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PIRATING IN THE SHOGUN’S WATERS: 
THE DUTCH EAST INDIA COMPANY 
AND THE SANTO ANTONIO INCIDENT

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In 1609, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) established its first East Asian trading outpost in Hirado, a small port in Kyushu. The factory, as it is usually referred to, was not an immediate commercial success. Without access to the Chinese goods that the Japanese domestic market demanded and inhibited by a lack of capital, it would be over a decade before the factory turned its first profit. In light of the limited returns produced by the Japan trade, it became clear that the factory’s primary value was as a base from which the Company could launch privateering operations against Portuguese, Spanish and neutral shipping sailing to and from Macao and Manila, the two great Iberian strongholds in the region. Such operations required a basic confidence that the Tokugawa shogunate (bakufu) would look favorably on VOC privateering, and in 1615 an incident involving a Portuguese junk enabled VOC agents in Hirado to test the waters.1

In August 1615, a VOC yacht Jakatra captured a Portuguese junk Santo Antonio off the coast of the Japanese archipelago. The junk represented the first prize captured by the Company in Japanese waters, and it provoked an immediate outcry from the Portuguese and their supporters in Nagasaki. For the Dutch in Hirado, the Santo Antonio was an opportunity to establish a

1 For a concise but valuable summary of Dutch privateering, including the Santo Antonio incident, see Yoko Nagazumi, Hirado Oranda shokan, Igrisu shokan niki: hekigan no mita kinsei no Nihon to sakoku e no michi (Tokyo: Soshiete, 1981). Also see Eiichi Katō, Bakuhansei kokka no keisei to gaikoku eki (Tokyo: Azekura Shobō, 1993). Katō argues that the VOC used Japan primarily as a strategic base between 1609 and 1621. Through a close analysis of the cargo registries of ships leaving Hirado, he shows that the majority of goods shipped from Japan were not acquired by commercial transactions but rather by VOC privateering. In English, Mulder provides some details of VOC privateering, but, as is generally the case with his volume, the references are scattered and difficult to follow. W.Z. Mulder, Hollanders in Hirado, 1597-1641 (Haarlem: Fibula-Van Dishoeck, 1984). Nachod remains a useful but dated resource. Oscar Nachod, Die Beziehungen der Niederlandischen Ostindischen Kompagnie zu Japan im siebzehnten Jahrhundert (Leipzig: R. Friese, 1897). For additional details of VOC privateering, see the author’s Ph.D. dissertation, Mercenaries, Pirates and Trade: Tokugawa Japan and the Dutch East India Company (Columbia University, 2007).
precedent for future acts of maritime violence. If the bakufu approved of – or at least consented to – the capture of the junk, then the VOC could confidently expand its privateering activities around the Japanese archipelago and attack prizes of far greater value, including the great Portuguese cargo ship traveling annually between Macao and Nagasaki. As a result, the Company’s agents moved immediately to defend the seizure with a combination of bribes, gifts and diplomacy. This article reconstructs the chain of events precipitated by the capture of the Santo Antonio, examining how the VOC took its case to the bakufu and why it was able to secure a favorable decision.2

VOC privateering generated a rich body of sources. The Company was from the beginning a highly bureaucratic organization that required comprehensive record keeping. In examining the Santo Antonio incident, this article relies primarily on a series of resolutions (Resolutien) passed by the council of the Hirado factory between 18 August 1615 and 2 March 1616.3 These resolutions provide a detailed account of the meetings held by the council, allowing an insight into the workings of the factory that is not provided by the official correspondence exchanged between Hirado and the Company’s headquarters in Southeast Asia.

1. The Company as privateering organization

A privateer is essentially a legalized pirate, holding a commission that has been issued by a state-level authority. The commission provides legal justification for acts of maritime violence, authorizing the holder to attack hostile or neutral nations and to capture their merchant shipping. Pirates, in contrast, operate independently without the endorsement of a state and entirely for their own profit. Despite these apparently clear distinctions, the line between pirate and privateer is a fine one. Although one state may authorize a privateer, there is no guarantee that another state will recognize the legitimacy of the license. As a result, a legal privateer operating from one state may be, and frequently was, considered a pirate by another state.

From the perspective of the Jakarta’s captain, and indeed of the Company as a whole, the capture of the Santo Antonio was an entirely legal act of state-

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2 The Tokugawa bakufu was founded by Tokugawa Ieyasu in 1603 and remained in power until 1867. In 1605, Ieyasu resigned as shogun, passing the office on to his son Hidetada. This strategy was designed to secure Hidetada’s succession, but Ieyasu continued to play an important role in bakufu administration until his death in 1616. The period from 1605 to 1616 is sometimes called the ‘dual-monarchy period’ by Japanese scholars.

