



Landscape Semiotics, Psychoanalysis, and Ritual Wine Production: A Case Study in Gravina in Puglia, Italy

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Abstract

The present work aims to decode the meaning of a rupestrian structure dug into the rock in the territory of Gravina in Puglia (Italy) to produce wine, being the same profoundly dissimilar from the others having the same function, present in the area and in other Italian locations. The distinctive characteristics of this structure have therefore been analyzed using a methodology that combines Semiotics and Psychoanalysis, since the same cannot be exhaustively decoded according to an approach aimed at reconstructing its functions according to the principles of the mere pursuit of maximum efficiency and effectiveness for the production of wine. Mythology has therefore revealed itself as a code capable of explaining the peculiarities of the structure, suggesting an approach to the landscape aimed at recognizing in it the unconscious connotations that accompany the processes of anthropomorphization of the natural environment, leading to new perspectives on landscape research.

Subject Areas

Semiotics, Psychoanalysis and Cultural Anthropology as Instruments of Study and Enjoyment of Cultural Landscapes

Keywords

Landscape Semiotics, Psychoanalytic Semiology, Rupestrian Complexes, Myths, Agrarian Rituals

1. Introduction

The aim of this study is to integrate the decoding methods of landscapes that present signs of anthropomorphization from different eras, in such a way as to recon-

struct their meanings that cannot be easily grasped through a mere aesthetic, naturalistic or historical evaluation, being the same imbued with signs produced and interpreted by the populations that inhabited it. A case study is therefore proposed.

The *Padre Eterno* Rupestrian Complex is located in Gravina in Puglia (Italy), and extends for about 1400 meters, starting from the South-West corner of the crevasse on whose bottom the *Gravina* torrent flows, going towards the West, up to the other corner of the crevasse, oriented in a North-East direction, from which the *Capotenda* Rupestrian Complex unfolds. Both complexes are located within the Gravina in Puglia rupestrian habitat, of which the PPTR (*regional territorial landscape plan*) currently in force in the Puglia Region recognizes significant hydrogeological, naturalistic and cultural values in their landscapes assigning it the status of an area to be safeguarded, protected and enhanced. This habitat is located on a rocky platform made of *Gravina tuff*, a calcarenite solidified during the Upper Pleistocene, between 126,000 and 11,700 years ago [1], easily workable, which has given shape to an articulated ancient rupestrian settlement, and that is present both underground and in the vicinity of the city's historical center, as well as a few dozen meters from it, beyond a spectacular ravine teeming with caves mainly dug by man and crossed by a torrent, which is located in a rural area mainly cultivated with wheat and vines, and which therefore represents a mirror that reflects the image of the cultural past of the city.

Although perceived synchronically and synoptically with all the senses, the landscape that defines this habitat can be broken down, then analyzed and interpreted, according to different dimensions, referable both to naturalistic and geological aspects, sound, odorous, kinaesthetic affordances, animal tracks, and also to signs of human presence left during different historical eras and according to different cultures and places. The spatial distribution of such differences therefore requires that this decomposition must be adequately elaborated by moving within the site and dynamically experiencing the space that delimits it and that contains the various sections that compose it, which differ from each other for certain characteristics that concern each of the dimensions mentioned. The best way to appreciate a landscape is indeed to travel through it, also basing oneself on a map to be used as a guide for a tour, which articulates the spaces through significant relationships that dynamically define the entire site reaching the *places* contained therein, *i.e.*, portions of space defined by memory and filled with material and symbolic values by the population that inhabited and built it, over time [2].

The entire rupestrian habitat of Gravina in Puglia is delimited by the two banks of the stream, which flows along segments oriented in the direction South-North, East-West, South-North, and again East-West, starting from the areas that border the oldest part of the city, or that overlook it, on the other side of the crevasse. Starting from the South, in the opposite direction to the flow of the stream, several rupestrian complexes located on the two banks of the crevasse with different characteristics intersect, which therefore present different relationships with the history

of the city, as it is defined by the separation that the crevasse creates between the city and the countryside, on the one hand, and by the territorial contiguity that brought the complexes located in the countryside closer to the ancient Peucetian city of *Sidion*, located on the *Petramagna* hill, which dominates the entire habitat. These complexes show signs of human settlement attributable to different functions exercised in Antiquity, still clearly distinguishable, despite the strong modifications due to the intensive uses that characterised the area during the Middle Ages and the Modern Era. (See **Figure 1** and **Figure 2**)



Figure 1. Historic centre and rupestrian complex overlooking the crevasse.



Figure 2. Rupestrian Complex located in front of the historic centre, on the other side of the crevasse.

The *Padre Eterno* area is characterized by the emergence of the calcarenite bank in an almost horizontal shape, on a wide strip that lies between the ravine and the *Petramagna* hill. This area is very rich in archaeological evidence, ranging from the first half of the Iron Age [IX-VIII BC] to the Archaic Age [VII-VI BC] and the Modern Age [3], and which include traces of ancient huts and remains of dwellings, of a still functioning aqueduct from the 18th century, and of a Medieval Christian crypt, located in the midst of a large ancient necropolis. This *Padre Eterno* crypt (or of the *Déesis*), gives its name to the entire area [4].

Unlike other rupestrian complexes distributed in the entire rocky habitat, this rupestrian complex shows few signs of its use during the Middle Ages and the Mo-

dern Era. In fact, the side of the ravine on which it is located faces mainly to the North, and is made up of a rather low layer of calcarenite, compared to the sides exposed to the East and West, which allow direct and prolonged exposure to the sun's rays, and a greater availability of calcarenite: indeed, the combination of these two qualities makes the excavation of houses and churches more effective and efficient, which in fact abound on the sides exposed to the East and West, in the immediate vicinity of the Ancient City. The area of the *Padre Eterno*, therefore, shows a greater distribution of signs of human presence left in Antiquity, especially before the ancient Peucetian city of *Sidion* was destroyed by the Romans, according to Diodorus Siculus in 306 BC [5].

2. Method

2.1. Landscape as Language

The interpretations of the landscape, and therefore the ways in which it has been inhabited, vary over time, just as the ethical, aesthetic, religious and social conceptions that characterize the various historical eras vary [6]. Consequentially, the same landscape can be interpreted and experienced in different ways also during the same era, varying according to the education and activities carried out by people during their enjoyment [7]. Indeed, the relationship between man and the natural environment can be regulated by profoundly different conceptions of the world, and give rise to cultures that allow good adaptation, although they may be completely dissimilar from the actual Western scientific one [8].

