


RESEARCH ARTICLE

Italian Sinology: Honoring the Tradition, Facing the Present and Securing a Future

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Abstract

For centuries, Italy was in the forefront of studying and spreading knowledge on China in the West. Some of the leaders of the exceptional cultural exchanges of the seventeenth century were Italian. After a period of decline, from the second half of the twentieth century, there has been a revival of China studies. Following the growth of China’s international impact, the traditional research fields have been supplemented by new specializations. Studies on modern China, its language, politics, institutions, society, economy, media etc., have enriched the Sinological panorama and multiplied university courses.

After an overview of Italian Sinology of the past, this study will focus on the recent developments: the universities, the research fields, the scholars, the associations and journals involved. The challenges the Sinologists are facing, due to the current Chinese political situation, will be highlighted, together with some consideration of the future of Italian Sinology.

Keywords: Italian Sinology; Italian China missionaries; Jesuits in China; Sinology in Italian Academia; Italian Sinological Journals; Italian Association of Chinese Studies; Italian Association of Chinese Linguistics

Italian Sinology has an ancient history and a glorious past. Beginning in the thirteenth century, and for a long time, Italy took the lead in studying and spreading knowledge on China, its language and culture, in the West. The Italian Jesuit missionaries, often considered to be Proto-Sinologists,¹ were among the unquestioned leaders of the exceptional China–Europe cultural exchanges that took place between the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries. In the years that followed, Italy lost its leadership to other countries like France, Holland, and England, whose presence in China became stronger. This was the time of the so-called “armchair Sinologists,” scholars who had a relatively solid knowledge of written, classical Chinese but had never been to China and could not speak the language.²

¹See David E. Mungello, *Curious Land: Jesuit Accommodation and the Origins of Sinology* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1985), 13–14.

²See Luisa M. Paternicò, “Following the Path of Italian Sinology,” in *From Sinology to Post-Chineseness: Intellectual History of China, Chinese People, and Chinese Civilization*, edited by Shih Chih-yu, He Peizhong, and Tang Lei (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2017), 25–29; Luisa M. Paternicò,

China studies never really disappeared in Italy, however, and since the second half of the twentieth century there has been a revival. This was partly due to political reasons, but not exclusively. The number of Italians carrying out research on China has grown steadily since then, and today it has reached considerable proportions. Interest in the Chinese past and its classical tradition never really faded, and between the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries there was a generalized “Chinese fever” that pressed a growing number of institutions, universities above all, to establish Chinese language courses. Today, a new generation of Sinologists has formed and, unlike some of their predecessors, they all master the Chinese language and are able to access primary, original sources.

Following the growth of China’s weight in the global order and economy, the traditional research fields on Chinese classical language and literature, philosophy, philology, and history were soon accompanied by new trends and specializations. Studies of modern China, its language and culture, its politics and institutions, society, economy, media and so on, have enriched the panorama of China studies and multiplied the offerings of university courses. Interdisciplinary projects have also been implemented by individuals or teams, stretching the boundaries of the single research fields and widening their perspective. New national scholarly associations and journals have been founded; the old ones have been invigorated. Furthermore, the new generation of Italian Sinologists actively organize and take part in both national and international conferences on China studies, writing essays and publishing the results of their research in Italian, Chinese, English, and other languages.

However, current Italian Sinology, along with global Sinology, is confronted with the complex Chinese political situation and with a worsening image of China in the media due to recent events like the suppression of the Hong Kong protests in 2019 and the following National security law; the 2019 data leak on the Xinjiang re-education camps; and the COVID-19 pandemic—which very likely originated in Wuhan—and the subsequent China “Zero Covid Policy.” Several scholars—especially those whose research areas include contemporary China, its politics and society—are suffering from the impossibility of entering China, accessing important primary sources, and carrying out fieldwork. They are also striving to untangle the different narratives on the current Chinese national situation, provided on one hand by the Chinese Chairman and the Communist Party and on the other hand by hostile western leaders and/or biased media. In this particularly delicate moment, most of the Italian Sinologists are trying not to take sides. Some are promoting scholarly discussions on the present situation, also coming out of their classrooms and offices, presenting the other side of the coin in public interviews and newspaper articles, offering their contribution for a better and more widespread understanding of today’s China in Italy.

After an overview of the history of Italian Sinology, its glorious dawn and the subsequent alternating fortunes, this article will focus on the current situation and health of China studies in Italy: the scholars, the disciplines, and the institutions involved, the main associations and the specialized journals, the present challenges and what future can be pictured.

“*Elements of Chinese Grammar: An Unknown Manuscript of the Italian Sinologist Antelmo Severini*,” in 文心 *Wenxin: L’essenza della scrittura. Contributi in onore di Alessandra Cristina Lavagnino*, edited by Clara Bulfoni, Zhigang Jin, Emma Lupano, and Bettina Mottura (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2017), 347–48.

The Birth of Italian Sinology (Late Sixteenth—Mid-Eighteenth Centuries)

The birth of Italian Sinology and its early glorious years can be approximately set between the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century, when a huge flow of information on China reached Europe, thanks to the work of missionaries, and Jesuits in particular. They were not simply churchmen, but also scientists.³ They all had a classical education, but they also studied the exact sciences: mathematics, physics, astronomy, etc. They were able to build clocks, cannons, water pumps, and musical instruments, and they could speak several foreign languages. They were special, talented men, who were very much appreciated in China and remembered in Chinese sources. They were the first western Sinologists: people who had a thorough knowledge of China, its culture, and its language. They could read the Classics and communicate with the mandarins.⁴ At the same time these missionaries understood the importance of making the peculiarity of Chinese civilization and tradition known to their home continent, which was eager for information but still too self-centered at the time. The circulation of their writings could not but stimulate and influence the thought and the research of the scholars it reached.⁵ They made China known in Europe and Europe known in China.

Among these early Sinologists, many were Italians and deserve to be mentioned. Here, just six of them will be presented because of their great contribution in paving the way to the long-lasting tradition of China studies in Europe and in Italy.

Michele Ruggieri (1543–1607)⁶ was the first Jesuit missionary who succeeded in learning Chinese language and settling in continental China, in 1583. Although his life and work have been overshadowed by his contemporary Matteo Ricci (see below), the scholarly community is now unanimous in attributing to Ruggieri the first complete manuscript translation in Latin—and also a partial one in Spanish—of the Confucian *Four Books*.⁷ In 1588, together with Ricci, he compiled the first Portuguese–Chinese dictionary in history: a word-list of 125 pages where the entries follow Portuguese alphabetical order and include Chinese characters and their transcription (only the first few pages include Italian translations as well). Ruggieri also worked for twenty-five years on an *Atlas of China*, which was never completed. The work consists of twenty-eight topographical maps, in the traditional reticular system of Chinese cartography, and thirty-seven manuscript folios describing all the fifteen provinces of Ming China.⁸

³Part of the content of this paragraph can be found in Paternicò, “Following the Path of Italian Sinology,” 19–24

⁴This article adopts a narrower definition of “Sinologist” compared to the broader one in Paternicò, “Following the Path of Italian Sinology,” 29–40

⁵Luisa M. Paternicò, *When the Europeans Began to Study Chinese: Martino Martini’s Grammatica Linguae Sinensis* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2013), 23–30.

⁶On Ruggieri see Louis Pfister, *Notices biographiques et bibliographiques sur les Jésuites de l’ancienne mission de Chine, 1552–1773*, 2 vols. (Shanghai: Imprimerie de la Mission Catholique, 1932), 1:15–21; Joseph Dehergne, *Repertoire de Jésuites de Chine de 1552 à 1800* (Rome: Institutuum Historicum S. I., 1973), 235–36. Francesco Antonio Gisondi, *Michele Ruggieri missionario in Cina e primo sinologo europeo* (Milan: Jaca Book, 1999); Federico Masini, “Michele Ruggieri, the First European Sinologist,” in *The Generation of Giants 2*, edited by Luisa M. Paternicò (Trent: Centro Studi Martino Martini, 2015), 13–19.

⁷The Latin manuscript is preserved in Rome, National Library, Fondo Gesuitico (3314), 1185. The Spanish version, also originally in manuscript form, has been published in Thierry Meynard and Roberto Villasante, eds., *La filosofía moral de Confucio por Michele Ruggieri* (Madrid: Mensajero, 2018).

⁸See Eugenio Lo Sardo, ed., *Atlante della Cina di Michele Ruggieri S.I.* (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1993).

Matteo Ricci (1552–1610)⁹ was the first Jesuit to be welcomed in Beijing by the emperor himself. The importance of his legacy is mainly linked to his contribution in spreading European knowledge and science in China through the translation of Western works in Chinese language. However, he also largely, though indirectly, contributed to the knowledge of China in Europe and Italy. His China journal in Italian, entitled *Della Entrata della Compagnia di Giesu e Christianità nella Cina* (On the Entrance of the Society of Jesus and Christianity into China), was translated into Latin, enlarged and published by Nicolas Trigault in 1615 with the title *De Christiana Expeditione apud Sinas* (The Christian Expedition to China). This work had immediate success and large distribution in Europe, replacing Marco Polo's (1254–1324) travel account *Il Milione* (The Travels of Marco Polo) as the main reference work on China, and constituting, until the nineteenth century, one of the main sources of information on the Middle Kingdom in the West.

One of the fathers of Sinological studies, whose main merit was to make the Celestial Empire's history, geography, and language known to the West, was the Italian Jesuit Martino Martini (1616–1661).¹⁰ His *De Bello Tartarico Historia* (History of the Tartar War) is an account of the Manchu conquest of China, to which he was an eye witness. The work was published in Antwerp in 1654 by B. Moret, and immediately became a best-seller; in the same year, four Latin editions (two in Antwerp, one in Cologne, and one in Vienna) and five translations (in German, Italian, French, English, and Dutch) were published. Martini later on published another historical work entitled *Sinicae Historiae Decas Prima* (First Ten Books of Chinese History, Munich, 1658), which had a very strong impact on the worldview of seventeenth-century European scholars. This work, the very first book on Chinese history in Europe, tells the history of the Middle Kingdom from its mythological origins until the first year of the Christian era, offering an accurate chronology of the events, even of the most ancient ones.¹¹

The *Novus Atlas Sinensis* (New Atlas of China), published in Amsterdam by J. Blaeu in 1655, is probably the most famous of Martini's works.¹² It presents, in detail, fifteen provinces of the Chinese empire, together with Japan and Korea. The description of each province covers a chapter and is preceded by a beautiful map. Not only did Martini provide information about the borders and the geographical features of each province, but he also wrote about its history, population, and the usage and costumes of its inhabitants. This work, which for the first time presented the geography of China to European intellectuals, was immediately a great success. At the end of the volume there is an appendix written by Jacob Gohl entitled *De Regno Catayo Additamentum*

⁹The bibliography on Ricci is extensive; see mainly Pfister, *Notices biographiques*, 22–42; Dehergne, *Repertoire*, 219–20; Ronnie Po-chia Hsia, *A Jesuit in the Forbidden City 1552–1610* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2010).

¹⁰For Martini's biography see Paternicò, *When the Europeans Began to Study Chinese*, 49–58; Giulian Bertuccioli, ed., *Martino Martini, Opera Omnia*, I (Trent: Università degli Studi di Trento, 1998), 511–33; Pfister, *Notices biographiques*, 256–62; Dehergne, *Repertoire*, 166–67.

¹¹The Italian translation and critical edition of the *De Bello Tartarico Historia* can be found in Federico Masini, Luisa M. Paternicò, and Davor Antonucci, eds., *Martino Martini S.J., Opera Omnia*. vol. V, *De Bello Tartarico Historia e altri scritti* (Trent: Università degli Studi di Trento, 2013) 189–336. That of the *Sinicae Historiae Decas Prima* can be found in Federico Masini and Luisa M. Paternicò, eds., *Martino Martini S.J., Opera Omnia*. vol. IV, *Sinicae Historiae Decas Prima* (Trent: Università degli Studi di Trento, 2010).

¹²Italian translation and critical edition in Giuliano Bertuccioli, ed., *Martino Martini S.J., Opera Omnia*. vol. III, *Novus Atlas Sinensis* (Trent: Università degli Studi di Trento, 2002).

