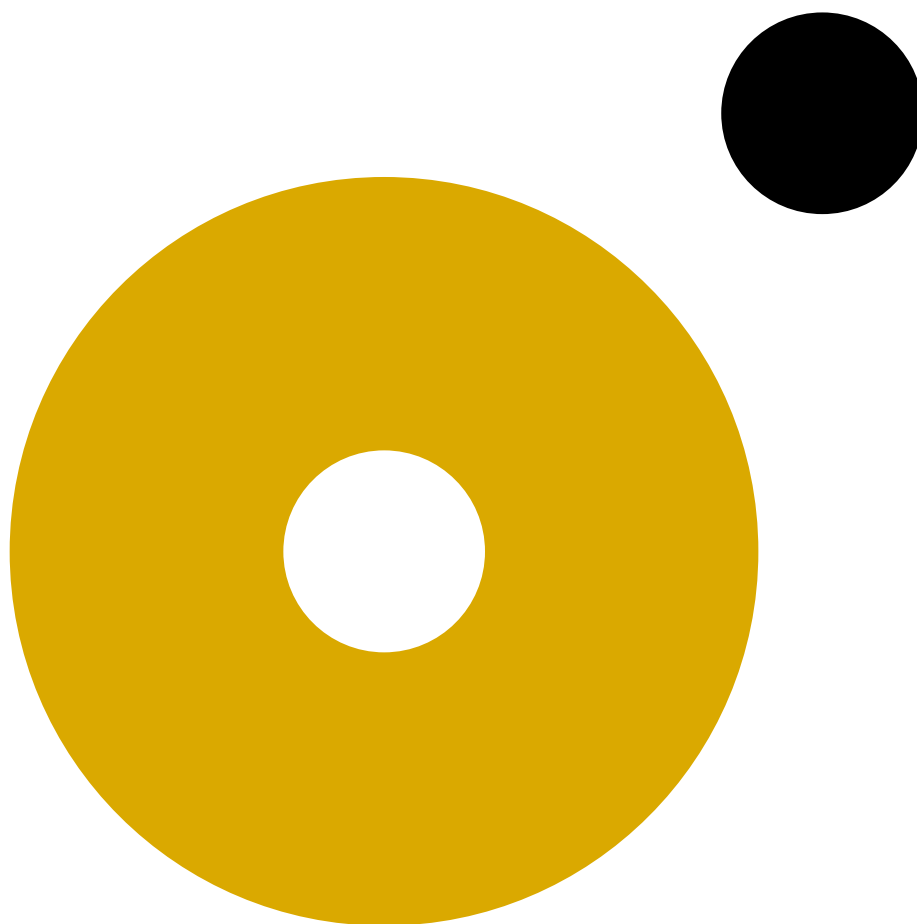


MEMORIA **SCOLASTICA**



The School and Its Many Pasts

edited by Juri Meda, Lucia Paciaroni and Roberto Sani



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The International University Games of 1933. The Fascist Regime and the Issue of Commemorative Stamps as a Memory Policy for a “Glorious” Italian University Tradition

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From 1st to 10th September, 1933, Turin hosted the International University Games whose organisation for Italy was entrusted to the Fascist University Groups (better known as GUF – Gruppi Universitari Fascisti)¹. Ten years earlier, Paris had hosted the first World Student Games, which were organized under the aegis of the *Confédération Internationale des Étudiants* in May. The Turin edition of the World University Games was the seventh one in the summer version – the second one in Italy, after the one in Rome, combined with the winter one held in Cortina in 1928 – and it was actually divided into two stages: the summer games in Turin were preceded from the winter ones, held in Bardonecchia from January 29th to February 3rd².

The enhancement and the celebration of this event by Fascism, like many others coming after each other during the 1930s, was part of that process implemented by the regime to also artificially “build” a great precise image of Italian Universities through the organization of a series of official representations and/or public commemorations promoted by the ministry in the wake of a specific memory policy³.

¹ About GUF, please see M.C. Giuntella, *I Gruppi Universitari Fascisti nel primo decennio del regime*, «Il movimento di liberazione in Italia», vol. 107, n. 2, April-June 1972, pp. 4-38; A. Grandi, *I Giovani di Mussolini: fascisti convinti, fascisti pentiti, antifascisti*, Milano, Baldini & Castoldi, 2001; L. La Rovere, *Storia dei Guf. Organizzazione, politica e miti della gioventù universitaria fascista, 1919-1943*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 2003; H.A. Cavallera, *La formazione della gioventù italiana durante il ventennio fascista*, 2 vols., Lecce, Pensa MultiMedia, 2006; S. Duranti, *Lo spirito gregario. I gruppi universitari fascisti fra politica e propaganda (1930-1940)*, Roma, Donzelli, 2008; E. Signori, *Tra Minerva e Marte: Università e guerra in epoca fascista*, in P. Del Negro, *Le Università e le guerre dal Medioevo alla seconda guerra mondiale*, Bologna, Clueb, 2011, pp. 153-172.

