

Archaeological sequences in central Viet Nam at the Sa Huynh sites of Go Cam and Tra Kieu elucidate the transition from Sa Huynh to the Cham polities, which leads the excavators to see this location as a Lin Yi site (see Introduction, p. 9, and Reinecke essay, p. 31–39).⁷ Their location on the north-central Vietnamese coast afforded a perfect opportunity to engage in international trade. In the eighth century, Chinese texts begin to refer to a new kingdom, Huan Wang, which superseded Lin Yi, but which was soon replaced by one of the polities of Champa.

Five distinct regions can be identified in the writings about Champa: around Hue and north of it, Quang Binh, Quang Tri, and Thua Thien provinces; then, moving south, Quang Nam (which the French called Amaravati, and which is also sometimes called Indrapura, based on a ninth-century dynasty); Quy Nhon (called Vijaya in the literature);⁸ Khanh Hoa, centered in Nha Trang (sometimes called Kauthara); and Thuan Hai province (Panduranga) in the south. Temple-building in each of these areas suggests shifting periods of florescence—the eleventh and twelfth centuries for the area around Quy Nhon, the sixth through eleventh centuries for Amaravati—but inscriptions and Chinese and Vietnamese texts (our three primary sources of information about the Cham) need to be studied anew to reveal the details of this complex history.⁹

Driving along the coastline today, one notices the brick Cham temples perched atop hills where they served dual purposes as religious edifices dedicated to the Hindu god Shiva, and as landmarks for passing ships (fig. 2).¹⁰ According to the mid-fifth-century monk Gunavarman, his ship was scheduled to stop at a Cham port on its journey between Java and China. This small piece of evidence, combined with the archaeological record of the cities of the Mekong delta, indicates the trade routes had shifted, and at least some ships no longer stopped at the ports of Fu Nan.¹¹ Why this shift occurred is uncertain; scholars previously believed goods were transported overland across the Isthmus of Kra during the Fu Nan period, then the route changed to the Straits of Malacca, but this view is changing.¹² Although Gunavarman left no record as to where the Cham port was located, judging from the presence of early Cham inscriptions and temples, the most likely location was either the Thu Bon River basin (Quang Nam province), or farther north, in the vicinity of Hue.¹³

FIG. 2

My Khanh Temple, Thua Thien–Hue Province. Miners searching for titanium discovered the 8th-century temple buried in the sand, close to the shore.



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