

CADMO

REVISTA DE HISTÓRIA ANTIGA - SUPLEMENTO 1
JOURNAL FOR ANCIENT HISTORY - SUPPLEMENT

SOTERIOLOGIAS IDENTIDADES E SALVAÇÃO

ORGANIZADORES:

CARLOS ALMEIDA, FILIPA ROLDÃO, CATARINA ALMEIDA



CENTRO DE HISTÓRIA DA UNIVERSIDADE DE LISBOA



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Centro de História da Universidade de Lisboa

2021



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REVISTA DE HISTÓRIA ANTIGA
JOURNAL FOR ANCIENT HISTORY

SUPLEMENTO 1 | SUPPLEMENT 1

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Título | Title

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Editora | Publisher

Centro de História da Universidade de Lisboa | 2021

Concepção Gráfica | Graphic Design

Bruno Fernandes

ISSN: 0871-9527

eISSN: 2183-7937

ISBN: 978-989-8068-30-9

Depósito legal (*Cadmo*): 54539/92

Depósito legal: 485942/21

Tragem: 150 exemplares

P.V.P.: 15.00 €

Cadmo - Revista de História Antiga | Journal for Ancient History

Centro de História da Universidade de Lisboa | Centre for History of the University of Lisbon
Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa | School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon
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cadmo.journal@letras.ulisboa.pt | www.centrodehistoria-flul.com/cadmo



Este trabalho é financiado por fundos nacionais através da FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P., no âmbito dos projetos UIDB/04311/2020 e UIDP/04311/2020. This work is financed by national funds through FCT - Foundation for Science and Technology, I.P. in the scope of the projects UIDB/04311/2020 and UIDP/04311/2020.

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WAITING FOR THE SALVATION: A perspective on Mithras Soteriology

ASPETTANDO LA SALVEZZA: *Una prospettiva sulla soteriologia nel Mitraismo*

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Abstract

The paper presented here intends to be an analysis of the soteriological component in Mithraic mysteries, with particular attention to the rituals and practices of the above-mentioned cult. The question concerns the actual soteriological value of Mithraic practices and their distance from the Christian perspective, in regard to the distinction of the peculiarities and ways of approaching the study of such rituals. Moreover, this paper examines the difference between the Mithraism and other cults that are characterized by the preeminence of one deity above the others, in order to determine if henotheistic tendencies could be the source of the soteriological peculiarity of the Mithraic cult. This paper then further examines ritual practices and the approach of believers, with the purpose of delineating the boundaries of the Mithraic religion and understanding the ways in which the cult found its place in the Roman Empire of Late Antiquity. Furthermore, this paper explores whether it is proper to refer to the Mithraic mysteries as a soteriological belief, and thus examining if it is correct to use this connotation when

applying this characteristic to Mithraism. Finally, the conclusion of this article analyzes if and how it is possible to discuss salvation in the Mithras religion.

Keywords

Mithras, Soteriology, Henotheism, Late Antiquity, Sol.

Sommario

L'articolo qui presentato mira ad essere un'analisi della componente soteriologica nei misteri mitraici, con particolare attenzione ai rituali e alle pratiche del suddetto culto. La questione riguarda l'effettivo valore soteriologico delle pratiche mitraiche e la loro distanza dalla prospettiva cristiana, rispetto alla distinzione delle peculiarità e delle modalità di approccio allo studio di tali rituali. A tal fine, si approfondisce la differenza tra il mitraismo e altri culti che sono caratterizzati dalla preminenza di una divinità sulle altre, al fine di determinare se le tendenze enoteistiche potrebbero essere la fonte della peculiarità soteriologica del culto mitraico. Nel testo sono poi analizzate le pratiche rituali e l'approccio dei credenti, con lo scopo di delineare i confini della religione mitraica e comprendere i modi in cui il culto ha trovato posto nell'Impero romano della tarda antichità. Inoltre, questo lavoro discute se sia corretto riferirsi ai misteri mitraici come credenza soteriologica, esaminando pertanto se è accettabile impiegare questa connotazione quando si applica questa caratteristica al mitraismo. Infine, la conclusione di questo studio analizza in quali termini sia possibile discutere di salvezza nella religione di Mitra.