This scientific approach, moreover, represents the product of a long cultural transformation, therefore even the signs left over time by man in western landscapes can represent conceptions of the world and of the relationship between man and the environment that are profoundly different from both current ones and those expressed during different past eras: indeed, both the western approach and that of other cultures represents the product of mental operations, both pre-conceptual and conceptual, which develop over time giving rise to symbolizations of the landscape that vary according to the uses of the natural environment made by the people who inhabit it [9], and which are constructed by metaphorically understanding one perception in terms of another, also by projecting body parts or schemes onto the characteristics of the natural environment, which thus becomes loaded with human, animal and plant features, when names are assigned to it—e.g.: *Gola di San Venanzio* (*San Venanzio Gorge*), *Contrada Coda di Lupo* (*Wolf Tail District*); *Via Giardini* (*Gardens Street*)—to denote it [10]. Communication between people, therefore, transforms such preconceptual and conceptual mental operations into signs and symbols that are shared and spread, giving rise to a Cultural Landscape that is reflected by the Languages used by the Communities that inhabit it.

2.2. Landscape Semiotics

The verbal or written linguistic tool, however, is not the only one used and invol-

ved in the process of cultural definition and transformation of natural environments into cultural landscapes [11]: the visual codes used in images and sculptures, the structure and shapes given to the streets and squares of cities, as well as to cultivated lands, being an expression of beliefs, institutions, rituals, material practices and knowledge, social and power relations, contribute to building the historical representations of the Cultural Landscape, giving indications on the ways in which emotions were aroused and the behaviour of those who lived or visited it was oriented [12]. This result is obtained through a communicative act, that is, through the transmission of a message with content by a sender to a receiver, which can be understood on condition that the participants in the communicative act use the same code, which contains a certain number of preconceived interpretative possibilities and prefabricated representations, the resulting informative ambiguities of which can be clarified by the possession of an interpretant shared by participants in the communicative act, or of a sign or a complex of signs that allows the signs that convey ambiguous messages to be translated into other signs capable of decoding them, thus making it possible to share the content of the message as a relationship between the communicators and the outside world [13] [14].

This communicative dynamic seems to assign a prominent role to the transmitter, from which the intention to communicate and the content of the message to be transmitted unfold, and in this perspective the semiotics of road signs and billboards can be developed, which index the urban space by indicating the behaviour expected from those who use them, at the same time regulating circulation and orienting the behaviour, attitude and expectations of those who move within it [15], even within multilingual contexts [16]. However, this approach has been discussed by evaluating the communicative act within the significant practices that characterize it over time, allowing variations and redefinitions of meaning capable of allowing the different interpretations given by individuals to the same percept, representation, sign or set of signs, to converge towards a shared meaning [17]. In this perspective, the practices of signification implemented by the participants in the communicative act, rather than assigning an immutable transpersonal status to the signifiers, as happens for road signs and signifiers whose meanings are presented independently of the physical presence and intentions of the people who produced them, contextualize and personalize the meaning, also allowing its evolution and historical transformation. This often happens for the signifiers that transmit the contents most subject to transformations, such as those denoting the material cultures, cosmogonic and religious beliefs of the peoples who have built and given meaning to the landscapes over time.

This semiotic analysis model allows us to interpret all the signs present in a landscape in the same way as a written or verbal language is interpreted, thus establishing relationships of significance also between the various images [18] [19], and identifying a code that allows their construction, therefore recognizing the substantial arbitrariness that associates a sign with its meaning, and reconstructing

its relationships of significance through the contrast between similarities and differences between signs, which can then be fully understood by placing them within the technical-scientific knowledge and religious, mythological and cosmogonic beliefs of the people that produced and used the landscape and the language through which it was articulated and structured [20]-[23]. This semiotic method led to identify symbolic representations of the mystical conceptions of the cosmos, as well as relationships of power and love, in the plan and distribution of the archaeological evidence of urban structures of ancient cities, military camps and oases [24]. The emotional and cognitive response originating from the landscape is therefore both subjective and collective, being originated by a combination of natural and cultural elements that are experienced in a personalized way by those who inhabit them.

The analysis and interpretation of both natural and historical/cultural dimensions can consequentially be conducted, during a *Tour of the Imaginary* to be carried out by moving within the landscape, according to a double level, one of which is represented by the mere naturalistic and historical classification of the detected signs, and the other by the decoding of the meaning that these signs have/had for those who produce them or have produced them in the past. In this way, crossing the landscape can be articulated by following *an imaginary space-time spiral*, within which the same spaces have been inhabited according to different production methods and conceptions of the world, along a temporal dimension that is both linear and circular.

The present work, therefore, will conduct an analysis of some ancient rural artefacts dug into the rock present in the area, deducing their meaning by extracting similarities and differences, and articulating it through a code that allows its structuring within a text, *i.e.*, a linguistic vehicle capable of transmitting contents defined by ordered sequences of words. These artefacts, however, do not have inscriptions in a well-defined written language, therefore the analysis will be conducted on the icons represented therein, and by the spatial relationship that they establish between themselves, within the space defined by structures built for the implementation of rural practices, which, as such, are able to also indicate the movements held by people within them, adding the diachronic temporal dimension to the synchronic spatial one, thus allowing to describe an area of significance referred to religious beliefs associated with such rural practices, using an appropriate code to decode it. The comparison between 3 types of ancient structures for wine production (*palmienti*) will allow us to extract, due to its singular structure, the ritual function of one of them, and to interpret it through a code defined by practices, myths, beliefs and worship.

The Connotations of Rituals

According to Bell [25], ritual practice should be recognized primarily on the basis of what it shares with other practices, and then on the basis of the ways in which it is distinguished from them, being its meaning dependent on the relationship

developed within a place and contextualized actions, which are distinguished from other places and actions in many aspects: indeed, one of the ways in which a ritual practice can be distinguished from spontaneous, technical and instrumentally effective actions for survival, is the strategic production of action patterns that structure the environment in such a way as to make it appear as the source of such patterns and of their value, which is defined by semantic oppositions implemented in space and time through movements, gestures and sounds produced below the discursive level. In fact, ritual practices are experienced as the instinctive mode of communication of truths coming from sources located beyond the community and its components, such as deities or traditions. Ritual practice therefore presents itself as a substitute for logical speculation, since it does not concern arguments whose meaning can be extracted by manipulating the relationships that things have between them, and therefore it is also embodied in the ways in which the body of the person who carries it out integrates it into the space-time environment specifically constructed to contain and act it out.

