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Entering the Field

New Perspectives on World Football

Edited by Gary Armstrong and Richard Giulianotti

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Contents

Frisked rudely or even violently, they are free to go as soon as they state that they are professional football players. See *Folha de São Paulo*, 14 January 1996.

28. Pelé who has recently been preoccupied, as Minister of Sports, in promoting sports and football in working-class neighbourhoods, has also been concerned by colour discrimination and racial inequalities. As he got back in touch with his ethnic origins he declared his desire to know the meaning of the nickname he didn't initially like. An intellectual of the black movement informed by newspaper that in yorubá language it would be 'rapid boy'. Another one disagreed with this meaning, but despite the mysteries of lost meanings, *Pelé* is now unequivocally associated with his person and his social biography.
29. Lever (1983) grasped the beginning of the changes in the cheering sections in the 1970s. In Brazil, it would be important to perform in-depth and focused ethnographic studies such as those done by Bromberger et al. (1995) in Marseilles, Turin and Naples.

Chapter 4

The Importance of Difference: Football Identities in Italy

Rocco De Biasi and *Pierre Lanfranchi*

Although the importance of football in Italian society is unquestionable, the interest of social scientists in the game is scarce, and over-focused on events related to violence and hooliganism. In fact, although the football industry is one of the most important economic sections in Italy, even this financial issue is ignored by academics.[1] In his two-volume monograph of post-war Italy the English historian, Paul Ginsborg (1989), did not have a single word to say about football. Perhaps his problem was one stated by the Brazilian sociologist, Roberto da Matta (1982), who noted how the presence of the game is so rooted in Latin societies that some analysts have difficulties seeing its implications. Finding reference to the game over the past fifty years in works that describe the transformation of Italy from a rural to an urbanized society is nearly impossible. Even in the 1990s historians and social scientists are reluctant to include passions for both football and *Totocalcio* (the Italian 'football pools') in their analysis of the country.

In the opinions of journalist Oliviero Beha and sociologist Franco Ferrarotti, 'Italy is a Republic based on Football'.[2] This definition is applicable and relevant but also paradoxical. The fact that the Italian football industry is the biggest in Europe could lead to excessive emphasis being given to the notion of Italian fans as 'consumers' in a manipulated form of consumption. Three national daily sports newspapers[3] offer Italian football fans not only news, but abstract and complex reflections upon matches and surrounding events. The Italian football spectator is thus often a sort of 'theorist' on his favourite sport, equipped with a sophisticated lexicon, exercised at a high level of abstraction. This fanatical

culture involves the whole country so that the recent developments of the football system in Italy have occurred on fertile and cerebral land. This chapter, written by a historian and a social scientist, combines social and oral history with ethnography, and seeks to analyse the development of football in Italy. After presenting the historical and historiographic complexities of that evolution, we endeavour to analyse the styles of fandom in Italy, in particular those of the *ultras*. The symbiosis of club, team and followers is, in Italy, one which is fragile, regional in its chauvinism and dismissive of the idea of national unity.

Italian football differs further from expressions of the game which are played elsewhere in Europe. Firstly, local patriotism – *campanilismo* – is forever present in a country unified only a century ago. In a manner similar to politics and the arts, football continues to create and diffuse tensions in the nation and offers endless possibilities to display local pride and chauvinism. In nineteenth-century Italy, games were played in various local forms; one was known as *giuoco del pallone* which is similar to tennis and relevant to an understanding of the specific development of a football culture throughout twentieth-century Italy (Pivato 1992). Secondly, while being strongly anchored in the habits and customs of the nation, Italian football has never referred to social class or religious discrimination. Thirdly, the game's status as a global social phenomenon has developed in the cultural and political sphere since the First World War, and is now an essential component of Italian society. We may begin to examine these historical phenomena by reference to the game that Italians call *calcio*.

What is 'Calcio all'Italiana'?

The Italian word *calcio* is not a literal or phonetic translation of the English word 'football'. Instead, it originates from a game played in Florence from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century (Artusi and Gabrielli 1986; Bredekamp 1995). In choosing this word to define a game imported from Britain, the Italian Football Federation in 1909 reassumed a characteristic of pre-modern ball games in Italy: the importance of difference. In local chauvinism, the differences could be small but significant. Florentine *calcio* proclaimed itself to be 'a *specific* and *ancient* game of the city of Florence'. Yet fifteen miles away, the textile city of Prato had played

its own game of *calcio*; for its citizens the differences were fundamental, since their game 'differs a lot from the florentine game, because our ball is smaller, our public place different'. This somewhat contradictory pursuit of establishing a direct link with local traditions and the need for displaying difference has been a constant logic in Italian football throughout the century (Lanfranchi 1995).

