

DESIDERI PROJECT

1.Reasons for research

Compelled by the heartfelt quotations above and struck by the beauty and depth of the missionary's writings, I have been committed since 1997 to a long and passionate research into his life. He is a fascinating figure, showing both modesty and masculine pride, combining a captivating heroism with irreproachable holiness. His ability to reason in a lucid manner, alongside his sympathetic and compassionate attitude, made him amazingly penetrating. Simply think of his enlightening explanation of the central concepts of Buddhism, such as emptiness, which is expressed in unsurpassable terms. Tucci said that "even in our times few westerners can properly understand the depth of this doctrine; so it is marvellous how Desideri, who had no knowledge of Indian philosophy, was able to grasp back then the real meaning of those challenging ideas."

First of all it was necessary to clarify the reasons why the account of his journey and discoveries were not published, and why he was so relatively unknown despite his huge undertakings and the chorus of recognition he received from very important figures like those quoted above and many others from various different disciplines (geographers, explorers, historians, anthropologists, linguists, orientalists, religious academics, etc.).

[Enzo Gualtiero Bargiacchi, website <http://www.ippolito-desideri.net>]