

A CHAM-MALAY ACCOUNT OF THE CONQUEST OF SOUTHERN VIETNAM BY THE FRENCH (1859 - 1867)

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Abstract

This article examines a previously unknown Cham text giving an account of the conquest of southern Vietnam by the French and the outbreak of the subsequent anti-French revolt in 1859-1867. Whereas French and Vietnamese records of the conquest are widely studied, unofficial accounts of the non-Việt peoples and especially the Chams and the Malays living in present-day South-western Vietnam (Châu Đốc and Tây Ninh) remain totally unknown. Through a vivid description of the fights between the French and Vietnamese this text sheds new light on the consequences of the conquest for the ethnic minorities, the Chams and Malays in particular, in this region.

Introduction

The article and the text presented here come from a Cham manuscript written in Cambodian Cham script.¹ The original manuscript is kept at the Société Asiatique de Paris, France, catalogue number CM39.² Although the text is written in verse, it is not a fiction work but deals with real historical events. The events featured have occurred between 1859 and 1867 in Southern Vietnam. The text recounts the fall of the southern provinces to the French and the subsequent battles led by the Vietnamese although, because of the lack of dates and terseness of style, many of the battles mentioned cannot be identified.

This text is a unique source of information about the Chams and Malays during the critical years following the irruption of the Europeans on the Indochinese political scene in the second half of the 19th century. The text is anonymous but it is reasonable to consider that it was composed by a Cham from the Cham-Malay military colony of Châu Đốc (An Giang province).³ The text is therefore unofficial and personal. It is a form of alternative source giving a different view of the French conquest of southern Vietnam. It also gives us a picture of southern Vietnam at a particular time, giving details on the fights from both the inside and from the periphery as the Chams and Malays were only participants and not leaders. This text also highlights the importance of Tây Ninh (Rung Tamari in the text) and Châu Đốc (Cu Ndaok in the text). These two cities, famous for their Cham and Malay colonies,⁴ were outposts of the extension of the Vietnamese influence over Cambodia.

This article features the historical context and a chronology of the events, a glimpse of the situation of the Chams and the Malays before the French intervention and brief comments on the administrative reforms implemented by the French and the consequences for the Cham-Malay communities of Southern Vietnam. A discussion on the form of the text follows featuring a presentation of the characters and the places of names mentioned in the original manuscript. Finally, new perspectives on the relationships between the Cham-Malays and the French are discussed. Since the original Cham text is not very long, its transcription and translation are provided. The reader will also find at the end of this article a map containing the location of the places mentioned in the text.

The Historical Context

Although no dates are mentioned, the events featured in the text have occurred between 1859 and 1867. A brief summary of the main events may be useful.⁵

In 1858, the French Emperor Napoleon III (1808-1873) consented to a military action against Vietnam putting forward the religious persecution of the French Jesuits and Vietnamese converts led by the Huế court. By the end of August 1858, French and Spanish armies, led by the Vice-Admiral Rigault de Genouilly, landed in Đà Nẵng and seized the city. Due to a prompt Vietnamese counter-attack, they were unable to reach Huế. The French and the Spanish, led by the Vice-Admiral Charner, moved their troops toward Gia Định and the southern provinces.⁶ Mỹ Tho (Định Tường province) fell to the Rear-Admiral Page in April 1862, Biên Hòa and Vĩnh Long fell to the Rear-Admiral Bonard (1861-1863) in September 1861 and March 1862 respectively.⁷

In June 1862, France, through the Rear-Admiral Bonard, signed with the Huế court the Treaty of Saigon, giving up three of the southern

provinces: Biên Hòa, Định Tường and Gia Định.⁸ Meanwhile a steady resistance led among others by Trương Định took place in southern Vietnam in 1862-1863. Trương Định, originally an officer in charge of the military colonies (*đồn điền* in Vietnamese) organized a guerrilla with his men from the military colonies soon after the fall of the Gia Định citadel in 1859.⁹ After Trương Định's death in 1864, his son Trương Quyền took command of the resistance and set his base in the Tây Ninh region. At that time, some efforts were made to recruit fighters among the regional ethnic minorities (like the Stiengs).¹⁰ In 1867, the provinces of Vĩnh Long, An Giang and Hà Tiên were finally ceded to the French by the Huế court.

The Chams and the Malays in Southern Vietnam Before the French Intervention

The Chams and the Malays of southern Vietnam were settled in the two military colonies of Tây Ninh and Châu Đốc.¹¹ According to Vietnamese historical documents, the colony of Tây Ninh was founded during the second half of the 18th century, and was populated by Cham political refugees or displaced Cham population from Cambodia. As for the Cham-Malay colony of Châu Đốc, it was founded in 1840-1841. The Chams and the Malays were grouped into companies (*đội* in Vietnamese). There were nine companies in Châu Đốc. The officer in charge of the Cham and Malay companies in Châu Đốc, bearing the title of *hiệp quản*, "chief of group", or *quản cơ*, "chief of squad", was residing in Châu Giang (one of the biggest Cham-Malay hamlets in Châu Đốc). Before the establishment of the French, the Chams and Malays settlements were always established in a Việt administrative unit. This was meant to first keep the Chams and the Malays under control and also speed up the assimilation process. The Chams and Malays of the colony of Châu Đốc have participated in various battles such as the pacification of the Khmer revolts in various places of the Mekong Delta (Trà Vinh, Sóc Trăng and so on) in 1840-1841¹² and the war between Vietnam and Cambodia (1859-1860).¹³

