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**SUBJECT: MAFIA MONOGRAPH**



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Section I

Sicily

July, 1958

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NOTE:

This monograph was based on memo from W. C. Sullivan to  
Mr. A. H. Belmont dated July 9, 1958 re captioned matter.

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## ILLUSTRATION

Map of Sicily and Calabria Showing Location of Certain Sites Pertinent to Origin and Development of the Sicilian Mafia . . . .	xvii
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8       **There have been again insistent allegations of the existence of the**  
9  
10 **Mafia in the United States. There have been also denials.**  
11

12       **The purposes of this monograph are threefold:**  
13

- 14           1.   **To explain what the Mafia is.**  
15  
16           2.   **To present the evidence indicating the Mafia does exist in the**  
17 **United States.**  
18  
19           3.   **To describe how the Mafia operates.**  
20  
21

22       **Fortified with this knowledge, all persons charged with law**  
23 **enforcement responsibilities should be in a better position to cope with**  
24 **Mafia lawlessness.**  
25  
26

27       **This monograph is written in two sections. The scope of the first**  
28  
29 **section includes a study of the (a) origin, (b) nature, (c) definition, (d) activities**  
30 **of the Mafia on its native soil of Sicily, and (e) transplanting of the Mafia,**  
31 **through immigration to the United States. The scope of the second section**  
32 **includes a study of the (a) existence of the Mafia in the United States, (b) defini-**  
33 **tion as it relates in particular to American conditions, (c) activities from its**  
34 **inception to the present (1960), and (d) basic current forms through which it**  
35 **continues.**  
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It will be understood that the Mafia is a highly clandestine operation most difficult to penetrate by informants. Therefore this study was not limited to data secured from informants. It goes beyond this source to include all available material emanating from other law enforcement groups and public sources, both in the United States and in Europe.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

### A. Summary

The Mafia exists in Sicily as a vicious, domineering, unique form of organized criminality. The Mafia was neither founded nor constituted at a specific time or in a particular place. It developed powerfully after 1860 as ruthless and avaricious individuals sought to exploit the lingering defensive reactions of the Sicilian people to the foreign tyranny that had oppressed them for centuries.

The Mafia was made possible by: (1) the hatred of the Sicilian people for the law and its enforcement represented in Sicily's perennial foreign masters; (2) the reaction of the people in the form of traditional refusal to cooperate with the law and (3) the tragic results of these factors, i.e., the absence of effective law enforcement in Sicily, and the curse of widespread and uncontrolled crime throughout the Island.

The history of the Mafia is the tragic story of the growth of a protection racket and its extension into every phase of Sicilian life.

In the absence of effective law enforcement, the proprietors of the great landed estates which covered the Sicilian countryside customarily recruited "scaretakers" from among the most domineering of the local tough or criminal element to protect their lives and properties. Being subject to

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9 no effective legal restraint, these individuals exploited their opportunities  
10 for illicit power and profit to the fullest extent. As early as the 13th  
11  
12 Century, the "caretakers" were sponsoring and harboring roaming  
13  
14 bands and aiding them in crime, as well as terrorizing and extorting  
15  
16 from the peasants and committing other crimes. These "caretakers" (as  
17  
18 an 19th Century Maffiosi) were able to foist "protection" services not only upon  
19  
20 the peasants but upon the landowners as well for they had it within their  
21  
22 power as overlords of local crime to control or unleash depredations upon  
23  
24 the landed estates at will.  
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27

28  
29 By the 19th Century, the protection racket was well established.  
30  
31 Its permeation into all phases of community life was assured by the fact  
32  
33 that the landed estates were the centers of rural life, and the landowners,  
34  
35 over whom the "caretakers" had acquired a sinister control, were the  
36  
37 patrons in their local communities.  
38  
39

40 In the early 19th Century, Sicily was a scene of widespread  
41  
42 disorders, consequent in part upon the Italian campaigns of Napoleon  
43  
44 Bonaparte. These disorders, plus an especially corrupt and ineffective  
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46 system of law enforcement under the Bourbon kings and a growing  
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48 liberation movement, combined to furnish the early Maffiosi extraordinary  
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6 opportunities to expand their domineering power. The owners of the landed  
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8 estates became increasingly dependent upon the "caretakers" for protection  
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10 of their vested interests. The liberation movement also attracted numbers  
11  
12 of the "caretaker" element who joined the Carbonari, an Italian secret society  
13  
14 of liberation. When the Carbonari, under the leadership of the Italian patriot  
15  
16 Giuseppe Garibaldi, overthrew the Bourbon regime in 1860 and liberated Sicily  
17  
18 from foreign rule, the Mafia acquired legendary coloration as a secret society  
19  
20 of liberation.  
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23  
24 It was not until after the liberation of the island from foreign  
25  
26 domination in 1860 that the Italian authorities fully recognized the malignancy  
27  
28 of the phenomenon that had been developing on the landed estates. The infant  
29  
30 Italian state had declared many of the Mafiosi to have been partisans in the  
31  
32 liberation movement, and some of their leaders were accepted into the new  
33  
34 parliament. The Mafia, however, soon revealed itself in its true colors,  
35  
36 stripped of its patriotic coloration. Firmly entrenched on the landed estates,  
37  
38 in control of much of crime for its own purposes, and pushing its tentacles  
39  
40 into all phases of the economic and political life of Sicily, the Mafia became  
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42 the new government's most vicious behind-scenes rival for power and revenue.  
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9 Prior to 1860, the word "Mafia" was a seldom-heard expression in the  
10 Sicilian dialect, and when used concerning a man it connoted the popular Sicilian  
11  
12 concept of true manliness.  
13

14  
15 To a 19th-Century Sicilian, with a racial background of centuries  
16  
17 of danger and oppression, true manliness consisted of a kind of audacious  
18  
19 arrogance in which a man kept silent in the event of a crime, refused to  
20  
21 assist the authorities in its detection or punishment, reserved the right of  
22  
23 personal vengeance (vendetta) to the injured person or his family, and  
24  
25 to exact ruthless personal vengeance for offenses he or his family might suffer.  
26  
27 These attitudes and this behavior were summed up in a tradition called omerta  
28  
29 which by the 19th Century had become an unwritten code among the Sicilian  
30  
31 people.  
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34  
35 In 1863, a play appeared in Sicily with the title I Mafiusi della  
36  
37 Vicaria. It glorified the audacity of certain prisoners in the Vicaria  
38  
39 penitentiary in Palermo. In the 18th-Century English translation of the  
40  
41 title, the word "Mafiusi" was given the meaning of "heroes." The play  
42  
43 achieved wide popularity. The word "Mafiusi," later more generally  
44  
45 spelled "Mafiosi," found its way into the common speech of Sicily and  
46  
47 Italy. It came to be applied to those individuals who formed the  
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6 "caretaker" groups, as they most obviously represented both audacity and  
7  
8 strict adherence to the omerta tradition. As the "caretakers" and their gangs  
9  
10 composed an exclusive, insular class of individuals characterized by  
11  
12 shrewdness and modiglianelli, and often found in collusion with one another,  
13  
14 they formed in effect a society, and as such were collectively referred to as  
15  
16 the Mafia.  
17  
18

19        Mafia crimes attained alarming proportions in the decade of the 1860's  
20  
21 and repressive measures were soon undertaken against the Mafia by the new  
22  
23 Italian Government. The authorities waged largely ineffectual campaigns  
24  
25 against the Mafia in the 1860's, in the 1870's, and in subsequent decades until  
26  
27 World War I. They were ordinarily forced to resort to arbitrary banishment  
28  
29 of convicted Mafiosi to small islands, positive evidence against the suspects  
30  
31 being extremely difficult to obtain in view of the Mafia code of silence, and the  
32  
33 refusal of witnesses and victims to testify due to their terror of reprisal by  
34  
35 the Mafia. One of the most significant results of the repressive measures  
36  
37 taken against the Mafia was the concurrent emigration of Mafia elements from  
38  
39 Sicily to countries abroad, especially to the United States, to avoid prosecution.  
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45        During the period between World War I and World War II, the Mafia  
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47 in Sicily was subjected to a concentrated attack by the Italian authorities. Mass  
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49 trials of Mafiosi and suspected Mafiosi between 1928 and 1934 resulted in the  
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9 sentencing of over 1,200 persons to terms ranging from a few months to life.

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Ma activity was found to be concentrated in the Palermo area and the western portion of the island, though it had also spread to the southernmost tip of the Italian peninsula, referred to as Calabria. Charges against the *Mafiosi* included, in the main, controlled extortion practiced for many years, "banding together for criminal purposes," and substantive crimes such as murder, blackmail, assault, robbery, and theft. Mass trials as a result of additional roundups of *Mafiosi* were held in 1935, and again in 1937. Later events were to reveal, however, that the Mafia had survived the wholesale attack against it by the Italian authorities. It survived during World War II with the resiliency of an established institution and resumed its deadly and nefarious activities.

