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THE CONTINUITY PARADIGM WITHIN

THE MYSTERIES OF

MITRA



ZOROASTRIAN·MACEDONIC·PHRYGIAN

**MITHRAISM OF THE IV CENTURIES - A CHAUVINISTIC PREDECESSOR OF
THE X-CENTURY BOGOMILISM/CATHARISM AND LATER PROTESTANTISM**

The intention of this essay is to provide simple and easy-to-understand retrospective of periods from ancient and medieval Macedonian and Middle East history, mythology, and religion. It avoids substantial and detailed explanations that consider wider historical background of the beliefs and deities described below, and is written primarily for those approaching the topic for the first time.

It also avoids complex explanatory comments or insightful footnotes on the citations from the sources. The explanatory notes are prevalently etymological.

The time-frame of this essay ranges from the second millennium BCE until the end of the Roman empire in the 5th century AD. The interpretations given here are meant to enhance our understanding and appreciation of the ancient Macedonian and Middle East religious legacy. They are focused mainly on the mythological and ritual aspects of the story disregarding the wider historical or socio-political perspective.

All the dates and references to centuries are „AD“ except where indicated otherwise. Throughout this essay, Macedonia/Macedonians refer to the area of the mainland north of Mount Olym. Macedonian Peninsula refers to so-called '*Balkans*.'

Latinized/Anglicized or Macedonic names are given in parenthesis, some names and technical terms are transliterated and these will be obvious when they appear. Other technical terms and titles have been transliterated directly from their original forms with as few changes as possible: thus 'Mysteries of Mitra' rather than '*Mitraism*' (the latter, like all such '-isms', is but a modern label devised for comparison and taxonomy), '*Mitra*' rather than '*Mithras*', which is neither "*Greek*" nor Latin.

The terminology and concepts that are *post factum* conventional historiography inventions (like '*Balkans*' or '*Greex*') are largely ignored, if not altogether avoided. Such empirically wrong terms used by modern historiography were unknown to the ancient and medieval world and their continued use perpetuates misleading assumptions.

The modern-historiography 'privileged moments' are largely avoided too. For historians today one such a privileged moment (of places and monuments as '*Byzantine*') is the '*Byzantine Empire*', actually the Romeian Empire of the 5th and 6th centuries. But when and why is so regarded? Was '*Byzantine Empire*' regarded as '*Byzantine*' already in the Middle Ages? By whom?

The definitions, current meanings and related concepts of the words in English are taken from the Oxford American Dictionary and Thesaurus (Mac OsX version 1.0.2 for PowerPC) and/or Meriam-Webster online dictionary. For the words in Macedonian is used the online ENCYCLOPÆDIA MACEDONICA / MAKEDONSKA ENCIKLOPEDIJA vol. 1 & 2, idividi.com, and off.net online Macedonian dictionary.

The sources are listed in the References at the end of this essay.

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The Continuity Paradigm of the Macedonic Hittite/Phrygian Cult of Mitra

What today 19th-century-fashioned English-male clubs and other secret and occult (masculine) societies have in common with the 2nd millennium BCE Hittite minor deity Mitra? Apparently nothing, but surprisingly lot, as they observe the same unaltered customs of most conservative reservedness, conspiracy, and oath, caused by the adoption of this initially non-Roman deity of the oaths and his minor Macedonic/oriental cult by the Roman legionaries in the 1st-4th centuries AD. In the mysterious corridors of today modern “clubs”, and within their conspirative, chauvinistic, and strictly male headquarters of different “*fraternities*”, “*orders of knighthoods*” and other ‘specially enlightened’ wannabe-different societies, they still preserve a special place for his worship, and a statuettes of Mitra the bull-slayer and his occult symbols are still placed in the coves of these secret societies (as the “*Freemasons*”, “*Priory of Sion*”, “*Opus Dei*”, “*Illuminati*”, “*Lions Club*”, “*Tarsus Club*”¹, etc.).



Above: from left to right (occult symbols of): “*Priory of Sion*”, “*Opus Dei*”, “*Illuminati*”, and “*Freemasons*” secret clubs/societies

The earliest known testimony of the original Hittite/Phrygian deity *Mitra* (also spelled *Mithras*) appears for the first time in the historical records on a clay tablets found in the Hittite capital city of Hattuša. It was mentioned around 1380 BCE in a peace treaty stipulated between the king of the Hittites and the client Mitani kings, where *Mitra*, as god-protector of treaties, was invoked among other Aryan deities to honor the contract between two rulers. Thenceforward it was adopted by Persians as *Ahura Mitra* (Lord Mitra), when *Ahura Mazda* (Lord Mazda) himself, according to Zoroastrian religious records, legitimized the worship of Mitra as his son. In this version too Mitra remains a lesser god, one of the “*Yazati*” (comparable to the *Archangels* in Christianity and *Devas* in Vedic tradition), which fight the evil forces on the side of the “Seven Holy Immortals” in the great cosmic battle.

As the bearer of the first light (the morning light before the sunrise) in the Persian inscriptions he is mentioned together with the goddess *Anahita/Anahita* (lat. *Venus*, i.e. the Morning/Evening Star, Macedonic *Zee* - the Goddess of the cold light). Mitra is the genius of the celestial light. He appears before sunrise on the rocky summits of the mountains; during the day he traverses the wide firmament in his chariot drawn by four white horses, and when night falls he still illumines with flickering glow the surface of the earth, “ever waking, ever watchful” (*Verethraghna* in Avestan). Thus, the common associate of Mitra in the mysteries was the sun, due to widely present historic and prehistoric solar cults.

¹ In the recent 2012 “Conspiracy” fiction movie it was convincingly suggested that the elite Tarsus Club worships Mithra, and as such is said to sacrifice a bull at each of its meetings.

Mitra cult spread from Anatolia until the India in the east, and as far as Spain, Great Britain in the west. Nevertheless, his worship continued without interruption in the original Hittite homeland, then after renamed into *Phrygia*² (corrupted form of *Brygia*, the name of Ohrid-Pelagonia region in Upper Macedonia³ from where the Brygians/Phrygians and Hittites originated).⁴



Right: **Phrygian freeze, Vienna museum**

² An ancient region in central Asia Minor, to the south of coastal Bithynia. It reached the peak of its power in the 8th century BCE under King Midas.

³ Today Republic of Macedonia.

⁴ Apparently, Hittites moved to Asia Minor at the beginning of the 2nd millennium BCE, while their later Macedonic relatives Brygians/Phrygians moved there in the 9th century BCE.

From Macedonian *Nike* to Roman *Mitra*

A piece of widely recognizable garment worn by Mitra underlines his undeniable homeland and Macedonic origin – the Phrygian Cap.⁵ As testified by Erodot, the Phrygians were known as ‘*Brygians*’ before they moved from their Macedonian homeland to Asia Minor. By extension, the Brygian/Phrygian cap was explicitly applied to the "barbarians". Most notable of these extended senses of "*Phrygian*" were the Trojans and other western Anatolian peoples, who in ancient authors perception were synonymous with the Brygians/Phrygians, and whose heroes Paris, Aeneas⁶, and Ganymede were all regularly depicted with a Brygian/Phrygian cap. Ancient clay pottery also depicts Amazons, the so-called “*Scythian*” archers, and generally all freemen with Brygian/Phrygian caps. Although these are military depictions, the headwear is distinguished and the figures are also identified altogether as "barbarians". The headwear also appears in 2nd century BCE Boeotian Tanagra figurines of an effeminate Eros, in various 1st century BCE statuary of the Macedonic kingdom of Commagene in eastern Anatolia, as well as in Etruscan statuary in central Italy and Sardinia. Representations of “*Thracians*” also regularly appear with Brygian/Phrygian caps, most notably *Vendis* (Macedonian *Vesna*, Roman *Vesta*), the Thracian goddess of the moon and the hunt, and *Orpheus*, a legendary Macedonian poet and musician.



Orpheus.

Mitra was Hittite-Pelasgo-Macedonic deity par excellence. His oriental attributes, like those in the Mithraeum of Kumanovo (Republic of Macedonia) where he is represented as Mitra-Verethraghna (the

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phrygian_cap

⁶ A Trojan leader, son of Anchises and Aphrodite, and legendary ancestor of the Romans. When Troy fell he escaped and after wandering for many years eventually reached Italy. The story of his voyage is recounted in Virgil's ‘Aeneid’.

Victorious)⁷ confirm these relations. On another relief carved on a large rock near the village of Thermes (near Xanthi, Aegean Macedonia), which design represents a cave, Mitra is depicted sacrificing the bull, and to his left and right are the god's retinue, Cautes and Cautopates.

However, the first great event that contributed to the greater international expansion and popularity of Mitra's worship was the well-known 4th century BCE Macedonian conquest in the east, accomplished by Alexander III of Macedon. In the cults of Apollo and Mitra, both identified with sun and/or moon, Macedonians and Persians found themselves on a common ground. It is impossible now to say to what extent each cult absorbed attributes from the other, but the interrelation of the two became an important element in the cultural unity of the vast region conquered by Alexander and the Macedonians. As minor deity and protector of the warriors Mitra was unquestionably accepted by the Macedonian soldiers, and as minor deity was worshiped among Alexander's famed Falankas and Royal Companions. When after 8 years of campaign in Asia the Macedonians returned back home, they were the first who spread the Mitra's cult in the Macedonian Peninsula and further west across Europe. Macedonia's cosmopolitan nature, and willing absorption of these universal ideas and influences under one aegis, were responsible for giving to much of her early Eastern Romeian art its distinctive oriental characteristics.



An exceptional showcase of the undisputed Mitraic worship among the Macedonian soldiers was once again the Mitra's most recognizable symbol, that mark of undisputed power of acting without the constraint of necessity or fate, and benchmark of the unchallenged reliance *par excellence* - the typical "Phrygian" (i.e. Macedonian) helmet of the falankas of Filip II and Alexander III of Macedon. It is a bare naked evidence which is in front of the eyes of everyone. While the Phrygian cap was of wool or soft leather, in pre-Hellenistic times the Macedonians had already developed a military helmet that had a similarly characteristic flipped-over tip. This so-called "Phrygian" type of Macedonic helmet was usually of bronze and in prominent use in the Kingdom of Macedon as of the 5th century BCE. Worn by the large majority of the Macedonian soldiers, it was a standard military equipment of the Macedonian Armies in 4th and 3rd centuries BCE. Confusingly similar are the depictions of the helmets used by cavalry and light infantry (*cf.* Peltasts of Agriania and Paionia regions of Macedon), whose headgear also included stiff leather helmets in imitation of the bronze ones.

⁷ One of the Avestan avatars of Mitra with many eyes and ears was "Verethranga" - 'the Victorious'.



Above: **some of the Macedonian “Phrygian” bronze helmets from the 4th century BCE; its shape was a universal symbol of undisputed freedom and firm reliance among the Macedonians, and a distinguished mark of the oath between equals⁸**

It's weird shape can hardly be explained as a technical improvement for the mere protection, as using of so much additional material (Bronze) cannot be justified with its strange shape. But, this more than obvious Mitra-fashioned military ordnance is still intentionally neglected as *de facto* Mithraic heavy-duty version of the Phrygian cap. Its widely recognised symbolic importance is altogether ignored by the modern scholarship and historiographers. And despite the blatant fact that it is known as “Phrygian”, because of its obvious identical shape to the Brygian/Phrygian cap of Mitra - inexplicably is refused as Mithraic garment. Why is that? It's because of the general anti-continuity political paradigm of the western historiography. Continuity and plain historical interactions that are so explicitly obvious are largely avoided for the sake of modern political and imperialistic-wannabe goals.

However, their interaction, a process that had begun long before Alexander, but to which he had given a dynamic impetus, continued to develop despite of the break-up of his Macedonic empire. The worshipping of warrior-protector deities was indeed a long tradition among the glorious Macedonians. Such is the well known worship of *Nike*⁹, Victory, Macedonic goddess par excellence. To this avail there's the first-hand most exceptional testimony, in the form of magnificent nearly 3 meters tall statue

⁸ Even the great Alexander was only the “first among equals”, according to the ancient codex of behavior of the Assembly of Macedonians Under Arms.

⁹ **Νίκη** (Nike) - victory, upper hand; in today Modern Macedonian: “*Ničkum*” - ‘on your back’, considered also the victory-over-the opponent in the sport of wrestling, by trying to throw or hold them down (i.e. “*ničkum*” in plain Macedonian) on the ground, typically according to a code of wrestling rules.

of the Macedonic goddess of victory *Nike* (or *Nika*)¹⁰, commissioned by the triumphant Macedonians in 323 BCE, to celebrate their victory in the naval battle against the city-state of Athens at Hellespont.¹¹



Above: **The statue of Nike from the island of Samothrace, 323 BCE. Today at Louvre Museum**

Beside the praised Macedonian dedication represented by the marvelous statue of Nike, there are at least four other important Macedonic tributes to the great *Kabeiri* gods on the isle of Samothrace. One is in the form of sanctuary built by Filip III of Macedon and his nephew and son of Alexander the Great, Alexander IV; then the propylon (Lat. *propylaeum*) built by Ptolemy II, Macedonian king and pharaon of Egypt; the rotunda dedicated to Arsinoe II, the second daughter and youngest child born to Macedonian king Lysimachus from his first wife, Nika of Macedonia; and a Column monument to Filip V. One of the artifacts found, a tiny gold Persian lion, was dedicated by a Macedonian soldier upon his return from the campaign under command of Alexander the Great. From this can be seen the overwhelming Macedonic attributes of the great Sanctuary on the isle of Samothrace.

Other monuments on the isle of Samothrace are unattested and designated merely as “*hellenistic*” (?) by the conventional historians. The historical buffoonery of this irrational claim lies in the contradictory

¹⁰ Found in 1863 by M. Champoiseau. Broken into several pieces, it was lying in a rectangular basin located on a windy ridge that overlooked the Samothracian Sanctuary of the Great Gods. Today is in the Louvre Museum, Paris.

