

Appendix: Translations of Primary Sources

These translations, and all other translations of Chinese sources in this book, are mine. The words in square brackets are words that have to be supplied by the translator to make the translation read smoothly in English. The words in parentheses are notes to the text.

I. Zheng He's Biography in Mingshi *304.2b-4b*

Zheng He, a native of Yunnan, is the one whom the world calls the Grand Director of the Three Treasures. Originally he served the Prince of Yan in the palace of his princely fief. He followed [when the prince] raised troops, accumulated merit [in his service, and] was promoted to Grand Director. [Emperor] Chengzu suspected that Emperor Hui had fled beyond the sea and wanted to track him down; moreover, he wanted to display his soldiers in strange lands in order to make manifest the wealth and power of the Middle Kingdom. In the sixth month of the third year of Yongle (27 June to 25 July 1405) [the Emperor] ordered Zheng He, along with his associates Wang Jinghong and others, to go as envoys throughout the Western Oceans. They led over 27,800 officers and men and were well supplied with gold and silk for gifts. Sixty-two great ships had been built, [each] 44 *zhang* long and 18 *zhang* wide. [The fleet] departed from Liu Family Harbor in Suzhou [prefecture] and sailed the sea to Fujian [province]. From Five Tiger Gate in Fujian they spread their sails and went straight to Champa. Then they went in succession to the various foreign countries, proclaiming

the edicts of the Son of Heaven and giving gifts to their rulers and chieftains. Those who did not submit were pacified by force.

In the ninth month of the fifth year (*1 to 30 October 1407*) [of Yongle, Zheng] He and the rest [of his fleet] returned, and the envoys sent by the various countries accompanied Zheng He to an audience at court. Zheng He presented the [pirate] chieftain of the Old Harbor, whom he had captured. The Emperor was delighted, and [rewarded the officers] with titles and gifts according to [their deserts]. Old Harbor was the former country of Sri Vijaya. Its chieftain Chen Zuyi was a pirate who plundered merchant shipping. Zheng He sent an envoy to summon and instruct him. Chen Zuyi promised to surrender but secretly planned to intercept and ambush [Zheng He's fleet. Zheng] He heavily defeated his forces, took Chen Zuyi prisoner, and presented his captive to be beheaded in the capital marketplace.

In the ninth month of the sixth year (*20 September to 18 October 1408*) [of Yongle, Zheng He set sail] once again and went to the country of Ceylon. The King [of Ceylon] Alagakkonara lured Zheng He into the interior of the country, demanded gold and silk, and sent troops to plunder Zheng He's ships. Zheng He's scouts observed that, since the main army of the bandits had gone out [to plunder the ships, the] interior of the country was empty, so [Zheng He] led forth over two thousand men of those he commanded, assaulted [the capital] by surprise, breached [the walls, and] took prisoner Alagakkonara along with his wives, children, officials, and subordinates. Those who were plundering Zheng He's ships heard about this and returned to come to the rescue themselves, [but the Ming] Imperial Army heavily defeated them once again. In the sixth month of the ninth year (*21 June to 20 July 1411*) [of Yongle, Zheng He] presented his captives to the court, but the Emperor pardoned them, did not execute them, and freed them to return to their country. As of this time the prefectures and districts of Vietnam had already been captured and destroyed, and the many other foreign countries had become increasingly agitated. [The number of embassies] coming to verify this increased day by day.

In the eleventh month of the tenth year (*4 December 1412 to 2 January 1413*) [of Yongle, the emperor] again ordered Zheng

He and the others to go as envoys, [this time] to Semudera. Before this, Sekandar, who pretended to be the son of a king, had been plotting to murder his lord and set himself up [as king, and he] was angry that Zheng He did not present him with [imperial] gifts. Leading his troops in person, he confronted and attacked the Imperial Army. Zheng He battled him forcefully, pursued him to Lambri, and took him prisoner, also capturing his wives and children. When [the expedition] returned to the Imperial Court in the seventh month of the thirteenth year (*5 August to 2 September 1415*) [of Yongle, the] emperor was very pleased and rewarded the officers and men according to their deserts.

