





# SHIPWRECKED

TANG TREASURES AND MONSOON WINDS

SPECIAL SOUVENIR EDITION

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.  
National Heritage Board, Singapore  
Singapore Tourism Board



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A model of the Belitung ship and ceramics recovered from its wreckage are featured in the *Shipwrecked* exhibition at the new ArtScience Museum, Singapore.

## Foreword

George Yeo, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Singapore

The ninth-century Arab dhow that carried the Tang Shipwreck Treasure and sank some 400 miles south of Singapore was part of an earlier era of globalization. It was the age of the Tang, China's greatest dynasty, and the height of the Abbasid Empire. The cities of Chang'an and Baghdad were linked by commerce transported via both overland and maritime silk routes.

In the previous century, at the battle of Talas, an eastward-moving Abbasid army had defeated a Tang army that crossed the Tian Shan mountain range in Central Asia. According to one account, the Abbasids captured Chinese papermakers and learned how to mass-produce paper. That technology, which the Chinese had kept secret for centuries, quickly moved westward, transforming the Islamic world and, much later, Europe. After Talas, no Chinese army would cross the Tian Shan again. It was enough to trade.

Trade flowed over land and sea, linking diverse parts of Asia. As ships could carry a much greater load than camels could, the maritime route from East Asia through Southeast Asia to South and West Asia became more important, with the Gulf serving as an important hub.

Buddhism and Islam were the portable religions of the time. In Southeast Asia, Buddhist Srivijaya held sway. In South Asia, the great Buddhist university, Nalanda, received monks who traveled through Central and Southeast Asia. The encounter between Buddhism and Islam was largely peaceful, a relationship that continues to this day. Indeed, the Tang Shipwreck Treasure collection was found with pieces bearing Buddhist and Islamic motifs sitting side by side.

We hear echoes of that world in this century. In a new age of globalization, different parts of the world are connected once again by trade. By researching the voyage of the collection, its content, and the global economy of that period, we can learn lessons that apply today. Diversity may be a reason for conflict, but it also can be a source of learning and creativity. In celebrating that glorious past, we can draw inspiration for the future.

## Foreword

Aw Kah Peng, Chief Executive, Singapore Tourism Board

Cities represent the diversity of lives within shared spaces. They are special because they contain the collective experiences of many communities over centuries. Since ancient times, cities have been the sites where talent congregates and creation takes place. They have inspired great inventions, from scientific discoveries to innovations in pottery, art, and craftsmanship. We understand this because Singapore is one such place.

That is also why the artifacts from the Tang Shipwreck Treasure excite so many of us in Singapore. They not only shed light on our personal and national histories, they are also a window into the past of many great cities. We were deeply impressed when we learned how these invaluable artifacts ended up in our part of the world and about the historical significance associated with being near our waters. Truly, this collection helps tell the story of how Singapore grew from a fishing village into the modern metropolis it is today. It also underscores how the city benefited from its strategic location in the global trade network and the cultural exchanges that arose through that trade.

The Singapore Tourism Board (STB) is honored to play a role in showcasing the Tang Shipwreck Treasure: Singapore's Maritime Collection. By presenting the collection first in Singapore and subsequently to a global audience, we hope to give audiences a different and deeper perspective of our island-nation. We believe the artifacts will help draw the link between the city-state that exists today and the rich historical narrative of the past.

STB would like to put on record our deepest appreciation to the Estate of Tan Sri Khoo Teck Puat for its generous contribution toward the acquisition of the artifacts. Mr. Khoo Teck Puat was one of Singapore's best-known businessmen and philanthropists. This world tour also would not have been possible without our esteemed partners—the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery and the National Heritage Board, Singapore.

It is hard for words to do justice to the Tang Shipwreck Treasure: Singapore's Maritime Collection. The best way to fully appreciate the collection is to see the artifacts firsthand and be taken on a magical historical journey. We invite you to enjoy the exhibition.



## Foreword

Michael Koh, CEO, National Heritage Board, Singapore

The mission of the National Heritage Board (NHB) is the development of Singapore as a vibrant cultural hub. It is therefore with great pride that we—in close partnership with the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution—present the inaugural exhibition and international tour of one of the oldest and most significant marine archaeological finds of our time, the Tang Shipwreck Treasure: Singapore's Maritime Collection.

In 2005, the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) in Singapore displayed highlights from the Tang shipwreck. Titled *Tang Treasure from the Sea*, the display was well received by more than 150,000 visitors. Since then, ACM has worked closely with the Sackler and STB to develop the project's themes, select objects, and design and install the exhibition that became *Shipwrecked: Tang Treasures and Monsoon Winds*.

The close collaboration between ACM and the Sackler has been most rewarding, resulting in the fruitful exchange of ideas and expertise. We at NHB are very happy to have worked with the Sackler and have benefited immensely from the experience.

Heritage constitutes an integral part of any country's social fabric, and we are honored to be a part of this landmark exhibition, which links so many cultures from Asia to the Middle East. It is a testament to how art and culture can transcend boundaries and encourage greater understanding. The world tour of the Tang Shipwreck Treasure will give a large number of people a chance to see these remarkable objects, and we hope visitors everywhere will come away with a better understanding of the cultural contacts brought about by maritime trade.

## Foreword

Julian Raby, Director, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

In 762, the Abbasid Caliph al-Mansur founded Baghdad as the capital of an empire that stretched from the Mediterranean Sea to the Taklamakan Desert. He is reported to have predicted, "Now nothing separates us from China." Seventy-five years later, al-Mansur's prediction was borne out: Chinese goods, ceramics in particular, flowed into Iraq, provoking a response from Iraqi potters that was to see the development of three of the most influential ceramic techniques in the western hemisphere, which transformed the history of ceramics from ninth-century Iraq to sixteenth-century Italy and seventeenth-century Holland.

Abbasid Iraq and Tang China were the two superpowers of their era. And they were destined to interact in Central Asia, disputing territory and conducting trade along the desert Silk Road. The ninth century, as we can see from the ceramic shards strewn across many archaeological sites in the Middle East, saw a massive increase in trade, as Tang China focused on the export trade, with Abbasid Iraq one of the major markets of the era.

Even though many of China's premier kilns were far inland, a network of rivers and canals enabled ceramics to be ferried to the coast. Ceramics had been carried overland but, as the Belitung wreck demonstrates, the quantities that even a single vessel could carry encouraged a shift in the principal routes, from land to sea, from the fabled Silk Road to the maritime Spice Route.

Yet in one sense Caliph al-Mansur was wrong: what separated Baghdad from China were vast oceans fraught with dangers, some real, some imagined. This Spice Route naturally divides into two principal legs, determined by the monsoons. Sailors and merchants were forced to sojourn in Southeast Asia as they waited for the winds to change. Southeast Asia also benefited from several different narrows through which trade goods had to be ferried, from the Malacca Straits to the Sunda Straits to the narrow isthmus of the Malay Peninsula.

This exhibition tells the story of a remarkable discovery—the Belitung wreck—that provides the most stunning testimony of a global trade a thousand years ago. It is witness to a China playing a leading role in this trade in a manner that it has resumed over the last two decades; to a Gulf that is one of the great

consumer markets; and to a Southeast Asia where Singapore has assumed the role once enjoyed by the kingdoms of Srivijaya, Sailendra, and Mataram. These kingdoms were builders of great temple complexes, just as Singapore is now expressing itself in major architectural projects. Indeed, Singapore is said to have been founded by a scion of the Srivijayan dynasty, providing a genealogical and geographical link between the ninth-century and our modern world.