¹¹ Actually this battle ended in a draw, but ultimately led to the final decline of the Athenian navy and its fall from the historic stage.

fact of misappropriated use of the term for designating as “*hellenistic*”¹² the periods which are not.¹³

The very same goddess *Nike* is also found on the balustrade of the temple of *Atena Nike* on the Acropolis in Athens, where the goddess of victory is depicted in undisputed Mitraic fashion – while slaying a bull. The amazing identical statue of *Nike Tauroctona* in a posture while slaying a bull was also found in the ancient Macedonic city of Pergamum, in ancient Mysia (western Asia Minor region), in Apolonia¹⁴ (western Macedonian Peninsula), etc.



Left: **Nike sacrificing a bull**

The same universal (Mitraic) attributes, like the Sacred Bull, used by or alleged to other deities also became popular in Rome as of the 1st century AD, and are found on the frieze of the Ulphian Basilika at Trajan’s Forum, on the Arch of Benevento.

¹² The modern adjective “*Hellenistic*” designates precisely “*the time-period after the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BCE until the battle of Azio (Actium) in 31 BCE and Roman empire conquest of the Egypt.*” - citation from the ‘*Lezioni di Arte*’ (Lessons of Art) Vol.1, ‘*Dall’arte arcaica al gotico*’ p.45: ‘*Il grande impero di Alessandro e i regni hellenistici*’. Electa/Bruno Mondadori, edition 2002). Any other use is inappropriate and misleading.

¹³ “*Finally, two points of terminology. We use the word ‘Hellenistic’ for no better reason other than out of the force of acquired habit, but of course the word and the concept are modern inventions that were unknown (exonym) to the ancient world. The continued use of the word perpetuates misleading assumptions, and there is a serious case for avoiding it altogether, though the impracticality of this is obvious...*” - M. M. Austin “*Hellenistic Kings, War, and the Economy*”, *The Classical Quarterly New Series*, Vol.36, No.2 (1986), p. 450. Published by: Cambridge University Press.

“*We are now able to say, with some certainty that the ‘Greex’ were, empirically, wrong: this ancient model of continuity between the ‘heroic age’ and the present day is not a true historical chronology, but a ‘chronology of desire’. For historians today one such a privileged moment (of places and monuments as ‘classical’) is ‘Classical Athens’, the Athens of the 5th and 4th centuries BCE. But when and why is so regarded? Was ‘Classical Athens regarded as ‘Classical’ already in antiquity? By whom?...*” - ‘*The Birth of Classical Europe: A History from Ilion to Augustine*’ by Simon Price, Peter Thonemann.

¹⁴ 3rd-2nd centuries BCE capital of the Macedonian Attalid dynasty (Attal, one of the Alexander’s generals). It was famed for its cultural institutions, especially its library, which was second only to that at Alexandria.

The continuity of Mitra worship as pure Macedonic cult is also confirmed in the post-Alexander's era, in the Macedonic successor kingdoms (Lat. *Diadochi*). The local Macedonic king Dropion (250-230 BCE), son of Leon of Paionia (Upper Macedonia), was noted by Pausanias when he gifted in Delphi a trophy of the famous Paionian bison, which was still a hunting prey across the Macedonic Peninsula in the 3rd century BCE: “A bronze head of the Paionian bull called the bison was sent to Delphi by the Paionian king Dropion, son of Leon.”

Especially in the Macedonic Asia Minor kingdoms of Pontus and Commagene, Mitra was worshiped in continuity until their fall in the 1st century of the new era. An astonishing and undeniable example of the spread of Macedonic religious influence and interactions between the Macedonic and local gods is the gigantic monument on the Mt. Nemrod, in the Macedonic kingdom of Comagene in Asia Minor. Here we found the solid rock testimony of Macedonic king Antiochus the Great, son of the king Mithridates I Callinicus and queen Laodice VII Thea of Comagene (from the Macedonic dynasty of Seleucids)¹⁵, who erected an enormous sepulchral tumulus with giant statues of kings/gods with Mitraic-Phrygian hats, and inscription on which is written as follows: “...all of the father-gods of Macedonia, Persia and our own country of Comagene will continue to bless their children and their grandchildren...”



Above: The statues around the gigantic tumulus built by Antiochus, Macedonic king of Comagene. On the Mt. Nemrod, part of the Taurus range, 2nd century BCE

Next page: the Macedonic successor kingdoms in Asia Minor and North Africa in 89 BCE, ruled by Macedonic dynasties of: Mithridates (132-66 BCE), Seleucids (311-65 BCE), Attalids (in Pergamon 188-133 BCE), and Ptolemies (304-30 BCE); in Red the Roman invasion

¹⁵ Founded by Seleuc Nicator, one of Alexander the Great's generals.



Commagene was originally a small Macedonic Syro-Hittite kingdom, and after Alexander III of Macedon conquered the territory in the 4th century BCE it became a part of the larger Macedonic Empire. After the breakup of the Alexander's empire the region became part of the Macedonic Empire of Seleucids. The Macedonic kingdom of Commagene, bounded by Cilicia on the west and Cappadocia on the north, arose in 162 BCE when its governor Ptolemy, a satrap of the disintegrating Seleucid Empire, declared himself independent. Ptolemy's dynasty was related to the Parthian kings, but his descendant Mithridates I Callinicus (109 BC–70 BCE) embraced Macedonic culture and married the Syro-Macedonian princess Laodice VII Thea. His dynasty could thus claim ties with both Alexander III of Macedon and the Persian kings. This marriage may also have been part of a peace treaty between Commagene and the Seleucid Empire.¹⁶ From this point on, the kingdom of Commagene became more Macedonic than Persian, and Commagene emerged in about 163 BCE as a independent state and province in the Syro-Macedonian Seleucid Empire.

¹⁶ “The Pact Between the Kings, Polybius 15.20.6, and Polybius’ View of the Outbreak of the Second Macedonian War” by A. M. Eckstein: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/497859>



Above: Mitra as *Ilios* (lat. '*Helios*') in Phrygian cap with solar rays, together with the 1st century BCE king Antiochus I Theos of Commagene. Relief found at Mt. Nemrud, in present-day eastern Turkey

But, its real height in popularity was reached in the late 1st century AD, when it was adopted by the invaders of the turn, the Romans. And, the emergence of its western worship coincides exactly with the fall of the Macedonic kingdoms in Egypt and Asia Minor in the 1st century AD. One inescapable conclusion emerges from the detailed facts which we have adduced. It is that the spread of the Mitraic Mysteries must have taken place with extreme rapidity. With the suddenness of a lightning, they make their appearance almost simultaneously in countries far removed from one another: in Rome, at Carnuntum on Danube, and in the Agri Decumates. Manifestly, this reformed church of Mysteries of Mitra exercised on the society of the 2nd century a powerful fascination, of which today we can only imperfectly ascertain the causes. Other particularity is that the original Hittite Mitra wasn't a bull-

slayer. It was rather Macedonic victory goddess Nike Tauroctona, not Mitra. Why then the Roman altars represent him as such?

The basic layer of this religion, its lower and primordial stratum, is the faith of ancient Hittite Empire, from which it took its origin. The human mind does construct and entertain representations of innumerable supernatural and paranormal beings entirely outside the religious domain. Folk tale and fantasy literature abound with inventions of all sorts, whose connections with 'religion' are questionable or inexistent. And that is precisely the explanation of the Tauroctony in the Roman exponential version of Mitra. Above the original Macedonian/Hittite prehistoric substratum was deposited a thick sediment of later eastern and western mythology. Romans thoroughly collected and added to their whole everything they managed to grab and plunder across the Mediterranean. In Rome there was a Pyramid built, the replica of the Colossus from Rhodos (hence the "*Colosseum*", which was built nearby), Obelisks were brought from Egypt, thousands of Macedonic sculptures were stolen from Macedonia, Asia Minor and Africa, etc.



Finally, a second wave of luxuriant Macedonic cosmopolitan ideas coagulated, and partly concealed from view its true original nature, as the post-Alexander era local beliefs of Asia Minor kingdoms added to it their alluvial deposits. Then after the cult spread quickly across the Roman empire, and flourished especially during the 2nd and 3rd century AD. Alike all the material things that Romans stole from everyone and everywhere, they also devoured the religions and myths of others. The Romans added more different perspectives and new thick layer of symbolism to it, juxtaposing it altogether with the Zodiac, the Sacred Bull, Silen and Aion, etc. Since the function of its mysteries was to relate the initiate to Mitra, the cult was of course centered entirely on the personality of the god. His cult title was "*Deus Sol Invictus Mithras*", thus, he was "*God,*" he was "*the Sun,*" he was "*unconquered,*" he was "*Mithras.*"

But, even the invincible Mitra finally perished after the successful Christianization of the Roman Empire. The Romans, same as their predecessors Macedonians, found in this deity of the oaths the much needed guarantor figure, that they hoped could keep them together and safe. But apparently it didn't, and as the Roman empire perished in the late 4th century AD, with it from history disappeared also the Roman-adopted cult of Mithraism and sacred bull Apis. But, was it really disappeared? Not quite so...



The Macedonic Hittite/Phrygian Cult of Mitra in Roman time

Unlike the major mythological figures of the ancient world, such as Dionis and Irakles, almost no ancient source preserves the precisely recorded story of the Roman-adopted chauvinistic cult of *Mitra*. It has being profoundly sectarian and mysterious cult, practiced far from the curious eyes of the public life, and it remained profoundly occult and exclusively male worship. Why? Because of the very same reason for which it was practiced by the Romans and others before them - its conspirative complicity. And, because of its deep conspiracy-fashion, the Roman Mitraic worship and its practices still remain enshrouded in mystery. Western scholars, politically delimited to Bosporus, still lag behind in the knowledge of the occult religions of the Orient and the precise features which derived from the *Bacchantes*, the *Maenads*, *Magianism* and initiates, or *Mitraism*, or are imparted to it. Thus the dictionary explanation of Mithras is limited to the following definition: “a god of light, truth, and honor, the central figure of the cult of Mithraism, but probably of Persian origin”.



Macedonian philosopher Aristotle (384-322 BCE), felt himself forced to state explicitly ‘*that the Magians neither know nor practice sorcery*’ (The Magian, fr.36 Rose). An older contemporary of the Macedonian philosopher, the Athenian author Xenophon (430-355 BCE), who visited the Achaemenid Empire in 401 BCE, calls the Magians experts ‘*in everything religious*’ (Cyropaedia 8.3.11). He also knows that the Magians sing hymns to the Rising Sun (the ancient Macedonic god *Dze*¹⁷) and all known gods (8.1.23). Other ancient sources mention Magians at Alexander's court and we may assume that they were performing the usual incantations, prayers and sacrifices. This proves that there was collaboration between at least some Magians and the world most famous conqueror. They were simply the representatives of the most ancient cults par excellence, and nobody was interested in the difference between a Magian, a Brahman and a Chaldaean - they were all the same, especially in the Cosmopolitan society which that of Macedonia was. That there was a reciprocal influence and continuity we definitely know, but its precise scope we are unable to ascertain. Still, however superficial it may have been, it certainly did prepare for the intimate reunion which was soon to be effected in the Macedonian Peninsula and Asia Minor, between the Hittite/Phrygian Mysteries of Mitra and those of proper Macedonia - the Mysteries of Great Mother Goddess and Dionis.

The evidence for this cult is mostly archaeological, consisting of the remains of Mitraic temples - Mitraeums, its dedicatory inscriptions, and iconographic representations of the god Mitra and other

¹⁷ “*Dze*” - ‘peep, peek’ in plain Macedonian <http://www.makedonski.info/search/%D1%95%D0%B5>; today modern Macedonian word that denotes ‘staring/gazing’ is *Zee*; in Dutch: *Zien*, in German: *Sehen*, English: *See*, etc. <https://glosbe.com/en/mk/stare>

aspects of the cult in stone sculpture, sculpted stone reliefs, wall paintings, and mosaics. There is very little literary evidence pertaining to the cult. All of our information is therefore derived from the depictions on monuments, and the limited mentions of the cult in literary sources. In the east of Italy, Pola, at the extremity of Istria, the islands of Arba and Brattia (today 'Brač'), and the sea-ports of the coast of Dalmatia, Senia, Iader, Salona, Naron, Epidaurius, including Dyrrachium in Macedonia (today 'Albania')¹⁸, have all preserved more or less numerous and indubitable vestiges of the influence of the invincible god, and distinctly mark the path which he followed in his journey to the commercial metropolises of the Macedonian Peninsula and Adriatic coast. Iconographically, he is depicted in exotic non-Roman, specifically Macedonic-oriental garb: trousers and the Phrygian cap.

Mitra was the "bringer of the airy light" between heaven and earth, but he is also associated with the sunlight, as with contracts and mediation. He endorsed the attributes of one of the most archaic Macedonian deities, the primordial god of the Young (morning) Sun - *Zee*, of the original Hittite *Mitra*, and *Dionis*. In the Avestan inscriptions, Mitra is the genius of the celestial light. He appears before sunrise on the rocky summits of the mountains; during the day he traverses the wide firmament in his Quadriga drawn by four white horses, and when night falls he is driven by the moon in her chariot.

For the Macedonians and Romans the time of sowing was closely associated with the setting of the celestial Bull, i.e., the date on which the Bull is first observed to fall below the western horizon before the sun rises in the east. It is surely not too far-fetched to find an echo of this in the death of the bull in the Mitraic tauroctony. Accordingly, such an important dates of astral-cults of the Sun (Sol) and Moon (Luna) enjoyed imperial sponsorship for thousands of years, as evidenced by their images on Roman coinage from the end of the 1st century BCE (Salzman 1990, p. 150; Clauss 1997, p. 250; Hijmans 2003, p. 383). On the Dies Natalis Invicti, AD 25 December 274, Roman Emperor Aurelian decreed Sol Invictus as the *Sol Dominus Imperii Romani* (the 'Lord of Roman Empire'), and ordered imperial coins honoring Mitras-Sol Invictus to be minted and the Templum Solis Aureliani (the 'Aurelian Sun Temple') to be built in Rome.

