

Migrating 'Ndrangheta in the case of Australia. A historical perspective.

Abstract

This paper attempts to present the phenomenon of the 'ndrangheta - criminal organisation from Calabria, South of Italy, and most powerful among the Italian mafias – through its migrating routes. In particular, the paper, by focusing on the peculiar case of Australia, aims at showing the overlapping of migrating flows with criminal colonisation, which has proven to be a 'policy' of this particular mafia.

The paper uses the very thin literature on the subject alongside official reports on migration and crime, mainly from Italian sources, to start an historical journey on the migration of people from Calabria to Australia in various moments of the last century. The aim is to prove that, alongside the dreams for a better life, also criminal habits migrated with people, reinforced to this day through tight family ties. The topic is largely unexplored and is still underreported among Australian institutions and scholars, which is why this paper chooses a historical narration as main methodology to describe the principal threads in this very new field of research.

Keywords: Australian 'ndrangheta; Italian mafias in Australia; Italian migration in Australia; organised crime in Australia; criminal colonisation; transnational organised crime

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Migratory routes and criminal settlements

The link between migration and organised crime can be considered physiological and not just because the movements of illegal immigrants for years have been almost totally managed by powerful criminal organisations based on transnational arrangements. Studies of migration have shown that those who leave their country, bring with them their own world made of life experiences and patterns of social relations, and they tend to reorganise, often through intense sacrifices, a complex system of self-defence of their ethno-cultural identity, without necessarily dismissing advanced forms of integration. In historical perspective, therefore, the routes of Italian emigration, from the nineteenth century to the Second World War, have also become those that have led to the internationalisation of mafia organisations, although it cannot be generalised that wherever there have been massive migratory flows - especially those from South of Italy - there have emerged mafia-like organisations on the model of the Italian ones. As pointed out by Emilio Franzina (1998:68), *'the conditions found on arrival or, rather, after the arrival'*, also influence the formation of colonies of mafia and organised crime, which at first sight, as in the U.S., *'would seem 100% imported from the South of the Peninsula'*. This paper, ~~explores based largely on historical analysis of~~ migration fluxes from Calabria, South of Italy, towards other continents ~~but mainly towards Australia, seeks in order~~ to establish the link between migration and criminal colonisation of the 'ndrangheta, the dangerous mafia organisation from Calabria, ~~choosing as example of migration destination Australia~~. Analysing the links between migration and criminality of Calabrian origin in Australia aims at raising awareness about the presence of the 'ndrangheta in the country, which seems to be well accepted among Italian scholars (Ciconte and Macrì, 2009), but neglected overseas.

The 'ndrangheta has recently been at the centre of attention also in international studies (Dickie, 2013; Calderoni, 2012; Varese, 2011; Paoli, 2003). Literature of the phenomenon, mainly in Italian, is huge and mainly focuses on the social and economic implications of the phenomenon. The penetration of the criminal organisation, rooted in Calabria and in Italy, is escalating and has become a worrisome ~~malady phenomenon of~~ in contemporary days. ~~According to Italian authorities, th~~The 'ndrangheta is the most powerful Italian mafia and controls the great majority of cocaine trafficking in Europe (DNA, 2012). Most of all, the 'ndrangheta migrates; this is why Italian authorities are often very keen in expanding the knowledge of the phenomenon outside regional and national boundaries.

The geography of the *'locali'*¹ of the 'ndrangheta in the world, in any case, is not analogous to the destinations in which migrants from Calabria have established (Forgione, 2009). There is not, in fact, an automatic link between the presence of communities of immigrants from areas with a strong mafia presence and criminal colonisation (DNA, 2012:109). Countries such as Argentina or Brazil, for example, both destinations of massive migratory flows, did not experience settlements of Calabrian criminal clans (DNA, 2012; Varese, 2011). In fact, although one certainly cannot exclude that among the many Calabrians escaping from poverty and oppression attempting to free themselves from secular slavery, there were criminals (Scarzanella, 2004), Italian Mafias, as we know them today, do not seem to have ever deeply rooted in Argentina (Varese, 2011). In the thirties in Buenos Aires the Italian scholar Oreste Ciattino published a book (1930) on to explain which type of criminality was moving towards the Argentinian capital: *'together with the atavistic crime we also have evolutionary delinquency; together with the murderer, the thief, we have a criminal who appears in society'* (Magnani-Tedeschi, 1931). It was, in short, a type of criminality fed by the atmosphere of the city and which had poverty as its fundamental cause, but there was nothing to indicate the presence of Calabrian mafia clans. This does not mean that Argentina has not historically known mafia-like phenomena. In the thirties, in fact, the Sicilian mafia was present in the territory and Rosario was sadly compared to the Chicago of Al Capone, brutally affected by the activities of two clans who were fighting for illegal activities ranging from gambling and prostitution exploitation (Díaz Araujo, 1971; Varese, 2011). According to Varese's research (2011), however, differently from what happened in other parts of the world (such as New York), suitable opportunities were lacking in Rosario; for example protection rackets could not be successfully imposed on illegal markets. This prevented a proper transplantation of mafia methods in the city.