Logical speculation, therefore, cannot adequately interpret a ritual practice, since it is a representation-communication of mythical conceptions that merges verbal and non-verbal language, actions, gestures, images and objects [26]. However, the psychoanalytic semiotic approach can reconstruct its decoding code, associating myths, cults and rites. According to this perspective, the myths represent an answer to questions that have remained unanswered by logical speculation; the *cult* is the belief in the answers given by the myth to such questions, and the *rite* is the formalization of the identification in such beliefs by a specific person or social group [27]. Psychoanalysis has revealed its effectiveness in interpreting dreams, bizarre psychic symptoms and myths [28]-[32], so it can also be applied in analyzing rituals. An analytical method based on models adopted by psychoanalysis, derived from Semiotics and the *Logic of the Unconscious System*, applied to images, movements and their relationships, will therefore be used. The *Logic of the Unconscious System* systematically integrates Ordinary Logic into every mental act or product, to the point of becoming dominant both in dreams and in psychic symptoms, as well in mental processes produced below the discursive level and perceived as instinctive by those involved, such as those underlying rituals, and operates according to the *Principles of Symmetry and Generalization*. The first “[...] treats the inverse relation of any relation as if it were identical to the relation. In other words, it treats asymmetrical relations as if they were symmetrical”, while the second:

[...] it treats an individual thing (person, object, concept) as if it were a member or element of a set or class containing other members; it treats this class as a subclass of a more general class and this more general class as a subclass or subset of an even more general class and so on (ad infinitum). [...] In the choice of class and of increasingly larger classes the Unconscious System prefers those propositional functions that in one aspect express a growing generality and in others conserve some particular characteristics of the individual

thing from which they started ([33]: pp. 43-44).

These two principles essentially regulate *Emotional Thought*, who is systematically associated with *Logical Thought*: the first, treating asymmetrical relationships as symmetrical, involves identification (empathy, for the most intimate interpersonal communication) between the poles of the relationships, therefore also identification with the characters of a narrative by the person listening it, or with the performers of a ritual by the person witnessing it, while the second involves that each percept or mental product represents both a well-defined thing, for *Logical Thought*, and a metaphor or analogy of something else, for *Emotional Thought*. According to Stein [34], the empathic perception of emotions, as well as feelings and intentions, is determined by the predetermined modality of bodily expression of the same, which are recognized by the interlocutors by recreating them, in a *derivative* manner, according to an inverse process, compared to the one that expresses them in an *original* manner, *i.e.*, originated by the innate capacity of recognition of such expressions, which has been recognized as being universal by both experimental [35] and clinical [36] researches, which have proven that this ability is present even before the appearance of language. The ability to understand the mental state of others has also been studied using Nuclear Magnetic Resonance techniques, which have revealed the activation of the same Cortical Regions (Somatomotor, Limbic and Paralimbic) both in people who experienced an emotion in a direct, original way, and in others, who experienced the same emotion in an empathic, derivative way. The same methodologies clarified the difference between the understanding of Emotional States and that of other mental states experienced by people with whom one is in a relationship, connected to the pursuit of objectives, beliefs and intentions, which involve the activation of the Prefrontal regions and the Temporal Lobe, which mature much later than the previous ones [37].

Following the model of the *Semiosphere* proposed by Lotman ([38]: pp. 55-76), it can therefore be stated that *empathy, in addition to being produced by a symmetric dynamic, is also palindromic, since it expresses the same content, expressed by the sender, making it perceived by the receiver according to an inverse production modality*. Furthermore, the *Unconscious System* emotionally connotes every communication, due to both the empathic dynamics and the generalizations that refer the contents of the communications directly to their referents and to the environment, to the relationship between the people involved in the communication, and to their respective knowledge and memories. The presence of generalizations, conversely, connotes the palindromic reading of communications originating from empathy, articulating it on different dimensions of meaning that transform it, differentiating it in such a way as to form and transform the contents of the *Semiosphere*, to the point of making the communicative palindromy unrecognizable, except for an analogical or metaphorical level. The reconstruction of the decoding code of ritual practices must therefore be carried out by interpreting them symmetrically and on the basis of the generalizations derived

by the knowledge of the myths of reference of the same.

A method based on the integration of these two principles with the structural analysis of the narratives proposed by Barthes and Duisit [39], already used for the analysis of some myths and rites [40] [41], will be used for the structural analysis of the ritual *palmiento* described below: Peucetian people, in fact, did not have a written language, so their most reliable knowledge must be reconstructed through other languages, which however can be structured into narratives.

Using the method of decomposition, the narrative can be analyzed by organizing it into *Nucleuses* and *Catalysis*. According to Barthes and Duisit [38], the *Nucleuses* are both consecutive (following one another) and consequential (the existence of a unit makes the occurrence of another possible), although the logical order of the narration does not necessarily have to coincide with the chronological one. They are both necessary to the narration and sufficient in themselves; the *Catalyses*, on the other hand, are integrative of the *Nucleuses*, and include the indices or descriptive indicators of personality traits, feelings, atmosphere, philosophy, which help to decipher narrated contexts and situations, and are catalytic, *i.e.*, they enter into a relationship with the *Nucleuses* in a parasitic and chronological way, since they describe what separates two moments of the narration, expanding its contents. In short, it is not possible to erase a *Nucleus* of a narration without altering it, and it is not possible to erase a *Catalyses* without altering its discourse.

3. The Context

The Specificity of the Rupestrian Habitat

According to Bergsvik and Sheates [42], at least 6 contextual dimensions relevant for the analysis of rupestrian structures can be extracted from research carried out according to different theoretical and methodological orientations.

- 1) architectural characteristics, formation process and correlations between the characteristics of other artefacts;
- 2) stratigraphic sedimentations of the materials present in them;
- 3) spatial characteristics, in relation to both their architectural components and the structural characteristics of the surrounding landscape, together with its properties, resources, and patterns of human behaviour consistent with it;
- 4) use or abandonment of the structures over time, including any transformations of use;
- 5) overlapping of different cultural levels of use: chronology, ritual actions, economic strategies, social practices, power relations, identity and memory;
- 6) dynamic context and development of sciences and technologies that characterises individual research.

