**Abstract**

**This chapter uses the emergence, evolution, and persistence of the Calcio Storico football match in Florence as a means to discuss the manifestation of festive order in relation to historic architectural settings. Although this particular competition emerged alongside the retreat of feudal and communal power in the thirteenth century, it continues to be fought between the historic districts of the city and because it continues reveal the conflict, violence, and disorder that often exists at the heart of democratic, agonistic institutions, and it retains some relevance to contemporary Florentine civic life.**

**Over time the game has often been adapted and co-opted to reflect the representational requirements necessary for the ruling order but in this process of change many aspects of the game have remained resistant to political manipulation. Consequently, the fact that an event such as the Calcio Storico still retains much of its original iconography is an important reference point for understanding both the idea of festival in Florence as well as, more broadly, the relationships that can exist between festival, architecture, and civic order.**

Running Head Right-hand: The *Calcio Storico* in Florence

Running Head Left-hand: Christian Frost

Chapter 6

The *Calcio Storico* in Florence

Agonistic ritual and the space of civic order – Italy

*Christian Frost*

Introduction

This chapter uses the emergence, evolution, and persistence of the *Calcio Storico* football match in Florence as a means to discuss the manifestation of festive order in relation to architectural settings. Although many people have heard of Siena’s *Palio*, fewer people are aware of Florence’s *Calcio Storico*, also structured around a competition between the historic city districts. Both events have a long and significant history bound up with forms of urban communal governance that emerged following the retreat of German Imperial power in the thirteenth century.

Given that this retreat of feudal power created opportunities for self-rule, one would have expected that manifestations of Florence’s new institutions would be composed, cooperative, and constructive. However, the city’s elites, often armed with a strong sense independence associated to their own mercantile success, also adopted rituals that revealed the conflict, violence, and disorder that remained at the heart of their new, partially democratic, agonistic institutions.

Although over time the rituals, parades, markets, and games associated with the festival have adapted to reflect the representational requirements necessary for each particular period, many aspects of the festival have remained constant. Consequently, the fact that an event such as the *Calcio Storico* still retains much of its original iconography is an important reference point for understanding both the idea of festival in Florence as well as, more broadly, the relationships that can exist between festival, architecture, and civic order.

The festive history of Florence is unique but, nevertheless, reveals wider themes that relate to the continuity and transformation of European civic culture from antiquity to the present. Broadly speaking, when looking at the development of the festival in Florence, it appears to fit into four key phases; the first corresponds to the rites of Roman foundation where the ordering of the city was oriented towards ‘nature’ and the ‘Cosmos’; the second phase is primarily feudal and Christian (one could argue sacramental) in character where festivals linked the identity and fate of the city to Christian teleology; the third phase, which relates to the period of the Communal government of Florence from around 1250 until 1530, broadened the iconography integral to the Christian festival by incorporating some aspects of the city’s developing civic institutions (such as the judicial arrangements, governmental offices, and guilds etc.); and finally, the fourth phase, which began following the elevation of the Medici to the Duke of Florence after 1532, where all of this historical and cultural landscape was articulated through the use of themes and acts related to perspectival or instrumental order.

Throughout this history differing iconographies often included and/or excluded particular constituencies on the basis of cultural issues relevant at the time – for example various families involved in the Guelph Ghibelline disputes of the thirteenth century were often either celebrated or excluded depending on who held power. But there is also evidence of a continuity of civic representation which underpinned this ever-changing political and social climate that accommodated changes in governance and leadership within a tradition of festive order keyed to the identity of the city, its history, and its meaning. This chapter discusses some key factors in this continuity, describing how architecture can be seen to contribute to this constantly evolving process concentrating on one element of the feast day of San Giovanni Battista,[[1]](#endnote-1) the ancient football match, or *Calcio Storico*, which (re)emerged during the final shift listed previously – from Commune to Dukedom.

The chapter itself is divided into four sections: firstly a brief discussion of the emergence of the football match within the broader tradition of the Feast of St Giovanni; the second section will look at the evolution of the event into its manifestation as a part of the contemporary staging of the Festival of St Giovanni, recounting the game’s re-emergence under the fascists; the third section describes the current event; and the fourth section discusses the meaning and architectural setting of the *Calcio* in relation to tradition and continuity. The conclusion will then briefly discuss the implications of these observations more generally in relation to the making of festivals in the city.