Although in recent years all South American countries, and therefore Argentina as well, have been affected by the transnationalisation policy of the Calabrian 'ndrangheta - which seeks to monopolise the cocaine market and must necessarily maintain direct relationships with the criminal stakeholders of strategic producer and exporter countries through emissaries on site (DNA, 2012) - the same process of Argentina can be noticed for Brazil, other country of Italian migration. At the end of the XIX century, caused a lot of concern in the State of São Paulo, where the Italian community was massively present and active. For a few years, from 1895 to 1898, the area of São Carlos, an area with a high concentration of migrants from Calabria, was

¹ A 'locale' is a group of 'ndrine (family clans, units) usually present in the same territory and working together in the same areas.

disturbed by violent raids of a gang of 40 Calabrians and their leader from Monterosso Calabro, Francesco Mangano (Monsma, Truzzi, da Conceição, 2003). Relying also on forms of ethnic solidarity, this gang was responsible for fires ranches, assaults on persons, thefts, injuries and murders. *'The Mangano gang of São Carlos is the only known example, even if the topic is under-studied and it may be that in São Paulo there may have been other Italian bandits with more limited roles'* (Monsma, Truzzi, da Conceição, 2003:73). The fact that organised crime of this type did not root in Brazil is probably due to the lack of a suitable environment for the development of rural banditry - as the one of Calabrian tradition in the XIX century with bandits established in the mountains (Ciconte, 2011) – alongside the unavailability of elites who would protect criminal activities and the inability to bribe the police (Monsma, Truzzi, da Conceição, 2003).

Different, however, the situation recorded in the U.S.A., Canada and Australia, countries in which the presence of criminal groups with a clear ethnic connotation - established in Calabrian communities (Coletti, 1995) - is documented as early as the last century. Already in 1911 a parliamentary committee in the U.S. launched the alarm and pointed at the new Calabrian and Sicilian immigrants – who, since 1900, had given priority to routes towards Ellis Island - considering them responsible for the growth of urban delinquency, as confirmed in judicial reports of the time (Critchle, 2009). The names of Frank Costello (born Francesco Castiglia in Lauropoli, village near Cassano Jonio in Calabria) and Albert Anastasia (born Umberto Anastasio in Parghelia) are perhaps the most well known Calabrian bosses associated with Cosa Nostra families (Critchle, 2009).

Calabrian mafia groups have been rooted in Canada from the early years of the twentieth century. In those years, Giuseppe "Joe" Musolino, cousin of the famous bandit from Santo Stefano d'Aspromonte with the same name (Ciconte, 2011), was active in Toronto at the head of a gang of Mafiosi from the Aspromonte (mountains in the Centre-South of Calabria) devoted to extortion and racketeering of local businessmen (Schneider, 2009). The more Calabrian communities became integrated in the country, the more the bonds of organised crime accompanying them stretched. Between Toronto and Montreal, the 'ndrangheta had an autonomous and overwhelming development. Some mafia bosses are part of the history of crime and their clan are an example of the establishment of the organizational model of the Calabrian *'ndrine* (clans) in a land of emigration. In particular, we remember the name and clan of Rocco Zito, considered one of the first patriarchs of the Canadian 'ndrangheta (Nicaso and Lamothe, 2005). Also, Rocco Perri, a man with magnetic eyes, a poor immigrant who had left Platì (a small town in the province of Reggio Calabria and in the heart of the Aspromonte mountains) at the age of 16, who became the most notorious smuggler of Canada (and

had among its clients Al Capone and Joseph Kennedy, father of the future president of the United States) (Nicaso, 2005) and who accumulated a fortune without leaving any heir (Sergi, 2004). Finally, Vic Crotoni originally from Mammola, and Paolo Violi, originally from Sinopoli, who are both believed to be the head of the Canadian 'ndrangheta, respectively, in the sixties and seventies of the twentieth century (Violi was killed in January 1978 by two gunmen while he was playing cards with three friends in his "Bar Reggio" in Montreal) (O'Connor, 2011).

Calabrians in Australia. Between proletarians and criminals.

A heavy colonisation related to criminal migration from Calabria succeeded, especially, in Australia, always been considered a historical basis of the 'honoured society'² ten thousand miles from the home country. The 'ndrangheta exported from Platì in particular, has always been considered a stronghold of the Mafia, which in general from the province of Reggio Calabria in the XX century has provided the most substantial share of regional migration to Australia, while remaining until 1940 a small minority of the Italian community as a whole. In fact, according to the data from the registers of nationalisation analysed by Charles A. Price, the migrants from the area of Reggio count for only the 8% of the Italians (Price, 1954). However, since the beginning of the XX century around 70,000 Calabrians have reached Australia to stay, initially employed as shepherds, miners or farmers (many contributed to the birth of the wine industry) (Castle, Alcorso, Rando, Vasta, 1992; Baggio and Sanfilippo, 2011). In addition to Platì, many small towns of Calabria historically very poor like San Luca and Locri, have provided a constant flow of migrants to Australia. The group from Calabria is now the largest³ after the Sicilian and large communities concentrate in cities such as Midland and Perth and in the suburbs of Balcatta, Stirling and Osborne Park.

