

Symposium Peregrinum 2016

The Mysteries of Mithras and Other Mystic Cults in the Roman World

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ABSTRACTS

1. Luciano ALBANESE luciano.albanese@uniroma1.it

“Porfirio, l’*Antro delle ninfe* e i misteri di Mithra”

The aim of this paper is to compare the Porphyry’s lecture of tauroctony in *The Cave of The Nymphs* (borrowed from Eubulus and Pallas, maybe also Numenius?) with the mithraic archaeological finds.

2. José David Mendoza ÁLVAREZ, luckyman76@hotmail.com , “*Mithras y otros cultos orientales en el anfiteatro de Itálica*”, /“Mithras and Other oriental Cults in the Amphitheater of Itálica.”

This research is part of our project Doctoral Thesis that discusses the amphitheater of Itálica, which we intend to show the results for the cult practiced therein. Thus, we present a new hypothesis of possible rooms of religion distributed along the annular gallery under the podium.

3. Giovanna BASTIANELLI , gawain@virgilio.it. “Mithras in Umbria”

Many finds testify to the cult of Mithras in *Regio VI, Umbria*. These include inscriptions, two altars, two reliefs, and two Tauroctonies, which were either found by chance by local collectors and erudite men, or sold by antiquarians after inadequate and scarcely documented excavations in the XIX and XX centuries. The Mithraeum of Spoleto was also fortuitously discovered, dug up, and deprived of its decoration and furniture, which are at present lost; the monument itself is hardly recognizable within a thick bush. From this sad situation one may, at least, draw a map of the local cult of Mithras, which appears to be mostly documented along the via Flaminia, from *Ocriculum* to *Inteamna Nahars*, Montoro, *Spoletium*, *Trebiae*, *Carsulae*, and *Sentinum*. Worshippers in *Regio VI* are known only thanks to some inscriptions from *Ocriculum*, Montoro, *Carsulae*, and *Sentinum*; they were Roman citizens, freedmen, and few slaves, who were mostly artisans, landowners, perhaps managers of private or public properties, living and working in small cities or in *villae*. Interesting cases are those of of a *quaestor arcae Augustalium* from Montoro, who had a *spelaeum* rebuilt after an earthquake, that of the *leones* of *Carsulae*, who took up a collection building a *leonteum*, and finally the case of *Sentinum*, where the Mithraic community could rely on no less than 35 *patroni*.

4. Sandra BLAKELEY sblakel@emory.edu.

“Mystery gods at the Circus Maximus: The Samothracian Cult in Rome”.

The journey from Samothrace to Rome was as familiar as it was long in the Roman religious imagination. Samothrace was deemed the source of the Salii, Camillae, and Penates; Tarquinius Priscus, Dardanus and Aeneas all serve as mythic exemplars of the Roman connection to the island; the island’s Great Gods were seen behind the Capitoline Triad and on the Velia. And Varro suggests that altars to the Samothracian gods were located in the middle of the Circus, manifested as the Great gods Earth and Sky. Both the setting of the circus and the identity of Varro’s gods are complete departures from the Greek traditions of the rites. Varro’s claims render the rites consistent with his own desire to identify the cult with deep antiquity and cultural authority. His discussions of earth and sky reflect contemporary Neopythagorean concerns, and resonate with the philosophical perspectives on the rites provided by Cicero and Nigidius Figulus. His intellectualization of the rites was a strategy to preserve their sacrality from the uninitiated hordes. He sought at the same time, however, to respond to the Roman enthusiasm to make the rites their own. Altars at the circus would be consistent with the multiple narratives which made Samothrace simultaneously accessible and exotic for the everyday Romans who celebrated Penates, knew of Aeneas, and could draw closer to the gods through the altars perched within visual reach above the dust and the horses. Varro’s image of the gods at the circus recommends the hypothesis that, despite the many Romans who appear on the initiation lists at Samothrace, Romans made entirely different use of the cult than did the Greeks. A closer look, however, offers a more nuanced reading of the philosopher-informant. The Samothracian gods and their neighbors on the spina share an association with both maritime protection and chthonic powers. These are the same semantics which inform their Northern Aegean context. Their maritime powers were broadly known, and would likely have been familiar to all the circus crowds. Chthonic associations, however, are articulated not through any textual tradition, but through ritual installations and iconography at the Samothracian sanctuary itself. Varro emerges as a nuanced reader of these visual cues. His Samothracians at the circus model the need to simultaneously preserve the mystic aspect of the rites, and celebrate their non-mystic reputation, a combination consistent with the broader phenomenon of secret cults in the Roman world.

5. Raffaella BORTOLIN [**raffaella.bortolin@gmail.com*](mailto:raffaella.bortolin@gmail.com)

“The Lion-headed God of the Mithraic Mysteries: Role and Meaning.”

The lion-headed god of the Mithraic Mysteries represents one of most unusual images in Mithras’s cult places, where it does not appear in a systematic way. The god’s representation has a complex iconography (a figure with human body and lion head, snake-wrapped and winged), without an exact identification and denomination. Many other factors make it a complicated study: an archaeologically reduced documentation, chronological generic indications, and the total absence of mithraic texts. The unique textual data available come from classical and Christian authors or from philosophical and magic-religious texts. The epigraphical records have not produced precise indications concerning the name of the divinity; the only known registration, belonging to the relief from York, is of uncertain reading.

This explains the numerous studies that have tried to clarify the role of lion-headed god, which has been interpreted as a time-God, an evil-God, or as a soul's keeper. On the basis of a systematic analysis of all data known, this paper intends to propose a new interpretation of god's role and meaning in the mithraic cult: that, as an original creation of the Mithraic Mysteries, with its own characteristics, the lion-headed figure is a god of mysteric time, an initiator with power over time and the cosmos. It makes use of figurative types and religious themes of the contemporary world. Among these are also some elements of Egyptian origin, perhaps assimilated by many Isea and Serapea, many of which are near Mithrea; furthermore, many cultic aspects are shared by both the Isiac and Mithraic cults.

In particular, in highlighting the roles of the lion-headed god in the liturgical and cultic context of the Mithraic Mysteries, this paper aims to analyze some relationships between the Mithraic lion-headed god and the Egyptian cults of Isis and Serapis. Even its iconographical element has an esoteric meaning, tied to the spiritual journey of the soul of the initiate, and some of this may result from or be reinforced by the influence of the Egyptian cults.

6. Francesca CECI (Musei Capitolini, Rome, Italy) *francesca.ceci@comune.roma.it * and Aleksandra KRAUZE-KOŁODZIEJ (The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland); o.krauze@wp.pl. "Perception of Mystery. The Images of the Myth of Orpheus on Ancient Coins"

The myth of Orpheus experienced great popularity in the ancient world, covering the path from a mythical legend to a complex and sophisticated mystic cult. There were many various features of Orpheus that characterized the Thracian singer, being the results of his different adventures--from the Quest of the Argonauts and the pathetic love story of Eurydice, to his journey to the underworld. All of them influenced the formulation of a real mystery religion that was also enriched by some shamanistic features of Thracian origin and elements of Dionysian mysteries. Orphism, compared to other mystery religions, introduced a new and essentially important element represented by the "soul" of the divine nature within human beings. Developed around the 6th century BC, the Orphic religion had a huge impact on the ancient, medieval and modern worlds (even today it is one of the so-called "Neopagan movements" still in practice). Contemporary culture then transposed the Orphic doctrines to the level of psychoanalysis.

Without a doubt, one can suppose that, due to the popularity of this mystic cult in the ancient world and to its large philosophical and religious connotations in Western thought since the 6th century BC, the myth of Orpheus was highly represented in iconography. The most frequent representations of Orpheus are those showing him as a singer surrounded by beasts and, in smaller numbers, in the scene showing his descent into the Underworld in search of Eurydice. Numerous images connected with the legend of Orpheus, dating from Classical times to the Christian era, are proof of the influence of this mystery cult in both early and late antiquity.

Various images of the story of Orpheus appear also widespread in one of the most powerful means of reaching a broad audience achieve. In the limited space on coins, the engravers were able to highlight effectively the most important and popular events from the story of

Orpheus: the song of Orpheus surrounded by the beasts as well as Eurydice on her way to the underworld. The comparison between iconography on coins and other ancient and late antique representations can easily represent images associated with the Thracian singer as unmistakably recognized by people in many periods, without the need to re-write text on coins.

This paper aims to present an overview of all the ancient coinage iconography representing Orpheus. The chosen coins will be compared with other ancient representations of the motifs connected with the story of Orpheus that are present on mosaics, frescoes and pottery. This paper will also consider the transition of the image of Orpheus to Christ, present in various early Christian and early medieval contexts. In this way I intend to make a contribution to the ancient perception of Orphic religion and actual knowledge about this mystery cult, based on objects of great popularity and every day use, namely, coins.

7. Fabio COLIVICCHI colivicf@queens.ca “Mithras in the Mundus (*Mithras in Caere*)”

The hypogaeum of Clepsina in the urban area of Caere has been the object of much debate in the last few years, but has been considered primarily in relation to the transformation of the ancient Etruscan city into a Roman *praefectura* in 273 BCE. Among the inscriptions traced in the later phase of usage of the hypogaeum is a sketch that has been often identified as the chariot of the Sun. The use of infra-red photography has allowed for better visibility of the image through the thin accretion of calcium carbonate that partially covers it, revealing that this is certainly a figure with radiate crown slaying a bull held down by his knee. This small figure sketched with fast, sweeping strokes appears to be *Mithras Tauroctonos*, even though there are some small differences from the canonical representation of the tauroctony. This paper will try to explain the presence of this image in a place of the highest symbolic significance for the community of Caere, marked by the inscription of the first *praefectus iure dicundo* and by high quality wall painting, and then used for the celebration of the *Rosalia* festival. The layout of the monument, its phases, its decoration, its hypothesized nature of *Mundus* and its relationship to the annual cycle of the sun will be analysed to understand why one of the later users of this space, perhaps one of those who wrote the *Rosalia* inscriptions, may have found it appropriate to draw here an image of the popular god. The evidence from Caere will be studied in the context of the growing number of documents of the cult of Mithras in Etruria, to which this is one of the new additions.

8. Stefano DE TOGNI stefanodetogni@gmail.com, “The So-called “Antro Mitraico” at Angera: Some Remarks on a Supposed Mithraeum”

In our times, Angera is a small town in the province of Varese (northern Italy) situated on the eastern shore of Lake Maggiore. The site was originally occupied by a Celtic village, that during Roman times has become an important lakeside port and also a *statio*, due to its strategic position near overland trading routes.

The existence of a *mithraeum* at Angera was assumed for the first time in the 19th century, after the discovery of two Mithraic inscriptions re-used as ornaments of a private garden in the middle of the small town. The best-known (CIL V 5465) is a statue base with a dedication to *Cautopates* made by two men who call themselves *leonis legati*. The other one

is an inscription, now lost, with the letters *D(eo) S(oli) I(nvicto) M(ithrae)* (CIL V 5477). The location of the alleged mithraeum is still uncertain: the inscriptions have been found out of context, and the place of worship has never been localized.

The “Antro mitraico”, also known as “Tana del Lupo”, is a natural cave situated at the base of the East wall of the cliff on which the Rocca Borromeo (the Castle of Angera) stands. In the cave traces of human presence dating back to Mesolithic period have been discovered, but the most visible archaeological evidence dates back to Roman times: on the outside rocky wall can be seen tens of breaches cut into the rock, which probably contained votive inscriptions or stele, and the entrance also preserves traces of monumentalization. These elements denote, however, the use of the cave as a place of worship.

In 1868, the same year in which the mithraic inscriptions were found, Biondelli “discovered” also the cave, and, due mainly to the striking quality of the place, he identified in the cave a location for a mithraic cult, giving rise to a myth that continues still today. His theory had increasing success, and is not questioned anymore. It dates back a few years after the visit of Franz Cumont to the cave, who included it in his monumental work on Mithraism (1896), consecrating it as *mithraeum de facto*. There are many doubts, however, about this interpretation: if on the one hand the proposal appeared plausible, there is no clear evidence that in the cave a mithraeum was ever set up; besides, the presence of many an *ex voto* on the outside is in conflict with the mysteric ritual practices.