The emergence of the *Calcio Storico***[[2]](#endnote-2)**

Although there are some commentators who suggest the *Calcio Storico* is derived from the Roman game *Harpastum*, described by Athenaeus (second century C.E.) in his book *Deipnosophitae* there is no proof that this game, apparently borrowed from earlier Greek origins, has any direct relationship with the game in Florence.[[3]](#endnote-3) Nevertheless, all of these games were played within a complex landscape of civic meaning where victory against an honourable opponent was seen as of greater value than over lesser adversaries and, therefore, such competitions were designed to contribute to the iconography of the city and its agonistic order.[[4]](#endnote-4) Often re-enactments of such events, particularly if they are choreographed in historical costumes, tend towards theme park pageant rather than agonistic ritual, but it would be a mistake to assume that they are completely without value.

One of the first clear references to a football ‘*palla’* – a game fought for honour and a small silk banner – was by the diarist Luca Landucci (1436–1516) who reported that one was played on the frozen Arno in January 1490.[[5]](#endnote-5) It also appears that early games were played by the nobility in the Prato district of the city,[[6]](#endnote-6) building off another tradition where such games were used for the training of soldiers and mercenaries, but by the early sixteenth century the contest had become a regular feature of the carnival on Shrove Tuesday.

[Insert 15031-2190-006\_Figure\_001 Here]

Figure 6.1 Map of Florence as it was in the sixteenth century showing the various locations of the *Calcio Storico*.

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It was one such match, staged during the siege of Florence in 1530 just before the city capitulated to the Emperor Charles V (which later became the most significant occurrence and underpins much of the contemporary iconography of the game) which was held in the Piazza di Santa Croce within shouting distance of the Emperors troops, that was the last cry of the old Communal government before the appointment of the first Medici Duke in 1532.[[7]](#endnote-7)

The Florentine army at this time, although incorporating many mercenaries, was also made up of a core of ‘National Militia’ formed into four battalions – one from each of the four *Quartiere* – created through the ‘Republican Draft’.[[8]](#endnote-8) This conscription, brought back in 1506 by Machiavelli while he was adviser to the Gonfaloniere of Justice Piero Soderini (1440–1522), came from Machavelli’s conviction that there is no point discussing ‘the proper form of government unless and until a state could adequately defend itself’.[[9]](#endnote-9) Thus, in the form of the *Quartieri* – teams made up of mercenaries and Florentines – the game represented the divided administrative order of the city, but as an event it represented the city’s unity as a singular body.

Charles’s siege had begun months earlier in October 1529, but the Militia, apparently unwilling to ignore the city’s civic traditions even in this time of strife, elected to hold the annual *Calcio*, including much loud musical accompaniment within earshot of the enemy. So, on 17 February 1530, even though the Florentine army were about to fight a battle for the survival of their political identity, they played their traditional carnival match which became as furious and violent as it always had been. This decision to play the game in the midst of the siege resulted in its place in the folklore of the city; an emblem of courage and respect for the *Quartieri* and the city as a whole. In the end the siege continued for a further four months, the conflict spreading throughout the region, eventually coming to an end with the defeat of the Florentine forces and the death of their commander Franceso Ferrucci (1489–1530) at Gavinana in early August.[[10]](#endnote-10)

Like other games, races, and jousts etc., over the following centuries, as well as the carnival game, special *Calcios* were often staged as a part of major celebrations such as the Ducal marriages of 1558, 1584, 1585, 1616, and 1650, as well as on other significant dates in the Christian Calendar, and even though the game eventually did fall into decline, when it was played, the form of the event was always linked to the historic Communal *Quartieri* through the four teams competing. Thus, when the Duchy of Florence was created in 1532 and the region was further ennobled in 1569 when Cosimo I became the Grand Duke, the *Calcio* remained a tangible representation of the historic civic structure of the city, linking ducal themes of governance with the city’s humanist traditions rooted in ideas of its Roman foundation in the classical world.

This ‘ambition’ to embed the game in a deeper civic culture is evident in the first treatise on the *Calcio* by Giovanni de’ Bardi (1534–1612),[[11]](#endnote-11) written later in the century, when he suggests that ‘one might believe that the game was introduced to the city at the same time as it was founded’,[[12]](#endnote-12) thus linking the game with the re-enactment of the foundation rite itself already established in the ritual life of the city in the processions and parades of the annual San Giovanni Battista feast day celebrations.[[13]](#endnote-13)

Although much of Bardi’s treatise describes the rules of the game and other practicalities, it does make continual connections to the Roman exemplar, suggesting how the set-up of the teams mirrors the battle formation of Roman troops but, more importantly, argues that the ‘utility’ of the game is to ‘convert laziness into manly virtue, and into praise’.[[14]](#endnote-14) In order to reveal such aspects of the *Calcio*, at a time following the rise of the Medici to the dukedom, Bardi goes on to suggest that these ‘manly pursuits’ must also be practised by the nobility,[[15]](#endnote-15) not the *popoli*. Nevertheless, over the years the *popoli* have played the game and, like in other festivals where the normal hierarchies of rule are ‘reversed’ or at least questioned for the duration of the event,[[16]](#endnote-16) the game has continued to elevate the most aggressive and violent of the citizens – *popoli* or *milites* – to a position of honour for the day.