As protector of warriors, he received for his companion, *Verethraghna*, or Victory; as the defender of the truth, he was associated with the pious *Sraoša*, or Obedience to divine law; with *Rašnu*, Justice, with *Arštat*, Rectitude. As the tutelary genius of prosperity, he is invoked with *Aši-Vanuhi*, Riches, and with *Parefidi*, Abundance. His festival, same as the one of another Macedonic and cosmopolitan predecessor, *Dionis*, was celebrated on the day of the winter solstice, when his birth from the stone had brought the airy light in the world. His greatest deed was to slay the sacred celestial bull, the source of all fertility. With this act, as a god-protector of the oaths, he guaranteed the fertility and the rebirth of the young sun (at the beginning of the winter) by protecting the arrangements between the Earth and Sky, the Rain and Soil, the rising of the Sun and Moon, etc. In this solemn sacrifice Mitra is always depicted in the same way: on the back of the bull, his face turned towards the beholder. His compassionate and at the same time suffering demeanor is explained by the fact that Mitra is the one who offers and at the same time the offering. In this he was too similar to Dionis, for the latter's followers of the Christ to react with indifference to his cult. Elsewhere he was also the Hittite *Sandan*, Egyptian *Osiris*, *Tammuz*, *Adonis*, and *Atis*, and for the peoples of Egypt and Southwestern Asia under these names he represented the yearly decay and revival of life, especially of vegetable life, which they personified as a god (or bull) who annually died and resurrected again from the dead (or was burned like the Hittite *Sandan*, that was followed by a ceremony of his resurrection or awakening; or he 'spend one part of the year under ground and another part above ground', depending of the cult version). Thus,

¹⁸ From the "Mysteries of Mitra" by Franz Valery Marie Cumont, 1903, p. 67. In his time this was originally still Macedonia, the modern "Albania" was invented and created later, by the imperialistic intervention of the 20th century western powers.

in name and detail the rites varied from place to place, in substance they were the same.¹⁹

The supposed death and resurrection of this universal deity, a god of many names but of essentially one nature (today refurnished as *Jesus Christ*), was the same indistinguishable subject of the Mitraic cult. We know about furious attacks by Christian worshipers and of brutally destroyed Mitraic sanctuaries, which are to be found among early Christian temples. But, these very same elements of the Dionis, Osiris, Tammuz, Atis, and Mitra cults now manifest themselves in Christianity. For example, setting the date of Christ's birth at the time of the winter solstice. This constant tradition shows that the solstice worship remained generally unaffected for at least three millennia, thus confirming the Continuity Paradigm, regardless of the apparently 'different' forms or names of this "Solstice cult", i.e. the god of the Rising Sun (the ancient Macedonic god *Zee*).



Above: **Mitra's shrine (Lat. *Mithraeum*) under the basilica of St. Kliment (Clemente) in Rome**

To summarize - at first the 25 of December was celebrated as *Dionis'* birthday, then the same date it became the festival of Phrygian-Zoroastrian minor god *Mitra*, then it became the birthday of the chauvinistic Roman-adopted *Mitra* and of *Sol Invictus* (i.e. the Latin name of the later Roman empire for the sun-god *Dzee/Ilios*), and finally – it became and today is the birthday of *Jesus Christ*, the latest oriental avatar of the very same Macedonic/Hittite/Phrygian solstice worship tradition. And there is absolutely no other apparent reason to believe that the *Jesus Christ* was really born on 25th of December. In order to celebrate the solstice rebirth of the morning celestial light, and of the sun and

¹⁹ Similar customs prevailed across the Macedonian Peninsula and many parts of Southwestern Asia. Fertility rites and practices were clearly regarded as a solemn religious duty performed in the service of the Great Mother Goddess of the Earth, and her consort, the Sky Creator God, whose names varied from place to place, while their type remained constant.

reenacting of the cycle of life, the 25th of December remained the very same fulcrum point for gathering of the people as from at least 3000 years ago, and motivated them to keep alive the tradition through the *Dionisian Mysteries*, *Mitra's Mysteries*, *Sol Invictus Mysteries*, and last - the today *Jesus Christ Mysteries* (for example of 'immaculate conception'²⁰, etc.).



The Nativity of the God Dionysius, Museum of Naples.

The Dionisiac-Mitraic worship of antiquity, which symbolized the passage of the sun into Taurus by the figure of a sacred bull slain by a man, wasn't the last survival of a faith that had once penetrated so deeply into the minds of the people. This perpetuated rite persisted under different names/symbols for thousands of years, transmitted in different sanctuaries and temples of the prehistoric, ancient, medieval and modern world. We find him from the immemorial times, as described in the Orphic hymn:

*“Haste, blest Dionis, of the thunderbolt
Engendered, Bassarus or Bacchus called,
Bull-visaged, king of many names and powers.”*

Its traces today are still stubbornly present in the Macedonian traditions. Although the rite of slaying the sacred bull/calf is abandoned in today modern religions and society, even in Macedonia, the memory of it is still well preserved until today, as for example within the popular song “Kolede” sang in modern Macedonia, but now as a “carol song” under Christmas.²¹ Amazingly for the 21st century, this innocent-looking ritual song discovers the story of the calf that begs for mercy when it's about to be slain. And weirdly enough, even if it narrates about the animal sacrifice to the gods - it was adopted and camouflaged as a “carol song” by the very institution that is thought as one that eliminated all the pagan traditions from religion - the church.

Etymologically looking, the Indo-European common Macedonic proverb “*Mi-trae*” means: /mi-/ – ‘bind to me, of mine’, and /-trae/ – ‘resistant, long-lasting’²²; hence Sanskrit ‘*Mitram*’ - “covenant, contract, oath”, the protection of which is Mitra's par excellence role in both the 1380 BCE Hittite-Mitanni peace treaty and the Rigveda. Most direct analogy of this archaism is to be found in the modern Macedonian verb expression “*mi-trae*” - ‘lasts-to-me’ in plain Macedonian, and precisely defines a process, activity, or state of things that is safeguarded for a specified period of time. Accordingly, in post-Vedic India, “*Mitra*” became the ‘guardian of friendships’, and the noun *mitra* came to be understood as “*friend*”, one of the aspects of bonding and alliance. In most IE languages, the word ‘*mitr*’ means friend; hence the Old Macedonic personal name ‘*Mitre*’ and

²⁰ The feast commemorating the ‘Immaculate Conception’ on December 8; the doctrine that God preserved the Virgin Mary from the taint of original sin from the moment she was conceived; it was ‘invented’ and adopted as a “dogma of the Roman Catholic Church” in 1854.

²¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6smq-0tZtio>

²² Still with the same unaltered meaning as verb “*Trae*” - ‘keeps/lasts/resists’ and as noun “*Trajno*” - ‘enduring’ in plain Macedonian.

corrupted Russian form ‘*Mitya*’ and/or “*D’mityr*”; also the Old Macedonic pronoun ‘*Miya*’ - we, and the plural suffix “-*mina*”,²³ ‘*Mihr*’ in Pahlavi, ‘*Mehr*’ in modern Persian, and ‘*Mher*’ in Armenian; as well as Latin noun “*military*”, from ‘*Miles, milite*’ - soldier, etc. Thus the Indo-Hittite god of the contract, Mitra, is heavily masculinized form of the neuter term *mitra*’*m/mitrae(m)* - ‘lasting/contract’.

Furthermore, it was also because of the important status of the Macedonic sun god *Dzee* (Latin *Sol Invictus*) that the Mysteries of Mitra became one of the most popular religions of the civil and military officials of the Roman Empire in the 3rd century AD. *Sol Invictus* rose at the same time from a low-ranking deity in the Roman pantheon to become the special protector of the empire.



Above: fragment of a sepulchral slab with the Alexander-styled *Sol Invictus*

By being exclusively male cult Mitra was directly and almost exclusively related to the Roman military classes. Lets not forget - the woman in Roman society was only one grade above from being a common slave, without almost no rights out of the household. For that reason in Rome no woman was ever Caesar, senator, or anything more than simply a plain woman. So, Roman variety of Mitra veneration was extremely chauvinistic by default, because it was a cult practiced only by the chosen, i.e. the male part of the population, namely the soldiers that could wage the wars. Mitraic Mysteries became an inseparable part of the military duty of all the men who were directly involved in defending Roman Empire, and by force of the things had the well-being of Rome at heart. Thus, the chauvinistic male participation in the Mysteries of Mitra became a collective medium of emphasizing one's (military)

²³ For example: “*petmina* (5-*mina*)”- five (of them), “*osummina* (8-*mina*)”- eight (of them), “*devetmina* (9-*mina*)”- nine (of them), etc. also Sanskrit ‘*Melah*’- assembly; thus Macedonic ‘*komes*’- (the inhabitants of) village, congregation; and ‘*comites*’- Latin for ‘*komes*’. See <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/comes#Latin>

loyalty to the Roman empire. Mitra's accentuated attributes as 'the protector of treaties' only helped to secure his preferential role among the Roman legionaries and other men.

In similar fashion the veneration of Jesus Christ became a patriotic duty for the loyal Romans in the 4th century. But, with one incomparable and crucial difference - it included also the female part of the population as well. In that way, by officially and forcibly becoming the state religion, Christianity accidentally became also the first feeble step toward the reestablishing of the basic human rights, female emancipation, and gender equality in the extremely inhuman Roman slavery society.

The Mysteries of Mitra most important aspect and legacy is its rejection of the theism and the doctrine polemics (alike in the Christianity) in the name of higher principles, and not by an *a priori* animosity toward religion and to the concepts of supernatural authority and revelation. To the faith Mitra opposes experience; to devotion, heroic and ascetical action; to the God of theism - the ideal of liberation and enlightenment...

Mitraic mysteries came from the very heart of the traditional Macedonic civilization values - a cosmopolitan world characterized by self-affirmation, light, greatness, regal spirituality and spiritual regality. A values once achieved, by that world most famous Macedonian, Alexander the Great. In (this) his path there was no room for escapism; or asceticism; or renunciation and contemplative abstraction. Alexander's and Mitra's path is one of action, of solar power and fervent spirituality, which is opposed to both dull and dreamy Oriental Universalism, and Christian sentimentalism and moralism. Mitra was the symbol of those who proceed along this path. And, it is said that only a "man" could proceed along this path; any woman would've be consumed by that immense "Taurean strength".



The evidence, and some of the inferences drawn from Mitraic mysteries, are as follows:

Plutarch (late 1st century AD), in *Life of Pompey* 24, states that the Cilician pirates who were vanquished by Pompey in the mid 60's BCE "*celebrated certain secret rites of initiation, of which those*

of *Mitra* have survived up to now” (or “as far as here,” i.e. Rome). These ‘*initiations*’ were a prototype of the Roman mysteries of *Mitra*.

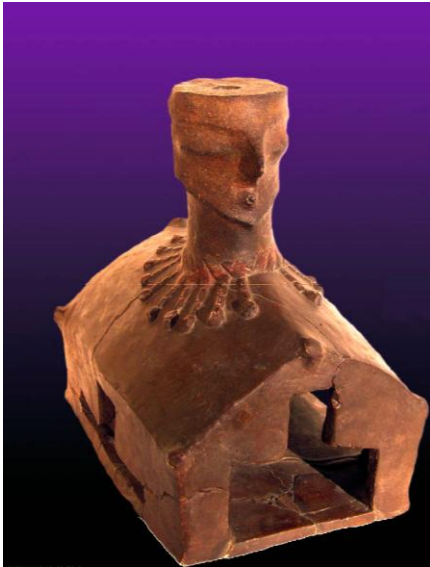
Moreover, a *Mithras* who was identified with the Sun god *Ilios* (Lat. *Helios*) was one of the deities of the syncretic Macedonic-Persian royal cult founded by Antiochus I, Macedonian king of the small but prosperous buffer kingdom of Commagene in the mid 1st century BCE.

Thus, as progressive dualistic god of light and night, truth and honor, *Mitra* (or Latinized *Mithra*, *Mithras*) was the central figure of the cult of Mysteries of *Mitra*, that was originally from the Middle East. Born probably in the Hittite Empire in the second millennium BCE, it continues as a minor provincial deity in Asia Minor region of Phrygia. He was further associated with merchants and as protector of the warriors, especially after the Macedonian conquest of Alexander the Great in the 4th century BCE, and finally by Roman legions as of the 1st to 4th century AD. Indeed, the largest quantity of evidence for Mithraic worship initially comes from the eastern provinces of the Roman empire, particularly from the provinces south of the Danube River frontier. In AD 62, some vexillations of the *Leggio V Macedonica* fought under Lucius Caesennius Paetus against the Parthian Empire in Armenia. After the defeat of the Battle of Rhandaia, the whole *V Macedonica* legion, together with *III Gallica*, *VI Ferrata*, and *X Fretensis* under the command of Gnaeus Domitius Corbulo, were sent to the east to fight in the victorious war against the Parthians. The *V Macedonica* was probably still in the east when the Great Jewish revolt in the province of Judea began in AD 66. It is attested that the soldiers from the Roman legion *XV Apollinaris* stationed at Carnuntum (Pannonia Superior) in the 1st century AD were called as reinforcements to the east in AD 63, in order to fight the Parthian invasion and further to help the suppression of the Jewish revolt in AD 66-70. It was noted that the members of this legion made Mithraic dedications back in Carnuntum after their return from these campaigns, possibly as early as 71 or 72 AD. It was especially powerful in the two principal places of this double province, in Aquincum and in Carnuntum; and in both of these cities the causes of its greatness are easily discovered. The first-named city, where in the 3rd century the Mysteries of *Mitra* were celebrated in at least five temples scattered over its entire area, were the headquarters of the *Leggio II Adjutrix*, which had been formed in the year AD 70 by Vespasian from sailors of the fleet stationed at Ravenna. Among the freedmen thus admitted into the regular army, the proportion of Orientals was considerable, and it is probable that from the very beginning Mithraic Mysteries counted a number of oriental adepts in this irregular legion. That’s why the Roman *Mitra* was also a savior, and a liberator as well: that is one reason he wears the red felt headdress of a Phrygian shepherd. It became the Roman sign of a slave who has been manumitted, set free.²⁴

It was at this period that *Mitra* emerged from the partial obscurity as lesser god, in which he had hitherto lived, to gradually become one of the favorite gods of the Roman aristocracy and the imperial court. We have seen him arrive from the Orient, a despised deity of the deported or emigrant Asiatics, and glorious but defeated Macedonians. The most ancient inscriptions are eloquent evidence of the truth of this assertion, for they emanated without exception from slaves or freedmen, from soldiers active or retired.

