

No country for sages – Religious (oriental) education in Germany (18th - 20th centuries)

Thorsten Pattberg, Peking University, China

This paper consists of two parts. First, I shall give a brief introduction on German orientalism from the end of the 18th to the beginnings of the 20th century. We will see that German intellectuals on Oriental thought can be divided into four classes: the philosophers (e. g. Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche etc.), the orientalists (e. g. Weber, Mueller, Winternitz etc.), the practitioners (e. g. Neumann, Dahlke, Zimmermann etc.) and the sponsors (e. g. Humboldt, Wagner, Goethe, Hesse etc.). The definition, function and interaction between these four classes will be discussed in some detail.

In the second part I shall analyze the attitude in Germany toward Oriental thought, and discuss 20th century German religious (oriental) education against three recent, post-modern criticisms: Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1987), Kamakshi Murti's *German Orientalism* (2001) and Suzanne Marchand's *Orientalized Germany* (2001). In particular, I will argue that despite the combined efforts of the four classes mentioned above, in accordance with their critics mentioned above, Germany could not - and never had the means to - succeed at establishing a "German Buddhism" for her lack of sages, or better a culture for sages; she only could welcome, so to speak, a "Buddhism in Germany" as a new exercise of the mind contributing to philosophical projects such as German romanticism and idealism. As a result, till today, the cultural outlook of the German people and their religious (oriental) education continue to remain largely "no country for sages".

[*Ch: "Shen wu suo yi" (No country for sages) is an alteration of the common Asian idiom "Lao wu suo yi" (No country for old men) referring to a society lacking filial propriety, usually said of elders, "lao", who – despite their vast life experiences and spiritual wisdom – are ignored and thus helpless.]