Voyages of Zheng He

Zheng He 鄭和 (1371-1433): Muslim of Mongol descent, became military officer in the eunuch service

Assigned to retinue of prince who in 1402 usurped the throne and became the Yongle 永樂 emperor (r. 1402-24)

Dispatched in 1405 on first of seven voyages to Indian Ocean
Comparative Sizes of Zheng He’s Ship and Columbus’ Santa Maria
Zheng He Receiving Maps of the “Western Ocean”

Illustration to Novel Adventures of the Eunuch Admiral “Three Treasures” in the Western Ocean (1597)
Map of Zheng He’s Voyages

First Expedition (1405-07) in Blue
Seventh Expedition (1431-33) in Red
Fulling and Dyeing Cotton
(from 1765 imperial manual on cotton manufacture)
Qinhuai River, Nanjing City, 1623

Qinhuai River flowed through city’s most fashionable neighborhoods
Lined with elegant shops, residences, & upper-class brothels
Bottom right corner: Examination hall
“Splendors of the Southern Capital”

Sixteenth-century painting of bustling Nanjing cityscape

Banners advertise shop specialties, including tea, silk, shoes, leather, foodstuffs, pawnshops, silversmiths, moneylenders, and purveyors of goods from Guangdong, Sichuan, and the “eastern and western seas”
Market Town Scene
(detail from 1757 painting, “Splendors of Suzhou”)

(image of market town scene from 1757 painting)
Ming Currency
Silver Ingots ("Shoes") and Bronze Coins
Ming Paper Money

Monetary value of 1 guan (equivalent to 1 ounce of silver, or 1,000 bronze coins)

Monetary value in hard currency indicated by illustration of 10 strings of coin (each string equal to 100 coins) at center
Silver Ingots

Top right: ingot with government seal declaring weight of 375 grams

Bottom: ingot with seal of a private pawnbroker
Ceiling of Santos Palace, Lisbon

Ceiling is decorated with 260 porcelain plates imported from China in the 16th century.
Major Circum-Global Trade Routes, 1400-1800
Rural Poverty and Urban Work
At left, women sit around empty grain thresher.
At right, wet-nurse nurses a child in a rich household.
Contract for Sale of Daughter as Child-Bride

Dated 1588 (a year of terrible famine)

In lieu of a signature, thumb and foot prints are used to seal the contract