



The Political Economy of East Asia

(BPEP-SHU 9042)

Monday & Wednesday
3:45 pm – 5:00 pm
Room E201

Instructor: JING QIAN

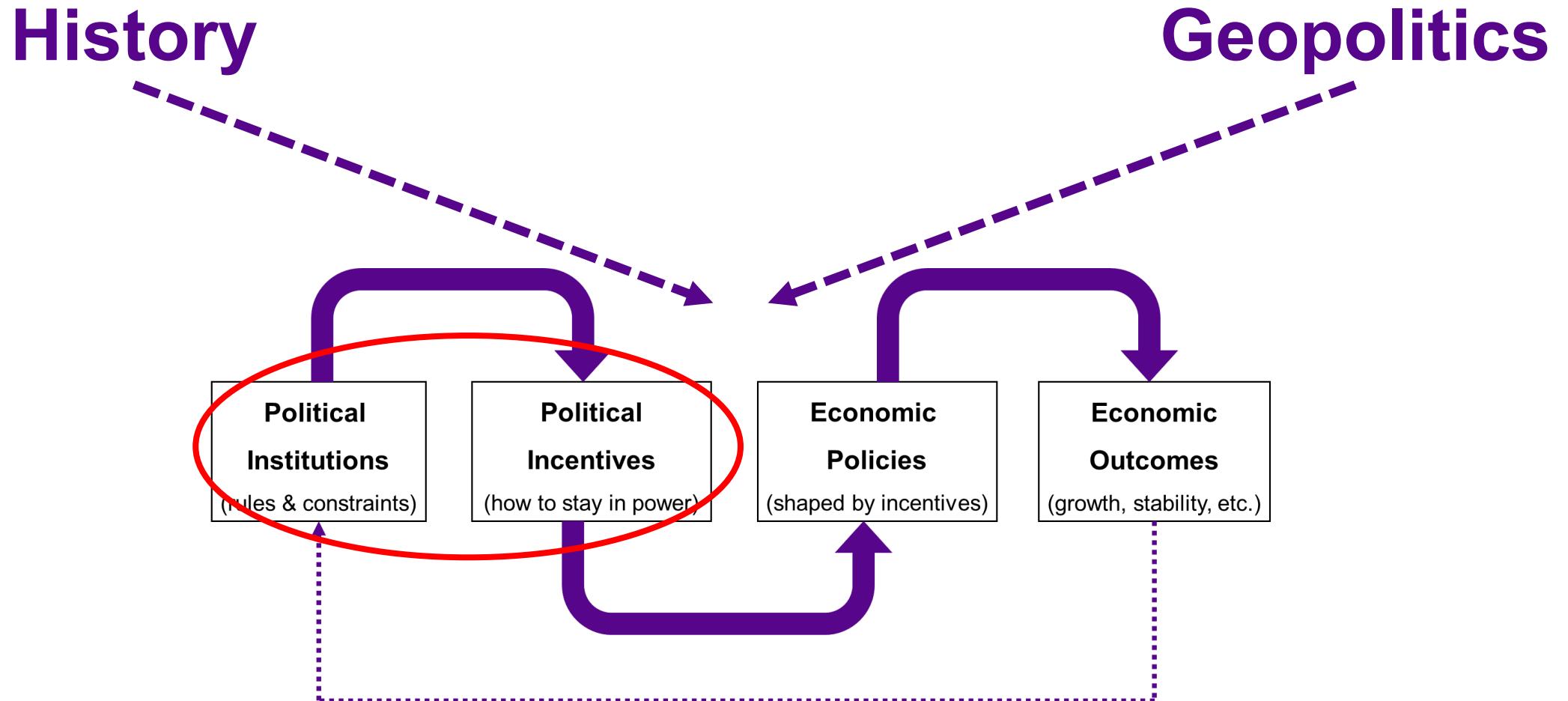
Logistics

- Library workshop this Wednesday
 - Attendance & tardiness tracking begins this Wednesday
- No class on next Monday, Feb 2
- Field trip to NDB HQ on Friday, Feb 6
 - Required readings are now posted on the online syllabus
- No Office Hour this Wednesday (email me)
- Quiz II window: 8am on Saturday, March 7 – 10am on Wednesday, March 11

Quiz I is coming

- **Quiz I window:**
 - Begins: 8am on Saturday, February 7
 - Ends: 11:59pm on Monday, February 9
- **Format (tentative)**
 - 30 multiple-choice questions (straightforward)
 - Complete within 45 minutes
- **Covers class from Jan 21 – Feb 6**
 - Including library workshop and field trip

