

# A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CULTURAL ASPECTS OF ORGANISED CRIME IN TWO COUNTRIES – CHINA AND ITALY – AND THEIR FUTURES WITHIN A TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL NETWORK

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## ABSTRACT

*The BBC World Service recently broadcast a series of investigative reports detailing various transnational criminal trades, including the trafficking of women and children into the illegal sex trade, drug smuggling, the trade in human body parts, money laundering and much more (BBC World Service, 2002). The United Nations Convention Against Organised Crime in 2000 highlighted the role of trafficking groups and criminal organisations in these illicit trades, bringing to attention the fact that serious crime is not simply a series of random individual acts, but is often a carefully organised trade, with the obvious feature of it being both violent and highly illegal.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The BBC World Service recently broadcast a series of investigative reports detailing various transnational criminal trades, including the trafficking of women and children into the illegal sex trade, drug smuggling, the trade in human body parts, money laundering and much more (BBC World Service, 2002). The United Nations Convention Against Organised Crime in 2000 highlighted the role of trafficking groups and criminal organisations in these illicit trades, bringing to attention the fact that serious crime is not simply a series of random individual acts, but is often a carefully organised trade, with the obvious feature of it being both violent and highly illegal.

Two of the most notoriously violent criminal gangs in the world are the Sicilian Mafia and the Chinese Triads, made famous by films such as the Godfather and Enter the Dragon, capturing the imagination of the audience with their secret initiation rituals and mysterious codes. These two organisations have been noted as two of the most successful and powerful criminal organisations in the world (Castells, 2000 and Paoli, 2004), and this has been attributed to their long histories and strong cultural identities (Castells, 2000, Fukuyama, 1996) with the Triads and the Mafias reflecting some distinctive traits of their respective national cultures. Certain cultural features, such as the nature of the exchange of social capital, and the absence of trust in a society, have certainly contributed to the formation and growth of these two organisations (Fukuyama, 1996) generating, over time, distinctive aspects of their behaviour, such as the strict family-like loyalty and rigid hierarchical structures. These traits are the binding force between members and the framework for their success, but do they help or hinder the Mafias' and Triads' activities as part of a transnational criminal network?

The research in this dissertation is presented in the form of an extended literature review, as field work in the sphere of organised crime could be considered, at least, a little dangerous and impractical.

### *1.1 Research Question*

The aim of this dissertation is to describe the relationship between national culture and organised crime within two countries – China and Italy, in a discussion of Hofstede's cultural dimensions and Fukuyama's 'Trust' theory. The paper shall compare and contrast aspects of the national cultures of Italy and China, and the links between those aspects and the behaviour of the major criminal organisations associated with Italy and China, both within their own nation states and as part of the transnational criminal network.

## ***1.2 Defining organised crime***

This alone is a difficult task, because of the ambiguity of both words in the term 'organised crime', and although some would say that it is impossible to create a single adequate definition (Block & Chambliss, 1981) it is important to define what organised crime does **not** include, which is individual or micro-level (i.e. groups of a very few people) criminal acts such as petty theft, random acts of violence, robberies, joyriding, etc. Similarly, the crimes of rape, murder, assault and violence against property, for the sole purpose of committing those acts, are also not included. For example, Jack the Ripper and his activities do not fall into our category of organised crime, although as an individual he may have been described as 'organised'. 'Criminal conduct' within the organisations studied here, can include any of the individual crimes listed above, but the important difference is that those crimes are committed under the authority of the organisation that the individual belongs to.

McIntosh, (in Block and Chambliss, 1981, Chapter III, p118) cites the distinction between amateur and professional crime: "*Professional criminals are people whose major occupational role is a criminal one, although they may have another nominal one as well*", and an adequate summary and useful starting point for this paper is the definition given by Chow (2003, p484), which defines organised crime as:

*"A group of persons or entities acting in concert to engage in criminal conduct within an overall organisational structure and under the direction of an individual group or group of individuals"*.

### **1.2.1 Transnational Organised Crime**

Both Fukuyama (1996) and Castells (2000) have identified that in recent years the world has undergone a rapid process of modernization, both industrially and culturally. Castells dubs this the 'Information Age' in which connections between geographically distant people and societies are both quick, and easy. Just as Chinese and Italian social history has shaped the formation of the Chinese Triads and the Italian Mafias, (as we shall see later) social, political and economic events have shaped the increase in, and awareness of, transnational crime, such as the spread of free trade economics, which made it easy to hide large quantities of money from illegal imports and exports (Williams, 2001), and as a boom in legal trade occurred, so a boom in illegal trade also occurred.

It is not the case that there is a single global criminal organisation (Galeotti, 2004), rather that what were originally separate organisations operating mainly within one or two countries, are now connecting in many illegal markets, particularly in the narcotics trade: heroin, cocaine and chemically manufactured drugs (Castells, 2000). Other markets include arms, people smuggling, tobacco smuggling, and counterfeiting (Castells, 2000 and Paoli, 2004). These markets require actors in various countries in various continents, and geographical distance no longer presents such an obstacle to business, due to the

availability of IT, which presents both new tools, and new targets (Williams, 2001).

Before looking at the Chinese Triads and the Italian Mafias as part of this network though, they should be introduced.