² One of the first names of the 'ndrangheta.

³ Nine associations of Calabrian immigrants are active as today in Australia. Three in the state of Victoria in Northcote, West Brunswick and Bulla. Three others operate in Western Australia, two of which in Perth. The others are in Queensland, Melbourne and in South Australia.

A few figures are enough to give the dimension of migration from Calabria to Australia, which, however, was not such a popular destination as soon as migration started in Calabria (Castle, Alcorso, Rando, Vasta, 1992; Baggio and Sanfilippo, 2011). From 1876 to 1925, for example, only 1903 Calabrians faced the endless trip to the sunny Oceanic shores, of which 1620 departed from 1919 to 1925, imperceptible and irrelevant number in comparison with other regional migration flows of the same years towards South and North America. The Australian route had been ignored for long at least with regard to official migration registries protected by bilateral agreements between states. From 1876 to 1900 Calabrians who reached the Oceanic continent were barely 14; 35 in 1901 and 150 in 1910. The highest number, 860, was touched in 1922. For the uncertain and ambiguous migration policy of the fascist regime (Vernassa, 2003) and the restrictions introduced in the U.S. and Argentina, also in 1924 and in 1925 figures were relatively large: 238 and 490 respectively (O'Connor, 1993). These were the years in which the existence of criminal activities of a group of Calabrians who had settled in the state of Queensland was ascertained, in the Tropic of Capricorn, to which migrants had been attracted by the opportunity to work in the sugar cane plantations (O'Connor, 1993).

The tendency of new migratory contingents to aggregate and form nuclei of Italians was favoured by ethnic factors as well as by the nationalist and corporatist policy implemented by the fascist diplomatic and consular representatives (O'Connor, 1993). The new guidelines of the fascist government actually dried out migration flows and not only to Australia, where Italians suffered personal restrictions at the outbreak of World War II. In Queensland only, where one-third of the total Italian population resided, 2,216 immigrants were deported in concentration camps; of these, 602 already had British citizenship and 41 were born in Australia (Rando, 2005) and there were many from Calabria (ITENETs, 2006).

The wave of immigration after World War II, thanks to a bilateral agreement for a controlled migration between Italy and Australia, signed in 1951 and renewed three years later, was instead quantitatively significant; through that, migrating flows and criminals flows overlapped in a clear and obvious way (Ciconte and Macrì, 2009). Driven by economic need, more than 360,000 people emigrated from Italy between 1947 and 1976, 280,000 of them permanently, aiming to achieve satisfactory economic positions (ITENETs, 2006; Bertelli, 1983). Australia became one of the great countries of destination and privileged were the flows towards the state of Victoria. The strong migratory flows also increased the population rates: between 1945 and 1979, Australia was reached by 4.8 million new immigrants, of which 8.5% were Italian (ITENETs, 2006; Bertelli, 1983). The net balance of Calabrian immigrants in Australia has been remarkable. Only between 1959 and 1979 - according to data compiled by Bertelli (1983) - there were 36,675 Calabrians, 26,22% of the total Italian migrants, the highest

figure among the regions (followed by Sicily, other region very exposed to mafia influences, with 35,615 people equal to 25.02% of the total).

In the Calabrian Diaspora to Australia, migration routes for economic reasons became one with the routes of mafia clans in search of new spaces. Forms of associated criminality soon rooted in the host society and revived after World War II through what may be considered an authentic criminal exodus from the area around Locri and the province of Reggio. From areas of classical and high density mafia activities - it has been documented (Ciconte and Macrì, 2009) - different mafia families have migrated and have moved and reproduced in Australia their illegal activities with methods and models similar to those used in Calabria. However, it would be ungenerous and wrong, to argue that all migrants had links with mafia families. It seems certain, however, that since the Twenties, Calabrians - considered racially inferior and discriminated because of their brown skin - brought with them a treasure of popular culture; some of these elements have also fuelled mafia culture (ITENETs, 2006). Every year, for example, in Australia there is a celebration for Our Lady of the Mountain of Polsi. For the majority of migrants the festival serves to reaffirm the identity of origin, as rightly pointed out the scholar Italo-Australian Gerardo Papalia (2008) - and in this sense it can be framed as one of the many Marian feasts of immigrants from Calabria around the world (Rosoli, 1990). However, it cannot be dismissed that such a festival in September – as it happens in Calabria, in Polsi, the heart of Aspromonte - also assumes strong symbolic values for the clans of the 'ndrangheta who consider the Madonna of the Mountain their protector and that hold their annual summit in Polsi during the festival to regulate the lives and affairs of the criminal organisation (Ciconte, 2011; DNA, 2012).

