Introduction

Travel literature in China developed in different genres, particularly in the form of "essays (□), diaries (□□), records (□), and prefaces (□). Travel writing in these forms (except the earlier preface) made its first significant appearance in Tang times, was developed during the Song and experienced a major upsurge in late Ming times, which lasted well into the Qing."[1]

Travel writing is one of the preferred ways of analysing the discovery process of the Other. In the case of encounters between Italy and China, this has a long history, dating back centuries;[2] the role played by travelogues and diaries is especially important in a later phase of this long journey for a variety of reasons. Diaries represent the most direct, first-hand information on contacts between the two countries which, more importantly, are firstly encounters between people. They also offer a different, more intimate, and direct perspective when compared to the very few—at least in the earliest phases of the historical encounters between China and Italy—annotations found in official and historical accounts.

It is not certain who was the first Chinese to travel to Europe, to Italy in particular. Rabban Bar Sauma (born in Zhongdu, modern Beijing, around 1220, died in 1294), a Nestorian Christian monk dispatched by the Mongols to Europe in 1287, is sometimes considered the first, even though his travel account was translated and published in the Syriac language.[3] However, notwithstanding new possible discoveries, scholars have ascertained that the first manuscript account about Italy is *Luoma riji* □□□□ [Diary from Rome], by the Chinese convert Huang Jialüe □□□, also known as Arcadio Huang (1679–1716).[4] It is also clear that the very first account in the form of a printed travelogue was provided by the seaman Xie Qinggao □□□ (1765–1821), who left his impressions in *Hailu* □□ [Records on the seas] thanks to the erudition and brush of Yang Bingnan □□□.[5]

After this pioneering work, the practice of writing down personal perceptions and more-or-less official activities in the West by Chinese scholars, and most of all official envoys sent to Europe, resulted in a considerable production of diaries. Pertaining to those describing Italy, a turning point is the dispatch of the first Chinese embassy to visit the peninsula in 1867.[6] Secondary literature convincingly suggests that travels abroad by Chinese in modern times can be divided into four sub-phases,[7] encompassing the numerous cultural,

social, and political changes that occurred in the world of the late Qing envoys as a result of the political upheavals and cultural revolutions of the early twentieth century. Accordingly, I suggest that diaries of this period, spanning from 1840 to 1945—from the First Opium War to the end of the Second World War—can be divided into two types based on their purpose. The first and most predominant one is the formal records of official envoys, such as *Chushi taixi ji* □□□□□ [Notes of the first mission to the West], by the official Zhigang □□, or *Chushi si guo riji* □□□□□□ [Notes on the mission in four countries], by the diplomat Xue Fucheng □□□ (1838–1894), to only mention a few; this typology is sometimes referred to as "diplomatic writing."[8] The second type is diaries closer to their first interpretation as a genre swinging "between the spontaneity of reportage and the reflectiveness of the crafted text";[9] these were written down by unofficial envoys or people accompanying them, as exemplified by Shan Shili □□□ (1863–1945)'s *Guimao lüxing ji* □□□□□ [Notes on a journey in 1903] and *Guiqian ji* □□□ [Notes on the retirement].[10] Shan was the first late Qing Chinese woman to record her travel abroad in such an extensive way.[11] Even though her *Guiqian ji* is interwoven with "a serious amount of scholarly research,"[12] her role and style of writing clearly separate it from the first typology.

The aforementioned more intimate perspective provided in diaries pertains in particular to the second and fourth stages—ranging respectively from 1875 to 1894 and from 1912 to 1945—[13] when Chinese travellers, including Kang Youwei □□□ (1858–1927), Liang Qichao □□□ (1873–1929), and Wang Tao □□ (1828–1897), began to embark on pleasure journeys. Wang Tao was indeed the first Chinese who travelled to Europe for personal cultivation and leisure, and his *Manyou suilu* □□□□ [Casual records of my wanderings] is remarkable for its unique personal and poetic style. As for the earlier travels by Chinese officials, in fact, very few can be described as sharing intimate considerations. A peculiar case is Zhang Deyi □□□ (1847–1918)'s *Hanghai shuqi* □□□□ [Marvellous things travelling at sea], since it is of the diplomatic kind, but is different from the others as it is written in a very fresh and personal style.

1. The missing tile: *Oumei manyou riji* and Italy

An almost forgotten piece in this picture is *Oumei manyou riji* □□□□□□ [Diary of a journey in

Europe and the United States], written by the Chinese scholar Chen Yifu □□□ (1869–1948), courtesy name Shuzhai jushi □□□□, and annotated by his son, Chen Dayou □□□ (dates unknown). *Oumei manyou riji* describes their travels across Europe and the United States, focusing in particular on the description of their stay in Italy; the latter has been selected as a case study in this article for the consistent portion of *Oumei manyou riji* dedicated to it.

Chen Yifu is nowadays almost exclusively known as an entrepreneur. He is particularly famous for his role in the establishment, together with his other son Chen Fanyou □□□ (1898–1952)[14] and the industrialist Zhou Xuexi □□□ (1866–1947), among others, of the Chee Hsin cement company (Qi xin yanghui gongsi □□□□□□). It is in the context of his work as an entrepreneur that Chen Yifu embarked on his trip to Europe and the United States, followed by his son.[15]

To the author's knowledge, *Oumei manyou riji* has never been presented and analysed in secondary literature until now.[16] Even though *Oumei manyou riji* has gone almost unnoticed for decades, it has a high historical and odeporic value for two reasons: it was written neither by a "scholar" in the most traditional sense of the term nor by an official envoy—two of the most prominent categories of authors of late Qing diaries—[17]and it was published in a period in which diaries were no longer considered a primary source of information on the West.[18] Therefore, its authors had more freedom to record their impressions without any concern for official recognition or similar considerations. Also, as pointed out in the introduction, the intimate perspective provided in diaries of the fourth stage, indicated by Chen Shiru, is connoted in *Oumei manyou riji* particularly for its specific "individuality."[19]

Methodological and research questions can be thus raised: are there substantial differences with other diaries, given Chen's position as an entrepreneur? In case the answer is positive, what fresh elements and representations of Italy could his role bring and what determined them? Is there any similarity, or did the temporal distance with the first travelogues prevent them? Was it only a question of time or did the mindset of the Chinese traveller to Europe change in the first part of the twentieth century? Was there any political or historical reason for this?

