

“Our Tents Sometimes Vibrated with Roaring Laughter”: The Ernst Schaefer Tibet Expedition 1938-1939*

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“A story that was the subject of every variety of misrepresentation, not only by those who then lived, but also today. The events are wrapped in doubt and obscurity. Some people believe the weakest hearsays are facts; other people turn facts into falseness. Both of these ideas have been exaggerated by posterity.”

The Roman historian Tacitus, in his “Annals” book 3, chapter 19, on the story of the death of Germanicus, 15BC - 19AD.

The article entitled “L’Allemagne au-dessus de Himalaya: des SS sur le toit du monde” in *Revue d’Etudes Tibétaines* 61, Octobre 2021, pp. 53-109, by Charlie Caron-Belloni about the Ernst Schaefer Tibet Expedition 1938-1939 needs substantial comment. Herewith, I present an extensive review of the expedition to demonstrate its scientific authenticity. Caron-Belloni has relied on too many secondary sources, many of which are unreliable when checked against original archive evidence, and which all too often omit original data or take material from the archives out of context. Consequently, Caron-Belloni has produced a confusing and contradictory essay, which branches out into too many areas, which have little or nothing to do with the actual Schaefer expedition. Throughout that essay, however, when carefully ‘sifting the wheat from the chaff’, some truths can be found. However, in contrast, several unreliable statements have been cited – see “Afterword” below for a selection. To correctly assess the expedition, it is vital to understand the German language; to be qualified in the natural sciences and to have good knowledge of Tibet, her culture and history.

* This essay is dedicated to the memory of Dr Isrun Engelhardt (3rd September 1941 – 2nd March 2022), whose dedicated research over many years – which she generously shared with many other academics – to establish and publish the facts, and to debunk many far-fetched myths about the Schaefer Tibet Expedition can never be surpassed.

In this essay, I have taken what I hope is a straightforward, dispassionate approach of, wherever possible, referencing only original archive data, adding only minimum comment. The archives are paramount: they are clear, comprehensive and speak for themselves. This is the approach I have taken since 1998, when Hugh Richardson, the erudite Tibetologist and last British diplomat to Tibet suggested I should pioneer research on the then little-known Schaefer Expedition. Until then there were only short reports in Alastair Lamb's *Tibet, China & India 1914-1950. A History of Imperial Diplomacy*. Roxford Books, 1989, pages 293-94, and Alex McKay's *Tibet and the British Raj. The Frontier Cadre 1904-1947*. Curzon, 1997, pages 174-77. Richardson knew there was one member of Schaefer's team, "their medicine sahib", who was still alive somewhere in Germany and he strongly recommended I should try to find him for interview.

Richardson did not have a good relationship with Schaefer "but the rest of them were not that bad! Schaefer wrote a book "Fest der Weissen Schleier", [Festival of the White Veil] you speak reasonable German, so start with that." Armed with a letter of introduction, it took almost two years until I found Dr. rer. nat. Bruno Beger, who, on receiving Richardson's recommendation, agreed to give a series of interviews.¹ In the meantime Hugh Richardson had died and I was regrettably unable to directly reconnect them after a 62-year gap as they had both wished. Bruno Beger's memory of the expedition was pin-sharp, detailed and accurate. Although I was initially extremely sceptical, due to the expedition participants all having been members of the Schutz Staffel – the SS (Protection Echelon also known as The Black Guard) – and some being members of the NSDAP, the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter Partei (Nazi Party / The National Socialist German Workers' Party), everything he told me I could corroborate in original archives and publications. What was surprising in these records was the depth, breadth and quality of the scientific research, and even though I deliberately looked for it because of my preconceived negative prejudice about 'the Nazi expedition', the total lack of Nazi propaganda or ideology in, for example, Wienert's "Preliminary Report on the Magnetic Results..." or in Schaefer's book *Geheimnis Tibet* and in the cine' film of the same name or in Schaefer's *Fest der Weissen Schleier* etc. (I am open to being challenged on this by academics who can provide any new, unknown, original 1938/39 Schaefer expedition data – rather than secondary 'interpretations' – which demonstrate any Nazi propaganda or ideology in the expedition's aims and results).

¹ Personal letter dated 7th February 2001 following an initial telephone call.

Ernst Schaefer was an internationally recognised zoologist, as evidenced by his participation in two earlier expeditions led by Brooke Dolan II, under sponsorship of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia (today the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University). On the second expedition of 1934-1936, when he was in charge of the scientific work, Schaefer realised he needed to lead another mission based on completely new lines. Hence his 1938-1939 expedition was a multi- and cross-disciplinary ("holistic" to use Schaefer's term), scientific investigation. It became inadvertently trapped in the complexities of domestic and international politics on the cusp of the Second World War. Those politics are mostly outside the scope of this essay, and I shall set them aside in order to concentrate and focus on the actual Tibet Expedition itself. (It must be borne in mind that this was a time of working and living under an increasingly totalitarian regime where lives were at great risk for opposing it. It was also a time when scientists needed patronage that was as influential as possible). The expedition was and has been labelled with various names such as the "SS Tibet Expedition" or the "Nazi Tibet Expedition" etc. which has often caused knee-jerk negative reaction and blind prejudice caused by post-war knowledge of the horrors and crimes of the Nazi regime. Call it what you will, its title is not important and need not be argued about. What is important is what the expedition *actually* set out to do and what it *actually* achieved.

Working on the concept of "take nobody's word for it" I shall demonstrate below, in sections, which, importantly and for absolute verification of evidence, require extensive quotations, summaries and paraphrasing of original documents, such that it cannot be stated that interpretations are being made or things are being taken out of context. Such lengthy original texts from the expedition have not previously been published to this extent; but by doing this, however tiresome and unusual it may be judged to be, it allows readers to assess for themselves what the expedition actually involved. This approach of putting the various aspects of the expedition into sections, which I find to be unavoidable, perhaps presents this essay at times in rather a brusque, disjointed 'telegraph' style.

Most of the results of the expedition's multi-disciplinary studies of the Natural Sciences have been omitted in many publications and mass media reports about the expedition made in recent years, which have disproportionately concentrated on, or misrepresented and overemphasised the mission's physical anthropology almost to the exclusion of every other scientific investigation. As can be seen below in Schaefer's lecture to the Himalayan Club, Calcutta in July 1939, out of 20 projects, only a total of three related to anthropology. However,

despite this small number and due to the excessive attention that has been paid to the anthropological research, it is necessary in this essay, also out of proportion, to look in close detail at its actual aims and results.

In addition to original archives, I sometimes need to draw on detailed academic research in other disciplines such as that by Lang, Hutton, Weingart and Wojak. By far, the best research on the Schaefer expedition had been done in meticulous, accurate, painstaking detail, almost all from original sources by the late Dr. Isrun Engelhardt, who left not a single archive leaf unturned. As she explained, "Schaefer's old style handwriting was so bad that it often took more than one hour to decipher and transcribe a single page." No other researcher has had the ability or has taken such a dedicated, time-consuming approach to unearthing the actual details of the Schaefer Expedition. Special note should also be taken of González, who has produced an excellent annotated bibliography of all of Schaefer's publications.²

There is a myth that there were secret purposes behind the aims of the expedition, the main one of which was that it set out to covertly find remnants or common origins of a supposed Aryan Master Race on the Roof of the World in Tibet. However, if such an aim was 'covert' or 'secret', then how can anyone who did not actually participate in the expedition ever possibly know? A secret remains a secret until it is exposed, when it is then no longer a secret: Q.E.D. No primary archival evidence has ever been produced to support this supposed secrecy. When proponents of such ideas are challenged to produce verification of their claims, they are "forced to admit after conscientious research and, for example, after searching all files in the National Archives in Washington, that they could find nothing "about the occult activities and interests of the Third Reich concerning Tibet," they often conclude with innuendo."³

It is interesting to note that even at the time of the expedition there was baseless innuendo and suspicion made against it, for example in Theos Bernard's September 1939 article in *Asia* where he comments that "there has recently been a visiting Nazi delegation in Lhasa, and it may be safely assumed that its several members did not come for their health." Yet Bernard contradicts himself with a photograph caption reading "A German mission spent some months this past spring in Tibet gathering scientific data. As a good-will mission it paid a visit to the Holy City of Lhasa".

² González (2010: 83-96).

³ Engelhardt (2008: 63-96).

In fact, it is important to note that the word "Aryan" is not to be found in any original document of the expedition; either in its aims, its progress or its results, for the simple reason that the expedition was established to do genuine research on multiple Natural Sciences and not at all to search for any supposed Aryans. The following statement eloquently sums up the position.