This paper is intended to present an analytical study of the monument, starting from the archaeological researches performed in 2009 both inside the cave (stratigraphic excavation) and outside (study of the rock wall), under the direction of professor Massimiliano David (Department of Archaeology of the University of Bologna) and the supervision of the Soprintendenza Archeologica della Lombardia, with a review of the published and unpublished documentation, and a broader inquiry on the existence and the characteristics of *mithraea* within natural caves.

9. Gerard FREYBURGER, gfreyb@unistra.fr,

“The Ritual Presentation of Symbols of Divinity in the Isiac and Mithraic Mysteries.”

One of the most important moments in the Isiac and Mithraic mysteries is certainly that which involves the ritual presentation to the initiates of a symbol which served to explain the essence of the divinity.

For the Isiac cult, we have the benefit of the famous Herculaneum fresco where a priest is shown presenting, in a very ritual context, a sacred urn, doubtless containing Nile water, the very symbol of Isis. As for the Mithraic cult, we have a by no means less famous source: the text of St. Justin the Martyr, which indicates that holy water and bread were shown.

Our paper will analyse these two vital source documents and seek to establish, in so far as is possible, the theological content of these acts, as much by reference to the *epoptis* of the Mysteries of Eleusis as by consideration of the presentation of bread and wine in the Christian eucharist.

11. Ugo FUSCO ugo_fusco@tin.it “A New Relief from Veii and Mithraic Reliefs from Etruria (*Regio VII*): Iconography, Chronology and Archaeological Context.”....

The topic of this paper concerns Mithraic reliefs found in Etruria (*Regio VII*). The reliefs are analyzed and their iconographic, archaeological and chronological features are compared in order to allow new proposals to be made concerning the cult of Mithras in the examined area.

Firstly, a particular focus is dedicated to the new Mithraic relief discovered in Veii, also in light of the presence of a specific object which constitutes the most original iconographic element of the relief. It can be seen aligned behind Mithras' head, which does in fact obscure the central part of the object: considering its shape and the presence of the quiver on Mithras' right shoulder, the object could be identified as a bow. This particular position of the object, likely to be connected to the symbolic importance of the bow in the mysteries of Mithras, is unique not only in the Mithraic reliefs but also in the remaining Mithraic evidence of the Roman world. The other reliefs are analyzed: the type of iconography, the chronology and the archaeological context are briefly described for each piece. The comparison between the reliefs allows us to highlight the differences in the size, style and chronology, highlighting the uniqueness of the new relief from Veii. These differences can be put down to reasons that are yet to be looked into in more detail, connected with the purchasers and the workshops working in the region. The research reveals that the relief from Veii may be considered not only as the oldest and highest stylistic relief, but also as one of the earliest testimonies of the cult of Mithras in Etruria.

12. Paola GAGLIARDI, paolagagliardi@hotmail.com. “Adonis in Rome: a God for Poets.” Nel generale interesse per i culti orientali diffusosi a Roma in età augustea Adone rappresenta un caso particolare: condotto a Roma da poeti, non vi si affermò il suo culto, ma solo la sua figura patetica e la sua vicenda di amore e morte. Se ne appropriarono in particolare i poeti elegiaci, che attraverso il suo *exemplum* affermarono alcuni τόποι del loro genere o sottolinearono le novità della loro poesia.

13. Brett GAMES, brettgms@aol.com (Brandeis University). “Apollo, Helios, and Mithras: Three Separate Gods or One?”

Are Apollo, Helios, and Mithras three separate gods or in actuality only one? The answer may depend on the responder's vantage point, being determined by artistic license, scientific method, or theological speculation. In this brief paper, I will examine the on-going confusion about the identity of these three ancient divinities. I will examine the ebb and flow of the three identities, and how, historically, these gods have either been treated as one or separated gods within the timeframe of their social usage. In attempting to re-establish some useful definition for each distinct divinity by the simple method of comparing and contrasting, my hope is to contribute to the promotion of a clearer foundation for examining ancient Greco-Roman cults in general. This endeavor seems particularly important to me because the cult of Mithras seems to defy a strict definition – simultaneously acting as a hero cult, a fraternal

brotherhood, and a dualistic religion by possessing characteristic elements of each association.

14. Giulia GASPARRO, rosagiulia.gasparro@libero.it

“Anubis in the ‘Isiac Family’ in the Hellenistic and Roman World.”

The aim of this paper is to investigate the role of Anubis as a member of the "Isiac Family" (Isis- Osiris/Sarapis- Horus/Harpokrates- Anubis) during the Hellenistic and Roman age. A new religious-historical analysis allows us to detect more or less profound changes of Anubis' ancient religious meaning due to its transfer from Egypt to Greece and Rome. The spread of this cult from its motherland to the Hellenistic world and subsequently to the Roman Empire caused, as well, the creation of its new religious identity.

15. Nuccia GHINI, giuseppina.ghini@beniculturali.it “Culti orientali, sincretismo religioso, ideologia imperiale e autocelebrazione nel ‘paesaggio sacrale’ della Diana del *Nemus Aricinum*”. (*Oriental Cults, Religious Syncretism, Imperian Ideology, and self-celebration in the “Sacred Passage” of Diana Nemorensis*).

The lake of Nemi is one among the prominent and peculiar sites which testify to a syncretism of Roman cults. The temple of Diana stood on the northern bank of the lake, and was founded early in the Middle Bronze Age, as recent excavations have proved. It became a *lucus* of Diana during the archaic age and a federal cultic place, and later on, in the classic period, its goddess, the Latin Diana, was identified with Artemis Tauropolos, a deity of the Chersonesus Tauricus (Crimea). The puzzling ritual of the killing of the priest (called *rex nemorensis*) was necessary to the succession in the priesthood, and took place within this sanctuary. It influenced historians, poets, and the emperor Caligula himself. Under his reign, Diana was joined by the Egyptian goddesses Isis and Bubastis. The same emperor had the theater of Diana re-shaped in order to make it fit for rituals to Isis. This was proved by recent research in its structures, and in statues and cultic Egyptian objects discovered in the Twenties of the past century. Also the gigantic imperial ships discovered between 1929 and 1932 had both a ceremonial function and the aim of celebrating the emperor himself. In those monumental ships Egyptian cultic objects were found; one can envision the emperor sailing on them from his palace to the sanctuary, probably during the *navigium Isidis*. A magnificent imperial villa was in fact identified on the western shore of the lake. Caligula took inspiration for this from eastern and Egyptian models, borrowing from traditions of the Hellenistic kings, as one could figure out by remembering the isle of Phile, sacred to Isis, and of the palace of the Ircanus in Jordan, and of Ptolemy IV's floating palaces (*thalamegoi*). We know that this young emperor favored some oriental and Egyptian traditions also because he spent several years in the East with his father Germanicus, and we also know that he rehabilitated the Egyptian cults in Rome after they were condemned by Tiberius. The compound of the sanctuary, the villa, and the ships can be considered as an excellent example of religious syncretism, of celebration of Caligula's empire, and also of a political talk.

Il bacino del lago di Nemi costituisce uno dei luoghi più significativi e peculiari per simboleggiare il sincretismo religioso dei culti romani.

Sulla riva settentrionale del lago sorgeva il Santuario dedicato a Diana, la cui fondazione risale al periodo del bronzo medio, come hanno rivelato i recenti scavi; divenuto lucus sacro alla dea in età arcaica, ebbe valenza federale e, a partire dall'età classica, la Diana latina che vi era venerata fu assimilata alla orientale Artemide Tauropolos, divinità del Chersoneso. Il singolare rituale dell'uccisione del sacerdote della dea (il rex nemorensis), necessario per la successione, che aveva luogo nel santuario dovette suggestionare, oltre a storici e poeti, l'imperatore Caligola, sotto il quale alla dea si affiancarono nel culto le egiziane Iside e Bubasti. Per volere dello stesso imperatore il teatro che si trovava all'interno del santuario subì trasformazioni per adattarlo ai rituali isiaci, come hanno dimostrato recenti studi sulle strutture e la presenza di statue e oggetti di culto egiziani rinvenuti nel corso degli scavi degli anni '20 del secolo scorso. Anche le navi appartenute all'imperatore, recuperate nelle acque lacustri tra il 1929 e il 1932, non lasciano dubbi sulla loro funzione autocelebrativa e cerimoniale. A bordo dei monumentali scafi (nel maggiore dei quali si rinvennero oggetti di culto egiziani) l'imperatore raggiungeva il santuario da uno dei padiglioni della sua villa, rinvenuta lungo la riva occidentale del lago, che faceva così parte della sfarzosa dimora, svolgendovi forse rituali in occasione dell'Isidis navigium. Anche in questo Caligola si ispirò ad esempi orientali ed egiziani, mutuati attraverso i dinasti ellenistici: l'isola di Phile, dedicata al culto di Iside, il Palazzo degli Ircanidi in Giordania, i "palazzi galleggianti" o thalamegoi di Tolomeo IV. E' noto come il giovane imperatore fosse sensibile alle influenze orientali ed egizie, avendo trascorso alcuni anni della sua infanzia in Oriente con il padre Germanico e si deve a lui il ripristino a Roma di culti egiziani che Tiberio aveva bandito. Il complesso santuario – villa – navi va dunque considerato un esempio -certo non unico, ma qui a Nemi emblematicamente rappresentato- di sincretismo religioso, autocelebrazione e messaggio politico.

16. Andrzej GILLMEISTER a.gillmeister@ih.uz.zgora.pl. "Oriental religions in Tadeusz Zieliński's Conception of Roman Religion"

In my paper I would like to focus on historiographical approaches and present the ideas of oriental religions proposed by Tadeusz Zieliński, one of the prominent scholars on Antiquity before World War II. Zieliński created his own and original conception of ancient religions, Greek and Roman. He devoted much attention to the analysis of the so-called "oriental" cults and beliefs. I think we can say that Zieliński built a new paradigm in the research of ancient religions, which can be compared to Franz Cumont and Richard Reitzenstein's conception. In my presentations I would like to compare those historians and show the main differences and similarities between their conceptions.

17. Tommaso GNOLI (Univ. of Bologna) tommaso.gnoli@unibo.it. "The Ethics of Mithraism."

What made a good Mithraist? Which behaviour was right for a "good" Mithraist? One of the less studied features of the mystic cult of Mithras in the Roman world is its ethics. Until now this cult has been mainly studied for its mythology and its cultic and initiatory aspects. However, going deeply into the widespread Persian imagery connected to this cult--or even into its Iranian background--it is possible to detect the ethics that shaped the behaviour of the members of the Mithraic communities.

18. Richard GORDON and Valentino GASPARINI, richard.gordon@uni-erfurt.de; valentino.gasparini@gmail.com. “Egyptianisms. Appropriating ‘Egypt’ in the ‘Isiac Cults’ of the Graeco-Roman World.”

It is striking how, when dealing with Isis, Serapis and the other members of the so-called ‘*gens isiaca*’, scholars have shown themselves undecided whether to emphasize their (indisputable) historico-geographic origin in the Nile valley or their (no less indisputable) Graeco-Roman tailor-made cults. We thus find these deities referred to as ‘Egyptian’, ‘Graeco-Egyptian’, ‘Graeco-Roman’, ‘Greek’, ‘Roman’ and, again, ‘Oriental’, ‘Orientalised Roman’, and so on. Each of these definitions is evidently partial, and this is one reason for the success of the much more unspecific terms ‘Isiac gods’ and ‘Isiac cults’. Yet these terms are just another way of ignoring the problem of how these cults were perceived as related to Egypt.

The two proposed papers aim to challenge the terms of the conventional dichotomy between Egyptian and Graeco-Roman, by exploring the specific, and therefore different, contexts in which ‘Egypt’ was appropriated, for example, by institutionalised ‘Isiac cults’, intellectuals (namely Middle and Neoplatonists), Christian apologists, late-antique encyclopedists, etc. Starting with the close comparison with ‘Persianism’ in the cult of Mithras, the papers will explore then the various interests and aims involved in the construction of ideas of Egypt, which may invoke one or even more of these ‘Egyptianities’ at the same time. Numerous as these ideas were, all seem to be linked with still more “producers”, who adapted what they knew of ‘Egypt’ to create their own religious offers, general ideas of ‘foreignness’, ‘exoticism’, and, basically, ‘otherness’.

