

Italian Association for Chinese Studies

Selected Papers | 4

Edited by Attilio Andreini and Federica Passi

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Preface

The fourth volume in the *Selected Papers* series of the Italian Association of Chinese Studies (Associazione Italiana di Studi Cinesi, AISC) includes some of the papers presented at the 17th Biennial Conference held in Venice from September 5-7, 2019. The year was significant because it marked the 40th anniversary of the founding of AISC in Rome in 1979. The choice of Venice as the venue for the conference was linked to this anniversary: the AISC's legal office has been located in Venice since the beginning, at the Giorgio Cini Foundation on the island of San Giorgio. Forty years is a long life for an academic association, especially given how Chinese studies in Italy and the relationship between the two countries have changed. Therefore, we have taken the opportunity of the publication of this volume to briefly review the history of our Association and offer younger AISC members and interested readers some insights into its development. In doing so, we hope to contribute to a better understanding of Chinese studies in Italy over the past four decades.

The AISC was founded in Rome on January 15, 1979, as evidenced by the notarial deed in the appendix to this volume. The founding members were five scholars from universities that offered courses on China: Lionello Lanciotti (1925–2015), the doyen of post-World War II Italian sinology, who was the first professor of Chinese language and literature at Ca' Foscari University in Venice (from 1966 to 1979), then professor of Chinese philology at L'Orientale University of Naples until 1997; and four professors who were, at various times, his students: Piero Corradini (1933–2006) from the University of Macerata (who later became professor of far eastern history at La Sapienza University in Rome); Annamaria Palermo (1943–2017) and Maurizia Sacchetti (1940–) from L'Orientale University of Naples, and Mario Sabattini (1944–2017) from Ca' Foscari University.

The birth of the Association marked a step change in academic research on China in Italy. A few years previously, in 1975 (when relations between the European Community and the People's Republic of China officially began), the European Association of Chinese Studies (Association européenne d'études chinoises) was founded, and Professor Lanciotti was a member of the board of directors. Other sinological associations sprung up around the same time, for example, in the United Kingdom (1976) and France (1980). There was a need to systematically

promote academic research on Chinese culture in Europe when the rapprochement between Western European countries and the People's Republic of China was already a given economically, culturally, and even politically. The reopening of diplomatic relations with Beijing in 1970 offered new opportunities for student and teacher exchanges between Chinese and Italian universities.

After the death of Mao Zedong in 1976 and the launching of Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms in December 1978 (a few weeks before the founding of the AISC), the need to equip Italian society with the ability to understand and interact with China became more urgent—though only a minority could see this. In fact, sinological studies and cultural exchanges between Italy and China were already well in place. In the post-World War II period, Chinese language and culture were taught at the “Istituto Orientale di Napoli” (Oriental Institute in Naples, later named L'Orientale University of Naples) and “La Sapienza” University in Rome, as well as at the “Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente” (Italian Institute for the Middle and Far East, ISMEO); these institutions would be followed by courses in Chinese language and culture at Ca' Foscari University in Venice in 1966. A few China experts were active in other Italian universities. The “Associazione per l'amicizia fra Italia e Cina” (the Association for Friendship between Italy and China), politically connoted as pro-Maoist, had been founded in the early 1960s, and managed much of the tourism (which was primarily but not exclusively politically motivated) with the People's Republic of China. The “Istituto Italo-Cinese” (Italo-Chinese Institute) in Milan, which was dedicated principally to promoting business relations but also to spreading knowledge about contemporary China, was established in 1972. But from its inception, the AISC wanted to be something else, and this remains the case. It represented the first Italian attempt to define and establish the study of Chinese civilization in Italian universities as a distinct field of research, emphasizing its multidisciplinary nature and the need to acquire the necessary linguistic skills. As a scientific body, the Association is a place for discussion and dialogue between those who are professionally engaged in Chinese studies. Article 4 of the AISC statute makes clear that “The Association is created to promote and foster, by all means, scientific activities related to the study of China and its civilization. The Association will not engage in any political activity.” Independence is guaranteed because, as a nonprofit organisation, the AISC depends solely on its members' dues.

The AISC founders were the scholars who constituted the first board of directors. They imprinted the idea of the Association as being a gathering place for the sinological community, which was spread across a small number of institutions. The account book for the early years states that there were forty-two paying members in 1979. In the following year, the number fell to thirty-three. Scrolling through the names, one finds scholars who, in the decades to come, would promote the study of Chinese philology, history, literature, art, and religion through their research and teaching. The Association is also in contact with Italian institutions in China, such as the Italian Embassy in Beijing, and some foreign sinologists. In 1980, it joined the European Association of Chinese Studies. In 1980, the AISC donated Lit 500,000 to the Belice earthquake victims.

