



UNIVERSITA' DEGLI STUDI DI VERONA

Dipartimento di Culture e Civiltà
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Dottorato di Ricerca in Arts and Archaeology
Curriculum Archaeology

Ciclo XXXIII

Archaeological Evidence of the Cult of Mithras in Ancient Italy

SSD: L-ANT/07

Realizzata in co-tutela con l'Università di Gand

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Archaeological Evidence of the Cult of Mithras in Roman Italy – Vittoria Canciani

Tesi di Dottorato

Verona, 14th April 2022

Introduction

This thesis focuses on the archaeological traces of the cult of Mithras in Roman Italy. The subject of Mithraism was suggested by my supervisors Prof. A. Mastrocinque and Prof. Dr. F. Vermeulen within the frame of the first year of our Joined Doctoral Program between Verona and Ghent Universities. The choice of an archaeological perspective to approach an historical-religious subject was required both by the sources being mostly archaeological and by my archaeological education.

The aim of this thesis is twofold. The first objective is the update of Vermaseren's CIMRM, which is the catalog of the material evidence of the Mithras' cult published between 1956 and 1960. The number of Mithraic discoveries intervened since then called for an update of the said catalog. The geographical limit has been set within the boundaries of ancient Italy. This area produced enough evidence to support 4-year-long research. The chronological limit has been determined by the chronology of the Mithraic phenomenon, which lasted from the final decades of the 1st century to the early 5th century CE. The method adopted to update CIMRM included: bibliographical survey of archaeological journals, conference proceedings dedicated to the Oriental Cults, and dedicated works; survey of Museums and Superintendence deposits; participation to dedicated conferences. Access to these last two sources suffered a major setback in the last two years because of the Covid-19 outbreak. Nonetheless, the availability of online resources such as Universities' digital libraries and the digital repositories of some major Italian Museums and Superintendence offices were quite helpful in these times of partial or total lockdown. The results of this update can be seen in chapter two of the present thesis. The second objective of this thesis is the comparative analysis of the spatial distribution and organization of Mithraea. The collection of a large amount of data ultimately shaped as a catalog allowed me to select the architectural contexts to develop an in-depth analysis of topographical and architectural topics in order to fill a gap still existing in Mithraic studies. The results of this analysis can be seen in chapter five.

The present thesis is organized into five chapters. The first chapter introduces Mithraism and his religious-historical dimension. After an overview of the scholarly debate on the 'Oriental Cults', some space has been dedicated to the literature review of Mithraic studies, with a specific paragraph devoted to Mithraic

catalogs. The second part of the chapter focuses on the definition of the features of Mithraism: origin and spread, devotees, beliefs, material traces, and demise.

The second chapter consists of the update of CIMRM. The total number of entries is 514, 108 of which are new additions. They are arranged following a geographical order into evidence from northern Italy (nos. 1-48), central (nos. 49-111) and southern Italy (nos. 112-125), Ostia (nos. 126-153), and Rome (nos. 154-285). At the end of the catalog, monuments from Italy but without exact find-spot (nos. 286-306) and finds which are not surely Mithraic or non-Mithraic at all can be found.

The following chapters three and four develop a comment on selected epigraphic (chapter three) and iconographic (chapter four) topics, based on the data collected in chapter two. The epigraphic comment focuses on the phrasings used to address Mithras, on the occasions chosen by the devotee to consecrate a monument to the god, on the social status of devotees, and their grades and priesthoods. The iconographic comment focuses on variations of the tauroctony image, on the supports and sizes it came in, and on the distribution of the occurrences of minor Mithraic subjects.

The fifth chapter focuses on the analysis of the spatial distribution of Mithraea within the urban layout, on the patterns of access of these sanctuaries, and the analysis of their internal organization.

The conclusions summarize the new data we added updating CIMRM and the results of the spatial and architectural analysis of Mithraea.

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Chapter 1

The Cult of Mithras: an historical-religious introduction

1. The Cult of Mithras and the Religion of the Roman Empire

1.1 Religion of the Roman Empire: from civic theology to lived religion

Between the 1st and the 4th century CE the Roman Empire extended from the Atlantic coast of Portugal to the Caucasus and the Persian Gulf and from the Scottish Lowlands to the middle course of the Nile. Almost 50 million people lived in it, with different local histories, identities, and different religions. Yet, even in this multicultural compound, a comprehensive definition of the Religion of the Roman people is both feasible and productive¹. A valid definition of the features of this phenomenon as a civic religion constitutes a profitable framework necessary to guide our research. We define, following the model proposed by J. Scheid², the Roman Religion as a civic and social religion, concerned with the earthly well-being of the community, founded not on dogma or revelation but on the correct performance of rituals. It did not involve mystery initiation or teachings as well as moral code. Social concerns of religion were the division of time, with the definition of the yearly calendar, and space, with the definition of temples, sacred places, and burial grounds. Religious practices consisted of sacrifices, games, processions, festivals, and ritual divination. Priests did not represent a caste, and not everyone who performed religious acts was a priest: public priests (elected and organized in colleges) existed along with citizens who performed religious rituals because of their social role (magistrates, community leaders, *patresfamilias*). Moreover, Roman Religion was polytheistic: the gods of the Romans are innumerable, as the immense amount of publications about single deities can easily demonstrate, each with his/her profile and function. They lived side by side and frequently helped one another. During the history of the Empire, a great number of deities was integrated into the Roman pantheon through processes of syncretic interaction such as the 'Romanization'.

But this conceptual frame does not exhaust the religious practices and rituals of the Roman world. Other dimensions must be integrated in order to understand this multicultural phenomenon. Religious expressions and practices that did not conform to or that cannot be explained only in terms of civic religion gave way to their specific traditions of studies. This is the case of the Oriental Cults (see the paragraph below), of magical arts and superstition, or again of highly philosophical systems such as Gnosticism, or of Judaism and Christianity.

We must also acknowledge that the wide geographic spread of the Roman Empire calls for a dialectic between the Roman Religion, intended as the religion

¹ See the exemplary discussion in Rüpke 2014, pp. 1-18.

² See Scheid 1998 and the recent updates in Scheid 2013.

elaborated in the city of Rome, and the Provincial Religion, intended as the regionally and locally connoted religion³.

Within this multicultural and pluralistic conception of the Roman Religion, the focus of research has recently shifted to new perspectives which explore the actors and actions of religion⁴ and its lived dimension. Going beyond the multifocal perspective, this new approach to an ‘ancient’ field of research affirmed the necessity of integrating the civic and ‘globalized’ Mediterranean model of religion with the lived and individual dimension of religious practice and tradition. A recent multi-authored dossier with the title *Religion in the making: the Lived Ancient Religion approach*⁵ presented an eclectic approach with the long-term aim to provide a new narrative of religious change in the Roman Empire. Three perspectives are outlined as useful for the development of the *lived religion* concept: religious agency, which involves agents of religion, both human and divine, instantiated religion, which comprehends expressing and experiencing religion, for instance in its materiality and documents, and narrated religion, which regards both religious narrative and accounts of religions. In this direction finally moved the even more recent multi-authored publication *Lived Religion in the Ancient Mediterranean World* which⁶ perfectly embodies these new perspectives.

1.2 The question of the “Oriental Religions”: reassessing F. Cumont’s work

At the beginning of the 20th century, a series of lectures given by F. Cumont at the *Collège de France* in Paris and later developed at Oxford University was edited by the author and published with the title *Les religions orientales dans le paganisme romain*⁷. This work canonized a category destined to dominate the history of Classic religions for the next century⁸. In the Belgian scholar’s work, the Oriental Religions meant an array of cults that originated in the East (Asia Minor, Egypt, Syria and Persia) characterized by mystery organization (p. 205) and involved in the after-life salvation of the individuals. Those Oriental Religions invaded the Roman Empire and its dull, cold, and prosaic (p. 28) religious life, with practices and rituals that satisfied both senses and intellect, preparing the ultimate triumph of Christianity (p. 19). In the following century the publication of the monumental series *Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l’Empire romain* edited by M.J. Vermaseren provided a rich *corpus* of documents essential in the development of the study of the Oriental Cults, but it also largely corroborated the apparent conceptual unity of this phenomenon within the Academic community. With the progress of research, criticism toward several Cumontian categories arose⁹ and at

³ See Beard *et alii* 1998, pp. 339-348, and for the most recent developments Rüpke 2014, namely pp. 1-18.

⁴ A comprehensive overview of this field of research can be seen in Gordon *et alii* 2017.

⁵ see Albrecht *et alii* 2018, in particular the introduction at pp. 3-8.

⁶ See Gasparini *et alii* 2020.

⁷ First published in 1906 in Paris by E. Leroux, republished in 1909, and translated in English in 1911.

⁸ For a bibliometric evaluation of F. Cumont’s impact in the following century see Van Hooydonk and Milis-Proost 1999.

⁹ See for example the re-evaluation of the impact of Oriental cults within the overall Roman religions in MacMullen 1981 (in particular pp. 112-118), the analysis and specification of the mystic, mystery, and mysteriosophic definitions applied to the Oriental cults in the works of U. Bianchi and G.

the same time a different, yet parallel, approach to ancient religions was developed¹⁰.

At the end of the 90s', after a century from the first publication of *Les religions orientales*, time had come to proceed with a complete revision of Cumont's work, his impact and his legacy in the 20th-century Academic research. This quite arduous task, inaugurated by C. Bonnet¹¹, was coordinated in the following decade by C. Bonnet, together with J. Rüpke and P. Scarpi, with the contribution of V. Pirenne-Delforge and D. Praet. Four workshops involving different scholars and researchers were organized between 2004 and 2006 within the project *Les religions orientales dans le monde grec et romain*¹². The result they achieved in reviewing F. Cumont's legacy was threefold. First, the figure of F. Cumont was contextualized within the European Academic community of his time¹³. Themes characterizing the late-19th/early 20th century debate on Roman Religion were explored, for instance, the debate around the rise of Christianity and Late Antique paganism, the contemporary teleological and ethical interpretation of the history of religions, and the colonialist view of the East. This historiographical research helped to achieve a better understanding of the cultural *milieu* the Belgian scholar operated in and the reasons for the early and long-lasting fortune of his work¹⁴. Secondly, this evaluation of the historical role of F. Cumont necessarily led to a de-structuration of the concept of Oriental Religion as the Belgian scholar intended them. An array of in-depth analyses showed the heterogeneity of the various religious experiences. The conception of the intrinsic mystery nature of the Oriental Cults was long gone as well as their marked eastern connotation, which has been re-set in terms of "graeco-oriental" or "oriental origin" also by the more affectionate Cumontians¹⁵. But the more relevant progress in this de-constructive stance had surely been the revision of the narrative of the invasion of the Oriental Religions and their forced diffusion in the Empire by means of soldiers, merchants and slaves. We achieved a new understanding of the processes that led to the incorporation of the graeco-oriental deities within the Roman pantheon, approached in term of integration and interaction. The actions of individuals such as priests, small religious entrepreneurs or even individuals and the diffuse use of media such as inscriptions and images played a fundamental role in both these processes of acculturation¹⁶. The third result of the project was finally a positive, constructive one, aimed to establish a renovated approach for the study of graeco-oriental religions. This renovated perspective strongly supports the necessary and productive collaboration of specialists coming from different branches of Classical studies (historians of religion, epigraphists,

Sfameni Gasparro (in Bianchi 1979, and in Bianchi and Vermaseren 1982), and the re-definition of some fundamental features of mysteries in Burkert 1987.

¹⁰ see the Beard *et alii* 1998 and Scheid 1998.

¹¹ See in particular Bonnet 1998 for a synthesis on the first stage of this reassessment of Cumont's work.

¹² See Bonnet *et alii* 2009, p. 6.

¹³ For a full contextualization and critical analysis of *Les religions orientales* by F. Cumont see Bonnet 2006b and Bonnet and Van Haepere 2006.

¹⁴ For Cumont's epistolary see Bonnet 2005, Bongard-Levine *et alii* 2007, Bonnet 2014, and more recently Lannoy *et alii* 2019. For Cumont's works see instead the series of the *Bibliotheca Cumontiana* published by Brepols in eight volumes between 2010 and 2020.

¹⁵ See for example Turcan 1989, pp. 9-13.

¹⁶ See the papers collected in Bonnet *et alii* 2006 and in Bonnet *et alii* 2009.

philologists, archaeologists, etc.), and the necessity of studying ancient religions in terms of interaction, dialogue and convergence. The final result of the project is the affirmation of the validity of the concept of Oriental Cults as a heuristic category rather than a normative one, still useful for approaching Roman religion¹⁷.

2. **Mystères de Mithra, Cult of Mithras, Mithraism: a brief literature review**

2.1 **Studies on Mithraism: a 120-year-old research history**

Although an overview of the literature on the cult of Mithras is needed to contextualize the present research, that of mine will be a brief summary¹⁸ compared to the enormous amount of literature produced on the subject¹⁹. The following review will be developed following a chronological order and will focus on the main general studies and contribution to the study of Mithraism. A paragraph specifically dedicated to the Mithraic catalogs will be developed below.

The founder²⁰ of the modern studies on the cult of Mithras is without any doubt **F. Cumont**. He was the first to collect all of the different sources (both written and archaeological) on Mithraism in a complete catalog, and to elaborate a coherent synthesis of the cult based on this dossier. The product of his work was the publication titled *Textes et Monuments figurés relatifs aux Mystères de Mithra* in two volumes. The second volume, which is the proper catalog, was published in 1896²¹ by H. Lamertin (Bruxelles), whereas the first one, with the analysis of the sources and the synthesis on the cult, was published in 1899 by the same editor. A more current version of the synthesis on the cult appeared in 1900 with the title *Les Mystères de Mithra*, which consisted roughly in the conclusions of TMMM1 stripped of the critic apparatus. This shorter account on Mithraism met a great fortune, being republished even today. It constituted the mainstream on the cult through all the 20th century and still today it constitutes an inescapable starting point for any complete research on Mithraism. In F. Cumont's interpretation, the Mysteries of Mithras consisted in a Romanized form of Mazdaism. Resorting to a famous geological metaphor, the Belgian scholar claimed that the layers of the Iranian, Persian, Near-Eastern and Hellenized Mithras, welded together by history, generated a religious system conceived in an undefined moment by the Magi living in Asia Minor, and exported from there to Rome in the 1st century CE. The army was a perfect carrier for this cult, in particular with regard to the soldiers of Eastern origin, whereas Syrian merchants and slaves, along with low-grade Imperial officers constituted other important vectors for the spread of Mithraism. The

¹⁷ Bonnet *et alii* 2009, pp. 9-11, 14. We mention also a tentative *trait d'union* between this reassessment of Cumont's works and the contemporary rising of the 'lived religion' perspective detectable in R. Gordon's review of C. Bonnet's endeavor in Gordon 2014.

¹⁸ For other extensive summaries see Beck 1984 and Beck 2004.

¹⁹ In 1984 R. Beck counted 486 papers or works on Mithraism from 1899 to 1982 (see Beck 1984, pp. 2099-2114) and between 1982 and 2004 M. Martens added another 633 titles to this count (see Martens and De Boe 2004, pp. 363-386).

²⁰ For the Mithraic studies before F. Cumont see Cumont in TMMM1, pp. XXI-XXVIII and Belayche 2013, pp. XXIII-XXXI.

²¹ The first file of this second volume was published in 1894, while the complete work in four files was finally published in 1896.

Emperors themselves, as F. Cumont noticed, saw favorably the spread of Mithraism because its solar theology implied and endorsed their political supremacy. Relying on figurative monuments, F. Cumont elaborated a coherent theology for the Mysteries of Mithras, complete with a sacred narrative too. The reason for the success of Mithraism (an 'active' ethic and the gratification of the soul through salvation and justice) was his appeal to both uncultured and cultivated devotees.

In the first half of the 20th century, no challenges were made to F. Cumont's overview and the major advancement in the study of Mithraism consisted in **F. Saxl's** *Mithras: typengeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (1931). The main interest of this work was iconographic: after an account of the history of the tauroctony representation, the author focused on the classification of the main cult image and the study of the multi-scene reliefs. An interpretative key was also proposed for the different parts and scenes of these cult images. In the same decade, we must also mention the excellent synthesis of the contemporary Mithraic topics by **A.D. Nock**, with the title *The Genius of Mithraism* (1937).

In the 50s' it was time for the first criticism of F. Cumont's view to arise. **S. Wikander** in his work *Études sur les mystères de Mithras* (1951) challenged the Cumontian assumption of the uninterrupted Oriental filiation of the cult of Mithras. In the scholar's argumentation, the god is Iranian only in the name, but certainly not in his attributes nor his role. Wikander also advanced an alternative birthplace for the Mysteries: the Balkan Peninsula. The iconographic path initiated by F. Saxl was developed by **E. Will** in his *Le relief cultuel gréco-romain* (1955). The major merit of Will's work was to contextualize the existence of the Danubian and Rhenanian Mithraic multi-scene reliefs as a peculiar expression of the Roman Provincial art. He also developed Saxl's classification of the Mithraic reliefs and suggested a penetration route for their iconographic model (supposedly mediated by a Mithraic sacred book of images) coming probably from *Cilicia* through the Adriatic Sea and the Brenner passage and leading then to a double route to the Rhine frontier and the Danube frontier. Another contribution to the study of Mithraic iconography was the paper by **L.A. Campbell** titled *Typology of Mithraic tauroctones* (1954-55), which proposed a classification of the tauroctony reliefs in types and subtypes based on the overall shape of the support and of the scheme of the representation itself. A development based on the iconographic study from the same author is constituted by the monograph published within the EPRO series *Mithraic iconography and ideology* (1968). Here Campbell explored the marginal representations of Mithraic reliefs and gave a decidedly Iranizing re-interpretation of the Mithraic monuments and general system of beliefs with the intention of saving the Eastern-origin thesis of F. Cumont.

In the 1960s essential for the development of the study on Mithraism was the publication by **M.J. Vermaseren** of the *Corpus Inscriptionum et Monumentorum Religionis Mithriacae* (1956-60), in two volumes. The Dutch scholar managed to update F. Cumont's TMMM2: his work became the benchmark for all the following studies on Mithraic material culture and gave a new impulse to research on the subject. M.J. Vermaseren also founded the series *Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain*, which from the 60s' to the 80s' collected further evidence for the cult of Mithras²² (as well as on other Oriental cults).

²² EPRO series hosted twelve monographs on Mithraism between 1971 and 1986. For both CIMRM and EPRO series see in detail in the paragraph below.

The 1970s' were a prolific decade for Mithraic studies: three major international conferences were held (in 1971 at Manchester, in 1975 at Teheran, and in 1978 at Rome/Ostia) and a dedicated scientific journal was created (the *Journal of Mithraic Studies*). The debate about the Mysteries of Mithras was developed and renovated on the basis of new archaeological discoveries and the dialogue between different Antiquity specialists (historians of religions, epigraphists, philosophers, and archaeologists) marked a decisive turning point in Mithraic studies, especially in challenging the mainstream Cumont's thesis, but also shed light on new interpretations and perspectives on Mithraism.

The major theme that emerged from the first international congress of Mithraic studies held in Manchester in 1971 and edited by **J.R. Hinnels** under the title *Mithraic Studies* in two volumes (1975) was the comparison between the features of Iranian Mithraism and Roman Mithraic worship. As it was to be expected, several Cumontian views were challenged, and several were instead developed. The major criticism came from the paper by **R. Gordon**, *Franz Cumont and the Doctrines of Mithraism*, and it was directed in particular towards Cumont's Oriental origin's assumption, that is against the too direct link drawn by the Belgian scholar between Persian Zoroastrianism and the Roman cult of Mithras. Developed themes were, on the other hand: the role of the army in the spread of Mithraism (by **C. Daniels**, *The role of the army in the spread and practice of Mithraism*), iconography and interpretation (**J. Hinnels**, *Reflections on the bull-slaying scene*; **M. Schwartz**, *Cautes and Cautopates the Mithraic torchbearers*; **M.J. Vermaseren**, *A magical time god*), the relationship between Mithras and other deities (**R.E. Witt**, *Some thoughts on Isis in relation to Mithras*; **A. Deman**, *Mithras and Christ: some iconographical similarities*; **U. Bianchi**, *Mithraism and Gnosticism*). A contribution to the socio-historical contextualization of Mithraism came after the congress, but before its publication, from **R. Gordon** in *Mithraism in Roman society: social factors in the explanation of religious change in the Roman Empire* (1972), where the scholar developed further the analysis of the social basis of Roman Mithraism.

The proceedings of the second international conference on Mithraic Studies held in Teheran in 1975 were edited by **J. Duchesne-Guillemin** with the title *Etudes Mithraïques* (1978). As for the question of the origin, a new suggestion for the birthplace of Mithraism was advanced by **P. Beskow**. The scholar suggested a Bosporan genesis for the Mysteries of Mithras: Roman soldiers camped in Crimea toward the end of the 1st century could have adopted Mithras and elaborated the MM thanks to the contact with Iranizing Bosporan guilds. The path of the elaboration of Mithraism through the army was further explored by **M.P. Speidel** in terms of the adoption of the god of the Parthian enemy. The other themes already explored in the first proceedings were further developed, and the Iranizing path of Mithraism was not abandoned but further investigated.

Meanwhile, within the EPRO series, **R. Turcan** published *Mithras platonicus* (1975), an acute analysis of the Platonizing features of Mithraism as it was conveyed to us by the ancient written sources.

Finally, the third international conference was held in Rome (and Ostia) in 1978 and edited by **U. Bianchi** with the title *Mysteria Mithrae. Atti del Seminario Internazionale su 'La specificità storico-religiosa dei Misteri di Mithra, con particolare riferimento alle fonti documentarie di Roma e Ostia* (1979). The major

achievement of this conference was the wide-scope analysis on the historical-religious dimension of the cult of Mithras coordinated by U. Bianchi. After reaffirming the peculiarity of this cult with respect to the other mystery cults and exploring its cultural and religious framework, the fundamental features of Mithraism were exposed (see in particular the contributions of **U. Bianchi** and **G. Sfameni Gasparro** in those proceedings), together with its initiatory and hierarchical structure, its cosmosophic perspective and soteriology. A quite large space was also destined for the publication of discoveries of Roman and Ostian Mithraea (see the contributions of **E. Lissi Caronna**, **S. Panciera**, **M. Guarducci**, **H. Solin**, **V.M. Scrinari**, **D. Gallo**, etc.).

The 1970s marked also the rise of astrological interpretations of different features of Mithraism, destined to become quite popular within the following two decades. Building on the identification of the characters involved in the main cult image with constellations, scholars interpreted the act of Mithras as the representation of a celestial phenomenon or variously identified Mithras with a precise constellation²³. An astrological exegesis of the structure of the Mithraeum as a sacred place was proposed by **R. Gordon** in *The sacred geography of a mithraeum: the example of Sette Sfere* (1976). Moreover **R. Beck**, the most fervent supporter of this perspective²⁴, recently developed an extensive interpretation of Mithraism using astronomical/astrological referents as an essential interpretative key of Mithraic beliefs as published in his *The religion of the Mithras cult in the Roman Empire* (2006).

Between 1976 and 1980 important contributions to the debate on Mithraism, along with discoveries of sanctuaries all around the Empire, appeared in the only three published numbers of the *Journal of Mithraic Studies*²⁵.

The 1980s saw the publication of several synthetic works on Mithraism. The first two are contributions of **U. Bianchi** and **R. Beck** within the series *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* (1984). They represented an attempt to summarize the recent developments in the study of Mithraism respectively from a religious-historical and an historical-archaeological perspective. Moreover, we must acknowledge another synthesis on the cult of Mithras, published by **R. Merkelbach** and titled simply *Mithras* (1984). This book constitutes still the fundamental textbook on Mithraism, condensing in a clear exposition all of the nodal points that emerged in the Academic debate of the previous decades. If in the first part the author analyzed the Iranian, the Persian, and the Hellenistic transformations of god, while presenting the Roman Mithras **R. Merkelbach** suggested also a new account on the genesis of the later Mithraic cult as the work of a single founder²⁶ within the *milieu* of the Imperial entourage in Rome. The analysis of the hierarchic system of the Mithraic grades as well as the brief overall picture **Merkelbach** gave of the Roman Mysteries of Mithras in terms of chronological and geographical coordinates and material culture represented a precise and complete synthesis of the major issues based on the known data. Within this decade we also mention a further

²³ See Speidel 1980, Ulansey 1989, and Beck 1994.

²⁴ For a synthesis see Beck 2004b with previous references.

²⁵ See in particular the contributions of R. Gordon and of R. Beck.

²⁶ After the suggestion of P. Nilsson in his *Geschichte der griechischen Religion* (1961). See Nilsson 1961, pp. 675-6.

analysis on the soteriology of the cult of Mithras by **R. Turcan** with the title *Salut mithriaque et sotériologie néoplatonicienne* (1982).

Another International Mithraic conference took place in 1990 in Rome, as a panel of the annual IAHR congress, and was published by J.R. Hinnells with the title *Studies in Mithraism* (1994). The collected papers aimed to summarize the overall picture of Mithraism as emerged from the research and analysis of the previous decades. Less space was devoted to the Iranian Mithras whereas conversely the regional characterization of the cult of Mithras was finally recognized and analyzed²⁷, along with more interpretative papers²⁸. Several works and papers contributed in the 1990s to further develop key points of Mithraism. First of all, **M. Clauss** entered the Mithraic debate with his two works *Mithras: Kult und Mysterien* (1990) and *Cultores Mithrae: die Anhängerschaft des Mithras-Kultes* (1992). If the first one was a brief and pragmatic reconstruction of the cult in its material and social aspects, the second represented a complete analysis of the epigraphical sources on the devotees of Mithras. M. Clauss voluntarily excluded from his synthesis the Oriental (Iranian, Persian and Commagenian) paths of the cult of Mithras as well as its astrological perspective, leaving behind what he deemed as exhausted and negligible for the comprehension of Roman Mithraism. Based mainly on epigraphic sources of the cult, he stated that Rome should be considered as the birthplace of Mithraism²⁹. On the question of the origins, **R. Beck** advanced a new ‘Cumontian scenario’ (1998). The Canadian scholar suggested identifying the founders of Mithraism within the military and civilian entourage who followed the deposed Commagenian royal family in the third quarter of the 1st century CE. In R. Beck’s view, this mobile group could have been the carrier of the two fundamental traits of Mithraism, namely the Iranian tradition of Mithras-worship and deep astrological knowledge³⁰. Another contribution to Mithraic studies in the 1990s was the analysis developed by **E. Sauer** in *The End of Paganism in the North-Western Provinces of the Roman Empire. The example of the Mithras cult* (1996). The German scholar proposed a quite penetrating analysis of coin assemblages found in Mithraic sanctuaries and of their possible meanings together with an analysis of the archaeological traces of the end of Mithraism in Britain, *Galliae* and northern provinces. This publication consisted of the first systematic use of a proper archaeological approach (largely but not solely numismatic) to a Mithraic topic.

In the 2000s’ the scientific legacy of F. Cumont was extensively revised by the research group led by C. Bonnet as mentioned in the previous paragraph. In the same decade, we assist in the emergence of a new approach to Mithraism, which will be fundamental for the development of the present research: the archaeological approach. If scholars always resorted to material sources while elaborating on Mithraism, an archaeological approach in the sense of the study of the contexts, i.e. the material culture consisting of artifacts, ecofacts, and structures which were

²⁷ See for example the punctual analysis on the spread of Mithraism given by **W. Liebeschuetz** with the title *The expansion of Mithraism among the religious cults of the second century*.

²⁸ See for instance those by **R. Gordon** (*Mystery, metaphor and doctrine in the Mysteries of Mithras*), by **R. Beck** (*In the place of the lion: Mithras in the tauroctony*), and by **L.H. Martin** (*Reflections on the Mithraic tauroctony as a cult scene*).

²⁹ Clauss 1990, p. 32, and Clauss 1992, pp. 253-4.

³⁰ See Beck 1998.

generated by the Mithraic phenomenon, had never been thoroughly developed. The first occasion to embrace this new approach was the conference held in Tienen in 2001 and published by **M. Martens** and **G. De Boe** with the title *Roman Mithraism: the evidence of the small finds* (2004). We report in particular, as a paradigm of this archaeological approach, the analysis of the assemblage found at the Mithraeum of Tienen by M. Martens with the title *The Mithraeum in Tienen (Belgium): small finds and what they can tell us* (2004). It is also worth mentioning the compelling results of the study on small finds such as coin assemblages analyzed in the same proceedings by **E. Sauer** and different papers dedicated to the material culture of Mithraism³¹.

This archaeological approach to Mithraism³² was the key perspective that guided two international conferences in the 2010s'. The first one was held in Tarquinia in 2016 with the title *The Cult of Mithras and Other Mystic Cults in the Roman World*, and subsequently published in 2018 by **P.A. Johnstone, A. Mastrocinque, Cs. Szabo and E. Krähling**. The second one was held in Alba Iulia in 2017 and published a few years later with the title *The archaeology of Mithraism. New finds and approaches to Mithras-worship*, by **M. McCarthy** and **M. Egri** (2020). Both these conferences represented an occasion for the presentation of discoveries of new Mithraic sanctuaries or for revising known evidence within a renovated archaeological approach. This multidisciplinary new take is well exemplified in the introduction of the proceedings of the Tarquinia congress by **P. Johnstone, A. Mastrocinque, A. Russo and L. Takács**.

In the 2010s', in parallel with the ongoing development within the study of the science of Religions, scholars also developed a cognitivist approach to Mithraism³³. Two works should be mentioned in this regard: the first by **O. Panagiotidou** and **R. Beck** with the title *The Roman Mithras cult: a cognitive approach* (2017) and the second by **L.H. Martin** in *The mind of Mithraists: historical and cognitive studies in the roman cult of Mithras* (2015).

On a more interpretative key, we end this brief review on Mithraism with the most recent complete work on the interpretation of the Mysteries of Mithras, which means the publication by **A. Mastrocinque** with the title *The Mysteries of Mithras: a different account* (2017). The author developed here some of the topics appeared in his earlier work *Des mystères de Mithra aux mystères de Jésus* (2009). In A. Mastrocinque's account, Roman Mithraism is re-interpreted in the light of the key concept of the identification of Mithras with the figure of the Roman Emperor. The corollary of this new perspective is the reinterpretation of the scenes of the Mithraic

³¹ See for instance **J. Birds** as well as **R. Gordon** on the small finds, or **M. Thomas, I. Huld-Zetsche**, and **V. Gassner** on Mithraic pottery.

³² Generally speaking, archaeology has had a quite tormented relationship with religion. Difficulties to approach religion from an archaeological perspective were recently underlined by **R. Raja** and **J. Rüpke** in their introduction to the *Archaeology of Religion in the Ancient World* (see Raja and Rüpke 2015, pp. 2-4). If in the past **T. Insoll** underlined a similar awkwardness in the archaeological approach to Religion, with extremes arriving even not to acknowledge the subject (Insoll 2004, pp. 48-52; 67-103), he recently highlighted a major change in tendencies of archaeologists approaching the materiality of religion (from cataloguing material remains to thinking about what they encode; see Insoll 2011, p. 4) and acknowledged a positive development in this previously troubled relationship (Insoll 2011).

³³ The first interest in this approach was advanced in Beck 2006.

narrative within an Imperial mindset strongly rooted in Augustan poetry, contemporary iconography, and Roman Imperial culture in the broadest sense³⁴.

2.2 Focusing on material sources: the catalogs of the Mithraic Mysteries

In this paragraph I will try to outline the main features of the major catalogs of Mithraic sources, tracing their evolution through the last 120 years of Mithraic studies.

