

The Achievements of Dutch Sinologist Gustaaf Schlegel (1840–1903)

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The eminent Scottish sinologist James Legge reportedly said that Gustaaf Schlegel “could be considered the greatest representative of his field in Europe in his time.” In order to find out why Legge said that, this study will analyse Schlegel’s major achievements during his professional career, including his research, translations, and collaboration with and criticism of peer scholars.

Research into Schlegel is important because he belongs to the group of early figures who established certain patterns and key ideas for understanding Chinese culture and helped shape the image of China. Schlegel worked as an interpreter of Chinese in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) before his appointment of Professor of Chinese at Leiden University in 1872. He is well known for his contributions to the field of Chinese studies; including his study of Chinese Triads *Thian Ti Hwui: The Hung-League Heaven-Earth*, his Dutch Chinese dictionary, his literary translations and *T'oung Pao*, the first international journal of Chinese Studies, which he co-founded with French Orientalist Henri Cordier (1849–1925) in 1890.

The aim of this study is to complement the history of sinologists and translators of Chinese in nineteenth-century Europe with substantive material from the Netherlands. It will contribute to debates on images of China through translation and it will shed light on Schlegel’s role as translator in the context of European sinology and his place/status among other sinologists who were translating from or into Chinese.