And, as it became worshiped and very popular among the Roman legionaries, *Mitra* cult from the Macedonian Peninsula spread further with them, across the whole Roman empire. But, as a consequence of its exclusive male worshipers it remained explicitly a male-practiced cult. And after all it wasn’t the first of the Great Mysteries adopted by the Romans. The worship of the Macedonian and Phrygian Mother of the Gods was cult adopted by the Romans in 204 BCE.

²⁴ The very same benchmark of undisputed freedom and pride worn previously by Macedonians in the form of military helmet, survived as a symbol of freedom until the French Revolution.

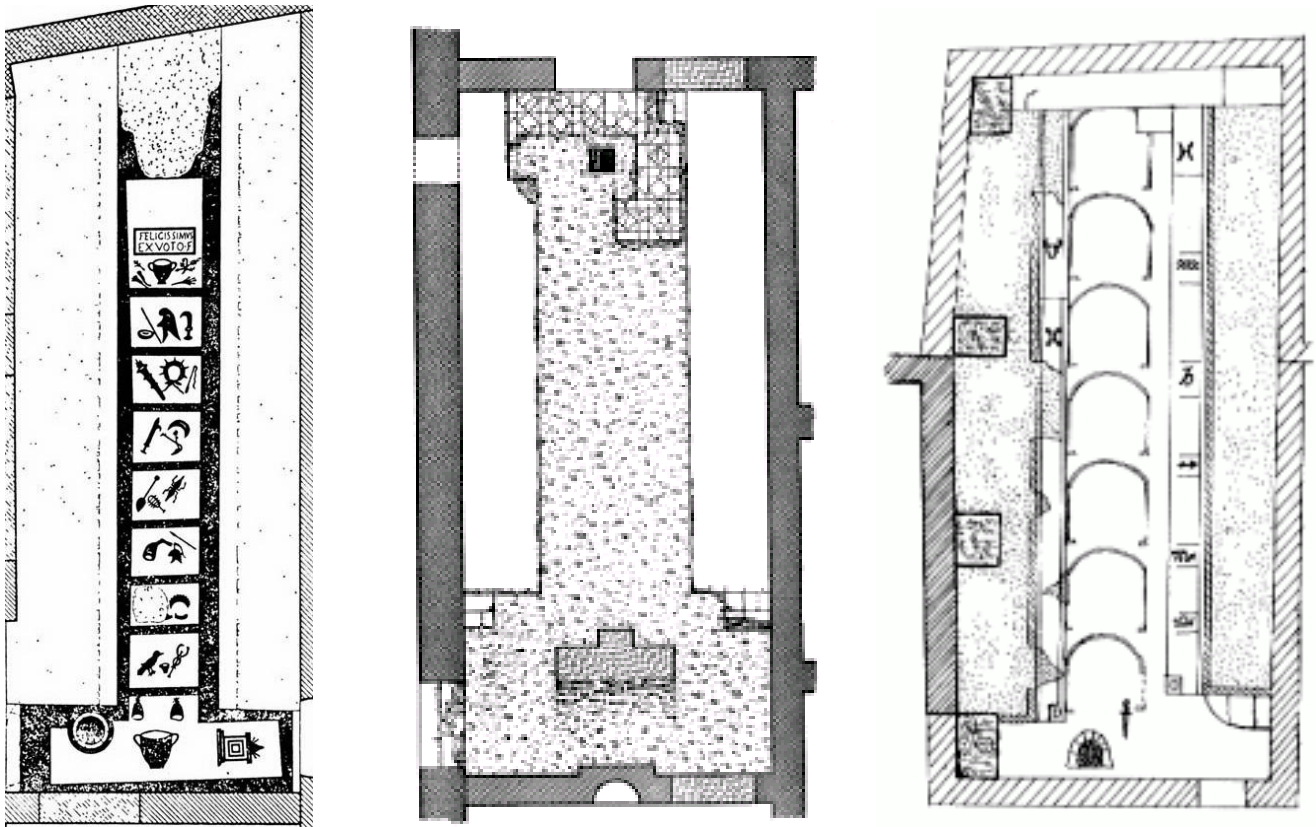


Above: altars of the Great Mother Goddess of the Home from the villages of Porodin near Bitola and Govrlevo near Skopje. 7th-6th millennium BCE, Republic of Macedonia. Her worship as the 'Magna Mater of Pessinus' was first rendered at Rome as late as 204 BCE

The shrines of Mitra, *Mitraeums*, were always in a underground caves, thought by some scholars to symbolize a model of a cosmos, featuring a relief of Mitra killing the bull. Indirectly discovering the hidden attributes of this chauvinistic cult, the underground "tauroctony" appears in the same format everywhere, with minor variations. The sacrifice of the sacred bull/calf deep in the underground cave, underlines the dualistic nature of the Mitraic cult. The sacred bull was in its nature only one manifestation (phallus) of a multitude-form solar deity, a symbol of the sky and heavens, the supreme creator that brought the light and life, which through its sacrifice 'ejaculates' its seed (blood) of life; while the underground cave (uterus), where Mitra is born from a stone, symbolized the interior of the mother earth, a womb which is about to be fertilized by the very sacrifice of the celestial bull deep inside her.²⁵ In the ancient traditions the death was also the symbol of the rebirth, as the sexual culmination is often compared with the "small death." This symbolic sexual "penetration" of the celestial fertile bull/phallus deep into the underground womb of the mother earth can be deduced without any doubt from the Phallus-like shape of the *Mitraeums*, on the end of which the altar represented the 'glans' of these penis-shaped structures, where the "celestial sperm" was ejaculated in the form of the bull's blood. It is not hard to imagine the collective masturbation of the present mail adepts of the cult, and the moment of ecstatic climax at the end of this underground celestial fecundation ritual.

²⁵ It is worth noting that most of the found *Mithraeums* have room for only 30 to 40 members, and only a few are so large that a full-grown bull could actually be sacrificed inside. It was probably a more practical and smaller calf being slayed instead in Mitra's shrines of worship. Precisely the same calf ("Tele" in plain Macedonian) that is still sang in Macedonian *Kolede* ("Slay-day") song, but today transformed into Xmas carol song:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6smq-0tZtio>



Above: more than obvious Phallus-like shape of the underground cave Mitraeums

Moreover, in the famous Ostia' Mitraeum in Italy (the one on the far left above), where the symbolic “ejaculation” of the sacrificial seed (i.e. bull’s blood was performed (and most probably the real sperm ejaculation of the adepts and *Paters*, which was mixed with the “celestial seed” of the slain bull). In support of this assumption there’s a properly-related inscription in Latin: “FELICISSIMUS²⁶ EXVOTO” - ‘maximum-felicity emptying’, with a depicted mosaic urn-vessel where the actual vessel served for the ejection of the spilled blood/semen.

²⁶ Latin superlative form; from the superlative adverb “*Maximus*”.



This was the Mitraic most potent hidden symbolism, and the actual “aphrodisiac” buildup for the male libido of every army, Roman comprised. As Mithraism typically expressed itself in and through the medium of the visual arts, a series of visual symbols had much greater effect than a sequence of words. At any rate Tauroctony wasn’t a Roman nor a new custom at all, as the bovine sacrifice has its roots in the prehistoric times, when killing a wild bull or a bison²⁷ meant the difference between the life and death, and the abundance of food by killing one was celebrated with animistic rituals and primitive forms of worship.

The oldest recorded evidence of this universal bull sacrificial rites in history pertains to be the Mesopotamian imagery, depicting the myth of Gilgamesh killing the celestial bull sent by Ishtar; and consequently other images of a bull being stabbed in the neck. Further followed the oxen sacrifice to the Persian god *Baal*; Egyptian sacred bull Apis/Serapis; then the mythological Irakle (Latinized *Hercules*) that kills the Minoan White Bull on Crete; the Cretan ‘*Tauromachia*’ and ‘*Taurokatapsia*’; the sacrifice of cow in the Abrahams Covenant; the myth of Teseus and the Minotaur; and already mentioned above testimony of the Macedonian king Dropion (250-230 BCE), who was noted by Pausanias when he gifted in Delphi a trophy of the famous Paionian bison, which were still a hunting prey in the Macedonian Peninsula in the 3rd century BCE - all of which performed a sacrifice rite involving a bovine animal. And back then this ritual also represented the “cleansing from death” - a necessary and desirable belief for the military profession of that time.

²⁷ Genus *Bison*, family *Bovidae*; *Bovidae Bonasus* of European forests (also called ‘*Wisent*’).



Above: **Mithraic-like image of bull sacrifice from the 2nd millennium BCE Knossos, and the sacrifice on the altar of Baal**

Below: **Irakle (Lat. *Hercules*) fighting the white Cretan bull**



Thus, the heroic triumph of the chthonic god Mitra over the epic force of nature and its elements, represented by the bull, was absolute. This was one of the last mythological versions of the prehistoric caveman struggle for survival, that used to hide himself deep in the caves in front of the dreadful cosmogonic forces of nature. But, at the end, the man had the upper hand and its final victory, and countless millenniums of incessant human struggle with this elemental or celestial bull, and other real and mythological creatures was over. By utterly defeating it, over countless millennia man managed to transform this once untameable and powerful wild beast into irreparably dull and humiliated livestock, reduced to a sacrificial item and helpless product for domestic food supply. And, as elsewhere, in the 1st century AD the European wild bulls and bison in the nature were practically extinct, thus Romans and others improvised the rite of Tauroctony with the domestic cattle.



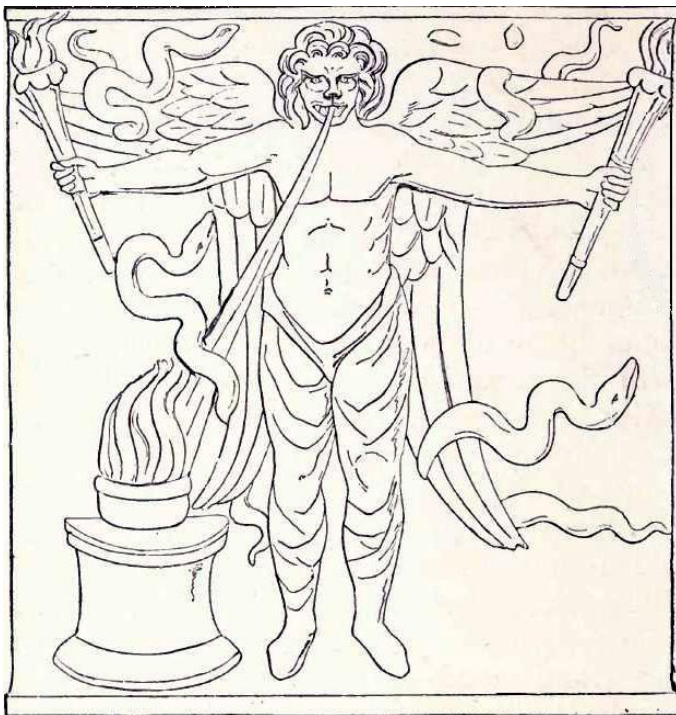
Above: the cavern, into which Mithras has carried the bull, after having hunted it, ridden it, and overwhelmed its strength

The rest of the overall imagery of Misteries of Mitra is pretty much known. Outside of the Mitraic cavern in which he was born, is the Macedonic sun god *Dzee* (Lat. *Sol Invictus* - the invincible sun),

with his flaming crown, often driving a quadriga. A ray of light reaches down from the sun to touch Mitra. On the top right is the Macedonic Moon-goddess *Zee* (Lat. *Luna*), with her crescent moon, who is depicted driving a chariot.²⁸ Among other standard themes that appear in the Mithraic iconography are the Zodiac signs, the Mitra's Phrygian dress and hat, then the Phrygian demigod *Silenus* (Lat. *Silvanus*; i.e. the Macedonic *Silen*, a woodland deity later also identified with the Latin *Pan*, and much later medieval cattle-god *Veles*), who appears as a mysterious bearded figure with the leaves of a tree above; on one Mithraic relief is depiction of him fighting with Eros.

Near Mitra usually appear two smaller figures, *Cautes* and *Cautopates*, dressed like himself in Phrygian clothes and bearing torches - one with an elevated torch, the other with a lowered torch. For these two some clue and an explanatory correspondence can be found in the well known "as above so below" principle, or far east Yin and Yang; and within the Orthodox church ritual of lighting-up the candles on the entrance for the closest family or friends: for the living ones above on the elevated burning platform, and for the deceased below, on the ground level burning platform.

And there's also a mysterious lion-headed and four-winged figure, entwined by serpents, found in some reliefs and called the *Aion* (also *Æon*, *Autozoon* or *Zervan Akarana*), thought to represent the boundless time. The *Aion* therefore typified the power of all things and of all gods. The *Aion* was Lord of the whole Celestial Sphere, and of the Four Great Elements. The serpent symbolized earth; the head of it entering the mouth is paralleled by a number of monuments on which the serpent drinks from a crater or water vessel; the wings symbolize air; and the lion-head with its shaggy mane typifies fire and light.



Above: the four-winged "Roman" *Aion* from the Mithraic shrine relief (on the left) appears to be our old friend *Ellel* (on the right) from the 2nd millennium BCE Hittite pantheon, which also appears in many different versions within other pre-Roman mythologies, like the Macedonic *Illion* (it appears even as a 4-winged female deity)

²⁸ The syllabic names of primordial Macedonic gods are clearly onomatopoeic, thus "*Dze*"(the sun) means 'all seeing' and/or 'to peek', and "*Zee*"(the moon) means 'starring' in plain Macedonian.

Unfortunately, no ancient authority tells us precisely why, for example, the Mitraic Tauroctony regularly includes a dog, a snake, a scorpion, a raven, and other more or less present animals. Through the wealth of explicit astronomical symbolism on the monuments reference is made to the visible heavens by deploying astronomical symbols in a less obvious, less conventional form as elements in what appears superficially to be an episode in a story. Mitra slays a bull, and around these two are grouped a dog, a snake, a scorpion, a raven, a pair of twins, and not infrequently a cup and a lion; the bull's tail is metamorphosed into an ear (or ears) of wheat. In the heavens of 1st century AD we find, within a band extending along and below the Zodiac from Taurus to Scorpius, constellations imagined in ancient astrology as a Bull (Taurus), Two Dogs (Canis Major and Minor), a Snake (Hydra/Drako/Serpens), a Scorpion (Scorpius), a Raven (Corvus), a Pair of Twins (Gemini), a Cup (Crater), a Lion (Leo), and finally a star called the 'Wheat Ear' (Spica i.e. Alpha Virginis).²⁹ The Zodiacal system had a special meaning because the Taurus constellation in the night sky is on the opposite side from the Scorpion constellation, confirming again the Dualistic nature of Mitra. Other signs meaning is not so clear, but they were connected with the time-calculating, sun-moon and celestial bodies cycles and influence.

