

*Interdisciplinary paths of historico-religious research
on the Ancient World: Themes, concepts, perspectives
/ Percorsi interdisciplinari della ricerca storico-
religiosa sul mondo antico: temi, concetti, prospettive*

Attilio Mastrocinque

University of Verona

Mithras and Mercury

Mithra e Mercurio.

Il concetto di mediazione





IGLSyr 1, 1

- ὡς ὄρᾳς Διός τε Ὠρομάσδου καὶ Ἀπόλλωνος
Μίθρου Ἡλίου Ἑρμοῦ καὶ Ἀρτάγνου
Ἡρακλέους Ἄρεως ἐμῆς τε πατρίδος
παντρόφου Κομμαγηνῆς θεοπρεπῆ ταῦτα
ἀγάλματα καθιδρυσάμην.
- As you see, I have built these statues, worthy
of gods, of Zeus Oromazes, **Apollo Mithras**
Helios Hermes, Artagnes Herakles Ares, and of
my fertile homeland Commagene.

Herodotus I.131

Θύουσι δὲ ἡλίῳ τε καὶ σελήνῃ καὶ γῆ καὶ πυρὶ καὶ ὕδατι καὶ ἀνέμοισι. Τούτοισι μὲν δὴ θύουσι μόνοισι ἀρχῆθεν, ἐπιμεμαθήκασι δὲ καὶ τῇ Οὐρανίῃ θύειν, παρά τε Ἀσσυρίων μαθόντες καὶ Ἀραβίων· καλέουσι δὲ Ἀσσύριοι τὴν Ἀφροδίτην Μύλιττα, Ἀράβιοι δὲ Ἀλιλάτ, Πέρσαι δὲ Μίτραν.

The Persians sacrifice to the Sun and the Moon, also to earth, fire, water and the winds. From the beginning they sacrificed only to them, but they also learned to sacrifice to the Uranian (goddess?) (Aphrodite), having adopted this rite from the Assyrians and the Arabs. The Assyrians call Aphrodite Mylitta, but the Arabs Alilat, and the Persians Mithra.

Mithras Yasht, 142-143, transl.

Gershevich

Grass-land magnate Mithra we
worship....., the well-created, very
great god who in the morning brings
into evidence the many shapes, the
creatures of the Incremental Spirit, as
he lights up his body, being endowed
with own light like the moon; whose
face blazes like (that) of the star Sirius.

Mithras Yasht, sect. 4, 12-13

Grass-land magnate Mithra we
worship....., who is the first
supernatural god to approach across the
Harā, in front of the immortal swift-
horsed sun; who is the first to seize the
beautiful gold-painted mountain tops;
from there the most mighty surveys the
whole land inhabited by Iranians

Mithras Yasht, 95

Who goes along the whole width of the
earth after the setting of the glow of
the sun, sweeping across both edges of
this wide, round earth whose limits are
far apart

Vidēvdāt also called *Vendidad* 19, §

27 transl. Anklesaria

on the completion of (the) third night,
(when) the bright dawn illumines, on
the mountains having the bliss of
holiness, (where) approaches Mithra of
the good weapon, the sun (too) rises
(by rising thither).

Rig Veda 137th hymn, to Mitra-Varuna
Come to us, Kings who reach to heaven,
approach us, coming hitherward. These
milky drops are yours, Mitra and Varuna,
bright Soma juices blent with milk. Here
are the droppings; come ye nigh the Soma-
droppings blent with curd, juices expressed
and blent with curd. Now for the wakening
of your Dawn together with the Sun-God's
rays. (transl. Griffith)

Yajur Veda VI.4.8:

This was not day or night, but indiscriminated; the gods said to Mitra and Varuna, ‘Make this to shine forth for us’; they replied, ‘Let us choose a boon; let one cup only be drawn before ours.’

Therefore the cup for Indra and Vayu is drawn before that for Mitra and Varuna, for the Upançu and the Antaryama (cups) are expiration and inspiration. Mitra produced the day, Varuna the night; then indeed did this shine forth; in that (a cup) is drawn for Mitra and Varuna, (it is) for shining forth. (transl. Berriedale Keith)

