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"Crowdsourcing *avant la lettre*: Henri Cordier and French Sinology, ca. 1875-1925"

100 word summary: This article argues that the French sinologist Henri Cordier (1849-1926) used his private correspondence with a vast international network of diplomats, administrators, missionaries, writers and scholars of every field of Asian studies between the 1870s until his death in 1926 to produce knowledge about China. Indeed, his unpublished correspondence, housed in the Bibliothèque de l'Institut de France in Paris, demonstrates a collaborative knowledge production on a global scale long before the digital revolution. Moreover, Cordier's letters further show his correspondents giving him guidance or professional mentoring at a crucial moment in the development and professionalization of European sinology.

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In press: special issue "Cultural Exchange and Creative Identity: France/Asia in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries"

Guest Editors, Aimée Boutin and Elizabeth Emery

Edward Said's *Orientalism* has cast a long shadow over the relationship between France and Asia by emphasizing Western artists' fantasies of "Oriental" Others. This issue seeks to highlight much more active nineteenth- and early twentieth-century French relationships with the *Extrême-Orient* (particularly China, Japan, and Korea) in which cultural, economic, political, and creative exchanges blurred cultural and geospatial borders, thus leading to what many scholars and diplomats refer to as "privileged links" with Asian countries. Contributors use a variety of methodologies and approaches to explore artistic, cultural, and economic interactions related to collecting, education, travel, translation, and aesthetic appropriation.

Crowdsourcing *avant la lettre*: Henri Cordier and French Sinology, ca. 1875–1925

Ting Chang

THIS ARTICLE FOCUSES ON one individual, the Frenchman Henri Cordier (1849–1925), who became an authority in Asian studies as a bibliographer, author, and editor.[1] Although he maintained the dominant mode of Westerners investigating and writing about Asia instead of reversing the flow, his work sheds light on the vital role of multinational and multidirectional exchange in the development of modern sinology**.** Beginning with his first major work, the *Bibliotheca sinica*, a vast bibliographic dictionary of European writings on China that put him in the canon of Western *sinology*, Cordier relied on an international network for information and improvement.[2] I suggest that he practiced a form of crowdsourcing *avant la lettre*, using the pre-digital media of pen, ink, and paper. In Jeff Howe's now familiar definition, "crowdsourcing" occurs when a company or institution takes a function once performed by employees and "outsources" it to "an undefined (and generally large) network of people in the form of an open call." Whether performed collaboratively or individually, "the crucial prerequisite is the use of the open call format and the large network of potential laborers."[3]

Cordier was not an employer, nor did he seek financial gain through his publications. He acted out of intellectual curiosity first as an amateur sinologist and later as a professional. Living through the heyday of *Western* imperialism, his advocacy of French colonial expansion was unstinting. Cordier's practices thus integrated two ideological frameworks, combining a research culture of shared knowledge production with European empire-building.

Given the subject matter, he had to write personally to those with the necessary Asian expertise or experience, in some cases at the highest levels, rather than launch open calls to a large and general crowd. A corollary is that his letter-writing helped him to develop as an asianist. Indeed, learning through correspondence was all the more vital for this autodidact in sinology, a field that lagged behind others in becoming an institutionalized academic discipline. Hence, notwithstanding the variances between his crowdsourcing and our contemporary forms, Cordier's example, like the *Oxford English Dictionary*, to cite only the most famous of cases, shows that collaborative knowledge production on a global scale preceded the digital revolution.[4]

As evidence I will examine Cordier's personal correspondence housed in the Bibliothèque de l'Institut de France in Paris, written by hundreds of hands of varying legibility on sundry papers, monogrammed stationery, official letterhead, and mere postcards. Limiting my study to a fraction of the ways in which Cordier's archives can be productively exploited, I will focus on his use of social relationships for epistemological ends. We will see that he acquired knowledge through interchange with personal and professional contacts, as did generations before and after him. I will use a minute but representative sample of his correspondence to show the central role played by Cordier's epistolarity in his professional development. As his interlocutors included pioneering students of China, the mutually rewarding dialogue that Cordier initiated during his long career, from about 1875 to 1925, meant that his letter-writing also advanced sinology more broadly for at least half a century. Among his most important correspondents were Christian missionaries, government envoys, embassy physicians, and others working in or on China in various capacities. The range of professions and countries of origin informed the complexity of relations among imperialism, nationalism, and internationalism in the cross-cultural exchange.

