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PLATE 5

Arms of the town of Bozen (left) and emblem of the Azienda Autonoma Statale della Strada with inscription (below): Bozen, ‘Bridge of Drusus’, completed 1931. See page 97.
Photo: Alessandro Campaner, Südtiroler Landesarchiv.

Photo: Alessandro Campaner, Südtiroler Landesarchiv.
Arms of the town of Bozen (tinctures reversed) with the *capo del littorio*: fireplace canopy, Hotel ‘Città’, Bozen, c. 1935/40. *See page 99.*

Photo: Gerald Steinacher, Bozen.
MUNICIPAL HERALDRY IN FASCIST ITALY: THE CASE OF THE BOZEN CIVIC ARMS (1926-1943)

Gustav Pfeifer

In a report to the Commissione araldica delle Venezie of 12 September 1928, the Soprintendente alle Belle Arti or head of the artistic heritage superintendency of Trent, Giuseppe Gerola, commented on the new arms of Meran, a town in the Province of Bozen: ‘The redesign of the traditional arms of the town of Meran (taking away the golden trefoils on the eagle and introducing a field in vert) was suggested by myself, with the purpose of both restoring an older form of this coat of arms and making it more national through the removal of the eagle’s all too Tyrolean braiding and, in a sense, the introduction of the tricolour.’

Gerola’s report, preserved in the small class of records in the Trent State Archive entitled ‘Regia Commissione araldica tridentina’, sheds light on how the language of heraldry can be used to transmit political content, that coats of arms, like architecture, urban design, street and place names, can constitute a form of emblematic occupation of the public space. In Fascist Italy, from 1926-7 on, not only the arms of the state but also those of provinces and armigerous municipal authorities at the next tier down, that of the town or commune, were made to converge and, through additional charges, brought into political conformity.

The legal measures concerning Italian heraldry are of special interest since no other totalitarian and authoritarian European dictatorship introduced anything...
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similar. In National-Socialist Germany, the symbols and insignia of the state were naturally adjusted to the symbolism of the sole governing parties, but interventions of the same degree were not made in municipal heraldry.

However, the Italian regulations did not come ex nihilo. They were rather based on a revival of older, in parts medieval, forms of heraldic representation.

In this article, the example of the civic heraldry of the town of Bozen in the period of the Ventennio, the twenty years of Mussolini’s rule, will be used to examine the concrete ways in which this visual occupation of public space took place. In the case of this town the situation was more complex than elsewhere in Italy, since the Province of Bozen had been an overwhelmingly German-speaking part of the Austrian Tyrol and had been occupied by Italy as recently as 1919. Mussolini attempted an aggressive policy of ‘denationalization’ (i.e. Italianization), for instance by the comprehensive introduction of Italian place names, replacing German personal

2 The German Gemeindeordnung (30 Jan. 1935) merely ruled in § 11 (2): ‘Die Gemeinden führen ihre bisherigen Wappen und Flaggen. Der Reichsstatthalter kann Gemeinden das Recht verleihen, Wappen und Flaggen zu führen. Er kann Wappen und Flaggen ändern. Die Gemeinde ist vorher zu hören.’ (‘The local authorities display their usual arms and flags. The Reichsstatthalter [imperial deputy] can grant local authorities the right to display arms and flags. He can alter arms and flags. The local authority has to be heard beforehand.’) Unarmigerous local authorities were to display in their new seals the emblem of the state (from 1935 this was the swastika). In a confidential circular of the Reich Interior Ministry addressed to the Reich deputies, 15 Dec. 1937, it was ruled that new arms for local authorities should not display images of saints or explicitly religious symbols. Cf. Rolf Nagel, ‘Der Kampf um Staats- und Kommunalsymbole 1933–1945 in Rheinland und Westfalen’, Düsseldorfer Jahrbuch 61 (1988), pp. 157-73; Wilfried Schöntag, Kommunale Siegel und Wappen in Südwestdeutschland. Ihre Bildersprache vom 12. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert (Schriften zur südwestdeutschen Landeskunde 68: Ostfildern 2010), pp. 216-21.

3 Here, the Franquistos took over the personal badges of the Catholic Kings (Isabel la Católica, d. 1504, and Fernando de Aragón, d. 1516), the eagle of St John (águila de San Juan) and especially the bundle of arrows (haz de flechas, which was however, shown with the points turned upwards as a sign of the Falange Española) and the yoke (yugo). On 11 Feb. 1938 they were integrated into the new Spanish national arms and, in an idiosyncratic arrangement, used as a badge, but were not systematically placed into the arms of local authorities; cf. Faustino Menéndez Pidal de Navascués, Heráldica medieval española 1. La Casa Real de León y Castilla (Madrid 1982), pp. 204-6, 229.

