

Celine Grothe

Professor O`Hara

World Civ 1

April 24th, 2023

### Research Paper

If the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans were reversed so that China was the closest Eurasian hierarchy to the Americas, it is possible that Chinese explorers would have reached the Americas before Europeans. In the following, I will build a scenario of how China could have "discovered" Mexico and the Aztec Empire.

During the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), the Chinese aimed to increase China's prestige, expand its influence, and increase its trade opportunities. Zheng He's expeditions were intended to establish Chinese supremacy over the Indian Ocean and to demonstrate the power and greatness of the Chinese Empire. His expeditions were not for colonization or territorial expansion, but rather to establish diplomatic relations, promote trade, and collect exotic goods. (page 442)

In contrast, during the same period, the Europeans were aiming for territorial expansion, colonization, and wealth. Europeans wanted to establish colonies on the American Continent and exploit the resources and labor of indigenous peoples. They also wanted to spread Christianity and convert the Native Americans to European culture. (page 446)

If China would have discovered Mexico and the Aztec Empire, it's likely that they would have established diplomatic and commercial relations with the Aztecs rather than attempting to colonize or conquer them. The Chinese were not interested in territorial expansion and would have recognized the value of the Aztec Empire as a trading partner. The Chinese also

would have been interested in acquiring exotic goods such as cacao, which was highly prized in China.

In this scenario, the encounter between China and the Aztec Empire would have been one of mutual respect and curiosity rather than conflict and domination. The Chinese and Aztecs may have exchanged cultural and technological knowledge and maintained a long-term relationship based on trade and diplomacy.

Obviously, we don't know the real outcome of such a drastic change in history but if China had discovered Mexico and the Aztec Empire, the encounter would likely have been characterized by diplomacy and trade rather than colonization and conflict.