Parole chiave

Mitra, Soteriologia, Enoteismo, Tarda antichità, Sol

The Mithraic cult first appears in Rome during the 1st century AD,¹ and it is known to develop and spread for at least three centuries.² The last evidence of the cult seems to be represented by two inscriptions,³ the first one

1 The earliest Mithraic evidence known is dated 75-125 AD, although origins and formation of the cult remain still dubious until today (Chalupa 2016, 66).

2 Beck 1987, 299.

3 It is extant also an inscription dated 370 from a Mithraic priest (*CIL* 6.509) and the literary evidence of *Carmen contra Paganos*, Ant. Lat. 1.20.46 dated 393 (Freyburger et al., 2006, 328 n. 148).

from Rome (dated 387 AD),⁴ which, according to Vermaseren,⁵ comes from the gardens on the Caelian hill (from the area today known as Villa Mattei or Villa Celimontana), and the second one from Sidon (389 AD).⁶ On the other hand, certain literary sources mentioned in Statius's work and the composition of Macrobius's work in 430 suggest Mithraism was "long since dead".⁷ Even though it is possible to track the authors many references to Mithras or the Mithraism in Latin, there is a lack of detailed information regarding those rituals, which makes it problematic for modern scholars to comprehend the dynamics and peculiarities of this religion. The scarcity of the sources at our disposal describing and informing us about the Mithraic religion additionally comes from the fact that said religion was primarily characterized by mystery. Therefore, its rites were not observable, and few people might have access to the ritual practices of which main evidence today is constituted by *Mithraea*, such as dedicants' inscriptions, *ex voto* and iconography.⁸ Nonetheless, archaeological and literary sources alike present many inconsistencies,⁹ so that the scarce data at our disposal becomes futile.¹⁰

It would be correct to say that the Mithraism was practiced in the Roman empire without any interruption, as evidences from private Mithraic mysteries could be found all through the empire. The cult did not encounter any opposition, nor were Mithraists taking part in a hypothetical conflict against the upcoming Christian religion. Mithraism, as well as other public or private cults, continued to exist and be worshipped in addition to the advent

4 CIL 6.1778: Agorii / Vettio Agorio Praetextato v(iro) c(larissimo) // pontifici Vestae / pontifici Soli(s) / quindecemviro / auguri / tauroboliato / curiali / neocoro / hierofantae / patri sacrorum // quaestori / candidato / praetori urbano / correctori Tus/ciae et Umbriae / consulari / Lusitaniae / proconsuli / Achaiae / praefecto urbi / prae(ecto) praet(orio) II / Italiae et Illyrici / consuli / designato // Dedicata Kal(endis) Febr(uariis) / d(omino) n(ostro) Fl(avio) Valentiniano Aug(usto) III / et Eutropio cons(ulibus).

5 For the study of the Mithraic cult in Vermaseren, see Vermaseren 1963.

6 CIMRM 74; for the dating of the *Mithraeum* in Sidon, see Will 1950.

7 Cameron 2011, 269.

8 Mingo 2009, 206.

9 Chalupa 2016, 67.

10 More than literary sources, archaeological evidence provides us at least some information about spread of the religion (with the presence of *Mithraea*), name of participants (through the analysis of inscriptions and *ex voto*), presence of symbols and sacrifices (in iconography), although this data does not show directly and specifically the cult and the rituals performed. Probably the only interesting and detailed literary description of Mithraic mysteries is found in Porphyry, who in his work *De antro nympharum* describes the Persian origin of the cult and some of its peculiarities. Mithraic mysteries are also mentioned by other late writers (Chalupa 2016, 68, note n.8.), but without adding any further info about the cult.