(Appendix on the Kingdom of Cathay), proving that the famous Cathay and China were indeed the same place.

Finally, Martini was the author of the first grammar of Mandarin Chinese in a European language ever written and published. His *Grammatica Linguae Sinensis* (Grammar of Chinese Language) was compiled around 1651–53 and was revised at least until 1656. The language described by Martini, in Latin with Chinese characters and transcriptions, is the *guanhua* 官话 ‘Mandarin’ of the time (a Nanjing based *koine*). The work was printed and published as an appendix to the 1696 edition of Melchiédec Thévenot’s collection of travel reports, *Relations de divers voyage curieux* (Reports on Several Curious Travels).¹³

Prospero Intorcetta (1625–1696)¹⁴ is renowned for being the main contributor to knowledge of Chinese philosophy, and of Confucianism in particular, in Europe. He began translating the Confucian *Si Shu* 四书 (Four Books) as soon as he arrived in China. In 1662 he printed a work entitled *Sapientia Sinica* (Chinese Wisdom), which included the integral translation of *The Great Learning* and the partial one of *The Analects*, together with a short biography of Confucius. The translation of the third Confucian classic, *The Doctrine of the Mean*, was printed with the title *Sinarum Scientia Politico-Moralis* (Political-Moral Science of the Chinese), partly in Canton (1667) and partly in Goa (1669), together with a longer biography of Confucius. His translation work was continued by other China Jesuits and finally published in Europe as: P. Intorcetta, C. Herdtricht, F. Rougemont and P. Couplet, *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus sive Scientia Sinensis Latine Exposita* (The Chinese Philosopher Confucius or Chinese Science Explained in Latin, Paris, 1687). This text had a wide circulation and made many European scholars look at the Chinese government, inspired by the Confucian morality, as a model to be followed in the West.

Basilio Brollo (1648–1704)¹⁵ was a Franciscan missionary who compiled a Chinese–Latin dictionary while in China. The work circulated widely in manuscript form. Despite several attempts, Brollo was never able to publish his work in Rome, due to the high cost of printing Chinese characters. It was only at the beginning of the nineteenth century that Napoleon’s government decided to print it. Unfortunately, the work was wrongly attributed exclusively to De Guignes, who had edited it. The title was: *Dictionnaire chinois, français et latin, publié d’après l’ordre de S. M l’empereur et roi Napoleon le Grand, par M. de Guignes* (Chinese, French and Latin Dictionary, Published upon the Order of His Majesty Emperor and King Napoleon the Great, by M. de Guignes, Paris, 1813).

Matteo Ripa (1682–1746)¹⁶ was one of the missionaries sent by the Congregation of Propaganda Fide to China in order to deliver the Cardinal *berretta* to the Papal Legate

¹³See Masini, Paternicò, and Antonucci, *Martino Martini S.J., Opera Omnia*, V, 337–98; Paternicò, *When the Europeans Began to Study Chinese*, 87–226.

¹⁴On Intorcetta see David E. Mungello, *The Forgotten Christians of Hangzhou* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1994), 41–67; Carmelo Capizzi, “Per una biografia scientifica di Prospero Intorcetta,” in *Atti del convegno Scienziati Siciliani Gesuiti in Cina nel XVII secolo*, edited by Alcide Luini (Rome: Istituto Italo-cinese, 1983), 197–217; Luisa M. Paternicò, “Translating the Master: The Contribution of Prospero Intorcetta to the *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*,” *Monumenta Serica* 65.1 (2017), 87–121.

¹⁵For his biography, see Giuliano Bertuccioli, “Brollo Basilio,” in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, XIV (Rome: Istituto dell’Enciclopedia italiana, 1972), 454–56.

¹⁶On Ripa see Michele Fatica, ed., *Matteo Ripa, Giornale (1705–1724)*, 2 vols. (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1991–96); Michele Fatica, ed., *Matteo Ripa e il Collegio dei Cinesi di Napoli, 1682–1869: percorso documentario e iconografico: Catalogo della Mostra, Archivio di Stato di Napoli*, 18

Maillard De Tournon (1668–1710). Once in China, Ripa was welcomed as a painter and engraver at the court of the Kangxi Emperor (1654–1722), and in 1714, he was entrusted to engrave a big map of China and Tartary on copper, on the basis of the cartographic data collected by other missionaries. Forty-four copperplates were used to make the 3.7m wide and 2.95m tall map. Chinese characters were used for the toponyms below the Great Wall, while those of Tibet, Mongolia, Manchuria, and Korea were in Manchu script.

While in China, Ripa began to dream of creating a seminar in Italy to train future clergymen to be sent to China. In 1724, he traveled back, bringing with him five young Chinese companions: a teacher and his four students, who would become the first nucleus of the “College of the Chinese” founded in Naples in 1732. Despite some initial difficulties, Ripa succeeded in his project and the College soon became an important school where noblemen sent their children. It was also the first place in Italy and in Europe where the Chinese language was taught for future China clergymen and interpreters.¹⁷ The College was gradually transformed into a lay institution and today corresponds to “L’Orientale” University of Naples.

Decline and Slow Resurgence of Italian Sinology (Early Nineteenth—Mid-Twentieth Centuries)

In the aftermath of the Chinese Rites Controversy,¹⁸ the presence of Italian missionaries in China decreased significantly and the primacy of Chinese studies passed to the French, in the eighteenth century, and to the Protestant missionaries of England, Germany and the United States in the nineteenth century. Italy was in general less present in the East, mainly due to internal political issues. Therefore, its presence in China would start again only after the so-called “Resurgence” and unification in 1861. However, Italy in China was never really considered a threatening country like its European neighbors.¹⁹

The first University in Italy to offer Chinese courses was the University of Pavia in 1806, and the first professor was the Italian-German Giuseppe Hager (1757–1819). His contribution to Italian Sinology, however, was not remarkable. He attempted to publish a Chinese dictionary for many years without success and got involved in several polemics, especially with Antonio Montucci (see below). Hager’s only publication on the Chinese language was *An Explanation of the Elementary Characters of the Chinese with an Analysis of Their Ancient Symbols and Hieroglyphics* (Paris, 1801), which was severely criticized, apparently for Hager’s limited knowledge of Chinese.

novembre 2006–31 marzo 2007 (Naples: Università degli studi di Napoli “L’Orientale,” 2006); Emanuele Raini, “Matteo Ripa (1682–1746): The Dream and the Difficulties of a Chinese College,” in *The Generation of Giants 2*, edited by Luisa M. Paternicò (Trent: Centro Studi Martino Martini, 2015), 75–80.

¹⁷ See Matteo Ripa, *Storia della fondazione della Congregazione e del Collegio dei cinesi* (Naples: Tip. Manfredi, 1832); Miriam Castorina, “I materiali didattici del Collegio dei Cinesi di Napoli: una ricerca preliminare,” in *Atti del XIII Convegno A.I.S.C., Milano 22–23 settembre 2011*, edited by Clara Bulfoni and Silvia Pozzi (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2014), 145–55; Miriam Castorina, “Nabulesi Zhonghua shuyuan ji qi Hanyu jiaoxue” 那不勒斯中华书院及其汉语教学, *Guoji hanxue yanjiu tongxun* 12 (2016), 89–102.

¹⁸ The literature on the subject is vast; see David E. Mungello, *The Chinese Rites Controversy, Its History and Meaning*, Monumenta Serica Monograph Series 33 (Sankt Augustin: Institute Monumenta Serica, 1994).

¹⁹ Giuliano Berticcioli and Federico Masini, *Italia e Cina* (Bari: Laterza, 1996), 175–76. Some of the contents presented in the following pages are an edited and updated version of what already published in Paternicò, “Following the Path of Italian Sinology,” 24–29.

Among the Italian Sinologists and professors of Chinese in Italian universities in the period stretching from the beginning of the nineteenth to the first half of the twentieth century, a few particularly deserve to be mentioned for their contribution to China studies.²⁰

Antonio Montucci (1764–1829) had a degree in Law and learned Chinese through the help of some students from Naples' College whom he had met in London. He then conceived the idea of compiling a dictionary, but he could not obtain funds. He finally gained the interest of the King of Prussia for his project and moved to Berlin to start working on it in 1806. Unfortunately, he was forced to return to Italy with the outbreak of the Napoleonic wars, and was unable to continue his work on the dictionary. Only the project proposal was published in 1817 in London: *Urh-chih-tsze-teen-se-yin-pe-keaou: being a parallel drawn between the two intended Chinese dictionaries by the Rev. R. Morrison and Antonio Montucci*. The title reveals the competition between Montucci's dictionary and that of Robert Morrison (1782–1834), who actually had his dictionary published before Montucci's.²¹

Giuseppe Calleri (1810–1862) had the opportunity to live in China for many years, first as a missionary of the *Sociétés des Missions Étrangères* and later as an interpreter of the French Consul in Macao. Calleri contributed to Chinese studies with two works: *Systema Phonicum Scripturae Sinicae* (Phonetic System of Chinese Script, Macau, 1841–1842) and the unfinished project of a dictionary, of which only the first volume appeared, *The Encyclopedia of Chinese Language*, vol. 1 (London, 1844).²²

Alfonso Andreozzi (1821–1894) was a journalist and a lawyer. He studied Chinese in Paris with Stanislas Julien (1799–1873) and was the author of a work on Chinese law, *Le leggi penali degli antichi cinesi* (The Penal Laws of the Ancient Chinese, 1878) and of the translation of one of the stories narrated in the *Shuihu zhuan: Il dente di Buddha* ('Buddha's tooth,' Florence, 1883).²³

Antelmo Severini (1828–1909) was another student of Julien in Paris, where he also studied Japanese with Leon de Rosny (1837–1914). Back in Italy, he became a professor of Chinese at the University of Florence. His interest was initially dedicated to Chinese philosophy, and he translated the Confucian *Analects* into Italian from a French version by Julien (1863). He also translated the work *Tre religioni giudicate da un cinese* (Three Religions Judged by a Chinese) directly from Chinese. He wrote an interesting essay on Chinese monosyllabism: "Monosillabismo della lingua cinese," published in *Rivista*

²⁰For a reconstruction of Sinology in Italy in the Nineteenth century, see Giovanni Vacca, "Asia Orientale," in *Gli studi orientalistici in Italia negli ultimi cinquant'anni (1861–1911)*, *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 17.5 (1913), 275–319; Giuliano Bertuccioli, "Per una storia della sinologia italiana: prime note su alcuni sinologi e interpreti di cinese," *Mondo Cinese* 74 (1991), 9–39; Giuliano Bertuccioli, "Gli studi sinologici in Italia dal 1600 al 1950," *Mondo Cinese* 81 (1993), 9–22, and its English version: "Sinology in Italy 1600–1950," in *Europe Studies China* (London: Han-Shan Tang Books, 1995), 67–78; Davor Antonucci and Serena Zuccheri, *L'insegnamento del cinese in Italia tra passato e presente* (Rome: La Sapienza Orientale, 2010), 11–32.

²¹On Montucci, see S. Villani, "Montucci Antonio," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 76 (Rome: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia italiana, 2012); Donatella Cherubini and Anna Di Toro, *Da Siena all'Europa guardando alla Cina. Antonio Montucci, 1762–1829* (Pisa: Pacini editore, 2021).

²²On Calleri, see Bertuccioli, "Gli studi sinologici in Italia," 15; also Ksenia A. Kozha, "Systema phonicum scripturae sinicae by J.-M. Callery, Translation and Comments by Father Iakinf (Bichurin), Critical Review by V. P. Vasiliev: One Manuscript, Three Dimensions," *Journal of the Institute of Oriental Studies* 2019.3, 258–65.

²³Bertuccioli, "Gli studi sinologici in Italia," 17–18.