Our basic model is derived from the Erfurt project *Lived Ancient Religion*, which inverts the usual representation of ancient religion as collective (‘*polis* religion’, ‘civic religion’) in favour of a perspective that stresses individual agency, sense-making and appropriation within these larger constraints, treating the latter as providing the materials for individual constructions. In the case of the ‘Isiac cults’ in the Graeco-Roman world, and especially that of the Empire, we understand them as the diverse creations of many local

19. Victoria GYŐRI victoria.gyori@kcl.ac.uk , “The ‘Festival Of Isis’ Coinage at Rome in The Fourth Century AD.”

This paper examines the importance of two series of “Festival of Isis” coins minted at Rome in the 4th century AD. The first series, or “imperial” series, depicts obverse portraits ranging from Diocletian to Valentinian II. The reverses depict various Egyptian gods, specifically Isis. Many of these reverses are related to the *navigium Isidis*, an annual Roman festival that took place on March 5th in honour of opening the season of navigation under the protection of Isis. All reverses bear the legend VOTA PVBLICA, in celebration of the imperial vows that were annually taken on January 3rd. The second series, or “anonymous” series, depicts obverse portraits of Isis and Sarapis. These coins depict the same reverse types and legend as on the “imperial” series. They were minted from the beginning to the end of Theodosius’ reign.

Both of these series can shed much new light on the politico-religious history of the 4th century AD. However, little progress has been made by scholars since the publication of András Alföldi's 1937 monumental study, *A Festival of Isis at Rome under the Christian Emperors of the IVth Century*, and many questions still remain. Some of the main topics of interest are: (1) What was the exact connection between the celebration of the imperial vows and the *navigium Isidis*? (2) Who issued the "anonymous" series, and what was the purpose of this particular series?

The significance of these two so-called "enigmatic" coin series is that cults of the Egyptian gods represented the most vital part of the pagan tradition in Rome. The *navigium Isidis* was one of the last of the important pagan festivals to be celebrated. Moreover, it should also be noted that the cult of Isis had great influence over the Christian faith; in particular, a strong connection was made between Isis and the Virgin Mary. For instance, it can safely be assumed that the *navigium Isidis* was one of the more obvious predecessors for the Feast of the *Stella Maris*--the feast of the Virgin Mary, Star of the Sea. In the same way that Isis was the protector of seafarers and later became associated with the prosperity of Roman emperors through the imperial vota, so Mary came to be seen as a sign of hope and a guide for Christians, particularly those who travel or seek their livelihood on the sea.

20. Ana Cristina HAMAT , anahamat@yahoo.com

"The Mystery Cults Reflected on Roman Gems from the Territory of Modern Roumania: the Cults of Ceres, Mithras, Isis and Serapis."

Two Roman provinces were established on most of the territory of Roumania, Moesia Inferior in the modern region of Dobrogea, and Dacia in present day area of Banat, parts of Oltenia and Transilvania. Some of the most beautiful artifacts discovered here in Roman context are gems, and over time more than 1000 gems were published from the collections of Roumanian museums. Not all of them, however, have been found in Roumanian territory; some come from acquisitions made by wealthy benefactors and donated to the cultural institutions in order to establish public collections. Our artifacts come from the collections of National Museum of Union Alba Iulia, National Museum of Transylvanian History from Cluj- Napoca, Zalău County Museum of History and Art, Brukenthal National Museum from Sibiu, Prahova County Museum of History and Archaeology, Museum of National History and Archeology Constanța and Numismatic Cabinet of the Romanian Academy from București. Among these we have a quite important section dedicated to the goddess Ceres, as a testimony for the great consideration that she has enjoys in this particular part of the Roman Empire. Beside her, we have a small number of gems representing Isis and Serapis, confirming the penetration of Egyptian cults into the north of the lower course of the Danube. A much smaller part from these gems bear images associated with Mithras.

The importance of these artifacts is a special one, because they open a door to the past by highlighting a few special deities from ancient times, and they can describe a form of practice for the ancient religion through jewelry.

21. James C. HENRIQUES james.c.henriques@utexas.edu. “The Mithraeum at Cosa”.

The adjectives “humble” and “unpretentious” have both been used (accurately) to describe the Mithraeum at the Roman colony of Cosa. These same descriptors are equally apt when applied to the amount of scholarship on this Mithraeum. Very likely due to its modest nature, the Cosa Mithraeum has been mentioned in scholarly publications only four times—each in passing—since its discovery in 1954. This sparse attention, restricted solely to literature on Cosa, has meant that the Mithraeum is well-known among those intimately familiar with the colony, but has languished in complete obscurity among Mithraic scholars for the past half century.

The Cosa Mithraeum was originally dated to the mid-2nd century CE. Scholarship on Cosa of the past three decades, however, has presented a narrative of overall civic decline during this period. This trend has resulted in many buildings, including the Mithraeum, receiving a later 3rd century date.

The purpose of this presentation, then, is twofold: First, to bring the Cosa Mithraeum to the attention of a wider audience; second, to reconsider the original dating of the Mithraeum. Recent advances in scholarship on Mithraea at Ostia give ample reason to suggest that the original date for the Cosa Mithraeum might be more accurate than later interpreters have assumed. Furthermore, the ongoing excavations of Cosa’s bath complex, conducted by Florida State University and Bryn Mawr College, have revealed a city that was still quite active during the 2nd century CE. In light of these developments, this presentation is a long-overdue study of the Cosa Mithraeum and its role in the history of the colony.

On a final note, in keeping with the current excavations’ goal of digitizing the site, this presentation will include a three-dimensional digital model of the Mithraeum.

22. Anja KLÖCKNER anja.kloeckner@archaeologie.uni-giessen.de. “Sacred and Symbolic Space in the Cult of Mithras”

According to established scholarly paradigm, *mithraea* are to be understood as symbolically constructed caves. To use the words of Roger Beck: “The Mithraeum is ideologically, and sometimes in practice or in décor, a cave. Since the tauroctony also takes place in a cave, this ... is one of the points at which the myth and the practice of the cult coalesce” (Beck 1984: 2090).

With this, we find ourselves at the initial point of my paper. What is the real meaning of the approach that *mithraea* “stand for the cave”? What is the true nature of the relationship between an architecturally composed sanctuary, an imagined space and a symbolically constructed space? Are *mithraea* supposed to symbolize caves, do they “mean” a cave or do they even represent one, thereby constructing a kind of structural identity?

In order to clarify these points, I will not only look at literary sources or at singular *mithraea* and their décor (e.g. Poetovio). I will also be questioning their medial conditions in general, comparing the *mithraea* as architecturally organized media ensembles with sanctuaries of other cults and with residential buildings as well. This will provide a basis to analyse how

sacred sites were endowed with symbolic meaning. And it will help us to describe the different *modi* how this aim was achieved by visual means, by spatial construction and by design.

23. Jaan LAHE, jaan.lahe@eek.ee. “Mitra-Mithra-Mithras: the Roman Mithras and his Indo-Iranian Background”

One of the key questions in the studies of the Roman cult of Mithras has been, since the works of F. Cumont, the question about the religious historical origin of the cult – regarding which there is no consensus to this day. Theories about the origin of the cult can be divided into three groups: (1) the so-called “strong” Iranian thesis, according to which the cult was imported from Iran; (2) the so-called “weak” Iranian thesis, claiming that just a few, mostly irrelevant elements of the cult originated in Iran; (3) a radical stance that there is no consistency between the Roman cult of Mithras and the Iranian cult of Mithra and what the two have in common is simply the similar name of a god. The author of this presentation has studied comparatively the character of Mitra in Indian religious literature, that of Mithra in Iranian religious and mythological texts as well as in Iranian religious iconography, and Mithras in the cult devoted to him in Rome, and has concluded that the radical belief common in current Mithras studies, according to which Mithras is connected with Mitra and Mithra only by them having similar names, is just as erroneous as the “strong” Iranian thesis defended by F. Cumont and G. Widengren. Although it is certain that the Roman cult of Mithras is not a cult imported from Iran, but a new cult that originated in the Roman Empire, the author of this presentation maintains that the Roman cult of Mithras contains a series of motifs that can be found both in the Vedas as well as in Iranian mythological texts: Connection of Mitra/Mithras with friendship and a contract of friendship; certain military traits; connection with cosmogony and the cosmic order; connection with light, the Sun and the chariot of Sol; the role of the god as a giver of water and fertility; the idea of a sacrifice that stimulates fertility. Based on the sources linked to the Roman Mithras, in particular iconography, it may be claimed that a large part of these motifs did not have a peripheral role in the mythology connected with the cult, but they carried an important, maybe even a central role. As the previously mentioned motifs were already interrelated in India and Iran, the author of this presentation believes that their coexistence in the mythology of the Roman cult of Mithras cannot be a coincidence but testifies to the wider Indo-Iranian background of the central figure of the cult, the god Mithras, which should not be ignored even if the Roman cult of Mithras is viewed as a new cult that evolved in the Roman Empire and within the context of the Greco-Roman religion.

24. Nicola LUCIANI, nickluciani87@gmail.com, “Mithras in Etruria: Evidence of a Mystery Cult from the *Regio VII*”...

This study aims to follow the path traced by Franz Cumont in his “*Mithra en Etrurie*”, where the scholar offered an overview of the then-known evidence in the region. As of today, in fact, *Regio VII* has emerged as a privileged territory to examine different aspects the cult. This paper will examine the topography of the finds, the role of Roman administration, the diffusion of the cult among the lower classes, the cult’s adoption by aristocracy in lower Etruria, and finally, the end of the Cult.

■ **Topography of the finds:** The distribution of the evidence highlights a gap between upper and lower Etruria. In northern Etruria, the finds are concentrated in large cities along consular roads, while in the South they are widespread, affecting many medium-sized settlements: a picture that might suggest an initial spread along main roads starting from Rome.

■ **Role of Roman administration:** The State's officials had a deep interest in promoting the mysteries, as hinted by an *ara* from *Volsinii*, attesting the dedication of a mithraeum by the freedman and magistrate *Tiberius Thermodon*. Moreover, in Cosa, the *spelaeum* is housed within the *curia*, probably meaning the body of magistrates attended its rites. Lastly, both the administration of Etrurian marble quarries and the circulation of raw material and finished products were prerogatives of the *statio marmorum*, run by imperial freedmen, who played a crucial role in favoring the religious iconography welcomed by the government (including the highly-standardized mithraic furnishings). On these bases, we could propose a correlation between the worship of Mithras and the imperial cult, taking into account their shared function in crystallizing the social order.

■ **Diffusion among the lower classes:** The *spelea* of Sutri and *Portus Pisanus* are located in a suburban area, the first in proximity to the local amphitheater, and the latter within a storehouse. Humble classes, who constituted the majority of the worshippers, certainly attended both shrines (it is noteworthy how two cult reliefs, from Sutri and its neighborhood, are shaped in tuff, a "poor" material locally extracted). Furthermore, an inscription from Arezzo contains a mithraic prayer from the slave *Myron*, *pro salutem* of his master: a very interesting find demonstrating the cult's role in maintaining the social hierarchy.

■ **The Cult's adoption by the aristocracy in lower Etruria:** Some clues indicate the interest of the aristocracy in the mysteries during the Late Empire, notably a marble relief from Soriano, found inside a *domus* and, above all, the *mithraeum* of Vulci, built in connection with a *villa*. Both the finds dated to the advanced III/IV, when the cult is more and more an aristocracy's prerogative. Besides, the rich decoration of the Vulci's *mithraeum* is also indicative of the high status of its owner. The case of Vulci is of particular interest, being the residence-city for senatorial families; remarkably, the *Sempronii* and the *Minucii*, whose involvement in both the cults of Mithras and *Sol Invictus* is attested.

■ **End of the cult:** The cult in Etruria seems to have ended in some cases peacefully, while violently in others. In Vulci, there are several cases of evidence of destruction and arson, possibly perpetrated by Christian fanatics. Conversely, in both *Portus Pisanus* and Cosa, destruction layers were not found, suggesting peaceful abandonment during the Vth century.

25. Francisco MARCO SIMON Univ. Zaragoza marco@unizar.es. "A Place with Shared Meanings: Mithras, Sabazios (and Christianity?) in the Tomb of Vibia"

Recent research is increasingly questioning the grand dichotomy between "Paganism" and Christianity established by influential trends of traditional historiography, and brings into light the prominence of spaces with shared meanings in diverse cults of the Roman world

specially related to mystic beliefs and practices. An excellent example is Vibia's tomb within Praetextatus' catacomb in the Via Appia, Dated to the fourth century A.D., this place combines epigraphy and a fascinating iconography pointing to the mystic initiation of the deceased within a syncretic context.

