

# Non-Fiction

Group 1



# The Adventure of Zheng He's Voyage

*Shanghai United International School WanYuan Campus, Guo, Gary - 9*

Zheng He was a famous Chinese explorer and diplomat in the early Ming Dynasty. When he was young, his father always told him about adventures on the sea. He was very interested in sailing from his young age, and decided to have adventures, like his father. From 1405 to 1433, he successfully led a large fleet to sail across the Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean for seven times. It was recognized as the biggest voyage before the Age of Discovery in Europe.

When he was nine, Zheng He was captured by the Ming army and was sent to serve Zhu Di, Prince of Yan. Throughout the years, Zheng He gradually gained the trust of Zhu Di who later became the Emperor of Ming.

Soon after Zhu Di took the seat of Emperor, he wanted to send a big fleet overseas to show friendliness to people in Southeast Asia and East Africa. The fleet could also help promote trade. Zheng He was selected as the leader of this fleet.

After several years of preparation, Zheng He's fleet left Nanjing and started the first voyage. He felt excited and a bit nervous. In the fleet, there were around 200 ships and over 20,000 soldiers and sailors. The biggest ship was over 150 meters in length and could contain 1,000 people. Zheng He also prepared goods to trade. They used body language and flags to communicate on foggy days.

Zheng He's fleet visited Vietnam and Java Island. During the visit, Zheng He sent diplomatic documents to local governors and traded with them. Zheng He's fleet was welcomed locally, however, sometimes it was also dangerous. During the trip, Zheng He had a big fight with pirates and made a big victory. The fleet came back to China in 1407.

Soon after, he started the second voyage, but the fleet only spent less than 2 years at sea. During his second expedition, he was not nervous, but excited. He always looked forward to going to different countries. Between 1409 and 1411, Zheng He made the third voyage.

The fourth voyage was an important landmark in the whole voyage series as it was the first time that the fleet visited East Africa. Afterwards, the fleet sailed toward the Arabian Peninsula. After passing the Peninsula, it finally came to East Africa. In the fifth voyage between 1417 and 1419, the fleet came again to the same area.

The last two voyages were short and neither of them lasted more than one year. But in the last voyage, the fleet arrived at the south part of Africa which was also the farthest place in Zheng He's exploration. As Zheng He put all of his energy and efforts into the voyage, it was said he died in the last trip in 1433.

Zheng He's seven voyages were an amazing achievement. It strengthened the relationship between China and other countries in Asia and Africa. In addition, trade was also on the rise as the impact of Zheng He's exploration. You can still find artifacts in some Southeast Asian countries left in Zheng He's trip, which reminds us again of this great man.



# Non-Fiction

Group 2

# Voyages of the Ming Fleet (Extract)

*Lee Chi Tat Memorial School, Zhang, Jiaming - 10*

Day 1

15<sup>th</sup> June, third year of Yongle (1405) Sunny

Today, I and my fellow crew are finally on board the ships we were looking forward to for several years. Admiral Zheng He is our captain. He is a devout Muslim, which is the reason why he was on the trip. The Emperor has already seen us off at dawn. As I am only eleven who is the smallest person on the ship. I was chosen because I had followed the Emperor in the Battle of Pacification three years ago. My duty is to fire the “Large Farangis”, which is a kind of large cannon. We are now in the calm sea. We set off from Nanjing and is already past Linjiagang. I hope to see new territories and exotic islands soon!

Day 963

26<sup>th</sup> September, fifth year of Yongle (1407) Sunny

What an exciting day we have had!

The day before yesterday, a man named Shi Jinqing of Palembang came on our ship and talked with Admiral Zheng He. He informed us that a pirate named Chen Zuyi planned to rob our fleet of all gold and treasures. Admiral Zheng He talked with Shi for some time and thanked him for the priceless information.

As the Admiral Zheng He expected, Chen Zuyi came to see us the following day. He acknowledged our fleet and said that he would prepare an escort through the port. He spoke politely, but his rude manners, shifty eyes and the greedy look as he looked around our fleet told us that this was a man of no good.

