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The life of the German chemist-apothecary Caspar Georg Carl Reinwardt (1773-1854) offers a fascinating window on Dutch culture and society in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. By providing an in-depth analysis of his multi-faceted career in the Netherlands and the Malay Archipelago, this study sheds light on the co-evolutionary character of science, governance, and empire. It argues that the seeds of Reinwardt’s professional flexibility lay in his practical training in one of Amsterdam’s chemical workshops and his socialization in a broader cultural context where the improvement of society and economy played a crucial role.

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