### *1.3 Italian Organised Crime*

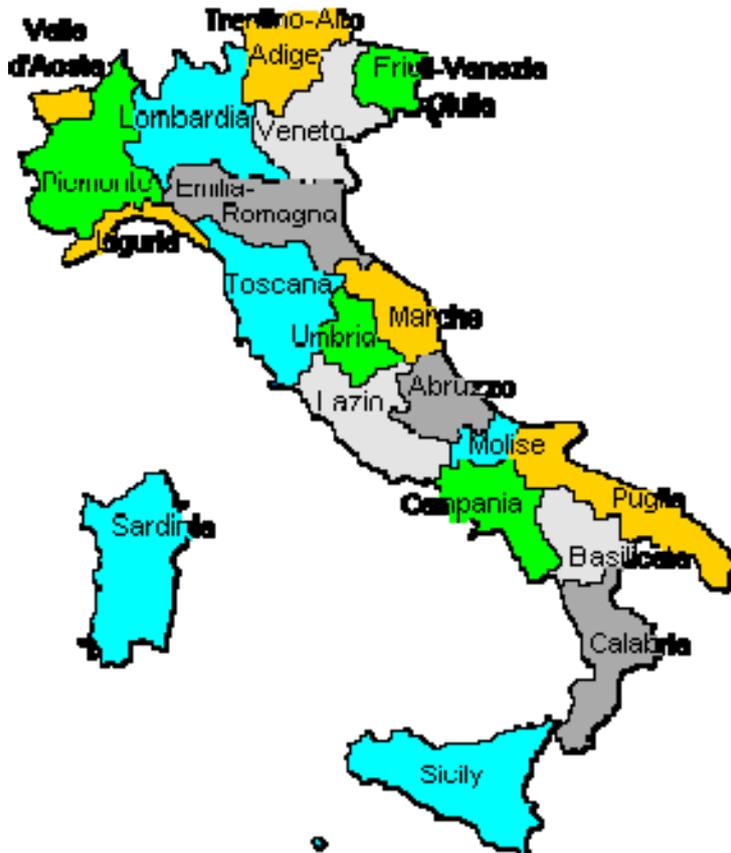


Figure 1.1 Provincial map of Italy. From [www.justtouritaly.com](http://www.justtouritaly.com)

Organised crime in Italy, as defined above, is made up of four main groups, which through the course of this project shall be known collectively as the Italian Mafias, although where required they shall be called by their individual names:

- 1) Cosa Nostra (translates to 'our thing' in English) otherwise known as the Sicilian Mafia, which comprises at least 3000 male members, operating mainly in Sicily, the island off the South coast of Italy, which is also its own Italian province (Paoli, 2004).
- 2) La 'Ndrangheta (translates to 'The Honoured Society' in English) which

comprises at least 5000 male members, operating in the province of Calabria in the South of Italy, although it has been claimed that since the capture of many of the top bosses of Cosa Nostra, membership has increased (La Sorte, 2004).

- 3) The Camorra (a general term for a secret group or society), which is a collection of independent criminal groups or gangs, operating in and around the city of Naples, in the province of Campania.
- 4) La Sacra Corona Unita, which incorporates various criminal groups in the South Eastern region of Puglia.

Groups 3 and 4 are worth noting, due to their location in the South of Italy, but neither is currently in operation as one organisation, and lack the cohesion (Paoli, 2004) to be considered as an established criminal organisation within the limits set by this project. The focus shall be placed upon Cosa Nostra and La 'Ndrangheta.

### **1.3.1 The Sicilian Mafia, an overview.**

The Sicilian Mafia has its roots in extortion within local communities, private protection, and tax enforcement (Gambetta, 1993, Sassoon, 1997), and continues to use these 'businesses' for constant revenue generation, but has been a major player in the international heroin trade since the 1950's, using their U.S. based groups to sell the Asian-grown drugs, making use of their location in the country with the highest demand for heroin (Nicaso and Lamothe, 1995, Sassoon, 1997). They have also had continued involvement in the illegal arms trade and tobacco smuggling (Dunnage, 2002).

Its members, both located in the U.S. and in Italy, refer to the Sicilian Mafia as 'Cosa Nostra', which translates to 'our thing' in English. Members know each other as 'men of honour', or Mafiosi (the singular term is Mafioso), although the latter term is usually used by outsiders.

#### **Important rules within Cosa Nostra:**

- Involvement in prostitution is prohibited;
- No changing membership into another cosca (family);
- Only Sicilian men are allowed to become members;
- No women are allowed to become members;
- No settling outside of Sicily;
- No leaving the organisation once you have been initiated as a member.

(Paoli, 2004 and Dickie, 2004)

### **1.3.2 La 'Ndrangheta, an overview.**

'Ndrangheta differs from Cosa Nostra in that groups are usually made up of immediate family relations. A recruitment strategy is virtually unnecessary, as members are usually born or married directly into it (La Sorte, 2004). 'Ndrangheta groups are known by their village or family name.

'Ndrangheta also has interests in heroin trafficking, but they have also been involved in smuggling and trafficking cocaine and marijuana from South America and North Africa (Paoli, 2004). They also retain local extortion and protection rackets, kidnapping, and the smuggling of any illicit goods, as guaranteed revenue generators, and acquiring public funds (Paoli, 2004), like Cosa Nostra. In fact, the arrests of many members of the Sicilian Mafia enabled La 'Ndrangheta to expand and gain power (La Sorte, 2004).

Capos of neighbouring districts will sometimes join forces to undertake large transactions or operations, such as contrabanding or drug smuggling (La Sorte, 2004) but are, in general, a more flexible organisation, using more entrepreneurial approaches, than Cosa Nostra (Paoli, 2004).

#### **Important Rules in La 'Ndrangheta**

- Only Calabrian men can be initiated into La 'Ndrangheta.

Having introduced the Italian criminal organisations, it is time to compare them to their Chinese counterparts.

#### ***1.4 Chinese Organised Crime***

Unlike Italy, there is only one criminal organisation within China that has successfully infiltrated the government and established itself as a legitimate power within the community, and that is the Triad group. Interestingly, the title 'Triad' is one that its members never apply to themselves; it has been attached to them by a Western interpretation of their use of numerology in their many names and symbols over the years (Booth, 1999). Triad members are known as 'Men of Hung', both by outsiders and each other. This differs somewhat from the Sicilian mafia, whose name for themselves – Cosa Nostra – was only known to outsiders after Tommaso Buscetta gave evidence to Judge Falcone in the 1970s (Dickie, 2004).

### 1.4.1 Introduction to the Chinese Triads



Figure 1.2 Provincial map of China, ([maps-of-china.net](http://maps-of-china.net))

The Chinese Triads may have one overall name, but operate as a number of separate clans, or lodges, usually based upon kinship and ancestral ties, which relates back to the village of birth of the founder members of each lodge. Hong Kong holds approximately 160,000 members, in three clans – the 14k, the Sun Yee On, and the Wo Group (Castells, 2000). Another large group called the United Bamboo has its home in Taiwan. The vast difference in membership between the Italian Mafias and the Triads is probably attributable to the correspondingly vast difference between their national populations.

Different lodges share the same hierarchical Triad structure, but each lodge, or clan, usually operates independently from the others, and, unlike the Sicilian Mafia, permission is not required for one clan to undertake a business venture without including the others (Booth, 1999).

