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Zheng Chenggong and
nationalist historiography

Marcel Oomens

Thomas à Kempigweg 25
3532 CA Utrecht

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台湾者，中国之土地也，久为贵国所踞，今余既
来索，则地当归我，珍瑶不急之物，悉听而归

“Formosa has always been Chinese. For long you have ruled, but I'm here now to take it back. Return it to me, take your useless riches, and leave.” (Tái wān zhě, zhōng guó zhī tǔ dì yě, jiǔ wéi guì guó suǒ jù, jīn yú jì lái suǒ, zé dì dāng guī wǒ, zhēn yáo bù jí zhī wù, xī tīng ér guī). Quote attributed to Zheng Chenggong upon his arrival in Taiwan in 1661 (Liu, 2008:11). Translated with the help of 李燕, 王瑾景 and ‘Joy’.

Summary

Zheng Chenggong¹ has variously been described as a pirate, a Ming loyalist and wartime general, and a national hero. Who is this man that's been used by nationalist historiographers in Japan, China, Taiwan and the Netherlands, and what is it about his life that allows for such varied and rich interpretations?

The first part of this essay will provide a 'bare bones' history of Zheng's life, thus answering the first question. It will furthermore suggest a possible answer to the second part of this question. Scholars that have taken a comparative perspective (such as Wang, 2008) stress the patchy nature of our knowledge about Zheng. These gaps in our knowledge have allowed Zheng to be raised to the status of national hero in several Asian nations, often for contradictory reasons. Before turning to the various interpretations of Zheng across East Asia, I will give a quick overview of the literature on nationalist historiography covered in this course. In the second half of this essay some of the interpretations of the history of Zheng are introduced. These interpretations have been taken from different sources: personal accounts (diaries), popular culture, and historiography. I have necessarily had to restrict myself to certain accounts of Zheng to the detriment of others. In my selection of historical interpretations I've been guided by the following question: "has this portrayal of the history of Zheng played a role in nation building?" As we will see, these interpretations have oftentimes been in relation to a nation's claim of sovereignty over Taiwan.

Dutch interpretations of Zheng are few and far between. Near the end of this essay I will nevertheless attempt to trace the development of accounts of Zheng's life in the Netherlands. I will conclude by saying something about what is missed by omitting certain parts of the story of Zheng Chenggong from Dutch accounts of history.

Who was Zheng Chenggong?

Much of what we know about the life of Zheng comes from biased accounts – Chinese, Japanese and colonial sources such as diaries and theatre productions – so that it is difficult to provide an objective account of his life. Few historical accounts remain, in part because the Qing dynasty initially didn't approve of such anti-Manchu historiography. It was only long after his death that the Qing immortalised Zheng in the Confucian pantheon as an exemplary loyalist to the Chinese (Ming) court. We can nonetheless distinguish

¹ From hereon I will just refer to Zheng Chenggong as Zheng. His father, Zheng Zhilong, will always be referred to by his full name. Other names for the protagonist of this story include *Koxinga* or *Coxinga*, *Cocksinga*, *Guo Xingye* and *Kokusenya*.

several stages in Zheng's life that almost all accounts, be they Chinese (Taiwanese), Japanese or European, have in common. Wang (2008: 8) identifies 4 chapters in the life of our pirate, wartime general and national hero.

It is commonly agreed that Zheng Chenggong was born to a Chinese father (Zheng Zhilong) and a Japanese mother (Tagawa Shichizaemon) in Hirado, a village near to present day Nagasaki, in Japan around 1624 (Croizier, 1977: 11). His father was a 'merchant-pirate' who ran a trade empire out of Fujian province in southern China. He maintained considerable autonomy from the Ming court. At the age of seven Zheng was called to his father's household in Amoy (Xiamen) where he was educated in the Confucian tradition. When the invading Manchu army threatened to overthrow the Ming dynasty, Zheng's father came to the aid of the imperial court. It was at this time that the Zheng empire gained royal legitimacy and Zheng was conferred with the imperial surname. After the fall of the Ming dynasty Zheng's father was quick to betray his old patron and fled to Beijing. The second stage of Zheng's life starts when he denounces his father for his betrayal of the Ming. Zheng takes over the family business, gathers his father's armies around him, and takes up arms against the Qing. Zheng has considerable success in opposing the Qing forces along the southern Chinese coast, thanks in large part to the formidable fleet at his command. When he finally opposes the southern Qing court at Nanjing in 1661, he makes some tactical errors and is forced to withdraw.