The French Reform of the Administration in Southern Vietnam

In the first years of the conquest, the French were instructed to maintain the traditional structures, replacing by French officials only the mandarins who had fled. Admiral Charner tried to follow these instructions but soon issues arose because of the difficulties for French men to administrate in the Vietnamese fashion.¹⁴ The administrative policies changed under the Admiral de La Grandière (1863-1868). In 1864, he proceeded to remove the Vietnamese participation in the administration. French inspectors of native

affairs were put into place whereas Vietnamese were relegated to auxiliary positions.¹⁵

The French conquest led to radical changes for the Chams and Malays living in the region. In September 1867, the Admiral de La Grandière officially abolished the military colonies and ordered their dismantlement. Each companies and battalions (*cơ* in Vietnamese) group of habitations would be having its own village name.¹⁶ Another major change was also an attempt of withdrawing the Chams and the Malays (as well as other ethnic groups) from their Việt¹⁷ environment and administration. The dismantlement of the military colonies led also to the termination of the military participation of the Chams and the Malays as the French considered that they did not need "auxiliary troops".¹⁸

The Text

The original text is depicted by its author as a *baruna*,¹⁹ or "verse, poem". This metrical composition is only found among the Cham communities of Cambodia but can be compared to the form called *ariya*²⁰ of the Cham communities of Bình Thuận and Ninh Thuận provinces.

This *baruna* is made of ninety-nine stanzas beginning with the Cham expressions *gap yac* "O people!" and *nai yac*, "O lady!". These expressions are frequently used in texts which were intended to be sung, like love poems. The recitation of metrical texts is not an original Cham tradition but can be found in several other traditions from the Malay and Indonesian worlds. Balinese and Javanese metrical works, such as the *kakawin*,²¹ were most probably meant to be sung.²² One can raise the hypothesis that this text was meant to be sung before a selected audience (the contemporaries of the events) and from a particular place (the Chams settlements in Châu Đốc). Poetry is rarely as explicit as prose and someone unacquainted with the events mentioned in the text may not have been, or still may not be, able to understand. The style adopted by the author is perfectly adapted to song performance or recitation. To a contemporary audience, it may have helped to recreate the atmosphere of this particular period as well as facilitate the preservation of the Cham remembrance of the events.

For a modern reader, the interpretation of the text can be quite challenging. Because the lack of punctuation,²³ several stanzas are ambiguous.²⁴ The text at time appears even more obscure as the order of the word does not follow the syntax of the Cham language but is set in accordance with the metrics. Therefore the interpretation and translation of this text implies a considerable degree of subjectivity.

The Accuracy of the Events Mentioned in the Text

The text describes events that have occurred between 1859 and 1867. Even if no dates are provided, the accuracy of the events is not questionable. The author illustrates the historical events and also gives at times more details on other facts such as the involvement of the Chams in the battles against the French and the administrative reforms carried on by the French.

The major battles mentioned in the text are: the French attack on Bam Kajaong (Vietnamese: Cần Giờ) and capture of the fort (stanzas 3-5); the seizure of the Mbang Ngaiei (Bến Nghè)²⁵ fort by the French and the Spanish (stanzas 11 and 23); the French attacks on Parik (Phan Rí) and Ndaong Nai (Đồng Nai) (stanzas 17-19); the seizure of Rung Tamari (Tây Ninh) (stanza 25); the capture of Laong Haw (Vĩnh Long) and Mi Thaow (Mỹ Tho) (stanza 42); the seizure of Cu Ndaok (Châu Đốc) (stanza 48).

French accounts confirm the seizure of Saigon in 1859, the capture of Mỹ Tho and Vĩnh Long in 1861 and 1862, the capture of Đồng Nai or the Biên Hòa region in 1861. It is also known that ethnic minorities of the South have participated to the fights. Most of the time, the men were drawn from the military colonies. The text confirms the participation of the Chams of the colony of Tây Ninh (stanzas 24-5) and the Chams-Malays of the colony of Châu Đốc to the fights.

Apart from the battles between the French and the Vietnamese, the text illustrates one of the many administrative reform carried on by the French after the cession of the An Giang province (as well as Vĩnh Long and Hà Tiên). According to the text, the French set the boundaries of the newly created administrative units (stanza 40). The French attempted first to create independent Cham and Malay administrative units. As the text confirms it, they supported the foundation of the Kha-ndaol (Khe Dol) hamlet in Tây Ninh region (stanzas 38-9). The French also tried to replace the local authorities in charge of ethnic minorities by men originating from the minorities: the text mentions that they appointed some Chams as *xã* ("mayor") for the Chams of Tây Ninh (stanza 37) and Châu Đốc (stanza 90).

The Cast of Characters

The exact identity of the characters mentioned in the original text remains unknown. All the prominent figures are only called by their administrative or military titles and honorific appellations.²⁶ The titles are neither Cham nor Malay but Vietnamese and French. The titles are transcribed into Cham language but are easily recognizable.

The French are called "*parang*" and their main leader(s) called *ak-miral* or "the Admiral(s)". The Spanish are named "*mani*" or "*mani*" (stanzas 11, 14 and 16). The text also mentions some "*kaling*" soldiers along the Spanish (stanza 11). The term *kaling* deserves some explanations. According to Cham, Malay and Khmer traditions, *kaling* designates the

Indians.²⁷ There are no records of the participation of Indians in the conquest of the Mekong delta by the Europeans. The term "*kaling*" here refers to the Tagals, inhabitants of the Spanish colony of the Philippines. According to historical data, there were about one hundred Tagals in Saigon's garrison in 1860.²⁸ The author does not mention any name for the Spanish and Tagals forces but is known that General Palanca, who had brought troops from Manila to sustain the Spanish, led them.²⁹

As for the Vietnamese, they were mainly members of the administration of the southern provinces. The text mentions the *aong jaong* or "provincial military governor" (stanza 1), the *aen sat* or "provincial judge" (stanzas 20 and 22), the *aong phu* or "prefect" (stanza 25) and the *cin taong* or "chief of canton" (stanzas 30). The text also mentions a *kham masai*, mandarin sent by the Huế court when the fights hardened (stanzas 12, 14 and 18).