In the winter of the fourteenth year (*21 October 1416 to 17 January 1417*) [of Yongle] Malacca, Calicut, and others, nineteen countries in all, sent ambassadors to the Imperial Court with tribute. When the emperor dismissed them to return to their home countries, he again commanded Zheng He and his associates to accompany them, bringing gifts to their rulers and chieftains. In the seventh month of the seventeenth year (*23 July to 20 August 1419*) [of Yongle, the expedition] returned.

In the spring of the nineteenth year (*2 February to 1 May 1421*) [of Yongle, Zheng He] went forth again, returning in the eighth month (*17 August to 15 September 1422*) of the following year.

In the first month of the twenty-second year (*1 to 29 February 1424*) [of Yongle, the] paramount chieftain of the Old Harbor, Shi Jisun, asked for imperial assent to succeed to the office of Pacification Commissioner, [and Zheng He] was entrusted with the official seal and imperial commission and sent to confer them. When he returned Chengzu had already passed away.

In the second month of the first year of Hongxi (*18 February to 19 March 1425*), Renzong (*Emperor Yongle's son and successor*) ordered Zheng He to use the military forces [that he had led] down to the foreign [countries] and to take command at Nanjing. The establishment of [the post of] Commandant of Nanjing thus originates with Zheng He.

In the sixth month of the fifth year of [Yongle's grandson Emperor] Xuande (*21 June to 19 July 1430*), the emperor reflected on the fact that, though it had been several years since he ascended the eastern steps [on becoming emperor], those foreign countries that were distant had still not sent tribute to the

Imperial Court. Thereupon Zheng He and Wang Jinghong again received the imperial order to sail to Hormuz (*Hulumosi*) and elsewhere, seventeen countries in all, and return.

Zheng He served three emperors in his career, and from beginning to end he accepted credentials as an ambassador on seven occasions. He sailed to over thirty countries in all, including Champa (*Zhancheng*), Java (here *Guawa*, but usually written *Zhaowa*), Cambodia (*Zhenla*), the Old Harbor (*Jiugang*, Palembang on Sumatra), Thailand (*Xianluo*), Calicut (*Guli*), Malacca (*Manlajia*), Brunei (*Poni*), Semudera (*Sumendala*, on the north coast of Sumatra), Aru (*Alu*, also transcribed *Yalu*, on the east coast of Sumatra), Cochin (*Gezhi*), "Greater Quilon" (*Da Gelan*, somewhere on the west coast of India), "Lesser" Quilon (*Xiao Gelan*, the actual Quilon), "Chola of the Western Ocean" (*Xiyang Suoli*, uncertain but from the name somewhere on the east coast of India), Chola (*Suoli*, Negapatam on the east coast of India), *Abobadan* (a country bordering on Coimbatore in southern India), Lambri (*Nanwuli*, also transcribed *Nanpoli* and also rendered Lamuri; Aceh in Sumatra), *Ganbali* (perhaps Coimbatore in Southern India), Ceylon (*Xilanshan*), Lambri (again; this time transcribed *Nanpoli* but not recognized as the same country by the compiler), Pahang (*Penghang*), Kelantan (*Jilandan*), Hormuz (*Hulumosi*), *Bila* (probably Bitra Atoll in the Laccadives), *Liushan* (the Maldive and Laccadive Islands collectively), *Sunla* (probably Chetlat Atoll in the Laccadives), Mogadishu (*Mugudushu*), Malindi (*Malin*), *Lasa* (near Mukallah on the southern coast of the Arabian peninsula), Djofar (*Zu-faer*, also on the southern coast of the Arabian peninsula), *Shaliwanni* (perhaps Cannanore on the west coast of India), *Zhubu* (Gumbo on the Somali coast south of Mogadishu), Bengal (*Banggela*), Mecca (*Tianfang* or "Heavenly Square"), Lide (*Lifa*, error for *Lidai*), and Nagur (*Naguer*; Lide and Nagur were small states in northern Sumatra). The goods and treasures without name that he acquired were too many to be accounted for, yet they did not make up for the wasteful expenditures of the Middle Kingdom. From the time that [Zheng He] returned from distant regions in the Xuande period (1425–35), the most urgent priorities have been different from those of the Yongle period (1402–24). Moreover, Zheng He grew old and

eventually died, and after Zheng He, of all those who received orders to transmit imperial letters by sea, none failed to praise Zheng He lavishly in order to boast to the foreigners. Thus, in the vulgar tradition [the story of] the Grand Director of the Three Treasures sailing down to the Western Ocean [is seen as] a major accomplishment of the early years of the Ming.

