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## A Case Study of Sicily: Women With and Against the Mafia.

The business of the Mafia is largely by definition the preserve of men; men who have displayed a remarkable talent for cunning, cruelty, murder and mayhem. For the most part, women have remained silent and unseen, or, as most scholars would say, they have remained "invisible". The fact that the Mafia is a secret, criminal monosex male organization is of particular importance when starting from a viewpoint of subjectivity and when listening to those who have experienced the Mafia is a known fact that only men can become part of the Mafia: A man can be affiliated to the Mafia, while a woman can only belong to it, in so far as she belongs to a Mafia man. Thus, it could be argued that the thin line that both separates and distinguishes the affiliation with the Mafia between man and women is the formal ceremony during which each novice, strictly male, has to swear an oath of faithfulness and silence. However, this different way of been associated to the Mafia is merely a formality; a formality that has often led the society to believe that women are extraneous to the Mafia and unaware of the activities of their menfolk. It is the aim of this paper to reject this contention and to prove that this is a naïve and dangerous misconception.

**The Typology of Mafia Women.** The main reason why the organization rigorously excludes women can be explained by the words of the former Mafia boss Antonino Calderone: "(...) women reason in a special way. All the women, even those married to Mafiosi or coming from Mafia families. When a woman is wounded in her dearest affections, she doesn't reason anymore. No conspiracy of silence (omertá) can resist, Cosa Nostra is not there anymore, there are no arguments or rules to restrain her (...)" (Repentant Antonino Calderone 1996, 9). Thus, considering that

conspiracy of silence is particularly essential for Cosa Nostra's endurance it is rational to think that it should be applied mainly towards women. Repentant Calderone support this contention and underlines, "(...) if women know something, they will talk. Sooner or later they will talk (...)" (Repentant Antonino Calderone 1996, 9).

Mafia men, in their rare conversations on women, described them as totally dedicated to their families. They were portrayed as perfect mothers and obedient wives, unaware of the violent criminal activities of their husbands. However, these women, on occasion, also got involved, either because they found themselves caught "by chance" in some violent conflicts or because unwittingly witnessed crimes or because, and this is the impression that exists today, they were directly involved themselves. Lella Golfo explains: "For centuries the women of Southern Italy have adjusted to male structural models and values, believing that their role was to "support" and sustain man's initiatives. The woman is mother, daughter, wife, lover, a subject that has identified only in relation to others and that lack autonomy. The woman protects and covers the man, without being conscious of her responsibility" (Golfo 1993, 9).

In Sicily, as in many other regions of Italy, there is a lot of confusion about the criminal capacity of women. The venera-

### Vocabulary:

*mayhem* = Körperverletzung  
*affiliation* = Zugehörigkeit  
*extraneous* = belanglos  
*contention* = Behauptung  
*misconception* = Missverständnis  
*conspiracy* = Verschwörung  
*endurance* = Ausdauer, Durchhaltevermögen  
*unwittingly* = unabsichtlich

tion of motherhood makes Italians unwilling to think of women as capable of destructive or dangerous behaviour, and this attitude has led to a number of questionable acquittals.

When evaluating the responsibility and effective commitment of women in Mafia-type crime, it is necessary, first of all, to clarify between the various different levels of participation. As pointed out previously, in the Mafia the social composition of its affiliates is non-homogeneous; likewise the women we find in its sphere of influence are extremely diverse. For this reason it is important to make a distinction between those born and bred in Mafia families and those who enter into relation with the Mafia either for temporary criminal activity or on account to personal relation with Mafiosi.

**Cosa Nostra and the So-called "Mafia Women"**. The traditional Sicilian values associate women to the realm of the home and the family excluding them categorically from the inner workings of the Mafia. At the same time, those same values impose on them all the restrictions of silence and loyalty, which are required of members of the organization. A "good" woman of the Mafia is expected to dedicate her life to her family and especially to her husband. In other words, her main task is to "maintain the good image of her man by not asking questions, keeping to herself, following him wherever he asks her to go, and above all bearing his (preferable male) children" (Fabj 1998, 193). Mafia women gain more respect once they become mothers. However, expectations become higher, in the sense that they have to transmit to their children the values of the Mafia and to instil in them a deep sense of loyalty for the organisation.