Apart from being the initiator of the modern studies on Mithraism, F. Cumont was also responsible for the publication of the first (and still the only) comprehensive catalog of Mithraic sources, which is the second volume of his *Textes et Monuments figurés relatifs aux Mystères de Mithra* (1896). This second volume was published actually before the first one: it was intended to be a corollary to the first volume, which included an extensive comment on the collected evidence as well as the starting point of the reconstruction of the cult of Mithras destined to acquire a life of its own in the following century (see paragraph above). F. Cumont organized his TMMM2 into three parts: the first collects the written sources on Mithraism, the second the epigraphic sources, and the third one the other material sources labeled *monuments figurés*. The written sources are further divided into a first section of Oriental texts³⁵ and a second section of Greek and Latin texts. These latter are excerpts reported with a brief contextualization and without translation. An appendix with the list of theophoric names derived from Mithras concludes this first part of the catalog, counting ca. 90 pages. The epigraphic part consists of the following ca. 95 pages, similarly divided into Oriental inscriptions³⁶ and Greek and Latin inscriptions, grouped following a geographic criterion. Their list is organized in brief entries, each one identified by a progressive number. Each entry reports: progressive number, place of discovery, CIL reference, and transcription of the text. In the case of inscriptions engraved on reliefs or statues, the reference to the corresponding monument is quoted as well. Sometimes a notation on the chronology is present. The larger part of the catalog (ca. 220 pages) consists of the *monuments figurés*. Within this definition, F. Cumont included reliefs and statues of Mithras, as well as Mithraea and their furniture, coins and other small finds. Each entry is identified by a progressive number; the numeration does not follow from the inscriptions but restarts anew. Each entry reports: place of discovery, a synthetic description of the evidence, dimensions, references, and finally a brief description of the object. For complex contexts such as Mithraea containing reliefs and furniture, F. Cumont used supplementary numbering, maintaining a number for the entire context and letters for the related single finds. Drawings (and rare photos) of the monuments are inserted within the text and are numbered separately. In the final part, smaller sections are dedicated to monuments of unsure provenance, monuments of dubious Mithraic value, forgeries and Mithraic gems.

The catalog which replaced TMMM2 half a century later was the *Corpus Inscriptionum et Monumentorum Religionis Mithriacae*, in two volumes, by M.J. Vermaseren. First of all, we should acknowledge a different basic stance in this renovated collection that is derived from a precise choice of the Dutch scholar.

³⁴ See in particular Mastrocinque 2017, chapters two to five.

³⁵ Quoted in translation.

³⁶ Which consist of merely two entries.

CIMRM was born to be a ‘pure’ catalog, a collection of all the known Mithraic material evidence meant to be complete in itself, without a commentary or synthesis. Secondly, in CIMRM, M.J. Vermaseren decided to exclude the literary sources on Mithraism. As for the general disposition and organization of the catalog, all the collected finds are listed in a continuous series of entries that follow a geographical grouping. Each entry bears a progressive identification number (but not the same as F. Cumont’s), a brief classification of the object, dimensions, notes on the context, a list of references, and finally a longer description of the find. Inscriptions represent ambiguous sources: they can be listed as single entries in case of an altar bearing an inscription for instance, but if they were engraved on a figurative monument they are given a new entry number, different from that of its support. A certain proliferation of entries occurs in the case of complex contexts such as Mithraea. An entry number is generally given to the architectural structure of the Mithraeum, and the following numbers usually indicate monuments found within the sanctuary or either cluster of artifacts. The changes that occurred in recording techniques and technology brought on some differences in the structuration of this renovated collection. For instance, photography became the preferred medium when recording statues and reliefs. The graphic documentation of the collected evidence is published in a separate section of each volume: each photograph is numbered autonomously but also reports the reference to the primary identification number used in the catalog. Plans of the sanctuaries are instead published within the text.

In the next decades, within the EPRO series (*Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l’Empire romain*), several publications were dedicated to the update of the catalog of Mithraic evidence, along the guidelines established by CIMRM. If both TMMM2 and CIMRM comprehended finds from all the Empire, the following EPRO publications were dedicated to a specific administrative or geographical area and included different Oriental gods, such as *Isis*, *Mater Magna* and *Attis*, *Iuppiter Dolichenus* and *Sabazius*. The organization of these works comprehended generally a catalog part (structurally similar to CIMRM catalog) and a commentary part.

With specific regard to the update of Mithraic finds coming from Italy, we report only three contributions that conformed to the other European updates within this series: the publication by M. Floriani Squarciapino on the Oriental cults in Ostia (1962), the publication of G. Sfameni Gasparro specifically on the Oriental cults in Sicily (1973), and the publication of V. Tran Tam Tinh on the Oriental cults in Campania (1972). Quite recently, a catalog on the representation of the Mithraic Aion was published by R. Bortolin with the title *Il leontocefalo dei misteri mitriaci: l’identità enigmatica di un dio* (2012). This collection comprehends all of the representation of the Mithraic Aiones found in the Roman Empire. Other dedicated works were published by M.J. Vermaseren and focused on the history and interpretation of a single monument or sanctuary. They are namely the publication on the Ottaviano Zeno’s relief³⁷ and the publications on the Mithraea of S. Maria Capua Vetere, Ponza and Marino³⁸, whereas other two Mithraic sanctuaries were published by other authors in the same series³⁹. Specific contributions on different

³⁷ See Vermaseren 1978.

³⁸ See respectively Vermaseren 1971, Vermaseren 1974, and Vermaseren 1982.

³⁹ See Lissi Caronna 1986 for the Mithraeum of S. Stefano Rotondo and De Spagnolis 1980 for the Mithraeum of Itri.

Mithraea were also collected in the four international conferences quoted above⁴⁰ as well as in the Journal of Mithraic studies⁴¹. Moreover, a publication dedicated to the Mithraeum of S. Prisca by M.J. Vermaseren and C.C. Van Essen was published in 1965 with the title *The excavations in the mithraeum of the church of Santa Prisca in Rome*. The two recently discovered Mithraea of Crypta Balbi in Rome and the Colored Marbles in Ostia were published in the above-mentioned proceedings of the 2001 and 2016 conferences held respectively in Tienen and Tarquinia. These publications of European reach constituted in the last 70 years the fundamental sources of knowledge for Mithraic finds in Italy.

Even on a more national or regional scale, scholars and researchers relied on these sources to delineate local features on the cult of Mithras. On the other hand, discoveries of Mithraic finds were published in national and local journals which struggled to be acknowledged on a European level. Quite exemplary is in this respect the Mithraeum of Duino which, even if briefly mentioned in the first JMS⁴², never reached the European public, and remained almost unknown even within the Italian Academia. The absence of recent synthesis studies on the spread of Mithraism in Italy, apart from the most famous contexts of Rome⁴³ and Ostia⁴⁴ unfortunately reinforced this pattern.

Some recent publications tried to fill this gap, even if only for some definite areas. Within the proceedings of the 2016 conference held in Tarquinia, three papers offered a synthesis on old and new Mithraic finds from the regions of Umbria and Etruria⁴⁵. A paper with a synthesis on the Oriental cults in Samnium appeared recently in a national journal by **C. Ricci** and **A. Di Meo** (2014) and finally, a review

⁴⁰ See for instance the Mithraea of Rome in the proceedings edited by U. Bianchi in 1979.

⁴¹ See for example the contributions of Beck 1976 and Beck 1978 on the Ponza zodiac and Gordon 1976 on the Sette Sfere Mithraeum. We must also mention the re-founding a Journal of Mithraic Studies made in the early 2000s' by R. Gordon, this time in digital format. The *electronic Journal of Mithraic Studies* had a website which hosted the papers from the three historical volumes of the journal, plus new papers and an invitation to upload news about Mithraic discoveries. This venture was ahead of its time, but unfortunately it did not meet the expected success. The site is currently available at the online archive *Way Back Machine* at the address <https://web.archive.org/web/20150224180208/http://www.uhu.es/ejms/>. Part of the files are corrupted and non-readable.

⁴² The Duino Mithraeum appears once in JMS 1, p. 197-9. For an history of the research on this site see Canciani 2020.

⁴³ A brief topographical analysis on the distribution of Mithraea within the city of Rome appeared by **F. Coarelli** in 1979 within the proceedings of the conference *Mysteria Mithrae* (edited by U. Bianchi), followed in 1982 by a paper focusing on a topographical synthesis of the distribution of the Oriental cults in the capitol. Mithraea appears also as proper sanctuaries in the topographical works on the city of Rome, from the *Storia degli scavi di Roma e Notizie intorno le Collezioni Romane di Antichità* by **R. Lanciani**, to the *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae* by **M. Steinby**, to the *Atlas of Ancient Rome* by **A. Carandini**.

⁴⁴ Given the peculiar extension of the excavations in Ostia, and the large available knowledge of the city layout, significantly more were the scholars interested not only in the record of the Mithraea discovered in the city (the account given by **G. Becatti** in 1954 is still a valid resource for the Mithraic architecture of Ostia), but also in the study of their spatial analysis and interpretation. Generally, on Mithraism in Ostia we must mention the publication edited by **S. Laeuchli** with the title *Mithraism in Ostia: mystery religion and Christianity in the ancient port of Rome* (1967). Apart from the brief mention on Mithraic sanctuaries in Meiggs 1973 (pp. 370-5), we can find an accurate analysis of these sacred places in Bakker 1994 (pp. 111-7; 204-7), further developed in recent years by **M. White** (see White 2012).

⁴⁵ See Rubio Rivera 2018, Luciani 2018, and Bastianelli Moscati 2018.

on the Mithraic finds from Aquileia and the high Adriatic coast appeared recently, again in a national publication, by **F. Fontana** (2017) and by **E. Murgia** (2017). We must also report, within the ambitious series promoted by F. Coarelli and J. Scheid with the title *Fana, Tempia, Delubra. Corpus dei luoghi di culto dell'Italia antica*, the publication of the sacred spaces of the cities of Ostia (by F. Van Haeperen in 2019) and Iulia Emona (by E. Murgia in 2018), which included also finds related to Mithraic worship.

The last mention within this overview on catalogs of Mithraic finds must be dedicated to those 'grey literature' works focused on Mithraic subjects. This is the case of four different Doctoral dissertation theses discussed between 2012 and 2020⁴⁶. It must be underlined that these works do not constitute a coherent project, but that they were developed separately on Mithraic subjects which were analyzed following different perspectives. The first one is the thesis with the title *Fuori dall'Urbe. Evoluzione e diffusione del Mitraismo nell'Italia imperiale* by G. Bastianelli, defended in a.y. 2012-2013 in Perugia University. This work focuses mainly on the epigraphical evidence for the cult of Mithras in Italy and updates the epigraphical section of CIMRM with the discoveries until 2008. Other three theses were dedicated to the analysis of the Mithraea of Ostia following an archaeological perspective. They are respectively *Sacra peregrina ad Ostia e Porto: Mithra, Iuppiter Sabazius, Iuppiter Dolichenus, Iuppiter Heliopolitanus* defended by R. Marchesini in a.y. 2012/2013 at La Sapienza Roma University (tutors: prof. M. Caldelli, F. Zevi, F. Van Haeperen), *Edifici di culto non cristiano a Ostia tra IV e V secolo d.C. Il caso dei Mitrei* defended by A. Melega at La Sapienza Roma University in a.y. 2017/2018 (tutors: prof. M. David, prof. F. Stasolla), and *I luoghi di culto mitraico di Ostia* defended by M. Battistini in a.y. 2019/2020 at Ca' Foscari Venice University (tutors: prof. L. Sperti, prof. F. Fontana).

It is patent from this brief review that a general synthesis on the Mithraic finds from Italy has not been tempted from the time of CIMRM. Regional *corpora* were here and there updated, but the new finds from some other areas such as northern Italy are still in need of a sufficient revision.

3. Written sources for the cult of Mithras

After this introduction on the modern literature on Mithraism and Mithraic catalogs, it is time to address briefly the ancient written sources on Mithraism⁴⁷, which will not constitute part of the catalog integrated into this thesis.

Let us begin this overview by saying that we will be concerned with the sources which reported data on Mithraism as it was practiced in the Roman Empire. This means that we do not include in the following overview Cumont's *textes orientaux* and all of those sources that can be ascribed to the pre-Hellenistic life of Mithras. If these more ancient testimonies can surely reveal features and characteristics of

⁴⁶ An earlier Doctoral thesis must be added to this count: *The Archaeological Evidence for Mithraism in Imperial Rome*, defended by A. Griffith in 1993 at the University of Michigan.

⁴⁷ The collection made by F. Cumont in his TMMM2 represents still today a useful tool for approaching written sources on Mithras and Mithraism. We mention also the further selection made by **A.S. Geden** with the title *Select passages illustrating Mithraism* (1925) with the English translation of the texts, and the collection made by **E. Sanzi** *I culti orientali nell'Impero romano. Un'antologia di fonti* (2003), with Italian translation of the texts.

the original Indian and Iranian Mithras⁴⁸, they do not constitute a relevant piece of information for the present research, that is concerned with the material remains of the cult of Mithras in the Mediterranean of the 2nd to 4th century CE⁴⁹.

Following this Mediterranean perspective, the earliest appearance of the Roman Mithras can be recognized in a verse of *Statius*, who refers to him as he ‘who bends the horns that do not want to follow him beneath the Persian caves’⁵⁰. From the last decade of the 1st century CE, we are informed that all the characteristic features of the canonic image of Mithras are known in Rome: the Persian origin of the god, his name, the fight with the bull, and the setting within the cave.

If other Greek and Latin authors seem to refer to the Eastern tradition of a Persian Mithras⁵¹, there is no doubt that Christian authors refer in their accounts to the Roman practice of Mithraism. Despite their first intention being derogatory, they nonetheless inform us about several features of the cult: mentions of the birth of Mithras from the rock, of Mithraic grades, rites and initiations appear in fact in Justin Martyr⁵² and Tertullian⁵³, whereas Origen reports Celsus’ explanation of the celestial system in use within the Persian mysteries⁵⁴. Similarly, we can read mentions of these same topics within the works of Commodian⁵⁵, Arnobius⁵⁶, Firmicus Maternus⁵⁷, Gregory Nazianzenus⁵⁸, and in the following centuries other Fathers of the Church⁵⁹.

⁴⁸ On the sources and analysis of this Eastern Mithras, we must mention the recent work of **I. Campos Mendez**, with the title *El culto del dios Mitra. Orígenes de su culto anterior al mitraísmo romano* (2006). We briefly recall here that Mithras appears in Vedic texts associated with the primeval god Varuna and was worshipped as the god of Truth and Order; furthermore, he will be associated with the first light of the day, the light of dawn. Evidence for a widespread cult of Mithras could be read in the invocation, among other deities, of Mithras in the peace treaty between the Hittite king *Subiluluima* and the king of the Mitanni (ca. 1350 BCE). Moving to Iran, with respect to the scant traces of Mithras worship in the pre-Zoroastrian period, his existence is conversely well attested in the Achaemenid Empire, where, within the Zoroastrian religion, he is worshipped as helper of Ahura Mazda and is even celebrated with a dedicated hymn within the Avesta. In the *Mihr Yašt* he is invoked as a protector of pacts and contracts; he has sharp eyes and cannot be deceived, he dispenses justice and is called with the unique epithet ‘of extensive grazings’ (see Hintze 2014). Traces of the vitality of the worship of Mithras can be read in the long survival of the eponymous festival of the *Mithrakana* (see Gordon 2015, p. 454) and the diffusion of the theophoroi with *Mithra-* among the nobility of the Persian Empire.

⁴⁹ For a synthesis on the ‘voyage’ of Mithras from the East to the West see Bivar 1994, and more recently Gordon 2015. If Mithras worship survived the collapse of the Persian Empire in the middle East, with testimonies of Mithras cult in the reigns of Armenia, Cappadocia, Pontus, and Commagene, it is nonetheless not easy to indicate a precise context for the origin of the Roman cult of Mithras (see below).

⁵⁰ Stat. *Theb.* I 719-720.

⁵¹ See for instance: Herodotus (Hdt. I 131), Ctesias (Ath. *Deipn.* X 45), Xenophon (X. *Oec.* IV 24 and X. *Cyr.* VII 5), Duris of Samo (Ath. *Deipn.* X 45), Strabo (Str. XI 14 and Str. XV 3), Pliny the Elder (Plin. *nat.* XXXVII 10), Quintus Curtius (Curt. IV 13), Plutarch (Plut. *Moralia* 369E, and Plut. *Pomp.* 632CD), and Cassius Dio (Cass. Dio *Hist. Rom.* LXIII 5, 2). Lucian instead refers to the canonic image of Roman Mithras (Luc. *Deor. conc.* IX and *Iupp. trag.* VIII).

⁵² Iust. *I apol.* 66, 4 and *Dial. C. Tryph.* 70, 1; 78, 6.

⁵³ Tert. *adv. Marc.* I 13, 4, and *De bapt.* 5, *De cor.* 15, and *De praescr. haer.* 40, 1-4.

⁵⁴ Orig. *Cels.* I 9 and VI 22.

⁵⁵ Comm. *Instr.* 1, 13.

⁵⁶ Arnob. *Adv. nat.* 7, 10.

⁵⁷ Firm. Mat. *De err. prof. rel.* 4 and 20.

⁵⁸ Greg. Naz. *Orat. IV adv. Iul.* 70 and 89; Greg. Naz. *Orat. XXXIX in Sanct. Lum.* 5.

⁵⁹ See for instance Jerome (Hieron. *Adv. Iov.* I 7; *Epist. 107 Ad Laetam* 2; *In Amos* V 9-10).

Moreover, particularly important for our knowledge of Mithraism are the accounts found in two passages of the philosopher Porphyry. Apart from delivering us the name of two Imperial authors who wrote extensively about Mithraism (Pallas and Eubulus), in a passage of his treatise *De abstinentia ab esu animalium* Porphyry suggested the Mithraic belief in the metempsychosis and reported about several Mithraic grades of initiation⁶⁰. Moreover, in his exegetical treatise *De antro nympharum*, Porphyry reported about the cave setting of the mysteries of Mithras, about their cosmological⁶¹ and spiritual beliefs, and about the use of honey in Mithraic rituals⁶².

Interest in Mithraic theology should be recognized also in the 4th-century *Hymn To King Helios* of Emperor Julian⁶³, who was surely initiated, among other mysteries, also to Mithraism⁶⁴.

The additions to F. Cumont's corpus of written sources are few. They are namely⁶⁵ the Mithraic catechism from Hermupolis and the inscriptions discovered in the Mithraeum of S. Prisca in Rome.

Discovered in 1906 in Hermupolis, the papyrus Berol. 21196 was first documented in the 1970s, and its fragmentary state took another 20 years before it was finally published in 1992 by W. Brashear. The author suggested, based on the lexical and grammatical occurrences within the fragmentary text, to refer this question-and-answer exchange to Mithraic worship⁶⁶ and in particular to an initiation occasion⁶⁷. This document is dated from the 4th century CE.

The inscriptions from S. Prisca consist of 21 lines of text painted on the sidewalls of the main cult room of the homonymous Mithraeum, dated within the first phase of the sanctuary that is in 195-200 CE. They were discovered in the 1940s' and extensively published and commented by M. Vermaseren in 1965. These inscriptions inform us of several images and subjects of Mithraic worship, as well as elements of rituals and ceremonies performed in the sanctuary⁶⁸.

4. General features of the cult of Mithras

4.1 The mysteries of Mithras: religious profile, structures and doctrines

⁶⁰ Porph. *De abst.* II 56; IV 16.

⁶¹ Already mentioned also in Pseudo-Clemens (Ps. Clem. *Hom.* 6, 10).

⁶² Porph. *De antro* 5-6; 15-16; 17-18; 20; 24-25.

⁶³ For an analysis of Julian and Mithras see Mastrocinque 2009 (pp. 21-3, 66-70) and Mastrocinque 2017 (pp. 321-4) with further references.

⁶⁴ As he himself hints (Iul. *Caes.* 38) and as it seems confirmed by Himerius (*Oration VII*, 60; *Panegyric on Julian*, opening words) and Libanius (*Oration 18*, 127).

⁶⁵ We exclude from the present account the so-called *Mithraslithurgie* published in 1910 by A. Dieterich, and recently republished (see Betz 2003). For the exclusion of this document from Mithraic sources of knowledge see also Alvar 2010 (pp. 522-34), Meyer 2012, and Mastrocinque 2017 (pp. 308-12) with further references.

⁶⁶ For the occurrence of the words *πατήρ* (Brashear 1992, p. 38), *λέων* (Brashear 1992, p. 38), and *λεοντ(ε)ίω* (Brashear 1992, pp. 27-8).

⁶⁷ The dialogue does not represent the report of an actual conversation, but more of a canvass, of instructions for reference in a future conversation, with didactic intention (see Brashear 1992, pp. 13-15).

⁶⁸ See catalog 202g.

Mithraism⁶⁹ consisted of a mystery and mystoriosophic cult focused on the god Mithras⁷⁰. The mystic connotation consists in the presence of a divine vicissitude which realizes a close interference between the human, divine and cosmic world⁷¹. Mithras was a dynamic god, who, after several labors, fought the bull in the cave and finally ascended to Heaven escorted by Sol⁷². The mystery dimension of the cult implicated an initiation of the devotee through a precise ritual and formulas, and the belief in an ultra-mundane soteriological perspective. Initiation rituals are testified both by written and material sources⁷³. As for Mithraic soteriology, there is no doubt Mithras was a savior god⁷⁴. And even if the theory of the Mithraic metempsychosis read in Porphyry should be treated with caution due to the Platonist perspective of the author⁷⁵, it seems nonetheless possible to agree with R. Turcan's statement of the bio-cosmic soteriology of Mithraism, rooted within this world and seen ultimately as the safety provided by life over death⁷⁶.

Written and material sources⁷⁷ inform us about Mithraic cosmology as well, and about the close relationship between cosmology, grade system, and Mithraic theology⁷⁸.

Mithraic communities⁷⁹ were organized in a hierarchy of initiatory grades. These were seven in number, each placed under the protection of a tutelary planetary deity, each requiring a ritual of passage, and each characterized by specific symbols and attributes. They were namely⁸⁰: 1) the grade of *corax* (the raven), under the protection of Mercury; 2) the grade of *nymphus* (the bridegroom), under the protection of Venus; 3) the grade of *miles* (the soldier), under the protection of Mars; 4) the grade of *leo* (the lion), under the protection of Jupiter; 5) the grade of *perses* (the Persian), under the protection of Luna; 6) the grade of *heliodromus* (the courier of the Sun), under the protection of Sol; 7) and finally the *pater* (the father), under the protection of Saturn.

⁶⁹ I am aware of the danger of using this *-ism* regarding the cult of Mithras, as already pointed out by R. Gordon (see Gordon 2007, p. 395): I will preferably use the more neutral 'cult of Mithras' in the following chapters, even if here and there Mithraism will inevitably resurface as a synonym.

⁷⁰ See the *prolegomena* and *epilegomena* by U. Bianchi in the proceedings of the conference *Mysteria Mithrae*, and moreover Bianchi 1984.

⁷¹ Bianchi 1979, pp. 12-3.

⁷² Sfameni Gasparro 1979, p. 318.

⁷³ For the written sources see for instance the references to Tertullian and Justin Martyr just above, whereas for material sources see for example the fresco depictions within the Mithraeum of S. Maria Capua Vetere (catalog **113d** and **113f**). For a brief overview on the initiations within Mithraic mysteries see also Bremmer 2014, pp. 125-141.

⁷⁴ As discussed for example in Turcan 1982.

⁷⁵ See in particular the criticism of R. Turcan in Turcan 1975, pp. 62-89.

⁷⁶ See Turcan 1982.

⁷⁷ For the written sources see for instance the references to Origen and to Porphyry just above, whereas for material sources see for example the mosaic floor of the *Mitreo delle Sette Sfere* in Ostia (catalog **136**) or that of the *Mitreo delle Sette Porte* in Ostia as well (catalog **142**).

⁷⁸ On Mithraic cosmology as a key perspective for interpreting the Mysteries of Mithras see Beck 2004.

⁷⁹ Or at least some of them. See the criticism of Clauss 1990, pp. 26-7.

⁸⁰ For a synthesis on Mithraic grades and on the issues raised about their value see Chalupa 2008. See also Mastrocinque 2017 (pp. 5-10) and for a further analysis of the importance of the grade of *leo* see pp. 16-20.

Mithraic theology has been reconstructed based on these same sources: Mithraic devotees worshipped a pantheon of seven planetary deities plus three hyper-cosmic gods that were Mithras and the Mithraic Aiones⁸¹.

As a last note, we must add that Mithraism did not receive any public funds nor it had public temples, but it rather adopted a more private and secluded profile, being Mithraic temples located within semi-public or either private buildings and being the communities self-financed or reliant on wealthy patrons. A number of priestly roles are known from epigraphical records: we can have priests of Mithras, *sacerdotes*, sometimes further characterized by the titles of *prosedens/prosidens*, or *antistes*⁸².

4.2 The origin of the cult of Mithras

The search for a time, place and face for the origin of Mithraism has long been debated among scholars and is still an open issue in Mithraic studies. The ‘strong Iranian hypothesis’, that means the narrative of the uninterrupted tradition going from the Persian Mazdaism to Roman Mithraism through the action of the mages travelling from royal court to royal court advanced more than a century ago by F. Cumont⁸³ can be considered nowadays ‘outmoded’. After the 1970s criticism of this thesis and the uncovering of new archaeological evidence, more and more scholars started looking in the Near East for a place of birth for Roman Mithraism, proposing a ‘mild Eastern thesis’ that could still work within a Cumontian scenario. The Eastern origin of Mithraic mysteries was out of the question, but its offspring from a Hellenized form of Mithras worship seemed more plausible than the ‘uninterrupted tradition’ narrative. The vectors which brought Mithras worship to the rest of the Roman Empire were variously identified⁸⁴. The more recent proposition in this sense was advanced by R. Beck, who suggested identifying the founders of Roman Mithraism within the military and civilian entourage who served the deposed Commagenian royal family in the third quarter of the 1st century CE. In this picture, Roman Mithraism should be considered as the development of a Mithras cult practiced within the royal court of Commagene⁸⁵.

More radical was instead the position of other scholars, who saw Mithraism as a cult that originated in the Roman Empire thanks to the elaboration by a ‘genius of Mithraism’⁸⁶. This is the position of R. Merkelbach, who suggested recognizing a founder both versed in the Persian religion and well-connected with the Roman society, based on the contents of the new cult and on the social status of the first known devotees. Mithraism was then elaborated by this single founder who had

⁸¹ See Mastrocinque 2017, chapter 6.

⁸² For a further explanation of these nomenclatures see Mitthof 1992 and Gordon 2001. See also *infra* chapter 3.

⁸³ See F. Cumont’s famous layer metaphor in TMMM1, p. 240.

⁸⁴ The Cilician pirates mentioned by Plutarch were responsible for the transmission of Mithras-worship from the Near East to Italy in the opinions of both E. Will (see Will 1955, p. 165 and Will 1978, p. 528) and R. Turcan (pp. 28-9). P. Beskow proposed instead a birthplace in the Crimean Peninsula (Beskow 1978, pp.), whereas R. Gordon suggested instead to look in Anatolia (Gordon 1978).

⁸⁵ See Beck 1998, particularly pp. 121-2 and Beck 2004, where the author added the figure of the astrologer *Titus Claudius Balbillus* to the equation.

⁸⁶ After the suggestion of P. Nilsson, see above.

access to the Imperial entourage in Rome in the 1st century CE. Imperial officials and soldiers would have then exported the cult to other regions of the Empire⁸⁷. This view was embraced by M. Clauss, who suggested locating in Rome and Ostia the birth-places of Mithraism⁸⁸ and by M. Vermaseren⁸⁹.

Written sources inform us that Romans believed that the Mysteries of Mithras came from the East, mentioning even that Zoroaster in person was the initiator of the worship within the cave⁹⁰. The perception of a Persian origin of the Mithras cult is strong in the written accounts, and a sort of ‘Persianism’ is evident in several features of Mithraism⁹¹, but nonetheless, any precise historical indication of the time and place of birth of the Mysteries of Mithras lacks.

If we turn to look at material evidence, the contemporary appearance of Mithraic evidence between the last decades of the 1st and the first quarter of the 2nd century CE in different areas of the Empire does not solve the question, but at least gives us some more elements to consider while pondering on the first Mithraists. Within this time span, we can recognize the presence of Mithraic inscriptions in Rome⁹², as well as⁹³ the building of Mithraea in *Germania superior* and in *Raetia*, the presence of Mithraic inscriptions in *Pannonia superior* and *Moesia inferior*, and the building of a Mithraeum in the Near East as well.

As a last remark, we can observe that this scattered evidence cannot confirm either one thesis or the other, nor entirely disprove one of them. More than solving the problem, it could be useful to ask different questions, changing the perspective we used to look at the problem. Instead of ‘when and where was Mithraism born?’ and ‘who invented it?’ it could gain some new insights by asking instead ‘what relation does the first places of Mithraism share?’ ‘Who were the first Mithraists?’ ‘Why did they choose to worship Mithras?’.

4.3 The spread of Mithraism between mid-2nd and 3rd century CE

From the mid-2nd to all the 3rd century Mithraism spread throughout the Empire: from Britannia to Egypt and from Lusitania to Syria, all the Roman provinces knew the Persian god. Particular concentrations of Mithraic finds can be recognized in Rome (and Ostia), Germania Superior, Pannonia, and along the Danube frontier in Dacia and Moesia. Mithraism was spread in Rome and Ostia among people of generally humble and middle condition, rarely including higher rank citizens⁹⁴. The same consideration applies in these centuries to the rest of the Empire⁹⁵. In areas such as Dalmatia, Raetia and Noricum, Pannonia, Moesia and Dacia custom

⁸⁷ Merkelbach 1984, pp. 95, 179.

⁸⁸ Relying on the most ancient datable evidence and on the most widespread evidence of the cult. Clauss 1992, p. 30.

⁸⁹ See Vermaseren 1978, pp. 28-9.

⁹⁰ See Porphyry in the paragraph above.

⁹¹ See the analysis in Gordon 2015.

⁹² See catalog 165 and 265.

⁹³ For all of the following sites see the analysis made by A. Chalupa in Chalupa 2016, with further references.

⁹⁴ See the analysis in Bakker 1994, pp. 116-7. Moreover, for Ostia and Rome see Clauss 1992, pp. 16-32 and 32-42.

⁹⁵ As pointed out in Gordon 1972 and Clauss 1992.

officials surely played an important role in the spread of the cult⁹⁶, which became popular within the local elites too. The army should be recognized as another important vector in the spread of Mithraism, but this statement needs to be tempered⁹⁷. If the role of the army is especially evident in Britannia, in Africa Proconsularis, and Syria, we should also note that in all the other areas soldiers do never represent the majority of the devotees⁹⁸ making Mithraism not a religion of soldiers, but a religion partly brought by soldiers and diffused in mixed civilian and military communities.

The spread of Mithraism in a territory so wide and among communities with different local identities brought to the construction of different associations between the Persian god and local deities. If between *Gallia Lugdunensis* and *Gallia Belgica* Mithras was frequently associated with Apollo and salutary springs⁹⁹, in *Germania Superior* the common association was with Mercury and moreover, Mithras was often worshipped within the local pantheon¹⁰⁰.

Moreover, local features of the cult are known from material sources and have been observed by several scholars¹⁰¹, but an overall picture of these divergencies among Mithraic communities has not been developed yet¹⁰².

4.4 Mithraic images

The main material expression of Mithraism is without any doubt the representation of the god and his assistants on various supports, mainly reliefs, but also statues and frescoes, and sometimes (but rarely) on pottery and metal plaques.

