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Le Memorie della Società degli Spettroscopisti Italiani

S. Serio[1]

DSFA Università di Palermo, and INAF Osservatorio Astronomico di Palermo Giuseppe S. Vaiana, Piazza del Parlamento 1, I-90134 Palermo, Italy
e-mail: serio@astropa.unipa.it

Abstract. Le Memorie della Società degli Spettroscopisti was the first international scientific journal dedicated to Physical Astronomy. I trace its history until, in 1920, it changed its name into Memorie della Società Astronomica Italiana.

Key words. History, Astrophysics, Italy

The *Società degli Spettroscopisti Italiani* [1] was established in Rome on October 5, 1871, during a meeting attended by representatives of the Astronomical Observatories of Capodimonte (Arminio Nobile), Collegio Romano (Angelo Secchi) and Palermo (Pietro Tacchini) officialy delegated by the directors of the Observatories of Padua (Giuseppe Lorenzoni) and Campidoglio (Lorenzo Respighi), and whose transcripts are published on the first issue of the *Memorie della Società degli Spettroscopisti Italiani* (1872).

The society was rather different from a modern scientific society such as, for example, Società Astronomica Italiana. It was more similar to what we would call a Consortium for a scientific programme requiring cooperation among different Institutes. Scope of the Society was in fact to coordinate solar observations of the participating observatories, to obtain maximum coverage in monitoring solar phenomena. Work to be done included monitoring and morphological studies of prominences, sunspots, faculae and spiculae, spectroscopical studies, measurements of solar diameters, study the correlation of solar phenomena with Aurorae and terrestrial magnetism. The participating observatories would have to take monthly shifts to perform monitoring chores, telegraphing the other observatories in case of bad weather or of other impediments.

Tacchini took charge of presenting a proposal to the Ministry of Public Instruction to obtain funds for the publication of the results, and for telegraph expenses. The original idea was to publish on the *Giornale di Scienze Naturali* in Palermo, but the funding of the proposal was probably more generous than expected, and he was able to start with a dedicated journal, the *Memorie della Società degli Spettroscopisti Italiani*. The Journal was published in Palermo by *Stabilimento Tipografico Lao* and, in its first volume, is embellished by a number of tables by the lithographer Frauenfelder, author of many of the figures of

Send offprint requests to: S. Serio

[1] For the early history of the Memorie and of the Society I refer to the chapter by G. Foderà Serio in L'Astronomia in Italia, F. Bonoli Editor, Società Astronomica Italiana, Naples 1998, pages 21 to 31.

Giornale di Scienze Naturali, who had collaborated with Tacchini to the volume dedicated to the reports of the Italian Commission for the eclipse of 1870 [2] and to the beautiful drawings of prominences in other previous publications by Tacchini.

Obviously, the prompt response of the Ministry and the generous funding were due mainly to the quality of the proposal. Tacchini, however, celebrating the twenty-fifth volume of the Journal, feels a special obligation to thank three persons, without whom the success of the Society would have not been possible: Stanislao Cannizzaro (1826-1910), who had been Rector of the University of Palermo in the years preceeding the foundation and was Senator in 1871, and "first helped the starting insitution"; Giovanni Cantoni (1818-1897), Secretary General of the Ministry of Public Education from 1870 to 1872 "who helped it with public support"; and Marco Minghetti (1818-1886), Minister of Public Education from 1873, "who established its life on firm foundations" [3]

The first volume of the Journal, totaling 124 pages, is entirely dedicated to the programme of solar observations of the society. Already in the second volume we find that the journal is open to international contributions. We find in fact articles by T. Bredichin, A. De La Rive, M. Faye, E. Loomis, and C. A. Young. We find also a brief article by Gaetano Cacciatore commemorating Giovanni Battista Donati, who died on September 19, 1873. In the future, the *Memorie* will publish obituaries of all members of the Society, thus giving an important documentation to history of Astronomy and of Astrophysics.

The third volume publishes two notes by T. Bredichin, one by H. Draper (with a photograph of the solar spectrum), R. Gautier, N. Lockyer, and R. Wolf. It is interesting to note that one of the articles by Bredichin is on Comet Coggia, and not on Solar Physics, and that the same volume III publishes an *Appendice Astronomica*, in response, as Tacchini writes, to the need expressed by several Italian astronomers to have a journal open to general astronomy. The Appendix shall be published until 1878, when the main journal has gradually been increasing the fraction of articles on different subjects, making the Appendix useless.

