

Between Trade and Legitimacy, Maritime and Continent:
The Zheng Organization in Seventeenth-Century East Asia

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Abstract

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This study examines the Zheng organization, which flourished from 1625 to 1683, during a time when the Ming-Qing transition in China intersected with the formation of an integrated early modern economy in maritime Asia. This quasi-governmental commercial enterprise reached the apex of its power under Zheng Chenggong (1624-1662), and his son and successor Zheng Jing (1642-1681). From bases along the southeastern Chinese coast and Taiwan, they relied upon overseas commerce to maintain a sustained resistance against the Manchus, who had taken over most of China in 1644 from the collapsing Ming, the ethnic Chinese dynasty to which both men had pledged their support. Like their fiercest competitor, the Dutch East India Company (VOC), the organization protected the safety and property of Chinese subjects abroad, engaged in armed trade, and aggressively promoted overseas expansion. Zheng Chenggong and Jing proved far more successful and profitable at these endeavors than the VOC. In 1662, shortly before his death, Chenggong even defeated and expelled the company from its colony of Taiwan, and opened the island for Chinese colonization and settlement.

Yet, operating within an imperial world order that looked upon overseas contact of any form as a potential source of political instability, the Zhengs, lacking “native” maritime sources of legitimacy, had to receive recognition for their authority from continental centers of power. Father and son skillfully utilized the ranks and titles from the Ming Yongli pretender to rule over territory, develop a civil bureaucracy, and sign treaties with foreign powers, functioning essentially as an autonomous “state.” Moreover, by successfully intermediating between continental and maritime Chinese cultural discourse, they forged a complex social unit of traders, militarists, and Ming imperial descendants and loyalist elites. However, this ambiguous

arrangement, which gave the organization maximum autonomy and flexibility, came under threat due to the gradual consolidation of Qing rule.

Chenggong's successor, Zheng Jing, turned away from Ming symbols of authority on Taiwan during the 1660s, and tried to institutionalize a new identity based upon Han Chinese customs and Confucian moral values on an island considered by contemporaries to be geographically and culturally outside of "China." In negotiations with the Qing court, he pressed hard for the emperor to recognize Taiwan as a tributary kingdom along the lines of Korea. The talks broke down, however, over ethnic identity, as Zheng insisted upon keeping his Han Chinese long hair and flowing robes, while the Qing ruler ordered him to shave his head and wear tight riding jackets in the Manchu style. Despite the failure of negotiations, Zheng took significant steps toward articulating a distinct Han Chinese state. He traded extensively, signed a commercial treaty with the English East Indies Company, and nearly launched an invasion of the Spanish Philippines. However, his return to China to participate in the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories (1674-1681) ruined his organization and paved the way for the Qing invasion and occupation of Taiwan in 1683, two years after his death.

This project moves beyond the standard Confucian trope of the Zhengs as ardent Ming loyalists or the Western narrative of ruthless pirate entrepreneurs, extreme discourses later appropriated to serve different nationalisms. Instead, the two men should be viewed as both the initiators and products of a dynamic and internally generated East Asian modernity within an interdependent economic and cultural region that nonetheless enjoyed significant interactions outside the system. Such an approach imbues maritime China with agency and revises the role commonly attributed to it as a marginalized appendage of its bureaucratic and agrarian continental counterpart. An examination of interstate relations unique to this East Asian world region also allows one to conceive of communities beyond the nation-state, and make sense of their identity formation and change, especially when combined with shifts in spatial settings.

For Mom and Dad, and Victoria

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	1
Dedication	i
Table of Contents.....	ii
List of Maps	iii
List of Tables	iv
List of Illustrations.....	v
Acknowledgements.....	ix
Note on Characters and Romanization	xiii
Measurement Conversions.....	xiii
Introduction.....	1
The Grand Stage of Maritime History	32
An Autonomous Maritime Commercial State	67
Caught Between Two Legitimacies	112
Brave New World	151
The Zheng “State” on Taiwan.....	195
A Question of Hairdos and Fashion.....	233
Conclusion	271
Character List.....	283
Works Cited	293

LIST OF MAPS

1. Fujian, Taiwan, and Surrounding Areas (c. 1655).....	xiv
2. The Eighteen Provinces of the Ming and Qing (c. 1655)	xv
3. Maritime East Asia (c. 1655).....	xvi
4. The Netherlands around 1650.....	36
5. A map of the Dutch settlements, the main targets of Zheng Chenggong's offensive.	163

LIST OF TABLES

1. Comparative value of Chinese and VOC silver exports to Nagasaki, 1648 to 1649 and 1650 to 1662 (p. 87)
2. Comparative value of Chinese and VOC silver exports to Nagasaki, 1648 to 1649 and 1650 to 1662 (p. 103)
3. The number and trading value of Chinese junks sailing from China to Southeast Asia per year, 1650 to 1660 (p. 104)
4. The Zheng organization's profits from the Japan and Southeast Asian markets, 1650-1662 (p. 107)
5. Graphic representation of the Zheng organization's profitability, 1650-1662 (p. 108)
6. Zheng revenue structure on Taiwan (p. 205)
7. Annual number of Zheng vessels arriving at Nagasaki, 1663-1673 (p. 216)
8. Comparative value of Chinese and VOC silver exports to Nagasaki, 1663 to 1672 (p. 222)

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Idol of Zheng Chenggong at the Zheng Ancestral Shrine in Tainan City, Taiwan. (p. 11)
2. Statue of Zheng Chenggong, erected by the Fujian provincial government in 2004, overlooks the city of Quanzhou from atop Daping Mountain. (p. 14)
3. Signpost of Zheng Chenggong near his birthplace at Kawauchi, on the island of Hirado, in Japan. The words read: “The Hero of Asia born in Hirado. Zheng Chenggong, Lord of the Imperial Surname.” (p. 15)
4. The stunningly beautiful landscape of Fujian is primarily characterized by mountain ranges, very few navigable rivers, and limited land for agriculture. (p. 33)
5. The alluvial plain formed by the Jiulong River near Zhangzhou City. (p. 35)
6. Senrigahama, near the castle town of Hirado. This marker denotes the exact location where Tagawa Matsu supposedly gave birth to Zheng Chenggong in 1624. (p. 43)
7. Rice paddies and pockets of small ponds now cover a flat plain once submerged underwater, beneath a bay separating Fort Zeelandia and the Dutch settlement of Tayouan from the rest of Taiwan. (p. 54)
8. The concentric circle model of *tianxia*. (p. 58)
9. The interpenetrating social composition of the Zheng organization. (p. 71)
10. Portrait of Zheng Chenggong. Detail from the painting “Zheng Chenggong Playing Chess,” of unknown origin and date. (p. 73)
11. The Zheng organization’s overseas trading structure. The highlighted boxes refer to institutions forming part of the official Zheng bureaucracy. (p. 82)
12. Model of a typical Chinese commercial junk in use during the Ming and Qing periods. (p. 85)
13. The Chinese Interpreters’ Office once stood on the grounds of the Nagasaki Prefectural Library. (p. 93)

14. Zheng Chenggong's seal, which bears his title of "Generalissimo Who Summons and Quells," bestowed by the Yongli Emperor in 1648. (p. 113)
15. One of Zheng Chenggong's main military bases at Riguangyan, or Sunshine Cliff, on Gulangyu, a small island next to Xiamen. He would station troops and store his supplies and provisions within these stockades, found mostly in hilly or mountainous areas. (p. 122)
16. One of Zheng Chenggong's surviving poems, written in his own calligraphy. (p. 123)
17. A tablet bearing the characters for "Military Boundary," personally written and signed by Zheng Chenggong. Found within a temple near the town of Dongshi, near Quanzhou, it is the only known surviving one out of what must have been many more similar markers that used to dot the southeastern Chinese coast. They strictly delineated the confines of his soldiers' activities, especially the area where they could legally station and plunder for goods, a testament to his strict control and discipline over his organization. (p. 137)
18. One of the cannons utilized by Zheng Chenggong's soldiers during his campaigns. (p. 143)
19. A garden on the grounds of He Tingbin's former mansion in Tainan, Taiwan, which would later become a part of the Tainan Public Meeting Hall under Japanese colonial rule. (p. 152)
20. The narrow Lu'ermen, or Lakjemeuse, Channel, the entry point for Zheng Chenggong's ships into Taiwan. (p. 162)
21. A sketch of Casteel Zeelandia. A narrow strip of land, seen on the right side of the image, connects the fortress at Tayouan with the main island in the background across from the bay. Shops and residences are found on the left side. (p. 165)
22. The grounds of Fort Provintia, which would later become the provisional Ming imperial palace and seat of Chengtian Prefecture. (p. 172)
23. Casteel Zeelandia, which later became the Zheng family's headquarters on Taiwan. Today, only the foundations remain of this once-impressive defensive network. On top of it, the Qing maintained a garrison until the late nineteenth century, just before Taiwan was ceded to Japan. The grounds of the fortress then became converted into an observation deck and a dormitory for customs officers. (p. 184)
24. The island of Tongshan, present-day Dongshan, served as a subsidiary base of the Zheng

organization. The walls, partly shown here, and the main fortress were built during the sixteenth century to repel piratical attacks. (p. 193)

25. Portrait of Zheng Jing with two attendants. Detail from a painting of unknown origin and date. (p. 197)

26. A shrine dedicated to Chen Yonghua at Tainan. (p. 202)

27. As in the time of Zheng Jing, the small and winding alleyways of Anping continue to bustle with commercial activity. (p. 208)

28. The entrance to the Confucian Shrine at Tainan, built under the supervision of Chen Yonghua in 1666. (p. 210)

29. Altar to the Jade Emperor, the Daoist ruler of Heaven and Earth, at the Shrine to the Supreme Heaven in Tainan. The plaque above bears the calligraphy of Zhu Shugui, Prince of Ningjing. (p. 212)

30. Painting of a Taiwan junk. (p. 213)

31. Qing-era statue of Shi Lang, with two attendants. (p. 246)

32. The young Kangxi Emperor in his study. (p. 248)

33. The Quanzhou Confucian Shrine, where the fateful negotiations between the Zheng envoys and Qing officials took place. (p. 254)

34. Elite and common forms of hairstyle and dress during the Ming. (p. 259)

35. The alteration of hairstyle and fashion after the Manchu occupation. (p. 260)

36. Zheng Jing's former mansion and pleasure gardens on the outskirts of Tainan. After the occupation of Taiwan in 1683, the Qing authorities converted the grounds into the Kaiyuan Temple. (p. 269)

37. A huge statue of Zheng Chenggong overlooks Xiamen Harbor from the islet of Gulangyu. (p. 280)

38. Xiamen today remains one of the key destinations for Mainland-bound Taiwanese investment.
(p. 282)

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Xing Hang
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Waltham, MA

NOTE ON CHARACTERS AND ROMANIZATION

For the transcription of Chinese characters, this work primarily utilizes the Pinyin system, the official Romanization standard of the People's Republic of China, which has gained increasing acceptance in Taiwan and other Chinese communities outside the Mainland, as well as in the West. Exceptions to this rule include instances of a more popularly accepted spelling in English (Taipei instead of Taibei, Chiang Kai-shek instead of Jiang Jieshi), or when an author utilizes his or her own variant in an article or book published in a foreign language (Wong Young-tsu instead of Wang Rongzu). If the same author also writes in Chinese, both Pinyin and the alternate Romanization would be listed, with the latter in parentheses, and vice versa when citing his or her foreign-language publication. Japanese names and concepts utilize the Revised Hepburn system, while Korean terms follow the Revised Romanization of Korean (RR), introduced by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Korea in 2000.

The characters for nearly all Romanized names and terms can be found in the "List of Characters" at the back of this work. Traditional Chinese characters are used when referring to historical place names, individuals, and scholarship from Taiwan. Terms specific to Mainland China after 1949 appear in simplified form. Similarly, Japanese terms relevant to the period after World War II are written according to the modified *kanji* resulting from the educational reforms of 1946.

MEASUREMENT CONVERSIONS

The following are the primary units of measurement found in this work, and their rates of conversion among one another and with corresponding present-day metric units:

1 *chō* = .9917 hectares

1 *dan* (picul) = 100 *jin* (catties) = 50 kg

1 *kan* = 100.2 taels = 3.75 kg

1 *jia* = 1 *morgen* = 0.96992 hectares

1 *li* = 150 *zhang* = 500 m

1 *mu* = 0.06667 hectares

1 *shi* = 82.81 kg

1 Zheng tael (*liang*) = 1 Spanish real = 2.85 guildens = 10 *qian* = 100 *fen* = 5 g



Map 1.

Adapted from Tonio Andrade, *How Taiwan became Chinese* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005)



Map 2.

Adapted from Map 2 in G William Skinner, "Regional Urbanization in Nineteenth-Century China," in *The City in Late Imperial China*, ed. Skinner (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1977), 214-215.



Map 3.

INTRODUCTION

A lone fleet of seafaring ships slowly sailed toward the harbor of Quanzhou one sunny afternoon in September 1669, or the eighth month of the eighth year of the reign of Emperor Shengzu (1654-1722), the Kangxi Emperor (r. 1661-1722) of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912).¹ This regional center of southern Fujian Province, on the southeastern Chinese coast, had been a renowned port for international commerce since the Tang Dynasty (618-906). Now, however, its harbor appeared all but abandoned, and its facilities rundown from neglect due to the Qing court's strict policies prohibiting trade and travel abroad.² Amid the sweltering heat and humidity of late summer, two high-ranking officials dispatched from the capital, Beijing, over 1,600 kilometers away to the north, awaited anxiously at the dock. When the vessels arrived and dropped anchor, Mingju (1635-1708), Secretary of the Board of Punishments (*Xingbu*), and Cai Yurong (1633-1699), an official under the Board of War (*Bingbu*), ran forward to greet two important-looking men who had emerged from one of the ships. After a brief exchange of formalities, they escorted the guests and their retinue to lodgings in the center of town.

Along the way, crowds of curious commoners and soldiers flocked to have a look at the exotic, yet familiar, characters that had set foot on their shores.³ Similar to the locals, they were born and grew up in southern Fujian and spoke the southern Fujianese, or Minnanese, language, but in terms of their dress and hairstyle, they appeared to be generations apart from their surroundings. As in the rest of the Qing Empire, the residents of Quanzhou wore tight, Manchu-style riding jackets and had their heads shaved, leaving a thin queue hanging in the back. The visitors, on the other hand, sported loose, flowing robes and horsehair caps, and coiled their long hair into a topknot. This fashion, while in vogue during the former Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), had been outlawed among all Han Chinese imperial subjects since the dynasty's collapse over two decades ago. Nevertheless, the residents of Quanzhou managed to "once again witness the majestic presence of Han officials" from a bygone era.⁴

Several days later, within the dark, incense-filled rooms of the Confucian Temple, the two sides sat down for weeks of extremely tense and difficult negotiations. In the end, the visitors finally threw down their cards, saying that "we refuse to shave our heads and would like to follow the precedents of Korea. We want to stay in Taiwan in perpetuity and become your ministers and pay tribute."⁵ Mingju and Cai likewise insisted that, while they had no problem with allowing their ruler to keep his land as a hereditary, autonomous fiefdom, they could not

¹ Shengzu forms the most essential part of the honorific title of the Qing ruler bestowed upon him after his death, while Kangxi refers to the name of the period of his reign. Chinese dates are based upon the combination of the years of an emperor's reign name and the months and dates of the lunar calendar. When referring to them, I use the following format: Kangxi 6.1/25 to stand for the twenty-fifth day of the first month in the sixth year of Kangxi.

² Yu Yonghe, *Pihai jiyao (Small Sea Travels)*, *Taiwan wenxian congkan (Taiwan Historical Documentary Collectanea)*, henceforth abbreviated as *TWWXCK*, 44 (Taipei: Taiwan yinhang jingji yanjiushi, 1959), 48.

³ Xia Lin, *Haiji jiyao (A Summary of Records of the Sea)*, *TWWXCK*, 128 (1960), 37.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁵ Jiang Risheng, *Taiwan waiji (An Unofficial Record of Taiwan)*, *TWWXCK*, 60 (1960), 255.

accept the example of Korea, the premier Qing vassal kingdom. Just as “father and son cannot wear different caps and gowns, how can rulers and ministers have different institutions and clothing? This matter of shaving the hair is what you must look up and obey with one will.”⁶ Tired and frustrated by the fruitless back and forth exchanges, Mingju and Cai decided to dispatch two envoys to accompany the visitors back home to persuade their ruler to submit. After an elaborate farewell ceremony, the four of them sailed away from the harbor of Quanzhou—a frontier outpost of Qing imperial control—into the vast and lawless maritime world beyond.

The ships made their way across the treacherous strait and, after a two-day journey, landed on the island of Taiwan, some 170 kilometers to the east of Fujian.⁷ In contrast to the rather desolate atmosphere of Quanzhou, the port of Anping, on the outskirts of present-day Tainan, bustled with commercial activity, with junks frequently arriving from and departing for ports across East and Southeast Asia. Here lay the seat of Zheng Jing (1642-1681)—the Hereditary Prince of Yanping (*Yanping wang shizi*)—ruler of an autonomous political entity and maritime trading enterprise nominally loyal to the fallen Ming Dynasty. He had inherited this territory several years ago, after the death of his father, the legendary sea lord Zheng Chenggong (1624-1662), also known as Koxinga. When they had anchored, Ke Ping and Ye Heng, two of Jing’s top officials, emerged from one of the ships and escorted their Qing counterparts, Mu Tianyan and Ji Quan, to see their ruler and continue the negotiations over the status of Taiwan and the position of its subjects within the Qing-dominated East Asian world order.

This small snapshot of negotiations with the Qing court during the summer of 1669 illustrates the deep contradiction faced by the Zheng organization throughout its existence. With roots in the piratical smuggling ring of Zheng Zhilong (c. 1604-1662) during the 1620s, in the waning days of the Ming, it came to dominate the intra-Asian trading lanes until its demise at the hands of the succeeding Qing in 1683. At their height, Zhilong’s main successors—his son, Chenggong, and grandson, Jing—achieved spectacular profits from their role as commercial middlemen, greater than its fiercest competitors: the Netherlands United East India Company (*Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, or VOC). Under them, moreover, the organization converted its tremendous economic influence, especially among Fujianese and overseas Chinese, into actual political power. After his meteoric rise to power in 1650, Zheng Chenggong successfully established an informal, autonomous maritime state ruling most of the Mainland coast from bases in southern Fujian. He even expanded overseas, seizing Taiwan from the Dutch in 1662 and opening it for Chinese colonization and exploitation before his death several months later.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 255.

⁷ Chinese ocean-faring ships measured distances in terms of *geng*, with ten *geng* equivalent to the time needed to travel one day and night on the sea. The distance from the Fujian coast to Taiwan was twelve *geng*. See Huang Shujing, *Taihai shicha lu* (*Miscellaneous Records of Being Dispatched across the Taiwan Strait*), *TWWXCK*, 4 (1957), 15-16. Assuming good weather and favorable winds, the ship would have arrived at Taiwan after two days.

Yet, at the same time, the continued viability of the Zheng family network depended upon relations with the imperial centers of power in inland China, particularly the ranks, titles, and other symbols of legitimacy granted by the Ming court. They had to reconcile their actions and beliefs with a neo-Confucian orthodoxy that, on the surface, appeared inimical to anything related to commerce and self-interest. Both Zheng Chenggong and Zheng Jing had to take on the additional role of cultural intermediaries, interpreting and justifying their maritime trading state according to accepted moral tenets. After the Ming collapsed in 1644 and the Manchus entered China, they successfully secured their legacy as loyal vassals of the former dynasty, and fashioned themselves as protectors of the Han Chinese and their customs against the desecration of these “barbarian” intruders.

While their official platform of resisting the Qing and restoring the Ming (*fan Qing fu Ming*) provided a convenient cover for their profit-making commercial activities, it is somewhat far-fetched to say that they opportunistically manipulated the ideals for their own ends. After all, both Zheng Chenggong and Zheng Jing were raised and educated in the neo-Confucian tradition and believed themselves to strictly adhere to its tenets. Just as they utilized this discourse to further their individual benefit, the discourse, too, committed them toward a certain range of actions morally acceptable to them and the opinions of their elite peers in official and gentry circles who received similar upbringing. This dialectic relationship explains the oscillation of father and son between maritime commerce and expansion abroad on the one hand, and, on the other, sustained campaigns against the Manchus to restore the Ming, which consumed a huge part of the profits.

To reconcile this gaping contradiction between trade and legitimacy, they concurrently entered into negotiations with the Qing on almost twenty occasions within a 40-year period, including the episode in the summer of 1669 mentioned at the beginning of this narrative. They sought a morally acceptable accommodation within the new dynastic order while preserving the interests of their enterprise. Although the Qing proved willing to grant them varying degrees of political autonomy and trading rights, the talks broke down each time on account of their refusal to shave their heads and adopt Manchu clothing as a sign of submission. Their inability to relinquish this bottom line of their legitimacy led them to direct confrontation with one of the mightiest continental empires in the early modern world, resulting in the organization’s ultimate collapse and surrender to the Qing in 1683. Still, we must not lose sight of the contingent nature of the Zheng organization’s defeat, and its potential to generate an alternative discourse for an expansive Chinese maritime kingdom based on Taiwan despite the failure of the talks.

The contradiction between trade and legitimacy that Zheng Chenggong and Zheng Jing faced, and their attempts to reconcile the two, complicates the singular, nationalist narrative in Mainland China and Taiwan of the two men as unwavering Ming loyalists. At the same time, it brings fresh perspectives and questions to the study of an era in East Asia when the tumultuous events of the Ming-Qing transition intersected with the first wave of European colonial incursion.

As the commercial success of the Zheng organization in the sea lanes and its military defeat of the Dutch vividly demonstrate, European powers during this period did not overwhelm hapless Asians to dominate the region politically and economically. We thus have to consider the merits of alternate “modernities” that interpenetrated with the Western variant but remained fundamentally separate from it. Moreover, I go beyond the standard trope of the nation-state to explore the effects of spatial shifts on identities, particularly the experience of Chinese outside the physical and cultural boundaries of “China.” A study of these margins and peripheries of the East Asian world order would, in turn, help us establish the contours of the overall trajectories of its main cores over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The Consensus and Its Contradictions

Chinese-language scholarship traditionally portrays Zheng Chenggong as a paragon of Confucian loyalty who never wavered in his quest to restore the Ming throughout his illustrious career, spanning from 1650 to 1662. Wong Young-tsu renders into English the opinion of a majority of academic literature on Taiwan when he writes that, for Zheng, “withdrawal of allegiance is not a question to be decided purely in terms of self-interest; it is a matter of honor and conviction.”⁸ Likewise, most Mainland scholars agree that “restoration, repaying the country, and saving the people form the core of his political thought, and remained consistent throughout his life.”⁹ Zheng’s dogmatic ideological stance against the Manchus, bolstered by a Confucian education and personal ties to Ming pretenders in the wake of dynastic collapse, differentiated him sharply from his amoral and opportunistic father.¹⁰ For these scholars, Zheng Zhilong’s singular pursuit of profit, on the contrary, had led him to abandon his ruler and surrender to the Qing whenever he saw it in his interests to do so.

Taiwan-based historians have similarly portrayed Chenggong’s son Jing as a carbon copy of his father, a loyal minister focused solely upon using Taiwan as a base to acquire the manpower and resources to retake the Mainland from Manchu “barbarians.” They point to his participation in the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories, which raged against Qing rule from 1674 to 1681, as evidence of his unwavering support for the former dynasty even when its restoration appeared hopeless. Zhuang Jinde, for instance, claims that Zheng Jing “was, time and again,

⁸ Wong Young-tsu, “Security and Warfare on the China Coast,” *Monumenta Serica: Journal of Oriental Studies* 35 (1981-1983): 133. For a typical example of this line of reasoning in Chinese, see Li Shunping, “Zheng Chenggong zusun sandai jingying Taiwan de qianhou” (“Account of the Management of Taiwan for Three Generations by Zheng Chenggong and His Descendants”), *Taipei wenxian zhizi (Taipei Historical Documents Quarterly)* 38 (1976): 261.

⁹ Chen Kongli, Chen Zaizheng, and Deng Kongzhao, “Zheng Chenggong pingjia de fangfalun wenti 郑成功评价的方法论问题” (“The Methodological Problem of Appraising Zheng Chenggong”), in *Qing dai Taiwan shi yanjiu (Studies of Taiwan History during the Qing Period)*, ed. Chen Zaizheng, Chen Kongli, and Deng Kongzhao (Xiamen, Fujian: Xiamen daxue chubanshe, 1986).

¹⁰ See, for example, Zhang Xiongchao, “Zheng Chenggong de pingfu yu zhiye zaojiu zhi yinsu” (“Zheng Chenggong’s Natural Endowments and the Factors behind His Career Achievements”), *Taiwan wenxian (Historical Documents on Taiwan)* 13.2 (1962): 13-16.

waiting for an opportunity to command his troops in a counterattack on the Mainland.”¹¹ Similarly, according to Wong Young-tsu, he “had no intention of discontinuing his father’s hard line of Ming loyalism even during the time of crisis.”¹² Where differing opinions come into play, they mainly took aim at Zheng Jing’s poor leadership skills and moral weaknesses as the main contributing factors to the failure of restoration.¹³ Although Mainland academic circles exhibit a greater diversity of opinions toward Zheng Jing, many of them concur with the observations of their counterparts on the opposite side of the Taiwan Strait. Zhu Shuangyi believes that the Qing treated Zheng Jing as a serious threat precisely because “he refused to rest in the small corner of Taiwan. Instead, time and again, he thought of taking up arms to recover his native land.”¹⁴

Such one-dimensional views not only oversimplify complex individuals of cosmopolitan backgrounds, but they also assume that their enterprise operated as a monolithic whole, obscuring its diversity and multiplicity of interests. Nowhere does the image of Zheng Chenggong and Zheng Jing as steadfast paragons of loyalty fail more to conform to actual evidence than in their continued negotiations, throughout their lifetimes, with their avowed nemesis: the Qing. Most Chinese-language studies tend to dismiss the talks as initiatives emanating entirely from the Qing court. Father and son would only passively respond to its offers, making unrealistic demands and taking advantage of the ceasefire to strengthen troops for future armed conflict. In fact, these works point to the ultimate failure of negotiations as yet another example of their unassailable moral character and loyalty to the Ming. Referring to Chenggong, the Taiwan-based scholar Chen Jiexian argues that he “would certainly not be moved by Qing ranks and...his motivation for the talks has nothing to do with acquiring personal gain or fame.”¹⁵ This narrative has profoundly influenced the otherwise more nuanced Western literature on the subject. Lynn Struve describes Chenggong’s actions as “the most cunningly deceptive performance of his career,” while John Wills doubts that he “ever intended to carry out” his submission.¹⁶

Yet, such views present an overly black-and-white picture by inadvertently reading the results back into the process to make it conform to the assumption of an ideal moral model.

¹¹ Zhuang Jinde, “Zheng-Qing heyi shimo” (“The Zheng-Qing Negotiations from Beginning to End”), *Taiwan wenxian* 12.4 (1961): 28.

¹² Wong Young-tsu, 152.

¹³ For one example of this view of Zheng Jing’s legacy, refer to Jin Chengqian, “Zheng Jing yu Ming-Zheng” (“Zheng Jing and the Ming-Zheng Regime”), *Taiwan wenxian* 23.3 (1972).

¹⁴ Zhu Shuangyi, “Zheng Jing shi Taidu fenzi’ shuo zhiyi” (“Critiquing the Saying ‘Zheng Jing is a Taiwanese Independence Activist’”), *Xiamen daxue xuebao: Zhexue shehui kexueban (Xiamen University Journal: Arts and Social Sciences Edition)* 167.1 (2005): 67.

¹⁵ Chen Jiexian, *Bu titou yu Liangguo lun (Not Shaving Hair and the Two-States Theory)* (Taipei: Yuanliu chuban gongsi, 2001), 132-133. Other works with a similar perspective include Zhuang Jinde, “Zheng-Qing heyi shimo” and Tong Yi, “Zheng-Qing heyi zhi jingwei” (“The Course of the Zheng-Qing Negotiations”), *Taiwan wenxian* 6 (1955).

¹⁶ Lynn A. Struve, *The Southern Ming* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 160 and John E. Wills, Jr., “Contingent Connections,” in *The Qing Formation in World-Historical Time*, ed. Lynn Struve (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2004), 187.

Although Zheng Chenggong and Zheng Jing certainly had negotiations in mind as a tactical ploy to build up strength for future confrontation, they were not averse to genuine compromise given favorable terms, even at the expense of their official Ming loyalist stance. As the Mainland scholar Chen Bisheng points out, the back-and-forth with the Qing occupied almost half of Chenggong's time as an anti-Manchu resistance fighter.¹⁷ These contacts with Qing authorities only grew more frequent under his successor, involving almost every subsequent year during his rule from 1662 to 1681.

The specific words and actions of father and son during the talks further call into question the sincerity of their commitment to restoration. Chenggong went as far as to say that, given appropriate conditions, he would not hesitate to become "a man of Qing."¹⁸ In 1659, in a stunning departure from previous practice, he even dispatched an envoy to Beijing to initiate talks on his own, without waiting for the Qing to approach him. Many scholars on both sides of the Taiwan Strait have either conveniently ignored this uncomfortable fact or relegated it to a minor footnote.¹⁹ Likewise, Zheng Jing emphasized that he "had no intention to return west" to the Mainland from Taiwan, and, as seen at the beginning of our study, expressed his wish to make his island a hereditary tributary kingdom of the Qing along the lines of Korea.²⁰ Such behavior on the part of the two men apparently demonstrates a willingness to put the interests of their own organization above that of the Ming loyalist cause.

Yet, we cannot entirely dismiss the valid counterpoints raised by Mainland and Taiwanese scholars in response to these implications of selfish opportunism. As Wong Young-tsu asks insightfully, if Zheng did not have any faith in Ming restoration, why would he "waste so many years and invest so many of his resources" in successive northern expeditions into Qing territory from 1655 to 1659?²¹ These abortive campaigns eventually culminated in 1659 in a massive siege of the former Ming capital and commercial center of Nanjing, far away from his sphere of influence in the southeastern maritime zone. Similarly, Zhuang Jinde argues that Zheng Jing's return to the Mainland coast from Taiwan in 1674 to join the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories raises doubts as to whether he had any serious intention at all to seek a permanent peace with the Qing. More importantly, the decisions that the two men made on both occasions not only appeared to violate their self-interest, but also resulted in severe crises threatening each time their organization's very survival. This project aims to explain its fundamentally contradictory actions through its awkward position on the crossroads of the maritime frontier, torn between the lucrative overseas trading lanes and the cultural links of morality and legitimacy that inextricably

¹⁷ Chen Bisheng, *Zheng Chenggong lishi yanjiu (Historical Research on Zheng Chenggong)* (Beijing: Jiuzhou chubanshe, 2000), 219.

¹⁸ Chen Bisheng, 144 and Wu Zhenglong, *Zheng Chenggong yu Qing zhengfu jian de tanpan (Negotiations between Zheng Chenggong and the Qing Government)* (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 2000), 84-85.

¹⁹ Wu Zhenglong, *Zheng Chenggong yu Qing zhengfu jian de tanpan*, 5-6. Tong Yi ignores this round of talks altogether in his article, while Zhuang Jinde uses a footnote to dismiss the event as "a minor afterthought within the entire history of negotiations between Zheng Chenggong and the Qing." See Zhuang Jinde, "Zheng-Qing heyi shimo," 38 n. 59.

²⁰ Jiang Risheng, 238.

²¹ Wong Young-tsu, 133.

tied it to continental power centers.

Narratives Constructed and Reconstructed

The high degree of ambiguity found in the words and actions of Zheng Chenggong and his son baffled even their own contemporaries. Their close ally Zhang Huangyan (1620-1664) suspected, on several occasions, that Chenggong “actually does not desire the revival of this dynasty [Ming].”²² Yet, elsewhere, Zhang praised him lavishly in his poems, and “felt great honor despite the defeat” outside Nanjing.²³ The rather scant textual records left by the organization leave room for an even greater multiplicity of imaginations. Most had perished or vanished into private collections amid warfare and the wholesale destruction of Zheng official documents, account books, and literary works by the Qing, not only because the family lost the conflict, but also due to the pervasive anti-Manchu rhetoric within them.²⁴ Of the surviving accounts, *Congzheng shilu* (*Veritable Record of the Expedition*) by Yang Ying, head of the Revenue Office, provides the most extensive firsthand narrative of Zheng Chenggong’s military campaigns, policies, and finances over the period of 1649 to 1662, when the record abruptly drops off. This remarkable text came to light in 1922, when researchers obtained a handwritten copy from one of his descendants at his ancestral village of Shijing, in present-day Quanzhou City. In 1931, the Institute of History and Philology of Academia Sinica published the first version of the manuscript.²⁵

During the eighteenth century, at the height of the *wenziyu* (literary inquisition), when books deemed politically subversive were confiscated and destroyed en masse, an anonymous scholar secretly copied a book containing fragments of poems, edicts, and memorials from Chenggong and Jing. He hoped—correctly as it turned out—that his thin, handwritten manuscript, entitled “*Yanping er wang yiji*” (“The Surviving Collection of the Two Princes of Yanping”), would “be preserved and transmitted for future generations to view their true relics once the net of words have somewhat loosened.”²⁶ Besides these limited snippets, some other individual poems by father and son have surfaced both in Quanzhou and Japan in recent years.²⁷ However, the most lucrative discovery involves a rare collection of 480 verses by Zheng Jing published under the title of *Dongbi lou ji* (*Collection from the Eastern Wall Pavilion*) around 1674, after he joined the

²² Shao Tingcai, *Dongnan jishi* (*Records of the Southeast*), *TWWXCK*, 96 (1961), 114, quoted in Chen Bisheng, 148.

²³ Zhang Huangyan, *Zhang Cangshui shiwen ji* (*Collection of Zhang Huangyan's Poems and Writings*), *TWWXCK*, 142 (1962), 31, quoted in Chen Bisheng, 204. See Zhang Huangyan, *Shiwen ji*, 61 for his eulogies to Zheng.

²⁴ A detailed historiographical study of these and other primary documents or contemporary historical accounts of the Ming-Qing transition can be found in Lynn A. Struve, *The Ming-Qing Conflict, 1619-1683* (Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Asian Studies, 1998).

²⁵ Yang Ying, *Congzheng shilu* (*Veritable Record of Accompanying the Expedition*), *TWWXCK*, 32 (1958), 1 and Struve, *Ming-Qing Conflict*, 279-280.

²⁶ “Yanping er wang yiji 延平二王遺集” (“The Surviving Collection of the Two Princes of Yanping”), in *Zheng Chenggong zhuan* (*Biographies of Zheng Chenggong*), *TWWXCK*, 67 (1960), 135.

²⁷ See, for instance, Zheng Guangnan, Fukuzumi Kunio, and Zheng Qinchi, eds., *Minzu hun* (*Spirit of the Nation*) (Taipei: Shijie Zheng shi zongqinhui, 1998).

Rebellion of the Three Feudatories.²⁸ Although such poems give insight into only those aspects of the two men's characters they wished to present as part of their self-image, their writings still allow us to capture some of their thoughts and concerns.

The vast corpus of memorials, rescripts, and edicts drawn from the Qing imperial archives in Beijing and Taipei, written in both Chinese and Manchu, contain some of the richest primary information available on the Zheng organization, and has yet to be fully exploited. Of course, since the original purpose of these official documents was to discuss ways of neutralizing or exterminating a major adversary, they would focus more upon the problems and weaknesses faced by the Zhengs, while downplaying Qing shortcomings or defeats. This caveat aside, however, they provide a vivid and detailed picture of the organization's political, social, and economic institutions and their evolution; obtained through covert intelligence operations, conversations with Zheng defectors, and forced confessions from prisoners. Moreover, the archives have left extensive records of the negotiations between the two sides, particularly the letters they exchanged laying out their respective conditions and terms. Taiwan's Academia Sinica, along with the China Number 1 Historical Archives in Beijing and Xiamen University in Fujian, has each published a large selection of these materials in several volumes.²⁹

The remaining documentation left behind by the Zheng organization come from non-Chinese accounts. Due to its close commercial ties with Japan, sources there have preserved many of the original correspondences that father and son and their subordinates exchanged with representatives of the Tokugawa *bakufu* (1600-1868) and prominent figures of the large overseas Chinese community at the port of Nagasaki.³⁰ Moreover, the famous poet and novelist Ōta Nanpo (1749-1823), an avid student of Ming history, includes within his collection of miscellaneous jottings several letters written by Chenggong to his Japanese brother Shichizaemon.³¹ Korean records provide us with another unlikely snapshot of the organization through interviews conducted by local and central officials of the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910) with the crew of one of Zheng Jing's agents, whose junk was shipwrecked on the shores of Jeju Island in 1667.³² Dutch and Spanish sources contain their fair share of the family's letters and

²⁸ Zhu Shuangyi, 67.

²⁹ The sources I refer to in this study include: *Zheng shi shiliao xubian* (*Historical Materials of the Zheng Regime, Continued*), TWWXCK, 168 (1963); *Zheng shi shiliao sanbian* (*Historical Materials of the Zheng Regime, Part 3*), TWWXCK, 175 (1963); *Tei shi kankei bunsho* (*Documents Related to the Zheng Regime*), TWWXCK, 69 (1960); Taiwan Research Institute of Xiamen University and the China Number One Archives, eds., *Zheng Chenggong dang'an shiliao xuanji* (*Volume of Selected Historical Archival Materials on Zheng Chenggong*) (Fuzhou, Fujian: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1985); and Taiwan Research Institute of Xiamen University and Editorial Department of China Number One Historical Archives, eds., *Kangxi tongyi Taiwan dang'an shiliao xuanji* (*Selections from the Historical Archives Related to the Kangxi Emperor's Unification of Taiwan*) (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1983).

³⁰ Many of these letters can be found in Hayashi Shunsai, *Ka'i hentai* (*The Metamorphosis from Chinese to Barbarian*), vol. 1, ed. Ura Ren'ichi (Tokyo: Tōyō bunko, 1958) and Historiographical Institute, Tokyo University, ed., *Tō tsūji kaisho nichiroku* (*The Daily Records of the Chinese Interpreters' Office*) (Tokyo: Tōkyō daigaku shuppan kai, 1955).

³¹ Ōta Nanpo, *Ichiwa ichigen* (*One Word by One Word*), vol. 2 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1928), 732-736.

³² The eighteenth-century Joseon scholar Seong Haeun has compiled these exchanges to form his *Jeongmi jeonshinrok* (*Record of Correspondences in the Jeongmi Year [1667]*) (Hanguk gojeon beonyeokwon [Institute for the Translation of Korean Classics], 2007) < <http://www.itkc.or.kr/MAN/index.jsp> >.

edicts as well, but these only come down to us in translation, hence leading to issues of potential misinterpretation and misrepresentation of their original intent.³³ In general, however, these non-Chinese documents provide fascinating and reliable insight into the structures and institutions of the organization's overseas trade, the types of goods exchanged, and foreign relations.

As seen, then, the relative scarcity of surviving original primary records, together with the seemingly contradictory actions of Zheng Chenggong and his son, leaves room for a wide variety of ways to imagine and shape their legacies. In groundbreaking new studies, the Taiwanese scholars Wu Zhenglong and Jiang Renjie already find these contestations at play in the historical accounts of the Zhengs written during the early to mid-Qing period, shortly after their demise.³⁴ Because these narratives make use of many documents unavailable to us today, and enjoy the benefit of personal recollection, they remain critical sources in our attempt to piece together a more holistic image of the family and organization. A better understanding of their differing agendas, and how the established discourse of loyal ministers evolved out of their multiple contestations, can help us exercise more caution in our analysis and avoid potential pitfalls.

Until the late nineteenth century, officially sponsored histories and biographies, and imperial compilations such as the *Shilu (Veritable Records)* of the Manchu emperors, strictly conformed to the Qing assessment of the organization as a group of “sea bandits (*haikou*),” who harassed the coast and brought endless misery to its inhabitants.³⁵ Aside from the state-sanctioned negativity, many of the early private accounts, or “wild histories (*yeshi*),” primarily by Ming sympathizers, viewed the Zhengs unfavorably for other reasons. Shao Tingcai (1648-1711) and Wen Ruilin accused Chenggong of opportunistically “usurping [Ming] imperial prerogatives” to enhance his own power.³⁶ Zha Jizuo (1601-1676), a former adherent of Zhang Huangyan, suspected that he occupied Taiwan from the Dutch in 1662 to “protect himself from afar.”³⁷ These authors held his son, Jing, in even lower regard, noting that he only “sought temporary ease (*touan*) overseas”, with no commitment at all to the Ming cause.³⁸

Other narratives offer a more positive assessment of the family's legacy. They praise father and son for their ability to uphold Ming institutions and provide political stability for far longer

³³ See, for instance, the exchange of letters between Zheng Chenggong and the VOC in Johannes Huber, “Relations between Cheng Ch'eng-kung and the Netherlands East India Company in the 1650s,” in *Around and About Formosa*, ed. Leonard Blussé (Taipei: Ts'ao Yung-ho Foundation for Culture and Education, 2003).

³⁴ See Wu Zhenglong, *Zheng Chenggong yu Qing zhengfu jian de tanpan*, 228-242 and Jiang Renjie, *Jiegou Zheng Chenggong (Deconstructing Zheng Chenggong)* (Taipei: Sanmin shuju, 2006), 12-20.

³⁵ Examples of works that toe the Qing official line include the biographies of Zheng Chenggong and his family in *Nichen zhuan (Biography of Rebellious Ministers)*, *Taiwan wenxian huikan (Collectanea of Taiwan Historical Documents)*, henceforth abbreviated as *TWWXHK*, 1.1 (Beijing: Jiuzhou chubanshe and Xiamen, Fujian: Xiamen daxue chubanshe, 2004), 381-408; Shi Lang, *Jinghai jishi (A Record of the Pacification of the Sea)*, *TWWXCK*, 13 (1958); *Qing Shizu shilu xuanji (Selections from the Veritable Records of Emperor Shizu of the Qing)* (henceforth known as *Shunzhi shilu*), *TWWXCK*, 158 (1963); and *Qing Shengzu shilu xuanji (Selections from the Veritable Records of Emperor Shengzu of the Qing)* (henceforth known as *Kangxi shilu*), *TWWXCK*, 165 (1963).

³⁶ Wen Ruilin, *Nanjiang yishi (Unraveling the History of the Southeastern Lands)*, *TWWXCK*, 132 (1962), 560 and Shao, 115.

³⁷ Zha Jizuo, *Lu chunqiu (The Annals of the Regent Lu)*, *TWWXCK*, 118 (1961), 74.

³⁸ Wen, 329.

than any of the numerous other loyalist resistance movements that sprang up like wildfire in the wake of dynastic collapse.³⁹ Their exemplary behavior, even if on an overseas island, demonstrates the steadfast loyalty of its members, especially Chenggong, who would “rather violate his father’s wishes than turn against his country.”⁴⁰ The writings of the southern Fujianese gentry scholars Xia Lin and Ruan Minxi during the 1690s, along with the recollections of other former elite participants or commanders in the organization, tend to cohere around this view.⁴¹

Over the course of the Qing, the contested discourse gradually consolidated into this second image of a solitary minister (*guchen*) whose diehard loyalty to his ruler exceeded even filial obligations to his father, and whose refusal to surrender led him to found a new land overseas for the Han people on Taiwan. Ralph Croizier shows that the key reason for this transformation lay in the early conversion of Zheng’s already colorful life into the popular legends and oral traditions of Fujian and Taiwan. *Taiwan waiji* (*An Unofficial Narrative of Taiwan*), written in 1704 by the Fujianese gentry Jiang Risheng, systematically incorporated such elements of the cultural hero into the written format of a historical romance similar to the famous *Sanguo yanyi* (*Romance of the Three Kingdoms*). At the same time, his book succeeded in codifying the family’s legacy according to more rigid standards of Confucian morality through extensive interviews with participants in the organization and consultations with his father, Jiang Meiao, a former commander.⁴² The trope of the loyal minister resulting from this hugely influential synthesis became solidified as survivors from the Zheng period gradually passed from the scene.

During the late nineteenth century, faced with increasing Western imperialist penetration into Taiwan, the Qing government could simultaneously capitalize upon the ambiguity of Zheng Chenggong and son, and their existing regional reputations to reverse its verdict and incorporate them into the official pantheon as loyal Ming officials. The shift aimed to rally the elites and commoners of Fujian and Taiwan against foreign encroachment by upholding the superior moral qualities of these mythical heroes as examples to emulate.⁴³ The Qing’s standardization of the family’s image on a regional scale would turn against itself, as it paved the way for his incorporation into the growing discourse of nationalism at the dawn of the twentieth century. He would evolve into the first truly “Chinese” hero, who led a heroic struggle against the alien Manchu invaders on behalf of the entire “Chinese” people.⁴⁴ In recent decades, the various components of the family’s legacy; including loyalty to the Ming, anti-Qing resistance, and

³⁹ Huang Zongxi, *Cixing shimo* (*The Imperially Bestowed Surname from Beginning to End*), *TWWXCK*, 25 (1958), 7-8.

⁴⁰ *Nantian hen* (*The Scar in the Southern Sky*), *TWWXCK*, 76 (1960), 428.

⁴¹ See, for instance, Xia; Ruan Minxi, *Haishang jianwen lu* (*Record of Things Seen and Heard on the Sea*), *TWWXCK*, 24 (1958) and Zheng Yiju 鄭亦鄒, “Zheng Chenggong zhuan” (“Biography of Zheng Chenggong”), in *Zheng Chenggong zhuan*, 1-39.

⁴² Ralph C. Croizier, *Koxinga and Chinese Nationalism* (Cambridge, MA: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, 1977), 6-9; Jiang Renjie, 9-12; and Jiang Risheng, 15.

⁴³ Croizier, 34-35; Wu Zhenglong, *Zheng Chenggong yu Qing zhengfu jian de tanpan*, 246-250; and Jiang Renjie, 27-32.

⁴⁴ Jiang Renjie, 32-37. The most representative work of this period is Fei Shi 匪石, “Zheng Chenggong zhuan” (“Biography of Zheng Chenggong”), in *Zheng Chenggong zhuan*, first published by Chinese revolutionary activists in Tokyo in 1904.

opening of Taiwan; still play an important role in articulating contested national communities.

After its withdrawal to Taiwan in 1949, Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government heavily promoted the view of Zheng Chenggong and his descendants as unwavering Ming loyalists, who



Figure 1. Idol of Zheng Chenggong at the Zheng Ancestral Shrine in Tainan City, Taiwan.

Photograph by author, 2009

utilized the island as a bastion for eventual restoration.

This narrative accords well with the official goal, until the late 1970s, of counterattacking the Mainland and recovering it from the Communists, who, like the Manchus, were destroying China's culture and traditions.⁴⁵ The prolific number of articles and books published during the three decades from 1950 to 1980 under these auspices continues to have a far-reaching impact on present-day scholarship related to the family. Despite their heavy methodological conformity to Nationalist dogma, they nevertheless leave behind meticulous, original research on almost every aspect of the organization, including its agrarian development of Taiwan, foreign trade, and military and civilian institutions.⁴⁶ Moreover, the authorities sponsored ambitious compilation projects of historical sources related to the Zheng family. The massive, 309-volume *Taiwan wenxian congkan* (*Taiwan Historical Documentary Collectanea*), published from 1957 to 1972 by the Economic Research Office of the Bank of Taiwan, gives us access for the first time to a systematically chosen corpus of Chinese-language works on Taiwanese history. Sources

related to the Zheng period occupy a significant share of the compilation.

During this period, scholars opposed to Nationalist one-party rule and who champion a native Taiwanese identity separate from China did not object to the image of the Zhengs as loyal servants of the Ming house, but differed from the earlier narrative primarily in their moral judgment. According to the famous dissident and exile Shi Ming, because of the Zheng organization's strong attachment to the Mainland, they established a ruthless, outsider colonial

⁴⁵ Croizier, 63-70 and Jiang Renjie, 118-123.

⁴⁶ Some prominent examples include, in thematic order, Cao Yonghe, "Zheng shi shidai zhi Taiwan kenchi" ("Land Development in Taiwan during the Zheng Era"), *Taiwan yanjiu congkan* (*Collectanea of Research on Taiwan*), 1 (1954); Zheng Ruiming, "Taiwan Ming-Zheng yu Dongnanya zhi maoyi guanxi chutan" ("A Preliminary Investigation of the Trade Relationship between the Ming-Zheng Regime and Southeast Asia," *Guoli Taiwan shifan daxue lishixue bao* (*National Taiwan Normal University Journal of the Study of History*) 14 (1986); Huang Dianquan, *Zheng Chenggong shishi yanjiu* (*Historical Research on Zheng Chenggong*) (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1975); and Sheng Qingyi, "Ming-Zheng neizheng kaolue" ("A Brief Study on the Internal Policies of the Ming-Zheng Regime"), *Taiwan wenxian* 27.2 (1976). In fact, their coverage was so detailed that it even extended to debates over the cause of Zheng Chenggong's death or the precise location and date of his landing on Taiwan. See, for instance, Li Shengyue, "Zheng Chenggong siyin kao" ("A Study of the Cause of Zheng Chenggong's Death"), *Wenxian zhuan* (*Specialized Historical Documents*) 1.3 (1950) and Yang Yunping, "Zheng Chenggong denglu Taiwan de riqi" ("The Date of Zheng Chenggong's Landing on Taiwan"), *Taiwan fengwu* (*Taiwan Folkways*) 40.1 (1980).

regime on the island with little commitment to its long-term development.⁴⁷ Chen Jiahong, on the other hand, argues that both father and son desired political independence, and their regime satisfied many of its conditions. However, their nominal goal of restoration and its underlying Confucian morality, what Chen calls the “Mainland character (*Dalu xing*)” of their value system, prevented any compromise, and hindered Taiwan’s path toward a normal “maritime country.”⁴⁸ Such narratives see “China” and its entire intellectual tradition as a hindrance that condemned the island to a fate as remote frontier outpost rather than a core of the maritime Asian trading lanes.

These voices would continue to be heard after the lifting of martial law and spread of Taiwanese identity into mainstream society in the 1990s, but would be joined by others that celebrate the loyalty of Zheng Chenggong and Zheng Jing as the reason for Taiwan’s prosperity and success. According to this line of opinion, the two men’s superior moral character became their motivating force to open up a new frontier for the Han people and bring them into extensive contact with the rest of the contemporary world through the promotion of overseas trade.⁴⁹ Gong Xianzong extols father and son for their ability, when faced with defeat and desperation on the Mainland, to completely change course and fight again with the Dutch for a remote island abroad, and, furthermore, develop it and preserve Ming institutions there for twenty more years. “Compared to Napoleon’s imprisonment on Saint Helena, or Chiang Kai-shek’s inability to make a comeback,” he beams, “their endurance, perseverance, and ability are rarely seen in history!”⁵⁰

In recent years, the academic focus on Taiwan has shifted away from the Zheng era due to disagreements over its scholarly direction in a pluralistic intellectual setting, the appropriation of its legacy on the Mainland to serve its own brand of nationalism, and the consensus that “everything about the topic has already been researched.”⁵¹ Increased attention is now paid to the preceding Dutch and Spanish periods and the era under Japanese colonial rule during the first half of the twentieth century. Official policy heavily promoted this orientation under the administrations of Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shui-bian, both native Taiwanese. It formed part of an effort to articulate a new national past characterized by multiethnic diversity and multilateral economic and cultural connections, and deemphasizing the previous primacy of Chinese identity.

Some of the leading pioneers of this new focus include Cao Yonghe, one of the eminent founders of Taiwan studies, and Jiang Shusheng, a brilliant scholar based at Leiden University, in the Netherlands. In an ongoing collaboration with Leonard Blussé of Leiden and other Dutch scholars, they are helping to edit and publish a large selection of Dutch-period sources from

⁴⁷ Shi Ming is the author of *Taiwan ren sibainian shi* (*The Four-hundred-year History of the Taiwanese People*), Chinese ed. (San Jose, CA: Pengdao wenhua gongsi, 1980). Originally published in Japan in 1962, the book utilizes history as a means of castigating the “foreign,” “colonial” Nationalist dictatorship under Chiang Kai-shek. See Jiang Renjie, 125.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴⁹ Jiang Renjie, 127-130.

⁵⁰ Gong Xianzong, “Cong *Taiwan waiji kan san Zheng de haiguo yingxiong xinxiang*” (“Observing the Heroic Maritime Image of the Three Zhengs from the *Unofficial Record of Taiwan*”), *Lishi* (*History*) 4 (1999): 93.

⁵¹ Zheng Yongchang, National Chenggong University, personal communication, Tainan, Taiwan, 3 March 2009.

manuscripts in the Nationaal Archief (National Archives) in The Hague. Besides doing cutting-edge research on these materials, they have also managed to translate some of them into Chinese.⁵² Meanwhile, a committee headed by José Borao-Mateo of National Taiwan University has ambitiously compiled all of the documentary sources related to the Spanish era on the island in a huge, two-volume collection, which came out in 2002.⁵³ These projects have greatly enhanced our understanding of a previously neglected part of Taiwan's past, but they also make available vast amounts of new firsthand information on the Zheng organization that has now been neglected in the new ideological climate.

Like its counterparts on the other side of the Taiwan Strait, academic literature in the People's Republic of China generally does not question the loyalty of Zheng Chenggong. However, Mainland scholars tend to dismiss this quality, in and of itself, as a bond among members of the ruling elite, with no relationship to the daily challenges of the common people. Chen Guoqiang points out that "if resisting the Qing and restoring the Ming represents the behavior of a national hero (*minzu yingxiong*), then Zheng Chenggong should become a national hero of the Ming Dynasty and not a hero of the entire Chinese race (*Zhonghua minzu*)."⁵⁴ His significance precisely lay in his ability to translate his "feudal" loyalty into a broader commitment to the nation and people by taking the "correct" stance and fulfilling his inevitable historical destiny to liberate Taiwan from the hideous shackles of Dutch colonialism and return it to China. This narrative reflects the twin influences of deterministic, anti-imperialist Marxist-Leninist historiography and the modern nationalist goal of recovering the island.⁵⁵ The second strand, nationalism, has grown increasingly prominent in recent years due to the collapse of world communism and rise of native Taiwanese identity, which has fueled political tensions across the strait.

The Mainland government enthusiastically encourages research on the Zheng organization to bolster its official position of Taiwan as belonging to China since time immemorial, and to provide historical precedents and lessons for a potential future military operation. As a result, the popularity of the topic has soared, especially in Fujian, where it was further stimulated by the discovery of previously unpublished texts and artifacts from private collections and local excavations. In 2004, Chen Zhiping and other scholars from Xiamen University and Fujian Normal University put the initial finishing touches on a massive government-sponsored project

⁵² Refer to Leonard Blussé et al., eds., *De Dagregisters van het Kasteel Zeelandia, Taiwan (The Daily Registers of Zeelandia Castle, Taiwan)*, henceforth known as *Zeelandia dagregisters*, 4 vols. (The Hague: Instituut voor Nederlandse Geschiedenis, 1986-2000). Jiang Shusheng has translated three of these volumes into Chinese, in Jiang Shusheng, ed. and trans., *Relanzhecheng rizhi (The Daily Registers of Zeelandia Castle)*, 3 vols. (Tainan, Taiwan: Tainan City Government, 2003-present). See also Chiang Shu-sheng (Jiang Shusheng), annot. and trans., *De missiven van de VOC-gouverneur in Taiwan aan de Gouverneur-generaal te Batavia (Letters from the VOC Governor in Taiwan to the Governor-General at Batavia)*, Part 1: 1622-1626 (Taipei: SMC Publishing, 2007). Other volumes are forthcoming.

⁵³ José Eugenio Borao Mateo et al., eds., *Spaniards in Taiwan*, 2 vols. (Taipei: SMC Publishing, 2002).

⁵⁴ Chen Guoqiang 陈国强, "Lun Zheng Chenggong de lishi gongxian 论郑成功的历史贡献" ("On the Historical Contribution of Zheng Chenggong"), in *Zheng Chenggong yanjiu (Research on Zheng Chenggong)*, ed. Fang Youyi (Xiamen: Xiamen daxue chubanshe, 1994), 20.

⁵⁵ Jiang Renjie, 131-142 and Croizier, 70-74.



Figure 2. Statue of Zheng Chenggong, erected by the Fujian provincial government in 2004, overlooks the city of Quanzhou from atop Daping Mountain.

Photograph by author, 2009

that aimed to include all Taiwan-related primary documents not included in the *Taiwan wenxian congban*. The publication, a result of twenty years of hard work and entitled the *Taiwan wenxian huikan* (*Collectanea of Taiwan Historical Documents*), comprises one hundred volumes of titles in seven parts. Since 1982, Xiamen University has also held several major international conferences on the Zheng organization, inviting scholars from both sides of the strait, as well as specialists from Japan and the West. These meetings have produced several edited volumes of specialized articles, which have greatly extended our knowledge, from a Mainland perspective, of the areas covered previously by the Taiwanese publications.⁵⁶

From the official standpoint of anti-imperialism and “reunification” with Taiwan, Zheng Chenggong could readily qualify as a national hero, but Mainland scholarly opinion exhibits a far more polarized attitude toward Zheng Jing. While Zhu Shuangyi, as shown above, praises him for his loyalism, Lin Qian and Wang Zhengyao take the diametrically opposite position, accusing him of betraying his father and attempting Taiwanese independence during his time on

⁵⁶ The two most prominent publications include Xiamen University History Department, ed., *Zheng Chenggong yanjiu lunwen xuan* (*Selection of Research Articles on Zheng Chenggong*) (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1982) and the Scholarly Committee of the Academic Conference on Zheng Chenggong, ed., *Zheng Chenggong yanjiu lunwen xuan xuji* (*Selection of Research Articles on Zheng Chenggong, Continued*) (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1984).

the island. They based this conclusion upon Jing's behavior during his negotiations with the Qing court in the late 1660s, especially his claim, made on multiple occasions, that "Taiwan is



Figure 3. Signpost of Zheng Chenggong near his birthplace at Kawauchi, on the island of Hirado, in Japan. The words read: "The Hero of Asia born in Hirado. Zheng Chenggong, Lord of the Imperial Surname."

Photograph by author, 2009

far away overseas, and not within the realm of the Middle Kingdom," and his requests to emulate the Korea example.⁵⁷ These secessionist tendencies justified the later conquest of Taiwan under the Kangxi Emperor in 1683 as a necessary act of national "reunification." We have thus established the constructed nature of the Zheng family's image as loyal Ming officials over the course of the Qing. This view continues to occupy modern discourse to serve nation-building efforts in both Taiwan, as either the Republic of China or a country in its own right, or the People's Republic on the Mainland.

In Japan, where Zheng Zhilong once resided and fathered Chenggong with a Japanese wife, narratives similarly praise the family for their loyalty. These accounts, however, emphasize that the unyielding spirit of sacrifice and martial vigor on the part of Chenggong and Jing for the Ming court could only come from their Japanese blood. In contrast, their cowardly Chinese partners, even Zhilong, quickly surrendered once the Manchus invaded.⁵⁸ As Aoyama Nobuyuki (1776-1843), director of the *Shōkōkan* (Historical Research Institute) of the Mito domain, extolled in the preface to a biography of the Zheng family, father and son "are not only the glory of the Ming,

but also that of this Divine Land."⁵⁹ Jiang Renjie has shown convincingly that this focus upon their "Japaneseness" became an instrument of military expansion and nationalism in the modern

⁵⁷ Jiang Risheng, 239, quoted in Wang Zhengyao, *Qing shi shude (Narrative of Qing History)* (Shenyang, Liaoning: Liaoning minzu chubanshe, 2004), 41 and Lin Qian, "Kangxi tongyi Taiwan de zhanlue juece" ("The Kangxi Emperor's Strategic Decision to Unify Taiwan"), *Qing shi yanjiu (Studies in Qing History)* 3 (2000): 44.

⁵⁸ For example, see Nishikawa Joken, *Nagasaki yawasō (Rough Draft of a Night Talk on Nagasaki)* (Nagasaki: Nagasaki Municipal Government, 1926), 42-43.

⁵⁹ Kawaguchi Chōju, *Taiwan Tei shi kiji (A Record of Taiwan's Zheng Regime)*, *TWWXCK*, 5 (1958), 75. This narrative of loyalty, which initially circulated among the elites, acquired instant popular appeal with the debut of a series of puppet plays (*jōruri*) about the family, most notably *Kokusenya kassen (The Battles of Koxinga)* in 1715, by the famous dramatist Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1725). Along with other dramas, the Zheng family's legacy and fame quickly spread into mainstream Tokugawa society in the late seventeenth century. See Jiang Renjie, 44-51.

era, particularly to justify Japanese colonial rule over Taiwan and win over its reluctant elites.⁶⁰ During World War II, numerous publications further utilized their legacy of moral uprightness and maritime trade to justify the “East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere,” aiming to create a common regional historical legacy centered upon Japan.⁶¹

During the post-war period, Japanese scholarship on the Zheng organization has continued this tradition, in part, and congregated around studies of its commercial network. Scholars, notably Yamawaki Teijirō and Iwao Seiichi, have done some eye-opening quantitative studies on the number and types of ships entering port, main trading destinations, and estimates of overall revenues and profits.⁶² In large part, they base their data off of compilations of foreign intelligence gathered at Nagasaki, the only port in Japan open for overseas trade from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. Since it forbade Japanese subjects from sailing abroad, the *bakufu* required the local magistrate, with the assistance of Chinese and Dutch translators, to interview the crew of each incoming ship for important news about Asia and the world. These compilations include Hayashi Shunsai’s (1618-1688) *Ka’i hentai* (*The Metamorphosis from Chinese to Barbarian*) and the massive, eight-volume *Tsūkō ichiran* (*A Glance at Commerce and Navigation*) by his descendant, Akira (1800-1859), in the nineteenth century.⁶³ Both men come from a long and respected lineage of official Tokugawa Confucian scholars. Besides them, Nagasaki-based writers, such as Ehara Uji and Nishikawa Joken (1648-1724), also provide fascinating but more unreliable tidbits of the Zheng organization’s trade and other activities through local hearsay and interviews.⁶⁴

Outside of the East Asian cultural sphere, our biggest source of information on the Zheng family comes from Western-language archives and publications. More so than the Japanese sources, they reveal to us a radically different side of the Zheng family: as heartless, cruel marauders, cunning and ruthless businessmen, and rulers of their own maritime kingdom. Even contemporary records recounted his exploits in a highly gruesome manner. Writing in the

⁶⁰ Jiang Renjie, 65-72. One typical academic publication of this period is Inagaki Magobē, *Tei Seikō* (*Zheng Chenggong*) (Taihoku [Taipei]: Taiwan keisei shinpōsha, 1929).

⁶¹ One representative work from that era, and which still has significant influence upon the academic discourse today on the topic, is Ishihara Michihiro, *Min matsu Shin sho Nippon kisshi no kenkyū* (*Research on the Requests for Japanese Soldiers during the Late Ming and Early Qing Periods*) (Tokyo: Fuzanbō, 1944). According to the introduction, written by the eminent Japanese sinologist Wada Sei, “when the construction of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere has become our aim, the treatment of books like this one on South China and the Pacific Ocean will, as a matter of course, raise the attention of the people of our times.” See Ishihara, 2.

⁶² For instance, refer to Iwao Seiichi, “Kinsei Nisshi bōeki ni kansuru sūryōteki kōsatsu” (“An Investigation of the Trading Figures between China and Japan during the Early Modern Era”), *Shigaku zasshi* (*Journal of Historical Studies*) 62.11 (1953) and Yamawaki Teijirō, “The Great Trading Merchants, Cocksinja and His Son,” *Acta Asiatica* 30 (1976).

⁶³ The title *Ka’i hentai* comes from a passage in its introduction, written in 1674, that laments how “the Tartars have wreaked havoc across the Central Plain. This is the transformation of Chinese into a barbarous state of existence 是華變於夷之態也.” See Hayashi, 1. Refer also to Hayashi Akira, *Tsūkō ichiran* (*A Glance at Commerce and Navigation*), 8 vols. (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1912-1913). Another prominent work of this genre is Kondō Morishige, *Gaiban tsūshokō* (*General Account of Commerce with the Foreign Lands*), in *Kondō Seisai zenshū* (*The Complete Works of Kondō Morishige*), vols. 44-46 (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1905-1906).

⁶⁴ See Nishikawa, *Nagasaki yawasō* and Ehara Uji, *Nagasaki mushi megane* (*Spectacles of Nagasaki*), *Nagasaki bunken sōsho* (*Collectanea of Nagasaki Historical Documents*), 1.5 (Nagasaki: Nagasaki bunken, 1975).

1670s under the penname of C. E. S., Frederick Coyett (c. 1615-1687), the last VOC governor of Taiwan who had surrendered to Chenggong in 1662, lambasted him as a bloodthirsty pirate; “out of revenge, he would have subjected even the women and children to all manner of torments.”⁶⁵ Another eyewitness account came from the Spanish Dominican priest Vittorio Riccio (1621-1685), who served as a missionary in Fujian, and lived for years under Zheng rule and maintained extensive contacts with the main leaders of the organization.⁶⁶ Upon learning of Zheng Chenggong’s death, Riccio actually cheered “the merciful Lord” for “properly killing, with his sovereign hand, that wicked tyrant in the prime of his life.”⁶⁷

This discourse of the ruthless, vicious lord of the seas has continued to color academic scholarship and popular opinion in the West. Using the example of a letter from Zheng Chenggong to the Dutch threatening to forcefully obtain an unpaid sum of money, from women and children if necessary, Johannes Huber expresses shock at his brutal realism and practicality. To satisfy his own interests, Zheng refused to even pay lip service to “Confucian pieties about taking care of his people.”⁶⁸ Likewise, according to Robert Antony, the Zhengs oversaw “a maritime empire that was financed as much by plunder and extortion as it was by trade... The core of [its] followers remained pirates.”⁶⁹ Jonathan Clements’s epic narrative, *Pirate King*, published in 2004, is the first-ever English-language rendition of the family’s story for a popular audience. The introduction to his work summarizes the Western perspective on Zheng Chenggong, which would readily apply to his descendants as well:

“This, then, is the man that was known to European writers as that ‘heathen idolator and devil worshipper,’ the mutilator of his enemies and a heartless brute who would execute a Dutch priest and ravish the man’s bereaved daughter on the same day...”⁷⁰

In addition to the overall morally negative focus, the multilingual European literature on the subject has given us a detailed look at the Zheng organization’s overseas trade and diplomatic interactions in the Western Pacific. From the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, the VOC kept meticulous daily reports, preserved for almost every year, from incoming ships at its main colony of Batavia, present-day Jakarta, on the island of Java, of news from its colonies and trading posts across Asia and their surrounding areas. Similar journals, known as *dagregisters* (daily

⁶⁵ C. E. S., *’t Verwaerloosde Formosa (The Neglected Formosa)*, annot. G. C. Molewijk (Zutphen, The Netherlands: Walburg Pers, 1991), 172. Apparently, the abbreviation C. E. S. stands for Coyett and Socii, the Latin for Coyett and Allies. Coyett intended the book to serve as a vindication for the accusations leveled against him by the Dutch East India Company headquarters, which held him responsible for the loss of Taiwan.

⁶⁶ For a concise biography of his life and times, see John E. Wills, Jr., “The Hazardous Missions of a Dominican: Victorio Riccio, O. P., in Amoy, Taiwan, and Manila,” in *Actes du Ile colloque international de sinologie (Acts of the Second International Colloquium of Sinology)*, vol. 4 (Paris: Les belles lettres, 1980).

⁶⁷ Borao Mateo et al., vol. 2, 608.

⁶⁸ Huber, “Relations between Cheng and the VOC,” 217.

⁶⁹ Robert J. Antony, *Like Froth Floating on the Sea* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 33.

⁷⁰ Jonathan Clements, *Pirate King* (Thrup, Gloucestershire, UK: Sutton Publishing, 2004), 5.

registers), were also maintained for important Dutch settlements, including Nagasaki and Taiwan.⁷¹ The heads of these trading factories and colonies also exchanged regular letters with Batavia, which would compile their contents and the daily events recounted by the *dagregisters* in summary form in annual reports (*generale missiven*) to the Company headquarters in Amsterdam.⁷² These records are primarily devoted to the state of the VOC's commercial interests, but they also pay significant attention to the finances of the Zheng organization, its fiercest competitor. We can obtain copies of the Zhengs' letters in translation, as mentioned above, along with detailed information not available anywhere else regarding the goods exchanged, number of ships, and revenues and profits.

Besides the official Dutch records, and the fascinating eyewitness accounts of Frederick Coyett and Vittorio Ricci, Jiang Shusheng recently discovered within the Nationaal Archief a remarkable diary by Philip Meij, a Dutch land surveyor captured and made prisoner during the Chinese invasion of Taiwan. Meij provides an intimate portrait of Zheng Chenggong, including his physical appearance, personality, and the difficult policy dilemmas he faced during his initial months on the island.⁷³ We also have a detailed narrative of the economic situation under Zheng Jing from the archives of the English East India Company, preserved in the India Office in London. The English signed a commercial treaty with him, and maintained an active presence through trading posts on Taiwan and coastal Fujian from 1670 to 1683. Similar to the VOC, their letters and reports contain valuable information on the trading situation there, but often delve into even more detail, such as providing the actual prices of goods in domestic and overseas markets and intelligence on Jing's planned invasion of the Philippines.⁷⁴

Due to the heavily material perspective of Western-language sources, academic scholarship on the Zheng organization in English has also cohered around its overseas trade and bilateral interactions with the Netherlands, England, and Spain. Leonard Blussé, John Wills, and the Italian scholar Patrizia Carioti, in particular, have done groundbreaking research on these areas

⁷¹ The *dagregisters* from 1624 to 1682 have been published, in several massive volumes, during the early twentieth century by scholars working for Dutch colonial administration in Batavia. An ongoing publication project by the Historiographical Institute of Tokyo University has already made available the factory records of Japan up to 1649 and eventually aims to incorporate the entire collection. See Historiographical Institute, Tokyo University, ed. *Diaries Kept by the Heads of the Dutch Factory in Japan*, 11 vols. (Tokyo: Tōkyō daigaku shuppan kai, 1974-present). Earlier on, the famous Japanese scholar Murakami Naojirō has provided a Japanese translation of these factory records up to 1654. See Murakami Naojirō, ed. and trans., *Nagasaki Oranda shōkan no nikki (Diaries Kept by the Dutch Factory at Nagasaki)*, 3 vols. (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1958). Unfortunately, due to time constraints, the author has not managed to make use of these excellent Japanese resources.

⁷² For letters from the governors of Taiwan to Batavia, see Chiang (Jiang Shusheng), annot. and trans., *De missiven van de VOC-gouverneur in Taiwan aan de Gouverneur-generaal te Batavia*. Large selections of the annual reports to Amsterdam from 1610 to 1750 have been published in Willem Phillippus Coolhaas, ed., *Generale missiven van gouverneurs-generaal en raden aan Heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (General Reports from the Governors-General and Councils to the Gentlemen 17 of the United East India Company)*, 11 vols. (The Hague: M. Nijhoff: 1960-present). Cheng Shaogang of Leiden University has translated all of these reports related to Taiwan, and others not included within Coolhaas, into Chinese, in Cheng Shaogang, trans. and annot., *Helan ren zai Fuermosha (The Dutch in Formosa)* (Taipei: Lianjing, 2000).

⁷³ Refer to Chiang Shu-sheng (Jiang Shusheng), annot. and trans., *Dagregister van Philip Meij (The Daily Register of Philip Meij)* (Taipei: Hansheng zazhishe gufen youxian gongsi, 2003).

⁷⁴ These archival materials have been arranged and published by a team of scholars from Taiwan and the UK in Chang Hsiu-jung et al., eds., *The English Factory in Taiwan* (Taipei: National Taiwan University, 1995).

using Dutch and Spanish sources in combination with relevant Chinese and Japanese-language materials.⁷⁵ Other scholars whose works focus primarily upon maritime China in general or the Dutch period in Taiwan, as Tonio Andrade does, have also yielded incidental but nonetheless valuable insight into the Zheng organization.⁷⁶ However, their research tilts toward the view of the Zhengs as ruthless pirate entrepreneurs, while downplaying or completely ignoring their equally important ideological orientation, even if nominal, toward the Ming. Lynn Struve's 1984 publication on the Southern Ming has provided a necessary correction of this orientation through a "continental" presentation of their military campaigns and relations with the Manchus.⁷⁷ However, this narrative encounters the same pitfall as the Chinese and Japanese accounts of the Zhengs as "loyal" ministers of the Ming court and goes into the other direction of ignoring the vast scope of their maritime activities.

Despite pioneering contributions of scholars in Greater China, Japan, and the West, then, the prevalent narratives of the Zheng organization still come under the influence of teleological arguments supporting different nationalisms or national perspectives, and downplaying contradictions in earlier records hinting at alternative communities.⁷⁸ Yet, how could we, with our own set of biases colored by our values and circumstances, do any better in penetrating these layers of construction to arrive at a more accurate picture of these men and their organization? In Croizier's words, "with reliable facts so difficult to separate from the rich accretion of legend, what can we know for certain about [them]?" For him, "the answer is very little."⁷⁹ Indeed, the tremendous ambiguities within the actions of Zheng Chenggong and his son, along with the challenges of working with sources in up to four languages, have made a balanced, substantive assessment difficult. Lately, many scholars, both inside and outside of East Asia, have even thrown in the metaphoric towel and given up on an already tiny field, but one with vast potential and a large number of untapped primary documents to unlock a crucial chapter in Chinese and global history. As academic focus has, regrettably, shifted elsewhere, very few innovative new studies of the Zheng organization have come out in recent years.

The Way Forward

I, however, take issue with Crozier's conclusion. Instead, I believe that Prasenjit Duara's

⁷⁵ See, for instance, Leonard Blussé, "Minnan-jen or Cosmopolitan? The Rise of Cheng Chih-lung alias Nicolas Iquan," in *Development and Decline of Fukien Province in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, ed. E. B. Vermeer (Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1990), 245-264 and Patrizia Carioti, "The Zhengs' Maritime Power in the International Context of the 17th Century Far Eastern Seas," *Ming-Qing Yanjiu (Ming and Qing Studies)* 5 (1996). I have also referred to a selection of the prolific number of articles and book chapters by John Wills for the purposes of my study.

⁷⁶ Tonio Andrade, *How Taiwan Became Chinese* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

⁷⁷ See Lynn Struve, *Southern Ming*.

⁷⁸ Prasenjit Duara calls this narrative by the self-coined term, "discent." In his words, "the narrative of *discent* is used to define and mobilize a community, often by privileging a particular cultural practice (or a set of such practices) as the constitutive principle of community—such as language, religion, or common historical experience—thereby heightening the self-consciousness of this community in relation to those around it." See Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 66.

⁷⁹ Croizier, 6.

suggestion of a careful reading of the vast amount of historical documents in a bifurcated manner would help us step out of the singular linear narrative by unmasking “appropriations and concealments in historical transmission.”⁸⁰ Through careful consideration of the motivations and context of our sources, and how they compare against one another, we can tease out alternative forms of discourse submerged within the dominant mythmaking process. This project proceeds by creating an analytical framework that would define the geographic, political, and social parameters for the Zheng organization’s activities in southeastern China and Taiwan. It aims also to reflect the broader shifts in conceptualization already under way within the field of maritime East Asian history. In this manner, I hope to capture the organization’s dynamism and contradictions, and provide for a bifurcated sense of historical progression.

In part, I build my analytical framework upon a synthesis of previous scholarship from some of the eminent experts on the Zheng organization and maritime East Asia from a variety of disciplines. John Wills makes the excellent point that Fujian fits the criteria of a distinct macroregion, referring to William Skinner’s classical geographic divisions of China.⁸¹ Moreover, in the early seventeenth century, it enjoyed far closer links outward with the commercial ports of Japan and Southeast Asia than with the continental interior. These close overseas trade ties accompanied the growth of a semi-public provincial discourse among its elites during the Ming and de facto autonomy of its coastal areas since the 1620s under the Zheng family. Fujian’s later placement under firm Qing central control thus becomes all the less inevitable and much more “contingent.”⁸² Patrizia Carioti elaborates upon this focus upon the province as a fundamental unit of analysis by portraying Zheng Zhilong and his descendants as leaders of an informal East Asian state. She concludes that the organization fulfilled all of the necessary conditions of an “autonomous economic, political and military entity...certainly capable of exerting its sovereignty over its ‘territory’: the seas,” from bases along the Chinese coast.⁸³

The perspectives offered by Wills and Carioti make it possible for us to situate the Zheng organization as a separate unit of analysis within a comparative and global context. In particular, we can examine it in conjunction with the Dutch East India Company due to the similar period and ways they started out, their common focus on maritime trade, and their activities in the many of the same routes and markets. At the same time, we can avoid the broad, sweeping generalizations involved in a nation-centered approach that treats “China” as an undifferentiated monolith and places it on the same scale with the developed national cores of Western Europe. As Kenneth Pomeranz correctly notes, China is “more comparable in size,

⁸⁰ Duara, 79.

⁸¹ Wills, “Contingent Connections,” For more on these natural geographic divisions, including the methodology for determining their boundaries, see G. William Skinner, “Regional Urbanization in Nineteenth-Century China,” in *The City in Late Imperial China*, ed. Skinner (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1977), 211-220.

⁸² Wills, “Contingent Connections,” 168-180.

⁸³ Carioti, 51.

population, and diversity to Europe as a whole than to individual European countries.”⁸⁴

Therefore, an analytical framework centered upon two mobile entities based on the rims of both continent-sized units provides a sounder frame of reference to understand early modern Chinese and European economic institutions than asymmetrical comparisons among heavily mismatched nation-states.

A careful examination of the Zheng organization in conjunction with the VOC reveals a surprising number and degree of commonalities. Both arose out of the similar circumstances of resource shortages and military and fiscal crisis, and both took advantage of the intra-Asian trade to fund their wars and pursue lucrative commercial opportunities. However, as my work shows, the scale and profitability of the Zheng trading network under Chenggong and Jing greatly exceeded that of their Dutch counterparts. Father and son maintained their superiority for over 50 years within a structure that combined a hereditary family hierarchy, patriarchal and personal ties, imperial institutions, and profit maximization, a realm where “public” and “private” interpenetrated and remained mutually indistinguishable. The success of this model calls into question the uniqueness of the VOC and other joint-stock corporations, often lauded by scholars as harbingers of the modern multinational corporation, with separation of management and capital, limited liability, and divisible shares of ownership.⁸⁵

At the same time, the Zheng organization managed to outmatch the forces of the VOC in a full-scale armed conflict to ultimately occupy its colony of Taiwan, and would have continued its expansion abroad had events on the Mainland not drawn away its attention. The success of the Zhengs could be attributed, in part, to the luck of geography, in particular, the numerical superiority of their ships and soldiers stationed at nearby bases. Tonio Andrade has insightfully pointed out the vulnerable nature of early European colonies, with their thin supply lines and tiny, albeit well-armed, garrisons.⁸⁶ However, the Zhengs, too, faced Qing attack and economic blockade on their rear, and harassment at sea by Dutch warships intent on putting a dent into the competition. Their orientation toward overseas military expansion forces us to reconsider the notion that the Chinese somehow lacked the initiative to engage in imperialistic ventures abroad.

Scholars have previously portrayed Han Chinese settlers as the junior partners of aggressively expanding powers, supplying them with the manpower and skills to open up new territories, whether for the Manchus in Xinjiang, as James Millward points out, or the Dutch on Taiwan, the focus of Andrade’s study.⁸⁷ Andrade shows how the Dutch established control over

⁸⁴ Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 7.

⁸⁵ Nara Shuichi, for instance, compares the activities of the Zheng family to “peddlers,” because even though they “had a large capital and governed large autonomous trading networks...the commercial activities in these networks were carried out by individuals for their own sake, and not for the sake of one trade organization.” The VOC, on the other hand, used “its unique organizational set up” to “lay out a world-wide network and maintain it for almost 200 years.” See Nara Shuichi, “Zeelandia, the Factory in the Far Eastern Trading Network of the VOC,” in *Around and About Formosa*, ed. Blussé, 161. As I set out to show, the relative longevity of the Dutch Company had more to do with the structures of legitimacy underlying its existence than to any inherent superiority in the business model.

⁸⁶ Andrade, “Conclusion,” 2.

⁸⁷ For an explanation of “Qing imperialism,” see James A. Millward, *Beyond the Pass* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press,

Taiwan with the settlement, labor, and taxes of Fujianese immigrants. Unable to find assistance from the Ming and Qing, which restricted or, at best, exhibited benign neglect toward any form of overseas contact, these people, in turn, depended upon the VOC's laws and infrastructure to trade and develop the island. Andrade uses the term "co-colonization" to describe this interdependent collaboration.⁸⁸ However, he goes on to show, the uneasy partnership quickly unraveled once it encountered a powerful East Asian state that similarly derived most its profits from foreign trade and proved willing to protect the interests of its subjects abroad.

Indeed, the Zheng organization managed to convert its tremendous economic influence in the region and close relationship with overseas Chinese communities into a competing, alternative source of political authority. By forming, semi-intentionally, a shadow government among them, a concept I call "co-allegiance," Zheng Chenggong and Zheng Jing could demand successively greater degrees of allegiance in accordance with their strategic interests. In other words, the organization depended more on the gradual assertion of control over existing Chinese populations in a given area through prominent community leaders, who concurrently served other powers, than the opening and exploitation of new territory per se. As the Taiwanese scholar Zheng Yongchang argues, it already possessed sea power, or the extension of traditional land-based sovereignty to protect its far-flung maritime trading interests, upon which its lifeline of its commercial network ran.⁸⁹ The successful economic and military rise and expansion of the Zheng organization raises the potential for other forms of modernity and calls into question the universal applicability of the variant initiated through the particular socioeconomic institutions and trends unique to northwestern Europe. We can thus take one step further toward Dipesh Chakrabarty's goal of "provincializing Europe" in the social sciences.⁹⁰

However, in our reevaluation of the Zheng organization's robust overseas trading network and the centrifugal orientation of its governing structure, we must also not lose sight of the crucial importance of continental regimes in creating legitimate avenues for its expression of autonomy.⁹¹ In fact, the Zheng "state" remained "informal" precisely because of its inability to generate original forms of discourse, and needed recognition from the dynastic system to justify

1998), 15-18.

⁸⁸ Andrade, "Conclusion," 4-6.

⁸⁹ Zheng Yongchang, "Zheng Chenggong haiyang xingge yanjiu" ("The Study of General Koxinga's Marine Personality"), *Chengda lishixue bao (The Bulletin of Historical Studies of Chenggong University)* 34 (2008): 85.

⁹⁰ Chakrabarty's idea involves writing "into the history of modernity the ambivalences, contradictions, use of force, and the tragedies and ironies that attend it." In other words, he tries to show that modern societies did not arrive at their present situations through a smooth, linear narrative of "progress" in the form of developments such as nationalism, public sphere, and the rise of capitalism. Instead, "modernity" represented a highly contested process whereby no institutions or thought processes occurred inevitably. As a result, he implies, many organizations and ideologies viewed as "traditional" continued to function or even flourish after contact with the West and imperialism, blending in and negotiating with the new trends introduced from abroad. See Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History," *Representations* 37 (1992): 21.

⁹¹ Peter Bol's study of elite expressions of local identity in Zhejiang's Jinhua during the late Ming shows that, while the gentry there emphasized the uniqueness and distinctiveness of their region, they also intended to utilize this discourse to renegotiate the terms of its inclusion within the empire outside of centrally mandated narratives. His observation would also apply to Wills' portrayal of the proto-public sphere in neighboring Fujian. See Peter K. Bol, "The 'Localist Turn' and 'Local Identity' in Later Imperial China," *Late Imperial China* 24.2 (2003): 44-47.

its activities in terms other than a group of sea bandits engaged in coastal plundering and killing.⁹² Wu Zhenglong also alerts us to the tremendous impact of actual events in the interior upon the maritime region. The shifting vicissitudes of “third-party interest groups,” primarily the courts of the Ming pretenders and the Qing, along with their internal politics and the progress of their war, all affected the scope of the organization’s options, as well as the Qing stance toward it.⁹³ We thus continue to face the challenge of grappling with the extent of the Zheng family’s ties to the Ming and adequately explaining their negotiations with the Manchus.

On these perilous topics, rife with potential for national appropriations and morally charged rhetoric, several scholars have, to our great fortune, extended the horizons beyond the simplistic tropes of loyalty, bloodthirsty opportunism, and anti-imperialist struggle. Chen Bisheng represents one strand of thought within the Mainland academic circles, prevalent at Fujianese institutions, that questions the absolute commitment of Zheng Chenggong and Jing to Ming restoration. Chen’s edited volume of his articles abounds with examples of how the two men fell far short of the Confucian ideals for loyalty to their ruler, even by the standards of the other anti-Qing resistance movements of their time. He argues that both looked to the Ming Yongli pretender (r. 1646-1662), based in southwestern China, primarily as a source of legitimacy for their otherwise independent actions. In fact, to achieve maximum initiative and flexibility, they would rather recognize this symbol of loyalist resistance from afar than equally qualified but potentially disruptive claimants along the southeastern coast. Compared to other anti-Qing resistance fighters, they also appeared to lack the firmness of will to fight when matters seemed to go against their interests or the solid resolve to pay with their lives.⁹⁴

Lynn Struve reinforces and builds upon Chen’s argument by explaining that Zheng Chenggong’s autonomy allowed him to “successfully conflate his own interests with those of the Ming, and to perform at his best for the loyalist cause,” thereby translating his deep-seated rebelliousness into a “potent political stance.”⁹⁵ He could utilize—rather than be utilized by—the anti-Qing resistance as a means of rallying his forces and maximizing his power base.⁹⁶ While convincing, this perspective cannot adequately account for the protracted negotiations of him and his son with the Qing court. Objectively speaking, their participation in these talks placed both the interests of the loyalist cause and a key source of their legitimacy in great danger. Struve and John Wills have tried to address the contradiction by suggesting that both men

⁹² The Qing frequently labeled him with these terms in their memorials and edicts. See, for instance, *Zheng shi shiliao xubian*.

⁹³ Wu Zhenglong, *Zheng Chenggong yu Qing zhengfu jian de tanpan*, 178-179.

⁹⁴ Chen Bisheng, 133-134. Chen’s logic, while solid for its analysis of the character of the Zheng family’s anti-Qing resistance, falls into the same anti-imperialist trope prevalent in the PRC when it comes to the invasion of Taiwan. According to him, when Zheng Chenggong faced tremendous adversity in his Mainland campaigns, “dispatching troops to recover Taiwan has already become a set course of action...his ability to release himself from the shackles of the feudalist view of steadfast loyalty, redirect his soldiers outward, and recover Taiwan from the hands of the Dutch invaders, has already made an indispensable contribution to the Chinese people.” See Chen Bisheng, 55.

⁹⁵ Struve, *Southern Ming*, 156.

⁹⁶ John E. Wills, Jr., “Maritime China from Wang Chih to Shih Lang: Themes in Peripheral History,” in *From Ming to Ch’ing: Conquest, Region, and Continuity in Seventeenth-Century China*, ed. Wills and Jonathan D. Spence (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), 224 and Chen Bisheng, 134-135.

ultimately wanted to permanently settle for a tributary framework along the lines of Korea, in which they could preserve intact Ming imperial institutions and their own power.⁹⁷

Yet, this explanation raises the further question of how to account for Zheng Chenggong's northern expedition from 1655 to 1659 and Zheng Jing's return to the Mainland from Taiwan to participate in the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories from 1674 to 1681. Both campaigns took them to areas far away from their centers of power and supply lines, and cost them dearly not only in economic terms, but, especially in the case of the latter, also severely threatened the very existence of their organization. Wills initially attributes Chenggong's northern expedition to his "growing megalomania or desperation or both."⁹⁸ In a later chapter, he clarifies his position, describing the final siege of Nanjing in 1659 as the result of successive raids that took Zheng further away from his bases in a struggle for survival against an ever-tightening Qing economic blockade.⁹⁹ Yet, according to Struve's description, the invasions appear to have been a less haphazard endeavor, and often the result of careful planning.¹⁰⁰ Likewise, Chen Bisheng shows that Chenggong launched the expedition as a proactive measure to prevent the Qing from concentrating all of its troops in the southeast theater after its successes against other forces loyal to the Yongli pretender.¹⁰¹ There has not yet been any systematic study to date of Zheng Jing's sudden decision to return to the Mainland after ten years of peaceful and, by all accounts, successful development on Taiwan.

Besides this major lacuna in historical analysis, the explanations of Chenggong's actions, while providing credible motives beyond the simplistic trope of loyalty, loops back again to the question of why the organization failed to opt for a negotiated settlement with the Qing in the first place. Chen Bisheng points to a way out of this circular puzzle by concluding, from his analysis of the talks, that Zheng simply could not trust the intentions of a regime whose troops had killed his mother and kept his father and relatives in captivity.¹⁰² Zhuang Jinde further sees Chenggong's participation as a tactical ploy to acquire more time and bargaining power for the hostages in Beijing.¹⁰³ If we look at the talks in this light, and in conjunction with the autonomous nature of the organization, we can begin to understand why he would risk the cause of Ming restoration to negotiate with the enemy for so many years. Moreover, we can partly understand why the growing threat to his survival from the Qing caused him, in turn, to endanger the lives of his relatives in a northern campaign.

Yet, his voluntary dispatch of an envoy to Beijing after his defeat in 1659 calls into question the implicit argument here that he only talked for personal reasons the entire time, and would not accept a compromise with the Qing under any circumstances, even if given more favorable terms.

⁹⁷ Struve, *Southern Ming*, 165-166 and Wills, "Contingent Connections," 187.

⁹⁸ Wills, "Maritime China," 226.

⁹⁹ Wills, "Contingent Connections, 190-191.

¹⁰⁰ Struve, *Southern Ming*, 183-185.

¹⁰¹ Chen Bisheng, 175-176.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 235-236.

¹⁰³ Zhuang Jinde, "Zheng-Qing heyi shimo," 1.

His son Zheng Jing had even less reason to hold talks with the Manchus, especially after his complete withdrawal, in 1664, to Taiwan, which the Qing, with its inexperienced naval fleets, found impossible to attack. Yet, both sides engaged in major negotiations in 1667 and 1669 that came very near to a political settlement and an opening of normal economic ties. Even more surprisingly, the records contradict the image of Zheng Jing presented in Chinese-language academic scholarship as a passive and reluctant recipient of a charm offensive completely masterminded by the Qing court. As I show, he not only encouraged the talks to continue at critical moments but also eagerly anticipated the arrival of envoys from the Mainland.

To address these seemingly irreconcilable contradictions, my study proposes a separation according to both conceptualization and periodization. By treating the Zheng organization as a separate, but porous, entity with its own concerns and challenges, we can see that, while its interests and objectives overlapped with Ming restoration, they did not completely coincide. In her master's thesis, Su Junwei of National Taiwan University skillfully employs political science theory to explain the motivations of Zheng Chenggong and Zheng Jing. She believes that the two men saw a settlement with the Qing court, especially along the lines of a tributary relationship, as a "second-best option" should their struggle fail to yield results.¹⁰⁴ I would go further in arguing that, once we put the organization at the center of our attention, a more complicated picture emerges of a maritime-based state caught between two different forms of legitimacy, one of which included joining the newly ascendant Qing.

The second conceptual separation involves that between dynastic loyalty and a far more abstract allegiance to the Han Chinese ethnicity that the Ming house came to embody. The most obvious option for the Zheng organization to demonstrate this commitment would be to expel the foreign Manchus by force. However, when the task appeared impossible to achieve due to the overwhelming strength of the adversary, it did not lack the flexibility to seek a permanent settlement with the Qing on terms it deemed acceptable. The key point of contention that ultimately caused the protracted negotiations to fail involved the bitter disagreement over whether father and son should shave their heads and adopt Manchu-style clothing. Although only covering the earlier negotiations in the 1650s between Zheng Chenggong and the Qing, Wu Zhenglong's groundbreaking study approaches this subject with an unprecedented degree of analytical depth. According to him, the type of coiffure determined the character of Chenggong's future political relationship with the new dynasty, whether it was direct subject-ruler ties, tributary, or an alliance of equal states. Since this issue touched upon the core cultural values of the Han people, and thereby, the very legitimacy of his regime, he needed sufficiently attractive incentives to overcome his disinclination to shave his head, which the Qing could not, or would not, provide.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Su Junwei, "Qing chao yu Ming-Zheng hezhan hudong celue jianlun qi dui liang'an guanxi de qishi" ("The Strategic Interaction between the Ching Dynasty and Ming-Cheng: Implications for Cross-Strait Relations") (MA thesis, National Taiwan University, 2008), 176.

¹⁰⁵ Wu Zhenglong, *Zheng Chenggong yu Qing zhengfu jian de tanpan*, 180-181.

Besides taking into account their personal sentiments, one must make another separation to fully understand why the two men so adamantly refused to compromise on issues of ethnicity. Previous scholarship has almost exclusively seen the organization as a monolithic entity dominated completely by its leaders, especially Zheng Chenggong, driven by “the intensity of his obsession with unflinching success and unwavering obedience.”¹⁰⁶ However, such a view only captures one side of the interaction, and eliminates the agency of his diverse group of followers, each of whom had a different reason or agenda for joining. Chen Bisheng’s class-based analysis shows that among them were Zhilong’s old subordinates, pirates, bandits, rebels, Ming loyalist militias, Qing defectors, and national and regional elites. Their importance would grow over time, especially under Zheng Jing, who made decisions primarily in consultation with advisors. Moreover, as a quasi-government that exercised jurisdiction on both land and seas, the Zhengs ruled and taxed millions of commoners.¹⁰⁷ All of these point to the need to approach the organization as a complex social unit, one whose own internal contestations had direct bearing upon the actions and policies of Chenggong and his son.

Finally, but of equal importance, I inject the element of historicity into my analysis to reflect how the priorities of father and son changed through time, reflecting concurrent shifts in the Ming loyalist movement, the Qing, the state of their organization, and the attitudes and composition of their followers. In sum, the proposed framework allows us to highlight, rather than obscure, the personal roles of both men as mediators bridging the conflicting interests among their followers, between continent and ocean, and between commerce and political legitimacy. Indeed, a fully informed analysis cannot be possible without adequate consideration of their background as heirs of perhaps the most powerful merchant family China has seen, their early lives outside the world of maritime Fujian, and classical Confucian education. Their multifaceted experiences conform to Philip Huang’s definition of biculturality, although, in their case, they could participate simultaneously in the ideas and thought processes of more than two cultures.¹⁰⁸

As I argue, Zheng Chenggong’s attempt to balance the different groups within his diverse organization and maximize his own interests led to a purposeful ambiguity on his part toward both the Ming loyalist movement and the Qing court. For most of the 1650s, he skillfully played one alternative against another until the balance between the two tilted in favor of the Qing. At that point, his multiculturalism allowed him to cross over geographic boundaries and take his regime in new directions, often against the strong protests of his followers. By focusing upon his siege of Nanjing in 1659 and subsequent attempt at talks with the Qing court, I explain his dramatic shift from restoration to negotiated peace, and, finally, to the opening of a new world overseas. Yet, his successful occupation of Taiwan in 1662 generated a crisis of

¹⁰⁶ Struve, *Southern Ming*, 180-181 and Wills, “Maritime China,” 224.

¹⁰⁷ Chen Bisheng, 217-219.

¹⁰⁸ Philip C. C. Huang, “Biculturality in Modern China and in Chinese Studies,” *Modern China* 26.1 (2000): 4.

legitimacy that would continue to engulf the organization under Zheng Jing.

Indeed, this invasion, I will show, resulted both from military defeat and repeated failure to reach a settlement with the Qing. Struve rightly claims that it did not merely represent a continuation of previous efforts at Ming restoration. Many of Chenggong's subordinates and allies resolutely opposed the idea of going to "a wild, inhospitable, disease-ridden place too far at sea."¹⁰⁹ Emma Teng's research on Taiwan's historical geography, building upon the previous work of John King Fairbank and James Millward on the continental limits of the Chinese world order, has clearly helped establish its maritime dimensions.¹¹⁰ She argues convincingly that the island lay completely outside the traditional physical and cultural boundaries of "China" as shaped and solidified over the course of the Ming. Its "foreignness" also helps explain why the rate of defections from Chenggong's camp to the Qing increased substantially after the invasion, eventually becoming an uncontrollable flood under his son.¹¹¹ Hence, despite the highly valid new focus upon the outward orientation of maritime China, the integrated nature of its economic ties mask the internally generated political and social barriers involved in the crossing of geographic space.¹¹² Therefore, we should be careful of overly conflating the Zheng organization with the "wide stateless space" of the Western Pacific world "in which the stateless maritime Chinese flourished."¹¹³

With the loss of his last Mainland bases in 1664 and complete withdrawal to Taiwan for the next decade, Zheng Jing and the Qing tried to institutionalize a relationship involving Han Chinese on an island both claimed lay outside of "China." In fact, the two sides made significant concessions, agreeing to open up trade and enter into some form of lord-vassal relationship. Their ability to compromise challenges the notion that maritime commercial networks remained fundamentally incompatible with land-based empires, and the two shared an irreconcilable antagonism. Of course, R. Bin Wong and Kenneth Pomeranz are correct to point out that the Qing prioritized social stability and keeping taxes and defense outlays low, rather than forming alliances with ascendant merchants and other independent sources of authority to maximize national power. Unlike the competing European states, then, it saw Zheng Jing and his followers as a dangerous concentration of Chinese overseas engaged in rebellion and illegal armed trade.¹¹⁴ Yet, as the protracted talks demonstrate, an empire's need to achieve internal

¹⁰⁹ Struve, *Southern Ming*, 190.

¹¹⁰ See Emma Teng, *Taiwan's Imagined Geography* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2004); James Millward, *Beyond the Pass*; and John King Fairbank, "A Preliminary Framework," in Fairbank, ed., *The Chinese World Order* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968).

¹¹¹ Wills, "Contingent Connections," 190 and Struve, *Southern Ming*, 192-193.

¹¹² John E. Wills, Jr., "The South China Sea is not a Mediterranean," in *Zhongguo haiyang fazhan shi lunwenji (Essays in Chinese Maritime History)*, ed. Tang Xiyong, vol. 10 (Taipei: Research Center for Humanities and Social Sciences, Academia Sinica, 2008), 2.

¹¹³ One must also not lose sight of the present political motivations for such a focus. Wills observes that it fits into the complex discourse of Taiwanese identity by rejecting "the hegemonic political implications of some definitions of Chineseness," while bolstering the island's role as an independent maritime country and a somewhat ambiguous vanguard for the "political, economic, and cultural end of Chinese 'isolation.'" See Wills, "South China Sea," 2.

¹¹⁴ Pomeranz, 173 and R. Bin Wing, *China Transformed* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 148-149.

stability did not necessarily mean that it had to view them in terms of a zero-sum game.

To understand, with any degree of analytical depth, why negotiations during this period failed to yield results, we must first move beyond the simplistic dichotomies of continental and maritime, empire and nation, and, especially, the modern political discourse of “unification” and “independence.” We turn, instead, to an examination of the profound impact of spatial shifts upon identity and self-perception. Yeh Wen-hsin represents one of the pioneers of this approach in her treatment of early twentieth-century Chinese intellectuals who crossed over from their native hometowns in rural Zhejiang to the metropolis of Shanghai during the May Fourth Movement.¹¹⁵ Applying her methodology to our focus some three hundred years earlier, I demonstrate that forced exile to a “foreign” island, combined with firm “foreign” Manchu domination of “China,” contributed to a severe dilemma on the part of Zheng Jing and his followers. Lacking the power to recover their homeland, they faced a stark dichotomy between a physical “China” where subjects had to adopt “barbarian” hair and dress on the pain of death, and a “barbarian” wilderness where they could keep abstract Chinese cultural symbols intact. We now have to address the question of how the organization tried to bridge this contradiction over the course of their decade on Taiwan from 1664 to 1674, and the role of negotiations with the Qing in the creation of new modes of locally based legitimacy.

Unfortunately, very few innovative studies in either Chinese or English have been done on the fascinating later years of the organization under Zheng Jing, which frequently gets dismissed as a minor footnote in maritime East Asian history, long past its prime compared to the days of his more colorful father and grandfather.¹¹⁶ However, several recent articles and chapters from both sides of the strait have modified and expanded our conceptual horizons of this period. On the Mainland, Deng Kongzhao, Chen Kongli, and other primarily Fujian-based scholars convincingly show that Zheng Jing and his followers wished to preserve Taiwan as a realm where their Han Chinese customs, including hair and dress, could flourish free from Manchu interference.¹¹⁷ Deng, moreover, rightly points out that the key disagreement on both sides during their talks lay not with the status of the island per se, but in Zheng’s refusal to shave his head and change his clothes.¹¹⁸ Concurrent shifts toward a more nuanced perspective of the

¹¹⁵ Refer to Yeh Wen-hsin, *Provincial Passages* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996).

¹¹⁶ John Wills is one of the few scholars who have provided any extensive analysis of the Zheng Jing decade on Taiwan in the English language. However, he mostly touches upon the earlier part of this period, from around 1662 to 1666, and in conjunction with his broader treatment of Sino-European tributary, economic, and religious interactions. See, for instance, Wills, “Hazardous Missions,” ; *Peppers, Guns, and Parleys* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974); and “The Dutch Reoccupation of Chi-lung, 1664-1668,” in *Around and About Formosa*, ed. Blussé, 273-290. In addition, Wills has researched, in detail, the final years of the Zheng organization, after Jing’s participation in the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories, from 1674 to 1683, but primarily writes from the Qing perspective, in particular, how it managed to obtain popular support and defeat its main rival in the maritime region. See, for instance, Wills, “Maritime China,” 228-234 and “Contingent Connections,” 184-186, 191-196.

¹¹⁷ Chen Kongli, “Kangxi 22 nian: Taiwan de lishi diwei 康熙二十二年：台湾的历史地位” (“Kangxi 22: The Historical Position of Taiwan”), in *Qing dai Taiwan shi yanjiu (Studies of Taiwan History in the Qing Period)*, ed. Chen Zaizheng et al. and Deng Kongzhao, *Zheng Chenggong yu Ming-Zheng Taiwan shi yanjiu (Study of Zheng Chenggong and Taiwan History during the Ming-Zheng Period)* (Beijing: Taihai chubanshe, 2000), 123-125.

¹¹⁸ Deng Kongzhao, *Zheng Chenggong yu Ming-Zheng Taiwan*, 123-125. However, their insightful analysis continues to be

negotiations have occurred as well in Taiwan with the lifting of martial law. Su Junwei argues that the Qing considered Zheng Jing and his men as untransformed internal rebels who had to show their submission by adopting Manchu fashion. On the other hand, Jing's desire to preserve his hair and clothes signified his wish for administrative autonomy in his domestic affairs, and relations with the Mainland on an equal basis.¹¹⁹

I build upon these innovative new perspectives and further argue that for Zheng Jing, the adoption of the Manchu queue amounted to a desecration of the traditional Chinese world order. After fleeing to Taiwan, he staked his entire legitimacy upon creating an identity emphasizing Han cultural practices outside of physical "China" and "naturalizing" them to the island. Confucian moral values, such as filial piety and loyalty, became especially important in constructing an ethnic community manifested in the form of Ming loose gowns and topknots. His repeated references to the Korea model shows that, while he could recognize the authority of a Manchu emperor, he could not abandon these outward manifestations of the Han character of his entire organization.

