

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# An Italian among the Chinese elite, a Chinese library among Lucanian mountains: Ludovico Luigi Nicola di Giura (1868–1947) and his personal library

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## Abstract

Ludovico Luigi Nicola di Giura (1868–1947) was an Italian doctor who lived in Beijing from 1900 to 1931. In addition to his medical practice, di Giura actively engaged with the local elite, developed a profound interest in Chinese literature, and contributed to introducing Chinese reality and culture into Italy through journalistic, literary, and translation works. Upon his return to Italy, he constructed a ‘Chinese library’ at his family estate in Chiaromonte, located in the Basilicata region. This article adopts the ‘Heraclitean approach’ proposed by Weingarten (2022) to examine di Giura’s personal library, analysing the evolution of both individual and communal cultural longings reflected by his collection and marginalia within the books spanning different periods. Drawing upon the primary sources recently discovered and catalogued from the library, along with archival and bibliographical materials from both Italian and Chinese sources, the paper not only aims to reveal di Giura’s intellectual profile, but also aims to utilise his individual experiences as a lens for observing the social and cultural life of Italians in China during the early twentieth century.

**Keywords:** history; personal library; Ludovico Luigi Nicola di Giura; Italians in China; Sino-Italian cultural exchange; Sino-Italian relations

## Introduction

Dr di Giura, retiring physician of Peking, is leaving Shanghai today by the Lloyd Triestino str. Gange for Italy. Dr di Giura is one of the oldest foreign residents in North China, having arrived in 1900. He was physician to the Italian Legation and Italian Guard and had many friends in Chinese official circles. (*The North-China Daily News*, 23 March 1931).

This report profiled an Italian doctor who lived among the local elite in early twentieth-century China.<sup>1</sup> Upon his return, Dr di Giura, formally known as Ludovico Luigi Nicola di Giura,<sup>2</sup> resettled in his family estate in Chiaromonte, a mountain town in the Basilicata region of Italy, where he curated a study room adorned with books

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and artwork collected during his stay in China, creating an intriguing juxtaposition of the study room and the panoramic view of Lucanian mountains and valleys just outside.

This paper delves into di Giura's 'Chinese library' to reveal the individual's profile through the examination of his evolving cultural inclinations and emotional motivations. Specifically, it will reveal di Giura's textual engagements with China and his related social and cultural experiences. In reference to his individual experiences, the study will present the conditions that existed and the resources that were available in the local cultural milieu for other Italians in Beijing, as well as the uniqueness of di Giura's involvement with China.

Di Giura was born into an aristocratic family of barons on 18 February 1868. Two years earlier, in 1866, Italy and China had established official diplomatic relations with the signing of the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation in Beijing.<sup>3</sup> However, this did not seem to significantly enhance the mutual knowledge and interest between the two countries. On the diplomatic front, Italy did not differentiate its diplomatic representations between China and Japan until 1878, and the permanent legation in the Chinese capital, Beijing, had not begun operations until 1889. Culturally, Italian studies about China from the late eighteenth century to the first half of the twentieth century were often considered to be in decline compared to the studies of other European powers like the United Kingdom and France, and to the studies about China in earlier centuries when Italian Jesuit missionaries were pioneers in China-Europe cultural exchanges.<sup>4</sup> For a contemporary Italian not specialised in orientalist or sinological studies, knowledge about China would not be easily accessible through daily reading, such as in newspapers or popular literature.

Regarding di Giura's educational background, as a 'cadet son' in an aristocratic family, he chose a conventional path in medicine and military service. On 28 June 1888, he participated in the conscription in the municipality of Salerno, enlisting as a second-category soldier. In 1891, he graduated in Medicine and Surgery from the Royal University of Naples.<sup>5</sup> At the end of the year, he was assigned to the *Corpo Sanitario Militare Marittimo* as a second-class doctor.

Therefore, before his long-term stay in China, di Giura did not have specialised training in studies related to the country, nor did he possess the preconceived observational paradigms common among, for example, professional journalists, anthropologists, or geographers. Instead, his background holds the potential to reveal an authentic perspective of China from an ordinary Italian's viewpoint, which can be discerned from his diaries during a global navigation mission to which he was assigned by the Italian Navy from 1894 to 1896. During this mission, di Giura visited China for the first time and recorded his impressions of the local society and culture (1977, 76–136). Generally, the diaries suggest a notable attention to the inferior distinctiveness of indigenous elements, especially the hygienic conditions and local customs, echoing Edward W Said's description of Orientalism as a style of thought based on the distinction between 'the Orient' and 'the Occident' (1979, 1–3).<sup>6</sup>

Rather than being a result of a prepared personal plan, di Giura's arrival and extended stay in China appeared to be much affected by the circumstances of contemporary Italian-Chinese relations. On 14 August 1900, he arrived in China by the cruiser *Fieramosca* as part of the *Forza navale oceanica*, dispatched by the Italian Ministry of War to participate in the multinational military intervention against the Boxers.<sup>7</sup> Afterwards, he remained in Beijing as the doctor for the Italian Navy detachment on guard at the Italian legation (ASDMAE 1902a). The legitimacy of his continued presence in China was enabled by the Boxer Protocol in 1901, which recognised the right of the powers to maintain a permanent legation guard, and granted Italy 5.9 per cent of the indemnity, amounting to around 27 million taels (approximately 100 million French francs) (Samarani and De Giorgi 2011, 31–32).

During his stay in Beijing, di Giura provided medical services to the Chinese and was a director of an Italian dispensary that commenced construction in 1905 with the support of Associazione Nazionale per Soccorrere i Missionari Italiani (hereinafter referred to as ANSMI), which received approximately 18 per cent of Italy's share of the Boxer indemnity (Francioni 2004, 156).<sup>8</sup> In addition, he engaged in local medical affairs and institutions, including the Peking Union Medical College<sup>9</sup> and the Peking Central Hospital.<sup>10</sup> Combined with his language studies and cultural interests, the Italian doctor built a social network that connected him with the political and cultural elite of Beijing, including esteemed literati, former royal family members, and influential officials of the Republic of China.

At the same time, Italian public opinion experienced a surge in interest towards China, driven by diplomatic events between the two countries at the turn of the twentieth century. Following China's defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War of 1895, foreign powers engaged in a 'partition of China' to secure interests in China through territorial concessions and market penetrations. Initially, Italy cautiously acknowledged the unfavourable conditions of seeking concessions in China, but eventually sought to seize the opportunity to rebuild its global reputation by requesting from the Chinese government the lease of Sanmen Bay in Zhejiang province. However, the request was rejected by the Chinese government, resulting in significant impacts in both countries. In Italy, these events heightened public attention on foreign policies in the Far East, which was further intensified by Italy's military involvement against the Boxers the following year. This surge in public interest facilitated not only the emergence of journalistic reports introducing the socio-political situation in China, but also the emergence of informative works delving into various aspects of Chinese culture.<sup>11</sup>

Grounded in his direct engagement with the local society, di Giura was able to participate in this trend. He provided approximately 40 articles about the Chinese situation for prestigious platforms, including the journal *Nuova Antologia* and the daily *La Stampa*, which allowed his observations to reach a large educated audience. In the final decade of his stay, he sought to introduce Chinese literature to Italy by translating *Liaozhai zhiyi* (*Strange Tales from the Study Liao*), Confucian maxims, Li Bai's poems, and selected poems from the Chinese novel *Hongloumeng* (*Dream of the Red Chamber*) (P'u 1926; Di Giura 1926, 1929, 1930). Moreover, he authored a novel set in 1920s Beijing (1931). Six novels that he collected about historical Chinese female figures were posthumously published by Mondadori in an anthology in 1958. An additional essay on the Boxers and the Dowager Empress Cixi (1835–1908) was published in *Il Velcro* journal in 1962. In the 1920s, when Italian Fascism was introduced into China and its 'strategic outposts' – the Fasci – were established in Shanghai, Tianjin, and Beijing, di Giura supported it through his journalistic publications and political activities (De Caprariis 2000; Lasagni 2019, 67). In 1924, he published an article in the local daily *Shuntian shibao* (*Shuntian Times*) under two pseudonyms, stressing the importance of finding a young Chinese similar to Mussolini to rescue China from its struggles (Moushi/Yiguomoushi 1924). On 21 April 1926, he participated in the assembly for the formation of the Fascio of Beijing. By 30 October 1928, he had assumed the role of secretary of the Fascio (*The North China Standard* 1928).<sup>12</sup>

In recent years, di Giura's translation efforts have garnered attention by Chinese scholars (Gu 2021; Chen 2022; Wang and Wen 2024). In contrast, attention to his historical figure and intellectual biography remains limited, and this article aims to offer insights by examining his personal library.