European writings on China began in the sixteenth century with Catholic missions from Spain, Italy, and France, followed by trade and diplomatic delegations from various powers. Thus compelled by ideological and commercial aims, Chinese studies had multinational and multidisciplinary beginnings. As a field of academic study in Europe, sinology was a latecomer, given an institutional home only in the nineteenth century when France created a "Chaire de langues et littératures chinoises et tartares-mandchoues" at the Collège de France in 1814. France also has the distinction of being one of the first countries to teach colloquial Chinese at the École des langues orientales vivantes. Cordier, however, was not a product of either ~~the~~ academic training or its more practical version. Unschooled in Chinese, he was sent by his father to pursue a career in business, beginning at the American trading firm Russell and Company, in Shanghai, at the age of nineteen.[5] Cordier arrived in 1869 and stayed until 1876.

Cordier was an accidental sinologist: in 1872, acting in his leisure as a voluntary librarian of the North China branch of the Royal Asiatic Society in Shanghai, he had the idea of compiling all Western writings on China over the centuries. His very premise was Eurocentric, focused on Western study without concern for its Chinese reception. This approach went hand in hand with the fact that he never acquired proficiency in reading or writing Chinese or other Asian languages.

Looking ahead to Cordier's subsequent success, it should be noted that the first volume of his *Bibliotheca sinica* appeared in Paris in 1878, after he had left Shanghai. It was awarded the Stanislas Julien prize in sinology in 1880, named in honor of the second Professor and Chair of Chinese at the Collège de France. Cordier would never revisit China, but he eventually became a doyen of Asian studies, teaching at the École des langues orientales vivantes as well as the École libre des sciences politiques in Paris. He later produced annotated bibliographies of Western writings on Japan and Indochina, respectively

titled *Bibliotheca japonica* and *Bibliotheca indosinica*.[6] He also co-founded and co-edited an international journal of Asian studies, *T'oung Pao* [通報], begun in 1890 and continuing today. Among his many honors was his election to the Académie des Inscriptions et des Belles-Lettres of the Institut de France, in 1908.

The *Bibliotheca sinica* opened with the rubric of "Ouvrages généraux." The first title cited is André Thevet's *La cosmographie universelle* of 1575, in which China made a brief appearance; the last item in the first edition of the *Bibliotheca sinica* (1878) was a book from the same year, *China: A History of the Laws, Manners, and Customs of the People* by John Henry Gray, LLD, Archdeacon of Hong Kong. These two works encapsulate historical change from early modern accounts of the world written by authors (no less than a royal geographer who served four kings of France) who had not seen the continents they described to accounts by authors who not only lived in but even governed foreign lands in some capacity. Concomitantly, the regions of study expanded over the centuries while the investigations in various languages including Portuguese, Spanish, English, French, German, and Italian became ever more specialized. Under natural history, for example, Cordier would list "Études sur les mœurs, le développement et les métamorphoses d'un petit poisson chinois du genre Macropode (Macropodus Paradisi Nobis)" published in 1874 by Professor N. Joly in the Faculty of Science at Toulouse (*Bibliotheca sinica*, 1878, column 188). Thus he offered not only a multidisciplinary bibliography on China, but also a quasi-summary or history of Western learning over five centuries. Cordier would produce a *supplément* to include new work that emerged during the course of his huge epistemological project. Published in 1922, the addition brought his bibliographic dictionary into the first quarter of the twentieth century.

Both editions of the *Bibliotheca sinica* are available in the original, in facsimile reprints, and in digitized form on Gallica.[7] They are the product of Cordier's vast labor in libraries and repositories worldwide. His correspondence was another important part of his research. We will focus on his early days when he actively solicited various experts; as his career blossomed he in turn became the recipient of attention from others. The Cordier archives contain only the letters he received, not the ones he wrote over the decades. Their abundance suggests that he kept every piece of paper ever addressed to him. He had good reason to do so: key names in the Euro-Asian encounter appear repeatedly, forming a veritable who's who in government, military, religion, commerce, and technology of many nations.

