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ZHENG HE'S
ART OF
COLLABORATION

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“Professor Hum’s venture to provide a new approach to business management through Admiral Zheng He’s Art of Collaboration rather than an Art of War merits attention. Admiral Zheng He is an eminently suitable candidate to draw lessons from. He was the CEO designated by the Ming Emperor Yongle (永乐) in the early fifteenth century to build a super fleet and to assemble a multi-ethnic crew to undertake a total of seven voyages spanning a period of twenty-eight years (1405–33) that eventually covered thirty-three countries from the South China Sea across to eastern Africa. This unprecedented and highly successful massive undertaking would have required the strongest and most capable CEO or commander in any comparable situation.

Professor Hum has provided a detailed account of Zheng He’s management skills and exploits within the context they were carried out to illustrate his business management approach based on Collaboration. The seven historic voyages were motivated by peace, harmony and goodwill by the then superpower and the smaller states in what was referred to as the ‘Western Ocean’. This was made absolutely clear from the several imperial edicts that were issued to Zheng He and his fellow top commanding officers that were never military or aggressive in nature. Instead they bore gifts of goodwill, provided assistance against pirates, brokered peace between feuding states, healed the sick, shared agricultural and other needed technologies, imparted culture including spreading the Islamic faith to peoples in the Indonesian archipelago. In turn, the voyagers benefited from knowledge of local medicine, natural products, and they undertook trade with Arab, Persian and Indian merchants from regions beyond. This was truly a mission of Collaboration and mutual benefit through a grand mission of international peace and mutual respect.”

Dr Chia Lin Sien

Co-editor, The Zheng He Epic

“Zheng He’s Art of Collaboration makes for a fresh and fascinating read for business leaders and students alike. The author has meticulously

researched and systematically presents an alternative management and leadership model from the great fifteenth-century explorer as a modern-day CEO and business leader. Understanding and drawing from *Zheng He's Art of Collaboration* will equip us to operate more effectively and achieve win-win results in a 'new normal' borderless multi-polar business world where no one has monopoly on information and resources."

Dr Steven Choo

*CEO, Real Estate Developers' Association
of Singapore (REDAS)*

"With many companies or states facing difficulties in the present-day economic situation, collaboration may be the best solution. The publication of this book is indeed timely as it is an excellent guide for business executives as well as politicians in the area of collaborative efforts."

Setyono Djuandi Darmono

President Director, PT Jababeka Tbk

"In a world where human machinations abound as people try to outdo one another, I find *Zheng He's Art of Collaboration* a fascinating and refreshing read. The book is a drop of dew in the parched spiritual landscape of business and politics as its principles and practices are grounded in collaboration rather than conflict thus tapping on man's benevolence rather than his combative spirit. In his well-researched book, Professor Hum delves into the annals of ancient China depicting the life of Zheng He and his epic voyages and draws from them detailed practical lessons in leadership, teamwork and management which are relevant business models for today's world.

Now, more than ever, we need leaders with the right motives and attitudes, because after all the competition and beating others down, if people become watchful and aggressive as a result and the world becomes

a worse place for all — what good is that? This is why I am thrilled to have Zheng He's alternative to Sun Zi's Art of War."

Dr Rosemary Khoo

President, NUS Senior Alumni;

Immediate Past President, University Women of Asia;

Founding President, University Women's Association Singapore

"This is a fascinating study of Admiral Zheng He's seven historic voyages to the West. Professor Hum has very creatively extracted from Zheng He's voyages certain principles and best practices, which are applicable to business and to life."

Professor Tommy Koh

Ambassador-at-Large, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore

"*Zheng He's Art of Collaboration* (AoC) is a uniquely crafted perspective which puts forward a less assertive and combative posturing in business. Professor Hum has succinctly articulated salient points on collaboration in businesses and how this perspective differs from the art of war. In essence, it provides another angle in looking at maintaining the balance of power and sustainability. The Art of War (AoW) through Sun Zi contained many tactics and manoeuvres used primarily to overwhelm, confuse, obfuscate and distract the opponents.

