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Chinese Migration to Italy: Features and Issues

Patrizia Battilani and Francesca Fauri

Abstract This essay examines the Chinese experience of migration to Italy. Archival material has been integrated with oral history field work conducted in Bologna and the Romagna. We have identified three distinct waves of Chinese migration to Italy. The first wave occurred in the very early stage of Sino-Italian relations (1850–1915), when only four categories of people moved to Italy from China: the students and priests studying and teaching at the Chinese college in Naples, the diplomats and their families based in Rome, a few sailors and the first street vendors. The sporadic presence of Chinese citizens in Italy was matched by the low number of Italians in China mainly living in the territorial concessions of Tianjin. During the second wave of Chinese immigration (1930–1970), a small but cohesive community started to develop both in Milan and Bologna. The most recent wave of Chinese immigration started in the 1990s. Involving Chinese born and educated under the flag of the People's

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Republic, this wave bears little or no resemblance to the preceding one. Today, there are widely dispersed ethnic Chinese communities in Italy, all independent from each other but all equally well-integrated into their respective local economies. All things considered, the base common denominator between the three unique waves of Chinese immigrants to Italy is a strong entrepreneurial attitude together with a sense of close community kinship. In each of the three eras, the Chinese family circle has proved decisive in the establishment of small businesses and their successful integration into the Italian economy.

Keywords China Club • Chinese language and dialect • Chinese migration • Chinese enterprises • Quingtian • Zhejiang province

Introduction: Chinese Migration to Europe

The majority of the early Chinese migrants to Europe originated from a few counties in Zhejiang province, south of Shanghai. Beginning in the 1820s, as the Qing government gradually eased the restrictions on maritime trade, an increasing number of people left the country to do business abroad. Between 1821 and 1850, many Chinese arrived in Europe to sell their Qingtian stone carvings. Then again, in the period between the end of the Qing empire and under the Republic of China (1911–1949), Chinese were allowed to leave their homeland at will.

Until the first decade of the twentieth century, Chinese settlers in Central Europe and Italy came mainly from Tianmen-Hubei province and Qingtian-Zhejiang province. The first group sold paper flowers and the second Qingtian stones (Mette 1996, pp. 275–296). In 1917, the Nationalist government in Peking abandoned its policy of neutrality, declared war on Germany and joined the Allied powers. Somewhere between 150,000 and 200,000 Chinese were subsequently drafted as labourers to serve the war effort in Europe. Once the war was over, 1000 of these conscripts stayed behind in the old Continent (Mette 1999, pp. 159–180). Chain migration started after the First World War and there were soon 3000 Chinese in France, more than 1000 each in Holland, Austria and Italy, 300 each in Belgium and Spain, and more than 200 in

Portugal. The first Chinese workers recruited to Great Britain had been replacements for sailors sent to fight the Napoleonic Wars. In the following decades, most of the Chinese who decided to remain in Britain worked as transient seamen. From there, they went into the laundry and restaurant (or café) businesses and by 1931 there were already 1194 Chinese immigrants in London alone (London Census Data). The proportion of Chinese emigrants who made their way to Europe was small, however. Of the 20 million Chinese who went overseas from 1840 to 1940, 90% went to Southeast Asia.[1] While a minority in this respect, the dynamics of the Chinese migrant communities in Europe post-1900 are extremely interesting. More and more, they came from the most impoverished part of Zhejiang, the Qingtian county located in the mountainous zone west of Wenzhou. Most of the population of this region were farmworkers (86%), traders (especially in grain, since local production did not yet provide for self-sufficiency in food) and stone carvers of a pale-green soapstone. These stoneworkers were probably the first to move to Europe, crossing Siberia to Russia. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the majority travelled by sea. Steamers carried a great number of migrants to France in particular (Kuhn 2008, p. 336). There were two traditional modes of taking the journey: to travel as a legitimate passenger with a passport cost of 300 silver coins in the early 1900s; but it only cost 200 silver coins to bypass all the formalities and board a ship disguised as a crew member.[2] The most reliable estimate for the number of Chinese living in Europe during the 1930s is 10,000–25,000 (Mette 1999, p. 164). In the interwar period, a network of experienced migrants developed. This eased the costs and risks of migration while Chinese banking houses helped migrants with loans, tickets to French or Italian ports and travel documents. They also supplied merchandise to be sold in Europe. Sales of stone and stone carvings had started to decrease by early 1916 so merchants swiftly switched their focus to pearls, neckties, carpets, paper flowers, wallets and silk. In 1926, an Italian newspaper wrote of the "Pearl invasion" when 68 Chinese street vendors arrived in Turin to sell fake

[1] Chinese migration was part of the global wave of mass migration from 1840 to 1940 (McKeown 2010, pp. 95–124).

[2] After arriving at their destination port, they took advantage of the cover of darkness and were led ashore to inns run by earlier migrants from Qingtian (Mette 1996, p. 281).

pearls, a trade which apparently could lead to fabulous earnings (1000 lire a day).[3] In 1935–1936, several hundred emigrants from the townships of Baimen Li'ao and Zi'ao in Wenzhou moved to Europe. At that time, many Chinese living in Europe had achieved a degree of upward social mobility and were no longer pedlars but shopkeepers or small businessmen in the leather industry. Due to favourable conditions in host communities, many of these existing emigrants moved on from sojourning (a venturesome/entrepreneurial period of unpredictable duration according to Wang or a period spent unassimilated and on the margins according to Sui) to settle permanently.[4] For the newcomers, however, life was difficult and they had to search for territories with markets for their products. Some of them went as far as Algeria, and others returned to Baimen Li'ao and Zi'ao having had little success. Ultimately, in 1937, the Japanese occupation of China stopped the outward flow of people, closed down all Chinese banking houses and halted the Chinese curios trade to Europe.

According to some scholars, the push factors behind this first wave of Chinese migration to Europe were not only economic in nature, but social/familial also. In respect of Qingtian County in particular, as well-established in the case of European migrants,[5] there were long-standing practices of (domestic) collective migratory movements and migratory decisions were governed by family strategies designed to achieve upward social mobility based on migrants' savings and remittances (Mette 1999; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 193).

This essay examines the Chinese experience of migration to Italy. Archival material has been integrated with oral history field work conducted in Bologna and the Romagna. Thirty interviews have been conducted with descendants of the first migrants as well as with members of various migration waves.[6]

[3] "L'invasione delle perle" in La stampa, 5 marzo 1926. On the alleged earnings of fake pearl vendors: "Cinesi di via Canonica" in Il Corriere della Sera 8 marzo 1932.

[4] Wang also underlines that sojourners have been viewed as potential enemies to nation-building efforts (Wang 2003, p. 55; Sui 1952, pp. 34–44).

[5] As Lucassen has well demonstrated, there have been strong migratory traditions in Europe from the North Sea to the Mediterranean since 1500 (Lucassen 1987, pp. 110, 116–117, 201–202 and also Lucassen and Lucassen 2014, pp. 13–38).