A further distinction between Italian football and the English original emerged in the 1930s. The style of 'kick and rush' which monopolized English football was criticized by managers and journalists. Italian clubs began to enrol vast numbers of trainers from Central Europe, particularly Austria and Hungary, whose conceptions of the game adapted well to the contemporary nationalistic and fascistic view about the game's role. A new style known as *Il Metodo* (The Method) appeared. This emphasized the political ideology that players were warriors for the nation (Marri 1983), and closely related to the climactic and morphological situation of Italy. By focusing on the tactical skills of the players, rather than their fighting spirit and physical strength, trainers in Italy created the idea of a specific way of understanding and performing the game across this Peninsula. In November 1934, when Italy travelled to play England, the 'Battle of Highbury' was presented by the Italian media as a contest between the guardians of the temple and the iconoclastic world champions; as the opposition between two games, two cultures, and as the metaphoric representation of a *Kulturkampf* (culture struggle). The very idea of universality in the rules of football was, from that point on, over. Football was displayed as the metaphoric opposition between the old capitalist democracy (England) and the new vigour of fascist Italy. And football offered during the 'golden decade of the Fascist regime' two World Cup victories (1934 and 1938) and an Olympic gold medal at Berlin (1936). Abroad, it allowed the possibility of displaying itself as the antithesis of England and Englishness. This opposition was not only visible in how the game was played; it also assumed various forms in the different understandings of fair competition, supporter culture, news coverage, citizenship within football, the impact of football stars, the concept of what stadiums are, and the symbolic values of the game. Further differences are reflected through the Italians' collective understanding of the history of their club football.

Internal Differences, Unequal Partners

Since the creation of the Italian national championship in 1929, football clubs have been classified into three unequal categories: *le grande* (the big clubs), *le provinciali* (the small provincial clubs) and the others. The big clubs are the two sides of Milan (Inter and AC) and Juventus of Turin. At the start of each season they are all the favourites to win the championship. Having more money than the rest, they can buy the best players. They are favoured by referees; they are influential in the football federation and in political circles. More than any other club, Juventus exemplifies this category, being part of the Agnelli empire which owns FIAT. The club recruits supporters from all regions of the country, and is a symbol of immigration from the South to Turin to work in the car factories. After winning the league in 1982 following a long battle with Fiorentina, the latter's supporters claimed the victory had been unfair: Juventus had received too much help from the football federation and referees. Offensive slogans appeared on Florentine city walls, declaring 'Better second than bent' or, more famously, 'If *Juve* is magic then Cicciolina[4] is a virgin'. Over a decade later, this strong anti-Juventus sentiment retains the same power and vitality.

This hierarchy within Italian football has changed little over time. Some clubs, such as Fiorentina, Roma or Napoli, have managed for a few years to compete at the highest level, but *le grande* quickly re-establish their supremacy. Only two clubs, Inter and Juventus, have never been relegated in the 66-year-old history of Italy's first division, *Serie A*. The second category of clubs, *le provinciali*, will never win the League. As they compete for a place in the UEFA Cup, their managers usually state that staying in the top division is like winning the title for them. From Atalanta, Ascoli, Udinese to Catania or Vicenza, these teams are obliged to sell their best players and successful managers to the bigger clubs every season, and benefit only from their local support.

The third category, the others, is more complex. Fiorentina, Napoli, Roma, Lazio, Sampdoria, Genoa, Bologna and Torino make up this group. They enjoy plentiful popular support all over the nation, have big stadiums and have each won the league title at least once. Genoa and Torino are considered to be 'the big dismissed' (*le grande decadute*); they enjoy a large but rather resigned support. In the 1920s, Genoa was Italy's major club but never really adapted to professionalism. Torino's history is more tragic. In May 1949 all the players and staff were killed in a plane crash over the church of Superga, north of the city. They had won the last three league championships and had in Valentino Mazzola the captain of the Italian national side. Unlike Manchester United, sportingly they never recovered from this disaster. In 1967, Gigi Meroni, their most talented player, was killed by a car when crossing a Turin street, only three hours after playing his last match for the club. He was only twenty-four (see dalla Chiesa 1995).

