

to its own orientation. By the same token, the reader might prefer that each of the references, heavily loaded in meaning, were utilized in a more systematic way (so as to show what would come out of a methodical application of such analytical grids). A first-hand use of some of the mentioned authors might also be preferable: it is not really obvious, for someone with a solid, direct, knowledge of the texts, in what sense, for example, the evolution of European thought ascribed to Descartes (e. g. the distinction of the body and the soul) has its origin in his writings, let alone whether it is actually present in those writings.

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HARTMUT WALRAVENS and AGNES STACHE-WEISKE:

Anton Schiefner (1817–1879) und seine indologischen Freunde. Seine Briefe an die Indologen Albrecht Weber (1825–1901), Rudolf Roth (1821–1895) und William Dwight Whitney (1827–1894) sowie den Indogermanisten Adalbert Kuhn (1812–1881).

(Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Sitzungsberichte der phil.-hist. Kl., 868. Band, Beiträge zur Kultur- und Geistesgeschichte Asiens, Nr. 89.) 445 pp. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2015. ISBN 978 3 7001 7799 9.

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Franz Anton Schiefner was undoubtedly one of the most outstanding scholars of the nineteenth century. Born in 1817 in Reval, the son of an immigrant from Bohemia, he studied jurisprudence in St Petersburg and classical languages and Sanskrit in Berlin. Back in St Petersburg, in 1852 he became a member of the Imperial Academy of Sciences and a director at its library; he was also in charge of the Ethnographical Museum and held a professorship in classical languages at the Catholic Spiritual Academy. When Schiefner died in 1879, he left many influential and pioneering contributions to several linguistic and philological disciplines – Tibetan, Indian, Finno-Ugric and Caucasian studies – and he studied myths and folklore as well. A list of his writings contains 185 items (cf. H. Walravens, “Anton Schiefner (1817–1879): Leben und Werk”, *Zentralasiatische Studien* 2007, pp. 131–69), most of them in German.

It goes without saying that an appraisal of such a man would be incomplete if it were merely based on his publications irrespective of their historical context. It is therefore highly desirable that Schiefner’s letters to his colleagues and friends be published. For the volume under consideration the editors have collected Schiefner’s letters addressed to four Sanskrit scholars, from the estates of Weber (State Library, Berlin), Roth (University Library, Tübingen), Whitney (Yale University Library) and Kuhn (University Library, Munich).

The major part of the book (pp. 21–281) contains 91 letters to Weber. As they were close friends, Schiefner not only discusses scholarly topics with Weber, but also wrote to him about his own life. Weber and Schiefner agreed with Böhtlingk in their joint rejection of Max Müller: “Indeed, the M.M. is a very peculiar plant” (“Ja, der M.M. ist eine ganz eigenthümliche Pflanze”, March 2nd/14th, 1870, p. 68; cf. A. Stache-Weiske, “Da die Herren Sanskritisten zornige Leute

sind ...': Bemerkungen zum Verhältnis von Otto Böhtlingk und Max Müller aus Briefen und anderen Quellen'', in: *200 Jahre Indienforschung – Geschichte(n), Netzwerke, Diskurse*, ed. H. Brückner and K. Steiner, Wiesbaden, 2012, pp. 65–95). Most interesting is Schiefner's conflict with Vassilij P. Vassiliev: when Schiefner had published Tāranātha's *Rgya gar chos byung*, Vassiliev accused him of having unduly used his own Russian translation. Schiefner's attempts to clarify the matter and restore peace with Vassiliev failed, and the communication between them came to an end (pp. 40 seqq., the editors also quote Vassiliev's accusation in footnote 106 in full). Schiefner summarizes: "In any case, he [i.e. Vassiliev] lacks civilised behaviour, and vanity has taken place in him instead" ("Auf jeden Fall fehlt ihm Civilisation und statt dieser hat die Eitelkeit in ihm Platz genommen", January 19th/31st, 1870, p. 63). From Schiefner's account we get an idea of how not only personal suspicions and disgrace, but also open conflicts arose between Russian scholars and their German-speaking colleagues, due to the increasing nationalism in St Petersburg. However, Schiefner did not show any nationalist attitudes. In 1870/71 he distanced himself from his warlike countrymen in St Petersburg (p. 96). Weber, on the other hand, was loyal to the Prussian rule. The political opinions of the two scholars were different, as were their religious beliefs – Schiefner was a Roman Catholic, Weber an active member of a Protestant parish in Berlin (p. 93). But, in Schiefner's eyes, such controversies could not have affected their friendship in any way: "Fortunately, we may join hands in Buddha, and I am glad that we shall not lock horns over that subject" ("Zum Glück dürfen wir uns aber in Buddha die Hand reichen und da freut es mich, daß wir auf diesem Gebiet einander nicht in die Haare kommen werden", May 7/19th 1877, p. 244). Whereas in Schiefner's letters to Weber scholarly and personal elements are often mixed, the personal component in the letters to Roth and Whitney is less prominent. With Kuhn, in particular, Schiefner had a lively exchange, especially for the comparative study legends, fairy-tales and folklore.