In the third stage of his life, Zheng gathers strength by moving his trade imperium to Formosa (Taiwan) from where he intends to continue his struggle against the Qing rule on the mainland. In 1661 he confronts the Dutch, who are at this time in control of the island. Frederick Coyett, governor of the Dutch trade concession at Port Zeelandia, near present-day Tainan, is far outnumbered by Zheng's armies. Coyett holds out against Zheng for nine months, waiting in vain for reinforcements from Batavia (Molewijk, 1991: 22-25). In 1662 the Dutch surrender Formosa to Zheng and flee the island. The last stage in the life of our pirate, merchant and loyal hero is a short-lived one. Zheng dies four months after taking possession of Taiwan. His son and grandson continue his reign from Formosa but the heydays of the Zheng trade imperium are already in the past. His grandson is forced to give up the last mainland concessions to the Qing and eventually surrenders to the emperor. In 1683 Taiwan comes under Chinese rule.

This 'bare-bones' account of the history of Zheng leaves plenty of room for manoeuvre on the part of later nationalist historiographers. Wang (2008: 11) raises two important questions about the history of Zheng, which have been variously interpreted in later accounts of

Zheng's life. The first question pertains to the second stage in his life. Is Zheng indeed the Ming loyalist that some claim him to be, or did he merely align himself with the imperial court to defend the autonomy of his trade imperium? The second question concerns his reasons for moving to Taiwan. Did Zheng have the expansion of the Chinese empire in mind when he decided to move to the island, or did he merely safeguard his own interests by moving the centre of his trade imperium away from the mainland? Another highly charged question is that of his birth and his alleged 'Japaneseness'. These questions have allowed later historians enough space to lay claim to the history of Zheng Chenggong for different, nationalist purposes.

On nationalist historiography

Before we turn our attention to the 'nationalist Zheng Chenggong', I need to say something about my interpretation of nationalism and the interpretation and reinterpretation of history for nationalist purposes. I agree with Smith that nationalist ideologies claim to represent pre-existing nations, be they primordialist or 'continuously perennial' nations (Smith, 2000: 2). Yet such identification with a pre-existing nation hardly seems to come natural; instead, "it is the aim of all nationalists to create the conditions for a greater congruence between state, nation and nationalism" (Smith, 2000: 1). In order to create greater congruence the nationalist has several tools at his or her disposal, all of them suggested by modernist or ethno-symbolic theories of nationalism. This essay is therefore firmly rooted in those two interpretations of nationalism, especially in Anderson's theory of 'imagined communities' (2006). In order to lay a primordial or perennial claim to the nation, nationalists have at their disposal such tools as cultural roots (2006: 9), ethnic roots (2006: 141), languages (2006: 67) and history (2006: 155). This last one is particularly relevant to my argument. This isn't to say that modern nation-states are created entirely by such imagined communities. Especially in the case of Japan and China, the present-day nations seem to have been suggested by some pre-existing ethnies, as the ethno-symbolic interpretation of nationalism claims (Smith, 2000: 12). Yet this still doesn't mean that nationalism comes natural in these cases, and nationalists need to continuously reinforce the national identity in order to keep the nation together.

Nationalist historiography, then, is the projection of contemporary nations – its borders, its cultural, ethnic and linguistic identity, et cetera – back into the past. Examples abound in literature. Yahuda (2000) shows how China traces its geographical claims to the oldest Chinese dynasties. Whenever China was ruled by outsiders, such as the Mongol (Yuan) and Manchu (Qing) dynasty, the Chinese claim that extensive sinicisation of the ruling elite

took place in order for this elite to claim legitimacy. In any case, the present regime in China claims to represent five main nationalities, including the Mongols and the Manchu (Yahuda, 2000: 27). Paramore (2009) shows how the Japanese at the time of the Meiji restoration looked for concepts upon which to build a Japanese identity, and found them in the Confucian and anti-Christian ideas of Tokugawa Japan. In the case of post-colonial nations such claims can be more contentious, but Anderson (1999) and Leifer (2000) show how the creation of a new nationalist historiography got underway in Indonesia, following independence from the Dutch, based on a common history of colonialism and oppression. Another country that has to grapple with such complex civic nationalism is Taiwan, where ideology and recent history provide a shared basis for nationalist sentiment (Hughes, 2000). For the case of Vietnam, Salemink (2007) shows how pre-colonial concepts are sometimes used for the creation of a post-colonial, national identity.

