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## The Voyages of Zheng He: Ideology, State Power, and Maritime Trade in Ming China

MATTEO RICCI, THE FAMOUS JESUIT MISSIONARY TO CHINA at the turn of the sixteenth century, wrote that the Chinese seemed bewildered when shown European maps of the world:

When put together the words *Ciumquo* or *Ciumhoa* are translated, “To be at the center.” I have heard that this title is due to the fact that the Chinese look upon the heavens as spherical and imagine that the world is flat and that China is situated in the middle of this flat plain. Due to this idea, when they first saw our geographical maps, they were somewhat puzzled to find their empire placed not in the center of the map but at its extreme eastern border. When I drafted a map of the world for them and inscribed it with Chinese characters, out of deference to their ideas, I so arranged it that the empire of China occupied a more or less central position.<sup>1</sup>

In 1668, the Jesuit Gabriel de Magalhaes also noted that Chinese cultural assumptions led to cartographical distortion: “They give a good expanse to China, but they represent other realms without order, without position, and without any sign of good geography.”<sup>2</sup> In its earliest usage, what Ricci called

*Ciumquo* (*zhongguo*), usually translated as “Middle Kingdom,” meant “the states at or around the center.” As early as the fifth century BCE, Chinese scholars conceived of China as central to the world, surrounded on all sides by water. Later cosmography characterized the imperial center as bordered by barren wastes: shifting sand to the west, frigid plains to the north, limitless ocean to the east. An alternative view conceived of China as the center of five concentric configurations, from the core imperial realm to an outer zone of deserts and graves.<sup>3</sup>

While these distinctions ostensibly were descriptive in nature, they clearly reflected moral and cultural values more than geographical observation. From early times, the Chinese regarded the peoples bordering the Middle Kingdom as lacking the sophisticated social organization and political order characteristic of China. As Ricci put it, “[t]he few kingdoms contiguous to their state, of which they had any knowledge before they learned of the existence of Europe, were, in their estimation, hardly worthy of consideration.”<sup>4</sup> The Jesuit regarded the idea of the centrality of China with both condescension and sympathy. From his perspective, the Chinese seemed woefully ignorant of their true position at the extremity of the map. At the same time, he recognized that Chinese cosmographical conceptions embodied an undeniable historical truth: “Considering its vast stretches and the boundaries of its lands, [China] would at present surpass all the kingdoms of the earth, taken as one, and as far as I am aware, it has surpassed them during all previous ages.”<sup>5</sup> The notion that China represents the only great civilization of Eurasia that evolved in relative isolation has become a commonplace for modern historians. In contrast, the Western experience is seen as significantly different: European monarchs and states endlessly jostled for an elusive imperial dominance while also struggling against the alien, aggressive civilization of Islam.<sup>6</sup> This background of diversity and conflict gave Europeans a certain limited advantage when they came to deal with societies new to them in the Americas and Asia. In contrast, the arrival of Westerners on the China coast in the early sixteenth century represented the beginning of a lengthy, painful process in which Confucian scholars eventually ceased to identify the history of the Middle Kingdom with that of the world.<sup>7</sup>

Jesuits in Ming China closely associated with and modeled themselves on Confucian scholars, imitating *literati* manners and wearing mandarin robes. The “Jesuit Relations” of the seventeenth century, especially the voluminous reports of Ricci, formed the basis for Western perceptions of the Chinese, and their influence can still be detected in scholarship on China, such as in the assumption that imperial China was indifferent to the outside world and long-distance commerce. David Landes’s bestselling work, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations* (1998), portrays the Chinese as incurious and complacent: “They were what they were and did not have to change. They had what they had and did not have to take or make. . . . Isolationism became China. Round, complete, apparently serene, ineffably harmonious, the Celestial Empire purred along for hundreds of years, impervious and imperturbable.”<sup>8</sup>

Another legacy of the “Jesuit Relations” was a forceful emphasis on the political and cultural consequences of China’s geographical isolation, a major theme among thinkers such as Turgot, Hegel, and Herder. In effect, the Jesuits projected the notion of Confucian ideological dominance into the immemorial past, seeing the idea of China as the Middle Kingdom as an aspect of the Confucian promotion of agrarian virtue and economic self-sufficiency over commercial enterprise and foreign exchange. In this perspective, China needed nothing from the outside world, while the tribute system, in which “barbarians” brought tribute to China, tokens of submission in the form of native products, was an expression of Chinese cultural superiority rather than a means of obtaining alien products.<sup>9</sup>

In their social and spiritual identification with Confucians, Ricci and his fellow Jesuits subscribed to a monolithic view of Chinese history and institutions; hence they failed to recognize how much of what they singled out as “traditional” China was in fact a product of the Ming period (1355–1644) itself.<sup>10</sup> To be sure, merchants and foreign trade consistently were disparaged in Confucian ideology at least as far back as the Han era (206 BCE–CE 220). Merchants were regarded as a disruptive social element, ranked at the bottom of the social scale, always in need of regulation and supervision, necessary parasites whose greed ran counter to Confucian ethics and a harmonious social order.<sup>11</sup> Too much can be made of such condemnations,

however, for they were more routine flourishes of conventional opinion than faithful descriptions of reality. From the Han through the Song (960–1279), ideological scorn for merchants never significantly hampered commercial activity, just as ecclesiastical prohibitions against usury never stopped interest payments and loan-sharking in Latin Christendom. When the Ming government tried to enforce draconian laws prohibiting maritime trade, a sixteenth-century Chinese commentator pointed out that it was a fruitless enterprise: “China and the barbarian countries have their respective unique products; thus trade between them is difficult to terminate. Where there is profit, people will certainly go for it.”<sup>12</sup>

Although Confucianism was the philosophy of the scholar-officials who ran the empire, it never succeeded in effectively defining China’s actual relationship with the outside world. In general, dealing with other states and peoples was a matter of a usefully muddled blend of cultural propaganda, reasoned diplomacy, and economic pragmatism. In particular, the tribute system was primarily a way of intermeshing Chinese civilization with other East Asian societies, not a bureaucratic structure of management passed down from ancient times. It expressed Chinese values through ritual and aesthetics—the exchange of commodities by “barbarians” and emperor, ceremonies of obeisance and elevation—and was not an administrative instrument of foreign policy mandated by Confucian ideology.<sup>13</sup>

