

New Chinese Migrants in Italy

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ABSTRACT

Italy joined the group of European nations with a positive migratory balance in 1980, but now the presence of an immigrant workforce is definitely embedded in the Italian development model. The shift from a net emigration to net immigration country occurred when the internal migration from southern Italy, which had provided the factories in northern Italy with the necessary manpower for their economic development, was coming to an end, and productive decentralization was beginning with the re-emergence of small businesses. Twenty years later, small dynamic businesses that are mainly clustered in industrial districts specializing in local production are a distinctive feature of the Italian economy to the extent that among industrialized countries Italy counts the largest number of small businesses and the lowest number of employees per business (Accornero, 2000). Starting from the 1980s, opportunities for a low-skilled labour force opened for new migrants mainly in these productive activities. In addition, throughout the 1980s and the 1990s niche opportunities for self-employment in workshops producing for Italian suppliers were also appearing or expanding.

Among other migrant groups arriving in Italy were those of Chinese origin. The crucial time for the recent migration flow from China to Italy – either directly or via other European countries, such as France and Holland – can be dated from the early 1980s. Since then, a succession of unskilled workers originating almost exclusively from the south-eastern Chinese province of Zhejiang arrived in the country, after the family-based chains of emigration that had almost come to a halt during the years of the Cultural Revolution had again been revitalized.

The number of immigrants of Chinese origin has grown rapidly over the last 20 years, as has the number of businesses owned by the Chinese. By today, the Chinese migrant community shows the strongest entrepreneurial aptitude, and, according to recent national data, account for the largest number of small business owners among non-European Union (EU) immigrants in Italy.

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Unlike the situation in most of the western European countries, such as Great Britain and the Netherlands, where the Chinese are active mainly in the catering service, in Italy their main areas of activity are the production of ready-to-wear garments, leather garments and bags, and woollen sweaters. Until recently, these seemed to be the only productive sectors open to Chinese immigrants. However, new trends are emerging in the employment patterns of the Chinese in Italy. The two most striking new features are the expansion from performing only simple manufacturing tasks for Italian suppliers to actually managing the entire productive process in the garment sector, and the growing employment in Italian firms, especially in the dynamic industrial districts where migrants of other origins were already working in large numbers.

INTRODUCTION

Italy joined the group of European nations with a positive migratory balance only in 1980, but by now the presence of an immigrant workforce is definitely embedded in the Italian development model. The shift from a net emigration to net immigration country occurred when the internal migration from southern Italy, which had provided the factories in northern Italy with the necessary manpower for their economic development, was coming to an end, and productive decentralization was beginning with the re-emergence of small businesses. Twenty years later, small, dynamic businesses that are mainly clustered in industrial districts specializing in local production are a distinctive feature of the Italian economy to the extent that among industrialized countries Italy counts the largest number of small businesses and the lowest number of employees per business (Accornero, 2000). Starting from the 1980s, opportunities for a low-skilled labour force opened for new migrants mainly in these productive activities. In addition, throughout the 1980s and the 1990s niche opportunities for self-employment in workshops producing for Italian suppliers were also appearing or expanding.

Among other migrant groups arriving in Italy were those of Chinese origin. The crucial time for the recent migration flow from China to Italy – either directly or via other European countries, such as France and Holland – can be dated from the early 1980s. Since then, a succession of unskilled workers originating almost exclusively from the south-eastern Chinese province of Zhejiang arrived in the country, after the family-based chains of emigration that had almost come to a halt during the years of the Cultural Revolution had again been revitalized.

Almost without exception, the newly arrived Chinese joined a productive system with workshops where the owner and the workers were Chinese performing manufacturing tasks for Italian businesses. This kind of working arrangement offered two main advantages: the chance to enter an ethnic working environment, thereby reducing the impact of the new cultural and linguistic situation and a job in

which the time needed to progress from workers to self-employment seemed particularly short.

The number of immigrants of Chinese origin has grown rapidly over the last 20 years, as has the number of businesses owned by the Chinese. By today, the Chinese migrant community shows the strongest entrepreneurial aptitude and, according to recent national data, account for the largest number of small business owners among non-EU immigrants in Italy.¹

Unlike the situation in most of the western European countries, such as Great Britain and the Netherlands, where the Chinese are active mainly in the catering service, in Italy their main areas of activity are the production of ready-to-wear garments, leather garments and bags, and woollen sweaters and, until recently, these seemed to be the only productive sectors open to Chinese immigrants. However, new trends are emerging in the employment patterns of the Chinese in Italy. The two most striking new features are the expansion from performing only simple manufacturing tasks for Italian suppliers to actually managing the entire productive process in the garment sector, as well as the growing employment in Italian firms, especially in the dynamic industrial districts where migrants of other origins were already working in large numbers.

After briefly introducing the Italian policies regarding immigration and their impact on the Chinese migrant community, this paper will present the major changes that have taken place during the past few years for the Chinese in Italy and, in particular, new employment patterns in those areas with a high concentration of Chinese.

ITALIAN MIGRATION POLICIES AND THEIR IMPACT ON IMMIGRANTS

Demographic data and amnesties and quotas

In December 2001, there were at least 1.6 million foreigners legally present in Italy, accounting for about 3 per cent of the population. According to official statistics, the five largest groups originated from Morocco, Albania (which is now competing for first place with Morocco), Romania, the Philippines, and China (Caritas, 2002). The Chinese living in Italy thus make up the fifth-largest immigrant population group in Italy.

The first legislative efforts to legalize the migratory phenomenon were initiated at the end of 1986, when an amnesty for “irregular” foreign workers was introduced for the first time. A series of amnesties was to follow (in 1986, 1990, 1995,

1998, and 2002) which, while remedying the perverse effects of the official border closures and the formation of pockets of illegal work, would also indirectly attract new waves of migration. Potential migrants believed that once they were in the country it would somehow be possible to obtain legal status (Ambrosini, 2001b). However, the migration law of 1998 sought to manage the flow of immigrants in a completely different way. First, annual quotas were adopted for the entry of foreign workers. In the current European context, that was a very bold initiative to take and contrasted with the European trend where, until recently, most European countries denied their own status as a country of immigration, “as if trying to exorcize the symbolism that this definition implies” (Zanfrini, 2001).

The quota system was put into full effect for the first time in 2000, authorizing 63,000 admissions. In 2001, 83,000 admissions were authorized. The ministerial decree on migratory waves included special quotas for countries who had signed re-admission agreements and a modest opening in favour of qualified immigrants with quotas reserved for professional nurses (2,000) and workers in advanced technologies (3,000).

