

01. Piracy or Privateering? The Capture of the Santo Antonio in 1615 and the Bakufu's Response

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01. Piracy or Privateering?

The Capture of the *Santo Antonio* in 1615 and the Bakufu's Response

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In August 1615 the Dutch VOC captured a Portuguese junk, called the *Santo Antonio*, near Meshima, an island west of Kyushu. The junk was brought into Hirado, where the Dutch factory was located. Letters were dispatched to Matsura Takanobu (the lord of Hirado), Honda Masazumi (a close advisor of Ieyasu), and Hasegawa Gonroku (the governor of Nagasaki) to inform them of the capture and to explain the reasons for the incident. These reasons centered on the renewed war between the Dutch and the Iberians in Asia and presented a rationale for the junk being awarded to the Dutch.

The Portuguese, for their part, condemned the actions of the Dutch as piracy, and their advocates argued that since the *Santo Antonio* was captured in Japanese waters, the junk and its cargo had to be restituted to its owners.

Reacting to the pleas of both parties, Ieyasu dispatched Matsura Takanobu to Hirado to inquire if the junk was in the possession of a legal document issued by the Bakufu (*shuinjō*). When it became clear that there was none, Ieyasu questioned Adams about the motives of the Dutch for capturing the *Santo Antonio*. Guided by Adams' comments, he decided not to interfere. As a result, the *Santo Antonio*, together with its cargo and crew, were awarded to the Dutch. It thus is clear that Ieyasu agreed with the Dutch argument that the capture of the *Santo Antonio* was a legitimate act of war, and dismissed the allegations of the Portuguese that the Dutch were pirates.

To examine the arguments of the three parties involved, I mainly used VOC sources. They provide us with detailed information about the negotiations that took place within the Bakufu. Apart from the information in Dutch sources, a letter from Cocks (the chief of the English factory in Hirado at that time) offers valuable information useful for understanding Ieyasu's view. I also used Jesuit sources in order to clarify the stance of the Portuguese towards the arrival of the Dutch in Japan. There are no extant Japanese sources. Based on an analysis of these sources, my article aims to provide a perspective on views of privateering and piracy within the context of the conflict between the Dutch and the Portuguese in East Asian waters. It argues that the notion of piracy was used by the Portuguese as a means to preserve their monopoly on Japan trade, while the Dutch used privateering not only as a means of waging war on their enemy but also as a tool for establishing their own trade network with Japan.