

## **GU YANWU: CHINESE GEOGRAPHER**

Geographers of the past did not have satellite imagery or other modern technology. They had to rely on firsthand accounts and physical measurements and calculations to gain an increased understanding of the physical and cultural world. If you were a Chinese geographer, would you have supported Zheng He's voyages? Why or why not?

## **MA YEHAO: EUNUCH MERCHANT**

New goods, new technologies, new ideas, and new discoveries are developing all the time around the world, especially in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. In order to prosper and grow economically, it's important to be on the cutting edge of these big changes. If you were a Eunuch Merchant, would you have supported Zheng He's voyages? Why or why not?

## **LIU JUNZI: CONFUCIAN SCHOLAR**

Confucian scholars were known for believing in the cultural superiority of China. They were often isolationist, favoring the preservation of Chinese customs over the introduction of new ideas. If you were a Confucian scholar, would you have supported Zheng He's voyages? Why or why not?

## **WU XIANG: MING GENERAL**

Military concerns are a top priority of stable states. Defense decision making is often about where to focus your attention. For instance, based on an assessment of major threats, it may be more important to put more money into the army (land-based) or the navy (water-based). If you were a Ming General, would you have supported Zheng He's voyages? Why or why not?

## **Key Historical Events of the Last 75 Years**

- 1404: Yongle Emperor comes to power
- 1405: First voyage of Zheng He and beginning of Indian Ocean trade missions
- 1420: Construction of Forbidden City completed in Beijing
- 1433: Last voyage of Zheng He and beginning of Chinese isolation
- 1453: Ottomans conquer the Byzantine Empire, making trade with the East difficult for Western Europe
- 1492: Christopher Columbus reaches the Americas and begins an age of European colonization
- 1497: Vasco da Gama discovers a new route from Europe to the Indian Ocean, leading eventually to European domination of the Indian Ocean Trade Network
- 1500: Portugal claims control of Brazil
- 1507: Portuguese take control of the Persian Gulf, an important point in the Indian Ocean Trade

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