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Interweaving Dreams and Rituals: The Anthropopoiesis of Communal Identity in the Festino di San Silvestro Rite

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Abstract

Purpose of the Study: This research aims to investigate the intricate relationship between communal identity, rituals, and dreams within the Festino di San Silvestro rite in Troina, Sicily. It focuses on understanding how shared dreaming, facilitated by the Social Dreaming Matrix (SDM), reflects and shapes communal engagement with cultural myths and collective identity during a traditional rite of passage. **Methodology**: Employing a qualitative approach, the study integrates participant observation, thematic analysis of dreams collected through SDM sessions, and semi-structured interviews with participants of the rite. This methodology allows for an in-depth exploration of the symbolic and metaphorical content of dreams and their relevance to the community's cultural practices and identity. **Main Findings**: The research uncovers that dreams shared during the rite act as semiophores, mediating the dialogue between individual and communal psyches, thus reinforcing communal bonds and cultural heritage. The liminal phase is identified as crucial for communal transformation, wherein rituals and shared dreams catalyze the redefinition of communal identity and the reinforcement of ties to cultural and spiritual roots. **Applications of This Study**: The findings have broad implications for cultural anthropology, community psychology, and ritual studies, offering a novel perspective on using shared dreaming as a mechanism for community building and identity formation. This study suggests practical applications for SDM in fostering community cohesion and understanding the dynamic process of anthropopoiesis in various communal settings. **Novelty/Originality of This Study**: This research contributes a novel perspective by integrating SDM with rites of passage, offering fresh insights into communal uses of dreams for navigating identity and heritage. Its exploration of dreams as semiophores in a communal ritual context marks a unique contribution to the fields of cultural and psychological studies, highlighting the SDM's potential in uncovering collective unconscious processes and supporting the dynamic construction of communal identity.

Keywords: Anthropopoiesis; Communal Identity; Cultural Anthropology; Liminality; Rituals; Social Dreaming Matrix

Introduction

Rituals and myths, integral to the social fabric, serve as the cornerstone of communal identity, embodying the collective psyche's aspirations, values, and beliefs. These cultural elements, as Geertz (Geertz, 1973) posits, function as "symbolic systems" providing a "cultural lens" through which societies interpret and project their realities. This perspective is complemented by Eliade's (Eliade, 1954) insights into the cosmogonic dimension of myths, which connect individuals to their spiritual origins, weaving the past with the present and the mundane with the transcendent. Such narratives and practices are not static; they evolve, reflecting and shaping societal dynamics, thereby reinforcing the link between individual and collective experiences.

This study aims to unravel how rituals and myths contribute to the construction and

perpetuation of communal identity, focusing on the *Festino di San Silvestro* in Troina, Sicily. This festival, venerating San Silvestro, encapsulates the dynamic interplay between tradition and contemporary societal shifts, offering a window into the community's anthropopoietic process. By examining this rite of passage, the research highlights the role of temporality in sustaining and transforming foundational myths, underscoring the rituals' capacity to mediate between the sacred and the social fabric.

Building on Turner's (Turner, 1969) examination of social dramas and the pivotal role of rites in expressing and resolving communal conflicts, this study explores the *Festino di San Silvestro* as an embodiment of such dynamics. The festival's rituals, including a pilgrimage and interaction with sacred laurels, symbolize a profound connection to San Silvestro, reflecting the community's ongoing negotiation of identity and heritage. Through an ethnogroupanalytical lens, this research delves into how the *Festino di San Silvestro* serves as a living testament to Troina's identity, illustrating the continuous weaving of communal identity through time-honored narratives and practices.