[Insert 15031-2190-006\_Figure\_002 Here]

Figure 6.2 Drawing of *Calcio* from 1688: Pietro di Lorenzo Bini (ed.), *Memorie del calcio fiorentino tratte da diverse scritture e dedicate all’altezze serenissime di Ferdinando Principe di Toscana e Violante Beatrice di Baviera*, Firenze, Stamperia di S.A.S. alla Condotta [1688].

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Even though the *Calcio* continued to be played at different times of the year throughout the next centuries, because the representational requirements for the Duchy rested less on vestiges of Communal order of Florence, *Calcios* became less significant for the city and, as a result, less frequent.[[17]](#endnote-17) That is not to say that the implicit civic order within the game was no longer recognised or celebrated, just that their regular performance was less essential to the order of the city. However, with the unification of Italy, the situation changed. Together with other secular events, church processions, and rituals, the match became a part of a newly constructed Feast Day of San Giovanni designed to honour the patron saint of the city.

The revival of the *Calcio Storico*

In the latter parts of the nineteenth century, following the *Risorgimento*,[[18]](#endnote-18) there was renewed interest in the history of Italy – including its festivals – and in Florence the Historian Pietro Gori began to reconstruct them (based upon some historical accounts) for significant political and national events such as the 1897 finishing of the new façade to Santa Maria Della Fiore; the 1898 celebrations for the centenary of Paolo Toscanelli (1397–1482) and Amerigo Vespucci (1454–1512);[[19]](#endnote-19) and the 1902 festival designed as an imitation of Duke Cosimo I’s *palio de’cocchi* (procession of chariots) of 1563.[[20]](#endnote-20) Thus, by the time the Fascists reintroduced these festivals and games in the twenties and thirties as a form of flag-waving nationalism, a skeleton structure more grounded in pre-First World War patriotism than nationalistic fervour was already familiar.

As Medina Lasansky suggests, the Fascist revival of historic feasts and festivals was about reclaiming Italian history for Italians. But although many of the resurrected events had originated in the late medieval period, the iconography of these ‘new’ events leaned heavily on the literature, art, and historiography created from the Quattrocento on.[[21]](#endnote-21) As a result, in 1930 Florence, they recreated a *Calcio* on the significant 400th anniversary of the match played in the city during Emperor Charles V siege of Florence, and associated this with the death of the Florentine Communal General and hero Francesco Ferrucci at the hands of the French that had occurred later that same year. Additionally, just in case this historical connection might have been lost on the casual observer, the match became a historic fashion show as well, and included on the VIP guest list some of the families who had attended the original 1530 event.

[Insert 15031-2190-006\_Figure\_003 Here]

Figure 6.3 The 1930 *Calcio Storico* in Piazza Signoria.

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Unlike the game today (and the one in 1530), which is held in the Piazza di Santa Croce, this first *Calcio* of the new age took place in the Piazza Signoria, the main civic square of the city, further linking the game’s revival to the heart of civic governance. The path of the parade from Santa Maria Novella to the temporary pitch constructed in the Piazza della Signoria passed many of the significant Renaissance Palazzi (also emblematic of this critical time in the history of Florentine communal government) that were especially decorated as a part of the celebrations. Consequently, in the same way that Vasari’s painting of the Foundation of Florence (1563–5) had been designed for the needs of the new Medici Dukes,[[22]](#endnote-22) this whole reconstruction of the feast, including the *Calcio Storico*, was primarily designed for the Fascists’ own representational needs – as was the case in other reconstructions such as the *Palio* of Siena (1928),[[23]](#endnote-23) the Jousting in Arezzo (1931), and the Battle of the Bridge in Pisa (1935).[[24]](#endnote-24)

[Insert 15031-2190-006\_Figure\_004 Here]

Figure 6.4 Map of Roman Florence showing the path of the parade of teams in 1930 from Piazza S.Maria Novella to Piazza Signoria.