If it could be shown that Nazi scholars promoted this 'myth' [of the Aryan race], then we would have a simple model to show how racist ideology undermined science and scholarship. However, while the term 'Aryan' was used in various fundamental ways in Nazi Germany, there was no academic support at all for its use as a strictly racial label, and by 1935 this was accepted as orthodoxy by the political authorities. There was complete unanimity among scholars of race, and in official publications, that the notion of an 'Aryan race' lacked any scientific basis... [therefore]... The 'ideological distorted science' or 'pseudo-science' model of Nazi thought is thus potentially quite misleading.⁴

The Expedition's Original Destination Was Not Tibet

One absolutely fundamental consideration, that has almost been overlooked, is that the original destination for the expedition was not Tibet, but rather the region between the eastern outliers of the Himalayas in Assam as far as the Kokonor area to the north, and from the eastern border of the Chinese lowlands towards the central plateau of Tibet. The planned research route was from the tropics of Assam to the palaeo-arctic plateau of northeast Tibet via the Irrawaddy, the Salween, the Mekong and the Yangtse-Kiang rivers as far as the Amnye-Machen mountain-massif (near to where Schaefer had travelled with Brooke Dolan II), and the city of Sining. The research on this route was to be integrated with research carried out in the western Chinese province of Gansu as well as integrating findings from the return journey via the province of Sichuan, following the Yangtze to Chunking, thus crossing the border between sub-tropical China and the Tibetan highlands. Research projects were to include: 1) geology-

⁴ Hutton (2005: 3). See also: Hutton <https://hiphilangsci.net/2013/07/24/rethinking-the-history-of-the-aryan-paradigm/comment-page-1/#comment-34994>

geography, 2) anthropology and culture, 3) palaeontology and pre-history, 4) biology-zoology, and 5) botany.⁵

However, the intended route and destination could not be followed due to the tense pre-war international political situation and had to be changed at short notice. At the conclusion of a lecture in Calcutta on 25 July 1939 [see below], Schaefer stated, "Shortly before we left Germany, I received a telegram from the [Chinese] Minister of Economics saying, 'please postpone expedition.' The [German] Foreign Office advised me to do so. I could not, I said we are going, and off we went. I dropped the Amnye Machin project and we went to British India, though I was warned many times, that to enter Tibet from the south is more or less impossible."

The Expedition's Aims

The above "Ziele und Plaene" [Aims and Plans] document was partly translated by the British Foreign Office on 5 May 1938.⁶ This is given here verbatim because it is singularly the most important and fundamental original reference in English that demonstrates unequivocally what all the original objectives of Schaefer were.

Aim and plan of the Tibetan Expedition of Ernst Schaefer

1) Geological-geographical aim

An attempt will be made at a causal-analytical observation of the field of exploration, which, by reason of its physio-geographical conditions, is one of the richest areas of the world in discoveries. It is the task of the geologist – to secure records of the geological structure and the surface formation, and to make records of terrestrial magnetics, as well as maps. The field has, up to the present, only been explored by pure geographical specialists, with the result that we possess no reliable and exact records of this loftiest and most mighty mountain group. Everything that has been done up till now in the realm of geological geography in East Tibet has been concerned merely with surface observations – with the exception of the explorations of the Englishmen Gregori [sic], who worked in the southern border-territory and the southern riverbeds. We have, up to the present, as little information on the min-

⁵ Bundesarchiv Berlin NS21-682 dated 3-12-1937. On paper headed "Das Ahnenerbe e.V. "Ziele und Plaene der unter Leitung des SS-Obersturmführers Dr. Schaefer stehenden Tibet Expedition der Gemienchaft "Das Ahnenerbe" (Erster Kurator: Der Reichsfuehrer SS).

⁶ British Library archive, Oriental and India Office Collections (OIOC) L/P&S/12/4343 pp.362-366

eral findings as we have on the structural problems of the mountainous regions in East Tibet. We have also no exact observations of any sort of the geological age of the different mountain systems, and the bare, undulating plateau lands.

2) *The anthropological-ethnological aim*

Because of the vertical formation and the high mountain walls, which separate the great river-valleys with the culture of their human settlements, we are concerned, in our area of exploration, with a great number of peoples of very different races and cultures. They have been subjected to very little anthropological and ethnological investigation, and are therefore of unusual interest. Besides the Mongolian Tibetans of the Tibetan plateau and the Chinese who have, in the course of centuries penetrated into the land, there are, in the secluded mountain valleys, many primitive peoples, who have retained their existence as mere racial fragments. Nearly all these "fragment" tribes have preserved their own cultures and their own languages and are distinguished by well-marked racial characteristics. We have had access, up till now, to only the most superficial observations on the origin and route of penetration of these people living in these out-of-the-way parts. In the border territory alone, between Zetschuan and Eastern Tibet proper, there are no fewer than 18 different tribes. Attempts have been made to connect these now with the Mon and Miau tribes, now with Caucasian racial elements, and also with the Veddoïd Indians. Further north, in the upper steppes of Tibet, live the nomad tribes which have, till now, remained absolutely unknown, and which are especially interesting because matriarchy is the rule among them. These tribes, it appears, show a strong west-Asiatic (or Caucasian) influence. The task of the anthropologist and ethnologist will be a worthwhile one for this reason and that he has here an opportunity of studying very different peoples in conditions of environment which are themselves very different from each other. Prehistoric and palaeontological discoveries have, until now, only been made in the border country between China and Tibet notably by Edgar (English) and Bowles (American) near the frontier town Tatsienlu. As the excellent collections of the English in British-India (that is, in the south of our field of our exploration) and those of the Americans on their expeditions into Mongolia have brought to light very informative material, it is to be expected that Tibet as well (a land of which we know nothing prehistorically) is also a source for palaeontological and prehistoric discoveries. We can already indicate that we presume that Tibet was raised as a mountain-block at a, geologically speaking, very

recent date, for its animal world is composed very largely of ancient elements whose development has remained a standstill. It is the task of the anthropologist to support pure collection and observation by the measurement of skulls and the making of moulds.

3) The biological-zoological aim

The results of the last American expedition to Tibet in 1934-36 (with Dr. Schaefer as scientific leader) show that, in the mountain masses which separate China from Tibet, there are in the remote parts animal species and fauna belonging to the ice-age, which have been preserved there in small retreats to the present day. The whole territory, however, forms a bio-geographical junction for the fauna-region of the Himalayas, India, East Asia and northern central Asia. This is the only place in the world where the abundance and variety of form of animal life is to be found in vertical belts over so very small a space* (Translator's note [1938]: This may refer to "time". I don't know) [*sic*]. East Tibet and West China can be regarded as the key-territory for historical and animal-geographical problems. Over and above this, this mountain territory, because of its enormous climatic differences, offers as does hardly any other, an opportunity of studying environment, ecology and the historical development in species and genera. An attempt will be made to form collections of the rare animal species which are of historical, animal-geographical and systematic interest. This applies also to the entomological examination of the area. The zoological-gardener's task is also one which will repay effort, for all mammals of the territory, which are among the rarest big-game in the world, have never been exhibited in any zoological garden; for another reason also, namely that of a number of rare animals have been tamed by the Tibetan princes. This would mean that the only difficulties to be overcome would be those of transport and acclimatization.

4) *The Botanist* has the task of observing the useful plants of west China and east Tibet. As Eastern Asia is regarded as the home of most of our useful plants, the problem is two-fold: (1) the original form shall be sought for and (2) the winter-hardened and drought-resistant primitive forms shall be collected.

5) *The Cinematographer* has the task of securing for posterity by means of moving pictures the big game (the species which are native to this area) which till now has been completely unknown, and which is only to be found as Pliocene remains in the remote mountain territories in the parts of the Hsifan range which are

backward (in regard to fauna), and which are giving way to the ever increasing pressure from China. The species in question are: *Budorcas*, *Ailuropas*, *Capricornis*, *Rhinopithicus* [Takin; Sulawesi Bear Cuscus, Serow, Snub-nosed Monkey] – those “living fossils”, the biology of which, in the narrower sense, was only ascertained through the two Dolan expeditions. Then the film-operator shall photograph the different tribes and their sociological conditions, and further, secure in moving-picture form a general view of the life of the complicated animal – and plant – world of this interesting bio-geographical convergence point of Asia.

The Proposed Anthropological Research – Comprising 3 out of 20 Research Projects

As already noted, undue emphasis has been placed on the mission's anthropological research in recent years, almost to the exclusion of all other research objectives. It is worthwhile, however, to understand what the ethnographic and anthropological studies really involved.

The expedition's anthropologist, Bruno Beger, found himself unexpectedly invited to join the expedition after a mutual friend of Schaefer's asked if he might be interested in going to Tibet as an anthropologist and ethnographer. A week later, Beger received a postcard from Schaefer so badly written that he misread that as a physical anthropologist he was being asked to write a primer school book on the many types of human races. A further week later Schaefer telephoned wondering why Beger had not replied to the invitation. Until then, Beger had had no intention of ever travelling to Tibet.⁷

In December 1937, a final detailed working plan was submitted to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft [German Association for Scientific Research] in which Schäfer was still assuming the destination of the expedition to be Eastern Tibet. Schaefer included the following direct quotation from Bruno Beger in his plan: [Translation from Bundesarchiv Berlin, R 135/43 p. 163381].