The well-known voyages of Zheng He illustrate the limitations of Confucian ideology as well as the pivotal role of the early Ming dynasty in Chinese history. Between 1405 and 1433, the emperors Yongle (r. 1402–1424) and Xuande (r. 1425–1435) sent seven expeditions to Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean, commanded by Zheng He, a Muslim and a eunuch, and comprising as many as 300 ships and 28,000 men in a single voyage.<sup>14</sup> Since they are unique in Chinese history, the voyages of Zheng He have given rise to endless argument over their purpose, the size of the ships, the magnitude of the fleets, the routes taken, the nautical charts employed, the countries visited, and the cargoes carried. Much of the contention regarding the objective of the voyages stems from a misguided search for a single motive behind a complex and ambitious enterprise spanning a generation. The expeditions, however, were simultaneously diplomatic displays, military exercises, and

trading ventures, with emphasis on these aspects shifting in response to both Chinese intentions and circumstances abroad. Placing the voyages in the context of commerce, however, serves to highlight the enduring significance of foreign trade in Chinese history.<sup>15</sup>

The notion of China as a Middle Kingdom always coexisted with tacit recognition that the realm was not economically self-sufficient and that civil officials were unable or unwilling to check seaborne commerce in the name of Confucian orthodoxy. During the latter half of the Tang period (618–902), there was rapid movement toward commercial specialization, growth of markets and trade, greater reliance of government on customs revenue, and improvement in the status of merchants. These trends accelerated explosively in the Song and Yuan (1279–1368) dynasties. After 1127, when conquerors in the northwest cut off southern China from contact with Central Asia, there was a decisive turn toward the sea. An enormous migration of people moved toward the southeastern provinces of Zhejiang, Fujian, and Guangdong, with the population there growing by around 700 percent between the years 800 and 1200. As the center of population shifted, the focus of economic activity also changed, for the hilly coastal provinces were agriculturally poor and the people there necessarily looked to the sea for a livelihood. Indeed, in some southeastern maritime counties, as much as a third of the population actually lived aboard a vessel. China emerged for the first time as a sea power, with a navy for coastal defense and a fleet carrying rice from south to north. Shipyards constructed over 600 vessels annually, and seagoing craft entering the Yangzi River numbered in the tens of thousands. The imperial government depended on maritime trade for at least 20 percent of its cash income.<sup>16</sup> An imperial ordinance of 1146 suggests that official Confucian contempt for overseas commerce had negligible effect on actual practice: “The profits of maritime trade contribute much to the national income. We ought to continue the old system by which people of faraway countries are encouraged to come and abundantly circulate goods and wealth.”<sup>17</sup>

A striking aspect of the Song commercial revolution was the extent to which parts of the Chinese economy became linked to production for overseas markets. Groves of plums and lychees in Fujian province were purchased

by merchants, who had the fruits pickled for transport overseas; iron products, cloth, and sugar from Fujian were shipped to Persia and Japan. Song copper coins (*jiazhi*) became common currency for small-scale transactions throughout Southeast Asia. Silk and porcelain production increased substantially to meet demand from foreign markets. Building on Song achievements, China under the Yuan dynasty became even more closely linked with overseas markets. The Mongol rulers even attempted to invade Japan and Java with fleets comprising hundreds of ships, most the property of private Chinese merchants. Chinese entrepreneurs during the Yuan era captured seaborne commerce from Indians and Persians, and Chinese junks—with private cabins, bathrooms, passenger lounges, African stewards, and plentiful cargo space—sailed the Indian Ocean.<sup>18</sup> In short, China transformed itself into a sea power during the Song and then employed its maritime capacities during the Yuan to become the dominant trading state in Asian waters.

The evolution of Chinese porcelain during the Yuan period points up the extent to which the Chinese economy became linked to long-distance trade.<sup>19</sup> The translucent quality of Chinese porcelain had long fascinated the Muslim Middle East, which produced only earthenware vessels. Knowing that Persian potters decorated their white-glazed products with attractive designs in blue, Middle Eastern merchants in China imported cobalt oxide from Persia and commissioned porcelains for their homeland, such as capacious bowls with inverted rims, jars with handles, and ewers with curving spouts—all wares alien to Chinese taste but well suited to Muslim cuisine. Potters decorated the ceramics with “Muslim blue” (*huihui qing*), a vibrant pigment processed from cobalt oxide. By the late 1300s, Chinese blue-and-white porcelain had become so popular in the Middle East that Syrian and Egyptian artisans turned out countless earthenware imitations. In China, wares in blue-and-white were considered vulgar and ostentatious for several generations: the color and ornamentation were stigmatized as typical of the “barbarian” world. By the end of the Yuan dynasty, however, the new ceramic style had become refined and sophisticated, capable of appealing to a domestic market. Under foreign influence, then, a revolution in decorative taste took place in China, a marriage between Islamic aesthetics and Chinese

technique, ushering in the dominant porcelain style for the remaining centuries of imperial China as well as the most popular of all forms of ceramic decoration.

The Middle Eastern merchants behind the development of blue-and-white porcelain represented part of the foreign population that entered China in the wake of the Mongol conquest. The emperor Kubilai Khan (1215–1294) did not share Confucian disdain for merchants, and he gave them high status and official position. As conquerors, the Mongol rulers depended heavily on other foreigners, especially Muslims from Central Asia, to act as intermediaries between themselves and the Chinese masses. Muslims served in high financial posts, as provincial governors, and as trade superintendents in coastal provinces. Acting in the name of the Mongol conquerors, refusing to join in ancestor worship, and keeping socially apart from the subject population, Muslims in China came to be feared and hated. As merchants and moneymen, they were regarded by Confucians as greedy and duplicitous; as Muslims, they were widely seen as cruel and hypocritical.<sup>20</sup>

In some respects, the regime of the emperor Hongwu (r. 1368–1398), the founder of the Ming dynasty, represented a continuation of Mongol methods of rule inasmuch as he was as despotic as his predecessors. On the one hand, the founder despised the Mongols as alien invaders of the Middle Kingdom and saw himself as a divinely ordained restorer of traditional Chinese values and institutions. He came from an uneducated, peasant background, and in his rise to power, he drew upon an eclectic mix of Buddhism, Daoism, and Manicheanism, all laced with notions of messianic fulfillment. On the other hand, Hongwu generally abandoned these radical (and unsettling) ideas after he came to power, chiefly because he needed Confucian civil officials to govern his empire. Moreover, in his reaction against the Mongols and in his desire to restore what he regarded as fundamental Chinese values, he aspired to make China conform to Confucian theory. In the sphere of maritime trade, strict application of Confucian ideology meant that the new emperor rejected the tolerance that previous dynasties (especially the Yuan) had extended to foreigners and seaborne commerce. In effect, Hongwu tried to turn back the clock, to restore a Middle Kingdom, isolated and self-sufficient, that in fact had never existed.<sup>21</sup>