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However, care must be taken not to see the ideas behind this ‘*renovatio*’ in the light of later developments to Fascism in Italy and abroad. The 1930 *Calcio* in Florence occurred two years before Giovanni Gentile (1875–1944) and Benito Mussolini published their *Doctrine of Fascism*,[[25]](#endnote-25) and a full eight years before the anti-Semitic legislation of 1938 was introduced – designed to appease the more ‘racial’ Nazism of their new Axis allies.[[26]](#endnote-26) Italian Fascism was clearly dismissive of the failed liberal culture that had opened the way to its electoral success in 1922, and was often violent towards any opposition – evidenced by the fact that, as in early 1924, the philosopher Benedetto Croce (1866–1952) had left the Fascist party in protest over its brutal politicking.[[27]](#endnote-27) But Italy was not Germany. Even at this critical time in Europe the use of historical iconography in Italy had a very different purpose than similar pageants of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia:

Ultimately [totalitarianism in Italy] dealt not with exclusion but with forging the capacity to act collectively in the new ‘total’ ways that had come to seem necessary and possible. At issue was who could be part of a community capable of acting as one, exercising collective human responsibility. Whereas the Soviets and the Nazis started with an a-priori exclusionary principle, Gentile started with openness to all, based on human freedom and ethical potential.[[28]](#endnote-28)

Thus, initially at least, and similar to earlier manifestations during the Risorgimento, the Fascist re-invention of historic festivals in Italy formed a part of the government’s plan to forge a new ‘spiritual and cultural’ identity for the whole ‘Italian’ population and differed significantly from the ‘materialistic’ identity inherent to Communism, or the ‘naturalistic’ identity of Nazism.[[29]](#endnote-29) The *l’uomo del fascismo*, Gentile believed, could emerge from any of Italy’s many constituent cities, races, and beliefs, and this new ‘Italian’ would inevitably be supportive of the aims of Fascism in Italy as a whole.

However, the iconography of festivals is not so easily co-opted, and along with these relatively narrow instrumental ideas of nationalism, other more seditious themes from the humanist commune (and its institutionalised agon) resurfaced; such as power reversal, local independence, and subversive anti-state behaviour: themes that have as much to do with local civic unity (opposed to centralised state power) as being an Italian. This more destabilising aspect of the festivals (at least for the Fascists) closely linked the participants and observers in the city to their implicit communality rather than their difference from other nations and was very much in line with Croce’s idea, articulated in the early part of the century, that liberty is not a natural right but arises out of a continuous struggle (or agon). Commentators on this aspect of Croce’s philosophy have argued that his ‘continuous struggle’ laid the foundations of the Fascist State in that it was representative of

a dangerous new philosophy that stressed relativism in values, subjective activism for the individual, violence as a mode of social action, and success as the supreme value in public affairs.[[30]](#endnote-30)

But this also describes the operational aims of the Communal government of the Quattrocento out of which much of the festal iconography arose and, more specifically in relation to the north Italian state, the way that the ‘natural’ conditions present in the city were understood as the context for freedom.[[31]](#endnote-31) This comparison goes some way to explain why many aspects of representative agonistic contest in contemporary culture are seen as dangerous to civic order, whereas, within the historical context of the city of Florence, this *modus operandi* had always been the way that politics was handled.

Festivals were, and continue to be, a ceremonial and symbolic representation of this ‘natural state’, of what was characterised by Destler as ‘violent relativism’. The difference between the historical event (including Croce’s relativism) and the Fascists’ idea was that Gentile’s Idealism – a ‘spiritual’ conception that was grounded in ideas of human freedom, creativity, and ethics – required a more singular viewpoint; in Fascism there was less space for negotiation of what ‘freedom’ might mean. The Fascists aimed use such events to help build their form of ‘open access state’, but in the resurrection of the festival revealed a more complex set of themes, not all of which were sympathetic to their aims. Both the form of the festival and its setting within the historic centre of Florence resisted such co-option and thus, even the brutal aspects of the festivals should not be seen as a form of Fascist bullying, but more as a representation of the violence that is concealed beneath much normal contemporary political activity.

Of the events, violent or otherwise, that continue to be celebrated annually, the majority have found a place in the festal calendar of the Catholic Church but, like their precursors in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the festivals have a representational field which steps outside the purely Sacramental order of the church. So even when the Lateran Treaty of 1929 made Catholicism the primary state religion of Italy, the festivals still offered various forms of engagement related to broader ideas of freedom and constituency than stipulated by the religious and political monocultures of the time. Festivals have always facilitated the representation of all citizens – even mercenaries, Jews, and Muslims – and one could argue that it is in the *Calcio Storico* in Florence that such diversity remains. The layered iconography of the event, originally extended to incorporate the humanist civic ideals of the commune championed by the wealthy merchants, bankers, and skilled craftsmen of the city, is now continued through reference to the current city’s various inhabitants, societies, institutions, and visitors.