His concern with clothing and, especially, coiffure provides a novel perspective on the function of the East Asian world order, challenging the classical claim of John King Fairbank that its rituals and symbols merely served as a veneer for other countries to trade with China. Although access to the vast China market served as a significant motivation for Zheng Jing to enter a tributary relationship, it was by no means the dominant factor, as Fairbank might claim.¹²⁰ The narrow confines of official trade would only add marginally to the rapidly growing smuggling between Taiwan and the Mainland coast. These semi-covert activities, undertaken with the active collusion of Qing officials, together with Taiwan's own natural resources, yielded spectacular profits for the Zheng organization well into the 1670s. From an economic standpoint, Zheng Jing had no need to hold talks with the Qing over the island's status, nor did he have a compelling material reason to return to the Mainland and join the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories, a move, I show, that actually increased his costs and lowered his revenues. His disastrous participation in a Qing internal insurrection even after the Manchu court decided to leave Taiwan alone and gave up on trying to exterminate him lays bare his ultimately unsuccessful attempt at applying a continentally based, neo-Confucian legitimacy to his maritime trading activities.

However, based upon Zheng Jing's negotiations with the Qing, it would be rather deterministic to claim that he never relinquished Ming restoration at all, and merely used Taiwan as a base to prepare for future conflict. Moreover, just one or two years before the rebellion, he

limited overall by the rigid paradigms of nationalist historiography. Chen, for instance, recognizes that Taiwan remained a marginal concern for the Qing, but he attempted to counter this evidence of its "foreignness" by arguing that it was because most officials had no knowledge of the island, and none bothered to study it in-depth. See Chen Kongli, "Kangxi 22," 98, 106-107.

¹¹⁹ Su Junwei, "Lishi de Liang'an guanxi" ("Cross Strait Relations in Chinese History"), *Zhanwang yu tansuo (Expectation and Discovery)* 5.11 (2007): 90.

¹²⁰ John King Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1964), 32-33.

was still actively opening up trade with the English East Indies Company and planned an invasion of the Philippines, actions that brought his “state” further away from “China.” Instead, Jing’s sudden turnabout demonstrates the dialectic and interactive nature of symbols and rituals. The organization could manipulate them to justify its maritime trade and expansion, and even reinterpret them to create new forms of legitimacy. Yet, at the same time, these same ideological structures confined it to certain priorities and courses of action deemed “politically correct.” As I show, the outbreak of rebellion in 1674 merged the dichotomy of geographic and cultural “China,” as Ming restoration once again became a realistic option. Under pressure from his homesick soldiers and a group of elites who seized the moral high ground within the organization, Zheng Jing had to turn back to the Mainland to demonstrate his loyalty to the dynasty. Otherwise, he would certainly get labeled as a coward enjoying peace in a small corner (*touan*) and putting his private interests above the public good, a damaging blow both to his immediate survival and the historical legacy of him and his family.

Contours and Boundaries of the Study

Due to the highly colorful lives of each of the leaders and the fast-paced nature of events packed into a period of just under half a century, this study does not aim to provide a comprehensive coverage of the Zheng organization from beginning to end. Based upon the problems enumerated above, I instead examine the main quandary it faced throughout its existence: its never-ending attempt to stretch the intellectual limits of Ming legitimacy and Han identity to accommodate its overseas trade and profit maximization. Accordingly, this work will be divided into five parts. The first captures a snapshot of the organization at its height on the Mainland during the 1650s under Zheng Chenggong through an examination of its political institutions and trading structure, and compares them to the VOC. In subsequent chapters, I will inject the element of historical progression into the narrative, detailing how his attempt to maintain an ambiguous legitimacy broke down, and led to the near-collapse of his organization after his death.

I then look at how Zheng Jing and his advisory body successfully reconstituted the organization and its institutions, simultaneously reevaluating their traditional position as a mere afterthought in maritime East Asia and recentering the events of this period. The body of my narrative ends in 1674, after tracing his sudden turn away from overseas expansion and a negotiated settlement with the Qing court based on the model of Korea, and back to the Mainland to join the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories. Despite an initial boost to the organization’s legitimacy, this disastrous involvement ultimately resulted in military defeat at the hands of the Qing and forced Jing’s son and successor, Zheng Keshuang (1669-1707), to surrender Taiwan in 1683. Yet, the scope of my study will not be strictly confined to the interval between 1650 and 1674; I reach backward and forward in time to examine the overall context of the organization’s contradictions and their broader significance in Chinese, East Asian,

and global historiography.

CHAPTER 1: THE GRAND STAGE OF MARITIME HISTORY

Due to the fluid nature of the Zheng family's campaigns and trading activities, our narrative inevitably encompasses a cast of tens of millions from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, who act out their roles over a vast geographic arena comprising a multitude of political entities, each with its own complex culture and history. Accordingly, to acquire a better understanding of the organization, it would be helpful to first explore the spatial setting of its main bases in southern Fujian and Taiwan. Building upon that foundation, we can trace its connections to the main centers of Chinese imperial power, first the Ming and then the successor Qing states. I also provide a brief historical outline of the other players in East and Southeast Asia that inspired or interacted with our protagonists. I especially pay attention to their fiercest competitors in the regional trading lanes, the Netherlands and its Dutch East India Company, often utilizing the two as units of comparison with the Zheng organization. With these proper introductions of the stage and its actors in place, the unfolding of the drama can begin.

The Geographical Setting

The Zheng organization arose out of a world of constraints and opportunities that profoundly influenced the actions and perspectives of its leaders and followers. What follows is a brief sketch of the overall geographic setting of Fujian, the province most of them called home and that served as the main sphere of their activities during their earlier years of anti-Qing resistance. The ecological environment of the Netherlands will also be explored briefly in this section, both to supply necessary background information and provide a comparative global context for the rise of merchant networks. Afterwards, we cross the ocean to Taiwan, the other crucial arena where events unfolded, examining its image and position among Chinese in the seventeenth century.

Fujian encompasses an area of 120,400 sq km, slightly larger than North Korea and smaller than the US state of Mississippi. Mountains, constituting 80% of the landmass, surround the province from three sides, making travel and communication by land with Zhejiang to the north, Jiangxi to the west, and Guangdong to the southwest; the passages to the rest of China; highly difficult. The rugged terrain also means that Fujian possessed limited arable land for primary agricultural production, even with terraces carved from the slopes of mountains.¹ Indeed, the destitution of the peasantry already ranked among the worst in the Ming Empire by the sixteenth century.² Evelyn Rawski's data shows that the population, adjusted for underreporting, increased from 3,627,300 in 1393 to 5,440,950 in 1482, assuming a growth rate of 0.5% per year, while cultivatable land remained constant at 14,492,323 *mu* (966,154 hectares). These figures

¹ People's Government of Fujian Province, "Dili huanjing 地理环境" ("Geography and Environment"), *Zhongguo Fujian (Fujian, China)*, 2010 <<http://www.fujian.gov.cn/bmdd/dlhj/>>, n.p.

² Wong Young-tsu, 115-116.



Figure 4. The stunningly beautiful landscape of Fujian is primarily characterized by mountain ranges, very few navigable rivers, and limited land for agriculture.

Photograph by author, 2009

imply that per capita acreage fell from 4 *mu* (0.27 hectares) to just 2.7 *mu* (0.18 hectares).³ As a result, Fujian had to rely upon grain imports from neighboring provinces even in good years, an expensive proposition given the inconvenience of land transport networks.

At the same time, its mountains made perfect natural barriers against invading armies, which found it costly and difficult to move troops or maintain garrisons, often involving long and thinly stretched supply lines from outside due to the lack of local resources.⁴ Fujian's fragmented geographic configuration also spawned one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse provinces in China. Chief among its numerous languages and dialects include Mindong, prevalent around the capital of Fuzhou, Minnanese in the southeast, centered upon the prefectures of Quanzhou and Zhangzhou, and Hakka in the hilly interior.⁵ The mountains and

³ Evelyn Sakakida Rawski, *Agricultural Change and the Peasant Economy of South China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 178-180.

⁴ Rawski, 59. The total cost for maintaining Manchu soldiers during the 1650s amounted to some 20,000 taels (1,000 kg) of silver per month. See Wu Zhenglong, *Zheng Chenggong yu Qing zhengfu jian de tanpan*, 49 n. 68-69.

⁵ People's Government of Fujian Province, "Renkou minzu 人口民族" ("Population and Nationalities"), *Zhongguo Fujian*, n.p.

tongues of Fujian encouraged strong, particularistic ties of community and identity—often perceived as insularity and suspiciousness of outsiders—that came to revolve, by Ming times, around strong lineage organizations.⁶

Just as the physical landscape and cultural attributes divided and cut off its people, all of Fujian's main transportation arteries linked them inexorably to the rest of the world. Starting from the Wuyi Mountains in the northwest, the Min River flows past Fuzhou and converges with the East China Sea at the port of Shacheng. In the coastal littoral of the southeast, the Jiulong River, the largest drainage system in the province, forms a small alluvial plain before emptying into the Taiwan Strait. The lengthy shoreline of Fujian, which extends 3,324 km from northeast to southwest, intersects with this relatively flat piece of land to create inlets and bays meandering around hundreds of islets of varying sizes. Southern Fujian, or Minnan, provides an ideal location for superior deep-water harbors like Haicheng, in Zhangzhou Prefecture, and the islands of Xiamen and Jinmen, along with nearby Quanzhou, which had served as China's main port for international trade since the Tang Dynasty.⁷ This region, in turn, forms part of a long strip of coastal plains extending northward into the Zhoushan archipelago of Zhejiang and eastern Guangdong to the southwest. Together, they constitute the core of a distinct Skinnerian macroregion readily linked through a chain of ports and accessible by ship.⁸

Unable to survive off of self-sufficient grain production, most Fujianese naturally had to rely upon the products of this maritime zone for their survival, engaging in fishing, salt-making, and coastal shipping to obtain grains from other provinces. Indeed, the Qing-era gazetteer of Xiamen, compiled in 1839, notes that, in Fujian, a land of “numerous mountains and few fields (*shanduo tianshao*),” the people “treat the sea as their fields (*yihai wei tian*).”⁹ During the late Ming, they began sailing in large numbers further out into the ocean, to Japan and Southeast Asia to take advantage of the high demand for lucrative Chinese exports. Many stayed behind on a long-term basis to look after business or settle down permanently. These overseas Chinese, whose total numbers grew from 10,000 in the mid-Ming to over a million by 1650, would become crucial commercial agents and partners for both the Zhengs and the VOC.¹⁰

Fujian, where the Zheng organization rose to power, actually exhibits surprising similarities with the Netherlands, the home country of the VOC, on the other end of the Eurasian landmass. Like its Fujianese counterpart, it had a lengthy, meandering coastline, about 642 km total, along

For an ethnolinguistic study of the Min languages and Hakka, see S. Robert Ramsey, *The Languages of China* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 107-112.

⁶ For an in-depth look at how these lineage groups formed and evolved into stable and durable local units of power and authority, refer to Michael Szonyi, *Practicing Kinship* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002).

⁷ Wong Young-tsu, 115.

⁸ The overall contours of this macroregion largely follow Skinner's Southeast Coast, although I have extended its boundaries to include parts of the coastlines of contiguous Jiangnan and Lingnan. Refer to the map in Skinner, 214 and compare with Maps 1, 2, and 3.

⁹ Zhou Kai, *Xiamen zhi (Gazetteer of Xiamen)*, *TWWXCK*, 95 (1961), 640.

¹⁰ Chao Zhongchen, *Ming dai haijin yu haiwai maoyi (The Maritime Prohibitions during the Ming and Overseas Trade)* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2005), 289-290 and Conrad Totman, *Early Modern Japan* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 76.



Figure 5. The alluvial plain formed by the Jiulong River near Zhangzhou City.

Photograph by author, 2009

the North Sea, stretching from the barrier islands of Friesland to Zeeland. Many port cities along the coast would become Europe's main centers of international trade and finance, notably Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and Middelburg. The bulk of the Netherlands, a country with an area of 41,526 sq km, consists of fertile, low-lying plains ideal for agricultural production, with very few places exceeding 50 m in elevation.¹¹ Although unlike Fujian in this respect, it, too, possessed very limited hinterlands, and found itself getting crowded by the dawn of the seventeenth century. In fact, population would continue to grow rapidly, to about 1.9 million by 1700.¹²

With about 27% of its landmass beneath sea level, the Dutch provinces further faced the perennial threat of flooding from the ocean, often with catastrophic results.¹³ Land reclamation

¹¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of the Netherlands, "Facts and Statistics," *Minabuza.nl*, 2010 <http://www.minbuza.nl/en/You_and_the_Netherlands/About_the_Netherlands/General_information/Facts_and_statistics>, n.p.

¹² Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998), 619-620.

¹³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "The Country and Its People," *Minabuza.nl* <http://www.minbuza.nl/en/You_and_the_Netherlands/About_the_Netherlands/General_information/The_country_and_its_people>, n.p. and Douglass C.

efforts, along with the construction of polders and elaborate irrigation systems from the thirteenth to seventeenth centuries, made possible one of the most intensive agricultural regimes in Europe, characterized by small farms and high rents.¹⁴ Faced with severe pressure on land and resources, the Netherlands, long before its independence from Habsburg dominion and



Map 4. The Netherlands around 1650.
 From Cynthia P. Schneider, *Rembrandt's Landscapes* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1990), 34

subsequent Golden Age of the seventeenth century, had learned to exploit its geographic proximity to the ocean. It came to depend on the rich herring fisheries of the North Sea and the bulk trade with the Baltic to acquire timber and foodstuffs, and would develop efficient commercial and economic institutions to support these endeavors.¹⁵

The Fujianese and Dutch, both pushed outward by their home environments, would meet, interact, and collide on Taiwan, a large island with an area of 35,801 sq km located 180 km from the southeastern Chinese coast. Portuguese navigators in the sixteenth century whose ships sailed past it marveled at the remarkable beauty of its landscape, and called it *Ilha Formosa*, or “Beautiful Island.” Taiwan, or Formosa, faces Fujian to the west across the

Taiwan Strait, the Philippines to the south via the Luzon Strait, and the Kingdom of Liuqiu (Ryūkyū) and the vast Pacific Ocean to the east.¹⁶ Taiwan thus stands at the intersection of China, Japan, and Southeast Asia, a place that all early modern maritime shipping in the region had to pass on their way to other trading destinations. The predictable monsoon seasons, with

North and Robert Paul Thomas, *The Rise of the Western World* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 132. For instance, major floods in 1551 and 1555 submerged the town of Reimerswaal, in Zeeland, while the All Saints Day Flood of November 1570 resulted in severe damages to Holland, Zeeland, and Friesland. See Israel, 112.

¹⁴ Israel, 111.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 16-18.

¹⁶ Government Information Office, Republic of China, *The Republic of China Yearbook 2009*, 2009 <<http://www.gio.gov.tw/taiwan-website/5-gp/yearbook/ch01.html>>, n.p.

the dry, northern winds from October to March, and the moist air from Southeast Asia during May to September, made travel through the Taiwan Strait highly reliable. Its favorable location would presage its later position as an entrepôt in the intra-Asian commercial networks.¹⁷

High, forbidding mountains running in five ranges from north to south cover most of the eastern two-thirds of the island. In contrast, the western coastline consists of an almost continuous series of flat plains and gentle, rolling hills. Early Chinese settlements tended to congregate in the vast and fertile Jianan Plain in the southwest, around present-day Tainan, an area occupying 12% of the island's total landmass.¹⁸ More limited numbers arrived at the northern harbors of Jilong and Danshui.

Across from southern Taiwan are the Penghu Islands, a series of 64 volcanic islets in the middle of the strait halfway between Fujian and Taiwan. Because of the limited agricultural productivity of the land, local residents used the island chain primarily as a fishing base, which explains why the Portuguese have left behind the alternate name of Pescadores, meaning “fishermen.” Penghu became an important way-station for both Chinese and foreign ships on their way to Taiwan and other destinations in Asia in the middle of the sixteenth century.¹⁹ This geographic configuration would put the Jianan Plain, facing it across the sea, in an even more favorable position to receive large-scale immigration from the Mainland. While the Penghu Islands have had a small but haphazard presence of Fujianese fishermen since the Song Dynasty (960-1279), surprisingly few Chinese until the sixteenth century had heard of or went to the main island of Taiwan, originally inhabited by tribes of Austronesian aborigines. Despite its proximity to the crowded and resource-poor southeastern Chinese coast, Taiwan, seen from there, remained a harsh, unsettled, and “foreign” frontier.

The Main Actors

Having established the spatial setting for the rise of the Zheng family, I now explore their ties to the other main players in East and Southeast Asia. I examine, in rough chronological order, the impact of events in China during the Ming-Qing transition, Japan, and Korea upon trends occurring in Southeast Coast macroregion. Moreover, I continue to put the Zheng organization in a comparative framework with the VOC to highlight the contexts for their emergence, relationship with home governments, and legitimacy. We start with the Ming, the dynasty to which the Zhengs pledged nominal loyalty.

The Ming. China during the seventeenth century was a unified empire that had enjoyed relative peace and stability for over two hundred years under the Ming Dynasty. The imperial court's primary challenge lay in acquiring enough revenues to maintain this social order and allow the vast imperial bureaucracy to continue functioning smoothly and implementing

¹⁷ Andrade, 1.2 and Ts'ao Yung-ho (Cao Yonghe), “Taiwan as an Entrepôt in East Asia in the Seventeenth Century,” in *Eclipsed Entrepôts of the Western Pacific*, ed. John E. Wills, Jr. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 4.

¹⁸ Government Information Office, Republic of China, n.p.

¹⁹ Chen Bisheng, 260-262.

directives from the center. Because land taxes formed the most important source of government income—not surprising for a country where the vast majority of people engaged in farming—the Ming state naturally paid great attention to agrarian affairs.²⁰ Not without reason, it believed that a prosperous and content peasantry would be in a better fiscal position to contribute to the imperial coffers and, hence, successfully prop up a powerful country. Impoverished farmers, on the other hand, would engage in rebellion or other troublemaking activities that required huge expenditures to put down, thereby weakening the polity.²¹

In fact, the primacy accorded to a self-sufficient agrarian economy was embedded within the very ideology of the Ming Dynasty, as formulated by its founder, Taizu (1328-1398), the Hongwu Emperor (r. 1368-1398), in 1368. Based upon Confucian and Daoist classics, he had envisioned an egalitarian society of small, industrious landholders living adequate but immobile lives, with each of them responsible for paying taxes to the government. In return, the ruler of the state should show benevolence toward his subjects; he would ensure their livelihood by giving them a field to farm, providing them with food and shelter during times of famine, and keeping official burdens at a minimal level.²² Early in its rule, the Ming court generally sought to carry out this ideal of maximizing agrarian welfare in its policies and institutions. For instance, it established a nationwide system of granaries that distributed food during times of shortages, and encouraged migration to new lands to bring resources and population into balance.²³

However, the Ming state gradually lost control of economy and society as the stable order it had established stimulated rapid population growth and commercialization during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The number of imperial subjects increased from 155 million in 1500 to 231 million in 1600 and 268 million by 1650, spawning a vastly expanded market for products. An intricate system of land and river routes initially laid out by the Ming court for governmental use facilitated the flow of surplus grain across long distances and contributed to the development of specialized commercial cropping among regions.²⁴ For instance, food production shifted inland, congregating in Hubei, Hunan, and Guangxi Provinces, while North China concentrated on growing cotton. Meanwhile, in the highly commercialized Jiangnan region, cultivators devoted entire fields to mulberry to meet the great worldwide demand for silk.²⁵

This area also saw the highest levels of proto-industrial manufacturing, with many households specializing solely in the production of textiles. In a kind of putting-out arrangement, they would buy the raw materials from merchant intermediaries and then spin and weave them into a final product that they sold them back to the merchant for distribution.

²⁰ R. Bin Wong, 90.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 92, 131, 135-136 and Timothy Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 19.

²³ R. Bin Wong, 139.

²⁴ Frederick W. Mote, *Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 745-749.

²⁵ Brook, 194.

Outside of Jiangnan, other large-scale manufactures involving complex industrial processes thrived as well, including the kilns of Jingdezhen, which churned out the porcelain prized throughout the early modern world.²⁶ To keep this economic engine well-oiled, enough silver had to circulate to serve as a medium of transaction for settling payments. The metal was widely seen as a secure store of value after the failure of early Ming experiments in paper money, which had fallen into disuse due to rampant inflation. Moreover, through the Single-Whip Reforms (*yitiaobian fa*) of 1581, even the court required that land and labor taxes be made in the metal.²⁷ Through its benign neglect toward commerce, the Ming government unintentionally allowed the majority of agricultural produce and handicrafts to circulate across the empire at very modest costs.²⁸

All of these factors combined to create a strong demand for ever-increasing amounts of bullion, which quickly depleted the limited supplies of domestic mines and necessitated a turn toward overseas sources.²⁹ However, the Ming court interfered in a far more arbitrary manner when it came to the treatment of foreign commerce. The imperial court feared that unscrupulous merchants would join pirate gangs or form shady alliances with outside forces to severely disrupt the coastline and, more seriously, subvert dynastic rule. As a corollary to his attempt to assert absolute control at home, the Hongwu Emperor issued a series of prohibitions (*haijin*) on all private maritime trade and travel abroad, attempting to channel and coopt such activities into a restricted system of official interactions based upon the payment of tribute from smaller countries to China.³⁰

Japan. Across the ocean, tremendous economic and social changes similarly swept over Japan, China's leading trading partner. The establishment of the Tokugawa *bakufu* in 1603, which signaled a return to peace after centuries of chaos and warfare, stimulated rapid population growth and agricultural production.³¹ The surplus generated through such increases bolstered government revenues, allowing the samurai ruling class, in turn, to hold a greater amount of

²⁶ Ibid., 198-200 and Mote, 765.

²⁷ Mote, 731.

²⁸ R. Bin Wong, 137.

²⁹ Chinese domestic silver mines, mostly concentrated in the remote southwestern provinces of Yunnan and Guangxi, could not even produce enough to supply local needs. For instance, the domestic output of the metal from 1599 to 1606 only amounted to 97,422 taels (3,646 kg) per year. For a detailed study of bullion flows during the Ming, refer to Lin Man-houng, "The Shift from East Asia to the World," in *Maritime China in Transition*, ed. Wang Gungwu and Ng Chin-keong (Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2004), 78-80.

³⁰ He even enshrined this principle into his ancestral injunctions, thereby forbidding his successors from ever altering it. For more on the tributary system and the Chinese world order during the Ming, refer to the collection of essays in John King Fairbank, ed., *The Chinese World Order* and Sakuma Shigeo, *Nichi-Min kankeishi no kenkyū* (*Research on the History of Relations between the Ming and Japan*) (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1992), 350. Through the issuing of licenses, the Ming effectively limited the number of private ships that could accompany tribute missions from other countries, a practice aimed at reinforcing its maritime prohibitions. In addition, the court banned the export of materials it deemed strategic, including arms and iron manufactures for fear of their being used against it, as well as several highly valued items, such as finer grades of silk. See Chao, 37 and Sakuma, 15-16.

³¹ Conrad Totman estimates that the amount of arable land under cultivation in the villages grew "from 1,635,000 *chō* [1,621,000 hectares] in 1600 to 3,050,000 [3,025,000] by 1720." During the same time, the population of the entire country went from 12 to 30 million. See Totman, 149.

disposable income and raise their demand for goods and services. In response, merchants and artisans began to settle down around the castles where these retainers lived to supply them with their needs and wants, and earn a profit, oftentimes tremendous, in the process. Kanazawa and other sprawling castle towns, the seat of the lords of Japan's semi-independent fiefdoms (*daimyō*), sprang up throughout the country, while major cities directly under *bakufu* control, such as the capital of Edo and the commercial hub of Osaka, also experienced phenomenal growth.³²

These cities became the breeding ground for a new class of consumers with a strong demand for products from abroad. They especially coveted Chinese luxuries and even daily goods, including silk, porcelain, classical books, medicines, needles, and iron pots. Although they could not sell most Japanese goods "more cheaply at the same level of quality" into the Chinese market, they nonetheless possessed one crucial resource to pay for these imports: silver.³³ Already by the early seventeenth century, "some fifty gold mines and thirty silver mines were brought into production," with a typical one such as that on the island of Sado "yielding...sixty to ninety thousand kilograms" annually.³⁴ China, which desperately needed the metal, started importing tremendous quantities from Japan, which would become its largest and most profitable source of overseas exports in the 80 years after 1567. Japanese silver constituted the bulk of the total inflow into China of around 100 million taels (3,743,000 kg), several times the amount of New World bullion acquired through the Philippines, the other key, and legal, foreign supply.

Japan had been an active participant in the Chinese tribute system under the preceding Ashikaga *bakufu* (1336-1573).³⁵ However, this arrangement, known as the *kanhe* (J. *kangō*) trade, named after the tallies granted by the Ming court to an assigned number of Japanese vessels for buying and selling in China during each official mission, broke down amid the chaos and civil war of the sixteenth century.³⁶ As central authority declined, armed bands under regional *daimyō* and unemployed samurai (*rōnin*) joined the far more numerous Chinese smugglers in illicit trade and plundering along the Chinese coastline.³⁷ Faced with this upsurge of attacks from "Japanese" pirates (C. *wokou* / J. *wakō*), the Ming court broke off all diplomatic relations with Japan, and refused to reopen private trade even after it relaxed its maritime prohibitions in 1567.³⁸

The Tokugawa unification succeeded in curbing piratical activities among its subjects, but did not lead to a revival of official ties. Tributary relations with China, which implied

³² The population of Kanazawa had grown to 80,000 by 1634. See Totman, 64.

³³ Contemporary Chinese accounts note that "nearly all of Japan's necessities are produced in China." Refer to Chao, 267.

³⁴ Totman, 70.

³⁵ Beginning in 1403, Shogun Yoshimitsu (1358-1408, r. 1368-1408) and his successors accepted investiture from the Chinese emperor as the "King of Japan."

³⁶ Sakuma, 6-7 and Ronald Toby, *State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1984, 58.

³⁷ For a more thorough study of Japanese piracy during the sixteenth century, see So Kwan-wai, *Japanese Piracy in Ming China during the 16th Century* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1975).

³⁸ Chao, 228.

recognition of its superior position as the bastion of “civilization,” conflicted with Japan’s own imperial institution, said to have directly descended from time immemorial in an unbroken line of succession from the Sun Goddess. Moreover, the Japanese emperor based in Kyoto represented a powerful source of domestic legitimacy and authority for the Tokugawa *bakufu*, which relied heavily upon the court to grant them the ranks and titles that would maintain their balance of power vis-à-vis the daimyō. Hence, the shoguns could not afford to put these important symbols of legitimacy into jeopardy by submitting to a foreign ruler to reap the profits of trade.³⁹ By the middle of the seventeenth century, the appeal of official tributary relations, too, had declined due to commercialization and the growing scale of demand, which had begun to outstrip this narrow framework of interaction.⁴⁰ The tremendous interdependence of the Chinese and Japanese economies, combined with the absence of institutionalized commercial ties, created favorable conditions for the rise of intermediaries, who could earn spectacular profits in the silk for silver trade between the two countries.⁴¹

Middlemen. The Portuguese overseas empire became the first organized enterprise to exploit this lucrative arbitrage. Their voyages of discovery had brought them across the Atlantic, reaching the coast of Zhejiang in 1513, two years after occupying Malacca from outposts in India.⁴² In 1543, three Portuguese sailors ran aground on the island of Tanegashima, just south of Kyushu, an accident that led to the opening of relations with Japan and the establishment of a trading post at the port of Nagasaki.⁴³ Meanwhile, with the tacit approval of the Ming Guangdong authorities, the Portuguese established a settlement in 1557 at Macao, close to the provincial capital of Guangzhou and its luxury markets.⁴⁴ For the next eighty years, they specialized in the exchange of Chinese silk and gold for Japanese silver.⁴⁵ Not to be left behind, the Spanish, fresh from their conquest of the New World, soon entered the Western Pacific sea lanes. In 1571, after conquering the Philippines, they founded Manila, which quickly became an important transshipment point connecting the economies of Asia and the Americas. By the end of the sixteenth century, forty or fifty Chinese ships would arrive each year to sell their products in exchange for large quantities of South American silver, brought by the famous Manila galleons across the Pacific from the port of Acapulco, Mexico.⁴⁶

Cut off from their livelihoods, and lured by the lucrative profits, the Chinese traders; mostly residents of Fujian, Guangdong, and Zhejiang; had sailed abroad in open violation of the Ming maritime ban. Initially, they often banded together in alliance with merchants and soldiers from Japan, Portugal, and Southeast Asia to engage in smuggling and plunder along the southeastern

³⁹ Toby, 58-59 and Totman, 50.

⁴⁰ Sakuma, 15-16.

⁴¹ For instance, merchants carrying high-quality brands of silk to Nagasaki could expect to fetch a return of up to ten times the domestic price. See Sakuma, 251-252.

⁴² Chao, 140-141 and Ts’ao (Cao), “Taiwan as an Entrepôt,” 4.

⁴³ Totman, 46.

⁴⁴ Chao, 146 and Andrade, “Introduction,” 10.

⁴⁵ Ts’ao, “Taiwan as an Entrepôt,” 4.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

Chinese coast.⁴⁷ Faced with such rampant “Japanese” piracy on its shores, along with growing domestic demand for bullion to grease its economic engine, the Ming court relaxed the prohibitions in 1567, opening the port of Haicheng, in Zhangzhou, to register and tax private, outward-bound traffic.⁴⁸ However, the continued embargo on Japan, its largest source of silver, and the appearance of hostile European armed merchants in Asian waters, prompted Chinese smugglers to consolidate into more rationalized, hierarchical organizations to coordinate defense and enforce contracts among multinational parties. Based on the islets off of Zhejiang and Fujian, and in Japan and Taiwan, these mercantile networks came to compete with the Portuguese and Spanish, and one another, for domination of the sea lanes.

From the sixteenth century onward, many of the Chinese residents who had sailed abroad to Japan, Manila, Batavia, and other parts of Southeast Asia stayed behind in large numbers. Of these, the ports of Kyushu, including Hirado and Nagasaki, witnessed the fastest and most sustained rates of growth. The Chinese population of Nagasaki, for instance, went from almost nonexistent in the middle of the sixteenth century to 2,000 to 3,000 residents in the 1620s.⁴⁹ The daimyō of southwestern Japan in particular welcomed these new immigrants to trade in their fiefdoms as a means of generating income, and formed warm personal relationships with prominent members of the community. An enigmatic overseas Chinese named Li Dan (d. 1625), the “Captain China” of Dutch and English accounts, became a major player in the maritime world between 1612 until his death in 1625. From his base in Hirado, he and his associates primarily plied the shipping routes back and forth to Taiwan, where they met and conducted clandestine trade with vessels from China.⁵⁰ The local daimyō, Matsuura Takanobu (1592-1637), highly valued Li’s intermediary services and made him headman of the Chinese community, hence his nickname. The *bakufu* issued him, along with several other prominent Japanese merchants, vermillion seals (*shuin*) permitting Tokugawa subjects to sail abroad to destinations in Taiwan and Southeast Asia.⁵¹

Daimyō Takanobu also bestowed great favor upon one of Li Dan’s junior associates, a young man named Zheng Zhilong, granting him a plot of land in Kawauchi, not far from the castle town and harbor, and giving him the hand of the daughter of one of his retainers in marriage. It was there in 1624 that the young woman, Tagawa Matsu (d. 1646), gave birth to their eldest son, Chenggong, some say, while taking one of her usual walks along a nearby beach called Senrigahama. Before arriving in Japan, Zhilong had fled from his birthplace of Shijing, a seaside village in Quanzhou Prefecture, and spent some time in Macao, where he converted to

⁴⁷ Chao, 133; Wong Young-tsu, 117.

⁴⁸ Chao, 211-213.

⁴⁹ Chao, 289-290 and Totman, 76.

⁵⁰ Iwao Seiichi 岩生成一, “Ming mo qiaoyu Riben Zhinaren Jiabidan Li Dan kao 明末僑寓日本支那人甲必丹李旦考” (“Study of Li Dan, China Captain Living in Japan during the Late Ming”), in *Helan shidai Taiwan shi lunwen ji* (Collection of Papers on Dutch-era Taiwan History), trans. and ed. Xu Xianyao (Yilan, Taiwan: Foguang renwenshe, 2001), 71.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 74.



Figure 6. Senrigahama, near the castle town of Hirado. This marker denotes the exact location where Tagawa Matsu supposedly gave birth to Zheng Chenggong in 1624.

Photograph by author, 2009

Catholicism and received the Portuguese name of Nicholas Gaspard. His fluent grasp of the language, considered a *lingua franca* for international communication throughout the Western Pacific, allowed him to make a living as a translator for both Li and the Dutch East India Company.⁵² From these modest beginnings, Zheng quickly rose within Li's network, and, after his patron's death in 1625, either seized or inherited his assets, and coopted his associates. He presently left Japan, and his wife and young child, and relocated with his followers to a base in central Taiwan, where they engaged in smuggling and the plundering of passing ships.⁵³

The appearance of Zheng Zhilong in the waters of the Western Pacific during the 1620s represented a culmination of previous trends, and marked the beginning of a new era in East Asian maritime history. Unlike any Chinese smuggling organization before him, Zheng managed to create an elaborate hierarchical structure to oversee his smuggling activities. He

⁵² Wong Young-tsu, 122-123.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 123.

also acquired the latest and most powerful guns and naval vessels available from the Dutch and other Europeans to effectively counter competition from rival outlaw groups and harassment from Ming government forces.⁵⁴ With the help of these institutional innovations, he was able to mount sustained and successful raids on an unprecedented scale on the Mainland coast. From 1625 to 1628, he attacked and occupied several key Fujianese towns and plundered them for goods, killing one garrison commander and sinking hundreds of the best Ming ships in the process.⁵⁵

On regular occasions, the imperial court would have devoted a huge number of resources and troops to exterminate this formidable maritime threat, but, during the late 1620s, more pressing crises tied its hands together. The Manchus had risen as a powerful empire in the Northeast, its troops amassing at the border and frequently conducting devastating raids into North China. Meanwhile, peasant uprisings had spread rapidly throughout the country, fueled by droughts and epidemics.⁵⁶ Already preoccupied on several fronts, the imperial court, not wanting to make another enemy along the coast, decided to strike a deal with Zheng Zhilong, tacitly approving his commercial organization and granting him a military post in exchange for his surrender.⁵⁷ In October 1628, after a series of difficult negotiations, coupled with sporadic fighting, Zheng agreed to bring his troops ashore and submit to the Ming. Under the auspices of his newly acquired authority, he successfully eliminated his erstwhile commercial competitors in the name of rooting out piracy, a feat that earned him promotion to the rank of Fujian Military Commander (*Fujian zongbing*). This office, in effect, made him an autonomous satrap who controlled soldiers and military installations throughout the province, and gave him a monopoly over a large proportion of China's overseas trade.⁵⁸

By the 1630s, Zheng Zhilong had undoubtedly become one of the richest moguls of the early modern world through commerce with different ports across East and Southeast Asia. Contemporary accounts note that his income totaled “tens of millions of [silver] taels per year,” and his assets “rivalled that of entire nations.”⁵⁹ In 1642, the value of goods on board the junks directly under his supervision trading just with Japan amounted to 300,000 taels.⁶⁰ He converted the town of Anhai (also Anping), not far from his home village of Shijing, into a major port for international trade, and built a splendid and lavish mansion overlooking the ocean to serve as his headquarters, fully equipped with a canal connected to the sea that allowed ships to sail directly into his bedroom!⁶¹ Among the most frequent visitors to the port were

⁵⁴ Ibid., 123-124; Chao, 256.

⁵⁵ Wong Young-tsu, 125-126.

⁵⁶ Brook, 239; Chao, 254.

⁵⁷ Wong Young-tsu, 126.

⁵⁸ For a more detailed narrative of the motivations behind Zheng Zhilong's surrender to the Ming, as well as his meteoric rise to power, see Wong Young-tsu, 124-130. A quantitative analysis of his market share in China's foreign trade and estimated profits can be found in Ishihara, 272-276.

⁵⁹ Chao, 260.

⁶⁰ Ishihara, 278.

⁶¹ Wong Young-tsu, 129.

representatives from the Dutch East India Company. The VOC already had dealings with him during his pirate days in Taiwan, and even farther back, while he still lived in Hirado. In 1609, with the permission of the daimyō, who eagerly welcomed all foreign merchants, the company had established a trading post, or factory, there along with the English, another newcomer to Asia.

The Netherlands and the VOC. In 1602, the United Provinces of the Netherlands, while still in revolt against Spain, officially established the Netherlands United East India Company (*Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*) with a charter awarding it a twenty-one year, renewable monopoly over all commerce east of the Cape of Good Hope.⁶² It concurrently banned other citizens of the Dutch Republic from the lucrative trade routes “on penalty of forfeiting their ships and cargo.”⁶³ The charter further granted the VOC power to enter into treaties with foreign countries on behalf of the government, keep its own army and navy, set up fortresses, and “appoint governors and judges to maintain law and order.”⁶⁴ In this manner, the company simultaneously possessed sovereignty but remained dependent upon the state for the maintenance of its rights and privileges.

The VOC devised a highly innovative and powerful manner of raising capital, by dividing ownership into shares that could be freely bought and sold on the market, and with earnings paid in the form of dividends. Moreover, the portions were small enough so that almost anyone could afford to purchase them, while only risking a limited liability restricted to the amount of money originally put into the firm.⁶⁵ Most of the biggest buyers, however, consisted of large wholesale merchants. This arrangement theoretically granted the VOC a permanent, albeit conditional, existence independent of the changing vicissitudes of a single proprietor.⁶⁶ Meanwhile, responsibility over routine policy matters and operations within the company was spread out across six chambers located in different regions of the Netherlands. Each headed by a court of directors, they had the authority to construct and outfit their own trading ships and hire their own sailors. From Amsterdam, the central court of directors, elected from the lower bodies and known as the *Heren XVII* (Gentlemen Seventeen), coordinated activities and made important decisions, playing a unifying role in this otherwise unwieldy corporate structure.⁶⁷ To better supervise the burgeoning trade and colonization in Asia, this upper elite grouping also voted to establish the Council of the Indies based in Batavia, on the island of Java, and appointed a Governor-General with wide-ranging powers.⁶⁸

These three layers of autonomy, combined with a minimal but effective system of

⁶² The Revolt lasted, on and off, from 1568 until 1648, when the Treaty of Westphalia recognized Dutch independence from Habsburg rule.

⁶³ George Masselman, “Dutch Colonial Policy in the Seventeenth Century,” *The Journal of Economic History* 21.4 (1961): 460. See also Julia Adams, “Trading States, Trading Places,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 36.2 (1994): 332.

⁶⁴ Masselman, 460.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Adams, “Trading States,” 332.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 333.

⁶⁸ Batavia is now Jakarta, the present-day capital of Indonesia.

supervision, reflected, on a broader scale, the institutional innovations devised by the United Provinces to adapt to its overall geopolitical environment. The Dutch Republic formed part of a continent that was gradually undergoing consolidation into modern nation-states at the dawn of the seventeenth century, dramatically reversing the previous centuries of division and political fragmentation into tiny feudal units. This process of centralization was accomplished at the cost of endemic warfare among and within the European countries. More powerful states would swallow up weaker ones, and various elite groups of nobles and merchants overturned their own governments.

In this menacing environment of Darwinian interstate competition, rulers had to field ever-greater numbers of soldiers and arm them with increasingly sophisticated and deadly weaponry in order to successfully fight wars abroad and maintain domestic order. As a result, military expenditures reached staggering levels, forcing the heavily indebted heads of state to develop ways to rationalize their fiscal structures and raise sufficient funds, or see their countries go bankrupt and face extinction.⁶⁹ Many of the successful ones attempted to raise money by developing or enhancing financial institutions that helped incorporate the mercantile elites into the ruling structure of the state. These methods, based upon the protection of certain property rights, included public loans and credit, as well as the creation of monopolies and other commercial privileges in exchange for payment or service to the ruler.⁷⁰

In many ways, the challenges faced by the Netherlands resembled that of other contemporary European countries. The Dutch states revolted against the Spanish Empire starting from 1568 and had mostly achieved their independence by 1579, when they formed a defensive alliance, known as the Union of Utrecht, that later “served as the basis for the new state.”⁷¹ Yet, the intense struggle with Spain was far from over; until well into the next century, the armies of King Philip II (1527-1598) continued to threaten the survival of the United Republics, whose boundaries remained unstable due to the changing vicissitudes of the war. The biggest blow to the young nation came in 1585, when Madrid, having just annexed Portugal, blockaded the port of Lisbon, where the Dutch had acquired most of their Asian spices, and, moreover, confiscated their ships and banned them from sailing to the Americas.⁷² The same year, Philip’s troops attacked and conquered the European financial center of Antwerp, in the South Netherlands.⁷³

To better meet the challenge of military threat and economic embargo from Spain, the fledgling Dutch states sought to rationalize their existing structures of governance. After several unsuccessful attempts at nation-building, which included, among others, seeking the protection of a foreign monarch and developing a centralized bureaucratic regime, the ruling coalition

⁶⁹ North and Thomas, 95-96.

⁷⁰ North and Thomas, 99 and Pomeranz, 173.

⁷¹ Adams, “Trading States,” 328 and Masselman, 456.

⁷² Adams, “Trading States,” 328 and Masselman, 456.

⁷³ Masselman, 456.

finally came to a consensus after negotiation with the country's primarily mercantile elites.⁷⁴ The result was a patrimonialist, statist form of government vesting sovereignty within corporate provincial assemblies dominated by merchants. These bodies elected the 1,500 regents that made up the States-General, a rather weak national government that only had the power to implement the unanimous decisions of the provinces on important matters such as wars, taxes, and finances.⁷⁵

This deficiency of the center, however, was compensated in large part by the overwhelming predominance of delegates from Holland, especially Amsterdam. Since the province contributed over 66% of the country's finances, it thus had an effective veto power over regions that might disagree with its policy proposals. At the same time, Amsterdam seized control of international affairs, sending its ambassadors to foreign countries as the representatives of the Netherlands as a whole.⁷⁶ In this manner, an unwieldy but efficient form of government was created that, at the same time, successfully incorporated the country's large mercantile class.

Meanwhile, the Netherlands formulated a fiscal strategy and foreign policy acceptable to its own elites. The subsequent formation of the VOC monopoly in 1602 promised a win-win situation for both the state and its mercantile elites. In terms of foreign policy, the company's combination of long-distance trade and its own military force would allow the Netherlands to break through the Spanish blockade and maintain the home country's independence. By attacking Iberian interests in Southeast Asia, it could also gain direct, unfettered access to the area's lucrative spices.⁷⁷ Any profits from these ventures would accrue to the primarily merchant shareholders and, at the same time, enter government coffers, with both helping to fund more journeys in the future. More importantly, the VOC's creation resulted in the further overlapping of state and elite interests. Not only did the company's decentralized institutions form a mirror image of the Dutch Republic, but many of its officials also served in government positions. For instance, among the 36 directors of the dominant Amsterdam chamber, ten or more held city office or "were opinion leaders and key political players in the town council."⁷⁸ This duplication of roles helped ensure that mutually beneficial policies would continue.

The flexible institutional structure of the VOC, combined with a loose chain of supervision, proved highly adapted to the undertaking of commercial and colonial ventures in the Western Pacific and Indian Oceans, halfway across the globe. The Company's initial goals consisted almost solely of the need to bypass the Iberian blockade and obtain direct access to the Maluku Islands in present-day Indonesia, the source of the pepper and spices used to season food back home. However, at a time when European products enjoyed little appeal in Asian markets, the Dutch had to plunge into the already thriving intra-Asian trade. Since Indian textiles sold well

⁷⁴ Adams, "Trading States," 329.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 330.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 331.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 333.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

on the islands, and the only thing accepted in India as payment was gold and silver, the VOC needed to find an alternative source to the bullion from the Spanish-controlled New World. One answer lay in Japan, which possessed vast deposits of silver and copper. Accordingly, the Dutch established one of their earliest factories at Hirado in 1609. Before obtaining these precious metals, however, they first had to satisfy the Japanese demand for Chinese silk and porcelain, luxury products highly prized throughout the early modern world. Moreover, China had a reliable supply of gold, the other resource to buy into India.⁷⁹

From the very beginning, the VOC specialized in the application of brute force to achieve a monopoly over the regional commerce.⁸⁰ The Company aimed, for one, to dislodge other European colonial powers from their positions in Asia. From 1605 to 1619, its naval fleets successively drove the Portuguese from the island of Amboina, forced Spain to the negotiating table, and ousted the English East Indies Company from the entire Indonesian archipelago.⁸¹ The Company, especially in its earlier years, often abetted pirates or engaged in piracy itself, plundering the vessels of enemy powers and Chinese junks on the high seas as alternative sources of income.⁸²

Meanwhile, the VOC sought to overpower competition in the business from local traders by pursuing a policy of colonization and violent intervention in regional politics. It had brought almost all of the islands of Indonesia under its control or suzerainty by 1619, and forced numerous other petty states in South and Southeast Asia to trade unequally on its terms.⁸³ The Company severely punished those subjects or native kingdoms that dared to challenge its exploitation of their economies. The capable but ruthless Governor-General Jan Pieterszoon Coen (1587-1629), for instance, initiated a systematic massacre and enslavement of the Bandanese Islanders in 1619 after their rebellion against Dutch rule.⁸⁴ Through the company's ruthless exercise of violence and continuing threat of coercion, it successfully manipulated the market to allow it to artificially buy cheap and sell dear at almost every stage of exchange.

Besides sheer force, the Dutch depended upon the assistance of the Chinese, whose widespread presence across the region and commercial activities helped tie together the markets of East and Southeast Asia. Chinese merchants utilized their existing ties with fellow countrymen and local rulers to open up new trade routes for the VOC, while Chinese immigrants settled its colonies and provided taxes and labor for the fields. In return, the Company supplied

⁷⁹ Chen Guodong, *Taiwan de shanghai jingyan (The Experience of Taiwan's Mountains and Seas)* (Taipei: Yuanliu chuban gongsi, 2006), 398-399.

⁸⁰ Pomeranz argues that, due to the lack of more lucrative investment channels, the huge sums of capital accumulated by such early modern corporations as the VOC could only gain the biggest returns when it combined commercial interactions with armed conflict. See Pomeranz, 198. Indeed, the Dutch East India Company had an initial value of 6,500,000 guildens, much more than any contemporary European proprietor could amass on one's own. See Masselman, 460.

⁸¹ Julia Adams, "Principals and Agents, Colonialists and Company Men," *American Sociological Review* 61.1 (1996): 18 and Adams, "Trading States," 334.

⁸² Andrade, 2.6.

⁸³ Adams, "Principals and Agents," 18 and Masselman, 467.

⁸⁴ Masselman, 467 and Adams, "Principals and Agents," 19.

the laws and infrastructure that provided a stable framework for their activities and livelihood. As a telling example of this interdependent collaboration, a concept Tonio Andrade calls “co-colonization,” the Dutch built Batavia and Taiwan, their main centers of colonial power, upon existing settlements with an already sizable Chinese presence. Once established, they attracted sustained and dramatic increases in the numbers.⁸⁵

The VOC further benefited from the fortuitous withdrawal of Japan from the East Asian sea lanes. Throughout the 1630s, the Tokugawa *bakufu* enacted restrictions that prohibited Japanese subjects from traveling abroad, and successively limited all overseas commerce to Dutch and Chinese merchants.⁸⁶ In 1641, it ordered these two groups to relocate from Hirado to the port of Nagasaki, and confine their activities there. The bans removed from the China-Japan trade fierce competition from Japanese merchants bearing the *shuin* license, as well as the Spanish and Portuguese, whom the *bakufu* expelled for their aggressive promotion of Catholicism, deemed subversive to its rule.⁸⁷ By 1640, the Dutch controlled large portions of the network of intraregional connections that culminated in the procurement of spices and their shipment back to Europe. As a corollary to trade, the VOC acquired an overseas colonial empire that would become the sites of agricultural and natural resource exploitation.⁸⁸ The profits earned from these ventures paid dividends to shareholders and funded future investments and acquisitions.⁸⁹

The successful fusion of the Dutch state and merchant class in every aspect of political life readily allowed the Netherlands to formulate a coherent ideology in favor of colonization and economic expansion abroad at all costs, with the ultimate goal of maximizing national power.

⁸⁵ Andrade, “Conclusion,” 4-9.

⁸⁶ Ronald Toby correctly disputes the notion that these and other restrictions, a total of five edicts promulgated between 1633 and 1639, represented a purposeful policy of isolation from the outside world. He shows that the term *sakoku* (closing of the country), generally used to describe this period, was a nineteenth-century invention. Although forbidden to all Europeans save the Dutch, Japan remained open to the rest of Asia, including Korea, Liuqiu, and Chinese merchants from both China and overseas. Rather, the policies, known at the time as *kaikin* (maritime restrictions), aimed at “ongoing, if carefully controlled, foreign relations with compatible foreign peoples.” See Toby, 11-13.

⁸⁷ Andrade, “Introduction,” 8-9. Along with traders, Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries had also arrived in Japan from Macao and Manila, where they competed to win converts among the ruling class and the ordinary people. By 1614, Christian communities flourished throughout Kyushu, with the total number of believers estimated at around 300,000 people. For Edo, the threat that the converts and missionaries posed to its rule lay not so much in their faith per se as in their allegiance to a foreign pope in Rome and the God he represented. Such a conception implicitly denied the divine authority of the Japanese emperor, and, by no difficult extrapolation, the *bakufu*. Therefore, the shogun persecuted Christianity with a vengeance, ordering missionaries expelled and places of worship torn down. Moreover, they cracked down severely on Japanese Christian communities, forcing believers to recant and, from 1616 to 1630, executing over 4,000 of those who refused. See Totman, 47-55. Similarly, the Christian background of certain Japanese *shuin* traders gave rise to fears that they might be colluding with the Iberians to topple the regime. See Inagaki, 224. Moreover, the *bakufu* felt, in general, that the encouragement of overseas trade among its subjects had delegated too much power to regional authorities and traders, as well as rowdy immigrants living beyond the pale of its influence, whose reckless confrontations with European armed traders could bring about a foreign invasion. For more on the growing scale of these conflicts in the early seventeenth century and their impact on Edo’s decision to prohibit Japanese travel and immigration abroad, refer to Nakamura Takashi 中村孝志, “Weirao Taiwan de Ri-Lan guanxi: Bingtian Mibingwei de Helan ren gongji 圍繞臺灣的日蘭關係: 濱田彌兵衛的荷蘭人攻擊” (“Relations between Japan and Holland Concerning Taiwan: Hamada Yahē’s Attack on the Dutch”), in *Helan shidai Taiwan shi lunwenji*, ed. and trans. Xu Xianyao.

⁸⁸ Andrade, 6.10-6.11.

⁸⁹ Adams, “Principals and Agents,” 18.

In 1604, the renowned legal philosopher Hugo Grotius (Huig van Groot, 1583-1645) wrote one of his most famous pamphlets, *De Jure Praedae (On the Law of Prize and Booty)*, to rationalize the continued VOC presence in Asia, and appeal to the States General to support its endeavors. Based upon the radical rights theory, he argued that trade and navigation were activities open “to all nations in all ages.”⁹⁰ These inherently natural laws, Grotius further shows, have now come under severe threat due to the monopoly of Asian shipping lanes and markets by Spain and Portugal, the adversaries of the Dutch state.

Combining the classic forensic rhetoric of Cicero and Quintilian, which emphasized a selective interpretation of history, and the Black Legend of horrific atrocities committed by Spain on New World natives, he portrays the Iberians as murderous barbarians who ruthlessly deprived innocent people everywhere of their right to trade freely. The Portuguese oppression of Asian natives merely represented “the mirror image of Spanish tyranny in the Americas and the Low Countries.”⁹¹ In the face of these intolerable violations, natural law mandates that private individuals or organizations should seek compensation for their losses by acting as both judge and executioner in the absence of independent judicial authority. The VOC could rightfully “send warships to the East Indies...to liberate Asian princes and peoples from Portuguese tyranny and unite these victims...in a truly global alliance for freedom” of commerce and navigation.⁹² The Company could cut off a key economic base that supported the Iberian war effort in the Netherlands, while conducting a lucrative spice trade with grateful and friendly natives.

By providing the VOC with a comprehensive ideological foundation, Grotius’s philosophical justification for expansion abroad had an enormous impact on the policies of the States General. The governing body became an active proponent of the Company, exempting it from many taxes, providing it with weapons and warships, and streamlining its operations to improve its organizational capabilities.⁹³ Moreover, the States General itself adopted Grotius’s ideological standpoint in many of its negotiations with foreign powers.⁹⁴ Johan van Oldenbarnevelt (1547-1619), Chancellor of Holland and a commanding figure in the States-General, promoted the VOC as an absolute necessity “for damaging the enemy and for the security of the fatherland.”⁹⁵ By encouraging interstate competition with Spain to spill over into the scramble for colonies with Iberian and other European powers in Asia, the Holland-dominated governing elites acquired the needed internal cohesion and loyalty to maintain its grip on power. News of the VOC successes gave them support from other provinces “on the basis of the positive impact of their politico-economic projects on the Netherlands as a whole.”⁹⁶ The moral high ground

⁹⁰ Martine Van Ittersum, *Profit and Principle* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2006), 232.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 57.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 288-289.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 245.

⁹⁵ Adams, “Principals and Agents,” 18 and Masselman, 459.

⁹⁶ Adams, “Trading States,” 331.

occupied by an appeal for freedom of trade and navigation also provided a legitimate excuse for privateering activities against the Iberians.

In fact, Grotius's ideology had become so thoroughly internalized by 1610 that the States General held onto it tenaciously, even though the Company had transformed itself into a full-fledged monopoly during this period and traded with the Spice Islands on terms highly unfavorable and exploitative for its native "allies." When English freebooters threatened this domination, carrying on an illicit commerce in the area and justifying their actions with the very same doctrine of rights, Grotius adopted a far more conservative version of his theory to defend Dutch measures to keep them out. Since the VOC freed and continued to guard the hapless natives from the yoke of Iberian oppression, he reasoned, only it was entitled to receive spices and other goods as payment for its service. After all, the natural law of trade did not encourage humans to behave in a purely altruistic fashion.⁹⁷ Moreover, such contracts formed the cornerstone of rights to unrestricted navigation and commerce, and could not be changed or nullified, even if the terms deprived the inhabitants of the Spice Islands of their economic freedom.⁹⁸

As an important stakeholder in the national polity, the Company, for its part, also embraced Grotius's thought and eagerly played its assigned role of promoting the interests of the Dutch state abroad. For instance, in 1620, Jan Pieterszoon Coen, Governor-General of the Council of the Indies, bluntly warned the ambitious English that they "had no right to a single 'grain of sand in the Mollucas, Amboina or Banda,'" since these islands rightfully belonged to the Netherlands.⁹⁹ He further called upon the home country to send more ships into the region to better counter its enemies.¹⁰⁰ The VOC's eager connivance helped maintain the Netherlands' position as Europe's preeminent power until well into the eighteenth century, while it itself lasted for a hundred years longer. More importantly, this quasi-autonomous monopoly created many of the institutions for future European colonization and exploitation of natives, crucial elements in the continent's ability to overcome resource constraints and achieve sustained industrial growth.¹⁰¹ As Martine Van Ittersum shows, the VOC was not just a profit-oriented capitalist machine run by opportunistic directors; it also had a coherent ideology that it relied upon heavily to justify commercial and military expansion.¹⁰²

However, one has to note that this discourse of free trade, its historical background, and the institutions built around it, all arose out of the particular political, social, and economic circumstances of northwestern Europe. In contrast, seventeenth-century China did not have any merchants, nobles, or other elites with independent bases of power and a distinct political

⁹⁷ Van Ittersum, 483.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 490.

⁹⁹ Adams, "Trading States," 335.

¹⁰⁰ Coen also launched a vigorous, though abortive, campaign to settle Dutch immigrants into the Indonesian archipelago, whom he believed could overpower the native population and provide lasting stability to the colonies. See Masselman, 464.

¹⁰¹ Pomeranz, 68.

¹⁰² Van Ittersum, xliv-liii.

identity that could seriously challenge imperial rule.¹⁰³ The court set the criteria for its own, non-hereditary ruling class of land-based gentry, certified through competitive civil service examinations based upon knowledge of the Confucian classics.¹⁰⁴ The Ming and the succeeding Qing did not aim for the “creation of any radically new state in competition with other political actors, but rather the reproduction and transformation of an agrarian” one.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, they had no incentive to develop public financial institutions or form an alliance with merchants, as in the case of the Netherlands, nor did they see the need to charter monopolies that would go abroad and mix trade with colonization.¹⁰⁶ In fact, the most fatal threat to their rule lay in the form of popular disruptions to the existing order, including mass peasant uprisings and piracy along the coast.¹⁰⁷ The differential political economies espoused by the Netherlands, and the Ming and the Qing states would greatly affect the kind of relationships they would have, respectively, with the VOC and the Zheng family.

Taiwan. The changes taking place at opposite ends of the Eurasian landmass spawned two massive quasi-governmental entities, one serving as an instrument of state expansion and the other rising as a result of neglect and even antagonism from power centers. The two organizations, and the governments behind them, would meet and collide on Taiwan in the early seventeenth century. Originally inhabited exclusively by aborigines of Malayo-Polynesian descent, the island became a covert rendezvous point for Chinese and Japanese smugglers, who met at several makeshift southwestern ports to exchange goods. By 1610, it had become a point of intersection between the highly commercialized and interdependent economies of China and Japan.

Around this time, the VOC had entered Asia, and, as mentioned before, searched for ways to open up the vast China market primarily to profit as middlemen in the lucrative trade with Japan. In fact, the Dutch ended up on Taiwan almost as an unintentional consequence of their original purpose of seizing the profitable commercial entrepôt of Macao from their Portuguese competitors. As early as 1604, a fleet under Wijbrant van Warwijck (c. 1569-1615) had tried to take the outpost, but ran into a typhoon while sailing through the Taiwan Strait, and had to anchor at Penghu. After fruitless negotiations lasting for half a year with the Ming Fujian authorities to open up trade, he had no choice but to turn back. However, the Dutch would return to the islands in June 1622, after suffering heavy losses from another ill-fated campaign on Macao. Admiral Cornelis Reijersen (d. 1625) built fortifications on Penghu and used it as a base to attack ports and indiscriminately raid shipping along the entire Fujian coast for the next two years in yet more fruitless attempts to force open the Chinese market.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ Ibid., 92.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 92.

¹⁰⁵ R. Bin Wong, 88.

¹⁰⁶ Pomeranz, 173.

¹⁰⁷ R. Bin Wong, 90.

¹⁰⁸ Ts'ao (Cao), “Taiwan as Entrepôt,” 5-6.

In response, the provincial authorities amassed ships and soldiers whose numbers overwhelmed the tiny Dutch fleet, and, through threat of force, compelled the VOC to evacuate Penghu and dismantle all the defensive networks it had built there.¹⁰⁹ Besides the threat they posed to maritime security, the Dutch occupied an island chain with a clear, albeit haphazard, Chinese governmental presence since the Song, when it came under the jurisdiction of Quanzhou Prefecture.¹¹⁰ Although refusing to allow the VOC to establish a base within their jurisdiction, the local Fujian officials, acting without the knowledge of the Ming court in Beijing, agreed to grant its request for trade if it removed to “a place outside the control of China.”¹¹¹ They went on to suggest that the Dutch fleet relocate to nearby Taiwan, which they confirmed “was not Chinese territory,” and promise that merchants from the Mainland could travel there freely to trade with the company.¹¹²

Accordingly, in August 1624, Reijersen’s men completed their relocation to a narrow sandbar named Tayouan, near present-day Tainan, formerly a rendezvous point for Chinese and Japanese traders with an already sizable Chinese settlement.¹¹³ Directly facing it on the Jianan Plain, across a small body of inland sea, the Dutch also planned and built a new town on the site of the aboriginal village of Saccam (Chikan). Known as Provintia, it would become a major trading center with convenient access to hinterlands in southern Taiwan, and stimulate further expansion of Mainland immigration. To ensure the defense of these settlements, the VOC constructed Casteel Zeelandia, which safeguarded the narrow Lu’ermen (Lakjemeuse) Channel, leading from the Taiwan Strait into the inland sea.¹¹⁴ Another bastion, Fort Provintia, was later built in 1653 within Saccam, the settlement on the main island, mainly to prevent Chinese rebellion.¹¹⁵

The new Dutch base, however, did not go unchallenged. Besides the Spanish, who established a fort at Jilong in 1626, and the Japanese traders frequenting the island before Edo’s maritime restrictions, the Chinese settlements just north of the VOC colony posed the largest challenge to its consolidation due to their connection with Zheng Zhilong.¹¹⁶ Before his submission to the Ming in 1628, Zhilong would set up floating markets on his junks in the middle of Taiwan Strait, and levy duties on all vessels headed to and from Japan and Southeast Asia.¹¹⁷ He conducted his operations from a base at the aboriginal village of Wankan, which

¹⁰⁹ Ts’ao (Cao), “Taiwan as Entrepôt,” 6 and Chen Bisheng, 268.

¹¹⁰ Chen Bisheng, 264.

¹¹¹ According to the original text, “*een plats besaeten buijten ‘t gebied van China.*” See Chiang (Jiang Shusheng), *Missiven*, Part 1, 44.

¹¹² Chiang (Jiang Shusheng), *Missiven*, Part 1, 46 and Cheng, 16.

¹¹³ Andrade, “Conclusion,” 4-9.

¹¹⁴ Ts’ao (Cao), “Taiwan as Entrepôt,” 6.

¹¹⁵ Andrade, Ch. 9, photo caption 5.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.9-15, 4.1. The Spanish felt that the Dutch presence on Taiwan gave them a chokehold on the crucial passageway of the Taiwan Strait, allowing them to cut off access at will between Manila and the Chinese junks traveling there, primarily from the Fujian coast. The Japanese could hardly feel happy that another power had imposed itself between them and the Chinese merchants, and levied duties upon their previously direct and clandestine exchange.

¹¹⁷ Zha Jizuo, *Zuiwei lu xuanji (Selections from the Sole Account of Sin)*, *TWWXCK*, 136 (1962), 255.



Figure 7. Rice paddies and pockets of small ponds now cover a flat plain once submerged underwater, beneath a bay separating Fort Zeelandia and the Dutch settlement of Tayouan from the rest of Taiwan.

Photograph by author, 2006

had developed into a major rendezvous point for Chinese and Japanese smugglers at the dawn of the seventeenth century under Li Dan and his associate in Taiwan, Yan Siqi (d. 1625).¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ Wankan is located near present-day Beimen, Tainan County. See Andrade, 7.19 n. 7. Scholars have long disagreed over the precise identity of Yan Siqi, and whether he actually existed or represented a fictional creation of Zheng Zhilong to romanticize his own shady past. In fact, Iwao Seiichi and other scholars have held that the two men were one and the same. See Iwao, ““Ming mo qiaoyu Riben Zhinaren Jiabidan Li Dan kao,” in *Helan shidai Taiwan shi lunwen ji*. However, numerous Chinese sources refer to Yan Siqi, and even went into the detail of providing his style-name of Yan Zhenquan. See, for instance, Zha, *Zuiwei lu*, 131; Wu Weiye, *Luqiao jiwen (Report from the Deer Observatory)*, *TWWXCK*, 127 (1961), 59; and Jiang Risheng, 4. They note that Taiwan only started having Han settlers on a large scale due to the patronage of this enigmatic figure. See Liu Liangbi and Gao Gongqian, eds., *Chongxiu Fujian Taiwan fu zhi (Revised Edition of the Gazetteer of Taiwan Prefecture of Fujian)*, *TWWCK*, 74 (1961), 453 and Huang Shujing, 1. Letters written by the governors of Taiwan to Batavia provide further evidence for the existence of Yan, known in Dutch records as Pedro China and identified as “an associate of Captain China.” In one such exchange, on December 12, 1624, Governor Martinus Sonck (d. 1625) reported the presence of about 100 Chinese pirates north of the Dutch settlement at Tayouan “under the control of Captain and Pedro China” (“*onder ’t gebiet van Capiteyn ende Pedro China staen*”). See Chiang (Jiang Shusheng), *Missiven*, Part 1, 174. Moreover, the letter reports the death of Yan Siqi on October 29, 1625, only two months after Li Dan. See Chiang (Jiang Shusheng), *Missiven*, Part 1, 133, 216. The date that Yan passed away matches that found in Chinese texts like Jiang Risheng, 4. Hence, the close proximity of Captain China and Pedro China in both space and time could easily lead one to believe that they were identical.

After Zhilong inherited this commercial network in 1625, he appeared to have taken nascent steps toward encouraging agricultural production and establishing institutions to control the burgeoning Chinese settlement in the area, although more research is needed to obtain a clearer picture.¹¹⁹ In any case, he effectively neglected his former base after joining the Ming. His associates would either follow him back to Fujian or stay on in Taiwan. The most prominent among the latter group, including a translator and trader named He Tingbin, would serve under the VOC colonial administration as leaders of the Chinese community, while maintaining close ties with the Zheng family.¹²⁰ With the Chinese coopted, the Dutch then proceeded to successfully pacify the coastal aboriginal settlements and expel the Spanish from Jilong in 1642, bringing most of the island under their control by the end of that year.¹²¹ Yet, Zheng Zhilong's former presence on Taiwan, and his relationship with the VOC and his former associates, would profoundly influence his son Chenggong's future perceptions and actions toward the colony.

Although immigrants primarily from Fujian, whether "rich entrepreneurs or poor peasants," poured into Taiwan, which, by the 1640s, had witnessed the rise of a large Chinese community and society, the island, as seen from the Mainland coast, remained a desolate and "foreign" frontier.¹²² Emma Teng's research on the island's historical geography clearly shows that it lay outside of "China" altogether in both its particular and universal connotations. Although parts of the boundaries of the Chinese historic landmass, or *guo*, remained fuzzy and permeable, prominent natural barriers, including mountains, deserts, and especially, the ocean, unambiguously delineated and categorized what belonged inside the Middle Kingdom (*Zhongguo*) and what stayed out.¹²³ These markers had traditional roots in ancient geographic texts, and became reinforced visually through maps drawn during the Ming that "served to naturalize the spatial image of a territorially bound China."¹²⁴ These criteria clearly excluded

¹¹⁹ Jiang Risheng, 16-17. Almost immediately after his submission to the Ming in 1628, during a severe famine in Fujian, Zheng Zhilong received approval from the provincial governor to recruit tens of thousands of impoverished commoners, with the aim of sending them to Taiwan on board his own junks, and providing them with the initial funds to open up the land. See Huang Zongxi, 6 and Ni Zaitian, ed., *Xu Ming jishi benmo (Continued Record of the Rise and Fall of the Ming)*, TWWXCK, 133 (1962), 175. Andrade, however, questions whether he ever carried out this plan, since movement on such a massive scale would certainly have attracted the attention of the VOC, but no relevant Dutch records exist. See Andrade, 6.3. Still, it would be safe to assume that Zhilong's ambitious proposal, in and of itself, reflected his desire to develop Taiwan beyond merely a den for pirates, and showed that he already had experience with colonization and agricultural development on the island prior to his submission to the Ming.

¹²⁰ The claim, that He Tingbin once belonged to the pirate organization of Yan Siqi and Zheng Zhilong, comes from Jiang Risheng, 36, 47-48. Although this highly fanciful account of He's early exploits contains elements of fantasy and exaggeration, while lacking corroboration in any other Chinese or Western source, it does not appear completely unfounded. Without doubt, the close relationship between the Zhengs and He Tingbin later on implies that they shared some kind of earlier connection, although its exact nature remains unclear.

¹²¹ Andrade, 3.12-3.13, 4.6-4.10.

¹²² According to Shi Lang's estimate, the population of the island during this period "did not fall below ten thousand." See Shi, 60.

¹²³ James Millward defines boundaries as places where "differences are articulated and negotiated; decisions are made to include or exclude; categories are drawn up. Not only do boundaries define two entities; they define the entities themselves... Yet, boundaries are seldom rigid. Rather, they are porous surfaces where heterogeneous physical or conceptual zones come into contact and interpenetrate." See Millward, 3.

¹²⁴ Teng, 36-38. These texts included the "Tribute of Yu," a chapter from the *Classic of Documents (Shujing)*, and the *Classic of Mountains and Seas (Shanhaijing)*. Millward quotes from the same ancient accounts to show that "the eastern and western

islands in the middle of the sea far away from the coast, such as Taiwan.

Indeed, both Ming and early Qing accounts spoke of the island as an exotic and mysterious place, psychologically distant from China despite physical proximity. The renowned early Qing intellectual and Ming loyalist Huang Zongxi (1610-1695) states in his biography of the rise and fall of the Zheng family that “Taiwan is a desolate island (*huangdao*) in the middle of the sea.”¹²⁵ “Taiwan, this miniscule land, lies far out in the ocean,” writes Gao Gongqian in a preface to one of its first gazetteers, published in 1696, just over a decade after the Qing took control in 1683.¹²⁶ The Fujianese gentry elite Yu Yonghe, who traveled there in 1690, heard popular stories with outrageous claims:

“At the foot of the Jilong Mountains [in the north], you approach water so weak that it cannot even hold up a feather. Ships will surely sink...Others say there is one named ‘Ten-thousand-waters-flow-east (*wanshui chaodong*)’...the current moves relentlessly toward the east and you will never return.”¹²⁷

Such fantastic descriptions of Taiwan’s inaccessibility due to the hostile waters around it served to emphasize and heighten its perceived divide with the Mainland. After becoming an official, Zhilong, too, tacitly acknowledged this separation by permitting junks to trade on the island but forbidding the VOC from coming to Fujian, because “our country’s emperor has issued an edict prohibiting foreigners from entering China.”¹²⁸ Taiwan thus clearly lay outside the territorial scope of the Ming.

Besides an entity marked off by bounded natural features, precedents in the canonical works presented an alternative model of “China” that theoretically encompassed the entire world (*tianxia*). However, the degree of “Chineseness” varied along a set of concentric circles or nested rectangles that radiated outward from the domain of the imperial court, which represented the epitome of “civilization,” to increasing degrees of “barbarism.”¹²⁹ From the depictions of Ming and Qing writers, Taiwan and its aboriginal inhabitants occupied the extreme periphery. Chen Di (1546-1617), who accompanied a Ming expeditionary force against pirate lairs on the

boundaries of the realm are here defined quite clearly indeed.” See Millward, 37. After a careful examination of Ming-era maps, Emma Teng concludes that some of them even portray the empire as surrounded by stylized waves. Teng, 37-38.

¹²⁵ Huang Zongxi, 6.

¹²⁶ Gao Gongqian, ed., *Taiwan fu zhi (Gazetteer of Taiwan Prefecture)*, TWWXCK, 65 (1960), 7.

¹²⁷ Yu, 29.

¹²⁸ Yuan Bingling and Bao Leshi (Leonard Blussé), trans., “Guanyu Zheng Zhilong gei Helan Badaweiya cheng zongdu Sibeikesi de liang feng xin” (“Regarding Two Letters Written by Zheng Zhilong to Governor-General Speck of Dutch Batavia”), *Fujian shizhi (Fujian Historical Journal)* (July 1994), 28.

¹²⁹ These idealized depictions are found in “Tribute of Yu” and the *Rites of Zhou (Zhouli)*. See Millward, 37 and Teng, 41. Teng refers to the first work, which conceived of a world of nested rectangles, with the Royal Domain at the center, followed by the fiefs of feudal lords and princes, the “Zone of Pacification,” “Allied Barbarians,” and “Wilderness.” Teng, 41. In his classic account of the Chinese world order, John King Fairbank utilizes a concentric circle with three components: the Sinitic Zone, consisting of culturally similar kingdoms like Korea, the Inner Asian Zone, which included the Mongols and other steppe peoples, and the completely “barbaric” Outer Zone. See Fairbank, “Preliminary Framework,” 2.

island in the late sixteenth century, called it the land of the “Eastern Savages (*dongfan*).” According to him, the Taiwanese aborigines do not observe the proper distinctions of superior and inferior, and “do not count the days or use writing.”¹³⁰ They “do not clothe themselves, but run around naked.”¹³¹ In the view of Chinese contemporaries, then, they lacked even the fundamental hallmarks of “civilization.” The Dutch, called the “Red Hair Barbarians (*hongmaoyi*)” in Chinese accounts, were portrayed as another tribe from abroad that managed to occupy the island and awe its simple and gullible aborigines into submission through deceit, ferociousness, and superior weapons and ships.¹³²

The thousands of immigrants from Fujian who had moved to Taiwan during this period hardly enjoyed a better reputation. Gao Gongqian’s *Gazetteer of Taiwan Prefecture* spoke of Yan Siqi as a “headman from the Eastern Seas” who initially “enticed the Japanese dwarves (*wo*) to gather there.”¹³³ Shen Guangwen (1613-1688), a scholar and Ming loyalist from Zhejiang, came to Taiwan in 1649 and stayed behind after his ship, bound for Quanzhou, strayed off course during a storm.¹³⁴ His sketch of Han residents there ranged from “arrogant and disorderly translators” for the Dutch, such as He Tingbin, to smugglers “greedy for the myriad products.”¹³⁵ Such images did not conform to the impression of an orderly society based upon accepted norms of Confucian propriety. Shen concluded that “it was difficult for the sounds of civilization” to reach people “crouched away in a strange land” for so many years.¹³⁶ The unflattering portrayals in these and other narratives clearly show that the Han Chinese had lost their identity as moral subjects from long-term residence in this desolate wilderness (*huangfu*), the outermost zone of “barbarism,” and collusion with hostile and powerful foreigners.¹³⁷ For Ming and Qing contemporaries, Taiwan not only remained outside the traditional boundaries of the *guo*, but also occupied the most extreme periphery of the *tianxia*.

The Qing. Zheng Zhilong’s prominent positions as Ming official and trade mogul came under threat in 1644, when Beijing fell to peasant rebels under Li Zicheng (1606-c. 1645), and Sizong (1611-1644), the Chongzhen Emperor (r. 1627-1644), committed suicide. Taking

¹³⁰ Chen Di, “Dongfan ji” (“Record of the Eastern Savages”), in *Minhai zengyan (Admonitions on the Fujian Seas)*, ed. Shen Yourong, *TWWXCK*, 56 (1959), 25.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹³² To illustrate the deceitful and cunning nature of the Dutch, Chinese narratives tell a somewhat fanciful anecdote of their promise to the aborigines (or, in other accounts, the Japanese), when they first set foot on the island, that they only wanted to “borrow” a piece of land the size of a cowhide. However, once they received approval, the newcomers set out to cut the hides and weave them into a huge circle with a circumference of several kilometers, which they proceeded to occupy and make their colony. See Liushiqi and Fan Xian, eds., *Chongxiu Taiwan fu zhi (Revised Edition of the Gazetteer of Taiwan Prefecture)*, *TWWXCK*, 105 (1961), 39-40 and Gao, 3. Gao’s gazetteer notes that even though the Dutch had a total of “no more than 1,000 troops, the aboriginal chieftains of the north and south all listen to their commands” due to their powerful cannons and ships. See Gao, 3.

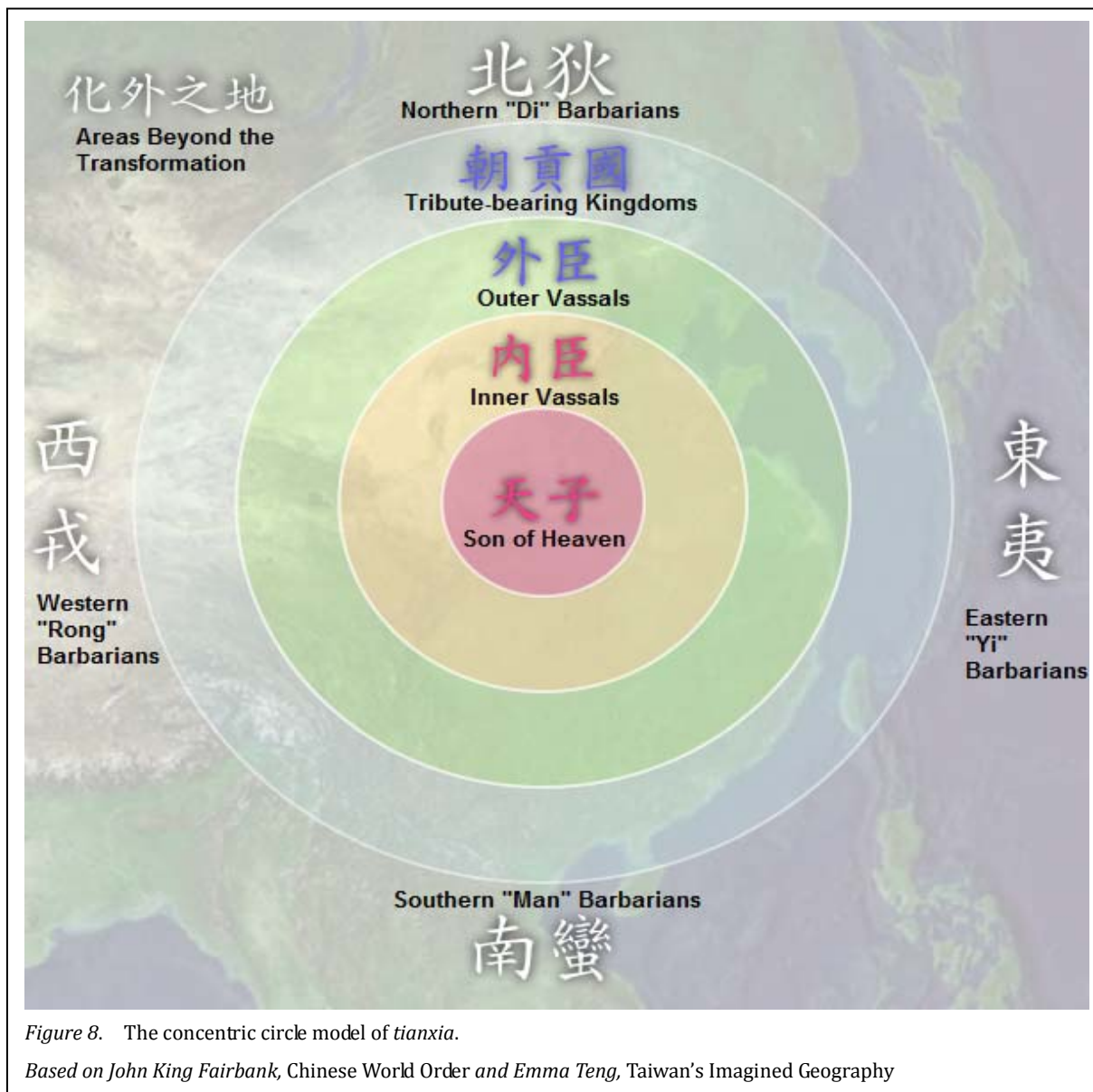
¹³³ Gao, 3.

¹³⁴ For his biography, refer to Liushiqi and Fan Xian, 393.

¹³⁵ Shen Guangwen, “Ping Taiwan fu 平臺灣賦” (“Rhapsody on the Pacification of Taiwan”), in *Chongxiu Taiwan fuzhi*, ed. Liushiqi and Fan Xian, 702.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Teng, 43.



advantage of this internal strife, the Manchus from the Northeast, aided by the turncoat General Wu Sangui (1612-1678), occupied the capital shortly afterwards. The newly proclaimed Qing Dynasty enthroned the six-year-old Shizu (1638-1661), the Shunzhi Emperor (r. 1644-1661), and would secure most of northern China by the end of the year. South of the Yangzi River, Ming loyalists hastily rallied around several imperial princes, utilizing them as focal points for efforts at restoration.

Under Zheng Zhilong's patronage, one such pretender, Zhu Yujian (1602-1646), was proclaimed the Longwu Emperor (r. 1645-1646) in 1645 at Fuzhou.¹³⁸ When Manchu troops

¹³⁸ A careful analysis of the Longwu regime and its relationship with Zheng Zhilong can be found in Struve, *Southern Ming*,

advanced southward in the beginning of 1646, however, Zheng, lured by the Qing offer to him of control over Fujian and Guangdong, went against the impassioned pleas of his family members and surrendered. His defection brought about his downfall. After capturing and beheading Zhu Yujian, the Manchus reneged on their pledge and carried off Zhilong and several of his relatives to Beijing, where they were kept in comfortable captivity.¹³⁹ The Qing soldiers also torched his Anhai mansion and raped Chenggong's mother, Tagawa Matsu, forcing her to commit suicide to defend her honor.¹⁴⁰

The strong opposition of family members to Zheng Zhilong's defection and their adamant refusal to surrender primarily came as a reaction against policies enacted by the Qing court. A tiny minority within their newly conquered land, the most populous in the early modern world, the Manchus had, from the beginning, depended upon their far more numerous Han subjects to subdue and govern the country.¹⁴¹ The Qing would, with significant success, shower land and titles upon prominent Ming officials and commanders in exchange for their capitulation, a strategy known as *zhaofu* (summoning and soothing), which it had tried, with less satisfying results, toward the Zheng family. With the assistance of these collaborators, the new dynasty established a bureaucratic system and structure of government based almost entirely upon the fallen Ming.¹⁴²

Toward the majority Han subjects, the Manchus, furthermore, emphasized a social order anchored in Confucian moral values and ritual practices. Anyone who fulfilled their roles in the ties of filial piety and loyalty linking the ruler, as Son of Heaven (*tianzi*), above down to the common people below, can become cultured, or "Chinese," and not "barbarian," regardless of ethnicity. This functional identity extended "China" across geographic space, from merely a *guo*, a bounded entity connoting "land and people" and "protection by military force," to *tianxia*, an abstract, blurry All under Heaven, imbued with a sacred mission to bring civilization to humankind.¹⁴³ This universalism suited the Manchus, who, as conquerors descended from semi-nomadic hunter-gatherer tribes in the forests and steppes of northeastern Inner Asia, wished to emphasize the fluidity, or "soft boundary," between "Chinese" and "barbarian" to legitimize their minority rule.¹⁴⁴

Consequently, the Qing state portrayed itself to its Han subjects, especially the Confucian literati elite, as protectors of their ideals and ethics, and hoped they would accept dynastic transition as an alteration of *guo*, rather than a fundamental change in the commitment to *tianxia*.

77-94.

¹³⁹ Wong Young-tsu, 131-132 and Struve, *Southern Ming*, 97-98.

¹⁴⁰ Huang Zongxi, 2.

¹⁴¹ Mote, 818-821. The Qing court successfully utilized the services of military commanders like Wu Sangui to defeat Ming loyalist resistance and bring large areas of China under Manchu rule. Hong Chengchou (1593-1665) and other civil officials became instrumental in helping the new regime acquire and sustain its legitimacy.

¹⁴² R. Bin Wong, 90.

¹⁴³ Joseph R. Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1972), 100-103.

¹⁴⁴ For more on "soft" and "hard" boundaries, and their implications for the nature of a given political community, see Duara, 65-66.

In other words, the shift from Ming to Qing should be viewed merely as “chang[ing] the surname, alter[ing] the style (*yixing gaihao*),” and not the destruction of civilized values, which implied the decay of moral rule into “beast-eat-man, men, leaders, eating each other.” Hence, “the civilization, not the nation, has a moral claim to man’s allegiance.”¹⁴⁵ Since these values were universal and extended beyond the confines of “China,” the area of the emperor’s direct control, the dynasty also viewed the payment of tribute from foreign countries as a sign of approval for the new Son of Heaven.¹⁴⁶ Of course, the corollary to the culturalist ideal was that those who refused the blessings of “civilization” would invariably fall under the category of “barbarians.”

In response, the various Ming loyalist movements that arose in the wake of the Manchu occupation cohered around a view of “Chineseness” subtly different from their arch-foes, but with radical implications. Although cultural values, particularly Confucian ethics, remained important as markers of identity within this conception, these traits have hardened along ingrained, proto-racial lines. Morality became an inherent privilege of the Han ethnicity, which “barbarians,” such as the Manchus, could not acquire through assimilation or acculturation. This viewpoint enjoyed broad acceptance among Ming loyalists of the period, including the philosopher Wang Fuzhi (1619-1692), who had served at the Yongli court. In his words, “it is not inhumane to annihilate [the barbarians]...because faithfulness and righteousness are the ways of human interaction and are not to be extended to alien kinds.”¹⁴⁷ His contemporary Huang Zongxi concurred, stressing that “the Middle Kingdom ruling itself separately from the *yi* and *di* barbarian tribes is just like people not being allowed to mix with animals, or animals with people.”¹⁴⁸ Such ethnocentrism, in effect, raised the *guo* above fluid conceptions of *tianxia*, imagining an ethnic Han fatherland in which “subhuman” outsiders had no place.

The racialist identity espoused by Ming loyalists represented a common intellectual and emotional reaction when militarily superior nomadic invaders threatened a Han Chinese dynasty.¹⁴⁹ Duara shows that during the Southern Song (1127-1279), both elites and peasants rallied around the court to defend their way of life against the Jurchens, who had occupied the

¹⁴⁵ Levenson, 102. The Qing rulers began to assert their role as protectors of Chinese culture soon after they entered Beijing in 1644. The Shunzhi Emperor conducted sacrifices to Heaven and Earth, and held ceremonies at the Altars of Soil and Grain. Moreover, he venerated Confucius and showered ranks and honors upon the heir to the family line. See Frederic Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise*, vol. 1 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), 858.

¹⁴⁶ Mark Mancall, “The Ch’ing Tribute System: An Interpretive Essay,” in *The Chinese World Order*, ed. Fairbank, 63-64. The tributary system only applied to those lands in the east, southeast, and south of China that had a similar relationship with the Ming. The Qing pursued a different form of diplomacy with the Mongols and other northern steppe peoples. See *Ibid.*, 72-75.

¹⁴⁷ Quoted in Duara, 59.

¹⁴⁸ 以中國治中國，以夷狄治夷狄，猶人不可雜於獸，獸不可雜於人也。 Traditionally, the *di* referred to “barbarian” tribes north of China, while *yi* territories lay toward the east and *rong*, to the west. Quoted in Zhang Zhaoyu, “Mingdai de huayi zhi bian” (“The Differentiation between Han Chinese and Barbarian during the Ming Period”), in *Gushi wencun: Ming-Qing juan* (*Preservation of the Texts of Ancient History: Ming-Qing Volumes*), vol.1 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2004), 271.

¹⁴⁹ Both the culturalist and ethnocentric points of view have precedents in the core canonical texts of Chinese culture written during the Western Zhou Dynasty (c. 1122-770 BCE), and are often found concurrently within the same work. For instance, the *Zuo* (*Chronicles of Zuo*) quotes the philosopher Guan Zhong, “Call the wavering with courtesy; cherish the remote with kindness.” Yet, shortly afterwards, he mentions that “the [Di and Rong barbarian tribes] are wolves, to whom no indulgence should be given; with the States of the great land, all are nearly related, and none should be abandoned.” These quotes are found in Yang Lien-sheng, “Historical Notes on the Chinese World Order,” in *Chinese World Order*, ed. Fairbank, 24-25.

northern half of the country.¹⁵⁰ In and of itself, the Qing takeover from the Ming would not necessarily have led to the prevalence or intensity of such views. In fact, the Manchus initially managed to win over a majority of elite opinion by claiming that they had come to defeat Li Zicheng's rebels and avenge the death of the Ming emperor on behalf of his subjects. This official narrative also made it easier for many Han Chinese to simultaneously balance their collaboration with the Qing and Confucian obligation of loyalty to their former ruler.¹⁵¹

However, this positive image changed dramatically in July 1645, when Dorgon (1612-1650), prince-regent for the young Shunzhi Emperor, issued an edict ordering all Han subjects to sport the Manchu tribal hairstyle by shaving their foreheads and plaiting the hair in the back into a queue, and wear tight-collared riding jackets. Those failing to comply after a two-week deadline would face decapitation.¹⁵² Dorgon justified the change in hair and clothing as a measure to bring rulers and subjects into uniformity of appearance. In highly Confucian terms, he reasoned that "since the ruler is like a father, and the people, his children, everything under heaven should be of one body [*yiti*]." "If they do not become transformed into one," he added, "[subjects] would, in the end, still have a different heart, and become people of a different *guo*."¹⁵³ The haircutting order, then, also served as a practical and convenient test of loyalty to the new regime.

Yet, this decision placed elite Han Chinese collaborators in a highly uncomfortable position. Although they could previously justify their cooperation with the Qing in terms of fulfilling their moral obligation to protect their communities from the ravages of war, and thereby enhance their own privileged role as local leaders, the haircutting order amounted to an insult that struck at the core of their identity as Confucian literati.¹⁵⁴ These men treasured the wide, loose-flowing robes and horsehair caps fashionable during the Ming, and especially prized their long hair, which they would coil into elaborate topknots. For them, changing hairstyles to determine the loyalty of subject to ruler ironically violated more personal Confucian injunctions against harming their bodies, considered an inheritance from one's parents.¹⁵⁵ Besides its unfilial nature, Dorgon's order touched a far deeper nerve among elites, who felt that they would lose their very moral integrity if they adopted the customs of an "inferior barbarian" tribe. Such sentiments, in fact, went beyond their circle to include a vast majority of commoners. Frederic

¹⁵⁰ Duara, 58-59.

¹⁵¹ Wakeman, vol. 1, 316-317, 420.

¹⁵² Wakeman, vol. 1, 647 and Inaba Kunzan, *Shinchō zenshi (Complete History of the Qing Dynasty)*, trans. Dan Tao, vol. 1 (Shanghai: Shanghai Shehui kexueyuan chubanshe, 1914), 1.3.8-9. Dorgon had actually tried to enact the policy a year earlier but had retracted it in the face of strong opposition. He decided to wait until the further consolidation of Qing rule before issuing the order once again. See Wakeman, vol. 1, 416-421 and Inaba, 1.3.8.

¹⁵³ Quoted in Inaba, 1.3.8.

¹⁵⁴ For a case study of how local elites rode out the troubled transition from Ming to Qing, refer to Hilary J. Beattie, "The Alternative to Resistance: The Case of T'ung-ch'eng, Anhwei," in *From Ming to Ch'ing*, ed. Wills and Spence, 239-276.

¹⁵⁵ According to the *Xiaojing (Classic of Filial Piety)*, one of the canonical texts of the Chinese heritage purportedly compiled by Confucius, "our bodies—to every hair and bit of skin—are received by us from our parents, and we must not presume to injure or wound them. This is the beginning of filial piety." See James Legge, *The Hsiao King Or Classic of Filial Piety* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2004), 17.

Wakeman has pointed out that the enraged masses viewed the “loss of their hair as tantamount to the loss of their manhood,” a form of spiritual castration.¹⁵⁶

Dorgon’s attempt to force a shift in allegiance from the Ming *guo* to the Qing, in effect, subtly redefined the cultural criteria for inclusion within the *tianxia* along Manchu terms, a move interpreted by Han subjects as a “barbaric” desecration of their “civilized” values. Moreover, the new standards offered a stark dichotomy from which they could not escape: “if you want your head, then abandon your hair. If you want your hair, then abandon your head (*liu tou bu liu fa, liu fa bu liu tou*).”¹⁵⁷ A large number of them opted for the latter, as elites and commoners put aside preexisting class tensions to unite in armed resistance against the Manchus. Communities that had submitted to Qing rule rebelled again, greatly delaying the pace of Manchu consolidation over the country.¹⁵⁸ Some of the fiercest and most sustained acts of defiance came from the prosperous commercial heartland of Jiangnan, in places such as Jiangyin, Jiading, and Songjiang. In Fujian, too, scores of large-scale anti-Qing uprisings erupted in eight prefectures, one sub-prefecture, and 57 counties between 1646 and 1650.¹⁵⁹ The Qing responded with equal determination and incredible brutality, conducting systematic massacres in these towns and others. Hundreds of thousands perished to protect their hair.¹⁶⁰

The Rise of Zheng Chenggong. Although Fujian had fallen to the Manchus in 1646, renewed resistance and rebellion in the wake of the haircutting order continued to frustrate their efforts at consolidation over the province. After Zheng Zhilong’s surrender and capture, his former subordinates, who had constituted the bulk of the regular Ming army in Fujian, formed their own rebel bands or joined the two main contending centers of loyalist power in the Southeast Coast macroregion. The first grew out of the gentry militia based in Zhejiang, headed by Zhang Mingzhen (d. 1656) and Zhang Huangyan, who upheld the Ming imperial descendant Zhu Yihai (1618-1662), the Regent Lu, as their ruler.¹⁶¹ Zheng adherents also rallied around several of Zhilong’s clan relatives, the biggest among them being Zheng Cai and Zheng Lian (d. 1650), based at Xiamen and Jinmen; they, too, nominally recognized the regent and counted the dates in his name. During this time, Zheng Chenggong was a minor player, only controlling his family’s shattered inheritance at Anhai with 300 followers and a handful of ships. Unlike the warlords in the rest of the macroregion, he refused to uphold the Regent Lu, choosing to use the Longwu reign name even after the emperor’s untimely death.¹⁶²

By the end of the 1640s, Chenggong would rapidly achieve dominance in the region through

¹⁵⁶ Wakeman, vol. 1, 648-650.

¹⁵⁷ Inaba, 1.3.9.

¹⁵⁸ According to Pierre Joseph d’Orléans (1641-1698), a French Jesuit historian, “those who rebelled against the Manchus did not necessarily oppose rule under a different people as much as react to their perceived humiliation at being forced to cut their hair and wear tribal clothing. The same Han people who, under the threat of losing their heads, had once been as subservient as lambs, now rise up and fight like tigers under the threat of losing their hair.” Quoted in Inaba, 1.3.9-10.

¹⁵⁹ Chen Bisheng, 161.

¹⁶⁰ Wakeman, vol. 1, 650-674.

¹⁶¹ For more on the Regent Lu and the anti-Qing resistance conducted in his name, see Struve, *Southern Ming*, 108-117.

¹⁶² Chen Bisheng, 122 and Struve, *Southern Ming*, 110.

his appeals to Ming loyalism, his personal charisma and energy, Zhilong's legacy, along with the wealth inherited from his father's trading vessels sailing into Anhui harbor from Japan. In 1648, he threw his support behind the pretender Zhu Youlang (1623-1662), far away in southwestern China, and recognized his Yongli reign title. Two years later, in a dramatic family coup, Chenggong seized control of Xiamen and Jinmen, executing Zheng Lian and forcing Cai to retire, and making the twin islands his new bases for his anti-Qing campaigns and trading activities.¹⁶³ Within a decade, Chenggong had successfully exterminated or coopted other armed groups in Fujian, and transformed his initially tiny movement into a massive quasi-governmental organization.

Joseon Korea. Before we complete our tour of the maritime Western Pacific, it would be instructive to provide a brief sketch of Korea during our period of study, an odd choice at first glance. The Joseon kings had submitted to the Qing in 1636, becoming its first tributary state even before its entry into Beijing in 1644. Moreover, because of geographic proximity to Manchuria and North China, the country had lost touch with the Ming and the loyalist movement after the dynasty's fall, relying only upon hearsay to obtain information on the latest developments. At the same time, Joseon was not well-integrated into the intra-Asian commercial network, and thus did not seem to have extensive trading ties with the Zheng family. In fact, the first time the Korean court and officials ever heard about the organization was in 1667, when shipwrecked merchants sailing under Zheng Jing's flag landed on the shores of Jeju Island while on their way to Japan.¹⁶⁴ Nevertheless, Korea's relationship with the Ming and Manchus would become a source of inspiration for both Chenggong and Jing in their own negotiations with the Qing court. We should thus examine this history to better understand the rationale behind their repeated requests to emulate the "Korea example."

Before conquering the Ming, Hong Taiji (1592-1643), the Great Khan of the Later Jin (1616-1636), the Qing's predecessor state, launched the first of two expeditions against Joseon in 1627.¹⁶⁵ The primary motivation for this invasion, known later as the *Jeongmyo horan* (Barbarian Disorder of 1628) was the need of markets for ginseng and other Manchurian products to support Hong Taiji's massive armies after relations with the Ming had turned sour. Moreover, the special tributary relationship between Korea and the Ming, along with continued support for the formidable Chinese garrison on the island of Pidao under General Mao Wenlong (1576-1629), also triggered the Manchu backlash. After Hong Taiji's troops handily routed Joseon forces under King Injo (r. 1623-1649) in several brief battles, both sides agreed to form a neighborly alliance, with the Jin as fictive elder brother and Korea the younger, and swore to respect each other's boundaries in a ceremony sealed with animal blood sacrifices.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ Chen Bisheng, 120.

¹⁶⁴ Seong, 277_003a.

¹⁶⁵ For further details regarding the first Manchu invasion of Korea, see Inaba, 1.2.2-7; 1.2.71-76; and Zhuang Jifa, *Qing shi lunji* (*Collection of Essays on Qing History*), vol. 4 (Taipei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1997), 51-53.

¹⁶⁶ This type of ritual sacrifice, known as the blood covenant, and the alliance that it cemented, had historical precedents dating

As conditions for peace, the king authorized officially supervised trade with Manchuria at the border outlets of Junggang and Hoeryong, and the regular exchange of envoys, who would travel to each ruler's capital two times a year.¹⁶⁷ Moreover, Injo could continue to pay tribute to the Ming, although he had to agree to abolish the use of its reign name and titles in all communications with the Manchus. For Korea, these relations based on rough equality already had precedents in its own interaction with Japan, known as *gyorin* (being neighborly), which coexisted with its status as a vassal of the Ming emperor, a model it called *sadae* (serving the great). The kingdom envisioned the first relationship as suitable for dealing with the Jin, as it did not harm the second one.¹⁶⁸

However, this arrangement would unravel in 1636, when Hong Taiji proclaimed himself emperor of the Great Qing, effectively declaring independence from the Ming-centered world order. Korea's refusal to recognize the new status, along with mutual trade disputes and its continued loyalty to the Ming, would result in another Manchu invasion that year. This brief war, known as the *Byeongja horan* (Barbarian Disorder of 1636), ended in a humiliating Korean defeat. The Qing forced King Injo to abandon the previous framework of brotherly equals and agree to subordinate status as its first tributary state. In concrete terms, he now had to accept Hong Taiji as his sovereign, and renounce all ties with the Chongzhen Emperor, abolishing the Ming reign name and surrendering its ranks and titles for those of the new dynasty. The king would send two of his sons, and one of the sons or brothers of all his senior ministers, to the Qing court as hostages, and permit intermarriage between the two countries. Each year, he must also dispatch an embassy bearing tribute of local products to Hong Taiji as a sign of continued submission.¹⁶⁹ Trade at the border would continue, but the Manchus would downgrade the status of their supervising officials to local functionaries.¹⁷⁰

In return, however, King Injo could exercise exclusive administrative control within his domain, including complete autonomy over local customs and institutions. This authority did not change despite the Manchu entrance into Beijing, since Dorgon's order in 1646 for all subjects to shave their heads and change their clothing did not extend to the tributary

from the protracted interstate warfare of the Spring and Autumn period of the Zhou Dynasty (722-481 BCE). As Mark Edward Lewis has shown, they were "employed to forge large coalitions of states under the dominance of a hegemon, and these coalitions replaced the Zhou monarchy as the primary link between increasingly independent states...covenants gradually replaced...the ancestral cult as the primary mode of constituting a political order..." For more on blood covenants, refer to the Lewis' study, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 43-50 (quote on 43-44).

¹⁶⁷ Inaba, 1.2.11-14. Trade along the border would take place every spring and autumn, with convoys of merchants from both sides doing business, each under the supervision of their authorities. During these periods, the dispatch of envoys would take place. Their missions were allowed to trade en route, as well as in the capital cities themselves. See Zhuang Jifa, vol. 7, 3-14.

¹⁶⁸ Zhuang Jifa, vol. 4, 51-53. The full words of the surrender pact and Manchu conditions for peace can all be found in Inaba, 1.2.9-11.

¹⁶⁹ The original surrender document, including a list of the tributary items that the Korean king promised to give to the Qing emperor, can be found in Inaba, 8.3-8.4.

¹⁷⁰ As part of the surrender agreement, Korea agreed to expand the number of border markets to three from two, and allow commercial interactions to take place three times a year. During the trading seasons, clerks from the Manchurian towns directly facing the Korean outposts and translators dispatched by the Qing Board of Rites (*Libu*) would cross the border to supervise the merchants, together with officials sent from the capital, Seoul. See Zhuang Jifa, vol. 7, 26-27.

kingdoms.¹⁷¹ Injo and his successors, like the other Qing tributary rulers of Vietnam and Liuqiu, could thus preserve the traditional Han Chinese long hair and topknot, and the Ming-style caps and loose-flowing gowns, worn on all formal occasions by Korean officials and elites.¹⁷² Moreover, although Korea was forced to officially recognize the suzerainty of the Manchu emperor and his ranks and titles after 1636, it could still utilize the Chongzhen reign name within its boundaries.¹⁷³ In fact, it continued to refer to the Ming privately as the “Imperial Ming (*Huang Ming*),” “Imperial Dynasty (*huangchao*),” or “superior realm (*shangguo*),” while the Qing went by the neutral term *Qing ren* (in this context, Qing people or country).¹⁷⁴

Such pro-Ming sentiments were sustained well into the nineteenth century, and can be seen quite explicitly in the diaries of many Korean envoys to Beijing during this period.¹⁷⁵ In 1783, for instance, the scholar Bak Jiwon (1737-1805) went to Beijing with his brother, head of an official delegation to congratulate the Qianlong Emperor (r. 1735-1796) on his seventieth birthday. Before crossing the border into Manchuria, Bak wrote passionately in his *Yeolha ilgi* (*Rehe Diary*), under the date of Chongzhen 156.1/11:

“Why am I not going to use the Chongzhen reign name? I am going to cross the river, so I must avoid it. Why must I avoid it? Across the river is the land of the Qing people (*Qing ren*). The entire *tianxia* now upholds the Qing calendar, so I dare not use Chongzhen. Yet, why do I privately use Chongzhen? That is because it represents the Middle Kingdom of the Imperial Ming (*Huang Ming Zhonghua*), the superior realm (*shangguo*) that first gave us our ranks and titles. In Chongzhen 17, the late emperor died to preserve the altars, and the Ming house has ended for over 140 years.

“Why, even today, do I use it? The Qing entered China, and the institutions of our former emperors have changed into those of barbarians (*hu*). Only in the eastern lands, where thousands of *li* have been marked off from a river to form a separate country, do they still guard the institutions of our former emperors, allowing the Ming house to survive east of the Yalu River.¹⁷⁶ Although we do not have enough power to expel the *rong* and *di*, and purge the Central Plain (*Zhongyuan*) to gloriously recover the land of our former emperors, we can

¹⁷¹ Wu Zhenglong, *Zheng Chenggong yu Qing zhengfu jian de tanpan*, 93-94.

¹⁷² Ge Zhaoguang, “Da Ming yiguan jin he zai?” (“Where Now are the Gowns and Caps of the Great Ming?”), *Ming-Qing shi* (*Histories of the Ming and Qing Dynasties*) 1 (2006): 3.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Zheng Kecheng, *Ming-Qing shi tanshi* (*Seeking Facts in Ming and Qing History*) (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2001), 405-406.

¹⁷⁵ During each embassy mission to Beijing, one person in the delegation would meticulously record what they saw and heard during their journey, including private conversations with Qing officials and scholars, as well as the local history, geography, customs, and people. The ambassadorial diaries are collectively known as the *Yeonghaengnok* (*Records of the Journey to Beijing*). See Ge, 3 and Zheng Kecheng, 395.

¹⁷⁶ The Yalu River flows through present-day Jilin and Liaoning Provinces, and forms the traditional boundary between Manchuria and Korea.

all continue to uphold Chongzhen to preserve China (*Zhongguo*).”¹⁷⁷

According to Ronald Toby, these symbolic gestures of defiance in defense of “a normative historical China” allowed Korea to discover a special role for itself as proud “custodian” of the ideals and institutions of the former dynasty, also the defining characteristics of Han ethnicity and polity.¹⁷⁸ Naturally, Zheng Chenggong and Jing, throughout the course of talks with the Qing, would make frequent allusions to the two settlements of 1627 and 1636 as models for the institutionalization of their relationship.

¹⁷⁷ Quoted in Zheng Kecheng, 405-406.

