



Illegitimate Scholar 🚫 🟢 @ill_Scholar

8h

A century Before Columbus, a fleet of 300 ships sailed from China

Over 30 years & 7 voyages, they visited Africa, Asia, India, & the Middle East

By the time Columbus sailed the Chinese fleet was burned or left to rot. The records destroyed. Why?

Thread 🗨️ 🕒



Jul 30, 2025 · 4:29 PM UTC

💬 34 ↺ 146 ↻ 14 ❤️ 1,141



Illegitimate Scholar 🚫 🟢 @ill_Scholar

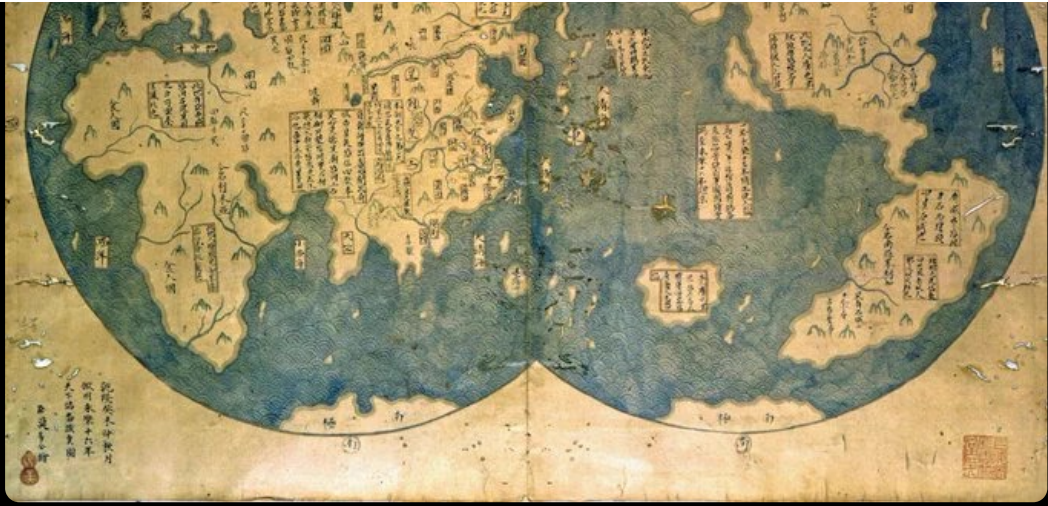
8h

Unlike Columbus, the Eunuch Admiral Zheng did not seek discovery, Gold, or Conquest

He was tasked with projecting Chinese Maritime Power and engaging in diplomacy/trade with tributaries & Distant Rulers

30,000 sailors, diplomats, officials, & soldiers sailed with him





3 8 1 171



Illegitimate Scholar @ill_Scholar

8h

The Treasure Fleet was 300 ships strong, the largest boasting 9 masts, 4 decks, and a length of ~400 ft

The fleet dwarfed any European Navy of the time to a laughable extent.



8 8 1 191



Illegitimate Scholar @ill_Scholar

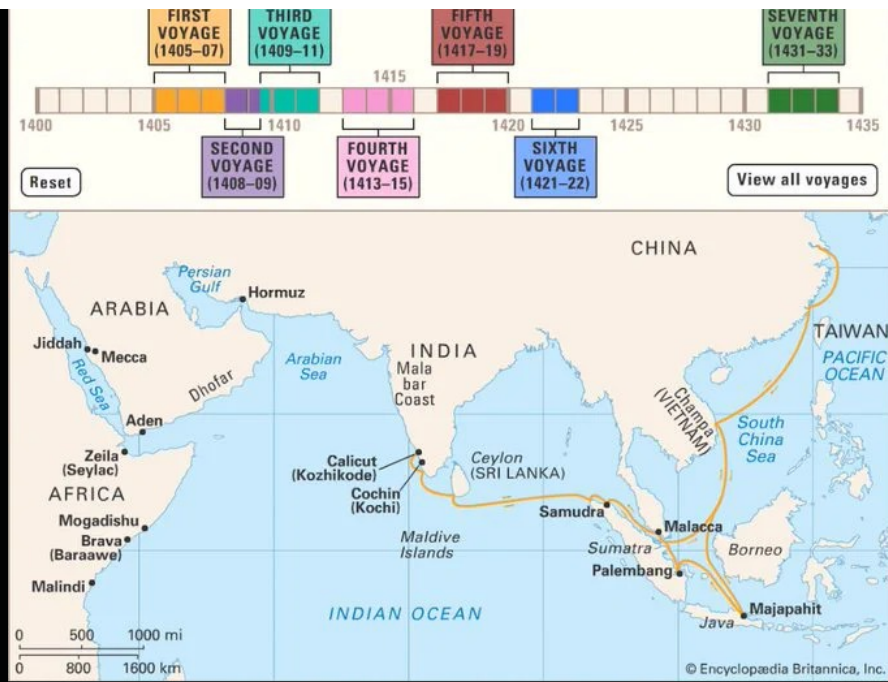
8h

Zheng embarked from what is now Shanghai in AD 1405 on his first voyage

Over Three Years, They sailed across all of Asia, to Malacca, Java, and on to Calicut

