

The Holland House (part 2)

Source: *The Van der Sloot Archive*

Van Gulik's initial plan didn't work out. There is no trace in the Van der Sloot archive of the reasons. Perhaps his request to Mr. Ringers went unanswered, perhaps the answer was negative. But there is always a Plan B...

On page 130-1 of *Haat en Liefde voor Japan* we find this paragraph:

Another possibility presented itself. There were plans to establish 'The Nagasaki International Sightseeing Center Limited', a commercial initiative of amongst others Sasaki who owned a number of enterprises such as Tobi, a large department store. These plans had the support of the local government and they were discussed in December 1965 in a meeting of Irie (General Manager) and Sasaki (owner) of the enterprise, a representative of the city council, Van Gulik and myself from the Dutch embassy.

Minor alterations

Van Gulik liked the plans and decided to visit the site. During that visit he spotted an old building that could be converted into a Holland House "with minor alterations" at an estimated cost of ¥ 870,000. He started to raise money in the Netherlands and got as far as three quarters of the required sum. In an ultimate effort to reach his goal, he decided to write a letter to the chairman of the Japanese-Dutch Association in Tokyo...



His excellency Mr. S. Okamoto,
Chairman Nichiran-kyokai in Kanto,
2-chome, 580, Nakameguro, Meguro-ku,
Tokyo.

Tokyo, August 9, 1966.

Dear Sir,

When I visited Nagasaki last year, the Prefectural authorities asked my co-operation regarding a plan of a private company to establish a Kokusai-kanko-center with the special name of I-jin-kan, in the former French Consulate building (Sawayama residence) in Nagasaki, in which center there would be installed a special Dutch room, a so-called "Kapitan's Chamber".

I visited this site (nextdoor to Glover House) and the sponsors showed me their blueprints, from which I saw that this was a serious undertaking that could materially contribute to the spreading of knowledge about Holland and the historical Japanese-Dutch relations, among both Japanese and foreign tourists. Accordingly I promised I would ask the municipal governments of Amsterdam and Rotterdam to donate or give in perpetual loan ancient Dutch furniture etc. Now the Kapitan's Chamber has been opened, and looks very attractive indeed.

When I visited the site, however, my attention was drawn by an old storehouse (kura) on the terrain, which had a nice old Japanese garden in front. It struck me that this kura, with minor alterations, could be made into a "Holland House", having on the ground floor for instance a reading room with pamphlets and reference material about the Netherlands, and on the second floor some antique Dutch furniture and interesting typically Dutch antiques. The Kokysai-kanko-center had planned to raze kura and garden, but were very enthusiast about my plan to preserve them, and agreed to pay for the alterations, to appoint a guard permanently on duty there, and bear all other costs, such as electricity etc.

As a matter of course it is in the commercial interest of the Center to have a Holland House on their grounds, for it will be an additional attraction for visiting tourists. On the other hand I felt that this Holland House ought to be more than just a tourist attraction, and that our side should retain a voice

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in its furnishings and upkeep, so as to prevent it from becoming a cheap “tourist stand”. Therefore I proposed to the Center that we surround kura and garden with a wall and entrance gate in old Dutch Factory style, and that the costs of building that wall and the gate would be born by various Japanese-Dutch organizations. This proposal was accepted by the Center, and they presented me with various blueprints, from which I selected one the costs of which are estimated at Yen 870.000.-. The location is no. 5 on the enclosed map.

Thereupon I reported this to the Netherlands-Japanese Association in Holland in order to find out the Netherlands reaction. The members of the association welcomed the plan, and a request for subscriptions, resulted in a round sum of Yen 500.000.- as per attached statement. Further the Netherlands Bank in Tokyo was authorized by its head office in Amsterdam to contribute Yen 100.000.- and I personally donated Yen 50.000.-. Now we have thus covered Yen 650.000.- and there remains Yen 220.000.--.

I think it would increase the symbolic value of the Holland House if your association could also raise some funds by circulating its members, so that practically all organisations concerned with Dutch-Japanese cultural relations in Holland as well as Japan would be represented on the bronze plaque listing all contributing organisations; this plaque will be put up on the gate.

I would greatly appreciate it, therefore, if, in case you agree with my views, you would kindly circulate the content of this letter among your members, and ask for contributions. If, as a result, we still don't arrive at the required sum of Yen 220.000.- the Netherlands-Japan Association in Holland will approach other cultural associations in the Netherlands, and I feel sure that we shall ultimately get the money together.

If possible I would like to open the Holland House officially on October 30 next, on the occasion of the Festival organized by the Nagasaki authorities for commemorating the 100 anniversary of von Siebold's death, and the 150 anniversary of Thunberg's death. If time should prove too short for that — a shipment with gifts from Amsterdam has not yet arrived — I would like to postpone the opening ceremony to April 1967, when the Mayor of Amsterdam is scheduled to pay an official visit to Nagasaki.

Thanking you in advance for your kind attention to this matter I remain, dear Sir, as always

Sincerely Yours,

R.H. van Gulik.

In the event, even April 1967 proved to be too optimistic, as we will see in part 3 of this series.



In tea house Kagetsu in Nagasaki: Discussing the establishment of the Holland House in Nagasaki with baron de Vos van Steenwijk (third secretary), geisha, business man Irie and Charles van der Sloot

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