Historically, Triad activity has been concentrated in the southern and coastal provinces of Guangdong, Fujian, Guangxi and Zhejiang, in busy ports where there was ample opportunity and cash-flow to undertake illicit business activity (Booth, 1999). But despite their long history in China, it is now in Hong Kong that most of the Triads reside, whilst continuing to do business within China itself (Chow, 2003). In recent years, more Triad groups have been found to be working across China, such as the Hua clan in the Henan province (BBC, 2001).

### **Important rules**

The Triads do not have strict explicit rules like Cosa Nostra and 'Ndrangheta, and membership can be changed from one group to another, dependant upon location, particularly moving from one country to another (Lintner, 2004). But, like Cosa Nostra, women are not permitted to be members of the Triad organisations.

### **Business interests**

Many of the Triads' main interests are shared with the Mafias – particularly in heroin trafficking from the 'Golden Triangle': where the borders of Burma, Thailand and Laos meet (Castells, 2000). However, the Triads operate a trade of at least \$16bn in counterfeit goods (Chow, 2001) and are heavily involved in human trafficking, (Schloenhardt, 2001), often using smuggling routes that have already been established for narcotics. Many of these smuggling routes make use of ports in Taiwan (Taipei), Hong Kong and Macau, where there is a known Triad presence and good access to infrastructure, as well as ineffective border controls into Burma and Taiwan (Schloenhardt, 2001). Italy simply does not have the resource of large scale manufacturing plants, so the avenue of business in counterfeiting is not open to them, and the trafficking of women into the sex trade is prohibited under the rules of Cosa Nostra (Paoli, 2004). All three organisations have repeatedly used their drug trafficking routes for tobacco smuggling (Booth, 1999, Dickie, 2004).

## ***1.5 Distinctive Characteristics of the Triads and the Italian Mafias***

There are a number of distinctive traits that all criminal organisations share, that are partly what make them so powerful, which are: "*durability over time, diversified interests, hierarchical structure, capital accumulation, reinvestment, access to political protection, and use of intimidation and violence to protect and promote their interests*" (La Sorte, 2004).

As we have seen above, the three organisations exhibit all of these traits, but in the eyes of Paoli (2004), Castells (2000) and Fukuyama (1996), the Triads and the Mafias exhibit some particularly strong cultural characteristics that are key to their notoriety and prolonged success. It is these traits that this dissertation aims to investigate in relation to the national cultures of the countries involved:

### **1.5.1 Loyalty, Silence and Collective Identities**

One of the most important aspects of the Triads and the Mafias' success is the sense of absolute loyalty that is instilled into the members as soon as they join. Both organisations perform a quasi-religious initiation ritual that is designed to create family-like ties – what Paoli (2004) terms 'brotherhood' ties – between the new member and the group. They become his new family, whether or not they are related to him by blood (which, in both

cases, they often are), and his new identity revolves completely around his role within the Mafia family or Triad clan (Paoli, 2004 and Lintner, 2004). Here are some examples of initiation rituals:

### **The Italian Mafias**

According to the testament of Tommaso Buscetta (in Dickie, 2004) the Cosa Nostra initiate is taken to a secluded place, where three men of honour from the same cosca are present. The oldest man speaks, stating that the purpose of 'quesa cosa' (this thing) is to "*protect the weak and eliminate the oppressors*". Then they prick a finger and the blood falls on a picture of the Virgin Mary. The new member must hold the burning image until it has burned out, then swear to be faithful to the principles of Cosa Nostra (Our Thing), reciting the words "*may my flesh burn like this holy picture if I am unfaithful to this oath*".

The initiation ritual for 'Ndrangheta is very similar, burning a picture of the Virgin Mary, swearing oaths of obedience, loyalty and silence (Paoli, 2004) but it is spoken quickly in the local Calabrian dialect, making it difficult even for Italians from other provinces to understand (La Sorte, 2004).

### **Triads**

Chosen members are initiated in a secret place, with a picture of their ancestral deity, where the following oath is taken, with incense burning in the room. The initiate's finger is also pricked and he must taste his own blood.

*"I shall suffer death by five hundred thunderbolts if I do not keep this oath. I will always acknowledge my Hung brothers when they identify themselves. If I ignore them I shall be killed by a myriad of swords. If I am arrested after committing an offence, I must accept my punishment and never try to implicate any of my sworn brothers. If I do, I will be killed by five hundred thunderbolts."*

(Lintner, 2004, p87)

Assuming that these details of the initiation rituals are true, there are a number of identical practices – the pricking of the finger, the symbolic use of blood, the pictures used, the threat of violence and pain if the oath is broken. The Triad initiation ritual is different in language to that of the Mafias, paying more attention to warning the initiate of the consequences of breaking the oath, whereas the Mafia ritual describes a general ethical goal of 'protecting the weak and eliminating the oppressors'. The two rituals show parallels in the use of religious ceremony as a template – the picture of the Virgin Mary and the ancestral deity representing Catholicism and Confucianism respectively.

### **1.5.2 Desire for power**

Another important similarity between Cosa Nostra, La 'Ndrangheta and the Chinese

Triads, is their continued use of protection rackets and extortion in local businesses, both as a source of income (Paoli, 2004), and a form of social control. The strong desire to exercise power and control, both over their members, and over their communities, is what makes the Triads and the Mafias different from other criminal organisations who are defined simply by their involvement in the transport, production or sale of illegal goods and services (Paoli, 2004 and Dunnage, 2002). It is what makes them, along with the Japanese Yakuza, the most powerful and complex criminal organisations in the world (Castells, 2000). Marino Mannoia, an ex Mafioso, describes it thus:

*“Do you know why I entered Cosa Nostra? Because before in Palermo I was Mr Nobody. Afterwards, wherever I went, heads lowered. And to me this is priceless.”* (Paoli, 2004, p 23)

The desire for recognition, the feeling of achieving social status, and the sense of belonging to a collective, are key motivators behind joining a criminal organisation such as the Italian Mafias (Fukuyama, 1996) or the Chinese Triads (Booth, 1999). Both of the Italian Mafia groups, and the Chinese Triads, have managed to create self-legitimising shadow states, in which they become autonomous political and economic forces (Sassoon, 1997 and Paoli, 2004), but this can only have been achieved with either an absence of, or collusion with, the state.

