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World Civilization 1

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Reading & Writing Assignment

During the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), Chinese maritime activity was largely motivated by commercial and diplomatic objectives. The Chinese intended to create commercial networks and become a dominating force in the Indian Ocean. Vice Admiral Zheng He launched voyages to Southeast Asia, South Asia, and East Africa, building diplomatic and commercial ties along the route. These expeditions had no intention of establishing colonies or converting people to Chinese culture or religion.

In contrast, European maritime activity during the Age of Exploration (15th-17th centuries) was driven by a desire for wealth and power. Europeans sought to establish colonies, extract resources, and convert people to Christianity. Columbus's voyages to the Americas in 1492 were motivated by the search for a new trade route to Asia and the desire to find gold and other valuable resources.

If the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans were reversed, bringing China closer to the Americas, Chinese explorers may have "discovered" the Americas before Europeans. However, the Chinese are unlikely to have pursued the same interests as the Europeans. They may have maintained diplomatic connections and traded with indigenous peoples, but they would not have sought to build colonies or convert people to Chinese culture or religion.

If Zheng He had "discovered" Mexico and the Aztec Empire, he may have established trading relationships with them and brought back valuable resources such as gold, silver, and textiles to China. However, it is unlikely that he would have attempted to colonize Mexico or

convert the Aztecs to Chinese culture or religion. The encounter between the Chinese and the Aztecs would have been very different from the encounter between the Europeans and the indigenous peoples of the Americas.

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