

Source: [KBhHIST201MingChina1500](#) [KBhHIST201MannMing](#)

1 | Ming China's Seafaring

Zheng He's Expedition: Famous official overseas official expedition

The Fleet

Hugely built ships:

- Dry docks @fact
- Precious metals
- High tech
 - Double hulls
 - Watertight compartments
 - Rustproofed nails
 - Mechanical pumps
- Zheng He's flagship was the largest ship ever constructed

The Guy

- Zheng He @fact
 - Captured from war
 - Supported a uncle-usurp-nephew coup
 - Put in charge of the sea expeditions

The Goals

- Viewed as way of announcing China's prowess @ [KBhHIST201MannMing](#)
- Sought tribute and coordination from other nations @fact
- Forced others to acknowledge Beijing
- Kept peace in the surrounding regions of the expedition
 - Subjugated a misbehaving Chinese enclave in Sumatra
 - Intervened in a civil war in Java
 - Invaded Sri Lanka
 - Wiped out Sumatran bandits
- Politically announced China's presence @ [KBhHIST201MannMing](#)
 - Sheer size of the ships scared the bejessus out of everyone
 - Added tribunes to China
 - Ships returned with great gifts/weird things
 - Giraffs — as... entertainment
 - A chief — for he did not acknowledge the emperor

The Expeditions

- Began 1405 ended 1433 @fact
- Traveled around much of the Indian Ocean => Southern Africa

The End

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- Became target in political infighting
- Son aligned with opposition party's ideas, cancelling the trips

The exact causes and reasons why this happened is still speculated. According to [KBhHIST201MannMing](#) (C. Mann's) 1500s Ming, this ending of the expedition marked a point at which China turned inwards from a trade perspective.

See [KBhHIST201ChinasDeclineWRTZhengHe](#) China's Decline w.r.t. Zheng He

#disorganized

- European => war power
- Zheng He => huge ships but mostly for trade
- China establishes tribute relations by getting others to acknowledge China's superiority and legitimacy => China's version of a trade treaty instead of actually trade ("trade" = "helping + tribute")
- Read: Cook Zheng He
- Decline of Zheng He could also be sacrifice between eunuchs vs. scholars
- No reason for China to have huge ships if they could just travel to Indonesia to get all the goods in the world