The author cites several times an official who was dealing directly with the Chams and Malays of Châu Đốc and who helped them when they were in need (see stanza 85). This character is simply called "*aong*" or "*ong*", an honorific title that can be used for "Sir", "mandarin" or in some cases "general". This official is also called "*aong praong*" (also spelt "*ong praong*") or "the great mandarin" (stanzas 65, 85, 88). His ethnic origin is not indicated in the text: he could have been Cham, Malay or Việt. He may have held a significant position in the Vietnamese administration, government or army as the French sent him into exile in an island (stanza 90). If that character was only holding a subordinate position, the French would not have taken the trouble of sending him into exile but would have put him to death without further ado. It is reasonable to think that the French saw in this official a dangerous political opponent. It is known that the French used to deport political opponents³⁰ in remote places, especially in Poulo Condor Island.³¹

The only characters called by their names are two Chams and Malays of Châu Đốc: Tuan Lah and Ja Sieng (stanzas 49-50, 54-5, 58). As for Tuan Lah, his Malay origin is clearly indicated by the term "*tuan*". History has not kept any records of these two characters but they must have been of a significance importance in the Cham-Malay community of Châu Đốc at that time since the author mentioned their names several times. The position they held in the Cham-Malay community remains unknown.

The Names of the Places

Beside the Vietnamese names of places, the author uses quite a few Khmer names, which are no longer in use.³² It is though puzzling that a place like Tây Ninh is called by its Khmer name (Rong Damrei in Khmer and Rung Tamari in Cham), whereas Châu Đốc (i.e., Cu Ndaok) is called by its Vietnamese name and not the Khmer one (i.e., Moat Chrouk). It seems that,

prior to the French intervention, the Mekong Delta was still in the process of Vietnamization and the Khmers still important. In our text, the author calls the places by their Khmer names wherever the Khmers were in large groups: Rung Tamari/Rong Damrei (i.e., Tây Ninh), Laong Haow/Long Ho (i.e., Vĩnh Long), Bam Kajaong/Peam Kanhchœu (i.e., Cần Giờ). The usage of Khmer shows that the Chams and Malays were not totally assimilated to the Vietnamese and had kept memory of their Khmer heritage.

The reader may notice several inconsistencies in the spelling of the names. There is no fixed spelling for the names, and the same word can be found within the text spelt in several different ways. For instance, for the transcription of BẾN NGHÈ, the author writes it Mbang Ngaiei (stanza 11) and then Mba Ngay (stanza 23). The Khmer name Prek Russei is first transcribed Braik Rasay (stanza 87) and then Braik Rahasei (stanza 88).

Translation of the Cham Text

For convenience sake, the text is divided here in numbered sections each made of five stanzas. As mentioned above, the stanzas begin with the Cham expressions *gap yac* and *nai yac*. In this translation, they are indicated only at the beginning of each section. Explanatory notes have been added whenever the stanzas are too unclear. As for the place names mentioned in the text, the original Cham words are kept and their equivalent in Vietnamese and/or Khmer put in footnote.

1. *ni yal baruna pagap pakrang ngap jieng ka-mbuan,,
gap yac hu jieng ngap ka-mbuan palei ni yuan parang tama,,
gap yac arak ni nyu tama tal jeh nyu mai daok padeh di kajaong,,
gap yac nyu mai daok pacaoh ong jaong di bam kajaong ong oh tama,,*

1. Here is the poem that is composed to become a treaty.
O people! The French have entered the country of the Việt.
They have entered and stopped in [Bam] Kajaong³³.
They came to subjugate the *ong jaong*.³⁴ [The latter] did not enter Bam Kajaong.

5. *gap yac lei ak-miral padeh brei tinyar caoh hai pa-ulac mai hi pang,,
gap yac ong nyu lakau cuh ka alah dap ka mang aong taduel,,
gap yac mâng ak-miral brei puk taguk ni saong kapal nyu cuh phao ral hamit tatuen,,
gap yac masuh gap takaplung alah gah yuen tama abih,,
gap yac hulei ak-miral nyu brei puk taguk ni yuen anak,,*

5. O people! The Admiral ordered him to surrender and listen to [his] orders.

He ordered to shoot at the troops [led by] the *aong* [*jaong*] in order to [force him] to surrender.

The Admiral went on his ship and [ordered his soldiers] to shoot with [their] guns. The [sound of the explosion] made all the people who heard it jump up.

The [sound] of the fight blasted. The Việt lost and [the French] entered [the citadel].

The Admiral moved [his troops] to the upper front [to launch an attack] on the Việt.

10. *gap yac rang puk taguk jeh rei ra mak dap rei yuen hu abih,,*
gap yac manil saong kaling jeh puk rang ba bual taguk mak dap
mbeng ngaiei,,

gap yac lei aok kham masai puk dap tubiak mani [> manil] pa ajiak
cuh gap tatuen,,

gap yac mani cuh phao tatuen anak buel yuen mbaiy dap kadun,,

gap yac hu jieng mbaiy dap kadun mani [> manil] cuh tatuen njap ong
kham masai,,

10. O people! His men moved and took the Việt citadel.

The *manil* and the *kaling*³⁵ led the soldiers to take the Mbang Ngaiei³⁶ fort.

The *kham masai*³⁷ arrived to the fort to drive away the *mani* [> *manil*], shooting at them in a terrifying way.

The *mani* [> *manil*] shot [back] at the Việt. [The Việt] withdrew [their men] and abandoned the fort.