In the footnotes the editors most admirably have given short biographical sketches for all people who are mentioned in the letters. In addition, their names – approximately one thousand! – are collected in a most valuable index (pp. 439–54). However, the publication does not contain a subject index. For example, in 1873–74 Schiefner and Weber discussed the names for chess pieces and some other board games such as *mig dmangs* in Central Asia (pp. 162 seqq.), or in 1877 Schiefner told Weber about his research on the *Udānavarga* etc. (pp. 248 seqq.). Unfortunately one has to read the whole book in order to find such passages: the publication would have been more useful if also some other terms such as mythological names, titles of texts and scholarly subjects were presented in an index.

The volume is enriched by a collection of some small, little-known works by Schiefner (pp. 385–437), among them his German translation of Lönnrot's summary of the second edition of his *Kalevala* (pp. 391–427), a concise comparison of *Kalevala* and *Kalewipoeg* (pp. 429–31) etc. The editors also have included the "Tea Song" ("Theelied", pp. 381–4), Kuhn's funny ode to his Sanskrit fellows at Berlin, which he had written on the occasion of his own wedding party in 1858 – most probably one of the earliest compositions of a Westerner in the Sanskrit language that has survived.

Schiefner's distinguished expertise in many fields is well known. Readers of this book will indeed better understand the historical contexts of some of Schiefner's writings. They will get a good idea of how Schiefner – and other scholars – lived and worked one-and-a-half centuries ago. Particularly, they will be captivated by Schiefner's friendly style of writing, his humorous remarks and gentle irony. Thus they also will gain a vivid impression of his personality. H. Walravens and A.

Stache-Weiske are to be thanked for this most carefully prepared edition, which they have annotated with admirable meticulousness. This publication shows once more the fascination of research in history of science and biographies of scholars.

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CENTRAL ASIA

DONALD S. LOPEZ and THUPTEN JINPA:

Dispelling the Darkness: A Jesuit's Quest for the Soul of Tibet.

viii, 302 pp. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017. £23.95.

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This impressive book is the result of a huge amount of original work which adds immeasurably to the knowledge we have of Ippolito Desideri (1684–1733) himself. Most importantly, it reveals his remarkable ability in the Classical Tibetan language and his masterly grasp of Buddhist philosophy, the latter being the necessary tool for him to gain a suitable scholarly audience in the Land of Snow.

The details of his life do not form a major part of the book as they are well known from other sources. The major part deals with Lopez and Jinpa's thorough and imaginative translations from the Latin of two of Desideri's works. These are a selection from his *Inquiry Concerning the Doctrines of Previous Lives and Emptiness (Inquiry)* and a complete translation of his *Essence of the Christian Religion (Essence)*. The latter text, it appears, had been translated by Elaine Robson in 2014 but had not been sighted by the authors prior to their own publication (p. 283, n. 49).

There are two particular Buddhist doctrines which Desideri felt made it impossible for a Buddhist to believe in the existence of God (p. 13): the first was the doctrine of Emptiness and the second was Rebirth. The two works contained in this book deal in great detail with Desideri's refutation of them. Desideri's rarely seen written works are finished in a wonderfully clear, perfectly formed writing and it is this reviewer's wish that several more relevant pages might have been reproduced rather than the single one as a frontispiece.

But the marvel lies not just in the minor part, the writing, but also in the complete command of the modalities of Buddhist belief which Desideri needed to make his refutations credible to Tibetan scholars at whom they were primarily aimed. Rather than a string of jeremiads such as several other Christian missionaries had engaged in, we find a cogent and well-argued line of thought based to a great extent on the content and style of Tsongkhapa's *Lam rim chen mo*. And to a great extent his extremely beautiful and appropriate language is the equal of any Tibetan author's. When one considers, as the authors certainly have done, the brief few years Desideri had in which to master the language and the philosophy, as well as the scholarly mode of argument which would have appealed greatly to his audience of cloistered literati, the remarkable nature of his writings becomes clear. Indeed Desideri claims that a Tibetan géshé who saw his works, "having carefully read and considered them . . . praised them profusely . . . declaring that he himself was not capable of writing a work equal to it, much less of responding to my strong logical arguments" (p. 19).