Professor Hum's book is a worthy read for an alternative perspective in the Art of Collaboration and it is particularly relevant in today's context of value management with peers and competitors."

David Leong

Managing Director, PeopleWorldWide Consulting

"Professor Hum Sin Hoon's excellent book *Zheng He's Art of Collaboration* provides an interesting alternative perspective for business people to consider when managing their businesses. Unlike the traditional model

of running a business employing Sun Zi's Art of War tactics, this book provides an insight to a highly credible business model that I believe will be more applicable as collaborative efforts are becoming the cornerstone of developed societies. Indeed this book conveys a less combative approach to business that is much more suited to the current social climate as the development of information technology has encouraged a deeper sense of sharing and cooperation. Professor Hum has provided an effective and coherent argument that would go hand-in-hand with the other Sun Zi proponents for an all-rounded business approach."

Andy Lim

Chairman, Tembusu Partners

"Political and economic events of recent years have ushered in a new paradigm shift in the way we do business and conduct relationships. Just like the advent of the Industrial Revolution, the dawn of this new era has brought about exciting opportunities, uncertainty and increased volatility in both these arenas. Zheng He's Art of Collaboration teaches us the values of cooperative competition and mutual respect. It is a timely beacon of light in today's challenging times."

Roger Lim

CEO and Co-Founder, Webvisions

"An interesting read. It is a refreshing presentation of an aspect of Zheng He's life that we know little of. The Art of Collaboration is a shift from what most of us were taught in business schools. It is an old ancient truth and it is based on a simple principle, i.e. developing strategies for all to win. Very readable. I recommend it to all who lead a team and/or are involved in developing strategies."

Ng Yong Hwee

President & CEO, City Gas and CEO, SingSpring

“Successful collaboration between stakeholders in supply chains is key to ensure that they prevail and grow. It helps to have some guidepost on the art and acts of collaboration. Professor Hum’s elucidation of management principles from the highly successful Zheng He and his collaborative approach, gives a fresh perspective of his adventures. Understanding how Zheng He overcame the challenges as he conquered the high seas would help us navigate our supply chains through the competitive oceans.”

Quek Keng Liang

Chairman, Singapore Logistics Association

“Rivalry is inherent in our fiercely competitive business world. While competition would undoubtedly provide the necessary impetus for a company to improve its business acumen and viability, mutual respect and peaceful coexistence are the very essence of our continued survival. Collaboration therefore plays an important role in enhancing a company’s relationship with its competitors, one that would create mutually beneficial and the much vaunted ‘win-win’ relationships.

The maritime exploits of Zheng He as contained in his seven voyages provide the quintessence of this collaboration principle and epitomizes an approach that places an unflagging emphasis on diplomacy rather than on hostilities.

The strategies contained in Sun Zi’s *Art of War* are premised on military principles. They might enable some initial gain for the victors, but with the passage of time, the vanquished would learn and counter with similar if not more virulent strategies. This could only mean the ultimate demise of dominant players like what had happened in the electronics industry.

Unlike the electronics industry, the aircraft industry with its multitude of supply chain players is collaboration in motion.

Professor Hum has illustrated well the principle that collaboration in any form would allow all companies to grow and prosper. It would allow each company to develop at its own pace and to fill a particular

niche based on its forte and specialism. The axiom that the sum of parts will be greater than the whole is never more apparent in a collaborative strategy.

The Art of Collaboration would be a timeless virtue for all to emulate.”

Seah Choo Meng

Director, Davis Langdon & Seah

“As an alternative, if not an updated version of Sun Zi’s *Art of War*, Zheng He’s Art of Collaboration is probably more relevant in today’s context where commerce and social interaction have become borderless.

The collective power of the man in the street had become real and formidable because of the advent of instant and viral communication channels now known as the new media. Another term to describe Zheng He’s ‘win-win’ approach is perhaps an ‘inclusive’ approach. While some may argue that this is not possible all the time, it must be attempted each and every time in the decision and policy-making process so that no one can claim or prove that he or she was sidelined. The uprising in the Middle East and ‘Occupy Wall Street’ protests bear testimony to the fact the voice of the people do matter.