The most recurrent subject depicting Mithras is the tauroctony. In the center of the scene, inside a cave, Mithras is caught in the act of wounding the bull with his dagger. The god is dressed in a long-sleeved tunic, *anaxyrides*, closed shoes, Phrygian hat. A cloak fastened on his right shoulder by a brooch is flying behind his back. With his left hand, the god grasps the muzzle of the bull by the nostrils, while with the right hand he sinks the dagger in the shoulder of the animal. The bull is usually subdued, pressed under the god, one of the forelegs thrusting in the last moment of the fight. Usually, the tongue of the animal protrudes from the muzzle. Ears sprout from its tail. Beside the body of the animal, the snake slithers on the ground and heads to leap at the blood spilling from the wound. Similarly, the dog, located in front of the bull, stands on its hind legs and heads to leap at the spilling blood. The scorpion is located under the bull and is piercing at the testicles of the dying animal. On the top left of the scene usually, the raven is represented. It is caught perched on the edge of the flying cloak of Mithras or the edge of the cave or

⁹⁶ See for example Claus 1992, pp. 297-300 for the role of the *familia* of the *Publicum Portorium Illyrici* in the spread of Mithraism between Gallia Cisalpina, Dalmatia, Noricum, Pannonia Superior, Dacia and Moesia Inferior.

⁹⁷ See Gordon 2009 for a critical analysis on the concept of Mithraism as the religion of soldiers.

⁹⁸ Less than 20% of the devotees nominated in Mithraic inscriptions are soldiers, as shown in Claus 1992, pp. 267-9.

⁹⁹ See Roy 2013 for an analysis of the phenomenon.

¹⁰⁰ See for instance the contexts of the sanctuaries CIMRM 1040, 1052, 1082, 1158, 1209, 1246, 1282, 1313, and 1335.

¹⁰¹ See for example the discussion about the value and meaning of the seven grades which has been recently synthesized in Chalupa 2008.

¹⁰² See Adrych 2021 for a critical analysis of the so-called 'Mithraic norm'.

either flying toward the god. The torchbearers flank this scene: both are dressed in Persian attire (the same as Mithras) and stand on each side of the group holding a lit torch in their hands: Cautes with the torch pointing upward, while Cautopates with the torch pointing downward. The torchbearers can also constitute stand-alone subjects and specific dedicatory inscriptions to either Cautes or Cautopates are known too. Outside the cave, in the upper corners of the scene, Sol (on the left) and Luna (on the right) are represented. The two deities can appear as busts or as full figures, each driving his own chariot. Regional variations can comprehend the addition of side scenes (see below) or of the element of the snake and lion beside the gushing water vessel.

The second most widespread Mithraic subject is the birth of Mithras from the rock, represented usually in statues and reliefs. The god is represented from the navel up, emerging from a rock¹⁰³, naked, with the exception of the Phrygian hat and sometimes of the cloak. The god is frontal and he holds in his outstretched hands a dagger and a lit torch, both pointed upward.

The only other stand-alone subject in Mithraic images is the *Transitus* that is Mithras dragging the bull on his back. The god, dressed in the usual attire, drags the bull on his back and shoulders: he is slightly bent forward and grasps the animal by his hind legs.

Both the previous subject can appear as stand-alone subjects or be included in the scenes of the multi-scene reliefs (see below).

The banquet of Mithras and Sol constitutes another relevant Mithraic image. It appears one time as a stand-alone subject¹⁰⁴, several times as the counter-part of the tauroctony scene, being represented on the obverse of double-face reliefs¹⁰⁵, and more common among the subjects of multi-scene reliefs. The scene is focused on Mithras and Sol reclining at a banquet table. They are dining: sometimes food is represented in front of them, sometimes they hold in their hands drinking horns. Sometimes they are attended by the torchbearers whereas sometimes by different assistants, with raven or lion masks¹⁰⁶.

Moreover, sometimes¹⁰⁷ the tauroctony scene can be accompanied by small scenes of the deeds of Mithras, represented at a smaller scale and located around the major subject¹⁰⁸. Among these minor scenes, we will mention here only the more common. Usually located on the left of the tauroctony, the scenes of Jupiter fighting the Giants, the dream of Saturn, and Mithras' birth from the rock constitute the most famous¹⁰⁹. We can have then some scene involving the bull (the bull on a

¹⁰³ Mithras is represented in this scene as a young male (61% of the cases recorded by I. Neri), more rarely as an adolescent (18% of the cases) and more rarely as a baby (6%). See Neri 2000 for an account of these calculations as well as for an analysis on the variations of this Mithraic subject.

¹⁰⁴ See the relief published in Schwertheim 1974, n. 144, pp. 188-9.

¹⁰⁵ As in CIMRM 397, 635, 641, 798 (here on the same side of the tauroctony scene), 1083, 1137, 1896. See also the relief published in Zotović 1978 and catalog 42*.

¹⁰⁶ See CIMRM 1896 and catalog 181.

¹⁰⁷ Of the known reliefs representing the tauroctony scene, ca. 35% include other scenes besides the central one. This custom was particularly diffused in Germania Superior, Dacia, Thracia and Moesia, but was known also in the rest of the Empire (For Italy, see chapter 4).

¹⁰⁸ For the different schematics of the disposition of minor subjects in multi-scene reliefs see Will 1955, Gordon 1980, and Beck 1984.

¹⁰⁹ For their interpretation we refer to the analysis of A. Mastrocinque, who convincingly explained their meaning through the lens of the Imperial ideology (Mastrocinque 2017, chapter 3).

boat and the bull in the small house) for which no convincing explanation has still been advanced. Another scene with Mithras, particularly common in the northern provinces virtually unknown in Italy¹¹⁰ is that of the so-called water miracle. We see here Mithras shooting an arrow in the direction of a rock and a liquid bursting suddenly from it¹¹¹. Finally, located usually on the right side of the tauroctony, we can find other scenes involving the characters of Mithras and Sol. They are namely¹¹²: Sol kneeling before Mithras, Sol and Mithras shaking hands, the banquet of Mithras and Sol, and finally Mithras and Sol on Sol's *quadriga* ascending to the heavens.

4.5 The leontocephalic deity and the Mithraic Aiones

Another figure which recurs in some Mithraic sanctuaries is that of the leontocephalic deity¹¹³. We can reasonably infer that the name the Mithraists gave to this figure was *Arimanius*, as testified by a statue with an engraved dedicatory inscription found in York¹¹⁴. The most common representation of this deity features a standing male figure, usually naked, with a lion head. Two (or more rarely one) pairs of wings are attached on his back, at the shoulders and the waist. His body is encircled in the coils of a snake who rests its head on top of the lion head. Usually, the figure has the arms crossed on the chest and holds in the hands a key and a scepter. A specific connection between this figure and the principle of fire can be observed in some monuments, where he is depicted breathing fire¹¹⁵.

More rarely, this deity was represented with a human head¹¹⁶. As abundantly and clearly explained by A. Mastrocinque¹¹⁷, these two deities together with Mithras represented the Mithraic Aiones and constitute the supreme triad of Mithraism which governed the entire cosmos. The lion-headed god, in particular, collected in himself several characteristics which made him a chief figure within the Mithraic mysteries: he incarnated the primordial principle of death and generation; he was a father god of the dead like Hades/Dispatier and like Chronos-Heracles¹¹⁸, but he was also like Herakles/Sandas¹¹⁹, and a god of the time constricted by Ananke/the snake¹²⁰.

¹¹⁰ See catalog **105a***, **155e***, **175a** and the comment in chapter 4.

¹¹¹ M. Clauss suggested identifying this substance with water (Clauss 2001, pp. 71-3).

¹¹² Also for the interpretation of these scenes in an Imperial perspective see Mastrocinque 2017, chapter 5.

¹¹³ For an account of the occurrence of this figure within the Roman Empire see the recent catalog by **R. Bortolin** with the title *Il leontocefalo dei misteri mitriaci: l'identità enigmatica di un dio* (2012).

¹¹⁴ See CIMRM 834.

¹¹⁵ See catalog **173b**. We also mention the presence of holes in the mouth of monument **240**, possibly used for creating pyrotechnic effects.

¹¹⁶ Only 2 out of a total of 52 leontocephalic deity representations presents the human head instead of the lion head (see Bortolin 2012). In these cases, the Mithraic attribution of these figures is out of the question, but generally, the deity known as Aion was worshipped also within the Isiac and Syrian temples and was identified by slightly different attributes (see LIMC, Aion).

¹¹⁷ See Mastrocinque 2009 (pp. 46-70) and Mastrocinque 2017 (pp. 207-240).

¹¹⁸ Borrowing from contemporary Orphic sources: Mastrocinque 2009, p. 217 and 224.

¹¹⁹ Mastrocinque 2009, pp. 51-3.

¹²⁰ See Mastrocinque 2017, p. 217.

4.6 Mithraic material culture: Mithraea and their furniture

The places where devotees met to worship Mithras, which we refer to with the modern term Mithraea¹²¹, were known among ancient contemporary sources as *spelaea*¹²². A single testimony of a *leonteum* is also known: this term could indicate a specific room or place where the devotees of the *leo* grade met¹²³. The written sources state that the original place chosen to worship Mithras by Zoroaster himself was a natural cave, and for this reason from then on the devotees dedicated to Mithras caves, either natural or artificial. The architectural evidence from Mithraea reveals a quite uniform master plan in the layout of the main cult room, usually entered after passing through an antechamber, and sometimes added with small ancillary rooms. The Mithraeum proper consisted of a rectangular room of ca. 15x8 m which could host small groups of 30 to 50 people. Two benches, usually referred to in the literature as *podia*¹²⁴, were built against the long sides and used as dining beds. A central empty space gave access to the end of the room where the main cult image was located, consisting of either a fresco or a relief representation of the tauroctony. Other omnipresent furniture consisted in altars and often also in statues (or reliefs) of the torchbearers or of other subjects connected with the Mithraic cult (see above). The Ostian Mithraea revealed quite rich mosaic floors, dense with symbols popular within the cult¹²⁵. Other figurative representations connected to the cult could be hosted in the front of the benches and frescoed on the walls of the Mithraeum, as the initiatory rituals depicted on the front of the benches in S. Maria Capua Vetere Mithraeum¹²⁶.

Among the expressions of the Mithraic material culture, we can recall some examples of dedicated pottery products and metallic objects too.

In a few cases, Mithraism was popular enough to be included within the iconographical repertory of red slipware potters. It happened in Gallia Lugdunensis at Lezoux, a renowned center of production of Gaulish Terra Sigillata, where a jar with molded tauroctony representation was found in the potters' quarters, together with the matrix used to make it. Another molding for a torchbearer figure came from the same site¹²⁷. Also in Germania Superior at *Tabernae*/Rheinzabern, center of production of fine wares, some potters produced vessels with Mithraic subjects¹²⁸. Some matrixes with tauroctony scene were also found in Gallia Belgica,

¹²¹ For a still current definition of the architectural features of a Mithraeum see White 1990. Moreover, see chapter 5.

¹²² or more rarely as *templum*, *fanum* or *crypta*. See chapter 5.

¹²³ See catalog 55* and discussion in chapter 5.

¹²⁴ But attested in inscriptions as *praesepia*, see CIMRM 233. See also Mastrocinque 2018 for an explanation of this quite peculiar term to indicate dining beds.

¹²⁵ See catalog 136a-d, 141a, and 142b-c.

¹²⁶ See catalog 113e-f.

¹²⁷ The jar (CIMRM 908c1-2) was a Dragendorff-Déchelette 72 type, dated in the early 3rd century CE. For the mold with torchbearer see CIMRM 908c3. Fragments of a plate and a bowl with tauroctony representation in red slip ware were found also in Alesia (CIMRM 937-938), but their production site (not a local one) is uncertain.

¹²⁸ The vessel in question is a fine ware jar dated between the late-2nd and the early-3rd century CE, found in the Mithraeum of Biesheim (Gordon 2004, p. 269). See also Gordon 2004 (p. 269) for another tauroctony representation on fine ware pottery from the Mithraeum of Pfaffenhofen am Inn.

in Trier's pottery workshops¹²⁹. Moreover, from the same city, a plate with the representation of the banquet of Mithras and Sol and a dish with Cautes came to light¹³⁰. In all these cases we are dealing with fine ware products of medium and high quality destined to the regional market. Mithraic subjects result extremely rare and constituted a specialized artifact produced in limited quantities for Mithraic devotees.

Quite similar, but even rarer, is the case of Mithraic representations issued on African red slipware. Only two examples are known: a bowl found in *Lavinium*, bearing a representation of the tauroctony and the *transitus* scene¹³¹ and a fragment of a bowl with tauroctony scene found in Rome¹³². Mithraic representations are seldom known also on silver and bronze plates¹³³, confirming the rarity of appearance of these subjects on expensive objects.

Other more cursive versions of the medium and high-quality pottery exposed above can be found among peculiar decorations recorded on the coarse wares of some Mithraic assemblages. It is the case of coarse ware products which bear subjects that can be related to the cult, such as snake appliques¹³⁴, or other symbols associated with the Mithras cult¹³⁵.

A personal testimony of Mithraic devotion was also expressed through the use and dedication of small and portable objects¹³⁶. Within this category, we can list: gems with Mithraic subjects¹³⁷, unique personal ornaments¹³⁸, and miniature reliefs of the tauroctony¹³⁹. Peculiar is the case of the small lead-glazed relief with tauroctony discovered near Perugia, which constitute a curious addition to this overview of Mithraic small finds (see **65a***).

4.7 The end of Mithraism

¹²⁹ CIMRM 994 reported three fragments of a plate with tauroctony scene. They should be identified with fragments of two (or three) matrixes for applique decorations (see Gordon 2004, note 70, p. 269). For similar finds from Trier see also Walters 1974, appendix B, nr. 7a and 7b.

¹³⁰ CIMRM 988. The vessel was found at the site of the Roman cemetery near St. Matthias Abbey in Trier. See Walters 1974, n. 9a.

¹³¹ The vessel is a Hayes 53 type, dating from the second half of the 4th to the early 5th century CE. See catalog **109**.

¹³² And currently preserved in Bonn, see catalog **278**. The type is again a Hayes 53, dating between the second half of the 4th and the early 5th century CE.

¹³³ CIMRM 1206 from Stockstadt-1 mithraeum, CIMRM 1216 from Stockstadt-2 mithraeum, and CIMRM 1727 from *Brigetio* mithraeum.

¹³⁴ See for instance vessels with applied snake decoration found in the Vulci Mithraeum (catalog **71d***). Nonetheless, snake applied decoration was not only a Mithraic-related feature: see for example Alicu 1980 and Giacobbi 2016.

¹³⁵ See for example the assemblages found in different Mithraea published in Martens and De Boe 2004.

¹³⁶ For an account of the finds listed in this category see Gordon 2004, pp. 273-278.

¹³⁷ Which could either be simply Mithraic or contain also magical features. See Gordon 2004, pp. 276-278 and Faraone 2013, pp. 5-8 (here, the American scholar refers to all these miniature tauroctonies as amulets).

¹³⁸ As the bronze brooch from Ostia CIMRM 318. For the two coins (CIMRM 27 and CIMRM 827) reworked for a Mithraic devotional purpose see the observation of Gordon 2004, p. 275.

¹³⁹ I think these artifacts should be considered as portable images of the main cult image eventually dedicated as ex-voto more than as personal talismans, in analogy with the context of provenance of the miniature relief of *Caesarea Maritima* (see Bull 1975).

The 4th century represented a moment of change for Mithraism. A decline in the dedication of altars is evident at the beginning of the 4th century CE. The last datable monuments from Britannia, Germania Superior, Noricum, Pannonia Superior and Moesia Inferior are all dated within the first decades of the 4th century CE¹⁴⁰. A decrease is also evident in the number of newly-founded Mithraea as well as in the restored temples all across the Empire¹⁴¹. By the mid-4th century, the cult was still alive and a certain degree of regional differentiation in Mithraic architecture and iconography has been noticed too¹⁴², as well as changes in ritual practices¹⁴³. At the same time, a number of the known Mithraea met their end: they were either violently destroyed (mostly along the Rhine frontier) or abandoned (generally in the interior provinces and Italy)¹⁴⁴. Different factors can be recalled for explaining this reduced support to Mithraism material expressions such as the decline of population in some of the sites where Mithraea were located, the contraction and changes within the social basis of Mithraism¹⁴⁵, and finally the rising of an ecumenical religion such as Christianity and the effect of the Imperial anti-pagan laws.

The latest testimonies of Mithraic devotion in Italy are represented by the dedications of a small number of senators in Rome dated within the third quarter of the 4th century CE. Whereas in the group of inscriptions from the Vatican *Phrygianum*¹⁴⁶ Mithraism is only one among the many pagan cults these senators paraded, in the group of the S. Silvestro in Capite Mithraeum¹⁴⁷ we can recognize a more specific Mithraic intent as well as the preeminence of a single family in the continuation of the cult. Both these phenomena should be contextualized within the widest frame of the ‘pagan revival’¹⁴⁸. Mithraism in Rome reveals a still popular character in the early 4th century CE also among less noble devotees, as testified by the continued use of several Mithraea¹⁴⁹ (Caracalla Baths, Crypta Balbi, Circus Maximus). Within the first decade of the 5th century also the three latest Mithraic temples in Rome, Ostia, and Syria were abandoned¹⁵⁰, signing the final demise of the cult of Mithras.

¹⁴⁰ See respectively CIMRM 825; CIMRM 1314; CIMRM 1414 and 1431; CIMRM 1614 and 1698; CIMRM 2279.

¹⁴¹ See Walsh 2019, pp. 126-127.

¹⁴² For Northern provinces see Walsh 2019, pp. 20-25, whereas see Gnoli 2017 for Eastern provinces (with further references).

¹⁴³ See Walsh 2019, pp. 30-33.

¹⁴⁴ For a detailed and updated analysis of the question of the destruction/abandonment of Mithraea in the 4th century see Walsh 2019, pp. 68-93.

¹⁴⁵ See Walsh 2019, pp. 56-60.

¹⁴⁶ See catalog **209a-d**.

¹⁴⁷ See catalog **183a-f**.

¹⁴⁸ See Cameron 2011, in particular pp. 142-153.

¹⁴⁹ With particular reference to the Late Antique characters of Mithraism in Rome see the recent works of Bjørnebye 2015a, Bjørnebye 2015b.

¹⁵⁰ For the Crypta Balbi Mithraeum see Ricci 2004 (p. 64), whereas for the Mithraeum of the Colored Marbles see David 2018 (p. 129). For the Hawarte Mithraeum see Gawlikowski 2007, p. 341.

Chapter 2

For an updated catalogue on Mithras and Mithraism in Italy

1. Introductory guide

1.1 Updating and Upgrading

As mentioned in the previous chapter, seventy years of studies and discoveries called for an update of CIMRM. This update consists of two parallel achievements: first of all, the integration of recent discoveries within the catalogue of Mithraic finds from Italy, and secondly the update of CIMRM records. The update of previous entries consists of a review of the Mithraic attribution of the records, translation of inscriptions, autoptic exam of the monuments¹⁵¹, and updates on references, state and place of preservation. The basic source for the present catalog has thus been CIMRM itself. As for recent discoveries, news of Mithraic finds was looked for among several literary sources. A primary source has been the series EPRO (*Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain*, published by Brill), which published single finds as well as Mithraea between the 1960s and the 1990s. Equally fruitful was the survey of the three existing issues of the *Journal of Mithraic Studies* as well as of the international journal *L'Année épigraphique* from 1960 onwards. The review of Italian archaeological journals from 1960 onwards constituted a further step in the search for new Mithraic finds. Titles included in this survey are: *Notizie degli Scavi di Antichità*, *Bullettino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale di Roma*, *Archeologia Classica*, *Rivista di Archeologia*, *Antichità Altoadriatiche*. This survey was cross-referenced with the proceedings dedicated to Mithraic subjects. Another fundamental source of 'Mithraic news' has been without any doubt my tutor, prof. A. Mastrocinque, who followed with passion my inquiry work and many times brought to my attention either monuments or further sources.

¹⁵¹ The autoptic exam of the Mithraic finds from Italy was planned right from the beginning of my PhD. Due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, a lot of journeys were rescheduled indefinitely and, in the end, delayed. I had the chance in the first two Academic years (2017-2018 and 2018-2019) to examine directly: the monuments preserved in Rome at the Musei Capitolini, Musei Vaticani, Museo Nazionale Romano (either Terme di Diocleziano, Crypta Balbi, and Palazzo Massimo), and Museo Barracco. I was able to visit also the extant remains of the following Mithraea: Crypta Balbi, Circus Maximus, Terme di Caracalla, Santa Prisca, and San Clemente. As for northern Italy, I was able to examine directly all of the figurative monuments, with exception of the relief from Pula. I was not able to visit the extant remains of the Mithraea of Marino and S. Maria Capua Vetere nor to examine directly figurative monuments from central and southern Italy, with the exception of those preserved in the KHKM Museum in Brussel, and of the monuments from Tarquinia, Cavriglia, Guidonia, and Montecelio, and of the monuments from central Italy currently preserved in Venice and Verona.

1.2 General definitions, classes of evidence, and general layout

We include in this catalogue all of those material sources of information related to the cult of Mithras. This broad definition includes several different classes of evidence. We could in fact have:

- a) inscriptions mentioning Mithras (either as Mithras or deus Invictus, or other variations on these two basic phrasings), Cautes, and Cautopates on a variety of supports (bases, altars, figurative monuments).
- b) figurative monuments such as reliefs, statues, frescoes, incisions, and so on featuring the god or the torchbearers.
- c) sanctuaries where the cult of Mithras was practiced.
- d) inscriptions and figurative monuments featuring the Mithraic Aiones.

Entries are listed following a geographical order. The elevated number of undated finds made a chronological order quite unuseful while on the other hand grouping entries by class of evidence unnecessarily disrupted the unity of complex contexts.

Within the list of possible Mithraic finds, we include material sources which could be related to the cult of Mithras, but whose connection is not patent or clear. It is the case of fragmentary inscriptions which do not report the name of the god or architectures where the cult of Mithras has been suggested but not indisputably proven. Possible Mithraic finds are listed with their own progressive enumeration: each record is identified by the letter **P** followed by progressive numbering.

Within the list of non-Mithraic finds we include material sources which have been connected with the cult of Mithras in the past but in light of recent development of the study of the cult are presently considered non-Mithraic. It is for example the case of inscriptions dedicated to Sol Invictus or for monuments and architectures which do not conform to the definitions given above. Non-Mithraic finds are listed with their own progressive enumeration: each record is identified by the letter **N** followed by progressive numbering.

1.3 Structure of the entries

Each catalog entry is given a progressive number. An asterisk (*) following the number of the find indicates a new record that was not included in CIMRM. Possible Mithraic finds and non-Mithraic finds are also given progressive numbers to facilitate further referencing. The enumeration of possible and non-Mithraic finds starts anew and is not consequential to the catalog listing.

In the case of single finds, which are single objects found in non-primary contexts, a single number identifies the object. On the other hand, in the case of contextual finds, which are for example multiple objects found within a Mithraic sanctuary, a number will be given to the architecture encasing the context whereas the single finds found on site will be identified by the same number paired with an

alphabetical progression (e.g. **126** = Mithraeum of the Casa di Diana; **126a** = graffito found in Mithraeum **126**; **126b** = altar found in Mithraeum **126**, etc.).

Each record starts with a brief definition of the find stating its preservation state and class of evidence (see Table a), eventual subject and presence of inscription(s), findspot, chronology, and current place of preservation.

A more detailed description of the find follows. The text of inscriptions is reported following the reading of specific literature (always found in the reference list) and using the symbols listed in Table b. An English translation of all of the inscriptions is given too.

Finally, a list of references is given for each record, following the chronological order of publication. This list includes always references to F. Cumonts's and M.J. Vermaseren's catalogs and for inscriptions the correspondence with CIL, *L'Année épigraphique*, and EDR (Epigraphic Database Roma). For a list of the abbreviations used for these and other catalogues see below in Table c. Otherwise, references are treated as in-text citations, completed with page numbers when needed, and solved in the general reference list found at the end of the thesis.

Table a. State of preservation and classes of evidence

Preservation state	(no notation)	the object is completely preserved or up to 85% of its surface is preserved
	Fragmentary	Between 50% and 80% of the surface of the object is preserved
	Fragment of	Less than 50% of the surface of the object is preserved
Classes of evidence registered in the catalogue		Mithraeum, altar, head, balteus, inscription, base, statue, relief, tabula, slab, group, fresco, arm, votive pit, appliques, vessel, hypogeum, bowl, hand, herm, architrave, mosaic, graffitus, pottery, brooch, handle, chandelier, crater, gem, amulet.

Table b. List of symbols used for reporting epigraphical texts.

(abc)	Abbreviation in the text, expanded or resolved by the editor
[abc]	Letters missing, restored by the editor
[-]	Letters missing, first or last part of a noun, etc.
[---]	Letters missing, unknown extent, less than a complete line
[..]	Letters missing, a dot for each letter
-----	Letters missing, complete line
(!)	Wrongful spelling, as in the written text
[[abc]]	Rasura
{abc}	Letters expuncted because superfluous or erroneous
	change of line
	change of field

Table c. List of abbreviations used in references lists.

AE	L'Année épigraphique
ATLAS	The Atlas of Ancient Rome: Biography and Portraits of the City, vol. 1
BCom	Bullettino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale di Roma
CCCA	Corpus cultus Cybelae Attidisque
CCID	Corpus cultus Iovis Dolicheni
CIL	Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum
CIMRM	Corpus Inscriptionum Monumentorum Religionis Mithriacae
CLE	Carmina Latina Epigraphica
EDR	Epigraphic Database Roma
IG	Inscriptiones Graecae
IGR	Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes
IGUR	Inscriptiones Graecae Urbis Romae
ILS	Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae
InscrIt	Inscriptiones Italiae
LSA	Last Statues of Antiquity Database by University of Oxford
LTUR	Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae
NSc	Notizie degli Scavi di antichità
PHI	Database for Greek inscriptions by The Packard Humanities Institute
RICIS	Receuil des inscriptions concernant les cultes isiaques
SIRIS	Sylloge inscriptionum religionis Isiacae et Sarapiacae
SupplIt	Supplementa Italica
ThesCRA	Thesaurus cultus et rituum antiquorum
TMMM2	Textes et monuments figurés relatifs aux Mystères de Mithra, vol. 2

Updated Catalogue of Mithraic finds from Italy

Northern Italy

Transpadana

1.* A Mithraeum (2 rooms) was discovered and excavated in the 1950s' in *Augusta Praetoria/Aosta*. It was in use from the half of the 2nd to end of the 3rd century CE. This Mithraeum was discovered and excavated in 1953 by S. Finocchi (Soprintendenza Archeologica del Piemonte). It is currently not accessible, but the relative finds are exhibited in Aosta at the Museo Archeologico Regionale (see below).

The sanctuary was located in an urban insula, namely *Insula 59*, consisting of four housing units, for residential and commercial use. The Mithraic rooms are included in the second constructive phase of the south-west housing unit, dated from the middle of the 2nd to end of the 3rd century CE. A courtyard, accessible possibly from the street, led to the entrance of a small antechamber. From here, the devotees could access the main cult room. Here, the central aisle was flanked by the usual two benches, realized in fieldstones. The right bench was hollow and hosted a series of small, vaulted pillars connected with the heating system, which was fed from a nearby utility room. Two small bases, possibly to support statues, were built against the front of the benches, in their southern section, just after the entrance of the room. A low structure parted the left bench at one fifth of its length. A structure consisting of two brick steps was built against the northern wall. In front of it, in the central aisle, altar **1a** was found. The Mithraeum was built in the mid-2nd century CE (a coin of *Antoninus Pius* was found incorporated in the mortar of the left bench) and was in use until the end of the 3rd century, when these rooms were abandoned.

References: Finocchi 1959 (pp. 109-113); Mollo Mezzena 1988 (pp. 170-2); Finocchi 2007 (pp. 26-31); Annibaletto and Bassani 2012 (pp. 150-1).

1a.* Marble altar (bardiglio, h. 88 cm) with inscription found in front of the brick steps in the back of the main cult room, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Aosta, Museo Archeologico Regionale.

I(nvicto) M(ithrae) v(otum) s(olvit) | Antiochus | Aug(usti servus)

To the unconquered Mithras. *Antiochus*, slave of the Augustus, fulfilled his vow.

References: Finocchi 1959 (p. 112); Mollo Mezzena 1988 (pp. 170, 172 - fig. 22); Cavallaro and Walser 1988 (pp. 42-43, with further references); Finocchi 2007 (pp. 28, 31 - fig. 24); Giorcelli Bersani and Balbo 2019 (pp. 328-329); EDR169506 (S. Pesce).

1b.* Marble altar (bardiglio, h. 85 cm) with inscription, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Ivrea, Museo Civico P.A. Garda.

This monument is virtually identical to altar **1a**. It was found in Aosta in the 16th century, and transferred to Ivrea, where it is currently preserved. It is highly

probable that it came from the same Mithraeum as altar **1a**, and that it was displaced after the abandonment of the site.

I(nvicto) M(ithrae) v(otum) s(olvit) | Antiochus | Aug(usti servus)

To the unconquered Mithras. *Antiochus*, slave of the Augustus, fulfilled his vow.

References: CIL V 6831; InscrIt XI-I, 5; Finocchi 1959 (p. 113); Mollo Mezzena 1988 (p. 170); Cavallaro and Walser 1988 (pp. 40-41, with further references); Finocchi 2007 (p. 28); Giorcelli Bersani and Balbo 2019 (pp. 309-10); EDR169766 (M. Balbo).

1c.* Small terracotta head of young Mithras (?). Currently preserved in Aosta, Museo Archeologico Regionale.

This fragmentary terracotta figurine was found in a destruction layer (dated to the 3rd century CE) of the nearby block *Insula 51*. R. Mollo Mezzena suggested it should pertain to the abandonment of the nearby sanctuary and that it could possibly belong to the same context of the Mithraeum. The fragment consists in the small head of a young male figure with curly hair and Phrygian hat.

References: Mollo Mezzena 1988 (pp. 170, 172 – fig. 23, 173).

1d.* Bronze *balteus* found in the destruction layers of the Mithraeum, second half of the 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Aosta, Museo Archeologico Regionale.

This fragmentary bronze *balteus*, featuring a battle between Romans and barbarians, was found in the destruction layers which obliterated the Mithraeum. S. Finocchi suggested it could belong to the context of the Mithraic sanctuary, and that it could be interpreted as a votive gift to Mithras. This interpretation is far from sure: as for the small terracotta head, this fragment could also come from a nearby context.

References: Finocchi 1959 (p. 113); Carducci 1959; Finocchi 2007 (pp. 29-31).

2.* Marble altar (bardiglio, h. 70 cm) with inscription found in 1962 in Aosta, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Aosta, Museo Archeologico Regionale.

This inscription was found re-used in a modern wall of the *Collège Saint-Bénin* in Aosta. The right half of the inscription is missing.

Invict[o Mithrae] | Bassus Ca[es(aris ser(vus))] | circ(itor) XL G[(alliarum)
Aug(ustae)] | Pra[et(oriae) d(ono) d(edit)]

To the unconquered Mithras. *Bassus*, slave of the Caesar and official of the custom of the *Quadragesima Galliarum* in the post of *Augusta Praetoria*, gave as a gift.

References: Walser 1986 (pp. 51-3); Cavallaro and Walser 1988 (pp. 52-3, with further references); Walser 1989; AE 1989, 334; France 2001 (pp. 157-9); Lewis 2016 (p. 527); Giorcelli Bersani&Balbo 2019 (pp. 329-330); EDR081479 (S. Pesce).