[6] All interviews are available—please contact the authors.

The First Chinese Migrants in the Context of Sino-Italian Foreign Relations, 1861–1914

As with many other European countries, the first Sino-Italian contacts, which occurred between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, were due to the Italian Jesuits who had been on mission in China since 1582.[7] In 1732, the Jesuits' efforts led to the foundation of a Chinese College in Naples to train Chinese priests and contribute to the propagation of the Catholic religion in China (Fatica 2006). The patron of the school was Matteo Ripa, an artist and a priest who had been working as a painter at the Machu court of the Kangxi Emperor, under the Chinese name Ma Guoxian, between 1711 and 1723. His return to Italy with four young students and a teacher of Chinese was the first step in the establishment of the new college. As one of the few institutions to teach spoken Chinese (schools specializing in Chinese usually focused on the written word), it became a hub for interpreting activities in Europe. After Italian unification in 1861, the school was transformed into the Real Collegio Asiatico (Royal Asian College) and new languages were introduced. Today, it is still part of Naples' public university system. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Chinese College accommodated at least 4–5 young Chinese per year (Fatica 2006). Most of them returned to China as priests, but some remained on in Italy at the end of their studies. According to Il *Corriere della Sera*, the newspaper of record of the day, in July 1879: "Some years ago the government financed the education of some young Chinese at the Naples College. Now they are grown ups and the Ministry of Education has hired them".[8]

A second typology of Sino-Italian contacts was due to commercial and political relations. An epidemic of silkworm disease in the mid-nineteenth century prompted greater Italian interest in the Far East, where silk production and trade were well developed. So the first Italians to settle in

[7] Matteo Ricci was one of those prominent figures committed to the diffusion of Western culture at the Chinese Court.

[8] "Cinesi al Ministero" Corriere della Sera, 25th January 1879; "Due Annegati" (one of them was a Foreign Department employee), 8 luglio 1879; "Un Cinese geloso" (one of the Education Ministry's employees killed himself), 22 luglio 1882.

China after the Jesuits were a handful of silk producers sent there by the Kingdom of Sardinia (the foremost Italian state prior to unification). From there, the relationship grew. In 1865, only two out of 1618 ships calling at Shanghai harbour were Italian.[9] In 1866, however, as the new Italy was emerging, the government signed a treaty of friendship, commerce, and navigation and appointed an officer (albeit one of junior rank) as representative of the Italian Legation at the Courts of Tokyo and Beijing. For the first twelve years, the Italian Diplomatic Mission to China was based in Tokyo, and only in 1878 was a permanent office finally opened in Shanghai. This was a sign of Italy's increasingly ambitious economic foreign policy. Finally, in 1889, the Italian Legation moved to Beijing, Italy envisioned a new political role for itself in the Far East, including requesting to replace France as protector of Catholic missions in China (Onelli 2013). Italian assertiveness led to embarrassment, however, when the government overstretched by requesting a colonial settlement in the province of Zhejiang (Sanmen Bay) in 1899 (Vinci 2016, pp. 117–144; Borsa 1969, pp. 618–644). There was some consolation in 1902 when the great powers awarded Tianjin to Italy (see below) in the wake of the Boxer Uprising.[10]

It was also in 1902 that the first permanent Chinese Delegation was built in Italy. Officers of different levels, along with their wives and children, started to live in Rome. Occasionally, the capital's newspapers provided information about them. In 1907, for instance, the ambassador's wife died after a short illness and a public funeral was organized. The lady was described as a quiet and discreet person, devoted to her husband and children, who spent her time at home and only rarely ventured out into the city in which she lived. The funeral was one of the very few occasions in which the ambassador and his family had shown themselves in public.

[9] Quite surprisingly, ships under the Italian flag transported coolies from Macao to Latin American: in 1865, 6284 coolies out of a total of 13,784 were transferred by 14 ships flying the Italian flag. Great Britain and the USA had prohibited this kind of trade but the Italian government either did not know or pretended not to know (Francioni 2003).

[10] M. Marinelli and G. Andornino (eds), Italy's encounters with modern China: imperial dreams, strategic ambitions, Palgrave, New York, 2014; A. Francioni, Il 'banchetto cinese': l'Italia fra le treaty powers, Nuova immagine editrice, Siena, 2004; M.C. Donato, Italiani in Cina contro i Boxer, Rivista di Storia Contemporanea; 14 (2)1985, 169–206.

The weakness of Sino-Italian relations is demonstrated by the low number of Italian and Chinese people living in the other country. A report from Alessandro Bardi, the Italian state representative in China, indicated that the number of Italians there had increased from 70 in 1882 to 133 in 1891, and that the number of companies they owned had doubled, from 2 to 4.[11] US government statistics for 1899 recorded 124 Italians and 9 Italian companies in China, a tiny minority out of 17,933 foreigners and 933 companies.[12]

The number of Chinese living in Italy was so low that it was only in 1911 that the Population Census started to list China as a country of origin. The Census for that year records the presence of 39 Chinese men and 6 women in Italy, and only 20 of them had been there for more than three months. As regards their profession, there were 11 sailors, 9 diplomats, 9 students and 6 peddlers, as well as some housekeepers and secretaries (Italian Census of Population 1911). They were concentrated in 6 big and middle size cities: the port cities of Genoa and Venice (almost all of the 14 Chinese temporarily living in Italy were staying in one of these two), Rome (which hosted the 6 women, two of them born in Italy, and 15 men), Naples (with 3 students or professors), and finally the industrial cities of Milan and Turin (where the peddlers had settled down). In this opening phase of Sino-Italian relations, then, only four categories of people moved to Italy from China: the students and priests studying and teaching at the Chinese college in Naples; the diplomats and their families based in Rome; the sailors docking in port cities such as Genoa, Livorno, Venice and Trieste; and the street vendors.

Having looked at how Chinese students and diplomats originally arrived in Italy, we can turn out attention to more mainstream migrants. Chinese sailors made their way to all the largest Italian port cities but only in small numbers. Prior to the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, there was no traditional commercial relationship between Italy and China and Italian ports did not feature on routes from Europe to the Far East. It was only in the 1880s that Italian shipping companies such as Lloyd Triestino scheduled regular passenger and cargo voyages to Singapore and

[11] "I commerci della Cina con l'Italia", Corriere della Sera, 30 Dicembre 1897.

[12] "Il numero degli stranieri in Cina", Corriere della Sera, 10 luglio 1900.

Hong Kong (1880) and Shanghai (1881). But there was no immediate surge in the volume of goods and passengers. In 1886, only one Italian shipping company asked for a government incentive to travel to China, and only 629 passengers took the route (Istat 1887). In the same year, only three foreign ships (all British) carried Chinese or Japanese goods to Italy. Sino-Italian trade did not increase significantly in the following decades. In 1910, trade with the Far East as a whole amounted to just 2.4% of Italy's total trade (Tamagna 1940).

