DESIDERI PROJECT

8. Bibliography of Desideri

A complete review of Desideri’s works (from manuscripts to publications) with an extensive logical bibliography equipped with a generous anthology (E.G. Bargiacchi, *Ippolito Desideri S.J. Opere e Bibliografia*), was published in March 2007 by the Istituto Storico della Compagnia di Gesù (I.H.S.I.: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu) in the series “Subsidia ad Historiam S.I.

The volume is divided into two parts. The first part gives an extremely detailed, philologically rigorous and exhaustive analysis of the works, from manuscripts to publications – all the various drafts of the manuscripts and the printed editions they became. It also discusses all Desideri’s documents or those referring to him, preserved in the historical archives especially by the C.d.G. and “Propaganda Fide”, with specific indication of those which are unpublished. The second part contains a very extensive bibliography of all the monographs or articles which refer in some way to Desideri.

The analysis, always conducted according to the original sources, leads to bibliography complete in all its elements. The bibliographical description is accompanied by an indication of the pages where the missionary is quoted; very often there is a short discussion of the work in question and all the most significant quotations are reproduced extensively. It might be said that this piece of work brings together everything relevant ever written about Desideri. As well as the bibliographical indications concerning a large quantity of writings from all disciplines, it also contains a remarkable harvest of biographical data about the various authors and figures discussed.

The bibliography follows a strictly chronological order, which is extremely useful in order to follow the events historically but it is also efficiently equipped with indexes: for the authors (or people discussed, with a graphical distinction), periodicals, institutes and titles of main works referring to Desideri or of a general nature (encyclopaedias, dictionaries, general or sectorial histories, bibliographies, etc).

The work has a general value and makes it possible to reflect on the great and exemplary figure of the unjustly neglected missionary. It also provides all the tools for more in-depth study. It will soon be online on the “Ippolito Desideri” site edited by various Pistoiese and regional institutes with the support of expert national specialised institutions such as IsIAO, S.G.I., I.G.M., I.H.S.I., international plurilingualism centre, etc. and important international links.

The bibliography follows a strictly chronological order which is a very useful aid in tracing the events historically, but it also contains extensive indexes: for the authors (or those people it concerns, graphically distinct), periodicals, institutions, and also for the titles of the main works referring to Desideri and those of a more general nature (encyclopaedias, dictionaries, general or sectorial histories, bibliographies, etc.).

The bibliography of Desideri, announced in Arnaldo Nesti’s editorial in “Religioni e Società” (as mentioned above) is available (price €30) from the Istituto Storico della Compagnia di Gesù, Borgo Santo Spirito 8, 00193 Roma – tel. 06 68977466 or 06 68977462 – email: ihsiroma@sjcuria.org. It can also be requested in bookshops: Libri dall’Asia, Mario Rossello’s bibliographical studio (Via Nazario Sauro 21 - 43100 Parma - tel. e fax 0521 221329); Taberna Librarìa owned by Federica Lucarelli (Via della Rosa, 38 - 51100 Pistoia - tel. e fax 0573 994562; e-mail: info@tabernalibria.com).

Here are some comments about the bibliography.

Enzo Gualtiero Bargiacchi has already devoted a great deal of study to the activities and works of Ippolito Desideri, the early 18th century Pistoiese Jesuit missionary who made a significant contribution to knowledge of the country of Tibet and above all to understanding of its culture and civilisation with particular regard to language and history and the religious concepts of Buddhism. Bargiacchi now presents us with a bibliographic index as useful as it is accurate, the first part dedicated to manuscripts and complete and/or partial editions of Desideri’s work [...] and the second (naturally larger) section including a logical, chronological bibliography with an anthology of comments. Use of all these indications is facilitated by analytical indexes placed in the final section, concerning access by author, to periodicals, institutions and general works (bibliographies, dictionaries, encyclopedias, histories, etc): it is therefore an indispensable tool for anyone interested in developing deeper study into the many themes connected to European penetration (not only in religious terms) of Asia and the reactions and mentality of our continent [F. SURDICII, “Geostorie”, January-April 2007].

[The work] stands out as a valuable tool for researchers into the history of exploration and travel and scholars of Tibet, and Asia in general especially India and China, the Himalayas and Karakorum [L. ROMBAI, “Rivista Geografica Italiana”, December 2007].