### **1.5.3 Relationships with/infiltration of the government**

Mafiosi have long been a part of Sicilian, and indeed Italian state institutions, often becoming members of parliament (MPs) or at least advisers to MPs, judges, police officers, lawyers, and so on (Dunnage, 2002). If they did not occupy these positions, with or without violence they could often find a way of bribing or blackmailing the person who did (Dickie, 2004), in order to exercise control over the local community. This has been the case since at least the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Chubb, 1996). Mafia ranks are rarely made up of professionally qualified people, relying instead upon people in the mid-ranks of society, such as shopkeepers, gardeners, builders and various other business owners, such as transport or haulage companies, which are often simply a legitimate façade for illegitimate business (Dunnage, 2002). There was recently an investigation into ties between the former Italian Prime Minister, Giulio Andreotti, and the Sicilian Mafia, and, although he was cleared, it would not have been the first time that a senior Italian politician had been colluding with, if not a member of, one of the Mafia organisations in Italy (Dickie, 2004).

The Triads, on the other hand, despite also running legal businesses for illegal purposes, have many well educated and professional members, such as lawyers and accountants, using their expertise almost solely for illegal purposes (Booth, 1999, Lintner, 2004). The Italian Mafias need members to not be absorbed by their daily job so they can work for them, whilst also maintaining at least a meagre living elsewhere, aiding the concealment

of Mafia business. Triads are, if it were possible, even more embedded into Chinese society than the Mafias, and in Chow's (2003) view, the economy. The professionals in a triad gang usually work only for their Triad boss, and are not motivated to work legitimately by fear of arrest because the 'front' of being a legitimate lawyer or accountant is enough - the police concentrate more upon trying to catch the street criminals than the men in the offices (Chow, 2003). The use of bribery is also common in Triad operations, for example, Lai Chan Xing, a Chinese businessman working in the Fujian province, had strong enough connections with officials of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the security services, senior police officers, border officials and a Bank of China manager in Xiamen, to pay them off and employ Triad foot soldiers to smuggle goods internationally on his behalf (Lintner, 2004).

### 1.5.4 Hierarchical Structures

One of the most notorious traits, certainly of Cosa Nostra, is the hierarchical structure, with the 'Godfather' figure sitting at the top of the pyramid. It is one of the features of a very well organised and well established criminal fraternity (Cressey, 1972).

	<b>Boss of Palermo Commission</b> Commission made up of bosses of each Mandamento (district)	
	<b>Capo di Mandamento</b> Head of the district. A mandamento is made up of three neighbouring families, or cosche	
<b>Capo di cosca</b>	<b>Capo di cosca</b> Head of the family.	<b>Capo di cosca</b>
Deputy capo and one or more <b>consigliere</b> - advisers.	Deputy capo and one or more <b>consigliere</b> - advisers	Deputy capo and one or more <b>consigliere</b> - advisers
<b>Capodecina</b> (head of ten)	<b>Capodecina</b> (head of ten)	<b>Capodecina</b> (head of ten)
Group of ten foot soldiers	Group of ten foot soldiers	Group of ten foot soldiers

Table 1.1 Organisational Structure of Cosa Nostra, from Dickie (2004).

Cosa Nostra has a fixed pyramidal structure and its members are expected to abide by strict internal rules. Orders for any business venture and/or killing must originate from at least as high as the Capo di mandamento, and entrepreneurial activity is discouraged (Paoli, 2004). Cosa Nostra has its own 'court' to deal with arguments between cosche, and incidents of rule breaking (Dickie, 2004 and Paoli, 2004).

<p><b>Capobastone</b> (head of command) Designates territory between the quintino <b>Quintino</b> – Five 'ndranghetisti sub-bosses <b>Vangelista</b> Controls a crew of picciotti, or a small neighbourhood. Has been initiated and sworn fidelity to the criminal life by swearing on the gospel. <b>Santista</b> Can earn a proportion of profits due to length of service and/or proving himself as a good picciotta <b>Picciotti</b> Foot soldier</p>
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Table 1.2 La 'Ndrangheta structure From La Sorte (2004).

Management of Principal Lodges, a confederate of a number of smaller lodges:		
	<p><b>Shan Chu (489)</b> Master of the Mountain, or Dragon Head. The overall boss, usually controlling finances.</p>	
	<p><b>Fu Shan Chu (438)</b> Deputy boss, adviser to the Shan Chu.</p>	
<p><b>Heung Chu (438)</b> Incense Master.</p>	Both Heung Chu and Sin Fung oversee promotions and initiations, and order retribution for defaulting members	<p><b>Sin Fung (438)</b> Vanguard.</p>
As part of a Principal Lodge, the Sheung Fa answers to the three ranks above, but in a smaller lodge that is not part of a consolidated group, the Sheung Fa is the highest level.		
	<p><b>Sheung Fa/Chu Chi (438)</b> Double Flower, or Snake Head The boss, usually controlling finances.</p>	
<p><b>Fu Chu Chi (432)</b> Deputy Snake Head</p>		<p><b>Cha So (432)</b>– Treasurer. This rank is unusual, as the Shan Chu or Sheung Fa usually controls finances.</p>
<p><b>Hung Kwan (426)</b> Red Pole There are many Red Poles, who act as the physical arm of the Triad lodge. They are martial arts specialists, who give out punishments, perform assassinations, or offer protection from the above.</p>	<p><b>Pak Tsz Sin (415)</b> White Paper Fan Bookkeeper or accountant, usually well educated, possibly with legal qualifications. Responsible for advising Sheung Fa and for the welfare of members and their families.</p>	<p><b>Cho Hai (432)</b> Grass Straw Sandal. A PR consultant and negotiator – responsible for liaisons between societies, and between Triad members and authorities/people outside the society. Ensures that transactions run smoothly.</p>
<p><b>Sze Kau (49)</b> Foot soldiers or workforce on the streets.</p>		

Table 1.3 Triad organisational structure, from Booth (1999).

The numerical codes next to the titles of each Triad office bearer in table 1.3 represent the numerological rank, with each one signifying a different level of responsibility (Booth, 1999).

It is apparent from Tables 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 that the Calabrian and Sicilian Mafias share their complicated pyramidal structures with the Triads, with all three organisations having prescribed job titles and roles within the group, and clear stratification of power and responsibility (Paoli, 2004), distinctly resembling that of a Weberian bureaucratic organisation or corporation.