However, many times there is no solid evidence available (such as ancient literary sources, inscriptions, and various archaeological finds) that can serve as a valid orientation system in the decoding work, therefore a deep methodological reflection is needed to fill the resulting knowledge gaps. Such a reflection becomes

mandatory in the presence of civilizations that have left clear signs of their complexity and depth, which however cannot be interpreted with the aid of written testimonies relating to them, as in the case of the Peucetian Civilization.

According to Ustinova's proposal [43], “*chain*” argumentative methods proceed sequentially, according to successive steps, therefore an absent or incorrect link can invalidate the entire chain of reasoning, while “*network*” argumentative methods interconnect different types of reasoning, use comparisons that allow to compensate for missing elements and discard imprudent hypotheses, and allow to search for explanations in different fields, using congruent data within a coherent explanatory model, which analyses different classes of evidence without preordained interpretations, elaborating the analysis separately, and making comparisons only at the final stages of each independent line of research.

4. Observed Rupestrian Structures Dedicated to Wine Production (*Palmienti*) and Their Classification According to Their Functions

In the *Padre Eterno* area, are displayed three types of *palmiento*. One of them is formed by two rectangular excavations, flanked by the shorter side, and horizontally connected by a hole dug, in the separation diaphragm. It represents an inefficient solution, since the collection of the produced must was uncomfortable, requiring a bent position of the workers, who also had to make many movements, using small containers, to collect the must from the excavation containing the same, being it placed on the same level as the one for crushing the grapes. Indeed, other *palmienti*, dug along the ridge facing north of the ravine, at the edge of a natural step that separates the rock stratification on two different levels, are more efficient, because the excavation used for collecting the must is located at a lower level than that used for crushing the grapes, allowing for easier collection of the must, carried out with a comfortable position and an easily fillable container: the *pithos* (πίθος), a terracotta container with a globoidal shape, which was placed in a circular housings dug into the rock. (See **Figure 3** and **Figure 4**)



Figure 3. Poorly efficient *palmiento*.



Figure 4. Example of a more efficient *palmiento*. Starting from the right, the arrows indicate the grape crushing area, the housing for the manual collection of the must, located below the drainage channel, and the location of the collecting *pithos*.

Finally, there is a third *palmiento*, whose extraordinary characteristics suggest to use a more complex interpretative model: it is much larger than the others, and has a rather singular must collection system, being made up, in addition to the grape crushing pit, of another pit dug near the must drainage hole, 120 to 170 centimetres deep, on the bottom of which, below the drainage hole, there is a circular excavation that housed a container. (See **Figure 5**)



Figure 5. Overall view of the *ritual palmi-ento* and the must collection pit.

This excavation is perfectly circular, with a diameter of 700 mm, which, considering the difference due to smoothing, corresponds to the measurement of the radius that gives the best approximation to 1 *Ionic or Samian foot*, of 348 mm, therefore it can be concluded that this structure could have been built before the Roman invasion of the territory, since it was possible to use the *Roman foot*, which measured mm 296 [44].

The must had to be collected by 2 people positioned inside the pit, from which it was passed, going up steps, to other people who placed it inside a large semicircular structure located by side, dug into the rock, on the bottom of which there is a hollow to house the *pithos*. This method of collecting the must is less efficient than that of the “stepped” *palmiento* previously described, to the point of appearing irrational. (See **Figures 6-8**) *The enormous amount of work required to build the structure is thus not sufficient to explain its sole function of producing wine, therefore it must be deduced that it was ritual, so it can be psychoanalytically interpreted.* In fact, the pit for collecting the must is dug in such a way as to allow more agile movement of two people who worked inside it, positioning themselves inside two niches dug into the wall below the grape crushing tank, which allowed them to collect the must while standing, and getting soaked in it. The size and shape of the adjacent semicircular structure (diameter 9180 mm), its orientation (north-east), and the design of the groove dug into its right side, which supports the ritual function of the structure, was invaded by the excavation of a canal for the water that flowed in an aqueduct built in the Late Antiquity/Early Middle Ages, which served another Rupestrian Complex, starting from that of the Padre Eterno [4].



Figure 6. Semicircular structure placed next to the *palmiento* and the must collection pit, with the niche used as a kitchen on its internal façade.



Figure 7. Semicircular structure seen from the opposite side, with housing for the *pithos* and hole for the escape of kitchen fumes

From the cardinal point of location of this *palmiento*, during the grape harvest (late September-early October), both the nocturnal sunset and the heliacal rising of *Ariadne's Crown* (or *Corona Borealis*) and *Bootes' Constellations* (or *of the Shepherd*) occur. Both of these constellations, in Greek mythology, are related to Dionysus, tutelary deity of wine, therefore identified with the wine itself.



Figure 8. Comparison between the semicircular structure (with the indication of the ritual *palmiento* next to it), taken from Google Earth, and the constellation of Corona Borealis, seen at its nocturnal setting, on 5 October 400 BC, extracted from the software “Stellarium.exe”, version 0.18.1.

The Mythology of Reference as an *Interpretant* of the Shape and the Signs of the Structures

Dionysus loved many women, but married only Ariadne, with whom he had children. According to Plutarch (Life of Theseus, 20.1), Theseus, after defeating the Minotaur in the labyrinth of Knossos using the “*thread method*” taught to him by Ariadne, and having had children by her, found shelter from a storm in Naxos, where he brought Ariadne and their children to safety, but ended up being carried away by the same storm, while he was trying to shelter his ship [45]. Arriving in Naxos, Dionysus fell in love with her and loved her, giving her a crown and naming the constellation of *Ariadne's Crown* after her. The gift of the crown is also reported by other authors, according to other stories that do not involve Theseus [46].

Pseudo-Apollodorus (Biblioteca 2.191-192) narrates that Dionysus, upon his arrival in Attica, gave the shepherd Ikarios a tool for cutting grapes, teaching him how to make wine. Ikarios let some shepherds taste the wine, who appreciated it, but drinking it imprudently, without diluting it, so they became intoxicated and killed him. When they awoke, after their drunkenness had passed, they buried him. His daughter, Erigone, began to look for him, and hanged herself, when Ikarios' dog, Maira, dug up his body [47]. Pseudo-Hyginus [48] narrates that Zeus, moved by such tragic events, traced the *Shepherd* and the *Virgin* Constellations, honoring both Ikarios and Erigone. (See **Figure 9** and **Figure 12**)

The correspondence between the representations elaborated by the software and the examined artefacts is not perfect, and it is difficult that this could have happened.