To date only superficial observations have been made of the origins and migration routes of the peoples that live in the areas of retreat. It is highly probable that individual groups of the legendary *Juezhi*, the *Tocharians* or the *Indians* arrived in this region on their forays, and that both skeletal remains of *these* early Nordic* immigrants and other prehistoric remains may be found, as well as remnants of blood strains here and there in the current popula-

⁷ Beger 1998: 7.

tion. In the border area between Szetschuan and eastern Tibet proper, alone, there live no fewer than 18 different tribes; *Mon* and *Miau* peoples (the indigenous peoples of China), they are brought together partly with *Caucasian* elements and also with *Veddoid-Indian* race elements. It is certain that in the research area there are three major racial groups, the *Tungid*, the *Sinid* and the *Palaeomon-golian* races, which clash together and are closely intertwined. It is now the anthropologist's task to conduct research into current ethnological conditions by means of measurements, research into characteristics, photographing and taking casts (using Poller's method), particularly concentrating on collecting material on the proportion of population, the origins, significance and development of the Nordic race [Note:- Beger is referring again to the above mentioned "Juezhi, the Tocharians or the Indians"] in this region. In addition, the steeply vertical structure already mentioned in the research area provides a rich field of evidence for investigation of the relationships between race and landscape. Chance may throw up the discovery of fossilised human remains, since it was immediately adjacent to the research area, on the fringe of the Eastern Asian mountain chains, that one of the most important human skull fossils, "*Sinanthropus pekinensis*" was discovered.⁸

This plan of Beger's has often been misinterpreted and misunderstood to wrongly claim that the plan was to search for Aryans in Tibet; a racial group which, as in the Hutton reference above, does not exist. Here, an understanding of anthropological classifications, which are various – according to the particular author – is necessary. It is generally agreed that the Juezhi/Yuezhi were nomadic pastoralists who were probably speakers of Indo-European languages first described in the first millenium BC in what is now the western Chinese province of Gansu. Some migrated southward to the edge of the Tibetan plateau. The Tocharians/Tokharians, speakers of Indo-European languages, were documented around 400 to 1,200 AD on the northern edge of the Tarim Basin in what is now Sinkiang/Xinjiang, China. Whereas northwestern and north-central India were occupied between 2,000 to 1,500 BC by peoples with linguistic affinities to Iran and Europe.

⁸ Underlining is my emphasis of what was defined as Nordic.

The British Reactions to the Expedition

*"... we need not necessarily attribute to them any particularly sinister intentions..."*⁹

German Expedition to Tibet. Homeward Bound. From our correspondent, Berlin July 1939.

According to reports reaching Berlin from the expedition to Tibet undertaken by members of the S.S. (Black Guard) under the leadership of Dr. Ernst Schaefer and under the patronage of Herr Himmler, the base at Gangtok [Sikkim] has been reached and the expedition is returning to Germany... On May 19 the expedition reached Gyantse, where there were discussions with the British military authorities concerning the future of the expedition and the transport of its specimens. The members of the party were the guests of the British officers at the King's birthday celebrations. The expedition is bringing back valuable zoological and botanical collections including 50 live animals.¹⁰

There is no indication that the expedition engaged in intrigue with the Tibetan government. They did not indulge in anti-British propaganda in any organised way.¹¹

I cannot imagine why Mr Hubbard troubled to put us on to these German press articles about the Schaefer Expedition. There is nothing new in them and nothing to indicate that the Nazis regarded this as anything more than a scientific stunt. I have sidelined an odd passage here and there which may interest you, but on the whole, it seems that they were hardly worth the trouble and expense of translations.¹²

On the way back from Mount Everest in 1938... at Tangu... we fell in with a large party of German Scientists led by a Dr Ernst Schaefer who were engaged in a very thorough examination of the fauna and flora and every other aspect of Sikkim. The party included every breed of scientist known to man: ornithologist, en-

⁹ British Library archive, Oriental and India Office Collections (OIOC) L/P&S/12.4343. Political Department's document P. Z. 3056/39 p.4. (Unknown official author. Dated 1939).

¹⁰ *The Times* [London], July 31, p.15; issue 48371; col. F.

¹¹ British Library archive, Oriental and India Office Collections (OIOC) L/P&S/12/4343 p.20. (Unknown official author).

¹² Miss Rolfe 22-2-1943; British Library archive, Oriental and India Office Collections (OIOC) L/P&S/12/4343 p.4.

tomologist, zoologist, anthropologist, geologist, and other 'ologists of whom I had never even heard. Here, if anywhere, was a team capable of clearing up any difficult problems. I took the anthropologist (an earnest, inquiring man) on one side and over a few glasses of Kuemmel [Schnapps] abjured him to spare no pains in solving the mystery of *Homo odiosus*, and begged him on no account to be put off by the zoologist who would assuredly tell him that any unaccountable tracks he might see in the snow were not those of a 'Snowman', not even a 'Snark', but merely those of a bear.¹³

The Expedition's Results

Good general accounts of the mission can be found in Schaefer's book *Geheimnis Tibet* [Mysterious Tibet], published in 1942, a travelogue lavishly printed on glossy paper, including full colour photographs; and in a ciné film of 1943 of the same name - the lively, brash, adventurous but factual script of which was translated into English. The full-length film lasting 101 minutes with English sub-titles can be viewed at the following website. The website itself is in error to state that the film is Nazi propaganda and that it was sent to seek Aryans. There is nothing to suggest these ideas in the film, viewers, however, can judge for themselves. It is a grainy copy but the best one I have yet been able to trace.¹⁴

However, in this essay, rather than taking information from the above book and film script, the expedition's results are best summarised by paraphrasing very similar data from the original English language transcript of an earlier, lengthy, detailed lecture given by Dr. Ernst Schaefer on 25th July, 1939 at the Himalayan Club, Calcutta.¹⁵ This also sheds light on his reaction to the falsehoods that would develop over the aims of the mission.

Deutsche Tibet Expedition Ernst Schaefer

We did not find any gold, nor did we find any oil, and we did not even have the instruments for finding such things with us. But the newspapers in India, as well as in England and probably also in other countries were full of untrue stories about these things and full of suspicion against us. Headlines such as "Hitler's Delegation in Tibet found oil" appeared and they did not surprise us any more after a while. **Our tents sometimes vibrated with roaring**

¹³ Tilman 1948: 134-35.

¹⁴ <https://www.themoviedb.org/movie/194405-geheimnis-tibet#TE81FBYIc3o>

¹⁵ Bundesarchiv Berlin, R135-30. Nr. 12 p.9.

laughter, when we read such articles, but we also learned, what the great freedom, by which any person is allowed to express his noble private ideas in the press, actually means. I also experienced what damage this does to friendly scientific relationships of different countries. I might add in this connection, that I have just returned from Simla, where His Excellency the Viceroy kindly and most graciously granted me a farewell audience, and from Dehra Dun, where for reasons of mutual understanding and gratitude to the Government of India, I presented the Survey of India with the results of our surveying work, which for them, have a practical and material, but for us only a scientific and theoretical value. Many viciously false rumours have been spread throughout this country and other countries about my expedition... I have to say a few words about the actual idea of the Expedition, about its aims and prospects as they were invested in my mind, and as I laid them down already in 1935...

Schaefer then explains that on the second Brooke Dolan Expedition, sponsored by the U.S. Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia in spring 1935, he realised when he was camped in the Ngolok area of northeastern Tibet, that there were few connecting links between different specialised natural sciences. So he decided to lead another expedition on completely new lines. Later, when working in America on results of the Brooke Dolan expedition, he received a telegram from Himmler, the head of the SS, asking him to explain his plans.

Having been a member of the Black Guard since a long time, I was only too glad that the highest SS Leader, himself a very keen amateur scientist, was interested in my work of exploration. There was no need of convincing the Reichsfuehrer SS, as he himself had the same ideas; he simply promised to give me all the help necessary, and I asked him to act as a sponsor of the expedition, which he graciously accepted.

The expedition's projects: [summary]

1. Terrestrial magnetism, geophysics, surveying.
2. Exact meteorological measurements.
3. Salt contents of lakes.
4. Soundings [depths] of lakes and rivers and the rapidity of rivers.
5. Measurements of exact altitudes, timber-lines, contact zones – changes of fauna and flora.
6. Collection of most important stones and minerals.
7. Collection of petrofacts and fossils.