of the new religion. In fact, evidence shows that the cult actually grew during Late Antiquity and traces of worship are found until the first half of the fifth century.¹¹ The permanence of Mithraism, as well as of other pagan cults, thus continued during the spread of the Christianity and coexisted in this time of transformation. A slow mutation occurred, consisting in the gradual disappearance of the orally transmitted cults to make way for religions of the book, likely one of the most interesting peculiarities of Late Antiquity.¹²

Mithraism and other mysteric cults

In analyzing Mithraic practices, one likely initially notices a different approach towards the divine, not only when compared with other public festivals, but also in relation to other initiatory private cults. Mystic cults were widespread in Rome during Late Antiquity, including but not limited to Isis, Magna Mater, Cybele and Attis, the Dionysiac mysteries.¹³ All of these beliefs mutually shared an initiatory character, in the sense that few and selected people were allowed to participate to said religious practices, and they were not allowed to speak about those practices nor divulge publicly information about the ceremonies. These cults were not an exclusive monolatry; in fact, Romans could still worship the deities of the Pantheon and participate to public religious festivals. At the same time though, adepts had a special preference towards Mithras, who was preeminent above the other divine entities. For this reason, it is possible to paint Mithraism as a henotheistic religion,¹⁴ characterized by an admittance of importance of one single deity, which is primarily worshipped and considered, but without excluding other gods.¹⁵ There are common peculiarities among the mystery cults, such as: initiation, individual approach of the

11 Bjornebye 2016, 198.

12 Stroumsa 2005. The end of extreme and brutal practices in the religion, such as animal sacrifices, characterizes the moment of change towards the monotheism and the religions of the book.

13 Burkert 1987.

14 As it will happen for the cult of Sol Invictus under the reign of the emperor Elagabalus in the 3rd century AD.

15 “The term ‘henotheism’ . . . denotes a personal devotion to one god without involving rejection or neglect of other gods” (Versnel 1998, 35).

believer towards his private cult, discourse about afterlife, and the presence of sacrifices. Moreover, three main stereotypes can be attributed to these ancient cults as common threads: (1) these beliefs developed in a late period; (2) they are characterized with Oriental features; and (most important for our discussion here) (3) they are considered religions of salvation,¹⁶ achieved “through the closeness with the divine”.¹⁷ Mystery cults represent a form of individual religion in which the believer is in contact with god, and therefore he has the possibility of reaching out to the divine directly in order to obtain what he prays for. There are extant many inscriptions with the function of *ex voto*, in which dedicants give praise to Mithras for having obtained what they had requested.¹⁸ In most of the inscriptions Mithras figures as *invicto* or “undefeated”,¹⁹ a designation also found in relation to *Deus Sol Elagabal* in Late Antiquity, as well as previously associated to emperors or other deities of the Roman pantheon.

The “undefeated” god Mithras gained success among Romans in Late Antiquity. This is likely attributed to the changes in politics, the economy and general society during second and third centuries. In fact, as the statal apparatus began to fail in its responsibilities in caring and maintaining the life of its citizens, the figure of the emperor was transformed into a distant symbol of reverence and power, allowing Mithraism to take its place as a state in miniature.²⁰ In contrast with public worship, however, private and secret cults focused on the journey of the single believer and focused on a path which allowed the adept to get in contact with the deity through different grades. The presence of a sacrifice, a ceremony already established in the public festival as purifying ritual for the masses, thus becomes crucial in the mysteric

16 Burkert 1987, 2-3.

17 Burkert 1987, 12.

18 See, for example: *AE* 1998.869; *AE* 2014.90; *CIL* 13.11612a; *AE* 2017.853; *CIMRM* 02.1441; *CIL* 03.15184.13; *CIL* 06.718; *CIL* 06.3724; *CIL* 05.6831; *LAugPraetoria* 12.

19 All the inscriptions mentioned above except *CIL* 06, 718, where Mithras appears only with the appellation of *Sol*, and *AE* 2017.853. The latter one, dated second century and found in Can Modolell (*Hispania citerior*), is particularly interesting because it presents the dedication d(eo) K(auti) M(i)thrae), therefore mentioning one of the two deities (*Cantes* and *Cantopates*) appearing in the Mithraic ceremony. There are other inscriptions, all from Spain, witnessing this use (*IRBarc* 14 from Barcelona; *IRC* 1.86 and *IRC* 1.206 from Can Modolell). As in regards of the other divine entity, *Cantopates*, is attested only once (*AE* 1980.50; see also Panciera 1979, 94).