The arrival of the 'ndrangheta in Australia

The rise of the Calabrian clans in Australia began in the 1920s when were recorded the first signs of a bloody battle for control of fruit and vegetable markets in the state of Queensland (Ciconte and Macrì, 2009). A historical review of the presence of the 'ndrangheta in the country was done by Colin Brown, agent of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), in November 1964, while leading a committee on Italian organised crime (Spagnolo, 2010; Minuti and Nicaso, 1994). The work of the Brown committee lasted several months and the results were condensed into a 147 pages report entitled *'The Italian Criminal Society in Australia'*, delivered to federal authorities and never entirely disclosed in its entirety (Ciconte and Macrì, 2009). The outline of the story in the report is the following. The arrival of the Calabrian 'ndrine in Australia, according to the report, has a precise date, December 18, 1922, the arrival of the ship 'Re d'Italia' (King of Italy) at the Port of Melbourne, which can be considered the first carrier of Calabrian criminality in Australia. Among hundreds of

immigrants were also people linked to clans in the country of origin; in mafia mythology three of them are considered the founders of the 'ndrangheta in Australia (Cicone and Macrì, 2009; Minuti and Nicaso, 1994). Two of them are known: Antonio Barbaro, who settled in the state of Victoria, known as '*the toad*', and Domenico Strano, who chose to take his family - real and criminal - in New South Wales where he died in 1965; numerous members of the clans from all over the continent attended his funeral as a sign of respect as it is custom in mafia culture. Not certain is the identity of the third founder, even though it is known that he established the '*locale*' of Perth. The rise of the Calabrian clans, after the arrival of the ship '*Re d'Italia*', took place in a few years. For the young Australian 'ndrangheta the most attractive business, before entering in the drug market, was the one of the fruit and vegetables farmers markets in the state of Queensland, quickly controlled by mafia boss Vincenzo d'Agostino (Spagnolo, 2010).

Several criminal episodes - red flags of the presence of Calabrian clans in the territory - took place from 1928 to 1940. The area of Ayr, Ingham and Innisfail in northern Queensland - where emigration from Calabria was deeply rooted - was the scene of a chain of thirty attacks with ten murders attributed to a mafia war whose contenders were Calabrian migrants (Spagnolo, 2010). But no one was able to understand and interpret those events at the time, which were attributed, as noted by Salvatore Lupo (2008), to an organisation called '*The Black Hand*', based also in Canada. The news reports of the time show some significant events that have ethnic and criminal connotation linked to Calabria. On December 24, 1925, for example, a group formed by 8-12 Italians, after a fight in the pool, in Victoria Street, North Melbourne faced a policeman, Constable James Clare, who was with two colleagues in civilian clothes. Clare was stabbed in the heart and died. Accused of the crime was the Calabrian immigrant Domenico Condello, who had arrived in Australia three years before. Appeared in court Jan. 19, 1926, Condello was acquitted, claiming that Clare had offended him and his friends without even declaring he was a policeman: the funds necessary for his defence had been collected in the Italian community by the boss Antonio Barbaro (Cicone and Macrì, 2009; Macrì, 2012).

The 'ndrangheta in those years established new '*locali*'. Letters found in the house of Domenico Belle in 1930 revealed to the police that Antonio Brando was the leader of a clan in Melbourne. Brando wrote that the mere fact of being born in Plati, according to him, was more than enough to assert his authority (Cicone and Macrì, 2009). Two years later, on January 20, Rocco Tremarchi was killed in Griffith; he was listed as one of the first bosses of the city in a report by John T. Cusack, supervisor of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) called in Australia in the sixtieth to advice

investigators together with Italian police commissioner Ugo Macera, who had previously worked in Calabria (Ciconte and Macrì, 2009).

Furthermore, the report published by the Brown committee had also investigated other names of the Calabrian mafia: for example, Joseph Roller, boss in Mildura, who died in 1964 with his two children taking over the clan, or Domenico Alvaro, who was born in Calabria in 1910, known as 'Mr. Lenin', and who became the boss of a clan in Sydney in 1960 after the death of Raffaele Mafrici, his relative (Ciconte and Macrì, 2009). The clans of the 'ndrangheta, in short, by using many migration settlements, after the war had 'occupied' Australia and had their hands on various licit and illicit businesses. In this criminal expansion, a date to remember is December 13, 1962. On that date died in his bed Domenico Italiano, known as '*The Pope*', recognised and feared boss of Melbourne who, among other things, detained control over the Victoria Produce Market, the largest fruit and vegetable market in the city. Many tried to fill the gap for the leadership of the clan. Vincenzo Angioletta, who had been a lieutenant of Italiano, sought independency by creating a 'bastard' '*ndrina*' - i.e. without the support of other clans - but was killed in March 1963 near his home in Northcote (Spagnolo, 2010). The '*Australian Crimine*'⁴, coordinating structure established in the territory, could not allow such an open and blatant violation of the rules: it is excluded - as confirmed in the latest report of the National Anti-Mafia Directorate (DNA, 2012:124) for a similar recent case -

...that, after breaking or cracking the relationships with his locale and the "Australian Crimine", a member, could ever get the chance to open a new 'locale' in Australia and become independent from the context, by seeking support from other some authoritative members.