The Political Economy Process



The Ultimate Political Incentive

Stay in Power



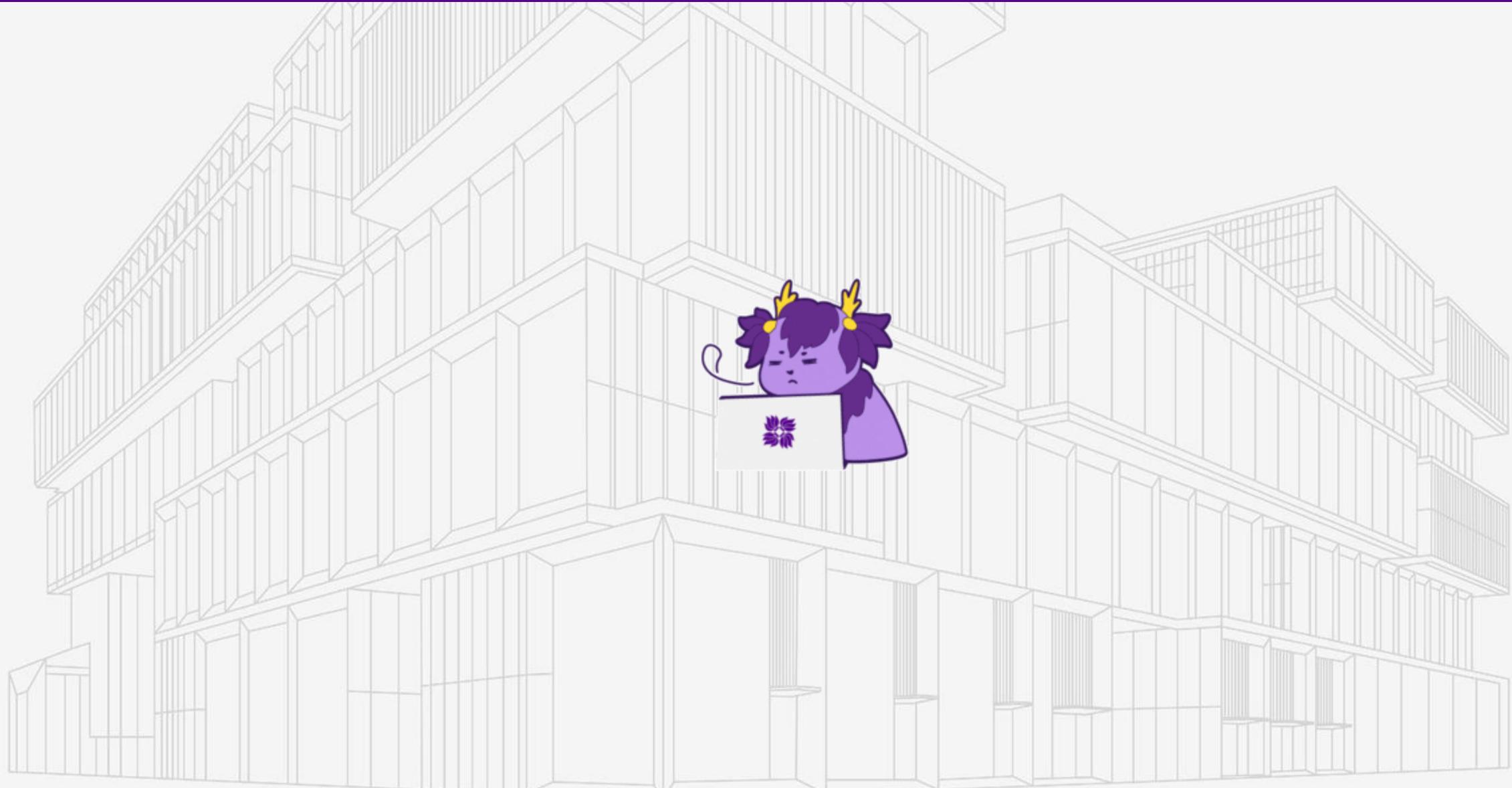
Qianlong Emperor 乾隆帝

1711-1799

(Qing Dynasty)

**What should emperors do in order to
stay in power?**

Qilin (麒麟)









