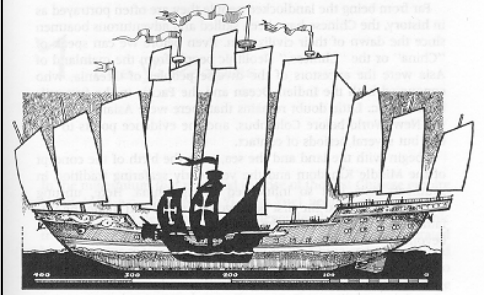


Great Ming Naval Expeditions

Source A

"The first sighting of the Ming fleet is a massive shadow on the horizon. As the shadow rises, an enormous city appears. A floating city, like nothing the world has ever seen before. No warning could have prepared officials, soldiers, or the thunderstruck peasants for the scene that unfolds. Stretched across miles is the armada of Zheng He."

Source B



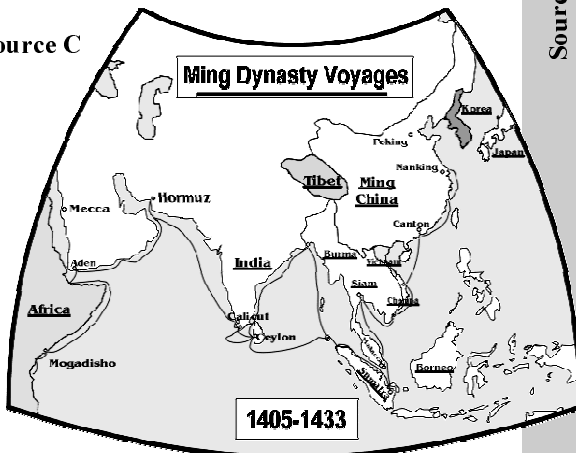
Zheng He's treasure ship (four hundred feet) and Columbus's St. Maria (eighty-five feet). (Illustration by Jan Adkins, 1993.)

Between 1405 and 1433, the Ming government sponsored a series of seven naval expeditions to establish a Chinese presence, impose imperial control over trade, and impress foreign peoples in the Indian Ocean. Zheng He was placed as the admiral in control of the huge fleet and armed forces that undertook these expeditions.

Zheng He led his fleet to voyage to the Western Sea for seven times. The number of ships of his fleet was from 40 to 63 each time, taking many soldiers and sailors on the voyage, with a total party over 27,000 people. Their ships navigated the wide sea area from Ryukyu Islands, the Philippine Islands and Maluku Sea to the Mozambican Channel and the coastal areas of South Africa.

Throughout his travels, Zheng He liberally dispensed Chinese gifts of silk, porcelain, and other goods. In return, he received rich and unusual presents from his hosts, including African zebras and giraffes that ended their days in the Ming imperial zoo.

Source C



Source D

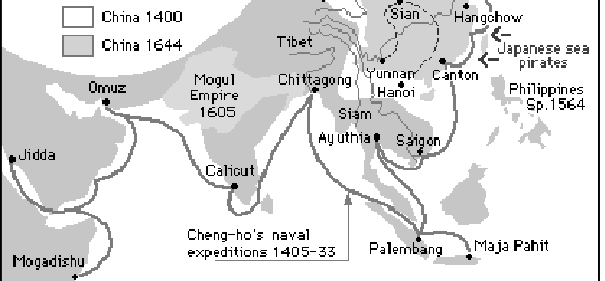
"We have traversed more than 100,000 li (50,000 kilometers) of immense water spaces and have beheld in the ocean huge waves like mountains rising in the sky, and we

have set eyes on barbarian regions far away hidden in a blue transparency of light vapors, while our sails, loftily unfurled like clouds day and night, continued their course [as rapidly] as a star, traversing those savage waves as if we were treading a public thoroughfare..." — Zheng He, 1432.