As De Pretis (De Pretis 1996) rightly points out, the so-called Mafia women are members of the organization (albeit indirectly), even if they have not been affiliated with the traditional ceremony.

Sociologist Renate Sibert supports this argument and comments: "If the image of women which the Mafia organization sought to attribute publicly was one of subordinate traditional mothers and perfect wives, all kitchen sink and church and, above all, in the dark about their menfolk's criminal activities, the reality is very different" (Sibert 1996, 11).

Aside from her ability to bear, look after children and educate them as expected, a woman's most important quality is her ability to be "invisible". Liliana Madeo (Madeo 1994) explains that women of Mafia bosses are aware of the importance of discretion: "They have always known that they have been chosen as wives or partners, with the agreement of the entire Mafia family, because of their ability to be silent and not to attract attention, to lead a private life, to not let strangers in the home, and not to associate with people from different backgrounds" (Madeo 1994, 69). However, this is not to say that women are unaware of what happens in their family and around them. There is a widespread dictum that "women don't know". According to Sibert, "this convenient subterfuge should be revised straight away" (Sibert 1996, 148). It would be naïve to think that women really do not understand what goes around them in their house and in their family if we consider "the comings and going of her husband and children, the evidence, in one way or the other, of what they are involved in, the amount of money circulating in the house" (Sibert 1996). Indeed, this contention is also supported by the former Mafia boss, Antonino Calderone who

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**Vocabulary:**

*acquittal = Freispruch*  
*commitment = Engagement, Verpflichtung*  
*subterfuge = Ausflucht*

The first rule, and perhaps the most important, prohibits the members of the organisation to inform women about Cosa Nostra activities. In spite of these rules, women know about their husbands' activities and connections.

Usually these women act as "carriers" between men on the run or in prison and members of the organisation who can move freely in the light of the day without arising suspicion.

Women who participate in Mafia's illicit activities are usually unemployed and live in the most deprived areas of Sicilian cities.

states that it is difficult, if not impossible for a Mafioso to hide his activities from his wife, despite of Cosa Nostra's strict rules for Mafiosi concerning women. The first rule, and perhaps the most important, prohibits the members of the organization to inform women about Cosa Nostra activities. In spite of these rules, women know about their husbands' activities and connections. Calderone states: "many Mafia wives ... come from Mafioso families, have breathed mafia air since they were born, and thus know very well how a Mafioso thinks and behaves (...). The wife herself ends up intuiting everything, and whatever she can't figure out on her own she is told by her friends or her sisters and sisters in law, who themselves are often married to men of honour" (Repentant Antonino Calderone 1992,165).

Therefore, they undoubtedly understand the behaviour and the way of thinking of the Mafiosi; either because of their cohabitation with them or because, when it becomes necessary (during the hiding or imprisonment of their partners), they are willing to act as intermediaries between the organisation and their "men of honour". These assumptions are supported by the words of a young widow of a killed Mafioso, Piera Aiello, who now collaborates with the authorities: "women (...) listen to everything, charge themselves with everything. I was like a sponge. If you ask something to Mafiosi husbands they will not answer, but if you remain calm and quite they (...) will confess because this way they feel important" (Aiello 1996, 9).

Among the women of Mafia families (in particular bosses' wives) levels of complicity and joint responsibility are indeed very high. It is sufficient to consider their role during the long years in which their husbands are on the run from the authorities<sup>1</sup>. Not only do they offer psychological and material support; "through "men of straw", asset and financial management and mediation they also take control of eco-

nomie power by proxy on temporary basis" (Sibert 1996, 11). Usually these women act as "carriers" between men on the run or in prison and members of the organization who can move freely in the light of the day without arising suspicion.

It needs to be noted that Mafia women do not choose to be part of the organization, but enter it through birth or marriage. Antonino Calderone describes women's inability to decide their own destiny within the Mafia culture. When explaining to his daughter why he decided to collaborate with the authorities he said: "You are a big girl now, you know who I was in Catania. If we had stayed there (in Sicily) and someone like me, a Mafioso, had asked for your hand, I would have had to say yes ... now you can marry whoever you want. You don't have to marry a Mafioso and live on the run, or in hiding, or constantly tortured by fear" (Calderone 1992, 293). Silence, subservience, loyalty, and even the maintenance of the culture of vengeance are natural consequences of fear.