All these 'other' clubs have experienced high points followed by major crises, and do not wear the exclusive gold star on their shirts (the symbol of ten league titles). They can keep their best players, like Antognoni (Fiorentina), Mancini (Sampdoria), Bruno Conti and Falcão (Roma), but are often not able to compete with *le grande* in the *Calcio-mercato* (football supermarket) held every summer in a big Milan hotel. Here, the ethics of competition are diametrically opposed to the American model. Every year, as always, the most expensive players on the market go to the best professional clubs. Such a lack of flexible mobility on the football scene is comparable to other Latin countries, such as Spain, Portugal or Greece, and reproduces in the sporting sphere the very idea of power and local or regional oppositions. Football is not open to big surprises.

In Italy, the aphorism that football is more than a game is especially true. In addition to the ubiquitous football media, the game's words and terms are major vectors in political and economic discourses. The former prime minister, Giulio Andreotti, a long-standing and influential Roma supporter, used to say that he never liked to sit on the bench. One of the major questions asked in the press during the last decade was, 'Is the Italian economy relegated to *Serie B*?' In recent years, this link has been emphasized by Silvio Berlusconi, first when he used football to develop his private television network in 1981, then upon becoming chairman of AC Milan in 1986, and then in his use of a football slogan to christen his political party as *Forza Italia!* (Come on Italy!) in 1993. Radio and the Sunday afternoon transmission *Il calcio minuto per minuto* play an important role in this liturgy. In the stadium, the majority of supporters bring a radio to learn of developments at other matches; in the cities, people everywhere listen to the voice of Sandro Ciotti to suffer with their team, and to know if they have won the *Totocalcio*. A Sunday afternoon may well change your life . . .

Sunday Afternoon 'Lay Religion'

Eric Hobsbawm has used the term 'lay religion' to define the football culture (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1981), and the editor of a book on football culture in Europe entitled an article one of the authors wrote on Italian football 'Cathedrals in Concrete' (Lanfranchi 1995a). Thus, football matches could be understood as perfect rituals with their own fixed rules. In a number of other European countries, religious conflicts played a major role in the dynamics of the development of the game through opposition between religious communities. The catholic predominance in the peninsula (at 90 per cent of the total population) excludes any kind of religious football war. However, and this aspect has been generally underestimated, the church and the parish organizations play a central role in the structure of Italian football. As in Italian sport generally, the Italian football association (FIGC) is only organized for the élite. The infrastructure and numbers of qualified trainers and organized competitions are insufficient, particularly at youth level. Since the 1920s, the *oratorio* has been the natural place for young boys to meet and learn football together after school, under the supervision of the local priest. Initially, the strong Italian socialist movement was steadfastly opposed to sport, and proclaimed: 'More libraries, less stadiums' (Pivato 1992). Conversely, at the end of the nineteenth century, catholic theorists such as Semeria gave major attention to sport as they were more inclined to the development of activities for young people than any political movement (ibid.; Porro 1995). In his biography of Gigi Meroni, dalla Chiesa underlines the continuing importance of the *oratorio* for the young winger. More recently, players such as Cabrini have focused on the early years of their autobiography, when the priest was coach and referee, and the pitch devoid of grass.

The Italian Catholic Church's long-standing partiality towards football has been epitomized very recently on television. Lazio's most celebrated supporter is *Suor Paola*, a religious sister in her fifties who appears on TV screens every Sunday afternoon in the midst of a group of young *ultras* in the stadium. During the match her language is partisan rather than reasoned, though she justifies this by arguing, 'I like to be where the youngsters are, to understand their passions . . . and I enjoy it.' In the 1990s, other clubs exhibit their priests: Atalanta's is a TV spokesman for the *ultras*, Fiorentina's has recently published a book based on player

interviews reflecting their strong religious feelings and attachment to the church (Vagnuzzi 1992). Yet, in this religious context, there is no official link with the catholic hierarchy. No Italian club is analogous to Barcelona, with its chapel next to the dressing-room. Gianni Rivera and his team-mates of the 1960s were called *gli abattini* by the major sportswriter Gianni Brera, as they looked as cold and superior as a young *abbé* (Brera 1993: 211).

Hence, the message is one of everyday faith in a popular religion conversely. Paganist rituals are also appropriated, and chance remains as a major factor in the rhetoric of Italian football. Pisa's chairman, Romeo Anconetani, was renowned throughout Italy for throwing salt inside the goals before every home game, to prevent bad luck. Helenio Herrera, Inter's successful manager during the 1960s, was not appreciated for his tactical qualities: his nickname *il mago* (the wizard) derived from his ability to transform ordinary players into prize-fighters. According to the press, the reason for his successes had nothing to do with training skills, but was instead rooted in his considerable power in hypnotizing players before matches!