They abandoned the fort and the *mani* [> *manil*] shot the *kham masai* with their guns.

15. *gap yac njap tangan aong kham masai kadun wek hai dap oh*
tama,,

gap yac hu jieng rang oh tama dap u hai rang oh pieh hatai di gap
dalam,,

gap yac hu jieng rang trun ralao rang khaong rut nao mak dap parik,,
gap yac ong maor nyu njap gah parang nyu puk tuei glang aong kham
masai,,

gap yac nyu tuei duah sa ké mbuh rei nyu nao tal palei ndaong nai
padih,,

15. O people! The *kham masai* was shot in the arm and left the fort. They [i.e., the *manil*] did not enter the fortress as they did not trust [the

local population].

They went down [the river] and planed to seize the Parik³⁸ fort.
[Meanwhile] the *aong maor*³⁹ joined the French's side and look for the
kham masai.⁴⁰

He looked for him but could not find him. He left for Ndaong Nai.⁴¹

20. *gap yac nyu tuei tal palei ndaong nai masuh gap hai aen sat ta nan,,*

gap yac arak caoh nyu abih yuen nan abih ni kaon parang,,

gap yac arak ni ak-miral pajieng aong nai aen sat ni hai khik dap ta nan,,

gap yac hulei ak-miral ni daok damanang ahaok daok di mba ngaiy,,

gap yac arak ak-miral raong phu taguk mak hu then rung tamari,,

20. O people! He arrived in Ndaong Nai and attacked the *aen sat*.⁴²

He and all his French companions subjugated the Việt.

The Admiral appointed *aong Nai* [as the new] *aen sat* and ordered him to stay in the fortress.

The Admiral ordered to station the boats in Mba Ngaiy.⁴³

The Admiral appointed a *phu*⁴⁴ [there].⁴⁵ He [sent his men] to seize the fort of Rung Tamari.⁴⁶

25. *gap yac then rung tamari mak hu halei aong phu yuen nduec abih,,*
gap yac arak aong phu parang mbaoh daok danang ahaok mbaoh daok ta nan,,

gap yac phu yuen kadun dap wek guar gap pawek mak mai pataom,,

gap yac phat mai pataom abih guar rei nyu jak gap rei suak mak palei kieng nao masuh,,

gap yac abih dum guar kumei taom di palei tang mbang abih,,

25. O people! The fort of Rung Tamari was seized and its Việt *aong phu* escaped.

The [new] French *aong phu* set a camp and stationed the boats there.

The Việt *aong phu* who had withdrawn came back and gathered the people.

They gathered the [Cham] people, asking the men to leave their villages and participate to the war.

Only women remained in the Tang Mbang village.⁴⁷

30. *gap yac cin taong ganaong ni crih nyu kain bual abih ni nao masuh,,*

gap yac nyu puk nao masuh ko hu parang mak hu caoh nyu abih,,

gap yac buel caoh nyu abih jeh rei lei lakei kumei caoh nyu abih,,

gap yac aong phu parang raong brei apan abih dum yuen palei,,

gap yac aong phu rumiek srap grap nyu ngap jieng dap deng

daok ta nan,,

30. O people! The infuriated *cin taong*⁴⁸ raised troops to participate to the war.

They launched an attack [on the French]. They were caught by the French and were subjugated.

The French subjugated all the population, boys and girls.

A French *aong phu* appointed men to administrate the Việt villages.⁴⁹

The *aong phu* prepared everything and at the same time had a fort built.

35. *gap yac aong phu kadun wek mai khi ngap ndun hujai di rung tamari.*

gap yac arak aong phu pajieng kur cam brei bual apan ngap cha ta nan,,

gap yac nyu raong cha mada phaow hai nyu brei ngap hai ni puk kha-ndaol,,

gap yac nyu brei puk kha-ndaol blaoh pangap sang hai ni jieng pasa,,

gap yac ong phu apah kur hai aong mbaow taguk caoh nyu tanan,,

35. O people! [Then] the *aong phu* returned and had a fortress built in Rung Tamari.

Now the *aong phu* appointed Chams and Khmers as *cha*⁵⁰ there.

He appointed the *cha* and their assistants and had the Kha-ndaol hamlet built.

He had the Kha-ndaol⁵¹ hamlet built, then houses and markets.

The *aong phu* put [some] Khmers at the service of the *aong mbaow*⁵² and [ordered the population] to obey him.

40. *gap yac rang brei tuei [> truei] grap palei aia pak halei ni grap jalan,,*

gap yac rumiek truei saralah tau ndaow mariah dap taguk,,

gap yac nyu puk mai pacaoh yuen laow laong haw mi thaow mak hu abih,,

gap yac nyu puk mai masuk gap hai yuen nduac kacai caoh nyu abih,,

gap yac lei aong nduac abih jeh rei then adei tao-ndaw rang mak,,

40. O people! The [French] men marked each village [boundaries] and each road with beacons.

They put a red fixed [mark on them]. [Then] battleships arrived.

They subjugated the Việt and the Chinese of Laong Haw⁵³ and Mi Thaow.⁵⁴

They attacked them and the Việt ran away.

The mandarins [in charge of the administration of the two cities] ran away. The [trade] ships were seized.

45. *gap yac ndaw nan rang mak jeh rei nyu mak padai krung aong ra klak,*

*gap yac nyu mak rumiek blaoh blai nyu nao mbéng hai ni ak-miral,,
gap yac arak ni ak-miral brei puk tau-ndaow taguk wek mai rumiek,,
gap yac rang brei puk taguk mak hai cu ndaok nan hai mak hu abih,,
gap yac lei tuan lah sa ko thau hai ramiek gaiy hai nao blei patei,,*

45. O people! The ships and the paddy granaries that people had left behind were seized.

They seized everything and brought it back to the Admiral.