Previous research on myths and rituals has embraced an interdisciplinary approach, offering a rich tapestry of insights into how these cultural phenomena shape human experience and societal structures. A notable compilation of readings delves into various aspects of ritual, including ancestor worship, initiation rites, gender roles, and shamanic practices, providing a broad overview of the subject (Strathern, 2017). A bibliometric analysis highlights the evolutionary trajectory of research on religious rituals, pinpointing significant contributions within clinical, neuroscience, developmental, and health studies (Fischer, 2021). This multidisciplinary conversation extends across various religious traditions, with scholars from diverse fields examining Christian, Buddhist, Jewish, and Islamic rituals, thereby enriching our understanding of ritualistic practices across cultures (Hoffmann, 2013). Rituals, characterized by their structured and repetitive nature, are identified as key behavioral events that cultivate predictable patterns of behavior, reinforcing social bonds and communal identities (Gruenwald, 2020). The study of ritual pragmatics further reveals the complexity of ritual as a phenomenon, approached through both 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' methodologies across different disciplines (Kádár & House, 2020). An interdisciplinary perspective underscores ritual as a culturally inherited and psychologically ingrained behavior, necessitating insights from anthropology, archaeology, biology, psychology, among others, to fully grasp its significance (Legare & Nielsen, 2020). Additionally, neuroscientific research endeavors to unravel the cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and experiential dimensions of religious rituals and practices, offering a deeper understanding of their impact on individuals and communities (Newberg, 2020). This confluence of research from various disciplines illuminates the multifaceted nature of myths and rituals, underscoring their pivotal role in human culture and societal development.

Despite the extensive exploration of myths and rituals from various interdisciplinary perspectives, there remains a gap in research specifically focused on the dynamic interplay between ritual practices and communal identity formation within the context of modern societal changes. Previous studies have provided valuable insights into the structural, neuroscientific, and cultural dimensions of rituals, yet few have delved into how these rituals adapt and evolve in response to contemporary societal shifts, particularly in communities with deep-rooted historical and religious traditions. This research aims to fill this gap by examining the "Festino di San Silvestro" rite in Troina, Italy, as a case study to understand how a traditional rite of passage not only sustains communal identity but also adapts to and reflects modern societal dynamics. The purpose of this study is to illuminate the ways in which communal rituals, steeped in ancient myths and practices,

continue to shape, reaffirm, and redefine communal identities in the face of evolving social realities, thereby offering new insights into the anthropopoietic processes that underlie communal cohesion and identity in the contemporary world.

Research Methods

In exploring the intricate layers of the Festival of San Silvestro, this study adopts an ethnogroupanalytical approach (Bates, 1970), which aligns closely with Geertz's (Geertz, 1973) concept of "thick description" in ethnography. This approach allows for an in-depth cultural analysis, integrating both observational fieldwork and qualitative analysis. The primary method of data collection was participant observation, a technique as crucial for understanding the nuances of cultural practices from an insider's perspective. Researcher actively engaged in the festival's activities, immersing themselves in the rituals and interacting with community members to gain direct insights into their cultural significance.

Complementing this, semi-structured interviews with key informants, such as local historians, religious figures, and long-time festival participants, were conducted. This method follows the guidelines proposed by Bernard (2017) ensuring a comprehensive collection of diverse perspectives on the ritual's interpretations and meanings.

A central component of our methodology was the Social Dreaming Matrix (SDM), a technique inspired by Lawrence (2018), which focuses on exploring the collective unconscious. In SDM sessions, participants shared dreams and reflections related to the festival, revealing underlying collective thoughts and emotions. This dream analysis, guided by Jung's (1964) theory of collective unconscious, sought to identify recurring themes, symbols, and metaphors, thereby uncovering insights into the community's psyche and their connection to the festival's rituals and myths.

Results and Discussion

According to Van Gennep (2004) the rite of passage represents the possibility for a people/group/individual to define its own anthropopoiesis and the way for the researcher to define its anthropopoietic function. As a consequence the study of a rite of passage within a social group is nothing more than the question which we ask ourselves when faced with the close and well defined relationship of the impossibility to respond to the problem of life and death except in terms of the study of the group, the psychosomatic dimension and hence the imaginary collective.

We feel that what characterizes the experience of the rite of passage in terms of the psychic process is the way in which the Community can control the Time variable and its conflict with unconscious phantoms.