Western government officials who published on China during their residency were of interest to Cordier. One example is the former secretary and Chinese interpreter to the United States legation to Beijing, Dr. Samuel Wells Williams (1812–84). Another was Sir John Francis Davis (1795–1890), retired British governor of Hong Kong. Both held high office in the imperial machinery of their respective nations and produced important works of sinology. In addition to governing the new colony of Hong Kong, Davis published several books on Chinese poetry listed in the *Bibliotheca sinica*. We will concentrate on Williams, who wrote guides on Chinese language, topography, and tariff rates. His most influential book was *An English and Chinese Vocabulary in Court Dialect* of 1844. He also preceded Cordier in his research on the history of Western sinology, publishing a "List of Works upon China, Principally in the English and French Languages" in the *Chinese Repository* in 1849. Cordier praised his scholarship, later writing in *La grande encyclopédie* that *The Middle Kingdom* by Williams was "somme toute, de beaucoup le meilleur livre moderne sur la Chine."[8]

It is worth recalling that in 1874 Cordier was only a young employee in Shanghai, in his mid-twenties when he contacted Williams in the U.S. legation in Beijing. The latter was a

veteran "China hand" of four decades. In reply to Cordier's request for biographical details, he recalled his first arrival in Canton, in 1833, as a missionary to direct the press of the American Board of Foreign Missions (Bibliothèque de l'Institut de France, Correspondence d'Henri Cordier MS5486 pièce 29, undated). He had also been on the historic American expedition with Commodore Perry to Japan in 1854. Williams subsequently took part in negotiations with China over the Treaty of Tientsin (Tianjin) during the Second Opium War that led to such conditions as permanent western legations in Beijing and the legalization of Christian proselytism in China. In other words, Williams had negotiated the very embassy in which he would work and represent his government. Five years after being appointed secretary to the American legation to Beijing, in 1855, Williams was promoted to *chargé d'affaires*. He would resign in 1877 and become the first professor of Chinese at Yale, the first university to teach the language in the U.S.[9]

Letters from Williams to Cordier dating between 1874 and 1875 seem conventional and even trivial at first. However, I suggest that when viewed in historical context, even short memos played a role in Cordier's apprenticeship in Asian studies. In March 1875 Williams acknowledged receipt of Cordier's article, "A Narrative of the Recent Events in Tong-King" (MS5486, pièce 26, March 12, 1875). The events in question were the failed French incursion in Tonkin (northern Vietnam) in 1873. At the heart of the matter was Francis Garnier (1839–73), a French naval officer who first explored 5,000 miles of terra incognita in the Mekong valley in Southeast Asia, followed by the Yangtze valley in central China. Garnier was sent to Tonkin to settle a minor dispute in 1873. Acting without permission from his government, he captured Hanoi, the capital, followed by most of the nearby forts in the Red River Delta. This unprovoked aggression was finally stopped when the Vietnamese, with Chinese help, killed Garnier and his men in a brutal ambush. The French government then suspended its expansionism (temporarily).

Cordier published his article in the *Journal of the North China Branch, Royal Asiatic Society*, the most prestigious and influential Western journal in China at the time, featuring research articles over a hundred pages in length.[10] The author emphasized that his sources were French officers who had survived the combat and that he personally had met Garnier a year before. Williams duly thanked Cordier for making him "better acquainted with Garnier's expedition and death" (MS5486, pièce 26, March 12, 1875). A contextualized reading is needed here before we can gauge the value of this exchange between a young man from France and a senior official from the U.S. concerning Vietnam, with which both Western powers would be at war in the future. At a minimum, by sending Williams his article Cordier strengthened his acquaintance with a prolific author and past editor of *The Chinese Repository*, an American Protestant journal. But more than promoting himself, Cordier promoted French colonial interests by challenging China's historic claims to the region in his article. (A decade after Garnier's death France would indeed oust China to create a protectorate in Vietnam.) Thus when the American wrote that "you have done a good service in bringing the leading facts together, and preparing them by the synopsis of the ancient history of Tongking, a region and people hitherto almost unknown to Europeans," it had considerable meaning (MS5486, pièce 26, March 12, 1875). The recognition by an official negotiator and forty-year resident in China of the young author's contribution to a field "hitherto almost unknown to Europeans" was no small endorsement. Viewed from the vantage of academic practices today, this is exactly the kind of feedback one would hope for from a senior colleague in the field. In Cordier's case, working in Shanghai, outside any formal institutional environment but within a knowledge community of Westerners living in China, this brief communication from Williams shows one of the polyvalent roles of letter-writing in Cordier's development as an asianist**.**