² On this regard, see P. Dessì, P.P. Zannoni (edd.), *Gli studenti dell'Università di Bologna dal fascismo alla liberazione. Aula Magna dell'Università di Bologna, 21 aprile 2010*, Bologna, Clueb, 2010, pp. 26-27.

³ On this subject, see in particular C. Yanes-Cabrera, J. Meda, A. Viñao (edd.), *School Memories. New Trends in the History of Education*, Cham, Springer, 2017; M. Brunelli, J. Meda, L. Pomante (edd.), *Memories and Public Celebrations of Education in Contemporary Times*, «History of Education & Children's Literature», vol. XIV, n. 1 (special issue), pp. 9-394.

Especially thanks to Achille Starace, Giovanni Battista Giuriati's successor at the PNF (Partito Nazionale Fascista) secretariat and a GUF secretary⁴, the university events, which were often linked to sports events as they were able to involve and to animate «Fascist young and courageous men», became the ideal opportunity to recover and to enhance the Italian university traditions, above all the medieval or early Renaissance ones⁵, in order to make them an essential key element in the work of strengthening a national identity.

That «cult of the origins», which ended up being officiated in all the venues and in particular also during the most significant student celebrations and demonstrations, found a concrete application in such precise public situations. However, Fascism did not simply intend to limit to an aseptic commemoration of the past, but to effectively recover that past with its «legendary traditions», in order to seek in them the foundations of that «cultural and civil primacy» of the nation, which constituted the starting point of an age of splendour, such as the one which was started up by Mussolini's regime. Therefore, no collective Fascist manifestation could avoid this inspiring *ratio*.

After all, as recent historiography has well highlighted⁶, parades, public celebrations, organized mass meetings and, more generally, many «spectacular» commemorations organized by the regime ended up developing a real «Fascist liturgy»⁷ whose main purpose was to mould «the new man»⁸ thanks to the fusion between Fascist symbols and rituals and the pre-existing national ones. It is also well known that Fascists boasted several times that they had renewed what was called «mass aesthetics» with their collective rites. As well analysed by Emilio Gentile in his appreciated work *Il culto del littorio*, Fascist celebrations, a precious vehicle of indoctrination for people, could be considered «great choral celebrations» while

'before Fascism, public demonstrations were extremely unaesthetic. [...] When our processions wind across the streets, pass under the arches, form squares at the foot of bell towers and towers in the squares,

⁴ In the rich bibliography devoted to Achille Starace, PNF secretary from 7 December 1931 to 31 October 1939, please see the works by S. Setta, *Achille Starace*, in F. Cordova, *Uomini e volti del fascismo*, Roma, Bulzoni, 1980, pp. 445-472, C. Galeotti, *Achille Starace e il vademecum dello stile fascista*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2000 and A. Spinosa, *Starace: l'uomo che inventò lo stile fascista*, Milano, Oscar Mondadori, 2003.

⁵ On this subject, see S. Cavazza, *Piccole patrie. Feste popolari tra regione e nazione durante il fascismo*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1997, pp. 171-244.

⁶ On this subject, especially see the works by Emilio Gentile, such as: E. Gentile, *Fascism as Political Religion*, «Journal of Contemporary History», vol. 25, n. 2, April 1990, pp. 229-251; Id., *Il culto del littorio: la sacralizzazione della politica nell'Italia fascista*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1993; Id., *Le religioni della politica: fra democrazie e totalitarismi*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2001.

⁷ See L. Klinkhammer, *Il fascismo italiano tra religione di Stato e liturgia politica*, in V. Ferrone, *La Chiesa cattolica e il totalitarismo. VIII giornata Luigi Firpo, Atti del Convegno Torino, 25-26 ottobre 2001*, Firenze, L.S. Olschki, 2004, pp. 185-203 (quotation on p. 185).

⁸ About the subject of the fusion between the Fascist symbols and rituals and the pre-existing national ones, see R. Suzzi Valli, *Riti del Ventennale*, «Storia contemporanea», vol. XXIV, n. 6, December 1993 and Ead., *Jugendfeiern im faschistischen Italien. Die Leva Fascista*, in S. Behrenbeck, A. Nützenadel, *Inszenierungen des Nationalstaats: Politische Feiern in Italien und Deutschland seit 1860/71*, Köln, SH-Verlag, 2000. Instead, about the concept of a «new man», see L. La Rovere, *Rifare gli italiani: l'esperimento di creazione dell'«uomo nuovo» nel regime fascista*, «Annali di storia dell'educazione e delle istituzioni scolastiche», vol. 9, 2002, pp. 51-77.

they are worthy of our cities, and their beauty increases the beauty of stones and marble', giving people 'brotherly love for civic holidays, which is then love for city, tradition and, therefore, homeland'⁹.