8. Maps of geological structures.
9. About 400 complete anthropological measurements of Sikkimese, Bhutias, partly Lepchas, Lachenese, Lachung people and many Tibetans.
10. Hundreds of dactyloscopic hand and a certain number of footprints were taken.
11. Sixteen head masks of Lachenese, Lachung, Nepali, Sikkimese-Bhutias and Tibetans, men women and children.
12. Sketches of many foundations of houses and photographic pictures for the purpose of reconstructing interesting buildings such as the Potala.
13. A large and nearly complete collection of ethnological objects, embracing the cultures, both material and spiritual, and religions of Sikkim and Tibet. A third of the entire expenditure of the Expedition went into this collection, which came up to about 150 mule loads. The greatest trouble was also taken to obtain as many of the cheap everyday tools used in households, fields and handicrafts.
14. About 2,000 samples of wild flower seeds... All seeds of grains, fruits and vegetables... 4,000 – 5,000 samples, requiring 10 mule loads.
15. More than a thousand flowering plants, dried and pressed.
16. 3,500 bird skins, 2,000 bird eggs, 400 mammals, a certain number of reptiles and amphibia, many thousands of butterflies, several thousands of hymenoptera... and about 150 skulls of all existing domestic animals were collected.
17. More than 20,000 black and white still photographs of land, people, animals, plants etc... about 2,000 coloured still pictures. About 40,000 feet of moving pictures... about 4,000 feet of coloured moving picture films.

I may have left out a few points, but this gives you a fair idea, of what we were after and what my real aims were.

Secret Research in Tibet

Here is the only original source reference to any “secret work” done by the Schaefer Expedition. The following is a paraphrase of the relevant section from Wienert’s account:

Summary – The main result is a table giving declination, horizontal intensity, and dip for 55 stations in Sikkim and Southern Tibet, reduced to the epoch 1939.0. [sic] The data were obtained by the author on the Schaefer Expedition in 1938-1939. Details are given on the instruments used, and the manner of reduction. Linear formulas for a smoothed normal field in the area are derived for D, H, I , and Z . Numerous observations of vertical intensity with an Askania field-balance are used for a preliminary description of local anomalies...

(1) The original task was to get geographical and meteorological data for the biologists. Because of interest in magnetic exploration, the author decided to take along a full set of instruments and to perform a survey of this magnetically unknown region. In Sikkim there were no restrictions on the work. On the trip to Tibet scientific investigations had been prohibited by the Tibetan Government and the work had to be done secretly. On the journey from Gangtok to Lhasa observations were made during the nights. At Lhasa, under the careful watching of Tibetan officials, absolute observations could be made only twice. On March 19, 1939, when we left Lhasa, the program was changed to start at 04h, to reach the new station at 09h 30m and to complete observations at 21h. Camps were at adequate distance from inhabited places, so that nobody was able to find out what was actually done. The instruments were always kept hidden in the tents and the astronomical universal was put on the tripod only when necessary. If these activities had been discovered by the Tibetan authorities, this would have meant the end of the expedition. The Tibetan as an individual is rather harmless and extremely helpful, but in congregations, especially when involved in religious service, he becomes easily excited and dangerous.

(2) Observations of position and time – The astronomical observations, azimuth and altitude, were made by means of a Hildebrandt theodolite...

(3) Declination observations – A magnetometer designed by Professor R. Bock of Potsdam, and fabricated by Gustav Schultze of Potsdam was used... This instrument was especially designed for traveling purposes... with an accuracy of $0'.1$... etc. etc. etc.¹⁶

¹⁶ Wienert 1947.

Wienert fixed 240 terrestrial magnetic stations in northern Sikkim which, he noted, were of use to the local British Indian authorities for geological surveys, mining and aviation.

The Proposed Publication of Results, Including the Anthropological Research

The following excerpt from a memorandum that Wienert received from Schaefer outlines the contents of the anticipated publication.

Where are the mostly ethnological notes on the Lepchas (Gangtok to Chungtang) being revised? Beger must by all means finish his anthropological works on them and has to orientate himself strictly by the advancement of the work of the other scientists. I expect detailed diary-like accounts of Beger's visit to the nomads' tents around Tangu with [gra?]phical documents. The same for a detailed description of the visits undertaken together with Wienert to the Tso-lhamo and the Lonak valley. A further chapter should be written by Beger on his medical experiences, similar to how he has already written on nutrition, but in more detail. How is the situation with the models of the Potala and the Tibetan house? Has the work started or has the plan not been stipulated yet? In which department of the work do the descriptions of the population density go? I attach Beger's scientific programme in writing and ask him to write a more detailed working plan with the typewriter for me, because the account is too short. Similarly the accounts on the progress of the work should be in more detail from now on and most of all I request a schedule to know, when Beger's works can be finally done. The set-up of the working plan should be like this:

- 1.) race historical part
- 2.) race scientific part
- 3.) race-soul scientific part

In this order the volume on anthropology will be published in the anthology. Furthermore I want to get an account on the number of pictures to be published and their format, or rather I have to know how many pictures will fit on one page. On all these questions I request a written account upon return from Berlin.

Munich, the 29th October 1940

Signature Schaefer, SS-Obersturmführer

- I. Race historical part
 - a.) Preface
 - b.) The Tibetans, especially the South Tibetans
 - c.) The Bhutias from Sikkim and the Chumbi valley and other Bhutia groups in the Himalaya (Fauna)
 - d.) The Lepcha (retreat!)
 - d.) [sic] The Nepalese with the Sherpa

II. Race-soul scientific part

- a.) Introduction: race-soul scientific work in Tibet and the Himalaya, questions, shortages of the following account, the common expedition and the race-soul scientific work!
- b.) Race style and landscape – The highland Tibet and the Himalaya: The style of the background, houses, yaks and Tibetans etc.
- c.) Different types of Tibetans (Lepcha): different postures, behaviours and more
- d.) How they wish for life to be!: The best inventions, negation of conflicts by methods of avoidance etc.
- e.) Singing, laughing, dancing
- f.) The order of society through submissiveness and fear of God: hanging around, devotion, lack of effort and distance
- g.) Mercilessness: cruelty?, dullness and more
- h.) Tibetan scattered groups in the Himalaya

III. Race scientific part

- a.) Introduction: race scientific work in Tibet and Himalaya, superstitions, questions, common expedition and race-scientific work and more
- b.) The researched groups: Tibetans, Sikk. Bhutia, Lepcha, Nepalese and Sherpa
- c.) The method of research
- d.) Mass, colours, forms in comparison with neighbouring and other Mongolian groups (the Mongolian eyelid crease and its hereditary transmission!)
- e.) Connection of characteristics
- f.) Differences within the groups by region and social layer (caste!)
- g.) The race-composition of the researched groups

Concluding remarks:

The anthropological exploration of Inner-Asia in its importance for the larger connection with the race history of Europe.¹⁷

Comment

Here, for non-anthropologists and non-biologists, it is necessary to understand a few biological definitions as used at that time..

“Taxon” (plural taxa): any unit (e.g. family, genus, species) used in the science of biological classification (i.e. taxonomy). Taxa are arranged in a hierarchy. A given taxon can include several taxa of lower rank. Taxonomic categories are universally recognized. In descending order these are:- kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus, species, sub-species, race, variety, form. In biological nomenclature, race has various definitions. Race is a level below sub-species. Races may be genetically distinct populations within a sub-species and they may be defined as geographically or physiologically distinct and where genetic differences have not sufficiently accumulated to form sub-species (sub-species can interbreed, whereas different species cannot).

Europid/Europide: a grouping of humans regarded as a biological taxon, which, depending on which of the race classifications is used, have included some or all of the ancient and modern populations of Europe, Western Asia, Central Asia, South Asia, North Africa, and the Horn of Africa.

Mongolid/Mongolide: depending on which classification is used, this grouping includes the Mongols, Manchus, Chinese, Koreans, Japanese, Annamese, Siamese, Burmese, Tibetans, and, to some extent, the Inuits and the American Indians.

The taxon ending “-ide” was coined in 1891 by Maurus Horst, being taken from zoological classification, c.f. *Bovide*, *Canide*, *Felide* or *Hominide* (see von Eickstedt 1940, 58).

**Resulting from Schaefer’s Memorandum,
Beger Published his Anthropological Paper in 1944**

Relevant, detailed extracts are translated and published here for the first time in English. The paper speaks for itself.

Within the large continental countries of the earth there is no natural region and at the same time no state which is in the same way

¹⁷ Translation of *Memorandum from Schaefer to SS-Obersturmführer Dr. Wienert (for discussion with SS-Obersturmführer Dr. Beger. 29-10-1940 [Budesarchiv].*

enclosed and secluded from its neighbours by enormous mountain ranges and natural borders as Tibet. The Tibetan highland is, because of this, and because of its extraordinary height from a geomorphological and climatical viewpoint, the most reclusive and island-like region of the earth. It is therefore only natural that one finds singular and special circumstances regarding flora and fauna as well as the people. After all, there exists not only a close relationship and interaction between any living being and its environment, but the living world and environment, race and region are closely knitted together.

Creation of humankind in Tibet?