4 At least, this was the case with the GDR, the People’s Republic of Poland, the People’s Republic of Hungary, and the Czechoslovak Republic: there were no general rules for municipal heraldry prescribing the inclusion of hammer, sickle or the red five-pointed mullet into the civic arms. If this happened it was initiated by the municipal authorities. In Prague, for instance, the communist civic administration in the 1960s replaced the crest of the central helmet in the civic arms with a lion argent emergant and above the five-pointed red mullet, both taken from the new state arms of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (as it was renamed in 1960), yet this step was uncommon. cf. Jakub Hrdlička, Pražská heraldika. Znaky pražských měst, cechů a měšťanů (Prague 1993), pp. 34-6.
names by Italian ones, outlawing the use of German in schools, and attracting Italian immigrants.\textsuperscript{5}

1. The Fasces (fascio littorio)

The Fascist permeation of the Italian state, its institutions and its heraldry did not begin when the Fascists came to power in autumn 1922 but only with the turn towards an authoritarian regime after the end of the political crisis following the murder of

the socialist politician Giacomo Matteotti (June 1924). Admittedly, the fasces as ‘simbolo di Roma antica e della nuova Italia’ had already appeared in January 1923 on the reverse of the coins of one and two lire, and on a similar 100-lire gold coin in October 1923, for the anniversary of the March on Rome, while in a circular of 1 December 1925 Mussolini ordered the display of the fasces on all ministry buildings. But it was only by decree of 12 December 1926 that the fascio littorio was declared the official ‘state emblem’ (emblema dello Stato). More detailed rules for its use in the public administrative context followed with the Regio Decreto of 27 March 1927.


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In article 1 it defined the shape of the new emblem. The fasces had to be displayed in the argent section of a ‘Samnite’ (also known as ‘Modern French’) escutcheon _Tierced in pale vert argent and gules_, ensigned by a Roman eagle. Together with the ‘greater’ royal arms of the house of Savoy this shield was to be used as symbol of the state (Figures 1 and 2), for instance, on the silk sash worn on official occasions by the _podestà_ (an appointed official discharging the duties of the mayor). In 1929 a new form was introduced. The greater royal arms were simplified, and the two lions previously used as supporters were replaced by two fasces. Already a year earlier, in summer 1928, permission to display the _fascio littorio_ had been granted to local authorities, provinces and charitable foundations (_congregazioni di carità_), as well as state-owned corporations, as long as they were of recognized national benefit (the latter needing a decree from Mussolini as Head of Government and Prime Minister).

If these public bodies and foundations already had arms recognized by the competent body, the _Consulta araldica_, they could be displayed at the sinister side of the tricolour escutcheon with the fasces, but could no longer be displayed alone.

One final change was introduced with the _Regio Decreto_ of October 1933. It created a specific chief, the _capo del littorio_ (purpure charged with a gold fasces surrounded by an oak and a laurel branch bound together by a band in the colours of the tricolour flag: see Figure 3, over). The regulations concerning the arms of provinces, municipal authorities, foundations and state-owned corporations from 1928 were revoked, and now the fasces that had previously been displayed on a separate escutcheon charged with the tricolour were to be placed within the authority’s own escutcheon, as part of the _capo del littorio_.

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9 Regio Decreto 27 Mar. 1927, n. 1048, Art. 4: ‘Il distintivo del podestà consiste in una fascia tricolore di seta, fregiata dallo stemma Reale e dall’emblema del Fascio Littorio, da portarsi cinta intorno ai fianchi.’
11 Regio Decreto 14 June 1928, n. 1430. In contrast to the arms of the state they lack the legionary eagle (aquila Romana) on the top of the escutcheon.
12 Regio Decreto 14 June 1928, n. 1430, Art. 3: ‘Qualora i Comuni, le Provincie, le Congregazioni di carità e gli enti parastatali, autorizzati a norma del presente decreto a far uso del Fascio Littorio, siano in possesso legittimo e riconosciuto di altro stemma, questo dovrà essere accollato ed a sinistra del Fascio Littorio.’ Local authorities without arms displayed the escutcheon with the tricolour and the fasces or, after 1933, an empty escutcheon with the _Capo del Littorio_. On the _Consulta araldica_ see below, p. 90.
14 Regio Decreto 12 Oct. 1933, n. 1440, Art. 2: ‘L’emblema del Fascio Littorio usato, a norma delle disposizioni vigenti, dalle Provincie, dai Comuni, dalle Congregazioni di carità e dagli Enti parastatali autorizzati a fregiarsene, dovrà essere disposto negli stemmi di legittimo possesso inscritti nei Libri araldici del Regno, nella forma della figura araldica del Capo.’
The fasces are based on the fasces of the Lictors, who in classical Rome were the attendants of the higher Magistrates and symbolized their authority by carrying the bundle of scourges and the executioner’s axe.\(^\text{15}\)