To businesses which enjoy monopolistic advantages, the ‘all-win’ approach may sound too radical. However, if we were to consider both the tangible and intangible gains, Zheng He’s collaboration approach can never go wrong. After all, a long-term customer can only last as long as the economic cycle we are in and that in itself had become shorter and shorter over the years.”

Ricky Sim

CEO, Suntec Investment

“A factual and extensively researched book which provides valuable insights into the accomplishments of Zheng He and offers practical lessons in leadership principles and business collaboration. It reminds

us that competitors need not necessarily be enemies and businesses can in fact gain more by forming allies and sharing more generously.

The author has produced a much needed and timely piece of work which will greatly enhance our understanding of the art of building collaboration and assist the modern-day CEOs in achieving better and more sustainable results.”

Johnny Tan

President, National University of Singapore Society (NUSS)

“Winning in business in the twenty-first century takes more than just strategy and technology. It takes knowledge of how to work well with all stakeholders from investors, management, employees, partners and customers. In *Zheng He’s Art of Collaboration*, Sin Hoon shares with us the need and know-how of achieving a ‘win-win’ strategy in business through collaborating well with all stakeholders.”

James Tay

Director, National University of Singapore Extension

“Many business people all over the world are interested to know the reasons for China’s economic success. The current Chinese leadership is applying a lot of Zheng He’s philosophy as they invest all over the world to generate goodwill and win-win business propositions. I attribute part of China’s economic success to its adoption of Zheng He’s philosophy of the ‘Art of Collaboration’. Therefore, this book is most timely and a ‘must read’ for all business people.”

Dr Michael Teng

*Best-selling author and Managing Director,
Corporate Turnaround Center; and
President, MBA Alumni-NUS*

“Sin Hoon has eloquently presented the usefulness of Zheng He’s Art of Collaboration. I find Zheng He and his voyages fascinating. If the history books are correct, China did not repeat his feat, destroyed his fleet and closed its doors for several centuries, thereafter. Why that happened, puzzles me.”

Professor Tsui Kai Chong

Provost, SIM University

“This book presents an excellent analysis of the approach adopted by Zheng He. The insights presented in the book will certainly be of great value to many who are searching for new ways of co-creating solutions and approaches that engender ownership whilst achieving desired results and outcomes.

Zheng He’s Art of Collaboration gives us a glimpse of man’s wisdom, leadership principles and practices for winning, whether in life, business or in international relations. This book is a must-read for all strategic planners, entrepreneurs and CEOs who believe in ‘All Win’ as a way for the modern world to succeed, in contrast to ‘Aggression’, ‘Competition’, ‘Confrontation’ and ‘Conflict’. It is also a book about how we as the community organizers can build Social Capital within a community and across communities, through generous sharing, giving and collaboration among the partners in the public, private and people sectors. Professor Hum pays a lot of attention to the details on how Zheng He did it. He has offered us an alternative approach, and a softer and more sustainable solution to an organization’s success and growth.”

Yam Ah Mee

CEO, People’s Association

“Admiral Zheng He has long been touted and admired for his maritime skills and geographical explorations. For such success to be attained especially during the fifteenth century, much has to be attributed to Admiral Zheng He’s leadership, management and motivational skills.

There are many lessons to be learnt from the wise and foresighted Admiral. His successes in explorations to new geographical territories, as a Muslim leading a fleet of Chinese vessels and representing the Chinese Emperor as an eminent envoy, provide insights into collaborating skills involving cross-cultural and religious issues. This non-threatening, non-aggressive style that Admiral Zheng He used sets the platform for the ‘Art of Collaboration’. These skills and techniques in collaboration are necessary and especially relevant in today’s complex and competitive environment. Business leaders (and political leaders) have much to benefit from this much needed publication.

I must commend Professor Hum for sharing the insights gleaned from the archives of Admiral Zheng He and organizing them systematically for today’s students of management.”