Instead of regarding the tribute system as a matter of ritual and formality, Hongwu treated it as a bureaucratic structure of management, an administrative instrument of foreign policy. For the first time, tribute relations took on a truly systematic character, transformed from ceremonies and tacit accords into a set of regulations spelling out actions and obligations down to the smallest detail, such as which foods were to be served to tribute envoys and which to their servants. Perhaps to assert the legitimacy of his new dynasty, Hongwu took the unprecedented step of dispatching envoys to invite states into a tribute relationship with the Ming court. Equally unprecedented, he coupled those invitations with drastic restrictions on tribute trade: private maritime commerce was strictly forbidden, and only those countries paying tribute would be permitted to import commodities, although under stringent rules regarding the timing, size, and number of tribute missions. Such regulations rarely had been enforced, for the tribute system had evolved over hundreds of years as a way of ritually asserting Chinese superiority while also permitting virtually unimpeded trade. The system had functioned as an elaborate fiction whereby the notion of a self-sufficient Middle Kingdom could be preserved amid a swarm of foreign merchants. Hongwu's aspiration, however, was to displace commercial exchange from the heart of the tribute system, reducing the latter solely to a hierarchical political relationship between imperial center and subservient client. He believed his radical measures would cauterize the wound inflicted on the Chinese moral and political order by Mongol influence and alien exchange. He apparently never recognized (or cared) that by imposing new tribute rules he was disrupting trading customs and mercantile networks that had existed for centuries.<sup>22</sup>

Following Confucian orthodoxy, Hongwu believed that tribute envoys were abusing their circumscribed privilege to import commodities. A tribute mission from Siam (Thailand) came to China with 38,000 tons of aromatics, only a fraction of which was bestowed on the emperor while the rest ended up in public markets. A Japanese tribute mission numbered 1,200 persons and over a million pounds of goods in nine ships, including 250,000 pounds of sulfur, although just 10,000 was the established tribute, and 37,000 swords, only 100 of which represented a gift to the emperor. As Ricci later observed, tribute ships and trade ships were indistinguishable. That,

however, was a reality Hongwu could not abide. Furthermore, the emperor believed that the tribute system was a threat to his dynasty: in 1300, he put to death Hu Weiyong, his chancellor, because he suspected civil officials of using revenue from tribute trade to conspire against him. The execution, coupled with abolition of the Central Secretariat, the highest level of the bureaucracy, was intended by Hongwu to ensure his direct control of imperial administration. Instead, it had the effect of reducing the efficiency of central management and overwhelming the monarch with paperwork. Hongwu's restructuring of the tribute system embodied his aspiration for control and resulted in equivalent disorder.<sup>23</sup>

Hongwu's prohibition of private maritime commerce and his sweeping cutbacks in tribute trade immediately imperiled the livelihoods of innumerable coastal inhabitants and foreign merchants. Overseas dealings continued under different auspices, however, for by a stroke of the pen, the emperor simply had transformed ordinary traders into legally proscribed smugglers. In this perspective, the illegal importation of goods represented the invasion of the real market into an artificial economy of scarcity and monopoly created by imperial fiat.<sup>24</sup> In an attempt to stop illicit trade, Hongwu placed rigorous controls on the coastal provinces, conscripting as much as a third of the adult male population into military contingents in some prefectures.<sup>25</sup> The imperial administration effectively had launched a campaign against the most enterprising ranks of its society.

The emperor Yongle, the son of Hongwu, overthrew his nephew, the emperor Jianwen (r. 1398–1402), in a bloody civil war and had to deal with the tumultuous coastal situation created by the Ming founder. Yongle shared his father's authoritarianism but not his stiff-necked devotion to Confucian fundamentalism. He sought to extend imperial control by an aggressive policy of military force, most notably by ordering the invasion of Vietnam and by leading armies into the steppes against the Mongols in five grueling campaigns. In the southeastern provinces, he continued Hongwu's policy of outlawing maritime trade, even ordering the people of Fujian to convert their ocean-going vessels into "flat-nosed ships" (*pingtouchuan*) suitable only for river traffic. Faced with widespread lawlessness and economic hardship on the coast, however, Yongle took the action for which he is now most famous:

he dispatched to the southern seas the largest maritime expeditions the world had ever seen.<sup>26</sup>

The voyages of Zheng He may be regarded as Yongle's forceful attempt to reconcile China's need for maritime trade with the government's suppression of private foreign contact; or, to put it differently, they represented a deployment of state power to bring into line the reality of seaborne commerce with an expansive conception of Chinese hegemony. The voyages, then, were Yongle's means of establishing his own direct links with tribute states, thereby outflanking private channels of trade as well as local civil officials who sabotaged imperial prohibitions against overseas exchange. While Hongwu had invited states to send tribute missions to China, Yongle had his invitations delivered by a formidable armed force that would also provide transportation for tribute envoys and their commodities. Gu Yanwu, a late Ming writer, emphasized that both emperors had the same goal—to bring maritime trade under government control—but Hongwu followed a defensive policy of suppressing commerce and restructuring the tribute system, while Yongle aggressively extended imperial power to monopolize seaborne traffic itself.<sup>27</sup>

Functioning as a state trading commission, the voyages of Zheng He encompassed both private commerce and tribute trade. In the grandest manner, Yongle aimed at eradicating the roots of coastal criminality, providing employment for mariners and entrepreneurs, reaching overseas markets with Chinese products, securing desired goods for Chinese consumers, enlarging the sphere of tribute states, and displaying imperial majesty in the southern seas. In the course of seven expeditions, the Ming emperor established tribute relations with forty-eight states, many of them for the first time. Yongle extended imperial power to foreign lands while also ensuring the supremacy of his own policies against the protests of Confucian officials, who were opposed to the emperor peddling Chinese commodities as well as seeking foreign ones.<sup>28</sup>

