

## *Review Articles*



# Some Unknown Episodes in the History of Buddhist and Indian Studies in Anton Schiefner's Correspondence with Theodor Benfey and Ivan Minaev

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### Abstract

This review article is based on the published corpus of letters by Franz Anton Schiefner (1817–1879) addressed to various Russian and foreign scholars, including Theodor Benfey (1809–1881) and Ivan Pavlovich Minaev (1840–1890). The corpus, edited by Hartmut Walravens and Agnes Stache-Weiske and completed in 2022, marks the conclusion of their work on Schiefner's surviving epistolary legacy (unfortunately, his personal archive has not survived, and only a few of the letters addressed to him are now available). Anton Schiefner served for many years at the Imperial St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences. He was one of the most distinguished European philologists of the 19th century, notable for the breadth of his interests and his contributions to various branches of philology, although he is best known as a Tibetologist and Sanskrit scholar. His letters to Theodor Benfey and Ivan Minaev, with whom he maintained extensive, long-standing correspondence, contain valuable information about the lives and scholarly work of these two figures, who played a major role in the development of Buddhist and

Indological studies as academic disciplines, and they also reveal Schiefner's friendly engagement with their academic careers.

### Keywords

Anton Shiefner – Theodore Benfey – Ivan Minaev – Vasily Vasilyev – history of Buddhism – history of Indology

Hartmut Walravens, Agnes Stache-Weiske †. *Anton Schiefner (1817–1879). Briefe an Theodor Benfey (1809–1881) und skandinavische, russische und ungarische Kollegen*. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2022. XV+655, ill. Philosophisch-historische Klasse Sitzungsberichte, 923; Beiträge zur Kultur- und Geistesgeschichte Asiens 107. ISBN 978-3-7001-8912-1. € 98.–.

The book prepared by Hartmut Walravens and Agnes Stache-Weiske which provides the impetus for the present reflections concludes, as the sixth installment, the series of volumes of letters sent by the well-known Saint Petersburg philologist Franz Anton (Russian: Anton Antonovich) Schiefner (1817–1879) to a broad circle of scholars who studied various fields of Oriental and European philology and history in the second half of the 19th century.<sup>1</sup> Schiefner was a prolific

1 The previously published five volumes are: 1) H. Walravens, «Freilich lag in den zu überwindenden Schwierigkeiten ein besonderer Reiz ...». *Briefwechsel der Sprachwissenschaftler Hans Canon von der Gabelentz, Wilhelm Schott und Anton Schiefner, 1834–1874*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2008; 2) H. Walravens, *St. Petersburg und Livland—und die Entwicklung der estnischen Literatur. Anton Schiefner (1817–1879) und Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald (1803–1882) im Briefwechsel (1853–1879)*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2013; 3) H. Walravens, A. Stache-Weiske, *Anton Schiefner (1817–1879) und seine indologischen Freunde. Seine Briefe an die Indologen Albrecht Weber (1825–1901), Rudolf Roth (1821–1895) und William Dwight Whitney (1827–1894) sowie den Indogermanisten Adalbert Kuhn (1821–1881). Mit Anmerkungen, kleineren Arbeiten Schiefners und Register*. Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften 2015; 4) H. Walravens, A. Stache-Weiske, *Anton Schiefner: Briefe und Schriftenverzeichnis. Briefe an Bernhard Jülg (1825–1886), Karl Ernst von Baer (1792–1876), Reinhold Köhler (1830–1892), Victor Hehn (1813–1890), August Friedrich Pott (1802–1887), Ernst Kuhn (1846–1920), Lorenz Diefenbach (1806–1883), Ernst Förstemann (1822–1906) und Karl Dziatzko (1842–1903)*. Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften 2017; 5) H. Walravens, A. Stache-Weiske, *Der Linguist Anton Schiefner (1817–1879) und sein Netzwerk. Briefe an Emil Schlagintweit, Leo Reinisch, Franz v. Miklosich, Vatroslav Jagić, K.S. Veselovskij, Eduard Pabst, Vilhelm Thomsen und andere*. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2020.

