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CONTEXTS AND DEBATES

The 'Ndrangheta: the current state of historical research

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This article surveys the state of the research undertaken to date on Calabrian organised crime, now known as the 'Ndrangheta. Using continuous reference to the historiography of the Sicilian Mafia, and prompted in particular by a preliminary review of various documentary sources, it also poses questions and develops theories that will need further study and reflection. The first section addresses the classic image of the 'Ndrangheta, as crime linked to the traditional values of the Calabrian rural world. It is suggested that the interweaving of this criminal phenomenon and traditional society is more complex than a relationship of identification between the two, and results from the deliberate pursuit of criminal objectives such as legitimisation and social control. Further problems are highlighted as attention is turned from issues regarding values to the socio-economic features of the 'Picciotteria', as the 'Ndrangheta was known prior to the 1950s. There is a discussion of the reasons for its success, the economic parasitism practised using positions of social intermediation, and the existence of formal structures distinct from traditional family bonds and community ties. The article's final section focuses on the relationship between the 'Ndrangheta and politics in the period after the Second World War. The paucity of research that specifically addresses the period between the war and the 1970s is highlighted; linked to this, approaches are suggested for investigating the nature of crime's penetration of politics, the relationship with the parties at the local level, and the ways in which the 'Ndrangheta was interpreted by these same political parties.

Keywords: 'Ndrangheta; organised crime; Picciotteria; Calabria; southern Italy; historiography

Introduction

The 'Ndrangheta has now been the subject of many books, but only a few of these address its historical development. There has been no historiographical debate that focuses on dissecting this criminal phenomenon, which currently seems to be 'the most modern of these organisations, and the most firmly established in the regions of central and northern Italy, as well as in many foreign countries', according to the parliamentary commission of inquiry into the Mafia in its report of 2008 (Commissione parlamentare antimafia 2008, 17).

This study provides a profile of the research on the 'Ndrangheta, poses questions, and develops theories that will need further study and reflection. In particular, it draws on a preliminary survey of documentary sources located in the Central State Archives, and in

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the State Archives in Reggio Calabria and Catanzaro; these hold court judgments and papers, as well as reports by the prefecture and the police.

For a long time there was no discussion of the organised crime specific to Calabria, and until the 1950s the term now used to describe it did not even exist. It has been called 'Onorata Società', 'Picciotteria', 'Fibbia', 'Mafia' and 'Camorra', prior to the more modern ''Ndrangheta'; the words used illustrate both the variety of interpretations and the absence of discussion. The term 'Picciotteria' was widely used at the beginning of the twentieth century, and remained in use until after the Second World War; it is especially found in judicial documents. It derives from 'picciotto', indicating the lowest level of membership, and was used as a local variant of the better known 'Camorra' and 'Mafia'. 'Fibbia' appears in codes of criminal justice, and as a consequence in sentencing: it refers to a local gang within a structured hierarchy. This terminology implies the criminal character of the organization.

The name 'Onorata Società' tells a different story. By the end of the nineteenth century it was already the most widely used term in common usage, referring to peasant societies' codes of honour and those men who embodied them. Only in the last 50 years has ''Ndrangheta' described Calabrian organised crime. The linguist Paolo Martino (1988) explains how it derives from the Greek (ἀνδραγαθία), denoting courage, moral virtue, strength and, by extension, honour. Before gaining modern-day acceptance this term probably had the same degree of recognition as 'Onorata Società', but at a lower social level.

This complexity presents historians with problems. Given the difficulty in arriving at a clear conception of the 'Ndrangheta, this article raises questions regarding key factors for a better understanding.

I start by analysing the relationship between the 'Ndrangheta and traditional society. We need to understand whether this organisation assumes the nature of its host society, or whether it is alien to this society and its cultural values. Many commentators argue that Calabrian criminality does not reflect traditional society; from this view, I move on to an enquiry into the 'Ndrangheta's origin, structure, geographical distribution, socio-economic features and methods of social penetration.

Finally, I will be discussing Operation Marzano, an initiative to suppress the 'Ndrangheta in the province of Reggio Calabria in 1955. This allows us to examine the relationship with the political world, and points the way to a discussion of the complexity of interests around this criminal phenomenon.

Frequent reference will be made to the historiography of the Mafia: study of the 'Ndrangheta should follow the same developmental path. From the 1980s the conceptualisation of sociologists and anthropologists such as Hess (1970), Blok (1974), and Schneider and Schneider (1976), who saw the Mafia as a social behaviour which reflected the traditional culture of southern Italy, was abandoned in favour of discussion in terms of organised crime.[1] With regard to the 'Ndrangheta, Enzo Ciconte (1992) took this approach: he portrays a consciously criminal and well-organised collective entity, which aims to control resources using a distinctive approach of intimidation and permeation of the social fabric. Ciconte particularly focuses on sentencing by the Court of Appeal in Catanzaro from the late nineteenth century onwards, and he provides a picture of the organisation, spread, evolution and language of the 'Ndrangheta. He also suggests in a more recent book (2008) that it shares its history with the Camorra and the Mafia, and that they should be studied as one single phenomenon. This is an important viewpoint, but the specific historical development of the 'Ndrangheta still needs a more detailed

examination, in particular through the use of court papers and the reconstruction of individual criminal episodes. This would allow a better understanding of the social environment in which these episodes occurred, an analysis of their nature and some response to the many unanswered questions; the comparison between the types of mafia would then be more rigorous.

The 'Ndrangheta and traditional society

An analysis of the relationship between the 'Ndrangheta and traditional society is the first step towards understanding Calabrian organised crime, and should allow us to capture both the cultural aspects of this organisation and how it positions itself within society. This in turn will help us to identify the dynamics of its development.

In 1983 the sociologist Pino Arlacchi identified the *Onorata Società* of the late nineteenth century with the culture of traditional peasant society in specific and more developed areas of Calabria, such as the Gioia Tauro plain, which were characterised by a particular socio-economic system: 'society in permanent transition' (Arlacchi 1980, 1983). This was marked by a dissonance between the capitalist structure of the economy and the traditionalism of the dominant culture. This environment, he argued, encouraged social mobility, due to the fierce competition for honour and to mechanisms of resistance to the socio-economic change that was under way. The survival of traditional codes of honour and the strong competition relating to these were at the root of the main characteristics of mafia behaviour: a strong individualism, and the absence of any abstract concepts of morality or justice whereby individuals might relate to a collective whole that was broader than their own community. Within this community, justice was dispensed exclusively by individuals in defence and assertion of their honour. According to Arlacchi, mafia power, the prerogative of men able to create a degree of honour and respect around themselves, arises within this competition.