Information from 19th Century observers supplemented by data developed by Italian authorities in the 1920's and 1930's revealed certain chief features of the traditional Sicilian Mafia: (1) it was chiefly a rural phenomenon comprising a traditional protection racket on the landed estates; (2) rather than composing a compact, centrally organized society, the Mafia was loosely compounded of local gangs operating under self-imposed local chiefs; (3) the chiefs and their retainers collaborated

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9 when expedient, as in the passage of stolen goods, but often fought among  
10 themselves for power or for reasons of vengeance, resulting in numerous  
11 unsolved murders; (4) as ambitious local chiefs forcibly imposed their  
12 authority over neighboring Mafia groups, territorial rings emerged comprising  
13 the broadest of the Mafia's organizational features; (5) the person considered  
14 to be all-powerful in the Sicilian Mafia was a man of supreme prestige among  
15 the Mafiosi, the chief of a powerful territorial ring; (6) high Mafiosi were  
16 sometimes to be found in the professions or in other prominent positions where  
17 they maintained ostensibly respectable reputations; (7) Mafia adherence was  
18 found to be generally hereditary although conformance with the code of omerta  
19 and proof of ruthless criminality by other aspirants often meant their acceptance  
20 by the Mafia; (8) formal admission rites were neither uniform nor generally  
21 practiced; (9) the Mafia code of discipline was omerta, the code of silence,  
22 infractions of which were punishable by death; (10) one territorial Mafia ring  
23 utilized a cover organization with the innocuous name, the "Agriculturers'  
24 Club," where major plans of operation were hatched; (11) the chief modus  
25 operandi of the Mafia was murder, often by shotgun; (12) the rule for the  
26 distribution of spoils was the right of the strongest; (13) proofs of the conspiracies  
27 represented in the territorial Mafia rings or associations were adduced from  
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observations by police and other witnesses of associative ties among the  
defendants, meetings, identification of different functions of members of  
the rings, apparent similarity in modus operandi on the part of the  
defendants, and the fixing of responsibility for overt acts appearing as  
manifestations of the conspiracies; (14) the Mafia rings or associations  
were held by the Supreme Court of the Kingdom of Italy in 1934 to  
consist of persons permanently bound by common agreement to impose  
upon and exploit honest and quiet citizens and to commit crimes against  
property and persons; (15) the Mafia was distinguished from crime in  
general in Sicily by its monopoly of the protection racket, domineering  
position over local crime, ferocity, special clannishness and exclusiveness,  
traditions, and interlocking family ties.

During World War II, the Mafia revealed the quality of  
adaptability, domineering over black-market operations on the one hand,  
and operating as independent criminal gangs on the other. It also accepted  
adherents from among Army deserters, war-born robber gangs, deportees,  
and other criminal elements returned from America. This expanded new  
Mafia developed know-how in the fields of racketeering and political  
pressures and succeeded in having adherents elected to the National



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8 Constituent Assembly in Rome. The tentacles of the Mafia reached into the  
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10 police force, and ensnared provincial and municipal authorities as well.

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12 The existence of the Mafia in Sicily in 1955 was confirmed by a  
13  
14 study made by an agency of the United States Government, and was reaffirmed  
15  
16 in recent statements of Italian police officials.

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18 In the 1930's, the Mafia's connection with the international smuggling  
19  
20 of narcotics was made public by the U. S. Federal Narcotics Bureau, after years  
21  
22 of investigation.  
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25 The present-day Mafia in Sicily, while basically resembling the  
26  
27 traditional Mafia, has extended its sphere of operations more strongly into the  
28  
29 cities. In Palermo, for example, Mafiosi practice racketeering in labor and  
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31 supplies on the waterfront. They also operate an extremely lucrative racket in  
32  
33 the markets where they interpose themselves between wholesalers and retailers  
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35 in the guise of middlemen and "take a cut of" all sales. These city Mafiosi are  
36  
37 assisted by bodyguards and assassins. Clashes among their groups for  
38  
39 domineering control are frequent and bloody.  
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44 Admission into a local Mafia group requires sponsorship by a Mafioso  
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46 known as the aspirant's godfather, proof of obedience to the code of omerta, and  
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48 proof of capacity for ruthless crime.  
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9 Mafia crimes include chiefly murder, protection racketeering,  
10 labor racketeering, extortion, kidnapping, smuggling, robbery, and theft.  
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13 While it does not appear that Sicily is "world headquarters" for  
14 the Mafia, as some claim, some degree of coordination appears to exist  
15 between the Mafiosi in Sicily and those in the United States. The visits  
16 of Giuseppe Bonanno and Carmine Galante, notorious American hoodlums,  
17 to Palermo, Sicily, shortly before the Apalachin, New York convention of  
18 hoodlums on November 14, 1957, are viewed with interest. The Mafia in  
19 Sicily keeps informed on the activities of its American counterpart,  
20 receiving at least a portion of its intelligence through visits of American  
21 Mafiosi to Sicily. Correspondence between Mafiosi in Sicily and the  
22 United States, uncovered by the Federal Narcotics Bureau, has been  
23 found to contain veiled meanings and to confirm previously developed  
24 information that the Mafiosi refer to themselves as the "friends."  
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45 The Mafia in Sicily remains an unofficial feudal system of  
46 power and patronage, established and maintained by craft and force.  
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48 Although it operates in modern criminal dress, it is in many ways a  
49 throwback to the medieval principles of Niccolo Machiavelli and  
50 Cesare Borgia.  
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9 The present-day Mafia controls crime to the extent that it dominates  
10 certain criminal operations wherever it can, pushing crime to the limit beyond  
11 which further trespass would mean either the destruction of the productive  
12 society upon which it feeds or a popular rising against it in a wave of reprisal  
13 that would encompass the destruction of its elements.  
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20 B. Conclusions  
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- 22  
23 1. The Mafia in Sicily is a deadly traditional combination of crime  
24 and local pseudo government. It imposes an invisible government on  
25 Sicilian communities, depending for its authority upon the fear it  
26 inspires through its domineering control of the local vicious elements.  
27  
28 2. The most typical Mafia figure is the assassin, though the power he  
29 commands is slight in comparison with that of the local Mafia chief.  
30 The latter has risen from the ranks and enjoys a relationship to  
31 the local Mafia gang like that of a feudal lord to his armed retainers.  
32 His relationship to the local community is also one of prestige and  
33 domineering power. He expects to be deferred to for permission in  
34 local ventures both criminal and legitimate, from which he extracts  
35 a percentage of all profits. He may be sought by non-Mafiosi for  
36 arbitration of disputes; ransom of stolen goods; or backing, political  
37 or otherwise, though in so doing the petitioner becomes dangerously  
38 obligated to the Mafia.  
39  
40 3. The basic and often the only units of Mafia organization in Sicily are  
41 the local gangs. Members are admitted to it if they are acceptable  
42 to the local chief. Prerequisites for admission include proof of  
43 capacity for ruthless crime; adherence to the traditional code of  
44 omerta, i. e., silence in the event of crime and dependence upon  
45 "stiletto justice"; and sponsorship by someone already a Mafioso.  
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9 4. The traditional Mafia is not a compact, centrally organized society  
10 or party such as the Communist Party, but a collection of gangs  
11 autonomous in their own territories and loosely federated when  
12 federated at all. The pattern of connections among local Mafia gangs  
13 depends chiefly upon the existing relationships between their leaders.  
14 These relationships may be cooperative, as in the case of inter-  
15 territorial collusion in a broad conspiracy, or close family ties; or  
16 they may be inimical, stemming from rivalry or the existence of  
17 an active vendetta.  
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20 5. Above the local level, territorial gangs sometimes appear, created  
21 by ambitious and powerful local chiefs. Above such territorial gangs  
22 there is no fixed hierarchy. Powerful chiefs meet occasionally to  
23 hold court or divide territories, and they often defer ultimately to  
24 a chief of supreme prestige. The Mafia system of administration is  
25 primitive. The leader is the one with the "psychological drop," i. e.,  
26 the one who instills the greatest fear of refusal to comply with his  
27 wishes.  
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30 6. Recently, Mafia crime has been accentuated and has become better  
31 organized in Palermo than it was formerly. The possibility exists  
32 that the Mafia in Sicily has begun to achieve greater centralization  
33 since the establishment in 1947 of the Sicilian regional autonomy  
34 centered in Palermo.  
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- 36  
37 7. Mafia crimes have included murder, extortion, kidnapping, black-  
38 mail, smuggling (especially the smuggling of narcotics), labor  
39 racketeering, black-market operations, and many other crimes,  
40 though the persistent emphasis over many decades has been upon  
41 the operation of a deadly protection racket.  
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- 43  
44 8. Chief among Mafia modi operandi are murder and intimidation,  
45 practiced upon victims, witnesses, and all opposition.  
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- 47 9. The Mafia is distinguished from crime in general in Sicily by its  
48 traditional exclusiveness; close family ties among its adherents;  
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its consistent modus operandi; the outstanding toughness of its elements; and the proclivity of small groups of its elements to domineer over much larger numbers of other criminals and their gangs.

