

BOOK REVIEWS

China as a Sea Power, 1127-1368: A Preliminary Survey of the Maritime Expansion and Naval Exploits of the Chinese People during the Southern Song and Yuan Periods

Lo Jung-pang, Edited by Bruce A. Elleman.

(1957)2011. Singapore: NUS Press and Hong Kong University Press

Expansion through Sea: China's Maritime Story

Review by Joan Tara Reyes

Ph.D. Student, Department of History, University of the Philippines

The world prides itself with stories of civilisations that grew through conquests. First, it was by land where armies marched and rode their horses. Then, navies conquered through sea with ships. The latter proved to cover more distance and introduced new found lands to conquer. Naval supremacy was THE next step for emerging imperialists at the dawn of the modern era. *China as a Sea Power, 1127-1368: A Preliminary Survey of the Maritime Expansion and Naval Exploits of the Chinese People during the Southern Song and Yuan Periods* book tells such a story. Lo Jung-pang wanted to narrate the emergence of China as a sea power. The manuscript for this book was finished in 1957. It was later edited by Bruce A. Elleman after Lo's death. Such importance was given to Lo's work that Elleman saw it to be published even after many years. Indeed, Elleman is right. Lo extensively researched ancient documents and other available sources during his time. Being Chinese and foreign-educated, Lo was exposed to different historical sources that he could utilise to write such a detailed and extensive research.

Book Parts

The book is made up of four parts divided into nine chapters.

The first part is about the different contexts and forces that enabled the emerging Chinese civilisation to be a maritime power. Lo laid down in detail how different polities started to create their own naval forces to subjugate the other. They have special naval forces with their own special fighting skills and armaments. These wars later resulted in political consolidation. As it happens, communities were concentrated in areas near ports. This changed their livelihoods as people became

merchants or naval engineers and shipbuilders, and seamen. They would later extend their power to Korea and Japan through maritime means and explore Southeast Asia. These activities resulted to the development of Chinese cartography. The second part discusses the Southern Song period that was constantly in danger of war with the North. This vulnerability propelled them to pool in resources for the development of their navy. Mass amount of wealth was poured in constructing war ships and producing armaments. Men with sea experience were drafted along with merchant ships to increase the number of sea crafts. The officials also encouraged maritime trade where they collect taxes to fund their navy. Luckily, the Chinese trade in Asia was very lucrative and established. Revenue came from Chinese settlements in Southeast Asia and other places.

The Song was not that successful as the Northerners invaded them that resulted to the Yuan period which is the focus of the third part of the book. The Northerners with some help from the South have built their own army and overtook the Middle kingdom. As a very successful conqueror the Yuans received tributes from their other vassals to fund their further expansion through land and sea. China then held influence in Korea where they launched their attacks on other kingdoms like Japan and Annam. According to Lo, as Korean and Chinese naval officers did not agree, the raiding party was sabotaged and failed eventually in Japan. On the other hand, they would gain some territory in Southeast Asia but did not go that far as they got entangled with local politics. Resisting them was easy for the locals. They expanded as far as Annam. Kingdoms especially in island Southeast Asia succeeded in repelling them. In the fourth part, Lo discussed his conclusions. As he reviews the past experiences of the Chinese sea empire, he recounts that the Chinese would reach great triumphs during the times of their solidarity and fail when they are weak and divided. When they have reached their maritime golden age during the Ming period, great explorations were led by Zheng He and sea trade flourished. As Lo pointed out, political instability would put this development on hold again as it had done before.

Some Comments

After reading the book, it is evident that Lo extensively researched for this book as seen on the amount of details that he supplied. He painted a picture of the different stages of what will become the Chinese empire. This book is very informative about those trying times as their

maritime tradition began. He did impeccable research and maximised varied sources. This book is indeed a traditional and comprehensive historical work. The most interesting element of the book for me is the perspective of the author. As I look back, the book was finished during the start of the Cultural Revolution of China. Incidentally, Lo's family was entangled with the founding of the Republic of China by Sun Yat Sen. His father was a diplomat under this government that is why he had a varied educational background as his family travelled around the world.

During the 1950s, Lo had been living in the United States after finishing his master's and doctoral studies. Lo's research is indeed very important during those times. As World War II ended, the Cold war started and the events in China gave the country much international interest. As they build their new country with a new identity and government, researchers from non-Communist Chinese such as Lo provided interesting perspectives especially as he gave much value on the country's strong suit, its unity. Even though this book did not reach China during those times, it is still of importance. This book carries the life's work of a man that had a different view of China during its pivotal moment. In the end, he still believed in its unity and greatness as he held on to the China's illustrious past.

The Portuguese and the Straits of Melaka, 1575-1619
Power, Trade and Diplomacy

Paulo Jorge Pinto De Sousa, Translated by Roopanjali Roy.
 2012. Singapore: NUS Press and The Malaysian Branch of the Royal
 Asiatic Society

They Were Here First

Review by Joan Tara Reyes

Ph.D. Student, Department, of History, University of the Philippines

Most people forget that the Kingdom of Portugal was the first European country that sank its teeth on the lucrative trade available in Southeast Asia known to them as the Far East. Unlike the Spanish, Dutch, French and British, the Portuguese relatively started early and enjoyed trade monopoly for a relatively short period of time. The book of Paulo Jorge de Sousa Pinto tells this story of how state of the art navigation prevailed and how mismanagement brought this empire to its end. This book consists of five chapters with 336 pages of text. It includes some