

**Márton Nagy**  
**Chinese Sources on Champa**  
**Ph.D. dissertation**

**THESES**

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## **I. Introduction**

The history of Vietnam is not limited to the history of the Viet people. While the northern part of the country, as a result of a thousand years of political and cultural presence of the Chinese, took shape under the influence of Chinese culture, at the Central and Southern regions of Vietnam the Cham, a minority still living in the country today, established their states. Linyi 林邑, a state commonly related to Champa, was one of the first political entities to be mentioned by name by the Chinese in Southeast Asia. By tradition it was described as a *country* (*guo* 國) in their chronicles and their geographical works. For scholars researching the history of Southeast Asia it is obvious that the study on the history and culture of Champa (a state existing and flourishing for nearly two thousand years) is crucial for the complete understanding of the whole region. The research on the former states of the Cham is a task offering exciting challenge for every Sinologist. Beyond the translation and interpretation of the Chinese sources, by the study of the Vietnamese chronicles, which were written in classical Chinese language and in many ways were following the traditions of Chinese historiography, a Sinologist can have the pleasure of understanding three different cultures.

## **II. Methodology**

In my work my main aim was to give an introduction as precise as possible to the Chinese and Vietnamese sources on Champa. I applied the principle of using all the available primaeval sources to study the historical events they contain information on. Further to my personal interest, my work was compelled by the erroneous method of the preceding researchers. In his classical work, apart from some short sections of the original texts, Georges Maspero did not publish any translation of the Chinese and Vietnamese sources. He only confined himself to quoting the contents of the texts by using his own words. In many cases, for readers not familiar with the original texts, it is really hard to identify the boundary between the real contents of the texts and the interpretations made by Maspero.

As for the different versions of the texts which do not cover each other regarding the details, Maspero often used an arbitrary method by selecting the text which he judged to fit the most probable scenario of the historical events and considering it as correct. In many cases he neglected the fact that the various historical sources do not seem to fit perfectly. A graphic example of that is his effort to record the rulers mentioned parallelly in the Vietnamese, Chinese and local ephigraphical records, written in Cham or Sanskrit language, as one and the same person without any convincing evidence. He did so in spite of the fact that the royal names of the various sources show very little coincidence on linguistic or phonetic base.

As most of the Chinese and Vietnamese texts related to Champa have no translation in any Western languages, most of the scientific works dealing with the original texts go back to the work of Maspero, thus in many cases they contain serious misinterpretations still appearing in scientific works. To avoid and correct the errors mentioned before I started my study by translating all the Chinese and Vietnamese sources available. First of all I translated all the texts used by former researchers and further to that I tried to extend my study to sources that escaped the notice of the researchers up till now.

The most important and most extensive Chinese sources on Champa were left to us as part of the so-called dynastic histories (*zhengshi* 正史). In addition to the dynastic histories there are the geographical works of fundamental importance containing notable differences to the historical texts. After translating the Chinese texts I began to collect and translate the sections of the most important Vietnamese chronicles referring to any events related to Champa.

After finishing the translation of the main sources I started to put the texts, often differing from one another concerning the details, side by side to make a study on the differing and concurring details. The Vietnamese texts are busy repeating the well known Chinese sources up to the 10th century, the birth of the independent Vietnamese state. After that period the Vietnamese sources offer information significantly different from the details available in the Chinese texts. They provide new aspects and new details to the events well known from the Chinese sources. In other cases they offer details not having even the slightest correspondence to the Chinese texts.

### **III. Main results of the dissertation**

1. During my work on the Chinese and Vietnamese texts I found examples of imprecision and mistranslation in the study of Maspero. The correction of these errors might give new light to the contents of the texts. Amongst the major errors there are incorrectly identified royal names and wrong references to texts disagreeing the interpretations of Maspero. In some cases text variant never used before helped me to have a correct understanding of the details.
2. The kings and rulers mentioned in the historical sources on Champa were divided into royal dynasties by Maspero. His concepts are still in scientific use today, but by the study on the original texts, the ideas of Maspero seem largely hypothetical and impossible to testify. The dynasties identified by Maspero were based on the events and details included in the Chinese and Vietnamese sources as well as the local epigraphy. As a Sinologist I had the opportunity to have a close study on the sources written in Chinese language. Thus I examined the dynasties that were established on the evidence found in these texts only. The Chinese sources are dominant in the periods that are without available local epigraphy.  
The period of Linyi (192–757) was divided into four dynasties by Maspero based mostly on the Chinese dynastic histories but after the extensive study of the family relations of the rulers to their predecessors and successors, some of the dynasties identified by Maspero are unjustifiable. There are similar examples asking for reconsideration on the correctness of the later dynasties.
3. In my study, abandoning the preceding practice, I made an effort to handle the Chinese and Vietnamese texts separately from each other as the two historiographical materials differ on many important points. I tried to give an introduction to some important examples where the automatic combination of the details found in the Chinese and Vietnamese sources without close examination and circumspection seems insupportable.
4. As an important result of my work, much of the corpus of Chinese and Vietnamese texts on the state of Champa became available in Hungarian language. This achievement is unique as most of these texts have no translation at all in any Western languages. The finished translations are awaiting to appear in international publications in the future.

#### **IV. On the possible utilization of the results**

The study on the Chinese and Vietnamese sources on Champa is not new to the scholars dealing with the history of Southeast Asia since the texts were used, interpreted and used for the scientific theories on the history of the country. Even so the last time the Chinese and Vietnamese sources as a whole were the subject of extensive scientific examination was a century ago. This study of Maspero contains a few mistranslations and wrong interpretations still living in the scientific knowledge.

In my dissertation I tried to present and correct the minor and major errors of the old translations and interpretations. I drew attention to the problematic questions that are in a crucial need for revision. The texts usually thought to be well known offer a wide range of important novelties, and by the new and precise work we can have a better understanding of the history of Champa.

#### **V. Publications and lectures related to the dissertation**

##### **Publications:**

Excerpts from Chinese sources on Cham cloth and jewellery” *In Gold Treasures of the Cham Kingdoms* Volume 2. JelNet Ltd, Budapest, 2008. 139–143.

„Kínai források Csampáról a Tang-dinasztia időszakában” [”Chinese sources on Champa in the period of the Tang dynasty”] *Keréknyomok – Orientalisztikai és buddhológiai folyóirat*. 2009/Nyár. 53–62.

„Kínai források Linyi királyságról” [”Chinese sources on the kingdom of Linyi”] In *Kínai történelem és kultúra. Tanulmányok Ecsedy Ildikó emlékére*. Ed. by Imre Hamar-Gergely Salát. [Sinológiai M hely 7.] Balassi Kiadó, Budapest, 2009. 48–65.

„Kínai források Délkelet-Ázsiáról” [”Chinese sources on Southeast Asia”] *Konfuciusz Krónika* 2011. 5. évfolyam. 2. sz. 16–17.

„Linyi uralkodóházainak vizsgálata a kínai források alapján” [”Study on the royal dynasties of Linyi based on the Chinese sources”] *Távol-keleti tanulmányok*, Budapest [Forthcoming]

##### **Lectures:**

„Kínai források Délkelet-Ázsiáról.” [”Chinese sources on Southeast Asia”] Orientalista Nap, Budapest, 4 April 2008.

„Kínai források a Csampa királyságról.” [”Chinese sources on the kingdom of Champa”] Orientalista Nap, Budapest, 3 April 2009