3. Marble altar (pres. h. 43,5 cm) with inscription, found in 1830 at Monteu da Po (*Industria*), second half of the 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Turin, Museo di Antichità (inv. 445).

[D(eo)] I(nvicto) M(ithrae) | C(aius) Indus | trius | Verus | d(ono) d(edit)

To the unconquered god Mithras. *Caius Industrius Verus* gave (this altar) as a gift.

References: Fabretti 1880 (p. 80, tav. VII – n.12); CIL V 7474; SupplIt 593; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 164); CIMRM 699; Cresci Marrone et al. 1994 (pp. 43-4); EDR010421 (L. Lastrico).

4. Marble altar (pres. h. 14 cm) with inscription, found in 1874 re-used in a modern wall in Vercelli, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Vercelli, Museo Leone. On top of the small altar a hole to fasten a statue is recognizable.

[-]surix [Sae] | [c]illus ne | gotiator | d(eo) Inv(ict)o | v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens)

The merchant ...*surix Saecillus* fulfilled his vow willingly to the Unconquered god.

References: Bruzza 1874 (pp. 382-4); CIL V 8939; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 218); CIMRM 703; Viale 1971 (p. 46, tav. 32); Roda 1985 (p. 15); Giorcelli Bersani 2002 (pp. 294-5); EDR116126 (A. Pellizzari).

5. Inscription found in Tortona, 1st century CE. Currently lost.

[D(eo)] S(oli) M(ithrae) I(nvicto) | [---]IIIIIV[i]r | [---] et | [---]i l(ibertus) | [---] l(ibertus) | [---] l(ibertus) | [---] A(uli) f(ilius) | -----

To the unconquered god Sol Mithras. ... *sevir*, ... and ... freedman of ... , ... freedman, ... freedman, ... son of *Aulus*, ...

References: CIL V 7362; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 163); CIMRM 698; Pettirossi 2007 (pp. 56-7); EDR010685 (V. Pettirossi).

6. Gneiss altar (beola chiara, pres. h. 56,5 cm) with inscription, found before 1877 in a private building in Arona (Lago Maggiore). Currently Preserved in Novara, Lapidario della canonica di Santa Maria.

[Sa]c[ru]m Soli | M[ithr]ae numini | v(ictori) Invict(o) deo | ex{s} visu iussus | Aelius Secundi | [n]us

Consecrated to Sol Mithras, *numen victor*, unconquered god. Because of an order received in a dream, *Aelius Secundinus* (set up).

References: CIL V 8997; SupplIt 892; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 193); CIMRM 704; Mennella 1999 (p. 172); EDR108255 (V. Pettirossi).

7. Inscription found in Angera (by S. Alessandro church), 3rd century CE. Currently lost.

D(eo) S(oli) I(nvicto) M(ithrae) | adiutor | Valerian(us) | Petalus | v(otum) [s(olvit)]

To the god Sol unconquered Mithras. The *adiutor Valerianus Petalus* fulfilled his vow.

References: Biondelli 1868 (pp. 527-8); CIL V 5477; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 188); CIMRM 717; EDR124516 (V. Pettirossi).

8. Marble base (marmo di Candoglia, h. 36 cm) with inscription found in 1868 in Angera (garden of house Castiglione), late 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Milan, Civico Museo Archeologico (inv. A 0.9.11063).

Cautopati sac[r(um)] | M(arcus) Staius Nig[er] | V(ir) Aug(ustalis)
c(reatus) d(ecreto) d(ecurionum) [-] | leg(atus) dend(rophorum) c(oloniae)
A(ureliae) A(ugustae) M(ediolanensium) | et C(aius) Valerius Iulia(nus) |
leones leg(ati) v(otum) s(olverunt) l(ibenter) m(erito)

Consecrated to Cautopates. *Marcus Staius Niger*, *sevir Augustalis* appointed by a decree of the town council ... and representative of the *dendrophoroi* of the colonia *Aurelia Augusta Mediolanensium*, and *Caius Valerius Iulianus*, both *leones* and representatives, fulfilled their vow willingly and deservedly.

Reference: Biondelli 1868 (pp. 523-7); CIL V 5465; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 187); ILS 4259; Calderini 1946 (pp. 70-1); CIMRM 718; Sartori 1995 (p. 40); Sartori 2009 (pp. 364-5); Zoia 2017 (p. 136). Sartori and Zoia 2020 (p. 260); EDR124511 (S. Zoia, A. Sartori).

9. Marble base (h. 90 cm) with inscription found possibly in Milan (in S. Ambrogio Church from the 16th century), 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Milan, Civico Museo Archeologico (inv. A 0.9.11010).

D(eo) S(oli) I(nvicto) M(ithrae) | P(ublius) Acil(ius) Piso | nianus pater |
patratus qui | hoc spel(a)eum | vi{i} ignis ab | sum(p)tum com | parata area
a re | publ(ica) Mediol(anensium) | pecunia sua | restituit

(Consecrated) to the god Sol unconquered Mithras. *Publius Acilius Pisonianus*, *pater patratus* who restored with his own money this *spelaeum* previously destroyed by the strength of fire, after having obtained the area from the municipality.

References: CIL V 5795; Biondelli 1868 (pp. 530-1); ILS 4224; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 190); De Marchi 1917 (pp. 19-20); Calderini 1946 (p. 41); CIMRM 706; Sartori 1994 (p. 63); Sartori and Zoia 2020 (p. 203); EDR124115 (S. Zoia, A. Sartori).

10. Gneiss inscription (Serizzo, h. 71 cm) found possibly in Milan (S. Simpliciano), mid-2nd – 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Milan (private owner, via Verdi 6).

----- | M(arcus) Valeri[us] | Maximu[s] | sacerdo[s] | d(ei) S(olis) I(nvicti)
M(ithrae) stu[d(iosus)] | astrologia[e] | sibi et | Severiae Apr[...] | uxori |
h(oc) m(onumentum) h(eredes) n(on) [s(quetur)]

... *Marcus Valerius Maximus*, priest of the god Sol unconquered Mithras, scholar of astrology, made this monument for himself and for his wife *Severia Apr...* Heirs will not use this monument.

References: CIL V 5893; ILS 4270a; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 192); CIMRM 708; EDR124212 (S. Zoia, A. Sartori).

11.* Fragmentary marble statue (pres. h. 33 cm) of torchbearer found in 1880 in Milan (via Camperio), early 4th century CE. Currently preserved in Milan, Civico Museo Archeologico (inv. A 0.9.1147).

The statue represents a torchbearer wearing his usual attire. A long cloak is pinned on his chest with a circular brooch. The upward pointing torch identifies him as Cautes. Head, arms and legs are missing.

References: Camporini 1979 (pp. 28-9, with further references); Cadario 2013.

12. Limestone altar (h. 111 cm) with inscription, found in Bergamo (via Arena), 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Bergamo, Civico Museo Archeologico (inv. 975).

This monument was found in the excavation of a foundation trench just under the Santa Grata monastery. It was reported that a small room came to light: the altar stood within a semicircular niche, sustaining the bronze head of a bull.

Deo | Invicto | l(ibens) d(e) s(uo)

To the Unconquered god. (The devotee gave) gladly at his own expenses.

References: Finazzi 1876 (pp. 14-5); CIL V 5116; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 216); Antonucci 1941; CIMRM 710; Vavassori 1994 (pp. 148-9, with further references); EDR092025 (M. Vavassori).

13. Limestone altar with inscription, found in Sale Marasino (Lago d'Iseo) in the 15th century, and moved to Brescia in 1824. Currently preserved in Brescia, Civici Musei di Arte, Storia e Scienze (Capitolium).

Cautopati | C(aius) Munatius | Quir(ina) Tiro Ilvir | i(ure) d(icundo) et
C(aius) Mun | atius Fronto | filius d(ono) d(ederunt)

To Cautopates. *Caius Munatius Tiro* of the *Quirina tribus*, *duovir iure dicundo* and his son *Munatius Fronto* gave as a gift.

References: Labus 1846; CIL V 4935; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 181); *InscrIt* X-V, 1162; CIMRM 715; EDR091162 (D. Fasolini).

Venetia et Histria

14. Limestone relief (120x150 cm) found in 1589 near Mauls, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Bozen, Museo Archeologico dell'Alto Adige.

This relief features the usual tauroctony scene in the center, while a series of six scenes flank this main representation on either side. Those minor scenes are vertically disposed on top of each other and are divided and framed by a thin band. In the center of the relief, inside the cave, Mithras, dressed in his usual attire, plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The dog (with collar), the snake (crested), and the scorpion can be seen at the usual places. The raven is perched on the rocky margin of the cave, on the left. The torchbearers flank the scene, both cross-legged. Cautopates is on the left, whereas Cautes is on the right. On top of the cave, on the right, a small animal (possibly a wild boar) is represented roaming among three trees. Outside the cave, the busts of Sol and Luna are represented. Sol, on the left, wears a cloak fastened

on the left shoulder with a circular pin and a radiate crown. A ray is prolonged to reach Mithras. Luna, on the right, wears his hair in a bun and a crescent emerges behind her shoulders. This main representation is flanked by two sets of minor scenes. On the left, from top to bottom, we have:

- a) A standing figure, his right arm raised to throw something to a second figure with snake feet. It is possible to recognize in this representation Jupiter fighting with a Giant.
- b) A figure lays, reclined on his left elbow. It is possible to recognize in this scene the dream of Saturn.
- c) A figure with Phrygian hat emerges from the ground, his hands raised to the sky. It is possible to identify this scene with the birth of Mithras from the rock.
- d) A figure with Phrygian hat bends to pluck at some bushes. It seems possible to recognize in this scene Mithras harvesting.
- e) A knelt figure with Phrygian hat stretches his right arm up to touch the sky and his left one down to touch the ground. It is possible to identify this subject with Mithras-Atlas.
- f) A bull is represented.

On the right stack of scenes, from the bottom to the top, we have:

- a) The scene of the *transitus*: Mithras dragging the bull by its hind legs.
- b) Mithras stands on the left. He stretches his hands toward a second person kneeling before him. On the right, a third person stands behind the kneeling figure.
- c) Mithras, standing on the left, raises an unidentifiable object in his right. With his left hand he reaches a second figure knelt before him.
- d) Mithras and Sol stand side by side shaking hands.
- e) Mithras and Sol are represented on Sol's chariot which is pulled by four horses and is taking off.
- f) A semicircular table with four people dining. In front of the table a smaller, three-legged one is placed. It seems possible to identify this scene with the banquet of Mithras and Sol.

On the upper and lower band of the relief, a *tabula ansata* is carved, but they were not inscribed. On the left of the upper tabula, an animal is represented (possibly a ram), running from the right to the left among some trees. On the right another animal (possibly a bull) is represented in the same stance.

The monument is possibly unfinished, as testified by the two un-inscribed *tabulae ansatae*.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 239); CIMRM 1400; Turcan 1976.

15. Altar (h. 52 cm) with inscription found in *Sublavio*, 218-222 CE. Currently preserved in Ponte Gardena, Trostburg castle.

D(eo) I(nvicto) M(ithrae) | et Soli soci | o sac(rum) Valen | tinus Se | cundion(i)s | ob nemor(iam) (!) | patris sui | ex colleg(io) | v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)

Consecrated to the unconquered god Mithras and to Sol Socius. *Valentinus*, son of *Secundio*, for the memory of his father from the will of the guild fulfilled his vow willingly and deservedly.

References: CIL V 5082; ILS 4233; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 186); Roberti 1951 (p. 19); CIMRM 730; Chistè 1971 (p. 61); Ianovitz 1972 (pp. 88-9); Buonopane 2000 (p. 185); Banzi 2005 (pp. 178, 182); Hohenbühel 2016 (pp. 3-4); Vágási 2018 (p. 368).

16. Fragmentary white marble relief (25x23x4 cm) found re-used in the masonry of a modern building in Sanzeno (Val di Non), 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Innsbruck, Tiroler Landmuseum Ferdinandeum (inv. U 8869).

Fragments of this relief were found in 1911 during construction works at Sanzeno (under the inn of Mr. Inama). Only few of the usual characters of the tauroctony scene are recognizable. On the right, Cautes stands holding his torch with both hands. On his left the bull can be recognized, and the arms of Mithras, caught in the act of plunging his dagger in the shoulder of the animal while grasping it by the nostrils. The heads of the dog and of the snake can be found at the usual places. The rest of the scene is missing.

References: Mayr 1928 (p. 84-5); Roberti 1951 (p. 19); Ianovitz 1972 (pp. 84-5); CIMRM 725; Buonopane 2000 (p. 185); Höck 2015 (pp. 309-310).

17. Fragmentary Greek marble relief (34,5x29x4 cm) with inscription found in 1869 in a field at the entrance of Valle di San Romedio (Sanzeno, Val di Non), 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Trento, Museo del Buonconsiglio (inv. 6436).

The relief is broken in half: only the right part of the monument is preserved. A thin band frames the central tauroctony and describes also the vaulted ceiling of the cave where the scene takes place. In the centre we can recognize Mithras, dressed in the usual attire, who plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. Beside the bull, at the usual places, the dog, the snake, and the scorpion are recognizable. On the right of this group Cautes stands, holding his torch with both hands. In the top right corner of the relief, the bust of Luna is represented: the goddess faces to the right and a crescent emerges behind her shoulders. On the lower part of the relief, the dedicatory inscription is engraved on a smooth band. It reads:

[D(eo) I(nvicto) M(ithrae)] Ulda Marius | [v(otum) s(olvit)] l(ibens) p(osuit)

To the unconquered god Mithras. *Ulda Marius* fulfilled his vow willingly and set up.

The inscriptions bear traces of red color. Traces of color (now pinkish-red) can be noted also on Mithras' garments and hat, on Luna, and on the tunic of Cautes.

References: de Vigili 1882; Inama 1895 (pp. 22-3); CIL V 8892; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 184; *mon. fig.* 115); Campi 1909 (pp. 115-9); Mayr 1928 (p. 86); Roberti 1951 (p. 19); CIMRM 726-727; Roberti 1960 (p. 4, with further references); Chistè 1971 (pp. 57-8, with further references; t. 19, fig. 32); Ianovitz 1972 (p. 85); Buonopane 1990a (pp. 206-7); Buonopane 2000 (pp. 184-5); EDR137641 (C. Girardi).

18.* Fragmentary limestone altar (pres. h. 37 cm) with inscription found at the beginning of the 20th century in Sanzeno, 3rd-4th century CE. Currently preserved in Trento, Museo del Buonconsiglio (inv. 511).

This inscription was found re-used in the wall of the cemetery of Sanzeno.

[D(eo)] Sol(i) In[v(icto) M(ithrae)] | sac(rum) C(aius) Cusa Pa[p(iria)] |
[I]unianus v(otum) s(olvit) l(aetus) l(ibens) m(erito)

Consecrated to the god Sol unconquered Mithras. *Caius Cusa Iunianus* of the *Papiria tribus* fulfilled his vow willingly, gladly, and deservedly.

Reference: Chistè 1971 (p. 59, t. 20, fig. 33); AE 1977, 289; Solin 1981 (p. 102); Buonopane 1990a (pp. 214-5); Buonopane 2000 (p. 185); EDR076820 (C. Girardi).

19. Fragmentary white marble double-face relief (37x20 cm) found near Meclo (Val di Non), 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Trento, Museo del Buonconsiglio (inv. 6444).

Only the lower right corner of the relief is preserved. A series of vertical scenes representing episodes of the story of Mithras flank the central representation, which is completely missing, except for some rocks on the extreme right. Of the lateral scenes, only the two in the lower right corner are preserved. They represent:

- a) A male figure dressed in a short tunic raises his right hand holding a round object. His body bends slightly to the right and his left arm is stretched to reach a second person. This other male figure wears a Phrygian hat and is knelt before the first one. He stretches his arms to the standing person and looks up at him.
- b) The lowest frame hosts the *transitus* scene. We can recognize Mithras, walking to the left, who carries the bull on his back and shoulders, dragging the animal by its hind legs.

On the opposite side of the relief we can recognize a bird (probably a raven) on the lower left corner. Just above it, a square altar is represented; flames burst at his top. The legs of two standing figures can be recognized on the left and on the right of the altar. It is possible that on this side the representation of the banquet of Mithras and Sol was featured.

References: Cumont TMMM2 (*mon. fig. 114bis*); Campi 1909 (pp. 122-3); Roberti 1951 (p. 19); CIMRM 729; Chistè 1971 (pp. 60-1); Ianovitz 1972 (p. 87); Buonopane 2000 (p. 185); Bezzi 2020.

20. Greek marble double-face relief (77x19x15 cm) with inscription found in the 19th century in Val di Non (val Tovel, Tuenno castle), 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Trento, Museo del Buonconsiglio (inv. 6437).

Only the extreme right part of the relief is preserved: it was cut from the whole piece in post-antique times and re-used as a balcony (traces of the holes to pin the grating are visible on the surface of the relief). The relief was sculpted on both sides. On the obverse side we can recognize the extreme left part of the representation. A thin band separates five vertically-stacked scenes. From top to bottom we can recognize:

- a) A standing bearded man, with long hair, wrapped in a long mantle that covers his left shoulder and part of his chest. He holds a staff in his right hand and points it to the ground (to a rock).
- b) A male figure with wavy hair, dressed in long mantle which covers his left shoulder and part of his chest, reclines on his left elbow. In his right hand he holds an oblong object. This scene recalls the dream of Saturn.
- c) A naked male figure with wavy hair raises a lightning bolt in his right hand to strike a giant with snake-feet. This scene represents Jupiter fighting the giants.
- d) A male figure with long hair and beard shakes hand with another figure naked, with radiate crown and a whip in his hand (Sol). This second figure is currently almost undiscernible.

e) A naked male figure with Phrygian hat kneels. He keeps his right hand up, touching the sky, while his left hand touches the ground.

Of the central tauroctony scene it seems possible to observe only the end of the right foot of Mithras in the lower right corner.

On the reverse side we can recognize, in the lower right corner, an indistinct mass constituted by five rounded objects, possibly rocks. On top of them stands the figure of Cautes, dressed in a short tunic and Phrygian cap, holding his torch with his right hand whereas in the left one he holds an undiscernible small object. On top of him, in the top right corner of the relief, a big tree is represented, possibly a cypress. On the left of the tree, the head and the forelegs of a wild boar running to the right is recognizable. Between the boar and Cautes, two letters of an inscription are preserved. They read:

[---] I(nvicto) M(ithrae)

To the unconquered Mithras ...

The subject represented on this side of the relief it could be the banquet of Mithras and Sol, as testified by other reliefs (see for example nr. 39, CIMRM 1896, and the relief from Banjevac). It seems possible to discern beside Cautes' feet the horns of the bull, whose body represents the table where Mithras and Sol feast in other reliefs.

References: Henzen 1864 (pp. 81-2, t. 1-2); Inama 1895 (p. 23); CIL V 5066; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 185; *mon. fig.* 114); Campi 1909 (pp. 119-22); Mayr 1928 (p. 86); Roberti 1951 (p. 19); CIMRM 723-724; Chistè 1971 (pp. 56-7, with further references; t. 18, fig. 31); Ianovitz 1972 (pp. 81-4); Buonopane 1990a (p. 200); Buonopane 2000 (pp. 184-5); EDR136685 (C. Girardi).

21a. Limestone altar (h. 76 cm) with inscription found in 1868 in loc. San Niccolò, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Trento, Museo del Buonconsiglio (inv. 501).

D(eo) I(nvicto) M(ithrae) L(ucius) | Claudius | Iustio cum | fili(i)s Iusto | et
Iustino | d(ono) d(edit)

To the unconquered god Mithras. *Lucius Claudius Iustio* together with his sons *Iustus* and *Iustinus* gave as a gift.

References: CIL V 5019; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 182); Roberti 1951 (p. 19); CIMRM 732; Chistè 1971 (pp. 53-4, t. 17, fig. 29); Ianovitz 1972 (p. 90); Buonopane 1990b (p. 130, with further references); Buonopane 2000 (p. 184); EDR119893 (S. Braitto).

21b. Limestone altar (h. 70 cm) with inscription found together with the previous number, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Trento, Museo del Buonconsiglio (inv. 509).

Gen(etrici) | pro ge(nitura) | dei | Q(uintus) Muie(lius) Ius | tus cum s(uis)

To the Birth stone for the birth of the god. *Quintus Muilius Iustus* together with his family.

References: CIL V 5020; ILS 4249; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 183); Roberti 1951 (p. 19); CIMRM 733; Chistè 1971 (pp. 54-5, t. 17, fig. 30); Ianovitz 1972 (p. 90); Buchi 1984 (p. 59); Buonopane 1990b (p. 131, with further references); Buonopane 2000 (p. 184); EDR119915 (S. Braitto).

22a.* Altar with inscription found in 1940 in S. Ambrogio di Valpolicella (Cava dei Simieri), 2nd – 3rd century CE. Currently lost.

Pergemus | Primus | Tavanus | deo Invic | to sacrum

Pergemus, Primus and Tavanus. Consecrated to the Unconquered god.

References: Franzoni 1974 (pp. 260-1); Franzoni 1982 (p. 28); Buchi 1984 (p. 62); AE 1986, 256; AE 2012, 576; Bertolazzi 2012 (pp. 260-1, with further references); EDR113121 (R. Bertolazzi).

22b.* Altar with inscription found in 1940 in S. Ambrogio di Valpolicella (Cava dei Simieri), 2nd – 3rd century CE. Currently lost.

Genitu | r(ae) invic | ti

To the birth of the Unconquered (god).

References: Franzoni 1974 (p. 261); Franzoni 1982 (p. 28); Buchi 1984 (p. 60); AE 1986, 257; AE 2012, 577; Bertolazzi 2012 (pp. 261-2, with further references); EDR113122 (R. Bertolazzi).

23a. White marble relief (61x92x 22 cm) found in 1888 in Aquileia (loc. Monastero), first half of the 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum (inv. I-624).

This monument was found in 1888 while planting a vineyard in the Ritter property (part. cat. n. 493/1). It was buried with the sculpted face facing the earth. Two inscriptions were found together with this monument: **23b** and possibly **25** (see below). The relief shows a unique rhomboidal shape and is preserved almost intact (except for the body of the raven, the heads of Sol's horses, and the body of the snake which are missing). This relief features the usual tauroctony scene. In the centre of the cave Mithras, dressed in the usual eastern attire, grasps the bull by the nostrils and pierces the shoulder of the animal with his dagger. The bull is pressed on the ground by Mithras, a large band (garland) wraps his body and three ears sprout from the end of its tail. At the usual places we can recognize the scorpion, the snake and the dog. The raven is perched on Mithras flying cloak: only its claws are preserved. On the left of the scene we can recognize Cautopates whereas on the right Cautes, both cross-legged, holding their torches with both hands. On the right corner there is the bust of Luna emerging from a crescent and facing away from the scene. On the left corner we can recognize Sol, driving his chariot pulled by four horses. Just under Sol and on the left of Cautopates a peculiar scene is represented: three grazing sheep. Two of them are crouched whereas the other one stands up, stretched, eating from a tree.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 116); Calderini 1930 (p. 131); CIMRM 736; Scrinari 1972 (p. 210); Ianovitz 1972 (pp. 26-8); Noll 1983 (p. 245); Maionica 2000 (pp. 74-5); Giovannini 2006 (pp. 181-3); Novello et al. 2019 (p. 80, with further references).

23b.* Limestone altar (pres. h. 58 cm) with inscription found together with nr. **22a**, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Aquileia, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (inv. 1087).

----- | Invic | to deo | sac(rum)

... consecrated to the Unconquered god.

References: Maionica 1893 (pp. 114-5); Brusin 1991 (pp. 145-6); Maionica 2000 (p. 75); Lettich 2003 (p. 175); Giovannini 2006 (p. 182); EDR117132 (F. Mainardis).

24a. Limestone altar (h. 79 cm) with inscription found re-used in a private house in Aquileia (loc. Monastero, hamlet La Colombaia), 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Aquileia, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (inv. 403).

D(eo) I(nvicto) {I} M(ithrae) | P(ublius) Aelius | Mercur(ialis) | Q(uintus) Tessig | nius Maxi | mian(us) patr(e) | pros(edente) T(ito) Aur(elio) | Victore | v(otum) s(olverunt) l(ibentes) m(erito)

To the unconquered god Mithras. *Publius Aelius Mercurialis* (and) *Quintus Tessignius Maximianus* while *Titus Aurelius Victor* was *pater prosedens* fulfilled their vow willingly and deservedly.

References: CIL V 805; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 169); CIMRM 741; Alföldy 1978; AE 1978, 360; Brusin 1991 (p. 150); Gordon 1998 (p. 231); Alföldy 1999; AE 1999, 698; Lettich 2003 (p. 177); Rayboud&Williams 2007 (pp. 109-110); EDR077189 (F. Mainardis).

24b. Altar (h. 125 cm) with inscription, found together with the previous number, 244-248 CE. Currently preserved in Cervignano del Friuli (private owner).

D(eo) I(nvicto) M(ithrae) || Fl(avius) Exuperat(us) | agens in lust(ro) Fl(avi) Sabini p(rimi) p(ili) | Ael(ius) Severu[s] | agens lust(ro) | Aur(eli) Flavi pr(incipis) | signif(eri) leg(ionis) IIII | [[Philippianae]] | Valer(ius) Valens | [s]ign(ifer) leg(ionis) XIII Ge[m](inae) | lust(ro) Aur(eli) Zeno[n(is)] | p(rimi) p(ili) || v(otum) s(olverunt) l(ibentes) m(erito)

To the unconquered god Mithras. *Flavius Exuperatus* serving under the *lustrum* of the *primus pilus Flavius Sabinus*, *Aelius Severus* serving under the *lustrum* of the first *signifer* of the 4th *legio Philippiana Aurelius Flavius*, (and) *Valerius Valens*, *signifer* of the *legio 13th Gemina* servig under the *lustrum* of the *primus pilus Aurelius Zeno*, fulfilled their vow willingly and deservedly.

References: Domaszewski 1893 (p. 20); CIL V 808; ILS 9103; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 170); CIMRM 742; Hackethal 1968 (pp. 229-30); Brusin 1991 (p. 147); EDR116884 (F. Mainardis).

25. Limestone altar (pres. h. 50 cm) with inscription found in 1899 in Aquileia (loc. Casa Bianca, Puntin family), 204 CE. Currently preserved in Aquileia, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (inv. 428).

M. Buora suggested this could be the inscription found together with nrr. **23a** and **23b**, but apparently there is no extant proof of the association.

Cilone II et Libon(e) | co(n)s(ulibus) || d(eo) I(nvicto) M(ithrae) | T(itus) Aelius | Verecundus | et M(arcus) Aurel(ius) | -----

When *Cilo* (for the second time) and *Libo* were consules. To the unconquered god Mithras. *Titus Aelius Verecundus* and *Marcus Aurelius*

References: Buora 2000 (p. 75); Brusin 1991 (p. 146); EDR117133 (F. Mainardis).

26. Limestone altar (h. 62 cm) with inscription found re-used in the late antique wall circuit of Aquileia (loc. S. Stefano, Moschettini property), 151-250 CE. Currently preserved in Aquileia, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (inv. 1947).

Deo | [Invi]cto | [Mit]hrae | [Ca]ntius | [Ma]nlianus

To the unconquered god Mithras. *Cantius Manlianus* (gave as a gift).

References: CIL V 809; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 174); CIMRM 746; Brusin 1991 (pp. 149-150); Zaccaria 2004 (pp. 33-4, 46); EDR116885 (F. Mainardis).

27. Two Aurisina limestone altars (h. 58 cm) with inscription found in 1805 in Aquileia (loc. Beligna), 2nd century CE. Currently lost.

27a.

Cautop(ati) | Q(uintus) Baien(us) | Procul(us) | pater

To Cautopates. *Quintus Baienus Proculus pater*.

27b.

Cauti | Q(uintus) Baien(us) | Procul(us) | pater

To Cautes. *Quintus Baienus Proculus pater*.

References: Gegerutti 1891 (p. 382); CIL V 763; ILS 4252; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 165); CIMRM 738; Panciera 1970 (pp. 88-9, fig. 3); Brusin 1991 (pp. 82-3); EDR165396 (F. Mainardis), EDR116850 (C. Zaccaria).

28. Limestone altar (h. 95 cm) with inscription re-used in the construction of S. Marco in Venice, 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Venice, Lapidario del Seminario Patriarcale.

Soli sac(rum) | Q(uintus) Baienus | Proculus | pater | nomimus

Consecrated to Sol. *Quintus Baienus Proculus pater nomimus*.

References: CIL V 764; ILS 4251; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 166); CIMRM 739; Brusin 1991 (pp. 150-1); EDR116851 (F. Mainardis).

29. Altar (pres. h. 22 cm) with inscription found in 1806 in Aquileia (loc. Beligna), 1st century CE. Currently preserved in Cividale del Friuli, Museo Archeologico Nazionale.

Cautopati | Aug(usto) sac(rum) | Callistus | O[---] | -----

Consecrated to Cautopates Augustus. *Callistus*

References: CIL V 765; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 168); CIMRM 740; Brusin 1991 (p. 83); EDR116852 (F. Mainardis).

30. Fragmentary white marble relief (h. 32 cm) found in Aquileia (Zandonati collection), 120-150 CE. Currently preserved in Trieste, Civico Museo di Storia ed Arte (inv. 12597).

A single fragment of the relief is preserved. It features the head of Mithras. Under the rocky ceiling of the cave the god's head with Phrygian hat emerges. It is not perfectly axial, but slightly tilted right. The face is oval, the forehead slightly furrowed; two rows of curls frame the face and descend almost till the chin. The nose, the mouth and the lower part of the chin are missing.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 117); Calderini 1930 (p. 132); CIMRM 737; Casari 2004.

31. Limestone altar (h. 63 cm) with inscription found in Aquileia, 100-250 CE. Currently preserved in Aquileia, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (inv. 441).

S(oli) I(nvicto) M(ithrae) | C(aius) Calidius | Agathopus | VIvir Aqu(ileiae)
| v(otum) s(olvit)

To Sol unconquered Mithras. *Caius Calidius Agathopus*, *sevir* of the city of Aquileia, fulfilled his vow.

References: CIL V 806; SupplIt 65; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 172); CIMRM 744; Brusin 1991 (p. 151); Tassaux 2000 (pp. 377, 407); Buonopane 2001 (p. 356); EDR116886 (F. Mainardis).

32. Limestone tabula (h. 44 cm) found in Aquileia, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Aquileia, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (inv. 380).

Pro salute | Tiberi Claudi | Macronis con(ductoris) | fer(rariarum)
Nor(icarum) Velox ser(vus) | vil(icus) spel(a)eum cum | omni apparatu fecit

For the safety of *Tiberius Claudius Macro*, manager of the Noricum mines, his slave *Velox* built a *spelaeum* with all the proper furniture.

References: CIL V 810; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 175); CIMRM 747; Brusin 1991 (pp. 152-3); Lettich 2003 (pp. 22-3); Hirt 2010 (p. 284); Zaccaria 2017 (p. 192); EDR116886 (F. Mainardis).

33.* Limestone altar (pres. h. 25) found in Aquileia, first half of the 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Aquileia, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (inv. 4083).

D(eo) I(nvicto) M(ithrae) | Tulliu[s] | -----

To the unconquered god Mithras. *Tullius* ...

References: EDR160230 (C. Zaccaria).

34.* Fragment of Aurisina limestone statue (pres. h. 45 cm), found in Aquileia. Currently preserved in Aquileia, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (s. n. inv.).

