

The Roman Cult Mithras Mysteries

Roman Cult of Mithras The Mysteries of Mithras The Religion of the Mithras Cult in the Roman Empire The Mind of Mithraists The Mysteries of Mithras The Roman Cult of Mithras The Roman Mithras Cult Romanising Oriental Gods The Mystery of Mithras The Cult of Mithras in the Roman Provinces of Gaul The Mysteries of Mithras The End of Paganism in the North-western Provinces of the Roman Empire The Cult of Mithras in Late Antiquity Images of Mithra The Cult of Mithras in the Roman Provinces of Gaul The Archaeology of Mithraism Cult of Mithras in the Roman Provinces of Gaul Mithras Mithras-Orion Mithraism Manfred Clauss Charles River Charles River Editors Luther H. Martin Attilio Mastrocinque Manfred Clauss Olympia Panagiotidou Jaime Alvar Ezquerra Walters Payam Nabarz Eberhard Sauer David Walsh Philippa Adrych Vivienne J. Walters Matthew M. McCarty Vivienne Jacques Walters D. Jason Cooper Michael Speidel William John Phythian-Adams

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since its publication in germany manfred clauss s introduction to the roman mithras cult has become widely accepted as the most reliable as well as the most readable account of its elusive and fascinating subject for the english edition the author has revised the work to take account of recent research and new archaeological discoveries the mystery cult of mithras first

became evident in rome towards the end of the first century ad during the next two centuries carried by its soldier and merchant devotees it spread to the frontier of the western empire from britain to bosnia perhaps because of odd similarities between the cult and their own religion the early christians energetically suppressed it frequently constructing churches over the caves mithraea in which its rituals took place by the end of the fourth century the cult was extinct professor clauss draws on the archaeological evidence from over 400 temples and their contents including over a thousand representations of ritual in sculpture and painting to seek an understanding of the nature and purpose of the cult and what its mysteries and secret rites of initiation and sacrifice meant to its devotees in doing so he introduces the reader to the nature of the polytheistic societies of the roman empire in which relations and distinctions between gods and mortals now seem strangely close and blurred he also considers the connections of mithraicism with astrology and examines how far it can be seen as a direct descendant of the ancient cult of mitra the persian god of contract cattle and light the book combines imaginative insight with coherent argument it is well structured accessibly written and extensively illustrated richard gordon the translator and himself a distinguished scholar of the subject has provided a bibliography of further reading for anglophone readers

includes pictures includes ancient accounts describing mithras includes online resources and a bibliography for further reading includes a table of contents it is as though the living tradition and written records of christianity had disappeared from the world for fifteen hundred years and there remained to us only a few hundred monuments and the ruins of some three score churches what could we glean from these of the doctrines of the faith how from such meagre remains could we reconstruct the story of the god the saving doctrines the rituals the liturgies g r s mead the mysteries of mithra in the early roman empire as christianity struggled to gain a foothold and survive in the polytheistic pool of roman theology its greatest rivals weren t the caesars or the roman aristocracy but rather the faith and devotion of the common roman legionary the faith of these men was centered on the god mithras who they believed led them to victory upon the field of battle and had done so for nearly four centuries despite this widespread belief among soldiers the cult of mithras was not a creation of the romans although they would eventually add their own rituals and mysteries to the ancient religion in fact the mithraic religion was an indo persian creation a theology which managed to travel from india and back into the hellenic and roman world by way of alexander the great s conquest of the

persian empire eventually the cult of mithras would spread across the ancient world and mithras would be worshiped from the mountains of india to the coasts of spain as a result the cult of mithras could ultimately be found in every corner of the roman empire the mithras cult was one of the many mystery religions that the romans adopted several of which came from cultures outside of rome isis an egyptian goddess and cybele an anatolian goddess were both popular with roman women while mithras which was a variation of the name of the zoroastrian demigod mithra was popular with roman soldiers and the political elite for over 400 years since the mithras cult like all of the roman mystery cults was esoteric in nature the exact nature of the influence other cultures had on the cult remains unknown but some archaeological evidence has led modern scholars to make educated deductions some believe that the conscription of persian soldiers into the roman army and continued contact between the parthians and romans led to some members of the ever eclectic roman society adopting the cult directly from the parthian zoroastrian religion clark 2001 157 this seems like the most plausible explanation but others have argued that the mithras cult was actually a roman religion that was given a parthian faade to make it appear more exotic in order to attract romans who were enthralled with eastern spirituality clark 2001 157 the best evidence to determine the origins of the mithras cult can be found in the many temples throughout europe that the romans erected to the god these temples known as mithraea were subterranean chambers where the secret rituals of the cult took place the best evidence from extant mithraea are the reliefs on the altars which depict a graphic mythological story the altar reliefs usually depict the god slaughtering a bull and often accompanied by a leaping dog clark 2001 158 the references to zoroastrian theology are unmistakable the bull slaughter is similar to an account from a zoroastrian text the bundahishen while dogs were viewed as asha animals in zoroastrian theology and an important part of the funerary ritual clark 2001 158 the detailed iconography on the mithras altars suggests that the inventors of the mithras cult had more than just a superficial knowledge of zoroastrianism which in turn indicates a provenance of the religion somewhere in persian or parthia

