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Calabria Described By Cesare Lombroso

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Abstract

This article delves into the criminal anthropology of Calabria, employing a comprehensive methodological approach rooted in Cesare Lombroso's pioneering work "In Calabria" (Lombroso, 1898). The study meticulously examines various aspects, including lifestyle, cultural norms, traditions, and criminality. Methodologically, archival and historical analyses, socio-anthropological approaches, and statistical assessments are utilized to create a multifaceted perspective on Calabria's criminal anthropology. Lombroso's observations provide a detailed portrayal of Calabria's rugged landscape, dominant fishing activities, and unique geographical features, enriching our understanding of the region's socio-economic and cultural dynamics. The results offer valuable insights into the historical, cultural, and social factors influencing crime formation in this distinctive Italian region. The purpose of this article is to outline the main characteristics and features of Calabrian life and its criminal phenomenon, which underpinned the Calabrian criminal tradition. As a result, this tradition gave rise to one of the most powerful organizations in the world, characterized by parameters such as effective philosophy, management, and the establishment of business relationships.

Keywords

Cesare Lombroso, Calabria, anthropology, Calabrian crime, Calabrian lifestyle, philosophy of southern Italy, Calabrian culture, Ndrangheta, Calabrian subculture

Introduction

Currently, a wide range of interdisciplinary research is focused on the examination of Italian criminal organizations (Buonanno & Pazzona, 2014; Calderoni et al., 2017; Catino, 2015; Lavorgna & Sergi, 2014; Pomara et al., 2015). Amidst various scientists who studied

the 'Ndrangheta—the Calabrian criminal subculture—the one most resistant to changes, the most powerful and widespread around the world, few have researched the features of its origin and the circumstances of its formation. Since the exact date of the formation of this criminal structure is not precisely known due to the absence of written sources and the impossibility of accurately tracing the historical chain of formation, among other reasons, the history of the origin of the original form of this organization is attributed to the beginning of the formation of the criminal tradition in Calabria, marking the mass emergence of crime as a phenomenon.

Therefore, to thoroughly study the nature and causes of the emergence of the Calabrian criminal tradition, it is necessary to delve into the conditions and way of life of the people of that period. These factors, among others, formed the basis for the development of an effective philosophy in southern Italy. An extremely useful and important source of information in this aspect is the observations on Calabrian life, culture, and everyday life made by the renowned anthropologist Cesare Lombroso (1898), which served as the foundation for the book "In Calabria."

Cesare Lombroso, renowned as the "father" of criminal anthropology, encompassed roles as a physician, psychiatrist, researcher, and trailblazer. Notably, he held a prominent stature as one of the preeminent European spiritualists of his era. His intellectual journey was profoundly shaped by physiognomy, an ancient discipline, as well as ideas stemming from the prevalent theory of social Darwinism during the 19th century (Fedele & Baldii, 1988, p. 66).

Born in Verona, Italy, in 1835, Lombroso hailed from a devout Jewish family. His medical studies veered towards atheistic materialism, a subject diligently explored by scientific luminaries of the time. At 31, he assumed a professorship at the University of Pavia, and in 1871, he was entrusted with the leadership of an asylum in Pesaro. It was during this period that he formulated his doctrine of the criminal individual, prompting an examination into the physical attributes of inmates and wrongdoers. Subsequent to reflection and meticulous observation, he deduced that specific bodily anomalies both define and unveil criminal inclinations (Musumeci, 2012). His writings are still of interest to researchers today (Gatti & Verde, 2012; see also Bénézech et al., 2016; Ciliberti et al., 2018; Kushner, 2011).

Lombroso's military service dispatched him to Calabria for a three-month stint. Here, he embarked on investigations into delinquency, with a specific focus on scrutinizing the tattoos of soldiers and other criminal markings that distinguished the "dishonest" from the "honest" soldier. Yet, Lombroso realized that comprehending criminal nature necessitated more than just a single aspect like tattoos. It entailed the identification of a diverse array of attributes and features encompassing the region, its populace's disposition, local living conditions, and distinctive lifestyle traits. By this juncture, Lombroso had already displayed an interest in criminality; for instance, he had exhibited himself as a collector and classifier of various artifacts, a researcher, and a scholar. Consequently, his observations in Calabria propelled him to undertake the composition of his work "In Calabria" (which was published later). Notably, the manuscript itself was nearly finalized by 1862, yet Lombroso subsequently reevaluated certain statements, deeming them "irreverent and unsuitable" (Lombroso, 1898).