Chinese peddlers as well as sailors were infrequent visitors to Italy. The newspapers kept track of their presence by monitoring special events such as the birth of a child in a public dormitory or the enforced return to China of 25 jugglers and street artists from Milan.[13] To sum up, before the First World War, then, Chinese migration to Italy revolved around the establishment of foreign and economic relations between the two countries.

Italians in China During the Interwar Period and Until the End of the Chiang Kai-Shek Era

This section will place the evolution of Sino-Italian relations in the context of major Chinese political events between the end of the First World War and the birth of the People's Republic of China. Following the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1912, the Republic of China came into being. From the outset it was unstable, riven by internal strife and a north-south political division. In 1928, the Kuomintang (KMT) party leader Chiang Kai-shek declared an end to the civil war that had been plaguing the country and proclaimed an era of unity in the new Nationalist Republic of China.[14] This façade evaporated quickly, however, as regional uprisings erupted, imperial Japan seized Manchuria in September 1931 and Kai-shek's government, dominated by military leaders, conducted relentless military

[13] "Cinese nato a Milano" Corriere della Sera, 21st August 1914; "Le tribolazioni dei cinesi a Milano" Corriere della Sera, 17 luglio 1915.

[14] In 1937 as Japan invaded Northern China an alliance was formed between Chiang Kai-shek and the Communist army. But with the defeat of Japan in 1945 the civil war broke out again (Roberts 2013, p. 269).

campaigns against communist guerrillas in the southeast of the country. Against this background of internal Chinese division and strife and fascist Italy's support for Japan, Mussolini and Kai-shek attempted to build a viable relationship.

When Mussolini took power in 1922, Italy's presence in China was mainly confined to Tianjin, which was Italy's prize for sending troops to fight with the International Liberation Corps against the Boxer. The 1901 treaty between the restored Imperial Government and its international allies included territorial concessions and Italy was granted 457,800 square metres of marshland in Tianjin, plus the restoration of its Legation in Beijing and its coastal garrison at Shanhaiguan. The Royal Navy was put in charge of Italian interests in China but there was little private or public reaction to the acquisition. No private capital was channelled in its direction despite the setting up of a company for that purpose and the government did not even acknowledge Tianjin's status as a zone of Italian military occupation for a decade (Marinelli 2010, pp. 536–556) let alone that it required public funding.[15] Finally, in 1910, Italy started to construct sewers, an electrical power grid, streets, piazzas and public buildings there.[16] The first government building in Tianjin was a neo-renaissance two-story villa. In 1917, the Circolo Italiano was set up in the Italian park where the 100–150 residents of Tianjin socialized. Italy's last major project in Tianjin was a hospital that opened on December 21, 1922. Originally a forty-bed hospital run by Franciscan nuns, in the first six months of 1924 it treated 78 European and 272 Chinese patients.[17] It changed its name to Sacred Heart Hospital in 1937 (Smith 2012, p. 19, 142).

[15] Archival sources demonstrate that expenses were invariably greater than incoming funds from taxes. ASMAE (Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri), Rappresentanza diplomatica Cina Pechino Busta 109 Concessione italiana Tientsin Verbale di consegna della cassa al consiglio muncipale della concessione italiana.

[16] "The Italian administration has financed various public works … which have turned our concession into one of the most modern and healthy European districts of residence, where the right of asylum is fully safeguarded to foreigners, including eminent Chinese politicians". ASMAE Rappresentanza diplomatica Cina Pechino BUSTA 60 Regia amministrazione della Concessione italiani di Tientsin, Tientsin 15 settembre 1922.

[17] ASMAE Rappresentanza diplomatica Cina Pechino BUSTA 60 Consolato d'Italia Tientsin 27 agosto 1924 Ospedale italiano a Tientsin.

Apart from investments in Tianjin, fascist Italy's efforts to forge closer bonds with KMT China involved Mussolini sending Chiang Kai-shek an airplane as a gift in 1935. This preceded an agreement on the construction of an aircraft factory. Breda (an engineering company that had started building aircrafts during the war) and an Italian Consortium called Air China were to build the facility in China and it was to construct 100 airplanes a year (Marinelli and Andornino 2014, p. 100). Also in the 1930s, two twin ocean liners, Lloyd Triestino's Conte Rosso and Conte Verde, started to cruise regularly between Italy and China.

Japan's invasion of China in 1937 put a halt to Mussolini's diplomatic efforts, however. The Sino-Japanese war lasted eight years, engaged and exhausted KMT troops (assisted by Chinese communist guerrillas) and killed fifteen to twenty million Chinese, directly and indirectly (Eastman 1991, pp. 115–176).

The Japanese were defeated in August 1945 with the KMT government in control of all the country's major cities, its entire industrial base, and more than three quarters of a total population estimated at about 450 million. Albeit a civil war started between the Communist troops and KMT forces, which were much better equipped and, with 2.5 million men, numbered more than double the enemy. Everybody including the Americans (who were supplying and training KMT armies) expected Chiang to win the civil war in China: "That this did not happen was a surprise to almost everyone except perhaps the Communists" (Van Slyke 1991, pp. 177–290).

The repressive measures adopted by the nationalist government following the Japanese surrender, including the outrageous takeover process of its officials and the closing of many rural wartime industries, caused not just unemployment but also widespread disillusionment (Pepper 1991, pp. 291–356). The terrible toll inflicted on the Chinese people during and after the war accelerated the KMG's political and economic decay and the demise of Chiang Kai-shek's regime. The Chinese Communist Party eventually emerged victorious from the long civil war and on October 1, 1949, Mao announced the birth of the People's Republic of China (PCR). Chiang retreated to Taiwan (Shambaugh 2000). Control of Taiwan had shifted from Japan to the Chinese Nationalists under the

terms of a 1943 agreement between Franklin Roosevelt, Joseph Stalin, Winston Churchill and Chiang Kai-shek and two million Chinese had moved to Taiwan by the autumn of 1949.[18]

Chinese Migration in the Interwar Period

The increasing number of Chinese migrants in northern Italy in the 1920s stimulated commentary in the leading Italian newspapers. The migrants first came to public attention in 1926, when a hundred peddlers of fake pearls took to the streets. Seventy of them set up in Turin and the local newspaper, la Stampa, reported on their activities from March 1926. Unhappy with the prices offered by locals on the street, the vendors started selling to shopkeepers. Newspaper reports suggested the pearls in question had been mass-produced in a Shanghai factory employing 1000 people and exported all over the world. It seems, however, that the pearls were produced in France.[19]

Since the Chinese street vendors did not pay the required licence fees, the Municipality of Turin soon ordered them to leave the city. The possibility of a negotiated settlement was ended by shopkeepers' protests against the granting of any permit. The peddlers moved to other cities, including Florence and Milan.[20] National newspapers announced soaring numbers. *Il Corriere della Sera* reported that around 300 had come to Milan in 1926. The shopkeepers of Milan were just as unhappy as their counterparts in Turin and the Superintendent of the Municipality settled the issue by granting only 10 full licences for street vendors.[21] Whatever the official figures, the reality is that many more migrants continued to sell their wares on the streets of Milan and other Italian cities. Their presence in Ancona was noted in April 1926.[22]

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[18] Ensuing Taiwanese uprisings were brutally suppressed by GMD and nationalist martial-law was enforced until 1987 (Brown 2004, pp. 7–9).