- The constellations are visible vertically, while the artifacts described were carved horizontally, with all the imperfections that may result;
- The semicircular structure was created on the natural profile of the rocky

outcrop, according to a slightly different orientation, compared to that observable in the sky;

- In ancient times there were no international organizations that codified the characteristics of the constellations, therefore there could be discrepancies between the various representations elaborated in different places and by different people, also with regard to the number of stars represented (see segments added in the Constellation of the Shepherd);
- The groove reproducing the Constellation of the Shepherd was designed to collect the drops of must (reproducing the entire constellation, in fact, would have made it less efficient).

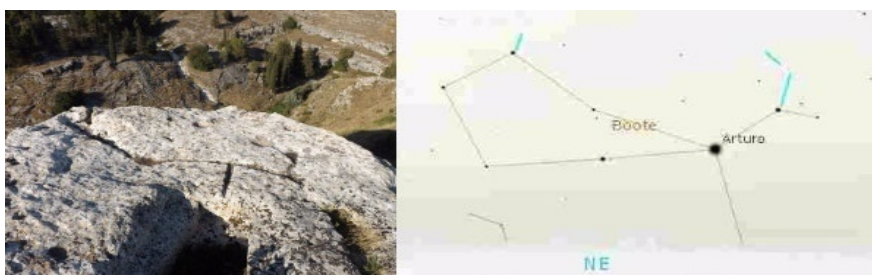


Figure 9. Comparison between the representation of the heliacal rising of the Constellation of the Shepherd, extracted from the software “Stellarium.exe”, version 0.18.1, on 05/10 400 BC, coordinates of Gravina in Puglia, and the groove carved to serve the collection pool of the *ritual palmiento*.

5. Meaning Relationships between the Reproduction of Astral Configurations, Myth, and Ritual Production of Wine

The two constellations are iconically represented according to a modality that opposes them: at night sunset, for the *Ariadne’s Crown*, and at heliacal rising, for the *Bootes’ Constellation*. Considering one with respect to the other, they have a rotation of approximately 90 degrees (see **Figure 12**), during the night sunset or the heliacal rising, therefore their representation extracted from different phases of the nocturnal Earth rotation is the result of a communicative choice. This opposition is therefore significant, like all oppositions between linguistic signs, including images and symbols [49]-[54], therefore it implies that the contrast between night sunset and heliacal rising “also” represents the metaphor of something else, according to the *Principle of Generalization of Emotional Thought*. The reconstruction of the interpretative code of this oppositional relationship must also be conducted by inserting it within both mythological references, which concern the marriage between Ariadne and Dionysus and the gift of the production of wine to Ikarios by Dionysus, and rituals, which concern the technique of producing wine inside this *palmiento*.

1) The passage of the must from the *palmiento* to the semicircular structure, and its pouring into the *pithos*, represents, according to the metaphor expressed by the *Principle of Generalization*, a symbolic insemination of Ariadne by Dionysus,

therefore their marriage, while the representation of the *Ariadne's Crown* at its nocturnal sunset symbolizes death.

2) One of the main characteristics of Dionysus is being born twice, the first of which is caused by a death: Pseudo-Apollodorus (Biblioteca 3. 26-32) narrates that Zeus, in love with the mortal woman Semele, promised her that he would grant her whatever she desired, taking her away from Hera, his wife. Semele was deceived by Hera, who suggested her to ask Zeus to appear to her in the same way in which he presented himself to his wife, during their courtship. Having made a promise, Zeus could not refuse his request, so he appeared to Semele, pregnant with Dionysus, on a chariot with thunder and lightning, throwing a thunderbolt at her. Semele died of fear, and Zeus took the aborted fetus from her body, which he sewed into his thigh. In the ninth month, Dionysus was unstitched from his thigh and entrusted to Hermes, who gave him to Atamas and Imo, Semele's brother-in-law and sister, prescribing them to raise him as a girl, so as to hide him from Hera. Angered, Hera caused the two spouses to go mad, which killed their children and committed suicide, while Hermes escaped Hera's wrath by transforming Dionysus into a kidskin, which he entrusted to the care of the nymphs of Mount Nysa [46]. Later, Hera drove Dionysus mad, who wandered through Syria and Egypt, where he was welcomed by King Proteus [47].

3) According to the myth, Dionysus therefore has both mortal and immortal origins/births: he is born the first time from a death, that of Semele, his human mother (just as must is born from the death of its generator/mother the grape, according to the *Principle of Symmetry*, while the *Principle of Generalization* establishes a metaphorical analogy between the two deaths), and the second time after a period of maturation in an immortal container, the thigh of his father, Zeus, just as must is transformed into wine after a period of maturation in *the pithoi*—in the local dialect: “*l p' toil*”,—which, in ancient times, were also used to bury the dead [55].

4) The representation of the *Bootes' Constellation* at its heliacal rising therefore represents, always according to the action of the aforementioned principles, a metaphorical analogy of the rebirth of the grape in the form of wine after its death/transformation in the form of must, metaphorically represented by the second birth of Dionysus, which is made possible by the permanence in the container represented by the immortal thigh of Zeus, like must become wine after its permanence into the *pithoi*. In this way, the agricultural practice of wine production was associated, through ritual, with the mythological conception that describes the mystical transformation from the mortal to the immortal condition, or the double birth of Dionysus: from a mortal mother, who dies like the grape, and from an immortal father, who allows the transformation/maturation of what is still immature by integrating mortal and immortal components, the integration of which is witnessed by the effects produced by the wine in the soul of the drinker. An integration obtained through a condensation, therefore, already described as one of the mechanisms producing dream images by Freud [56].

In the area where the examined *palmiento* is located, there are other structures dug into the rock, which indicate the presence of other rituals, attributable to the *Anthesteria* festival, which was held between February and March. This festival associated the opening of the new wine with the return of the souls of the dead, as well as the ritualization of the marriage between Ariadne and Dionysus through a secret ceremony, which was held in a stable by the *Basileus* (the king) and the *Basilinna* (the queen) embodying respectively the role of Dionysus and Ariadne, and where the oath to maintain purity and chastity and virginity was pronounced by the priestesses. Subsequently the rite of opening the containers of the new wine was performed by the *Basileus*, as well as its ritual drinking (*i.e.*, mixed with water) by the participants in a rite that did not foresee differentiations by class or social belonging, and which included a “drinking contest” that led to rather serious drunkenness [54]: in fact there is a cave containing the remains of two thrones placed side by side, as well as an animal feeder that could also function as a seat, and two further thrones placed side by side and a seat, located near a cave from which, in ancient times, a spring originally flowed and was later channelled into an aqueduct [57]. (See **Figures 10-12**)



Figure 10. Remains of thrones and manger/seat carved inside the cave inserted in the rupestrian complex of the *Madonna della Stella*.



