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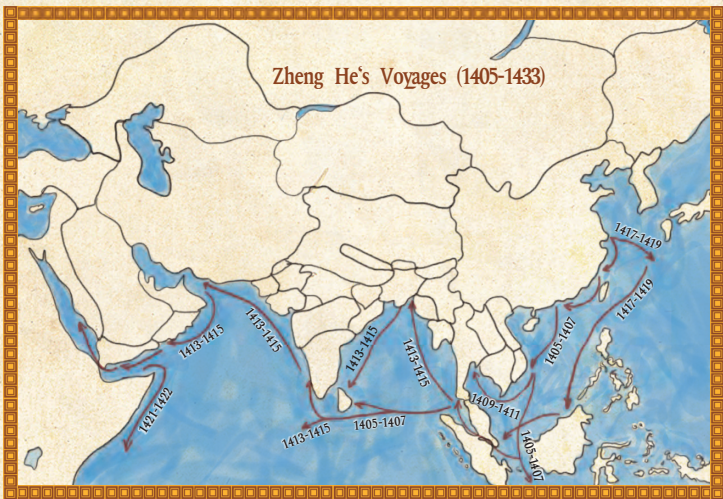
THE MING VOYAGES

POCKET
CAMPAIGNS

Rulebook for 2 players

S.S.G.

Zheng He's Voyages (1405-1433)

The Ming voyages are the 7 journeys made by the Chinese treasure fleet of oceanic junks between 1405 and 1433. The Yongle Emperor constructed the fleet during a period of outward-looking expansion of Chinese influence overseas, and its commander was Admiral Zheng He. The maritime power of the Ming Empire was used for political purposes, not just for trade. The immense fleet was technologically far in advance of European counterparts until at least the 18th century. While it is purported by some that the fleet circumnavigated the world and discovered all its continents save Europe, the voyages certainly reached Calicut in India, Hormuz in the Persian Gulf, and made landfalls in the Arabian Peninsula and East Africa. But on the landward side of the Empire, border troubles were always brewing.

The Ming Voyages is an asymmetric game for 1 or 2 players aged 12+ that takes around 30-45 minutes to play.

1 game board

27 main deck cards

Ming Empire's components

7 green ships
Junks

12 green cubes
Troops

5 yellow cubes
Gold

3 green
6-sided dice

Barbarian's components

5 white discs
Settlements

12 white cubes
Hordes

3 white
6-sided dice

Important: All components are finite – if there are none in the Supply, you cannot take them.

One player is the Ming Emperor trying to complete all 7 treasure fleet Voyages as well as to protect the Chinese Borderlands from invading barbarians. The other player controls the 3 disparate barbarian factions who are trying to settle on the Borderlands with China.

The Ming Emperor scores a major victory if they complete all 7 Voyages before the end of the game and, likewise, the Barbarian Overlord scores a major victory if they control all 5 Borderlands at any time. Having any type of marker in a Borderland shows control. If neither side completes their major victory, a minor victory can be achieved by either side; the Ming Emperor adds their controlled Borderlands to the number of completed voyages, the Barbarian Overlord adds their controlled Borderlands to the number of uncompleted voyages. The winner is the one with the highest total. If it's a tie, the Barbarian Overlord wins.

There is also a version for solo play as the Ming Emperor that uses extra cards for the operation of the Barbarians. See the Solo Play booklet.

The game board is divided into several regions:

- ◻ Ming Empire Homeland
- ◻ South China Sea
- ◻ 7 Voyage spaces numbered 1 to 7
- ◻ 5 Borderlands
- ◻ 3 separate Barbarian Homelands

Neither player can enter an opponent's Homeland. All movement is only possible to an adjacent region. Only Junks and Gold can enter the South China Sea.

The arrows on the diagram below confirm the movement and attack routes that each side can use.

A The players choose which side they will play – Ming Emperor or Barbarian Overlord. Place the board between the 2 players with the South China Sea nearest the Emperor.

B Shuffle the Main deck and place it face down next to one side of the board.

C Each player takes their own colour of dice.

D Place all of both players' markers together as a Supply next to one side of the board.