In this volume, the 15th 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 founder of 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, always verified and examined critically, in libraries and archives scattered in Italy, Germany and 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’s vicissitudes during the 18th century — and even later, until the publication of parts V-VII of Luciano Petech’s I missionari italiani nel Tibet e nel Nepal: Ippolito Desideri S. I. (La Libreria dello Stato, Roma,1954-1956). On Desideri, who has been the object of Bargiacchi’s exclusive interest for a number of years, the author has 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), which has been 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). The first part, dealing with Desideri’s manuscripts and publications, examines in detail the various drafts of the former as well as their printed editions. The author deals also with all the texts, either written by or related to Desideri, which are kept in archives, especially of the Society of Jesus and of the Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide, indicating even the unpublished ones. It is divided in three sections: Italian works, Tibetan works and works in other
languages (Portuguese, Latin and Tamil). The first section includes Desideri’s famous *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. 11-18) and Tibetan works (pp. 19-20).

Part two is preceded by a foreword (pp. 21-22) and includes an annotated bibliography of all works from 1722 to 2006 that, whichever their branch of learning, deal with or mention the Italian Jesuit in a significant way (pp. 23-214). That 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 of both Desideri’s own production and of the literature relevant to him. This arrangement is supported by a heavy apparatus of the indexes, respectively of authors, editors and translators, of periodicals, of institutions and of works of a general character (including bibliographies, dictionaries and encyclopedias), allowing the researcher to refer to the individual entries.

Each entry is accompanied by the indication of the pages where Desideri is mentioned and, in many cases, by a summary of the work taken into consideration as well as by several significant quotations. Also minor writings, such reviews and mentions otherwise difficult to trace, are listed and commented upon, always showing the author’s ability to seize not only the essential message of a book, but also the structure of the argument in an article. Furthermore, the reader will find a remarkable amount of biographical data on the authors and on the other figures mentioned in the volume.

This book represents a solid piece of bibliographical work, as complete and documented as a scholar may desire, the first step in the direction of a biography of Ippolito Desideri, on which Bargiacchi is working at present. It represents a useful tool to investigate not only an exemplary figure of missionary and scholar, but also the history of the European exploration of Tibet as well as its social and political history in the 18th century. The author is presently updating his work with the intention of putting it on a website especially devoted to Ippolito Desideri [E. Lo Bue, “The Tibet Journal”, Vol. XXXII, n. 1, Spring 2007].

During his research [for the first essay on Desideri] Bargiacchi gathered an enormous amount of documentation; not only sifting through existing documents, manuscript and printed, by Ippolito Desideri, but also returned to the original sources, verifying research previously carried out and discovering new clues and materials.

The acquisition of all kinds of sources, concerning local history, missionary history and the history of international exploration over the last four centuries, endowed the events with the greatest importance. It is well-known that anyone who invests a great deal of energy in research will accumulate huge reserves of capital but they will also encounter all the risks and difficulties of managing it. While on the one hand, the breadth of this research develops multiple ideas originating from very varied letters (confirming the rule that mere specialisation has obvious creative limits), on the other it creates the problem of complexity. The larger the store of ideas, the higher the risk of dispersion and the the greater the difficulties in bringing the material back to some kind of unity. This is the watershed that distinguishes a researcher from a historian.

Bargiacchi has made this leap of quality, and succeeded in his undertaking to dominate the complexity of his research and display it in rigorous philological terms and narrative style.

With this first contribution Bargiacchi has definitively focused the attention of historical criticism on a figure who has not yet been rightly and adequately recognised. The awareness and appreciation of the introductory monograph in national and international scientific circles, starting with the ISIAO (Istituto italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente) and the Società Geografica Italiana, and the personal encouragement received from Luciano Petech and Fosco Maraini, have motivated Bargiacchi to continue his research with most ambitious objective of writing a biography of Ippolito Desideri.

In preparing for this more challenging monograph, Bargiacchi sent to press, for the Istitutum Historicum Societatis Jesu, the volume entitled *Ippolito Desideri S.J. Opere e Bibliografia*, which includes a presentation (and scientific examination) of preparatory materials for this work which also provide enlightenment [...] into the author’s own intellectual journey.

As we can read in the forewords to the sections of this volume, the papers collected concern both a well-founded review of the writings and works of Ippolito Desideri (from manuscripts to printed works) and the extensive existing bibliography of the Jesuit missionary. Each work has been directly verified and critically examined. The content of the fundamental works has been summarised and significant passages are often reproduced. But there is more: the lesser writings, with comments, are made available to the reader – those recommendations and reviews that are hard to find yet sometimes so rich in information and enlightening details.
The bibliography is arranged in chronological order, by publishing date. The analytical index at the end of the volume (pp.215-302) makes it possible to look up the authors, their works, periodicals, institutions and general works – everything that facilitates identification of the source, even including (as the author informs us on p. 22) “curators, prefacers, translators and all the people mentioned, with the sole exception of editors”. [...] 