Zheng He commanded his armada as an official commercial agent of a centralized tribute system. His largest vessels, known as "treasure ships" (*baochuan*), made a stunning impression when they coasted into foreign harbors, their sails dyed red with henna, their railings festooned with yellow

banners, their hulls painted with giant images of white seabirds, their masts towering over everything in sight. When thousands of troops marched off the junks and built fortified warehouses (*chinakotta*), it surely inclined their hosts to consider that a client relationship with the Ming emperor was an offer they could not refuse. If soldiers represented the stick, however, goods were the carrot. The treasure ships functioned as an emporium offering a wealth of products, including nails, cast-iron kettles, axes and hoes, copper basins, bronze jewelry, lead and zinc ingots, vermilion, saltpeter, lacquerware furniture, bed furnishings, fans, umbrellas, embroidered velvet and taffeta, carpets, tapestries, thread and needles, clothing, dyes, glass beads, paper and ink, candles, pickled plums and lychees, raisins, sugar, dried rhubarb, chicken and geese, wheat flour, salted meats, and preserves of ginger, orange, pear, and peach.<sup>29</sup>

Zheng He returned to China with about 180 kinds of tribute goods, most prominently silver, spices, sandalwood, precious stones, ivory, ebony, camphor, tin, deer hides, coral, kingfisher feathers, tortoise shell, gums and resins, rhinoceros horn, sapanwood and safflower (for dyes and drugs), Indian cotton cloth, and ambergris—which the Chinese knew as “dragon’s spittle” and used for making perfume. Exotic animals, especially ostriches, elephants, and giraffes, also figured in the consignments. The Ming fleets brought back enough cobalt oxide from Persia that Jingdezhen, the great porcelain center in Jiangxi province, was able to draw upon it for decades after the voyages ended. The junks returned with such huge amounts of black pepper that in the course of the expeditions it was transformed from a costly luxury into a common commodity. A Ming scholar claimed that the flourishing economy of the Yongle period was intimately linked to the voyages:

From the time when the Yongle emperor ascended the throne, messengers were sent to every country, and tribute poured in. Precious merchandise in unprecedented quantities, as compared with former dynasties, filled the warehouses to overflowing. The poor undertook to act as sellers, occasionally making a great fortune through it, and as a result the empire’s wealth increased immensely.<sup>30</sup>

Despite the supposedly vast benefits from the voyages, however, they ceased after 1433. Imperial China withdrew from the sea, never again to be a naval power. Given the militaristic character of Yongle, that is not surprising. The voyages began as a direct expression of his outlook and ambitions, and they were halted with his death in 1424. The new emperor, Hongxi (r. 1424), cancelled the seventh voyage on the day he assumed the throne; but when he died within the year, the emperor Xuande ordered dispatch of the seventh and last voyage, apparently to return tribute envoys to their countries. The opposition of Confucian officials certainly played a role in ending the voyages, though they were probably motivated more by institutional self-interest than ideological bias. As a personal project of the emperor, the voyages were controlled by Yongle's eunuch establishment, the foremost bureaucratic rivals of civil officials. At the first opportunity, therefore, upon the accession of Hongxi, a pro-Confucian ruler, the fleet of Zheng He was disbanded and his seamen assigned to other duties. A generation later, when a high-ranking eunuch proposed renewing the voyages, civil officials destroyed the records of Zheng He's exploits, and the memory of Yongle's revolutionary use of imperial power was all but forgotten.<sup>31</sup>

The forceful aspect of Yongle's policy—that is, his effort to encompass maritime trade within the formal structure of the tribute system—was rejected by his successors, just as his strategy of making forays into the northern steppes was abandoned in place of relying on a Great Wall for defense. But the negative feature of early Ming policy, the prohibition of private overseas traffic that Hongwu had initiated, remained in force. Since the pressure for maritime trade continued unabated, however, smuggling and piracy grew to such an extent that by the mid-sixteenth century, the imperial government had lost control of most of the southeastern coast. What the government tendentiously called “Japanese bandits” (*wokou*)—in fact, Chinese mariners acting with a minority of Japanese—dominated wide areas along the Yangzi River, occupied strongholds on the coast, and threatened important urban centers, such as Nanjing and Yangzhou. Sometimes the *wokou* were joined by new arrivals on the scene: Fr. Gaspar de Cruz, a Dominican serving in China, noted that civil officials on the coast secretly collaborated with banned Portuguese traders. Finally, in 1567, almost two

hundred years after Hongwu's declaration of policy, the prohibition on maritime trade was partially lifted. One port in Fujian province was permitted to receive foreign ships, and the formality was maintained that only states paying tribute to the emperor were allowed access to Chinese markets. During the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), the maritime frontier was no longer a problem inasmuch as imperial ministers regarded foreign commerce as necessary for pacification of the southeastern provinces, which itself was needed for the security of rice supplies being shipped to Beijing on the Grand Canal. In its tolerance of seaborne exchange and its benign neglect of the coastal zone, the Qing regime thus returned China to the pragmatic policy that had guided imperial action before Hongwu first tried to impose Confucian logic on the fluid world of maritime enterprise.<sup>32</sup>

Hongwu believed he was restoring traditional Chinese values by suppressing overseas trade and restructuring the tribute system, while Yongle dispatched the voyages of Zheng He to counter coastal disorder, extend Chinese hegemony, and assert state power over seaborne traffic. While Hongwu acted from commitment to the orthodox Confucian notion of the Middle Kingdom, Yongle, in seeking to monopolize maritime trade by use of imperial sea power, shattered the pretense that China disdained the outside world. In principle, an emperor such as Yongle could not receive wholehearted support for his voyages from officials dedicated to Confucian ideology. In their different aims and policies, however, both Hongwu and Yongle were stymied by their own bureaucracy for more practical reasons. Confucian officials mirrored the social and economic realities of China in that they formally paid deference to the ideal of a self-sufficient Middle Kingdom while also accommodating themselves to maritime trade. Not only were Hongwu and Yongle in conflict with enterprising long-distance merchants of their own society, they also had to contend with civil officials who often paid only lip service to Confucian scorn for trade and the wider world.

