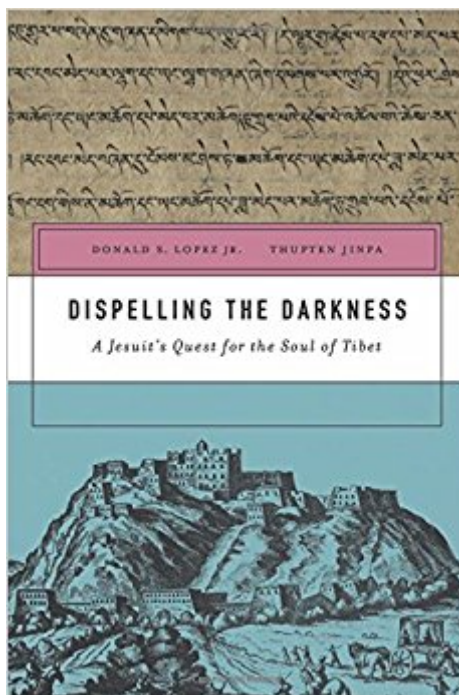




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# Dispelling The Darkness: A Jesuit's Quest For The Soul Of Tibet



## Synopsis

In a remote Himalayan village in 1721, the Jesuit priest Ippolito Desideri awaited permission from Rome to continue his mission to convert the Tibetan people to Christianity. In the meantime, he forged ahead with an ambitious project: a treatise, written in classical Tibetan, that would refute key Buddhist doctrines. If he could convince the Buddhist monks that these doctrines were false, thought Desideri, he would dispel the darkness of idolatry from Tibet. Offering a fascinating glimpse into the historical encounter between Christianity and Buddhism, *Dispelling the Darkness* brings Desideri's Tibetan writings to readers of English for the first time. This authoritative study provides extended excerpts from *Inquiry concerning the Doctrines of Previous Lives and Emptiness*, Desideri's unfinished masterpiece, as well as a full translation of *Essence of the Christian Religion*, a companion work that broadens his refutation of Buddhism. Desideri possessed an unusually sophisticated understanding of Buddhism and a masterful command of the classical Tibetan language. He believed that only careful argumentation could demolish the philosophical foundations of Buddhism, especially the doctrines of rebirth and emptiness that prevented belief in the existence of God. Donald Lopez and Thupten Jinpa's detailed commentary reveals how Desideri deftly used Tibetan literary conventions and passages from Buddhist scriptures to make his case. When the Vatican refused Desideri's petition, he returned to Rome, his manuscripts in tow, where they languished unread in archives. *Dispelling the Darkness* brings these vital texts to light after centuries of neglect.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The Jesuit missionary Ippolito Desideri's engagement with Tibetan Buddhism in his Tibetan writings combine a profound understanding of its philosophy and theology with a closely-argued, penetrating critique of some of its tenets, particularly rebirth and emptiness. This critique is articulated in the two treatises most ably and lucidly translated here by Donald Lopez and Thupten Jinpa, and their excellent introduction and notes provide the intellectual and historical context needed to fully appreciate Desideri's arguments. *Dispelling the Darkness* is an important contribution to our understanding of the ongoing encounter between Tibetan Buddhism and Christianity. (Michael Sweet, author of *Mission to Tibet*) *Dispelling the Darkness* brilliantly makes available the remarkable Ippolito Desideri, the Jesuit missionary and scholar who in a few short years achieved great erudition in Tibetan language and culture and wrote several of the first treatises, in Italian and Tibetan, about the country, its society and religions. His *Essence of the Christian Religion* and *Inquiry concerning the Doctrines of Previous Lives and Emptiness* at long last receive due attention here, by expert translations from the original Tibetan and by masterful contextual essays putting Desideri's work in the context of Tibetan and European, Buddhist and Christian beliefs and practices. Donald Lopez and Thupten Jinpa are to be congratulated for enhancing our knowledge of Desideri in such meticulous and insightful detail, thus shedding clear light on a remarkable moment in the encounter of Europe and Asia and the great drama of the Jesuits in Asia. (Francis X. Clooney, Harvard University) We, and all who are interested in the Jesuits, the history of missions, Buddhism, Tibet, and the art of translation, are indebted to the authors of this sumptuous volume for translating the texts (selections from the monumental *Inquiry* and the whole of the more manageable *Essence*) into flowing English, and providing introductions both to the tragic story of Desideri and to his writings. (John Arnold Church Times 2017-04-28)

Donald S. Lopez Jr. is Arthur E. Link Distinguished University Professor of Buddhist and Tibetan Studies at the University of Michigan. Thupten Jinpa is Adjunct Professor of Tibetan Buddhist Philosophy in the School of Religious Studies at McGill University.

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