3 Unfortunately only a small number of these valuable sources survive for the earliest years of the VOC factory in Japan. The next extant series covers the period from 5 August 1620 to 9 November 1623. The original resolutions are stored in the National Archives in The Hague (VOC 1061).
sponsored privateering. In its 1602 charter, the VOC received a wide range of powers including a monopoly on Asian trade, gaining the sole right to send its vessels east of the Cape of Good Hope and west through the straits of Magellan. The Company was also empowered to conclude treaties with local rulers, to establish forts and garrisons and to appoint administrative and military personnel, who were required to take an oath of allegiance to the States-General, Prince Maurits and the Company. Despite this long list, the VOC was not initially granted the right to wage offensive maritime war against its rivals in Asia. The wording of its charter specifically restricted the Company to defensive actions. In contrast, the Dutch West India Company, the VOC’s sister company, was chartered in 1621 and authorized to engage in all forms of privateering against enemy shipping. Instead, the VOC’s legal justification for maritime violence was rooted in later incidents.

In February 1603, a Dutch captain Jakob van Heemskerk attacked and seized the Portuguese vessel Santa Catarina in the Straits of Singapore. The capture of this vessel proved a defining moment for the VOC. As the leader of a trading venture, Van Heemskerk held authorization from Prince Maurits to defend his fleet against any party that “might seek to impede their voyage or inflict harm, and to seek reparations for damages suffered,” but he was in no way authorized to launch an attack. Once in possession of his prize, Van Heemskerk successfully argued that the assault on the Santa Catarina was made in revenge for Portuguese aggression directed against Dutch merchants in the East Indies. Hugo Grotius, a young Dutch jurist who would become the primary spokesman of the VOC over the next decade, expanded this argument in an important work entitled De Jure Praedae Commentarius (Commentary on the Law of Prize and Booty).

The capture of the Santa Catarina set in motion a wave of VOC maritime predation, encapsulated by a simple formula that was constantly repeated in Company letters: do as much damage to the enemy as possible (vijand soo veel afbreuk mogelijk doen). In 1614, the Company intensified its campaign, sending out a general commission from the States-General to attack any Portuguese or Spanish shipping encountered in Asian waters. VOC commanders proceeded to carry out these instructions with impressive results. According to one estimate, between one hundred and fifty and two hundred prizes were

4 For the Portuguese and Spanish, VOC privateering was nothing more than illegal piracy.
taken in Asia by the Company in its first two decades of existence.\textsuperscript{7} These prizes in turn generated massive revenues of between ten and twenty million guilders every year.

When the first VOC ships arrived in East Asia, they brought with them an unrivalled capacity for maritime violence befitting what has been called the "world’s largest and best-capitalized privateer enterprise."\textsuperscript{8} The Company discovered that Portuguese and Spanish trade in the region was based on the exploitation of two extremely profitable routes both stemming from Ming China and terminating in Manila and Nagasaki respectively.\textsuperscript{9} The VOC attempted to open direct trading relations with China, but this strategy proved unsuccessful until the establishment of a Dutch base in Taiwan in 1624. At the same time, the Company’s ships patrolled the triangular routes between China, Japan and the Philippines in an attempt to shut down Spanish and Portuguese commerce. It was against this background that the Company established its Japan factory in 1609.

2. The Japan factory

The Japan factory was bound up with VOC privateering from the beginning. Information about Japan had circulated in the Netherlands from the last decades of the sixteenth century, but it was not until 1600 that the first Dutch vessel, \textit{Liefde}, reached the archipelago.\textsuperscript{10} The \textit{Liefde} was part of a fleet of five ships belonging to one of the independent trading companies that operated before the establishment of the VOC. The small fleet sailed in 1598 from Rotterdam in an attempt to travel to Asia via the western route through the straits of Magellan. After numerous setbacks, \textit{Liefde} eventually reached Japan in April 1600. The few surviving members of the crew, including the famous English navigator William Adams, were detained by the \textit{bakufu} until 1605 when Jacob Quaeckernaecq, the captain, and Melchior van Santvoort, one of the ship’s merchants, were permitted to sail to Patani in modern-day Malaysia to establish contact with the Dutch there. They traveled aboard a vessel provided by Matsura Shigenobu, retired lord (\textit{daimyo}) of Hirado domain. By sponsoring the voyage, Shigenobu hoped to lure a new

\textsuperscript{9} A third important route connected Acapulco with Manila.
\textsuperscript{10} Pomp, a Dutch sailor, had already reached Nagasaki aboard a Portuguese vessel in 1585.
set of foreign merchants to replace the Portuguese who had relocated their trade from Hirado to Nagasaki. Quaeckernaecq brought with him a trading pass from the shogun, Tokugawa Ieyasu, permitting the Dutch to trade in Japan.\(^\text{11}\)

The pass was handed over to a VOC fleet led by Cornelis Matelieff de Jonge that was in the process of laying siege to the Portuguese in Malacca. More interested in opening trade with China than Japan, Matelieff did take possession of Ieyasu’s trading pass, but it would be a number of years before the Company was prepared to act. In 1607, Pieter Willemszoon Verhoeff left the Netherlands with a fleet of thirteen ships, two of which would eventually reach Japan and establish a factory there. In Verhoeff’s primary instructions, Japan is not mentioned and it is clear that at this point a factory in Japan was not a priority for the Company.\(^\text{12}\)

