

Lobby Group: Profile One

CHENG HO

By the fifteenth century, China was again at peace, and the terrible wars with the Mongols were a memory. The Ming dynasty had re-established law and order, and a stable government and administration ruled China. The Ming emperors pursued an aggressive foreign policy with the intention of extending Chinese influence far beyond their own borders to those lands that had once been threatened by the hostile Mongols. It would be an opportune moment for the Ming dynasty to show the kingdoms of Southeast Asia the power and glory of China. It was a showing of the flag, making the Chinese presence felt in those parts of the world that may have been momentarily forgotten. A series of expeditions was carefully planned, all financed by the funds of the imperial treasury.

Chosen to lead the expeditions was a court functionary, Cheng Ho. He would be the admiral in charge of the entire enterprise. Cheng Ho possessed rare genius, and he was an admirable choice to be the leader of this greatest of adventures. The expeditions were planned to be large, but they were not primarily of a military nature. There would be attempts at establishing trade, but that was not the most important objective. Cheng Ho also was given a free hand, and he could lead his fleet of ships wherever he chose to go. There were no limits placed on the expeditions, and Cheng Ho seems to have been driven and inspired simply by the love of discovery and exploration. Cheng Ho and the Chinese dynasty were curious about the world beyond their kingdom, and the females of the court had a taste for the rarities that existed and had their origins outside of China.

In all, there were seven great expeditions from 1405 through 1433. As many as 70,000 men in great ships sailed under the command of Cheng Ho on one such voyage of exploration. On occasion, small squadrons were detached from the main body of the fleet to explore obscure islands and ports, and even single ships were

sent out for this purpose. To supply such a fleet and to provide provisions for seven expeditions was a monumental task and staggering chore. Cheng Ho sailed southward out of Nanking and Hangchow, down toward Foochow, Canton, and the island of Hainan. The fleet skirted the coast of Southeast Asia and Vijaya (Indo-China) and continued down to Sumatra and Java (Indonesia) and then eastward to Timor and the Philippines. Negotiating the Strait of Malacca and sailing westward, the Chinese voyagers moved north along the coast of Burma into the Bay of Bengal, up to the mouth of the Ganges and Brahmaputra Rivers. The fleet of Cheng Ho was unopposed in the Indian Ocean and sailed on to Ceylon (Sri Lanka today), putting in at Colombo and Calle. They rounded the tip of India and turned north, visiting the Malabar Coast on the west, introducing their presence into Calicut, Cochin, and Quilon. Cheng Ho's fleet continued its westward journey into the Persian Gulf and made a landfall at Ormuz, a major trading center of the Arab world. The Chinese skipped along the coast of the Arabian Peninsula, touched Dofar and Aden, and went on into the Red Sea as far north as Jidda. Coming back into the Indian Ocean, Cheng Ho sailed around the African horn.

Cheng Ho took back to China offerings of tribute from the lesser kingdoms of Southeast Asia and shiploads of exotic goods and products from as far away as Java, Ceylon, and East Africa. He established Chinese influence in Malaya, Java, Sumatra, and Ceylon. Malacca, dominating and controlling the strait, became a principal Chinese base. Cheng Ho died in 1434, and with him died China's bid for a presence in the Indian Ocean. By then, the Mings were being threatened with renewed Mongol invasions, and the Japanese pirates were attacking China's coasts. A unified Japan under a powerful shogun was threatening to invade Korea. Exploration was forgotten, and China prepared to defend her kingdom.

Lobby Group: Profile Two

THE VIKINGS

The Vikings were the greatest seafarers of their time. They were also renowned for raiding, looting, pillaging, and spreading death and destruction wherever they went. For close to 400 years, from the ninth to the twelfth centuries, they spread terror throughout Europe and any other place on the face of the earth they could reach with their long ships. The old chronicles of England and France that date back to this time are filled with tales of roads choked with the bodies of men, women, children, priests, monks, and nuns killed trying to flee from the Viking raiders attacking their shores.