After the downfall of Rome the fasces were not revived until the revolutionary era in France, when they were used from spring 1790 onwards as sign of unity (\textit{la France une et indivisible}), and additionally, after the fall of the Monarchy (21 September 1792), as signs of the Republic. Alongside the cockerel, the cockade, the Phrygian bonnet (\textit{bonnet de la Liberté}) and later the tricolour, the fasces became a symbol of the French state.\(^\text{16}\)


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In Italy the ‘Fasci italiani di combattimento’, the precursor of the Partito Nazionale Fascista founded in November 1921, displayed as a canting ‘logo’ in their official magazine *Il fascio* beneath the title a bundle (*fascio*) of ears of wheat hold up in a closed fist.\(^\text{17}\) The frontispiece of the programme of the Fasci (‘Orientamenti teorici, postulati pratici’), printed in 1920, shows, by contrast, an eagle holding in its claws fasces modelled after the fasces of the French Revolution, and hence a republican symbol.\(^\text{18}\)

Only during 1921 did deliberate references to the imperial Roman past (*Romanità*) become predominant. From then on, this heritage was celebrated by the Fascists in every conceivable form and provided a model of greatness they hoped to achieve again.\(^\text{19}\) Besides, at the beginning the *fascio littorio* had some anti-monarchical tendency. Accordingly, Benito Mussolini stressed at a speech in Bologna on 3 May 1921: ‘Our symbol is not the symbol of the house of Savoy, it is the fasces, Roman and (if you will permit) republican’.\(^\text{20}\)

2. Historical precursors: late medieval marks of allegiance and Napoleonic heraldry

Consciously or unconsciously, Fascist heraldic policy returned to some late medieval traditions. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries certain heraldic charges – either principal or subsidiary – as well as certain emblems and devices (*imprese*) could indicate political loyalties or (territorial) claims and manifest dependent relationships.\(^\text{21}\) In Central Italy, for instance, the crossed keys (keys ‘for binding

\(^{17}\) Cf. Gentile, *Fascismo di pietra*, p. 42 fig. 2.

\(^{18}\) Ibid., p. 32 fig. 1.


\(^{20}\) ‘Il nostro simbolo non è lo scudo dei Savoia; è il Fascio littorio, romano e anche, se non vi dispiace, repubblicano’, quoted by Scuccimarra, ‘Fascio littorio’, p. 517.


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and loosing’) in civic seals, arms or banners usually identify towns and municipal authorities belonging to the Patrimonium Petri, the Papal State. In his Liber constitutionum sanctae matris ecclesiae (the Constitutiones Aegidianae), enacted in 1357 in Fano, Cardinal Gil Álvarez de Albornoz made it obligatory to display St Peter’s crossed keys as an additional charge on civic seals within the papal states. Families could often signal their adherence to a political group with a specific heraldic chief; common ‘party signs’ were the capo dell'impero (a gold chief charged with a black imperial eagle [one- or two-headed, with or without crowns]) for the Ghibellines, and the capo d'Angiò (an azure chief charged with three gold fleurs-de-lis beneath a red label of four points).  

22 Costituzioni egidiane dell’anno MCCCLVII, ed. Pietro Sella (Corpus statutorum Italicorum 1: Roma 1912), p. 119, liber secundus c. 36 (Rubrica): De armis clavium ecclesie Romane apponendis in portis, palatiis, banderiis et sigillis. Rubrica, p. 120, ll. 7-15: Insuper eisdem rationibus et causis inducti volumus et mandamus quod omnes et singulares comitatus et universitates predicte, que habent et habere consueverunt vel in futurum habebunt proprium sigillum, in ipso sigillo supra arma et insignia ipsius comunitatis apparente, infra dictum mensem faciant apponi et sculpiri arma ecclesie vel eorum sigilla de novo refici et cum dictis armis ecclesie de novo fabricari et absque dictis armis nullo sigillo uti, quia eis fides sine dictis armis non daretur.  

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A second source can be found in the hierarchic heraldry of the first French Empire under Napoleon I, initiated in 1808 and abolished as early as 1814; this crucially influenced the heraldic style in Napoleon’s *Regno Italico* and consequently that of the Italy of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Both Napoleon’s revival of classical Roman symbols (as the Roman Eagle used as sign of the Empire from 1804 onward) and his attempts to systematize heraldry, especially the hierarchy of forms and charges generated by them, were direct or indirect models for the Fascist heraldic policy.