NYU
上海

SHANGHAI
纽约大学

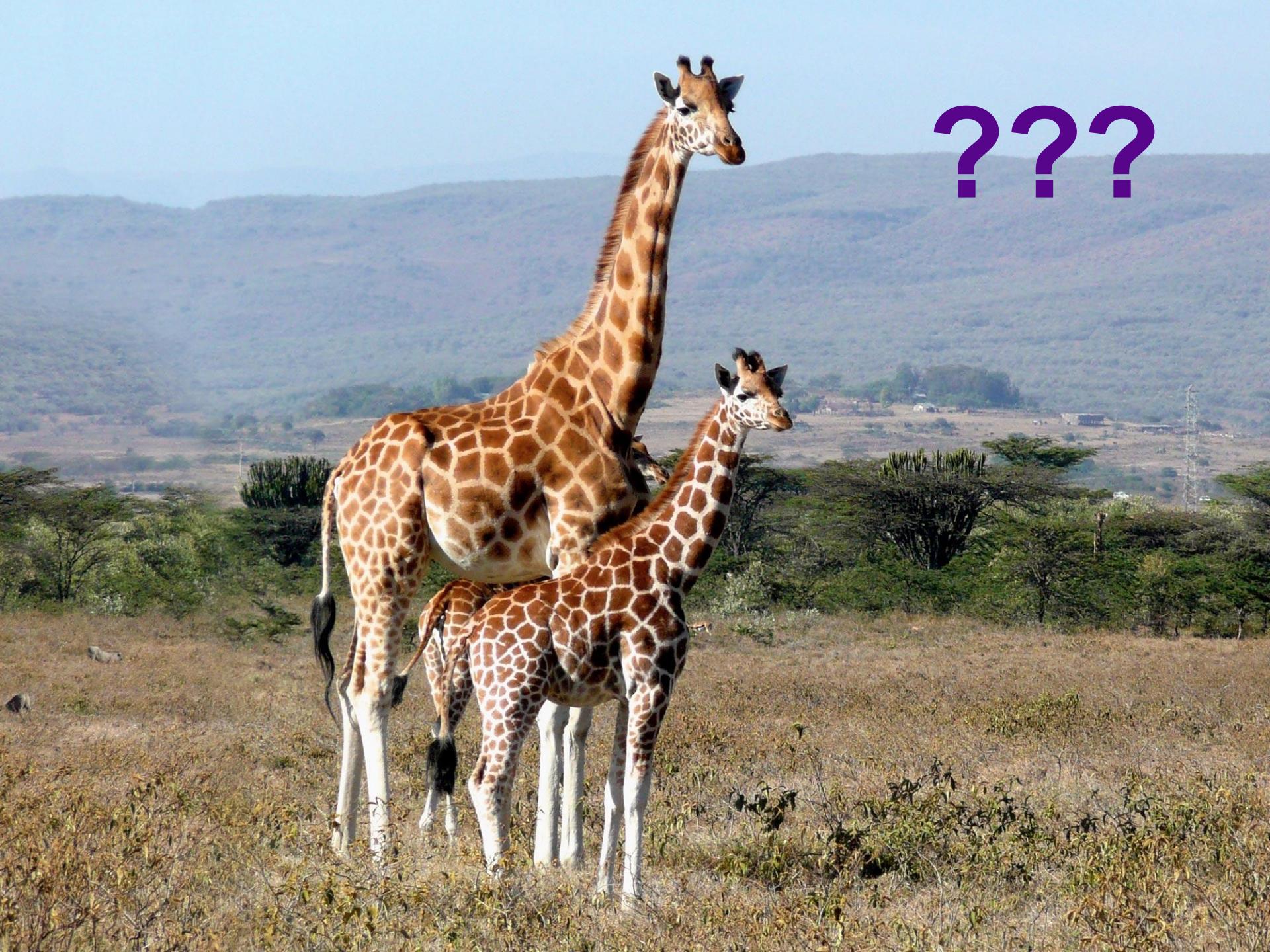


University of
Nottingham
UK | CHINA | MALAYSIA

昆山杜克大学
DUKE KUNSHAN
UNIVERSITY



???







Thanks for bringing the
Qilin as your tribute.

Yongle Emperor (永乐帝) —— ZHU Di (朱棣)

1402-1424

Ming Dynasty

瑞應麒麟歌

永樂十二年九月丁丑楊萬里表獻麒麟
群臣交慶以為希世之大瑞莫不播之聲頌以
昭示方來臣謹為歌詩一章以進其詞曰
四靈之物古所珍獨有上瑞為麒麟周南想像
託歌詠千載誰復觀其真

聖皇垂衣御寶膺霈澤仁恩震八垠北窮冰天南裸
壤東極暘谷西崑崙熙然

神化洽九有日月所照皆陽春跂行喙息自生遂
奇祥異瑞相駢臻西南有國居海島自昔稽賴
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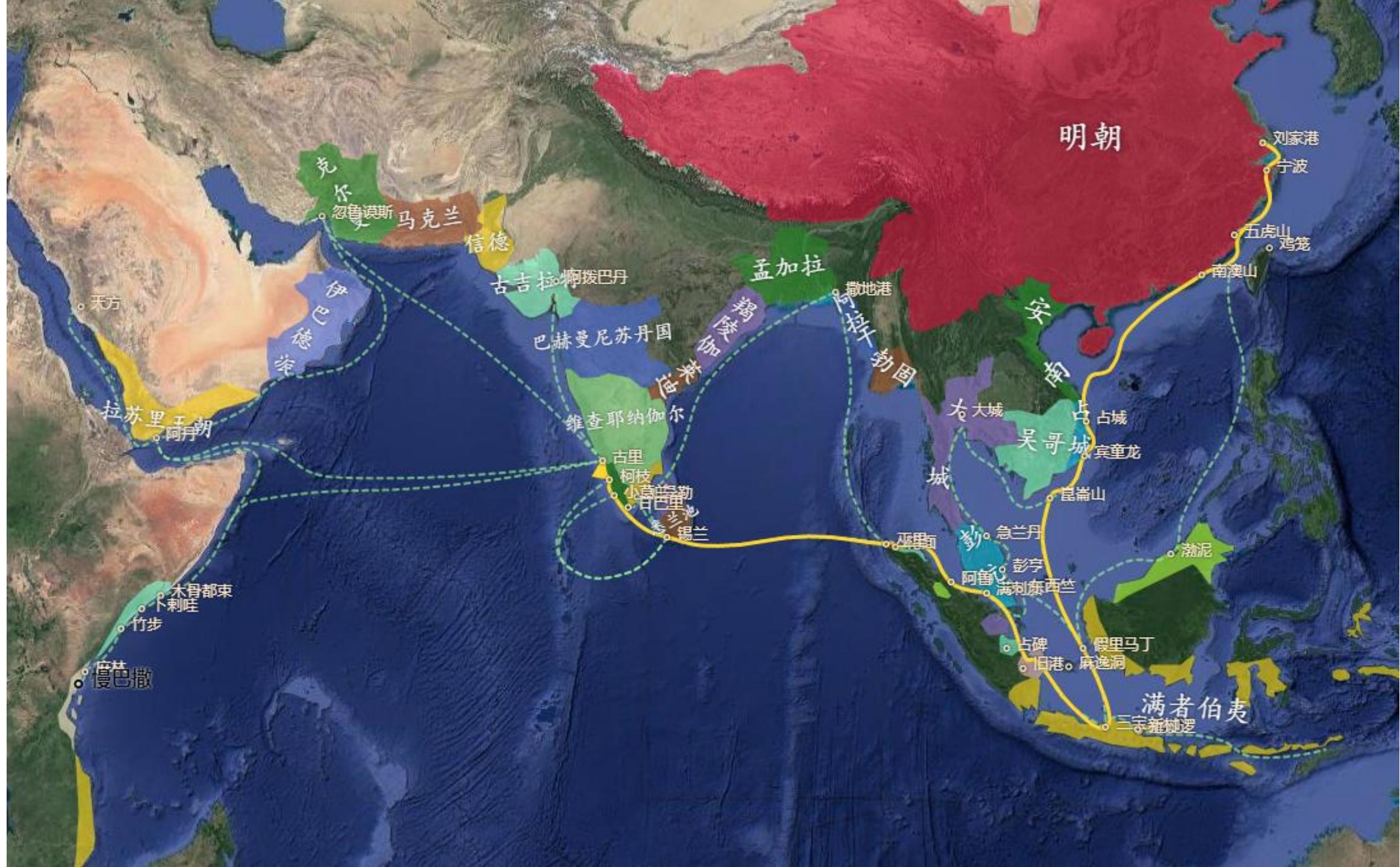