Within his work, Cesare Lombroso (1898) meticulously scrutinized the multifaceted aspects of Calabria during that period, encompassing the populace's lifestyle, cultural norms, traditions, to some extent their behaviors, philosophy, and psychological inclinations. He delved into geographic features, primary livelihoods, sustenance methods, educational pursuits, marital customs, hygiene practices, and propensity towards prevalent ailments. Notably, his comprehensive observations encompassed a comprehensive exploration of criminality in Calabria, supplemented by statistical data concerning principal criminal acts, prison condi-

tions, and other noteworthy peculiarities. This data stands as a significant contribution to the study of the criminal subculture of Calabria. It is important to mention that in contemporary research, we discover compelling reasoning supporting the selection of this analytical approach (McCabe, 2012).

Methods

This article employs a comprehensive methodological approach to analyze the criminal anthropology of Calabria. To ensure an objective and thorough understanding of the topic, various research methods were applied. The archival method involved scrutinizing primary sources, particularly Cesare Lombroso's work "In Calabria" (Lombroso, 1898) which served as the foundation for grasping the historical and cultural context of the region and the specificities of criminal life.

Historical analysis was undertaken to explore Calabria's development as a cultural and social phenomenon, focusing on the region's structure within the context of crime. Adopting a socio-anthropological approach facilitated the examination of cultural norms, lifestyles, and worldviews of the people of Calabria. This enabled a generalization of how attitudes contributing to the development of criminal traditions are shaped. Statistical analysis of crime data in Calabria aided in quantifying the extent and characteristics of criminal activity. Comparative analysis across different historical periods and social conditions in Calabria allowed for tracing the evolution of crime and changes in the criminal subculture.

The outlined methodology culminated in the creation of a multidimensional and objective perspective on the criminal anthropology of Calabria, drawing upon a diverse range of sources and analytical methods. This conceptual framework enables a comprehensive exploration and understanding of the influence of historical, cultural, and social factors on the formation of crime in this distinctive region of Italy.

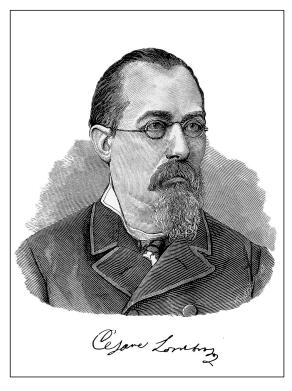


FIGURE 1. CESARE LOMBROSO

Results

Lombroso (1898) provides an intricate portrayal of Calabria, characterizing it as a rugged expanse within the southern realm of the Italian peninsula. According to the scholar's observations, the inhabitants of this region are predominantly occupied with fishing endeavors across the Ionian Sea, the Tyrrhenian Sea, and the entire expanse of the territory, reaching up to the formidable peak of Aspromonte. The landscape features two densely populated coastal areas adorned with expansive slopes, nourished by rivulets and streams. The preexisting harbors were beset with hazards, rendering them unsuitable for extensive trade; furthermore, the treacherous sea currents often posed risks, isolating Calabria from the more civilized world. In response to this isolation, the introduction of a railway system became doubly advantageous.

Lombroso duly acknowledges the presence of exceptional water bodies and beneficial sulfur springs in locales like Gerace, Cassano allo Ionio, Melissa, Palestrina, Sersale, Crotone, Strongoli, San Nicola, Pallagorio, Polistena, and Ferretto. Ore extraction was practiced in quarries situated in Parenti, Girifalco, Amaroni, Gasparina, Olivadi, and Pizzo. Notably, three saltwater springs emerged at Zagarise: one featuring sulfur and alum, another containing sodium sulfate, and a third characterized by alum, utilized for leather tanning. Sellia boasted a reservoir rich in sodium sulfate, yielding the renowned "Sellia salts." The waters of San Biase, Guardia, and Gerace showcased numerous therapeutic attributes, drawing a multitude of infirm individuals seeking recuperation each year (Lombroso, 1898).