¹⁷⁸ Toby, 224 n. 138. Toby believes that the role of Korea as protector of Ming values contrasted sharply with Tokugawa Japan, which came to conceive of itself as the center of the universe, replacing China, after the shock of the Manchu occupation, and view the countries around it, including the Qing, as “barbarians.” For more on the creation of this Japanocentric world order, see Toby, 219-230.

CHAPTER 2: AN AUTONOMOUS MARITIME COMMERCIAL STATE

The Zheng organization operated from the ports of southern Fujian during the 1650s, particularly the islands of Xiamen and Jinmen, which became its primary bases, before shifting its concentration to southern Taiwan. At its height, the family controlled most of the Chinese coast, from Chongming, near present-day Shanghai, to Huizhou, in central Guangdong Province. Moreover, the organization maintained a significant presence in major Mainland commercial centers, often at considerable distances away from the maritime zone and under the control of its Manchu adversaries. It exercised considerable economic influence and held sway over Chinese communities overseas, from Japan and the Philippines to Indochina, Siam, and the Indonesian archipelago. Like the ocean with which they interacted on a daily basis, the Zhengs had no prescribed limits to their sphere of control. Rather, they seeped into existing structures, gradually eroding them through the assertion of their own covert sources of authority and hierarchy, backed by commercial power and military force. To acquire a better sense of the scale and importance of the organization within both seventeenth-century China and maritime East Asia, I will examine a snapshot of its political institutions and trade during the 1650s under Zheng Chenggong, at the height of his power on the Mainland. As before, I refer to the Dutch East India Company, his main competitor, trading partner, and a key player in the intra-Asian commercial network, to place his activities in a comparative context.

Political Institutions and Social Composition

Although coming to power during the waning years of the Ming, when the center could no longer effectively control affairs along the southeastern coast, Zheng Chenggong's "state" still derived its existence, in theory, from the ranks and institutions of the Ming. According to tradition, when he had his first court audience with the Longwu pretender in 1645 at the age of twenty-one, the ruler was so impressed with the remarkable physiognomy and precociousness of the young man that he bestowed upon him the Ming surname of Zhu. This conferral effectively made him an imperial relative and earned him the alternate appellation of *Guoxingye*, or Lord of the Imperial Surname, which appeared as Koxinga in Western sources, a corruption from its Minnanese pronunciation.¹ During that audience, he also received the title of Generalissimo Who Summons and Quells (*zhaotao dajiangjun*).² Later, the Yongli court would confer upon Zheng the Prince of Yanping (*Yanping junwang*), a purely nominal honor with no actual geographic control.³ Hence, unlike the VOC, which received a formal charter outlining a wide range of responsibilities and privileges, Zheng Chenggong's ranks and titles only granted him the

¹ Xia, 1-2.

² *Ibid.*, 2.

³ Zheng initially received this title in 1653 but had declined it, and only tacitly accepted it the second time around in 1658, on the eve of his invasion of Jiangnan. See Ruan, 15, 25 and Xia, 11-12, 21. For more on Ming princely titles and their significance, refer to Deng Kongzhao, *Zheng Chenggong yu Ming-Zheng Taiwan*, 226-230.

substantive right to command military campaigns on behalf of the Ming.

Moreover, the VOC came into existence concurrently with the rise of the Dutch Republic as a world power, while his organization flourished in an overall centrifugal climate of dynastic eclipse and transition. As a result, while the company abided, no matter how loosely, by the terms of the charter, Zheng could overstep his prescribed bounds with impunity. Not only did he maintain his private army and navy, but he also exercised complete political control over the territories his troops occupied. In fact, he and his subordinates referred to himself in private as feudatory (*fan*), a term reserved for inner vassals in charge of autonomous fiefdoms within the boundaries of the empire.⁴ As one contemporary observed, Zheng already had the intention of “governing on his own (*ziwang*)” during the 1650s. Hence, Zheng served as the defining figure and embodiment of his organization, and ruled it as a hereditary family enterprise with an iron grip.

At the beginning of the decade, he began creating institutions to manage the increasingly complex political and economic affairs of the de facto “state” he controlled. The names and functions of the offices that he established appeared to intentionally represent extensions of the Ming bureaucracy, although he redefined positions and created new ones according to the changing situation.⁵ Yet, the overall nature of his organization greatly differed from the imperial system of the Ming, or even the Qing, in its subordination of the civil to military. In 1658, Zheng possessed a total of at least 85,000 men and 2,300 war junks, which he divided into 72 divisions (*zhen*).⁶ The core strength of this force undoubtedly lay in its overwhelming naval superiority, which reflected the superior level of experience and expertise among his subordinates in maritime matters. These men, who had mostly grown up in southern Fujian, knew its harbors and inlets, and typically spent years at sea or in distant lands.⁷ Two of the ablest and most trusted commanders in the Zheng regime—Gan Hui (d. 1659) and Zhou Quanbin (d. 1669)—hailed, respectively, from Haicheng and Tongan Prefectures, located not far from Xiamen.⁸ Throughout the decade, they demonstrated tremendous prowess and capable leadership in numerous amphibious engagements with the Qing.

Zheng Chenggong’s formidable infantry and navy were led by commanders who once formed part of the regular Fujian military establishment under his father, or served as outlaws, bandits, or gangsters.⁹ The rise of these militarists accompanied a breakdown in law and order in the province after the fall of the Longwu court, compounded by unusually severe famines and

⁴ Zha Jizuo, *Zuiwei lu*, 136. For the relative position of inner vassals within the China-centered world order, refer to Figure 7.

⁵ Sheng Qingyi, 79-80.

⁶ The estimate of troop numbers comes from Struve, *Southern Ming*, 186-187. A complete list of Zheng’s regiments can be found in Lian Heng, *Taiwan tongshi (A General History of Taiwan)*, TWWXCK, 128 (1962), 314-323.

⁷ Wong Young-tsu, 116-117.

⁸ Jin Chengqian, “Gan Hui, Zhou Quanbin, Liu Guoxuan yu Ming-Zheng sanshi” (“Gan Hui, Zhou Quanbin, and Liu Guoxuan, and Their Relationship with the Three Generations of the Ming-Zheng Regime”), *Taiwan wenxian* 16.4 (1965): 134, 136.

⁹ Struve, 118.

epidemics, and a sharp decrease in silver imports that devastated the cash-dependent region.¹⁰ Bands of displaced peasants, fishermen, and lower gentry waged class warfare in a Robin Hood-like manner, killing officials and plundering wealthy families, while opening granaries and aiding the poor.¹¹ Militia cutting across social backgrounds arose in all parts of Fujian and neighboring Zhejiang in response to the disorder, often under the leadership of local elites in the name of Ming restoration.¹² Zheng attracted many of these elements through the strict discipline imposed upon his soldiers, as shown later; exactions on rich households; their old personal ties to his father; and his family's prestige.¹³ Shi Lang (1621-1696), who became a key commander within his organization, had initially served as a Patrolling General (*Youji*) under Zheng Zhilong, and later joined an anti-Qing gentry militia.¹⁴ Wan Li (d. 1659), another trusted general, began his career as a leader of peasant rebels.¹⁵

In a clear departure from the Ming practice of civilian authority over troop assignments, Zheng's commanders had wide latitude in selecting their own men or, if they had surrendered from the opposing side, could keep their original divisions intact.¹⁶ This emphasis on personal ties between officers and soldiers, which characterized the entire military organization, helped it respond more rapidly and flexibly to diverse circumstances. It also attracted to his movement significant numbers of Qing defectors, whom he rewarded with high ranks and positions. Ma Xin (d. 1662), the Qing military commander of Taizhou, in Zhejiang, and Liu Guoxuan (1629-1693), the former assistant garrison commander of the city of Zhangzhou, southern Fujian, later became some of the organization's most trusted generals.¹⁷

The majority of the fighting men at the bottom of the military hierarchy came from the ranks of impoverished peasants and fishermen throughout the southeastern coast, who either joined because they had little to lose or were forcibly impressed during raids for provisions, which will be detailed shortly.¹⁸ Others had served the Qing army but were either captured or surrendered voluntarily during campaigns in the coastal region. When his forces did not participate in raids or military operations, Zheng never ceased to drill them.¹⁹ To develop capabilities on both land and water, he made officers and soldiers from inland areas practice naval skills, while those from the coast learned archery and horseback riding. At the beginning of 1658, Zheng created an entire division of Iron Men (*tieren*) consisting of 5,000 to 8,000 soldiers specially chosen for their incredible strength.²⁰ Heavy, shining armor decorated with intricate patterns and motifs

¹⁰ Antony, 29-30.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹² *Ibid.*, 30.

¹³ Chen Bisheng, 161-162.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 113-114.

¹⁵ Chen Bisheng, 163 and Chen Jiexian, 148.

¹⁶ Huang Dianquan, 21.

¹⁷ Yang Ying, 92.

¹⁸ Chen Bisheng, 162 and Yang Ying, 9.

¹⁹ Huang Dianquan, 22.

²⁰ Zheng and his officials would test the strength of these men by ordering them to lift a heavy stone lion weighing 500 *jin* (250

covered their bodies, leaving only small openings for the eyes and mouth. During battle, each unit of the division, marked by a flag bearing a distinct animal, specialized in one weapon, which included arquebuses, long swords, and shields. In many ways, the Iron Men's equipment and battlefield formations reflected the influence of Japanese forms of warfare. Besides the actual power of these warriors, they capitalized upon the fearsome reputation of Japanese fighters and swordsmen throughout coastal East and Southeast Asia.²¹

In addition to a highly efficient military force, Zheng took steps to establish civilian institutions within the occupied coastal areas. He utilized his ranks and titles from the Longwu and Yongli pretenders to attract Ming loyalist elites into the organization. Those initially responding to his call included several prominent former ministers in the Chongzhen court, such as Lu Zhenfei (d.1655), governor of Lianghuai, and Zeng Ying (d. 1651), Minister of Works.²² As Zheng Chenggong's power grew, he incorporated the Zhejiang-based gentry resistance movement of Zhang Mingzhen and Zhang Huangyan, who took refuge in Xiamen in 1652 after their defeat at the hands of the Qing. They brought along several Ming imperial descendants, including the Regent Lu, whom they had upheld as their ruler, and Zhu Shugui (1617-1683), Prince of Ningjing. Also among the ranks were renowned officials and gentry from Zhejiang and Fujian, like Lu Ruoteng (1600-1664), Wang Zhongxiao (1593-1666), and Xu Fuyuan (1599-1665), one of the prime figures in the late Ming intellectual societies. Zheng treated these men with great respect, and, at least nominally, sought their advice on all policy matters.²³

They became the main officials who would staff the Six Offices (*Liuguan*) of Works, Rites, Punishment, Revenue, Military, and Personnel, which Zheng had created in 1654, officially as local extensions of the Ming imperial Six Boards (*Liubu*).²⁴ He also established an academy at Xiamen and instituted regular examinations to generate homegrown talent for these posts.²⁵ However, most of the civilian offices fulfilled empty symbolic roles, with their heads relegated to menial clerical jobs, while the few strategic positions like Works and Revenue became led exclusively by military men or Zheng's relatives. For instance, the functions of the Revenue Office, as detailed later, remained undifferentiated with the family trade and extrabureaucratic plunder, with officials only in charge of keeping "track of military supplies and rewards."²⁶

kg). See Ruan, 25 and Jiang Risheng, 170.

²¹ Ji Liuqi, *Ming ji nanlue (Brief Account of the South during the End of the Ming)*, TWWXCK, 148 (1963), 331-332; Jiang Risheng, 170; and Ishihara, 60. The continued chaos and warfare in Japan that had accompanied the Sengoku (Warring States) period in the centuries preceding the Tokugawa unification gave rise to some of the Western Pacific's most well-armed and powerful armies. Both continental and maritime China had experienced the might of these warriors firsthand by the beginning of the seventeenth century. The Ming and Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598) had formally met on the battlefield during his invasion of Korea in the 1590s. For a far longer period of time, masterless samurai, or *rōnin*, frequently took part in piratical raids on the Zhejiang and Fujian coast in connivance with local freebooters and smugglers. See Struve, 117 and Chao, 184.

²² For the biographies of these two men, see *Nantian hen*, 145-147. Lianghuai comprises parts of present-day northern Jiangsu and Anhui.

²³ Zha, *Lu chungiu*, 65-66.

²⁴ Xia, 13. Zheng Chenggong had justified his establishment of the Six Offices on the grounds that the Yongli Emperor was far away, and officials could not immediately receive his edicts.

²⁵ Xia, 14, 21.

²⁶ Struve, *Southern Ming*, 180.

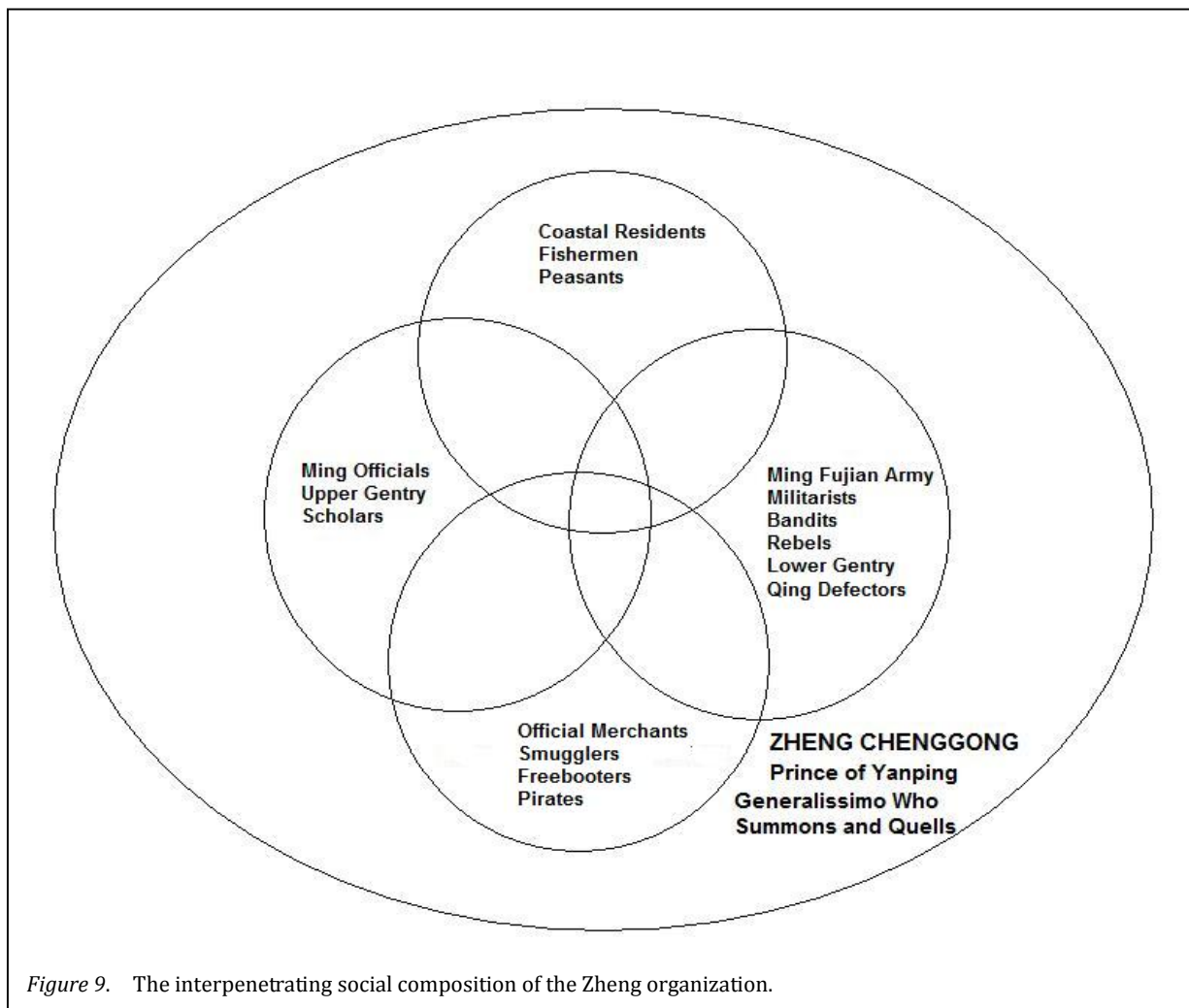


Figure 9. The interpenetrating social composition of the Zheng organization.

Still, I would not go so far as Lynn Struve in arguing that Zheng “seems to have been solely interested in obtaining sustenance for his...organization, and he never tried to institute any government administration for the general, largely agrarian populace.” Her claim, while valid for this period of the 1650s, only captures an early, formative snapshot of a highly dynamic process that would eventually bring the bureaucratic system to far greater levels of sophistication, especially after the withdrawal to Taiwan. Indeed, the rise of civilian institutions reflected the need for more rationalized ways of handling the complex affairs of a maturing, autonomous state exercising control over both land and people.²⁷

Zheng Cheggong ran his organization not only as a military machine and maturing bureaucratic “state,” but also as a profit-maximizing commercial entity, as will be detailed shortly. Among his followers were those who had started out their lives as his father’s associates in piracy and smuggling, but had turned into semi-legitimate merchants after Zhilong

²⁷ Ibid.

joined the Ming. Men such as Hong Xu (d. 1666) and Chenggong's half brother Zheng Tai (d. 1663), Zhilong's adopted son, shared in the profits of the family's vast trading network and participated in their own right.²⁸ Besides these officially sanctioned entrepreneurs, independent merchants and artisans all along the coast maintained a cooperative relationship with the organization. Indeed, it served as one of the very few access points to the highly lucrative foreign commerce, while its powerful naval fleets stood ready to protect the lives and assets of private traders from harassment. By the same token, overseas Chinese merchants also relied upon Zheng as the key provider of products from the Mainland, and turned toward him for assistance in the event of conflict with their native rulers.

The above represents a rough sketch of the institutions of Zheng rule and the diverse backgrounds of the people who lived under it. Of course, the latter categorization is by no means mutually exclusive, with plenty of examples of overlap among one or more of the groups. For instance, Chen Yonghua (d. 1680), who would play an important role in the organization under Zheng Jing, was the son of a minor Ming loyalist official, served in military posts but mostly handled civilian matters, and had merchants trading under his account.²⁹ Hence, instead of distinct units, these social categories more resemble a series of Venn diagrams, in which a multiplicity of interests mutually intersected and interpenetrated. Still, by maintaining the boundaries of the individual circles, we can better understand the areas of shared interests and divergence among the Zhengs and their followers, and their efforts to reach consensus in their dealings with the Ming restoration movement and the Qing court.

The Multiculturality of Zheng Chenggong

When examining the organization, and its complex political, social, and economic composition, we cannot underestimate the remarkable role of its leader, Zheng Chenggong, particularly his multinational background, in forging together a potent movement along the southeastern Chinese coast. In many ways, his personal charisma and influence permeated through all of the institutions that he had created. Zheng, in his own words, "was born where the sun comes out," in Japan, having spent the first six years of his life in Hirado.³⁰ He may have had some contact with overseas Chinese and Europeans in the multinational port city. However, with his father Zhilong absent from the household during this time to pursue his own career abroad, Chenggong's early upbringing and education came mainly from his Japanese mother. He went by the name of Fukumatsu, and enjoyed archery and swordplay, hobbies typical of children from samurai families.³¹ Afterwards, at his father's repeated requests and with *bakufu* approval, he made the journey to Fujian alone, while his mother stayed behind to

²⁸ Xia, 13.

²⁹ Jiang Risheng, 159 and *Tei shi kankei bunsho*, 18.

³⁰ Hayashi Shunsai, 45.

³¹ Zheng would continue these activities after he went to China. See Jiang Risheng, 39. During his visit to Edo, a Korean envoy observed that even children as young as two or three years of age had swords strapped at their sides. See Ishihara, 121.

take care of her other son, Shichizaemon.³² Finding himself in a strange new land and among unfamiliar relatives, who often taunted and caused trouble for him, evidently for being “different,” the young Chenggong badly missed his mother, and frequently gazed toward the east at night.³³ His early years in Japan, and the radical transition that followed, would all have a significant impact upon the rest of his life.



Figure 10. Portrait of Zheng Chenggong. Detail from the painting “Zheng Chenggong Playing Chess,” of unknown origin and date. The original can be found at the National Museum of China, Beijing.

Indeed, Japanese influence permeated many aspects of his organization, ranging from culture to political thought. The son of Gotō Ikkan, an overseas Chinese and one of Zhilong’s close associates, was, like Chenggong, born in Hirado, and had been a close childhood friend. The young man had accompanied Chenggong to Fujian, and lived and traveled across the province with him for many years before sailing back to Nagasaki. As an old man, Gotō Ikkan’s son would recall his surprise at seeing the “Japaneseness” of certain towns under Zheng control, including the customs of ordinary people, and the ceremonies marking the changing of the seasons. For instance, during the first three days of the New Year, residents would place pine and bamboo trees in front of their homes to celebrate the occasion, just as in Japan. Such practices, he concluded, demonstrate the “depth of [Chenggong’s] admiration for his homeland [Japan].”³⁴ Besides reflecting the multicultural background of their ruler,

the ready and widespread adoption of these customs occurred within the larger environment of a maritime society that had enjoyed close economic and cultural ties with the Western Pacific world for hundreds of years.

On a personal level, the Italian Dominican priest Vittorio Riccio saw traits in Zheng’s

³² Kawaguchi, 7.

³³ Jiang Risheng, 39. His mother would later leave Japan to join Zhilong and her son in 1645, again with Edo’s approval, a remarkable decision considering the strictness of its maritime restrictions. She would reside at Anhai until she committed suicide in 1646 to defend her honor against invading Qing soldiers. See Huang Zongxi, 1 and Kawaguchi, 7.

³⁴ Nishikawa, 42-43.

character that made him stand out from the “pure Chinese,” including his fairer skin, and his indirect expression of displeasure or anger through a “feigned and hearty laughter” (*fingida y espaciosa risa*) rather than rebukes or threats.³⁵ Zheng also handled a variety of weapons, including the arquebus and musket, with great expertise, and had almost perfect aim. Like a model samurai, he personally led the charge into battle, and would often number among the first to suffer injury.³⁶ Father Riccio thus attributed Zheng’s “strong, brave, vengeful, and cruel” nature to his half-Japanese background.³⁷ Moreover, Zheng’s strict management of his organization reflected the samurai ethic of *bushidō*, which placed the lord-vassal relationship above all personal ties, including filial piety. Robert Bellah, in his analysis of Tokugawa societal structure, compares this extrafamilial bond to a contractual debt obligation involving intangible goods. Since the lord had bequeathed so many blessings upon his retainers (*on*), they should, out of gratitude, devote their utmost for his sake (*hōon*), even to the point of death.³⁸ The philosophy proved tremendously effective in ensuring rigid conformity to institutions, and providing a set of concrete goals around which an organization’s members could cohere.

Indeed, Zheng worked hard to bind his men to him through ties of personal loyalty. He would exhibit the utmost care and respect for his followers, both civil and military, recognizing their accomplishments and rewarding them lavishly. When Gan Hui fell ill during a campaign against the Qing in northern Fujian in 1657, Zheng purchased medication worth 300 taels (11 kg) of silver on his behalf.³⁹ As a reward for Ma Xin’s defection from the Qing, Zheng showered him with high ranks and honors, and gave him 2,000 taels (75 kg), another 500 (19 kg) to his wife and mother, and 1,000 (37 kg) to each of his officers. He even arranged for a house where Ma and his family could reside.⁴⁰ Zheng also provided complete financial support to the relatives of deceased officers, and established at Xiamen a Hall for Nourishing Descendants (*Yuzhouguan*) that provided a Confucian education for their sons.⁴¹ Gestures like these earned the lasting gratitude of his commanders and deeply moved the soldiers under them, hence greatly boosting their morale.⁴² Later, after the defeat at Nanjing and his subsequent capture by the Qing, Gan Hui would return the favor by seeking death instead of surrender.⁴³

At the same time, Zheng balanced these emotional acts of generosity with a strict,

³⁵ Borao Mateo et al., vol. 2, 589-590.

³⁶ Ibid. Chinese sources also noted this behavior. During a Qing attack on Haicheng in 1653, Zheng mounted a platform to observe the enemy camp. When the Manchus discovered his identity, they redirected their artillery to fire in his direction. Despite the earnest entreaties of his subordinates, Zheng refused to step down, and continued to look calmly into the distance as shrapnel exploded around him. He only remarked coolly that “the cannon should avoid me. How can I avoid the cannon?” He finally stepped down after the chair upon which he sat was blown to pieces. The Chinese documents obviously found his actions odd enough to record down. See Yang Ying, 37 and Jiang Risheng, 129-130.

³⁷ Borao Mateo et al., vol. 2, 589.

³⁸ Robert Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion* (New York: The Free Press, 1985), 70, 93.

³⁹ Yang Ying, 109.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 96-97.

⁴¹ Yang Ying, 71 and Xia, 14.

⁴² Yang Ying, 109.

⁴³ Zha, *Zuiwei lu*, 135-136 and Ruan, 31.

impersonal, and almost ruthless discipline. He sometimes demanded such a high standard of behavior that the discipline failed to account for a reasonable degree of human mistakes and oversight. For instance, when, during a military training session, one of his divisions appeared somewhat out of line, he ordered its commander to be beaten with forty blows of the stick.⁴⁴ At the end of every campaign, regardless of victory or defeat, he methodically meted out generous rewards to officers who achieved merit, and severely punished, often with death, those who committed tactical errors or whose soldiers misbehaved. Instances of punishments meted out to subordinates abound in Yang Ying's work.⁴⁵ They included decapitation, forced suicides, poison, or, for more minor offenses, heavy beatings. If lucky, however, the commander, especially a prominent one, can receive a suspended capital sentence, to be abolished if he won a victory during the next battle.

Needless to say, his harsh punishments caused his civil and military officials to live in constant fear and anxiety, and directly contributed to a large number of defections to the Qing within his ranks. In 1651, his left vanguard Shi Lang, a man of wisdom and bravery who had inflicted heavy losses on enemy forces in many battles in Fujian, fled to the Qing camp after Zheng imprisoned him on a boat with his father and younger brother for insubordination. Zheng evidently did nothing to alleviate the situation when he had Shi's entire family slaughtered upon hearing of the defection.⁴⁶ The second major figure to go over to the adversary was Huang Wu (d. 1673) in 1656. After Zheng reprimanded and fined him heavily for committing a minor blunder while campaigning in Guangdong, he surrendered Haicheng, a strategic garrison guarding the approach to Xiamen and a supply depot containing several months' worth of supplies and provisions.⁴⁷ Both Huang and Shi, embittered and driven by revenge against their former commander, would later become instrumental in helping the Qing bring down the organization. However, on the positive side, Zheng, for the most part, applied punishments fairly and automatically, not sparing even his own relatives. His discipline whipped "his units into shape," laying out clear expectations and forcing them to put in every effort to achieve his goals.⁴⁸

The Confucian education that Zheng had received after his return from Japan would reinforce this emphasis on loyalty and further inculcate in him a higher allegiance toward the Han ethnic group. In 1644, just before the Ming fell, his father sent him to study at the Imperial Academy (*taixue*) in Nanjing, the subsidiary capital, under the renowned scholar and official Qian Qianyi (1582-1664).⁴⁹ While there, Chenggong learned and internalized the classic works of the Chinese tradition, including his favorite: the commentaries to the *Chunqiu* (*Spring and*

⁴⁴ Yang Ying, 88.

⁴⁵ See, for example, Yang, 38-39, 89, 98, and 135.

⁴⁶ Chen Jiexian, 149.

⁴⁷ As a result of this defeat, Zheng had already beheaded Su Ming (d. 1656), a fellow commander who took part in the campaign, but had given Huang another opportunity to prove himself in battle. See Xia, 16-17.

⁴⁸ Struve, *Southern Ming*, 180.

⁴⁹ Huang Zongxi, 1.

Autumn Annals), which emphasized the clear delineation of boundaries between China (*hua*) and “barbarians” (*yi*).⁵⁰ This sense of separation would serve as a powerful ideological deterrent to the acceptance of Qing rule. Yet, the Chinese brand of neo-Confucian orthodoxy placed equal emphasis upon kinship ties and filial piety as the basis for ordered society. It understandably contributed to tremendous psychological stress on his part, especially when faced with his own father’s imprisonment at the hands of the Manchus, a dilemma that could only be solved through submission to an alien dynasty. As I will show, he reacted to the subtle but wrenching conflict between the two sets of expectations through intensified and oftentimes exaggerated manifestations of respect toward the Yongli court and demands for absolute obedience from his followers, as if to make up for his inadequate filialty.

Yet, the contradictions also gave him a large degree of flexibility, allowing him to objectify these values and, in concrete terms, choose or manipulate the ideology that provided the best legitimate justification for his goals. In 1654, in a rare written revelation to one of his brothers held captive by the Qing, Zheng outlined the nature of his personal ambitions through comparisons with several animals. The tiger and panther, dwelling deep within the mountains, instill fear and awe among the myriad creatures. Yet, these ferocious beasts could easily be trapped and captured, in which case they could only “wag their tails and beg for mercy.” The phoenix, on the other hand, “soars above the thousand peaks. It could journey the length and breadth of the universe to its remote corners, and remain aloof from the secular world.”⁵¹ Zheng, then, would rather play the role of the phoenix, enjoying complete freedom and flexibility in the boundless maritime world than become a high official with numerous ranks and honors, but subject to the whims of a continental bureaucracy that could take away his privileges at will.⁵² In other words, he could only utilize, but never agree to be utilized. This refusal to bend to any higher authority represented the only constant of his long and expansive career. Indeed, he was the right person to forge and lead an organization likewise riveted with conflicting interests.

Plunder and Taxation

Similar to the Netherlands and the Dutch East India Company in regards to Habsburg Spain, the Zheng organization was locked in a bitter war of survival to defend the independence of its bases from invading Manchus. Meanwhile, with the Yongli pretender far away in the southwest,

⁵⁰ Aside from his studies of the major Confucian classics, Zheng also wrote eloquent poetry and read *The Art of War*, the famous handbook of military strategy written by Sunzi (c. 544-496 BCE). See Yang Ying, 42 and Jiang Risheng, 39.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁵² Chenggong’s animal metaphor carried the alternate purpose of indirectly blaming his father for submitting to the Qing and praising his uncle, Zheng Hongkui (1613-1657), for refusing. Tiger and panther referred respectively to Zheng Zhihu (d. 1635) and Zheng Zhibao, Zhilong’s younger brothers, whose names carried the same meanings. Like his elder brother, Zhibao had surrendered to the Qing, while Zhihu had perished earlier, in 1635, when caught on board a burning ship during a battle with pirates (Ruan, 4 and Jiang Risheng, 42). Hence, Chenggong used Zhibao to substitute for his father, and implied that both men were trapped by the enemy in a manner similar to Zhihu. On the other hand, Hongkui, whose original name was Zheng Zhifeng, or phoenix, did not surrender, and remained unfettered.

Zheng possessed neither the ability nor the intention to subject his troops on the Fujian coast to potential interference from imperial bureaucrats, as will be detailed later. Facing a formidable adversary mostly on his own with a minimal amount of outside assistance, Zheng needed to develop an efficient system to raise the funds and acquire the resources to feed and clothe his troops, maintain the smooth functioning of his bureaucracy, and keep the Manchus at bay. Of course, the simplest and most direct method, and one often used to satisfy immediate emergency needs for food, involved plundering enemy territory, known euphemistically as “taking grain (*quliang*).” From 1649 to 1660, Zheng’s men engaged in at least 44 such forays into Qing-held prefectures throughout southeastern China, especially in Fujian and neighboring Guangdong and Zhejiang.⁵³ In one typical instance, after successfully besieging the Qing-held town of Xianyou in 1654, Zheng ordered his men to massacre its residents for their defiance, and carry away all of their property.⁵⁴ Yet, looting and pillaging towns and villages usually provided only several months’ worth of rations at any one time.⁵⁵ Without doubt, Zheng required a longer term strategy for acquiring food and supplies.

The organization met the challenge of securing sufficient funds in part by running a protection racket on residents in Fujian, Zhejiang, and Guangdong. In regions where Zheng lacked the capability to fully control but still maintained an influential presence, and where Qing forces could not easily reach, his soldiers would force the local populace to pay a form of regular tribute, known as “primary tax (*zhenggong*),” of grain or bullion. The areas directly under his jurisdiction fared better, but they still provided “donations (*zhuxiang*)” and “voluntary offers (*leshu*),” which were usually anything but voluntary.⁵⁶ For instance, in Shunzhi 10.7 (September 1653), several of his commanders stationed near Putian, north of Quanzhou, forced all of its townships to contribute grain, clothing, and weapons for their soldiers in proportion to the wealth of the residents. Those who refused were beaten and tortured into compliance. Due to the evidently harsh exactions, “rich households went bankrupt, and the poor had to sell their wives and children.”⁵⁷

To evade the extortions from his armies and the Manchus, many villages, especially deep within the mountains of Fujian, armed and fortified themselves. Zheng ruthlessly suppressed these independent, “neither Qing nor Ming (*bu Qing bu Ming*),” militias in scores of campaigns during the 1640s and 1650s, and tore down their stockades and fortresses.⁵⁸ In one entry,

⁵³ Zhuang Jinde, “Zheng shi junliang wenti de yantao” (“A Discussion of the Problem of Zheng Military Provisions”), *Taiwan wenxian* 12.1 (1961): 55.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁵⁵ Wu Micha, “Zheng Chenggong zheng Tai zhi beijing” (“The Context of Zheng Chenggong’s Conquest of Taiwan”), *Shiyi (The Unraveling of History)* 15 (1978): 33.

⁵⁶ Wu Micha, 32 and Wong Young-tsu, 132.

⁵⁷ Chen Hong and Chen Bangxian, “Qing chu Pu bian xiaosheng” (“Minor Account of the Changes in Putian during the Early Qing”), in *Qing shi ziliao* (Documents on Qing History), ed. Qing History Office, Historical Research Center, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), 75. Numerous other examples can be found within this book and Yang Ying’s *Congzheng shilu*.

⁵⁸ *Bu Qing bu Ming* carries the double meaning of “neither clear nor bright,” a pun on the unclear political stances of these militias. For a list and brief summary of Zheng’s campaigns upon their stockades and fortresses, see Chen Bisheng, 166-170.

written in Yongli 4 (1650), Zheng's revenue official, Yang Ying, describes in detail the dire consequences of defiance:

“In the second month...the monks [of a mountainous stockade (*zhai*) known as Yuanshan]...refused to submit, so [Chenggong] attacked them...[He] ordered all his divisions to raze the stockade, and, as for the men and women, extirpate and kill them to the fullest extent, without any exceptions...The remaining stockades heard about the battle and all submitted...A ‘primary tax’ was assessed [on the region].”⁵⁹

In general, residents of the southeastern coast paid out staggering sums to the Zheng coffers. Yang shows that for the entire year of Yongli 8 (1654), the prefecture of Zhangzhou contributed an equivalent of 1,080,000 taels (40,420 kg) of silver, while neighboring Quanzhou coughed up more than 750,000 taels (28,070 kg).⁶⁰ To alleviate the onerous exactions, Zheng ordered some of his troops to open up new land and grow crops for themselves in eastern Guangdong.⁶¹ He further relied upon the produce of his own fields in the Zhangzhou and Quanzhou area.⁶² Even so, shortages of food and basic provisions remained a perennial problem for him and his soldiers throughout their years on the Mainland. Their massive presence simply overwhelmed what the tiny pockets of agricultural productivity in an overpopulated and severely resource-deficient region could supply. Chen Bisheng estimates that, at the height of Zheng's rule, the number of people under him not engaged in any form of productive activity stood at no less than 300,000. These included officers, soldiers, Ming princes and loyalist gentry, and their families. Only taking into account the military personnel, one town in southern Fujian had to support, on average, 1,500 men.⁶³ The continued growth of the organization led to forays for more supplies beyond its traditional sphere of control, and became one of several major factors behind Zheng's northern expedition at the end of the 1650s.⁶⁴

John Wills points out that the Qing's ability, ultimately, to restore normality along the coast by defending “local people against the exactions of [other] conquerors...contributed to the emergence of a longed-for condition of stable ‘law and order’ that, in turn, played a key role in its final victory over the Zheng organization.”⁶⁵ However, at least in the 1650s, the Qing hardly represented an attractive alternative. When Manchu banner forces came to Fuzhou in Shunzhi 12.10 (January 1656), they quartered in the houses of commoners, and forced the residents to provide enough meat, wine, and hay for tens of thousands of men and thousands of horses. The next year, soldiers under Ma Degong (d. 1664) engaged in indiscriminate killing and plundering

⁵⁹ Yang Ying, 16.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 43, 63.

⁶² Liu Xianting, *Guangyang zaji xuan (Selections from the Random Thoughts of Guangyang)*, TWWXCK, 219 (1965), 32.

⁶³ Chen Bisheng, 165.

⁶⁴ Wills, “Maritime China,” 226.

⁶⁵ Wills, “Contingent Connections,” 185.

around the area, stealing grain and chopping down fruit trees in the suburbs.⁶⁶ Besides losing their lives and property, commoners could hardly be encouraged by the Qing court's ban, in 1656, on all maritime commerce and travel, the most crucial means of livelihood in the resource-deficient region.⁶⁷ Although this policy aimed to cut Zheng off from his main sources of supplies, in the short term, it actually drove many coastal residents to his camp.

Zheng Chenggong, of course, also killed, plundered, and extorted, but he made a conscious effort to avoid them or minimize their damage. Therefore, when looting, his soldiers would first take aim at the wealthy, and avoid raping the women.⁶⁸ However, supposing that the level of Zheng's exploitation and atrocities was the same or exceeded that of the Qing, his organization still provided merchants and fishermen access to the sea and backed up their activities with the implied threat of force. These, in turn, stimulated other opportunities across the region, from peasant sidelines and artisan crafts to shipbuilding and services. Even the landless and destitute could become recruits in the Zheng army or man his naval junks. Some, of course, refused to let him take a share of their surplus, including the Guangdong-based pirate Su Li (d. 1664), who earned 100,000 taels of silver annually from salt smuggling.⁶⁹ Still, these remained in the minority. In sum, Zheng managed to cut across class divisions to protect the organic economy of the macroregion, while the Qing threatened to destroy it through its misguided policies.⁷⁰

The Institutions of Overseas Commerce

With agrarian sources of revenue insufficient to cover the tremendous fiscal outlays needed to resist the Qing, trade, particularly overseas commerce, became by far the most crucial pillar of support for the regime. In many ways, this lucrative enterprise arose out of the Ming maritime restrictions, which had virtually given Zheng Zhilong a free reign over the sea lanes of the Western Pacific. The Qing court's continued inability to control the coastal areas allowed Chenggong to fill in the power vacuum and follow his father's role of providing intermediary services for the numerous countries eager to gain access to China's vast but forbidden markets and its highly sought-after products. Zheng Chenggong and his relatives ran the trade as their personal family enterprise, having the final say over all its operations and how to allocate the profits. Yet, their business remained completely undifferentiated from the bureaucratic administrative structure of the organization, with responsibility for the day-to-day conduct of trading activities in the hands of the Revenue Office. He successively appointed to this post two of his most trusted officials, the first being Hong Xu, a native of Jinmen who had served

⁶⁶ *Rongcheng jiwen (Jottings of Things Heard in Fuzhou)*, in *Qing shi ziliao*, vol. 1, 9-10.

⁶⁷ Wills, "Contingent Connections," 190. In the words of the Qing court, "not a single piece of wood is allowed to be able to enter the sea." See Yu, 48.

⁶⁸ Chen Bisheng, 161.

⁶⁹ Antony, 34.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 162.

under Zhilong as a general and purchasing agent specializing in the Taiwan trade during the 1630s.⁷¹ Zheng Tai, Chenggong's elder half brother and an adopted son of his father, succeeded Hong, transferred to head the Military Office in 1657.⁷²

Both men, in turn, oversaw several institutions that, collectively, held a virtual monopoly over all economic activity within Zheng-held territories. Ten firms (*hang*) bought and sold directly on behalf of Chenggong himself, mostly to fund his expensive military campaigns against the Manchus. Five of them, known as the Mountain Five Firms (*Shan wushang*) had their headquarters at Qing-held Hangzhou, the provincial capital of Zhejiang. These businesses, each named after the elements of gold, wood, water, fire, and earth, operated undercover branches throughout the country disguised as storefronts.⁷³ Two of them were located in Suzhou and Nanjing, the other major commercial and proto-industrial centers of the Yangzi River delta, while another conducted transactions in Beijing, right under the very noses of the Qing central authorities.⁷⁴ The head of these covert firms, Zeng Dinglao, would coordinate the purchases of different brands of woven and raw silk, porcelain, embroideries, and lacquerware with the assistance of four branch managers, and deliver them to Xiamen.⁷⁵

In addition to their purely commercial orientation, their storefronts played a critical role as collection points for intelligence about Qing campaign plans and troop movements, and provided shelter for spies, often the very same long-distance traders responsible for transporting goods to and from the Zheng camp. Due to their status as itinerant wanderers and the inconspicuous nature of their occupation, merchants, along with monks, could easily serve as the eyes and ears of the entire organization.⁷⁶ For instance, in 1657, Zheng dispatched Hou Guanlang into eastern Guangdong to gather intelligence while disguised as a Tibetan lama. When the Qing authorities caught him, he carried with him a flag and a bronze tally plated with gold, tokens of his connection with the organization that would grant him access to other covert agents.⁷⁷ To prevent similar misfortunes from happening, Zeng Ruyun, the son of Zeng Dinglao, specifically

⁷¹ Xia, 13 and Yang Ying, 85. Hong Xu is almost certainly the subordinate of Zheng Zhilong known in Dutch sources as Gampea. For a detailed study of Gampea and his overlapping identity with Hong, see Yang Yanjie 杨彦杰, "Zheng Chenggong bujiang Gampea kao 郑成功部将 GAMPEA 考" ("A Study of Gampea, Zheng Chenggong's Subordinate Commander"), in *Zheng Chenggong yanjiu*, ed. Fang.

⁷² Yang Ying, 88, 111 and Han Zhenhua 韩振华, "Zheng Chenggong shidai de haiwai maoyi he haiwai maoyi shang de xingzhi: 1650-1662 郑成功时代的海外贸易和海外贸易商的性质: 1650-1662" ("The Character of Overseas Trade and Overseas Trading Merchants during the Zheng Chenggong Era: 1650-1662"), in *Zheng Chenggong yanjiu lunwen xuan*, ed. Xiamen University History Department, 180.

⁷³ *Tō tsūji kaisho nichiroku*, 180-181.

⁷⁴ Liu Xianting, 32.

⁷⁵ *Zheng shi shiliao xubian*, 911; Nie Dening 聂德宁, "Ming-Qing zhi ji Zheng shi jituan hai shang maoyi de zuzhi yu guanli 明清之际郑氏集团海上贸易的组织与管理" ("The Zheng Organization's Management and Control of Maritime Trade during the Ming and Qing"), in *Zheng Chenggong yanjiu*, ed. Fang, 330; Sheng, 88; Wong Young-tsu, 143; and Sarasin Viraphol, *Tribute and Profit* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1977), 44.

⁷⁶ Gan Mantang, "Jianlun Zheng Chenggong de qingbao gongzuo tese" ("A Brief Analysis of the Characteristics of Zheng Chenggong's Intelligence Work"), in *Zheng Chenggong yanjiu (Research on Zheng Chenggong)*, ed. Xu Zaiquan (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1999), 156.

⁷⁷ *Zheng Chenggong dang'an*, 408-409.

befriended lower Qing gentry degreeholders, often through bribery, to secure an additional level of protection and shelter for spies at the local level.⁷⁸

This commercial/intelligence network weaved an intricate web of covert passageways that ultimately transported both information and goods to Xiamen. There, the other five firms, known either as the Oceanic Five Firms (*Hai wushang*) or the Five Virtues (*Wuchang*), handled the shipment of products to overseas destinations. Named after the cardinal Confucian values of benevolence (*ren*), righteousness (*yi*), propriety (*li*), wisdom (*zhi*), and trust (*xin*), these businesses each maintained a fleet of twelve junks and supervised the construction of new vessels for both commercial and military use.⁷⁹ Besides Xiamen, the other branches operated at points along the entire southeastern coast, including Shacheng, on the border between Fujian and Zhejiang. This small coastal port provided convenient access to the mountainous northwestern corner of the two provinces via tributaries of the Min. The lush forests of China fir (*shan*) found there made excellent wood for shipbuilding, one of the few items the otherwise resource-poor region possessed in abundance.⁸⁰ A merchant named Lin Xingke specialized in smuggling timber from these areas. In 1655, he floated 900 logs of China fir downstream to the coast, where he hired carpenters to process some of them into wooden planks for shipment to Xiamen, and stored the others at warehouses hidden in several villages.⁸¹

Men like Lin Xingke and Zeng Dinglao worked for Zheng Chenggong as his official merchants (*guanshang*). Although they occupied a subordinate economic position to their leader in the organizational hierarchy, the relationship differed from the system of formal contractual employment seen in European companies like the VOC. Moreover, as his personal agents, they did not belong to his formal bureaucratic structure, even though they had to report to the Revenue Office. Official merchants fit into two broadly distinct categories. The first, and most common, group involved a relationship based upon long-term debt obligations, whereby independent merchants borrowed capital and ships from Zheng to buy and sell on his account. After completing the transactions, the trader would return the accrued interest to him at a deep discount and obtain a share of the profit, along with a new principal for investment. In exchange for the favorable terms, official merchants also had to take on nonmonetary responsibilities for Zheng, such as manning his ships or managing his firms, presumably based upon expertise and the amount of capital at their disposal to make investments. Meanwhile, individual traders could continue to conduct their own business on the side. In this manner, a stable, semiofficial hierarchy of these merchants came into being based upon a rational division of labor.

Zeng Dinglao, Lin Xingke, and the other heads of the covert commercial firms fit into this

⁷⁸ *Zheng shi shiliao xubian*, 911 and Nie, 330.

⁷⁹ *Kangxi tongyi Taiwan dang'an*, 82.

⁸⁰ Chen Xiyu, *Zhongguo fanchuan yu haiwai maoyi (Chinese Junks and Overseas Trade)* (Xiamen: Xiamen daxue chubanshe, 1991), 92.

⁸¹ *Zheng shi shiliao xubian*, 681 and Chen Xiyu, 92.

category. On Shunzhi 12.11/11 (December 8, 1655), Zeng, for instance, received 100,000 taels (3.74 tons) of silver from Wu Yuhan, an official from the Zheng Revenue Office, at interest of 1.3% per month.⁸² This rate, equivalent to 15.6% per annum, and below the market norm of 1.5% per month charged by major pawn shops, appears to have been a great bargain for the borrower.⁸³ We learn that, early in the following year, in Shunzhi 13.4 (May 1657), Zeng forwarded to Zheng the goods he had purchased along with an interest repayment of 60,000 taels. In return, he received for his services 7,000 taels of the profit, which he would share with the other agents, and an additional 40,000 taels to initiate another round of purchasing. Not surprisingly, men like Zeng, who dealt with such tremendous sums of money, often became fabulously wealthy.

The other category of official merchants represented a continuation of a labor arrangement common to southern Fujian during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in which young boys, typically from impoverished backgrounds, entered wealthy families as adopted sons (*yizi* or *yinan*). The master of the household would raise and support the “son,” and, when he grew older, provide him ships and capital to trade and manage affairs on behalf of his “father,” who stayed behind at home. This system essentially amounted to economic servitude, although it could also be viewed as an apprenticeship due to the opportunity for eventual mobility into the ranks of an independent merchant.⁸⁴ Official merchants from this category were thus direct dependents of the Zheng household and received no monetary compensation for their labor. The most representative of them was undoubtedly Zheng Tai, originally a bandit before Zhilong took him in, “promoted him, and entrusted him with great responsibilities.”⁸⁵ By the time of Chenggong, he had shaken off his servitude and risen in the ranks to become head of the Revenue Office.

Civil and military officials like Tai also bought and sold on their own accounts, constituting the second major source of Chenggong’s overseas trade. Tai held extensive assets abroad, accumulating, on his behalf and that of the organization, millions of taels in silver.⁸⁶ Likewise, Hong Xu and Chen Yonghua, the closest advisors and confidants of Zheng Chenggong and his son, had scores of “subsidiary traders and servants,” in other words, their own official merchants from both categories under their employ.⁸⁷ These subordinates enjoyed privileged access to the same channels of distribution as the Zhengs, and could run their individual firms and maintain their own junks trading overseas.

In fact, an entire fleet of ships belonged to the commander Liu Guoxuan, with one of them

⁸² *Zheng shi shiliao xubian*, 911.

⁸³ Han, 172-173.

⁸⁴ For a detailed analysis of the system of adopted sons, refer to Han, 170-172.

⁸⁵ Hayashi Shunsai, 46.

⁸⁶ Xia, 48.

⁸⁷ *Tei shi kankei bunsho*, 18.

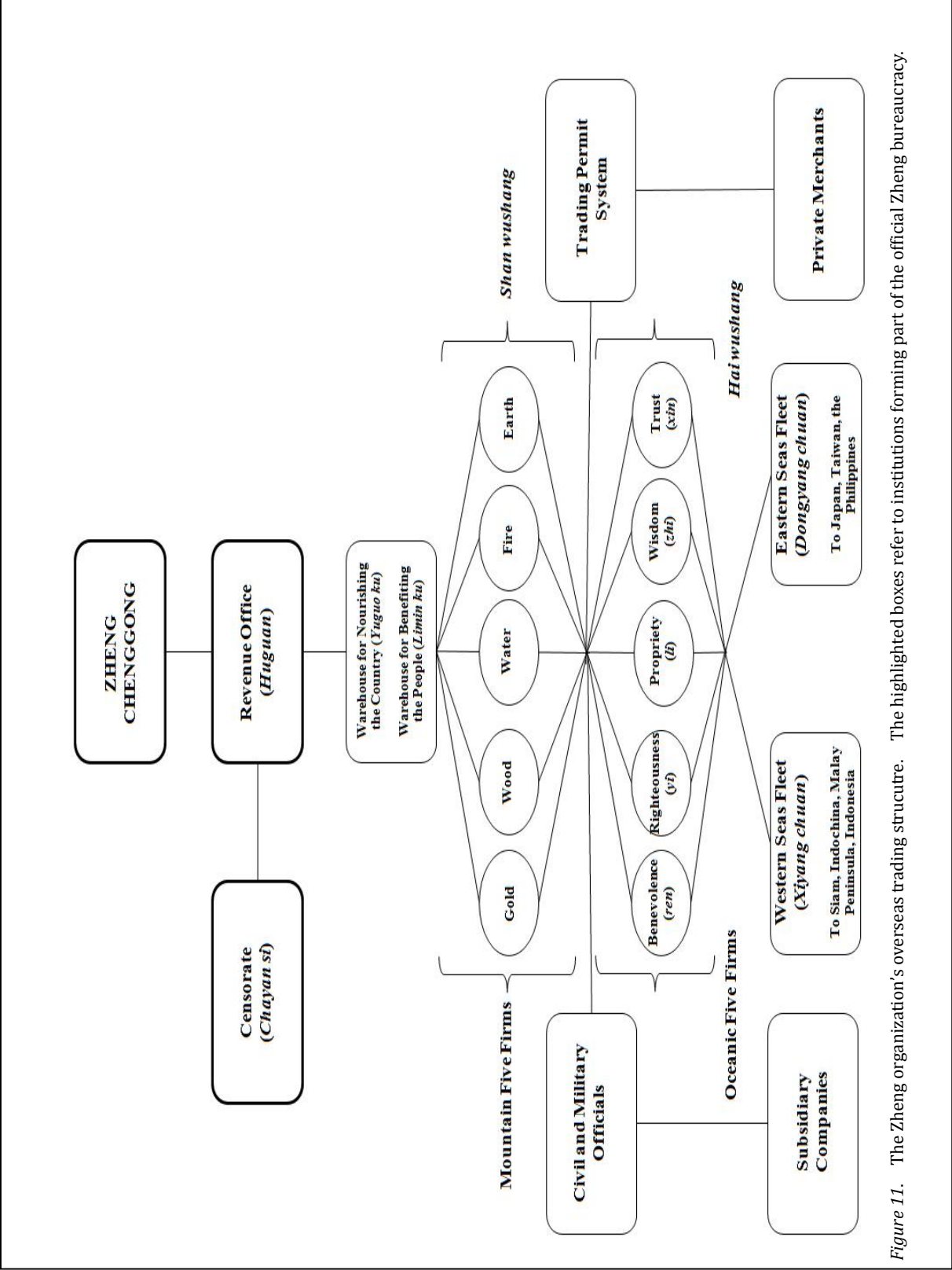


Figure 11. The Zheng organization's overseas trading structure. The highlighted boxes refer to institutions forming part of the official Zheng bureaucracy.

sailing into Xiamen from Siam in 1684, after he and the organization had already surrendered to the Qing!⁸⁸ Among Lin Xingke's biggest clients for processed shipbuilding timber was the Xuyuan Company, a firm belonging to Hong Xu.⁸⁹ As a result of his entrepreneurial activities, Hong acquired so much wealth over his lifetime that he instructed in his will for his son to contribute 100,000 taels (3.74 tons) of silver to assist the regime after his death in 1666.⁹⁰ While he and other officials made handsome fortunes in the business, far less active participants like Chen Yonghua could still realize a profit of several thousand taels per year.⁹¹ Overseas trade thus provided a substantial source of income for Zheng's officials, a kind of stock option outside of regular stipends, and gave them a strong material incentive to remain loyal to him and the organization.

The remainder of the participants in the family trading enterprise includes private merchants and artisans from both inside and outside Zheng-held territory. In 1655, the Zhejiang-based trader Fang Yuanmao and his partners hired the ship of Wang Boliang, and sailed out to Xiamen to purchase goods from Southeast Asia. When the Qing authorities confiscated the vessel, they discovered 6,359 *jīn* (3.18 tons) of peppers, along with limited quantities of swallows' nests, ivories, and hides.⁹² Similarly, Chen Zhaoding, of Fuzhou, teamed up with Xia Yuanyi to construct a junk larger than the legal limits mandated by Qing law, and tried to smuggle sulfur to the organization.⁹³

In stark contrast to the official merchants working under Zheng and his subordinates, these men typically had very low rates of capitalization. Han Zhenhua's meticulous study of 13 nonaligned traders reveals that the funds possessed prior to their journeys ranged from a low of four taels (0.15 kg) to over 300 taels (11.23 kg) of silver, with an overall average of just under 100 taels.⁹⁴ In fact, some of them did not trade in their own right, but were the adopted sons of powerful and wealthy gentry families in Fujian, Zhejiang, and Guangdong. Others with a more independent identity often could not afford their own junks and had to employ the services of specialized individual ship-owners or hire cargo space on vessels directly from Zheng's Oceanic Five Firms. In 1655, one Li Muxia handed a total of 1,200 taels (45 kg) of silver to Huang Sheng, Zheng's agent at the port of Shacheng, to cover both the rent for the junk and a mandatory commercial tax.⁹⁵ All merchants trading on their own accounts had to pay the levy (*paixiang*) in exchange for a permit authorizing the bearer to travel and trade overseas. The cost depended upon the size of the vessel. Ships under 4,000 *dan* (200 tons), normally plying the route to Taiwan and Japan, paid 500 taels (18.7 kg), while large junks with a capacity of

⁸⁸ *Zheng shi shiliao sanbian*, 216-217.

⁸⁹ *Zheng shi shiliao xubian*, 456.

⁹⁰ *Minhai jillue* (*Brief Record of the Fujian Seas*), *TWWXCK*, 23 (1958), 47.

⁹¹ Yu, 51.

⁹² *Zheng shi shiliao xubian*, 598-599.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 560-561.

⁹⁴ Han, 178.

⁹⁵ Nie, 334.

around 20,000 *dan* (1,000 tons), which frequently traveled farther away to Southeast Asia, required 2,100 taels (78.6 kg).⁹⁶

Once out at sea, the crew of a vessel operated according to an efficient and intricate division of labor, mostly customary and informal. The shipmaster took charge of making liaisons with contacts at the ports of call and handling the trade there, while the manager oversaw all affairs on board during the journey, including the crucial task of keeping the account books. One man

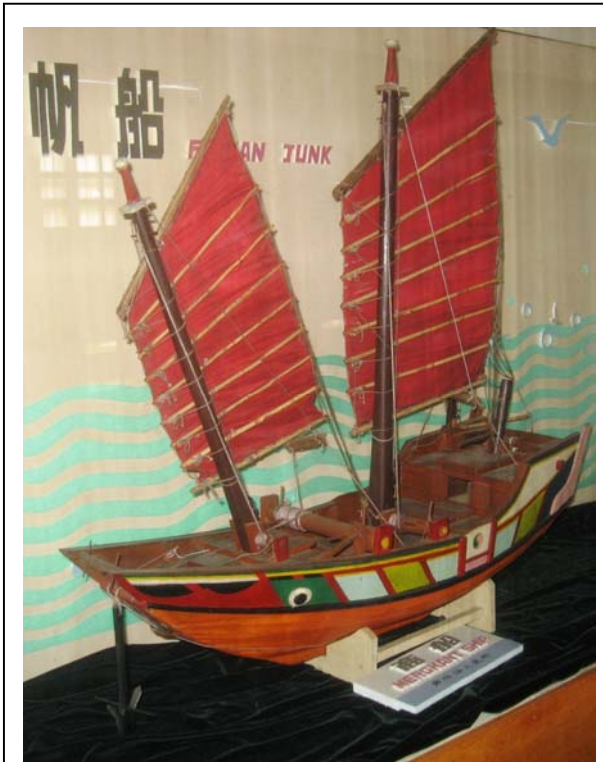


Figure 12. Model of a typical Chinese commercial junk in use during the Ming and Qing periods on display at the Museum of Overseas Communications, Quanzhou.

Photograph by author, 2009.

was an expert on the compass, ocean currents, and other matters related to navigation, while another burnt incense to the sea goddess for good luck. Others handled more technical matters, such as the regular maintenance of the junk, cooking meals, and operating the sails.⁹⁷ Although highly specialized, the hierarchy on board the privately run ships differed from a long-term employment contract but rather resembled a labor collectivity.⁹⁸ Crew members actually assumed a double identity as independent merchants or their agents who, on account of their undercapitalization, took on these tasks in exchange for differing shares of cargo space. The profits from the venture would, in turn, accrue in proportion to the amount of goods put in by the participants.⁹⁹ A private ship typically contained a small crew of around ten people, most of them young men of around 30 to 40 years of age, and traveled in groups of five or six for mutual aid in case of storms or pirate attacks.¹⁰⁰

In contrast to the small, unaffiliated merchants, junks plying the sea routes on behalf of the Zheng family came under the direction of the Oceanic Five Firms. The vessels had a similar division of labor, but the crew consisted mostly of official merchants dealing in the capital of their superior, although they and a few private traders could carry cargo on their own account.

⁹⁶ Nie, 336 and Ōta, vol. 2, 733.

⁹⁷ *Tō tsūji kaisho nichiroku*, 145-148; Huang Shujing, 17-18; and Zheng Ruiming, 24.

⁹⁸ Han, 186-189.

⁹⁹ Pomeranz has described this arrangement, in which crew members provided labor in exchange for share of the cargo on board, as “resembling a Canton suburban market set afloat.” See Pomeranz, 171.

¹⁰⁰ *Tō tsūji kaisho nichiroku*, 146.

Just like in the Mountain Five Firms, the directors and the other agents would take a portion of the profits. Both the size and capacity of these ships greatly exceeded those of the unaffiliated traders. In 1667, one vessel, part of a fleet of five on their way to Japan, strayed off course in a severe storm and washed ashore on Jeju Island, Korea. Subsequent Korean reports and memorials reveal that it had on board a total of 95 men and women, all of them from Xiamen and the nearby prefectures of Zhangzhou and Quanzhou.¹⁰¹ They were on the whole quite young, with an age range from the late teens to over fifty, but the vast majority, seventy of them to be precise, consisted of men in their thirties. The head official merchant, Lin Yinguan (1644-1667), handled affairs at the port and acted as spokesman on their behalf, while Zeng Sheng (1630-1667), the manager, kept the crew in order.¹⁰² The crewmembers of the Zheng ships observed a high degree of discipline and hierarchy. When Korean officials threw a feast in their honor, only Lin and two others could occupy the guest seats at the table. The rest of the crew either had to sit outside the entrance to the building, or, in the case of the lowliest operators of the ship, on the steps and in the middle of the garden.¹⁰³

The official ships under the Oceanic Five Firms fell into two broad categories: the Eastern Seas Fleet (*Dongyang chuan*) and the Western Seas Fleet (*Xiyang chuan*). Like the VOC, both took advantage of the flourishing intra-Asian commerce to earn handsome profits from the arbitrage of different regional markets. The Eastern Seas Fleet would sail directly to Japan, Dutch-held Taiwan, or Manila before either returning to the Chinese coast or, more commonly, first engaging in an additional round of trade in Southeast Asia. The Western Seas Fleet went the opposite direction, traveling into the Indian Ocean, and buying goods from Southeast Asian ports, exchanging them in Japan, and then taking their products back to China.¹⁰⁴ With these routes in mind, Zheng Chenggong's Mountain Five Firms would purchase silk and other Mainland products, and load them onto the fleets at Xiamen, where they would then be transported overseas. Private shipping, of course, also plied these routes, almost exclusively under his flag.

The biggest market for Chinese goods lay to the east in Japan, which enjoyed a very close commercial relationship with the Zheng regime. At Nagasaki, the Zheng merchants would unload cargoes of Chinese luxury products, such as silk and porcelain, and even copper, forge muskets and cannons, or be “cast into Yongli era coins” that circulated as currency in the southeastern coast.¹⁰⁵ Zheng could further obtain resin and iron nails, the prime components of ship construction, at a price two times cheaper than Fujian.¹⁰⁶ However, the bulk of the payment for Chinese products came in the form of silver, tapped intensively from mines

¹⁰¹ Seong, 277_003d-004b.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 277_007a.

¹⁰⁴ Nie, 336.

¹⁰⁵ Jiang Risheng, 105. Qing memorials mentioned, on several occasions, commoners caught carrying coins that bore the Yongli reign name. See, for instance, *Zheng shi shiliao xubian*, 325.

¹⁰⁶ Chen Xiyu, 92.

Table 1. Comparative value of Chinese and VOC silver exports to Nagasaki, 1648 to 1649 and 1650 to 1662

<i>Year</i>	<i>Chinese Silver Exports (kan)</i>	<i>Chinese Silver Exports (kg)</i>	<i>Dutch Silver Exports (kan)</i>	<i>Dutch Silver Exports (kg)</i>
1648	1,794	6,727	6,222	23,330
1649	5,454	20,450	5,341	20,030
AVERAGE	3,624	13,570	5,782	21,670
1650	6,828	25,600	3,940	14,770
1651	4,749	17,810	4,896	18,360
1652	5,687	21,330	5,719	21,450
1653	3,517	13,190	6,191	23,990
1654	8,181	30,680	3,848	14,430
1655	4,655	17,460	4,002	15,010
1656	5,241	19,650	6,190	23,220
1657	2,450	9,187	7,562	28,360
1658	11,029	41,360	5,640	21,150
1659	19,401	72,750	5,960	22,350
1660	20,151	75,570	4,269	16,010
1661	25,769	96,630	5,544	20,790
1662	12,943	48,540	5,960	22,350
AVERAGE	10,046	37,673	5,363	20,172

Based on Von Glahn, 227, table 21

throughout Japan.¹⁰⁷ As Richard von Glahn estimates, the mean export of bullion from 1650 to 1662 totaled 10,046 Japanese silver coins (*kan*), or 1,007,000 Chinese taels (37.7 tons) per annum, a tremendous leap over the 3,624 *kan* (363,100 taels, 13.6 tons) average of 1648 and 1649. He correctly attributes virtually all of the increase to the “soaring price of Chinese silk goods, a trade effectively dominated by Chinese merchants, that is to say, the Zheng clan.”¹⁰⁸

Zheng’s unique Japanese background, along with his organization’s domination of Chinese foreign trade, put him in a favorable position to exploit this highly lucrative mutual dependency.

¹⁰⁷ Totman, 70.

¹⁰⁸ Richard von Glahn, *Fountain of Fortune* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 226-228.

In 1651, soon after he had secured his dominant position in the family, he capitalized upon his mother's status as a former samurai retainer and dispatched an envoy to Japan with a letter addressed to Shogun Ietsuna (r. 1651-1680). Zheng successfully managed to establish an uncle-nephew protocol (*shengli*) between the two men, in effect agreeing to enter into a diplomatic relationship based upon rough equality (*tonghao*), with himself as the junior member.¹⁰⁹ In 1658, he wrote another letter to Edo, which he sent along with lavish gifts, expressing his desire to “renew [his] deep friendship.”¹¹⁰ In this exchange, he complimented Ietsuna as a capable ruler whose “abilities and expertise can hold up the sky, and whose merit is high enough to bathe the sun.”¹¹¹ Zheng went on to praise Japan as a land where people “do not pick scraps from thoroughfares,” a sign of prosperity and peace, and where the customs are comparable to the era of the mythical Chinese sage kings of Yao, Shun, and Yu; a golden age of high antiquity supposedly characterized by benevolent rule and noble virtue.¹¹² Naturally, the Japanese “take promises seriously” and exhibit an “outstanding degree of sincerity” in their dealings.¹¹³ In a reference to Japan's military might, Zheng also remarked that the shogun “forges the knives and swords of the sixty-five provinces.”¹¹⁴

These exchanges won Zheng significant commercial privileges and material aid at Nagasaki, allowing him to enjoy unhindered access to its markets, even including the export of armaments strictly prohibited by Edo's maritime restrictions. In addition to his background and deep personal ties to the country, most Japanese felt genuine sympathy for the Ming, the dynasty to which he pledged nominal allegiance. They also hated the Manchus, equating and often confusing them with the Mongols, who had invaded the country twice in the thirteenth century.¹¹⁵ Moreover, the ruling elite could hardly be pleased that the Qing had forcibly incorporated Korea, considered a buffer state, into its sphere of influence in 1628, hence posing a direct threat to Japan.¹¹⁶ As concrete expressions of these sentiments, the *bakufu*, for many years, specifically favored “only those Chinese merchants under anti-[Qing] auspices,” almost all of whom sailed under the Zheng flag.¹¹⁷ It also provided a haven for Ming loyalist refugees fleeing disorder back home, most notably the renowned Confucian scholar Zhu Shunshui (1600-1682).

Besides exchanging their products at Nagasaki, the Zheng fleets would often sail to Taiwan. During the earlier half of the 1650s, Zheng Chenggong maintained generally cordial relations with the VOC authorities, frequently exchanging letters and gifts. On April 4, 1654, he sent a

¹⁰⁹ Jiang Risheng, 123.

¹¹⁰ Hayashi Shunsai, 45.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Toby, 127.

¹¹⁶ Struve, *Southern Ming*, 120.

¹¹⁷ For details on a specific incident that occurred in 1646 involving a fleet of junks from Nanjing whose crew had sported the Manchu coiffure, see Toby, 138-139.

message to Governor Cornelius Caesar (d. 1657) expressing his happiness at the “good treatment and accommodation of the Chinese merchants” who went there and looked forward to an enduring, “unbreakable friendship.”¹¹⁸ In reply, the governor promised to provide the traders “with all kinds of merchandise at a reasonable price, and we hope that in the same way they will not fail to bring us from China Chinese manufactures.”¹¹⁹ At Chenggong’s request, Caesar also sent medicine and a surgeon to Xiamen to help treat a disease that had afflicted him.¹²⁰

Beneath the auspices of this mutual cordiality, however, fundamental economic changes on the island brought about by the rise of the Zheng organization would contribute to increased tensions by the end of the decade. In fact, during this period, Taiwan was gradually losing its status as a key entrepôt that had concentrated Chinese products and re-exported them to markets in Japan and Southeast Asia, while serving as a distribution point for goods from those regions.¹²¹ Zheng Chenggong’s domination of the southeastern coast allowed him both to source silk and other luxuries and to transport them to Nagasaki at a far more competitive price than the VOC. The company itself also found substitutes for Chinese silk by purchasing from Tonkin, present-day northern Vietnam, and Bengal.¹²² Meanwhile, with the assistance of a growing number of Chinese settlers, Taiwan underwent a transformation into a colonial economy characterized by a sugar monoculture and exploitation of natural resources, especially the hunting of deer in the aboriginal villages, leading to the rapid depletion of their numbers.¹²³

Moreover, Zheng completely dominated the access of Chinese merchants to the island. As his letter to Governor Caesar, dated October 21, 1653, stated emphatically, “no junks arrive thither from the coast except they be my own, or junks that sail thither with my license.”¹²⁴ For instance, on November 11, 1654, two vessels belonging to one Bienkoya, either an official merchant or unaffiliated trader, arrived from Anhai with a total of 130 men on board.¹²⁵ Their cargo included 52 piculs (2.6 tons) of salt, 123 bundles of paper, 580 catties (290 kg) of oil, 200 packs of cangan—a kind of coarse fabric used in cheap clothing—20 pieces of gold, three piculs (150 kg) of tea, 388 packages of tobacco, and two iron pots.¹²⁶ Gold, along with silver from Japan, allowed the VOC to buy into the markets of Persia, Bengal, and the Coromandel Coast of India as part of its effort to sustain its far-flung network. In fact, Chen Guodong shows that almost all of the bullion obtained by the company passed through Taiwan, and over 90% of that

¹¹⁸ *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part III: 1648-1655 (1996), 323.

¹¹⁹ Huber, “Relations between Cheng and the VOC,” 225.

¹²⁰ *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part III, 323; Huber, “Relations between Cheng and the VOC,” 225-228; and Andrade, 10.7-8.

¹²¹ Ts’ao (Cao), “Taiwan as an Entrepôt,” 7.

¹²² Nara, 172-173.

¹²³ Andrade, 6.11-12, 8.11-12.

¹²⁴ Huber, “Relations between Cheng and the VOC,” 220.

¹²⁵ *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part III, 454. The size of the fleets and number of people could get much larger, and women often came along as well. For instance, earlier in the year, on July 7, eight ships arrived in Taiwan, with a crew of 575 men and 61 women. See *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part III, 372.

¹²⁶ *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part III, 454. The picul is roughly equivalent to *dan*, and catties to *jin*. For a more detailed treatment of cangan, refer to Chen Guodong, 452-478.

amount ended up in those three places.¹²⁷ In 1658, the value of gold exported from China, the sole supplier of the precious metal, amounted to 430,000 guildens, constituting slightly more than a third of the total remittance of 1,200,000 guildens to India and Persia, with silver making up the remainder.¹²⁸ The rest of the goods imported by the Chinese merchants consisted of the basic manufactures, textiles, and condiments that helped provide for the daily needs of the residents on the island.

After unloading their goods, the ships affiliated with the Zheng organization would often procure local products and then sail directly back to China. In a typical case, five junks with 197 men on board went home on September 25, 1657. They carried with them 60,660 catties (30.3 tons) of sugar, 8,280 catties (4.1 tons) of venison, 1,765 catties (882.5 kg) of salted fish, 11,500 catties (5.75 tons) of liquefied sugar (*zuyckerwater*), and 1,380 piculs (60 tons) of pepper.¹²⁹ These items, primarily natural resources, either already had counterparts on the Mainland or, in the case of pepper, could be sourced directly from other markets in Southeast Asia.¹³⁰ Moreover, sugar products and the other portion of hunted deer, their skins, went in even larger amounts from Taiwan to meet Japanese demand.¹³¹ Hence, from the perspective of the Zheng organization, the colonial authorities on the island depended on China far more than the other way around. In return, not only did the Dutch not provide any crucial services for Zheng Chenggong, but they often posed a significant obstacle, as shown later. While Taiwan held little value for trade with the Mainland, it ironically became increasingly prized as a potentially strategic alternative base, close enough to the Chinese coast but separated by a body of water, and possessing abundant natural resources. By the end of the 1650s, Zheng, faced with growing pressure from Qing campaigns and an economic blockade, would begin to seriously consider occupying and settling down on the island for the long term.

However, since his priority remained primarily commercial rather than geopolitical for the time being, his main focus outside of Japan naturally lay in the trading emporia of Southeast Asia. Most of the surplus gathered from the China-Japan trade bought into the markets of Siam, Cambodia, Tonkin, Quinam, the Spanish Philippines, and Dutch-held Batavia. In Siam, merchants acquired “strategic materials such as tin and salt-petre,” key ingredients in the production of gunpowder, which provided ammunition for the Zheng muskets and artillery.¹³² Rice from both there and Manila helped alleviate the perennial food shortages on the resource-deficient Fujian coast. Cambodia became a prized source of deerskins, which Zheng would ship, along with other goods, to Nagasaki.¹³³ In 1654, he signed a treaty with the King

¹²⁷ Chen Guodong, 405.

¹²⁸ Yamawaki, 110.

¹²⁹ *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part IV: 1655-1662 (2000), 224.

¹³⁰ Both Guangdong and Fujian already produced significant quantities of sugar. See Pomeranz, 120-121.

¹³¹ Deerskins were highly prized in Japan for their use as decorative covering for sword cases and ceremonial armor in samurai outfits. See Chen Guodong, 408-409 and Andrade, 7.2.

¹³² Viraphol, 45.

¹³³ J. de Hullu, ed., *Dagh-register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel*

of Tonkin that granted him the privilege of sending four junks per year to procure locally produced silk for the Japanese market.¹³⁴ Other items from the region, ranging from the peppers and spices of the Indonesian archipelago to “sapan wood...ivory, and rhinoceros horns,” went into Chinese medicine or met the demand for the conspicuous consumption of luxuries among the Mainland elite.¹³⁵

The Role of Overseas Chinese

As with the VOC, the Zheng organization depended heavily upon the overseas Chinese population to tie the lines of exchange connecting its trading network. Their numbers included not only merchants, but also Ming loyalist refugees, a strange mix of ideological purity and hard economic reality that mirrored the complex societal composition of the southeastern Chinese coast. Their sheer diversity meant that they differed from one another in respect to their relationship with the organization. Some participated as independent traders to whom Zheng Chenggong issued permits, while others served as agents for him and his subordinates. Among the possessions of Lin Yinguan and his shipwrecked crew, Korean authorities uncovered three letters written by Cai Zheng (d. 1668), a loyal official under both Chenggong and his son. They were addressed, respectively, to Li Feng, a former Ming military governor who had served under the Chongzhen Emperor, Lin Huanguan, leader of a loyalist militia in the southwestern province of Sichuan, and another commander named Lin Liushi. All of them had fled the disorder of the Ming-Qing transition, and resided in exile at Nagasaki, where, despite their former status as officials, these men actively participated in the China-Japan trade to support themselves. Cai’s letters to them spoke of “dispatching my house secretary and servant to come to Nagasaki” to issue them new trading licenses, as their older ones, bestowed upon them on an annual basis as gifts due to their fame and prestige as loyal officials, had already expired.¹³⁶ Of course, these cases were the exception; as seen, most private merchants had to purchase their permits.

A select number of overseas Chinese, on account of their wealth, influence in their community, or close personal relationships with local rulers, became Zheng’s official representatives, with responsibility for purchasing goods and supervising his trade in the area.¹³⁷ Although he left for Fujian at a young age, Zheng maintained close contact with his brother Shichizaemon in Nagasaki, sending him 500 taels (18.7 kg) of silver at the beginning of each year to cover his expenses.¹³⁸ A poem dedicated by Chenggong to his brother further revealed the depth of their relationship. In it, he compared himself to Liu Kun (271-318), a general

Nederlands-India (Daily Register Kept in Batavia Castle of the Happenings at Places throughout Netherlands East India, henceforth known as Batavia dagregisters), 1656-1657 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1904), 37-38.

¹³⁴ *Generale missiven*, vol. 2 (1960), 778.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹³⁶ Seong, 277_007a.

¹³⁷ Jian Huiying, “Ming-Zheng shiqi Taiwan zhi haiwai maoyi ji qi zhuanyun diwei zhi yanjiu” (“Research on the Overseas Trade of Taiwan during the Ming-Zheng Period and Its Position as a Hub”), MA thesis (Taipei: National Taipei University, 2000), 57.

¹³⁸ Kawaguchi, 8 and Ōta, vol. 2, 732.

during the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420), who tried to defend a city from a “barbarian” siege all on his own, without any aid or reinforcements. Outnumbered and surrounded, Liu only managed to fend off the intruders by playing the tunes of their homeland, which so moved them that they abandoned their camps and withdrew. After this obvious allusion his current predicament of fighting the Manchus, Zheng concluded by asserting that “across the land of Japan, how can there lack the music of the Han house?”¹³⁹ Chenggong thus implied that if even “barbarians” could love their native place so much, then Shichizaemon must also cherish his ancestral land across the seas and miss his brother, whom he had not seen since childhood.

In addition to genuine feelings of fraternal goodwill and solidarity, Zheng made use of this trusted family relation to oversee the Japanese side of the China-Japan trade, the backbone of his entire commercial network. He charged Shichizaemon with the collection of payment from all incoming nonofficial Chinese merchants in exchange for the organization’s trading permits. These licenses had to be renewed on an annual basis, and the proceeds forwarded via the trading fleets to Chenggong himself. However, at the beginning of each year, Chenggong would only make available ten new permits, effectively restricting the number of traders not sailing directly under him or his officials. He had them deposited at the office of the two local magistrates (*bugyō*), where they could be picked up after the merchant paid Shichizaemon and received a receipt from him documenting proof of purchase.¹⁴⁰ Known colloquially among the overseas Chinese as the Kings of Nagasaki (*Changqi wang*), the magistrates enjoyed a friendly and highly cooperative relationship with the organization.¹⁴¹ For merchants caught without a trading permit, they would order the coastal garrison forces to detain the crew and search their vessels and confiscate their goods.¹⁴² Moreover, Shichizaemon, a Tokugawa subject, could correspond directly with the *bakufu* at Edo, unlike other overseas Chinese.¹⁴³

Besides Zheng Chenggong, his civil and military officials had extensive connections of their own in Japan, especially his half-brother Zheng Tai. When Tai traveled to Nagasaki in 1658 with a junk carrying 47 men, his entire crew lodged at Shichizaemon’s house for several days.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, Tai enjoyed warm relations with the translators at the Chinese Interpreters’ Office (*Tō tsūji kaisho*). He even entrusted a sum of about 400,000 taels (15 tons) of silver to two of them, Hayashi Nihē and Eisen Tōzaemon, for safekeeping as emergency funds on behalf of the organization and for personal use.¹⁴⁵ These translators, who were themselves overseas Chinese,

¹³⁹ Zheng Guangnan, Fukuzumi, and Zheng Qinchi, 49-50.

¹⁴⁰ Ōta, vol. 2, 733.

¹⁴¹ Seong, 277_007a.

¹⁴² Ōta, vol. 2, 733.

¹⁴³ Kawaguchi, 8. After its failure to normalize relations with the Ming Dynasty, the Tokugawa regime “had demoted China to the lowest rung of its hierarchy of partners,” treating them as “barbarians” unworthy of the *bakufu*’s attention. By forcing all Chinese traders to deal with the low-ranking magistrate’s office at Nagasaki and thwarting their attempts to correspond at a higher level, Edo could reinforce its own Japanocentric worldview and shut out competitors that threatened this crucial source of its domestic legitimacy. See Toby, 196-197.

¹⁴⁴ Ehara, 44.

¹⁴⁵ Xia, 48; Hayashi Shunsai, 49; and *Tō tsūji kaisho nichiroku*, 19.



Figure 13. The Chinese Interpreters' Office once stood on the grounds of the Nagasaki Prefectural Library.

Photograph by author, 2009.

had become subjects of the *bakufu* and adopted Japanese-style names. In fact, Eisen's original surname was Xu, while Hayashi represented the Japanized pronunciation of Lin.¹⁴⁶ Both Chenggong and his subordinates also maintained active ties with Ming loyalist elites residing in Japan but having no direct connection to the organization. They exchanged frequent letters with the Confucian scholar Zhu Shunshui and Yinyuan (Ingen, 1592-1673), the highly esteemed head abbot of Huangpo Temple in northeastern Fujian, who transmitted the Huangbo (Ōbaku) sect of Chan (Zen) Buddhism to Japan.¹⁴⁷ Zheng protected the monk and his disciples throughout their journey to Nagasaki in 1654, dispatching soldiers to travel alongside them on land and using his own navy to transport them to their destination.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ *Tō tsūji kaisho nichiroku*, 92. In fact, the Chinese would commonly refer to him as Lin Erguan, or Lin the Number Two Son. See Hayashi Shunsai, 49.

¹⁴⁷ Zhu Shunshui's writings and correspondences with key figures in the Ming loyalist movement, including Zheng, can be found in Zhu Shunshui, *Zhu Shunshui ji (The Collections of Zhu Shunshui)* (Taipei: Hanjing wenhua shiye youxian gongsi, 2004) and Xu Xingqing, ed., *Xinding Zhu Shunshui ji buyi (Newly Compiled Additions to the Collections of Zhu Shunshui)* (Taipei: Taiwan daxue chuban zhongxin, 2004).

¹⁴⁸ For more about Yinyuan and his relationship with Zheng Chenggong and other Ming loyalists, both in China and Japan, see

Outside of Japan, overseas Chinese merchants played an important, albeit less-documented role for the organization in Southeast Asia. They developed a particularly good relationship with the rulers of Siam, first P'rasat Tong (r. 1630-1656) and then his successor Narai (r. 1657-1688), who both pursued policies that welcomed trade with all countries. The kings entrusted the management of domestic and international commerce and navigation almost completely to the control of the Chinese. These merchants, furthermore, oftentimes assumed high positions at court, especially under Narai, serving as his secretaries and managers of the royal household.¹⁴⁹ The ruler also participated in the intra-Asian trade in his own right, hiring the Chinese as his agents to carry Siamese goods to China and Japan, and splitting the profit with them.¹⁵⁰ More often than not, the traders cooperated closely with Zheng Chenggong, and would purchase his license or assume a double identity as his own official merchants.¹⁵¹ The relationship between the organization and the Siamese court would only grow closer in the next two decades.

As mentioned previously, Taiwan, along with the other colonies under VOC control, saw tremendous growth in the number of Chinese immigrants. Outnumbered and short of personnel, the Dutch delegated the routine management of affairs among the Chinese population in Taiwan to ten headmen (*cabessas* or *hoofden*), prominent merchants and ship-owners chosen from within the community.¹⁵² Zheng Chenggong maintained close contacts with these local leaders, especially through He Tingbin, known in Dutch sources as Pincqua or Pinqua, also a prominent merchant, tax farmer, and translator on behalf of the company.¹⁵³ As an old associate of Chenggong's father, he had another powerful patron in Zhilong's adopted son, Zheng Tai, known colloquially in Taiwan and Fujian as Sauja.¹⁵⁴ Both Chenggong and Tai would frequently address their letters regarding their interests in Taiwan directly to the Chinese headmen rather than the VOC authorities, often singling out He Tingbin by name.¹⁵⁵ In 1657, He acquired the right to issue trading permits to all junks entering and leaving Taiwan in exchange for the collection of duties amounting to one percent on venison, salted fish, shrimp, and other exports, and imports of Chinese gold. Those merchants refusing to pay the levy would have their names, ships, and cargoes written down and reported to Zheng Chenggong.¹⁵⁶

Lin Guanchao, "Yinyuan chanshi he Nan Ming kang Qing renshi de guanxi" ("The Relationship between Yinyuan and the Anti-Qing Figures of the Southern Ming"), *Shaoguan xueyuan xuebao: Shehui kexue ban (Journal of Shaoguan University: Social Sciences Edition)* 24.1 (2003): 66-74.

¹⁴⁹ Zheng Ruiming, 75-76.

¹⁵⁰ Viraphol, 12.

¹⁵¹ Jian Huiying, 42-43.

¹⁵² Johannes Huber, "Chinese Settlers Against the Dutch East India Company: The Rebellion Led by Kuo Huai-i on Taiwan in 1652," in *Development and Decline*, ed. Vermeer, 284 and Andrade, 8.4.

¹⁵³ For more on the headman system and tax farming in Dutch Taiwan, refer to Andrade, 8.4-8.5. Pincqua or Pinqua appears to be the transcription of the Minnanese for Binge, or "Elder Brother Bin."

¹⁵⁴ C. E. S., 68. Sauja is a corruption of the Minnanese pronunciation for Zuoye, or the "Blessed Mandarin."

¹⁵⁵ See, for instance, Huber, "Relations between Cheng and the VOC," 235; *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part III, 312; Part IV, 201-202, 256-257; and Andrade, 10.15.

¹⁵⁶ *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part IV, 222-223.

Co-allegiance

The use of a trusted agent to issue licenses and collect fees from private traders remained consistent with Zheng's policies elsewhere in Japan and Southeast Asia. Of course, the need to control merchants sailing abroad from the southeastern Chinese coast provided the initial impetus for this far-flung system of permits. Besides increasing the convenience and flexibility of obtaining a license away from home, it also prevented them from taking advantage of the loophole of sailing from one port outside Chinese jurisdiction to another, which could give rise to alternative centers of smuggling outside his network. The consequences of getting caught without a valid license were serious. In 1653, when ship-owner Wang Yunsheng arrived at Nagasaki with an expired permit from ten years ago, *bakufu* officials, in coordination with the organization, detained him and confiscated the goods on board his vessel. Only through the earnest entreaties of Shichizaemon did Chenggong agree to forgive this transgression, but he warned his brother to never again "allow ships to sail off with an old license."¹⁵⁷ While Wang met with good fortune, others without his luck would have faced the possibility of bankruptcy and destitution, and serve out harsh sentences under Zheng's strict laws upon return.

The enforcement of payment on men like Wang, however, became a natural, if not completely intentional, conduit for Zheng to extend his authority outside his traditional sphere of influence on the Mainland coast. Indeed, by its very nature, the permit system easily had the potential to become politicized, since it entailed responsibility for the management of a highly mobile group of traders across vast expanses of geographic space. In exchange for payment from affiliated merchants, the Oceanic Five Firms dispatched armed convoys to protect their ships, as well as those belonging to the agents of Zheng and his officials, from attacks by pirates or competitors.¹⁵⁸ On the whole, both the East Asian and Western primary records document very few instances of attacks and confiscation of the organization's ships on the high seas, a testament to its highly successful efforts in maintaining the safety of its interests. Indeed, Zheng Jing would later boast that those who bore the family's permits would encounter "no obstacles on the water routes."¹⁵⁹

Yet, should even one of his vessels run into misfortune, Chenggong would not hesitate to take proactive measures to prevent future occurrences. On August 23, 1653, two VOC ships in the South China Sea seized a Chinese junk from Quinam affiliated with the organization and claimed it as a prize under the pretext that the company was at war with this kingdom in present-day central and southern Vietnam. However, the Dutch merely confiscated what they could obtain and allowed the crew and the vessel to sail unharmed back to Xiamen. When he learned of the perceived slight, Zheng wrote a polite but firm letter to the governor of Taiwan on October 21. At the end, he attached a list of the junk's cargo, which included spices, silver,

¹⁵⁷ Although the overall circumstances behind this letter are not entirely clear, Zheng may have suspected Shichizaemon of taking bribes from Wang in exchange for turning a blind eye to the merchant's lack of a valid permit. See Ōta, 733.

¹⁵⁸ Zheng Ruiming, 24.

¹⁵⁹ Seong, 277_007a.

sharks' fins, and other luxuries, and demanded a compensation of three times the amount.¹⁶⁰ On June 29, 1654, the governor-general at Batavia responded by emphasizing the company's continued interest in friendly relations and mutually beneficial trade with Zheng, and providing a partial repayment of the goods, along with additional presents to him of cloth and pepper.¹⁶¹ Whether Zheng felt satisfied with the proposed settlement or not remains unknown, since no further exchanges related to this topic have appeared in the records thus far. However, he had already made his point abundantly clear; his ships would have unrestricted passage on the high seas and their crews would be protected from harm.

Indeed, more serious violations of these basic tenets often led to tit-for-tat measures that Zheng conveniently utilized to further his geopolitical advantages in the region. In August 1655, he issued an embargo on all trade and communication with Manila in response to years of what he perceived as insults at the hands of the Spanish. He claimed that the Spanish, with a "heart like that of a dog or pig," had "killed my merchants and others of my people, and took my junks and merchandise...some of them taking the merchandise off them by force without paying anything."¹⁶² Likewise, in 1657, Zheng banned all his ships from sailing to ports in Tonkin upon learning that the king had tried to force one of his envoys to the Yongli court, Xu Fuyuan, to kowtow before the ruler and submit to him as his minister. Xu had originally intended to travel through Tonkin to southwestern China because Qing forces had blocked the domestic land route through Guangdong and Guangxi Provinces.¹⁶³ Zheng, by using his privileged access to the vast China market and its coveted products as leverage, could thereby influence geopolitical outcomes favorable to himself.

At the same time, he formed mutually beneficial economic ties with Chinese community leaders, giving them a stake in his commercial hierarchy in exchange for greater political influence in the local affairs of their societies. As a result, the reach of his organization extended across traditional boundaries to provide a unified source of authority and final appeal for a large segment of Chinese, whether living deep within Qing-held territory or in Japan and the Southeast Asian kingdoms. Many of the heads of these states, like Siam's Narai, driven by their desire to sell their products and access coveted goods from China, welcomed this form of extraterritoriality and actively cooperated with his designated agents. These overseas Chinese merchants, men like Shichizaemon in Japan and He Tingbin in Taiwan, in turn occupied a Janus-faced role that saw them answering both to Zheng and the local authorities, while also serving as conduits of communication between the two sides. Unlike the VOC's policy of outright colonization over territory, then, Zheng tended to establish institutions over people, a partly unexpected consequence of managing his far-flung commercial network. Moreover, he quietly expanded his administrative and functional oversight of overseas Chinese communities

¹⁶⁰ Huber, "Relations between Cheng and the VOC," 220-221.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 228-229.

¹⁶² Huber, "Relations between Cheng and the VOC," 234 and *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part III, 558.

¹⁶³ Ruan, 25 and Xia, 21.

over time.

Yet, the implementation encountered serious problems with the VOC in Taiwan. The company correctly viewed Zheng Chenggong's activities as potentially serious violations of its independence and sovereignty. Indeed, nowhere was his presence felt more acutely and as menacingly than on the island. Besides encroaching upon the territorial rights of the Dutch, he essentially managed to establish a shadow government over Taiwan's Chinese population. As early as 1651, VOC authorities had discovered, to their surprise, one of his official junks levying taxes on fishing vessels off the coast of Wankan, just north of Tayouan and Provintia. In answer to their inquiries, the crew of the ship claimed to follow "an ancient precedent" from a Ming Fujianese official, who later sold Zheng Zhilong the rights now inherited by his son.¹⁶⁴ In the subsequent flurry of exchange following the discovery, Chenggong warned the VOC that if it restricted his right to tax the fishermen in the area, he would readily seek compensation from their "friends, brothers, wives or children" living in China.¹⁶⁵ From very early on, then, the Zheng organization had tried to extend its jurisdiction from trading vessels to supervision over another highly mobile group, the fishing junks, to obtain a surplus from their catch.

Many of his other actions toward the colony seemed equally suspicious and worrisome. On June 25, 1654, the Dutch got word that Zheng had dispatched envoys to the island to levy taxes on some of the residents.¹⁶⁶ Although these rumors remained unsubstantiated, more obvious instances of his expanded political interference soon surfaced. One glaring example would be his letters and proclamations, which he often addressed directly to He Tingbin and the other headmen, bypassing the company completely. In 1655, during his trade embargo with Manila, he requested that, in addition to his own territories, Taiwan should similarly prevent its junks from traveling to the Spanish colony, thereby preventing Chinese merchants from using it as a transit point for illicit smuggling.¹⁶⁷ Interestingly enough, the proclamation he sent for propagation across the island referred to the Chinese residents there as his own subjects.¹⁶⁸ In replies to his letters and proclamations, Governor Caesar kept emphasizing that the Chinese on Taiwan came under VOC jurisdiction.¹⁶⁹ Likewise, he refused to enact the ban on Manila to avoid any appearance of submission to Zheng's will.¹⁷⁰ Already during the 1650s, the Chinese residents had not only become partners in co-colonization with the Dutch, but they also maintained co-allegiance with both the VOC and Zheng.

After all, the activities of the organization and the company overlapped within the East Asian trading lanes far more than they complemented one another. As mentioned, they essentially traveled the same routes and marketed competing substitute products. Moreover, the

¹⁶⁴ *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part III, 205.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, Part III, 219.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, Part III, 358.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 535.

¹⁶⁸ Andrade, 10.8-10.9.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.3.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.9.

forceful Dutch presence in the Spice Islands had managed to reroute the bulk of pepper and spice exports, a total of 4.2 tons, to European markets rather than China by the first half of the seventeenth century.¹⁷¹ While Taiwan perhaps served as the only focal point where the two gigantic entities met to engage in mutually beneficial trade, its position became ever more precarious throughout the 1650s. Not only did competition intensify, especially in the silk trade of Tonkin and the markets of Cambodia and Siam, but tensions further escalated due to Zheng's efforts to bypass the Dutch spice monopoly in the Indonesian archipelago. In a polite yet firmly worded letter dated June 17, 1655, VOC Governor-General Joan Maetsuijcker (d. 1678) requested him to confine his procurement of pepper and spices to Batavia, noting that Zheng had earlier sent several small ships to Malacca and Palembang. Since the former lay too close to the Dutch headquarters, "our superiors have ordered that there and thereabouts no junks will be admitted." On the other hand, the Dutch had "an old treaty" with the ruler of Palembang, "as with other potentates situated hereabouts, that all the pepper and other merchandise appearing there must be brought to Batavia, without the same being allowed to be sold to others."¹⁷² To drive home the message of its unchallenged monopoly, the company even ordered the seizure of 400 piculs (20 tons) of pepper from one of his ships.¹⁷³

In response to this perceived provocation, and the adamant refusal of the Dutch to honor his sanctions against Manila, Zheng retaliated on June 27, 1656 by issuing a ban on trade with Taiwan and halting all traffic from China. He did not confine this edict to the island, but issued it to the Chinese community leaders at "every seat of government in the Eastern and Western barbarian states."¹⁷⁴ He ordered careful searches of vessels arriving at Xiamen and meted out harsh punishments to anyone caught violating the embargo, confiscating the ships, jailing or killing their owners, and even chopping off the right hands of crewmembers.¹⁷⁵ At the same time, he dispatched a minor official named Sausinja to the island with instructions to "visit all junks and carry out an inspection of their loaded manufactures and other goods, and...make a report to his lord."¹⁷⁶ The application of Chinese domestic laws to the Dutch colony clearly demonstrated the pervasive extent of Zheng's influence. Other than requesting the official never to come back again after it happened to intercept his junk of 24 men, the VOC, with less than 2,000 troops stationed on the entire island, could hardly prevent men like him from infiltrating again at will anywhere along the lengthy coastline.¹⁷⁷

Indeed, Zheng's semi-covert enforcement mechanism proved extremely effective. The move cut off access to a vast market for Taiwanese and Southeast Asian products and a key source of gold bound for India. Shipments of pepper and spices now piled up by the dockside,

¹⁷¹ Yamawaki, 109.

¹⁷² Huber, "Relations between Cheng and the VOC," 232.

¹⁷³ *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part III, 582.

¹⁷⁴ Yang Ying, 113.

¹⁷⁵ *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part IV, 94-95.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, Part IV, 94.

¹⁷⁷ C. E. S., 86.

as merchants packed up and left in droves. Even more seriously, without the imports of bulk items needed by the Chinese residents for their own daily use and exchange with aboriginal tribes, the entire domestic economy of Taiwan collapsed. The value of leases over land and deer-hunting licenses plummeted, resulting in severe losses and bankruptcy to their owners, who typically bought them on credit and became heavily indebted as a result. Food shortages soon hit the island due to the severe deflation and growing destitution among residents.¹⁷⁸ Officials at the VOC headquarters in Batavia admitted that the embargo, “if it should continue like this for much longer, would spell total ruin for the company in Tayouan and Formosa.”¹⁷⁹ Likewise, on the other side of the strait, Zheng’s revenue official Yang Ying observed that after just several months, “many of the barbarians had fallen ill, and pestilence spread among them.”¹⁸⁰

Finally, in March 1657, the Dutch decided to soften their position, and dispatched He Tingbin to Xiamen to negotiate with Zheng. During the meetings, Zheng promised to reopen trade if the VOC stopped attacking Chinese shipping in Southeast Asia and ended the harassment of merchants flying his flag. Governor Frederick Coyett (c. 1615-1687), who had replaced Caesar in 1656, authorized He to agree to these conditions, and wrote a reply to Zheng promising him better treatment for his merchants at Taiwan “than they would receive from any other nation anywhere else in the world.”¹⁸¹ However, Andrade has argued convincingly that the Dutch remained completely unaware of the second half of the deal, which He Tingbin privately struck with Zheng behind their backs. On behalf of the company, He further agreed to his other condition of presenting an annual tribute of 5,000 taels (187 kg) of silver, along with 100,000 arrow shafts and 1,000 *dan* (50 tons) of sulfur to fund the war effort against the Manchus.¹⁸² The Dutch would have never accepted this kind of demand, which would transform Taiwan into a subsidiary state and severely compromise the VOC’s sovereignty, but Zheng evidently would not take anything less. In his eagerness to restore normal economic life to Taiwan, and thereby protect its profits for himself and his fellow merchants, yet caught between two obstinate and unyielding powers that both placed confidence in him, He decided to grant each side the illusion of the concessions they wished to receive from the other.

For the time being, the plan seemed to work; by early 1658, the crisis had appeared resolved and everything had returned to normal, as Chinese junks arrived at Taiwan in large numbers and commercial activities boomed almost immediately.¹⁸³ However, He still faced the unresolved and pressing issue of coming up with the funds to pay Zheng the promised tribute. To solve this problem, he conveniently passed on the costs indirectly to the Dutch colony through a variety of shady practices, such as over-reporting his expenses at Xiamen and paying for the right to collect

¹⁷⁸ Andrade, 10.13-14.

¹⁷⁹ Quoted in *ibid.*, 10.14.

¹⁸⁰ Yang Ying, 113.

¹⁸¹ Quoted in Andrade, 11.3.

¹⁸² Andrade, 11.3.

¹⁸³ C. E. S., 67.

the rice tax of an irrigated parcel of land at below market rates.¹⁸⁴ However, the main source of the tribute came from the authority granted to him by the Zheng organization to levy duties on all outgoing junks, a privilege he had earlier leased from Zheng Tai for 18,000 taels (674 kg) during his visit to Xiamen. He Tingbin would present each China-bound ship-owner with an invoice demanding the payment of duties, in exchange for which he would provide a sealed receipt in his own handwriting. For those junk owners who could not promptly fulfill their obligations, He would advance them the funds at interest after they handed over a written promise to return the money at a specified future date.¹⁸⁵ Needless to say, this position of relatively unchecked privilege provided plenty of opportunity for abuse. Through loans, extortion, and embezzlement, He could easily extract from these extralegal customs duties most of the necessary tribute payment.

However, He Tingbin's precarious balance began unraveling by the beginning of 1659. Already, in August of the previous year, the Dutch had reacted with surprise after reading an edict issued by Zheng that proclaimed the reopening of trade with Taiwan and gave his reasons for lifting the ban. In it, he emphasized his compassion for the suffering of the residents on the island, as "the people who go there [to Taiwan] from time to time and at the moment reside there, are these not all my people (*mijn volk*)?" After raising this rhetorical question, he sternly requested "the Hollanders there in Tayouan" to "think, when they drink the water, from where it comes, so that they themselves, with a good heart, may again treat my merchants and people (*mijn kooplieden en volckeren*) well."¹⁸⁶ Evidently surprised by the condescending tone of the edict, which publicly included the Chinese residents of the island as Zheng subjects, Coyett and the Council of Formosa, the colony's advisory body, took He Tingbin in for questioning. They found "this placard, read by us, to have therein quite some tough words toward the contempt of the Netherlands nation."¹⁸⁷ Nevertheless, Coyett allowed this matter to drop, along with the other irregularities they had discovered about him, in the interest of maintaining cordial trading relations with the Mainland coast, the lifeblood of the island's economy.

However, the final straw for the Company came in February 1659, when a Chinese merchant named Samsiack, either unwilling or unable to bear the heavy exactions of He's extralegal customs duties any longer, exposed his activities before the Dutch authorities. After detaining and questioning some of the headmen, they learned, to their great dismay and shock, not only of He Tingbin's own involvement in the matter, but also the active collaboration of the other leaders of the Chinese community to keep it a secret for so long.¹⁸⁸ Despite his valuable services to the company as an intermediary in its relations with Zheng, Governor Coyett decided that he could no longer go unpunished for his actions, which had become tantamount to treason. Accordingly,

¹⁸⁴ *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part IV, 223; 246-247.

¹⁸⁵ C. E. S., 193.

¹⁸⁶ *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part IV, 203.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 204.

¹⁸⁸ C. E. S., 193.

on April 21, the Council of Justice (*Raad van den Gerechte*) tried and convicted He and stripped him of his posts as headman and translator, and forced him to pay a fine of 300 Spanish reals.¹⁸⁹ Soon afterwards, deprived of his sources of income and bankrupted by creditors, he fled across the Taiwan Strait with his family and sought refuge with Zheng Chenggong in Xiamen.¹⁹⁰

The defection of He Tingbin, “the Chinese who handled the greatest volume of trade and possessed the most land on Formosa,” and therefore incurred the largest debts, epitomized the Zheng organization’s growing power over the island.¹⁹¹ It also revealed the tenuousness of the VOC’s hold over Taiwan, the overall weakness of its position in Asia, along with the serious pitfall of co-colonization as a strategy of governance. When tensions between the company and Zheng escalated to a point where the Chinese residents, caught in the middle, could no longer reconcile the contradictory positions and maintain their co-allegiance, they would readily opt for the latter. Not only did Zheng come from the same ethnicity, but he also depended upon overseas Chinese to maintain part of his operations, directly protected their lives and property, and stood up for their interests in front of foreign governments. While the VOC fulfilled the same functions to a certain extent, it primarily answered not to them, but to its own employees and officials, and, ultimately, its shareholders back home in Amsterdam. In many ways, the Zheng organization simply held the best cards in this competition, whether in terms of proximity and access to markets, or economic and military power. Intentionally or not, Zheng had successfully utilized the trade dispute to increase his already significant political presence on Taiwan at the expense of the Company. As the Chinese population’s allegiances increasingly tilted toward him, and his shadow government slowly surfaced into the open, the Dutch were losing the island from within even before the actual invasion.

Trading Figures

More fundamentally, the Zheng organization had become a credible alternative to the VOC in Asia by the end of the 1650s, as demonstrated through a mutual comparison of the number of ships sailing to each port, quantities of goods traded, and revenues and profitability. In 1657, during the height of Zheng’s power, he dispatched a total of 47 junks to Nagasaki, including 28 from the port of Anhai, Fujian, 11 from Cambodia, three from Siam, two from Quinam, two from Pattani, and one from Tonkin.¹⁹² These vessels “all belonged to the great merchant Cocksinja and his adherents,” being those of his agents and private domestic or overseas Chinese traders.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 194. The Zheng tael roughly equaled the Spanish real, valued at around .7 Qing taels. See John Robert Shepherd, *Statecraft and Political Economy on the Taiwan Frontier* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 101.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 68.

¹⁹¹ On the eve his flight to Xiamen, the VOC records show that He Tingbin owed the Company 17,122.5 reals, of which only 6,500 had been recovered. He also had outstanding debts totaling 50,000 reals to various Dutch and Chinese creditors. See Cheng, 513.

¹⁹² Cheng, 490-491 and Yamawaki, 111. The Japanese accounts give a slightly higher figure, at 51 junks for the year. However, the discrepancy does not necessarily come as a contradiction, since Nagasaki counted ship numbers according to the lunar calendar, which would have included some of the vessels entering port in early 1658. See Hayashi Akira, vol. 4, 324-325.

¹⁹³ Cheng, 491 and Yamawaki, 111.