Today was the big day of passing Palembang. Before we got into the port, Admiral Zheng He said, ‘My friends, tonight we are going to pass the port of Palembang. However, I fear that the pirate is planning an ambush for us when we are most at ease. So we will be ready for him! He paused, looked fiercely around at all of us. Then he continued, ‘Now, my fellow shipmates, let us be dispersed around the port in an arc. We should all fill in our cannons and be as armed as possible. When the pirate comes into our target area, we shall surround him and order him and his fellow pirates to surrender. Chen Zuyi is not an idiot, he would surely see by that time that he could not oppose us. If he is, we may as well blast him to pieces.’ His words were quite right. By about eleven o’clock at night, we had the arc formation ready. Then we waited for the pirates. It was well past midnight when they finally arrived. As the enemy fleet entered the target area, our fleet secretly formed a full circle now. In the dim light of the torches, I saw Admiral Zheng He giving the signal. Instantly, we tightened the circle. The pirates discovered our presence a second too late. The Admiral Zheng He ordered them, ‘You have been surrounded. Surrender immediately or...’ Just then, a sudden sound followed by the roaring of the gray waves told us that eleven pirates’ ships had broken out their huddle and rushed straight at our side. My heart quickened: It is my time! I filled in my ‘Large Farangis’ for the first time. Then I fired it. A flaming iron ball shot out of the hole and towards the escaping pirates. With a deafening boom, a ship burst into flames. In five minutes, it had completely vanished, though bits of woods and steels were littered on

the surface. All around me, my shipmates did the same. Soon there were no longer any enemy attempting an outbreak. Admiral Zheng He spoke again, ‘Surrender immediately or be blasted to pieces!’ At last the pirates surrendered. They are now kept in the vacant chambers and looked securely.

Day 380

30<sup>th</sup> October, sixth year of Yongle (1408) Sunny

Another ruler paying tribute to the Great Ming.

On 25<sup>th</sup>, a man rushed out of breath to the port. He turned out to be one of our own men. When we asked him what was happened, he spluttered a lot, and the bits we could understand told us that he was one of the 180 to explore the new island. Since they were going to explore, they did not carry weapons. After that were a confusion but he remembered that several hundreds of native men holding bloody knives were running about wildly. In the fight, only ten Chinese ran away in time. He did not know where the others were. The following day, the Admiral Zheng He took over a thousand crew on land. I was one of them, being now fourteen. We captured ten natives and threatened them to take us to the native ruler, otherwise be executed, and of course the obeyed. After we were taken to the king, the Admiral Zheng He asked the king if he knew anything about the men that killed our 170 men. To our surprise, he dropped to his knees and pleaded for mercy. It turned out than this land was called Java and the king in front of our eyes was the West Java king. There had also been and East Java King. Five years ago, the two kings broke into war about who would rule Java. Eventually, the West King won. For three months hence, he had been wiping out the remnants of the East King. The 170 Chinese were killed because the Javanese men mistook them for East King alliances. The West King apologized most sincerely to the Admiral Zheng He. He also handed us the men that killed our people, which we imprisoned.

Day 1204

22<sup>nd</sup> July, eighth year of Xuanda (1433) Cloudy

Today is the last day of my navigation life. The Emperor has just seen us off since today is the return of our seventh voyage. It’s heavy news that Admiral Zheng He has died on the journey. He was buried in Kuri, where he died. He was a great man.

I plan to drop my journeys and return to my homeland, where Xuande Emperor has given me the job of Doctor of Treasury. This position is quite well for me: it’s Level five. There may be an eighth journey; I wouldn’t be up for it. While I started on the first journey I was eleven; now I am thirty-nine. I may be able to lead a quieter life.

# Zheng He

*Peak School (ESF), Schulz, Amelie - 8*

## **Introduction**

Zheng He was born on the 23 of December 1371. We don't know exactly when he passed away. Most probably it was in 1433 (aged 61-62). He lived in China in the region of Yunnan which is next to the border of Myanmar.

He was a great explorer and a fleet commander with 300 ships and over 30.000 troops under his command. He went on seven major expeditions to explore the world and to establish chinese trade in new areas. He was a symbol of China's peaceful rise.

## **Chapter 1 : The Beginning**

There was once a boy called Zheng He. He had four sisters and one older brother. One day, after his 8th birthday, Zheng He was like always the last out of bed. Finally Zheng He was ready to go out and his family were going to the market. All of a sudden, lots of people started running away. They tried asking what happened, but no one stopped. Finally someone told them "There are a lot of soldiers coming and some are even coming with horses".

The soldiers were coming nearer and nearer until they were very close to the village. Everybody started running for their lives until they were safe in their homes. Zheng He didn't make it back to the village. He was taken from the soldiers to the emperor's castle.

