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Research and Writing Assignment- China and Europe "What-If"

I never considered how different the Mexican culture would be if the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans were switched, placing China, not Europe, as the closest Eurasian hierarchy to the Americas. This "what if" lesson is one of the most interesting for me because it puts Zheng He of China discovering Mexico and the Aztec Empire, impacting both my Mexican and American culture immensely. At the time, China's maritime goal was to project its power throughout the East Asian and Indian Ocean worlds. They were a single hierarchy, and the Treasure Fleets under Zheng He were under state control, as they managed expeditions and what they represented, which was politics. Politics ultimately constrained economics. According to the text, with all the fleets and valuable goods they varied, the wealth and prestige of the Empire, and Zheng He was the ambassador who put China on top. With this, the Ming took control of states in Vietnam and could have been a threat to future expeditions in the area of the Indian Ocean. The expeditions illustrated China's dominance in culture and economy. They traded things like spices, medicine, and materials to others states around the area, which brought more wealth and tax revenues to China.

Western Europe took a different path in maritime compared to Ming China. Because they were divided into numerous competing hierarchies, they depended on

close cooperation between private merchants and states who dominated mercantile interests. According to the text, although their political and cultural influence was limited and they were small hierarchies, they had the freedom to maneuver and the ability to survive at crucial locations. This also influenced other European hierarchies that were becoming vulnerable to network-based practices and cultures. When Portugal was the first kingdom to take on the explorations, the rest of Europe followed because they were successful. They were funded by limited resources, in comparison to the Ming's fleets, and exchanged woolen cloth and guns during the trade. From this, they came back with profits of gold and slaves. Later, a growing partnership between various European states and merchants emerged, switching the emphasis to global network-hierarchy intersections.

If the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans were switched, placing China, not Europe, as the closest Eurasian hierarchy to the Americas, for one, much more action would be going on in the Americas way sooner than it did, as China began its explorations before Europe did. If Zheng He of China discovered Mexico and the Aztec Empire, they would essentially lose a lot of their own cultural values. China was huge, and the world's most sophisticated producer of manufactured goods, which could have changed the skills and goods Mexico and the Aztec Empire was considered to specialize in. They were also very set on Confucian values and teachings, so a lot of what Mexico and the Aztec Empire learned would eventually be overruled by Confucian teaching with their influence. Christianity grew in Mexico due to European custom, so Confucian could have easily been adopted if its the religion that got to the people first. With Chinese influence, we may have well adopted the sense of power and ideology of self-sufficiency

and military/Emporer supremacy. Taking in their hierarchy system would have also changed what Mexico and the Aztec Empire were, but it possibly could have made them stronger. As far as trade, China could have also made them stronger in that aspect as well.

Again, Mexico would, of course, not have any European influence and revolve around Chinese customs and traditions. I think one of the reasons Mexico now and the Aztec Empire at the time were so free to create their own values and traditions and adapt their own skills is because Europe did not have one specific cultural frame. Europe came in with many prominent screen elements that people in the Americas could adopt if they chose to. They did not have one religion or set of beliefs like China. They were not governed a certain way or were powerful by any means. The Amercias had to pave their own history and create traditions and values through European influence, which is what made the Americas so unique as well. Under Chinese influence, Mexico and the Aztec Empire could have easily just been another one of the states they dominated.

