

Chapter 6

BREAK THE HONOR PROMISE: REASONS WHY CALABRIAN MAFIA AFFILIATES DECIDE TO COLLABORATE WITH JUSTICE

Raffaella GALLO¹

WHY MOBSTERS DO NOT BETRAY THE MAFIA?

The Mafia is a real secret society, whereby the secret society, we mean a group that makes secret its constituent element. In fact, there is no doubt that the Mafia gangs can be considered real secret societies, as they are groups that make of the secret a form of their existence (Paoli, 2000): in the Mafia world secrecy serves both to protect the organization from the outside, and to give an image of power to members of the association (Sciarrone, 1999). The attractive force of secrecy, explains Simmel (1908), lies in the principle of «sociological separateness», which consists in a positive differentiation based on the exclusion between who *possess* the secret and the individuals to whom it is instead denied, identifiable with a value and a power added. Furthermore, belonging to a secret society means, at the same time, satisfy the need for separation-of differentiation and uniqueness-and the need for social interaction of each individual: being part of a secret society means feeling different-better-by the majority but avoiding the risk of isolation, feeling however part of a community.

Keeping the secret is not easy and the temptations of betrayal are several, especially in contexts characterized by a high risk such as the Mafia. For this reason, the natural trust that born among members of a secret society is not enough alone to guarantee the sense of security that encourages permanence of the subjects within the group: the protection of secret-and of secret society itself-requires techniques that incentivize the loyalty. In this regard, along with some practices and rules of behavior (e.g., recruitment and interaction rules, selection of subjects with which to socialize, concentric distribution of secrecy within the hierarchy, etc.), in defense of secrecy, the 'Ndrangheta (and Mafia organizations generally) has devised some “long-term” strategies, now recognizable as constitutive elements of the Mafia phenomenon.

¹ PhD, Rome Sapienza University, gallo.raffaella1987@gmail.com

which, together with the dissatisfaction with the boss's management of this situation, has probably undermined the trust in the norms shared by the group.

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