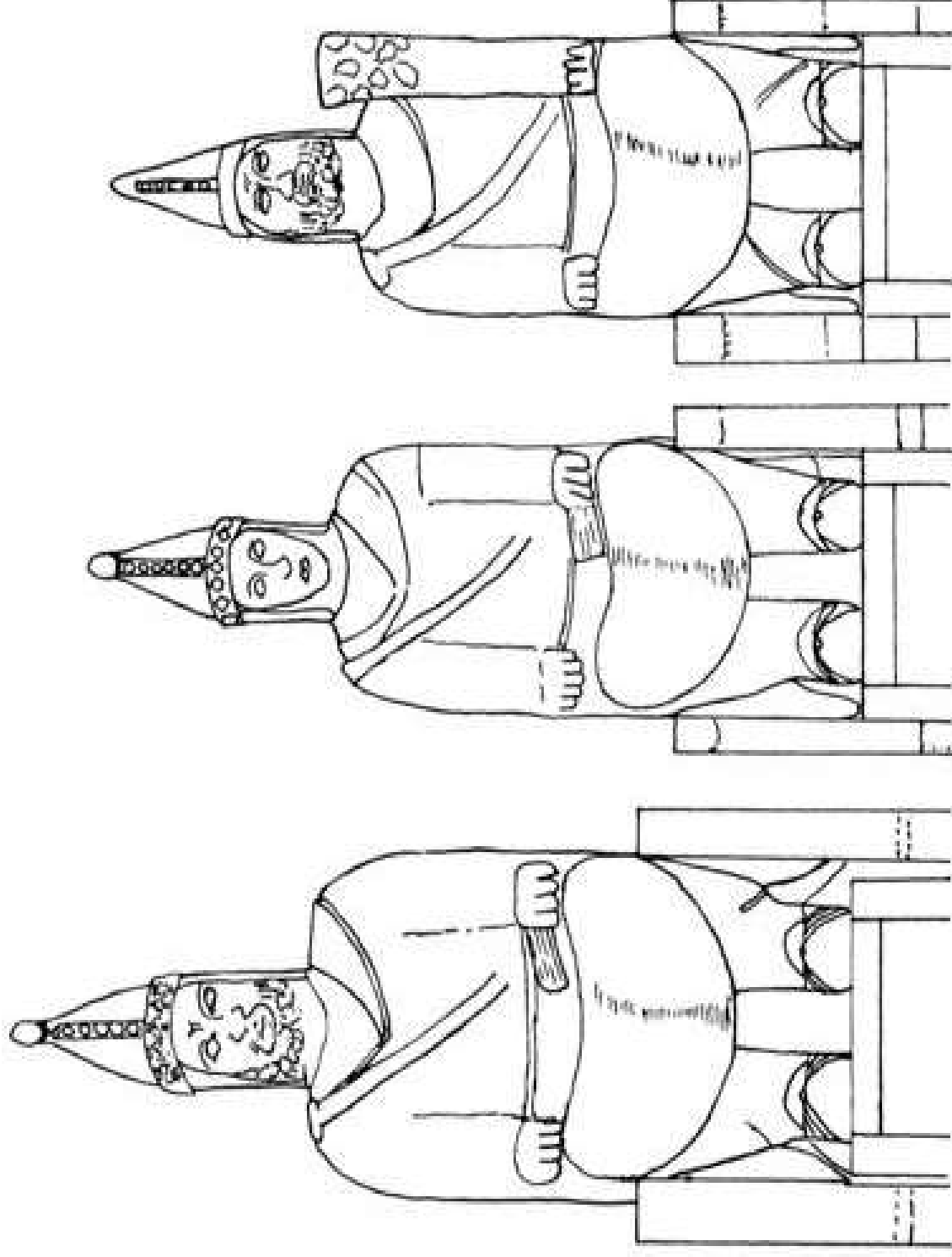
Plutarch., *de Iside et Osiride* 46 transl.

Cole Babbitt

Horomazes may best be compared to light, and Areimanius, conversely, to darkness and ignorance, and midway between the two is Mithras: for this reason the Persians give to Mithras the name of “Mediator” (Μίθρην Πέρσαι τὸν μεσίτην ὀνομάζουσιν).

Porphyr., *de antro Nympharum* 24. Transl. Taylor :
On this account, the gates of the Homeric cavern are not dedicated to the east and west, nor to the equinoctial signs, Aries and Libra, but to the north and south, and to those celestial signs which towards the south are most southerly.... But these places are adapted to souls descending into generation, and afterwards separating themselves from it. Hence, a place near to the equinoctial circle was assigned to Mithras as an appropriate seat. And on this account he bears the sword of Aries, which is a martial sign. He is likewise carried in the Bull, which is the sign of Venus.

Zeus Oromazes, Mithras, Herakles



Porphyr., de antro Nympharum
Mithras is the Demiurgus and lord of
generation and therefore is placed
near the equinoctial circle

Mithrakana or Mihragan

is a festival still celebrated in honor of Mithras in Iran, today. It takes place in autumn, in the month of Mihr (Mithras).