20 R. Gordon 2001, 266.

cult. In this circumstance the ritual acquires the sense of commensality and participation of the group as a whole; the tauroctony is seen generally as act of salvation,²¹ but it would be proper to define the sacrifice as a part of the whole ritual, described as an initiatory path through different grades, which might be further connected with the concept of cyclicity and rebirth.

Ritual

As previously mentioned, what is known today about the Mithraic ceremony is scarce, but some evidence suggesting that it was a cult worshipped exclusively by males is that the adept is carried through an initiation process, and he is supposed to go through a divine path organized and divided in seven steps.

The journey appears as a way of purification, in the sense that all the adepts are led by Mithras, in the vest of *psychopomp*, the conductor of souls, towards the rising sun, first principle and supreme deity (Sol Invictus).²² In the Indo-Iranian religion, Mithra's aid was needed in order to achieve the soul's release, "an opinion voiced in a warrior's prayer that dates at least to the fifth century B.C. Next, in a late Avestan text, most probably authored by one of the Magi, Mithra's role as savior is homologized to his association with the rising sun".²³ If the topic of salvation already exists in the first appearances of Mithra, who embodies the peculiarities of a savior, it is then to establish if such a peculiarity persists during the spread of this cult in the Roman Empire.

21 Beck 2015, 28.

22 It is worth of notice that the Mithraic cult and the cult of Sol Invictus both present the solar element as the ending point of the path towards the purification. In particular, for the religion of Mithras, "according to a popular Armenian legend, on the shores of Lake Van there is an opening in the rock. In the cavern, Meher (Mithras) on horseback and his black raven stay enclosed until Ascension night when manna falls from heaven. Then Meher emerges to gather the manna and live on it for the rest of the year in the cave, which closes behind him. Two candles burn beside him (like the two torch-holders which flank him on the cultic panels in Roman *Mithraea*). When the wheel of the universe, which turns day and night before his eyes in the cave, stops, Meher will emerge and his reign will come in time to coincide with the end of the world. It brings to mind the Mithraic ladder whose seventh door is gold and corresponds to the era of the Sun" (Turcan 1996, 198).

23 Lincoln 1991, 85.

In fact, a distinction is normally placed between the origin of the cult and its spread in the late antique centuries. As Giulia Sfameni Gasparro pointed out, the Mithraic cult has very particular characteristics which made it unique and different from its Iranian origins.²⁴ While the process which Mithraists need to follow for their own purification is known, it is necessary to point out that the connection of the rituals is not strictly connected via the discourse of salvation. In the representation found in *mithraea* it is possible to go through the phases of Mithras' earthly life, and to see through a view of life and history according to a "before" and "after" times,²⁵ the true essence of Mithras, who appears as mediator and savior. In this atmosphere, the sacrifice of the bull, that is the *tauroctony*, becomes the symbol of the Mithraism, since the killing of the animal, according to the Indo-Persian mythology, is connected with the process of regeneration of the world, and with purification.

The Sun is also part of the picture: the solar deity assists the scene from the sky, sometimes in the company of other gods.²⁶ Furthermore, in depicted scenes, particularly in a relief discovered in Troia (Setúbal) at the south of Lisbon, a triptych portrays the Sun having a banquet at table with Mithras.²⁷ Of this, only a small part of the central panel remains, and integrally, the right-most panel. The panel of the central scene represents the tauroctony and, at the top, it is possible to see the moon, represented through a feminine bust. In the center, Cautopates, a genius that symbolizes the setting sun, supports with his right hand a torch that serves as an attribute to distinguish one of the front legs of the sacrificed animal. In the zone opposite the central panel to the left, Cautes would be represented holding the torch erect and lit, symbolizing the rising sun. On the genius it would appear a masculine bust with radiated halo, representing the Sun itself. In the right panel, the only one remaining complete, we see Helios and Mitra, reclining on a triclinium and having the banquet.