The Belitung cargo provides tangible proof of the accounts of mid-ninth-century travelers such as Sulayman of Basra. The recovered objects are the hard facts that complement the imaginative fictions of Sinbad the Sailor. They represent one of the great archaeological discoveries of the late twentieth century, and Singapore is to be congratulated for recognizing their importance and ensuring that the cargo has been largely kept together.

Still, many archaeologists argue that some evidence must have been lost because the site was not protected from the outset, and archaeological recording only began in the second season. Rather than repudiate the recovery as a travesty of the principles of maritime archaeology, I hope that we can be grateful that the cargo was not completely plundered by local fishermen, and that the salvage team chose to sponsor an archaeological survey and maintain the vast majority of finds as a single collection. Thus the Belitung wreck avoided the fate of several others previously salvaged in Southeast Asian waters, whose cargoes were dispersed onto the open market without regard to their historical value.

I hope that this exhibition can have a positive effect in two areas. One is to encourage a greater understanding of the ways in which different regions of the globe were interconnected a millennium ago, and of the importance of the maritime Spice Route, a route long overshadowed, at least in the popular imagination, by the Silk Road. Let us pay as much attention to the ships of the sea as we do to the "ships of the desert." The second aim is to provoke an appreciation of the crucial role that maritime archaeology can play in reconstructing Southeast Asia's history. This can be achieved only if enlightened leaders are willing to devote funds to foster archaeological research, enact local controls to protect vulnerable sites, create institutes of maritime archaeology in universities, and provide support to museums to study and exhibit maritime finds. This exhibition will, I hope, encourage Singapore to build on the commitment it has shown in purchasing this remarkable collection, so that it becomes a catalyst for developing expertise and resources not only in Singapore itself but across the entire ASEAN region.

## Sponsors

*Shipwrecked: Tang Treasures and Monsoon Winds* is organized by the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, the National Heritage Board, Singapore, and the Singapore Tourism Board. The exhibition opened at the ArtScience Museum in Singapore on February 19, 2011.

The acquisition of the Tang Shipwreck Treasure: Singapore's Maritime Collection was made possible by a generous donation from the Estate of Tan Sri Khoo Teck Puat.





## TWO EMPIRES

Ninth-century Asia was dominated by two great powers, those of the Abbasid and Tang dynasties. The Tang Empire's influence extended from the East China Sea to the oases of Central Asia. To the west, the Abbasid Empire stretched across Iran, Iraq, and Egypt into North Africa. There had been contact between China and West Asia for many centuries before, and during the seventh and the first half of the eighth century, a period of relative political stability, cultural connections had multiplied, with people, trade goods, and ideas (religions, languages, and technologies) traveling between east and west more freely and on a larger scale than ever before.

China had been reunited by the Sui dynasty (581–618), but it was under the Tang (618–907) that it experienced a golden age, especially in the early period of their rule. A huge population and correspondingly large armies allowed China to quell the nomad tribes of Central Asia, and for a while it received tribute from numerous states while acting as “protector” to others. By the ninth century, China no longer held unchallenged sway over Central Asia, but it maintained great cultural influence there and over its other neighbors, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, and poetry and painting continued to flourish. Meanwhile, Buddhism had become an increasingly important feature of Chinese life: it had been introduced from India but strains from Southeast and Central Asia were now arriving, too. Diplomacy, trade, and migrations forced by the Arab conquest of lands to the west brought thousands of foreigners—Persians, Arabs, Indians, Malays, and Sinhalese—to visit and live in China.

The capital Chang'an (now Xi'an) grew to become the largest city on earth, with a million inhabitants of many nationalities and faiths. Under the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), the original city had been built on already ancient principles, as a rectangular grid with streets, gates, and squares arranged in harmony with favorable terrestrial features. The Tang evoked this earlier age of Chinese expansion when they rebuilt Chang'an as their own capital, again on a rectilinear plan. Besides the imperial palaces, there were parks and lakes, gardens and waterways, and mosques, temples, monasteries, and churches to serve the diverse population. But by the later Tang period, Chang'an was no longer the empire's economic center. Constant challenges from the west (chiefly from Turkic and Tibetan forces) refocused Tang attention to the east, and to the sea. Yangzhou in the southeast, where the Yangzi River met the Grand Canal, was now the most important entrepôt. In the sixth and seventh centuries, the canal had been constructed to allow

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The Great Wild  
Goose Pagoda of  
the Da Ci'en Temple  
in Chang'an, built  
in the 7th century.

north-south communication within the country; in the eighth and ninth, coastal ports such as Yangzhou and especially Guangzhou, further south, were expanded with international maritime trade in mind.

In the west, the focus of the Arab Empire had also been reoriented, away from the Mediterranean and eastward to Iraq and Iran. After the Abbasid dynasty (750-1258) had overthrown their predecessors, the Umayyads, they moved the capital from Damascus to Baghdad in 762. The city's founder, al-Mansur, acknowledged the potential of its location on the Tigris River: "There is no obstacle between us and China. Everything on the sea can come to us from it." Abbasid dominion did not go unchallenged for long: central control was hard to exercise over such a far-flung empire, and by the mid-ninth century certain regional rulers had much autonomy. Even so, Baghdad enjoyed its own golden age: under the renowned caliph Harun al-Rashid it became a center for learning, where scholars collected and copied ancient texts and made advances in scientific, medical, mathematical, and astronomical knowledge. By the 800s Baghdad, built in a circle with a radiating plan (based on ancient Persian prototypes) and central palaces and a mosque, was the world's largest city outside China. Nevertheless, unrest between its populace and imperial mercenaries caused the capital to be moved to Samarra, a short way north of Baghdad on the Tigris, between 836 and 892.

The ninth century saw the peak of Abbasid consumerism and the expansion of China's economy and industrial capacity, even as civil strife threatened the authority of both ruling dynasties. The demand from the urban elites for foreign luxury goods, raw materials, and exotic foodstuffs increased. It had been serviced for centuries by the famous Silk Road across the deserts of Central Asia, and now it was also being answered by a burgeoning maritime enterprise, with ships sailing between the ports of the Gulf and Arabian Sea and those on China's south and east coasts. The sea trade made mass export of heavy, fragile Chinese ceramics possible for the first time, and large numbers of them have been found at sites from Fustat in Egypt and the East African coast to Samarra in Iraq and throughout Southeast and East Asia. In return, the Abbasid Empire provided China with raw materials and finished goods, such as textiles and the glass, made in Basra, that was found among the imperial treasures donated to the Famensi, a temple just west of Chang'an, before it was sealed in 874. The Belitung ship set sail at the height of this era of prosperity. But for both regions political instability lay ahead, which would bring about the end of direct trade between them on the Silk Road of the Sea.

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Samarra's Great Mosque (847) was at one time the largest in the world.

## THE DESERT ROAD

Trade between east and west began in earnest at the end of the first millennium BCE with the opening of what we now call the Silk Road. Goods and people had found their way in limited numbers across Asia for centuries before this, but trade began to flourish with the encouragement of the Han emperors. Silk—China’s most prestigious export—was known in Rome in the first century BCE, although Mediterranean people were vague as to its source and the whereabouts of Serica (the “Land of Silk”). Under the early Tang, imports and exports of luxury goods increased dramatically, as did contacts with the Central Asian peoples on China’s borders and with fellow Buddhists in India. The Silk Road was a vital conduit not only for goods but also for people and ideas.