Ohnuki-Tierney (2004), in the case of cherry blossom in Japan, and Salemink (2007), in the case of fashion in Vietnam, both highlight the importance of historic symbols of the nation. Another such symbol is the national hero. Joseph Campbell (1949, quoted in Croizier, 1977: 43) has formulated the features of an archetypical national hero dubbed 'the hero with a thousand faces'². Such a hero must be physically presupposing and possess exceptional abilities, virtues, bravery and daring. The hero must be "dedicated to some great enterprise and be indifferent to personal gain" (Croizier, 1977:43). He must suffer and undergo severe trials. The hero must be a 'child of destiny', and die young and in an ironic way, as to show the inevitability of his destiny. The final aspect is that of romantic love. Zheng fulfils most of the requirements of the archetypical hero, even though different nationalisms stress different aspects of his character. Missing in all accounts of Zheng is the romantic love aspect. Croizier (1977: 45) sees this aspect as typical of the European chivalric tradition, and not so much a feature of Asian national heroes, to whom female family members often play a more instrumental role.

Let's turn now to Zheng Chenggong, and find out how he has been constructed as a national symbol and hero, used for nationalist purposes in different nations.

² Thomas Carlyle (1891, quoted in Matten, 2006: 157) provides an even earlier analysis of the relevance of hero-worship and "the Heroic in History".

Zheng Chenggong and nationalism

Japan

Perhaps surprisingly, the first country where the history of Zheng gained some currency in popular culture was Japan. This can be explained by the suppression of historiography and popular support for Zheng under the Qing dynasty in China. However, from the earlier account of Zheng's life it may be clear that his relationship with Japan is perhaps the most tentative of all. The process of 'Japanising' or 'Nipposing' Zheng got underway around 1700 and continued well into the 20th century. Matten (2006) provides a comprehensive account of this Japanising of Zheng. After introducing the Japanised hero I will turn my attention to the utilisation of the history of Zheng for nationalist purposes during Japan's military involvement in East Asia throughout much of the first half of the 20th century, in particular during the Japanese occupation of Taiwan (1895-1945).

The first accounts of Zheng to reach a large audience in Japan were theatre productions and puppet plays. The most important of these is Chikamatsu's 'The battles of Coxinga', which first appeared on stage in 1715 (Wang, 2008: 15). Even though Chinese accounts of the history of Zheng were available in Japan at the time, the playwright Chikamatsu preferred to rely on Japanese sources when he wrote his puppet play. These accounts invariably stress the influence of Zheng's Japanese mother and claim that he married a Japanese woman. Chikamatsu surely had the interest of the audience in mind when he depicted Zheng ('Kokusenya' in Japanese) as a warrior with a Japanese spirit. His mother was considered to be of noble descent – the warrior class – again stressing Zheng's Japanese warrior spirit. In Chikamatsu's play he is furthermore seen to revere the Japanese gods. The heroic deeds of such a Japanese warrior in China found a fertile ground in the Japanese context. At that time Japan looked at China for its literature, philosophy, arts and sciences (Matten, 2006: 170), yet they prided themselves on their brave and sincere 'warrior' disposition. Playwrights of the time cleverly played with this sentiment, creating a syncretic Japanese/Chinese Zheng. Chikamatsu's 1715 dramatisation of our protagonist could be seen continuously in theatres for at least 17 months. The image of Zheng provided by Chikamatsu continued to be influential until the 20th century.

As a result of Japanese involvement in East Asia throughout the first half of the 20th century, interest in the history of Zheng rose again around 1900. Zheng played an instrumental role in the development of a "collective consciousness" (Matten, 2006: 173) between Japanese and Taiwanese during the occupation of the latter from 1895 to 1945.