A second new element, the guarantee system, was introduced by the 40/98 law, which introduced the notion of a “sponsor” for the first time. A company or individual, not necessarily of Italian citizenship, legally in Italy, could vouch for the entry of a maximum of two foreigners into Italy in order to facilitate their access to the work market. In both 2000 and 2001, the years in which it was possible to sponsor the arrival of new immigrants, foreigners residing in Italy made the most use of this situation (Fasano and Zucchini, 2002; Caritas, 2002).

Generally speaking, both the planning of migratory waves and, to an even greater extent, the introduction of the sponsoring system, have actually encouraged the arrival of a workforce which carries out low-grade, unskilled work. And, even the first tentative openings to facilitate the entry of a limited number of nurses and advanced technology professionals into Italy, does not appear to have been sufficient to counteract Italy’s position as a receiver of mainly low-skilled migrant labour. This is in contrast to the now prevalent trend in other European countries, such as Great Britain and Germany, where highly qualified foreign workers are favoured.

The recently elected centre-right government in Italy introduced a new immigration law in July 2002 (law 189/2002), deciding to resort once more to an amnesty, under which one housekeeper per family and an unlimited number of help workers for the elderly or handicapped could be legalized. A decree of September 2002 (195/2002) extended the amnesty to all undocumented immigrants who already possessed a work contract in Italy. Under this law, those without employment at the end of the two-year duration of their residence permit would be per-

mitted to legally remain in Italy to look for a job for another six months before having to leave the country. This law also discontinued the sponsorship system.

The amnesty now under way promises to be the largest amnesty ever to have been granted in the country. In fact, while the last two amnesties in 1995 and 1998 allowed the regularization of 246,000 and 217,000 immigrants, respectively (Carfagna, 2002), the current amnesty has attracted almost 700,000 migrants wishing to regularize their status, of whom around 340,000 are domestic employees, household help, or assistants for dependent people such as the elderly or handicapped, and about 360,000 who carry out dependent work in other sectors.

In mid-October 2002, a further 20,500 admissions were authorized through the quota system, of which 2,000 were reserved for highly qualified immigrants for self-employment; during 2002 ad hoc decrees were introduced admitting 56,000 seasonal workers altogether.

Italy has never had a single act concerning asylum. The 2002 immigration law also introduced the screening of asylum applications at the frontier, as well as simplified procedures. However, unlike in some other European countries, for instance the United Kingdom, in Italy migrants did not consider the asylum channel as among the most convenient ways of legalizing their status. In fact, at the end of 2001, out of 5,520 applications, 5,152 immigrants had been granted asylum (Caritas, 2002).

The need for immigrant labour

It is estimated that 20 years after the arrival of the first immigrants in Italy, around 650,000 foreign workers hold regular employment in Italy today (Caritas, 2001), while around 360,000 are believed to be working irregularly (Reyneri, 2000). Immigrant labour is found all over the country and especially throughout the smallest Italian firms (Zanfrini, 2001; Ambrosini, 2001a).

Some authors have identified the main patterns of immigrant entry to the job market (Ambrosini, 2001b; Ambrosini and Zucchetti, 2002). The first, and continuously growing pattern, is in the industrial districts with a large concentration of many small businesses specializing in local production, which play a crucial role in the Italian economy. A second pattern can be seen in the big cities, especially Milan and Rome, where immigrants provide labour-intensive services and especially domestic help and care of the elderly. The number of foreign domestic workers in Italy is close to 50 per cent of the total number of registered regular workers, and in the provinces of Rome and Milan three out of four domestic workers registered with the Italian National Insurance Scheme (INPS, Istituto Nazionale di Previdenza Sociale) are immigrants (Ambrosini, 2001a).

Similar to other family-oriented social systems of southern Europe, the demand for family and personal services is particularly strong in Italy, especially as the public sector is unable to satisfy the growing need for family help. As a result of the current amnesty, the number of regular domestic helpers is bound to increase dramatically in 2003. The third important areas where immigrant entry to the job market is widespread are agriculture and tourism, where employment is mostly seasonal and temporary, and linked to harvesting time and the tourist season.

The geographical distribution of immigrant entry to the job market shows territorial diversification, pointing to a north-south divide that continues to be characteristic of the national economy. Almost 60 per cent of all permits of stay were issued in northern Italy and the role of the north as leader in immigrant employment becomes evident if we look at the national distribution of permits according to their purpose: 59 per cent of permits of stay for dependent work, and 57 per cent for self-employment were issued in the north (Caritas, 2002).

A great propensity to absorb immigrant manpower has been noted in these areas, not only in sectors related to mechanics and machinery, but also in the wood-working, textiles and garments, and leather and shoe-making industries, so much so, that “an incipient process of foreign worker inclusion can be observed in the fabric of wide-ranging industrialization (...) producing traditional ‘made in Italy’ goods” (Zanfrini, 2001).

Italian employers now openly recognize immigrants have become an indispensable part of the Italian economy. For several years, business associations have been protesting against the overly small annual quotas for migrants determined by the Government² and, since 1999, the *Unioncamere* (National Association of Chambers of Commerce) has introduced annual surveys of the requirements for workers from non-EU countries. According to these, Italian employers would have been willing to take at least 100,000 new immigrants in 2001 (Zanfrini, 2002). The current amnesty is, therefore, expected to attract migrants from other European countries and to provide an ample supply of labour for Italian employers.

Moreover, in recent years Italy has witnessed the growth of immigrant self-employment, albeit modest in comparison with other European countries with a large migrant population. However, unhindered access to self-employment had been denied for a long time – from 1990 to 1998 – to immigrants coming from countries with which Italy had not signed reciprocal agreements, and these regulations hampered the development of some strong entrepreneurial groups, including the Chinese.

According to the Caritas Statistical Dossier, in 2001 the owners of some 90,000 firms nationwide had a residence permit for self-employment (Caritas, 2002);

ongoing research by the Chamber of Commerce of Milan shows that by mid-2002 the number of individual immigrant businesses had grown to more than 120,000, an increase of almost 20 per cent from the previous year.

However, in a number of small businesses, self-employment often only amounts to the sub-contracting of simple manufacturing tasks from Italian suppliers, allowing Italian contractors to side-step business risk by laying any blame on the sub-contractors (Zanfrini, 2001).