The soldiers were handing over Zheng he to the General Fu Youde.

"Why are you keeping me here?" asked Zheng He. The General started with a long explanation:

"Because in 10 years time you will be old enough to be a voyager, to explore the world. We will give you more than 300 ships and about 30,000 troops under your command. You will have sacks full of gold. If you come to a city that will fight you have to fight back! If the country is very nice you ask the boss of the city or country if you are allowed to visit their country, if their boss says yes you give him or her gold, then you enter their country. If they say no you give them a lot of gold and they might let you in if they don't you sail on. Your first voyage will be in 10 years that means you will be 18. You will be living in the castle for those 10 years and after that you will be gone."

## **Chapter 2: The horse ride to Naypyidaw and the first expedition**

After ten years living in the castle of Fu Youde, Zheng He was ready to start the adventure of doing amazing expeditions for the emperor. His army and all ships were already set up in the harbour of Naypyidaw. So Zheng He took his horse to ride to the harbour to meet his troops. He stepped on the boat and started shouting "Hello my ship mates! Happy to see you all! Welcome to our Adventure! Let's start our adventure! "

The conditions were great to start the journey. They set of with enough food and water for everybody. The final destination of the first journey was Mumbai. They wanted to do a stopover in Colombo, Sri Lanka in the middle of the way to Mumbai. After two weeks in stormy water, all are happy to leave the boats. In Colombo they refilled their food, water and

things they need for the boat ride. They set off once again to Mumbai. A soldier shouted on their way “There’s a storm coming!” “Everybody of deck!” shouted Zheng He. Fortunately they arrived safely in Mumbai.

### **Chapter 3: Voyage to Pakistan**

After Mumbai they traveled to Pakistan to the port of Karachi. There they gave the people gold and gifts. The people were so happy and invited Zheng He’s troops to a local street party with lots of music. Happy and exhausted and the ships full loaded with presents from Sri Lanka, India and Pakistan, Zheng He returned back to Kunming to show Fu Youde all the gifts and filling the sacks with gold again.

### **Chapter 4: Off to Africa**

After weeks in a rough sea they arrived in Somalia. Again, Zheng He gave the poor people gold and made lots of new friends. The people in Somalia showed him great dances and music and shared their food with him. One of the gifts which he got was an animal and Zheng He thought that it was a unicorn, but later someone found out it was a giraffe but nobody told him. Happy and satisfied, he took his troops to Madagascar. There he distributed lots of gold again to the people. He got lots of gifts for example coffee and spices for cooking.

### **Chapter 5: Adventures in Southeast Asia**

The next voyages would bring Zheng He to Southeast Asia. The first country they went to was Indonesia, to the island of Java. The trip to Java was peaceful and enjoyable. They arrived safely in Jakarta. Now the troops knew exactly what to do after the last five expeditions, they had to give gold and gifts to the poor people. Everybody again was very happy and friendly. On the way to Vietnam, they stopped in Malaysia to say hello there. They filled up as well food and water for their final destination. Zheng He was getting very sick on their way to Hanoi and the doctor on the boat tried everything to help him. But unfortunately nothing helped and he passed away just before they reached Hanoi. The troops were very sad, but fulfilled the job of distributing gold and gifts in the name of General Fu Youde to the poor people before returning back home to China.

### **Chapter 6: The End**

Zheng He was getting very famous in China, because what he did for China during the seven voyages and all the souvenirs from the different countries which he brought back to China for example like the giraffe.

# Non-Fiction

Group 3



# Zheng He and his glorious voyages of dream and power

*Immaculate Heart of Mary College, Cheung, Ching Po Chris - 14*

When the Asian world was waiting to see the bewitching glory of Ming Dynasty, the Yongle Emperor, Zhu Di, seized the best moments to send his diplomat to let other Asian countries have the first glimpse of The Great Ming Empire. However, to whom did the emperor give his credence to? Who was the lucky man to be chosen to carry out this historical and glorious mission of Ming Dynasty? It all started with a 10-year old boy who was selected to serve in the palace of the Chinese Emperor...