In fact, between 1650 and 1662, a documented total of 820 Chinese junks made visits to Nagasaki, 649 of them from the Mainland coast and 171 from various locations in Southeast Asia, with a high of 81 in 1650 and a low of 46 in 1661 due to the invasion of Taiwan. These overall figures, in turn, yield a mean of 63 ships annually, among them 50 from China and 13 from Southeast Asia.¹⁹⁴ An additional 14 junks per year on average sailed from the Chinese coast to destinations outside Japan.¹⁹⁵ In 1655, for instance, Zheng dispatched seven ships to Batavia, two to Tonkin, ten to Siam, four to Quinam, and one to Manila.¹⁹⁶ In contrast, only eight Dutch ships arrived in Japan during all of 1658. While the total number of VOC vessels docking at ports throughout the region would amount to a somewhat higher figure, the Zheng fleets nevertheless dwarfed them in numerical terms.

The cargos of the Chinese vessels, to give the example of the 47 that arrived at Nagasaki in 1657, included 1,120 piculs (56 tons) of raw silk and 636,000 catties (318 tons) of white and brown sugar, along with an assortment of various merchandise.¹⁹⁷ The Dutch, on the other hand, had on board 126,509 catties (63 tons) of raw silk, 490,879 catties (245 tons) of powdered sugar, 103,698 catties (51 tons) of sapanwood, 39,040 catties (19 tons) of pepper, 1,639 catties (819 kg) of quicksilver, and other retail items.¹⁹⁸ Despite the larger number of Zheng vessels, then, the company ships boasted greater size and carrying capacity. Aside from spices and other Southeast Asian goods, which Chinese junks would typically ship to the Mainland rather than Japan, we can see that the VOC held an overwhelming advantage in deerskins due to its control of Taiwan, but surprisingly lagged behind in sugar, the other main product of the colony.

What seems equally intriguing from this data is that the VOC managed to achieve a slight edge over the Zheng organization in raw silk, by far the most important and valuable trading item in the entire Western Pacific, the “main engine” of regional commercial exchange. However, when examining the fluctuations in volume across several years, we can safely conclude that 1657 merely represented an unusual low point for Zheng’s exports of the luxury item. In the subsequent three years of 1658, 1659, and 1660, the VOC’s raw silk shipments grew modestly on the whole, to 146,067 catties (73 tons), 131,619 catties (66 tons), and 144,699 catties (72 tons), respectively. By comparison, the Zheng organization’s quantities jumped from 135,720 catties (68 tons) in 1658 to 229,891 catties (115 tons) and 201,383 catties (100 tons) in the next two years.¹⁹⁹

While the VOC and Zheng Chenggong had comparable trading quantities, they diverged significantly in terms of the value of the goods they exchanged and their profitability. In 1657, the eight Dutch ships that arrived at Nagasaki sold their wares for a little more than 542,751 taels

¹⁹⁴ Han, 149. Refer also to Table 2.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 152.

¹⁹⁶ *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part III, 466.

¹⁹⁷ Cheng, 491 and Yamawaki, 111.

¹⁹⁸ Yamawaki, 111.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 112.

Table 2. The number and trading value of junks sailing from China and Southeast Asia to Nagasaki per year, 1650 to 1662

<i>Year</i>	<i>Junks from China</i>	<i>Silver Value of Goods Traded (taels)*</i>	<i>Silver Value of Goods Traded (kg)</i>	<i>Junks from SE Asia</i>	<i>Silver Value of Goods Traded (taels)*</i>	<i>Silver Value of Goods Traded (kg)</i>	<i>Total Chinese Junks</i>	<i>Total Silver Value of Chinese Junks (taels)</i>	<i>Total Silver Value of Chinese Junks (kg)</i>
1650	70	1,400,000	52,400	11	220,000	8,234	81	1,620,000	60,630
1651	40	800,000	29,940	13	260,000	9,732	53	1,060,000	39,670
1652	50	1,000,000	37,430	13	260,000	9,732	63	1,260,000	47,160
1653	56	1,120,000	41,920	19	380,000	14,220	75	1,500,000	56,140
1654	51	1,020,000	38,180	11	220,000	8,234	62	1,240,000	46,410
1655	45	900,000	33,690	5	100,000	3,743	50	1,000,000	37,430
1656	57	1,140,000	42,670	18	360,000	13,470	75	1,500,000	56,140
1657	51	1,020,000	38,180	19	380,000	14,220	70	1,400,000	52,400
1658	40	860,000	32,190	13	260,000	9,732	56	1,120,000	41,920
1659	63	1,200,000	44,910	13	260,000	9,732	73	1,460,000	54,650
1660	45	900,000	33,690	20	400,000	14,970	65	1,300,000	48,660
1661	39	780,000	29,190	7	140,000	5,240	46	920,000	34,430
1662	42	840,000	31,440	9	180,000	6,737	51	1,020,000	38,180
TOTALS	649	12,980,000	485,800	171	3,420,000	128,000	820	16,400,000	613,800
MEAN	50	1,000,000	37,430	13	263,000	9,844	63	1,263,000	47,270

* Based upon a trading value per junk of 20,000 taels (749 kg), which masks the year-by-year fluctuations on an individual level.

Modified from Han Zhenhua's estimates. Refer to the table in Han, 149

Table 3. The number and trading value of Chinese junks sailing from China to Southeast Asia per year, 1650 to 1660

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of Junks to Southeast Asia*</i>	<i>Total Silver Value (taels)+</i>	<i>Total Silver Value (kg)</i>
1650	11	880,000 – 1,110,000	32,940 – 41,170
1651	13	1,040,000 – 1,300,000	38,930 – 48,660
1652	13	1,040,000 – 1,300,000	38,930 – 48,660
1653	19	1,520,000 – 1,900,000	56,890 – 71,120
1654	11	880,000 – 1,110,000	32,940 – 41,170
1655	5	400,000 – 500,000	14,970 – 18,710
1656	18	1,440,000 – 1,800,000	53,900 – 67,370
1657	19	1,520,000 – 1,900,000	56,890 – 71,120
1658	13	1,040,000 – 1,300,000	38,930 – 48,660
1659	13	1,040,000 – 1,300,000	38,930 – 48,660
1660	20	1,600,000 – 2,000,000	59,890 – 74,860
TOTALS	155	12,400,000 – 15,520,000	464,100 – 580,900
MEAN	14	1,120,000 – 1,140,000	41,000 – 52,000

* We assume that all the junks traveling from Southeast Asia to Japan would make a stop in China and then return home, so the figures exactly correspond to the ones found in the section “Junks from SE Asia” in Table 2. This method has the most likely effect of undercounting the number of ships traveling to the region. Compare, for instance, the figure given for 1655 to the 24 ships Zheng actually sent that year. The mean silver value of the vessels is also intentionally rounded down.

+ Based upon a trading value per junk of 80,000 taels (2,994 kg) to 100,000 taels (3,743 kg), which masks the year-by-year fluctuations on an individual level.

(27 tons) of silver.²⁰⁰ Their 47 counterparts, on the other hand, together obtained a value of 1,036,630 taels (38 tons) for their goods, almost double the amount of their competitors.²⁰¹ The key reason for this discrepancy lay in Zheng’s ability to control access to Chinese silk, which sold at high premiums across the region. Unable to enter the lucrative China market, the Dutch had to resort to substitutes. Among their 126,509 catties of raw silk, some 14,190 of them came from Tonkin, which produced an inferior grade that sold at cheap prices.²⁰² While the bulk of the shipment consisted of higher quality Bengali silk, it still could not match the Chinese variety in popularity and demand.²⁰³

We can derive an estimate for the Zheng organization’s total revenues and profits from the

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Hayashi Akira, vol. 4, 324-325.

²⁰² Cheng, 491 and Yamawaki, 111.

²⁰³ When first introduced in Japan to potential buyers, they praised its fine quality but also noted its “defective reeling.” See Nara, 172-173.

trading value each Chinese vessel obtained from sailing to the ports of East and Southeast Asia and back. For the China-Japan trade, we begin by assuming average revenues of 20,000 taels (748 kg) per junk per year. This figure, based off the Tokugawa *bakufu*'s annual quota, enacted in 1684 and 1715, on imports and numbers of ships entering Nagasaki, also accords well with the volume per junk carried by the 47 ships that arrived at the port for only the year of 1657.²⁰⁴ As Table 2 shows, the Zheng fleets acquired annual revenues of 1,263,000 taels (47 tons) on average plying the routes to Nagasaki from 1650 to 1662. This figure accords well with mean silver exports of 1,007,000 taels derived from von Glahn (see Table 1); together, they reveal that almost 80% of the shipments from Japan consisted of bullion, a reasonable estimate.²⁰⁵

Han Zhenhua has estimated that the raw silk carried by one Chinese vessel to Japan during this period could fetch a rate of return over 200%.²⁰⁶ Since seven-tenths of the entire shipment typically consisted of this luxury product, and assuming no loss and zero return in the other three-tenths, we can calculate a weighted rate of return of 140% on the overall cargo.²⁰⁷ Now, working backwards, we find that each junk paid, on average, 8,333 taels (311 kg) for its goods in China, while yielding a profit 1.4 times as much at Nagasaki, or 11,667 taels (436 kg). When multiplied by the average annual number of 63 ships sailing to Japan, the profit of the Zheng organization in this market comes out to 735,000 taels (27 tons).²⁰⁸ Although no comparable Dutch figures could be located at the time of writing, we do know that their mean export of bullion from Japan from 1650 to 1662 amounted to 5,363 *kan* (537,300 taels, 20.1 tons) per year (see Table 1).²⁰⁹ This estimate does not take into account other, non-silver imports, but if we assume the same proportion of the metal in VOC cargoes at 80%, we can extrapolate a rough total value of 671,625 taels (25.2 tons).²¹⁰ Hence, the company's revenues from the Nagasaki trade amounted to a little over one-half of that of its Chinese competitors for the same route.

For the Zheng organization's trade with Southeast Asia, we can obtain its revenue from the

²⁰⁴ Han, 149. The Tokugawa *bakufu*'s regulations collectively restricted the number of Chinese junks arriving at Nagasaki to 30 per year, and the trading value to 600,000 taels (22 tons). This sum represented the imports they "had recently been able to cover with exports other than gold and silver." Divided among each of the 30 vessels, the overall trading value translates to 20,000 taels (748 kg) per ship, which can then be multiplied by the number of junks sailing to Nagasaki during the 1650s. Although such extrapolation does have its limitations, the figures nevertheless provide a ballpark average of the fluctuating worth of the annual shipments of the three or four decades prior to 1685, when the occupation of Taiwan and the Kangxi Emperor's lifting of maritime restrictions brought an onrush of private Qing traders to Nagasaki. See Totman, 145. Indeed, the 51 Chinese junks, according to the lunar calendar, that sold their products at port in 1657, averaged 20,326 taels (760 kg) per ship from the total of 1,036,630 taels, so the estimate appears to be reliable. See Yamawaki, 111.

²⁰⁵ Von Glahn, 227.

²⁰⁶ Han, 152-153.

²⁰⁷ Han Zhenhua extrapolates the 200% rate of return to serve as the total profitability per vessel per year. However, since the other three-tenths of the cargo most likely could not realize such a high yield, the resulting calculations would tend to overestimate the profit. As a corrective measure, I decided to incorporate the 200% rate of return on raw silk in a weighted average that also includes a zero rate of return for the bulk of the cargo.

²⁰⁸ Han Zhenhua's calculation of 640,000 taels, obtained from multiplying the 14,000 taels by 60 ships, appears to be in error. See Han, 153.

²⁰⁹ Von Glahn, 227-228.

²¹⁰ The actual average Dutch trading value, however, also appears to be significantly lower than Zheng. The 1684 Tokugawa regulations on maritime trade, for instance, stipulate a limit of 340,000 taels (12.7 tons) for Dutch vessels, in contrast to the 600,000 taels permitted to Chinese merchants. See Totman, 145.

trading value per vessel, estimated at 80,000 taels (3 tons) to 100,000 taels (3.7 tons). These figures come from the reparations Chenggong demanded from the Dutch during the 1650s for confiscating the cargo of two of his ships.²¹¹ As Table 2 shows, the value of the organization's entire Southeast Asian operations during this period averages anywhere from 1,120,000 taels (41 tons) to 1,400,000 taels (52 tons) per year. We can directly derive profitability from a 1676 Qing memorial exposing the smuggling activities of the merchant Shen Shangda, who enjoyed the patronage of Shang Zhixin (d. 1680), the feudatory of Guangdong and a main leader in the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories. The document observed that his junks, which almost exclusively traded with Southeast Asia, especially Siam, could each fetch a profit of 40,000 taels (1.4 tons) to 50,000 taels (1.9 tons) for one roundtrip journey.²¹² Alternatively, we could arrive at this conclusion by referring to accounts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which note that the borrowing cost for overseas trading missions amounted to an interest of 100%. Therefore, the merchant had to realize a rate of return equal or in excess of this figure to remain solvent.²¹³ Using 100% as the basis of our calculation, then, we find that the original purchasing price for Southeast Asia-bound goods was the same as the profit earned by each junk, a range of 40,000 to 50,000 taels, which, in turn, accords exactly with the Qing memorial's estimates. When we multiply these figures by the mean of 14 junks sailing to the region annually, we get a range of 560,000 taels (21 tons) and 700,000 taels (26.2 tons), respectively. Taking their average, we find that Zheng and his followers made 630,000 taels (23.6 tons) each year from the Southeast Asian market.

Added together, the total annual revenues of the Zheng organization amounted to a ballpark of 2,523,000 taels (94.4 tons) of silver, yielding a profit of 1,365,000 taels (51 tons). At least 45% of both market value and profit went directly Zheng Chenggong and his official merchants, while his commanders and their agents and affiliated private traders captured the remainder.²¹⁴ The proportion is based upon the assumption that only the 28 junks from Anhai out of the 47 that sailed to Nagasaki in 1657 belonged to his Oceanic Five Firms. We proceed to multiply the number of Anhai vessels by the 20,000 taels generated in trading value per ship per year and divide the product by the average total annual value for the China-Japan trade of 1,263,000 taels. The proportion can then be extrapolated to provide a rough estimate of the Southeast Asian market as well. Accordingly, Zheng and his agents earned, in all, 614,250 taels (22 tons), while his affiliates captured the remaining 750,750 taels (28 tons).

To place these figures in context, the mean annual profit of the VOC, as represented by the

²¹¹ This range of 80,000 to 100,000 taels can then be multiplied by the number of junks sailing to the region each year to determine the overall figure. Although the amount of Zheng's demands may represent a high estimate, it does not cover the part of the trading value achieved by the vessels after they brought the Southeast Asian products back to China. The cargoes of junks sailing home or to Southeast Asia from Japan, on the other hand, consisted almost entirely of bullion, aside from a certain proportion of armaments and strategic minerals that also was never resold, but directly consumed in warfare. See Han, 152.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 152, n. 1 and Viraphol, 42.

²¹³ Han, 153-154.

²¹⁴ According to Han Zhenhua, Zheng and his agents obtained 60% of the profits, but the methodology appears questionable. For greater detail into how these estimates were determined, see Han, 150.

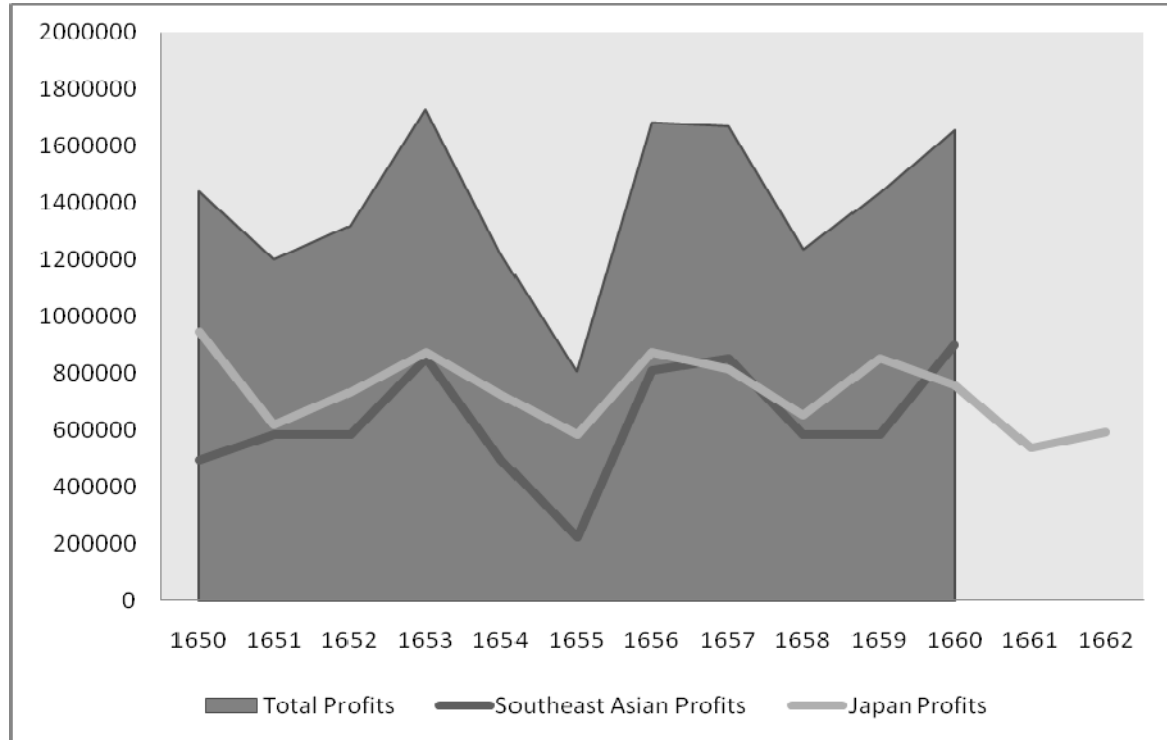
Table 4. The Zheng organization's profits from the Japan and Southeast Asian markets, 1650-1662

<i>Year</i>	<i>Japan Profits (taels)*</i>	<i>Japan Profits (kg)</i>	<i>SE Asia Profits (taels)+</i>	<i>SE Asia Profits (kg)</i>	<i>Total Profits (taels)</i>	<i>Total Profits (kg)</i>
1650	945,000	35,370	440,000 – 555,000	16,470 – 20,585	1,385,000 – 1,500,000	51,480 – 55,955
1651	618,333	23,140	520,000 – 650,000	19,465 – 25,330	1,138,333 – 1,268,333	42,605 – 48,470
1652	735,000	27,510	520,000 – 650,000	19,465 – 25,330	1,255,000 – 1,385,000	46,975 – 52,840
1653	875,000	32,750	760,000 – 950,000	28,445 – 35,560	1,635,000 – 1,825,000	61,195 – 68,310
1654	723,333	27,070	440,000 – 555,000	16,470 – 20,585	1,163,333 – 1,278,333	43,540 – 47,655
1655	583,333	21,830	200,000 – 250,000	7,485 – 9,355	783,333 – 833,333	29,315 – 31,185
1656	875,000	32,750	720,000 – 900,000	26,950 – 33,685	1,595,000 – 1,775,000	59,700 – 66,435
1657	816,667	30,570	760,000 – 950,000	28,445 – 35,560	1,336,667 – 1,766,667	59,015 – 66,130
1658	653,333	24,450	520,000 – 650,000	19,465 – 24,330	1,173,333 – 1,303,333	43,915 – 48,470
1659	851,667	31,880	520,000 – 650,000	19,465 – 24,330	1,371,667 – 1,501,667	51,345 – 56,210
1660	758,333	28,380	800,000 – 1,000,000	29,945 – 37,430	1,558,333 – 1,758,333	58,325 – 65,810
1661	536,667	20,090	N / A	N / A	N / A	N / A
1662	595,000	22,270	N / A	N / A	N / A	N / A
TOTALS	9,566,666	358,060	6,200,000 – 7,760,000	232,070 – 292,080	N / A	N / A
MEAN	735,897	27,543	563,636 – 705,455	21,097 – 26,553	1,299,533 – 1,441,352	48,640 – 54,096

* Assumes a 140% rate of return on the revenue figures from Table 2.

+ Assumes a 100% rate of return on the revenue figures from Table 3.

Table 5. Graphic representation of the Zheng organization's profitability, 1650-1662*



*Value of Southeast Asian and total Zheng profits obtained from taking the average of the numerical range.

documented sum of the balance sheets of the Dutch factories across Asia during the entire seventeenth century, amounted to 1,049,507 guildens.²¹⁵ Given the official exchange rate at Nagasaki of 57 stuivers, or 2.85 guildens, for one tael of Japanese silver coin, most likely an underestimate, this sum translates to 368,248 taels (14 tons).²¹⁶ Over the course of the 1650s, the overall numbers were even lower, averaging around 677,447 guildens, or 237,701 taels (9 tons), per annum. Although Company earnings from trade reached a high of 1,282,841 guildens (450,120 taels, 17 tons) in 1651, it also realized negative balances of 73,175 guildens (25,675 taels, 960 kg) in 1655 and 68,949 guildens (24,193 taels, 906 kg) in 1656.²¹⁷ Hence, the VOC's average annual commercial profits amounted to a little more than one-fourth of the Zheng organization's sum of 1,365,000 taels, and about 60% of Chenggong's direct income of 614,250

²¹⁵ Nara Shuichi points out that the overall profitability of the Company should be viewed as an organic whole made up of the sum of the performances of individual trading factories. Rather than profit-generating units in their own right, then, every factory fulfilled a specific function or division of labor within the network, and worked together with others as a cooperative unit. See Nara, 163. Nara derives his figures from an examination of the trading balances reported by the individual factories in their letters to Batavia at the end of each year. For the profit and losses generated in the year 1653, for instance, see Cheng, 403-404.

²¹⁶ Yamawaki, 111. One gulden is worth twenty stuivers. In fact, one tael of fine silver could exchange for 4.3 guildens on the market. See Andrade, Appendix A, 1-2.

²¹⁷ Nara, 168.

taels. Even at their height in 1651, these proportions only changed to one-third and 73.2%, respectively. In fact, the Company could not match the average performance of its competitor's China-Japan trade alone. Zheng's direct share of that profit, 330,750 taels (12.3 tons) out of 735,000 taels, compared favorably with his Dutch counterparts, and surpassed them for certain years.

In spite of the VOC's attempts to monopolize intra-Asian commerce through anti-competitive measures, such as restricting the spice and pepper trade to Batavia and seizing shipping, and through the promotion of substitutes to Chinese goods, the Zheng organization remained the dominant economic power of the Western Pacific. Besides the spectacular profits earned by him and his officials and commanders, private merchants sailing under his flag could acquire sizable fortunes. After deducting the interest rate of 100% on loans, they would realize a 100% rate of return on the Japan trade but break even in Southeast Asia on the whole. The lower profitability in the latter market resulted from the Dutch presence, which increased the risks and restrictions of doing business. Hence, the number of junks sailing there had declined precipitously from the late-Ming highs of 44 vessels per year.²¹⁸ Moreover, merchants headed to Southeast Asia also tended to diversify their operations by stopping in Japan before returning.

Regulatory Bodies

Eventually, after making their rounds to the different markets of the Western Pacific, Zheng's own junks, and those belonging to his civil and military officials and unaffiliated merchants, would return to Xiamen and other ports along the southeastern Chinese coast. Some of the goods brought back by his Oceanic Five Firms, especially strategic materials like sulfur, knives, copper, and rice, would go into the production of weapons, feed and arm his soldiers, and cast coinage engraved with the Yongli reign title. The rest, primarily luxury products and spices from Southeast Asia, would be handed over to the Mountain Five Firms for wholesale distribution within the key commercial centers of the continental interior. The official merchants of Zheng Chenggong and his subordinates deposited the majority of their profits in the Warehouse for Nourishing the Country (*Yuguo ku*) and the Warehouse for Benefiting the People (*Limin ku*).²¹⁹ These facilities, administered directly under officials from the Ministry of Revenue as part of the regular bureaucratic structure, functioned as a central bank, simultaneously a repository and clearinghouse for the silver bullion accumulated from trade (see Figure 10). Their deposits would then either fund the purchasing activities of Zeng Dinglao and the Mountain Five Firms, or be lent at interest to the Oceanic Five Firms and private merchants sailing abroad on future trading missions. As mentioned earlier, Zheng Tai, the organization's revenue officer, stored a smaller portion of the accumulated profit at the Chinese Interpreters'

²¹⁸ Han, 151.

²¹⁹ Yang Ying, 111.

Office in Nagasaki to serve as working capital.²²⁰

To prevent the potential for abuse or embezzlement of the funds, which greased the wheels of his trading network, Zheng assigned the critical task of supervising the activities of the two warehouses to the Division of the Censorate (*Chayan si*). It would check the principal and interest of the stored funds against the income and expenditures of the Mountain and Oceanic Five Firms. In Yongli 11.5 (June 1657), during one such audit, the censor Chang Shouning reported 10,000 taels (374.3 kg) missing from the Warehouse for Benefiting the People and indicted its director, Lin Yi, for embezzling the money and covertly splitting the spoils with Zheng Tai. According to Yang Ying, Chenggong spent the entire night looking over the accounts and found no problem with them. Chang was subsequently removed from his post and placed under house arrest.²²¹

Yet, one has to wonder whether he really slandered Zheng Tai and the heads of the warehouses on purpose, or his accusations contained at least some element of truth. After all, these officials, who commanded great prestige and influence within the organization due their control over its fiscal organs, could have readily colluded to manipulate the accounts to cover up their deeds. Tai even maintained a bank account overseas where he could deposit the illicit funds under his own name. At the same time, Chenggong may have also had the motivation of shielding Tai from criticism due to his financial expertise and his family relation. Hence, although this incident reveals Zheng Chenggong's rationalized supervision over commerce and his strict discipline, it also speaks of the potential abuses to the system due to his absolute authority, including opportunities for corruption, embezzlement, willful concealment, and nepotism.

These problems naturally resulted from an organization that lacked any meaningful separation between the public and private, and official and nonofficial. On the one hand, it operated as a far-flung family business that depended more on paternalistic ties of kinship and connections than a contractual relationship of employer and employee. At the same time, however, we see traces of the international trading corporation, carrier, and credit institution, some of the hallmarks of "modernity," combined into one. It also adapted an imperial bureaucratic structure, originally suited for ruling an agrarian continental society, to serve the purposes of regulating maritime commerce, and actively protected these interests with military force. Yet, this quasi-governmental multinational family monopoly corporation proved remarkably resilient and successful in the face of tremendous adversity, including Dutch obstruction of shipping in the sea lanes, along with persistent Qing invasion and economic blockade on Zheng's rear, as shown later. Through the institutions he built and perfected, he maintained a bottleneck around the vast China market and positioned himself as its gatekeeper. He became an indispensable intermediary who procured the goods prized throughout the

²²⁰ Hayashi Shunsai, 46.

²²¹ Yang Ying, 111-112.

contemporary world, while bringing in the silver that greased the engines of the Chinese economy and kept its silk growers and manufacturers and artisanal workshops busy. More importantly, he and his family maintained this commercial dominance for over 50 years, and consistently made profits that often dwarfed those of their main competitor in this market: the VOC.

CHAPTER 3: CAUGHT BETWEEN TWO LEGITIMACIES

When Zheng Chenggong began his career as an anti-Qing resistance fighter in 1646, a devastated young man in the wake of his father's imprisonment, his mother's suicide, and the Longwu Emperor's execution, he had chosen two symbols that anticipated the complexity and ambiguity of his movement. On the one hand, he located his uprising at the port of Anhai, and later, Xiamen. Both had served as his father's bases for the trade with Japan and the rest of maritime Asia.¹ As we have seen, Chenggong successfully laid the groundwork for an autonomous state that defended the interests of the Southeast Coast macroregion, and fashioned a maritime trading empire through his connections with overseas Chinese.

Yet, the banner of resistance he raised simultaneously called for "assisting the ruler (*qinwang*)," the Ming Yongli pretender, far away in southwestern China, to whom he pledged his loyalty. Certainly, Zheng manipulated the ranks and titles given by the court to further his interests and even utilized its bureaucratic structure to maximize his commercial profits. However, in exchange for these benefits, he had to meet the expectations of a loyal official, putting in his every effort as a nominal military commander of the Ming forces to restore the dynastic house and expel the Manchus from China, even at the cost of his own life.² Meanwhile, with his father in captivity deep in the heart of Qing territory, he also faced severe parental pressure to submit to a "barbarian" regime, which went against his education and worldview, and found himself in protracted talks with his avowed nemesis.

Chenggong's contradictory actions represented the continuation of efforts, since the beginning of the seventeenth century, by maritime Chinese merchant networks to acquire recognition from continental power-brokers and elites. This quest intersected with the divisive events of dynastic transition to create two alternative discourses of legitimation: the popular but increasingly hopeless cause of Ming restoration and the authority granted from a newly ascendant but ethnically alien central government. Throughout the 1650s, Zheng reaped the maximum benefit for himself and his organization by maintaining a purposeful ambiguity, playing off one option against the other. However, when the tide turned completely against the Ming loyalist movement at the end of the decade, he enacted a rapid succession of tremendous shifts. He went suddenly from throwing his support completely behind restoration, culminating in a massive invasion of Jiangnan, to an attempt at conciliation with the Qing. The failure of these efforts presaged his final turn away from the Mainland to search for a new form of legitimacy on the overseas island of Taiwan, a quest that continued under his son and successor,

¹ Based upon the conflicting records, scholars have given different locations as possible places where Zheng initiated his resistance. Struve (110) and Wong Young-tsu (134), for instance, claim that he rose up in Xiamen. However, as Chen Bisheng convincingly shows, it and the islands around the area all lay under the control of his relatives, who competed to fill the power vacuum left by Zheng Zhilong's departure. Moreover, since Chenggong managed to secure most of his father's ships and other business interests, he had to be at the place where they tended to congregate. Anhai, Zhilong's old headquarters, appears to best fit the narrative. See Chen Bisheng, 120.

² Chen Bisheng, 120.



Figure 14. Zheng Chenggong's seal, which bears his title of "Generalissimo Who Summons and Quells," bestowed by the Yongli Emperor in 1648.

Photograph by author, 2006, courtesy of the Zheng Chenggong Memorial Hall, Shijing, Nan'an, Fujian

Zheng Jing.

Internal Contradictions: Ming Restoration

Ming loyalism, which had become interchangeable with the defense of Han ethnic traits from Manchu desecration, directly resulted from Dorgon's order for subjects to shave their heads and change their clothing on the pain of death. Widespread opposition to the draconian command gave Zheng a powerful means of rallying people of different classes along the southeastern coast and fashioning them into a credible anti-Qing movement. His organization could give a coordinated voice to their desire to protect their homes and economy from foreign invaders. By shrouding himself with this "carefully cultivated loyalist mystique," he could also become more than just a leader of merchants, militarists, and pirates.³ As Croizier argues, he

³ Wills, "Maritime China," 224.

could consciously fashion for himself a legacy that conformed to the orthodox Confucian model of a loyal minister.⁴

To this effect, Zheng worked hard to attract prominent figures within the local and exiled gentry, and treated them as guests of honor. After he recognized the authority of the Yongli Emperor in 1648, he displayed utmost symbolic devotion to the pretender, memorializing his every action and decision, kowtowing in front of imperial edicts, and rejecting “undeserved” ranks and titles.⁵ In 1655, Zheng even renamed his base at Xiamen to Siming (Cherishing Ming).⁶ These gestures, along with his own charisma, diligence, and energy, moved most of his commanders and men to fight to the utmost on his behalf.⁷ He further managed to attract to his movement Ma Xin, Liu Guoxuan, and other Qing defectors, whom he awarded with high ranks and positions.⁸ Zheng could also provide a compelling reason for realizing the enormous profits from his overseas commerce, citing the need to fund his expensive campaigns against the Qing.

Yet, the organization he led was simultaneously “provincial” and “empire-wide” in scope. Although he benefited greatly from the legitimacy granted to him, he, in return, also had to placate the Yongli Emperor and the local and exiled gentry, whose focus lay in the interior, with the rest of the empire.⁹ To fully achieve his stated goals of “assisting the ruler,” Zheng thus had to lead his men outside the Southeast Coast macroregion, and join forces with the core Yongli troops in the southwest, or open up a new front by penetrating northward into Jiangnan. The ultimate goals included the occupation of the former Ming imperial capitals of Nanjing and Beijing, the expulsion of the Manchus, and the restoration of the descendants of the Zhu family as legitimate occupants of the throne. Indeed, Zheng’s abundant resources acquired through trade and his large army became seen by other loyalists as potentially valuable assets in the struggle. Li Dingguo (1621-1662), one of the Yongli court’s key commanders based in western Guangdong, frequently tried to persuade Zheng to lead troops into the province and join him there.¹⁰ Likewise, the Zhejiang loyalists under Zhang Mingzhen and Zhang Huangyan pressed for an expedition into Jiangnan that would recover Nanjing, and push onward to Beijing.¹¹

However, a move in either direction would bring Zheng away from his bases and endanger his commercial interests, which also served as the main source of funds for maintaining his soldiers and ships. He realized the consequences of straying too far in 1651, when he led a campaign into central Guangdong to join up with Li Dingguo and carry out the invasion plan. Qing soldiers under Ma Degong took advantage of the absence of Zheng’s main forces to attack

⁴ Croizier, 33.

⁵ For examples, see Yang Ying, 39-40 and Jiang Risheng, 119.

⁶ Xia, 14.

⁷ Struve, *Southern Ming*, 156.

⁸ Yang Ying, 92.

⁹ Wills, “Contingent Connections,” 180.

¹⁰ See Li’s letter to Zheng in Yang Ying, 39-41.

¹¹ Chen Bisheng, 156.

Xiamen, robbing him of his gold reserves, trading goods, and grain, in addition to burning shops, killing, and raping.¹² Many of his subordinates, who had kept their own bullion and silk stored in warehouses at the base, had strongly opposed the mission.¹³ Shi Lang's adamant and repeated refusal to lead troops into Guangdong in the first place laid the seed for future confrontation with Chenggong and his ultimate defection to the Qing.¹⁴ Zheng finally had to turn back when his bottom rank-and-file refused to advance any further, and burst into tears and wailed loudly, since they feared for the safety of their family and possessions.¹⁵ He then reoccupied Xiamen and drove out the Manchus, and would never again commit his forces wholeheartedly to a restoration campaign without first ensuring the safety of his base.

Another problem Zheng faced with a Ming loyalist agenda was the widespread popularity, especially among Zhejiang gentry and the forces under their command, of the Regent Lu, whose regime they helped establish at Shaoxing in 1645, almost concurrently with the Longwu court to the south. In 1652, the Manchus occupied the province, and forced him and his followers to flee into exile at Xiamen. Yet, Zhang Mingzhen, Zhang Huangyan, and others only saw their relationship with Zheng in terms of an alliance among equals in service of a common ideological cause, and refused to submit directly to his rule.¹⁶ Zheng had to treat the Regent Lu, a Ming imperial descendant, as an honored superior, while the gentry-led armies had their independent organization and chain of military command. Many of them continued to uphold the ruler in private, viewing him as a more potent and effective rallying point for maritime-based loyalist movements than the faraway Yongli court. For Zheng, however, the close proximity of even an informal Ming pretender posed a direct threat to his autonomy and flexibility due to the regent's potential ability to transform symbolic prestige into actual interference over his followers and allocation of resources. Zheng was keenly aware of the lesson of his father, who, despite dominating the economic and military apparatus of Fujian, had failed to curb the independent initiative of the Longwu Emperor. Their escalating standoff resulted in the ruler's execution and Zhilong's confinement in Beijing at the hands of the Qing.¹⁷

Moreover, on the most basic level, the customs and language of Zheng's soldiers, mostly from the Minnanese-speaking cultural areas of southern Fujian and eastern Guangdong, differed greatly from other Ming loyalist armies and made cooperation highly difficult. In 1655, before a scheduled joint offensive on Zhoushan, a group of islands off the coast of Ningbo, northern Zhejiang, Zhang Mingzhen had a serious falling-out with the Zheng general Chen Liuyu (d. 1656), and refused to join him in the attack. Zhang scoffed at his "armies from the south," who

¹² Yang Ying, 43 and Ruan, 10-11.

¹³ Yang Ying, 43.

¹⁴ Yang Ying, 14, 19-20 and Chen Bisheng, 128.

¹⁵ Yang Ying, 16-17.

¹⁶ Chen Bisheng, 158. For a comprehensive narrative of the Regent Lu's resistance in Zhejiang, see Struve, *Southern Ming*, 75-80, 108-115.

¹⁷ A detailed account of the troubled relationship between Zheng Zhilong and the Longwu Emperor, culminating in Zhilong's surrender to the Qing, can be found in Chen Bisheng, 92-94.

“do not understand the strategic terrain” of the province. Chen retorted, “We have attacked many fortresses and towns. Why should we wait for Mingzhen to meet us just for this isolated island?”¹⁸ In fact, Zheng himself was known to have personally “loathed (*ji*) Zhejiang people,” including the Zhangs.¹⁹ The regional tensions implicit within these descriptions served to reinforce the highly exclusive nature and local orientation of the Zheng military.

Internal Contradictions: The Qing Alternative

After the near-debacle at Xiamen, Zheng Chenggong managed to turn the tide and score several spectacular victories in southern Fujian. By 1652, his forces had seized control of Zhangzhou and most of the towns in Quanzhou Prefecture, blockaded its harbor, and even killed the Qing Governor-General of Fujian and Zhejiang, Chen Jin (d. 1652).²⁰ The Qing had earlier paid little attention to the southeastern coast due to the more pressing concern of eliminating the main forces under the Yongli Emperor, which still controlled about half of the former Ming territory. Moreover, in south and central China, it had just suffered some of its biggest military reversals since the Manchus entered Beijing. The Ming loyalist movement gained new life after the surrender of Li Dingguo and Sun Kewang (d. 1660), former subordinates of the rebel Zhang Xianzhong (1606-1647), to the Yongli court in 1649.²¹ By 1655, their forces had recaptured large swathes of Sichuan, Hubei, Hunan, and Guangxi Provinces, with Li’s troops penetrating as far as central Guangdong. They managed to inflict heavy losses upon the Qing, causing the deaths of its top commanders Kong Youde (d. 1652), a veteran who played a huge role in the occupation of South China, and Nikan (d. 1653), a high-ranking Manchu prince specially dispatched from Beijing.²²

An outright military solution against Zheng Chenggong proved an expensive and difficult proposition even in the best of times, especially in a region with a highly limited agricultural base to support large concentrations of troops.²³ Moreover, the Manchus, as descendants of hunter-gatherer tribes in the northeastern frontier, had no experience with naval warfare, the key to a successful campaign in the maritime zone, and deeply feared the ocean.²⁴ On the other hand, their Han Chinese collaborators mostly continued to advocate the passive Ming-era policy of containing coastal rebel groups and forbidding residents to have contacts with them rather than launching a full offensive. Although these obstacles were not insurmountable, the construction of a naval fleet still required an intense commitment of time and money, with most of the funds ultimately derived from the local land taxes that resource-poor Fujian was

¹⁸ Yang Ying, 94.

¹⁹ Shao, 128.

²⁰ Struve, *Southern Ming*, 159 and Yang Ying, 28.

²¹ Zhang Xianzhong had risen up against the Ming in 1630, around the time that his rival Li Zicheng launched his rebellion. Zhang seized large parts of the southwest, especially Sichuan, before suffering defeat and destruction at the hands of the Manchu army. See Struve, *Southern Ming*, 144.

²² For a detailed narrative and analysis of these events, see Struve, *Southern Ming*, 148-150.

²³ Wu Zhenglong, *Zheng Chenggong yu Qing zhengfu jian de tanpan*, 49 n. 68-69.

²⁴ Struve, *Southern Ming*, 158.

ill-equipped to provide.

The lack of both immediate ability and motivation to undertake a determined and sustained campaign in the Southeast Coast macroregion prompted the Qing authorities to turn instead toward its time-tested policy of *zhaofu*, persuading Zheng to peacefully surrender in exchange for honors and privileges. By reaching a settlement with him, it hoped to neutralize a serious threat to its rule along the southeastern coast, and prevent him from joining forces with Li Dingguo.²⁵ Moreover, with the death of Dorgon and Shizu's assumption of personal rule in 1651, the young emperor had reversed many of the regent's more draconian policies toward the Han Chinese, and proved more willing to entrust them with positions of greater responsibility.²⁶ Accordingly, in 1653, the Shunzhi Emperor proclaimed a ceasefire and put both the Qing Fujian officials and Zheng Zhilong in charge of handling negotiations with this troublesome adversary. The ruler instructed them to write letters and dispatch envoys to Chenggong's camp, utilizing the lure of the new dynasty's leniency and familial ties to coax him into submission.

The farthest extent of the Qing's concessions, which had taken shape around 1654, involved giving Chenggong the prefectures of Zhangzhou and Quanzhou in southern Fujian, and Chaozhou and Huizhou in eastern Guangdong as autonomous fiefdoms. It also agreed to grant him the title of Duke of Haicheng (*Haicheng gong*) and the rank of Sea-Quelling General (*Jinghai jiangjun*).²⁷ As demonstrations of sincerity, the Shunzhi Emperor addressed the edict awarding these concessions directly to Chenggong rather than the usual practice of corresponding through his Qing local officials. Moreover, he brought Zheng Zhilong out of captivity, and showered him and his relatives with ranks and titles, honors rarely accorded to subjects of their status.²⁸

For Zheng Chenggong, submission to the new dynasty meant that he could legitimately institutionalize his family's sphere of influence, and remove the moral pressure of leading his soldiers outside the Southeast Coast macroregion in campaigns of restoration. His military and economic rights would also receive the full guarantee of a powerful, newly ascendant, and centralized East Asian state. On a personal level, he could ensure the safety, or even secure the release from hostage, of his father and relatives in Beijing.²⁹ At the same time, however, Chenggong found the conditions that the Qing court laid out in exchange for these privileges highly unattractive. He could continue to exercise full control over his troops, but all civil officials within his four prefectures required central appointment. While he could maintain his dominance of maritime trade, he had to forward all the duties he had collected to Beijing.³⁰ As he forcefully replied in one exchange, "This coastal area is what I firmly possess. The profits

²⁵ Chen Jiexian, 142-143 and Wu Zhenglong, *Zheng Chenggong yu Qing zhengfu jian de tanpan*, 62.

²⁶ *Shunzhi shilu*, 105 and Wakeman, vol. 2, 896-904.

²⁷ Su, "Qing chao yu Ming-Zheng hezhan hudong celue jianlun," 172-175.

²⁸ Chen Jiexian, 83-84.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

³⁰ Su, "Qing chao yu Ming-Zheng hezhan hudong celue jianlun," 175-176.

from the Eastern and Western Oceans are those I create and cultivate on my own...how can I agree, on the contrary, for others to restrict what I sit upon and enjoy?”³¹ This passage gives us a rare glimpse of his true intentions, and in his own words: to enjoy complete autonomy over the southeastern coast and unfettered access to overseas trade.

Even more unappealing to Chenggong was the Qing order for him to shave his hair and change his dress as signs of loyalty to the new dynasty. Certainly, given sufficient protection of their interests, some of his more practical subordinates, especially of mercantile and militarist backgrounds, would not have minded the move. This can be seen in the high-profile defections of Shi Lang in 1651 and Huang Wu in 1656.³² Yet, this act of submission posed an insurmountable ethnic barrier for most of his men to cross, as the fierce reactions to Dorgon’s haircutting order amply demonstrate. In a reply to his father, Chenggong emphasized that even if he agreed to shave his own head, he would face potential mutiny from his commanders and hundreds of thousands of men, especially if the command came suddenly. Without placating them, how “can I guarantee that they would not react in an extreme manner?”³³ For Chenggong himself, altering his customs went against his own Confucian education and sensitivities, and affected the image he tried to forge, both for his contemporaries and historical legacy, of a loyal minister to the Yongli court. Indeed, it is quite revealing that the Qing officials utilized alternative models of political correctness in their letters to win him over, including the “hero” who understood the times and chose his ruler to achieve glory, and, especially, the filial son who switched sides for the sake of his father (*yi zhong zuo xiao*).³⁴

Zheng’s consciousness of his historical role and the “reputation it could give to him,” served as “a powerful influence on behavior,” but it did not completely drive his actions.³⁵ In addition, he harbored a deeply personal hatred and suspicion of a dynasty that had violated its promise to his father, murdered his beloved mother, and held Zhilong and other family members as hostages.³⁶ Chenggong observed that the Qing “bears all kinds of mistrust and ill-will toward those who surrender...first, it treats them with politeness but later oppresses them savagely.”³⁷ Not without a sense of vindication, he wrote to Zhilong, “Since my father has erred in front, how can I follow your footsteps?”³⁸ Chenggong thus feared that if he submitted, he, too, would place himself and the survival of his organization completely at the mercy of an arbitrary and untrustworthy regime.

³¹ Yang Ying, 43.

³² Ironically, the Qing would bestow upon Shi the title of Sea-Quelling General, and Huang, the Duke of Haicheng, both of which Zheng had refused to receive. See Chen Jiexian, 149.

³³ Yang Ying, 67.

³⁴ Literally, “moving aside loyalty to be filial.” For an interesting study of the contending legacies utilized by the Qing and the Zheng organization to justify their respective positions, refer to Shi Yilin, “Jiamian yingxiong Zheng Chenggong” (“Zheng Chenggong, A Hero with a Mask”), *Daoyu (Island Voice)* 3 (2003): 5-9.

³⁵ Croizier, 33.

³⁶ Huang Zongxi, 1-2.

³⁷ Literally, “views them as fish and meat (*yurou*).” See Yang Ying, 107.

³⁸ Yang Ying, 59.

The Qing court did try to make amends for these past grievances. The Shunzhi Emperor had acknowledged the errors, removed offending personnel, and voluntarily withdrew troops from the four prefectures given to him to show goodwill.³⁹ Yet, the way that he and his officials presented their offers further fueled Chenggong's distrust. They essentially pressured him to either accept Qing terms or face adverse consequences to his family and organization, leaving him with almost no room to discuss the offer or bargain for more favorable concessions. He complained bitterly about the Qing's forceful style, characterizing their ultimatums as attempts to "blackmail (*jia*)" him.⁴⁰ For Chenggong, then, keeping his hair and dress intact not only represented the preservation of ethnic identity, but it also served as an insurance policy that provided a concrete guarantee of his existing autonomy and privileges on the southeastern coast.

Between Loyalism and Collaboration

Not willing to commit to either option, Zheng managed to skillfully play off both the Ming restoration movement and the Qing court against each other to reap the maximum benefit for his organization. Although he treated his loyalist elites and allies with great respect, consulting them on all matters of state, and displayed the utmost obedience and devotion to the Yongli Emperor, he made sure they could never assert their own will upon him. No doubt under Zheng's heavy pressure, the Regent Lu "voluntarily" renounced his regency soon after he arrived at Xiamen.⁴¹ When an imperial edict reinstated the title in 1659, the only time the Yongli Emperor ever issued a substantive command to Zheng, he retaliated by exiling the regent for one year to the Penghu Islands.⁴²

Toward the requests of Zhang Mingzhen and Zhang Huangyan for an expedition into Jiangnan, he at first refused, but later agreed to lend 20,000 men under the command of Chen Liuyu and three months of rations to them.⁴³ From 1654 to 1656, the modest expeditionary force sailed up the Yangzi River three times and achieved significant gains. The two Zhangs raided Zhenjiang, inscribing a eulogy to the deceased Chongzhen Emperor on the walls of the famous Jinshan Temple, located on an island in the middle of the river. Much to the bewilderment of the Qing court, they reached as far as the shoreline of Tianjin, which defended the approach to Beijing. Yet, Zheng refused to send more troops to capitalize upon these promising beginnings due to his ongoing talks with the Qing.⁴⁴ Without significant

³⁹ For an examination of the incredible efforts expended by the Qing to win over Zheng, see Chen Jiexian, 32-45.

⁴⁰ Yang Ying, 62. The different terms for these negotiations employed by the Qing and Zheng Chenggong reflect the divergent attitudes and goals on each side. *Heyi* (talk peace), used commonly by Zheng, implied his desire to arrive at a consensus through compromise on an equal footing. The Qing, on the other hand, wanted to "make him feel good about surrendering" to a new master through its *zhaofu* policy, a subtle yet important difference. See Struve, *Southern Ming*, 146.

⁴¹ Shao, 33.

⁴² Shao, 34 and Zha, *Lu chungiu*, 73.

⁴³ In order to persuade Zheng, Zhang Mingzhen even took off his shirt and revealed an inscription etched onto his bare back, "exhaust loyalty to repay the country (*jinzhong baoguo*)," which demonstrated his sincerity and devotion to the Ming cause. Only then did Zheng, highly moved, agree to lend him the troops. See Zha, *Lu chungiu*, 67 and *Haidong yishi* (*Historical Record of the Eastern Seas*), TWWXCK, 90 (1961), 72.

⁴⁴ Shao, 34 and Wen, 325. He may have also been jealous of the Zhangs' accomplishments, a feeling no doubt compounded by

reinforcements, their men remained an isolated reconnaissance force unable to attract a broad following, and thus could only capture and hold onto Zhoushan and other points along the Zhejiang coast.⁴⁵

After the disaster at Xiamen, neither Zheng nor his commanders showed great enthusiasm in responding to Li Dingguo's subsequent pleas for assistance. Zheng only made token gestures of support, sending troops into eastern Guangdong that lingered for long periods to raid for supplies, and then conveniently "missing" the appointment under the excuses of adverse winds and bad weather.⁴⁶ On other occasions, he engaged in never-ending preparations, or, as toward the Zhangs, held troops intact as a means of "displaying trustworthiness to the Qing Dynasty."⁴⁷ This remark, made by Zheng himself, together with his lukewarm attitude to the restoration campaigns around him, contradict claims that he never seriously intended to reach a settlement with the Qing.

By 1654, he appears to have tacitly accepted the offer of four prefectures with some form of supervision, and "adopt the Qing calendar...if not for the sake of the living mortals and land, then to bend on behalf of my father."⁴⁸ However, he refused to shave his hair or change his clothing, and bluntly told the Qing envoys that if they desired peace, then "there are examples [to follow] in Goryeo [918-1392] and Joseon."⁴⁹ Just like these two Korean dynasties, he wished to preserve his customs and institutions within the framework of a formal Qing tributary kingdom, allowing him to legitimize his position along the southeastern coast. His allusion to the "Korea precedent," the first recorded mention of the term, would eventually become the standard negotiating position and bottom line of the organization under Zheng Jing.

At this point, however, it remained one of many possible models that Chenggong was pondering. If the Qing insisted that he had to adopt Manchu coiffure, he was still open to the idea, but needed far more attractive concessions than he already received to placate the suspicions and ethnic sensitivities of him and his men. For them to "put down their hearts and shave their hair (*fangxin tifa*)," Zheng demanded the much higher price of complete autonomy over the coastal areas of three provinces.⁵⁰ The Qing court, however, refused to consider this counteroffer, causing the negotiations to plunge into deadlock by the end of 1654. Although the Shunzhi Emperor subsequently ended the ceasefire and reinitiated hostilities, sporadic exchanges of letters and envoys attempting to inject renewed momentum into the talks would continue until 1657.

regional differences. According to Shao's work, Zheng even had Zhang Mingzhen deliberately poisoned to death. This account, however, cannot be completely reliable, coming from a source with a predominately negative opinion of Zheng. Nevertheless, even if a rumor, it reveals the underlying tensions between him and the Zhejiang loyalists. See Shao, 128.

⁴⁵ *Nantian hen*, 257.

⁴⁶ For a penetrating analysis of Zheng's relationship with Li, see Chen Bisheng, 236-237.

⁴⁷ Yang Ying, 73.

⁴⁸ Yang Ying, 108 and Jiang Risheng, 163.

⁴⁹ Yang Ying, 48. In the case of Goryeo, the occupying Mongols, as with the Manchus toward Joseon later on, had allowed it to maintain its institutions and customs.

⁵⁰ Wu Zhenglong, *Zheng Chenggong yu Qing zhengfu jian de tanpan*, 180-181 and Yang Ying, 54.

In sum, Zheng, caught between the contradictory expectations of two dynastic legitimacies, had decided to observe from afar the military balance of the Ming loyalists and the Qing court, and avoid, for the moment, serious commitment to any one cause. Instead, he diversified his political risks to ensure maximum flexibility toward both the Ming loyalists and the Qing. In the manner of a shrewd businessman, he calculated that, if the former proved successful, he, like Zhilong before him, could institutionalize his privileges along the southeastern coast with the approval of a restored court. He thus needed to devote the minimum military support and spending possible to convince the Yongli Emperor of his loyalty. Meanwhile, Zheng stood ready to accept any offer from the Qing that could overcome his mistrust and ethnic sensitivities, and save his father.

Zheng further ensured that his self-aggrandizing actions would not seriously conflict with his ideal Confucian archetype of loyal minister, but contained enough multiplicity of meanings to provide a deceptive array of possibilities to imagine and construct him. His marginalization of the Regent Lu could represent a power struggle, but it could also be excused as due to genuine dislike for a regime that had refused to submit to the Longwu Emperor, whom Zheng and his father had served.⁵¹ Despite his tough and insubordinate comments in letters to the Qing, Zheng always left open the option of submission if given acceptable terms, even as he complained about being dragged into the talks against his will.⁵² His military campaigns, from the dispatch of the Zhangs' forces up the Yangzi, expeditions into Guangdong, and operations in the southern Fujian area, could simultaneously be interpreted as efforts at Ming restoration, pressure upon the Qing to grant better terms, or plundering expeditions to enrich himself.

In the meantime, Zheng set out to establish political domination over Fujian, centered upon Zhangzhou and Quanzhou, along with the coastal ports and islands of the Southeast Coast macroregion, the access points for goods and ships to the maritime world abroad. In 1652, Zhou Quanbin, one of his closest subordinates, had proposed this strategy to him as part of three suggestions for restoration. The first two involved cooperation with other loyalist forces in a joint northern expedition along several fronts. Then, as if anticipating Zheng's intentions, Zhou went on to argue that both plans appeared unrealistic, since "the road to western Guangdong could not yet be opened, so we would merely tire ourselves on the route."⁵³ Instead, he proposed:

⁵¹ Many scholars argue that Zheng Chenggong's loyalty toward the Longwu Emperor may well have been genuine, emanating out of respect and gratefulness for the high honors and trust bestowed upon the young man. According to them, the two enjoyed a deeply affectionate relationship akin to father and son. Moreover, Zheng had continued to use the Longwu reign name in the aftermath of the ruler's death, even after his relatives had switched to the Regent Lu. See Chen Bisheng, 145; Wong Young-tsu, 134; and Croizer, 20-21. Viewed from this perspective, a competing regime such as the Regent Lu would naturally arouse Zheng's dislike. However, there are reasons to suspect this intimacy, primarily the seeming lack of any emotional reaction to the Longwu Emperor's death, in stark contrast to the tearful remonstrations Chenggong made to his father to prevent him from surrendering. See, for instance, Jiang Risheng, 91-92, 97. Yet, if we suppose that he genuinely refused to serve the Regent Lu due to the previous intimate bond with the Longwu Emperor, Chenggong would still stand to gain the most by marginalizing a potential competitor to his de facto control over the southeastern coast.

⁵² Yang Ying, 65.

⁵³ Jiang Risheng, 124.

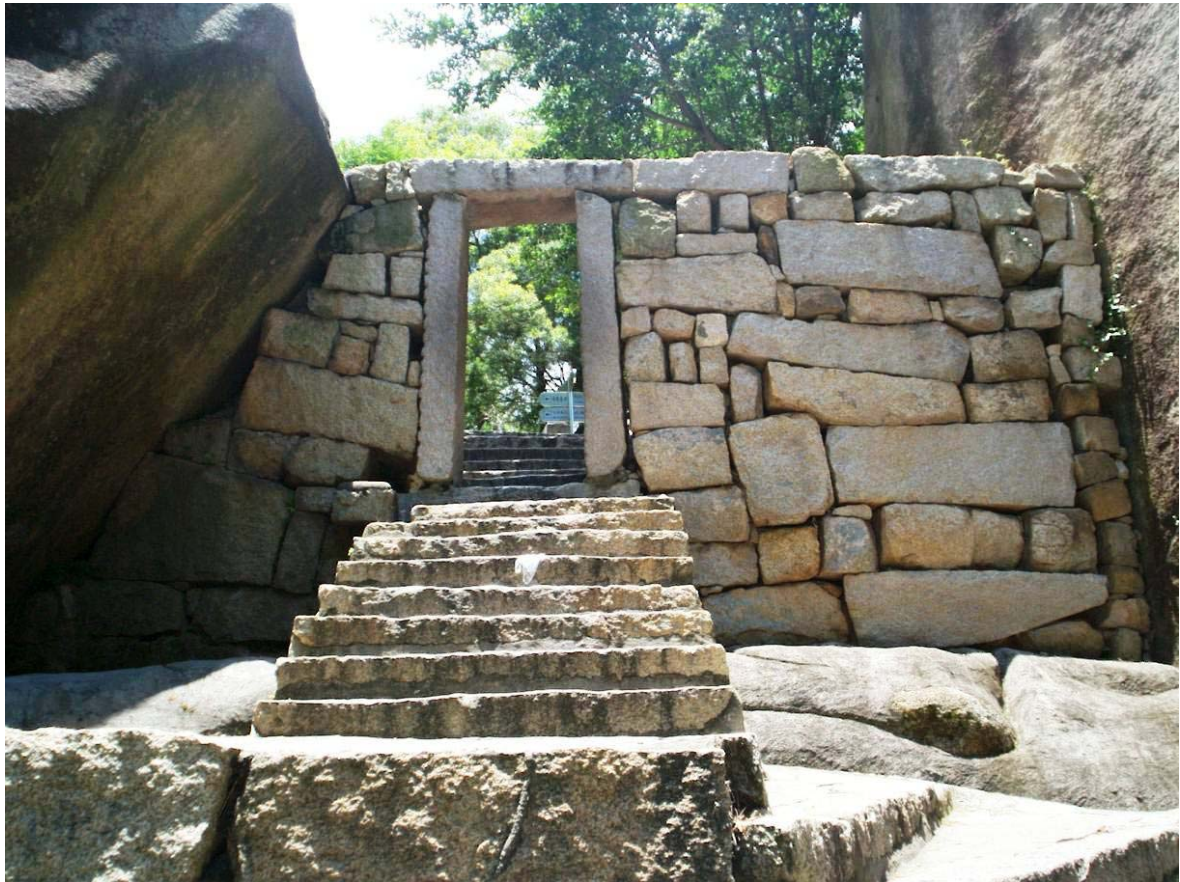


Figure 15. One of Zheng Chenggong's main military bases at Riguangyan, or Sunshine Cliff, on Gulangyu, a small island next to Xiamen. He would station troops and store his supplies and provisions within these stockades, found mostly in hilly or mountainous areas.

Photograph by author, 2006

“Now, for the time being, you should firmly defend all the islands. By occupying Zhoushan above, you can disperse the powerful thrust coming from the north. By guarding Nan’ao [an island on the border of Fujian and Guangdong] below, you can check an invasion from the south. By selling goods along the maritime trade routes, you can acquire sufficient grain and profits. Then you can lift your troops to capture Zhangzhou and Quanzhou, making them the foundations of your enterprise. On land, you should advance inland through Tingzhou [in western Fujian, close to the Jiangxi border], and on water, you should enter through Funing and Xinghua [on the coast]. Then, all of Fujian can be taken!”⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Ibid. A slightly modified version of the same three strategies can be found in Shen Yun, *Taiwan Zheng shi shimo (The Beginning and End of the Zheng Family on Taiwan)*, TWWXCK, 15 (1958), 21.

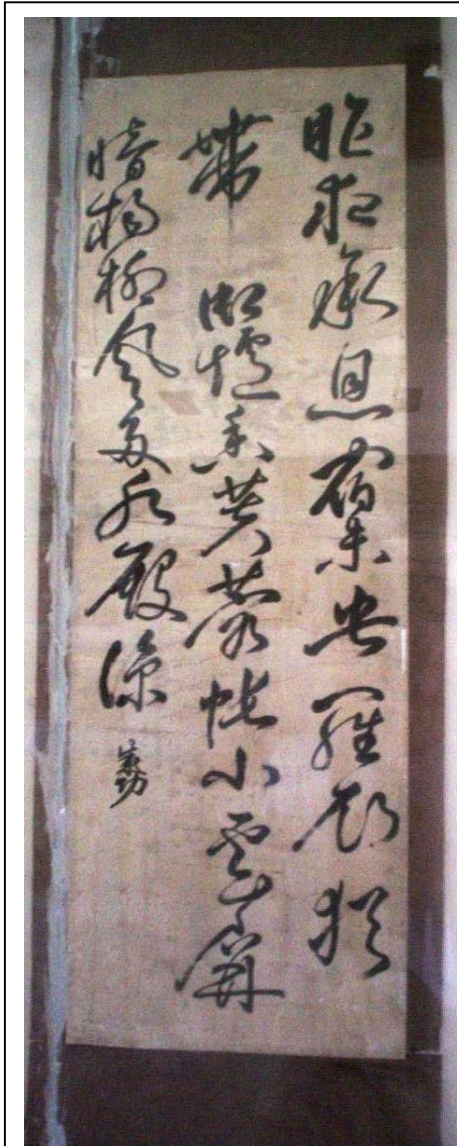


Figure 16. One of Zheng Chenggong's surviving poems, written in his own calligraphy.

Photograph by author, 2006, courtesy of the Zheng Chenggong Memorial Hall, Shijing, Nan'an, Fujian

Although Zhou was careful to label it “the worst of all available plans (*xiace*),” it accurately reflected and, in turn, influenced Zheng’s goals for his organization. During the 1650s, he put the plan into implementation, seizing Zhangzhou and all the surrounding counties of Quanzhou, and penetrating into Guangdong.⁵⁵ With the help of his subordinate Chen Liuyu, he skillfully redirected the Zhangs’ northern expedition toward the capture of Zhoushan and other outposts on the Zhejiang coast.⁵⁶ Moreover, he developed a highly sophisticated commercial network that, as we have seen, generated spectacular profits. Through maritime trade and territorial expansion, Zheng met most of the goals envisioned by Zhou Quanbin, and saw his ranks swell with new followers. After negotiations began with the Qing, Chenggong made Zhilong a valuable hostage, and thereby ensured his father’s survival, by always keeping open the possibility of submission. However, as long as the Shunzhi Emperor refused to accord with his conditions, Chenggong utilized the ceasefire to launch raids into enemy territory to acquire food and other resources, citing the inability of his barren strongholds to supply his large armies. He fully understood that the Qing, fearing any strong action that could place the talks in jeopardy, would not retaliate.⁵⁷

As someone who received a formal Confucian education from a young age, Zheng understood the political and moral conventions of a continental empire. Unlike the short-lived pirate and rebel regimes that thrived along the coast in the wake of the Ming fall, even those with their own reign names or puppet pretenders, he knew how to utilize its discourse as a vehicle for the legitimate expression of his interests and ambitions.⁵⁸ On the other hand, he could translate the lofty ideals of Confucian orthodoxy into concrete promises of tangible

⁵⁵ Xia, 12-14.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 15-17.

⁵⁷ Yang Ying, 42.

⁵⁸ A survey of the various movements of this period can be found in Antony, 30-35.

interests to his commanders and soldiers, allowing him far greater success than the scores of gentry militias that rose up against the Qing. In a speech given to his men in 1658, Zheng asked them rhetorically:

“What have [you] been fighting so hard for in these ten-something years? It is always for the purpose of repaying the country and saving the people. It is also for acquiring a meritorious name, riches, and honor, to plan for your sons and descendants in the future.”⁵⁹

Zheng, then, served as a cultural, as well as commercial, intermediary, who possessed the remarkable ability to cut across geographic space, linking maritime with continental, provincial with imperial, and across classes to join elite and popular, military and civil.

Continental Ambitions

From the middle of 1655, even as Zheng continued to maintain a noncommittal stance, he began to make preparations to invade Jiangnan, gradually casting his lot completely with the Ming restoration movement. Several factors lay behind this slow but dramatic shift. The Qing maritime ban, issued on August 6, 1656, stipulated that anyone caught engaging in trade with the organization would face decapitation and have their goods confiscated.⁶⁰ Huang Wu's high-profile defection later that year further endangered Zheng's commercial network. Besides handing over Haicheng, where Zheng stockpiled massive amounts of grain and weapons, Huang, in a memorial dated Shunzhi 14.3/14 (April 27, 1657), exposed the trading and espionage activities and location of the Mountain Five Firms.⁶¹ Actual enforcement proceeded almost immediately, as the Qing authorities began to round up members of the secret commercial network within its cities and discover and catch individual traders transporting goods to the organization.⁶² The tightening economic blockade posed a long-term threat to the Zheng regime's survival and added urgency to a northern expedition.

Zheng's noncommittal stance, moreover, had failed to provide him with an effective means to institutionalize his autonomy, creating greater pressure on the political and military fronts. The Qing refused to back down from its precondition of shaving hair in exchange for four prefectures, and, in 1655, dispatched the princeling Jidu (1633-1660) to the Fujian coast with 30,000 elite soldiers from the Manchu Eight Banners to scare him into submission.⁶³ When it

⁵⁹ Yang Ying, 126.

⁶⁰ *Zheng shi shiliao xubian*, 501.

⁶¹ Yang Ying, 101; Wong Young-tsu, 144; and Hsieh Kuo-chen, "Removal of Coastal Population in Early Tsing Period," *Chinese Social and Political Science Review* 4 (1932): 564-567.

⁶² For one example, see *Zheng shi shiliao xubian*, 526-532.

⁶³ Su, "Qing chao yu Ming-Zheng hezhan hudong celue jianlun," 155 and Struve, *Southern Ming*, 166.

became evident that Zheng still would not accept the terms, the troops launched an all-out offensive on Xiamen and Jinmen in April of the following year. Despite suffering a crushing defeat, Jidu still managed to retake Zhangzhou and the surrounding counties of Quanzhou, which Zheng had razed to the ground and turned into a no-man's-land not long before to protect his twin bases.⁶⁴ Along with the subsequent surrender of Haicheng, the Manchu armies destroyed a strategic defense perimeter around Xiamen and Jinmen, leaving the islands vulnerable to future attack and posing a severe threat to their supply lines. Zheng had earlier dispatched his subordinates north into the Yangzi and south to Guangdong in part to prevent just such a concentration of Qing troops in Fujian. Yet, the proactive move failed to deflect Jidu's invasion force to other points on the southeastern coast. Moreover, Qing armies routed Zheng's men in eastern Guangdong in early 1656 and retook Zhoushan in late summer, causing its commander, Chen Liuyu, and his entire garrison to perish.⁶⁵ Chen's old rival and partner, Zhang Mingzhen, had already died of illness at the start of the year.⁶⁶

Meanwhile, realizing his decreasing importance as a hostage to pressure Chenggong into submission, the Qing imprisoned Zheng Zhilong again at the end of 1656 under the convenient accusation of illegal contact with the enemy. Yet, Chenggong seemed completely unmoved by Zhilong's earnest written appeals and the tearful entreaties of his personal envoys to accept the Qing terms for the sake of his father's life and safety. In his written replies to Zhilong, he blamed the elder Zheng for "throwing himself into the tiger's den."⁶⁷ Despite his seemingly uncompromising exterior, the incarceration did, in fact, place a huge psychological burden upon the son.⁶⁸ In private, Chenggong would often get up in the middle of the night and cry bitterly as he faced north.⁶⁹

The Qing could afford a strong show of force in Fujian and place more ominous restrictions upon Zhilong due to its increasing military successes against the Ming loyalist movement. In 1655, Li Dingguo suffered a heavy defeat in the Pearl River delta of Guangdong, caused in no small part by Zheng's wait-and-see attitude, which denied him much-needed naval assistance in his attempt to capture Guangzhou.⁷⁰ Qing forces then chased Li deep into Guangxi and inflicted heavy losses upon his men. At the same time, a nasty power struggle developed between him and Sun Kewang that aggravated factional politics within the Yongli court and eventually broke out into open internecine warfare.⁷¹ By the end of 1657, the imperial

⁶⁴ Yang Ying, 91; Su, "Qing chao yu Ming-Zheng hezhan hudong celue jianlun," 157; and Struve, *Southern Ming*, 181.

⁶⁵ Xia, 16-17. After the victory at Zhoushan, the Qing moved the residents inland and destroyed the walls of the county seat in a move that presaged the massive coastal evacuations of the 1660s. See Xia, 17.

⁶⁶ Ruan, 20. Shao claims that Zheng Chenggong had Zhang deliberately poisoned to death, but this claim cannot be independently verified. See Shao, 128.

⁶⁷ Yang Ying, 107.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Xia, 19.

⁷⁰ Chen Bisheng, 237.

⁷¹ For a detailed, penetrating narrative of Li's campaigns, the factional struggles at the Yongli court, and the power struggle between Li and Sun, see Struve, *Southern Ming*, 149-154.

pretender had fled from Guizhou to Yunnan, and toward increasing marginalization, as a bitter and revengeful Sun surrendered to the Qing, only to die three years later, either from illness or killed by Manchu soldiers during a hunt.⁷² The Qing now stood ready to launch a massive final offensive, and proceeded to send troops into Guizhou from Sichuan, Hubei, Hunan, and Guangxi.⁷³

Far away in the little corner of southern Fujian, Zheng purportedly remarked to the imperial eunuch who brought news of the developments from the southwest:

“Even at this time, there are no wise ministers within [the court] to rectify their ruler...outside, there are arrogant generals whose armies have no discipline...they become self-satisfied due to their accomplishments and form factions, to the point of causing heroes to lose hope and the hearts of the people to crumble. How can we hope for a restoration in the future?”⁷⁴

While factional conflicts and bureaucratic incompetence served as sufficient justifications for Zheng’s refusal to accept the Yongli court’s interference, its rapid journey down the road to defeat meant that the Qing would soon redirect all its armies and resources toward the southeastern coast.⁷⁵ As Chen Yonghua advised him, “it is extremely difficult if we stay in Fujian and compete for its countryside and city walls, and look into the distance for a restoration.”⁷⁶ Zheng’s Personnel Officer, Pan Gengzhong (d. 1659), agreed:

“If, one day, the Qing gathered together the armies of the entire empire to eye us, how can the two islands [of Xiamen and Jinmen] remain complete? The reason why the whole force does not have the leisure to do so is because Sun Kewang, Li Dingguo, and the others are holding them up in Guangxi, Guizhou, and Yunnan.”⁷⁷

With the Ming restoration movement failing to deliver, Zheng had firmly decided by early 1657 to launch a proactive strike deep into Qing territory—into Jiangnan—to force the banner soldiers in Fujian to withdraw and relieve future pressure on the southeastern coast. For him, the upcoming expedition represented a struggle for long-term survival.

However, it would be inaccurate to simply describe the campaigns as increasingly desperate and far-ranging forays “in search of grain stores and trade opportunities.”⁷⁸ For one, Zheng already began making plans for a northward thrust in late May of 1656, several months before

⁷² Wu Weiye, 112.

⁷³ Struve, *Southern Ming*, 167-169.

⁷⁴ Jiang Risheng, 145.

⁷⁵ Chen Bisheng, 177.

⁷⁶ Jiang Risheng, 164.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Wills, “Contingent Connections,” 190.

the Qing enacted the maritime prohibition, and carefully organized and trained his men at every stage of the drawn-out expedition over the next three years.⁷⁹ With him in control of the coastal areas, the ban proved largely ineffective, as he continued to provide a profitable outlet, now made even more attractive due to increased risk, for goods produced in the interior.⁸⁰ While Haicheng's surrender that year brought heavy losses to the organization, it only delayed the planned expedition for less than two weeks.⁸¹ Huang Wu, who engineered the entire incident, had his own grievances with his new overlords. In fact, he tried to defect back several months later, because the Qing had treated him with suspicion, and taken his men forcibly from him and scattered them across the Eight Banners. Only when Zheng adamantly refused to accept him again did a highly embittered Huang proceed to expose his former leader's commercial and spy networks later in the year.⁸² During this period, a large number of Qing-held garrisons also surrendered and opened up their warehouses to Zheng.⁸³

Hence, to assume that Zheng Chenggong only sent his forces into Jiangnan as a passive reaction to political and economic pressure from the continental interior denies agency to him and his organization, and overlooks the opportunities and ambitions, the "pull" factors, that attracted him toward this course of action. After a decade of skillful military and political maneuvering, he now possessed the massive capability to undertake an invasion, commanding significant resources to save for many rainy days.⁸⁴ His forces had grown from around 70,000 to 180,000 men, and his annual tax revenues amounted to 1,800,000 taels (67,370 kg) in Zhangzhou and Quanzhou alone, not counting the forced contributions and plunder from his other possessions and Qing-held territory.⁸⁵ His profits obtained from his maritime trading empire were even more spectacular. Evidently, the confidence and power of his organization allowed him to reject the renewed overtures from a former high-ranking officer such as Huang Wu.

As his commanders' suggestions show, the primary commitment of the Qing to the southwestern theater gave Zheng a golden window of opportunity to launch his invasion. The bulk of its forces remained tied down in a difficult battle with Ming loyalist troops until the spring of 1659, when they finally succeeded in pushing the Yongli Emperor out of China altogether and into Myanmar. As a result, Jiangnan was lightly defended, with troops stretched thin across the region.⁸⁶ Governor-General Lang Tingzuo (d. 1676) complained that the provincial capital of Nanjing proved difficult to defend on account of its huge walls and lack of

⁷⁹ Yang Ying, 100-101.

⁸⁰ As seen in Table 4 of Chapter 3, Zheng's profits remained at a consistent level both before and after the Qing enacted the maritime ban. Wong Young-tsu, 143-144 and Ura Ren'ichi, "Qing chu Qianjieling kao" ("Investigation of the Order to Shift the Boundary in the Early Qing"), trans. Lai Yongxiang, *Taiwan wenxian* 6.4 (1955): 113.

⁸¹ Yang Ying, 101-103.

⁸² Yang Ying, 116-117.

⁸³ Su, "Qing chao yu Ming-Zheng hezhan hudong celue jianlun," 154.

⁸⁴ Struve, *Southern Ming*, 182 and Chen Bisheng, 176.

⁸⁵ Su, "Qing chao yu Ming-Zheng hezhan hudong celue jianlun," 155.

⁸⁶ Struve, *Southern Ming*, 170-171.

sufficient soldiers.⁸⁷ The situation was bleaker on the strategic island of Chongming, which defended the approach to Jiangnan from the Yangzi River. According to Liang Huafeng (d. 1671), the military commander, the place “had no grain reserves and insufficient amounts of gunpowder and armor.”⁸⁸ The imperial court even refused to provide his garrison with extra horses due to the pressing need for the limited supply elsewhere in the province.⁸⁹ Within this context, Zheng’s naval superiority allowed him to dominate the coastline and penetrate into the interior at any point along a river with impunity. His previous campaigns in Zhoushan and Guangdong had given him ample chances to spy out enemy defenses and obtain familiarity with the terrain outside of Fujian.⁹⁰ He would conclude that the ready accessibility of the Yangzi River delta and Nanjing from the ocean made it much more attractive than the alternative route northward along the unfamiliar waterways of Hubei, Hunan, and Anhui.

Some scholars, such as Chen Bisheng, portray the Jiangnan offensive as an attempt by a lonely army to penetrate deep into enemy territory at an inopportune time, when other anti-Qing resistance movements already stood on the brink of extinction.⁹¹ However, this argument sees the campaign only in terms of the success or failure of restoration, and overlooks Zheng’s personal ambitions. While the inability to obtain third-party support certainly posed a tremendous risk for him, it also maximized his potential rewards, as he would not have to share with others the substantial fruits of victory.⁹² If he could occupy Jiangnan, he would possess a vast and fertile agricultural region, the most prosperous in the empire and the largest supplier of its taxes, greatly relieving his need for food and supplies.

Moreover, he could gain direct access to the primary production bases from where he sourced most of the raw and processed silk, cotton cloth, and other trade goods for export overseas. In fact, his Mountain Five Firms already maintained a covert presence in the area through branches at Hangzhou, Suzhou, and Nanjing.⁹³ Like a shrewd company executive, Zheng saw in this campaign an opportunity to transform them into legitimate companies engaging in commercial activities under the protection of his soldiers and without interference from Qing military harassment and economic embargoes. Zheng, then, desired nothing less than the political domination of the entire region. “If we enter the Yangzi River,” he glowingly told his commanders, “the half of the empire (*banbi*) that is Jiangnan will all be in my pocket!”⁹⁴ His informal maritime organization would metamorphose into a formal East Asian mercantile

⁸⁷ Chen Bisheng, 210 n. 12.

⁸⁸ *Zheng shi shiliao xubian*, 981 and Ortai et al., eds., *Baqi tongzhi chujī (General Gazetteer of the Eight Banners, First Part)*, juan 172 (Changchun, Jilin: Dongbei shifan daxue chubanshe, 1985), 4199.

⁸⁹ *Zheng shi shiliao xubian*, 979.

⁹⁰ Chen Bisheng, 176.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁹² One notable exception would be the allied forces of the Zhejiang loyalists, but their numbers were too few to pose a significant threat to the Qing. Although separate from Zheng Chenggong’s organizational structure, they required the support of his men and supplies to undertake any action, and faced the danger of having these cut off at any time at his whim. This risk would become strikingly evident in the disastrous aftermath of the Nanjing invasion, as shown later.

⁹³ Liu Xianting, 32.

⁹⁴ Xia, 22. See also Pan Gengzhong’s comments in Jiang Risheng, 164.

state with vast hinterlands in southern China to supply its markets overseas.

At the same time, he calculated that the capture of Nanjing, a former Ming imperial capital and strategic military outpost, would provide enough symbolic power to rally the “heroes of the entire empire” to rise up against the Manchus.⁹⁵ As Zheng prepared to travel northward in 1657, he also sent envoys to request Li Dingguo and Sun Kewang to join forces with him in Jiangnan, even dispatching someone skilled in the art of persuasion to dissuade the two men from their vicious infighting.⁹⁶ Apparently, Zheng hoped, at the very least, for widespread renewed resistance to effectively delay the enemy until he had consolidated his hold over the region. He would also utilize his occupation of Jiangnan to turn the tables on the Qing and cause it to experience resource shortages instead by cutting off the Grand Canal, the major artery for shipments of grain to Beijing. As Pan Gengzhong pointed out to Zheng, “if [the Qing] does not even have time to care for itself, how can it have the leisure to attack our two islands?”⁹⁷ In this scenario, Zheng, as crucial power-broker, would once again have the flexibility to choose different possibilities of institutionalizing his organization. He could maintain his privileges as part of a restored Ming court, or force the Qing to win him over with bigger concessions.

The northern expedition that Zheng led occurred in several halting stages, evolving from efforts somewhat more ambitious than the previous forays along the coast into a massive, all-out invasion.⁹⁸ His first campaign came just after Huang Wu’s defection, when Zheng seized the Qing military outpost of Min’anzen, which guarded the approach to Fuzhou, and attacked the provincial capital. During the winter of 1656, he withdrew and went further north to capture the area around Funing before returning to Xiamen. In the autumn of the following year, he set out once again, occupying the southern Zhejiang port of Taizhou before a Qing army struck his rear and recovered Min’anzen. Arriving too late to save the town, Zheng sailed on back toward Xiamen. Despite this setback, the two campaigns, each involving 45,000 to 60,000 men, gave him the confidence to carry out a sustained invasion on a much grander scale.⁹⁹ In the late spring of 1658, he left Xiamen along with 100,000 soldiers and over a thousand junks.¹⁰⁰ This huge expeditionary force sailed as far as the mouth of the Yangzi River, near the Yangshan Islands, when an especially violent typhoon struck, resulting in the loss of one-tenth of his men; several of his sons and concubines and 231 other household members; and 50 to 100 ships.¹⁰¹ The heavy casualties and blow to morale from the natural disaster forced Zheng to retreat to Taizhou to regroup and acquire provisions.

However, by June 1659, he had sufficiently recovered to launch a renewed offensive on

⁹⁵ Jiang Risheng, 164.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 165.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁹⁸ For a succinct summary of the separate and halting stages of “the” northern expedition, refer to Struve, *Southern Ming*, 182-185.

⁹⁹ Chen Bisheng, 178-179.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 185.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 186.

Jiangnan with the remainder of his troops in conjunction with the Zhejiang loyalists under Zhang Huangyan.¹⁰² On his way, Zheng considered settling his men and their families, whom he had brought along, on Chongming, which he wanted to establish as a new base that would enjoy equal status with Xiamen.¹⁰³ If carried out, the plan could have laid a solid foundation for the long-term occupation of Jiangnan. The island's maritime environment and strategic location on the mouth of the Yangzi would allow his men to operate in familiar territory and gradually adapt to conditions in the interior. Yet, Zheng refused to carry through with his plan after he encountered a small but sturdy Qing garrison under Liang Huafeng. Despite the strong protests of his commanders, Zheng subsequently chose to abandon Chongming and move directly toward Nanjing. He feared that a protracted siege or anything short of a quick victory would weaken troop morale for undertaking the larger and what he believed to be the far more important offensives further upstream.¹⁰⁴ The failure to secure Chongming would, in the long run, severely handicap Zheng's ability to consolidate his hold over the region.

For the time being, however, the rest of the campaign proved enormously successful. Zheng's forces penetrated deep into Jiangnan via the Yangzi River, occupying Guazhou and Zhenjiang, garrison towns located directly across from one another on the northern and southern banks, respectively. The capture of these two key transit points along the Grand Canal cut off both the flow of imperial grain to Beijing and the critical channels of communications and intelligence to and from the rest of the empire for an entire month. Outside aid was completely unable to enter.¹⁰⁵ Even Manchu reinforcements that had come just before the onset of the blockade "did not bring any horses, and are short on bows and arrows, and armor" to pose a credible threat.¹⁰⁶ Fresh from victory in Guizhou, they had only arrived by accident while passing through the region on their way home. Meanwhile, prefectures and counties across Jiangnan and neighboring provinces, from Ningbo and Hangzhou to the south, and Jiujiang in Jiangxi to the west, all saw their defending armies flee or announced their submission from afar.¹⁰⁷ Zhang Huangyan estimates that he alone, with just several hundred men and a handful of ships, managed to secure the submission of four prefectures, three sub-prefectures, and 24 counties.¹⁰⁸ The entire region lay on the brink of defection.

A large number of Qing military men genuinely welcomed the invasion as liberation from foreign rule. For instance, Ma Fengzhi, the high-ranking regional commander (*tidu*) of

¹⁰² Struve, *Southern Ming*, 183-184.

¹⁰³ Yang Ying, 143.

¹⁰⁴ Jiang Risheng, 173-174 and Xia, 22.

¹⁰⁵ *Zheng shi shiliao xubian*, 1012-1013, 1067.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 1008.

¹⁰⁷ Peng Sunyi, *Jinghai zhi (Account of the Pacification of the Sea)*, TWWXCK, 35 (1959), 51. Even memorials to the Qing court admit that "all the prefectures north and south of the Great River [Yangzi] fell one after another." See *Zheng shi shiliao xubian*, 1067.

¹⁰⁸ Zhang Huangyan, "Bei zheng jilue 北征紀略" ("Chronicle of the Northern Expedition"), in Zha Jizuo, *Lu chunqiu*, 83-84 and Zheng Yiju, 16. According to Struve, the handful of literati under Zheng and Zhang "were completely overwhelmed by the demand for their services within the surrendered cities and towns." See Struve, *Southern Ming*, 188.

Songjiang, near present-day Shanghai, expressed his desire to submit because he “cherished the Ming house in his heart.”¹⁰⁹ Liang Huafeng initially responded positively to the appeals of Ma Xin, a fellow northerner, and promised, in a secret pact, to bring his forces over to Zheng.¹¹⁰ Local gentry and the common people greeted the invaders with even greater enthusiasm, often shedding tears at the sight of their flowing robes and long hair.¹¹¹ Residents abandoned towns still under Qing control to purposely “weaken the defenders, who forbade but could not stop them.”¹¹² Ming-style gowns and caps soon became the rage in fashion, driving up the price of raw silk and the demand for tailors.¹¹³ When a fleeing Qing commander stopped to eat at a village restaurant and inquired about the news, the old storekeeper, not knowing his identity, clasped her hands together and thanked Heaven that the “northerners (*beiren*) [Manchus] will soon be exterminated!”¹¹⁴ Popular uprisings flared in neighboring Hubei, Hunan, and Jiangxi.¹¹⁵

Encountering almost no resistance, Zheng’s men sailed up the Yangzi and reached the gates of Nanjing, which they surrounded on Yongli 13.7/10 (August 27, 1659). They initiated a siege of the city that lasted for almost two weeks. Upon hearing the alarming news, a shocked and desperate Shunzhi Emperor ordered the mobilization of armies from across the empire—from the southeastern coast to as far afield as remote Ningxia in the northwest—to aid Jiangnan. He also dispatched to the region his elite Manchu imperial guards, under the command of the chamberlain Dasu (d. 1661).¹¹⁶ The emperor even planned to lead soldiers in person to stop the onslaught.¹¹⁷ Meanwhile, surrounded by hostile or noncommittal troops, the beleaguered garrison at Nanjing sent a message to Zheng requesting him to delay storming the city, ostensibly so that its commanders could find an opportune time to surrender. In this manner, they could not only debate the merits of submission, but also buy time for outside assistance.¹¹⁸ Evidently, Zheng’s invasion posed one of the greatest threats to Manchu rule since their entrance into Beijing in 1644. Liang Huafeng, renowned as a fierce warrior, recalled later that out of all the adversaries he had encountered, “there has been none so difficult to defeat as the Zheng family.”¹¹⁹

Nevertheless, at this critical juncture, while others remained indecisive about their loyalties, Liang opted to take the risk and rally his men around the Qing cause. He marched his troops

¹⁰⁹ Xia, 24 and Yang Ying, 156.

¹¹⁰ Peng, 49 and Shao, 141. Peng claims that Liang and Ma Xin had even sworn to become brothers. Shao’s account appears especially credible, since he had verified his information through a personal conversation with one of Liang’s former subordinates. See Shao, 143 and Jiang Risheng, 173.

¹¹¹ Shao, 113.

¹¹² Zha, *Lu chunqiu*, 71.

¹¹³ Peng, 48.

¹¹⁴ Huang Zongxi, 6.

¹¹⁵ *Zheng shi shiliao xubian*, 1143-1146.

¹¹⁶ *Shunzhi shilu*, 159-160.

¹¹⁷ Peng, 51.

¹¹⁸ Peng, 51; Huang Zongxi, 6; Shao, 141; and Jiang Risheng, 178.

¹¹⁹ Shao, 143-144.

unnoticed and unhindered from Chongming to the unguarded town of Danyang, just south of Zhenjiang. From there, just as stealthily, he advanced upon Nanjing, breaking through the siege lines to reach a greatly relieved garrison.¹²⁰ Liang's decision to throw his weight against Zheng marked a turning point that restored the crumbling morale of the city's defenders and won them over to the side of the Qing. On the night of 7/22, Zheng, impatient at having still received no response from the garrison, planned to storm Nanjing the next day. Yet, a few hours before the crack of dawn, Liang and a contingent of his soldiers burst out of a long-abandoned side gate. They directly struck the opponent's center, under the command of Yu Xin (d. 1659), surprising and nearly obliterating it. Manchu cavalry then took advantage of the newly formed gap to establish a foothold outside of the city. At daybreak, the main Qing regiments swarmed out of Nanjing, and assailed the Zheng positions in the surrounding mountains from both front and rear.

In the ensuing struggle, the spirited Qing soldiers, while outnumbered overall, managed to concentrate their numbers and overwhelm, one by one, Zheng's infantry units, largely because he had earlier ordered them to stay intact and forbade them to march without his approval. Still, Zheng's men fought back ferociously and stopped three forward charges before breaking ranks into a full rout.¹²¹ Although many fled in the chaotic aftermath, entire divisions, from the commander down, stood firm and resisted to the last man. A total of fourteen division (*zhen*) leaders and other high-ranking military and civil officials perished in the fiasco, including Wan Li and Pan Gengzhong. Gan Hui and Yu Xin were captured by Qing soldiers and later executed in Nanjing.¹²² When Zheng witnessed the scale of the catastrophe from afar, he retreated with his navy back to Zhenjiang, gathering thousands of his fleeing men along the way.¹²³

The Failure of Restoration

Many contingencies and tactical errors intervened to bring about this spectacular reversal of fortunes. The severe disaster at Yangshan in 1658 had delayed the northern invasion force for almost a year, sufficient time for Manchu soldiers, fresh from victory in the southwest, to reinforce the city by boat just before the siege began.¹²⁴ Moreover, Zheng's desire to hold out for a "maximally large battle so that he could win a maximally large victory" and inspire the most widespread pro-Ming resistance, combined with his arrogance and overconfidence, also played a huge role.¹²⁵ After his capture of Zhenjiang, he chose to disregard the advice of Gan Hui and other subordinates to march on land, a much quicker route, and instead, made his way up the Yangzi against the current by ship. Outside Nanjing, despite their renewed entreaties, he refused to storm the city, but waited for the Qing garrison to surrender. As a result, his troops

¹²⁰ Ibid, 141.

¹²¹ Huang Zongxi, 6; Yang Ying, 162; and Zheng Yiju, 17.

¹²² Ruan, 31; Xia, 24-25; Peng, 50-51; and Jiang Risheng, 182.

¹²³ Ruan, 31; Yang Ying, 162; and Peng, 51.

¹²⁴ Chen Bisheng, 187 and Struve, *Southern Ming*, 187.

¹²⁵ Struve, *Southern Ming*, 185.

became lax and undisciplined. Most disturbingly, elite soldiers of his vanguard under Yu Xin gambled and drank, and left their camps unguarded to hunt and fish.¹²⁶ As a result, Qing reinforcements from other parts of Jiangnan could slip through the Zheng lines, including Chongming garrison commander Liang Huafeng. Liang would later take advantage of the relaxed state of the siege to launch a counterattack from the city.¹²⁷

These miscalculations also point to more fundamental features of Zheng's organizational structure that compounded the difficulty of a successful occupation of Jiangnan. Wills claims that Zheng's need to station troops at various points along the coast to maintain his drawn-out supply network drew away badly needed manpower for a successful siege on Nanjing.¹²⁸ Moreover, these men, long accustomed to naval warfare, lacked experience with land-based offensive techniques, especially when faced with a well-fortified city surrounded by walls of massive proportions.¹²⁹ Riccio observed that Zheng's soldiers, despite their large numbers, only managed to surround one-fourth of its circumference.¹³⁰ As Wong Young-tsu correctly shows, they also "seemed affected by a 'pirate psychology,' which meant one can always rush back to the ship for safety" when faced with adverse circumstances rather than having to fight to the death.¹³¹

Struve has further argued that, although a large number of places in the region and even north of the Yangzi flocked to offer their allegiance to Zheng, he failed to lay out a concrete plan for effective political administration of these areas. He only sent his commanders and allies to garrison some of them on an ad hoc basis, and viewed them as nothing other than "sources of men, animals, monies, food, and materiel for his war effort."¹³² He also lacked the local intelligence networks that had served him so well along the coast, while most of his generals and the Zhejiang loyalists with expertise in warfare along the Yangzi, including Zhang Mingzhen and Chen Liuyu, had either died or were killed by Qing forces.¹³³ Due to Zheng's failure at effective political consolidation, Struve concludes, his soldiers remained an isolated invasion force deep within enemy territory, a problem compounded by lack of knowledge of the local terrain and climate.

While highly convincing, the explanations of her and other scholars have overlooked certain evidence in the records that conflict with their assertions but that nevertheless point to far deeper underlying issues. The Zheng organization had a strong military focus, but, as seen, it had taken steps toward the gradual establishment and rationalization of civilian institutions along the southeastern coast. Zheng's use of spectacle and strict orders delimiting the area of plunder

¹²⁶ Wu Weiye, 61; Zheng Yiju, 17; and Yang Ying, 158.

¹²⁷ Struve, *Southern Ming*, 187 and Wu Weiye, 61.

¹²⁸ Wills, "Hazardous Missions," 251.

¹²⁹ Chen Bisheng, 205.

¹³⁰ Wills, "Hazardous Missions," 251.

¹³¹ Wong Young-tsu, 139.

¹³² Struve, *Southern Ming*, 188.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 186.

also implied a far larger political vision than using the region as a mere supply base. During the summer of 1659, as he and his men sailed up the Yangzi toward Nanjing, he had paid obeisance to the tomb of the Hongwu Emperor from afar, wailing bitterly, and conducted sacrifices to Heaven and Earth.¹³⁴ Before surrounding the city, Zheng had taken his commanders on a tour of the Yuejiang Pavilion, a famous lookout point located on the mountain where they encamped, and that had been constructed at the orders of the Ming founder himself. From there, they could gaze in awe at the former capital and experience its “imperial spirit (*wangqi*).”¹³⁵ Moreover, Zheng threatened strict punishment for any commander or soldier who dared “touch a feather” in Jiangnan, but set aside the region north of the Yangzi as a special zone to plunder for provisions.¹³⁶

Although Zhang Mingzhen and Chen Liuyu had died, Zhang Huangyan and his small band of followers still possessed valuable expertise of the local terrain, and went ahead of Zheng’s main invasion force to guide its entrance into the Yangzi River.¹³⁷ Even more importantly, they maintained close ties with an extensive espionage network among the local gentry centered upon Wei Geng (1614-1662), a *xiuca* degree-holder and poet living in seclusion at Huzhou, in northwestern Zhejiang, and his associate Qian Zuanzeng (d. 1662).¹³⁸ These men shared rumors and intelligence with other elites across Jiangnan and Zhejiang, including Shanyin, Xiaoshan, and Suzhou. They also took on the broader responsibility of keeping the various anti-Qing resistance movements in contact with one another and coordinating their campaigns. Liu Jun in Hubei and Hunan became Wei’s chief liaison with the rebel movements there, and a gateway to a wider web of contacts that ultimately led to the Yongli court. On the other hand, the Cantonese gentry Qu Dajun (1630-1696) provided access to Zheng’s own intelligence network attached to the Mountain Five Firms.¹³⁹ Buddhist monks, on account of their shaved heads, could venture back and forth unsuspected to pass messages among these figures.¹⁴⁰ This vast, interconnected network, which spanned the entire empire, allowed Zheng to obtain timely news of the Ming loyalist movement, and send and receive envoys from the Yongli Emperor. The intelligence acquired by Wei and Qian of the empty state of Qing defenses in Jiangnan helped him determine the best route and timing for his campaign.¹⁴¹

The question we should ask, then, is not why Zheng lost, but why he could not win despite the seemingly heavy odds stacked in his favor. The key answer here, I believe, lies in an examination of the complex relationship between him and his followers. Needless to say, his

¹³⁴ Jiang Risheng, 177; Xia, 24; and Struve, *Southern Ming*, 186-187.

¹³⁵ Zheng Yiju, 17.

¹³⁶ Yang Ying, 145.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 142.

¹³⁸ For brief biographies of Wei and Qian, see *Haidong yishi*, 89.

¹³⁹ A full survey of Wei Geng’s associates, including a brief biographical introduction of each man, can be found in He Lingxiu, *Wukuzhai Qing shi congkao* (*Collected Drafts of Qing History from the Five-Treasury Study*) (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004), 281-294.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 285-286.

¹⁴¹ *Haidong yishi*, 89.

Zhejiang allies and the gentry elite in his own organization eagerly supported the northern expedition. Among his own officials, Zheng's plan met with the greatest enthusiasm from Qing defectors and those in primarily civil roles, such as Chen Yonghua. Ma Xin, in particular, expressed his eagerness to take the lead in storming Nanjing, and capitalized upon his background as a northerner to persuade high-ranking Qing military officers in Jiangnan to submit.¹⁴²

However, the core of Zheng's followers remained reluctant to engage in a campaign so far away from home. Before the expedition began, Gan Hui, one of his most trusted generals, worried that without several hundred thousand men, they could not secure Jiangnan. He instead advocated staying on Xiamen and Jinmen, where they could continue to play the waiting game, "advancing to fight and retreating to defend."¹⁴³ Men like him, who were "at the same time soldiers and merchants," "had invested their own capital" along with Zheng in his enterprise of maritime trade.¹⁴⁴ The invasion of Jiangnan represented a radical departure from their concentration upon the defense of this economic and cultural macroregion. A victory would greatly benefit their interests in the long-term by securing a stable and affordable source of supplies and goods, but they would suffer devastating immediate losses to their profits due to lost trading opportunities, the conversion of their junks into warships, and their diversion away from the coast. They further risked their savings, property, and loved ones if the Qing took advantage of their absence to launch a surprise attack on the bases of Xiamen and Jinmen.

The conflicting goals among the different social groups of the southeastern coast, compounded by strong differences in language and regional customs, easily fueled mutual mistrust and hostility once the invasion force set out. Although Zheng firmly held onto the goal of capturing Jiangnan, he mostly sided with his majority core followers in disputes over specific matters due to similar background and the need for their continued cooperation in the war effort. For instance, after the disaster at sea near Yangshan, Zheng's newly recruited soldiers, mostly northerners from the Qing garrisons in Zhejiang, deserted in large numbers.¹⁴⁵ Not only had they grown terrified of the turbulent ocean waves, but they also did not feel included in the organization. To make matters worse, a highly paranoid Zheng soon heard rumors that his northern generals all planned to defect as well and discovered one of them, He Shiming (d. 1658), painting the masts of his junks bright red. In a fit of rage, he had the offending commanders relieved of their posts. Angry and embittered, He Shiming, who may have simply intended these markings to allow for the better recognition of his ships and coordination among his inexperienced men, died shortly afterwards.¹⁴⁶

Later, Zheng also experienced problems cooperating with the Zhejiang loyalists. While

¹⁴² Shao, 141 and Peng, 49.

¹⁴³ Jiang Risheng, 164.

¹⁴⁴ Carioti, 42.

¹⁴⁵ Yang Ying, 134; Peng 42; and Jiang Risheng, 172.

¹⁴⁶ Yang Ying, 134; Peng, 43; and Jiang Risheng, 172-173.

besieging Nanjing, he ordered Zhang Huangyan to advance further west into Anhui Province under the pretext of holding back Qing reinforcements, but, more likely, to marginalize him and prevent him from sharing in the expected victory. Zhang only had less than a thousand men and a hundred ships to undertake this sizable task, but he did not receive any reinforcements from Zheng, and soon lost all contact with the main invasion force.¹⁴⁷ The breakdown in communications, probably cut off on purpose, would leave Zhang completely stranded in the middle Yangzi after the defeat at Nanjing.¹⁴⁸ Zheng's treatment of both He Shiming and Zhang Huangyan resulted from rumors, no doubt of malicious intent, told to him by his own subordinates.¹⁴⁹ His bias against soldiers and elites from outside the southeastern coast effectively alienated him from precisely the ones with the strongest motivation to occupy Jiangnan and valuable expertise in its terrain, as well as land warfare, civil administration, and espionage. As a result, he could not storm Nanjing effectively, nor fully capitalize upon the Zhejiang loyalists' skills in gathering intelligence and winning over local power brokers.

In the meantime, Zheng had to intensify both the scale of his personal charisma and the harshness of his punishments toward his core commanders and soldiers. As shown, he put on huge spectacles and ceremonies, and promised them personal glory in stirring speeches. He also encouraged them by ordering their entire families to come along in specially guarded vessels to prevent homesickness.¹⁵⁰ Yet, the excessive reliance upon personal loyalty meant that his divisions competed for recognition and rewards from him (*zhenggong*) during battles in Jiangnan, often to the point of bitter accusations and hostility among one another.¹⁵¹ To curb the malicious and potentially damaging turf wars, Zheng strictly forbade, on the pain of death, any unit to move without his explicit orders.¹⁵² Hence, an overenthusiastic Zhou Quanbin was almost beheaded after a surprise attack on Guazhou made at his own initiative. Zheng only spared him due to the stunning success of the mission, which had forced the Qing garrison to surrender, and the earnest appeals of his fellow commanders.¹⁵³ When the Qing later surprised Zheng forces outside Nanjing, their dependence upon his orders prevented them from assisting other divisions under attack, allowing the adversary to finish them off one by one.¹⁵⁴ The carrot and stick approach gave the soldiers little incentive to put in their best effort, whether to fight out of fear or loyalty to their leader.

Even if these forms of positive and negative persuasion had achieved their full effect, they could only maintain the fighting spirit of Zheng's men in the short term. Yet, the occupation of Jiangnan required a far more incremental process of consolidation, including the establishment

¹⁴⁷ Zhang Huangyan, "Beizheng jilue," 83.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 85.

¹⁴⁹ Yang Ying, 134. Chen Bisheng's research shows clearly that both Zheng's subordinates and those in the Zhejiang loyalist movement said some pretty nasty things about each other and their leaders. See Chen Bisheng, 157-158.

¹⁵⁰ Yang Ying, 138.

¹⁵¹ Jiang Risheng, 179.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ruan, 29.

¹⁵⁴ Jiang Risheng, 179 and Ruan, 31.



Figure 17. A tablet bearing the characters for “Military Boundary,” personally written and signed by Zheng Chenggong. Found within a temple near the town of Dongshi, near Quanzhou, it is the only known surviving one out of what must have been many more similar markers that used to dot the southeastern Chinese coast. They strictly delineated the confines of his soldiers’ activities, especially the area where they could legally station and plunder for goods, a testament to his strict control and discipline over his organization.

Photograph by author, 2009

of civil institutions in the region and the incorporation of local collaborators into his organization. Since Zheng had refused to seize Chongming as a secondary maritime base, Gan Hui and Zhang Huangyan had advised him to strengthen his hold over the surrounding areas of Nanjing, and maintain a blockade at Guazhou over the shipment of grain along the Grand Canal.¹⁵⁵ In this manner, he could both starve the isolated garrison into surrender and deny the wealth of Jiangnan to the Qing. However, Zheng feared that these efforts would take too long, causing his soldiers to lose momentum, and allowing time for massive Qing reinforcements to arrive. On the other hand, moving too quickly would mean overextending his already overstretched forces, and ultimately running into limitations, such as the thick walls of Nanjing, which he lacked the

¹⁵⁵ Ruan, 30; Xia, 23; and Zhang Huangyan, “Beizheng jilue,” 84.

expertise in land-based siege warfare to storm. Meanwhile, he constantly worried about the safety of his rear, and had to station thousands of men and hundreds of ships to guard every coastal outpost from possible enemy attack, withholding valuable resources that could have aided his offensive.¹⁵⁶

Faced with the need to motivate his soldiers and consolidate his hold over the region, and the looming specter of Qing reinforcements, Zheng betrayed highly contradictory impulses in his actions. On the one hand, he kept his forces advancing and engaged them in large battles, but often slowed them down, and brought them to a full stop outside Nanjing, to see whether he had impressed potential Qing defectors enough to surrender. His ships always hung around as a last resort where his men could flee in case everything else failed.¹⁵⁷ In short, he faced heavy pressure to deliver one victory after another, presenting a picture of imminent success to his followers and other anti-Qing movements.

By planning and accounting for multiple eventualities, Zheng was unable to take the risk of settling upon one course of action and following it through with a single purpose. Under these circumstances, even the slightest setback or potential hint of difficulty might cause the fragilely constructed momentum of his campaign to collapse. Right after the disastrous shipwreck at Yangshan in 1658, nearly all of his commanders implored him to return to Xiamen. Although he refused, Zheng had to delay his expedition by almost an entire year before he could set out again.¹⁵⁸ On the way to Nanjing from Zhenjiang, Zheng chose to travel up the river rather than the much quicker land route due to the complaints of his subordinates that “our men are not accustomed to the water and soil here. If they carry heavy loads in this hot and muggy weather, it would be difficult for them to travel the entire distance.”¹⁵⁹ Outside the gates of Nanjing, just a day before the Qing counterattack, Zheng had planned to launch a full-scale assault partly because the prolonged siege was adversely affecting the discipline of his center.¹⁶⁰ He tried to put a stop to the misbehavior by issuing a reprimand to Yu Xin, but the vanguard commander would not, and probably could not, restrain them. Zheng then ordered the execution of Guan Shangxian, a subordinate of Yu who had gambled away his savings.¹⁶¹ However, the night before the sentence was to be carried out, Guan escaped into the city. Bitter and vengeful, he revealed to its Qing defenders the decrepit state of the vanguard forces and their abandoned camps, and later guided Liang Huafeng during the surprise attack.¹⁶²

On the most fundamental level, the conflicting problems that Zheng faced with his followers reflected the inherent geographic contradiction of an organization concurrently “empire-wide” and “provincial” in ideological scope. As shown, this combination, forged through a complex

¹⁵⁶ *Zheng shi shiliao xubian*, 1010-1011 and Chen Bisheng, 205.