At local and provincial levels, Confucian bureaucrats played out the ceremonial obligations of their offices and maintained suitable decorum even while discreetly subverting Confucian precepts and imperial dictates. To some extent, this was a consequence of the attenuated nature of the

imperial bureaucracy. Chinese officials were very thinly spread, with no more than twenty administrators and functionaries for counties of perhaps 1,000 square miles. Lacking extensive institutional backing, their support by the populace derived more from articulation of social values than from performance of administrative duties. Moreover, the poorly paid officials naturally knew of the substantial profits to be gained from maritime trade, with merchants needing at least the acquiescence of local magistrates to safeguard their ships, markets, warehouses, and investments.<sup>33</sup>

The Confucian principles of civil officials meant they formally had to despise trade, but the social reality was that they were intimately linked to the very groups thriving on it. Bureaucrats at the local level depended on the gentry, men who usually had passed preliminary state examinations on the Confucian classics and commentaries, to collect taxes, administer justice, and maintain order. The gentry invested heavily in commerce, and sons of wealthy merchants regularly passed into government ranks by means of the examination system. The sons of officials who failed to climb the civil-service ladder often took employment in state industrial monopolies, guilds, banking institutions, and trading companies. Officials secretly invested in trading ventures and extracted kickbacks from merchants.<sup>34</sup> A government report of 1560 spelled out how little control the central administration had over civil officials charged with supervising maritime trade:

When Emperor Shizong [r. 1522–1566] withdrew all the eunuchs who supervised the provincial governments and abolished the Office of Commissioner of Trading Ships, the treacherous people on the coast got their hands on the profit. At first, the trading was handled by merchants. But when the ban on having intercourse with foreigners was strictly enforced, trading was then managed by families of influential officials.<sup>35</sup>

The fate of Zhu Wan, the viceroy (or “Grand Coordinator”) of Zhejiang and Fujian provinces from 1547 to 1549, dramatically illustrates the tensions within the imperial bureaucracy between idealized precepts and financial self-interest.<sup>36</sup> The epitome of a dedicated Confucian, Zhu was given extraordinary powers to put an end to piracy and smuggling on the

southeastern coast. To his chagrin, he discovered that active and retired civil officials routinely collaborated with malefactors, lending them money, giving them use of government boats, and providing legitimate cover for prohibited trade. After making a raid on a smuggling outpost, Zhu, despite the protests of corrupt civil officials, executed ninety-six culprits. Even worse, he attacked imperial administrators of Zhejiang and Fujian in a report to the emperor: "Getting rid of Chinese coast-dwelling bandits is easy, but getting rid of Chinese robe-and-cap bandits is especially difficult."<sup>37</sup> This was a mortal insult to the officials, an exposure by one of their own colleagues of the gap that the fruits of maritime trade had opened between Confucian ideology and elite conduct. Zhu quickly suffered the fate of a whistleblower in the Ming bureaucracy. Gentry and civil officials lobbied ministers at the imperial court, who then discredited the viceroy. He was deposed from office, and facing trial and certain execution, he committed suicide by taking poison in 1550.

Both the commanding enterprise of the Zheng He voyages and the miserable fate of Zhu Wan represent unintended consequences of Hongwu's policy. The Ming founder regarded overseas exchange as a corrupting influence on his own officials, and, in part for that reason, he ensured that it suffered crippling disabilities. One of Yongle's motives for sending out his great fleets under the command of eunuchs was to circumvent a civil service that appeared incapable of restraining maritime trade and keeping order on the coast. Yet Hongwu's attempt to enforce commercial isolation was doomed, since it ran counter to long-standing practice and to the welfare of the coastal periphery, while Yongle's attempt to dominate seagoing commerce was ideologically repugnant to orthodox Confucians as well as contrary to the financial self-interest of unorthodox civil officials. Like that of the voyages of Zheng He, the fate of Zhu Wan thus illustrates the circumscribed influence of Confucian ideology, the formal and informal restraints on state power, and the overriding force of maritime trade in Chinese society.

In his radical imposition of Confucian orthodoxy, the emperor Hongwu bequeathed to his successors the ideal of a self-sufficient Middle Kingdom that was contrary to historical reality. The Ming government made

an accommodation between the two in 1567 when prohibition of overseas trade was partially lifted, a decision which indicates that tension remained lively within the Ming elite between idealized and pragmatic visions of the world.<sup>38</sup> An analogous tension may be seen in Luo Maodeng's 1597 novel, *The Voyage of the San Bao Eunuch to the Western Ocean* (*San Bao taijian xia xiyang*): although the author declares in his preface that Chinese maritime power is essential for world order, he concludes his work by suggesting that the voyages of Zheng He represented an unseemly, even dangerous, preoccupation with the world beyond China.<sup>39</sup>

Unwilling either completely to embrace or reject the wider world, Confucian officials increasingly indulged in the formal exercise of maintaining appearances—a response that became increasingly problematic after Western merchants reached the Chinese coast in the early sixteenth century. In the 1520s, the Ming government characterized a Portuguese request for trade facilities as a petition to register the king of Portugal as a tribute client. In the end, the Portuguese were refused legal entry to China because they had captured the city-state of Melaka, which had enrolled as a tribute client as long ago as the first voyage of Zheng He and which, by the early sixteenth century, had been out of diplomatic contact with China for nearly a hundred years.<sup>40</sup> Ming chroniclers also claimed that a 1576 visit by Spaniards from the Philippines to request trading privileges was in fact an application by Philip II of Spain to enlist as a client in the tribute system. Similarly, an immensely detailed compilation of tribute regulations in 1587 studiously avoided mentioning the flourishing Portuguese colony at Macao in Guangdong province or the bustling maritime trade along the Fujian coast.<sup>41</sup> By the late sixteenth century, Confucian officials, ostensibly committed to the premise of Chinese centrality, had considerable experience in assimilating or overlooking embarrassing facts. “He whose authority extends over this immense kingdom,” Matteo Ricci wrote, “is called Lord of the Universe.”<sup>42</sup> In time, the activity of Westerners in China would come to belie the sonorous title; but for generations to come, such troublesome considerations continued to be put aside or papered over, as when Ricci placed the Middle Kingdom in the center of his world map in deference to his Confucian acquaintances.