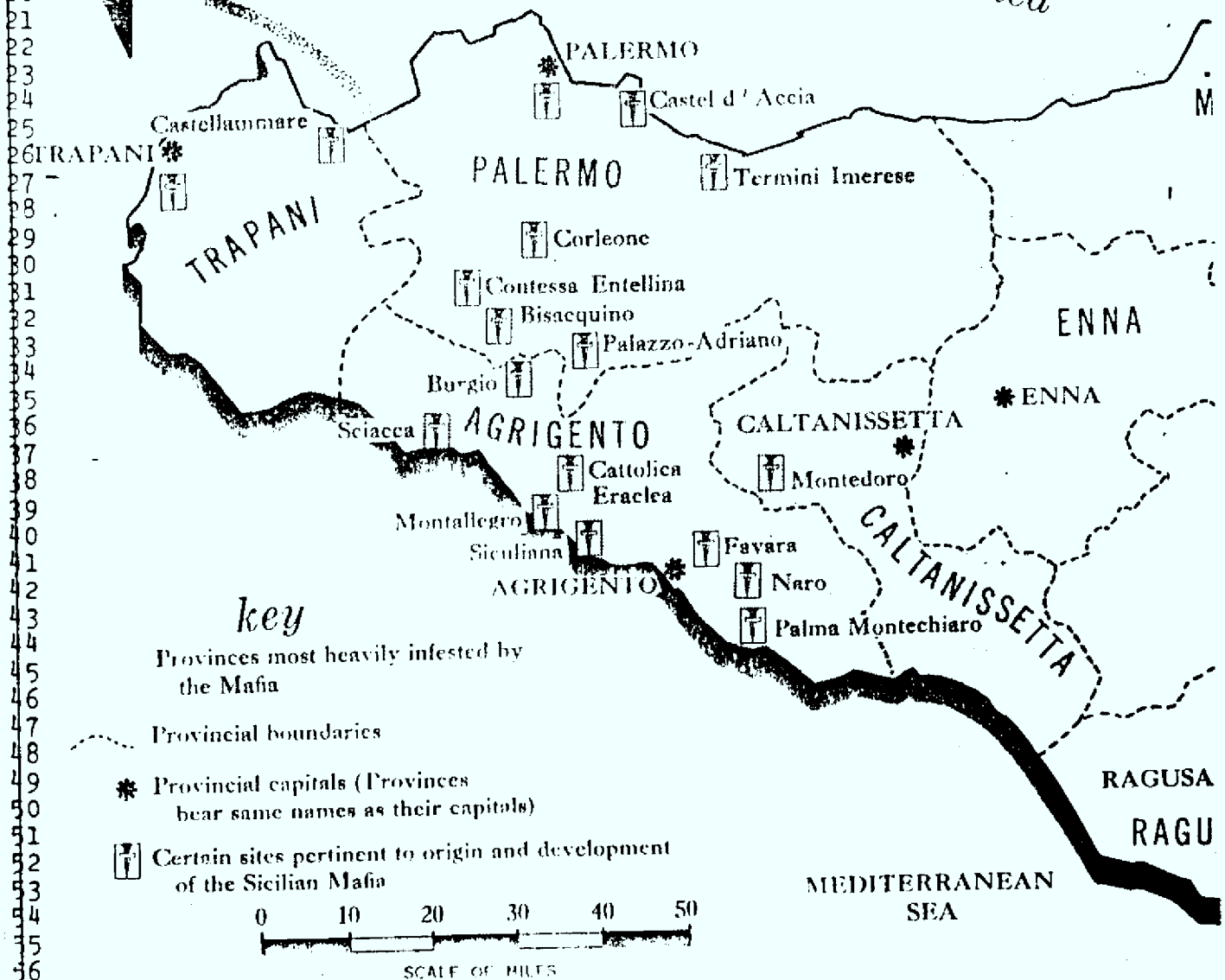
10. Some coordination exists between Mafia elements in Sicily and those in the United States. Such coordination has been most strongly illustrated in the illicit international traffic in narcotics. It has also been indicated in visits of certain hoodlums to Sicily prior to their attendance at the Apalachin, New York, meeting of hoodlums in November, 1957; in the passing of information to the Sicilian Mafia by Mafiosi in visits to Sicily; and in correspondence between Mafia elements in Sicily and those in the United States. Data currently available, however, fails to indicate that Sicily could be considered "world headquarters" for the Mafia.
11. The eradication of the Mafia in Sicily, attempted by Italian authorities on repeated occasions, has never been successfully accomplished. Reasons for their failure have included: (1) the infiltration of Mafia elements and the reach of Mafia pressures into law enforcement and high government circles; (2) the intimidation or elimination of witnesses; (3) the traditional refusal of Mafiosi to confess their own crimes or to reveal the crimes of others; (4) the traditional and consequently chiefly tacit and understood nature of the Mafia's extortionary pressures; (5) the institutional quality of the Mafia, i. e., as known practitioners are suppressed, new opportunists are favored by the perseverance of a conditioned public, especially its superstitious, poverty-stricken, and unenlightened elements, and those made vulnerable by adherence to ancient traditions of hostility to the law; (6) the new, lucrative criminal opportunities that enrich some Mafia leaders and increase their power; and (7) the perennial problem faced by the prosecutive authorities in attempting to prove that the Mafia as such is an illegal group. Although the Mafia presents the ostensible appearance of a single, cohesive society, it has no written constitution, nor does it operate in formal fashion. Admission is by informal understanding; advancement is by prestige and self-imposition. Prosecutive opportunities in the past have been

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9 reduced to proving: (1) substantive crimes of individuals; and  
10 (2) limited conspiracies. Vast and arbitrary prosecution has  
11 struck at large fragments of its composition without effectively  
12 outlawing the Mafia as a whole movement or society.  
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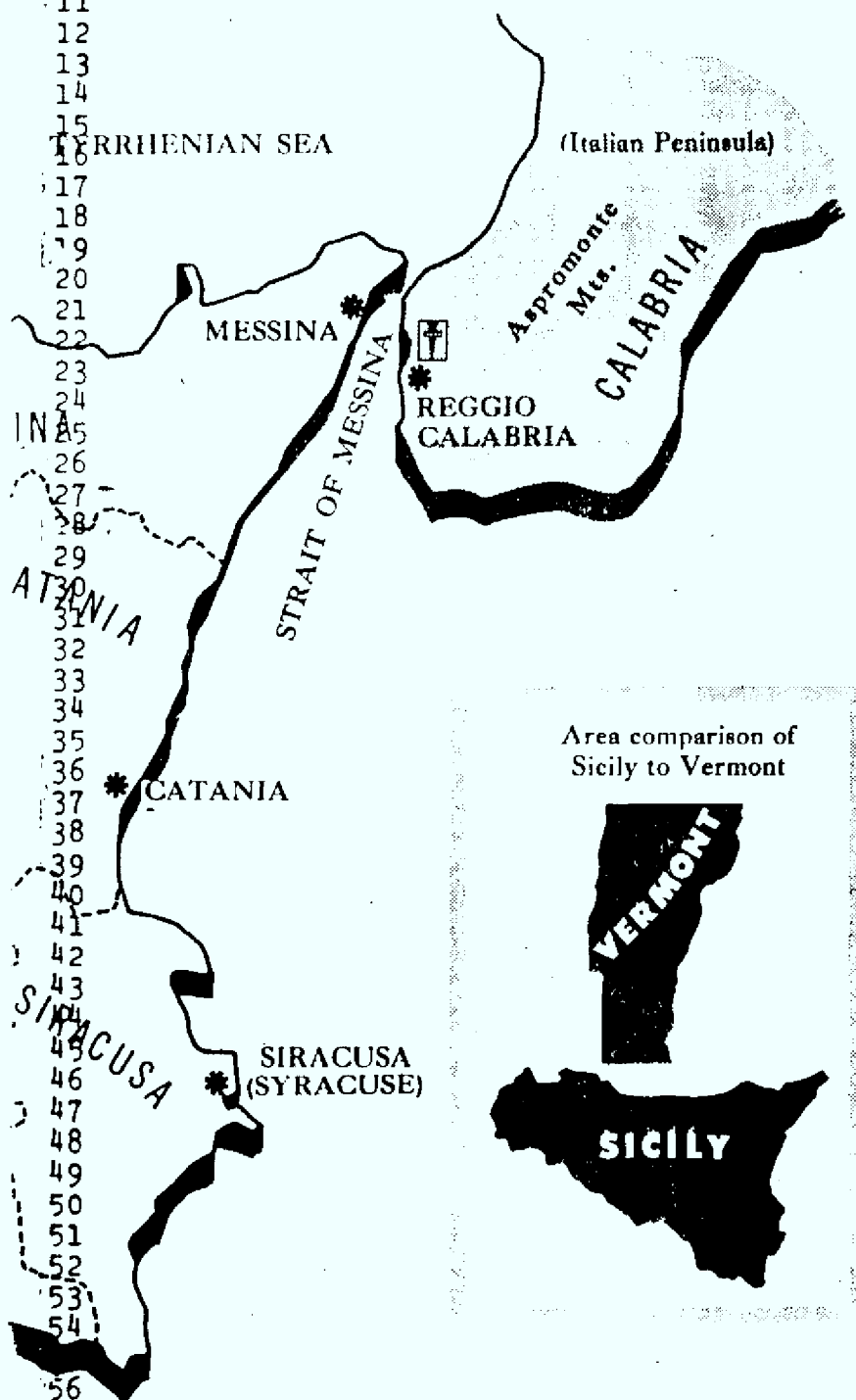
- 14 12. The Mafia persists in Sicily as the most vicious and extensive  
15 racket ever to have been foisted and imposed upon the public.  
16 To law enforcement, the Mafia presents the most deeply  
17 entrenched and monstrous challenge ever to have crept forth  
18 from the underworld. This challenge extends to law enforcement  
19 in the United States.  
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# Map of SICILY and CALABRIA showing pertinent to origin and development

*Beginning in 1860's, emigrating Mafiosi threw an ever lengthening shadow of the Mafia over America*



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3 location of certain sites  
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8 **I. NATURE AND ORIGINS OF THE MAFIA IN SICILY**  
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12 **A. Nature**  
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14 The Mafia has been referred to variously as a "deadly brotherhood,"  
15 a "secret society," or a "criminal organization." Numerous observers have  
16 commented, however, that the Mafia is not an organization at all, but a "type  
17 of criminality,"<sup>(1)</sup> or a "phase of Sicilian society."<sup>(2)</sup>  
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20 Reduced to its elements, as seen in the points of view of the many  
21 observers who have attempted to pinpoint the nature of the Mafia for nearly a  
22 century, it can be said that the Mafia consists of two basic features:  
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25 (1) A traditional refusal on the part of some Sicilians to cooperate  
26 with the law, plus a preference for private systems of revenge and self-  
27 government; and  
28

29 (2) Those who are most deeply imbued with these views, are  
30 predisposed to the use of extortion, terror, murder, corruption, and  
31 criminal conspiracies of all varieties, and under local chiefs seek to  
32 establish a tyranny over both criminal and legitimate affairs for the  
33 power and profit to be derived therefrom.  
34

35 The traditional aspect of the Mafia permits it to operate often in tacit  
36 faction. This factor, plus the code of silence adhered to by those who follow the  
37 Mafia tradition; the existence of some criminal conspiracies among its adherents;  
38 the appearance of solidarity revealed in close family ties; and the use of similar  
39 formulae of action, often gives Mafia groups the semblance of one vast criminal  
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9 secret society. Whether the Mafia can be pinpointed to the extent of  
10 identifying it as an illegal group or as a collection of illegal groupings  
11 in order to proceed against it in a court of law is still an open question.  
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13 The following account of its alleged origins and development may contain  
14 elements of possible value in assessing the status of the Mafia as an  
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20 legal group. It may be noted in advance, however, that at this time the  
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22 Mafia employs secrecy and organized forms while at the same time it does  
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27 constitute a regular secret society or an open, conventional-type  
28 organization.