It has to be emphasized that the spreading of many plants, most of the animals and especially of humans across the inner and essential Tibet happened relatively recently. The Tertiary rise of the high mountain ranges and the subsequent creation of the Tibetan highland had caused the rise of new species, but also the displacement, even the extinction of many species and races. Many factors make it probable that this was also the trigger for the creation of humankind in Inner Asia and probably even in Tibet. But the conditions of this living space did not remain unchanged after the Tertiary. Rhythmic cold periods starting in the Quaternary brought deep changes in the living conditions, which could only be survived by plant and animal species as well as the pre-human groups by adaptation or evasion. How the species that survived after the Tertiary reacted to the Ice Age is one of the important scientific quests of biology and is still largely hypothetical. We know only one thing with relative security that – irrespective of whether or not the notion of the creation of pre-humans in Tibet is correct or not – the subsequent phases of the creation of humans and the coming into being of larger race circles during the periods of Ice-Age turmoils have to be sought outside of Tibet. In the same way that many creatures of the present flora and fauna have spread in Tibet only between and after the Ice-Ages, it also seems certain that Tibet was only gradually inhabited by *Homo sapiens* during these same periods and starting from the outside areas which had also been Tertiary retreat areas.

Early Mongolides as the first inhabitants of Tibet

The Tibetan highland seems to have become inhabited by humans later than the neighbouring regions, probably because of its reclusiveness and extraordinary height, which causes an uncomfortable and rough climate. The people living closest, especially the ones living at the border regions in the east and southeast, were proba-

bly the first to migrate into the unstructured young regions. The original people therefore consisted, as is probably rightfully assumed – there are so far no osteological proofs – of people of the Mongolide or better said “yellow” (or Circum-Pacific) race group, that lived mostly to the east and north-east of Tibet. Because coming from the East via the deep riverbeds of the large East-Asian streams and from the North via the Kokonor region the mountain walls around Tibet are most easily crossed. The inhabited area of these early Mongolids probably also included only the more densely populated areas as today, being the more fertile and slightly lower lying regions of the highland in the east, south-east and south. The island-like isolation, which should actually have promoted an uninhibited development of the first inhabitants and the low density of the population were not strong enough to avoid later and often repeated invasions of neighbouring peoples or shepherd warriors. These later intruders came mostly through the thin strip of grassland, divided by many mountain ranges, which reaches from the Kokonor region into northeastern Tibet and seems to be the actual gateway to Tibet. All other gateways leading into the Tibetan highland play lesser roles compared to this one concerning its importance for the present-day race picture of the Tibetans. A slightly larger importance as a gateway for other peoples of other races can also be attributed to the upper Indus-valley. The few military intrusions across the high passes of Nepal, India or China towards Tibet, which could always only be performed with small armies, seem to have had no or only little race-scientific impact. The foreign, racially higher developed intruders or conquerors have obviously displaced some of the original inhabitants towards the borders of the Tibetan highland.

The importance of the north-east Tibetan gateway for the race-history of Tibet

But of which race is now the essence of the Tibetan people, those intruders that have come in several waves from the northeast into Tibet and displaced or assimilated the original inhabitants? The northeast route of the high plateau is the focus of the struggles of Inner-Asian peoples and races. Here Chinese, Mongolians and Turkic peoples clashed with the Tibetans and took turns in ruling the region within a history of several thousand years. Time and again migration routes and advances of peoples, who spread from Europe over all of Inner Asia, ended here and took the route along the lines of the least obstruction towards the young and only lightly populated Tibetan highlands. At the northern border of this territory runs the famous Silk Road, the aorta of Inner Asia, which

over many thousands of years connected the Middle East and Europe across East Turkestan with China. Here the Silk Road had its weakest point for the infringement and conquest by the marauding nomad warriors from North-East Tibet or from Mongolia as well as for a jamming, bursting or trickling away of the advances of the migrating peoples from the west just before the gates of China, which was densely populated and later secured from intruders by its unique wall. Looking at the mixture of races in this region and its neighbouring peoples today we have to take these migrations, which still go on and which at the same time provoked race-struggles and brought with them displacements and assimilations of races, strongly into account. The larger part of these movements is so young when seen from a viewpoint of the history of race-development, that a naming of races has to be applied with great care. Some big and difficult tasks are waiting for anthropological research in this field, which can only be fulfilled in cooperation with related sciences of biology and geology. Only the answers to some large questions in these fields will enable us to find answers to the composition of races in the Tibetans. Moreover this will clarify the relationship of races in China, Mongolia and East-Turkestan, which afterwards may have to be seen in a new light.

The different approaches of Anthropology towards the problems [i.e. questions] of the Inner-Asian races

Two different approaches exist within modern anthropology towards the problems of the Inner- and East-Asian races. The one holds back and waits for new viewpoints and materials, bit by bit, resulting from exact anthropological research in those regions, which are far from the present events in the world and are reachable for the European scientists only with great efforts and strain. With the help of older anthropological writings, with regard to geographical and only partly known geological facts, and taking into account the few anthropological records, that were mostly taken only in passing and at the main caravan routes – wherein often the enthusiastic description of certain very striking types for the sake of later successful publication, caused a completely distorted image of the inhabitants of the regions – [whereas] others try to develop a race-picture and a map of races in the way of a generous and in parts quite speculative putting together and division of races. Both approaches stand on opposite sides like old and young, but should get together and find each other in the middle. What our complete anthropology is missing is first of all, matter-of-fact and thorough field research, which cannot be replaced even

by the most beautiful hypothesis or the most daring synthesis. According to the description of the Asian races, which have become popular in recent years through von-Eickstedt's "*Rassenkunde und Rassengeschichte*" [Race Science and Race History], three versions of east-Mongolid races of the Mongolid race-circle and one version of the mountain-races belt of the Europid race-circle meet in the regarded region; being the Tungid, Sinid and Palämongolid races on the one hand and the Turanid race on the other.

The Inner-Asian race

The clearest case is that of the Tungid race, which should be called the Inner-Asian race, because it is the only race whose original home-region has to be sought in Inner-Asia and because its main inhabited region is still Inner-Asia, meaning East-Turkestan, Tibet and most of all Mongolia. As a result of the anthropological research of the author in Tibet it can be assumed that the share of the Inner-Asian as well as the Tungid race is evenly distributed in the different social classes of the population and is relevant; definitely it is much larger than has been assumed up to now in the anthropological sciences. The climatic relationship of Tibet and Mongolia especially promoted a migration of this race into Tibet. Also in favour of this are the many struggles between Mongolians and Tibetans even in recent history in the Kokonor region. Relatively pure representatives of this race according to their physique were found all over South-Tibet. It seems though, as if an intense mixing with some Europid blood, has created types that look somewhat like our Ostic (Alpine) and East-Baltic (East-Europid) races, which makes it harder for our eyes to differentiate this race.

The Sinid race

The Sinids, who according to von-Eickstedt make up the second main race-share of the Tibetan people next to the Palaeomongolid race, are described as being of higher and thinner growth with longer heads and thinner but nonetheless flat faces. The Mongolian eyelid crease is less strong and the hair black and tight. In the writings on this subject the probably repeated admixtures of Europid blood in the creation of this race are always emphasized, which probably even caused fundamental changes in the Chinese culture time and again. In the opinion of the author the Inner-Asian race also has a part in the creation of this relatively young race or has possibly even created this race together with Europid blood. Even though the clear differentiation of traits of the Sinid race towards the other races is not fully researched yet, the exist-

ence of the latter cannot be doubted. The Chinese people also, obviously show their face. The Sinid should simply be called, like in the vernacular, the East-Asian race, because it is to be found mainly in the centre of East Asia, in China and it makes up the main race of East Asia. Surely it plays a similarly important role for East Asia as the Nordic race for Europe. But whether its several subdivisions in north-, central- and south-Sinid are justified will have to be shown by future anthropological research in China. In the end it is also a question of how narrow or wide one wants to read the term race when looking at humans. The differences in the looks of the inhabitants of North and South China are obvious, but this could be explained as in Germany and other countries, too, by different proportions in the mixture of races and does not necessarily have to have an inherently racial cause. It must not be forgotten that the Chinese as well as the Mongolians and all other peoples are a people made up by a mixture of different races.¹⁸

Comment:

Much commentary about the physical anthropology of the expedition has stated that it was supposedly looking for Aryans in the Tibetan aristocracy. The first paragraph of the following excerpt makes it clear that it is actually the Sinid/East Asian racial element that shows up the most in the aristocracy.

It [the Sinid race] shows mostly in the Tibetan aristocracy and in the smaller cities, next to Europid traits and gets proportionately stronger towards the east and northeast. [As an example] a young woman from Shigatse, who comes from a very high-ranking family, seems to be mostly of Sinid race but with a strong part of old-Mongolid race, which according to von-Eickstedt has created the more "South-Sinid" type.