Zheng He's Treasure Voyages

- 200+ Ships
- 27,000 + people
- 70,000 + nautical miles



ZHENG He
Seven ocean voyages (1405-1433)



ZHENG He's Treasure Ship vs. Columbus' Santa Maria



12m-long double-decker bus

1.8m-tall man



Santa Maria

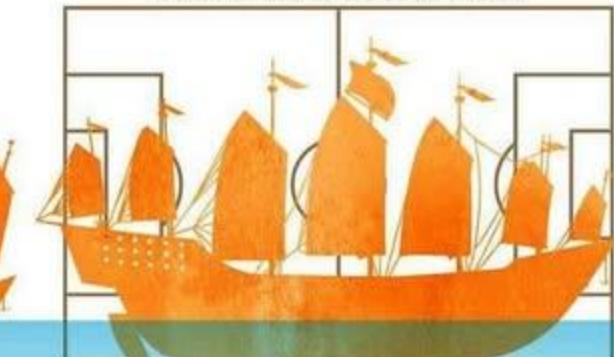
21m long, three masts

Christopher Columbus' flagship
in his first voyage to America

Fu Ning

41.6m long,
12m wide

Soccer field: 68m x 105m



Baochuan, Zheng He's flagship

62m long*, six masts
and six sails

107m long*, nine masts
and 12 sails

*Dimensions based on two main records. Critics of the larger ship contended that its size posed serious technical and operational constraints.

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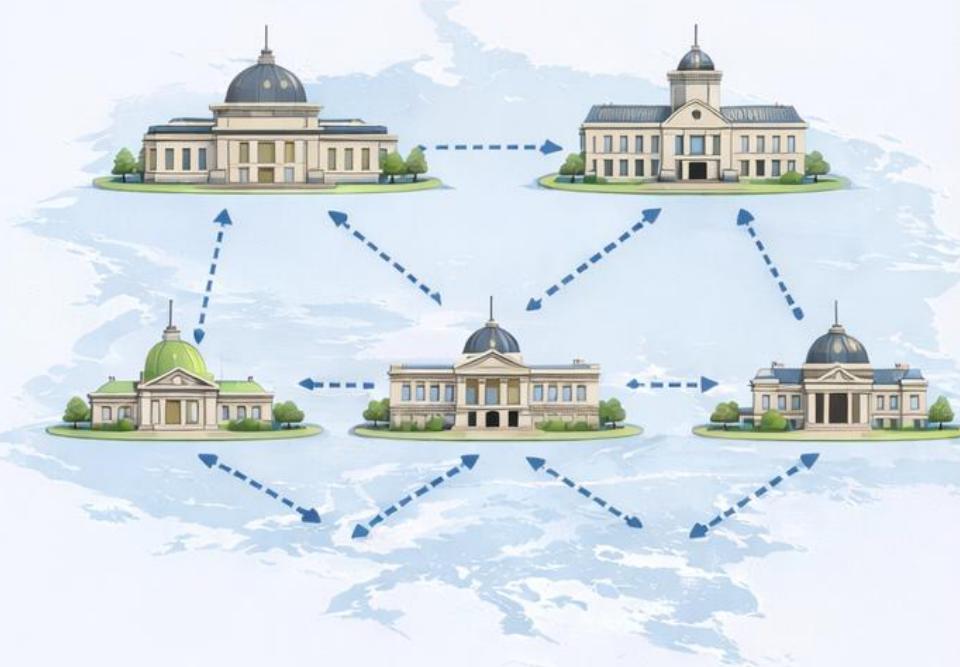
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A Tale of Two Systems



Chinese World Order (Tributary System)