## 29 Origins

### 30 31 1. A Society of Liberation

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33 Legend among the Sicilian people is said to hold that the Mafia  
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36 began as a secret society of liberation several centuries ago, aimed at  
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38 overthrowing the oppressive foreign rulers of the island of Sicily. Those  
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41 who hold this opinion generally have qualified it, avowing that the Mafia  
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8 3. A Natural Result of Political and Economic Forces  
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10 It is generally conceded that Sicily's foreign rulers were oppressive  
11 over a period of many centuries, and that in the final analysis the Mafia was an  
12 outgrowth of this misrule. Some sources trace the origins of the Mafia no  
13 further back than the period of Bourbon rule in Sicily (1735-1860). Others see  
14 the Mafia as having been produced by a constellation of circumstances which  
15 began taking form virtually at the outset of Sicilian history. In the absence of  
16 precise and authoritative accounts of the origin and history of the Mafia, and in  
17 view of the recurrent statement that the Mafia is a Sicilian institution with deep  
18 roots in the race, experience, customs, and traditions of the Sicilian people, a  
19 basic item will be presented of the political and economic forces that seem to  
20 have, by their confluence, molded the phenomenon known as the Mafia.  
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35 a. Background: The Island of Sicily and Its Early History  
36

37 Sicily, a mountainous island about the size of the State of Vermont,  
38 lies just off the toe of the Italian boot. It was inhabited before the dawn of  
39 history, the earliest inhabitants being said to have been the primitive tribes of  
40 the Elymi, Sicani, and Siculi.  
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The position of the island, lying as it does astride ancient sea routes  
of trade, exploration, and conquest, drew a succession of different peoples to

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its shores. About 1,000 B.C., the Phoenicians settled in the western part of the island at Panormous (now Palermo). The Carthaginians founded towns in the area now known as Trapani, near Palermo. On the east and southeast coasts, the Greeks founded Syracuse, Catania, and the city now known as Messina. (4)

After the first Punic War (241 B.C.) the Romans founded great landed estates across the Sicilian countryside. (4) It was upon these landed estates and others founded later under Norman rule that the Mafia was to take shape.

b. Political Characteristics of Early Italian Society

Italian society was historically divided into a number of diverse political units, each with its own administrative system, economic and cultural patterns, and prides and prejudices. These political divisions were further segmented by the secret societies, associations, and gangs that abounded in early Roman times and were to be found throughout the pattern of Sicilian history. Many of these secret groupings were said to have revealed aspects of mutual assistance, protection, and power. The Mafia is said to reveal the latter characteristics, which tend to give at least partial support to the theory that the Mafia development represented the expedient interaction of a number of local secret associations of the more domineering variety.



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9 c. A Succession of Oppressive Foreign Rulers

10 A succession of other conquerors, including the Byzantines, the Arabs,  
11 and the Normans followed. The Normans founded additional feudal estates and  
12 increased the oppression of the peasants who lived upon them.<sup>(4)</sup>  
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18 d. The "Sicilian Vespers," A. D. 1282

19 The unpopular rule of the French in the 13th Century brought about an  
20 (100-42303-297)  
21 uprising of the Sicilian people in 1282. This uprising, the so-called "Sicilian  
22 Vespers," was characterized by mass assassinations of French soldiers  
23 garrisoned in Sicily and symbolized the Sicilian desire for independence.<sup>(4)</sup>  
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29 e. Ancestral Mafiosi

30 A recent account of Mafia history traces the rise of the Mafia to the  
31 activities of "caretakers" of the landed estates in Sicily in the 13th Century.  
32  
33

34 In Norman times the feudal barons used tax collectors to collect the  
35 customary tribute from the peasants. The tax collectors formed the custom of  
36 stealing from their masters, and especially from the peasants. Under Aragon  
37 rule, established shortly after the uprising of 1282, the power of the feudal  
38 lords is said to have increased. Many of them went to live in Palermo, Messina,  
39 Italy proper, or Spain. They entrusted the care of their estates to the tax  
40 collectors and to violent and merciless individuals who were to act as guards.<sup>(5)</sup>  
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6 The "guardians" were allegedly a set of rogues and parasites who  
7 followed the custom of their masters in giving hospitality to roaming brigands,  
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9  
10 and instructed them to commit crimes against their enemies. The "guardians"  
11  
12 and tax collectors, according to this account, increased each year the amount  
13  
14 withheld for their personal use from the taxes they collected from the peasants.  
15  
16

17 These possible ancestors of the Mafiosi (as Mafia adherents are  
18  
19 called) are said to have joined forces with "guardians" of neighboring estates  
20  
21 in criminal ventures. In order to protect their interests they followed the  
22  
23 custom of their Spanish masters, using a type of inquisition to dispose of  
24  
25 rebellious peasants. The nobles are said to have often favored the use of this  
26  
27 system. (6)  
28  
29  
30

31 f. Corrupt Law Enforcement under the Bourbons  
32

33 The majority of theories concerning the rise of the Mafia attribute its  
34  
35 origin to the untrustworthy system of law enforcement which prevailed under the  
36  
37 Bourbon kings (A.D. 1735-1860) (7)  
38  
39

40 (1) Disorder in the Early 19th Century  
41

42 A number of complicated circumstances were involved in the confusion  
43  
44 and lawlessness that prevailed in Sicily in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.  
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47 As part of the "Kingdom of the Two Sicilies" (including the southern portion of  
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5 the Italian peninsula and the island of Sicily), legal matters relating to the island  
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7 were handled through Naples, the principal seat of government. This legal  
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9 (100-42303-306, enclosure, p. 17)  
10 power, it is said, did not reach Sicily satisfactorily.  
11

12 To add to the public confusion, Napoleon Bonaparte invaded South  
13  
14 Italy in 1796 and conducted a military campaign which lasted until 1797. The  
15  
16 Sicilian countryside became a scene of brigandage and disorder.  
17  
18

19 (2) Corrupt Police Groups  
20

21 The Bourbon regime had created police groups, "armed companies"  
22  
23 which were charged with maintaining public order, but counted among their  
24  
25 numbers a variety of rogues with a tendency to abuse their authority and act in  
26  
27 collusion with their Bourbon masters to commit crimes themselves. (9)  
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29

30 (3) Public Order Left to Local People  
31

32 Public order was in effect left to the local people. They are said to  
33  
34 have formed "juries," and dispensed "justice" according to their own judgments.  
35  
36 (100-42303-306, encl., p. 17)  
37 It has been said that the Mafia derived from this unofficial system of "juries."  
38

39 (4) Guarda were Hired To Protect the Estates  
40

41 On the great landed estates, the gabelloiti, wealthy entrepreneurs  
42  
43 who rented the estates from their absentee owners and sublet the lands to the  
44  
45 peasantry, had become in effect a rural ruling class. They were usually linked  
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47 to Palermo, where rents were paid and decisions were made. To maintain their  
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8 power and protect their interests they recruited bodies of armed followers,  
9 many of whom were bandits and professional outlaws. The "armed companies"  
10 of the Bourbon police are said to have accomplished little in the way of law  
11 enforcement other than in persuading these outlaws to plunder outside the  
12 area each commanded in exchange for local sanctuary. (10)  
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19 One familiar theory holds that the early Mafia groups were formed  
20 from the "armed companies" themselves. (11) Another avers that the early Mafia  
21 was made up of the private police forces on the great landed estates. (12) Still  
22 another view favors the likelihood that Mafia elements were to be found in each  
23 of these groups.  
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#### 30 (5) The Guards May Have Become the Mafia

31 The possibility that the private police forces on the landed estates  
32 were able to assume the control over local affairs both criminal and legitimate  
33 is characteristic of the Mafia, and thus formed the first Mafia groups, is  
34 influenced by several factors. The landed estates represented local patronage  
35 systems, with the chief patrons being the gabellotti, or in the event of a  
36 absent landholder, the landholder himself. In this semifudal system, the  
37 landed estates became local strong points. Their local patronage systems  
38 caused persons in the vicinity to desire or find it expedient to place themselves  
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9 under their protection and partake of their influence. Centuries of experience  
10 with oppression by the central government as represented in the rule of foreign  
11 tyrants and their viceroys, and with the untrustworthy administration of public  
12 justice, had encouraged in the Sicilian people a traditional hostility to the law,  
13 a refusal to cooperate with enforcers of public law, and a tendency to seek  
14 elsewhere for supreme authority.  
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22 For the rural population, this authority was found on the great landed  
23 estates in the persons of the landowners or their gabellotti. The landowner  
24 or the gabellotto, with his body of armed followers, represented the apex of  
25 visible power and authority for all who resided in the area. In fact, in the  
26 prevalent absence of any other form of constant power, such a strong-arm  
27 group was in reality the law and its enforcers in one body. The landowners  
28 and their gangs controlled life to suit themselves in the rural communities in  
29 which they were to be found. Each landowner and gabellotto also had his own  
30 network of influential contacts in Palermo, the capital. (13)  
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43 (6) The Mafia as an Early "Protection Racket"  
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45 The gangs themselves, for in essence that is what they amounted to,  
46 were a peculiar compromise form of government, and as later developments  
47 proved--a deadly one. They eliminated interlopers and held monopoly by force.  
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7 they formed a primitive but effective "protection racket," having as  
8 targets the peasants and other tenants within the area, and even the  
9 landowners themselves. Their demands were enforced in a reign of  
10 terror. Although it did not acquire its familiar name until the latter part  
11 of the 19th Century, this network of gangs is said by some sources to  
12 have represented the original Mafia. This theory of Mafia origin holds  
13 that the Mafia arose in the absence of any other form of constant power  
14 over the control of community life by a system of gangs, secret in the sense  
15 that they were officially unrecognized. (14)

