

FOREWORD

It is a challenging task to write even a few words of introduction to this first issue of the 2020 Volume with which *East and West* (New Series) resumes its publications, after almost a decade of silence. It is exactly seventy years since Giuseppe Tucci, in his role as President of IsMEO, began, with the *Foreword* contained in the first pages of the first issue of *East and West* 1 (1950), his dialogue between East and West that led to his receiving in 1976 the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding (“We shall therefore begin a talk with our friends of Asia. Our aim is to have an exchange of ideas among men desirous of knowing each other better and intent on spanning a bridge of understanding and sympathy between nations which are, nowadays, too often full of wrath and suspicion,” *East and West* 1 [1950], p. 2).

East and West was an English language quarterly published from 1950 by IsMEO (Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente [Italian Institute for the Middle and Far East]) and subsequently (from 1995 onwards) by IsIAO (Istituto Italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente [Italian Institute for Africa and the Orient]).

Giuseppe Tucci edited the journal until 1978. From 1978 (when Tucci’s presidency of IsMEO came to an end) until 1997 the journal was edited by Gherardo Gnoli (who, after the short interregnum of Sabatino Moscati, was president from 1980 onwards) and then, from 1997 to 2000, by Maurizio Taddei, to whom Gnoli entrusted full responsibility for the journal, recognizing his exceptional editorial skills (Dr Beniamino Melasecchi was Taddei’s trusted companion in this adventure). After Professor Taddei’s death (5th February 2000), Gherardo Gnoli once again took over the editorship until the dissolution of the Italian Institute for Africa and the Orient (IsIAO) in 2011-2012, imposed by an administrative streamlining policy launched by the Italian government of the time. No. 59 (2009) of *East and West* was consequently the last of the first series (still rated at Level A on the Italian Evaluation Agency ANVUR scale).

The periodical was divided into various sections, of which the most important were ‘Articles,’ ‘Brief Notes’ and ‘Book Reviews.’ In the first twenty volumes or so, *East and West* also contained a section entitled ‘IsMEO Activities,’ providing information on archaeological excavations and conservation work carried out by IsMEO, as well as conferences and exhibitions organized by the Institute; the section was subsequently discontinued. An attempt to make readers in Asian countries aware of important events in Italian cultural life also appeared in the early 1950s—a unique experiment, which involved important figures in the Italian literature, philosophy and artistic culture of the time (Remigio Strinati, Renato Annibali, Michelangelo Cagianò de Azevedo, Alberto Pirovano, Fabrizio Dentice, Nicola Pende, Ugo Spirito, Paolo D’Ancona, Massimo Bontempelli, Nicola Abbagnano, Emilio Cecchi, Benedetto Croce, Aldo Capitini)—but was discontinued in the mid-1950s.

The focus of *East and West* was mostly on Middle Eastern and Asian art and archaeology—with particular emphasis on results from various archaeological excavations in Iran, Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Tibet, Central Asia etc., either directly organized by the Institute, or in collaboration with other scientific institutions. The history of the earliest Italian archaeological missions in Pakistan (1956-), Iran (1959-) and Afghanistan (1957-) can be reconstructed in detail from the excavation reports, methodological debates and comparative assessments of individual finds that were published in the journal when it was not yet clear in which direction excavation surveys would evolve, at a time when there were no modern instruments that supplied information about the presence and orientation of underground structures still to be excavated.

Studies in diverse fields, such as the history and ethnography of religion, anthropology and philology (of both epigraphical and codicological monuments), were also frequently to be found in the pages of the periodical.

Another important task of cultural interaction assumed by *East and West* involved the publication—often enriched with photos, graphs and complementary notes—of a large number of articles and short notes by young scholars, who subsequently became research executives and managers of cultural tourism in the countries where excavation and research were conducted.

The current revival of *East and West*, made possible by dedicated funding under the five-year project “Research on the cultures of Asia and Africa: tradition and continuity, revitalization and dissemination” sponsored by M(I)UR [Italian Ministry for Universities and Research], takes place in a scientific landscape that differs greatly not only from that of the 1950s, when the journal was founded, but also that of the first decade of the 2000s, at the end of which its publications ceased.

Today there are dozens of specialized journals in Italy, Europe, and the individual Middle Eastern, Asian and African countries whose concrete and intellectual traditions are the subjects of ISMEO’s research. However, we believe that considerable space is available for a high-level English-language periodical: the new *East and West* series aims to provide an authoritative platform for information and discussion on the sidelines of ISMEO’s scientific activities, active once more—wide-ranging and high-quality, a direct international communication channel between training experiences in the areas of the world where ISMEO-related research is carried out and the training that takes place in Italy in the study of Asian and African civilizations.

We thank the scholars who have honoured the new series of the journal with their presence on the International Editorial Board and the International Advisory Board, the dozens of scholars of all ages and backgrounds who have generously made available their expertise as peer-reviewers (34 in this first volume alone), the editorial staff and all those—including the Secretariat General of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs—who have in various ways made possible the launch of this new series.

We are confident that the new *East and West* series will meet the expectations of the academic community no less than the first series, providing Italian, European and international research with a renovated platform for scientific discussion.

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