Although this religious presence in Italian football has remained, since the 1940s young men have deserted churches but continued to attend matches on Sunday afternoons. Yet Italian football shows intense stoicism in celebrating itself on this most religious of days. Football in Italy is deeply attached to Sunday afternoons. The Federation has always been extremely reluctant to postpone matches. The relationship is reciprocated through the fact that football is also present in religious processions. In Naples in 1987, after Napoli's first league victory, images of Maradona were present at the popular procession of the Madonna dell'Arco, next to the images of San Gennaro (patron of the city) and the Madonna (Niola 1991). In addition, parodies of city processions, such as the wearing of bishops' dress by supporters, highlighted the religious impact of the club. In other settings, the trappings of religiosity find an expression in football. Obituary notices are placed to mourn the death of a rival team during a game, and circulated throughout the country. Significantly, only in their songs and lyrics do Italian supporters avoid using religious canticles. From the early 1990s, political songs, such as *Morti di Reggio Emilia*, the anti-fascist hymn from the 1970s, have been adapted on to the terraces. Yet, with the names of *ultra* groups referring to left-wing movements, like the red-black brigades of Milan or the face of

Che Guevara on the flags of Pisa supporters, the political aspect has been manipulated to such an extent that it has become only a generic symbol (Dal Lago 1991).

The Cultural Dimension of Italian Football: Politics and Social Research

As noted at the outset of this chapter, it is only recently in Italy's post-war history that social scientists have come to appreciate the significance of football in Italian society. It was not until the 1970s that historians first dealt seriously with football, specifically through their political interest in fascism. Even here, they were concerned with applying previous work on Nazi Germany to Mussolini's regime, focusing almost exclusively on institutions and propaganda (Fabrizi 1973). The first innovative work appeared about ten years ago. Stefano Pivato, who worked initially on popular catholicism at the start of the twentieth century, dedicated a book to the myth of Gino Bartali (Pivato 1987, 1996). In his following work, he emphasized the importance of popular catholicism as a catalyst in the development of a rural sporting tradition. Cycling and football benefitted from the favours of the public and the local clergy. The biographies of players have reflected this rural tradition in Italian football. Ezio Pascutti, Bologna's forward in the 1960s, embodied this tradition, coming from a village of 450 inhabitants in Frioul which offered no future except through emigration to America (Fiori 1996). Football was a working-class game, belonging to the rural working class that emigrated *en masse* to the major cities of the north (such as Milan, Genoa and Turin), bringing with them rural values and catholic faith. If historians did not pay much attention to football's symbolization of changes in Italy, this theme was developed by political scientists particularly with the growth of the post-1990's Berlusconi phenomenon, though political involvement in football had a longer history. During the Fascist period, football assumed extraordinary importance. Giuseppe Meazza, captain of the national team in the 1930s, was called *il Ballila*, the young soldier of the regime. As Soldati (1964) records in his book *Le due città*, 'Juventus was a serious matter, it was, maybe, at that time the most serious in life. We could not dedicate ourselves to politics anymore, we were not allowed to think anymore, and it seemed

there was no hope Fascism could end.'

Biographies and studies describing the creation of sporting legends, like Maradona in Naples (Dini 1994), are essential to understand the cultural changes of the nation. Interestingly enough, the journal *Ossimori*, published by the Italian association of anthropologists, devoted its first issue to football in 1992. The influence of Christian Bromberger played an essential role in this choice but, as the editorial said, football passion may be considered as a legitimate and accurate object, through which the impact of modernity on rural society may be identified. Additionally, political association and supporter organization have direct connections. In the case of Naples, the journalist Antonio Ghirelli, whose history of Italian football is still the most valuable contribution to the field, wrote: 'People from Naples who emigrated to the North feel their football support as a transfer . . .. They give to football matches a sense of their lives; it is a link with their origins, but also a way to fight against under-development' (Ghirelli 1978).

Participating in football remains the best way to express a form of genuine normality. Politicians and judges form their national team for charity matches in order to enhance their popularity. To name more famous cases of the football–politics connection, Gianni Rivera, football idol of the 1960s, has been a Christian Democrat MP for the past fifteen years; Giampiero Boniperti, former star then chairman of Juventus, is an MEP for *Forza Italia!*; the young Massimo Mauro, former Juventus and Naples midfielder, is representing the left-wing Olive Tree coalition, in the newly elected parliament. We doubt that any other Western democracy ever had such a large sporting tradition in politics. Artists are not absent from this 'footballization' of society. A book compiling all the publications of Pasolini, the writer and movie director, regarding football has been recently published and in the debate regarding Maradona some years ago, major cultural figures like Carmelo Bene expressed their opinion.