The Admiral ordered to keep the boats [under close watch].

[Then] they seized Cu Ndaok⁵⁵ and all [its population].

Tuan Lah did not know if he had to keep the boats or go to buy bananas.

50. *gap yac nao blei patei sa ko hu saoh ja sieng adaoh phling siem daraheng [> daheng],,*

*gap yac nao blei patei hu jeh mai tal padeh daok cuh kanung,,
gap yac cuh kanung mak hu jeh rei kapal parang tal cuh phao tatuén,,
gap yac tuen lah hi phit pheí ndei nyu cuh mai rei njap gap basah,,
gap yac ba gap taguk klak gaiy ja sieng caok hia aiew gap pamak,,*

50. O people! He went to buy bananas. Ja Sieng stayed alone on the boat, singing nice songs.

[Tuan Lah] bought bananas and went back [to the boats]. He stopped [on the way] to shoot at the *kanung*.⁵⁶

He shot at the *kanung* and took the one [he killed]. The French [on their] ships [thought that they were attacked and] suddenly fired.

Tuen Lah was terrified. He shot [back with his] gun and got wounded.

He got up to the boat to escape. Ja Sieng was crying and yelling [like a] drunk-man.

55. *nai yac abih gap anit rieng ba ja sieng caok hia aiew maik ama,,*

*nai yac ba gap tama glai dap tuk nyu da-ndap dap di parang,,
gap yac gaiy nan parang mak hu sagar cing samu nan daok di gaiy,,
gap yac tuen lah daman lo crih drap nan abih parang nyu mak,,
gap yac nyu mak ba duah ti-nyar suar rei nyu lac gaiy sei nduac klak nyu mak,,*

55. O lady! The unfortunate Ja Sieng kept crying, calling his mother and father.

They [both] went to hide in the forest. They wanted to hide from the French.

O people! The French seized the boats, the *sagar* and *cing*.⁵⁷
Tuan Lah bitterly regretted that the French seized these goods.
They [i.e., the French] searched for them. They caught them and asked them to who the boats were belonging to.

60. *gap yac abih dum gap palei sa ko mbuh rei ni kieng ikhan,,*
gap yac nyu ba suar grap urang gap khin ikhan ni huac di chuk,,
gap yac aong abih takatuak pal tal biak bap di kabaong,,
gap yac ni jeh anak cam pheï lakei kumei mbaok mâng banjuei
[> banjruei],,
gap yac tau-ndaw parang ti-nya aong rei khi caoh nyu rei hai khin
masuh,,

60. O people! Nobody in the village wanted to speak.
They questioned every man in the village: "What fault have you committed to be so frightened?"
The elders were trembling. They [i.e., the French] gathered the population on the riverbank.
The Cham men and women faces were full of sadness.
The [men] from the French boats asked the *ong*: "Do you want to surrender or to fight?"

65. *gap yac aong praong ra brei lang duk patih parang wek abih cam*
hu khi aen,,
gap yac tau-ndaw kadun wek hai nyu mao [> waong] wang hai pa ak-
miral,,
gap yac nyu wek nao ikhan lac hai abih aong hai caoh nyu abih,,
gap yac arak ni hulun pieh daok danang ahaok daok khik galang,,
gap yac arak ak-miral brei puk tau-ndaow taguk mak aong tama,,

65. O people! The great mandarin waived the white flag.⁵⁸ The French left. The Chams were happy.
The boats withdrew and gathered around the Admiral's ship.
The [men] announced to him that the mandarins [in Cu Ndaok] had all surrender.
[One of the men said:] "We stationed the boats and we kept the paddy granaries".
Then the Admiral took command of the boats.⁵⁹

70. *gap yac tau-ndaow tuguk mak ong jeh rei nyu aiew ong rei ni brei*
rumiek,,
gap yac ong trun taduel nyu hai pagop mai hai pago tubiak,,

*gap yac ong mai lakau cuh ka khi nao oh mada cuh phao blaoh drap
patao ni kan kahia,,
gap yac tau-ndaw urang peh brei mak sa hurei pago tubiak,,
gap yac ong klau lakau jeh rei dua klau harei mak drap putao,,*

70. O people! He took command of the boats and ordered mandarins to keep them.

He gave orders and divided [the tasks] and left in the morning.

He asked to fire with the guns [whenever it was necessary]. Now, [let us] think of the goods of the king [which were on the boats].⁶⁰

In the morning the [French men] deployed their boats [around the king's boats] to seize them in one day.

The *ong klau*⁶¹ asked for two-three days to seize [all] the goods of the king.

75. *gap yac tau-ndaw parang oh pang nyu brei khik galang klak su
abih,,*

gap yac nyu mak ong abih jeh rei nyu mak jun rei nao ak-miral,,

*gap yac rang mak nao jun blaoh blai rang mak nao ndai pieh daok di
kaoh,,*

*gap yac abih dum anak cam cu ndaok hia rei lakei saong kumei anit ka
ong,,*

gap yac hudar lo mang kal drei kan aong rang apan drei klah di chuk,,

75. O people! The French [men] on the boats did not listen [to him].

He was ordered to keep the granaries under control.⁶²

[Then] they [i.e., the French] seized the *ong* and brought him to the Admiral.

He was brought [to the Admiral] and sent in exile in an island.

The Cham men and women in Cu Ndaok were crying because they loved him.

They thought a lot of him. They [i.e., the French] were going to govern them and rally them [to their cause].