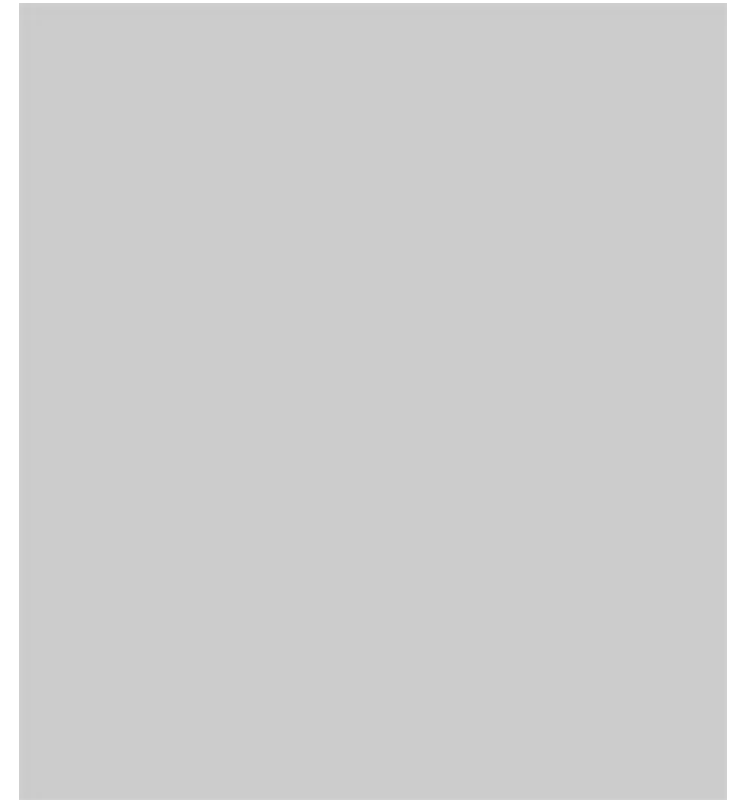
Travelers along the Silk Road were forced to brave the extreme climate of the Central Asian deserts, where winter might last eight months and summers were baking. The main route from China began at Chang’an, continued via oasis towns such as Dunhuang, and skirted north or south of the Taklamakan Desert to Kashgar. Another way ran north of the Tian Shan mountain range. From Kashgar, travelers could turn south to India or press on westward to Samarqand and into the Abbasid Empire, where further routes led to the capital Baghdad, and beyond that to Damascus, Byzantium, or the Black Sea.

People of many faiths—Christians, Nestorians, Manicheans, and Muslims—made their way eastward along the Silk Road, but the most important religion to be introduced to China was Buddhism, probably first practiced there by Central Asians in the first century CE; by the third century Chinese Buddhists were traveling in the opposite direction. They went to visit famous Buddhist sites in India and to receive advanced teaching, and returned with sacred texts.

Buddhist pilgrims also stopped along the Silk Road, at monasteries such as that at Dunhuang, a major Buddhist center in China from the fourth to the tenth century. These monasteries earned considerable wealth serving as way stations, storehouses, and banks for the Silk Road traders. Here, the caravans could find new pack animals and hire guides and interpreters. Unlike missionaries, foreign merchants hardly ever traveled the length of the route to accompany their goods, which in fact passed from agent to agent. From the second century BCE to the end of the Tang, the Sogdians, a Central Asian people, negotiated commerce along the way, their language becoming that commonly used by all traders on the Silk Road. Sogdian textiles have been found at sites such as Dunhuang in the east and as far west as cathedral treasuries and tombs in Belgium and France. It was they who brought

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Pottery figurines of two-humped or Bactrian camels bearing wooden packboards show how familiar these animals were to the Chinese.



Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, and even aspects of Buddhism eastward; transmitted West Asian imagery that immediately became popular in all sorts of Chinese crafts; and adopted Chinese paper, helping its spread westward into central Islamic lands and eventually to Europe.

A series of events across Asia, from the Arab Conquest in the west to civil war in China, meant that the Silk Road became more dangerous for merchant travelers, and its use declined through the eighth century. The Tang dynasty eventually fell in 907, leaving China splintered for a century. But by this time traders had established other ways to negotiate the thousands of kilometers between China and its western markets: in increasing numbers, they took to the sea.



*Jewel of Muscat* during  
sea trials off Oman.





## THE MARITIME TRADE

Exactly when the sea trade between China and West Asia began is unknown but it was clearly well established by 636, when the port of al-Ubulla at the head of the Gulf was described by its Arab conqueror as “the port of Bahrain, Oman and China.” Buddhist pilgrims were traveling by ship from at least the fourth century, and there were large foreign communities living in China’s main port cities by the mid-seventh century. Although there are contemporary reports of “Chinese ships” reaching the Gulf in the ninth century, it seems that these referred more to the source of the cargoes than to the origin of the vessels: no Chinese ships of this date have been found in the waters of Southeast Asia. The Belitung wreck, however, offers the first physical proof of the long-held belief that Perso-Arab vessels carried the China trade.

The sewn construction and African hardwoods used on the ship show that it most likely originated in a Gulf port, or perhaps on the coast of Oman, where similar vessels were still being built in the twentieth century. It may have come from Basra, at the head of the Gulf, or Siraf, further south on the Iranian shore. Both served the key markets of Baghdad, Shiraz, and Samarra, but Siraf was the most important entrepôt of the period until its destruction by an earthquake in 977. Detailed excavations of the Great Mosque there have produced ceramic finds of the same type as those recovered from the Belitung wreck.

Merchant ships setting out from either of these ports, or from Sohar in Oman, might choose one of two possible routes to the Strait of Malacca. They could hug the coast, never leaving sight of land; or they could strike out from Muscat across the Arabian Sea to India’s west coast. They then proceeded south to the Malabar Coast and Sri Lanka, before heading for the Nicobar Islands and Kalah (perhaps Kedah) on the Malay Peninsula and Srivijaya in Sumatra. The onward journey to China would take them across the South China Sea to the coast of Vietnam before arriving at Guangzhou (Arabic: Khanfu), China’s premier southern port. Along the way the ships stopped to take on provisions, recruit crew, and acquire local products: incense from Arabia; ivory, pepper, and cotton goods from India; pearls, gemstones, and spices from Sri Lanka; and spices, scented woods, and resins from Southeast Asia.

Ships had to leave the Gulf in autumn to catch the favorable winds of the northeast monsoon, and once in the South China Sea, pick up the southwest monsoon to drive them northward toward Guangzhou, thirty days’ sailing further on. The Belitung ship may even have traveled as far as Ningbo and Yangzhou on China’s east coast, near the mouth of the Yangzi River. Most of

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The Belitung ship would have been stitched together with coir rope, a nail-less construction technique typical of the Gulf and India.



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This 13th-century illustration depicts a vessel with features similar to those on the Belitung ship.

the ceramic types from the wreck are also found at Yangzhou, and many of the gold objects may have been made there.

