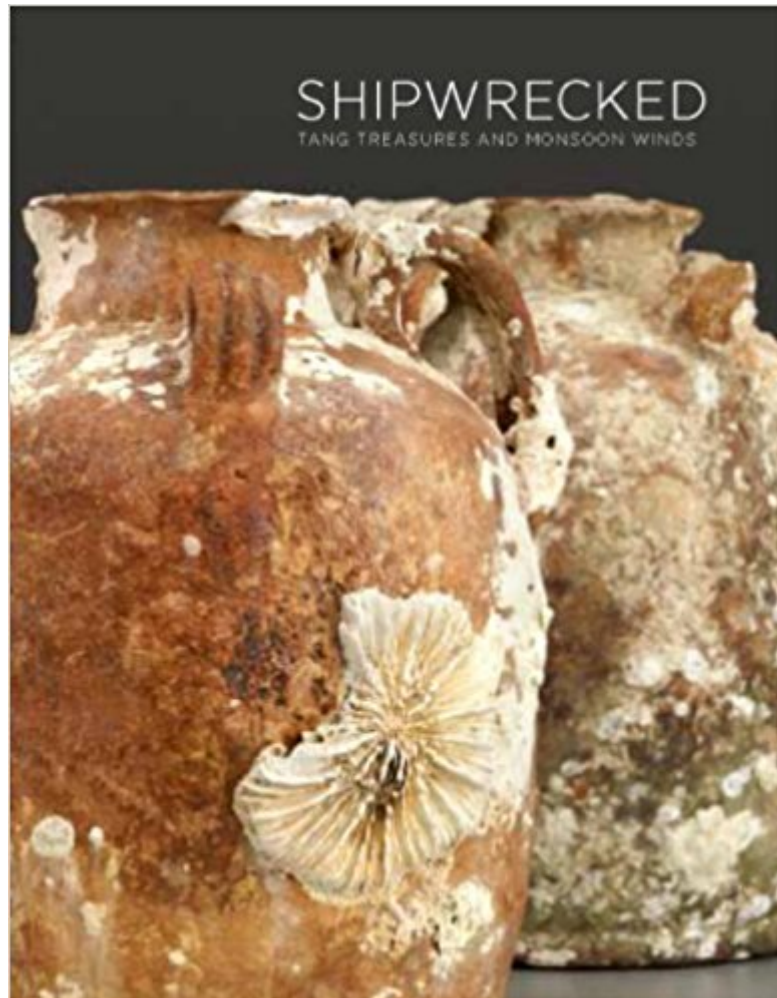




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Shipwrecked: Tang Treasures And Monsoon Winds



Synopsis

Part adventure story, part maritime archaeological expedition, part historical look into ninth-century Chinese economy, culture, and trade, *Shipwrecked* is a fascinating journey back in time. Twelve centuries ago, a merchant ship—*an Arab dhow*—foundered on a reef just off the coast of Belitung, a small island in the Java Sea. The cargo was a remarkable assemblage of lead ingots, bronze mirrors, spice-filled jars, intricately worked vessels of silver and gold, and more than 60,000 glazed bowls, ewers, and other ceramics. The ship remained buried at sea for more than a millennium, its contents protected from erosion by their packing and the conditions of the silty sea floor. *Shipwrecked* explores this precious cargo and the story of the men who sailed it, with more than 250 gorgeous photographs and essays by international experts in Arab ship-building methods, pan-Asian maritime trade, ceramics, precious metalwork, and more.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

CHOICE The shipwreck discovered off the Indonesian island of Belitung provides the most important material evidence of the seafaring trade between China and the Arab world in the ninth century. The ship itself was Arab by construction. Having been loaded up in south China, it went under while en route, probably to the Near East. Of the more than 60,000 items discovered, most were ceramics from Changsha. In addition, there were pieces from the Ding and Yue kilns. Other types of finds include bronze mirrors and gold and silver wares. The high quality and large quantity of these export goods stand in testimony to the strength of Tang China as the dominant manufacturing power in East Asia, a position unchallenged by any neighboring country. It is particularly remarkable, given

that in the course of the ninth century the Tang Empire was on its way to political decline and disintegration. This volume is the catalogue of an exhibition on the shipwreck mounted in Singapore in 2011. The book contains a number of well-researched articles on the shipwreck and its cargo by archaeologists and art historians. Summing Up: Recommended. All levels/libraries. --V. C. Xiong, Western Michigan University

John Guy, Curator of South and Southeast Asian Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, has extensively researched all early shipwrecks discovered in insular Southeast Asia. He lives in New York City. Regina Krahl, an expert in the Chinese production of high-quality ceramics and their export markets, has published widely in the field.

The book contains so much important textual information but suffers from the use of extremely tiny font size. Maybe the designer of this book wanted to make it look cute and cuddly, giving more space to, well, empty spaces on each page by reducing/compressing the text. The result is a disaster. One will certainly need a magnifying lens in order to read the text in this book. Given its heavy weight and its size, it is a struggle to go through each page without straining the neck and the eyes. The book also suffers from scant information and dearth of photos of the actual excavation, conservation treatments, storage and other important aspects of the actual recovery that would have made justice to the title of the book. Worse, it has only a limited number of photographs of the items from the shipwreck making one conclude that this is no exhibition catalog at all.

Excellent book in good condition

At first, I thought I must have a different edition of this book from the reviewer who gave it only two stars, but there seems to be only one publisher so it must be the same volume. I therefore have to disagree and say that this is a magnificent volume, full of excellent information of immediate relevance to those studying the Tang, its ceramics, its trade goods, and the entire subject of maritime trade in Southeast Asia. Granted the text is too light and too small and the font is particularly irritating, but the content is so worth the struggle that I can only say get out the magnifying glass and take it in bite-size pieces; it is worth the effort. The pictures are magnificent--large, full colour, beautiful with lots of close-ups to reveal the details of significant pieces. Guy's chapter on "Rare and Strange Goods: International Trade in Ninth-Century Asia" is particularly rich, and Regina Krahl's concise, tight chapters on "Chinese Ceramics in the Late Tang

Dynasty" and "White Wares of Northern China" with their beautiful photographs are worth the price of the book alone. This volume would have won five stars if not for the miserable font. It will be of more interest, however, to sinologists than those interested in maritime history or the history of disasters at sea.

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