

Italian Association for Chinese Studies

Selected Papers | 2

2018



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Preface

At the end of September 2013, the 14th conference of the Italian Association of Chinese Studies (AISC) was held in Procida, a little island in the Gulf of Naples. In those very days it happened that the General Secretary of Communist Party of China Xi Jinping mentioned for the first time the project of establishing an economic zone along the ancient Silk Road. It was the beginning of a new, enormous project launched by Chinese government, aimed not only at the further development of the domestic market and industrial production, especially in Western areas of the country, in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) had also the goal to further develop the relationships between China and a vast area of neighboring countries, including even far-away Asian, African and European countries, and to spread a different image of China itself. As it has often happened in the last decades, along the economic and social development of China, the BRI project aroused much interest and awe but also raised much criticism and suspect, with the result that China stepped to an even more central position on the stage of world's political and cultural scene, and the attention to her grew deeper and deeper.

The academic activity of the members of AISC since 2013 may be then called “BRI generation” activity. The first results of the scientific research of this generation of Italian sinologists, which include both scholars of previous generations and several young scholars who started their activity in recent years were exposed at the 15th conference of AISC, held in Macerata in September 2015.

The contributions collected in this second issue of Selected Papers represent a small part of those delivered at the 15th conference, which underwent a strict peer review. In general, the fields of research of these “BRI generation” essays are multifarious, span different eras and different realms of Chinese culture.

Marco Meccarelli explores the origin of one of the most ancient and powerful icons of China, *long* 龙, the dragon. Meccarelli's article helps to bridge the gap by introducing the reliable theories on the origin of the mythical animal, focusing particularly on issues of typology, classification, and latest debates on the distinction between the long and the dragons of the other cultures.

Antiquity and one of the core theories of ancient Chinese philosophy is dealt with by Luca Vantaggiato, who discusses the problem of the human nature in Xunzi and his understanding of Mencius: Vantaggiato's article offers a grammatical and philosophical analysis of the quotation of the "Xing e" 性恶 chapter of the *Xunzi*.

Victoria Almonte introduces Western scholars to the geographical work *Lingwai Daida* 岭外代答 [Notes from the lands beyond the Passes], written by Zhou Qufei 周去非 in 1178 and encompassing descriptions of geography, history and customs from Guangxi province to Northern African countries during the Southern Song dynasty.

Giulia Falato, in the field of missionaries studies, compares the *Tongyou Jiaoyu* 童幼教育 [On the education of children], written around 1632 by the Jesuit missionary Alfonso Vagnone S.J.'s (1568–1640) with Zhu Xi's *Xiaoxue* 小学, in order to appraise the potential influence of Zhu Xi's approach to the education on Vagnone's pedagogic treatise.

Alessandro Tosco analyses the "tragic" representation of the heroine's exemplary execution in the well-known drama *Dou E yuan* 窦娥冤 [The Injustice to Dou E] by Guan Hanqing 关汉卿 of the Yuan dynasty and discusses the cultural background in which these dramatic representations are set.

Gabriele Tola presents the John Fryer Paper, the archive of the famous English missionary and sinologist, which may be a useful bibliographic instrument for research on missionary linguistics, on the cultural interactions between the West and China and on the *Xixue Dongjian* 西學東漸.

The twentieth century is the period attracting most of the interest of the contributors of these *Selected papers*. Martina Turriziani analyses the *Travel Diary of Italy* (*Yidali youji* 意大利游记) written by Kang Youwei 康有为 during his trip to Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century, discusses his views upon the Italian "heroes" of the Risorgimento (Garibaldi, Mazzini and Cavour) and translates a *fu* poem dedicated to the Cavour.

Selusi Ambrogio tries to deconstruct the widely-renowned principle of "exclusion" of Asiatic thought from the realm of philosophy, due to the colonial culture of the 19th century. The point of view he adopts is that of Mou Zongsan 牟宗三, one of the leading thinkers of nineteenth-century Modern New Confucianism, who discussed the correct definition and the chronological collocation of this so called "exclusion".

Literary studies here represented are influenced by the latest "Sinophone studies", the literature in Chinese language written outside China. Luca Pisano takes into account Taiwanese literature, which narrates literary landscapes as background of literary works. The urban space of Taipei is certainly one of the privileged places, and Taipei's "city south" (*chengnan* 城南) is particularly important for the so-called Taipeiology.

Gao Xingjian 高行健, a de-territorialized author with bilingual and a bicultural consciousness, constantly reveals his ability to give his hybrid self the shape of

literary and artistic works which transcend boundaries. Simona Gallo compares Gao's most recent play written in French, *Ballade Nocturne*, and its self-translation *Yejian xingge* 夜間行歌.

Martina Codeluppi's article compares Ha Jin and Ma Jian, two amongst the most important voices in contemporary Chinese diasporic literature: their different voices show different influences of temporal and spatial displacement on the narratological features of the novels and emphasize the role of the individual in the process of reshaping memory through literature.

Chinese modern art is a well studied field of research too. In the last 30 years, China has been experiencing a major development of the museum system and a proliferation of art museums. Ornella De Nigris argues that this growth, which has been labelled "museumification", was fostered by the government's new political agenda and the development of private collections.

In 21st century China, *shanshuihua* 山水画 appears as a changing concept exposed to global issues and art theories. Elena Macrì attempts to identify the diverse ways in which some contemporary artists perceive and depict landscape, by looking at three representative art exhibitions organized outside China as case studies.

The urban phenomenon of graffiti art (*tuya yishu* 涂鸦艺术) since the beginning of the 21st century has quickly acquired a large following among young artists in the major cities of the country. Adriana Iezzi analyses KwanYin Clan's *Shengong yijiang* 神工意匠, and demonstrates how, in China as everywhere, the globalizing tendencies as well as the desire for specificity and particularity can be fulfilled within transculturality.

Immigration from China to Italy in the last years has been a large social phenomenon, so that in 2011 local media created the expression "New Prato" phenomenon, being Prato the Italian city with a very large Chinese community, one of the biggest in Europe. Daniele Massaccesi attempts to explore the identity of the "New Italians" with Chinese origin, as often the national media refer to them.

The minority nationality of the Naxi is the focus of Cristiana Turini's contribution. She aims at developing an anthropological and cross-cultural analysis of the patient-practitioner encounter in Western biomedical context and among the Naxi people today inhabiting the region on the border between Yunnan and Sichuan provinces.

The nearest contemporaneity is dealt with by the last two articles. Tanina Zappone tries to develop the analytic framework delineated in previous studies on PRC government spokesperson system, in order to collocate the evolution of the system in the wider context of China's government communication.

Finally, a contribution on the state of Internet governance is put forward by Gianluigi Negro: he provides an overview on the role of private sector and its co-evolutionary approach in relation to the state government as well as the shift from an approach primarily focused on domestic issues (*duinei*) to a more international oriented one (*duiwai*).

Although the fields of research covered by both the older and the younger generations of Italian scholars within China studies are many more, the second issue of the Selected papers of AISC attempts to put forward the most advanced studies brought about in the last years: they show the depth of the analysis of the authors, the influence of the international community of sinologists and in general the vitality of the research on China and its culture in Italy during the 2010s.