

other Champa-era archaeological sites in central Vietnam. In addition to those found in Cù Lao Chàm, the pottery was also found in other sites including Trà Kiệu (Quảng Nam), Trảng Sỏi (Hội An), Ngũ Hành Sơn (Đà Nẵng), Lý Sơn (Quảng Ngãi) and Phú Yên with total of 100 specimens. The substantial evidence of imported ceramics and glassware suggests that Cù Lao Chàm, on the one hand, was an outpost and, on the other, an organic part of the 'Great Port of Champa' located at the estuary of the Thu Bồn River for centuries.⁵

Amarāvati in Maritime Trade routes during the Tang – Song period

The excavations in Cù Lao Chàm have provided solid evidence to demonstrate the significance of the island on the maritime silk route as referenced in Chinese records. The Châu Tân shipwreck and its commodities, as will be detailed, documents the substantive presence of international merchants on the coast of Amarāvati in the ninth century.

The Châu Tân ship is a typical lashed-lug and stitched plank vessel. This ship building technique is said to be of Southeast Asian tradition and was widely practiced in the region over a thousand years from the second century CE to at least the early fourteenth century. The fact that the Châu Tân ship was still stitched suggests that it was made no later than the 10th century.⁶ Based on the recovered original keel timber, experts suggest that the Châu Tân ship could have been nearly 25 meters long and approximately 9 meters wide.⁷

The salvaged ceramic fragments were from Changsha, Yue and Ding kilns. Changsha ceramics include bowls, ewers, plates, dishes,

white glaze, brown and green glaze, in a variety of shape and rim decoration. Yuezhou ceramics include bowls, plates, dishes, ewers, boxes, cups. Ding and Xing-type white porcelains include large dishes, dishes, bowls, ewers, cups and boxes. A large number of medium and large sized yellow-glazed storage jars from Guangdong are also recorded. Brown glaze basin-shaped wares with impressed flower motifs were probably products of the Xicun kiln. Middle Eastern green-glazed shards also recovered though not in great quantity.⁸

Incised and ink inscriptions on the bases of jars and basins with two types of incised and ink inscriptions were recovered from three shipwrecks off the shore of Bình Châu in Quảng Ngãi Province.⁹ According to Professor Aoyama and the Nishimura project team, 147 shards with incised inscriptions were found on recovered bowls and jars. Out of 438 shards with ink inscriptions, there are 19 in Chinese, 27 in Arabic and 201 in Indic scripts, while 191 shards remain unidentifiable. Interestingly, several Indic inscriptions bear the name 'Ambārak', a location in present-day Iran, known to be north-west of the ancient port of Siraf on the Persian Gulf, which was a well-known port-of-trade on the maritime trade route during the Tang period. In the meantime, the incised Arabic inscriptions provide evidence of the presence of Middle Eastern merchants travelers on board the recovered ship. It appears that all the pieces with Arabic words on them carry the same text 'amdada dadu muhammad wa dafa...'; which could be translated as 'To aid Dadu[?] Muhammad and to resist/ward off...'¹⁰. The Arabic inscriptions of the Châu Tân collection mainly end with a six- or

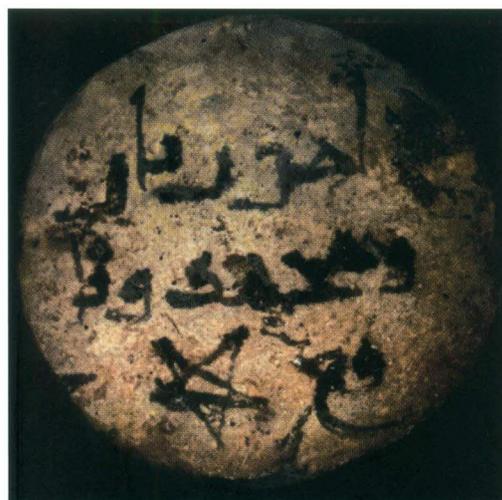


Fig. 2 Châu Tân ceramics with Arabic words.