**Women within the Mafia.** Women who are not strictly members of the Mafia family context express a different level of complicity, however, providing "a cheap and easily available criminal workforce to Cosa Nostra" (De Pretis 1996, 5). According to De Pretis, "the role of these women does not differ so much from the role of those people (males and females) who are normally linked to a criminal organization" (De Pretis 1996, 5). Women who participate in

#### Vocabulary:

*honour = Ehre, guter Ruf*  
*cohabitation = Kohabitation, Zusammenleben*  
*suspicion = Verdacht*  
*subservience = Unterwürfigkeit*  
*vengeance = Rache, Vergeltung*

Mafia's illicit activities are usually unemployed and live in the most deprived areas of Sicilian cities. Their involvement, in many occasions, is perceived as the only solution considering that they frequently have many children to sustain on their own since their husbands are usually dead, unemployed or are serving their sentences in prison. These types of women are quite easy targets for Cosa Nostra. Usually they are contacted "through an intermediary (so that, if captured will no be in the position to tell anything about the organization) and to offer them a relatively easy way to make money, selling drugs in the areas where they live, usually from their own homes and frequently using their children as couriers" (De Pretis 1996, 5). These are the types of activities that women tend to be selected for. Different from men, women can move freely in their environment without arousing suspicions in the police.

In addition, with the growth of the international drug trade (particularly towards the United States), which enabled the Mafia to expand, the organization was forced to "employ" more workers, including women. Women took advantage of prejudice: they passed unsuspected across international borders, where the presence of female customs officers to search them was exceptional.

It is also interesting to notice that "although these women are recruited primarily as a criminal force, they often have to accept sexual intercourse with their referents, who regard this practice as their own right" (De Pretis 1996, 6). It can be said that for long time, the Italian law favoured female criminals and indeed their partners, albeit indirectly. For example, Mafiosi used women's names to register companies, properties and bank accounts. It can be claimed that the system worked perfectly for the honoured organization because "women, even wives of high-ranking Mafiosi, were considered beyond suspicion. Since there was not legal definition of the

Mafia, there was no way of connecting a bank account in a woman's name with a drug smuggling ring" (Longrigg 1997, 18).

**Women and the Pentitismo Phenomenon.** Until relatively recently, Mafia women represented a sort of largely unexplored zone. However, the phenomenon of collaborating with justice, more precisely Pentitismo, has transformed this invisible veil and offered us a better understanding of wide-ranging connections, relations, activities and responsibilities. For a variety of reasons, few women of the Mafia have chosen to abandon any relation with the organization either by persuading their husbands to give evidence or by turning state's witnesses themselves. As Valeria Fabj suggests "while at the beginning their choice to do so stemmed from a need to seek revenge for the death of a loved one, in time they were transformed from seekers of revenge to seekers of justice" (Fabj 1998, 194).

**Mafia Bosses' Women: Indirect Collaboration.** It seems likely that, within a context of unquestionable subordination, Mafia Bosses' women gradually assume a much more complex role. Above all, and this is the hypothesis that this paper is trying to prove, their role is active and their complicity very strong. As Sibert rightly suggests: "In ethical terms the responsibility they bear seems strong, very strong, sometimes on a par with that of their men" (Sibert 1996, 138).

Until relatively recently, Mafia women represented a sort of largely unexplored zone.

It seems likely that, within a context of unquestionable subordination, Mafia Bosses' women gradually assume a much more complex role.

**Vocabulary:**

*illicit activities = verbotene Aktivitäten*  
*deprived areas = sozial benachteiligte Gebiete*  
*arousing = erwachend*  
*advantage = Vorteil*  
*invisible veil = unsichtbarer Schleier*  
*to abandon = aufgeben, verlassen*  
*revenge = Rache*

"Women are attracted by the Mafia. Until they are not burned by the sorrow, by the dreadful things that happen in Cosa Nostra, they live well inside it. They like the Mafiosi (...)" (Repentant Antonino Calderone in De Pretis 1996, 10).

It can be noticed that, although men are still the major responsible for Mafia type association, the 1996 parliamentary report on organised crime, which included for the first time a section on women has brought women's true role sharply into focus.