[Insert 15031-2190-006\_Figure\_005 Here]

Figure 6.5 *Calcio Storico* Florence on the 24 June 2008 between *Azzurri* and *Rossi*

Photo Lorenzo Noccioli. Public domain

The contemporary *Calcio* on the feast day of San Giovanni in Florence

The contemporary *Calcio* takes place in the afternoon of the 24 June every year, on the Feast Day of San Giovanni beginning with a parade which winds its way through Florence from the Piazza di Santa Maria Novella in the West, to the Piazza di Santa Croce the East.[[32]](#endnote-32) There are clergy involved but it is primarily civic act. Large numbers of the public mingle with handsomely dressed locals who arrive from all directions into the Piazza di Santa Maria Novella. Television and media crews are present, alongside spectators and participants, foreigners, and locals, horses, and cattle. The solemnity of the morning processions, run mostly by the church, gives way to civic parades that can accommodate the ‘violent relativism’ that continues beneath the surface of even the most civilised city.

Led by a handful of militia and two mounted police at four o’clock the parade departs the piazza, later continuing anticlockwise on the line of the old Roman walls until the Palazzo Strozzi, built on the corner of the main east-west street of the Roman *Florentia*. Following the *Decumanus* (now the Via Degli Strozzi) west the parade crosses the middle of Piazza della Repubblica, laid out at the end of the nineteenth century on the site of the old Roman forum, and heads towards the main medieval route north-south.

The parade is led by the four historic *Quartieri*,[[33]](#endnote-33) each comprising three *Gonfalone*,[[34]](#endnote-34) that were originally the political basis for power in the city. Amidst these dignitaries mingle the officials of the football match and following on at the rear are the four *Calcio* teams, one from each *Quartiere*. Each team, wearing period costume breeches and contemporary t-shirts displaying their colours,[[35]](#endnote-35) lead their supporters (also wearing the teams colours) through the streets of the city towards the arena.[[36]](#endnote-36) As the main parade heads south towards the Piazza della Signoria, the supporters separate, continuing their path east along the old Roman *Decumanus* until they reach the location of old Porta San Petri in the first set of Commune walls where they then turn south, zig-zagging through the streets until they reach the Piazza di Santa Croce and the footballing arena.

Meanwhile, at the front of the parade the *Calcio Storico* teams continue heading south into the Piazza Signoria where, having passed Ammanati’s Neptune Fountain (1560–75) and Michelangelo’s David (1501),[[37]](#endnote-37) they continue between the Loggia dei Lanzi (1376–82) – originally built for the use of government officials during public ceremonies – and Bandinelli’s Heracles and Cacus (1525–34) and on down the narrow Via della Ninna towards the location of the old Porta de’Buoi in the first set of Commune walls. From here the parade diverts northwards to the south-eastern corner of Piazza di Santa Croce by the entrance to the main church cloister and the Pazzi Chapel where it finally enters the temporary arena.

A large, temporary arena is assembled annually inside the Piazza with terraced seating around all four sides; a red padded inner ring and backup fences and nets are set slightly further back. The paved surface of the piazza is covered in earth to protect the players but also to return the square to conditions similar to when the game was first played in the sixteenth century. All tickets for the arena are sold in advance although it is also possible to watch the game from the upper windows of the buildings – such as the Palazzo dell’Antella – which surround the square. Although this particular palazzo has medieval origins, a top floor was added in the late sixteenth century and a new façade added in 1619–20 to unify it with the neighbouring plot. The new façade was re-configured into a series of panels comprising, putti, flowers, vegetable motifs, and arabesques with a bust of Cosimo II de’ Medici (1590–1621) in the centre. The main feature of the façade, which faces this symbolically significant square, is that the windows are nearer to each other as they become closer to Santa Croce, using relatively new ideas of perspective to create the illusion that the building is in fact larger than it is.

Once the parade has entered the arena, presentations are made and slowly the finely dressed musicians, *Spandieratori* (ceremonial flag waivers), and ‘soldiers’ of the city depart the earth-filled arena leaving only the officials and the finalists,[[38]](#endnote-38) twenty-seven on each team, to compete for fifty minutes in a gruelling, ruthless, and bloody game that appears almost without rules. There are fistfights, harsh tackles, knockouts, injuries, blood, and a ball. There are no substitutions, no half time, and no change of ends; those who survive, survive. The aim is always to deliver a ball into a low net at the end that runs the entire width of the pitch defended by your opponents. Such a goal scores one point. If the ball crosses the end above the low crossbar but is caught by the cage at the back, it is scored at half a point. The whole game, including the arrival of the parade (like the Sienese Palio) is always televised.

Following the game, the parade returns to the arena for one final fanfare as the supporters and the teams leave (or are carried from) the pitch. The crowd gradually melting into the small streets and bars of the city after spending over an hour exposed to the searing midsummer sun.