However, many new *locali* were opened in the years and crowded the map of mafia presence in the country. In the second half of the sixties, when migration essentially stopped, the regeneration of mafia groups, through new members coming from Italy, stopped as well. Calabrian migration routes headed to European countries and the North of Italy where criminal migration also found many lucrative opportunities (Ciconte, 2010; 2013).

⁴ With the word 'Crimine' is intended a structure of control on various locali of the 'ndrangheta. According to the latest DNA report (2012) there is a Calabrian Crimine, a North Italy Crimine, an Australian Crimine and a Canadian Crimine.

Australian 'ndrangheta in contemporary days

Often compared to the famous 'Five Families' of New York are the 'seven cells' of Adelaide, the family clans Sergi, Barbaro, Trimboli, Romeo, Nirta, Alvaro, and Perre based in South Australia, but with branches throughout the country. The families of the 'seven cells' have been widely linked to the *'ndrine* in Calabria (Macrì, 2012; Ciconte and Macrì, 2009). Similarly, families like Arena, Muratore, Benvenuto, and Condello. Medici, Musitano, Pochi, Pelle, Polimeni and Agresta, among others, instead exercise their control in the rural areas (DNA, 2012; Ciconte and Macrì, 2009). Their presence so prevalent in the Australian continent dates back to the early fifties, as introduced before. In October 1951, in fact, a severe flood hit Platì causing 18 deaths, *'when the river Ciancio came, furious out of water, from the throat of Aspromonte, [and] took away two-thirds of the poor households'* (Sergi, 1994). The village back then counted 7200 inhabitants of whom 5000 eventually chose to pack and leave. It dates back to then the escalation of the local clans (Manfredi, 1993) and the migration of many affiliates of the 'ndrangheta, from Platì and close villages, to Australia, disguised among peasants, workers, skilled craftsmen and enterprising merchants, *'driven away by age-old poverty and natural plagues'* (Sergi, 1989), in search of better living conditions, legally or illegally obtained. The New South Wales became the Promised Land. The presence of so many immigrants coming from the area of Platì has even led to the founding of a town called New Platì (near Fairfield), west of Sydney (Veltri and Laudati, 2009).

Thanks to the flood in Calabria, the Australian 'ndrangheta knew its economic boom (L'Europeo, 1988) and the peak of its colonisation process. Moreover, the Australian groups played a big role also for the growth of the clans in Calabria. In Griffith, for example, the 'ndrangheta cleaned and multiplied the money from the kidnappings that, especially in the eighties, have been the major activities for the clans of the triangle Platì-San Luca-Careri (to the clans in Platì only have been attributed around 60 kidnappings) (Ciconte, 2011). The Australian Immigration Department launched an alarm, fearing the illegal movement of members of the 'ndrangheta and putting in place strict controls based on the requirement of clear criminal records for entering the country (ITENETs, 2006). Neither Calabrians nor Sicilians enjoyed a good reputation and their entry into the country was not very welcome (ITENETs, 2006). Nevertheless, masses had arrived mainly from the province of Reggio Calabria and Catanzaro and a minority from the northern areas of Calabria (Sgrò, 2000).

Internationalisation, transnationalisation and colonisation

Examples of internationalisation - also indicated as delocalisation or transnationalisation (DNA, 2012) - or perhaps of colonisation, of the 'ndrangheta can be found in recent judicial history developed between Calabria and Australia, which shows that the origin of criminal flows is not limited exclusively to the province of Reggio Calabria, and in particular to Platì, but extends to other Calabrian provinces (Sergi, 2012a). At the end of May and beginning of June 2012, three men living in Australia - Nicola Ciconte, Vincenzo Medici and Michael Calleja - were convicted for smuggling 500 kg of cocaine in the country. The trial, however, took place in Calabria where the three were found guilty in absentia because Australia could not grant extradition (due to the lack of a mafia membership offence in Australian law). Moreover, the Australian authorities had started their own investigation on the three men, but the evidence provided by the Italian courts, including the testimony of an informant, could not be used in Australian courts as the request for extradition was rejected (Sergi, 2012a). According to the archives of the Italian prosecutors, Ciconte had maintained contacts with accomplices in Vibo Valentia and, in collaboration with Medici and Calleja, had made several trips from Australia to Calabria to define the details of shipments and payments. Ciconte, the son of Calabrian immigrants who settled in Victoria in 1955, strengthened his mafia ties through his relatives in Italy. The father of Medici, in fact, was a notorious gangster in Australia and was murdered in the early eighties. Eventually, Ciconte, a native of the state of Victoria (where today resides about 40% of the Italian-Australian population) and resident on the Gold Coast, received a 25 years prison sentence: the court has found him guilty of mafia membership for a conspiracy with Calabrian clans to import cocaine into Australia between 2002 and 2004 from Colombian producers. Medici, originally from Mildura, and Calleja from Melbourne, were both sentenced to 15 years for aiding and abetting Ciconte (Sergi, 2012a; Macrì 2012). The sentence pronounced in Calabria in 2012 revealed how poorly documented is the phenomenon of Italian criminal organisations operating in Australia. The phenomenon is under reported and not fully understood (Macrì, 2012) in the scenario of organised crime in the country, which is strongly perceived as a threat nonetheless (ACC, 2013). According to a study carried out by the Attorney's General Department in view of an Organised Crime Response Plan (2010), crimes such as illicit drug trafficking or people trafficking, did lead to an increase in violence, drug dealing, theft, are all offenses connected with organised crime groups. In 2013, the Australian Crime Commission (ACC) has explained that the costs of organised crime in Australia each year ranges around 15 billion Australian dollars; this represents a serious threat to Australian society, but there is no mention of the Calabrian mafia (ACC, 2013).