Yangzhou was a key marketplace, positioned not only near the coast but on a system of waterways that linked northern and southern China. Shipbuilding seems to have thrived there, and the remains of boats and port infrastructure have been found in archaeological excavations. “Persian shops” are reported trading in Yangzhou. Alternatively, the vast quantities of ceramics found on the wreck and other, perishable cargoes might have been assembled at Guangzhou, packed in large stoneware storage jars made in nearby kilns. Silk cloth—still China’s most popular export—was in all probability also loaded at Guangzhou.

The maritime trade stimulated the growth of the most important Chinese ports of the late Tang era—Yangzhou, Ningbo, and Guangzhou in particular—whose foreign populations increased rapidly. They included Malays, Chams from central Vietnam, Indians, non-Muslim Persians (in Chinese called *Bos*) and Muslim Persians and Arabs (*Dashi*). Persian, and later, Arabic, was used as the language of international sea-borne trade, and the wealth of such foreigners was axiomatic. Guangzhou became an important source of tax revenue for the Tang, and in 763 the post of Maritime Trade Commissioner (*shibo shi*) was set up to tap it. In 829, foreign merchants were granted official imperial protection, although this lasted only fifty years. In 879, an estimated 120,000 foreign merchants were massacred by the rebel Huang Chao in Guangzhou. With the Tang no longer able to guarantee the safety of foreigners, trade suffered, and although sailors from West Asia continued to make ocean voyages, they no longer ran direct to China. Instead, merchants from east and west obtained goods at intermediate trading posts in Sri Lanka and the Malay Peninsula, as they had done centuries before.

The journey homeward to the West Asian ports also began in the autumn, again determined by the direction of monsoon winds. Our ship seems to have been heading toward the Sunda Strait between the islands of Sumatra and Java, perhaps to trade with (or pay tolls to) agents of the powerful Southeast Asian empires of Srivijaya and Sailendra. Although we cannot know its mission, the Belitung ship provides a dramatic illustration of the potential riches and real dangers that inspired the tales of Sinbad.

## THE EMPIRES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

Among the thousands of relief sculptures decorating the great ninth-century Buddhist monument at Borobudur in central Java are five panels depicting oceangoing ships of a local outrigger design. Indonesian-built vessels had been plying the routes to China for centuries before the Tang, and the region was home to maritime states that played a key role in east-west trade during that period and beyond.

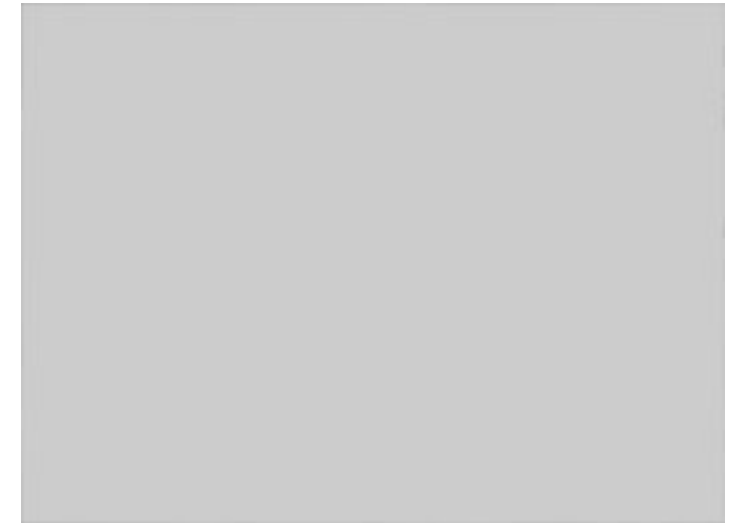
All ships sailing between West Asian ports and those of China had to pass through either the Strait of Malacca, between the Malay Peninsula and the island of Sumatra, or the Sunda Strait, between Sumatra and Java. Control of these pinch-points and the waters around them made the confederation of local kingdoms known as Srivijaya a powerful regional force from the seventh to the thirteenth century. The Chinese, who called it Shilifoshi (or Sanfozhi), recognized this, and in their histories described it as standing “at the center of all foreign waterways.”

The Srivijayan civilization left few physical remains, and the empire was largely forgotten until the twentieth century. It seems to have been centered variously on Palembang and Jambi in southeast Sumatra and, around the time of the Belitung shipwreck, controlled the seas as far north as the Isthmus of Kra (peninsular Thailand), the western coast of Borneo, and western Java; it may also have conducted raids on Khmer and Champa ports in Cambodia and Vietnam to preserve its dominance over the South China Sea trade. Meanwhile, the related and sometime rival Sailendra dynasty established itself on Java (called the Kingdom of Heling by the Chinese), where its ruler Samaratunga oversaw the building of Borobudur.

Both Srivijaya and Sailendra enjoyed extensive trading and diplomatic relations with China. Envoys regularly traveled between the states, and the Indonesian islands were also a stopping point for Chinese Buddhist pilgrims on their way to India. Among these was the monk Yijing (635–713), who left an account of three visits to Srivijaya; on the first, in 671, he traveled on a “Persian”-owned boat. The later reinvigoration of Mahayana Buddhism in China (and elsewhere in Southeast Asia) increased demand for incense to be used in temples and shrines, and by the late Tang period the Chinese began to see Indonesia as a primary source for such commodities as well as a natural entrepôt for their own goods destined for markets further west. That Srivijayan customers, too, were interested in Chinese products is shown by the discovery of Yue, Changsha, green-glazed, and white wares from China

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Ninth-century  
carving of a ship  
at the Borobudur  
temple complex.



at many sites in Indonesia, including Palembang and other places in southern Sumatra, which would tend to confirm a secondary trade route through the Sunda Strait. Tang ceramics also have been found at temple sites in central Java, including the Prambanan complex, which dates from 850, close to the time that the Belitung ship sailed.

In the eleventh century the power of the Srivijayan Empire was weakened by attacks by the Chola kingdom of southern India which, along with Sri Lanka, another key destination on the maritime route, made its own embassies to China. Shifts in power continued for several centuries more until Srivijaya lost control of the sea routes—to the emergent entrepôt of Malacca and to the Majahapit kingdom based in eastern Java—in the thirteenth century. Islam was also being introduced from the west, at first to Sumatra and the Malay world. Around this time, a small island outpost called Temasek, at the tip of the Malay Peninsula, was founded by a Srivijayan prince. Today it is Singapore: as the inheritor of the natural geographical advantages of the Srivijayan Empire, it is the busiest port in a region that is still at the crossroads of trade between East and West.



## DISCOVERY AND RECOVERY

The Belitung shipwreck was discovered in 1998 by fishermen diving for sea cucumbers, in shallow waters less than 3 kilometers off the western shore of Belitung island in the Java Sea. A nearby reef may well have been the cause of its destruction, tearing the bottom out of the vessel, which continued under sail only 150 meters before settling on the seabed. The stitches holding the planking together rotted away relatively quickly and the hull collapsed before there was time for sediment to build up around it. Twelve centuries later, much of the ship had disappeared under coral structures that prevented its complete excavation, although the timbers that could be studied had been well preserved by the layers of anaerobic sediment that covered them, and gave enough information to allow an understanding of the ship's building techniques and a reconstruction of its form.