A stabilizing immigrant presence

In general, the immigrant presence in Italy is poised for stability, as confirmed by the data on permanent residents. The distinction made in Italy between permanent residents (*residenti*) and temporary residents (*soggiornanti*), does not exist in all other European countries. The temporary residence permits in the four-year period from 1997-2000 increased by 9 per cent, demonstrating the growth rate of the immigrant population in Italy, while during the same period the number of recorded permanent residents grew by an annual rate of 13 per cent, showing the strong tendency toward stable immigrant settlement in the country (Blangiardo, 2002). The trend to settle is also confirmed by the large increase in family reunions – residence permits for family reasons in 2001 accounted for 26.4 per cent of all residence permits (Blangiardo, 2002) – and, as Table 1 shows, by the growing number of minors among immigrants (Blangiardo, 2002: Table 2).

TABLE 1
PERCENTAGE OF MINORS AMONG FOREIGNERS RESIDENT
IN THE LARGE TERRITORIAL DIVISIONS ON 1 JANUARY

Year	%
1997	14.2
1998	15.1
1999	16.7
2000	18.1
2001	19.0

Source: ISTAT data, from Blangiardo, 2002.

The birth rate for immigrants in Italy is twice that of Italians, to the extent that immigrant life contributes toward sustaining the population growth rate and, in 2001 – as is also the case in Greece and Austria – compensated for the natural negative growth rate (Farina, 2002). However, there still remains a gap between the inclusion of immigrants into the productive system and their integration into

the social fabric, characterized by the difficulty in accessing social services, serious housing problems, and cultural marginalization (Ceccagno, 2001; Cesareo, 2002; Zanfrini, 2001).

EARLY AND RECENT MIGRATION FLOWS FROM CHINA TO ITALY

Italy, Europe: the chess board of opportunity

As we have seen, the fairly regular amnesties have enabled undocumented immigrants to remedy their clandestine status, and the majority of Chinese, like other immigrants of different origins, arrived in Italy as unregistered migrants from China, but also from other European countries where they had not been able to fully regularize their status.

Most of the amnesties in Italy were announced well ahead of time, and detailed information on the imminence of amnesties has always circulated widely among the Chinese in Italy and their relatives in China and Europe. For instance, in the central Italian town of Prato, in just one day in September 2002, more than 3,000 irregular Chinese presented themselves at the Chinese Consulate's temporary office hurriedly opened to accommodate the unexpectedly high number of passport applications, as passports were a precondition to qualify for the amnesty. In the queue were Chinese already present (illegally) in Italy, but also many who had come especially from Spain, France, and the Netherlands, attracted by the prospect of legalization.³

Illegal migrants arriving from other European countries did not only come from western and southern Europe, but also from eastern Europe. During the 1995 and 1998 amnesties, Chinese also came to Italy from the new destination and transit countries – Hungary in the first instance, but also Slovenia, Croatia, and Russia.⁴

Italy is considered to be a desirable place to settle in Europe precisely because of the frequent amnesties that have given access to regularization. This is undoubtedly the most pressing requirement for all Chinese migrants, considered as the watershed marking the end of their odyssey and the acquisition of a series of residence rights (including the chance to visit China and reunite with their family in the new country). Many Chinese interviewed during my research work⁵ declared that the Chinese in Europe often move frantically from one country to another at the beginning of the migration process, ready to grasp every available opportunity of regularizing their status and that they pay particular attention to any local policies that could help them to achieve their objective.

For the Chinese, Europe can also be seen as a chess board on which various family members move around to minimize the risks, take best advantage of the

existing conditions and to grasp the best opportunities. Movement from one European country to another is aided by the Chinese diaspora's high mobility. In the last few years, researchers have highlighted the mobility and transnational character of the Chinese diaspora and shown how European national boundaries present no barrier to them Chinese, who are scattered all over the continent (Pieke et al., forthcoming). Through family networks, shared dialects, and places of origin, immigrants gain access to opportunities throughout Europe, and not just in the country in which they are (temporarily) settled – opportunities for legalization, work, and investment can be identified in any European country.

It is important, however, not to be misled into considering the Chinese as a group of migrants constantly on the move; for many, the possibility of moving around Europe remains only a potential one. With the passage of time, there is a strong tendency to put down roots in the country where they have been legalized.

The number of Chinese in Italy

Owing to the frequent amnesties and available working opportunities for unskilled people, the number of immigrants of Chinese origin in Italy – as for immigrants from other countries – has grown exponentially since the 1980s. As Table 2 shows, only 1,600 residence permits were granted to Chinese citizens in Italy in the mid-1980s, slightly more than 16,000 in 1996, shortly after the 1995 amnesty, and nearly three times as many in 2000, reaching 47,000. According to the *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione* (Immigration Statistical Dossier) which collects data from the Italian Ministry of the Interior, in 2001 there were almost 60,000 (56,566) Chinese regularly living in Italy. Children should be added to these figures since in Italy minors are not issued their own residence permits. Thus, an additional 21.5 per cent is calculated to include them, to reach almost 69,000 Chinese immigrants. However, for the past three or four years the Chinese Embassy in Italy has been referring informally to some 100,000 Chinese present in Italy, and the same number is given by the European Federation of Chinese Organizations (European Federation of Chinese Organizations, 1999).

Data collected at the local level seems to cast some doubt on the reliability of the national data. In fact, as Table 3 shows, if the data for the Chinese presence in two significant settlement areas, the city of Milan and the town of Prato, (12,150 and 8,086, respectively in 2001, not including their districts) are combined, these two centres alone would appear to hold more than a third of the Chinese in Italy.⁶

Clearly, a certain number of Chinese live in an irregular situation in Italy. Estimates from 2000 on the presence of illegal immigrants suggested that they could represent as much as 10 to 15 per cent of the total number of Chinese present (Blangiardo and Farina, 2001). This figure would also appear to be confirmed by

recently completed research on Chinese businesses in Prato, where the entrepreneurs interviewed all stated that in many small firms run by Chinese, often one or two out of eight to ten workers were illegal (Ceccagno, 2003). As the new amnesty attracts new migrants to the country, these estimates will again have to be revised.

TABLE 2
RESIDENCE PERMITS GRANTED TO CHINESE CITIZENS
IN ITALY ON 1 JANUARY

Year	Residence permits
1981*	463
1986*	1,618
1992	15,776
1993	12,166
1994	13,080
1995	13,906
1996	16,200
1997	31,615
1998	35,310
1999	41,237
2000*	47,108
2000**	60,075
2001***	68,727

Sources: *Ministry of the Interior, various years; ISTAT, 1999; **Caritas estimate (Caritas, 2001), ***Including an estimated 21.5% of minors (Caritas, 2002).