II. Zheng He's Liujiagang Inscription of 1431

Zheng He and his associates set up inscriptions engraved on stones at the port of Liujiagang on the Yangtze and at the anchorage at Changle in Fujian as the fleet was preparing to sail on its seventh and last voyage (1431–33). The compilers of Taizong Shilu and the Mingshi were unaware of these inscriptions, and their publication by J. J. L. Duyvendak in 1938 solved the question of the “true dates” of the voyages that had baffled earlier scholars. The translations below are mine, but I am much indebted to Duyvendak's work.

Inscription on Stone in the Temple of the Heavenly Princess at Liujiagang in Eastern Lü, Recording the History of Contacts with the Barbarians

Zheng He

On the first day [of the second month of] spring in the sixth year of Xuande of the Ming, the Metal Boar (*xinhai*) year of the [sixty-year] cycle (14 March 1431), the principal envoys Grand Directors Zheng He and Wang Jinghong and the deputy envoys Grand Directors Zhu Liang, Zhou Man (*corrected from Zhou Fu*), Hong Bao, and Yang Zhen and Senior Assistant Director Zhang Da, and others, have set up these words, which say:

The divine majestic spirit of the Heavenly Princess, [who is] titled by imperial edict “[she who] defends the country and shelters the people, [whose] miraculous spirit responds visibly [to prayers, and whose] vast benevolence saves all,” spreads across the oceans, and her merits and virtues are recorded with honor at the Bureau of Sacrificial Worship. [We, Zheng] He and the others, have been commissioned as envoys to the various barbarians on seven occasions from the beginning of Yongle until now. Each time we have commanded several tens of thousands

of government troops and over a hundred seagoing ships. From Taicang we have sailed to Champa (*Zhancheng*), Thailand (*Xianluo*), Java (correcting *Guawa* to *Zhaowa*), Cochin (*Kezhi*) and Calicut (*Guli*), finally reaching Hormuz (*Hulumosi*) and other countries in the Western Regions, more than thirty (correcting 'thousand' to 'ten') countries in all. [We have] traversed over a hundred thousand *li* of vast ocean [and have] beheld great ocean waves, rising as high as the sky and swelling and swelling endlessly. Whether in dense fog and drizzling rain or in wind-driven waves rising like mountains, no matter what the sudden changes in sea conditions, we spread our cloudlike sails aloft and sailed by the stars day and night. [Had we] not trusted her divine merit, how could we have done this in peace and safety? When we met with danger, once we invoked the divine name, her answer to our prayer was like an echo; suddenly there was a divine lamp which illuminated the masts and sails, and once this miraculous light appeared, then apprehension turned to calm. The personnel of the fleet were then at rest, and all trusted they had nothing to fear. This is the general outline of the goddess' merit.

When we arrived at the foreign countries, barbarian kings who resisted transformation [by Chinese civilization] and were not respectful we captured alive, and bandit soldiers who looted and plundered recklessly we exterminated. Because of this the sea routes became pure and peaceful and the foreign peoples could rely upon them and pursue their occupations in safety. All of this was due to the aid of the goddess.