At every anniversary celebrated or every collective holiday, the regime used to emphasize the difference in style and spirit with respect to the rites in the liberal age, which were characterized by their «aboulic patriotism» and the «crowd's terror with a commemorative ceremony addressed to the past». On the contrary,

the scenario of the Fascist rites was composed of squares full of applauding people, men, women and children of all the classes, who celebrate the Fascist glory and its leader in unison, in a mystical exaltation. [...] Fascism claimed to have redeemed the crowd by changing them into a *liturgical mass*, who took part in the celebrations of the regime's rites with joy and faith¹⁰.

Thus, even the Turin University Games and the related and connected Italian university historical Carousel, which had the task of introducing the event and, above all, recovering and celebrating the memory of a renowned cultural past¹¹, ended up becoming targeted propaganda tools, which were used by the regime to the achievement of the objectives mentioned above.

In fact, beyond its purely sporting value, the celebrated event was part of that university operation of «invention of tradition»¹² promoted by Mussolini and blindly implemented by the Fascist ruling class throughout the twenty years¹³ with the aim to recover the Italian «glorious» academic traditions, whether they were true or presumed. In fact, the Duce intended to restore and to enhance the ancient value of Italian universities, underlining their primary vital function as a centre for irradiating culture and a mine for

⁹ See Gentile, *Il culto del littorio: la sacralizzazione della politica nell'Italia fascista*, cit., p. 161.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 161-162.

¹¹ About the Italian university historical Carousel organized in Turin, please see the extensive discussion reported in L. Pomante, *L'Università italiana nel Novecento. Nuovi itinerari storiografici e inediti percorsi di ricerca*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2020, pp. 39-47.

¹² As we know, the reference is obviously to the category of the «invention of tradition» elaborated by Eric Hobsbawm in Hobsbawm, Ranger (edd.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983. Instead, according to a more recent contribution by Roberto Sani, the merit of having applied the historiographical category of the «invention of tradition» should be attributed no longer only to political organizations and state apparatuses in the strict sense, «but also to those social and cultural institutions, which were more invested by the deep and radical changes underway and struggling with the consequent need for a new and more solid legitimation of their role and their prerogatives and functions». And among these social and cultural institutions there were also universities and higher education institutions with regard not only to the ancient colleges of English universities struggling with the changes, which were produced by the industrial revolution in cultural and scientific fields and Hobsbawm mentions, but also very old and new universities, which arose in Germany and France during the nineteenth century, as well as that particular type of «minor universities» widespread in Italy, to which Sani himself turns his particular attention. On this regard, please see R. Sani, *The invention of tradition in the minor Universities of united Italy. The case of the thirteenth-century origins of the Studium Maceratense*, «History of Education & Children's Literature», vol. VII, n. 1, pp. 485-504. Finally, about this subject, please also see the interesting work by D. Bidussa, *A proposito della "invenzione della tradizione"*, «Studi storici», vol. LIV, n. 3, July-September 2013, pp. 591-609.

¹³ Please see Pomante, *L'Università italiana nel Novecento. Nuovi itinerari storiografici e inediti percorsi di ricerca*, cit., pp. 19-53.

the new Fascist ruling class in the hoped and definitive realization of that ideal of «state university», which had been always dreamt, but never concretely realized in previous decades¹⁴.

However, in order to be able to fully implement this plan, a specific apologetic celebration of university «glorious traditions» was necessary. Hence, Fascism invented a mythological tradition, which especially aimed at artfully introducing University as a typically Italian “creation” in a phase when the country was about to be considered the cradle of culture and intellectual development par excellence, underlining the birth of the first university venues in Italy in the late Middle Ages but, however, concealing the real coeval existence of many other prestigious European universities¹⁵. This invention represented the tool which would have allowed the regime to identify a mythical original event destined to mark a clear discontinuity in national history from which to date the “rebirth” of Italian people¹⁶ and was an obligatory step to create a Fascist tradition, which represented «not only a system of ritualized procedures aimed at a symbolic use of mass politics, but [also] a pedagogy for Mussolini’s new Italian people»¹⁷. So, Mussolini more concretely started up a process of ideological reconstruction for a national identity, which was clearly and mainly founded on the recovery of past and tradition.