TABLE 3
IMMIGRANTS OF CHINESE ORIGIN IN TWO ITALIAN CITIES IN 2001,
ACCORDING TO DATA COLLECTED AT LOCAL LEVEL

	Numbers	Total number of immigrants
Milan	12,150	138,200
Prato	8,086	13,781

Note: The districts of the two cities have not been included.

Sources: Lombardy Region and ISMU Foundation, 2001, and Centre for Immigration Research and Services, 2002.

Besides legalizing the status of irregular immigrants, amnesties have also paved the way for the arrival of a large number of relatives through family reunion schemes. In 2000, 71.7 per cent of residence permits for people of Chinese origin were issued for working purposes and 25.3 per cent for family reunion (Caritas, 2001: 133), while in 2001, 16,595 Chinese, or around 29 per cent of the total, had a permit based on family reunion purposes. In Prato the growth rate of residence permits for family reasons among the Chinese rose by 63 per cent from December 1998 to June 2001 (Centre for Immigration Research and Services, 2002).

The sex ratio of the Chinese in Italy is more and more balanced. In 1992 among those holding residence permits only 37 per cent were female (Caritas, 1993), while in 1996 their numbers had increased to 43 per cent (Caritas, 1997). In 2001, Chinese women accounted for 47.4 per cent in Lombardy (Lombardy Region and ISMU, 2001); in Prato the figure was 46.28 per cent (Centre for Immigration Research and Services, 2002).

The number of Chinese youngsters is also rising, even though we can only estimate their numbers because children do not hold a residence permit of their own and, in particular, the number of children born to Chinese immigrants is increasing. In Lombardy, 423 babies were born to Chinese parents in 2000 (Pasini, 2002), while children born to Chinese parents in Prato made up 18 per cent of all long-term resident Chinese in 2002 (Centre for Immigration Research and Services, 2002). All these features confirm that, as the years go by, the Chinese presence in Italy is becoming more and more stable and balanced.

Places of origin of the Chinese immigrants

In contrast to other European countries such as France, the Netherlands, and Great Britain, where the Chinese arrived from different places in China and east Asia (Benton and Pieke 1999), in Italy, up until a decade ago, almost all the Chinese originated from Zhejiang province. The history of the Zhejianese presence in Europe and Italy goes back about a century. We know that a core of Zhejianese was present at least from the 1920s, and these individuals had found work as travelling trinket vendors, and later in the production and sale of neckties. The migrants who settled in Italy during the 1980s also originated almost exclusively from the southern part of Zhejiang province.

It was only in the late 1980s and early 1990s that significant groups of migrants from other Chinese provinces started arriving in Italy. The Fujianese originating from central and western Fujian, mainly the prefectures of Sanming and Fuqing, were the first to join the previously all-Zhejianese immigrant group. Now they are scattered across Milan, Prato, Rome, and Naples, but also the cities of the north-east, such as Venice, Treviso, Conegliano, Padua, Verona, and most of the areas where Zhejianese had already settled before them (Pieke et al., forthcoming).⁷

In Italy the Fujianese entered into the Zhejianese ethnic economy and adopted the existing working patterns. Until 1995 virtually none of the Fujianese had access to self-employment; they were nearly all working clandestinely in Zhejiangese businesses, often carrying out the most menial tasks. Most of them regularized their status during the 1995 and 1998 amnesties and for them a slow rise to economic success appears to be under way; some have already opened up their own businesses, some are in the process of starting them up. However, their future is far more uncertain than that of the Zhejiang Chinese who set up their own businesses during the previous decade. In the first instance, internal competition has pared profit margins down to the bone, both for employers and employees. Second, as recent immigrants, Fujianese cannot count on as complex a web of contacts and relationships in Italy as the Zhejiangese. In fact, most of them turn to relatives and friends in China to obtain loans at the time when they make the changeover from worker to micro-entrepreneur in Italy, probably more frequently than the Zhejianese did before them (Ceccagno, forthcoming).

Chinese from the north-eastern Chinese provinces (e.g. Manchuria), Heilongjiang, Jilin, and Liaoning, started to arrive in Italy only in the late 1990s. These are better educated migrants, originating mainly from large urban centres, who left their country following the reorganization of state enterprises and administrative organs during the late 1980s that forced many workers to leave their state-sector jobs. In contrast with the Zhejianese, and also with those Chinese originating from Fujian province, those from Manchuria seem to not understand the hard work needed to attain the position of a small entrepreneur and, therefore, do not share the readiness for hard work within the community. A certain number of Manchuria women have carved out a role for themselves inside an ever more complex Chinese community whose needs are constantly increasing. They are employed as workers in workshops owned by Zhejianese, as childminders because of their better knowledge of standard Chinese, or as prostitutes. Many Chinese from the north-eastern provinces, however, look for employment with Italians as quickly as they can, though in recent years a growing number of Chinese in general are increasingly finding employment outside the Chinese-operated workshops.

RECENT TRENDS IN CHINESE BUSINESSES IN ITALY

Differentiation of fields of activity in the 1990s

While most Chinese businesses still specialize in the manufacturing of garments and leather goods for Italian suppliers, the areas of activity have expanded during the past two decades.

The catering service has been one of the most sought after business areas for the Chinese, who, especially in past decades, tended to perceive it as a tangible symbol of their economic upward mobility and as the crowning of their entrepreneurial aspirations. But, unlike the situation in most northern European countries, such as Great Britain and The Netherlands, in Italy it is far from being the main business sector for the Chinese.

Thus, from the early 1990s on, the growing opportunities for ethnic catering in Italy meant that Chinese family groups have settled in virtually every town and small centre in the country, gradually also attracting co-nationals who had entered into local productive areas. The diffusion of the Chinese ethnic restaurants has actually caused the Chinese presence to become more evenly distributed over the entire national territory.

The redrawing of the geography of the Chinese presence in Italy has also been determined by increasing work opportunities outside the historical centres of settlement such as Milan, Rome, Florence, and Bologna. In the last decade, the Chinese presence has grown exponentially in towns and industrial districts needing an unskilled, flexible, low-cost workforce. Areas specializing in the manufacture of garments stand out, including Milan, Prato, and the Florence area, but other areas are also active in the manufacturing industry, including S. Giuseppe Vesuviano in the Naples area and Carpi in the Modena area. New productive sectors in a growing number of areas are also attracting Chinese businesses, for example, the shoe-making industry along the Brenta Riviera, (close to Venice) or the production of curtains and sofas in Varese or Brianza (Lombardy).

