

CHAPTER
19

Section 2

GEOGRAPHY APPLICATION: MOVEMENT

The Voyages of Zheng He

Directions: Read the paragraphs below and study the map carefully. Then answer the questions that follow.

An unusual stone pillar was discovered in the 1930s in the Chinese province of Fujian. It is inscribed with one of the only remaining records of the voyages of the Zheng He. Five hundred years earlier, around 1430, he erected that pillar to commemorate his trips.

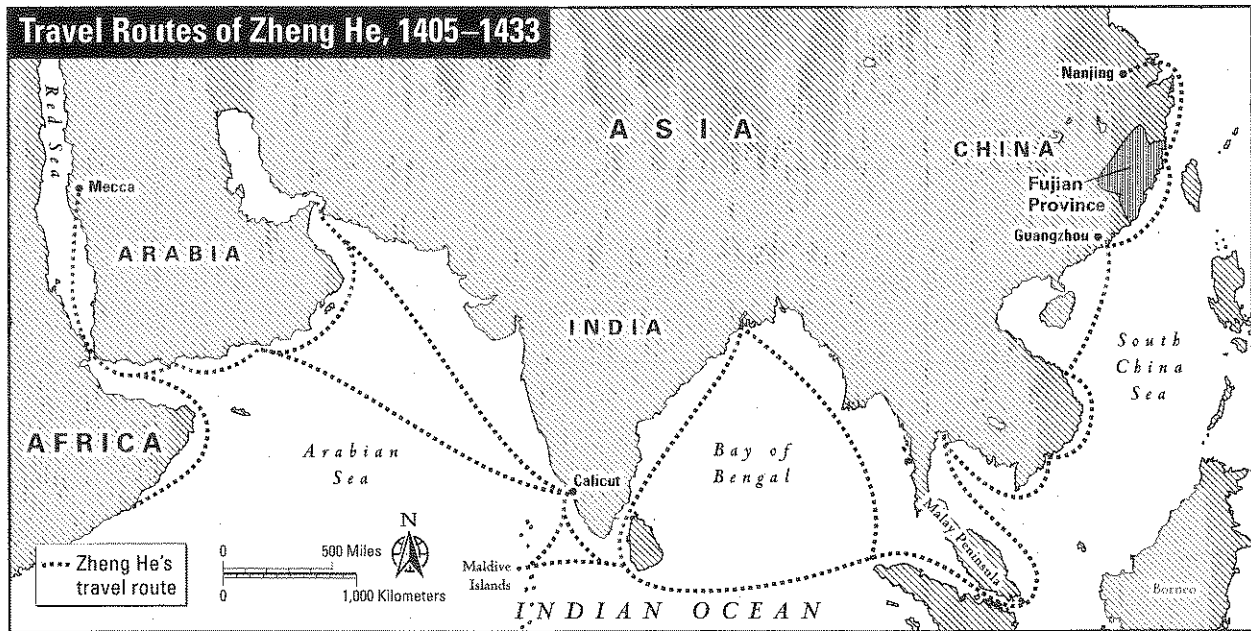
The first emperor of the Ming Dynasty, after overthrowing the Mongols in 1368, wanted to trumpet Chinese power. He decided to build a navy and send Chinese ships around the world. However, it was not until after his successor, Yongle, took over in 1398 that this dream was realized. Yongle appointed Zheng He, a Muslim, as "Admiral of the Western Seas." Zheng He set sail from Nanjing on his first voyage in 1405 with a fleet of hundreds of ships.

The Chinese viewed themselves as the center of the world and their fleet reflected that view. The larger ships in the fleet were ten times larger than their European counterparts and could carry 500

people. To feed all those people, they brought huge tubs of soil in order to grow fruits and vegetables.

The Chinese intended to show off their wealth, receive tribute, and explore new places. Zheng He brought porcelain vases, Chinese silk, and pearls to amaze the "barbarians." On one of Zheng He's stops, a local king did not show sufficient respect to the Ming emperor, so he was taken back to China for "instruction." In Arabia, Zheng He made the pilgrimage to Mecca and visited Muhammad's tomb in Medina. Another time, in Africa, animals such as "lions, gold-spotted leopards, and camel-birds [ostriches]" amazed Zheng He and his men.

In 1433, after traveling nearly 35,000 miles to thirty nations on seven voyages, Zheng He retired and soon died. The Ming emperor at that time then ended exploration because of the cost. He even had the written journals of Zheng He destroyed to emphasize his policy, and China soon fell back into isolation.



Interpreting Text and Visuals

1. The Strait of Malacca, through which Zheng He sailed, lies between the southern end of the Malay Peninsula and the island of Sumatra. According to the map, what two large bodies of water does this strait connect? _____

2. According to the map, Zheng He sailed through three seas, a large bay, and an ocean. Name these bodies of water. _____

3. Why did Zheng He sail to Mecca? _____

4. What port city appears to be Zheng He's major jumping-off point for destinations in Arabia and Africa? _____

5. Columbus's voyage from Spain to the Caribbean in 1492 covered about 5,000 miles. About how long was Zheng He's trip from Nanjing to Mecca, measured along the most direct ship route? _____

6. Examine the map. Why do you think that it may have been important to Zheng He's travels that he was a Muslim? _____

7. Do you agree or disagree with the Ming emperor who ended the voyages of exploration? Why? _____