¹⁴ About Italian University in the first fifty years after unification and the main university policies implemented by the ruling class of that time, please see in particular: F. De Vivo, G. Genovesi, *Cento anni di università. L'istruzione superiore in Italia dall'Unità ai nostri giorni. Atti del III Convegno nazionale CIRSE. Padova, 9-10 novembre 1984*, Napoli, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1986; T. Tomasi, L. Bellatalla, *L'Università italiana nell'età liberale (1861-1923)*, Napoli, Liguori, 1988; G.P. Brizzi, *L'Università italiana fra età moderna e contemporanea. Aspetti e momenti*, Bologna, Clueb, 1991; S. Polenghi, *La politica universitaria italiana nell'età della Destra storica (1848-1876)*, Brescia, La Scuola, 1993; A. La Penna, *Modello tedesco e modello francese nel dibattito sull'università italiana*, in S. Soldani, G. Turi, *Fare gli italiani. Scuola e cultura nell'Italia contemporanea I. La nascita dello Stato nazionale*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1993, pp. 171-212; I. Porciani, *L'Università tra Otto e Novecento: i modelli europei e il caso italiano*, Napoli, Jovene, 1994; F. Colao, *La libertà di insegnamento e l'autonomia nell'università liberale. Norme e progetti per l'istruzione superiore in Italia (1848-1923)*, Milano, Giuffrè, 1995; I. Porciani, M. Moretti, *La creazione del sistema universitario nella nuova Italia*, in G.P. Brizzi, P. Del Negro, A. Romano, *Storia delle Università in Italia*, 3 vols., Messina, Sicania, 2007, Vol. III, pp. 323-379; F. Pruneri, A. Bianchi, *School Reforms and University Transformations and Their Function in Italy from the Eighteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries*, «History of Education», vol. 39, n. 1, 2010, pp. 115-136; A. Ferraresi, E. Signori, *Le Università e l'Unità d'Italia (1848-1870)*, Bologna, Clueb, 2012.

¹⁵ In fact, as it is well known, if it is true that some of the most important Italian universities, such as the universities of Bologna, Padua and Naples (Federico II), can trace their founding date back to the period between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries, in the Middle Ages, it is equally undeniable that equally prestigious universities, such as the universities of Oxford, Paris, Cambridge and Salamanca, just to name a few, also saw the light in other European countries in the same period of time. About the medieval origins of Italian and European universities, please see the works by J. Verger, *Le università nel medioevo*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1982; G.P. Brizzi, J. Verger, *Le università dell'Europa*, 6 vols., Cinisello Balsamo, Silvana Editoriale, 1990-1995 (in particular Vol. I: *La nascita delle università*); A. Romano, *Università in Europa. Le istituzioni universitarie dal Medio Evo ai nostri giorni: struttura, organizzazione, funzionamento. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi, Milazzo, 28 settembre-2 ottobre*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 1995.

¹⁶ About this subject, please see C. Tullio-Altan, *Ethnos e civiltà. Identità etniche e valori democratici*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1995 and R. De Felice, *Mussolini il fascista*, 6 vols., Torino, Einaudi, 1966-1970, Vol. I, t. II: *L'organizzazione dello Stato fascista*, pp. 372-377.

¹⁷ See La Rovere, *Storia dei Guf. Organizzazione, politica e miti della gioventù universitaria fascista, 1919-1943*, cit., p. 185.



Figs. 1-4. The four celebratory stamps of the International University Games in Turin (1933)

In order to adequately celebrate the Turin sporting and university event and to underline its role as an important political window-dressing for the country on the international scenario of which to leave «lasting memory» to posterity, the regime also resorted to philately, which had been never involved in the celebration of sporting events so far¹⁸. In fact, the creation of a special series of four stamps with the same iconography, but with different colours (brown, red, purple and blue) and, therefore, with different costs (0.10, 0.20, 0.50 and 1.25 lire) was planned for the Turin Games¹⁹. The series was authorized by Royal Decree no. 945 of July 13th, 1933, and was issued on August 16th; it was on sale until September 15th and remained in circulation for four months until December 31st²⁰. Made by the State Mint and Polygraphic Institute (in the Security Printing Works) with a certain care of carving, the four stamps (24x40mm) were printed with the photocalcographic system on paper with crown watermark. The drawing (21x37 mm) reproduced in them was composed:

of the monolith in Mussolini's Forum with the inscription 'Dux Mussolini' from the ground up and the statue of a football player. At the top there are the words 'Poste Italiane' and the State Coat of Arms, in the middle the indication of the value and at the bottom the caption 'Giochi Universitari Internazionali Torino 1933-XI' in a Roman plaque²¹.

¹⁸ A new sought-after series devoted to the world of sport was released the following year on the occasion of the II World Football Championship, which was played in Italy from 27 May to 10 June 1934, and was won by Italy. It consisted of nine stamps: five ordinary mail stamps and four air mail stamps. Furthermore, for the first time a stamp was designed by a woman, Liana Ferri, who drew some stamps of this series.

¹⁹ About these stamps, please see: F. Filanci, *Il Novellario. Enciclopedia della Posta in Italia*. Vol. III: *Un Ventennio in Posta (1921-1943)*, 6 vols., Milano, CIF editore, 2016, Vol. III, pp. 210-211.

²⁰ Royal Decree no. 945 of 13 July 1933, *Emissione di speciali francobolli in occasione dei Giochi Universitari Internazionali che avranno luogo a Torino*, «Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d'Italia», vol. 74, n. 180, 4 August 1933, pp. 3556-3557.