An interlocutor who played a still greater role in his informal training was the Briton Alexander Wylie (1815–87). Like Williams, Wylie worked for decades in China as a Protestant missionary. He was at the British and Foreign Bible Society in Shanghai when Cordier first knew him. In 1872, the Frenchman catalogued Wylie's donation to the library of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. "Wylie's library was the very foundation of my *Bibliotheca sinica*," he later stated.[11] It was there that he encountered a wealth of Western writings on China that led to the idea of a bibliographic dictionary. Such was Wylie's Chinese collection that Oxford University bought some 20,000 volumes from him for the Bodleian Library. As an accomplished linguist he made remarkable contributions to the Euro-Chinese exchange through his translation of European treatises in mathematics and sciences as well as parts of the New Testament into Chinese. The missionary's key work was his *Notes on Chinese Literature: With Introductory Remarks on the Progressive Advancement of the Art*, an annotated bibliography covering centuries of Chinese writing previously unknown to Westerners.

The ensemble of sixty-eight letters from Wylie to Cordier, dated from 1872 to 1883, is rich in proof of their mutually beneficial friendship. Wylie was responsible for Cordier's first substantial publication, the study on Tonkin sent to Williams in 1875. As editor of the *Journal of the North China Branch, Royal Asiatic Society*, Wylie had to overcome Cordier's reluctance to publish (the Royal Asiatic Society had shown little interest in the paper when he had delivered it). Wylie argued in a letter to his young friend, "you must be aware that our meetings generally are far from being demonstrative, and I may venture to say that the papers of greatest value in our Journal are those over which there has been least discussion" (MS5486 pièce 69, January 4, 1875). Despite the contorted reasoning Wylie secured the publication of Cordier's work.

Reading the letters from both Williams and Wylie to the young Frenchman highlights the way all three were united in a Sinological Republic of Letters. Wylie and Cordier, based in Shanghai, enjoyed regular contact in person. The two missionaries, Wylie and Williams, in effect formed a support network with the former encouraging, indeed pressuring Cordier to publish his work, and the American endorsing its value once in print. Through correspondence they served as mentors and advisors, to use the terminology of academia today, and helped a talented beginner make his way through the phases of knowledge production and dissemination. Their correspondence allows us to watch Cordier grow in their acquaintance and become an independent author. Indeed, in 1887, as professor at the École des langues orientales vivantes Cordier acknowledged that when the *Bibliotheca sinica* appeared, "it was to Wylie that I owed the first public recognition of my labors in the *Chinese Recorder*, the *China Review*, *Trübner's Record* and the *London and China Express*" (Cordier, "The Life" 352).

Wylie's letters prove that Cordier owed him more than the first reviews of *Bibliotheca sinica.* The Englishman was by turns his tutor, reader, editor, and research assistant. In one reply to Cordier's query he explained classical Chinese inscriptions to his young friend who lacked language skills (MS5486 pièce 72, March 30, 1875). Wylie also lent rare documents and gave advice on many aspects of the project, even regarding typography. If Cordier were to have his dictionary printed in Shanghai, Wylie wrote, he should obtain "a few pounds of Russian type [...] *capitals* and *small letters*" in Europe "to give the exact title of every book" (MS5486 pièce 88, January 10, 1877). After his retirement and return to London in 1877, he helped Cordier by sending old copies of the *China Review* and the Christian gazettes that he had edited in China (MS5486 pièce 92, November 17, 1877). He also mobilized his British network for the Frenchman now settled in Paris. Wylie described his efforts: "A few days ago when I was down at Dr. Lockhart's, speaking of your enterprise, he very liberally offered to

lend you his catalogues and materials for [your] catalogue. He has a box with several hundred (a large number) slips of paper each containing a title" (MS5486 pièce 91, undated). We can view the above as Wylie doing a version of crowdsourcing on Cordier's behalf, spreading the news of a huge undertaking by an energetic novice to collate all European writings on China from the earliest examples to his own day, and gathering materials for him. Cordier accepted Lockhart's slips of paper with bibliographic information as well as others found by Wylie. "I happened to mention your work to Mr. Jenner, a friend of mine here, who takes much interest in China," Wylie next wrote, "and he requested me to send you a copy of his [linguistic learning aid] 'Chinese Radicals phoneticised'" (MS5486 pièce 92, November 17, 1877).