[19] "Collane di perle" La Stampa, 13 marzo 1926; "L'invasione delle perle" La Stampa, 5 marzo 1926.

[20] "L'invasione cinese anche a Firenze" Corriere della Sera, 17 marzo 1926.

[21] "La penosa condizione dei rivenditori cinesi" Unità, 13 marzo 1926; "Il fermo dei trecento cinesi rivenditori di perle", L'Unità, 12 marzo 2016.

[22] "Esodo di cinesi anche a Firenze", Corriere della Sera, 6 aprile 1926.

The issue soon became politicised and caused concern at the highest levels. Within two months, the Ministry of Home Affairs had issued an edict ordering the arrest and expulsion of all Chinese peddlers as communist propagandists.[23] This did not deter the peddlers from appearing on the streets of Milan, however. The response of the municipal police was to fine them (10 lire for each instance).[24]

> [My father] left China in 1928, practically when he was 18 years old. One day he told me: 'We all started with fake necklaces … We remained in France for a while … then we came to Italy'. Some friends gave him hospitality in France for two or three months … Then he came to Milan … He stayed there for a little time … until they [the Chinese street vendors] suggested that he go to Bologna [in 1934][25] because there were already too many of them in Milan.[26]

Street vendors travelled far and wide and settled down in many Italian cities. According to the censuses of 1931 and 1936, there were Chinese migrants in all large and middle-sized Italian cities, but the overall numbers remained trifling: 331 in 1931 and 531 in 1936. Milan housed what was the only real Chinese community in the country, and it was a small one, numbering 77 in 1931 and 175 in 1936.[27]

Press coverage indicates that by the early 1930s, Chinese migrants were selling Italian-manufactured petty trade products in small Chinese-run shops located both within the big cities and on their outskirts. This is corroborated by the fact that upon their arrival in Milan, Chinese vendors initially relied on local artisans to supply them with products but

[23] "I cinesi rivenditori di perle propagandisti sovversivi" L'Unità, 11 maggio 1926.

[24] "Gesti cinesi" l'Unità, 16 maggio 1926; "Rompicapi cinesi" L'unità, 18 novembre 1927.

[25] Tong arrival in Bologna dated from 1934 when he obtained the street vendor licence. Municipal Archive Bologna, Commercial licences.

[26] Interview with Antonio Tong by Patrizia Battilani and Luigi Yen Liao, Bologna, June 31st 2015.

[27] Other estimates provided by newspapers ranged from 136 to 300. "Cinesi di Milano e il loro lavoro", Il Corriere della Sera, 30 agosto 1938. The Chinese community of the time had its own: "before the second world war, there were in 700–800 Chinese in Italy. After the war there were 60 in Milan, 25–28 in Bologna, 10 in Rome, 10 in Florence, 7–8 in Genoa, less than 300 in the whole of Italy. When the war ended the majority of them had returned to China" (Interview by Patrizia Battilani and Luigi Liao with N. T., Bologna, June 8th 2015. Nino T., born in 1943, migrated to Italy in 1959, two years after his father and about 30 years after his grandfather).

this relationship had ended by 1932. The Chinese were already manufacturing their own goods at incredibly competitive prices in "small firms where they do not pay workers contributions or taxes and no control on their labourers' wages is ever enacted".[28]

Traditionally a country of emigration, Italian governments had rarely legislated for immigration. Thus, it was quite easy for foreign people to settle in Italy. A law of 1912 had regulated mixed marriages and meant that Italian women lost their citizenship if they married a foreigner (Legge 555, 13 giugno 1912). However, their citizenship would be restored if they became widows. Restrictions on migration were gradually introduced under the fascist regime in a framework of generalized surveillance of opponents. In 1926, the Provincial office of the political police was established. In 1929, the Central Office for foreigner registration followed. Then, in 1931, compulsory visas were introduced for all foreigners and this evolved into a residency permit in 1942 (Law Rd 18 giugno 1931, n. 773).

The true turning point, however, was the approval of the race laws of 1938 (Law Rd 17 Novembre 1938, XVII n. 1728). These laws prohibited marriage between Italians and people of different races, unless otherwise stated by the competent authority. This had a major impact on the integration of Chinese migrants, who were primarily men and had often married Italian women. From December 1938 the Home Department forbade marriage between Italians and Chinese.[29] On the other hand, the San Marino-Italian Friendship Agreement meant that mixed marriage (although only in the religious and not the civil sense) remained possible in the Republic of San Marino (a microstate in the northeast of Italy) until it passed its own race laws on September 17th 1942.[30]

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[28] One journalist referred to a shop producing fake pearls and other gadgets "near a lake in the North". See: "I Cinesi di via Canonica" Il Corriere della Sera 8 marzo 1932 and also "I sorridenti cinesini e le merci giapponesi" Il Corriere della Sera, 13 ottobre 1934.

[29] State Archive Bologna, Prefettura. Gabinetto, Serie 1944, Matrimoni con stranieri anni 1938–1944. See the request forwarded by the Prefect of Bologna to allow Calderoni Maria to get married to Tong Ling Sin Giovanni (26 September 1939). The Home Department twice rejected the request.

[30] "My parents married between 1939 and 1940 in the Republic of San Marino because they couldn't do it in Italy". Interview by Patrizia Battilani and Luigi Yen Liao with Antonio Tong, Bologna, 17 June 2015. Antonio Tong, born in 1940, was the first Sino-Italian male baby born in Bologna.

