions of the

7 For a description of the *mamun* ceremony and its significance see Stock 2007.

8 I am taking this phrase from Kim 2004.

9 I would like to thank Emiko Stock for providing me with a copy of this manuscript.

genealogies seem to have been copied from some originals, while some abridged versions appear to have been read aloud to a copyist. This is how for instance Jean Moura, then French Resident-General in Cambodia, collected a version of the royal genealogies from Po Takay, a Cam who claimed to be of royal descent (Moura 1883: I, 466). Finally, some genealogies appear to have been jotted down from memory.

Figure 2. First two pages of a royal genealogy belonging to Kai Mal, O Russei village, Kompong Chhnang province (credit: Emiko Stock)

It is important to note that the Cam Diaspora's royal genealogies have very little in common with the royal genealogies of Campā kept in Central Vietnam's Cam communities. Royal genealogies are called in Central Vietnam *sakaray*, a word derived from the two Sanskrit terms: *śaka* (name of an era) and *rāja* 'king'. Campā royal genealogies offer lists of the kings of the principality of Pāṇḍuraṅga, their date of reign (using the traditional Cam dating system) and the names of their descendants. Furthermore, from the 18th century to the 19th centuries, the royal genealogies mention the administrative titles given by the Vietnamese to the Cam rulers, like for instance the title *ceng* (from the Vietnamese: *chưởng cơ*, 'captain of garrison'). In any case, Campā royal genealogies do not incorporate extended biographies, legends or stories. It is also worth mentioning that the names of kings mentioned in Campā and Cam Diaspora's royal genealogies do not match. Most of the kings' names mentioned in the Cam Diaspora texts, with the notable exception of Po Nit, Po Naraop and Po Cang, do not exist in Campā. According to Pāṇḍuraṅga's royal genealogies, Po Nit reigned from 1603 to 1613 and Po Nraop from 1652 to 1653 (Po Dharma, 1978). As for Po Cang, it is the Po Cei Brei of the narratives mentioned above. The reasons for the lack of similarities are still obscure. Does this mean that the Cam Diaspora recreated or invented its own past? Where do the names of the kings come from? Many questions remain unanswered.

The Cam Diaspora's royal genealogies start in Campā and end naturally in Cambodia. Interestingly enough, genealogies never use the term 'Campā' but the phrase 'the country of Parik and Panrang' (Cam: *nagar Parik Panrang*), the southern principality of Pāṇḍuraṅga (today Ninh Thuận and Bình Thuận provinces).

Not all the kings in the Cam Diaspora's royal genealogies have detailed biographies.

For instance, a version of the genealogies features the biographies of kings who fought against the Vietnamese, such as King Po Manit. According to the genealogy, an unnamed Vietnamese king sent one of his general, Aong Hau, and an army of twenty thousand men to take the kingdom of the Cams. Fights followed but the kingdom is miraculously saved by the divine intervention of *Aolaoh Ta-ala*[10] (Cam 26:8–9). This Po Manit seems to be the Po Nit of the royal genealogies of Pāṇḍuraṅga who reigned from 1603 to 1613. Vietnamese official records confirm the war with the Vietnamese. In 1611, following a Campā attack on Quảng Nam's border, Lord Nguyễn Hoàng sent troops to attack Campā. He captured the king and left his armies occupy a territory from Mount Cù Mông to Mount Thạch Bi. He then transformed this territory into the district (Vietnamese: *phủ*) of Phú Yên (*Đại Nam Thực Lục* 2002:36).

Another king that is almost always present in the Cam Diaspora's royal genealogies, and remembered for his issues with the Vietnamese, is Po Phindisak. According to the texts, the Vietnamese tried several times to invade the kingdom of the Cams but could never succeed as a divine tree, the *kraik*, protected the country. A version of Cam royal genealogies mentions that the tree had supernatural powers (Cam 26). Aware of the divine power of the tree, the Vietnamese sent a beautiful girl to marry the king and trick him to cut the tree. Po Phindisak fell madly in love with the girl, married her and eventually cut the *kraik* tree. The Vietnamese subsequently invaded the country and killed the king. This story is almost the same as the story of king Po Romé (1627–51) and kept by Cam communities in Central Vietnam. Details vary of course. For instance, in Pāṇḍuraṅga, the Vietnamese girl is called Po Bia Ut, 'the Northern Queen'. The Cam Diaspora's versions of the story name her Nai Isah, *nai* being a title for a princess and Isah, the Cam adaptation of the Arabic name Aishah.