## 2. Links between culture and organisations

### 2.1 *The Triads and the Italian Mafias as corporations.*

Gambetta (1993) views Cosa Nostra as, essentially a business enterprise, specialising in selling the service of private protection with the maximisation of profit as the motivation behind all of Cosa Nostra's activity, drawing direct comparisons between the mafia organisation and a legitimate business organisation such as an insurance broker. For example, he likens the initiation ritual to a trading license, the commodity or service being protection (in actual fact, extortion, because the person who is supposed to protect ends up becoming a threat), and behavioural traits of the mafia organisation such as secrecy, spying and the use of violence, as skills.

Similarly, Paoli (2004) describes the rigid organisational structures and the "*sharing of common cultural codes*" exhibited in the initiation rituals as "derived from the replication of corporate and cultural forms", and Williams, (2001) likens Triad-controlled Chinese immigrant communities in other countries to 'local subsidiaries of multinational corporations', which provides a starting point into examining the link between culture and organisational behaviour.

#### 2.1.1 Hofstede's cultural Dimensions

Hofstede (2005) identified five aspects of national cultures - termed cultural dimensions – that he quantified and compared in indices. His studies covered a large number of countries, including China and Italy. Whilst his study did not cover criminal organisations, some of the conclusions he drew may be useful as an initial venture into the cultural identities of the Triads and the Italian Mafias, based upon their nation states of origin.

The five cultural dimensions are:

##### **Power Distance (PDI)**

Highest: Malaysia – 104

Lowest: Austria - 11

The Power Distance Index represents the extent to which inequalities are tolerated and expected by the general population, mostly the less powerful. Large power distances mean that subordinates are very dependent upon bosses, younger people have great respect for elders and people in high status positions. **China** has a very large power distance index of **80**. **Italy** has a low power distance index in comparison, with **55**, but has one of the highest of the European countries, along with France.

### **Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI)**

Highest: Greece - 112

Lowest: Singapore - 8

Strong uncertainty avoidance would indicate a society that relies on very structured bureaucratic organisations and many rules to control employees and citizens, with a low level of trust in governing institutions. Weak uncertainty avoidance suggests a society that has a greater level of trust in governments and authorities, requiring fewer structures and rules. **Italy** exhibits a very strong UAI of **75**, whereas **China** has a weak UAI of **30**.

### **Individualism (IDV)**

Highest: United States – 91

Lowest: Guatemala – 6

This index represents the weighting towards an individualist society versus a collectivist society, with members of an individualist society focussing upon themselves and the needs of their immediate family, rather than operating as part of a cohesive extended family or community as they would in a more collectivist society, which would also tend to be fiercely patriotic. Typically, Western nations are very strongly individualist, with Eastern countries being much more collectively minded. **China** has an IDV of **20**, which is quite strongly collectivist, with **Italy** as a strongly individualist country, having a score of **76**.

### **Masculinity (MAS)**

Highest: Japan – 95

Lowest: Sweden – 5

A measure of masculinity in a society illustrates the strength of ‘masculine’ values in a society, which include: The importance of material possessions, power, strength, self-centredness, competitiveness and assertiveness. The opposite of a masculine society is one which, in general, adopts the more ‘feminine’ values to those above, i.e. modesty and a more caring and responsible role towards other citizens. Both **Italy** and **China** exhibit strongly masculine values, with scores of **70** and **66** respectively.

### **Long Term Orientation (LTO)**

This cultural dimension was a later addition to Hofstede’s original study, and is based upon the prevalence of Confucianism in the East as opposed to the West. It was only applied to twenty three countries, and although China scored the highest, with 118, Italy was not considered in the study, so this property cannot be compared.

### **2.1.2 Discussion**

Strong, stratified hierarchies are a common feature of high PDI countries, and, as both of our countries show strong hierarchies in their major criminal fraternities, it is interesting that they have such different PDI scores. Clearly there are other factors to be considered here, one of which is the Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI). The bureaucratic

organisation and strict rules of Cosa Nostra definitely show traits of a strong uncertainty avoidance, as defined by Hofstede (2005), and in many ways, the more flexible, entrepreneurial approach of the Triad groups shows the polar opposite – a weak UAI, as does the absence of formal rules within a general expectation of absolute obedience (Booth, 1999). However, the pyramidal structure and fixed career progression within the Triad clan is distinctly bureaucratic, and seems to be at odds with the weak uncertainty avoidance. It has been noted that the Mafia and the Triads both have a strong sense of collective identity (Paoli, 2004), so the high IDV score of Italy also appears to conflict.

However, Hofstede's view is that a higher level of national wealth gives a higher IDV score, and given that Italy is a developed Western capitalist country rather than an Eastern communist country on the brink of industrialisation, it is not surprising that Italy's score is higher. However, there could be a link between a stronger sense of collectivism in the Italian Mafias, and the sharp difference in wealth between the North of Italy and the South (Fukuyama, 1996, Sassoon, 1997). Other factors such as familism (Fukuyama, 1996) may also contribute to the strong collective identity. The value of patriotism in a collective society can be seen in the use of patriotic values in recruiting Triad members overseas (Williams, 2001), and was instrumental in the birth of the Triad gangs, as will be discussed later (Lintner, 2004). The masculinity scores show clear links to the values and priorities of the Italian Mafias and the Triad groups. The basic pursuit of cash profit in both cases is an obvious example of the value of material possessions, and the strong desire not just for profit but also for power and control runs parallel with the masculine values listed above (Booth, 1999, Chubb, 1996).

Upon discussion of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, it appears that applying each dimension to our two countries, although showing some clear links between individual dimensions, such as masculinity and power distance, does not show a consistent link between national cultures as Hofstede views them and the traits of the criminal organisations in those nations. Hofstede's study was, however, limited to different members of one multinational company – IBM, and although national boundaries are a useful place to start, it does not cater for the fact that there are large variations between societies within nations (clearly cultural, no date) as is particularly the case with Italy.

It is important, at this point, to highlight the fact that culture, national or otherwise, is not a static entity. The dimensions listed above, and other behavioural traits that one may associate with 'culture' have not always been the same. Hofstede (2005, p36) explains that “*societies preserve their cultural identities by passing on social rules through generations*” but these social rules are shaped and defined by social, political and economical events that have happened over the course of a society's lifetime, in short, they depend on history (Fukuyama, 1996).