However, the Mitra and the sacred bull remain the central subjects around which everything else is more or less present. The animal-totem of Bull is just another visible symbol of this multitude-form solar deity. The sacred bull is a symbol of cosmogony, of the high god, the paradise mountain, primordial reality and unity. He is also known as the symbol of *Uran(us)*³⁰, the heavenly supreme god-creator of the whole Indo-Mediterranean areal. The same bull-god that was celebrated in the prehistoric sanctuary of Çatal Hüyük (Asia Minor around 12,000 BCE), it was also the Minotaur slain by Teseus in Crete, and the sacred bull Apis/Serapis in Egypt, and again the bull that was slain by Mitra - it has the characteristic multitude nature: 3 heads or even 3 bodies united to one, and myriad of Orphic animals around him. Derivations and similar copies of this primordial patchwork-animistic totemism are to be found in other Mediterranean mythical beings as well, as the widespread *Totoiti* and famous *Chimera*. They all contain the very same vast myriad of beings or parts of beings attached to them.

²⁹ "The Religion of the Mithras Cult in the Roman Empire. Mysteries of the Unconquered Sun" by Roger Beck, 2006

³⁰ *Ur* - bull, a prehistoric PIE name of this animal, from the Macedonic onomatopoeic exclamation "*Ouruk*"- used when pushing, a great effort cry, and/or verb "*Urna/uriva*"- 'demolishes, brings down in violent manner' (see also Italian "*Urto*"- 'a crash'); from there comes the name of the extinct wild Eurasian ox known as *Aurochs** (Lat. *Bos Taurus Primigenitus*), which was the wild ancestor of domestic cattle and was called *Ur/Urus/Uroks/Auroks*, is also the root for later Latin *Uranus* (sky-god), *Ta-Ur-us*, etc. See also Sanskrit '*Ukṣán*' - bull.

* pronounced '*Uroks*' i.e. 'Ur-ox'; still used as a noun "*Urok*" meaning 'a curse, bad luck' and/or 'harsh lesson' in plain Macedonian, a distant remnant of the innate primordial fear of Neolithic people, denoting the ones bad luck if attacked by this dangerous wild beast in the prehistoric woods and steppes of Eurasia.



Above: *Totoiti*, a lion or bull-bodied mythical being of nightmares, adorned with snakes and scorpions, with several heads, snake tail, etc.

Below: the famous bronze *Chimera* from Arezzo, Italy. 5th-4th century BCE





Above: the Mitra's 1st-4th century sacrificial bull with similar animistic menagerie around him (snake, scorpion, lion, dog, raven, etc.)



Dionis was also the solar god of life in the form of the divine bull or calf '*Bougenæs*'. *Nimrod*, the mighty hunter, is seen attacking this same bull with a club in the sign of the constellation of Taurus. *Bel Merodach* as god of Babylon was also the divine bull with triple nature.



Above: ***Bel Merodach***, the divine bull-god of Babylon

The god “*became a lion in the lion's skin of Leo the lion, as he became a ram in Aries, or a bull in Taurus.*” This primordial animistic multiverse spreads across all the ancient world, and reappears through much later Macedonic (or so-called '*Slavic*') anthropomorphic mythology, in the myths of *Veles*, *Triglav*, *Svyatovid*, etc. These were the new medieval versions of Dionis, Mitra, Serapis, etc. ancient pagan gods, that reached and survived through Middle Ages, and were transmitted until our days via oral folk tradition. Despite the merciless oppression by the church institution, that with extreme cruelty persecuted all pagan beliefs - tacitly, behind her back, they survived until nowadays.



Above: **Bronze Age Carthaginian symbols of Baal (the sun and the crescent) and his consort the goddess Tanit - below them is the sacred celestial bull. Sardinia, 1700 BCE**

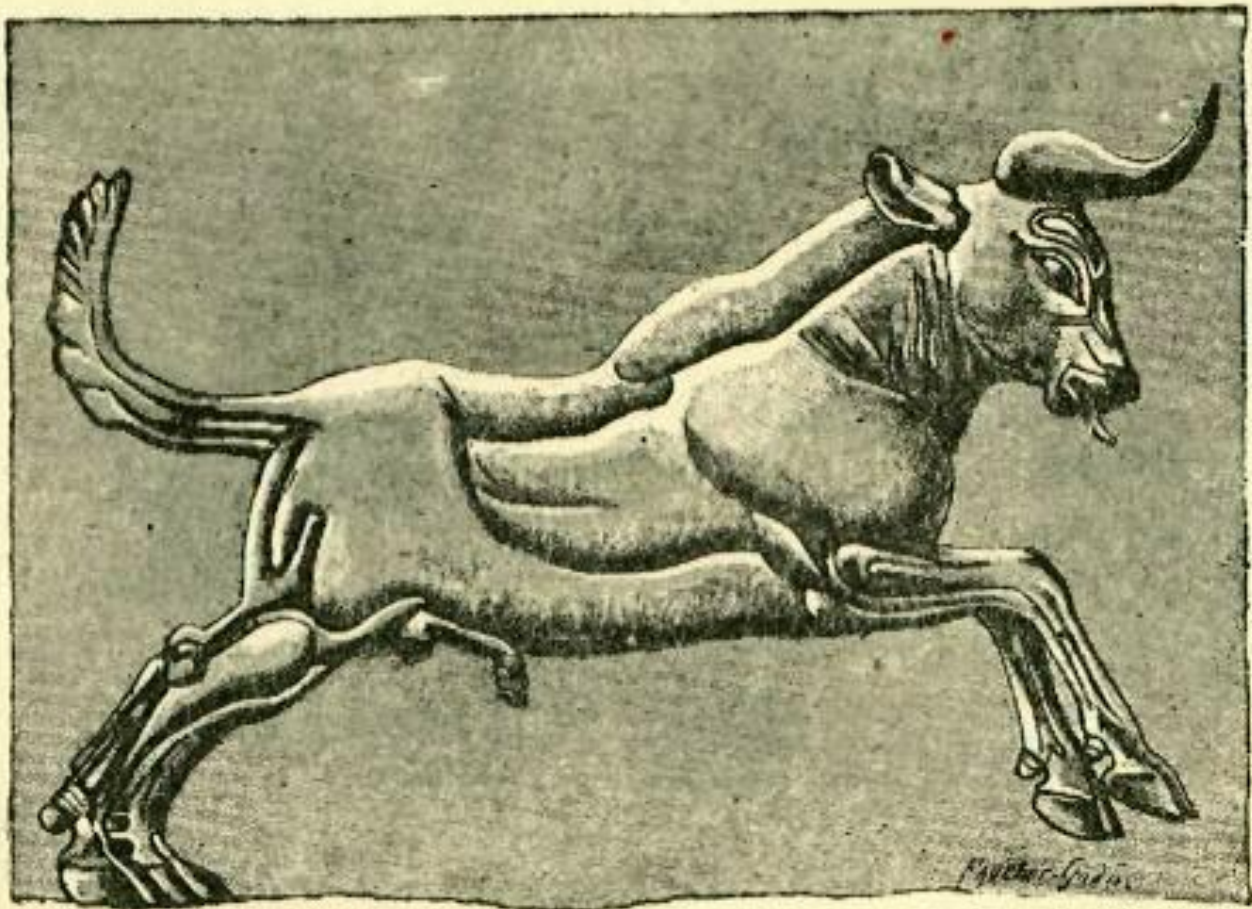
Nonetheless, despite the passing of the countless millenniums, the remembering of the prehistoric cult of bull-god is still preserved and celebrated in Macedonia within many pagan traditions, as for example on 24th of February, as “Mukovden”, the day of the bulls. Also, the Macedonic noun “*Urok*” - ‘a curse, bad luck’ and/or ‘a harsh lesson’ in plain Macedonian, is a surprisingly distant but undeniable prehistoric record of the one of innate primordial fears of the Neolithic Macedonians. Although the modern people of Macedonia have totally forgotten the original etymological meaning of it, the Neolithic root of the word ‘*urok*’ still denotes the reason for its comparative “*misfortune*” sense - the

Aurochs, and the someone's dreadful destiny that had a bad luck, or unfortunate 'lesson', to meet one. Namely, *Aurochs* or *Urox/Urus* was this extremely dangerous wild oxen (now extinct) from the Eurasian prehistoric woods and steppes.³¹ This ferocious and savage creature was twice bigger than today domestic bovine, and unimaginably more dangerous. Ancient sources report that it was still hunted in Paionia (Upper Macedonia, today R. of Macedonia), with specific hunting dragnet traps, in the 5th-4th century BCE.

But, unfortunately human progress and growth of population across Macedonian Peninsula, and generally on the whole European continent, contributed to the complete extinction of this legendary specie.



³¹ Aurochs [ouräks; ô,räks] noun (pl. same) i.e. *Ur-ox*, from PIE 'Ur' and Sanskrit 'Ukṣán'- bull, a large wild Eurasian ox that was the ancestor of domestic cattle. It was exterminated in the Middle Age, and reportedly the last one was killed in Poland in 1627. Also called *Urus*; Latin: *Bos Taurus* (formerly *primigenius*), family *Bovidae*.



THE URUS IN THE ACT OF CHARGING.²

Above: Sumerian relief depicting a wild Aurochs bull in the act of charging

Below: Minoan bull-head artifact, 2nd millennium BCE



Another distant remnant of this dreadful and succumbing prehistoric epoch of human history is preserved in Spain, through the embarrassing and grotesque imitation of the most primitive ceremonial bull-fighting, once practiced across the whole Mediterranean region. Namely - the famous “Corrida”, which is still practiced even today, in the 21st century. These modern-retarded “*Mitras*” still slay the bull, although the much smaller domestic one, and not for the gods, but in a shameful and unfair circus-ceremonial in front of the cheering public and tourists...

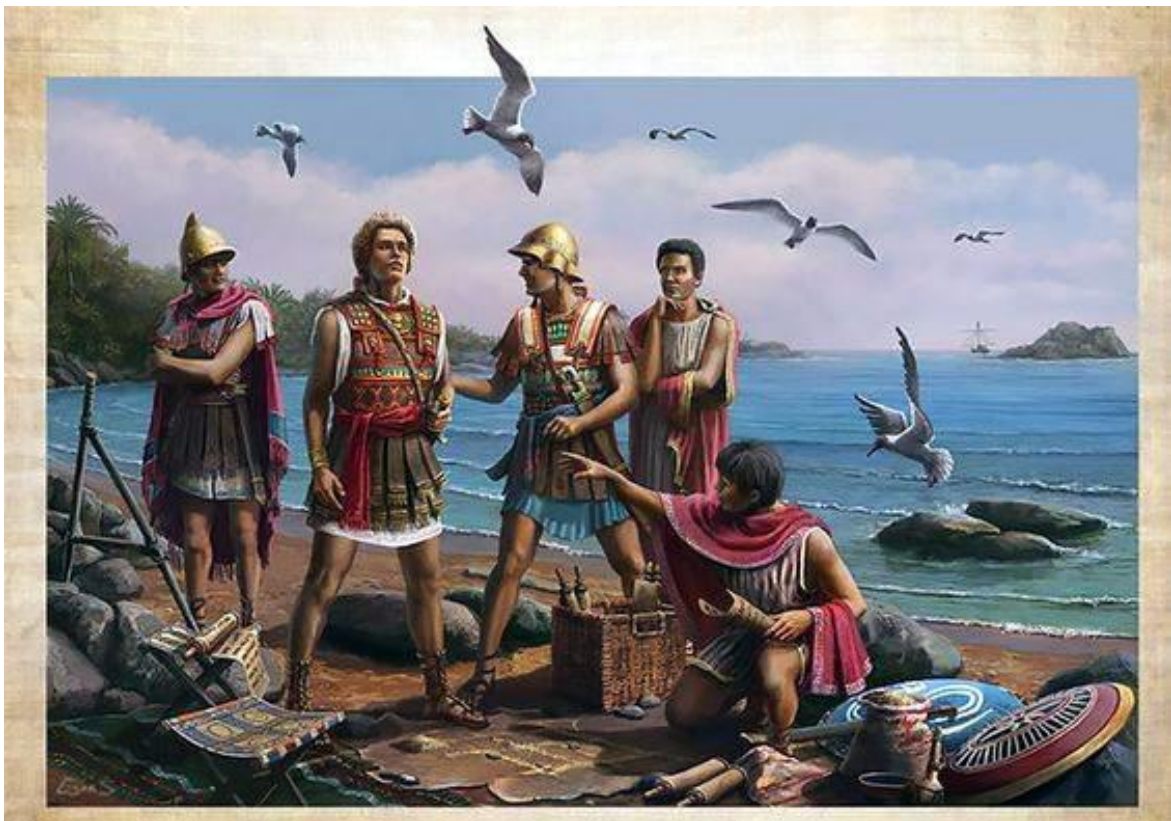


The secret aspects of Mitra's Cult rites and attributes

It is to be remarked that Simon, whom the late antiquity church fathers regarded as the earliest Gnostic heretic in the Christendom, was surnamed the *Magian*, and that The Great Announcement, which was the principal document of the Simonian Tradition, is filled with *Magianism* doctrine. Moreover the names of the Aeons in a number of Christianized Gnostic systems, are those of ethical abstractions, precisely as are the names of the *Amshaspands* in the Zoroastrian Avesta. And not only are there distinct traces of this Mitraic influence in some of the Christian Gnostic documents preserved to us, as for instance in the system underlying the Coptic Gnostic works contained in the Askew and Bruce Codices; but also we have many indications of a large literature derived from the doctrines of Zoroaster, and his Mazdayasnian successors, and directly attributed to him by the ancient writers. This literature was in circulation among certain Christian Gnostic fractions, and is also directly referred to by Porphyry³², in his "*Life of Plotinus*", when giving a list of the Gnostics against whom his master wrote one of the books of his famous *Enneads*.