In describing mafia power Arlacchi refers to ideas previously developed in relation to the Sicilian Mafia, which are still partly valid: Hess (1970) had discussed the State's lack of legitimacy, and how this vacuum was filled by mediation by the 'man of respect', for whom honour was transformed into authority and legitimate power; Blok (1974) had examined the territorial monopoly of violence; and Schneider and Schneider (1976) had analysed the family and local characteristics of mafia interaction, and its informal nature. The approach of interweaving traditional society and mafia behaviour acknowledges the 'Ndrangheta as a method for managing power, but there is a central assumption that 'a secret, hierarchical, centralized criminal organisation called *Mafia*, *'Ndrangheta*, or *Onorata Società*, does not exist and has never existed' (Arlacchi 1983, 63).[2] In this view, these phenomena are instead a mode of social behaviour of the lower classes, who aspire to honour and wealth. A very similar approach regarding the 'Ndrangheta had been put forward in 1977 by the French scholar Nello Zagnoli (1983).

Arlacchi, finally, placed the figure of the traditional *picciotto* in the period between Italian unification and the post-Second World War years. He explained the vitality of the 'Ndrangheta from the 1970s onwards by distinguishing traditional crime from a violent new 'mafia-enterprise', which has ruthlessly penetrated the capitalist economy.

These approaches have been criticised by more recent writing. Salvatore Lupo, for example, has disputed the idea that the Mafia was originally an expression of traditional

social structures; this would explain neither its original patchy distribution (around Palermo and in southern Calabria), while the mentality of honour was a feature of the entire South, nor how the 'Ndrangheta has managed to survive the advent of modernity, and to extend into new geographical areas.[3] Drawing a distinction between old and new criminality does not resolve the contradiction: Lupo (1996, 25) sees this as 'a superficial conceptual shortcut in relation to the complex interrelationship between old and new' that is the Mafia. Some research has in fact demonstrated the historical continuity of the Mafia: Lupo and Mangiameli (1990) portray it as an organised criminal association, particularly active in areas with developing economies, right from its start. Diego Gambetta (1993, 87) has discussed the 'mafia-enterprise' theme: he argues that the very first *mafiosi* displayed a ruthlessness in their aggressive business practice and entrepreneurial skills, when engaged in selling the advantage of their protection within societies such as Sicily and Calabria where trust was lacking. Paolo Pezzino (1990) has highlighted the connection between crime, the property-owning classes and parts of the State apparatus from the period after Italian unification onwards. With a socio-economic style of analysis, different criteria are identified to explain the rise of mafia power. We need to understand whether these models also apply to the historical development of the 'Ndrangheta; subsequent discussion in this article makes suggestions on this front.

On the issue of the interrelationship between old and new, an interesting point on the 'Ndrangheta is made by the sociologist Ercole Giap Parini (2010), who recently described the modern organisation as 'the strongest mafia'. He gives its strengths as its resilience, its absence of *pentiti*, and its penetration of the international economy thanks to the interplay between power wielded on a local and on a global scale. He sees within the organisation's myths and rituals, which have usually been viewed as archaic and primitive, a basis for energy and modernity. The secret association, distinct from society, is built on these myths and rituals, which determine its internal rules; the rituals are instrumental in the consolidation of the organisation, with its orientation towards resource accumulation (Parini 2003). As well as investigating the rituals within the Picciotteria, we need to examine the potential linkage between this criminal association and the values of traditional society, in order to understand whether there is identification, cross-fertilisation, manipulation, or all these together.

In 1977 the anthropologist Lombardi Satriani argued that mafia culture takes on traditional values and then uses these, turning them to other purposes. In this analysis, a mafia exists independently and aims to exploit the confusion between itself and its host society, permeating the latter. Honour, revenge, family and religiousness are values in common, but this is only a 'superficial coincidence . . . which should not in any way lead us to conceive of mafia culture as traditional culture' (Lombardi Satriani 1983, 86).

Ciconte (1992, 72–73) takes the same approach; he believes that the 'Ndrangheta has always sought to borrow peasant values, and present itself as the way to defend them, in order to achieve a 'widespread consensus'. Some evidence supports this view. In 1906 Francesco Arcà, a journalist and politician close to revolutionary socialism, in a study on the province of Reggio Calabria, held that the Picciotteria was seen both as a mutual aid society and as an opportunity to escape the socio-economic malaise:

> The poor, unemployed, oppressed mass of *braccianti* . . . gave in to the flattery, suggestion, sweet talk, and incitement of the real criminals, who put themselves at the head of the associations; many joined these, believing that they were mutual aid societies, and then, disappointed, abandoned them; others, disheartened small landowners in dire straits, with

their sense of the value of life lost, prided themselves on the retention of their fading status. (Arcà 2000, 49)

Arcà indirectly highlights some important issues that merit exploration: the existence of a criminality not exclusively attributable to aspects of mentality; its duplicity, courting the *braccianti* while pursuing criminal objectives; and the need of the subordinate classes 'for a means of protection and security which the 'Ndrangheta manipulated in order to gain new members' (Ciconte 1992, 75).

The image of the 'Ndrangheta as a popular reaction against economic problems also finds some support in popular Calabrian literary works. In the first years of the twentieth century, Giovanni Patari (1926, 17–18) of Catanzaro made a direct link between poverty and criminal activity in his dialect poem 'Mala Vita'. In 1894 the writer Giovanni De Nava, also editor of *Il quotidiano della Calabria* and contributor to the socialist daily *L'Avanti*, had addressed the same theme in his collection 'Sintiti genti'. In his poem 'I notti', young men without homes, mothers, food and God become *picciotti* 'chi campanu 'nto sgarru': they survive 'with the proceeds' from 'demands imposed on businesses and brothels' (De Nava 1894, 22–23).

These short dialect poems clearly cannot lead to any broader conclusions, but they do generate reflections on the prevalent image of the Picciotteria, and on the possible relationship between the self-representation of Calabrian crime and its representation by others.

One interesting episode, bridging the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is that of the 'brigand' Musolino. In the affair that made him famous he was seen as a lone fugitive individually responsible for appalling crimes: imprisoned in 1898 for an attempted murder which he probably had not actually committed, but in which he had played some part, Musolino escaped the following year in order to take revenge on all those who had testified against him. In 1901, after three years on the run, he was captured, and given a life sentence at his trial in Lucca. While his course of action might seem to reflect the culture of honour, according to the expert analysis of Gaetano Cingari (1976, 207–27) the Musolino affair actually stemmed from a settling of accounts within the Picciotteria of Santo Stefano d'Aspromonte. The brigand's criminal allegiances were established by Vincenzo Mangione, police inspector, whose enquiries led to the arrest of 127 *picciotti* in 1898. The offence of association for criminal purposes was not acknowledged at the trial, and had absolutely no place in the popular imagination, for which Musolino remained a rebel against pernicious official justice: a vengeful hero, acting for traditional values and against the bourgeois state.

The important point is the use made by the Picciotteria of the popular support that Musolino enjoyed. Cingari maintains that this resulted mainly from the social malaise of the time, which reinforced the traditional popular rejection of authority and mistrust of the State. The Picciotteria benefited from this in its relationship with both the ruling and the popular classes. He reconstructs a local power system, the so-called 'partito Musolino', which referred to a shared intention to profit from both support for the brigand and distrust of the State, rather than to a defined political grouping. The Picciotteria was part of this system; it was able to exert substantial influence on the local elections in the years when Musolino was at large, and also afterwards, due to its deliberate identification with his image and the values that he represented in the people's eyes. Cingari says that 'in some areas the vote was commandeered by bosses and bought or sold almost as if at auction' (1976, 258–61).