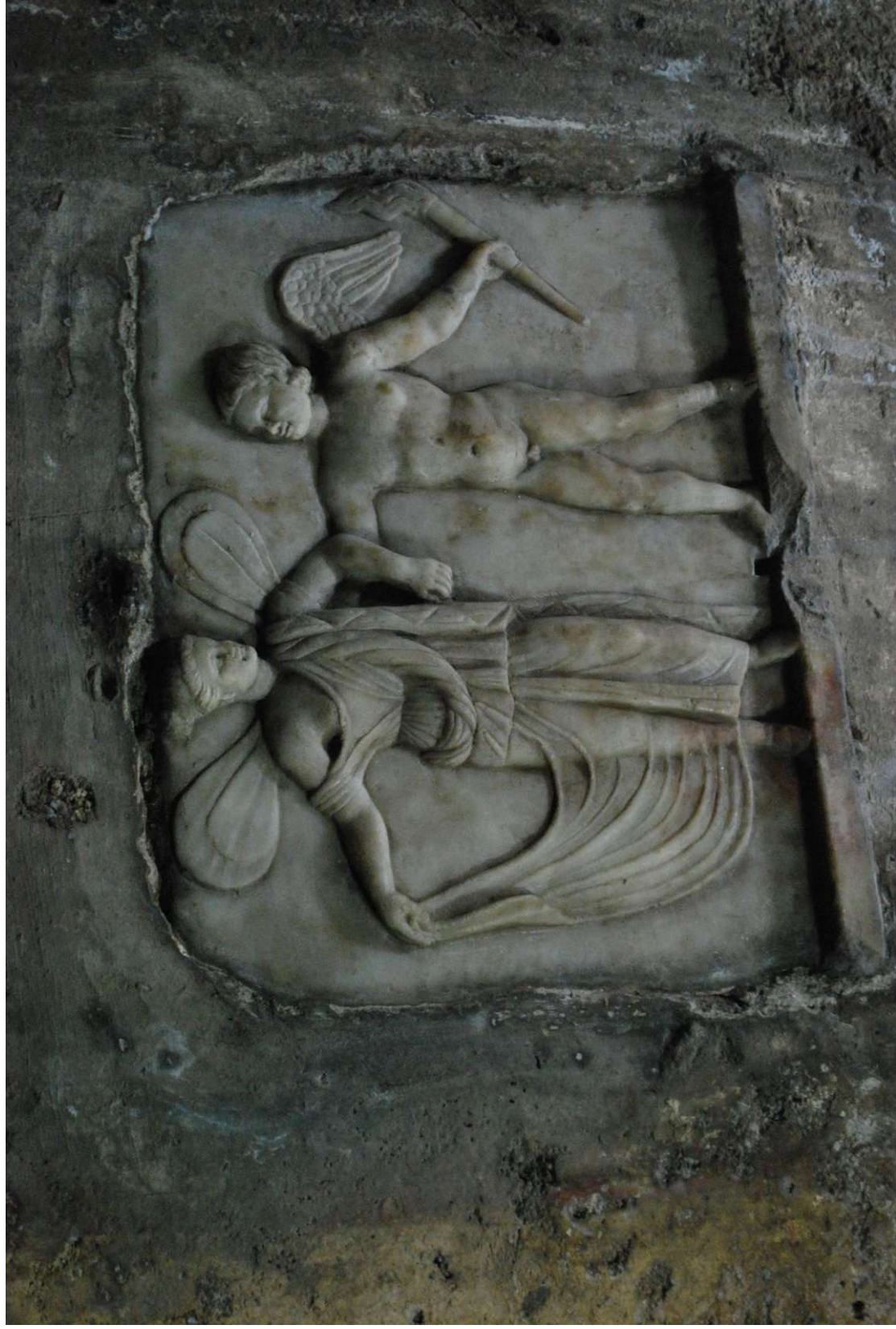
Rome. Castra Peregrinorum



relief from Dragu (Romania)



Mitreo di Santa Maria Capua Vetere



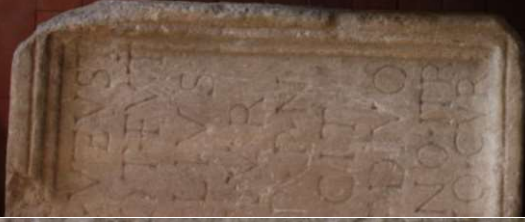
Housested



Aion di Modena



Virunum



Apul., *de mundo* 29

*comites amoenus Lucifer et com[mun]is
Cyllenius.*

The charming Lucifer and the affable
Cyllenius (i.e. Mercury).

Ps. Aristot., *de mundo*, 399a Bekker
about Phosphoros and Mercury

accompanying the Sun:

“there was some incertitude about the
stars of Mercury and that of Venus,
and the star of Mercury was called
Stilbon but the Egyptians called him
‘star of Apollo’”

Plin., *Nat. Hist.* II.39
*proximum illi Mercurii sidus, a quibusdam
appellatum Apollinis.*

The star next to Venus is Mercury by some
authors called Apollo.

Apul., de mundo 2
*Stilbon, cui quidam Apollinis, ceteri
Mercuri nomen dederunt.*

Stilbon was called Apollo by some authors
and Mercury by others

Nemrud Dagh. Mercury = Στίλβων

Ἄπόλλωνος: Stilbon of Apollo



Porphyry (*de antro* 18) labels Mithras
“stealer of oxen”: βουκλόπος θεός.

Firmicus Maternus says: Μύστα
βουκλοπίης (“O initiate of the theft of
the bull”)

Commodianus, *Instructiones* I.13, ed. Dombart

Invictus de petra natus si deus habetur

Insuper et furem adhuc depingitis esse,

Cum, si deus esset, utique non furto vivebat.

Terrenus utique fuit et monstruosa natura,

Vertebatque boves alienus semper in antris,

Sicut et Cacus Vulcani filius ille.

Whether the invincible, born from a rock, is to be
regarded as divine...

Yet surely were he divine he would not be guilty of theft.
The truth is he was of earthly birth and shared the nature
of monsters, and was always driving off another's
bullocks in his caves, like Cacus of the story the fabled
son of Vulcan

Poetovio. Transitus



