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CHAMPA KINGDOM TOWERS AS A TOURIST ATTRACTION IN VIETNAM. HISTORICAL, GEOGRAPHICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL ASPECTS

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Abstract

In the 17th century, the Champa Kingdom, which had operated for more than 1,000 years in what is now central and southern Vietnam, ceased to exist. The Hindu influence of the Cham state remained visible in the brick tower-temples that still exist, as well as in sculptures some of which are in Vietnamese museums. The first research into the Cham culture and history was carried out by French colonisers in the early 20th century, followed by Polish archaeologists and the Vietnamese government, among others. The study of the legacy left by the Cham poses significant difficulties, due to years of warfare, environmental influences, the passage of time and theft. However, the homogeneous culture and architectural structural integrity enable conducting a research analysis of the legacy left behind. The heterogeneous level of tourist development of the different tower groups poses a challenge to create a high standard of tourist attractiveness. The high quality of tourism provision characteristic of My Son and Po Nagar, setting an example to be followed throughout the Southeast Asian region, stands out against the low level of tourism development at other Cham temples.

Key words

Champa Kingdom, Cham towers, Vietnam, tourism, tourist attractions, tourist development.

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1. Introduction

Notwithstanding the problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism in Vietnam is experiencing a period of rapid development, becoming a leading part of the economy (Moska, 2021). One of the elements of state and social activity is to take care of the development of tourism infrastructure and the display and restoration of artefacts. In this regard, the towers-temples that are the remains of the defunct Kingdom of Champa, whose origins date back to the 2nd century, can be

identified as a global tourist attraction. The basis for the clarification of the origins of the Cham state comes from Chinese and Vietnamese texts; Cham manuscripts, held, among others, in the Paris Inventory of the Archives of the Asiatic Society; stone inscriptions (Phan, 2015); oral accounts; and artefacts retrieved from the Cham towers. Chinese chronicles indicate that the Cham were already inhabiting the area south of Hue in the 2nd century. On the other hand, we learn from stone inscriptions that the Kingdom of Champa was established in the 7th century.

The aim of the study is an analytical presentation of the existing towers of the Champa Kingdom as a potential factor of Vietnam's tourist attractiveness.

2. History and geographical conditions

A state with changing names (Huan Wang, Champapura, Chiem Thanh), consisting of several principalities (Panduranga – now Phan Rang; Indrapura – Dong Duong; Amaravati – Quang Nam; Vijaya – Binh Dinh; Kauthara – now Nha Trang), playing an important role in the South China Sea basin for about a thousand years, has ceased to exist. Complicated, unstable international politics resulted in permanent changes to the territory of the Champa Kingdom, even though the Cham led the entire region in pottery production and rice cultivation, as

well as maritime trade. The 14th-century legendary proposal by Jay Simhavarman III, King of Cham, to hand over part of his territory in exchange for the hand of Princess Dai Viet Huyen Tran resulted in the region between Hue and Tourane (Da Nang) becoming Vietnamese territory. Subsequent wars led to the loss of parts of the Champa Kingdom, primarily to Dai Viet, and the Hindu religion of Champa was transformed into Islam and animism with Indian elements. In 1697, the Champa Kingdom became part of Vietnam, and the Cham king received the annual nomination of the Vietnamese Nguyen family and paid tribute to it until 1832 (Hubert, 2015). Eventually, the Cham became a Vietnamese ethnic minority of one hundred and sixty thousand (Nakamura, 2008). The matrilineal and matrilineal system (Wielka Encyklopedia, 2005; Konarska, 2016)¹, as well as the cultivation of akhar thrah, as

Tab. 1. Location of existing Cham structures.

No	Name of groups or individual towers	Location
1.	My Son	Duy Phu, Duy Xuyen, Quang Nam
2.	My Khanh	Phu Dien, Phu Vang, Thua Thien-Hue (northern part)
3.	Po Tam/Po Dam	Phong Phu, Tuy Phong, Binh Thuan
4.	Phu Hai	Phu Hai, Phan Thiet, Binh Thuan
5.	Hoa Lai	Tan Hai, Ninh Hai, Ninh Thuan
6.	Dong Duong	Binh Dinh, Thang Binh, Quang Nam
7.	Khuong My	Tam Xuan, Nui Thanh, Quang Nam
8.	Ha Trung	Gio An, Gio Linh, Quang Tri
9.	Po Nagar Nha Trang	Xom Bong, Nha Trang, Khanh Hoa
10.	Binh Lam	Phuoc Hoa, Tuy Phuoc, Binh Dinh
11.	Banh It	Phuoc Hiep, Tuy Phuoc, Binh Dinh
12.	Chien Dan	Tam An, Tam Ky, Quang Nam
13.	Nhan	Tuy Hoa, Phu Yen
14.	Lieu Coc	Huong Xuan, Huong Tra, Thua Thien-Hue
15.	Linh Thai	Vinh Hien, Phu Loc, Thua Thien-Hue
16.	Bang An	Dien An, Dien Ban, Quang Nam
17.	Duong Long	Binh Hoa, Tay Son, Binh Dinh
18.	Hung Thanh	Dong Da, Qui Nhon, Binh Dinh
19.	After Klong Garai	Luu Vinh, Phang Rang-Thap Cham, Ninh Thuan
20.	Thoc Loc/Phu Loc	Binh Nghi, Tay Son, Binh Dinh
21.	Thu Thien	Binh Nghi, Tay Son, Binh Dinh
22.	Canh Tien	Nhon Hau, An Nhon, Binh Dinh
23.	Yang Prong	Ea Roc, Ea Sup, Dac Lac
24.	After Rome	Huu Duc, Ninh Phuoc, Ninh Thuan