With the creation of a new imperial nobility (*noblesse impériale*) on 1 March 1808, the coats of arms that had been abolished in the course of the Revolution in 1790 were reintroduced. The same decree established an office with responsibility for all heraldic questions, the *Conseil du sceau des titres*, under the direction of the arch-chancellor Jean-Jacques Régis de Cambacérès (1753–1824). From spring 1809 onwards towns, civic authorities and other bodies corporate could apply for arms at the *Conseil*. Like the arms of the nobility those of civic authorities followed a hierarchical system. The arms of the 38 towns of the first order, the so-called *bonnes villes*, whose mayors had the right to attend the coronation of the emperor, were given a chief gules with three gold bees (*Figure 4*); those of the towns of the second order, whose mayors were nominated by the emperor, received an azure canton (vert in the Kingdom of Italy) with a gold letter ‘N’ (for Napoleon) surmounted by a gold star; the arms of the towns of the third class, whose mayors were appointed by the prefects, had a canton sinister gules, with an Argent ‘N’ surmounted by a star of the same metal. Further ornaments were added outside the shield (*ornements extérieurs*); for the *bonnes villes* they consisted of a gold caduceus lying horizontally on the shield with two branches (olive on the dexter, oak on the sinister) suspended from it and wound together by red bands, and above a high golden wall with a mural crown of seven turrets and a gold eagle emerging from it (*Figure 5*). Mural crowns,

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branches and (after 1933) chiefs were to become the defining elements of Italian civic heraldry.25

3. Bozen as an example of Fascist civic heraldry

From 1260, when it was a town under the rule of the Prince-Bishops of Trent, Bozen’s seal showed bishop St Vigilius under a canopy above the city wall.26 The town probably did not have a coat of arms until jurisdiction of the inner town was transferred to the Duke of Austria as dominus terrae. In the 1460s it received a newly cut seal and civic arms: Argent on a fess gules a mullet of six points or. These arms refer to the two rulers of Bozen: first, as a variant of the Austrian arms (Gules a fess argent – the inversion necessary for heraldic reasons, in order not to have metal on metal); and, secondly, by means of the six-pointed mullet, to Mary, the stella maris, patroness of the Bozen parish church and of the town.27 In its principal parts this coat of arms remained unaltered for centuries, and only underwent adaptation after the occupation of the South Tyrol by Italy (1919/20) and the Fascist accession to power; and these applied to a very specific detail (the mullet) as well as the elements necessary to comply with national regulations.

In order to receive confirmation of a civic coat of arms that was already in use the Podestà had to send a coloured drawing of the arms together with a historical and heraldic rationale through the responsible Prefecture to the Head of Government and thereby to the Consulta araldica, an advisory body for heraldry and titles of nobility, affiliated since 1923 to the Head of Government’s office.28 Normally, the Consulta then requested an opinion from one of the twelve Commissioni araldiche regionali located in twelve larger regional state archives.29 In the case of Bozen the relevant body was the Commissione araldica veneta (or delle Venezie) based at the Venice State Archive, or the Commissione araldica trentina (or tridentina) in Trent, which was at least for a time subordinate to the former. The deciding expert and therefore the key figure for all granted or confirmed civic arms in Venezia Tridentina (made


29 Regio Decreto 21 Jan. 1929, n. 61, Arts. 90-5.
up of the provinces of Trent and Bozen) between 1928 and 1933 was Giuseppe Gerola (1877–1938), from 1920/23 the Soprintendente alle Belle Arti of Trent.\(^{30}\) His opinions were normally copied verbatim by the Commissione araldica veneta and therefore of pivotal significance for the decree granting or confirming arms by the Head of Government.

### 3.1. From the ‘stella maris’ to the ‘stellone d’Italia’

Together with the tricolour flag, the silver five-pointed star, the stellone d’Italia, is one of the patriotic symbols of the Italian Risorgimento. It regularly decorates images of the personified, turreted figure of Italy and appears most prominently in the ‘Greater Arms’ of the country used between 1870 and 1890; here the star, surrounded by golden rays, crowns the mantling (Figure 6).\(^{31}\)

As one of the national symbols the star become the central element of the arms of the Province of Bozen created in 1927: *Azure a mullet of five points over a naturalistic mountain range in base argent on a chief gules a cross throughout argent* (the capo di Savoia: see Figure 7 over).\(^{32}\) In the heraldry of the town of Bozen, too, the five-

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\(^{30}\) See G. M. Varanini, s.v. ‘Gerola, Giuseppe’, in Dizionario biografico degli italiani vol. 53 (Rome 1999), pp. 460-3, for his political views esp. p. 462. Gerola’s heraldic opinions are collected in the small record class ‘Commissione araldica’ in the Trent State Archive.

