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ADMIRAL ZHENG HE & SOUTHEAST ASIA

International Zheng He Society (Singapore) was established in 2003. It is an association of a group of people interested in Zheng He. It aims at promoting the study of Zheng He's exploration worldwide, especially Southeast Asia and its impact on the region. It also aims to foster cooperation with other research organizations which are involved in the study and research of Zheng He.

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ADMIRAL ZHENG HE & SOUTHEAST ASIA

Edited by
Leo Suryadinata



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Singapore



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Glossary

The articles reproduced in this book were originally published over a long period of time (1964–2005). Therefore, the Chinese system of spelling differs from article to article. Some use the Wade–Giles system while others use Hanyu Pinyin. Hsu Yun-Ts'iao used his own spelling, for which he had provided the original Chinese characters. This glossary does not include Hsu's spelling and only lists selected names and terms deemed necessary by the editor.

Wade–Giles/Pinyin/Chinese characters

Chan Cheng (Zhan Cheng) 占城
Chan p'o (Zhan Po) 占婆
Chao-wa (Zhaowa) 爪哇
Ch'en Chu Yi (Chen Zuyi) 陈祖义
Cheng Ho (Zheng He) 郑和
Fa Hsien (Fa Xian) 法显
Fei Hsin (Fei Xin) 费信
Hsi-li-ma-ha-la-che (Xi Li Ma Ha La Ze) 西里马哈刺者
Hsi Yang (Xi Yang) 西洋
Hsing-ch'a Sheng-lan (Xing Cha Sheng Lan) 星槎胜
Hsu Yun-ts'iao (Ch'iao) (Xu Yunqiao) 许云樵
Hsuan-te shih-lu (Xuan De Shi Lu) 宣德实录
Hung-wu shih-lu (Hong Wu Shi Lu) 洪武实录
I-ssu-han-ta-er-sha (Yi Si Han Da Er Sha) 亦思罕答儿沙
I-tsing (Yi Jing) 义净
Khuan Shi Kuan (Guan Shi Guan) 管事官

- Kong Koan (Gong Guang) 公馆
 Kuan Ch'ang (Guan Chang) 官厂
 Lih Tai Pao Ann (Li Dai Bao An) 历代宝案
 Ma Chu (Ma Zu) 妈祖
 Ma Huan (Ma Huan) 马欢
 Man-la-chia (Man La Jia) 满刺加
 Ming Shih (Ming Shi) 明史
 Ming Shih lu 明实录
 Mu-kan-sa-yu-ti-er-sha (Mu Gan Sa Yu De Er Sha) 母干撒于的儿沙
 Pai-li-mi-su-la (Bai Li Mi Su La) 拜里米苏拉
 Sam Po (San Pao) 三宝；三保
 Sam Po Kong (San Bao Gong) 三宝公；三保公
 San Fu Chi (San Fo Qi) 三佛齐
 San Pao Lung (San Bao Long) 三宝垄
 San Po Tay Jin (San Bao Da Ren) 三宝大人；三保大人
 Shih Chin Ch'ing (Shi Jin Qing) 史进卿
 Shih Ta Niang Tzi Pi Na Ti (Shi Da Niang Zi Bi Na Zhi) 施大娘子
 婢那智
 Shuan wei shih (Xuan Wei Shi) 宣慰使
 Tung Hsi Yang K'ao (Dong Yi Yang Kao) 东西洋考
 Tung Yang (Dong Yang) 东洋
 Wu Pei Chih (Wu Bei Zhi) 武备志
 Yin Ch'ing (Yin Qing) 尹庆
 Ying-ya sheng-lan (Yin Ya Sheng Lan) 赢涯胜
 Ying-yai sheng-lan chiao chu (Yin Ya Sheng Lan Jiao Zhu) 赢涯
 胜览校注
 Yung-lo Shih-lu (Yong Le Shi Lu) 永乐实录

Introduction

Leo Suryadinata

Admiral Zheng He (Cheng Ho 郑和) was also known as San Bao Da Ren (三宝大人; 三保大人), San Bao Tai Jian (三宝太监; 三保太监), and San Bao Gong (三宝公; 三保公). The year 2005 is the 600th anniversary of Zheng He's maiden voyage to Southeast Asia and beyond. The anniversary is commemorated by numerous celebrations with Zheng He as the main theme, including international conferences, exhibitions, and publications. This book is composed in the context of this celebration. The Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore and the International Zheng He Society consider it significant to review Zheng He's activities in Southeast Asia, which took place 600 years ago. Nine English articles on Zheng He, originally published from 1964 to 2005 and written by Asian scholars to reflect Asian views, have been reproduced in this volume.

The articles are grouped into three clusters. The first three articles examine the relationship of the Ming court, especially during the Zheng He expeditions, with Southeast Asia in general and the Malacca empire in particular. The fourth, fifth, and sixth articles examine the socio-cultural impact of the Zheng He expeditions on some Southeast Asian countries, with special reference to the role played by Zheng He in the Islamization of Indonesia (Java) and the urban architecture of the region. The last three articles examine the route of the Zheng He expeditions and the location of the places that were visited.