Source: Phuong, 2009.

¹ The matrilineal system, due to the rule of descent in force, is unilinear, limiting the range of relatives to those related to each other through female agency; the matrilineal system is when a man resides in his wife's house after marriage.

a script derived from Sanskrit, is part of the Cham's concern for their own culture.

Architectural considerations aside, Cham's search for cultural identity is also determined by its close links with China, its transposition of Buddhist art, its Hindu cultural borrowings, its many hitherto undiscovered temples, and the fact that Cham artefacts have been repeatedly exhibited in various museums around the world, most notably in Vietnam, the USA and France (Binh, 2018; Vietnamese archaeological treasures..., 2018; Ramabadrán, 2019; Momoki, 1996).

The temple complex, which had a unified structure, was entered through a gate tower. The altar (calan) in the form of a linga standing on a yoni together with the place of sacrifice was the centre of the temples of the kingdom. It was surrounded by small towers and outbuildings, an auxiliary building (mandapa) stood next to it, stone stelae with inscriptions stood in front of the entrance and the whole was surrounded by a low wall. The temples, built mainly of brick and sandstone, were furnished with sculptures and statues made after the construction had been completed.

A detailed analysis of the structures discovered so far has revealed 24 tower groups, consisting of 1 to 68 temples, bringing the total to an impressive 115 standing buildings remaining in Vietnam from

the Champa Kingdom. Tab. 1. includes the groups of inventoried Cham buildings.

The currently remaining structures (the earliest dating from the late sixth and early seventh centuries) were built of brick, as wooden shrines could not stand the test of time. French archaeologist and architect H. Parmentier, the first known researcher of Cham temples, who published two works on architecture and archaeological research in 1909 and 1918, believed that for various reasons the study of the artefacts of the Kingdom of Champa was highly hampered. Tab. 2. contains the strengths and weaknesses of the historical, geographical and architectural conditions of the buildings left behind by the Kingdom of Champa, representing hindrances as well as opportunities when undertaking research activity.

Some of Cham's brick temples have survived, but many have been destroyed during warfare, due to adverse weather conditions, theft and the passage of time. The first attempts to reconstruct and restore the towers of the Kingdom of Champa were made as early as the beginning of the 20th century and, with varying success, this process is still being carried out today. Tab. 3. presents the most important undertakings aimed at maintaining the temple heritage of the now defunct kingdom.

Tab. 2. Strengths and weaknesses of the Cham towers study.

No	Weaknesses of Cham architecture research	Conditionality
1.	Long period of civilisation	More than 1,000 years of state functioning (an older civilisation than Khmer from the 9th to the 15th centuries)
2.	Extensive research area	The Champa kingdom operated in an area from Hoanh Son to Phan Thiet, over a meridional length of about 1,000 km
3.	Significant distances between groups of towers	The Champa State was a federation of small states. Individual sanctuaries were separated from each other to minimise losses from hostile expansion
4.	Difficult terrain	Rapidly growing vegetation
5.	Non-military purpose of towers	The structure, intended only for religious purposes, was significantly vulnerable to damage due to its lack of defensive capabilities
6.	Complex soft raw material in the form of bricks	The brick used by Cham is a less durable raw material than stone
7.	Bonding material of the bricks	Lack of archival records of brick bonding hinders proper reconstruction of towers
8.	Method of measurement	At the beginning of the 20th century, a measured method of counting bricks was used, due to the difficulty of accessing crumbling towers
9.	Robbed property	The area of the former Kingdom of Champa remained without state control for many years

Tab. 2. Strengths and weaknesses of the Cham towers study (continuation).

No	Strengths of Cham architecture research	Conditionality
1.	Uniform formula for tower construction	The sacred purpose of the Cham towers allows comparative studies to be used.
2.	Pyramid design	The positioning of the towers on the hills, with an eastern orientation, facilitates their identification and the search for yet undiscovered objects/ The pyramidal shape of the towers reinforced their strength
3.	Square base with a hollowed-out calan, prayer halls devoid of decoration. Use of false doors	The location of the false doors in the structure of the towers, the square base and the hollowed out calan made it easier to identify the cultural affiliation of the objects.
4.	Principle of copying the second level of the temple in relation to its ground floor	The structural uniformity of the first two levels of the towers facilitates their reconstruction
5.	Numbered floors of towers	The numbering of floors allowed for more effective restoration of damaged buildings
6.	Fitting of churches with vestibules, linked by a common structure to the towers	This design may have been a factor in the longevity of the temples
7.	Brick fired at low temperatures as the basic building block of temples	Weak material in the form of bricks fired at low temperatures has proven to be resistant to environmental influences and warfare
8.	Stone as a material for the construction of: lintels, doorframes and steps	The introduction of stone in the construction of Cham temples has made the towers more resistant to damage
9.	Decorative, animal, figurative sculptures, special ornaments, pilasters, entrepilasters made after construction, ornaments made on temple bases	The manner in which the ornaments were placed after construction was completed probably promoted their effective survival and enabled their later identification

Source: Parmentier, 1909.

Tab. 3. Major reconstructions and restoration of Cham towers in Vietnam.

No	Group of reconstructed towers	Institutional care	Period of activity
1.	Po Nagar Nha Trang	A group of French archaeologists in Hue	1902; 1907; 1931–1933
2.	Cham towers	Ecole Francaise d'Extreme - Orient, Hanoi	since 1930
3.	Bang An Tower	A group of French archaeologists in Hue	1933–1940
4.	My Son Group	A group of French archaeologists in Hue	1937–1942
5.	My Son	Government of Vietnam	since 1978
6.	Cham towers in Central Vietnam	Centre for the Restoration of Cultural Property of the Ministry of Culture and Information of Poland, under the direction of Kazimierz Kwiatkowski	1980
7.	My Son	Government of Vietnam	1981–1990
8.	Chien Dan, Po Klong Garai, Hung Thanh, Duong Long	Government of Vietnam	1980–1990
9.	Hoa Lai Towers	Government of Vietnam	1998–2001

Source: Phuong, 2009.

3. Technical conditions for the construction of towers

Despite the many problems associated with wars, climatic influences and looting activities, the Cham towers have even managed to survive for more than a thousand years, and their design and construction technology still arouse wonder today. Various theories have arisen as to how the towers were, or are, built as sanctuaries. The process of inquiring into knowledge in this regard will be an ongoing one, as the towers that were built in the central and southern parts of Vietnam differ in terms of period of construction, size, style, environment, maintenance in the original condition and care of the monument. The process of finding out about the construction technique of Cham towers is of considerable importance when it comes to the conservation of these monuments and their restoration in such a way that the reconstructed temple does not differ from the original.

One experiment attempted to create a vision of making bricks and tying them together in the construction of Cham temples (Tim hiểu kỹ..., 2009). In Hoi An, the author built a tower 0.6 m high with a base of 0.3 m, using sandblasted, soaked, rubbed bricks. He carved on the already finished model of the tower and then fired the whole thing after a few days.

Once completed, the experiment proved to be a complete success, as it resulted in a structure with adequate durability and aesthetics. The result of that study is a series of conclusions that can be used primarily for the reconstruction of temples that no longer exist, because, according to the author:

- towers–temples were built from unfired carpentry bricks, using a small amount of sand and clay;
- bricks were dipped in water and rubbed against each other, liberating the mortar;
- the wet bricks were then pressed together;
- the carving process was carried out on a still unfired whole;
- the constructed piece of masonry was re-baked;
- the finished tower structure was filled with sand from the inside and backfilled from the outside, creating a pyramid that prevented collapse during the subsequent firing of the tower and the intensive carving process;
- the process of final burning of the tower, which did not yet have a roof, started from the top and then the sand was successively removed from the centre in order to effectively burn the lower levels down to the very bottom;
- the sand on the outside of the tower served primarily to keep the whole thing stable and

was also a helpful substrate for the finishing and artistic work done on its outer walls.

Although on a micro scale the concept author's assumptions proved to be accurate, he stipulates that this is only a hypothesis which may be useful in the conservation and restoration of temples left over from the Kingdom of Champa. It is highly likely that the Cham used different techniques and technologies for firing bricks as civilisation developed, which is reflected in the styles of their architecture (Tim hiểu kỹ..., 2009).