Yeo Keng Joon

*Founding President, NUS Business School Alumni Association
and Past President, MBA Alumni-NUS*

INTERNATIONAL ZHENG HE SOCIETY

Admiral Zheng He (or Cheng Ho) was the 15th century Ming China's great mariner. His seven historic voyages across the Southeast Asian and Indian oceans from 1405–1433 was a ground-breaking achievement. His contributions changed the face of the region for a more peaceful and prosperous world. The International Zheng He Society (Singapore) was formed in 2003 to undertake scholarly research on Zheng He's enduring contribution to peace, good will, and ethnic and cross-cultural understanding among nations.

The Society's aims are: (1) to promote research on Zheng He expeditions focussing on his exploits and contributions beyond China; (2) to study the social, economic, political and cultural influence of Zheng He's legacies in the pre-Colonial and modern world; and (3) to share research findings from Zheng He studies through publications and international fora and visits.

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ZHENG HE'S
ART OF
COLLABORATION

Understanding the Legendary Chinese Admiral
from a Management Perspective

和

HUM SIN HOON



国际郑和学会

INTERNATIONAL ZHENG HE SOCIETY

ISEAS

INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES
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FOREWORD

The last decade of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century have enjoyed peace and yet the world has been full of the smoke of gunpowder, conflicts and endless suicidal bomb explosions. One wonders what has gone wrong with our civilization that leads to the world becoming so chaotic, with countless ordinary people being destitute and dying.

Of course, one of the reasons is the ideological differences that lead to the struggle and clash of interests among the major powers. Former President of the United States, George W. Bush, maintained the policy of U.S. domination, unilateralism and forestalling of others who do not identify with the American position. Such behaviour has drawn the United States into deep trouble ever since.

Three years ago, President Barack Obama was well aware that George W. Bush's policy would drag the U.S. into an abyss. So he rode on the electoral slogans of "Change" and "Anti-war" and ascended to the U.S. Presidency, for which he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Unfortunately, under the pressure of the hawkish faction, he promptly dispatched thirty thousand soldiers to Afghanistan. The recent surge of the "Arab Spring" and "Occupy Wall Street" movements highlight the discontent against the current political system. Does this mean that there is no other substitute system in mankind's 5,000 years of civilization?

In 1988, seventy-five Nobel Laureates assembled in Paris and issued a joint declaration: “Mankind in the 21st century requires learning from Confucian Wisdom prevailing 2,500 years ago in order to survive.”

What is Confucian Wisdom? Generally speaking, it means Confucian thought. Confucian orthodoxy is the way “to ordain conscience for Heaven and Earth, to strive for people’s life, to follow the Sage and spread his teachings, to create eternal peace for future generations”; “to care for the common people and to assume responsibility to serve the world”. This orthodoxy seeks to secure good life and fortune for the people, dedicate oneself to the people and be patriotic. Guided by the principle of people first, society second and monarch less important, Confucian mandarins implemented governance of benevolence, humanity and virtue to realize an ideal and perfect society. This ideology that emphasizes the importance of the collective group, society and state is very different from the western ideology that places emphasis on individual freedom and democracy.

President Obama, after assuming office, has also realized the inadequacy of over-emphasizing western freedom and democracy. Hence, according to the *Wall Street Observer*, Obama has been inclined to use Zheng He’s policy of projecting culture (soft power), something that Zheng He did 600 years ago. Then, Zheng He had commanded the world’s most powerful naval fleet. He did not bring to the countries he visited bloody wars of aggression nor did he embark on any form of colonization. Instead, through the use of diplomacy of trade and good-neighbourliness, he promoted the benign image of Ming China and disseminated Chinese culture (soft power). President Obama therefore emphasize the policy of trade and humanistic assistance to spread American soft power so as to serve the national interest of the United States better.

