

NAU ESMERALDA

Exciting Find

The undersea salvage of a rare coin reveals the identity of a doomed vessel.

➤ IN MAY 1503, the *nau Esmeralda* (or *Emerald*), a Portuguese East Indiaman ship that was part of explorer Vasco da Gama's 1502-03 Fourth Armada to India, sank off the coast of Al Hallaniyah island in Oman's

Dhofar region. Discovered in 1998, the then-unidentified vessel was not excavated until 2013. Although more than 2,800 artifacts have been recovered, the recent discovery of a rare silver coin known as an *índio* has confirmed the wreck is that of the *nau Esmeralda*.

Identified by Portuguese numismatics expert António Trigueiros, the coin is only the second-known *índio* in existence. (The other is held at the National Historical Museum in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.) "It is impossible to precisely date the wreck using most of the recovered artifacts, since they all were created during the reign of King Emanuel I, who ruled from 1495 to 1521," says Trigueiros.

"The recovery of the *índio* changed everything. The coin was minted between 1500 and 1504, allowing us to determine that the vessel is the *nau Esmeralda*."

The rare specimen was commissioned by Portuguese diplomat Dom Manuel in 1499, specifically for trade with India. A CT scan of the coin revealed the Portuguese Cross of the Military Order of Christ and the legend *IN HOC SIGNO VINCES* ("In This Sign, You Will Conquer") on the reverse, both of which are common on Emanuel I's early coinage; and the word *REX* on the obverse. Says Trigueiros, "This coat of arms and obverse legend perfectly match the *índio* specimen at the National Historical Museum in Brazil."

To view high-resolution images and videos of the shipwreck or to learn more about the *nau Esmeralda*, visit www.esmeraldashipwreck.com.

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▲ **THIS SILVER ÍNDIO** (right), only the second such specimen ever documented, was found in a clump of silver and gold pieces. The CT scan at the left reveals the Cross of the Military Order of Christ and the word *REX* on the obverse.

Actual Size: 27mm