Because of the restoration attempts that have been made, in many cases partly changing the original image of the individual towers, a group of Italian archaeologist-experts decided to publish restoration recommendations close to what Cham did during the construction of the temples. According to them:

- the firing temperature of the bricks must not exceed 850 degrees C;
- lime and traditional bricks should be rejected as distorting and likely to cause dampness;
- a mixture of natural resin (currently used for sealing boats), clay and brick meal should be used as a binder;
- conservation work must focus first and foremost on maintaining the churches that still exist, and leave the reconstruction of damaged buildings for the next period (Tran, 2011).

Recognising that in the Cham culture only the gods were entitled to permanent masonry buildings, this study presents the temples and the remains of the temples which are part of the artefacts found as the element of Cham activity that has not stood the test of time. These are also artistic creations, primarily in the form of pottery, jewellery and sculpture, which are preserved both on the buildings of the temples that are still standing and have been discovered as a result of archaeological work and have found their way into museums around the world.

Caring for Cham's heritage, as a responsibility of Vietnam, should be seen as an activity that influences the development of the tourism industry. The unique architecture, artefacts, and secrets left behind by the defunct Kingdom of Champa are all factors of tourist attractiveness, enhanced by reconstruction backed by scientific research.

4. Existing Cham towers in Vietnam

Cham temple complexes have been located throughout present-day Vietnam in several distinct clusters, some of which have unfortunately only become the subject of archaeological research.

The first of the tower complexes, very well preserved and properly developed, is the large Po Nagar temple complex (Fig. 1.) in the coastal town of Nha Trang, which was built between the 7th and 12th centuries, on the site of an earlier wooden temple. However, a place of worship existed there much earlier, as early as the 2nd century. Currently, there are four tower-temples preserved in very good condition, along with an area armed with various sculptures, such as a dancing Shiva, musicians and a Nandi bull, among others. Po Nagar owes its very good condition to the early renovations initiated by Henri Parmentier between 1902 and 1907, followed by Jean-Yves Claeys's consolidation of the entire complex between 1931 and 1933. Although efforts were made to restore the towers to their original state, as was the case between 1931 and 1942, the clumsy use of cement, masonry techniques and the firing of bricks at high temperatures in the later period affected the deformation of some of the structures. A small museum operates on the Po Nagar site. Some of the artefacts found along with a stone stele with inscriptions of the Champa Kingdom from the 10th century are housed at the National History Museum in Hanoi. Due to the evasive damage of war and calamities, the Po Nagar Temple is rated as

the best-preserved example of Cham architecture in Vietnam. It is also the venue for Cham folk dance demonstrations and the organisation of the Po Nagar Festival from 21–23 March according to the lunar calendar (Katsimpalis, 2009; Khám phá báu..., 2020; Po Nagar Towers..., 2020).

The group of temples located around Da Nang city includes the Dong Duong area, Tra Kieu, the lone octagonal tower Bang An, Chien Dan and Khuong My.

Most of the Dong Duong structures, built at the end of the ninth century and considered the largest religious architectural complex in Southeast Asia, probably collapsed in 1820. The doors and other furnishings disappeared from the surviving tower, and only the remains of the floors and columns remain (Phuong, 2006). Louis Finot and Henri Parmentier made the first discoveries at the beginning of the 20th century, which today are still considered ground-breaking. A 114-centimetre bronze statue, a stone sculpture of Shiva, a Dong Duong relic and many other valuable artefacts found at the Dong Duong site are part of the displays at the Cham Sculpture Museum in Da Nang, the National History Museum in Hanoi and the Ho Chi Minh City History Museum and are also on display in the



Fig. 1. Po Nagar Nha Trang Shrine.

Source: author's own collection.

world's leading museums (Doang, 2015; Dung, 2014; Huong, 2011; Khám phá báu..., 2020).

At the site of the Tra Kieu (Simhapura) citadel dating to the 2nd or 4th century, the former capital of the Kingdom of Champa, only fragments of the ramparts 2–3 m high remain. Valuable artefacts such as, among others, a 10th-century stone sculpture of the nine Navagarh gods, gold jewellery, structural elements of towers, parts of altars, stone lingi, various stone carvings, fragments of statues as well as pottery dating to the 9th to 11th century discovered by J.-Y. Claeys between 1927 and 1928 and artefacts from the late 2nd and early 3rd centuries excavated during archaeological work in the late 20th and early 21st centuries by English, Japanese and Vietnamese researchers are held by museums in Da Nang, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Hue, Binh Dinh and Hoi An. The Sa Huynh and Champa Culture Museum, located in Tra Kieu, has around 200 original artefacts in its collection, in addition to many replicas: ceramics, stone altars, jewellery, tomb jars, documents and photographs (Doang, 2019; Đỗ, 2017; Hoang, 2017; Museum..., 2009; Sa Huynh..., 2009; Truong, 2020).