²¹ Royal Decree no. 1531 of 26 October 1933, *Descrizione tecnica dei francobolli commemorativi dei Giochi Universitari Internazionali di Torino*, «Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d'Italia», vol. 74, n. 275, 28 November

As rightly observed by Federico Zeri, the series, which was designed by Amedeo Pesci, represented

a very open example of propaganda exploitation: although the games took place in Turin, the (unique) design [strangely] depicted Mussolini's Forum in Rome with the monolith and the marble statue of a *Football Player*, a work by Bernardo Morescalchi²².

Therefore, the event takes place in Turin, but everything in the design speaks about Rome, the *Caput Mundi* with its renewed splendour, where there is Mussolini's Forum with the statue of a football player, a work by Morescalchi, and the monolith with the reference to the Duce²³. Therefore, the primary purpose of the stamps was to celebrate the greatness of Fascism even at risk of overshadowing the intrinsic sporting value of the Turin event, which was acquiring absolute relevance, especially if included in that course of recovery and exaltation of Italian university traditions to which Fascist hierarchies had turned their attention «with wisdom» since the first years of government.

The ideological *ratio*, which inspired the creation and the issue of the four celebratory stamps, was obviously the same one which led Fascism in the articulated planning of the University Games and the related University historical Carousel for whose organization nothing was left to chance in order to be able to achieve the desired objectives in the best possible way.

In fact, on June 7th, 1933, a circular signed by the Minister of Public Education, Francesco Ercole²⁴, had warned Italian university rectors that the International University Games, to which «the intervention of the representative teams from the most important foreign universities» was ensured, would be held in the Piedmontese city during the first half of September. In order to make the official opening ceremony more solemn, it established that there were «Italian university gonfalons, which were escorted by Italian university young people including the Fascist University Groups» with the aim of bringing back the Italian «illustrious university tradition»²⁵. On June 20th, 1933, various local GUF secretariats were informed by the national secretariat that all the venues would have taken part in the inaugural ceremony not only with the gonfalon, but also with a representative of heralds, trumpeters and drummers in perfect medieval clothes, in order to «faithfully reproduce our ancient glorious university customs»²⁶.

1933, p. 5383.

²² F. Zeri, *I francobolli italiani. Grafica e ideologica dalle origini al 1948*, Genova, Il Melangolo, 1993.

²³ Please see F. Giuliani, *I dentelli attorno all'Università*, «L'Arte del francobollo», vol. 80, May 2018, pp. 23-25.

²⁴ About Francesco Ercole, a full professor of History of Italian Law and Minister of Public Education from July 20th, 1932 to January 24th, 1935, please see the biographical profile drawn up by L. Lo Bianco, *Ercole, Francesco*, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Roma, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1993, vol. 43, pp. 132-134, to which to also refer for other bibliographical references.

²⁵ Archivio Università degli Studi di Parma (henceforth, AUP), year 1933, folder 1173, dossier 1, *Circolare del 7 giugno 1933*, n. 9693. *Giuochi universitari internazionali di Torino*.

²⁶ Archivio di Stato di Macerata (henceforth, ASMC), Circolari, years 1921-1935, folder 700, dossier 1933, *Circolare del 20 giugno 1933. Ai segretari dei Gruppi Universitari Fascisti*.

With a subsequent detailed circular dated July 7th, Starace, who was notoriously very careful to external organization of parades and mass public events²⁷, provided the local GUF secretariats and, for information, «the Minister of Public Education, the magnificent rectors and podestas of the cities where universities were located» with further details about the desired correct development of the event and, above all, indications regarding the function and the ideological value, which the regime intended to attribute to it. First of all, as it was the custom of the best medieval ceremonies²⁸, he specified that the representatives of each university had to be composed of a well-defined number of figures, which had to be the same for each venue and specifically composed of «a drummer, four trumpeters with banderols, two standard-bearers with flags in the colours of the city, two men of arms, a major page with the University Gonfalon, who was supported by two valets and, at the end, a variable number of pages». In this way, «while the representatives of young students from all over the world will be gathered in the field of the great «Mussolini» Stadium, Italian university Gonfalons will go by on the track in order to give an augural and welcoming greeting to competitors».

In his circular, Starace underlined that the «glorious millenary university Gonfalons» would precisely have recalled «what a beacon of light Italy was, even in the darkest times», while «new University Gonfalons, which were created by Fascism», would have testified «how much the Italy of the Duce has done even in this field for ten years». All those who were directly or indirectly involved in the event in any case should have contributed to give the demonstration that majesty and that interest, which the regime wished, and, above all, to ensure the perfect realization of the process of recovering the «immortal Italian university traditions»²⁹.