The collection of the existing images and texts can be read as a program developed through several phases. Firstly, Vibia is abducted by the infernal god (in an iconography typical of the Eleusinian mysteries) and taken to the Hades. Secondly, she is introduced by Mercurius and Alcestis to the presence of Dis Pater and Abracura, with the Fata Divina attending the scene. In the third phase, once the judgment's proof is passed, Vibia accedes to an otherworldly banquet which she shares with other blessed characters, in a scene easily understandable from a Christian perspective (including the fish as the food figured in the painting). Lastly, a priest of Sol Invictus Mithras dedicates an inscription where not only Vibia's initiation is mentioned, but also that of her husband Vicentius, a priest of Sabazios who is enjoying a state of blessings after death. In an hypogeum (the catacomb of Praetextatus) shared by "Pagans" and Christians, Vibia's tomb is an outstanding example of a space of mystic religiosity, with a piety based on a "universalism through addition" which is manifested more by multiple initiatic adhesions than by an exclusive conversion

26. Luther H. MARTIN Luther.Martin@uvm.edu, "'Seeing the Mithraic Tauroctony"

"The images in art, like all images, represent not so much reality as the viewer's perceptions, imagination, expectations, and knowledge of other images—images recalled from memory. —Eric Kandel (2012: 205).

No myths survive from the Roman cult of Mithras, nor do any accounts of such myths, as in the case of the *Homeric Hymn of Demeter* or those by the Hellenistic novelists. Mithraists did, however, leave a trove of archaeological remains, including frescoed and plastic representations. Scholars of Mithraism have long attempted to derive Mithraic myth(s) from this material culture. These attempts have largely focused on the Mithraic tauroctony, and rightly so, for the tauroctonous image is one of the few ubiquitous features of a tradition that endured for over fifteen generations throughout the expanse of the Roman Empire.

Despite the cognitive penchant of *Homo sapiens*, past and present, to be storytellers/mythmakers and to attribute this proclivity to others, I should like to focus on the tauroctony as an image *qua* image and ask how this central image of Mithraism might have been seen by new initiates, a perception informed not only by cultural expectations (environmental, didactic) but also by the neurocognitive properties of the human visual system.

The tauroctony has long been understood as portraying the sacrifice of a bull, a familiar act within the context of official Roman ritual. This would have been recognized as such by new initiates despite its representation deviating from usual portrayals of and expectations about Roman ritual sacrifice. More recently, the tauroctony has been identified as a star-map. Given the prevalence of popular astrology during the imperial period, it would be surprising if new initiates didn't also recognize this astrological pattern in the tauroctony, or would do so with minimal prompting. Would a new initiate recognize the tauroctony as representing a

sacrifice? Or, would he rather understand this image as a star-map? Or both? And what would be the mental response of a new initiate to such an ambiguity?

The question that an approach to the tauroctony as image *qua* image might address is: are all tauroctonies subject solely to local (or regional) interpretations, or is there decentralized but nevertheless shared information that is communicated to Mithraic initiates solely through visual stimuli?

27. David MASSIMILIANO, massimiliano.david@unibo.it. “Questions and Suggestions from the Newly Discovered Mithraeum of Multicoloured Marbles Found at Ostia”.....

In 2014, during the archaeological investigations conducted by the University of Bologna (Dipartimento of History and Civilizations - Sect. Archaeology), within the Ostia Marina Project, in the suburban neighborhood out of porta Marina (block IV, IX), a new building has been found with outstanding mithraic features. The building, for the special features of the marble floor of the *spelaeum*, has conventionally been called the *mithraeum* “of the multicoloured marbles”. The *spelaeum* has a major cultic niche, a single bench, a ritual well and a flowerbed for a sacred plant. It differs clearly both in form and size from the typical planimetric patterns of the mithraea discovered in ancient Ostia until now. The excavation is not yet finished, but--on the basis of the currently available data--the building can be proposed to have a very late chronology (end of 4th - beginning of 5th century A.D.). It is abutting some rooms which originally belonged to a ‘caupona’ of the second [?] half of the 3rd century A.D.

28. Attilio MASTROCINQUE, attilio.mastrocinque@univr.it “The Mithraic *praesepiae* as Dining Beds”

A Mithraeum always has long benches, which were called *praesepiae*, “places where cattle is fed in a stall” (*CIMRM* 233). The name is inappropriate for a dining room, which was usually called, instead, *triclinium*. *Mithraeum* is a common modern name, whereas the ancient called it *spelaeum*, *antrum*, *templum*. Another important name was *Leonteium*, which was not a separate cultic place for Leones only, because Porphyry states that the members of a Mithraic community were the Leones and the servants were called Korakes, the Ravens (Porphyr., *de abst.* 4.16). The Mithraic menu apparently consisted of meat rather than of vegetables, even though one should take into account the fact that bones are better preserved than vegetables in an archaeological site, and therefore they were often published, whereas vegetal remains had never been investigated by means of chemical analyses. Lions are notoriously carnivorous and the *praesepiae* had to be filled with meat for the Leones.

The initiation of Leones was supposed to be dry and fiery (Tert., *Adv. Marcionem* I.13), and we are also told that the Mithraic Leones avoided water for their purifications and washed their hands with honey (Porph., *De antro* 15-16). Moreover, a lion and a snake are often depicted on Mithraic reliefs as going to drink from a crater. It is possible to get some information from those facts about what Leones were used to drink during their symposia, they were thirsty but their drink could not be water, but, eventually, wine. Iustin., *Apol.* I.66

speaks of a cup of water, but only to mention some ritual acts during initiations and not during symposia.

29. Davide MASTROIANNI davide.mastroianni@unina2.it and Vincenzo Elio Junior MACCHIONE vinmacchione@hotmail.it. “The Prohibition of Bacchanalia between Magna Grecia and Etruria. The *Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus* of Tiriolo and the *Trono delle Pantere* of Bolsena”

In the Greek world, the celebrations of Dionysus were different: the Rural Dionysia and the City Dionysia, the *Lenee*, the *Antestèrie*, the *Oscofòrie*, the *Ascalia* and the *Bacchanalia*. During the *Bacchanalia*, women ran, danced and screamed in the woods, and fell prey to Dionysian inebriation. In 186 BC, the Roman Senate issued a decree that limited the cult of Bacchus Dionysus in Rome and in Italy, because of sexual abuses [see Livy]. The diffusion of *Bacchanalia* was a risk for people and for the *dignitas* of Rome.

In 1640 in Tiriolo, Calabria, during the excavation for the foundations of the so-called Palazzo Cicala, a bronze inscription and fragments of columns were found; the inscription had the original text of *Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus* with which, in 186 BC, the Roman Senate forbade the *Bacchanalia*.

In Latium, during the excavation of the so-called *Domus delle Pitture* in Bolsena, directed by the *École Française de Rome*, between 1964 and 1982, a fragment of a throne's base and a cherub's thigh [check this terminology--It was an Etruscan, not a Jewish statue!] were found in a layer of ashes in an underground room. Another 150 pieces of the throne, included ribbons and fragments of a panther head, were recovered in a specific spot of the room. Fragments, carefully restored and reassembled, compose an object called *Trono delle Pantere* of Bolsena, datable between the end of the third century BC and the early years of the second century BC. The left and rear sides are better preserved. The first represents a panther sitting on a throne with a cherub on his knees while it grabs at the ears of beast; the rear side represents a pattern with wings blocked by ribbons. The front side is completely destroyed. The throne has different sets of problems on its religious meaning and its decoration, where the Dionysiac theme is clear. The panther, the cherubs and the ribbons recall the youth of Dionysus, during which he was hidden inside a cave. The panther was not related to Dionysos' youth, but to his conquest of the world: images of the adult god with a panther are quite frequent. His chariot drawn by lions, panthers, tigers is typical of his conquest of India or his encounter with Ariadne. Indeed, the underground room of Bolsena was appropriated to *Bacchanalia*. This paper intends to link Tiriolo and Bolsena, through the specific cases of two cities; in the first we have a proof of the enforcement of the law in 186 BC, and in the second we have an evidence of its application, with the destruction of a throne and of a Bacchic shrine.

30. Claudina Romero MAYORGA, Universidad Complutense de Madrid (Spain)

Poster session: “Mithraic Iconography in Hispania: Reinterpretation of the Catalogue and New Findings.”

This proposal aims to provide an update of the catalogues of findings associated with the Mysteries of Mithras in *Hispania* produced by García y Bellido (1967) and Alvar Ezquerro (1981). A new approach to the archaeological material is needed due to the multiplicity of findings in recent decades and the overcoming of traditional theories in this field of study. We have focused on the figurative monuments, as mithraic iconography has been considered a mere vehicle for the transmission of the eschatology of the cult. Therefore, the study of images has been relegated to a secondary role due to the monotonous, repetitive icons of mediocre aesthetic quality. However, the analysis of literary sources, the study of the models, the motifs and the formal similarities with other ancient worship images have revealed that the Mysteries of Mithras borrowed from the Greco-Roman repertoire the imagery language to shape its own iconography.

Although three representations of tauroctony were located in the province of *Betica*, the findings of Tróia and Mérida, both in *Lusitania*, are the most important source of materials in the territory of *Hispania*. Recent discoveries in Lugo, Altafulla, Cabrera de Mar, Puente Genil, San Juan de la Isla, Barbate, Mérida, along with the revision of the Museo Nacional de Arte Romano collection, have been a great contribution to the study of Mithraism in the Iberian Peninsula.

31. Alessandro MELEGA, alessandro.melega@hotmail.it, “The Mysteries of Mithras in other Mystic Cults.”

From ancient Ostia comes the highest number of mithraea in an urban context of the ancient world. Although we don't know the whole city, mithraea have been found in all districts of the town.

The spread and fortune of Mithraic worship are also attested by the quantity of epigraphic and sculptural material. The present research deals with Mithraism in Ostia, focusing on the particular cases of monograms, recently mentioned by Giovanni Becatti in his fundamental work about mithraea in Ostia, dating back to more than sixty years ago. After the recent discovery of the Mithraeum of Multicoloured Marbles, made by the archaeologists of Ostia Marina Project (University of Bologna), it seems necessary to examine and contextualize the phenomenology of mithraic monograms in Ostia, as well as in relation to similar processes which involve the Christian world.

32. Israel CAMPOS MÉNDEZ, israel.campos@ulpgc.es, “Making Oriental The Mysteries Of Mithras.”

The question of the origin of Mithraism is still a controversial subject in the field of studies of the History of Religions. We propose through this study to review the relevance of the maintenance of Mithraism in the category of Eastern Religions as it was coined by Franz Cumont, based on the analysis of two of the elements that have been put forward as justifying this oriental origin: the presence of words of Persian origin in the Mithraic cult, thus defining its possible real origin, and possibly the origin of the idea of the Mithraea as a cave.

33. Beatriz Pañeda MURCIA, bpandeda@hum.ucsm.es, Universidad Carlos III of Madrid.

“The Sanctuaries of Mater Magna in the Latin Provinces: Places of Divine Cohabitation ?”

As part of my Ph.D. project, which deals with the problem of the use of common sanctuaries and the *synnaoi theoi*, I elaborate a catalog of the temples consecrated to Mater Magna in the western provinces, based on a survey of literary, epigraphical and archaeological sources. My purpose is to analyse the divinities associated with the Phrygian goddess in such cultural places in order to determine the possible reasons for their connection. In this paper, I will present the inventory and the provisional results of this research. The association of Mater Magna with other deities in her sanctuaries can be settled in different ways. On one hand, each divinity could have had her own building in the sacred precinct, such as the two *aedes* dedicated to Mater Magna and Isis in the sanctuary of Mainz. On the other hand, the divinities could have been venerated in the same *cella*. A third option would be that they were worshipped outdoors within the holy space. Apart from the archaeological remains, the inscriptions commemorating the dedication of a temple as well as those attesting a double priesthood can bear testimony to these situations.

