

The World of Koxinga

Raised by his mother in Japan until the age of seven, Zheng Chenggong (bestowed with the name Koxinga or "Lord of the Imperial Surname" by the Ming emperor) was brought to the family ancestral home in Anhai, in southern Fujian, by his father, whose stature in the the Ming dynasty ensured his son's scholarly Confucian education at the Imperial Academy in Nanjing. (Hang, 2015) After invading Manchu forces captured the Ming capital of Beijing and then defeated the last Ming strongholds of Nanjing in 1645 and Fuzhou in 1646, legend holds that Koxinga burned his scholar's robes (Manthorpe, 2008) and fled to Xiamen as well as his family's base in nearby Anhai to lead the Qing resistance with resources financed by his family's maritime trade networks. (Andrade, 2008). After several failed attempts to defeat Manchu forces and sensing that his days in China were numbered, Koxinga eyed the island of Taiwan, possibly as an ideal stronghold from which to relaunch an offensive. In 1661, leading some 400 Chinese junks and 25,000 soldiers, Koxinga defeated the Dutch at Fort Zeelandia on the western coast of Taiwan despite possessing inferior weapons and technology and renamed it Anping Fort in tribute to his hometown of Anhai (formerly called Anping). There are varying historical views as to Koxinga's intentions upon vanquishing the Dutch. Some historians have argued that Koxinga was a Ming loyalist whose ultimate goal was to defeat the Manchu Qing dynasty by unifying Chinese newcomers to Taiwan with the Chinese diaspora present throughout Southeast Asia at that time (Manthorpe, 2008). Other historians contend that Koxinga's foremost agenda was to achieve his independent commercial and political ambitions in Taiwan. (Hang, 2015). Koxinga's untimely death in 1662 at age 39 halted his personal agenda, but albeit short-lived, his leadership did usher in the era sometimes known as the House of Koxinga or Kingdom of Tungning in Taiwan.