The Fleet projected the unfathomable strength of the Middle Kingdom & secured trade & diplomatic relations at each stop





1 5 130



Illegitimate Scholar @ill_Scholar

8h

The later six voyages were equally successful, spreading Chinese Superiority to Africa & the Persian Gulf

They brought treasures & dignitaries back to China, a singing Parrot, a Giraffe, & massive Bengal Porcelain

So why did Chinese Naval Power meet such an unceremonious demise?



1 3 125



Illegitimate Scholar @ill_Scholar

8h

Emperor Yongle who funded the Voyages died, with his successors wanting to concentrate on internal affairs

The influence of foreign "barbarians" wrought through trade was seen as disruptive

to Order by the more Confucian Conservative minded Emperors after Yongle



2 3 126



Illegitimate Scholar @ill_Scholar

8h

The expeditions, grand as they were, strained the treasury,

The benefits did not outweigh the costs to Emperors facing internal strife and Mongol encroachment

The Rising Power of the merchant class was also seen as a threat



1 5 128



Illegitimate Scholar @ill_Scholar

8h

The result of these factors led to not only the ending of the voyages but of a calculated campaign to destroy collective knowledge that the Ming ever undertook

such travel

The Ming would wain in power over the next centuries, and neither the Ming nor the Qing Dynasty that supplanted them would attempt anything close to the Voyages of Admiral Zheng



2 6 123

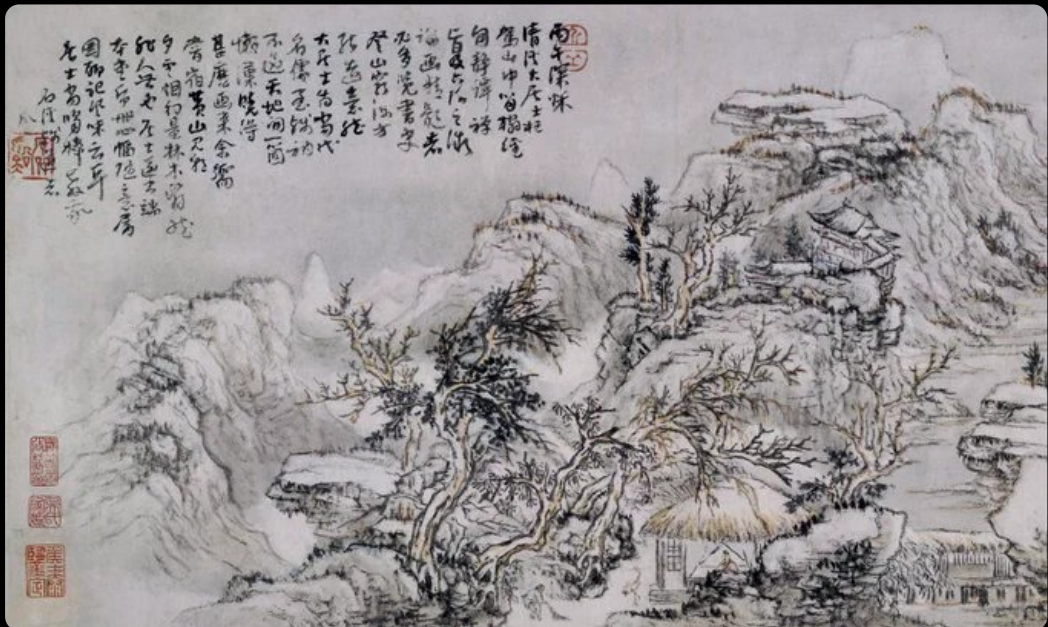


Illegitimate Scholar @ill_Scholar

8h

While the Europeans grew in strength over the next centuries, expanding across the World's Oceans, the Chinese turned inward

The attitude of disinterest in all that occurred past their Divine Borders led the Chinese to internal harmony



2 4 102



Illegitimate Scholar @ill_Scholar

8h

Apathy to World Affairs unfortunately also rendered the Chinese Empire incapable of comprehending the threat amassing beyond their Divine Borders

By the late 18th century, the growing British Empire sent Lord George MaCartney to

the court of Emperor Qianlong

The goal was to open direct trade with China

1 4 102



Illegitimate Scholar 🌐 @ill_scholar

8h

The British Emissary viewed himself as a representative of the Grand World Empire on which the sun never sets, now a contemporary of the Great Chinese Empire, renowned even in Europe for Millenia

This British self-perception meant little to the Chinese Emperor, ruler of all under Heaven and of the Middle Kingdom around which the Barbarian Brit's sun revolved.

