

On the History of the University of Pisa

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In the twelfth century Pisa became renowned throughout Europe for the teaching of jurisprudence in its churches. As a maritime power, the city was particularly expert in the area of commercial law, and Tuscan Italian as spoken in Pisa became the predominant language for business transactions and commercial disputes throughout the Mediterranean. Nevertheless, a university with the authority to award the *licentia ubique docendi* was not formally instituted until 1343 with the papal bull of Clement VI *In supremae dignitatis*. The decline of the Pisan empire and foreign invasions placed the university in serious difficulties until the Medici dynasty began the process of imposing state control following a series of reforms. One of their initiatives was the creation of the Botanical Garden under the supervision of the botanist Luca Ghini in the middle of the sixteenth century. Shortly afterwards the scientific prestige of the university was further enhanced by its association with Galileo Galilei, the founder of modern science, whose legacy would make itself felt for the whole of the seventeenth century in the continued debate between innovators and traditionalists.

The statutes and curriculum of the university would remain more or less unchanged until the Napoleonic period and the rule of the House of Lorraine, when new reforms were introduced to create a modern university capable of meeting the needs of contemporary society. The statutes for a national university system, modelled on the reforms introduced earlier in Tuscany and Piedmont, were formulated during the period of the unification of Italy by the Minister of Education, Carlo Matteucci, who was a professor of physics in Pisa. This legislation would remain in force until the revision of the entire education system undertaken by Giovanni Gentile during the Fascist period.

After World War II the University of Pisa devoted itself for many years to the repair of the damage caused by the war, in particular to the city's architectural legacy; the chancellors Enrico Avanzi and Alessandro Faedo were especially committed to this effort. Faedo also perfected an electronic calculator (following the impetus of Enrico Fermi, another alumnus of Pisa) with the support of the university and the collaboration of the enlightened industrialist Adriano Olivetti.