By trying to answer some of these questions and raising others, as well as highlighting differences in *Oumei manyou riji* from other late Qing analogous texts, it is possible to

appreciate its distinctiveness, getting an insight into the evolution of odeporic literature from the late Qing to the Republican period, which had such an important value in cross-cultural relations between China and the West, Italy included.

2. A real journey around the globe

As stated above, *Oumei manyou riji* was annotated by Chen Yifu's son, Chen Dayou; Chen Yifu himself printed the text[20] that, given the forewords and annotations by other eminent personalities of the time,[21] was probably destined for the educated elite of entrepreneurs and scholars to whom Chen Yifu belonged.

Their travel started in 1935 and was a true journey around the globe. We must consider their understanding of Europe from a different perspective than that of contemporaneous European travel accounts of Italy; the latter were layered with the cultural baggage of the regional understandings of classical antiquity, which Chinese travellers obviously lacked or could partially enjoy. This situation is a mirror image of what happened to Japanese travellers visiting China: while they and the Japanese readers, given their cultural background, could somehow understand what China was at the time and what it had been in the past, this could not be applied to Westerners and their "travel narratives of East Asia."[22]

Also, when reading *Oumei manyou riji* and comparing it with its European counterparts, one must remember that the expectations and the divergent understandings of the concept of civilisation contributed to shaping the perceptions of twentieth-century Italy and its people. While the association between travel and Italy, part of the ritual Grand Tour, was already established in European minds as a cultural activity,[23] in the case of Chinese travellers, the cultural and spatial distance and its consequent "alienation" tended more to stress the differences with the other culture, even though it is based on personal judgement and cultural baggage.[24]

The first part of the record begins with an account of their passage through Tianjin and Shanghai (*Jin Hu tuzhong* □□□□[25]), their arrival in Hong Kong (*Xianggang* □□), Singapore (*Xinjiapo* □□□), Sri Lanka (in particular the city of Colombo, *Gelunbu* □□□), India (in Mumbai,

A Little-known Diary across Italy and Europe: Oumei manyou riji and
the Changed Representation of the Other in Diaries of the
Republican Period | 5

in Chinese Mengmai 孟買), and the last stage before reaching Europe, Egypt (the city of Suez, Suyishi cheng 蘇彝士城, Cairo, Kailuo 開羅, and Port Said, Bosai 波賽); Egypt was the last portion of this usual route for Chinese travellers in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s.[26] From Port Said, Chen Yifu and his son finally reached Italy (Yiguo 意國), France (Faguo 法國, which they visited three times due to their itinerary), England (Yingguo 英國), Norway (Nuowei 挪威), Sweden (Ruidian 瑞典), and again southwards to Denmark (Danmai 丹麥), Germany (Deguo 德國), Switzerland (Ruishi 瑞士), and Belgium (Biguo 比國).

After a short stay in Paris, the diary starts again from different cities in the United States (Meiguo 美國), from New York all the way westwards to San Francisco, and then on the road back again to Asia (Mei Ya tuzhong 美亞途中), stopping by Honolulu (Tanxiangshan 檀香山), various cities in Japan, and leaving from Kobe (Shenhu 神戶) to finally go back on the road from Shanghai to Tianjin (Hu Jin tuzhong 滬津途中, this time in a reversed order). Their passage in Europe, therefore, touched nine countries, on which Chen provided different information. However, the most consistent portion of the diary is dedicated to Italy. In fact, of the 232 pages of the work—only considering the body text—thirty are devoted exclusively to Italy. The decision to dedicate so much space to the country is not by chance: since 1933, discussions about fascism were already in fashion in China, with numerous publications in the journal Shenbao 申报 reflecting this interest.[27] Also, a few descriptions by the Chens are specifically devoted to the political movement, as will be seen later in the text. The date of writing of Oumei manyou riji is also an important temporal coincidence: a few months later, in 1937, Italy was going to sign the Anti-Comintern Pact, putting China and Italy in antagonist positions, so the Chens’ travel would have been more problematic. The choice to focus this article on Italy is connected to all these factors: other than recent numerous studies conducted on the cultural cross-representations between China and Italy, the temporal and historical frame of Oumei manyou riji is instrumental to better describe the process of mutual discovery.

As stated in the preface to the diary, dated the third month of the twenty-sixth year of the Republican era, the Chens’ journey started when Yifu was almost seventy years old, and he decided to bring his son Dayou to visit Europe and the United States for about one year (“一甫觀察年近七旬慨然率其少子達有出遊歐美諸國近一年”).[28] An important motivation for the travel was represented by their appreciation for Western achievements in scientific development; this is a leitmotif of the first wave of diaries written by Chinese travelling to Europe and the United States. To

Nordicum-Mediterraneum. Icelandic E-Journal of Nordicum and Mediterranean Studies (CC BY 4.0) (DOI code, author's name and issue details are available on the journal's website)