The family of the mint official of Lhasa, who belongs to the high-ranking aristocracy of Tibet, seems to be to a lesser extent admixed with Sinid blood, which can be assumed by the only slight characteristics of the existing share of the Inner-Asian race-part. The Chinese traders with Sinid looks, who were seen by the

¹⁸ Beger 1944. See also Hutton (2005: 95), referring to Firth (1956 [1938]), who discusses the term Aryans as a name for types of language only and who also attacked the notion of racial purity, noting that "all modern populations must be supposed to be very mixed from a racial point of view." Hutton adds: "But no Nazi racial anthropologist would have pretended otherwise." Indeed, this understanding of racial mixture is the exact viewpoint stated by Beger at the end of the above paragraph on the Sinid race.

members of the Tibet expedition in Lhasa, would have looked un-Tibetan even in Tibetan clothes, because they looked so different from the Tibetans. Half-breeds of Tibetan women and Chinese mercenaries from the last Chinese rule in Tibet were mostly easily recognised as such.

The Turanid race

Towards the importance of foreign and especially Europid blood-admixtures to the Sinid race, one can take the often-mentioned view that they play only a small role, because of the large numbers of Sinids and their extraordinary power of assimilation. This view does not hold up though, when regarding the admixtures of other race-parts to the relatively smaller number of inhabitants of Turkestan, which has the function of a bridge and therefore has had an extraordinarily turbulent history of many thousands of years with planned exterminations, displacements or movements of the inhabitants of whole regions. In this population with its amazing amount of different small peoples and tribes which it has preserved until the present day, it is supposed that the Turanids, who are thought to be quite close to the Ostic (Alpine) race, have remained the main race. Could it be that Deniker, Haddon, Montandon and von-Eickstedt have gone too far in this assumption of the perseverance of a Turanid race and have elevated rather similar types of mixed Europid and Mongolid blood into its own race?

Europid race-parts in Tibet

Taking into account several facts it can be deemed as secured that several waves of peoples of mainly Europid race-components, coming from Turan and also carrying Ostic (Alpine) race-parts, met in this region with groups of peoples of mainly Inner-Asian race and became mixed-up. In favour of this concept also, is that the Europid characteristics increase when going from South-Tibet to North-East-Tibet and their stronger existence in groups of peoples at the eastern and southern border of Tibet, who once migrated here coming from the north-east and have stayed more or less pure-blooded since. Within the North-Eastern Ngoloks and other related tribes in the pilgrimage camps in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, and also with the Sikkimese Buthia were found several persons with blue eyes, children with dark-blond hair and some especially Europid types, in whom a Nordic-race element seemed to be obvious. Last but not least there are signs in the Tibetan tales, traditions, history, language and material culture for a racial and cultural connection to the Europid race-circle, especially though to

Asia Minor, which would have to be researched in more detail in cooperation with pre-history, history, ethnology, linguistics and theology. The change from peaceful nomads towards shepherd-warriors, which happens at several intervals in Inner-Asia, the author wishes to attribute not to affliction because of overpopulation, as Prof. Machatschek did in his lecture on Inner-Asia at the 400-year jubilee of the Munich University, but more to the intrusion and mixture with certain Europid race-components.

The importance of Ladakh, India and Nepal for the race-picture of Tibet

Because of the above, we have a more or less detailed overview of the influence of the important races on the Tibetan race-picture. In how far the intrusion of the Europid race across Ladakh, which over centuries shared a border with the West-Tibetan kingdom Guge, reached into Tibet and to what extent is so far not clarified. The Ladakh people, who speak a Tibetan dialect and belong according to Ujvalfy to the Tibetan race, actually are much closer to the neighbouring strongly Europid Balti than to the South-Tibetans. Race-components that seem to belong to the "Vorderasiatisch" [ancient Near East] race could have come through Ladakh into South Tibet. The Ladakhis from Leh who visited Lhasa for the New Year celebrations as representatives of the Maharaja of Kashmir impressed the members of the last Tibet expedition especially with their strongly Europid, almost Nordic facial features but in dark colours. Racial elements that could have come across the Himalaya from India were not seen by the author in the physique of the Tibetans. The enormous differences between the Indian and Tibetan landscapes and the resulting differences in the populations have made mixing only rarely possible. The Indian elements in South Tibet as assumed mainly by Rockhill are probably not so much race-components from India, Nepal or Kashmir but more such of the Europid race coming from North-East Tibet.

The tendency for race-development in Tibet

Altogether the Tibetans seem to be strongly mixed. According to the research of many Tibet researchers they do not seem to know any racial barriers between the sexes within the population. This may have to do for one thing with the morality of the peaceful nomads and on the other hand with the fact that new immigrants brought only few women with them over the difficult passes and bad caravan routes onto the high plateau. The mixture of the single races in Tibet is so strong and brings about such a uniform

type of the Tibetan that it is very understandable that respected researchers like the brothers Schlagintweit were already speaking in the past century of a Tibetan race. The seclusion and the extreme environmental conditions surely would strengthen the process of race-development more than in any other part of the earth so that if admixtures of other races would stop, after few generations of Tibetans one could possibly already speak of a sub-variety or even a race.

The race picture of the Tibetan

The race picture of the Tibetan, is in conclusion, mostly influenced by the races of the Mongolid race-circle, which are mixed here to a large extent with Europid blood. How strong the specific shares of the races are cannot be estimated yet, especially since the clear differentiation of the forms is not securely clarified. Research on the race-picture of Tibet in all detail and in all parts of the country is therefore a task for further research. The best insight into the Tibetan race-relations and at the same time an overview of the races of the Tibetan population in the different provinces, can be found at the time of Tibetan New Year in Lhasa when it is the pilgrimage site of many Inner-Asian but mainly Tibetan Buddhists. The population of Lhasa itself, as a result, seems to incorporate, more or less harmoniously mixed, all the race-components existing in the west, north, east and south.

The transitional position of the Tibetan race-picture

A race-scientifically exact subdivision of the Mongolid race-group, as well as the classification of the peoples of Inner-Asia to the so far assumed specific Mongolid races, seems to be daring. The difficulties for the researcher lie mainly in trying to put together a detailed and thorough account of the races of this region similar to what has already been achieved in the research of the history and characteristics of the races in Europe. This can only be achieved by a circle of dedicated and cooperating scientists with a carefully planned and fully synthetic research. A certain transitional position of the Tibetan race-picture between the Mongolid and the Europid race-groups with a stronger element of the Mongolid part can be safely assumed via the morphological facts, which are explained by Tibetan pre-history and history. They seem to be symbolized by the two lucky and healing charms that are painted on almost every Tibetan front door: the crescent of the moon open towards the top with the flaming sun, the sign of the Mongolian hordes of Ghengis-Khan, above the swastika of Indo-Aryan origin.

For the complete research in all fields of the "human" in the Sven Hedin Institute for the research of Inner Asia, and possibly also for biology, this transitional position is of great importance; moreover, it could gain importance for the demarcation of front fields and spheres of influence of Greater Europe and East Asia, because the fate of Inner Asia will not be determined on its own grounds but by the bordering superpowers. If Europe wants to retain or, rather, regain an influence in these regions it will have to throw in all factors in its favour, even the racial factors.¹⁹

For a comparison with almost identical anthropological research undertaken in 1951-54, see the following excerpt from a work by a group of internationally-recognised scholars, paraphrased here:

This expedition was to comprise zoological, botanical and anthropological investigations in the widest sense of the word, and to include ethnographical, religious, archaeological and physical anthropological studies... One of the tasks it had been deemed advisable to realise was a description of the physical anthropology of the Tibetans; both by examinations of the living and by the collection of skeletal material... in the course of the years from 1951 until 1954 Prince PETER [sic] obtained for the expedition anthropological measurement sheets in respect of 5000 Tibetans... Tibet has been a coveted prize for scientific investigations. The physical-anthropology of the Tibetans formed no exception to this." Non-metrical observations in this research project included:- pigmentation of skin; colour of hair; eye colour, hairiness and hair type; beard growth; eye shape; nose shape; jaws; ear shape. "How are variations to be explained? ...Mongolian traits towards the east can be explained by the geographical factor. China, with her Mongol population, lies to the east and has had close connections with Tibet for centuries. India with a Europoid population lies to the south and also links up with Tibet... it is thus natural to explain the less typical Mongoloid populations in the southern provinces [of Tibet] as being due to the greater distance from the Mongolian centres in the north and east, and as a result of relations with a Europoid India... The Tibetans are thus typical Mongoloids, characterised by low height, relatively short extremities, mesocephalic heads, broad faces, medium noses, narrow eyes with Mongol folds, sparse hair, a yellowish skin, dark, wiry hair, dark eyes and powerful jaws." Research in nearby Sikkim and

¹⁹ Beger 1944. 29-53

Assam found “it has been possible to show a certain non-Mongoloid influence (Dravidian or Indo-Europid) on the Boro group.”²⁰

From this one example amongst a great many, we can see that the physical anthropology of the Schaefer expedition corresponded to the international standards of the time. The genetics of individual people could at that time only be observed in the phenotype (i.e. the observable morphological body), as opposed to the underlying genotype with its complexities and interactions of dominant and recessive genes, all of which are not physically displayed, but which can now be explored by modern DNA and mRNA analysis etc. The question of the racial composition of Tibet and the surrounding regions had already been a topic of research for years before the Schaefer Expedition, as it still is today. See Afterword for a small selection of published examples.

