

Background of Dutch doctors in Japan during the Bakumatsu-Meiji Period

Harm BEUKERS

Most of the Dutch doctors that practised in Japan since Pompe van Meerdervoort's arrival, were students of Training College for Military Surgeons in Utrecht. With the exception of A.F. Bauduin they were trained after the reorganisation of that College in 1841. This meant not only that their education had a stricter military character, but also that it followed the anatomical-physiological school. Medicine should root in pathological anatomy and physiology and should ultimately be based in chemistry and physics. For that reason the students were well trained in sciences, physiology (then including histology), pharmacology and pathological anatomy. Moreover, they received solid training in medical practice. Ideas in the field of pathology and therapeutics were generally German inspired.

Although the College had no formal relation with the University of Utrecht-in a sense there was a controversy - it was under the influence of the University's intellectual climate. Particularly important was the idea of positivism propagated by the philosopher C.W. Opzoomer (who also taught Nishi Amane and Tsuda Mamichi during their stay in Holland). More directly influential were professors like G.J. Mulder, who reformed university education in chemistry and pharmacy, and F.C. Donders, founder of Dutch physiology and ophthalmology.