Figure 11. Remains of thrones located in the rupestrian complex of the *Padre Eterno*, near a cave from which a spring once flowed.

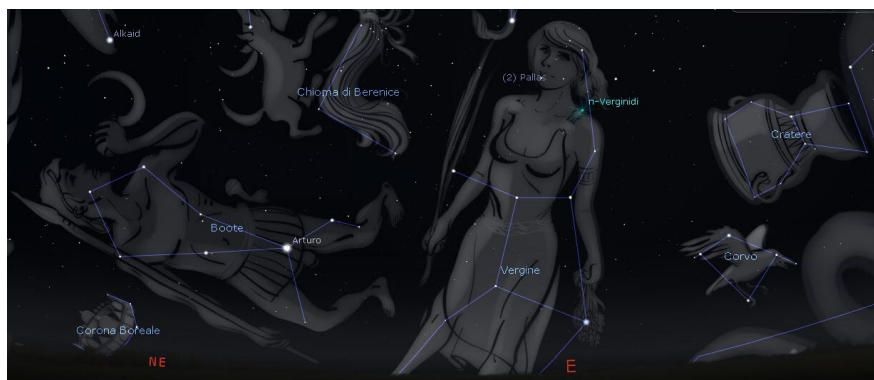


Figure 12. Representation of the constellations of Ariadne's Crown, the Shepherd, the Virgin and the Crater extracted from the software "Stellarium.exe", version 0.18.1, on 28/02 400 BC, coordinates of Gravina in Puglia, Italy.

These thrones were oriented to the north-east, from which, during the three days of the festival, both the two aforementioned constellations were visible, as well as other constellations placed side by side, that of *Virgo* (*i.e.*, Erigone, daughter of Ikarios, as well as the virgin vestals who participated in the secret marriage rite) and of the *Crater* (where the wine was ritually mixed with water, before being served).

6. Discussion and Conclusions

The present work, having identified a structure whose characteristics could not be explained by analyzing only its productive function, has used an intersemiotic approach to explain its ritual function, and has proposed an approach potentially capable of broadening the understanding of ancient cultures by associating psychoanalysis with anthropology.

In this specific case, the presence of pottery decorated with representations referring to Dionysus and other deities is well documented both in the territory of Gravina in Puglia [3] and of Central Puglia [58]. However, although in the former some vases clearly dedicated to the Dionysian cult have been found [5], and the consumption of wine has been documented starting from the 6th-5th century BC, when Greek customs were adapted to local customs, also allowing women to take an active part in both the consumption of wine and its presentation and ritual use [59], it has not been clarified whether such evidence corresponded to an assimilation of the myths, cults and rites referring to Dionysus, as no testimonies, like written texts or remains of temples, attesting to this have been recognized.

However, knowledge of the reference culture of the analyzed rupestrian structure can contribute to decoding its meaning, although the archaeological evidence may seem insufficient, according to a classical approach, as it represents preconceived interpretative possibilities and prefabricated representations originating from myths, that are necessary to clarify the interpretative ambiguities present in ritual communicative acts. In fact, the peculiar characteristics of the analysed palminto have gone unnoticed by the archaeological research conducted in the area.

The researches conducted on the astronomical knowledge of the ancients has

produced results that are in some ways unexpected, given the complexity of the structures produced for the observation and accurate measurement of solar and astral cycles since prehistory [60]. The structures construction, observations and measurements required considerable investments of resources, work, time and energy, which, in times when survival alone required enormous efforts and facing risks and dangers, had to be balanced by advantages of equal weight, such as the prediction of seasonal agricultural cycles or the migration of game animals, as well as the categorization of one's environment, life and work cycles, within a religious conception that emphasized their value, providing the emotional and spiritual energies necessary to bear the harshness of one's life: the *Ordinary Logic*, necessary both to design and build the structures, and to carry out meticulous observations and measurements, it had to be integrated with the *Emotional Logic*, giving rise to systems of meaning that were expressed both in rules of life and work practices, mythical narratives and ritual practices, defining the culture of the communities, and transforming itself over time.

6.1. Observed Signs of other Practices Indicating Astronomical Knowledge Present in the area Under Study

The aptitude to observe the movement of the stars and to use them to regulate daily activities was well rooted in the ethnic group that inhabited this area, even before contact with Greek culture, which instead expressed sophisticated astronomical knowledge, as well as very rich mythologies. Indeed, in the examined area there is a system of measuring time based on gnomons and alternating geometric figures (circle and circle inscribed in a quadrilateral, in alternating adjacency to one of its sides) that is probably older than the examined *palmiento*, as the builder did not trace circles and quadrilaterals according to geometric principles, which were well known in ancient Greece [61]: starting from the East and going towards the West, a circle is represented, followed by a circle inscribed in a quadrilateral, adjacent to the upper East; a circle; a circle inscribed in a quadrilateral, adjacent to the upper West, and finally another circle. Each figure has holes dug into the tuff nearby, in such a positions that poles inserted into them would project their shadows, sectioning the figures in parallel with the solar movement.

The figure of the circle is often used by mystics and philosophers as a symbol of perfection, divine or human spirituality, and yet it represents, more directly, the symbolization of the celestial cycle and the passage of time ([62]: pp. 245-250). Furthermore, the circle iconically represents the sphericity of the sun, which can therefore be represented by the circle both for its shape and for its regular cyclical activity, *i.e.*, for certain aspects of it that can be the object of communication [50]. On the other hand, the figure of the square represents solidity and stability, therefore the earth opposite to the sky ([62]: pp. 257-259), therefore the insertion of the circle inside a square (in this case, a quadrilateral, since the sides of the figures carved in the rock have not the same size), represents the interpenetration between the terrestrial cycle and the solar cycle, *i.e.*, the passing of the day and the

seasons. The different distances that characterize the alternation between the circle and the circle inscribed in the quadrilateral, therefore, represent the different duration of the hot and cold seasons at the latitude of Gravina in Puglia. In fact, the ancient mentality divided the year into two seasonal cycles, during which the land was fertile or sterile [63], with the fertile period longer than the sterile one, at least in the Mediterranean basin, where the duration of daytime solar radiation exceeds twelve hours both during the summer solstice and the autumnal equinox, reaching around 12 hours during the spring equinox, and then falling below that during the winter solstice. The different allocation of the circles inside the quadrilaterals, finally, allows us to distinguish the shadows of the poles in the morning from those in the afternoon.