The situation for Chinese migrants deteriorated further when Italy signed the Tripartite Pact with Japan and Germany on September 27th 1940, making China an enemy state (the Sino-Japanese war was ongoing). On the September 4th 1940 Mussolini signed a decree establishing 43 internment fields for the citizens of enemy states living in Italy: about 150 Chinese were interned in Tossiccia (Abruzzo) in 1941, then from September 1942 to October 1943 in Isola del Gran Sasso (Capogreco 1987, 2004). Upon the armistice of September 1943, by which Italy broke its alliance with Japan and Germany, Chinese migrants were released from internment but faced with all the difficulties and tragedies confronting the rest of the Italian population.[31] For a regional breakdown of Chinese immigrants from 1911 to 1951 see Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Regional breakdown of Chinese migrants, years 1911, 1931, 1936 and 1951

	1911	1921	1931	1936	1951
Piemonte e Valle d'Aosta	3	0	17	61	48
Liguria	9	75	36	75	241
Lombardia	4	3	80	181	514
Veneto	5	42*	12	21	83
Trentino Alto Adige	0		1	0	12
Friuli Venezia Giulia	0		35	26	29
Emilia Romagna	0		19	32	40
Toscana	0	6**	56	17	39
Marche	0		3	11	4
Umbria	0		3	6	11
Lazio	21	38	50	55	783
Abruzzi e Molise	3	0	0	3	3
Campania	0	0	9	14	172
Puglia e Basilicata	0	0	5	15	10
Calabria	0	0	4	4	4
Sicilia	0	0	1	11	45
Sardegna	0	0	0	7	8
Italy	45	164	331	539	2046

Source: Italian population census, 1911, 1931, 1936, 1951
* Friuli Venezia Giulia and Trentino Alto Adige included
** Emilia Romagna, Marche and Umbria included

[31] "One bomb hit the building where he lived. The caretakers, wife and husband, died in the courtyard. My husband was frightened. And then he lost most of his things. So he got away and a family living on the outskirts of Bologna housed him". Interview by Patrizia Battilani and Luigi Yen Liao with Cecilia Geslao, Bologna, 7 July 2015. Cecilia Geslao, born in 1929, married Wu King in Bologna in 1949.

The Italian Chinese Communities from the 1950s to the 1980s

In the immediate post-war years, a huge number of refugees returned home with the support of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). Many of them were Chinese who had fled to South East Asian countries during the Sino-Japanese war. UNRRA defined 'displaced persons' as anyone displaced after 1937 and from September 1946 to July 1947 (Peterson 2012). In this context, many of the Chinese living in Europe before the war decided to return home.

> One day the Chinese Consul or whoever he was, called and said to my husband there was the possibility to return home with an all-expenses paid trip…. So all Chinese feeling homesick returned to China. There were so many of us. We left little by little.[32]

In June 1944, a refugee camp was organized in Rome (in the area of Cinecittà) to provide housing to displaced people in Italy. From 1946, Chinese waiting to depart for home were also housed there.

> They brought us to the refugee camp in Cinecittà. There was a shower and they fed us. My son was born there. We should have left the camp after a few days but I was pregnant and they didn't allow me to embark. Our luggage was already on the boat, therefore we lost everything. But they helped us. My son was born on 18th October 1946. Then when my baby started to eat solid food we embarked.[33]

Many Sino-Italian families went back to China and settled in Shanghai or in Wenzhou province. After the proclamation of the People's Republic by Mao Tse Tung in 1949, however, they were treated as politically suspect and during the 1950s many of them attempted to return to Italy with the help of the Italian Red Cross or the Catholic Missions. In most

[32] Interview by Patrizia Battilani with Giovanna Rilli, Bologna, March 18th 2016. Mrs Rilli was born in 1927, married Ho Tin Fee in 1945 in Bologna and in 1946 moved with her husband to China, where they stayed for 3–5 years.

[33] Interview by Patrizia Battilani with Giovanna Rilli, March 18th 2016.

cases, since all their Chinese relatives were living in China, they could not claim to be joining kinfolk in Italy. The chaotic circumstances of the day did not aid their cause.

> We fled from China with a false passport … and reached Italy on an Italian Red Cross boat in 1952. We arrived in Rome and were housed in the Refugee Camp of Cinecittà. Fortunately my mother had some relatives in Milan and we went there.[34]

> "One day the Italian Consul said they had to leave. So I told my husband that it would be better if we returned to Italy too. The Consul prepared all we needed to leave. However, when we arrived at the Hong Kong border, my husband wasn't allowed to cross, because he was Chinese. He returned to Shanghai. It was a desperate situation. I crossed the border with my two children. I didn't have anything. Fortunately, the Mission's Sisters helped us. I stayed there for at least three months, then we embarked to Italy. We arrived in Naples and we were housed in a Refugee camp … Meanwhile I wrote to Sister Giulietta, because in Italy I was told she had helped many Chinese fleeing from China to return to Italy". She told me: "We are waiting for his permission. He will arrive. He will arrive. And he arrived after three months in Venice. So I went to meet him. Before then, I picked up my son and daughter [who had been hosted in a religious boarding school] and I went. When we met, he was so serious, but we hugged each other. He was moved. The Sister had dressed him well, he was keeping well. He looked like a gentleman".[35]

The Mao Tse Tung government included migration policy in a wider strategy of population management, stimulating great movements of Han Chinese towards the Chinese border (Amrith 2011). Despite the substantial internal movements of the Chinese population, between 1949 and 1978 international migration was restricted and usually directed to the socialist bloc countries. However, emigration for the purpose of family

[34] Interview by Patrizia Battilani and Luigi Yen Liao with Antonio Yen, Bologna 5th October 2015. Antonio Yen was born in China in 1949, his parents having returned from Italy.

[35] Interview by Patrizia Battilani with Giovanna Rilli, Bologna, March 18th 2016. Families experienced a range of difficulties in returning to Europe from China. See: "Un'italiana sposata ad un cinese ottiene di rimpatriare con i due figli" Corriere della Sera, 16 Settembre 1955.

reunification was permitted and this facilitated the movement of a limited number of Chinese migrants to Europe and the USA.

Little by little, the Chinese community in Italy was re-established. While its members had settled down in many provinces, Milan continued as a central point and Bologna emerged as a base also. As had happened in the interwar years, Sino-Italian communities developed on the back of Chinese migrant men marrying Italian women, embracing Catholicism and raising children. The first Chinese women started to arrive from the mid-1950s, to join their fathers or husbands.

> In the mid-60s, I don't know if it was a legal issue or out of necessity, I remember the arrival of a guy, the son of [my father's] brother who had returned to China … Then I remember a guy named Ivano … Then the arrival of Chinese wives started….[36]

In some case they arrived from Taiwan.

> In 1949, when the Communists took power, my uncle left China and moved to Taiwan with his family. He lived there until 1958 … when my father helped him to come here [to Italy] … with his wife and the three children. They settled down in Milan.[37]

The majority of the first generation of migrants did not go back to China until old age, although they maintained close ties with their native land, regularly sending remittances to relatives.

> My husband sent money to his parents. He said: "My mum and my dad are there I must send it". From the bank here (in Bologna), the money went to Milan and then from Milan to Switzerland. From there, money arrived in Hong Kong … He didn't tell me but we received a letter from the bank.[38]

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[36] Interview with S. Y. by Patrizia Battilani, Francesca Fauri and Luigi Yen Liao, Bologna, January 31st 2015.

[37] Interview with Itala Wu by Luigi Yen Liao, Bologna, November 18th 2015.

[38] Interview with Cecilia Geslao, who married with Wu Lung King Paolo in 1949, by Luigi Yen Liao Bologna, July 7th 2015.