E The Barbarian Overlord places 1 Horde in each of their 3 Homelands.

F The Ming Emperor places 1 Troop in each of the 5 Borderlands, 1 Gold in their Homeland and 1 Junk in the South China Sea. Then they roll a dice and place a Junk from the Supply on the appropriate numbered Voyage space.

Space for Overlord's reserved cards

Space for Overlord's played card

Space for Main deck discards

G The Barbarian Overlord takes 4 cards from the deck and the Ming Emperor takes 3. The players can look at these cards but must not reveal them to the opponent. You are ready to play!

Space for Emperor's reserved cards

Space for Emperor's played card

There are three types of cards in the 2-player game: Action, Emperor and Barbarian cards. All of the cards are shuffled in the same deck and can be played by either player. All three types have a command point (CP) value between 1 and 3 in the centre left that can be used by the side that plays it.

Overlord special action

CP value

Card number

Voyage number

Place 1 Settlement marker from the Supply into a Barbarian-controlled Borderland.

2 ADVANCEMENT

1 East Africa

Make a Voyage with up to 2 rolls deducting 1 from each result.

Emperor special action

Action Cards – There are 21 Action cards. These cards can be identified by a curved dagger in the top half and a scroll in the bottom half of the card. The Barbarian Overlord may always use a special action in the top box instead of spending the CP. If the Ming Emperor has completed the Voyage indicated by the Voyage number on the card, they may use the special action in the bottom box instead of the CP. Completion of the Voyage is shown by having a Junk in the relevant Voyage box on the board.

1-3
Withdraw all Hordes in a Borderland back to a single adjacent Barbarian Homeland, both chosen by the Ming Emperor.

2 PESTILENCE

4-6
Withdraw half (rounded up) of Hordes in a Borderland to a single adjacent Barbarian Homeland, both chosen by the Ming Emperor.

Emperor Cards – These 3 cards can be identified by scrolls in the top and bottom halves of the card. Only the Ming Emperor can choose to use the special actions on these cards instead of the CP. The special action they can use is determined by how many Voyages have been completed, up to 3, or 4 or more.

Barbarian Cards – These 3 cards can be identified by the curved dagger in the top and bottom halves of the card. Only the Barbarian Overlord can choose to use the special actions on these cards instead of the CP. The special action they can use is determined by how many Voyages have been completed by the Ming Emperor, up to 3, or 4 or more.

Opponent's Reaction - For all of the cards, when an Opponent's special action is available on the played card, the Opponent may carry out that action during the Active player's turn. This is the case whether the Active player used the card for a special action or for a CP action. The Active player chooses who uses the card first.

For example, the Ming Emperor plays "Raids" (card #24) and wants to use 3CP to Tax for 3 Gold. The Barbarian Overlord has a Reaction on this card that would deprive the Emperor of up to 2 Gold from their Homeland. The Emperor has 1 Gold in their Homeland, so they sensibly ask the Overlord to take their Reaction first, before their own action. As the Emperor currently has only 1 Gold, they lose 1 rather than 2 Gold. Then, the Emperor taxes the people and places 3 Gold from the Supply into the Ming Empire Homeland. If the Emperor had had no Gold at all, then they would have lost none.

The game is played over 2 eras, each consisting of a number of rounds. The game ends either when one player achieves a major victory or when the Ming Emperor plays the final card in the second era.

A round is made up of 4 phases. Finish each phase before starting the next.

1. **Ming Emperor draws 2 cards.**

2. **Ming Emperor plays 1 card.**

3. **Barbarian Overlord plays 1 card.**

4. **End of round - swap hands.**

Note: The Barbarian Overlord never draws any cards!

The final round of the first era starts when the Ming Emperor draws the last cards from the deck. At the end of this round after swapping hands, the Emperor will have 3 cards, the Overlord 4.

Create a new draw deck by shuffling together cards in the discard pile along with all reserved cards, but not cards in hand. Then, start the first round of the second era.

In the second era, continue to play after the final cards are drawn until the Ming Emperor plays the final card of the game and both hands are empty.