The following sections will examine di Giura's library in reference to the 'Heraclitean approach' proposed by Weingarten (2022). According to Weingarten, a library, akin to a Heraclitean river, is subject to continual ebbs and flows that cause dramatic, subtle, or even imperceptible changes in form and meaning. Given this ever-changing quality, Weingarten

warned of the risk of oversimplifying the relationship between the collector and their book collection by hastily or rigidly characterising either the collector or the collection.

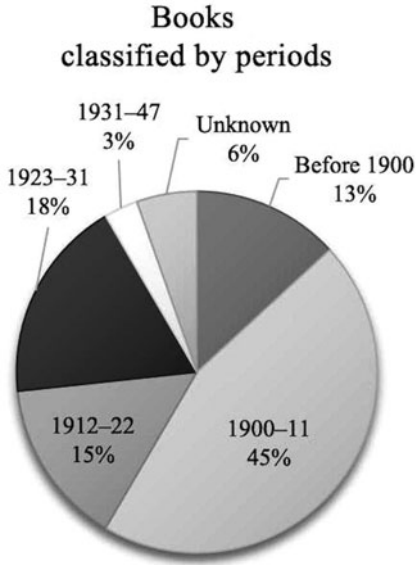
Nevertheless, this sceptical concern does not deny the potential of a personal library for researching its owner's biography. In this context, Weingarten considered personal libraries symbols of individual and communal longings (2022, 233). Specifically, an individual's collection could reveal what they aspired to, desired, or reached for, under circumstances shaped by emotional, psychological, and/or historical contexts. To discern these longings, scholars need to apprehend a greater whole, find larger contexts, and consistently observe the impermanence and instability of the library. Metaphorically, scholars need a 'Heraclitean perspective' of the collection and the collector, whose tastes, beliefs, ideas, era, and self are ever-changing. The task is not to pin down the meaning of a collection, but to observe and chart its 'ebb and flow' (237).

To interpret di Giura's library, Weingarten's approach can provide a solid theoretical foundation on both an ontological and an epistemological level. Firstly, most of the volumes in the library were collected by di Giura during his stay in Beijing from 1900 to 1931, a period when he encountered and engaged with the local socio-cultural context, which featured considerable changes from the imperial to the republican era. Observing the 'ebb and flow' of di Giura's collection over time would thus provide insight into the evolution of his individual longings and the constantly changing cultural milieu surrounding him. Secondly, the study of both di Giura's historical figure and his library has been limited. For this initial study of di Giura's intellectual biography, Weingarten's open-minded critical approach appears to be particularly suitable for its emphasis on avoiding hegemonic claims to a singular truth about the collector and collection.

On a practical level, Weingarten demonstrated a feasible solution to avoid oversimplification of the relationship between collector and collection in his study of the Canadian writer F R Scott's library, by emphasising attention to multiple interpretations of the marginalia in books (2017). Specifically, for texts without annotations, researchers should be cautious of overestimating their meaning and potential to reveal the collector's reading habits merely because of their physical presence. For books with marginalia, scholars need to acknowledge the multiple interpretations of these signs, symbols, dialogues, and other traces to avoid creating false claims to hegemonic interpretation. The same attention will be applied to di Giura's library, which comprises 296 units of books in total,<sup>13</sup> among which 99 contain marginalia.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, the quantitative nature of his books will not be overlooked, in view of the long-distance transportation that potentially gave each of them more significance than those in fixed-location libraries.<sup>15</sup>

To observe the 'ebb and flow' of di Giura's library, the paper adopts a chronological categorisation, despite the challenge posed by the owner's infrequent dating (only 29 units out of 296 have documented dates). The primary criterion is the time of publication, with a priority given to the time of use or acquisition for the 29 units with documented dates.<sup>16</sup> By adopting cut-off points for years including 1900, 1912, 1923, and 1931, which mark respectively di Giura's arrival in China, his temporary return to Chiaromonte, his commencement of a considerable amount of translations and writings, and his permanent return to Italy, the total of 296 units and 99 units with marginalia will be categorised, as illustrated in Figure 1 and 2.

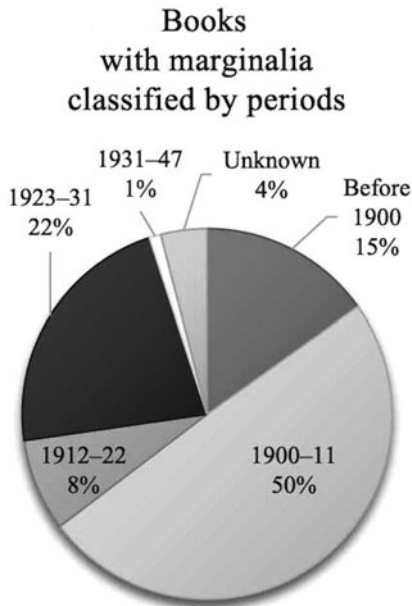
In terms of Figure 1 and 2, the subsequent sections will focus on books categorised in 1900–11, 1912–22 and 1923–31, respectively, to examine di Giura's evolving cultural longings and emotional motivations reflected by his collection and marginalia within the books, and to utilise his personal experiences as a lens for observing the dynamics of Italians in early twentieth-century China.



**Figure 1.** Books classified by periods.

**1900-1911: Transcultural background and multifaceted image**

The largest chronological section comprises books from 1900 to 1911, totalling 134 units. These years are significant from both the micro-scale perspective of di Giura’s library and the macro-scale perspective of Chinese history. Following the Boxer uprising, China underwent significant changes, including the reforms attempted by the imperial monarchy and a surge of revolutions, culminating in the 1911 Revolution that marked the end of the Qing dynasty and led to the establishment of the Republic of China. In this context, di Giura built a multifaceted image, as discussed in this section.



**Figure 2.** Books with marginalia classified by periods.

### Dr di Giura and his medical treatises

In Chinese archival and bibliographical sources, di Giura's image as a Western doctor was particularly notable in China at the time.<sup>17</sup> The doctor's library contains ten medical treatises published and collected during his initial decade in China. Among them is a medical textbook composed by di Giura himself, titled *Xinyi dubing huibian* (*Tu-Ping-Hue-Pien: Lezioni sulle malattie infettive dettate al Dispensario Italiano di Pechino*), which sheds light on his efforts to impart Western medicine to his assistants at the Italian dispensary in Beijing (1907a). This teaching approach aligns with the prevalent paradigm during the period of the early introduction of Western medicine to China, when a doctor heading a medical institution would transfer knowledge to local assistants who then edited treatises based on the doctor's dictation (Hao 2005).