A Little-known Diary across Italy and Europe: Oumei manyou riji and
the Changed Representation of the Other in Diaries of the
Republican Period | 6

this, the Chens add another topos found in relevant previous works as well—not as common as the other, though: the exquisiteness of the European and American manufactured goods (“近日歐美各國科學之猛進製造之精奇”). The trip to Europe was a heavy burden for Chen Yifu, according to his account, given his older age and the distance covered (“體力不健不能勝舟車之遠勞”). More importantly, the Chens regret the fact that the obstacles of communicating in a foreign language, both in its oral and written forms, hindered the good intentions of social communication with local people: this prevented them from investigating their “spirit” (“語言不通不能盡交際之善意文字不悉不能考民族之精神[…]”).[29]

From a cultural perspective and the study of the Other, one of the most important focuses in travel diaries is the description of what appears as oddities in the eyes of the writer, when trying to convey a powerful sense of alterity and estrangement to the reader.[30] Again, in the preface, the Chens find three particularly “bizarre” points of their journey in the West: sceneries, languages, and people (“有三奇曰景奇曰文奇曰人奇”).[31] When reflecting on Italy, the Chens explain in the preface that through the Italian Renaissance it was possible to best see the various strengths and weaknesses, successes, and failures of the past and present of the peninsula (“以義大利之民族復興今昔異情強弱殊勢最足令人棖觸蓋古今成敗興衰之理[…]”).[32]

3. New itineraries of careful visitors: images and descriptions of Italy

Oumei manyou riji has another peculiarity distinguishing it from previous diaries mentioned above: its iconographic apparatus, including various pictures of Italy. There are a variety of photos from the city of Venice, occupying the biggest portion, perhaps given its frequent comparison with the city of Suzhou,[33] including the Bridge of Sighs and pigeons in Saint Mark’s Square (“威尼斯太息橋,” “聖馬可廣場之飛鴿”),[34] one in Verona close to Romeo and Juliet’s tomb (“威郎那城羅米俄與祝麗愛特墓前”), two in Milan, with its famous Cathedral (“米蘭大教堂”), two in Florence, including Ponte Vecchio (“佛羅侖司費西歐橋”), three in Rome, comprising the Stadio dei Marmi (indicated as Stadium of the fascist youth of Rome, “羅馬法西斯蒂青年體育場”) and Saint Peter’s Basilica (“羅馬聖彼得大教堂”), the Leaning Tower of Pisa (“比薩斜塔”), Mount Vesuvius (“威蘇維亞火山”), and finally various views of Pompeii (Pengpai 彭湃). The focus on the latter might be influenced by other itineraries travelled before by Chinese scholars: an example is Yidali youji 意大利遊記 [Notes on a journey in Italy] by Kang Youwei, in which there is very consistent stress on the

Nordicum-Mediterraneum. Icelandic E-Journal of Nordicum and Mediterranean Studies (CC BY 4.0) (DOI code, author's name and issue details are available on the journal's website)

A Little-known Diary across Italy and Europe: Oumei manyou riji and the Changed Representation of the Other in Diaries of the Republican Period | 7

description of Pompeii. More generally, however, the trip by Chen and his son was less inspired by earlier travelogues and contemporary ones as well, which somehow tended to shape and later codify the places to visit while in Europe; Norway and Sweden, for example, were not among the most common destinations. By way of illustration, the journey by Ying Yining 應懿凝 (1907–1999), recorded in *Ouyou riji* 歐遊日記 [Diary of a journey in Europe],[35] included the Czech Republic, USSR, and England, among other destinations.

The first spot described by the Chens in Italy is Brindisi.[36] The ship they were travelling on stopped in the port city, but since there was an important military base located there, they were not allowed to go ashore. The Chens therefore spent those two hours walking on the ship's deck; after that, they headed to Venice, the first city in Italy where they could actually disembark.

The Chens provide extremely accurate information about the architecture of the city, the weather, the temperature, and much more; this is a peculiarity of the diary, not only for Venice. For example, they go into detail about the mosaics and how they were created,[37] the origin of the Bridge of Sighs, the "Paradise" painted by the well-known artist Tintoretto (1518–1594) in the Doge's Palace, as well as descriptions of natural landscapes, such as Venice Lido, occupying a total of almost three pages. After leaving Venice, Chen and his son headed to Verona, annotating all the names of the cities they passed by. Their arrival in Verona[38] is a chance to describe the plot of Romeo and Juliet as composed by Shakespeare, and the Verona Arena, modelled after the Colosseum in Rome and originally destined for fights between humans and beasts. After a short stay in Lake Garda, Chen and his son carried on their journey across Italy, describing the smoothness of the road that made them travel up to "ninety kilometres per hour."

Oumei manyou riji is entangled with much information about the industries of the country visited, as well as historical facts. For example, after visiting Lake Garda and arriving in Como, the Chens state that all the facilities in Italy had astonishing features, demonstrating its production capacity ("意國諸事業其故作驚人之舉以示其創造能力").[39] Narrating their stop in Lake Maggiore, the Chens present the Stresa Conference, reporting the news that Benito Mussolini arrived there piloting a seaplane by himself, astonishing the people in attendance. We do not know the actual source of this news, but Chen Yifu and his son probably gathered it from local newspapers; the archive of the Istituto Luce actually includes a picture of Mussolini arriving

Nordicum-Mediterraneum. Icelandic E-Journal of Nordicum and Mediterranean Studies (CC BY 4.0) (DOI code, author's name and issue details are available on the journal's website)

A Little-known Diary across Italy and Europe: Oumei manyou riji and
the Changed Representation of the Other in Diaries of the
Republican Period | 8

on the lake on April 14, 1935, the date of the meeting.[40] The Chens even describe the place where the encounter between Mussolini, Pierre Laval, and Ramsay MacDonald took place, given the importance this had for the situation of Europe (“三強首領齊集此室一言一動關係歐洲全局”).[41]

Their following destination was Milan, the industrial and communication centre of Italy (“意大利商業及交通中心”). An important portion of the description of the city is dedicated to the Duomo, the opposite square, and the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II. It is important to point out how some trivial facts attracted the Chens’ attention more than one would expect from our contemporary and Western perspective. For example, the Last Supper by Leonardo da Vinci is hardly mentioned, while the fact that passengers waiting at Milan railway station, the most important in Italy, were not bothered by the bad weather since the station was covered and they could visit an array of “extremely clean” shops while waiting for their train (“中央車站一觀是站新建居全國第一車停站內旅客無風雨之苦前爲大廳均係商店小販但極清潔”),[42] is dedicated considerable space. This is most likely due to Chen’s mixed background, both as a businessman and as a man of culture, as also explained further on.

