



8th Gaetano Cozzi Prize for studies on the history of games, 2024

SILVIA ORIONE

Il palinsesto festivo degli Sforza.

Il rituale delle feste nella Milano della seconda metà del XV secolo

(The programme of festive events promoted by the Sforzas.

The ritual of festivities in Milan in the second half of the 15th century)

Treviso,

14th November 2024

Citation

The study submitted by Silvia Orione, *Il palinsesto festivo degli Sforza. Il rituale delle feste nella Milano della seconda metà del XV secolo* (The programme of festive events promoted by the Sforzas. The ritual of festivities in Milan in the second half of the 15th century), dedicated to the programme of festive events promoted by the Sforzas certainly deserves attention for the relevance of her subject to the history of games, for the quality of the first-hand data and the care and attention with which it has been assembled and for the intrinsic and specific interest of the chosen theme. The ritual nature of the festive events promoted by the Sforzas in the second half of the 15th century, the historical-cultural context in which the events took place, the positive and planned impact they had and the themes they were organised to embody all go to show the attention the Sforzas' system of government paid to the role that great public events could play in terms of social control and community relations.

From this point of view, the experience of the Milanese government was no different from what was happening in other political centres in the complex Italian scene of the time, but in this case the specific experience of the Sforzas is highlighted with precision and clarity in the distinction between fixed festivities and those linked to particularly important events. Their calendar is constructed with reference both to 'stable' observance of important moments such as Christmas, and the generally more interesting celebration of specific events of special significance, an example being the ducal investitures of 1450 and 1466. But there are also other occasions when "the court dresses up", and it is a merit of the study that it carefully traces the connections between the festive occasions, their organisation, the paraphernalia they required, the iconographic programmes they followed and the ceremonial etiquette they observed.

Naturally, the study brings out the obvious political significance underlying the programme of festivities, as, for example, in the specific case of the celebration of Christmas 1469, which was devised as an expression and a lesson of loyalty to Duke Gian Galeazzo Sforza, who had succeeded his father Galeazzo Maria. But as well as these specific cases, the study succeeds in



revealing the complex 'programme of festivities' of the Sforzas. The festive ceremonials, the theatrical performances, the importance of the personalities involved, the carefully organised preparations, the involvement of the inhabitants (starting, no doubt, with the cream of Milanese society), the decoration of the city: the political significance of all this is tellingly underlined by the role assigned to Leonardo da Vinci; the study appropriately underlines the primary importance of his operational role. The period in question is between 1482 and the end of the century, the reign of Ludovico Maria Sforza, *il Moro*, and the years immediately afterwards.

In this connection, Silvia Orione lists Leonardo da Vinci's tasks as "master of ceremonies" and "artistic director ante litteram". Indeed, she finds it quite plausible that Leonardo was responsible for "orchestrating banquets and entertainments", recalling too that he was in some way involved as a stylist for "the attire of the Duchess of Milan, Isabella of Aragon", and also that he was responsible "for outfitting Galeazzo Sanseverino on the occasion of a tournament in 1491". Such are small, no doubt marginal, details but they should not be forgotten. The main points of the study are, however, those mentioned above.

Silvia Orione's study succeeds in relating these aspects to an extremely complex framework of events of apparently secondary importance. She deals with the actual festivities, the ways citizens were involved, the rituals observed in lay and religious celebrations, productions and arrangements of various kinds, the 'festive venues' and the festivities themselves... in a world in which the 'programme of festivities' is presented in its carefully organised (and serious!) complexity as one of the supporting elements of the social system.

For these reasons, the Selection Board for the eighth *Gaetano Cozzi Prize for studies on the history of games*, 2024 has decided to award a Special Mention to the study by Silvia Orione and to recommend that it be published in the forthcoming issue no. 30 of the journal *Ludica. Annali di storia e civiltà del gioco*.

The Selection Board, comprising members of the Scientific Committee
of *Ludica. Annali di storia e civiltà del gioco*:
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