author in various fields of linguistics and studies of literature, but he is most known as a Tibetologist who was able to use freely Sanskrit and Mongolian languages in his researches. For many years, he curated the Tibetan and Mongolian collections of the Asiatic Museum,<sup>2</sup> and headed the Second Department of the Library of the St Petersburg Academy of Sciences<sup>3</sup> (1862–1879) and the Museum of Ethnography (1856–1878). The latter was reorganized, by his suggestion, into the Museum of Ethnography and Anthropology in 1878.<sup>4</sup> Schiefner had many contacts in Europe and served as a tireless intermediary between Western and Russian scholars of various cultural backgrounds.<sup>5</sup> This resulted in a large corpus of letters mostly kept in German archives, but also in various institutions in Saint Petersburg,<sup>6</sup> Tartu, Helsinki, Budapest, Moscow, and Copenhagen. Thanks to the combined efforts of Hartmut Walravens and Agnes Stache-Weiske (1962–2021) this corpus has been published in its entirety. The book starts with a short biography of the late co-editor, Agnes Stache-Weiske, a list of her publications (mostly on the history of German Indology), and some reminiscences of the fruitful collaboration between the two co-editors.<sup>7</sup>

The volume comprises letters to thirty-five correspondents, including several Orientalists: Theodore Benfey, who has the largest representation in the book, Bernhard Dorn, Herman Kellgren, Ernst Kunik, Wilhelm Lagus, Ivan Minaev, Wilhelm Radloff, Victor von Rosen, and Carl Salemann. Another important part of the volume concerns Schiefner's interests in the fields of Finno-Ugric studies. Some letters are nothing but short notes and remarks connected with his work duties in Saint Petersburg (a few of these are written in Russian). As explained in the foreword, in explanation of the inclusion of such seeming ephemera, "given the considerable lack of historical correspondence

2 The Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Saint Petersburg is a direct heir to the Asiatic Museum. The Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow also traces its history to this museum, but the majority of its collections remain in Saint Petersburg.

3 In 1819, the library was divided into two departments: the First (Russian) and the Second (Foreign). This basic division existed till the end of the 1910s.

4 Currently, the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera) of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

5 Unfortunately, the fate of most of the letters sent to Schiefner remains unknown. They likely did not survive the upheavals of the Russian Civil War (1917–1922).

6 Predominantly, at the Saint Petersburg Branch of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences; several letters are kept at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, RAS.

7 Hartmut Walravens also prepared a special volume of letters exchanged by the two coeditors during their joint work: *Agnes Stache-Weiske (1962–2021). Korrespondenzen aus den Jahren 2016–2021 zur Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft*. Herausgegeben von H. Walravens. Norderstedt: BoD, 2023.

and the wide variety of questions discussed, even seemingly trivial things can often be of interest. What is of value is ultimately decided by the researcher, not the publisher" (p. 4).<sup>8</sup>

Among the most interesting materials presented in the volume is the correspondence to Benfey and Minaev, letters which provide new details about the history of Buddhist studies. Theodore Benfey, a German philologist with broad interests, gained recognition in Europe for his studies of Sanskrit literature. Despite his linguistic talents and contributions, he faced financial struggles for many years due to discrimination based on antisemitism, as he was Jewish.<sup>9</sup> His conversion to Christianity in 1848 merely secured him a position as an assistant professor, and it was only after considerable pressure from his European colleagues that he was offered a tenured position at the University of Göttingen in 1862.

The severe lack of funds prompted Benfey to consider seeking a job in Russia, leading him to rapidly learn the Russian language, much as he had previously taught himself Sanskrit within a very short time. This job search was one of important subjects discussed in the letters sent to him by Schiefner starting from 1857. Schiefner, known for his willingness to aid colleagues, offered detailed guidance to Benfey regarding academic positions at the Academy of Sciences and universities in Saint Petersburg, Dorpat (currently, Tartu, Estonia) and Kazan, and the cost of living in Saint Petersburg (pp. 43–46). Benfey was included in the list of foreign scholars for Corresponding membership of the Academy of Sciences (p. 130). Schiefner also attempted to help Benfey's daughter find a governess position in Russia (pp. 41–52). Although all these efforts proved fruitless, their connection did yield one practical result for Benfey: the professional German translation of Vasily Vasilyev's (1818–1900) monograph, *Der Buddhismus, seine Dogmen, Geschichte und Literatur* (Buddhism, Its Dogmas, History, and Literature).<sup>10</sup>

8 Here and below, I offer my own English translations from German.

9 See pp. 88–89 in M. Kapstein, "L'oubli des Russes: An (Almost) Forgotten Chapter in the History of 19th-Century Orientalism". *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 1 (287) (2019): 79–90. This paper was also published in my Russian translation in *Pis'mennye pamiatniki Vostoka* 19.4 (2022): 58–73.