The Rituals and Differences of the *Ultras*

In order to analyse the relationship between politics and football in Italy more fully, we can consider the most discussed phenomenon linked to the game: spectator violence. This is an important

looking-glass, through which we may examine different societies. In various countries football hooliganism involves the immersion of spectator violence in religious or ethnic conflicts, or has a cause instigated by extreme nationalist elements. In Italy, the influence of politics mainly relates to the particular forms of association which are transplanted into the stadium ends (the *curvas*). Deriving from the tradition of local associations, religious and political, which are deeply rooted in Italian culture, football supporters are organized, whether they are 'respectable' fans or *ultras*.[5]

Legacies of political commitment have influenced the *ultras* associations in the *curvas*. The political symbols displayed on the banners of each *curva* have lost their original reference point and assumed another meaning. There has occurred simultaneously a transposition of the firmly structured organizational dimension of some politically extremist youth associations. After the crisis of political commitment among young people in Italy during the late 1970s and early 1980s (Dal Lago and De Biasi 1994). The extreme left and right wing have created a form of association that presents itself in new contexts.

What we would emphasize is that *ultra* culture is an extreme culture towards which the expressions of the movements of the political margins are compelling. Thus, in the 1970s left-wing sentiment was manifest – to be replaced in the 1980s with those of the political right. But *ultras* do not simply mirror these marginal manifestations, they take what they want and recontextualize it into the football arena. The heterogeneous nature of today's *ultra* composition permits a variety of sub-cultural styles. The syllogism which equates the skinhead with the fascist and implicitly the manifestation of fascist sympathies has to be challenged. Political ideology is not the main issue in the *ultra* gatherings, the cognitive framework of the *curvas* is metaphorical and can assimilate young people of opposing ideologies.

Historical Changes in Organized Fandom in Italian Football

The birth of the *ultras* is linked to an historical change among spectators at football grounds. As Antonio Roversi argues, in Italy, spectator behaviour was always influenced by patriarchal and masculine values, and gave voice to feelings of local identity. This

phenomenon was typical of spectators during the 1950s, from both the working class and petit bourgeoisie, and sometimes from the upper-middle class in the north of the country (Roversi 1990: 80). Football-related violence (in particular pitch invasions) was not regarded as rooted in any social problem; 'intemperance' was explained in terms of the inclinations of individuals or the 'contagions' within crowds.

During the 1960s, the greater professionalization of football and the televising of matches, watched nation-wide by broad, cross-class audiences, attenuated the relevance of local and municipal values, but damaged neither 'patriarchal' values, which still permeated society, nor the masculine mores visible in the attitudes of supporters and behaviour of players. At the same time, spectator violence moved outside football grounds, and involved police too, in common with the violent political demonstrations and riots of the time (see Roversi 1990: 91). Organized football supporters' clubs were also born, which later joined the Italian Federation of Supporters of Football Clubs (FISSC), founded in 1970. During the late 1960s, and on the fringes of these official supporters' clubs, new groups of young fans occupied the *curva* of Italian stadiums. A new era of football-related disorder began. As in the rest of Europe, and in Britain in particular, football hooliganism was now considered a social problem.

In the 1970s, the terrace supporters' associations, now named *ultras* (like the extreme political organizations of the same period), changed the atmosphere of the match event. The *curva* displayed a persistent form of collective support manifested in big banners and flags with the name and the symbol of the *ultras* group and, as on British terraces, new collective choruses and chants. The rise of this new generation of *ultras* involved various factors: autonomy from paternal tutelage (young fans went to the stadium with people of the same age); which combined with 'assimilation and imitation of the forms of the British hooligan style of support and aggression' and para-political patterns of group cohesion (Roversi 1990: 95).

Between the 1970s and 1980s press and public opinion focused upon the problem of football hooliganism as an issue of public order. Inside stadiums, the police began to segregate visiting *ultras*, allocating them the opposite end to that of the rival home supporters. In response the *ultras'* organization became more structured and hierarchical. The names adopted by some groups

alluded to political extremism or terrorism and, crucially as police control increased inside the grounds, hooligans moved their confrontations outside it. Between 1983 and 1984 the frequency of violence increased, and the second generation of *ultras* arrived. Other small *ultras* groups were formed by gangs of punks and skinheads. There is now, in the 1990s, a fragmentation of *ultras* groups, and this organizational weakening makes their infiltration by extreme right-wing elements easier.