#### 16 17 18 19 (7) Public Opinion May Have Favored the Early Mafia

20  
21 There has been some indication that the public was not completely  
22 hostile to these gangs and may have favored them to some degree. They  
23 presented local government and local protection, though the price was  
24 high. They symbolized non-co-operation with the hated constituted authority--  
25 the government of the Bourbons. They not only victimized the poor, but  
26 abused and robbed the rich as well, thus perhaps satisfying a general  
27 desire on the part of the oppressed peasants for revenge against their  
28 wealthy masters. They may have occasionally furnished the framework  
29 of revolutionary organization, gaining a coloration of patriotism and further

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8 prestige in the public mind. Certainly they epitomized the general resentment  
9 of the people against the Bourbon regime. Despite their customarily violent  
10 practices, the public shielded them against legal punishment. Duly constituted  
11 authorities attempting to investigate crimes were met by a solidarity of  
12 silence. (17)

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19 (8) Alleged Cooperation between Local Gangs: The Mafia  
20 "Organization"  
21

22 One student of Mafia history, whose opinion is tacitly supported by  
23 several other sources, has pointed out that the Mafia was never a single secret  
24 society, centrally organized like the Neapolitan criminal organization known as  
25 the Camorra, \* but a local and rural phenomenon. It was composed of a network  
26 of local gangs, each controlling and plundering a certain territory, and linked  
27 together by fluctuating bonds of rivalry and common interest. When expedient  
28 to do so, these gangs would collaborate, permitting passage of stolen cattle, for  
29 example, into other territories where they could be disposed of without being  
30 identified by their owners. (16)

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43 g. Gangs with Patriotic Coloration  
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45 The political situation is said to have become increasingly complicated  
46 in the early 19th Century. The Mazzini brothers and Giuseppe Garibaldi,  
47 Italian patriots who were dedicated to the unification of Italy and the overthrow  
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53 \*Or like the Communist Party is today.  
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6 of the Bourbons, developed secret societies. The Carbonari, a secret society  
7  
8 of liberation, is said to have spread its influence into Sicily in about 1818.

9  
10 Several of the secret associations that were to be found in Sicily in great  
11  
12 numbers took on the aspects of societies of liberation. Some elements of the  
13  
14 gangs that were to be known later as the Mafia are said to have joined the  
15  
16 Carbonari, their alleged purposes having been to seek whatever profit or  
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19 (17)  
20 under the circumstances would allow. The Sicilian spirit of independence  
21  
22 gave rise to abortive revolts in 1817 and again in 1848 and 1849 against the  
23  
24 (18)  
25 Bourbon regime.

26  
27 - b. The Establishment of Monopolies of Power by Certain Gangs  
28 in the Confused Period of 1800-1860

29  
30 In the absence of effective systems of public safety and order,  
31  
32 especially in the period between the Napoleonic invasions of the latter part of  
33  
34 the 18th Century, and the unification of Italy in 1860, i.e., about 1800-1860,  
35  
36 power and authority generally resided in those who could establish them for  
37  
38 themselves by influence, craft, and force. It has already been shown how  
39  
40 such rural power groups operated in the landed estates. The towns as  
41  
42 well were plagued with local "brotherhoods," as a letter allegedly written in  
43  
44 1838 is said to have revealed.



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6 Pietro Ulloa, Attorney General of Trapani, Sicily, is said to have  
7  
8 written to the Bourbon Minister of Justice of Paris on August 3, 1838. Ulloa  
9  
10 allegedly pointed out, in part, that there were "brotherhoods" in various towns.  
11  
12 There were about seven "parties" which did not hold meetings and which had  
13  
14 only one thing in common: one leader. Here, said Ulloa, he may be a land-  
15  
16 owner, elsewhere he may be a priest. One treasury was said to serve all  
17  
18 their purposes. Such purposes might vary from exonerating an official to  
19  
20 ruining him, or to ruining an innocent man. The people, said Ulloa, had come  
21  
22 to an agreement with the criminals. When robberies occurred, mediators  
23  
24 appeared who tried to get the stolen objects back. Many high magistrates  
25  
26 protected these "brotherhoods," such as one Scarlata, a judge of the Supreme  
27  
28 Civil Court of Palermo, and Siracusa, a high magistrate. It was not possible to  
29  
30 get civilian policemen to patrol the streets and it was not possible to find  
31  
32 witnesses to crimes committed in broad daylight. In the heart of Sicily, public  
33  
34 offices were for sale, and justice was corrupted. Since 1820, the people had been  
35  
36 (19)  
37 "up in arms."  
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43 Confusion mounted as the Bourbon authorities attempted to crush the  
44  
45 Carbonari movement. However, Garibaldi succeeded in invading Sicily from the  
46  
47 south in May, 1860, and with the help of the Carbonari drove the Bourbons out  
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49 (20)  
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9 Sicily. Since 1860, Sicily has been a part of Italy, though under the terms  
10 of the Italian constitution of 1947 it is known as an autonomous region with  
11 (21)  
12 Palermo as the capital.

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15 1. The Emergence of Lawless Tradition and Groups Epitomizing It

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17 Some sources favor the gradual emergence of two related phenomena  
18  
19 Sicilian history which taken together are referred to as the Mafia.

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21  
22 (1) Lawless Tradition (Omerta)

23  
24 The first phenomenon was of two parts: the popular sentiment of  
25  
26 hostility to the law, developed in Sicily over many centuries at least in part  
27  
28 a result of misrule, and the calamitous results of this sentiment in action.

29  
30 (22)  
31 Webster's dictionary has defined this aspect as follows:

32  
33 "In Sicily, the popular sentiment of hostility to the law, leading  
34 to refusal to bear witness in case of crime, and hence to  
35 frequent violent crimes, esp. against persons, as officers,  
36 who have incurred popular displeasure...."

37  
38  
39 By the 19th Century a complicated tradition had developed in  
40  
41 Sicily, its core being this popular sentiment of hostility to the law. The

42  
43 tradition, known as omerta, \* became virtually unwritten law among numerous  
44  
45 Sicilians. According to its tenets, the citizen had these obligations:

46  
47 From Sicilian OMI, man. Omerta is still known to Italians and Sicilians as a  
48 concept similar to "honor among thieves," a kind of underworld solidarity.

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51 (John Colaneri, Tr. Sect. 4-3-58)

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- (1) Never to apply for justice to legal authorities;
  - (2) Never to assist in the detection of crime against oneself or others (even while dying, the victim of an assailant was never to reveal to the authorities the identity of his attacker);
  - (3) Always to maintain silence in the event of a crime, refusing to report crimes to authorities, or bear witness to them; and
  - (4) Always to reserve the right of vendetta (the taking of personal vengeance) to the victims, their families, or their friends.

(23)

In its practical operation, this traditional code resulted in an extremely high murder rate in Sicily, chiefly from motives of vengeance; and widespread brigandage which operated under the protective shield of omerta.

(24)

#### (2) Groups Epitomizing the Lawless Tradition

Webster's definition continues by describing the other phenomenon which together with the spirit of hostility to the law composes the two meanings of the word "Mafia."

(25)

"...also, the body of persons imbued with this sentiment which in the course of time became a secret society of loose but widespread organization."

There has been continual debate among observers of the Mafia concerning the use of the generic expression "secret society" in referring to the Mafia. The term "secret society" implies to some persons a quality of formal organization which has never been adequately established with reference

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9 to the Mafia. There can be little doubt, however, that a number of Sicilians  
10 by their lawless activities, and conspiracies did epitomize the omerta  
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13 trition (raised to its highest exponent and used as a perverted code of  
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15 honor and discipline) and that these persons were eventually referred to as  
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18 Most, and their groupings as the Mafia.  
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## II. THE 1960'S: MAFIA IS NAMED, ACCLAIMED, OPPOSED

### A. Foreword

No precise link has been established between the name "Mafia" and the groups, sentiments, and practices to which it refers. One theory indicating how the Mafia may have acquired its name is set out below.

### B. Mafia Etymology Is Obscure

The derivation of the term "Mafia" has been tentatively traced to such widely diverse origins as the name of an Arab tribe anciently settled in Palermo; French words meaning "to devour," and "the devil"; the geographical expression "Mafia," referring to the mountainous abode of certain Sicilian bandits; and the initial letters of an Italian slogan attributed to Giuseppe Mazzini, 19th-Century Italian patriot, which translated means "Mazzini authorizes theft, arson, and poisoning." (26, 27, 28)

Prior to 1960, the word Mafia was a seldom-heard expression in the Sicilian dialect. When used concerning a man, it is said to have implied true courage and manliness. (29)

The meaning of true courage and manliness to the average Sicilian of the 19th Century was of course conditioned by the race experience of the

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Sicilian people, which had been perennially bitter. Recourse to legal authority in cases of persecution by private enemies was thought to be a symptom of weakness, almost of cowardice. It was an exaggeration of the sentiment, historically more or less common among Latin peoples, that to appeal to law against offenses involving personal insult is unmanly, and that the duel is the proper means of recovering lost honor. Adherents of the Mafia, however, expanded manifold the scope of offenses they considered to imply personal insult. Common theft, for example, was considered a sign of lack of respect indicating that the thief did not fear vengeance. The theft must be avenged by personal action, or by the vengeance of relatives or friends. Obedience to the perverted code of honor known as omerta was said to have been another heroic and manly characteristic. As the evolution of the word "Mafia" continued it came to connote behavior which is lawless, violent, brutal, and evil.