Leaving Milan, Chen and his son visited the Certosa of Pavia, where they were stared at by the children studying as seminarists, who presumably had never seen Asian faces before; the order was restored by a superior, who prevented Chen and his son from being encircled by the curious children. After a visit to the Certosa and its relevant description, they proceeded to Florence, which is “362 kilometres” in distance from Milan, as they record in extreme detail, almost the same distance between Shanghai and Nanjing, but not without first stopping in Bologna.

The first impression of Tuscany is that, while every single city in Italy always comes with an antique flavour, this is especially true of Florence (“意大利無論何種城市均不能完全脫其古香古色之風味而佛羅侖司尤甚焉”).[43] Like contemporary tourists, Chen and his son visit the markets where leather products are sold. As in other passages of Oumei manyou riji, details such as this are intermingled with information on the culture, for example the fact that Florence was the linguistic and artistic centre of Italy. During their Italian stage of the trip, Chen and his son were travelling with a total of six people,[44] probably with the addition of a local guide and porters, even though it is not possible to ascertain all of their identities.[45]

A passage in the diary[46] lets us infer that the Chens derived a portion of their information

Nordicum-Mediterraneum. Icelandic E-Journal of Nordicum and Mediterranean Studies (CC BY 4.0) (DOI code, author's name and issue details are available on the journal's website)

from a local guide in English. In fact, they always provided English renderings of the toponyms and anthroponyms, especially phonemic loans and names that might be unfamiliar to the Chinese reader. In the case of Florence's Fountain of Neptune, the English explanation in brackets "by Bart. Ammannati" is not conveyed at all in the Chinese text; this might be a simple mistake which, as in many other cases of textual research, is more revealing than explicit statements.

In Siena, Chen and his son visited the Duomo, explaining that the façade was never accomplished according to its initial plan, given the Great Plague that almost killed half of the population of Europe during the fourteenth century.

4. Going South: the inconvenience of the language and the simplicity of gestures

After a brief stop in Viterbo, the Chens arrived in Rome. In the capital city, the driver needed to repair some springs (*tanhuang* □□, perhaps dampers) of the vehicle in which they were travelling. This cost eighty liras (*lier* □□) and, luckily enough, the driver was able to speak Italian, even though he was not Italian himself. It was exactly the language, according to the Chens, that represented the most inconvenient thing about their travel in Italy ("□□□□ □□□"). On the other hand, when the driver again asked a person riding a bicycle for directions, the person stopped immediately and, with polite language and courteous expressions, indicated where to go; that was the convenience of Italy ("□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□").

A visit to Rome could not leave the Vatican ("□□□") out of consideration. For the Chens, the Vatican was not only a small independent State; since long ago, the Pope represented the spiritual leader of every country in Europe ("□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□"). After a careful description of the Vatican Museums and the most important works stored there, including the Sistine Chapel,[47] Chen and his son proceeded to visit other monuments such as Saint John Lateran and the Holy Stairs.[48] It is here that a comparison is drawn in *Oumei manyou riji* between Italy and China or, to put it in their words, "East and West": pilgrims go up the stairs on their knees, chanting their prayers, similar to the Chinese visiting temples, kowtowing at each step; this really was East and West mirroring each other ("□□□□□□□□□□□□□

A Little-known Diary across Italy and Europe: Oumei manyou riji and
the Changed Representation of the Other in Diaries of the
Republican Period | 10

詞頗似我國拜廟一步一叩首者誠東西互映矣”).

After this passage, we read one of the many direct interventions of the narrator’s voice. In fact, the actual diary’s writer says that he followed his father and their other travel companion, Mr. Sun 孫 (“隨父與孫君[…]”), to the Capuchin Crypt, where skulls of dead bodies are kept. This stylistic feature is not surprising: it was Chen Yifu who asked his son to write down the diary,[49] therefore direct interventions of Chen Dayou in the flow of the text should be deemed natural. One woman (or more—the Chinese text does not clarify this) was travelling with them in Italy, and the driver was wondering if she might be frightened by this sight.

The city of Rome struck the Chens for the number of cars, trams, and the fact that sounding the horn was not allowed unless necessary, otherwise drivers would get fined—this was also true for other countries in Europe and the United States.[50] Another comparison between these two distant worlds is found in Oumei manyou riji when visiting the Trevi Fountain—Rome was known as the city of fountains (“羅馬有噴泉城之稱”). If one were to toss a coin in the fountain, he was destined to go back there once again; superstitions were the same in the “East and West” (“投幣其中則人將復回迷信傳說東西同也”).

Following a visit to numerous other spots, such as the Basilica of Saint Paul,[51] the convoy saw the most famous monument in Rome, the Colosseum (“鬥獸場 (Colloseum)[sic]亦羅馬最著古物”). A tour of Piazza Venezia[52] and Via dei Fori Imperiali is an example of how the Chens interpreted the figure of Mussolini, perhaps not foreseeing the immediate consequences of his foreign politics, also for China. The Chens state that Mussolini was the initiator of many new endeavours in Italy, praising his role in paving Via dei Fori Imperiali (“意大利新興事業爲墨氏一人包辦世無否認者而其對於發掘保存古物亦不遺餘力最近新闢之皇家大路[…]”). The beauty of the relics stored there is a chance again to draw a comparison with the Chens’ motherland, but this time it is not a flattering one.[53] They regret that many archaeologists arrived in China and only brought with them whatever they excavated, demonstrating that their country did not focus at all on relics; this was something the Chinese needed to pay attention to (“我東方四千年古國所以保存古物之方法果何在乎[…]我國當局宜注意也”).