The block is sculpted in resemblance of the rock surface. The upper part is missing. References: Maionica 1910 (p. 37); Calderini 1930 (p. 132); Scrinari 1972 (p. 102, fig. 312); Ianovitz 1972 (p. 29); Buchi 1984 (p. 58, tav. 3 – fig. 2).

35.* Greek marble statue (pres. h. 80 cm) found in Aquileia, 140-190 CE. Currently preserved in Aquileia, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (inv. 464).

The group features the *Transitus* scene. Mithras (head, arms, feet and right leg of the god are missing), dressed in the usual attire, drags the bull (horns, hind legs and tail of the animal are missing) on his back while holding the animal by its hind legs.

Reference: Calderini 1930 (p. 132); Scrinari 1972 (p. 102, fig. 313); Ianovitz 1972 (p. 29).

36. Altar (h. 69 cm) with inscription, found possibly in Aquileia, 100-250 CE. Currently lost.

Deo | Invicto | L(ucius) Aebutius | Eut[y]chus | Primi lib(ertus)

To the Unconquered god. *Lucius Aebutius Eutyclus* freedman of *Primus*.

References: CIL V 804; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 206); CIMRM 751; Panciera 1970 (p. 90, fig. 7); Brusin 1991 (p. 146); EDR116881 (F. Mainardis).

37. Altar (h. 53,5 cm) with inscription re-used in the masonry of the Aiello church, coming possibly from Aquileia, 244-248 CE. Currently walled up in the façade of the church of Aiello (Udine).

D(eo) I(nvicto) M(ithrae) | L(ucius) Sept(imius) Cas | sianus sig(nifer) | leg(ionis) IIIII His(panae) | agens in | lustrum P(ubli) | Por[c]i Fausti | p(rimi) p(ili) v(otum) p(osuit) l(ibens) m(erito)

To the unconquered god Mithras. *Lucius Septimius Cassianus*, signifer of the 6th *legio Hispana* serving under the *lustrum* of the *primus pilus Publius Porcius Faustus*, set up for his vow willingly and deservedly.

References: SupplIt 165; ILS 4244; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 173); CIMRM 745; Hackethal 1968 (pp. 230); Brusin 1991 (p. 148); Furlan 2008 (pp. 33-5); EDR117134 (F. Mainardis).

38.* White marble slab (h. 39x38,5 cm) with *album sacratorum* found in the 18th century in Ospedaletto di Gemona, first half of the 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Gemona, walled in the city townhall.

[D(eo) I(nvicto)] M(ithrae) [-] || [---]cori[---] | [---] Publ[---] | [---] Prot[---] | [---] Secu[nd ---] | [---] Fin[---] | [---] Rufinus [---] | [---] Aur(elius) Marcelus | [---]us Sept(imius) Marcelinus | [---]eia(nus) Sept(imius) Speratus | [---]er Umbri(us) Iustinus | [---]s Bovius Rufinus | [---]tes Musidi(us) Valentinus | [---]us Frondi(us) Frondianus | ex voto

To the unconquered god Mithras. ...*cori...*, ... *Publ...*, ... *Prot...*, ... *Secund...*, ... *Fin...*, ... *Rufinus ...*, ... *Aurelius Marcelus*, ...*us Septimius Marcelinus*, ...*eianus Septimius Speratus*, ...*er Umbrius Iustinus*, ...*s Bovius Rufinus*, ...*tes Musidius Valentinus*, ...*us Frondius Frondianus*, fulfilled their vow.

References: CIL V 1811; Moro 1956 (pp. 203-4); Mainardis 1994 (pp. 95-6); Zaccaria 2001 (p. 217); Mainardis 2008 (pp. 108-9, with further references); EDR007231 (F. Mainardis).

39. Small altar with inscription found in 1716 in Ospedaletto di Gemona, 2nd – 3rd century CE. Currently lost.

Deo | Cauto | pati

To the god Cautopates.

References: CIL V 1809; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 180); CIMRM 759B; Moro 1956 (p. 203); Panciera 1970 (pp. 112-3); Mainardis 1994 (p. 95); Zaccaria 2001 (p. 217); Mainardis 2008 (pp. 88, with further references); EDR007061 (F. Mainardis).

40.* A Mithraeum (1 room) was discovered and excavated in the 1960s in Duino (territory of Aquileia). It was in use from the 2nd to end of the 4th century CE. This Mithraeum was discovered and excavated in 1964-65 (see Canciani 2020 for a history of the excavations on the site). It is currently accessible, and the relative finds are preserved in the SABAP-FVG deposit in Trieste (see following numbers). The sanctuary was set in a natural cave (55 sq.m) located on the southern slope of mount Ermada. The site could be reached from a secondary road coming from the coast (punta Bratina and Duino) and going to the hinterland. This Mithraeum should be linked with the nearby maritime villas and small commercial harbors which characterized the surrounding landscape in the Imperial Age. The structural remains of the Mithraeum are quite scarce: a lime floor, two almost parallel low masonry structures (maybe benches), and a third feature connected with the stair which gave entrance to the sanctuary. The Mithraic features consist of the two reliefs **40a** and **40b** and the altar **40c**. Other small uninscribed altars came to light during the excavations, together with materials pertaining the different phases of occupation of the site. On the base of the chronology of the Mithraic features and of the other finds, the cultic frequentation of the area can be set from the beginning of the 2nd to the end of the 4th century CE.

References: Andreolotti et al. 1965; Faraone 1965; Pross Gabrielli 1975; Cuscito 1976; Maselli Scotti 1979 (pp. 376-81); Callegher 2010; Giovannini 2013a; Canciani 2020 (with further references).

40a.* Fragmentary Aurisina limestone relief (95x90x15/18cm) found in 1964-65 in the debris filling the cave, 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Trieste, SABAP-FVG deposit (inv. 2950).

The relief features the usual tauroctony scene, represented within an architectural framework: two pillars support an *epistylum* which hosts the dedicatory inscription. It reads:

D(eo) I(nvicto) M(ithrae) Tullius Paulinianus pro sal(ute) | sua et fratrer (!)
suor(um) Tulli Secundi et Tulli Severini

To the unconquered god Mithras. *Tullius Paulinianus* for his own well-being and for that of his brothers *Tullius Secundus* and *Tullius Severinus*.

Within this frame, other two smaller columns support an engraved arch; each one of these smaller columns rests on a square base, which hosts a minor scene. In the left one we can recognize the *Transitus*: Mithras walks to the right, bending slightly forward. He drags the bull on his shoulders, grabbing the hind legs of the animal.

The right scene is missing. Within the central space we can recognize part of the usual tauroctony scene. The raven is perched on Mithras' flying cloak. The tail and the hind legs of the bull, the right foot of the god, and the scorpion are the only surviving parts of this central representation. On the right we can recognize the head of Luna, and just under her the figure of Cautes. The symmetrical figure of Cautopates on the left is really faint, while the head of Sol is missing.

References: Andreolotti et al. 1965 (pp. 22, 24); Pross Gabrielli 1975 (pp. 18-22); Cuscito 1976 (p. 61); AE 1976, 261; Maselli Scotti 1979 (p. 378, fig. 11); EDR007176 (F. Mainardis).

40b.* Fragmentary limestone relief (h. 95 cm) found in 1964-65 in the debris filling the cave, 150-300 CE. Currently preserved in Trieste, SABAP-FVG deposit (inv. 2960).

The fragmentary state of the piece makes very difficult to comprehend the subject of this representation. On the right of the restored relief the head of a bull is recognizable. Just beside it a hand holds a dagger and points it upward. In the centre of the representation a figure with pointed hat stands, probably mounting an unbridled bull. On the extreme right of the scene a bird stands on a cylindrical support. On the lower part of the relief the wavy body of a snake is represented. Part of the dedicatory inscription is recognizable:

D(eo) I(nvicto) M(ithrae) | Aelius | [---] s(olvit?)

To the unconquered god Mithras. *Aelius* ... fulfilled his vow.

References: Andreolotti et al. 1965 (pp. 24, 26); Pross Gabrielli 1975 (pp. 24-30), Cuscito 1976 (p. 62); AE 1976, 262; Maselli Scotti 1979 (p. 378, fig. 12); EDR007177 (F. Mainardis).

40c.* Limestone altar (h. 55 cm) found in 1964 in the debris filling the cave, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Trieste, SABAP-FVG deposit (inv. 2974).

D(eo) Inv(icto) [Mit(hrae)] | Aur[elii] | Herm[es et] | Protem[us] | et suis | v(otum) s(olverunt) l(ibens)

To the unconquered god Mithras. *Aurelius Hermes* and *Aurelius Protemus* and with their family fulfilled their vow willingly.

References: Andreolotti et al. 1965 (pp. 22, 23); Pross Gabrielli 1975 (p. 33); Cuscito 1976 (pp. 48, 62); AE 1976, 263; Maselli Scotti 1979 (p. 377, fig. 13); EDR007178 (F. Mainardis).

41. Altar with inscription found in Ljubljana, 2nd – 3rd century CE. Currently lost.

D(eo) I(nvicto) M(ithrae) | Silvano Augusto | sac(rum) Blastia| CEB[---] | -

Consecrated to the unconquered god Mithras Silvanus Augustus. *Blastia Ceb...*

References: CIMRM 1463; Selem 1980 (p. 77, with further references); Murgia 2018; Murgia 2019 (pp. 307-10); EDR152839 (A. Ragolic).

42.* Fragmentary limestone relief (pres. h. 31 cm) found in 1997 in Elleri, 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Muggia, Civico Museo Archeologico.

Fragments of the relief were found in the 1990s' in an abandonment layer (dated in the 5th century CE) in the excavation of the site of Elleri (near Muggia). Only four fragments of this double-face relief are preserved: the entire piece should have measured ca. 60x50 cm. On the obverse side we can recognize the head of the bull (with open mouth and protruding tongue) and the hand of Mithras who grasps the animal by the nostrils. The dagger of the god is recognizable too. On the extreme right of the relief Cautes stands, holding his torch with both hands, looking at the bull. Part of the snake is preserved just on top of the lower band, which bears an inscription:

Vot[u]m posu[it]

Set up for the vow.

The reverse face hosts a representation of the banquet of Mithras and Sol. On the extreme left a male figure is represented, standing, dressed in a tunic similar to those of the torchbearers and cloaked in a mantle pinned on the shoulder with a circular brooch. His right arm is stretched in the act of offering a bowl. This character features a bird-shaped head, with long beak and without hair. On the central fragment the lower extremities of the legs of a table are represented. A human foot is recognizable on the bottom right corner of the scene.

References: Maselli Scotti 1997.

43. Limestone altar (h. 94 cm) with inscription found in 1886 (or 1887) in Poreč (Vabriga, Val di Dente), 244-249 CE. Currently preserved in Poreč, Zavičajni muzej Poreštine (inv. ZMP4331).

D(eo) S(oli) I(nvicto) M(ithrae) | pro salute et | vic[t]oria [[s(anctissimorum)
dd(ominorum) nn(ostrum)]] | [[Philipporum Aug(ustorum)]] | [[et Otaciliae
Sever(a)e Aug(ustae)]] | Charitinus l(ibertus) s(ub)proc(urator) | et
Sabinianus l(ibertus) ad | iut(or) tab(ulariorum) d(evoti) n(umini)
m(aiestati)q(ue) e(orum)

To the god Sol unconquered Mithras. For the safety and the victory of our most holy lords, the two Emperors Philips and of *Otacia Severa*. *Charitinus*, freedman and sub-manager of the Imperial patrimony, and *Sabinianus*, freedman and assistant, devoted to the *numen* and to the majesty of the Emperors.

References: TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 178); *InscrIt* X-II, 216; CIMRM 754; Tassaux 2001 (pp. 41-2, with further references); EDR134104 (V. Zovic).

44.* Fragment of limestone altar (pres. h. 19 cm) found in 1970 in Poreč (Vabriga, Campo Grande), late 3rd- early 4th century CE. Currently preserved in Poreč, Zavičajni muzej Poreštine.

Mit(h)r(a)e | Aurelius | Commod(us) | -----

To Mithras. *Aurelius Commodus*

References: AE 1978, 350; Tassaux 2001 (p. 42, with further references); EDR077179 (R. Matijasic).

45. Fragmentary limestone relief (50x89 cm) found in Pula. Currently preserved in Pula, Arheološki muzej Istre.

Only the lower right part of the relief is preserved. We can recognize Mithras' legs and the body of the bull, pressed to the ground. A single ear sprouts from its tail. The scorpion, the snake and the dog can be found at the usual places. On the right of the scene the lower part of a cross-legged torchbearer is represented.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 118); CIMRM 755; Degrassi 1970 (p. 623).

46.* Limestone slab with inscription (26x51 cm) found in the area of Concordia (Bertolini collection), 170-230 CE. Currently preserved in Portogruaro, Museo Nazionale Concordiese (inv. 8846).

P(etrae) G(enetrici) AG | v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)

To the *Petra Genetrix*. AG fulfilled his vow willingly.

References: CIL V 8657; Broilo 1980 (p. 24), Buchi 1984; Alföldi 1984 (p. 107); AE 1985, 454; Lettich 1994 (p. 47); EDR079845 (D. Baldassarra).

47.* White marble altar found in the 1980s' in Venice (S. Lorenzo in Castello church), 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Venice, *crypta* of S. Lorenzo church.

This small altar was found walled in the foundation of one of the pillars of the *crypta* of S. Lorenzo church in Venice. It seems possible that this monument came from *Altinum*.

D(eo) I(nvicto) M(ithrae) | C(aius) Iulius | Saturn(inus) | pro se et | suis | v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)

To the unconquered god Mithras. *Caius Iulius Saturninus* for his well-being and for that of his family fulfilled his vow willingly and deservedly.

References: De Min et al. 1987 (pp. 63-4); Franco 1990 (p. 162); AE 1992, 733; Calvelli 2011 (p. 192); EDR149797 (L. Calvelli).

48.* Fragmentary white marble relief found in 1983 at Corte Cavanella, 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Adria, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (inv. 38220).

The relief was found in 1983 in the excavation of the site in a superficial layer. Only three fragments of the relief (lower and right part of the representation) are preserved. A thin band frames the relief and marks the ceiling of the cave which hosts the usual tauroctony scene. In the center we can recognize Mithras, dressed in the usual attire, who plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull. The dog, the snake and the scorpion are visible at the usual places beside the animal. *Cautes* stands on the right of the group, holding his torch with both hands. Traces of polychromy are recognizable on Mithras' left leg.

References: De Min and Peretto 1986 (pp. 238, 248, 256 – tav. 9, fig. 48); Bonomi and Zega 2010 (p. 65).

Central and Southern Italy

Aemilia

49. Marble altar (h. 80 cm) with relief (29x22 cm) re-used as support for the stoup of S. Stefano church in Pisignano. Currently preserved in Ravenna, Museo Arcivescovile (inv. 164).

The Mithraic tauroctony is carved on one side of a square marble altar. We can recognize Mithras, dressed in his usual attire, who plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The god wears a radiate crown encircled by a halo. The scorpion, the dog and the snake are represented at the usual places. The raven is in the top left corner, perched on a pile of rock. There are no traces of the torchbearers or of either Sol or Luna.

References: Ducati 1912; CIMRM 692; Novara et al. 2011 (pp. 51-2).

Umbria et Picenum

50. White marble relief (47x54 cm), possibly from the southern *Picenum* area, early 4th century CE. Currently preserved in Warsaw, National Museum in Warsaw (inv. 198.788).

The relief was found at an antiquarian in Rome at the beginning of the 20th century. It was then translated in the Lyceum Hosianum in Braunsberg (Braniewo), and from 1947 it has been preserved in the National Museum in Warsaw. The provenance of this monument from the southern *Picenum* area (possibly *Urbs Salvia*) seems confirmed by the name of the devotee mentioned in the inscription. This relief features a tauroctony scene. In the center of the scene is Mithras, dressed in his usual attire, who plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull. A sort of halo consisting of six rays encircles Mithras' head. The body of the bull is wrapped in a band, and three ears sprout from its tail. The animal is not subdued and presses to the ground, but it is fighting the god. It stands on its hind legs, with raised left foreleg whereas the right one is folded under his body. Mithras rests his right leg on the rocky ground while his left one is folded against the back of the bull. The scorpion, the dog and the snake can be found at the usual places. The raven is represented on the left. The torchbearers flank the scene: Cautes on the left and Cautopates on the right. The cave is not represented, and the usual setting is recalled only thank to the rocky texture of the ground where the characters stand. There is no trace of the busts of either Sol or Luna. In the top right corner, a dedicatory inscription is engraved:

[I]nvicto propitio | Sal(vio) Novanio | [L]ucianus | d(onum) p(osuit)

To the Unconquered (god) favorable to (his master) *Salvius Novanius*, *Lucianus* set up as a gift.

References: AE 1904, 200; Sadurska 1953 (pp. 118-23); CIMRM 690-691, 628; Mayer-Olivé 2010 (pp. 62-6, with further references); AE 2010, 423; EDR072025 (F. Branchesi).

51. The following monuments were discovered in 1844 in Sentino, in a location known as Civita.

References: Ramelli 1853 (p. 15).

51a. Marble group (h. 40 cm) found in 1844 in Sentino (loc. Civita), early 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Fabriano, Palazzo Raccamadoro-Ramelli.

The group features the usual tauroctony scene. Mithras plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull. The dog, the snake and the scorpion can be recognized at the usual places. The muzzle and the tail of the bull, and the body of the dog are lost as well as Mithras' forearms.

References: Ramelli 1853 (pp. 15-19); TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 98); CIMRM 685; Bastianelli Moscati 2018 (pp. 108-110).

51b. Limestone inscription (43x57 cm) found in 1844 in Sentino (loc. Civita), 26th August 219 CE. Currently preserved in Fabriano, Palazzo Raccamadoro-Ramelli.

On the same slab two inscriptions can be recognized. The first one occupies the first and the last lines, while the space in between is occupied by the six line of the second inscription.

The first inscription reads:

Dicatus V Id(us) Sept(embres) Antonino Aug(usto) II et Sacerdote II
co(n)s(ulibus) || prosedente | C(aio) Propertio Augurino sacerd(ote)

Dedicated on the 26th of August in the year of the second consulate of the (Emperor *Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Augustus* and of the second consulate of (*Quintus Tineius Sacerdos*, under the office of the priest *Caius Propertius Augurinus*).

Whereas the second reads:

N(umini) s(ancto) S(olis) I(nvicti) M(ithrae) | duo Gessi Castus | et Severus
simu | lacrum exorna | tum voto posu | erunt

To the holy *numen*, Sol unconquered Mithras. The two *Gessi Castus* and *Severus* set up for the vow (this) decorated image.

Given that both the inscriptions belong to a Mithraic community, it is possible that the text of the second inscription was engraved sometime after the first one, without changing the data reported in the first inscription.

References: Ramelli 1853 (pp. 19-23); CIL XI 5736; ILS 4207; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 156); CIMRM 687; Cervetti *et al.* 2006 (pp. 121-23, with further references); Bastianelli Moscati 2018 (p. 108); EDR016199/016190 (F. Branchesi).

51c. Luna marble slab (46x53 cm) with inscription found in 1844 in Sentino (loc. Civita), second half of the 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Fabriano, Palazzo Raccamadoro-Ramelli.

This inscription consists of a list of Mithraic devotees. On top there are two opening lines, followed by the names of the devotees distributed in three columns.

Opening lines:

Cultores d(ei) S(olis) I(nvicti) Mithrae | patroni prosedente C(aio) Propertio
Profuturo

The devotees of the god Sol unconquered Mithras under the office of the *pater Caius Propertius Profuturus*.

First column:

Coedius Proculus | Ligurius Theodotus | Mussius Vindex | Coedius Hilarianus | Sentinas pater leonum Ianuarius | Titius Castor | Pompe(i)us Pompeianus | Gessius Optabilis | Ligurius Clementinus | Plotius Fortunatus | Licinius Faustus | Aetrius Romanus | Asinius Commodi[anus] | Visenn(ius) Quinqu[ennalis]

Coedius Proculus, Ligurius Theodotus, Mussius Vindex, Coedius Hilarianus, Ianuarius Sentinas/ius pater leonum, Titius Castor, Pompeius Pompeianus, Gessius Optabilis, Ligurius Clementinus, Plotius Fortunatus, Licinius Faustus, Aetrius Romanus, Asinius Commodianus, Visennius Quinquennalis.

Second column:

Pompon(ius) Victor | Stadius Velox | Vassiden(us) Verus | Helvenat(ius) Celer | Carfan(ius) Achille(s) | Casidius Rufin(us) | Antist(ius) Benign(us) | Aetrius Iranaeus | Helven(atius) Gemellin(us) | Sentinas Valentin(us) | Iulius Victorin(us) | C[a]ecilius Sozo[n] | [---]D | [---]T

Pomponius Victor, Stadius Velox, Vassidienus Verus, Helvenatius Celer, Carfanius Achilles, Casidius Rufinus, Antistius Benignus, Aetrius Iranaeus, Helvenatius Gemellinus, Valentinus Sentinas/ius, Iulius Victorius, Caecilius Sozon, ...d, ...t.

Third column:

Rantif(ius) Verus | Caesoni Dexter | Ianuarius Sentinatium | Aelius Ylas | Coied(ius) Pamphilus | Aduren(us) Theseus | Coied(ius) Auxanon

Rantifius Verus, Caesoni Dexter, Ianuarius slave of the town of Sentinum, Aelius Ylas, Coedius Pamphilus, Adurenus Theseus, Coedius Auxanon.

At the bottom of the third column, after five lines of blank space:

Menesterio Sevio Felice

Under the office of *Sevius Felix*.

References: Ramelli 1853 (pp. 23-25); CIL XI 5737; ILS 4215; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 157); CIMRM 688; Thrans 1972 (pp. 156-160); Cervetti et al. 2006 (pp. 124-28, with further references); Bastianelli Moscati 2018 (p. 108); EDR016200 (F. Branchesi).

51d. Limestone altar (h. 78 cm) with inscription found in 1844 in Sentino (loc. Civita), 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Fabriano, Palazzo Raccamadoro-Ramelli.

Invicto | prosedente | [S]evio Facundo | Umbri | Rufinus et | Aemilianus | leones

To the Unconquered (god). The *leones Umbrius Rufinus* and *Umbrius Aemilianus* (set up under the office of *Sevius Facundus*).

References: Ramelli 1853 (p. 23); CIL XI 5735; ILS 4208; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 158); CIMRM 689; Cervetti et al. 2006 (pp. 118-20, with further references); Bastianelli Moscati 2018 (p. 108); EDR016198 (F. Branchesi).

52.* Fragmentary white marble group (pres. h. 42 cm) found possibly in Trevi. Currently preserved in Trevi, Palazzo Prosperi Valenti (private owner).

This fragmentary marble group was found walled-up in the house of an artisan in Trevi in 1760. The group features the tauroctony scene. Of the original statue, only the body of the bull, the scorpion and part of the snake are preserved.

References: Prosperi Valenti 1996; Bastianelli Moscati 2018 (pp. 99-100).

53. A Mithraeum (3 rooms) was discovered and excavated in 1878-1879 in an extra-urban villa near the city of *Spoletum*. The Mithraic sanctuary was located on the ground floor of the villa. The Mithraeum was accessible from an antechamber, which was paved with a mosaic floor. Pieces of marble furniture possibly connected with the cult were also found in here (see below). From the antechamber, the devotees could access the main cult room. On the left of the entrance (sector A), two benches were built against the long sides. On the right of the entrance (sector B), other two benches were built with the same technique. The floor between these benches was paved with *opus sectile* and the walls were possibly painted red. On the front side of the benches four niches were cut, two per side. The northern ones (33x33 cm) were realized with brickwork, while the southern ones (23x21 cm) with fieldstones and lined with mortar. A circular depression, like a shallow basin, was realized on the top surface of each bench in correspondence with the northern niches. In one of these basins, the fragments of three small vessels were found. The front of the benches (h. 77 cm) of sector B was decorated with painted figures. Four subjects were found at the moment of the discovery of the site, two per bench. On the eastern bench, the figures of Saturn and of Mercury were recognizable (see **53a**), while the two figures on the front of the opposite bench were too faded to be discerned. Sector C was located in the northern part of the room. Here a smaller bench was built against the left wall and covered with marble. Against the back wall the remains of two bases were found, and between them a narrow shelf, also covered with marble. In the center of this sector an altar with dedication to Mithras was found in place (see **53b**). On its left, a singular piece of furniture in the shape of a rock (see **53c**) with a cavity to host a lamp was found. Between this and the altar a triangular base (see **53d**) was placed. The finds from the Mithraeum listed in Gori's report are currently lost. The objects found in the main cult room comprehended: finds nr. **53b-d**, a terracotta lamp with stamp C.DESSI, a coin of *Gratianus* (see below), a coin of *Constantine* (see below), a bone statuette (h. 10 cm) of Apollo playing the lyre, a fragmentary brick with stamp CEIAE...CILLAE, and a small bronze medal in the form of a cross. Objects found in the other rooms included: various marble fragments, a marble arm and a marble hand (possibly belonging to a torchbearer), a marble fragment bearing the representations of the zodiacal signs, and an oxidized knife.

The villa was in use from the 1st to the 3rd century CE, possibly with a minor phase of restoration in the 3rd and 4th century CE. Very few elements are at our disposition

to circumscribe the time of foundation and use of the sanctuary. The finding of a coin of *Gratianus* in the layer of destruction which covered the structures and of a silver coin of Costantine (306-307 CE) in the layer covering the right bench could point to a final moment of life of the Mithraic spaces in the first decades of the 4th century CE, and to its destruction in the last quarter of the same century. Evidence of destruction by means of a big fire were recognized in the materials found in the first exploration of the site.

References: Gori 1878-79 (pp. 55-62; 252-56); TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 97); CIMRM 673, 678, 680, 681, 682; Coletti 1983; Manconi et al. 1981 (p. 398); ThesCRA (p. 279, n. 36); Bastianelli Moscati 2007 (with further references); Bastianelli Moscati 2018 (pp. 91-7).

53a. On the front of the right bench two figures were painted. The represented subjects are:

a) A man with white beard, standing. He is bare-chested and wears a red cloak which veils his head and is fastened on his hips with a green band. He holds in his right hand a sickle and in his left a patera. It is possible to identify this figure with Saturn.

b) A young man, standing. He is naked, except for a long red cloak with green interior fastened on his left shoulder. He holds in his right hand a bag. It is possible to identify this figure with Mercury.

Those two subjects can be identified with two of the tutelary deities linked with the Mithraic grades of *Corax* (for Mercury) and *Pater* (for Saturn).

References: Gori 1878-79 (pp. 60-61); CIMRM 677; Bastianelli Moscati 2007 (pp. 47-8).

53b. Travertine altar (h. 102 cm) with inscription found in the main cult room, sector C. Currently lost.

Soli | Invicto Mithrae | sacrum

Consecrated to Sol the unconquered Mithras.

References: Gori 1878-79 (pp. 56-7); Coote 1882 (p. 206); CIL XI 4774; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 159); CIMRM 674; Bastianelli Moscati 2007 (p. 35, fig. 3); EDR164122 (M. Ribecco).

53c. Piece of furniture (h. 132 cm) found in the main cult room, sector C, on the left of the altar. Currently lost.

This piece of furniture consists of a roughly cone-shaped stone with a square hole at two thirds of its height. The cavity probably hosted a lamp, which was found on the ground near this support. It is possible that on top of this stone a statue of Mithras *petrogenitus* was fastened. A small terracotta arm (l. 13 cm) with hand closed holding a lost object was found in fact near this peculiar piece of furniture.

References: Gori 1878-79 (p. 59); Coote 1882 (p. 206); CIMRM 675, 679; Bastianelli 2007 (fig. 3).

53d. Cipollino marble base (h. 77 cm) found in the main cult room, sector C, between the altar and **53c**. Currently lost.

This piece of furniture consists of a triangular marble base. It was possibly used as support for a statue.

References: Gori 1878-79 (p. 59); Coote 1882 (p. 206); CIMRM 676; Bastianelli 2007 (fig. 3).

53e. A fragmentary marble arm was recently attributed to the assemblage of the Mithraeum. It is the case of the white marble fragment of an arm (l. 18 cm, from shoulder to elbow) formerly part of the Canzio Saporì collection, and currently preserved in Spoleto, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (inv. 283285). The hand-written tag attached to the piece reported it came from the Mithraeum of Spoleto. Reference: Bastianelli Moscati 2007 (pp. 44-6); Bastianelli Moscati 2018 (p. 95).

54. White marble relief (51x39 cm) found in 1880 in Piedimonte (near *Interamna Nahars/Terni*), 180-220 CE. Currently preserved in Terni, Museo Archeologico.

This relief was bought by the marquis G. Erolì from a worker who discovered it during construction works in Piedimonte. In the same excavation he found also an oxidized iron sword and potsherds. In the center of the cave Mithras, dressed in the usual attire, plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull with his right hand while grasping the animal by the nostrils with his left. The scorpion, the snake and the dog can be found at the usual places. The raven is on the left, perched on the rocky margin of the cave. The torchbearers flank the scene, both cross-legged: Cautes on the left and Cautopates on the right. In front of Cautes a second scorpion can be recognized. On the upper corners of the relief, outside the cave, the busts of Sol (on the left, with radiate crown) and of Luna (on the right) are represented. On top of the cave seven lit altars are represented: trees stand between them. On the lower band of the relief seven water vessels are represented. On the back of the relief some letters are engraved: DNG [-] | ICT+[-]. They should be interpreted as a quarry code or as a modern inventory rather than as a dedicatory inscription.

Reference: Erolì 1885; TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 96); CIMRM 670; Bastianelli 2012c; Bastianelli Moscati 2018 (pp. 87-91, with further references).

55.* White marble slab (104,5x33cm) with inscription found in San Gemini, possibly from *Carsulae*, first half of the 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in San Gemini, via della Rocca 1 (private owner).

Leonteum cum signo et cetero cultu exornatum | ex permissu sanctissimi ordinis ex pec(unia) sua | a solo fecerunt leones consummati ab Egnatio Re | para[t]o sacerdote legit(timo) et collatore T(itus) Lepidius Ho | norinus Alexander et Amicus circ(itores) Aug(usti) n(ostris) L(ucii duo) Vicri(i) Severus | et Speratus T(itus) Satronius Sabinianus P(ublius) Vatinius | Iustus L(ucius) Iulius | Felix L(ucius) Longinius Stachys faber de (sestertii quinque) | m(ilibus) n(ummum) l(oco) d(ato) d(ecreto) d(ecurionum)

The *leones Titus Lepidius Honorinus, Alexander and Amicus*, officials of the Emperor, the two *Lucius Vicrius Severus* and *Speratus, Titus Satronius Sabinianus, Publius Vatinius Iustus, Lucius Iulius Felix*, (and) the artisan *Lucius Longinius Stachys* who were brought to perfection by *Egnatius Reparatus* lawful priest and collector of the five thousands *sestertii*, made with their own money a *leonteum* decorated with a statue and the other devices with the permission of the holy order in the place given by the city senate.

Reference: Ciotti 1978 (pp. 233-9); Rubio Rivera 1998; Bastianelli 2012b; AE 2013, 453; Lewis 2016 (p. 526); Bastianelli Moscati 2018 (pp. 104-8).

56.* Square marble base (74x74 cm) with inscription, 150-250 CE. Currently preserved in Montoro, Castello Patrizi, private owner.

This inscription was preserved in the castle of Montoro and although there is no evidence about its find-spot, it seems possible it was found in the area nearby the castle.