Roversi's description, summarized above, gives us some useful information about the birth and transformation of *ultras*, but his focus is mainly on the degeneration of supporter behaviour, and neglects other important aspects of the culture and form of organized supporters. We do not think that this is a mistake, but rather an issue of approach and our research, like other sociological and anthropological studies, is more focused on the *ultras'* rituals, symbols and culture (Dal Lago 1990; Bromberger 1995a). Moreover, the question of Italian *ultras'* 'assimilation and imitation of the forms of the British hooligan style of support and aggression' is misleading. British supporter culture has been influential, but it has not been a case of mere imitation. Compared with the British terrace model, the Italian *ultras* show at least two elements which are absent inside the British ends: the more sophisticated choreography of the *curva* and a strongly structured form of association among *ultras*. As Roversi (1992: 42) himself later argued, the *ultras* phenomenon represents 'an original "Italian way" of football hooliganism'.[6]

Rituals, Violence and the *Ultras*

It is appropriate to consider what actually goes on during a football match: describing these collective rituals is part of a 'frame analysis' (Goffman 1974) of the match event, within the overall *ecology* of the stadium.[7] Roversi argues that the *ultras'* rituals and expressive behaviour are part of the phenomenon of football hooliganism. By contrast, the anthropologists Dal Lago and Bromberger look at *ultras'* culture from a different perspective. According to Roversi, their chants and choruses (which he terms their 'autonomous modulation') intimate a lack of attention to the match itself: *ultras* prefer to celebrate themselves instead of the match. According to Dal Lago (1990), however, the collective rituals

are linked to the match event. From this point of view, there is not necessarily a link between supporters' collective rituals and hooliganism. Since the dominant metaphor of *ultra* culture is war, Dal Lago argues that we can understand what takes place inside Italian stadiums every Sunday by introducing the political concept of 'opposition between friends and foes' (Schmidt 1927) to the realm of football. Dal Lago's approach is based on three assumptions:

1. As a *team sport (sport di squadra)* which allows identification with particular symbols (beyond specific loyalties), football splits the supporters' world into friends and foes. This split can, under some circumstances, according to predictable and ritualized forms, transform itself into physical fighting.
2. A *football match* is not only a competition between two football teams: for organized supporters it is the opportunity for ritual confrontation between friends and foes, which, under some circumstances, according to some predictable ritual forms, can transform itself into physical fighting.
3. A *stadium* is not only the physical environment for a football match: for organized supporters it is mainly the frame of the ritual celebration of the 'friends/foes' metaphor.

In this perspective the football 'war' is mainly (although not always) symbolic and theatrical.

Although Roversi states that this approach resembles the work of Marsh, Harré and Rosser (1978), Dal Lago does not seem to argue that 'ritual' and 'real' violence are mutually exclusive: his intention is to analyse the context of the behaviour of football fans in which violence is just one aspect of a wider cultural phenomenon. This point of view converges with the anthropological studies of Bromberger (1990) who states: 'There are few events which can be deemed to be "complete social phenomena", if this suggests – following Marcel Mauss rather than some of his commentators – phenomena which in some cases mobilize the totality of a society and its institutions.' Bromberger's fieldwork in Naples and Turin, focuses on the cultural dimensions of the phenomenon: symbols, rituals, rhetoric of choruses and chants, theatrical aspects of the match event and collective identification are all considered as anthropological issues. The football match is a sort of religious ritual, and 'for its symbolic plasticity, its

contradictory properties and its ritual dimensions, the football match is, without doubt, one of the more enlightening viewpoints of contemporary life' (1995b: 137). In short, *ultras* can be analysed as a cultural phenomenon.

The Political Vulnerability of *Ultras*

As Roversi points out, Italian hooliganism on the terraces is increasingly vulnerable, in both a political and non-political sense. The *ultras*' organizations are undergoing a process of fragmentation: born in the 1970s, and well established in the 1980s as highly structured organizations, they are now, in the 1990s, in a deep crisis. Symptoms of this crisis are the absence of a generational turnover of the old leadership; fragmentation into different groups; the emergence of violent 'non-official' groups that elude the control of recognized leaders; and the predominance of physical engagement with opponents, which is progressively less ritual and more 'acted' (De Biasi 1993). This aspect of the *ultras*' phenomenon is rising at the same time as the decline of other associative activities (like choreography, emotional involvement in the match, playful aspects of the stadium rituals, etc.). Consequently, *ultras*' organizations risk becoming weaker and more changeable and, exactly for these reasons, more dangerous.

