

If the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans were switched, it would have had a profound impact on the course of history. If China had been the closest Eurasian power to the Americas, it's possible that a Chinese explorer like Zheng He might have "discovered" the Americas before Columbus. Assuming that China had established a presence in the Americas, here's a speculative history of the era with Zheng He "discovers" Mexico and the Aztec Empire:

In the early 1400s, Zheng He, a Chinese admiral and explorer, led a series of expeditions to explore the western seas. His fleet of massive junks sailed from China, down the coast of Southeast Asia, and across the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean.<sup>1</sup> On one of these expeditions, Zheng He's fleet reached the western coast of the Americas. He was astonished to discover a new continent, rich in resources and home to civilizations that were as advanced as any he had seen in Asia. Zheng He and his crew established contact with the Aztec Empire, a powerful and sophisticated civilization that dominated central Mexico. The Aztecs were initially wary of the Chinese explorers, but they were impressed by the Chinese technology and trade goods. Zheng He and his crew were equally impressed by the Aztec culture, architecture, and art. Over time, the Chinese and Aztecs established a thriving trade relationship. The Chinese brought silk, porcelain, spices, and other luxury goods from Asia, while the Aztecs provided gold, silver, cocoa, and other resources from the Americas.<sup>2</sup> This trade relationship helped to enrich both civilizations and establish a cultural exchange. As the Chinese presence in the Americas grew, they encountered other civilizations, including the Maya and Inca. The Chinese were fascinated by the diversity of the Americas and the rich cultures that flourished there. However, tensions

---

<sup>1</sup> Britannica: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Zheng-He>

<sup>2</sup> National Geographic: <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/china-zheng-he-fleet-ming-treasure-voyages>

began to rise between the Chinese and Aztecs as the Chinese sought to establish more control over the trade relationship. The Aztecs, who were used to dominating their neighbors, were not willing to accept Chinese dominance.<sup>3</sup> The resulting conflict between the Chinese and Aztecs was bloody and devastating for both sides. Despite the conflicts, the Chinese continued to explore and trade in the Americas. They established settlements and outposts along the western coast, and some Chinese even settled among the Aztecs, marrying into local families and adopting local customs. The discovery of the Americas by the Chinese had far-reaching consequences for the course of history. It challenged the dominant narrative of European exploration and colonization, and it established a new relationship between China and the Americas. The Chinese presence in the Americas also influenced the development of local cultures and societies, leading to a blending of Chinese and indigenous American traditions.

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.aztec-history.com/aztec-warfare.html>