The persistence of the *Calcio Storico*: tradition and meaning

While the form of most of these revitalised events was (and has continued to be) apparently historicist, with period costumes, traditional banners, and ancient weaponry forming a significant part of the festival, there have always been aspects of contemporary fashion and politics, and it is in this aspect of the tradition – including the very real violence evident on the field of play – that maintains the much of the historicity of the occasion. It is the inevitability and the immediacy of these aspects of the events that give it meaning and actually make it a part of a real tradition, not just something made to look like tradition. Even if this aspect of the revival was outside the remit of the Fascists, they could not stop the re-emergence of this civic patriotism that ran deeper than their own shallow brand of nationalism. Additionally, while it is clear that the game, and the form of much of the rest of the festival, was used as a way of promoting fascism, the game and the festival form is not itself fascist or necessarily historicist. In fact, it could be argued that the setting created by the city as fabric and as a body of people (*civitas* and *urbs*) present a deeper level of meaning that cannot easily be hijacked by political ideas. Quoting Lando Ferretti from 1932, Lasansky suggests that:

festivals ‘helped codify a new civility in Mussolini’s Fascist Italy’. The festival was a social leveller – conveniently providing a common ground on which individuals, with varying degrees of support for the regime, could be united by a single civic project.[[39]](#endnote-39)

It is then perhaps in this moment that the most important distinctions become visible and offer a way of thinking about this violence that is perhaps more therapeutic than divisive. Fighting for love is very different than fighting for hate, even if they appear to be exactly the same. To fight to belong is not the same as to fight to exclude. All civic agonistic transactions have a tendency towards violence of some sort, it is just that much of our current democratic procedures conceal this violence beneath a veneer of conformity. The aim of the *Calcio* (along with the other resurrected games and festivals), as well as to entertain, is to make more visible this violence at the heart of all civic culture which inevitably has some winners and some losers. Dramatic enactments of battles of skill and daring, violence, and submission are merely another more visible recognition of the violence of the social structures of the city. That such attitudes to the *Calcio* are still evident is confirmed in an excerpt from an interview with one participant from the 2017 Calcio:

Q: What makes this game so special for the city?

A: It’s about pride, you know, it’s about glory. You play for your city first of all, every time you step into the arena it’s for the pride and the glory of your city. There is no money involved, so it’s just for honour and pride. Everyone recognises that, so that’s why this kind of game is so special for the Florentine people.[[40]](#endnote-40)

Conclusion

Along with the general misconception of events such as the *Calcio* that mistakes violent demonstrations of civic belonging for fascist power and intolerance comes the claim that such events are also ‘artificial’ because they were partially reinvented as ‘spectacle’ for the tourist trade. But cities have always taken advantage of any gathering of people to make money and attract more business (or visitors) – for example, the five-day *Ludi Romani in Circo* was always followed by four days of markets;[[41]](#endnote-41) and in the early fifteenth century the Feast of San Giovanni celebrations (including market days) would last up to ten days.[[42]](#endnote-42) It is in the nature of festivals that there are different layers of participation, from commercial, through political to symbolic. But even within such a differentiation each participant, although in search of different things, shares something of the festival.

The anthropologist Victor Turner suggests that this shared aspect can be explained by a hierarchy of three layers of engagement that relate to three degrees of detachment from normal social situations which he identifies as ‘separation’, ‘transition’, and ‘incorporation’. First, everyone who witnesses the event is ‘separated’ into one community ‘out of time’;[[43]](#endnote-43) and at the other end are the smallest subgroup of the hierarchy, the festival participants, who, in participating, deny their own identity and as a result are deemed to be ‘incorporated’. In between these two states rest the remainder of the population who experience ‘transition’ – ‘a sort of limbo which has few [. . .] of the attributes of either the preceding or subsequent profane social statuses or cultural states’.[[44]](#endnote-44) Such a description, for Turner, was also applicable to the detachment experienced by a pilgrim where, in the act of the pilgrimage, he argued a new community Turner labelled *communitas* emerged.[[45]](#endnote-45) For Turner, this *communitas* was formed, revealed, and shaped by the event itself and was related to a state of being he called ‘liminality’ that emerged in a ‘time out of time’ characterised, like Gadamer suggests, as a form of festival time.[[46]](#endnote-46) In this scenario, the variety of experiences people encounter during the more ritualistic aspects of a festival are accounted for on an ontological level and tend to resist the identification of any individual with their normal social conditions:

for Turner, so far from reflecting or reinforcing secular social structure, [such an event] is a liminal phenomenon which betokens the partial, if not complete, abrogation of that structure . . . [and tends] towards communitas, a state of unmediated egalitarian association between individuals who are temporarily freed of the hierarchical secular roles and statuses which they bear in everyday life.[[47]](#endnote-47)

In such an interpretation of Turner’s theory, the ritual aspect is seen to become completely disassociated from the political or social conditions that may have contributed to the festival’s creation in the first place. And as a result of this particular interpretation of Turner, Eade and Sallnow dismiss Turner’s theory as a discourse that relates more to a particular discourse *about* ritual rather than as an description of it.[[48]](#endnote-48) In its place they offer another solution to this layered experience at the heart of festival suggesting that ‘it is necessary to develop a view of pilgrimage not merely as a field of social relations but also as a *realm of competing discourses*’.[[49]](#endnote-49) The problem with this is that it reduces the significance of the ontological aspect of festival to the ranks; it becomes only one of many equal discourses.