Many women have persuaded their husbands to become collaborators of the authorities and accepted to share with them the difficulties arising from their segregated lives. Antonio Manganelli, a police investigator who later became head of the special department for the protection of pentiti, talks about Tommaso Buscetta<sup>2</sup> and his wife Cristina. The investigator has no doubt that Cristina was responsible for Buscetta's decision to collaborate with the authorities. He claims: "(b)ehind Buscetta, this charismatic personality, is a truly remarkable woman. She understood that collaboration was the only way, she begged him to do it" (Manganelli 1998, 182).

Mafia bosses' collaborations have meant some difficult personal choices for their wives too. However, as De Pretis correctly suggests, Mafia women undoubtedly benefit from their position within the family (De Pretis 1996, 10). Particularly, the women of the bosses participate in the high status of their partners and in their wealth. This whole idea has been supported by the testimony of repentant Antonino Calderone: "(...) women live well inside the Mafia. To be the wife of a Mafioso means to enjoy many privileges, big and small, and it is also, somehow, a binding thing. It can happen that the woman has to decide, in some apparently harmless circumstances, on the life of a person (...)<sup>3</sup>. Women are attracted by the Mafia. Until they are not burned by the sorrow, by the dreadful things that happen in Cosa Nostra, they live well inside it. They like the Mafiosi (...)" (Repentant

Antonino Calderone in De Pretis 1996, 10). During another confession he claims: "(...) When my wife said 'I do', when we got married, she knew what she was getting into" (Calderone 1996, 149).

**The role of Mafia women.** As already pointed out, the aim of this paper was mainly to analyse the involvement and role of women within those criminal organizations known as Mafia. The Mafia is a criminal organization renowned for being "full male chauvinists" (Pizzini-Gambetta 1999, 257) where no woman has ever been admitted into in. However, despite their exclusion, women have featured in norms upheld by this criminal group.

In order to investigate this point, I looked at some data from various sources, focusing on three main areas: whether the number of women involved in Mafia-type association has increased since 1992 and the type of offences that women are most likely to commit. It will also try to identify a relevant relationship between women's involvement in Mafia-type association and the Pentitismo phenomenon. This last point is of particular relevance. It is my contention that the Pentitismo phenomenon has contributed to the great increase of arrests of many Cosa Nostra's "men of honour". As a result of all these arrests (and perhaps independently, in a process of natural evolution), Mafia women have started to take charge of specific sectors of illicit activity. The statistics provided will try to support such contentions.

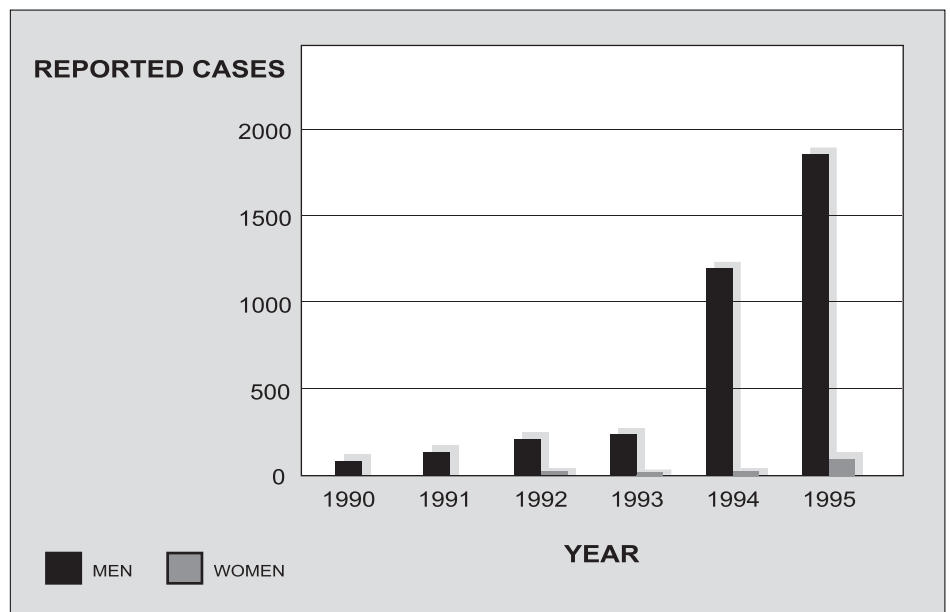
It can be noticed that, although men are still the major responsible for Mafia type association, the 1996 parliamentary report on organized crime, which included for the first time a section on women has brought women's true role sharply into focus. It revealed that in 1990 just one woman had been indicted in Italy for Mafia association; by 1995 this figure had increased to 89. However, to use a division of roles invented by Alan Block, women have entered the