Working from a platform and transferring artifacts to conservation and storage facilities on land each day, salvagers recovered most of the objects from the wreck in two seasons in 1998 and 1999, with an interval for the monsoon. They were able to excavate most of the ceramics in the first season, finding many of them still neatly stacked or packed in larger storage jars that had protected them from damage by waves, salt, and sand. Breakages on the wreck seem to have been relatively limited, and this allowed the team to calculate the original ceramics cargo as consisting of some 70,000 pieces, or 25 metric tons. The bowls, ewers, and other shapes were readily identifiable Chinese types that are known to have been made in the ninth century, a dating confirmed by later radiocarbon analysis of samples of ship's timber and of a consignment of star anise (another miraculously well-preserved element of the cargo). Further testing of different woods from the wreck revealed that many had originated in Africa, strongly suggesting that this was a dhow built somewhere on the Arabian peninsula.

Other parts of the wreck could not be so easily recovered. Hardened mounds of a lime compound that may have been part of the cargo prevented the removal of other ceramics and many of the lead ingots that the ship had carried as ballast; and centuries of immersion in seawater had left metal objects fused by corrosion or covered in coral growths. Only painstaking work by conservators, often using x-rays as their only guide to the fragile decoration that lay beneath the encrusting coral, allows us to see the beauty of these artifacts once again.





## COINS

The Belitung ship was carrying a small amount of cash on its last voyage, in the form of bronze coins, as well as eighteen large silver ingots. These constitute the earliest consignment of Tang silver bullion found to date, and the largest ever recovered inside or outside China. Although very pure and of a distinctive, waisted shape, the ingots have no inscriptions indicating their place of origin or weight (found on most known examples from the Tang period).

After centuries under water, many of the coins had been heavily corroded and when discovered were fused into formations that indicated they had originally been strung together on a length of rope or a rod of wood or metal passed through the square central hole. Now the coins have been separated, the inscriptions on them can be read and show they are of the two types most common in the Tang dynasty. The majority, 199 coins in two sizes, have inscriptions that read *Kaiyuan tongbao* (circulating treasure of the new beginning), referring to a new coinage system introduced by the first Tang emperor in 621 and in continuous use for almost three centuries. A mark identifying the relevant mint was introduced on the reverse of *Kaiyuan tongbao* coins after 845, but is not found on the coins from the ship, indicating that they were struck before that date. Nine read *Qianyuan zhongbao* (heavy treasure of the Qianyuan era) and were minted from 758.

The quality and reliability of the *Kaiyuan tongbao* coins made them a very successful currency throughout the Tang empire and beyond, in Central Asia, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam; the first Japanese (708), Vietnamese (970), and Korean (996) coins were modeled on them. Their presence on the Belitung ship may represent some of the earliest evidence of their acceptability in Southeast Asian markets, which still largely operated on a barter system. These Chinese coins would have been used alongside Abbasid gold dinars and the local gold *piloncito*, but being bronze had a low market value. True monetization was yet to come.





## THE CREW AND THEIR POSSESSIONS

We cannot know for certain who crewed the Belitung ship. No human remains were found on the wreck site—when the vessel sank, perhaps all on board had time to escape to the island only a few kilometers away. They left behind a scattering of objects that were clearly not goods to be traded but personal possessions or practical tools essential to the everyday running of the ship. These can tell us something of life on board, of likely ports of call, and of the origins of the sailors, merchants, and passengers who undertook the ship's last voyage.

These miscellaneous objects come from places that span the trade route from West Asia to China. The Arab or Persian merchants who probably chartered the ship may have fitted it out with the containers made of yellowish clay covered in a turquoise-blue glaze typical of Iraq and Iran (shown opposite); other examples have been found both at Siraf and at Yangzhou, at either end of the maritime route. A small blue-glass bottle containing a still mysterious substance is also likely to have been brought from West Asia (perhaps as a sample: similar bottles containing cosmetics or medicines are known to have been shipped to China). It is perhaps surprising that besides these items, no other objects from this region were found on board.

In the course of such a long voyage it almost certainly would have been necessary to recruit new crew members, as well as to trade and renew supplies. Someone picked up in a Southeast Asian port may have brought on board the gold *piloncito* (little coin), an Indonesian type that circulated in the region until the thirteenth century. Meanwhile, the merchants' transactions may have been facilitated by the copper-alloy weights and scale bar (missing its pans and hanger) found on the wreck: scales of the same type, which are quite different from Chinese examples, are depicted in a carved relief at Borobudur and others have been found on the tenth-century Intan wreck, also discovered in the Java Sea. From at least the sixth century, Indonesia had become a major exporter of aromatic resins to China, progressively replacing West Asian frankincense and myrrh, but the small pieces of amber and benzoin found on the ship were probably left over from burnt offerings made to ensure a safe passage rather than the remnants of a commercial cargo. Benzoin resin, tapped from a tree found most famously in Sumatra and Java (the Arabs called it *luban jawi*, "Javanese frankincense"), was used as incense in Buddhist temples, as a perfume, and for a range of medicinal purposes.







**LEFT**

Bone die and  
acorn-shaped  
ivory game pieces.

**ABOVE**

Tiny blue-glass bottle,  
likely from West Asia.

Detail of inkstone with  
an engraved insect, one  
of the Chinese objects  
on board.

Although it seems unlikely that the ship's company included any Chinese sailors, it is very probable that there were Chinese passengers on board, and the wreck contained a number of Chinese-made items besides the cargo. These elegant objects include plain bronze spoons, complete and fragmentary gold bracelets, and pieces of a lacquer dish, red on top and black beneath. An inkstone incised with an insect (also seen on some of the prestigious gold pieces) must have been brought on board by a literate Chinese traveler; a stick of ink would have been ground on the smooth surface with some water, the resulting liquid collecting in the well. These rare survivals from the Tang all suggest an important Chinese presence on the ship.

Besides such refined accessories, the ship's cooking equipment appears rough-and-ready. It includes a very heavy stone mortar and pestle, and a grindstone and roller on two tall feet, of a type known in Southeast Asia. A number of lead weights and sinkers for fishing with nets suggest how the crew supplemented their diet of dried foods. A large needle may have been used to mend nets or sails. When all this work was done, and in the long intervals spent waiting for a favoring wind or clearance by a port official, the multinational crew could have passed the time gambling with the tiny bone die (the earliest to be found on a shipwreck). Four pieces of turned ivory, shaped like an acorn with a flat base, may be for a board game such as pachisi. All the while, the crew were engaged in a bigger game of chance, the voyage itself.



## CHANGSHA WARES

The vast majority of the Belitung ship's carefully packed cargo of ceramic wares came from the kilns of Changsha, in the central southern province of Hunan. In total, 55,000 Changsha bowls and 2,500 other pieces were recovered from the wreck, testament to China's capacity for mass-manufacturing—and to the foreign demand for its goods—in the ninth century.

Indeed, Changsha wares seem to have been popular in markets overseas as well as in China itself. Besides finds from Chinese tombs, significant quantities have been discovered at the site of the Tang harbor at Yangzhou, where they must have been stored before being shipped. In addition, they have been found throughout Southeast Asia and especially in Indonesia, along with some other ninth-century Chinese export wares. It is possible that at least part of the Belitung shipment was intended for sale in a Javanese port serving the rich and densely populated Sailendra kingdom of Central Java.

Relatively isolated from the Tang court, commercial centers, and other kilns—and with an eye on the newly emerging export markets—Changsha potters developed a distinctive design repertoire. Their products featured painted motifs in brown, green, and occasionally red, produced with iron- and copper-oxide-based pigments. Foreign customers favored these more colorful wares that formed the bulk of the ceramics found on the wreck, although Changsha produced a wide variety of other items.