The rite of passage is thus not only useful for the punctual study of the specific nuclei which define the before and after periods in the cyclic time of existence. It also has the function of putting us in contact with a particular space of the mental and semantic field which Van Gennep defined as the "liminal phase" (van Gennep, 2004). The problem of life and death, and therefore the identity, is being able to stay on the threshold and observe the process of building and making memory. The liminality which characterizes the transition phase of a rite of passage has also been analyzed by Victor Turner (Turner, 1969), who examines in particular the peculiar comradeship which is created between those who experiment such a condition. Turner uses the term "communitas" to define this substantially egalitarian way of interacting, founded on a reciprocal empathic adaptation

instead of a system of rules and interaction established (to a certain extent) by the social norm. According to Turner it assures the "recognition of a general and essential human link, without which no society could exist".

The group which creates, lives, produces and performs the rite is a group which decides to observe these bio-cultural aspects while remaining on the threshold.

The study has shown that the neotenic characteristic of the group must be a constituent of the dynamic unconscious which is manifested within the rite in its somatic dimension.

Basically the rite becomes a construct in which we can define and identify different levels of knowledge of a culture. The use of the SDM enables us to create a space suitable for the observation of these dimensions as the dream brings the levels together. This happens because the dream is recognizable as a primary structured process: it is essentially analogical and strongly metaphorical.

The primary structured process permits a dialogical relationship between psychic instances and regards the mechanisms of self representation of the mental apparatus according to the principles of the Freudian topographies (the Conscious, Preconscious and Unconscious; the Id, the Es and the Super-Id)(Freud, 1989). The primary structured process involves a workgroup and is analyzed in terms of free associations. According to Menarini (2013) free associations can be interpreted as metonimic and metaphorical rhetorical meanings (respectively movement and condensation). The movement concerns the symbolic meanings of the chain. The primary structured process translates the conflicts between the instances (ES, Id, and Super-Id) in the internalized imaginary, which has the specific structure of fairytales, literature, mythology and dreams.

So our attention, also according to conceptualizations on the social dream of the device of the social dreaming matrix, is based on the liminality of the rite (as spatial dimension) and the narration of the rite (its structure and group construction in terms of ceremonies and semantic links with an affective basis of the collective): the preparations for the journey, the waiting in the wood for the "welcome" or "welcome back" (to life) and the women's waiting for the men to come back from the wood. How can we observe liminality? In their cyclicity every rite has its "dead" times which are, in fact, moments of great empirical significance for the structuring of the primary structured process. For this reason the SDM was used before the passage to the wood, the night before the return to the town and on the confirmation of the completed journey after the mass at the church of San Silvestro.

1. The Rite Of San Silvestro

The Festino di San Silvestro, a profound rite of passage in Sicily, epitomizes the deep-rooted connection between a community and its landscape, interweaving the present experience with the rich tapestry of memory and history. Held in Troina, in the province of Enna, this annual pilgrimage from the Church of San Silvestro to the Sacred Wood of Nebrodi marks a significant cultural and spiritual journey for the men of Troina. Embarking on this journey on a Thursday night and culminating on Sunday afternoon, the participants enact a living tradition that binds them to their land and their shared past, embodying what De Martino (2002, pp. 669–670) describes as "being in history":

> The fundamental constitution of being is not being in the world but having to be in the world … The worldliness of being refers to having to be in worldliness, having to be according to a community project of being …. The catastrophe of the worldly

does not therefore appear in analysis as a way of being in the world, but as a permanent threat, sometimes dominated and resolute, sometimes triumphant.

At the heart of the Festino di San Silvestro lies a moment of profound significance: the act of touching the laurel in the deepest part of the valley. This act, according to local legend, takes place where the body of San Silvestro, the Basilian Monk and Patron Saint of Troina, was discovered, preserved and intact. By touching the laurel, the men symbolically connect with the sacred, their territory, and their history, becoming heroes in a narrative that bridges past and future. This ritual not only reaffirms their belonging to the community and the land but also serves as a testament for future generations, embodying a direct contact with the sacred and reinforcing their place within a continuum of tradition and belief.