Orientale, 1 (1867), 8–26. He spent the rest of his life working on a *Clavis Sinica* (Key to Chinese) project, a system to help students memorize Chinese characters. Recently, a grammar of Chinese language written by Severini has resurfaced from the private archive of another Italian Sinologist, Giovanni Vacca (see below).²⁴

Severini's work on the *Clavis Sinica* was continued by his student and successor at Florence University, Carlo Puini (1838–1924). Puini was unable to complete the project, but he was the author of about one-hundred works that contributed greatly to the knowledge in Italy of China, Tibet, and Mongolia. These include *Il Buddha, Confucio e Lao-Tse: notizie e studii intorno alle religioni dell'Asia orientale* (Buddha, Confucius, and Laozi: Information and Studies on East Asian Religions, Florence, 1878); *Le origini della civiltà secondo la tradizione e la storia dell'estremo oriente* (The Origins of Civilizations according to Far Eastern Traditions and History, Florence, 1891); *Tibet secondo la relazione del viaggio del P. Ippolito Desideri (1715–1721)* (Tibet According to the Travel Journey of father Ippolito Desideri (1715–1721)), Rome, 1904); *Taoismo (Filosofia e religione)* ('Taoism (Philosophy and Religion)', Rome, 1917).²⁵

A separate case was that of Angelo Zottoli (1826–1902). A Jesuit missionary in Shanghai, he was no "armchair Sinologist." Zottoli was the author of a monumental compilation in five volumes entitled *Cursus Litteraturae Sinicae* (Course of Chinese Literature), published between 1878 and 1882, in which he translated several classical texts of Chinese literature. He also compiled a Latin–Chinese dictionary in 12 volumes, which remained in manuscript form.²⁶

Lodovico Nocentini (1849–1910), one of Severini's students, after a brief career as an interpreter in China, was appointed Professor of Chinese at Istituto Universitario Orientale in Naples in 1891. In 1899 he became Professor of Chinese at "Sapienza" University of Rome, where he greatly contributed to the development of Chinese studies. In 1907 he founded the journal *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*. He wrote several Sinological essays that were very much appreciated by his foreign colleagues and a book entitled *L'Europa nell'Estremo Oriente e gli Interessi dell'Italia in Cina* (Europe in the far East and Italian Interests in China, 1904).²⁷

Amedeo Vitale (1872–1918) was an interpreter of the Italian legation in Beijing from 1892 until 1914, when he was offered a position at the University of Naples to teach Chinese. His major contribution to Italian Sinology is in the work *Chinese Folklore, Pekinese Rhymes* (Beijing 1896) a collection of poems, songs, lullabies, nursery rhymes, and so forth, which he had assembled on the streets of Beijing. His work was even praised by the Chinese scholar and philosopher Hu Shi (1891–1962).²⁸

Giovanni Vacca (1872–1953) was Nocentini's successor in Rome. After a graduate degree in mathematics, he discovered his passion for Chinese language and culture, and he studied with Puini in Florence. Vacca travelled in China for two years, from

²⁴Paternicò, "Elements of Chinese Grammar," 346–58; Luisa M. Paternicò, "Le riflessioni linguistiche di Antelmo Severini in scritti editi e inediti," in *Atti del XVI Convegno AISC, Milano, settembre 2017*, edited by E. Giunipero and C. Piccinini (Venice: Cafoscarina, 2019), 126–32.

²⁵Antonucci, Zuccheri, *L'insegnamento del cinese in Italia*, 20.

²⁶Bertuccioli, "Gli studi sinologici in Italia," 13–14.

²⁷Antonucci and Zuccheri, *L'insegnamento del cinese in Italia*, 25–26; Michele Fatica, et al. "Sinologia e orientalistica all'Orientale di Napoli da Matteo Ripa al 1972," in *La rete dei saperi nelle università napoletane*, edited by Cesare De Seta (Naples: Artem, 2020), III: 228.

²⁸Bertuccioli, "Per una storia della sinologia italiana," 23–25.

1907 to 1909.²⁹ He taught Chinese first in Florence, from 1922 to 1923, and then in Rome, from 1922 to 1947. He tried to establish an Italian Institute of Oriental Studies at “Sapienza” University in the early 1930s but failed. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the then Fascist government preferred the foundation of a greater Institute for the studies on Middle and Far Eastern countries, the ISMEO (Istituto per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, (Institute for the Middle and Far East)), established in 1932.³⁰ Vacca’s contribution to Sinology is noteworthy; among his papers and books are “Sulla matematica degli antichi cinesi” (On the Mathematics of Ancient Chinese), published in the *Bollettino di Bibliografia e Storia delle Scienze Matematiche* (1905); “Notizie sulla cronologia e sul calendario cinese” (Information on Chinese Chronology and Calendar), in *Calendario Astronomico del Regio Osservatorio di Roma* (1930); *La religione dei cinesi* (Chinese Religion, 1944); and “Sur l’histoire de la science chinoise” (On Chinese History of Science), in *Archives Internationales d’Histoire des Sciences* (1948).

Sinological studies were in decline during the Fascist years, with Giovanni Vacca being one of the few exceptions. For a few years, China was considered a land to colonize and one of the places of the Far East “to promote Italy’s mission to restore the cultural supremacy of the white race and the proud affirmation of the imperial past of Rome.”³¹ After a failed first attempt in 1899, the Italian government was able to obtain a small concession in Tianjin in 1901, because of its cooperation in the suppression of the Boxer Rebellion.³² Italy was never able to truly exploit the concession, a swampy area adjoining a cemetery, which required vast decontamination operations.

Galeazzo Ciano (1903–1944), Mussolini’s son-in-law, who had been Consul in China between 1930 and 1933 and then became Minister of Foreign Affairs, wanted to improve exchanges between Italy and China, and to export Italian goods to the Middle Kingdom. However, the relations between the two countries began to deteriorate from 1931, with the growing links between the Fascists and the Japanese military regime, and relations were interrupted in 1936, when Italy signed the Anti-Comintern pact with Germany and Japan. After the defeat in the Second World War, Italy was forced to hand back the Tianjin concession by the Treaty of Paris of 1947.³³

The Sinological tradition in those years was kept alive mainly thanks to Pasquale D’Elia (1890–1963). According to Bertuccioli, “D’Elia was the greatest Sinologist in

²⁹His travel diary has been recently published: Tiziana Lioi, ed., *Viaggio in Cina 1907–1908: Diario di Giovanni Vacca* (Rome: L’Asino D’oro, 2016).

³⁰For a more detailed account, see Antonino Di Giovanni, “Giuseppe Tucci, l’ISMEO e gli orientismi nella politica estera del fascismo,” *Annali della facoltà di Scienze della formazione Università degli studi di Catania* 11 (2012), 77–78; Antonucci, Zuccheri, *L’insegnamento del cinese in Italia*, 27–29; Lionello Lanciotti, “Giovanni Vacca (1872–1953),” *East and West* 4 (1954), 40.

³¹See Laura De Giorgi, “In the Shadow of Marco Polo: Writing About China in Fascist Italy,” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 15.4 (2010), 573–89.

³²See Luisa M. Paternicò, “Il quartiere italiano a Tianjin: storia di un insediamento,” *Sulla via del Catai* 3 (2009), 139–43; Maurizio Marinelli, “The Genesis of the Italian Concession in Tianjin: A Combination of Wishful Thinking and Realpolitik,” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 15.4 (2010), 536–56; Aglaia De Angeli, “Italian Land Auctions in Tianjin: Italian Colonialism in Early Twentieth-Century China,” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 15.4 (2010), 557–72.

³³Paternicò, “Il quartiere italiano a Tianjin,” 143–45; on Italy–China relations during Fascism see also Mario Filippo Pini, *Italia e Cina, 60 anni tra passato e futuro* (Rome: L’Asino d’oro, 2011), 30–36; Guido Samarani, “An Historical Turning Point: Italy’s Relations with China before and after 8 September 1943,” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 15.4 (2010), 590–602.

Italy in the twenty years between the two World Wars.” D’Elia went to Shanghai as a missionary in 1913 and studied Chinese at the Zikawei College until 1917. He went back to Italy in 1934 and was appointed professor of History of the Missions and of Sinology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. From 1941 until 1960, he also taught Chinese at “Sapienza” University as an adjunct professor. His most important publications are *Il mappamondo del p. Matteo Ricci* (The World Map of F. Matteo Ricci, 1938) and *Le origini dell’arte cristiana cinese* (The Origins of Chinese Christian Art, 1939). His uncompleted project was the publication of all the works of Matteo Ricci, under the title of *Fonti Ricciane* (Ricci’s sources). However, he was able to publish only Ricci’s journey, *Della Entrata della Compagnia di Gesù e Christianità in Cina*, in 3 vols. (On the Entrance of the Society of Jesus and Christianity into China, 1942–1943).³⁴

Another interesting Sinologist during the Fascist era was Giuseppe Tucci (1894–1984) “explorer to ‘Il Duce’.”³⁵ Tucci was a Sinologist as well as an Indologist and a Tibetologist. He led scientific expeditions to India, Tibet, and Nepal thanks to the financial support of the Fascist government, and in 1930 became professor of Philosophies and Religions of East Asia at “Sapienza” University of Rome. Among his works: *Storia della filosofia cinese antica* (History of Ancient Chinese Philosophy, 1922); *Buddhismo* (Buddhism, 1926); *Indo-Tibetica* (Indo-Tibetan, 1932–33); *Tra giungle e pagode* (Between Jungles and Pagodas, 1954); *Storia della filosofia indiana* (History of Indian Philosophy, 1958); *Tibet, Land of Snows* (1968).³⁶

To summarize, between the beginning of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, the portrait of the “Italian Sinologist” was still somehow blurred. As we have seen, many of these scholars could read and teach Classical Chinese but might have had a difficult time using Chinese in China to accomplish simple communication tasks. Some of them are also listed among respectable Japanologists,³⁷ Indologists, or generally defined with a word that is not much used anymore, “Orientalists” (since they also dedicated their studies to other regions of East Asia, like Tibet, Nepal, etc.). Their interests were quite broad, and their studies, with some exceptions, were not specialized in one particular field.

However, some of them began an academic career after being missionaries or diplomats in China: these Sinologists were the most well-versed in the Chinese language. The passion for China studies, often together with the academic position, was passed from master to disciple/disciples. This trend would partially continue until the last decades of the twentieth century.

New Lifeblood for Italian Sinology (second half of the twentieth century)

In the second half of the twentieth century, the Universities of “L’Orientale” in Naples, “Sapienza” in Rome, and “Ca’ Foscari” in Venice became consolidated centers of Sinological studies that gave birth to the current generation of scholars.

The Sinologists of the time also established courses of Chinese language and culture in other Italian Universities (Pavia, Bologna, Milan, Perugia, Turin, etc.)³⁸ and the

³⁴Bertuccioli, “Gli studi sinologici in Italia dal 1600 al 1950,” 14; Antonucci and Zuccheri, *L’insegnamento del cinese in Italia*, 30–32.

³⁵Enrica Garzilli, *L’esploratore del Duce: Le avventure di Giuseppe Tucci e la politica italiana in Oriente da Mussolini a Andreotti. Con il carteggio di Giulio Andreotti* (Rome: Memori, Asiatica, 2012).

³⁶Di Giovanni, “Giuseppe Tucci,” 75–94.

³⁷This was for example the case of Severini, see Paternicò, “*Elements of Chinese Grammar*,” 349–50.

³⁸Regular University courses in the Chinese language began in 1868 in what later became “L’Orientale” University of Naples, in 1876 in “Sapienza” University of Rome, in 1960 in University of Pavia, in 1966 in

interest in the subject began to reach wider proportions. This was also a consequence of the Chinese economic rise and constant growth starting from the 1980s, which sparked the interest of many Italian families who pushed their sons and daughters to “look East.” As a matter of fact, the image of China in Italy in the second half of the twentieth century had undergone many changes: the common idea of a mysterious and exotic country was accompanied, and sometimes completely replaced, by that of a land where the political dreams of equity and justice could be fulfilled.³⁹ The dark years of the Cultural Revolution, however, disappointed many Italian leftists who had previously fallen in love with China: the PRC was then often seen as an obscure sort of Orwellian society, especially after the events of Tian’anmen Square in 1989. China’s rapid growth afterwards, and its impact on the world economy, led many people to put aside ideology and seek new job opportunities and economic fulfillment in the Middle Kingdom. Thus, the demand for Chinese language courses gradually increased, not only in universities but also in public and private schools. In a growing number of institutions, aside from the language, it became possible to study Chinese Literature, Philology, Philosophy, History, and Art. Scholarly interest in different fields of Chinese culture emerged and slowly underwent a process of specialization.⁴⁰ It should also be noted that, in this phase, Italian Sinology finally opened to women scholars who would become important agents in its future.