The Idea of a Nordic-Aryan People in the Ahnenerbe

From the above, it can be seen from original expedition data that the idea that the Schaefer expedition was looking for “Aryans” in the Himalayas and Tibet is a misconception. Such a concept was, however, held by some people within the Ahnenerbe. In interviews, Beger stated that “all the expedition members laughed at this stupid idea.”

The following paraphrase of selected passages from Junginger and Akerlund (2013) helps to explain the views held in the Ahnenerbe.

The idea of a Nordic-Aryan people who lived around the Atlantic before emigrating southwards after the Atlantis catastrophe was put forward by the German-Dutch amateur historian Herman Wirth (1885-1981), in his best-selling book *Der Aufgang der Menschheit. Untersuchung zur Geschichte der Religion, Symbolik und Schrift der atlantisch-nordischen Rasse* (Wirth 1928). This drew on Bal Gangadhar Talik’s 1903 book *The Arctic Home in the Vedas. Being also a New Key to the Interpretation of Many Vedic Texts and Legends* (Talik 1903). Talik developed a theory of an Arctic Aryan Homeland from where Aryans set off south to India and Europe. Wirth was a founding member of the predecessor organisation of the Ahnenerbe, the *Geistesurgeschichte*. His ideas were dismissed as being imaginative conjectures and

²⁰ H.R.H Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark, L. Edelberg, J.Balslev Jorgensen, K. Paludan, and H. Siiger 1966, p. 5.

outside those of academic reasoning and rational thinking. By chance, Wirth met Himmler at a party in October 1934. Himmler wholeheartedly consented to Wirth's ideas, which gave Wirth the opportunity in July 1935 to found a new society for the study of primeval ideas, the "*Studiengesellschaft fuer Geistesurgeschichte, Deutsches Ahnenerbe.*" However, Wirth's reputation was severely damaged when he translated a fake chronicle about a Friesian family, such that in 1936 even Himmler withdrew his support and, under pressure of public criticism, Himmler "transformed the Wirth-society into a scientific brain[s] trust" changing the name in 1936 to "*Das Ahnenerbe,*" appointing Walther Wuest of Munich, professor of Indian and Iranian studies, as president in 1937, with Wirth resigning in 1938.²¹

How Schaefer Dissociated Himself from the Ahnenerbe

Ideas of remnant Aryans heading south to Tibet and so forth were not originally those of Himmler and certainly not those of Schaefer, who established his autonomy from Himmler, as seen in the three following excerpts from, first, a letter from Schaefer to Beger at the end of December 1937:

...I set the yardstick for our coming expedition quite independently... This independence awarded me by the Reichsfuehrer – and without which I would never have taken on the charge...²²

Secondly, in a letter from Sievers to Wolff:

In the meantime the task of the expedition has diverged too far from the goals of the Reichsfuehrer SS and does not serve his ideas of cultural studies [because] it would lie outside the scope of his work.²³

Thirdly, in a memo by Sievers:

²¹ From Junginger and Akerlund 2013: 8-9; 50-51; 108; 115-16; 124-25.

²² Bundesarchiv Berlin, R 135/43 pages 163367-163370.

²³ Bundesarchiv Berlin, NS21-628 January 23, 1938.

At the request of the Reichsfuehrer SS, SS Obersturmfuehrer Schaefer's expedition was not conducted by the Ahnenerbe.²⁴

Claims that the Expedition was "Racist"

Here, reference is made to original sources. Readers of this essay are invited to assess the following statements for themselves.

[Prof.] Clauss says "each race is valuable in itself, within its own environment, within its own area. It is clear for us today that the Nordic race ranks number one, but not because we say it is the best race, but rather, because it has created the German people in its current form, because it is in the majority, and because it belongs in the Middle-European Region."²⁵

SS officers are never to drop the natural barriers to other races or foreigners, however, they must not treat them as a lower order (the latter is valid especially for the researcher of races as this would then block their access to the others' race and soul).²⁶

Examination [of the film *Geheimnis Tibet* of 1943] demonstrates that the accused and his scientific collaborators have never advocated any ideas of racial discrimination and that the results of the expedition were evaluated according to strictly scientific points of view and that the film, after 1945, [i.e. re-issued as *Lhasa Lo* on safety film rather than on dangerous nitrate film] was without any substantial changes. The film also depicts the anthropological method of measuring and moulding. It presents the scientific work of the accused [in the skeleton collection – see below] in an objective way.²⁷

Recent Nonsense

New invented nonsense continues to be published about the Schaefer Tibet Expedition. As recently as 2012, international media sensationally reported on "The Buddha from Space" which had appeared for

²⁴ Bundesarchiv Berlin, NS21-682 May 27, 1938. This and the last two excerpts are all cited in Engelhardt 2008: 76.

²⁵ Lecture 1-2-1937 by Bruno Beger. "Geschichte der Rassenkunde."

²⁶ Letter to Himmler from Bruno Beger, 3rd May 1941. p.15. point 7. Incomplete archive ref. Bundesarchiv folio 164751, p. 15; also cited in Weingart 1995: 56.

²⁷ 15-1-1971. Affidavit. Staatsarchiv Muenchen. Stanw 34.878/92.

sale and which had apparently been “looted by the Nazis in Tibet in the 1930s.” This was supposedly an ancient priceless Tibetan Buddha statue carved one thousand years ago from a meteorite, which had crashed to earth 15,000 years earlier. It is actually made from the third largest piece ever found of the Chinga Iron Meteorite from the Tanna Tuva border area between Siberia and Mongolia. Further research indicated that the statue was a modern counterfeit made by a well-trained western sculptor who had no background in Tibetan art. The attribution that it had been collected by the Schaefer Expedition was baseless and no source could be produced for such a claim.²⁸

There can be no doubt, that when crossing certain high Himalayan mountain passes today and tomorrow, it will be possible to hear the ghosts of the expedition members roaring with laughter, making their ghostly tents vibrate once more as they read such newly minted, absurd stories!

Afterword: Miscellaneous Corrigenda

World War Two: The Skeleton Collection

Caron-Belloni's essay includes references to the later criminal skeleton collection, which need to be commented on. There is no direct connection between The Schaefer Tibet Expedition and the later events of anthropological measurements in Auschwitz and the subsequent murders in Natzweiler for the criminal skeleton collection. They are separate events. The article contains the following misleading statements.

More than 2,000 Tibetans participated in the collection of this [anthropological data] but none of them could have suspected that these scientific experiments would fuel one of the most important mass murders in history a few years later. (p. 72)

As far as the numbers are concerned: “About 400 complete anthropological measurements of Sikkimese-Bhutias, partly Lepchas, Lachenese, Lachung people and many Tibetans. Hundreds of dactyl-oscopic hand and a certain number of footprints were taken.”²⁹ Also,

²⁸ For more on the Buddha from Space, see: <https://descrier.co.uk/science/is-the-space-buddha-a-counterfeit/>; Bayer 2012; *The Lama Wearing Trousers: Notes on an Iron Statue in a German Private Collection*. Hamburg: Zentrum für Buddhismuskunde. Buchner et al. 2012; Engelhardt 2017.

²⁹ Schaefer Calcutta lecture.

physical measurements and the making of body moulds cannot be described as experiments. The Tibet Expedition data was not used in the later mass murder.

All the anthropometrical measurements collected were compared to the measurements taken on Northern Europeans... as well as on those deported to concentration camps of different ethnic types in order to serve the Nazi racial experiments. (p. 72)

In fact, no comparisons were made.

... the expedition's anthropologist, Bruno Beger, took a much darker turn on his return to Germany. In December 1941, he proposed to the head of the Ahnenerbe, Wolfram Sievers, to build a collection of Jewish skulls as part of his anthropological research...Beger would have reserved some for his personal use and had them sent to Mittersill Castle in Austria. (p. 82)

According to the verdict in Beger's trial in 1971 (of which a synopsis is given below),

It cannot be stated that Dr. Beger was the author of that document ("Securing the skulls of Jewish-Bolshevist Commissars"), as was thought by the prosecution. According to the comments of the expert Dr. Schroeter, Dr. Beger cannot be the author because of the style of the document.

For the facts relating to the skeleton collection, Hans-Joachim Lang should be referred to for the most definitive and detailed research on this crime and its victims.³⁰ The following is a paraphrase of part of this work.