Ciconte, on the other hand, points out that the Picciotteria 'did absolutely all it could to keep the bandit Musolino out of the clutches of authority' (1992, 122). This assistance might suggest that the Picciotteria sought to manipulate his image in order to gain support. While this is just a suggestion, it is consistent with an intention this criminal organisation may have had to present itself as a popular one. This possible self-representation seems in any case to have taken root. For example, in 1901 the socialist writer De Nava described Musolino as a social outcast and primitive rebel against an injustice he had suffered. The same description is used for the *Onorata società*:

> Crime in the South is in direct proportion to abject poverty and the lack of education of the people. Crime is in fact a form of struggle that the defeated and hungry engage in with the weapons of primitive peoples: violence and cunning. It is an ancient form of the law that 'might is right'. (1901, 246–54)

According to De Nava, it was due to this correspondence that the Picciotteria acted to help the bandit.

According to Ciconte (1992, 55–60, 75) an additional aspect of the assumption of popular values was legitimisation in having authority over society: if on one side the 'Ndrangheta had credibility as a popular organisation, on the other, by virtue of the strength it exercised, it presented itself as an exclusive one. It could give its members glamour, prestige and security, which were sought-after conditions in a marginalised society like that of Calabria. Its appeal to the popular classes allowed it to present itself as a higher power, justified in following a code of criminal behaviour.

Saverio Mannino, president of Reggio Calabria's criminal court in the 1980s, also discusses the coexistence of criminal and social action that typifies mafia organisations. Criminal activity is the manner of pursuing the primary objective, the accumulation of resources, but also of building a power base; social action helps the organisation to acquire stability and legitimacy (1997, 409). The 'Ndrangheta seems to disguise itself within society to the point of becoming an inherent part of the collectivity, with the additional aim of concealing its criminality; but at the same time the *picciotti*, giving overt demonstrations of their strength on a daily basis, seem to put in motion the machinery of prestige and power, in accordance with the rules of the code of honour, in such a way as to impose themselves as a managing class.

The 'Ndrangheta's exercise of power, and how the organisation was viewed, was discussed in a 1955 article by the writer Corrado Alvaro, remembering his own youth in the Aspromonte area:

> ...no one in the village thought of [the picciotti] as people who could be shunned, not so much out of fear but because they were by then one of the elements of the ruling class.... The members of the organisation claimed to respect religion, set themselves up as defenders of morality even when they didn't practise this, protected girls that had been abandoned and insisted on their weddings, and looked favourably on fellow citizens who acquired honour.... They were active in the villages, and within the very fabric of society. (1955, September 17)

We see here a power in play which controls and regulates all the social dynamics. A sentence from 1929 gives a similar picture: it describes a marriage payment, or 'Camorra', that the parents of the betrothed had to make in order to get the agreement of local bosses.[4]

One can reasonably conclude that by purposely identifying themselves with popular values, the *picciotti* achieved their own legitimisation as the guardians of social order and administrators of popular justice. This would have guaranteed them a certain degree of

respect, and above all recognition of their monopoly of violence to be exercised in the accumulation of economic resources.

These reflections on the manipulative appropriation of peasant values await a more thorough exploration, but help to illustrate the complexity of the intertwining of the 'Ndrangheta and traditional society.

A further complication lies in the possibility that the values of the *Onorata Società*, right from its origins, were not just those of the rural agricultural world. Ciconte states that Calabrian crime also reflects the social behaviour of the ruling classes: landowners were arrogant squires who exercised violence, made use of armed groups and behaved as if they owed no respect to any legal system (1992, 77–78). Sharo Gambino (1971, 69) also argues that the 'prehistory' of the Picciotteria should be looked for in the customary use of armed groups by the propertied classes 'to assert their position of dominion'.

Ciconte furthermore maintains (1992, 154) that the 'Ndrangheta sought legitimisation by the property-owning classes and integration into the ruling strata, to secure a position of strength from which they could pursue the control and accumulation of resources. This would have positioned them across the social classes and created an ideology of supremacy, rather than a popular one, engaged in an instrumental dialogue with different levels of society. All this suggests that the relationship between the 'Ndrangheta and traditional society needs an even more careful evaluation. The corresponding analysis of the Mafia suggests potential approaches; as Gabriella Gribaudi and Adrian Lyttelton have emphasised in the Sicilian context, the interweaving of criminality and popular values has important implications, in terms of disguise and legitimisation, for the actual development of the criminal organisation, irrespective of whether or not this is a mythical representation (Gribaudi 1989–90; Lyttelton 1989–90). In order to grasp the nature of organised crime, it is in any case probably necessary to distinguish it from traditional society. This is the direction taken by the research of both Lupo and Pezzino, who contend that the identification of the Mafia with traditional society is historically dependent on specific factors, especially the need that criminal organisations have for support, the superficial correspondence of 'crime' and 'South', and the complicity, or deliberate inactivity, of the ruling classes, which thus failed to address the problem (Pezzino 1990; Lupo 1996). Moreover, Mangiameli's research (1989–90) on the Pugliese group, active in the Palermo hinterland in the 1860s, has shown that at the origin of the Mafia there were no popular interpretations in evidence, just networks of relationships between local outlaws and elites.

We need to understand to what extent these interpretations apply to the 'Ndrangheta. The final point on its ambiguous social positioning, drawing on Nino Recupero's analysis, leans towards it being seen as alien to traditional society. Recupero (1987, 323) describes the Mafia as having an inter-class structure, in the sense that, speaking 'a social language consistent with that of the majority', it aims to locate itself in positions of social and economic intermediation, so as to have overall control of society and resources. This shifts the emphasis of enquiry towards the type of socio-economic penetration achieved by crime: its objectives and activity, origin, structure and the areas where it has spread.

Origin, structure, spread and activity of the Picciotteria

Following the approach of Lupo, the origin of the mafia phenomenon should be located at the moment when people become aware of it and it was given a name. In the case of Sicily,

this awareness occurs after 1860 (Lupo 1996, 49). The Picciotteria, by contrast, seems to emerge in court hearings from the mid-1880s onwards (Arcà 2000, 49). Leopoldo Franchetti (1950), who in 1876 was the first to make perceptive observations concerning the Mafia, recorded no evidence of anything similar while travelling in Calabria in 1874; he noted corruption, clientelism and violence in social life, but said nothing about organised crime. This might support the idea that the *Onorata Società* appeared in the 1880s, but this seems inconsistent with the extent of the Picciotteria's geographical spread and its particular nature right from its first appearances; these factors suggest we should think in terms of a degree of prior development.

