

2 CHAMPA PORTS-OF-TRADE NETWORKING ON THE COASTLINE C. 300-1500 CE

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Fifth to sixteenth-century Champa-based, networked, port-polities on the central and southern coast of what is now Vietnam, were subject to the ebb and flow of the evolving maritime trade as this caused fluctuations in Cham sovereignty. As demonstrated in the following map, the Cham 'state' was dispersed among several competing river valley courts centred on productive downstream river valley rice lands that not only provisioned international traders making stopovers on Straits of Melaka-to-China voyages, but also linked Champa coastal ports-of-trade to their productive upstream highland sources of commodities that were in high international demand.

In the fifth century, the Cham realm was an independent entity that responded to new opportunities following the southern China Jin dynasty (265-420) rulers' encouragement of multi-ethnic Southern Seas mariners to trade in China's ports. As demonstrated in the following maps the Cham coastline was a strategic stopover of international shipping necessitated by dangerous underwater shoals between the Southeast Asia mainland and Borneo. Thus Cham ports initially became intermediate stops for provisions by merchant ships transitioning from the Eastern Indian Ocean and Java Sea to China, and subsequently

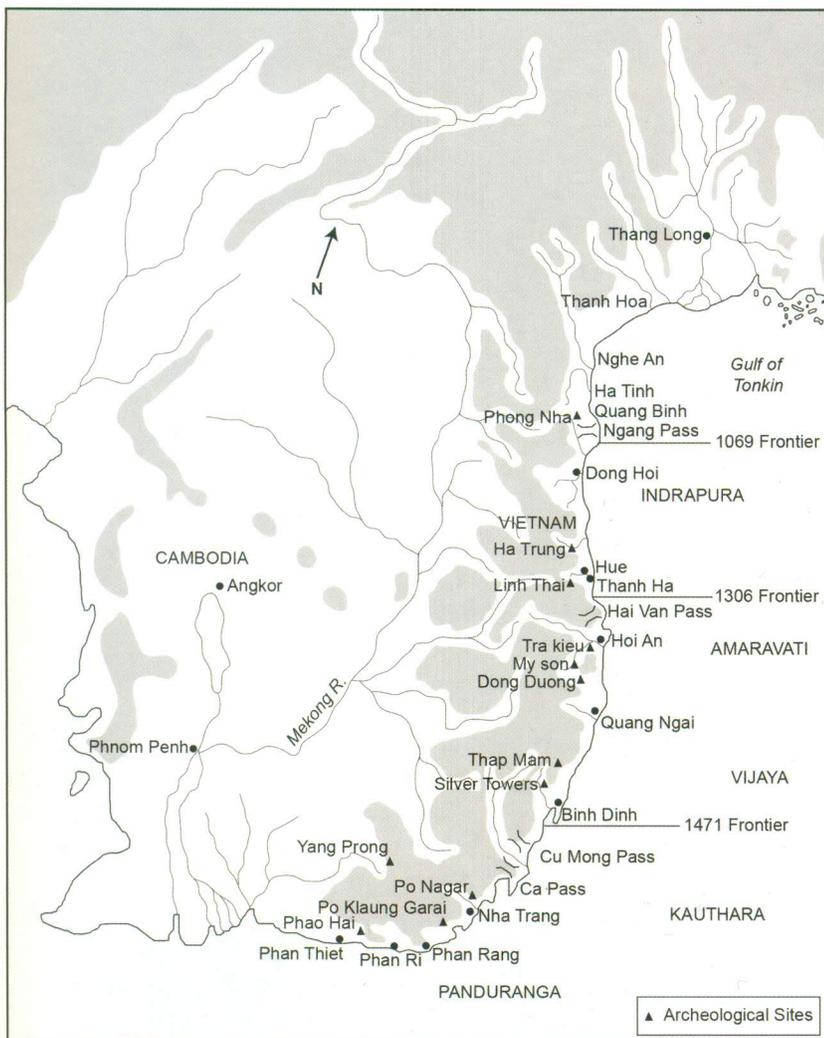


Fig. 1 Champa Realm c. 300-1500.