After sightseeing various places on the outskirts of Rome, one of the Chens’ travel companions, Mr. Sun, decided to head to France, while the others followed the path South,

Nordicum-Mediterraneum. Icelandic E-Journal of Nordicum and Mediterranean Studies (CC BY 4.0) (DOI code, author's name and issue details are available on the journal's website)

towards Naples, and then back Northwards; they agreed to meet again in Nice.[54] The day after, they had the chance to see young fascists on the road, boys holding arms and singing fervid songs, accompanied by girls. Once again, the Chens' conclusion was not positively predictive: they were fascinated by this sight and invited their Chinese fellows who supported disarmament as the basis of world peace to deeply reconsider their ideas ("□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□"). The depiction of Mussolini, his deeds, and more generally the representation of fascism, is an extremely original element in Chinese travel writings that the author plans to investigate further in the future. As already highlighted in section 2 of this article, at the time there was a strong fascination for fascism in China, and its perception was influenced by the Italian propaganda abroad—Galeazzo Ciano, Mussolini's son-in-law, worked as consul general in Shanghai in 1930, a few years after his work as secretary of legation in Beijing in 1927.

Through *Oumei manyou riji* it is also possible to see how the perspectives of the authors of travelogues and diaries completely changed, compared to the first Chinese travellers in Europe. While in the first phase most Chinese were shocked by European habits, particularly physical contact between women and men, banned according to Confucian etiquette,[55] the Chens were somehow surprised when two women were not allowed into the Abbey of Monte Cassino because their sleeves were "only a little bit short," adding that the two could not help but go back in the car and wait. Furthermore, the Abbey of Monte Cassino represents a chance to draw a further comparison with their own country's government: a small earthquake struck twenty-five years before[56] and slightly damaged the Abbey, which was able to receive financial aid from the Italian government for reconstruction. That was common in Europe and the United States, but in China it was not a frequent practice ("□□□□□□□□□□□□").

5. From Naples to Pompeii: the last phase of a long stay

Upon reaching Naples,[57] where the Chens are taken aback by dinner being served from seven p.m. or half past seven p.m., they have their first direct interactions with locals. A man able to speak English asked them where they were heading and talked about the local scenic spots. The group spoke for a while, until the Chens realised that the young man was

planning to beg them for money. They reluctantly gave him two liras, asking themselves why youngsters would do such things (“□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□”).

As demonstrated in the previous paragraphs, the Chens frequently use *Oumei manyou riji* to present the reader with what they consider the most salient differences between China and Western countries. In Naples, they noticed the presence of a “taximeter” (“□□□”)[58] in cars for tourists that allowed the client to pay based on distance, so there was no fear of being cheated (“□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□”). This was also true for Europe and the United States, while back in China one had to bargain on the price. The comment on this peculiarity—at least in the Chens’ eyes—is not surprising, given that the Chens recorded the price of many services and goods during their trip. The pervasiveness of such information is peculiar to *Oumei manyou riji*, compared to other travelogues mentioned, and is evidently related to the entrepreneurial background of its authors.

A visit to Solfatara and Pompeii is the next step in their journey,[59] followed by Amalfi.[60] The Chens describe lemons as an extremely common product in this area, such that each person dining can have half, while in China, when eating Western food, one could consume only one-tenth. The tour to Mount Vesuvius[61] is a chance to recall the last big eruption, which took place in April 1906, with its inauspicious consequences. Earthquakes and volcanoes have indeed always been a topic of much interest for Chinese travellers and their descriptions of Italy.[62] Naples is the final step southwards before returning to Rome, where another accompanying person, Mr. Xia (“□□”), is mentioned, and a tour to the last of the four Basilicas in the capital city, Santa Maria Maggiore.[63]

On their way back northwards, the group visited Pisa and the Leaning Tower.[64] This time a comparison praising China is drawn: the walls of the city of Pisa are extremely low, set against the magnificence of those in China (“□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□”),[65] while Genova is compared to Hong Kong for its slopes. It was in the afternoon of the eighteenth day that they left Italy.[66] The last record at the border gives a first-hand insight into the historical atmosphere of the time: the guard inspecting their passports asked them if they were Japanese, to which the Chens replied, “We are Chinese.” They had heard, in fact, that Europeans and Americans would ask Orientals first if they were Japanese (“□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□”).

Conclusion

Oumei manyou riji is an essential hidden piece in the mosaic of how the Other is represented in the cultural exchanges between Italy and China, analogously to previous travelogues, diaries, and other accounts that await to be discovered. The diary was recorded by Chen Dayou, and therefore, he also contributed to the final result, at least with personal stylistic features. This partial double voice of the diary's narrators, father and son, which sometimes patently emerges to the surface, is one of the most original stylistic features of this diary, compared to other travelogues composed in late Qing China and the Republican era, some of which are mentioned in the article.