Chinese migrants were very well integrated from a business point of view. During the 1950s, they stopped working as street vendors and set up workshops or trading activities and undertakings all over Italy. In Bologna, they participated in the city's thriving leather and leatherette bags production. While Italian craftsmen usually focused on the production of real leather items, the Chinese concentrated on leatherette goods. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, there were around 300 workshops producing bags in Bologna, and 70 of them were run by Chinese craftsmen. The Chinese community was closely integrated in the economic life of the city and employed Italian workers (normally female homeworkers) and suppliers.[39]

From the late 1970s, as bag production became less lucrative, the focus and nature of Chinese enterprises started to change. Some of them moved up the production chain and became wholesalers of raw material (for the apparel and furniture industries), while others moved into new areas altogether. For instance, between 1970 and 1983 the first five Chinese restaurants opened in Bologna, four of them by entrepreneurs coming from the leather sector and with no experiences in catering. Others set up food shops or travel agencies.[40]

Mao's rise to power also had consequences for foreign affairs at the level of high politics. Italy's government seemed willing to recognize the People's Republic of China on its foundation, but the Cold War complicated matters.[41] Despite Italy's intention to pursue its own foreign policy independent of its Nato allies, it proved impossible to develop political and commercial relations with China until 1970 (Fardella 2017, pp. 181–197). During the 1950s and 1960s, however, some Italian companies did establish economic relations with the People's Republic, among them Eni, Fiat, Olivetti and Snia Viscosa (Meneguzzi Rostagni 2012).

[39] For a description of the work organization model, see the interviews with Lo Hueng Yuk, Antonio Tong, Antonio Yen, Nino T., Cecilia Geslao. On the relationship between craftsmen and suppliers, see the interview with Corrado Veronesi and Vainer Neri.

[40] Interviews with Nino T., Pietro Sun Pai Cheang, Marco Tung, Maria Grazia Sun, Tse Weik Wang Ugo, Dick Ting.

[41] Legislatura 11 – Discussioni – Seduta 8th June 1954, Seguito della discussione del bilancio dei Ministero del commercio con l'estero, Tonetti and Martinelli's speeches.

China's interest in normalizing its diplomatic relations with Western European countries progressed only after its relationship with the Soviet Union deteriorated. Its pro-European initiatives were part of a strategy aiming at undermining Soviet influence in Asia and combating the USA's non-recognition policy. It also served to isolate the Republic of China (Taiwan). The first success of the new strategy was the announcement of mutual recognition with France in 1964. This progressive climate meant that Italy could open a commercial office in Beijin and operate it as a de facto embassy. Full normalization between Italy in China only became a reality after the further deterioration of Soviet-Sino relations in 1968 and the establishment of formal talks with the USA in 1969. Italian state recognition of the People's Republic of China came in 1970 and included the taking note by Italy of China's 'declaration' of its rights over Taiwan.[42] Despite the many official visits of Italian ministers to Beijing, however, Sino-Italian relations remained quite stilted and there was no surge in economic exchanges between the two countries.

As a consequence of the establishment of official foreign relations with China, the Chinese living in Italy (including their Italian wives and children) had to choose between citizenship of the People's Republic and Italy. At that time, many Chinese immigrants were politically connected with Taiwan as a consequence of their original support for the KMT, and some of them did not wish to be citizens of the People's Republic, preferring to become Italian. As a result, the official number of Chinese living in Italy decreased from 2133 in 1971 to 1494 in 1981 and the Milan community from 277 to 194 (Istat Population Census).

The New Chinese Migration Wave of the 1990s

The 1978 Reform and Opening Period and further migration legislation in 1985, which granted passports to those with overseas invitation letters and sponsors, facilitated another wave of international migration. From 1979 to 1986, 10,948 Chinese obtained passports and in 1987 alone

[42] It is important to note that Italy found much greater favour with the Beijing government once it accepted the Chinese stance on Taiwan (Melchionni 1970, pp. 651–652).

another 3128 did likewise (Minghuan 2013, p. 184). During this period, migration trends within Europe gradually shifted from Northern Europe to the Southern Mediterranean region. Chinese migrants were attracted to the new sweatshop factories opening across Italy, Spain, and France (Chang 2012). In 1994, of the 165,000 Wenzhou migrants in Europe, 95% lived in four countries—France, the Netherlands, Italy and Spain. The reasons for this huge and continuous flow of Wenzhou people to Europe (even when things had greatly improved at home) have been widely debated by scholars. Many potential motivations factors have been identified but one key factor which certainly prompted Wenzhou people to migrate to Europe was the pull of family reunion and the opportunity to help establish or expand the family's business in Europe (Gungwe 2006, pp. 926–948).

There was also a sense that it was possible to get rich quickly in Europe without having specific abilities or education: "to earn a high income in any Chinese restaurant without possessing any special skills, investment or even knowledge of the host society. All that is required is to be a hard-working person".[43] Furthermore, the lure of "unlimited mobility", the practice of Chinese immigrants to continue moving until they were satisfied that they had located the best possible opportunity, was a powerful draw (Minghaun 1988, pp. 21–41; Carchedi 1994, p. 60). Last but not least, the Zhejiangese also had a strong psychological drive to migrate to Europe. They were in fact often pushed to leave in the aftermath of the adoption of the "Wenzhou Model". In the early 1990s, the underdeveloped southern port city of Wenzhou burst onto the economic scene as a "beehive of small-scale entrepreneurship" financed by newly created financial facilities (Hood 1999; Cologna 2005b, p. 126). The Wenzhou Model was touted nationwide (Koo and Yeh 1999). However, for those inhabitants who did not share in its success or lived outside its zone of influence, "envy or relative deprivation" effect pushed them to seek their fortune in Europe and figured as one of the most prominent reasons for migration (Cologna 2005b).

[43] The annual average income of peasants in Wenzhou in 1994 was more than 12 times that of 1980: "We are richer than in the past but still poorer than our fellows in Europe" (Minghuan 2013, p. 185).

While these push factors were crucial to the migration wave of the 1990s, Italy's relaxed immigration policy was a vital pull factor in its case (Pieke et al. 2004, p. 117). In particular, law no. 943/86 (1986) regularized the status of those in paid employment in Italy and gave newly legal residents the right to apply for family reunification. However, the residence permits granted to non-European community citizens were given almost exclusively to dependent workers. According to some authors, this law created dependency among recent pre-1986 Chinese immigrants on their employers, a dependency that translated into acceptance of hard working conditions (Christiansen 2003, p. 29). In the case of the Chinese community, this legislation clearly contradicted the terms of the Italian-Chinese Treaty of 1985, which aimed to intensify economic cooperation and to create favourable conditions for investment and business ventures by one country in the other, thus offering the opportunity to set up enterprises in either Italy or China. Finally, new legislation in 1990 (law no. 39/90) provided for the regularization of irregular immigrants and also clarified the position of self-employed immigrants (Carchedi and Ferri 1998, pp. 261–263). Independent workers or relatives who had arrived spontaneously (and illegally) to join their families were given legal status in Italy. Chinese immigrants who had been residing illegally in France, England and Holland came to Italy to benefit from this indemnity (Pan 1998).