\(^{31}\) Laszloczky, ‘L’evoluzione dello stemma’ (note 7 above), pp. 357-62 with fig. 5 (p. 358).

\(^{32}\) Regia Lettera Patente 26 Feb. 1928.
pointed mullet was widely used (in gold) from about 1927/28 on, when it replaced the six-point mullet that had not been in consistent use since before the First World War. However it was only by a decree of the Head of Government from 9 July 1931 that this alteration was placed on a legal basis and the arms of Bozen re-interpreted definitively in a nationalistic sense.

The civic authorities were prompted to act by a circular from Giovanni Battista Marziali, the Prefect of the Province of Bozen, dated 11 September 1929, to all those holding the post of podestà, noting that not all commune authorities in the province were observing the regulations on the use of arms. Consequently, the podestà of Bozen, Felice Rizzini, requested the Head of Government to confirm the current town arms, on the basis of an historical opinion from Carlo Gallia, Bozen’s State archivist, itself primarily based on an older study by Conrad Fischnaler (1855–1941). Rizzini mentions several older examples for the use of the five-pointed mullet and concludes with the words: ‘This administration considers it appropriate to keep the five-pointed star that has recently been placed on all commune arms. Amid the uncertainty that reigns in this matter it is necessary to resolve the question by appeal to national

33 Already before the First World War there are isolated examples of the Bozen civic arms with a five-pointed mullet: thus at the Taler bridge built in 1899/1900 by the Graz-based company Waagner-Biro, or above the main entrance of the civic boys’ school, Weggensteinstraße 6, refurbished by the civic architect Gustav Nolte in 1908 (cf. Renate Brenn-Rammlmair, Stadtbaumeister Gustav Nolte. Der Heimatsstil in Bozen (Bozen 2007), p. 65 fig. 66). However, as a norm the six-pointed mullet was shown.

34 Prefetto della Provincia di Bolzano, Circolare (printed) 11 Sept. 1929, n. 5286: ‘Ho dovuto rilevare che non tutti i Comuni della Provincia osservano le disposizioni in vigore circa l’uso dello stemma.’

sentiment, with its preference over all other forms for the five-pointed star, which is the glorious star of ITALY'. Probably working with Gallia on this question had been Ettore Tolomei (1865–1952), the leading intellectual and activist of the ‘denationalization’ of the South Tyrol (and creator of most of the then official Italian places names) – it was hardly a coincidence that his Istituto di studi per l’Alto Adige in Maretsch Castle was an immediate neighbour of the state archive. Accordingly, in the journal Archivio per l’Alto Adige which he edited, Tolomei underlined his own role and that of his institute in the alteration of the Bozen town arms.37

The request from Bozen to the Consulta araldica was forwarded to the competent office, the Commissione araldica veneta; this in turn turned to the Trent soprintendente Giuseppe Gerola. In his advice, given in April 1930, he stated (amongst other points): ‘The Bozen town arms are by now established through the usage of many centuries. The only disputed question is the number of points in the mullet, that was generally six and now proposed to become five. But considering that there are also examples with five points and that this variant is endowed with a patriotic meaning, and furthermore that the new provincial arms show the mullet with five points, and that it is an unimportant detail that can anyway be changed ad

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36 ‘Questa Amministrazione pertanto ritiene opportuno mantenere la stella a 5 punte, quale è stata recentemente apposta su tutti gli stemmi comunali, in quanto che nella incertezza che regna al riguardo, devesti risolvere la questione facendo appello al sentimento nazionale che, a tutte le altre preferisce la stella a 5 punte, la quale è la stella gloriosa d’ITALIA.’ Stadtarchiv Bozen, Allgemeine Verwaltungsakten I.4.4, Felice Rizzini to the Head of Government, typescript draft (upper case in the original); copied virtually verbatim in ibid., Beschlussprotokolle 1930, Nr. 607 (1 Feb. 1930).

37 ‘Nel campo dell’araldica e della sfragistica, per il quale la R. Prefettura prende il parere dell’Istituto, sono state risolte le pendenze relative agli stemmi, antichi o nuovi, sigilli e gonfaloni dei Comuni di Bolzano, Brunico, Termeno, Appiano, Salorno, Terlano’: Archivio per l’Alto Adige 16 (1931), p. 561.
libitum, it is appropriate to accept the proposal: Argent on a fess gules a mullet of five points or.\(^{38}\)

The practice introduced by the Fascist civic administration (e.g. on letterheads, official stamps, notices, public announcements or forms – see Figures 8, 9 and 10) was subsequently approved by decree of Mussolini in July 1931. The decree also provided a justification (or an excuse) for the alteration of earlier monumental renderings of the arms with a six-pointed mullet, and belated approval of such alterations as had taken place already. The 1629 arms at the top of the gateway leading from the old town hall to the Dr.-Streiter-Gasse (then Via Carretai), originally

