

How China Studies Started In The Dutch East Indies



Universiteit
Leiden

Leiden University has traditionally been the seat of knowledge about South and Southeast Asia. Every year many students graduate here in the languages and cultures of China, Japan and Korea.

Sinologists

But how did this knowledge come to Leiden? To find the answer we have to go back to the Dutch East Indies, Koos Kuiper explains. His PhD defence on 16 February is based on an extensive archive and literature study of the early Dutch sinologists – or China experts.

As early as the colonial period, hundreds of thousands of Chinese people lived in the Dutch East Indies. They played an important role in the economy and indirectly swelled the coffers of the Dutch treasury. This also earned them some privileges. For example, the Chinese were to a certain degree governed by their own elders, and the Chinese council was responsible for registering marriages and funerals, and also dealt with minor civil and penal cases among the Chinese inhabitants.

Read more: <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/dutch-east-indies>