80. *gap yac nduac di putao kur nao abih guar nao klah drap abih,,*

*gap yac mana gap ru-mbah hu mbiak hulun klak pariak drap ar di
sang,,*

gap yac ukan lac ka-ndaong daok rei khan gam di drei taleh abih,,

gap yac karaom gaiy kabung krah ndih gap gan abih min brei anguei,,

gap yac guar taom abih jeh rei taom di palei cu ndaok abih,,

80. O people! The [Cham] population fled to the [country] of the Khmer king leaving everything [behind].

Some were sad because they brought very little. I [myself] had left my money and my things in my house.
 [I] do not even say that some had only a *khan*⁶³ to tie [around their waist].
 The boats sank near the riverbank with all the people's clothes.
 The [Cham] population gathered in Cu Ndaok

85. *gap yac ong praong anit peh brei pariak jin saong brah padai kal guar tama,,*
nai yac abih gap hadar lo ndei lakei kumei hujieng anit,,
gap yac rang peh brei saralah rang ba nao mapieh di braik rasay,,
gap yac ong praong anit ka drei rang pieh braik rahasei tuk nyu da-ndap,,
gap yac nyu huac ka putao kur hamit brei tuei lakau rang ngap mang [ngap] oh thau ka guar tama,,

85. O people! The great mandarin pitied [us] and gave money,⁶⁴ rice and paddy to the population.
 All remember it. This is why all the men and the women love him.
 They [i.e., the French] dismissed [him from his position],⁶⁵ brought [him] to Braik Rasay⁶⁶ and kept [him there].
 The great mandarin that pitied us, he [was found in the place] he was hiding. They took him to Braik Rahasei.
 He [i.e., the great mandarin] was afraid that the Khmer king might hear [that he was hiding in his territory].⁶⁷ If they [i.e., the French] were asking [where he was] the [Cham] population would pretend⁶⁸ not knowing anything.

90. *gap yac hajieng oh brei kur thau tuei mai lakau mak tak [> taok] abih,,*
gap yac arak parang mak ong nao ndai thau ka matai ni saong hudiep.
gap yac lei parang nyu daok jeh rei nyu mak cam drei nao ngap liman,,
gap yac nyu mak taong taha mada nyu brei ngap cha apan ni buel,,
gap yac hurak ni tamat jeh rei abih gap drei bac blaoh hada,,

90. The Khmer [king] was not informed that a stranger⁶⁹ had come [to his country]. It was ordered to capture him.
 Then the French seized the mandarin and sent him in exile with his wife saying [they would remain in exile] until they die.
 The French appointed Chams to be mandarins.
 In the [newly created] *taong*⁷⁰ they [selected] old and young [men] to be appointed *cha* to govern the people.
 This text is over now. We have to learn [what happened] to remember.

95. *gap yac hu jieng bac blaoh lawik nao war oh hu hadar mang kal ru-mbah,,*
gap yac ngap ni ukan khin jak ngap tuei danap krung drei ru-mbak,,
gap yac yah chuk kurang panuac anit juei puac hulun rang bataok,,
gap yac hurak ni tamat jeh rei blaoh di hurei jip krâh pa-ndiak,,
hurak ni di bulan kara-ndak thun nasak nagarai mbalat dup,,

95. O people! It has been a long time [since these events happened] and [I may have] forgotten. The sad days have to be remembered. If I made a mistake or if a sentence is missing, do not call me a fool.⁷¹ This text was finished on Thursday, at noon. This text [was copied] during the *kara-ndak*⁷² month, year of the Dragon⁷³ [by the] *mbalat Dup*.⁷⁴

Conclusion

This text is a unique account of the French conquest of the southern provinces of Vietnam as seen by the ethnic minorities, the Chams and Malays in particular, and the first phase of the French politics towards the non-Việt peoples. Although official French and Vietnamese accounts do not mention it, it seems that, in the early stages of the French presence in southern Vietnam, the relationships between the French and the Cham-Malays were difficult. Our text mentions that the Chams and Malays from Châu Đốc tried to leave southern Vietnam and take refuge in Cambodia. It seems that the Chams and Malays did not understand the administrative reorganisation of the country and the authoritative measures taken by the French during the first years of the establishment of the colony of Cochinchina. The exile to Cambodia has been a way for the Chams and Malays of Châu Đốc to express their dissatisfaction. Etienne Aymonier⁷⁵ pointed out in 1880 that the Chams and the Malays of Châu Đốc immigrated to Cambodia because of the administrative reforms. Aymonier mentions that the Cham and Malay population, which numbered thirteen thousands individuals in 1880, dropped to four thousands in 1900.⁷⁶