The time frame therefore remains uncertain. Most historians have focused on the post-unification era; only a few have looked at the earlier period. Among these is Nicola Tranfaglia (1991, 34), who links the origins of Picciotteria, Mafia and Camorra to Spanish domination. Piero Bevilacqua (1992) has contested this approach: he refers to the absence of criminal phenomena in other territories under the same rule, and argues that the unauthorised use of violence within *ancien régime* societies should be distinguished from the mafia phenomenon, which only arises in the context of, and in opposition to, modern society.

Another issue for debate is whether the Picciotteria came from outside, or was generated internally. Luigi Malafarina (1986, 78) theorises a derivation from the Camorra, without however explaining how this actually happened. Gambino suggests (1971, 89), without giving details of his sources, the contribution of Sicilian mafiosi detained in the Reggio Calabria area in the 1880s. Antonio Nicaso (1990, 8) puts forward the same theory and quotes the *procuratore* of Palmi at the start of the twentieth century, Lucio Barberi, who believed that the origin of the Picciotteria was linked to the arrival of Sicilian workmen in the area, to build the railway in the 1880s.[5] We need to research the evidence on which the magistrate based his statement.

The 'importation' theory seems somewhat reductive for such a complex phenomenon: its ability to take root and proliferate is not explained. We therefore need to assess the reasons for its success. According to Cingari (1976, 264), the origin of the Picciotteria should be sought within the crisis of the traditional agrarian system, starting with the overthrow of feudalism, and with the genesis of parasitical social relationships that were imposed by continued use of the violence typical of the feudal system. This situation, which first arose in the countryside, developed its central character in the connections made with political, administrative and financial power. The mechanism may have been as has been described for the Mafia: armed groups reflecting individual power, as used under feudalism, did more than survive the advent of the modern State: by exploiting its weakness and the social transformations under way, they continued to carry out illegal activity, assertively working their way into the folds of economic life. Around these groups interests and complicities came into being.[6]

Even if the 'importation' hypothesis does not hold, there are aspects of the theories just discussed that merit exploration: the theory regarding the detainees relates to the role potentially played by prison, where ideas were probably exchanged, alliances broadened and organisational characteristics spread wider. In 1890, for example, the *pentito* Antonio Albano gave evidence that the Palmi organisation, in the 1880s, 'had its origin in the prisons of the surrounding area under the name of secret society of the *camorristi*'.[7] The magistrate Antonino Filastò, in 1906, described prison as an 'appalling breeding ground for social infection', where 'the old *mafiosi* teach the young one the ways, rites and

baccaglio of the organisation'.[8] This function of prison and detention persists over time: in 1936 the *picciotto* Paolo Agostino was killed by the Picciotteria of Platì because he had declared that he had made new and more solid alliances while in prison.[9] Finally, the idea that the origin of the Picciotteria was connected to the railway workers relates to the possible link between crime and economic development. Having mentioned this here, I will be returning later to the question of penetration of the economy by Calabrian crime.

One certain fact is that the Picciotteria, right from its discovery, is a structured and hierarchical association. A detailed description is found within a sentence of the Reggio Calabria courts in 1933:

> [The Picciotteria] is divided into 'Società maggiore' and 'società minore', the former consisting of *camorristi*, and the latter of 'picciotti di sgarro' [criminal footsoldiers] and 'giovani d'onore' [young men of honour]. The first is led by the association's boss, who is chosen by his fellow *camorristi*, and the second by a 'capo giovane'. Both sections have a 'contaiolo' (treasurer), picked from the *camorristi* or able *picciotti*. The *società maggiore* is divided into 'società in testa o Gran criminale' [core criminal group] and 'società indrina'. The head of the 'società in testa' is called 'capo in testa' [head boss] and is always a distinguished *camorrista*. The 'società indrina' is that of the local quarters or districts. The *società minore* answers directly to the *società maggiore*. In every quarter there is a 'capo indrina', a treasurer, and a *camorrista* on duty that day for the *società maggiore*; and a *capo giovane*, treasurer, and *picciotto* on duty for the *società minore*. The duty *picciotto* must report every morning to the *capo giovane* to pass on news and receive orders; the duty *camorrista* gives all the news to the treasurer or the *capo indrina* on a daily basis, and one of these then passes news on to the *capo società*. The levels in the organisation are: 'fiorillo' or *giovane d'onore*, *picciotto di sgarro*, *camorrista*, *contaiolo*, *capo società* .... The *contaiolo* closely guards the 'bacinella', which is the place where the association's money is located.[10]

This shows how the 'Ndrangheta is not an informal phenomenon; it had an official structure from the beginning. Further research needs to establish whether the groups were also organised on a complex territorial basis, and the degree of coordination across the provinces and region.

Many scholars agree that there was never a command structure with jurisdiction over extensive territory. Ciconte (1992, 92–94) is adamant that there was no vertical structure: independent organisations rooted in their quarter or village, protective of their local supremacy, had business or mutual assistance relationships, at most, on a horizontal basis. By contrast, Gratteri and Nicaso (2007, 47–54) point to the possibility of a degree of coordination: they cite as evidence the occurrence of annual meetings of local bosses in the province of Reggio at the festival of the Madonna of Polsi, from the end of the nineteenth century. They also provide proof of the existence, from the 1960s onwards, of the so-called 'Santa', a convocation created in order to formalise the relationships that various gangs in the Reggio area had with institutions, forces of order and the masonry. This cuts across the established localism and creates an executive centre. The attendance of men from different localities clearly implies the management of common interests.

It is difficult, in any case, to make any definitive statements. At present we only have fragmentary evidence for the existence of forms of coordination. A 'maxi-trial' of 1896 establishes that the groups in the villages of Aspromonte and the Ionian coastline in the province of Reggio, including Sinopoli on the Tyrrhenian side, recognised an overall boss and held annual meetings.[11] The same is true for the area around Palmi, where different gangs 'were in correspondence, and while each organisation answered to a local boss and deputy boss, all answered to the organisation that from 1886 onwards was based in

Iatrinoli [now Taurianova]'.[12] Research into the documents should clarify whether or not any coordination was formalised or centralised, to what degree this had happened and its robustness, in the light of the fact that some sentences show there was heated conflict between neighbouring gangs over issues of supremacy.[13]

The bonds between members require analysis as well as the issues of hierarchical and territorial organisation. We need to understand if these reproduced existing social links, like those of the family, or if they created new ones. The rituals of the Picciotteria suggest that the exchange of blood played a central role as regards membership; to enter the 'Maggiore', for example, in a Catanzaro gang in the 1930s, it was necessary to stage a knife duel with another *picciotto*, inflict a light wound and drink the blood from this (Castagna 1967, 40–41). The existence of a blood pact, aimed at creating a brotherhood between men who were not related, suggests that the Picciotteria was not coterminous with existing family groups, but promoted itself as an alternative family; this is even more evident in the duty, sometimes specified, 'to forget one's father and mother' (as in Reggio in the 1930s), which suggests that it lay claim to greater importance than the traditional family.[14] Future research should explore when and why organisation of the 'Ndrangheta came to be based mainly on blood-related family units, as now seems to be the case. Currently, it can only be stated that in the early court papers the Picciotteria does not seem to be based on *'ndrine* relating strictly to family, as Gratteri and Nicaso claim (2007, 69), even if the family may well have been the most obvious vehicle for recruitment. An interesting instance of family strategy was recorded in the 1930s: one sentence refers to a marriage organised between two clans in the Vibo Valentia area in order to cement an alliance.[15] Might the retreat to a family basis have started under Fascism as a strategy to resist potential repression?