Zheng had been revered as a folk hero in Buddhist shrines around the island for some centuries. Zheng's alleged 'Japaneseness' allowed him to be raised to the Shinto pantheon. Buddhist shrines on Taiwan could therefore be converted to Shinto places of worship while keeping Zheng-worship in place, effectively creating a syncretism between Japanese and local folk religion. The fact that Zheng had been a Ming loyalist fighting against the Qing court provided further proof of the legitimacy of Japan's claim to Taiwan, as the Qing court still ruled on the mainland in the early 20th century. The Japanese used this claim hesitantly at first, given its innate link to the Chinese (Ming) court, but pan-Asian, anti-Qing arguments eventually took the upper-hand; Zheng was considered more of a loyal subject than a patriotic hero. These arguments are nicely summed up in a quote taken from a book – *Japanese Rule in Formosa* – on the history and geography of Taiwan:

“... The island [Taiwan], which China had torn from Koxinga's descendants by intrigue, bribery, and brute force, passed again into the hands of the Japanese, in whose veins flows the same blood as filled those of Koxinga” (Takekoshi Yosaburô, quoted in Matten, 2006: 179).

In this quote the Japanisation of Zheng, and thus the legitimacy of Japanese rule over Taiwan, is complete; the author unambiguously identifies him as Japanese.

China

Either historiography or dramatisation of Zheng was prohibited for a long time under the Qing. We have nonetheless seen that this didn't prevent folk worship of Zheng in Buddhist temples across Taiwan, and the same can also be said for the area on the mainland where Zheng had his most loyal following, in Fujian and along the southeastern coast. When the Manchu rulers started to lose their grip on China in the second half of the 19th century, the ruling elite searched for new ways to appeal to the public. Zheng was immortalised in the Confucian pantheon for his loyalty to the Ming emperor. His loyalty had demanded the ultimate sacrifice, the betrayal of his father. The message was clear, loyalty to the emperor was the highest virtue, higher even than filial piety.

Yet serious interest in Zheng only arose as the threat of Japan already loomed large around the turn of the 20th century. Republican accounts of Zheng were the first to draft him as a national hero instead of a cultural symbol. They cast him as “a prototype of the national hero fighting alien conquest and domination” (Croizier, 1977: 52). Zheng's struggle against the Manchu, still ruling over China at that time, was meted out large in these accounts, but his anti-imperialism went further than that. It was also aimed at the

western imperial powers, many of which had forced the Qing to accept foreign trade concessions along the Chinese coast. The republicans used Zheng as a character to rally around. For the first time loyalty to the emperor had been replaced by loyalty to the nation. Republican accounts also showed the hardship Zheng suffered when he was forced to choose between his father and the emperor (nation). In earlier (confucian) accounts such questions of loyalty aren't valid questions at all, and in later communist accounts emotional struggle is similarly seen as a weakness in the revolutionary spirit. The Japanese issue didn't play an important role in Republican accounts of Zheng until the 1930s, even though Japan had been in control of Taiwan since 1895. Perhaps Zheng's ambiguous ancestry played a role herein. It was only during the Sino-Japanese wars that the issue of Taiwan, and Zheng's role in this, gained some currency, which may have paved the way for the swift adoption of the history of Zheng by Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang when they fled to the island in 1949.

Zheng's relationship with the communists was more strenuous than with the republicans. Off course the communists needed revolutionary exemplars and Zheng was initially used to that aim. His loyalty (nationalism) and anti-imperialism played important roles in the communist narrative on Zheng, and his struggle against the Qing was depicted as a struggle against dynastic feudalism. Zheng's anti-imperialist attitude further served to cast the courting of the western powers by the Kuomintang, especially the United States, in a negative light. The mainland government could thus claim that the Kuomintang was merely another imperial power in Taiwan, not the legitimate ruler at all. But there were problems with Zheng's image as well. His loyalty to the Ming and his noble background both served as a brake on a swift adoption by the communists. Communist heroes are ideally hard-working proletarians that struggle to cast off feudal oppression. In this regard Zheng didn't qualify at all, and his role as a national hero died a quiet death as the cultural revolution firmed its grip on mainland China.

I didn't find any literature on the role of Zheng in contemporary China, but I have got hold of some accounts from within the country. This is merely anecdotal evidence though, and more research is needed to get a clear idea about present-day images of Zheng. What is clear is that the history of Zheng on Taiwan is part of the syllabus in mainland China. Every child knows about it. Anti-imperialism has become Zheng's greatest driving-force for taking up arms against the Dutch. The Dutch are portrayed as barbarians committing gruesome crimes against the islanders: "*As a child I used to hate the Dutch. We were told they treated the Taiwanese terribly and ate their children.*" This level of arbitrary violence is new

in Asian accounts of Zheng but it's been part-and-parcel of Dutch accounts, as we will shortly see. Another striking factor is the awareness of other narratives on Zheng. Parallels between Zheng and Chiang Kai-shek aren't missed on scholars in communist China either. Yet the focus on the later stages of Zheng career has come at a price for the earlier ones. None of my friends were aware that alternative images of Zheng exist in Japan. They were surprised to hear that Zheng has some Japanese ancestry.

