

PRESS RELEASE

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The Lost Dhow: A Discovery from the Maritime Silk Route

Asian Civilisations Museum, the Singapore Tourism Board, and the Aga Khan Museum present objects from the Tang shipwreck to a Toronto audience

Singapore, 8 December 2014 – For the first time, the objects from the earliest and most important shipwreck ever discovered in Southeast Asia, an Arab dhow sunk during the Tang dynasty, will be on display in North America. The objects will be exhibited in Toronto, Canada, allowing thousands to appreciate a historically important cargo.

The Lost Dhow: A Discovery from the Maritime Silk Route is an exhibition made possible by a collaboration between the

Asian Civilisations Museum, the Singapore Tourism Board, and the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto.

With a cargo of some 60,000 objects from China, including gold and silver vessels, ceramics, and the earliest complete Chinese blue-and-white wares ever found, the Arab dhow was travelling to the Abbasid Empire (with its capital in Baghdad, present-day Iraq) when it ran aground on a reef off Belitung Island in the Java Sea. The discovery of the wreck has resulted in valuable new knowledge about world trade and has led to a rewriting of the early history of trade through Southeast Asia.

Dr Alan Chong, Director of the Asian Civilisations Museum, explains: “The Tang Shipwreck demonstrates the intensity of trade between China and the Middle East in the 9th century, with Southeast Asia serving as the transitional point. The diverse cargo of the wreck ranges from mass-produced ceramics to finely crafted luxuries. This exhibition beautifully shows that creative exchanges between China and the Islamic world were fully underway one thousand years ago. The new Aga Khan Museum in Toronto is an ideal partner to present this as we share a keen interest in fostering a greater understanding of the close links between the Islamic world and Asia.”

The 276 exquisite objects on display provide an insight into the cultural exchange between East and West. Highlights include a selection of the Changsha bowls in the cargo, and a cup made of solid gold. The exhibition will be on view from 13 December 2014 to 26 April 2015.

Ms Ranita Sundramoorthy, Director, Attractions, Dining & Retail, Singapore Tourism Board said: "The Tang Shipwreck is an indelible part of our maritime heritage. This collaboration will thus help raise the awareness of this little-known aspect of our historical past. Come 2015, when the objects will be displayed at the Asian Civilisations Museum, both local and international visitors will be treated to a richer story of the role Singapore and Southeast Asia played in the trading past."

This exhibition has received the generous support of PSA International Pte Ltd and Temasek Holdings (Private) Limited.

The objects in the exhibition are from the collection of the Asian Civilisations Museum. Acquisition of the Tang Shipwreck collection was made possible by a generous donation from the Estate of Khoo Teck Puat. The recovery and conservation of the collection was undertaken by Tilman Walterfang.

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