When Verhoeff reached Bantam in Southeast Asia, he received word that the Portuguese were in the process preparing their annual cargo ship to sail from Macao to Nagasaki. This vessel, along with the Spanish silver ships traveling between Manila and Acapulco, represented the great prize – and constant obsession – for VOC captains.\(^\text{13}\) The Macao-Nagasaki carrack sailed from Goa via Malacca in April or May each year. Arriving in Macao, its cargo of cloth, spices, wine, aromatic woods and other goods was sold and a new cargo made up predominantly of silks taken onboard. Fully loaded, the vessel departed for Japan between the end of June and the beginning of August on the southwest monsoon. On average it reached Nagasaki in two weeks, although the voyage could take up to a month in unfavorable conditions. In Nagasaki it took on a cargo of silver bullion and waited for the northeast monsoon that would carry it back to Macao in October or November.\(^\text{14}\)

After Verhoeff received news of the carrack, he immediately dispatched two of his ships, the Vereenichde Leeuw met Pylen and the Griffouen that were waiting off the coast of Johor. These ships were charged to establish a factory

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\(^{11}\) There are a number of possible reasons why Ieyasu encouraged the Dutch to establish a trading outpost in Japan. It seems most likely that he wanted to disrupt the Portuguese trading monopoly on certain valuable commodities and to gain access to military supplies and technology.


\(^{13}\) The Macao-Nagasaki cargo ship is referred to as the kraek or carrack in Dutch sources.

\(^{14}\) Detailed shipping registries do not survive but all the evidence points to a cargo of remarkable value. In July 1603, two Dutch ships that were originally part of Wybrant van Warwijck’s fleet captured a carrack in the road off Macao. The carrack was preparing to depart for Japan and was filled with 1400 picols of silk valued at 1.4 million guilders. The return cargo was equally impressive. Robert Fitch, an English traveler who visited Asia between 1585 and 1591, estimated that the Portuguese brought out of Japan about 600,000 cruzados of silver every year. 1 guilder equals approximately 0.32 cruzados.
in Japan, but in his instructions to his captains Verhoeff was adamant that this was a secondary consideration, stating that “principally the purpose of this voyage is that the two ships shall search for and take the ship that departs from Macao to Japan this year, of which we are certain and aware that it is richly laden.” Only if the attack on the carrack was not a success, were the two vessels to sail onto Japan and attempt to open trading relations with the bakufu. On their way to take up station off the coast of Taiwan in order to intercept the carrack, the Vereenichde Leeuw met Pylen and the Griffoen stopped off in Patani to pick up small quantities of silk, pepper and lead. These goods were designed to establish the Company’s credentials as legitimate merchants intent on setting up a commercially viable factory in Japan. Despite their best efforts, the two Dutch vessels were unable to capture the carrack, which beat them by two days to Japan. Having failed, the captains decided to pursue their secondary objective. This they did successfully, dispatching an embassy to the bakufu and receiving a pass to trade in Japan and permission to construct a factory.

A small staff headed by Jacques Specx was left in Hirado, which was chosen as the best location for the factory. Between 1609 and 1615, the Dutch maintained an extremely limited presence in Japan. No Company vessels arrived in Hirado in 1610 and only two each year in 1611, 1612 and 1614. Comprehensive ledgers from this period do not survive, but extant cargo registers of vessels leaving Hirado show that Specx and his staff struggled to penetrate the Japanese market.

3. The Santo Antonio incident

On 18 August 1615, the Jakatra and her prize entered Kawachi, a small port just south of Hirado that was used by the Company as a secondary harbor. The Santo Antonio’s cargo was not particularly valuable, consisting primarily of 3055 guilders of ebony wood and 3863 guilders of pewter, a mixture of tin and lead. However, the vessel quickly assumed an importance that far exceeded the value of its cargo. The Hirado council saw the Santo Antonio as both problem and opportunity. Their concerns centered on the issue of jurisdiction. The Santo Antonio was captured off a small island called Meshima (女島). Meshima is one of five uninhabited islands that form the Danjo Gunto.

15 Opstall, Verhoeff naar Azië, 1: p. 328.
16 Resolutions, 17 November 1615, VOC 1061. One guilder contains 20 stuivers. One stuiver contains 16 penningen. All figures in this article have been rounded up to guilders.
17 Resolutions, 18 August 1615, VOC 1061.
(男女群島), a small chain situated roughly a hundred miles off the west coast of Kyushu.\(^{18}\)

For Europeans coming to Japan, Meshima assumed an importance entirely disproportionate to its size. The island featured prominently in Jan Huygen van Linschoten’s *Itinerario*, which was published in 1596, and formed the most important navigational tool for Dutch mariners in Asia.\(^{19}\) During years spent serving the Portuguese in Goa, Linschoten amassed a compendium of knowledge about the Portuguese trading empire in Asia, including sailing directions used by Portuguese pilots. Meshima appears in *Itinerario* as the gateway to Japan, functioning as the first clear sign that a vessel is about to approach the archipelago. Because of its role as a navigational marker, the island was a constant feature of contemporary European maps. From the perspective of the Hirado council, the waters around Meshima were clearly “binnen ’t lant” or within the lands of Japan and hence under the bakufu’s jurisdiction.\(^{20}\) As a result, the Dutch feared that the bakufu would rule illegal any acts of maritime violence within its domains, and declare the Company’s prize forfeit. At the same time, the junk represented a chance to establish a precedent that could be used as a basis to expand VOC privateering around Japan.