A National Historic Site of Vietnamese Architecture, the stripped-down Bang An's two towers, which were built between 875 and 977, are shaped like a vertical linga with a calan on an octagonal plan. The inner furnishings of the towers include a small stone linga, and on the outside are two stone statues of Gajasimha, probably from the 11th century, and a stone stele with a partially illegible inscription dedicated to Shiva, probably from the 10th century. According to one of the legends proclaimed on the basis of an epitaph found at the tower, the temple in honour of Shiva was built at the turn of the 4th and 5th centuries by King Cham Bhadravarman II (Bang An Tower..., 2020; Hoa..., 2021a, 2021b; Kumar, 2016; Tháp Bằng An..., 2020 2022; Tháp Bằng An, Dien..., 2022). Tourist facilities at the site are reduced to a stone-lined road and two information boards.

The three parallel towers of Chien Dan, probably built in the late 10th and early 11th century, on a square base, consist of a gate tower (gopura), a front building (mandapa) and a south tower. Located about 50 km from Da Nang, the structures have no furnishings, as subsequent archaeological work (1901–2002) excavated all artefacts. Some of the valuable excavated artefacts, in the form of statues of Gaasimha, warriors, dancers, musicians, a goddess with six arms holding weapons and various forms of Hindu gods were placed in, among others: the Binh Dinh Provincial Museum in Qui Nhon, the Chien Dan Gallery, the Quang Nam Museum and the Ho Chi Minh City Historical Museum. The walls of the towers

are still decorated with floral appliqué, ribbons and pilasters. There are also masks of the Kala monster, two busts, a stone tympanum including a seated deity holding a lotus flower, stone friezes of monsters, dancers, animals, plants and other designs, among others. In addition to the towers, there is a small museum in a fenced area displaying stone sculptures (Chien Dan Cham..., 2022; Chien Dan Towers..., 2022; Kumar, 2016; Tran, 1998).

The Vietnamese National Monument, a group of three brick Khuong My towers with sandstone domes built in the late ninth and early tenth centuries, consisting of three-storey square structures, is set in a north-south line, with an eastern orientation, near Tam Ky town (the Quang Nam province). The decorative motifs of deeply carved branches and flowers, probably originated from Khmer art. Notable among other wall ornaments are figures of Garuda, a Naga snake, horsemen, a monkey and an elephant, as well as embossing in the form of a lotus flower. All towers are fitted with false doors and carved stone bases. The towers are devoid of furnishings as valuable artefacts discovered during archaeological investigations between 1901 and 2007 were placed in museums, most notably the Ho Chi Minh City Historical Museum and the Da Nang Museum of Sculptural Art. These include sculptures of Krishna, four-armed Vishnu, demon king Ravana, chariots with a coachman, Dvarapala, a turtle, a lotus flower and several hundred other sculptures, bas-reliefs, statues and wall decorations. According to one legend, Khuong My is also the burial place of King Chiem Thanh's wife (Độc đảo tháp..., 2018; Khuong My Tower..., 2008; Kumar, 2016; Levin, 2008; Nhóm tháp Khương..., n.d.; Thanh; Tháp Khương Mỹ, 2010).

Another large cluster of Cham temples, with Twin towers, the Vijaya citadel (Cha Ban ruins) with the Canh Tien tower, the Banh It tower and the Thi Nai citadel and the Nhan tower located in the Binh Dinh province, near Quy Nhon.

The two varying heights of the Twin Towers with Khmer architectural influences, located on a flat site with a southern orientation in the city's Quy Nhon Park, were built between the 11th and 13th centuries. The structures have distinctive carvings of people, animals and mythical figures. The passage of time, environmental influences, theft and inept restoration have contributed to the destruction of one of the three original towers, significant degradation of the other two structures and severe distortion of the interiors from their original state.

Listed among the country's most important monuments, with status as a Vietnam National Monument, National Heritage Site and National

Monument, the Twin Towers have undergone several renovations, upgrades and have been the subject of archaeological surveys. A bonsai garden has been installed at the site. The Binh Dinh Museum displays the best-preserved elements of the towers, friezes and doorframe (Cham Temples..., 2020; Cham towers..., 2020; Quy Nhon..., 2020; Riblet, 1997; Tháp Dơi..., n.d.).

The Vijaya (Cha Ban) Citadel, probably built in the 14th century, one of Champa's last citadels, ceased to be the capital of the Kingdom as a result of significant damage shortly after its establishment. It is estimated that the area protected by the Cha Ban Citadel had as much as about 50 km in circumference. As one of the elements of Champa's power, it was a military unit, with dimensions of 1.4x1.1 km at its core. Added to this were ramparts of varying lengths from 1.6 to 2.2 km, of specific construction, consisting of blocks of sedimentary rock and ceramic elements. The Cha Ban Citadel is the only Champa citadel in Vietnam in which a tower-temple (Canh Tien) has survived. Vietnamese archaeologists exploring the ancient well and other sites within the citadel have uncovered several thousand different 4th century Cham artefacts (ceramics, porcelain, everyday objects), on display at the Binh Dinh Museum, among others (Ancient structures..., 2015; Archaeological Champa..., 2014; Truong et al., 2017).