Westphalian System

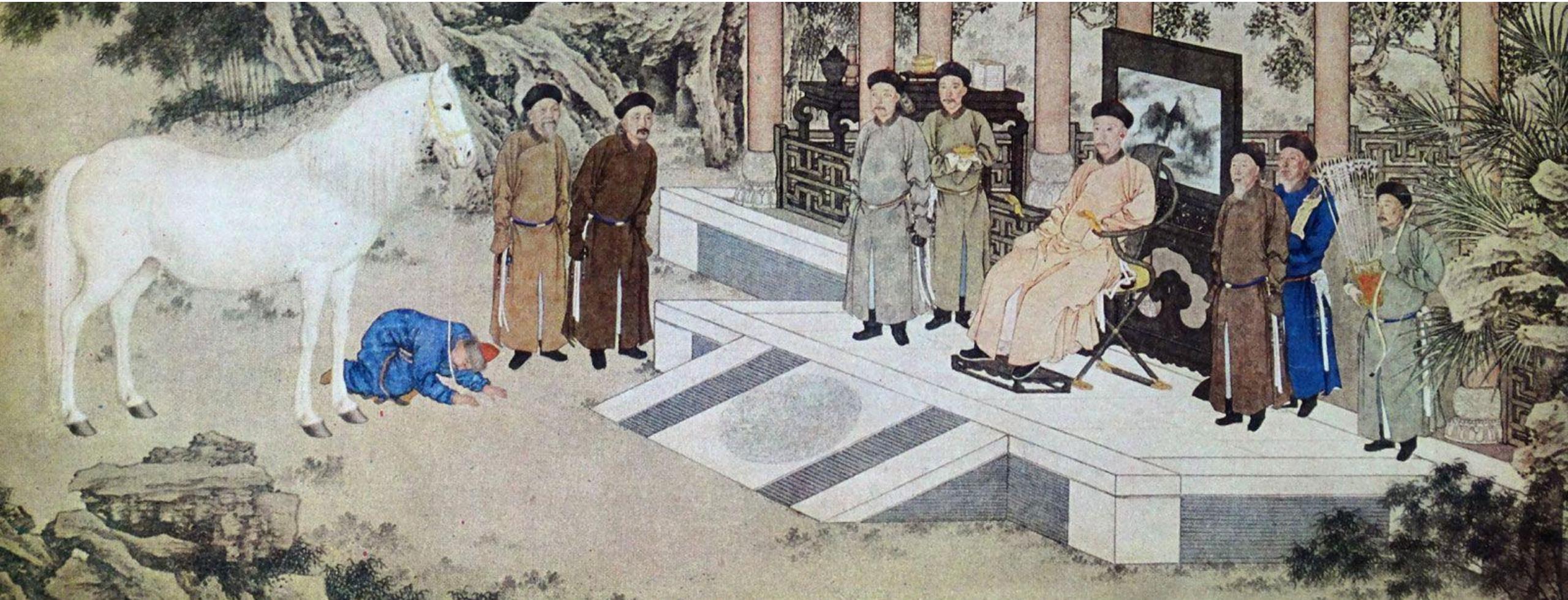
The Chinese World Order



Chinese World Order (Tributary System)

- Hierarchical
- China as the Middle (中) Kingdom (国)
- Chinese Emperor as universal kinship
 - tianxia/all under “heaven” 天下
 - emperor/ the Son of Heaven 天子
- Tributary states send missions

Who do you do when presenting the gift (tribute)?



Kowtow (叩头/磕头)



Modern Gifts of State

Porcelain Swans
Statue



Who do you do when presenting the gift?



Richard Nixon and Mao Zedong, 1972

Confucian



Confucius (551-479 BC)

- **Moral hierarchy as political order**
 - Authority through *virtue*, not coercion
 - Leader should be benevolent and exemplary in moral conduct
- **Governance through moral influence**
 - Stability comes when leaders behave virtuously and others follow their roles
- **Rituals and ceremonies to maintain order**
 - A virtuous emperor will draw others to pay respect naturally
 - Rituals signal acceptance of China's hierarchy position
 - Tribute reflects recognition of China's moral authority, not just political power

Ten Thousand Nations Coming to Pay Tribute

万国来朝

- Tributes from “all corners of the earth” confirmed the emperor’s central place in the world. (Wan, Ch3)



Why Tributes Come?

- **Maybe they fear absences lead to attacks from China**
 - But China actually rarely interfered the internal affairs of foreign countries
- **Material incentives**
 - Access to Chinese markets through controlled but lucrative trade
 - Generous imperial gifts often exceeded the value of the tribute itself
 - Preferential access to Chinese goods (silk, ceramics, silver, etc.)
- **Security & Strategic Benefits**
 - Political recognition → Domestic prestige
 - Military protection*

“Giving generously to those who come and receiving little in return is the way to win over the vassal states.”

—— Book of Rites

厚往而薄来，所以怀诸侯也。

—— 礼记

Why the Emperor Wants Tributes?

- **Tribute missions as political signals**
 - A symbolic act showing acknowledgement of China's superior status
- **External recognition reinforced the emperor's authority**
 - The more tributes, the stronger image of the emperor as “son of the heaven”
- **Rituals as legitimacy performance**
 - Proper rituals demonstrate that the emperor uphold Confucian moral governance
 - The emperor claims to “act in accordance with Heaven’s Mandate” (奉天承运)
- **Boots internal political legitimacy**
 - China is respected
 - The emperor commanded universal admiration

**So that the Emperor could stay in power
And the dynasty could continue**

Political legitimacy: the popular acceptance and recognition by the governed that an authority, regime, or law holds the rightful power to make decisions and govern

The China-Centered Tribute System

Tributary missions and diplomatic communication

- Strict **rules** regulating the tributary missions
 - The frequency of tributes
 - The status of tributary states
 - The routes of incoming tributary missions
- **Two-way** communication through the tribute system
 - Foreign courts sent tributary missions to China
 - China sent imperial tallies to tributary states