The council acted rapidly to secure its rights to the Santo Antonio. Specx was dispatched at once to prepare letters to send to the shogun, high-ranking bakufu officials and the daimyo of Hirado. Unfortunately the letters themselves do not survive, but the council’s instructions to Specx reveal a basic uncertainty as to how the bakufu would react to the capture of the Santo Antonio. Specx was instructed to refrain from asking directly whether the bakufu was permitted to seize Portuguese vessels within the bakufu’s domains but rather to somehow obtain a sense of the “inclinations and opinions” of bakufu officials.\(^{21}\)

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18 The Danjo gunto forms an important part of Japan’s modern interpretation of maritime jurisdiction. Possession of these islands allows the Japanese government to extend its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) into Korean and Chinese waters.


20 There is no indication whether the bakufu viewed Meshima as part of Japan. The island does appear in medieval Japanese records, but the first clear reference comes in the Keicho kuniezu, the great map of Japan started by the bakufu in 1605 and finally finished in the 1630s. On this map, two of the islands of the Danjo Gunto chain, Meshima and Oshima, appear but are marked as uninhabited. As will be discussed, the bakufu viewed the question of where the vessel was taken as irrelevant in making its final decision about the Santo Antonio. For details of Meshima see the entry in *Nihon rekishi chimei taikei* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1979-2005)

21 Resolutions, 18 August 1615, VOC 1061. These letters secured an initial favorable response from the daimyo of Hirado who was in Kyoto.
These letters would be followed up by an embassy. The first step in convincing the bakufu of the essential justice of the VOC case was to select the right gifts for the embassy to carry with them. The council resolved to "take all measures to keep our right to the [Santo Antonio] against the Portuguese and their supporters." These measures translated into an authorization for Specx to spend whatever it cost in gifts and other bribes to win the bakufu’s favor. This was an extraordinary commission for a very poor factory, and it indicated the lengths to which the Company’s agents in Hirado were prepared to go to secure the Santo Antonio. Two iron cannon, 100 cannon balls and 350 catty of gunpowder were taken from the ship Enkhuyzen to be given to Ieyasu and Hidetada. Alongside the cannon and powder, other gifts were given, all in the name of the Governor-General. Ironically, the council also ordered that some "beautiful goods" should be bought second or third hand from the Portuguese in Nagasaki to augment the Company’s gifts. Finally, raw silk was added from the factory’s supplies. All together these gifts and bribes totaled a sizable amount. Ieyasu received 1642 guilders worth of gifts and Hidetada another 518 guilders. The factory’s generosity did not stop here. Two other high-ranking bakufu officials received gifts of 183 and 186 guilders respectively. Hasegawa Sahyōe Fujihiro (Saphia-dono), the current Nagasaki magistrate (bugyō), was also given various items totaling 205 guilders.

The second step was to select the right personnel to represent the Company. The Hirado council called up all the pro-Dutch forces the VOC could muster in Japan. Specx was placed in charge of the embassy but he was advised by Elbert Wouterszoon, a Company agent based in Kyoto. In addition, the Company summoned Jan Joosten Lodensteyn, an original crewmember of the Liefde and occasional advisor to the bakufu. Lodensteyn, it was believed, would do "good service for the company" in the negotiations.

In late September 1615, Specx arrived in Kyoto and prepared to present his case before the bakufu. Debates over VOC privateering in Japan were not simple confrontations between the Portuguese and the Dutch before a neutral Japanese audience, but rather complex negotiations involving multiple parties, each with their own set of interests and concerns. The Company’s most important supporter was the daimyo of Hirado, Matsura Takanobu. The history of the Matsura family is interwoven with that of the Dutch in Japan in this period, but the Matsura’s consistent support of the VOC and its agents came at a price, to the extent that they came to demand a direct cut of the Company’s prizes. The Nagasaki magistrate, first Hasegawa Sahyōe and later

22 Resolutions, 10 September 1615, VOC 1061
23 1 catty was roughly 1.5 pounds or 681 grams.
24 Resolutions, 10 September 1615, VOC 1061
his successor Hasegawa Gonroku, were consistent opponents of the Dutch. Unlike later versions of the Nagasaki magistrate that became true bakufu functionaries, the magistrate operated in this period with considerable freedom in a vaguely defined role. Sahyôe and Gonroku were highly effective defenders of Macao-Nagasaki trade. In some cases this translated into a pro-Portuguese policy, but their focus was always on Portuguese trade rather than Portuguese interests in general. This interest in Portuguese commerce was almost certainly rooted in personal investment in the trade itself.