The fact is that this work, as I was saying, not only gathers together (and informs us of) a series of materials scattered throughout the libraries of the world, but provides an introduction to the scholar’s working method, his intellectual ability to convert an experience drawn from a book to the conceptual level, and grasp the structure of the reasoning contained in any article, even in a short comment. [G. PETRACCHI, “Storia Locale”, December 2007].

In one of his novels, Anatole France wrote ‘I know of no easier, more attractive and delightful reading than a catalogue’. We can fully concur with the opinion of the French writer when we pick up this book by E.G.Bargiacchi on Ippolito Desideri. Like all books, also this one may be examined from different viewpoints. I would like to propose a historical-archival interpretation in which the erudition is acknowledged and its utility for works of a historiographic nature appreciated. My point of view is also that of a Jesuit who is aware of and has experienced ‘from the inside’ many of the issues regarding the history of the Society and is delighted to observe the ever-growing interest aroused in the history of his Order.

In the first place, I consider it possible and also useful to set Bargiacchi’s book in a wider context, namely that of the bibliography, or rather that of Jesuit ‘bibliographies’. The use of the plural is more than justified as two kinds of bibliographies may be defined as ‘Jesuit’: the one in which the writings of members of the Society of Jesus are presented, and that dedicated to publications on the subject of the Order founded by St Ignatius, to which Ippolito Desideri belonged. Bargiacchi’s book reflects this dual nature. Indeed, in the first part he lists the writings by Desideri; in the second he provides a reasoned bibliography on our missionary. [...] 

As no bibliography can be perfect or exhaustive, it is up to scholars of all periods to make additions and corrections to them. The book by Bargiacchi takes its rightful place in this long chain of succession and completion. [...] 

Section two of Bargiacchi’s publication also here provides a precious supplement to the concluding part of Polgár’s work as it devotes nearly 200 pages to everything (if this can be said of the field of bibliography) published on Desideri. [...] 

Today [...] we witness numerous examples of collaboration among Jesuit and non Jesuit historians. In my opinion it is precisely books like Bargiacchi’s that provide a good example of such collaboration.

I should like to conclude by quoting the Bollandist Victor De Buck when, while presenting the bibliographic work of several of his companions, he wrote in 1870: ‘A man can be very wise, finding satisfaction only in books, spending his life reading and writing them but not have any inclination towards being a bibliophile or a bibliographer. One can be an excellent librarian, book specialist, professional book trader, even an erudite, without being a bibliophile, much less a bibliographer. For the latter it is necessary to have a taste, a feel, an eye, an intuition, a wisdom, a curiosity, a patience, a wholly special kind of a attraction, that not even the best will in the world can guarantee’. These are qualities and natural inclinations that we all acknowledge as being possessed by the author of the book under review [R. DANIELUK S.J., "East and West", December 2007].

One of the great lacunae in the history of Buddhist-Christian relations has been a lack of attention to the work of missionaries who reported on Buddhist belief and practice in various parts of East and South Asia. As a result, the important work of the Italian Jesuit Ippolito Desideri (1684-1733) has not received the attention it deserves. There had been centuries of missionary contact with the Buddhists of Sri Lanka, Japan, and China, but it was not until the mission of Desideri to Tibet (1716-1721) that the connection between the Buddhism of Southeast Asia and that of China and Japan could be established on the basis of Desideri’s study of Tibetan historiographical materials.

Desideri was the first European to become fluent in Tibetan, the first to understand Buddhist Mahayana scholasticism, the first to grasp the meaning of Vajrayana ritual and practice, the first to describe the political situation of Tibet, the first to engage in serious debate with Tibetan lamas, the first to write extensively on Catholic Christianity in Tibetan.[…] 

The author of this summary of the works of Ippolito Desideri and of the entire corpus of materials related to his oeuvre, Enzo Gualtiero Bargiacchi, is convinced that even today the works of this eighteenth century Jesuit missionary have something to offer. I would agree with Bargiacchi, because I am equally convinced that the
Desiderian project is in many ways a better model for interreligious dialogue between Christians and Buddhists than any of the more recent models that have been proposed and implemented since the Second Vatican Council. [...] 