In fact, the mission completed by Zheng He's voyages to the western ocean consisted of the following:

1. Politically, expanding Ming China's sphere of political influence. He promoted Ming China as a mighty nation but without bullying the weak in spite of his military and technical might. Instead, he actively helped the smaller states against foreign invasion. For example, he dissuaded Siam from attacking Malacca, and prevented Malacca from attacking Srivijaya.
2. Diplomatically, adhering to the notion of "China and native states are one family". He established friendly and fraternal ties, not wars, with native states, valuing peace and harmony above territorial gain. Rulers and envoys of foreign states were invited to visit the Ming Court.
3. Economically, he developed the East-West international trade in the framework of tributary trade. Through consultation and cooperation, he achieved the goal of an all-win situation and valuing justice above material gains. He stood firm against piracy. The notorious pirate in the Straits of Malacca, Chen Zuyi, was wiped out by him.
4. Culturally, emphasizing protocol and etiquette. In diplomatic exchange, the Ming Court adopted a principle of benevolence and conciliation and thus returned those native states offering tribute of local products with generous gifts. The Chinese were more concerned with disseminating Chinese culture.
5. Religious tolerance and broad-mindedness. All religions were respected.

The above-mentioned behavioural mode is what we call the "Zheng He spirit". Actually, it is an extension of Confucian

philosophy. I think this would be the meaning of “Confucian Wisdom” as declared by the Nobel Laureates. If only the present political elites of the world would adopt this wisdom to rule the states, the world would be less chaotic and more peaceful for everyone.

History never repeats itself perfectly but it mirrors the similarities of the many historical events. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Mongol Empire dominated the world, its vast territories stretching from Asia to Europe. Due to this enormous territory and very diverse culture, religion and race of the population under its rule, the whole empire eventually collapsed. China being the centre of the empire was captured by the founder of the Ming Dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang in 1368 and the Han culture of benevolent governance through Confucian orthodoxy prevailed again. Twentieth-century America apparently dominates the world as a sole superpower and rules the world by hegemony, and to a certain extent, reflecting the similar ambition of the Mongol Empire in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Historians have labelled the nineteenth century as the British century and the twentieth century as the American century. Some American scholars are predicting that America is on the decline and it will soon be replaced by China in the twenty-first century. However, in this so-called “China century”, China has vouched repeatedly that she will never be a hegemony. Whether China will adopt the spirit of Zheng He and bring peace to the world is yet to be seen. We earnestly hope to see the revival of the Zheng He spirit in the twenty-first century.

Professor Hum Sin Hoon is the first scholar to apply the Zheng He spirit in business affairs. This deserves our admiration and support. He aptly extends Zheng He’s spirit of good faith and cooperation to develop a concept of the Art of Collaboration (AoC) in contrast to Sun Zi’s Art of War (AoW). The Art of Collaboration

is a “strategy” and is the best standard of behaviour in business. Numerous successful entrepreneurs have applied this spirit of good faith and cooperation to achieve an all-win objective through mutual care and impartial collaboration. If every partner employs Sun Zi’s Art of War for his own selfish material gain, then he will lose his business partners and the opportunity to succeed and grow. We consider Sun Zi’s Art of War to be unsuitable to serve as the entrepreneurs’ business strategy, but only as a tactic at best, in the attempt to reach greater strategic heights.

I hope that the elites in every profession and business can fully use the essence of Zheng He’s AoC to yield twice the results with half the effort to achieve the goal of business success.

Dr Tan Ta Sen
President, International Zheng He Society

MESSAGE

What should be the relevant management philosophy and strategies for today's twenty-first century world?

Currently, one of the most popular management concepts is that based on “Sun Zi Bing Fa” or “Sun Zi’s Art of War”. Sun Zi was a brilliant Chinese military strategist and he developed his war strategies some 2,600 years ago (in the sixth century BC). Many books have since been written about his war strategies and how they can be effectively applied to modern business. Indeed, many business empires have been built based on the philosophy of Sun Zi’s Art of War.

Under this doctrine, “business is a battlefield” where winners take all. It is either “kill or be killed” and usually, only the strongest prevail. It underlines the belief that “Big Fish Eat Small Fish and Small Fish Eat Shrimp”. In short, it is either you eat or gobble up your opponent or you yourself will be eaten up.

While this management concept holds true for many people and for a very long period of time, recent events have shown otherwise. With the advent of the Internet, and after 911, and the current prevalence of mobile technologies and devices, the world has changed.

911 demonstrated that “shrimps” also have the abilities to fight back quite effectively. Computer hackers working alone in their bedrooms have caused havoc to the world’s computer systems.

Suicide bombers are other examples of “shrimps” fighting back. The collective strength of the common people is being confirmed even in the most current uprising in the Middle East.