Description of a Round

1. Ming Emperor draws cards

The Ming Emperor draws 2 cards from the deck and adds them to their hand. Skip this phase if the second era deck has run out.

2. Ming Emperor plays 1 card

The Ming Emperor plays 1 card from their hand.

<div align="center">They may either</div>

Reserve a card face down in front of them, adding it to any cards reserved earlier (the Emperor uses reserved cards during battles);

<div align="center">or</div>

Play a card face up in front of them. If played face up, the Emperor chooses whether to spend the CP or use the special action on the card. They may use the special action at the bottom of the card if it is an Action card and they have already completed the Voyage numbered on the card. If it is an Emperor card, they may use the top or bottom special action dependent on the number of Voyages completed.

Barbarian's Reaction - if the Barbarian Overlord has a special action available on the played card, they may use that action during the Emperor's turn. The Emperor chooses who uses the card first. Reminder: the Barbarian's Reaction is available whether the Emperor used the card for a special action or for a CP action.

Using Command Points

If the Emperor chooses to use the CP, they must spend at least 1 of the points on a CP action and all of the points spent must be on the same CP action type. Any CP that cannot be used are lost. The CP actions available to the Emperor are:

- ◙ **Recruit Troops** – Take 1 Troop from the Supply for each CP spent and place them in the Ming Empire Homeland.
- ◙ **Move** – Select 1 region with Troops in it. Move Troops in that region equal to the CP spent into either the Ming Empire Homeland or 1 adjacent Borderland that does not contain Hordes or Settlements.
- ◙ **Attack** – Choose a Barbarian-controlled Borderland adjacent to at least 1 region with Troops in it. Put into that Borderland a number of Troops up to the CP spent from any number of adjacent regions. Fight a battle until only 1 player has forces in the attacked Borderland – see the Battle Sequence at the end of the rules for how to fight a battle.
- ◙ **Tax** – Take 1 Gold from the Supply for each CP spent and place them in the Ming Empire Homeland.
- ◙ **Build Junks** – Take 1 Junk from the Supply for each CP spent and place them in the South China Sea.
- ◙ **Voyage** – Set sail on a Voyage if you have at least 1 Junk in the South China Sea and at least 1 Gold. Choose a Voyage that has not yet been completed (it has no Junk in the Voyage space). Place any number of your Junks and Gold (but at least 1 of each) from the South China Sea and the Ming Empire Homeland, next to your choice of Voyage space. For each CP spent, you have 1 attempt to complete the Voyage. Roll 1 dice for each attempt. To succeed, you must roll **lower than** the total amount of Gold and Junks that you sent on the Voyage added together.

  For example, you play a 2CP card for a Voyage CP action to discover Voyage space 6. You choose to send 2 Gold and 3 Junks on the Voyage. Place 2 Gold and 3 Junks next to Voyage space 6, then roll 2 dice, 1 for each CP. You roll a 5 and a 4. The 5 is a fail, because you must roll lower than the total amount of Gold and Junks sent, in this case 5. Fortunately, the 4 is a success.

If any of the rolls is successful, return to the Supply all Gold sent on the Voyage, and return all but 1 Junk to the South China Sea. Leave 1 Junk on the Voyage space to show it has been completed. For the rest of the game, the Emperor can use special actions on Action cards containing that Voyage number.

If the Voyage was unsuccessful, the Gold stays in the South China Sea with the Junks. All Gold in the South China Sea must be sent on the next attempted Voyage (supplemented by more Gold from the Ming Empire Homeland, if desired), but it cannot be affected by the Barbarian Overlord's actions.

Using the Special Actions on the Emperor cards

Instead of using the CP on an Emperor card, the Ming Emperor can use the special action available to them. The available special action is determined by how many Voyages have been completed. The Emperor must be able to carry out the special action in full in order to use it.

Using the Special Action on the Action cards

Instead of using the CP on an Action card, the Emperor can use the special action on the bottom half of the card, if the Voyage with the number shown on the card has been completed. The Emperor must be able to carry out the special action in full to use it.