Much akin to other explorers who extolled the exceptional allure and opulence of Calabria, Lombroso also takes note of the distinctive terrain, climatic conditions, and fertile soil. As a counterbalance to human inattention, the natural world seems to flourish remarkably across cultivated and less cultivated expanses alike. Prickly cacti adorn the most desolate and rocky coastlines, olive trees thrive notably in Gioia del Colle, and in Reggio Calabria, the unparalleled essence of orange and bergamot emanates a unique, intoxicating aroma. Abundant blooms of agave, along with Castor, milkweed, and crocus, grace the landscape. The history of the harbour of Reggio Calabria harbor is still of research interest today (Consoli, 2016). Vineyards are cultivated in Sant'Eufemia a Maiella, while mountainous terrains harbor dense forests of walnut, ash, pear trees, chestnuts, oaks, firs, and ferns. Notably in Reggio and Palmi, sericulture is practiced alongside the growth of aloe, lemons, cacti, agave, olives, and saffron. Essential commodities encompass oil, wine, hemp, rice, licorice, legumes, and wheat (Lombroso, 1898).

Cotton cultivation is relatively prevalent, particularly in the province of Castrovillari and the plains. However, textile mills for cotton and wool, as well as other similar workshops, are notably absent, along with any prospects for their establishment. Catanzaro gained renown for its textile production, reaping substantial profits from items like curtains, brocades, and especially silk velvets woven on its looms. This craft evolved into an art form in the region, garnering fame well beyond Italy's borders. Unfortunately, the industry is currently dwindling for numerous reasons, with only a handful of operational looms mostly churning out imitations. The last display of Catanzaro silk fabrics was held in Rome in 1887 and was met with particular admiration.

The impoverished population, largely of Spanish descent, exhibits a pronounced inclination towards idleness. This trait has led them to maintain a grip on some productive industries. However, significant harm was inflicted by the Bourbons, who deliberately isolated Calabria through inadequate road networks. This isolation reignited deep-seated enmity between the Calabrians and their Sicilian neighbors, with shared roots, ancestry, and language. During times of upheaval, convicts were relocated between the regions; during periods of tranquility,

the least skilled laborers were transferred. The animosity became so deeply ingrained that peaceful coexistence between the factions was unattainable for years.

The Bourbons, fostering and even endorsing the workers' discontent, established new governments tailored solely to protect the upper echelons. In doing so, they lost their sense of fairness, frequently leading the affluent to impede the interests of artisans and settlers. Each faction insisted on its own entitlements and, in turn, sought to rob the other (Lombroso, 1898).

Lombroso (1898) references the insights of French historian Georges Goyau (1898), who documented how the partition of public assets initiated during the French Revolution failed to genuinely and enduringly disrupt estates and farms in Metaponto, Sibari, and Crotone. It is also crucial to acknowledge that from that era onward, economic activity held little rationale, given the scarcity of even basic tools, capital for production, and other necessary prerequisites. Due to malaria and agricultural decline, farmers were compelled to relocate to urban areas, subsequently incurring housing rent expenses and losing a substantial portion of their workday commuting from the city to remote farms and back. This culminated in a sustained reduction of already modest opportunities and incomes.

As documented by Cesare Lombroso (1898), the economic conditions prevailing in Calabria can be found in Oliva's work, "Discorso inaugurale del Tribunale" (1895-96). During that period, both the Calabrian land and its inhabitants were subject to a range of hardships and deprivations, which, for the peasant class, often took on the most severe forms. The bourgeoisie of the middle class, motivated by their mentality and inclinations, sought to rapidly establish conditions conducive to prosperity and substantial property growth through various means, sometimes resorting to less than honest strategies.

However, the wealth accumulated by a select few, often through unjust means, failed to benefit the working class. In fact, it caused significant harm by expropriating the sources of production – the very foundations of social prosperity. These circumstances contributed to the desperation experienced by the lower class, leading to the emergence of tendencies and inclinations toward criminal activity. This was sometimes a result of anti-authority struggles, as individuals attempted to break free from the shackles of an unjust fate, which Cesare Lombroso (1898), the eminent anthropologist, saw as a manifestation of human injustice.