Further, the beautiful Syriac "*Hymn of the Soul*," which is almost certainly the work of the Christian Gnostic Bardasian (Bardesanes), is thought by some to be based almost entirely on Magianism doctrines. It may, therefore, contain valuable material for unveiling part of the inner secrets of Magianism, and, therefore, help us better to understand the innermost doctrines of the Mithraism.

Again, the conquest of the east by Alexander III of Macedon renewed the old relations between Macedonia and all the lands into which Magianism had directly spread itself, and this contact would aid in the reinvigorated diffusion of the mystic knowledge of general Mazdaean/Mithraic tenets among the learned. As Cumont writes: "*it is certainly during the period of the moral and religious fermentation promoted by the Macedonian conquest, that Mithraism received its more or less definitive form*".



³² Porphyry (232–303), Neoplatonist philosopher; born Malchus. He was a student of Plotinus, whose works he edited after the latter's death.

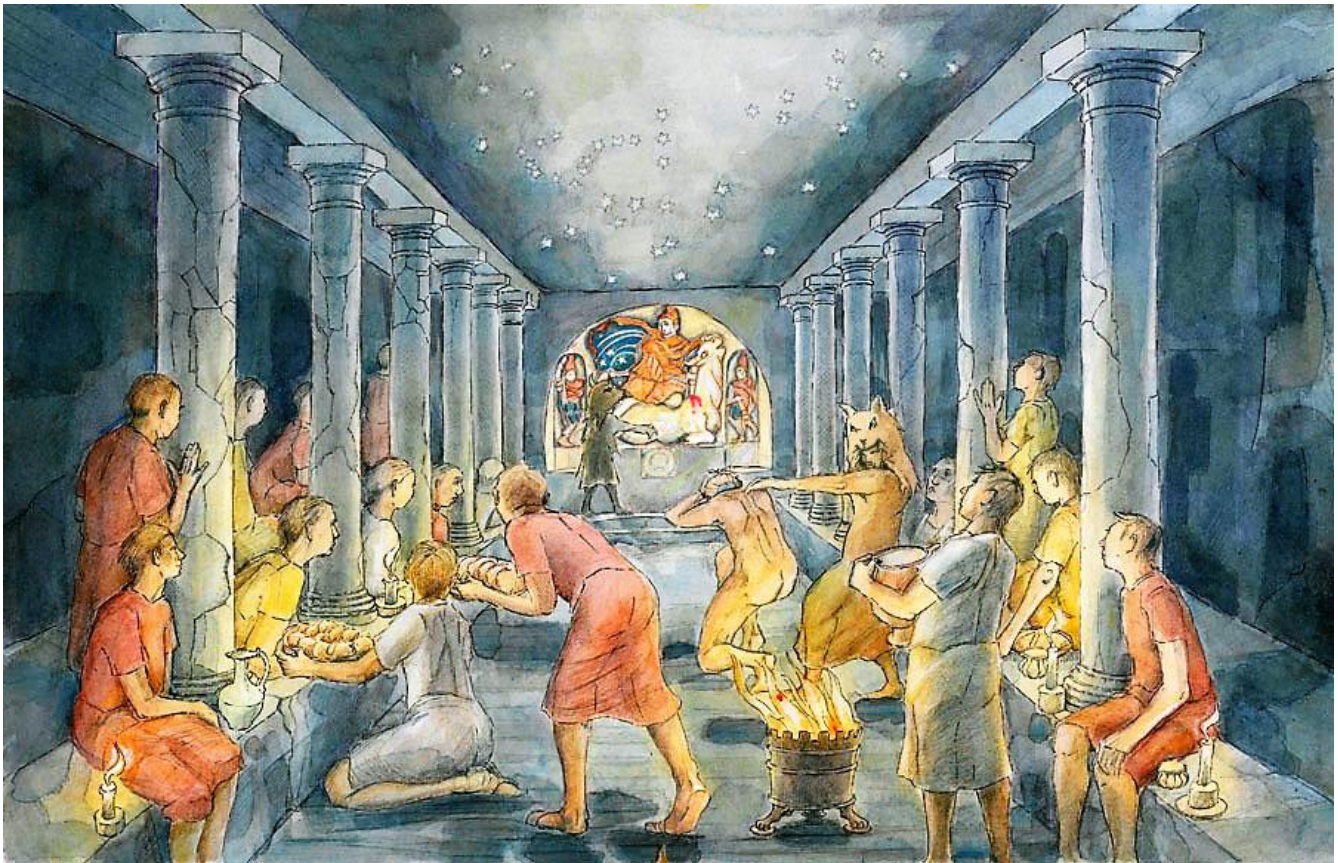
Moreover, when Alexandria became the intellectual centre of the Macedonian world, this interest in Magianism increased. All this shows that before the direct immigration of the Mithraic Mysteries (as known to us from the monuments) into the Roman empire, Magianism doctrines had already strongly influenced Macedonic religious thought during the Macedonian conquest in the 4th century BCE, and functioned as international medium for spreading the Mithraic Mysteries.

In the Magianism tradition Mitra is all-important deity; in Avestan theology, the latest development of the great Zoroastrian reformation, Mithra holds but a subordinate place among the *Yazatas*, or 'celestial deities', created by Ahura-Mazda. It is, however, quite evident both from the oldest Vaidic hymns and the oldest traditions preserved in the Avestan documents, that in the beginning the God whom the hymns call Mitra was one of the highest deities of a pantheon which was in prehistoric ages the common property of the forefathers of both the Macedonic and Persian Aryan races. Mitra's attributes are such as to place him on almost an equality with the Supreme God. In earliest days Mitra was God of Light, and was invoked together with Heaven (Zd. *Ahura*, Sk. *Varuna*). In the Avesta, Mitra is the Lord of the Heavenly Light, and therefore of all the heavenly lights. He is the Light, but not the Sun, the Sun is his chariot, or rather his charioteer. He is ever awake, ever on watch. He is neither sun nor moon nor stars; but with his thousand ears and his ten thousand eyes watches over the world. He hears all, sees all, no one can deceive him. And so by a natural transition he is the God of truth and loyalty, he is invoked in taking oaths, and guarantees all the contracts and punishes all who violate their bond and plighted word. And if he is Light, thus he is also the Heat and Life - the Vaidic Kama, the Orphic Eros, he fecundates all Nature. He gives abundance; he gives herds, he gives progeny and life. He pours forth the waters, and causes the plants to grow; he bestows on his worshippers health of body, wealth and well dowered off spring. In fact he is precisely what the worshippers of Osiris, and the followers of the Trismegistic tradition, and other Macedonic cults, called *Agathodaimon* or the 'Good Spirit', the benefactor. As protector of warriors, he received for his companion, *Verethraghna*, or Victory; as the defender of the truth, he was associated with the pious *Sraoša*, or Obedience to divine law; with *Rašnu* - Justice, with *Arštat* - Rectitude. As the tutelar genius of prosperity, he is invoked with *Aši-Vanuhi* - Riches, and with *Parefidi* - Abundance. And not only does he bestow material benefits, but he also gives the good things of the soul - peace of heart, wisdom, and glory; he makes concord among the brethren who worship him. As God of Light he is the relentless foe of the darkness and all its creatures all suffering, sterility, vice, and impurity. The supremacy of Mitra is also shown by the enormous number of names of kings, princes and nobles containing the name of the god, and this not only in later days, but also in the earliest times.

Mithraism also included an overlooked astronomical component that goes well beyond astrology, iconography or mythology. Majority of Mitra reliefs in stone or clay include the Zodiac as well. And it was realized that many of the Mithraeums are oriented toward the rise of the three brightest stars of constellations represented in the Mithraic bull-slaying (tauroctonos) reliefs: Aldebaran (i.e. Alpha Taurii, the bull's eye of the Taurus constellation), Antares (Alpha Scorpii from the Scorpius constellation), and Sirius (Alpha Canis Major). Every 19 years the mithraeum at Dura-Europos in Syria is oriented to the midwinter Full Moon rise at the minor lunar standstill, just as a mithraeum on Hadrian's Wall is oriented to the Full Moon rise marking the death of Deified Hadrian.

Mithraic tradition, in spite of its absorption and adoption of all these different and/or foreign elements, clung tenaciously to its ancestral myths and rites and doctrines, as constituting the real esotericism of its cult within them alone, it claimed, was to be discovered the *secretum secretorum* of its mysteries. And unlike the other mystery religions of antiquity, that allowed participation to diverse persons regardless of ethnicity, age, gender and social status, the Roman-adopted Mysteries of Mitra wasn't a universal religion. It was restricted only to the men, and wasn't practiced in open beautiful temples made of marble, but in claustrophobic and rather tenebrous underground caves and tunnels. It wasn't just a cult, it was occult.

So, why this excentric and occult congruity? Because the Roman Mysteries of Mitra selfish sectarian and chauvinist aspects (already mentioned above) were determined by the exceptional popularity and acceptance of this former Dionisiac/Phrygian cult among the Roman soldiers, which without exception were all male. The Roman legionaries rapidly transformed Mysteries of Mitra into their preferred and most intimate religious communion, a worship that made them feel accepted among each other, being part of the “family of soldiers”. It was a “Mitraic fraternity” sealed by the secret Mitraic oaths and initiation rites, that were used as means for reinforcement of their tight companion-bondages, a relations of trust so much needed when confronting the enemy in battle. The solemn oaths given between the restricted circles of closest soldier-companions within this Men’s-club-like worship, added the excitement of complicity, and made the cult of Mysteries of Mitra to become so popular among the Roman legions, and consequently across the whole Roman empire. That’s one of the reasons why the Mitraeums weren’t large splendid temples crowded with people, but rather narrow intimate shrines that could’ve contain just small groups of male worshipers, who practiced occult blood-spilling rituals.



The secrets of the Mitraic Cult have been most strictly guarded by all the followers, and not even a single Christian church cleric or other wanderer has been able to discover their jealously guarded rites and doctrines. This strong complicity among the male practicants of the Mitraic initiation rites presumes rather intimate relations among the male Roman Mitra worshipers, and probable collective homosexual or mail-couples intercourses. Although, as for the rest about anything else of Mithraism, it is not explicitly confirmed by any reliable source. Nevertheless, in such a heavily conspirative-symbolic cult as Mithraism, the phallus-like shaped Mithraeums pour a series of suspicious questions, and in lack of other means for practicing closer male bonding, they appear to became some kind of first primitive gay night-clubs...

On the other hand, it is not surprising that the religion of Mitra have found so great favor with the soldiery - for the cult of victory was essentially a cult of warriors. Indeed, Mitra was a warrior and a god of warriors, he was not only general of the celestial militia in the good fight, but also protector of

all brave deeds and chivalrous adventures. Nevertheless, the only Mitraic ritual, known as ‘Mitraic Climax’, comes to us from an important quotation from the “*True Word*” of the philosopher Celsus, who composed his criticism of Christianity around AD 175:

“These things are symbolically set forth by the wisdom of the Persians and the initiation of Mitra which is practiced among them. In the latter there is a certain symbolic representation - the two circuits in the heaven, both the regular circuit and of that which is assigned to the irregular spheres, and the passage of the soul through them. This symbolic representation is as follows: ‘A ladder with seven gates, and at its top an eighth gate. The first of the gates is of lead, the second of tin, the third of copper, the fourth of iron, the fifth of alloy, the sixth silver, and the seventh of gold. The first they assign as Saturn’s, indicating by lead the slowness of the star; the second as that of Venus, setting in correspondence with her the brightness and softness of tin the third of Jupiter, for it has a copper basis and is hard; the fourth as Mercury’s, for both Mercury and iron are patient of work of every kind—the one transacts all business, the other is wrought with much labour; the fifth as that of Mars, for it is irregular from its mixture and variegated ; the sixth as the Moon’s, the silver one; and the seventh as the Sun’s, the golden - in imitation of their colors.”

This is the only description we have of the famous ‘Mitraic Climax’ or ‘Ladder’, and whatever may be the correct key to the alchemical or astrological secrets involved in it, it may be of interest to remark that this scheme was adopted as a means of theurgical yoga. Thus, unlike the other mystery religions that knew only the initiated and the uninitiated, in its deep chauvinist-conspiracy the Roman Mithraic cult has “evolved” further, and there was not just simply ‘an initiation’ anymore, but whole seven of them. The cult-relief from Konjic, that depicts only six persons, wearing animal masks of the grade holders, instigated some scholarly controversies. Also one of Porphyry’s texts gives some unusual names for Mitraic initiates unattested elsewhere - it speaks about ‘Eagles’ and ‘Hawks’, but evidently in connection with the highest Mitraic grade *Pater*. Nevertheless, all uncertainties were abolished by the floor mosaic in the Mitraeum of *Felicissimus* in Ostia, representing a ladder-like up the central aisle, each square depicting three symbols, two of the grade and one of the planet; inscriptions of the acclamatory sentences discovered in the St. Prisca Mitraeum in Rome mentioning the names of all grades, together with a planetary god under whose protection each grade belonged. Complicated ritual of initiation of Roman Misteries of Mitra tented to held the adepts in heavily submissive position, as the very first two stages suggest: “*corax*”, or ‘the battering ram’, and ‘*nymph*’ - a ‘beautiful maiden’, undoubtedly discover the hidden two different (sexual) positions of the newly initiated members, oral and “doggy style” respectively.

Mysteries of Mithras had three distinctive symbolic constructs, Tauroctony is one, the other two are the Mitraeum and the hierarchy of the seven grades. The all seven stages of initiation were as they follow:

1. *Corax* (‘crow’ or ‘battering ram’) - Symbols: Crow, beaker (the *Caduceus*, a symbol of Mercury) “*Nama* (“praise to us”)³³ to the Crows, under the protection of Mercury!” *Mystai*, i.e. the newly initiated, received new garments and new tasks in god's service. Zodiacal symbol and constellation of Gemini.

³³ “*Nama*” - ‘to us’ in plain Macedonian.



Left: **Caduceus, the symbol of initiated Corax**

2. *Nymphus* (bridegroom) or *Gryphus* – Symbols: lamp; a diadem and a now unrecognizable object are symbols of the goddess and planet Venus; “*Nama to the Bridegrooms, under the protection of Venus!*” i.e. Urania, the heavenly female. Zodiacal symbol and constellation of Taurus.