Since 1980, in any case, the Australian authorities could not dismiss that the 'ndrangheta – even if it was called or known differently - was becoming a social

phenomenon deeply rooted in some areas of the country. The networks and the degree of infiltration appear more complex now than at any other time in history (Macrì, 2012) and have encouraged interest in the topic. In 1987, the federal agency NCA (National Crime Authority) had in fact requested the presence of Italian experts to investigate a secret society of Calabrian origin, known by various names, including 'ndrangheta (Ciconte and Macrì, 2009). For the occasion, the Italian police sent to Australia Chief Nicola Calipari for a period of three months with the specific task of identifying the nature of the criminal presence of Calabrian origin on Australian soil. Calipari's report, published on May 2, 1988, speaks of a 'Griffith Group' and confirms the presence of mafia associations mainly for drug trafficking. Two codes of rituals of the 'ndrangheta, one found at Domenico Nirta's house in Giralang, outskirts of Canberra, and another seized in December 1987 to Raffaele Alvaro in Adelaide, were analysed, interpreted and reconstructed by the Australian authorities. The two codes closely resemble some codes found in Calabria, are handwritten and, most likely, dictated by heart, which would explain the linguistic errors and archaic vocabulary (Ciconte and Macrì, 2009; Sergi, 2012a).

Areas and Groups

In 1981, the Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence (ABCI) was already aware of the presence of the 'ndrangheta in the country, which is also why it is surprising how more contemporary studies dismiss the importance of that awareness. According to the ABCI, Australia was divided into six areas by the Calabrian mafia, each of which had its own leader (Ciconte and Macrì, 2009). The number is not accidental: it is the same number found in Canada or in Basilicata, where with the contribution of the 'ndrangheta has recently grown the fifth Italian mafia, called the Basilischi (Sergi, 2012b). Every independent sub-group of the 'ndrangheta is always made up of six cells, because traditionally the seventh is always meant to be in Calabria. Seven units are, in fact, in Calabria (Ciconte, 2011; DNA, 2012). According to the ABCI, in the early 1980's Giuseppe Carbone was the boss in South Australia, Domenico Alvaro in New South Wales, Pasquale Alvaro in Canberra, Peter Callipari in Griffith, Giuseppe Alvaro in Adelaide and Pasquale Barbaro in Melbourne (Sergi, 2012a). In May 2012, Barbaro, son of an immigrant from Calabria, was sentenced to life imprisonment for his role in the organisation devoted to the importation of drugs from Italy. With his cousin Saverio Zirilli, he was convicted for having participated in an international drug smuggling of 4.4 tonnes of ecstasy and 100 kilos of cocaine seized in tomato cans in 2008 in Melbourne (Sergi, 2012a). At the trial against Barbaro, Judge Betty King said that that was the highest amount of ecstasy seized worldwide, to that time. The cost of the tablets on the market would be millions of dollars (Sergi, 2012a; Macrì 2012).