Notes

- ¹ Like many other Southeast Asian scripts, the Cham script is derived from a Southern Indian script. The Cambodian version of the script is slightly different from the one used in Vietnam (Bình Thuận and Ninh Thuận provinces). The transcription system of the Cham script adopted here was set by a group of French scholars, namely Pierre-Bernard Lafont, Po Dharma, Gérard Moussay and Pierre Labrousse, in 1997.
- ² The text consists of 4 pages (pp. 535-9).
- ³ The Cambodian Cham script is no longer in use in Châu Đốc and has been replaced by a Latin transcription or a Cham adaptation of *jawi*. The Cham spoken by the Chams of Châu Đốc has evolved to a different dialect, though it remains closely related to the Cambodian Cham dialect (also called "Western Cham").
- ⁴ One should note that Malays were only to be found in Châu Đốc.
- ⁵ Numerous works have been published on the conquest and the establishment of the French colony of Cochinchina. For a narrative of the conquest of the south by the French see, for instance, G. Taboulet, *La geste française en Indochine. Histoire par les textes de la France en Indochine des origines à 1914*, Vol. 1 and 2, Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient, Adrien Maisonneuve, 1955-56; P. Brocheux, D. Hémyer, *Indochine, la colonisation ambiguë (1858-1954)*, Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 1995; C. Fourniau, *Vietnam- Domination coloniale et résistance nationale, 1858-1914*, Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2002); M. E. Osborne, *The French Presence in Cochinchina and Cambodia. Rule and Response (1859-1905)*, Cornell : Cornell University Press, 1969.
- ⁶ Southern Vietnam at that time was made of six provinces (Biên Hòa, Gia Định, Định Tường, Vĩnh Long, An Giang and Hà Tiên) and was known in contemporary Vietnamese historical sources as "*lục tỉnh*", or the "Six Provinces".
- ⁷ See Trương Vĩnh Ký, P.- J.-B., *Cours d'histoire annamite à l'usage des écoles de la Basse-Cochinchine*, Vol. 2, Saigon: Imprimerie du Gouvernement, 1877, p. 275.
- ⁸ Trương Định is a famous anti-colonialist fighter. He is regarded as a national hero in Vietnam. See M. W. McLeod, "Trương Định and Vietnamese Anti-Colonialism, 1859-64: a Reappraisal", in *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 24, no. 1, 1993, p. 89.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 91.
- ¹⁰ See D. G. Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism 1885-1925*, Berkeley: University of California, 1971, p. 34.
- ¹¹ For the foundation, the growth and the end of these colonies, see the forthcoming article: "Securing and Developing Vietnam South-western's frontier: the role of the Chams and Malays from Cambodia in the Southern Provinces (18th-19th centuries)".
- ¹² See *Quốc Triều Chánh Biên* [Primary Compilation of the National Dynasties], Saigon: Nhóm Nghiên-Cứu Sử-Địa Việt-Nam xuất-bản, 1972, p. 244; A. doc", *Excursions et Reconnaissances* II, vol. 6, 1880, p. 374. One of the most famous Khmer uprisings was led by Lâm Sâm in 1841.

- ¹³ See *Đại Nam Thực Lục* [Veritable Records of Đại Nam], *Tập XXIX: Chính Biên, đệ Tứ Kỳ III (1859-1862)*, Hà Nội: Nhà Xuất Bản Khoa Học Xã Hội, 1974, p.136.
- ¹⁴ Osborne, *The French Presence*, p. 74.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 75.
- ¹⁶ See A. Schreiner, *Les institutions annamites en Basse-Cochinchine avant la conquête française*, Vol. 3, Saigon: Claude & Cie, 1902, p. 106.
- ¹⁷ The Việt, or Kinh, are the largest ethnic group in Vietnam. The Việt have conquered the southern territories at the expense of the kingdoms of Champa and Cambodia. When the text was written, the other ethnic groups living in the southern provinces were under the Việt administration.
- ¹⁸ Labussière, 'Rapport sur les Chams', p. 374.
- ¹⁹ *baruna* derives from the Sanskrit *varṇa*, "order or arrangement of a song or poem". One should note that although the form has a Sanskrit name, it does not follow the metrical patterns of Sanskrit poetics.
- ²⁰ *ariya*, "verse, poem", derives from the Sanskrit *āryā*, the name of a metre. It does not follow the metrical patterns of Sanskrit poetics either.
- ²¹ Long narrative poems composed in *kawi* or Old Javanese. The *kakawin* are composed in fixed metrical patterns based on Sanskrit poetics. For a discussion on Balinese *kakawin*, see H. Creese, "The Balinese *Kakawin* Tradition. A Preliminary Description and Inventory", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 155, 1999, pp. 45-96.
- ²² P. J. Worsley, *Babad Buleleŋ. A Dynastic Genealogy*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1972, p. 116.
- ²³ Except for the traditional symbol indicating the end of stanzas. This symbol is a double coma: ".,".
- ²⁴ In his discussion of the *Babad Buleleŋ*, P. J. Worsley argues that the ambiguities due to the lack of punctuation have to be regarded as an inherent part of the text and be retained. See Worsley, *Babad Buleleŋ*, p. 116.
- ²⁵ BẾN NGHÈ is in the former Gia Định city (Saigon) vicinity.
- ²⁶ It seems that the censorship of personal names of important political characters in the writings is a tradition in the Cham communities of Cambodia. Although no studies have been led on that matter, the censorship may be a form of deference.
- ²⁷ Etienne Aymonier and Antoine Cabaton mention that the origins of the word come from Kalinga (Coromandel Coast). "*kaling*" is the word used for all the Indians regardless of their ethnic origins. See E. Aymonier, A. Cabaton, *Dictionnaire cam-français*, Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1906, p. 67.
- ²⁸ See J. F. Cady, *The Roots of French Imperialism in Eastern Asia*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1967.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 269.
- ³⁰ Historians have kept records of the deportations of the regent Nguyễn Văn Tường to Poulou Condor in 1885 and Emperor Hàm Nghi in Algeria in 1888 after the suppression of the anti-French movement *Cần Vương*, or "Support to the King". For the history of the *Cần Vương* movement, see Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism*, pp. 44-76.
- ³¹ See Osborne, *The French Presence*, p. 76. Poulou Condor is one of the islands of the Côn Đảo archipelago. The current name of the island is Côn Lôn (or Côn Sơn).