Additionally, according to the travel account about China written by Italian mathematician Giovanni Vacca (1872–1953), di Giura used a Japanese manual on anatomy in teaching activities due to the lack of standardised Western medical terminology in Chinese (Lioi 2016, 114). This manual could potentially be the Chinese rendition of the Japanese textbook *Jitsuyō kaibōgaku* (*Practical Anatomy*) by Tsukanu Imada (1907), which is held in di Giura's library.

Regarding the medical terminology issue, the China Medical Missionary Association formed the Committee on Medical Terminology in 1890 (Zhang 1994, 16). In 1908, di Giura acquired two reference volumes edited by members of the committee (Committee on Medical Terminology 1904; Cousland 1908). The acquisition, along with di Giura's notes on the pronunciation of Chinese terms related to bones in Cousland's work, may be relevant to his position on the Examining Board at the aforementioned Peking Union Medical College. Between 1908 and 1915, he served as an examiner at the college, and specifically as Examiner in Anatomy in the academic year from 1913 to 1914 (Cochrane 1910, 218; Jiang 2018, 43, 177).

Moreover, two units on the 1911 plague outbreak in north-eastern China are associated with di Giura's anti-epidemic efforts: an unedited report on the anti-epidemic service in Mukden (now Shenyang) and an album titled *Views of Harbin (Fuchiatien) Taken during the Plague Epidemic* (1911). In April 1911, he participated in the International Plague Conference in Mukden as one of the Italian delegates alongside Gino Galeotti (1867–1921) and Ernesto Signorelli, delivering a speech on the correlation between the 1898 Bombay pneumonic plague and the contemporary epidemic (Strong 1912, VII, 180–182).<sup>18</sup>

As Feuerwerker (1983, 167) noted, modern Western medicine in China was significantly influenced by missionary efforts: the development of Western medical institutions generally followed the spread of missionary activities. The first institution appeared in Canton in the 1830s, followed by those in treaty ports like Shanghai, and eventually expanded throughout the country. In Beijing, the first medical institution was established in 1861 by William Lockhart (1811–1896), supported by the London Missionary Society. Subsequently, John Dudgeon (1837–1901) further advanced the medical mission with his Shuangqigan Hospital, founded in 1864, by introducing Western medicine to Chinese official circles. During di Giura's stay in Beijing, the number of Western medical institutions significantly increased. In 1900, notable hospitals included Lockhart's, Dudgeon's, the Douw Hospital for Women and Children, and the Peking Methodist Hospital (He 2016, 116). By 1917, the number of hospitals in Beijing had grown to 38, and reached 46 by 1919 (Gamble 1921, 118). Consequently, di Giura's initial status as one of the few Western doctors in Beijing may have diminished over time, making the need to distinguish himself and his Italian Dispensary from various colleagues and competitors more pressing. This may have driven him to engage more deeply with Chinese society and culture.

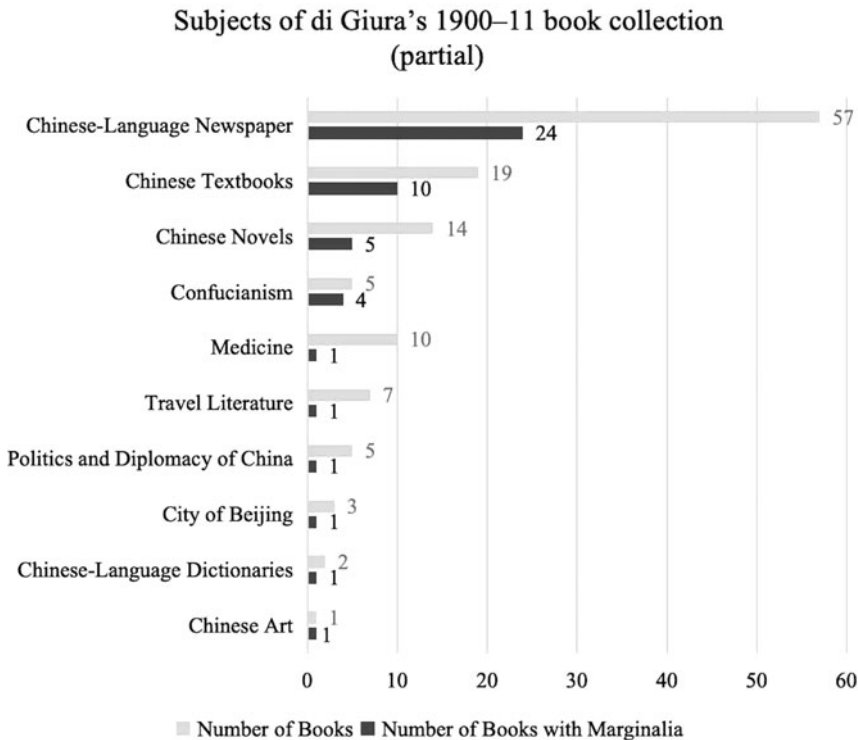
### Learning Chinese language to be a ‘Sapient Confucian Scholar’

Between 1900 and 1911, di Giura acquired 19 Chinese textbooks and studied ten of them.

His marginalia in Chinese textbooks include underscores of Chinese characters and corresponding annotations of pronunciation. Such attention to orthography not only demonstrates di Giura’s personal need of communication, but also mirrors a common phenomenon among foreign learners during the time when spoken Chinese lacked standardisation. In the late nineteenth century, foreign missionaries and diplomats engaged in heated discussions over which dialect best represented the modern spoken language of China, with the Beijing and Nanjing dialects at the forefront of the debate (Kaske 2008, 66–74). This was reflected in di Giura’s library, particularly in two textbooks notable for his thorough study, with a considerable amount of his pronunciation annotations: *Boussole du langage mandarin* (Boucher 1900), which is based on the Nanjing official language, and *Peking Dialect: T’an Lun Hsin P’ien* (Jin and Hiraiwa 1900), which is a reference to the dialect spoken in Beijing.

Di Giura displayed a wide range of reading interests when he was learning Chinese language, as illustrated in Figure 3.<sup>19</sup>

As observed in Figure 3, despite the number of books on Confucianism not constituting a majority of his collection, di Giura read books on Confucianism (four out of five) most frequently. Confucianism emerges as a vital subject for the Italian doctor’s initial exploration of Chinese culture. He had a habit of taking down the dates he finished reading in books with detailed annotations: there are only seven such books in the entire library, four of them Confucian classics, which were studied during di Giura’s first decade in



**Figure 3.** Subjects of di Giura’s 1900–11 book collection (partial)

China (Chen 1904; Couvreur 1896, 1897, 1899). His study of Chen's work was completed in 1908, and the other three were finished in 1910. He treated these classics like language textbooks, studying them by making typical underscores and pronunciation annotations of Chinese characters.

In contrast to our efforts to infer di Giura's passion for Confucianism based on his reading, Chinese people of his time had no trouble recognising such passion from his choice of a Chinese name: *Ru La* 儒拉.<sup>20</sup> The character *Ru* exactly indicates Confucianism. Along with his 'courtesy name' – *zitong* 子通 – he was referred to as *Ru Zitong* (Sapient Confucian Scholar).<sup>21</sup> It remains unknown whether he or his Chinese acquaintances chose the name, but his intention to create a profile as a Confucian-trained intellectual is notable.