End of phase

If at the end of this phase all 7 Voyages have been completed, the Ming Emperor wins the game and claims a major victory!

Once players have finished all their actions in this phase, discard all played cards face up into the discard pile. If there is more than 1 discarded card, the Emperor chooses the order of the discards.

Then, continue with the next phase.

3. Barbarian Overlord plays 1 card

The Barbarian Overlord plays 1 card from their hand.

<div align="center">They may either</div>

Reserve a card face down in front of them, adding it to any cards reserved earlier (the Overlord uses reserved cards during battles and, for the Overlord player only, to reinforce their CP action);

<div align="center">or</div>

Play a card face up in front of them. If played face up, the Overlord chooses whether to spend the CP or use the special action on the card. They may always use the special action at the top of the card if it is an Action card, or they may use the relevant action if it is a Barbarian card, dependent on the number of Voyages completed by the Emperor.

Emperor's Reaction - if the Emperor has a special action available on the played card, they may use that action during the Overlord's turn. The Overlord chooses who uses the card first. Reminder: the Emperor's Reaction is available whether the Overlord used the card for a special action or for a CP action.

Using Command Points

If the Overlord chooses to use the CP, they must spend at least 1 of the points on a CP action and all of the points spent must be on the same CP action type. Any CP that cannot be used are lost. The CP actions available to the Overlord are:

▣ **Amass Hordes** – Take 1 Horde from the Supply for each CP spent and put it in any of the Barbarian Homelands. When amassing more than 1 Horde, you can place them in different Homelands or in the same one.

- ◰ **Move** – Select 1 region with Hordes in it. Move Hordes in that region equal to the CP spent into either 1 adjacent Barbarian Homeland or 1 adjacent Borderland that does not contain Troop markers.

- ◰ **Attack** – Choose a Ming-controlled Borderland adjacent to at least 1 region with Hordes in it. Put into that Borderland a number of Hordes up to the CP spent from any number of adjacent regions. Fight a battle until only 1 player has forces in the attacked region – see the Battle Sequence at the end of the rules for how to fight a battle.

- ◰ **Gather Resources** – Take 1 Settlement from the Supply for each CP spent and place it in any Barbarian Homeland. This represents the Barbarians getting the resources required to build a Settlement in a Borderland later. When placing more than 1 Settlement, you can place them in different Homelands or in the same one.

- ◰ **Build Settlement** – Move 1 Settlement for each CP spent from a single Barbarian Homeland into an adjacent Barbarian-controlled Borderland. Each Settlement can move into a different adjacent Borderland. Once placed in a Borderland, the Barbarian Overlord cannot move the Settlement. A Settlement in a Borderland indicates control in the same way a Horde does.

Reinforcing your CP actions

The Barbarian Overlord player (only) may use up to 1 of their Reserved cards to reinforce each CP action. Add the CPs on the Reserved card to the CPs on the card you are playing. You may use all these CPs for the chosen CP action. At the end of your phase, discard the Reserved card.

Ignore all the actions on cards played to reinforce your CP actions. These actions cannot be used by either player.

Using the Special Action on the Barbarian cards

Instead of using the CP on a Barbarian card, the Overlord can use the special action available to them. The available special action is determined by how many Voyages have been completed by the Emperor. The Overlord must be able to complete the special action in full in order to use it.

Using the Special Action on the Action cards

Instead of using the CP on an Action card, the Overlord can use the special action at the top of the card: it is always available to them. They can never use the special action at the bottom of the card. The Overlord must be able to complete the special action in full in order to use it.

End of phase

If at the end of this phase the Barbarian Overlord has Hordes and/or Settlements in all 5 Borderlands, they win the game and claim a major victory!

Once players have finished all their actions in this phase, discard all played cards face up into the discard pile. If there is more than 1 discarded card, the Overlord chooses the order of the discards.

Then, continue with the next phase.

4. End of round

At the end of a round, the players swap hands. If the deck has not run out, continue to play a new round, starting at phase 1. If the deck has run out, refer to the Eras and End of Game section below.

The first era saw voyages down to India's southwestern coast, the second era saw the voyages reach the Arabian Peninsula and East Africa.