After perusing Domenico Ruiz's "Discorso inaugurale per l'anno giuridico 1890," Lombroso (1898) observes that numerous feudal strongholds and estates were either declining or transitioning into bourgeois domains. Consequently, many noble families were compelled to leave their mountain abodes and relocate to urban areas, which were already under the control of the military. Fueled by their own pride and power, the army held a sense of disdain toward them, aiming to blur the lines between the remaining bourgeoisie and the peasant class. However, the path to progress lay in elevating the masses from poverty and providing them with gainful employment. Thus, wealth became concentrated in the hands of a privileged few, who, on one hand, obstructed production while, on the other hand, unnecessarily expanded it through a maniacal usurpation of land for their own needs. As a result, the focus shifted away from issues concerning cultural development and the preservation of traditions. Instead, the emphasis was placed on meeting the basic needs of the population and enhancing public welfare (Lombroso, 1898).

Consequently, whereas in other regions the wealth of the privileged few flowed like a rejuvenating stream, breathing life into fields and fostering fertility, in Calabria, it was a destructive torrent that swept them off their feet. These times are often remembered with a mix of fear and awe, as they were marked by numerous homicides, robberies, and wrongful acts brought about by the prevailing injustice. A popular saying of the era encapsulated the sentiment: "A bull for a year is better than a bull for ten years." The essence was that for a

Calabrian during that period, short-term gains achieved through criminal means seemed more preferable than investing sustained effort over the long term to attain future benefits (Lombroso, 1898).

Cesare Lombroso (1898) further highlights the harsh and somber conditions of Calabria through the following fact: In the Catanzaro court alone, 104 verdicts were issued for the sale of furniture to repay debts, and 151 cases involved seizures of real estate as collateral. Securities transactions numbered 701 cases, including 83 for debts not exceeding 50 lire, 91 for debts not exceeding 100 lire, 236 for debts not exceeding 1000 lire, and 200 for debts exceeding 1000 lire. These figures nearly doubled when considering the rest of the courts as well.

Nonetheless, a significant portion of these activities was not carried out solely by ruthless tax collectors. Debt collectors, in exchange for a modest fee, undertook the task of collecting taxes while also imposing their own rates for fines, thus profiting from the endeavor. They employed a range of illegal methods, skillfully veiling their actions within elaborate legal frameworks. Often, an entire group of "messengers" was enlisted to carry out the debt collection process, which further boosted profits and ultimately devastated the debtors. Furniture was sold at exceedingly low prices due to premeditated auctions, with the buyers often being collaborators or even accomplices of the debt collectors (Lombroso, 1898).

Analyzing the societal landscape that had taken shape in Calabria during this period, Lombroso (1898) arrived at the conclusion that there was little hope for cooperative associations in the region. Although the number of such associations grew – from two registered in 1989 to 41 by 1894 – only 18 of them were mutual cooperatives. Even among these, many eventually fell under the sway of larger associations with greater capital. Such births, transformations, and takeovers often left those involved harboring feelings of resentment and a desire for vengeance.

Year	Number of illiterates
1872	88
1877	85
1881	85
1887	82
1889	82
1890	81
1891	81

TABLE 1. NUMBER OF ILLITERATES PER 100 PERSONS FROM 1872-1891.

In the backdrop of their social existence, religious rituals remained the sole sphere where common people could channel their imagination. As recounted by Lombroso (1898), a young man once informed him that the true liberals of the region had been participants in the Brotherhood of St. Paul since 1848, engaging in covert activities collectively.

Cesare Lombroso (1898) also embarked on efforts to delve into the prevalence of crime in the area. Notably, in Calabria, both firearms and knives were used to perpetrate homicides. Similar to Lombroso's observations, other researchers frequently highlight and elaborate on the long-standing inclination toward weapon use in the region. As articulated by Italian literary historian and politician Luigi Settembrini, the art that all Calabrians, from the wealthiest to the poorest beggar, are proficient in, is the handling of weapons (Placanica, 1999).

Nearly everyone in the area was armed, and those who possessed more than two rifles commanded greater respect and status. During Lombroso's stay, he encountered two mayors and two elected chancellors of public safety who had previously been convicted of murder. Criminals, including thieves, communicated using their own specialized jargon, which Lombroso identified as the "Amascan" language. Interestingly, he noted that this language was also spoken by educated individuals in Calabria (Lombroso, 1898).