**Vocabulary:**

*segregated life = abgeschiedenes (isoliertes) Leben*  
*testimony = Zeugenaussage*  
*confession = Geständnis, Beichte*  
*offence = Straftat*  
*to indict = anklagen (indicted = angeklagt)*

**INCIDENCE OF REPORTED CASES  
OF MAFIA-TYPE ASSOCIATION, 1990-95**

(Source: Ministero di Grazia e Giustizia. Elaboration by DIA 1995)



"enterprise syndicate" but not the "power syndicate" of organized crime (Block 2000, 231). Some attention has to be drawn on the type of crimes that Mafia women are most likely to carry out.

Women reported for possessing and trafficking in drugs increased from 37 in 1994 to 422 in 1995, while the number charged with recycling money increased from 15 to 106, and women arrested for loan sharking went up from 119 to 421 (Parliament Report, Minister of Internal Affairs 1996).

This figure appears to prove a radical change in women's role. However, it can be argued that this unexpected increase in women's involvement in criminal activities with a men-only organization, is, perhaps, due to the fact that investigators, having always accepted the idea that women never get involved, had finally begun their movement a little more closely. In fact, there are records of women involved in Mafia crime throughout this century.

It is important to clarify that an apparent

relationship, between the number of arrests of many Mafia affiliates and the increase of women's participation in illicit activities, exists. As pointed out by Jamieson, "if their menfolk were arrested, (women) became vital messengers between prison and the outside world" (Jamieson 2000, 231).

**The Antimafia Movement.** There are many women of the Antimafia, who have broken the oppressive silence and denounced the Mafia and the establishments that support it. Although their courage is

There are many women of the Antimafia, who have broken the oppressive silence and denounced the Mafia and the establishments that support it.

**Vocabulary:**

*reported cases = gemeldete Fälle (Straftaten)*  
*drug trafficking = Drogenhandel*  
*loan shark = Kredithai*

The Mafia is usually depicted, especially by the media, as a conservative, male-dominated organization, but it is probably less backward and more flexible than the rest of society would like to think and believe.

exceptional and their motivations are different from those of their male counterparts, their collaboration in the fight against the Mafia deserves particular attention.

Their role has changed also in this sense: they have taken a stand against their own Mafia upbringing or have bravely

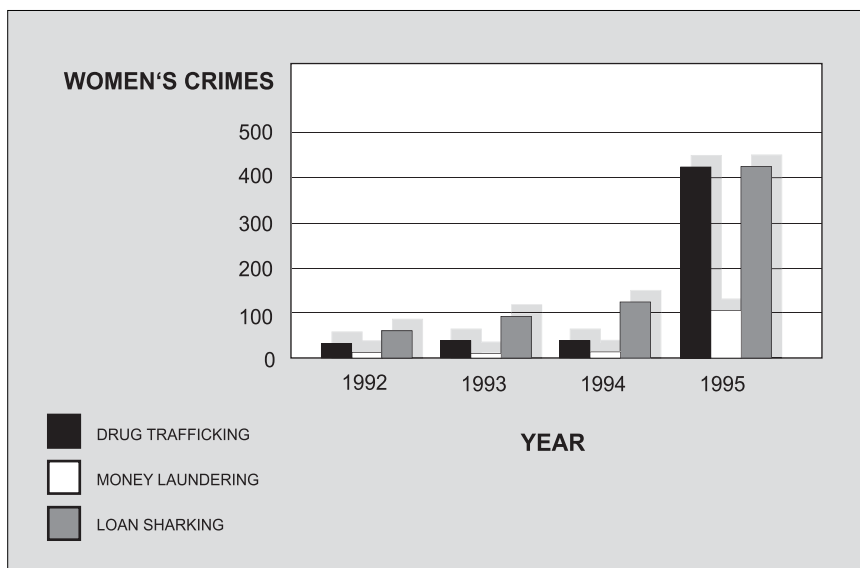
The penitents' law of 1991 finally gave Mafia women the option of removing their children from a culture of violence, in return of evidence. It was also the first time women were taken seriously as witnesses. Before 1991, women's testimonies, which contained accusations of Mafia killers, were openly rejected. After that, Mafia wives who decided to come forward proved that far from being silent victims who asked no questions, women knew a great deal about the Mafia business.