In this way, the first circle contained the shadows of the poles that indicated the passing of morning; the first circle inscribed in the quadrilateral contained those that indicated the approach of midday; the third circle the passing of midday; the second circle inscribed in the quadrilateral the approach of sunset, and, finally, the last circle contained the shadows of the passing of sunset. (See **Figures 13-17**)



Figure 13. Circle and circle inscribed in quadrilateral, east side.



Figure 14. Central circle



Figure 15. Circle inscribed in quadrilateral and circle, west side.

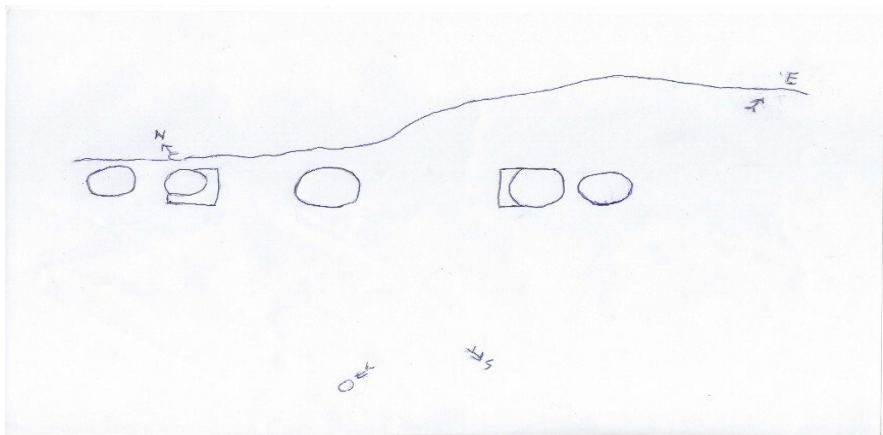


Figure 16. Overall representation of the arrangement of circles and circles inscribed in quadrilaterals.

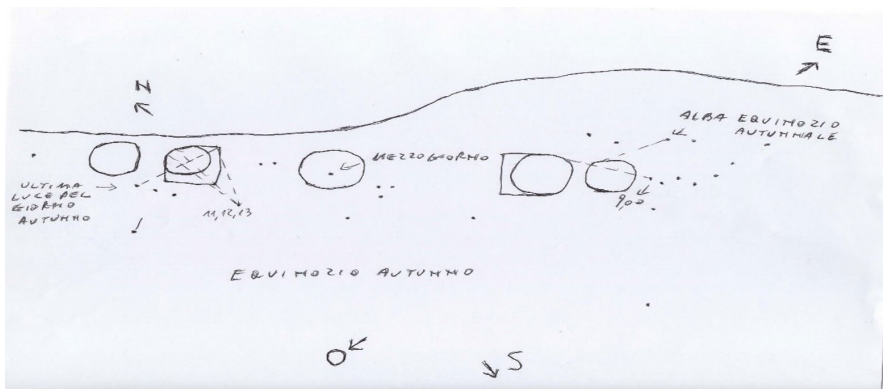


Figure 17. Demonstrative study of some shadow projections during the autumnal equinox.

A further artefact, located to the west of the time measurement system, takes up the symbolisation of the solar cycle, combining it with activities related to animal breeding: it is a circle, of a much more regular shape, compared to those dug for the measurement of time, perfectly divided into four equal parts by two inter-

secting segments, according to the north-south and east-west and orientation, the latter of which connects, via two holes, to two basins used to water the animals, placed adjacent to the circle. The circle was traced keeping the length of the radius constant, expressed with the measurement of the *Roman foot*, therefore the artefact is probably subsequent both to the system of measuring time, as well as the *ritual palmiento*. The circle is divided into four equal parts, therefore brings about the rite of filling the two lateral basins synchronously and through a single filling action. This rite, by symbolizing the solar cycle in four parts of equal duration (two solstices and two equinoxes), pays homage to the sun symbolically and ritually quenching the animals' thirst through the water that supplied the basins after flowing inside it, crossing the east-west axis of the solar path. (See **Figure 18**)



Figure 18. Ritual animal drinking trough, seen from the north.

6.2. Relationship between Ancient Daily Adaptation Practices, Astronomical Knowledge and Myth

As far as Greco-Roman culture is concerned, it has been proposed that some Greek myths had an astronomical root, and that they could be classified as *etiological* (such as the myth of the abduction of Kore/Proserpina by Hades/Pluto which explains the birth of the fertile and sterile agricultural season with the wrath of Demeter/Ceres, mother of the abductee, who introduced the alternation of the seasons in a context in which only a mythical fertile season existed), or *cryptoscientific* (such as the myth of the hunter Orion, who is killed by a scorpion as a punishment plotted by Artemis or Gaia to punish his arrogance in defining himself capable of killing any animal produced by the earth): for the change of the seasons, no constellation is presented that can be referred to the myth, while for the myth of the killing of Orion by the scorpion the astral reference is represented by the *Orion's Constellation*, which sets/dies while that of *Scorpio* rises/lives [64].

However, the Orion's death myth also contains a moral, which, as such, plays an adaptive, albeit elementary, function, excerpt from its narration. Therefore, the method of analyzing myths through the extraction of asymmetry, to be implemented after the structural decomposition of the narrative, can allow us to obtain representations of both visions of man and the world, as well as rules of life and

maxims of wisdom, capable of significantly integrating the knowledge of the cultures of ancient populations, enriching the results of historical, archaeological, anthropological and artistic research with meaning.