In negotiations with the bakufu, Specx emphasized that the Netherlands were at war with Spain and Portugal, insisting "that the Portuguese and Castilians have gone against their promises and falsely broken their word in order to do as much damage to us as possible." Due to these broken promises, the Dutch had been instructed by their prince to wage war against the Castilians and the Portuguese wherever they might encounter them. If a VOC vessel sighted enemy shipping anywhere at sea it was required to attack, and if a captain or crew did not perform their duty they would be liable to harsh punishment or execution. This justification was designed to appeal to the bakufu by presenting the Dutch as loyal subjects, obligated by their sovereign to attack his enemies wherever they were encountered. Specx addressed the issue of Japanese jurisdiction by acknowledging that the "junk was first sighted off the island of Meaxima, followed and captured from the Portuguese," but he made it clear that the Dutch had not attempted to hide this fact from the bakufu or from their enemies.

Specx’s argument was contested by the Portuguese, who organized their own rival embassy. The Portuguese, as the Hirado council had feared, maintained that the Santo Antonio was captured illegally within the bakufu’s domains, and that the Dutch should be compelled to pay them full restitution. In addition, the Portuguese embassy appealed to a universal principle that no sovereign should allow his lands to be used as a base for pirates. The exact wording of the Portuguese protest is not recorded, but a later memorial to the bakufu provides a close approximation of the content:

“lately the thirteen pirates ships of Holland are infesting the high seas, so that we cannot use the big Black ships but only small ships. This is a great problem to us. We would be very grateful if you would order the Hollanders to leave Hirado. Since they are nothing but pirates, no other

25 Resolutions, 18 August 1615, VOC 1061.
26 These instructions were probably derived from the 1614 general commission for privateering issued by the States-General.
27 Resolutions, 18 August 1615, VOC 1061.
country allows their ships to anchor in their ports; consequently they only gather at Hirado.”

We know from VOC sources that Hasegawa Sahyōe presented similar objections to the capture of the Santo Antonio. Wouterszoon reported that “much was done” against the Dutch by Sahyōe, “saying that [the junk] was taken in the territory of the Japan.”

On September 26 1615, the bakufu issued a verdict to the Company’s representative, Lodensteyn. The “junk, people and everything connected” were all awarded to the Dutch. The verdict represented a complete victory for the Company and, to further prove the bakufu’s favor, the Dutch were also presented with a trading pass to send a junk to Siam. The council in Hirado proceeded to dispose of their prize. The Santo Antonio itself was valued at 7344 guilders. The council noted that it was well constructed and the vessel was duly added to their Hirado fleet. Renamed Hoope, it made a number of voyages to Siam. Along with the cargo of ebonywood, pewter and other miscellaneous goods this brought the total value of items seized to 15313 guilders. In addition, some weaponry including ten muskets, six rapiers, four halberds and eight spears were distributed among the Company’s other ships.

There was still the matter of the Santo Antonio’s mixed Portuguese and Chinese crew that had been held captive by the Company in Hirado. The seven Portuguese crewmembers were shipped to Bantam to exchange with captured Dutch sailors. In November 1615, the council in Hirado decided that their Chinese prisoners would be released as they have “wives and children on the [Chinese] coast.” This decision was motivated largely by practical concerns as the council no longer desired to pay for the costs of maintaining these men. The Chinese crew was released in Nagasaki with money, clothes and letters addressed to Hasegawa Gonroku, asking his help to reach their wives and children in their land. Never prepared to miss an opportunity, the council in Hirado remarked that with this decision “our good

29 Letter received from Elbert Wouterszoon, 6 September 1615 (Register van ingekomen brieven 1614-1616, Archives of the Dutch Factory in Japan, p. 276).
30 Letter received from Elbert Wouterszoon, 6 September 1615 (Register van ingekomen brieven 1614-1616, Archives of the Dutch Factory in Japan, p. 276).
31 Resolutions, 26 September 1615, VOC 1061.
32 It seems that at least the captain was highly valued by the Portuguese. Cocks reported the existence of a plot to “steale away a Portingall w’ch is capt. of the junk they Hollander took.” Richard Cocks, The Diary of Richard Cocks, 1615-1622, ed., Historiographical Institute, The University of Tokyo (Tokyo, 1979-1980), I: p.101.
33 Resolutions, 24 November 1615, VOC 1061.
fame will grow and increase” and “show that we seek to harm no nation other than our enemy.” There is no record of what happened to the Chinese crew after they were released in Nagasaki.

4. A landlocked, agrarian empire

Why did the bakufu rule in favor of the Company? According to the Dutch records, Ieyasu and Hidetada were persuaded by a skillful lobbying campaign orchestrated by Speex and Lodensteyn. Similarly, the English in Hirado believed that William Adams, who was also present, was responsible for the favorable decision. Attributing success entirely to superior negotiation skills was a common theme in the first years of both the Dutch and English factories in Japan, but in this case the decision probably stemmed from a combination of different factors.