10 The original Russian book: V. Vasilyev, *Buddizm. Ego dogmaty, istoriia i literatura. Vol. 1: Obshchee obozrenie* [Буддизм, его догматы, история и литература. Часть 1. Общее обозрение, Buddhism, Its Dogmas, History and Literature. Vol. 1: The General Survey]. St. Petersburg: Typography of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1857. The German translation: W. Wassiljew, *Der Buddhismus, seine Dogmen, Geschichte und Literatur. Theil 1: Allgemeine Übersicht*. Aus dem Russischen übers. [von Theodor Benfey]. St. Petersburg: Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1860.

This work was a milestone in the development of Buddhology in the second half of the 19th century, and it became known to Western readers mainly through its German translation.<sup>11</sup> The high value of the book was recently highlighted by Matthew Kapstein, according to whom Vasilyev's work was "unprecedented .... For it is here that we find the story of Buddhism's progression from the primitive teaching of the śrāvakas and the formation of the eighteen early orders, through the revelation of the Mahāyāna and the sophisticated philosophical systems that arose with it, to the later turn to the esotericism of the tantras, told for the first time in substantial detail".<sup>12</sup>

Schiefner's letters contain a few significant details about the history of the German translation of Vasilyev's book. First of all, they provide the *documentary* evidence that the translation was indeed made by Benfey. They also help us to understand why the translator's name was not mentioned in the book. According to the editor's introduction, "Schiefner explained Benfey's wish not to be named in the book by saying that the translator believes that the work, which is valuable in itself, is not uncontroversial in terms of style and presentation. This was the pride of the poor man who did not want to document the fact that he had resorted to this bread-making job out of economic necessity" (p. 3). The editor's statement is based on the memoirs of Benfey's daughter Meta, who recounted: "Later in life, he had a similar experience with Russian, which he also learnt in a few weeks because he wanted to translate Vasilyev's Buddhism into German. It was also one of those emergency works [Notarbeit] that he did quietly, had printed without mentioning his name and never, or at least very reluctantly, mentioned".<sup>13</sup> An alternate speculation could be Benfey's uncertainty about being credited as the sole translator, considering that he relied on working materials provided by Schiefner, including the latter's own initial "first draft without any polish" (p. 79).<sup>14</sup>

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The idea to offer this work to Benfey belonged to both Schiefner and Otto Böhtlingk (1815–1904) (p. 74). The fee was set at 10 silver rubles, payable in gold coin equivalent (*r. S. in Gold*), per printed sheet (*Druckbogen*) of the Russian edition (p. 79). By way of comparison, 10 rubles constituted the monthly pension of Raskolnikov's mother in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866). In the novel, this sum is described as modest, yet it was sufficient for Raskolnikov's mother and sister to live on and to send some money to Raskolnikov in St Petersburg.

- 11 A consequent French translation made by G.A. La Comme (1865) was not very successful; see Kapstein, op. cit.: 87–88.
- 12 Kapstein, op. cit.: 81–82.
- 13 See Th. Benfey, *Kleinere Schriften*. Ausgewählt und herausgegeben von Adalbert Bezzenberger. Hildesheim: Olms, 1975: xv. I owe this explanation to Hartmut Walravens (personal communication via email, December 2023).
- 14 Alongside this, a first attempt at a French translation of the book was sent to him. The pres-

However, based on Schiefner's letters, one might conclude that both correspondents overemphasized certain shortcomings of Vasilyev as an author (it is a pity, though, that we do not know exactly what Benfey wrote in his own letters on this matter): "Regarding your Russian studies, I would be very interested to know how you got along with Vasilyev's language and style (or rather, lack of style). The man has become accustomed to the Chinese way of saying two thirds and letting one third be thought out. It will not be difficult for a connoisseur of Buddhist scriptures to find their way around and, given the cumbersome style, to reshape everything that is less skillfully expressed"<sup>15</sup> (p. 73); "If you prefer not to have your name on the title, it will remain unnamed, potentially avoiding any negative associations with the work" (p. 78); "The Academy publishes some works which, although not meeting the strict standards of academic research, still have to be promoted because booksellers cannot be involved in such things. This also concerns Vasilyev's work and I completely understand why you do not want to put your name on the cover. Nevertheless, Vasilyev is a man who, despite some shortcomings in his education and his views, tries to express to the best of his knowledge and confidence, albeit in a strange informality, which he sees as a result of the works he studied. The fact that he does not apply to his works the meticulousness that is typical of German scholars can be explained by the nature of the nation to which he belongs" (p. 96).

