

# Culture contact and its impact on China and southeast asia with special references to cheng ho's voyages

Tan, Ta Sen, author

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## Abstrak

Culture contact took place throughout recorded history. The three major world civilizations, namely, Chinese, Indian and Arabian, all originated in Asia. Since the 2nd century BC, these three civilizations began to interact with each other via the overland and sea trade routes—the Chama (Tea and Horse), the Silk, and the Maritime Ceramic and Spice routes. Such interaction triggered off a dynamic chain reaction of culture change in all societies in the regions largely by peaceful means through trade and cultural interchange as well as migration. A review of the literature of the subject under study reveals the lack of in-depth study of the subject leaving many gaps for future research. This macro-study is the first of such an attempt that adopts a holistic view of continental-wide culture contact. It deals with the incoming Indian and Islamic alien cultures infiltrating into China's Confucianism and Daoism on the one hand, and against Java's indigenous culture on the other. The study explores the localization of these alien cultures through a process of sinicization in China and Javanization in insular Southeast Asia set within a broader historical context of regional trade development and geo-politics. This research then narrows down to an investigation of the highly significant role played by Ming China through the hands of the famous maritime explorer, Cheng Ho, in the Islamization of the Nusantara world and particularly in helping to unravel the localization process that took place in 15th and 16th centuries in Java. In the final analysis, this study has uncovered the striking differences in the resulting patterns of culture contact between East and West imbedded in their differing world view. It clearly demonstrates the cultural fusion-clash polarization pattern in culture contact.