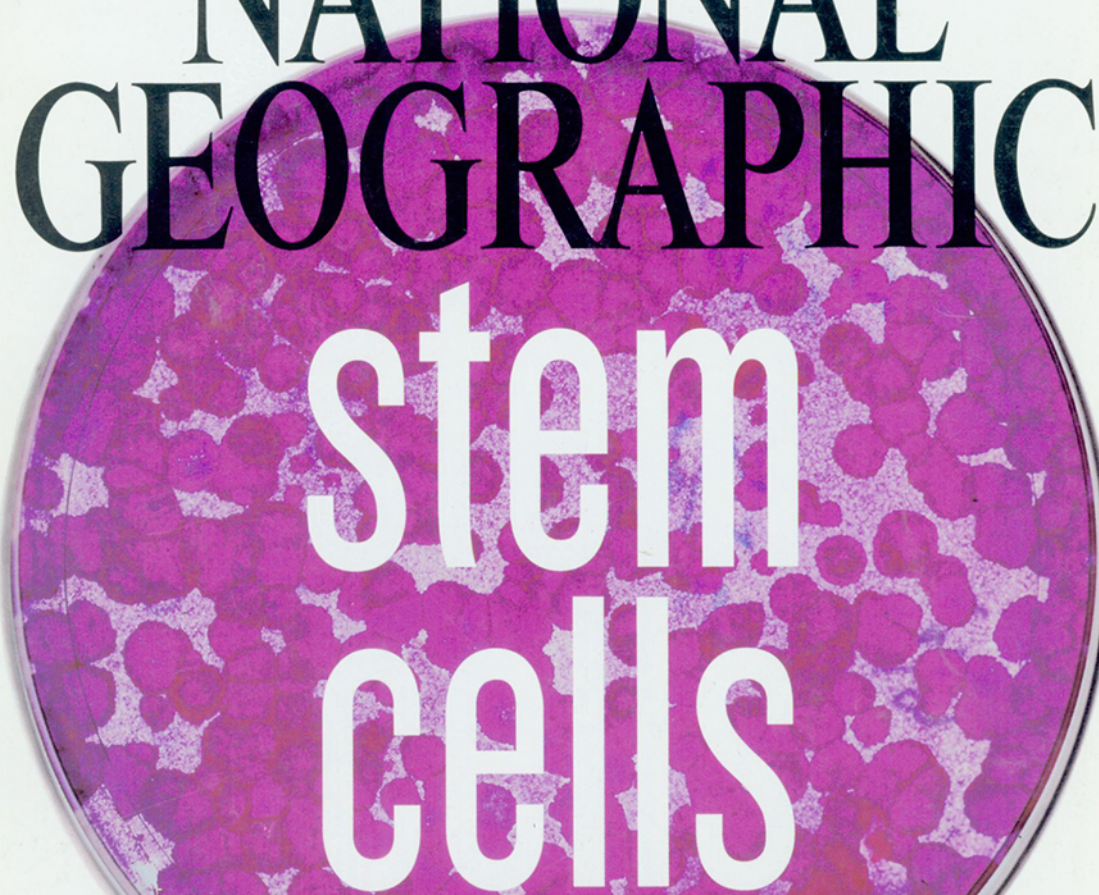


NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC




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*Six hundred years ago
China's Admiral **Zheng He**
led a mighty fleet on the first
of seven voyages
that reshaped an empire.*

China's Great Armada

By Frank Viviano
Photographs by Michael Yamashita



A man of towering height and ambition, Zheng He led one of the grandest trading fleets the world has ever known. In the early 15th century his vast floating city of hundreds of ships spread Chinese influence and gathered knowledge and wealth from Indochina to the coast of Africa. With Zheng as its maritime architect, China became a superpower.

ART BY HONGNAN ZHANG