Castells (2000) identifies the Italian Mafia and the Chinese Triads as being “rooted in

history and ethnicity”, and Paoli (2004) believes that it is history and culture that prevent the Italian mafias from being 'just' businesses. Both, in fact, perform far wider social roles than this, as powerful political and economic forces (Chubb, 1996 and Lintner, 2004)). But how is it that both countries have ended up with criminal organisations so deeply embedded into their political and economic systems, giving them so much power?

## ***2.2 Trust and History***

Fukuyama (1996) lays the blame firmly upon what he calls 'Low Trust Societies'. Both Italy and China have an absence of what he calls 'generalised trust', which is due, in essence, to two factors – historical events that presented opportunities for the Triads and the Mafias to take control, based around a population disillusioned with and/or neglected by central rule, and the strong sense of familism in both societies.

These factors are entwined with Putnam's theory of social capital, which must first be explained before we can continue to explore Fukuyama's 'Trust' theory.

Putnam (2000), believes that an abundance of social capital in a society is what holds it together in a positive and functional way. Social capital is exchanged in various arenas, including the family, schools, social clubs and other groups, and is the recognition that people get from others within their community for their achievements, their contribution to that community and their responsibility towards other people within it. He believes that in the western world people are becoming more and more detached from each other, and social capital is dwindling. The level of trust in a society depends heavily upon the presence of social capital, and both contribute to better economic well-being within a society (Fukuyama, 1996).

Fukuyama (1996) often groups China and Italy, along with France, together into the category of low-trust societies. This, he claims, is a result of 'overcentralised political authority', which refers to a situation in which an “*absolute emperor, monarch, or state deliberately set out to eliminate competitors for power*” (p337). This is a common theme through both Italy and China's histories:

### **2.2.1 History of the Italian Mafias**

In Italy it started as far back as the 13<sup>th</sup> century reign of Norman King Frederick II, who exercised the feudal system in southern Italy and Sicily, in which the peasantry were prevented from becoming autonomous (Fukuyama, 1996). The north was locally governed at this time, allowing social groups to organise themselves everywhere – the beginning of the difference in social capital from north to south.

When Mussolini united the North and South in the 1860's, there was a lack of state

replacement for the feudal system (Chubb, 1996). The lack of autonomy depleted spontaneous socialisation – the ability of people and groups to form ties outside the family – and without links to each other and wider society, social capital dwindled (Fukuyama, 1996). People have interpreted this lack of social capital as 'southern backwardness' (Sassoon, 1997 and Dickie, 2004), a genetic problem with people from southern Italy and Sicily, which served the Mafias well in their growth, as it brought with it an acceptance of the Mafia as a 'code of behaviour' of the south, and it was consequently ignored by authorities (Sassoon, 1997). Around this time, sly villagers began to control ownership of the lemon groves – Sicily's most valuable resource at that time, through the use of blackmail and violence (Dickie, 2004).

In both Sicily and Calabria the mafia grew, aiding the government with controlling the 'southern problem' whilst gaining their own political control (Williams, 2001). The persistent lack of social capital in the area due to the weakness of the state led to a greater need to gain it elsewhere, and the lack of legitimate options drew people toward the Mafia (Fukuyama, 1996). Its appeal lay in providing a sense of honour and social status – very masculine values - in a society where honour and status were largely absent, with the Mafia as the primary source of social capital (Dickie, 2004).

Mussolini's fascist government, of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, succeeded in restricting the activities of the Mafia somewhat, through the use of counter-violence, but the Mafias then allied themselves with the new Christian Democrats (CDC) instead, in the post-war era, during which time they entered the international heroin trade, using state money earmarked for social improvements to the South..

The Mafia were only acknowledged by outsiders, including authorities, as a criminal fraternity, in the 1970s, when Tommaso Buscetta confessed to Judge Giovanni Falcone (Dickie, 2004). It was only in the 1980s that it became a crime to be a member of the organisation or engage in mafia activity, by which point the mafia were firmly embedded into the system (Paoli, 2004).

The underlying theme, through all of this, is that the state governance was not consistent from north to south in Italy at any point, and the experience of the feudal regime had left southern Italy with a distinct lack of trust in the state, but a desperate need for guidance, which was not helped by the general absence of state and social institutions after unification, and then overcompensation during the fascist era. Through this hot-and-cold pattern of state authority, the South developed its own local authority – the Mafias.

### **2.2.2. History of the Chinese Triads**

The history of the Chinese Triads starts as far back as the 9th century AD, and is more violent than that of Italy, with countless violent conflicts and mass executions. The first

known Chinese secret society was the Chih Mei: The Red Eyebrows, in the Shangdong province. By the 14th century, patriotism became the foundation for a new secret society – the Pah Lien, or White Lotus Society (Booth, 1999) to overthrow the then Mongolian rulers.

During the Q'ing dynasty – a long period of foreign rule, all secret societies were banned, as was any religious practise, with the punishment of execution. Behaving in such an aggressive way fuelled desires for the native Chinese Ming dynasty to return, forming bonds between societies with their rituals and secret identification methods, and turning them into vehicles for insurgency (Booth, 1999). This was also the birth of strong patriotism.

The White Lotus Society and the T'ien-Ti Hui (Heaven and Earth Society), the first Triad-like organisations, operated mainly in the Fujian and Guangdong provinces in the late 17th century. These societies, and many others across China, were set up as mutual aid organisations for people from the same villages to seek solidarity and support under the persecution of the Q'ing dynasty. In the 18th century, they became a political movement, establishing their goals as: “the furtherance of religious belief and practice, the encouragement of Chinese nationalism and... Fan q'ing fuk ming: ‘Overthrow the O'ing – restore the Ming’” (Booth, 1999, p10) and it is this phrase that united and motivated the some 3600 Triad groups that spawned from the T'ien-Ti Hui.