In Naples, after Amedeo Vitale, other distinguished Sinologists followed, such as Martin Benedikter (1908–1969), a specialist of Tang literature who taught Chinese language between 1959–1965,⁴¹ and Lionello Lanciotti (1925–2015). The latter, in particular, was one of Tucci’s students in Rome, who later on moved to Sweden to study with Bernhard Kalgren (1889–1978) and then to Leiden to study with Jan Julius L. Duyvendak (1889–1954). Back in Italy, he taught Chinese language, literature, and philology at “Sapienza” University of Rome from 1956 until 1964. In 1966, he launched the first Chinese language course at “Ca’ Foscari” University of Venice, where he remained until 1979.⁴² From 1979 to his retirement in 1997, he was Professor of Chinese Philology at “L’Orientale” University of Naples. He was also Director of the section “Venezia e l’Oriente” (‘Venice and the East’) of the Giorgio Cini Foundation in Venice, Vice-president of the IsMEO, and one of the founders of the Italian Association of Chinese Studies (Associazione Italiana di Studi Cinesi). Among his numerous publications are *Confucio: la vita e l’insegnamento* (Confucius, the Way

“Ca’ Foscari” University of Venice, in 1980 in the Universities of Bologna and Milan, in 1984 in University of Perugia, in 1987 in University of Turin, in 1995 in University of Trieste, in 1997 in University of Salento, in 1999 in University of Cagliari, in 2000 in University of Florence. For all the others established between 2000 and 2008 see Antonucci and Zuccheri, *L’insegnamento del cinese in Italia*, 55–57; for the current universities offering courses of Chinese language and culture see the Appendix.

³⁹For the image of China post World War II, see Luisa M. Paternicò, “The Italian Image of China in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century,” in *Oral History of China Studies in Italy*, edited by Louisa M. Paternicò, Chih-Yu Shih, *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, suppl. 2, vol. 90 (2017), 133–50.

⁴⁰On the history of Sinology in the second half of the twentieth century, see Lionello Lanciotti, “Gli studi sinologici in Italia dal 1950 al 1992,” *Mondo Cinese* 85 (1994), 17–26, also online at www.tuttocina.it/Mondo_cinese/085/085_lanc.htm. For more recent data (2010) see Antonucci and Zuccheri, *L’insegnamento del cinese in Italia*, 51–118.

⁴¹Fatica et al., “Sinologia e orientalistica all’Orientale di Napoli,” 260.

⁴²See Laura De Giorgi, “Chinese Studies at Ca’ Foscari: Lionello Lanciotti, Mario Sabattini and their Legacy,” in *150 Years of Oriental Studies at Ca’ Foscari*, edited by Laura De Giorgi and Federico Greselin (Venice: Edizioni Ca’ Foscari 2018), 147–54.

and the Teaching, Rome, 1968), *Letteratura cinese* (Chinese Literature, Milan, 1969), and *Il libro della virtù e della via* (The Book of the Way and the Virtue, Milan, 1981). Between 1956 and 1996, he edited the 26 volumes of the *China* series, published by the IsMEO.⁴³

Sinology in Rome owes its current school mainly to Giuliano Bertuccioli (1923–2001), who studied Chinese during his adolescence and university years while he was actually majoring in law. In 1946, he began his diplomatic career as an interpreter in Nanjing, where he perfected his knowledge of Chinese and especially of classical Chinese. He devoted forty years of his life to serving as a diplomat in different areas of the Asian continent (Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Philippines, etc.). Returning to Italy in 1981, he obtained the position of Professor of Chinese Language and Literature at “Sapienza” University, where he remained until 1995, teaching Chinese to many students. The last twenty years of his life were dedicated to teaching and researching in several fields of Sinology, such as Taoism, classical literature, and on the Italian scholar-missionaries of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Among his many publications are *La Letteratura Cinese* (Chinese Literature, Milan 1968); *Testi di Letteratura Cinese: Poesia* (Texts of Chinese Literature: Poetry, Rome, 1985); *Testi di Letteratura Cinese: Prosa* (Texts of Chinese Literature: Prose, Rome, 1985); *Il linguaggio diplomatico cinese* (Chinese Language of Diplomacy, Rome, 1987); and, with Federico Masini, *Italia e Cina* (Italy and China, Bari, 1996). Finally, he edited the first three volumes of *Martino Martini S.J. Opera Omnia* (Trent, 1998–2003).⁴⁴

As Lanciotti wrote in 1994,⁴⁵ in Italy at the time, there were two full professors of Chinese language and literature: Bertuccioli in Rome and Mario Sabattini (1944–2017) in Venice.⁴⁶ He himself was full professor of Chinese philology in Naples. Chinese history was taught in Rome by Piero Corradini (1933–2006)⁴⁷ and in Naples by Paolo Santangelo.⁴⁸ Also in Naples, Antonino Forte (1940–2006)⁴⁹ was teaching Chinese Religions and Philosophies. The first professor of History of East Asian Art in an Italian University was Paola Mortari Vergara Caffarelli in Genoa from 1987 to 2009.⁵⁰ The subject

⁴³See also Maurizio Scarpari and Tiziana Lippiello, eds., *Caro Maestro ... Scritti in onore di Lionello Lanciotti per l'Ottantesimo Compleanno* (Venice: Cafoscarina, 2005).

⁴⁴For an account of his life, see Federico Masini and Marina Miranda, “Ricordo di un maestro,” *Mondo Cinese* 108 (2001), 47–53. For a detailed bibliography, see Antonino Forte and Federico Masini, eds., *A Life Journey to the East: Sinological Studies in Memory of Giuliano Bertuccioli* (Kyoto: Scuola italiana di studi sull'Asia Orientale, 2002).

⁴⁵Lanciotti, “Gli studi sinologici in Italia,” 17–26.

⁴⁶Sabattini taught in Venice from 1970. His research interests included several aspects of Chinese civilization: language and literature, but also history. See Laura De Giorgi, “Chinese Studies at Ca'Foscari,” 147–54; A selected bibliography of his work can be found in the volume edited by his daughter: Mario Sabattini, *Zhu Guangqian's Life and Philosophy*, edited by Elisa Sabattini (Leiden: Brill 2021), X–XII.

⁴⁷Corradini taught History of China and Eastern Asia in Naples from 1966 to 1975, then in University of Macerata until 1985; from then until the year 2000 he was full professor of History of Eastern Asia in “Sapienza” University of Rome. See Emilio Bottazzi, “In ricordo di Piero Corradini,” *Mondo cinese* 128 (2006), www.tuttocina.it/Mondo_cinese/128/128_bott.htm.

⁴⁸His biography can be found in Fatica et al., “Sinologia e orientalistica all'Orientale di Napoli,” 323–26.

⁴⁹After having been director of the Italian School of Oriental Studies in Kyoto for a few years, in 1981 he became professor in Naples. See Fatica et al., “Sinologia e orientalistica all'Orientale di Napoli,” 329.

⁵⁰She was also the founder and director of the Italian Cultural Institute in Shanghai from 2003 to 2006. A book in her honor, with bio-bibliographical information, has been edited by Maurizio Paolillo and

was also taught by Maria Teresa Lucidi (1930–2005)⁵¹ in Rome, by Adolfo Tamburello—in Naples, and by Gian Carlo Calza in Venice.

From this point, it would be very hard to continue providing detailed bio-bibliographical information for each of the Sinologists who followed, mostly disciples and successors of Bertuccioli, Lanciotti, Sabattini, Forte, Caffarelli, etc. Some have already retired (and references to their studies will be provided in footnotes). Many are still in service (and information on their affiliation, courses, research topics, link to CV and publications can be found in the Appendix). They can all be considered undiscussed pillars of today's Italian Sinology.

The following pages provide a list of the main subject areas and, without claim to completeness, the people who were most active researching or teaching in each field in the last decades of the twentieth century. It should be noted that, aside from the courses they taught, many Italian Sinologists of the time did not specialize in merely one field of study but carried on research and published on history as well as on literature, philology and philosophy. This interdisciplinarity within the wider “Sinological subject-area” has always been a peculiar trait of Italian Sinology.

Research Fields and Scholars in the Last Decades of the Twentieth Century

Language, Linguistics and Philology

This field has always been one of the most studied in the Italian tradition. Among the scholars of the period, we can mention the following: Magda Abbiati taught Chinese language at the University of Venice beginning in 1979, when Lanciotti left for Naples. She carried out extensive research on Chinese syntax, lexicon, pragmatics, and semantics.⁵² Maurizio Scarpari taught Classical Chinese language in “Ca' Foscari” from 1979. His research focused on ancient China's language, history and philosophical thought.⁵³ Federico Greselin taught Chinese Language and Literature in Turin from 1987 and in Venice from 1992. His research focused on Chinese language and its pedagogy as well as on Chinese cinema.⁵⁴ Also Franco Gatti taught Chinese language and translations at the Universities of Trieste and Venice from the 1990s. His research includes Chinese language for special purposes, communication strategies as well as Taoist classical literature. Tiziana Lippiello began teaching Classical Chinese in Venice in 1996. Her fields of expertise are Classical Chinese language and literature together with history of Chinese philosophies and religions.

Giorgio Casacchia taught Chinese language and philology from 1985 at “L'Orientale” University of Naples. He carried out research in the fields of Chinese linguistics and history of linguistics as well as in classical Chinese literature. He authored a comprehensive Italian–Chinese Dictionary with Bai Yukun (2nd ed., 2013). Luciano Dalsecco began teaching Chinese language at University of Bologna in the late 1970s.

Pierfrancesco Fedi: *Arte dal Mediterraneo al mar della Cina. Genesi ed incontri di scuole e stili. Scritti in onore di Paola Mortari Vergara Caffarelli* (Palermo: Officina Studi Medievali 2015).

⁵¹Lucidi taught in Rome from 1970 until 2002. The proceedings of a conference held in Rome in 2007 in her honor have been published by Pierfrancesco Fedi et al., eds., *Alla Maniera di ... Convegno in ricordo di Maria Teresa Lucidi* (Rome: Casa ed. Sapienza 2010).

⁵²Abbiati retired in 2019 but complete information on her research and publications can be found here: www.unive.it/data/persona/5591299/pubb_anno.

⁵³Scarpari is now retired but has a personal website with all of his activities and publications: www.maurizioscarpari.com/

⁵⁴Greselin also retired in 2019, more on him can be found online at www.unive.it/data/persona/5591832/curriculum.

His research was on Chinese grammar.⁵⁵ Federico Masini began teaching Chinese Language and Philology in “Sapienza” University of Rome in 1993. His research focused on Chinese modern lexicon and its neologisms. He also continued Bertuccioli’s studies on the history of the early Italian Sinologists and Italy–China Relations.

Literature

Literature has also been a very popular field of study in Italy, with several scholars teaching, researching, and translating classical, modern, and contemporary literature. In 1997, the above-mentioned Mario Sabattini with Paolo Santangelo published a collection of selected Chinese fiction from the Ming period through the late twentieth century.⁵⁶

Annamaria Palermo (1943–2017) taught Chinese Language and Literature in Naples from 1973. Her research mainly focused on Yu Dafu and Lu Xun, and in general on modern and contemporary literature, as well as on Chinese cinema.⁵⁷ Sandra Marina Carletti taught Chinese Literature in Venice from 1971 and in Naples from 1985. Her research was mainly on Chinese modern and contemporary fiction, from Lu Xun and Qu Xiaolong.⁵⁸ Maria Cristina Pisciotta shared the interest in Chinese modern literature of her colleagues in Naples, but she also carried out research on Chinese theater from Lao She and Gao Xingjian. Maria Cigliano taught Chinese Language and Literature at “L’Orientale” in Naples from the 1980s. Her research mainly focused on Chinese ethnic minorities and in Ming–Qing literature.⁵⁹ Patrizia Dadò, who taught Modern and Contemporary Literature in Rome, focused her research on Shanghai and Hong Kong metropolitan fiction, but also on Chinese Intellectual History.⁶⁰ Alessandra Lavagnino taught Chinese language and culture in Milan State University from 1987 and carried out research on classical poetry and rhetoric. She also translated literary works. In the later years of her career, she broadened her range of studies to include Chinese media and politics.⁶¹ Claudia Pozzana began teaching Chinese Literature at the University of Bologna in 1984. Her research focused on Chinese poetry and poetical thought.⁶² Giovanni Sary taught Mongolian Language and Literature from 1982 and Manchu language and literature from 1990 in Venice. His research focused on Manchu literature and culture.⁶³ Fiorenzo Lafirenza began teaching Chinese Language, Literature, and Translation in the late 1990s at the Universities of Venice and Trieste. His research focuses on Chinese literary translation and on modern

⁵⁵Not much can be found on his life and academic career. His main work was *Grammatica cinese* (Bologna: Pàtron 1973).

