

## DESIDERI PROJECT

### 5. Lectures 2004-2006

On 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2004 I held a lecture about Desideri in Rome, introduced by Vittorio Kulczycki, at the “L’Angolo dell’avventura e dei grandi viaggiatori”, (Lungotevere Testaccio 10; angolo Via Romolo Gessi) of “Avventure nel Mondo” (presentation in “Viaggi Avventure”, n. 4, 2004, pp. 7-8 and mentioned in the Rome events of several daily newspapers). It attracted many participants and aroused much interest, resulting in another evening held on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2007 (see below). As well as publishing a review of the essay on Desideri, “Avventure nel Mondo” circulated it appreciably.

On 17<sup>th</sup> December 2004 the “K2 fifty years on: scientific research in extreme environments” conference was held at the central office of the National Research Board in Rome. It was attended by the highest authorities: ministers (Giovanni Alemanno), under-secretaries, chairmen of scientific institutes (Fabio Pistella, CNR; Vincenzo Cappelletti, Soc. Ital. di Storia della Scienza; Franco Salvatori, S.G.I.; Agostino Da Polenza, Comitato Ev-K2 CNR; etc.), and papers were given by the leading Italian academics in the various sectors in question. The paper by Dott.ssa Nadia Fusco, for the S.G.I., held the figure of Ippolito Desideri in the greatest esteem following the recent publication of the essay in “Storia locale/2”, duly recommended to the audience (this part of the account does not appear in the published summary of the conference proceedings).

The publication of the essay on Desideri provided an occasion to organise a meeting, which was held on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2005 at the Gabinetto Scientifico Letterario G. P. Vieusseux (Sala Ferri di Palazzo Strozzi, Florence), by Vieusseux-Asia and the Società di Studi Geografici, Florence. The meeting, entitled “Italian travellers in Tibet”, introduced by Maurizio Bossi (Director of the Romance Centre of the Gabinetto Scientifico Letterario G. P. Vieusseux) and coordinated by Adriana Boscaro (Università Ca’ Foscari, Venice), opened with my paper (“Ippolito Desideri and the discovery of Tibet and Buddhism in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century”), followed by Erberto Lo Bue, lecturer in Tibetan language and history from the University of Bologna (“Fosco Maraini’s contribution to knowledge of Tibetan culture in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century”). The third paper, by Prof. Paolo Marrassini (of the University of Florence, former dean of the Faculty of Letters), “Oriental studies in Florence between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries”, was not given due to illness. The meeting was very successful due to a large number of expert participants and the interesting discussions, and was mentioned in long articles in the Pistoia section of “Il Tirreno” (12.1.2005, p.VII / Pistoia. L’Agenda, *Un saggio di Bargiacchi su Desideri protagonista al Gabinetto Vieusseux*) and “La Nazione” (18.1.2005, p. IX / Agenda Pistoia, *Enzo Bargiacchi presenta il suo «Desideri» al Vieusseux*) and in the Tuscan section of “Il Giornale” (18.1.2005, *Vieusseux. Tre secoli di viaggi da Desideri a Maraini*); it was also mentioned on the Florence pages of “La Nazione” (16.1.2005), “La Repubblica” (18.1.2005) and the “Rivista Geografica Italiana” (a. CXI, fasc. 4, December 2004, p. 811). The text of this conference was published in the

“Bullettino Storico Pistoiese”, a. CVIII, 2006, pp. 155-156, under the title *Reflections on a long-underestimated Pistoiese missionary*.

On Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2005, after the annual festival “Letteraria” held in the Biblioteca Comunale Forteguerra, Pistoia, I held a conference entitled “The discovery of Tibet and Buddhism. The 18<sup>th</sup> century Pistoiese Jesuit Ippolito Desideri at the origins of modern travel literature”. This conference was introduced by Giovanni Capocchi (Pistoia city councillor for culture) and Giorgio Petracchi (history professor at the university of Udine) and attracted a large and active audience. It was reviewed in the Pistoia section of “Il Tirreno”, 30.9.2005 and 23.10.2005 and “La Nazione” on 23.10.2005. The proceedings of this conference were published under the title of “Ippolito Desideri at the origins of modern travel literature” in “Geostorie”, (quarterly newsletter and bulletin of the Italian historical-geographical study centre), year 16, no.2, May-August 2008, pp.171-187.

On Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2005, at the monastery of San Domenico in Pistoia, during the 2005-2006 programme of the “Maritain” Cultural Centre (reported in “La Nazione” on 28.10.2005) introduced by Mariangela Maraviglia, I held a conference entitled “Ippolito Desideri and the first contrast between Christianity and Buddhism”. The lecture was pre-announced in lengthy articles by Mariangela Maraviglia (*Ippolito Desideri e il primo confronto tra cristianesimo e buddismo* in *La Vita*”, Tuscan Catholic newspaper, a. 108, n. 41, Sunday 20.11.2005, p. 7, Pistoia Sette) and by Cesare Sartori (*Il Tibet ‘scoperto’ tre secoli fa da un pistoiese* in “La Nazione”, 22.11.2005, p. IX Agenda Pistoia). It met with great interest, as shown by the article by Matilde Palandri (*Ippolito Desideri missionario in Tibet* “La Vita”, a. 108, n. 43, Sunday 4.12.2005, p. 7). The proceedings of the conference are published with the title *Ippolito Desideri e il primo confronto tra cristianesimo e buddismo* in three parts in the bi-monthly “Appunti di Viaggio”, spiritual research notes (Rome), in the first three editions of 2006 (year XV, nn. 82, 83, 84, January-February, March-April, May-June, respectively pp. 38-43, 44-49, 32-37).

On 27<sup>th</sup> January 2006 I gave a paper entitled “Ippolito Desideri’s Tibetan experience” at the international conference “Languages and cultures of the missionaries” (Udine 26<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> January 2006) organised by Nicola Gasbarro and Carla Marcato for the International Plurilingualism centre and the Department of Germanic and romance language and literature of the university of Udine (with the collaboration of the department of Philosophy, the centre for Canadian culture and the board for the development of humanistic and linguistic studies). The conference was opened by the dean of the University of Udine, Furio Honsell, and the dean of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literature, Vincenzo Orioles. The proceedings, edited by Nicola Gasbarro, have been published (Bulzoni Editore, Roma) in January 2009, in two volumes: *Le culture dei missionari* (pp. 376: *L’esperienza tibetana di padre Desideri*, pp. 101-124) and *Le lingue dei missionari* (pp. 321).

On Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2006 I held a lecture, introduced by Andrea Ottanelli (editor of the journal “Storia Locale”), entitled “Ippolito Desideri S.J.: the extraordinary journey and exemplary life of a great Pistoiese” at the Amici di Groppoli association’s centre, Villa di Groppoli (Pistoia).

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