The introduction of the Social Dreaming Matrix (SDM) into the rite of San Silvestro presents an innovative approach to exploring communal identity and spirituality. By conducting SDM sessions at the beginning, middle, and end of the pilgrimage, a space was created for participants to delve into their collective unconscious, revealing insights into their shared sense of life, existence, and the foundational myths that underpin their community's identity. This process bypassed the need for traditional dream reflection groups, focusing instead on capturing the essence of the community's primordial matrix and its relationship with the sacred.

The SDM sessions aimed to capture the dynamism of the present within the community's foundational matrix, exploring how roles, rules, and relationships are structured through the creation of a specific communal imaginary. This exploration was guided by the notion of "anthropopoiesis of the mind" and the "semiophoric function" of dreams, or "semiophores," concepts that draw from both anthropological and psychological studies to illuminate the ways in which dreams act as carriers of meaning, connecting the community to its origins and foundational myths.

The Festino di San Silvestro, through its intricate blend of ritual, communal journey, and the integration of social dreaming, offers a unique lens through which to understand the complex layers of human identity, spirituality, and community. By participating in this rite of passage, the men of Troina engage in a process that is both deeply personal and intrinsically communal, reaffirming their connections to each other, their history, and the sacred landscape that surrounds them. The SDM, as applied in this context, reveals the power of dreams to unlock collective memories and myths, offering new insights into the ways communities navigate their existence and articulate their place within the broader tapestry of human history.

2. Implementation of Social Dreaming Matrix (SDM) in the Rite of San Silvestro

During the Social Dreaming Matrix (SDM) sessions associated with the rite of "Festino di San Silvestro," participants shared dreams that illuminated the process of "anthropopoiesis of the mind." This term, inspired by the work of Francesco Remotti (2013), suggests that through the act of sharing dreams within the context of a social drama, such as a rite of passage, the community engages in a collective thought-creation process. These dreams serve not only as reflections of individual and communal psyche but also as semiophores—objects or entities that carry deep meanings and facilitate the transfer of knowledge and experience across generations.

Nisbet (1969, p. 4) describes metaphor as "a way of proceeding from the known to

the unknown", a description that resonates deeply with the role of dreams in the SDM. Dreams, in this context, act as metaphors, carrying the "identifying qualities of one thing" and transferring them "in an instantaneous, almost unconscious, flash of insight to some other thing that is, by remoteness or complexity, unknown to us" (Nisbet, 1969). This semantic transformation, where dreams translate experiences, feelings, and ancestral wisdom into vivid narratives, aligns with Krzysztof Pomian's (2013) concept of the semiophore, which he describes as an object becoming a "bearer of meaning" when it transitions from utility to possessing a purely semantic function.

The SDM, as utilized in the rite, becomes a liminal space, "purposely convened in the here-and-now, [and] is a reflection of the primordial matrix of humanity" (W. G. Lawrence, 2003, p. 3), wherein dreams are shared and interpreted. These shared dreams, rich in symbolic imagery and emotional resonance, act as conduits between the visible and the invisible, the past and the present, effectively becoming semiophores themselves. They are "the connection between the invisible and the visible" (Agresta, 2010), enabling participants to explore their collective unconscious and the foundational myths that underpin their community identity.

In this liminal space, dreams are not passive reflections but active participants in the construction of communal memory and identity. They serve as the structural representation of the rite's imaginary, revealing the community's engagement with its myths of origin and the sacred. As Bion (1992) suggests, the process of myth-making is an essential function of dream-thought, transforming sensory impressions into material suitable for the communal narrative. This transformation underscores the dreams' role in facilitating an "anthropopoietic process" (Agresta, 2015), where the shared unconscious activated by these semiophoric dreams contributes to the community's ongoing story of itself.

The application of the SDM in the context of "Festino di San Silvestro" highlights the intricate relationship between ritual, dream, and myth in the maintenance and evolution of communal identity. Through the act of sharing and interpreting dreams, the community of Troina engages in a dynamic process of self-reflection and collective memory construction, reaffirming their connection to San Silvestro and the sacred landscape of their ancestors. This process not only bridges the gap between the known and the unknown but also ensures the intergenerational transfer of knowledge and the continuity of cultural and spiritual traditions.

