

**7th Gaetano Cozzi Prize for studies on the history of games, 2023**

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*La dimensione ludica nel mondo del lavoro.**Incontri e sovrapposizioni fra mestiere e gioco d'azzardo**(secoli XIII-XV)*24th November 2023 **Citation**

The study *The ludic dimension in the working world. Points of contact and overlap between work and games of chance (13th-15th centuries)*, submitted by Aldo Giuseppe di Bari for the *Gaetano Cozzi Prize for studies on the history of games*, awarded by the Fondazione Benetton Studi Ricerche, is of unquestionable interest and deserves high commendation. The prime reason for conferral of the Prize is the excellent result yielded by outstanding exploration and analysis of source material and exemplary bibliographical scrutiny. As regards the specific assembly of source materials devoted to ludicity in the context of manufacturing and labour in general, the period chosen – the 13th to the 15th centuries – is certainly logical in that it refers to an undoubtedly distinctive phase in working practices and financial systems in Italy and elsewhere. This was a period of marked development that gave rise to decidedly new forms of social organisation during the 1400s. In shedding light on the evolution of the financial system and societal organisation, di Bari's survey pays due attention to aspects that are too often taken for granted.

The starting point is naturally a period when standard production practice was still part of a social system in which (as the study points out straight away) the "antinomy between productive and leisure activities" was fragile, and "work schedules overlapped with free time". Games were part of a ludic system which often hovered between the licit and the illicit, and the study rightly focuses on the role of workshops and the work bench, using regulatory/statutory texts and *novelle* as primary sources. It is noted, however, that chronological stringency is not accorded too much weight. The research concentrates rather on the contents in a span of events that are later described in more detail, for example on the novelty of the arrival of *nàibi*, playing cards, in the late 1300s.

The first section of the study (*Proscriptions imposed by corporations and merchants' precepts*) is certainly the most comprehensive. It is dedicated to regulatory structures and leads to conclusions, based on a well-chosen bibliography, which are thoroughly convincing. More concise but substantially scrupulous are the sections devoted to *Time for playing and working relationships* and especially *Places for work, places for play* (with the unrealistic assumption that these were two separate places). The last part, *Concluding observations*, takes us, with dice and then *nàibi*, not only onto public squares and into markets but also into shops and workshops that often doubled as living places.



Generally speaking, di Bari's study is unquestionably meritorious, not only because of its rich and carefully assembled bibliography, but most of all because of the parts that often illustrate the working environment, a product of the author's painstaking exploitation of the documentation offered by the State Archives in Bologna. It is to be hoped, indeed, that his achievement will serve as a stimulus to greater attention to the documentation available in Bologna. In any case, the work as a whole is to be considered commendable and, as this citation of the Commission shows, is worthy of the *Gaetano Cozzi Prize for studies on the history of games* for 2023 and of publication in the forthcoming issue no. 29 of the journal *Ludica. Annali di storia e civiltà del gioco*.

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