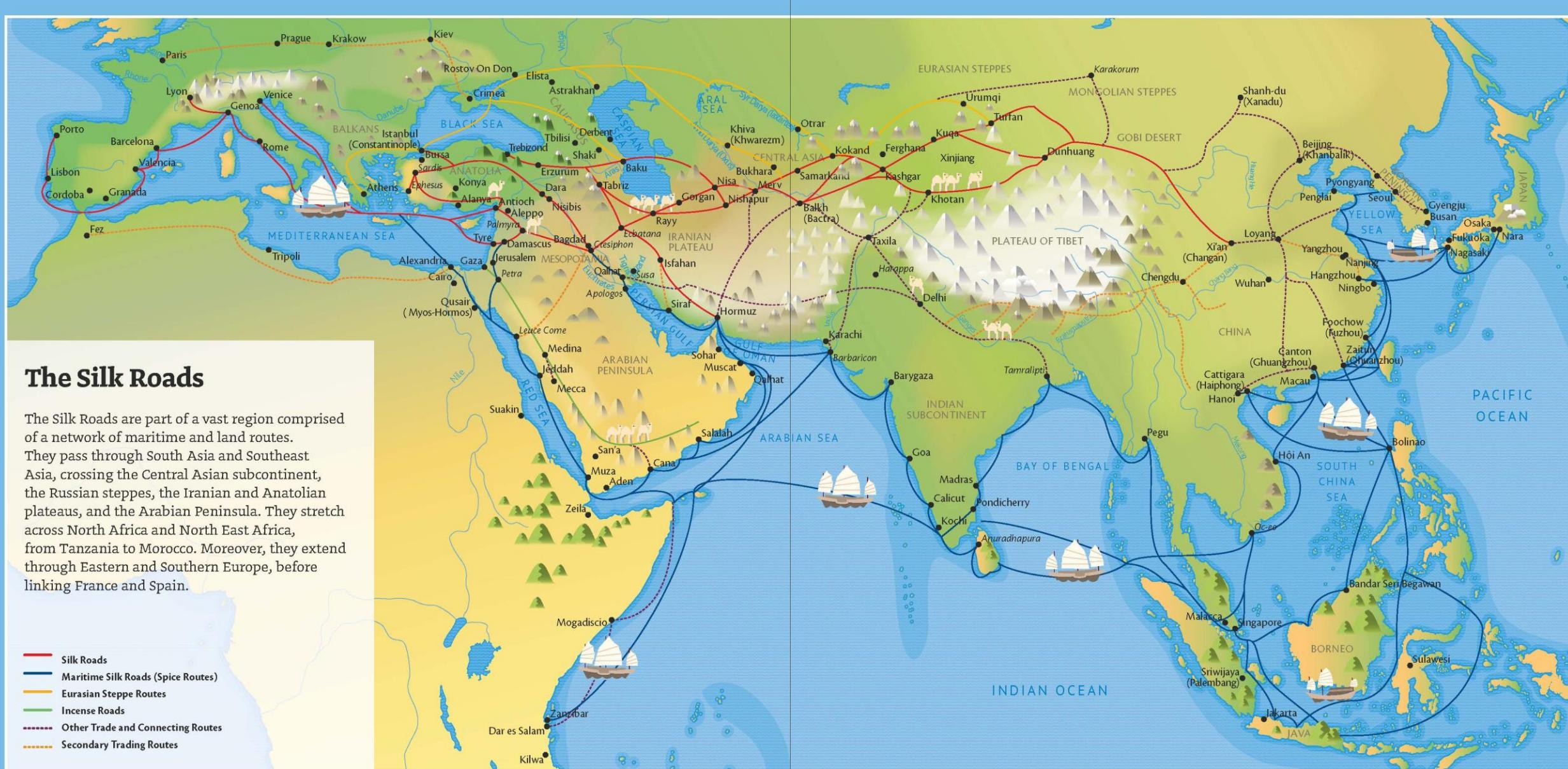
Qing Dynasty

- **Korea:** 4× per year
- **Ryukyu:** 1× every 2 years
- **Annam:** 2 missions combined into 1 every 4 years
- **Laos:** 1× every 10 years
- **Siam:** 1× every 3 years
- **Sulu:** 1× every 5 years
- **Burma:** 1× every 10 years

Additional Benefits of the Tribute System for China

- **Control through access**
 - Permission to send tribute missions acted as a gatekeeping mechanism.
 - By controlling access to China's markets and court, the empire shaped foreign rulers' behavior.
 - Creating economic dependence on Chinese trade privileges.
- **Managing threats & buying peace**
 - Large imperial gifts functioned as strategic bribes to powerful or potentially hostile neighbors.
 - This reduced the need for costly military campaigns.
 - Tribute trade was viewed as an unpleasant but necessary security expense.

Trade Routes



Silk Roads: A Brief History

- **Opening the Routes (2nd c. BCE)**
 - Zhang Qian's missions link Han China to Central Asia → trade as diplomacy.
- **Cosmopolitan Exchange (7th–10th c.)**
 - Tang, Persian, and Islamic stability lowers risks → merchants knit regions together.
- **Mongol “Unification Effect” (13th–14th c.)**
 - One empire standardizes rules, protects caravans → overland trade surges.
- **Maritime Turn (15th–19th c.)**
 - Ming voyages + later European naval dominance shift commerce from land to sea.