⁵⁶Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, eds., *Il pennello di lacca: La narrativa cinese dalla dinastia Ming ai giorni nostri* (Bari: Laterza 1997).

⁵⁷On Palermo see Fatica et al., “Sinologia e orientalistica all’Orientale di Napoli,” 323, and Lucia Caterina, “AnnaMaria Palermo (1943–2017),” *Annali Sezione Orientale* 78 (2018), 274–78.

⁵⁸She is now retired. For more information see https://docenti.unior.it/index2.php?content_id=20021&content_id_start=1.

⁵⁹Cigliano is now retired. Some information on her life and career can be found at https://docenti.unior.it/index2.php?content_id=19128&content_id_start=1.

⁶⁰Dadò is also retired; she taught Chinese Language and Literature in Venice before arriving in Sapienza. See www.lettere.uniroma1.it/users/patrizia-dado

⁶¹Lavagnino is now retired and more information about her can be found in the introduction of Clara Bulfoni et al., eds., 文心 *Wenxin. L’essenza della scrittura. Contributi in onore di Alessandra Cristina Lavagnino* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2017), 13–18.

⁶²On Pozzana see www.dslo.unibo.it/planisferi/dslo/Pagine/PersoneCurriculum.aspx?IDPersona=18.

⁶³Sary is also retired. See www.unive.it/data/persona/5592827.

and contemporary Chinese fiction. Marco Ceresa teaches Chinese Literature and China cultural studies in Venice. His research fields include Cultural studies in China, China food culture, and Classical Chinese literature. Stefania Stafutti has been teaching Chinese Language and Literature at Turin University since 1994. Her research focuses on Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature and Cultural studies.

History

The Italian tradition of studies on Chinese history is quite long and includes eminent scholars. Filippo Coccia (1934–1997), who was one of the first Italian students in China in the late 1950s, taught Modern and Contemporary History of China at Naples from 1977. He was one of the translators of Mao's works into Italian.⁶⁴ Adolfo Tamburello taught History of East Asia in Naples from 1972. His interests included history and pre-history of China and Japan as well as East Asian art.⁶⁵ After teaching for several years in Naples, Paolo Santangelo moved to Rome where he taught History of China until his retirement. Now Emeritus, his research interests include Chinese history and literature, and he leads an important international project on the expression of emotions in China.⁶⁶ The already mentioned Piero Corradini taught History of China in Naples and in Rome and specialized in the history of East Asia. He also published studies on specific Chinese cities such as Beijing, Macau, and Hong Kong, as well as research on Chinese ethnic minorities and Islam in China. In the late nineties, the history of modern and contemporary China was taught in Rome by Valdo Ferretti, who also specializes in History of Japan. In Venice, the history of China was taught by Guido Samarani who is a specialist on the history of modern and contemporary China, the history of Italy–China relations, and China's foreign policy.⁶⁷ In Naples, the history of modern and contemporary China was taught by Paola Paderni from 1992. Her research interests include late Qing judicial sources for the history of China, women, and gender studies.⁶⁸

Philosophies and Religions

Antonino Forte (1940–2000) was one of the main specialists in Chinese and Japanese Buddhist history, who taught East Asian Philosophies and Religions at “L'Orientale” in Naples from 1981.⁶⁹ Alfredo Mario Cadonna (1948–2020) taught classical Chinese Language and History of Chinese Philosophies and Religions in Naples and Venice. His early research focused on Middle Chinese vernacular as in Chan Buddhist texts. He also studied Taoism and the Dunhuang's manuscripts.⁷⁰

⁶⁴Fatica et al., “Sinologia e orientalistica all'Orientale di Napoli,” 322–23. The letters he sent from China have been published in Lucia Battaglia and Giorgio Trentin, eds., *Filippo Coccia: Lettere dalla Cina* (Rome: Aracne, 2017). See also Giorgio Mantici, Paola Paderni, Valeria Varriano, eds., *Sulla Cina, 1958–1997/ Filippo Coccia* (Naples: IUO, 1998).

⁶⁵Fatica et al., “Sinologia e orientalistica all'Orientale di Napoli,” 327

⁶⁶More information on him and his publications can be found at <https://uniroma1.academia.edu/Paolosantangelo/CurriculumVitae>.

⁶⁷Samarani is now retired. More info on him is available at www.unive.it/data/persona/5591740/curriculum.

⁶⁸Paola Paderni retired in October 2021. More information on her life and work can be found at https://docenti2.unior.it/index2.php?content_id=20837&content_id_start=1.

⁶⁹Victor H. Mair has edited a volume of essays in his honor: *Buddhist Transformations and interactions, Essays in Honor of Antonino Forte* (Amherst: Cambria Press 2017).

⁷⁰His cv and publications are available at www.unive.it/data/persona/5592463/curriculum. See also the remembrance written by Maurizio Paolillo, at <http://chinesestudies.eu/?p=4209>.

Archeology and History of Art

These subjects were taught by Maria Teresa Lucidi (1930–2005) in Rome from 1970 until 2002. Her research included Chinese art, archeology, and philosophy. She also researched Japanese aesthetic conceptions.⁷¹ In Naples, the first specialist in archeology and the history of Chinese art was Lucia Caterina. Her main research focus has been the study of the Oriental collections in Italian museums and of the *chinoiserie*.⁷² Gian Carlo Calza, not a Sinologist *stricto sensu* himself, taught art history of East Asia in Venice from 1971, forming a generation of art historians specialized in either Japanese or Chinese Art.

Italian Sinology Today

Sinological studies in Italy today hold a solid position in academia and reach beyond it. Many other figures including translators of literary works, diplomats, journalists, and economists, are knowledgeable China experts, who understand the Chinese language and are able to carry out reliable studies on China, publishing for and able to reach a wider audience. For the sake of space, the following pages will concentrate on the situation in Italian academia. The number of scholars devoted to China studies and that of the institutions promoting them are growing at a steady pace. At present, at least twenty-six universities offer regular courses and programs on Chinese language and culture (see Appendix), thanks to twenty-eight researchers (twenty-two in pre-tenure and six in tenure positions), forty-eight associate professors and thirteen full professors. At least another twenty-two universities offer one or two courses on Chinese language and culture, mainly thanks to adjunct professors, with the perspective of future implementation and stabilization. Altogether, forty-eight out of eighty-two Italian university institutions in Italy offer courses related to Sinological studies.

The number of available university positions, although increasing, is still lower than the number of new scholars being trained every year, and quite a few Sinologists therefore tend to look for academic positions abroad, within the EU borders or beyond it, in China, or in North America. This so-called “brain drain” is found in many other study areas as well, to the point that there is a government program called “brain regain,” offering economic advantages, tax breaks, and other incentives both to scholars who return to Italy and to institutions promoting the “brain return.” This has enabled Sinologists like Elisabetta Corsi, Donatella Rossi, Giovanni Vitiello, and Giovanna Puppini (see Appendix) to return. However, the few available positions, the often-slow career advancement, the scarce research funds, and the low salaries offered in Italy are rarely attractive for successful Italian scholars abroad. Also, in our globalized and super-connected world, it is very easy for Italian scholars abroad to collaborate with Italian colleagues and institutions, participate in nationally organized conferences, as well as access materials in Italian archives and libraries. These connections are a win-win situation which fosters international cooperation programs and joint research projects.

The following pages will present the current situation of Italian Sinology in academia, together with the related scholarly associations and main journals.

Sinology in Italian Academia

Twenty-first century Italian Sinology has seen a growing number of scholars taking interest and carrying out research in one of its sub-fields. More than in the past,

⁷¹See n. 47, above.

⁷²Caterina is now retired; see Fatica et al., “Sinologia e orientalistica all’Orientale di Napoli,” 327–28.

contemporary Italian Sinologists tend to specialize in one or two connected areas; but they also promote multidisciplinary studies, individually or in teams, and also with non-Sinologists, for cross-area or comparative research projects. Furthermore, the new generation of Sinologists actively organize, participate in, and are invited to both national and international conferences on China studies, writing essays and publishing the results of their research in Italian, Chinese, and English, but sometimes also in Spanish or French. The publications are frequently in open-access digital form, thanks to national policies implementing this modern way of accessing knowledge. Italian libraries and archives overflow with manuscripts and texts on China from the thirteenth century onwards and exert a great appeal for scholars from all over the world. More and more Italian libraries are digitalizing their materials: an increasing number of them have joined international online platforms providing free online consultation of their resources. Additionally, several national libraries allow free reproductions of printed texts, even with one's own mobile phone, for study purposes.

While the traditional study areas maintain their original appeal, new ones have also emerged and gained immediate popularity. Studies on contemporary China, its language/s and culture, its politics and institutions, society, economy, media and so on, have enriched the panorama of China studies and multiplied the range of courses that can be offered. As the Appendix shows, although many scholars are still mainly asked to teach the basic subjects in most universities (Chinese Modern or Classical Language, Literature, History, Philosophy, etc.), the research scene has become ampler and more comprehensive. As a matter of fact, the list of scholars and institutions in the Appendix (data from the website of the Italian Ministry of University and Research) includes only fixed-term researchers, associate professors, and full professors. It does not include all the younger scholars who are currently PhD students, research fellows, or adjuncts, or those who are temporarily affiliated with foreign universities. Counting all these other figures, one might dare to say that almost no area of study concerning China is neglected by Italian Sinology nowadays.

Since it would be impossible to write detailed information concerning the numerous scholars that today are involved with Sinological studies, I offer here a list of just a few of the new or popular fields and topics of research with which Italian scholars are engaged:⁷³

Chinese language: teaching Chinese as a foreign/second language; history of Chinese language teaching; Chinese language didactics, acquisition and assessment; Cantonese language, Tibetan languages; translation studies; classical Chinese.

Chinese linguistics: semantics, pragmatics, morphology, lexicon, syntax; corpus linguistics, sociolinguistics; historical linguistics, missionary linguistics, history of Chinese linguistics.

Chinese literature: classical, pre-modern, modern and contemporary literature; erotic and/or gay literature; Taiwan and Hong Kong literatures; overseas Chinese literature; literary criticism.

Chinese history: social and intellectual history; Ming-Qing history; late-Qing–Early Republican history; contemporary history; history of books and printing; history of Mongolia.

Sinology: history of Sinology, China–Europe cultural contacts and exchanges.

Chinese cultural studies: cultural practices related to power; soft power; the effects of propaganda on culture production.

⁷³See Appendix for further information and links to cv and publications of today's Italian Sinologists.

Chinese social studies: studies on Chinese immigrants in Italy and their cultural products; Chinese healthcare system; Chinese minorities; food studies.

Chinese media: Chinese contemporary television, press, comics; advertisements; state control over the internet and the media.

Chinese government and politics: Chinese institutions, national politics and international relations; Chinese environmental governance; soft power; political discourse; cultural diplomacy; Chinese law and legal system; introduction of Roman law in China.

Chinese arts: art history; modern calligraphy, *chinoiseries*, graffiti; cinema, theater, and performance; traditional and contemporary music.

Chinese thought, philosophies, and religion: intellectual, political, and religious history of China; Taoist, Buddhist, and Confucian studies.

Chinese economy: brand and marketing strategies; Chinese economic transformations after 1978.

The Scholarly Associations

The first Italian scholarly association for Chinese studies was founded in 1979 in Rome by Lanciotti, Corradini, Palermo, Sacchetti and Sabattini, as the Associazione italiana di studi cinesi (AISC).⁷⁴ The association's goal is to promote scientific studies on China and its civilization. Lanciotti was the secretary general until 2015. The current president is Marina Miranda. The association has been quite regularly holding biennial conferences, and the eighteenth edition was held in November 2021 in Turin. The conference proceedings in Italian are now published exclusively in digital open-access form on the website. Aside from the proceedings, the association sponsors the publication of a volume of *Selected Papers* in English, which undergo double blind peer-review. The AISC currently counts 224 members.