### Reporting on China's situation to Italy

From 1905 to 1911, di Giura acquired 57 units of Chinese-language newspapers: 17 monthly collections of *Yuzhe luyao* (*Edicts and Memorials*) from January 1905 to June 1906; 15 monthly collections of *Jinghua ribao* (*Jinghua Daily*) from January 1905 to May 1906; and 25 monthly collections of *Zhengzhi guanbao* (*Political Gazette*) from March 1909 to June 1911.<sup>22</sup> At the time, these were among the most influential newspapers in Beijing.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, a notebook discovered in the library contains newspaper clippings annotated by di Giura from 1907 to 1925, with news from 1907 to 1908 composing roughly one-third of the total.

As mentioned earlier, di Giura published three articles on Chinese socio-political events in *Nuova Antologia* journal (1905, 1907b and 1910), demonstrating a noteworthy reformist stance. For example, being delighted to see the Chinese government's promotion of exchanges by sending officials abroad in preparation for institutional reforms, di Giura extensively reported on the officials' international travels and the reform initiatives they proposed upon their return to China (1907b, 492–498).<sup>24</sup> Regarding these events, he read news about the visits of Duanfang (1861–1911) and Dai Hongci (1853–1910) to Denmark and Norway, the administrative reorganisation for constitution establishment, and the edict to send military officials to visit the United States and Japan.

Di Giura's interest in the local socio-political context can also be observed through his reading of popular literature. Among the 1900–11 Chinese novels with marginalia, four of the five are allegorical narratives of social criticism (Liu 1907; Li 1906; Wu 1906, 1907). Among them, *Ershinian mudu zhi guaixianzhuang* (*Eyewitness Reports on Strange Things from the Past Twenty Years*) and *Laocan youji* (*The Travels of Laocan*) stood out as masterpieces of the new fictional genre *Qianze xiaoshuo* (exposé), garnering significant popularity during the 'fiction boom' at the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>25</sup>

Di Giura's 1900–11 book collection reflects the formation of his transcultural background through his language studies, observations of socio-political events, and exploration of classic and popular literature after his arrival in China. During this period, he cultivated a multifaceted image in Beijing as a doctor, diplomat, journalist, and enthusiast of Chinese language and culture, demonstrating his versatility and curiosity in socio-cultural interactions with China.

Combined with his linguistic abilities and cultural interests, di Giura's social activities extended outside medical circles and encompassed more than just interactions with patients as a doctor. His interest and efforts in engaging with Chinese culture seemed to have been recognised by the circle he frequented in Beijing, as evidenced by Chinese books and calligraphic works preserved in his library, which were presented to him by his acquaintances in China, including Gu Hongming (1857–1928), who presented his work to the Italian doctor in 1911 (Gu n.d.).<sup>26</sup>



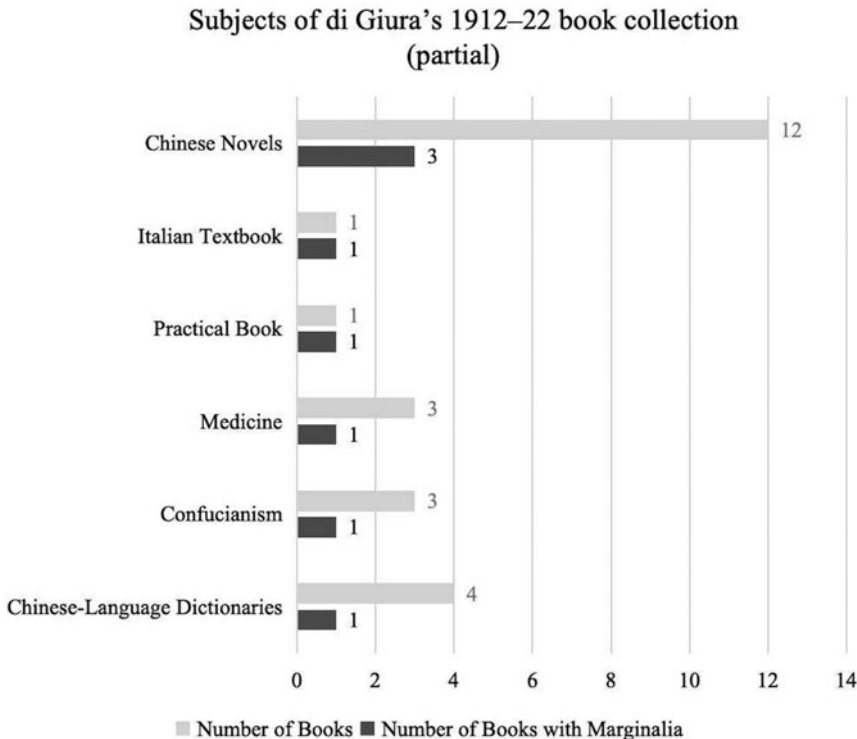
In subsequent years, di Giura maintained his multifaceted role within the Italian and local community in Beijing. Besides his personal circumstances, the relatively small Italian community that persisted in Beijing after the Boxer uprising should be taken into account.<sup>27</sup> Did this environment afford di Giura more opportunities to distinguish himself in various fields among the Italians in Beijing? Would his status be comparable if he were situated in another city with a larger Italian community, or an Italian community with different dynamics, such as Shanghai?

### 1912–22: An ‘interlude’

From February to September 1912, di Giura returned to Italy. Initially, he received treatment for otosclerosis from ‘Professor Ferrero of the University of Rome’ (ASDMAE 1913). In late June, he returned to Chiaromonte and stayed for about one month (ANSMI 1912a, 1912b).

The decade following 1912 seems to represent an ‘interlude’ in di Giura’s book collection: with a total of 44 units, the number is fewer than in both the preceding and succeeding phases. As illustrated in Figure 2, this contrast tends to be greater in terms of the quantity of books with marginalia. Figure 4 further demonstrates that only eight books categorised during this period have traces of being read, and they scarcely indicate any special attention to particular subjects.<sup>28</sup>

Unlike the previous phase, these eight books with marginalia mainly have symbols whose function is to highlight, with few textual annotations.



**Figure 4.** Subjects of di Giura’s 1912–22 book collection (partial)

Concerning reasons for this ‘interlude’, a paper fragment found in an unedited volume prompted a hypothesis about the mobility of books in di Giura’s library. The fragment bears the words ‘LINICO, Rom’ on one side and ‘LICLINICO’ on the other, suggesting ‘POLICLINICO, Roma’, the University of Rome’s polyclinic. This raises questions about whether di Giura transported books to Chiaromonte in June 1912 after receiving treatment from ‘Professor Ferrero of the University of Rome’, leaving the fragment with the university polyclinic’s name in one of the books. If so, could it be this mobility that has contributed to the greatest chronological concentration of the 1900–11 collection in his library?

Another hypothesis regarding the ‘interlude’ concerns di Giura’s medical workload in the decade 1912–22. From October 1912 to December 1922, his Italian dispensary in Beijing appeared to conduct over 80 significant surgical procedures and received more than 127,000 visits, averaging 34 per day.<sup>29</sup> In addition, correspondence from the family’s private collection reveals that on 27 December 1917, di Giura was invited by Wu Lien Teh (1879–1960), the Medical Director of Peking Central Hospital, to serve as a visiting staff member at the hospital. Having accepted the invitation, he started attending to surgical cases on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays since February 1918. Did such a heavy medical workload contribute to a decline in his endeavours in reading? If so, could this ‘interlude’ reflect the pragmatic characteristic of his book collection?

In any case, some books acquired from 1912 to 1922 provide valuable information about di Giura’s life. For example, a 1916 address book for Beijing and Tianjin, categorised as ‘Practical Book’ in Figure 4, notes his residence: ‘North Royal River Bridge, Imperial City Corner, East Side, n.1’ (*Minghaobu* 1916, 97). This geographical context is crucial for investigating di Giura’s social and cultural activities, in view of the diverse dynamics of Italian communities in different cities, as well as the unique milieu in Beijing at the time.