Taiwan (1945 ~)

After the Japanese retreat from Taiwan in 1945, the short-lived independent republic of Taiwan appropriated Zheng as their own. The history of Zheng was used for nationalist purposes and to legitimise a claim for an independent nation. Zheng was revered by way of a national holiday on the date that Zheng landed on the island. Zheng worship at temples continued, but over the course of some years Shinto shrines were converted back to Buddhism (Croizier, 1977: 63). When the Chinese nationalists, the Kuomintang under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek, moved to the island in 1949, they were keen to exploit any symbol of Taiwan's relationship with China, so they also adopted the nationalist interpretation of Zheng for their own purposes. Zheng was used to conciliate with the island population. Of course the parallel between Zheng's retreat to Taiwan and the retreat of the nationalists was an obvious one to the leadership of the Kuomintang. The history of Zheng was thus used to legitimise the Kuomintang's rule over Taiwan.

The nationalists even claimed a direct lineage from Zheng. An alleged secret society, the 'heaven and earth society' (Croizier, 1977: 66), in Fujian province, continued Zheng's struggle after the disintegration of his trade empire. Sun Yatsen, and through him the nationalists, inherited the ideology of the heaven and earth society. Since the nationalist cause of the Kuomintang all started with Zheng's retreat to the island, the original mainland emigres were from the very beginning part of the nationalist revolution. Prove for the existence of such a secret society in Fujian around the turn of the 17th century is very scanty, but through this narrative the Kuomintang has a powerful rhetorical device for drawing the island population into the nationalist cause. The historical parallel between Zheng and the nationalists was further exploited to legitimate certain political actions, such as the necessity of holding on to off-shore island and the coordination of political and military planning. Zheng's intention to continue his anti-Qing struggle from Taiwan slotted in perfectly with the ideology of the Kuomintang to eventually unify Taiwan with the mainland under the nationalist banner.

The interpretations of the history of Zheng in Taiwan and on the mainland differ most markedly on his anti-imperialist intentions at the time of his struggle against the Dutch. Contrary to the communists, the nationalists were never keen to stress the anti-imperialist narrative of Zheng's history on Taiwan. The Kuomintang didn't want to put their good relations with the United States and the western world in the firing line. The Dutch were never portrayed as murderous and barbaric oppressors, as they were in mainland China. The Kuomintang is much more keen to stress Zheng's civil exploits, such as his sinicization of the island, the opening up of the interior, and Zheng's attempts at bringing education to a much larger part of the island population. The nationalists mirror their own achievements to those of Zheng and claim that rule over and development of the island is a direct continuation of Zheng's rule over Taiwan. But the analogy is never carried through too far, as our hero lost to the mainland rulers in the long run.

The Netherlands

“Zijne macht toch nam van jaar tot jaar toe, want iedere Chinees, die zich aan het een of ander vergrepen had, sloot zich bij Coxinga aan (...) Te verwonderen valt het dus niet, dat de Nederlanders telkens in den grootsten angst verkeerden, door dat Opstandelingenhoofd, door ons meestal maar ‘zeerover’ genoemd, aangevallen te worden” (Louwerse, 1894: 5).

We have seen how Zheng has been portrait as a warrior with a Japanese spirit, an anti-imperialist hero in China, and a historical precedent in Taiwan. But what about the European powers, in particular the Netherlands, who lost their Taiwanese trade concessions to the invading Zheng armies? Frederik Coyett, then governor of Dutch Formosa, was held responsible for the loss of Taiwan to the Chinese. Coyett was charged with treason and forced into exile on the Banda island, narrowly escaping capital punishment. Some 15 years later he was pardoned and allowed to return to the Netherlands. His account of the defeat, published after Coyett's return to the Netherlands is the first Dutch popular account of events in 1661 and 1662 (Molewijk, 1991: 27).