In the 1990s the number of Chinese present in Italy rose very rapidly, communities began to stratify, and their internal needs slowly began to surface. First, many Chinese opened shops, bars, and services aimed at serving the ethnic community (travel agencies, jewellers, amusements, arcades, and translation agencies, etc.). Later, some began to also cater to a mixed clientele of both Italians and Chinese (food shops and herbalists). Finally, some began to expand into fields indirectly related to the garment production by opening clothes shops, importing garments produced in China, and supplying reels of thread produced in China and dyed in Italy (Ceccagno, 2003).

Import-export was without doubt one of the most coveted sectors of activity, but also one which required exchange networks with the homeland and a great capacity for interaction with the local environment. For this reason, import-export was one of the sectors occupied mainly by the Chinese in Milan and Rome who had arrived before the great immigration wave of the 1980s; only recently has it also become a test bed for some of the business people who arrived later.

Self-made micro-entrepreneurs

In Italy there is a virtual absence of some categories of Chinese which are present in some northern, western, and eastern European countries, where highly skilled workers are invited, asylum seekers are granted permission to stay in the country, and students arrive to complete their education. Apart from a small group of 428 students present in the country in 2001 (Caritas, 2002), the vast majority of Chinese in Italy are unskilled workers who arrived in Italy and tried their luck in one of the few sectors where the Chinese had asserted their ethnic economy. The arrival of this type of immigrant is related to various factors. First, only recently did Italy introduce a modest opening for skilled workers; second, the qualifications held by educated immigrants already in Italy are not recognized (Zanfrini, 2001); and third, until very recently, there has been an almost complete lack of provisions for attracting immigrants who intend to come to Italy to invest.

Therefore, the so-called Chinese entrepreneurs are only rarely thought of as a category of people already working as business people prior to their arrival in Italy, in possession of capital and know-how, in contrast with most of the Chinese originating from northern China who settled in, e.g. Hungary in the last decade (see Nyíri, this issue). The Chinese who are now entrepreneurs in Italy are those who used to do all sorts of jobs in China. They were attracted to Europe by the dream of becoming rich quickly and reached entrepreneur status only after having tried and worked their way up the ladder in Chinese-owned businesses. Besides, the businesses headed by Chinese in Italy seem to be many – 10,000 Chinese had a residence permit for self-employment in 2001, or more than one-fifth of the total (Caritas, 2002) – but in most of the country they represent very small workshops where only manufacturing tasks for Italian contractors are performed.

Inside Chinese businesses, workers initially carry out the more menial tasks (*zangong*), keeping the workshop clean, cutting loose threads on clothes, folding clothes, and they earn between EUR 400 and EUR 500 per month. If they learn quickly, within a few months they can move up to the post of *shougong*, which requires basic technical abilities (a *shougong* irons and can sew, but not expertly), and can earn about EUR 600 per month, paid either by piece or as a fixed wage. When they become tailors (*chegong*), i.e. full employees, they are paid by piecework and earn between EUR 7,500 and EUR 10,000 per year. There are no living expenses, as workers live with the principal and are provided board and lodging.⁸ Given the amounts earned, several years may be necessary before a Chinese worker has raised the necessary capital to start up a small family business.

Most Chinese workshops perform manufacturing tasks in the production of low to medium-grade garments that are sold in shops and department stores all over Italy. A small number of workshops, however, sew high-grade garments to Italian

suppliers who in turn produce them for major names such as Armani, Gucci, Ferré, Max Mara, Valentino, and Versace (Ceccagno, 2003).

Fragmentation of businesses

In principle, within the ethnic economy managed by fellow countrymen, the possibility of upward mobility in a relatively short time and the release from dependent work to gain self-employment is higher than it would be with Italian employers.

Actually, though, this route of mobility and access to self-employment was denied to the Chinese in Italy from 1990 to 1998. Until 1998, Italy prohibited the access to self-employment to new, legal immigrants coming from countries with which Italy had not entered into reciprocal agreements, including China. In a community which has a strong aptitude for entrepreneurship, such as the Chinese, this created great socio-economic inequalities between the small number of immigrants who had arrived prior to 1989 and were able to enter into self-employment, and the others who were able to work only as employees.

Since the removal of this ban when free access to self-employment was restored, many Chinese have opened new firms or fully regularized those which previously operated on the borderlines of legality (Ceccagno, 2001).

The mushrooming of Chinese-operated businesses in Italy is particularly evident in Milan and Prato, the two Italian cities with the highest concentration of Chinese businesses. In Prato, the 375 firms active in 1996 increased to 479 in 1997, to 862 in 1998, to 1,288 in 2000, and to almost 1,400 in 2001 (see Table 4). These figures are even more impressive if we take into account the fact that in 2001 the adult population of Chinese origin in Prato was 8,026. In Milan the increase from 1999 to 2001 was almost 70 per cent (Ambrosini and Zucchetti, 2002) (see Table 5).

Rather than being the epitome of the entrepreneurial aspirations for many Chinese or the direct result of an increase in business, the strong growth of Chinese enterprises seems to be caused by the division of already established businesses.

The phenomenon of business fragmentation is also visible in the progressive reduction in the number of workers employed by the firms. There are no official figures on the number of dependent employees in Chinese firms, and in any case some members of the workforce are not officially employed. However, the information gathered from a number of Chinese business associates leads us to the conclusion that in the Prato area those Chinese firms which employ between 13 and 15 workers are rare and considered to be medium to large-sized businesses (Ceccagno, forthcoming).⁹

TABLE 4
CHINESE FIRMS OPERATING IN PRATO

Year	Number of businesses
1993	212
1994	289
1996	375
1997	479
1998	862
1999	1,158
2000	1,288
2001	1,392

Source: Centre for Immigration Research and Services, 2001.

TABLE 5
CHINESE FIRMS OPERATING IN MILAN

Year	Number of businesses
1993	340
1999	889
2000	1,212
2001	1,505

Source: ISMU, 2001.

