

Italian Chinese Dialogues 2.0

Opening Remarks

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Coordinator of the PhD Programme in Historical Studies

December 19th, 2025

Dear colleagues, dear doctoral students,

on behalf of the PhD Programme in Historical Studies of the University of Naples “Federico II”, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the first meeting of the seminar series *Italian–Chinese Dialogues 2.0*. This series builds on a successful first cycle that took place in 2024 under the title *Italian–Chinese Dialogues: A Series of Doctoral Seminars in the Humanities*. That experience showed how fruitful sustained academic exchange between Italian and Chinese institutions can be – not only in terms of specific research topics, but also in fostering a broader, comparative approach to historical inquiry. As Coordinator of the PhD Programme, I want to emphasize how much we value this continuity: seminars like these are central to our educational mission. They create opportunities for our doctoral students – and for all participants – to engage with international scholarship, to test ideas in a dialogical setting, and to refine critical and methodological skills that are essential in contemporary historical research.

The theme of today’s seminar – *Ethnic Identities in the Late Antique West* – inaugurates the series with a topic that resonates with key questions in current historiographical debate. Late Antiquity reminds us that identities are not fixed categories, but dynamic results of political, religious, and cultural processes. This perspective enriches our understanding of the past and trains us to ask nuanced questions about continuity, change, and belonging.

I thank our speakers, Jiaming Zheng and Riccardo D’Ascenzi, for their contributions; Donato Sitaro for chairing today’s session; and all those who have contributed to organizing this series (Donato, Jiawei Weng and Qianyu Wang). I wish us a stimulating discussion and a fruitful seminar.

Thank you very much.