24 "The situation of Roman Mithraism is quite unique . . . Although it has a certain relationship of continuity (to an extent and in forms which are still subject to definition) with the ancient Iranian cult of Mithras, it constitutes an organic and autonomous religious context which had so entirely assumed a 'mystery' shape that, of all the cults with an initiatory-esoteric structure in Antiquity, this alone deserves to be defined as "mystery religion". (Sfameni Gasparro 1985, XIV)

25 These times intended as the condition before the start of the journey, and after the completion of it.

26 Freyburger et al. 2006.

27 Turcan 1996, 208.

The characters of Cautopates and Cautes, accompanying the god Mithras and the Sun, symbolically indicate a specific eschatology, if not a soteriology of the Mithraic cult, as the ritual practices and the syncretistic peculiarity of this religion would show,²⁸ and serve to point out with more efficacy the problem of salvation in these mysteries.

In fact, in other extant reliefs²⁹ the same iconography appears, with both characters depicted on the sides of Mithras and the Sun God Helios. Wearing Phrygian caps, Cautes and Cautopades both hold torches, Cautes holding his upwards while Cautopates holds his downwards, respectively representing the rising and the setting sun, or, if seen from a soteriological and eschatological point of view, Cautopates might represent death, while Cautes life.³⁰ Both characters additionally appear with Mithras in other iconography, but this time connected with the ciclicity of the day (or the seasons), take for example a relief from Bologna,³¹ where they are directly connected with Sol and Luna. The gesture of Cautes, raising the torch, in opposition with Cautopates' lowering of the torch, can be also interpreted as a bright manifestation of the ambivalence of the deity, and expression of harmony by the tension of the opposites.³² This would reflect even more the sense of ciclicity given by the whole ceremony practiced in the *Mithraea*.

The Heddernheim *Mithraeum*, in particular, associates Cautes with the Sky with Heaven, while Cautopates is related to *Oceanus*.³³ This opposition is established in a scheme where the triade Mithras-Cautes-Cautopates is depicted as a journey consisting in three steps, death-descension/ascension-life, and

28 "Il est certain que le Mithraïsme enseigne une théologie qui se prolongeait par une eschatologie et, sans doute, par une sotériologie" (Freyburger et al. 2006, 300).

29 Above all it is here worth of mention, at least, the Mithraic relief of Fiano Romano of the II-III century AD (CIMRM 641); a *stela* from Nida/ Heddernheim (CIMRM 1127) with the dedication to Sun God Mithras and the attribute of *petra genericem* (Mithras rock-born); a statue of Cautopates from Sarmizegetusa (CIMRM 2120-2121), and of Cautes (CIMRM 2122-2123) from the same *Mithraeum* (CIMRM 2027); two statues of Cautes and Cautopates found in at Neuenheim in Germany, and probably indicating an existing *Mithraeum* in the area (CIMRM 1290); two marbel statues from *Regio I*, Ostia (CIMRM 254-255); a two-sided relief on pivot with side panels from Dieburg, Germany (CIMRM 1247) from the *Mithraeum* discovered in the same area (CIMRM 1246).

30 Claus 2000, 97.

31 Beck 2015, 28.

32 Beck 2007, 6.

33 Alvar Ezquerro 2008b, 86. Oceanus appears in the tauroctony often beside the image of Mithras while ascending in the sun's chariot, and it is often represented by watery iconography, "such as waves, a boat, an oar, a vase, or a sail" (Ulansey [s.d.]).