Furthermore, their relationship is manifested by the presence of images of distinct deities in a metroac sanctuary. A well-known example is the statuary found in the metroon of Ostia, which includes statues of Venus, Attis, Mars, Dionysos, and an altar to the twelve gods, among other divine figures. Why were these images placed there? Were they ex-votos offered to the goddess? Or are they, rather, evidence that these other deities were honored in the same sacred space? With regard to the reasons why Mater Magna is associated with other divinities, Roman or Greco-oriental, they are undoubtedly numerous and difficult to determine. Firstly, it is possible that their connection is based upon conceptual concomitances concerning the religious beliefs. Secondly, the connection could be based on a common ethno-geographic origin. Thirdly, their association could be due to a practical problem of cultural organisation or, rather, to the needs of the *cultores*. Maybe some deities lacking their own sanctuary in a certain city were worshipped by their believers in the sanctuary of one of those intended for the Mother of the Gods, which could have been considered the most prestigious or the most sacred place in the town. Nevertheless, none of these criteria is decisive, and other explanations can be eventually proposed from a close analysis of the sources.

A final question in this paper will deal with whether Attis, the divine partner of the goddess, is always present in her temples or, on the contrary, whether Mater Magna could be venerated independently.

32 Aleksandra NESTOROVIĆ, aleksandra.nestorovic@pmpo.si, *Regional Museum Ptuj-Ormož*, Ptuj, Slovenia, and Andrej PRELOŽNIK, andrej.preloznik@upr.si, *University of Primorska, Faculty of Humanities, Institute for Archaeology and Heritage*, Piran, Slovenia
“Between Metropolis and Wilderness: The Location of Mithrea in Slovenia.”

Traces of Mithraism in Slovenia are represented by a large number of mithraeums and finds of altars and stones carved with mithraic symbols. Some of these have been systematically studied and are quite well-known, others are poorly documented and less known. This

difference is largely a consequence of factors from antiquity: in the social status of the dedicators of the monuments and in the choice of location.

Our contribution will focus on the location of these shrines. The questions we explore are: Where and in what environment were mithraea built? What is their relationship to other urban structures, traffic routes, natural resources and topography? What role do they have in their setting within the provincial and city boundaries? The results of our analysis show the heterogeneity of responses to these questions and, consequently, the vitality of the cult of Mithras in the area of present day Slovenia.

33 Panayotis PACHIS, pachisp@me.com. “The Rites of *dies sanguinis* in the Cult of Cybele/Attis During the Graeco-Roman Age: Considerations According to the Issues of Cognitive-Historiography”

The cult of Cybele/Attis was a cult that was disseminated during the Graeco-Roman era throughout the entire Roman Empire. Among the rites held in the environment of this cult were the so-called rites of “the Day of Blood” (*dies sanguinis*) on 24 March, Calendar of Pholocalius, 354 AD. On this day the priests (*galli*) of Cybele/Attis flagellated themselves to the point of bleeding, and with their blood they sprinkled Cybele’s effigy as well as the altars of the temple. We will examine these special rites in the frame of the so-called “extreme rituals” that are “powerful social technologies”. In this way we will propose a new approach to the study of these Graeco-Roman world rituals, following the methods of Cognitive Historiography.

34 Olympia PANAGIOTIDOU, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, olympia.pana@gmail.com. “Secrecy in the Mithras Cult: Concealment, Cognition and Social Cohesion”

Secrecy was one of the major features of the so-called mystery or foreign cults that met significant diffusion and popularity throughout the Greco-Roman world. The initiates should conceal the details of their participation in the mysteries from the outsiders. Secrecy did not consist in the concealment of a certain body of creeds and ideas revealed during the mysteries. It mainly demanded the reservation of the details of the ritual ‘dromena’ and of the participants’ roles and identities inhabited after the initiation hidden from the uninitiated.

The Mithras cult in particular coincided— with its mysteries lacking any public aspect and performance. The cult places, the mithraea, were untraceable by the outsiders, having no external markers of their locations. Only the initiates had access to the mithraea and were allowed to attend or to participate in the ritual dromena the details of which they should keep secret from the uninitiated. The internal furniture and decoration of the ritual places serviced the demand for secrecy and concealment. The perception and conception of the symbolic meanings ascribed to the visual imagery displayed in the mithraea presupposed familiarization with the world view of the Mithras cult and would have been cognitively inaccessible for the outsiders.

This paper examines the ways in which the major symbolic systems of the cult, the mithraea, the scene of the tauroctony and the hierarchy of the initiatory grades— although the latter not

omnipresent in the Mithraic communities—would have operated as elaborated security systems which would have contributed to the secrecy of the Mithras cult obstructing both the physical and cognitive access of the uninitiated to their internal meanings. In particular, it is suggested that the scene of the tauroctony would have comprised a complex coded representation, the decoding of which would have presupposed participation in the Mithraic mysteries and gradual revelation of the multi-layered meanings ascribed to its composition.

Furthermore, the cognitive processes which mediate the attractiveness of secret communities and forge social cohesion between members of secret groups are explored. It is argued that secrecy was a crucial aspect which would have promoted the formation of close exclusive communities of mithraists and the development of social cohesion between the cult members.

35 Giulia PEDRUCCI, giulia.pedrucci@unibo.it.

“The *mundus Attinis in Consilinum* as a Metaphor of Death and Re-birth.”

My contribution aims to reconsider an inscription from the Lucanian town *Consilinum*, in Campania (third century A.D.), in which we can find the problematic mention of a *mundus Attidis*. Indeed, this inscription has been quite neglected by scholars: It has been analysed in a systematic way only in an article written in the Latin language back in 1978. It is not easy to explain what exactly the term *mundus* represented to ancient Romans, but we can certainly assert that it was a holy place in connection with the worship of the gods of the underworld. So far, no big surprise: the connection between Cybele, Attis and the underworld is well known. The main problem is that a *mundus Attinis* (i.e., *Attidis*) is not attested elsewhere, not even a *mundus Cybeles*: we only know the *mundus Cereris*. This enigmatic *mundus* might be connected to the (mystic?) rites in honour of the dead Attis, symbolized by the pine, who, during the *Hilaria*, was carried into an underground chamber for lamentations, before his return to a new life. Plutarch linked the Roman *mundus* to the religious center of the city of Rome, the *umbilicus urbis Romae* (possibly the external part of the subterranean *mundus*). In my opinion, we could also think of the *mundus* as a sort of reversed womb, related to the figure of the *Magna Mater*, in which birth and death come together and overlap.

36 Beatrice PALMA VENETUCCI, beavenet@gmail.com, “The Importance of Oriental Cults in Antium.”

This lecture focuses attention on the importance of Antium in connection with the cults of Mithras and Isis. Like other Cities on the Coast (Ostia, Pozzuoli, Cuma), we can also suppose that Mithraic grottoes and a Temple of Isis existed in Antium. This is supported by the preliminary studies presented by B. Cacciotti, B. Palma, and M. Mangiafesta, as well as by the statues of Anubis, Isis Pharia, two Mithraic reliefs and a fresco discovered in Antium through XVII-XIII centuries and dispersed in various collections, such as those at Sannesio, Buratti, Gioia, Ludovisi, Pamphilj, and Albani. We can suppose that a Temple to Isiac cults existed where a statue of Anubis was discovered by the Pamphilj family, and this supposition can be enhanced by the ancient discovery of a *bigio morato* marble statue of Isis on a boat (an Isis Pharia or Pelagia) by Bartolomeo Cesi in the 17th century in the area formerly occupied by this family and then by the Pamphilj. This statue was later placed in the Villa Ludovisi (probably acquired by Cesi from the Cardinal Ludovico Ludovisi in 1622). At

Antium, in the Villa Pia Adele, Roman structures are supposed to be a Temple of Isis, and here too was discovered by Cardinal Albani a plinth in *bigio morato* or onto which a lost statue in the same marble was inserted, perhaps an Isis Pelagia, signed by the sculptor Athanadoros of Rhodes, son of Agesandros. Also two mithraic reliefs, a fresco and a Dadophorus statue discovered in Antium, can also be supposed to be related to a Mithraic grotto in the area of the Villa Serena.

37 Lorenzo PÉREZ Yarza lorenzopy@yahoo.es “Apollo as a precedent to the coinage of *Sol Invictus*.”

After the Severan Dynasty, there is an absence of Sun’s coinage until the joint reign of Valerian and Gallienus. Within this period three exceptions are found. Firstly, some isolated provincial coinage can be checked, such as that¹ of Maximinus the Younger from Alexandria. Secondly, it stands out the case of Gordian III, whose propaganda about the *saeculum aureum* influenced the coining with several types, including Sol and Apollo among others. Following them, there are several few examples from Philippus I honouring *Aeternitas*, in which Sol is also represented.

The co-emperors Valerian and Gallienus re-started the regular minting of Sol coins after 255. A new period began that extended until the end of the Tetrarchy. It was not a uniform process and it has a strong dependence on the different reigns. Its most important phases belong to Gallienus, Aurelian and Probus (besides Constantine’s reign). These three rulers minted most of the coins to Sol (54, 101, 118 respectively). In other words, they shaped the imperial attitude towards Sol during the second half of 3rd century.

However, some Apollo types had previously emerged from Herennius Etruscus and Hostilian coins. Some connection is observable between their mint policy and that of Gordian III through the epithet “CONSERVAT,” associated with Apollo. That interesting term seems to be decisive in order to define later Sol’s competences. The Delphic god appears as the possible pattern from which Sol will be developed, although “CONSERVAT” is not only used for these deities.

Apollo’s features seem to be the clear precedent. His presence had increased until Sol’s appearance with Gallienus. After that, his coins were progressively reduced at the same time that Sol’s were increased. The numerical link is not the only one. Worthy mentions seem to be such coin legends as “APOLINI CONSERVA” under Gallienus², the Sol-Apollo interchange of symbols (e.g., the arch used by Sun³) or even the depiction of the second as Sol (“APOL CONS AVG”⁴).

In conclusion, the preliminary results of my research suggest we can point to a direct bond between Apollo and Sun. This relationship does not exclude the interaction of *Sol Invictus*

¹ *Milne* 3219.

² *RIC* V-1 Gallienus 71.

³ *RIC* V-2 Probus 45.

⁴ *RIC* V-1 Aurelian 66.

with other deities, but allows an inner logic for Sol in Numismatics at the second half of the 3rd century.

38 Marina PIRANOMONTE m.piranomonte@alice.it, marina.piranomonte@beniculturali.it
 “The Mithraeum of the Baths of Caracalla”

The Mithraeum of the Baths of Caracalla was restored and reopened to the public in 2012. It was excavated at the beginning of the 20th century, and consists of five rooms, the first of which is a kind of entrance hall that also serves as the stairwell of the steps that lead down from the Baths level. On the long wall to the west, to the right of the entrance, there is still a fresco depicting Mithras wearing a Phrygian cap and carrying a blue solar disc. The most interesting aspect of the room, stripped bare of its decoration (except for a roughly carved marble block that must have represented the *petra genetrix*) is the hole in the brickwork at the centre of the room. This linked a narrow passageway and steps to another room opening onto what we might call a sacristy: made up of a rough brick counter at the back and a circular basin with steps that must have been used for purification relating to sacrifices. This rectangular hole is unique among the known mithraea. The most recent interpretation by scholars, including me, is that it was a *fossa sanguinis* for the sacrifice of the bull (*taurobolium*).

35. Beatrice POLETTI poletti@ualberta.ca, “*Eastern cults at Rome at the turn of the Principate*”

In a well-known passage from the *Roman Antiquities*, the Greek Augustan historian Dionysius of Halicarnassus praised the cautiousness of the Romans in accepting foreign cults. Unlike the Greeks or barbarians, Dionysius states, the Romans never indulged in religious frenzy, but celebrated the gods with reverence and composure; and in the rare cases in which they officially introduced foreign gods into their pantheon, they worshipped them according to the Roman customs—as happened with the rites of the Magna Mater, in which the praetors performed the sacrifices, but the emasculated priests were all Phrygians (DH RA 2.19).

Dionysius’ remark seems to reflect the general concern for religious conservation which is largely attested in late-Republican and early Augustan sources. In particular, the introduction of foreign cults in Rome was often regarded with suspicion and distaste in Roman conservative milieus, as it was perceived as a deviation from the ancestral *mores* and religion—which in fact were closely tied to the city of Rome and its archaic/Italian traditions (cf., in particular, Liv. 4.30, 5.51-54, 25.1, 39.8-19). This rhetoric of moral and religious corruption from the East, together with the recent association of Anthony with the god Dionysus and his intimate relation with Cleopatra, surely served Augustus’s political design, especially in the early years of his rule, to present himself as the restorer of Roman ancestral ways. Significantly, Cassius Dio attributed to Maecenas advice to the young *princeps*; not to allow new divinities or foreign practices to come into the city (Dio 52.36.2); accordingly, Augustus repeatedly banned Isis’ cult from the city (Dio 53.2.4, 54.6.6). As Paul Zanker puts it, Augustus “had no use for the Oriental and Egyptian gods” (1988: 109f). But was that really the case?