The splitting of Chinese businesses in the Prato area reflects not just the trends of the industrial districts but also the traditional characteristics of local firms. In Milan, on the other hand, family businesses have tended instead to form consortia in the last few years – several families gather around one family able to guarantee commissions, although each one remains a firm in its own right. This kind of work organization allows the members of the consortium to be available for urgent commissions which have to be finished quickly, thus being more competitive than smaller workshops (Cologna, 2001). It is probable that the nature of productive settlement, in either metropolitan or industrial areas, heavily influences the type of productive model of the Chinese workshops. However, this hypothesis needs to be investigated through a comparative study of Chinese entrepreneurial activity in the main northern, central, and southern settlement areas.

Pioneer ethnic entrepreneurs enter the *pronto moda* business

Until now, the economic and social differences among the Chinese who have settled in Italy have usually been defined in terms of their ability to reach the status of the so-called “ethnic entrepreneur”. However, this label includes a variety of entrepreneurs who share the same productive models but have highly diversified levels of entrepreneurial and economic achievements.

In particular, we may define a certain number of families who arrived in the 1980s and who are now well off as “pioneer” ethnic entrepreneurs. These Chinese founded their businesses before the Italian law imposed a ten-year halt to access to self-employment for Chinese immigrants, and before internal competition among the Chinese had eroded profit margins. These are the entrepreneurs who made the best use of the ethnic market and managed to use family relations and friendships within the ethnic community to obtain loans and financial support from the groups of *laoxiang* (fellow countrymen). Various environmental factors, combined with relational abilities within the community of origin, have allowed this group to broaden the range of its activities, therefore guaranteeing far greater profit margins than those enjoyed by the majority of small entrepreneurs. For instance, many of them started import-export businesses between Italy and China and occupy the desirable niche of providing ethnic services for the Chinese community.

But the most important change is that of garment manufacturing – these entrepreneurs have recently expanded their activities into the segments of clothing design, cutting, manufacturing, and selling, which only a few years ago would have been inaccessible to the Chinese.

“Ready-to-wear” becomes Chinese

Chinese *pronto moda* – firms that design ready-to-wear garments, which can be produced quickly and follow monthly or even weekly changes in fashion, have workshops produce them, and then sell them to wholesalers or cut-price chain stores – is a recent development; although there has been a mushrooming of *pronto moda* in Prato in the past ten years, the owners of these businesses were all Italians who gave the garments to be sewn to the many local workshops run by Chinese. In the past two years, however, gradually the Chinese, too, have begun to set up this kind of activity. Now there are at least 100 Chinese-owned firms producing ready-to-wear garments in Prato’s industrial area (Ceccagno, 2003). Some of these have a workshop to produce their own garments, as well as occasionally producing also for other suppliers; others do not have their own production but turn to workshops run by Chinese, just as the Italian suppliers do.

The Chinese *prontisti* (those who manage the *pronto moda* system) have not yet reached sophisticated levels of distribution and for now it is just direct sales in

shops, but their network of buyers is already impressive – they have clients, including Chinese wholesalers, arriving from many European countries.

The move from third party to supplier is significant because it involves a series of skills and contacts that, until a short time ago, Chinese small-business people did not have: knowledge and buying of fabrics and accessories, knowledge of the fashion market and the ability to adjust very rapidly, and the ability to attract clients by becoming competitive compared to Italians in terms of quality, variety, and price.

Access to the *pronto moda* business, however, is not for all small Chinese entrepreneurs. Rather, it is the prerogative of a limited number of entrepreneurs able to secure the required capital, assume the higher commercial risk, and count on help from relatives, which are conditions mainly satisfied by the Zhejiang Chinese who arrived prior to those from other areas. Only a small portion of Chinese businesses are moving toward the trend described above. For the majority of the Chinese who arrived since the 1990s prospects have been quite different.

Small ethnic entrepreneurs and subsistence entrepreneurs

In the last few years Chinese workshops have had to face a growing number of interrelated constraints. Internal competition has reduced profit margins, while the seasonal nature of manufacturing and the increasing incidents of deception and swindles by suppliers have exacerbated an already uncomfortable situation. These constraints, combined with the scarcity of cultural and social resources, as well as the increasing difficulty in activating *guanxi* (connections) needed to sustain economic upward mobility, undermine the foundations of many small businesses (Ceccagno, 2001). This is particularly true for those who may be described as subsistence entrepreneurs. They became entrepreneurs only recently and all they manage to do is put together three or four sewing machines in a small workshop or in a corner of a workroom rented jointly by several small companies. The subsistence *laobans* are those who have become entrepreneurs in order to end the excessive instability they were subjected to as workers. They still dream of upward economic mobility based on the successful model of the ethnic companies of the late 1980s and early 1990s, but it is clear to all that it is virtually impossible to reproduce this model.

These smallest firms do not have the means to support the weight of business risks (discontinuity of orders, inspections, deceptions, and swindles by Italians, or extortion from fellow countrymen), to the point that they sometimes end up completely overwhelmed and their businesses dissolve.

In many cases a Chinese micro-entrepreneur is just somebody who has tried to exploit his own workforce, including his family and his workers. His competitive

advantages in comparison with the mass of workers are usually modest, unstable, and, therefore, easily reversible.

Employment with Italians

Italy seems to be the “pioneer country” in Europe where employment with Italians is attracting increasing numbers of Chinese nationals. This is a recent phenomenon – until the mid-1990s, Italians used to consider the near-total absence of Chinese in the dependent work market as proof of the withdrawn nature and “otherness” of the community (Ceccagno and Omodeo, 1995). In fact, at that time there were virtually no Chinese working for Italians and most of the Chinese who had a residence permit would not even have considered this, as wages in ethnic firms were considerably higher and entrepreneurial prospects more enticing, while the outside world was unknown and inhospitable. Figures on the number of Chinese employed by Italian firms are not available; nonetheless, the phenomenon appears to be growing. Veneto and Tuscany absorb the largest number of Chinese labour. There are already some Chinese settlements at the foot of the Alps, for example, all of whom are employed by Italian companies in the industrial district which specializes in the production of eyeglasses.

Various factors weigh heavily on the decision to work for an Italian employer. The need for a house, the most obvious statement of stability, becomes most acute for everyone as soon as children are born. Other reasons are the chance to learn the language, have fully legalized employment, lower working hours compared to Chinese-run businesses, and the chance to request the arrival of family members. All this is in contrast to the situation of instability, ethnic isolation, uncertainty, and irregularity in the workplace that immigrants know they will encounter in firms run by the Chinese. Undoubtedly, the increasing interest for work with Italians is also motivated by the progressive limitation of space for economic and professional upward mobility within the ethnic group.