We can also affirm that Chen Yifu's role was different from his predecessors, but at the same time it shared common points. His position was not limited to his activity as an entrepreneur; similarly to the traditional figure of cultured Chinese officials, he was perfectly integrated into the cultural circles of his era. This double dimension is demonstrated by the postfaces to *Oumei manyou riji*, written by a variety of authors of different backgrounds: Yang Shounan □□□ (1868–1948) was himself an entrepreneur, but also a poet and politician, while Jin Liang □□ (1878–1962) was a literatus and important official; Wang Xitong □□□ (1865–1938), in turn, was known mostly as an entrepreneur, while Zhao Yuanli □□□ (1868–1939) was a calligrapher and poet, as well as a political figure. All these versatile figures demonstrate the variety of the Chens' personal connections, and at the same time a shift in the background of the authors of travelogues: before the collapse of the Qing dynasty, it would be impossible to read a text such as *Oumei manyou riji*. In fact, it has already been demonstrated that the first testimonies of China by Italian travellers were mostly left by missionaries and scholars, not by merchants,[67] who were not interested in literary legacies. Apparently, however, the circulation of *Oumei manyou riji* was somehow limited to educated scholars, including those who wrote prefaces and annotations for the text. As already mentioned, *Oumei manyou riji* was published by Chen Yifu himself, and perhaps the changed perception and attitude toward China by Italy, to which a consistent portion of the diary is devoted, and its government, after 1937, prevented the publication by major publishing houses and consequently its diffusion among wider circles of readers.

By describing Europe, devoting so much time and pages to Italy, and making comparisons with their own country, the Chens are following the paths other travellers had walked before them. It should be noted that a description of the other culture is frequently carried out in the form of contrast and, almost always, is also a "self-description or self-definition."[68] What is different in *Oumei manyou riji* is the perspective provided by the Chens, also given their background; there is a shift in the focus of the descriptions recorded in *Oumei manyou riji*, for example in the cases of the prices or the episode of the women's sleeves. What remains in common with most of the previous travelogues is the admiration for some aspects of Italian culture and the space dedicated to the description of monuments and landscapes. As for the Chens' appreciation of Italian contemporary circumstances, such approval would probably not remain the same, at least from a political level, just a few months after the publication of the diary, given the global context and its historical evolution. A temporary and ideal end to this process of re-discovery of the Other, reciprocally enacted by Italy and China and started almost one century before, would come in the years immediately after the publication of *Oumei manyou riji*. Luckily, the drive for the discovery and curiosity of the Other, motivated by different ideals, pushed the Chens and all their predecessors to set out on such a long journey. More importantly, the desire to help readers with reciprocal comprehension made them leave a durable mark in the form of a diary, right before this—temporary—halt. The world awaits other texts such as *Oumei manyou riji* to be discovered, further allowing us to see how our predecessors looked at each other and, perhaps, better understand ourselves.

References

Bertuccioli, Giuliano, and Federico Masini. *Italia e Cina*. Bari: Laterza, 1996. Reprint, Rome: L'Asino d'Oro, 2014.

Brezzi, Alessandra. *Note per un dono segreto: il viaggio in Italia di Shan Shili*. Rome: Editrice Orientalia, 2012.

Brezzi, Alessandra. "L'immagine dell'Italia nei resoconti di viaggio cinesi all'inizio del XX secolo." In *Atti del XIII Convegno dell'Associazione Italiana Studi Cinesi: Milano 22–24*

ottobre 2011, edited by Clara Bulfoni and Silvia Pozzi, 87–97. Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2014.

Casalin, Federica. "Investigating the Introduction of Italian Culture into Late Qing China through Some Foreign Travel Diaries (1867–1897): What Culture? About What Italy? By What China?" In *Italy and China: Centuries of Dialogue*, edited by Francesco Guardiani, Gaoheng Zhang, and Salvatore Bancheri, 199–215. Florence: Franco Cesati Editore, 2017.

Castorina, Miriam. "Italian Women in Chinese Eyes: An Analysis of Some Late 19th– and Early 20th-Century Chinese Travel Accounts and Their Perception of Italian Women." In *Exchanges and Parallels between Italy and East Asia*, edited by Gaoheng Zhang and Mario Mignone, 25–43. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020.

Chen, Kekuan □□□, and Chen Kejian □□□. *"Yanghui Chen" zhuanlüe* "□□□"□□ [Brief biography of Chen family, the masters of concrete]. Shanghai: Shanghai sanlian shudian □□□□□□, 2001.

Chen, Shiru □□□. *Jindai yuwai youji yanjiu—1840–1945* □□□□□□□□——1840–1945 [Research on modern travelogues abroad – 1840–1945]. Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe □□□□□, 2008.

Chen, Yifu □□□. *Oumei manyou riji* □□□□□□ [Diary of a journey in Europe and the United States]. 1937.

Day, Jenny Huangfu. *Qing Travelers to the Far West: Diplomacy and the Information Order in Late Imperial China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Eggert, Marion. "The Sorrow of the Traveler: Melancholy in Chinese Travel Narrative." Paper for the Bonn Conference on Melancholy and Society in China, July 1995. 1995.

Findeisen, Raoul David. "In the *Hutong* of Naples from Chinese Travelogues of the Republican Era." *Cina* 28 (2000): 89–106.

Fogel, Joshua A. *The Literature of Travel in the Japanese Rediscovery of China: 1862–1945*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996.

Harbsmeier, Michael. "Allocentrism and Alterities. Ultra-Short World History of the Genre

of the Travelogue." *Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften* 14.2 (2020): 205–233.

Hester, Nathalie. *Literature and Identity in Italian Baroque Travel Writing*. London: Routledge, 2008.

Hu, Ying. "'Would That I Were Marco Polo': The Travel Writing of Shan Shili (1856–1943)." In *Traditions of East Asian Travel*, edited by Joshua A. Fogel, 144–166. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006.

Jin, Jing □□. "'Yanghui Chen' fuzi yu guojia tushuguan shanben tecang '□□□'□□□□□□□□□□□□" [Chen father and son, masters of concrete, and the special collection of rare books in the national library]. *Wenjin xuezhi* □□□□ 5 (2012): 329–340.