In September 1615, Ieyasu and Hidetada had far more pressing matters to consider than a small Portuguese junk. The Osaka campaign against Hideyori, Hideyoshi’s son and a rallying point for those discontented with the Tokugawa regime, had dominated bakufu affairs for the first part of 1615. By the time the Company’s embassy arrived, Osaka castle had been successfully stormed and Hideyori was dead by his own hands, but the bakufu was still engaged in winding down a massive campaign. The VOC embassy was also fortunate to arrive at a time when the Portuguese enjoyed little favor. The arrival of the Dutch and the English coupled with the increasing importance of Japanese trading vessels, meant that the Portuguese contribution to commerce in the archipelago was in decline. The Jesuits, important Portuguese spokesmen, were banished in 1614 and in the same year the persecution of Christians greatly intensified.

At the same time, the bakufu’s decision derived from more general attitudes towards the control of ocean space. The Tokugawa bakufu was not a maritime power and displayed no aspirations to become one. Until the nineteenth century, the bakufu developed no fleet of its own and restricted the maritime capacities of daimyo under its control. In 1609, the bakufu confiscated all vessels over 500 koku from daimyo in Kyushu, the traditional mari-

34 Resolutions, 24 November 1615, VOC 1061.
36 It is possible to see the decision as one of the last act of an aging Ieyasu before he died in 1616. Of the first three Tokugawa shoguns, Ieyasu is generally seen as the most supportive of the Dutch enterprise in Japan. However, a careful examination of the Hirado resolutions shows that both Hidetada and Ieyasu were closely involved in making the final decision about the Santo Antonio.
time center of the Japanese archipelago, and banned future construction of large junks.\textsuperscript{37} Policies such as these have led one scholar to comment that the \textit{bakufu} "defined itself as a landlocked, agrarian empire."\textsuperscript{38}

Under first Ieyasu and later Hidetada, the \textit{bakufu} encouraged foreign trade by allowing merchants such as the Dutch to establish trading outposts in Japan but otherwise pursued an essentially passive maritime policy. It made little attempt to impose its authority on the waters beyond the shores of the archipelago and indeed had no interest in doing so.\textsuperscript{39} As a result, the \textit{bakufu} developed no general policy that required it to defend foreign or domestic shipping either coming to Japan or within the coastal waters of the archipelago. The one exception centered on the vermilion-seal licensed trading ships or \textit{shuinsen}. These ships were specially authorized by the \textit{bakufu} and traveled through the seas of East and Southeast Asia as outposts of state authority. The \textit{shuinsen} system originated in the 1590s but developed fully in the first decades of the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{40} Under the system, the \textit{bakufu} issued trading passes (\textit{shuinjô}), which were drawn up by Zen monks in Kyoto. A pass authorized the holder to undertake a single voyage from Japan to a stated destination. Passes were issued as the result of personal connections and required the mediation of a high-ranking \textit{bakufu} official.

It is important to understand what the \textit{shuinsen} system was not. Above all, the system was not used to dominate maritime space in the same way as the pass system pioneered by the Portuguese and later used by the VOC throughout Asia.\textsuperscript{41} The \textit{shuinsen} system was designed to guard and regulate traders who used the archipelago as a base, but not to extend \textit{bakufu} power into the ocean. In addition, the \textit{shuinsen} system was not intended to protect

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{37} Seiichi Iwao, \textit{Sakoku} (Tokyo: Chuô Kôronsha, 1966), p. 523. 500 koku was equivalent to 90 tons or a small ocean-going vessel.
\item \textsuperscript{38} W.J. Boot, "Maxims of Foreign Policy," in Leonard Blussé and Felipe Fernández-Armesto, eds., \textit{Shifting Communities and Identity Formation in Early Modern Asia} (Leiden: CNWS, 2003), p. 15.
\item \textsuperscript{39} Tokugawa maritime policy, or the lack thereof, appears to draw on pre-modern conceptions of ocean space prevalent in the Japanese archipelago. Amino Yoshihiko, who pioneered the study of maritime cultures in Japanese history, has shown that landed elites in the medieval period understood the open ocean as a \textit{muen}, or unattached zone, over which political control could not be exerted. Yoshihiko Amino, \textit{Nihon chôsei no hinôgômin to tennô} (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1984).
\item \textsuperscript{40} The classic work on the \textit{shuinsen} is Seiichi Iwao, \textit{Shuinsen bôekiishi no kenkyû} (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kôbunkan, 1985). This work has recently been revised by one of Iwao’s students. Yokô Nagazumi, \textit{Shuinsen} (Tokyo, Yoshikawa Kôbunkan, 2001).
\item \textsuperscript{41} In the sixteenth century, the Portuguese attempted to establish a system of maritime control in the Indian Ocean based on the issue of passes (\textit{cartaz}). All merchants in the Indian Ocean were required to obtain a \textit{cartaz} and subsequently to visit a Portuguese controlled settlement in order to pay customs duties there. A vessel not carrying a \textit{cartaz} was liable to be boarded and sunk if it encountered a Portuguese warship.
\end{itemize}
all Japanese who traveled abroad. In diplomatic correspondence, the bakufu repeatedly emphasized that it had no interest in the welfare of its subjects once they departed the archipelago.\footnote{As one example, Hidetada encouraged the king of Siam to attack and kill any Japanese merchants engaged in helping the king of Cambodia, then at war with Siam. For details of this diplomatic correspondence see Fukusai Hayashi, ed., *Tsūkō ichiran*. (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1912-1913).} Since these licenses were not intended to protect Japanese, they could be issued to a variety of different merchants. Recipients included one Ryukyuan, eleven Chinese, and twelve Europeans.\footnote{Iwao, *Shūinsen*, p. 224.} An attack on a shuinsen anywhere was interpreted as a direct assault on the bakufu’s authority. In these very rare occasions, the bakufu responded by punishing foreigners resident within its borders. One such incident occurred in 1628 when the Spanish, seeking revenge for a ship attacked earlier by a group of Japanese mercenaries employed by the king of Siam, captured a shuinsen. The bakufu reacted by embargoing both Spanish and Portuguese shipping coming to Japan.

