

**Document 3.1: Excerpts from “Shi Lang’s Memorial on the Capture of Taiwan,”
1683**

Between 1647 and 1661, Zheng Chenggong, also known as Koxinga, continued to resist Manchu rule in the southern coastal region. At one point, he even tried to capture Nanjing. Zheng retreated to Taiwan, which he had captured from the Dutch, and the Zheng family controlled the island for twenty years. In 1683, Emperor Kangxi sent a huge fleet under the command of Admiral Shi Lang to eliminate this last pocket of resistance.

On the 22nd day, your subject repeated his orders and launched a broad attack with various battle groups.... Your subject led this powerful fleet forward to Niangmagong and then attacked all of the batteries and confronted the various enemy gunboats, “birdboats,” and silk junks which ventured out from all points to attack us. A huge brass, barbarian, cannon weighing three to four thousand catties [1 catty = 1 1/3 lbs.] was mounted on each bandit gunboat; on each side of the prow of their ships, were arrayed some twenty smaller guns and one to two hundred blunderbusses.

Cannon shot and arrows fell like rain; smoke and flame covered the sky. It was impossible to see even a foot beyond the ships....The fighting went on from the early morning until the late afternoon. Our sailors fought without regard for their own lives and used all of their energy to attack and kill the bandits. Eighteen of the bandits’ big gunboats were set aflame and destroyed by our navy’s incendiary buckets and grenades. Eight other heavy gunboats were sunk by cannon fire. Thirty-six large “birdboats,” sixty-seven silk junks, and five refitted foreign ships were also burned and destroyed. Moreover, our navy used the wind to propel incendiary boats into other bandit ships; one “birdboat” and two silk junks were destroyed in this way. The rebellious bandits fought feverishly and when their forces were exhausted [they] packed gunpowder in holds of their own ships and blew themselves up. In this way, they burned nine gunboats and thirteen “birdboats.” Some bandits panicked and jumped into the sea and, in this way, we captured two “birdboats,” eight silk junks, and twenty-five two-masted junks. What was

to be burnt was burnt; those to be killed were killed.... Members of the bandit mob who were burned to death in the fighting, killed in combat, or who blew themselves up or who jumped into the sea and were drowned totaled roughly twelve thousand. Bodies covered the surface of the sea....

The surviving bandits fled north toward Houmen in three small gunboats, two little “birdboats,” eleven silk junks, and fifteen two-masted junks. It was discovered that Liu Guoxuan boarded a small, swift vessel and also ran for Houmen... [Shi Lang next lists the names of 165 surrendered enemy commanders and captains and states that 4,853 sailors followed their leaders into captivity.] Your subject, knowing of your majesty’s love of human life, pardoned the bandit prisoners and permitted them to reform themselves. They have already been ordered to shave their heads. As a manifestation of our dynasty’s dislike of killing and to set an example for others to follow, false commanders and captains of the surrendered forces were presented with robes and honorary caps and the bandit followers were given silver and food.... If there are some among surrendered officers and soldiers who are willing to return to farming, your subject will investigate their original place of registry and contact that prefecture or county in order to have them accepted. The old and the weak will also be discharged. Those who seek to be enlisted in our forces must be supplied with food and wages and I beg for an imperial decree... so that this can be provided. This will enable all who have defected to obtain what they sought and have a place to reside. This will cause the rebels on Taiwan to see the direction of the wind and surrender. After the pacification is completed we will follow this example to deal with our captives....

Source: Shi Lang. “Express Memorial Describing the Great Victory.” *The Search for Modern China: A Documentary Collection*. Pei-kai Cheng, Michael Lestz, and Jonathan D. Spence, eds. New York: W.W. Norton, 1999. 48-51.

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