- ³² They are only used nowadays by some political Khmer activists claiming the retrocession of the Mekong delta territories, or Kampuchea Krom ("Lower Cambodia"), to Cambodia. See for instance the websites: www.khmerkrom.org, www.khmerkromngo.org, www.kampuchekrom.org.
- ³³ Transcription of the Khmer Peam Kanhchœu. This place was renamed Cản Giở in Vietnamese.
- ³⁴ Transcription of the Vietnamese title *chương* [đốc] or "provincial military governor". One should note that the author tends to shorten the Vietnamese title and add the word "ong" or "aong".
- ³⁵ The Spanish and the Tagals.
- ³⁶ Transcription of the Vietnamese Bến Nghè.
- ³⁷ Transcription of the Vietnamese *khâm sai* or mandarin sent to a region for a specific purpose by the emperor himself. The term *khâm sai* is not a full title though, the actual title of this character is not known.
- ³⁸ In Vietnamese: Phan Rí. This city was a part of the Bình Thuận province.
- ³⁹ *maor* could be the Cham transcription of the Vietnamese title *môn hạ*, "subordinate". This character could be a mandarin at the orders of the *kham masai*.
- ⁴⁰ This stanza illustrates the fact that some Vietnamese officials willingly took the side of the French and supported the conquest.
- ⁴¹ Transcription of the Vietnamese Đồng Nai.
- ⁴² Transcription of the Vietnamese title *án sát* or "provincial judge".
- ⁴³ Transcription of the Vietnamese Bến Nghè.
- ⁴⁴ Transcription of the Vietnamese title *phủ* or "prefect".
- ⁴⁵ This sentence illustrates the fact that once the place was conquered, the French put a new official to govern the region.
- ⁴⁶ Transcription of the Khmer Rong Damrei. Its Vietnamese name is Tây Ninh.
- ⁴⁷ The Tam Mbang village is unknown.
- ⁴⁸ Transcription of the Vietnamese *chính tổng* or "chief of canton".
- ⁴⁹ "*phu*" being a title of the Vietnamese administration (*phủ*), it is hard to believe that this official was actually French. There are two hypotheses. This new "*phu*" could have been a Vietnamese appointed by the French. The "*phu*" could also have been a French man whose title was unknown to the author of the text. As his duties were similar to a traditional Vietnamese "*phu*", the author identified the official with a "*phu*".
- ⁵⁰ Transcription of the Vietnamese title *xã* or "mayor".
- ⁵¹ Khe Dol, a village in Tây Ninh vicinity.
- ⁵² Adaptation of the Vietnamese title *quan bố* or "administrator".
- ⁵³ Transcription of the Vietnamese Mỹ Tho.
- ⁵⁴ Transcription of the Khmer Long Ho, renamed Vĩnh Long by the Vietnamese.
- ⁵⁵ Transcription of the Vietnamese Châu Đốc.
- ⁵⁶ A small grey pelican.
- ⁵⁷ *sagar* is a drum, *cing* is a gong.
- ⁵⁸ This sentence means that they asked for peace.
- ⁵⁹ This stanzas means that the Admiral ordered to seize the boats own by the Vietnamese, Chams and other peoples living in Cu Ndaok.

- ⁶⁰ This sentence means that the French took possession of the royal boats stationed in Châu Đốc and pillaged them.
- ⁶¹ “*ong klau*” literally means “the third mandarin”. The exact position of this official remains unknown and it hard to determine if this official belonged to the Vietnamese traditional administration or the French administrative and military hierarchy.
- ⁶² The author uses here the expression “*klak su*”, which means “to lock with a key”. It is a Khmer expression (*cak so*). This stanzas means that boats and paddy granaries were requisitioned by the French without further ado.
- ⁶³ A piece of cloth folded around the waist similar to the Malay *sarong*.
- ⁶⁴ The term used in the text is “*pariak jin*” which designates the silver Sino-Vietnamese stringed-coins. The stringed-coins were still in use at that time in Vietnam.
- ⁶⁵ The term used in the text is “*brei saralah*” which means “to relieve someone of his/her duties” or “set someone free”.
- ⁶⁶ Transcription of the Khmer Prek Russei. Prek Russei is the Khmer name of Cần Thơ. It is though not known why the French chose this location to jail the mandarin.
- ⁶⁷ From this sentence, one can understand that the Khmer king (i.e., Norodom, 1860-1904) was on the French side and the treaty establishing the French Protectorate of Cambodia already signed (April 1863).
- ⁶⁸ The author uses here the truncated expression “*ngap mak ngap*” which means “to pretend”.
- ⁶⁹ The author uses here the word “*tuei*”, the Cham transcription of the Khmer “*doy*”, or “foreigner, stranger”.
- ⁷⁰ Transcription of the Vietnamese *tông* or “canton”.
- ⁷¹ This section is very similar to a section of the Javanese *babad* relating the story of Dipanagara, the *Buku Kědhuṅ Kěbo*: “[...] If there are any faults in the tale, I beg your forgiveness, because the composer of this poetry is still young (and) did not experience (the events) himself”. See P. B. R. Carrey, “Javanese histories of the Dipanagara: the *Buku Kědhuṅ Kěbo*, its authorship and historical importance” in *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 130 (1974), p. 268. One should note also that the performance of *cianjuran*, or *tembang sunda* (Sundanese sung poetry with musical accompaniment), is often concluded with the poem *Sekar Duaan* in which he performers ask the audience’s forgiveness for any mistake in the rendition of the poems.
- ⁷² Transcription of the Khmer word *karatdak*, 12th month of the Khmer calendar.
- ⁷³ This could be 1868-1869, 1880-1881 or 1892-1893.
- ⁷⁴ Transcription of the Khmer *balat* or “provincial lieutenant”.
- ⁷⁵ Etienne Aymonier (1844-1929) is a pioneer in the field of Cham studies. He served as acting French representative for the French protectorate of Cambodia (1879-1881). He published, with Antoine Cabaton, the first Cham-French dictionary (1906). He has also carried numerous archeological missions in Indochina and collected Cham manuscripts from Cambodia and Vietnam.
- ⁷⁶ E. Aymonier, “*Le Champa et les Chams*” (unpublished), p. 388.