Incorporating the shared dreams from the Social Dreaming Matrix (SDM) sessions into our understanding of "anthropopoiesis of the mind" during the "Festino di San Silvestro" rite, participants articulated profound experiences that bridge personal and collective consciousness. One participant expressed feeling disconnected and burdened, stating, "I find it hard to be present at this festival. It is as if the festival had gone and I am not able to catch up with it and be with them. If possible, with great sacrifice I manage to catch up with them but not in a correct way. I lose the things I have, my comforts, I lose my rucksack... I find it difficult to do what I do every year." This narrative captures the struggle and the liminality of engaging with the rite, reflecting the personal sacrifices and challenges faced in the pursuit of spiritual and communal connection.

Another dream shared reveals a transformative encounter, "Jesus Christ and San Silvestro say to me: 'Set out on the journey and be strong'. I was pushing my father in his wheelchair and my Dad was giving me strength. At a certain point Dad got up and came towards me. He came to me and hugged me." This dream signifies the empowerment derived from spiritual and ancestral figures, underlining the rite's role in facilitating

strength and resilience among participants.

A further poignant dream involves a direct command from San Silvestro, "San Silvestro saw me and said to me: 'You must carry me on your back'. I said to him: 'How can I do it?'- and he said: 'Don't worry, you will be able to carry me on your back!'" This interaction highlights the deep sense of responsibility and honor bestowed upon participants, suggesting that the burden of tradition and the sacred is not only a personal challenge but also a communal privilege that connects the present with the sacred past.

The shared dreams within the SDM sessions vividly illustrate the profound psychological and spiritual processes at play during the "Festino di San Silvestro." The narratives shared by participants reveal a deep engagement with the themes of sacrifice, strength, and the transmission of cultural and spiritual heritage. These dreams serve as semiophores, not just in the transfer of meaning and knowledge, but as living embodiments of the rite's transformative power. They encapsulate the liminality of participants' experiences—straddling the realms of the known and the unknown, the physical and the spiritual, the individual and the collective. Through these dreams, the community collectively navigates the complexities of their identity, history, and the sacred, reaffirming their connection to San Silvestro and each other. This process, underscored by the dreams' vivid metaphors and emotional resonance, enriches the communal fabric, weaving together past, present, and future into a continuous narrative of belonging and transformation.

3. Anthropopoiesis and the Semiophoric Function of Dreams

The concept of "anthropopoiesis and the semiophoric function of dreams" within the Social Dreaming Matrix (SDM) sessions for the "Festino di San Silvestro" rite captures a profound intersection of individual and communal psychologies with cultural anthropology. Gordon Lawrence (2010) and other scholars have posited that the SDM serves as a developmental space for the mind in its most archaic form, where dreams are shared not merely as personal narratives but as communal myths awaiting realization. These shared dreams, embodying the essence of Bion's notion of myth as "non-common sense," become a medium through which the sacred guides, such as San Silvestro, communicate with the community, urging them towards action and reflection within the rite. The dreams recounted—"I saw San Silvestro and he told me..."—illustrate this dialogical process between the sacred and the mundane, the past and the present, embodying the semiophoric function of dreams as carriers of deep cultural and spiritual meanings.

Lawrence and Long (2010, p. 231) argue that dreams link the conscious observer to a "spontaneously organizing system of thinking that is the human ecological niche," a niche that represents the collective unconscious of a community engaged in a rite of passage. This ecological niche is where the anthropology of the rite intersects with social dreaming, highlighting the SDM as a crucible for the transformation of sensory experiences and unconscious memories into a structured communal myth. Dreams shared within the SDM—encompassing symbols like family, the boy, and the church—serve not only as reflections of individual inner life but also as collective experiences that bind the community to its historical and cultural identity. This process reflects De Martino's concept of "being in history," where dreams, as semiophores, facilitate a communal dialogue with the sacred, anchoring the community within a continuum of past, present, and future.