\(^38\) Archivio di Stato di Trento, Regia Commissione araldica tridentina, Bolzano comune, Giuseppe Gerola to the Commissione araldica veneta, 26 Apr. 1930, No. 1491: ‘Lo stemma della città di Bolzano è consacrato ormai dall’uso di molti secoli. Unica questione verte sul numero delle punte della stella, che per lo più si usava di sei ed ora si vorrebbe di cinque punte. Ma considerato che non mancano esemplari anche con cinque punte, che a tale variante si intende attribuire significazione patriottica, che anche sul nuovo stemma della Provincia figura la stella a cinque punte e che finalmente trattasi di particolare di poco conto suscettibile di variazioni ad libitum, pare opportuno accogliere senz’altro la proposta: Di argento, alla fascia di rosso, caricata di una stella di cinque punte d’oro.’ Besides the opinions of Gerola argued on empiric grounds, there are others with ideological elements. Thus the arms of Sterzing (Vipiteno) should receive a chief ‘con qualche emblema romano’; in those of Schlanders (Silandro: Az. three piles ar. issuant from the sinister) the first pile should receive ‘una stella d’oro a cinque punte (stella d’Italia)’; and those of Welsberg (Monguelfo: Qtly. or. and sa.) should show a triple mount vert, since the proposed design, the arms of the Lords of Welsperg ‘è lo stesso degli Hohenzollern imperatori di Germania e re di Rumenia [sic]’, which would have unacceptable consequences (‘conseguenze ... inammissibili’). The alterations of the Meran arms have already been described (note 1 above). All quoted opinions are in the Archivio di Stato di Trento, Regia Commissione araldica tridentina, files Vipiteno comune, Silandro comune and Monguelfo comune.
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(and again now) coloured, was rechiselled to fit the party line. Likewise, in the new town hall, completed in 1907 to a design by Karl Hocheder of Munich, the escutcheon above the main entrance (Figure 11) and the one in the great council hall were altered ‘in a patriotic sense’.  

3.2. Norm and Reality

Whilst the legal norms from 1928/29 and 1933 respectively were swiftly enacted, especially in administrative practice, they were hardly followed to the letter in monumental images of the Fascist era – in contrast to the normally correct images of the state’s emblem. Those buildings of the 1920s and 1930s that still stand show the civic arms, in monochrome form, as a fess (sometimes with the vertical hatching indicating gules) bearing a five-pointed mullet. Between 1928 and 1933 it should have been paired with the shield bearing the fascio littorio on the dexter side, yet this was done only on occasion, or showing only elements of that shield. Where the escutcheon with the tricolour flag and fasces was depicted, it was removed more or less discreetly after 1943/45 – as happened with the fasces, (pseudo-)Roman military standards (signa) 

Figure 11: Oval shield above the main entrance of the new town hall, showing the altered mullet, c. 1930 (from Eine Stadt im Wiederaufstieg [see note 40]).

39 Only during the extensive restoration of the old town hall, completed in 2001, was the cartouche shield returned to its ancient form. Whether the two heraldic stones at the top of the arches on the arcade front of the old town hall, dating from the last third of the 15th century, show original five-pointed mullets or were likewise ‘adapted’ in the years around 1929/30, cannot be decided. In 1926 the wooden door closing the passageway to the Dr.-Streiter-Gasse at the side of the Lauben still displayed on the left leaf the arms of the Tyrol, and on the right the town arms with a six-pointed mullet; yet later the arms of Tyrol and the star were removed, cf. Josef Weingartner, Die Kunstdenkmäler Südtirols vol. iii 2: Die Kunstdenkmäler Bozens (Vienna and Augsburg 1926), p. 160.

40 Cf. the images in a booklet published by the civic administration: Eine Stadt im Wiederaufstieg 1948–1952 (Bozen [1952]). After the reintroduction of the old civic arms by decree of the regional president, 21 Dec. 1968, each coat of arms was given back its six-pointed mullet in the 1970s; cf. Hans Prünster, Die Wappen der Gemeinden Südtirols (Etschlandbücher 7: Bozen 1972), p. 28. Lastly, in 1997, the mural crown and the branches of laurel and oak were removed from the Bozen town arms.