The Cham Monument to Architecture and Art, a four-storey, 20-metre-high Canh Tien tower in good condition, dates back to the late 12th and early 13th centuries. Located about 30km from Quy Nhon town, the structure was built on a 10x10m square plan in the centre of the now defunct Vijaya citadel. Equipped with three false doors and wall pillars, the tower was decorated mainly in the roof area. Characteristic elements are the phoenix tail and makara ornaments at the corners and the stone reliefs of Shiva and the dancers. Two two-metre-high Khmer stone elephants and stone Dvarapals are located in close proximity to the structure. The shabby renovated complex is fenced off and the inner paths are paved with flagstones (Basic information..., 2020; Canh Tien..., 2019, n.d.; Cham Temples..., n.d.; Hệ thống tháp..., nd.; Nguyen, 2019a; Truong et al., 2017).

Part of Vietnam's National Heritage, the four Banh It towers, remaining from a larger temple complex that looks like a pyramid from afar, were built in the late 11th and early 12th centuries in an eastern, north-south orientation. The restored complex, located at the top of a hill near the town of Binh Dinh, has undergone renovations mainly involving the main tower, the roof tower and the gate tower.

The different shapes of the individual towers, their varying heights, architectural dissimilarity and location on a hill, create a unique landscape. Some of the temples' furnishings are on display at the Cham Museum of Sculptural Art, while others have been stolen or taken abroad. It is likely that one of Banh It's major works, a statue of Shiva, was moved by the French to the Trocadero Museum between 1884 and 1886. A replica of the statue was placed in the main tower. The well-kept complex was equipped with a car park and stairs. In 2022, it was decided to undertake a comprehensive, careful restoration of all Banh It buildings, using only handmade work (Banh It Towers..., n.d.; Banh It Tower..., n.d.; Banh It Towers (built c. 11th century)..., n.d.; Basic information..., 2020; Binh Dinh..., 2022; Cham Temples..., n.d.; Cham towers..., n.d.; Irving, 2000; Kumar, 2016).

Lying in the sea, with a history of more than 1,000 years, the Thi Nai citadel established as a military and trading port can only be seen at low tide. Discovered in 1987, the citadel was destroyed in the 15th century as a result of the expansion of King Le Thanh Tong's army. The method of construction of the citadel has not yet been investigated, but it is believed that the Cham people used a mortar that was unique for the time, enabling the creation of smooth surfaces (Đầm Thị Nại..., 2017; Những di tích..., 2013; Thành Thị Nại..., 2011).

A National Art Monument and Special National Monument of Vietnam, the 11th-century Nhan Tower was built on top of Nhan Hill. The four-storey, 23.5 m square structure with a base area of 121 m square and an eastern orientation has been renovated several times. The temple grounds include a carved stone, a stone lotus flower and a stone stele with an inscription in honour of Shiva and other gods. Characteristic elements of the building rebuilt from destruction include pyramidal turrets and a linga on the roof, as well as damaged false doors.

On the fifteenth day of the first month according to the lunar calendar, it hosts a poetry night, cultural performances every Saturday from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., and a Poetry Festival on the first full moon, in celebration of Tet (Le, 2019b; Nhan Tower..., 2007, 2012, n.d.; Thang, 2017; Tran, 2020).

A completely separate group is the My Son Shrine (located in the province of Quang Nam, a few dozen kilometres from Da Nang), which originally comprised around 80 towers dating from the 7th to the 13th century, although their construction began as early as in the 4th century. The locations, surrounded by mountains, were planned so that the temple complex would also have a defensive function. The temples, shaped like towers, equipped with stone pillars and decorated with sandstone reliefs, were built using low-fired brick.

My Son was partially restored to its original state after the first reconstruction between 1937 and 1942, and extensive restoration work was carried out. UNESCO's patronage, the work of Vietnamese, Polish and Italian experts in the post-1978 period, and the support of the World Heritage Fund, led to the clean-up of the site, the excavation of many elements of the towers, photogrammetric surveys and the reconstruction of some structures.

The uniqueness of the heritage complex, the UNESCO World Heritage status, contacts with Laos, Thailand, Myanmar and Cambodia, an increasing number of tourists visiting My Son, not only from abroad, is causing a growing awareness of the social obligation to combine leisure tourism with visits to historical sites.

