The portrayal of the treasure fleet in *Xiyang ji* suggests the treasure ships (*baochuan* 宝船) were massive. The novel was, however, written during a time when knowledge about everything maritime has become merely theoretical at best, due to the “sea ban” (*baijin* 海禁) that made even approaching the coast illegal. It is therefore likely that Luo Maodeng’s dimensions for the treasure fleet made use of symbolic proportions rather than accurately describe the ships. Yet the idea of gigantic ships that sailed from China to Africa half a century before Vasco da Gama (1469–1524) took the opposite route captured the imagination of Chinese intellectuals at the end of the Qing dynasty. That China once surpassed the Western nations in maritime matters was a subject of great interest and provided consolation in a time when China was increasingly divided between Western colonial powers. Therefore Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929) saw no reason to question the description of *Xiyang ji* when he wrote his essay on Zheng He, “Zuguo da hanghai jia Zheng He zhuoan” 祖國大航海家鄭和傳 (“Biography of the Great Chinese Seafarer Zheng He”, 1905), in which he mentions these numbers as facts. The article, which appeared in the Chinese journal *Xinmin* 新民, further compared the assumed size of the treasure ships to the newly launched *USS Minnesota*, then the largest ship in the world, as Sally Church pointed out. (See her articles below.) Subsequent scholarly essays on the treasure fleet have made it their subject to dismiss the *Xiyang ji* as a valid source for Ming dynasty shipbuilding and to recover the actual size of these ships. Their number goes well beyond the selection presented here, as some of them have gone so far as to omit the *Xiyang ji* altogether.


Sally Church traces the accounts of the enormous size of Zheng He’s treasure ships from Liang Qichao’s article and the entry in the *Mingshi* 明史 to the *Xiyang ji* and *Yingya shenglan* 瀛涯勝覽. She also recounts the scholarly discussion of the 20th cent. and links the question why scholars defended the enormous size of the ships despite contrary evidence to a discussion of national pride and an image of China’s greatness in the past.

In this article, Church discusses the recorded size of the treasure ships in light of the assertions that the dimensions recorded in the *Mingshi* may have originated in *Xiyang ji*. Relying on sources written before 1597 (before the earliest known version of the novel), shipbuilding knowledge, and archaeological evidence she concludes that the treasure ships were in fact more likely to have been 200–250ft (≈60–76m) rather than 450ft (≈140m).


In this study, Lo points out a connection between *Xiyang ji* and *Kezuo zhuiyu* 客座贅語 (1618) by Gu Qiyuan 龔起元 that suggests that the latter’s author may have had access to the novel and copied the (erroneous) name of Bengal and the dimensions of the ships from it.


In this monograph, Shi Hequn uses *Xiyang ji* as a supplementary source for particulars relating to Zheng He’s treasure fleet, while also cautioning against too much trust in the novel’s descriptions, which are prone to exaggerations. The author makes use of the novel in the discussions of the fleet’s make-up, the dimensions of the ships, communication methods used among the vessels and the formations in which the fleet sailed.


This book was compiled from papers presented at a conference on “Zheng He and Fujian” held in 1985. Unfortunately no copies seem to be available in Eu-
European or American libraries. The title of Shi Zulie’s paper suggests that its subject is a preliminary analysis of the description of Zheng He’s crew in *Xiyang ji*.


Su’s book consists of two halves: the first half contains “musings” on Zheng He’s travels previously published in the university magazine of NTOU (Kee-lung, Taiwan). The second half consists of several academic articles that had appeared in the *Zheng He yanjiu yu huodong jianxun* 鄭和研究與活動簡訊. Two articles talk about the false portrayal of the treasure fleet in *Xiyang ji*.

7.1.7 Su, Ming-yang. Seven Epic Voyages of Zheng He in Ming China. See 1.1.4.

Su closes his chapter on the *Xiyang ji* with a discussion of the available sources on the actual size of the treasure ships and the ongoing scientific discussion.


I was unable to access the full text of this journal. It may contain reference to *Xiyang ji*.


In this article Tang Zhiba traces the origin of the description that the *Xiyang ji* gives of the weapons of the treasure fleets to the military manual *Jixiao xinshu* 紀效新書 (1560) by Qi Jiguang 戚繼光 and canons introduced to China during the 16th cent. and Luo Maodeng’s imagination. The article further discusses a more likely time for the equipment of Zheng He’s vessels based on historical record and archeological findings.
7.1.10 Tang Zhiba 唐志拔. “Zheng He baochuan chidu zhi wojian” 鄭和寶

Tang Zhiba discusses various theories on the origin of the dimensions of the
treasure ships recorded in Mingshi. The author argues that Xiyang ji is the earli-
est work to contain these dimensions and is therefore the most likely source.

7.1.11 Xi Longfei 席龍飛. “Zai langman yu xi anshi zhongxunmi: Luo
Maodeng Xiyang ji wei baochuan tigong zuozheng” 在浪漫與現實中
尋覓—羅懋登《西洋記》為寶船提供佐證. In: Studien zum Roman
“Sanbao taijian Xiyang ji tong su yanyi”《三寶太監西洋記通俗演義》
之研究, vol. 1, ed. by Shi Ping and Roderich Ptak [Maritime Asia, 23.

In this article, Xi Longfei explores how the Xiyang ji expands the depiction of
the treasure fleet taken from Yingya shenglan with particular emphasis on their
size and number of masts. He compares these details to archaeological data
from the Song and Yuan periods, as well as Song Yingxing’s Tiangong
kaiwu 天工開物 of the late Ming era. He concludes that while some “ship-
related” segments of the novel are highly imaginative, others reflect reality and
are of direct relevance to our picture of Zheng He’s treasure ships.

7.1.12 Xin Yuanou 辛元歐. “Guanyu Zheng He baochuan chidu de jishu fen-
xi” 關於鄭和寶船尺度的技術分析. Chuanshi yanjiu 船史研究 17

In this paper Xin Yuanou argues that Zheng He’s ships could not have been as
large as recorded in the Mingshi, basing his argument on practical shipbuilding
observations. Regarding the measurement given in Mingshi, he believes them to
originate in Xiyang ji.

7.1.13 Xu Gongsheng 徐恭生. “Zheng He baochuan chidu ‘32’ zi jiedu” 鄭和

This article discusses the 32 characters describing the dimensions of the treasure
fleet in a Ming-dynasty edition of Yingya shenglan and, among other things,
compared these numbers to the specifications in Xiyang ji.
Zhang Jian explores factual exaggerations in various descriptions in *Xiyang ji*, including the routes, the size of the treasure fleet, crew and ships.


This article uses the treasure ship dimensions recorded in *Xiyang ji* as one of many possible sources for their actual size.

Fig. 14 *Xiyang ji*, Chapter 17 (4.14b-15a, 440f):
“At the Treasure Fleets Shipyard, Lu Ban Lends a Helping Hand.”