They came out of Scandinavia, the cold lands of northern Europe centered in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. In old Norse, *Vik* means "fjord," and *ing* means "son of," making a Viking the son of the fjords. It was a harsh environment, a land of cold and ice where deep inlets of blue freezing waters were cut into the mountains by glaciers ages ago. Very little of the land is productive, so the Vikings turned to the sea to make their living. It was probably a period of overpopulation that suddenly propelled the Vikings into becoming marauders, sailing out of the fjords to seek wealth from the lands and kingdoms that were beyond their own hostile world.

The cold northern climates created a breed of men and women who were conditioned to a harsh existence. They were a hearty race of blond, light-skinned warriors. Living where they did, they were a tough and rugged people. They crafted their ships for speed and swiftness of handling with one large sail and a low keel made of planks that were overlaid and heavily caulked, giving the ship a tightness and resiliency in the roughest of seas.

The Vikings sailed the seas and oceans without instruments, relying solely on the stars and the heavenly bodies to guide them. They knew the waters they sailed and were familiar with every shoal and shallow, as well as reefs, rocks, or other dangers that could destroy them. They preferred to destroy themselves rather than

risk capture by their enemies. They were a pagan race that worshipped a whole assembly of warrior gods and goddesses.

The Vikings made their way east into the rivers of the Eurasian steppes, where, intermixing and intermarrying with other Slavic tribes, they established Kievan Rus as the first Russian kingdom in the East. They sailed down the Volga and the Don, into the Caspian Sea, and down the Dneiper into the Black Sea. They sailed as far as Constantinople, where the Byzantine emperor was so impressed by the Vikings that he created the Varangian Guard made up of these ferocious Norsemen, who served as his personal bodyguards. The Vikings sailed into the Mediterranean, raiding every shore they touched, and conquered Sicily. Every year, they came and raided England until, finally, they were given an area, the Danelaw, to settle. The Vikings invaded Ireland, and they settled Dublin. The French were subjected to yearly raids, some raids reaching as far as Paris on the Seine River, until the French king gave in and allowed the Vikings to settle in Normandy. Sailing northward into the Arctic Ocean, they discovered Spitzbergen. Vikings set their ships north and to the west, settling the Orkney, Faeroe, and Shetland Islands, making their way to Iceland, Greenland, and all the way to the North American continent and Vinland. Bjarni Herjulfson may have been the first to sight the North American shore. Leif Ericson made a repeat voyage, reported a land that was wild and rocky, and made a landing where he found an abundance of wild grapes.

The Vikings were remarkable voyagers. They were unafraid to sail in darkness and had no fear of sailing beyond the sight of land. They voyaged where no other Europeans had gone before. They let the rivers, seas, and oceans take them to the far reaches of the earth, but their monumental journeys and wanderings remained relatively unknown.

Lobby Group: Profile Three

THE NATIVE AMERICANS

The Native Americans were descendants of people who wandered out of the vastness of Asia onto a land bridge that was anchored to a landmass further to the east. These events are shrouded in mystery, for it was a time when humans were still nomadic hunters and food gatherers, Stone Age creatures surviving by sheer animal instinct in a hostile environment. This migration onto and across the land bridge took place during the Neolithic period (the New Stone Age), more than 25,000 years before the Christian era. (This is considered to be an accurate estimate since no anthropological dig anywhere in North or South America has ever unearthed a burial site that dates farther back in time.) These early people were able to make their way onto the land bridge because the last Ice Age had the Northern Hemisphere in its grip. Glaciers covered the earth from the North Pole down to the Great Lakes in North America and most of northern Eurasia as well. The glaciers were massive walls of ice a mile high, and the levels of the oceans were 300 feet lower than they are at the present time.