In close scrutiny, Augustus's policy in matter of foreign cults appears rather ambivalent. While his valorization of archaic Roman and Italian cults likely responded to the ideological needs to distance himself from Antony and enhance the people's sense of identity, extant sources suggest that Augustus was highly receptive not only of Greek cults, but also—to some extent—of Egyptian cults (cf. e.g. Suet. *Aug.* 93; Dio 53.2.4-5; cf. Spawforth 2012; Mastrocinque 2014). In this paper, I will study the reception of foreign cults in the literary sources concerning the Augustan Age, with the aim of explaining how Augustus reconciled his philhellenism (with specific reference to the religious sphere) with his mission as the *restitutor* of the old Roman tradition and his public initiatives to restrain foreign religious practices in Rome.

39 Elizabeth ROBINSON erobinson@udallas.edu “Archaeological and Epigraphical Evidence for the Cult of *Mater Deum* (Cybele) at the Site of Larinum (Molise)”

Evidence from the town of Larinum, an important regional center located on the eastern edge of Samnium, suggests that the cult of Cybele may have been present there from at least 100 BCE until the third century CE. This paper investigates the material remains pertaining to Cybele's cult at Larinum to discern the nature of her worship at the site and to suggest that when her cult was first adopted there it was strongly connected with the worship of Mamers/Mars and perhaps other deities.

An inscription in Oscan recently discovered by the author suggests that a shrine at Larinum was dedicated to Mamers and a mother goddess, perhaps Cybele, around 100 BCE. This inscription, dating to before Larinum became a Roman *municipium*, could be the earliest evidence of Cybele's cult at the site. It links her worship to that of Mamers/Mars, a deity whose importance for the town in the first century BCE is highlighted by evidence from Cicero's *pro Cluentio* oration.

This inscription adds to the body of evidence for Cybele's cult at Larinum. Statuettes of her consort, Attis, have been found in multiple locations at the site, suggesting that her cult flourished in Larinum in the Julio-Claudian period. One sanctuary contained bronze statuettes of Attis and other deities, including Mars, Minerva, and Hercules. The association of these statuettes strengthens the argument that the worship of Mamers and Cybele could have been connected at Larinum in an early period, as suggested by the Oscan inscription.

Later evidence for Cybele's cult, a funerary stele of a *sacerdos matris deum* from to the late 2nd or 3rd century CE, shows continuity of her worship in Larinum. This *sacerdos* was associated with one of the most influential local families of this period, the *Raii*, indicating that priesthoods in Cybele's cult were still prestigious at this later time.

This combined material suggests that the cult of Cybele played an important role in Larinum for almost 400 years, which would correlate with evidence found elsewhere in central Italy. In Larinum her cult may have been associated with the worship of Mars, at least initially, and her worship seems to have played an important role in the town for many centuries. The combination of archaeological, epigraphic and historical evidence related to this cult,

analyzed in its proper context, provides a firmer understanding of the role of Cybele and her worship in central Italy.

40 Diego ROMAGNOLI helios121@virgilio.it “Mithras Demiourgos”

Roman Mithraism has been subject to philosophical interpretations and influences over the years. In this paper I will present the important case of the Mithras as a Demiurge, following the Platonic doctrine of the three Gods that has evolved, after Plato, through three phases.

Plato described three fundamental divine figures: the **Being**, who accounts for the early Idea and the source of all the other ideas, as well as the early cause of the world; the **Demiurge**, who was born from the Being and accounts for the acting Power who creates the perceivable world; the **Anima Mundi** (the **Soul of the World**) who was born from the other two gods and is the “mother” who shapes all of beings.

Later, Middle Platonism (on which the *Chaldean Oracles* are based) identified the Being as the **First God** and the source of every indistinct idea; the Demiurge as the **Second God** who features the early Idea in order to create the world; and the **Anima Mundi** as the unifying principle from which all organisms are shaped.

Finally, in Neoplatonism (on which the Porphyry *De Antro Nympharum* is based), this doctrine was fitted together with Mithraism: **Mithras** was the Demiurge and the **Goddess Hecate** was identified with the Anima Mundi.

41 Paolo ROSATI, archeorosati@gmail.com, Università degli Studi dell'Aquila, “Sol Victus: Christianization of a Temple of Mithras in the Roman *suburbium*.”

The present study attempts to reconstruct the stages of life of the rocky church of St. Nicholas in Guidonia-Montecelio in the Roman *suburbium*, object of the investigation by the chair of Professor of Classical Archaeology, Eugenio La Rocca, Sapienza University. The main goal is to propose the identification of the church as a former *mithraeum*, and to link it with one of the *villas* located inside the archaeological Parco dell’Inviolata, a popular residence area for senatorial families.

The *ipogeuum*, orientated SW-NE, has three naves (separated by two *podia*), culminating with an apse above which an *oculus* opens. Most of decorations on the walls date to the 14th century, mainly consisting in a series of saints. A golden cross stands at the center of the ceiling, flanked by two poorly preserved *clipei*. Such furnishings and a few others testified to a previous phase, dating back to the VII-VIII centuries. Furthermore, the ceiling is painted with red stars on a white background, below which a previous, similar decoration can be seen, consisting of eight-pointed blue stars.

The plan is unusual for a church, but fits well with the typical structure of a mithraic *spelaeum*: this assumption could explain the presence both of the *oculus* and the two *podia*. Besides, the *ipogeuum* recalls the rocky church of the Madonna del Parto, in the town of Sutri, also interpreted as a former *mithraeum*. We are not facing the only evidence of the cult of

Mithras in the area: Three fragments of a marble relief depicting the mithraic tauroctony comes from the vicinity. Another bull-killing relief, moreover, is located in a wall of a private storehouse in the village of Montecelio, whose original location is unknown. The *ipogeu*m is in strict proximity with the so-called *domus* of Marco Simone.

The presence of senatorial families is well attested in the area, notably the *gens Valeria*. From this starting point, the *mithraeum*'s christianization has been linked with the transfer of its property site from this *gens* to the *Xenodochium Valeriorum*, founded on *Mons Caelium* in Rome at the end of the 4th century. Guidonia's situation is thus mirrored by the events that occurred at the same time on Rome's *Caelium*, headquarters of the *Valerii*, allowing us to read the shifts in this slice of suburbia as a likely consequence of the contemporary changes on the Roman hill.

42 Rebeca RUBIO Rivera rebeca.rubio@uclm.es "Specific aspects of Mithraism in Etruria and Umbria"

The Mithraic evidence in Etruria and Umbria--VII and VI *Regiones*--presents some particular features of great interest, not only because they contribute to enlarging our knowledge regarding the extent of the diffusion of Mithraism in these regions, but also as regards the general study of the cult itself and the comprehension of certain facets of the cultic implantation patterns within the religious communities.

The epigraphic corpus of Mithraism in Umbria provides valuable information concerning some degrees of initiation and Mithraic priesthood, highlighting the specificity of this religion. The importance of such information transcends the local level, by revealing details about the functioning of the cult in general, especially regarding the degree of Leo and some variants of the priesthood, which are poorly documented elsewhere in the Roman Empire.

In addition, the discovery of Mithraea, Mithraic images and other archaeological evidence in Etruria and Umbria provides a picture that shows an important spread of the worship in private contexts, i.e. *domus* and *villae*, with examples as relevant as Vulci and *Spoletium*. Furthermore, the prevalence of astral components in the material evidence also suggests a strong preference among local Mithras devotees of the higher social status for the cosmological aspects of their religion.

43 Maria Gabriella SCAPATICCI mariagabriella.scapaticci@beniculturali.it

"A New Mithraeum on the Civita of Tarquinia: the Discovery."

The discovery of the Mithraeum of Tarquinia is due to the Department for Protection of Cultural Heritage of the Carabinieri (Italian military police), who noticed some clandestine excavations near the Ara della Regina, on the ancient site of Tarquinia, in May of 2014.

Subsequently the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici dell'Etruria Meridionale carried out a short archaeological excavation in order to prove the actual provenance of the magnificent sculpture of Mithras, which had been illegally unearthed, and which was fortunately recovered by the Carabinieri, after investigations by the Procura della Repubblica of Rome.

The digging allowed the discovery of another part of the sculptural group, namely the dog, which is perfectly interconnected with the knee of the bull. Apart from the evident artistic value of this monument, the discovery of a part of the sculpture in an archaeological context is an unquestionable proof of the precise provenance of this Tauroctony from the ancient urban area of Tarquinia.

The same excavation brought to light the remains of a building which may have been the Mithraeum, and this fact is an important scientific contribution to the story of Tarquinia and of the mysteries of Mithras themselves. In fact, hitherto the unique sculptural group of Mithras killing the bull in southern Etruria had been that from Vulci, which was discovered in 1875 after clandestine excavations close to the *domus* del Criptoportico. This new find adds the urban area of Tarquinia as another seat of this cult, and the stylistic features of its sculpture suggest a date in the early reign of Antoninus Pius (138 – 161 CE), i.e., about one century before the Mithras from Vulci, which has been assigned to the middle of the 3rd century CE.

44 Rosa María SIERRA DEL MOLINO, rsierra@dch.ulpgc.es, “Gender And Mysteries: Isiac Priestesses and Double Marginality in Cultic Space”

The complex social and political reality of the Roman world generated multiple and continuing tensions between the different belief systems; in fact the eastern mystery religions were viewed as exotic cultic systems, but at the same time, as alternatives; giving spiritual and social responses to dissatisfaction caused by the current Roman religious system. In this context of ideological and social conflict, the mysteries were a potential danger to Rome, due to the transgressive action representing their cultic practices and as breaking down social barriers by integrating within them into all marginal social segments--freedmen, slaves, women. They allowed for civic participation by these outsiders through their integration into the mystery cults, but did not necessarily imply the same degree of intervention of both citizens and non-citizens, men and women. It is therefore interesting to analyze, from the parameter of gender, the situation of women in the mysteries, in particular with regard to the priestesses of Isis, and to determine whether there were equal social-class access to the services of worship, and generic parity in a quantitative and qualitative sense.

45 Concetta Giuffré SCIBONA (Università di Messina) gioscina@inwind.it, “ “Sabazios from Athens to Rome. Mystical and Mystic Characters of a Foreign Cult over a Long History.”

The contribution is a review of the large and varied documentation on the history of the "foreign cult" to Sabazios, which appeared, with evident syncretistic features, early in Athens, in the times of Demosthenes . In particular, we will focus on changes that arose in different times and places, changes referring to its mystical character. The rituals of Sabazios allowed, in fact, some contact with the gods and allowed participants to obtain a share of the divine reality. They were possibly a mystery cult, with initiatory and esoteric features and, above all, with the aim of obtaining specific forms of “salvation.”

46 Gaius STERN, gaius@berkeley.edu, “Castor and Pollux, the Original Penates from the East, on the Ara Pacis”

On the front, right panel of the Ara Pacis an elderly, veiled man prepares to sacrifice a pig in the presence of two gods in a small shrine in the upper left corner of the scene with the help of two teenaged acolytes. The identity of the sacrificant and the twin gods has caused some debate, as has the question of whether the elderly man sacrifices to the twin gods or just in their presence. And finally the question of where the sacrifice occurs arises, based on the alleged location of the shrine to the twin gods.

Many scholars see the elderly man to be Aeneas and the twin gods to be the Penates, whom Aeneas brought West from the flames of Troy in a scene famous in Greek vase art. Other proposals have been made. This paper will provide a history of the scholarship of this panel, but it will focus more on the qualities of the twin gods, providing a pictorial and literary account of their likeliest identities to build up the thesis that the gods we see on the Ara Pacis may well be the earliest form of the Lares and/or Penates, the original Divine Twins, Castor and Pollux. If we expect a rational, geographic origin for the Penates, they would be Eastern protector gods of Anatolia and thus a very Eastern addition to Roman cult, via Trojan cult. They may also have been the protectors of an early Trojan king such as Dardanus. Over time their persona in Roman cult changed. It is easiest for us to compare them to their Greek counterparts, but other Indo-European mythologies also retain stories of divine twins that correspond in part to the Castor and Pollux story. Greek mythology knows Castor and Polydeuces to be the sons of Zeus and Leda and Tyndareus, and paragons of fraternal devotion. After their deification as demi-gods, the Greek twins gods assumed additional qualities that reappear in both the Lares and the Penates.