We have previously reported the meritorious deeds of the goddess in a memorial to the court, in which we asked that a temple be erected on the banks of the Dragon River at Nanjing, where sacrificial worship may be continued in perpetuity. We have respectfully received an imperially composed inscription, whose words display her spirit and also praise her as the ultimate in goodness. However, there is nowhere one can go where the spirit of the goddess does not reside. Thus the branch temple at Liujiagang was built years ago, and we have repaired it every time we have come back here. In the winter of the fifth year of Xuande (1430), having once more accepted commissions as ambassadors to the barbarian countries, we moored our

ships beneath the shrine, and the personnel of the expeditionary force have been reverent in ritual and diligent in sincerity, performing sacrifices without interruption. We have repaired and added to the main hall of the temple, enlarging it greatly beyond its former scale, and we have also reconstructed the divine shrine of the “Younger Sister of Mt. Qu” behind the temple. We have made the statue of the goddess in the main hall shine as though it were new. Officials and officers, soldiers and common people all rejoiced and hastened to serve, and there were some who could not contain themselves [for joy]. How could it have come to this, if not for the merit and virtue of the goddess being felt in people’s hearts? Therefore, we have engraved an inscription on [this] stone, both to record the years and months of our going to and returning from the foreign countries, and to make [these things] known forever and ever.

[I] In the third year of Yongle (1405) we went in command of the fleet to Calicut (*Guli*) and other countries. At that time the pirate Chen Zuyi and his gang had gathered together at Palembang (*Sanfoqi*), where they plundered the foreign merchants. We captured their chieftains alive and returned in the fifth year (1407).

[II] In the fifth year of Yongle (1407) we went in command of the fleet to Java (written *Guawa* in error for *Zhaowa*), Calicut, Cochin (*Kezhi*), Thailand (*Xianluo*), and other countries, whose kings each presented tributes of local products, precious birds, and [rare] animals. In the seventh year (1409) we returned.

[III] In the seventh year of Yongle (1409) we went in command of the fleet to the afore[mentioned] countries, passing by the island of Ceylon (*Xilanshan*) on our way. The king of that country, Alagakkonāra (*Yaliekunaer*, correcting *ruo* to *ku*), trusted to his own strength and plotted to do harm to the fleet. Trusting to a divine manifestation of the spirit of the goddess, we perceived and understood this, and in consequence captured that king alive and presented him [to the emperor] on our return in the ninth year (1411). Afterward he received the favor of a pardon and was returned again to [his own] country.

[IV] In the twelfth year of Yongle (1414) we went in command of the fleet to Hormuz (*Hulumusi*) and other countries.

In the country of Semudera (*Sumendala*) a pretender to the throne, Sekandar (*Suganla*), had invaded and plundered his own country, whose [legitimate] king had sent an envoy to the gates [of the Ming imperial palace] to lodge a complaint and ask for assistance. Therefore we led imperial troops to attack and exterminate [those rebels, and] silently aided by the merit of the goddess we then captured the pretender alive and presented him [to the emperor] on our return in the thirteenth year (1415). In the same year the king of the country of Malacca (*Manlajia*) came in person, with his wife and son, to present tribute at court.

[V] In the fifteenth year of Yongle (1417) we went in command of the fleet to the Western Regions, whose country of Hormuz presented lions (*shizi*), leopards (*jinqianbao*), and Arabian horses (*xima* or “western” horses), [while the] country of Aden (*Adan*) presented *qilin*, whose foreign name is *zulafa* (“*zarafa*” is the Arabic word from which “giraffe” is derived), along with the long-horned *maha* animal (*oryx*), the country of Mogadishu (*Mugudushu*) sent zebras (*huafulu*) as well as lions, the country of Brava (*Bulawa*) presented thousand-li camels (*luotuo*) as well as ostriches (*tuoji*), and the countries of Java and Calicut both presented *miligao* animals (*unidentified*). Each presented local products, none of which had ever been heard of before, and sent a son or younger brother of the king, bearing a memorial of submission written on gold leaf, to court with the tribute.

[VI] In the nineteenth year of Yongle (1421) we went in command of the fleet to conduct the ambassadors of Hormuz and all the other countries, who had been in attendance in the capital for a long time, back to their respective countries, and the kings of those countries presented tribute in local products even more abundantly than before.

[VII] Now, in the fifth year of Xuande (1430), we go once again to the foreign countries to proclaim [the emperor’s] edicts, and the fleet has made anchor beneath this shrine. Recalling how, on all of the several previous occasions, we have relied on the merit of the protection and assistance of the divine illumination, this time we have carved this text on this stone.