Employment with Italians should not, however, be viewed as always being the exact opposite of work within the ethnic community. The Centre for Immigration Research and Services in Prato has recently collected statements from Chinese working for Italians with contracts which only partially cover the actual number of hours worked, working days longer than the contractual eight hours, and working for entire months with no pay (Ceccagno, forthcoming).

But, it is important to remember that the decision to work for Italian employers is not a definitive and irreversible departure from working in the ethnic community. Some Chinese see it as a transitional phase in their life project, with the belief that they can open their own business at a later date.

CONCLUSION

Italy was the first country of settlement in southern Europe for the new wave of Chinese who arrived in large numbers in most of Europe since the early 1980s and remains the principal destination of Chinese migrants in southern Europe.

The phenomenon of recent arrivals of migrants from China is primarily linked to the particular phase of development experienced by the sending areas in China during the last 20 years, where reforms and the growing integration into the world economy are being pursued. The arrival of migrants from China has also been induced by the recent epochal changes that have taken place in Europe, namely the disintegration of the Soviet bloc and the further integration and expansion of the EU that have greatly facilitated mobility across national frontiers.

Within this framework, Italian politics, together with frequent amnesties, and economic features such as a proliferation of small businesses and the existence of an informal economy, have also played a fundamental role in attracting an uninterrupted flow of new arrivals from China.

The 1990s could be considered a turning point for the Chinese in Italy. They are no longer the early pioneers who reached the sparse pre-existing community at the beginning of the 1980s, entering into an ethnic economy which seemed to promise overnight economic success. Chinese now originate from different provinces in China, and different dialects signal the boundaries between sub-groups within the community. Most of them have been able to legalize their status, and – at least up to the announcement of the last amnesty – the situation would have seemed to be the exact opposite than that of the early 1990s, when the general trend in Chinese businesses was that only the employer had a residence permit and most of the workers were irregular. Of course, if Italy is to continue to manage immigration through amnesties, many new migrants could be induced to enter the country illegally and wait for the next opportunity for regularization.

Also, over the last ten years Italy has witnessed growing diversification in the activities and businesses among the Chinese who have settled in Italy. These new trends are particularly noticeable in industrial districts where small firms specializing in local production have assumed a leading role, but are also subject to, on the one hand, crowding and unsustainable competition in those sectors which have become typical of the Chinese community in Italy, and to the evolution of the community structure, on the other.

The ranks of the second generation are beginning to swell, and among these are the growing numbers of Chinese children born in Italy. The second generation seems to play an important role in the family project of upward mobility. This is

evident, in particular, among the Chinese who are active in the new ready-to-wear businesses. Most of those interviewed, in fact, believe that a good knowledge of the Italian language, not usually the case for many adults, but for a growing number of youngsters, is of paramount importance. They are convinced that they gained access to the ready-to-wear business now and not before because only now is the second generation mastering the Italian language and thus able to function as a linguistic and interactive support to parents starting this business.

In short, the Chinese ethnic community in Italy has entered a more mature phase. In the last few years, one of the most significant features has been the greater integration of the Chinese community, which Italians have long considered to be very closed, into Italian everyday life, in addition to the increase of work contacts with Italians. It should be understood that the organization of work within the ethnic community does not exclude contact with Italians. The Chinese economy is fully integrated into the national economy, as those who organize the production of garments or leather goods are Italians, as are the accountants who also handle the paperwork on behalf of the Chinese business people.

By now contacts, exchange, and working interactions with the local population are growing very quickly. In the ready-to-wear business, there are all sorts of relations with Italians, no longer just with suppliers and accountants, but also with fabric manufacturers, stylists, trimmings manufacturers, Italians active in advertising, and a multitude of buyers both from Italy and neighbouring European countries. Moreover, Chinese employers are now taking on Italian staff in order to facilitate relations with clients.

Besides, Italy is witnessing a case of professional and territorial specialization by Italians offering their services to the Chinese. This is the case of the Italian women who in the Naples area work all week as childminders for Chinese children, some of whom are even sent there from elsewhere in Italy.

As we have seen, the reverse also has begun to be true – working for Italian employers has undergone rapid growth and seems to be seen as the way out of a crowded ethnic economy. This trend appears to be the result of a strong demand for cheap immigrant labour generated by the dynamic small business sector of the Italian economy, and, therefore, strongly linked to this specific productive model.

However, other reasons are also at work. New arrivals from China, new sending areas in China, growing internal competition, and saturation of some traditional sectors are also pushing toward employment with Italians. The phenomenon is new and needs to be studied further, but it cannot be ruled out that what is taking place in Italy could be the first sign of a new trend in the Chinese presence in Europe.

NOTES

1. See “Da immigrati ad artigiani, i cinesi al primo posto” (From immigrants to entrepreneurs, the Chinese on top), *La Repubblica*, 6 August 2001: 24. The data is also from unpublished tables obtained directly from Confartigianato.
2. See for example *Il Sole 24 Ore* newspaper, 12 July 2002.
3. Conversation on 4 September 2002 with two members of the Chinese associations who carried out crowd control duties for passport applications.
4. Information gathered by the author at the Centre for Immigration Research and Services, Prato, during the two amnesties of 1995 and 1998.
5. Qualitative fieldwork done by the author during the last years and in particular on two recent research projects – a project on the Fujianese communities in Europe, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council of England and Wales (ESRC), headed by Professor Frank Pieke of the University of Oxford, Great Britain; and a project on the Chinese entrepreneurs in Prato, funded by the Centre for Immigration Research and Services, Prato, Italy, and other local institutions conducted by the author in 2001-2002.
6. This is even truer if we take into account the fact that minors are not included in these figures. The data were gathered from the Lombardy Region and I.S.M.U. Foundation, *Osservatorio Regionale per l'integrazione e la multiethnicità, Rapporto 2001*, and Centre for Immigration Research and Services, 2002.
7. Information on the Fujianese in Italy has been collected through qualitative fieldwork conducted by the author in 2001 and 2002 as part of the above-mentioned project on the Fujianese communities in Europe.
8. Interviews conducted by the author in Prato on 15 May 2001 (filename C010506i2), 20 May 2001 (filename C010520i1), 25 May 2001 (filename C010525i1), and 1 June 2001 (filename C010601i1) within the aforementioned project on the Fujianese in Europe.
9. This information, together with that on *pronto moda*, was collected as part of the above-mentioned project aimed at Chinese entrepreneurs in the Prato area. In particular, the author of this paper, together with Mo Dongke, conducted ten long interviews on the subject with local Chinese entrepreneurs from October 2001 to April 2002.

