



2009 WORKSHOP

IDENTIFYING THE PERSON: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

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Abstract

Lombroso, Mussolini, and Scientific Policing: How Fascism Shaped Italian Forensic Science

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My contribution explores the development of Italian scientific policing from the beginning of the twentieth-century until the end of the fascist regime in the 1940s. In the first part, an account of the influence of Lombrosian theories and practices had on the development of a national scientific police system, and on police identification procedures for criminals, is carried out. Particular attention has been given to the Lombrosian plan for a scientific national security network, characterised by the imposition of a medical reading on basic police practices of criminal identification and focused on the key role played by the School of Scientific Police within the national network of police headquarters. In the second part, the decline of Italian scientific policing is depicted as a side effect of the rise of fascism. Although the scientific police continued to apply Lombrosian theories to criminals, the routine adoption of scientific methods of prevention and repression of crime was progressively sidelined during the fascist regime. The fascist policy marked the end of the Lombrosian national plan for a scientific police, and it progressively relegated anthropological readings from courts, laboratories and crime scene investigations.

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