Italy was seen to be using the promise of amnesty and legalization as a recruitment system. As well as making it a major destination country in Europe, this open system also attracted Fujian Chinese to Italy for the first time (Pieke 2002).

Apart from the perk of regularization, the opportunities available to entrepreneurial immigrants were also a big draw to Italy, especially since most Chinese migrants' ultimate goal was to save enough funds to establish their own business. The Zhejiangese were quite successful in setting up family workshops based on minimal capital, thanks to familial and friendship networks providing a ready supply of labour. As previously discussed, the Chinese working in Italy were more reliant than other immigrant communities on a network of chain migrants to supply badly needed labour: as one study found, "production units with the same ethnic components are typically Chinese" (Carchedi 1994, p. 58).

This third great migration wave, despite the divergence in the social and political background of migrants (the most recent additions having been born and raised in Maoist China), showed a similar attitude toward work and entrepreneurship as their predecessors. The new Chinese immigrants swiftly inserted themselves into economic sectors such as the Chinese catering business, Italian leather/clothing workshops and the wholesale/retail trade. The Zhejiangese, in particular, were capable of establishing economic niches within trades once dominated by Italians (Tomba 2013). In this case, our recent oral history interview field work in Bologna and the Romagna region has revealed how the entrepreneurial attitude of Chinese migrants coming from Zhejiang suited the small family business dynamic inherent in the Italian economy. In Ferrara (a city near Bologna), for instance, the Chinese epitomized the traditional notion of close community kinship. In many cases, the family unit played an important role in providing the necessary financial help to start up a business.[44]

Xumei moved to Italy in 1994 to join her husband who worked as a cook in Rome. When they decided to start their own business in 1997, they moved to Copparo, near Ferrara, and bought a restaurant with the help of her relatives (who were quite well-off and had themselves moved to Italy and settled in Cuneo with Xumei's help). Similarly, the owner of another restaurant in Copparo tells us that, after a few years in France, she moved to Italy in 1987. After working in the restaurant of her husband's uncle in Foligno (Umbria), the family moved to Ferrara and bought a restaurant and a house with the help of "relatives and local banks".[45]

Moreover, the deindustrialization taking place in some sectors of the Italian economy actually facilitated the Chinese in some instances, such as in their entry into the garment industry and more recently the services sector (Chinese bar-keepers and hairdressers have been proliferating over the last 5 years). Some Chinese tend to take over small firms on the verge of collapse. These "broad-parasite entrepreneurs" have been accused of exploiting immigrant Chinese labour to make these firms viable, but they

[44] Sometimes they are also held together by bonds of trust and by a network of mutual loans that offered everyone a chance to start a business of their own (Zhou 1992).

[45] Interview by Luigi Liao with Y. Y. born in 1963 in Guenzthou, Ferrara April 2015.

represent the only alternative to failure and are deeply connected with the network of small and middle sized businesses led by Italian entrepreneurs in surrounding areas (Battilani and Fauri 2016). Many of the firms or sectors they are working in would have all but collapsed in the absence of fresh Chinese entrepreneurship. Several of the region's industries have survived thanks solely to Chinese manufacturers. Chinese migration has thus been defined as "noninvasive" because by establishing separate economic sectors such as ethnic restaurants all over Europe, leather and garment workshops in Italy and import-wholesale-retail networks in Eastern Europe, "Chinese migrants have tended to add to local economies without challenging non-Chinese for jobs" (Pieke et al. 2004, pp. 25–26).

Finally, many scholars suggest that living in Italy has required a majority of the Chinese to develop ethnic enclaves, and while they are unlike the homogenous Chinatown models developed elsewhere, they remain incapable of integrating the community into the national social fabric (Cologna 2005a, p. 270). Thus, while economically integrated, the Chinese in Italy have remained socially alienated and isolated.[46] Rather than generalize, however, we should consider each geographical area on its own merits. If Prato and Milan can be thought of as economic enclaves, in Bologna and the surrounding area the immigrant Chinese have not congregated in clearly defined zones of economic activity. Although there are certainly some ethnic-based communities, they are generally fairly dispersed and independent from one another, integrated both with local society and among themselves but via innovative connections which entail religion for instance.

A recent set of interviews with some of the newer members of the Chinese immigrant community in Emilia Romagna reveals that the spiritual awakening which has been taking place in China since the early 1990s (and is currently perceived as a threat by the Communist government)[47] has also been occurring among the Chinese in Italy, who

[46] Living in Italy has required a majority of the Chinese to develop their ethnic enclaves "within mixed multiethnic neighbourhoods and not within homogenous ethnic landscapes like in traditional Chinatowns" (Mudu and Li 2005, p. 278; Chang 2012, p. 187).

[47] "In China churches are being demolished and new laws are set to increase monitoring of religious activities. As more Chinese turn to Christianity, the Communist Party sees a rival in a struggle for hearts and minds" (Rahn 2018).

regularly worship at (Chinese) Evangelical Churches. Silvia Huang and her mother, who moved to Italy in 2005 and 2000 respectively, and who work at the same garment factory in Crespellano (Bologna), attend their local Evangelical Church every Sunday. The religious ceremony offers an opportunity to the widely dispersed Chinese community to congregate. Chinese come to Bologna from Imola, Forlì and even Rimini in the hope of establishing friendly contacts with other members of the immigrant community and because they want to raise their children in this religious culture:

> We meet around 3 pm and pray, sing and listen to the Minister all together for at least three hours. We also look after the children and help them grow up as Christian, we use big screens where we reproduce the written words used in our religious ceremony. This helps everyone to understand … We also organized Chinese classes for children.[48]

A closely related characteristic of the latest additions to the Chinese community is a pronounced interest in passing on the Chinese language and culture to their children. When the Chinese courses her daughter was attending in Bologna shut down, Zhang Min (who was born in 1975 in Whenzou, immigrated to Bologna in 1993 and is currently engaged in the wholesale business) first relied on Chinese students attending the Italian University to teach her girl. But when her second born turned 6 years old, Zhang Min decided to set up a small school in Bologna to teach Chinese to not just her own children, but to those of her sisters and some friends also:

> Nowadays Chinese parents want to make sure their kids know Chinese because China is growing so much and their children might want to go back to China one day. However, Bologna is not like Milan or Padova where all Chinese live close by and have organized Chinese courses in the afternoon after school. Here we are a more dispersed community and therefore we have organized the school on Saturdays and Sundays when children do not attend Italian schools and can come from far-off places.

[48] Interview by Luigi Liao with S. H., Bologna May 16th 2015.