These snippets form a tiny sample of Cordier's correspondence, but they provide a sense of Wylie's aid to Cordier's work-in-progress. As in the earlier case of Williams responding to the article on Tonkin, it is reasonable to infer that when Cordier published the first installment of the *Bibliotheca sinica* at the age of twenty-nine, praise from an authority such as Wylie, literate in no less than Chinese, Manchu, Tartar, Mongol, and Latin, carried special weight. "You have made use of your rare opportunities of acquiring information in a way in which few are capable, and in a way in which orientalists must ever feel grateful to you," the missionary stated (MS5486 pièce 95, October 19, 1878). But he did more than simply commend the author. In the same letter, two paragraphs down, Wylie opened a new phase of collaboration by listing errors such as Cordier's omission of the English translation of Athanasius Kircher's *China illustrata*, a monument in the history of European studies of China, and Cordier's failure to cross-reference the seventeenth-century work under the rubrics of "Geography" and "General Accounts" in the *Bibliotheca sinica* (MS5486 pièce 95, October 19, 1878).

Cordier was aware of the immensity of his project to identify and annotate a multilingual literature on China produced over centuries, hence he energetically sought

advice on gaps and errors. As illustrated by his comments on Kircher's *China illustrata*, Wylie was one of the first to reply with meticulous care. He wrote a month later, "Let me call your attention also to your col. 149 'The Japanese Expedition' by House. It appears to one the Chinese characters are reversed as they make no sense as they stand." Also noting the inconsistent printing of Chinese characters mostly from left to right in the *Bibliotheca sinica*, but occasionally in the opposite direction, Wylie recommended that the Chinese convention of printing from right to left be "invariably" adopted (MS5486 pièce 96, November 16, 1878).

Cordier's papers contain legible evidence that he grasped their value: the recipient annotated Wylie's letters in pencil, checking off titles that would be either added or corrected in the future, used in another publication or kept for reference at a later date. Indeed, Cordier did this with any letter among the several hundred that he received over the next five decades. He wrote directly on the paper, in the margins, "noté" or "pour T.P.," an abbreviation for his journal *T'oung Pao*. This explains why he kept all his letters. In some cases they were primary sources for Cordier's research, documents that he had solicited far and wide.

Wylie's communications reveal another aspect of their relationship. In addition to being a proofreader, fact-checker, and research assistant who brought materials from the attics of his friends, the Englishman acted like a concerned parent, or moral tutor, warning Cordier against the distractions of early success:

> I congratulate you on the honor of having received the Julien prize. I hope however that will not induce you to rest on your oars. I confess to a little impatience at the slowness of your progress, for much of the value of such a work depends on having it before the public complete, before the first part gets stale. (MS5486 pièce 115, October 20, 1880)

Here we see a highly personal interaction, an intimacy expressed with due restraint that differs from the style of today's crowdsourcing. In essence, without the formal procedures now familiar in academia, Wylie advised Cordier on his professional development: he should make his mark as an authority on the historiography of Western sinology by publishing more of his research, and quickly!

Within a year Cordier had brought out a second installment of *Bibliotheca sinica*. Wylie was again a diligent reader and a wise coach, mixing praise with calls for improvement. "Like the preceding it speaks volumes for the erudition and industry of the author," he wrote. The excellence "makes me long all the more for an index, but this of course cannot be had till the other four volumes are published" (MS5486 pièce 118, June 11, 1881). Wylie added that he had sent a notice of the latest *Bibliotheca sinica* to *The Telegraph*, thus playing the role of both mentor and promoter of Cordier's work. He then alluded to yet another source of information: "I am sorry you did not apply to the Secretary of the Anti-Opium Society, as he could have given you the titles of a vast number of publications on that subject which is now receiving increasing attention in England" (MS5486 pièce 118, June 11, 1881). The Frenchman duly pursued this advice.

Wylie's liberality was repaid by Cordier's energetic provision of materials unavailable in London and by gifts of books. A still greater offering where Wylie was concerned was Cordier's work on a history of religious missions and their achievements. The two men exchanged several letters on this topic. Wylie's wish for exactitude is clear when he asked to see Cordier's proofs before publication:

> You may perhaps find a little difficulty in making out the Table of Missions, but if you care to send me a corrected proof, I shall have much pleasure in looking it over again; as I feel specially interested that you should have the thing correct and

> complete. Those put down as *unconnected* and *independent*, are missionaries not in the service of any Society. So that they ought not to be put in a list of societies. The *Bible Societies* are not properly *Missionary Societies*. (MS5486 pièce 97, January 5, 1879)

As distinctions of this kind were meaningless to most laymen and therefore easily overlooked, Wylie underlined his words in the original. He returned Cordier's proofs along with his own research and more missionary periodicals:

> I have got for you a specimen of all that I can, and have gleaned what particulars I could about others in the British Museum and elsewhere, which particulars you will find annexed. There are 11 different kinds; and they all have at times a good deal about China ~~[...]~~. (MS5486 pièce 100, March 4, 1879)

He added for good measure that he had better look at any and all proofs of Cordier's "Missionary publications" (MS5486 pièce 100, March 4, 1879). Such efforts are all the more remarkable when we realize that Wylie was then losing his eyesight, the cause of his repatriation to London. In what proved to be the final decade of Wylie's life, his overriding commitment remained the spread of Christianity in China and publishing that history through Cordier. In this respect their dialogue helped both parties and contributed to the production of knowledge within and beyond the pages of the *Bibliotheca sinica*.

As noted at the outset, missionaries were among the first and most important contributors to sinology**.** Cordier drew upon this knowledge community early on, finding other informal teachers in addition to Wylie such as the French Jesuit Aloys Pfister, based at Siu ca-wei, the Jesuit mission outside Shanghai. Cordier later exchanged letters with

Séraphin Couvreur (1835–1919), another Jesuit missionary. Couvreur's groundbreaking achievement was a phonetic romanization system for Chinese that was adopted by the École française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO) to replace the dominant English system of Wade-Giles. The Jesuit's remarkable work as linguist and lexicographer twice received the Stanislas Julien prize.

For the above individuals the commitment to religion superseded politics. Wylie, Pfister, and Couvreur made no reference to the latter subject in communications with Cordier. This was not true of the final person to be considered here, Dr. Émile Vasilievitch Bretschneider (1833–1901). As resident physician to the Russian legation in Beijing from 1866 to 1883, Bretschneider added another nationality to Cordier's network of American, British, and French correspondents, and also a profession other than diplomacy or evangelism. He was a medical doctor whose main areas of research were Chinese botany and geography, in which he produced important studies, notably the *History of European Botanical Discoveries in China*, in 1898.[12] The book includes 8,000 plants, a discussion of Chinese geography, and detailed accounts of European travels to China and its tributary states up to the late nineteenth century. It remains the definitive work on the subject even today.[13]

The Bretschneider–Cordier exchange endured for more than a quarter century, from 1875 to 1901, outlasting the one between Wylie and Cordier, but with fewer letters in total. Bretschneider's first of thirty-seven letters (compared with Wylie's sixty-eight) originated in the Russian legation in Beijing. He continued to write to Cordier very briefly from Vienna on his return to St. Petersburg where he retired.

In 1875, the physician began his epistolary relationship with Cordier by asking the latter, based in Shanghai, to persuade Wylie the editor to hasten the publication of Bretschneider's work (MS 5446 pièce 12, November 22, 1875). We do not know if Cordier in fact played a role in the publication of Bretschneider's monograph, *Notices of the Medieval*

Geography and History of Central and Western Asia Drawn from Chinese and Mongol Writings, and Compared with the Observations of Western Travelers in English, in 1876. However, the Russian's appeal to Cordier, after having written directly to Wylie, highlights the interconnected world of Western sinologists in China at the time. It also shows Bretschneider's own use of correspondence and professional relations to advance his research and publications.

Bretschneider very quickly became another critical reader, sharing with Wylie a deep awareness of Cordier's contribution to the field, the scrutiny of installments of the *Bibliotheca sinica*, and a commitment to the work's accuracy and comprehensiveness. In almost every letter he helped Cordier by identifying flaws and omissions, listing problems with exact volume, page, and column references, and suggesting a profusion of multilingual literature to fill the gaps. Bretschneider's longest bibliography was sent from Beijing within months of the first installment of the *Bibliotheca sinica*. He wrote on four sheets of paper on eight sides, listing Russian, German, French, and Chinese texts that Cordier did not know (MS 5446 pièce 16, October 20, 1879). The recipient annotated these letters in his habitual manner.

However, Cordier was not the only beneficiary in this dialogue. From distant Beijing and St. Petersburg, Bretschneider gained access to various French diplomats, missionaries, publishers, and references in Paris through Cordier. Their correspondence also gave the retired physician solace when he was out of the milieu of active research and lacking the latest publications. With no one to talk to in St. Petersburg except Professor Wassillieff, who was interested only in reading Russian, he wrote to Cordier that "nous nageons dans les mêmes eaux et vous êtes un de ces rares savants de bon sens et qui travaillent consciemment" (MS 5446 pièce 21, May 21, 1884). He expressed gratitude for the installments of the *Bibliotheca sinica* and other publications regularly sent by Cordier.