In the end, the apparent conflict between these two interpretations serves only to confuse the situation. It is clear that there is an ontological component to the experience of the festival, but one that is rooted in the conditions of the mundane experience, not separated from it. So, while viewed purely psychologically, it could be argued that Turner’s ‘incorporation’ (and the associated states of detachment) suggests a separation from the world out of which the actual conditions for the festival originally emerged, it would be a mistake to consider this detachment to be total or solipsistic. Both Turner’s insistence on detachment, and Eade and Sallnow’s response of perpetual engagement, cloud any real ontological description of the situation. As has already been indicated in this chapter, it is the very specific locations of the *Calcio* and similar such events – from pilgrimage, through ritual to festival – that link the ontological conditions to the world from which any ‘detachment’ occurs. Hence, it is the spaces of the city that do much to maintain the continuity of the tradition even if the activities associated to it, or the political conditions that drive it, are subject to radical change. Consequently, it can be argued that it is the spatial component to both arguments that is under-developed and leads to this apparently unresolvable dichotomy. It seems obvious to say, but a *Calcio* played in a normal football stadium is a completely different event from one played in the centre of the city.

Understood in this way, architecture should also be subject to the same questions of detachment and engagement as the experience of the festival often described by anthropologists. Perhaps it too, when associated with the conditions of historicity, festival, and city, should be seen as a multilayered phenomenon that has different possibilities of experience. Firstly, at a mundane level, architecture has the ability to make streets and places capable of accommodating the day to day life of the city; and, at the other extreme, create a suitable setting for ritual (political, civic, religious). Neither of these two states are contentious and would fit a description of even the most rational forms of modernity. However, it is perhaps the third state, something like Turner’s ‘transition’, which is most under-described, suggesting there is another layer of architecture that creates opportunities for the operation of both forms of action.

Perhaps it can be argued then that architecture plays a greater role in the process of tradition than currently accepted. Rather than just being an aesthetic analogue of culture, architecture should be understood as something more primary, not in its ability to create new cultures – like argued for by the fascists – but in its ability to communicate traditional ideas embedded within culture itself.