3. *Miles* (soldier) – Symbols: sling-bag, helmet, lance; “*Nama to the Soldiers, under the protection of Mars/Ares!*” Zodiacal symbol and constellation of Scorpius.

4. *Leones* (lion) – Symbols: the fire-shovel (the rattle, sistrum and thunderbolt refer to Jupiter); “*Nama to the Lions, under the protection of Jupiter/Zeus!*” Whoever possessed the fourth degree of initiation was called a *Lion*. During his initiation he received Jupiter's weapon, the thunderbolt, to be used in a kind of mystery drama to slay the Titans once again. Then the *mystai* were purified by having their hands washed with honey³⁴ before being awarded a lion's mask. The use of honey in the *Leontica* rite is corroborated by the engraved figure of a lion with a bee in its mouth. Zodiacal symbol and constellation of Sagittarius.

5. *Perses* (Persian ‘*The keeper of the fruits*’) - Symbols: akimakes, a Persian hooked dagger; (the crescent moon and stars refer to *Luna/Artemis*); “*Nama to the Persians, under the protection of the Moon!*” Ritual of purifying the tongue with honey. Zodiacal symbol and constellation of Cancer.

6. *Iliodromus* (sun-runner) - Symbols: torch, the rayed crown and whip (symbols of the sun); “*Nama to the Runners of the Sun, under the protection of the Sun!*” The second highest grade that a Mithras disciple could achieve was that of *Heliodromus*, the courier of the sun. The initiate thus became like the sun god, who had revealed to Mithras the right point in time for sacrificing the bull. Zodiacal symbol and constellation of Lion.

³⁴ “*The (Lion) initiates have used honey in many different symbolic ways owing to its being a same deduced from many powers, ‘and especially’ because it has both a purifying and preservative virtue, for by honey many things are preserved from decay, and with honey long open wounds are purified. Moreover it is sweet to taste, and collected from ‘flowers’ by bees who happen to be ox-born.*” Porphyry (C. XV)

7. *Pater* (father) - Symbols: Phrygian cap, libation bowl, the staff and sickle (last two symbols of Saturn); “*Nama to the Fathers, from East to West, under the protection of Saturn!*” Zodiacal symbol and constellation of Taurus.

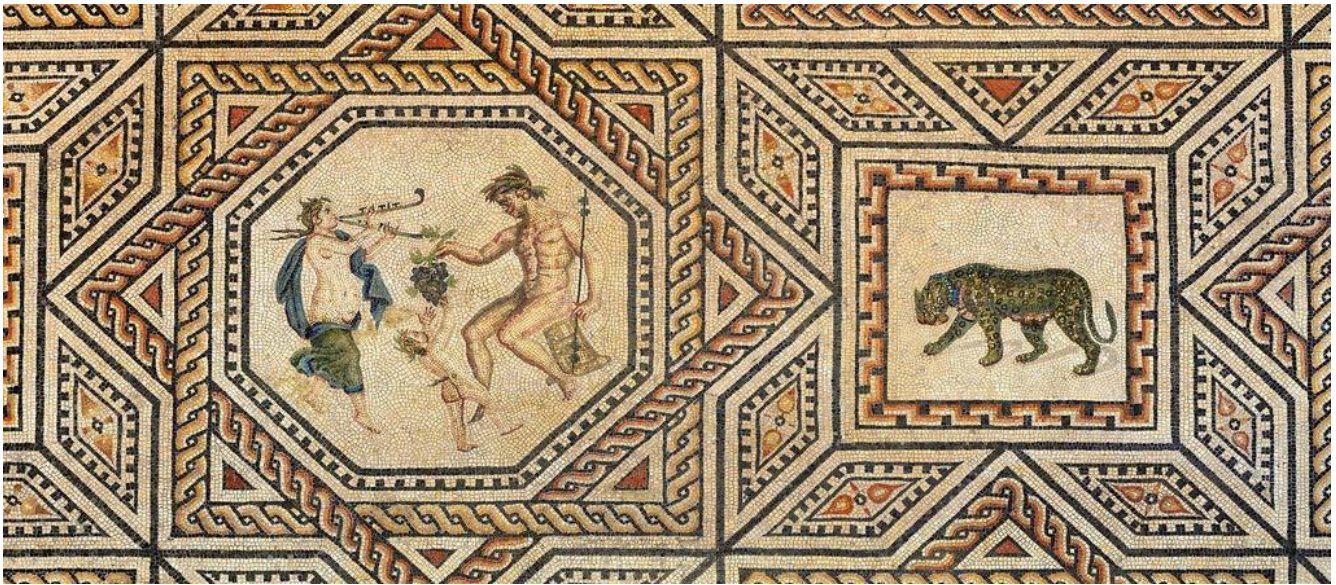


Mitra, meanwhile, was also considered to be identical with Saturn (Olympian equivalent of *Kronos*).³⁵ In the cult, the highest ranking member, the “*Pater*,” was thought of as his incarnations. These priests, like Mitra himself, wore the same Phrygian cap, just like Saturn did. And strangely, but also Cybele’s priests wore them too. This hat was also known as a “liberty cap,” worn as heavy duty “Phrygian” helmets by Macedonian soldiers, and later in Rome it was the symbol of free people or a slave that had been freed. Accordingly, all slaves wore them during the Dionisiac festival of Saturnalia at the winter solstice, because they were considered free during this time period. Indeed, all rules were considered null during these days, giving way to the old cosmopolitan Macedonic traditions of orgies, drinking, and mischief. This was done in honor of Dionis/Saturn and his Golden Age, when, it is said, nobody had to work. It is the reason why we all take vacation around Christmas, and why Santa Claus wears that funny red hat. It’s also why we get wildly drunk on New Years Eve, just on the like the “*Feast of fools*” celebrated in medieval Europe, when the social order would be upturned in honor of the “*Lord of Misrule*.” It’s why the Phrygian “liberty” cap became the symbol of the French Revolution, inspired by Freemasons, who, like the adepts of Mitra, gave no regard to social status within the boundaries of their lodges.

Now one may be wondering if there is any connection between the cults of Mitra and Cybele (*Kibela/Kubaba/Magna Mater*), since they are both featured and both connected to the figure of *Baphomet*. Despite many claims to the contrary by different scholars, there is undisputable link. Beside the fact that the both were originally Hittite/Macedonic/Phrygian mystery cults that were imported to Rome from the east, both featured bull sacrifices, and, the myths of both figures fit together in an important way that has been largely ignored until now.

³⁵ The youngest son of the mythical *Uranus* (Heaven), hence “*Ur/Tur*” (Lat. *Taurus*) - ‘the heavenly bull’, and *Gaia* (Earth), *Kronos* overthrew and castrated his father and then married his sister *Rhea*.

A further step was taken by the emperor Claudius, when he also incorporated the Macedonic/Phrygian worship of the sacred tree, and with it probably the orgiastic rites of Atis, the consort of Cybele, in the established religion of Rome. Then her spring festival of the New Year was introduced according to ancient Macedonian Calendar - on the 22-nd day of March a Pine-tree was cut in the woods and brought into the sanctuary of Cybele, where it was treated as a great divinity. The Macedonian Phrygians worshipped the Pine above other trees as clear symbol of Dionis. The cones of the stone-pine contain edible nut-like seeds, which have been used as food since antiquity, and are still eaten, for example, by the poorer classes in Rome. Moreover, a wine was brewed from these seeds, and this may partly account for the orgiastic nature of the rites of Cybele, which the ancients clearly linked to those of Dionis. Pinecones were also regarded as symbols of fertility.



On the second day of the festival, on 23 of March, was the main ceremony; and the 24th March was known as the “Day of Blood”, when in Dionisiac frenzy the Archpriest drew blood from his arms and presented it as an offering. Stirred by the wild barbaric music of rumbling drums, clashing cymbals, droning horns and flutes, the rest of the clergy whirled about in the dance with waggling heads and streaming hair, until, hypnotized of excitement and insensible to pain, they cut their bodies with knives or other sharp objects in order to spill their own blood on the altar and the sacred Pine-tree. At Rome, and probably elsewhere, the celebration took the form of a carnival. The new birth and the remission of sins by the shedding of bulls blood appear to have been carried out at the sanctuary of the Macedonic/Phrygian goddess on the Vatican Hill, at or near the spot where the great basilica of St. Peter's now stands.



Above: **Taurobolium, ritual bathing with the sacred blood of the bull, in order to consecrate the fertility**

To summarize as briefly as possible, Mitra was said to be born from a rock, which he ripped his way out of with a knife, just like Saturn or Kronos ripped his way out of the connected bodies of his mother and father. And just like Chronos, Mitra then became the new god of whatever was outside.



Left: **Mitra born from the rock**

Mitra reportedly hated women, which is why his cult only admitted men. When he wanted to have a son of his own, in accordance to his conspirative promiscuity he is said to have masturbated and spilled his seed on a rock, from which sprang the god *Orphos*. This is the cosmic egg. This is how he created a universe for himself to rule over.



Right: **the Orphic Egg from which the Universe was born**

Cybele, on the other hand, was said to actually be a rock herself, from which her son, who was later castrated, parthenogenically sprang. She was the next stage of the primordial Great Mother goddess of the Earth in its primitive state, of caverns, worshipped on the sources and mountain tops. She was

known as Empresses Kibela, founder of the City of 'Pillar' - *Stobi*,³⁶ in Upper Macedonia. Volkert Haas described this 'mountain mother': "*The belief of the great mountain queen was known in the Near East, as well in the whole Mediterranean and in areas of Eurasia. The mistress of the mountain is just a form of the Mother Goddess, who is manifesting herself in the throne realm of a mountain. The location of the mountain top as a throne for the goddess is of a latter development.*"³⁷ *First the mountain, the throne and the goddess were united in one. From the sky the Stormgod connect himself with the earth mother at the mountain. The mountain itself or the goddess sitting on the mountain forms the earth mother, who is receiving the rain god.*"

However, a further story tells that she was originally a hermaphrodite god on Mt. Olym in Asia Minor. The other gods were afraid of her freakishness, it was said, so they had her castrated and then threw her out, down to earth. Now just as Mitra hated women and natural procreation, Cybele had a similar attitude. Moreover the ancients used to call the priestesses of Mother Earth - *Bees*, in that they were initiates of the Terrene Goddess, and the Maid (Koré) herself *Bee-like*. They also called the Moon - *Bee*, as lady of regeneration, and especially because with the Magianism and Mitraism the Moon in exaltation is the Bull, and Bees are Ox-born, that is, souls coming into birth are Ox-born, and the God who steals the Bull (Mitra) occultly signifies regeneration.

Prudentius, a Roman Christian poet, writing in the 4th century, said: "*Both sexes are displeasing to Cybele's holiness, so he keeps a middle gender between the two.*" Notice he referred to Cybele as 'he.' We are dealing with the personalities of a hermaphrodite that has been separated, and from which our universe was made.

³⁶ *Stob, stolb, stub* – 'pillar, column' in plain Macedonian.

³⁷ as later Macedonic-Phrygian *Kibela/Cybele/Kubaba* in Asia Minor, and medieval *Kupalo* in central and eastern Europe.

Mitraic ritual of initiation

Mitraic ritual record has miraculously appeared from the chaos of the great Paris Magic Papyrus 574 (Supplement Macedonic de la Bibliotheque Nationale), the date of which is fixed with every probability as the earliest years of the 4th century AD. The original text of the ritual has, however, been plainly worked over by a Macedonian school of Ptolemaic Egypt magicians, who inserted most of the now unintelligible words and names (*ashma ovomata, nomina varvara, nomina arcana*), and vowel-combinations and permutations (*vores mysticæ*), of their theurgic language, which were known in old world as "words of power." The subject is naturally one of the most obscure that is known to scholarship, and so far no one has found any real key of it. The Mitra's heavenly "light" was in fact the light of the Word, but men could not comprehend, is rekindled in he who experiences his first spiritual birth. That, however, there was once a science of this "nature language," or "tongue of the gods," which subsequently passed into the superstition of a purely mechanical tradition, is highly probable; and one mean towards a recovery of the understanding of its nature is a study of the still living tradition of mantra-vidya, or the science of mantra, or mystic utterances and invocations, in India of to-day. The other is the recent decoding of the Old Macedonic script from the middle text on the Rosetta Stone on behalf of two Macedonian scholars, Tom Boševski and Aristotel Tentov.³⁸ But that's another theme...

The discovered papyrus which contained the Mitraic ritual was first practiced in Egypt around AD 100-150, and was used in the Misteries until AD 200. Here's a translation of the ritual:

I. [THE FATHER'S PRAYER.]

O Providence, O Fortune, bestow on me Thy Grace - imparting these the Misteries a Father only may hand on, and that, too, to a Son alone - his Immortality - [a Son] initiate, worthy of this our Craft, with which Sun Mitra, the Great God, commanded me to be endowed by His Archangel; so that I, Eagle [as I am, by mine own self] alone, may soar to Heaven, and contemplate all things.

II. THE INVOCATORY UTTERANCE (Logos).

1. *O Primal Origin of my origination; Thou Primal Substance of my substance; First Breath of breath, the breath that is in me; First Fire, God-given for the Blending of the blendings in me, [First Fire] of fire in me; First Water of [my] water. thewater in me; Primal Earth-essence of the earthy essence in me; Thou Perfect Body of me - N. N. son of N. N., son of N.N. (fem.) - fashioned by Honored Arm and Incorruptible Right Hand, in World that's lightless, yet radiant with Light, [in World] that's soulless, yet filled full of Soul!*

2. *If, verity, it may seem good to you, translate me, now held by my lower nature, unto the Generation that is free from Death; in order that, beyond the insistent Need that presses on me, I may have Vision of the Deathless Source, by virtue of the Deathless Spirit, by virtue of the Deathless Water, by virtue of the [Deathless] Solid, and [by virtue of] the [Deathless] Air; in order that I may become re-born in Mind; in order that I may become initiate, and that the Holy Breath may breathe in me; in order that I may admire the Holy Fire; that I may see the Deep of the [New] Dawn, the Water that doth cause [the Soul] to thrill; and that the, Life-bestowing Æther which surrounds [all things] may give me, Hearing.*

3. *For I am to behold to-day with Deathless Eyes - I, mortal, born of mortal womb, but*

³⁸ <http://rosetta-stone.feit.ukim.edu.mk>

[now] made better by the Might of Mighty Power, yea, by the Incorruptible Right Hand - [I am to see to-day] by virtue of the Deathless Spirit the Deathless Æon, the master of the Deadens of Fire - I with pure purities [now] Purified, the human soul-power of me subsisting for a little while in purity; which [power] I shall again receive transmitted unto me beyond the insistent Bitterness that presses on me, Necessity whose debts can never go unpaid - I, N. N., son of N. N. (fem.) - according to the Ordinance of God that naught can ever change.