¹⁵⁷ Yang Ying, 155.

¹⁵⁸ Xia, 13 and Jiang Risheng, 172.

¹⁵⁹ Yang Ying, 152.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 160.

¹⁶¹ Peng, 110 and Zheng Yiju, 17.

¹⁶² Peng, 111 and Zheng Yiju, 17.

consensus among militarists, merchants, regional and central elites, and commoners on the southeastern coast, had legitimized the autonomy of his “state” and provided powerful inspiration for them to defend it from outside invasion. Yet, Zheng’s role as a cultural intermediary, which had allowed each group to identify its own interests and aims with him, either failed to translate or became lost in translation once his men entered Jiangnan. Despite the symbolism and ceremonies outside Nanjing, Zheng did not attempt to craft a larger message that would appeal to his own men and tap the broad base of elite and popular support in the region. With the crossing of space, his organization should have become fully “imperial,” but the campaign continued to emphasize “provincial” interests. In other words, restoration served as an extension of coastal autonomy, rather than an aim in itself, a message that could inspire no one.

When projected outward, the eccentric nature of his organization, along with his dominating personality and harsh discipline, failed to harness the enthusiasm of the literati and convince fence-sitting Qing commanders in the region to fight actively on his behalf. Even Ma Fengzhi, who truly desired to restore the Ming, held his men intact and observed the offensive from the sidelines. He subtly refused requests to join the offensive on Nanjing on the grounds that the Qing held his family hostage in Beijing.¹⁶³ Since Zheng did not effectively incorporate Liang Huafeng’s men into his organizational structure, the already surrendered commander was essentially left to decide on his own which side to choose.¹⁶⁴ Zheng himself seemed to have only halfheartedly recruited them, and ignored most of the other cities and garrisons that had submitted. Although it is true that he had bitten off more than he could chew, he did not make a serious effort to utilize Jiangnan gentry to help him sink roots by establishing long-term governance in the area. As a result, Zheng and his troops, while tightly bound through shared regional and personal ties, remained a lone force deep within enemy territory, facing uncertain terrain and soldiers throughout Jiangnan. Later, back at Xiamen, when he asked a Qing defector why he could not take Nanjing, the man replied that the city had not heard that the organization “stood for the Ming.”¹⁶⁵ Zheng’s inability to “digest” gentry and soldiers from outside the southeastern coast ultimately hampered the transformation of his maritime “state” from “provincial” to “imperial.”

An Attempt at Peace

On Yongli 13.7/24 (September 10, 1659), Zheng arrived at Zhenjiang, where he regrouped his scattered followers and consolidated his divisions, and recalled his civil officials sent to govern the area. Just four days later, his troops plundered the city for provisions before abandoning it and sailing into the Yangzi.¹⁶⁶ The speed of his withdrawal deeply shocked and

¹⁶³ Yang Ying, 161.

¹⁶⁴ Peng, 49 and Shao, 141.

¹⁶⁵ Ni, 130.

¹⁶⁶ Peng, 51 and Yang Ying, 162-163.

disappointed his allies and supporters across Jiangnan. Upon first hearing the news, Zhang Huangyan could not believe that Zheng would “board his ship immediately” after his “chance defeat.” “Even if he boarded his ship,” Zhang reasoned, “he would not necessarily set sail immediately, and even if he set sail, he would certainly go to defend Zhenjiang.”¹⁶⁷ Likewise, Luo Zimu (d. 1664), a *zhusheng* degreeholder from Zhenjiang who had offered his services to the Zheng camp, thought that Zheng was only “faking his defeat.”¹⁶⁸ Although Zheng suffered a severe setback, his naval forces remained unscathed, and managed to sink two Qing vessels that tried to cut off his retreat.¹⁶⁹ He still possessed significant infantry capability, with 5,000 men alone, who had not seen any action, stationed at Zhenjiang under Zhou Quanbin.¹⁷⁰ He controlled the coast from Zhejiang to Fujian with tens of thousands of more troops and hundreds of ships.¹⁷¹ At the same time, Wei Geng’s intelligence network informed Zhang that the bulk of Qing reinforcements had not yet arrived in Nanjing, leaving the city open for another attack if Zheng so chose.¹⁷²

In a letter to Zheng, Zhang earnestly tried to dissuade him from retreating:

“How common it is for military strategists to win and lose! Today, what we can depend on is the people’s hearts. Besides, I continue to hold all the prefectures and towns on the upper part of the river. If you can spare a hundred of your ships to assist me, we can still recover all under heaven. If you abandon [Jiangnan], and flee in haste, what are we to do with these millions of living mortals?”¹⁷³

Before he set sail, Luo Zimu ran to Zheng’s ship, and held onto his hand, wailing bitterly:

“The state of your armies is still strong. Why do you let a small defeat frustrate your will? [The Qing forces] have become idle due to their victory. If you turn your sails around and advance again, then Nanjing can definitely be taken. If you miss this opportunity...how can you obtain it again?”¹⁷⁴

His earnest entreaties met with cold silence from Zheng, who only motioned his subordinates to send Luo away. Zheng had already made up his mind to withdraw from Jiangnan as quickly as

¹⁶⁷ Zhang Huangyan, “Beizheng jilue,” 84.

¹⁶⁸ Shao, 120.

¹⁶⁹ Yang Ying, 162 and Peng, 51.

¹⁷⁰ Qing memorials claim that the defenders at Nanjing managed to kill over a hundred thousand soldiers, an obvious exaggeration given the overall size of Zheng’s army at roughly 85,000 men. See *Zheng shi shiliao xubian*, 1007. The real number of casualties remains unknown, although Zha gives a rough sum of 10,000 killed, missing, or captured. See Zha, *Zuiwei lu*, 135. Even if we double this figure, Zheng would still have 65,000 soldiers remaining.

¹⁷¹ *Zheng shi shiliao xubian*, 1010.

¹⁷² Zheng Yiju, 16.

¹⁷³ Zhang Huangyan, “Beizheng jilue,” 85.

¹⁷⁴ Shao, 120.

possible. In fact, he did not even bother consult or wait for Zhang Huangyan, and instead left him completely trapped deep in eastern Anhui. His route to the sea cut off, and faced with mounting defections among his occupied territories and already outnumbered troops, Zhang and a handful of others, disguised as commoners, escaped by foot through the mountains, all the while chased by Qing soldiers in hot pursuit. They barely returned to the southeastern coast alive at the end of 1659.¹⁷⁵

On his part, Zheng had far more pressing issues to worry about than rescuing his ally. Although reconstituted and reorganized, his forces had become too demoralized to engage in another offensive in unfamiliar territory, and had no secure coastal bases to fall back on if they remained in Zhenjiang.¹⁷⁶ Moreover, he had failed to inspire renewed resistance from Ming loyalist forces in the southwest. In February 1659, before his Jiangnan invasion began, the Qing army under Wu Sangui had successfully pinned down Li Dingguo's remnants on the edge of Yunnan, the last corner of Ming control, and forced the Yongli Emperor to flee into Myanmar.¹⁷⁷ Gradually relieved of pressure on that front, the Qing could now redirect its troops eastward to focus entirely upon Zheng's organization. Faced with this dilemma, Zheng, in a radical turnaround, decided to relaunch negotiations with the Manchu court, this time at his own initiative. As Wu Zhenglong shows, this gesture represented a major concession demonstrating his willingness to lower his conditions for submission. He could also utilize the ceasefire to slow the advance of the Qing soldiers and buy time to regain strength and consolidate his hold over the southeastern coast.¹⁷⁸ With these motivations in mind, Zheng brought his forces to the mouth of the Yangzi River, he anchored at the port of Wusong, Ma Fengzhi's command headquarters, on 8/4 (September 19). He sent Cai Zheng, his Rites Censor (*Li dushi*) to contact Ma once again, this time requesting him for help in memorializing the Qing court to reopen talks.

Although the limited records do not reveal much about Cai, they show that he was originally from Jinmen, and began his career as a minor official in the Xiamen region. He had caught Zheng's attention due to his cunning, intelligence, and ability to speak his way out of any difficult situation, and obtained his leader's trust on account of his filial behavior.¹⁷⁹ As a sign of the great faith placed in him, Zheng accorded Cai full powers to travel to Beijing and undertake negotiations without having to write back to him for approval.¹⁸⁰ Evidently, Zheng had already given his instructions and laid down his bottom line before the envoy set out.

Cai's negotiating counterpart, Ma Fengzhi, seemed the most ideal individual to approach, as the Qing general had a long history of interaction with coastal resistance movements. A former

¹⁷⁵ For Zhang's own account of his escape, which reads like an adventure novel, see Zhang, "Beizheng jilue," 85-90.

¹⁷⁶ Struve, "Southern Ming," 188 and Wu Zhenglong, "Nanjing zhi yi hou Zheng-Qing heyi zai jiantao (xia)" ("A Reevaluation of the Zheng-Qing Negotiations after the Nanjing Campaign: Part 2"), *Dalu zazhi (Mainland Journal)* 100.4 (2000): 21.

¹⁷⁷ Struve, *Southern Ming*, 170-171.

¹⁷⁸ Wu, "Zheng-Qing heyi zai jiantao 2," 21.

¹⁷⁹ Xia, 37 and *Tei shi kankei bunsho*, 15.

¹⁸⁰ Yang Ying, 164.

Ming vice-commander of the Anqing garrison, in southwestern Anhui, who went by Ma Jinbao, he had changed his name after surrendering to the Qing at Jiujiang in 1647. He was soon assigned to eastern Zhejiang and Fujian, where he conducted campaigns against the armies of Zheng and the Regent Lu throughout the 1650s. A tenacious fighter, Ma was later transferred to Jiangnan and promoted to the post of Songjiang regional commander.¹⁸¹ Despite the great favors he received from the Qing, he still sympathized with the Ming cause, and evidently enjoyed collegial relations with coastal resistance leaders even as they met on the battlefield. As early as 1651, he had been suspected of illicit contact with commanders from the Regent Lu's camp.¹⁸² Although he did not actively support Zheng during the Jiangnan invasion, he ignored Lang Tingzuo's orders to aid Zhenjiang and cooperate with Liang Huafeng, and stood by and watched idly as Zheng retreated from the Yangzi.¹⁸³ As a high-ranking official, Ma enjoyed, on the one hand, the privileged ear of the emperor and central officials. Yet, his political sympathies also convinced Zheng to trust him as the only person on the Qing side who could speak for him without selling out his interests. In fact, Ma even allowed him to first read his memorial to the Shunzhi court before sending it out.

However, Zheng, in his characteristic manner, did not wish to place all his bets on one outcome. To keep his options open, he injected additional meaning into his actions by balancing his conciliatory gesture with an assault on Chongming. As he told his commanders, he believed that the attack would "firstly, force [the Qing] to agree to a state of peace" on his terms.¹⁸⁴ It would also effectively demonstrate that, in spite of his defeat, he still commanded sizable forces and significant resources to occupy territory at will and inflict heavy losses. Zheng hoped to utilize his military advantage as a bargaining chip to press for more favorable conditions from the Qing court, and, if not successful, at least frighten it enough to delay or prevent it from sending troops south.¹⁸⁵ In a paradoxical way, his actions actually reflected the seriousness of his desire to submit to the Qing. Yet, at the same time, he had not completely abandoned the idea of a renewed invasion of the Yangzi River delta. By successfully occupying Chongming, he could acquire a stable coastal base just like Xiamen, where his men could rest and revive their shattered morale, and he could plan for a future expedition given the right opportunity. In the short-term, Zheng could also use the island as a meeting place and collection point to pick up those soldiers and commanders still fleeing from Nanjing.¹⁸⁶

On Yongli 13.8/8 (September 23, 1659), he and his men docked at Chongming, and, three days later, fired their cannons on the county seat. However, the campaign did not go according to plan. The small Qing garrison, led by Liang Huafeng, who had rushed back to the island

¹⁸¹ Wu Zhenglong, "Zheng-Qing heyi zai jiantao 2," 17. For Ma's biography, see *Qing shi liezhuan xuan* (*Selections from the Qing History Biographies*), TWWXCK, 274 (1968), 83-85.

¹⁸² *Qing shi liezhuan*, 83.

¹⁸³ *Shunzhi shilu*, 176-177; *Qing shi liezhuan*, 84; and Wu Zhenglong, "Zheng-Qing heyi zai jiantao 2," 17-18.

¹⁸⁴ Yang Ying, 164.

¹⁸⁵ Yang Ying, 164; Struve, 188; and Wu Zhenglong, "Zheng-Qing heyi zai jiantao 2," 21.

¹⁸⁶ Ruan 32 and Yang Ying, 164.



*Figure 18. One of the cannons utilized by Zheng Chenggong's soldiers during his campaigns.
Photograph by author, 2006, courtesy of the Zheng Chenggong Memorial Hall, Shijing, Nan'an, Fujian*

after the victory at Nanjing, already anticipated his attack and held firm in spite of heavy bombardment. Zheng then ordered his troops to storm the county seat after filling its surrounding moat with debris, and causing part of the walls to crumble with his cannons. However, Liang's men fought back ferociously, forcing them to withdraw after killing two commanders and other officers and soldiers who tried to scale the town with ladders. The disastrous attack cost Zheng over a thousand lives, and only further demoralized his troops.¹⁸⁷ When he considered storming the town again, Zhou Quanbin voiced his opposition, complaining that it "has deep moats and high walls...and is already hard to capture quickly...the officers and soldiers have also been hit hard [in Nanjing], and have no interest in loving battle." He further saw little purpose in obtaining this "lonely town on a solitary island," and proposed returning to Xiamen and launching another expedition the following year.¹⁸⁸ However, his northern

¹⁸⁷ Yang Ying, 165 and *Zheng shi shiliao xubian*, 1022-1023.

¹⁸⁸ Yang Ying, 165 and Xia, 25.

generals, especially Ma Xin, strongly wanted to take the island.¹⁸⁹

As Zheng agonized over what course of action to take, Cai Zheng arrived at his camp that very night with an envoy of Ma Fengzhi, who transmitted a message from the commander expressing bewilderment at the attack:

“You want me to memorialize and negotiate peace, yet you still use your soldiers to launch assaults and destroy cities and towns. How can you allow me to request on your behalf? How can you, sir, face your ruler? It is better to just abandon Chongming, and, for now, return to your islands in the ocean. It would not be too late to make ideal plans depending on the success or failure [of negotiations].¹⁹⁰

Ma wanted Zheng to make a concrete gesture of goodwill to demonstrate his sincerity in submitting to the Qing court. In a rather frank reply to the envoy, Zheng excused his actions, but agreed to meet the demands more than halfway:

“Your tribe (*qiu*) pasted proclamations everywhere stating that my infantry and navy have been exterminated, and that the Imperial Surname [Zheng] has perished among them...For this reason, I planned to open up Chongming to settle my soldiers and their families, and again penetrate [into Jiangnan]. Does your master [Ma] also know of this? Today, I fired several guns, and half of the town has already crumbled. Tomorrow, if I position my cannons to attack again, it will be leveled to the ground. Since your master has come to persuade me, I will lift my offensive, and allow him to request on my behalf.”¹⁹¹

Despite his use of big words, Zheng saw in the envoy's arrival a perfect opportunity to extricate himself from the fruitless and costly offensive.¹⁹² Satisfied that the Qing had witnessed the might of his army and could not ignore it, Zheng lifted the siege on 8/18, and sailed out of Chongming into Zhejiang. After assigning his divisions to guard the islands, harbors, and ports along the lengthy coastline, he returned to Xiamen on 9/7.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ According to Ma Xin's cook, who had been captured by Liang Huafeng's forces during the attack, Zheng, undoubtedly under the pressure of Zhou Quanbin and others, had initially wanted to return to Fujian and wait for another opportunity, but Ma insisted upon trying to occupy Chongming again to serve as a base for future excursions up the Yangzi. The account, found in the Qing memorials, once again exposes the rift in his organization along class and regional lines. See *Qing chu Zheng Chenggong jiazhu Manwen dang'an yibian (er)* (Edited Translation of the Manchu Language Archives Related to Zheng Chenggong and His Family: Part 2), TWWXHK, 1.7 (2004), 135.

¹⁹⁰ Yang Ying, 165-166. Ma Fengzhi's words are corroborated in his memorial to the Qing court. See *Manwen dang'an* 2, 131.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 166. Many Qing memorials at the time did, in fact, suspect that Zheng Chenggong had perished during the chaos outside of Nanjing. See, for instance, *Zheng shi shiliao xubian*, 1007-1008 and *Manwen dang'an* 2, 128.

¹⁹² Zheng was said to have been highly disturbed at the unexpected difficulty of taking Chongming. As he wailed aloud to Ma Xin, “If I cannot even occupy such a small town, how can I come back again [to retake Jiangnan]?” See *Manwen dang'an* 2, 135.

¹⁹³ Yang Ying, 166-167 and Ruan, 32.

Slightly before his departure, on 8/12, he had dispatched Cai Zheng and the Qing envoy, Cao Yingfeng, to Ma Fengzhi's camp in Wusong. Zheng sent along a message, to be forwarded to Beijing, in which he boasted of "opening Chongming, but my soldiers all have never entered the town. I want Commander Ma to vouch for my submission (*toucheng*)."¹⁹⁴ He also rewarded Cao, one of his northern soldiers who had fled after the disaster at Yangshan, by ordering Ma Xin, the envoy's former commander, to send back his wife and other family members still in the Zheng camp.¹⁹⁵ Afterwards, Cai traveled to Beijing, where he initially met with a warm reception, and had the honor of an imperial audience. During the meeting, the Shunzhi Emperor entrusted Cai with the Manchu robes of a first-rank official as a gift to Zheng, a sign of the court's willingness to award him lavishly if he carried through with his submission. The emperor then dispatched the envoy back to Jiangnan to confer with Ma Fengzhi, together with the governor-general and governor.¹⁹⁶ It remains unclear what terms were being discussed, but, given the enthusiastic response of the Qing court, Zheng must have greatly lowered his demands, perhaps dropping claims to certain prefectures in Fujian and Guangdong.¹⁹⁷

In contrast to the Shunzhi Emperor, his central and Jiangnan officials mostly saw Zheng's gesture as lacking in sincerity and nothing more than another delaying tactic to buy time for his organization to recover. They either thought that his defeat outside Chongming had severely weakened him, or wondered why he attacked when he should have "encamped in an empty and open terrain to await the results of the talks" if he truly wanted to surrender.¹⁹⁸ In both cases, Zheng's show of force failed to convince them of his strength and the need for any concessions to appease him. In fact, it caused them to seriously question the role and motive of Ma Fengzhi in encouraging the talks at a time when further military action could eliminate his newly defeated army altogether. In October 1659, the Revenue Censor Sun Guangsi (1614-1697) accused Ma of standing by idly while Zheng overran Jiangnan. Later, when he attacked Chongming, "and was defeated by our officers and soldiers, Fengzhi, on the other hand, vouched for [his] surrender, skillfully utilizing [it as] a tactic of slowing down our forces."¹⁹⁹ Not only did Sun and other officials mistrust Zheng's intentions, but they also felt that Ma secretly collaborated with him, and to no good end. Shortly after Cai departed from Beijing, another censor came forward to accuse Zheng of an "irreverent attitude" to the court, and requested that his envoy be detained and executed.²⁰⁰

Under heavy pressure from below, the emperor reversed his previously lenient attitude and, in an edict dated Shunzhi 16.10/25 (December 8, 1659), laid down a strict bottom line for his

¹⁹⁴ *Zheng shi shiliao xubian*, 1240.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1238.

¹⁹⁶ Xia, 25.

¹⁹⁷ This interpretation comes from Wu Zhenglong, and is quite strongly supported by the circumstantial evidence. See Wu Zhenglong, "Zheng-Qing heyi zai jiantao 2," 22.

¹⁹⁸ *Manwen dang'an* 2, 135

¹⁹⁹ *Shunzhi shilu*, 176-177.

²⁰⁰ Xia, 25.

officials in all subsequent negotiations with Zheng:

“If the sea bandit Zheng Chenggong dispatches someone to come with a letter of surrender, and fakes his submission just like what he did again and again the previous times...there is no need to memorialize. If he personally shaves his hair and comes to surrender with himself bound, then you can memorialize.”²⁰¹

The suspicion over Zheng’s sincerity, then, lay not just in his non-submissive actions and attitude per se, but, more fundamentally, in his refusal to shave his hair. During the talks, he evidently could not agree to this ultimate demonstration of loyalty, even if he prepared to accept all other conditions. As seen, the preservation of long hair in the context of an autonomous entity along the lines of Korea or Vietnam represented the one concrete assurance of his current privileges along the southeastern coast. Since this issue also touched upon the core cultural values of the Han people, and thereby, a pillar of his legitimacy, he needed far more attractive concessions to persuade him to give up his distinctiveness and become a direct subject by shaving his head.²⁰²

However, in late 1659, the Shunzhi Emperor and his officials were in no mood to court Zheng, as they had earlier in the decade. Besides the dismal failure of such efforts previously, the Qing state now stood in a far stronger position than ever before. Of course, it still faced the massive challenge of consolidating its hold over a broken country ravaged by years of continuous warfare and daunting fiscal shortfalls due to widespread tax evasion and a skyrocketing military budget.²⁰³ Yet, it had almost eliminated all other challengers to its legitimacy on the Chinese Mainland, relegating the forces of the Yongli court to a small corner of the southwest. Therefore, the Qing could afford to turn its entire attention toward neutralizing Zheng’s resistance in the southeast.

Since he refused to surrender unconditionally, the Qing displayed an increasingly aggressive posture toward him, a sign of its newly found confidence after the Jiangnan victory. In November, its troops attacked and inflicted heavy losses on several of Zheng’s divisions, including those of Zhou Quanbin, engaged in the plunder and extraction of resources in the Wenzhou area.²⁰⁴ On 10/4 (November 17), the Shunzhi Emperor ordered Manchu banner troops under Dasu to march to Fuzhou from Nanjing. There, he would join the Han Green Standard infantry and navy from the three provinces of Zhejiang, Fujian, and Guangdong to launch a massive, all-out offensive on Xiamen. The emperor had already instructed his Council of Ministers to discuss the invasion on 8/23 (October 8), and preparations, including ship construction and horse-breeding activities, were well under way. However, he had refrained

²⁰¹ *Zheng shi shiliao xubian*, 1105-1106.

²⁰² Struve, and Wu Zhenglong, *Zheng Chenggong yu Qing zhengfu jian de tanpan*, 180-181.

²⁰³ Wakeman, 1061, 1070. From the period of 1644 to 1660, the Qing court estimated that the total fiscal deficit amounted to over 27 million taels (over a thousand tons) of silver and 7 million piculs (350,000 tons) of rice. See Wakeman, 1061.

²⁰⁴ Yang Ying, 167 and Ruan, 32.

from issuing his final approval of the council's recommendations until over a month later due to ongoing negotiations with Cai Zheng.²⁰⁵ For this reason, both central and provincial officials memorialized the court to stop wasting time with fruitless talks and exterminate Zheng once and for all, taking advantage of his fresh defeat and the low morale of his troops.

Meanwhile, Cai Zheng, upon hearing word of the recriminations against him and fearing impending capture, escaped back to Jiangnan via small country roads.²⁰⁶ At Wusong, Ma Fengzhi secretly sheltered him for several months before ordering someone to accompany him to northern Fujian in February 1660. From there, he made the final leg of the journey back to Xiamen on his own.²⁰⁷ Ma had cut Cai's hair short to avoid arousing suspicion and capture, and sent along with the envoy gifts of silver, clothes, and a letter to Zheng, the exact contents of which remain unknown.²⁰⁸ However, after Cai returned to Xiamen later that month, he did reveal to Zheng crucial information, either obtained from that correspondence or his personal observations in Beijing.²⁰⁹ Not only had negotiations failed, but the emperor also dispatched tens of thousands of soldiers and hundreds of ships under Dasu to attack Xiamen. Moreover, Ma Fengzhi was relieved of his duties and recalled to Beijing due to his inaction during the Jiangnan invasion.²¹⁰

Last Stand

In preparation for the imminent attack, Zheng pulled back his divisions spread out along the entire southeastern coast to the islands around Xiamen, where he concentrated most of his ships, and relocated the family members of his officers and soldiers from his main base to adjacent Jinmen.²¹¹ He now prepared to fight for the very survival of his organization. If the Manchus wanted to "struggle for supremacy with us between the ships and waves," he confidently told his men, the "advantage of master and guest already cannot be compared, and that of water and land is even more lopsided."²¹² He knew that his officers and soldiers would put in extra effort on familiar territory to defend their homes and property from foreign invasion. This tremendous motivation, combined with his naval superiority in both numbers and quality, and complemented by offers of lavish rewards and leniency in punishment, had sufficiently bolstered the spirits of his men by the time the Qing forces attacked on June 17, 1660.²¹³ They beat back the invasion

²⁰⁵ *Zheng shi shiliao xubian*, 1054. We can thus determine that Cai Zheng probably stayed in Beijing for some period of time during the month of October and must have departed before the Shunzhi Emperor's edict calling for the unconditional shaving of hair in early November.

²⁰⁶ Xia, 25.

²⁰⁷ *Shunzhi shilu*, 186 and *Manwen dang'an* 2, 163.

²⁰⁸ *Shunzhi shilu*, 186.

²⁰⁹ Yang Ying and Xia give the date of Cai's arrival in Xiamen as January 1660, but the Manchu-language archives, which includes the testimony of the person who accompanied him to Fujian, show more convincing evidence that the envoy only departed from Wusong about a month later. See Yang Ying, 168; Xia, 25; and *Manwen dang'an* 2, 162.

²¹⁰ Yang Ying, 168; Xia, 25; and *Shunzhi shilu*, 170.

²¹¹ Yang Ying, 172 and Ruan, 33.

²¹² Yang Ying, 172.

²¹³ Struve, 189 and Wu Zhenglong, "Zheng-Qing heyi zai jiantao 2," 20.

force along two fronts, decimating the enemy fleets and massacring the Manchu soldiers that tried to make a landing on an adjacent island.²¹⁴

Through this tremendous victory, Zheng had obtained revenge for his previous defeats in Jiangnan, and, to drive that point home and make the Qing think twice before ever invading his bases again, he cut off the ears and hands of over 300 Manchu prisoners before sending them back to Dasu's camp.²¹⁵ Despite the strong show of force, Zheng still faced severe long-term challenges to the continued viability of his organization. His defeat at Jiangnan signaled the end of major organized challenge to Qing rule, but, at the same time, negotiations had failed to secure him any satisfactory form of legitimacy within the new order, a possibility that appeared increasingly less likely by the day. Highly incensed at the loss of some of his most elite soldiers, the Shunzhi Emperor was determined to keep attacking until he either had Zheng killed or forced him to shave his head and surrender unconditionally.

On Shunzhi 17.7/24 (August 29, 1660), the emperor granted Geng Jimao (d. 1672), the son of a veteran commander, a hereditary fiefdom in Fujian to specifically deal with the maritime threat.²¹⁶ The Qing would eventually place two more semi-autonomous feudatories in the other restive frontier areas of the empire to oversee defense and reconstruction efforts. Wu Sangui was put in charge of the southwestern provinces he had helped conquer, while Shang Kexi (1604-1676) assumed responsibility over Guangdong. These men commanded the personal loyalty of their troops and had rights to use them to a certain degree. However, local administration and matters of taxation all lay in the hands of centrally appointed officials. On 7/29, Shizu further dispatched Manchu banner troops under the imperial clansman Loto to capture Xiamen again, and did not permit him "to talk about merit" as long as the "bandits remain unpacified."²¹⁷ With other resistance movements already eliminated or on the verge of collapse, Zheng's troops, although remaining powerful and intact, nevertheless had to face the might of the entire empire alone.

At this time, Ma Fengzhi and other suspected Zheng collaborators among the gentry and military organs in Jiangnan were put in jail, beaten, or executed.²¹⁸ Meanwhile, the Qing began

²¹⁴ Due to the humiliating nature of this defeat, Qing official sources either remain silent or gloss over the invasion, including the number of casualties. Peng gives a rough estimate of 10,000 casualties, a figure anecdotally confirmed by the sight of Qing corpses littering the bays and inlets around Xiamen. See Peng, 55. Moreover, as the biographies of Manchu Eight-Banner officers show, quite a few of them perished during this invasion. See, for instance, Ortai, et al., *juan* 144, 3738 and *juan* 223, 5113-5114.

²¹⁵ Yang Ying, 178 and Peng, 55. Some historical accounts written by early Qing gentry, such as Ruan and Peng, claim that Dasu committed suicide after his return to Fuzhou from the disastrous campaign, a stance also adopted by Wong Young-tsu. See Wong, 141; Ruan, 36; and Peng, 55. However, a reading of Yang Ying and Qing official documents would reveal that Dasu was still alive, although he had been demoted and incorporated into a fresh invasion force under Loto. See *Shunzhi shilu*, 179.

²¹⁶ *Shunzhi shilu*, 178 and Struve, 189. For a detailed study of the purpose and function of the Three Feudatories, see Liu Fengyun, *Qing dai Sanfan yanjiu (The Study of the Three Feudatories during the Qing Period)* (Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, 1994), 111-112.

²¹⁷ *Shunzhi shilu*, 179.

²¹⁸ Wakeman, 1046 and *Shunzhi shilu*, 179-180, 186. The Shunzhi Emperor had initially simply wished to relieve Ma Fengzhi of his command, but only because of his fence-sitting attitude, and decided to keep his honorary titles intact. As 1660 proceeded along, details gradually emerged of his earlier consideration to surrender and contacts with the adversary. The most

to put teeth into its maritime prohibitions. It proceeded steadily with the roundup of Zheng's spies and trading agents, and the confiscation of his firms operating within its territory, measures already initiated in 1658 at the suggestion of the defector Huang Wu.²¹⁹ Since the Qing now possessed most of the coastline due to Zheng's earlier withdrawal to defend Xiamen, it could readily deny him access to food and supplies. On 9/11, the court approved the memorial of Fujian Governor-General Li Shuaitai (d. 1666) to evacuate the residents of the coastal areas of Haicheng and Tongan, the county to which Xiamen belonged, and relocate them into the interior to make sure they could not sail out to sea and conduct covert trade with Zheng.²²⁰ All of these policies would grow in harshness and intensity in the years to come.

In contrast to the uncompromising attitude toward Zheng and his organization as a whole, the Qing, even before Dasu's attack, had begun to actively court his followers. In what would become an increasingly institutionalized and prominent fixture of measures taken against the regime, the emperor promised amnesty and high ranks and rewards for anyone who could "capture [Chenggong] alive" or "cut off his head and come to surrender."²²¹ This imperial edict, promulgated in November 1659, claimed that Zheng's followers knew perfectly well about the organization's impending doom, and "must have a heart of regret. Only because they have followed the rebels for so long that they fear they would not be forgiven for their crimes...for this reason, they do not plan in haste to submit."²²² By lowering his standards for defection, the Shunzhi Emperor hoped to persuade Zheng's followers to put aside their concerns and help bring down his regime from within. The Qing now attempted to position itself as the one "power that could maintain public order and suppress crime and violence" along the coast, to compete with Zheng Chenggong for the hearts and minds of the macroregion.²²³

This shift in policy quickly won over adherents. Even before the Qing attack, Zheng's main cook had plotted with Li Shuaitai to poison Zheng and his officers by trying to inject peacock venom in their snacks.²²⁴ During Dasu's invasion, Chen Peng (d. 1660), commander of a garrison defending the critical northern approach to Xiamen, had secretly agreed to turn over the strategic location to Shi Lang.²²⁵ Zheng still inspired enough loyalty and fear among the majority of his soldiers to thwart both attempts, but these unprecedented threats to his survival were sure to make him realize how much he was on the defensive.²²⁶ Although his men

damning evidence, however, came from a Zheng spy intercepted while on his way to the commander's camp. He carried with him a letter from Chenggong to his father, and several more from one of Chenggong's officers requesting Ma to secure the release of a cousin imprisoned in Beijing. The correspondence also enclosed bribes to both Ma and contacts in the Qing capital. After repeated memorials from numerous Jiangnan officials, the Shunzhi Emperor finally agreed to order Ma Fengzhi's execution in early 1661. See *Shunzhi shilu*, 176-178, 186-187.

²¹⁹ *Zheng shi shiliao sanbian*, 1.

²²⁰ *Shunzhi shilu*, 185.

²²¹ *Zheng shi shiliao xubian*, 1046.

²²² *Ibid.*

²²³ Wills, "Contingent Connections," 183.

²²⁴ Jiang Risheng, 185-186 and Shen Yun, 47.

²²⁵ Peng, 55 and Ruan, 35.

²²⁶ The poison attempt was foiled when a minor cook responsible for putting the venom in the food, fearing retribution, reported

received a temporary boost after the victory, they remained trapped on Xiamen and several other islands, continually threatened with a renewed Qing onslaught. To further dampen the mood, resource shortages began to bite due to their huge concentration in a small area cut off from its surrounding hinterlands. Out of sheer hunger and necessity, many soldiers deserted ranks and fled into the Qing camp.²²⁷ Bereft of continental connections to assure the security of his entity, he now looked overseas to create a new world abroad.

on his superior. See Jiang Risheng, 186 and Shen Yun, 47. Likewise, Chen Peng's subordinates refused to heed his order to remain still as Qing soldiers made their landing, and, instead, charged at the unprepared enemy with full force. An infuriated Zheng had Chen dismembered for attempting to defect. See Ruan, 35 and Yang Ying, 181.

²²⁷ Zha, *Lu chunqiu*, 73.

CHAPTER 4: BRAVE NEW WORLD

Confined to two island bases in a narrow corner of Mainland China, and pinned down on three sides by hostile forces, Zheng Chenggong appeared to have run out of options. According to accepted Confucian standards of loyalty, his only path would now be to refuse to withdraw or surrender, and prepare to give his life defiantly for the Ming cause. Zhang Huangyan conformed completely to this set of expectations. After his epic escape from Jiangnan in 1659, he continued to launch raids on the coastal areas until his troops gradually deserted him. He then disbanded the remaining scores of men under him and settled down on an isolated island off of Zhejiang, where he lived in seclusion until Qing spies pinpointed his location in 1664. They proceeded to have him and a handful of followers, including Luo Zimu, captured and brought to the yamen of the Zhejiang governor-general at Hangzhou. Despite treatment as guests of honor, the men refused to even eat, drink, or bow down, much less shave their hair. They only requested the governor-general to grant them a speedy death. After several weeks of fruitless persuasion, the Qing authorities conceded to their wish and beheaded them.¹

Although he had considered the option, Zheng Chenggong ultimately refused to go down such a road. In fact, his multiculturalism precisely allowed him to step out of the rigid dichotomy of loyalty and submission, and find a way to maintain both his image as a model Confucian and his own survival by making a bold leap across geographic space, toward the overseas island of Taiwan. However, his decision to occupy Taiwan from the VOC and settle it for the long-term ran into strong opposition from his followers, who saw the move as forced exile and a betrayal of his commitment to Ming restoration and defense of their macroregion from foreign invaders. The subsequent relocation abroad resulted in two more successive and interconnected blows to the organization that nearly brought about its demise: the death of the last Ming pretender and Zheng's father, both at the hands of the Qing, and the demise of Chenggong himself. These events unleashed a bitter struggle for succession within the family that culminated in massive defections to the Manchus, and a Qing-Dutch invasion that dislodged Zheng Jing, Chenggong's son and successor, from his last Mainland bases in 1664. The resulting collapse in the Zheng regime's traditional legitimacy prompted the need to search for new forms of political symbols and identity on an overseas island over the course of the next decade.

A Prelude to Invasion

Both contemporary Chinese and Dutch accounts wholeheartedly credit Zheng Chenggong's invasion of Taiwan to the advice of He Tingbin. As we have seen, Governor Frederick Coyett had stripped the double-dealing He of his honored positions as translator and headman of Taiwan's Chinese community. Deprived of his wealth and hounded by creditors, he had fled

¹ Wen, 329-330 and Shao, 115-116.



Figure 19. A garden on the grounds of He Tingbin's former mansion in Tainan, Taiwan, which would later become a part of the Tainan Public Meeting Hall under Japanese colonial rule.

Photograph by author, 2009

across the strait with his family to seek the protection of Zheng Chenggong and Zheng Tai.² Once at Xiamen, the Chinese narratives claim, He presented Chenggong with a map of Taiwan, and described it to him in glowing terms as a fertile, resource-rich island and an entrepôt of maritime trade, “truly a place for hegemons.” If he could occupy it, He asserted that he would possess a secure base “sufficient to resist the entire Middle Kingdom.”³ Deeply convinced, the accounts go on to show, Zheng promptly decided to dispatch troops to Taiwan. Similarly, the Dutch learned from Chinese defectors at one point during the invasion that Zheng later regretted his decision to attack, as “he had been badly deceived by Pincqua.”⁴ Certainly, He used his knowledge of the ocean currents around Taiwan and its geography, as well as inside information about the VOC acquired through years of collaboration, to guide the expeditionary force and

² C. E. S., 68.

³ Jiang Risheng, 191. Similar versions of He's words can be found in Xia, 27 and Peng, 56.

⁴ *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part IV, 620.

formulate campaign strategies.⁵

However, his connections to the Zheng organization had a far deeper dimension, as already alluded to in his secret collection of duties on all China-bound junks on its behalf, which had led to his downfall in the first place. Even before these activities came to light, He Tingbin had run into trouble with the company in 1654 for hiring several divers to conduct unauthorized surveys of the depths of a bay near Jilong in the name of recovering treasure from a sunken Spanish vessel. The colonial authorities suspected him and the divers, who “appear to be impoverished men,” of “harboring evil intentions” with their strange behavior, namely, “to receive tiny scraps of advantage from the Mandarin Corsima [Koxinga].”⁶ Unfazed, he conducted another survey in 1657, ordering Guo Ping, a minor translator under him, to discover a sea route toward the main Dutch settlements in southern Taiwan while disguised as a fisherman.⁷ These covert endeavors, and perhaps many more that escaped any documentation, provide strong evidence that He Tingbin was already gathering sensitive geographic information about the island crucial for a potential invasion years before he fled. Therefore, he could not have acted alone merely out of revenge, but must have enjoyed the active support of Zheng Chenggong, who had been considering just such an eventuality.

In fact, it becomes even clearer from Zheng’s behavior on other occasions that Taiwan had long served as an important factor in his strategic calculations. Years before his surrender to the Qing, Zheng Zhilong had already instructed his son that “if your efforts should come to naught, you can always find security on Taiwan similar to Qiuran,” referring to a famed seventh-century knight-errant.⁸ Qiuran, whose name means “the Bearded Warrior,” had abandoned the scramble for China, leaving its unification to the Tang Dynasty, and went into voluntary exile in Manchuria, where he seized the throne of a local kingdom.⁹ For Chenggong, then, the conquest and occupation of Taiwan served as a legitimate option of last resort to supplement his primary Mainland concerns.

The VOC authorities appeared to have sensed this intention, since they remained highly suspicious of his every move throughout their rule over the island. As early as 1652, a letter from the colonial authorities at Batavia had warned Taiwan Governor Nicolaes Verburg (d. 1676) that Zheng, “through pressure from the Tartars [Manchus], can no longer hold out in China.” He “may well have set his sights upon Formosa, to settle down there.”¹⁰ That same year, an

⁵ As the Dutch authorities themselves admitted, He’s defection “could place the Company in a highly difficult position, because he can easily provide his new protector with vital information regarding the position of the Company.” See *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part IV, 314.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Part III, 295. In his translation of this portion of the *dagregisters* into Chinese, Jiang Shusheng notes that Corsima appears to be a mistake made in the original transcription for Koxinga. See *Relanzhecheng rizhi*, Part III: 1648-1655 (2003), 295.

⁷ Jiang Risheng, 165. This survey apparently went unnoticed by the Dutch, and, therefore, remained unrecorded in their otherwise meticulous documents.

⁸ Chen Lunjiong, *Haiguo wenjianlu (Record of Things Heard and Seen in the Maritime Kingdoms)*, TWWXCK, 26 (1958), 21.

⁹ For more on Qiuran, see Du Guangting, “Qiuranke zhuan” (“Biography of the Bearded Warrior”), in *Tang-Song chuanqi zhuan (Legendary Biographies of the Tang and Song Periods)*, ed. Zhang Youhe (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1962).

¹⁰ C. E. S., 187.

abortive uprising against Dutch rule led by the headman Guo Huaiyi (d. 1652) and involving about a quarter of the island's Chinese population, fueled widespread suspicion of the rebels' ties to the Zheng organization.¹¹ In every subsequent year, the Dutch continued to voice concerns that, should Zheng's conflict with the Manchus turn against him, the island would become a perfect target for his soldiers, warnings that accord well with what his father had once advised him.¹²

These latent fears broke out into open panic after his defeat outside Nanjing in 1659, and his increasing confinement to Xiamen and Jinmen. Early in 1660, rumors of an impending invasion began to circulate wildly throughout the island, causing many Chinese to sell their property, slow down their debt repayments, and repatriate their assets and send their wives and children back to China.¹³ When Frederick Coyett, governor of Taiwan, wrote a letter requesting Zheng to clarify his intentions, his reply insisted that he had no use for "a land that yields forth so little grass," and warned the Dutch against listening to "gossip spread by a rabble of ill-intentioned people."¹⁴ Yet, in the same letter, Zheng added, "How, then, can the common man understand my hidden thoughts, and predict my exact intentions, which have not been made public to anyone?"¹⁵ These words, in keeping with his characteristic desire to avoid any kind of open commitment toward a singular course of action, sounded hardly reassuring to the Dutch.

In fact, the VOC authorities on Taiwan had analyzed the situation across the strait with a high degree of accuracy. In December 1659, soon after Cai Zheng returned and reported the failure of negotiations with the Qing, Zheng Chenggong set out to repair his junks and order the production of new weapons.¹⁶ The following month, he convened a meeting to discuss the idea of dispatching his Revenue Officer, Zheng Tai, and Huang Ting, a key general in charge of Xiamen's defense, to "pacify Taiwan" with two divisions and settle the "families of officials and soldiers" there.¹⁷ Days later, Chenggong commanded Huang to train his men, and relocated all civil and military officials to open-air tents, where they would reside and await the order to advance.¹⁸ Presently, a headman of the Chinese community in Taiwan leaked the matter to

¹¹ The Guo Huaiyi rebellion flared up primarily due to widespread discontent and anger among Chinese farmers in the countryside over the heavy burden imposed by a mandatory poll-tax, as well as the extortion they had to suffer in its collection. Detailed studies of the social conditions in Taiwan on the eve of the uprising include Huber, "Chinese Settlers," 280-283 and Andrade, 8.15-8.18. However, Johannes Huber concludes that no evidence supports any connection of this uprising to Zheng Chenggong, who was himself locked in a fierce battle during this time with the Manchus outside of Zhangzhou. Still, given the widespread social discontent, when Zheng "did turn his attention to Taiwan later in the 1650s, his agents surely found a population ready to give him allegiance and help him throw off the Dutch regime." See Huber, "Chinese Settlers," 290.

¹² C. E. S., 188-194.

¹³ C. E. S., 70-71 and Andrade, 11.8. A glimpse of these rumors can be found in the many letters exchanged among the Chinese residents of Taiwan and their relatives and friends back home that the Dutch managed to intercept. They all speak of an imminent attack, and advised against staying, encouraging those still on the island to return to the Mainland or Penghu. See C. E. S., 194-198.

¹⁴ C. E. S., 89.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ The Dutch on Taiwan also got word that Zheng "was probably negotiating with the Tartars, but until now, there have still been no results." See Cheng, 533.

¹⁷ Yang Ying, 168.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Governor Coyett, who undertook prompt measures to bolster the island's defenses.¹⁹ Sensing this heightened state of preparedness, and the additional news of the Manchu general Dasu's advance on Xiamen, Zheng canceled his planned invasion and instead resettled all personnel and their families on nearby Jinmen.²⁰

However, Zheng Chenggong set his sights upon Taiwan yet again after his victory over Dasu in June. He first made sure that the Qing would not try to launch a renewed offensive. Zheng sent a woman's kerchief to the Manchu commander and Fujian Governor-General Li Shuaitai, challenging them to either receive this token of humiliation or return it if they wished to fight for their honor. The two men treated his envoys with courtesy, and signaled their acceptance of the kerchief in their replies, thereby assuring Zheng of their disinclination to pick another battle.²¹ His rear secured for the time being, he prepared his fleets to cross the strait in September and land on Wankan, hoping that the autumn harvest on the island would provide sufficient food for his soldiers and allow them to travel light.²² However, the arrival at Taiwan, on September 19, of reinforcements of twelve ships and 600 soldiers from Batavia under the command of Joan van der Laen thwarted Zheng's plans again.²³

Zheng's ability to flexibly adjust his strategies in response to the situation on the island reflected his close relationship with the local Chinese community, including many powerful headmen, whom the colonial authorities suspected, with good reason, of spying on his behalf.²⁴ They feared that these local leaders, who wielded tremendous authority over a "large retinue of laborers and artisans," could recruit them to collect sensitive information about the company or mobilize them to respond to his invasion force from within.²⁵ In fact, an informant alerted the Dutch of one headman who received three secret letters from an official in Zheng's territory, while another was caught lying to the governor, saying he knew nothing about rumors of an impending invasion after he had just told a second company official otherwise. To prevent them from using their enormous influence to assist the goals of a potential adversary, Governor Coyett held the elders and several other influential figures as hostages at Fort Provintia.²⁶ Yet, He Tingbin's defection undoubtedly opened up for Zheng an even larger web of valuable connections.²⁷ In addition to presenting him the map, He recruited for him three hundred navigators with extensive knowledge of the island's coastline.²⁸

¹⁹ C. E. S., 71 and Jacobus Anne van der Chijs, ed., *Batavia dagregisters, 1661* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1889), 63.

²⁰ Yang Ying, 172 and *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part IV, 344.

²¹ Yang Ying, 182.

²² *Batavia dagregisters, 1661*, 63.

²³ *Batavia dagregisters, 1661*, 62 and C. E. S., 84. Zheng had originally believed that Batavia would not send ships to Taiwan so late in the year.

²⁴ C. E. S., 72.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ As early as 1659, in a report back to the Netherlands, the Governor-General at Batavia lamented that He Tingbin's defection would "place the VOC at Tayouan in a difficult position, as he could easily provide his protector with vital information regarding the position of the Company..." See *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part IV, 314.

²⁸ C. E. S., 83.

The Han Chinese commoners on Taiwan, the majority of them agriculturalists reeling under heavy taxes and rampant abuse in their collection, widely anticipated and supported an invasion. Moreover, they somehow managed to acquire prior notice of any moves Zheng made.²⁹ In the countryside outside Tayouan and Provintia, the colonial authorities heard reports about the Chinese making the aboriginal villagers “averse...to the Company,” and inciting them to revolt. They boasted to them of Zheng’s superior weaponry and armor, which “the Hollanders, with their muskets, could not pierce.”³⁰ On April 14, 1661, two weeks before Zheng’s arrival on Taiwan, the Dutch discovered that many of the Chinese houses in Tayouan have been abandoned, with their doors bolted shut. The men and women living there had fled their homes and sought refuge across the bay in Provintia.³¹ To curb the rapid spread of such destabilizing information, the authorities discontinued all navigation to the Fujian coast, ordered fishermen to return to shore, and prohibited food vendors from hawking inside the fortresses.³²

However, these measures had a highly limited effect. For instance, the fishing boats around Wankan, Zheng Zhilong’s former turf, obstinately refused to head back, and moved to a place farther along the coast that proved far more difficult to access.³³ As mentioned, Chenggong had already set his sights on the area for a possible landing, and evidently wanted to employ these vessels to guide his junks. When Zheng’s forces finally appeared on the shores of Tayouan on April 30, 1661, “some thousands of the country’s common Chinese came to meet” them as if by appointment, and helped them set foot on land with “carts and other instruments.”³⁴ We have seen how the Zheng regime, unlike both the Ming and Qing, had a strong maritime orientation that presented a credible alternative for the Chinese on Taiwan, and undermined Dutch institutions and regulations from within. Hence, when He Tingbin fell out of favor with the company and into debt, he could flee to Zheng for help. In the same manner, commoners would welcome him as a liberator from the VOC’s onerous burdens.

Dissonant Voices

Although He Tingbin and the Chinese residents on Taiwan had good reasons to cheer on an invasion, Zheng Chenggong ran into significant problems convincing his “state” to do the same. Besides encountering a Qing offensive on his bases and the VOC’s timely detection of his plans, Zheng’s hesitation to launch the campaign reflected his own doubts in the face of intense disagreements among him and his subordinates. When he first informed them about his

²⁹ Andrade, 8.15-8.18.

³⁰ Ibid., 72-73.

³¹ *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part IV, 344.

³² C. E. S., 72.

³³ Ibid., 73. Governor Coyett had to dispatch a force of 50 musketeers in six Chinese junks to force these recalcitrant fishermen to return. See Ibid., 198.

³⁴ Ibid., 101. Yang Ying gives the date of landing as Yongli 15.3.1, or April 29, 1661, one day earlier than the *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part IV, 348. Coyett, on the other hand, claims that Zheng appeared on April 31, a certain mistake, since the month only has 30 days! Due to its detailed and reliable recording of information, I utilize the date given by the *Zeelandia dagregisters*.

decision, “nobody dared oppose him” due to his fearsome reputation for strict discipline, “but their faces revealed strong displeasure.”³⁵ Zheng Tai and Huang Ting, both entrusted with the initial plan to attack in March 1660, were reluctant to carry out orders. Huang expressed his fear of the powerful Dutch cannons and treacherous sea route across the strait.³⁶ Likewise, Zheng Tai saw “no good opportunity” during this time, citing insufficient ammunition, and, along with the other officers, called for a postponement until September, “a month before the harvest of the paddies.”³⁷ By far the most explicit and vocal opposition came from Wu Hao (d. 1661), who was assigned to lead the upcoming expedition.³⁸ Besides pointing to the power of the Dutch and geographic obstacles, he complained of the island having “bad fengshui” and viewed its “water and soil” as containing “many elements of disease.”³⁹

The strong and sturdy fortress at Zeelandia, strategically positioned in the middle of several narrow ocean channels leading toward the main island, and defended by some of the most powerful and well-armed fleets in the early modern world, certainly presented a significant obstacle. Yet, even with the arrival of Joan van der Laen’s reinforcements, surprisingly few troops guarded the island, only 1,500 to be precise. In fact, most of them consisted of untrained young recruits or lay sick in the hospitals.⁴⁰ Zheng Chenggong already observed this fact quite accurately, noting that “the barbarian rabble in the fortresses does not exceed a thousand.”⁴¹ Against his own force, which, despite suffering heavy losses at the hands of the Manchus, still numbered in the several tens of thousands spread out along the entire Mainland coast, the Dutch could not stand a chance.⁴² Moreover, the company’s seemingly invincible fleets had fought a major naval engagement before with his father, Zheng Zhilong, in 1633, and ended up suffering a spectacular defeat.⁴³

It seems hard to believe that Zheng Chenggong’s commanders, battle-hardened veterans who successfully held their ground for years against the seemingly invincible Manchus, and braved countless hardships campaigning along the resource-deficient coast, would balk at his proposal on these grounds alone. John Wills puts forth a more credible explanation, attributing their objections to “commercial opportunism and instinct of self-preservation,” and refusal to abandon

³⁵ Yang Ying, 185 and Ruan, 36.

³⁶ Jiang Risheng, 192.

³⁷ C. E. S., 83.

³⁸ Dutch sources call him Gauja Banca.

³⁹ Yang Ying, 185. The Dutch corroborate Wu Hao’s opposition, but notes the reason for it being the island’s “poor crop yield (*slechte gewas*),” as in *Batavia dagregisters, 1661*, 63. Yang Ying and other Chinese accounts portray the disagreements among Zheng and his subordinates as taking place during a large meeting held in January 1661, several weeks before the actual invasion. As the Dutch sources show, however, the final decision to attack Taiwan occurred as a result of negotiations within the Zheng organization that lasted over the course of a year and a half. Yang and others, such as Jiang Risheng and Ruan Minxi, conceivably condensed the previous events and dialogues into the last meeting to facilitate their narratives and achieve maximum dramatic effect.

⁴⁰ C. E. S., 86.

⁴¹ Yang Ying, 185.

⁴² Ruan, 36.

⁴³ For more on this monumental battle and its overall context and significance, see Blussé, “Minnan-jen or Cosmopolitan,” 262-263.

their “coastal trade connections” in Fujian.⁴⁴ Chen Bisheng similarly notes that some of them did not want to “give up the huge profits of maritime trade,” while others “did not want to live a life of hardship in Taiwan.”⁴⁵ These observations, while valid, continue to oversimplify the motives of Zheng’s subordinates in opposing the invasion of the island.

In fact, Taiwan was not some remote *terra incognita*. Despite complaints about its inhospitable climate and disease-ridden soil, they evidently did not prevent immigration and the rapid growth of the Chinese population, estimated at around 50,000 on the eve of the invasion.⁴⁶ As seen, the Zheng organization also had sizable economic interests there, maintaining an intimate, though at times troubled, commercial relationship with the Dutch. Moreover, prominent civil and military officials within the organization conducted trade with Taiwan on their own accounts. Chenggong’s half-brother Tai, for instance, enlisted He Tingbin as his official merchant and sheltered the translator after the latter’s flight to Xiamen.⁴⁷ One of Tai’s own nephews, Phenqua, resided on Taiwan, and even purchased a house for 2,300 *rijksdalders* from a Dutchman named Wynand on behalf of his uncle.⁴⁸ Many of Chenggong’s other subordinates, as former followers of his father, had likewise traveled or lived there extensively. Besides Hong Xu, whom we mentioned earlier, Wu Hao had set foot on the island before, and acquired his extensive knowledge of local conditions and the state of Dutch defenses during his stay.⁴⁹ Evidently, Chenggong’s subordinates had far broader perspectives on the world outside China than for what Wills or Chen was willing to give them credit.

If the maintenance of commercial networks comprised their foremost and only concern, then they certainly would have no problem moving to Taiwan. Not only did the island serve as an ideal entrepôt lying at the crossroads of the triangular trade among China, Japan, and Southeast Asia, but it also had a mature infrastructure for the business laid by the VOC, making it one of the company’s most profitable trading outposts.⁵⁰ Moreover, the island’s tremendous agricultural potential would provide a welcome relief from Zheng’s tenuous outposts on barren islands and narrow strips of coastal farmland that provided only a precarious subsistence. Ironically, however, the elites who would become the most vociferous opponents of the planned invasion, including Zheng Tai, Hong Xu, and Wu Hao, possessed the most extensive knowledge of Taiwan and enjoyed an intimate relationship with its Chinese community.

To understand their behavior, we must refer once again to the image of Taiwan in the minds of Ming and Qing contemporaries. Like them, Zheng Chenggong’s own followers and associates saw the island and its entire population as not only outside the traditional boundaries

⁴⁴ Wills, “Maritime China,” 227.

⁴⁵ Chen Bisheng, 67.

⁴⁶ Shepherd, 96.

⁴⁷ C. E. S., 68 and *Batavia dagregisters, 1661*, 83.

⁴⁸ *Batavia dagregisters, 1661*, 83.

⁴⁹ Yang Ying, 185 and Ruan, 36.

⁵⁰ A year-by-year breakdown of the profits of the Taiwan factory compared to the total balance of the VOC’s operations can be found in Nara, 168. Nara estimates that the overall average annual income from the colony made up 71.6% of company profits, a figure that rose to a height of 301.7% in 1654. See Nara, 169.

of the *guo*, but also occupying the most extreme periphery of the *tianxia*. Xia Lin and Ruan Minxi, Fujianese gentry who lived in Xiamen and Jinmen under Zheng, portray Taiwan as a place where the “local savages lived impurely and disorderly (*za*).”⁵¹ Zhang Huangyan spoke of it in even more disparaging terms, calling it “a desolate southern wilderness with smoky peaks and the hundred *man* barbarians.”⁵² Shen Guangwen, who was closely affiliated with the Zhejiang loyalists, notes that the island “had never entered the boundaries of the Nine Divisions” and “was not carried in maps of the Middle Kingdom.”⁵³ Shi Lang likewise observed that it “lay beyond [cultural] transformation (*huawai*)” and “had not entered the map (*wei ru bantu*).”⁵⁴

Shi’s viewpoint accorded especially well with Zheng’s military commanders, with whom he shared a similar background. From the overall context mentioned above, their complaints about Taiwan’s climate and powerful Dutch defenses merely served as a veneer for their real concern: their strong reluctance to relocate to what they considered a foreign, “barbarian” island outside their homes in “China.” Despite their frequent journeys to Taiwan and close interactions with the Chinese community and VOC authorities, the Zheng subordinates cared about it only to the extent that it served as a source of income to enrich themselves and their families within their Mainland bases. Taiwan, in other words, provided a *means* to acquire personal wealth and continued sustenance to Zheng Chenggong’s organization, which, in turn, protected their property, ancestral graves, and native places along the coast from outside attack. However, they could not accept the idea of making it an *end* goal of settlement and development in its own right, a move tantamount to exile away from their cherished homes.

For those who had resided on the island with Zheng Zhilong during his earlier years as a pirate, their return to Fujian after his surrender to the Ming represented not just a change in geographic setting, but also the crossing of a vast cultural and class boundary. Yeh Wen-hsin’s study of abrupt spatial shifts from peripheries to cores, and their contribution to the radicalization of young rural intellectuals transplanted to urban Shanghai in the aftermath of the May Fourth Movement, provides a startling but fitting analogy to the situation examined here. The striking contrast between a precarious existence as outlaws and smugglers hiding in the mountains of southern Taiwan, as opposed to the refined life of officials on the Mainland coast with access to all manner of luxuries, caused “the dissonance between the two worlds to be more sharply felt.” Together with the resulting “shift of cultural allegiance from one space to another,” they actively sought to distance themselves from their shady past identities.⁵⁵ For this reason, men like Wu Hao became the most vocal opponents of the invasion.

Besides their own reluctance, Zheng’s military commanders faced significant pressure from

⁵¹ Ruan, 36 and Xia, 27.

⁵² Zhang Huangyan, *Shiwenji*, 184.

⁵³ Shen Guangwen, 702. The Nine Divisions (*Jiuzhou*) were the traditional territorial units of China according to the “Tribute of Yu.”

⁵⁴ Shi, 60.

⁵⁵ Yeh, 5.

the ordinary fighting men who made up their rank-and-file. These battle-hardened veterans from countless land and naval battles now suddenly recoiled in fear at the prospect of crossing the strait, and many thought of absconding when they learned about Zheng's plans. He had to dispatch one of his generals to patrol the seas around Xiamen to capture and bring back deserters.⁵⁶ In sum, the widespread opposition within his ranks reflected a variation of a prevalent conception during the Ming and Qing of Chinese residing overseas as "abandoned subjects (*qimin*)" blocked from the "sounds of civilization" of the Middle Kingdom.⁵⁷ Zheng acknowledged and even reinforced this view, since in 1657, he had banished his censor Chang Shouning to Taiwan as punishment for "falsely" accusing Tai of misusing funds, and ordered He Tingbin to provide for his food and living expenses.⁵⁸ Now, however, Chenggong wanted his own followers to likewise abandon their ancestral graves and way of life on the southeastern coast, and go into collective exile to a remote frontier suitable only for criminals and other marginal elements. For many, high and low, in the organization, his decision to occupy Taiwan amounted to a betrayal of his commitment to defend their macroregion, leaving its fate entirely in the hands of the invading Manchus.

Their fierce opposition could not contrast more sharply with He Tingbin's glowing reports of the island's wealth and productivity, and the warm welcome Zheng would later receive from its Chinese residents. The planned invasion laid bare the tremendous ideological and cultural gulf between the Han communities on both sides of the strait, usually masked by a common maritime and commercial orientation. Due to the reluctance of his followers, Zheng appeared to have harbored second thoughts about the campaign as 1660 drew to a close. On October 15, Governor Coyett of Taiwan received words of reassurance from the Dutch factory at Nagasaki. According to news from recently arrived Chinese traders there, Zheng swore "to fight to the death in his country as a soldier than go to a foreign land that he had to conquer with weapons, or at least with great difficulty, and possess with anxious insecurity."⁵⁹ Evidently, he now considered continuing his struggle to the bitter end against the Manchus within Mainland territory rather than expending his still-considerable strength on an overseas island where none of his followers wanted to settle.

At this critical juncture, however, two major events on the Qing side decisively changed his calculations. In November 1660, Loto, Dasu and the other Manchu commanders responsible for coordinating the offensive on Xiamen and Jinmen were recalled to Beijing, leaving the Qing naval junks docked idly along the coastal shoreline.⁶⁰ The Qing strategy would shift from offensive attacks on the Zheng bases toward a full-fledged policy of denying them access to their economic lifelines of food, provisions, and goods for trade in the interior so as to starve the

⁵⁶ Yang Ying, 185.

⁵⁷ Chao, 281.

⁵⁸ Yang Ying, 113.

⁵⁹ C. E. S., 202.

⁶⁰ Yang Ying, 184 and *Shunzhi shiu*, 183-185.

regime into collapse or submission. Shortly afterward, in February 1661, the Shunzhi Emperor passed away, and was succeeded by Shengzu, then only a young boy of seven.⁶¹ The Qing's recent setback, along with its own internal succession issues, gave Zheng Chenggong the precious window of opportunity needed to press ahead with an invasion of Taiwan relatively free of hindrance from his rear. Hence, during a third meeting of his generals he convened that same month, he announced his final decision.

Although receiving token support from, predictably, an enthusiastic He Tingbin, and just one of his senior commanders, Yang Chaodong (d. 1662), he used these opinions to justify his plan, and called for preparations to ensue right away.⁶² When the construction and maintenance of part of his naval fleet fell behind schedule, Zheng ordered the ready ships to depart first. On Yongli 15.3/23 (April 21, 1661), he, along with 300 junks and thirteen divisions totaling 11,700 men, set sail from Liaoluo Bay in Jinmen.⁶³ With great difficulty and frequent personal hesitation, Zheng had finally forced through the invasion of Taiwan, and dragged along his unwilling subordinates. However, in the long-term, he needed a more effective way of neutralizing the profound threat to his organization's legitimacy posed by relocation to a "savage" island abroad.

A Race Against Destruction

Realizing the discontent among his officers and men, Zheng initially based his plans, devised with the persuasion and assistance of He Tingbin, upon a speedy victory, as he calculated that the small number of Dutch troops and its agricultural bounty would make Taiwan an easy catch. Indeed, after his ships passed through Lu'ermen Channel, the narrow entrance to the island, on April 30, his men overwhelmed the tiny garrison at Fort Provintia. Cut off from supplies and outside aid, its commander, Jacobus Valentijn, had no choice but to surrender on May 4, leaving Zheng in control over the main island in under a week.⁶⁴ However, Zheng encountered far greater difficulties against Zeelandia, a "powerful, modern fortress, against which [his] cannons could make little headway."⁶⁵ Although connected to the rest of Taiwan by a narrow strip of land, its sturdy walls and access to the sea placed it in a good position to hold out for a very long time.

When an overconfident Zheng stormed the fort on May 25, the Dutch defenders quickly repulsed the attack by unleashing a barrage of fire from their powerful muskets and heavy artillery. Moreover, a group of them launched a daring expedition into the town of Tayouan, where he encamped, and successfully spiked a large number of his cannon.⁶⁶ Philip Meij, a

⁶¹ *Shunzhi shilu*, 188 and Zhang Huangyan, *Shiwenji*, 158.

⁶² Yang Ying, 184.

⁶³ Yang Ying, 184; *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part IV, 520; and *Batavia dagregisters*, 1661, 485-486.

⁶⁴ C. E. S., 116. For a detailed account of the assault on Fort Provintia, negotiations held between the Zheng and the garrison, and its final surrender, see *Dagregister van Meij*, Back 14-20.

⁶⁵ Andrade, 11.16.

⁶⁶ A detailed account of this battle for Fort Zeelandia can be found in *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part IV, 404-408.



Figure 20. The narrow Lu'ermen, or Lakjemeuse, Channel, the entry point for Zheng Chenggong's ships into Taiwan.
Photograph by author, 2006

land surveyor at Fort Provintia who became Zheng's prisoner of war along with Valentijn, noted in his diary that "the dead of the enemy are above a thousand, with as many as 700 to 800 wounded."⁶⁷ Governor Coyett likewise observed from the numerous corpses "lying dead on the ground" that Zheng had suffered heavy casualties, especially compared to the meager loss of two to three men and several wounded on the Dutch side.⁶⁸

Seeing that he and his men could not take Zeelandia easily, Zheng ordered his junks to blockade Lu'ermen Channel and the mouths of the major navigable rivers. He further instructed troops under Ma Xin to guard the narrow land passage to the rest of the island.⁶⁹ In this manner, he hoped to starve the fortress into submission, and counted upon the prevailing southern winds at the time to prevent any Dutch appeals for aid from reaching Batavia.⁷⁰ However, unknown to Zheng, a Dutch yacht named *Maria* had earlier slipped away during the

⁶⁷ *Daghregister van Meij*, Back 27.

⁶⁸ C. E. S., 125.

⁶⁹ Yang Ying, 188; C. E. S., 128-129; *Batavia dagregisters, 1661*, 501; and *Daghregister van Meij*, Back 32.

⁷⁰ C. E. S., 100.

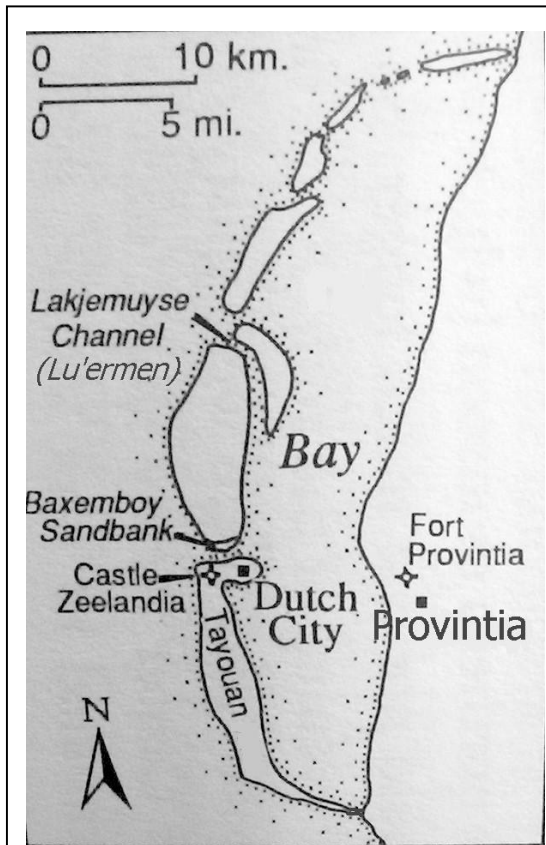
heat of battle and arrived at the VOC colonial seat with news of his invasion after sailing bravely for months against the current. In response, the company dispatched a succor fleet of eleven

ships and 700 men under Admiral Jacob Caeuw that appeared off the shores of Taiwan on August 12.⁷¹

His arrival came as a complete shock to Zheng and his officials, whose “dismay,” according to Philip Meij, “was so great, it was difficult to describe.” They would constantly “run to and fro across Provintia...the whole night and day,” questioning both Valentijn and his men “how many soldiers were presumed to be on each ship.”⁷² At the time, Zheng deeply feared that the succor fleet might contain as many as 2,000 men, enough to provide a huge boost to the numbers and morale of the defenders.⁷³ Yet, even these potentially substantial reinforcements paled in comparison to the size of his army, a numerical advantage made more overwhelming by the arrival of 60 junks and 4,600 soldiers, the second wave of his invasion force, from Xiamen in July 1661.⁷⁴ As it turned out, Zheng’s greatest enemies were not the Dutch, in spite of their courageous resistance and the heavy casualties they inflicted upon his men, but rather a series of mounting crises within the organization itself.

Food shortages constituted the most pressing and immediate challenge for him and his followers

throughout the siege. Because He Tingbin had assured him of Taiwan’s agricultural bounty, Zheng had neglected to bring along sufficient quantities of grain, an oversight that became acutely felt soon after they set sail, when a violent storm at sea forced them to encamp at Penghu. After just three days on this unproductive island chain, growing hunger within his ranks forced



Map 5. A map of the Dutch settlements, the main targets of Zheng Chenggong’s offensive.

Adapted from Lynn A. Struve, *Voices from the Ming-Qing Cataclysm* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993)

⁷¹ C. E. S., 140 and Andrade, 11.17.

⁷² *Daghregister van Meij*, Back 39.

⁷³ C. E. S., 141.

⁷⁴ *Batavia dagregisters, 1661*, 505. Yang Ying and Ruan Minxi note that this second wave of troops arrived in Taiwan on Yongli 15.5/2, or May 29, 1661. It remains unclear how to account for this discrepancy, which may have resulted from transcription errors on the part of one or more of the sources, or simply the arrival of the reinforcements in two parts. See Yang Ying, 188 and Ruan, 38.

him to continue onward to Taiwan in spite of the adverse weather conditions.⁷⁵ Once they arrived on April 30, Zheng immediately saw to it that his men prevented the Dutch from setting fire to Provintia's private residences, made primarily out of straw, and grain warehouses.⁷⁶ Yet, his revenue official, Yang Ying, only managed to secure two weeks' worth of provisions for the troops despite a thorough and systematic search of the premises.⁷⁷

By the time Zheng launched his attack on Casteel Zeelandia on May 25, supplies had run low once again. Subsequent requisitions in the Taiwanese countryside only yielded sufficient quantities to last several more weeks at the most.⁷⁸ Philip Meij, whom Zheng ordered to undertake these tasks along with Yang Chaodong, noted that the total amount of rice found in the fields did not exceed 4,000 *morgens* (4,124 hectares) in area.⁷⁹ Likewise, supplies of taro and other coarse grains quickly became exhausted. The limited number of full-time Han farmers and the extensive agricultural practices of the aborigines could hardly support his 30,000 men, who already equaled 3/5 of the largest pre-invasion Chinese population estimates!⁸⁰ Zheng had no choice but to import food from Xiamen to make up for the deficiency. Yet, when his grain ships failed to arrive on time in September due to adverse winds, local prices skyrocketed to such outrageous levels that most of his soldiers were reduced to a diet of wood from palm stems.⁸¹

As the natural accompaniment to hunger, epidemics of tropical diseases raged within his ranks. Ruan Minxi estimated that seventy to eighty percent of the troops became ill due to maladjustment to "the soil and water" of Taiwan, along with the onset of summer and its scorching heat and humidity.⁸² Philip Meij provides anecdotal evidence of these shockingly large numbers through the observations of his own colleagues, Hendrick van Lisse and Jan Vrijaltenhoven, who came back after conducting surveys in the southern Taiwan countryside. Not only could they "hardly describe, with words of the world, the great distress and suffering" among the soldiers there, but the two men themselves had also fallen gravely ill. Van Lisse would pass away within a matter of days.⁸³ Meanwhile, Yang Ying, who had provided one of the most detailed Chinese records of Zheng's invasion of Taiwan thus far, contracted some disease in September that left him incapacitated for over half a year.⁸⁴

⁷⁵ Yang Ying, 185-186.

⁷⁶ Yang Ying, 186-187; Ruan, 37; and *Daghregister van Meij*, Back 3.

⁷⁷ Yang Ying, 187.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁷⁹ *Daghregister van Meij*, Back 45.

⁸⁰ Shepherd, 96.

⁸¹ Yang Ying, 191 and *Daghregister van Meij*, Back 51. At the time, Chenggong blamed his Revenue Officer Zheng Tai for willfully delaying the grain fleets and even publicly planted a placard announcing that he would "first of all set the punishments for the Revenue Officer on account of his oversight" as a means of placating the increasingly demoralized soldiers on Taiwan. However, Deng Kongzhao's study, based upon Chinese and Dutch accounts, convincingly shows that the ships could not depart on time due to violent storms in the Taiwan Strait that lasted for about a month. See Deng Kongzhao, *Zheng Chenggong yu Ming-Zheng Taiwan*, 67-69.

⁸² Ruan, 39.

⁸³ *Daghregister van Meij*, Back 35.

⁸⁴ There is a huge gap in the record between the time Yang fell ill, after the entry dated Yongli 15.8/28 (September 21, 1661), and Yongli 16.4/1 (May 18, 1662), when he picked up his narrative once again. See Yang Ying, 191-194.

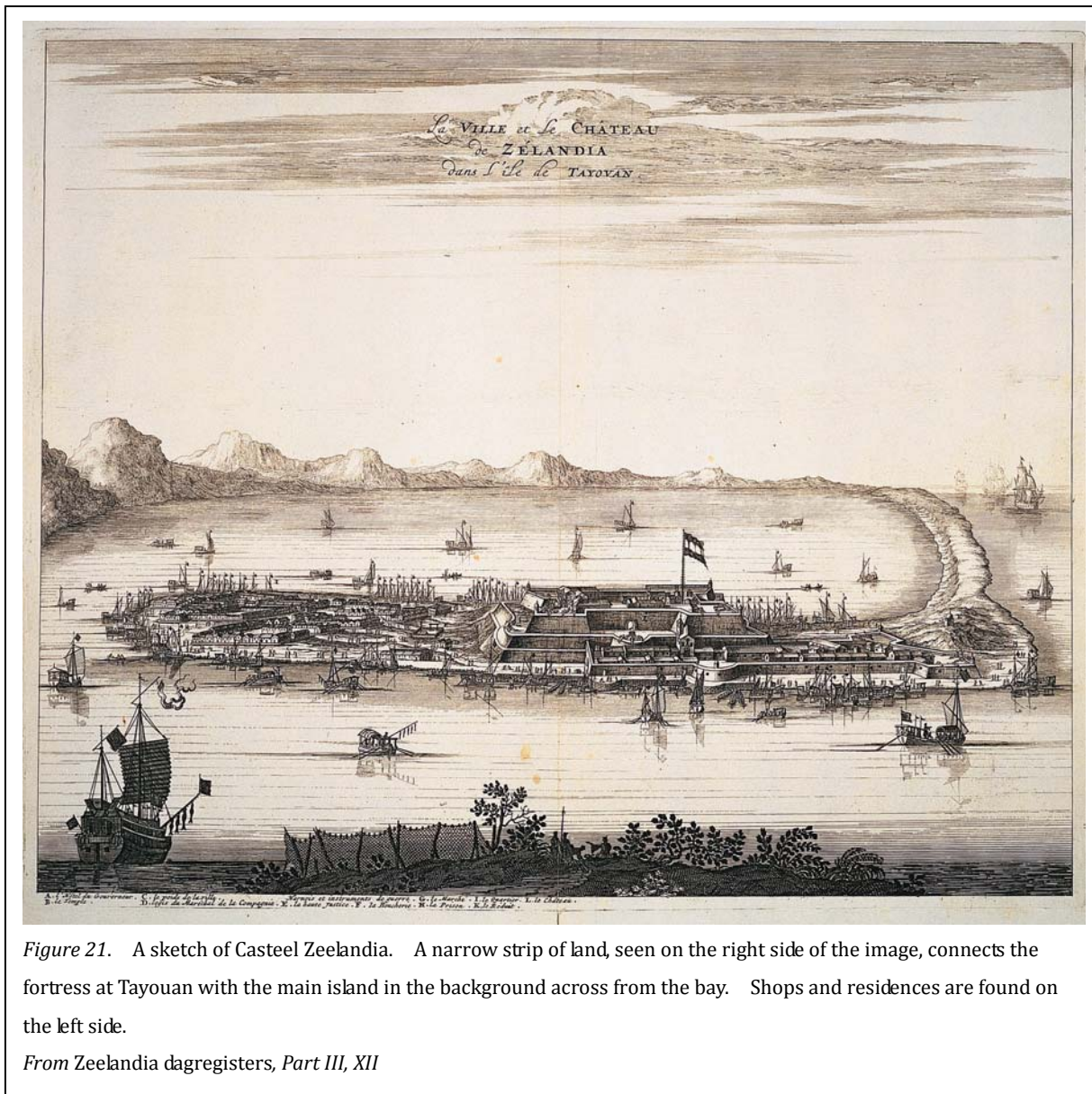


Figure 21. A sketch of Casteel Zeelandia. A narrow strip of land, seen on the right side of the image, connects the fortress at Tayouan with the main island in the background across from the bay. Shops and residences are found on the left side.

From *Zeelandia dagregisters, Part III, XII*

Increasingly repressive levels of exactions, and outright extortion and plunder of the limited surplus within the countryside, a sign of the growing desperation of Zheng’s commanders and their men, triggered rebellions in July 1661 among aboriginal tribes north of Provintia and in the south. Under the command of powerful chieftains, they killed over 2,000 of the soldiers sent to suppress them, including one of his key generals, and sought an alliance with the Dutch.⁸⁵ To make matters worse, Zheng received word from his junks arriving from the China coast in September that a fleet of Dutch ships under David Harthouwer had met with the Qing Fujian

⁸⁵ Yang Ying, 191; Jiang Risheng, 204; and *Dagregister van Meij*, Back 37.

authorities.⁸⁶ Geng Jimao, the feudatory of the province, and Governor-General Li Shuaitai had given him a warm reception in Fuzhou. The two men also forwarded letters to Frederick Coyett offering to dispatch two junks and 7,000 men to Taiwan in exchange for his assistance in striking Zheng's rear on the Mainland, a move that appeared mutually beneficial.⁸⁷ Upon receiving the correspondences on November 6, Coyett dispatched Jacob Caeuw's ships to the Fujian coast to actualize the rendezvous with Li and Geng.⁸⁸ The news came as another shock to Zheng, who held emergency councils with his generals for two consecutive days, and hastily arranged for more weapons to be forged.⁸⁹

Naturally, the anger of him and his followers became directed at the man who had most enthusiastically championed the invasion: He Tingbin. The commanders and officials raised complaints and recriminations against He to such a degree that Zheng had him confined in a small hut, "out of the sight of [Koxinga] and his soldiers."⁹⁰ Never mind that Zheng had already set his sights upon Taiwan long ago and found whatever excuse necessary to invade. He now shrugged off any responsibility and accused the interpreter of making him "believe great things while in China of a speedy victory over these castles."⁹¹ Yet, Tingbin was the perfect scapegoat to deflect criticism from Zheng himself. He came to represent the failed hopes and dismal progress of the invasion thus far. Where he made glowing promises of wealth and agricultural bounty, Zheng and his men only experienced famine and disease. Where he spoke of a quick victory over the small garrison of Dutch troops, they encountered fierce resistance and constant danger from Batavia, Fuzhou, and the aboriginal tribes in his own backyard. By October 1661, Zheng had lost "eight thousand of his best soldiers" to hunger, disease, and warfare.⁹² His Taiwan campaign had degenerated into a sheer contest for survival, for which side could hold out longest without sinking under the weight of its own problems.⁹³

However, all of these environmental and manmade challenges put together still do not fully account for the high degree of bitterness within his ranks. In fact, the physical obstacles encountered during the invasion merely served to dampen the already low morale of his officers and soldiers in contesting a foreign island far away from their homes and families. Hendrik Robertszoorn, a daring Dutch prisoner who had escaped to Fort Zeelandia by swimming across the Bay of Tayouan, provided Governor Coyett with valuable information on the state of the

⁸⁶ Originally, the Tayouan authorities had dispatched the fleet to evacuate and bring back the garrison at Jilong to serve as reinforcements for Zeelandia. However, the ships were blown off course during a storm and had no choice but to land at Yongning (known in Dutch accounts as Ingelingh), a town near Quanzhou. The local officials escorted the crew to Fuzhou to have an audience with the provincial authorities. Hence, the entire meeting occurred by the mere chance of an accident. See Harthouwer's account in *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part IV, 579-581.

⁸⁷ See the letters written by Geng and Li to Coyett in *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part IV, 587-588. Refer also to C. E. S., 145-146.

⁸⁸ C. E. S., 148-149.

⁸⁹ *Daghregister van Meij*, 52.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, Back 39. The original text mentions the target of their anger as an individual named Seecqua. Jiang Shusheng argues convincingly that this name was most likely a corruption of the word Pincqua. See *Ibid.*, Front 56.

⁹¹ *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part IV, 558.

⁹² C. E. S., 145.

⁹³ The equally serious crisis that pervaded the besieged Dutch garrison has received extensive treatment in Andrade, 11.1-18.

Chinese soldiers at Provintia. Many of them told him of having “a far better life in China than here.”⁹⁴ Pork and venison, slim luxuries that they could occasionally afford along the Mainland coast, had long been priced out of the market on the island. Now, during the most difficult of times, they were resigned to a meager diet of prohibitively expensive aboriginal rice containing “not a single condiment.”⁹⁵ Zheng’s homesick men deserted in large numbers, with many fleeing back to the China coast everyday in illegally commandeered junks.⁹⁶

Zheng’s subordinates and allies still based on the Mainland, at a safe distance from his control, exhibited far greater defiance toward his campaign. In the winter of 1661, as his troops remained deadlocked in front of Fort Zeelandia, Luo Zimu arrived in Taiwan with a letter from Zhang Huangyan urging Zheng to abandon his fruitless siege and return to the cause of Ming restoration.⁹⁷ The Qing was currently preoccupied with issues of succession related to the Shunzhi Emperor’s death, and the rise to power of four regents under the nobleman Oboi (c. 1610-1669), who ruled in the name of the seven-year-old Shengzu, the Kangxi Emperor.⁹⁸ According to Zhang, with the “Shunzhi barbarian chieftain dead” and “the empire suspicious of the young ruler,” factional divisions within the Manchu elite and the lax and spoiled character of the soldiers presented a perfect opportunity to join forces and launch a fresh attack on the Qing.⁹⁹ He questioned why Zheng must “struggle for supremacy with the Red-Haired Barbarians overseas” when he could capitalize upon passive popular discontent with an alien dynasty to acquire “millions of powerful men” and capture “hundreds and tens of cities” in China.¹⁰⁰

Zhang expressed in forceful terms his dissatisfaction with what Zheng was doing:

“To abandon your soldiers of the Middle Kingdom within the vast ocean waves and detaining them on a land of wild air and soil is to truly sink them into a deep pit. In the meantime, feelings of departure, unwillingness to leave, yearning for home, bitterness and poverty, all of these various emotional states are sufficient to crush morale and blunt the might of your army.”¹⁰¹

Zhang accused Zheng of using his soldiers of righteousness as sacrificial lambs on the altar of his personal interests. Due to his selfish decision to seek continued survival and refuge for his own organization on a wild foreign island outside of “China,” they now led a precarious existence of homesickness and deprivation. Under these circumstances, Zhang warned, they could no longer form an effective fighting force, and could even turn against their commander in their

⁹⁴ *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part IV, 495.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Daghregister van Meij*, 39 and C. E. S., 145.

⁹⁷ *Nantian hen*, 258.

⁹⁸ Zhang Kaiyuan et al., eds., *Qing tongjian (Comprehensive Mirror of the Qing)*, vol. 1 (Changsha, Hunan: Yuelu shushe, 2000), 483.

⁹⁹ Zhang Huangyan, *Shiwenji*, 30.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 30.

desperation.

Zhang went on to remind Zheng that “small and inconsequential Taiwan (*ququ Taiwan*)” could never match “the Divine Land of China (*Chixian Shenzhou*).”¹⁰² Regardless of Zheng’s overseas adventures, the true foundations of his rule continued to lie at his two bases of Xiamen and Jinmen, which have now come under threat through Dutch attempts to form an alliance with the Qing.¹⁰³ “If there is no Siming [Xiamen],” Zhang warned, “then you have no roots. How can you still possess the branches” that are Taiwan?¹⁰⁴ By placing his Mainland bases in a vulnerable position, Zheng threatened to undermine the very survival of his organization, whose ideals ultimately derived from a commitment, no matter how nominal, to active resistance against the Manchus. As Zhang mentioned in his letter, it was “because of Your Excellency’s ability to wipe clear humiliation and exact revenge” that the fate of “the Great Ming heavily depends upon Your Excellency.”¹⁰⁵ Without this legitimating continental factor, his regime would implode from the resulting collapse in morale. If Zheng still chose to waste his energy and manpower on a “barren desert” like Taiwan, he added, then “even if you survive, it is not wise; if you die, it is not out of loyalty.”¹⁰⁶ Zhang essentially accused him not only of betraying the Ming cause, but “China” and all of its trappings of civilization.

Where Zhang Huangyan expressed his dissatisfaction eloquently in words, some of Zheng’s subordinates on the Mainland vividly displayed it through their actions. When Zheng ordered Wan Lu and Wan Yi, commanders of two of his divisions, to relocate to Taiwan, they instead defected to the Manchus from the island of Tongshan, where they were temporarily stationed. They already harbored personal grudges against him for removing the spirit tablet of their sworn brother Wan Li, who had perished during the battle of Nanjing, from the Shrine of Loyal Ministers (*Zhongchen ci*) in Xiamen for treachery or cowardliness, according to different accounts.¹⁰⁷ Now, they would rather join the enemy than reside on Taiwan, a “barren and desolate land where those who went could not adjust to the water and soil. This is definitely not a place to go.”¹⁰⁸ The disobedience from them and other military commanders on the Mainland only became bolder and more open in the months to come.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Zheng had believed accusations from certain quarters that Wan Li did not die bravely in battle as imagined but had drowned on account of his heavy armor while attempting to flee. See Jiang Risheng, 197. Ruan Minxi, on the other hand, claims that Wan Li had secretly colluded with Huang Wu to turn over Xiamen before the invasion of Nanjing, a matter discovered by Zheng only after he had already enshrined the commander. See Ruan, 38. Jiang, however, only mentions Wan Yi and Wan Lu as having contact with Huang. Although they bore no relation to one another and originally had different surnames, the three men had changed them to Wan when they became sworn brothers to signify “the single-minded purpose of ten thousand people.” Refer to Jiang Risheng, 197.

¹⁰⁸ Jiang Risheng, 198.

Naturalizing Taiwan

In the face of intense opposition from his gentry allies, martial elites, and his own rank and file, Zheng needed to present his invasion of Taiwan in terms beyond simply fleeing overseas and finding a refuge away from the reach of the powerful Manchus. He needed to modify and articulate a new vision for his organization to legitimate the radically altered circumstances he and his men faced. However, to create the new, he must first start from the old. Before he set out for Taiwan, Zheng held out the prospect of an eventual counterattack against the Qing once his invasion succeeded. He assured his subordinates that his campaign represented a temporary movement abroad to form a stable base unhindered by incursions or harassment from the enemy, where they could recuperate, reorganize, and await the right opportunity to launch another offensive.¹⁰⁹ He also responded to critics of his decision by emphasizing that he had always “set his will upon the recovery [of the Ming] and firmly longed for a campaign of restoration.” He certainly dared not “covet overseas lands, and neglect [the loyalist movement] to extend his own peace and happiness.”¹¹⁰

At the same time, however, Zheng clouded these promises with a layer of ambiguity that hinted, on a deeper level, at a concurrent and subtle turn away from them. During the journey across the strait, he would often invoke the will of Heaven, who, he felt, would bequeath Taiwan to him as “a peaceful realm” to reside out of “pity for this solitary minister.”¹¹¹ After he had landed and begun his attack on the Dutch, he wrote in a poem celebrating the invasion that, even as he “experienced this crucial moment of suffering, I still cannot bear to leave” the island.¹¹² No amount of setbacks, including heavy resistance, hunger, disease, or defections could persuade him to give up and return to China. Despite his strong protestations of merely using Taiwan to prepare for a new campaign against the Manchus in the future, Zheng was evidently intending to stay there for the indefinite long term.

His subsequent actions reflected and clarified this subtle underlying shift in orientation, and increasingly prioritized it through the creation of a radically modified discourse of legitimacy. Zheng recalled the complex relationship his father once had with Taiwan, and began to reimagine those connections in a novel manner, both for the Dutch and his own men. He wrote as a commentary to his poem commemorating the invasion that “the Senior Grand Tutor to the Crown Prince [*taishi*, Zhilong] had gathered his troops and stored grain” on the island before assuming office in the Ming bureaucracy.¹¹³ Zhilong’s actual involvement with Taiwan consisted, as seen, of certain commercial prerogatives in nearby waters, a precarious and shifting piratical base near Wankan, and abortive efforts at settlement. Despite the hazy nature and scope of his father’s

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 194.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. Scholars on both sides of the Taiwan Strait have appropriated these quotes to argue that Zheng never wavered in his commitment to Ming restoration.

¹¹¹ Xia, 27.

¹¹² “Yanping er wang yiji,” 128.

¹¹³ Ibid. As recognition for his support, the Longwu Emperor had bestowed this title upon Zheng Zhilong in 1645. See *Nantian hen*, 418.

authority, Chenggong now spoke of Taiwan as a place where the elder Zheng exercised concrete and sustained military and political jurisdiction. By means of natural inheritance, then, Chenggong, too, rightfully possessed it.

He elaborated upon this point in a letter to Governor Coyett he had prepared while still on Penghu and handed over to Zeelandia Castle on May 1 by means of a released Dutch prisoner. In it, Zheng claimed that “my father Iquan [Zhilong] had designated this land out of friendship” to the VOC during a time when its “ships first came to seek trade but did not have the least piece of land in these parts.”¹¹⁴ However, Chenggong went on to emphasize, both in his letter and a placard issued to all residents of Taiwan, that Zhilong had only “lent [the island] to the Company. How can anyone go against accepting this fact?”¹¹⁵ When Coyett dispatched two envoys to the Zheng camp in Provintia two days later to request an explanation for the invasion, Chenggong told them that he had come “only for this land, which belonged to my father and now belongs to me.”¹¹⁶ The Dutch, he continued, could trade and reside in Taiwan at their pleasure as long as he had no pressing need for it. However, the time had come to hand it over, since he, through the legacy of his father, enjoyed sovereign authority over the island and now had to use it for his own purposes.

The Dutch envoys issued a skillful rebuttal of his narrative by bringing up the formal agreement struck between the VOC and Ming authorities that exchanged Penghu for Taiwan, an occupation that Zheng Zhilong himself had recognized. They concluded from the weight of evidence that Taiwan did not come “under the Empire of China, but belonged to the Company,” and Chenggong had “no rights or pretenses” to this territory. Yet, he remained oblivious to these facts, since, “after much debates back and forth,” he still “seemed not to understand,” and stubbornly continued to press forth his demand for them to withdraw or face the full wrath of his army.¹¹⁷ Evidently, Zheng was in no mood to haggle or compromise on a position he had articulated specifically to justify his occupation and persuade the Dutch to surrender quickly. More importantly, by tying his entire family legacy to Taiwan regardless of relationship to actual events, he hoped to appeal to a vast segment of his commanders and soldiers, who had once served under Zhilong. His communications with the Dutch and his poem both functioned as mediums to shore up the flagging morale of his men and provide a new focus for them through ties of personal loyalty. In other words, they were no longer contesting with “barbarians” for a strange island abroad, but fought to recover a familial inheritance.

Ralph Croizier sees Zheng’s words and actions as a turn away from his previous commitment to the Ming in favor of “a maritime kingdom dominating the East Asian trading

¹¹⁴ *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part IV, 352. In order to hide their true identities, many Chinese residing abroad typically used the term *guan*, a colloquial term for a male child, in combination with a numerical rank to identify themselves. In this case, Iquan (*yiguan*, or *Ikkan* in Japanese-language sources) means the first-born son. Accordingly, Zheng Zhilong was known as Nicholas Iquan among the Dutch and Portuguese, and the Hirado *Ikkan* in Japan. For more on the use of *guan*, see Ishihara, 263.

¹¹⁵ *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part IV, 353.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 362.

¹¹⁷ C. E. S., 115.

routes.”¹¹⁸ Likewise, John Wills believes that Taiwan, which formed “part of his inheritance as son of his despised father,” stood in diametric opposition to his legacy of “Lord of the Imperial Surname” bequeathed upon him by the Longwu Emperor.¹¹⁹ While Zheng’s actions pointed toward an indefinite suspension or even abandonment of campaigns for restoration, these views tend to oversimplify the situation. He could not afford to suddenly throw off the one symbol of legitimacy that had successfully held his organization together for almost two decades through its unique ability to fuse the “provincial” with “empire-wide” priorities, and enhance his personal mystique. As matters already stood, his relocation to the island had run into entrenched opposition from his elites and soldiers, and he certainly could not afford to rock the boat further without articulating and explaining his actions in a manner in which they could all relate.

Besides casting himself as the legitimate heir to the enterprise his father had purportedly established on Taiwan, then, Zheng went on to weave an intricate web of connections that tied the family to the state and, ultimately, “China,” along with the “civilized” values it embodied. In his prepared letter to the Dutch, Zheng emphasized that “the Pescadores is located not far from the islands of Chincheuw [Xiamen and Jinmen], and therefore belongs to there.”¹²⁰ This fact alone would not surprise any of his contemporaries, since the Penghu island chain, along with his twin bases, came under the jurisdiction of Fujian’s Quanzhou Prefecture. However, what follows represented an unprecedented extrapolation from the established continental discourse of both the Ming and Qing. “So is Taiwan close to the Pescadores,” Zheng asserted, “therefore this land must also be under the government of China.”¹²¹ Besides a powerful testament to his ability to assert sea power, this discourse essentially redefined the boundaries of the Ming by incorporating an area once considered a desolate wilderness into the civilized realm.¹²²

In the same letter, Chenggong further pointed out that the “residents of both the landscapes lying along the sea [Tayouan and Provintia], being Chinese, have occupied and cultivated these lands for ages.”¹²³ In stark contrast to late Ming and early Qing elite depictions of Taiwan’s Han inhabitants as having abandoned civilization for life on a remote periphery, Zheng utilized their huge and growing numbers to justify the island’s fundamental “Chineseness.” Instead of “a land that yields forth so little grass,” as he himself earlier admitted, he now spoke of it as a territory that always formed an integral part of China, whether in terms of geographic proximity,

¹¹⁸ Croizier, 23.

¹¹⁹ John E. Wills, Jr., *Mountain of Fame* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 228.

¹²⁰ *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part IV, 352. According to the editors of the *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Revier Chincheuw, also spelled Tchinchew and Chincheo, refers to the bay around Xiamen and Jinmen. In this case, then, Zheng was talking about the twin islands in the region that formed his main bases. See *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part I (1986), 4 n. 18.

¹²¹ “...zoo is oock Tayovan dichte bij de Piscadores, weshalven dit landt oock onder deselve regering van China moet staan...” See *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part IV, 352.

¹²² Zheng Yongchang, 85.

¹²³ “...de ingesetenen van beyde die aen zee gelegene landschappen, Chinesen zijnde, die landerijen van alle tijden af beseten en bebouwt hebben.” See *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part IV, 352.



Figure 22. The grounds of Fort Provintia, which would later become the provisional Ming imperial palace and seat of Chengtian Prefecture.

Photograph by author 2009

or the cultural practices and ethnic composition of its people.¹²⁴ This modified narrative, in fact, complemented the reimagined legacy of his father, who had, in his capacity as a Ming official, “lent” to the Dutch this “Chinese” Taiwan. Now, Chenggong, as both rightful heir and loyal representative of the same dynasty, came, in the words of his poem, to “expel the Dutch barbarians” and “recover my forefathers’ foundations.”¹²⁵

Despite his claims of Taiwan’s “Chineseness,” Zheng also admitted to the unprecedented nature of his actions. Although he titled his poem “Recovering Taiwan (*Fu Tai*),” his very first line spoke of “opening up this wilderness of thorns and brambles.”¹²⁶ Evidently, his justifications alone could not even convince himself, much less the Dutch or his own followers; he had to initiate concrete policies to make the reality on the ground conform to his discourse.

¹²⁴ C. E. S., 89, 114.

¹²⁵ “Yanping erwang yiji,” 128.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

Indeed, he took the first steps toward that direction on Yongli 15.5/2 (May 29, 1661), while his men still lay siege to the Dutch at Fort Zeelandia. He proclaimed Taiwan's new official name of Dongdu Mingjing (Ming Eastern Capital), and designated Provintia as Chengtian (Receiving from Heaven) Prefecture (*fu*), the new imperial seat that theoretically awaited the arrival of the distant Yongli Emperor.¹²⁷ The prefecture, in turn, administered the counties (*xian*) of Wannian and Tianxing, named after Fuzhou when it served as the temporary residence of the Longwu court.¹²⁸ These two units handled affairs in the areas, respectively, to the south and north of Provintia. He also envisioned a new headquarters for himself at Tayouan, which he renamed Anping Garrison (*zhen*), after the alternate name for his hometown of Anhai in Fujian.¹²⁹

His creation of a new capital to the east of the Mainland, along with the transplantation of its traditional political divisions of prefectures and counties in compact form, removed the pressing need to campaign for the “rest” of China. By rectifying the various names of Taiwan, he hoped to transform its previous connotations of peripheral wilderness into the nerve center of the entire Chinese empire. Zheng could thus abandon restoration not by turning his back on the Ming, but extending the Ming to Taiwan, recentering it, and indefinitely postponing the return. Since his possessions already included the new seat of the imperial court, he could devote all his energies instead toward its defense and development. Meanwhile, underneath the overarching Ming legitimacy, Zheng would capitalize upon his ranks and titles to proclaim a new maritime kingdom on Taiwan, or, as he put it in a proclamation of 5/18 (June 14), “opening the country and establishing the family-state (*kaiguo lijia*).”¹³⁰ The island would become “a foundational endeavor that will not be uprooted for ten thousand generations.”¹³¹ In sum, Zheng combined the continental symbols of imperial capital and feudatory within one political unit to justify his new maritime orientation.

As the next part of his goal of incorporating Taiwan into “China” by bringing “China” into Taiwan, Zheng set out to transform the island economically and culturally. His proclamation of 5/18 authorized his top civil and military officials to lay claim over large tracts of uninhabited land and forests in the area around Chengtian, where they could establish heritable estates to exploit its resources in perpetuity. They would make sure not to encroach upon aboriginal possessions or fields already under cultivation by local Chinese, and pay taxes to Zheng based upon their yield.¹³² More significantly, Zheng decided to maintain an active force of only 5,000 men around Tayouan and Provintia to continue the war of attrition against the Dutch.¹³³ He

¹²⁷ Chengtian bears the typical name of a capital prefecture. Compare it, for instance, to Shuntian (Submission to Heaven) Prefecture of Beijing and Yingtian (Responding to Heaven) Prefecture of Nanjing, all of which contain the second character of “Heaven (*tian*).”

¹²⁸ Xia, 1; Jiang Risheng, 70; and *Nantian hen*, 60.

¹²⁹ Yang Ying, 189.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*, 189-190.

¹³³ Most of these men blockaded Fort Zeelandia and guarded the entrance to the Lu'ermen Channel. Philip Meij estimates that less than 300 men remained behind in Provintia. See *Dagregister van Meij*, Back 33.

ordered the rest of his soldiers to disband and settle down across the island in agricultural military colonies, with 11,000 of them going north and five to six thousand headed toward the south.¹³⁴

Each of the dispatched divisions, consisting of about a thousand to 1,200 men, would open up paddies at the foot of mountains in groups of one or two hundred people, with each plot of land not to exceed half a *morgen* (.48 hectares). Those appropriating more than this share would face decapitation. Zheng provided them with thousands of oxen and farming implements, mostly confiscated from the Dutch Company assets.¹³⁵ Besides the cultivation of rice, an endeavor requiring significant long-term investments, they were required to grow yams, which promised handsome yields within a three-month period. In the first three years of settlement, he would “borrow” three-tenths of their total yield, and institute a regularized system of taxation afterwards.

In part, the move represented a practical need to resolve the dire shortage of labor, which contributed to the constant subsistence crises his men had encountered since they landed. A *ganting* (three kg) of rice on Taiwan averaged six to seven *dubbeltjes* (ten-cent silver pieces), and could go as high as ten to eleven *dubbeltjes* during the most difficult times. By comparison, the price of pork on the Mainland coast, considered a modest luxury, cost two *dubbeltjes* per catty (half a kg). Putting the two items on the same scale of kilograms, rice, at its lowest price of two per kg, was only slightly cheaper than the four per kg for pork in China, and almost the same at its most expensive cost of 3.7.¹³⁶ Converting his soldiers into farmers became a necessity for Zheng if he wanted to generate sufficient surplus to sustain his organization. These men would serve as reliable sources of food in regular times and stand ready to take up arms in warfare.¹³⁷

Yet, his actions also reflected the result of a long-term vision conceived before the invasion of Taiwan that only acquired a sense of urgency due to the unexpected difficulties he had encountered. Already, in his placard to the residents of Taiwan, Zheng spoke of making improvements to the island and constructing “many grand and beautiful cities.”¹³⁸ After the landing, he dispatched Philip Meij and other Dutch land surveyors to put his grand visions into practice. In June, they set out as parts of teams composed of craftsmen, woodcutters, artists, and translators of Portuguese and aboriginal languages, accompanied by three officers sent to supervise them.¹³⁹ They traveled north and south for up to 25 mijlen (180 km) to delineate the boundaries of the settlements and design the layout for several cities and towns.¹⁴⁰ A perimeter

¹³⁴ Yang Ying, 190 and *Daghregister van Meij*, Back 31.

¹³⁵ *Daghregister van Meij*, Back 33-34.

¹³⁶ *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part IV, 495.

¹³⁷ Jiang Risheng, 207.

¹³⁸ *Daghregister van Meij*, Back 33.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.* The survey team to which Meij belonged traveled as far north as Tackaijs (present-day Erlin in Zhanghua County) until Zheng recalled its members to Chengtian Prefecture. Another group going south made more limited progress, being forced to turn back at Cattja (present-day Jiadong, Pingdong County) due to hostile aboriginal tribes in Longiou, at the southern tip of the island. See *Ibid.*, 33-35.

of a twelve to thirteen hours' journey (70 km) comprising Provintia and all of the former Chinese settlements in the region from the Dutch period would come under his direct administration and taxation.¹⁴¹ Elsewhere, Zheng charged them with planning cities in the center of each agricultural colony, at a four hours' journey from the coast, to serve as his commanders' residences. They also surveyed locations for frontier towns on the eastern edge of the military settlements that would function as nodes of trade with aboriginal tribes and defense outposts to guard against their attacks.¹⁴²

Besides sheer survival, Zheng wished to replicate the agrarian economy of the Mainland and its urban distribution networks onto Taiwan as the material foundation for its cultural incorporation into the "civilized" realm. These measures, together with the military colonies, would receive their full implementation under Chenggong's son Jing, and eventually resolve the issue of food shortages that had perennially plagued the organization on the Mainland coast. Yet, in the short-term, the unprecedented transplantation of "China" to Taiwan appeared to be a dismal failure. Over the course of his land surveys, Philip Meij encountered twenty to thirty Dutch prisoners of war among Zheng's men dispatched to the military colonies. While some of them received good treatment, the vast majority had to endure harsh conditions with the rest of the soldiers in the north, "lodging in linen tents" at Tilocen or even reduced to sleeping "under the blue sky" in Taijckaijs.¹⁴³ Regardless of rank or station, both the Dutch and the vast numbers of Chinese had to brave the hardships associated with opening a new frontier, including epidemic diseases and unhealthy water, which, as shown, had contributed to untold suffering and death.