attilio mastrocicque explains the mysteries of mithras in a new way as a transformation of mazdean elements into an ideological and religious reading of augustus story the author shows that the character of mithras played the role of apollo in favoring augustus victory and the birth of the roman empire

since its publication in germany manfred clauss's introduction to the roman mithras cult has become widely accepted as the most reliable as well as the most readable account of its elusive and fascinating subject for the english edition the author has revised the work to take account of recent research and new archaeological discoveries the mystery cult of mithras first became evident in rome towards the end of the first century ad during the next two centuries carried by its soldier and merchant devotees it spread to the frontier of the western empire from britain to bosnia perhaps because of odd similarities between the cult and their own religion the early christians energetically suppressed it frequently constructing churches over the caves mithraea in which its rituals took place by the end of the fourth century the cult was extinct professor clauss draws on the archaeological evidence from over 400 temples and their contents including over a thousand representations of ritual in sculpture and painting to seek an understanding of the nature and purpose of the cult and what its mysteries and secret rites of initiation and sacrifice meant to its devotees in doing so he introduces the reader to the nature of the polytheistic societies of the roman empire in which relations and distinctions between gods and mortals now seem strangely close and blurred he also considers the connections of mithraicism with astrology and examines how far it can be seen as a direct descendant of the ancient cult of mitra the persian god of contract cattle and light the book combines imaginative insight with coherent argument it is well structured accessibly written and extensively illustrated richard gordon the translator and himself a distinguished scholar of the subject has provided a bibliography of further reading for anglophone readers

this book is the first full cognitive history of an ancient religious practice in this ground breaking study on one of the most intriguing and mysterious cults olympia panagiotidou with contributions from roger beck shows how cognitive historiography can supplement our historical knowledge and deepen our understanding of past cultural phenomena the cult of the sun god mithras which spread widely across the graeco roman world at the same time as other mystery cults offered its devotees certain images and assumptions about reality initiation into the mysteries of mithras and participation in the life of the cult significantly affected and transformed the ways in which the initiated perceived themselves the world and their position within it the cult's major ideas were conveyed mainly through its symbolic complexes the ancient written testimonies and other records are not adequate to establish a definitive reconstruction of mithraic theologies and the meaning of its complex symbolic structures the

roman mithras cult identifies the cognitive and psychological processes which would have taken place in the minds and bodies of the mithraists during their initiation and participation in the mysteries enabling the perception apprehension and integration of the essential images and assumptions of the cult in its worldview system the roman mithras cult a cognitive approach is the first full cognitive history of an ancient religion that highlights how cognitive historiography can supplement our historical knowledge and deepen our understanding of past cultural phenomenon the cult of the sun god mithras which spread widely across the greco roman world at the same time as other mystery cults and christianity offered to its devotees certain images and assumptions about reality initiation into the mysteries of mithras and participation in the life of the cult significantly affected and transformed the ways in which the initiates perceived themselves the world and their position within it the cult s major ideas were conveyed mainly through its major symbolic complexes the ancient written testimonies and other records are not adequate to establish a definitive reconstruction of mithraic theologies and the meaning of its complex symbolic structures filling this gap the roman mithras cult a cognitive approach identifies the cognitive and psychological processes which took place in the minds and bodies of the mithraists during their initiation a

the traditional grand narrative correlating the decline of graeco roman religion with the rise of christianity has been under pressure for three decades this book argues that the alternative accounts now emerging significantly underestimate the role of three major cults of cybele and attis isis and serapis and mithras although their differences are plain these cults present sufficient common features to justify their being taken typologically as a group all were selective adaptations of much older cults of the fertile crescent it was their relative sophistication their combination of the imaginative power of unfamiliar myth with distinctive ritual performance and ethical seriousness that enabled them both to focus and to articulate a sense of the autonomy of religion from the socio political order a sense they shared with early christianity the notion of mystery was central to their ability to navigate the weberian shift from ritualist to ethical salvation

preliminary material vivienne j walters the sites of mithraic sanctuaries vivienne j walters the dedicants of mithraic monuments vivienne j walters mithraic representations on pottery vivienne j walters mithras and the gods of gaul vivienne j walters mithraic inscriptions and monuments vivienne j walters rejected monuments vivienne j walters mithraic representations

on pottery vivienne j walters addendum vivienne j walters indexes vivienne j walters list of plates vivienne j walters plates i xl vivienne j walters