The quotations above from Wylie and Bretschneider show the depth and breadth of their erudition in Chinese studies and their contributions to Cordier's work. The exchanges reveal another facet of Cordier and Bretschneider as sinologists**.** National loyalty superseded their research: the Frenchman always privileged the interests of his country as a colonial power just as Bretschneider's allegiance to Russia outweighed his engagement with Chinese botany and historical geography. His partisanship first emerged inoffensively. In an early letter he advised Cordier to meet Skalchkoff, the Russian consul general in Shanghai (whom Wylie had also mentioned). "C'est un des sinologues russes les plus distingués qui pourrait vous donner des informations bien précieuses sur le sujet de vos travaux" (MS 5446 pièce 13, November 25, 1875). Bretschneider's loyalty also comes across in his innumerable references to Russian studies of China throughout his letters, whether texts or expeditions by missionaries and diplomats from Russia. As he explained, his was first among Western nations to study China in part because the two countries shared a long border. He did not mention, however, that underlying Russia's neighborly interest in China was a hegemonic one. Indeed, Bretschneider, the author of *Notices of the Medieval Geography and History of Central and Western Asia Drawn from Chinese and Mongol Writings, and Compared with the Observations of Western Travelers*, was concerned with these territories for more than historical research alone.

The Russian displayed his chauvinism most overtly in connection with the anti-foreign uprising and so-called Boxer War between China and Western powers in 1900. He wrote to Cordier, "Je me réjouis chaque jour de lire dans les journaux et les télégrammes russes reçus de la Mantchourie, où nous battons à plate couture les troupes chinoises qui se présentent. Les Chinois ne sont braves que quand ils se sentent 50 contre un" (MS 5446 pièce 46, August 14, 1900). The Chinese insurgency was one of many reasons why the country's massive defeat by the alliance of eight nations, including Russia and France, and the Russian

occupation of Manchuria were fully justified. In his view it was the "simple application de la loi du talion" (MS 5446 pièce 47, January 1, 1901). He continued in this vein over the next year: "Nous nous réservons cependant le droit d'appliquer aux Chinois en Mantchourie de temps à autre une bonne raclée, quand il serait nécessaire de rabaisser leur présomptions, toutefois sans déclaration de guerre" (MS 5446 pièce 48, February 29, 1901). Bretschneider showed that after decades of meticulous research on China this sinologist was no sinophile. Nationalism, imperialism, and knowledge production intersected in complex ways.

Cordier's older correspondents such as Wylie and Bretschneider were succeeded over the years by new generations of scholars, diplomats, and colonial administrators, many of whom had been his students at the École des langues orientales and the École libre des sciences politiques in Paris. He asked them in due course for contributions to the new edition of his bibliographical dictionary underway, and issues of the journal *T'oung Pao*. With help from his ever-expanding international network, Cordier published an expanded second edition of the *Bibliotheca sinica* that contained some 70,000 multilingual bibliographic entries.

Letters from one of his accomplished students, Paul Demiéville (1894–1979), who would eventually become a professor of Chinese at the École des langues orientales and the Collège de France, and also a longtime co-editor of *T'oung Pao*, indicate the progress of academic sinology since Cordier began his work. In a letter of 1920, Demiéville reported to "Monsieur et vénéré maître" on his research at the École de l'Extrême-Orient at Hanoi in terms that show his rigorous education: "Je me propose de choisir un des poètes qui illustrèrent la grande époque T'ang, le règne de Ming houang, et de grouper autour de ce personnage, de son œuvre et de son histoire des études aussi variées et aussi complètes que possible" (MS 5451 pièce 52, April 7, 1920). Demiéville showed that he had acquired not only skills in Chinese language, literature, and history but also a sense of how to construct a

rich study. After expressions of gratitude to his former teacher he concluded, “mon vœu le plus ardent est de réussir dans la tâche qui m’a été confiée. Oserai-je compter sur votre indulgence si la route est longue et la marche difficile?” (MS 5451 pièce 52, April 7, 1920). Through his polite formulation Demiéville suggested that research and correspondence would continue to play central roles in their knowledge production. Cordier had passed the baton to the next generation of sinologists.