Types of crime	Indicator	Commentary	
Murders	25.88	(100,000, Kingdom 18.24)	
Bodily injury	602.50	(100,000, highest in Kingdom average 258.59)	
Crimes against morality	38.80	(100,000, highest in Kingdom average 18.04)	
Robbery and blackmail	5.88	(100,000, one of the lowest in the Kingdor with an average of 8.41)	
Theft	435.51	(100,000, Kingdom 862.83)	
Fraud and deception	77.35	(100,000, Kingdom 66.44)	
Coin counterfeiting	22.61	(100,000, the lowest of all rates in Kingdo 38.42; so with the maximum number injuries, crimes against morality, it mit imizes robbery and coin counterfeiting	

TABLE 2. STATISTICS ON DIFFERENT TYPES OF CRIME IN CALABRIA PER 100,000 INHABITANTS FROM 1890 TO 1892

For a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the emerging Italian civilization, Cesare Lombroso (1898) recommends consulting the Judicial and Criminal Statistics for 1894 provided in Table 2 (Italia: Direzione generale della statistica, 1894). The prevalence and occurrence of criminal activities are also depicted in the criminal statistics (Italia: Direzione generale della statistica, 1895). As an illustration, in 1893, following Catania and Caltanissetta, the rates in Calabria exceeded those of moral crimes in all Italian provinces. Specifically, Catanzaro reported 39 cases and Cosenza 38 cases per 100,000 inhabitants. In terms of other crimes, Reggio Calabria registered 702 cases, Catanzaro 609 cases per 100,000 inhabitants. Moreover, there were 182 recorded cases per 100,000 inhabitants concerning fines and the use of firearms. Conversely, Calabria exhibited the lowest rates in coin counterfeiting, threats, and blackmail, and a relatively lower rate in theft. The chronology of crimes and their corresponding rates for the years 1891 to 1894 are provided in Table 3.

Types of crime	1890 y.	1891 y.	1892 y.	1893 y.	1894 y.
Resistance to authority	620	740	790	735	780
Coin counterfeiting and public acts	320	312	254	430	474
Crimes against morality	480	470	520	540	588
Murders	320	340	330	352	340
Bodily Injuries	7300	8000	7900	7400	8000
Grand larceny	6000	7500	5400	5600	5700
Robbery and extortion	80	63	89	80	80
Deception and fraud	8300	9100	9300	1030	8700
Usurpation and damage	4500	4500	3580	3500	3700

TABLE 3. ACTS RECORDED

These figures unmistakably reveal a consistent and growing trend in violent crimes, specifically blood-related offenses, each year. Crimes related to usurpation, injury, fraud, deceit, robbery, extortion, theft, and murder have maintained a stable level, albeit with variations between different years. Cases of injury, coin counterfeiting, public criminal acts, and crimes against morality have demonstrated a noticeable increase over the years. This suggests that, in the aftermath of the Revolution, Calabria has added to its repertoire of crimes those which were present in other civilized nations.

Curiously, "the inclination toward committing murder did not align with a martial spirit" (referring to military and armed forces). As outlined in Military Anthropometry by Ridolfo Livi (1896), Calabrians were underrepresented in the ranks of officers and students of military academies, accounting for a rate of only 28.8%, the lowest in the entire Kingdom.

Drawing insights from Domenico Ruiz's Inaugural Discourse for the Judicial Year 1895 in Catanzaro, Lombroso (1898) inferred that the surge in violent crimes was linked to exorbitant feudal taxes. In defense, Calabrians wielded personal weapons, sometimes in response to insults, a necessity for survival. Consequently, akin to the Middle Ages, inhabitants of the region considered carrying weapons a fundamental practice. However, many other crimes, Ruiz observes, are more clearly contrived than genuine (Lombroso, 1898).

The reported "500 trials for various offenses" are often mere absurdities or cases driven by greed, such as seeking revenge over disputed land use. However, for instances involving "manifestations of violence," as Ruiz contends, legal measures must be taken to rectify deviations from established norms. Further data indicates that the "370 recorded cases of insult and defamation" stem from a burgeoning form of speculation that is increasingly prevalent each year.

Due to the harsh circumstances, a significant number of Calabria's inhabitants turned to looting and pillaging in a desperate attempt to secure subsistence. The dire conditions compelled them to target peasants in pursuit of money or means of survival. During this period, prisons were often unsanitary, lacking supervision, toilets, proper lighting, and even water. Consequently, outbreaks of typhoid and other diseases frequently ravaged the detention centers. Numerous prisoners were held in cells on the ground floor, effectively at street level, allowing them to communicate with passersby, shouting complaints, prayers, and sometimes even audacious threats against those who walked by (Lombroso, 1898).