Situated in the woods, the complex is well organised, the directions of the tour clearly marked out and the individual sites connected by picturesque brick paths. There are information boards about the artefacts, as well as directions to the site. Along with the ticket, tourists receive a mini map and are taken around in electric cars. The stay at the site is enhanced by daily dance shows and Cham music concerts. A new product of My Son is the artistic performances organised from 24 March 2022: the *Legendary Night of My Son*. In front of the temple complex there is a museum facility (Sparkling..., 2022; Son Sanctuary..., 1999, 2006; My Son, Vietnam..., n.d.; Pham, 2014; Tran, 2011).

Located on Ong Xiem Hill, Phu Lac (Binh Thuan Province), the group of six low Po Dam towers dating from the late eighth and early ninth centuries are shrines in honour of King Po Dam (Po Kathit, La Tra Duyen) built in a southern orientation. Holding the status of a National Architectural Monument, it is a heterogeneous group of shrines in age, with the three northern towers built in the Hoa Lai style dating from the late eighth and early ninth centuries and the three southern towers from the 14th century. It is likely that the first structures of this complex were hypaethral temples, i.e. without a roof. Although legend indicates that the temples were dedicated to 15th-century kings, experts indicate that the buildings were built seven hundred years earlier (Dang, 2017; 2021b; Khám phá báu..., 2020; Parul, 2016; Tháp Po Dam..., 2014, n.d.).

A Linga – Yoni altar has been preserved in the complex equipped with a modest information board. Also found were stone tablets and elements of columns, a late 12th century stone statue of Shiva as decoration from the temple's main entrance, and a mid-13th century stone sculpture of a lion, all of which are on display at the National History Museum in Hanoi. In April, according to the Cham calendar,

the dragon robes of King Po Dam are honoured by sacrificing them (Dang, 2017; 2021b; Khám phá báu..., 2020; Parul, 2016; Tháp Po Dam..., 2014, n.d.).

Other important Cham sites associated with the presence of temples include: Phu Hai, Hoa Lai, Po Klong Garai, Po Rome (Chapman, 2018). The three towers of Phu Hai (Po Sah Inu) were built in honour of Shiva and Princess Po Sah Inu on Ba Nai (Ong Hoang) Hill. The eighth- to ninth-century structures, which have Vietnamese National Heritage status and face east, stand 7 km from Phan Thiet within the Binh Thuan province. The structures, 5 to 16 metres high, are among the oldest surviving Cham temple complexes in Vietnam. Despite damage caused by the passage of time and inappropriate restorations, the pyramidal towers with a square base and steeply pitched roofs have preserved many structural elements and ornaments, such as light recesses, gun ports, carved lintels, cylindrical exterior columns, false doors, pilasters and carved appliques, among others. The only piece of equipment in the temples is the Linga – Yoni altar with a partially replaced pedestal. The complex is completed by the ruins of the fourth tower, discovered between 1992 and 1995.

On July 1, according to the Cham calendar, Cham festivals such as Kate, Rija Nu'ga, Poh Mbang Yang, the ginger cake baking festival, weaving and pottery festival are held within the fenced premises (Parmentier, 1909; Parul, 2016; Po Sah Inu..., n.d.; Tháp Po Sah..., n.d.; Yen, 2021).

The two Hoa Lai temple towers bearing the designation of National Historic Landmark and Special National Monument, facing east, are located in the Tam Thap, Ninh Thuan province. Part of an ensemble dating from the eighth to ninth centuries was probably the third tower, of which only the base remains. The unfinished complex still contains brickwork and remains of the walls. The 8.4x8.4-m and 9.2x9.2-m towers, built on a square plan, consist of many ornate architectural elements, such as columns, a system of false doors and doorframes, decorative belts, a figure of an armed god, a Garuda figure, a tiger rider, sculptures of flowers, leaves and vines. Legend tells of the cooperation of the Cham and Cambodian kings in the creation of Hoa Lai.

Archaeological work after 1986, led to the discovery of, among others, a stone linga and yoni and more than 400 other artefacts, placed in the Ninh Thuan Museum. Meanwhile, a stone stele, listed as a National Treasure of Vietnam, was unearthed in 2006. Despite many restorations, mistakes were not prevented by partially deforming the temples between 1998 and 2001. The site was fenced and equipped with a gate (Cham folk..., 2009; Chiêm

ngưỡng về..., 2020; Dang, 2020; Đoài, n.d.; Fangi et al., 2013; Excavation at Hoa..., 2008; Hoa Lai..., 2020; Le, 2019b).