One of the most salient features of the genealogies is the mention of the exile of the Cams from Campā to Cambodia. Interestingly enough, only one episode recounting the exile of the Cams in Cambodia is mentioned in the genealogies. All versions feature Po Cik Kaok, member of the royal family and parent to the king Po Rat Talang, as leader of the Cams in exile. Here is how the exile is related in one version of the genealogies:

> Po Rat Talang was related to Po Cik Kaok. Po Rat Talang became king in Bal Canar in Parik-Panrang, the country of the Cams. Po Cik Kaok went to settle in the country of the Khmers. He arrived in the village of Mbaon Sang. He stayed [there] and sent an envoy to the Khmer king to let the Cam population to settle in the country of the Khmers. The king ordered the Aok-nyua Bimuk Waongsa to go to Po Cik Kaok with his soldiers to take Po Cik Kaok and the entire Cam population and settle them in the villages of Baow Bara-in, Soh Sa-mbuer, Gugaor, Rakabapram in the province of Ta-mbaong Khamum (CM39[25]:349).

This excerpt is interesting as it sets the origins of Po Cik Kaok in the southern principality of Pāṇḍuraṅga. The genealogy indicates that the actual king, Po Rat Talang, was reigning in Bal Canar. Scholars consider that the site of this capital was located in the present Cam village of Canar (Vietnamese: Tịnh Mỹ). It was capital of Campā since at least the 17th century. For some reason, Po Cik Kaok chose to leave Pāṇḍuraṅga for Cambodia. The

10 '*Alolaoh ta-ala*' is the Cam adaptation of the Arabic phrase *Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala*, 'God, may He be glorified and exalted'.

first locality where Po Cik Kaok settled, Mbaon Sang, remains obscure. From Mbaon Sang, he is then redirected to lands given by the Khmer king. It is quite interesting to note that all these villages are located in nowadays Kompong Cham province. Baow Bara-in corresponds to Po Preah In; Sam-mbuer corresponds to Sambuor; Gu-gaor corresponds to Kokor and Rakababram to Rokapopram. As for the number of Cams that followed Po Cik Kaok, it is variable: a version of the genealogy mentions 15,000, another one indicates 1,500 (M/E07/014:26). The names of the places where the Casm settled are not always the same: one manuscript mentions only the village of Phum Sawai (M/E07/014:26) or Bhum Sawai (Cam 26:43). The reasons of the exile of Po Cik Kaok are not always explained in detail but one version of the genealogies briefly mentions that he decided to leave after a conflict with the Vietnamese. It is essential for the Cams to remember this episode as it is not only a testimony of the exile (which, as we have seen, is central in Cam diasporic literature) but also a legitimization of their presence in Cambodia. Genealogies stress that the king of Cambodia himself gave lands to the refugees and sent a high-ranking dignitary and his army to direct them to their new lands. This exile is not only significant for the Cams: it is also important for Khmer and Vietnamese history. For the Khmers, it is the first time that the massive arrival of Cams is recorded. The Khmer Royal Chronicles record that in 1692–3, 5,000 Cam families led by a 'member of the royal family' (Khmer: *préah vongsa*) requested to settle in Cambodia. The Khmer king Jayajeṭṭhā III (Aṅg Sūr, 1677–95) settled them in the provinces of Thbaung Khmum, Stung Trâng, Prêk Pra and Chhruy Changvar (Mak, 1995:397–8). It is also important to stress on the official recognition and the royal patronage. For Vietnamese history, this exile is important as it represents one of the consequences of Vietnamese encroachment in Campā and their firm intention of stripping Cam rulers off their power. The exile was a direct manifestation of the refusal of some members of the ruling class and part of the population to accept Vietnamese authority. Vietnamese historical data give indications in understanding the context. In 1692, the Campā king Po Saot (1655, 1660–92), or Bà Tranh, attempted to win back the territories lost to the Vietnamese. He was defeated by Lord Nguyễn Phúc Chu's (1691–1725) armies, was deported, and died in jail less than a year after his capture. The Vietnamese then seized Campā and destroyed the Cam royalty. Campā was then turned into the prefecture of Bình Thuận and Vietnamized Campā's administration. The outbreak of massive popular revolts led Nguyễn Phúc Chu to restore Campā royalty and sign of treaty with Po Saktiraydaputih, new ruler of Campā. One can understand that this exile is fundamental for the Cam Diaspora as it helps them to link their past to the former kingdom of Campā and allows them to reaffirm their legitimacy in Cambodia and their links with Khmer royalty.

Conclusion

Cam narratives and royal genealogies are essential material to document the unknown history of an ethnic group that never ceases to intrigue us. Narratives not only give important information on the political ties of the Cam communities with the different spheres of power in Cambodia, but also document the history of the migrations in the Indochinese Peninsula and give invaluable insights on the social history of the Cams. On a broader historical scale, Cam narratives document 19th century shifts of balance of power in Southeast Asia.

Royal genealogies cannot be used as documents to trace back the history of the Cam in Cambodia. However, they are of significant importance as they are one of the few documents that keep alive the memory of the installation of the Cams in Cambodia. They are an attempt to reconstruct the past and legitimize the presence of the Cam in Cambodia. By placing the Cam Diaspora in a historical perspective, royal genealogies give us information of how the Cams consider their past and how they made the exile in Cambodia not only acceptable but also a logical development of their history.

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