Thus, the anthropopoiesis of the mind, facilitated by the SDM, becomes a vital

process of cultural and psychological renewal, where dreams as semiophores carry forward the legacy and wisdom of the community. Through the act of dreaming and sharing these dreams, the community of Troina engages in a dynamic re-enactment of their founding myths, ensuring the transmission of these sacred narratives across generations. This semiophoric function underscores the dreams' role in the communal rite, acting as bridges between the visible and the invisible, the known and the unknown, thereby reinforcing the communal identity and its sacred bonds.

4. Reinventing Tradition: The Power of Rituals and Dreams in Shaping Communal Identity

The Festino di San Silvestro rite and the Social Dreaming Matrix (SDM) serve as pivotal mechanisms for the Troina community, highlighting the dynamic interplay between rituals, dreams, and the construction of communal identity. These elements are not static traditions but active engagements with the community's psyche, facilitating a dialogue with foundational myths. This dialogue is crucial for the reaffirmation or redefinition of communal roles, rules, and relationships, as stated by Lawrence (W. G. Lawrence, 2010), emphasizing the SDM's role in articulating and reflecting communal values and memories. Moreover, this process allows for the adaptation of cultural rituals to contemporary contexts, ensuring that communal identity is not only preserved but also evolves with time.

The liminal phase, characterized by the journey to the Sacred Wood of Nebrodi, represents a critical period of transformation within the community, as described by Van Gennep (van Gennep, 2004). This phase, explored through the SDM, reveals how the community collectively navigates the ambiguous space between known and unknown realms, facilitating profound personal and communal growth. The shared dreams and experiences during this phase act as catalysts for communal bonding and identity strengthening, underscoring the transformative power of liminality in fostering new understandings and solidifying communal cohesion.

The SDM's application within the context of the Festino di San Silvestro rite highlights its unique ability to access the collective unconscious, playing a significant role in myth and memory formation. As Lawrence and Long (G. Lawrence & Long, 2010) suggest, dreams serve as a link between the individual and the collective, enabling the community to engage in the creation of new myths that are integral to the communal memory and identity. This process not only preserves the wisdom contained within these shared dreams but also ensures its transmission through generations, maintaining the vibrancy and relevance of communal values.

This research provides a new perspective on understanding the function of rites in society. Traditionally, rites are often thought of as celebratory expressions of tradition and cultural values, which is a concept long recognized in anthropology and cultural studies (Turner, 1969; van Gennep, 2004). However, this study highlights that rites, especially the Festino di San Silvestro, go beyond the usual symbolic and ceremonial roles. Rites across cultures, such as in ancient Chinese societies, encompass rituals, moral ethics, and systems of political hierarchy (Hu, 2023), while in modern Western societies there has been a shift to more active and individualized forms of ritualization (Wojtkowiak et al., 2018). These rites are present at every level of society, expressing the sacredness of the society and its culture (Lardellier, 2019), and play a central role in institutions, transmitting knowledge and values (Lardellier & Delaye, 2015).

This research, through the implementation of the Social Dreaming Matrix (SDM),

shows that rites also function as a means of collective introspection and a dynamic communal identity formation tool (Agresta, 2015; W. G. Lawrence, 2010). In this context, our research differs from more traditional approaches that tend to separate aspects of anthropology from psychology in the analysis of rites. We integrate both aspects, showing how psychological and anthropological factors interact in rites to shape and strengthen communal identity (De Martino, 2002; Remotti, 2013). Despite the diversity of rites, they are formal acts that are central components of individual and community life (Hornborg, 2019), with varied purposes and meanings of ritual actions, as well as diverse reflections of actors (Xygalatas & Maňo, 2022).

This research highlights the importance of rites in the context of modern society, where globalization and modernization often threaten the survival of cultural traditions. This study, particularly through the lens of Festino di San Silvestro, shows that rites are not just traditional celebrations, but also serve as an important bridge between the past and the present, allowing communities to celebrate, reflect on and adapt their traditions according to contemporary conditions (Turner, 1969; Van Gennep, 2004). The findings illustrate how global communities utilize symbolism and dreams as tools of communication and deep collective understanding, helping to express and explore shared values and histories amidst the pressures of modernity that often lead to fragmentation of collective identities (W. G. Lawrence, 2010; Zainuddin, 2023). This research makes a significant contribution to the study of anthropology and social psychology, showing how cultures and identities are shaped and sustained through generations, as well as highlighting the adaptation and resilience of traditional practices in the face of social and cultural change (Remotti, 2013; De Martino, 2002).