The decoration on Changsha bowls is painted under a shiny glaze, usually tinged with green, and is characterized by free, almost calligraphic brushstrokes that emphasize spontaneity and energy. The motifs are mostly organic forms—familiar themes of leaves and flowers, animals, and clouds—that often become stylized and abstract. Other designs feature mountainous landscapes and inscriptions, including poetry, which was enjoying a golden age in the Tang. Certain other West Asian motifs are known to have appealed to domestic Chinese audiences, but they may also demonstrate that the kilns were catering to foreign tastes.

A Changsha bowl is one of only two precisely dated objects found on the entire Belitung wreck, with an inscription mentioning a summer's day in 826. It is reasonable to assume that commercial wares were not stored for long and that the Belitung ship sailed with its cargo within a year or two of this date. On the other hand, comparison of celadon wares from the wreck with finds from excavations near the Yue kilns may indicate a slightly later date, in the 840s.





## GREEN-SPLASHED WARES

Found at the stern of the Belitung shipwreck with other higher value items of cargo were a number of white ceramics decorated with splashes of bright green: these included stem cups, a massive covered box, lobed dishes and bowls, and a spectacular tall ewer with a dragon-head stopper. The body of these ceramics was covered with a white coating of liquid clay called a “slip” and translucent and copper-based glazes to produce the decoration.

Chemical analysis of fragments of green-splashed ceramics from the wreck suggests that the majority came from the kilns at Gongxian in Henan province. This manufacturing center was renowned for its undecorated white wares but by the ninth century no longer made them to the same high quality as the Xing manufactories further north in Hebei province. It is possible that Gongxian chose not to compete with the Xing kilns at this time and instead developed other lines for export, notably green-splashed and blue-and-white wares.

These more colorful products certainly appealed to foreign markets, and Tang green-splashed wares have been found in Iraq, at the Abbasid city of Samarra, and in Iran, at the port of Siraf, at Susa, and at Nishapur, far inland to the north, among many other sites in West Asia. A four-lobed bowl with a central dragon medallion like that from the Belitung cargo was also discovered, with other fragments, at Yangzhou, where the ship undoubtedly sourced many of the goods it carried. The makers of these wares increased their appeal to West Asian customers by copying a lozenge-and-foilage motif from Iraqi pottery; this design, incised into dishes and other shapes, has been found on Chinese-made green-splashed wares at Samarra but only very rarely in China itself. (It is also found on a few other ninth-century ceramics, including the blue-and-white dishes from the Belitung ship.) Iraqi craftsmen repaid the compliment by copying these pieces, as further fragments of Abbasid green-and-white wares uncovered at Samarra demonstrate.

The same motif is incised into the body of the magnificent ewer, more than one meter in height including the tall stand. It has a globular belly, long neck, and strap handle, a combination of features also seen in some monochrome white wares and smaller metal examples, such as a seventh-century bronze ewer from the treasury at the Horyu-ji, an important Buddhist temple in Nara, Japan. A dragon-head stopper also found on the shipwreck probably belongs with the ewer and is another feature shared with its metal counterpart.



Green-splashed dishes  
and the magnificent  
ewer from the  
Belitung wreck.







## CELADON

The appreciation of ceramics as a precious material during the Tang period was closely connected with the growing popularity of tea, which had probably been introduced to China with Buddhism a few centuries earlier. In his *Chajing* (The Classic of Tea), the poet and tea connoisseur Lu Yu (730s–circa 804) discussed among other aspects of tea-drinking the various types of ceramic tea bowls then available: he rated the bowls made at the Yue kilns of Zhejiang province most highly because their glaze enhanced the tea's color. Lu Yu compared this smooth glaze in varied tones of green to polished jade. In the West, it came to be called celadon, after the shepherd hero of *L'Astrée* (a seventeenth-century French romance by Honoré D'Urfé), who wore ribbons of this distinctive color.

Kilns in Zhejiang already had been making hard, durable stonewares (fired at temperatures high enough to make the ceramic material vitrify) for more than 2,000 years, and Yue celadons were regarded by Tang connoisseurs as rivaled only by Xing white wares. Quality control was strict, and they were not made in large quantities. Only around 200 of the thousands of ceramic pieces found on the Belitung ship were from the Yue kilns. Nevertheless, there seems to have been an enthusiastic foreign market for them, as indicated by finds at the port cities that served the kilns, Ningbo and Yangzhou (including a shipwreck in Ningbo harbor); at a number of sites in Southeast Asia and Japan; and at excavations as far afield as Samarra in Iraq, Siraf on the Iranian coast, and Fustat in Egypt. Almost all the Yue types recovered from the shipwreck have counterparts found in the excavations of the harbor at Ningbo, in a stratum dated by an inscribed bowl fragment to the Dazhong reign (847–59) of the Tang dynasty.

While a few larger pieces may have been made to suit the tastes of a West Asian market, the forms of most of the Yue wares in the Belitung cargo are Chinese. They are either undecorated—focusing attention on the glaze and shape—or have designs incised with a fine tool, such as the bottle in the form of two fish at left. Certain specific forms are also found in Tang silver and gold objects. In some cases, including the very rare square plates, the closest known comparisons come from the ship's cargo itself.

## WHITE WARES

Probably the most valuable ceramic cargo on the Belitung ship was a relatively small consignment of white wares (about 300 pieces). All were made in northern China, the finest examples coming from the Xing kilns in Hebei province. Thinly potted and covered with a sparkling clear glaze, their durability and translucence were fabled. Sulayman, a merchant of Basra writing around 851, described Chinese bowls as “delicate as glass vessels, through which one can see the light of water.” Many were used as elegant domestic utensils, for example, for drinking tea and wine.

The Ding kilns, a little to the north of the Xing kilns, began by imitating their neighbors’ white wares in the Tang period but eventually became the most important and innovative producer in the north. At the time the Belitung ship sailed, wares from the Ding and Xing kilns sometimes were distinguishable only by slight differences in their proportions and other minor features. Tang white stonewares also were manufactured in Henan, Shanxi, Shaanxi, and Anhui provinces, most notably at the Gongxian kilns in Henan.

Whichever kiln they originated from, white wares were unique to China and highly prized throughout Asia. However, they were not made in large numbers. The white wares recovered from the Belitung shipwreck are varied in type and may represent the output of three or four different kilns. The ship’s merchants, based at ports in the south, far from the kiln sites, could not have placed direct orders for white wares and may simply have assembled as many as they could through intermediaries. Distinguishing the products of different kilns, which would have been recognized “brands” to Chinese connoisseurs, was probably of little interest to foreign buyers.

Nevertheless, “imperial China-ware”—recognized as the best quality—made a considerable impression on the court of Harun al-Rashid, the Abbasid caliph, at the end of the eighth century. The Iraqi ceramics industry was inspired to transform its products with new technologies and forms. While Xing and Ding white wares provided the initial inspiration, the most directly influential Chinese imports were the slightly less refined white bowls made at the Gongxian kilns. Their size and shape—a hemispherical body with a flaring rim and low footring—were duplicated in the earliest opaque-white-glazed wares from Basra, which the contemporary commentator al-Azdi described as having the “surface of a white pearl ... as if carved from the circle of the moon.”