41 E.g. on the façade of the central block of Bozen railway station, rebuilt by Angiolo Mazzoni and opened in 1928. At the left-hand end the crowned royal arms of Savoy were then shown, at the right the fasces with a legionary eagle above. Cf. Zoeggeler and Ippolito (note 5 above), fig. 193; Horst Hambrusch and Wittfrida Mitterer, ‘Hochbauten der Brennerbahn. Bautendokumentation’, in Wittfrida Mitterer (ed.), Weichen & Wahrzeichen. Bahnlandschaft Bozen–Innsbruck. Bautendokumentation (Bozen 2007), pp. 177-272 at 265. The state emblem was reduced to two of its charges on the army HQ on the 4.-November-Platz, built in 1934/35 to the design of Marcello Piacentini: the upper floor on the façade towards the square displayed an overly large capo di Savoia flanked by two fasces, cf. Zoeggeler and Ippolito, fig. 221.
and legionary eagles. This is doubtless what happened at the entrance to the house at Leonardo-da-Vinci-Straße 11, then the municipal office for cemeteries (Figure 12), and on the entrance side of the commercial school (Scuola commerciale, today the Istituto professionale per i servizi commerciali e turistici in lingua italiana ‘Claudia de’ Medici’) at the corner of Fiunestraße and Quireiner Straße.42

The front of the left of two square monumental gateposts at the start of Prinz-Eugen-Allee (named Viale Savoia from 1936 to 1945), laid out in 1928, shows the civic arms with the five-pointed mullet; its counterpart to the right displayed a legionary eagle that was removed after 1945, leaving a clearly visible silhouette.

At the so-called Froschbrunnen or ‘frog fountain’ erected on the Station Square in 1928 to the design of Ignaz Gabloner and Francesco Rossi of Rome, the basin displayed, in the direction of the square and opposite, towards the station park, the Bozen arms with a five-pointed mullet (in the 1970s replaced with a six-pointed mullet), and towards the street three fasces (removed after the war).43 Street lamps produced by the Milanese company Continentale (formerly J. Brunt) were placed at the Wassermauer and in the park on Hermann-von-Gilm-Straße, displaying on one side the fasces, on the other the Bozen arms with a five-pointed mullet in a Spanish escutcheon. Five of these lamps are still unaltered in situ (Figures 13a and 13b).

Mention must also be made in this context of two important buildings, both finished in 1931. The ponte di Druso or Drususbrücke (Bridge of Drusus), constructed to the plans of Eugenio Miozzi and originally heavily loaded with romanità but today rendered anodyne, at least in its upper parts, and the municipally constructed Drusus stadium not far away.44 Above the main entrance to the central seating block, facing the square, was an inscription flanked by two fasces with hatchets turned inwards; within a cartouche were shown the (still extant) civic arms beneath a mural crown.45

42 Zoeggeler and Ippolito, fig. 45; Municipio di Bolzano, 18 mesi di amministrazione, giugno 1929–dicembre 1930 (Bolzano [1931]), reproduced on pp. 15 and 16.
43 Zoeggeler and Ippolito, fig. 196.
44 Zoeggeler and Ippolito, pp. 134-43.
45 Zoeggeler and Ippolito, fig. 48.
The Bridge of Drusus displayed not only four legionary eagles (now removed) on its four central piers, together with other Roman symbols, but also had brightly coloured marble slabs inserted into the porphyry covering of the bridgeheads, still visible on the left bank of the river Talfer: the slab on the south side showed, on a golden mosaic ground, an escutcheon with the civic arms surrounded by ornaments; that on the north offers an Italian inscription with the emblem of the section of the national highway company (the Azienda Autonoma Statale della Strada) responsible for the ‘Triveneto’ region (i.e. Trentino, Venezia and Venezia Giulia) – the fasces with the winged head of St Mark’s lion (Plates 5). 46

In other cases the fascio littorio was never affixed, and the prescribed ‘Samnite’ escutcheon only appears as the exception rather than the rule. The house at the corner of Venedigerstraße 44 and Fiumestraße 6, erected between 1928 and 1930 by Paolo Bertanze (Venice), has on the façade above both entrances the civic arms, the escutcheon surrounded by a wreath (Figure 14, over). Similar is the front of the I.N.C.I.S. residential complex, built in 1926–1928 (Alberto Calza Bini, Rome) at the corner of Carducci-Straße and Wendelsteinstraße to house civil servants. It shows a group of three escutcheons: above, a single oval shield that probably never bore a design, and below, two examples of the Bozen arms in a cartouche frame decorated with cornucopia, inspired by early Baroque art in Rome (Figure 15, over). 47

The new hospital wing designed by Spiro Nachich and built in 1928/29 by the town (Spitalgasse 8, then Viale Duca d’Aosta, today the presidential and rectoral

46 Cf. Zoeggeler and Ippolito, pp. 140-3.
47 Zoeggeler and Ippolito, fig. 275.
offices of the Free University), bears on the façades of the corner blocks facing the Spitalgasse four ‘Sannite’ shields: they display (from left to right) the new provincial arms granted in 1927/28, the arms (Figure 7, above) of the hospital that was founded in 1271, using elements from the seal (an impaled shield with a grape in the dexter half and a Latin cross with two traverses of equal length in the sinister), the civic arms with a five-pointed mullet and finally the hospital’s arms again. The façade on the Sparkassenstraße (then Viale Regina Elena) shows again the arms of the province and the town.