Understandably, Coyett's account of his defeat in Dutch Formosa is coloured by his involvement in the events. There's nothing of a Japanese hero or loyal Chinese servant in this 'Dutch' Zheng. Instead he's portrayed as a swashbuckler, a pirate and a ruthless merchant unrelated to any foreign court that can claim sovereignty over Taiwan. This account has stood the test of time, as the above-mentioned quote, taken from a history book published in Leiden in 1894 shows (Louwerse, 1894). In Louwerse's interpretation of

history, Zheng is a mere rebel leader and Chinese corsair. In 1986, knowledge of Zheng's allegiance to the Ming court had still not travelled around the Cape. Dorresteyn (1986) fails to mention this aspects of Zheng. In a 3-minute video clip, part of a television series on the history of the overseas exploits of the Dutch, Zheng is still referred to as the rebel leader from China. The siege of Fort Zeelandia are "nine awful months", with "genuine acts of heroism" of the part of the Dutch (Dorresteyn, 1986 ³).



Figure 1: Jan Willem Piemenam (1810), De zelfopoffering van predikant Hambroeck op Formosa, 1662. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Just like the Chinese would do to the Dutch after 1949, in the Netherlands great acts of barbarism have always been attributed to Zheng and his armies. The most popular story of Dutch heroism and Zheng's barbarism is told about Hambroeck. Hambroeck, a Dutch

³ The 3-minute video clip (Dutch audio) can be seen on my website at <http://marceloomens.com/archives/499>. Transcriptions of the Dutch and English audio are provided in the appendix.

missionary reverent, is captured by Zheng and ordered to provide Coyett with the terms of surrender. Hambroeck returns to Fort Zeelandia only to encourage the Dutch forces to continue their struggle against Zheng. Hambroeck then says goodbye to his two daughters and gives himself up to Zheng, allegedly to save his honour but knowing full well what fate likely awaits him. Nothing is ever heard of Hambroeck again but it's claimed that he was beheaded by the 'barbaric rebel leader'. Pieneman immortalised the emotional parting of Hambroeck with his daughters in a painting (figure 1), which is now in possession of the Rijksmuseum.

An academic debate about the relevance of Dutch rule to the development of Taiwan is still underway. In 1995 Chen translated relevant parts of the Dutch East-India company (VOC) archives into Chinese for the first time, thus providing an invaluable source for Chinese researchers of the history of Taiwan. Chen (1995) provides a much more nuanced, Dutch account of the events surrounding the fall of Fort Zeelandia. The evaluation of this academic debate is the topic of another paper though. My history of the interpretation of Zheng Chenggong – pirate, wartime general and national hero – ends here.

Concluding remarks

Many of the most important readings of the history of Zheng have been introduced – the spirited Japanese warrior, the loyal Chinese anti-imperialist, the Taiwanese folk hero and nationalist, and the rebellious Dutch pirate. I could have introduced still more portrayals of Zheng. Spanish merchants have at times been harangued by Zheng's armies and after taking Taiwan Zheng warned that he considered the Philippines to be in the Chinese sphere of influence as well. He wanted the Spanish out of Manilla. Seeing what had happened to their European counterparts, shivers of fear must have run down the Spanish spine. His death came as a relief to the court in Madrid; popular Spanish culture at the time depicted Zheng as the Asian Attila the Hun. Spanish accounts have seen him die smitten by madness for his heretical attitudes.

What many interpretations have in common is a claim for sovereignty over Taiwan. This is especially pronounced in 20th century Asian accounts of Zheng but Dutch portrayals of the protagonist of this story also make this claim. By robbing Zheng of his allegiance to the Ming, and by portraying him as a piratical rebel leader, the Dutch effectively rob him of the authority to make a claim for sovereignty over Taiwan. Zheng's actions against Dutch rule on Formosa are therefore seen as criminal; he had no right to claim Taiwan. Recent Dutch accounts of Zheng in the popular media have not yet restored the loyalist Zheng to his

place as a nationalist and folk hero in China and Taiwan. This is a pity, as it prevents us from understanding why Chinese history books depict the Dutch as the barbaric invaders of Formosa. It stops us from understanding fully how ideas about each other are shaped by the different interpretations of our common past. Such an argument can doubtlessly be made for Japan, China and Taiwan as well. I will leave that to future academics though. We need further research into contemporary portrayals of the history of Zheng in the history books, the syllabus, and in popular culture of the countries involved. Such research will help to show how our understanding of each other is affected by the different interpretations of this story we share in common, the story of Zheng Chenggong.