As stated by Wang (2022, 18), the history of early twentieth-century Beijing signifies a transformation from a feudal imperial capital to a modern urban centre, where novel and traditional, foreign and indigenous elements collide and interweave, collectively shaping a hybrid milieu. In this environment, di Giura’s reformist stance in his early years evolved into a defence of the traditional Confucian order. Specifically, he attributed the phenomenon ‘New China has a horror of Confucius and his works’ to the fact that the works ‘are not written in an easy language, and the majority of young Chinese do not understand them’ (Di Giura 1927).

This linguistic perspective raises questions about the evolution of di Giura’s cultural inclinations. Since the New Culture Movement began in 1915, intellectuals like Qian Xuantong (1887–1939) advocated for the Romanisation, Latinisation, and abolition of the Chinese language (Sang 2013, 71). In this context, the cultural capital that di Giura had acquired in accordance with the Confucian order of the imperial monarchy during its final period might have found limited applicability. In this regard, could his initial engagement with Chinese language and culture contribute to his later scepticism towards ‘New China’? Was his defence of Confucianism in the 1920s driven more by emotional motivations than an ideological conviction? Was his revalorisation of the Confucian order, in some way, inventing an ‘Old China’?<sup>30</sup>

Another noteworthy book between 1912 to 1922 is a Japanese-English translation of *The Analects* (Yamano 1912, hereinafter referred to as *Rongo*), a collection of selected sayings attributed to Confucius (551–479 BC).

In 1926, di Giura published an Italian-Chinese version of 55 items drawn from *The Analects*. His Italian translation is probably based on James Legge’s English version in *Rongo*, amid seven other editions of this classic in his library (*Zhushi jiaozheng huaying sishu* n.d.; Zhu 1878; Couvreur 1895; Chen 1904; Yamano 1912; L. Y. T. 1914; *Tuhua sishu baihuajie* n.d.). Besides textual resemblance, di Giura marked Legge’s translation with a

blue cross next to each maxim that he later translated into Italian. Some maxims in *Zhushi jiaozheng huaying sishu* and Cuvreur's work were also highlighted, but only those in *Rongo* precisely match the maxims translated by di Giura.

Legge's English translation of Confucian classics remained the resource most consulted by later translators (Nordvall 2020). However, di Giura's reference to Legge may have been influenced more by the *timing* of his intellectual pursuits. While he owned a 1914 edition which included *The Analects* translated by Legge, there is no indication that the book has been read. In contrast, di Giura engaged with Legge's work collected in *Rongo*, a book gifted to him by his legation colleague Alfredo De Prospero in 1921. Could this detail further contribute to the hypothesis that the years following di Giura's temporary return to Italy in 1912 constituted an 'interlude' in his intellectual activities?

From an alternative perspective, it would be hasty to affirm a decline in di Giura's interest in Chinese culture during this period, considering the historiographical contradiction that a period lacking documentation might coincide with the most significant period in shaping historical experiences. As suggested by archival records of his intensive medical work, the absence of documentation in di Giura's book collection from 1912 to 1922 might correspond to the extent of his daily interactions within Chinese society. Moreover, his active engagement with Chinese society during this decade could have enabled him to draw upon a wealth of accumulated knowledge for his intellectual pursuits in the final years of his stay in China, as discussed in the next section.

### 1923–31: Intellectual pursuits

As illustrated in Figure 1 and 2, di Giura's reading during 1923–31 intensified, totalling 54 units with 22 bearing marginalia. These marginalia – featuring corrections of printing errors, underscores, symbol marks and handwritten notes on inserted pieces of paper – potentially illuminate the intertextuality between di Giura's readings and his works, as discussed in this section.

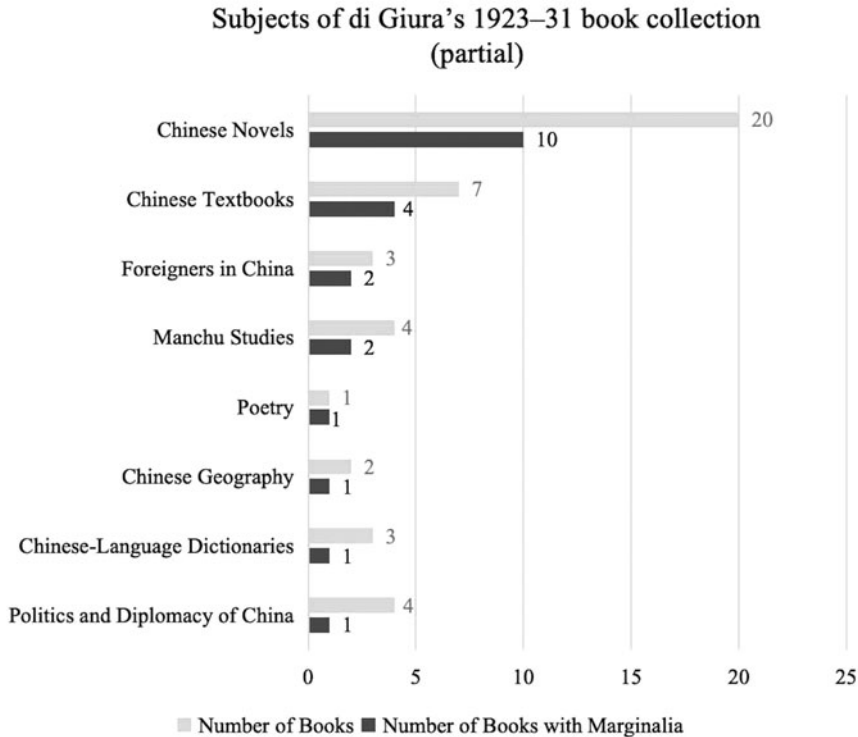
#### Introducing Chinese novels

In the 1923–31 collection, di Giura's interest in reading Chinese novels stands out, as illustrated in Figure 5.<sup>31</sup>

As for di Giura's choice of novels, his previous inclination towards allegorical narratives of social criticism on contemporary issues evolved into a preference for *yanyi* (fiction based on historical facts). Among the ten annotated novels, four fall into this category: *Xishi yanyi* (*Story of Xishi*, 1923), *Zhaojun yanyi* (*Story of Zhaojun*, 1924), *Qinggong lishi yanyi* (*History of the Imperial Court of Qing Dynasty*) (Xu 1924), and *Qingchao lishi yanyi* (*History of the Qing Dynasty*) (Ruan 1924).

Fiction based on historical facts probably provided di Giura with necessary material for crafting stories about Chinese historical female characters. A preliminary analysis suggests that two stories in his 1958 work, focusing on the female figures Zhaojun and Xishi respectively, appear to be an Italian rendition of the aforementioned Chinese novels – *Story of Xishi* (1923) and *Story of Zhaojun* (1924). Additionally, in his diary for January 1927, di Giura wrote down the Italian translation of a section extracted from the *History of the Qing Dynasty* (Ruan 1924), which has a striking resemblance to his later 1962 essay on the Boxers and Dowager Empress Cixi.<sup>32</sup>

Furthermore, among ten novels with marginalia from 1923 to 1931, there are two editions of *Liaozhai zhiyi* (hereinafter referred to as *Liaozhai*) (Giles 1916; Pu n.d.a)], the collection of supernatural tales compiled by Pu Songling (1640–1715). During the same period, di Giura translated Pu's work into Italian. According to his translation draft and



**Figure 5.** Subjects of di Giura's 1923–31 book collection (partial)

preparatory notes, between January 1923 and June 1925, di Giura exhausted 13 notebooks to specify the Italian pronunciation, explanations, and cultural connotations of Chinese expressions selected from every *Liaozhai* story. Upon completing the translation of 436 stories in Beijing on 29 May 1925, he continued to revise the draft until 18 September 1928, with the final revision finished in Chiaromonte on 17 May 1940.