Faced with these adverse circumstances, regardless of the broader vision he held, Zheng could only intensify his already harsh and severe discipline to hold his organization together. Philip Meij observed that he would decapitate any of his followers in due haste for the slightest of crimes. When seven soldiers in his army, all related to one another, reunited with a long-parted brother who had earlier taken up residence in Provintia, the man killed a young calf to fete them in celebration. After several days of feasting, however, someone secretly reported on them, and they were promptly caught and publicly executed in the town center.¹⁴⁴ Although the farmer, an original Chinese resident of Taiwan, owned the calf as his property, his slaughter of the animal reduced a valuable stock of capital necessary for agricultural production. Evidently, everything "belongs all the same to the King, or Cocksins [Zheng]," during this period of dire shortage and hunger.¹⁴⁵

Even Zheng's commanders faced the prospect of losing their heads on account of

¹⁴¹ Ibid., Back 35.

¹⁴² Ibid., Back 33.

¹⁴³ *Daghregister van Meij*, Back 34. Taijckaijs is an alternate spelling for Tackaijs. Tilocen, known in Chinese as Zhuluoshan, is the area of present-day Jiayi County.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., Back 29.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

miscalculation in battle or simply getting on his wrong side. He took revenge upon Wu Hao, the most vocal opponent of the invasion, by having him decapitated on the convenient pretext of embezzling a sizable sum of silver he had discovered in the home of a local Chinese.¹⁴⁶ However, other victims included his more trusted subordinates. In early 1662, Zheng ordered the termination of Yang Chaodong and his entire family. The commander, who, contrary to Wu Hao, had been rewarded with the post of prefect of Chengtian for his enthusiastic support of the Taiwan venture, fell out of favor with Zheng for distributing grain with a smaller measure.¹⁴⁷ The newly appointed county magistrate of Wannian, Zhu Jing, met with a similar fate, although his family only had to endure the ordeal of exile deep within the interior.¹⁴⁸ Meij remarked with trepidation that incidents like these occurred on a daily basis.¹⁴⁹ Responding to complaints from his subordinates about the unreasonable severity of his regulations, Zheng stressed that “in the initial stages of establishing a kingdom, without a round of rectification, there will be no end of improper practices!”¹⁵⁰ Harsh punishments became the only immediate deterrent to the complete disintegration of his organization before any long-term measures took effect.

Victory

Indeed, the discipline helped him achieve a modicum of stability during the turbulent first few months on a new frontier. Other fortuitous events intervened to save Zheng’s campaign during this time. After a summer storm delayed its departure, a fleet of 24 grain junks finally set out from Xiamen and arrived in Taiwan on October 14, carrying enough “rice, salt, salted fish, and fancy toppings” to tie his men over the most difficult period of opening up new land.¹⁵¹ Meanwhile, Zheng’s men managed to capture one of the ships from Jacob Caeuw’s succor fleet, which had run aground north of Fort Zeelandia. Zheng and his subordinates learned to their relief after interrogating the crew that the Dutch reinforcements relieving the fortress numbered no more than 600 soldiers when they had earlier expected at least 2,000.¹⁵² Moreover, a strong storm had blown Caeuw’s fleet off course for 28 days before he could fully unload all of the troops and provisions on shore.¹⁵³ Zheng could therefore confidently crush a subsequent two-pronged Dutch counterattack from land and sea on September 16, 1661. His men set fire to their ships and captured five of them, along with 50 to 60 prisoners, whom he promptly executed.¹⁵⁴ This last major action of the Taiwan campaign cost the Dutch 128 men, a huge

¹⁴⁶ *Daghregister van Meij*, 30 and Yang Ying, 185.

¹⁴⁷ Ruan, 40 and Peng, 60. Yang was known in the Dutch accounts as Pohnhoe, a corruption of the term *benfu* (this prefect), used to refer to himself in the first-person. See *Daghregister van Meij*, Back 26.

¹⁴⁸ Ruan, 40 and Peng, 60.

¹⁴⁹ *Daghregister van Meij*, Back 29.

¹⁵⁰ Xia, 29. A similar passage can be found in Jiang Risheng, 208.

¹⁵¹ *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part IV, 555-556 and *Batavia dagregisters, 1661*, 515.

¹⁵² *Daghregister van Meij*, Back 40 and C. E. S., 141.

¹⁵³ *Daghregister van Meij*, Back 40 and C. E. S., 141.

¹⁵⁴ Meij recounts that Zheng’s commanders ordered the Dutch prisoners at Provintia to decapitate “around 50 to 60 Dutchmen” captured in the fight, “after so intoxicating [them] with arrack [a type of strong liquor] that they could hardly speak.” See *Daghregister van Meij*, Back 42.

proportion of their total number of around a thousand.¹⁵⁵

Several months later, Coyett saw renewed hope for the beleaguered fortress after the letters from Geng Jimao and Li Shuaitai arrived on November 6. Coyett promptly dispatched Caeuw to go to Fujian to seek the assistance of the Qing, bringing along the governor's gifts and a reply. Yet, shortly after departing on December 3, Caeuw encountered a severe storm at Penghu, and, instead of continuing toward his destination when the seas cleared, sailed directly for Siam.¹⁵⁶ Their hopes shattered again, the Dutch, resigned to their fates, retreated back within the walls of Fort Zeelandia.

In January 1662, Zheng's men, acting upon the advice of a defected sergeant named Hans Jurgen Radis, stormed and occupied the Ronduyt Uytrecht, which overlooked Fort Zeelandia from atop a hill.¹⁵⁷ The seizure of this redoubt gave Zheng a commanding position to train his guns directly at the fort's entire defensive network exposed below. At this point, Governor Coyett and the beleaguered garrison realized that further resistance equaled suicide, and began to negotiate terms of surrender. The two sides signed a formal treaty on February 1, marking an end to a bitter, nine-month siege of the fortress.¹⁵⁸ Twelve days later, Coyett and his men marched to their ships in full regalia, armed to the teeth, and banners flying, before sailing away beyond the horizon. Aside from taking along their personal possessions, they turned over the company's assets, fortresses, and its entire colony of Taiwan to Zheng Chenggong.¹⁵⁹

Although certain aboriginal tribes revolted and attempted to form alliances with the Dutch, the majority submitted to Zheng and retained their loyalty, allowing him to eventually crush the rebellions by September 1661.¹⁶⁰ Even earlier, just several days after he set foot on the island, the leaders of Sinckan, Soulangh, Matthauw, Dorcko, Baccloan, and other native villages surrounding Provintia had already offered their full submission.¹⁶¹ Zheng threw a sumptuous banquet for them, and bequeathed upon them Ming-style caps and gowns as tokens of submission and fealty toward him.¹⁶² He took at least two grand tours of the neighboring

¹⁵⁵ This battle is described from the Dutch side by *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part IV, 532-535; C. E. S., 142-144; and *Dagregister van Meij*, Back 41-42, and from the Chinese viewpoint in Yang Ying, 191.

¹⁵⁶ Bitter policy disagreements within the Dutch camp over how to respond to Zheng's invasion, a matter compounded by personality conflicts between Caeuw and Governor Coyett, contributed to the former's decision to leave Taiwan and his subsequent actions. See C. E. S., 146-150.

¹⁵⁷ C. E. S. 152-153; *Dagregister van Meij*, 49-50; Xia, 29; and Andrade, 11.18. Hans Jurgen Radis is also spelled as Hans Jeuriaen Rade.

¹⁵⁸ A copy of the actual treaty can be found in C. E. S., 160-161.

¹⁵⁹ For a detailed account of the VOC's surrender of Taiwan and subsequent departure, refer to C. E. S., 158-162 and Ruan, 39.

¹⁶⁰ Ruan, 38; Jiang Risheng, 204; *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part IV, 386; and *Dagregister van Meij*, Back 52.

¹⁶¹ These villages, located in present-day Tainan County, had also been among the first to submit to the VOC and take up a full-time sedentary agricultural lifestyle. See Andrade, 3.1.

¹⁶² Yang Ying, 187 and *Dagregister van Meij*, Back 21. These measures, by and large, worked effectively to bring most aboriginal tribes onto the side of Zheng. Steven Janssoon, a missionary and teacher in one of the villages south of Provintia, recounted with horror:

"These fellows now speak with much disdain of the true Christian faith which we endeavored to implant in their hearts, and are delighted that they are now freed from attending the schools. Everywhere they have destroyed the books and utensils, and have introduced the abominable usages and customs of heathenism. On hearing the report that Chenggong had

aboriginal villages with his commanders and a thousand men, showering the natives who had flocked the roads to welcome him with pouches of tobacco.¹⁶³ During the second time, which occurred shortly after the Dutch surrender in early 1662, none other than He Tingbin accompanied him. Due to He's valuable role as interpreter of aboriginal languages and Portuguese, he had been recalled from confinement to reenter Zheng's service.¹⁶⁴

In many ways, Zheng's policies toward the aborigines inherited the Dutch-era practice of the *landdag* (diet, literally: land-day). This institution, in which representatives from native tribes would gather annually to participate in a ceremonial meeting and feast provided by the VOC, aimed to promote peaceful relations among them and strengthen their feudal bonds of vassalage to the company.¹⁶⁵ Besides continuing the practice, Zheng grafted onto the *landdag* his own vision of gradually "transforming" the aborigines into "civilized" subjects and converting Taiwan into a new core of the Ming. To this effect, his revenue official Yang Ying suggested in April 1662 that Zheng expand the implementation of full-scale agricultural production among the aborigines. Observing that only those "who had sufficient food and clothing could understand the difference between honor and shame," Yang suggested that a Chinese peasant be sent to every tribe to instruct them in the most advanced farming methods.¹⁶⁶ By further providing the aborigines with implements and oxen for free, the yields from their land would increase beyond their traditional slash-and-burn methods.

By early 1662, Zheng appeared to have weathered the initial crisis accompanying the invasion. After the Dutch packed up and left, he entered Tayouan, now renamed Anping, and converted Fort Zeelandia into his primary residence and headquarters.¹⁶⁷ As master of the island, he believed that he could now promote agricultural development and concentrate on overseas trade, either for the time being or in perpetuity. As matters turned out, however, potential crises of an even greater magnitude were brewing on the other side of the strait.

Second Blow

In contrast to Zheng Chenggong's successes abroad, events back on the Mainland would shake the very foundations upon which his campaign had intended to preserve. The lunar year of Yongli 16 (1662) began badly, with news of his father's execution at the hands of the Manchus reaching Taiwan. As seen, Zheng Zhilong had been successively stripped of his honors and

arrived, they murdered one of our Dutch people; and after having struck off the head they danced around it with great joy and merriment, just as they formerly did with their vanquished enemies."

Refer to *Zeelandia dagregisters*, Part IV, 386, quoted in Andrade, 11.16.

¹⁶³ Yang Ying, 188 and Jiang Risheng, 205. Yang Ying evidently participated as well in the second tour in early 1662, since he wrote a detailed memorial to Zheng shortly afterward calling for policies to encourage education and improved farming methods among the aboriginal tribes. Yang thereby indirectly confirms Jiang Risheng's account. See Yang Ying, 193-194.

¹⁶⁴ This represents the last-known reference to He Tingbin found within any source, East Asian or Western. The ultimate fate of this enigmatic figure remains a mystery.

¹⁶⁵ For a detailed study of the *landdag*, see Andrade, 9.4-9.20.

¹⁶⁶ Yang Ying, 194.

¹⁶⁷ Jiang Risheng, 205 and Gao, 3.

faced ever-ominous restrictions on his freedom during the 1650s. In spite of the Shunzhi Emperor's growing frustration, he nevertheless kept Zhilong alive as a potential bargaining chip in future negotiations with Chenggong.

The four regents succeeding Shizu, on the other hand, pursued conservative policies that aimed to strengthen Manchu control and racial identity, and viewed their Han subjects with far more suspicion than their deceased predecessor.¹⁶⁸ Even more seriously, for some yet unknown reason, Zheng Zhilong "had discord" with one of the nobles, Suksaha (d. 1669).¹⁶⁹ Chenggong's abandonment of the Mainland altogether made the new leadership even less inclined to keep his father alive. In Shunzhi 18.10 (December 1661), the Qing authorities had Zheng Zhilong beheaded, along with his sons and relatives, a total of eleven people, in Beijing.¹⁷⁰ Upon receiving the news, Chenggong attempted to dismiss it as mere rumor, but his subordinates overheard him crying bitterly at night behind closed doors.¹⁷¹

In late 1661, the Qing dispatched the defector Huang Wu and the Manchu Sunahai (d. 1666), Secretary of the Board of War, to Fujian to survey the coast.¹⁷² The regents had ordered them to implement the proposals of Huang's earlier 1658 memorial. The two men would oversee the confiscation of Zheng family land and assets, and the destruction of the ancestral graves in Quanzhou and Zhangzhou. More cynically, the court had adopted his other suggestion of forcibly removing all coastal residents about 30 *li* (15 km) inland to put teeth into the prohibition on trade and communication with the organization.¹⁷³ After Li Shuaitai evacuated the area around Xiamen in 1660, the Qing put the policy into effect along the entire Chinese shoreline, from Liaodong in the north to eastern Guangdong. Huang and Sunahai took charge of setting up walls and fortresses in Fujian—the main sphere of the Zheng organization's activities—that would cut off its access to the sea and transform its coast into a vast no-man's-land.¹⁷⁴ The measure would cause tremendous suffering and dislocation to coastal residents, who had depended upon maritime activities for their very livelihood, and now faced an even harsher existence in already overpopulated and resource-deficient hinterlands.¹⁷⁵

¹⁶⁸ Under the Oboi Regency, fiscal reforms initiated by the Shunzhi Emperor deteriorated into a manhunt for possible tax evaders among the Jiangnan gentry, who were also suspected of harboring secret loyalties toward the Ming cause. The arrears case implicated thousands and led to mass imprisonments and executions. See Wakeman, vol. 2, 1067-1070.

¹⁶⁹ Ruan, 39 and Xia, 28.

¹⁷⁰ Ruan, 39; Xia, 28; Jiang Risheng, 204. The Qing spared Zhilong's brother Zhibao for "coming over promptly at the time Zheng Chenggong rebelled." See *Kangxi shilu*, 4.

¹⁷¹ Ruan, 39.

¹⁷² Zhang Kaiyuan et al., vol. 1, 466.

¹⁷³ Huang's proposal enjoyed the enthusiastic support of two other defectors, Shi Lang and Fang Xingye, who had served as Zheng's prefect of Zhangzhou. Jiang Risheng, 204; Liu Xianting, 32; and Ruan, 39.

¹⁷⁴ Liu, 32; Ruan, 39; and Jiang Risheng, 204. The *Kangxi Veritable Records* notes that the removal of the population inland had already occurred in Fujian, Guangdong, Jiangnan, and Zhejiang by September 1661. See *Kangxi shilu*, 4. The actual implementation, of course, varied from province to province and across periods, depending upon the nature of the maritime threat. In general, Fujian, the Zheng family's main sphere of activity, experienced the most rigid and systematic removal of the population, and endured the highest degree of suffering. For an official record of its implementation in the province, see *Manwen dang'an* 2, 302-305. For a detailed and classic survey of the coastal evacuation policy and its significance, refer to Hsieh Kuo-chen, "Removal of Coastal Population in Early Tsing Period."

¹⁷⁵ Xia, 28-29.

The draconian policy would certainly make Xiamen and Jinmen, as lone outposts in the middle of a huge, deserted wasteland, even more untenable as supply bases in their own right. Zheng breathed a huge sigh of relief when he heard of the measures, which, in a sense, vindicated his decision to invade Taiwan. The Qing had brought so much suffering to the coastal residents all on account of him, and specifically, his desire “to preserve these several strands of hair.”¹⁷⁶ If he had “listened to the advice of all my commanders, and had not decided, of my own accord, to attack eastward and acquire this piece of land, there would be no place for a hero to use his army.”¹⁷⁷ Yet, he refused for now to return to the Mainland and save the “widows and orphans weeping bitterly while gazing at the horizon.”¹⁷⁸ Zheng wanted to refrain from further warfare and continue to develop Taiwan, while encouraging these destitute commoners to seek refuge instead on the island. As for restoration, he only made a vague promise to build up his strength and await the right opportunity, as “the matters of the *tianxia* cannot yet be predicted.”¹⁷⁹ Evidently, Zheng believed in the correctness of occupying Taiwan and wished to make it the center of his focus, while shelving restoration for the indefinite future.

However, events on the Mainland continued to distract him from his intended maritime orientation. In January 1662, Wu Sangui led Qing troops into Ava, capital of the Myanmar court, and forced the king to hand over the Yongli Emperor, along with the pitiful and destitute remnants of his entourage. After bringing the pretender back to Yunnan, Wu had him and his son executed by strangulation in May.¹⁸⁰ Li Dingguo attempted to continue the Ming loyalist resistance, but mounting defections from his ranks and growing illness soon took their toll. In August 1662, he, too, passed away in the extreme southwestern corner of Yunnan.¹⁸¹ Weeks before the emperor’s capture, a supply officer of the Yongli Board of War named Lin Ying had shaved his head to become a monk, and fled by way of Xiamen to Taiwan, where he met and reported the situation to Zheng. Although he remained unsure of the Yongli court’s fate, Lin already heard the rumors about Wu’s entry into Myanmar and the pretender’s capture at the hands of the Qing.¹⁸² However, Zheng quickly dismissed these claims as hearsay and lacking evidence, and continued to uphold the same reign name and calendar as before. Only when he could receive clear confirmation of the emperor’s fate from the southwest would he recommend

¹⁷⁶ Jiang Risheng, 207.

¹⁷⁷ Zheng Yiju, 21.

¹⁷⁸ Zheng Yiju, 22 and Jiang Risheng, 207.

¹⁷⁹ Xia, 29. Zheng Yiju, 22 provides substantiation of Zheng’s words, although this account has him saying something slightly different, namely, that to “rest the soldiers and let them engage in agriculture to wait for the clearing of the *tianxia* would still not be late.” Jiang Risheng, 207-208 has Zheng taking on a more explicit tone: “Once there is a gap, I will prepare my armor and head west, to restore [the Ming] and welcome the imperial carriage.” The last quote, from a rather suspect source, lacks independent collaboration. Moreover, even if Zheng had actually said these words, they still represent a hazy commitment to an indefinite future effort.

¹⁸⁰ For a detailed account of the Yongli Emperor’s flight to Myanmar and his subsequent capture and execution, refer to Struve, *Southern Ming*, 170-178 and Wakeman, vol. 2, 1030-1036.

¹⁸¹ Struve, *Southern Ming*, 178.

¹⁸² Jiang Risheng, 209-210; Ni, 524; and Zhou, 552.

a suitable successor.¹⁸³

Zheng dismissed or downplayed the terrible news of his father and his nominal ruler not just because of his fondness or devotion to them and adamant refusal to recognize the grim reality. These two important men had functioned as the crucial figureheads of legitimacy that knit together his organization from the family level, through the macroregion, and then to the entire empire. Their passing threatened to burst the seams and unravel the intricate ties that held him and his subordinates together. Already, the execution of Zheng Zhilong and the destruction of the ancestral graves in Fujian had called into question Chenggong's ability to protect his lineage from harm. These doubts over his capacity to represent the family only further fueled the bitter divisions within his organization around the issue of relocation to Taiwan, and remained not far from the surface during a subsequent crisis over the moral failings of his son, Zheng Jing.

In March 1662, soon after the Dutch left, Zheng Cheggong strictly ordered all commanders in Xiamen, including Zheng Tai, Hong Xu, and Huang Ting, to move to Taiwan with their wives, children, and their relatives on the pain of death. However, the three men had already heard reports from soldiers and commanders who had fled back to the Mainland about his severity in punishing even slight offenses on the island.¹⁸⁴ Far more disconcerting for Hong, Chenggong had assigned him and ten of his clan members to administer the affairs of various aboriginal villages deep in the interior of Taiwan. Faced with the bleak prospect of settling in a perceived wilderness full of hunger and epidemic diseases, the Xiamen commanders stopped sending grain ships and other vessels to Taiwan, and detained any of Chenggong's junks coming from the island.¹⁸⁵ All communications between the two sides subsequently became nonexistent. Chen Bao, the commander of the strategic garrison at Nan'ao Island, on the border of Fujian and Guangdong, and a trusted old general who had served for decades under Zhilong and him, likewise refused to budge. When Chenggong attempted to force the issue by dispatching a fleet under Zhou Quanbin to capture and "escort" him to Taiwan, Chen simply led his men into Guangzhou and surrendered to the Qing.¹⁸⁶

Already tense relations with the former Mainland island bases would break out into open conflict over an affair his son Jing had carried on with the wet nurse of Chenggong's fourth and youngest son. Their illicit union, considered incest according to strict Confucian interpretations, had ended up producing two children.¹⁸⁷ Chenggong would have probably let the matter slip had it not been for an angry memorial from Tang Xianyue, the highly influential former secretary

¹⁸³ Xia, 30 and Jiang Risheng, 210.

¹⁸⁴ Jiang Risheng, 210.

¹⁸⁵ Ruan, 40 and Jiang Risheng, 208.

¹⁸⁶ Chen Bao was so badly afflicted by this experience, however, that he passed away shortly after his surrender. See Ruan, 40 and Jiang Risheng, 208.

¹⁸⁷ Ruan, 40; Xia, 30; Jiang Risheng, 200-201, 210; and Zheng Yiju, 22. The wet nurse was considered one of the "eight mothers," and therefore, a relative of the Zheng family. See Wills, "Maritime China," 228. Father Vittorio Ricci, who resided in Xiamen at the time, had experienced firsthand this entire incident. Unlike the Chinese sources, which claim that Jing and the wet nurse only produced a son, he writes of two children resulting from this union. Most likely, the other one was a girl, whom the Chinese accounts would conceivably gloss over as unimportant. Refer to Borao Mateo et al., vol. 2, 590.

of the Board of War, whose granddaughter was Jing's principal wife.¹⁸⁸ In it, Tang accused Chenggong of neglect and oversight in family affairs. "If you cannot even administer your house in an upright manner," the secretary warned, "how can you run the country?"¹⁸⁹ Chenggong sought to quickly put down this unprecedented internal challenge to his interlinked familial and political authority by dispatching envoys to Xiamen with personal orders for Zheng Tai to slit Jing's throat and behead the nursemaid, along with their illegitimate children. In addition, Chenggong demanded that his own wife, Madame Dong (d. 1681) be put to death for her inability to effectively discipline her son.¹⁹⁰ Likewise, one of his brothers and a primary cousin would be locked up in a tower for failing to intervene.¹⁹¹

The shocked and terrified Xiamen commanders initially responded with partial compliance, killing the wet nurse and illegitimate children, and sending their heads over to Taiwan. However, when an adamant Chenggong dispatched another envoy to insist upon the execution of the other culpable parties, and entrusted the man with his personal sword, Zheng Tai, Huang Ting, and Hong Xu decided to openly defy their leader and take the life of his representative.¹⁹² The arrival of Zhou Quanbin's ships from Nan'ao, fresh from an unsuccessful campaign to seize the defector Chen Bao, set off further alarms. Rumors spread that Zhou carried with him Chenggong's orders to kill over ten generals on both Xiamen and Jinmen.¹⁹³ Considering this behavior to be predictable due to Chenggong's record of harsh discipline and his doubled severity on Taiwan, Tai, Huang, and Hong seized the ships as they entered the harbor and imprisoned their commander.¹⁹⁴ Hong Xu also sent a covert message to Taiwan requesting Dai Jie, a trusted confidant, to reinforce Xiamen and Jinmen with his troops in case Chenggong attacked.¹⁹⁵

Besides sheer survival, some of the Mainland leaders may have genuinely wanted to protect Chenggong's eldest son and designated heir from harm for the sake of the organization as a whole. However, Zheng Tai held far greater ambitions. Indeed, as shown, he was the second most important figure within the family, possessing extensive wealth and assets both at home and abroad. For Tai, Zheng Jing's moral failings became the perfect issue around which to enhance his own power and prestige at a time when his clan brother's policies had become increasingly unpopular among his followers. In fact, the commanders justified their defiance by pointing to Tai's seniority within the family lineage. Zheng Jing, as the son, "cannot go against his father. All the commanders are ministers, and cannot go against their ruler." However, Tai, being the

¹⁸⁸ Shen Yun, 55 and *Teishi kankei bunsho*, 42.

¹⁸⁹ Jiang Risheng, 210.

¹⁹⁰ Jiang Risheng, 210; Zheng Yiju, 22; Xia, 30; Ruan, 40; and Borao Mateo et al., vol. 2, 590.

¹⁹¹ Borao Mateo et al., vol. 2, 590.

¹⁹² Jiang Risheng, 210; Ruan, 40; Xia, 30; and Zheng Yiju, 22.

¹⁹³ The Qing side had also gotten wind of these rumors. According to intelligence reports, Zheng Chenggong had entrusted Zhou with orders to seize Hong Xu and another Xiamen commander. See *Manwen dang'an* 2, 332.

¹⁹⁴ Ruan, 40; Jiang Risheng, 210-211; and Zheng Yiju, 22.

¹⁹⁵ Zheng Yiju, 22.

elder member in the clan, “can refuse the younger brother.”¹⁹⁶ Without the legitimating role of Zheng Zhilong as the lineage head, Tai emerged as a credible alternative to Chenggong within the Zheng family on account of his seniority, a challenge that would evolve into a bitter internecine feud over the course of a year.

The Death of Zheng Chenggong and Its Aftermath

As multiple crises continued to plague his organization, Zheng Chenggong passed away at his residence, the former Fort Zeelandia in Anping, on Yongli 16.5/8 (June 23, 1662) at the age of thirty-eight, while still in the prime of his life. A shroud of mystery hangs around the exact circumstances surrounding his death. He first “experienced, by occasion (*ou*), [symptoms of] a cold and chills” on 5/1 (June 16).¹⁹⁷ Nobody around Zheng knew what exactly afflicted him.¹⁹⁸ During the days before his death, Zheng continued to receive civil and military officials on his bed, and held audiences with them to discuss matters of state.¹⁹⁹ He would often get up and observe the harbor of Anping from his castle, hoping to spot junks bearing news from Xiamen. On June 23, the last day of his life, he was still reading the Ancestral Injunctions of the Hongwu Emperor.²⁰⁰ Yet, that very night, Zheng Chenggong gave out a great yell, muttered a few last words, and passed away, while clawing his face with his fingers and chewing his hands.²⁰¹

The exact nature of the mystery disease that issued him the final deadly blow remains a matter of scholarly debate and is certainly worthy of further explanation.²⁰² I would, however, bring up some new findings in the primary records to suggest a way forward. Father Riccio wrote in his memoirs that Zheng developed a sudden and acute case of sunstroke (“*un tabardillo mortal tan furioso*”).²⁰³ This assertion has received the collaboration of Li Guangdi (1642-1718), a Fujianese gentry who would later serve as a Confucian adviser in the Kangxi Emperor’s court. He heard that a Chinese doctor recommended by Ma Xin to examine Zheng’s

¹⁹⁶ Zheng Yiju, 22; Ni, 179; and Jiang Risheng, 210-211.

¹⁹⁷ Xia, 30; Jiang Risheng, 211; and Ni, 179.

¹⁹⁸ Xia, 30.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Jiang Risheng, 211; Ni, 179.

²⁰¹ Borao Mateo, vol. 2, 607; Jiang Risheng, 211; Xia, 30; and *Kangxi shilu*, 9. The final words of Zheng Chenggong varied according to the account, but mainly lamented his failure to restore the Ming, act as a filial son, and serve as a responsible family head. It remains unclear whether they actually came from his mouth or were embellishments intended to heighten the dramatic effect of his death.

²⁰² Croizer suspects that malaria, a tropical disease endemic to the island, could have played the main culprit. See Crozier, 27. Andrade, on the other hand, attributes his death to syphilis. Refer to Andrade, 10.7. Both conditions could explain Zheng’s bouts of craziness and delirium during his final days in Taiwan, while an advanced stage of syphilis could also account for his scratching and biting due to the formation of gummas on parts of his body. These explanations, while credible, appear to fit the description of longer-term illnesses and do not fully accord with the suddenness of his demise. In a daring and creative article, the Xiamen-based scholar Lin Qiquan argues that he had been deliberately poisoned to death, the victim of a vast, covert, and intricate conspiracy masterminded and executed by Zheng Tai and the Mainland commanders, and Ma Xin. While creative, the argument appears somewhat far-fetched, but some of the evidence Lin brings up is worthy of further exploration. See Lin Qiquan, “Zheng Chenggong siyin xi” (“An Analysis of the Cause of Zheng Chenggong’s Death”), *Zheng ming (Striving to be Heard)* 4 (1982).

²⁰³ Borao Mateo et al., vol. 2, 607.



Figure 23. Casteel Zeelandia, which later became the Zheng family's headquarters on Taiwan. Today, only the foundations remain of this once-impressive defensive network. On top of it, the Qing maintained a garrison until the late nineteenth century, just before Taiwan was ceded to Japan. The grounds of the fortress then became converted into an observation deck and a dormitory for customs officers.

Photograph by author, 2006

illness had diagnosed him with sunstroke (*zhongshu*) on the day of his death.²⁰⁴ This condition could conceivably occur due to hard work and high stress in a hot and humid environment, overwhelming the ventilation capacities of the body, especially one unaccustomed to the tropical climate of Taiwan. It can also be triggered by a high fever just prior to the outbreak, a condition present in Zheng, seen in his “cold and chills,” which may have then quickly developed.²⁰⁵

Even more intriguingly, on 8/19 (September 30), just several months later, Ma Xin, one of Chenggong's most trusted commanders, who had accompanied him throughout his campaigns on the Mainland and eagerly supported the invasion of Taiwan, suddenly passed away as well.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Li Guangdi, *Rongcun yulu, Rongcun xu yulu (The Written Records of Rongcun, The Continued Written Records of Rongcun)* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1995), 672.

²⁰⁵ Andem Ndem Effiong, MD, Emory University, personal communication, Atlanta, GA, 23 December 2009.

²⁰⁶ *Manwen dang'an* 2, 395; Jiang Risheng, 212; and Ni, 179. The last two unofficial or “wild” histories claim that Ma Xin

The commonly accepted explanation, originating from Jiang Risheng, was that Ma had cried out of such great sorrow upon hearing the terrible news about his leader that he quickly caught a fatal illness.²⁰⁷ Yet, the timing of his demise and Zheng's earlier death appear too interconnected to pass off as mere coincidence. In fact, the one person who stood to benefit the most from Zheng's passing was Ma Xin. Not only did Ma enjoy great respect and clout on account of his distinguished military service and the full trust of his deceased leader, having risen to second-in-command in the organization, but he also possessed the largest number of soldiers on Taiwan.

More credible sources, including the memorials and testimonies found in the Qing archives and Li Guangdi's account, provide strong evidence that he wanted to "rule over this land" as his own autonomous fiefdom.²⁰⁸ Indeed, soon after his leader's death on June 23, Ma, with the help of several other commanders on Taiwan, proclaimed Chenggong's tenth brother Zheng Xi as regent, bearing the official title of Caretaker of the Seal of the Prince of Yanping (*Huli Yanping wang yin*).²⁰⁹ They claimed to act according to Chenggong's instructions on his deathbed for the regent to "assist my teenage son [Jing] and manage" the affairs of the island.²¹⁰ Even if the statement represented an authentic last will, Zheng Xi did not possess a strong character and could easily serve as a figurehead through whom Ma could exercise actual power.

Meanwhile, the junk that the new authorities in Taiwan had hastily dispatched with news of Chenggong's death arrived at Xiamen between the fifth and sixth lunar months (June to July).²¹¹ Besides issuing an order for mourning on all of the Mainland coastal islands, the commanders upheld Zheng Jing, the eldest son, as the legitimate successor to Chenggong. In accordance with what their deceased leader would do when making important decisions, they crafted a memorial to the Yongli Emperor, "requesting" the faraway pretender to allow Jing to inherit the titles of Generalissimo Who Summons and Quells and the Prince of Yanping.²¹² In private, the junior Zheng would refer to himself as *shifan* (Inherited Feudatory), while others would call him *shizi* (the Crown Prince).

However, actual power over organizational affairs on the twin island bases in the wake of Chenggong's death quickly became concentrated in the hands of Zheng Tai. As Revenue

died just five days after Zheng Chenggong. Li Guangdi goes even further, writing that Ma passed away the very next day. See Li Guangdi, 672. My conclusions come from a memorial of Geng Jimao to the Qing court. He Yi, a division commander under Hong Xu and Zheng Tai, had informed one of Geng's subordinates, the garrison commander of Haicheng, of the date of Ma's death. In addition, the Qing feudatory asked and obtained verification of its truthfulness from Yang Laijia, whom the Xiamen authorities had dispatched to conduct negotiations with the Qing court at the time. Therefore, I have no doubts as to the accuracy of this date. Perhaps Jiang, Ni, and Li intended to heighten the dramatic effect of their presentation.

²⁰⁷ Jiang Risheng, 212.

²⁰⁸ Li Guangdi, 672.

²⁰⁹ Ruan, 40 and Li Guangdi, 673. In other accounts, Zheng Xi goes by Zheng Shixi or Zheng Miao.

²¹⁰ Zha, *Zuiwei lu*, 137.

²¹¹ Jiang Risheng provides the specific date of 5/14 (June 29), but his other information regarding this period, including Ma Xin's death, contains serious inaccuracies. See Jiang Risheng, 213. Zheng Yiju, on the other hand, claims that the news arrived during the sixth month. See Zheng Yiju, 22.

²¹² Jiang Risheng, 213.

Officer and banker and manager of the family finances, he had amassed a tremendous private fortune for himself. Moreover, during the crisis over Jing's moral failings, Tai had acquired significant goodwill by taking on the role of protector of the family enterprise and legitimate line of succession. He had the final say over all decisions, which occurred through joint consultation in committees with other civil and military powerbrokers, primarily Hong Xu and Huang Ting.²¹³ Tai refused to accord Zheng Jing with any responsibility in governance, as he "could not find in him the capability that in such times was necessary."²¹⁴ From the very outset, Tai intended Jing to serve as nothing more than a figurehead while running the show from behind the scenes.

Naturally, the grand ambitions of this revenue officer would run into conflict sooner or later with Ma Xin's own goals on Taiwan. The point of conflict occurred during the seventh month (August) of that year, when Geng Jimao, Li Shuaitai, and the other Qing Fujian authorities dispatched envoys to Xiamen. After hearing the news of Chenggong's death, they were convinced that a huge obstacle to their efforts to pacify the coast had been swept clear. They now came with the aim of "summoning and soothing" his followers into submission. Zheng Tai eagerly supported renewed negotiations with the Qing, claiming that the years of resistance had caused the common people to suffer. He noted that even Chenggong himself, before setting sail for Taiwan, had decided to "seek friendship (*tonghao*)" with the Qing, a reference to Cai Zheng's mission in 1659.²¹⁵

Tai dispatched Yang Laijia as an envoy to Zhangzhou to negotiate with Li and Geng, who had recently arrived from the provincial capital.²¹⁶ The Qing laid out stringent conditions for peace, adamantly requesting that the Zhengs abandon Taiwan and their Mainland coastal bases, and order subjects to shave their heads and relocate inland in accordance with the coastal evacuation policy.²¹⁷ The Xiamen commanders responded with an appeal to grant Taiwan autonomy along the example of Korea, so that it could maintain the Ming hairstyle and dress. Although they refused to evacuate the Mainland coastal areas, they eventually made the concession of allowing resident Zheng officials and commoners to shave their heads "and follow Qing institutions."²¹⁸ Nevertheless, they continued to demand exceptions and tolerance for elites living there who were unwilling to serve the new dynasty. As tokens of their sincerity in submitting if granted the conditions, the commanders forwarded to the Qing all the population and military registers of the coastline and the seals of authority over formerly occupied territories.²¹⁹

When Ma Xin heard about the talks on Taiwan, he adamantly objected, especially when he

²¹³ Zheng Yiju, 22; Xia, 40; Jiang Risheng, 213; and Borao Mateo, et al., vol. 2, 614.

²¹⁴ Borao Mateo et al., vol. 2, 614.

²¹⁵ Zheng Yiju, 22.

²¹⁶ Jiang Risheng, 213 and *Manwen dang'an* 2, 396.

²¹⁷ Ruan, 41; Xia, 23; Jiang Risheng, 214-217; and Zheng Yiju, 23.

²¹⁸ *Tei shi kankei bunsho*, 2.

²¹⁹ Jiang Risheng, 215 and *Tei shi kankei bunsho*, 3-8.

learned of the details of the communication.²²⁰ Ma hastily dispatched a junk to Xiamen demanding that his relatives there be sent across the strait, and expressed his intention to cut off all relations with the commanders. He would instead make “Dongdu as his place to retreat and settle down” for the long term.²²¹ Faced with centrifugal tendencies on Taiwan, Zheng Tai decided to enter into a contest for influence with Ma over the figurehead of Zheng Xi. During this time, Xi’s closest aides plotted with two key generals, Huang Zhao (d. 1662) and Xiao Gongchen (d. 1662), to proclaim the regent as “Master of Dongdu” (*Dongdu zhu*) and refuse recognition to Zheng Jing.²²² Through a series of covert letters exchanged among Tai, Xi, and the Taiwan commanders later discovered by Jing in Huang’s camp, it is evident that Tai had full knowledge of the plan and actively encouraged it.²²³ Their exact contents remain unknown, but they spoke of an arrangement whereby the regent would dominate Taiwan while Zheng Tai enjoyed exclusive control of Xiamen. The plotters would also find a way to murder Jing and bring both regions under Qing control in a lord-vassal relationship similar to the Three Feudatories that involved an even more comprehensive change in hair and dress.²²⁴

About this time, Ma Xin suddenly passed away on Taiwan under mysterious circumstances. The primary records mention this event in highly cryptic language. While some sources, as mentioned, attribute his death to illness from excessive grief, Li Guangdi notes that he “passed away violently and suddenly (*baosi*) without any sickness.”²²⁵ Likewise, Geng Jimao gleefully memorialized the court that “Heaven had become fed up with his evil ways and brought about his destruction” due to his stringent refusal to negotiate with the Qing.²²⁶ The sources perhaps hint at a plot not far beneath the surface, with the Qing a highly interested party, or even undertaken with its connivance. Regardless of natural or manmade causes, with Ma Xin conveniently out of the way, Zheng Tai could expand his authority to include Taiwan. Tai hoped to utilize his increased influence to bypass the other Xiamen commanders entirely and reach a private settlement with the Qing court on any terms, as long as it could relax its demand for the organization to relocate inward. At the same time, he and his Taiwan-based allies aimed to eliminate Zheng Jing, the final barrier to his absolute power.

However, with the notable exception of Liu Guoxuan, who assisted Huang Zhao and Xiao

²²⁰ *Manwen dang’an* 2, 395-396.

²²¹ *Manwen dang’an* 2, 395.

²²² Jiang Risheng, 213; Xia, 40; and Zheng Yiju, 23.

²²³ Ruan, 42; Jiang Risheng, 221; Zheng Yiju, 24.

²²⁴ One of the rare surviving edicts of Zheng Jing, written to Hong Xu before he set out for his expedition against Xi on Taiwan, noted that the regent wanted to “kill and abandon the Crown Prince and reach an accord of surrender with the barbarians (*tongkuan yidi*).” See “Yanping er wang yiji,” 133. Father Vittorio Riccio, who had returned to Xiamen on July 27, 1663, likewise acknowledged that Tai tried to “kill or overthrow the said son of Cuesing [Jing] and recognize the Tartar king.” In fact, Tai had already “considered the great conveniences of the vassals that remained subjected to the Tartar.” See Borao Mateo et al., vol. 2, 618. These two accounts receive further collaboration in the Qing memorials found in *Tei shi kankei bunsho*, 12 and Jiang Risheng, 221.

²²⁵ Li Guangdi, 672. Not only was Li a contemporary of these events, but he also obtained a large part of his information on the Zheng regime through an interview on Kangxi 39.6/6 (July 21, 1700) with his close friend, who happened to be a relative of both Chen Yonghua and Zheng Jing’s younger brother.

²²⁶ *Manwen dang’an* 2, 395.

Gongchen with the island's defense, most of the other commanders sat on the fence or remained openly hostile. One of them, Huang An, secretly sent a memorial to Zheng Jing alerting him of the plot.²²⁷ Concurrently, Chenggong's former trusted advisor and chief negotiator with the Qing, Cai Zheng, reported the news after fleeing across the strait and presenting his deceased leader's princely robes and cap to the son.²²⁸ More importantly, Jing commanded the support of key civil and military figures in Xiamen. Hong Xu, the other major player within the organization who had followed along with Zheng Tai's policies thus far, sensed the danger of his overconcentration of power, and threw his support behind Jing.²²⁹ The young heir was also fortunate enough to have a capable advisor in Chen Yonghua, whom Chenggong had assigned at a young age to accompany and study together with him.²³⁰

With the help of Hong, Jing managed to scrape together an invasion fleet with one thousand soldiers under the command of Zhou Quanbin. Toward the end of Yongli 16.10 (December 1662), Jing sailed for Taiwan together with Chen Yonghua, whom he had appointed his Advisory Staff Officer (*ziyi canjun*). After Zhou's forces landed on the island, a brief but fierce skirmish ensued with the supporters of Zheng Xi, but these were quickly surrounded and overwhelmed when the other fence-sitting commanders rallied behind the invasion force. Huang Zhao was killed by a stray arrow in the heat of battle, while Jing later had Xiao Gongchen and the advisors of Zheng Xi sentenced to death by slicing.²³¹ Liu Guoxuan almost met with the same fate, but Chen Yonghua decided to spare him on account of his remarkable physiognomy.²³² Jing also forgave Xi and treated him with proper courtesy.²³³

In a proclamation to the various civil and military officials on Taiwan, Zheng Jing attempted to give his invasion a layer of justification and legitimation. As he wrote, "according to the Ancestral Injunctions of the Imperial Ming, when a king dies, the crown prince succeeds him... There has not been a single alteration in three hundred years in which an eldest son was deposed in favor of a younger brother..."²³⁴ Anyone who went against this principle, he stated in a separate edict to Hong Xu, are "truly traitorous subjects of the Great Ming."²³⁵ The fact that Zheng Jing needed to emphasize these points so emphatically reflects a broader, structural crisis within the organization closely tied to both family and imperial legitimacy. As mentioned earlier, Zheng Zhilong's death and Chenggong's decision to essentially abandon the southeastern macroregion had greatly diminished the latter's standing in the family hierarchy and contributed

²²⁷ Jiang Risheng, 213.

²²⁸ Xia, 31 and *Tei shi kankei bunsho*, 12.

²²⁹ From the moment the succession crisis began on Taiwan, Hong Xu had advised Zheng Jing closely on all major affairs. See Jiang Risheng, 213. An edict from Jing praised Hong profusely for his loyalty and ability to "manifest the Ancestral Injunctions" of Zheng Chenggong. See "Yanping er wang yiji," 133.

²³⁰ Xia, 64 and Jiang Risheng, 235.

²³¹ For a detailed account of the invasion and conflict, see Xia, 32; Jiang Risheng, 217-221; and Ruan, 41.

²³² Li Guangdi, 673.

²³³ Jiang Risheng, 220-221; Ruan, 41; and Xia, 32.

²³⁴ "Yanping er wang yiji," 133.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

to the rise of Tai as a credible alternative. Zheng Jing's own failings further undermined his already vulnerable position as a successor. In fact, one key reason Huang Zhao and Xiao Gongchen had given for upholding Xi was that "since the Crown Prince could use his troops to defy his father, how can [the regent] on Taiwan not succeed his brother?"²³⁶ Thus, with Chenggong dead, Jing commanded very little moral authority to control his increasingly assertive relatives.

Meanwhile, around August 1662, at the height of the succession crisis, official news of the Yongli Emperor's tragic death arrived in Xiamen, although rumors had circulated widely for quite some time.²³⁷ Chenggong had tried to dismiss these doubts of the ruler's wellbeing precisely because they threatened the legitimacy of the rank and titles conferred upon him that had allowed him to issue commands as an imperial vassal. More ominously, however, the Yongli Emperor's demise signified the end of the Ming as a coherent political entity, even if its memory lived on in the elite and popular imagination of the early Qing. With its roots in an effectively nonexistent dynasty, Chenggong's very qualification to rule as "Lord of the Imperial Surname" came under question. His son and successor Jing, who inherited the same titles and ranks, would find himself in even less of a position to uphold the status quo. An ever thinning line now separated them from just another group of rebels and pirates that aimlessly terrorized the coastline from a wild, "barbarian" base abroad. The intricate thread that, for decades, so successfully tied macroregional interests with family enterprise and, ultimately, the symbols of imperial authority, began to unravel.

Although Zheng Jing's succession continued to receive the support of a substantial core of followers, two main centrifugal tendencies emerged in the organization. Upon hearing of the Yongli Emperor's death, Zhang Huangyan and the prominent civil officials and gentry based at Xiamen and Jinmen, including Wang Zhongxiao and Lu Ruoteng, met in private with Zhu Shugui and other resident Ming imperial relatives. They secretly discussed the idea of placing the Regent Lu, whom many of them had once served and continued to privately uphold, on the throne as the new Ming ruler.²³⁸ Zhang even crafted three memorials urging him to "inherit and perpetuate the proper title."²³⁹ The regent's imperial succession would certainly provide a new focus and rallying point for the coastal anti-Qing resistance movement. Yet, it once again unveiled the specter of continental interference in the political and economic autonomy of the maritime region that both Zhilong and Chenggong had tried so hard to prevent. Fortunately for Zheng Jing, himself mired in a power struggle at the time, the Regent Lu passed away at Jinmen from asthma on 11/13 (December 23) at the age of 44, thereby temporarily putting to rest the

²³⁶ Jiang Risheng, 212-213.

²³⁷ Xia, 33; Jiang Risheng, 223; and Zhang Huangyan, *Shiwen ji*, 41.

²³⁸ Zhang Huangyan, *Shiwen ji*, 42; Shao, 115; Zha, *Lu chungqiu*, 73.

²³⁹ For the content of one representative memorial to the Regent Lu, see Zhang Huangyan, *Shiwen ji*, 43-44; Zha, *Lu chungqiu*; and Shao, 115.

issue of imperial succession.²⁴⁰ Jing continued to uphold the Yongli reign name, but his choice would cloud the organization's legitimacy throughout its remaining existence.

The other threat came from none other than Zheng Tai, who had significant resources and soldiers at his disposal, and enjoyed great popularity among the Xiamen populace, being “broadly loved (*generalmente querido*),” in the words of Father Riccio.²⁴¹ Without the overarching framework of the Ming polity, Tai wanted the organization to instead submit to the Qing on the condition that the family enterprise could maintain significant privileges and autonomy. As seen, this arrangement threatened to concentrate power in his hands and undercut the role of Zheng Jing and the other commanders on Xiamen. After foiling the plot in Taiwan, where they had discovered Tai's letters in Huang Zhao's camp, he and his victorious troops sailed back across the strait in late January 1663. In great fear, Tai refused to greet Jing upon his return, feigning illness, and moved his entire family onboard a junk docked in a harbor of Jinmen, ready to flee at a moment's notice. Although formal talks between the Xiamen commanders and the Qing had ended inconclusively that month, with each side holding onto its original position, he again dispatched Yang Laijia, who had just returned from Beijing, to Zhangzhou to continue negotiations.²⁴²

Meanwhile, Zheng Jing, already unsettled by his clan relative's attempt on his life, was disturbed to learn of his further covert contacts with the Qing, and increasingly worried about his abnormal behavior.²⁴³ Finally, in the sixth month (July), he plotted with Chen Yonghua and Hong Xu to get rid of him. They utilized the ruse of granting Tai his wish for exclusive control over Xiamen and Jinmen, and promised that Jing would concentrate only on Taiwan's affairs. Tai, greatly relieved, accepted their invitation to a banquet celebrating his “appointment.” There, the three men caught him off guard, and seized him and confined him in a cell, where he strangled himself the very next day.²⁴⁴

Upon hearing the news, the deceased's brother, Zheng Mingjun, and son, Zuanxu, fled with their relatives and over 400 civil and military officials, 180 junks, and 7,300 soldiers into Quanzhou Harbor, and surrendered to the Qing.²⁴⁵ In the following months, two other major commanders would defect, bringing along a further 200 officials and 3,000 men.²⁴⁶ These significant numbers reflected the size and influence of Tai's patronage network.²⁴⁷ Indeed, his suicide formalized the deep divisions over the organization's direction that had resulted from

²⁴⁰ Zhu Shugui, “Huang Ming Jianguo Lu wang kuangzhi 皇明監國魯王墳誌” (“Tomb Inscription of the Regent Lu of the Imperial Ming”), in Zha, *Lu chungiu*, 100.

²⁴¹ Borao Mateo et al., vol. 2, 618.

²⁴² Essentially, Zheng Tai would be willing to shave his hair and agree to any terms as long as the Qing could let him remain along the coast, and guarantee his authority there. For the detailed contents of these negotiations, including the memorials and letters exchanged, refer to Jiang Risheng, 223 and *Zheng shi shiliao sanbian*, 53-54.

²⁴³ Xia 33 and Ruan, 42.

²⁴⁴ Xia, 33-34; Ruan, 42; Jiang Risheng, 225-226; and Borao Mateo et al., vol. 2, 618.

²⁴⁵ Xia, 33-34; Ruan, 42; Jiang Risheng, 226; and *Kangxi shilu*, 13.

²⁴⁶ *Kangxi shilu*, 14-16.

²⁴⁷ Wills, *Peppers*, 52.

Chenggong's relocation to a foreign island, and the blows caused by the deaths of key familial and imperial figures.

Collapse and Retreat

The Qing, having failed to persuade the Zheng regime to surrender through negotiations, now took advantage of the bitter internecine conflict to actively encourage defections among individual commanders and officials by offering lenient terms in exchange for their submission.²⁴⁸ Besides trying to bring down Zheng Jing from within through such divide and conquer tactics, the Fujian authorities began to prepare for another all-out offensive on Xiamen and Jinmen that aimed to completely exterminate his weakened forces. To that effect, Geng Jimao and Li Shuaitai had already entered into an alliance a year earlier with the VOC, which still felt bitterness and anger over its loss of Taiwan, and eagerly looked for opportunities to avenge the defeat.²⁴⁹ The Dutch finally made their long-awaited rendezvous with the two men on June 24, 1662, when the envoy Constantin Nobel came to Fujian from Batavia to negotiate a joint attack on Xiamen. In exchange, the Qing promised to assist the VOC in recapturing Taiwan and allow it unrestricted access to the China market.²⁵⁰

A year later, on August 29, 1663, Admiral Balthasar Bort (d. 1680) arrived with seventeen ships armed with 440 guns, and carrying 1,382 sailors and 1,234 soldiers.²⁵¹ The timely surrender of Zheng Mingjun and the rest of Tai's relatives and clients to the Qing provided it with additional vessels, weapons, and naval expertise, as well as another committed group of commanders with personal grievances and a strong desire for revenge. On November 19, Bort's powerful ships, together with 500 junks belonging to the Qing and Mingjun, launched a joint attack on the Zheng fleets in the waters between Xiamen and Jinmen.²⁵² Jing's navy, consisting of 400 junks under the command of Zhou Quanbin, put up a strong resistance, managing at one point to board two Qing vessels and kill everyone on board, including the commander, Ma Degong.²⁵³ Eventually, however, the superiority and deadly accuracy of Dutch weapons and the numerical advantage of the combined fleet overwhelmed Zhou and forced him and Jing to abandon Xiamen and Jinmen, and withdraw to the island of Tongshan, farther south.²⁵⁴

On the next day, November 20, Qing troops entered Xiamen and Jinmen, and brutally removed the entire population as part of the coastal evacuation policy. According to shocked Dutch observers, local residents who refused to leave were "pulled out of their hiding places [and]

²⁴⁸ Wills, "Maritime China," 228-229; "Contingent Connections," 190-191; and Wong Young-tsu, 149.

²⁴⁹ Wills, *Peppers*, 32.

²⁵⁰ Ruan, 42. For a look at the complex negotiations and numerous misunderstandings that occurred between the Qing and the Dutch in the run-up to the joint offensive on Xiamen, see Wills, *Peppers*, 37-58.

²⁵¹ Wills, *Peppers*, 60; Ruan, 42; and Xia, 35.

²⁵² Borao Mateo et al., vol. 2, 618.

²⁵³ Ruan, 42 and Jiang Risheng, 228.

²⁵⁴ Xia, 35; Ruan, 43; and Borao Mateo et al., vol. 2, 618. For a detailed narrative of the Qing-Dutch offensive in English, see Wills, *Peppers*, 58-78.

hacked and carved...and tortured...to death, and left...lying on the road in our sight.”²⁵⁵

Likewise, Father Vittorio Riccio, another eyewitness at the time, noted the “rabid fury of those three nations” of the Netherlands, Zheng defectors, and the Qing, all seeking to exact retribution for the endless pain that the organization had caused them. They tore down the city walls, set fire to houses, raped women, and “opened the pregnant to see the creatures in their wombs, and these they threw into the air with their spears or swords.” The fearsome soldiers left behind “a horrible tumult of ashes strewn with cadavers and human bones, a hideous mountain of ruin.”²⁵⁶ The fires they set off burned for over 15 days. Both Xia Lin and Ruan Minxi, former followers of Zheng, estimated that most of the several hundred thousand residents on the two islands had perished in the massacre and subsequent evacuation.²⁵⁷

Besides experiencing the ghastly human toll of the battle, the Zheng commanders had to face a bleak dilemma as they fled in defeat. Now confined to a handful of tiny and barren islands centered upon Tongshan, Jing and his troops quickly encountered severe resource shortages due to the Qing evacuation, which had turned the hinterlands into a huge, barren wasteland. Bitter disputes soon erupted between the soldiers of Zhou Quanbin and Hong Xu over scarce food supplies that almost exploded into open armed conflict.²⁵⁸ Jing soon realized that, out of sheer survival, he had little choice other than to abandon his remaining coastal bases and retreat completely to Taiwan.

However, this decision represented the final nail in the coffin for his organization’s legitimacy. Already stricken hard by the demise of its key symbols and demoralized by familial intrigues and coups, his followers had pinned all their remaining hopes on Xiamen and Jinmen. Even if Chenggong had embarked on some wild overseas adventure to seize and colonize a “barbarian” island, the two Mainland bases remained a source of inspiration for both commanders and soldiers to tie their struggle with the defense of their native place and way of life. For many officials and gentry, they further symbolized the family’s continued commitment to fight against the Manchus and restore the Ming. However, Jing’s decision to permanently abandon Xiamen and Jinmen drove a wedge within the collective identity, creating a dichotomy of “Chineseness” as a set of independent cultural practices and characteristics on the one hand, versus attachment to a concrete geographic entity. The first option implied a life of indefinite exile, with no hope of returning to China, while the second meant surrender to the Manchus and the accompanying mutilation of “civilized” values through cutting hair and changing clothes.

Faced with this dilemma, a vast majority of Zheng military commanders opted for the former, as they sailed their junks en masse into Qing territory and pledged loyalty to the new dynasty rather than accompany Jing to Taiwan. Along with lenient Qing policies encouraging

²⁵⁵ Quoted in Wills, *Peppers*, 75.

²⁵⁶ Borao Mateo et al., vol. 2, 618-619.

²⁵⁷ Xia, 35 and Ruan, 43.

²⁵⁸ Xia, 35 and Jiang Risheng, 231.



Figure 24. The island of Tongshan, present-day Dongshan, served as a subsidiary base of the Zheng organization. The walls, partly shown here, and the main fortress were built during the sixteenth century to repel piratical attacks.

Photograph by author, 2009

submission, defections soon grew to uncontrollable levels.²⁵⁹ Zhou Quanbin, Du Hui, the garrison commander of Nan'ao Island, and other high-ranking generals, who had once enjoyed Chenggong's fullest trust and confidence, voluntarily went to shore, where they shaved their hair and changed their clothing. Others, like Huang Ting, had no choice but to surrender when his officers and soldiers threatened to mutiny if he sailed toward Taiwan.²⁶⁰ Indeed, the consequences of ignoring their wishes could be fatal. When Feng Chengshi (d. 1664), Officer of Works at the time, resolved to accompany Jing, a servant hijacked his ship and forced him to jump overboard to his death.²⁶¹ On Kangxi 3.7/5 (August 25, 1664), Bendai, the Manchu imperial commissioner to Fujian, estimated that the number of surrendered Zheng personnel from 1662 to 1664 stood at 3,985 civil and military officials, 40,962 soldiers, and 900 ships.

²⁵⁹ Jiang Risheng, 230 and Xia, 35. A comprehensive list of the key commanders who submitted to the Qing can be found in *Tei shi kankei bunsho*, 9-16.

²⁶⁰ Jiang Risheng, 231; Xia, 36; and Ruan, 43.

²⁶¹ Xia, 35; Ruan, 43; and Jiang Risheng, 231.

These figures amounted to anywhere from one-third to one-half of Jing's total troop strength in the Xiamen and Jinmen area.²⁶²

Only a very small group of military commanders; including Chen Yonghua, Hong Xu, and Feng Xifan, the son of Feng Chengshi; resisted the tide and traveled personally with Zheng Jing to ensure his safe passage to Taiwan.²⁶³ Zheng's other pillar of support came from the Ming imperial princes and loyalist gentry. Among the former, the Prince of Ningjing—Zhu Shugui—as well as the Princes of Luxi and Badong, the son of the Regent Lu, and their families, about 2,000 total, all made the arduous journey over to Taiwan.²⁶⁴ These royal descendants of the Ming house decided to take up residence on the wild and inhospitable island, far away from “civilized” comforts back home, merely for the sake of “several strands of hair,” in the words of Zhu Shugui.²⁶⁵ Sharing such sentiments were the members of the gentry, including poets and essayists like Wang Zhongxiao, Shen Quanqi (1608-1682), Gu Chaojian (1598-1668), and Li Maochun, who all set sail for Taiwan in spite of old age.²⁶⁶ At least these men could continue to find on the island the familiar Ming institutions and cultural symbols that they prized so much.

Besides these nonmilitary personnel, Zheng Jing had with him no more than 50 junks and 4,000 soldiers when he reached Taiwan in April of 1664.²⁶⁷ With the bulk of his forces gone over to the Qing, he now faced the ominous task of persuading his remaining officials and subordinates to accept the island as their new home and a focus of development in its own right. Moreover, with the Mainland no longer accessible, he needed to reestablish his familial authority and create a new legitimacy that would channel the energies of his followers away from the Ming and anti-Qing resistance. He also had to deal with the more immediate and pressing issues of growing enough food to support his men and countering the threat of an invasion from the Manchus and Dutch.

²⁶² Wills, *Peppers*, 52.

²⁶³ *Minhai jillue*, 21 and Xia, 35-36.

²⁶⁴ Shi, 6.

²⁶⁵ Gao, 256 and Jiang Risheng, 433. Zhu revealed these sentiments in a suicide poem he wrote in 1683, when the Zheng regime agreed to surrender Taiwan to the Qing and, thereby, accepted its haircutting order. Shortly afterwards, he and his five concubines ended their lives. See Jiang Risheng, 432-434 and *Minhai jilue*, 65.

²⁶⁶ The biographies of these men are included in the gazetteers of Taiwan Prefecture. See Gao, 211-212. In addition to them, Lu Ruoteng also decided to journey to Taiwan, but became sick and died while still in Penghu. Of the literati in Zheng's company, only Xu Fuyuan, a Jiangnan scholar, refused to go along and sailed instead for his native province. See Jiang Risheng, 231.

²⁶⁷ Shi, 6 and Borao Mateo et al., vol. 2, 618.

CHAPTER 5: THE ZHENG “STATE” ON TAIWAN

After losing his final Mainland outposts in 1664, Zheng Jing spent the next ten years on Taiwan, until the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories brought him back again to the Mainland coast. His decade on the island has received very little attention in previous scholarship, often relegated to a minor footnote in maritime East Asian history due to the admittedly scant surviving documentation and the towering personalities of Zheng Zhilong and Zheng Chenggong. Yet, the sources we have available and some newly discovered records reveal that Zheng Jing proved to be a highly capable leader in his own right who successfully met the challenge of survival on a new frontier and established the foundations for a new state on Taiwan. He moved away from the previous legitimacy of a nominal commitment to Ming restoration in favor of a new conception for his regime. He tried to naturalize Han customs, especially hair and clothing, to a “foreign” and peripheral island, while relegating physical “China” to abstract historical memory.

Meanwhile, Zheng managed to reconstitute his father’s flourishing trading network despite a severe Qing economic blockade. By the end of his decade on Taiwan, he had opened up commercial relations with the English East Indies Company (EIC) and even prepared to invade the Spanish Philippines, initiating a new round of expansion overseas. Seen in this light, Zheng Jing had no compelling material motivation to leave the island, nor did he actively prepare for an invasion of the Mainland, as Chinese-language scholarship tends to argue. Taiwan, then, did not merely serve as an economic base to prepare for an inevitable future restoration campaign, but the focus for development and settlement in its own right. In fact, as the next chapter will show, the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories came as a completely unexpected event, shortly after Zheng attempted to institutionalize his budding new legitimacy through negotiations with the Qing.

The Character of Zheng Jing’s Rule

After fleeing from his Mainland bases with all but a handful of followers, Zheng Jing, caught between a Qing blockade of the entire coastline and a harsh, unsettled frontier, first needed to ensure the physical survival of his organization and refashion the shattered morale of his soldiers. The 20,000 men in his divisions and their commanders constituted about one-fourth of the Han Chinese population in Taiwan during this period.¹ Most of them had joined Chenggong’s invasion force in 1661 and now worked as farmers in military colonies scattered throughout the island. For them, the inhospitable atmosphere, along with a loss of

¹ In a 1668 memorial to the Qing court, Shi Lang claimed that there were already 20,000 to 30,000 Han Chinese in Taiwan while under the Dutch. Zheng Chenggong brought 30,000 soldiers and their families with him to the island, while, in 1664, Zheng Jing took another 6,000 to 7,000. Those who died of illness and battle numbered about five or six thousand. Based upon Shi’s figures, John Robert Shepherd has concluded that the entire population of Taiwan in 1668 lay at a maximum of 61,000. See Shepherd, 96.

purpose in their role as fighting men, had triggered widespread homesickness within their ranks. In a memorial to the Qing court in 1668, Shi Lang reported that the Zheng forces had become lax and disorderly due to the neglect of their military training, and could no longer form a credible defense if attacked.² Far more seriously, over half of them did not have wives and families. They might manage to brave the harsh frontier environment, but, Shi wondered, “who would be willing to remain single their entire lives without thinking once about their native land?”³ Despite the highly biased source, it reflected a widespread desire on the part of these soldiers to return to their homes in the Southeast Coast macroregion, their geographical place of belonging, even at the cost of sacrificing the cultural aspects of their Chineseness. According to Shi, only treacherous waters around the island and the lack of boats to cross over to the Mainland prevented defections on a massive scale.⁴

To stem these ominous trends, Zheng Jing worked throughout 1664 and 1665 to reconstitute the political and economic apparatus of his father, while adding his own innovations to suit the new environment of Taiwan. He began with his own bureaucracy, undertaking a major reform of the Six Offices (*Liuguan*) of Works, Rites, Punishment, Revenue, Military, and Personnel. Under Zheng Jing, civil officials came to enjoy a status theoretically equal to their military counterparts, and both groups had the same right, “as ministers,” to memorialize him with policy suggestions and concerns.⁵ As a result, the people who filled these offices played a greater role in decision-making and implementation than their predecessors. For instance, Ke Ping, head of the Office of Punishments, and Ye Heng, the Officer of Rites, would represent the organization as major envoys in negotiations with the Qing.⁶ Yang Ying, a financial expert who worked for years under Hong Xu and Zheng Tai, now assumed the helm of the Revenue Office, succeeding these predecessors from military backgrounds.⁷

Zheng Jing’s reforms certainly did not mean the marginalization of his men in arms. In fact, he entrusted oversight of all affairs, civil and military, to two key subordinates: Chen Yonghua, the Advisory Staff Officer (*ziyi canjun*) and Feng Xifan, head of the Imperial Bodyguard (*shiwei*).⁸ Both men, along with Hong Xu and a small handful of others, had remained steadfastly loyal to Zheng despite massive defections to the Qing in the wake of the loss of Xiamen and Jinmen. Jing lavishly rewarded them for their unyielding stance, giving them top positions and allowing them to form the core of his advisory body. Evidently, this arrangement continued to bypass the traditional civilian oversight of government and reinforce the privileged position of Zheng’s family members and officers at the top of the organizational hierarchy. Still, by giving civilian ministers an increased role and making the military accountable for them, he

² Shi, 6.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Shi, 6.

⁵ Xia, 44.

⁶ Xia, 44 and Jiang Risheng, 238.

⁷ Xia, 44.

⁸ Ibid.

had taken a huge step toward the rationalization of his government. Moreover, despite the military background of his advisors, many of them, such as Chen Yonghua, never had direct experience in combat, and would exclusively oversee and coordinate the handling of civil affairs on the island for the rest of their lives. At the same time, the appointment of Chen, Feng, and others to prominent positions of trust showed that policies and actions within the organization

increasingly depended upon debate and consensus rather than the personalized and arbitrary decisions of Jing's father.

In many ways, the bureaucratic reforms undertaken by Zheng Jing, along with his mode of governance, reflected his personal character and upbringing. Born in 1642 at the Zheng ancestral village of Shijing, he spent most of his formative years on the main base of Xiamen, a highly international port and the largest bastion of Ming loyalist resistance outside the Southwest. As such, he had plenty of opportunities to interact with traders from across the Western Pacific, as well as people from "all the nations of the 15 kingdoms [provinces] of China," who spoke various dialects and maintained different customs.⁹ From very young, he also displayed a passion for learning and handled weapons with great precision and skill.¹⁰ Yet, compared to his cosmopolitan father and grandfather, who had both spent significant time abroad, Zheng Jing's horizons were far



Figure 25. Portrait of Zheng Jing with two attendants. Detail from a painting of unknown origin and date. The original can be found at the National Museum of China, Beijing.

narrower in scope. He undoubtedly received a strict Confucian education, while his concurrent position as eldest son and heir to the family enterprise allowed him to lead a pampered life relatively sheltered from Chenggong's otherwise harsh and unrelenting discipline. Jing's conservative moral upbringing, combined with an exterior environment conducive to "all the vices" common to a huge trading emporium like Xiamen, generated severe contradictions and tensions within his personality.¹¹ During his earlier years, he completely pushed aside the values imparted to him and turned instead to a life of rebelliousness, indulgence, and excessive

⁹ Borao Mateo et al., vol. 2, 592.

¹⁰ Jiang Risheng, 200.

¹¹ Borao Mateo et al., vol. 2, 592.

debauchery. He and the servants under him would randomly seize property around Xiamen and terrorize the common people at will. On one occasion in 1657, they tore into a church during the Festival of the Most Holy Rosary and confiscated some of the idols, mostly to satisfy Jing's curiosity. They then apprehended and detained Father Gregorio López, a Chinese Dominican priest from Manila, and threatened to execute him.¹² Chenggong could do very little about his son's misbehavior other than ordering him to stop, and beating, exiling, or decapitating Jing's responsible servants. Jing also enjoyed, often to the point of obsession, the finer pleasures of life, including food, drink, and, especially, sex. Caught in an unhappy arranged marriage with the daughter of the eminent minister Tang Xianyue, he frequently engaged in flings with singsong boys and took a fancy toward mature women.¹³ Chenggong's decision to have Jing executed for impregnating the wet nurse of his younger son only represented the final straw, the culmination of years of frustration and helplessness at what he perceived was the wasted promise of his designated heir.

Yet, this traumatic incident, which nearly cost Jing his head, along with his father's subsequent death on Taiwan, appeared to have made a significant impact upon the young man's later life, and caused him to mature quickly. As if trying to atone for his past depravity, Jing readily embraced his previous Confucian education after he succeeded to the head of the organization. He made sure to strictly observe the precedents set down by Chenggong in every manner and construed everything he did as the embodiment of the unfinished legacy of his father. His edicts, poems, and letters referred frequently to his predecessor as "the Former King" (*xianwang*) and often capitalized upon Chenggong's ambiguous and contradictory words and actions to justify his own goals.¹⁴ By prioritizing filial piety, especially in an overall political context in which allegiance to an effectively nonexistent Ming court had become unpractical and untenable, Jing could maintain the flexibility to reimagine the future legitimacy of his organization. In this sense, he differed from Chenggong's emphasis on loyalty to make amends for his inability to assist Zheng Zhilong in captivity.

Jing also lacked his father's strict and impartial discipline, as well as the desire to personally manage all matters within the organization. Contemporaries knew him as a benevolent and kind man, humble and respectful toward others, and always willing to consult their advice and welcome their input.¹⁵ In fact, the high level of trust he placed in his key ministers provided him with a degree of emotional comfort and stability that he otherwise lacked. An analysis of his poems reveals him to be a highly solitary and isolated individual who did not have many close friends or soul mates around to share his happiness and frustrations, and the ups and downs of his life.¹⁶ He could not find satisfaction in his marriage, while his affair with the wet nurse,

¹² Ibid., 593.

¹³ Jiang Risheng, 200 and Zheng Yiju, 22.

¹⁴ See, for instance, Zheng Jing's edicts in *Yanping er wang yiji*, 133-134.

¹⁵ Jiang Risheng, 200.

¹⁶ Zhu Shuangyi, 67.

perhaps the one person in whom he could confide, and the illegitimate children she bore for him ended in tragedy.¹⁷ Frequently depressed, he regularly threw sumptuous banquets for his advisors and drank heavily to dull his pain.¹⁸ Based upon these observations, some of his contemporaries, notably Shen Guangwen, have labeled him a weak-willed individual who easily succumbed to the “obsequious flattery” of his retinue and indulged in excessive pleasures under the influence of such unscrupulous men.¹⁹ While it is true that he had the tendency to be too trusting and naïve, his increased dependence upon consultation with advisors and consensus decisions, as we will see, laid the framework for greater stability and continuity in his rule, which Taiwan greatly needed at the time.

For all their dissimilarities, however, Zheng Jing and his father resembled one another in one key respect: their bitter hatred of the Manchus. Although Jing was too young to clearly remember the traumatic events of the Ming-Qing transition and could only vaguely recall the fate of his grandparents, his Confucian education had, from a very young age, imparted within him the rigid separation of “Chinese” and “barbarian.” In fact, the key reason why he had his servants seize Father Gregorio López was because the priest “came in a shaved head conforming to the customs of the Tartars and...deserved a grand punishment.”²⁰ Still, due to the differing circumstances, Jing’s antipathy toward the Manchus took on a less personal, but far more objectified and intensely virulent, form than Chenggong. In several of his poems, Jing revealed that he and his ministers often reminisced during banquets over the events surrounding the Ming fall. Of the stories, the suicide of the Chongzhen Emperor when rebels overran Beijing caused him the greatest pain. The late ruler’s tragic fate was, in his words, “a most miserable plight, alas, unseen since antiquity!”²¹ Jing also lamented the incompetence of the loyalist regimes that had attempted to resist the Manchu onslaught. For him, if only the ministers serving these courts could have shown enough leadership and loyalty, the Ming would still keep control over at least the southern half of the country, just like the Eastern Jin and the Southern Song before it.²² In fact, the factionalism and treachery of these very officials led to the “barbarian disaster that has plagued the country in this day.”²³

In referring to the Manchus, Zheng Jing used highly denigrating terms, such as *hu* or *lu*, equivalent to “Tartar” in Western languages, and called the Qing emperor by the title *qiu*, a mere tribal chieftain.²⁴ In a footnote to one of his poems, he described, not without a tinge of exoticism, the fantastic and perverse customs of the Manchu native religion that he had heard from Zhang Huangyan’s envoy Luo Zimu:

¹⁷ Jiang Risheng, 200.

¹⁸ Shen Guangwen, 706.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Borao Mateo, vol. 2, 593.

²¹ “Yanping er wang yiji,” 130.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 131.

“At the dawn of the New Year, the fake Emperor and Empress would enter a temple to worship their demon gods. It is located at a place where people could not go, and contains idols of males and females embracing each other and engaging in intercourse. After they complete their worship, the two would proceed to the platform naked, and perform in the manner of caged animals, with man on the left and woman on the right...these are truly the despicable customs of beasts. Moreover, when the barbarian chieftain dies, his younger brother violates his sister-in-law in order to perform this ritual in his place, while calling out aloud the name of the late emperor.”²⁵

Such incestuous behavior, according to Zheng Jing, occurred not only as ritual within the walls of the secretive Manchu shrines, but also as explicit carnal desires in the very palaces once occupied by the former Ming emperors. Based upon further hearsay, he composed several more poems describing the loneliness of the Qing empress after the death of her husband, and her wild lust for his younger brother and their passionate encounters in the inner court.²⁶

The derogatory lyrical portrayals of the Qing rulers reflected a consensus among Zheng Jing and his elites on Taiwan that the Manchus, despite their lavish patronage of Chinese culture, remained fundamentally alien. Their strange customs and religion promoted incest and went completely against the permissible set of Confucian relationships. They were, in Zheng’s opinion, no different from sensual animals with a wild and untamed nature that could never assimilate into the Han ethnicity. Instead, the disorderly conduct among members of the Qing ruling class, which had usurped the “proper” Confucian hierarchy of the Ming, threatened, through its own example, to corrupt and tear apart the very fabric of Chinese society. Indeed, Zheng spoke of “the foul and rank odor of sheep flooding the four corners of the earth.”²⁷ This intense racial hatred, together with his personal qualities, the consultative nature of his government, and collective exile on an overseas island, would deeply influence the character of his rule over the course of the decade. However, in 1664, Zheng, still reeling from the loss of his Mainland bases, first needed to overcome the Qing blockade and achieve self-sufficiency in food and the basic provisions necessary for the survival of his regime.

Toward Self-Sufficiency

A series of agrarian reforms implemented with the help of Chen Yonghua marked a crucial sign of this emphasis on the development of Taiwan’s domestic economy. For the next decade, under his capable oversight, Taiwan managed to largely resolve its dire labor shortage, and secure the basic supplies and manpower that would form the material foundations of his organization. A comprehensive revenue system soon went into effect, which continued many

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

Dutch precedents, but also implemented Chenggong's original vision and plans for the island before his untimely death. As in former times, all residents above 15 years of age, both Han Chinese settlers and native tribes, were required to pay an annual head tax.²⁸ During the 1680s, when Qing accounts gave us a detailed glimpse into the organization's finances, Zheng Jing collected a total of 35,668 taels (1.3 tons) per year, including 19,440 taels from the Chinese and 16,228 taels from the aborigines.

However, the pressing desire to achieve basic subsistence for his soldiers meant that Zheng Jing had to place his priority on sufficient primary grain production. Acting under the advice of Chen Yonghua, he divided the arable acreage in Taiwan into three categories, and subjected the agriculturally oriented Han population to land taxes, just as on the Mainland. Land previously opened up and cultivated by Chinese peasants during the Dutch period, known as "official fields (*guantian*)," fell under the direct jurisdiction of Zheng Jing and his family. They imposed a heavy tax (more like a rent) on average of 11.25 *shi* of rice or its equivalent per *jia* (932 kg per hectare) per year.²⁹ This sum typically translated to around one-third of individual crop yields. In exchange, however, they provided agricultural implements and animals for the tenants and constructed and maintained dikes for irrigation. At the same time, Zheng and Chen encouraged officials and wealthy gentry to open up virgin soil and recruit peasants to work on them. Known as "private fields (*sitian*)," or "fields of civil and military officials (*wenwuguantian*)," they charged a much lower mean rent of 2.3 *shi* of grain per *jia* (196 kg per hectare) annually. In this arrangement, however, individual landlords typically invested in the tools, animals, and irrigation projects, and were responsible for paying a proportion of the rent as tax to Zheng. They would then split the harvest with the tenant working the land, making the total payments more variable than the "official fields," and possibly higher.³⁰

To alleviate the tax burden on the peasantry, and thereby better feed his 20,000 soldiers, Zheng Jing expanded upon his father's policy of settling soldiers into military colonies (*yingpan*), where they could open up new land and grow food for their own survival.³¹ He essentially disbanded his army and placed his commanders in charge of supervising the activities of the fields rather than planning for future campaigns. True to Shi Lang's observations, most of Zheng's men would become little different from the other Han Chinese peasants on Taiwan. At

²⁸ Sheng, 92.

²⁹ Ibid. The *jia* was the rough equivalent of the Dutch *morgen*, utilized by Chinese settlers on the island. Zheng Chenggong kept it unchanged after his occupation for the purpose of collecting taxes conveniently and quickly rather than adopting and transferring the corresponding Mainland area measurements. The *jia* remained in use on Taiwan well into Qing times.

³⁰ Ibid. Zheng Jing rated all land on Taiwan belonging to himself and his officials according to two classes of fertility: *tian* and *luan*. Each, in turn, was subdivided into three subcategories of quality and assigned different levels of rent. See Jiang Yuying, ed., *Taiwan fu zhi (Gazetteer of Taiwan Prefecture)*, TWWXCK (1959), 145. The amounts given here represent an average of the six figures for official and private fields.

³¹ Xia, 36 and Jiang Risheng, 233. Zheng Chenggong had justified this policy by bringing up historical precedents of troops that had tilled the soil in times of peace and taken up arms during war, especially in the early Ming. His men, too, would serve as "seventy percent farmers and thirty percent soldiers." See his proclamation, made just after the Dutch surrender of the island, in Jiang Risheng, 206-207, quoted in Cao, "Taiwan kenzhi," 74-75.



Figure 26. A shrine dedicated to Chen Yonghua at Tainan.

Photograph by author, 2006

first concentrated on the Jianan Plain, close to the main population centers, the scope of their settlement eventually stretched from the southern tip of the island to roughly present-day Xinzhu County in the north.³² However, two divisions continued to guard Anping and Chengtian, while garrisons were maintained at Danshui and Jilong, in the extreme north.³³ Moreover, all his men still had to undergo military training in the lax farming seasons and bear the obligation of taking up arms in the event of possible warfare.³⁴ Nevertheless, since no major conflict broke out until 1674, most of the soldiers generally engaged in production without any interruption. No exact figures survive regarding the rate of taxation from the military colonies.³⁵ However, before his

³² Yang Ying, 190 and *Dagregister van Meij*, Back 31.

³³ Cao, "Taiwan kenzhi," 79 and Deng Kongzhao, "Zheng Chenggong yu Ming-Zheng Taiwan," 78.

³⁴ During this period, they primarily mobilized to defend Taiwan from the Qing and Dutch, or battle hostile aboriginal tribes. For instance, upon hearing word of Shi Lang's plans to attack in 1665, Zheng pulled three-tenths of Hong Xu's division from the land and sent them to garrison Penghu. See Jiang Risheng, 234.

³⁵ The paucity of data probably reflected the intentional lack of motivation to keep precise records due to their impermanent nature; the soldiers that cultivated them had to abandon them if remobilized for battle. In many cases, the vast distances involved also made regular oversight difficult.

death, Zheng Chenggong had given these settlements a relief of three years in payment, but “borrowed” upfront three-tenths of their initial crop yield.³⁶ This proportion would appear to have become the regular tax rate after the grace period.

By 1684, one year after the Zheng organization surrendered to the Qing, around 9,783 *jia* (10,086 hectares) of “official fields” had come under cultivation, yielding 84,920 *shi* (7,032 tons) of tax grain. The “private fields,” on the other hand, registered at 20,272 *jia* (20,901 hectares), with revenues of 41,403 *shi* (3,429 tons).³⁷ Their sum alone had reached 30,055 *jia* (30,987 hectares), two and a half times greater than the biggest Dutch-era figure of 12,252 *morgen* (12,632 hectares), reported in 1660.³⁸ For calculating the total area of the military colonies, we assume that about three-tenths of the 20,000 soldiers on Taiwan, or 6,000 men, farmed in the military colonies, a rather conservative estimate. Moreover, as Deng Kongzhao shows, Qing soldiers, during their initial years on the island, each received an average of 30 *mu* (2 hectares), or 2.65 *jia* of land. By multiplying these two figures, Deng concludes that the total area of the Zheng colonies could not fall under 15,000 *jia* (15,465 hectares).³⁹ However, since their taxation figures remain unavailable due to lack of data, they cannot be counted into the overall estimates of agrarian revenues. The Zheng organization’s earnings from land exclusive of the military colonies, factoring in an additional 11,868 *shi* (982 tons) from eight aboriginal tribes south of Anping and Chengtian that paid head taxes in grain rather than silver, equaled 138,192 *shi* (11,440 tons) of grain per year.⁴⁰ At a low, early Qing price of .4286 taels per *shi*, this sum translates to 59,229 taels (2 tons) of silver.⁴¹

If we add to this figure the other levies collected by the Zheng organization, including those on fishing, storefronts, salt, mills and carts, and import duties; an annual amount of 65,586 taels (2.4 tons), we arrive at estimated total tax earnings of 124,815 taels (4.7 tons).⁴² Compared to the overall amount of 110,403 reals (4.13 tons) generated by the VOC in 1655, the Zheng revenues represented only a marginal increase despite the tremendous expansion of population and area under cultivation.⁴³ The key reason lies in the differing priorities each enterprise assigned toward use of the land. Since the VOC ran its colony as a profit-making venture to

³⁶ Jiang Risheng, 207.

³⁷ Jiang Yuying, 145 and Shepherd, 99.

³⁸ Jian, 17 and Shepherd, 99.

³⁹ Deng Kongzhao, “Zheng Chenggong yu Ming-Zheng Taiwan,” 77-78. This figure accords with empirical observations from scholars, who have established with certainty over 40 locations throughout the island as former sites of the colonies. In addition, countless other modern-day place names bear the namesakes of Zheng’s military divisions, a testament to the large scale and wide distribution of the settlements. Some examples include Zuoying, or “Left Encampment,” outside Kaohsiung; Linfengying, or “Encampment of Lin Feng (a Zheng commander),” outside Tainan; and “Guoxingpu,” or “Place of Koxinga,” in Taipei County.

⁴⁰ Shepherd, 102.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 101.

⁴² For a precise breakdown of these additional levies, refer to Jiang Yuying, 151-163.

⁴³ Shepherd, 102. Of course, the variable here is the contribution made by taxes from the Zheng military colonies, which we have no way of calculating until further evidence surfaces. At the same time, however, the Dutch revenues were also undercounted, since the VOC did not include sugar within the levies on land, which mostly consisted of a tithe on the rice harvest.

maximize its extraction of natural resources, most of its revenues consisted of levies related to Taiwan's two key exports: sugar and deerskin. Starting from 1653, the Dutch had farmed out the right, in public auctions, to collect both the head taxes on Han Chinese and aborigines in a given area to the highest bidder. The varying and fluctuating prices for purchase reflected the demand among residents for land to engage in commercial farming, particularly sugar production, and the supply of deer, respectively.⁴⁴ In 1655, 34% of the earnings came from the head tax on Han Chinese, while the aboriginal head tax contributed another 18%. However, customs duties made up the largest share of the VOC revenues, at 37%. In sum, 89% of the total earnings derived from sources related to commercial farming and trade, while primary production, in the form of rice tithes, made up the remaining 11%.⁴⁵

On the other hand, land taxes grew to almost half of the revenues of the Zheng organization, while the other levies became set at fixed quotas rather than allowed to fluctuate according to market values. This shift reflected efforts spearheaded by Chen Yonghua to promote a diversified commercial economy that deemphasized the profit-oriented sugar monoculture under Dutch rule. The presence of so many hungry troops meant that much more attention was paid to basic grains such as rice and sweet potatoes. Due to the fertility of the land outside of the southwestern population centers, the newly opened settlements practiced an extensive slash-and-burn agriculture, with rotation every three years among fields.⁴⁶ The Zheng organization would dispatch an envoy between these intervals to different parts of the island to adjust the measurements of the fields and update the tax rates accordingly.⁴⁷ Combined with the shortage of labor, irrigation projects remained rather crude and limited in scale, typically involving the construction of small ponds or ditches that trapped rainwater.⁴⁸ This agrarian regime, which encouraged the rapid production of grain and the meeting of basic subsistence, naturally led to less commercial potential and lower incremental revenues on land.

Nevertheless, the efforts of Zheng Jing and his advisory body had begun to reap tremendous dividends by 1666. Taiwan recorded bumper harvests in 1665 and 1672, while the annual crop yields of other years remained plentiful enough to allow the government to “rest with the people (*yu min xiuxi*).”⁴⁹ According to Jian Huiying's calculations, the total annual output of the official and private fields, roughly representing a gross national product (GNP) of the island, comes out to 1,127,869.3 *shi* (93,400 tons) of rice, or 406,032.95 taels of silver (15.2 tons).⁵⁰ Besides primary agricultural products, the traditional sectors of the economy based upon sugar and deerskin registered a modest increase as well. Writing on September 16, 1672, Simon Delboe of the English East India Company (EIC) factory at Taiwan wrote to headquarters in

⁴⁴ Andrade, 8.10, 9.19-20.

⁴⁵ Shepherd, 101.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 99-100.

⁴⁷ Deng Kongzhao, “Zheng Chenggong yu Ming-Zheng Taiwan,” 82.

⁴⁸ Cao, “Taiwan kenzhi,” 83.

⁴⁹ Jiang Risheng, 235, 259 and Zheng Yiju, “Zheng Chenggong zhuan,” 24.

⁵⁰ The methodology and data utilized to arrive at this figure can be found in Jian, 25-26.

Table 6. Zheng revenue structure on Taiwan

Revenues in kind	<i>shi</i> of unhusked grain	kg equivalent
Han land taxes	126,324	10,463,000
Aboriginal land taxes	11,868	983,000
Total	138,192	11,445,000
Conversion to taels	Zheng taels of silver	kg equivalent
Total	59,229*	2,217
Revenues in cash	Zheng taels of silver	kg equivalent
Han head tax	19,440	728
Aborigine head tax	16,228	607
Mills and carts	2,624	98
Storefronts	3,888	146
Fishing	4,249	159
Shipping	1,974	74
Salt	3,480	130
Import duties	13,000	487
Miscellaneous land revenues	703	26
Total	65,586	2,455
TOTAL REVENUES	124,819	4,700

* Assuming .4286 taels per *shi*

Based on Table 4.1 in Shepherd, 102.

London that “all they made now [of sugar] doth not exceede 20,000 pecull a yeare, of skins about 100,000 yearely of all sorts.” He further claimed, regarding cane production, that “there is not the 1/5 part made now as in the time of the Dutch.” The “King [Zheng Jing] doth not incourage the people as they did” to grow more sugar due to his focus on maintaining self-sufficiency.⁵¹ However, the amount given in the English records, equivalent to 2,000,000 catties (1,000 tons) per year, actually exceeded the Dutch-era height of 1,730,000 catties (865 tons) recorded in 1658.⁵² The level of deerskin output, at 100,000 pieces, remained generally

⁵¹ Chang Hsiu-jung et al., 153.

⁵² Yao Keisuke, “Two Rivals on an Island of Sugar: The Sugar Trade of the VOC and Overseas Chinese in Formosa in the

unchanged between the two periods.⁵³ Hence, the Zheng organization inherited intact the entire Dutch colonial infrastructure.

At the same time, however, the surpluses generated from agricultural production spawned increasing specialization and diversification of the island's economy. Jiang Yuying's *Gazetteer of Taiwan Prefecture*, compiled soon after the Qing occupation, counts among Taiwan's products 30 different types of grain, 40 varieties of vegetables, and twenty kinds of fruits, along with a bewildering array of seafood.⁵⁴ Besides inheriting the sugar mills and carts and the deer processing techniques of the Dutch period, new native industries sprang up across the island, especially on the more populated Jianan Plain. They included kilns for making roof tiles, blacksmiths to forge the iron that went primarily into plows and other agricultural tools, shipbuilding, and wine distilleries.⁵⁵ Under the direction of Chen Yonghua, techniques for making salt underwent dramatic improvement. As opposed to the previous method of boiling seawater, which left behind many impurities and gave the final product a bitter aftertaste, peasants were encouraged to trap the ocean water in mounds near the coast. After drying in the sunlight, the salt proved finer and whiter, yielding a far more lucrative product for both marketing and taxation.⁵⁶ Construction also became a big industry, as population increased and demand for housing grew. Moreover, the Zheng organization invested in building roads and bridges to facilitate the transfer of surplus.⁵⁷

By the late 1660s, a network of distribution channels of exchange had taken shape and was gradually tying the island together. Busy thoroughfares crisscrossed the commercial centers of Chengtian, Anping, and the seats of Tianxing and Wannian Counties, where markets and shops of different varieties converged to sell a plethora of domestic and foreign goods. Jiang Yuying estimates that during the late Zheng period, altogether 4,705 storefronts thrived across the island.⁵⁸ As Shi Lang observed, right after he had landed to claim Taiwan for the Qing in 1683, "it has no shortage of all the daily necessities...people live closely together, families are numerous, and the peasants, artisans, and merchants all follow their pursuits."⁵⁹ Indeed, the population grew dramatically during this period, as residents of the Fujian coast, destitute and starving due to the Qing coastal evacuation policy, which had deprived them of basic supplies and their traditional livelihood on the seas, set sail for the island in large numbers. Despite the great distances and treacherous waves, over 30,000 people crossed the Taiwan Strait throughout the Zheng era to join the military or to seek better opportunities in farming and commerce. They were mostly enticed by the relative peace on the other side, along with favorable policies in

Seventeenth Century," in *Around and About Formosa*, ed. Blussé, 137.

⁵³ Andrade, 7.21, n. 25.

⁵⁴ Jiang Yuying, 69-90 and Deng Kongzhao, "Zheng Chenggong yu Ming-Zheng Taiwan," 79.

⁵⁵ Deng Kongzhao, "Zheng Chenggong yu Ming-Zheng Taiwan," 79.

⁵⁶ Jiang Risheng, 235.

⁵⁷ Jiang Yuying, 127, 131-134.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁵⁹ Shi, 60-61.



Figure 27. As in the time of Zheng Jing, the small and winding alleyways of Anping continue to bustle with commercial activity.

Photograph by author, 2006

general toward immigration that included a three-year land tax remission.⁶⁰ A large number of these newcomers settled in the military colonies, as greater harvests above the need to maintain self-sufficiency prompted many commanders and soldiers to lease out their land.⁶¹

Certainly, for most people living on Taiwan during this period, life remained tough and the tax burdens onerous, forcing some people to sell “even their daughters to pay.”⁶² For the typical tenant household, assuming a family of six with both husband and wife engaged in farming and after taking out the various rents and taxes imposed upon them, it would earn about 30 *shi*, translating to 2.684 taels (100.5 g) per person per year.⁶³ This figure remained relatively unchanged from the Dutch period, when an average Chinese laborer made just fewer than 3 reals

⁶⁰ Shepherd, 96; Jian, 15; Shen Yun, 53; and Ura, 117.

⁶¹ Deng, *Zheng Cheggong yu Ming-Zheng Taiwan*, 83.

⁶² Hsu Wen-hsiung, “From Aboriginal Island to Chinese Frontier,” in *China’s Island Frontier*, ed. Ronald Knapp (Honolulu, HI: University Press of Hawaii, 1980), 23-24.

⁶³ For the exact method and data utilized in calculating personal income, see Jian, 26-27.

(112.3 g) annually. Although most peasants lived on the edge, this income, while meager, still implied that they could generate sufficient surpluses to cover costs, and provided them with a much better standard of living than in resource-deficient Fujian. Indeed, one contemporary observed, not without reason, that Taiwan, a place where “people once feared to go, has now become a land of happiness (*letu*).”⁶⁴ With the successful implementation of agrarian policies and rise of a modest but expanding domestic market, the Zheng organization mostly resolved its perennial shortages of food and basic supplies, a feat never before accomplished on the Mainland.

A New “China” Abroad

Besides providing economic and material relief, Zheng Jing proceeded to forge a new legitimacy that would appeal to the Han ethnic pride and homesickness of his subjects. At the same time, he would inherit and move further along his father’s policies of deemphasizing Ming restoration and firmly committing their future to this island overseas. However, Zheng initially had to undertake this task in such a way as to not upset the sensitivities of his commanders and elites, who clamored for a hasty return to the Mainland. He thus left several key outward forms of Ming legitimacy unchanged throughout his rule. He steadfastly refused to alter the Yongli reign name, and continued to use it in all of his correspondences.⁶⁵ He accorded the deceased emperor with great respect and honor, and treated him as if he still lived. For instance, on the Lunar New Year of Yongli 19 (February 15, 1665), Zheng and his civil and military officials, all adorned in court garb, paid homage to the ruler and congratulated him before his empty throne.⁶⁶ Of course, these gestures may also have served as calculated and preemptive maneuvers to prevent any of the imperial princes from laying claim to the throne and challenging Zheng’s political power. He could acquire much-needed space and time to undertake further reforms that, while not entirely doing away with the Ming legacy, effectively marginalized it and promoted the creation of new and distinct narratives.

A generational shift in elite opinion greatly aided the creation of a new discourse of legitimacy. Many of the gentry and high-ranking civil and military officials who had originally come to Taiwan with the Zhengs had either died or become old.⁶⁷ The new group of men at the core of Zheng Jing’s decision-making circle primarily consisted of the descendants of the ones they replaced. Feng Xifan was the son of the deceased Feng Chengshi, Officer of Works, while Hong Xu’s son, Hong Lei, also became a close advisor who served in different positions of the Six Offices.⁶⁸ Unlike their predecessors, these men lacked independent moral authority, and owed their high positions almost solely to their fathers’ loyalty to the organization and, of course,

⁶⁴ Ruan, 44.

⁶⁵ Xia, 31.

⁶⁶ Jiang Risheng, 233.

⁶⁷ Gao, 212-213.

⁶⁸ Hong Lei became the Officer of Punishments soon after Xu’s death. Xia, 38.

Zheng Jing. With their advice, he set out to create new symbols and myths, while undoing or toning down old ones.

The first major shift in direction was symbolic and seemingly harmless, involving a mere question of names. In 1664, soon after he and his soldiers fled back to Taiwan, Zheng changed the official title of the island from Dongdu to Dongning, or “Eastern Pacification.”⁶⁹ The move was a subtle statement of the goals he intended to achieve for his organization. Dongdu, coined by his father, implied a new seat of Ming government, of making Taiwan “China,” but still hinted at future efforts at restoration of the Mainland. Dongning imparted the additional feeling of settled permanency, of creating a new “China” outside of a corrupted, “barbarianized” one, and involving a long-term commitment to Taiwan, rather than as the focal point of a broader movement. Moreover, the change signaled a desire to end hostilities with the Qing and arrive at some kind of political settlement. In another significant move, Zheng Jing elevated Tianxing and Wannian Counties to the status of sub-prefectures (*zhou*).⁷⁰ Their upgraded profile directly translated into a higher status for the entire island, making it the focus of administrative and economic policies. Indeed, to better manage Taiwan’s burgeoning commercial activity, he concurrently extended his control beyond the sub-prefectural level, establishing four wards (*fang*) in the urban areas and 24 districts (*li*) to oversee the Han Chinese peasantry. He also set up two Pacification Divisions (*Anfu si*): the Northern and Southern Routes (*Nanbei lu*) to handle aboriginal affairs within the interior, and a branch that administered the Penghu Islands.⁷¹

The implementation of sweeping agrarian reforms under Chen Yonghua resulted, in part, as we have seen, from dire economic circumstances. Yet, the measures also aimed at a full-scale sinicization of the foreign landscape of Taiwan, transforming it from an inhospitable frontier of “wild” aboriginal tribes and exotic miasmas into a “civilized” atmosphere of cultivated farms and peasant households. To this effect, he advised commoners to replace their grass huts, typically found even in the busy urban areas of Chengtian and Anping, with permanent houses made of wood and baked tiles.⁷² He ordered numerous temples and shrines built in every major population center to worship Buddha and the various local deities of Fujianese culture.⁷³ In 1665 and 1666, Chen established an Imperial Academy and Confucian Shrine in Chengtian, and founded schools throughout the sub-prefectures. He also transplanted the system of regular civil service examinations from the Mainland to acquire talent for managing Taiwan’s affairs.⁷⁴

In a further attempt to promote the transformation of the island into a bastion of “civilization,” Zheng Jing dispatched teachers to the various aboriginal tribes to instruct them in advanced and intensive farming methods, and provide them with tools and animals.⁷⁵ Of course,

⁶⁹ Xia, 36 and Yang Ying, 189.

⁷⁰ Gao, 3-4.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁷² Jiang Risheng, 235 and Yang Ying, 186.

⁷³ For a list of these places of worship, including names and their exact location, refer to Jiang Yuying, 119-125.

⁷⁴ Chen Yonghua headed the Imperial Academy, with Ye Heng as his assistant. See Jiang Risheng, 235-236.

⁷⁵ Jiang Risheng, 236 and Xia, 36.



Figure 28. The entrance to the Confucian Shrine at Tainan, built under the supervision of Chen Yonghua in 1666.

Photograph by author, 2006

as a necessary corollary, he did not hesitate to severely punish the indigenous population should they refuse to accept the blessings of “civilization.” During the decade on Taiwan, several major rebellions flared up, especially in the remote northern and central parts of the island, chiefly due to the incursion of Han Chinese settlers on their land and way of life.⁷⁶ The reaction to these acts of defiance was often brutal. In one campaign, Liu Guoxuan, stationed in present-day Zhanghua County, nearly obliterated the local Shalu tribe for its defiance, leaving only six people alive out of an original population of several hundred.⁷⁷ These twin aspects of culturalism, both benevolent and ruthless, represented, ironically, a microcosm of what the Qing practiced toward the Zhengs themselves.

Whether violent or not, the internal sinicization effort, besides fundamentally changing the landscape of Taiwan, marked a definitive shift away from Ming restoration, a process already

⁷⁶ Jiang Renjie, 127.

⁷⁷ Huang Shujing, 128. Jiang Renjie gives 1670 as the year of the offensive, although no mention of this date can be found in the original source.

begun under Chenggong. As shown above, Jing kept the nominal imperial throne at Chengtian empty, refusing to allow anyone to succeed the late Yongli pretender despite the presence on Taiwan of many qualified descendants from the Ming imperial house. Ironically, these princes, who once directly epitomized the defense of Han ethnic characteristics from “barbarian” desecration, were now the main group to fall victim to his attempt to divorce geographic and cultural “Chineseness.” As potential rallying points for restorationist sentiments, the ideas they represented appeared incompatible with his new political orientation. Zheng Jing reversed his father’s deep reverence and respect for Zhu Shugui, the most prominent of the descendants on Taiwan and likeliest candidate for succession to the throne, cutting off all financial assistance to him and ending Chenggong’s practice of providing for his meals. The prince was soon reduced to a status no different from a commoner, although, to support his basic needs, he was given a plot of land in the suburbs of present-day Tainan, which Jing also taxed heavily.⁷⁸ If even Zhu Shugui could hardly receive the proper treatment befitting his royal status, the other Ming descendants did not fare much better.

Meanwhile, Zheng kept a close eye on the central and local elites who had accompanied him to the island, and tried to ensure that they did not voice opinions contrary to his new policies. Shen Guangwen, a close friend of Zhu Shugui, learned the hard way after he wrote a poem satirizing Zheng’s dependence upon his advisors, the shift in the organization’s direction, and the “disbanding of troops” into the military colonies.⁷⁹ Fearing possible recriminations, Shen disguised himself as a monk and fled into the mountains of Bacloan, where he lived for years in exile among the local aborigines. Other prominent literati, who experienced similar disillusionment with what they viewed as Zheng Jing’s cowardice and weak character, withdrew voluntarily from society to lead secluded lives. Li Maochun, his former tutor, concluded that he “was not leadership material,” and, along with Wang Zhongxiao, “refused to serve the false Zhengs.”⁸⁰ They chose the path of eremitism to “signify a form of passive resistance” not only toward foreign domination over “China,” as Frederic Wakeman points out, but also toward an organization that could no longer represent their core values.⁸¹ These men felt hurt and betrayed by Zheng’s inability and unwillingness to launch another campaign against the Qing, even as he waged vicious internal power struggles to get rid of potential rivals and expand his own interests. As one of Shen’s numerous poems written in exile lamented, “I often looked toward the West [to the Mainland] for good news, but I had to flee north because of my fear of alienation from the group.”⁸²

⁷⁸ This account can be found in Gao’s *Gazetteer of Taiwan Prefecture* under “Biography of the Ming Prince of Ningjing,” written by Chen Yuantu, a former confidant of Zhu Shugui, shortly after the prince’s suicide in 1683. See Gao, 255.

⁷⁹ Huang Shujing, 75-76. Shen often wrote and exchanged poems with Zhu Shugui. For examples, see “Shen Guangwen,” in *Quan Tai shi (Complete Collection of Taiwanese Poems)*, ed. Shi Yilin et al., vol. 1 (Tainan: Guojia Taiwan wenxue guan, 2004), 62.

⁸⁰ Jiang Yuying, 216, 219.

⁸¹ Wakeman, vol. 1, 644-645, 674.

⁸² 欲聆佳信頻西望，卻訝離群又北飛。 See “Shen Guangwen,” 64.

Despite tremendous opposition from civil elites and his homesick soldiers, Zheng Jing managed to push through his policies unfazed with the unwavering support of his advisory body, spearheaded by Chen Yonghua. Chen adapted a phrase from the *Chunqiu* to justify the shift in ideological direction. According to him, “after ten years of letting the multitudes grow, and ten years of educating and nourishing them...in thirty years, [Taiwan] can truly compete for first and second with the Central Plain.”⁸³ Even Wang Zhongxiao grudgingly came to recognize this



Figure 29. Altar to the Jade Emperor, the Daoist ruler of Heaven and Earth, at the Shrine to the Supreme Heaven in Tainan. The plaque above bears the calligraphy of Zhu Shugui, Prince of Ningjing.

Photograph by author, 2009

advancement of “civilization” on the island. In an inscription dedicated in 1665, a year before his death, to the newly built Shrine to the Supreme Heaven (*Shangdi miao*), he wrote:

“Once the Imperial Surname [Zheng Chenggong] governed this land, the Chinese people came one after another. In Anping of Dongning, I only see and hear Chinese. The people here are people of the Middle Kingdom, and the soil is the soil of the Middle Kingdom.”⁸⁴

For Chen and Wang, the years of efforts spent at “naturalizing” Taiwan had successfully transformed it from a wild “foreign” frontier into a new “China” abroad, able to outcompete and outshine the old. Nevertheless, the former legitimacy of Ming restoration, which had once so successfully melded the organization together through shared defense of ethnic identity, love of native place, and dynastic loyalty, remained a powerful inspiration for many and always lay not far beneath the surface. Zheng Jing needed time

for his separation of physical and cultural “China” to sink in, as well as a means to institutionalize it by means of a more stable political arrangement.

Overseas Trade Reconstituted

As he tried to rebuild the shattered ideological infrastructure of his organization, Zheng Jing

⁸³ 十年生長、十年教養...三十年真可與中原相甲乙。 See Jiang Risheng, 236 and Gao, 3.

⁸⁴ 賜姓撫茲土，華人遂接踵而來，安平東寧，所見所聞，無非華者，人為中國之人，土則為中國之土。 See Wang Zhongxiao, *Wang Zhongxiao gong ji (Collection of the Gentleman Wang Zhongxiao)* (Nanjing, Jiangsu: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 2000), 82.