Today’s technologies have transformed and created a huge paradigm shift in business strategies. With “business knowledge” and “information” easily available to all, should we still continue to adopt and practise “Sun Zi Bing Fa” or Sun Zi’s Art of War which was developed some 2,600 years ago before the computer, Internet and today’s wireless technologies?

My personal view is that we should review our dependence on “Sun Zi Bing Fa”. But do we have any alternative? Again we can turn to history to give us an answer. More than 600 years ago, Zheng He made seven famous expeditions to Asia including Malacca, India, the Middle East and even Africa. With more than 200 ships and 27,000 soldiers/sailors, his armada was the largest the world had ever seen. He could have easily conquered whatever land he wanted, destroyed all resistance and be the mighty conqueror. But he did not.

Instead, he worked with the locals to earn their trust. He shared with them the finer art of weaving, fishing and agriculture. Friendship and mutual respect were the keys, though China then was the centre of civilization. As a result, Zheng He was widely respected by the people in all the countries he visited. He was the symbol of peace and harmony, regardless of race and religion.

So what new business model should we adopt or practise in this fast changing world to ensure a “win-win” business environment? Can we learn and adopt Zheng He’s philosophy and practices? I believe we can and I am confident that a change in mindset from “Sun Zi Bing Fa” to “Zheng He” will be the key to harmony and respect for all humanity. It will help develop trust which is so lacking today.

Professor Hum Sin Hoon's *Zheng He's Art of Collaboration* is certainly a very timely and appropriate response to our continual search for the business model that will help to improve business negotiations and relationships among companies and among trading nations. Professor Hum has investigated and researched extensively the "value-add" of Zheng He from a management perspective. I believe this is the first attempt to view Zheng He as a Management Guru and Professor Hum has carefully extracted the historical and cultural writings on Zheng He to give us a fresh and substantive understanding of Zheng He from this management angle.

Professor Hum has also aptly positioned *Zheng He's Art of Collaboration* as an alternative model to Sun Zi's *Art of War*. In this way, he draws our attention to the possibilities of this alternate, collaborative, and all-win paradigm that is in Zheng He, and wisely guiding us away from the present, prevalent, competitive and combative win-lose mindset.

Is this model practical and workable in the current turbulent business world? We all agree that "history always repeats itself". The fact that this model worked well some 600 years ago without the support of modern technologies gives us the confidence that it can be successful in today's world. A classic example of the application of Zheng He's collaborative model is the agreement between Singapore and Malaysia on the massive "Iskandar" project. Another relevant example is the collaborative arrangement between China and Singapore on the "Suzhou Industrial Park". The Batam Industrial Park and Bintan are other collaborative examples that demonstrate the possibilities of this management approach.

Many businessmen in Asia are already adopting and practising this "collaborative" business model and I am sure they will be

very happy to know that their business approach is the right one in this turbulent times, as exemplified by Zheng He long ago.

This book is a must-read for business students and businessmen. They can gain the wisdom of the alternative collaborative model provided by Zheng He to help them to be successful in their business relationships and collaborations in today's world. They can also learn from Zheng He in his various practices as a leader and manager.

*Wong Ah Long
Chairman, Utraco Green Tech;
Deputy Chairman, Board of Trustees,
Institute of Southeast Asian Studies;
Former CEO, Suntec City Development*

PREFACE

Just before the Lunar New Year in 2010, I met up with a group of Chinese businessmen led by Mr Wong Ah Long. These gentlemen explained quite quickly and seriously that they would like me to help in doing research on the legendary Admiral Zheng He.

I was actually quite surprised by the request. Prior to this, I had only vaguely remembered that I did study Zheng He in my secondary school history classes. I asked if they had made a mistake in “selecting the professor” since this is not the usual kind of research that I do as an academic. My training and work have been in operations and supply chain management, and even there, my usual mode of research is based largely on theoretical mathematical modelling, although in some instances, I do adopt an empirical approach in studying specific operations issues.