This research has significant implications in the context of maintaining rituals and folklore as integral elements of social and cultural structures. The importance of maintaining these practices is emphasized, not only as a form of respect for cultural heritage, but also as a vital means of maintaining communal cohesion and identity. In the academic realm, the findings provide new insights into the practices of anthropology and psychology, by highlighting the important role of the semiophoric aspect of dreams in cultural contexts. It encourages researchers and practitioners to better appreciate and understand the role of dreams as carriers of meaning and narrative in culture, as well as a means of deep symbolic communication within communities.

This research reveals the complex interactions between culture, history, collective psychology and spirituality in the context of rites, which form a rich and layered experience, instrumental in reflecting and influencing community identity. Ritual consciousness, as an altered state of consciousness, facilitates the experience of unity in community, suggesting that rites are more than just traditions or ceremonies, but also rich expressions of value and meaning (Moore, 2015). The rite is formed of various practices-from pagan, cultural, celebratory, traditional, to religious rituals-that overlap, replace, enrich, or utilize each other, creating a diverse tapestry (Burgos, 2021). Influenced by social and environmental factors, including subsistence, socio-political conditions, and social complexity, rites contribute to the social evolution and operation of cultural institutions (Winkelman, 2022). This unique blend of elements creates a special dynamic in rites, which not only maintains but also shapes and adapts communal identities and structures, highlighting the importance of rites as a dynamic and adaptive medium that integrates multiple dimensions of social and spiritual life.

Given the significance of these findings, further research is necessary to explore how various communities utilize rites and dreams in similar contexts. This exploration will aid in comprehending the diverse methods employed by communities worldwide to maintain

and adapt their traditions. Moreover, there is an urgent need to incorporate these findings into modern practices in psychology and anthropology. Doing so will deepen our understanding of the ways in which cultural traditions are preserved, contemplated, and modified. It will also assist in developing a more inclusive and holistic approach towards sustaining the relevance and viability of cultural traditions in evolving societies.

Conclusion

The integration of the Social Dreaming Matrix (SDM) within the Festino di San Silvestro rite represents a profound exploration of the ways in which communal identity, myths, and collective memory are intricately woven through the shared experience of ritual and dream. This study underscores the dream's role as a transformative space where personal and collective histories are liberated from the constraints of an inevitable future, suggesting that rites serve to dramatize these narratives, thereby enabling communities to engage with their cultural and historical identities on a deeply affective level.

Our findings reveal that the dream and the rite perform parallel functions: they both facilitate a dialogue between the conscious and unconscious realms, acting as vehicles for the community to navigate and negotiate their identity and place within the continuum of history and myth. The SDM sessions, by fostering a collective engagement with the dreaming process, have illuminated the semiotic richness of dreams as semiophores—carriers of deep cultural significance and mediators of the anthropopoietic processes that underlie communal bonding and identity formation.

This study, while providing valuable insights into the complex interplay between communal identity, rites of passage, and the Social Dreaming Matrix (SDM), encounters several limitations that merit consideration. Firstly, the intrinsic nature of qualitative research, particularly when exploring the deeply subjective experiences of dreams and rites, introduces challenges in generalizability. The findings are deeply rooted in the specific cultural, historical, and geographical context of the Troina community and the Festino di San Silvestro rite, which may not be directly applicable to other communities or rites without careful consideration of their unique contexts. Additionally, the interpretation of dreams and the analysis of their significance within the communal and ritual framework rely heavily on the subjective perspectives of both participants and researchers, which could introduce bias and variability in the understanding of the communal psyche. The reliance on self-reported experiences also raises questions about the potential for recall bias and the influence of social desirability on participants' sharing of dream narratives. These limitations highlight the need for further research that encompasses a broader range of communities, comparative analyses between different rites of passage, and the development of methodological approaches that can enhance the reliability and validity of interpreting dreams within communal and ritualistic contexts.

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