Mithras would embody the figure of the “Savior” who, according to the ancient doctrine of *Avesta*, will come at the end of times to exterminate Ahriman and regenerate the Universe with fire, that is the *ekpyrosis*. He would be the Iranian Messiah, the Savior, and even though he would be far from embodying the attributes of death and resurrection that are possible to find in relation to other Oriental cults imported to the Roman Empire,³⁴ Mithras would symbolize a condition of cosmic regeneration in accord with the naturalism of the Iranian religion.³⁵ If one is to analyze the salvific component in the Mithraic mysteries, it is worth noting that, while the sacrifice of the bull is necessary to bring life and vital power to the cosmos and the universe, the journey from death to life could be not intended as an individual journey for human beings in order to achieve the salvation and the ascension of the soul. The mysteries of the Mithraic caves appear not to be a benefit and a privilege for the single soul, or the single adherent to the cult, but rather they are the product of the collectivity, and for the collectivity, within a wider view which includes natural regeneration and the cosmic order. The mysteries of Mithras are ordinarily deemed as a dualistic and soteriological type of cult, with Mithras portrayed as a type of god who dies and resurrects, similar to the ways of other Oriental cults who practiced in the Roman Empire until the Late Antiquity, or, alternatively the type of Messiah in the rising Christianity. In reality, Mithraism differs from the monotheistic belief, and in this respect also from the other mystic cults, as there is a focus on the collectivity, and the path followed by adepts is not connected to an ideal hope of salvation in the afterlife.³⁶

It seems in fact that the adherents to the Mithraic practices did not have the need, nor the urgency, to direct their devotion towards an individual essence. This likely occurred because of the social extraction of the believers.

34 For the Oriental cults in the Roman Paganism see, in particular, Cumont 2010.

35 Freyburger et al. 2006, 302-303.

36 Mithras in fact appear as a “living, vital and triumphant figure. His function is not to save the spiritual human soul out of its captivity in a material body and world. The point in the Mithraic soteriology is not the journey of the soul from the body and this world up through the seven spheres of the realm of the eternal fixed stars. This type of interpretation of Roman Mithraism appears to be forced and unnatural. The Mysteries of Mithra are not individualistic but rather a collective religion. Mithras is saving man and the world in bringing life, light, fertility and order. His salvation is vitalization. The Mysteries of Mithras are thus an optimistic, this-worldly and monistic religion” (Sorensen 1989, 40).

Since the first spread of the cult, it seems that Mithraism involved free men, sometimes men of the court itself, but also soldiers in legionary camps in remote areas of the Roman Empire. Despite this, it was generally small circled groups and high-ranking army members were involved in performing those rituals, especially within the walls of the capital of the reign, Rome.³⁷ In a middle-upper class communities, which were recognized and at times even working in the administration of the Empire at different levels, it was more necessary for the adepts to be inserted into a social group in which they were active members, rather than let single personalities emerge and be concentrated on the salvation of the soul. It is worth mentioning that in many depictions from Germany and the Eastern Empire, during the second and the third centuries, Mithras appears on horseback, a factor which more incisively proves the participation of high-class members to the ritual practices.³⁸ Furthermore, an extant inscription in Spain from the province of Valencia, found in Benifayó portrays an inscription dedicated from a slave, Lucano, to Invictus Mithras. Lucano, with Suceso and Elaina, represent the slavery as found in the Mithraic evidences of the peninsula. The presence of slaves worshipping Mithras is interesting because it shows that the cult was not prerogative of the aristocracy, but at the same time it does not necessarily mean that the cult was favored by lower classes.³⁹ The fact that slaves appear as adepts of the Mithraic cult does not mean that Mithraism embraced mass participation or a lower class involvement; in fact this evidence points to the opposite, that is, the participation of upper society rather including their slaves, and their participation to the cult somehow signalling of the prestige and importance of the adherents.

37 Turcan 1996, 240-245.

38 "It is probable that two factors, in short, encouraged Mithras' appearance as a cavalier in the second and third centuries-his popularity among men who used the horse themselves and his similarities to some foreign gods who already were cavaliers. But more generally, the image must have seemed a natural one to attach to Mithras, who was the soul's guide through the planetary spheres, the mediating link between heaven and earth and, on a more mundane level, the god to whom one prayed for good health and successful return from the next battle-the bringer of aid both now and later" (Johnston 1992, 310-311). The image of the cavalier associated to those who already were alike it is understandable, if we consider the participants to the cult, as well as the figure of Mithras as mediator. It is more difficult to see, in my opinion, a connection with the soteriology and the element of salvation in general.