The growth of the AISC in the early 1980s was evidenced by a steady increase in membership. The first *Annuario* (Yearbook) was published in 1984, when the Association had fifty-five members, each of whom were forwarded a questionnaire designed to gather information about their activities; around forty responded. The yearbook was the first bibliography of late-1970s and early-1980s Chinese studies in Italy. It also marked the first step towards a systematic effort by AISC to highlight modern Italian sinology, which culminated in 1988 with the publication of the *Italian Sinological Bibliography 1959 -1987* (edited by Giovanni Vitiello). In 2007, the Association supported the publication of a more complete bibliography of Chinese studies in Italy (*China in Italy, a Bibliography From 1899 to 1999*), edited by Francesco D'Arelli. In the meantime, the number of members had increased steadily, and the Association now counts more than two hundred and twenty associates.

The biennial conferences began in 1985 and became the centerpiece of the Association's activities. At the beginning of the 1990s, the board of directors decided to publish the proceedings. The result was fourteen volumes containing most of the Italian papers presented. Among the authors are the names of well-known sinologists and young researchers, attesting to the activities of AISC members from 1993 to 2019. The first ten volumes bear the title of each conference theme. From 2011, the conferences were organized with no specific theme so that participants could present their research without limitation, as the titles of the final four proceedings indicate.

Intellettuali e potere in Cina. Atti del Convegno AISC (Venezia 5–6 aprile 1990), edited by Mario Sabattini. Venezia: Libreria Editrice Cafoscarina, 1993.

Le fonti per lo studio della civiltà cinese. Atti del Convegno AISC (Napoli 24–25 novembre 1993), edited by Maurizio Scarpari. Venezia: Libreria Editrice Cafoscarina, 1995.

Conoscenza e interpretazione della civiltà cinese. Atti del V Convegno AISC (Roma 23–25 maggio 1996), edited by Piero Corradini. Venezia: Libreria Editrice Cafoscarina, 1997.

Cina: miti e realtà. Atti del VI Convegno AISC (Venezia 21–23 maggio 1998), edited by Alfredo Cadonna and Franco Gatti. Venezia: Libreria Editrice Cafoscarina, 2001.

Tradizione e innovazione nella civiltà cinese. Atti del VII Convegno AISC (Milano 30 settembre–2 ottobre 1999), edited by Clara Bulfoni. Milano: Franco Angeli, 2002.

L'invenzione della Cina. Atti dell'VIII Convegno AISC (Lecce 26–28 aprile 2001), edited by Giusi Tamburello. Galatina: Congedo editore, 2004.

La Cina e l'Altro. Atti del IX Convegno AISC (Capri, 14–16 ottobre 2003), edited by Annamaria Palermo. Napoli: Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale" – Il Torcoliere, 2007.

Percorsi della civiltà cinese fra passato e presente. Atti del X Convegno AISC (Venezia 10–12 marzo 2005), edited by Guido Samarani and Laura De Giorgi. Venezia: Libreria Editrice Cafoscarina, 2007.

La Cina e il mondo. Atti dell'XI Convegno AISC (Roma 22–24 febbraio 2007), edited by Paolo De Troia. Roma: Edizioni Nuova Cultura, 2010.

thought and literature in the 17th-19th centuries, also filtered through the translations of Jesuit missionaries. On this topic, he, in collaboration with Rodney Lokaj, published the English-Italian translation of Prospero Intorcetta's *Sinarum Scientia Politico-Moralis*, containing the Latin translation of the Confucian classic *Zhongyong* (Palermo, 2021).

RENATA VINCI is Associate Professor of Chinese Language and Literature at the Department of Humanities of the University of Palermo. She works on late-Qing and early modern periodical press, especially related to the Sino-Western exchanges, the relations between Italy and China, and the translation and circulation of Western literature translations of short stories and serialized novels in late Imperial time. Her book, *La Sicilia in Cina. Una raccolta di testi cinesi sull'isola (1225-1911)* [Sicily in China. A Collection of Chinese Sources on the Island (1225-1911)] introduces the representations of the Mediterranean island in Imperial times in the framework of the circulation of Western knowledge in China. She is also the co-editor of a monographic issue of *Sulla via del Catai* dedicated to children education and representation in Imperial China titled *Giovani virtuosi e dove trovarli* [Virtuous youngsters and where to find them].

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