1863: A Play Popularized the Word "Mafia"

It was in the climate of this dangerous set of values that a play appeared in Palermo in 1863 entitled: "I Mafiusi della Vicaria." Vicaria was the great prison of Palermo; the Mafiusi (more common spelling "mafiosi") were prisoners, who during the course of the drama demonstrated

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8 physical audacity in knife duels. A 19th-Century, English translation of the  
9 title of this play, i.e., "Heroes of the Penitentiary," serves to indicate the  
10 honor with which these "heroic" prisoners were regarded. The play became  
11 extremely popular, touring Italy and Sicily in an extended run of over three  
12 thousand performances. In this way the words Mafia and Mafiosi entered the  
13 common speech of Sicily, and of Italy as well. (31)

21  
22 D. Mafia First Defined as "Bravado"

23  
24 In the first known attempt to define "Mafia," Traina's Sicilian-Italian  
25 Dictionary, published in 1868, pointed out that the term "Mafia" was a neologism  
26 (new expression) meaning "bravado." (32)

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31 E. Mafiosi Declared "Partisans" by the Italian Authorities

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33 After the liberation of Sicily from the yoke of the Bourbons, the  
34 collaboration of some Mafiosi in the Carbonari which had perhaps aided the  
35 downfall of the Bourbons was given recognition by the new Italian Government.  
36 Most of the Mafiosi were declared to have been "partisans." With this  
37 prestige behind them some Mafia leaders went to the new parliament and the  
38 parliamentarians accepted them with honor. (33)

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43 F. Mafia Crimes Multiplied

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45 Meanwhile, as their leaders were being lionized in the new parliament,  
46 other Mafiosi are said to have redoubled their criminal activities. Murders and

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8 the old Mafia as the "Stuppagghiari" ("stoppers"). The "stoppers" not only  
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10 failed to best the Mafia but in time joined forces with it. Thus the Mafia  
11  
12 continued to emerge as a stronger and increasingly terrible tyranny over  
13  
14 Sicilian affairs. (35)  
15  
16

17 H. The Mafia Spread across Sicily  
18

19 Those who adhered to the Mafia attitude and conduct were of many  
20  
21 degrees, extending into most social classes, though Mafia was most firmly  
22  
23 established in the rural areas among peasants and the large landholders. The  
24  
25 attitude and conduct had many adherents in western Sicily (e. g., especially in  
26  
27 the provinces of Palermo, Trapani, Agrigento, and Caltanissetta) but fewer in  
28  
29 the eastern provinces. In virtually all areas of Sicily, there were some Mafia  
30  
31 adherents by the latter part of the 19th Century.  
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34  
35 It must be noted that in the beginning persons with Mafia sentiments  
36  
37 did not necessarily consider themselves criminals, nor did they all necessarily  
38  
39 participate in criminal activities. A large number are said to have violated no  
40  
41 statutory law. Their contacts with criminals it is said were usually motivated by  
42  
43 the desire to prevent offenses against themselves, rather than to commit them  
44  
45 against others. (36) The consequences of Mafia were nonetheless grave with reference  
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47 to the public safety. Refusal to report offenses to constituted authorities or to  
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assist them in identifying the culprit (because to do so would have been  
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regret that the conditions of the situation prevented the detection of crime,  
the capture of criminals. Under these conditions the formation and  
activities of bands of malefactors were greatly encouraged and facilitated.  
Sicilians thus were trapped by Mafia in a vicious circle of crime from  
which, so long as Mafia continued to exist, there could be no  
escape.

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### III. THE 1870'S: THE MAFIA RECOGNIZED AS CRIMINAL BANDS, MANY MAFIOSI DEPORTED, OTHERS FLED TO AMERICA

A. A New Definition Appeared

In 1876 Mortillaro's dictionary is said to have accepted the meaning of Mafia as "gang." Another source has indicated that a more accurate definition under the circumstances of the time would have referred to the Mafia as a number of small criminal bands. (37)

B. An Official Described the Mafia, 1874

The Public Security Deputy of Siculiana, Sicily, writing in 1874, is said to have described the Mafia of the 1870's in part as follows: (38)

"...I wish to say that the Mafia, the evil plague which is responsible for all unrest and crime in these Sicilian provinces, does not have any set rules for procedure, as far as I can tell. It is nothing other than a profession, a trade and an unruly abuse of authority which is physically and morally exercised.

"Morally, by those bigwigs who impose their ideas, good or bad, on their subjects who cannot oppose them or neglect to carry them out. They cannot refuse to obey because they see their own ruin in their refusal.

"Physically, by those criminals who impose their supremacy on everyone by various means. They compel the weak or their accomplices to commit those criminal acts which damage public order or social morale so much.

"A single comment, a single act of refusal is enough to bring down the wrath of the Mafia.

Hence it is evident that the Mafia has a hold on every class of society. In fact, it is seen in the clergy in the form of sponging. It is cloaked by superstitious beliefs under the form of voluntary charity. In the judiciary, because of the absolute command which no one can refuse, least of all a servant or a dependent of some nobleman who hasn't yet abandoned his feudal ways. Proof of this is seen in the protection and asylum which the great landowners afford the thieves in the country and in the city. They also give them the opportunity to go through their possessions without fear of punishment. The Mafia is seen in other classes as graft, gambling, vagrancy, intrigues, highway robbery, and the many other crimes which have been committed and are still being committed in these provinces.

From what I have said up to this point and because of my limited knowledge, I cannot say what the main centers are. To my way of thinking, I would say that they do not exist because of the lack of an appropriate and distinct organization.

In the first list I will give the names of those who, because they are important and feared in the province, are the greatest obstacle to fighting and overcoming the Mafia.

In the second list, I will name the subordinates of the bigwigs upon whom the centers are dependent, who demand obedience, and who attempt to instill fear in others, regardless of whether they do so on their own accord or whether they were instructed to do so."

#### The Mafia Described as Not One but a Number of Associations

##### 1. The "Coseche" or Associations

(39)

Giuseppe Mosca, a student of Mafia history, has pointed out that the Mafia was not one vast association of malefactors with a hierarchy of leaders but rather a number of small autonomous associations. Each association was

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8 called a cosca (the Sicilian dialecticism for "tuft"), having a membership of  
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10 twelve to fifteen as a rule, though some were larger.

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13 There was said to be no election of chiefs, authority being wielded  
14  
15 by members long addicted to crime who directed the movements of younger  
16  
17 associates, superintended dealings with victims, and divided booty.

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19 The cosche, as they were collectively referred to, punished  
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21 insubordination among their elements and especially the misappropriation of  
22  
23 booty. These acts were considered violations of the Mafia code of "honor," and  
24  
25 were sometimes punished with death.

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29 2. Relations between Associations and within Them Often Antagonistic

30  
31 The relations between neighboring cosche might be cordial or so  
32  
33 antagonistic that difficulties would have to be settled by shooting. The greatest  
34  
35 number of murders grew out of rivalry between cosche or members of one  
36  
37 cosca.

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40 3. No Conventional Signs or Passwords for Recognition

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42 While it is untrue that members of the various cosche used conventional  
43  
44 words and gestures to recognize one another, they did have peculiar mannerisms,  
45  
46 including pronunciation of certain words, frequent use of others, and a certain  
47  
48 furtive and shuffling expression. To any experienced Sicilian, these betrayed  
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50 connection with a cosca.

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7 4. Crimes: Chiefly Cattle Rustling, Extortion, Kidnapping, Murder  
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9 The cosche engaged chiefly in cattle rustling, extortion, and  
10 occasional kidnapping for ransom. Often an ally of the cosca would offer to  
11 recover stolen cattle for the owner, and if such an offer was accepted, the  
12 cattle would soon be found wandering about the countryside and the "friend"  
13 would be indemnified for his "expense" to the extent of a third or a half of  
14 the value of the cattle. Murder, of course, was common, growing out of  
15 rivalry between Mafiosi or between groups of them.  
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25 5. Controlled Extortion: A Widespread Protection Racket  
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27 In regions where agriculture was intensive, a tribute system  
28 prevailed. Every landowner or tenant paid to the cosca an annual tax higher  
29 than the combined imposts of the state, province, and commune. Refusal  
30 to pay was punished by destruction of trees and vines and the slaughter of  
31 livestock. Letters demanding the deposit of a sum of money at a designated  
32 place or its consignment to a designated messenger were a method generally  
33 used by novices.  
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36 A cosca, through more or less veiled threats, would often induce  
37 a landowner to entrust the marketing of produce to one of its members, or to  
38 leave his estate to persons in their confidence. In the first case, small thefts  
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8 by novices not associated with the cosca were prevented, a part of the produce  
9  
10 being appropriated as payment by the cosca itself. In the second case, a rebate,  
11  
12 often half of the lease price, was extracted.  
13

14 Collaboration between the cosche was seen most often in cattle rustling  
15  
16 Two or more cosche collaborated. Stolen oxen and sheep would be dispatched to  
17  
18 a commune fifty or more kilometers away, secretly butchered, and consumed.  
19  
20 Stolen horses and mules were sometimes sent as far as Tunis, where the Mafiosi  
21  
22 had connections with Sicilian emigrants.  
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26 D. Attempts at Prosecution Thwarted by Lack of Evidence; Reputed Mafiosi  
27 Deported, Many Perfected New Methods, Some Fled to U. S.  
28

29 The Italian Government was said to have been powerless against the  
30  
31 Mafia. Although the chiefs of the Mafia were said to have been fairly well known,  
32  
33 the police were able to offer no evidence but popular report. Even when a chief  
34  
35 could be identified he could prove an alibi, and the youths who actually had  
36  
37 perpetrated the offenses were unknown. When the latter were arrested they  
38  
39 rarely gave information about those who had ordered them to commit an offense,  
40  
41 for they would then not only be condemned but also forfeit Mafliet honor  
42  
43 and the help customarily given by the cosca to captives of the police.  
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46 In 1877 and 1878 a government campaign against the Mafia took place.  
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48 About 1878 Prefect of Police Malusardi, in whom the Italian Minister of the  
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6 Inferior is said to have vested authority over all Sicily, exiled to the coastal  
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8 bands several hundred criminals against whom precise evidence was lacking.  
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10 Later the cosche are said to have reorganized and to have perfected  
11  
12 their methods of operation. Many of the Mafiosi are said to have begun to  
13  
14 practice trades from which they could appear to live. (40)  
15

