

# The Holland House (part 3)

Source: The Van der Sloot Archive

In part 2 (newsletter 104), Van Gulik wrote a fund-raising letter to the chairman of the Japanese-Dutch society, Mr. S. Okamoto. The goal was to cover the remaining ¥ 220,000 needed to establish the *Holland House*.

Little over a month later, that goal was nearly reached, as Charles van der Sloot proudly reported to Van Gulik in a memorandum dated 16 September 1966.

This morning I had a telephone conversation with Mr. Okamoto, Pres. of the *Nichiran Kyokai* who told me that he had received ¥ 160,000 in contributions toward the *Holland House* in Nagasaki! He requested urgently that I wait with the transferral of funds as he was still expecting several contributions and he didn't want to antagonise these people. He is hoping to be able to reach a grand total of ¥ 200,000 and will transfer this amount as soon as possible.

## Sore spot

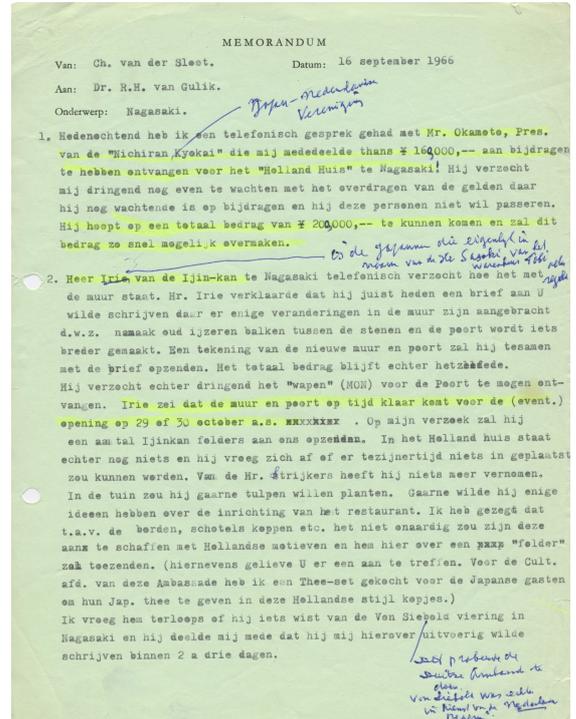
In the same memorandum, a delicate matter is raised, a diplomatic rivalry between the Dutch and the German representatives in Japan:

I asked him [Mr. Irie, manager of the *Ijinkan* of which the *Holland House* was part] if he knew anything about a Von Siebold celebration in Nagasaki and he said that he was planning to write to me about this extensively in the next couple of days.

Philipp Franz Balthasar von Siebold (1796–1866) was a German doctor who entered the Dutch military service in 1822 to be able to go to the Dutch East Indies. In 1823 he was sent to Deshima, the Dutch trading post in Nagasaki. Besides founding a medical school, he was a keen botanist. When he was expelled after charges of high treason (spying for Russia) in 1829, he took his enormous collection back to The Netherlands. The small private museum he started in his private home in Leiden evolved over the years to what is now the Dutch National Museum of Ethnology.

It was the Dutch government that enabled Von Siebold to travel to Japan, therefore the Dutch were rather miffed when the Germans tried to hijack his legacy, as they perceived it. There's a handwritten note next to the fragment quoted above that reads:

This [the Von Siebold celebration] the German Embassy is trying to stage. Von Siebold however was in the service of the Dutch Government.



The indignation one can feel in this note is the same as I heard in his voice when Charles van der Sloot told me this story last September. Almost fifty years have passed but the feeling remains...

## Compromise

In the end, it was the German Embassy who organised a reception to honour Von Siebold, but Ambassador Van Gulik was asked to deliver a short speech and the members of the Dutch-Japanese Society were invited to attend. The German-Dutch rivalry wasn't confined to Von Siebold. Van der Sloot writes in a memorandum dated 22 September 1966:

Enclosed please find the new flyer of the *Ijinkan* which as far as the cover is concerned is not as nice and moreover incorrect as compared to the original flyer. The new flyer, with its German beer tankards and German pipe, will probably not strike the average Japanese or maybe even foreigner as not being a Dutch image. The question now is if the majority of material exhibited in the *Ijinkan* will not be German too. I don't think one can object against the presence of German things since the Dutch employed many Germans in Deshima (Von Siebold etc.), but if the Board of the *Ijinkan* labels them as *Oranda* [Dutch] we will have to point out their error to them. Besides, a too large presence of German objects would attract the attention of authorities etc. at the

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upcoming commemoration of Von Siebold and Kampfer in Nagasaki on 30 October. Consequently, I have informed Baron de Vos of the above and asked him to watch closely what is exhibited in the *Ijinkan* during his planned visit to Nagasaki, and write a small report about it.

### Official opening

The date of the official opening was supposed to be 21 April, but it had to be postponed once again. Finally, on Wednesday 3 May 1967 the Mainichi Daily News ran the following article:

#### Newly Built Holland House To Open From May 5

Dr. R.H. van Gulik, Ambassador of the Netherlands, will cut the tape at 11 a.m. on May 6 to open Holland House, which has been newly completed at Nagasaki to promote Japan-Netherlands amity.

The ceremony will be attended by notable from the Netherlands, representatives of Nagasaki Prefecture and City, Suemasa Okamoto, president of the Japan-Netherlands Society, KLM executives and others, totaling about 300.

Located next to Glover House in Minami Yamate, Nagasaki, Holland House has been completed by remodeling a warehouse in the garden of Fusao Sasaki. An old Dutch style stone wall, 3½ meters high and 2 meters wide, has been newly built.

Holland House, which was made possible through private donations, will not only contain mementoes of the early Dutch history in Japan but will also display exhibits and books introducing the Netherlands to the Japanese people.

[...]

The tape cutting ceremony on May 6 will be followed by a lecture with slides.



*Officiële opening van het "Holland Huis" te Nagasaki met het doorsnijpen van het lint door Ambassadeur van Gulik*

高羅佩