In confirmation of the considerable importance that the regime attributed to the celebration, all the GUFs, who were scattered throughout the national territory, received even more precise and detailed instructions about the rituals and the actions, which the representatives in medieval costumes should have performed in the inaugural ceremony of the Games, with a PNF directive on August 11th, 1933³⁰. In Starace's intentions, the «Italian University Historical Carousel», included in the context of the first day of an international event of this magnitude, should also have achieved that long-desired perfect mixture of medieval and Fascist elements, besides assuming the form of an effective propaganda tool for the regime, as well as a useful means to affirm a precise sense of a

²⁷ About this aspect, please see the interesting journalistic report by C. Galas, *Gli uomini di Mussolini: Achille Starace*, available on the web at <http://www.televignole.it/gli-uomini-mussolini-4-achille-starace/> (last access: 08.01.2022).

²⁸ About the structure and the organization of festivals and ceremonies in the Middle Ages, please see J. Verdon, *Feste e giochi nel Medioevo*, it. transl. by Marina Karam, Milano, Baldini Castoldi Dalai, 2004.

²⁹ AUP, year 1933, folder 1173, dossier 1, *Circolare del 7 luglio 1933, n. 18. Achille Starace ai segretari dei Gruppi Universitari Fascisti di Bari, Bologna, Cagliari, Camerino, Catania, Ferrara, Firenze, Genova, Macerata, Messina, Milano, Modena, Napoli, Padova, Palermo, Parma, Pavia, Perugia, Pisa, Roma, Sassari, Siena, Torino, Trieste, Urbino, Venezia; e per conoscenza a S.E. il Ministro dell'Educazione Nazionale, ai Magnifici Rettori delle Regie Università e ai signori Podestà delle città sedi di Università.*

³⁰ AUP, year 1933, folder 1173, dossier 1, *Direttiva dell'11 agosto 1933 dei Gruppi Universitari Fascisti. Carosello storico delle Università fasciste.*

shared national identity. In fact, it was a real rite, which was celebrated on the occasion of a sporting event in this case, an excellent example of how the regime did not limit the orchestration of mass liturgy only to political rites, but it appropriated all the spheres of collective life, bending them to their own purposes and integrating them into a «cult of Fascism»³¹. Along the track in «Mussolini» Stadium, where «the spirit of a new Italy» would have been in the air in the presence of a «stunning and euphoric crowd», as it was typical of the Fascist events of that time³², GUF pennants and athletic teams in black shirts would also have taken turns together with university representatives in medieval costumes, who were led by the representatives of the University of Rome; standard-bearers would have been escorted by their secretary in «regulatory uniform» and, after having declaimed the Oath of Office, «music [would have struck up] Giovinezza, while the games with the flags [would have been] resumed by all the standard-bearers»³³.

Therefore, in this circumstance, the Fascist attempt to recover Italian university traditions, which was started up by Mussolini in the early 1920s, as we have seen, seemed to have reached its peak. Actually, the historical continuity between medieval and Fascist universities, which was supposed by Starace, turned out not to almost exist, at least with reference to the «Historical Carousel». In fact, the preparation of the «millenary university» Gonfalon was more simply a real operation of «invention of tradition» for many universities rather than an intervention for recovering tradition. In fact, as pointed out by Ennio Lazzarini, few venues could really boast a historic Gonfalon to «be brought up again and re-proposed for the occasion»; therefore, most of them were instantly created or even “invented”, very often taking the University Seal or only some of its parts as the main decorative element of the Gonfalon³⁴. However, Starace’s requests ended up pushing academic leaders not to skimp any even significant economic efforts in many universities at all, in order to be able to satisfy the requests of the regime in the best possible way³⁵.

Despite this, the Turin event met the desired echo and was greeted by the entire public opinion and, above all, the press of that time, who was close to the regime, with great emphasis and almost unanimous approval³⁶. In particular, «Il Popolo d’Italia», a

³¹ Please see Gentile, *Il culto del littorio: la sacralizzazione della politica nell’Italia fascista*, cit., p. 50 and pp. 141-142.

³² Please see Suzzi Valli, *Riti del Ventennale*, cit., pp. 1027-1031.

³³ AUP, year 1933, folder 1173, dossier 1, *Direttiva dell’11 agosto 1933 dei Gruppi Universitari Fascisti. Carosello storico delle Università fasciste*.

³⁴ Please see E. Lazzarini, *Università italiane. Stemmi, sigilli, medaglie*, Alessandria, Edizioni dell’Orso, 2002, pp. 32-33.

³⁵ On this regard, please refer to Pomante, *L’Università italiana nel Novecento. Nuovi itinerari storiografici e inediti percorsi di ricerca*, cit., pp. 43-45.