The game is played over two eras represented by the Main cards deck. Either player can win a game before the end of the first or second era by claiming a major victory.

The final round of the first era starts when the Ming Emperor draws the last cards from the deck. At the end of this round after swapping hands, the Emperor will have 3 cards, the Barbarian Overlord will have 4. Create a new draw deck by shuffling together cards in the discard pile along with all reserved cards, but not cards in hand. Then, start the first round of the second era.

Be careful not to reserve too many cards before the end of the first era; if you don't use them, they will be lost!

When the deck runs out for the second time, keep swapping hands and playing as normal, skipping phase 1 (drawing cards) each round. The final round of the game starts when only the Emperor has a card in their hand; the Emperor plays this card and the game finishes at this point.

Winning

The Ming Emperor scores a major victory if they complete all 7 Voyages before the end of the game and, likewise, the Barbarian Overlord scores a major victory if they control all 5 Borderlands at any time. Having any type of marker in a Borderland shows control. If neither player has claimed a major victory by the end of the second era, one player can claim a minor victory. For the Ming Emperor player, add the number of Ming-controlled Borderlands

to the number of completed voyages. For the Barbarian Overlord player, add the number of Barbarian-controlled Borderlands to the number of uncompleted voyages. The winner is the player with the greater total. In case of a tie, the Barbarian Overlord wins.

For competitive play, we recommend that opponents play 2 games, swapping sides for the second game. Calculate the basic overall points as above. A player who wins a major victory earns 12 points instead of their normal total. Where either or both players did not achieve a major victory, they earn points for control of Borderlands and for voyages as described above. If a game is tied, the Barbarian Overlord earns 1 additional bonus point. After 2 games, add up the points for each, and the winner is the player with most points. If the series is a tie after the 2 games, it is an honourable draw.

When a player chooses the Attack CP action and puts their Troops or Hordes into a Borderland controlled by the Opponent, a battle begins. The Active player is the Attacker, the other player is the Defender. Follow these 6 battle steps until only 1 player has markers in the attacked Borderland:

A) Attacker Rolls – The Attacker rolls their 3 dice. There are three types of result: a triple is **strong** (for example, 4, 4, 4), a double is **moderate** (for example 1, 1, 5) and a single is **weak** (for example, 6,4,3).

B) Attacker Uses Reserves – The Attacker may choose to use the CP on a reserved card to re-roll the dice. Reveal the card. The CP value is the number of re-rolls they can make. Each re-roll can be of any number of the Attacker's dice. The Attacker may stop re-rolling whenever they wish and may use more reserved cards to keep re-rolling. Once the Attacker stops re-rolling, place all used reserved cards in the discard pile. Any unused CP are lost. Unused reserved cards stay in reserve. Keep the dice to one side and note the final result, for example, triple 5, double 3 or single 6. Ignore the additional dice on a double or a single.

C) Defender Rolls – The Defender rolls their 3 dice. Again, there are three types of result: a triple is **strong**, a double is **moderate** and a single is **weak**.

D) Defender Uses Reserves – The Defender may choose to use reserved cards in front of them in the same way as described for the Attacker in step B.

E) Resolve Attack – A strong result is more powerful than a moderate result, which is more powerful than a weak result. If one player has rolled a more powerful result than their opponent,

they have struck a **Devastating Blow**. If both players have rolled the same type of result, then if one player's score of that type is higher, they have inflicted a **Normal Hit** (for example, a double 3 beats a double 2 and inflicts a Normal Hit). If both players have rolled the same type and the same score (for example, both rolled a single 6), then the result is a **Standoff** (ignore the additional dice on a double or a single). Below is how these three are resolved. All losses are only from the Borderland attacked:

- **Devastating Blow** – The loser returns 2 Troops/Hordes to the Supply, *unless* the loser was the Overlord and they have at least 1 Settlement in the Borderland; in this case the Overlord instead returns 1 Settlement to the Supply.

- **Normal Hit** – The loser returns 1 Troop/Horde to the Supply, *unless* the loser was the Overlord and they have at least 1 Settlement in the region – in this case the Overlord does not lose anything.

