

Week 13: HIS 113

ABIDE BALLI

Discussion

Columbus, an Italian navigator, was searching for a new trade route to Asia when he stumbled upon the Americas in 1492 (Morillo 446). He made four voyages to the New World but died believing he had reached Asia, never realizing the extent of his discovery. Vasco da Gama, a Portuguese explorer, also sought a new trade route to Asia, but he sailed around Africa and reached India in 1498. He established a direct sea route to India, revolutionizing European trade with Asia and making Portugal a wealthy European nation. Zheng He, a Chinese admiral, led seven naval expeditions between 1405 and 1421, traveling as far as East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula (Morillo 440). His voyages aimed to establish Chinese dominance in the Indian Ocean and explore new trade opportunities. He brought back exotic goods and animals. While Columbus and Vasco da Gama are often credited with initiating the Age of Discovery, Zheng He's explorations were equally significant. However, his voyages did not result in lasting trade dominance, and China later abandoned its maritime ambitions. On the other hand, Columbus and Vasco da Gama's discoveries had profound consequences for global trade, colonization, and the spread of European influence.

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Writing Assignment

The Chinese goals in maritime activity differed significantly from those of the Europeans. Chinese maritime activity, as exemplified by the voyages of Zheng He, aimed to establish Chinese dominance in the Indian Ocean and expand trade networks. The primary goal was to enhance China's prestige and establish diplomatic relations with other states. Zheng He's voyages were also intended to explore new territories and gather exotic goods, but colonization was not a priority.

In contrast, European maritime activity, particularly after Columbus discovered the Americas, was driven by the desire to colonize and exploit new territories. The Europeans sought to expand their empires, establish new trade routes, and gain access to valuable resources. Colonization and conversion of the indigenous populations were central to European exploration.

The approach would have been markedly different if China had "discovered" Mexico and the Aztec Empire instead of Europe. The Chinese would likely have established diplomatic relations and trade networks with the Aztecs to gain access to their resources and exotic goods. They may have established a presence in the region, but colonization and conversion of the indigenous population would not have been a priority. The Aztecs, for their part, would have likely viewed the Chinese as a valuable trading partner and potential ally, given their technological prowess and diplomatic skills. The encounter could have resulted in exchanging ideas and technologies, potentially altering the course of Chinese and Aztec history. Overall, the

encounter between the Chinese and Aztecs would have been driven by mutual benefit rather than conquest and domination.

Reference

Morillo, Stephen. Frameworks of World History, Volume One: To 1550 (Oxford University Press, 2014).