

# The Siren of Cirebon: A 10th Century Trading Vessel Lost in the Java Sea



The presentation will discuss a shipwreck found in the Java Sea, the 'Cirebon/Nan-Han' wreck. The find is regarded as one of the most important discoveries in Southeast Asian history in recent years. It was excavated by a commercial salvage company in 2004 and 2005, and the presenter was appointed as scientific advisor to the excavation on behalf of the Indonesian Government's Research Agency for Marine Affairs and Fisheries. He currently is preparing a PhD thesis on this find at Leeds University.

Chinese cash and ceramics firmly place the wreck in the 10th Century AD: Lead Qian Heng Zhong Bao 乾亨重宝 coins of the Domesne of Nánhàn, which thrived around Guangzhou between 917 and 971, glaze and forms of most of the ceramic objects, and a potter's mark provisionally dated onto 968, suggest that the wreck should be dated to the era of the 'Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms', the period between China's Táng and Sòng Dynasties.

The 10<sup>th</sup> century was a period of remarkable economic and political dynamics for Insular Southeast Asia; however, the actors in these events –Srivijaya, the polity that dominated maritime Southeast Asia from the seventh to 13<sup>th</sup> century AD, and its rival, the nascent state of East Java– have left but few written records and hardly any archaeological remains. Our knowledge of 10<sup>th</sup> century Southeast Asian economy and politics has until now relied mainly on scattered secondary information found in Chinese and Perso-Arabian records. The Nánhàn/Cirebon shipwreck represents one of the rare first-hand sources that should shed light on the rise of regional, and, ultimately, international economic and political networks which became so important in the ensuing centuries.