As regards the analysis of the *ritual palmiento* proposed here, I am not aware of any similar rupestrian structures having been described and semiotically interpreted. The aforementioned analysis model has anyway been used both to distinguish the types of *palmiento* dedicated to the mere technical production of wine from those dedicated to its ritual production, and to decode the role assumed by the structure and the images inscribed in the *ritual palmiento* in determining the value of the ritual schemes as resulting from the environment in which they were acted out. From this perspective, the language of the images was therefore analyzed, as represented by the iconic reproduction of the two constellations, and by their presentation in the position they assumed during the nocturnal sunset and the heliacal rising, as representatives of mythical narratives: the symbolic insemination/death represented by the ritual deposition of the must inside the structure reproducing *Ariadne's Crown* does not seem to show great interpretative difficulties (*Generalization Principle*: must/seed of Dionysus placed in the *pithos/uterus* located inside the semicircular structure, symbolizing death through its representation at nightfall). Conversely, understanding the meaning of the *Bootes' Constellation* appears less immediate, since the same derives from the symmetrical relationship between the double birth of both Dionysus and wine: “Dionysus reveals to Ikarios the two phases of wine production” is equivalent, in fact, to “Ikarios reveals the two births of Dionysus” (*Principle of Symmetry*), inasmuch the double birth of Dionysus represents a metaphor (*Principle of Generalization*) of the phases of must production and wine maturation (“*double birth*” of wine, and therefore the identification between wine and Dionysus).

This significant relationship is also illustrative of the direction that the production of myths takes [65]: it starts from a practice, a knowledge or a rite (in this case, that of the production of wine), for arrive, through analogies, metaphors and symmetrizations, at the myth, which becomes its emic representation. The interpretation of myths is therefore analogous to that of dreams, differentiating itself from it on the basis of the weight to be given to the narrative structure (strongly asymmetrical for myths, compared to that of dreams, which appears more chaotic and disorganized), and to the modalities of symbolization: expression of collective adaptations and practices, for the former, and of individual needs and conflicts, for the latter. The same method can therefore be applied to ritual practices.

Indeed, one of the most famous myths, reflected in the most famous initiatory rite of Greco-Roman antiquity, *i.e.*, that of Demeter and Kore, represents the metaphorical reconstruction of the practice of growing wheat, and was so important that it gave rise to variations and to the mystery-initiatory rite of Eleusis, which for centuries attracted a large number of faithful on pilgrimage, many of whom were cultured and famous, due to the profound personal transformations that the rite produced in the participants, and due to the profound symmetrical parallelism

that it proposed between the mythical narration and the moral code of management of marriages and the generation of children. As a result, this parallelism led to the identification between the cycle of agrarian regeneration represented by the wheat seed, which decomposes underground to give rise, by multiplying itself, to the ear of wheat that is harvested, nourishing the community, and the cycle of generation of new births, which multiplies the members of the community through arranged marriages (and consequent gestations that decompose the mothers), in which young women did not choose their partner, just as the wheat seed does not choose to be sown. This parallelism emerges from archaeological finds and literary testimonies psychoanalytically interpreted. [27] [39].

The interpretation of the rite proposed for the *ritual palmiento* described here can therefore be placed within the ancient Chthonic mythical/religious conceptions of the geographical area, which established systematic symmetrical identifications between consciously carried out agricultural practices, transformations (inexplicable at that time, according to Ordinary Logic) which occurred underground (or in the *pithoi*, as far as the must is concerned), and the daily life and psychic and social transformations of men, which occurred on the surface. An emotional isomorphism perceived at sub-discursive levels, which found in the Myth a partial verbal explanation, which was completed and communicated through the Rite, therefore.

Furthermore, the *Narrative Catalysis* that describes Dionysus as drunk and/or mad, and the one that describes Ariadne ([66]: pp. 102-130) as “*Lady of the Labyrinth*”, creator of the method of immersion and safe exit from it, would deserve a more in-depth and extensive examination, since the Minotaur residing in the Labyrinth is considered a metaphor for the most primitive and destructive components of the personality [67], and the Labyrinth a metaphor for intrauterine psychic life [68], as well as a place symbol of initiatory paths ([62]: pp. 1-3) and where one gets physically and mentally lost. In fact, such catalysis adds possible further meanings to the aforementioned symbolic insemination: drunkenness and madness of Dionysus (*i.e.*, more destructive and primitive parts of the personality, of which the Minotaur is a metaphor) “*seed*” the method of immersion and safe exit from the Labyrinth, transforming themselves into more constructive and civilized components, if not in contact with the divine. In fact:

The thread or “*mitos*” (*μίτος* in Greek) that unravels in the labyrinth is not simply part of an action that leads Theseus to the exit. The presence of the thread is the result of a thought that has set in motion a mental process capable of determining the use of the thread. And it is no coincidence that the word “*mitos*” is also used in reference to the activities of thought: *kata miton* (*κατά μίτον* in Greek) means: in the appropriate order and/or in detail ([67]: p. 1).

The presence in the area of rupestrian structures attributable to the *Anthesteria* festival, which included mysterious rites partially described by Apollodorus in the

fragment called “*Contra Naera*” [69], in which a marriage held with a secret rite is mentioned, and an oath made by vestals who took a vow of chastity, in addition to the “*drinking contest*” which led to very serious drunkenness, and therefore to the identification between the drunkenness and madness of Dionysus with that which could often affect the participants in this contest, could explain the introduction of this festival in a rural, cultural and linguistic context (ancient *Silbion* or *Sidion*—currently Gravina in Puglia) rather distant from Athens. In that city, in fact, the myth of the defeat of the Minotaur by Theseus had a fundamental importance in the structuring of the *synoecism* and the constitution of Attica [70] [71], therefore the marriage between Ariadne and Dionysus, which occurred after that defeat, could assume the meaning of the resemblance of the new order emerging from the *synoecism*, and the personal and social transformation following the relational chaos due to the climate of the festival.

It cannot therefore be excluded that the ritual practice analysed was part of a Dionysian mystery cult, since there are many testimonies of a strong civic rooting of the Cult of Dionysus in Southern Italy, which come both from manuscripts of Greek authors (Sophocles, Aristophanes), and from archaeological finds that are also completely original, compared to the Greek ones [72]. Such mystery cults foresaw the transformation of practitioners from common men/women into *Bacchoi*, and, although the meaning of this transformation is still unknown, the analysis of the ritual presented here could provide useful metaphorical indications, *i.e.*, *chaotic thoughts emerging from madness and drunkenness, are placed in the appropriate order and/or in detail, crossing a labyrinthine mental space. the wedding between Ariadne and Dionysus.*

6.3. Possible Future Developments

In a context where archaeological evidence is still insufficient, integrating the semiotic and psychoanalytic approaches, can help to decode some peculiarities present in the landscape, defining a horizon in which archaeology, geography, history and anthropology can converge within interdisciplinary research, conducted by collaborating “*in a network*” [73]. It is therefore desirable that further archaeological research should be conducted both in the area of the *Padre Eterno* and in the neighbouring ones, as well as further research on the mystery cult of *Anthesteria*, both in Southern Italy and in Greece

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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