They ignored my “protest” and went on to explain that they have been impressed by Zheng He’s contribution in spreading peace and goodwill through his seven imperial voyages carried out during the early part of the fifteenth century. They felt that Zheng He and his basic message of peace and goodwill should be introduced to the larger world, especially when the world today seems to be filled with conflicts and stresses of all kinds.

This group of businessmen included Dr Tan Ta Sen. Apart from his business background, Dr Tan was also introduced to me as the President of the International Zheng He Society. These men

were clearly very earnest and genuine in their desire to propagate the Zheng He message. I was honestly quite inspired by their humility and determination, though I was not clear then as to what would constitute Zheng He's basic message.

I promised the businessmen that I would read about Zheng He over that Lunar New Year break, and would think about what I could or could not do in terms of research on this legendary Chinese character. As it turned out, my reading led to curiosity, which led to the desire to want to know more, and quite quickly, I concluded that the existing literature did not quite look at Zheng He from a management or business perspective. Also, as a professor of operations and supply chain management, I was especially intrigued by how Zheng He could have moved his huge crew and fleet across the open seas from China to Africa in the early fifteenth century without today's wireless and satellite communications technologies. So I told Mr Wong and Dr Tan that I would indeed do some research and see what I could contribute. These two gentlemen have since been my mentors on this new journey that I started with Admiral Zheng He.

With the help of a number of my NUS Business School undergraduate students, I proceeded on the first wave of my research on Zheng He. This involved our search on the existing Zheng He literature that was published in English. My students and I did not do an exhaustive search; our intention was to initially read and learn from the most readily available English sources on Zheng He. The approach that we adopted was to stand on the shoulders of these earlier experts and researchers on Zheng He by quoting from their writings when we saw relevance to our focus on understanding Zheng He from a management perspective. In other words, the approach we adopted involved culling from the existing literature anything that we read and

interpreted as related to Zheng He's management practices; we then "connected these dots" of discovery of the managerial Zheng He by presenting them as a coherent whole in what we would refer to as a specific model of Zheng He's management practices in a particular area of management.

Because of this approach, the reader will see that the writing in this book is heavily endnoted. Every point that I make on Zheng He is based on what my students and I have read, interpreted, and cited from the existing literature. The endnotes point the reader to the specific pages in the writings that were cited, and in this way, explicit recognition and credits are given to these earlier experts and researchers on Zheng He. This is also an indication that my work in this book did not add any new historical, cultural, diplomatic or maritime facts on Zheng He. To facilitate easy reading, and flow of contents, I have decided not to use the usual quotation marks in quoting from the literature (there would be too many quotation marks, otherwise). In any case, I have largely paraphrased most of these cited references, though I do borrow some words from some references. I do resort to using quotation marks when it is helpful in making a point, as in putting forth a specific quotation from Sun Zi's *Art of War*, for example. Similarly, for the purpose of emphasis, I have used text indentation to present some specific quotes, as in the presentation of the imperial edicts. In all references, I have given the full reference information in the chapter endnotes when I first cited from that source within the chapter; subsequent citations from the same source are simplified with reference only to the title of the publication. In every reference or citation, however, I point to specific pages in the source. I do the same with the references to Chinese literature. Here, when I cite the reference fully in the first instance within a chapter, I also provide

an English translation of its publication title and the publisher. This is to give the non-Chinese reader a basic sense of the Chinese references cited.

Together with a few of my students who can read Chinese readily, I have already embarked on the second wave of our research on Zheng He by searching through the literature written in Chinese. This explains why I have included some of such Chinese references in the writing in this book.

I started the research in March 2010. By July of that year, with encouragement from both Dr Tan and Mr Wong, my student Grace Chew and I co-authored a paper which we presented at the International Conference on Zheng He and the Afro-Asian World held in Malacca. We presented in that paper the first version of what we referred to as Zheng He's Art of Collaboration. To my surprise, the paper was quite well received by several of the conference participants who encouraged us to do more work in this area.