Considering his detailed notes on Chinese culture-loaded expressions and concurrent textual translation, it appears to be more likely that di Giura translated *Liaozhai* directly from Chinese to Italian, rather than through an intermediary language.<sup>33</sup> Among the five Chinese editions of *Liaozhai* in his library (Pu, Xu and Gao 1921–22; Pu n.d.a; Pu n.d.b; Pu 1918a; Pu 1918b), the 1918a edition stands out with extensive underscores in the texts and a piece of paper annotated with the Chinese characters *Sibaisishiduan* (444 paragraphs) inserted in the first volume. In spite of this, di Giura's arrangement of the ten stories with more than one subject is not entirely identical to the original edition: while seven stories align with the multi-subject format as in the 1918a edition, for the other three, each subject has been presented as an individual story.<sup>34</sup> His alternative organisation aligns with another edition (Pu n.d.b), which, however, lacks annotations. Considering the possibility of dispersion, additional intertextual studies are necessary to explore di Giura's translation activities in relation to these two editions.

### *Translating Chinese poems*

In 1930, di Giura published the Italian translation of 50 poems of Li Bai (701–762). In the preface, he provided details about the reference edition: ‘The few poems that we present

to the public are all contained in the collection of poems of T'ang, made by Wang Yao-Ch'ü, and bear the Chinese title *T'ang Shih Ho Chieh* (1930, iv). In di Giura's library, a six-volume *Gu tang shi hejie* (*Anthology of Ancient Poems and Tang Poems*) by Wang Yaoqu (n.d.) emerges as the sole edition of the work mentioned by the Italian translator. While one volume containing 13 poems translated by di Giura has been dispersed, there are no annotations for the remaining 37 translated poems. According to his translation draft, the original Chinese text of each poem was transcribed on the left side of a piece of paper, which was used as a folder for his translation of the poem and preparatory notes. Could the initial transcription result in the absence of annotations in the *Anthology of Ancient Poems and Tang Poems*?

Furthermore, di Giura referred to the Japanese diplomat Shigeyoshi Obata as 'the one who maintained fidelity to the [original] text' among previous translators of Li Bai's work (1930, iv–v). In di Giura's library, there is a 1923 edition of Obata's English translation. Within it, there is a mark related to the title of a poem: 'Lü shui qu', translated by Obata as 'The Blue Water' (1923, 56). Di Giura annotated another Chinese character *Lu* (clear) in the margin and translated the title into Italian as '*La canzone dell'acqua chiara*' ('The Ode of the Clear Water') (1930, 36). Besides this detail, the significant contrast between Obata's and di Giura's translations lies in their chosen genres: the former opted for a prose presentation, while the latter preserved the poetic cadence, maintaining approximately eleven syllables per verse (Wang and Wen 2024).

The interests in Li Bai's works prompted di Giura to translate eight poems from the Chinese novel *Dream of the Red Chamber* (1929). As he noted in the work, these poems were translated since they 'recall those [poems] of the famous poet LI PUO'. This note seems to suggest a certain lack of valorisation for the novel itself, but di Giura collected seven versions of *Dream of the Red Chamber* – five published and two unpublished, which is the highest count for any book in his library (Tsao and Kao n.d.; Cao 1899, 1905a, 1905b, n.d.). In terms of the reference for his translation, the edition titled *Guochu chaoben yuanben hongloumeng* (*Dream of the Red Chamber Reprinted in the Early Years of the Republic of China*) (Cao n.d.) stands out. It features a divergence from other editions concerning the Chinese text of the first poem translated by di Giura, titled '*Paesaggio*' ('Landscape'). In *Dream of the Red Chamber Reprinted in the Early Years of the Republic of China*, we read *Lüliu hengpo* (*Green willows spread across the slope*), whereas in all other editions, it is *Bailiu hengpo* (*White willows spread across the slope*). Di Giura's translation is consistent with the 1927 edition: '*e dell'acque sul bordo verdi salici s'incurvano*' (And green willows curve on the water's edge) (1929, 5).

Di Giura's 1923–31 collection illuminates the intertextuality between his readings and intellectual pursuits, particularly in the Italian translation of Chinese literary works. Among these works, *Liaozhai* appeared to have received the most attention from di Giura, with preparatory annotations beginning in 1923 and the final revision completed in 1940. His motivation for this long-term effort seemed to be driven by *Liaozhai*'s popularity in China and its potential to represent Chinese social life, rather than its artistic value. In the preface to his translation, di Giura emphasised that the tales could provide Italian readers with insights into Chinese life and superstitions. Highlighting the work's popularity in China, he described how he witnessed storytellers in Beijing captivating audiences with *Liaozhai* tales, stopping at the most interesting points to ask for money, with hardly anyone leaving (P'u 1926, 7). For his translations of *The Analects* and Li Bai's poems, di Giura stressed the works' significance in Chinese history and culture, presenting Confucius as 'the supreme Chinese sage' and Li Bai as 'a supreme Chinese poet'.<sup>35</sup> With the intention to introduce these highest achievements of Chinese culture to Italian readers, di Giura organised his translations akin to didactic materials for Chinese language study, which feature the original Chinese text with phonetic transcriptions of every

character and detailed annotations for culture-loaded expressions. This organisation was maintained in the 1926 translation of *The Analects*, where di Giura claimed the didactic objectives of his work were: ‘to facilitate the study of the Chinese written language and Chinese classics’, and ‘to allow those who have not studied Chinese to grasp the wisdom Confucius imparted to his disciples’. In contrast, the published version of Li Bai’s poems retained only the translations and annotations, omitting the Chinese original text and phonetic transcriptions. Had Li Bai’s poems been published according to di Giura’s original manuscript, they could have served a similar purpose – assisting Italian learners of Chinese while allowing a wider readership to appreciate the charm of Chinese poetry. Di Giura’s comprehension of these literary works and his motivations for translating them reveal him as an Italian who aspired to present the most influential and popular Chinese works he encountered through his direct contact with Chinese society and culture to his home country audience.

As for whether his aspirations were achieved, from a temporal perspective, di Giura’s translation works represent early efforts to introduce these Chinese works in Italy. His translation of *Liaozhai*, titled *I racconti fantastici di Liao (The Fantastic Tales of Liao)* and published by A. Mondadori in 1955, is considered the first complete translation of this work into a European language (Gu 2021, 1). His 1930 translation of Li Bai’s poems was among the earliest efforts to introduce Tang poems to Italy.<sup>36</sup> His translation of poems from *Dream of the Red Chamber* was published in 1929, almost 30 years before the first full Italian version of the novel.<sup>37</sup>

However, historical sources suggest a risk in overestimating the circulation and impact of di Giura’s translations in Italy at his time. As di Giura complained in correspondence with Mondadori (FAAM 1931), the performance of his 1926 translation of *Liaozhai* was unfavourable in the Italian market. His translation of Li Bai’s poems faced notable difficulties in publication due to the lack of an interested audience, as suggested by his private correspondence to Gino Carabba on 20 July 1928. His translations of *The Analects* and *Dream of the Red Chamber* were published in Beijing and have garnered scarce scholarly attention in Italy, with only a few copies available in public libraries today.<sup>38</sup> The effectiveness of di Giura’s transcultural contribution between Italy and China during the first half of the twentieth century requires further investigation.