Their testimonies clearly function as a call for action and provide a way to fight the Mafia from within. At the same time, they also demonstrate that Cosa Nostra's silence, on which it depends for survival, can be broken reinforcing, in this way that the Mafia is not invincible.

**A promising female Anti-Mafia drive?**

The Mafia is usually depicted, especially by the media, as a conservative, male-dominated organization, but it is probably less backward and more flexible than the rest of society would like to think and believe. As I have argued throughout this article, women cannot be considered extraneous to Cosa Nostra. On the contrary, women also get involved, either because they find themselves caught "by chance" in some violent conflicts or because unwittingly witness crimes or because they are directly involved. As it has been demonstrated in this research, only one woman had been indicated in Sicily for Mafia association in 1990; by 1995 this figure had increased to 89. In addition,

**MAFIA WOMEN'S TYPE OF OFFENCES**



(Source: Ministero di Grazia e Giustizia. Elaboration by DIA 1995)

spoken out as witnesses, at enormous personal costs. In other words, most women who have turned state's evidence have suffered. The Mafia does not forgive the traitors or their families, and so women were rejected by others too afraid to associate with them (see for example Michela Buscemi, Rita Atria, Serafina Battaglia and many others). These women's courageous initiatives have led to the development of local anti-Mafia campaigns and recent mass protests, in spite of violent intimidation.

**Vocabulary:**

- traitor = Verräter
- intimidation = Einschüchterung
- accusation = Anschuldigungen, Vorwürfe
- extraneous = belanglos



women reported for possessing and trafficking in drugs increased from 37 in 1994 to 422 in 1995, while the number charged with recycling money increased from 15 to 106. These figures appeared to confirm a fundamental change in women's role.

However, when evaluating the responsibility and effective commitment of women in Mafia-type crime, it is necessary, to make a distinction between those born and bred in Mafia families and those who enter into relation with the Mafia either for temporary criminal activity or on account to personal relation with Mafiosi. Those women who enter into relation with the Mafia for temporary criminal activities can simply be defined as Cosa Nostra's "criminal workforce". In these circumstances women are denied every right or importance within the organization and will always be regarded extraneous to Cosa Nostra. Likewise,

women who are somehow linked to the "men of honour" will never be considered members of the organization but participate in the advantages and wealth, which come from Cosa Nostra.

Indeed, as De Pretis points out, "both cases should not be interpreted as a result of women's emancipation, or as a sort of admission (somehow egalitarian) of women to the criminal world. Whatever they do inside the organisation, anything can happen only if judged to be useful or nec-

Those women who enter into relation with the Mafia for temporary criminal activities can simply be defined as Cosa Nostra's "criminal workforce".

As De Pretis points out, "both cases should not be interpreted as a result of women's emancipation, or as a sort of admission (somehow egalitarian) of women to the criminal world".

**Vocabulary:**  
*distinction = Unterschied*  
*admission = Aufnahme*

**The assassination of the public prosecutor Giovanni Falcone, one of the most known and most committed Mafia investigators. (Pictures: [www.maxplanck.de](http://www.maxplanck.de), [www.sperimentaleLeonardo.it](http://www.sperimentaleLeonardo.it))**



"The role that Cosa Nostra imposes on women simply perpetuates traditional roles and models, denying to women every real power or influence inside the organization and particularly hindering every possibility of achieving freedom and equality" (De Pretis 1996, 13).

The call for action implicit in the narratives of women who have turned state's evidence presents a new alternative for Mafia women who might be disillusioned with the organization but who might not know how to break away from its culture of violence.

essary to Cosa Nostra" (De Pretis 1996, 12).

It can be argued that their participation highlights the presence of a crisis in the secret organisation. That is to say, with the great number of arrests of the most prolific Mafiosi, especially in the last decade, women became vital messengers between prisons and the outside world and so begun to take charge of specific sectors of illicit activities. However, we cannot overlook the fact that the essence of Mafia code of honour, more precisely omerta' or silence, literally means "the ability to be man" and rigidly rejects any "feminine qualities". Thus, "the role that Cosa Nostra imposes on women simply perpetuates traditional roles and models, denying to women every real power or influence inside the organization and particularly hindering every possibility of achieving freedom and equality" (De Pretis 1996, 13).