Before issuing its decision on the *Santo Antonio*, the bakufu dispatched Matsura Takanobu to interrogate the Portuguese crewmembers captured by the Company.\footnote{Nagazumi suggests that an official of the Hirado domain rather than the daimyo himself interviewed the prisoners.} Takanobu met with the *Santo Antonio*’s captain and one of the junk’s merchants along with two Dutch representatives and a translator. The contents of the interview, which are recorded in a 1615 letter, are extremely revealing of the bakufu’s chief concerns. The daimyo of Hirado asked no questions concerned where the vessel was taken but focused instead on whether the vessel carried a bakufu trading pass. He asked the two prisoners “if they had his majesty’s passport or seal,” to which the captives replied that they did not have such a pass” but asked their questioner to take them under his protection as they were in his land. Takanobu “replied laughing and said that [they should ask] Saffia-dono [Hasegawa Sahyōe] who was their advocate and had domain over the Portuguese.”\footnote{Letter received from Matthijs ten Broeke and Lenard Camps, 19 September 1615. (Register van ingekomen brieven 1614-1616, Archives of the Dutch Factory in Japan, p. 276).} Since the junk did not hold a trading pass, the bakufu ruled in favor of the VOC and ignored any question of maritime jurisdiction.\footnote{The bakufu’s policies in this regard were very different from those of its predecessor, Toyotomi Hideyoshi who unified most of the archipelago under his control in the 1580s. In 1588, Hideyoshi, prohibited all pirates from operating from Japanese bases or in coastal waters around Japan.}

The bakufu’s decision does not mean that it viewed the capture of the *Santo Antonio* as a legal act. In fact, the VOC argument of state-sponsored
privateering did not translate well in Japan where there was no equivalent to the European privateer. Indeed, there is no indication that the bakufu ever considered VOC privateering as anything more than acts of piracy, and it would use these terms when legislating against the Dutch in 1621. The decision to award the Santo Antonio to the Company lay therefore not in a positive attitude towards Dutch privateering but rather in a passive attitude towards maritime control.

Conclusion

The repercussions of the Santo Antonio incident were far-reaching. The council in Hirado celebrated their victory and hastened to inform their superiors, particularly Jan Pieterszoon Coen, the dominant figure in the VOC’s colonial administration of the period. After 1615, Coen was convinced that the Company could – with virtual impunity – launch extended privateering campaigns against Portuguese shipping sailing to and from Japan, even to the extent of attacking enemy vessels in the shogun’s harbors. This belief transformed VOC strategy in maritime East Asia, setting in motion a significant escalation of privateering operations around Japan.

In 1617, 1620 and 1621, Coen dispatched vessels with instructions authorizing VOC captains to attack the carrack within Nagasaki harbor. Such an attack represented the easiest and surest way to capture the carrack as, in contrast to other parts of the world in which the VOC hunted for enemy shipping, the route from Macao to Nagasaki offered few natural chokepoints along the lines of the straits of Malacca, the narrow waterway between modern-day Malaysia and Indonesia. The Company identified three areas in which their ships were most likely to seize the carrack. These were the approaches to the ports of Macao and Nagasaki and the straits of Taiwan. To catch the carrack in any of these three areas required exact timing and favorable conditions. Far easier would be an attack on the carrack once it had

47 In 1621, the bakufu employed the word bahan to describe VOC privateering. This term was used in Japan to refer to the multi-ethnic wakō, who used the archipelago as a base from which to launch raids against China in the sixteenth century.

