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Lobsang Shastri  
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Tenzin Nyinje  
MANAGING EDITOR

Yeshe Dhondup  
ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR

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***Enzo Gualtiero Bargiacchi, Ippolito Desideri S. J. Opere e bibliografia, Institutum Historicum S. I., Roma 2007, viii-333 pp., two black-and-white photographs, paperback (ISBN 978-88-7041-415-8; euros 30.-).***

In this volume, the 15<sup>th</sup> in the series "Subsidia ad Historiam Societatis Iesu," Enzo Gualtiero Bargiacchi affords us not only the first complete bibliography of the works by his fellow townsman, the Jesuit Father Ippolito Desideri (1684-1733) from Pistoia, but also an extensive annotated bibliography of the sources dealing with that remarkable figure of missionary and scholar, who may be regarded as the chief western forerunner in tibetological studies.

The bibliography is the result of ten years of work that the author—sometimes with the help of foreign colleagues—has carried out on original sources in libraries and archives scattered in Italy, Germany and the United States of America. Ippolito Desideri's importance in the field of Tibetan studies was hardly acknowledged during his lifetime—partially also because of the Society of Jesus' vicissitudes during the 18<sup>th</sup> century—and even later, until the publication of parts V-VII of *I missionari italiani nel Tibet e nel Nepal: Ippolito Desideri S. I.*, edited by L. Petech (La Libreria

dello Stato, Roma 1954-1956). On Desideri, who has been the object of Bargiacchi's exclusive interest for ten years, the latter published an essay in Italian, "La Relazione di Ippolito Desideri fra storia locale e vicende internazionali", in *Storia locale. Quaderni pistoiesi di cultura moderna e contemporanea*, 2 (2003, pp. 4-103), which was reviewed in *East and West* (55, 1-4, 2005, pp. 507-508).

Bargiacchi's volume is divided into two parts preceded by a foreword (p. vii). In the first part, dealing with Desideri's manuscripts and publications, the author examines in detail the various drafts of the former as well as their printed editions, taking also into consideration all the texts, either written by or related to Desideri, which are preserved in archives, especially of the Society of Jesus and of the Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide, always indicating the unpublished ones. This first part is divided in three sections: works in Italian (pp. 1-19), in Tibetan (pp. 19-20) and in other languages (Portuguese, Latin and Tamil; p. 20). The first section includes Desideri's *Relazione* ("account" of Tibet, pp. 1-4), *Manuale missionario* ("missionary handbook", p. 5), *Difese* (apologetic writings related to his mission in Tibet, pp. 5-10), letters (pp. 11-19) and drafts in Italian of Tibetan works of his (p. 19).

Part two is preceded by a foreword (pp. 21-22) and includes an annotated bibliography of all works from 1722 to 2006 that, whichever the branch of learning they belong to, deal with or mention the Italian Jesuit in a significant way, each entry being accompanied by the indication of the pages where Desideri is mentioned (pp. 23-214). Also minor writings, such as reviews and mentions otherwise difficult to trace, are listed and commented upon, always showing Bargiacchi's ability to grasp the core of a book and the main argument in an article. The reader will further find a remarkable amount of biographical data on the authors and other figures mentioned in the volume. Part two is followed by four indexes (pp. 215-302).

Entries are arranged chronologically, a choice made by the author in order to allow researchers to follow the historical progress both of Desideri's own production and of the relevant literature. This arrangement is supported by a heavy apparatus of indexes, respectively of authors, editors and translators, of periodicals, of institutions and of works of a general character (including bibliographies, dictionaries and encyclopaedias), allowing the researcher to refer to the individual entries. Several entries are accompanied by a summary of the work taken into consideration as well as by significant quotations drawn from the same.

In a long caption on the last page, Bargiacchi points out that Desideri was the first scholar to provide a "correct interpretation" of the mantra *om mani padme hūm* (p. 303). Such statement is right in philological terms, inasmuch as the Italian Jesuit realized that *padme* is a vocative form of *padma*, although he did not venture to provide a translation of the spell. As may gathered from F. W. Thomas, S. Konown and D. Snellgrove's remarks, the feminine vocative *padme* means "her of the jewelled lotus" (not "lotus in the jewel" as still commonly believed), where "her" refers to Avalokiteśvara's knowledge (*vidyā*, feminine in Sanskrit) as personified by his female counterpart. Hence it is an invocation actually directed to the *bodhisattva*'s wisdom as symbolized by the goddess Tārā (cf. D. Snellgrove, *Buddhist Himālaya. Travels and Studies in Quest of the Origins and Nature of Tibetan Religion*, Himalayan Book Sellers, Kathmandu 1995, pp. 116 and 308-309).

This book represents a solid piece of bibliographical work, as complete and documented as a scholar may desire, the first step towards the publication of a biography of Ippolito Desideri, on which Bargiacchi is working. It represents a useful tool to investigate not only an exemplary figure of missionary and scholar, but also the history of European exploration in Tibet as well as the latter's cultural, social and political history in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The author is updating his work in order to put it on a website especially devoted to Ippolito Desideri: <http://www.ippolito-desideri.net>.