In the 15th century, Yunnan, which was located in southwest China, was filled with the tense atmosphere between Mongols and ethnic Han Chinese; the villagers could smell the smoke of fire, bombs, ambition and hatred in the constant conflicts and wars. The volatile situation was meant to continue until Zhu Yuanzhang, the Hongwu Emperor, conquered China and ended the Mongol-led Yuan Dynasty in 1368. During the wars between Mongols and ethnic Han Chinese, numerous of mighty and loyal soldiers were killed, including the father of a young boy, Ma He.

As a 10-year-old boy, the childish smile of Ma He disappeared because of the tragic loss of his beloved father. With no time to mourn for the death of his father, Ma He was then being captured by a Chinese general and sent to Nanjing to serve in the emperor's palace. He was among all the chosen young boys, having the deepest fear in their hearts, missing their families and shivering in the unspeakable darkness. They were then castrated and sent into the unknown world of Chinese armies and palaces, without any single idea about their future.

The charming and enticing appearance and intelligence of Ma He shone brightly in Chinese Emperor's court, and his sparkling eyes could not hide his talents in military service and diplomatic affairs. The young Ma He was sent to serve in the Emperor's court, and he was a playmate of the Hongwu Emperor's son, Zhu Di, when he was small, and playing with Zhu Di must have helped Ma He forget his own unbearable past, and of course, more importantly earn the trust of the Emperor's family. When Zhu Yuanzhang died, he only passed his power to his son, Zhu Biao, but Zhu Biao died early. The son of Zhu Biao succeeded the power and became the Jianwen Emperor. However, after the Jianwen Emperor was in reign, he carried out harsh campaigns against the lords in order to weaken the power of his uncles, fearing that one day his throne would be taken away.

Witnessing the harsh and terrible cut of land and power, some of his uncles found the policy was too hard to bear, and the cruel reality forced them to end their lives. Zhu Di was the exceptional case, he decided to fight against the authority. Zhu Di pretended to be a mad man and found his way to get more support, especially from Li Jinglong and the prince's half-brother, Zhu Hui, and they played the important role of Zhu Di's success as they opened the gate for him in Nanjing in July, 1402. It was also known that Zhu Di also had superior tactics and capable Mongol auxiliaries to help him overthrow the rule of the Jianwen Emperor. It was believed that Ma He was one of the soldiers who facilitated Zhu Di to reign in power.

Zhu Di, the Yongle Emperor, rewarded Ma He for his help during his rebellion; he gave the surname "Zheng" to Ma He. Ma He then changed his name into Zheng He, and

he became the most powerful man who served Zhu Di in the Emperor's court. He was also promoted to Grand Eunuch, the highest rank that a eunuch could be promoted to.

When Zhu Di had settled everything as the new Emperor of China, he then decided to revive the traditional tribute system. In the past, countries on China's borders agreed to recognise China as their superior and the Chinese Emperor as Lord of "All under Heaven". These countries offered the emperor gifts regularly in exchange for some benefits like providing them with military protection or signing trade treaties. The Yongle Emperor, one of the most ambitious and aggressive emperors in Chinese history, seized the chance to commission his favourite servant, Zheng He, to start the lavish expeditions to other Asian countries to overwhelm the Asians with Chinese advanced naval technology and show them the power of the Great Ming Dynasty.

In 1403, Zheng He's fleet was in a very huge scale with nearly 28,000 men on board including professionals like sailors, diplomatic specialists, scholars and more. The fleet of Zheng He then travelled all the way to the bustling and famous place, Calicut, India. After that, one of the most important parts of the first voyage was to visit Calcutta, the world's major trade depot at that time.

During the voyage, Zheng's journey was not always safe. The pirate, Chen Zuyi, might have spotted the huge and splendid fleet, and that attracted the greed of Chen. Chen attacked the fleet in order to get the big fortune, however, with the mighty force of Zheng's voyage fleet, the ships were well protected, and Chen lost everything, as he was arrested and sent to Nanjing. There, he received severe punishment from the Emperor.

The first voyage allowed foreign countries to know more about China, and the Great Ming Dynasty. Thus, the foreign ambassadors from various kings and rulers did not hesitate to make their way to go to China in return to pay tribute to the Yongle Emperor. The diplomatic relationship between China and those countries were strengthened by, of course, the exchange of goods, especially the luxury goods which included gemstones, spices, exotic treasures and rare animals. The First Voyage offered instant benefits to China and its diplomatic affairs. The second one was carried out in 1407, and this time, he was one of the honourable guests who were invited to join the inauguration of a new king in Calicut, India.

