

## The 'Tamburo Imperiale' (Imperial Drum) of the Calcio Storico Fiorentino (Italy)

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The 'tamburo imperiale' (imperial drum) is the most iconic instrument played by the 'musicisti' (musicians) of the Corteo della Repubblica Fiorentina, the Renaissance costumes group that introduces the matches of Calcio Storico Fiorentino (CSF), each year in June, in the Historic Center of Florence. With the other costumes and objects of CSF, 'tamburi imperiali' are property of the city council of Florence, that organizes CSF. They comprise a wooden frame painted in white and red, 52 cm high with a diameter of 47 cm. The sound is obtained by hitting the upper membrane, made of donkey leather and fixed on the wooden body with ropes. The leather tension can be adjusted through small strings that tie the ropes. A red fleur-de-lis – the heraldic symbol of Florence – is painted on the white frame of the drum. The model was conceived in 1930, based on 'tamburi a bandoliera' (cross-body drums). They are held by the 'tamburini' (drummers) of the Corteo with a shoulder strap.

In 2020, the 'tamburo imperiale' has been recognized as an object of particular ethno-anthropological interest by the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage, 'Istituto Centrale per il Patrimonio Immateriale', that in cooperation with its peripheral organ ('Soprintendenza') has funded an ethnographic research project to define the relevant tangible and intangible aspects of CSF from an ethno-anthropological perspective. From the data collected, a body of 23 costumes and objects has been identified and catalogued, in order to start safeguarding measures for CSF and its Corteo. Among these objects, 'tamburo imperiale' is one of the most iconic for the festival/game, being adopted by the city council as the official symbol of the event.

Calcio Storico Fiorentino is both a ball game and a festival organized every year by the city council of Florence, normally in June, since 1930, when it was introduced by local Fascist leaders as a reenactment of the Florentine Renaissance game of 'calcio' (Lasansky, *Renaissance*). In fact, *calcio* was a relevant civic tradition in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when it represented a distinctive activity for the Medici family and the local upper classes (Bredekamp, *Florentiner*). However, it completely disappeared from the daily life and memory of the city between the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. Notably, the festival founded in 1930 reenacts the 'partita dell'asse-



A section of the tamburo imperiale (imperial drum) of the Calcio Storico Fiorentino

Photo: Dario Nardini

dio' (the siege match) of February 17, 1530, when the Republic of Florence (1527–1530) was besieged by the troops of the Emperor Charles V, and the Florentines, starving and almost defeated, bravely decided to play the traditional 'calcio' match for Carnival in Piazza Santa Croce, to encourage the Florentine soldiers and mock the besieging enemies.

Since its foundation in 1930, CSF has provided the people involved with a complex field for the expression and definition of 'imagined' Florentine identities: a '[re-] invented tradition' exploited for various social, economic and political purposes (Mazzoni, "Firenze").

Today, Calcio Storico consists of a contested, rough version of a composite set of contact and combat sports. Four teams of 27 'calcianti' ('calcio' players), representing the 'historic districts' of Florence (only men), confront each other every year in June on a sand arena in Piazza Santa Croce, in a ball game that echoes rugby, where wrestling and combat techniques are allowed. The three matches of the tournament (semi-finals and final) are introduced by a military parade in Renaissance costume in the city center – the Corteo della Repubblica Fiorentina, that also includes calcianti. The march is beat to the rhythm of the 'tamburi imperiali' played by the 'musicisti'. 'Tamburi imperiali' also highlight the decisive moments of the festival and the calcio matches. For example, they rhythmically guide the 'Inno alla vittoria' (ode to victory), the arrangement played at the end of each match to celebrate the winning district, inspired by fifteenth century melodies and compositions.

Since the 1930s, the 'tamburo imperiale' also represents the main symbol of CSF, and was printed on the badges given to the member of the Corteo. In fact, the sources and accounts regarding the 'partita dell'assedio' consistently report the presence of musicians with drums and other instruments in 1530, to accompany the calcio match and create a festive atmosphere in the face of the enemy (Bredenkamp, *Florentiner*). From 1956, a drawing representing a 'musicista' playing the 'tamburo imperiale' has also become the official symbol of CSF and is portrayed on the posters and official documents regarding the tournament.

The Renaissance costumes, instruments and scenic arms of Calcio Storico have been conceived and designed by drawing on heterogeneous iconographic and literary sources by the local scholars and experts involved in the project of reenacting the 'partita dell'assedio' in the last years of the 1920s – a process that has been partially documented in a text by Alfredo Lenzi (1931). Since then, costumes have been slightly re-adapted according to the analysis of new sources or to the specific needs of the festival. The execution of the costumes, instruments and scenic arms of CSF has been regularly assigned to local artisans (design and tailor's studios, instrument makers, armorers, etc.), consolidating the link between the festival/game and the social, productive and cultural context of the city.

To sum up, the 'tamburo imperiale' is the reconstruction of one of the Renaissance instruments played by the Florentine people during the celebrated 'calcio' match of 1530, that has been regularly reenacted in Florence since 1930, in the tournament of Calcio Storico Fiorentino. It constitutes the rhythm section of the Renaissance costume march that introduces each match of the tournament, and represents an emblematic item for the game, as well as for the whole festival.

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