DESCRIPTION

This ground-breaking book offers a deep and original analysis of the Mafia – in particular Cosa Nostra – as a distinct form of politics. Marco Santoro breaks with criminal and economic approaches which see the Mafia as an industry of private protection and rationally calculating wealth accumulation. Instead he argues that it represents an alternative way of organizing political relations, the exercise of power, and the struggle for prestige. Nor is this a distortion or failure of the modern Western state, based on the rule of law: the Mafia is best understood as an older, alternative tradition of politics, a distinctly Southern institutional arrangement of social life focused on personal ties and obligations. Today, the Mafia still thrives among subaltern classes and in regions that the modern state has not yet incorporated, as a conservative counter-politics of prestige. Pivotal to understanding this world is a cultural sociology of the Mafia, offering the tools and concepts necessary to penetrate the symbolism and structures of Mafia life.

Blending diverse theoretical strands with folk sources and the voices of Mafiosi themselves, Santoro develops a political theory of the Mafia, shedding new light on this captivating, global, and remarkably resilient phenomenon.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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