The correspondence of gang and blood family, certainly the case for the contemporary 'Ndrangheta, raises the issue of the role of women within Calabrian crime. They have self-evidently been key figures within family strategies. Renate Siebert (1994, 1996), who has analysed the 'Ndrangheta through the prism of gender, has shown that in addition, in line with the advance of modernity, they have increasingly taken on active roles in mafia education, in family feuds, in dissuading potential *pentiti* and in acting as representatives of the gang leadership.

In order to study the 'Ndrangheta's permeation of the social, economic and political fabric of Calabria, it is helpful to look first at where it spread. An 1898 sentence of the Catanzaro Court of Appeal records that 'numerous verdicts show how the evil plant of the camorra . . . has regrettably put down deep roots, most of all in the areas around Nicastro, Reggio, and Palmi, in receptive territory'.[16] These were areas with a developed economy: in the Gioia Tauro plain and around Reggio Calabria there was involvement in the production and export of oil and citrus fruits, and around Nicastro there was much intensive farming of olive groves and vineyards. This links to the idea that the Picciotteria asserted its presence in the areas where the circulation of resources allowed it to practise financial parasitism. Ciconte (1992, 149–52) identifies the markets of Aspromonte as further places where money circulated and mafia gangs proliferated; Mannino points to the presence of the *Onorata Società* in the *latifondo* areas, in livestock-farming areas, and in areas that were 'developed in intensive production for the market' (1997, 410–11), and to its original absence in the Cosenza area, which was characterised by small landowning and self-sufficiency.

Ciconte describes the 'Ndrangheta as 'a new entity in economic activity' (1992, 212): it differs from ordinary crime as it is driven by the desire to accumulate wealth, rather than

by poverty, and brings a new variable, violence, to how the market operates. A particular mechanism for penetration of economic activity is seen in the extortion practised by *picciotti* in key intermediary positions, such as 'guardiani'. In Palmi in 1899, for example, a very large gang which had specialised in livestock theft came up for sentencing, and the features typical of mafia activity are seen: subjected to repeated theft, the landowners, rather than turning to the authorities, were persuaded to entrust the protection of their animals to the *picciotti*, the very same men who were responsible for their insecurity and had put themselves in the position where they would make an illicit profit whatever happened (Ciconte 1992, 125–26).

Research by Gambetta (1993) shows how some mafia activity is built around selling the commodity of protection, in a market characterised by insecurity. The 'guardianìa' (protection service) is in fact forced on landowners, becoming a parasitic institution: the *picciotti* create the conditions for its demand, in the paradoxical situation where the same people have the monopoly of both violence and security.

This organised crime aspires to total control of the economy and of social mobility, over and above the profits from extortion. The acquisition of intermediary positions always seems to be the first stage in this process. In a study of family and client relationships in Calabria by Fortunata Piselli and Giovanni Arrighi, this pattern is clearly seen. In Olivara, a village in the Gioia Tauro plain, the *picciotti* were establishing themselves, from the end of the nineteenth century onwards, inside the network of producers, traders, and purchasers of oil and citrus fruits. They oversaw the wholesale market, set prices, controlled sales, imposed commitments and apparently protected the work force (Arrighi and Piselli 1985). They needed to take key posts: for example, in the context of production for the market, the *picciotti* established themselves as commercial intermediaries, for the most part owners of warehouses, able to influence the market through intimidation and violence. In a 1925 sentence, the judges of Palmi mentioned respectable men who, like the 'mayor of the *comune*', judged it 'appropriate . . . to entrust their vast oil storehouses to the safekeeping' of well-known criminals, and not necessarily out of fear, but often out of mutual interest (Mannino 1997, 408). From the beginning, a central role in the success of the Picciotteria was played by support from the managerial and property-owning class, which used it to reinforce 'its own dominant position', at the same time allowing it to 'root itself in the social fabric as an acknowledged possessor of social power' (Mannino 1997, 409). These ideas still need further elaboration, with thorough research of the documents and study of specific cases.

Fascism and Picciotteria

In the process of identifying a series of questions that need further research, it must be emphasised that a clear and exhaustive picture of the evolution of the 'Ndrangheta is missing. The most obvious gap relates to the Fascist period. Much research, as we will see, has been done on Operation Mori in Sicily, while there are no specific studies for Calabria.

There are many issues to explore: to start with, the behaviour of the gangs during peasant mobilisation in the period after the First World War, when individual mediators established themselves as well as collective bodies such as co-operatives and rural banks. For Calabria, nothing is known; research on Sicily provides some suggestions. For example, Francesco Di Bartolo (2008) describes how in the province of Caltanissetta, from

1920 onwards, the Mussomeli gang controlled the cooperatives of militants, aiming to impose their own mediation between landowners and peasants, and to manage the distribution of tenancies and the monopoly of the land market. It should then be asked what the relationship was with the new parties, and especially with the Fascists. The historiography discusses a Calabrian Fascism that had been weak prior to the March on Rome; at that point many prominent figures, with their client networks, were among those who joined the party, without necessarily adopting its ideology (Cingari 1982, 255–64). This gave Calabrian Fascism a composite nature, further complicated by the divisions within early Fascism between the radicals and those who supported strengthening the totalitarian State. It follows that an investigation of how organised crime behaved in the political environment has to take into account the multiform nature of local Fascism, as well as the composite nature of the gangs; it may be that there are several different cases, rather than one general pattern.

Yet further questions concern the extent to which the national government wished to suppress the Picciotteria, the image that Fascism had of Calabrian crime and therefore its strategy for action. Ciconte's (1992, 231–36) discussion of Giuseppe Delfino, the *carabinieri* officer in Platì, refers to a suppression along Sicilian lines. This comparison seems tenuous, as Delfino was a minor figure who has yet to be studied, and also because it is unclear to what extent his conduct was part of any coordinated action.

The possibility that Fascism had a particular image of the Picciotteria, which then determined its action, is suggested by a report in 1936 from Giovanni Alessandri, the provincial party secretary for Reggio Calabria. He cautiously drew attention to a recurrence of crime in the area, linking this to reduced levels of 'monitoring and educational' activity by the Party.[17] There was no reference to any police operation, but rather to the need for education, perhaps because the belief was that the problem lay in the social behaviour of the Calabrian population. These, however, are only suggestions.