Judging by his book collection, di Giura’s active engagement with Chinese literature seems to have waned by 1931, aligning with his return to Chiaromonte. Considering the significantly diminished availability of China-related literature in Chiaromonte compared to Beijing, it appears that di Giura only added nine relevant volumes to his collection after his return. Nevertheless, the physical presence of a Chinese library in Chiaromonte was likely to have assumed an aesthetic and symbolic function to build di Giura’s public profile as a reference figure of China in his later years, as suggested by the local people referring to the tower housing the library as the ‘*la torre cinese*’ (‘the Chinese tower’).

### Conclusion: an Italian within Chinese society

The interpretation of di Giura’s Chinese library illuminates the utilitarian and functional characteristics of the library, providing the collection with the potential to reveal the owner’s evolving roles and cultural interests. In contemporary China, records of di Giura’s image as a Western doctor can be frequently found. His library, on the other hand, illustrates his longing to build the image of a ‘cultural man’ within the local society. During his initial decade in China, besides his profession as a doctor for the Italian diplomatic and military corps, di Giura began learning the Chinese language and classical literature, reading local journals, and reporting on socio-political affairs, showcasing his

versatility and curiosity in social and cultural interactions with China. In subsequent years, his focus on Chinese literature appeared to narrow, which, however, paradoxically coincided with a period of intensive and profound daily experiences within Chinese society. Such experiences were likely to lay the foundation for the renewed vigour in his intellectual pursuits during the final decade of his stay in China, and his concurrent collection offers valuable resources for exploring the intertextuality between his readings and writings.

As stated by Samarani (2014, 49), despite the frequent challenges presented by fragmented and dispersed historical documents, the reconstruction of the history of Italians in early twentieth-century China remains essential. In this area, di Giura's 'Chinese library' emerges as a valuable repository, offering insights into his and other Italians' textual engagements with China, which are often linked to their socio-cultural experiences. As an archive containing symbols of 'individual and communal longings', his library mirrors the cultural milieu commonly experienced by Italians in China during that time, and provides a micro perspective on the potential opportunities for social, cultural, and textual engagements with China available to contemporary Italians in the country. Specifically, di Giura's library reveals the favourable conditions and available resources for Italians in China who wanted to contribute to mutual understanding between the two countries without having the relative professional training. In China, the burgeoning commercial publishing industry facilitated the growing access to literature related to the country. Di Giura's collection shows the most prevalent subjects – Chinese-language newspaper (57 units) and Chinese novels (51) – aligning with the rise of the newspaper press and the 'fiction boom' in the country. In Italy, the growing public interest in the Far East after the Sanmen Bay and Boxer events presented opportunities for Italians in China to engage in intellectual discourse through publishing reports, travel journals, or informative monographs based on their readings, observations, and occasional involvement in local and international affairs. Additionally, at a time when China-related materials in Italian were limited and not easily available, the circulation of textbooks and translated works in other European languages, especially English and French, provided opportunities for Italians without sinological training to embark on the study of Chinese language and culture, deepen their study of China, and eventually contribute to introducing China to the home country.

Italians engaged with Chinese studies from the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century, when Italy lost its leadership position in Sino-European cultural exchanges, have a 'blurred' profile, as noted by Paternicò (2023). Some developed in institutions of sinological studies, others beginning their intellectual careers after serving as missionaries or diplomats in China, and still others after travelling in the country. Di Giura contributed to this landscape with a noteworthy profile as an Italian engaged in Chinese studies based on his direct contact and long-term experience with the local society. Immersed in the local cultural milieu of Beijing, he developed curiosity and interest in classical and popular Chinese literature, and translated the works that he deemed most representative of China to Italian readers. Observing events in daily life and through journalistic reading, he provided first-hand accounts and commentaries on the local socio-political situation. His collection embodies the authenticity of an Italian observing this foreign world without a prepared professional framework or observational paradigm. This authenticity set di Giura's cultural pursuits apart from a structured ideological stance or original reflections on specific historiographical issues. Instead, the library reveals di Giura's image as an unprofessional yet versatile participant in politics, literature, and history, which could facilitate a more genuine portrayal of the interaction between two cultures. This article interprets di Giura's life through his library, not to present him as an exceptional case, but to use his experiences as a lens for observing the potential social-

cultural interactions of Italians in China during the early twentieth century, aiming to enrich perspectives for further studies on the theme.

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## Notes

1. All translations from Italian and Chinese are mine.
2. Several name variants exist for di Giura, including 'Lodovico di Giura' and 'Ludovico Nicola di Giura'. This paper adopts the name 'Ludovico Luigi Nicola di Giura' as documented on his naval personnel registration form (hereinafter referred to as NPRF), preserved in the Archivio degli estratti matricolari degli Ufficiali della M.M., held at the Direzione Generale per il Personale Militare of the Italian Ministry of Defence.
3. For more information on the 1866 Sino-Italian treaty, see Borsa (1961); Samarani and De Giorgi (2011); Francioni (2004).
4. For more information on Chinese studies in Italy at the time, refer to Bertuccioli and Masini (2014, 256–267), and Paternicò (2023).
5. Historical documents about di Giura's educational experience at the Royal University of Naples are sparse due to the dispersal of the university's archival sources. Only two certificates from 1891, documenting his attendance and good performance in courses on bacteriology, clinical microscopy in the laboratory, and medical clinic, have been discovered in his private collection. These personal records can be cross-referenced with a general review of the faculty of Medicine and Surgery at the Royal University of Naples by Dröscher (2002, 161–206).
6. Di Giura's 1894–96 diaries will be examined with more interpretative paradigms, as well as his evolving view of China, on other occasions.
7. In June 1900, the Boxers besieged the Legation Quarter and the zone surrounding the North Cathedral in Beijing, prompting a multinational military intervention. Italy joined in July by forming and sending the *Forza navale oceanica*, which included four warships, *Fieramosca*, *Stromboli*, *Vesuvio*, and *Vettor Pisani*, followed by a land contingent of approximately 2,000 personnel. For further information on the Italian dispatch against the Boxers and its aftermath, see De Courten and Sargerì (2005), Francioni (2004, 143–173), Samarani and De Giorgi (2011, 28–32).
8. The land for di Giura's dispensary was purchased in 1903 by Ernesto Schiaparelli (1856–1928), the representative of the association (ANSMI 1948).
9. Peking Union Medical College was established in Beijing in 1906 by multiple missionary societies and has had a significant impact on China's modern medical education. For more information, see Bowers (1972), Jiang (2018).
10. The Peking Central Hospital was established in Beijing in January 1918 with the support of social donations. For further details, see Li (2019).
11. For more information about Sanmen Bay event and the reaction of the Italian public, see Borsa (1961, 97–155), Samarani and De Giorgi (2011, 22–32), Bertuccioli and Masini (2014, 236–267).
12. Di Giura's ideological and practical adherence to Fascism will be detailed on other occasions. For Fascist politics in China during that era, consult Lasagni (2019), who also documented several of di Giura's activities while serving as the secretary of the Fascio of Beijing (69–72).
13. For clarity, one unit corresponds to a single edition of a title, excluding Chinese-language newspapers. Chinese-language newspapers in di Giura's library are all monthly collections, in volumes or box sets. To avoid reducing the quantitative significance of this subject, each monthly collection is treated as a unit.
14. In this paper, marginalia refer to annotations, underscores, inserted pieces of paper or other forms of marks. Merely leaving a signature is not considered to be proof that a book has been read.
15. According to private correspondence between di Giura and his family dated 25 April and 28 July 1929, two boxes of his books were transported that year across sea and land, first on the ship *Romolo* to Brindisi, and then to Chiaromonte via Nova Siri. The construction of the library requires further research and documentary evidence.