39 "Sería engañoso extraer conclusiones precipitadas sobre la difusión del mitraísmo entre los sectores menos favorecidos de la sociedad. Precisamente, la creciente coincidencia entre mitreos privados y presencia de individuos en condición de dependencia acentúa el carácter instrumental del mitraísmo en manos de la clase propietaria" (Alvar Ezquerro 2008a, 219-220).

If a soteriology exists, it is concerning the destiny of a social entity, the Empire and, in a bigger picture, the destiny of the world and the whole universe. Even confronting the syncretism of the Mithraistic religion with other mysteric cults, it appears that Mithraism is quite distinguished and originates from different traditions in becoming a proper Roman religious practice. From this perspective, it seems useful in new and modern times to abandon the peculiarity of Mithras as savior and conductor of the soul,⁴⁰ especially in the development of the cult during Late Antiquity.⁴¹ In further analysis, if one is to take the concept of soteriology as death and resurrection of the divinity for the salvation of the believers, Mithraism and the figure of Mithras himself do not seemingly belong in this category, as Mithras often appears, if not always appears, as a mediator. Therefore, if it is to be considered that, once accepted, a salvation of some kind is present in the Mithraism, it is not the salvation which could be found in Christianity, but it is a soteriology with cosmologic and sociologic connotation, which constitutes a new and different category.⁴²

Conclusion

Mithras' cult had its origin in the Persian tradition and became widespread in the Roman empire from the first century AD. Non-literary evidence shows the great dissemination of the cult, as many *Mithraea*, inscriptions and papyri were found, attesting to the large scale of its diffusion and the grand number of adherents to the cult. Little information is available concerning the rituals performed in honor of the deity, as the cult was initiatic and mysterious, but from this data it is possible to know some of its peculiarities, such as its symbols and iconography. By studying the images found in *Mithraea* described in the scarce literary evidence at our disposal, it is understood that a path, a

40 "Two other points of Mithraic doctrine . . . seem most thoroughly rooted in the West: the association of Mithras with the sun, and its role as savior and conductor of the soul" (Lincoln 1982, 506).

41 It seems that the notion of Mithras as savior, that is the proper soteriology of the divine figure, it should be put in doubt, mostly if we consider the evolution of this and the other cults during Late Antiquity.

42 Beck 2000.

spiritual journey, was provided for the adept, in order to achieve a contact with the deity. Even though some scholars depict this itinerary as a way to reach salvation, during this life or in the afterlife, it seems that the main purpose of such a quest is the purification and achievement of individuals request of the deity. Symbols and grades, some of which can be found in other mysteries, reflect the idea of a ciclicity, and the figures of Cautes and Cautopates well embody this concept. In some respects Mithraism can be compared with the other mysteric cults of Late Antiquity, as there are common features and symbols, but it differs in its representation of a unique scheme of society, in a minor scale, and because it would suggest an eschatological plan, which does not involve the concept of salvation, but rather refers to the ciclicity of life-death, closer with the Persian origins of the cult. Adherents to the Mithraic religion follow a path which leads to a better state and a better connection with the divine entities, but at the same time it does not appear to be a proper soteriological individual plan, but rather a chance to be part of a community, and to express one's own individual religiosity within the selected and restricted group. The concept of salvation, during or after life, will be shaped by a complex and structured system, only with the advent of the religions of the book. Christianity will take the reins, borrowing some elements from the Mithraism (one above all the sun as divine entity), and developing a spiritual discourse based on the possibility of salvation for the believers.

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Soteriologias. Identidades e Salvação é representativo do campo alargado de interesses, dos caminhos de debate trilhados e dos fios de convergência tecidos no CH-ULisboa. Que este volume seja mais um testemunho de que é no conhecimento científico e no trabalho colaborativo, sempre sob o primado da liberdade, da solidariedade e da entreatajuda, que reside a chave para a superação dos desafios que a humanidade enfrenta.

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