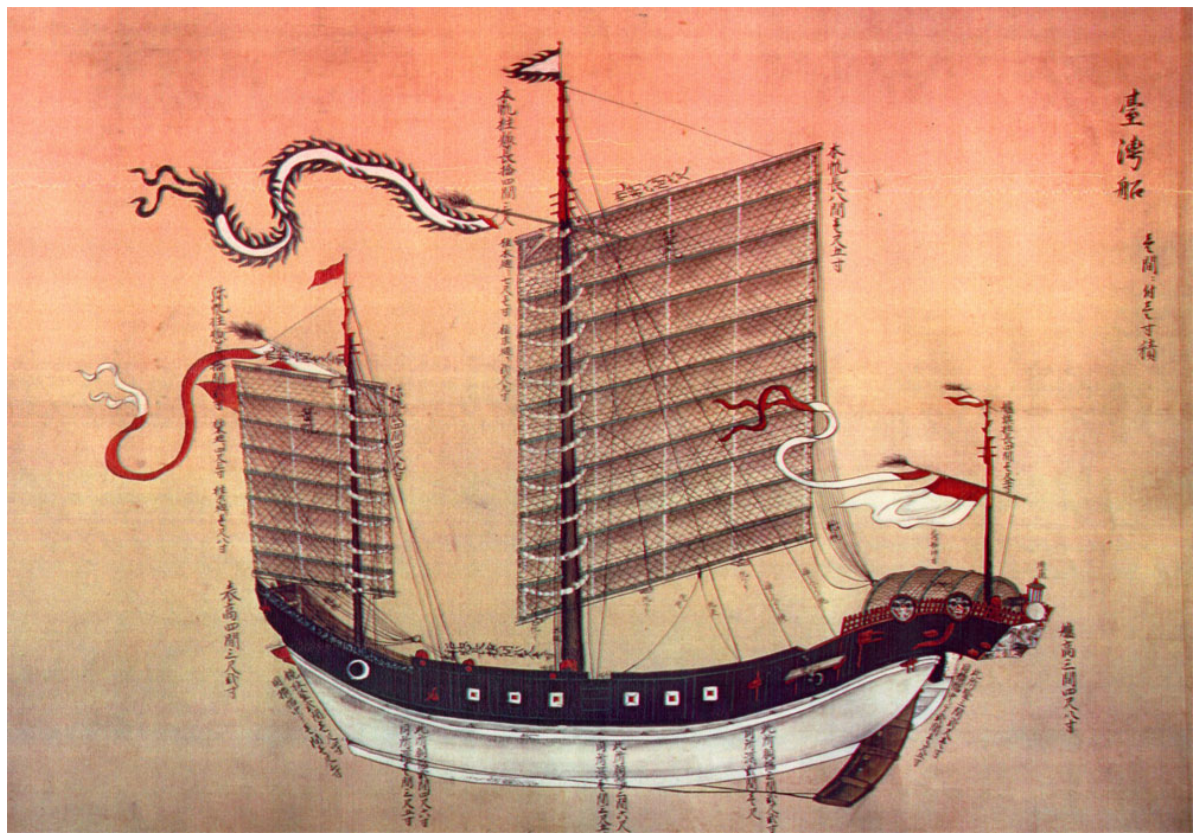


Figure 30. Painting of a Taiwan junk. Original found at the Matsuura Historical Museum, Hirado, Nagasaki Prefecture, Japan.

concurrently turned his attention toward reconstituting his family’s foreign trading network, which had been severely interrupted due to the bitter succession struggle and the Qing economic blockade. With the assistance of Hong Xu, a seasoned veteran of the sea lanes and one of the last surviving senior authorities from Chenggong’s days, Jing began to refashion his commercial fleet, whose junks had already started to rot as they sat idly in the ports. In 1665, he transferred some of his military colonies to areas deep within the mountainous interior to access its rich forests of camphor wood, while Hong dispatched his own commercial vessels to ports across the Western Pacific to acquire other shipbuilding materials.⁸⁵ Meanwhile, Zheng asserted full control over Taiwan’s overseas trade, establishing the Monopoly Firm (*Gonghang*), whose activities, as before, came under the direct supervision of the Revenue Office, now headed by Yang Ying. The firm essentially consolidated the functions of both the Mountain and Oceanic Five Firms of his father’s day.⁸⁶ His agents, known in English sources as the “King’s merchants,” bought and sold on his account, and enjoyed a monopsony over the procurement of

⁸⁵ Jiang Risheng, 237.

⁸⁶ Zheng Ruiming, 77.

local products, while serving as the sole supplier of exports for other traders on Taiwan.⁸⁷ In this manner, Zheng Jing was able to take a huge cut of the business for himself, certainly greater than the proportion during Chenggong's time.

As before, private merchants and his commanders, through their agents, could also participate in the trade, but the former needed to first purchase a license to go abroad. Instead of a flat levy in previous times, the tax now varied in increments based upon the carrying capacity of a ship's wooden beam, which could measure its overall size with a greater degree of preciseness and accuracy. The Zheng organization would charge one *qian* one *fen* (5.5 g) per *dan* of cargo for this beam license (*liangtou pai*).⁸⁸ In exchange for the payment, private merchants enjoyed the armed protection of its naval escorts on the high seas. For instance, Yang Yandi, commander of a division of 70 junks and 3,000 troops, patrolled the seas around Guangdong, Tonkin, Quinam, and Cambodia to prevent piracy and privateering, especially from the Dutch, who, embittered at the loss of Taiwan, specifically targeted Zheng shipping as a means of venting their anger.⁸⁹ In a report to Amsterdam on April 22, 1662, Governor-General Maetsuyker emphasized forcefully that "regardless of whether the Japanese decline or approve, we have decided to attack and subdue all of Koxinga's junks sailing in those waters."⁹⁰ Those Chinese vessels that did not pay for the license fees would thus have to face VOC intimidation alone. Moreover, the Zheng ships, too, made prizes out of any "jonckes they meete with which have not the King's pass."⁹¹ When a vessel of Kea Nabby, a leading merchant of Bantam, blew off course in a storm and landed in Zheng-held territory, "they plundered her and...tooke from them in money & goods betweene 4 & 5000" reals (149.7 to 187.1 kg).⁹²

After initial forays into the market in 1664, the commercial activities of Zheng Jing and other merchants based on the island began to pick up in earnest during the following year. In 1670, there were over 200 official and affiliated long-distance trading junks in Taiwan.⁹³ We actually have a detailed depiction of one of these vessels, although of a slightly later period: the *Dongbenniao* belonging to Liu Guoxuan, which fell into Qing hands upon its return to Xiamen in 1684, one year after the Zheng surrender. This ship, considered typical for junks under Zheng Jing and his commanders, was constructed in Taiwan and measured just below eight *zhang* (26.7 m) in length and two *zhang* (6.7 m) in width, and had a depth of around two *zhang*. It had a total of 25 compartments for living space and storage of cargo, and carried a crew of 83 men.⁹⁴ The journey these vessels took almost exclusively followed the Mainland China/Taiwan-Japan-Southeast Asia-Mainland China/Taiwan triangle. For instance, the

⁸⁷ Chang Hsiu-jung et al., 63-64.

⁸⁸ Xia, 44 and Nie Dening, 335-336.

⁸⁹ Hayashi Shunsai, 366-367 and Zheng Ruiming, 80.

⁹⁰ Cheng, 558.

⁹¹ Chang Hsiu-jung et al., 69.

⁹² Ibid., 65.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ *Zheng shi shiliao sanbian*, 217-218.

Dongbenniao set out for Nagasaki on Kangxi 22.Intercalary 6/1 (July 24, 1683), arriving at port on Intercalary 6/23. After staying until 12/25, it then headed for Siam, where it docked on Kangxi 23.2/22. It left port again on 6/1, returning to Xiamen on 7/15 (August 25, 1684).⁹⁵ Because of dependence upon the prevailing winds and currents during a given season, it took a junk about one year to complete a roundtrip journey, with significant layover time in the different ports of East and Southeast Asia.

The Nagasaki Route

A total of 111 ships traveled the well-established route to Japan between 1663 and 1673, or an average of around 10.1 per annum, with the figures maintaining a general upward momentum despite moderate fluctuations. From a low of two to three ships in 1662 and 1663, soon after the disastrous internecine conflicts and Qing blockade had devastated the family enterprise, the numbers climbed to eight in 1665. It then reached a high of 20 in 1671, before falling precipitously to just one in 1673 due to the mass mobilization of soldiers in preparation for the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories, which would break out a year later on the Mainland against Qing rule.⁹⁶ These estimates err on the low side, as they only counted the number of vessels belonging directly to Zheng Jing, and further did not take into account the annual average of 14.2 junks sailing to Japan from Southeast Asia.⁹⁷ For instance, in 1670, 18 junks, 11 of them under Zheng, went to Nagasaki from Taiwan, while a total of 36 made the return trip. This figure only represented over half of the 63 vessels on average per year during Chenggong's day, but they nevertheless outnumbered the six Dutch ships visiting the port in the same year.⁹⁸

We can get a rare glimpse into the types and quantities of goods exported to Japan during this period through Korean records of a junk operated by one of Jing's official merchants that had blown off course during a storm and ran aground on Jeju Island in 1667. Among the cargo of Lin Yinguan and his 94 other shipwrecked crew members, Korean authorities counted a total of 7,203 skins from several different varieties of deer.⁹⁹ The export of this item, which Zheng Jing completely monopolized, amounted to some 200,000 to 300,000 skins per year, with bucks valued at 20 reals in Taiwan, while does could be purchased at 16 reals (748.6 g), each per 100 skins.¹⁰⁰ In Japan, it could fetch anywhere from 60 (2.25 kg) to 70 reals (2.62 kg), yielding a mean rate of return of 306%.¹⁰¹ Assuming the higher Taiwan purchasing price and the lower sale price at Nagasaki, we can safely estimate that Lin Yinguan could have realized a profit of at least 2881.2 reals (108 kg) from his supply of deerskins alone. Taken on a grander scale, and based upon the overall annual export of 200,000 skins, Zheng Jing could earn a total of 80,000

⁹⁵ Chang Hsiu-jung et al., 216-217.

⁹⁶ Zheng Ruiming, 72.

⁹⁷ Jian, 44.

⁹⁸ Chang Hsiu-jung et al., 65 and Yamawaki, 114.

⁹⁹ Seong, 277_004b.

¹⁰⁰ Chang Hsiu-jung et al., 65.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 65, 69.

Table 7. Annual number of Zheng vessels arriving at Nagasaki, 1663-1673

<i>Year</i>	<i>No. of ships from Taiwan to Nagasaki</i>	<i>No. of ships from Southeast Asia to Nagasaki</i>	<i>Total ships to Nagasaki</i>
1663	3	10	13
1664	5	9	14
1665	8	17	25
1666	14	17	31
1667	11	14	25
1668	12	13	25
1669	10	13	23
1670	11	13	24
1671	20	11	31
1672	16	26	42
1673	1	13	14
TOTAL	111	156	267
AVERAGE	10.1	14.2	24.3

Adapted from Table 3 in Zheng Ruiming, 72 and Table 14 in Jian Huiying, 44

reals (3 tons) of silver. The other items from Taiwan that Lin Yinguan brought along included 114 catties (57 kg) of ramie cloth, leather items, iron implements, and parasols. Interestingly enough, the junk also carried large quantities of arquebuses, knives, gunpowder, and even two large cannons, allowing it to defend itself against possible predation on the high seas.¹⁰²

Surprisingly, however, Lin's shipwrecked vessel does not appear to have carried on board any sugar, Taiwan's other lucrative export item. However, we can be certain that the cargoes of other ships belonging to Zheng and his official merchants contained plenty of it. English observers pointed out in 1670 that Taiwan could churn out some 20,000 piculs (1,000 tons) of sugar for export per year.¹⁰³ Although Zheng seized the lion's share of this trade, private merchants could also participate in a certain proportion of the business. Liu Guoxuan's *Dongbenniao*, for instance, carried 2,050 *dan* (102.5 tons) of refined white sugar and 150 *dan* (7.5 tons) of rock candy in 1684.¹⁰⁴ White sugar normally can be purchased on the island at three reals (112.3 g) per picul and sold at eight reals (299 g) at Nagasaki, a 167% rate of return. If processed into rock candy, the revenue obtained from its sale would normally rise to 12 reals

¹⁰² Seong, 277_004b-277_006c.

¹⁰³ Chang Hsiu-jung et al., 153.

¹⁰⁴ *Zheng shi shiliao sanbian*, 218.

(449 g).¹⁰⁵ Taken altogether, Taiwan could earn 100,000 reals (3.74 tons) annually, making sugar its most profitable export. Therefore, the resources of the island alone already greatly boosted the Zheng organization's earnings, adding an average of 180,000 reals (6.73 tons) to its coffers. In contrast, the available data we have of mean Dutch-period earnings from trade throughout its rule, primarily dependent upon the twin exports of sugar and deerskin, amounted to 299,125 guildens, or 104,956 reals (3.9 tons).¹⁰⁶

Among the cargo of Lin Yinguan's shipwrecked vessel, the Korean authorities also discovered 467 bolts of raw Chinese silk and several items of silk cloth, along with limited amounts of porcelain and lacquerware.¹⁰⁷ So, how did these prized Mainland luxury goods wound up in the Zheng vessel during a time of severe economic blockade launched by the Qing to specifically counter the organization's activities? After all, as part of the coastal evacuation policy, the Qing authorities had "built walls and established boundary markers" all along the Chinese coast, especially in the southeast, and "garrisoned forces to guard them. Those who dare to cross the boundary will die."¹⁰⁸ Likewise, the English acknowledged the tremendous difficulty of accessing the Chinese coast, where "there is noe carrying in or bringing out goods. There is a wall allso all along the sea coast & every 5 howers' journey distant a castle for keepinge the coast of China."¹⁰⁹ They, too, noted that "if any person is found without the wall 'tis death."¹¹⁰

At the same time, however, coastal removal brought about severe destitution, homelessness, and starvation among the local population, which had depended upon the ocean for their very sustenance in this already resource-deficient macroregion. Because of the draconian measures, many residents assembled together in large bands, and either fled deep into the mountains to become robbers, or settled on the deserted islands outside the boundaries. In this liminal no-man's-land, safely out of the reach of the Qing patrols, which lacked sufficient naval power to dislodge them, they preyed upon villages and towns in the interior and otherwise maintained their former way of life. Lawless elements at the time tended to congregate in eastern Guangdong, just south of the Fujian border. A laxer enforcement of the coastal evacuation policy there due to the Portuguese presence in Macao, and the lack of coordination between the naval commands of the two provinces within this ambiguous jurisdiction facilitated their rapid proliferation.¹¹¹

Zheng Jing took advantage of this chaotic situation to form alliances with one of the key rebel leaders, a pirate named Qiu Hui (d. 1683), during the early 1660s. Based on the island of

¹⁰⁵ Chang Hsiu-jung et al., 65, 69.

¹⁰⁶ Andrade, Appendix C, 2.

¹⁰⁷ Seong, 277_004b.

¹⁰⁸ Ruan, 39.

¹⁰⁹ Chang Hsiu-jung et al., 67.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 64.

¹¹¹ For a fascinating series of memorials, imperial edicts, and eyewitness testimonies that speak of piracy on the high seas and illicit collusion with Taiwan, see *Zheng shi shiliao sanbian*, 62-63; 66-73; and 74-87.

Dahao, in present-day Shantou, this young and ferocious warrior, nicknamed “Stinky Red Meat (*Chou hongrou*),” operated a squadron of boats manned mostly by tanka fishermen. They launched frequent raids on the various towns of Chaozhou Prefecture.¹¹² Besides providing Taiwan with silk, porcelain, and other Mainland products, Qiu actively engaged in the trafficking of humans.¹¹³ Young girls became especially precious commodities fetching premium prices, as over half of the soldiers who came with Zheng Chenggong and Zheng Jing to the island were single men with no wives or families.¹¹⁴ The increased presence of women through these admittedly perverse means would alleviate the severe gender imbalance and give this rough frontier a more settled feel, thereby elevating troop morale and maintaining their long-term commitment toward Taiwan. Nevertheless, young adult males continued to occupy a substantial portion of immigration during this period.¹¹⁵

Even though Qing soldiers proved unable to effectively dislodge Qiu Hui and his men, the sole reliance upon plunder to obtain Mainland products and labor only provided rather haphazard results, and contributed to steep prices in Taiwan.¹¹⁶ To ensure a more stable supply, Zheng needed to institutionalize the smuggling by having his own agents infiltrate into the interior to purchase goods and acquire information, while controlling ports on the coast where they could be shipped out in a safe and orderly manner. By 1666, he had already established a foothold at Putuoshan, on the Zhoushan Islands off Zhejiang, where “the King hath lately putt some people...& from thence hath a trade with the Governor of Lamking.”¹¹⁷ Jing, then, sent some of his official merchants from the Monopoly Firm to covertly enter and live in Qing territory, fulfilling a role similar to the Mountain Five Firms of Chenggong’s day. These agents would purchase silk, porcelain, and other proto-industrial manufactures of the highly developed Jiangnan region from the nearby commercial centers of Hangzhou and Suzhou. In addition to espionage activities, they apparently entered into a covert deal with a high-ranking Qing authority, possibly the governor or governor-general of Jiangnan, to buy directly from merchants trading under his account. With the secret connivance of a well-placed individual within the Qing hierarchy, the Zheng organization could enjoy official protection for its business in the region, and acquire a high level of stability and reliability on the supply side.

However, Zheng Jing needed a bigger port of transit located closer and more directly accessible to Taiwan, and with better natural harbors and facilities to accommodate a larger number of junks. It should also be easily defensible from potential harassment from outlaw groups and Qing soldiers when the ships docked to load and unload goods, their most vulnerable

¹¹² Jiang Risheng, 238-239 and *Zheng shi shiliao xubian*, 1211-1212.

¹¹³ Jiang Risheng, 238-239.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 257-258.

¹¹⁵ Ura, 117. Shepherd estimates that under Dutch rule, “at least two-thirds of the immigrants had been adult males.” While the Zheng figures remain unknown, the influx of women during that period must have decreased this majority. See Shepherd, 97.

¹¹⁶ Jiang Risheng, 238 and *Zheng shi shiliao xubian*, 1211-1212.

¹¹⁷ Chang Hsiu-jung et al., 65.

moment. The islands of Xiamen and Jinmen, his former twin bases, became the natural choice for Zheng to establish a main foothold that would coordinate all of his organization's activities along the Mainland coast. Until 1668, the presence of Shi Lang's Fujian Naval Command at Haicheng, located directly south across a narrow stretch of sea, made any covert smuggling operation a highly difficult task. During that year, however, to facilitate a negotiated settlement with Zheng Jing, the Qing court dismantled and burned the entire naval fleet, and ordered Shi to Beijing.¹¹⁸ Even after the talks failed, the new Kangxi Emperor, faced with the far greater challenge of domestic consolidation, had grown "weary of war" and "promised not to punish" Zheng anymore.¹¹⁹ Until the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories broke out, then, the two sides "were mutually at peace."¹²⁰ The sudden disappearance of the Qing navy, along with a partial relaxation of the removal policy, opened up a new power vacuum on the coast that allowed the chaotic lawlessness of the Guangdong border to spread into southern Fujian.

Zheng Jing moved quickly to establish control over the region by coopting the largest and most organized rebel group in the area: the bandits of the Southern Taiwu Mountains, close to Haicheng. He transformed them into a regular division of the Zheng military apparatus under the command of their leader, Jiang Sheng (d. 1683). With the assistance of Qiu Hui, who had also formally joined the organization not too long ago, Jiang seized control of Xiamen and Jinmen from another band of pirates in 1669. He then constructed straw huts as makeshift markets and applied the strict laws of Taiwan on the islands, enforcing contracts at market prices, and prohibiting robbery and murder.¹²¹ From a strategic standpoint, Zheng's control of these and other key ports allowed the fleets of his semi-autonomous allies to form an outer defensive ring along a vast arc extending from Ningbo, Zhejiang to Chaozhou in eastern Guangdong. Besides guarding the approach to Taiwan, the perimeter gave his organization a stranglehold over most of China's access to the sea, helping to enforce his monopoly over virtually its entire foreign trade.

With a stable infrastructure for trade established, Jiang proceeded to form cordial relations with the Qing border garrison commanders, primarily through the payment of handsome bribes. As a result, while they adhered to all the outward forms of enforcing the prohibition, including frequent and careful patrols of the coastal no-man's-land, they tacitly allowed smuggling under their very noses. The official Zheng merchants would infiltrate the boundary walls at night, carrying only Japanese silver or gold coins (*koban*) with them to purchase Mainland goods and pay off any greedy guards.¹²² When "discovered," as was usually the case, they would "run" from the pursuing soldiers, actually dispatched by the commander to escort and guide them into

¹¹⁸ Jiang Risheng 242-246 and Shi, 4-5.

¹¹⁹ Zheng Yiju, 26.

¹²⁰ Xia, 37.

¹²¹ Jiang Risheng, 239 and Zheng Yiju, 26.

¹²² Chang Hsiu-jung et al., 64.

the interior.¹²³ After the smugglers had obtained their products and returned to the coast, they simply needed to bribe the border guards on the spot before leaving their jurisdiction. In the words of an English observer, “’tis much less trouble to bring goods out than carry in.”¹²⁴ Still, Zheng’s agents could sell any non-Chinese wares they had carried along directly at Xiamen and the other ports due to the sizable presence of Mainland-based merchants. Eager to find lucrative outlets for their own products, they, too, paid their way through the boundaries and flocked to do business.¹²⁵ Meanwhile, on the other side of the strait, the English observed that “dayly the China junkes brings in great quantities” of silk, porcelain, and other prized luxuries.¹²⁶ Indeed, this system of institutionalized illicit trade with the Mainland had greatly leveled their purchasing price in Taiwan.¹²⁷

In addition to the sugar and deerskin, junks bound for Japan, like Lin Yinguan’s vessel, now had plentiful supplies of Chinese products among their cargoes. The item in greatest demand, as in Chenggong’s day, remained raw silk, which could be bought in Taiwan at 255 reals (9.54 kg) per picul and sold at Nagasaki for 600 reals (22.46 kg) per picul, yielding a return of 135%. This rate, however, was significantly lower than the 200% realized during the 1650s due to the higher risk, and therefore cost, involved in transporting the product to Taiwan. Moreover, it encountered fierce competition from Bengali silk, which the VOC could market at a comparable, if not greater yield, as high as 192% in 1671.¹²⁸ Data regarding the quantities of Chinese silk exported to Japan during the decade of 1663 to 1673 remains rather spotty and incomplete, with precise figures available only for the years of 1663, 1664, 1665, and 1671. However, they reveal a rather large fluctuation in the volume, ranging from a low end of around 50,000 *jin* (25 tons) in 1663 and 1671 to highs of 119,208 *jin* (59.6 tons) in 1664 and 163,042 *jin* (81.6 tons) in 1665.¹²⁹ On average, the amount of silk shipped from Taiwan to Nagasaki amounted to 94,966 *jin* (47 tons). We do not have comparably precise figures for the VOC, although we know that the Company exported a total of 1,516,600 catties (758 tons) from Bengal and Tonkin between 1655 and 1668, yielding a mean of 116,661 catties (58.3 tons) per year.¹³⁰ On the whole, then, the Zheng organization managed to ship slightly fewer quantities of the luxury to Nagasaki during this period than the Dutch.

While the Zheng organization handled a smaller volume of the silk trade and realized a

¹²³ Jiang Risheng, 257.

¹²⁴ Chang Hsiu-jung et al., 64.

¹²⁵ Yu, 48.

¹²⁶ Chang Hsiu-jung et al., 64.

¹²⁷ Jiang Risheng, 239.

¹²⁸ Zhang Bincun, “Shiqi shiji mo Helan Dongyindu gongsi wei shenme bu zai pai chuan dao Zhongguo lai?” (“Why Would the Dutch East India Company No Longer Dispatch Ships to China at the End of the Seventeenth Century?”), in *Zhongguo haiyang fazhanshi lunwen ji (Essays in Chinese Maritime History)*, ed. Liu Xufeng, vol. 8 (Taipei: Research Center for Humanities and Social Studies, Academia Sinica, 2005), 181.

¹²⁹ Jian, 54.

¹³⁰ Of this figure, 1,232,400 catties (616.2 tons) came from Bengal, while Tonkinese silk made up 284,200 catties (142.1 tons). I have decided to exclude the 82,800 catties (41.4 tons) of Chinese silk, since it had virtually disappeared from the Dutch inventories by the 1660s. See Nara, 173 and Zhang Bincun, 180-182.

lower rate of return, the absolute profits nevertheless exceeded that of the VOC due to the greater overall value of the Chinese variety. We know that the purchase price for Bengali silk was 2.38 guildens per pound, which translates to about 2.62 guildens per catty.¹³¹ Now, assuming a 192% rate of return, we arrive at a profit per unit of 5.03 guildens per catty. We further apply this figure, derived only for Bengali silk, to the average annual quantity of all Dutch shipments to Nagasaki of 116,661 catties, obtaining total mean earnings of 586,804 guildens, or 205,896 taels (7.7 tons) of silver. The Zheng organization, on the other hand, had a profit per unit of 345 reals per picul. Multiplied by the average volume of 94,966 *jin*, converted to 949.66 *dan*, we obtain a total of 327,633 reals (12.3 tons). Even in 1663, its worst year, the Zheng organization still realized earnings of 178,553 reals (6.6 tons) from a shipment of 47,614 *jin*, comparing quite favorably to the mean Dutch figures.¹³²

For most of the 1660s, the vessels of Zheng Jing and his affiliated merchants exchanged the contraband silk and other products, including Taiwanese sugar and deerskin, primarily for Japanese *kan* at Nagasaki. According to von Glahn's figures, their exports of silver from 1663 to 1668 amounted to a total of 45,315 *kan* (4,540,000 taels, 169.9 tons), or an average of 7,552 *kan* (756,600 taels, 28.32 tons) per annum.¹³³ However, the bullion shipments suddenly fell to lows of 296 *kan* (29,660 taels, 1.11 tons) in 1669 and 395 *kan* (39,570 taels, 1.48 tons) for the following year. Then, they recorded a modest rebound to 950 *kan* (95,180 taels, 3.56 tons) in 1671, before making a spectacular leap to 8,964 *kan* (898,100 taels, 33.6 tons) in 1672 back to the figures of the previous decade. What could explain this tremendous three-year gap in bullion exports? As it turned out, the continuous outflow of silver for over a century had begun to deplete the Japanese mines, contributing to growing scarcity of the metal and calls for further official containment of overseas trade. In 1668, after a major fire in Edo led to rapid inflation of prices for building materials and basic necessities, the *bakufu* launched a comprehensive program of sumptuary regulations that included a prohibition on the export of silver.¹³⁴ Instead, from 1664, it actively encouraged the export of gold by lifting a ban it had enacted in 1641.¹³⁵ Chinese merchants primarily acquired the metal in the form of coins, or *koban*, for those three years.

However, due to the tremendous demand for silver from the Mainland market, gold fetched a low price in Taiwan, valued at five and a half to six reals per *koban*, as opposed to 10 reals on the Coromandel Coast of India.¹³⁶ The prohibition, then, put the Zheng traders at a sudden comparative disadvantage in the commerce with Nagasaki. In 1670, for instance, the VOC exported 77,333 gold coins valued at around 1,569,790 guildens, equivalent to 550,803 taels

¹³¹ Leonard Blussé, "No Boats to China," *Modern Asian Studies* 30.1 (1996): 68.

¹³² Jian, 54.

¹³³ Von Glahn, 227-228.

¹³⁴ Totman, 143-144.

¹³⁵ Von Glahn, 228.

¹³⁶ Von Glahn, 74, 153 and Yamawaki, 115.

Table 8. Comparative value of Chinese and VOC silver exports to Nagasaki, 1663 to 1672

Year	Chinese Silver Exports (kan)	Chinese Silver Exports (kg)	Dutch Silver Exports (kan)	Dutch Silver Exports (kg)
1663	5,411	20,290	3,672	13,770
1664	16,664	62,490	5,572	20,890
1665	8,042	30,160	6,880	25,800
1666	7,236	27,130	3,977	14,910
1667	4,547	17,050	3,574	13,400
1668	3,415	12,810	0	0
1669	296	1,110	0	0
1670	395	1,481	0	0
1671*	950	3,562	0	0
1672	8,964	33,610	0	0
AVERAGE	5,592	20,969	2,368	8,877

Based on Von Glahn, 227, table 21

(20.62 tons) of silver, making the ratio of the two metals 1:7 if we continue to assume the official exchange rate of one tael to 57 stuivers.¹³⁷ Under these circumstances, the Dutch could simply ship the gold to Coromandel, under their sphere of influence, and sell at 770,330 taels (28.83 tons), obtaining an arbitrage profit of 219,527 taels (8.2 tons). On the contrary, the 36 Chinese junks at Nagasaki that year exported 152,304 *koban*, equal to 1,066,128 taels (39 tons) of silver.¹³⁸ However, once at Taiwan, their gold would depreciate to a ratio of 1:5.5 or 1:6, which, taking the lower figure, would amount to 837,672 taels (31.3 tons), a loss of 228,456 taels (8 tons).

Because of the lack of demand for gold in Taiwan and Mainland China, Zheng merchants continued to press for payment in silver, and even threatened to turn away from Nagasaki altogether.¹³⁹ Since fewer ships would mean decreased quantities of highly coveted Chinese silk, prices at the port would rise even higher from the inability of supply to meet demand, resulting in further depletion of bullion. In a sign of just how much economic clout the Zheng

¹³⁷ Yamawaki, 111, 114 and Blussé, 70-71.

¹³⁸ Hayashi Akira, vol. 4, 327.

¹³⁹ Von Glahn, 228.

organization had on the trade with Japan, the *bakufu* finally relented and decided to lift the ban in 1671, although the prohibition remained in effect on the Dutch. In fact, Edo could never completely stem the outflow of silver, as demonstrated in 1669 and 1670 by continued, albeit drastically curtailed, exports of bullion, which the Chinese vessels must have transported covertly out of the country.¹⁴⁰ Besides the brief shift in precious metals, the Zheng organization's other purchases remained essentially unchanged from the previous decade, consisting of imports of knives, armor, and copper. The latter remained the most important item after silver, for forging weapons and casting into Yongli-era coins for small daily transactions in Taiwan.¹⁴¹ In 1670, Chinese junks carried 732,470 catties (366 tons) of copper.¹⁴² Given that it could be bought at 16 reals (224.6 g) per picul in Taiwan that year, we use this rate to arrive at a total import value of 117,195 reals (4.38 tons).¹⁴³

Now, based upon the total silver shipments from 1663 to 1668 and 1672, and adding to these the gold obtained in 1671 at a conversion rate of 1:5.5, we arrive at the Zheng organization's annual mean value of trade with Nagasaki.¹⁴⁴ If we assume that silver or its gold equivalent constituted 80% of total revenues, as in Chenggong's day, then we obtain 1,009,107 taels (37.8 tons).¹⁴⁵ Alternatively, we could individually multiply the Japan sale prices of Zheng's most crucial exports of raw silk, sugar, and deerskin; valued respectively at 600 reals per picul, eight reals per picul, and 60 reals per 100 skins; by the quantities shipped there annually.¹⁴⁶ After obtaining their average, we add it to the 1670 value from copper to arrive at an overall estimate of revenue amounting to 966,911 reals (36.2 tons) of silver. The discrepancy between the two revenue figures could readily be explained by other, miscellaneous goods that the Chinese vessels brought out of Nagasaki. The VOC, on the other hand, acquired 622,365 taels' (23.3 tons) worth of silver and gold coins on average from 1663 to 1668, and 1670.¹⁴⁷ Besides these two metals, copper made up the bulk of exports from Nagasaki, amounting to 2,263,100 catties (84.7 tons) in 1670.¹⁴⁸ According to Leonard Blussé, the mean copper shipment equaled around 400,000 guildens, or 140,351 taels (5.25 tons). Hence, we derive an average VOC revenue of 762,716 taels (28.6 tons), which accords well with Blussé's range of 1.5 to 2.5 million guildens (526,315 taels, 19.7 tons to 877,193 taels, 32.8 tons) per year.¹⁴⁹

For the period from 1663 to 1673, we can obtain fairly accurate estimates of the Zheng organization's profitability for the Mainland China/Taiwan-Japan leg of its network and evaluate

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Jiang Risheng, 237. On Taiwan, 1,000 copper pieces equaled 2 taels (74.86 g) of silver. See Liu Xianting, 8.

¹⁴² Yamawaki, 114.

¹⁴³ Chang Hsiu-jung et al., 74.

¹⁴⁴ Our calculations leave out 1670, since the amount of gold exports for that year awaits further investigation.

¹⁴⁵ That is, the average of the sum of the figures from 1663 to 1668 and from 1671 to 1672, 807,286 taels, divided by .8.

¹⁴⁶ Chang Hsiu-jung et al., 64.

¹⁴⁷ The Dutch exported on average 4,735 *kan* (474,400 taels, 17.8 tons) of silver from 1663 to 1667, along with 77,333 gold coins (770,330 taels, 28.83 tons) in 1670. See Von Glahn, 227 and Yamawaki, 114.

¹⁴⁸ Yamawaki, 114.

¹⁴⁹ Blussé, 70.

its performance with comparable Dutch figures. Based upon the per unit prices given by the English, the average earnings from raw silk, deerskin, and sugar, its three main-ticket export items, could be added to arrive at 507,633 taels (19 tons). Of that amount, raw silk shipments made up 65%, while the other two came in at 20% and 15%, respectively. Now, assuming that these exports combined constituted 90% of the entire shipment, we estimate a total profit of 564,037 taels (21.1 tons).

An alternative calculation involves taking a weighted average of the yields of raw silk (135%), sugar (167%), and deerskin (306%) based upon their contribution to earnings. The result is then further weighted to reflect its 90% contribution to the cargo, assuming that the rest of the goods had zero profits. The rate of return on the entire annual shipment of Chinese junks to Nagasaki comes out to 150%. With revenues of 1,009,107 taels, we calculate a sum of 605,464 taels (22 tons). The Zheng organization could thus earn anywhere from 564,037 to 605,464 taels per year in the trade with Nagasaki. For the VOC, Blussé estimates that the highest revenues it could realize amounted to 2.5 million guildens (877,193 taels), while its profit margins averaged 100% for the 1650s, and gradually dropped to 50% by 1670.¹⁵⁰ Assuming the larger rate of return, we calculate earnings of 1,250,000 guildens (438,596 taels, 16.5 tons) per year. Despite relatively lower revenues and profits compared to the days of Chenggong, Zheng Jing maintained the family's superiority over the Dutch at Nagasaki, capturing, at the very least, half of the Japanese market in terms of both revenue and income.

The Southeast Asian Route and the Rise of Manila

In the meantime, commercial relations with Southeast Asia continued to flourish. For 1665 alone, Zheng Jing dispatched 20 trading vessels to the region, ten of which went to Siam.¹⁵¹ Although we lack more precise records regarding the number of junks from Taiwan in another year between 1663 and 1673, Zheng Ruiming's data shows that a total of 156 ships arrived at Nagasaki from different parts of Southeast Asia over this period, an annual average of 14.2. Due to the Zheng organization's continued domination of the sea lanes, most of them inevitably came under its control or sphere of influence.¹⁵² Ships of Southeast Asian origin would often sail directly to Nagasaki and exchange their cargo before heading to Taiwan and the Mainland coast and back. Alternatively, they could travel to the island and then move onward to Japan, in which case they become counted with other Taiwanese junks. On the flip side of the coin, vessels from Taiwan, as well as a limited number from the Mainland, would sail directly to Southeast Asia and then to Nagasaki and back, or to Japan and then southward. The integrated nature of intra-Asian trade meant that one can hardly discern the *true* place of origin of Chinese junks. Nevertheless, the available data reveals the centrality of Taiwan in this commercial

¹⁵⁰ Blussé, 69-70.

¹⁵¹ Viraphol, 45.

¹⁵² Zheng Ruiming, 95-96.

network, as well as the importance of Southeast Asia to Zheng Jing's business.

Zheng continued to carry on a lively trade with almost all major ports in the region, including its traditionally close partners of Tonkin, Quinam, Cambodia, Siam, and Pattani.¹⁵³ The most important of these various states was, as before, Siam, on account of its abundant natural resources and the desire of King Narai and his ruling class for Chinese products. The cargo of Liu Guoxuan's *Dongbenniao*, which had sailed from there back to Xiamen in 1684, contained 120,000 *jin* (60 tons) of sapanwood, several hundred *jin* of elephant ivory tusks, and 50 *jin* (25 kg) of ettusais (*doukou*), all of which served as essential ingredients for Chinese herbal medicine. Moreover, Qing authorities found 1,300 *jin* (650 kg) of pepper, along with different varieties of swallow's nests for elite luxury consumption in Taiwan and the Mainland. *Dongbenniao*'s imports of 20,480 *jin* (10.24 tons) of lead and 40,000 *jin* (20 tons) of tin demonstrate Siam's importance as a supplier of gunpowder ingredients.¹⁵⁴ Other vessels also procured bulk items, such as wood for shipbuilding and, in particular, rice, which it produced in abundance.¹⁵⁵ On a political level, Zheng Jing enjoyed very close relations with King Narai. After the collapse of his organization in 1683, the ruler voluntarily granted asylum to Zheng's former commanders and soldiers, and encouraged them to settle down permanently, noting that "this country and Dongning enjoy a deep mutual friendship."¹⁵⁶

Unlike the days of Chenggong, the organization came to develop far more extensive commercial ties with the Spanish in their colony of the Philippines. According to the English records, "the King hath 5 or 6 jouncks that goe yearely for Manilha in January and retorne in Aprill or May."¹⁵⁷ VOC accounts similarly note that for 1665, a total of twelve Chinese vessels arrived there from across East and Southeast Asia, almost all of them affiliated with Zheng Jing. As Father Riccio recounted to the Dutch, the Zheng merchants all "do big business at Manila." They typically brought along with them large quantities of "raw silk and silk fabric (*rouwe zijde en stoffen*), wheat (*tarwe*), and iron (*iser*) and animal products (*diergelijke waare*)."¹⁵⁸ In fact, "there was such a great abundance" of wheat at Manila that "it sold at 2.5 pesos [93.6 g, equivalent to real and tael] per picul." The Zheng organization managed to acquire this surprisingly plentiful supply from a place known as "Santon," which most likely referred to Shandong Province in northern China, a top producer.¹⁵⁹ The export of a bulk item like wheat from a region located so far away from Zheng's main bases depended upon a relatively predictable and secure environment, and implies some manner of collusion with local Qing authorities. It also demonstrates the extent of his reach over the Mainland coastline and penetration into the interior of enemy territory.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ *Zheng shi shiliao sanbian*, 218.

¹⁵⁵ Viraphol, 43-44.

¹⁵⁶ Hayashi Shunsai, 398.

¹⁵⁷ Chang Hsiu-jung et al., 151.

¹⁵⁸ Borao Mateo et al., vol. 2, 639.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 641.

Wheat and iron made up a significant part of the cargo of junks going to Manila, but silk products from the Mainland, valued at 380 Spanish reals (14.2 kg) per picul on the local market, remained the most prized item.¹⁶⁰ The Spanish would pay for all of these goods with silver brought by the galleons from Acapulco each year, and load them onto the same vessels for reexport back to the New World. As an example of the scale of this trade, a ship from Mexico carried around two million reals (75 tons) to Manila in 1665.¹⁶¹ Although we lack more specific data on revenues and profitability, the Philippines probably constituted the most important market for Zheng Jing outside of Japan. More importantly, the Spanish colony also appeared to occupy a growing share of his overseas commerce, as the Tokugawa *bakufu* gradually tightened the outflow of bullion and placed additional restrictions and regulations on foreign merchants at Nagasaki.¹⁶²

To figure out the annual revenues and profits realized from the Southeast Asian leg, we continue to assume that junks plying the route could realize revenues of 80,000 to 100,000 taels, and earn 40,000 to 50,000 taels per ship.¹⁶³ Although we lack precise records regarding the average number of vessels sailing to ports in the region from Taiwan every year, we can use as a proxy the corresponding figures for ships of Southeast Asian origin arriving at Nagasaki. Due to the integrated nature of the intra-Asian trade, they would most likely include Taiwan as one of their main destinations. Given an average of 14.2 junks per year, the rough annual value of the Southeast Asian trade comes out anywhere from 1,136,000 taels (42.5 tons) to 1,420,000 taels (53.1 tons) of silver, yielding a profit of 568,000 taels (21.2 tons) to 710,000 taels (26.5 tons).

Diplomatic Relations with the European Powers

Not surprisingly, the decade from 1663 to 1673 also saw a dramatic decrease in the number of Zheng-affiliated junks sailing to Batavia and the other ports under VOC control or influence. After the bitter loss of Taiwan, Dutch vessels prowled the Straits of Malacca with orders to specifically identify such ships and seize them by force, and, if they encountered any resistance, liquidate the entire crew.¹⁶⁴ As another part of their effort to exact revenge, the company attacked smuggling outposts along the Mainland coast run mostly by illicit networks with close ties to Zheng Jing. In 1665, for instance, it launched a raid upon Putuoshan, a holy Buddhist pilgrimage site, killing monks and seizing hostages, and carrying off massive quantities of ancient religious statues and relics from a temple.¹⁶⁵ A year earlier, the Dutch had occupied

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Besides encouraging the export of gold and copper, Edo replaced the system of competitive bidding for overseas goods, in place since 1648, with a managed market in which merchants collaborated to set wholesale prices. This measure appeared to “have reduced the total value of imports by squeezing foreign traders,” particularly the Dutch, which, unlike the Chinese, were forbidden from taking silver out of the country. See Totman, 144.

¹⁶³ These assumptions remain relevant since they represent the profit per ship realized during the mid-1670s. For a detailed description of my methodology in calculating the total figures of the Southeast Asian trade, see Chapter 3.

¹⁶⁴ Zheng Ruiming, 76.

¹⁶⁵ Wills, *Peppers*, 122 and Chang Hsiu-jung et al., 65.

Jilong, on the northern tip of Taiwan, in the hopes of reconstituting a formerly important leg of its East Asian trade centered upon Fort Zeelandia, and thereby more effectively competing with the Zheng organization in the south.¹⁶⁶ However, the outpost failed to realize its potential, primarily because of the VOC's inability to open up regular commercial ties with China despite repeated efforts at negotiations with the Qing Fujian authorities and attempts to establish a trading post at Fuzhou. In the fall of 1668, the company finally decided to abandon Jilong, demolishing its defensive structures and evacuating its employees to Batavia.¹⁶⁷

Although the Dutch posed a threat to Zheng Jing's operations farther south, their brief reappearance on Taiwan also presented an opportunity for commercial gain. As Chinese soldiers and settlers expanded northward to the area around the nearby port of Danshui, their vessels would secretly sail into Jilong and supply it with deerskin, gold, and other products from the hinterland.¹⁶⁸ In early 1666, Zheng Jing even tried to mend fences with his former enemies and reopen official commercial relations. In February, he dispatched an envoy with a letter to Jilong promising to free all remaining Dutch prisoners on Taiwan taken by his father during the invasion, and offering them the islet of Beixianwei (Baxemboy) in the Lu'ermen Channel, close to Anping, as a trading factory. In exchange, all company vessels had to turn over their "arms, gunpowder, lead, and rudder" for safekeeping with a designated official during their stay, "following the laws of Japan." Zheng further requested that the Dutch refrain, in the future, from "attacking or harassing the King's junks sent to engage in trade on the seas, as heretofore Your Honor has witnessed, but let them pass freely on their course to the east, west, north, or south."¹⁶⁹ The representative for the VOC, Constantin Nobel, rejected the proposal, as he had no authority from Batavia to engage in negotiations with the Zheng organization, and simply found the terms unacceptable. He also flatly refused to consider a modified offer of establishing a Chinese trading post near the Dutch settlement.¹⁷⁰

Nobel's negative reaction notwithstanding, Zheng Jing appeared to have adopted a surprisingly unusual degree of leniency and flexibility toward a former rival. In fact, this gesture formed part of his larger open-door policy during this period that welcomed all merchants from abroad to come to Taiwan and do business there. Besides dispatching junks overseas, then, Zheng "sent abroad letters to invite people to trade in his country, promising they shall have friendly reception."¹⁷¹ Among those who enthusiastically responded, and left the most extensive records of their experience, was the English East India Company, based out of Bantam in the Indonesian archipelago. On June 23, 1670, a commercial delegation headed by

¹⁶⁶ Zheng Ruiming, 91.

¹⁶⁷ For a detailed narrative of the VOC's persistent attempts to open up regular trade with the Qing from 1664 to 1669, including the intricacies of its ties with the feudatory and high-ranking officials of Fujian and an audience in Beijing with the Kangxi Emperor, refer to Wills, *Peppers*, 105-144. A careful study of the Dutch factory in Jilong can be found in Wills, "Dutch Reoccupation," 273-290.

¹⁶⁸ Zheng Ruiming, 91 and Wills, "Dutch Reoccupation," 281.

¹⁶⁹ Borao Mateo et al., vol. 2, 649.

¹⁷⁰ Wills, "Dutch Reoccupation," 283-284.

¹⁷¹ Chang Hsiu-jung et al., 73-74.

Ellis Crispe and consisting of the ships *Bantam* and *Pearle*, landed at Anping to the great welcome of Zheng Jing and his officials, who entertained him and his crew “upon the King’s cost neere a weeke most plentifully.”¹⁷² The two sides then signed a formal commercial treaty, the very first documented between a Chinese and Western political entity, granting the English use of the former Dutch town hall of Tayouan as their trading factory. In exchange, the EIC would pay an annual rent of 500 reals (18.7 kg) of silver, and provide two gunners “for the King’s service,” as well as a skilled smith to produce weapons. The Zheng authorities would confiscate the arms and powder of each entering ship until departure, just like the terms they had offered the Dutch, and levy a customs duty of three percent after sales on all imports.¹⁷³

By forging an alliance with Zheng Jing, the EIC hoped to obtain from him the coveted Chinese and Japanese products that would allow it to effectively compete with the VOC for supremacy in the intra-Asian trade and exports to the European market. A letter from company headquarters in London to Henry Dacres, head of the Council at Bantam, made this point clear when it spoke glowingly of “our trading with Tywan” that “it may be in effect as if we did trade to China, Japan & the Manilhaes.”¹⁷⁴ However, the actual results of the commercial relationship fell far short of these grand expectations. A total of nine ships visited Taiwan between 1670 and 1672, or an average of three per year. The English would bring guns and gunpowder; lead; Southeast Asian products, such as pepper; and European woolens.¹⁷⁵ Yet, other than the sale of firearms, most of their goods lacked sufficient demand on the Taiwan market. For one, Zheng Jing either monopolized or dominated the most profitable sectors of the economy, including the exports of deerskin and sugar, and the supply of Mainland silk.¹⁷⁶ Moreover, his own junks could procure pepper and other goods from Southeast Asia at much better rates, while the overall need for woolens remained predictably low in semitropical Taiwan.¹⁷⁷

The English found themselves dealing almost exclusively with Zheng’s official merchants, who offered for their wares “no more then [*sic*] they were worth at Bantam.”¹⁷⁸ On the other hand, they could only purchase the limited quantities of Mainland and Taiwanese goods remaining after Zheng Jing had taken his share, and at high prices. The Qing coastal evacuation policy meant that no foreigners could travel to the Chinese coast, making direct access to the sources of production impossible. Even with sufficient cargos of silk, deerskin, and sugar, the EIC still could not readily sell them to Japan, the biggest consumer market for these items, on account of its strict maritime restriction policy. The English failed in their admittedly ambitious attempt to become the leading intermediaries of the Asian trade, but they nevertheless continued

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 62.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 56-58.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 191.

¹⁷⁵ Zheng Ruiming, 88-89.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹⁷⁸ Chang Hsiu-jung et al., 64.

to do business with the Zheng organization until its fall in 1683. Although we do not have overall revenue and profitability figures for their operations, they apparently managed to stay on due to their decent performance in several niche markets. Besides the import of armaments into Taiwan, the EIC could rely upon the arbitrage realized through the reexport of Japanese copper and gold to India, where they were in great demand for casting coinage and as components of household utensils. In fact, the *koban* brought by the Zheng ships from Nagasaki during the *bakufu*'s brief ban on silver shipments could fetch a 40% rate of return at Mumbai.¹⁷⁹

The other European power that maintained formal commercial relations with Taiwan during this period was Spain, via its colony of the Philippines. In Yongli 20.8 (September 1666), Governor Diego Salcedo (r. 1662-1668) dispatched a Catholic priest to Taiwan, where he had a personal audience with Zheng Jing.¹⁸⁰ The ruler bequeathed upon him Chinese gowns and robes, and ordered the Division of Honored Guests (*Binke si*), the unit under the Rites Office in charge of foreign affairs, to fete him lavishly for the purpose of “cherishing men from afar (*rou yuanren*).”¹⁸¹ Although only Jiang Risheng’s comprehensive but at times fanciful account speaks of this visit in detail, the Spanish accounts likewise allude to “the peace [Zheng] had with Manila” (“*los paces que tenían con Manila*”).¹⁸² The English, also present in Taiwan at the time, noted that “peace is now concluded betweene the Castellians & them, freedome of trade permitted.”¹⁸³

As conditions for the opening of commerce, if we trust Jiang’s narrative, Zheng Jing required the Spanish to present a regular tribute of shipbuilding materials and refrain from harassing the vessels that sailed to Manila.¹⁸⁴ We do not have sufficient information to determine whether the Spanish agreed to these specific terms, but they seemed quite willing to go out of their way to appease him. Indeed, Zheng Jing had threatened in his audience with the priest to “immediately dispatch his soldiers to punish” the Philippines should they fail to comply.¹⁸⁵ In a letter to Mariana (r. 1665-1675), the Queen Regent of Austria, Governor Manuel de León (r. 1669-1677) warned that “these provinces [the Philippines] are in no state to be complaining to the neighboring kings, with the ease with which they move to any altercation.”¹⁸⁶ As late as 1673, he wrote of sending an envoy to Zheng “who might admonish and persuade him to continue the peace,” one method possibly involving the presentation of tribute.¹⁸⁷ Several Dominican and Capuchin priests also resided long-term at Taiwan to pass

¹⁷⁹ Yamawaki, 115.

¹⁸⁰ The priest had actually come to reestablish ties with the Zheng organization, which had remained cut off since 1662. That year, shortly before his death, Zheng Chenggong had written a letter to Saucedo’s predecessor, Sabiniano Manrique de Lara (r. 1653-1662), threatening to invade the Philippines unless it agreed to pay tribute. The Spanish responded in panic, massacring the Chinese civilians of Manila and sending many others away by ship. See Wills, *Peppers*, 27 and Carioti, 49-50.

¹⁸¹ Jiang Risheng, 237.

¹⁸² Borao Mateo et al., vol. 2, 656.

¹⁸³ Chang Hsiu-jung et al., 171.

¹⁸⁴ Jiang Risheng, 237.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Borao Mateo et al., vol. 2, 654.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 659.

along messages between Zheng Jing and Manila. In addition, they apparently tried to gain access to the Mainland market, report abnormal activities, and covertly engage in proselytizing among the local populace.¹⁸⁸

The implied lack of mutual trust between the organization and the Spanish, as seen through their interactions, would increasingly strain their relationship despite booming commercial ties. Zheng Jing remained highly suspicious of the Catholic priests and their religion, and, during their stay, kept them under tight surveillance, at times equivalent to house arrest. Already before the 1666 audience with the first envoy, Chen Yonghua had warned his ruler “never to allow them to establish churches, since they always use the arts of deception to plot and occupy other countries.”¹⁸⁹ Similarly, according to Arcadio del Rosario, one of four Dominican friars dispatched to Taiwan in 1673, Zheng sent a message to them informing them that “he did not want his vassals to become Christians, and even if the fathers came to visit him, he would not see them.”¹⁹⁰

On their part, the Spanish authorities remained highly suspicious of the Zheng family’s designs on the Philippines, especially in the wake of the threats to invade the islands, which often led to great unease and even panic in Manila. Like the Dutch, they also expressed deep alarm with the now all-too-familiar pattern of gradual but steady encroachment of their sovereignty from within. Between 1670 and 1671, the “Master of Camp and Governor-General of the States and Armed Forces of Isla Hermosa and first cousin of the King,” probably referring to Chen Yonghua, who was the chief-of-staff and whose daughter was married to Zheng’s son, sent a letter to Governor de León.¹⁹¹ He demanded that two local Chinese prisoners incarcerated for committing “nefarious sins” and awaiting execution—among them one Lousu, whom he claimed as his mandarin—be released immediately and extradited to Taiwan for “the King to punish them.”¹⁹² A petition for their freedom from prominent leaders of the Chinese quarter, or *Parián*, accompanied the letter, undoubtedly a sign of Zheng’s pervasive influence.

When de León eventually complied with the request, Queen-Regent Mariana expressed shock and horror at the decision. She stressed in her letter that “you cannot and should not” send these prisoners to him, as their “crime being so grave and aversive to our sacred Religion...they were so justly condemned by the Courts.”¹⁹³ She correctly believed that Zheng’s actions essentially treated the Chinese residents of the Philippines as his own subjects and grossly interfered with Spanish legal procedures. However, the Spanish officials in the colony could do very little except tolerate the extraterritorial interference and continue their policy of appeasement. Their well-armed but tiny garrison stood no match for the tens of

¹⁸⁸ See, for instance, Borao Mateo et al., vol. 2, 655-657, 660.

¹⁸⁹ Jiang Risheng, 237.

¹⁹⁰ Borao Mateo et al., vol. 2, 656.

¹⁹¹ Borao Mateo et al., vol. 2, 654 and Ruan, 59.

¹⁹² Borao Mateo et al., vol. 2, 654-655.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 655.

thousands of soldiers Taiwan could muster in the event of armed conflict.¹⁹⁴ In fact, by 1670, Zheng Jing and his officials were already seriously considering an invasion of the Philippines, and appeared, for all purposes, to be repeating the precedent set out by Chenggong toward the Dutch, until the outbreak of Rebellion of the Three Feudatories in 1674 put an end to their preparations.

Maritime Horizons

On the whole, the stability provided by Zheng Jing during the decade of 1663 to 1673 on Taiwan allowed Chinese traders to sail abroad relatively unhindered, while his open attitude toward all countries, in turn, drew many foreign merchants to the island. After making their rounds through Japan and Southeast Asia, junks belonging to him and his affiliated merchants would bring back spices, luxuries, and bulk goods to service the Mainland and Taiwanese consumer markets. As before, silver, copper, gold, and other precious metals would either go into government warehouses to accumulate interest or serve as the working capital for fresh journeys abroad. On the other hand, commercial missions would often come from Siam and Annam to “present tribute” and do business, together with the aforementioned English and Spanish.¹⁹⁵ By 1674, Taiwan had recovered its strategic role as a regional entrepôt, and even expanded its functions from the Dutch period. It became a clearinghouse where goods from all over East and Southeast Asia, including the much-coveted but ever-elusive China market, could be concentrated and then reexported to their respective destinations.

We can obtain a rough estimate of the average annual value of goods exchanged through this interconnected network of trade, along with the profitability of Zheng Jing and his official merchants. By taking the lower end of the range of revenues for the Southeast Asian (1,136,000 taels) and the Japan routes (996,911 taels), we find the trading value of the Zheng organization for the decade of 1663 to 1673 to be around 2,132,911 taels (79.8 tons) per year. Similarly, the sum of the corresponding profits for both (568,000 and 564,037 taels) translates to 1,132,037 taels (42 tons). Since about half of the 36 junks that sailed to Nagasaki belonged directly to Zheng Jing, we infer that he dominated at least 50% of the commercial revenues and earnings, although, as anecdotal evidence reveals, he probably took a much larger slice of the pie.¹⁹⁶ At a very minimum, then, his own profit amounted to 566,019 taels (22 tons) per year, while his subordinates and private merchants pocketed at most the remaining half. The average annual earnings realized by the organization represented a moderate decline of around 230,000 taels, as compared to the 1,365,000 taels during the previous period from 1650 to 1662.

It would appear that the Qing economic blockade, combined with the Tokugawa *bakufu*'s increasing restrictions on bullion exports, worked together to depress the scale of the highly

¹⁹⁴ In 1662, Zheng Chenggong had mobilized some 15,000 troops in preparation for an imminent attack on Manila after Governor de Lara refused to comply with his demand for tribute. See Chang Hsiu-jung et al., 151 and Carioti, 49-51.

¹⁹⁵ Xia, 46 and Shao, 152.

¹⁹⁶ Yamawaki, 114.

lucrative China-Japan trade. However, the organization's overall results for the decade from 1663 to 1673 still outmatched the average seventeenth-century VOC trading balance of 1,049,507 guildens (368,248 taels), about one-third of the Zheng profits and 65% of Jing's direct earnings. Moreover, these rough measures of the Zheng network's performance exclude the rapidly growing commercial ties with Manila, and the income realized from duties and sale of goods to the English and other mercantile groups based in Taiwan. An interesting question worth exploring further, then, is whether the organization actually declined in scale under Zheng Jing, or rather, it was transitioning away from Japan toward more lucrative markets for Mainland and Taiwanese products, especially the Philippines, which could pay for them with bountiful American silver.

Even if we assume a moderate contraction had taken place, most of the profits could be retained in Taiwan due to dramatic decreases on the cost side, especially in relation to the 1650s. Unlike his father, Zheng Jing no longer faced the threat of imminent extinction at the hands of Qing forces constantly attacking a set of precarious and shifting ports along a small strip of the southeastern Mainland coast. Separated by the natural barrier of the Taiwan Strait, he did not need to maintain massive armies or field them in bloody and expensive campaigns against one of the fiercest and most formidable war machines in Inner Asia. Moreover, as will be seen, the Kangxi Emperor drastically scaled back the draconian removal policy and essentially tolerated his existence after 1666.¹⁹⁷ By that year, Taiwan had itself become a tremendous asset to the organization through its bountiful agricultural surpluses and natural resources. Instead of relying upon plunder and forced contributions, as during the days of Chenggong, Jing's soldiers could now grow food for their own survival. The Zheng organization's ability to maintain high levels of profit, combined with lower costs of defense, allowed for greater investment in Taiwan's domestic infrastructure, and increasingly rationalized bureaucratic institutions. From a purely material standpoint, then, Zheng simply had no pressing motivation to return to the Mainland, nor, judging from his words and deeds during his decade on Taiwan, did he expect, much less actively prepare for, such an eventuality.

¹⁹⁷ Xia 37; Jiang Risheng, 246; and Zheng Yiju, 26.

CHAPTER 6: A QUESTION OF HAIRDOS AND FASHION

Having restructured the economic foundations of his “state” on Taiwan, Zheng Jing now needed to institutionalize his turn away from the Mainland and Ming restoration in the form of an alternative political model for his organization. From 1667 to 1669, he entered into negotiations with the Qing court, agreeing to recognize its legitimacy and even suzerainty in exchange for some form of autonomy. I argue that, in this period, both sides proposed and seriously considered different political settlements, and were willing to give generous concessions to institutionalize their relationship. The Qing wanted to make Zheng Jing an inner vassal, initially ordering him to leave Taiwan in exchange for land and titles on the southeastern coast, but later allowed him to keep the island as a hereditary fiefdom. However, as a subject directly under imperial rule, he had to conform to Qing institutions and shave his hair to show his loyalty and submission. Zheng, on the other hand, wished to follow the example of Korea, first proposing an alliance of equal states, before modifying his stance toward a hierarchical tributary relationship.

However, the talks ultimately broke down chiefly due to the issue of hairstyle and fashion. This seemingly innocuous dispute encapsulated an explosive divide over “Chineseness,” as defined by the Qing, the Zheng regime, and Taiwan, which both sides agreed lay outside the cultural and geographic boundaries of “China.” The Qing viewed Zheng Jing and his men as untransformed internal rebels, who had to show their loyalty to the new dynasty by wearing Manchu-style clothing and shaving their heads. For Zheng, however, the preservation of their Han Chinese long hair and topknots and flowing robes amounted to a last-ditch defense of “civilization” from “barbarians.” His exile on a “foreign” island meant that such ethnic and cultural symbols, bolstered by Confucian morality, became even more critical to the legitimacy of his organization.

Although inconclusive, the negotiations ushered in an unprecedented period of peace, with both the Qing and Zheng Jing tacitly renouncing the use of force against one another. Zheng would utilize this window of opportunity to turn entirely toward the maritime trading lanes and away from the Mainland. From 1670 to 1674, he and his men planned an invasion of the Philippines, not only to expand his territory, but, more importantly, to clarify and articulate his rule on Taiwan, a process already started during the failed talks. Besides converting his massive economic influence into actual political domination, he would reimagine and reevaluate his father’s invasion of Taiwan to fashion a new legitimacy, transforming his struggle against the Manchus into a defense of all overseas Chinese against foreign “barbarians.” For the first time in the organization’s existence, continental forms of discourse had the potential to merge with its maritime orientation and provide symbolic value for its trading activities and overseas expansion. However, the outbreak of the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories against the Qing would bring out the latent sentiments for restoration even among Zheng’s closest advisors, and engineer a

dramatic reorientation of his priorities back toward the Mainland.

The Path toward Negotiations

We have seen in the previous chapter how Zheng Jing's attempt to forge a new "China" abroad became projected outward in the search for suitable political models away from the Ming. These efforts coincided with the Qing's desire to abandon its previous belligerence toward the organization and seek a peaceful settlement. By 1665, Qing officials had concluded that, despite his defeat, Zheng still represented a credible source of resistance that has not yet been eliminated.¹ Many feared that his organization would continue to harass the southeastern coastline, and worried that his active collusion with maritime bandits and pirates, local officials, and foreign powers would pose an ominous threat to dynastic rule and stability in the long-term.

Yet, even if no such disturbance occurred, the Zheng regime, through its very existence, directly challenged the ideological foundations of the Qing polity. As Shi Lang wrote in a memorial to the court, "How can the mighty Celestial Empire, to which myriad kingdoms have submitted, tolerate the daily spread of this remnant of ashes [the Zhengs]?"² Likewise, Jiang Risheng wrote in the preface to his work that the Qing "responded to Heaven's will...and inherited the empire. The myriad foreign kingdoms all submitted. Only the Zhengs on Taiwan...harassed our frontiers, causing the court countless sums of cash...and frequently creating worries in the south..."³ By refusing to accept Manchu rule, Zheng Jing acted in a manner even more "barbaric" than foreign rulers, who at least wished to partake of "Chinese" culture as redefined by its new patrons. At the same time, he and his followers mostly came from Fujian and Guangdong, areas considered integral to "China," subscribed to the same customs and Confucian value system, thereby presenting a credible alternative that needed to be neutralized in some manner. After all, how could a dynasty completely convince its subjects of its legitimacy when a group of their own countrymen adamantly rejected its civilizing mission?

Qing officials in 1665 also held a broad consensus that the current measures against this threat to legitimacy had not proven effective. While the coastal removal policy made a sustained hostile presence in the maritime region untenable, the Zheng organization did not collapse on its own, as was expected, but, as we have seen, acquired new life on Taiwan. More sobering for the Qing was the staggering cost of the evacuation, both in terms of human lives and lost tax revenues for the state. In a memorial to the court, Li Zhifang (1642-1698), Circuit Censor for Hubei and Hunan, complained that the income from fishing and salt mines, two lucrative coastal industries, had totaled "tens of millions of [taels]. Products from the soil are again many times the amount."⁴ His sentiments were echoed in another memorial by Guangdong Governor Wang Lairen (d. 1666), which argued for at least a partial restoration of

¹ Chen Kongli, "Kangxi 22 nian," 96.

² Shi, 1.

³ Jiang Risheng, 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 203.

access to the coastal zone.⁵ Hence, the Qing faced tremendous pressure to end its disastrous policy, which not only had little effect against Zheng, but also abandoned thousands of kilometers of coastline considered an integral part of “China.” As Shi Lang forcefully emphasized in his memorial, “emperors from ancient times have ruled by defending every inch of land that has been acquired. How can territory already obtained be cut off and abandoned?”⁶ Li Zhifang concurred, pointing out that “since ancient times, the purpose of supporting an army was originally to protect our territory.”⁷ Li went on to ridicule the policy, stating that he had “never heard of abandoning our territory to repel the bandits.”⁸

The key area where Qing elite opinion diverged lay in the specific actions necessary to neutralize this threat. Shi Lang, along with Huang Wu, Zhou Quanbin, Zheng Mingjun, and other prominent defectors from the Zheng camp, formed the core of a regional war faction. These men called for a forceful response to root out the remaining challenge to Qing universal authority. Their enthusiastic fervor not only reflected a desire for personal vengeance against the Zhengs, but also to convince their new masters that they somehow remained relevant to the preservation of order along the coast. By emphasizing the seriousness and pressing nature of the threat, they would have continued reason to keep command over their soldiers and stay close to their families in Fujian. In long and detailed memorials to the court, Shi carefully outlined plans for a naval attack on Taiwan, and provided extensive information about its troop numbers and conditions. He concluded that the Zheng soldiers were stretched thinly across the island and lacked military training. They stood no chance against the newly constituted Fujian navy, furnished with new ships built from yards along the southeastern coast, a sizable number of them once in Zheng hands, and consisting mostly of men who had defected from the rival camp and had extensive knowledge of ocean currents.⁹ If the court did not seize this opportunity, Shi warned, Zheng Jing would recover his power and “unite with foreign lands” to become an endless source of worry in the long-term.¹⁰

The imperial court and Fujianese officials, flushed with success at the victory in Xiamen and Jinmen, initially adopted the suggestions of Shi and the war party, arranging for a Dutch fleet to assist in a naval invasion of Taiwan.¹¹ In return for the VOC’s efforts in helping to drive the Zhengs out of Xiamen and Jinmen, the Qing had promised to restore the island to the company. However, on December 24, 1664, shortly after the joint fleet had set out, the entire Qing squadron of 300 vessels under the command of Shi Lang and Zhou Quanbin suddenly turned

⁵ Ibid., 247-250.

⁶ Shi, 5.

⁷ Jiang Risheng, 202. Contrast this attitude to the willingness of the Qing to give Taiwan to the Dutch. For the court, a VOC-held island would pose far less of an ideological threat than a Zheng-held one. The other side of the deal also appears noteworthy; the Qing wanted Dutch help to dislodge Zheng Jing from Xiamen and Jinmen, islands considered an integral part of “China.” Wong Young-tsu, 151.

⁸ Jiang Risheng, 202.

⁹ Shi., 6.

¹⁰ Ibid., 5.

¹¹ Wong Young-tsu, 150-152.

back to shore. Perhaps the two men did not wish to share credit with the Dutch for any victory over the Zheng organization, or they may have wanted to hold onto their power for several more months.¹² Whatever their motives, a second expedition under their exclusive control set sail on Kangxi 4.4/15 (May 29, 1665), only to encounter a ferocious storm that seriously damaged their ships and forced them to return and undertake repairs.¹³

The abortive campaigns hardened objections toward the war party from other central and provincial officials, including Wang Lairen. In his opinion, large concentrations of troops in the southeastern coast already proved an expensive proposition, especially in a macroregion with a highly limited agricultural base to support their needs.¹⁴ This problem became further compounded by the economically disastrous coastal removal policy, which severely devastated the livelihood of local commoners. As his memorial stated, “in my over two years as governor, I have never once heard of the sea bandits attacking and plundering. What I have heard are still those removed coastal residents gathering together in the interior and becoming bandits.” At the same time, a more conservative atmosphere pervaded the court under the Oboi regency, which viewed Han Chinese subjects with suspicion. In such a political climate, Shi Lang and his faction, nearly all of whom had relatives or other connections in Zheng Jing’s organization, could never earn its full trust.¹⁵ In its eyes, nothing could prevent them from defecting again if another naval campaign ran into difficulties or homesickness overtook them.

However, these factors only partially explain why the Qing ultimately chose the path of negotiations. The decision of the court should be seen more as a lack of motivation, and not just ability, to seek a military solution. After all, the Manchus had demonstrated a remarkable adaptability to a wide variety of adverse circumstances and terrain, even mastering warfare in the rivers and jungles of the south and southwest to overpower Ming loyalist bastions.¹⁶ Yet, just as with the Ming before it and many of the Zheng followers, the prevailing Qing opinion saw Taiwan as psychologically distant and physically outside the traditional boundaries of China, as seen through the narratives of early elite travelers to the island. The court only paid attention to Taiwan because Zheng Jing and his organization remained a significant political enemy. Although they lived in a “barbaric” land among “barbaric” tribes, and even acted in a “barbaric” manner, they nevertheless appeared too “Chinese,” and, in doing so, walked a fine line between transformation through Qing culturalism and a threat to that same legitimacy. On the other hand, the perceived “foreignness” of Taiwan, along with a shift in the priorities of Zheng Jing

¹² Wills, *Peppers*, 99. Wills convincingly contradicts Deng Kongzhao’s claim that the expeditions to Taiwan under Shi and Zhou “all represented the individual actions of the Qing army. No Dutch squadrons participated.” In fact, the evidence points to Dutch fleets joining in at least the first of the failed invasions. Refer to Deng Kongzhao, “Shilun Qing-He lianhe jingong Zheng shi 试论清荷联合进攻郑氏” (“A Hypothesis on the Qing-Dutch United Attack on the Zhengs”), in *Qing dai Taiwan shi yanjiu*, ed. Chen Zaizheng et al., 224.

¹³ Peng, 71 and Jiang Risheng, 234-235.

¹⁴ Jiang Risheng, 249.

¹⁵ Needless to say, the Zheng relatives would always come under suspicion for sympathizing with Zheng Jing. Moreover, Shi Lang’s own eldest son remained within the organization. See Peng, 90.

¹⁶ Struve, *Southern Ming*, 118-119.

away from warfare and toward long-term development of the island, decreased the attractiveness of a risky and costly military operation across the sea.

For Zheng Jing, the talks served as a welcome opportunity to forge a new legitimacy independent of the need to reassert control over any part of the Mainland, divorcing “China” from its geographic setting. In the short-term, he also wanted to persuade the Qing to reverse its coastal removal policy and institutionalize his covert trading relations with the southeastern Chinese coast, the source of most of the lucrative export products needed to restart his devastated maritime trading empire.¹⁷ Moreover, through negotiations, Zheng could achieve the tactical purpose of marginalizing Shi Lang and the war party, and prevent the Qing and Dutch from forming another alliance against Taiwan. By 1667, this menace had already subsided due to Shi’s abortive campaigns, and arguments between the two potential invaders over timing and logistics, which “spared their common enemy.”¹⁸ In Yongli 20.12 (January 1667), Zheng ordered Xue Jinsi, garrison commander of the strategic Penghu Islands, the frontline of Taiwan’s defense, to withdraw, and disbanded him and his men to a military colony after their return.¹⁹ Zheng hoped to demonstrate that “we resolve to stay here and have no intentions toward the West [Mainland],” and create a favorable climate for negotiations to start.²⁰ Such signals contradict the claim of scholars like Zhuang Jinde, who believe that the initiative of the talks all came from an evil, manipulative Qing court.²¹ After all, the Qing overcame the agitations of the war party and swung toward negotiations partly because the Zheng regime also signaled its willingness by dramatically toning down its belligerence.

Round One: Envoys

It was within this overall political climate that on Kangxi 5.11/4 (November 29, 1666), Kong Yuanzhang, Jingkou Garrison Commander at Zhenjiang, in Jiangnan, secretly memorialized the imperial court, confidently stating his expectation of “results that can be obtained” if he persuaded Zheng Jing to submit.²² An edict promptly dispatched him to Fujian under the new title of Fujian Summoning and Soothing Garrison Commander (*Fujian zhaofu zongbing*). He was authorized to oversee negotiations with the Zheng organization in consultation with the regional feudatory, Geng Jimao, and Governor-General Zu Zepu.²³ Kong’s background and sketchy past made him highly useful for undertaking this kind of activity. After the Ming fall, he had mingled within the circles of loyalist literati, dressed as a monk, and enjoyed close

¹⁷ Jiang Risheng, 238-239.

¹⁸ Wong Young-tsu, 152.

¹⁹ Jiang Risheng, 239.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 238.

²¹ Zhuang Jinde, “Zheng-Qing heyi shimo,” 1-2.

²² Jiang Risheng, 239 and Wu Fei, “Kong Yuanzhang guanyu shoufu Taiwan de zouben” (“The Memorial of Kong Yuanzhang Regarding the Recovery of Taiwan”), *Lishi dang’an* (*Historical Archives*) 3 (1983): 134.

²³ Wu Fei, 134 and *Kangxi tongyi Taiwan dang’an*, 71.

relationships with Zhejiang elites, particularly Wei Geng and Qian Zuanzeng.²⁴ Through participation in the underground activities of these men, passing along strategic messages and coordinating activities among different Ming loyalist organizations across the country, he came into close contact with the maritime resistance of Zhang Huangyan and Zheng Chenggong. He came to know many people within these movements on an intimate basis, including Hong Xu and Weng Tianyou, now Jing's top officials.²⁵ Although no conclusive evidence can yet support this claim, the scholar He Lingxiu has suggested convincingly that Kong may even have taken part in Zheng's failed invasion of Nanjing in 1659, organized with the help of Wei Geng and his associates.²⁶

Apparently, Kong Yuanzhang's greed and ambition for an important post with stable revenue, which this gentry-led movement failed to satisfy, brought him into conflict with the other elites and marginalized him from the group.²⁷ The breaking point came in 1662, when he was discovered and sternly rebuked for forging a letter in Wei's name to solicit and embezzle silver.²⁸ Incensed and hungry for revenge, Kong went to Wenzhou, in coastal southern Zhejiang, which still lay under Zheng Chenggong's influence at the time. There, he compiled a list containing the names of officers and soldiers stationed in the area to use as "evidence" that he held a high-ranking office with responsibility over many men, and thus obtain more favorable terms of surrender from the Qing. He then turned himself in at Zhenjiang, claiming to be a Zheng garrison commander, and proceeded to expose Wei Geng's entire network, an act that led to a mass roundup and the execution of Wei, Qian, and others in 1662. As a result of the massive betrayal, Kong obtained his coveted job position at Jingkou, where he was placed in charge of further sabotaging local Ming loyalist movements. Although he now had a means of living, he soon found himself with very little to do as the decade progressed and the situation in China gradually stabilized.²⁹ Since the center of conflict had already shifted to Taiwan, Kong sought another opportunity for fame by trying to obtain Zheng Jing's submission.

The court, dominated by conservative Manchu nobles, viewed Kong Yuanzhang with a great

²⁴ Kong traced his ancestry to central China's Henan Province, but was born and grew up in Jiangyin, Jiangnan. He came from a poor family, and served as the servant boy of a local elite family before moving to Huzhou, in Zhejiang. During the turmoil of the later years of the Ming, he earned his reputation as a military man, and, in 1638, became the garrison commander of Jingkou, the same position he would later assume under the Qing. From early on, he had demonstrated an ability to form connections with people in high places to speak on behalf of him, including the prominent Qian Qianyi. For a brief but highly fascinating biography of Kong Yuanzhang, refer to He, 294-302.

²⁵ Wu Fei, 134 and He, 296.

²⁶ He, 296.

²⁷ Indeed, this grouping of elites functioned in a highly loose manner, tied together only by enthusiasm, friendship, and shared political ideals. In terms of organization, it could not even compare to the factions of the late Ming or popular millenarian cults, which at least had leaders, a hierarchical structure, and a system of rewards and punishments. This underground network of gentry, then, became highly susceptible to infiltration from opportunists like Kong Yuanzhang. See *Ibid.*, 294.

²⁸ Throughout their cooperation, Kong kept on asking for silver from Wei. Wei initially granted him whatever he wanted, but soon realized his true intentions and broke off the relationship. However, Kong did not stop there. Besides the forgery incident, another trigger for his defection was his attempt to blackmail Wei, who, out of anger, slapped him in the face. See *Ibid.*, 297.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 297-298. During his tenure, with the little he had to do, he nevertheless managed to further gain infamy by imprisoning, killing, and exiling hundreds of suspected Ming loyalists in the Jiangnan area.

degree of suspicion, and, in part due to his shady reputation, had purposely marginalized him with the post at Jingkou, which provided no soldiers, no fortresses, nothing at all tangible.³⁰ The Qing nevertheless recognized his value to a potential settlement of the Taiwan problem, given his intimate knowledge of conditions within the Zheng regime and close ties to its former and current key figures. Hence, the court authorized Kong to undertake this task, but, aware of his past opportunism, also made sure he was closely supervised from the very beginning. His new garrison command post at the port of Haicheng, headquarters of the Fujian naval fleet, put him under Admiral Shi Lang of the war party, allowing for a built-in mutual check on each other's activities.³¹

Once he arrived, Kong sent out a report to Beijing on Kangxi 6.5/16 (July 6, 1667), forwarded by the provincial authorities and approved by the court, that laid out his strategy for obtaining Zheng Jing's submission.³² Besides "summoning and soothing (*zhaofu*)" him through the talks, offering him ranks and territory in exchange for his surrender, Kong wanted to concurrently entice Hong, Weng, and other key leaders in the organization with attractive rewards. He hoped that these advisors and subordinates would provide additional pressure on their leader to accept his terms, or capture and hand Zheng over to the Qing.³³ This method, Kong believed, would save the court far more money than a highly risky naval campaign, which Shi Lang had tried without success.³⁴

Kong also wasted no time reestablishing contact with his old connections along the coast. On Kangxi 6.5/16 (July 6, 1667), he dispatched Summoning and Soothing Circuit Official Liu Ergong and Subprefect Ma Xing as envoys to Taiwan to feel out Zheng's attitude. Nothing else is known of these enigmatic figures, not even the exact nature of their positions, other than the fact that both Liu and Ma lived near the Kaiyuan Temple in Quanzhou.³⁵ Their official ranks may have been no more than empty titles added onto their names to increase their prestige as envoys. Kong entrusted them with a letter from himself and a man named Dong Ban she, brother of Zheng Chenggong's wife, Madame Dong, and maternal uncle of Zheng Jing.³⁶ Kong, then, appeared to have made effective use of his contacts in the Fujian maritime region, opening to the Qing a valuable web of informal relationships it could tap in its attempt to win over Taiwan's submission.

Round One: Terms, Counter-terms, and Their Significance

Both letters from Kong and Dong entreated Zheng Jing to surrender for the sake of the

³⁰ Ibid., 298.

³¹ *Kangxi tongyi Taiwan dang'an*, 71-73.

³² Although the contents of his report remain unknown, fragments of it can be found within the response of the Qing court.

³³ Wu Fei, 134.

³⁴ In Kong's words, "even if the entire [Qing] navy goes to subdue [the Zheng regime], it is still easy for these defiant remnants to escape within the vast ocean, and cause the court to waste unlimited sums of cash." See Ibid.

³⁵ *Kangxi tongyi Taiwan dang'an*, 71-73.

³⁶ The term *she* refers to "sir" or "mister" in Minnanese, and is added to the end of a person's name. Documents of this period often referred to Zheng Jing as Jin she before the death of his father. See, for instance, Yu, 10.

coastal residents, whose suffering and impoverishment they blamed on his continued stubbornness and refusal to accept the Qing civilizing influence. If he agreed to submit, the imperial court promised to bestow upon him the title of “King of Fujian (*Bamin wang*),” and grant him control over all of the evacuated southeastern coastal islands.³⁷ The court planned to treat Zheng Jing as one of its feudatories to help it assert control and preempt potential rebels in a politically troublesome frontier, in addition to Wu Sangui in the southwest, Geng Jimao in Fujian, and Shang Kexi in Guangdong. In exchange for the reward of land and autonomous rights in local administration, Zheng, as an internal vassal (*neifan*) and direct imperial subject, could not stay on a foreign island, but should signal his acceptance of the new dynasty by shaving his head and abandoning Taiwan.³⁸

Zheng flatly rejected the offers in two separate replies addressed to Dong and Kong, each dated Yongli 21.6/23 (August 12, 1667). After the personal inquiries to his uncle, he complained that “Commander Kong’s letter contains nothing substantial, and what Liu Ergong and Ma Xing have said all amount to empty talk.”³⁹ Since the time of the “late king [Chenggong] to your nephew,” he wrote, “the Qing negotiators kept insisting, but in the past, during the height of our time on all the islands [of the Chinese coast], we still refused to shave our heads.”⁴⁰ Filial piety dictated that Zheng could not agree to what his father, during his own negotiations with the Manchus, had refused to do even within his territories considered integral to “China,” not to mention now a “foreign” land. Indeed, “we only ever fought over these two words [shaving hair].”⁴¹

Moreover, Jing told the Qing negotiators that he could not abandon Taiwan for the sake of land and ranks on the Mainland. According to his letter to Dong Ban she:

“Today, I have opened up another universe (*lingpi qiankun*) at Dongning, outside of the domain (*bantu zhi wai*). Its area is thousands of *li*, and its grain can last decades. The barbarians from the four directions submit, myriad products circulate, and the living masses gather and receive education. These are enough to be strong on its own (*zhiqiang*). What do I have to desire from a feudatory title? What have I to envy about the Central Land (*Zhongtu*)?”⁴²

Similarly, he announced to Kong his creation of an entirely new kingdom abroad:

“Today, Dongning is far away overseas, and does not form part of the domain (*fei shu bantu*

³⁷ The conditions for Zheng Jing could be discerned from his reply to the letters of Kong Yuanzhang and Dong Ban she. See *Kangxi tongyi Taiwan dang’an*, 70.

³⁸ Fairbank, “Preliminary Framework,” 7.

³⁹ *Kangxi tongyi Taiwan dang’an*, 69.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 69.

zhi zhong). It neighbors Japan to the east and Luzon to the south. Numerous people congregate here and products circulate. The honors of a king are those which I already have myself, and the foundations of ten thousand generations have been established to the point it cannot be transplanted. You, sir, have already witnessed this. What have I to envy of ranks, to desire of land, and to shave my head on account of these?”⁴³

He already ruled over an island that had nothing to do with “China,” and the Qing simply could not give him a satisfying incentive to leave, especially if it meant cutting his hair.

Zheng Jing tried to convince Kong that he had withdrawn to Taiwan to steer clear of the Mainland coast and leave it in Qing hands. Since Dongning could satisfy the needs of him and his men, he had no intention to return to scramble for territory:

“During the battle for Siming [Xiamen] some time ago, I withdrew [to Taiwan] because of grain shortages, not because of military miscalculation. Still, wherever the wind points, as south as Hainan Island and as north as Liaodong [the entire length of the Chinese coast], where can I not open up land? Where can I not congregate my troops? The reason why I decided to isolate myself on the ocean and establish the Kingdom of Dongning was because I felt truly grieved at the separation of young men and women, and the daily escalation of warfare...yet, your dynasty still has not investigated this in-depth, and enforced with great strictness the evacuation of the coast. As a result, the myriad surnames are homeless and wandering, and four provinces have been laid to waste. To just sit and give up the rents and taxes of several thousand *li* and spend annually on the provisions of hundreds of thousands of soldiers, alas, is this not your dynasty’s strategic miscalculation?”⁴⁴

Although he still possessed the capability to fight anywhere along the coast, Zheng Jing voluntarily chose to leave the Mainland because of his great pain at the tremendous suffering brought to innocent commoners by years of warfare. As he emphasized, “I only want to construct for your dynasty a method for prolonged peace, to plot for the sake of the lives of the myriad people.”⁴⁵ Yet, he lamented, the Qing failed to recognize his sincere interest in pursuing peaceful coexistence, and continued to treat him as an enemy to be forced into surrender. Therefore, responsibility for the current suffering and destitution of coastal residents lay not with his refusal to submit, but rather with its deep mistrust of his intentions, as manifested in its brutal removal of the coast, a policy that only harmed the court in terms of lost revenues and skyrocketing expenditures.

Zheng then laid out his own conditions for achieving mutual peace. His only requests, he

⁴³ Ibid., 70.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

told his uncle, were for the Qing “to treat me according to the rituals of a foreign country (*yi waiguo zhi li jiandai*), and for the two sides to initiate trade and friendly interaction (*hushi tonghao*).”⁴⁶ He proposed to Kong that “representatives from each country could establish friendly relations based upon mutual trade. Both your side and ours would have no [*missing character*], and the tempests would not roar.”⁴⁷ These measures would encourage “coastal farmers and fishermen to return to their original activities,” and benefit the Qing government with “millions in tax revenues.”⁴⁸ They would also legalize, or make semi-legal, the organization’s rampant smuggling operations along the southeastern coast, and provide an additional avenue of official trade.

Zheng Jing’s negotiating position contained two components, one for the Qing side and the second for domestic consumption, each closely connected to the other in dynamic interaction. As shown, his attempt to forge a new ideological foundation for his regime propelled his willingness to engage in talks. The negotiating table, in turn, became an arena where his quest for legitimacy could be further refined and articulated internally. Other than the Yongli reign title, itself frozen in time, Zheng did not make any mention of the Ming or restoration in his letters. Moreover, in referring to Taiwan’s geographic position, he avoided Qing tributaries, such as Liuqiu or Vietnam, but rather Japan and Luzon, important trading partners of the Chinese maritime region with no political ties to the Mainland. Even his tone and use of words, while polite, seemed far from submissive. By boasting of “barbarians” submitting to him from the four corners of the earth, he tried to prove that, like the Qing, he possessed the moral character to bring “civilization” to non-Han peoples. His terms and actions apparently aimed at achieving equal status with the Qing, such as in a friendly trading alliance somewhat akin to the first Manchu settlement with Korea.⁴⁹ Besides legitimate access to the lucrative China market, he could keep existing institutions on Taiwan completely intact within this model, placating potential internal opposition from Ming princes and their elite supporters. Meanwhile, he could consider several different political options, which might include a kingdom with titles and ranks still from a fictive Ming court, or a new empire in its own right.

At the same time, Zheng placed strong emphasis on Confucian morality in his correspondence with the Qing. He demanded to keep the Ming hair and dress for himself and his subjects, ostensibly because his father had proposed the same conditions, but also because of a more deeply held desire to preserve in full the body handed down by one’s parents. Not only did he care for his own people, but it was also due to his pain at the misery of coastal Chinese residents that prompted him to withdraw from his Mainland bases. On the other hand, he pointed to the Qing’s brutal removal of its subjects, their suffering, and its violation of filial piety as examples of the inhumanity of Manchu rulers, who competed on these same Confucian values,

⁴⁶ Ibid., 69.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 70.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

and seize from them the moral high ground. In this manner, Zheng Jing could shift “Chineseness” from physical settings to more abstract qualities, allowing for an exclusivist Han identity without having to engage in a suicidal venture to expel the invaders in the name of restoration.

After receiving the letters from Zheng, Kong Yuanzhang begged the Qing court to allow him to travel to Taiwan in person, and “permit me to persuade him to submit and listen to reason.”⁵⁰ The regents granted his request, and further agreed to raise his daily stipend from four *qian*, eight *fen* to six *qian* in silver. However, they remained highly suspicious of him and the other defectors in the Fujian maritime zone. They prohibited Ma Xing and Liu Ergong from ever being dispatched again, and turned down Kong’s appeal for Huang Yi of the Tongan garrison, a nephew of Huang Wu and a potentially valuable negotiator, to join him in the talks.⁵¹ They also kept a close watch over Kong’s activities, dispatching the Manchu nobleman Narsai to Haicheng before the scheduled departure to personally verify Kong’s cargo and accompanying personnel. The nativist regents resorted to such measures out of fear that he and other defectors might use such an opportunity to engage in illicit commerce with Zheng in violation of the maritime prohibitions, or even active political collusion against the Qing.⁵² Besides weathering official suspicion, Kong had to deal with obstacles from Mother Nature. A man named Dong Shen, who had originally planned to join him on the mission, unexpectedly passed away during this period due to illness. Judging from his surname, he was most likely a maternal relative of Zheng Jing, probably none other than Dong Ban she himself.⁵³ Huge winds and tempests in the sea further postponed the start of the journey.

Finally, on Kangxi 6.8/26, eighteen days after the originally scheduled departure date, the skies had cleared enough for Kong to leave. A naval squadron under Ke Cai carried out a final check of his ships before “escorting” him out to the open sea.⁵⁴ According to Kong’s recollection after his return, his fleet ran into strong, adverse winds and turbulent waves throughout the journey, greatly delaying his arrival on the island.⁵⁵ However, once on Taiwan, Zheng Jing feted him lavishly with banquets and treated him as a guest of honor for over a month.⁵⁶ Otherwise, besides increasing goodwill, the two sides made little substantive progress during his stay. The Qing side merely enhanced and repackaged its old offers. It promised to end the maritime ban and give Zheng the right to oversee all trade along the coast, but continued

⁵⁰ Ibid., 71.

⁵¹ *Kangxi tongyi Taiwan dang’an*, 71 and Chen Hong and Chen Bangxian, 86.

⁵² An imperial edict to Kong read, “The Fujian Navy has a responsibility for carrying out duties in the region. The vessels plying the domestic routes, if unchecked, might find an excuse to engage in trade.” See *Kangxi tongyi Taiwan dang’an*, 71. However, this decision appeared to be aimed more at the Zheng defectors themselves, who could conduct smuggling activities with greater ease due to their possession of capital and familiarity with their rivals.

⁵³ *Kangxi tongyi Taiwan dang’an*, 72.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 71-72.

⁵⁵ The distance from Xiamen to Penghu was seven *geng*, and the Penghu to Anping leg was five *geng*. See Huang Shujing, 15-16. Assuming good weather and favorable winds, Kong would have arrived, at the fastest, in Penghu after a day and on the main island by the end of the next.

⁵⁶ Jiang Risheng, 239.

to insist upon his status as an internal vassal, who must first shave his head and leave the overseas island to join other Qing officials and subjects on the Mainland.⁵⁷ As an added condition, he even had to send one of his sons to Beijing as a hostage to ensure his sincerity and trustworthiness.⁵⁸ For his part, Zheng Jing repeated his demands to preserve his hair and clothing, and stay on his island. He emphasized to Kong:

“Taiwan is far away overseas, and not the domain of the Middle Kingdom (*fei Zhongguo bantū*). When the former King was alive, we only disagreed on the two words ‘shaving hair.’ If you can use the example of Korea, then I can [accept it].”⁵⁹

Since Taiwan was a foreign land like Korea, Zheng implied, it should deserve treatment different from China, including its ruler, political institutions, and cultural practices.

The talks sunk into deadlock, as both sides refused to give further ground. Zheng finally told Kong explicitly to stop wasting his time: “The strategy of negotiations cannot drag out indefinitely. The will of the former King cannot be violated!”⁶⁰ He then ordered Kong’s captain, Lin Gongxun, to ferry him back to the Mainland. However, in a sign that Zheng left the door open for future talks, he sent along several cargoes of local Taiwanese products, including sandalwood, dalbergia wood, deer meat, and salted fish to accompany the mission, apparently an attempted tribute payment to the emperor.⁶¹ His gesture hinted at his willingness to give up the initial vision of equality for Dongning and become a subordinate outer vassal state (*waifan*). In this framework, he could have complete domestic autonomy, and only recognize the Qing emperor as overlord.⁶² As a result of this round of talks, he now seemed to tilt toward a mode of interaction with the Qing along the model of Korea after the second Manchu invasion of 1636.

Round One: Failure and Aftermath

Kong Yuanzhang set out for sea on Kangxi 6.10/7 (November 22, 1667), and arrived back at Haicheng eighteen days later, after another windy and turbulent journey. The inconclusive nature of this round of talks was due primarily to the Qing side’s inability to offer sufficiently powerful incentives for Zheng Jing to concede. On the one hand, the Qing navy proved incapable of launching an assault on Taiwan. Despite lacking the ability to coerce, the Qing laid out terms for peace that would essentially force him to give up the natural security of Taiwan

⁵⁷ Xia, 37.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Jiang Risheng, 239.

⁶⁰ Xia, 37.

⁶¹ According to the tally of Zheng’s tribute items made by Manchu officials on Kangxi 6.10/27 (December 11, 1667), after Kong’s return to Haicheng, the cargo consisted of 21 *dan*, 40 *jin* (1.07 tons) of sandalwood, 400 *jin* (200 kg) of dalbergia, 200 *jin* (100 kg) of deer tendons, 2,610 *jin* (1,305 kg) of deer breasts, and 1,150 *jin* (575 kg) of salted fish. In addition, Zheng handed out a total of 360 taels (13.5 kg) of silver to Kong’s entire crew. See *Kangxi tongyi Taiwan dang’an*, 75.

⁶² Fairbank, “Preliminary Framework,” 7.

and place his fate completely into its hands. As he aptly put it, “What have I to envy of ranks, to desire of land, and to shave my head on account of these?”⁶³ Although it is not clear whether Kong spoke with any of Zheng’s top officials, they evidently did not betray their ruler or force him to surrender, but stuck behind him to negotiate as one body.⁶⁴

The stinginess of the Qing offer resulted, in part, from the regents’ deep mistrust of Zheng’s intentions. As R. Bin Wong and Kenneth Pomeranz correctly point out, these rulers of a massive continental empire, who prioritized social stability and keeping taxes and defense outlays low, saw the organization as a dangerous concentration of Chinese overseas engaged in rebellion and illegal armed trade.⁶⁵ To prevent a protracted and costly campaign, it wanted to entice Zheng back within its boundaries, where it could keep him and his activities under close watch. In return for his submission, however, the court would not hesitate to grant him favorable concessions, including the right to serve as “exclusive link between the huge Chinese market and overseas luxury goods,” even though it did not have any interest in licensing armed monopolies.⁶⁶ At times, then, an empire’s need to achieve internal stability did not necessarily mean that it had to view maritime-based organizations as a zero-sum game. Yet, this same suspicion and fear also severely restricted its flexibility and limited the scope of its negotiation options. Not only did they suspect the intentions of the organization, but they also exhibited paranoia against their own personnel in Fujian, many of them defectors from the Zheng camp. This attitude exacerbated tensions on the ground between the war and negotiating parties, which they had forcibly grouped together in the first place as a mutual check. In sum, it resulted in the Qing side’s inability to coordinate a unified response to Zheng’s demands other than repeating the same basic terms, with little room for meaningful concessions.

In the end, the peace process spelled disaster for collaborators in both parties. After Kong’s return, an imperial edict ordered all officials in Fujian to secretly memorialize the court with their suggestions on the next step to take toward Zheng Jing. Shi Lang was among the first to come out and dismiss the talks as a fruitless endeavor. He complained to the court that even after “our envoys went there two times,” Zheng still did not dispatch any officials to accompany them back for further consultations. Based upon the information provided by Kong’s ship captain Lin Gongxun, whom he had sent to spy on the mission, Shi felt convinced that Zheng “does not necessarily have any true intention to return and submit.”⁶⁷ Instead, the admiral

⁶³ *Kangxi tongyi Taiwan dang’an*, 70.

⁶⁴ Before Kong set out for Taiwan, he tried to secure the surrender of Li Feng, an ally of Zheng Jing based on the islands off of Zhejiang. “If the fake garrison commander Li Feng and others take their troops and ships, and come to submit,” he claimed, “then we can seriously destroy one of Zheng’s arms in the southeast. Taiwan would naturally become isolated, and then we can gradually plan.” See *Kangxi tongyi Taiwan dang’an*, 73. The outcome of this mission remains unknown, but, either way, it was unlikely to have had much impact on the survival of the Zheng organization. Kong likely exaggerated the role of Li, who was nothing more than one of the many coastal rebels engaged in illicit trade with Taiwan, peripheral to Zheng and his core followers.

⁶⁵ R. Bin Wing, 148-149.

⁶⁶ Pomeranz, 203.

⁶⁷ Shi, 1.



Figure 31. Qing-era statue of Shi Lang, with two attendants.

Photograph by author, 2009, courtesy of the Fujian-Taiwan Kinship Museum, Quanzhou.

asked for another chance to lead a naval expedition. This time, he would first capture Penghu, and, from there, try again to conduct negotiations with Zheng Jing, but from a position of military strength. If he refused to accept the terms, Shi would then eliminate him by attacking and occupying the main island.⁶⁸ The proposal essentially implied that Kong had achieved nothing during his mission to Taiwan, dealing a heavy blow to his efforts to obtain recognition through these negotiations, upon which he had staked his entire reputation.

Partly due to this report, the Qing court suspended the talks and recalled Kong to Beijing to

⁶⁸ Ibid., 3. In Shi's words, "Zheng Jing...only depends upon the forbidden vast ocean. If you specifically dispatch one envoy to summon and soothe, then the decision-making power lies only in the one person of Zheng Jing. However, if we use our grand army to press against the frontier, then the opportunity to leave [Taiwan] or stay is with the bandit masses. How can Zheng Jing make this decision by himself?" Given his image of Taiwan as a place where the Zheng soldiers lacked spouses and missed home, Shi was confident that they would flock over to the Qing if he took military action. See Ibid., 6. The methods used by the war and peace parties, then, both contained the elements of official negotiations and surrender, as well as the use of defections to put additional pressure upon the enemy. As in previous and future interactions with the organization, however, the first group wanted a strong show of force and success in battle to bring about submission, while the second desired to achieve it peacefully, while complementing its actions with "summoning and soothing" officers and soldiers from the opposing camp.

await his next assignment.⁶⁹ Obviously unhappy, he turned around and accused Shi of collusion with Taiwan. Kong revealed in a memorial that, during his stay on Taiwan, Zheng Jing had told him about the secret contacts the organization maintained with Shi, and even showed Kong the letters exchanged between the two men.⁷⁰ These allegations touched off a chain reaction. Soon, several subordinates of Zhou Quanbin came out and accused him of faking his surrender in 1664 simply to retake Haicheng for Zheng at the soonest convenient opportunity.⁷¹ In Kangxi 7.1/10 (February 21, 1668), the Qing regents ordered both Shi and Zhou to Beijing for “an imperial audience,” which, in reality, meant giving them honorable but worthless titles in the central bureaucracy.⁷² Huang Wu, too, fell under suspicion, and his nephew, Huang Yi, was reduced to the status of a commoner.⁷³ The court then disbanded the entire naval establishment in Fujian, reconverting a small number of defected Zheng troops into land forces, while dispatching the rest, along with their families, deep into the interior provinces to open up military colonies.⁷⁴ Most of the Qing ships were grounded in Haicheng harbor and eventually burned. Kong Yuanzhang, the chief instigator of this entire chain of events, met with a similarly tragic fate. Soon after the failure of the talks, he was exiled to the frontier outpost of Ningguta, in Manchuria, where he lived until his death around 1690.⁷⁵

Round Two: Motivations and Preparations

Besides suspicion of its collaborators, the Qing court undertook these drastic actions as a sign of goodwill toward the Zheng organization. With these potentially unstable elements out of the way, they could not hijack future conciliatory gestures through rash military maneuvers or illicit smuggling and political collusion. In early 1669, even as the purge of personnel progressed, the court dispatched officials to Fujian and Guangdong to survey the coastline. A few months later, in Kangxi 8.2 (March 1669), an imperial edict called for a limited extension of the maritime boundaries, allowing residents to return to the evacuated areas for farming and fishing in the harbors and bays.⁷⁶ This friendlier attitude continued despite a major palace coup in Beijing on 5/16 (June 14), when the fifteen-year-old Emperor Shengzu ousted Oboi and his allies, and assumed personal control over the empire.⁷⁷ The new ruler had to spend the rest of the year ridding the government of officials with close ties to the former regents, and dealing with massive flooding from the Yellow River, which had breached its dikes for two years in a

⁶⁹ Jiang Risheng, 242.

⁷⁰ Chen Hong and Chen Bangxian, 86.

⁷¹ *Zheng shi shiliao sanbian*, 121. The accusers claimed that before Zhou’s surrender, he and Zheng Jing had sworn by the sword to seal the pact. They purportedly promised each other that “if the two sides had a contrary heart, then may we die under ten thousand swords.”

⁷² Jiang Risheng 242-246 and Shi, 4-5.

⁷³ Chen Hong and Chen Bangxian, 86.

⁷⁴ Jiang Risheng, 246; Chen Hong and Chen Bangxian, 86-87. These defectors were mostly sent to the provinces of Shanxi, Shaanxi, Henan, Sichuan, Hunan, and Hubei.

⁷⁵ He, 298.

⁷⁶ Jiang Risheng, 251; Chen Hong and Chen Bangxian, 86-87.

⁷⁷ For more details on this political struggle, refer to Zhang Kaiyuan et al., vol. 1, 615-617.

row.⁷⁸ In contrast, Zheng Jing's exile on an overseas island represented a much less pressing issue that did not immediately threaten the stability of the empire, especially after his assurances that he had no intention to harass the Mainland coastline again.

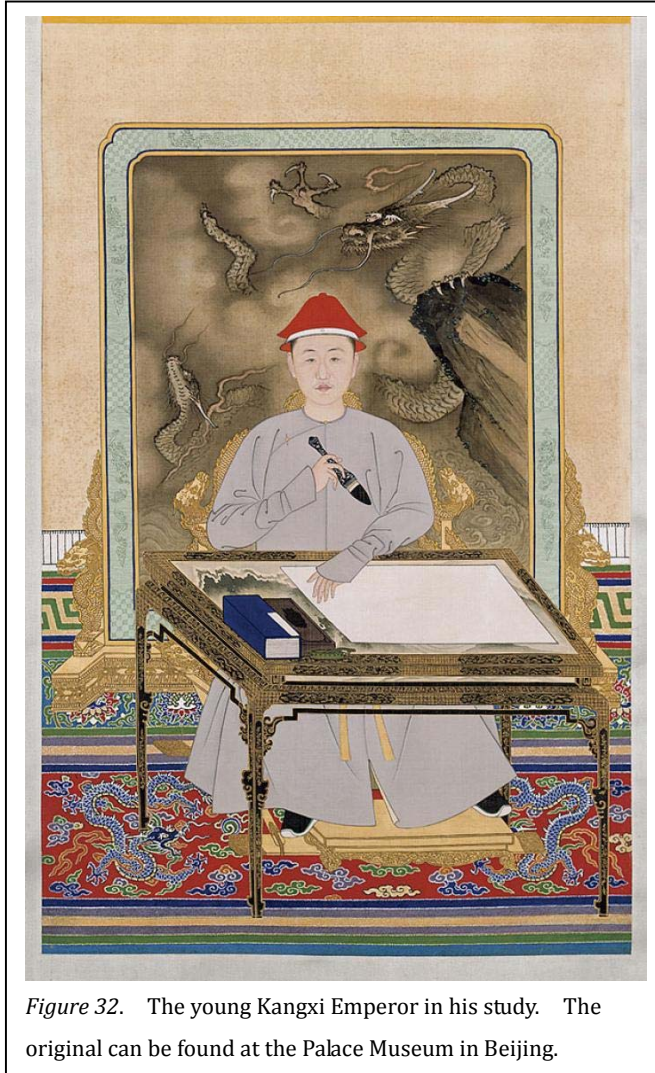


Figure 32. The young Kangxi Emperor in his study. The original can be found at the Palace Museum in Beijing.

In 1669, the emperor restarted the negotiations, dispatching Mingju, Secretary of the Board of Punishments, and Cai Yurong, Assistant Secretary of the Board of War, to Fujian. They arrived at the port of Quanzhou in Kangxi 8.6 (July 1669), and met with Geng Jimao and Zu Zepu for consultation.⁷⁹ The four of them agreed to send Xinghua Prefect Mu Tianyan and Assistant Commander Ji Quan as envoys to Taiwan. Unlike the defectors before them, these imperial officials were some of Shengzu's most trusted allies. Mingju, a Manchu bannerman of the Yehe clan, enjoyed close relations with Suoetu, the emperor's imperial bodyguard, who had helped mastermind the ousting of the Oboi faction.⁸⁰ It was through Mingju's enthusiastic patronage that Cai, a Han bannerman from Liaodong, rose to his present position. The assistant secretary, in turn, knew Zu Zepu on a personal basis, having once served under his father, Zu Dashou, a former Ming commander who had surrendered to the Manchus in 1641

with his men and entire family.⁸¹ Mu, a northerner from Shaanxi in the service of Geng and Zu, represented a new generation of bureaucrats, who had acquired his *jinshi* degree during the

⁷⁸ Zhang Kaiyuan et al., vol. 1, 617-624, 608-609, 622-623. The flooding caused tremendous loss of lives and property, and severely threatened the Grand Canal, the key artery for the shipment of imperial grain from prosperous Jiangnan to Beijing.

⁷⁹ Jiang Risheng, 251; Peng, 72; and Xia, 22.

⁸⁰ See Mingju's biography in Zhao Erxun et al., eds., *Qing shigao (A Draft Qing History)*, vol. 33 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998), 9992-9994. For more on Suoetu's role in the overthrow of Oboi, refer to Zhang Kaiyuan et al., vol. 1, 616-617.