The third voyage was initiated in 1409, and this time, the places visited by Zheng He were not limited to a few, but quite a number of different ones. He travelled to Malacca on Malay Peninsular Ceylon (Sri Lanka), and this trip was pretty much challenged by the people of Ceylon who were totally clueless about the Great Ming Dynasty. The people of Ceylon appeared to be rude and disrespectful to Chinese. Zheng then captured the Sri Lankan King, Vira Alakeswara, using the impressive military power of Ming Dynasty. More importantly, Zheng also brought the tooth relic of Buddha back to China, and it was only returned to Sri Lanka in 1960.

After this incident, the Ming Dynasty had a great influence in Indian Ocean and the nearby areas which allowed Chinese to develop a maritime Silk Road in the future. The fourth voyage then followed in 1413. Zheng He and his fleet arrived Hormuz which was on the Persian Gulf. During the fourth expedition, Zheng He had a Muslim translator to help him on the way, and this helped Zheng a lot to communicate with the people in other countries effectively. The fifth one took place in 1417, and Zheng even visited the cities of the Red Sea and the east coast of Africa. The friendly visit of Zheng was always accompanied by the strong military force of Ming Dynasty, which was indeed quite a powerful image given to foreign countries. The last two expeditions, which were started in 1421 and 1431 respectively,

enabled Zheng He to reach more places and visit all important ports in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean.

The seven voyages were definitely a demonstration of Chinese shipbuilding technology. Zheng He's armada was believed to be built partly at Longjiang Shipyard in Nanjing, and its docks were once the home to an army of between 20 and 30,000 shipbuilders from Hunan and Guangdong provinces. The spectacular "Treasure Fleet" was actually a gigantic navy with junks that had nine masts, and they were up to 400ft long. The ships carried cargos of precious gifts like silk, porcelain and tea as gifts to the diplomatic friends of China in Asia. Recently, the glory of the voyages was revealed again through subsequent excavations in Nanjing. Iron anchors and shipbuilding tools like axes, stone hammer, nails and knives were found, and all these help to compile a good documentary on Zheng He's successful voyages.

Zheng He's voyages took him to 37 countries over 28 years, and his fleet was one of the mightiest fleet that ever sailed. With the scale of 300 ships with 28,000 men on board, his journeys were indeed the biggest flotilla before the First World War. The dazzling and glorious success of Zheng He's voyages is something to be proud of as a Chinese student. Zheng He, a legendary explorer and "China's Columbus" helped China open its eyes to see the brave new world. Though the treasure fleet was put to an end eventually, it was still the most remarkable fleet that China has ever had.

# How did The Ming Treasure Voyages Open Opportunities for The Ming Dynasty? What Would have been The Effects and Influences if Those Opportunities Were Seized, for China and Other Countries?

*Sha Tin College, Wong, Ivan - 14*

‘It was a tough challenge with multiple obstacles, meeting pirates and Emperors around the world, an experience people would never imagine’ spoke a soldier from the third voyage in 1409. The Ming Treasure Voyages, a lesser known part of Chinese history, was one of the longest distance travelled voyages ever known during the Ming dynasty. Taking place during the time period of 1405-1433 and led by famous explorer Zheng He, fleets were commanded to sail across the seas, bestowing other countries with gifts from the Chinese Emperor, Zhu Yuanzhang. Bringing over 27,000 men on the first voyage, they set off to the Western Ocean, bringing along commodities such as silk and brocade. However, they were misled by the map and were instead headed towards the Indian Ocean, taking them to a completely new destination. The Chinese were eventually able to create connections and become allies with other Emperors of other nations. After the first successful voyage, Emperor Zhu decided to continue these ventures across the world under Zheng He’s guidance. The voyage proceeded with similar progress, but of other nations. Unfortunately, China ceased the voyages in 1433 when Zheng He passed away in India. By then, the furthest destination reached was East Africa. With Zheng He’s abrupt death, one can only wonder what was planned ahead for the voyages? If China had continued with the offerings and affiliations with other countries, what benefits would they have gained in terms of economic and power? This discussion aims to deliberate this question. Ultimately, how the Ming Treasure Voyages would have been a great start for the Ming Dynasty and China’s future prospects.