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Notes

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[2] Henri Cordier, *Bibliotheca sinica: Dictionnaire bibliographique des ouvrages relatifs à l'Empire chinois* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1878–95). Starting in 1904 Cordier brought out an enlarged and corrected second edition, *Bibliotheca sinica: Dictionnaire bibliographique des ouvrages relatifs à l'Empire chinois* (Paris: E. Guilmoto, 1904–08) (rpt. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1971).

[3] See Jeff Howe, June 2, 2006, "Crowdsourcing: A Definition." http://crowdsourcing.typepad.com/cs/2006/06/crowdsourcing_a.html.

[4] For the use of pre-digital crowdsourcing in the production of the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1879, see Simon Winchester, *The Meaning of Everything* (London: Oxford U P, 1998), 107–12. In recent years historians have argued that the crowdsourcing of science on a global scale first began in the early modern period. For one such study, see James Delbourgo, "Listing People," *Isis*, 103: 4 (Dec. 2012): 735–42. Recent research on Guillaume-Thomas Raynal's *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes*, first published in 1770, has also examined Raynal's incorporation of work by multiple co-authors in his various editions. In the latest study Daniel Gordon proposes that Raynal gave *Histoire des deux Indes* "certain qualities that we associate today with open-source knowledge creation, best known through Wikipedia." Gordon draws on the work of scholars who variously examined Raynal's use of questionnaires to draw information from others, his recruitment of additional authors, and his sponsorship of essay competitions that effectively obliged people to read *Histoire des deux Indes* and kept the already best-selling book alive in ongoing public discussion. See Daniel Gordon, "Uncivilised Civilisation: Raynal and the Global Public Sphere," in *Raynal's "Histoire des Deux Indes"*: *Colonialism, Networks and Global Exchange*, Cecil Courtney and Jenny Mander, eds. (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2015), 103–17, especially 115–17. See

also Gilles Bancarel, "Écriture et information: Aux sources du réseau de Raynal," in Courtney and Mander, 137–48, and Bancarel, *Raynal, ou le devoir de vérité* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2004), 255–88. I thank Aimée Boutin for drawing my attention to *Raynal's "Histoire des Deux Indes"*: *Colonialism, Networks and Global Exchange*.

[5] René Cagnat, *Notice sur la vie et les travaux de M. Henri Cordier* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1929), 5. See also Léonard Aurousseau, "Henri Cordier," *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient*, 25 (1925): 279–86; and Paul Pelliot, "Henri Cordier (1849–1925)," *T'oung Pao*, 2e [*série*], 24:1 (1925–26): 1–15.

[6] Henri Cordier, *Bibliotheca japonica: Dictionnaire bibliographique des ouvrages relatifs à l'empire japonais rangés par ordre chronologique jusqu'à 1870*: *Suivi d'un appendice renfermant la liste des principaux ouvrages parus de 1870 à 1912* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1912). *Bibliotheca indosinica: Dictionnaire bibliographique des ouvrages relatifs à la péninsule indochinoise* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1912–15).

[7] The electronic version of Henri Cordier, *Bibliotheca sinica: Dictionnaire bibliographique des ouvrages relatifs à l'Empire chinois* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1878–95), is available on Gallica at http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5460349w. Cordier's enlarged and corrected second edition, *Bibliotheca sinica: Dictionnaire bibliographique des ouvrages relatifs à l'Empire chinois* (Paris: E. Guilmoto, 1904–08), is available at http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5432821b.

[8] *La grande encyclopédie: Inventaire raisonné des sciences, des lettres et des arts par une société des savants et des gens de lettres* (Paris: Henri Lamirault et Cie, 1885–1902), 119.

[9] See the Council on East Asian Studies at Yale University website, http://ceas.yale.edu/about-ceas/samuel-wells-williams.

[10] Fa-ti Fan, *British Naturalists in Qing China: Science, Empire, and Cultural Encounter* (Cambridge: Harvard U P, 2004), 97.

[11] Cordier, "The Life and Labours of Alexander Wylie, Agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society in China: A Memoir," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 19 (1887): 351.

[12] Kerry L. MacPherson, "Emile Bretschneider and the History of Botany in China," *European Botanical Discoveries in China* (London: Ganesha Publishing, 2002), v–xi. Bretschneider also corresponded with Kew Gardens in London beginning in 1880 and sent plant specimens from Beijing.

[13] Jane Kilpatrick, *Fathers of Botany: The Discovery of Chinese Plants by European Missionaries* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2014), 14. See also Fa-ti Fan, *British Naturalists in Qing China: Science, Empire, and Cultural Encounter* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U P, 2004), 103.