FOREIGN RELATIONS AND THEIR NATURE

Since the end of World War II, some Asian scholars have studied the Ming Dynasty and Southeast Asia with reference to Zheng He. One of the pioneers of the Zheng He and Southeast Asian studies is Professor Wang Gungwu who wrote a number of impressive papers on the Ming Dynasty's relations with Southeast Asia in general and with Malaya/Malaysia in particular.

In his article written in 1964 on the early Ming's relations with Malacca (Chapter 1), Wang detailed the Ming court relations with Parameswara, the founder of the Malacca kingdom, and the nature of that relationship. This coincided with the period of the Zheng He expeditions. Using the Chinese sources, Wang argued that Emperor Yong Le during the Ming Dynasty took the initiative to send eunuch Yin Ch'ing (尹庆 Yin Qing) to lead a mission to Malacca in 1403, and the Zheng He's voyages, starting in 1405, were part of the same desire to expand China's foreign relations. Wang also pointed out that Yong Le inherited the previous policy of the Ming emperors "to suppress the flourishing private trade in overseas goods which encouraged piracy on the Chinese coast".

The article stressed that the Ming relationship with Malacca was based on mutual benefit. During that time, Malacca was under the threat of both Siam and Majapahit. Therefore, Parameswara and the other kings of Malacca also saw the economic benefits to be gained by the establishment of close relations with the Ming court.

Although the Chinese followed the Confucian order concept (or in Wang's words, "Confucian universal state") and the tributary system in conducting its foreign relations, Malacca and other "tributary" states might have not seen it from the Chinese view. Wang stated that "Parameswara was shrewd enough to see that a special relationship would bring Malacca no harm but greatly add

to his prestige. What was important was the size of Zheng He's fleet, the wealth in the ships' holds, and the trade the Chinese could bring."

Wang further argued that both the Ming court and Malacca established a very close relationship. Malacca was the first "foreign nation" to receive the emperor's inscription, and the Malacca kings visited China in Zheng He's ship. He concluded that "this close relationship with China continued until 1435 when the Ming court finally abandoned Yung-lo's policy of state-trading. By that time, Malacca's international position was unassailable."

In the 1968 article on the first three kings of Malacca (Chapter 2), Wang painstakingly elaborated on the previous erroneous assumption that Parameswara was the Malacca king who, after his conversion to Islam, changed his name to Iskandar Shah. Using the Chinese source again, Wang was able to convincingly argue that Iskandar Shah was the son of Parameswara. He was the one who visited China to report to the Ming court that his father had died, and he was the successor to the throne. Wang also maintained that:

All three kings of Malacca were transported to China in Chinese ships following some of the Cheng Ho expeditions. Malacca needed help against Siam and China needed a base for fleets to the Indian oceans. This was a sound basis for 30 years of close relations between China and Malacca ... But after 30 years of Chinese protection, Malacca was obviously ready to look after itself and it did so with increasing confidence and success for the remainder of the century.

The two articles by Wang serve as a good introduction to the Zheng He expeditions from 1405 to 1433 and, hence, this book on *Admiral Zheng He and Southeast Asia*. They analyse the Ming

policy towards Southeast Asia and the significance of the Zheng He expeditions to the history of the region. They underline the two important decades in Malaccan history when Zheng He's ships used the country as a vital base, thereby laying the foundation for the Malay empire.

The Zheng He expeditions are not without controversy. Dr Geoff Wade maintained that it was a type of proto-colonialism, similar to that of the Portuguese. Drs Tan Ta Sen disagreed with that view and argued that it was basically different from Western colonialism as there were no Ming colonies in the Western sense (Chapter 3). Tan maintained that Zheng He's expeditions were a reflection of the Ming Confucian concept policy and the tributary trading system. Using Chinese sources, he views the Zheng He saga from the perspective of the Chinese Confucian order and the context of tributary trade, which was fundamentally different from Western colonialism that follows the industrialization of the West. Tan's argument is closer to that of Wang Gungwu's, but not exactly the same. Tan stressed the Confucian aspect while Wang emphasized the aspects of security of the dynasty and state trading.

SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPACT

There was no doubt that Zheng He created a great political/security impact on Southeast Asia. But the socio-cultural impact of the expeditions is seldom addressed. The late Tan Yeok Seong used *Lidai Baoan* (历代宝案 Dynasty Documentary Records of Ryukyu), which has seldom been used in Zheng He studies, and combined it with Western sources (e.g. Raffles's *History of Java*) to trace the story of Shi Da Niang Zi 施大娘子 of Palembang, the daughter of a Chinese Muslim officer called Shih Chin Ching

(Shi Jin Qing 施进卿) sent by Zheng He to replace Chen Zuyi 陈祖义 in Palembang (Chapter 4). Shi Da Niang Zi is known as Nyai Gede (i.e., Da Niang Zi or grand old lady) Pinatih in both the local and Western history. The Shi family had a close relationship with Zheng He. Tan Yeok Seong argued that “when the family was in trouble after Shih Chin Ching’s death, it sought the personal intervention of the aged eunuch”. Shi Da Niang Zi left Palembang for Gresik and was influential in spreading Islam in that area. Tan further argued that “the Chinese elements could indeed be considered as one of the driving forces or ‘paku’ [nail] in the new movement of Islamization in Malaysia [and Indonesia].”