Wherever authority was weak, the Triads took over, particularly in overseas Chinese communities such as Singapore and Penang, (Lintner, 2004). They became responsible for public order, with self-made courts. In China, government officials joined because they were dissatisfied with their meagre earnings, and saw the secret societies as ways to make more money. Throughout Chinese history, the only certain way to gain status and recognition was to become a mandarin, but examinations were difficult and selection was biased, driving many disillusioned, well educated people into the Triads (Booth, 1999). They appealed to every human need – spiritual fulfilment, belonging, security, and ultimately, the accumulation of wealth (Booth, 1999). But the political cause was lost after the formation of the People's Republic of China in 1911, and even before this the Triads' most emphatic victories ended in looting and pillaging, and Triads were firmly involved in the opium trade at the major ports by this time.

The beginning of high level Triad government influence began with Sun Yat-sen, who ruled from 1921 until his death in 1925. He was a previous revolutionary, and Triad member. Later, in the 1930s, the government used the notorious Green Gang to police the streets of Shanghai and control trade unions. (Lintner, 2004), and the 14k group were set up with the secret police in the 1940s to try to fight communists. However, the communists came to power in 1949 with Mao Zedong, who managed to stamp out a lot of Triad activity by banning religious practices and Confucian family obligations

(Williams, 2001).

But Mao's successor, Deng Xiaoping, had hinted since 1984 that there were links between the Triads, now residing mainly in Hong Kong, and the Chinese secret service, saying that some Triads were 'good' and 'patriotic' (Lintner, 2004). In 1997, when Hong Kong was returned to Chinese rule from British, the Triads were virtually welcomed home by the Chinese government, with a chief government official, Tao Siju, issuing a public statement in 1993 inviting the Triads to do business in China as long as they were 'patriotic' (Lintner, 2004). Since then, the Triads have been allowed to run various illegal businesses such as protection rackets and gambling, as long as they maintained order on the streets and eliminated most petty crime (Lintner, 2004).

China's underlying theme seems to be centred around oppression from the state, rather than its absence, as in southern Italy's case. At each point, the ruling body tried to stamp out religious practices by force, but being foreign rulers, did nothing to offer any sense of national pride or togetherness, simply driving the secret societies further underground, thus encouraging their illegal and violent activities, and if anything, increasing their appeal to the disillusioned Chinese professionals.

### ***2.3 Familism and Confucianism***

In familistic societies such as China and Italy, large extended families in (also known as kinship and 'lineages' in China) provide the basis for the development of business organisations, which in the presence of spontaneous sociability, results in networked family businesses functioning very effectively (Fukuyama, 1996). However, there is often a major distrust of anyone outside the family, which limits opportunities to make business ties that could enhance the business, and many Chinese and Italian businesses have failed to grow into large corporations or to compete in the international sphere. In the absence of extended family ties, or an alternative social group, fierce rivalry and violence occurs (Fukuyama, 1996). This in turn makes spontaneous sociability even harder.

Confucianism is the ancient religion of the Eastern countries, and it is based upon absolute loyalty and duty to the family. Confucianism is more influential than Taoism or Buddhism in Chinese society. The duty to your family is far more important than any other duty, including to the state. There is a lifelong obligation of xiao – filial piety – to always do as the parents say, support them in old age, worship their spirits once they are dead, and keep family line alive (Fukuyama, 1996). The definition of 'family' is not just the immediate relatives, but often includes five generations living very close together, like Italian extended families. Fukuyama likens the familism that is embedded in Italian society, to the Confucianism of the East, with corporate organisations in both countries having their identities almost completely based upon family ties.

The notorious Italian extended family ties, though, are much weaker in the South, making it likely that a social identity will be sought elsewhere, in the form of a pseudo-family, which is also useful in maintaining loyalty and secrecy: *“The blood oaths taken by members of Cosa Nostra serve as surrogate kinship bonds that allow criminals to trust one another in situations in which betrayal is very tempting”*. (Fukuyama, 1996, p337) This plays into the lack of trust in non-family members that is inherent to Italian, particularly Southern Italian culture, as a result of the feudal era. Furthermore, the hierarchical structures of the Mafias and the Triads are directly comparable to patriarchal family structures, and in such strongly familistic societies as Italy and China, it is unsurprising that the criminal groups chose to organise themselves in this way.

But familism in China does not resemble the South of Italy, which is nuclear and introspective - it is more similar to the central Italy region which is so successful economically, suggesting that the strong sense of family values based on Confucianism, although a key contributor to internal loyalty within Triad clans, was not in absence in China, as it was in Southern Italy. In China's case, it was the lack of trust in governing institutions and the lack of social capital in state institutions during the violent power struggles of all of the phases in China's history described above, that provided the niche into which the Triads could step, and their use of violence was legitimised by the example from the state (Hofstede, 2005).

The combination of a lack of trust, the need for social capital and status, and overly strong familism, in different quantities, was the ultimate recipe for state-embedded organised crime in these two countries, generating strong cultural traits, such as Chinese patriotism and Italian family loyalty within the Triads, Cosa Nostra and La 'Ndrangheta. The offer of appearing to uphold strong family values and honourable behaviour in the form of family loyalty plays into the social values held dear to Italian and Chinese people, that were left unsatisfied by state or social institutions.

### **3. The Triads and Italian Mafias in Transnational Crime**

In this new compressed world, in which many nations have culturally diverse populations, the cultural identity of the groups within these populations has become increasingly important, rather than diluted. Habits, mannerisms and values that are dictated by the cultural origins of a society, often bounded by a nation state, become their 'trademarks' in the business and economic world, in which international transactions are now commonplace (Hofstede, 2005). These cultural attributes, however, are not only applicable to legitimate businesses, but also apply in the sphere of internationally organised crime (Castells, 2000).

This global marketplace for illicit goods and services has already posed interesting challenges for the Chinese Triads and the Italian mafias. The style of business is now more entrepreneurial and the networks are flexible, with loose ties that are broken and made according to the next business proposition (Castells, 2000)

Although there have long been triad groups operating in various major cities all over the world, they have often operated mainly within their own ethnic circles, with little interference with the indigenous populations (Lintner, 2004 and Chow, 2003). With groups dotted around the globe in such a fashion, they are in an ideal position to enter these international markets. In the last decade, the Triads have been able to make use of their geographically diverse locations, having illegally smuggled Chinese people into cities across the world during the 1990's, in anticipation of the return of Hong Kong to British rule (Castells, 2000). The triads' weak uncertainty avoidance and entrepreneurial style has continued, abandoning some of their traditional structure (Lintner, 2004) and creating independent protection rackets in each international 'Chinatown'. They avoid conflict with indigenous police through legitimate business facades and by eliminating most random petty crime within their communities (Lintner, 2002), whilst simultaneously making themselves available for business from almost any sector of the illegal market, including the sex trade. Recruiting within isolated immigrant communities is easy, creating international bases for their people smuggling and heroin trafficking routes (Schloenhardt, 2001). It is this flexibility that is key to survival in transnational organised crime (Castells, 2000).