Langford, Rachael, and Russell West (eds.). *Marginal Voices, Marginal Forms: Diaries in European Literature and History*. Amsterdam; Atlanta: Rodopi, 1999.

Pfister, Manfred (ed.). *The Fatal Gift of Beauty: The Italies of British Travellers. An Annotated Anthology*. Amsterdam; Atlanta: Rodopi, 1996.

Rossabi, Morris. *Voyager from Xanadu: Rabban Sauma and the First Journey from China to the West*. Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010.

Tola, Gabriele. "Transcultural Mediterranean in the History of Chinese Travelogues: *Oumei manyou riji* as a Case Study." *Nordicum-Mediterraneum* 19.1 (2024): http://doi.org/10.33112/nm.19.1.3

Wakeman, Frederic Jr. "A Revisionist View of the Nanjing Decade: Confucian Fascism." *The China Quarterly* 150 (1997): 395–432.

Widmer, Ellen. "Foreign Travel through a Woman's Eyes: Shan Shili's *Guimao lüxing ji* in Local and Global Perspective." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 65.4 (2006): 763–791.

Wu, Xixiang □□□. *Yanghui shijia—Chen Yifu, Chen Fanyou fuzi qiusuo shiye jiuguo zhi lu* □□□□——□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ [The family of cement: Chen Yifu and Chen Fanyou seeking the

path to save the nation with the industry]. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe □□□□□□□, 2010.

Xie, Yong □□. *Hegu luan fanshu—Xie Yong yuedu biji* □□□□□—□□□□□□ [Why should we wantonly leaf through books: Xie Yong notes on reading]. Taipei: Xiuwei zixun □□□□, 2008.

Xu, Minglong □□□. *Huang Jialüe yu zaoqi Faguo hanxue* □□□□□□□□□□ [Huang Jialüe and the early French sinology]. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju □□□□, 2004.

Ying, Yining □□□. *Ouyou riji* □□□□ [Diary of a journey in Europe]. Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju □□□□, 1936.

Endnotes

[1] Marion Eggert, "The Sorrow of the Traveler: Melancholy in Chinese Travel Narrative," Paper for the Bonn Conference on Melancholy and Society in China, July 1995 (1995), 4.

[2] Giuliano Bertuccioli and Federico Masini, *Italia e Cina* (Bari: Laterza, 1996. Reprint, Rome: L'Asino d'Oro, 2014), 37 and following.

[3] See also Morris Rossabi, *Voyager from Xanadu: Rabban Sauma and the First Journey from China to the West* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010). 2–3 and 117–138.

[4] Xu Minglong, *Huang Jialüe yu zaoqi Faguo hanxue* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004), 23 and passim.

[5] Bertuccioli and Masini, *Italia e Cina*, 226.

[6] Federica Casalin, "Investigating the Introduction of Italian Culture into Late Qing China through Some Foreign Travel Diaries (1867–1897): What Culture? About What Italy? By What China?" in *Italy and China: Centuries of Dialogue*, ed. Francesco Guardiani, Gaoheng

Zhang, and Salvatore Bancheri (Florence: Franco Cesati Editore, 2017), 201.

[7] Chen Shiru, *Jindai yuwai youji yanjiu—1840–1945* (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 2008).

[8] Jenny Huangfu Day, *Qing Travelers to the Far West: Diplomacy and the Information Order in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 221.

[9] Rachael Langford and Russell West (eds.), *Marginal Voices, Marginal Forms: Diaries in European Literature and History* (Amsterdam; Atlanta: Rodopi, 1999), 8.

[10] See its annotated translation in Alessandra Brezzi, *Note per un dono segreto: il viaggio in Italia di Shan Shili* (Rome: Editrice Orientalia, 2012).

[11] Ellen Widmer, "Foreign Travel through a Woman's Eyes: Shan Shili's *Guimao lüxing ji* in Local and Global Perspective," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 65.4 (2006): 767.

[12] Hu Ying, "'Would That I Were Marco Polo': The Travel Writing of Shan Shili (1856–1943)," in *Traditions of East Asian Travel*, ed. Joshua A. Fogel (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006), 150.

[13] According to Chen Shiru, *Jindai yuwai youji yanjiu*.

[14] See Wu Xixiang, *Yanghui shijia—Chen Yifu, Chen Fanyou fuzi qiusuo shiye jiuguo zhi lu* (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2010). Other information on Chen's family can be derived from Chen Kekuan and Chen Kejian, *"Yanghui Chen" zhuanlüe* (Shanghai: Shanghai sanlian shudian, 2001).

[15] Jin Jing, "'Yanghui Chen' fuzi yu guojia tushuguan shanben tecang," *Wenjin xuezhi* 5 (2012): 330.

[16] References can be found in Xie Yong, *Hegu luan fanshu—Xie Yong yuedu biji* (Taipei: Xiuwei zixun, 2008), 48–49, and Jin Jing, "'Yanghui Chen' fuzi," 330–331.

[17] See also the statements on the different typologies of genres adopted by officials and

scholars listed in Alessandra Brezzi, "L'immagine dell'Italia nei resoconti di viaggio cinesi all'inizio del XX secolo," in *Atti del XIII Convegno dell'Associazione Italiana Studi Cinesi: Milano 22–24 ottobre 2011*, ed. Clara Bulfoni and Silvia Pozzi (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2014), 87–88.

[18] Casalin, "Investigating the Introduction of Italian Culture," 201.

[19] Chen Shiru, *Jindai yuwai youji yanjiu*, 312.

[20] Jin Jing, "'Yanghui Chen' fuzi": 330.

[21] Jin Jing, "'Yanghui Chen' fuzi": 331.

[22] Joshua A. Fogel, *The Literature of Travel in the Japanese Rediscovery of China: 1862–1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), xv.