Sicilian historiography should provide a constant reference point for fuller development of the approach to research in the Calabrian context. Following Christopher Duggan, might it be considered that the concept of 'Mafia' was manipulated for the purposes of building Fascist strength? According to Duggan (1986), the idea of the Mafia as a criminal organisation was used only in order to justify restricting the freedom of prominent figures, to attack political enemies and to restore the power of landowners against the 'gabellotti'. While it is now widely disputed that criminal organisations did not exist, the theory that the struggle against crime was exploited for other ends remains a valid interpretive approach.

Lupo (1996, 203–25), on the other hand, distinguishes between action by the prefecture and action by the police. The latter, he says, led to a real reduction in mafia power, while the former related to Fascism's political objectives: the elimination of opponents both internal and external, use of the Mafia to justify restricting democracy, and strong support for landowners faced with peasant demands. These are important ideas, which trigger questions. Was there a similarly complex approach to the issue of Calabrian criminality? Through what ideological and political filters did Fascism operate? What influence did the conservative position have on the social level? Apart from the manipulation of its image, and Fascist excesses, was there also a genuine struggle against the Picciotteria, and with what means?

Giovanni Raffaele (1993) portrays an 'ambiguous interrelationship' between Fascism and the Mafia, highlighting the presence of a strong propaganda element: Fascism wanted

to create an image of itself as the implacable supporter of the State against crime, while in reality, Raffaele argues, it struck only at minor delinquency, and let itself get enmeshed in old relationship networks, whose survival allowed the Mafia to re-emerge. Was there any Fascist involvement in Calabrian criminal networks? For now, evidence of the possible links between crime and Fascism can be seen in a brief reference by Cingari (1988, 331–35) to mafia penetration in the Reggio area, and in at least two criminal sentences. One of these, from 1932, refers to the struggle between two mafia families for the office of *podestà* in the village of S. Calogero, in the province of Catanzaro.[18] The other, from 1930, quotes a *carabinieri* report in which the *podestà* of the village of S. Ilario, in the province of Reggio Calabria, is identified as also being the head of the local gang.[19] In the first case, enquiries were diverted along another line; in the second, the judges dispute the reliability of the *carabinieri* statement. According to Ciconte, these episodes show Fascism's wish to avoid disturbing the real power relationships, in which it had allowed itself to get involved, by restricting itself to minor crime. However, given that these are particular local episodes, generalisation is dangerous. Matteo Di Figlia (2008) has analysed the police–Mafia relationship in relation to the trial of Alfredo Cucco, the Fascist leader in Palermo; he suggests that the particular feature to be aware of when analysing the mafia phenomenon under Fascism is that of complexity. It is very difficult to reconstruct a general and unambiguous position of Fascism towards crime, and vice versa, mainly because of their composite nature, which means that specific situations have to be distinguished from a general pattern.

Research has recently been undertaken on the struggle against the Mafia in the Fascist era, using newly available archival material, and the results published in an issue of *Meridiana*, which includes work to which I have already referred. Manoela Patti and Vito Scalia reconstruct two trials that resulted from Operation Mori; the first concerns the gangs of the Palermo countryside (Patti 2008), and the second those of villages inland (Scalia 2008). These shed light on genealogies and activity; on the development and system of relationships with respectable figures; and on the Fascist wish to eliminate mafia mediation in both the socio-economic and political spheres, in the name of totalitarian politics. Moreover the distinction emerges between police and judicial action: the former was notably firm, and consistent with Fascism's determination to suppress, but also to engage in politics and propaganda, while the latter was milder, generating penalties that were modest although commensurate with the criminal charges and people's stated intentions (Patti 2008, 74). Fascist suppression, in fact, operated in the courts with the measures of the previous Zanardelli penal code, which was generally less prescriptive regarding recognition of the crime of criminal association. Because of this, on behalf of increased statism, heavy use was made of warnings and internal exile. At the same time, however, even in court Fascist repression marked an important shift with regard to the previous period. Magistrates and prosecutors had battled with defence lawyers over the crucial issue of the interpretation of the Mafia as a criminal organisation. Antonino Di Blando (2008) highlights the role of lawyers in the construction of a mafia narrative that denied its organisational and criminal features and focused instead on cultural aspects, in line with the classic approach put forward by the Sicilian anthropologist Giuseppe Pitrè in the late nineteenth century (1899). According to Scalia (2008, 112–15), this formulation was rejected in the trials held in the late 1920s.

Nothing of this sort exists in the Calabrian environment. First of all we need to return to the trials, which might help us with a detailed reconstruction of the criminal

organisations active across the region. We also need to ask if, at the same time as any suppression, there was any debate similar to that in Sicily in the 1920s which might, through any trial outcomes, have shaken the established images of crime.

The final issue to examine relates to the 1930s, which were characterised by the Fascist claim to have resolved the mafia problem (Lupo 2000, 281). Vittorio Coco (2008, 121) reconstructs the thriving nature of the Mafia after Operation Mori. A statement of 1938 drawn up by the *Ispettorato Interprovinciale per la Pubblica Sicurezza*, a body established in 1933 during a new and silent phase of the Fascist battle against the Mafia, highlights the role of men of high social rank in aiding the resurgence of the Mafia, using their personal networks of relationships; these permitted its members, moreover, to put on 'the mask of gentlemen' (Lupo 2008, 13–14). In Calabria, there is evidence of the Picciotteria's presence in the 1930s. Many court sentences show that organised crime is still alive, particularly in the Reggio area, and one of these provides a particularly interesting starting point: a gang discovered in 1933 in Cirella, in the *comune* of Platì, was attacked by sending its bosses into internal exile. The need to survive this suppression forced the *picciotti* to appoint a new and 'inconspicuous' boss. They turned to Francesco Macrì, a wealthy landowner, 'not known for any previous crimes, above suspicion because of his financial and social state', who was able to deal with the needs of the organisation using his own resources.[20] This is an intriguing case that might encourage discussion of the strategies of survival under Fascist repression, and the complicity of the upper classes.

The post-war period and 'Operation Marzano'

The 'Ndrangheta re-emerged, thriving, in the post-war period. While there are plenty of studies that attest to its strength in the 1970s, there are no specific pieces of research which analyse its development from the Second World War onwards.

Ciconte describes the ability of the 'Ndrangheta to survive the war and to adapt to subsequent change: during the war the *picciotti* worked their way into managing the black market, laying the foundations for future illegal trade in arms, tobacco and cocaine. As early as 1943, with the Allied landings, their authority regained its prestige and entered a new ascendant phase. Many *picciotti* were co-opted as mayors and administrators by the Allied government; others established themselves in the management of local power, creating links with the political world, or controlling wide stretches of territory with their characteristic tools of intimidation and status. This was the case, according to Ciconte (1992, 239–44), for Antonio Macrì, boss of Siderno, who in this period asserted himself as one of the most powerful 'Ndrangheta bosses.