Discussion

Cesare Lombroso's exploration of the phenomenology of Calabria directs attention to how the region's distinctive historical and cultural attributes have shaped its criminal subculture. The focus is on understanding how deeply ingrained elements in Calabrian history and culture, such as economic adversity, social inequity, and limited education, have played a pivotal role in the emergence of criminal activities. These factors, coupled with cultural norms like familial ties and religious beliefs, laid the foundation for the region's criminal traditions. It is noteworthy that socio-economic challenges, including poverty and limited economic opportunities, contributed to the development of criminal tendencies among the local populace. The geographical isolation and dearth of opportunities have fostered an environment conducive to the growth of crime.

Significant attention is warranted on how the criminal subculture of Calabria has not only preserved its traditions but has also undergone adaptations to meet the challenges of modernity and evolving conditions. The emergence of criminal groups like the 'Ndrangheta is a direct outcome of these historical and cultural processes, deserving distinct contemplation. It is crucial to underscore that a comprehensive understanding of Calabria's criminal culture necessitates considering a myriad of factors, ranging from historical and cultural traditions to prevailing socio-economic conditions.

Furthermore, acknowledging the significance of comprehending Calabrian identity and its impact on the formation of criminal traditions is imperative. Lombroso's study underscores the importance of elements such as religious beliefs, family values, and social norms interacting with economic and social conditions to create a unique milieu for the development of crime.

Equally noteworthy is Lombroso's recognition of the impact of Calabria's physical geography and climatic conditions on its socio-economic evolution. The challenging natural conditions, coupled with restricted economic prospects, played a role in shaping a harsh living environment, subsequently influencing the emergence of criminal traditions in the region.

In summary, the study underscores the intricate and multi-dimensional nature of Calabria's formation of criminal culture. This intricate process results from a distinctive amalgamation of historical, cultural, social, and economic factors.

Conclusions

This article delves into the prominent features and attributes that pertain to the criminal landscape of Calabria and the circumstances that led to its emergence. It meticulously outlines the living conditions and way of life of the region's inhabitants. Worth noting is that this article is a product of an in-depth analysis of the previously mentioned source within the framework of studying Italy's criminal traditions. As such, it highlights the key statements, references, statistics, and descriptions directly related to the origins of criminal activity and the formation of criminal traditions.

Consequently, the work authored by Cesare Lombroso (1898) holds a distinctive value as a unique written source shedding light on Calabria's culture, history, living conditions, and the underlying factors contributing to the development of criminal traditions. Remarkably, the book "In Calabria" had not been translated into Russian up to the year 2020, making this article a highly pertinent and invaluable resource for researching Italy's criminal traditions, particularly the criminal subculture of Calabria, within the Russian-speaking academic sphere.

The various excerpts from Lombroso's work vividly capture the essence of Calabrian life and the prevailing conditions, starting from 1862 when Lombroso embarked on his investiga-

tions in Calabria (Lombroso, 1898). These observations intricately paint a picture of Calabria's remarkably bountiful and distinct landscape, juxtaposed with the immense challenges and destitution faced by its inhabitants. These observations provide insight into the resilience, morality, mentality, and psychology of the Calabrians. They also underscore the historical circumstances and external factors that profoundly shaped the region, subsequently influencing its development, philosophy, psychology, and way of life.

In the present day, we are confronted with a stark reality: the criminal subculture of Calabria, known as the Ndrangheta, has expanded its reach worldwide, infiltrating numerous facets of society and amassing substantial wealth, as documented by Gratteri and Nicaso (2019). This organization has demonstrated the capability to extend its influence across industries, infrastructure, and more (Gratteri & Nicaso, 2007). The Ndrangheta endures to this day, showcasing its adaptability to changing circumstances – a trait that traces back to the distant 1860s. A comparison between Cesare Lombroso's depiction of Calabria and its inhabitants and the contemporary accounts of the Ndrangheta's activities, as outlined in the works of researchers like Nicola Gratteri and Antonio Nicaso, reveals stark differences (Gratteri & Nicaso, 2007, 2019). This contrast highlights the significant achievements these individuals have attained through their established practices, upbringing, way of life, adept negotiation skills, and their capacity to infiltrate various spheres of activity. It is important to underscore, however, that the author views the criminal dimension of their activities as inherently negative and incompatible with the values of our civilized society.

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