16  
17 Large numbers of the Mafiosi are said to have immigrated to  
18  
19 America during the Italian campaign against the Mafia in 1877-1878, many  
20 (100-42303-317, encl, p. 7)  
21 of them going to New Orleans. In this connection it is noted that following  
22  
23 murder of Chief of Police David G. Hennessy of New Orleans, in 1890,  
24  
25 inquiries revealed that one of the causes of the dozens of unsolved murders  
26  
27 in New Orleans prior to 1890 (the investigation of which was said to have  
28  
29 brought about Hennessy's murder) was alleged to have been a struggle for  
30  
31 supremacy between Mafia factions, one of them known as the "Stoppagghera." (41)  
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33 The latter group may have been elements of the Mafia faction described  
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35 in the 1880's as the "Stoppagghiani."  
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IV. THE 1880'S: POLITICAL INFLUENCE ACQUIRED BY THE MAFIA;  
STUDIES INDICATED THE MAFIA NOT AN ORGANIZATION

A. Political Influence after Extension of Voting Franchise 1882

The chief obstacle to legal action against the Mafia in the 1880's is said to have been the growing political influence it acquired as a result of the extension of the voting franchise in 1882. The poorest classes were given the vote. They were not largely represented in the cosche, but they were most easily persuaded through ignorance and fear by manifest threats of the Mafiosi, and thus supported candidates endorsed by Mafiosi.

The Mafiosi, having acquired legislative tools, required them to obtain for Mafia members the permission to carry weapons; required them to intercede with the police on behalf of Mafiosi; and forced their favors in other ways. (42)

B. Studies Were Made by Concerned Officials: The Mafia Was Not Considered To Be a Conventional-Type Organization

During the 1870's and 1880's several Italian scholars, police officials, (43) and parliamentarians attacked the problem of the Mafia in an attempt to analyze the phenomenon and determine what could be done to eradicate its evil power in Sicilian affairs.

(44)  
In 1887, Giuseppe Alongi, said to have been a police official and close student of the Mafia, published a book called "La Maffia." This study and

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8 other inquiries by the Barons Franchetti and Sydney Sonnino were seen in  
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10 perspective by a later writer who made these comments: Rather than being  
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12 a conventional-type organization, with a fixed code of rules and a recognized  
13  
14 body of officers; a secret society; a loose freemasonry such as that which  
15  
16 can bind anarchists of all countries together in sympathies if not in form; or  
17  
18 a political league, the Mafia might instead be referred to as a social  
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20 phenomenon, a product of instinct among a people who had, under the brutal  
21  
22 domination of the Bourbons, and the extortions and oppressions of the Bourbon  
23  
24 police, lost all respect for law and all idea of an impartial and impersonal  
25  
26 justice between man and man. These forces "made each man an Ishmael  
27  
28 among his fellows and spread an essential spirit of anarchy." The "moral"  
29  
30 code that developed "turned upside down all the accepted notions of honor  
31  
32 and morality." Though neither an open organization nor a secret society  
33  
34 in the ordinary sense of the terms, and though it had no central authority,  
35  
36 no government, and no laws, yet "the groups of Mafiosi, who were to be  
37  
38 found in every town and village under local chiefs were more or less  
39  
40 connected with each other in sympathies and common formulae of action,  
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42 if not by open bonds." It is this unique form of organization which prevails  
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49 today.

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8       The Mafia is said to have worked all the more effectively for being  
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10 thus loosely organized or voluntarily united for specific operations. The Mafia  
11 presented in effect a "many-linked chain of human connection" and of secrecy,  
12 the violation of which was punishable by death. It was this contaminating  
13 connection that gave it an invisible strength. It penetrated into every sphere of  
14 social life in Sicily, "from the peasant working in the fields to the government  
15 official in his bureau, from the criminal in the dock to the magistrate on the  
16 bench." (45)  
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9 **THE 1890'S: MORE ARRESTS OF MAFIOSI; MORE EMIGRATIONS OF**  
10 **MAFIOSI**  
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13 **Arrests in 1892**  
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15 In September, 1892, about 150 Mafiosi were arrested at Catania,  
16  
17 Sicily. Antonio Cutrera, chief of police in Palermo in the 1890's, conducted  
18 (46, 47)  
19 an extended campaign against the Mafia.  
20  
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22 **Emigrations**  
23

24 The chief result of the attack on the Mafia in the 1890's is said to  
25 (100-42303-317, p. 7)  
26 have been that Mafiosi again emigrated abroad. Instances of the arrival of  
27  
28 Mafiosi in the New York-New Jersey-Pennsylvania area during the 1890's  
29 (100-42303-282, p. 4; 62-75147- Sub 37, Ser. 111, pp. 271-272)  
30 and early 1900's have been described.  
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35 **STANDARD ACCOUNTS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY MAFIA**  
36

37  
38 **The Association Tie**  
39

40 William Agnew Fisher, an author whose description of the Mafia at  
41  
42 the turn of the present century has been widely used by officials and others  
43  
44 interested in pinpointing the nature and operations of the Mafia, has indicated  
45  
46 that the Mafia was not to be considered a sect, a cult, nor yet an association  
47  
48 having conventional rules, regulations, or bylaws. It was to him an instinctive  
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9 racial grouping; an attitude; a form of conduct; and a sense of being superior to  
10 moral, social, or political law. The Mafia, said Paton, was a phase of Sicilian  
11 society, not a compact organization of individuals bound together by oaths, nor  
12 a secret society of members who recognized one another by grips and passwords,  
13 but rather "a state of social immorality tacitly acquiesced in by an indefinite  
14 number of Sicilians, who order their living and regulate their thinking according  
15 to a code of ethics called omerta." (48) Disregarding social law and accepting omerta,  
16 Mafiosi are guided by its teachings and by it regulate their lives and adjust their  
17 relations to their fellow men." (49)

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Omerta was not expressed as a code of ethics in so many words, but implied in an underworld slang consisting of popular sayings, proverbs, and apothegms, in a variable Sicilian dialect. Omerta was a living discipline kept alive in the minds of those whose criminal tendencies made them favor it and become instruments of it. In turn it encouraged them to make themselves independent of law and society, forming themselves into a virtual "conspiracy of the strong and masterful against the weak and fearful." (51) Only a small minority of Sicilians were said to be veritable Mafiosi, but this masterful, active minority, inspired by the spirit of evil, "having omerta in their hearts, (52) terrorized the unorganized, timorous, passive majority, the peaceable citizens."



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9 The whole fabric of the Mafia rested on murder, wrote Paton, the  
10 theory of omerta being that the assassin was always lurking near and prepared  
11 to act his part. (53)  
12

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14  
15 Paton referred to the Mafia as the associating of evilly disposed  
16  
17 persons who without formal organization consorted together for furtherance  
18  
19 of common interests. When it served their purposes they acted together in  
20  
21 concert in defiance of law and order. When their interests changed and  
22  
23 clashed they quarreled among themselves, and by their vendettas threw the  
24  
25 community into disorder while they murdered or committed outrages without  
26  
27 hindrance. (54)  
28  
29

30  
31 The Encyclopaedia Britannica, taking its data from the works of  
32  
33 several writers on the early Mafia in Sicily, proceeds no further in attempts  
34  
35 to define the associative tie than to say: "The members of the organization  
36  
37 were not very numerous but bound by close ties of fellowship...." (55)  
38  
39

40 Francis Marion Crawford, another observer of the Mafia at the turn  
41  
42 of the century, pointed out that Mafia adherents were not bound in their  
43  
44 association with each other by promise of secrecy nor oaths of obedience,  
45  
46 but by interest and necessity on the one hand, and the strong Sicilian sense  
47  
48 of honor on the other." The purpose of associating with others of like  
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9 mind and operating together in an organized way meant protection, for the  
10 Mafia could annihilate its isolated enemies, and in criminal cases it was almost  
11 impossible to convict a Mafioso due to the total absence of witnesses against  
12 him. (56)

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17 B. Organizational Features

18  
19 1. The Local Chief ("Capo Mafioso")

20 Paton pointed out that in each locality in which the Mafia operated,  
21 the person with the greatest capacity for evil, the cleverest cheat, the most  
22 daring villain, the most truculent bully, or in a word, the ablest Mafioso became  
23 the leader of the Mafia. This superlative malefactor, said Paton, was called the  
24 "Capo Mafioso." He ruled despotically until a stronger person killed him or  
25 usurped his authority. (57) Crawford added that a man's position in the Mafia was the  
26 result of his personal influence, his reputation as a man of so-called honor, which  
27 might afterward be augmented by the force of circumstances until he became  
28 a "Capo Mafioso," an acknowledged chief. As such, his prestige was so increased  
29 that his fellow citizens appealed to him to settle their differences both in matters  
30 of business and in questions of "honor." His house became the resort of all  
31 those who had difficulties to decide or who needed help from the "friends," as the  
32 Mafiosi commonly called each other. (58) In spite of his fixed hatred for the concept  
33 of constituted law, the "Capo Mafioso" took care to use scrupulous exactness in  
34 dealing with those who came to him for assistance. This inspired confidence

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7 and created the sort of "moral despotism" on which the Mafia relied for its  
8  
9 (59)  
10 existence. (A similar situation was to be found in Sicilian-Italian communities  
11  
12 in America, creating doubt in the minds of many observers concerning the  
13  
14 actual Mafia connection of prominent business leaders in those communities  
15  
16 as their services were sought not only by the criminal element, but also by  
17  
18 persons not believed to be associated with the underworld in any way.)