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NOUVEAUX IMMIGRANTS CHINOIS EN ITALIE

En 1980, l'Italie a rejoint le groupe des nations européennes présentant un bilan migratoire positif, mais aujourd'hui, la présence d'une main-d'œuvre immigrée est définitivement ancrée dans le modèle de développement italien. La transition du statut de pays d'émigration nette à celui de pays d'immigration nette s'est effectuée lorsque la migration interne en provenance de l'Italie méridionale, qui répondait aux besoins de développement économique du Nord de l'Italie, a pris fin, et que la décentralisation productive a commencé, avec la réémergence des petites entreprises. Vingt ans plus tard, des petites entreprises dynamiques essentiellement regroupées dans les secteurs industriels spécialisés dans la production locale sont une caractéristique marquante de l'économie italienne, à tel point que, parmi les pays industrialisés, l'Italie est celui qui compte le plus grand nombre de petites entreprises et le plus petit nombre d'employés par entreprise (Accornero, 2000). A partir des années 80, des opportunités en termes de main-d'œuvre peu qualifiée se sont fait jour pour de nouveaux immigrants, essentiellement dans ce type d'activités productives. En outre, pendant toutes les années 80 et 90, des créneaux particuliers sont apparus pour des emplois indépendants dans des ateliers travaillant pour des fabricants italiens.

Des immigrants d'origine chinoise figuraient au nombre des groupes d'immigrants arrivant en Italie à cette époque. C'est au début des années 80 qu'il faut situer l'époque cruciale de l'immigration chinoise récente en Italie – que ce soit directement en provenance de Chine ou depuis d'autres pays européens de transit tels que la France et la Hollande. Depuis lors, l'Italie a vu affluer une succession de travailleurs non qualifiés venant presque tous de la province de Zhejiang, dans le Sud-Est de la Chine, lorsque les chaînes familiales de l'émigration furent revitalisées après s'être presque complètement interrompues durant les années de la révolution culturelle. Le nombre d'immigrants d'origine chinoise a rapidement augmenté au cours des vingt dernières années, en même temps que le nombre d'entreprises gérées par des Chinois. A l'heure actuelle, la communauté chinoise immigrée est celle qui présente l'aptitude la plus marquée à l'entreprise, et, selon des données nationales récentes, compte le plus grand nombre de propriétaires de petites entreprises parmi les immigrants extérieurs à l'UE en Italie.

Contrairement à la situation prévalant dans la majeure partie des pays d'Europe occidentale, comme la Grande-Bretagne et les Pays-Bas, où les Chinois sont surtout présents dans la restauration, les principaux domaines d'activité occupant la communauté chinoise en Italie sont la production de vêtements prêts à porter, de vêtements et d'articles de cuir, et de pull-overs en laine. Jusqu'à récemment, ces mêmes secteurs semblaient être les seuls secteurs productifs ouverts aux immigrants chinois. L'on voit cependant se dégager de nouvelles tendances dans ce domaine. Les deux caractéristiques nouvelles les plus frappantes sont le fait que les Chinois

se bornent de moins en moins aux simples travaux de fabrication pour des fournisseurs italiens et prennent pied dans tout le processus de production proprement dit du secteur de l'habillement, tandis qu'ils gèrent également une main-d'œuvre croissante au sein de sociétés italiennes, surtout dans les secteurs industriels dynamiques où les immigrés d'autres origines sont déjà présents en grand nombre.

LOS NUEVOS MIGRANTES CHINOS EN ITALIA

Italia se ha unido al grupo de naciones europeas que contaban con un saldo positivo migratorio en 1980, pero ahora la presencia de una fuerza laboral inmigrante está definitivamente enraizada en el modelo de desarrollo italiano. El cambio entre país de migración neta a país de inmigración neta se produjo cuando la migración interna desde Italia meridional, que había provisto a las fábricas instaladas en el Norte de Italia la mano de obra necesaria para su desarrollo económico, llegaba a su fin y comenzaba la descentralización productiva con el resurgimiento de pequeños negocios. Veinte años después, las pequeñas empresas dinámicas que se concentran principalmente en los distritos industrializados especializados en la producción local son una característica distintiva de la economía italiana y en tal medida que entre los países industrializados Italia es el que tiene el mayor número de pequeños negocios y el número más bajo de empleados por negocio (Accornero, 2000). A partir de los años ochenta, se abrieron oportunidades para migrantes poco calificados a fin de que trabajaran en estas esferas productivas. Así mismo, a lo largo de los años ochenta y noventa se dieron oportunidades de autoempleo en talleres para proveedores italianos recién creados o ampliados.

Entre estos grupos que llegaban a Italia estaban los de origen chino. Puede decirse que el momento crucial de la reciente inmigración desde China hacia Italia – ya sea directamente o a través de otros países europeos tales como Francia y Holanda – data de principio de los años ochenta. Desde entonces, una serie de trabajadores sin competencias provenientes casi exclusivamente de la provincia sudoriental china de Zhejiang llegaron al país, una vez que se hubieran asentado las cadenas familiares de emigración que prácticamente se habían interrumpido durante los años de la revolución cultural y que ahora estaban siendo revitalizadas.

El número de inmigrantes de origen chino ha aumentado raudamente en los últimos 20 años, así como el número de empresas pertenecientes a los chinos. Hoy en día, la comunidad migrante china tiene una actitud decididamente emprendedora y, de acuerdo con recientes datos nacionales, representa el principal número de pequeños negocios entre migrantes no miembros de la Unión Europea en Italia.

A diferencia de la situación en la mayoría de los países Europa Occidental, tales como Gran Bretaña y los países Bajos, donde los chinos trabajan principalmente en los servicios de restauración, en Italia sus principales esferas de actividad son la producción de prendas de vestir, accesorios en cuero, carteras, ropa de lana y hasta hace poco, esos parecían ser los únicos sectores productivos abiertos a inmigrantes chinos. Sin embargo, surgen nuevas tendencias en los patrones de empleo de chinos en Italia. Dos de las características más notables son la ampliación a fin de desempeñar no sólo tareas manufactureras simples para proveedores italianos sino administrar procesos productivos enteros en el sector de la confección de prendas de vestir, y un creciente empleo en firmas italianas, especialmente en los distritos industriales dinámicos donde los migrantes de otros orígenes ya están trabajando en grandes cantidades.