

Prince Henry the Navigator and Zheng He



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Prince Henry and Zheng He Comparison Throughout history, many people strived for glory by exploring new lands. They hoped to leave an impact while gaining money and success. Zheng He of China and Prince Henry of Portugal, both set out on maritime expeditions. Prince Henry is widely known and remembered while Zheng He is recognized for being a eunuch. Both used maritime travel to gain economic influence, power and success for their rulers, and to successfully gain economic dominance over the new, conquered lands. However, the two voyagers differed greatly in their reasons for exploration.

Henry wanted to spread his religion and focused on gaining allies while Zheng He strived to gain knowledge, trade, and force people to acknowledge Chinese power. In addition, Zheng He actually led these voyages while Henry just funded them. Finally, Portugal largely supported Prince Henry's expeditions while Zheng He was granted little to no support in China. The structures and values of Portugal and Spain differed greatly. This contributed to how each explorer is remembered. The Portuguese, relied heavily on foreign supplies. Portugal's capitalist economy allowed many people to conduct and go on explorations.

This made Henry's voyages heavily supported and made expansion possible. Unlike Portugal, China did not have a high demand for foreign supplies. It was a largely self-reliant empire and many citizens believed it was higher than all others. Therefore they did not believe that exploration was necessary. In addition, Confucian scholars believed it was "demeaning" to rely on any other nations. Consequently, Zheng He's voyages were barely supported, and he was considered to be a "servant" of the emperor with

little to no independence. Moreover, China relied heavily on their land army while Portugal relied on their navy.

Soon, China burnt Zheng He's works and banned the creation of ships. Throughout Portugal, Prince Henry was highly renowned while in China Zheng He was unacknowledged. Some parts of Prince Henry and Zheng He's voyages and accomplishments differed greatly. Economically, Zheng He was focused on trading while Henry used the newfound nations to obtain more wealth and allies for Portugal. Zheng He stressed China's rule and strived to obtain knowledge. However, Prince Henry was more focused on gaining allies. Henry's several attempts to gain allies can be linked with his desire to gain strength to fight the Muslims on the Iberian Peninsula.

When Henry came into contact with other cultures, it was his Christian duty to spread his faith. Zheng He had no desire to spread his religion during his voyages, but he was quite tolerant of other religions. Prince Henry simply guided and controlled the voyages and expansion while Zheng He traveled and led the Chinese on explorations around the world. Though both men traded with the new lands, Zheng He traded rare goods while Prince Henry acquired humans. Zheng He and Prince Henry clearly differed in their reasons for exploration.

Prince Henry and Zheng He's ways of expanding shared several similarities. Both men set out to expand power for their rulers. China and Portugal were extremely advanced in maritime knowledge, which was uncommon, but it allowed for expansion. In addition, both wanted to help their rulers achieve the goal of global dominance, proving that the people of each society highly

regarded their rulers. To achieve this goal, both developed boats and relied on their navy. Henry and Zheng He were polite and respectful to the locals, though the Chinese were less forceful than the Portuguese.

They also both wanted to impose economic dominance by their homelands over each new land but neither used force. Overall, both Zheng He and Henry successfully expanded their nation's influence while also accomplishing their exploration goals. Though the voyages of Prince Henry differed with those of Zheng He, the two still maintained many similarities. With such similar achievements, it is surprising that Prince Henry is celebrated and well known while Zheng He is forgotten and disregarded. However, their homelands differed greatly in the way they viewed travel and foreign connections.

Portugal's relied heavily on outside goods allowing for Prince Henry to be regarded as one of the first people to participate in maritime voyages during the age of exploration. However, China was strongly against interacting with the outside world so proof of Zheng He's achievements were burned and disregarded. Over time, many historians have begun to recognize Zheng He's expeditions and refer to him as an important voyager during the age of exploration. Without Prince Henry, Zheng He, and other explorers, people believe that the world would not have turned into what it is today.