A more recent scholarly association is the Associazione italiana di linguistica cinese (AILC), founded in Rome in 2017 by Giorgio F. Arcodia, Bianca Basciano, Federico Masini, Luisa M. Paternicò, and Chiara Romagnoli.⁷⁵ The goal of the Italian Association of Chinese Linguistics is to encourage and promote scientific research on Chinese theoretical and applied linguistics, but also studies on didactics and teaching Chinese teaching as a second language. The current president is Carlotta Sparvoli. The association holds biennial conferences called "Study days on Chinese Linguistics," which continue a meeting tradition that had begun in Venice before the association was founded. The seventh edition of the Study Days was held at the University of Bergamo in September, 2022. The AILC currently counts forty-seven members.

The Journals

The main Italian journals publishing studies and research on China are:

- *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* (RSO), founded in 1907 by the professors at "Sapienza" University of Rome, publishes scholarly articles in the field of "Oriental" studies. The geographic areas covered by the journal range from the Middle East to East Asia. The subjects include archaeology, history, philology, linguistics, literature, religion, and philosophy. Two annual monographs are

⁷⁴AISC website: <https://aisc-org.it/>.

⁷⁵AILC website: <https://linguisticacinese.wixsite.com/ailc>.

published as supplements to the journal. Its papers undergo a double-blind peer review process.⁷⁶

- *Annali, sezione orientale* (AION-or), is one of the oldest international journals of “L’Orientale” University of Naples, founded in 1929. The journal includes papers written in the main European languages in the fields of history, literature, linguistics, philology, philosophy, and art of the wider African and Asian areas, from ancient times to the contemporary era. The articles undergo a double-blind peer review process.⁷⁷
- *Annali di Ca’ Foscari. Serie orientale* is the journal of the Department of Asian and North African Studies of “Ca’ Foscari” University of Venice. Founded in 1970, the journal became an open-access resource in 2014. Its mission is to foster original and interdisciplinary research in the fields of Asian and North African Studies. Each annual issue features articles and reviews written by leading scholars whose contributions span across a vast array of topics: linguistics, philology, literature, religion and philosophy, archaeology, and cultural heritage, visual and performing arts, history, economy, politics, and international relations. The papers undergo a double-blind peer review process.⁷⁸
- *Mondo cinese* was founded in 1973 as a scholarly platform to write on Chinese matters. When the Fondazione Italia-Cina acquired it, the journal began to focus on Chinese contemporary studies. *Mondo Cinese* now hosts contributions from Italian and international Sinologists and China experts on economy, management, internal and foreign politics, law, culture and society, and history. Since 2021, it has been a digital open-access publication.⁷⁹
- *Ming Qing Yanjiu*, founded in 1992, is another journal linked to “L’Orientale” University of Naples. It is primarily dedicated to studies on pre-modern China. The journal aims at providing a forum for scholars of different fields related to the late imperial and early republican period. It publishes peer-reviewed papers on sociology, literature, psychology, anthropology, history, geography, linguistics, semiotics, political science, and philosophy, as well as book reviews.⁸⁰
- *Sulla via del Catai*, founded in 2007, is a biannual publication of the Martini Study Center (University of Trent). Every issue is a monographic volume centered on the cultural relations and exchanges between China and the West in the past as well as in the present. The journal is enriched with several high-quality images and illustrations. The papers undergo a double-blind peer review process.⁸¹
- *Orizzonte Cina*, founded in 2010, is a quarterly journal linked to the University of Turin, and is entirely dedicated to China’s current affairs, including political dynamics, socio-economic transformations, and cultural phenomena. It is freely downloadable online.⁸²
- *Sinosfere* is a free online journal on Chinese culture, founded in 2018. Its purpose is to offer a platform for Sinologists to explore and discuss Chinese socio-cultural

⁷⁶RSO website: <http://www.libraweb.net/riviste.php?chiave=38>.

⁷⁷AION-or website: <https://www.unior.it/ateneo/265/1/aion-or.html>.

⁷⁸*Annali di Ca’ Foscari, Sez. Orientale* website: <https://edizionicafoscarini.unive.it/en/edizioni4/riviste/annali-di-ca-foscari-serie-orientale/>.

⁷⁹*Mondo cinese* website: www.tuttocina.it/Mondo_cinese/.

⁸⁰*Ming Qing Yanjiu* website: www.unior.it/ateneo/268/1/ming-qing-yanjiu.html.

⁸¹*Sulla via del Catai* website: www.martinomartinicenter.org/sulla-via-del-catai.html.

⁸²*Orizzonte Cina* website: www.orizzontecina.unito.it/?page_id=118&lang=en.

dynamics and the peculiar logics governing them. *Sinosfere* also has a blog section, called *Voci* (Voices), hosting miscellaneous interventions, debates, translations, reviews, etc.⁸³

Current challenges

Today, Italian Sinology, along with global Sinology, is confronted with the current, complex, Chinese political situation. Furthermore, there is a worsening image of China in the media due to recent events like the suppression of the Hong Kong protests in 2019 and the following National security law; the 2019 data leak on the Xinjiang re-education camps; and the Covid-19 pandemic and China's subsequent "Zero Covid Policy."⁸⁴

While some Sinologists, mainly those who can keep carrying out studies using local libraries and digitalized online sources and corpora, have not suffered too much with the current situation, several scholars, and especially those whose research fields include contemporary China, its politics and society, are suffering for the impossibility of reaching China, accessing important primary sources, and carrying out fieldwork. They are also striving to untangle the different narratives on the current Chinese national situation provided on one hand by the Chinese Communist Party and official media, and on the other hand by hostile Western leaders and biased media. In this particularly delicate moment, most of the Italian Sinologists are trying not to take sides. Some are promoting scholarly discussion on the present situation outside of their classrooms and offices as well as inside, presenting the other side of the coin in public interviews and newspaper articles, offering their contribution for a better and more widespread understanding of today's China in Italy.

In this sense, a scholarly debate on the Hong Kong protests and their suppression was encouraged on the pages of the online journal *Sinosfere* after Stefania Stafutti's letter to Xi Jinping published on the newspaper *Corriere della sera*, asking the Chairman to listen to the young protesters.⁸⁵ A series of five articles followed, written by Italian Sinologists between November and December 2019 expressing their views and discussing their role in this situation.⁸⁶ Attilio Andreini for example invited all the Sinologists in Italy to voice their opinion and not to forget their moral responsibilities, political duties, and civic role.⁸⁷ Fabio Lanza warned on "how to talk" about the situation as China experts, illustrating the complexities of this crisis, finding its motivations and inspiration, locating the tensions and the contradictions without falling into easy (pro-China/anti-China) dualisms.⁸⁸ Giovanni Andornino warned about the risks of supporting Hong Kong independence, first of all because this would be disrespectful

⁸³*Sinosfere* website: <http://sinosfere.com/sinosfere/>.

⁸⁴See, for example, Toshio Miyake, "'Cin ciun cian' (ching chong): Yellowness and Neo-Orientalism in Italy at the Time of COVID-19," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 47.4 (2021), 486–511; Beatrice Gallelli et al., *Italian Public Opinion on China in the Age of COVID-19. Longing for Economic Engagement Amid General Distrust* (Bratislava: Central European Institute of Asian Studies, 2020).

⁸⁵The letter can be read at www.corriere.it/esteri/19_novembre_20/appello-docente-xi-jinping-incontri-studenti-hong-kong-466f6342-0bad-11ea-a21c-9507e0a03cd5.shtml.

⁸⁶The articles can be all read at this link: <https://sinosfere.com/category/la-questione-di-hong-kong-e-il-ruolo-dei-sinologi/>.

⁸⁷Attilio Andreini, "Ecco perché è fondamentale parlare," *Sinosfere* November 2019, <https://sinosfere.com/2019/11/25/attilio-andreini-ecco-perche-e-fondamentale-parlare/>.

⁸⁸Fabio Lanza, "Ma il problema è come parlare," *Sinosfere* December 2019, <https://sinosfere.com/2019/12/01/fabio-lanza-ma-il-problema-e-come-parlare/>.

to the Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984, but also because the majority of the protesters simply asked for universal suffrage and for the autonomy of their administration and not independence.⁸⁹

The debate on this issue did not go much further, especially after the Hong Kong National Security law passed in June 2020, and the catastrophic outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the Italian Sinological community continued to debate about their role, especially after some accusations of collusion with the Chinese government and of self-censorship were made in the press. The accusations came mainly from Maurizio Scarpari, a retired Professor, and directly targeted the Confucius Institutes in the Italian Universities, together with the scholars who are linked to them. In September 2020, Marisa Siddivò, Marco Fumian, Paola Paderni, and Flora Sapio of “L’Orientale” University of Naples promoted an online roundtable inviting scholars studying contemporary China to participate in an exchange of thoughts. The idea, as written in the invitation letter, came from the awareness that, in recent years, the rise of China together with the growing influence that it exerts—or tries to exert—in the world, has made scholars of Chinese and observers confront an unprecedented situation. While this rise has potentially increased job opportunities and therefore also the social relevance of Sinologists, at the same time, the geopolitical tensions are exerting a greater pressure on Italian scholars. In particular, the academic world that deals with China seems pressured both by the increased attention of the Chinese authorities on their point of view, and by the request of part of the public to take a more “militant” position. For this reason, the scholars in Naples started a reflection and discussion on the problems and challenges of Italian Sinology today, asking how they can usefully exercise their role without being sucked into a “Cold War” logic. The suggested themes for discussions included, but were not limited to, the change of attitude towards China in the EU since the autumn of 2018; the “soft-power” policies after the New Coronavirus pandemic; and the critics of Italian scholars: is there censorship or self-censorship?

Several Sinologists took part in the roundtable, mainly agreeing on the importance of their role for public opinion, but also stating that scholarly research on China today, regardless of individual points of view, cannot and should not feel obliged to make “field choices.”⁹⁰ Stefania Stafutti, for example, highlighting that a Sinologist is not an “influencer,” expressed the need for today’s Sinologists to develop tools to form scientifically based opinions on China and to transmit a working methodology that allows future generations to build their own opinion on a scientific basis.⁹¹

Guido Samarani stated that “Our political, cultural and even personal sympathy/antipathy for China must leave room, as scholars, for a great and constant effort of ‘critical analysis.’” He believed that “this effort should be based in general on a thorough reading and examination of sources, both Chinese and international, constantly intertwining them and without assuming that one or the other is automatically the bearer of absolute and iron truths.”⁹² Marina Miranda pointed out that “the activity of narrative

⁸⁹Giovanni Andornino, “I rischi di auspici controproducenti per Hong Kong,” *Sinosfere* December 2019, <https://sinosfere.com/2019/12/07/giovanni-andornino-i-rischi-di-auspici-controproducenti-per-hong-kong/>.

⁹⁰Some of the interventions made during the roundtable were published on *Sinosfere* in a section entitled: *Sinologists in the New Era* promoted by Marco Fumian on October 1, 2020: <https://sinosfere.com/category/sinologi-nella-nuova-era/>.

⁹¹Stefania Stafutti, “Zhongxue wei yong: la Cina come strumento?,” *Sinosfere* November 2020, <https://sinosfere.com/2020/11/04/stefania-stafutti-zhongxue-wei-yong-la-cina-come-strumento/>.