Soli et Invicto [Mithrae] | ex permissu san[ctissimi] | ordinis dec[ur(ionum)]
| Sex(tus) Egnatius Primi[t]ivus | sacerdos probatus V[ir] | Aug(ustalis)
Casuenii (!) et Carsulis | q(uaestor) arcae Aug(ustalium) designat(us) |
speiaem (!) vi motu terrae di | ruptum ex suo omni inpen | sa reecit (!)

To Sol and to the unconquered Mithras. By the order of the holy city council, *Sextus Egnatius Primitivus*, *sacerdos probatus*, *sevir Augustalis* of the communities of *Casuentum* and *Carsulae*, *quaestor* of the treasure of the *Augustales*, rebuilt at his own expenses a *spelaeum* previously destroyed by an earthquake.

Reference: Ciotti 1978 (pp. 239-46). Petrucci 1996; AE 1996, 601; Bastianelli 2012a; Bastianelli Moscati 2018 (pp. 102-4); Mastrocinque 2018 (p. 424); EDR136596 (G. Cenerini).

57. White marble relief (50x75 cm) found in 1776-1777 in *Ocriculum* (excavations of pope Pius VI), 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome - Vatican City (Musei Vaticani, Museo Pio Clementino, inv. MV 839).

In the center of the cave, indicated by a thin band, Mithras, dressed with his usual attire, plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull whereas he holds the animal by the muzzle. The body of the bull is wrapped in a band. At the usual places we can recognize the scorpion, the snake and the dog. The raven is on the left, perched on the flying cloak of the god. It was restored as a dove in modern times. The torchbearers flank the scene. Cautopates is on the left, he holds the tail of the bull in his left hand, whereas Cautes is on the right. Outside the cave, two *acroteria* host the busts of Luna (on the left) and Sol (on the right). Within the cave other two scenes are represented. On the left of Mithras we can recognize the *transitus* scene, which features the god with the bull on his back dragging the animal by its hind legs. On the right of Mithras' face we can recognize the *petrogenitus* scene that is the birth of Mithras from the rock. The character was wrongly restored as a Venus in modern times. On the lower band of the relief three other minor scenes are represented. From the left to the right we have:

- a) Luna driving her chariot pulled by two oxen to the right.
- b) Two figures kneeling.
- c) Sol driving his chariot pulled by two horses to the right.

The dedicatory inscription of this relief has been broken in two pieces and only recently associated with the monument. The fragments are currently preserved in It reads:

Val(erius) Marinus pater sign(um) | Invicti Mitrhe ex voto po(suit)

The *pater Valerius Marinus* set up (this) image as a vow to the unconquered Mithras.

The two fragments of the inscription are preserved in in Rome - Vatican City (Galleria Lapidaria, inv. MV 6794 and MV 6816).

References: CIL VI 743; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 42; *mon. fig.* 74); Pietrangeli 1942-43 (pp. 52-3, 70, 89); CIMRM 556, CIMRM 625; Spinola 1999 (p. 173); Mangiafesta 2015 (pp. 475-6); Bastianelli Moscati 2018 (p. 100).

58. Inscription found in 1880 in *Ocriculum*, 3rd-4th century CE. Currently lost.

Mitrha

(To) Mithras.

References: Erolì 1885 (p. 525); TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 160); Pietrangeli Otricoli 1978 (p. 34); CIMRM 684.

Etruria

59. White marble relief (56x45 cm) found re-used in the masonry of a private house in Pisa (Chiocchini house, via l'Acciughe). Currently preserved in Pisa, Camposanto Monumentale.

The relief represents the usual tauroctony scene. In the centre Mithras, dressed in his usual attire, plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The bull is not subdued to the god, but is fighting back. He is trying to escape Mithras' pull with rampant forelegs. Its hind legs are not folded as it is usual in tauroctony scenes. At the usual places we can recognize the snake, the dog and the scorpion. The raven is perched on a high rock on the left of Mithras. In the top left corner, we can recognize the bust of Sol in profile with radiate crown, while on the opposite corner the bust of Luna in profile too, veiled, with a crescent emerging behind her shoulders. On the left of the scene, standing on a pile of rocks is Cautes whereas on the opposite side is Cautopates.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 100); Taylor 1923 (p. 222-3); Cumont 1937 (p. 96); CIMRM 663; Arias *et al.* 1977 (p. 80); Luciani 2018 (p. 29).

60.* A Mithraeum (1 room) was discovered and excavated in 2009 in Livorno (S. Stefano ai Lupi, loc. La Paduletta). It was in use from the 3rd to the beginning of the 5th century CE.

The Mithraeum was set in the south-east corner of a square building organized in a central open space surrounded by a *porticus*. At least 10 rooms overlooked the *porticus*: they were possibly used as storage rooms and shops in the early phases of the building (from mid-1st century BCE). In the 3rd century CE the room in the south-eastern corner of the building was restructured to serve as a Mithraeum. Two benches were built against the side walls. Their front was realized in broken roof tiles, and the space between these fronts and the side walls was filled with sand. Their upper surface consisted of a layer of mortar mixed with pottery fragments which sloped toward the back walls. These fronts were covered in stucco and painted red. Two small bases were incorporated in their middle, possibly used as support for small statues. In the sand filling of one of the benches a thin-walled cup was found, filled with chicken and pig bones and carefully covered with a tile. It is possible to interpret this find as the material remains of a foundation ritual. The central isle was covered with a simple lime floor, which showed at least three phases of restoration. A square structure (50x50 cm) was built with the same technique of the benches toward the end of the room. Another feature was built against the back of the room. It consisted of a massive rectangular base occupying the whole width of the room, with a cut-in round niche in the center, covered with stucco and painted red. As for the chronology of this sanctuary, the adaptation of the room for Mithraic

purposes can be dated in the 3rd century CE (*termini post quem* are given by the potsherds found in the sand filling the benches and embedded in the first lime floor layer). Other two phases of restoration are shown in the layers of the central floor. The construction (or restoration) of the massive feature in the back of the room can be dated after the first decade of the 4th century CE, thanks to a *foliis* of Massentius found embedded in its mortar covering. The materials from the abandonment layer covering the room can be dated from the middle decades of the 5th century CE.

References: Ducci 2009 (pp. 9-11), Genovesi 2011; Luciani 2018 (p. 29).

61.* Fragmentary white marble group (pres. h. 32 cm) found in 1976 during construction works in Cavriglia, 2nd-3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Cavriglia.

The group features the usual tauroctony scene. On a rocky base the god, dressed in his usual attire, plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull. The scorpion, the snake and the dog can be recognized at the usual places. Only the lower part of the representation is preserved: Mithras is preserved up to the waist, while the bull to the base of the neck. Of the dog, only the paws are preserved.

References: Tracchi 1978 (p. 73); Luciani 2018 (p. 30).

62. Small marble base found re-used in the masonry of a private house in Arezzo (near S. Niccolò church). Currently lost.

This inscription was once preserved in the Museo Archeologico of Arezzo, but it is lost since the 1990s.

[In]victo | deo | sancto | salvo | Prunic | ian(o) n(ostro) | Myron | ser(vus)

To the holy Unconquered god. The slave *Myron* (set up) for the safety of our (master) *Prunicianus*.

References: CIL XI 1821; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 204); Taylor 1923 (p. 200); Cumont 1937 (p. 96); CIMRM 658; Luciani 2018 (p. 30); EDR110603 (C. Gabrielli, M. Gatto).

63.* Luna marble fragment (pres. h. 27 cm) of a statuary group preserved in Arezzo. Currently preserved in Arezzo, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (inv. 14233).

This fragment of a marble group represents the foremost part of the muzzle of a bull. The mouth of the animal is open; the tongue protrudes outward. A human hand grasps the muzzle of the animal by the nostrils. Given the peculiar stance of the muzzle of the animal, it seems possible to identify this fragment with the remains of a tauroctony representation.

References: Bocci Pacini and Nocentini Sbolci 1983 (p. 28); Luciani 2018 (p. 30).

64. Marble group (h. 42 cm), possibly found in Asciano (Siena). Currently preserved in Rome, Academia Belgica.

This group was bought by F. Cumont from an antiquarian in Rome. The merchant reported this fragment came from Asciano (Siena). The group represents the usual tauroctony scene. Mithras wounds the bull with his dagger while holding the animal just under its jaw. The scorpion, the snake and the dog can be seen at the usual places. The direction of Mithras' gaze as well as his naked foot and the gesture of his left hand are quite unusual.

References: Cumont 1937 (pp. 102-3); CIMRM 662; Luciani 2018 (p. 29).

65.* A votive pit belonging to a quite ancient sanctuary was discovered in 1934 in Colle Arsiccio, on the eastern bank of the Trasimeno Lake. The finds from the votive pit of the sanctuary revealed a frequentation dating back from the 6th century BCE till the Constantinian Age. This last period of frequentation of the site is testified by the terracotta objects at the following numbers and by some coins. In the first dedicated publication of this Late Antique period, F. Morandini did not express an opinion on how the Mithraic fragments entered the deposit, but nonetheless suggests the existence of a nearby Mithraeum with annexed furnace for the production of the votive terracottas. She mentioned in fact that these fragments bear evident traces of misfiring.

References: Calzoni 1947; Maggiani 2002 (pp. 279-82); Morandini 2006; Luciani 2018 (p. 29).

65a.* Fragments of a pottery relief (17,9x24,8x3,3 cm) with Mithraic subject. Currently preserved in the deposit of SABAP Umbria.

Two fragments of this pottery relief are preserved: they consist of the left part of the representation. We can recognize Cautes standing, dressed in the usual attire, holding the torch with both hands and looking upward. In the top left corner, we can recognize the bust of Sol and the hindmost part of the raven, perched on the flying cloak of Mithras. In front of Cautes three ears are represented: they quite possibly sprout from the bull's tail. The surface of the piece shows a greenish glazed coating. This piece features traces of defective firing, such as greyish ceramic body and presence of glazing overlapping the fractures of the fragment.

References: Maggiani 2002 (p. 281); Morandini 2006 (pp. 79-80).

65b.* Fragment of a pottery relief (8,1x10,2x2,4 cm) with Mithraic subject. Currently preserved in the deposit of SABAP Umbria.

This small fragment represents the lower part of a figure wearing long trousers and a cloak, standing cross-legged. It could be identified as a Mithraic torchbearer, in analogy with the previous number. The surface of this fragment exhibits a greenish glaze and the same firing defects as **65a**.

References: Morandini 2006 (p. 80).

65c.* Fragments of pottery with glazed surface were found together with the previous numbers. These consist of:

- a) three rectangular basins with appliques on the rim (human busts, animal appliques, and pinecones at the four corners) comparable with analogous finds from the Mithraeum of Zillis (Switzerland, 3rd-4th century CE).
- b) fragments of a crater with appliques representing a snake and a human bust.
- c) fragments of a lid with applique representing a snake.
- d) fragments of other vessels with appliques representing snake-like motives and human figures.

References: Calzoni 1947 (p. 46); Maggiani 2002 (pp. 281-2); Morandini 2006 (pp. 80-84); Giacobbi 2016 (p. 692).

66. Marble statue (pres. h. 58 cm) found possibly in Roselle before 1896, first half of the 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Grosseto, Museo Archeologico e d'Arte della Maremma (inv. 2302).

The statue consists of three pieces of different marble (head, neck, and bust), which could also not pertain the same statue. The head, very worn, is that of a young male with wavy hair and Phrygian hat. He shows a very pathetic expression which is marked by the depth of the lines of the face. The bust is slightly twisted, as usual in the representations of Mithras. The figure wears a tunic tied on the chest with a thin band, and a flying cloak fastened on the right shoulder with a circular pin. The bust fragment is quite well preserved. The neck fragment is a restoration of the 19th century created to join together the other two pieces.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 99); Taylor 1923 (p. 174), Cumont 1937 (p. 96), CIMRM 661; Bocci Pacini and Celuzza 1990 (pp. 105-6); Luciani 2018 (p. 29).

67. Two bronze appliques found possibly in Bolsena, 2nd-3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani - Antiquarium Romanum (inv. 12158 and 12159).

The first object (inv. 12158) consists of the bust of a bearded male figure with wavy hair, identified with the god Sabazius. He holds in his left hand a pinecone whereas in the right one a branch around which a snake is coiled. The fold of a cloak rests on his left shoulder, while on his right shoulder an eagle is perched. On his bare chest some Mithraic subjects are applied. We can recognize on the left Mithras dressed in his usual attire caught in the act of wounding the bull with his dagger while grasping the animal by the nostrils. On top of this scene a loaf of bread divided into five triangular pieces is represented. Under the tauroctony we can recognize a water vessel and a snake, and on the right the head of a ram.

The second object (inv. 12159) is very similar to the first one, but do not present any Mithraic feature. It is the bust of a bearded man with *pileus*. In his right hand he holds a pinecone, while in the left he holds a branch around which a snake is coiled. In the middle of his chest a round shape is engraved, possibly identifiable with a round brooch which pins his cloak (recognizable on his left shoulder).

References: Cumont 1892; TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 104); CIMRM 659; Hattler 2013 (p. 304, with further references).

68. Limestone square altar (h. 76 cm) found in the 16th century in the area of *Volsinii*, 167-200 CE. Currently preserved in Ficulle, S. Maria Vecchia church.

Soli Invicto | Mithrae | Tiberius Claudi | us Tiberi filius | Thermodo[n] |
spelaeum cu[m] | signis et ar[a] | ceterisque | voti compos | dedit

To Sol unconquered Mithras. *Tiberius Claudius Thermodon*, son of *Tiberius*, gave after the fulfillment of his vow (this) *spelaeum* with statues, and altar, and other furniture.

References: CIL XI 2684 = CIL VI 3723; ILS 4223; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 161; *mon. fig.* 104); Taylor 1923 (p. 164); Cumont 1937 (p. 96); CIMRM 660; Buonocore 2011; Luciani 2018 (p. 28); EDR126714 (A. Rossi).

69.* A Mithraeum (2 rooms) was discovered and explored in the early 1990s' in Bolsena (loc. Poggio Falchetto). The site is currently still accessible, but no further investigations have been conducted from the 1990s'.

The rooms of the sanctuary were carved into the tufaceous rock of a natural cave located on the hillside in proximity of the bank of the Bolsena Lake. The site was

located just outside the Roman settlement of *Visentium*, by the road that run along the western shore of the Bolsena Lake.

The devotees could access this small sanctuary from an antechamber. The exact extent of this first room is not clearly perceivable due to the amount of debris still filling its space. A single step led from this antechamber to a second room. This constituted the main cult room and was organized in two sectors. In sector A two benches were carved against the long sides. Their upper surface sloped toward the side walls and their upper rim was indented by a continuous shelf. Semi-circular niches were cut in the front of these benches, four in the right bench, and three in the left one. A small step granted access to the upper surface of each bench. Three small altars complete with moldings were carved in the front of each bench. Each one of them had a little cut-in niche at the base. In the centre of the aisle there is a square negative trace, possibly for the lodging of a feature connected with the cult, like an altar or a statue. Sector B consisted of a roughly rectangular space which was carved out of the rock. In the back wall a shallow rectangular niche was cut-in and decorated with a tympanum cut in the rock too. Traces of mortar and other moldings revealed that this tympanum cover should have rested on stucco semi-columns or small pillars applied to the stone surface. The niche possibly hosted the cult-relief. Another shallow rectangular niche was cut in the left wall, and another smaller one on the left of the cult-niche. The lower part of the walls in sector B were covered with mortar. Due to the absence of small finds, the chronology of the occupation of the site cannot be indicated with precision.

References: Biamonte 1997; Pellegrini et al. 2011 (p. 28); Luciani 2018 (p. 28).

70. A Mithraeum (1 room) was discovered and excavated in 1951 in Cosa. The Mithraeum was located in a semi-subterranean room in the basement of the Curia building of the forum of the city of Cosa. It was accessible from a northern door directly from the street. In the cult room, two benches were built against the long sides. They consisted of a front realized in unmortared fieldstones and filled with earth. Two small square bases, possibly for a statue, stood within each bench against the side wall. In the front of each bench, in the middle, a small rectangular niche lined with roof tiles was realized. Other two rectangular bases were found: one was placed at the end of the south-east bench while the second one in the west corner of the room. A square altar built with roof tiles and mortar was placed toward the end of the aisle. In front of it a small basin was excavated on the ground floor and lined with mortar. The absence of a niche in the back wall suggested the presence of a fresco representation of Mithras. The chronology of the use of the Mithraeum can be indicated from the mid-2nd to at least the mid-3rd century CE based on the finds from the first excavations.

References: CIMRM 662B; Richardson 1957 (p. 55); Buttrey 1980 (pp. 45, 48-50, 56, 58); Brown et al. 1993 (pp. 244-5), Fentress 1994 (p. 213); Fitch&Goldman 1994 (pp. 159, 197, 206, 211, 214); Fentress and Bodel 2003 (p. 66); ThesCRA (p. 277, n. 2); Henriques 2018; Luciani 2018 (p. 29).

70a.* The fragment (pres. h. 40 cm) of a marble statue was found in the excavation of the mithraeum in 1951. Another fragment of the same statue was found in the 1970s in the excavation of the nearby temple B. The fragment represents the right foot, ankle and calf of a human figure. The back part of the piece is not finished. It has been suggested that this fragment could belong to a statuary representation of one of the Mithraic torchbearers.

References: Brown et al. 1993 (p. 244); Henriques 2018 (p. 162).

71.* A Mithraeum (2 rooms) was discovered and excavated in 1975 in Vulci.

The sanctuary was located in an urban unit which has not been excavated, but given the central location of the block, a housing purpose (or even housing and commercial) seems the most probable use. The devotees could access the main cult room from a long antechamber. This first room consisted of a long corridor with an earthen floor, only partially covered by a roof, sloping slightly toward the main cult room. A small fireplace was found at the beginning of this corridor. In this room the two cult vessels with appliques (see **71d**) were found. The main cult room was semi-subterranean and partially excavated in the natural bedrock. The central aisle was paved with a simple limefloor. In this long, rectangular room two benches were built against the long sides. Their structure is quite unique: instead of the usual low walls filled with rubbish, the front of these benches consisted of six arches which supported a horizontal surface which constituted the seat of the devotees. The fronts were covered in mortar and a stucco molding was applied on them. Each arch corresponded to a small rectangular space covered with barrel vault. These spaces were found empty at the moment of the discovery of the room. Four steps built at the beginning of each bench granted access to their upper surface. Three bases were incorporated in the front of each bench, at their extremities and in their middle. Each of these bases had a cut-in rectangular niche at their foot, except for the central base of the right bench which had a circular (and slightly larger) niche. The floor and the upper surfaces of the benches were covered with mortar. The final part of the room was partially excavated in the bedrock and partially built by adapting a previous wall. A square altar was built, with a rectangular cut-in niche in its left side. A rectangular niche was excavated on top of it to host the major Mithraic group (see **71a**). On the right corner of the altar a square negative trace cut in the ground floor indicates the location of another altar, a limestone *ara* found dislodged in the first exploration. It seems possible that a second niche was cut in the right wall of this extreme part of the main cult room. The chronology of the use of this sanctuary can be dated in the 3rd century CE on the basis of the finds. Signs of a violent destruction can be recognized in the extreme fragmentation of the cult statues (see **71a-c**).

References: Sgubini Moretti 1979 (pp. 259-68); Sgubini Moretti 1998; Ricciardi 1998 (p. 27); Deiana and Zaccheddu 2001; ThesCRA (p. 278, n. 24); Luciani 2018 (p. 29).

71a.* White marble group (pres. h. 79 cm) found broken in pieces on the left of the altar, 240-300 CE. Currently preserved in Vulci.

This monument was realized re-using an already sculpted marble piece: traces of the previous subject are visible on the back of the statue. The main group with Mithras and the bull as well as the raven, was made with white marble of Eastern origin, possibly from *Asia Minor*. The dog was made with a piece of Luna marble. Several minor elements were added to the main group of Mithras and the bull with bronze pins. The left arm of the god and great part of his face are missing. The group represents the usual tauroctony. On a rocky base Mithras, dressed in his usual attire, plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. Ears sprout from the tail of the animal. The scorpion, the snake and the dog can be recognized at the usual places. The statue of the raven, perched on a

plain base, was found together with these fragments. The bird was possibly placed on a minor shelf on the left of the main group.

References: Sgubini Moretti 1979 (pp. 269-73).

71b.* Luna marble group (h. 38 cm) found broken in pieces against the back wall on left of the altar, 240-300 CE. Currently preserved in Vulci.

The group represents the usual tauroctony: Mithras wounds the bull with his dagger, while grasping the animal by the nostrils. Ears sprout from the tail of the animal. The scorpion, the snake and the dog can be recognized at the usual places. The back of the group is worked in imitation of a rocky surface. The left arm of the god and his face are missing.

References: Sgubini Moretti 1979 (pp. 274-6).

71c.* White marble statue (h. 68 cm) found in the central aisle. Currently preserved in Vulci.

The statue represents the figure of Cautes. The torchbearer is dressed in the usual attire. He stands cross-legged, with arms folded on the chest. He holds in his left hand the lit torch, which is currently lost, as are the torchbearers' feet.

References: Sgubini Moretti 1979 (pp. 273-4).

71d.* Some peculiar vessels were found in the excavation of the antechamber. They are currently preserved in Vulci.

These vessels consist of:

a) An ovoid jar with three handles and corresponding horizontal grips. A small cup is attached on the rim of the vessel on top of each handle. A clay snake is applied at the major diameter of the pot. Its sinuous body is punctured to resemble scales. The applied snake encircles the vessel and raises its head to the rim of the vessel to drink at one of the small cups. The symbol of Sol is represented two times one with punctures and one with incision.

b) A crater with three handles standing on a low foot. The major diameter is marked by a thin creased band. Three appliques are attached on the external surface of the bowl: two lamps and a water vessel. On top of each handle another applique is attached: a small bowl with a snake climbing the external part of the vessel to drink from it. An applique representing a bull is attached on the internal wall of the bowl. Among the other finds from the same context we can mention three lamps (a firmalampe and two kugelform lamps) and coarse wares (at least four lids and three small beakers).

References: Ricciardi 1998 (p. 27).

72.* White marble group (h. 90 cm) found in 2014 in Tarquinia (loc. Civita, *Domus del Mitreo*), 140-160 CE. Currently preserved in Tarquinia, Museo Archeologico Nazionale.

This group was recovered in 2014 by the Authorities, who seized it from the grave robbers who were on the point of shipping it illegally to the antiquarian market. Further archaeological investigations on the find-spot indicated by the robbers has not traced evidence of a Mithraeum yet. The group represents the usual tauroctony scene. On a plain base Mithras, dressed in his usual attire, plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull and presses the animal to the ground. The god holds the animal by the nostrils. At the usual places we can recognize the scorpion, the snake and the

dog. The hind part of the dog, large part of the snake, as well as the tail of the bull, Mithras' head and left hand are currently missing.

Reference: Festa et al. 2015; Scapatucci 2018.

73.* Fragmentary sandstone altar (h. 92 cm) with inscription found in the area of *Caere* (loc. Ceri), late 2nd – early 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Bracciano, Villa (private owner).

[Deo Soli Invic | to Mi]thrae | [Mem]mius Pla | [c]idus helio | dromus sacr |
atus a Curtio | Iuvenale patre | votum [solvit | libens merito]

To the god Sol unconquered Mithras. *Memmius Placidus* with the grade of *heliodromus*, consecrated by the *pater Curtius Iuvenalis*, fulfilled his vow willingly and deservedly.

This fragmentary altar shows on the back a square hole (29x22,5x21 cm) possibly for the lodging of a lamp or other device functional to the worship of the god.

References: Antolini 2017 (pp. 17-27); AE 2017, 450; EDR166595 (A. Raggi).

74. White marble relief (62x58 cm) found in Soriano nel Cimino. Currently lost. This relief was found in an underground room filled with debris belonging to the Roman settlement on the northern slope of *Mons Ciminus*, in a property of the Fontana family.

The upper part of the relief is lost. In the centre of the scene we can recognize Mithras, dressed in his usual attire, caught in the act of wounding the bull. From the tail of the animal three ears sprout. The snake, the scorpion and the dog can be found at the usual places. There is no trace of the torchbearers.

References: Di Stanislao 1886 (pp. 96-7); Taylor 1923 (p. 103); Cumont 1937 (p. 102); CIMRM 657; Luciani 2018 (p. 28).

75. Peperino relief with inscription found possibly in *vicus Matrini*. Currently preserved in Vetralla (private owner).

This relief was walled up in a private house in Vetralla (loc. Le Capannacce) at least from the 17th century CE. The relief is much worn due to weathering. We can recognize the shape of the cave and the figure of Mithras, with flying cloak, caught in the act of wounding the bull. From the tail of the animal three ears sprout. Of the other animal, only the snake is preserved, creeping on the ground beside the bull. There is no trace of the torchbearers or either of Sol or Luna. On the left lower left corner of the relief, inside the cave, a small *tabula* hosts the dedicatory inscription, which reads:

L(ucius) Avillius | Rufinus | posuit

Lucius Avillius Rufinus set up.

References: Garrucci 1864 (p. 34); Germano di Stanislao 1886 (p. 98); CIL XI 3320; Taylor 1923 (p. 112); Cumont 1937 (p. 101); CIMRM 655-656; Luciani 2018 (p. 28); EDR121131 (G.A. Cecconi).

76. Limestone relief (107x63 cm) from Sutri. Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano (inv. 126284).

This relief was bought by Museo Nazionale Romano at the beginning of the 20th century from Mrs. Flacchi, a widow living in Sutri. It seems possible that the monument was found in the city of Sutri.

The relief is broken in three pieces. The upper part with Mithras' head, the busts of Sol and Luna, and part of the raven is lost. In the center of the cave we recognize Mithras, dressed in his usual attire, who plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. Two ears sprout from the tail of the bull. At the usual place beside the bull we can find the dog, the snake and the scorpion. The raven is perched on the upper left corner of the cave. On the upper right corner, the lower part of the bust of Luna is recognizable. There is no trace of the torchbearers.

References: Cumont TMMM2 (*mon. fig. 98bis*); Taylor 1923 (p. 109); Cumont 1937 (pp. 96-7); CIMRM 654; Luciani 2018 (p. 28).

77. White marble statue (h. 65 cm) with inscription found possibly in Torrita Tiberina, 3rd-4th century CE. Currently lost.

The statue was preserved in the 19th century in Torrita Tiberina (house Trasi), where it was presumably found. The statue represents a torchbearer, dressed in the usual attire, holding the torch in his left hand. The right hand is lost. On the base of the statue, beside the right foot of the torchbearer a dedicatory inscription is engraved:

Hymnu | s Inbic | to

Hymnus. To the Unconquered (god).

References: Tomassetti 1884 (p. 420); CIL XI 3865; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 162; *mon. fig.* 105); Taylor 1923 (p. 58); Cumont 1937 (p. 96); CIMRM 645-646; Muzzioli 1980 (pp. 192-3); Luciani 2018 (p. 26); EDR121130/144270 (C. Slavich, G.A. Cecconi).

78. White marble double-face relief (67x58 cm) found in the 1920s in Fiano Romano, 2nd-3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Paris, Musée du Louvre (inv. MND 1911 / MA 3441).

This rectangular relief was sculpted on both sides and was meant to be hinged on a pivot, giving the devotees the possibility of look either at the tauroctony side or at the sacred repast side. On one face we can recognize in fact the tauroctony scene. Mithras, dressed in his usual attire, plunges a long dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The bull is pressed to the ground; two ears sprout from its tail. The scorpion, the snake and the dog can be seen at the usual places while the raven is perched on the rocky margin of the cave. On the top left corner, we can recognize the bust of Sol, with radiate crown. A single ray of light departs from his crown and reaches Mithras. On the opposite corner the bust of Luna is represented, with a crescent behind her shoulder. On the opposite side of the relief, the banquet of Mithras and Sol is represented. In the higher part of the scene the two gods recline at a table made with the hide of the dead bull. Sol is dressed in a cloak fastened on his right shoulder with a circular pin. The god holds a whip in his left hand. Mithras, dressed as usual, holds a long scepter in his left, while his right hand is lost. On the top left corner, the bust of Luna looks away from the scene. In the lower part of the relief the two torchbearers are represented, standing on the two sides of a circular altar, around which a snake is entwined. On

the left, Cautopates holds a long torch in his left hand, while with the right one he offers a drinking horn to Sol. On the right, Cautes holds his long torch in the left and a *caduceus* in the right. He points this staff to the base of the altar and flames burst from its top.

References: Cumont 1946; CIMRM 641; Charbonneaux 1963 (pp. 184-6); Luciani 2018 (p. 26).

79.* White marble relief (159x154 cm), found in 2009 in Veio, 120-160 CE. Currently preserved in Formello, Museo dell'Agro Veientano (inv. 143672).

This relief was seized by the Authorities in 2009, on the point of being illegally sold. It was found in the area of Campetti, north-east of the city of *Veii*. Further investigations in the area did not reveal traces of architectures nearby the find-spot. The relief represents the tauroctony scene. In the center of the cave we can recognize Mithras who, dressed in his usual attire, plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. A quite peculiar detail is the presence of a quiver on Mithras shoulder and of a long bow behind his head. At the usual places we can find the scorpion, the snake and the dog. The raven is perched on a high rock on the left of Mithras. The two torchbearers flank the scene: Cautopates on the left and Cautes on the right. The stance of Cautopates is quite peculiar: the torchbearer looks at Mithras, and is represented in three quarter profile, almost giving his back to the devotees. In the top left corner, we can recognize Sol, with radiate crown, driving his chariot which is pulled by four horses. On the right corner Luna is represented. She is veiled and drives her chariot, which is pulled by two animals, possibly oxen. On top of the relief, outside the cave, two stars are represented.

References: Fusco 2015; Fusco 2018 (pp. 70-79); Luciani 2018 (p. 26).

80.* A single fragment of a marble relief with Mithraic subject(s) was found north of the city of *Veii*. The fragment is currently not available.

References: Cascino et al. 2012 (pp. 50-1); Fusco 2018 (p. 80).

Samnium

81.* Inscription found possibly in Cagnano Amiterno, 2nd-3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Cagnano Amiterno (L'Aquila), incorporated in the masonry of S. Cosimo church.

[S]oli | [I]nvicto | M[ithrae] | -----

To Sol unconquered Mithras. ...

References: Persichetti 1892 (p. 206); Buonocore 1992 (p. 226); AE 1992, 365; Segenni 1992 (with further references); Buonocore 2009 (p. 293); Ricci and Di Meo 2013 (p. 38); EDR100039 (G. Di Giacomo).

82. Limestone inscription (45x64 cm) found in Fossa, 213 CE. Currently preserved in L'Aquila, Museo Nazionale d'Abruzzo.

Imp(eratore) Severo Antoni | no Aug(usto) IIII co(n)s(ule) T(itus) Fl(avius)
Lucilianus | eq(uo) pub(lico) et T(itus) Avidiacus Fu | rianus eq(uo)

pub(lico) spel(a)eum | Soli Invicto consumma | ver(unt) cur(a) ag(ente)
P(ublio) Peticen(o) Primo

In the fourth consulate of the Emperor *Severus Antoninus*, *Titus Flavius Lucilianus*, gifted with the *equus publicus*, and *Titus Avidiacus Furianus*, gifted with the *equus publicus*, finished the construction of a *spelaeum* to the unconquered Sol with the management of *Publius Peticenus Primus*.

References: CIL IX 3608; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 154); CIMRM 652; Hackental 1968 (p. 226); Alimonti 1975 (p. 554); Buonocore 1992 (p. 226); Buonocore 2009 (p. 278); Ricci and Di Meo 2013 (p. 39); EDR175631 (S. Orlandi).

83.* Limestone slab (63x31 cm) with inscription found in Fossa (*Aveia Vestina*), 244-49 CE. Currently lost.