Establishment within the political world is central to the study by James Walston, who analyses how 'clientelism of the welfare state' has operated in Calabria from the post-war period onwards. Although he regards the 'Ndrangheta as an informal structure relating to honour, he also sees it as providing a way to manage power; he describes the mechanisms that aided its success, linking this analysis to national trends. Calabria, according to Walston, is characterised by a marked lack of social, political and economic trust; this has led to a dramatic reduction in social interaction, except when this is linked to family bonds or 'governed by the principle of mutual advantage'. In this situation, favoured by the absence of a participatory civil society, prominent figures, and then later the parties, in particular the Christian Democrats (DC), created for themselves a role of mediation

between the State and its citizens, founded on a personalised and clientelistic management of politics. In a region where most of the financial circulation and employment prospects derive from government funding, the parties have taken over the bodies responsible for managing public finance and have then been a means to distribute public resources, creating and extracting private profits. Organised crime penetrated this mechanism for accumulation, intercepting public funding with the parties' collusion, especially in the province of Reggio and particularly from the years of the centre-left onwards (Walston 1995). Fortunata Piselli (1988), who has worked with oral sources in the Gioia Tauro plain, also describes the control of the economy by the parties and the resulting mafia presence; the 'Ndrangheta, she says, abandoned its traditional codes of honour, as its attention switched from the local to the bigger picture, where the central State was being transformed into a 'partner' in business. For Piselli there is a qualitative shift away from a mafia of honour and order, to an unscrupulous mafia which emerges during the 1960s. This idea prompts a reflection on potential changes in the 'Ndrangheta's deliberate adhesion to traditional values, as it slowly works its way into larger socio-economic systems.

Both Walston and Piselli convincingly describe the mechanisms that regulate Calabrian political life; the particular nature of mafia penetration of the political parties after the dawn of the Republican era has yet to be analysed, along with the type of control, pressure and influence brought to bear on these parties, and their potential interest in collaborating with the 'Ndrangheta.

Operation Marzano, named after the *questore* Carmelo Marzano, provides some interesting indications. This was a rapid hunt for fugitives in the province of Reggio Calabria, resulting in the arrest of 261 previous offenders between August and October 1955. It can be reconstructed from documents in the State Archives – telegrams and daily reports between the Prefecture, police headquarters and Ministry of the Interior – which reveal the interweaving of politics and crime, and describe the ability of the 'Ndrangheta to deliver votes in exchange for favours: 'rental agreements, contracts, service franchises, acquisition of customary public rights'.[21] However, the operation presents some contradictions in this regard, as both Ciconte and Cingari note, as the Mafia–politics interrelationship is not really addressed. According to a report to the Ministry of the Interior by the prefect for Reggio Calabria, many politicians who had relationships with crime, either in the DC or the government coalition, were not touched: these included Romeo, mayor of Reggio Calabria, the provincial councillor Giuseppe Macrì, and the Liberal Capua, undersecretary for Agriculture, who had all enjoyed electoral support in exchange for favours. Moreover, the prefect discusses the embarrassing presence on the Commission for Internal Exile of the lawyer Catalano, a member of the Catholic *Comitato Civico* for Reggio Calabria, who apparently tried to defend Antonio Macrì, the overall boss of the gangs in the Locri area. Nothing was done, except for a trivial cautionary note sent to party management regarding a DC inspector, who before this same Commission had defended a known offender who 'during the elections had given his all in support of the ruling party'.[22] In the light of this absence of action, at least as regards the DC, Ciconte concludes that in reality Operation Marzano was intended to politicise the 'Ndrangheta rather than fight it, in order both to avoid its support going to the opposition on either the Right or Left, and to ensure that the DC in Reggio supported Fanfani's line (Ciconte 1992, 271–79). The one-sided nature of the operation can in fact be seen in a note from Marzano to Tambroni, the Minister, following the arrest of Nicola D'Agostino, the communist

mayor of Canolo. This expresses the hope that 'if the facts that have emerged are made the most of in the political arena, that *comune* could be snatched from the left-wing extremists at the next local elections'.[23] Other Communist Party (PCI) activists were arrested and detained alongside D'Agostino, and other local councils held by the left were dissolved.

These episodes appear to show extensive mafia penetration of the parties of both alignments; it is still to be explained how this started, and the choice of political alliance by the gangs at a local level.

As regards the DC, Ciconte argues that after their success in 1948 'the 'Ndrangheta . . . could hardly not be attracted and not look for some form of relationship and linkage with Christian Democrat politicians, who represented the party most able to penetrate the nerve centres of local and national power' (1992, 271). The approach to the PCI was different; according to Ciconte, it represented a potential democratic route to emancipation for those peasants and young people who had 'a romantic, idealised vision' of the 'Ndrangheta, 'to the extent that they saw it as an organisation for the people's self-defence'. Many of them had encountered politics in internal exile, and following this contact had been 'converted'. Although this last point seems very interesting, because of the reference to contacts between criminals and political militants while detained, and as a way of understanding a degree of politicisation of crime, it does not seem very convincing to divide the 'Ndrangheta on the basis of a distinction between two supposed moving spirits. As Lombardi Satriani suggests, 'one can talk about differences between an old and a new mafia across time, but only in order to understand the developments, not to judge one form as being better than the other'.[24] Ciconte's reasoning might still be valid in individual cases, but other explanations can probably be found for the 'Ndrangheta's choice of the PCI: at the local level communist activists were perhaps involved in supporting the gangs, or the underworld perhaps wanted to penetrate the social movements that seemed dominant in particular areas.

Prior to Ciconte, Eric Hobsbawm had approached the relationship between organised crime and left-wing parties in a similar way. In his view, the 'Ndrangheta was a pre-political form of social protest: an organisation of shepherds, peasants and artisans intent on defending themselves against both feudal and State power. Unlike the Mafia, it had not adopted a dominating character, or if so only to a limited extent; instead, it retained a popular one. Simmering social demands would be expressed in a different way: there would be a progressive disappearance of criminal symptoms in favour of a more modern political emancipation (Hobsbawm 1966, 77–82). Among the references used by Hobsbawm is the essay 'Politica e Malavita' by the historian Rosario Villari and the communist Adolfo Fiumanò: protesting vociferously against the arrests of PCI members, they praise the importance of progressive political forces thanks to which a section of the popular masses 'has abandoned the road of resignation or primitive anarchic rebellion and has acquired a new, politically valid, and positive spirit' (Fiumanò and Villari 1955, 656).

Hobsbawm also refers to articles by the *L'Unità* journalist in Calabria during Operation Marzano, Riccardo Longone, which contribute to creating an image of the 'Ndrangheta as a popular organisation. Longone (1955a, 1955b) described the *Onorata Società* as a 'state of mind' of the disinherited seeking redemption; moreover, he identified a split under way between an old and a new 'Ndrangheta. The latter was a 'very dangerous criminal organisation', which 'extorts, threatens, exploits, and imposes its will almost openly'; aligning itself with landowners, it was developing thanks to support from Christian Democrats. The old 'Ndrangheta of the people, on the other hand, was destined

to fade away with the advance of the party, which could harness the demands coming from instinctive rebellion. D'Agostino's story provided the illustration: he had been a *picciotto* under Fascism, and while in prison he came 'into contact with political detainees' and discovered that 'to defend the weak, to set wrongs right, to combat injustice, there was a different path to follow'. He therefore joined the PCI, becoming mayor of Canolo in 1946 and fighting for public land to be returned to the peasants. Due to one of his works of 'social reclamation' Canolo became, according to Longone, one of 'the most advanced places in Calabria, where no one wants to pose as *mafioso*' (1955c).

