EARLY MODERN SOUTHEAST ASIA, 1350–1800

Edited by Ooi Keat Gin and Hoàng Anh Tuán
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12 Cham–Viet relations in Binh Thuận and Ninh Thuận under Nguyễn rule from the late seventeenth century to mid-eighteenth century

Danny Wong Tze Ken

For years, studies on Cham–Vietnamese relations during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have centred on the political and quasi-tributary relations between a declining Cham kingdom and a rising, if not dominating, Nguyễn southern Vietnam (Đàng Trong). Some existing scholarship also highlighted aspects of relations between the rulers of the two political entities by focusing on some aspects of court history. However, existing sources consulted thus far – mainly in the form of Vietnamese chronicles and veritable records – could not penetrate beyond the official selection of materials and therefore could only provide an official version of the relationship between the Cham and the Vietnamese, without the possibility of shedding the veil that shrouded the official nature of the relations. The existence of a set of materials in the form of day-to-day transactions between the two peoples during the late seventeenth and greater part of the eighteenth century could perhaps provide a new dimension to the nature of this relationship. Known as the Panduranga Archives or Royal Archives of Champa, the collection consists of letters, financial orders, purchase contracts, loan agreements, as well as receipts from other forms of transactions. It is the intention of this paper to reconstruct some aspects of Cham–Viet relations in Binh Thuận and Ninh Thuận through the consultation of these sources as well as others.

The present study attempts to investigate the nature of Cham–Vietnamese relations during the seventeenth–eighteenth centuries when territories of Champa in the region of Panduranga came under Vietnamese control. The Vietnamese southern advance into the region at this time was spearheaded by the Nguyễn family, who had started to control the southern region of the country from the mid-sixteenth century, and had by the beginning of the seventeenth century broken with the central government in Thăng Long (Hanoi) that was under the control of a rival family. With this break, the Nguyễn set up their own political entity that placed them in the forefront of the southern neighbours of the Vietnamese, including the Cham. Not long after the Nguyễn established their rule, they had to confront the Cham in 1611. The Cham were defeated and the Nguyễn extended Vietnamese influence/ control beyond the former borders. The two sides later clashed militarily on