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Course: HIS113: World Civilization I: OB

Date: April 19th, 2023

Comparison of Chinese and European Maritime Goals

In the 15th century, Europe and China embarked on separate yet coincidental explorations. Both societies actively sent representatives on expeditions to unfamiliar worlds, each exhibiting a different goal (McKenzie, par. 1). Europe was mainly interested in acquiring wealth in Asia and Africa. In addition, it spread Christian values with the ultimate goal of converting as many people as possible. However, China's voyage wanted to spread Chinese' imperialism and power in the East. During the 15th century, China was the leading manufacturer of the best quality products globally. As a result, it did not need to import any new commodity into its territory (McKenzie, par. 2). The only thing it needed was increased respect and recognition as an economic hub ("Columbus, Vasco da Gama, and Zheng He - 15th Century Mariners: Crash Course World History #21" 3:00-3:12). In addition, China developed the tribute system which was part of its larger plan to gain as much respect as possible from its neighbors in the East. Accordingly, the exhibitions helped China restore its status as an economic center and facilitate the tribute system that brought immense admiration to China and its rulers.

Due to the continuous pursuit of power, Europe expanded its territory in different parts of the world. The leading Chinese explorer, Zheng He, could not match their European counterparts' hunger and determination. After establishing a territory in the Indian Ocean, Zheng He felt no need to further his exploration (McKenzie, par. 2). On their part, the Europeans continued relentlessly with their voyage in the hope of more wealth and empires. Some notable

European explorers that left a long-lasting impact on the world include Vasco Da Gama and Christopher Columbus. Due to their broad goals, the expeditions by these explorers moved around the globe, accessing Africa and the Americas. Therefore, unlike the Chinese, who were only interested in maintaining their status as an economic powerhouse, the European expedition wanted to establish a new world order by influencing trade, acquiring wealth, and spreading Christianity.

Counterfactual Argument

From the comparison, it is evident that the two societies had diverse goals in their expedition. Several things could have happened if the Pacific and the Atlantic Oceans had changed positions, placing China rather than Europe closer to the Americans. As expected, Zhang He could have led the expedition to the Americas. As the comparison shows, China was already experiencing abundance, and the presence of gold and other natural cities in Mexico and the Aztec Empire could not have attracted them as much. However, it is crucial to note that China's ongoing tributary system shaped its foreign policy. In their quest to establish their hegemony, China would have sent expeditions towards the Americas, hoping that Mexico and other territories, such as the Aztecs, could pledge loyalty to China and acknowledge its superiority. Accordingly, as they did in their accurate history, China would have continued its imperialistic principles in the Americas.

In 1519, Hernán Cortés led an expedition that discovered Mexico and the Aztec Empire. Besides the presence of gold in Mexico, sophisticated cities, especially in the interior, attracted the Spanish, prompting the expedition ("Cortés and the Aztecs - Exploring the Early Americas | Exhibitions - Library of Congress"). The case for the Chinese would have been slightly different. China would not have pursued an aggressive annexation of Mexico and the Aztecs, as witnessed

by the Europeans. Instead, they could have shown more interest in cooperation and sought opportunities that would have made China the absolute economic hub of the region. As a result, the Chinese expedition could have concentrated more on expanding Chinese hegemony and imperialism in Mexico and the Aztecs rather than taking advantage of their resources, such as gold.

Works Cited

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McKenzie, Aryn. "Chinese and European Exploration by Kai Ser Aschenputtel." *Student Made History*, 18 Mar. 2015, studentmadehistory.wordpress.com/2015/03/18/chinese-and-European-exploration-by-kai-ser-aschenputtel/#:~:text=The%20European%20and%20Chinese%20explorations.