Then, we can ask ourselves "(...) why these women do not think that the real emancipation happens exactly when they decide to collaborate with the judicial system (...)" (Sibert 1996 in De Pretis 1996, 13), when the desire for legality breaks links and helps them to escape from the world in which they lived before. However, this process is slowly taking place. A considerable part of the day-to-day anti-Mafia drive is female. The call for action implicit in the narratives of women who have turned state's evidence presents a new alternative for Mafia women who might be disillusioned with the organization but who might not know how to break away from its

culture of violence. This willingness of women to break the code of silence and become informants of the State has brought hope to Italians who are starting to believe that the Mafia is not invincible.

**The code of honour – "omertá" excludes women from Mafia organizations in principle.**



**Vocabulary:**

admission = Aufnahme  
 prolific = erfolgreich  
 to perpetuate = aufrechterhalten, bewahren  
 to hinder = aufhalten, behindern

## Zusammenfassung

*Der Artikel untersucht die Rolle und die Bedeutung von Frauen innerhalb der Mafia und ihr Auftreten gegen diese kriminelle Organisation.*

*Die geschäftlichen Aktivitäten der Mafia sind vorwiegend eine Sache von Männern, die ein beachtenswertes Talent für Gerissenheit, Grausamkeit, Mord und Körperverletzung entwickelt haben. Frauen blieben über lange Jahre größtenteils unauffällig im Hintergrund, oder wie Wissenschaftler sagen, sie blieben "unsichtbar". Die Tatsache, dass die Mafia eine geheime, kriminelle Männerorganisation ist, ist von Bedeutung, wenn man von einem subjektiven Blickpunkt ausgeht und denjenigen zuhört, die die Mafia erlebt haben. Es ist ein bekanntes Faktum, dass nur Männer Mitglieder der Mafia werden können, Frauen werden nur durch die Beziehung zu einem Mann der Mafia Teil dieser kriminellen Organisation.*

*Es kann angenommen werden, dass jene Grenze, die über die Zugehörigkeit von Mann und Frau zur Mafia entscheidet, eine formelle Zeremonie ist, bei der jeder männliche Novize einen strengen Eid der Treue und des Schweigens (omertá) zu schwören hat. Diese Art der Unterscheidung ist jedoch nur eine Formsache, die schon oft dazu geführt hat, dass von der Gesellschaft angenommen wird, dass Frauen belanglos für die Mafia seien und von den Aktivitäten ihrer Männer nichts wüssten. Ganz im Gegenteil engagieren sich Frauen durchaus in der Mafia, entweder weil sie "zufällig" in gewaltsame Zwischenfälle verwickelt oder unabsichtlich Zeugen einer Straftat wurden, oder direkt involviert waren. Während im Jahr 1990 nur eine Frau in Sizilien auf Grund von Verbindungen mit der Mafia angeklagt wurde, stieg die Zahl im Jahre 1995 bereits auf 89. Darüber hinaus gab es einen Zuwachs bei angezeigten Fällen im Bereich der Drogen-*

*delikte (Drogenbesitz und Drogenhandel) von 37 Fällen im Jahr 1994 auf 422 Fälle im darauf folgenden Jahr. Ein erheblicher Anstieg ist weiters bei der Anzahl von Verurteilungen von Frauen im Bereich der Geldwäsche festzustellen, von 15 Fällen im Jahr 1994 auf 106 im Jahre 1995. Diese Daten scheinen einen fundamentalen Wandel in der Rolle der Frau zu bestätigen. Man kann sogar behaupten, dass die Teilnahme von Frauen an den kriminellen Aktivitäten der Mafia eine Krise in dieser geheimen Organisation markiert.*