The Po Klong Garai tower complex, which has the status of Vietnamese National Monument, Vietnamese National Heritage and Special National Monument, was built by King Jay Simhavarman III, in the late 13th and early 14th centuries in Panduranga, the former principality of the Kingdom of Champa, on the rocky Trau Hill. The most beautiful Cham temples located in Do Vinh Ward, Ninh Thuan Province were built in honour of Shiva and King Po Klong Garai, who built the Nha Trinh Dam and the Cham Canal. The three 9–14 m high brick towers (Cong – gateway, Lua – fire and main) remaining from the larger temple complex, which are in very good condition thanks to the Polish specialists who restored Po Klong Garai between 1980 and 1990, were executed in a careful architectural style. Built on a rectangular plan, the temples are decorated with saddle roofs, shrines on the domes, a linga and a sculpture of a dancing Shiva. Internal decorations include a sculpture of King Po Klong Garai, many simple appliques, carved faces, makar and lotus leaves.

In January, April, July and September according to the Cham calendar, Po Klong Garai is the venue for many festivals, artistic performances, pottery demonstrations, weaving, art and folk games, including the Prayer for Rain, Kaolin Festival, and Kate Festival, among others. In front of the entrance to the complex is the Cham Cultural Exhibition Centre, documenting daily Cham life, as well as a photo gallery, souvenir sales and a wooden cart with buffaloes pulling it (Dang, 2017; Troung, n.d.; Duc, 2019; Le, 2019a; Le., 2019b; Nguyễn..., 2019; Po Klong Garai..., 2020; Tran, 2011; Temple cham..., 2020; Tháp Chàm..., 2020; Truong, 2022).

The four-storey, eight-metre-high, east-oriented Po Rome Tower, in honour of King Po Rome (1627–1651) from the 16th–17th centuries, stands on a high hill, in Hau Sanh village (the Ninh Thuan province). The last Cham brick building to have the status of a National Monument of Architecture and Art, made on an 8x8 m square plan, is equipped with three false doors and a dome with a stone linga on top. The temple was decorated with brick carvings in the form of: Shiva, human effigies, Nadin cow, fire, lotus. It houses a statue and the tomb of King Po Rome and a statue of Queen Po Bia Sančan. Surrounding the enclosed tower, accessed by a stone staircase, is a statue of Queen Sucih and two tombstones. Restorations and archaeological work have led to the discovery of human remains, carved stone stelae,

fragments of carvings and structural elements, and a set of 17th-century reliefs. On the Po Rome site, the Kate Festival takes place from 1 to 3 July, according to the Cham calendar (Le, 2020; Kate Festival..., n.d.; Po Rome..., n.d., 2012; Tháp Pô Rômê..., 2019).

Archaeological sites are a separate category which, due to the scale of devastation, cannot be attributed to towers or citadels, although they are also mentioned in the literature in the context of heavily devastated temples, if only because of ongoing research work. They are particularly in close proximity to towers or citadels or in places where, for example, some artefacts were accidentally encountered during other work. Among the many sites, archaeological work is carried out mainly in: Linh Thai, Lieu Coc, Dong Duong, Lan My Duc, Quang Binh, Ha Trung, Thach Anh, Bich La, Da Nang – Phong Le, Huong Que, Xuan Duong, Tam Ky, Chanh Lo, Quang Ngai, Kon Tum, Mam, Quy Nhon, Binh Dinh, Rome and, in particular, My Son.

In Vietnam, Cham artefacts are collected in more than a dozen museums, of which only the Cham Sculptural Art Museum in Da Nang is dedicated to the sculpture of the Champa Kingdom. Apart from it, the most important sites collecting Cham artefacts, mainly sculpture, building elements and ceramics, include the Sa Huynh and Champa Culture Museum in Da Nang, the Cham Museum in Bac Binh, the Cham Cultural House in Binh Son, the Cham Cultural Research Centre in Ninh Thuan, the History Museum in Ho Chi Minh City, the Museum of Culture and Art in Ho Chi Minh City, the My Son Museum Pavilions, the Vietnam National History Museum in Hanoi, the Sa Huynh Cultural Museum in Hoi An, the Royal Museum in Hue, the Gia Lai Provincial Museum, the Binh Dinh Museum, the Nguyen Thi Dao Exhibition House, the Hoi An Museum of History and Culture, the Ho An Thuan Collection. In addition, some researchers suggest that “hundreds of ruined sites may lie along rivers leading to the Central Plateau, eastern Cambodia and Laos” (Ramabadran, 2019).

5. Summary

Currently, Vietnam is pursuing an organised conservation policy, also treating artefacts that have arisen as a result of the expansion of cultures from other parts of the world and the region as national heritage. Stopping the ruination of monuments is closely linked to economic development, in which tourism plays a leading role. The difficulties presented in the study regarding research activities, information on archaeological research and problems of a geographical and historical nature,

are intended to give an idea of the scale of the problem in the context of analysing and saving the cultural and architectural heritage of the Kingdom of Cham. Due to the hitherto unrecognised construction technique of Cham temples being one of the fundamental factors for the survival of the unique towers, the paper concludes with a closer explanation of this issue.

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