The 1938/39 rebuilding of the savings bank (Sparkasse or Cassa di Risparmio), under the direction of Francesco Rossi, was very much a case apart. It is decorated with reliefs in travertine by the sculptor Hans Piffrader, one of the leading exponents of Fascist sculpture in the South Tyrol. The relief on the rounded corner facing the river Talfer shows a strange mixture of a pseudo-Roman military standard or signum crowned with a legionary eagle (aquila) and a corona or wreath of leaves. About its staff it bears seven escutcheons, probably in imitation of phalerae, the disks that often decorated the central shaft of a signum, arranged in the pattern 2 : 2 : 2 : 1. These are the arms of the seven communes of the South Tyrol whose savings banks were forcibly merged into the Cassa di Risparmio della Provincia di Bolzano between 1928 and 1935: Bozen, Meran, Brixen, Sterzing, Bruneck, Schlanders and St. Ulrich in Gröden (from the top left downward: see Plate 6).

The legal requirements from 1933 (introducing the capo del littorio) had hardly any influence on large-scale works. The only example I am aware of is on the canopy of the fireplace in the restaurant of the municipally-owned hotel ‘Città’ at Waltherplatz 21 (then Piazza Vittorio Emmanuele III). The terracotta decoration displays a red-bordered ‘Sannite’ escutcheon bearing, in a remarkable inversion of tinctures, Gules
THE BOZEN CIVIC ARMS (1926-1943)

on a fess argent a mullet of five points or, beneath an untinctured chief with a laurel branch and an oak branch, both vert, on either side of the fasces (originally gold?); these were provisionally chipped off but are still visible (Plate 7).

4. Summary

Unlike other twentieth-century European dictatorships the Fascist regime in Italy – besides requiring the display of the state emblem – also attempted to govern heraldic practice at provincial and commune level. Government decrees issued in quick succession in 1928, 1929 and 1933 made the fasces (fascio littorio), promoted to an emblem of the state in late 1926, a constituent part of public heraldry and therefore a means of propaganda for the regime.

In doing this, the competent authorities made more or less conscious recourse to a range of different traditions: alongside emblematic elements from the classical Roman Empire (fasces, legionary standards and eagles) were features from the Italian late Middle Ages (chiefs) and from French and especially Napoleonic heraldry (‘Samnite’ escutcheons, mural crowns, exterior ornaments, a hierarchy of design). Also (indeed especially) subject to this symbolic conquest were the local authorities in the new provinces that had been annexed by the Kingdom of Italy as a consequence of the First World War and had non-Italian-speaking minorities.

In the civic arms of the town of Bozen the six-pointed mullet used since the fifteenth century and signifying the stella maris, Mary, the patroness of the parish church, was from 1927/28 onward reinterpreted by the Fascist civic administration as the five-pointed stellone d’Italia, one of the central symbols of the Italian Risorgimento; older physical representations (especially at the old and new town
halls) were forcibly brought into compliance. It was only in 1931, however, that this new form of the civic arms was legitimated by a decree of the Head of Government.

Key local figures in the nationalist freighting of public heraldry included a pioneer of the ‘denationalization’ of the South Tyrol, Ettore Tolomei, and, in some cases, Giuseppe Gerola, head of the artistic heritage superintendency in Trent, with responsibility for Bozen, who wrote several opinions for the Commissione araldica veneta and thus indirectly for the Consulta araldica situated in the office of the Prime Minister.

The rulings of 1928/29 (combining commune arms with the new state emblem) and 1933 (regarding the capo del littorio) were swiftly observed by the Bozen town administration. However, large-scale depictions of the town arms take a multitude of forms (apart from the use of the five-pointed mullet), and artists frequently displayed isolated elements instead of the full escutcheons or chiefs – technically in contravention of the rules.

It is characteristic that even the letterhead of Gerola’s Trent soprintendenza, composed of several coats of arms, does not display the mandatory ‘Samnite’ or ‘Modern French’ escutcheons but rather a mixture of ‘horse-head’ shields typical of the Italian Renaissance and shield-forms of English heraldic style. After World War II the compromising elements (fascio littorio, aquila Romana, Roman military standards) were normally, but not always, removed more or less discreetly; yet the six-pointed mullet in the new town hall and in some other public heraldic images was only restored after 1970.