The trades China made with other countries would have boosted the economy and helped China regain their market in the international community. During the Ming Dynasty, China had been travelling across the seas, selling their national products to other countries. These products likely included silk, tea bags, jade, ivory, cloisonne etc. Making trades also meant China gain valuable goods in return too, rare and unattainable commodities, possibly even new discoveries. The number of trade deals China gained in short-term was vastly more than what they had expected. If China had continued these trades, the money gained would have been a substantial boost to the economy of China. This is to say, due to the number of treasures they had received. For instance, they had received horses from the Indonesian army, it became a great asset to the Chinese army. Even though these horses were common in Indonesia, it was a new species to the Chinese and it’s acquisition indefinitely strengthened the army. On another voyage to Africa, Admiral Zheng He was presented with another

foreign creature; the camel. Resilient in hot and rough conditions, camels were perfect for areas such as the Henan province's humid subtropical climate, assisting farmers and citizens on long journeys such as ones on the infamous Silk Road. If China had continued to create alliances and trades with Africa, the amount of money generated from the camels sold and their aid in additional trades via the Silk Road would have been substantial. Even after the Ming Dynasty ended, the trades could have continued, becoming a stable income generator. As a result, China would have gained greater success in excelling the economy, short term and long term.

Financial benefits gained from The Ming Treasure Voyages would have been momentous for China's Emperor and citizens. The financial benefits China had gained helped the people and economy of the country. When Zheng He brought back gifts from other countries, he showed the Emperor and fellow citizens of their achievements, telling them about the journey. When people saw the opportunity buying the product for their own good, they asked Zheng He for the price. But, Zheng He had limited stock and had to raise the price of the object in order to earn more money for himself. People started bidding on goods and it soon became an effective way for the emperor and the crew to reap in on the financial benefits the voyage offered. In addition, it was a prime opportunity to interest people to participate in the Ming Treasure Voyages. Upon witnessing the riches of people who came back from the voyage, how they sold precious commodities and trinkets from other countries, they would want to earn a name for themselves, helping their families as well as getting to travel around the world and start a new adventure, exploring and meeting different people in different cultures. The Emperor can earn more money, which leads to building and making the nation stronger. It could be spent on weapons, training and development in the army, or used to build more infrastructures for the citizens. Also, this could develop the voyage itself. After gaining these gifts, the Emperor and its strong team can suggest ideas on how it can help the voyage. For instance, they can use fur from animals to keep the crew on the ship warm during nights and storms. By gaining these financial benefits, it can help not only the country itself but also its development on technology and other areas which could secure the country and show their strengths. To conclude, the financial benefits gained in the Ming Treasure Voyages the people and the economy of the country, making businesses out of it as well as developing technology for the country and the voyage itself.

If the Chinese Emperor had continued the Ming Treasure Voyages disregarding the death of Zheng He, it could have opened up an industry and business for China, ensuring their vital position in international trades and affairs. After Zheng He's death in India, the fleets returned, making it the last voyage for China and its sea. The following dynasties passed by without any development or notice of the Ming Treasure Voyages. Before Zheng He's death, men and generals have been gaining progress to improve the sea weapons against pirates as well as different functions of the ship to make it more sustainable. Builders have already started building and making the outer structure of the developed models, planning to use it in the 8th voyage for testing. However, when the Emperor had received news regarding Zheng He's death, he did not continue to pursue the projects and proposals Zheng He had placed. Instead, he terminated the voyages, for good. The new technology developed and encouraged by Zheng He could have been an opportunity for China to sell the parts and tools to other countries, taking the lead as the most advanced in the world. Additionally, China themselves may utilise the tools and equipment, exploring new lands, providing land for agricultural and development purposes, perhaps even an opportunity for colonisation. Building alliances with other nations, aiding one another to strive in areas of struggle.

If the Ming Treasure Voyages continued while sustaining connections and relations, a lot of misconceptions and misunderstandings would have been avoided. Western and Middle Eastern countries viewed China as a land of resource, having sufficient land and technology. Pirates would have taken this advantage, seeing the Chinese Emperor did not utilise Zheng He's designs, they stole a lot of the technology from China to gain power. China, more known to be a 'closed' country, due to its huge amount of resources, has been self-sufficient and have not been trading or connecting with the outside world. Rumours were spread across the world and brought different misconceptions towards China. Some said the Emperor kills the poor, some say the Chinese are ghosts at night. This brought disadvantages to China. But, if they made use of the technology Zheng He has developed, they could sell it, tying in with the connections with the international community. It seemed like ever since the end of The Ming Treasure Voyages, China became more separated from the outside, only if they had utilised the technology they had.