The people who migrated out of Asia did not cross over the land bridge right away. There is enough evidence to indicate that generations lived and died on the land bridge. They found shelter. They hunted and learned to get a steady food supply. Movement of these early settlers took several hundreds or even thousands of years, with groups staying in some areas for long periods. It is also known that there were several different waves of migration, occurring over thousands of years. Some of the wanderers adapted and acclimated to the cold regions of the tundra, and that is where they chose to stay. The high latitudes of the Arctic were no longer a threat or danger to their existence. They learned to hunt whale, seal, walrus, polar bear, and other ducks and seabirds. These ancestors of today's Native Americans found their home in the frozen wastes of northern Canada, Alaska, and the

Aleutian Islands. Others among the wanderers turned to the south, finding openings in the glaciers or natural pathways that led to warmer latitudes. Again, it was a wandering measured in centuries, with the Native Americans settling into the forest lands of North America, making their way into the tropical regions of Central and South America, and filtering into the rain forests or the high altitude regions of the cordillera and the Andes. Many stayed on and learned to survive on the open prairie or the high plains; others spread into the mountains or made their way to coastal areas. Some adapted to the arid areas and the desert wastes while others, traveling to the waters of the Gulf of Mexico, began to skip from one island to another, gradually inhabiting all of the islands of the Greater and Lesser Antilles in the Caribbean Sea.

Cultures and civilizations developed throughout the regions where these wanderers settled. The migrations ceased with the end of the Ice Age. As the earth readjusted its orbit around the sun and began to warm, the glaciers began to melt and recede. After several thousand years, the level of the oceans rose 300 feet, the land bridge sank under water, and a strait existed between Asia and North America, connecting the Arctic Ocean to the North Pacific. Over thousands of years, the distinct waves of migrants developed separately along their own chosen paths. Many remained hunters and warriors and carried on their way of life as before.

In other parts of North and South America, the Native Americans developed sophisticated societies and cultures that rivaled what existed in Europe and Asia. Unfortunately, they never discovered the wheel, had no sufficient beast of burden like a horse, and never mastered the technique of making steel. For this, they would pay dearly when 1492 brought the dawning of a new age.

Lobby Group: Profile Four

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

He was the greatest and bravest of navigators. His was the greatest of explorations, and his voyages were the greatest adventures, the greatest voyages of discovery. This is the opinion about Christopher Columbus held by Samuel Eliot Morison, this nation's foremost naval historian. Morison's credentials are most impressive. He was a Harvard professor, author of a Pulitzer Prize biography of Christopher Columbus, author of several books dealing with exploration, recipient of a Pulitzer Prize for a biography of John Paul Jones, and he was commissioned by the United States government to write the authoritative history of the United States Navy in the Second World War. There are those, however, who would disagree with Samuel Eliot Morison.

For Christopher Columbus, the sea and sailing ships were his life. He was 14 years of age when he went to sea. Later, he settled in Lisbon where he worked as a chartmaker. Portugal at that time was the center of trade and exploration. The Portuguese were pushing their caravels south along the coast of Africa, determined to find the all-water route to the Indies and the Far East. It was here that the idea began to take hold in Columbus's mind that he could reach India and China by sailing to the west. The African coast seemed endless, and Columbus made several voyages south along the coast of Africa in the 1470s and 1480s to determine for himself what would work best and to improve his navigational skills. On these voyages, he became aware that in the southern latitudes, as far north as the Canary Islands, the winds blow from the east. He reasoned that with these prevailing easterly winds at his back, he would be able to take a fleet of ships to the Indies. In 1484, he approached the Portuguese court and John II with his idea, but no one saw any merit in it. The Portuguese were determined to pursue the southern route around Africa. It wasn't until twelve years later, in 1492, that he received the approval and financial backing of the Spanish court, Queen Isabella, and King Ferdinand.

Columbus set sail with his fleet of three ships in August of 1492. There was never a moment when Columbus didn't know the exact position of his ships. In the course of the voyage, as the men sailed onward into the ocean and well beyond the sight and reach of land, the crew began to panic and fear that they would be destroyed. Columbus urged the men onward even as thoughts of mutiny and turning back to Spain began to take hold. After 33 days of holding to the westerly course, land was sighted. Columbus and his men made their first landfall on San Salvador, one of the easternmost islands of the Bahamas. Columbus was convinced that he had reached an outlying island off the Asian mainland.

This would be a fixation that stayed with Columbus to the day he died. He always believed that the rich and glorious cities of India, China, and the Far East were just a few days' voyage away. In all, he made four voyages across the Atlantic Ocean, searching for the elusive riches of the East that he was convinced were just out of reach of his grasp. He discovered the West Indies in 1492, South America in 1498, and Central America in 1502 but believed that he was elsewhere in the Far East. He confidently referred to the natives as "Indians."