Clans, People and Activities

As clarified by Ciconte and Macrì in the only comprehensive analysis of the Australian 'ndrangheta (2009), ethnicity and the belonging to blood ties was/is still the main characteristic of all the 'ndrangheta clans proliferating in Australia as elsewhere. Protection of family ties and ethnicity easily explain the easiness in participating and escaping prosecution for activities such as the cultivation and trafficking of cannabis, ecstasy and cocaine, extortion, tax evasion, insurance fraud, illegal gambling, and - although rarely - murder. As it is known for the 'ndrangheta clans in Calabria (Ciconte, 2011), the first stage of the evolution is the attempt to monopolise the drug market, while investments in other activities and interest in politics in general show a more sophisticated level of penetration. Finally, violence may also follow, usually in the form of excellent murders, targeted killings of key authorities (Barbagli and Gutti, 2002). The use of violence by the 'ndrangheta has stirred great concern in Australia. An excellent murder was the one of Bruce Donald MacKay, 44, a member of the Liberal Party in Griffith, who was killed in July 1977 because its press campaign against drug production in the country was in fact directed against families who had emigrated from the Ionian coast of the province of Reggio Calabria (Minuti and Nicaso, 1994), and for his role in the arrest of four people accused of drug trafficking, three of whom had emigrated from Calabria (Sergi, 2012a). The Calipari report in 1988 confirms the links between the families of Griffith and this murder (Ciconte and Macrì, 2009). Of the murder was accused Robert Trimboli, boss emigrated from Platì who had never severed the ties with mafia clans in the country of origin. Born in 1931 in Platì, he had spent his childhood in his parents' farm not far from Griffith. Considered the king of drug trafficking he had been the one who forcefully introduced the 'ndrangheta in the drug business (Small and Gilling, 2009). In any case, *'for investigators all over the world he was the real brain of drug trafficking in the continent'* (Sergi, 1991). Filthy rich and powerful enough to travel on a yacht provocatively named 'Cannabis', Trimboli, immediately after the court case against him, managed to escape under a false name in Spain where he died in 1987. The persons investigated in the process were all originally from Platì: boss and followers of the clans Sergi, Barbaro and Trimboli who had established large illegal plantations of marijuana in the spacious, lush regions of Australia (Sergi, 1991). By financing the purchase of lands with the proceeds of kidnapping, in the eighties, the 'ndrangheta controlled, in fact, illegal plantations in Griffith, Michelago and Yerlarbin *'capable of delivering profits estimated at around 60 million dollars per year'* (Sergi, 1991:85). The New South Wales had been turned into a huge mafia corporation: in 1989, after the murder of Colin Winchester in Canberra, Deputy Chief of the Australian Federal Police involved in a delicate investigation aiming at mapping of land purchased by mafia families of Platì (Gratteri and Nicaso, 2009) 188 cannabis plantations were discovered precisely on land owned by Calabrians.

Another case that beyond all doubts presents a strong and organised 'ndrangheta on Australian soil is the murder of Geoffrey Bowen, NCA detective, March 2 1994, who was killed by an explosion of a package delivered to his office in Adelaide (Madigan, 2013). Bowen was expected to testify the day after he was murdered in a trial against, among others, Domenico and Francesco Perre, from Platì. The two brothers had been involved in an operation in the Hidden Valley in 1993, leading to the arrest of 13 people after the discovery of cannabis plantations (15,000 plants) for a total value of over \$40 million (Sergi, 2012a). Following the murder of Bowen, Dominic Perre was arrested in July 1994, but the investigating authorities failed to prove allegations and evidence against him. To this day the case remains unresolved and is considered one of the most important unsolved cases in the country (Madigan, 2013), which causes cyclical interest from the local media, for example, a documentary produced by Sunday Night in July 2012, dedicated to the event, titled 'Terror at home'.

Other Notable Activities

Between the mid-1990s and 2001, several police operations in Italy (Zag, Domino and Decollo) have shed light on the international networks of drugs and criminal activity in Australia and beyond. Operation Zag in the mid-1990s was an investigation led by anti-Mafia prosecutors in Reggio Calabria, which revealed the relationships between criminals and Calabrian partners in Australia involved in money laundering after the export of cocaine from Italy to Australia (Sergi, 2012a). Operation Domino, tracking the import of cocaine from Colombia and Turkey, followed. Operation Domino worked on the assumption that there was a unique organisation from Colombia through Italy towards the rest of the world, and has proven the link between Italy and Colombia. Building on that, finally, Operation Decollo (1991-2001) presented a triangular relationship between Colombia, Italy and Australia (Sergi, 2012a; Ciconte and Macrì, 2009). Members of the 'ndrangheta had bought from Colombian drug traffickers between 100 and 800 kilos of cocaine packaged in blocks of marble and stone, and sent them to a shipping company in the Calabrian port of Gioia Tauro or to the port of Adelaide. The investigation also involved shipments of cocaine from Venezuela and Colombia to Italy, France, Spain, the Netherlands and Germany, and in Togo and Australia as well. Operation Decollo involved in four continents, starting from the clans of Limbadi and Rosarno (province of Vibo Valentia) in Calabria. The trial for was held in Italy, but four members of the Australian group (three Italian-born and one Australian) have been charged also in Australia (Sergi, 2012a). A number of intelligence operations in the early 1990s in Calabria had already confirmed the existing partnership between Colombia and the Calabrian mafia in Australia. Operation Siderno Group, in the first half of the decade, had showed how the 'ndrangheta operated in the Northern United States and Canada, and also had ties with Australia (mostly for

cannabis trafficking). Australia, in fact, offers fertile fields and certain availability of cheap labour, as well as less rigorous controls in some areas (Ciconte, 2011).