This inscription was found at the beginning of the 20th century in the property of B. Calvisi, near the ruins of the Roman theatre of *Aveia Vestina* (loc. Palazzo del Re).

Aurel(ius) Mucatra R | mil(es) legion(is) sag(undae) (!) pa(rthicae) |
Filip(p)iani (!) c(o)ho(rtis) V [ha] | stato (!) prioris | stationarius muni | cipio
Habae (!) [[-]] Inbiceo (!) | d{a}eo promis(s)u(m) fec(it) | lib{i}e(n)s
{h}anim(o)

Aurelius Mucatra R, soldier of the 2nd legion *Parthica Filippiana*, of the *centuria hastati prioris* of the 5th cohorts, *stationarius* of the city of *Aveia*, fulfilled his vow willingly to the Unconquered god, as promised.

References: Persichetti 1902 (p. 68); Domaszewski 1902; AE 1902, 89; ILS 9087; Mateescu 1923 (pp. 201-2); Alimonti 1975 (p. 549); Buonocore 1992 (p. 226); Petracchia Lucernoni 2001 (pp. 25, 43, 51, 70); Chiarucci 2006 (p. 78); Buonocore 2009 (p. 279); Petracchia Lucernoni 2009 (p. 205); Ricci and Di Meo 2013 (p. 39); Buonocore 2020 (p. 1686, with further references); EDR071843 (S. Orlandi, D. Fasolini).

84. Inscription found in Nesce (loc. contrada Silvestri), 25th June 172 CE. Currently lost.

Invicto Mithrae | Apronianus arkar(ius) | rei p(ublicae) d(onum) d(edit) |
dedicatum VII k(alendas) Iul(ias) | Maximo et Orfito co(n)s(ulibus) | per
C(aium) Arennium Rea | tinum patrem

To the unconquered Mithras. The public treasurer *Apronianus* gave as a gift. Dedicated on the 25th of June, in the year of the consules *Maximus* and *Orfitus*, under the office of the *pater Caius Arennius Reatinus*.

References: CIL IX 4109; ILS 4190; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 152); CIMRM 647; Buonocore 1992 (p. 226); Buonocore 2009 (p. 288); Ricci and Di Meo 2013 (p. 38).

85. Inscription found in Nesce. Currently lost.

--- spelaeu]m Solis Invict[i] | [Mithrae pro salut]e ordinis et pop[uli] |
[Apronianus arcar]rius rei p(ublicae) vetustate [conlap] | sum | [s]ua pecunia
restit[uit]

The public treasurer *Apronianus* rebuilt with his own money a *spelaeum* of Sol unconquered Mithras previously collapsed because for its old age, ... for the safety of the people and of the city senate.

References: CIL IX 4110; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 153); CIMRM 648; Buonocore 1992 (p. 226); Buonocore 2009 (p. 288); Latteur 2011 (p. 748); Ricci and Di Meo 2013 (p. 38).

86. White marble relief (104x81 cm) with inscription found in Pescorocchiano (loc. San Silvestro), second half of the 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano – Terme di Diocleziano (inv. 124668).

This relief features the tauroctony scene in the centre, whereas six minor scenes are represented on the lateral bands, three for each part. In the center we can recognize Mithras, dressed in his usual eastern attire, who plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The beast is pressed to the ground, and two ears sprout from its tail. At the usual places we can recognize the scorpion, the snake and the dog (with collar). The raven is on the left, perched on the rocky margin of the cave. The two torchbearers flank the main scene, both cross-legged: Cautes of the left and Cautopates on the right. Outside the cave, on the upper corners, we can recognize the busts of Sol (with whip, on the left) and of Luna (with quiver, on the right). On the left band of the relief three minor scenes are represented. They are divided by a thin band. From the top to the bottom we can recognize:

- a) A veiled figure in the background holds a bundle of lightning bolts in his right hand, which is raised and ready to strike at two naked figures with snake-feet, represented in the foreground. It seems possible to recognize in this scene Jupiter fighting with the Giants.
- b) A bearded male figure, dressed in a long tunic and veiled, reclines on his left side under the branch of a tree. In his right hand he holds a *harpè*. It seems possible to recognize in this scene the dream of Saturn.
- c) In the centre, the young Mithras emerges from a rock from the waist up. The god is naked, except for the Phrygian hat. At his sides the torchbearers are represented. They hold a hand on their mouth in a gesture of marvel.

On the right band of the relief other three minor scenes are represented. From the top to the bottom we can recognize:

- d) Mithras rides the bull and is dragged around by the unbridled animal.
- e) A naked male figure (possibly Sol) is kneeling before a standing figure dressed in eastern attire (possibly Mithras). On the background a small square altar is represented, flames burst from its top. The knelt figure holds in his right hand a triangular dagger pointed downward, while with his left hand he grasps the wrist of the standing figure. Conversely, the standing figure holds in his right hand a smaller object, possibly a smaller knife, pointed upward.
- f) In a swift move the figure dressed with the eastern attire raises in his left hand a long object (possibly a club) and is caught in the act of striking at the knelt figure. This last person is naked, with the exception of a log flying cloak.

On the lower band of the relief a dedicatory inscription is engraved:

Apronianus rei p(ublicae) ark(arius) sua pecunia fecit

The public treasurer *Apronianus* made with his own money.

References: CIL IX 8151; CIMRM 650-651; Buonocore 2009 (p. 288); Buonocore 2012; Ricci and Di Meo 2013 (p. 38); EDR166931 (S. Orlandi).

87. Limestone altar (h. 48 cm) with inscription found in *Aesernia/Isernia*, re-used in the masonry of a private house (Palazzo Petrecca). Currently lost.

Invicto | Deo | Verus | antistes | v(otum) s(olvit)

To the Unconquered god. *Verus* the *antistes* fulfilled his vow.

References: CIL IX 2632; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 155); CIMRM 203; Buonocore 1992 (p. 226); Buonocore 2003 (pp. 36-7); Ricci and Di Meo 2014 (p. 39); EDR127765 (C. Ricci, S. Di Mauro).

Latium et Sabina

88. White marble group (h. 43 cm) found in 1824 in the Roman *suburbium* - via Aurelia (11th mile, loc. Il Bottaccio). Currently preserved in Rome, Villa Doria Pamphilij (inv. 308).

This monument was discovered in the 1824-25 excavation of the site of *Lorium*. The group features the usual tauroctony scene. Mithras, dressed in his usual attire, plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The body of the bull is wrapped in a band (*dorsuale*). The head of the god and the tail of the animal are missing. At the usual places we can recognize the scorpion, the snake and the dog. The torchbearers flank the scene. *Cautus* is on the left, cross-legged: he looks up to Mithras. On the right there is *Cautopates*, who looks down at the ground.

References: Visconti 1825 (p. 665); TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 26); CIMRM 629; Mineo 1989-90 (p. 286).

89. Inscription found in 1905 in the Roman *suburbium* – Catacombs of Commodilla. Currently lost.

This inscription was re-used as a tombstone.

[D(evotus)] n(umini) m(aiestati)q(ue eius) | T(itus) Flavius Eytuchus |
Invicto sancto d(ono) d(edit)

To the holy Unconquered (god). *Titus Flavius Eutyclus*, devoted to the *numen* and to the power of the god, gave as a gift.

References: Marucchi 1905 (p. 118); CIMRM 627; Purnelle 1995 (p. 493); EDR072083 (I. Grossi).

90. Inscription found in the Roman *suburbium* - via Salaria, from the area of the Catacombs of Priscilla. Currently lost.

Q(uintus) Hosti | lius Eupl | astus leo | l(ibens) d(ono) d(edit)

Quintus Hostilius Euplastus, with the grade of *leo*, gave gladly as a gift.

References: CIL VI 31042; CIMRM 632; Rupke 2005 (p. 1039).

91. Luna marble relief (250x125 cm) found in 1964 in the Roman *suburbium*, via Tiburtina (loc. Tor Cervara), mid-2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome – Museo Nazionale Romano, Terme di Diocleziano (inv. 164688).

This relief was found fragmented in 57 pieces in 1964 in a field operation devoted to the decontamination of war remains just outside Rome, in loc. Tor Cervara. It seems possible that this extreme fragmentation is due to the explosion of a bomb occurred in the Second World War. Another fragment featuring the head of Mithras was bought in 1976 by the Badisches Landesmuseum of Karlsruhe (inv. 76/121) from a Swiss merchant, but it was only in the 1980s' that its pertinence to the Tor Cervara relief was recognized. A recent agreement between the Museo Nazionale Romano and the Badisches Landesmuseum succeeded in reuniting the German fragment with the rest of the relief. Moreover, in 2017 the Authorities seized in Cagliari (Italy) another fragment belonging to the relief, representing the head of the bull. This last fragment was promptly attached to the monument, which is currently preserved in Rome.

The relief features the usual tauroctony scene. In the centre of the cave Mithras, dressed with the usual Eastern attire, plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The pupils of the god are filled with blue glass paste. The body of the animal is pressed to the ground and three ears sprout from its tail. The dog, the snake and the scorpion can be found at the usual places. On the left of the scene the raven is perched on the flying cloak of the god. The two torchbearers flank the scene, both cross-legged: Cautes on the left (looking up) and Cautopates on the right (looking down). In the top left corner of the relief we can recognize Sol, with radiate crown, who drives his chariot pulled by four horses. On the opposite corner there is Luna, with crescent behind her shoulders, who drives her chariot pulled by two oxen. Some minor fragments are still missing: the head of Luna, part of Mithras' cloak and the right hand of the god. Traces of polychromy were detected at the moment of the discovery: black color was recognized on the raven, behind Cautapates' head, and on Mithras' shoes, whereas brown-yellow color on the cloak of Mithras and on Cautopates' trousers, and red color on Mithras' garments.

References: Lissi Caronna 1965; Vermaseren 1982 (p. 2, note 1.1); Stucky 1987; Hattler 2013 (p. 265); Shepherd 2015 (pp. 126-7).

92. M.J. Vermaseren reported a piece of news given to him by E. Paribeni. He told the Dutch scholar that two fragmentary reliefs were found by Monte Carnale, near Mentana, and that they were preserved in the deposits of the Museo Nazionale Romano. It seems possible to identify these two fragments with two monuments still preserved in Mentana, by the Collezione Zeri (private owner).

92a. In this first case, Vermaseren reported a fragmentary marble relief with tauroctony scene. He reported that the foremost part of the dog, snake and bull are preserved, together with Mithras' hands. The rest of the relief is missing. The fragment currently preserved in Mentana shows instead the top left corner of a Mithraic relief: the bust of Sol is visible, with radiate crown, and just after him the head of a torchbearer.

References: CIMRM 642.

92b. Fragmentary marble relief (pres. h. 58 cm) of torchbearer. Currently preserved in Mentana, Lapidario of the Zeri collection.

This monument features a torchbearer, dressed in the usual eastern attire, standing cross-legged. He holds the upward pointing torch with both hands: this particular permits to identify him with Cautes. Head, hands, feet and part of the torch are missing.

References: CIMRM 643; Gavini 2012.

93. Several rooms belonging to a rural villa occupied in the Republican and Imperial Age were excavated in 2014-15 along via Tiburtina-Cornicolana (loc. Bancaccia, Municipality of Guidonia-Montecelio). The two following artifacts, which has been associated with the cult of Mithras, were found among the debris deposited on a mosaic floor. The finds from this layer (namely several warzenlampen and a coin of Constantine) point to a last occupation of this room in the first decades of the 4th century CE.

References: Cipollari 2019 (pp. 35-38).

93a. Fragmentary glazed vessel, 4th-5th century CE. Currently preserved in Montecelio, Museo Civico Archeologico R. Lanciani.

The vessel consists of a simple ovoid pot with disc foot. The rim is unfortunately lost. A layer of greenish glaze was applied on the external surface of the vessel but not on its lower part. Plastic figures were applied on surface of the pot, and covered with glaze as well. We can recognize a naked male figure (the head is missing) in profile fighting with an animal, possibly a bull, which he holds with his left hand. His right arm is raised, and holds a long dagger ready to strike at the subdued animal. A smaller animal, possibly a dog, jumps from the ground toward the group. A smaller figure, possibly a scorpion, attacks the lower part of the body of the bull. A snake, whose body encircles all of the vessel, leaps toward the fighting group. On the right of the group, a bird sits: it resembles a hen, but could be either interpreted as a raven.

References: Cipollari 2019 (p. 36).

93b. Fragmentary terracotta relief (pres. h. 13,5 cm), 1st century CE. Currently preserved in Montecelio, Museo Civico Archeologico R. Lanciani.

This piece consists of the top right corner of a larger terracotta relief. We can recognize, under a cornice with *guttae*, a female head in profile, looking to the left. She wears her hair in a bun and a thin band encircles her temples. Given the crescent represented behind her shoulders, this female figure should be interpreted as Luna.

References: Cipollari 2019 (p. 35).

94. White marble relief (38x33 cm) found in 1951 in Montecelio, 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Montecelio, Museo Civico Archeologico R. Lanciani.

This relief was re-used in the flooring of a private house, and it possibly came from the nearby area. The relief features the usual tauroctony scene. In the centre of the cave we can recognize Mithras, dressed in the usual attire, who plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. Two ears sprout from the tail of the animal. The scorpion, the snake and the dog can be found at their usual place beside the bull. On the left, the raven is perched on a rock at the border of the cave. The two torchbearers flank the scene: Cautes on the left,

Cautopates on the right. Both are cross-legged. On the top left corner, we can recognize the bust of Sol, while on the opposite one the bust of Luna. The surface of the relief is much worn.

References: Piccolini 1953 (pp. 209-14); CIMRM 321bis.

95. Marble inscription currently preserved in S. Maria del Carmine church in Tivoli, 3rd century CE.

Two fragments of this inscription, which could come either from Tivoli or Rome, were re-used in the floor of S. Maria del Carmine church (former S. Pietro della Carità) in Tivoli.

Deo | So[li] | Invicto [Mi] | trhe Salv[ius] | [---] | dotio auc[---] | ceptus iu[---]
-] | et L(ucius) Cattius C[---] | sacerdos v(otum) [s(olverunt) l(ibentes)
m(erito)]

To the god Sol unconquered Mithras. *Salvius* ... and the priest *Lucius Cattius C...* fulfilled their vow willingly and deservedly.

References: CIL XIV 3568 = CIL VI 31030; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 65, 143); CIMRM 213, 348; Alföldi 1966; AE 1967, 69; SupplIt Imagines - Latium 1, 964a-b; EDR074676 (C. Ricci).

96. Marble inscription (40x70 cm) found in the 18th century in Tivoli (loc. Pantanello), 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Paris, Musée du Louvre, Cabinet des Médailles (inv. MA 3694/MND 1747).

Soli Invicto Mithrae | sicuti ipse se in visu | iussit refici | Victorinus
Caes(aris) n(ostri) | verna dispensator | numini praesenti suis in | pendi(i)s
reficiendum | curavit dedicav[itque] | Nama cunctis | [a]ntistitae (!) | [-]lio
Magno

To Sol unconquered Mithras. *Victorinus*, slave of the Caesar and *dispensator*; because the god himself appeared and ordered to rebuild his (statue), promoted with his own money the remake and consecrated (it) to the present *numen*. Hail to everyone! Under the office of the *antistes ...lius Magnus*.

References: CIL XIV 3597; ILS 4237; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 144); CIMRM 214; SupplIt Imagines - Latium 1, 915; Granieri 2008 (p. 44); Ando 2010 (p. 46); EDR129974 (C. Ricci).

97. Fragmentary inscription found in the Roman *suburbium* - via Labicana (funerary area by the *statio ad duas lauros*). Currently lost.

[-]coni[-] | s(acerdos) d(ei) S(olis) Invi[cti Mithrae] | [-] an(nos) XL vi[-] |
[-] ag(ro) II [-]

...coni..., priest of the god Sol unconquered Mithras, who lived 40 years

References: CIL VI 3881 = CIL 32467; CIMRM 633.

98. Marble relief (h. 110 cm) found in the Roman *suburbium* - Quadraro at the end of the 18th century by the English painter Fagan. The monument entered the Vatican

collection under the pope Pius VI (1775-1795). Currently preserved in Rome, Vatican Museums (inv. MV 1079).

Two pieces of this relief are preserved in the Vatican Museums: the one in Museo Chiaramonti consists in the left part of the monument, while the other is the right one. In the center of the cave we can recognize Mithras, dressed in his usual attire, who plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The dog, the snake and the scorpion are represented at the usual places. On the left, the raven is perched on a branch just outside the cave. The torchbearers, dressed in the usual attire and both cross-legged, flank the scene: Cautopates on the left and Cautes on the right. On the top left corner, we can recognize the head of Sol with radiate crown, while on the opposite corner the head of Luna, with crescent of her forehead. Outside the cave, on the left, three minor subjects are represented.

a) Just below the raven a male figure with beard and long hair is represented. He is cloaked in a long mantle which covers his head. The figure is represented bare chest and reclines leaning on his left elbow. This subject should be identified with the dream of Saturn. On the left of this figure a short sword is represented, pointing downward. Under this figures, on the left of Cautopates, a tree is represented. A Phrygian hat is placed on top of one of its branches.

Outside the cave on the right, between Luna and Cautes, two minor scenes are represented.

a) In the first one, just under Luna, we can recognize a man with Phrygian hat and oriental attire (Mithras) standing in front of a naked man, who is kneeling before him (Sol). The man in eastern attire places a radiate crown on the head of the knelt figure while holding an undefined small object in his right hand.

b) The second scene, just over Cautes, represents the *transitus* subject. Mithras walks to the right, dragging the bull by its hind legs on his shoulders.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 32, 85); CIMRM 321; Mangiafesta 2015 (p. 476).

99. It seems highly probable that a Mithraeum was located in the Centroni Villa, in the Roman *suburbium* - via Anagnina as indicated by the following monuments. The precise location of the sanctuary is unknown. F. Di Matteo suggested a re-occupation for religious purposes of one of the water cisterns belonging to the villa, based on modest architectural features (closing of a previous door communicating with other water tanks, opening of a new skylight and of a new door).

References: Di Matteo 2002 (p. 298).

99a. Fragmentary white marble relief (44x31 cm) with tauroctony found in the 1970s excavation of the Centroni Villa. Currently preserved in Rome, private owner (proprietà Romalli).

Only the top left corner of the relief is preserved. On the right we can recognize the bust of Sol, with radiate crown. Given the position of Sol in the top left corner of a larger field, it seems highly possible that the main scene represented on the relief was the Mithraic tauroctony. On the left part of the relief, three minor scenes are represented. We can recognize:

a) A male figure standing on the left. His right arm is raised, and in his right hand he holds a bolt of lightning, ready to strike at the second figure who is represented on the right, at his feet. It seems possible to identify this scene with Jupiter fighting the Giant(s).

- b) A male figure is leaning, reclined on his left elbow. He brings the right hand to cover his head. It seems possible to identify this subject with the dream of Saturn.
- c) A male figure is represented: he is in the centre of the scene and raises his hands holding a dagger in his right and a torch in his left. Only the upper part of this subject is represented, but even from these few elements it seems possible to identify this scene with the birth of Mithras from the rock.

References: De Rossi 1979 (pp. 97-8); Di Matteo 2002 (p. 298).

99b. F. Di Matteo reported that an inscription was found excavating this villa, as written in the notes of prof. Cozza. This monument comprehended a representation of Sol Invictus and an inscription. The inscription reported is identical to the one engraved in the triangular slab from the Nerva forum (see **186**).

References: Di Matteo 2004 (p. 298).

100.* An hypogeum with funerary destination, later called the Catacomb of Vibia for his most famous host, was discovered in the mid 19th century in the Roman suburbium - via Appia Antica. After the 1852 publication of this catacomb, new excavations were conducted on the site by A. Ferrua in the 1970s. The syncretic meaning of the most famous representations of Vibia and Vincentius has been recently analyzed by M Simón. Among other pagans, three Mithraic devotees are present in this sepulcher.

References: TMM2 (pp. 412-3); Ferrua 1970; Ferrua 1971; Ferrua 1973; Simón 2018.

100a.* Marble slab (38x79 cm) with funerary inscription found in 1952 in Vibia's catacomb, 4th century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Vibia's Catacomb (arcosolio SS).

D(is) [M(anibus)] | sancte aquae peraenni bone me | moriae viris Aurelii[s]
Faustiniano patri | et Castricio fratri sacerdotibus dii Solis | Invicti Mitrae
eredes aeorum prosecuti sunt e[t] | b(onae) m(emoriae) Clodiae Celerianae
matri f(ecerunt)

To the Manes gods. For the holy and eternal good memory of *Aurelius Faustinianus*, father, and of *Aurelius Castricius*, brother, priests of the god Sol unconquered Mithras, and also for the good memory of *Clodia Celeriana*, mother. Their heirs follow.

References: Ferrua 1970 (p. 78); Ferrua 1971 (pp. 43-6); AE 1975, 54; Simón 2018 (p. 226); EDR075912 (A. Carapellucci).

100b.* Painted funerary inscription found in 1852 in Vibia's catacomb, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Vibia's Catacomb (gallery V3).

D(is) M(anibus) | M(arcus) Aur(elius) [--- sacerdo]s d(ei) S(olis) I(nvicti)
M(ithrae) | qui basium [v]oluptatem iocum alumnis suis dedit | ut locu[m]
sibi et coniugi sua]e et natis suis | [---] en locus Carici[s?] | [---]so proles

To the Manes gods, *Marcus Aurelius* ..., priest of the god Sol unconquered Mithras, who gave kiss, love, and tenderness to his pupils, for ... for himself, his wife, and his children, ... place of ... offspring.

References: CIL VI 142; TMM2 (inscr. 552); Ferrua 1970 (pp. 84-5); Ferrua 1971 (p. 37); Simón 2018 (p. 226); EDR161251 (A. Ferraro).

101. Statues of different deities (Jupiter, Heracles, Asclepius, Dioscuri, Artemis, Astarte, etc.) and several inscriptions were discovered in 1929 along via Appia Nuova. The current hypothesis about this context is that of a storage of marbles ready to fuel a nearby lime kiln. It seems possible that the statues were taken from a nearby sanctuary (probably dedicated to Zeus Bronton as indicated by other finds) and from other sacred spaces of private nature which have not been precisely located yet.

References: Annibaldi 1935; CIMRM 634; Paris and Pettinau 2008; Rotondi 2012 (p. 8); Frontoni et al. 2012.

101a. Fragmentary white marble double-face relief (27x38 cm) with tauroctony. Formerly preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano (inv. 121020). Currently lost.

Only two fragments of this relief were recovered. In the first one, which constitutes the top left corner of the relief, we can recognize on the obverse side the head of Sol, in profile, with radiate crown. Under him, the rocky ceiling of the cave is represented. The raven is perched on the margin of the cave, in the act of flying toward Mithras. Only the point of the Phrygian hat of the god is preserved. On the extreme left we can recognize the flame of Cautes' torch. Above the arch of the cave, a band containing the symbols of the zodiacal signs is represented. We can recognize (running from left to right): Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Libra and Scorpio. On the reverse side of this fragment, a vegetal branch occupies the top part of the scene. On the extreme right, the head and bust of a torchbearer can be recognized. On the left, the top part of two figures can be discerned: two rays possibly belonging to the radiate crown of Sol and the top part of a Phrygian hat possibly belonging to Mithras are figured. On the second fragment, part of Mithras's body is recognizable, together with the dagger, an ear and part of a horn of the bull. On the reverse side of this fragment, part of a tunic can be discerned. It seems possible to identify these two scenes with the usual Mithraic tauroctony on the obverse side whereas the banquet of Mithras and Sol is represented on the reverse side. The style used to engrave the figures is quite linear: the subjects result thus sketched and lacking depth.

References: Annibaldi 1935 (p. 91); CIMRM 635; Paris and Pettinau 2008 (p. 190).

101b. Fragmentary statue (h. 51 cm) of torchbearer, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Villa dei Quintili - Antiquarium (former Museo Nazionale Romano inv. 121019).

The relief features Cautes, dressed in the usual attire, standing cross-legged. He holds the torch in his right hand.

References: Annibaldi 1935 (p. 90); CIMRM 636; Paris and Pettinau 2008 (p. 190).

101c. Fragmentary statue (h. 43 cm) of torchbearer, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Villa dei Quintili - Antiquarium (former Museo Nazionale Romano inv. 121018).

The relief feature Cautopates, dressed in the usual attire, standing cross-legged. He holds the torch in his right hand. His head is missing.

References: Annibaldi 1935 (p. 90); CIMRM 637; Paris and Pettinau 2008 (p. 190).

101d. Fragmentary Luna marble statue (h. 34 cm) of torchbearer. Currently preserved in Rome, Villa dei Quintili - Antiquarium (former Museo Nazionale Romano inv. 121013).

The statue features a torchbearer (head, feet and arms are missing) dressed in the usual attire. He should have hold the torch with his right hand. R. Paris and B. Pettinau identified this subject with a statue of Attis.

References: Annibaldi 1935 (p. 87); CIMRM 638; Paris and Pettinau 2008 (p. 190).

101e. Marble altar (h. 60 cm) with inscription, late 2nd – 3rd century CE. Formerly preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano (inv. 121047). Curretly lost.

Deo Soli Invicto Mitre | [[-----]] || D[.]EM | Flavius [---] | [[-----]] | [[-----]]
-] | cum omne [---] | [[-----]] | [[-----]]

To the god Sol unconquered Mithras. ... *Flavius* ... with all ...

References: Annibaldi 1935 (p. 99); AE 1935, 131; CIMRM 639; Paris and Pettinau 2008 (p. 190); EDR073292 (M. Giovagnoli, A. Carapellucci).

102. Fragmentary white marble relief with tauroctony, found in the 2002-2003 excavations in the Villa dei Quintili. Currently preserved in Rome, Villa dei Quintili – Antiquarium (inv. 499957).

Two fragments of the same relief were found among the debris filling one of the subterranean utility rooms serving the bath complex of the villa. The major one shows a polygonal shape and a hole can be seen on its upper part, possibly realized to fasten the manufact to a vertical support. The relief features the usual tauroctony scene. In the center we can recognize Mithras, dressed in the usual attire, who plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. On his right the bust of Luna, with a crescent behind her shoulder, can be recognized. On his left, part of Sol's radiate crown can be discerned. The second fragment features two hooves of the bull, but the scorpion, the snake and the dog are not recognizable. This tauroctony representation was enclosed in a circular field, as seems indicated by the incised curve line present on both fragments.

References: Paris and Pettinau 2008 (p. 191); Frontoni and Galli 2012 (p. 16).

103. Marble relief (h. 63 cm) found in 1864 among other debris in the ruins of a Roman villa near Colonna (Roma). Currently lost.

Only the right part of the relief was preserved at the moment of its discovery. W. Helbig recognized Mithras, dressed in the usual attire, who plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. On the right of the group Cautes stands, both his hands are raised toward Mithras. The bust of Luna, with small crescent of her forehead, was represented in the top right corner.

References: Helbig 1864 (p. 92); De Rossi 1872 (p. 275); TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 87); CIMRM 210.

104. Fragmentary Luna marble group (pres. h. 31 cm) possibly from Palestrina. Currently preserved in Palestrina, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (inv. 3).

This statue was preserved in the 18th century in the garden of Palazzo Barberini in Palestrina, and it seems possible it could come from the nearby site of *Praeneste*.

Only the lower part of the group is preserved. We can recognize the lower part of the body of the bull (until the neck) and of the god (until the waist), the snake, the scorpion and the hind part of the dog. The extremities of the base are missing as well.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 88); CIMRM 211; Romanelli 1967 (pp. 92-3); Agnoli 2002.

105.* A Mithraeum (2 rooms) was discovered in 1962 in Marino by a private owner who used it for several years as a wine cellar. In 1963 the authorities acknowledged the existence of the site and finally in 1978 it was acquired in the State property. Recent restoration works on the site recovered three more manufactures (see nr **105d**) related to the cult and led to a better understanding of the general layout of the sanctuary.

The Mithraeum was located in a long subterranean room with barrel vault excavated in the natural rock, belonging to a villa and previously used as a water cistern. In the mid-2nd century CE this room was re-located as a Mithraic sanctuary. A stair made of seven steps granted access to the subterranean room. A wall structured with wooden beams divided this long space in two rooms: an antechamber and the main cult room. Frescoes of the two Mithraic torchbearers were painted on either side of the antechamber (see nr **105b**). In the main cult room two benches were built against the long sides, their fronts were covered with mortar and painted red. Those benches ended 1,2 m from the back wall. In the center of this back space an altar was placed (see nr **105c**). The back wall was painted with a fresco representing the Mithraic tauroctony (see nr **105a**). In a second phase a parallelepiped structure was built against the right corner of the back wall. It was stuccoed and painted red. A graffito (see nr **105e**) was engraved on the wall just above this feature. Small niches (w. 15 cm, some circular and some square) were cut in the side walls: three on each side in the first room, five in the second. They possibly hosted lamps. A nail to suspend a lamp was found also in the ceiling just in front of the fresco. Other holes, one probably again to host a lamp and two to host a device able to cover the fresco, were cut in this extreme part of the side walls. The Mithraic re-occupation of these rooms can be dated in the second half of the 2nd century CE, on the base of the dating of the main fresco (160-170 CE). It was in use at least until the mid-3rd century, as indicated by the dating of the altar (170-250 CE).

References: Lavagne 1974; Vermaseren 1982; Ghini 2002; ThesCRA (p. 278, n. 12); Chiarucci 2006 (pp. 78-9); Bedetti 2010; Bedetti&Granino Cecere 2013; Onorati 2014.

105a.* Fresco with tauroctony and minor scenes painted on the back wall of the main cult room, 160-170 CE. Currently preserved *in situ*.

This fresco is organized in a major central scene representing the tauroctony, flanked by four vertical rectangles on each side containing other representation of the history of Mithras. In the center, inside a naturalistic cave with dark background, Mithras is caught in the usual act: he plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The god is dressed in his usual attire. His light red clothes are embroidered with golden details. His *anaxyrides* are red as well, with a central blue stripe. The inside of his flying cloak is blue and features several golden stars. The white bull is pressed to the ground, his tongue protrudes from the slightly open mouth. From its tail three ears sprout. The scorpion (almost disappeared), the dark snake and the brown dog can be seen at the usual places. On the left, the black raven is perched on the rocky margin of the cave. The two

torchbearers flank the scene. Cautes, on the left, stands cross-legged holding his torch with both hands. He is dressed with a yellow tunic, red sleeves and long trousers, red shoes and cloak, and red Phrygian hat. On the right Cautopates stands. He is cross-legged too and holds the torch in his right hand while leaning his left arm on the band that delimits the nearby minor scene. He dresses in light blue tunic with red sleeves, trousers and shoes, and red cloak and Phrygian hat. On the top left corner, the bust of Sol is recognizable. A halo is represented around his head, and a ray of light departing from his face reaches Mithras. On the opposite corner we can recognize the bust of Luna.

In the four vertical panels on the left of the main representation we can recognize, from top to bottom:

- a) A bearded male figure dressed in a flying cloak, standing on a cloud. He raises a lightning bolt in his right hand and is ready to toss it to two figures with snake feet down on the ground. This scene can be identified with Jupiter fighting the Giants.
- b) A bearded male figure draped in a long tunic which covers his head reclines on his left elbow, sleeping. A tree branch with leaves and white flowers is pictured over his head. It seems possible to identify this scene with Saturn's dream.
- c) Mithras is born from the rock: the god, completely dressed, emerges from his legs up from a rock. He raises both his arms to the sky. In his left hand he holds a torch while in the other presumably a dagger (this detail is currently lost).
- d) Mithras rides the white bull, which is walking to the right. The god grasp one of the animal's horns.

