

400 Years of Dutch–Japanese Friendship

In 1598, a Rotterdam trading firm dispatched five vessels bound for the Far East. One, *De Liefde*, successfully navigated the Magellan Strait to enter the Pacific Ocean. She was disabled in a storm and drifted ashore in Usuki Bay in Bungo Province (now Oita Prefecture) on 29 April 1600. Only 24 of the original crew of 110 survived. They included the captain Jacob Quaeckernaek, the English pilot William Adams, and the second mate Jan Joosten Van Lodenstijn. Ieyasu Tokugawa, who soon became the founder of the Tokugawa Shogunate dynasty, received them at Osaka Castle. Joosten became Ieyasu's advisor for foreign and military affairs, and promoted Japan's trade with the Netherlands and England, soon overthrowing the dominance of Portugal and Spain. Joosten was given a residence in the capital of Edo (now Tokyo), and today's Yaesu in central Tokyo (near Tokyo Station) is said to be a corruption of his name. In 1623, he drowned in the South China Sea when his ship sank on returning to Japan from a trade mission to Batavia (now Jakarta).

His shipmate William Adams also became Ieyasu's advisor, and James Clavell's famous novel *Shogun* was inspired by his adventures. In the late 1630s, Ieyasu's grandson Iemitsu Tokugawa ordered the closure of Japan to foreigners, but the Netherlands and China remained trading partners with Japan throughout the isolation period until the mid-19th century. The *De Liefde* stern carried a wooden statue of the respected Renaissance thinker and writer Desiderius Erasmus (1466–1536). This statue is preserved in a Buddhist temple in Sano City (in Tochigi Prefecture, 75 km north of Tokyo) as one of the nation's important cultural properties.

T. Suga

To celebrate the anniversary on 19 April 2000 of 400 years of Dutch–Japanese friendship, Dutch Crown Prince Alexander and Japanese Crown Prince Naruhito visited Usuki Port in Oita Prefecture where they were welcomed by Oita Governor Hiramatsu and a band from a local school. (Photos: Oita Prefecture)