4. For that it is beyond my reach that, born beneath the sway of Death, I should [unaided] soar into the Height, together with the golden sparklings of the Brilliancy that knows no Death.

5. Stay still, O nature doomed to Perish, [nature] of men subject to Death! And straightway let me pass beyond the Need implacable that presses on me; for that I am His Son; I breathe; I am!

III. [THE FIRST INSTRUCTION.]

1. Take from the [Sun-]rays breath, inhaling thrice [as deeply] as thou canst; and thou shalt see thyself being raised aloft, and soaring towards the Height, so that thou seem'st to be in midst of Air.

2. Thou shalt hear naught, nor man nor beast; nor shalt thou see aught of the sights upon the earth, in that same hour; but all things thou shalt see will be immortal.

3. For thou shalt see, in that same day and hour, the Disposition of the Gods - the Ruling Gods ascending heavenwards, the other ones descending. And through his Disk - the God's, my Father's - there shall be seen the Way-of-going of the Gods accessible to sight.

4. And in like fashion also [shall be seen] the Pipe, as it is called, whence comes the Wind in service [for the day]. For thou shalt see as though it were a Pipe depending from His Disk; and toward the regions Westward, as though it were an infinite East Wind. But if the other Wind, toward the regions of the East' should be in service, in the like fashion shalt thou see, toward the regions of that [side,] the converse of the sight.

5. And thou shalt see the Gods gazing intently on thee and bearing down upon thee. Then straightway lay thy dexter finger on thy lips and say:

IV. [THE FIRST UTTERANCE.]

Silence! Silence! Silence! The Symbol of the Living God beyond Decay. *Protect me, Silence! †!* Next "hiss" forth long: *Sss! Sss!* Then "puff" saying: *†!* And thereon shalt thou see the Gods gazing benignly on thee, and no longer bearing down upon thee, but proceeding on the proper order of their doings.

V. [THE SECOND INSTRUCTION.]

When, then, thou see'st the Upper Cosmos clean and clear, with no one of the Gods (or Angels) bearing down on thee, expect to hear a mighty thunder-clap so as to startle thee. Then say again:

THE [SECOND] UTTERANCE (LOGOS).

1. *O Silence! Silence! I am a Star, whose Course is as your Course, shining anew from out the depth †.* Upon thy saying this, straightway His disk will start expanding.

2. And after thou hast said the second utterance - to wit, twice *Silence* and the rest - "hiss" twice, and "puff" twice; and straightway shalt thou see a mighty host of stars, five-pointed, emerging from His Disk, and filling all the Air.

3. Then say again: *O Silence! Silence!* And when His Disk is opened [fully] out, thou shalt behold an infinite Encircling and Doors of Fire fast closed. Straightway set going

then the utterance that follows, closing thy eyes:

THE THIRD UTTERANCE (LOGOS).

1. *Hear me, give ear to me - N. N., son of N. N. (fem.) - O Lord, who with Thy Breath hast closed the Fiery Bars of Heaven; Twin-bodied; Ruler of the Fire; Creator of the Light; O Holder of the Keys; Inbreather of the Fire; Fire-hearted One, whose Breath gives Light; Thou who dost joy in Fire; Beauteous of Light; O Lord of Light, whose Body is of Fire; Light-giver [and] Fire-sower; Fire-loosener, whose Life is in the Light; Fire-whirler, who sett'st the Light in motion; Thou Thunder-rouser; O Thou Light-glory, Light-increaser; Controller of the Light Empyrean; O Thou Star-tamer!*

2. *Oh! Open unto me! For on account of this, the bitter and implacable Necessity that presses on me, I do invoke Thy Deathless Names, innate with Life, most worshipful, that have not yet descended unto mortal nature, nor have been made articulate by human tongue, or cry or tone of man: ëëö · öëëö · iöö · öë · ëëö · ëëö · öëëö · iöö · öëëë · öëë · ööë · ië · ëö · öö · öë · iëö · öë · ööë · iëööë · iëëö · eë · iö · öë · iöë · öëö · eoë · eoë · öië · öiëëö · oi · iii · ëöë · öuë · ëö · öëë · eöëia · aëaeëa · ëëëë · eeë · eeë · iëö · ëëö · öëëëö · ëëö · euö · öë · eiö · ëö · öë · öë · öë · ee · ooouiöë!*

3. Utter all these with Fire and Spirit once unto the end; and then begin again a second time, until thou hast completed [all] the Seven Immortal Gods of Cosmos. When thou hast uttered them, thunders and crashings shalt thou hear in the Surround, and feel thyself a-shake with every crash. Then once more utter *Silence!* [and] the utterance [following it].

4. Thereon open thy eyes; and thou shalt see the Doors thrown open, and the Cosmos of the Gods that is within the Doors; so that for joy and rapture of the sight thy Spirit runs to meet it, and soars up. Therefore, hold thyself steady, and, gazing steadily into thyself, draw breath from the Divine. When, then, thy Soul shall be restored, say:

VIII. [THE FOURTH UTTERANCE.]

1. *Draw nigh, O Lord!* Upon this utterance His Rays shall be turned on thee, and thou shalt be in midst of them.

2. When, then, thou hast done this, thou shalt behold a God, in flower of age, of fairest beauty, [and] with Locks of Flame, in a white Tunic and a scarlet Mantle, wearing a Crown of Fire. Straightway salute Him with the Salutation of the Fire:

IX. [THE FIFTH UTTERANCE.]

1. *Hail Lord! O Thou of mighty Power; O King of mighty Sway; Greatest of Gods; O Sun; Thou Lord of Heaven and Earth; O God of Gods! Strong is Thy Breath; strong is Thy Might! O Lord, if it seem good to Thee, make Thou announcement of me unto God Mosthigh, who hath begotten and created Thee!*

2. *For that a man - N.N., son of N.N. (fem.), born of the mortal womb of N.N. (fem.), and of spermatic ichor, yea, of this [ichor], which at Thy Hands to-day hath undergone the transmutation of re-birth -, one, from so many tens of thousands, transformed to immortality in this same hour, by God's good-pleasure, of God transcendent Good-, [a man, I say,] presumes to worship Thee, and supplicates with whatsoever power a mortal hath.*

3. Upon this utterance He shall come to the Pole, and thou shalt see Him moving round as on a path. Then gaze intently, and send forth a prolonged "bellowing," like to a horn-note, expelling the whole breath, with pressure on the ribs, and kiss the amulets, and say first to that upon the right:

X. [THE SIXTH UTTERANCE.]

Protect me! †! When thou hast uttered this. thou shalt behold the Doors thrown open, and, issuing from the Depth, Seven Virgins, in byssus-ropes, with serpent-faces. and golden sceptres in their hands. These are they who are the so-called Heaven's Fortunes (*Tychai*). When thou dost see these things, make salutation thus:

XI. [THE SEVENTH UTTERANCE.]

1. *Hail Heaven's Seven Fortunes, Virgins august and good, ye sacred ones who live and eat with †! Ye holiest Protectors of the Four Supports!*

Hail thou, the First, †!

Hail thou, the Second, †!

Hail thou, the Third, †!

Hail thou, the Fourth, †!

Hail thou, the Fifth, †!

Hail thou, the Sixth, †!

Hail thou, the Seventh, †!

2. There come forth others, too - Seven Gods, with faces of black bulls, in linen loincloths, with seven golden fillets on their heads. These are the so-called Heaven's Pole-lords. And in like fashion unto each of them thou must make salutation with his special name.

XII.

[THE EIGHTH UTTERANCE.]

1. *Hail Guardians of the Pivot, ye, sacred sturdy Youths, who all, at once, revolve the spinning Axis of Heaven's Circle, ye who let loose the thunder and the lightning, and earthquake-shocks and thunder-bolts upon the hosts of impious folk, but [who bestow] on me, who pious am and worshipper of God, good-health, and soundness of my frame in every Part, and Proper stretch of hearing and of sight, and calm, in the now Present good-hours of this day, O mighty Ruling Lords and Gods of me!*

Hail thou, the First, †!

Hail thou, the Second, †!

Hail thou, the Third, †!

Hail thou, the Fourth, †!

Hail thou, the Fifth, †!

Hail thou, the Sixth, †!

Hail thou, the Seventh, †!

2. Now when they [all] are present in their order, here and there, gaze in the Air intently, and thou shalt see lightnings down-flashing, and lights a-quiver, and the earth a-shake; and [then] a God descending, [a God] transcending vast, of radiant Presence, with golden Locks, in flower of age, [clad] in a Robe of brightness, with Crown of gold [upon His Head], and Garments [on His Legs], holding in His Right Hand the golden Shoulder of the Calf. This latter is the Bear that moves the Heaven[-dome], and changes its direction, now up now down, according to the hour. Then shalt thou see lightnings leap from His Eyes and from His Body stars.

3. Straightway send forth a "bellowing" prolonged, with belly-pressure, to start thy senses going all together-prolonged unto the very end, kissing again the amulets and saying:

XIII. [THE NINTH UTTERANCE.]

†, [O Lord] of me - N. N. - abide, with Me, within my Soul! Oh! leave me not! For † bids

thee [remain]. And gaze intently on the God, with "bellowing" prolonged, and thus salute Him:

[THE TENTH UTTERANCE.]

Hail Lord, Thou Master of the Water! Hail, Founder of the Earth! Hail, Prince of Breath! O Lord, being born again, I Pass away in being made Great, and, having been made Great, I die. Being born from out the state of birth-and-death that giveth birth to [mortal] lives, I now, set free, Pass to the state transcending birth, as Thou hast established it, according as Thou hast ordained and made, the Mystery.



The fading of Mitra's cult and its legacy

The Mysterics of Mitra most important aspect and legacy is its rejection of the theism and the doctrine polemics (alike in the Christianity) in the name of higher principles, but, not by an *a priori* animosity toward religion and to the concepts of supernatural authority and revelation. To the faith Mitra opposes experience; to devotion, heroic and ascetical action; to the God of theism - the ideal of liberation and enlightenment. The very same concepts and ideals are to be found in the Macedonic Bogomilism movement, born in medieval Macedonia of the 10th century. With only difference that the Mitra's heavenly Bull, as the symbol of the sky and life energy, as well as the animistic menagerie that surrounded him weren't present anymore, as the wild animals were already decimated if not extinct in the nature, and domestic bovines was now a simple property and not a symbol of higher spiritual values.

Mitraic mysteries spawned from the very heart of the ancient Macedonic civilization and cultural traditions - a cosmopolitan world characterized by self-affirmation, light, greatness, regal spirituality and spiritual regality. A values that were only once fully achieved, by that world most famous Macedonian, Alexander III the Great. Deeds that were tried and retried to be emulated so desperately by the later rulers, like the Roman emperors or western medieval kings and monarchs like Napoleon. In his path there was no room for escapism or asceticism, or renunciation and contemplative abstraction. Alexander's and Mitra's path is one of action, of celestial light and solar power, a fervent spirituality which is opposed to both dull and dreamy Oriental Universalism, and Christian sentimentalism and moralism. Thus, it is not by pure case that the physiognomy of (Roman) Mitra was equaled to that of Alexander - he was the "Sun King", '*Sol Invictus*' of his time. This is why he became so much venerated, glorified, and envied in the same time, and blasphemously transformed into worship that contained all the human virtues.



ALEXANDER OF MACEDON

Although it resisted in its original form much longer in the regions of Pontus and Commagene, following the centuries of incessant and merciless Christian persecution toward all the pagan religions and mystery cults, Mitra worship gradually regressed and disappeared. In Christian kingdom there was no place for other gods or goddesses, and Gnostic teachings and beliefs from the antiquity were ruthlessly extirpated.

Mithraism managed to retain its norms and to survive throughout millenniums without recourse to expensive and contentious institutions. Although, under the systematic pressure of monotheistic religions it slowly recessed, and the last Mitraic communities probably disappeared in the first half of the 5th century AD, and in most regions probably much sooner. Nevertheless, the Mysteries of Mitra concealed itself in cognate *Manichaeism*, which long survived as a harbor of refuge for the shipwrecked gnostics and mystics of the ancient world and early Middle Age. In particular the Syro-Macedonians were distinguished in all epochs by their ardent zeal. No people, not even the Egyptians, defended their ancient idols with such great pertinacity against the Christians. But, at the end even they were forced to abandon their old traditions, and to bow in front of the persistent Christian persecutions...



Six centuries later, again in Macedonia, a medieval version of the Mitraic worship reappeared, somehow modified, in the form of *Bogomilism* (“*Bogomil*” - ‘God-beloved’ in plain Macedonian). This 10th century Macedonic religious movement, as defined in the dictionary, was “a modified form of Manichaeism”, thus consequently a modified medieval form of *Magianism* and Mysteries of Mitra, Dionis, or Nike. It was once again a pure innocent credo, without expensive and contentious institutions, from the people to the people. And the 10th century Bogomilism movement descended further in the west under the name of *Catharism*, which turned out to be the 11th-13th centuries predecessor of the later *Protestantism*. Its predecessors, all these previous primordial traditions that were once simply popular beliefs and rites, spawned from the people themselves, were to be reborn again and again among the last of the pagan rites resurrected from the same simple people, as the spiritual refuge and obstinate adversaries to the church institution, ruling classes and monarchies, even in a much later times. The most old traditions repeatedly were transmitted and repeated, from generation to generation, reborn from their ashes, like that unique mythical bird Fenix. The Mysteries of Mitra thus played one of the most significant parts in the consolidation and stubborn continuity of these ancient beliefs, and their transformation throughout millennia, as these traditions never really died out. Alike the previously mentioned Macedonian ‘carol’ song *Kolede*.



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