## BLUE-AND-WHITE WARE

Among the rarest items found on the Belitung ship were three white dishes painted with a blue design. These are among the earliest known intact pieces of Chinese blue-and-white ware. They provide intriguing evidence of a short-lived experiment that predated by 500 years the development of China's famous blue-and-white porcelain. They also speak of the cross-cultural influences on ceramics made possible in the ninth century by the international maritime trade.

Only fragments of similar wares have been discovered at the kilns of Gongxian in Henan province, and a few more whole items at the port of Yangzhou on the Yangzi River, suggesting that this type of white ware (with a coating of white clay slip rather than a pure white ceramic body) was intended for export only. The Gongxian kilns once had made colorful funerary earthenwares, but by the start of the ninth century had responded to a ban on lavish burials by producing stonewares for domestic use. Many Gongxian products are also distinguished by their use of color, in particular a bright green derived from copper, a characteristic that may have been meant to appeal to foreign markets.

In Western Asia, both plain and colored Chinese ceramics were admired and emulated. Inspired by large quantities of Chinese goods arriving by sea, Iraqi potters began to replicate the appearance of the imports. To cover their local yellow clay, they invented an opaque white glaze of lead and tin, the perfect background for patterns in the vivid cobalt blue that soon became a favorite decorative color on Islamic pottery. By the time the Gongxian potters painted the dishes found on the shipwreck they must have seen some Iraqi blue-on-white wares because their chosen motif—one or two lozenges surrounded by sprigs of foliage—was definitely not in the Tang repertoire. (It also appears on some of the green-splashed wares, made at the same kilns, which the ship was carrying to foreign markets.) The cobalt they used was most likely another import from West Asia.

Production of the new kind of Iraqi pottery seems to have been centered in Basra, a key Abbasid port city. While the taste for Chinese wares was probably popularized by the Abbasid court at Baghdad or Samarra, it seems likely that it was the merchants who set out from Basra on the long voyage to the Far East who provided the real impetus for these developments.



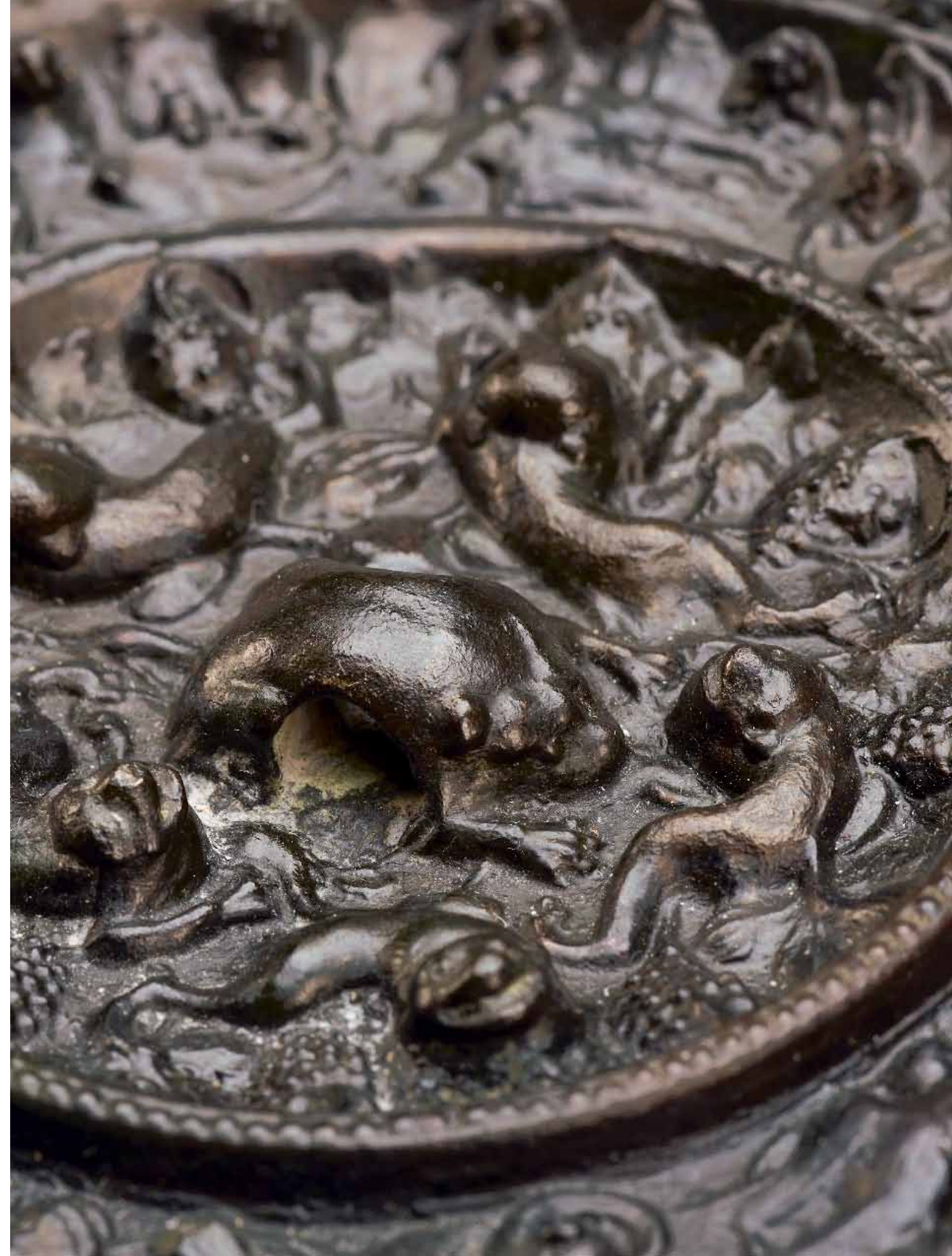


## MIRRORS

Altogether, twenty-nine Chinese bronze mirrors were recovered from the Belitung wreck, a figure that strongly suggests they were trade goods and not the personal possessions of someone on board. After centuries under water many of them had blackened or become encrusted with coral, but originally they were silvery, an effect achieved by adding more tin to the copper alloy. One side was polished smooth to provide a reflective surface, the other usually cast with a decorative design.

Most of the mirrors from the wreck are types that were popular in Tang China and abroad in the ninth century, with typical motifs such as flowers, auspicious animals and birds, and musicians. Six have an older “lion and grapevine” motif adapted from West Asian sources, and may have been made in the seventh or eighth century. Four square mirrors that now lack decoration once may have been inlaid with mother of pearl, gold, and silver in black lacquer and would have been among the more prestigious pieces. Intact examples are preserved in the mid-eighth-century Shōsō-in treasury in Nara, Japan.

Three mirrors stand out. The first was almost a thousand years old by the time the ship sailed; it dates from the middle of the Han era (206 BCE–220 CE). A second was also an antique, dating from the Six Dynasties period (220–589 CE), when China was divided. The largest mirror on the ship is Tang. An inscription dates its manufacture to winter 759 and also identifies it as one of the famous “Yangxin” mirrors, which reportedly were cast on board boats moored in the Yangzi River at Yangzhou. It is the only known example of its legendary kind. It bears a circle of eight trigrams referring to the cosmic cycle of *yin* and *yang*, while four exotic creatures symbolize the cardinal directions. The meaning of such culturally specific motifs would probably not have registered with the foreign buyers for whom the mirrors were intended but certainly would have impressed them as authentically Chinese, and probably enhanced the objects’ value in markets abroad.