Mongol Expansion





KHANATES OF THE MONGOL EMPIRE, c.1300



Empire of the Great Qing

25th Year of the Jiaqing Emperor (A.D. 1820)



Korea vs. Japan

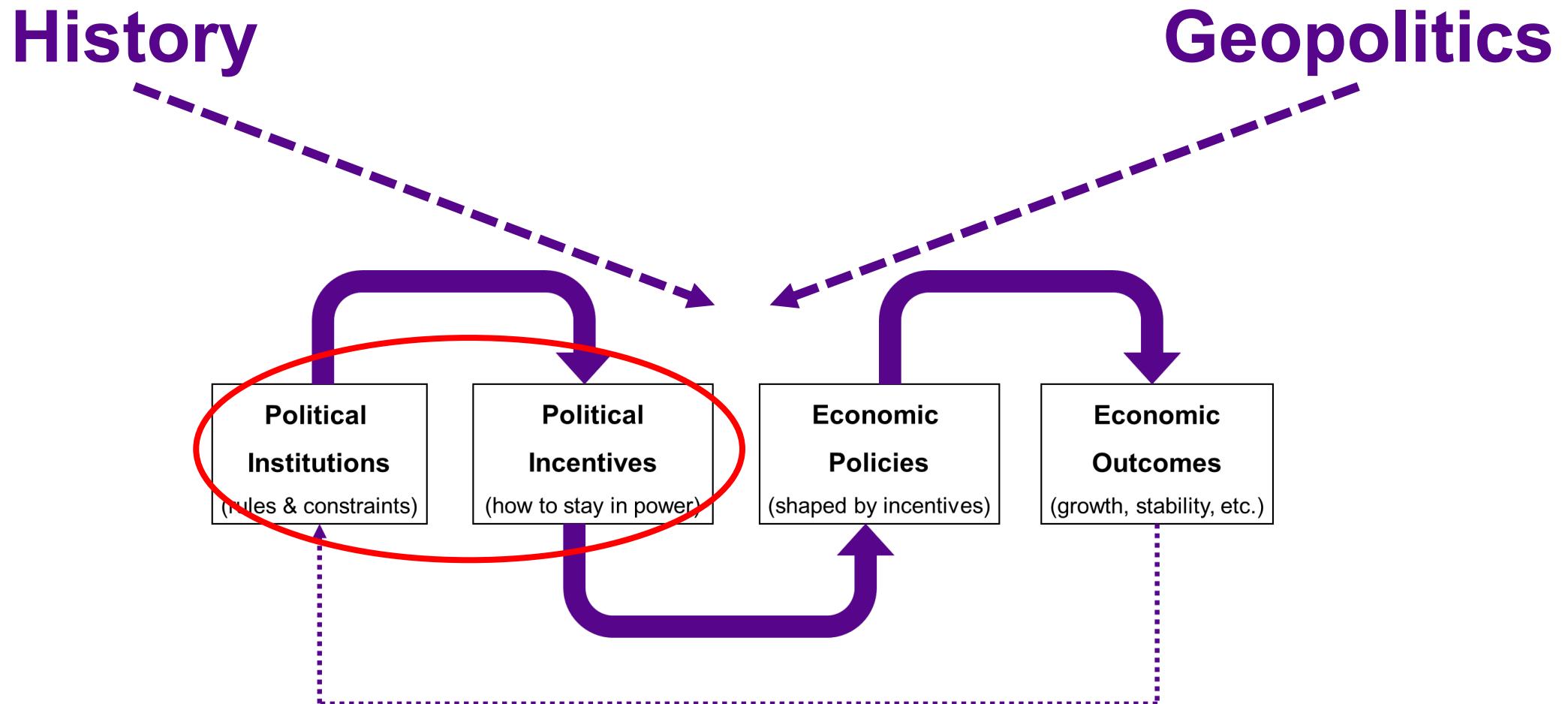


Yangban



Daimyo

The Political Economy Process



Geopolitics: Korea vs. Japan



Korea: concerned neighbor

- Direct land access
- Tribute secured protection
- Geopolitical dependence

Japan: insulated island nation

- Avoid tribute without triggering existential threats
- Strategic autonomy

History: Korea vs. Japan

Korea: Long-Term China & Confucian Influence

- Deep integration into the Sinosphere for over a millennium.
- Shared written language, Confucian statecraft, bureaucracy, diplomacy norms.
- Tribute was part of a **continuous civilizational identity**.

Japan: Selective Borrower

- Adopted many Chinese cultural elements, but **retained political independence**.
- Historical episodes (e.g., failed Mongol invasions) reinforced a narrative of self-reliance.
- Tribute seen as symbolic subordination—not aligned with Japan's self-image.

Political Institutions: Korea vs. Japan

Korea: Confucian Monarchy

- Confucian ideology tied royal authority to recognition by the Chinese emperor
- Tribute reinforced internal legitimacy
- Korean elites relied on Chinese classics