NOTES

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1. Louis J. Gallagher, trans., *China in the Sixteenth Century: The Journals of Matthew Ricci, 1583-1610* (New York: Random House, 1953), 7. The translation has been altered so only the first person is used rather than both the first and third. Ricci first drew his world map in 1584 and then improved on it in 1602; it went through many printings in China, and one was displayed in the imperial palace in Beijing; see Jonathan Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1984), 96–97, 148, 149.
2. Cited in D. E. Mungello, *Curious Land: Jesuit Accommodation and the Origins of Sinology* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), 104.
3. Hsieh Chiao-min, “The Chinese Exploration to the Ocean: A Study in Historical Geography,” *Chinese Culture* 9 (1968): 123; Ruth I. Meserve, “The Inhospitable Land of the Barbarian,” *Journal of Asian History* 16 (1982): 51–61; Yang Lien-sheng, “Historical Notes on the Chinese World Order,” in *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China’s Foreign Relations*, ed. John King Fairbank (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 20–23; also see Vadime Elisseeff, “The Middle Empire, a Distant Empire, an Empire without Neighbors,” *Diogenes* 42 (1963): 60–64.
4. Gallagher, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, 7; see C. C. Müller, “Die Herausbildung der Gegensätze: Chinesen und Barbaren in der frühen Zeit,” in *China und die Fremden*, ed. W. Bauer (Munich: Beck, 1980), 66–75.
5. Gallagher, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, 7–8.
6. William H. McNeill, *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 632–652; E. L. Jones, *The European Miracle: Environments, Economies, and Geopolitics in the History of Europe and Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 104–126; Patricia Crone, *Pre-Industrial Societies* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 161, 168–175; but see P. H. H. Vries, “Governing Growth: A Comparative Analysis of the Role of the State in the Rise of the West,” *Journal of World History* 13 (2002): 67–138.
7. On cultural diversity and adaptation to outsiders, see Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Harper Row, 1984), 87–89, 92–93. On changes in Confucianism, see Joseph R. Levenson, “The Inception and Displacement of Confucianism,” *Diogenes* 42 (1963): 76–77.
8. David Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some Are So Rich and Some So Poor* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), 96, 98; see also Ray Huang, *China: A Macro History* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1997); John Hicks, *A Theory of Economic History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969). For a critique of Landes and comparable Eurocentric views, see Ricardo Duchesne, “Asia First?” *The Journal of the Historical Society* 6:1 (2006): 69–91. On Jesuits modeling themselves on Confucians, see Spence, *Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*, 114–16.
9. On the theme of China’s geographical isolation, see Jacques Gernet, *A History of Chinese Civilization*, trans. J. R. Foster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 521–23; Andrew L. March, *The Idea of China: Myth and Theory in Geographic Thought* (New York: Praeger, 1974), 62–72; Mark Mancall, *China at the Center: 300 Years of Foreign Policy* (New York: Free Press, 1984), 1–10. On the tribute system, see the essays in Fairbank, ed., *The Chinese World Order*, and in Morris Rossabi, ed., *China among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbors, 10-14<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983).
10. On “traditional” China as a product of the Ming, see Edward L. Farmer, “Social Regulations of the First Ming Emperor: Orthodoxy as a Function of Authority,” in *Orthodoxy in Late Imperial China*, ed. Kwang-Ching Liu (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 105. The same point is central to Arthur Waldron’s *The Great Wall of China: From History to Myth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), which argues that the Great Wall was not an ancient construction but rather the product of a new frontier strategy of the Ming, especially from the later sixteenth century. Ricci arrived in China in 1583.

11. Ying-Shih Yu, *Trade and Expansion in Han China: A Study in the Structure of Sino-Barbarian Economic Relations* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967); Denis Twitchett, "Merchant, Trade and Government in Late T'ang," *Asia Major* 14 (1968): 64–66; Yang Lien-sheng, "Government Control of Urban Merchants in Traditional China," *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies* 8 (1970): 186–209.
12. Cited in Ng Chin-keong, "Maritime Frontiers, Territorial Expansion, and *Hai-fang* during the Late Ming and High Ch'ing," in *China and Her Neighbors: Borders, Visions of the Other, Foreign Policy, 10<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> Century*, ed. Sabine Dabringhaus and Roderich Ptak (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1997), 243.
13. John E. Wills, Jr., "Tribute, Defensiveness, and Dependency: Uses and Limits of Some Basic Ideas about Mid-Qing Dynasty Foreign Relations," *The American Neptune* 48 (1988): 14–16.
14. The most thorough discussion in English includes Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China* vol. 4, part 3: *Civil Engineering and Nautics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 389–99; Edward L. Dreyer, *Zheng He: China and the Oceans in the Early Ming Dynasty, 1405–1433* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2007); and Louise Levathes, *When China Ruled the Seas: The Treasure Fleet of the Dragon Throne, 1405–1433* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). See also the introduction to Ma Huan, *Ying-Yai Sheng-Lan: 'The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores' [1433]*, ed. J. V. G. Mills and trans. Feng Ch'eng-chün (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 1–66; Zhou Juseng, *Zheng He hanglu kao* (The routes of Zheng He's voyages) (Tapei, Taiwan: Maritime Press, 1959); and Xu Yuhui, *Ming Zheng He zhi yanjiu* (Research on Zheng He of the Ming dynasty) (Gao Xiong, Taiwan: De Qinshi, 1980), 18–41, 525–49. A wide range of information and interpretation on the voyages is available in *Zhenghe yanjiu zilao xuanbian* (Selected essays on Zheng He) (Beijing: People's Communication Company, 1985); *Zhenghe xia xiyang lunwenji* (Essays on Zheng He's voyages) (Beijing: People's Communication Publishing Company, 1985); and Claudine Salmon and Roderich Ptak, eds., *Zheng He: Bilder & Wahrnehmungen* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005). Documents on the voyages of Zheng He are gathered in Zheng Hesheng and Zheng Yijun, eds., *Zheng He xia xiyang yangzi liao huibian* (Collected sources on Zheng He's voyages), 3 vols. (Jinan, China: Qi Lu Book Company, 1980–1983). A survey of interpretations of Zheng He is provided in Wan Ming, "Reflections on the Study of Zheng He's Expeditions," *Ming Studies* 49 (2004): 17–33. But the work that has reached the widest audience is the bestseller by Gavin Menzies, *1421: The Year China Discovered America* (New York: William Morrow, 2003). Unfortunately, it is riddled with fantasy and error; see Robert Finlay, "How Not to (Re)Write World History: Gavin Menzies and the Chinese Discovery of America," *Journal of World History* 15:2 (2004): 229–42.
15. On diversity of opinions about the voyages, see Huang Huizhen and Xue Jindu, "Zheng He yanjiu bashi nian" (Research on Zheng He for eighty years), in *Zhenghe yanjiu zilao xuanbian*, 1–19; Roderich Ptak and Claudine Salmon, "Zheng He: Geschichte und Fiktion," in *Zheng He: Bilder & Wahrnehmungen*, 9–35. On the diplomatic (or political) nature of the voyages, see Dreyer, *Zheng He*, 2–4, 180; Wang Gungwu, "China and Southeast Asia, 1402–1424," in *Studies in the Social History of China and South-East Asia: Essays in Memory of Vincent Purcell*, ed. Jerome Ch'en and Nicholas Tarling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 375–401; Jung-pang Lo, "A Case Study of the Foreign Policy of the Early Ming Government," *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies* 8 (1970): 154–82. On their military nature, see Robert Finlay, "The Treasure-Ships of Zheng He: Chinese Maritime Imperialism in the Age of Discovery," *Terrae Incognitae: The Journal for the History of Discoveries* 23 (1991): 1–12.
16. On the Tang economy, see Twitchett, "Merchant, Trade and Government in Late T'ang," 74, 93–95. On Chinese population, see Robert M. Hartwell, "Demographic, Political, and Social Transformations of China, 750–1550," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 42 (1982): 365–442; see also Jung-pang Lo, "The Emergence of China as a Sea Power during the Late Sung and Early Yuan Periods," *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 14 (1955): 489–503. On coastal provinces, see Shiba Yoshinobu, *Commerce and Society in Sung China*, trans. Mark Elvin (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Chinese Studies, 1970), 24; Wu Xiangze, Lin Zhangkan, and Zhang Yongqing, "Zheng He xia xiyang yu Fujian quanxi de tantao" (Relations between Zheng He's voyages and Fujian), *Zhenghe xia xiyang lunwenji*, 294; see also the essays in