³⁶ About the event, please also see the materials preserved in *Istituto Luce* Archive, in particular “Cinegiornali”, series “Giornale Luce September 1933”, *Trionfo di giovinezza allo Stadio Mussolini di Torino. Ai giochi mondiali goliardici hanno partecipato i rappresentanti di 32 nazioni*, and “Cinegiornali”, series “Giornale Luce September 1933”, *Una rassegna mondiale della gioventù goliardica. I giochi internazionali universitari a Torino* and Documentari, series *Giornale Luce September 1933, Giochi mondiali universitari /Torino Anno XI* (<http://fondoluce.archivioluce.com/LuceUnesco/ricerca/avanzata/esito.html?temi=Giochi%20mondiali%20universitari>; last access: 08.01. 2022).

political newspaper, which was founded by Benito Mussolini in 1914 and later become the unofficial organ of the PNF and the government³⁷, almost daily devoted detailed and enthusiastic articles both to the preparatory and organizational phase of the Games and their development³⁸. The tones used to introduce the event and, above all, to celebrate the «Historical Carousel», which was considered to be an «almost epochal moment» for Italian university history, were obviously highly encomiastic. On September 3rd, on the eve of the inaugural ceremony, which would have been held the next day, «Il Popolo d'Italia» wrote:

Tomorrow we are having the inaugural ceremony of the games for which there is a great attention. [...] The big ceremony is taking place at the Stadium at 3pm. [...] The Carousel will be a great show. It will faithfully reproduce our ancient university customs with trumpeters, pages and men of arms. All the university gonfalons have arrived with spare valets and GUF secretaries. [...] After the ceremony at the Mussolini Stadium, Hon. Starace is visiting the National University Life Exhibition. This is a remarkable and useful initiative of the Turin GUF [...]. All the very interesting documentation about student life with particular regard to war, Fascism and our noble university traditions has been collected in numerous rooms³⁹.

Two days later, Arturo Pianca, a correspondent of the newspaper in the Piedmontese capital city⁴⁰, let further grow the encomiastic dimension of the descriptions supported by the pompous rhetoric, which was typical of Fascism in those years, by introducing readers with an extensive report about the opening day of the Games:

This Sunday in Turin will remain indelible in the eyes and the hearts of the students coming from all over the world and taking part in the International University Games as representatives of the best physical and intellectual part of 32 countries. With the intent of honouring guests, they witnessed a great Fascist day during which all the people shouted their Faith to the Chief thanks to whom Italy, which is a master of civilization today, recalls people from all over the countries under its blazing sun. [...] At the end of the polychrome grouping of teams, the tolls of the Olympic bell were heard and, at that moment, we saw the characteristic groups of student trumpeters from Italian universities, who were preparing to parade in ancient costumes for the historical Carousel, going up two large platforms [...]. The entrance of medieval uniforms had a great choreographic effect and the public

³⁷ «Il Popolo d'Italia» was a political newspaper founded in 1914 by Benito Mussolini, who edited it up to the march to Rome. From the positions of revolutionary interventionism on, the newspaper followed its editor's political evolution. Although it was always inspired by Mussolini, it was edited by his brother Arnaldo after Fascists took power and by his son Vito on his death (1931). From 1922, it became a PNF organ and suspended its publications only on 25 July 1943.

³⁸ Please see in particular the following articles: *L'organizzazione a Torino dei Giochi universitari internazionali*, «Il Popolo d'Italia», vol. 11, August 13th, 1933, p. 9; *Il saluto del "Guf" torinese*, «Il Popolo d'Italia», vol. 11, 31 August 1933, p. 8; *La partecipazione del G.U.F. dell'Urbe al carosello storico di Torino*, «Il Popolo d'Italia», vol. 11, 1st September 1933, p. 10; *La cerimonia inaugurale*, «Il Popolo d'Italia», vol. 11, 3 September 1933, p. 8; A. Pianca, *Olimpiadi universitarie solennemente inaugurate dal Segretario del Partito nello Stadio Mussolini di Torino alla presenza di una folla immensa*, «Il Popolo d'Italia», vol. 11, 5 September 1933, pp. 9-10; *La mostra goliardica di Torino*, «Il Popolo d'Italia», vol. 11, 6 September 1933, p. 8.

³⁹ See *La cerimonia inaugurale*, cit.

⁴⁰ About Arturo Pianca, who was born in Mantua in 1903, a journalist, an editor of «Il Popolo d'Italia» from 1923 to 1943, a head clerk at ANSA Agency from 1945, please see G. Vaccaro, *Panorama biografico degli italiani d'oggi*, 2 vols., Roma, A. Curcio, 1956, Vol. II, p. 1200.

started applauding among continuous acclamations of wonder. [...] At some point, we saw two ranks of graceful pages appearing and carrying long bundles of laurel and university gonfalons immediately appeared with their magnificent escorts behind them. Opening on both sides of the field, the historical procession drew up in a semicircle around the athletes and the solemn inauguration ceremony took place in this superb setting, which was almost unreal.