Evidence from the same case appears to undermine this optimism. Gianfranco Manfredi (1983) establishes that in a well-known case in Locri at the start of the 1980s, in which 133 people were charged with association with criminal intent, Nicola D'Agostino was identified as boss of the Canolo gang and given three years for having banked money that came from the kidnapping of Guglielmo Liore, a Turin businessman. D'Agostino's sons Vincenzo and Domenico were also found guilty; the latter, while communist mayor of Canolo in 1977, had been surprised by the carabinieri at a meeting of the local gang where the allocation of contracts was being discussed. It does not seem that the 'Ndrangheta had faded away within a modern organisation for political struggle: rather, a strong criminal organisation seems to have colonised the party that had been dominant in a particular local environment.

Future research should therefore re-examine the penetration of political parties by Calabrian organised crime after the end of the Second World War, and also assess the image of the crime problem that politics constructed for itself: an image that, intentionally or not, generated a particular style of intervention, activity and struggle.

Conclusions

As has become clear, the themes of poverty-stricken criminality and socio-cultural backwardness of the Calabrian people have long accompanied the historical development of the 'Ndrangheta.

In the eyes of observers and of the State, the 'Ndrangheta established itself very late as a mafia-type criminal organisation: it was only in the twelfth legislative period, from 1987 to 1992, that it was first listed among the organisations of interest to the parliamentary anti-mafia commission. However, as I have shown in this article, there are clues and indications that allow glimpses of the more complex and structured nature of Calabrian crime; this has yet to be investigated by thorough documentary research. Calabrian archives hold many court verdicts and other papers, prefectural accounts and police reports, although locating the material is often problematic: some collections are fragmented and incomplete; some papers, not always fully catalogued, are kept in chaos; and some trial papers, even from the 1930s, have been retained in the archives of the relevant court, where it is much more complicated to gain access for research. Despite all this, a rigorous study could be undertaken, and is necessary in order to clarify the history and nature of the 'Ndrangheta. There are also the central State Archives: the 'Ministry of the Interior' collection holds important material on public security in the provinces; the Ministry of Justice should hold records of court action and reports from police chiefs; and, finally, the central police files sometimes keep the records of individual criminals who are

either in prison or under surveillance. These documents can also be cross-referenced with other sources, such as newspaper articles, political statements and parliamentary inquiries.

It is obviously necessary to bear in mind that we are studying a criminal organisation which aspires to remain secret; it has been able to create authority over the territory and a particular relationship with Calabrian society, and has strong relationships with the political world. All this makes interpretation of the sources very complex. The networks of relationships that have been created around the 'Ndrangheta at both local and national levels, the degree of social penetration of the Calabrian fabric, fear and intimidation: as we have seen, these have all contributed to the emergence of different modes of interpretation of this phenomenon. Some of these are purposely constructed, others simply relate to the inability to discern its nature clearly and unambiguously.

A rigorous analytical approach has been adopted by the historiography of the Sicilian Mafia; using court papers, historians have reconstructed single episodes, particular criminal events, and individual gangs and mafia figures, recognising the complexity and variety of the phenomenon and the difficulty of providing any clear-cut description. In this way many discoveries have been made, enabling a better identification of the Mafia's nature, its probable origins, the features of its criminal activity and its social penetration, and the principles of its evolution over time. The 'Ndrangheta awaits the same approach.

Translated by Stuart Oglethorpe

Acknowledgement

Notes

1. See for example Lupo (1996). Other works will be referred to later in the article.
2. A revision of this approach can be found in a later work (Arlacchi 1992, VIII).
3. On this issue, see Varese (2006), who analyses the success of 'Ndrangheta penetration of northern Italy, supporting the argument that the Mafia emerges in societies undergoing expansion where there are no protective legal structures.
4. ASCZ, Corte di Appello di Catanzaro, Sent. 2-5-1929, Palermo Rinaldo + 48, vol. 507.
5. This belief was also expressed in a book by his predecessor as public prosecutor of Palmi, Pasquale Sansone (1904, 72).
6. See Lupo (1996), and also Pezzino (1999, 12–14).
7. ASCZ, Corte di Appello delle Calabrie, Sent. 14-10-1890, Calia Michelangelo + 65, v. 324.
8. Filastò is quoted in Malafarina (1986, 120). 'Baccaglio' is the language of the Picciotteria. See Ciconte (1992, 44–45).
9. ASCZ, Corte di Assise di Locri, Sent. 6-9-1939, Macrì Francesco + 141, b. 4.
10. ASRC, Tribunale di Reggio Calabria, Sent. 6-4-1933, Spanò Demetrio + 106, unnumbered vol. "1933 – 15 gennaio–30 aprile".
11. The trial documents are quoted by Mannino (1997, 390–91).
12. ASCZ, Corte di Appello delle Calabrie, Sent. 21-2-1890, Giovanbattista Sciarrone + 95, v. 137.
13. ASCZ, Corte di Assise di Locri, Sent. 2-2-1933, Andrianò Vincenzo + 8, b. I.
14. See the case of *Spanò Demetrio* referred to above.
15. ASCZ, Corte di Assise di Catanzaro, Sent. 21-5-1932, Rosello Francesco + 2, vol. 63.
16. Quoted by Mannino (1997, 385). Nicastro is now part of the *comune* of Lamezia Terme.
17. ACS, PNF, Situazione Politica delle provincie, b. 17, Reggio Calabria.
18. ASCZ, Corte di Assise di Catanzaro, Sent. 21-5-1932, Rosello Francesco + 2, vol. 63.

19. ASCZ, Corte di Appello di Catanzaro, Sent. 29-11-1930, Mollica Vincenzo + 41, vol. 516.
20. See the case of Francesco Macrì referred to above.
21. ACS, Ministero dell'Interno, Gabinetto, 1953–1956, b. 4, fasc. 1066-2.
22. ACS, Ministero dell'Interno, Gabinetto, 1953–1956, b. 4, fasc. 1066-2.
23. ACS, Ministero dell'Interno, Gabinetto, 1953–1956, b. 4, fasc. 1066-2.
24. The quotation comes from a radio interview given by Lombardi Satriani on 'La Mafia', produced by Stefano Catucci (Questioni di Filosofia, Enciclopedia Multimediale delle Scienze Filosofiche, RaiEducational, 21 December 1997, online at http://www.emsf.rai.it/radio/trasmissioni.asp?d = 73) and quoted in Gratteri and Nicaso (2007, 35–36).

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