The last statement is notable in the context of the struggle around the Academy of Sciences that was repeatedly criticized for the dominance of ethnic Germans and discrimination against Russian and Slavic studies. Schiefner was twice in focus of the public interest: in 1869, in connection with Vasilyev's accusations of plagiarism in regard to his translation of Tāranātha's *History of Buddhism in India*, and in 1878, when the Sanskritist Leopold von Schröder

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ident of the Academy of Sciences initially wanted the book to be published in French, and an initial attempt was made, but it turned out to be unsatisfactory (pp. 73–74).

- 15 This reads as an approval of improvements of the original text in the German translation. It may raise the question whether the non-Russian reader encounters Vasilyev's text or its refined German version. I compared a small fragment concerning *dhāraṇīs*. The fragment that explains this topic in a way that was also *unprecedented* covers pp. 142–145 in the Russian version and pp. 153–157 in the German translation. My conclusion is that at least this portion of the text in German follows the Russian original without any significant deviations.

Regarding the unadorned style, Vasilyev himself addressed this in his book's introduction, mentioning the lack of time to refine materials written during his life in Peking. We owe gratitude to both him and the Academy of Sciences (with Schiefner at the forefront) for publishing at least a portion of these materials, since most of his drafts remained unpublished and many were simply lost forever.

from Dorpat (present-day Tartu, Estonia) was almost elected a member of the Academy, leaving the ethnic Russian Ivan Minaev behind.<sup>16</sup> The above-quoted passages show that Schiefner, who was very reserved and correct in public appearances, did have emotions, sometimes with a tint of nationalist sentiment.

In a similar vein, Schiefner critiqued his French colleagues: “For a period, I was engrossed in Foucaux’s *Tibet Grammar*. It stands as a fresh testament to the inadequate level of linguistic research in France. While some excellent observations are present, as you have seen, it lacks comprehensive grammatical training. Initially, I contemplated writing a review but reconsidered. There is so much to address that it is more beneficial to produce a new work that better fulfills the legitimate requirements of linguistics. The gentlemen in Paris would also become very sensitive if their point of view were described, however delicately” (pp. 119–120). Nevertheless, Schiefner was eager to keep friendly contacts with Stanislas Julien (1797–1873), whom he mentions many times and who also became Benfey’s correspondent.<sup>17</sup>

It appears that Schiefner held a particular fondness and trust for Benfey as a confidant, as he tended to share his thoughts and feelings with him quite openly (which was not his usual behavior). He even joked about himself on a few occasions. An illustrative instance of (self-)irony is associated with his notorious “calligraphy”: “In your letter, you request forgiveness for your handwriting, but it is so beautiful and legible compared to mine that I am almost embarrassed to send these lines to you. The only solace for me is the fact that Lassen<sup>18</sup> writes even worse” (p. 69).

The first meeting of the two scholars took place in Germany in September of 1860, as we learn from the letter sent in December of that year (p. 104). Subsequent correspondences are dated February and April 1862. In the first, Schiefner inquired about exchanging photographs (p. 135), and in the second, he included

16 The first case is specially discussed by H. Walravens, “Letters of A. Schiefner about V.P. Vasil’ev”. *Written Monuments of the Orient* 1(8) (2008): 251–264. Schiefner’s perspective on the second case is detailed in his letters to Albrecht Weber; see the volume published in 2015: 276–280. As a result of the scandal, von Schröder failed to secure election to the Academy. Unfortunately, a year later, Schiefner passed away at the age of 62.

17 Schiefner mentioned a conflict with Julien instigated by a critical remark from Vasilyev who “suggested that Stanislas Julien had left a chapter of the *Houen Thsang* [i.e., Xuanzang’s “Record of the Western Regions”] untranslated due to the style’s difficulty. Vasilyev seems to have been wrong; I myself made the mistake when I not only recommended the article for printing, but also translated it into German myself” (p. 84).

18 Christian Lassen (1800–1876), a Norwegian-German Indologist, a professor of Sanskrit at the University of Bonn.

a photograph of Böhntlingk (p. 136). Surprisingly, these two letters mark the conclusion of Benfey's section of the volume. While there must have been more letters exchanged,<sup>19</sup> it appears they have been lost.