In conclusion, the Ming Treasure Voyages overall provided many opportunities for the Ming Dynasty. Further, it also explains the affect and influence it had on China and other countries. The financial, long-term benefits and trades, it could have brought to China, the alliances and advantages they come with, how all of that potentially may have prevented conflict and wars happened between nations. China ultimately would be much more well known and more open to the outside world. Economically, the country and its people would have flourished through the humble beginnings of the Ming Treasure Voyages.

# Non-Fiction

Group 4



# A New World Order

*Diocesan Boys' School, Yeung, Thaddeus - 15*

Since the year 1978 when the Central Chinese Government introduced the Reform and Opening-up Policy, China's economy and domestic development have improved tenfold. As members of the Hong Kong society, this is highly relevant to our lives as China's growth will lead to direct consequence to Hong Kong, which is a city of China under the doctrine of "one country, two systems", and to the international world order itself.

Historically, this is not the first time that China finds herself wielding great international influence as a world power. In the Ming Dynasty, China was leading among the global powers in terms of living standards and economic development, and her foreign political influence extended far into the west with the help of the Seven Treasure Voyages, much alike China's foreign policies today such as the Belt and Road Initiative. By looking at Ming China and her international achievements and conduct, we can develop a good idea of what modern day China might aspire to achieve, as philosopher and father of Communism Karl Marx once observed in his study of class-based struggles, "history repeats itself, first as tragedy and second as farce". Through comparing the Treasure Voyages of Ming China and modern-day China's foreign policies, we can see that this is indeed the case.

Firstly, let us take a look at the Ming Dynasty and how, through Admiral Zheng He's treasure fleet, Chinese influence was spread vast and far, from neighboring Vietnam and India to Arabia of the Middle East to the very continent of Africa.

The Ming Dynasty, under the rule of the ethnically Han royal house, is regarded as one of the most powerful and influential dynasties of Imperial China, with its naval might surpassing even the European powers of the time. While both the Europeans and the Chinese aimed at spreading their influence to other regions of the globe, the methods with which they chose to do so were vastly different: while European powers such as the Dutch, the French and the British chose to spread their influence through their gunboats and through colonizing any helpless civilization it came across, Ming China, rather than exercise its military might, tried to earn the loyalty of lesser civilizations through gifts.

As the 1st wave of European colonization took place in the 15th century, the Yongle Emperor took on an opposite approach to that of the European powers. Admiral Zheng He was appointed by the Emperor to commandeer a "Treasure Fleet". Over the course of 7 voyages, the Ming Treasure Fleet distributed Chinese wealth in the form of silk, spices and rare minerals to foreign countries, in return for their rulers and kings to arrive at the Ming capital and declare themselves tributaries of Ming China. Over the 7 voyages, Ming China successfully established absolute control over maritime trade in the South China Sea, reaching great political and economic success for both Ming China and for countries that were reached by the Treasure Fleet as all parties benefited from the improved maritime trade (Wang, 1998). These smaller and less developed countries also benefited greatly from Ming China's involvement with their local development, such as Malacca, Cochin and Malindi which obtained more infrastructure in the form of ports with the help of China (Sen, 2016).

However, the spread of Chinese influence was not entirely beneficial to smaller countries. While the Treasure Fleet gave the countries it reached much incentive to follow Ming China's international order, China also used militaristic means to force smaller states into compliance. Through the heavily armed Treasure Fleet, Ming China threatened hostile governments into submission, purged political rivals in the region and intervened in local politics, undermining the sovereignty of many smaller countries. Mills (1970) expressed the view that Ming China's Treasure Fleet was “an instrument of aggression and political dominance”, and he may not be so wrong.

Now, let us compare Ming China's foreign policies with that of modern-day China.

The Belt and Road Initiative was proposed by President Xi Jinping in 2013 during his visits to Kazakhstan and to Indonesia. Kuik (2016) summarizes the Belt and Road Initiative as aimed at “constructing a unified large market”, “enhancing mutual understanding and trust between member nations” to reach an “innovative pattern with capital inflows, talent pool and technology database”. We can see that this is highly similar to Ming China's Treasure Fleet, which was aimed at enhancing maritime trade and cultural & technological exchange.