Following the conference, I therefore decided to press on with the research and put together this book to introduce the legendary Chinese Admiral Zheng He from the management perspective. By now, I have come to appreciate the "big message" that Zheng He seemed to represent, namely the message of peace and goodwill for all, through the cultivation of win-win collaboration amongst all people. I have therefore adopted the general mainstream perspective of Zheng He's grand voyages as a peaceful means for conveying Ming China's splendour and glory, and spreading goodwill and promoting economic trade, though I am also quite aware of alternative views on this. In this book, and as in the earlier conference paper, I have referred to this overall message as Zheng He's Art of Collaboration. At the same time, I have also come to appreciate Zheng He in his many apparent management and leadership practices which I believe should be introduced to today's managers and leaders.

This book therefore comprises two parts. The first part includes chapters 1 through 4, and it introduces what I now see as Zheng He's major contribution: the Zheng He Art of Collaboration. Chapter 1 first introduces Zheng He by putting forth some reasons why we may all want to pay attention to this fifteenth-century Chinese eunuch admiral. It then provides a broad sketch on the admiral from the management perspective, pointing out many questions on what his management practices were and how we could perhaps learn from them for application in today's environment.

Chapter 2 then introduces Zheng He's Art of Collaboration (AoC). It presents this as Zheng He's alternative model to the well-known Sun Zi's Art of War (AoW). Chapter 2 therefore represents Zheng He's central message of building collaboration with all people so as to help spread goodwill, peace and prosperity for the benefit of all people. It introduces the 4Cs model of Zheng He's strategies in building collaboration, and collectively, these 4Cs strategies represent Zheng He's Art of Collaboration.

Within Zheng He's AoC, Chapter 2 also briefly describes what is now referred to as Zheng He's 5Acts of Collaboration. Chapter 3 therefore follows with an elaboration on these Acts of Collaboration by providing more examples of them from the literature on Zheng He.

To conclude this first part of the book, Chapter 4 provides a comparison of Zheng He's AoC with Sun Zi's AoW. The intention here is to provide a better understanding of the AoC by comparing it directly with the well-known AoW. This chapter provides an examination of the fundamental philosophies, assumptions and contexts of both the Zheng He's and Sun Zi's strategies in their respective AoC and AoW.

Part 2 of the book, which comprises chapters 5 through 8, introduces Zheng He from the management perspective in the different specific functional areas of management. Here, the

basic objective is to learn from Zheng He through his apparent management and leadership practices. Chapter 5 first introduces the Admiral Zheng He in terms of his leadership principles and practices. Here, the chapter presents Zheng He's ABCDE Model of Leadership that highlights what he apparently considered to be most important in his work of leadership, namely his Allegiance to Authority, his Band of Brothers, his Care for Crew, his Doing Due Diligence and his Embrace of the Eternal.

Chapter 6 then considers learning from Zheng He in his Human Resource Management (HRM) practices. It introduces Zheng He's Role Model of HRM where the highlight is on Zheng He in his three roles as a Strategic HR Planner, a Clever HR Organizer and a Wise HR Manager.

Chapter 7 introduces Zheng He's Supply Chain Management practices by presenting Zheng He's 7S Model of Importance in managing supply chains. Here, the highlight is on what Zheng He apparently considered to be important in his supply chain management work, namely the importance of: Strategic Intent and Clarity; Supply Ecosystem; Specialists Recruitment; Sights and Sound of Navigation; Selection of Regional Bases; Supply Chain Growth and Development; and Storage and *Guanchang*.

Finally Chapter 8 considers Zheng He and his faith practices. Here it introduces Zheng He and his Islamic faith heritage as well as his apparent faith practices through Zheng He's PC Model for managing religious beliefs and faith practices: to Zheng He, it was apparent that Personal Faith can be a Significant Plus for his seafaring enterprise, while Corporate Inclusiveness is an Important Must for his mission success.

In summary, I have essentially drawn upon existing writings on Zheng He and considered them from the management perspective. In so doing, I have attempted to "connect the dots" in the ongoing discovery of a managerial Zheng He. This book

therefore introduces Zheng He from the management perspective. In particular, it offers Zheng He's Art of Collaboration as a possible alternative model to the managerial mindset contained in Sun Zi's Art of War. At the same time, this book also offers Zheng He's apparent management and leadership practices as possible inspiration for today's managers and leaders.

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