Source E

MING CHINA 1368 - 1644

- 1368 Ming dynasty est. at Nanking
- 1421 Capital moved to Peking
- 1522 Mongol incursions and Japanese sea pirate attacks
- 1566



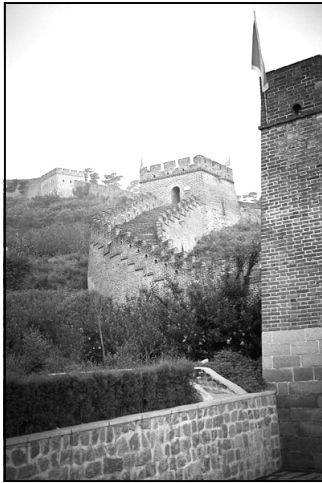
Source F

China had the world's greatest navy, with an estimated 317 ships - constructed at Nanjing. These ships were made with special woods and waterproofing techniques and an adjustable centerboard keel. Some of the ships were 440 feet long and 180 feet wide, ships with four to nine masts that were as high as ninety feet, with silk sails and with crews as large as five hundred. But in China interest in a great navy and merchant shipping was overshadowed by concern about military defenses on land. In mid-century the Mongols were making border raids and appeared to the Chinese as an even greater threat.

The development of Chinese shipbuilding and techniques of navigation on the Asian sea routes made Zheng He's voyages possible. His seagoing junks were very large with four decks and up to a dozen watertight compartments. They navigated by using the compass and detailed sailing directions

Source G





Source H

The Great Wall of China -although the rammed earth walls were combined into a unified wall under the Qin and Han dynasties, the vast majority of the brick and stone Great Wall as it is seen today is a product of the Ming Dynasty.

Source J

After the beginning of 1433 China's beginnings as a naval power were suddenly stopped, never to resume again. One reason for this was their great cost, at a time when the Ming were paying for their campaigns against the Mongols and financing the building of Peking, the expeditions were criticized as expensive adventures. The court eunuchs that promoted the expeditions came under considerable opposition from their rivals

Source I

The reason for these naval expeditions are varied, but the Yung-lo emperor wanted to expand trade with other countries and had a taste for imported and exotic goods. These expeditions sailed to East Asia, Southeast Asia, southern India, Ceylon, the Persian Gulf, and Africa. Trading from Africa to Southeast Asia, these expeditions made China the world's greatest commercial naval power in the world at the time, far superior to any European power.

In 1435, however, the court scholars convinced the emperor that the decline of the dynasty would be signaled by a taste for exotic wares, so China greatly contracted its commercial and maritime expansion it had begun so auspiciously. After the last voyage was completed none were ever again attempted. In fact, records of the trips were destroyed and shipbuilding was restricted to small-size vessels. As a result, China's coast was frequently attacked by pirates.

Source K



The Xuande Emperor playing chuiwan with his eunuchs, a game similar to golf, by an anonymous court painter of the Xuande period (1425-1435).

Source L



16th century Japanese pirate raids.

Source M

State-sponsored Ming naval efforts declined dramatically after Zheng's voyages. Starting in the early 15th century, China experienced increasing pressure from resurgent Mongolian tribes from the north. In recognition of this threat and possibly to move closer to his family's historical geographic power base, in 1421 the emperor Yongle moved the capital north from Nanjing to present-day Beijing. From the new capital he could apply greater imperial supervision to the effort to defend the northern borders. At considerable expense, China launched annual military expeditions from Beijing to weaken the Mongolians. The expenditures necessary for these land campaigns directly competed with the funds necessary to continue naval expeditions

Questions

Answer the following questions on your own piece of paper. Your answers should be complete, well-thought out and use the sources provided in this paper.

Basic Knowledge Questions

1. What were the Great Ming Naval Expeditions?
2. Who was Zheng He?
3. Where did the Expeditions go?

Thinking questions

4. How did Chinese technology help the Expeditions to travel so far? (source B, F, G & D)
5. What kind of man was Zheng He? (all sources)
6. Were the Expeditions good or bad for China? (all sources)
7. Why did the Expeditions end? (sources I, J, L & M)