an overview of mithraism the ancient roman mystery religion popular in the roman legions provides a comprehensive history of mithraism including its influence on christianity and islam includes rituals meditations and teaching tales for readers who wish to follow the mithraic path studies the evolution and divergence of the eastern persian and western roman forms of mithraism the mysteries of mithras presents a revival of the magical practices and initiatory system of mithraism the ancient roman mystery religion that was immensely popular in the roman legions from the late second century b c until a d 400 and was taken to every corner of the roman empire as the last pagan state religion in europe it was the most important competitor to early christianity and heavily influenced christian doctrine and symbolism the parallels between christianity and ancient mithraism are striking for example the god mithra was born of a virgin in a cave on december 25 payam nabarz reveals the history origins and spiritual and philosophical tenets of mithraism and its connections to christianity islam and freemasonry he also describes the modern neo pagan practice of mithraism in evidence today and for readers who wish to adopt the mithraic path he includes seven of its initiatory rituals and meditations as well as orations and teaching tales that open the door to the seven mithraic grades of passage

the decline of mithraism in the fourth century ad is used as a case study for understanding the end of other classes of paganism in the roman western provinces the author reviews epigraphic and numismatic evidence to date the final uses of mithraea he then discusses examples of wilful damage to mithraic monuments drawing all this archaeological evidence into a historical framework sauer argues that rather than losing its social function as the roman army became splintered mithraism was a healthy religion with active shrines until the very late fourth century rather than fading away its desecrated monuments indicate that the religion was the victim of a sustained christian attack which was also directed at other established faiths in the western provinces

in the cult of mithras in late antiquity david walsh explores how the cult of mithras developed across the 3rd and 4th centuries a d and why by the early 5th century the cult had completely disappeared contrary to the traditional narrative that the cult was violently persecuted out of

existence by christians walsh demonstrates that the cult s decline was a far more gradual process that resulted from a variety of factors he also challenges the popular image of the cult as a monolithic entity highlighting how by the 4th century mithras had come to mean different things to different people in different places

with a history of use extending back to vedic texts of the second millennium bc derivations of the name mithra appear in the roman empire across sasanian persia and in the kushan empire of southern afghanistan and northern india during the first millennium ad even today this name has a place in yazidi and zoroastrian religion but what connection have mihr in persia miro in kushan bactria and mithras in the roman empire to one another over the course of the volume specialists in the material culture of these diverse regions explore appearances of the name mithra from six distinct locations in antiquity in a subversion of the usual historical process the authors begin not from an assessment of texts but by placing images of mithra at the heart of their analysis careful consideration of each example s own context situating it in the broader scheme of religious traditions and on going cultural interactions is key to this discussion such an approach opens up a host of potential comparisons and interpretations that are often side lined in historical accounts what images of mithra offers is a fresh approach to the ways in which gods were labelled and depicted in the ancient world through an emphasis on material culture a more nuanced understanding of the processes of religious formation is proposed in what is but the first part of the visual conversations series

over the course of the second century ce worship of the persianate god mithras swept across the whole of the roman empire with its distinctive traces preserved in the material record including cave like sanctuaries and images of mithras stabbing a bull the cult has long been examined to reconstruct the thought systems of mithraism its theology through such monumental trappings this volume starts from the premise that like much religion in the roman world the cult of mithras must be examined through its practices the ritual craft knowledge which enabled those rites and the social structures thus created what did mithras worshippers do how do we explain the unity and diversity of practices observed archaeology has the potential to answer these questions and shed new light on mithras worship presenting new discoveries higher resolution archaeological data on finds and assemblages and re evaluations of older discoveries this volume charts new paths forward in understanding one of the roman empire s most distinctive cults

known as mitra to the indians mithra and zarathustra zoroaster in greek to the iranians and mithras to the romans this is the oldest of all living deities mithras was recognized as the greatest rival of christianity a greater threat even than the religion of isis if rome had not become christian it would have become mithrasian mithraisians had a sacrament that included wine as a symbol of sacrificial blood bread in wafers or small loaves marked with a cross was used to symbolize flesh the priestly symbols were a staff a ring a hat and a hooked sword members were called brothers and priests were called father mithras was born on december 25th he offered salvation based on faith compassion knowledge and valor he appealed to the poor the slave and the freeman as well as to the roman aristocracy the militia and even to some emperors the christians sacked his temples burned his books and attacked his followers they desecrated his temples and built their own churches on the same foundations as the old mithraic temples cooper examines mithras and his religion in the most complete study ever done he explores the various forms of this godworshiped from lisbon to modrn bangladesh from the scottish border to the russian steppesand investigates the worship this is an exciting journey into living mythology the history of a living god and will fascinate modern western readers who want to know more about the spiritual pathwhether they want to better understand contemporary christianity the basis of many contemporary ideologies mythology or the western mystery tradition

preliminary material introduction the bull slaying scene as a series of equatorial constellations mithras orion the image of the heavens and the cult icon greek hero roman god conclusion abbreviations bibliography index

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