Despite the confirmed presence of organised crime, the criminal-ethnic lobby has grown very powerful and is able now to influence government decisions. The case of Francesco Madaffari - born in 1961 in Oppido Mamertina and emigrated at the age of 27, with a tourist visa to Australia where he married and had four children - is emblematic in this sense. Madaffari, who already had problems with the law in Italy, remained as an illegal immigrant in Australia; after 12 years the authorities issued a deportation order against him. In 2000, the Minister for Immigration Philip Ruddock, rejected Madaffari's appeal and confirmed the expulsion. The name of Madaffari had not yet been linked to drug trafficking yet (it will be in 2008) and the Italian community rebelled against the order. For his grace intervened Nino Randazzo, director of the two Italian newspapers *'The Globe'* and *'The Flame'* printed in Melbourne and Sydney and future senator of the Democratic Party in the Italian Parliament, in an open letter to the minister. Ruddock's decision was overturned, however, only in 2005, when the new Immigration Minister Amanda Vanstone officially quashed the expulsion for humanitarian reasons. Senator Vanstone, afterwards, became ambassador in Italy. The newspaper *'The Age'* in Melbourne advanced the hypothesis that the gracious behaviour was due to the fact that Madaffari's brother, member of the 'ndrangheta in Italy, had financed Vanstone's liberal party for thousands of dollars (Murphy, McKenzie, Welch and Houston, 2008). When Madaffari was arrested in 2008 a virulent polemic against the Liberal Party erupted because of those rumours and in 2009 an enquiry wanted by Mick Keelty, Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police (AFP), aimed at investigating the alleged donations and contiguity of members of the Liberal Party with members of a mafia group in order to prevent the expulsion of one of their member, i.e. Francesco Madaffari (Ciconte and Macrì, 2009). The enquiry somehow confirmed the involvement of members of the party with the Calabrian circle and confirmed a number of donations made throughout the years, but Minister Vanstone, now Ambassador to Italy, interrogated by the AFP on the matter in late 2009 denied that the donations of 15,000 dollars in 2004 by Madaffari's brother – as confirmed afterwards – had influenced her decision (Ciconte, 2013; Ciconte and Macrì, 2009).

That the 'ndrangheta in Australia is not only dedicated to drug trafficking, but, as in Calabria, has its hands on politics is expected outcome. Known to Calabrians are for example the interceptions in 2011 involving 'ndrangheta's affairs in Siderno (near Reggio Calabria) between Tony Vallelonga – Calabrian of origin and former mayor of Stirling from 1997 to 2005 – and the boss Giuseppe Commisso. Even though the judicial proceedings are not final yet, the hypotheses of the prosecutors seem firm on the matter (Ciconte, 2013). As agreed by scholars (Forgione, 2009; Ciconte, 2011;

Ciconte 2013; Macrì, 2012), even though there has not been any official enquiry into the levels of corruption of public officials or police officers and penetration of mafia figures into the public sector in Australia, the existence of networks of the 'ndrangheta in Australia is not only undeniable but judicially proven not only at an economic level but also at a more concerning social level.

Conclusion

Emigration before and globalisation afterwards have enabled the criminal association known as the 'ndrangheta to extend its tentacles across national borders. After having, in fact, exploited the traditional migration flows, the 'ndrangheta has been able to use the global trends of criminal economy to facilitate its own market and increase its presence in legitimate business around the world. The link between migration and the 'ndrangheta in the Australian case is more evident than elsewhere. The dynamics of immigration and criminal emergence, in fact, overlap. Starting from the twenties onwards Calabrian '*ndrine* rooted in Australia with a precise and independent identity. This process, confirmed at a socio-historical level, has also been legally proven. According to the analysis of the National Anti-Mafia Directorate (DNA, 2012), the Australian case is one of colonisation directly dependent on migration. The phenomenon of mafia colonisation is peculiar of the 'ndrangheta only, among the Italian mafias, because, even the Sicilian Cosa Nostra did not operate at the same level of awareness when established somewhere else (DNA, 2012). However, the DNA (2012: 108) warns that '*not in all the territories that have been destination of Calabrian migration, the 'ndrangheta is structured according to the patterns that are proper of the archetype in Calabria*'.

This paper has linked migration flows from Calabria, through figures and numbers, with the manifestations of criminal phenomena of ethnic origin. Conspicuous migration flows have allowed a historical and structured presence of the 'ndrangheta with significant infiltration in illegal economic activities and in the political and social fabric of the country. Chronicles and news have more than once referred to Calabrian groups operating in various illegal markets with the support of strong units from Calabria and relying on family ties. There are all the ingredients for a strong presence of this powerful Italian mafia: family ties have been made tighter by emigration, violent excellent murders have gone essentially unpunished, the drug market is flourishing and the political penetration has been proven. The risk is that, if undetected and underestimated, the phenomenon will grow undisturbed. The 'ndrangheta is a silent and fluid organisation, whose tentacles will seek to reach even further fringes of Australian society.

Even though the criminal colonisation of Australia is made very peculiar and unique as consequence of migration flows, the spreading of the Calabrian 'ndrangheta's activities so far away from Italy should come as a warning. The Australian route of drugs needs, for example, further attention, and the lack of awareness of the social and anthropological implications of this Italian mafia abroad is worrisome. Whereas it is true that there is no direct link between migration and criminal implantation, even the mere presence of national fellows in a given country will always be something the organisation can count on when deciding to move activities abroad. The Calabrian mafia counts on ethnic solidarity in Italy as well as elsewhere; levels of penetration and structural organisation in Australia are strictly dependent on migration flows peculiar to the country, but the effects of such a structural organisation and the strengthening of the Italian-Australian routes should be a concern for the international community as a whole.

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