⁸¹ For Cai Yurong's biography, see Zhao et al., vol. 32, 9787-9791. For a detailed account of Zu Dashou's surrender to the Manchus, see Wakeman, vol. 1, 180-194 and 221-224. A biography of the entire Zu family can be found in Zhao et al., vol. 31, 9419-9429. Both Cai and Zu should have been familiar with Geng Jimao, another bannerman from Liaodong.

Shunzhi period, and thus owed his entire career to the new dynasty.⁸² Through this personal chain of ties from top to bottom, Shengzu could obtain timely and accurate information on the progress of the talks.

Mu and Ji arrived at Penghu on 6/12 (July 9), where a Zheng fleet escorted them to Taiwan a few weeks later. For the upcoming talks, Zheng Jing chose two of his own trusted officials. Officer of Punishments Ke Ping was the son of Ke Chenshu, a highly esteemed general under Chenggong, while Ye Heng headed the Rites Office and served in the Imperial Academy under Chen Yonghua.⁸³ The two men put the Qing envoys in an official residence until they arranged a date for a personal audience with Jing.⁸⁴

Round Two: An Issue of Hair and Tribute

During their wait, the envoys apparently insinuated in their conversations with Ke and Ye that the Kangxi Emperor would permit Zheng Jing to rule Taiwan in perpetuity as a subordinate vassal.⁸⁵ Zheng heard the rumors, since he noted, in a caption to one of his poems, the coming of “an envoy from the Manchu tribal chieftain with a saying of ‘not setting foot on shore and not changing clothes.’”⁸⁶ Wanting to find out more about the attractive terms, he initiated a series of audiences with Mu Tianyan and Ji Quan, attended by all his civil and military officials, starting on Kangxi 8.7/7 (August 3, 1669). During these sessions, Mu forwarded to him the letters from Mingju and other officials, along with an imperial command that laid out the detailed conditions of submission. Sensing trickery, Jing refused to receive the edict, as that would mean automatic approval of Shengzu’s terms based upon mere hearsay.⁸⁷

In order to understand what the Qing really offered, he opened Mingju’s letter:

“I have once heard that to soothe the people is called benevolence, and to know the times is called wisdom. From antiquity, great men have understood that the Mandate of Heaven has a place of belonging, and believe in the fruitlessness of hurting the people. They do not doubt their decision to entrust their bodies to the Celestial Dynasty. Fortune would fill the black-haired multitudes, and overflow to their descendants. The names [of these great men] would go down honorably in history. For you, sir, to understand the times and changes is a simple matter compared to the earlier sages, being a great man of this generation. Yet, your

⁸² Jiang Risheng, 251.

⁸³ Xia, 44; Jiang Risheng, 238; and Deng, *Zheng Chenggong yu Ming-Zheng Taiwan*, 49.

⁸⁴ Jiang Risheng, 251-252.

⁸⁵ According to Jiang Risheng, Mu allegedly hinted to Ke, “The landscape of Taiwan already does not show a large contrast with the interior [China], and His Excellency has had a heart for some time to submit.” Ke enthusiastically replied, “If it can truly be as what you, old master, have said, then the myriad surnames have great fortune!” See Jiang Risheng, 251-252. It is impossible to verify whether or not these conversations actually took place, or their exact wording. Nevertheless, the general terms and conditions put forth by the Qing and Zheng Jing accords well with the other sources of the period, including imperial edicts and memorials.

⁸⁶ “Yanping er wang yiji,” 129.

⁸⁷ Jiang Risheng, 252. For more on the implications of receiving an imperial command during the course of Zheng Chenggong’s negotiations with the Qing, see Wu Zhenglong, *Zheng Chenggong yu Qing zhengfu jian de tanpan*, 69-70.

name has no contact with the imperial domain, and your ranks and titles do not emanate from the Celestial Dynasty. Instead, you float and submerge overseas. If this was conversed about for a time, does it not cause deep regret among those with understanding? Now, fortunately, the Son of Heaven has felt pain one day, and grieved at the unrecovered injuries of the coastal residents. Among them are those who have left their villages and wells, who have fled and wandered to islands in the sea, some as recently as over ten years ago, and others as distant as over twenty years ago. Many have suffered, and it is uncertain whether they are living or dead. Since these people all live in this world, which of them do not possess the desire to return home gloriously? ...

“Let us not talk about the utmost pain of the Son of Heaven, to whom we should all look up and not fear, but as for your homeland, the children and white-haired elders of Fujian, they are mostly your fellow people. How could you bear to cause their mutual separation for a long time? Our country treats people with sincerity and trust; its virtuous intentions are all trustworthy, and those from near and far all come here. By these, it achieves the glory of unification (*yitong*) without peer in antiquity! Even the most remote and isolated lands still do not fear to come to court with important translators. You, sir, are prominent among humans, yet you, on the other hand, put yourself outside of the imperial benevolence. How does this harm the court? However, we just feel regret on your behalf! You should truly turn around and return, and let the remote corners of the ocean become a land of joy, and the wandering masses go back to their hometowns. If you, sir, can return to the Central Plain from overseas, will it not be a tremendously happy matter for thousands of ages, an opportunity that cannot be achieved again? Our Emperor has tried all he can to show you his sincerity, and he has provided an imperial edict. After reading it, you should look up to the most benevolent and loving heart of the Son of Heaven...”⁸⁸

As Mingju’s letter shows, despite the sweet talk of Mu and Ji, he essentially repeated Kong Yuanzhang’s basic stance: accept Qing ranks, quit Taiwan, and return to Fujian. This time, however, Mingju turned Zheng Jing’s Confucian morality on its head to launch a subtle counterattack against him. Since the Manchus, he insisted, already possessed the Mandate of Heaven due to superior moral values, any decision to submit represented an understanding of the times, and, therefore, an ethical course of action. Instead, Zheng Jing’s continued disobedience to this inevitable trend would only bring endless suffering to the coastal residents and tear their families apart, a claim that conveniently excused the Qing for its own brutal evacuation policy. Mingju further exploited the homesickness within Zheng’s ranks, reminding him of his soldiers’ desire to return and reunite with their loved ones and fellow villagers. The secretary implored him to trust in the emperor’s sincerity, while subtly threatening that if he did not, the troops on

⁸⁸ Jiang Risheng, 252-253.

Taiwan, moved by the benevolence of the Qing court, would do so for him.

Predictably, Zheng flatly rejected this offer. Unable to modify the conditions on their own, Mu and Ji could do nothing but ceaselessly, and fruitlessly, persuade him to reconsider. The two sides even came to the point of trading insults, with Zheng insinuating that he could still fight if necessary, while the Qing envoys threatened that “we do not lack battleships or soldiers” if he continued to refuse their demands.⁸⁹ After two weeks of stalemate, they finally requested him to dispatch Ke and Ye to Quanzhou to meet their superiors, who would have greater latitude in determining his requests. Zheng agreed, and sent his envoys, accompanied by Mu and Ji, to the Fujian coast by junk via Penghu. The arrival of Ke and Ye at Quanzhou brings us back to the scene at the beginning of this study, when crowds of curious commoners flocked to gawk at the Ming-style hair and dress of the visitors. The stark contrast in fashion laid bare the tremendous underlying gulf between the Zheng organization and the Qing in terms of their institutions and worldview. These fundamental differences led to further troubles for the two envoys before their scheduled meeting with the Qing central officials.

Ke and Ye had carried with them a letter from Zheng Jing to Mingju that laid out his own conditions for the submission of the organization:

“I have heard that the form of a unicorn or phoenix cannot be surrounded by fences or cages. The view of heroes cannot be muddled by activities of persuasion. Yet, as the ruler of mortals, one should have the entire universe in mind, and let even the insects and birds share in his bounty. If there are common men and women who could not live securely, a gentleman would feel shame. Ever since the shifting of the boundary, people have been separated and wander around hopelessly in five provinces, and ten thousand *li* have been laid to waste! Therefore, I did not fear to withdraw afar and establish a kingdom at Dongning. Probably, that would allow for us to rest our soldiers and pacify our masses, and coexist without incident. Yet, your dynasty has still not forgotten its sentiments, to the point of letting the coastal residents wander around homeless. My heart truly regrets that!

“You, sir, have received orders to come from far away, and desire to create fortune for the people, to allow those exiled to return to their work, to establish security in the maritime region, and to be virtuous and compassionate. There had also been word spread about ‘not setting foot on shore and not shaving hair’ and others. It was somewhat moving. Yet, I realized that I had never understood [your terms] in detail, so I had no choice but to instruct that the [imperial] command be welcomed. Matters must be set in advance before I could regret them, and words must be set in advance before I can step over them. A true man trusts with his heart, expresses utmost sincerity, and does things matter-of-factly. Why should he alter what he has already said? ... I respectfully uphold the precedents of my

⁸⁹ Ibid., 253.

forefathers to protect their great foundation. I must not abandon their work in order to covet the profits of a moment. I only feel pity in my chest for the suffering of the mortals. If your dynasty truly cherishes the people in its mind, it is not hard for me to put down my heart and submit, to follow the ritual of ‘serving the great (K. *sadae* / C. *shida*).’ After we establish friendship, I will necessarily withdraw my patrols and sentries. As the coastal areas are all under your control, [peace] is not that which I provide. If I have missed something, then you, sir, please instruct me. I humbly await your reply.”⁹⁰

Similar to the first round of talks, Zheng Jing attempted to seize the moral high ground by highlighting his concern for the coastal residents, his sincerity for peaceful coexistence, and his filial piety, as opposed to the shiftiness and lack of trust on the part of the Qing. This time, however, he had taken further steps in re-envisioning his polity and its relationship to “China.” He now explicitly floated the idea of an unequal tributary model, with Taiwan as an outer vassal in a universe centered upon the Qing state. He wanted his kingdom to “follow the example of Korea, not shaving the hair and becoming your ministers and paying tribute (*chengchen nagong*).”⁹¹ Zheng now explicitly referred to the term “serving the great (*sadae*),” which the Koreans used to characterize the Joseon Dynasty’s relationship with the Ming for over 200 years and with the Manchus after their second invasion in 1636.

For Zheng, the normalization of trade served as an important but subsidiary concern for him to enter into a tributary relationship, since an institutionalized system of smuggling already yielded handsome profits for his organization. The more important advantage of the system lay in the official recognition of his status as King of Dongning, in exchange for his adoption of the Qing calendar and Shengzu as his suzerain. If Zheng obtained a patent of investiture from an established empire widely recognized as the new center of the East Asian world, he could secure automatic legitimacy at a very low risk by tying his destiny to its wellbeing. As one scholar points out, close tributary relations protected the interests of both ruler and elites in Korea’s Joseon Dynasty, partly explaining why it lasted over five centuries.⁹² Like Korea, Zheng could count upon Qing military assistance in the event of an internal succession crisis or rebellion.⁹³ Moreover, he could enjoy exclusive domestic control, including the right to use Ming institutions and the Yongli reign title, and preserve Han customs free of Qing interference. In this manner, he could calm internal pressure to expel the “barbarians” from the Central Plain, transforming restoration from a concrete goal into an abstract ideal, and continue to be “Chinese” by making himself foreign to “China.”

Yet, Zheng did not entirely relinquish the other model of relations between roughly equal

⁹⁰ Jiang Risheng, 253-254 and Zheng Yiju, 26. Some very minor differences, particularly usage of characters, exist between the two texts. This passage has been translated from Jiang Risheng’s work.

⁹¹ Jiang Risheng, 253.

⁹² Chun Hae-jong, “Sino-Korean Tributary Relations in the Ch’ing Period,” in Fairbank, ed., *The Chinese World Order*, 111.

⁹³ Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, 30-31.

entities. Although he would have to create his own symbols of power from scratch, and assume full risk of failure, it would give him greater freedom to expand his authority over Taiwan without limit, perhaps even beyond his current status as king. Moreover, he would not have to accept a “barbarian” as overlord or express his inferior status through tribute missions. Therefore, despite his request for investiture, he simultaneously made another bid for equality expressed subtly in the wording of his reply to Mingju. Before this letter reached the hands of the Qing ministers, however, Mu Tianyan had spotted his “inappropriate” use of words, and sternly rebuked Zheng’s envoys:

“Inside the letter of His Excellency, there is ‘the form of a unicorn or phoenix cannot be surrounded by fences or cages.’ Yet, of all living beings between Heaven and Earth, only the Son of Great Heaven can be said to be ‘unfettered.’ If His Excellency cannot be surrounded by fences or cages, then this means that Taiwan is still not his sole focus. He also mentioned that ‘the view of heroes cannot be muddled by activities of persuasion (*youshui*).’ This applies to the Warring States period, when Qin and Chu competed for power, not today’s order of great unity (*da yitong*).⁹⁴ The Supreme Emperor specially displayed his grace and dispatched his high ministers to come with his edict, while I, an imperial official of the third rank, received orders to travel across the sea. If you view this as persuasion, then it is equivalent to comparing people who do not belong to the same category. As for ‘after we establish friendship (*tonghao*),’ this sentence is even more misguided. When there are two huge countries whose strength is equivalent, only then could we begin to call it friendship. Friendship would then result from negotiations. Now, our dynasty commands the respect of the Four Seas and myriad lands. The various barbarians all come to pay their respects. Taiwan is but a remote corner overseas. If it wants to resist us on an equal basis, then regardless of wise or foolish, they will all know who is strong and who is weak. What [Zheng] described in his letter amounts to nothing more than armies on paper. What benefit is there to reply to it? ...”⁹⁵

Through his meticulous critique of these sentences, Mu was reminding Ke and Ye that Taiwan simply could not match China in terms of military strength or political clout, nor was it even remotely qualified to form an alternate *tianxia* and enthrone a second Son of Heaven. After all, the “barbarians” everywhere submitted to the Qing, and definitely not to Zheng. His reply, then, amounted to a spirited defense of the entire Qing-centered Chinese world order.

In the face of this rejection, the Zheng envoys had no choice but to back down and apologize

⁹⁴ Qin and Chu were two large states of roughly the same power battling for control over all of China during the Warring States Period (c. 400-221 BCE). The literal translation is “Qin at dawn and Chu at dusk (*zhao Qin mu Chu*).” In making this analogy, the Qing envoy refused to acknowledge Zheng Jing as an equal partner in negotiations, but, rather, a rebel who needed to submit in some manner acceptable to both sides, a subtle yet important difference.

⁹⁵ Jiang Risheng, 254.



Figure 33. The Quanzhou Confucian Shrine, where the fateful negotiations between the Zheng envoys and Qing officials took place.

Photograph by author, 2009

for the inconsiderate wording.⁹⁶ However, their attempt to assert equality with the Qing did not end there. On the scheduled day of the talks, Mu required Ke and Ye to enter through the side gate of the compound of Mingju and Cai, and sit perpendicular to them, in the manner of prospective vassals paying homage to the Son of Heaven, whose will these representatives embodied.⁹⁷ The Zheng envoys refused to comply, and instead requested treatment as foreign guests, who could use the main gate and face them directly across the room. “There are lands large and small,” Ke defended his stance, “but envoys are of one body.”⁹⁸ Due to sharp differences over the preferred ceremony, the imperial ministers and Zheng envoys refused to meet for the next few days. In the end, Mu Tianyan managed to break the impasse by relocating the negotiations to the local Confucian shrine. There, Ke and Ye would still enter

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ This ritual applied not just to the Zheng envoys, but to all Qing officials, including, on that day, the Fujian civil and military authorities. The Qing seemed to view Taiwan as a prospective inner feudatory. See Jiang Risheng, 255.

⁹⁸ Jiang Risheng, 255.

through the side doors to greet the imperial envoys.⁹⁹ Mingju and Cai could view this move as an act of subordination toward the emperor, while the Zheng envoys could claim that they were paying their respects to Confucius, something also acceptable to the Qing, since both sides espoused him as a great sage and upheld the Confucian value system.¹⁰⁰

During this round of talks, Ke and Ye quietly let the issue of equality drop, and settled upon Zheng's bottom line of a tributary framework of relations with the Qing:

“The land of Taiwan was opened up by [Jing's] father, Zheng Chenggong, so he cannot easily bear to abandon it. Once we submit, Taiwan will belong to the imperial court, and our bodies, hair, and skin will all be at its disposal. Yet, our submission lies in the sincerity of our hearts, not in shaving our heads and returning to shore. We are willing to pay tribute along the precedents of Korea.”¹⁰¹

The Qing officials agreed to reconsider the envoys' requests, and, after a meeting among themselves, memorialized the emperor. In Kangxi 8.9 (September 1669), Shengzu allowed Zheng to remain on Taiwan in perpetuity. His imperial edict read:

“I believe that Zheng Jing had lived for a long time on islands in the sea, and was blocked from the sound of civilization. Now, because our officials went there to summon and soothe him, he has actually sent his envoys to accompany them. It is highly praiseworthy that he desires to submit. If Zheng Jing cherishes and loves Taiwan and cannot bear to abandon it, we can concede to his desires... We can allow him to live there according to his wishes.”¹⁰²

However, the emperor refused to give the island tributary status along the lines of Korea, meaning that Zheng Jing must shave his hair and change his clothes:

“Korea has always been a foreign country (*waiguo*), but Zheng Jing is a man of the Middle Kingdom (*Zhongguo zhi ren*).¹⁰³ Since he will reside on Taiwan, on what basis could we discern his sincerity in submitting if he does not shave his hair? ... If he follows [Qing] institutions and shaves his hair, I will not hesitate to award him high ranks and honors.”¹⁰⁴

Since Shengzu considered Zheng Jing a direct subject of the emperor, he could not adopt the

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ This interpretation comes from Deng Kongzhao, with which I wholly agree. See Deng, *Zheng Chenggong yu Ming-Zheng Taiwan*, 119.

¹⁰¹ *Kangxi tongyi Taiwan dang'an*, 85.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ 朝鮮系從來所有之外國，鄭經乃中國之人。

¹⁰⁴ Jiang Risheng, 256.

customs of a foreign country like Korea. As such, he would first have to become an inner feudatory, and make Taiwan an integral part of “China.”

Mingju, Geng, and Zu ordered Mu and Ji to accompany Ke and Ye back to Taiwan with the edict, along with their own letters announcing the concessions.¹⁰⁵ They also contained warnings that such lenient terms would never be offered again, for the Qing, too, had reached its bottom line. As one letter from Geng Jimao put it, “now you have received the rank of feudatory and are allowed to stay in Taiwan. This is already the height of luxury!”¹⁰⁶ “If you sit and lose this opportunity,” added Mingju, “the time will never again return!”¹⁰⁷

Indeed, Zheng Jing found the offer highly attractive, and seriously considered shaving his hair and changing his clothing. He even sought out Zhu Shugui, the most prominent of the Ming imperial relatives on the island, and hinted to him this intention:

“Your minister, along with his grandfather and father, have, for three generations, received the munificent grace of this *guo* [Ming], and is unable to repay it at any chance. How can I decide by myself? It is only at Your Highness’s command.”¹⁰⁸

The prince refused with equal subtlety, and threw the ball back into his court,

“The affairs of the country are all in your hands. If matters succeed, then it is due to your wisdom. If they do not succeed, then it is my life. I recall the late emperor’s decision to die for this *guo*, and want to follow his example.”¹⁰⁹

Although Zhu Shugui had been marginalized and enjoyed very little official privilege, he still commanded great respect, and reflected and influenced a significant segment of elite opinion on Taiwan. Even if Zheng Jing overcame his own disinclination to shave his hair, he could not afford to lose his moral high ground, and, along with it, the fragile “glue” of cultural Chineseness that held his movement together.

In the end, Zheng firmly decided against changing his customs: “If [the Qing] can follow the example of Korea, then I shall submit. If it wants us to shave our heads, then I will not change them even to the point of death.”¹¹⁰ In the face of his resolute refusal to alter his hair and dress,

¹⁰⁵ In an alternative account, the Qing authorities held Ke Ping and Ye Heng hostage in Quanzhou, and only summoned Mu and Ji to Taiwan to pressure Zheng Jing into shaving his hair. Highly angered, Zheng abused and imprisoned the envoys, and threatened to launch raids on the Fujian coast if his representatives were not returned. Only then did Mingju finally agree to send back Ke and Ye. See Peng, 72. Peng’s story, just like Jiang Risheng’s here, cannot be independently verified. However, I prefer to utilize the latter, since it appears more consistent with the verbal and written exchanges between the two parties, and the briefer narratives found in other sources.

¹⁰⁶ Jiang Risheng, 256.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Chen Hong and Chen Bangxian, 87.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. Zhu here appears to refer to the Chongzhen Emperor.

¹¹⁰ Jiang Risheng, 256.

Mu Tianyan and Ji Quan saw little choice but to return to Quanzhou, carrying along his reply letters to Geng Jimao and Mingju. However, the central and Fujian authorities saw no purpose in continuing the negotiations, since Zheng's demands remained unchanged and need not be reported to the emperor, who already made clear his bottom line.¹¹¹ Therefore, at the end of 1669, Mingju and Cai headed back to Beijing, marking an unsuccessful conclusion to the second round of talks.

Toward a New Legitimacy

In both rounds of negotiations, the two sides sincerely sought out a mutual settlement due to their inability and unwillingness to continue their protracted conflict. Although it is true that the Qing court initiated the talks each time, once they began, Zheng Jing's behavior contradicted the image attributed to him in traditional scholarship of a passive recipient in no mood to compromise with the enemy under any circumstance. In fact, he actively utilized the process to drive home a deal most favorable for his organization, and encouraged it to continue at key moments by withdrawing his garrisons or sending along tribute gifts. Zheng even considered shaving his head when Shengzu granted his request to stay on Taiwan. On the Qing side, the court showed greater flexibility in the second round, with a unified hierarchy of officials answerable directly to the emperor. The reasons why the talks did not succeed had as much to do with principles as with whether the benefits received were worth the sacrifices in principles needed to realize them.

The most fundamental point of digression between the Qing and the Zheng organization lay in hairdos and fashion. For a Manchu-dominated court, altering customs represented a necessary test of its majority Han Chinese subjects' loyalty to the dynasty. As the Kangxi Emperor admitted, if Zheng did not shave his hair, "on what basis could we discern his sincerity in submitting...?"¹¹² Yet, Zheng feared that if he accepted these conditions, his fate would become completely subject to the whims of an untrustworthy regime. Many previous Ming loyalist leaders, including his grandfather Zhilong, had similarly agreed to surrender and alter their customs, only to encounter tragedy at the hands of their new masters. Jing made clear his mistrust in his final reply to Geng Jimao:

"None can compare to your dynasty's tolerance and benevolence? Let me not inquire about those far away. From what I have recently seen and heard, for example, Fang Guoan and Sun Kewang, are these not men who showed utmost sincerity to your dynasty? Where are they all now? The examples of past affairs are sufficient for me to shiver in my heart!"¹¹³

¹¹¹ Jiang Risheng, 256-257 and Zheng Yiju, 26. Zheng claims that Ke Ping and Ye Heng accompanied Mu Tianyan back to Quanzhou once again, along with Zheng Jing's reply letters. However, this fact cannot be independently verified.

¹¹² Jiang Risheng, 256-257.

¹¹³ Jiang Risheng, 257; Zheng Yiju, 26; and Xia, 31. In the latter two works, this final reply to Geng Jimao actually appears

Since Taiwan lay safely outside the Qing military's reach, however, and since Shengzu had promised Zheng the autonomy he sought, such suspicions could still be overcome.

A far deeper issue involved differing shades of identity as manifested in the hairstyles and fashion. Certainly, both sides agreed upon Taiwan's "foreign" status vis-à-vis the *guo*, and marginal position within the *tianxia*, a point made clear in their exchanges. Mingju and Mu emphasized that Zheng "lived alone in a remote wilderness," or "escaped to a remote place."¹¹⁴ In his replies to Kong, Geng, and the central officials, Zheng spoke of the island as "outside of the domain," or "a remote corner far away overseas, with nothing at all to do with the domain."¹¹⁵ Yet, beneath this consensus lay a wide gulf between them in defining "Chinese" identity without a physical "China."

The Qing authorities could care less about Taiwan, a mere "ball of mud overseas," but they could not regard Zheng Jing and his regime as equally "foreign."¹¹⁶ Unlike the Koreans, he and his elites came mostly from Fujian and Guangdong, spoke their regional tongues, and practiced the same customs. The Qing, then, saw them as untransformed internal rebels, so close to its version of "civilized" values, and yet refusing to take the crucial final step of shaving the hair and changing fashion. As Geng Jimao implored to Zheng, "you already received titles and call yourself a minister. How can you have different institutions, and wear different clothes?"¹¹⁷ If Zheng agreed to alter his customs, the officials were prepared to offer significant concessions, including opening up trade and granting him Taiwan as a hereditary fiefdom.

His continued refusal, on the other hand, represented a threat to the legitimacy of the Manchu ruling class. This challenge became explicitly visible when the residents of Quanzhou flocked to view the "majestic presence of Han officials" in the scene at the beginning of this study.¹¹⁸ Their nostalgic sentiments were actually widely shared among elites and commoners throughout the empire. When the Korean envoy Hong Myeongha (1607-1667) traveled to Beijing in 1664, he noted that many Han residents, upon seeing his Ming-style outfit and long hair, would "wear long sighs on their faces. They acted as if wanting to speak, but did not say anything."¹¹⁹ Such expressions of regret and envy were still potent even 20 years after the Manchus entered the capital. More than Koreans, the prospect of other "Chinese" refusing to alter their customs could cause discontent among Qing subjects, who might question why they

under the negotiations between Zheng Jing and the Qing in 1662, before his complete withdrawal to Taiwan. However, judging from the content, especially references to the island as Dongning, I believe that these works must have chronologically misplaced the letter. The official name for the island changed after Zheng abandoned his Mainland bases, while he touched upon topics that could only be brought up within the context of the negotiations of 1669. Therefore, Jiang Risheng's placement of this letter appears more credible. Fang Guoan (d. 1646), a key minister of the Regent Lu, surrendered to the Qing in 1646, and helped its forces occupy Zhejiang. After he had fulfilled their purpose, the Manchu executed him and his son. See Peng, 12.

¹¹⁴ Jiang Risheng, 256, 255.

¹¹⁵ *Kangxi tongyi Taiwan dang'an*, 69-70; Jiang Risheng, 256, 257; Zheng Yiju, 26; and Xia, 31.

¹¹⁶ Teng, 3 and Deng, *Zheng Chenggong yu Ming-Zheng Taiwan*, 122.

¹¹⁷ Jiang Risheng, 255.

¹¹⁸ Xia, 37.

¹¹⁹ Quoted in Ge, 4.



Figure 34. Elite (left) and common (right) forms of hairstyle and dress during the Ming.
 Detail from Nishikawa Joken, *Teisei shijūnikoku jinbutsu zuzetsu* (Revised and Annotated Pictorial Descriptions of People from 42 Countries) (*Kotenseki sōgō dētabēsu* [Database of Ancient Classics], Waseda University Library)
<http://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/index.html>, n.p.

did not enjoy the same privilege.¹²⁰

For Zheng Jing, his personal memories of “China” remained powerful, the wounds from its loss never completely healing. In some of his poems, he would lament the “mountains and rivers of my homeland,” which “have all changed colors, and the palaces of the old capital turned into ashes.”¹²¹ Elsewhere, he swore to “prepare his weapons daily” as long as “my grand plans [to retake China] have not been achieved.”¹²² Zhu Shuangyi points to such stanzas to argue that Zheng never wavered in his commitment to Ming restoration, and plotted to counterattack the Mainland throughout his years in Taiwan.¹²³ However, a closer reading of his poetry, juxtaposed to his actual policies, reveal them more as emotional outlets for expressing longing, bitterness, and nostalgia due to the hopelessness of recovery. These militant verses usually depicted a fictional struggle between Chinese legions and “barbarian” hordes rather than

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ “Zheng Jing,” in *Quan Tai shi*, ed. Shi Yilin et al., 130.

¹²² “Yanping er wang yiji,” 129.

¹²³ Zhu Shuangyi, 69.



Figure 35. The alteration of hairstyle and fashion after the Manchu occupation.

Detail from Nishikawa Joken, *Teisei shijūnikoku jinbutsu zusetsu*, n.p.

mentioning the Manchus directly. Moreover, he often expressed resignation to his predicament within the same poems, referring to the Ming as “a former dynasty from times past” and Beijing as the “old capital (*jiujing*).”¹²⁴ In the last line of one verse, after fantasizing about raising an army of brave warriors to expel the invaders, he admits, ironically, “I look up to behold the imperial carriage [of his ruler], but year after year, I still cannot see it.”¹²⁵

More frequent in Zheng’s poems are his references to clothing, and its naturalization to Taiwan. He noted, for instance, that “the imperial spirit is finished in the Central Plain, but gowns and caps survive overseas.”¹²⁶ He also spoke of “gowns and caps in the maritime kingdom,” where “various affairs are managed by separate departments.”¹²⁷ He brought up fashion again in a celebration of Taiwan’s sinicized landscape:

¹²⁴ “Zheng Jing,” 130, 166.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 74-1. Besides the ones already cited, see, for example, *Ibid.*, 100, 110, 122, and 166.

¹²⁶ “Yanping er wang yiji,” 129.

¹²⁷ “Zheng Jing,” 130.

“The Pacified Capital has been established in the east of the great ocean.¹²⁸ Thousands of mountains and hundreds of valleys stretch far across the sky. Fragrant forests twist and turn toward outside the blue clouds, while water long flows within the green creeks. The people and houses on both shores welcome the dawn, and fishing boats throughout the river sail with morning winds. I have once heard that the ancient sages may find it difficult to say, but the gowns and caps of the Han Country (*Hanguo*) is the same as all antiquity.”¹²⁹

Zheng conjures up similar images and themes in another verse:

“The green sea’s waves flow from west to east. The new city’s lucky spirit pervades the realm. I still entertain strong feelings for my former home, and the old country reappears in my dreams during the middle of the night ... Although the scenery of mountains and rivers here are different, the pureness of the wind and glory of the moon are the same for tens of thousands of *li*.”¹³⁰

Zheng Jing’s poems reveal that Taiwan had become the primary focus of his rule, an independent space where both hair and clothing could flourish safe from Qing mutilation.

Their preservation represented a defense of Han ethnic identity and institutions, of an entire way of life that was, in turn, bolstered in terms of filial piety and loyalty. Zheng Jing must protect the body handed down from his forefathers, just as he had to carry on the family business, and defend and develop Taiwan. Moreover, being the island’s ruler, he had to show benevolence and compassion for his people, to educate them and bring them prosperity. In this manner, the Zheng regime was imagining a dynamic new legitimacy built upon a hierarchy of Confucian relationships and obligations, culminating in loyalty to an ethnicity embodied in hair and clothing. Meanwhile, as the prospect for restoration became increasingly remote, the memory of the Ming and geographic “China” in general became decentered, objectified, and historicized. The marginalization of the Ming princes and their supporters, and policies aimed at sinifying Taiwan, represented the concrete embodiments of this discourse. Negotiations clarified and facilitated this process, and brought out two means of institutionalizing this identity: private loyalty to a deceased Ming ruler within a subordinate Qing vassal state or a “new universe outside the boundaries of the domain,” an independent *tianxia* abroad.¹³¹

The Qing negotiators realized the connection between Confucian morality and Han ethnicity, and tried to gain Zheng’s submission by “rewiring” these networks of relationships. In his letter announcing Shengzu’s concessions, Mingju wrote:

¹²⁸ Literally, “setting the tripods (*dingding*).”

¹²⁹ “Zheng Jing,” 127. In the last line, Zheng probably means that the ancient sages may have never expected an overseas island to become a place of refuge for Han people and their customs.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹³¹ Jiang Risheng, 255.

“As for becoming a minister and paying tribute, since you already respect the institutions of the empire, and settled upon the righteousness of ruler and minister, this is just like relations between father and son. There has never been a father and son with different gowns and caps. How can there be rulers and ministers with different ceremonial clothes? This matter of shaving the hair is what you must follow respectfully with a single will, and must not allow for any worries. Moreover, in staying on Taiwan, now we respectfully received word of the Emperor’s intention to yield to your filial piety, and treat you according to the ceremonial status of a king. Why, sir, do you not follow the distinction between ruler and minister? In this one act, you can fulfill both loyalty and filial piety...”¹³²

The Qing tried to harness Zheng’s desire to inherit his family’s legacy, and extend his filial piety and loyalty to the Kangxi Emperor, as expressed in the shaving of hair.

Zheng Jing responded to Mingju by bringing up the example of past loyalists who went into self-imposed exile because they refused to serve a second lord. He referred to Jizi, a legendary sage and minister of the fallen Shang Dynasty (c. 1756-1050 BCE), who became enfeoffed in Korea by King Wu of the newly established Western Zhou (c. 1050-771 BCE).¹³³ He pointed to Bo Yi and Shu Qi, Shang ministers who hid on a mountain, preferring to eat wild grass and die of starvation than accept Zhou food.¹³⁴ He spoke of Tian Heng, “a mere commoner of Qi,” who refused to serve the Western Han (202 BCE- 8 CE) after the fall of Qin, and supposedly fled with 500 of his followers to an island off the coast of Shandong, where he proclaimed himself king.¹³⁵ Zheng compared himself to Zhang Zhongjian, the famed *Qiuran*, or “Bearded Warrior,” who “retreated from the Central Land” and seized the Fuyu Kingdom in Manchuria, so the Tang Dynasty could enter its golden age.¹³⁶ Like these men before him, Zheng accepted the shift in the Mandate of Heaven, and went overseas to “be neighbors daily” with “mud dwellings and my soldiers” to avoid interfering with the inevitable prosperity of the Qing.¹³⁷ In this manner, he used loyalty in the creation of a “founding legend” for Taiwan.

For Zheng Jing, staying on the island and not changing customs became his regime’s core identity. While the Qing faced a challenge from his assertion of Han values, the successful consolidation of its rule, along with his intention to promote peaceful relations, seen in both his words and actions, put it in the best position to grant his conditions with minimal risk. Yet, even if it felt genuine concern with its own legitimacy, the court stubbornly clung to the demand for Zheng to shave his hair without adding sufficiently attractive incentives to overcome his strong disinclination. On the other hand, the Qing did not possess the coercive power to make

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid., 256. For more on Jizi and his enfeoffment, see Sima Qian, *Xinjiaoben Shiji sanjiazhu (Records of the Grand Historian: New Annotated Edition with Commentaries from Three Schools)* (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1985), 1609-1611.

¹³⁴ Jiang Risheng, 256 and Sima, 2121-2129.

¹³⁵ Jiang Risheng, 257; Zheng Yiju, 23; Xia, 31; and Sima, 2646-2649.

¹³⁶ Jiang Risheng, 257; Zheng Yiju, 23; Xia, 31.

¹³⁷ Jiang Risheng, 257; Zheng Yiju, 23; Xia, 31.

him concede. Even though it held an *absolute* military advantage over Zheng in terms of size, tax revenues, and manpower, it lacked the *relative* ability to match his might on the sea. Instead of mobilizing its superior resources to build a strong navy, the Qing disbanded its fleets out of suspicion for its collaborators, precisely the people with expertise on naval matters.

As a result, Zheng Jing did not have to fear any negative consequences even if negotiations failed. As he told Mingju, “Gowns and caps are what I have myself, and ranks and honors are also what I possess. How can your words of ‘lavish titles and hereditary status’ move the heart of a solitary overseas minister?”¹³⁸ Even if Zheng willingly agreed to sacrifice what he already had, he would still run into significant opposition from his influential elites, who were equally adamant about preserving their hair and fashion. The Qing, too, realized that Zheng Jing “relied upon the danger of the waves and could not be persuaded,” nor did it plan to make any further concessions.¹³⁹ The court finally withdrew its envoys and had completely abandoned the idea of an institutionalized political settlement by the end of 1669.

From Maritime Expansion to Continental Restoration

From 1670 to 1674, the two sides of the strait generally ignored each other, while enjoying relative peace and flourishing, though covert, economic ties.¹⁴⁰ Zheng Jing would utilize this opportunity to finalize his shift away from the Mainland. On the other hand, he involved his organization within both the commerce and political intrigues of the Western Pacific maritime world. As we have seen in the previous chapter, he welcomed merchants from around the region to trade at Taiwan and signed a formal treaty with the EIC in 1670. During that year, he also began to plan for a massive campaign against the Spanish in the Philippines, swayed by eager proponents within his advisory bodies. Two of his division commanders, Yan Wangzhong and Yang Xiang, offered to lead the expedition as a means of “expanding the land (*guang difang*).”¹⁴¹ By enlarging its territory, the organization could acquire a broader base for agricultural and natural resource exploitation, and convert its already tremendous informal influence within a key trading hub of the Western Pacific sea lanes into actual political control.

Even more importantly, the policy of expansion signaled a further step along the gradual maturity of the organization’s ideological foundations, initially conceptualized and refined through the course of the failed negotiations with the Qing. It combined and put into concrete action the discourse of abstract Han ethnic identity and the establishment of a new “China” abroad. With himself and his followers in exile, Zheng Jing no longer had to straddle the awkward divide between continental and maritime, but could now fully cast his lot with the overseas Chinese population and concentrate on his role as the protector of their interests. As English records show, the prime motivation for his planned campaign on Manila arose from his

¹³⁸ Jiang Risheng, 257; Zheng Yiju, 23; Xia, 31.

¹³⁹ Jiang Risheng, 257.

¹⁴⁰ Xia, 37.

¹⁴¹ Jiang Risheng, 259.

anger at “severall wrongs done to the Chinamen there.”¹⁴² Indeed, the Spanish ruled over their colony with an iron grip, and initiated several bloody massacres of the Chinese at Manila throughout the seventeenth century, killing up to tens of thousands in response both to revolts and perceived plots at uprising.¹⁴³ By fulfilling the moral aim of ending Spanish mistreatment, Zheng was rechanneling resistance against the Manchu “barbarians” on the Mainland into a broader struggle against foreign domination and oppression overseas. In this sense, he began to reconstruct and reinterpret Chenggong’s previous relations with the Dutch and invasion of Taiwan not just as a transfer and recentering of the Ming, but also the first step in the creation of a new maritime empire. Continental discourse now had the potential to merge with his maritime orientation to bring his organization outside of “China.”

Zheng Jing and his key officials appeared to have been carefully putting their ideas into action over the next four years, from 1670 until 1674. Most of his purchases of large quantities of firearms and ammunition from the EIC served to further his “designe to make himselfe master of all those islands” of the Philippines.¹⁴⁴ The Spanish would soon learn that Zheng had “harnessed a grand armada to come over to these isles.”¹⁴⁵ Deeply anxious, they even sent a ship to the Dutch governor of Ternate, going as far as to buy powder and ammunition from a bitter enemy to defend the colony against attack.¹⁴⁶ As the English noted, Zheng would have most likely succeeded had he initiated the campaign, “there being soe many Chynees within & without the citty” of Manila, akin to the situation in Dutch Taiwan on the eve of Chenggong’s invasion.¹⁴⁷

However, the outbreak of the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories against the Qing on the Mainland completely changed the geopolitical equation. This internal uprising occurred as a result of the young Kangxi Emperor’s desire to consolidate his power over the empire. Fearing that his vassals would pose a fatal long-term threat to the court with their huge, semi-independent power bases and personal armies, he decided to strip them of their territorial holdings.¹⁴⁸ Accordingly, when an aging Shang Kexi sought permission to retire in April 1673, Shengzu granted his request. At the same time, the emperor prohibited his son, Zhixin, from succeeding to the post and, instead, abolished the Feudatory of Guangdong. In response, the two other satraps sent out feelers to the court by asking for the same “favor” of retiring. When the Kangxi Emperor actually accepted their resignation, Wu Sangui refused to comply and rose up in

¹⁴² Chang Hsiu-jung et al., 68.

¹⁴³ Although the Spanish depended upon the Chinese for the luxuries and essential goods and services that only they could provide, the colonial authorities remained highly suspicious of their actions. For instance, the Spanish killed over 20,000 Chinese in 1603 and again in 1632. See Andrade, “Conclusion,” 7. In late 1662, after the Chinese at Manila rose up in revolt in expectation of Zheng Chenggong’s imminent invasion of the city, the colonial authorities savagely put down the rebellion and carried out another systematic massacre. See Carioti, 50-51.

¹⁴⁴ Chang Hsiu-jung et al., 164.

¹⁴⁵ Borao Mateo et al., vol. 2, 658.

¹⁴⁶ Chang Hsiu-jung et al., 117.

¹⁴⁷ Chang Hsiu-jung et al., 104.

¹⁴⁸ Liu Fengyun, 153-166.

rebellion. In April 1674, Geng Jingzhong, the son of Geng Jimao, who had died in 1671, joined the insurrection, followed by a disgruntled Shang Zhixin two years later.¹⁴⁹ The three feudatories, possessing bountiful land and resources, easily managed to overwhelm government forces and sweep across the southwest, southeast, and northwest. Qing commanders, one after another, cast their lot with the insurgents and swelled their ranks. By early 1676, well over half of the empire lay under rebel control.¹⁵⁰

In Taiwan, the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories resulted in a radical turnaround in political discourse. Until late 1673, Zheng Jing simply had no intention of getting involved in Mainland affairs; “hee will not suffer [his soldiers] to returne to China.”¹⁵¹ Instead, he continued to eagerly anticipate the arrival of “an ambassador from the King of China...expected here for a treaty of peace,” even after negotiations with the Qing court had broken down in 1669.¹⁵² As long as the Mainland remained securely under Qing control, with no realistic hope of returning, his civil and military officials supported, at least grudgingly, his plans to invade the Philippines. However, the contingency of the rebellion reactivated the latent sentiments for restoration among his followers, by making “China” as concrete geographic entity once again tangible and realistic. Around this time, Feng Xifan, a crucial member of Zheng Jing’s advisory body, came out in open opposition to further overseas expansion. Since the Philippines, he argued, already submitted tribute to Taiwan, any military action would “have no moral basis and lose the hearts of men from afar.”¹⁵³ On a more practical level, it would severely harm the prosperity and stable economic development achieved by the organization in Taiwan over the past decade. Feng added that even if the campaign proved successful, Zheng would overextend his forces to occupy a land of very little value in terms of natural resources.¹⁵⁴

The arrival of the envoy Huang Yong, dispatched from Fuzhou by Geng Jingzhong, on Taiwan in early 1674 further increased the attractiveness and urgency of a Mainland campaign.¹⁵⁵ Geng had sent along a message promising to grant Zheng all the coastal Fujianese prefectures that Chenggong had once occupied in exchange for the backing of his navy. Geng wanted Jing to “advance by water,” while he himself “went forward on land. Would these not be sufficient to pacify Jiangnan and Zhejiang?”¹⁵⁶ Pressure and persuasion from both subordinates and the camps of the feudatories would convince Zheng to cut short his designs on the Philippines and redirect all of his mobilized fleets and weapons toward the Mainland coast. His own intense hatred for the Manchus also played a huge role, as evident from his poem, entitled “Singing Joyously upon Hearing of the Recovery of the West,” which celebrated the outbreak of the

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 181-206.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 206-213.

¹⁵¹ Chang Hsiu-jung et al., 68.

¹⁵² Ibid., 64.

¹⁵³ Jiang Risheng, 259.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Xia, 39.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 40.

rebellion:

“Once I heard the news, all the colors seemed to move. I was filled with happiness but also felt surprise in my heart. I want to help sweep clean the camps seething with the stink of mutton, and completely recover Beijing and Nanjing.¹⁵⁷ We can reopen again the path of tributary kingdoms and rebuild the surrendered cities.”¹⁵⁸

In April 1674, Zheng Jing left Chen Yonghua in charge of Taiwan’s affairs, and led the bulk of the organization’s forces to Xiamen and Jinmen, where he formally reestablished his main bases and proudly proclaimed the calendar year of Yongli 28.¹⁵⁹ Feng Xifan, the same individual who had adamantly rejected a move on Manila in the name of preserving Taiwan’s peaceful development, would now spearhead the offensive against the Qing.¹⁶⁰

The events on the Mainland had evidently caught Zheng Jing completely unprepared and necessitated an abrupt turnaround from his previous maritime orientation. In early May, Filipino Governor de León suddenly received a letter from Zheng assuring him of “friendship, saying that the movement and restrictions on people and boats that had been undertaken [on Taiwan] would be against the Tartar with whom he had declared war.”¹⁶¹ As we have seen, however, Zheng’s original mobilization of soldiers and ships could have only targeted the Philippines. In fact, he was once again transforming his discourse to support his complete tilt back toward the Ming restoration movement. Soon after his arrival at Xiamen, he issued an open proclamation to the entire empire in which he called for “upholding together the Great Ming civilization and completely recovering the Han universe.”¹⁶² He also restored the great honor and reverence that he had taken away from Zhu Shugui during the decade on Taiwan, and sent him across the strait to reside on the Mainland.¹⁶³ At the same time, Zheng excused his previous policies by comparing himself to Gou Jian, ruler of the Warring States kingdom of Yue, who kept a low profile for years as he secretly prepared to take revenge upon his enemy, the king of Wu.¹⁶⁴ This final shift in rhetoric would provide the basis for Zheng Jing’s later image as an unwavering Ming loyalist who never ceased his preparations to fight against the Manchus even while in exile, a narrative conveniently appropriated by nationalist discourse.

Collapse and Surrender

From 1675 to 1680, Zheng Jing launched a massive offensive on the Mainland that saw his

¹⁵⁷ The “stink of mutton” (*xingshan*) refers to the foul body odor supposedly emitted by the meat-eating “barbarians.”

¹⁵⁸ “Zheng Jing,” 156.

¹⁵⁹ Jiang Risheng, 263 and Xia, 41.

¹⁶⁰ Ruan 45-46 and Xia, 40.

¹⁶¹ Borao Mateo, 660.

¹⁶² Xia, 39.

¹⁶³ Shen Binghu, *Chonglin yuce (The Jade Volume of Chonglin)*, TWWXHK, 1.1 (2004), 192.

¹⁶⁴ Kawaguchi, 59.

forces occupying most of Fujian and Guangdong. At first, his reappearance provided a major boost to his movement, as many of his former soldiers and commanders, who had already surrendered to the Qing, flocked to join his ranks.¹⁶⁵ Once again, geographic and cultural “Chineseness” became reconciled through the uneasy union of macroregional interests with “empire-wide” priorities, and the marginalization of the overseas trading networks. However, Zheng Jing could not hold onto the territories that he had occupied for long. Although his forces defeated the Manchus in battle after battle, major tactical errors and miscalculations prevented them from winning the war.¹⁶⁶ Moreover, mistrust soon developed between Zheng and Geng, resulting in bitter infighting between the two that, in large part, contributed to the latter’s surrender to the Manchus in 1676 out of desperation and disgust. During this period, Zheng Jing and the Qing continued to hold talks on an almost annual basis. Ironically, the Qing representatives of this period appropriated his former negotiating position, allowing him to preserve his hair and granting him tributary status if he would only leave the Mainland completely. However, the talks failed every time due to the stubborn refusal of him and his main advisors, particularly Feng Xifan, to abandon the captured coastal territories.¹⁶⁷

Zheng’s return to the Mainland would also tremendously harm the organization in economic terms, drawing away much-needed manpower from the military colonies of labor-scarce Taiwan to fight a formidable adversary that commanded the agrarian resources of an entire continent. At the same time, the island had to become the primary supplier of grain and other basic provisions for the soldiers on the other side of strait during the rebellion, since the marginal coastal areas they occupied produced very little.¹⁶⁸ As a result, taxes had become increasingly numerous by the early 1680s, and were being levied upon every single item imaginable on Taiwan, even, for instance, on the number of rooms in houses. Many residents destroyed part of their dwellings to avoid this onerous burden.¹⁶⁹ Zheng’s return to the Mainland coast certainly put him in a better position to access the lucrative markets in the continental interior, but almost constant warfare with the Qing frequently disrupted the supply lines, leading to far greater fluctuation and risk. In fact, the available data hint at a slight decline in the scale of trade from the previous decade.¹⁷⁰ The campaign, then, appeared to be an ill-planned and foolhardy decision to drastically increase his expenditures while decreasing the certainty of his revenues. The decline of income from trade and the land, his two main pillars, forced Zheng Jing to revert to plunder and other forms of extralegal extraction to fund his war effort on the

¹⁶⁵ Xia, 40.

¹⁶⁶ Wong Young-tsu, 162.

¹⁶⁷ For a detailed summary of these negotiations, a total of five rounds, see Zhuang Jinde, “Zheng-Qing heyi shimo,” 28-34 and Chen Jiexian, 110-117.

¹⁶⁸ Ruan, 47.

¹⁶⁹ Xia, 73.

¹⁷⁰ Although we lack specific figures, we can get a sense of this decline by taking the mean of the number of ships sailing to Japan each year. Over the ten-year period from 1674 to 1683, an annual average of 8.8 junks arrived at Nagasaki from Taiwan and the Mainland coast, compared to 10.1 over the previous decade. See Zheng Ruiming, 72.

severely resource-deficient Fujian coast.¹⁷¹

Meanwhile, the Qing gradually turned the tide against the feudatories, forcing Geng Jingzhong and Shang Zhixin to surrender and pushing Wu Sangui's forces further into the southwest. Wu died in 1680 from dysentery, and, a year later, Qing troops entered his headquarters at Kunming, in Yunnan Province, and captured and executed his son and successor.¹⁷² As the flames of rebellion were gradually quelled elsewhere, Shengzu could now turn his entire attention toward the eradication of Zheng Jing. In close coordination with two trusted confidants he had appointed to Fujian, Governor-General Yao Qisheng (1624-1684) and Governor Wu Xingzuo, he adopted a three-pronged strategy that would deliver the final death blow to the organization. In 1679, Shengzu authorized a second evacuation of the coastline, ordering the construction of a huge, continuous wall from Funing to Zhaoan, or the entire length of the province.¹⁷³ The same year, Yao Qisheng established a "Hall for Reform and Return (*Xiulaiguan*)" on the outskirts of Zhangzhou that offered generous ranks and monetary rewards for any Zheng follower who submitted.¹⁷⁴ Already pressed hard by shortages of food and provisions, Zheng commanders and soldiers defected en masse, at a rate of several hundred per day.¹⁷⁵ By 1680, a total of fifteen major commanders, 500 officials, and over 30,000 soldiers had come over to the Qing side.¹⁷⁶

Even more importantly, the Kangxi Emperor reestablished the Fujian naval command, and ordered the construction of fighting vessels and the manufacture of armaments for a fleet to be equipped and sent into action as soon as possible. After two years of frantic building, the Qing could finally boast a formidable navy consisting of 240 junks, fifty supporting boats, and over 50,000 men.¹⁷⁷ The sailors who manned these vessels would primarily come from the ranks of the defected Zheng troops. On March 6 of the same year, this naval force, led by Admiral Wan Zhengse, directly confronted the bulk of the Zheng fleet under the command of Zhu Tianguai at Haitan Island. When the smoke cleared, Wan had undoubtedly carried the day. Keeping up his momentum, he succeeded in routing another rival detachment on March 20 in the waters outside Chongwu.¹⁷⁸ With these two dramatic victories, the Zheng resistance quickly collapsed, as Zheng Jing and his commanders hastily abandoned their remaining Mainland possessions of Haicheng, Xiamen, and Jinmen, and fled back to Taiwan. Crushed and forlorn, Zheng retired to

¹⁷¹ For more on the increasingly desperate measures to secure resources and provisions, see Xia, 60; Ruan, 52; and Zheng Yiju, 32.

¹⁷² Liu Fengyun, 305-308.

¹⁷³ Xia, 59.

¹⁷⁴ Military commanders turning themselves in would be guaranteed an equivalent rank in the Qing bureaucracy. Moreover, the Qing offered them and the common rank-and-file gifts of silver along the following pay scale: "3 taels for long hair, 1.5 for half-long, 0.8 for short." The length of the hair supposedly marked the years of service under the Zheng organization. See Peng, 89-90 and Wills, "Contingent Connections," 195.

¹⁷⁵ Peng 90.

¹⁷⁶ Zhuang Jinde, "Zheng-Qing heyi shimo," 32.

¹⁷⁷ Chen Zaizheng, *Taiwan haijiangshi yanjiu (Historical Research on the Taiwan Maritime Frontier)* (Xiamen: Xiamen daxue chubanshe, 2002), 58-59.

¹⁷⁸ Wong Young-tsu, 165.



Figure 36. Zheng Jing's former mansion and pleasure gardens on the outskirts of Tainan. After the occupation of Taiwan in 1683, the Qing authorities converted the grounds into the Kaiyuan Temple.

Photograph by author, 2006

a mansion on the outskirts of Chengtian, where he reverted to his earlier debauchery, whiling away his days intoxicated with wine and women. He would soon die of these excesses in the early winter of 1681.¹⁷⁹

Taking advantage of a fierce succession struggle in the wake of Zheng's death, the Kangxi Emperor decided to launch an expedition on Taiwan to exterminate the organization once and for all. In 1681, he recalled Shi Lang from retirement in Beijing and reappointed him to his former post as head of the Fujian Navy. Two years later, Shi set sail along with a formidable expeditionary force consisting of 300 ships and 21,000 soldiers.¹⁸⁰ On July 9, 1683, they engaged the Zheng navy under Liu Guoxuan at Penghu, Taiwan's first line of defense. After a week of intense fighting, the Qing navy won a decisive victory, nearly obliterating Liu's 200

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 173.

junks and 20,000 soldiers.¹⁸¹ When news of the fateful battle reached Taiwan, its thirteen-year-old ruler Zheng Keshuang, who had just succeeded his father Jing, lost the will to fight. Together with Liu, Feng Xifan, and other civil and military officials, he surrendered unconditionally to the Qing on September 1, 1683. All of his followers signaled their submission to the new dynasty by returning to the Mainland, shaving their heads, and adopting its style of dress. Zheng Keshuang and Feng Xifan would live out the remainder of their lives in Beijing, where they joined the Eight Banners and received honorary titles. Liu Guoxuan was appointed to the post of Garrison Commander of Tianjin, a position he held until his death.¹⁸² The Zheng resistance, which had lasted for almost 40 years, came to an end. Taiwan became formally incorporated into the Qing Empire, marking the complete redefinition of geographic and cultural “Chineseness” according to Manchu ethnic characteristics.

¹⁸¹ Chen Zaizheng, 86.

¹⁸² Peng, 98.

CONCLUSION

The Zheng organization represented a huge anomaly in both Chinese and East Asian history, but one that grew out of the meeting and interpenetration of prior trends. On the one hand, it inherited the legacy of the bands of armed traders that ravaged the Mainland coastal areas throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. These illicit enterprises arose out of the confluence of the restrictive and unpredictable policies of the Ming court toward foreign trade, the position of China as a lucrative global “sink” for silver, and the expansion of European and Japanese merchants into the Western Pacific. Like these earlier piratical groups, Zheng Chenggong and Jing mixed trade with plunder and ran protection rackets through their system of permits. A patriarchal element also pervaded their mercantile network, with the placement of family members, friends, and other close connections as agents in positions of great responsibility. The system of subsidiary merchants and economic slaves, or “adopted sons,” became a standard labor arrangement for the operation of their purchasing firms and aboard commercial junks. On the other hand, Zheng Chenggong and Zheng Jing injected the institutions of empire and its Confucian value system into the operation of their trading enterprise. They essentially established a bureaucratic hierarchy to monopolize and oversee all economic activities within their sphere of influence, and utilized the censorate system to ensure its smooth operation. Their recognition of the Yongli Emperor and Ming institutions allowed them to bolster their personal authority over their followers.

The organization also drew upon influences from its trading partners and commercial rivals. As seen, Zheng Chenggong turned toward Japanese models in organizing his military divisions and enforcing a rigid discipline over his troops that, theoretically, spared not even his closest relatives. Despite the intense competition and mutual antagonism, one suspects that both father and son looked to the institutional forms of the Dutch East India Company for inspiration in the management of their own organization. Their use of armed convoys and fleets, protection of the rights and privileges of Chinese subjects abroad, and policy of maritime expansion exhibited a remarkable understanding of the value of control over the seas, and bore striking similarities to the activities of the VOC. An interesting question to ponder is how much of these activities arose through the gradual, accumulated knowledge of maintaining a trade network and what proportion involved conscious imitation. We will need further evidence to discover whether the Zhengs ever took a page from Hugo Grotius’ book—a possibility Chen Guodong adamantly rejects—or heard of his ideas in any other manner or form.¹

Although the Zheng organization drew upon precedents from native Chinese sources, both maritime and continental, and referred to other contemporary models of governance and economic regulation, the sum of these individual parts would add up to a radically different whole. This totality provided a strong, hierarchical structure and discipline to what was once a

¹ Chen Guodong, 428.

rather loose and scattered coalition of pirate bands. The Zheng organization rapidly developed and matured into an autonomous “state” that controlled access to the Chinese market in an institutionalized, bureaucratic manner and promoted trade by ensuring the safety of the sea lanes with its powerful naval fleets. It also became the source of authority and appeal for overseas Chinese communities across the Western Pacific, even more than the foreign governments they were supposed to serve. At the same time, the organization provided a broader political and ideological focus beyond the “practical” concern of profit margins. It appealed to Ming loyalist civil and military elites with its commitment to an eventual restoration of the dynasty and campaigns against the Qing. Residents of the Southeast Coast macroregion, the vast but silent majority of its followers, saw its actions as a defense of their native place and way of life against potential disruption and desecration at the hands of “barbarian” invaders. The Zheng “state,” then, was simultaneously imperial, regional, and expansive in scope.

Here, we cannot discount the central role played by the multiculturalism of Zheng Chenggong and Zheng Jing, whose classical Confucian education and time spent in close proximity with the maritime trading lanes allowed them to act as interpreters between continent and ocean. By manipulating and justifying the discourse of one spatial setting in terms of the other, they served as the crucial intermediaries that bridged the divide between inland China and the rest of East and Southeast Asia. They also helped knit together the Western Pacific world into an integrated marketing and cultural zone. Their individual qualities, along with their close ties to official merchants stationed throughout the region, provided the nominally hierarchical “state” with a remarkable degree of flexibility and efficiency. The strange mix of rationalized bureaucracy and informal connections, autocracy and patriarchal/familial authority, became especially suited to fully exploit the organization’s naturally endowed advantages. These included its privileged access to the vast but forbidden China market, shared cultural affinities with Japan—the most important source of imported foreign silver—and large concentrations of overseas Chinese across East and Southeast Asia.

The flexibility and discipline of the organization provided it with a cost-efficient but powerful conduit for expansion. Its network of agents in the Mountain Five Firms controlled the access and distribution of highly coveted Chinese luxury products, and doubled as spies who readily provided information on political developments and troop movements in the interior. As a result, Zheng Chenggong and Jing could flexibly shift or adapt their policies toward the Qing and the Ming loyalist court, playing off one movement against the other to obtain the maximum benefit for the organization. Likewise, they could utilize their monopoly to wield tremendous economic leverage in foreign markets, where they often transformed it into greater political capital and extraterritorial privileges. Through interdependencies with key overseas Chinese community leaders, especially in places where Chinese constituted a majority of the population, they gradually eroded competing forms of authority through ties of co-allegiance and paved the way for their own domination. This was precisely what happened in Taiwan and the

Philippines before the planned Zheng invasions.

The organization's approach differed dramatically from the VOC, which, as an outsider to an already mature set of commercial and cultural ties, relied upon its large, sturdy ships and powerful weaponry to force its way into the network and artificially enhance its own profit margins. The use of violence in the intra-Asian sea lanes, as Pomeranz has shown, transformed the investments of the company's shareholders back home in Europe from a "short-term and speculative activity" into "new forms for amassing *patient* capital."² Of course, Zheng Chenggong and Jing, too, would field large numbers of troops in massive and bloody campaigns to acquire their aims, such as the penetration into Jiangnan, the invasion of Taiwan, and the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories. However, these large-scale military encounters mostly did little to enhance their maritime enterprise and frequently ended in disaster for the organization. In fact, their most successful operation, the expedition on Taiwan in 1661, represented the final push resulting from the steady assertion of their prerogatives and interests on the island at the expense of Dutch authority over the previous decade.

The differing institutions and structures of the two competing organizations certainly reflected their unique sets of advantages and challenges. Yet, in terms of the intra-Asian trading network, the configuration of the Zheng organization undoubtedly placed it in a more favorable position to capture its benefits. Although the Dutch established a presence over a larger geographic expanse, with factories and colonies stretching from Persia and the Coromandel Coast to the Spice Islands and Japan, the quantity and value of goods traded and overall profitability lagged far behind that of the Zhengs. Chenggong even outperformed the VOC in its area of greatest comparative advantage, violence, by seizing its colony of Taiwan and forcing the most formidable and well-armed military of the early modern world to sign a humiliating treaty of surrender. The success of the Zheng model calls into question the superiority and universal applicability of the European joint-stock corporation as a necessary harbinger of economic "modernity." The Zheng organization, we have seen, lacked any meaningful separation between public and private, official and nonofficial, and management and capital. It relied upon an interlocking system of debt obligations among free merchants rather than formal contractual employment. Moreover, it had unlimited liability, wholly dependent upon the fortunes of the Zheng family, which had the final say over all business decisions.

Nevertheless, the organization was well-adapted to a sophisticated and highly integrated market that covered the Western Pacific and Indian Oceans. Hamashita Takeshi has shown that China and India formed the twin cores of this regional network, with Southeast Asia serving as a conduit for the flow of goods and specie between them. An official system of trade based on the presentation of tribute to China, alternated or coexisted with the activities of numerous small-scale private merchants, becoming the main vehicles for the conduct of business in the

² Pomeranz, 178.

intra-Asian sea lanes.³ The European powers would muscle their way into this existing network at the end of the sixteenth century, and knit it together with the Atlantic World to form a loosely interconnected global order centered upon the provision of silver to the “sink” of China.⁴ Hamashita convincingly challenges the notion that the Europeans somehow introduced “advanced” business practices to “backward” and “traditional” Asian economies through their participation.⁵ Instead, as Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giráldez argue, the Portuguese, Spanish and the East India Companies merely functioned as successive middlemen, important, “but potentially disposable,” and had to face fierce competition in their profession with Japanese *shuin* vessels and overseas Chinese traders.⁶

Despite their groundbreaking revision of the role of European enterprises in intra-Asian commerce, Hamashita and other scholars continue to implicitly portray the Chinese as an invisible and loosely scattered group of merchants without any clear affiliation. This depiction may be true for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when they enjoyed little protection from an indifferent or even hostile Qing court, and became subject completely to the whims of foreign colonial rulers.⁷ However, during the seventeenth century, the Chinese were unquestionably the biggest and most important intermediaries of the Western Pacific, thanks to the leadership of Zheng Zhilong and his son and grandson. These men brought together both the monopolistic tributary and private junk traditions of trade under the auspices of a powerful “state.” Besides engaging in business on its own account, this entity provided unified direction and coordination for the activities of Chinese merchants throughout the region. The spectacular rise and success of the Zheng organization provides further evidence for the formation and development of a distinct, East Asian modernity during the seventeenth century. Although generated through the internal dynamic of the regional trading lanes, it also resulted from negotiations with forces outside the system. Still, East Asians, not Europeans, served as the main actors in moving forward this process.

However, the manner in which the Zheng organization came into being would pose a severe, and, as it turned out, ultimately fatal challenge to its existence. Indeed, it arose as a centrifugal movement in the waning years of the Ming, and grew to sizable proportions in opposition to the centralizing tendencies of the new Manchu Qing Dynasty. From the very beginning, then, the Zhengs had to struggle for their autonomous space within a political economy that stressed conformity and allegiance to only one Son of Heaven as ruler of the entire *tianxia*. The VOC, on the other hand, held a distinct advantage in this respect, as it received the active financial and ideological support of the Dutch Republic, and became an integral part of the young nation’s

³ Hamashita Takeshi, *Kindai Chūgoku no kokusai teki keiki (Modern China’s Global Opportunity)* (Tokyo: Tōkyō daigaku shuppankai, 1990), 3.

⁴ Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, “Born with a ‘Silver Spoon,’” *Journal of World History* 6.2 (1995): 205-206.

⁵ Hamashita, 6 and Flynn and Giráldez, 205.

⁶ Flynn and Giráldez, 206.

⁷ Pomeranz, 173.

identity and efforts at consolidation. As R. Bin Wong has shown, fierce competition in Europe among states of roughly similar size; in this case, the protracted struggle of the United Provinces against Spanish rule; stimulated the formation of rival monopolies that caused the bitter internecine warfare to spill overseas into the scramble for markets and colonies.⁸ On the other hand, both the Ming and Qing courts, concerned more with the stability of an agrarian empire, viewed such autonomous corporate entities as a source of disorder and threat to their rule.⁹ Seen in this light, the final defeat and extermination of the Zheng organization perhaps represented the inevitable outcome of a continental imperial order that marginalized foreign trade and treated those who engaged in it with suspicion and hostility.

While this view makes perfect sense in hindsight, it reads the results into a process fraught with contingencies, and masks over the agency and multiplicity of options available to the Qing and the Zhengs. Although they engaged in fierce armed conflict for almost four decades, the two sides nonetheless subscribed to the same Confucian morality and worldview to bolster their legitimacy. For the Zheng organization, its dependence upon this continental value system represented a double-edged sword. Although its leaders could utilize and manipulate certain tenets to flexibly choose and alternate among several courses of action, Confucian morality, in turn, acted as a check that constrained the scope of their options.

Throughout its existence, the Zheng organization remained nominally committed to a restoration of the Ming. Indeed, this political stance served as a cohesive legitimating force that unified a diverse and complex society of merchants, military men, fishermen, peasants, and loyalist elites into a powerful “state.” Yet, at the same time, Zheng Chenggong and Jing faced great pressure to leave the confines of the autonomous entity they had forged and use their armies to expel the Manchu “barbarians” from “China.” As the Qing consolidated and entrenched its rule, restoration appeared to be an increasingly unrealistic and suicidal option. Both Chenggong’s invasion of Jiangnan and his son’s participation in the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories would have adverse effects on the organization’s long-term survival. Moreover, these campaigns laid bare the competing interests and inner tensions of a movement that was simultaneously “empire-wide” and “macroregional” in scope. Nevertheless, one cannot exclude the presence of contingent factors at play, especially during the Jiangnan campaign. In large part, Chenggong’s stubborn refusal to make Chongming his subsidiary base aggravated the regional tensions within his organization and prevented him from taking a more decisive course of action.

The Zheng organization’s dialectical relationship with imperial institutions and moral systems breaks down Fairbank’s conception of a rigid barrier between continental and maritime China. According to him, the seafaring frontier zone, characterized by “greater physical mobility” and an environment that “rewarded even small-scale enterprise and initiative,”

⁸⁸ R. Bin Wong, 130-131.

⁹ Pomeranz, 203-204.

remained peripheral to the grand narrative of a land-based, bureaucratic empire.¹⁰ Lacking the motivation to build a strong naval force to extend its power into the sea, an admittedly steep investment, the imperial court essentially neglected the maritime region and left it into the hands of private traders and pirates. The main features of continental China, on the other hand, included “the agricultural peasant village, the lineage structure, the thin ruling stratum, the classical literature, the official speech...and the Confucian hierarchy of social statuses.” Together, they kept China unified despite tremendous regional diversity, and successfully subsumed the minor traditions, “decentralized both among the villages and on the frontiers,” into a dominant narrative.¹¹ Yet, as we have seen, the Zheng organization managed to articulate and clarify their activities of maritime trade in terms of continental symbols of legitimacy and morality. Moreover, it even established an autonomous state with a centralized bureaucratic government ruling over millions, both along the southeastern Chinese coast and overseas. Its example reveals a far higher degree of agency among members of these “minor traditions” in negotiating and contesting the overarching imperial-centered narratives.

Fairbank’s dichotomy further comes under challenge when we examine the talks held between the Zheng organization and the Qing court on at least seventeen documented occasions over a four-decade period. Although they ultimately failed to reach a compromise, the point of contention between them at no point involved the overseas commercial network of Zheng Chenggong and Jing. In fact, as long as father and son agreed to submit to the Qing, it planned to grant them the exclusive right to participate in foreign trade and collect duties from private merchants. Chenggong may have had plenty of reason to suspect the sincerity of these overtures, but the court continued to offer Jing the same lenient terms even after his relocation to Taiwan, far away from the reach or concern of the Qing. In fact, it allowed him to keep the island in perpetuity as a hereditary kingdom. This observation complicates Fairbank’s notion that Manchu domination of the Mainland represented “the peripheral culture of Inner Asian tribal nomadism and semi-nomadism reinforcing the anti-seafaring tradition of the Chinese heartland.” While the Qing “gave little or no encouragement to seafaring enterprise,” it possessed enough flexibility to leave open the option of a mutually beneficial settlement with maritime networks, rather than rigidly stifling them under its bureaucratic rule.¹²

Both Zheng Chenggong and Zheng Jing expressed their willingness, in correspondences with Qing officials, to become subjects of the new dynasty, in effect abandoning the Ming cause, but they adamantly refused to shave their long hair and shed their flowing robes in favor of Manchu riding jackets. Instead, they demanded to preserve these and other symbols of Han identity within the form of a tributary kingdom along the lines of Korea or Liuqiu. For the Qing, however, their “Chineseness” remained so close to its own modified and more ethnically

¹⁰ John King Fairbank, “Maritime and Continental in China’s History,” in *The Cambridge History of China*, ed. Fairbank and Denis Crispin Twitchett, vol. 12.1: Republican China, 1912-1949 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 12.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, 18.

inclusive version that they posed a severe threat to its legitimacy as a minority ruling class governing over hundreds of millions of Han Chinese subjects. Hence, it adamantly demanded that both father and son adopt the Manchu coiffure. Certainly, as Fairbank has argued, Chinese mercantile groups like the Zheng organization played a significant role in promoting alternative avenues of trade outside the rigid confines of the tributary system to satisfy the voracious appetite of other countries for Chinese luxury goods.¹³ Yet, symbolic rituals remained an important component of legitimation for many participants in the East Asian world order, at least during the seventeenth century. The ranks and titles from the Qing court, along with a strong military alliance, were in part responsible for the longevity and stability of Korea's Joseon Dynasty and Liuqiu. Zheng Chenggong and his son, likewise, eagerly sought the same kinds of advantages that these kingdoms already enjoyed.

After their withdrawal in 1662 to Taiwan, an island considered completely outside the boundaries of the Qing and "China," their desire to seek an institutionalized peace settlement became part of a larger effort to extract Chineseness as a set of abstract moral and cultural values from its concrete, physical settings. Although the negotiations broke down in 1669, Zheng Jing would continue to utilize Confucian loyalty and filial piety in the creation of a new ethnic Han community abroad. This "China" outside of "China" aimed to seize the moral high ground from the Qing through selective adherence to Chenggong's legacies of overseas trade and the preservation of hairstyle and fashion, rather than Ming loyalist resistance. Zheng Jing would also nourish the people and ensure their livelihood and prosperity in the manner of a benevolent Confucian ruler. At the same time, the trope of resistance against the Manchus became transformed into a generic defense of Chinese against oppressive foreign "barbarians" everywhere, as exemplified by his plans to invade the Spanish Philippines. By the early 1670s, the continental value system had started to merge with Zheng Jing's mercantile orientation to forge the foundations for a new maritime entity, either maintaining the Ming framework or creating an alternate imperial *tianxia* overseas. However, the contingency of the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories in 1674 would actualize the geographic "China" once again and, through the intense pressure of the civil and military officials on Taiwan, bring about a disastrous and fatal turnaround of the organization back to the Mainland.

We now turn toward a study of the legacy of the Zheng organization, and examine several points of significance in Chinese, East Asian, and global historiography. For one, the Qing's four-decades-long experience with both father and son, ranging from coastal removal and negotiations to the construction of a navy from scratch to eliminate them, would provide it with valuable precedents to face the challenges of the nineteenth century. Many scholars have successfully contested Fairbank's image of a self-content imperial court "lulled into a false sense of security" as the center of the East Asian world, and completely unaware of events beyond the

¹³ Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, 33.

seas, particularly the imminent encroachment of Britain and other European powers.¹⁴ Instead, as Peter Perdue argues, the Qing preoccupation with the warfare and political intrigues of Inner Asia during the eighteenth century resulted in a set of responses to the West that had worked with the Mongols and other steppe peoples, but would prove ineffective toward the new maritime challengers.¹⁵ James Polachek has established the presence of a sizable faction within the central government that strongly supported drastic reforms and the enforcement of treaty obligations with European powers in the wake of the Opium War with Great Britain.¹⁶

Yet, I would suggest that the Qing court and local officials knew even more about the nature of the maritime challenge through a direct point of reference to a prior adversary: the Zheng organization. In his famous *Shengwu ji (Imperial Military Chronicle)*, written in 1842, shortly after the Opium War, the philologist and scholar Wei Yuan (1794-1856) made an explicit comparison between Zheng Chenggong and Zheng Jing and the European threat from the seas. He saw the “two Zhengs” as “anomalies of the Middle Kingdom.”¹⁷ He went on to elaborate further upon this point:

“As for their demands for Zhangzhou and Quanzhou, and requests for Haicheng, how do they differ from the Western barbarians’ calls to open up treaty ports? As for their encroachment on Taizhou and Wenzhou, and their invasion of Nanjing, how do they differ from the Western barbarians’ incursions into the interior?”¹⁸

One has to wonder whether Qing diplomacy and reforms after the Opium War carried any trace of its previous policies toward the Zheng organization, and, if so, about the success rate of relying upon those precedents. The answers, in turn, would determine just how prepared was the Qing for handling the second wave of European expansion.

Another issue to ponder involves the constructed and shifting nature of identity, especially in response to a foreign environment. Indeed, as Fairbank aptly observes, overseas Chinese made sense of their surroundings and interpreted them “out of Chinese elements, old or new, available within themselves if not actually in the local scene.”¹⁹ Oftentimes, then, the stimuli and collision involved in living abroad only served to heighten one’s Chineseness. Yet, identity also functioned as an instrument to facilitate the acquisition of practical advantages or privileges. Lin Man-houng shows that overseas Chinese of the early twentieth century took on multiple nationalities as a means of seeking out economic opportunity and reducing commercial risk.²⁰

¹⁴ Ibid., 38.

¹⁵ Peter C. Perdue, *China Marches West* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 564.

¹⁶ James M. Polachek, *The Inner Opium War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 1992), 15-16.

¹⁷ Wei Yuan, “Shengwu jilue” (“Brief Imperial Military Chronicle”), in Ding Yuejian, *Zhi Tai bigao lu (A Record of What Must be Transmitted in Governing Taiwan)*, *TWWXCK*, 17 (1959), 71.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Fairbank, “Maritime and Continental,” 7.

²⁰ See Lin Man-houng, “Overseas Chinese Merchants and Multiple Nationality,” *Modern Asian Studies* 35.4 (2001): 984-1009.

Indeed, private merchants sailing under the Zheng flag cared at least as much about the organization's ability to provide convenient access to foreign markets as its Han ethnic character.

However, what happens when residence abroad combines with shifts in the collective identity of the home country, while the older symbols remain, either in reduced form or relegated to imagination? As we have seen, Zheng Jing took steps toward fashioning a community based upon a Han Chinese identity outside of "China" during his decade on Taiwan. After the family's surrender to the Qing in 1683, many former Zheng commanders and soldiers fled to Southeast Asia, where they settled down permanently, with some even establishing independent Ming loyalist principalities in Indochina and West Borneo. Anthony Reid suspects that these immigrants and their descendants may have contributed to an exclusive ethnic consciousness sustained into the present day, in contrast to previous waves of Chinese settlers, who quickly "assimilated into the Southeast Asian urban trading elite within a generation or two."²¹

After the Kangxi Emperor reopened private maritime trade in 1684, Chinese merchants and immigrants sporting the Manchu-style queue would begin to make their presence felt in the region in large numbers. How they interacted, contested, and negotiated with the earlier arrivals, and how that, in turn, affected relations with local kingdoms and European colonial authorities, is a topic worth pursuing further. In many ways, the rise of a native Taiwanese identity in the 1990s and early 2000s resulted from collective exile and isolation from the Mainland for almost five decades under different political and cultural institutions, and the gradual appropriation of the symbols and discourse for "China" and "Chinese" by the PRC. Frequent contacts with Mainlanders in overseas settings, along with increased business and vacations on the other side of the strait, further articulated the desire on the part of many Taiwanese for a separate space to express their own variant of cultural Chineseness.

Finally, we revisit the question of what exactly was the Zheng organization and how to position it within the larger environment of the seventeenth-century Western Pacific world. As my study has shown, Zheng Chenggong and Zheng Jing did not remain steadfastly loyal to the Ming at all costs, nor did they spend their time on Taiwan actively brandishing their weapons everyday for an inevitable counterattack on the Mainland. They were not crusaders who liberated sovereign Chinese territory by driving out the Dutch imperialists, nor did they wish to achieve political independence and create a new nation-state. At the same time, it would be inaccurate to label them simply as ruthlessly competitive, profit-maximizing entrepreneurs or bloodthirsty opportunists and pirates. These highly charged moral judgments resulted, in one form or another, from the appropriation and reinterpretation of the family's legacy according to a Westphalian system of closed, mercantilist national entities. While this approach may adequately explain the development of early modern Europe, it could not fully capture the complexities unique to the Western Pacific world to which the Zhengs belonged.

²¹ Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*, vol. 2: Expansion and Crisis (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 314-315.



Figure 37. A huge statue of Zheng Chenggong overlooks Xiamen Harbor from the islet of Gulangyu.

Photograph by author, 2006

To move beyond the nationalist-influenced historiography, I take inspiration from the proposal of Hamashita, Giovanni Arrighi, and Mark Selden to view East Asia as an interstate system constituting an organic “world region” based upon interdependency and interaction. Although member entities had relations with other regions outside their own, their shared economic institutions and trading patterns, as well as political and cultural traditions, bounded them together closely into an integrated unit.²² East Asia, then, should be viewed as a historical totality, characterized by primarily internally generated forms of change and development, but nevertheless open to “foreign” input and influence. If we view the Zheng organization according to this model, the picture emerges of a large intermediary enterprise providing an invaluable service that connected the commercial sea lanes of the Western Pacific. At the same time, however, its existing framework of legitimacy for these activities became increasingly untenable during a time of dynastic transition and disorder in China, the world regional core.

²² For more on the East Asian world region, see Giovanni Arrighi, Hamashita Takeshi, and Mark Selden, “Introduction,” in *The Resurgence of East Asia*, ed. Arrighi, Hamashita, and Selden (London: Routledge, 2003), 4-10.

Unable to fit into the new, Qing-centered tributary network, the Zheng organization instead set out, ultimately unsuccessfully, to forge a competing variant of *tianxia*: a maritime-oriented “China.”

In fact, the Ming-Qing transition and the accompanying specter of “barbarian” rule precipitated a similar crisis throughout many parts of the region. The various states around the periphery of China responded in different ways to what appeared a traumatic disintegration of the whole world around them. Korea, for instance, reluctantly accepted Manchu suzerainty and remained a loyal model tributary kingdom until 1895. Yet, it continued to uphold Ming institutions and symbols domestically and conceptualized for itself a role based upon the preservation of “Chinese” hairstyles and flowing robes.

Japan, on the other hand, saw the transition as the “barbarianization” of the “civilized” empire of the Ming, a shift that drastically reduced the estimation of “China” in its eyes. Tokugawa intellectuals came to believe that since Japan never experienced foreign rule, its moral values and homegrown imperial institution must be naturally superior to those of all else. Dazai Shundai (1680-1747) proved influential in transforming the concept of the Middle Kingdom (C. *Zhonghua* / J. *Chūka*) away from its geographic setting of China into an abstract functional value applicable anywhere. As he asserted, “without propriety, even a person from *Chūka* is the same as a barbarian; if one has propriety, then...one is no different from a person from *Chūka*.”²³ Since Japan fully met this standard, he reasoned, it had naturally become the new Middle Kingdom. Ronald Toby shows that the *bakufu* would utilize this justification in forging an alternate, Japanocentric world order, while simultaneously downgrading the Qing to the lowest rung of “barbarian” in its hierarchy of partners. The interdependent and interactive nature of the East Asian world region, then, poses a unique set of historical questions and challenges that a traditional, nation-centered focus would completely obscure.

This model not only remains relevant for an understanding of the greater context of the Zheng organization, but also an East Asia that is increasingly coming together again as an integrated unit at the dawn of the twenty-first century. The case of present-day Taiwan, for instance, fails in every way to conform to the dominant, Westphalian system of international relations. Its government, as the Republic of China, represents an archaic and largely unrecognized legitimacy based upon control of the entire Chinese Mainland. Yet, it has little hope of either recovering the lost territory or transforming Taiwan into a fully-fledged, independent nation-state in its own right due to the risk of a devastating Mainland invasion. On the other hand, the PRC, nearly universally recognized as the sole legitimate representative of “China,” is likewise reluctant to “unite” a supposedly integral part of its territory by force. Besides facing its own, and far larger, domestic problems and lacking a blue-water navy, an intervention from the United States and other powers in the region if it launched an offensive on the island could prove devastating for its economic development and geopolitical standing.

²³ Quoted in Toby, 226.



Figure 38. Xiamen today remains one of the key destinations for Mainland-bound Taiwanese investment.

Photograph by author, 2009.

Indeed, the potential costs of a military conflict could not be higher today. Similar to the time of Zheng Jing, Taiwan depends upon the Mainland market to produce goods for export abroad, and for the consumption of a growing number of affluent consumers. The Mainland economy has also benefited tremendously from the jobs and opportunities created by Taiwanese investment. A study of the Zheng organization's dilemma between trade and legitimacy, maritime and continent, as situated in an East Asian world region can help us better understand the current impasse over identity and political status despite economic interdependency. Perhaps this approach would also allow us to propose more creative and adaptable solutions to this and other conflicts and challenges faced by East Asia today.

Character List

- Anfusi* – 安撫司
Anhai – 安海
Anhui – 安徽
Anping – 安平
Anqing – 安慶
Aoyama Nobuyuki – 青山延于
Ashikaga – 足利
Badong, Prince of – 巴東王
Bacloan (Mujialiawan) – 目加溜灣
Bak Jiwon – 朴趾源
bakufu – 幕府
Bamin wang – 八閩王
banbi – 半壁
bantu zhi wai – 版圖之外
baosi – 暴死
Baxemboy (Beixianwei) – 北線尾
Beijing – 北京
Beimen – 北門
beiren – 北人
Beixianwei (Baxemboy) – 北線尾
Bendai – 賁岱
benfu (Ponhoe) – 本府
Binge – 斌哥
Binke si – 賓客司
Bingbu – 兵部
Bo Yi – 伯夷
bugyō – 奉行
bu Qing bu Ming – 不清不明
bushidō – 武士道
Byeongja horan – 丙子胡亂
Cai Yurong – 蔡毓榮
Cai Zheng – 蔡政
Cao Yingfeng – 曹應鳳
Cao Yonghe – 曹永和
Cattya (Qieteng) – 茄藤
Chayan si – 察言司
Chan (Zen) – 禪
Changqi wang – 長崎王
Chang Shouning – 常壽寧
Chaozhou – 潮州
Chen Bao – 陳豹
Chen Bisheng – 陳碧笙
Chen Di – 陳第
Chen Jiahong – 陳佳宏
Chen Jiexian – 陳捷先
Chen Jin – 陳錦
Chen Kongli – 陳孔立
Chen Liuyu – 陳六御
Chen Peng – 陳鵬
Chen Shui-bian (Chen Shuibian) – 陳水扁
Chen Zhiping – 陳支平
Chen Yonghua – 陳永華
Chen Yuantu – 陳元圖
Chen Zhaoding – 陳肇鼎
chengchen nagong – 稱臣納貢
Chengtian Prefecture – 承天府
Chikamatsu Monzaemon – 近松門左衛門
Chikan (Saccam) – 赤崁
Chixian Shenzhou – 赤縣神州
chō – 町
Chongzhen – 崇禎
Chongwu – 崇武
Chou hongrou – 臭紅肉
Chūka – 中華
Chunqiu – 春秋
Congzheng shilu – 從征實錄
Dai Jie – 戴捷
daimyō – 大名
Dalu xing – 大陸性
Daping Mountain – 大坪山
Dasu – 達素
da yitong – 大一統

dan – 擔
Danshui – 淡水
Danyang – 丹陽
Dazai Shundai – 太宰春台
Deng Kongzhao – 鄧孔昭
di (Di) – 狄
dingding – 定鼎
Dong Ban-she – 董班舍
Dongbenniao – 東本鳥
Dongdu Mingjing – 東都明京
Dongdu zhu – 東都主
Dongfan – 東番
Dong, Madame – 董氏
Dongbi lou ji – 東壁樓集
Dongnan jishi – 東南紀事
Dongning – 東寧
Dong Shen – 董申
Dongshi – 東石
Dongyang chuan – 東洋船
Dorcko (Duoluoguo) – 哆囉囉
Dorgon (Duoergun) – 多爾袞
doukou – 豆蔻
Du Hui – 杜輝
Edo – 江戸
Ehara Uji – 江原氏
Eisen Tōzaemon – 穎川藤左衛門
Erlin – 二林
fan – 番
fan – 藩
fan Qing fu Ming – 反清復明
fang – 坊
Fang Guoan – 方國安
fangxin tifa – 放心剃髮
Fang Xingye – 房星擘
Fang Yuanmao – 方元茂
fei shu bantu zhi zhong – 非屬版圖之中
fei Zhongguo bantu – 非中國版圖
fen – 分

Feng Chengshi – 馮澄世
fengshui – 風水
Feng Xifan – 馮錫範
fu – 府
Fujian – 福建
Fujian zhaofu zongbing – 福建招撫總兵
Fujian zongbing – 福建總兵
Fukumatsu – 福松
Funing – 福寧
Fu Tai – 復台
Fuyu – 扶餘
Fuzhou – 福州
Gan Hui – 甘輝
Gao Gongqian – 高拱乾
geng – 更
Geng Jimao – 耿繼茂
Geng Jingzhong – 耿精忠
Gonghang – 公行
Gong Xianzong – 龔顯宗
Goryeo – 高麗
Gotō Ikkan – 五島一官
Gou Jian – 勾踐
Gu Chaojian – 辜朝薦
guchen – 孤臣
Gulangyu – 鼓浪嶼
Guazhou – 瓜洲
guan – 官
Guan Shangxian – 關尚賢
guanshang – 官商
guantian – 官田
Guan Zhong – 管仲
guang difang – 廣地方
Guangdong – 廣東
Guangxi – 廣西
Guizhou – 貴州
guo – 國
Guo Huaiyi – 郭懷一
Guo Ping – 郭平

Guoxingpu – 國姓埔
Guoxingye (Koxinga) – 國姓爺
gyorin – 交鄰
Haicheng – 海澄
Haicheng gong – 海澄公
haikou – 海寇
Hainan – 海南
Haitan – 海壇
Hai wushang – 海五商
Han – 漢
Hanguo – 漢國
hang – 行
Hangzhou – 杭州
Hayashi Nihē – 林仁兵衛
Hayashi Shunsai – 林春齋
Hayashi Akira – 林輝
He Lingxiu – 何齡修
Henan – 河南
He Shiming – 賀世明
He Tingbin – 何廷斌
heyi – 和議
He Yi – 何義
Hirado – 平戶
Hirado Ikkan – 平戶一官
Hoeryong – 會寧
Hong Chengchou – 洪承疇
Hong Lei – 洪磊
hongmaoyi – 紅毛夷
Hong Myeongha – 洪命夏
Hong Taiji (Huang Taiji) – 皇太極
Hongwu – 洪武
Hong Xu – 洪旭
hōon – 報恩
Hou Guanlang – 侯觀郎
hu – 胡
Hubei – 湖北
Huli Yanping wang yin – 護理延平王印
Hunan – 湖南

hushi tonghao – 互市通好
Huzhou – 湖州
hua – 華
huawai – 化外
Huang An – 黃安
Huangbo (Ōbaku) – 黃檗
huangdao – 荒島
huangfu – 荒服
huangchao – 皇朝
Huang Ming – 皇明
Huang Sheng – 黃昇
Huang Ting – 黃廷
Huang Wu – 黃梧
Huang Yi – 黃翼
Huang Yong – 黃鏞
Huang Zhao – 黃昭
Huang Zongxi – 黃宗羲
Huizhou – 惠州
Ietsuna, Tokugawa – 德川家綱
Ingelingh (Yongning) – 永寧
Ingen (Yinyuan) – 隱元
Injo – 仁祖
Ishihara Michihiro – 石原道博
Iwao Seiichi – 岩生成一
Jeju Island – 濟州島
Jeongmyo horan – 丁卯胡亂
ji – 忌
Jidu – 濟度
Jilin – 吉林
Jilong – 基隆
Ji Quan – 季佺
Jizi – 箕子
jia – 挾
jia – 甲
Jiading – 嘉定
Jiadong – 佳冬
Jianan Plain – 嘉南平原
Jiayi – 嘉義

Jiangnan – 江南
Jiang Meiao – 江美鼈
Jiang Renjie – 江人傑
Jiang Risheng – 江日昇
Jiang Sheng – 江勝
Jiang Shusheng – 江樹生
Jiangsu – 江蘇
Jiangxi – 江西
Jiangyin – 江陰
jin – 斤
Jin – 晉
Jin, Later – 後金
Jinhua – 金華
Jinmen – 金門
Jinshan Temple – 金山寺
Jin she – 錦舍
jinshi – 進士
jinzhong baoguo – 盡忠報國
Jindezhen – 景德鎮
Jingkou – 京口
Jinghai jiangjun – 靖海將軍
Jiulong River – 九龍江
Jiujiang – 九江
jiujing – 舊京
Jiuzhou – 九州
jōruri – 淨瑠璃
Joseon – 朝鮮
Junggang – 中江
Ka'i hentai – 華夷變態
kaiguo lijia – 開國立家
kaikin – 海禁
Kaiyuan Temple – 開元寺
kan – 貫
Kanazawa – 金澤
kangō (kanhe) – 堪和
kanhe (kangō) – 堪和
Kangxi – 康熙
Kaohsiung (Gaoxiong) – 高雄

Kawauchi – 川內
Ke Cai – 柯彩
Ke Chenshu – 柯宸樞
Ke Ping – 柯平
koban – 小判
Kokusenya kassen – 國姓爺合戰
Kong Yuanzhang – 孔元章
Kong Youde – 孔有德
Koxinga (*Guoxingye*) – 國姓爺
Kyōto – 京都
Lang Tingzuo – 郎廷佐
leshu – 樂輸
letu – 樂土
Lee Teng-hui (Li Denghui) – 李登輝
li – 里
li – 禮
Libu – 禮部
Li Dan – 李旦
Li Dingguo – 李定國
Li dushi – 禮督事
Li Feng – 李鳳¹
Li Guangdi – 李光地
Li Maochun – 李茂春
Limin ku – 利民庫
Li Muxia – 李慕霞
Li Shuaitai – 李率泰
Li Zhifang – 李之芳
Li Zicheng – 李自成
Liang Huafeng – 梁化鳳
Lianghuai – 兩淮
Liangtou pai – 梁頭牌
Liaodong – 遼東
Liaoning – 遼寧
Liaoluo Bay – 料羅灣
Lin – 林

¹ The same characters for both a Ming loyalist exile residing in Nagasaki and a commander who was interested in surrendering to Kong Yuanzhang in 1667.

Lin Gongxun – 林功勳
Lin Huanguan – 林環官
Lin Liushi – 林六使
Lin Qian – 林乾
Lin Qiquan – 林其泉
Lin Xingke – 林行可
Lin Yi – 林義
Lin Ying – 林英
Lin Yinguan – 林寅官
lingpi qiankun – 另辟乾坤
Liubu – 六部
Liu Ergong – 劉爾貢
Liuguan – 六官
Liu Guoxuan – 劉國軒
Liu Jun – 劉俊
Liu Kun – 劉琨
liu tou bu liu fa, liu fa bu liu tou – 留頭不留
髮, 留髮不留頭
Liuqiu (Ryūkyū) – 琉球
Longhai – 龍海
Longiou (Langjiao) – 瑯嶠
Longwu – 隆武
Loto (Luotuo) – 羅託
lu – 虜
Lu, Regent – 魯監國
Lu'ermen – 鹿耳門
Lu Ruoteng – 盧若滕
Luxi, Prince of – 盧溪王
Lu Zhenfei – 路振飛
Luo Zimu – 羅子木
Ma Degong – 馬得功
Ma Fengzhi – 馬逢知
Ma Jinbao – 馬進寶
Ma Xin – 馬信
Ma Xing – 馬星
man – 蠻
Mao Wenlong – 毛文龍
Matsuura Takanobu – 松浦隆信

Matthauw (Madou) – 麻豆
Min'anzen – 閩安鎮
Mindong – 閩東
Minnan – 閩南
Min River – 閩江
minzu yingxiong – 民族英雄
Ming – 明
Mingju (Mingzhu) – 明珠
Mito – 水戶
mu – 畝
Mu Tianyan – 穆天顏
Nagasaki – 長崎
Nan'an – 南安
Nan'ao – 南澳
Nanbeilu – 南北路
Narsai – 納爾賽
neifan – 內藩
Nikan – 尼堪
Ningbo – 寧波
Ningguta – 甯古塔
Ningjing, Prince of – 甯靖王
Ningxia – 寧夏
Oboi (Aobai) – 鼈拜
on – 恩
Ōbaku (Huangbo) – 黃檗
Ōsaka – 大阪
Ōta Nampo – 太田南畝
ou – 偶
Pan Gengzhong – 潘庚(賡)鐘
Penghu – 澎湖
Peng Sunyi – 彭孫貽
Pidao – 皮島
Pingdong – 屏東
Ponhoe (*benfu*) – 本府
Putian – 莆田
Qi – 齊
qimin – 棄民
qian – 錢

Qianlong – 乾隆
Qian Qianyi – 錢謙益
Qian Zuanzeng – 錢纘曾
qinwang – 勤王
Qing – 清
Qing ren – 清人
qiu – 酋
Qiu Hui – 邱輝
Qiuran – 虬髯
Qu Dajun – 屈大均
quliang – 取糧
ququ Taiwan – 區區臺灣
Quanzhou – 泉州
ren – 仁
Riguangyan – 日光岩
rong (Rong) – 戎
rōnin – 浪人
rou yuanren – 柔遠人
Ruan Minxi – 阮旻錫
Saccam (Chikan) – 赤崁
sadae (*shida*) – 事大
Sado – 佐渡
sakoku – 鎖國
samurai – 侍
Sanguo yanyi – 三國演義
Sauja (Zuoye) – 祚爺

Seoul – 서울

Sengoku – 戰國
Senrigahama – 千里濱
Shacheng – 沙埕
Shalu tribe – 沙轆番
shan – 杉
shanduo tianshao – 山多田少
Shanhaijing – 山海經
Shan wushang – 山五商
Shanxi – 山西
Shanyin – 山陰

Shaanxi – 陝西
Shangdi miao – 上帝廟
shangguo – 上國
Shanghai – 上海
Shang Kexi – 尚可喜
Shang Zhixin – 尚之信
Shao Tingcai – 邵廷采
Shaoxing – 紹興
she – 舍
Shen Guangwen – 沈光文
Shen Quanqi – 沈佺期
Shen Shangda – 沈上達
shengli – 甥禮
Shengwu ji – 聖武紀
Shengzu, Emperor – 聖祖
shi – 石
Shichizaemon – 七左衛門
shida (*sadae*) – 事大
shifan – 世藩
Shijing – 石井
Shi Lang – 施琅(郎²)
shilu – 實錄
Shi Ming – 史明
shiwei – 侍衛
shizi – 世子
Shizu, Qing – 世祖
Shōkōkan – 彰考館
shuin – 朱印
Shujing – 書經
Shu Qi – 叔齊
Shun – 舜
Shuntian – 順天
Shunzhi – 順治
Sichuan – 四川
Siming – 思明
Sinckan (Xingang) – 新港

² This was the character used before his defection to the Qing.

sitian – 私田
 Sizong, Ming – 明思宗
 Song – 宋
 Songjiang – 松江
 Soulangh (Xiaolong) – 蕭壠
 Sunahai – 蘇納海
 Su Junwei – 蘇軍瑋
 Su Li – 蘇利
 Suzhou – 蘇州
 Suksaha (Sukesaha) – 蘇克薩哈
 Sun Guangsi – 孫光祀
 Sun Kewang – 孫可望
 Sunzi – 孫子
 Suoetu – 索額圖
 Tagawa Matsu – 田川マツ
 Tainan – 台南
taishi – 太師
 Taiwan – 臺灣
Taiwan waiji – 臺灣外記
Taiwan wenxian congkan – 臺灣文獻叢刊
Taiwan wenxian huikan – 台灣文獻匯刊
 Taiwu Mountains, Southern – 南太武山
taixue – 太學
 Taizhou – 台州
 Taizu, Ming – 明太祖
 Tanegashima – 種子島
 tanka (*danjia*) – 蛋家
 Tang – 唐
 Tang Xianyue – 唐顯悅
 Tayouan (Dayuan) – 大員
tidu – 提督
tian – 天
tian – 田
 Tian Heng – 田橫
 Tianjin – 天津
tianxia – 天下
 Tianxing – 天興
tianzi – 天子
tieren – 鐵人
 Tilocen (Zhuluoshan) – 諸羅山
 Tingzhou – 汀州
Tō tsūji kaisho – 唐通事會所
 Tokugawa – 德川
 Tongan – 同安
tonghao – 通好
tongkuan yidi – 通款夷狄
 Tongshan – 銅山
touan – 偷安
toucheng – 投誠
 Toyotomi Hideyoshi – 豐臣秀吉
Tsūkō ichiran – 通航一覽
 Wada Sei – 和田清
waifan – 外藩
waiguo – 外國
wakō (wokou) – 倭寇
 Wan Li – 萬禮
 Wan Lu – 萬祿
 Wannian – 萬年
wanshui chaodong – 萬水朝東
 Wan Yi – 萬義
 Wan Zhengse – 萬正色
 Wang Boliang – 王伯亮
 Wang Fuzhi – 王夫之
 Wang Lairen – 王來任
wangqi – 王氣
 Wang Yunsheng – 汪雲升
 Wang Zhengyao – 王政堯
 Wang Zhongxiao – 王忠孝
 Wankan (Wengang, Wanggang) – 蚊港、魷港
 Wei Geng – 魏耕
wei ru bantu – 未入版圖
 Wei Yuan – 魏源
 Wen Ruilin – 溫睿臨
wenwuguantian – 文武官田
 Wenzhou – 溫州
wenziyu – 文字獄

Weng Tianyou – 翁天佑
wo – 倭
wokou (*wakō*) – 倭寇
Wu – 吳
Wu of Zhou, King – 周武王
Wuchang – 五常
Wu Hao – 吳豪
Wu Sangui – 吳三桂
Wusong – 吳淞
Wu Xingzuo – 吳興祚
Wuyi Mountains – 武夷山
Wu Zhenglong – 吳正龍
Xiyang chuan – 西洋船
xiace – 下策
Xia Lin – 夏琳
Xiamen – 廈門
Xia Yuanyi – 夏元一
xian – 縣
xianwang – 先王
Xianyou – 仙游
Xiao Gongchen – 蕭拱宸
Xiaojing – 孝經
Xiaoshan – 蕭山
xin – 信
Xinzhu – 新竹
Xingbu – 刑部
Xinghua – 興化
xingshan – 腥膻
xiucai – 秀才
Xiulaiguan – 修來館
Xu – 徐
Xu Fuyuan – 徐孚遠
Xuyuan Company – 旭遠號
Xue Jinsi – 薛進思
Yalu River – 鴨綠江
Yamawaki Teijirō – 山脇悌次郎
Yan Siqi – 顏思齊
Yan Zhenquan – 顏振泉

Yanping junwang – 延平郡王
Yanping wang shizi – 延平王世子
Yan Wangzhong – 顏望忠
Yang Chaodong – 楊朝棟
Yang Laijia – 楊來嘉
Yang Xiang – 楊祥
Yang Yandi – 楊彥迪
Yang Ying – 楊英
Yangshan – 陽山
Yangzi River – 揚子江
Yao – 堯
Yao Qisheng – 姚啟聖
Yehe – 葉赫
Ye Heng – 葉亨
yeshi – 野史
Yeolha ilgi – 熱河日記
Yeonghaengnok – 燕行錄
yi – 夷
yi – 義
yiguan – 一官
yihai wei tian – 以海為田
yinan – 義男
yiti – 一體
yitong – 一統
yitiaobian fa – 一條鞭法
yi waiguo zhi li jiandai – 以外國之禮見待
yixing gaihao – 異姓改號
yi zhong zuo xiao – 移忠作孝
yizi – 義子
Yinyuan (Ingen) – 隱元
yingpan – 營盤
Yingtian – 應天
Yongli – 永曆
Yongning (Ingelingh) – 永寧
Yoshimitsu – 義滿
Youji – 游擊
youshui – 遊說
Yu – 禹

Yuguo ku – 裕國庫
yu min xiuxi – 與民休息
yurou – 魚肉
Yu Xin – 余新
Yu Yonghe – 郁永河
Yuzhouguan – 育胄館
yuan – 園
Yue – 越
Yuejiang Pavilion – 閱江樓
Yunnan – 雲南
Yuanshan – 圓山
za – 雜
Zen (Chan) – 禪
Zeng Dinglao – 曾定老
Zeng Ruyun – 曾汝雲
Zeng Sheng – 曾勝
Zeng Ying – 曾櫻
Zha Jizuo – 查繼佐
zhai – 寨
zhang – 丈
Zhanghua – 彰化
Zhang Huangyan – 張煌言
Zhang Mingzhen – 張名振
Zhang Xianzhong – 張獻忠
Zhang Zhongjian – 張仲堅
Zhanghua – 彰化
Zhangzhou – 漳州
Zhaoan – 詔安
zhaofu – 招撫
zhao Qin mu Chu – 朝秦暮楚
zhaotao dajiangjun – 招討大將軍
Zhejiang – 浙江
zhen – 鎮
Zhenjiang – 鎮江
Zheng Cai – 鄭彩
Zheng Chenggong – 鄭成功
zhengong – 爭功
zhengong – 正供

Zheng Hongkui – 鄭鴻達
Zheng Jing – 鄭經
Zheng Lian – 鄭聯
Zheng Miao – 鄭森
Zheng Mingjun – 鄭鳴駿
Zheng Shixi – 鄭世襲
Zheng Tai – 鄭泰
Zheng Xi – 鄭襲
Zheng Zhibao – 鄭芝豹
Zheng Zhifeng – 鄭芝鳳
Zheng Zhihu – 鄭芝虎
Zheng Zhilong – 鄭芝龍
Zheng Zuanxu – 鄭纘緒
zhi – 智
Zhongchen ci – 忠臣祠
Zhongguo – 中國
Zhongguo zhi ren – 中國之人
Zhonghua (Chūka) – 中華
Zhonghua minzu – 中華民族
zhongshu – 中暑
Zhongtu – 中土
Zhongyuan – 中原
zhou – 州
Zhou – 周
Zhouli – 周禮
Zhou Quanbin – 周全斌
Zhoushan – 舟山
Zhu – 朱
Zhu Jing – 祝敬
Zhuluoshan (Tilocen) – 諸羅山
zhusheng – 諸生
Zhu Shuangyi – 朱双一
Zhu Shugui – 朱術桂
Zhu Shunshui – 朱舜水
Zhu Tiangui – 朱天貴
Zhu Yihai – 朱以海
Zhu Youlang – 朱由榔
Zhu Yujian – 朱聿鍵

zhuxiang – 助餉

Zhuang Jinde – 莊金德

zhiqiang – 自強

ziwang – 自王

ziyi canjun – 諮議參軍

Zu Dashou – 祖大壽

Zu Zepu – 祖澤溥

Zuoye (Sauja) – 祚爺

Zuoying – 左營

Zuozhuan – 左傳

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Abbreviations

TWWXCK – *Taiwan wenxian congkan* 臺灣文獻叢刊 (*Taiwan Historical Documentary Collectanea*)

TWWXHK - *Taiwan wenxian huikan* 台灣文獻匯刊 (*Collectanea of Taiwan Historical Documents*)

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