[23] Nathalie Hester, *Literature and Identity in Italian Baroque Travel Writing* (London: Routledge, 2008), 4.

[24] Miriam Castorina, "Italian Women in Chinese Eyes: An Analysis of Some Late 19th- and Early 20th-Century Chinese Travel Accounts and Their Perception of Italian Women," in *Exchanges and Parallels between Italy and East Asia*, ed. Gaoheng Zhang and Mario Mignone (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020), 31.

[25] Page numbers start over again in different sections of the books, such as prefaces, index, and body text. Quotations from the pages are given only for the prefaces and body text of *Oumei manyou riji*.

[26] Raoul David Findeisen, "In the Hutong of Naples from Chinese Travelogues of the Republican Era," *Cina* 28 (2000): 90. See Gabriele Tola, "Transcultural Mediterranean in the History of Chinese Travelogues: *Oumei manyou riji* as a Case Study," *Nordicum-Mediterraneum* 19.1 (2024): http://doi.org/10.33112/nm.19.1.3.

[27] Frederic Jr. Wakeman, "A Revisionist View of the Nanjing Decade: Confucian Fascism,"

The China Quarterly 150 (1997): 426.

[28] Chen Yifu, *Oumei manyou riji* (1937), preface, 1A. From here on, for clarity, the author explicitly records quotations from *Oumei manyou riji* when the quotation is on a page different from the previous one; therefore, in case the quotation in question is not pointed out, it is intended as appearing on the same page as the previous one.

[29] Chen Yifu, *Oumei manyou riji* (1937), preface, 1A–B.

[30] Michael Harbsmeier, "Allocentrism and Alterities. Ultra-Short World History of the Genre of the Travelogue," *Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften* 14.2 (2020): 209.

[31] Chen Yifu, *Oumei manyou riji* (1937), preface, 1B. It would be interesting to explore the evolution of the concept of *qi* □ from Ming travelogues, where it evolved to mean outstanding, extraordinary, or exquisite, and its connotation in the Chens' words: one might translate it, freeing Greenblac's argument on "marvelous possessions" from the European explorers' colonial greed and violence, as "wonders."

[32] Chen Yifu, *Oumei manyou riji* (1937), preface, 2A.

[33] This comparison was curiously presented, perhaps for the first time, in another diary by Li Shuchang □□□ (1837–1897) in his *Xiyang zazhi* □□□□ [Miscellaneous notes on the West], as stated in Bertuccioli and Masini, *Italia e Cina*, 279.

[34] Chen Yifu, *Oumei manyou riji* (1937), unnumbered.

[35] Ying Yining, *Ouyou riji* (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1936).

[36] Chen Yifu, *Oumei manyou riji* (1937), 13A.

[37] Chen Yifu, *Oumei manyou riji* (1937), 13B.

[38] Chen Yifu, *Oumei manyou riji* (1937), 14A.

[39] Chen Yifu, *Oumei manyou riji* (1937), 15A.

[40] Given the almost complete conformity of the archive of the Istituto Luce and of *Oumei manyou riji*, it is less probable, even if it cannot be excluded, that the information was told to Chen by the local guide, who could speak Italian.

[41] Chen Yifu, *Oumei manyou riji* (1937), 16B.

[42] Chen Yifu, *Oumei manyou riji* (1937), 17B.

[43] Chen Yifu, *Oumei manyou riji* (1937), 18A.

[44] Chen Yifu, *Oumei manyou riji* (1937), 18B.

[45] Further on, in Chen Yifu, *Oumei manyou riji* (1937), 19B, it is also specified that the driver, *chefu* □□, was not Italian, but he could speak Italian without problems.

[46] Chen Yifu, *Oumei manyou riji* (1937), 19B.

[47] Chen Yifu, *Oumei manyou riji* (1937), 20A.

[48] Chen Yifu, *Oumei manyou riji* (1937), 20B.

[49] Jin Jing, "'Yanghui Chen' fuzi": 330.

[50] Chen Yifu, *Oumei manyou riji* (1937), 21A.

[51] Chen Yifu, *Oumei manyou riji* (1937), 21B.

[52] Chen Yifu, *Oumei manyou riji* (1937), 22A.

[53] Chen Yifu, *Oumei manyou riji* (1937), 22B.

[54] Chen Yifu, *Oumei manyou riji* (1937), 23A.

[55] Bertuccioli and Masini, *Italia e Cina*, 227.

[56] That might either refer to an earthquake that happened in the area on December 29, 1910, or to one that struck the south of Rome on April 10, 1911.

[57] Chen Yifu, *Oumei manyou riji* (1937), 23B.

[58] Chen Yifu, *Oumei manyou riji* (1937), 24A.

[59] Chen Yifu, *Oumei manyou riji* (1937), 24B.

[60] Chen Yifu, *Oumei manyou riji* (1937), 25B.

[61] Chen Yifu, *Oumei manyou riji* (1937), 26A.

[62] Bertuccioli and Masini, *Italia e Cina*, 32–35 and 272.

[63] Chen Yifu, *Oumei manyou riji* (1937), 26B. The Chens describe the church and report the legend according to which the gold plate in the roof was part of the first batch brought by Christopher Columbus from America.

[64] Chen Yifu, *Oumei manyou riji* (1937), 27A.

[65] Chen Yifu, *Oumei manyou riji* (1937), 27B.

[66] Chen Yifu, *Oumei manyou riji* (1937), 28A.

[67] With the well-known exception of Marco Polo, as stated in Bertuccioli and Masini, *Italia e Cina*, 38.

[68] Manfred Pfister (ed.), *The Fatal Gift of Beauty: The Italies of British Travellers. An Annotated Anthology* (Amsterdam; Atlanta: Rodopi, 1996), 4.