He discovered and named Cuba and Hispaniola (Haiti). Columbus also claimed for Spain several islands, including Domenica, the Lesser Antilles, the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. He discovered Jamaica, the Cape Verde Islands, Trinidad, and the coast of South America. On his last voyage, he explored the coast of Central America and the Isthmus of Panama. Columbus always held to his belief that the great cities and riches of the Orient were only a short sail away, and he never realized that he had discovered a New World. In terms of world events, and all that was to follow, the year 1492 is a milestone in the history of the world. The voyages of Columbus would unleash an age of discovery and exploration without precedent.

Lobby Group: Profile Five

VASCO DA GAMA

Vasco da Gama won the prize. All of Europe and the merchants and navigators knew that only an ocean route to the East would be safe and profitable for carrying on trade with the Orient. Five years after Christopher Columbus discovered a New World, Vasco da Gama succeeded in rounding the coast of Africa and made his way eastward into the Indian Ocean and on to the riches of India and the Far East.

It was an enterprise that could trace its beginnings to the first decades of the fifteenth century. Much of the credit for da Gama's success must go to Prince Henry the Navigator and the scores of ships' captains and conquistadors sent out into the ocean to find the way to India. The court of Prince Henry was a beehive of activity, focused on improving the navigational skills of mariners, developing better charts and maps, and improving vital instruments like the compass, sextant, and astrolabe. It was most assuredly Prince Henry's shipwrights who designed the caravel, a ship made especially to sail the wide oceans, one with enough length, beam, and masts, and sails to conquer distant shores well beyond the sight of land.

The Portuguese moved with caution but were always urged on by Prince Henry to go further. First, the Madeira Islands were reached, and soon after Portuguese mariners were dropping anchor in the Azores. Expeditions were sent to scout the coast of western Africa, and bases were established, but Prince Henry always would urge his men to go further south. Cape Bojador was the biggest barrier. On a map, it appears to be only a tiny point of the Sahara jutting into the sea, but beyond was myth, darkness, and superstitions which had to be overcome. But Prince Henry would always find the right man and leader to get the job done. Once Cape Bojador was rounded, the Portuguese caravels kept sailing south. Prince Henry died in 1460, but the venture continued. In 1487, Bartholomeu Dias successfully rounded the southern tip of Africa into the

Indian Ocean. If not for a mutinous crew, he may well have sailed all the way to India. His voyage set the stage for the final act.

Vasco da Gama set sail for India with a fleet of four ships in 1497. As his ships rounded the huge bulge of West Africa, he set a course to the southwest, sailing right out into the great expanse of an unknown ocean instead of hugging the African coast. It is probable that other voyagers and navigators had passed on the information that sailing out to the southwest was a better way to go than fighting opposing winds and currents along Africa's western coast. He quickly picked up the southeast trade winds, which set a satisfactory pace for the fleet. The skies were clear and a brilliant blue, and the sails billowed out and pushed the caravels steadily southward. For a few days after turning eastward, hoping to slip past the southern tip of Africa, the fleet couldn't raise a satisfactory wind to fill the sails. They were caught in the "horse latitudes," the doldrums with calm waters and no wind. After three months of eating moldy food, drinking spoiled water, and suffering sickness and disease, the sailors rounded the tip of Africa and made their way into the Indian Ocean. Vasco da Gama's first landfall was Mozambique, an important Arab center for trade. He had sailed 4,500 miles, but now, finally, India and the Far East were in sight. Resuming his voyage, on May 20, 1498, he sailed into Calicut on the Malabar Coast of India.

His mission accomplished, and encountering hostility from Arabs and natives alike, Vasco da Gama loaded his ship with spices and prepared for the homeward journey. He received a well-deserved hero's welcome upon his return in 1499, and King Manuel greeted him personally and bestowed many rewards. Within a few years of his return, the Portuguese would sweep into the Indian Ocean and establish bases and fortresses, take Malacca and the Spice Islands, and make their way to China and Japan. The riches of the Far East were theirs for the taking.