From this point of view *ultras* are without doubt a public order problem. Let us take, for example, the cost of policing football grounds: during the 1993–94 season, police reinforcements assigned to the *questure* (divisional police stations) amounted, on a national level, to over 88,000 officers (and more than 150,000 when counting *carabinieri*[8]). The total cost for one season is 70,000 million lira, at the expense of the State. In England, the price of maintaining public order is much lower and, for a large part, charged to the football clubs. In Italy, on the contrary, each day of the season costs the State 6,000 million lira (to which should be added the cost of the fuel for the means of transport and the cost of absences from work for the occasional injured policeman). Recent research on Italian police and public order (della Porta 1995; De Biasi 1995) shows that, although political tension and uncertainty are typical of the Italian situation, strictly speaking, public order problems seem to belong to another age. Especially for the *reparti mobili* (anti-riot police), the most frequent experiences

of managing and violently engaging with crowds occur in football grounds, with the *ultras*. In truth, the *reparti mobili* also have to face new forms of disorder due, for instance, to the need to control large groups of *extracommunitari* immigrants in the major cities. This control function takes the place of more traditional tasks like the policing of protests; modern changes in the major cities now produce forms of disorder, the rules of which are still unknown.

Football hooliganism has also caused deaths (seven in 20 years), which no longer occur during mass political demonstrations. Football grounds provide the context in which the toughest equipment and most repressive techniques are still used by the Italian police and *carabinieri*, in a manner very similar to the policing of the political protests and riots typical of the 1970s. The opinion of interviewed police officers is that the *ultras* are the main precipitants of public disorder in the Italy of the 1990s. Nevertheless, police work has not improved qualitatively, but only quantitatively; hence, in some cases, 1,200 police officers may now be employed during a single football match. Quantity not quality seems to be their preferred method, combined with a degree of non-intervention. Surrounding the *curva* they permit the fans in it to behave in a way as if the *curva* were a zone of liminality. Such discretion points to a discrepancy between legal requisites and tolerated behaviour which is not manifested by the police in Britain.

The Absence of Nationalism

Although football hooliganism seems to be the main public order problem for Italian police (as reflected in workload and cost), the same phenomenon does not occur when Italian *ultras* travel abroad. There are no *ultras* following the national team – *ultras* travel abroad only when their favourite club is playing and not for the national team – and in such cases there has not been disorder or hooliganism. This is one of the main differences in comparison with the English situation. In Italy, nationalism, at least among football fans, became *ultra* in a municipal culture manifested in opposition to the national side. During Italia '90, the 'national team fever' coexisted with a critical detachment among ordinary spectators and with the competing loyalties of *ultras*, who often identified with foreign teams for which players

of their favourite club were playing.[9] Hence, the match between Germany and Holland, played in Milan, became a sort of derby between Internazionale and AC Milan.[10] The semi-final between Italy and Argentina, played in Naples, split Neapolitan football fans, undecided between their national side and their city's favourite adopted son, Maradona. If the national team prefers to play in central or southern Italy, and finds hostility in northern cities like Turin, Milan or Florence, it is because supporters of these clubs (and *ultras* in particular) identify only with players who play for their club side. They often show contempt toward Italian players of rival clubs and oppose, with booing and chanting, the national team during the match. Moreover, if we take into account the fact that northern club sides are over-represented within *Serie A* (the Italian first division), the demand for international football at a high level is stronger in central and southern Italy, where spectators are more amenable to supporting the *azzurri*. Nevertheless, even when the national team plays in southern Italy, it is possible to observe giant banners with the symbol and the colours of the *ultras*' local team (and not the national one) adorning the stadium ends (De Biasi 1993). If we consider the separatist feelings which have recently found a *symbolic* space within the northern football fan sub-cultures (and in the South too: for instance, Naples *ultras* used to fly the old American confederate flag), it is easier to understand how nationalist feelings amongst football spectators, are now on the wane in the 1990s, and are not, for instance, comparable to the nationalism of English supporters.[11]

Playing Deep While Being Different

Football is a 'complete social phenomenon' which allows foreign observers to understand the 'otherness' of Italian culture. Football, to the whole country, is a form of 'deep play' as in the Balinese cockfight described by Geertz (1973). From this perspective (see Armstrong 1994) the behaviour which may seem useless or irrational to the unconverted owing to their lack of appreciation of the symbolic extent of the prize at stake, can be understood as a performance of a ritually dramatized self-portrait. Football fanaticism in Italy is not only about consumption. The actual relationship between football and economics or politics is not unidirectional: politics and economics do not invade the playful

sphere of football any more than football culture floods into the domains of politics or the economy.