A significant reason for Schiefner to feel a soul mate in Benfey must have been their shared passion for the genre of tales found in Indian and other literatures. Both of them were among the most outstanding pioneers of narratology in the West. Schiefner retold for his colleague several stories extracted from the Tibetan Buddhist canon and Mongolian literature. In this connection, he was also assisted by the Buryat scholar Galsang Gomboev (1822–1863), an ex-lama, who worked at Saint Petersburg University from the middle of the 19th century. Benfey complimented Gomboev's translation of the collection of tales "Ardschi-Bordschi"<sup>20</sup> in press, and Schiefner passed along the latter's gratitude for "making him known abroad" (p. 80).

As for Ivan Minaev, there are twenty-five letters sent to him during the years of 1868–1878, and the first thirteen between April of 1868 and September of 1869. It was the period of their most intensive contacts when Schiefner took some part in Minaev's getting a job at Saint Petersburg University (pp. 455–456) and prepared his two works for publication by the Academy of Sciences.<sup>21</sup>

19 One is mentioned in a letter to Minaev dated June 22 / July 4, 1871; it also contains a remark: "One of my local friends, who was studying in Göttingen at the time Benfey got married, told me about student songs that were written and sung on the occasion of that wedding" (p. 474).

20 The Tibetan version of this text has the full title *Rgyal po bi kra mi ji ta'i spyod pa shing mi dang po nas bcu gsum gyi bar du rgyal po a rje pu rje dang phan tshun smras bar byed pa'i lo rgyus bzhugs so*; its manuscript copy is kept at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, RAS (shelf mark Tib. 2368).

21 1) *Pratimoksha-sutra, buddiiskii sluzhebnik* [Pratimokṣa-sūtra, the Buddhist Service-book]. Appendix 1 to Volume 16 of *Mémoires de l'Académie impériale des sciences de St.-Petersbourg*, 1869; 2) "Die Pāli-Metrik Vuttodaya". *Bulletin de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences de St.-Petersbourg* 14 (1870): 406–427. The *Vuttodaya* is said to be the only extant Pāli work on prosody. Even the renowned bibliographer J.W. de Jong, who in his Preface to the reprint of R. Siddharatha's 1929 edition and translation (Delhi: Sri Satguru, 1981) goes so far as to mention a Japanese translation (Katayama Ichirō 片山一良, "Vuttōdaya' yakuchū (Vuttodaya): Pāri inritsuron" [『ヴットーダヤ』訳註 (VUTTODAYA): パーリ韻律論]. *Bukkyō kenkyū* 3 (1973): 143–105 [not seen]), remained apparently unaware of Minayeff's contribution (he wrote his name as Joh. Minayeff in the article), as was Helmer Smith (see his notations in the Epilegomena to Vol. 1 of *A Critical Pali Dictionary* [Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1948: 59], who mentions only a Columbo edition of 1916, and that of G.E. Fryer, *Vuttodaya (Exposition of Metre)* [Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1877]). Generally the scholarship, little as it is, notices only the editions and translations of Siddharatha and Fryer, or only one of these. Given that Minayeff's pioneering contribution—published not in Russian but in German—was the first to edit and translate the text, is difficult to

For the first matter, he even invited the younger colleague to stay for a while at his apartment on Vasilyevsky Island (very close to both the University and the Academy of Sciences), because Minaev had to travel from Moscow (p. 452).

In connection with the second aspect, Schiefner wrote several demanding lines to Minaev, being irritated with the necessity to spend more time on editing and waiting for the corrections from his correspondent (pp. 466–470). He must have felt the pressure of deadlines and, moreover, a sense of responsibility toward his friend Albrecht Weber (1825–1901), the eminent German Indologist whom he also involved in the editing process. Thus, he requested in a letter from June 21, 1869: “The remarks from Weber that I sent you on the 12th and 13th of June, I ask you to take great care of and absolutely not to lose” (“Die Bemerkungen Webers, die ich Ihnen am 12 und 13 Juni gesandt habe, bitte ich sehr in Acht zu nehmen und ja nicht zu verlieren”; p. 468). Minaev did not answer. In the next letter, sent two months later, Schiefner adopted a milder yet weary tone: “I have been back here for three days but have not found the correction of the *Corrigenda* of the *Pāṭimokkha* that I sent to you in Moscow. I already sent it to you in June along with a letter. Since I have not received any message from you, I did not write again. ... Shouldn’t we stop the printing of the *Vuttodaya* now? It would probably be the right time” (pp. 468–469). Fortunately, both of Minaev’s works were eventually published, bringing him recognition in the field of Indian Buddhist studies.