19  
20  
21 The "Capo Maffioso," according to Crawford, might be a lawyer, a  
22  
23 member of the municipal or even of the provincial council, or a deputy, even  
24  
25 a cabinet minister, rising to moral control of the whole society "simply by  
26  
27 his prestige and predominant will, but never by any sort of election or  
28  
29 machinery, as the Mafia had none. Long before attaining such posts, however,  
30  
31 the Mafia leader had ordinarily become a rich man, because it would be  
32  
33 practically impossible to make a contract for any public work or to carry it  
34  
35 out without his intervention. (60)

## 36 37 38 39 2. The Local "Strata" 40

41 The local "Capo Maffioso" sought to secure as his partisans (his gang)  
42  
43 the assassins and malefactors of his district, from among the lower strata of  
44  
45 society. The upper-class Maffioso ("Alta Mafia") was powerful and rich, or  
46  
47 had established his reputation as an insolent, fearless, cruel, and influential  
48  
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51 The lower classes (called "Bassa Mafia") murdered, robbed, abducted,  
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9 or committed arson on command of members of the "Alta Mafia." Tacit  
10  
11 understanding ordinarily existed between these two strata, so that the "Bassa  
12  
13 Mafia" perpetrated the most heinous of crimes "at the nod of the patron's head  
14  
15 or the wink of his eye."<sup>(61)</sup>  
16  
17

18 3. Alliances between Gangs  
19

20 The "Capo Maffioso" invited alliances with his counterparts in other  
21  
22 districts. They made common cause against all enemies "only so long as their  
23  
24 joint interests were subserved by their unholy league."<sup>(62)</sup>  
25  
26

27 4. No Complete or Compact Association: A Pyramid of Patronage  
28

29 Eaton pointed out that despite the occasional discovery of an actual  
30  
31 criminal society in one or another of the Mafia-ridden localities, and despite the  
32  
33 expedient relationships that might or might not exist between certain local chiefs,  
34  
35 the Mafia was not a compact association; and insofar as Sicily at large was  
36  
37 concerned there was no general open organization of Mafiosi.<sup>(63)</sup>  
38  
39

40 Crawford indicated that due to the patronage system that appeared to  
41  
42 be part of the Mafia way of doing things, the local chiefs in the outlying districts  
43  
44 were always in communication with those of the city, especially Palermo, who  
45  
46 had acquired broader and more important connections and influence. The country  
47  
48 chiefs tended to defer to or appeal to the chiefs in the cities. This patronage  
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6 narrowed naturally to a few chief patrons, generally in Palermo, who were  
7 (64, 65)

8 intimately associated and in turn sometimes deferred to one head.

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10  
11 A political theorist who has taken the latter view into consideration

12  
13 has concluded that it was probable that the Mafia evolved some sort of

14  
15 quasi-national coordination in this way, its central direction settling in

16  
17 Palermo. The source indicated, however, that such power structure would

18  
19 create the corporate and political structure of Sicily rather than reveal any

20  
21 (65)  
22 master plan of original organization.

23  
24 It is possible that insofar as organization of the Mafia was concerned,

25  
26 above the level of the local gangs, the Mafia could be considered to represent

27  
28 a loose, fluid pyramid of patronage, with its highest point in Palermo, the

29  
30 center of political activity and business transactions.

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8 VII. 1900-1910: THE PALIZZOLO CASE; IMMIGRATION TO THE U.S.;  
9 THE PETROSINO MURDER  
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13 A. The Palizzolo Case  
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15 The case of Baron Raffaele Palizzolo, a reputed Mafia leader of  
16  
17 Palermo, Sicily, at the turn of the century, is cited frequently as a classic  
18  
19 example of the Mafia's capacity for "fixing" court cases involving their elements  
20  
21 and taking revenge against witnesses who might dare to testify against them.  
22

23 Although Palizzolo was eventually convicted of murder in 1902, the stabbing  
24  
25 murder in question occurred in 1893. The case had shuttled from one court of  
26  
27 assize\* to another, revealing, it is said, a mockery of the law as one magistrate  
28  
29 after another blandly refused the responsibility for final decision. (66)  
30  
31

32 High police officials themselves are said to have later confessed that  
33  
34 they had been well aware of Palizzolo's activities, and could have helped to  
35  
36 convict him. They awaited his death many years later, however, to bitterly  
37  
38 denounce him. (67) The trial is said to have cost the Italian Government not less  
39  
40 than a million dollars. (68) Key witnesses are reported to have been murdered,  
41  
42 and Palizzolo himself is said to have eventually gained his liberty. (69)  
43  
44

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47 \*A court of appeals in criminal cases. (M. Miushkovich, Tr. Sect., 6/10/58)  
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5 Although there is no immediate possibility of wholly verifying  
6  
7 this classic story at this time, it serves as a characteristic illustration of  
8  
9 the Mafia reputation for influence in high places, and for horrible  
10  
11 violence, a part of the legend of Mafia that has effectively silenced  
12  
13 potential witnesses for many years.  
14  
15

#### 16 Waves of Emigration from Sicily

17 The decades of the 1890's saw mounting emigration from Sicily  
18  
19 (100-42303-295, p. 2)  
20 to countries abroad, notably to America. In the first decade of the present  
21  
22 century, Sicilian immigrants came in massive waves to settle in the large  
23  
24 metropolitan centers, especially in New York City. Emigration from Sicily  
25  
26 to countries abroad in 1905 involved approximately 100,000 persons, while in  
27  
28 (70)  
29 the figure reportedly reached 127,000.  
30  
31

32 The majority of the Sicilian immigrants to the United States were  
33  
34 criminals. Many of them carried with them, however, the mores and  
35  
36 customs of non-co-operation with the law that were to make them easy prey  
37  
38 for the small percentage of their number who were veritable Mafiosi. (71)  
39  
40

#### 41 The Petrosino Murder

42 The Sicilian-Italian communities of New York and other major  
43  
44 cities in the United States experienced a reign of terror that reached its  
45  
46 climax in the first decades of the present century. This so-called  
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8 "Black Hand" period was characterized by a great wave of extortion, bombings,  
9 (72)  
10 blackmail, and murder attributed in many cases to elements of the Mafia. In  
11  
12 1928, after waging virtually a one-man campaign against the terrorists in  
13  
14 New York City, Lieutenant Giuseppe Petrosino of the New York City Police  
15  
16 Department made a trip to Palermo, one of his objectives being to study the Mafia  
17  
18 at first hand.  
19

20  
21 Petrosino was murdered on the street, at Marina Square in Palermo,  
22  
23 on the evening of his arrival. (73) His murder went unsolved, though years later  
24  
25 one Vito Cascio Ferro, a notorious Mafioso of New York and Palermo, was  
26  
27 accused of having personally ambushed Petrosino, and in the Mafia trials of  
28  
29 1930 in Sicily received a sentence for this crime among others. (74)  
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5 **VIII. 1919-1920: MAFIA ACTIVITY CONTINUED DURING THE WAR YEARS**  
6 **AND INCREASED AFTER THE WAR**  
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8

9 **9A. Mafia Activity Persisted during World War I**  
10

11 During the period of the First World War, large numbers of the  
12  
13 younger Mafiosi are said to have served in the ranks of the Italian Armed  
14  
15 forces.  
16

17  
18 Meanwhile, Mafia activities continued in Sicily, sustained in large  
19  
20 part by the older Mafiosi, and those who had deserted from the Armed Forces.  
21  
22 Later prosecutions were to reveal that extortion, murder, and other crimes  
23  
24 (75)  
25 attributed to the Mafiosi had persisted during the War years.  
26

27 **B. Postwar Crimes Reached a Striking Figure**  
28

29 The return home of Sicilian troops after the War brought back to  
30  
31 Sicily a number of the younger Mafiosi, and would-be Mafiosi, now practiced  
32  
33 in the arts of war.  
34

35  
36 During their absence, it is said, the older Mafiosi and the deserters  
37  
38 had established a monopoly in Mafia operations that they were unwilling to  
39  
40 relinquish. Perhaps in part due to this factor, and in part to the probability  
41  
42 that many families had awaited the return of their menfolk to effect vengeance  
43  
44 for offenses suffered during the War years, unsolved murders\* are said to have  
45  
46 reached a striking figure following the War.  
47

48  
49 Italian authorities have used the high incidence of unsolved murders as an  
50  
51 index of Mafia activity in certain areas.  
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9 In one province, that of Agrigento on the southern shore of Sicily,  
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11 hundreds of unsolved murders are reported to have been perpetrated in the  
12 (76)  
13 year 1919 alone.  
14  
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17 IX. 1920'S AND 1930'S: FULL-SCALE ATTACK ON THE MAFIA BY THE  
18 ITALIAN GOVERNMENT  
19

20  
21 A. Mass Arrests  
22

23 Probably the strongest campaign ever launched against the Mafia  
24  
25 commenced in 1926. (77) Cesare Mori, Prefect of Palermo, Sicily, had received  
26  
27 a mandate from the then Premier Benito Mussolini to wipe out the Mafia. After  
28  
29 a firsthand study of the situation, he began a vast campaign. (78)  
30  
31

32 Mori is said to have chosen his assistants from the Reale Carabinieri  
33  
34 (known in English as the Royal Military Police), most of those chosen being  
35  
36 Sicilians themselves. After months of selection and briefing, Mori is said to  
37  
38 have sent many of his men in disguise to known Mafia centers to collect evidence.  
39  
40 Eventually, he dispatched circulars purporting to have come from Mafia  
41  
42 "headquarters" in Palermo, instructing local chiefs to meet at certain designated  
43  
44 places on a particular day. Urged on by the disguised Carabinieri, they  
45  
46 assembled, and were taken into custody. One estimate places the number of  
47  
48 local chiefs apprehended in this way at 459. (79) (NYT 5/2/29 p. 2)  
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