1 4 95



Illegitimate Scholar 🌙 ✓ @ill_Scholar

8h

Lord MaCartney acted accordingly, repeatedly requesting to speak directly with the Emperor, in direct opposition to Chinese custom

Nevertheless, with a tone of annoyance, bewilderment, and a growing awareness of the danger posed by the arrogant Barbarians the audience was granted.

But only to squash the arrogant request outright and settle the matter permanently

💬 1 ↻ 3 🗨️ 1 ❤️ 90



Illegitimate Scholar 🌙 ✓ @ill_Scholar

8h

Each request of the Letter, shown below, was refused outright by the Emperor.

Lavish gifts were bestowed on the Officers and Men of the expedition and even greater sent back with them to King George III in recognition of his "tribute"

This event would be the first major rendezvous of many between the Empires.

The disparity in perception between them would eventually be reconciled on the Battlefield

💬 1 ↻ 4 🗨️ ❤️ 79



Illegitimate Scholar 🌙 ✓ @ill_Scholar

8h

The British expanded and grew in strength, regardless of the resulting destabilization of their home country

The Chinese chose the opposite path, creating harmony and stability for centuries, but leading to relative weakness which would result in incalculable death/suffering and the "Century of Humiliation" (19th century) in China

💬 2 ↻ 4 🗨️ ❤️ 81



Illegitimate Scholar 🌙 ✓ @ill_Scholar

8h

But that story will be told another day

Follow me if you don't already to see the next thread on the Century of Humiliation in China

I would really appreciate likes and shares if you enjoyed this thread! 🙏

💬 ↻ 7 🗨️ ❤️ 84

Historical Chronicles ✓ @HistoriaJack

8h

Replying to @ill_Scholar

Great thread!

I often ponder how very different the world could have been had the Chinese continued on this path.

They may well have (re)discovered America first, Europeans might never have risen to superpower status, the United States could have been populated differently.

It would have changed absolutely everything!

1 1 12



Illegitimate Scholar @ill_Scholar

6h

Yes, some people think they DID reach America.

I don't think so though

1 1 2



more replies

MoundLore @MoundLore

8h

Replying to @ill_Scholar

Ming naval dominance wasn't erased because it failed.

It was deliberately forgotten....a casualty of Confucian conservatism, internal strife, and bureaucratic fear of merchant power.

Not a fall. A retreat.

1 1 29



Illegitimate Scholar @ill_Scholar

8h

Yes

1 1 17

Joshua Eisenhart @EisenhartJoshua

7h

Replying to @ill_Scholar

i thought this voyage was a manhunt for a rival to the throne.

1 1 2



Illegitimate Scholar @ill_Scholar

6h

Bit of a pretext for the voyage IIRC

1 1 3

Jane Wisdom @JaneWisdom34856

7h

Replying to @ill_Scholar

Great post - thank you!

1 1 1



Illegitimate Scholar @ill_Scholar

6h

thanks!

1 1 2

Aaron @Hawkatarian

7h

Replying to @ill_Scholar

Very interesting! I'm not a fan of China, but it is a great contrast in cultures to the West; both good and bad.

1 6



Illegitimate Scholar @ill_Scholar

6h

You can love the culture and history and not the CCP

6

William Wallace Welker @Will_W_Welker

8h

Replying to @ill_Scholar

China's vast accomplishments are rivaled only by their feats of self-annihilation...

4 5



Illegitimate Scholar @ill_Scholar

6h

Multiple of the top ten deadliest wars in history are just Chinese civil wars, lol

8

Madam Archaeologist @madamarchaeo

8h

Replying to @ill_Scholar

Cool thread!

1 1



Illegitimate Scholar @ill_Scholar

6h

thanks!

1

Luis de Cordova1780 @mana99475524

8h

Replying to @ill_Scholar

It is surprising that they didn't get to America.

1 1



Illegitimate Scholar @ill_Scholar

5h

They were trying to spread Chinese superiority and diplomacy, so they almost exclusively went to places known to them already or places known to other people they knew of.

It wasn't for exploration.

But they certainly had the capability

2

us Purple Blaze @lbwizardBlaze

8h

Replying to @ill_Scholar

An interesting and relevant side note -- China has NEVER been interested in anything the West offered until modern Entertainment, so there has always been a trade imbalance with China.

2 1 12



Illegitimate Scholar @ill_Scholar

8h



yes, that's actually in the thread, not a sidenote at all

1 1 11

hand basket @InAHandBa5ket

6h

Replying to @ill_Scholar

Meaning they didn't actually cross an ocean. Everywhere they went had land trade routes which were probably more efficient than trying to do it by sea.

1 1 4



Illegitimate Scholar 🚫 @ill_Scholar

5h

yeah

1 1 1