In the following years, Schiefner and Minaev remained in contact, and their correspondence appears to have been quite friendly.<sup>22</sup> However, they no longer needed to write frequently, as Minaev had moved to Saint Petersburg. The letters from the 1870s offer some details about the Indological topics they discussed, especially those connected to Schiefner’s own research. One letter (sent in November of 1874) opens with a passage that is worth quoting here:

You, in your distant abode, surely deserved a more prompt report on the proper receipt of your dear letter from Anuradhapura, dated September 19th,<sup>23</sup> but the Buddha simply would not permit it. His words have so captivated me that I find it difficult to tear myself away from the

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understand why it has been virtually everywhere overlooked. I am sincerely grateful to Jonathan Silk for this information.

22 Among the personal details, one intriguing aspect of Minaev’s life is mentioned by Schiefner in the following passage (dated March 8, 1878): “By the way, you will be fully occupied as a jury member in court for the next two days” (p. 486). It would be interesting to learn more about this occasional role that Minaev had to play in his life.

23 Minaev traveled to India, Ceylon (including the city of Anuradhapura), and Nepal from June 1874 till December 1875.

*Dīvyāvadāna* to attend to anything else. For about three weeks now I have been comparing the Sanskrit text with the Tibetan translation in the *Kanjur*, yet I have managed to complete only the *Sudhanāvadāna* and the *Śroṇakoṭīkarnāvadāna*,<sup>24</sup> taking as much delight in the Sanskrit as I am learning a great deal of Tibetan. This translation contains so many ancient words whose meaning becomes clear only through Sanskrit. It is also evident that *Vyutpatti*<sup>25</sup> drew heavily on these texts.

p. 477

Apart from a touch of scholarly humor, this passage shows that Schiefner eagerly shared information about his research on Buddhist texts with Minaev. He apparently expected that his colleague would be able to convey some results of his own fieldwork. In the same letter, Schiefner (who never had the chance to visit India) asks Minaev to investigate several practical aspects concerning the use of religious texts in Buddhist and Hindu daily rituals (p. 481). Elements of scholarly discussion can also be found in other letters. It seems likely that the two philologists were well aware of each other's work and may have exchanged ideas more frequently in person than through correspondence, since, as noted above, they lived in the same city.<sup>26</sup>

The newly published corpus of Schiefner's letters to his colleagues in the fields of Indology and Buddhology, Theodor Benfey and Ivan Minaev, sheds new light on the circumstances of their academic careers during some of their most vulnerable periods. We learn valuable details about Benfey's work as the translator of Vasily Vasilyev's monograph, which turned out to be the latter's most significant contribution to the development of Buddhist studies. Another episode, involving the Buryat lama Galsang Gomboyev, confirms his recognition as one of the most eminent early representatives of the indigenous Buddhist tradition engaged with European academia. Minaev's part is perhaps less

24 The *Sudhanāvadāna* and the *Śroṇakoṭīkarnāvadāna* constitute two chapters of the *Dīvyāvadāna*, the thirtieth and the first, respectively, according to the common enumeration. They also appear among the twenty-one chapters translated into Tibetan and included (not as a single collection, but as separate stories) in the Vinaya section of the Tibetan Kanjur, the evident source for the versions collected in the *Dīvyāvadāna*. Schiefner, as curator of the Tibetan and Mongolian collections at the Asiatic Museum of the Saint Petersburg Academy of Sciences, had access to two versions of the Tibetan Kanjur, the Derge and Peking editions.

25 This refers to the *Mahāvyutpatti*, the Sanskrit-Tibetan dictionary compiled in the early ninth century.

26 Notably, in one of his letters (dated 22 August 1869), Schiefner refers to his studies of the *Kālacakra Tantra* (p. 469).

informative. Nevertheless, Schiefner's letters provide noteworthy details about Minaev's early years in St Petersburg and the publications that first brought him recognition in Europe, as well as about Schiefner's own studies in the field of Buddhist philology.

In addition to these aspects, other sections of the same volume of Schiefner's letters provide scholars with a wealth of substantive information for the history of various fields of academic study. It is only right to extend our gratitude to the editors, who devoted considerable time and effort to deciphering hundreds of letters written—at times in an almost illegible hand—by one of the most important European philologists of the nineteenth century.