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World Civilization

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Week 13 The Mariners

Zheng He, a Chinese admiral who led the first significant voyages in the 15th century and is regarded as one of history's greatest admirals. Zheng He, was a Muslim and a eunuch who led seven voyages throughout the Indian Ocean between 1405 and 1433. In contrast to Columbus' initial journey that only included only three ships, Zheng led an armada of over 300 ships and a crew of over 27,000 people. The ships were extremely large and the flagships, known as treasure ships, were over 400 feet long and had 7 or more masts. Zheng was not an explorer, rather he was familiar with the Indian Ocean trade routes and other Chinese sailors. His journeys to Africa, India, and the Middle East were trade missions for prestige and respect in order for people to continue to view China as the center of the economic universe. The tribute system known as the *kowtow,* in which foreign rulers went to China to engage in a ritual where they acknowledged the Chinese emperor's superiority by giving gifts in exchange for the right to trade with China. A zoo's worth of rhinos, zebras, giraffes, and exotic animals from Africa also came from Zheng's tribute missions. The Chinese were world leaders in naval technology, and they wanted to dominate trade in the Indian Ocean. These voyages ended when Zhang died and his successors were not interested in maritime trade

Vascoda da Gama from Portugal introduced Europeans to the Indian Ocean trade network because Portugal relied upon trade in order to grow. In the 15th century, Christian crusading was strong because the Muslims had brought stability and prosperity to the region. A chief crusader, Prince Henry the Navigator, commissioned sailors to search for a path to the Indian Ocean to get

lucrative spice trade and to find the kingdom of Prester John, a mythical Christian King. Da Gama was the first of Henry's protégés to make it around Africa, and into the Indian Ocean. In 1498, he landed at Calicut, a major trading post on India's west coast and the exploration was able to capture and control a number of coastal cities, creating a "trading post empire". The ships were armed and enabled them to capture cities by firing cannons into city walls.
The Portuguese lacked people or boats to run the Indian Ocean trade so they used extortion and forced them to purchase a cartaz, a permit to trade in Portugal's towns. Merchants thought Portuguese were glorified pirates who never took control of Indian Ocean trade but Spain did become interested in their own route to the Indies.

In 1492, Christopher Columbus discovered America, he navigated by relying on dead reckoning, a technique in which you figure out your position based on the direction, speed, and time which is figured out via hourglass. Columbus's first out of four journeys had a similar purpose as the Portuguese which was gold and Christians. Columbus's expedition was funded by Spain's Ferdinand and Isabella, which promising riches and conversions of the natives Columbus did not find spices or gold but he created some Christians, he was less successful than Zheng He or Vasco de Gama. When Spain was a leading power in Europe, Columbus's voyages had a negative impact on the people the Spanish encountered in the Americas.