⁹²Guido Samarani, “noi e la Cina: né filocinesi, né anti-cinesi,” *Sinosfere* November 2020, <https://sinosfere.com/2020/11/14/guido-samarani-noi-e-la-cina-ne-filocinesi-ne-anti-cinesi/>.

deconstruction of Sinologists must be extended far beyond China, towards all types of storytelling that dangerously populate political communication in our countries and beyond, highlighting their fragility and risks.” This should be done in the hope of uncovering what is hidden by the various dominant narratives, through a critical investigation supported by an authentic cultural perspective, avoiding over-simplifications and looking beyond the distortions and narrative manipulations.⁹³

Another roundtable has been recently organized by the board of the Italian Association of Chinese Studies during the conference held at the end of November, 2021, in Turin. The title of the roundtable is *Challenges, Problems and Opportunities of Sinology Today*, and the premises of the event, as written on the website of the association, were grounded first of all on the awareness that rise of China, combined with its efforts for economic, political and cultural expansion in a context of a global crisis in the so-called Western world, has contributed to creating an unprecedented *scenario* of tension, which some today call the “new cold war.” Secondly, the assertive attitude of the Chinese government has been met with worried reactions from those who see China as a threat, thus limiting the development of a more sophisticated and articulated reflection of public opinion. Thirdly, while trying to spread more scholarly knowledge on China, Sinologists often have to confront themselves with issues like censorship or self-censorship. For this reason, the association invited its members to discuss the following points:

1. How to develop useful, methodological tools to ensure the dissemination—especially among students—of a critical understanding of China that is open to dialogue and tolerance.
2. How to deal with the increasing propaganda constructions in a moment in which knowledge about China begins to play an unprecedentedly central role in the public sphere.
3. What experiences and practices can be useful in the academic interactions with students and with the general public, in particular around sensitive and controversial issues.
4. How to promote transparency and mutual respect in the relationship between scholars of Chinese and public institutions, within cultural cooperation programs, also with reference to the Confucius Institutes.
5. What forms of intervention can be devised so that scholarly research can also have a presence and an impact in society as a whole.

Several scholars contributed to the debate and five papers have been published on the dedicated webpage on the Association’s website.⁹⁴

Finding a shared answer to all these questions will not be an easy task, and it will probably take more than a few meetings. However, promoting and carrying on the debate is surely a sign that Italian Sinology is in good health. With a long tradition of mutual respect and cultural mediation, Italian scholars do possess the resources to confront such themes and secure survival under the new unprecedented circumstances. In this peculiar historical moment, Sinologists in Italy are neither silent nor

⁹³Marina Miranda, “L’era dello storytelling: la Cina e noi,” *Sinosfere* December 2020, <https://sinosfere.com/2020/12/20/marina-miranda-lera-dello-storytelling-la-cina-e-noi/>.

⁹⁴“Sfide, problemi e opportunità della sinologia oggi”: <https://aisc-org.it/sfide-problemi-e-opportunita-della-sinologia-oggi/>.

condescending; they strongly believe in their academic freedom; they obviously want to avoid stereotyped, simplistic definitions and conclusions, while looking for the best way to carry out their research, to produce and transmit accurate scientific knowledge on China today.

Conflicting Interests

The author declares none.

Appendix

List of Italian Sinologists up to September 2021

Table 1.

University	SURNAME Forename	Position	Main Subjects taught	Main Research field/s	Link to personal page
BERGAMO	GOTTARDO Maria Giuseppina	Associate Professor	Chinese language; Translation	Chinese language and translation theory	www.unibg.it/ugov/person/1034
BERGAMO	PELLIN Tommaso	Associate Professor	Chinese language	History of Chinese language and linguistics	www.unibg.it/ugov/person/26210
BOLOGNA	FIORI Antonio	Associate Professor	International relations in East Asia; Politics of contemporary Asia	Northeast Asia political development and international relations; Democracy transition and consolidation in Asia	www.unibo.it/sitoweb/antonio.fiori/en
BOLOGNA	CELLI Nicoletta	Associate Professor	Asian art; History of Chinese religions	Buddhist art in China	www.unibo.it/sitoweb/nicoletta.celli/en
BOLOGNA	IEZZI Adriana	Full Professor	Chinese–Italian translation	Contemporary Chinese calligraphy and graffiti art	www.unibo.it/sitoweb/adriana.iezzi2/en
BOLOGNA	SPARVOLI Carlotta	Associate Professor	Chinese language and linguistics	Semantics of modal expression; Teaching Chinese as a second language	www.unibo.it/sitoweb/carlotta.sparvoli/en
BOLOGNA	ZUCCHERI Serena	Associate Professor	Chinese culture and literature; Chinese–Italian translation	Chinese terminology; Corpus-based translation studies	https://www.unibo.it/sitoweb/serena.zuccheri/en
CAGLIARI	ONNIS Barbara	Associate Professor	Contemporary China; International politics of Asia	China–EU Relations; The role of cultural diplomacy in Chinese Foreign Policy	www.unica.it/unica/it/ateneo_s07_ss01.page?contentId=SHD30637
CAGLIARI	CONGIU Francesca	Researcher—fixed term	Asian history and institutions	China–US Relations; Connections between State, capital, and labor in China and Taiwan	www.unica.it/unica/page/it/francesca_congiu73

CAGLIARI	LUPANO Emma	Associate Professor	Chinese language	Contemporary Chinese press and journalism; Political discourse	www.unica.it/unica/it/ateneo_s07_ss01.page?contentId=SHD196553
CATANIA	BENEDETTI Lavinia	Associate Professor	Chinese language and translation	Chinese literature; Early Qing crime fiction	www.sdslingue.unict.it/docenti/lavinia.benedetti
CHIETI-PESCARA	COLANGELO Lara	Researcher—fixed term	Chinese language	Chinese language and translation; Roman law translation in China	www.unich.it/ugov/person/18352
CHIETI-PESCARA	STIRPE Luca	Associate Professor	Chinese literature and philology	Classical Chinese literature; Late Ming detective stories	www.unich.it/ugov/person/2425
ENNA “Kore”	TOSCO Alessandro	Researcher—fixed term	Chinese language	Yuan dramatic literature; Chinese lexicon and lexicography	https://servizi.unikore.it/koredocenti/Scheda.aspx?id=212
ENNA “Kore”	MAGNANI Arianna	Researcher—fixed term	Chinese language	China–Europe cultural exchanges in the 17th–18th centuries	https://servizi.unikore.it/koredocenti/Scheda.aspx?id=345
FIRENZE	CASTORINA Miriam	Researcher—fixed term	Chinese literature	China–Europe cultural contacts through travel accounts; History of Chinese language teaching in Italy	www.unifi.it/p-doc2-2017-0-C-3f2b3b32332e2e-0.html
FIRENZE	PEDONE Valentina	Associate Professor	Chinese language and literature	Languages and cultures of Chinese people inside and outside China; Sociolinguistic issues of Chinese immigrants in Italy	www.unifi.it/p-doc2-2017-200007-P-3f2b342e372e31-0.html
GENOVA	PISANO Luca	Associate Professor	Chinese language and literature	Chinese, Taiwanese, and Hong Kong literature; Traditional Chinese music	https://rubrica.unige.it/personale/UkJCXl9q
GENOVA	PUPPIN Giovanna	Associate Professor	Chinese language and literature	Chinese advertisement and its language; Brand and marketing strategies; Chinese media and soft power	https://rubrica.unige.it/personale/UkJBUltp

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued.)

University	SURNAME Forename	Position	Main Subjects taught	Main Research field/s	Link to personal page
INSUBRIA	BRIGADOI COLOGNA Daniele	Associate Professor	Chinese language; Principles of demo-anthropological sciences, globalization processes, and intercultural education	History of Chinese diaspora; Sociolinguistic peculiarities of Chinese immigrants in Italy	www.uninsubria.it/hpp/daniele.brigadoi-cologna
INSUBRIA	CODELUPPI Martina	Researcher—fixed term	Chinese language	Overseas Chinese language literature	www.uninsubria.it/hpp/martina.codeluppi
MACERATA	TRENTIN Giorgio	Researcher	Chinese language and translation	Chinese language and translation of Chinese literature	http://docenti.unimc.it/giorgio.trentin
MACERATA	TURINI Cristiana	Researcher—fixed term	Chinese language and translation	Chinese minorities (focus on the Naxi)	http://docenti.unimc.it/cristiana.turini
MILANO	BULFONI Clara	Associate Professor	Chinese language	Chinese language and its pedagogy	www.unimi.it/it/ugov/person/clara-bulfony
MILANO	DOSSI Simone	Researcher—fixed term	International political thought; International relations of East Asia	China's foreign and security policy; China's regional diplomacy in East Asia; Italy-China relations	www.unimi.it/it/ugov/person/simone-dossi
MILANO	MOTTURA Bettina Marta Rosa	Associate Professor	Chinese language and culture	Chinese language and political discourse	www.unimi.it/it/ugov/person/bettina-mottura
MILANO Cattolica	GIUNIPERO Elisa Maria	Associate Professor	International relations of East Asia; Chinese language and culture	History of China–Europe cultural exchanges; Chinese social and religious history.	https://docenti.unicatt.it/ppd2/it/docenti/17572/elisa-maria-giunipero/profilo
MILANO Cattolica	PICCININI Chiara	Researcher—fixed term	Chinese language and literature; Negotiation strategies	Chinese language and linguistics	https://docenti.unicatt.it/ppd2/it/docenti/15065/chiara-piccinini/didattica
MILANO-BICOCCA	PAOLIELLO Antonio	Researcher—fixed term	Chinese language and culture	Sinophone literature and film (focus on Malaysia and Singapore)	www.unimib.it/antonio-paoliello

MILANO-BICOCCA	POZZI Silvia	Associate Professor	Chinese language and literature	Translation of Chinese literature	www.unimib.it/silvia-pozzi
NAPOLI “L’Orientale”	BRUSADELLI Federico	Researcher—fixed term	History of China; International history of East Asia	History of Chinese political thought; Intellectual, political, and religious history of Late-Qing and Republican China	https://docenti2.unior.it/index2.php?content_id=26838&content_id_start=1&ID_Utente=3545
NAPOLI “L’Orientale”	CARIOTI Patrizia	Full Professor	History of East Asia	East Asian history (focus on Ming–Qing China and Japan)	https://docenti.unior.it/index2.php?user_id=pcarioti&content_id_start=1
NAPOLI “L’Orientale”	FUMIAN Marco	Associate Professor	Chinese language and literature	Modern Chinese literature, culture, and society	https://docenti.unior.it/index2.php?user_id=mfumian&content_id_start=1
NAPOLI “L’Orientale”	GUIDA Donatella	Associate Professor	History of China; Historiography and power in Imperial China	Ming–Qing China social and intellectual history	https://docenti.unior.it/index2.php?user_id=dguida&content_id_start=1
NAPOLI “L’Orientale”	PAOLILLO Maurizio	Associate Professor	Chinese philology; Chinese language and culture	Chinese philosophical-religious tradition and its influence on aesthetics	https://docenti2.unior.it/index2.php?content_id=26564&content_id_start=1&ID_Utente=3526
NAPOLI “L’Orientale”	PATERNICO Luisa Maria	Associate Professor	Chinese language	Mandarin and Cantonese language teaching and its history; History of Italian Sinology	https://docenti.unior.it/index2.php?user_id=lpaternico&content_id_start=1
NAPOLI “L’Orientale”	RAINI Emanuele	Researcher—fixed term	Chinese language	Didactics of Chinese and its history; Missionary linguistics; History of Christianity in China	https://docenti2.unior.it/index2.php?content_id=26869&content_id_start=1&ID_Utente=3547
NAPOLI “L’Orientale”	SAPIO Flora	Researcher—fixed term	International history of East Asia	Chinese law and legal system	https://docenti.unior.it/index2.php?user_id=fsapio&content_id_start=1&parLingua=ITA

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued.)