However, modern day China's foreign policies are also similar to those of Ming China in the aspect that the sovereignty and freedom of many smaller countries may be at stake. Coining Secretary of State of the US Rex Tillerson, China's “debt-trap diplomacy”, in other words attracting smaller countries into borrowing money for building infrastructure while they are unable to repay the debt, results in countries losing their sovereignty and political freedom to make their own decisions as they have to repay the debt. Examples of this include Sri Lanka and Djibouti, which were both forced to cede ports to China in order to repay their debts. This results in a vicious cycle where China's influence grows continuously as that of countries in debt decline, resulting in more and more countries falling into debt with China. This is highly similar to Ming China's foreign policy of providing gifts and treasures to smaller countries in return for their sovereignty and for them to become vassal states of China.

Ming China's attitude towards establishing an international order is highly similar to that of modern-day China. Both Ming China and modern China aim at promoting international trade and local development of smaller countries, while at the same time expanding China's political influence and achieving international hegemony. Whether this is beneficial to other countries is still a topic of debate today; however, it remains certain that if China wishes to establish a new world order similar to that of the Ming Dynasty, she must take on her share of the responsibility of being a new global power in order to truly achieve a win-win situation for both China and the rest of the world.



# Non-Fiction

Group 5

# Yuka

*Marymount Secondary School, Ho, Yui Ka Yuka - 16*

He was the first man in history to accomplish the groundbreaking mission of travelling around the world by sea. He was born Muslim but would seek protection from Mazu and donate to Buddhist temples. He was the eunuch courtier who spread the network of the prosperous Ming Dynasty over the eastern Pacific and Indian Oceans. Who is he? He is Zheng He, the leader of the Ming Treasure Fleet.

How he manoeuvred his way through the endless sea has fascinated many, be it a historian or a diplomat. What had he done to earn the admiration of people and become one of the legends of China?

In the past, without advanced technologies like satellites and telecommunications, navigating through the vast and boundless seas was definitely a challenging job. Then what had enabled Zheng He to embark on such an unprecedented journey? That's Zheng He's knowledge in astronomy and intellectual technologies such as water clocks and compasses that were founded in the Ming Dynasty. Natural phenomena, such as the circulation of the sun and moon and tidal flows, were taken into account to determine the sailing routes. Apparatus found at that time, including the water clock and compass helped Zheng He to locate his ships and explore new realms. Besides, the sternpost-mounted rudder was a large ship which had a high carrying capacity and contained weapons and helped Zhang He to defeat intruders. This allowed Zheng He to voyage safely to different countries, ranging from the South East Asia to East Africa, and make good ties with them through exchanging their local goods. Amongst all of the exchanged products, the most significant one was a giraffe he received from Malindi, Kenya, which was later considered to be a holy animal that only existed in the tales of China — Qilin. Not only did the exchanged goods allowed the Ming Dynasty to make the best out of them to boost their economy, but also planted the seed of Chinese culture in different countries.

Apart from Zheng He's contribution in the diplomacy of the Ming Dynasty, his voyages also gained him respect from many people who had been living under the terrors of Chen Zuyi, the infamous pirate leader, and his henchmen. At that time, many local and foreign merchants were attacked and had their valuables robbed when they sailed across the South China Sea to trade. Chen Zuyi was let loose in the sea until he met Zheng He in Palembang. When Chen Zuyi saw the massive fleet of ships led by Zheng He, he planned to ambush them. He pretended to surrender to Zheng He, attempting to trick him into thinking that he was not a threat. However, Zheng He had seen through his nasty schemes. When Chen Zuyi later tried to mount a sneak raid, he and his allies were completely wiped out by Zheng He's army, which comprised more than 5,000 soldiers. In the end, Chen Zuyi was captured and executed. After the fiasco of the notorious pirates, the evil acts of pirates were effectively suppressed, allowing safer trades in China. Most importantly, it gained respect and recognition from the ruler in Palembang. The acknowledgment even extended to the allies of Palembang in Ming's supremacy. In return, these countries received benefits from Ming such as military and trading. More than 30 ambassadors even brought gifts to Yongle Emperor to express their appreciation and gratitude towards his reign of China.

Although the ancient wisdom found in the Ming Dynasty had long outshone by the modern technologies, Zheng He's venturesome expeditions across the oceans, punitive raids on the pirates, and considerable contributions to the China's trade and diplomatic force shall never be forgotten. His journey — the seven voyages of the Ming Chinese Treasure Fleet shall forever stand tall in the Chinese and world history