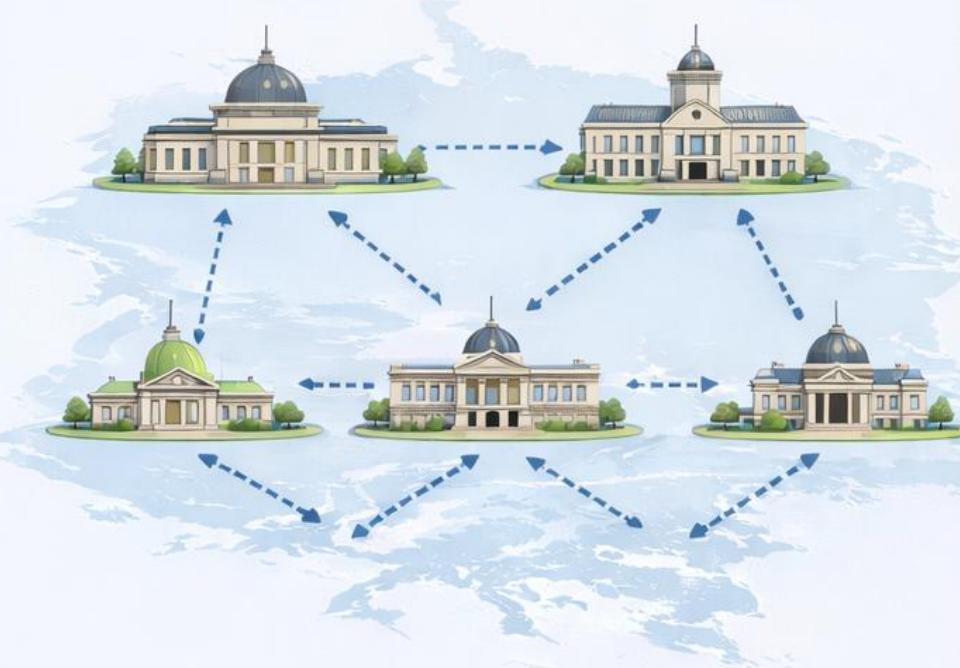
Japan: Decentralized Warrior Rule

- The shogunate's legitimacy came from samurai hierarchy, not Chinese recognition.
- Internal political order did not require external validation.
- Tribute undermined the shogun's status by implying subordination.

What If the Two Systems Met?

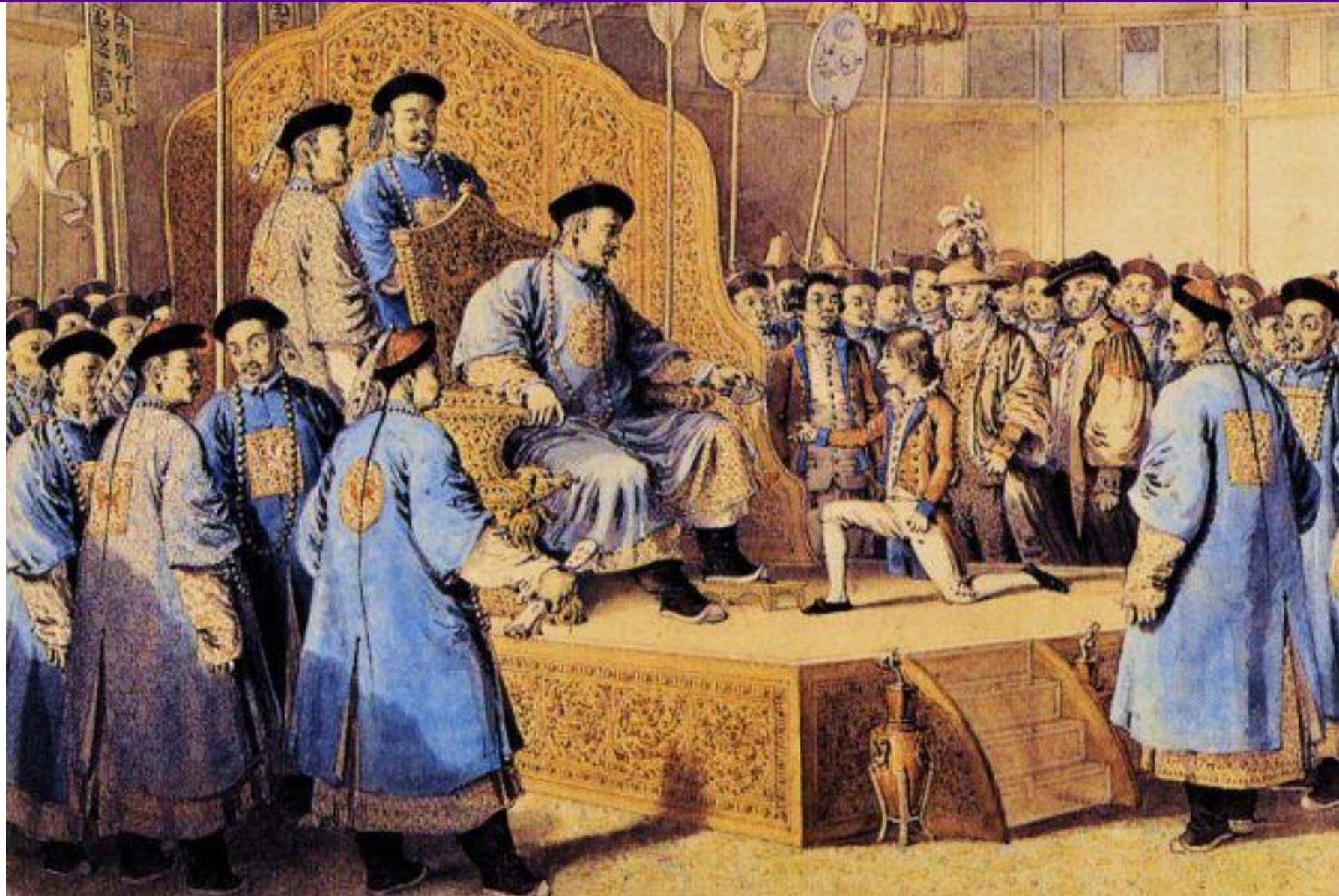


Chinese World Order (Tributary System)



Westphalian System

The Macartney Embassy (1793)



Qianlong's Letter to George III



We have never valued ingenious
articles nor do we have the slightest
need of your country's manufactures

Thank You!