University	SURNAME Forename	Position	Main Subjects taught	Main Research field/s	Link to personal page
NAPOLI "L'Orientale"	SIDDIVO' Maria	Researcher	Economic reforms in contemporary China; Chinese development strategies	China's economic transformations after 1978	https://docenti.unior.it/index2.php?content_id=19425&content_id_start=1&ID_Utente=3044
NAPOLI "L'Orientale"	VARRIANO Valeria	Associate Professor	Chinese language	Chinese media; Chinese language and its didactics	https://docenti.unior.it/index2.php?user_id=vvarriano&content_id_start=1
NAPOLI "L'Orientale"	VISCONTI Chiara	Associate Professor	Archeology and history of Chinese and Japanese art	Chinese archaeology during the Tang; Contacts between Asia and Europe, with reference to the trade of ceramics.	https://docenti.unior.it/index2.php?content_id=21197&content_id_start=1&ID_Utente=3253
NAPOLI "L'Orientale"	VITIELLO Giovanni	Full Professor	Chinese literature	Fiction and history of sexuality in late imperial China	https://docenti.unior.it/index2.php?user_id=gvitiello&content_id_start=1
PALERMO	TAMBURELLO Giuseppa	Researcher	Chinese language and translation; Chinese literature and culture	Chinese literature	www.unipa.it/persone/docenti/t/giuseppa.tamburello/?pagina=curriculum
PALERMO	VINCI Renata	Associate Professor	Chinese language and translation; Chinese literature and culture	Image of Italy in Late Qing China; Western literary influence on Chinese intellectuals	www.unipa.it/persone/docenti/v/renata.vinci/?pagina=curriculum
PERUGIA	BIANCHI Ester	Associate Professor	Chinese literature; Chinese religions and philosophies	Religions of China (focus on Sino-Tibetan Buddhism)	www.unipg.it/personale/ester.bianchi
ROMA "Sapienza"	ANTONUCCI Davor	Associate Professor	History of East Asia; History and culture of Mongolia, Chinese philology	East-West historical relations; History of Mongolia	https://sites.google.com/a/uniroma1.it/davorantonucci/

ROMA “Sapienza”	BREZZI Alessandra	Associate Professor	Chinese language; Modern and contemporary Chinese Literature	Chinese literature; Italian literature in China	www.lettere.uniroma1.it/users/alessandra-brezz
ROMA “Sapienza”	CASALIN Federica	Associate Professor	Chinese literatures	Chinese literature; Italy–China Relations; Chinese image of Italy and Italian image of China.	https://sites.google.com/a/uniroma1.it/federicacasalin/home
ROMA “Sapienza”	CORSI Elisabetta	Full Professor	Sinology; History of Eastern and South-Eastern Asia; Science and production of knowledge about China in Europe during the early modern age	Material culture and connoisseurship in late imperial China; History of the book and printing; History of Sinology	www.lettere.uniroma1.it/users/elisabetta-corsi
ROMA “Sapienza”	DE TROIA Paolo	Associate Professor	Chinese language and translation; Chinese philology	Contacts between China and Europe through Geographical material	www.lettere.uniroma1.it/users/paolo-detroia
ROMA “Sapienza”	FERRETTI Valdo	Associate Professor	Modern and contemporary Chinese history	Chinese Modern and Contemporary History	https://sites.google.com/a/uniroma1.it/valdoferretti/curriculum
ROMA “Sapienza”	MASINI Federico	Full Professor	Chinese language and translation	Chinese language and linguistics; History of Sinology	https://sites.google.com/a/uniroma1.it/federicomasini/
ROMA “Sapienza”	MIRANDA Eugenia Marina	Full Professor	History of contemporary China; Political and social institutions of contemporary China	Contemporary Chinese history and institutions	www.lettere.uniroma1.it/users/marina-miranda
ROMA “Sapienza”	ROSSI Donatella	Associate Professor	East Asian philosophies and religions; Tibetan language and literature	Tibetan Language and Religion;	www.lettere.uniroma1.it/users/donatella-rossi
ROMA “Sapienza”	SALVIATI Filippo	Researcher	Archeology and history of Chinese art; Korean visual arts in the East Asian context	Chinese Art and Archeology; Chinese Jades	www.lettere.uniroma1.it/users/filippo-salviati

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Table 1. (Continued.)

University	SURNAME Forename	Position	Main Subjects taught	Main Research field/s	Link to personal page
ROMA TRE	LOMBARDI Rosa	Full Professor	Chinese language and literature	Chinese literature and its Italian translation; Italian literature in China	www.uniroma3.it/persona/USTwaVk3NUs2b3ZzcnA5c21PSktxSXFibVdkOXp4UTVzMDZQdXFZQXAyQT0=/
ROMA TRE	ROMAGNOLI Chiara	Associate Professor	Chinese language and culture	Chinese acquisitional linguistics	www.uniroma3.it/persona/c2RpbDAxdFJLRGxTcytpQlFsbHQwZ2w4TldYK0ErZIR6U1A5RitJa0c3bz0=/
ROMA UNINT	LIOI Tiziana	Associate Professor	Chinese language and linguistics; Chinese language and translation	Didactics of Chinese, focus on writing; Italy–China cultural and literary relations in the Twentieth century	https://my.unint.eu/web/t.lioi
SASSARI	PINNA Cristina	Researcher—fixed term	Chinese language	Cultural and literary relations between China and Italy in the Twentieth century	www.uniss.it/ugov/person/117433
SIENA	NEGRO Gianluigi	Researcher—fixed term	Chinese language and translation	Chinese Media	https://docenti.unisi.it/it/negro
SIENA Stranieri	DI TORO Anna	Associate Professor	Chinese language and literature	Sino-Russian cultural and linguistic relations, history of European sinology; translation of contemporary and classical Chinese literature	https://online.unistrasi.it/docenti/Persona.asp?ID=342
SIENA Stranieri	SEPE Agostino	Researcher—fixed term	History of China; History and institutions of contemporary China	Ming–Qing History; Chinese language pedagogy	https://online.unistrasi.it/docenti/Persona.asp?ID=588
TORINO	ANDORNINO Giovanni Battista	Researcher	International relations of East Asia	International relations, politics and foreign policy of China	www.unito.it/persona/giovanni.andornino

TORINO	GABUSI Giuseppe	Researcher—fixed term	East Asian political economy and regional dynamics in the Asia Pacific Lab	East Asian political economy	www.didattica-cps.unito.it/do/docenti.pl/Alias?giuseppe.gabusi#tab-profilo
TORINO	DE TOGNI Monica	Associate Professor	History of Eastern and Southeastern Asia	History of late Qing–early Republican China	https://asiaafrica.campusnet.unito.it/do/docenti.pl/Alias?monica.detogni#tab-profilo
TORINO	LEONESI Barbara	Associate Professor	Chinese language and literature	Literary translation and translation theory; Contemporary Chinese literature and theatre	www.didattica-cps.unito.it/do/docenti.pl/Alias?barbara.leonesi#tab-profilo
TORINO	STAFUTTI Stefania	Full Professor	Chinese language and literature	Modern and contemporary Chinese literature and cultural studies focused on China	www.studium.unito.it/do/docenti.pl/Alias?stefania.stafutti#tab-profilo
TORINO	ZAPPONE Tanina	Researcher—fixed term	Chinese language	Chinese soft power; Chinese government communication on the media	https://asiaafrica.campusnet.unito.it/do/docenti.pl/Show?_id=tzappone#tab-profilo
TRENTO	GRAZIANI Sofia	Associate Professor	Chinese language and culture; Modern and contemporary Chinese history	Modern and contemporary Chinese history; Young political organizations; China–Italy and China–Africa relations; Soft power and people democracy	https://webapps.unitn.it/du/it/Persona/PER0195689/Curriculum
VENEZIA “Ca’ Foscari”	ANDREINI Attilio	Full Professor	Manuscripts and knowledge transmission in Ancient China; Classical Chinese language; History of Chinese philosophies and religions	Study of manuscript sources of the pre-imperial period; Translation of Taoist sources; Philosophical-religious literature of Classical China	www.unive.it/data/persone/5590139
VENEZIA “Ca’ Foscari”	ARCODIA Giorgio Francesco	Associate Professor	Chinese language	Chinese linguistics, focus on morphology	www.unive.it/data/persone/22646413

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Table 1. (Continued.)

University	SURNAME Forename	Position	Main Subjects taught	Main Research field/s	Link to personal page
VENEZIA “Ca’ Foscari”	BACCINI Giulia	Researcher—fixed term	Classical Chinese language; Chinese literature	Pre-modern Chinese literature, classical Chinese, Chinese textual culture, literary criticism, literary theory, humor studies.	
VENEZIA “Ca’ Foscari”	BASCIANO Bianca	Associate Professor	Chinese language and linguistics	Chinese linguistics; Corpus based research on Chinese language	www.unive.it/data/persona/ 10801543
VENEZIA “Ca’ Foscari”	BOARETTO Adriano	Researcher—fixed term	Chinese language	Chinese Language differences between PRC and Republic of China.	www.unive.it/data/persona/ 5590856/didattica_prec
VENEZIA “Ca’ Foscari”	BROMBAL Daniele	Associate Professor	Contemporary Chinese society; Public participation and environmental governance in China; Politics and society of contemporary China	Environmental protection and healthcare in contemporary China	www.unive.it/data/persona/ 5668673
VENEZIA “Ca’ Foscari”	CAVALIERE Renzo	Associate Professor	East Asian law and institutions	Civil and commercial Chinese law, with specific attention to its international trade and foreign investment aspects	www.unive.it/data/persona/ 5592431/didattica_curr
VENEZIA “Ca’ Foscari”	CERESA Marco	Full Professor	Cultural studies of Eastern Asia; Chinese literature	Cultural Studies in China; China food culture; Classical Chinese literature	www.unive.it/data/persona/ 5591430
VENEZIA “Ca’ Foscari”	DE GIORGI Laura	Full Professor	Modern and contemporary Chinese history	Modern and contemporary Chinese history; China– Italy relations; Chinese media	www.unive.it/data/persona/ 5591447/didattica_curr

VENEZIA “Ca’ Foscari”	FRACASSO Riccardo	Associate Professor	Classical Chinese language and literature	Ancient Chinese language, culture, philosophy, art, history, literature	www.unive.it/data/persone/5590906/didattica_curr
VENEZIA “Ca’ Foscari”	GATTI Franco	Associate Professor	Chinese language	Chinese language; Classic Taoist literature	www.unive.it/data/persone/5591407
VENEZIA “Ca’ Foscari”	LAFIRENZA Fiorenzo	Full Professor	Chinese language	Chinese literary translation and on modern and contemporary Chinese fiction	www.unive.it/data/persone/5591712/ricerca
VENEZIA “Ca’ Foscari”	LIPPIELLO Tiziana	Full Professor	Classical Chinese language	Classical Chinese language and literature; History of Chinese philosophies and religions	www.unive.it/data/persone/5591147
VENEZIA “Ca’ Foscari”	MAGAGNIN Paolo	Associate Professor	Chinese–English consecutive interpreting; Chinese translation for special purposes; History and theory of translation	Translation of contemporary Chinese literature; Translation for special purposes; Translation theory	www.unive.it/data/persone/5592091/didattica_curr
VENEZIA “Ca’ Foscari”	MORBIATO Anna	Researcher—fixed term	Chinese language	Syntax, semantics, pragmatics, corpus linguistics, cognitive approaches to language, language acquisition	www.unive.it/data/persone/6218430
VENEZIA “Ca’ Foscari”	PASSI Federica	Associate Professor	Chinese language and translation	Modern and contemporary Chinese literature; Taiwan literature; Chinese–Italian translation	www.unive.it/data/persone/5591487
VENEZIA “Ca’ Foscari”	PESARO Nicoletta	Associate Professor	Chinese language and translation	Translation of Chinese literature; Chinese literary categories and translation theory.	www.unive.it/data/persone/5592852
VENEZIA “Ca’ Foscari”	POLLACCHI Elena	Researcher	Chinese language; Chinese arts, cinema, and performance	Contemporary Chinese cinema	www.unive.it/data/persone/5590945

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Table 1. (Continued.)

University	SURNAME Forename	Position	Main Subjects taught	Main Research field/s	Link to personal page
VENEZIA “Ca’ Foscari”	RASTELLI Sabrina	Associate Professor	History of Chinese art; Chinese arts, architecture, and performance	Chinese art and archeology	www.unive.it/data/persone/ 5592851
VENEZIA “Ca’ Foscari”	ZANINI Livio	Researcher—fixed term	Chinese language; Consecutive interpretation Italian–Chinese	Chinese beverages in Classical Chinese literature	www.unive.it/data/persone/ 5590520/avvisi
VERONA	BISETTO Barbara	Associate Professor	Chinese culture and society; Varieties of Chinese language; Chinese literature and culture	Pre-modern Chinese vernacular narrative; Chinese translation studies; Chinese corpus linguistics	www.dlls.univr.it/? ent=persona&id=50481
VERONA	MANNONI Michele	Researcher—fixed term	Chinese language; Varieties of Chinese language	Chinese legal linguistics; Translation studies; Chinese corpus linguistics	www.dlls.univr.it/? ent=persona&id=54935