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17. Cited in Mark Elvin, *The Pattern of the Chinese Past* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973), 216.
  18. On Song production for overseas markets, see Elvin, *Pattern of the Chinese Past*, 149-50; John S. Guy, *Oriental Trade Ceramics in South-East Asia, Ninth to Sixteenth Centuries* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1986), 13-22; Peter Y. K. Lam, "Northern Song Guangdong Wares," in *A Ceramic Legacy of Asia's Maritime Trade*, ed. Peter Y. K. Lam (Singapore: Southeast Asian Ceramic Society, Malaysia, 1985), 1-30. On the Yuan period, see Lo, "The Emergence of China as a Sea Power," 95, and "Chinese Shipping and East-West Trade," 170; also see Chen Gaohua, *Song-Yuan shigi de haiwai maoyi* (Overseas trade of the Song and Yuan period) (Wu Tai: Tianjin shixin huashu dianfaxing, China, 1981).
  19. On what follows, see Robert Finlay, "The Pilgrim Art: The Culture of Porcelain in World History," *Journal of World History* 9:2 (1998): 150-58.
  20. Morris Rossabi, "The Muslims in the Early Yuan Dynasty," in *China under Mongol Rule*, ed. John D. Langlois (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 259, 271; and *Kublai Khan: His Life and Times* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 123; Raphael Israeli, *Muslims in China: A Study in Cultural Configuration* (London: Curzon Press, 1980), 4-5. On Mongol attitudes toward merchants and commerce, see Thomas T. Allsen, "Mongolian Princes and Their Merchant Partners, 1200-1260," *Asia Major* 2 (1989): 83-126.
  21. On early Ming and Mongol similarities, see Frederick W. Mote, "The Growth of Chinese despotism," *Oriens Extremus* 8 (1961): 17-18; Xu Daolin, "Ming Taizu yu Zhongguo zhuangzhi zhengquan" (The first Ming emperor and despotism), *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies* 8 (1970): 352-53; see also Elizabeth Endicott-West, "Imperial Governance in Yüan Times," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 46 (1986): 523-50. On Hongwu's ideology, see John D. Langlois, Jr., and Sun K'o-k'uan, "Three Teachings Syncretism and the Thought of Ming T'ai-tsu," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 43 (1983): 97-140; John W. Dardess, "The Transformation of Messianic Revolt and the Founding of the Ming Dynasty," *Journal of Asian Studies* 29 (1970): 539-58. On Hongwu and Confucianism, see John W. Dardess, *Confucianism and Autocracy: Professional Elites in the Founding of the Ming Dynasty* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), 120-29, 182-84. Mote ("Growth of Chinese despotism," 24-29) emphasizes the conflict in Hongwu between continuity with the Yuan and identification of China with Confucianism; see also Edward Dryer, *Early Ming China: A Political History, 1355-1435* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982), 1.
  22. On use of the tribute system by China and other states to establish legitimacy, see Chiu Ling-yeong, "Sino-Javanese Relations in the Early Ming period," in *Symposium on Historical, Archaeological and Linguistic Studies on Southern China, South-East Asia and the Hong Kong Region*, ed. F. S. Drake (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1967), 221; O. W. Wolters, *The Fall of Srivijaya in Malay History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), 37; Zheng and Zheng, *Zheng He xiyang yangzi liao huibian*, 2:851-54. On Hongwu's aspiration, see Wang Gungwu, "'Public' and 'Private' Trade in Chinese History," in Mollat, ed., *Sociétés et compagnies de commerce en orient et dans l'Océan Indien*, 167-76; Jung-pang Lo, "A Case Study of the Foreign Policy of the Early Ming Government," *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies* 8 (1970): 154-82.
  23. On Siamese and Japanese missions, see Wang Yi-t'ung, *Official Relations between China and Japan, 1368-1549* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953), 63-64, 95, 98; Henry Serruys, *Sino-Mongol Relations During the Ming III: Trade Relations: The Horse Fairs (1400-1600)* (Brussels: Institut belge des Hautes études chinoises, 1975), 25. On Ricci's assertion, see Gallagher, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, 53, 515. On the execution of Hu Weiyong and abolition of the Central Secretariat as turning points in Hongwu's regime, see Dreyer,