In Chapter 5, Dr Leo Suryadinata discusses the Islamization of Java during the Zheng He period. Arguing that although Chinese sources may be useful, they may not be able to throw new light on the Islamization of Java due to various reasons. He noted the existence of local historical records and recent studies may help explain the role of the Zheng He expeditions in spreading Islam in Java and Malacca. Nevertheless, the local sources had to be used critically as many contain more legend than history. Besides, oral history and historical sites are also important in judging the impact of the Zheng He expeditions. Without these, the story of Zheng He would not be complete.

Dr Johannes Widodo explores the heritage, links, and connections of Admiral Zheng He in the coastal regions of Southeast Asia, especially in the urban culture, settlement structures, and architecture (Chapter 6). “Here history is perceived as a layering process rather than a linear succession of events. Thus in this sense, the city or settlement can be seen as a repository of cumulative memory of its inhabitants along time, a unique formation of urban culture and identity.”

THE ZHENG HE ROUTE AND PLACES VISITED

There have been many studies on the places visited by Zheng He's fleet. For this collection, two articles by the late Professor Hsu Yun-Ts'iao 许云樵 have been selected. One is his notes relating to Zheng He's expeditions to the Western Ocean (Chapter 7), and the other his article on whether Zheng He's fleet visited the Philippines (Chapter 8). Hsu, a self-taught historian, taught at Nanyang University in the late fifties and early sixties. He was an expert on Southeast Asian ancient history based on the Chinese historical records. His 1976 article on Zheng He (Chapter 7) is not an integrated paper but a series of notes on a number of questions relating to Zheng He and his expeditions: the meaning of San Bao, whether Zheng He was a eunuch, the location of "West Ocean" 西洋, the number of voyages Zheng He made, the dates of Zheng He's charts, and the size of Zheng He's ships. All of these are interesting questions, but his answers are too brief. In fact, many other scholars have attempted to answer some of the questions raised by Hsu but many questions still remain unsatisfactorily answered.

In an earlier article written in 1968 (Chapter 8), Hsu discussed Zheng He's assumed visit to the Philippines. Hsu noted that Zheng He only visited the Western Ocean, not the Eastern Ocean 东洋, where the present-day Philippines is located. Hence he insisted that Zheng He never visited the Philippines.

In fact, the places that Zheng He visited have been studied by many scholars, but there has never been complete agreement among them. For instance, in the Chinese sources there was no record that Zheng He had ever visited San Bao Long 三宝垄 (or the similar-sounding Semarang in Bahasa Indonesia). Nevertheless, both local history and the Chinese community in that area strongly believe that Zheng He had visited Semarang —

indeed, San Bao Long was named after San Bao (i.e., Zheng He). Even the location of the places that Zheng He visited or noted is still a matter for debate. The landmark called Long Ya Men 龍牙門 (Lungyamen) is a case in point. Some scholars said it is in Johore, some said in the Riau Straits. Others maintained that it is in Singapore (present-day Keppel Harbour). Mr Chung Chee Kit, a maritime engineer, argues that Long Ya Men is Singapore (Chapter 9). He re-examines what has been researched by others, including the recent publication by the late Mr Lin Wo Ling 林我鈴, employing modern navigational methods and recalculating the distance. He eventually came to the conclusion that Long Ya Men is indeed in Singapore!

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The nine articles included in this book show that Zheng He and his expeditions are fascinating subjects of study, and the sources are not restricted to the Chinese language. There is no general agreement on the factors that contributed to the expeditions of Zheng He. Nevertheless, consulting both Chinese and non-Chinese sources is necessary. However, analyses should be in the historical context, not by taking them out of context. The debate on the reasons for the Zheng He's expeditions will no doubt continue.

It should be noted that in the case of Wang Gungwu's studies, conventional Chinese sources are indeed useful. When used properly and innovatively, they are able to answer many important and interesting historical questions. However, conventional Chinese chronicles are unable to answer questions relating to Zheng He's role in the Islamization of Indonesia and Malaysia (Malacca). Non-traditional sources, both Chinese and non-Chinese, throw light on this issue as shown in the articles by Tan Yeok Seong and Leo Suryadinata. Nevertheless, the Chinese sources remain

important. However, confining the research to conventional Chinese chronicles alone will not reveal the complete picture of the Zheng He expeditions, especially if the impact of the admiral on the history of Southeast Asia is to be known.

It is also true that the studies on Zheng He, both in English and Chinese, are not exhaustive yet; many aspects remain to be explored. It is hoped that more Asian scholars will follow suit in the near future.