> On Saturdays they stay here all day and go to school for two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon.[49]

Finally, it is important to note the contribution of Associna, which fosters Sino-Italian identity and represents those Sino-Italians who feel a strong sense of attachment to both cultures. Associna's slogan is "Free to be" (*Liberi di essere*). Sun Wen-Long a member of the association, argues that it does not serve any political function but simply seeks to offer practical advice to Sino-Italians based on the experience accumulated by immigrants of long-standing:

> We act as cousins do in Chinese culture, we are able to help since we know about intercultural dynamics. We are also here to help teenagers. We often meet locally (in Ferrara) and every two or three months we also get together with Milan and Prato Associna members. Then once a year, in October or November, we arrange a national assembly. We also exchange information online, often about recent news report, since if anything happens within the Chinese community, we are the ones the press gets in touch with.[50]

Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, we can identify three distinct waves of Chinese migration to Italy. The first wave occurred in the very early stage of Sino-Italian relations (1850–1915), when only four categories of people moved to Italy from China: the students and priests studying and teaching at the Chinese college in Naples, the diplomats and their families based in Rome, a few sailors and the first street vendors (the first Chinese born in Milan in 1914 was presumably from a peddler family). The sporadic presence of Chinese citizens was thus substantially connected with Sino-Italian diplomatic relations as well as with Catholic mission work. Similarly, China was one of the few countries where Italian migrants didn't settle down.

During the second wave of Chinese immigration (1930–1970), a small but cohesive community started to develop. Chinese migrants took

[49] Interview by Luigi Liao with Zhang Min, Bologna 15th April 2015.

[50] Interview by Patria Battilani and Luigi Liao with Sun Wen-Long, Bologna 15th April 2016.

many different routes to Italy after the first world war: across Siberia before stopovers in East and Central Europe, via France or the United Kingdom, or directly from China to the ports of Venice or Genoa. Here are some of the first Chinese migrants' experiences reconstructed through oral interviews:

> My grandfather arrived before the first World War from Quingtian. The village was very very poor and all the people tried to go away. To Beijing, to Shanghai, to Siberia. My grandfather arrived in Europe from Russia, then went through Czechoslovakia, Poland, the Netherlands. Then he came to Milan because he had relatives and friends there.[51]

> I think he arrived in Italy in 1935–36. He travelled around Europe for a long time. He said he arrived first of all in England. He worked as a cook. Then he went to France where he remained for 5 years. Then he went to Germany, but he didn't like it, that was in the Hitler period, and finally he reached Italy. So he must have left China very young.[52]

> He left by boat and he remained on board for 40 days, because when he arrived in Trieste he wasn't allowed to disembark. Then the boat went to Genoa, but he could not disembark there either. So he started to travel up and down and at the end he landed at Genoa. Then he went to Milan, and after that to Bologna where his brother was.[53]

From the 1930s, most Chinese immigrants settled in Milan. After the Second World War, this community was rebuilt and new ones were set up, including in Bologna. The small number and common origin of this wave (almost all of them came from Quingtian) made for close kinship ties, so all of these communities (especially those in Milan and Bologna) were very cohesive and strictly interconnected:

> Every so often, we spent time with the Milan community, that was even better organized … That was a significant community, with some person-

[51] Interview with Nino T. by Patrizia Battilani and Luigi Yen Liao, Bologna, 8th June 2015.

[52] Interview with G. W. by Luigi Liao Yen, Bologna 22nd November 2015.

[53] Interview with Cecilia Geslao, who married Wu Lung King Paolo in 1949, by Luigi Yen Liao Bologna, 7th July 2015.

> alities which stood out … more charismatic … Therefore we went there, from time to time.[54]
>
> We all knew each other … And we did the celebrations together. And the marriages? There were 400 guests at my wedding. And we went to weddings in Rome and Milan.[55]

The second wave of migrants usually spent their spare time within their small community, playing Mah-jong, chatting in the Zhejiang dialect and eating homemade Chinese food. In Bologna, in the early 1960s, they set up a self-financing association called the China Club. This was a place to meet regularly on Sundays and bank holidays, and especially for family celebrations such as marriages or children's First Communion or Confirmation (Catholic sacraments).

> We had the habit to gather on Sundays and spend time together [at the China club]. The dads played Mahjong, we [the children] played together and mums chatted … After the death of my father we stopped going there [in 1970].[56]

This community was also very well integrated from an economic point of view, it never became an ethnic enclave. Even if they all specialized in the production of one precise good, the leatherette bag, they interacted daily with Italian workers and companies and sold their items to Italian customers, while the Italian craftsmen specialized in leather bags or in shoes.

These Chinese shared in the Italian economic miracle and lived the "Italian dream", based on home and car ownership, and the embrace of modern conveniences like television and other lifestyle factors like going away for holidays.

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[54] Ibid.

[55] Interview with Antonio Yen by Patrizia Battilani and Luigi Yen Liao, Bologna, 10th June 2015.

[56] Interview with Tommasina Wang by Francesca Fauri and Luigi Yen Liao, Bologna, 9th September 2015.

> My father was the first one [in the Chinese community] to buy a car, the first to buy the television.[57]

> The doctor said our son needed to go on holiday … Then when June arrived, well he [the husband] took us to the seaside. To the Springtime Pension in Cesenatico. He brought us to the seaside in June and July, then in August I wanted to go back.[58]

> We had bought a flat … My husband told me: "do it by yourself because I don't know how "… In the city centre houses were so expensive and I chose to buy in (…) street. It was like a dream, such a wonderful house, all the furniture was new…. There was the bath tub. The bath tub! Then the childrens' room. I bought the house with cash. I never signed a promissory note.[59]

This second wave of Chinese immigration ended with the 1960s. Italy's recognition of the People's Republic of China (1970) prompted many of the Chinese living in Italy to choose Italian over Chinese citizenship because of their objections to Chinese communism and their connections to Taiwan.

The most recent wave of Chinese immigration started in the 1990s. Involving Chinese born and educated under the flag of the People's Republic, this wave bears little or no resemblance to the preceding one. Second and third wave immigrants rarely know each other and have no occasion to meet. Today, there are a host of widely dispersed ethnic Chinese communities strung around Italy, all independent of each other but all equally well-integrated into their respective local economies. All things considered, the base common denominator between the three unique waves of Chinese immigrants to Italy is a strong entrepreneurial attitude together with a sense of close community kinship. In each of the three eras, the Chinese family circle has proved decisive in the establishment of small businesses and their successful integration into the Italian economy.

[57] Interview with Adriana Wu by Patrizia Battilani and Luigi Yen Liao, Bologna 25th June 2015.
[58] Interview with Cecilia Geslao by Patrizia Battilani and Luigi Yen Liao, Bologna 7th July 2015.
[59] Interview with Giovanna Rilli by Patrizia Battilani, Bologna, March 18th 2016.

Based on our ongoing oral history project, it seems reasonable to conclude that while the most recent immigrant Chinese influx has not been able to create a cohesive community, it has certainly been successful in building interconnecting networks and relationships among the immigrant population.

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