

In the final chapter, Dr. Horn raises a series of questions pointing to possible future studies involving Old Harp music, particularly the folk hymns. Hopefully these suggestions, as well as the many other questions she raises in the course of the text itself, will stimulate others to continue her excellent scholarship in this area.

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The American Mafia, Genesis of a Legend, by Joseph L. Albini.
354 pp. No illustrations, no appendices, bibliography, Author Index, Subject Index.
New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1971.

Reviewed by Fredric R. Brandfon

The American Mafia, Genesis of a Legend has a misleading title. Like so many scholars in fields other than folklore, the author, Joseph L. Albini, is scrupulous in his definitions and distinctions in all areas except folkloristics. The book can hardly be said to deal with the legends surrounding the Mafia unless one is willing to define legend as merely an untruth. However, Albini should not be brought to task for failing to meet criteria he did not set for himself. The author is a sociologist, and his intent is to describe as accurately as possible the type of social group the so-called Mafia is and at what points it interacts with other -- and in his words, similar -- social groups such as the police, political machines, and legitimate businesses. He is able to do this and explains his case with some precision.

The problem, then, for the folklorist is not that the book appears to have ignored folklore scholarship, but rather what use can the folklorist make of this work.

On a very superficial reading, the book is useful as somewhat of a glossary of underworld jargon. Throughout the book, nicknames such as George Jean "Big Frenchy" de Mange, "Dutch Schultz" Flegenheimer, and "Honey Boy" Miller, as well as special terms for common items are noted if not always explained. It might be worth a folklorist's time to change these names from "local color" into valuable information about ethnic groups or occupations.

The book is also a minor collection of stories about the Sicilian origin or "the Mafia". Albini uses almost exclusively literary sources to recount these tales and legends and in doing so is actually dealing with popular lore rather than folklore. Although Albini shows little interest in the workings of popular lore, its particular domain, or its particular influences, a person with such interests could find his collection helpful.

Similarly, Albini gives an exhaustive catalogue of the popular and to some extent folk etymologies for the word, "Mafia". Although he, again, fails to determine differences between popular and folk material, as a case study for the etymologies of a particular term his work is, at least, thorough.

At another level, Albini is dealing theoretically with the structure of groups, organized, unorganized, and syndicated. As controversy over what constitutes a "folk group" continues, any work which deals with what some would define as a folk group, namely, the underworld, can be of value. Albini's definition of "organization" and "syndicate" are limited to criminal organizations and criminal syndicates, but the potential for imaginative use of his categories need not be so limited.

The book deals less inventively with the historical relationships of ethnic groups in an urban setting. Although the predominance of ethnic minorities, Irish, Italian, Jewish, and Black, within the structure of organized crime is acknowledged, Albini only touches briefly on this fact, and the dynamics of the succession of one ethnic group after another to positions of dominance within organized crime are intriguingly outlined but never fully investigated. The author seems to find it enough to point out that others besides Sicilians and Italians have been members and bosses of syndicates, and herein lies a shortcoming of the book. It is written as a defense, a rebuttal of what Albini would call the "legends" about the "Mafia". It is also one of the few attempts in print at a scholarly approach to the subject. Albini's reaction to prior shoddy scholarship is so violent as to make his work appear silly. His research is so rigorous it becomes inane. He quotes his opposition extensively, including not merely some or even most of his opponents' works, but every careless reference to "the Mafia" he could find. His work is, therefore, not only a competent collection of underworld jargon and legend, but an anthology of inept scholarship as well. At times he appears to be blatantly setting up straw men in order to annihilate them. This practice, naturally, takes away from his basically sound arguments.

With a final word about his method, it should be added that although Albini claims to have done some field work for this book, it is primarily a piece of library scholarship. Some of the most interesting portions of the book are the words of his informants but these instances are so few as to be counted on one hand. A further investigation, be it sociological or folkloristic, would do well to make more use of the testimony of informants.

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The Ritual Theory of Myth, by Joseph Fontenrose.

77 pp. Bibliography, Index, Index of Greek and Latin Citations.

Berkeley: University of California Press (California Library Reprint Series), 1971.

Reviewed by Sandra K. Stahl

Joseph Fontenrose serves as Professor of Classics at the University of California at Berkeley, and is the author of four major works in the classics and literary criticism: Python: A Study of Delphic Myth and Its Origins (1959), The Cult and Myth of Pyrrhos at Delphi (1960), John Steinbeck: An Introduction and Interpretation (1963), and The Ritual Theory of Myth, first published in 1966. The first two of these he draws upon on several occasions in The Ritual Theory of Myth.