## THE GOLD CUP

The most spectacular find from the Belitung shipwreck was a group of gold and silver objects discovered at the very bottom of the vessel, where they may have been hidden deliberately. These intricately worked dishes, platters, and boxes are among the most important discoveries of Tang precious metalwares ever made and constitute the first substantial find outside China itself.

Among them is an octagonal cup made of solid gold; the cost of its material alone would have equaled ten years' salary for a low-ranking Chinese official. Most surviving Tang metal cups are of bronze or silver and occasionally gilded. The Belitung cup is also remarkably large and heavy compared to other known examples.

Applied to each face of the cup is a human figure, one dancer and seven musicians carrying a variety of wind, stringed, and percussion instruments. They are identified as Central Asian by their long hair and flowing drapery. These *hu* (foreign) entertainers were popular in Tang China at the time of the wreck. The cup's ring handle with its thumb-plate decorated with back-to-back bearded heads also reflects the influence of Central Asian silverware on Chinese metalwork shapes.

Cups similar to this one had been made a hundred years or so earlier for the imperial family: three examples have been found in a cache of precious metal objects within the territory of the Tang capital at Chang'an. By contrast, the Belitung cup—larger and somewhat less delicately crafted than pieces from the High Tang period—may have been commissioned for a foreign client.

The cup probably was made not at Chang'an but at Yangzhou, where stylistically similar archaeological finds point to a shared origin and date in the first half of the ninth century. Most of China's gold and silver was mined in the southern region after the mid-eighth century, and we know these metals were in ready supply in Yangzhou in the year 760, when large quantities were looted from the city (and its rich foreign merchants) by the general Tian Shengong during the suppression of a revolt.

Were the gold cup and other precious-metal objects legitimate exports or a hoard of smuggled goods for private trade? Perhaps they were intended to be given as gifts in return for tribute presented by a foreign mission to the Tang emperor; or perhaps they were to be used in ceremonial exchanges to ease trade negotiations on the ship's long homeward journey.

## LEGENDS OF THE SEA TRADE

The Belitung shipwreck provides the first physical evidence of direct maritime trade between the ports of West Asia and China in the Tang period. The existence of Arab or Persian vessels on the sea route had long been suspected but was confirmed only by the discovery of the wreck in 1998. First-hand reports by pilgrims, diplomats, and merchants and the popular folk tales that developed from their accounts had alluded to the dominant role of Arabic ships in this period; the Belitung discovery proved that such tales were true.

The best-known of the early records is the *Akhbar al-Sin wa'l-Hind* (An Account of China and India), which early in the tenth century was incorporated by Abu Zayd al-Sirafi into a collection of travel writings. He dated the original text to around 851 and credited it to an Arab from Basra called Sulayman al-Tajir (the Merchant). Though not a traveler himself, as an inhabitant of the Iranian port of Siraf, Abu Zayd clearly knew much about the long-distance sea trade. He comments on the sewn boats that the shipwrights of Siraf specialized in building; on coconut wood being imported and used by Omanis for their ships; on the dangers of navigating between Siraf and the Red Sea; and on the international trade in aromatics.

Abu Zayd praised the exceptional artistic skill of the Chinese and described the experiences of various West Asian visitors to the Middle Kingdom. In Sulayman's time, many Iraqi merchants traded in India and China. This direct commerce came to an abrupt end with a rebellion in Guangdong in 878, which resulted in the massacre of 120,000 foreign residents of Guangzhou—Muslims, Jews, and Christians. Furthermore, Basra was devastated during an uprising of the Zanj (East African slaves) between 868 and 883. By the time Abu Zayd was writing, the direct maritime trade was becoming a thing of the past.

Nevertheless, the experiences of sailors and merchants in exotic and dangerous foreign waters survived in fiction and folklore. The Chinese had been inspired by their encounters with visitors from abroad, and the "Wonder Tales" that were popular in early ninth-century China associate Persian merchants with huge wealth, magic, and superstition. Further west, meanwhile, the stories of Sinbad were added to the collection of popular tales known as *Alf laylah wa laylah* (The Thousand and One Nights). In stories like these, now familiar the world over, the sea route found its enduring afterlife.





# Credits

## The Belitung Cargo

All objects from the Belitung shipwreck are © Tang Shipwreck Treasure: Singapore's Maritime Collection (TST). Unless otherwise noted, objects are from China, Tang dynasty, ca. 825–50. Photos by John Tsantes and Robert Harrell, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery.

*Cover (detail) and page 49:* monumental ewer with incised floral lozenges and clouds, TST2005.1.00900-1/2 to 2/2. *Title page (details), clockwise from left:* ewer with lugs, dragon-head spout, and feline-shaped handle, TST2005.1.00403; four-lobed slop jar, TST2005.1.00442; ewer with relief decoration, TST2005.1.00561; gold lobed oval bowl, TST2005.1.00923. *Page 37:* ewers with relief decoration, TST2005.1.00561. *Page 39:* Chinese coins, 2005.1.00891-1/208 to 208/208. *Page 41:* amphorae from Iraq or Iran, ca. 825–50, TST2005.1.00405, .00406, .00407. *Page 43:* small bottle, West Asia, ca. 825–50, TST2005.1.00548; inkstone with engraved insect, TST 2005.1.00544. *Page 44:* Changsha bowls, TST2005.1.43475 et al. *Page 46 (left to right):* ewer with lugs, dragon-head spout, and feline-shaped handle, TST2005.1.00403; four-lobed bowl with dragon medallion, TST2005.1.00398; large lidded jar, TST 2005.1.00377-1/2 to 2/2. *Page 48:* green-splashed dishes from the Belitung wreck, including TST2005.1.00398 (lower right). *Page 50:* celadon bottle in the form of two fish, TST2005.1.00437. *Page 53 (left to right):* bottle with quatrefoil mouth and lugs, TST2005.1.00468; four-lobed cup stands with arrow-shaped ribs, TST2005.1.00481, .00486; large lidded jar, TST2005.1.00457; cup, TST2005.1.00459. *Page 55:* Blue-and-white dish with floral lozenge motif, TST2005.1.00474. *Page 57 (detail):* Round mirror with lions and grapevines, China, Tang dynasty, 7th or early 8th century, TST2005.1.00843. *Page 58:* Gold octagonal footed cup, TST2005.1.00918.

## Other Photographs

*Frontispiece:* photo by M. Flecker. *Pages 6–7, 10–11:* Visual Media, Marina Bay Sands. *Page 19:* Keren Su/Getty Images. *Page 20:* De Agostini/Getty Images. *Pages 22–23:* © Redlink/Corbis. *Page 25:* Camel, China, mid- to late 6th century, Rogers Fund, 1928 (28.121), photo by Lynton Gardiner, © The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Art Resource. *Pages 26–27, 28:* photos by Alessandro Ghidoni. *Page 30:* Miniature from the *Maqamat* by al-Hariri, Baghdad, Iraq, 1237, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, ms arabe 5847, fol.119v, Hulton Archive, Apic/Getty Images. *Pages 32–33:* photo by Eric Lafforgue, www.ericlafforgue.com. *Page 35:* © Charles & Josette Lenars/Corbis. *Page 42:* Tony Law, National Geographic. *Page 61:* Jeff Spielman/Getty Images.

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