48 Coen was appointed as the Company’s Director-General in 1614, and would rise to become Governor-General, a position he held from 1617 to 1623 and then again from 1627 until his death in 1629. Although much – and justly – criticized for his ruthlessness and complete disregard of human costs, Coen was one of the most important Governor-Generals in the history of the Company and his tenure laid the foundation for the VOC empire in Southeast Asia. Under his leadership Jakarta was conquered and in its place Batavia was established as the capital of the Dutch East Indies. Coen was also responsible for the creation of an almost complete VOC monopoly over nutmeg, mace and other important spices.
anchored in Nagasaki with a full cargo. The *Santo Antonio* incident provided the final catalyst necessary for Coen to overcome any scruples he may have possessed about carrying the Company’s war into Nagasaki.

VOC privateering from Hirado was not limited to attacks on Portuguese shipping. As part of their overall plan to force the Spanish out of the Philippines, the VOC targeted Chinese junks that traveled between China and Manila. According to the Company’s estimate, twenty to thirty junks arrived in Manila from China between March and June every year, providing significant income to the Spanish treasury. The Chinese were neutrals in the VOC’s war with Spain, but this fact was incidental to the Dutch who viewed any merchant that traded with their enemies as a legitimate target. These attacks took place at a great distance from the Japanese archipelago, but Hirado served as a trans-shipment point for goods taken from Chinese junks, as a harbor to anchor prizes in and as a makeshift prison for captured crews.

Privateering operations reached a peak between 1617 and 1621, during which time the Company’s legitimate trade was insignificant in comparison to the returns produced by maritime predation. With so few trade goods coming in and so much plunder from VOC privateering campaigns going out, Specx begged Coen to fill a hundred boxes with anything and send them on to Japan so that the Dutch could at least present the image of honest merchants.  

The *bakufu* continued to tolerate VOC privateering until 1621 when the Company’s unregulated maritime predation provoked it to formulate a new policy on piracy and to define – albeit vaguely – an area of central control around the coastline of the archipelago. In July of that year, the *bakufu* issued a five-part edict regulating Dutch activities in Japan.  

The third part of the edict prohibited the Dutch and the English from pirating in “the waters near Japan” (日本近き海上に). The edict was extremely effective, and after 1621 trade gradually replaced privateering as the dominant activity of the Hirado factory. This shift in direction was aided by the establishment of a VOC base on Taiwan, which secured at least temporarily the Company’s access to Chinese goods. Despite their new focus on commerce, it would be decades before the Dutch were able to completely shake off their reputation in Japan as pirates.


50  For many years, historians pointed to an edict issued by the *bakufu* in Genna 7, 7th month, 27th day (13 September 1621) as the definitive official version of what was communicated to the Dutch and English in September. Recently, Japanese scholars discovered an earlier version of this edict in the archives of the Matsura family. The newly discovered document is dated two months earlier or Genna 7, 5th month, 22nd day (11 July 1621). For a complete copy of the edict see Yokó Nagazumi, “Hirado ni dentatsu sareta Nihonjin baibai buki yushutsu kinshirei” *Nihon rekishi* 611 (1999): pp. 67-81.
Abstract

In August 1615, a Dutch East India (VOC) Company yacht Jakatra captured a Portuguese junk Santo Antonio off the coast of Japan. The junk represented the first prize captured by the VOC in Japanese waters despite a number of attempts, and it provoked an outcry from the Portuguese and their supporters in Nagasaki. This article reconstructs the chain of events precipitated by the arrival of Jakatra and her prize. Using correspondence and resolutions from the VOC factory in Japan, I examine how the Company’s agents took their case to the shogun’s court in 1615 and why the shogun eventually ruled in favor of the Dutch.

Resumo

Em Agosto de 1615, o Jakatra, uma nau da VOC, capturou um junco português, o Santo António, ao largo da costa do Japão. Apesar de terem sido feitas anteriores tentativas, esse junco representou a primeira presa capturada pela VOC em águas japonesas, o que originou muitos protestos da parte dos portugueses e dos seus apoiantes em Nagasaki. Este artigo procura reconstruir a cadeia de acontecimentos iniciada pela chegada do Jakatra e captura da sua presa. Utilizando as resoluções e a correspondência da feitoria da VOC no Japão, analiso a maneira como os agentes da VOC levaram o seu caso à corte do shogun em 1615, e as razões que conduziram o shogun a tomar uma decisão favorável aos holandeses.

要約

1615年8月、オランダ東インド会社(VOC)の船ジャカトラ号が、ポルトガルのジャンク船サント・アントニオ号を日本沿岸で捕らえた。以前にオランダ船はポルトガル船の捕獲を計画し、それは未遂に終わっていたが、これは彼らが日本海域で最初に捕獲した船であった。この捕獲はポルトガル人と長崎での彼らの支持者からの激しい抗議を引き起こした。この論文ではジャカトラ号とその捕獲船の到着が引き起こした一連の出来事を再構築する。日本のオランダ商館の文書や決議議事録を利用し、1615年、東インド会社の代理人がいかなる形で幕府の裁きに臨んだのか、また何故幕府が次第にオランダ人に好意を示すようになったのかの事情を考察する。