Notes

1. The main Feast day of San Giovanni occurs on 24 June, however, throughout history, events associated to the feast have often occurred at other times as well, in the weeks before and after the actual day itself. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Luciano Artusi, *Calcio fiorentino. Storia, arte e memorie dell’antico gioco dalle origini ad oggi* (Firenze: Scribo, 2016). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. (Bk. 1, 14F) Athenaeus, *Athenaeus: The Deipnosophists, Volume I, Books 1–3.106e*, trans. by Charles Burton Gulick, Revised ed. (London: Loeb Classical Library, 1969). [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. See the introduction. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Luca Landucci, *Diario fiorentino dal 1450 al 1516*, ed. by Jodoco Del Badia (Firenze: G.C. Sansoni, 1883), chapter 50. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Luciano Artusi, *Early Florence and the Historic Game of Calcio* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1972), 28. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Ibid., 31ff. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Ferdinand Schevill, *History of Florence: From the Founding of the City through the Renaissance* (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1936), 465. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Miles J. Unger, *Machiavelli: A Biography* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2012), 79. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. John M. Najemy, *A History of Florence 1200–1575* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 460. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Bardi was Count of Vernio and a member of the Florentine Accademia degli Alterati. An analysis of this short treatise is offered by Theodore E. Mommsen, ‘Football in Renaissance Florence’, *The Yale University Library Gazette* 16, no. 1 (July, 1941): 14–19. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Giovanni Bardi, *Discorso sopra il giuoco del calcio fiorentino. Del Puro Accademico Alterato. Al sereniss. gran duca di Toscana suo signore* (Firenze: nella Stamperia de’ Giunti, 1580), 4. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Christian Frost, ‘Festivals and Tradition in Contemporary Florence’, *Journal of Urban Cultural Studies* 3, no. 2 (June, 2016): 239–54. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Bardi, *Discorso sopra il giuoco del calcio fiorentino. Del Puro Accademico Alterato. Al sereniss. gran duca di Toscana suo signore*, 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. ‘il fiore della Nobilità’. Giovanni Bardi, *Discorso sopra il giuoco del calcio fiorentino. Del Puro Accademico Alterato. Al sereniss. gran duca di Toscana suo signore*, 6. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Such feasts as Carnival in Venice, or the Boy Bishops and Feast of Asses from the medieval period. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. For a comprehensive list of recorded matches, see Artusi, *Calcio fiorentino. Storia, arte e memorie dell’antico gioco dalle origini ad oggi*, 53ff. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. The official unification of Italy occurred in 1871 but the process began at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 when the leaders of Europe convened to try to establish some international stability within Europe following the Napoleonic wars. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Around 1502 Vespucci discovered that South America was not Asia but a separate landmass. Although Tocanelli died well before this discovery he is credited with being Vespucci’s partner in his investigations. Pietro Gori, *I centenari del 1898: Toscanelli, Vespucci, Savonarola : Firenze nel secolo XV : feste, giuochi, spettacoli* (Firenze: Tipografia Galletti & Cocci, 1898). [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. D. Medina Lasansky, *The Renaissance Perfected: Architecture, Spectacle, and Tourism in Fascist Italy* (Penn State Press, 2004), 71. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Ibid., 64. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. See Frost, ‘Festivals and Tradition in Contemporary Florence’. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. The most famous surviving horse race is the *Palio* of Siena where the districts of the city, or *contrade*, sponsor a horse and jockey (not necessarily from the district) to run the race twice around the Piazza del Campo. The name, *Palio*, derives from the banner which is given to the winner of the race and they were a feature of feast days throughout Italy with some *Palios* running riderless horses. The *Palio* of Florence ran across the city from west to east through the narrow streets of the city and so would be almost impossible to run today. For an anthropological account of this event, see Alan Dundes and Alessandro Falassi, *La Terra in Piazza: An Interpretation of the Palio of Siena* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984). [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Lasansky, *The Renaissance Perfected*, 65. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. *La dottrina del fascism* (1932). [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Italy signed a treaty of alliance with Nazi Germany in 1936. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. He left the party following the assassination of the socialist politician Giacomo Matteotti in 1924 and was put under surveillance for the remainder of their time in government. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. David D. Roberts, *Historicism and Fascism in Modern Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 49. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Ibid., 26. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. Ibid., 7. Roberts is summarising Chester McArthur Destler’s opinion written in 1950 that Croce paved the way for the excesses of Fascism to follow. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. I use ‘natural’ here as a reference to the difference between ‘natural states’ and ‘open access states’. In a natural state ‘personal relationships, who one is and who one knows, form the basis for social organization and constitute the arena for individual action. . . . Natural states limit the ability of individuals to form organizations . . . [in] *open access orders* . . . personal relationships still matter, but impersonal categories of individuals, often called citizens, interact over wide areas of social behavior with no need to be cognizant of the individual identity of their partners’. Douglass C. North, John Joseph Wallis, and Barry R. Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. Procession is only used for religious events. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. San Giovanni, Santo Spirito, Santa Maria Novella and Santa Croce make up the four historic *Quartieri* (quarters) of the city first laid out in 1343. The modern city currently has five *Quartieri* (Centro Storico, Campo di Marte, Gavinana-Galluzzo, Isolotto-Legnaia and Rifredi). All four of the fourteenth-century quartieri represented here fit inside the current Centro Storico. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. The name ‘Gonfalone’ is derived from the heraldic banner with streamers that is suspended from a crossbar, like a Roman *vexillum*, that is used for ceremonial identification. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. Santa Croce is Azzurri (Blues), San Giovanni is Verdi (Greens), Santo Spirito is Bianchi (Whites), and Santa Maria Novella is Rossi (Reds). [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. There are no religious, social, or political barriers to competing in this event. The main stipulation is that a certain proportion of the players actually live in the *Quartiere* they represent. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. Which, for the sixteenth-century Commune, represented the victory of republicanism over tyranny. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. A referee, six linesmen, and a field master as well as several paramedics and physios. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. Ferretti, preface to Salvestrini’s book on *Il Gioco del Ponte di Pisa.* Lasansky, *The Renaissance Perfected*, 73. and n. 82, 291. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. ‘An Exclusive Interview with the Calciantes of Calcio Storico: Gladiators of Florence’, *The Gentleman Ultra*, www.thegentlemanultra.com/2/post/2017/06/an-exclusive-interview-with-the-calciantes-gladiators-of-calcio-storico.html (accessed 2 November 2017). [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. See W.W. Fowler, *The Roman Festivals of the Period of the Republic: An Introduction to the Study of the Religion of the Romans* (Oxford: Gorgias Press LLC, 2004). [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. Richard C. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 240ff. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. I.e. out of profane time which measures secular processes and routines. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. Victor Witter Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982), 24. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. For Turner, pilgrimage and festival had similar attributes in this regard. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. by William Glen-Doepel (London: Sheed and Ward, 1979), 110. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow, eds., *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois, 2000), 4. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. Ibid., 5. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-49)