In order to gain access to the works of Desideri and his interpreters, a complete bibliography is not only a desideratum but a necessity. Bargiacchi has provided us with an astonishingly thorough compilation of Desideriana, including manuscripts and publications. The work is divided into the following sections: (1) the works of Ippolito Desideri himself, including archival entries; (2) an exhaustive year by year bibliography of writings about Desideri, anthologies of his works in missionary publications, and more recent studies and editions of his principal works from 1722 to 2007; (3) four indices that cover authors, periodicals cited, institutions, and general works. The second part is the most useful, not only for its completeness but also for the valuable summaries (in Italian) of the works listed. For example, the works of three recent Italian scholars, Luciano Petech, Giuseppe Tucci and Giuseppe Toscano are generously summarized with key quotations from their own works and from book reviews of their works.

The bibliography includes works in all European languages. It is to be hoped that the English speaking scholars mentioned under “2007” will translate this material into English for the benefit not only of Tibetologists, but also of the Buddhist-Christian community of scholarship and dialogue [F.Tiso, "Buddhist-Christian Studies", Vol. 28, 2008].

“The crowning achievement of years of research into the figure of Ippolito Desideri: with this volume Enzo Gualtiero Bargiacchi provides an extraordinary bibliographical index about the great traveller and Jesuit missionary”. [R.Eleutì, “Bollettino della Società Geografica Italiana, April-June 2008”].

The volume places itself as an indispensable starting point for anyone wishing to undertake a study of the life and work of Pistoiese Jesuit Ippolito Desideri (1684-1733), a missionary in Tibet and one of the first scholars of Buddhism, author of works on the subject in Tibetan as well as the monumental Relazione in which he condensed his impressions of this experience and which is a real goldmine of historical, geographical and anthropological information about this distant Asian country. The work is divided into two parts: the first is an accurate reconstruction of the complex tradition surrounding the works of Desideri and refers both to manuscript reflections and (often incomplete) printed editions. Particularly noteworthy is the cataloguing of the so-called lesser and less “structured” writings of Desideri, like the letters and countless exchanges in the legal dispute which was opened between the Jesuits and Capuchins to obtain exclusive missionary activity in Tibet (and in which the Jesuits were defeated, which at least partly explains the centuries of oblivion endured by Desideri’s work from that moment on). With exemplary patience the author has traced every edition of these works, even the letters, even partial editions and translations into other languages. The second and more substantial part of the volume consists of the bibliography about Ippolito Desideri, in chrononological order of publication, so that it reads like a mirror of the alternating fortunes of Desideri’s work. This bibliography aims to be complete and exhaustive and therefore is not a prior selection based on the quality of the works indicated or their type. It thus includes encyclopedias, monographs, articles and reviews of greater or lesser importance. But the author’s critical scrutiny is always present and continually manifested in the accurate descriptions and comments which follow the more important works, often reproducing some of the more significant passages. Obviously in the case of more general works page references are given for specific mentions of the Pistoiese Jesuit. The volume is completed by three hefty and very useful analytical indexes (for authors, periodicals and institutions) which permit complementary cross-referencing to the main bibliography, as we said, in chronological order. [R.Nelli, "Archivio Storico Italiano", July-September 2008].

En una primera parte el autor presenta las obras de Hipólito Desideri (Pistoia 20.12.1684 - Roma 13.4.1733), el célebre misionero del Tibet. En primer lugar, sus obras italianas: los cuatro manuscritos de Relaciones, y sus ediciones impresas, los manuscritos e impreso de su Manuale missionario, y sus tres Difese en la causa de la misión del Tibet, los tres Sommarii, 25 cartas, y & series de documentos referentes a Desideri. Presenta tambien sus obras tibetanas y en otras lenguas. En la parte segunda ofrece el autor una Bibliografía razonada sobre Hipólito Desideri y antología de los comentarios. Está ordenada cronológicamente, desde 1722 al 2007. Es el fruto de largos años de investigación y aspira a ser completa; será difícil que se pueda añadir algún dato más a los recogidos en la casi 200 páginas que le están dedicadas en el libro. Para facilitar la consulta en casi 100 páginas más propone indices de autores citados, de publicaciones periódicas, de instituciones, de obras generales.
Agradecemos al autor y editores esta plena información de todo lo que sobre Desideri se ha escrito ["Archivo Teológico Granadino", 2008].