Cosa Nostra and 'Ndrangheta, though, may struggle to compete in the new international illegal markets in Europe (Paoli, 2004). Since the unification of Europe there has been an influx of migrants into the North of Italy, bringing a variety of ethnic criminal groups, some even more brutal than the old-school Triads, Yakuza and Italian Mafias, and new contraband or illegal products (Galeotti, 2004). These groups are quick-profit motivated, and disinterested in exercising any kind of political or economic power over anyone (Paoli, 2004). Coupled with the involvement of non-mafia native Italians who are more

trusting of outsiders, (Dickie, 2004), the bureaucratic Mafiosi face stiff competition. For example, a Triad group capitalised upon their preferential geographical location in northern Italy to steal a large share in the heroin smuggling trade from the Southern-based Cosa Nostra and 'Ndrangheta (Paoli, 2004), because they had an easier route to the Middle East, where the opium was turned into morphine and heroin (Sassoon, 1997). Undoubtedly, the rule preventing members from settling their families outside of Sicily has had an influence upon this (Paoli, 2004).

Cosa Nostra, with their characteristically low-trust exclusivity, are beginning to rely ever more heavily upon collusion with local government politicians to keep their income flowing: entrepreneurial activity does not quite fit into their strong collective identity, and their distrust of non-Sicilians may contribute to a lack of knowledge about newer illegal markets, such as gold, radioactive waste, nuclear weapons, and so on (Paoli, 2004). During the 1980's, through the investigations of Judge Falcone, the police began to arrest and prosecute an increasing number of mafiosi, which the (then) capo di tutti capi – 'boss of bosses' - Totò Riina decided to counteract with a series of brutal murders, including that of Falcone, his assistant, his wife and their bodyguards, with two huge car bombs in 1992 (Dickie, 2004). Since these very public murders, government collusion has been less accepted by the Italian public (Dickie, 2004), indicating an increasing level of generalised trust and state-based social capital in Southern Italy, leaving the Mafias with a problem. Their dependency upon public funds and political support could be their Achilles heel and the authorities are well aware of it (Paoli, 2004). Furthermore, Cosa Nostra's strict rules that have in the past helped to maintain cohesion and trust could now be hindering their progress in other ways, for example, the prohibition of any involvement in prostitution prevents them from entering one of the biggest and fastest growing markets in the criminal world – people trafficking for the sex trade (Paoli, 2004 and BBC World Service, 2002). La'Ndrangheta maybe able to keep up a little more, though, as they have much fewer rules and already operate in a more flexible way than Cosa Nostra. However, unlike the Triads, they are very limited in location as very few members have settled elsewhere, although some have been found in Poland and Canada (La Sorte, 2004).

The absence of effective state authority in the Italian south seems to be waning, whereas in China collusion with the government still seems to be fairly widely accepted (Lintner, 2002), and is even on the increase (Williams, 1995), with apparent values of strong patriotism and honour still playing important roles in gaining acceptance. China is also, through the process of industrialisation, on the cusp of becoming an enormous economic power globally, affording the illegal organisations connected to it an infinite number of opportunities to piggy-back onto legal trade and make vast quantities of money (Chow, 2003 and Williams, 1995).

But Castells (2000) believes that clear cultural identities will, in fact, be a vital tool in the

global criminal network, in commanding respect and marking territory from other gangs, and he believes that the key to all successful transnationally organised crime lies in collusion with corrupt state officials, not just the Italian Mafias. Furthermore, the various organisations must co-operate with one another, as well as compete, in order to evade police and keep their operations secret (Castells, 2000), so it would be unwise for newer organisations such as the Chechen drug cartels and other Eastern block groups to repeatedly cross the Italians and Sicilians, given their strong links to the stock market and well established trade in South American narcotics (Galeotti, 2004). These ties were formed using those hierarchies and rules that give the Mafia its strong collective identity and internal loyalty, so these attributes should not be dismissed too readily as hindrances in the new transnational criminal marketplace.

## 4. Conclusion

There are definite links between aspects of the national cultures of China and Italy and the behaviour of the major criminal organisations within those nations, which are similar - in some ways - to the links between national culture and organisational behaviour in legitimate organisations as described by Hofstede (2005), such as strong masculine values in both countries but different levels uncertainty avoidance. However, these links are not enough, to explain the importance of family loyalty, Confucian values and the acceptance of strong hierarchical structures within the Chinese Triads and the Italian Mafias. These characteristics are generated by a series of shared political and social events over the course of a country's history, such as violent conflict in China between natives and non-natives for overall power, and the unification of Italy leaving the Italian south with little or no state presence, leading to an absence of social capital, and generalised trust. The Italian Mafias and Chinese Triads provide an exchange in social capital and sense of collective identity that the state has historically not provided, and this has enabled them both to gain a worrying level of power and control over their governing states, breeding further success and power.

In the sphere of transnational organised crime, the strong cultural identities that the Chinese Triads and the Italian Mafias exhibit, coupled with their longevity and historical reputations, are of great importance in retaining a collective identity in the face of competition, and in stamping an illicit trademark upon their illicit business transactions. However, in the criminal world of the Information Age where industries such as narcotics and people smuggling are booming, these two age-old traditional organisations meet with competition from newer, more loosely organised groups with much less focus upon power and identity. The use of extreme violence is now commonplace, and there are groups who are more brutal than the Triads and the Mafia. The Chinese Triads appear better placed to cope with the new style of organising crime, embracing entrepreneurial activity and flexible international networking, whilst continuing to collude with their governments. The Mafias, on the other hand, particularly Cosa Nostra, despite well-established avenues into the international stock markets and a firm place in the international heroin trade, are suffering a little from their low-trust characteristics. They may still be able to use their position as one of the most revered criminal organisations in the world, but without substantial support from corrupt state personnel, they may find themselves in a cruel paradox – the cultural identity that spawned their success may contribute to their eventual downfall.

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