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Appendix

Dutch transcription of the video (Dorresteijn, 1986)

[VOICE-OVER]

Het Japanse Hirado had van alles te maken met de Hollandse activiteiten in de Chinese zee. Om te beginnen raakte de Hollandse factorij in Japan in de problemen door de geduchte concurrentiestrijd die Japan en Holland leverden om de handelsgunsten van China. Maar het belangrijkste was dat in Hirado, op het strand, de man geboren werd die in 1662 een einde maakte aan de Nederlandse heerschappij over Taiwan. Zijn vader was Chinees, en z'n moeder Japanse.

Hier op het strand werd zij tijdens het zoeken naar zeeslakken plotseling overvallen door barensweeën. Op een steen, die bij vloed gedeeltelijk onder water staat, heeft zij toen haar zoon gebaard, de beroemde Zheng Chenggong, bij de Hollanders beter bekend als Cocksinga.

Cocksinga voerde een reusachtig rebellenleger aan tijdens de instorting van de Ming dynastie. Toen hij in moeilijkheden kwam liet hij, net als Chiang Kai-shek eeuwen later, z'n oog vallen op Taiwan als veilige wijkplaats voor z'n vloten en legers. Maar op Taiwan zaten de Hollanders, verschanst in het geduchte fort Zeelandia. Een behoorlijk obstakel voor Cocksinga want het kleine garnizoen in Zeelandia heeft negen verschrikkelijke maanden lang kans gezien om een overmacht van 25.000 Chinezen van zich af te houden, terwijl ze alsmaar vergeefs wachtten op versterking vanuit Batavia.

Een onvervalst staaltje van heldenmoed werd geleverd door dominee Hambroeck, die door Cocksinga gevangen was en naar het fort gestuurd werd om de overgave te eisen. In plaats daarvan spoorde hij de gouverneur aan om door te vechten. Z'n eer gebod hem terug te keren naar Cocksinga, een zekere dood tegemoet. Pieneman heeft een ontroerend schilderij gemaakt over het dramatische afscheid dat de dominee van z'n dochters nam.

De dominee werd onthoofd en Cocksinga viel opnieuw aan met z'n duizenden soldaten. Er kwam geen hulp uit Batavia en op 1 februari 1662 moest gouverneur Coyett het hoofd buigen voor Cocksinga, en daarmee was Taiwan voor de Hollanders verloren gegaan, de zoveelste mislukking in het drama van de rode barbaren in de Chinese zee.

English transcription of the video (Dorrestijn, 1986)

[VOICEOVER]

Japanese Hirado was closely linked to the Dutch activities in the South China sea. Firstly, the Dutch trading station in Japan was badly hit by the ruthless competition between Japanese and Dutch merchants for China's favours and good will. But the main link was the fact that, in Hirado, the man was born who in 1662 put an end to the Dutch domination in Taiwan. His father was Chinese, his mother Japanese.

Here on this beach, while she was searching for mussels, she unexpectedly went into labour. On a rock, which is washed over by high tide, she gave birth to her son, the famous Zheng Chenggong. Better known to us as Cocksinga.

Cocksinga was in command of a huge rebel army during the collapse of the Ming dynasty. When he was cornered, he cast his eye, as did Chiang Kai-shek some centuries later, on Taiwan, as a safe refuge for his fleets and armies. But Taiwan already housed the Dutch, entrenched in their formidable fort Zeelandia. Quite a hard nut to crack for Cocksinga, as the small garrison at Zeelandia managed to hold out against heavy odds of 25.000 Chinese for no less than 9 awful months, while constantly cherishing futile hopes of reinforcements from Batavia.

A genuine act of heroism was performed by reverent Hambroeck, who had been captured by Cocksinga and sent back to the fort to demand surrender. Instead, he urged the governor to go on with the fight. His sense of honour – exceeded his common sense – compelled him to return to Cocksinga where he would face certain death. A Dutch artist made a touching painting of the dramatic farewell the reverent bade his daughters.

The reverent was beheaded, and Cocksinga attacked once more with his thousands of soldiers. No help ever came from Batavia and on February the first 1662 governor Coyett was forced to surrender to Cocksinga and with that Taiwan was lost to the Dutch. It was the unteemed failure and the drama of the red barbarians in Chinese waters.