In June 1943, the anthropologists Bruno Beger and Hans Fleischhaker... and the taxidermist Wilhelm Gable travelled to Auschwitz...[they] had Himmler's special order to make an anthropological record of alien race prisoners... In the preliminary Auschwitz Trial proceedings (1960-1968), Beger affirmed that he had had the special assignment declared as a secret Reich matter to conduct anthropological studies on Jews and to determine as many varieties of Jewishness as possible. Outside of his assignment he was also naturally interested in Inner Asians because of

³⁰ Lang 2004: 153. See also Lang and Renz: <https://www.die-namen-der-nummern.de/index.php/en/research>

his other scientific activities... For the prosecutors of the Auschwitz Trial, Beger was one accused among many... Initially, 22 defendants stood trial... in August 1965, 17 were sentenced to imprisonment, three were acquitted; two withdrew because of illness; with the indictment against Beger, Fleischhaker and Wolff still pending... It was not until October 1970 that their trial [court reference 4 Ks 1/70] began... Beger was sentenced to three years imprisonment [later suspended], for aiding and abetting the joint murder of 86 people...solely because of his activities in Natzweiler in August 1943 when he knew that the 86 would be killed... In Auschwitz... he had no knowledge of the killing plan.

Further information concerning Beger's involvement with the skeleton collection is to be found in the following excerpts from the Verdict of the 1970 Auschwitz Trial.³¹

For Dr. Beger the stay in Auschwitz "made sense" without him knowing of the killing plan: he had to measure 150 persons for Hirt... he wanted – "in passing" – to supplement his Tibet material, he wanted to do comparative measurements with Fleischhacker and he also wanted - this could not be refuted – to get information for Prof. Clauss on the situation in a concentration camp [Comment: from a post-war perspective, astonishingly, this was to find out if it was a safe refuge for Clauss's Jewish mistress]...

There is no evidence that Beger was guided by personal motives and interest...He was not put in the picture on his way to Auschwitz by the fellow accused or later in Auschwitz by others, about the true purpose of his assignment. There is no evidence for the viewpoint of the prosecution that Dr Beger was in the least one of the co-ordinators of the plan... it is not manifest that he even actively participated in the planning at all... His behaviour after the killings indicates the absence of any personal interest in the skeleton collection. Any use of the accrued materials by him is not provable...

Under the circumstances of a Constitutional State he surely would not have become an accessory to murder. His illegal behaviour can only be the result of the circumstances under the national-socialist dictatorship. Already in his youth and studies he was influenced by the NS-ideology. This may have caused the fact that in spite of his academic learning, his critical faculties and his willingness to refuse measures of the SS-leaders were weakened...

³¹ LG Frankfurt, 4 Ks 1/70.

It had to be taken into account, that he actively and effectively interceded with Himmler for his teacher Prof. Clauss, who had become seriously endangered because of his relationship with his Jewish assistant, by which he strongly helped in the saving of this woman and Clauss...

The participation of Dr. Beger partially has features of entanglement by fate: in Auschwitz he had decisively but unknowingly participated in the establishment of the skeleton collection and he was only called in to the later work because other anthropologists were not available.

Incorrect bibliographical reference

In Carron-Belloni's footnote 128 and bibliography "Sources Internet – Documentaires télévisés" Carron-Belloni incorrectly cites me "Croston, Roger, Critique de Le Secret d'histoire du docteur Bruno Beger: L'Expedition nazie, Channel 4, 2004, Ofcom. This should correctly be referenced under "Ofcom."

The quote is: "The anthropologist [Beger] affirmed in a letter to Himmler in April 1943, his approval to 'liquidate the Jews in Europe and beyond throughout the world if possible'." This sentence was taken out of context. The context is: the letter was addressed in April 1943 to Brandt, Himmler's Chief of Staff. Beger wrote to Brandt, quoting and agreeing with his former teacher Prof. Clauss in order to ingratiate himself with Brandt – with the consequentially effective aim to save the lives of Clauss and his Jewish mistress:

I am of the same opinion as Clauss that with the total eradication of the Jews in Europe and possibly even in all the world, the mental Judaism which one encounters at every step will not be eradicated for a long time yet. From this actuality there results the main research task in the science of the racial spirit, tools like the one composed by Clauss in the form of the half Jewess Lande are indispensable for this research...³²

Beger goes on to point out that Lande is fully and not half Jewish and Beger proposes a solution to safeguard the pair. This direct intervention was recognised by the verdict passed on Beger in the 1971 trial: "it had to be taken into account, that he actively and effectively interceded with Himmler for his teacher Prof. Clauss, who had become seriously endangered because of his relationship to his Jewish assis-

³² Mueller-Hill 1988: 51-52.

tant, with which he strongly helped in the saving of this woman and Claus...”³³

Citations of incorrect information

Their secret mission was to discover the origins of the Aryan race (p. 53).

Comment: There was no secret mission. The mission was an holistic approach to integrate and cross-reference many natural sciences, of which anthropology was only one part. There is no evidence that there was a mission to discover origins of the Aryan race.

The attempt was to allow the Nazis to rewrite history; to forge a new past, allowing them to legitimise the new world they claimed to set up at the time (p. 53).

Comment: No history was rewritten as a result of the expedition.

A team of the Ahnenerbe... in addition to performing scientific tasks, looked for traces of hypothetical Aryans or even Atlantean descendants... hiding in the bottom of the caves of Tibet (p. 57).

Comment: The Ahnenerbe did not organise or direct or finance the expedition. Schaefer extracted the expedition from the organisation so that he could run it under his own leadership. The idea of the expedition searching any Tibetan caves for such people is pure fantasy.

The Regent had asked Schaefer, to his great astonishment, whether Germany would be interested in selling arms to Tibet (p. 71).

Comment: An original document verifying this would be an interesting discovery.

The nobles of the country [Tibet] were the only ones who could have preserved the purest Aryan patrimony (p. 71).

Comment: There is nothing to support this statement in the expedition reports. In Beger's anthropology paper regarding the Tibetan aristocracy he states "[the Sinid] shows mostly in the Tibetan aristocracy and in the smaller cities next to Europid traits and gets proportionately stronger towards the East and Northeast." He does not mention Aryans.

Regarding Tibetan sky burials. "Bruno Beger was fascinated by death" (p. 75)

³³ For full details of this complex situation, see Weingart 1995: 165 ff.; see also Afterword, below.

Comment: This assertion cannot be supported by the archives. Unsurprisingly, however, he was “*impressed*” by a sky burial, as were all of the expedition’s members and many, if not all, foreign travellers to Tibet at the time, before or since. Here is what he recalled:

We were even more impressed by something, which lay close to the monastery, a large flat rock with bowl-like indentures. It was the burial ground for Lhasa’s dead and its surroundings. We experienced with shivers running down our spines the hacking apart of a dead woman, who seemed to have died because she could not give birth. The embryo was still in her body. The bones were smashed with large stones and mixed with Tsamba [roasted barley flour]. On a sign of the leader nearly two hundred greedy vultures and some ravens barge down for the feast. As an ethnographer I did not feel entitled not to look upon this dreadful scene. Subsequent thinking let me come to the conclusion that this form of burial actually makes good sense for this kind of rough climate with its meagre soil, the more so when it is connected with the religious belief that the soul of the dead flies into a “space in-between” on the wings of the birds. It wouldn’t disquiet me in my life to know that something like this would happen to me after my death.³⁴

Himmler desired to make contact with the Regent of Tibet (p. 76).

Comment: Actually, it was the Regent who sent a missive to Hitler. See Engelhardt 2008.

The first task of the expedition was to study the possibility of making Tibet a base for attacking British troops stationed in India... the purpose of the expedition was a means of drawing up maps and surveying passes to send guerrillas from Tibet to British India (p. 77).

Comment: There is no archival evidence for this. Schaefer actually shared the results of their surveys with the British Indian government as related in his speech to the Himalayan Club in Calcutta in 1939.

The archives are far from having delivered all their secrets (p. 80)

and

The scientific and cultural legacy of the Nazi expedition to Tibet was tainted by National Socialist thought, which motivated some members of the team.

³⁴ Beger 1998: 7.

Today the archives do not allow conclusions, which would exclude any other point of view (p. 85)

and

The members of the expedition were the only ones to know truthfully their personal motivations for participating in such an expedition (p. 91)

and

We realise the Nazi expedition to Tibet is far from having delivered all its secrets (p. 96)

and

The shadows that surround it remain difficult to explain without physical evidence in the archives and are the subject of many speculations, however mystical or esoteric, which today are the source of many cinematographic fiction and novels (p. 96).

Comment: Academics, most notably Isrun Engelhardt, have thoroughly investigated the mission archives, which are freely available to scholarship, in Germany, Great Britain and the USA. There is no evidence to suggest there are any remaining 'secrets' or archives that would radically alter the factual knowledge and factual understanding of the mission. There is no need for any speculation.

Schaefer recorded his observations on homosexuality and even masturbation... he described the various positions taken by the monks with young boys and explained the important role played by homosexuality in the high political spheres in Tibet... The expedition's archives also contain meticulous observation pages about the sexual habits of the Lachung and other Himalayan peoples (p. 86).

Comment: I know of no such accounts in the archives or references to them. The production of an original 1938-1939 document verifying this statement would be a most remarkable contribution to the study of the expedition.

The data they collected for the SS served a much darker purpose (p. 53).

Comment: What this darker purpose is supposed to be is not described.

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