- Early Ming China*, 131–33; Farmer, *Early Ming Government: The Evolution of Dual Capitals* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 1976), 57.
24. This formulation is adapted from Carla Rahn Phillips's discussion of the role of contraband trade in the Spanish crown's monopoly of New World commerce; see *Six Galleons for the King of Spain: Imperial Defense in the Seventeenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 16.
  25. Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, 122; Han Zenhua, "Lun Zheng He xia xiyang de xingzhi" (On the nature of Zheng He's voyages to the Western Ocean), in *Zhenghe yanjiu zilao xuanbian*, 310.
  26. On Yongle's seizure of power, see David B. Chan, *The Usurpation of the Prince of Yen, 1398-1402* (San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center, 1976). On his personality, see Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, 8; Waldron, *The Great Wall of China*, 75. On his reign, see Hok-lam Chan, "The Chien-wen, Yung-lo, Hung-hsi, and Hsuan-te reigns, 1399–1435," *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 7:1: *The Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 203–76.
  27. Wu Han, "Mingchu de diwai zhengce yu Zheng He xia xiyang" (The foreign policy of the early Ming dynasty and Zheng He's voyage to the Western Ocean), in *Zhenghe yanjiu zilao xuanbian*, 85. Gu added that the worst policy was that of his own time, when maritime trade took place within the tribute system as well as through large-scale smuggling. On commercial aspects of the voyages, see Lo, "Chinese Shipping and East-West Trade"; Bodo Wiethoff, *Die chinesische seeverbotspolitik und der private überseehandel von 1368 bis 1567* (Hamburg: Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens, 1963), 52–57; Zheng Weihua, *Mingdai haiwai maoyi jianlun* (An essay on overseas trade in the Ming dynasty) (Shanghai: Xinhua Shudian, 1955).
  28. On establishing tribute relations, see *Zheng He xia xiyang yangzi liao huibian*, 2:1297–1353; Hiroshi Watanabe, "An Index of Embassies and Tribute Missions from Islamic countries to Ming China (1368–1466) as recorded in the *Ming Shih-lu* classified according to Geographic Area," *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* 33 (1975): 285–349.
  29. On typical Chinese exports, see Haraprasad Ray, *Trade and Diplomacy in India-China Relations: A Study of Bengal during the Fifteenth Century* (New Delhi: Radiant, 1993), 113–16; E. H. Blair and J. A. Roberston, eds., *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898* (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1915), 16:180–83.
  30. Cited in T'ien Ju-Kang, "Chêng Ho's voyages and the distribution of pepper in China," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 2 (1981): 193–94. On cobalt oxide and production of porcelain, see Han Zenhua, "Lun Zheng He xia xiyang de xingzhi," 323.
  31. Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, 203, 212–13; Needham, *Science and Civilisation*, 4:524; Robert M. Crawford, "Eunuch Power in the Ming Dynasty," *T'oung Pao* 49 (1962): 115–48; Yang Xi, "Zheng He xia xiyang de mudi jiqi bei tinghang de yuanyin" (The purpose of Zheng He's expeditions to the Western Ocean and the reason for their termination), in *Zhenghe xia xiyang lunwenji*, 34; J. J. L. Duyvendak, "The True Dates of the Chinese Maritime Expeditions of the Early Fifteenth Century," *T'oung Pao* 34 (1938): 396–97.
  32. On the *wokou*, see So Kwan-wai, *Japanese Piracy in Ming China during the 16<sup>th</sup> Century* (Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1975), 6, 17–18, 32. On de Cruz, see *South China in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. C. R. Boxer (London: Hakluyt Society, 1953), 191–92. On trade from 1567, see Charles Whitman MacSherry, "Impairment of the Ming Tributary System as Exhibited in Trade Involving Fukien" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1956), 135–37, 175–97. On Qing coastal policy, see Jane Kate Leonard, "Geopolitical Reality and the Disappearance of the Maritime Frontier in Qing Times," *The American Neptune* 48:4 (1988): 230–36.
  33. On Chinese government, see Charles O. Hucker, *The Traditional Chinese State in Ming Times (1368-1644)* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1961), 63–65; Joseph Needham and Ray Huang, "The Nature of Chinese Society—A Technical Interpretation," *Journal of Oriental Studies* 12 (1974): 1, 7. Tilemann Grimm ("State and Power in Juxtaposition: An Assessment of Ming Despotism," in *The Scope of State Power in China*, ed. S. R. Schram [London: University of London Press, 1985], 33, 49) questions whether China's "system of precedent and social order" even deserves to be regarded as a "state."

34. On social and economic links between merchants and civil officials, licit and illicit, see Angela Ning-jy Sun His, "Social and economic status of the merchant class of the Ming dynasty, 1368-1644" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, 1972), 177-90; Chan Cheung, "The Smuggling Trade between China and South-East Asia during the Ming Dynasty," in Drake, ed., *Symposium on Historical, Archaeological, and Linguistic Studies*, 223-24; Chang Teh-Ch'ang, "Maritime Trade at Canton during the Ming Dynasty," *The Chinese Social and Political Science Review* 17 (1933): 280-81; Ng Chin-keong, "Gentry Merchants and Peasant Peddlers—The Responses of the South Fukienese to the Offshore Trading Opportunities," *The Nanyang University Journal* 7 (1973): 161-75.
35. Cited in So, *Japanese Piracy in Ming China*, 18; see Merrilyn Fitzpatrick, "Local Interests and Anti-Pirate Administration in China's South-East, 1555-1568," *Ch'ing-shih wen-t'i* 4 (1979): 6.
36. The following is based on the biography of Zhu Wan in the official history (*Ming shi*) of the Ming dynasty. MacSherry ("Impairment of the Ming tribute system," 103-10) provides a translation, as does Roland Higgins in "Piracy and coastal defense in the Ming period: Government responses to coastal disturbances, 1523-1549" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1981), 218-25. On Zhu Wan, see Roland Higgins, "Pirates in Gowns and Caps: Gentry Law-Breaking in the Mid-Ming," *Ming Studies* 10 (1980): 30-37.
37. MacSherry, "Impairment of the Ming tribute system," 108. Of course, "robe-and-cap" refers to the regalia of civil officials.
38. Waldron (*The Great Wall of China*, 172) suggests that failure to reconcile these contrasting visions was a long-standing problem in Chinese foreign policy.
39. On the novel, see Robert Finlay, "Portuguese and Chinese Maritime Imperialism: Camões's *Lusiads* and Luo Maodeng's *Voyage of the San Bao Eunuch*," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 34:2 (1992): 1-12; Roderich Ptak, *Cheng Hos Abenteuer im Drama und Roman der Ming-Zeit* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1986), 167-271.
40. Tien Tse Chang, "Malacca and the Failure of the First Portuguese Embassy to Peking," *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 3 (1962): 57; Lea E. Williams, "Inauspicious Ambiance: The Historical Setting of Early Luso-Chinese Contacts," in *Indo-Portuguese History: Old Issues, New Questions*, ed. Teotonio de Souza (New Delhi: Concept Publishing, 1985), 32-39. On Zheng He and Melaka, see Wang Gungwu, "The Opening of Relations between China and Malacca, 1403-5," in *Malayan and Indonesian Studies: Essays Presented to Sir Richard Winstedt on His Eighty-fifth Birthday*, ed. John Bastin and R. Roolvink (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 87-104.
41. MacSherry, "Impairment of the Ming tribute system," 138, 224; Zhang Weihua, "Mingdai Xibanyan zai Lusong yu Zhongguo zhi guanxi" (Relations between the Spanish in the Philippines and China during the late Ming), in *Mingdai guoji maoyi*, 89-107; Zhuan Hansheng, "Ming Qing jian Meizhou baiyin de shuru Zhongguo" (Trade between China and the Philippines during the late Ming period), in *Zhongguo wenhua yengiusuo xuebao* (Journal of the Chinese Culture Research Institute), 21 (1991): 27-49.
42. Gallagher, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, 7.