*So wurden durch die hohe Anzahl von Verhaftungen von äußerst erfolgreichen Mafiosi besonders im letzten Jahrzehnt deren Frauen zu wesentlichen Boten zwischen den Strafvollzugsanstalten und der Außenwelt und begannen somit für bestimmte Bereiche unerlaubter Aktivitäten die Verantwortung zu übernehmen. Jedoch darf dennoch die Tatsache nicht übersehen werden, dass der wesentlichste Punkt des Mafia Ehrenkodex, präziser "omertá" oder "Schweigen", wörtlich "die Fähigkeit ein Mann zu sein" bedeutet und vehement jede Art von "Mafia-Aktivitäten von Frauen" zurückweist. "Die Rolle, die die Cosa Nostra den Frauen aufbürdet, hält einfach die traditionellen Rollen und Modelle aufrecht und verweigert den Frauen jede Art von echter Macht oder Einfluss innerhalb der Organisation (...)" (De Pretis 1996,12). Man muss sich laut Sibert (Sibert 1996) deshalb fragen, "(...) warum sich diese Frauen nicht bewusst sind, dass echte Emanzipation genau dann geschieht, wenn sie sich dazu entscheiden mit der Justiz zusammen zu arbeiten (...)", dann wenn bei den Frauen das Verlangen nach legalen Beziehungen durchbricht und ihnen diese Zusammenarbeit helfen kann aus der Welt, in der sie zuvor gelebt haben, auszubrechen. Man darf dabei allerdings nicht vergessen,*

*dass solche Abspaltungsprozesse langsam vor sich gehen.*

*Ein beachtlicher Teil der tagtäglichen Anti-Mafia-Kampagne wird dennoch schon von Frauen geprägt. Der Aufruf, gegen die Mafia und ihre Strukturen tätig und Zeugen für den Staat zu werden, präsentiert eine neue Alternative für Mafia-Frauen, die nicht wissen, wie sie aus dieser Gewaltdkultur ausbrechen können. Diese Bereitschaft der Frauen, den Schweigecode zu brechen und Informantin des Staates zu werden, hat den Italienern Hoffnung gebracht und bewegt sie zu glauben, dass die Mafia nicht unbesiegbar ist.*

Frauen blieben über lange Jahre  
größtenteils unauffällig im  
Hintergrund, oder wie  
Wissenschaftler sagen, sie  
blieben "unsichtbar".

## Literaturhinweise

Diese Art der Unterscheidung ist jedoch nur eine Formsache, die schon oft dazu geführt hat, dass von der Gesellschaft angenommen wird, dass Frauen belanglos für die Mafia seien und von den Aktivitäten ihrer Männer nichts wüssten.

Man kann sogar behaupten, dass die Teilnahme von Frauen an den kriminellen Aktivitäten der Mafia eine Krise in dieser geheimen Organisation markiert.

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picture: Assassination to falcone. [www.maxplanck.de/.../paoliFalcone/Web\\_Zoom.jpeg](http://www.maxplanck.de/.../paoliFalcone/Web_Zoom.jpeg), 26.04.2005.

picture: Giovanni Falcone. [www.sperimentaleLeonardo.it/.../LA%20MAFIA.htm](http://www.sperimentaleLeonardo.it/.../LA%20MAFIA.htm), 26.04.2005.

**Violent Mafia disputes have posed a huge problem for security agencies in Italy for decades.**



### Anmerkungen:

<sup>1</sup> The most obvious examples are those of Ninetta Bagarella, wife of Toto' Riina, Grazia Minniti, wife of Nitto Santapaola, murdered in a vendetta against her husband, and Severia Benedetta Palazzolo, wife of Bernardo Provenzano, who is still hiding. See Sibert, R. (1996: 107-122).

<sup>2</sup> Tommaso Buscetta, a Sicilian mafia boss, was the first to collaborate with Public Prosecutor Giovanni Falcone. He revealed that what was referred to, as a "set of cultural attitudes and behaviours" by law enforcement agents, was in reality a secret society named Cosa Nostra.

<sup>3</sup> For example, Grazia Minniti, the wife of the boss Nitto Santapaola, later killed in the war between rival clans, once decided to "pardon" a man who, ignoring her identity, had made her some sexual proposals. She did not tell her husband, saving the life of the man. Nevertheless, another Mafioso came to know, and the man, (actually by mistake his brother) was shot in his legs (repentant Antonino Calderone, in: De Pretis (1996, 10).

Jedoch darf dennoch die Tatsache nicht übersehen werden, dass der wesentlichste Punkt des Mafia Ehrenkodex, präziser "omertá" oder "Schweigen", wörtlich "die Fähigkeit ein Mann zu sein" bedeutet und vehement jede Art von "Mafia-Aktivitäten von Frauen" zurückweist.

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