The fact that Romans in 13 BC revered both the Lares and the Penates and Castor and Pollux is not a mutually exclusive reality, for the Romans were clearly unaware that the original deities whom Aeneas brought from Troy in the early incarnation were based on the same pair of gods later revered by the Sabines and Southern Greeks in Magna Graecia. Subsequently, Castor and Pollux reentered Roman religion under their own names in a second incarnation and performing somewhat similar functions as the protector gods of the early incarnation. One puzzle here is that the Romans ended up with two sets of protector gods that do much the same thing, although this is a far from unique arrangement. A second puzzle that may be harder to answer is the matter of whether most of the traits of these twin protector gods hail from an original pair of Indo-European gods or whether the protection element seen in Castor and Pollux and the Penates arises from a limited and relatively late interplay.

47 Mario TORELLI mario.torelli1937@gmail.com), “Il *deikterion* di Adone.”

The discovery of Building g in the Greek sanctuary of the *emporion* of Gravisca and its identification as the complex for celebrating the *deikterion*, i.e. the place for showing the return and the death of Adonis, has allowed a complete reconstruction of the celebration of the festival through the combination of the archaeological evidence with the dispersed *testimonia* of ancient sources, as I showed long ago in my article titled *Les Adonies de Gravisca. Archéologie d'une fête*, in D.Briquel-F.Gaultier (edd.), *Les Etrusques, les plus religieux des hommes. État de la recherche sur la religion étrusque. Actes du Colloque*

international, 17-19 novembre 1992, Paris 1997, 233-291. I wrote then that, in my knowledge, that of Gravisca was the sole extant example, but I was wrong: I have just found a perfect comparison in a building in the capital of the Greek world, the sanctuary of Aphrodite *en kepois* on the road from Athens to Eleusis, not far from another famous cultic place dedicated to Apollo at Dafnì.

48 Robert TURCAN, amturcan@gmail.com, “*Mithras Saecularis.*”

In 252 CE, at *Borcouicium*, Britannia, two dedications to Mithras label him *Saecularis*. Both J. Hodgson and F. Cumont saw a relationship between this attribute and the *Ludi Saeculares* which, in 248, celebrated the millennium of Rome. Subsequently J.Gagé as well followed this interpretation, but F.Cumont did not keep maintaining it in his *Les Mystères de Mithra*. In fact, the surname *Saecularis* is related to the relief itself which bears the dedications. It represents Mithras’ birth from two halves of the cosmogonic egg. Mithras is thus *Saecularis* because he is *Aiôn* or *Saeculum*, responsible of the existence of the whole cosmos, in its spatiotemporal totality. *Saecularis* is an adjectif used as well for Jupiter on a scarcely known, but authentic, coin of Claudius Gothicus. Jupiter is indeed, like Mithras, a ruler of the cosmos.

49 Dan-Tudor IONESCU, dantudorionescu@gmail.com

“Mithras, Sol Invictus, and the Astral Philosophical Connections”

The main aim of this paper will be the discussion of the possible connections between the genesis of the Mithraic and Solar cults in the Roman Empire, especially during the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE, and the Hellenistic-Roman philosophies of Stoicism, Middle Platonism, and Neoplatonism. The age-old discussion concerning Mithraism has been unfolding around many aspects, but I will discuss only the problem of the origins of the Mithras cult: an Iranian religion (of Indo-Iranian Antiquity, going back to the age of the *R̥g-Veda* and of the *Avesta*’s *Gāthas*) that has been adopted and adapted accordingly into the Hellenistic milieu of Asia Minor and then into the larger Greco-Roman world represented by the Roman Empire. This is basically the school of the great Belgian scholar Franz Cumont and of his disciples, the thesis of the *Mages Hellenisés*, with Mithraism thus becoming a Mystery-initiation religious cult, albeit preserving its Iranian core of belief system; and the school first represented by the German researcher K. B. Stark. This school of thought was that the iconographical symbolism of the Mithraic tauroctony represented not Iranian myths in Greco-Roman garb, but the position occupied by different stars and constellations in a specific period of history, when these constellations were of course noticeable with no other instrument but the naked human eye and occupied of course a specific position on the night sky⁵. I shall try briefly to show in my paper the different theses available about the origins and spreading of the Mithras cult in the Roman Empire and to see how many Iranian concepts (or religious ideas of traceable Iranian origin) still remained in the Mithraic cult in the Roman Empire of the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE.

⁵ D. Ulansey, *I Misteri di Mithra Cosmologia e salvezza nel mondo antico*, Roma: Edizioni Mediterranee, 2001, p. 24.

Mainstream research on the Mithraic cult definitely runs against Cumont's once-prevalent thesis in Mithraic studies. I personally agree more with those researchers who see Mithraism as a new Hellenistic-Roman religion of mysteries, initiation, and salvation (bluntly put, a soteriological religion). I am also more attracted to Stark's original theory, of astronomical and astrological connections that underlie Mithraic religious doctrine, and the influence of Hellenistic schools of philosophy on Mithraism⁶. Nevertheless, at least the very name of the god Mithras still remains of Indo-Iranian origin. One should see if this was the only true Iranian relic in Roman Mithraism or not. The space of south-eastern Anatolia (Cilicia, Commagene), of North-eastern Asia Minor (Cappadocia and Pontus), and also the area of Southern Caucasus (Armenia and the Colchis-Iberia lands of what is now Georgia), as well as the territories of contemporary Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and North-western Iran (Media Atropatene, Media, and the satrapy of Parthia/ Parthyene/ Parthyaea included in the greater Parthian Kingdom) seem to have been also instrumental in both the birth or formation of Mithraism as a religion of mysteries and of Mithraism's spreading through the Roman Empire, where this religion adopted specific traits that made the Mithraic cult both recognizable and different from its supposed (and extremely vague, to say the least, apart the name of the god Mithras himself) Iranian roots⁷.

50 Mario TORELLI mario.torelli1937@gmail.com), “Il *deikterion* di Adone”.

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51 Robert TURCAN, amturcan@gmail.com, “*Mithras Saecularis*”

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⁶ *Idem*, pp. 75-76 *ssq.*

⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 18-23 that discusses the possible Iranian Zoroastrian and Iranian Mithra's religious myths and rituals.

52 Mojca VOMER GOJKOVIČ, mojca.vomer-gojkovic@guest.arnes.si. (Ptuj, Slovenia)
 “Mithras Temples In Poetovio” .

In the second and third centuries, Poetovio (Ptuj) (Slovenia) was a melting pot of various cultures due to the arrival of various peoples. Mithras temples of Poetovio are undoubtedly the most recognisable monuments. As many as five temples were discovered in Ptuj and its immediate surroundings: two of them (Breg na Ptuju, Hajdina) are preserved *in situ*, on the sites where they were discovered. In the past years, both temples were renovated: the area around the first temple located in Hajdina was cleaned, while the third temple in Breg was renovated and electrified. New brochures were published at the same time.

At the end of the nineteenth century, in the quarter of trade and temples ,Vicus Fortunae in Spodnja Hajdina, was discovered the first Mithras temple. The inscriptions on the monuments found in the temple revealed that the Poetovio customs officials dedicated a greater number of altars in the middle of the second century. The temple was the first in Pannonia and one of the smallest in dimensions; however, it represented a great discovery as it was one of the oldest. It was preserved on the site and covered with a protective building.

In 1901 the second Mithras temple was discovered, about 20 metres south from the first Mithras temple. The second Mithras temple was mostly built by customs officials, as well. Built some fifty years after the first Mithras temple, it must have been in use until the mid-fourth century.

The third Mithras temple is the largest among all temples found in Poetovio. The excavation works in the area ended in September 1913. As the remains of the building were rather well preserved, it was decided to leave them on the site of discovery. It was built by soldiers of the Roman legions and was in use from third to the mid-fourth century.

The fourth and the fifth Mithras temples were discovered on the left side of the Drava river in Ptuj. They were in use from third to the mid-fourth century.

During excavation for the local sewage system in 2011, in the vicinity of the first Mithras Temple in Spodnja Hajdina, some findings were found that can be attributed to the Mithras cult. The most important among those is a bronze fibula.

PANELS:

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THE MYSTERIES OF MITHRAS IN THE DANUBIAN PROVINCES

Organizers:

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Description:

More than a half century after the publication of Marteen Vermaseren's monumental corpus, the materiality of the Roman cult of Mithras increased significantly in the Danubian provinces (Illyricum) an area, which was considered already by Cumont as one of the main centers of the cult. The recent archaeological finds from the Danubian provinces, the new perspectives focusing on the intra and extra-provincial relationship of the worshippers from this area of the Empire urge the discipline for new perspectives and the revision of the old corpora.

New studies focusing on the social network of the worshippers, the economic background of the so called small-group religions within the larger frame of the "religious market" of the Empire, the military dislocations in the Danubian provinces and the local iconographic variation and tendencies of religious individuation open numerous questions and new possibilities.

The papers of this panel will present some of the recently excavated sanctuaries of Mithras from the Danubian provinces, the material evidence occurred since 1960 and through some particular case studies from Dalmatia, Pannonia and Dacia will focus on the role of individuals and networks within the cult.

1. **Ádám SZABÓ** (University of Pécs, HU)

"Mithras in Space: the External and Internal Orientation of the Mithraea"

The external orientation of the Mithraic sanctuaries known from the Danubian provinces shows a great variety and heterogeneity. There are no attestable rules or systems in the relation between different sanctuaries. They are oriented after pragmatic rules, such as the position of the surrounding buildings, the urban or geographical landscape, or other organising principles.

The internal orientation of the sanctuaries however, shows a great homogeneity and uniformity; only the inventories and the equipment seem to differ. The internal structure is organised on the possible axial line between the door and the cult image. The planetary images outside the cave (in the upper left corner the rising Sun, upper right the descendent Moon) represents a cosmic East/West axis, on which the line between the door and the cult image is perpendicular. This suggests that the internal orientation of the Mithraea is based on a North/South direction in the main axis and East/West in the secondary axis. This system explains why the external orientation of these sanctuaries doesn't follow any kind of rules. It was useless to do so, because the internal orientation was universal, following the description of Porphyry. The main figures and the materiality of the interior are following also the same cosmic axis or coordinate system. The two dimensional reliefs or frescos can't express the depth in space and in the North/South axis, except in rare cases, with the statuary representations of Cautes and Cautopates. However, in some examples, such as in the Terme di Mitra mithraeum from Ostia the tridimensional tauroctony clearly shows the orientation and purpose of the cult reliefs in the sanctuaries: the bull is ready to break out in the direction of the door (from South to North), while Mithras is stopping him by the tauroctony, an act of chthonian and celestial sacrifice. István Tóth--not discussing the axial directions--has already highlighted that the inner topography of the sanctuary was following also the inner orientation, consisting of a special system of the Danubian provinces, different from other

areas of the Empire. The study of the inner orientation and the topography of the sanctuary opens new perspectives in research on the cult.

Finally, the paper discusses the various denominations (*templum*, *anthrum*) of the sanctuaries which probably suggest their legal status. Similarly, the presence of some of the initiation grades gives us a glimpse of the internal hierarchy of these groups, organised after a certain rule and canon which is not completely clear for us.

2. Levente NAGY (University of Pécs, HU). “Mithraism and Early Christianity in Pannonia in the 3rd – 4th centuries A.D.: Reinterpreting the Evidence”

The research of Mithraic-Christian relations in the Middle Danube region, especially in the 4th century A.D., has not received much attention from scholars of ancient religion and classical archaeology. Recent publications of J. BJØRNEBYE, R.GORDON, O. NICHOLSON, E. SAUER *et alii* are relevant concerning methodological questions, but they focus mainly on Italy and the northwestern provinces. This contribution aims to represent the most relevant written/archaeological sources and scholarly interpretations of pagan (i.e. Mithraic)–Christian connections in the examined region, with special regards to the recent results of Hungarian Mithraic research (particularly by the late ISTVÁN TÓTH, whose monograph about Pannonian religious history was published in 2015).