And more:

When Y.E. Starace came back in the stands, the picturesque parade of the historical Carousel began. The procession was opened by the representatives of the University of Rome to signify the sovereignty of the city in all the fields of human activity. So, all the other universities followed by order of foundation. Each representative was preceded by a page carrying an emblem with the year of foundation, drummers and trumpeters came behind them and launched greeting notes, once arrived in front of the Party Secretary, while standard-bearers rotated their ensigns according to the ancient custom of jousts: the university gonfalon was escorted by men of arms followed by scholars and students. The characteristic styles aroused the exclamations of admiration from the public, many costumes were original and taken from museums and private collections, others had been faithfully reproduced and everything appeared to be neat down to the smallest detail. [...] So, Bologna, which is the oldest Italian university founded in 1088, Padua (1222), Naples (1224), Perugia (1266), Florence (1321), Pisa (1343), Siena (1357), Pavia (1361), Ferrara (1391), Turin (1404), Catania (1444), Urbino (1506) and gradually all the others up to the last ones established by the Fascist government, namely Bari, Trieste and Milan, paraded⁴¹.

Even the Italian University high hierarchies did not miss the opportunity to pay the right tribute to the Turin Games and the intrinsic value, which the regime had intended to attribute to them. The inauguration of the new academic year 1933-1934 represented the ideal official occasion to “celebrate” with emphasis the attention paid by the Duce and his hierarchs to University and, not less, the Fascist project of recovering the «noble» Italian university traditions and strengthening a national identity, which also passed through the organization of events, such as the Piedmontese one, as we have seen. In this sense, the words spoken by the deputy pro-rector of the small university in the Marches, Prof. Paolo Greco, a refined jurist and an esteemed lawyer of that time⁴², in the lecture hall at the Royal University of Macerata on November 11th, 1933 rise to a real “shared manifesto” of the academic thought of that time⁴³:

The past academic year marked a fervent reawakening of Italian university life everywhere. It can be said to be the year when Italian University was definitively ranked among the most active and precious forces of the Fascist Revolution. [...] Among its various aspects, this rebirth of university life, which

⁴¹ Pianca, *Olimpiadi universitarie solennemente inaugurate dal Segretario del Partito nello Stadio Mussolini di Torino alla presenza di una folla immensa*, cit.

⁴² About Paolo Greco, a Professor of Commercial Law, a deputy pro-rector at the Royal University of Macerata from 1st November 1932 to 30 November 1933 and subsequently a rector at the «Bocconi» University of Milan from 1938 to 1945, please see L. Pomante, *L'Università di Macerata nell'Italia unita (1861-1966). Un secolo di storia dell'ateneo maceratese attraverso le relazioni inaugurali dei rettori e altre fonti archivistiche e a stampa*, Macerata, Eum, 2012, pp. 569-570.

⁴³ About the thought and the behaviour of the rectors of those years in the face of Fascism, please see some interesting cues reported in G. Cianferotti, *Le leggi razziali e i rettori delle Università italiane (con una vicenda senese)*, «Le Carte e la Storia. Rivista di storia delle istituzioni», vol. 6, n. 2, pp. 15-28.

took place under the high auspices of the Duce and the impulse of the Minister Ercole and the Party Secretary Achille Starace, had three programmatic cornerstones: increasing the scientific and didactic university industriousness with the call of all the university people, professors and disciples, to a more intense and active fulfilment of their duties; promoting and spreading in the militia, gyms and sports fields physical activity, which does not already reflect or excite only the brute force of human matter, but it reawakens and restores all the young people's energies with a Hellenic conception, which is rooted in the spirit of the Latin race, preparing it for the arduous trials of life; finally, fully re-entrusting to Italian Universities that function of radiating our civilization, which they historically carried out to spread the ideas of the Roman empire and law in the world once, the lights of humanism and science, which was renewed by Leonardo's intuitions and Galileo's observations, later, new regulatory principles of state and civil society, which are expressed by the reconstructive genius of the Duce and Fascism, today.

In this "mission" Fascism also intended to carry out the University Games of September 1933 as a «superb show of physical strength and compact unity of our national soul»⁴⁴; indeed, they had undoubtedly played a leading role, which was appropriately celebrated and made everlasting in the common memory by the issue of a special series of four stamps.

⁴⁴ See *Inaugurazione dell'Anno Accademico 1933-1934. Relazione del Pro-Rettore Prof. Paolo Greco letta nella cerimonia inaugurale dell'11 novembre 1933*, in Pomante, *L'Università di Macerata nell'Italia unita (1861-1966). Un secolo di storia dell'ateneo maceratese attraverso le relazioni inaugurali dei rettori e altre fonti archivistiche e a stampa*, cit. pp. 579-585.

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The School and Its Many Pasts

History is not memory; both, however, affect the way we perceive the past. In recent years, an increasing number of studies have focused on memory in order to critically analyze shared narratives of the past and their implications. Memory studies not only allow us to expand our knowledge about the past, but also help us to define the way in which today's people, social groups and public bodies look at it and interpret or re-interpret it. In this sense, school memory is not only of interest as a gateway to the school's past but also as a tool to understand what they know or believe they know about the school of the past and how much what they know corresponds to reality or is influenced by prejudices and stereotypes deeply rooted in common sense. These volumes aim to address these complex issues and broaden the perspective from which the schooling phenomenon is analyzed to better understand the school and its many pasts.

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