

Zheng He — The Chinese Columbus

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World History

Introduction — Zheng He

- **Zheng He's original name was Ma He.** He was born around 1371 in China, Kun Yang, a town in southwest Yunnan Province.
- As Yongle emperor's favorite eunuch, Zheng He's remarkable journey began when the Emperor of the Ming Dynasty ordered him to sail to "the countries beyond the horizon, all the way to the end of the earth".
- **Between 1405 - 1433, Admiral Zheng He sailed the Indian and Western oceans, visiting more than 30 countries from Asia to Africa and as far as the central and eastern coasts of the African nations.**



Motive — Zheng He

- The **economic** motive for these huge ventures may have been important, and many of the ships had large private cabins for merchants.
- But the chief aim was probably **political**, to enroll further states as tributaries and mark the reemergence of the Chinese Empire following nearly a century of barbarian rule.



• Despite political pressure from within China, Zheng He's voyages were **not** intended to extend Chinese sovereignty overseas.



Motive — Zheng He

• Zheng He's western voyages were not just an opportunity to carry out overseas **trade**.

- More importantly, they served to transmit Chinese **culture** to South and Southeast Asia and the east coast of Africa.
- At the time, many of the countries of these regions were still relatively undeveloped, and therefore quite attracted to China's advanced **civilization**.



Course

Zheng He ←→ Columbus

Zheng He's voyages from China littoral to Indian Ocean

Columbus' trips from the Mediterranean to North America




Course — Zheng He

The First Trip

长风破浪会有时

直挂云帆济沧海

The time will come to ride the wind and part the waves

- **Zheng He's first fleet included 27870 men on 317 ships. On the way back it sailed along the west coast of India and returned home in 1407.**



Course — Zheng He

The Second/Third Trip

- Envoys from Calicut in India and several countries in Asia and the Middle East also boarded the ships to pay visits to China.
- Zheng He's second and third voyages taken shortly after, followed roughly the same route.



The Fourth Trip

- In the fall of 1413, Zheng He set out with 30,000 men to Arabia on his fourth and most ambitious voyage.
- From Hormuz he coasted around the Arabian boot to Aden at the mouth of the Red Sea.
- The arrival of the fleet caused a sensation in the region, and 19 countries sent ambassadors to board Zheng He's ships with gifts for Emperor Yong Le.

Course — Zheng He

The Fifth/Sixth Trip

- In 1437, after two years in Nanjing and touring other cities, the foreign envoys were escorted home by Zheng He.
- On this trip, he sailed down the east coast of Africa, stopping at Mogadishu, Malindi, Mombassa and Zanzibar and may have reached Mozambique.
- The sixth voyage in 1421 also went to the African coast.



Course — Zheng He

The Seventh Trip

- Emperor Yong Le died in 1424 shortly after Zheng He's return. Yet, in 1430 the admiral was sent on a final seventh voyage.
- Now 60 years old, Zheng He revisited the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea and Africa and died on his way back in 1433 in India.





Influence — Zheng He

- Zheng He's voyages played important roles in **encouraging Chinese traders** to continue seeking fortune in Southeast Asia and he had the influence over the culture and religion of the local communities.



Influence — Zheng He

- His achievements show that China had the ships and navigational skills to explore the world. Mysteriously, China did **not** follow up on these voyages.
- The Chinese **destroyed** their ocean going ships and **halted** further expeditions. Thus, a century later, Europeans would "discover" China, instead of the Chinese "discovering" Europe.



Influence — Zheng He

- After the death of Zheng He and Yong Le, the emperor of Dynasty Ming, the new emperor worried that European and other influences were corrupting China.
- On the contrary, he forbade the sailing to foreign countries and refused to trade with foreign merchants. By then, China had fallen behind many other west countries.



Memory — Zheng He

Stamps

- In memory of Zheng He, commemorative stamps is issued for The Anniversary of Zheng He's Maritime Expeditions.



Memory — Zheng He

Navigation Hall

- On December 17, 2004, the newly revamped Zheng He Navigation Hall opened to tourists in Changle City of East China's Fujian Province.
- Changle was the stationing and anchoring base as well as the starting point of the massive fleet of Zhen He's Seven Voyages to the Western Seas.
- Right in front of the navigation hall, there is a ten-meter-high stone sculpture of Zheng He, which is always a huge tourist attraction.



Memory — Zheng He

Exhibition Hall of Zheng He's Historical Relics

- In the center of downtown Changle City of East China's Fujian Province lies **Zheng He Park and the Exhibition Hall of Zheng He's Historical Relics**, originally known as "Southern Hill Park," which was first built in 1088 during the Song Dynasty.
- There is a **pagoda** that was built during the Song Dynasty but which still stands like a towering giant.



Memory — Zheng He

Cultural Relics Hall

- Outside Zheng He Cultural Relics Hall in Malacca stands a stone statue of Zheng He.
- The Malaysians consider Zheng He as an indispensable part in the history of Malacca. During ancient times, he brought hope to the Kingdom of Malacca, which entered a period of brilliance with his help.
- Nowadays, Zheng He and his legacies have become a hot tourist attraction.



Memory — Zheng He

Commemoration News

- Indonesian city to commemorate Zheng He in 2005
- Local government and businessmen of Central Java's capital city Semarang in Indonesia contributed 0.5 million U.S. dollars to commemorate the 600th anniversary of Zheng He's navigation of the Western ocean.
- Singapore celebrated the 600th anniversary of Zheng He's voyage.
- Singapore held a variety of celebrations to mark the 600th anniversary of Zheng He's maiden voyage.



Zheng He and Columbus

Conclusion

- Zheng He and Columbus obtain obviously **different appraisal**, even though they similarly sailed along the navigation route which their ancestors never passed through.
- Zheng He earned a **high reputation** in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia Philippines and Malaya. From today's concrete expression of commemoration, many of the customs and rituals he shared have continued several hundred years.
- As far as we know, memorials for Columbus are **rare except** Columbus Statue and Monument at Plaza de Colón in Spain, which does not mean he made a less contribution to the world than Zheng He.

Zheng He and Columbus

Conclusion

- From the comparison between Zheng He and Columbus we can find the reason why China fell behind the West World — China's closed-door **policy** had limited development and West World's **policy** of opening to outside had promoted their expanding.



CONTROVERSY!

The myth of the great exploration symbolized by Zheng's voyages



- The real purpose of Zheng He's voyages: exploration or trade?
 - Were they for "power projection" only?
 - How far did Zheng He's fleets go? **America**?
 - What did Zheng He accomplish?
 - What was the larger meaning of his voyages?
- Why did these start and why did they end?
 - Are the traditional educated elite to be blamed for the termination?