3. Csaba SZABÓ (University of Pécs, HU, Max Weber Kolleg, DE)
“CIMRM Supplement of Dacia: New Finds and Perspectives”

In less than 170 years, the territory of the Roman Dacia experienced a great mobility of large groups from all over the Roman Empire. Small and larger communities bounded by various military, economic, religious or ethnic identities moved into the new province where they faced a rarely attested cultural variety and an accelerated version of the so-called Roman religious market and consumer society. Among the visible religious identities and small-group religions were the Mithras worshippers in Dacia. Although the material evidence of most of the Mithraic groups and individuals has been researched by local and foreign scholars during the last two centuries, the extraordinary number of the finds are constantly increasing and raising new questions on the formation and maintenance of these groups. Considered for long time as a “military” and “Persian” cult of Dacia in local historiography, a revision of some notions needs to be emphasized in this case study.

In this paper I will present also a revision of Vermaseren’s catalogue on the provincial material and will focus on some questions regarding the formation of sacralised spaces, the role of individuals and communities in the maintenance of the sanctuaries, and the use of objects as agents in religious communication.

4. Nirvana SILNOVIC (Central European University, HU)
“To Carry the Universe in One’s Own Pocket: A Miniature Mithraic Relief From the Archaeological Museum of Split”

A miniature Mithraic relief is currently on exhibit in the Archaeological Museum of Split, standing right next to the famous Salonitan tondo (CIMRM 1861). Despite its visibility to the wider public, the relief has remained unpublished and completely unnoticed by scholars. The relief was executed in marble; it measures only 8.3 x 7.5 cm, and it was presumably found in Salona or its environs. Regardless of the clumsiness and summary treatment, this miniature

relief encapsulates all the necessary elements of the tauroctony. Under the semicircular upper frame symbolizing the cave, a standard scene of tauroctony is represented. As Richard Gordon rightly pointed out, the existence of such private miniature Mithraic reliefs is contrary to the usually perceived nature of the relationship between the adherents and Mithras, which was established exclusively inside the boundaries of the mithraeum (R. Gordon 2004: 267, 278). By breaking those boundaries, individuals were able to develop their own personal religious reflections and experiences, and were able to express their individual religious identity. This “pocket-sized” relief clearly served the personal needs of piety and devotion of a certain individual, who could therefore, due to its convenient size, carry it around and use it when necessary. This presentation will tackle the question of the miniature relief from Split in the context of portable Mithraic reliefs, their meanings and religious implications, as well as the questions of provenance and dating of a miniature Mithraic relief from the archaeological Museum of Split.

5. Željko MILETIĆ (University of Zadar, CR. “Reversible Mithraic reliefs from the Province of Dalmatia”

Workshop provenance and liturgical function of the two-sided reliefs from the province of Dalmatia are discussed. Scenes of Tauroctony, Feasts and Hunting are analysed in the context of the story of Mithras, and the way they were transposed into the sacred itinerary of the soul is reconstructed. The relationship between myth and cosmogonic view of the world has been established. A feast scene on the reverse of the cult icon from Konjic depicts evocation and liturgical stage scenes inside spelaeum, by which the mythical and liturgical scenography is equated. The impact of big game hunting iconography as well as ideology of imperial *virtus* on Mithras’ hunting scene is taken into consideration.

6. Blanka MISIC (Champlain College, CA), “Cognitive Approaches to Mithraism in Pannonia”

This paper proposes to explore, using a cognitive theoretical perspective, the dissemination of the Mithras cult in Pannonia via the social network dynamics of worshippers. Using as primary evidence votive reliefs and inscriptions, the paper will examine the channels through which the cult of Mithras was introduced into Pannonia; how its dissemination was achieved through individual, as well as social (professional and familial) networks; and how individual Mithraic cells contributed to the formation of varying group identities in Pannonia. The aim of this paper thus, is to offer a novel, interdisciplinary perspective of viewing--not only of the dissemination of the cult within the province, but also of understanding how social networks contribute to the formation of religious and provincial identities.

7. Philippa ADRYCH (Magdalen College, University of Oxford, UK)
“Building a myth: Mithraic Iconographies and Ideologies”

Even within a religious phenomenon that is best known for its material remains, the Danubian evidence for the Roman worship of Mithras has, for a long time, been seen as especially rich and important. In particular, the tauroctony reliefs have formed part of a widespread tendency in Mithraic scholarship towards localised readings of Mithraic communities, their iconography, and the possible ideologies that can be drawn from them. This paper will take the visual evidence for the worship of Mithras in the Danubian provinces as its starting point, and will use it to explore two methods of building a myth.

First, it will investigate the quite literal myth-building that surrounds some of the side scenes on Dacian tauroctonies – the depictions of the bull in a house, or temple, or on a boat, and those of Mithras riding the bull – assessing how they fit into the wider Mithraic iconographic trend. Second, it will look at more theoretical myth-building, interrogating the ways in which local studies can be used to form part of larger, universalising Mithraic narratives, and focusing on the construction of ideologies. This part of the paper will consider in closer detail the case of the Konjic relief, and its importance to the idea of the roles played by the Mithraic grades.

Finally, the paper will return to the material evidence itself, the necessary foundation of any discussion of Mithraic worship, to ask whether it allows us to compare examples of Mithraic communities from different places within the Roman Empire, and their attitudes towards visual representation.

8. Tünde VÁGÁSI (Eötvös Lóránd University, Budapest, HU)

“*Sol Socius*: Representations of the Relationship between Mithras and Sol in Pannonia”

Considering the Mithras cult, Pannonia had an exceptional status within the western Roman Empire. This unique status was connected with the huge size of the army which was stationed there. Numerous inscriptions and altars give evidence that Pannonia had an uncommon sensitivity to religions; this is why some local characteristics and relief-versions could be made, as, for example: dadophores with pelta shields, and unique dedicational forms which are mostly known in Pannonia, and perhaps spread from there to other parts of the Empire. In my presentation, I want to show the connections between Mithras and Sol through their Pannonian representations. I was searching for the answer to what kind of relationship existed between the visual representation of Mithras and Sol, and the *Sol Socius* dedicational form. What kind of local characteristics and religious sensitivity lead to the development of this kind of dedicational form? Are these circumstances connected to Pannonia?

9. Péter KISS (Rómer Flóris Museum, Győr, HU), “The Mithras Sanctuary in Savaria”

In Szombathely (Western Hungary, the Roman Savaria), at the planned site of a shopping center, there were excavations carried out in a large area. Remnants were found there of some insulae in the western part of the southern suburb of Savaria. In the layer of a collapsed building, two altars came to light. The inscriptions of the altars (FONTI / PEREN/NI and TR[an/situ / Dei] refer undoubtedly to the cult of Mithras.

The inscriptions refer to the scenes of Mithras’ life symbolizing the eternal spring and the divine passage. These limestone altars were found in the burnt layer of a small room of a building. The building, which later burned down and collapsed was observed to have been in use in the 4th century AD. A large number of wall paintings were found in the room of the altars; they belong to a collapsed ceiling and a wall that have remained *in situ*. These are the first Roman wall paintings in Savaria; they were excavated from a layer in the original layout. The exposed wall paintings probably decorated two rooms of a Mithraeum. On the wall paintings of the outer room, which probably belonged to the entrance area (*vestibulum*), there can be seen a white box bordered by a red stripe. In the middle of the box, mauve, green and red figure motifs are placed in red and yellow medallions with blue background.

The ceiling paintings of the inner room, that probably served as the inside room of the sanctuary (*spaeleum*), and where the altars were found, show figure motifs in geometric composition with tape and strip ornament.

Taking into account the topography of the Roman city, the Mithraeum was in the southern part of Savaria, where many other religious monuments, especially altars have been found, next to the Iseum sanctuary district, so it is likely that even more sanctuaries existed in this area. The excavated finds have an extraordinary importance in the religious life of Savaria, because previous researches could only suspect the presence of the Mithras cult in the city, but now it has also been proved.

10. Victor BOTTEZ (University of Bucharest, RO). “Mithras in Moesia Inferior. New Data and New Perspectives”

The study of the Mithraic cult, as of any other cult in the province of Moesia Inferior, is a challenge, given the fact that the region is divided into two areas, one dominated by the old Greek *poleis* and the other by the urban centers established by the Roman authorities, which define two very different cultural spaces.

Apart from an update and a synthesis of data concerning the Mithraic monuments discovered in the area (many new discoveries were made since Vermaseren’s second volume of his monumental corpus was published in 1960), the present paper tries to answer a question fundamental to any analysis of a religious cult, namely what role did that cult play in the religious life of the local communities?

Starting from Claus’s (*The Roman Cult of Mithras*) view of Mithraism as imitating the structure of the society in which it developed, this question will automatically guide us on parallel routes, as, on one hand, we have Mithraic centers in communities in the “Latin” area, defined by a high number of individuals involved in the Roman military or administration, and, on the other, there are Mithraic communities in Greek cities characterized by a very conservative pantheon, where the introduction of a new god was usually dictated by a significant change at a community level. Were there any common points between the two directions?

11. Nadezda GAVRILOVIC (Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade, SR), “Monuments of Mithras in Roman Provinces of the Central Balkans: New Interpretations in the Light of the Discovery of New Archaeological Finds”

It has been more than half a century since the synthesis of all the so-far-known Mithraic monuments found in the territory of the central Balkans was published by Ljubica Zotovic. Since then, many new monuments have been excavated, but aside from their brief descriptions and short summaries, no new interpretation of the cult of god Mithra on central Balkans has been offered.

Our paper proposes to present, revise and interpret all Mithraic monuments known to this date in the territory of Roman provinces of the Central Balkans during the period of Roman reign, beginning with a brief introduction of the ways of penetration, diffusion and implementation of the cult. The main part of this paper is dedicated to determining the degree of knowledge of the cult’s theology and *praxis* by the indigenous population, the

social and ethnic origins of dedicants, special features of Mithraic iconography and the locating of the places which most likely served as open mithraeums.

In addition, we are particularly interested in the syncretism of the Mithras cult with cults of other mystery deities, such as, for example, Sabazius and Attis. Certain groups of funerary monuments from western Serbia and southern parts of Monte Negro imply a very complex syncretism of the deities mentioned, raising numerous questions about the manner of worship and aspects under which god Mithras was venerated in the period of late antiquity in central Balkans.

12. Agnieszka TOMAS, Martin LEMKE, “The Nature of the Mithraeum at Novae. A Reassessment”

The sanctuary of Oriental deities at Novae was excavated 30 years ago. Although this sanctuary has been published in several contributions by the late Vărbinka Najdenova, it seems appropriate to gather the scattered pieces of data on this small and modest shrine for recapitulation. The analyses of published photographs and epigraphic evidence compared to architectural remains brought new observations, important for the cult of Mithras at Novae, but also useful for further studies in Oriental cults worshipped by the Lower Danubian troops.

PANEL 2 : MITHRAS AND OTHER FOREIGN CULTS IN SWITZERLAND

(coordinated by Koch Pirmin and Regula Ackermann)

1. Koch PIRMIN Pirmin.Koch@sg.ch, (Kanton St.Gallen, Dept. für Kultur Archäologie), and Regula Ackermann (Kanton St.Gallen, Dept. für Kultur Archäologie), “*Interdisciplinary Approaches on the Research of Sanctuaries of Mithras and other foreign Cults*”

2. Sarah LO RUSSO Sarah.LoRusso@sg.ch (Univ. Basle) and Hannes Flück (Univ. Basle), “Square up to a Mithraeum. Sampling strategies and excavation methods at the recently excavated Mithraeum in Kempraten, CH.”

This paper presents the recently discovered mithraeum and the sampling strategy, which was developed as a result of the close collaboration between various disciplines for the mithraeum that was discovered at Kempraten in 2015. We hope, thanks to this strategy, to eventually be able to make concrete statements with regard to the use and design of the mithraeum and the organisation of its religious feasts and practices.

3. Christa EBNÖTHER (Univ. Bern), “The Cult Cave at Zilis.”

4. Philippe RENTZEL (Univ. Basle), “Archaeogeology: the Biesheim Mithraeum”

Research on foreign cults in the north-western provinces, and on the cult of Mithras in particular, can look back to more than one hundred years of history. It focuses predominantly on evidence of construction, inscriptions and reliefs (such as the works by Maarten Vermaseren on the cults of Cybele and Mithras). Advancements that have been made with regard to the methods of excavation and analysis over the past few decades, for example, in archaeological and archaeobiological research, as well as detailed studies of all the finds

