[Review of: The Ca Mau Shipwreck, 1723-1735]
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The Ca Mau Shipwreck, 1723-1735

When Vietnamese fishermen discovered a historical shipwreck about 90 nautical miles south of Cap Ca Mau in southern Vietnam in 1998, they hauled up more than 30,000 artefacts and 2.4 tons of metal objects in their nets. Subsequently, a Vietnamese diving and excavation company, working in close collaboration with the Ca Mau Provincial Museum and other responsible agencies, began to salvage the ship. In 1998 and 1999 more than 150,000 artefacts were recovered from this 450m² site. Now, four years later, Nguyen Dinh Chien, chief curator at Vietnam’s Museum of Vietnamese History and a leading specialist on ceramics, has published the results of this find in a lavishly illustrated book under the title *Tàu Cơ Cà Mau (The Ca Mau Shipwreck)*, 1723-1735.

By John Kleinen

Sometime between 1723 and 1735, a Chinese junk sank off the coast of Vietnam’s farthest point in the South China Sea. Its cargo consisted of chinoiserie porcelain, blue and white ware, porcelains decorated in brown, white-glazed porcelains over-glazed with enamels, and variousstoneware, all originating from different kilns in southern China. The best-known pieces are the porcelains from Jingdezhen in Jiangxi province, where ceramics have been produced since the fourteenth century; other notable pieces include those from the Dehua kiln complex in Fujian, and from Guangzhou in Guangdong. The variety of the chinoiserie and the different kilns indicate that this vessel was part of the large Asiatic porcelain trade that developed in the early fifteenth century and in which Vietnam’s rulers of the southern domain, Dang Trong (the inner region), took part. Ultimately, the research on wrecks found off the coast of Vietnam contributes to unravelling Vietnam’s troubled internal history between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries.