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Recent Studies in China on Admiral Zheng He's Navigation

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At the end of 15th century great Portuguese sailor Vasco Da Gama returned to Europe from India. In the history of navigation, the Portuguese discovery is the very beginning of the new era. But before the Portuguese came to the east the Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean had already been a busy commercial region for a long time. Ships of China, Southeast Asia, Sub-continent, West Asia and East Africa had kept on coming and going from east to west and from west to east. Admiral Zheng He and his fleets' navigation in the West Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean in the early 15th century is one of greatest achievements in the history of Chinese navigation activities.

In the period from the 3rd year of Yong Le 永乐 (1405) to the 8th year of Xuan De 宣德 (1433) Zheng He sailed 7 times to Southeast Asia and in the Indian Ocean. His fleet was the biggest in the world at that time. It consisted of more than 200 ships and more than 27,800 sailors and soldiers.

The study on Zheng He's navigation activity was begun at the beginning of the Qing Dynasty when Zhang Tingyu 张廷玉 and his colleagues compiled the biography of Zheng He of the Ming Shi in the 17th century. After the article of Liang Qichao 梁启超 namely Zu Guo Da Hang Hai Jia Zheng He Zhuan 祖国大航海家郑和传 (Biography of Our Motherlands Great Admiral Zheng He) published in 1904 the studies developed very quickly. According to the bibliography since that time till 1989 there had been altogether about 900 articles and book concerning the life and activities of Zheng He published in China, including the continent, Taiwan and Hong Kong. In the last 10 years, the number of the publications has kept on increasing to about 60 papers and books per year. In this article I would like to give a brief description of the resent studies on Zheng He and his navigation activities in China. My introduction includes sources, historic geography, aims and significance, relations between the Ming China and other countries, history of Southeast Asian countries and trade. Because this paper is prepared on board during this expedition of the UNESCO and the material which I have now is limited, so it is only a primary introduction.

Sources

Original sources are bases of historical studies. In the last 10 years quite a lot of resources of Zheng He's' navigation were published or republished and some new additions of important sources have appeared. The most important of them are:

Xi Yang Fang Guo Zhi 西洋番国志 (Description of Different Countries), written by Gong Zhen 巩珍, who had accompanied Zheng He to sail in the Indian Ocean. In the past scholars only knew the name of this book from the old bibliographical books. Many of them believed that it was already lost. However in 1948 it was discovered. In 1961 it was published by Zhong Hua Shu Ju 中华书局I edited by prof. Xiang Da向达. This edition including three introductions copied from different bibliographical books, five inscriptions concerning Zheng He and another material. This book includes descriptions of 20 countries. It was reprinted in 1982.

Xi Yang Chao Gong Dian Lu 西洋朝贡典录 (Tributes from Western Countries), written by Huang Shengzeng 黄省曾 around 1520. The main difference between this book and the others, for example Ying Ya Sheng Lan 瀛涯胜览 and Xing Cuo Sheng Lan 星槎胜览 and Xi Yang Fan Guo Zhi, is there are navigation courses and compass directions to these countries which the author described. It was edited by Xie Fang 谢方 published with index by Zhong Hua Shu Ju in 1982 . There are also articles which discussed some problems in Zheng He' s navigation, for example Chen Youhe's 陈有和 paper Zheng He Xia Xi Yang De Yi Ge Zhong Yao Shi Shi Tan Tao 郑和下西洋的一个重要事实探讨. (A Study on an Important Problem Concerning Zheng He Is Navigation).¹

One of the most important works in studying the original material concerning Zhen He's navigation is Zhen Hesheng 郑鹤声 Zheng yijun's 郑一钧 Zhe He Xia Xi Yang Zi Liao Hui Bian 郑和下西洋资料汇编 (Collected Materials of Zheng He ' s Navigation) 3 vol. published in 1980 in Shangaong 山东which classified al l the resources so far as the author

¹ In Nan Kai Xue Bao.南开学报 (Academicals Journal of NanKai University), 1980, 4.

has known. It is a very useful tool in studying. The authors had studied Zheng He for more than 40 years. They are well known in China. Xie Fang, another scholar, also gave a general description of the sources about Zheng He's navigation.²

Except this there were also collections of materials concerning different countries published in recent years, for example the Institute of History Southeast Asian Zhong Shan University compiled a book titled Zhong Guo Gu Ji Zhong Yu Guan Fei Lu Bien Zi Liao Hui Bian 中国古籍总语关菲律宾资料汇编 (Collected Materials gathered from Classic Chinese Literature concerning Philippine)³ and the article Wo Guo Zai Ji Zhong De Jia Li Man Dan 我国载籍中的加里曼丹 (Kailimantan in Chinese Historical Literature⁴). Meanwhile Yuan Jian 袁坚 gave a paper on the inscription of Zheng He in Sri Lanka⁵.

The personal history of Zheng He and the history of his family have been another focus in studying. Wang Ying gave a study on this topic⁶. Yin Yuanzhuo 殷远卓 made a study on the name of Zheng He⁷. The same topic appeared again and again in different journals⁸. The date of Zheng He's death that was in 1433 was given in the conclusion of the paper of Zheng YiJun 郑一钧⁹. Meanwhile the scholars are also interested in the religion of Zheng He. For example there is an article which studied how Zheng He became a Buddhist¹⁰. And another article studied the religious activities of Zheng He¹¹.

In these 10 years Chinese archaeologists did a lot of work relating to Zheng He. Some of the relics of Zheng He were found. For example a bell which was casted by Zheng He before he started from China was found in Nan Ping city 南平 of Fu Jian province 福建 in

² Guang Ming Ri Bao 光明日报 (Guang Ming Daily) 5, Oct. 1983.

³ Published by Zhong Hua Shu 中华书局 (press of China)

⁴ Written by Tian Shu Mao 田书茂, in Shan Xi Da Xue Xue Bao 山西大学学报 (Academic Journal of Shan Xi University); 1980, 1.

⁵ Si Li Lan Ka De Zheng He Bu Shi Bei 斯里兰卡的郑和石碑

⁶ Zheng He De Jia Shi 郑和的家世 (A History of Zheng He's Family), in Nan Jing Shi Zhi 南京史志 (Historical Journal of Nanjing), 1984, No. 3.

⁷ Zheng He Ming Zhi Xiao Kao 郑和名字小考, in Ning Xia Da Xue Xue Bao 宁夏大学学报 (Academic Journal of Ning Xia University), 1980, No.4.

⁸ Guan Daliang 关大梁 Zheng He Chu Ming San Bao, Bu Shi San Bao 郑和初名三宝不是三宝 (The Original Name of Zheng He is San Bao, Not San Bao), in Xue Shu Yan Jiu 学术研究 (Academic Journal), 1982, No. 1.

⁹ In Guang Ming Ri Bao 光明日报 (Guang Ming Daily), 16, March, 1983.

¹⁰ In Min Zu Wen Hua 民族文化 (National Culture), 1981, No.1.

¹¹ In Nan Jing Shi Zhi, 南京史志 (Historical Journal of Nanjing), 1984, No. 3 and 4.

1981¹² and also an inscription of Zheng He¹³. In Nanjing, the first capital of the Ming Dynasty some relics of Zheng He's residence were excavated¹⁴. And the tomb of Zheng He is there also¹⁵. Wu Lvming 吴埭明 gave a good study on the historical monuments of navigation in Tai Cang county 太仓 of Jiang Su province 江苏 in the Yuan and Ming periods¹⁶, including the dock from where Zheng He started his navigation, navy leading bodies and customs, houses, store houses, hotels, ship building plant, temples which was used for praying safe, inscriptions concerning Zheng He's navigation and a sunk ship.

Historic Geography

Historical geography is one of the most important topics in the studies on Zheng He in China. In the new editions of the Chinese sources mentioned above, we can see that the editors really did a lot of work in identification of the place names appeared in these books. And these new are very important in the future studies.

Of course every researcher, even great scholars, has his limits in knowledge, If we read these materials carefully and compare them other materials earlier or later than them, we can find that some of the works done before still need to improve and there are still a lot of work waiting for us to do. For example in the chart of Zheng He's navigation, a place name in Arabia Peninsula between Zufar and Muscat mentioned, which is called Gu Li Ya 古里亚. Our editor Prof. Xiang Da identified it with Kuria Bay in the southern coast of Arabia Peninsula. If we check the names Die Wei 迭微 and Gui Yu 龟屿 (means Turtle Island) which have not yet been identified¹⁷, we can find that Gu Li Ya should be Quriyat, meanwhile Die Wei should be Tiwei and Turtle Island is Juzir al-Dimaliyat. All of them are at the east

¹² Shan Xi Ri Bao 山西日报 (Shan Xi Dai 1 y), in the 6th Oct. 1981 and in the Fu Jian Wen 福建文博 (Museums and Cultural Relics of Fu Jian), 1982, No.1.

¹³ Written by Xu Ya Zhou 许亚州, in Hai Yang 海洋 (Ocean), 1982, No.10.

¹⁴ Nanjing Ri Bao 南京日报 (Nanjing Daily), 6 June, 1983; Ren Ming Ri Bao; 人民日报 (People's Daily), 7 July, 1983; Guang Ming Ri Bao, 21 December, 1983.

¹⁵ Wang Yin 王印: Zheng He Mu 郑和墓 (The Tomb of Zheng He), Wen Bo Tong Xun 文博通讯 (Information of Relics and Museums), 1982, No. 1.

¹⁶ Tai Cang Yuan Ming Hang Hai Shi J1 Kao Lue 太仓元明海史籍考略 in Hai Jiao Shi Yan Jiu 海交史研究 (Research into Chinese Overseas Communication History), 1988, No. 2.

¹⁷ Zheng He Hang Hai Tu 郑和航海图 (The Navigation Chart of Zheng He), preface, ' p.11; p.61, chart 21; also see the reconstructed map and index.

coast of the peninsula. So historical geographical study is still a hard task for us, but it is worth to continue.

Southeast Asia and India Ocean were traditionally called Nan Yang 南洋 (The southern Ocean) and Dong Yang 东洋 (Eastern Ocean) and Xi Yang 西洋 (Western Ocean) by the Chinese. The geographical meanings of these terms were not fixed. They developed as the time changed. The article Wo Guo Wai Ji Zhong Nan Yang Yu Dong Xi Yang Ming Cheng De Yan Bian 我国载籍中南洋与东西洋名称的演变 (The Development of the Meaning of the Terms Nan Yang, Dong Yang and Ci Yang in Chinese Classic Literature)¹⁸ gave a general description of this topic. Gu Haichu 顾海初's article Zheng He Hang Hai Tu 郑和航海图 (The Navigation Chart of Zheng He)¹⁹ is an introduction on this topic. And the article of Yang Hanqiu 杨翰述 Shi Wu Dao Shi Qi Shi Ji Zhong Xi Hang Hai Mai Yi Shi Li De Xing Shuai 十五到十七世纪中西航海贸易势力的兴衰 (The Changing of the Maritime Trade Activities between China and the Western, Countries)²⁰ studied the changing period when the control of trade in India Ocean was transferred from the hands of Chinese to the hands of Portuguese. It is worth to read.

Navigation Technique and Ship Building

One of the most important works in the topic of navigation technique of the early Ming period is the article of Xie Haiquan 谢海泉 published in Hong Kong, namely Zheng He Xia Xi Yang Jian Dui Zhi Hai Shang Hang Fa 郑和下西洋的舰队之海上航法 (Navigation Technique of Zheng he's Fleet)²¹ which discussed the technique of using sails and the monsoon, and the technique of using compass for controlling direction and the instruments for checking time and the knowledge of navigation. Meanwhile the article of Zhu Jianqiu 朱剑秋 Wo Guo Gu Dai Hai Shang Zhen Cheng Dan Wei "Geng" De Chang Du Kao Zheng 我国古代海上针程单位“更”的长度考证(A study on the Length of the Ancient Traditional Chinese

¹⁸ Written by Tian Shu Mao 田书茂 in Di Ming Zhi Shi地名知识 (Knowledge of Place Names), 1990, No.2.

¹⁹ In Hang Hai 航海 (Journal of Navigation), 1980, No.6.

²⁰ In Li Shi Yan Jiu 历史研究 (Historical Studies), 1982.No.5.

²¹ In Hang Yun Ji Kan 航运季刊 (Quarterly of Navigation), May, 1983.

Unit “Geng” in Navigation)²² is specially dealing with the problem of measuring distance in Zhenghe’s navigation and the article of Lu Shi 閻石 discussed the using of compass of Zhenghe’s fleet²³.

There was an article written by Zheng Yaozong 张耀宗 which introduced the life of a doctor who accompanied Zheng He during his navigation²⁴.

Ship building is another focus in the study of navigation technique in the tile of Zheng He. Scholars who participated in this discussion were not only historians but also archaeologists and engineers. The stress of discussion was whether the length and width of Zheng He’s ships recorded in Chinese sources are true or wrong²⁵.

²² In Zhong Hua Wen Shi Lun Cong 中华文史论丛 (Studies on History of China and Classical Chinese Literature), Shanghai, 1980, No.3.

²³ In Jian Chuan Zhi 舰船知识 (Knowledge of Ships), 1983, No.5.

²⁴ In Zhong Hua Yi Shi Za Zhi 中华医史杂志 (Journal of the History of Chinese Medicine), 1984, No.3.

²⁵ Lue Tan Zheng He Xia Xi Yang De Sao Chuan Chi Du 略谈郑和下西洋的宝船尺度 (About the Length and Width of Zheng He's Ship), in Hai Jiao Shi Yan Jiu 海交史研究 (Research into Chinese Overseas communication History), 1981, No.3;

Guan Yu Zheng He Bao Chuan Da Xiao De Ji Zhong Kan Fa 关于郑和宝船大小的几种看法 (Different Opinions about the Ships of Zheng He); Wen Hui Bao 文汇报 5,11,1982 ;

Shi Hequn 施鹤群:Zheng He De Bao Chuan Jiu Jing Duo Da 郑和的宝船究竟多大 (How Big Was the Ship of Zheng He), Wen Hui Bao 文汇报12, 8 , 1982;

. Qiu Kehui 丘克辉: Zheng He Xia Xi Yang De Bao Chuan Kao 郑和下西洋的宝船考 (A study on the Ships of Zheng He) , in Hang Hai 航海 (Navigation) , 1983, No.2;

Zhuang Wei ji 庄伟玑 and Zhang Jinghui 庄景辉 :Zheng He Bao Chuan Chi Du De Tan Suo 郑和宝船尺度的探索 (A Studies on the Width and Length of Zheng He's Ship) Wu Shenyuan 吴申元: Ming Shi Ji Zai De Bao Chuan Chi Du Zheng Qu'e Wu Wu 明史记载的宝船尺度正确无误 (The Width and Length of the Ship in the History of the Ming Dynasty is Right) , Hang Hai 航海 (Navigation) , 1983, No . 4;

Xi Longfei 席龙飞 and He Guowei 何国卫: Shi Lun Zheng: Hen Bao chuan 试论郑和宝船 (On the Ships of Zheng He) , in Wu Han Shui Yun Gong Cheng Xue Yuan Xue Bao 武汉水运工程学报(Academic Journal of the Institute of Maritime Transportation of WuHan), 1983, No.3;

Feng Hanyong 冯汉镛: Zheng He Bao Chuan Shi Fei Duan Xing De 郑和宝船是肥短型的 (The Ships of Zheng He Were Short and Wide) and Cheng Qingkang 程卿康: Ye Tan Zheng he Bao Chun Chi Du 也谈郑和宝船尺度 (Another Study on the Width and Length of Zheng He's Ship), both in Hang Hai 航海 (Journal of Navigation), 1983, No.5;

Zhou Shide 周世德 : Zhong Guo Zao Chuan Shi Shang De Ji Ge Wen Ti 中国造船史上的几个问题 (Some Problems in the History of Chinese Ship Building), 1983, No.1 ; I

Zheng Hesheng 郑鹤声 and Zheng Yijun 郑一钧 : Lue lun Zheng He Xia Xi Yang De Chan 略论郑和下西洋的船 (A Short Study on the Ship of Zheng He) and Qiu Ke : Tan Ming Shi Suo Zai Zhen He Bao Chuan Chi Cun 'De Ke Kao Xing 谈明史所载郑和宝船尺寸的可靠性 (The Description of Zheng He's Ship in the History of the Ming Dynasty Is Reliable) , both in Wen Shi Zhe 文史哲 (Journal of Literature, History and Philosophy) , 1984 , No.3.

The Aims and Significance of Zheng He's Navigation

The aim of Zheng He's navigation is an old problem discussed by many scholars. But peoples are still interested in this topic and this kind of papers appeared again and again in different journals. In recent years the paper of Yang Xi 杨熹 Zheng He Xia Xi Yang Mu Di Kao Lue 郑和下西洋目的考略 (On the Purpose of Zheng He's Navigation)²⁶ and Feng Erkang 冯尔康's Ming Cheng Zu Yu Zheng He Xia Xi Yang 明成祖与郑和下西洋 (Ming Emperor Cheng Zu and Navigation of Zheng He)²⁷ should be mentioned.

Relations between Ming China and Other Countries and History of Southeast Asia

Papers on this topic are a lot. The most important collected work is Zhong Wai Wen Hua Jiao Liu Shi 中外文化交流史 (History of Culture Exchange between China and the Rest of the World)²⁸ which contains the papers concerning the relationship between China and Burma, Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei, Philippine, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Maldives, Arabia, Africa and so on. Besides this the non-periodical publication of Jinan University 暨南大学 namely Dong Nan Ya Shi Lun Wen Ji 东南亚史论文集 (collected paper on the History of Southeast Asia) is another most important one. And the 1st issue of it was published in 1980²⁹. In this part I had better describe them according to the countries which they relating to.

Burma

The article written by Chen Yan 陈炎 namely Zhong Mian Wen Hua Jiao Liu Liang Qian Nian 中缅文化交流两千年 (2000 years Cultural Exchange between China and Burma)³⁰ is a general description

²⁶ In Da Lian Hai Yun Xue Yuan Xue Bao 大连海运学院学报 (Academical Journal of Da Lian Sea Transportation Institute), 1980, No.2.

²⁷ In Wen Shi Zhi Shi 文史知识 (Knowledges of History and Classical Literature), 1981, No.4.

²⁸ Compiled by Prof. Zhou Yiliang 周一良, published by He Nan Ren Min Chu Ban She 河南人民出版社 (People's Press of He Nan), 1987.

²⁹ Edited by the Institute of the History of Southeast Asia, Dept. of History, Ji Nan Univ.

³⁰ Zhong Wai Wen Hua Jiao Liu Shi, pp.1-41.

Indonesia

The paper of Chen Zhaofu 陈造福 namely 19 Shi Ji Yi Qian Zhong Guo He Yin Du Ni Xi Ya Guan Xi Kao Lue 19世纪以前中国和印度尼西亚关系考略 (Relationship between China and Indonesia before the 19th Century) is a general historical description of this topic³¹. Meanwhile the article of Zhou Nanjin 周南京 Li Shi Shang Zhong Guo He Yin Du Ni Xi Ya De Wen Hua Jiao Liu 历史上中国和印度尼西亚的文化交流 (Cultural Exchange between China and Indonesia throughout the History)³² contains a short description of the relations between these two countries in the time of Zheng He.

Malaysia and Brunei

In the paper Hui Gu Zhong Guo Yu Ma Lai Xi Ya Wen Lai Wen Hua Jiao Liu De Li Shi 回顾中国与马来西亚文莱文化交流的历史 (A Review of the History of Cultural Exchange between China and Malaysia and Brunei)³³ by Zhou Nanjing 周南京, the author described the five times visits of the kings of Malacca to China and discussed the relationship between the Ming government and other small countries in Malay Peninsula.

One of the most important things in the history of relations between China and Brunei is that the King of Brunei visited China in the early years of the 15th century and died there. His Tomb was discovered in my hometown Nanjing in 1958. Wang Yin王引's paper³⁴ is only an introduction of it. Meanwhile Shi Yuan 史原's paper Boni Guo Wang Mu he Mu Bei Bei Wen Lue Kao 罽泥国王墓和墓碑碑文略考 (The Tomb of the King of Brunei and a Study on the Text of his Tomb Inscription)³⁵ and the article of Ji Shijia 季士家 namely Guan Yu Boni Guo Wang Mu He Mu Bei Bei Wen Wen Ti 关于罽泥周王墓和墓碑碑文问题 (On the problem of the Tomb of the King of Brunei and the Text of his Tomb Inscription)³⁶ gave detailed description of this topic.

³¹ In Li Shi Yan Jiu 历史研究 (Studies on History) 1980, No.3.

³² Zhong Wai Wen Hua Jiao Liu Shi, pp.190-238.

³³ Zhong Wai Wen Hua Jiao Liu Shi, pp.396-422.

³⁴ Boni Guo Wang Mu 罽泥国王墓 (The Tomb of the king of Brunei) , in Wen Bo Tong Xun 文博通讯 (Information of Relics and Museums) , 1982, No.5 .

³⁵ In Fu Jian Lun Tan, 福建论坛 (Social Sciences in Fu Jian), 1984, No ,1 .

³⁶ In Fu Jian Lun Tan, 1984, No.5.

Philippines

The paper of Jiang Xingdong 江醒东 is specialized in the friendly relationship between China and Philippine in the Ming period³⁷, that is the time of Zheng He. And so do the paper of Zhou Shaoquan 周绍泉³⁸. The article of Zhou Nanjing namely Zhong Guo He Fei Lv Bin Wen Hua Jiang Liu De Li Shi 中国和菲律宾文化交流的历史 (A History of Cultural Exchange between China and Philippine)³⁹ is an important and very good paper.

Whether Zheng He really visited Philippine is still a problem discussed by scholars. Some of them believed that Zheng He never visited Philippine. Zhou Shaoquan 周绍泉 did not agree with this idea. He gave his opinions in an article⁴⁰.

One of the most important events in the history of relations between China and Philippine is the visit of the king of Sulu to the Ming China. The king died in China during his visit and there are some descendants of him still living in China. The paper Su Lu Guo Wang Ji Qi Hou Yi 苏禄国王及其后裔 (The King of Sulu and his Descendants)⁴¹ introduced this story. The same topic appeared frequently in different journals⁴².

Sub-continent: Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bangladesh

Geng Yinzeng 耿引曾 in her article⁴³ studied the friendly relations with China and the Sub-continent throughout the history. Zhou Shaoquan 周绍泉 in his article analyzed the mission of Zheng He to Bangladesh⁴⁴. The article of Geng Yinzeng 耿引曾 Yi Fuo Jiao Wei Zhong Xin De Zhong Si Wen Hua Jiao Liu 以佛教中心的中斯文化交流 (Sino-Lanka

³⁷ Ming Dai Zhong Guo Yu Fei Lv Bin De You Hao Guan Xi 明代中国与菲律宾的友好关系 (Friendly Relations between China and Philippines in the Ming Period), In Zhong Shan Da Xue Xue Bao 中山大学学报 (Academical Journal of Zhong Shan University), 1981, No.1.

³⁸ Ming Dai Zhong Guo Yu Fei Lv Bin De you Hao Wang Lai 明代中国与菲律宾的友好往来(The Friendly Relationship Between China and Philippine in the Ming Period') I in Zhong Guo Gu Dai Shi Lun Gong 中国古代史论丛 (Journal of Studies on Ancient Chinese History), 1981, No.1.

³⁹ Zhong Wai Wen Hua Jiao Liu Shi, pp.439 -474.

⁴⁰ Zheng He Wei Shi Fei Lv Bin Shuo Zhi Yi 郑和未使菲律宾说质疑 (Did Zheng He Really never Visited Philippine?), in Ming Shi Yan Jiu Lun Cong 明史研究论丛 (Studies on the History of the Ming Dynasty), 1982, No.1.

⁴¹ Written by Dai Zi 岱子 in Shan Dong Qing Nian 山东青年 (The Youth of Shandong), 1980, No.3.

⁴² Mao Qi 毛琦 De Zhou Su Lu Guo Dong Wang Mu 德州苏禄国王墓 (The Tomb of the Eastern King of Su Lu Kingdom in De Zhou) , in Lv Xing Jia 旅行家 (Traveller), 1981, No.2.

⁴³ Zhong Guo Yu Nan Ya You Hao Guan Xi Yuan Yan Liu Chang 中国与南亚友好关系源远流长 (The Traditional Friendly Relationship Between China and the Sub-Continent) 1982, No.2

⁴⁴ Zheng He Shi Meng Jia La Bian Xi 郑和使孟加拉辨析 (A Study on Zheng He's Mission to Bangladesh), in Nan Ya Yan Jiu 南洋研究 (South Asian Studies), 1982, No.3.

cultural Exchange with the Stress of Buddhism)⁴⁵ gave a general description of the historical relationship between China and Sri Lanka. The shortage of it is that in the paragraph of Zheng He's navigation there is no word mentioned about the opinions of Sri Lanka's scholars. And the paper of Zhou Nanjing 周南京 which was published several years before, discussed the same problem⁴⁶. The study of Xie Fang 谢方 on the descriptions of Maldives in the classical Chinese literature⁴⁷ is a very good study on such kind of topic.

Thailand

The paper Xian Luo He Ming Chao Guan Xi De Ruo Gan Wen Ti 暹罗和明朝关系的若干问题 (Some problems concerning the Relations between the Ming Dynasty and Thailand) written by a young scholar Duan Lisheng 段立生⁴⁸ is worth to read. And Zhang Lianying 张莲英 did the same topic⁴⁹. The article of Ge Zhilun 葛志伦 1949 Nian Yi Qian De Zhong Tai Wen Hua Jiao Liu 1949年以前的中泰文化交流 (Cultural Exchange between China and Thailand before 1949)⁵⁰ described political, trade and cultural relations between these two countries throughout history. And Chen Bisheng 陈碧笙's paper Zhong Tai Li Shi Guan Xi Lue Lun 中泰历史关系略论 (On the Historical Relationship between China and Thailand)⁵¹ is also an important general introduction. Jiang Yingliang 江应梁's paper studied the same topic⁵².

⁴⁵ Zhong Wai Wen Hua Jiao Liu Shi, pp.474-486.

⁴⁶ Zhong Guo He Si Li Lan Ka De Chuan Tong Yu Hao Guan Xi 中国和斯里兰卡的传统友好关系 (Traditional Friendship between China and Sri Lanka), in Wai Guo Shi Zhi Shi 外国史知识 (Knowledge of World History), 1982, No.4.

⁴⁷ Zhong Guo Shi Ji Zhong Zhi Ma Er Dai Fu Kao 中国史籍中之马尔代夫考 (Maldives in Chinese Historical Sources), in Nan Ya Yan Jiu 南亚研究 (South Asian Studies), 1982, No.2.

⁴⁸ In Zhong Shan Da Xue Yan Jiu Sheng Xue Kan 中山大学研究生学刊 (Journal of Postgraduates of Zhong Shan University), 1981, No.2.

⁴⁹ Ming Dai Zhong Guo Yu Tai Guo De You Hao Guan Xi 明代中国与泰国的友好关系 (Friendly Relations between China and Thailand in the Ming Period), in Shi Jie Li Shi 世界历史 (Studies on the World History), 1982, No.3.

⁵⁰ Zhong Wai Wen Hua Jiao Liu Shi, pp.487-525.

⁵¹ Sha Men Da Xue Xue Bao 厦门大学学报 (Academical Journal of Sha Men University), 1981, No.1.

⁵² Gu Dai Xian Luo Yu Zhong Guo De You Hao Guan Xi 古代暹罗与中国的友好关系 (Friendly Relationship between Thailand and China), in Si Xiang Zhan Xian 思想战线 (Frontier of Thought) I 1983 No.4

Vietnam and Cambodia

Cheng Yulong 陈玉龙's paper Zhong Guo He Yue Nan Jian Pu Zhai Lao Wo Wen Hua Jiao Liu 中国和越南、柬埔寨、老挝文化交流 (Cultural Exchange between China and Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos) ⁵³ is the most recent general description of this topic.

Arabia

In his navigation Zheng He visited Arabic Peninsula 3 times. The paper of Zhang Guangda 张广达 Hai Bo Lai Tian Fang Si Lu Tong Ta Shi 海舶来天方丝路大食 (Ships from Mecca and silk Roads to Arabia) ⁵⁴ discussed the background of the historical relationship between China and the Arabia world. Meanwhile the stress of the article of Zhang Junyan 张俊彦 was on Oman⁵⁵.

Africa

Zheng He and his fleet visited eastern Africa several times. Sheng Fuwei 沈福伟 believed that Zheng He had visited Africa 5 times, he explained his idea in his paper⁵⁶. In the paper of He Fangchuan⁵⁷ 何芳川, the author described the relationship between China and eastern part of Africa throughout the History. The author believed that Zheng He had only visited eastern Africa 3 times;

Japan

Whether Zheng He visited Japan or not is still an unsolved problem. The paper of Pan Qun 潘群 gave a study on this ⁵⁸topic.

⁵³ Zhong Wai Wen Hua Jiao Liu Shi 1 pp.670-742.

⁵⁴ " A Review of ·Historical Connection between China and the Arabia World " 1 in Zhong Wai Wen Hua Jiao Liu Shi, pp . 473-802.

⁵⁵ Zhong Gu Shi Qi Zhong Guo He A La Bo De Wang Lai-Jian Lun Zhong Guo He A Man De Guan Xi 中古时期中国和阿拉伯的往来-兼论中国和阿曼的关系 (Communications between China and Arabia-- a study on relationship between China and Oman) 1 in Bei Jing Da Xue Xue Bao 北京大学学报 (Academic Journal of Beijing University), 1981, No , 3.

⁵⁶ Zheng He Bao . Chuan Dui Wu Fan Dong Fei De Zhuang Ju 郑和宝船队五访东非的壮举 (On the Five Times Visits of Zheng He to Eastern Africa) in Hang Hai Ji Shu 航海技术 (Navigation Technique), 19831 No.5 ,

⁵⁷ Zhong Wai Wen Hua Jiao Liu Shi 中外文化交流史 (The history of relationship between China and other countries) , pp.803-801.

⁵⁸ Zheng He Shi Ri Wen T i Chu Tan 郑和使日问题初探 (A Primitive Study on the Mission of zheng He to Japan), in Wen Shi Zhe 文史哲 (Studies on Chinese Classical Literature, History and Philosophy) , 1982, No.3.

Trade

Extending official trade between the Ming government and other Asian and African countries was one of the main purposes of Zheng He's navigation. Some scholars put their stress on the trade relations. For example Tian Peidong 田培栋 gave an article discussing the trade connection of maritime road of the Ming Dynasty with other countries⁵⁹.

In the ancient times trade relations of Chinese government with other countries were mostly called "TRIBUTE". "Tribute" was not always like some people imagined that one side was forced to present some goods to another side, and another side accepted the presents without any condition. Mostly the "TRIBUTE" must be paid. So many Chinese Scholars prefer to explain "TRIBUTE" as official trade. Zhou Jiming 周积明's paper discussed this problem⁶⁰. And Zhao Jingshen 赵景深's article is on the same topic⁶¹.

Some of the scholars in recent years tried to extend their studies. Chen Shangsheng 陈尚胜 gave a new paper on the historical position of the Ming China in the Pacifico-Asian trade⁶². Although the article did not touch the navigation of Zheng He directly, but the author put his study into the background of the Asian history between the second half of the 14th century and the mid of the 17th century. The same author also gave other three papers, one was on the evolution of the customs formalities system in the Ming period⁶³ and another was on the establishment and of the customs house of Zhejiang Province in the Ming period⁶⁴ and the third was on the customs formalities systems and the overseas trade of the Ming Dynasty⁶⁵. And Chao Zhongchen 晁中晨's article on the cause of the prohibition policy of overseas

⁵⁹ Ming Chao Qian Qi Hai Wai Mao Yi Yan Jiu 明朝前期海外贸易研究 (A Study on the Trade with Other Countries in the Early Ming Period through Maritime Road), in Beijing Shi Fan Xue Yuan Xue Bao (Academical Journal of Beijing Teachers College), 1983, No.4.

⁶⁰ Lue Lun Ming Dai Chu Zhong Qi De Chao Gong Yu Ci Lai 明代初中期的朝贡与赐贡 (A Study on the Tribute and Gift in the Early and Middle Ming Period), in Wu Han Shi Fan Xue Yuan Xue Bao 武汉师范学院学报 (Academical Journal of Wu Han Teachers College), 1983 I No. 5

⁶¹ Xi Yang Ji Yu Xi Yang Chao Gong 西洋记与西洋朝贡 (Description of the Western Ocean and Tributes from foreign Countries), published by Qi, Lu Shu She 齐鲁书社 (Qi Lu Press) I 1983.

⁶² Ming Dai Hai Wai Mao Yi Ji Qi Shi Jie Ying Xiang 明代海外贸易及其世界影响 (The Overseas Trade of the Ming Dynasty and its Influence to the World) in Hai Jiao Shi Yan Jiu 海交史研究 (Research into the Chinese Overseas Communication History), 1989, No.1.

⁶³ Lun Ming Dai Shi Bo Si Zhi Du De Yan Bian 论明代市舶司制度的演变, in Wen Shi Zhe 文史哲 (Studies on Chinese Classical Literature, History and Philosophy) 1986, No. 2.

⁶⁴ Ming Dai Zhe Ji ang Shi Bo Si Xing Fei Wen Ti Kao Bian 明代市舶司制度兴废问题考辨, in Zhe Jiang Xue Kan 浙江学刊 (Academical Journal of Zhe Jiang), 1982 No.2.

⁶⁵ Ming Dai Shi Bo Ci Zhi Du Yu Hai Wai Mao Yi 明代市舶司制度与海外贸易 in Zhong Guo She Hui Jing Ji Shi Yan Jiu 中国社会经济史研究 (Studies on the History of Chinese Social and Economic Development), 1987, No.1.

trade in the Ming period ⁶⁶is also a study which can help us to understand the historical background of Zheng He's navigation.

The Paper of Yu Siwei 余思伟 namely Ma Liu Jia Gang Zai Shi Wu Shi Ji De Li Shi Zuo Yong 马六甲港在十五世纪的历史作用 (The Historical Role of Malacca Port in the 15th Century⁶⁷) is a good study, the author avoided too much political element in his study as many other papers contained and specialized on Malacca Port. So that gave his paper more scientific meaning.

Conclusion

From the papers which I mentioned above we can see how great achievements in the studies on Zheng He's navigation have been made in China. In 1985 many scholars gathered in Nanjing to have a seminar in memory of Zheng He's navigation. At the same time we should point out the studies still need to be improved. On the topic which is relatively easy to study gathered a lot of scholars. While only few specialists kept on doing hard task, for example study on original sources and identification of place names. Many papers were only general introductions. In the topic of relationship between the Ming and other countries, this should be one of the most interesting problems, many scholar only touched political relations. They should extend their studies to the field of trade, culture and ideas. Many scholars only knew to praise the achievements of ancient Chinese navigators, some of them connected their studies to the old Chinese traditional navigation materials, but few of them compared these materials with those of non-Chinese before it and after it, especially with the Austro-Asian, Indian, Muslim Dutch and Portuguese navigation materials and also with archaeological findings. It is hardly to imagine that Chinese navigation was developed separately and independently. It must get a lot of influence from abroad. So to conclude in one word: The achievements are great but not enough.

We should learn from other scholars and to know more about the studies on abroad. That is why I come here. The materials concerning Zheng He's navigation are important

⁶⁶ Lun Ming Dai Shi Xing Hai Jin De Yuan Yin 论明代实行海禁的原因, in Hai Jiao Shi Yan Jiu 海交史研究 (Research into Chinese Overseas Communication History), 1989, No.1.

⁶⁷ Shi Jie Li Shi : 世界历史 (History of the World), 1983, No.6.

sources in studies on the history of Southeast Asia, which is our common task. I hope in the future we could work together on some topic and program so that to improve our work and to benefit our people.