The new journal acquires very soon an international reputation, publishing articles in English and in French in addition to Italian. In 1873 it receives an award at the Universal Exposition in Wien. It is published in Palermo until 1879, when Tacchini becames director of the Observatory of *Collegio Romano* in Rome. From 1899, Annibale Riccò takes charge of its editing, and the journal is printed in Catania until 1920. On this date the Society changes its name into *Società Astronomica Italiana,* and the Journal takes the new title of *Memorie della Società Astronomica Italiana*, *già degli Spettroscopisti*, whose publication continues today. Since 1986 the journal has changed its scope, turning to publishing essentially proceedings of international conferences or invited reviews, rather than unsolicited contributions.

Volume XIX (1890), for the first time, publishes a list of members of the society (see figure below). We do not know when, but likely shortly before this date the *Società degli Spettroscopisti* had changed its bylaws. The new ones call for 30 italian members and 30 foreign members, but the list for 1890 includes 4 empty lines in the italian section. Members include astronomers, physicists and other scientsists, all having in common an interest in spectroscopy, but not necessarily in Solar studies. The journal has served the international community as the first *and only* journal dedicated to *Physical Astronomy*, until 1895, when G.E. Hale established *the Astrophysical Journal*. This date -it is worth mentioning that P. Tacchini was among the members of its editorial board- substantially marks the end of the *Memorie* as an international journal. Actually the *Memorie* shall continue to publish articles in English and French, but mostly reprinting articles appeared in other journals.

[2] G. Cacciatore (ed.), Rapporti delle Osservazioni dell'Ecclisse Totale di Sole del 22 Dicembre 1870 Eseguite in Sicilia dalla Commissione Italiana, Palermo 1872.

[3] Memorie ..., Vol. XXV, 1896.

Elenco dei membri della Società degli Spettroscopisti italiani al 1° gennaio del 1890

	Membri italiani		Membri stranieri
1	Abetti Antonio, Padova.	1	Abney Cap. W., Londra.
2	Blaserna Pietro, Roma.	2	Bredichin T., Mosca.
3	Celoria Giovanni, Milano.	3	Christie W. H. M., Greenwich.
4	Chistoni Ciro, Modena.	4	Cornu M. A., Parigi.
5	Delisa Giuseppe, Palermo.	5	Dunér N. C., Upsala.
6	De Negri Antonio, Genova.	6	Faye H. A. E. A., Parigi.
7	De Negri Giovanni, Genova.	7	Fievez C., Bruxelles.
8	Fergola Emanuele, Napoli.	8	Gautier E., Ginevra.
9	Garibaldi Pier-Maria, Genova.	9	Gill D., al Capo di Buona Speranza.
10	Giacomelli Francesco, Roma.	10	Harkness W., Washington.
11	Grablovitz Giulio, Ischia.	11	Hasselberg B., Stoccolma.
12	Lorenzoni Giuseppe, Padova.	12	Hasting C., New-Haven Conn. (S. U.).
13	Lugli Aurelio, Roma.	13	Holden E., S. Francisco, California.
14	Manzi Giovanni, Piacenza.	14	Huggin W., Londra.
15	Mascari Antonino, Palermo.	15	Janssen P. J. C., Meudon.
16	Mengarini Guglielmo, Roma.	16	Joung C. A., Princeton (S. U.).
17	Millosevich Elia, Roma.	17	Konkoly N. de, O-Gyalla.
18	Morgen Arnolfo, Spezia.	18	Langley S. P., Allegheny (S. U.).
19	Nobile Arminio, Napoli.	19	Lockyer N., Londra.
20	Palazzo Luigi, Roma.	20	Mascart E. E. N., Parigi.
21	Pigorini Pietro, Parma.	21	Piazzi Smyth C., Edimburgo.
22	Pisati Giuseppe, Roma.	22	Pickering E. C., Cambridge (S. U.).
23	Riccò Annibale, Palermo.	23	Rayet G., Bordeaux.
24	Schiaparelli Giovanni, Milano.	24	Rutherfurd S., New-York (S. U.).
25	Tacchini Pietro, Roma.	25	Spoerer E., Potsdam.
26	Zona Temistocle, Palermo.	26	Vogel D. H. C., Potsdam.
27	N. N.	27	Wolf R., Zurigo.
28	N. N.	28	Wolf C. J. E., Parigi.
29	N. N.	29	Waterhouse Col., Calcutta.
30	N. N.	30	Zenger C. V., Praga.

Fig. 1. List of members of the Società degli Spettroscopisti, published in Vol. XIX (1890).

In the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the foundation of the Society, Vol. XL is accompanied by an appendix with a brief history of the Society and a large index of the articles published since 1872. Despite its aperture to essentially all Physical Astronomy, 56% of the articles published at that time wecan be classified as Solar Physics, 16% as Solar System studies, 6% as Astrometry and only 2% as stellar Spectroscopy. The index also shows sizable fractions of articles (2,6%) dedicated to new observatories, and to obituaries of members of the society (3%).