- **Standoff** – If both players have rolled the same score of the same type of result, neither player loses anything (ignore the additional dice on a double or a single).

F) End Battle Check – If only 1 player has markers in the Borderland, the battle has ended and play moves to the next phase of the Round. Otherwise, the battle continues at Step A.

Oscar the Overlord has 3 Hordes in each of the Western and Eastern Mongol Homelands and 2 reserved cards, Affluence (3CPs) and Pestilence (2CPs).

Emperor Beth has 2 Troops in Sichuan and Maelstrom (2CPs) in reserve. Oscar decides to attack and plays a 3CP card. He reinforces his Attack CP action with the 3CP on Affluence, so he attacks with all 6 Hordes, putting them into Sichuan.

◀◀ 1-3 ◉◉
Withdraw all Hordes in a Borderland back to a single adjacent Barbarian Homeland, both chosen by the Ming Emperor.

2 PESTILENCE

Take up to 5 Settlement markers from the Supply and place them into any single Barbarian Homeland.

3 AFFLUENCE

2 Persian Gulf
Take up to 4 Gold from the Supply and place them in the Ming Empire Homeland.

◀◀ 1-3 ◉◉
Ming Empire loses 1 Junk from the South China Sea.

2 MAELSTROM

◀◀ 4-6 ◉◉
Ming Empire loses up to 2 Junks from the South China Sea.

Oscar rolls his 3 dice: 553. He decides not to use his reserved card for any re-rolls.

Beth rolls her 3 dice: 556. Both players have double 5. Beth decides it's not the right time to use her reserved card. So, it's a standoff and neither player loses any pieces.

Oscar has to continue to attack until only 1 player's pieces remain. He rolls: 442. Again, he decides not to use his reserved card.

Beth rolls her dice: 543. Oscar's double 4 against a single 5 would be a Devastating Blow, so Beth would lose both her pieces and therefore the battle. She decides to use her reserved card for up to 2 re-rolls. For her first re-roll, she keeps the 5 and rolls the other 2 dice: 51. Now she has double 5, so will win this round of battle, but she has another re-roll. She re-rolls the 1: only a 3. With a double 5, Beth has a Normal Blow against Oscar's double 4 - Oscar loses 1 Horde and is down to 5.

Oscar continues his attack and rolls 653. He decides to use his reserved Pestilence card for up to 2 re-rolls. For his first re-roll, he rolls all 3 dice: 336. Double 3 is OK, but he re-rolls the 6 for his second and final re-roll: 3. Now he has triple 3.

In response, Beth rolls: 321; the worst possible roll, and she has no reserved cards.

Oscar has a Devastating Blow, inflicting 2 hits, so wins the battle. Beth puts her remaining 2 Troops into the Supply. Oscar's 5 Hordes have captured the Sichuan Borderland.

Credits

S.S.G.

Game sequence

1. Ming Emperor draws 2 cards.
2. Ming Emperor plays 1 card.
3. Barbarian Overlord plays 1 card.
4. End of round - swap hands.

Note: The Barbarian Overlord never draws any cards!

Actions available

Players may **Reserve** a card or **Play** it for their special action or to spend on the CP actions below.

Both players can use reserved cards for re-rolls in battle. Barbarian Overlord (only) may reinforce their CP action with a single reserved card.

Ming Emperor	Barbarian Overlord
Recruit Troops	Amass Hordes
Move	Move
Attack	Attack
Tax	Gather Resources
Build Junks	Build Settlements
Voyage	

Battles

A. Attacker Rolls
B. Attacker Uses Reserves
C. Defender Rolls
D. Defender Uses Reserves
E. Resolve Attack
F. End Battle Check

Results

Devastating Blow = lose 2 Troops/Hordes
Normal Hit = lose 1 Troop/Horde
Standoff = no losses

Settlements in defence

Devastating Blow = lose 1 Settlement
Normal Hit = no losses
Standoff = no losses

End of game and winning

The game ends when a player achieves a major victory or when the Ming Emperor plays the last card of the second Era.