16. Despite potential inaccuracies, excluding the criterion of publication date would render the library temporally agnostic, making it impossible to discern di Giura's evolving cultural interests, which were significantly influenced by the changing socio-cultural context. Moreover, this criterion is expected to reasonably control inaccuracies. Among the 29 books with documented dates, over half (18 out of 29) were acquired within a decade of their publication.
17. Di Giura's medical practice in China will be further explored on other occasions. Records of him as an Italian, or more generally, a Western doctor, can be found in numerous archival sources, journalistic reports, and the memories, diaries, and biographies of contemporary Chinese. His library in Chiaromonte contains valuable information revealing this image. For example, among the objects and books presented to him, there is a silver cup given by the former Manchu prince Aisin Gioro Zairun (1878–1963), dated 1931 and inscribed: 'Dr Di Giura, a doctor of the Royal Navy and the Royal Legation of Italy in China, and Director of the Italian Dispensary, is of universal reputation. Since his arrival in China, he has founded a dispensary to treat the sick for free, establishing himself as a virtuous and beneficent individual.'
18. For more information on the 1911 plague, see Summers (2012).
19. The subjects covered by di Giura's 1900–11 collection include Chinese-language newspaper (57 units), Chinese textbooks (19), Chinese novels (14), medicine (10), travel literature (7), Confucianism (5), politics and diplomacy of China (5), Japanese studies (4), City of Beijing (3), Chinese geography (2), Chinese-language dictionaries (2), Chinese drama (2), Chinese philosophy (1), Chinese art (1), Manchu studies (1), and poetry (1). Only subjects with volumes containing marginalia are displayed in Figure 3.
20. *Ru La* first appeared in the list of the Italian diplomatic corps that would have an audience with the Chinese Emperor in April 1902 (ASDMAE 1902b).
21. *Ru Zitong* appeared in the dedications on gifts presented to di Giura, which are preserved in the di Giura family's private collection.
22. In this paper, the issue dates of all Chinese-language newspapers are based on the lunar calendar.
23. *Edicts and Memorials* was a type of *Jingbao* (Reports from the Capital Beijing), traditionally exclusive to Chinese literati and officials but becoming accessible to the general public and turning into a popular reading trend in the early twentieth century (Zhang 2014, 35–37). *Political Gazette*, founded in 1907, was the first newspaper in Chinese history to be directly printed and distributed by the central authority (Ye 2002, 865). *Jinghua Daily*, launched in 1904 and published in the Beijing dialect, led the upsurge in vernacular journalism in China and achieved unprecedented sales – over 10,000 copies in 1905 (Kaske 2008, 185–186).
24. After the Boxer event, the Chinese government implemented a series of reforms, encompassing educational, military, and institutional fields. For further detail, see Ichiko (1980).
25. For more information on the new popular reading culture in China at the time, see Wang (2010, 440–456).
26. Gu Hongming was renowned for his defence of Confucianism and Chinese traditions during the Republican era. The interactions between di Giura and Gu were particularly significant in the late 1920s, with di Giura frequently referencing Gu as a symbol of 'Old China' in his journalistic works. Di Giura's interactions with Gu Hongming and other figures associated with 'Old China' will be examined on another occasion. Additionally, the inscriptions in di Giura's books require a more thorough analysis to reveal his social engagements with China.
27. The majority of Italian soldiers dispatched against the Boxers were repatriated by 1906 (Samarani and De Giorgi 2011, 31–32). For statistics detailing the geographical distribution of the Italian presence in China during the first half of the twentieth century, see Samarani (2014, 51–53).
28. The subjects covered by di Giura's 1912–22 collection include Chinese novels (12), Chinese-language dictionaries (4), travel literature (4), Confucianism (3), medicine (3), Chinese textbooks (3), Chinese religions (2), Chinese geography (2), poetry (2), politics and diplomacy of China (2), practical book (1), Manchu studies (1), City of Beijing (1), Italian textbook (1), Chinese art (1), Japanese studies (1), and Chinese calligraphy (1). Only subjects with volumes containing marginalia are displayed in Figure 4.
29. The author derived these figures from the statistical tables documenting the number of patients at the Italian dispensary in Beijing, signed by di Giura from October 1912 to December 1922, which are archived in ANSMI, 1/B Cina–Pechino, faldone 3, f. 'Dispensario di Pechino'. However, the accuracy of these figures cannot be fully confirmed due to the absence of detailed patient information.
30. Di Giura's evolving perception of Chinese culture will be examined in greater depth on other occasions.
31. The subjects covered by di Giura's 1923–31 collection include Chinese novels (20), Chinese textbooks (7), politics and diplomacy of China (4), City of Beijing (3), Chinese-language dictionaries (3), Manchu studies (4), foreigners in China (3), Chinese drama (2), Chinese geography (2), travel literature (1), medicine (1), entertainment (1), Chinese history (1), Chinese art (1), and poetry (1). Only subjects with volumes containing marginalia are displayed in Figure 5.
32. The intertextual comparison will be displayed on other occasions.
33. Further intertextual studies are needed to investigate whether di Giura occasionally referenced the English translation of *Liaozhai* by Herbert A Giles (1916). He finished reading Giles' work on 23 May 1925, when he was about to complete the draft of the Italian translation.

34. There are two items from the story *Wutong* (66, 67), a postscript for the story *Wang Gui'an* (218, 219), three items from *Juzha* (272, 273, 274), three items from *Long* (330), two items from *Xishu* (332), two items from *Guobao* (341), two items from *Nianyong* (343), three items from *Lang* (374), two items from *Yu zhongcheng* (407), and two items from *Zheyu* (411). In parentheses are the sequence number of the stories in di Giura's Italian translation (P'u 1955).
35. Confucius's title as 'the supreme Chinese sage (*il sommo saggio cinese*)' is cited from di Giura's preface to the 1926 translation of *The Analects*. Li Bai's title as 'a supreme Chinese poet (*un sommo poeta cinese*)' is cited from the inscription of his *Poesie di Li-Può* draft translation preserved in his family's private collection; the inscription was, however, removed in the 1930 published version.
36. For more information on the Italian translation of Tang poems and Li Bai's works, see Bertuccioli 2013 (429–430).
37. The first full Italian translation of *Dream of the Red Chamber* was published in 1958. For more information, refer to Bertuccioli 2013 (440–441) and Li 2022.
38. For more information on the publication process of di Giura's translation works, see Wang and Wen 2024.

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### Italian summary

Ludovico Luigi Nicola di Giura (1868–1947) fu un medico italiano che visse a Pechino dal 1900 al 1931. Oltre alla pratica medica, di Giura stabilì rapporti con l'élite locale, sviluppò un profondo interesse per la letteratura cinese e contribuì a far conoscere la realtà e la cultura cinese in Italia attraverso opere giornalistiche, letterarie e di traduzione. Al suo ritorno in Italia, allestì una 'biblioteca cinese' nella tenuta di famiglia a Chiaromonte, in Basilicata. Questo articolo adotta l'approccio eracliteo' proposto da Weingarten (2022) per esaminare la biblioteca personale del di Giura, analizzando l'evoluzione dei desideri culturali individuali e comunitari riflessi nella sua collezione e nelle marginalia dei libri in diversi periodi. Basandosi su fonti primarie recentemente scoperte e catalogate nella biblioteca, insieme a fonti archivistiche e bibliografiche in Italia e Cina, l'articolo si propone non solo di rivelare il profilo intellettuale del di Giura, ma anche di utilizzare le sue esperienze individuali come lente per osservare la vita sociale e culturale degli italiani in Cina all'inizio del Novecento.

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