

Exhibit unveils Sicilian treasures

A jar gilded with silver features relief patterns. It was made in Palermo in the upper half of the 17th century.



eted lineage is reflected in the colourful fusion of art and architecture — including two of the best-preserved Greek temples in the world — as well as in the mixed appearances of the inhabitants, ranging from the red-haired, blonde and

Chinese and Sicilian cultures, pointed out Maria Luisa Fama, a major curator for the exhibition from Sicily.

One telling piece is the rare 17th century volume of “*Zhongyong*,” or “Doctrine of the Mean,” literally meaning the Middle Path,

Another example is a gilded bronze lamp which bears coral decorations and was believed to have been made in 1633 in Sicily. The lamp-makers had borrowed ideas from the Chinese lantern in its designs of the shape and the red colouring, Fama explained.

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Italian priest known as ‘translator of Confucius’

By Hong Jingtian

Born in Piazza Armerina in 1625, Prospero Intorcetta (1625-96) became a priest in 1654 after studying theology, philosophy, logic and letters at several Jesuit colleges.

On January 8, 1656, Intorcetta sailed from Genova en route to China, with other Jesuits from Portugal, Germany, Belgium and Italy.

Between 1657 and 1659, Intorcetta stayed in Macao where he studied the Chinese language. Shortly later, he was sent to the Chinese mainland, to join the mission in today’s Nanchang, capital of East China’s Jiangxi Province.

In September 1665, Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) Emperor Kangxi, who had been advised to oppose the missionaries, issued an order for the arrests of Jesuits.

Intorcetta, along with other missionaries, were put in prison first in Beijing and then trans-

ferred to Guangzhou.

In 1668, he fled to Macao and in 1671 arrived in Rome where he

wrote a book about missionaries in China.

In 1672, Intorcetta was sent to China again and founded the first Jesuit Novitiate in Hangzhou, capital of East China’s Zhejiang Province, and became the first rector and master. He met Emperor Kangxi in Hangzhou in 1677 when the emperor was on an inspection tour to southern China provinces.

Intorcetta is believed by historians to have played a key role in political and religious events that eventually led to the issuing of an imperial decree expressing religious tolerance, with which Emperor Kangxi was to legalize the work of the Christian missionaries in China.

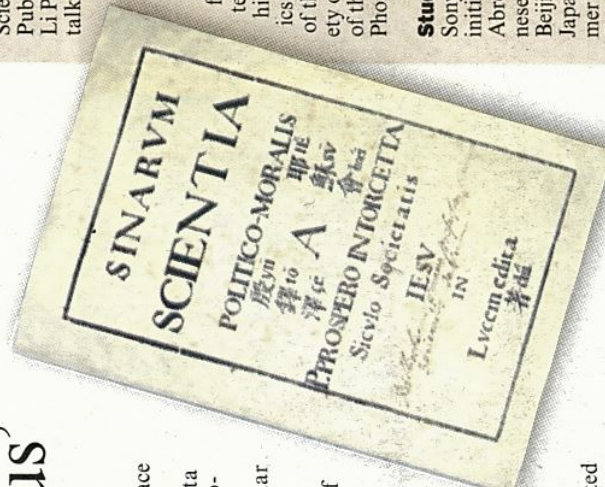
Intorcetta died on October 3, 1696, at 71, in Hangzhou, the place where he spent 20 years.

As early as in 1873, Intorcetta was considered “the first European translator of Confucius” by Sicilian historian and scholar Vincenzo Di Giovanni.

Going in circulation in 1669 in Italy, the Confucius book of “*Zhongyong*,” or “Doctrine of the Mean,” was compiled by Intorcetta.

It contains the first translation in Latin, alongside the original version in Chinese.

The original text of “*Sinarum Scientia Politico-Moralis*” is believed by Italian experts to have been partly printed in China by Chinese technicians using local materials, and partly by Western technicians, using Western paper and techniques. This is a practice hailed by some Sicilian scholars as an emblem of cross-cultural communication between China and Italy.



“*Sinarum Scientia Politico-moralis*,” one of the works by Prospero Intorcetta, contains the first translation in Latin of one of the Confucian Four Books.



A portrait of Prospero Intorcetta is kept at the City Library of Palermo.