Notes

1. As noted by Caselli (1990: 32), 'It is hard, in Italy, to make a deep analysis of the economic structure of the industry of football because of the lack of official data about sport.' Marzola (1990) is the only monograph about the football industry.
2. See Ferrarotti and Beha (1983). This definition alludes to the first article of the Italian Constitution: 'Italy is a Republic based on work'.
3. These journals are *Gazzetta dello Sport*, *Tuttosport* and *Corriere dello Sport-Stadio*. Although they are general sports newspapers, 80 per cent of their coverage is on football.
4. The Hungarian born star of porn films known as Cicciolina successfully stood for political office in 1987. Elected on behalf of the Reform Party the actress never missed an opportunity to disrobe publicly to embarrass interviewers and political colleagues.
5. The distinction attempts to distinguish the *ultras* as the younger, boisterous, fanatical element drawn from a variety of class backgrounds, from the 'respectable' fan whose support is more sedate, who belongs to officially recognized supporters' clubs and tends to have middle-class, white-collar status. The basic characteristic of the official supporters' clubs is their formal recognition by the favoured football club. Usually, all the supporters' clubs linked to the same team are related to a 'Co-ordinating Centre', which is a member of the Italian Federation of Supporters of Football Clubs (FISSC). In the case of top clubs, the supporters' clubs can be situated in towns far from the location of the favoured team. In such cases, another federation co-ordinates the supporters' clubs: for instance, the Italian Association of Supporters' Clubs, founded in 1967, comprises 1,340 clubs, eleven of which are located abroad.
6. Moreover for Roversi (1992: 11), *ultras* groups 'are usually formed by youths who share common and unifying cultural

models instead of a common and disadvantaged material condition'.

7. According to Goffman (1961: 20), social situations 'place a "frame" around a space of immediate events, determining the type of "sense" that will be accorded everything within the frame'. According to Bateson (1972: 180), within the playful 'frame' messages assume the following tacit and paradoxical form: 'These actions in which we now engage do not denote what those actions for which they stand would denote.'
8. Small villages normally have only *Carabinieri*, while the *Polizia di Stato* (State Police) are present in larger towns or cities. For an analysis of the historical duality of the Italian police forces see Collin (1985).
9. I am not referring to the TV audience of the national team, but to organized supporters, both from official supporters' clubs and *ultras*. I do not intend to argue that the national team cannot involve other ordinary supporters, but the average spectator in the stadium prefers the football club's side to the national team.
10. The German team contained three players from Internazionale of Milan, and the Dutch had three players from their city rivals, AC Milan. The rival clubs' *ultras* were also in the habit of dressing in the colours of the German or Dutch national sides.
11. The national team represents a source of identification for television audiences, or for Italian immigrants living abroad, who are an important source of support at away matches. Italian immigrants in the USA were considered an important audience for the 1994 World Cup, in a country where football was still unknown to the native people.

Chapter 5

The Political Role of Football for Palestinians in Jordan

Dag Tuastad[1]

'One day when we had no voice, al-Wihdat was our voice'

(Yasser Arafat)

Introduction

Sobhi Ibrahim is the vice-director of the *al-Wihdat* football club at the *Wihdat* Palestinian refugee camp in Jordan. He remembers how once he was pelted with eggs and tomatoes outside the clubhouse in the camp after *Wihdat* had lost a match. He recalls that he received a phone call from an old woman:

> She was crying on the telephone. I told her – it was only a game. She said: 'Never play if you are going to lose. We have lost so many times, in 1948, 1967, 1970 and 1982. When you lose, you remind us of our losses.' I told her: 'to feel the happiness of winning, we have to lose sometimes.' 'No,' she replied, 'tell your boys – never lose!'

In 1970 Palestinians and Transjordanians (ethnic Jordanians) in Jordan fought a civil war. Today, when *Wihdat* is playing, it is as if the civil war is being fought again.

This chapter is about the political role football has come to play for Palestinian refugees living in Jordan. Ever since the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) left Jordan following the defeat in the civil war of 1970 to 1971, Palestinian national identity has been suppressed by the Jordanian authorities. However, football has remained an arena where Palestinian national identity is actively exposed. Football may be a way to restore or maintain honour (Hognestad 1995: 18) and the *Wihdat* club, in restoring