Moreover, in the four vertical panel on the right of the main representation we can recognize, from top to bottom:

e) Mithras drags the bull oh his shoulders holding the animal by its hind legs. The group is entering a cave. The subject of this scene is clearly the Mithraic *transitus*.

f) Mithras (on the right) stands in front of a knelt figure. The god holds a yellow object in his right hand and places it over the head of the other figure. The knelt figure is male, naked, with a golden halo around his head: he should be identified with Sol. He kneels on his right knee and his arms are outstretched toward Mithras. He does not look at the Persian god but holds his face to the ground.

g) Mithras (on the right) and Sol (on the left) offer a sacrifice at a flaming altar. The Persian god is dressed as usual while Sol is naked except for the red long cloak. Both gods stare at the flames.

h) Mithras (on the left) strikes an arrow to a rock wall. On the right a figure dressed in Persian attire kneels in front of the same rock.

References: Vermaseren 1982 (pp. 8-11).

105b.* Frescoes (h. 85 cm) of the two Mithraic torchbearers are depicted on the western (Cautopates) and eastern (Cautes) wall of the ante-chamber, 160-170 CE. Currently preserved *in situ*.

On the western wall we can recognize the representation of Cautopates, framed by a blue band. The torchbearer is quite evanescent, but we can still recognize his blue clothes (tunic and *anaxyrides*), dark blue Phrygian hat and red cloak. He stands cross-legged and looks downward. He holds a downward-pointing torch in each hand. On the eastern wall we can recognize the representation of Cautes. He stands

cross-legged, looking at the flame of his torch, which he holds with both hands. He dresses with pink garments: Phrygian hat, cloak, long tunic and *anaxyrides*. He wears also red shoes. His legs are lost, destroyed by one of the first discoverers of the Mithraeum. He too is framed by a blue band.

References: Vermaseren 1982 (pp. 5-6).

105c.* A peperino square altar (h. 118 cm) with inscription was found in the main cult room, just before the altar, late 2nd – early 3rd century CE. Currently preserved on site.

Invicto | Deo | Crece(n)s | actor | Alfi | Seberi (!) | d(onum) p(osuit)

To the Unconquered god. *Crescens*, manager of *Alfius Severus*, set up a gift.

References: AE 1973, 132; AE 1978, 72; Vermaseren 1982 (p. 4); Bedetti 2010 (p. 27); Bedetti&Granino Cecere 2013 (pp. 236-7); EDR076930 (G. Di Giacomo).

105d.* A peperino square altar (h. 118 cm) with inscription was found in the Mithraeum in the 2010s' restoration works, late 2nd – early 3rd century CE. Currently preserved on site.

This altar was found in the first room, among the debris deposited in the layers representing the last occupation of the site.

Genesi | sac(rum) | d(onum) p(osuit) | QS

To the Birth (of the Unconquered god). *QS* set up as a gift.

Other two uninscribed small altars were found in the same restoration campaign.

References: Bedetti 2010 (p. 27); Bedetti and Granino Cecere 2013 (pp. 235, 237-9); AE 2015, 287; EDR155317 (G. Di Giacomo).

105e.* A graffito was engraved in the main cult room, on the right corner of the back wall, late 2nd – early 3rd century CE. Currently preserved *in situ*.

Pro salute Corne | li Aemiliani et | Tityaenae ipsius | collegium (!) devo | ti
restituimus

For the well-being of *Cornelius Aemilianus* and his (wife) *Titiaena*, the devotees restored for the community.

References: Bedetti and Granino Cecere 2013 (pp. 239-41); Onorati 2014 (p. 11); AE 2015, 288; EDR155318 (G. Di Giacomo).

106. White marble statue (h. 68 cm) found in 1933 during construction works in Villa Barberini, Castel Gandolfo, 80-100 CE. Currently preserved in Castel Gandolfo, Villa Barberini - Antiquarium (inv. 36419).

The statue represents a leontocephaline figure standing before a throne. The male figure exhibits a lion head with open mouth. He wears a thin linen around the hips. He has four arms. All hands are lost except the posterior right one holding a long object, possibly a sceptre. On his chest an open eye is represented, whereas a lion heads is represented in the centre of his belly and another one on each knee. Two

pair of wings are attached on his shoulders. Beside his right foot a hydra and a lion head rest, while beside his left one a three-headed Cerberus (ram head-lion head-dog head) sits. Two snakes slither on tree trunks at each side of the figure: the left one is going upward, the right one downward.

References: CIMRM 326; Bortolin 2012 (pp. 195-6, with further references); Aglietti 2019 (p. 60).

107. White marble group (h. 92 cm) found possibly in Velletri. Currently preserved in Paris, Musée du Louvre (inv. MA 1026).

This group was preserved in Velletri in the 18th century in the Ginnetti Palace. It was then moved at the antiquarian Vescovali in Rome and became part of the Campana Collection. It was bought in 1863 by the Louvre Museum. The group represent the usual tauroctony scene: on a rocky base Mithras plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The scorpion, the snake and the dog can be found at the usual places. The claws of the raven are visible, perched on the flying cloak of the god. The head of Mithras, his arms and right leg, as well as the dagger, the tail of the bull and the hind legs of the dog are modern restorations. On the front of the base a dedicatory inscription was engraved:

Q(uintus) Fulvius Zoticus d(ono) d(edit) d(edicavit)

Quintus Fulvius Zoticus gave as a gift (and) dedicated.

References: CIL X 6559; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 146; *mon. fig.* 90); CIMRM 208-209. Charbonneaux 1963 (p. 185); Gregori 2009 (pp. 502, 510); EDR150701 (V. Sapone).

108. African red slip ware bowl found around 1870 in *Lavinium*/Pratica di Mare by a private citizen, 350-425 CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano – Crypta Balbi.

Bowl with plain rim and slightly flaring walls (African red slip ware, production C, shape Hayes 53A) with applied relief decoration of Mithraic subject. Inside the bowl, on the bottom and on the lower part of the walls three subjects are represented. We can recognize:

a) Mithras wounding the bull with his dagger while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The bull is not pressed to the ground, but he stands upright on his four legs. This subject represents the tauroctony scene, but with the lack of the animals which usually accompany this representation.

b) A lion walking to the right.

c) Mithras dragging the bull on his shoulder while holding the beast by its hind legs. This subject can be identified with the Mithraic *transitus*.

References: Visconti 1872 (pp. 117-22); Cumont TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 89); CIMRM 207; Atlante I (p. 174, with further references).

109. Relief (l. 150 cm) found in 1699 in Porto d'Anzio. Currently lost.

P. Della Torre reported that this relief was found in 1699 during construction works in Porto d'Anzio. He included in his work an engraving representing the relief, which constitutes the only iconographical source for this monument. We can recognize part of the usual tauroctony scene: Mithras and the bull are represented in the centre of the cave. The god grasps one of the horns of the bull. The scorpion, the snake and the dog can be recognized at the usual places. Two ravens are

represented on the left of the scene: one flies toward Mithras, the other away from him. The two torchbearers flank the scene: Cautopates on the left, a vessel is represented beside his feet, and Cautes on the right. Nor Mithras or the torchbearers wear shoes.

References: Della Torre 1700 (pp. IX-X, 157-160); Cumont TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 86); CIMRM 204; Venetucci et al. 2018 (p. 520).

110. White marble relief (55x50 cm) found possibly in *Antium*. Currently preserved in Verona, Museo Lapidario Maffeiano (inv. 28705).

This relief has been preserved in the Museo Maffeiano since the mid-18th century CE, but it seems possible that it was discovered in Anzio at the beginning of that same century. It possibly came in possession of card. F. Bianchini, who was responsible from 1711 of the excavations in Anzio (and was an epistolary friend of P. Della Torre). At the death of card. F. Bianchini, part of his collection of antiquity was bequeathed to his nephew, G. Bianchini, librarian of the Biblioteca Capitolare of Verona. In a following moment, G. Bianchini should have ceded this relief to S. Maffei, who incorporated it in his newly founded museum.

The relief is framed by a thin band, and features the usual tauroctony representation. In the centre of the scene, inside the cave, Mithras plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the muzzle. Three ears sprout from the tail of the animal. The scorpion, the snake and the dog can be found at the usual places. On the left, the raven is perched on the flying cloak of the god. The two torchbearers, both cross-legged, flank the scene: Cautes on the left and Cautopates on the right. On the top corners we can recognize the busts of Sol (with radiated crown, his cloak fastened on the right shoulder with a circular pin) on the left and of Luna (her hair combed in a braid which encircles her temples, a crescent emerges behind her shoulders) on the right.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 111); CIMRM 759; Modonesi 1995 (pp. 83-4); Bolla 2010; Venetucci et al. 2018 (p. 521).

111.* Marble slab (121x275 cm) with inscription found in 1884 in Fogliano (mouth of the Rio Martino), 385 CE. Currently preserved in Latina (Fogliano, Villa Caetani).

Inter avos proavosque tuos sanctumque parentem | virtutum meritis et
honoribus emicuisti | ornamentum ingens generis magnique senatus | sed
raptus propra liquisti sancte Kameni | aeternos fletus obiens iuvenalibus
annis | te dulcis coniunx lacrimis noctesque diesque | cum parvis deflet natis
solacia vitae | amisisse dolens casto viduata cubili | quae tamen extremum
munus solacia luctus | omnibus obsequiis ornat decoratque sepulcrum |
Alfenio Ceionio Iuliano Kamenio v(iro) c(larissimo) quaestori candidato |
pretori triumphali VIIviro epulonum patri sacrorum summi | invicti Mithri
hierofante Aecatae arcibuculo dei Liberi XVviro | s(acris) f(aciundis),
tauriboliato deum matris, pontifici maiori, consulari | Numidiae et vicario
Africae qui vixit annos XLII m(enses) VI d(ies) XIII | rec(essit) II nonas
Septemb(res) d(omino) n(ostro) Archadio et Fl(avio) Bautone v(iro)
c(larissimo) cons(ulibus)

Among your grandfathers and ancestors and your father, you distinguished yourself for the merits of your virtues and for honors, magnificent jewel of the Senate; but you left, abruptly

torn from us. Make haste, oh pious Kamenius, dead in your young years. For you the sweet wife cries day and night with your young children; the suffering widow deprived of the chaste bedroom at the point of refusing all the consolations of life, as a last gift and consolation for (your) death ornates and embellishes (your) tomb. To *Alfenius Ceionius Iulianus Kamenius, vir clarissimus*, candidate to the quaestorship, *praetor* of the triumphs, *septemvir epulonum, pater sacrorum* of the highest and unconquered Mithras, hierophant of Hecate, *archibucolus* of the god Liber, *quindecemvir sacris faciundis, tauroboliatus* of the Mater Deum, higher priest (and) governor of the province of Numidia and *vicarius* of the province of Africa. He lived 42 years, 6 months, 13 days. He died on the 4th September, when our Emperor Archadius and Flavius Bauto, *vir clarissimus*, were consules.

References: Elter 1884; TMMM2 (*Inscr.*: 147); ILS 1264; CLE 654; CCCA III 469; EDR164602 (L. Ebanista).

Campania

112.* The existence of a subterranean room near S. Maria port in the Isle of Ponza was known at least from the mid-19th century CE, and a religious purpose was suggested since the very first mentions of this site. The Mithraic value of this space had been suggested in the 1970s' by M.J. Vermaseren. The site is currently owned by a private citizen.

The sanctuary was located in an underground room, partially cut in the natural stone. This room was accessible through a stair from a superior level. The room is quite short and do not preserve any trace of the side benches. An irregularly shaped niche framed by two pillars hosted the cult relief (see nr **112a**). A horizontal trace visible on the back wall could indicate the location of the altar. A small and irregular room was cut into the natural rock on the left of the cult niche.

References: Vermaseren 1974 (pp. 5-7); ThesCRA (p. 279, n. 26).

112a.* The scarce remains of a stucco relief with tauroctony representation were visible in the Ponza Mithraeum in the 1970s'. Although the main group with Mithras and the bull was completely lost, M.J. Vermaseren was able to recognize on the left side of the niche the chariot of Sol, pulled by four horses. Just under it, the figure of Cautes was hardly discernible. On his left a cock was represented. On the right side of the niche the chariot of Luna, pulled by a single horse, was recognized. Just under Luna's chariot, the figure of Cautopates, dressed in his usual attire, stood cross-legged, holding the torch in his left hand while he holding the right one under his chin. Finally, on the front of the right pillar, a kneeling could be seen. He raised his outstretched arms to the right. Traces of a Phrygian hat were recognized on top of his head.

References: Vermaseren 1974 (pp. 7-8).

112b.* Another more complete stucco relief was found in the Ponza Mithraeum. This relief was realized on the ceiling of the room, just before the cult niche. It consists of three concentric circles delimiting three sectors decorated with zodiacal and astronomical symbols. The figures represented were painted yellow. In addition, two running figures were represented running with their arms outstretched around these circles. One of them holds a long object, possibly a flute. Within the inner circle, two bears were figured: they represent the constellation of the Great Bear and of the Little Bear. The second circle featured a creeping snake: it symbolizes the Hydra constellation. Within the outer circle the twelve zodiacal

signs were represented. Starting from the Ram, and going clockwise, we can recognize: Aries (the ram, which runs through a loop), Taurus (the bull), Gemini (two twin figures), Cancer (the crab), Leo (the lion), Virgo (completely lost), Libra (a woman holding a scale), Scorpio (the scorpion), Sagittarius (a centaur drawing a bow), Capricorn (a goat with marine snake tail), Aquarius (a male figure holding a water vessel), and Pisces (two fishes).

References: Vermaseren 1974 (pp. 9-11); Beck 1976; Beck 1978.

113. A Mithraeum (2 rooms) was discovered in 1922 and excavated in 1924 in Santa Maria Capua Vetere.

The sanctuary was located in a *cryptoporticus*. Unfortunately, there are not enough data to indicate what type of building these subterranean rooms belonged to. The access point to these two rooms is also uncertain. If the main room could be accessed only from the first room, the pattern of access to this first one is not certain. It was probably gained through another southern room of which we only have a single mention in Minto's report (p. 356). In this southern room a small terracotta head of Minerva was found. The first room, that is, the antechamber, is a long rectangular space. A single skylight opened in the northern part of its vault. No Mithraic artifacts or decorations were found in this room, where the walls were bare, and the floor consisted in a simple beaten earth floor. Among the materials found in this room, Minto reported: fragments of marble (one bearing the inscription MVN F[-]), the fragment of a travertine base, many lamps (one possibly an Atlante X), potsherds and animal bones. At the end of this room, turning 90 degrees to the left the devotee could access the main cult room. Three skylights opened in the left side of the vault and another one in its center. Two main architectural phases can be recognized in this room. In a first phase, two low benches were built against the side walls, but only in the second half of the room. They were realized in concrete and painted red. They lodged two tanks at their beginning (the left one rectangular and the right one semicircular). The floor between these benches was bordered in white marble slabs and consisted of a lime floor enriched with inserts of various colored marbles. The floor in the rest of the room consisted of a simple beaten earth layer, possibly with mosaic inserts representing small roses (Sirano 2016, p. 285). The vault was stuccoed and painted. On a yellow background stars were frescoed. These stars consisted in eight rays either red or blue and in their center a small gem or glass bead was attached. The three skylights on the left were marked by red bands. The side walls were frescoed too: red bands delimited six vertical panels in the northern wall (see **113c**) and five in the southern one (see **113d**). The eastern (see **113b**) and western (see **113a**) walls were painted too. Traces of iron nails that possibly lodged a device for covering the tauroctony fresco when needed were found in the upper part of the western wall. A raised platform was built against the back wall. Its upper surface was inclined westwards, and an open channel indented its upper rim. In a second phase, new longer benches were built. They consisted of a front realized in various materials, filled with rubbish, and covered with a mortar surface sloping toward the side walls. Two square niches were cut in these fronts, one per side. The front of these benches was frescoed too: red bands divided their surface in panels (six on the right bench, seven on the left one) which featured initiatory rituals (see **113e-f**). Among the materials of the superficial layer covering the floor of this room, Minto reported:

fragments of building materials, marble fragments, two fragmentary marble bases and a fragmentary travertine base, many lamps (among which an Atlante X with MEN stamp on the disc and a disc lamp with representation of Sol on the disc), a few coins (among which a bronze of *Marcus Aurelius*, a bronze of *Constantius Chlorus*, and a bronze of Constantine).

The chronology of this sanctuary is based mostly on the stylistic dating of the frescoes. The first phase, with the small benches and the wall paintings, can be dated in the last decades of the 2nd century CE (180-190 CE). The second phase, with the new benches and their decoration can be dated in the mid-3rd century CE (230-240 CE). The materials found in the filling deposit of these rooms point toward a last occupation of the site in the mid-4th century CE. The sanctuary was then abandoned. The gem encased in the tauroctony fresco was pulled out and Mithras' face was voluntarily damaged. The rooms were progressively filled with earth and debris filled in from the skylights.

References: Minto 1924; Cumont 1924; CIMRM 180, 198, 199; Vermaseren 1971 (pp. 1-5); Tran Tam Tinh 1972 (pp. 184-93); Meyboom 1982; ThesCRA (p. 278, n. 16); Gordon 2009; Sirano 2016 (pp. 283-290, with further references).

113a. A fresco with the tauroctony scene was depicted on the western wall of the the main cult room of the Mithraeum, 180-190 CE. Currently preserved *in situ*.

This fresco features the usual tauroctony scene. Inside the rocky cave, Mithras plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The god is dressed in his usual attire: he wears long anaxyrides, closed shoes, a long-sleeved tunic, flying cloak and Phrygian hat. His clothes and cap are red, with embroidered green ribbons and golden details. His cloak is red too, with golden borders and a blue internal overlay. Seven stars are embroidered on this blue internal surface. A yellow sheath for his dagger is suspended on a belt which encircles the god's chest. The face of the god was unfortunately damaged. He looks toward Sol, wavy brown hair framing his face. The white bull is pressed to the ground, its tongue protrudes from the muzzle and yellow ears sprout from its tail. The brown dog and the brown and green snake run to leap at the blood spilling from the wound of the animal. The scorpion, quite evanescent, can be seen at the usual place. The black raven is perched on the rocky side of the cave, just on the left of Mithras. The two torchbearers flank the scene: Cautes on the left and Cautopates on the right. Cautes is dressed in yellow clothes with green ribbons. He wears also a red Phrygian hat, red boots, and red cloak with violet internal overlay. In his right hand he holds the torch while in his left a bow (a quiver is represented on his back). A star is represented on his hat. On the opposite side Cautopates is dressed in greyish clothes with green ribbons, light cloak and he too wears red hat, and red boots. He holds the torch in his right hand and a bow in the left one (a quiver is represented on his back). Outside the cave, on opposite corners, we can recognize the busts of Sol (on the left) and of Luna (on the right). A ray departs from Sol's face and reaches Mithras. In the lower part of the representation other two faces are represented. We can recognize on the left corner a male face with dark beard, wavy hair, and a pair of red horns emerging from the waves (Oceanus) while on the opposite corner a female face emerging from the earth (Tellus). The lower part of the wall was painted green in resemblance of a marble socle.

References: Minto 1924 (pp. 359-60; out-of-text table); CIMRM 181; Vermaseren 1971 (pp. 5-7).

113b. A fresco with Luna on her chariot was depicted on the eastern wall of the the main cult room of the Mithraeum, 180-190 CE. Currently preserved *in situ*.

This representation is located in the lunette of the eastern wall of the main room, just opposite the tauroctony fresco. We can recognize the figure of Luna driving her chariot pulled by two horses. The goddess is naked and wrapped in a flying white veil. Her hair is combed on her nape in a bun. She takes the reins in her left hand and holds a whip in her right. Two dark horses pull her chariot: one declines his head down while the other tilts his head up.

On the same wall, just below this subject, another figure was painted. He was identified with a tall male figure, frontal, dressed in red clothes and hat, and wearing sandals.

References: Minto 1924 (pp. 363-4; fig. 6); CIMRM 184; Vermaseren 1971 (pp. 14-16).

113c. On the northern wall of the main cult room, red bands delimited six panels. In the first panel from the door, according to Minto's report (p. 366), a representation of the Mithraic leontocephaline deity was depicted. He recognized a winged figure encircled in the spires of a snake. On the same wall, but at the same location, Vermaseren saw a quite different figure. The Dutch scholar saw a male figure, frontal, with red-painted face and probably a red hat. He holds in his right hand a flaming torch and in his left a blue globe. Vermaseren interpreted the figure as a Mithraic devotee dressed as heliodromus (Vermaseren 1971, pp. 16-18).

Moreover, a fresco representation of Cautes was depicted in the second panel from the entrance. The torchbearer is dressed in his usual attire (red clothing and yellow belt) and stands cross-legged. He raises the lit torch in his right hand, whereas he holds some branches in his left. On his right a flaming altar is represented, while on his left a cock. The torchbearer stands between two green trees who creates a sort of arch for his image. Based on stylistic features, this fresco can be dated as the tauroctony scene in 180-190 CE.

Other figures were represented in the third panel. Vermaseren reported three figures dressed in yellow clothes and suggested to interpret this subject as the sacred repast of Mithras and Sol. This scene did not figure in Minto's report. The stylistic treatment of the figures in the third panel should be connected with the second phase of the paintings, dated in 230-240 CE.

The other three panels did not preserve traces of other depicted subjects.

References: Minto 1924 (pp. 365-6, fig. 7); CIMRM 185, 182; Vermaseren 1971 (pp. 16-19).

113d. On the southern wall of the main cult room, red bands delimited five panels. In the first panel from the door, a fresco representation of Cautopates was depicted. The torchbearer is dressed in the usual attire with red clothing and yellow belt, and stands cross-legged. He lowers his right hand holding the lit torch while he raises his left holding a sickle. He stands between two green trees. On his right a flaming altar is represented. Based on stylistic features, this fresco can be dated as the tauroctony scene in 180-190 CE.

The other panels on this wall does not exhibits traces of other depicted subjects. Nonetheless, in the third panel a white marble relief (32x39 cm) representing Amor and Psyche is encased. On the left, the winged Psyche stands, represented as a young woman dressed in a thin tunic and veil. She holds in her outstretched right arm a rim of her dress, and looks to the right to Amor. On her back a pair of small wings, as those of a bee, is represented. Amor is represented as a small, winged child,

standing naked and looking back to Psiche. He reaches Psiche with his right hand while in his outstretched left he holds a small lit torch. On the left of this relief, a graffito was inscribed:

INYODVM

References: Minto 1924 (pp. 366-7, figg. 8-9); CIMRM 180, 183, 186; Vermaseren 1971 (pp. 22-24, fig. 4); Mastrocinque 1998 (p. 214).

113e. Red bands divided the front of the northern bench in six small panels where representations of several initiatory rituals were painted.

a) The first panel (CIMRM 187, Minto 1924 fig. 10, Gordon 2009 R-I) from the entrance features two figures. A standing figure dressed in white tunic and short cloak with red stripes pushes a second naked figure (his body is painted red). The latter is blindfolded and walks with his hands stretched onward.

b) The second panel (CIMRM 188, Minto fig. 11, Gordon 2009 R-II) features the same person in white tunic and red-bordered short cloak standing behind the blindfolded naked man. This latter kneels on his right knee while his arms are tied behind his back. In front of these two figures a third one stands, dressed in red flying cloak, red tunic and red helmet. This man holds a lit torch in his left hand and brandishes it toward the knelt man.

c) The third panel (CIMRM 189) features a figure with short tunic walking, but it is quite too damaged to recognize the development of the entire scene.

d) The fourth panel (CIMRM 190, Minto fig. 12, Gordon 2009 R-IV) features again the three figures. On the left the man in short red tunic and cloak is facing the other two. Of those latter, the left figure stands still while the right one, slightly bowed, seems to embrace him from behind.

e) The fifth panel (CIMRM 191, Minto fig. 13, Gordon 2009 R-V) features again a kneeling naked person, with hands bound behind his back. He is knelt on his right knee and is trying to stand up. Behind him, the man with the white tunic holds an object above his head.

f) The sixth (CIMRM 192) from the right features again the same three figures, but their stance is indiscernible.

References: Minto 1924 (pp. 368-70); CIMRM 187-192; Vermaseren 1971 (pp. 26-42); Gordon 2009 (pp. 298-301).

113f. Red bands divided the front of the southern bench in seven small panels where representations of several initiatory rituals were painted.

a) The first panel from the entrance features is broken off and only small traces of paint are preserved.

b) The second panel (CIMRM 193, Minto fig. 16, Gordon 2009 L-II) features a naked figure lying prone on the ground, with his hands behind his back and a scorpion (or snake) laying on his back. Other objects are scattered on the ground beside him. On the left the man in short white tunic stands; his gesture is not discernible. On the right the man with short red tunic and red short cloak holds in his right hand an object pointed to the prone figure.

c) The third panel (CIMRM 195, Minto fig. 14, Gordon 2009 L-III) features the same three figures. The kneeling man stretches both his hands forward. The man in white tunic with red stripes stands behind him and lays his hands on the kneeling

man's shoulders. In front of them the man with red cloak, short tunic and helmet (or Phrygian hat) holds in his hands two torches. He puts the fire under the outstretched hands of the kneeling man.

d) The fourth panel (CIMRM 194, Minto fig. 15, Gordon 2009 L-IV) features the same three figures. The naked man is knelt. He holds his arms on his chest (or behind his back). The man with the white tunic with red stripes stands behind him and stomp his calf while seizing him by the shoulders with his left hand. In front of them the man with red tunic, short cloak and cap points an oblong object (possibly a staff or whip) toward a rounded object (a water vessel?) beside the knees of the knelt figure.

The fifth and sixth panels (CIMRM 196) show really faint traces of paintings, whereas the seventh is lost (CIMRM 197).

References: Minto 1924 (pp. 370-3); CIMRM 193-197; Vermaseren 1971 (pp. 43-7); Godon 2009 (pp. 301-304).

114.* A Mithraeum (2 rooms) was excavated in 1983-84 in Napoli (loc. Carminiello ai Mannesi).

The sanctuary was located at the ground floor of an urban complex with mixed use (housing, storage and hygienic). The rooms relating to the Mithraic community in particular were part of the bath complex which occupied the south-west sector of the block. Two rooms were surely related to Mithraic use, while for the other two a connection has been suggested on the basis of spatial considerations. The first room involved was a rectangular space covered with a cross vault in its southern sector and by a barrel vault in the northern one. No furniture or other decorations of this first room have survived. Two entrances to this first room have been recorded: a southern one, from a service room, and an eastern one, from a larger room of similar utilitarian purpose. This eastern room has shown traces of stucco decoration and was possibly a service room connected with the baths, as well as with the access to the Mithraic sanctuary and with a minor access to a utility room. A passage that was as large as the first room led to the second room of the sanctuary. This was almost square and had two spaces separated by thresholds on either side. The central sector was covered with a cross vault while the lateral ones with barrel vaults. The thresholds have been interpreted as the fronts of the ritual benches. On the right-side wall a small rectangular niche was cut. It seems possible that a similar one was cut in the opposite wall, but it did not survive until modern times. A stucco representation of the tauroctony occupied the northern wall (see **114a**). No other furniture or architectural decoration was found. The chronology of the setting of the Mithraeum is tentatively set in the mid-2nd century CE on the basis of the general spread of the cult. The entire complex was abandoned from the early 5th century CE.

References: Delaine 1994 (pp. 22-25); Lacerenza and Morisco 1994; Lacerenza and Morisco 1998 (p. 530).

114a.* Stucco relief (226x210 cm) attached on northern wall of the main cult room, mid-2nd century CE. Currently preserved *in situ*.

The relief is very fragmentary: only some parts of the original stucco representation were still preserved at the moment of the discovery. We can recognize Mithras' flying cloak and the god's right leg, the tail of the bull from which three ears sprout, and the scorpion. Moreover, on the top left part of the relief the bust of Sol and the

raven perched on a rock are still visible. On other fragments the body of the snake is recognizable, as well as one of the hind legs of the bull. The relief preserved traces of polychromy: the rock of the cave was brown, whereas the scorpion was grey.

References: Lacerenza and Morisco 1994 (p. 47).

115. White marble relief (113x110 cm) found in the 15th century in Napoli, late 3rd – early 4th century CE. Currently preserved in Napoli, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (inv. 6764).

The relief was found in the 15th century during restoration works in the gallery known as *Crypta Neapolitana*. A thin band frames this almost square relief. In the center of the cave we can recognize Mithras, dressed in his usual attire, who plunges the dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The stance of the bull is quite peculiar: the animal is not pressed to the ground but is fighting to get up. Its left foreleg is firmly pointed in the ground while the right one is lifted. A band (*dorsuale*) encircles its body. The dog is represented under the bull in the act of leaping toward the wound of the animal. The raven is on the left, perched on a small pile of rocks. The torchbearers flank the scene: Cautes on the left and Cautopates on the right. They are unusually small. On the upper corners of the representation we can recognize the busts of Sol (on the left) with radiate crown and the bust of Luna (on the right). A dedicatory inscription is engraved on the top and bottom band of the relief:

Omnipotentī Deo Mithrae Appius | Claudius Tarronius Dexter v(ir)
c(larissimus) dicat

To the almighty god Mithras. *Appius Claudius Tarronius Dexter, vir clarissimus*, dedicates.

References: CIL X 1479; ILS 4196; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 148; *mon. fig.* 93); CIMRM 174, 175; Tran Tam Tinh 1972 (pp. 178-81); Papadopoulos 1985 (p. 396); Lacerenza and Morisco 1998 (p. 529); EDR167984 (G. Camodeca).

116. White marble relief (99x84 cm) bought in 1896 by F. Cumont in Rome. Currently preserved in Brussels, Koninklijke Musea voor Kunst en Geschiedenis (inv. 58 – A/1940).

This relief was known to be preserved in Napoli, where it was very probably found, at least from the beginning of the 17th century CE, as testified by several written sources. In an unprecised moment it was moved to Rome, where in 1896 it was bought by F. Cumont. The Belgian scholar later gifted the relief to the Musée du Cinquanteaire in Brussels, where it is still preserved.

In the center of the rocky cave we can recognize Mithras, dressed in his usual attire, who plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. Three ears sprout from the tail of the bull. The scorpion, the snake and the dog (with collar) can be seen at the usual places. On the upper right corner of the relief stands the bust of Luna, with a crescent on top of her forehead. The upper left corner of the relief is missing. There is no trace of the torchbearers.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 94, 94*bis*); Cumont 1913 (pp. 74-76); CIMRM 173, 176; Tran Tam Tinh 1972 (p. 181); Lacerenza and Morisco 1998 (with further references).

117. Limestone inscription found in Ischia (loc. Casamicciola).

Ἡλίω | Μίθρα | ἀνικητῶ

To Sol Mithras unconquered.

References: IG XIV 891; IGR I 410; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 149); CIMRM 178; Tran Tam Tinh 1972 (p. 182); PH141126.

118. White marble relief (100x77 cm) possibly found in Capri, early 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Napoli, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (inv. 6723). In the 18th century CE this relief was preserved preserved in Capri (San Costanzo church). It was moved to the Museo Borbonico of Napoli at the beginning of the following century.

In the centre of the scene we can recognize Mithras who plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The god is dressed in his usual attire and looks back toward Sol. Five ears sprout from the tail of the bull. The stance of the bull is quite peculiar: the animal is not pressed to the ground, but he is actually leaping. The snake, the dog and the scorpion can be recognized at the usual places. The raven is on the left, perched on a small pile of rocks between Mithras and Sol. The torchbearers flank the scene: Cautopates on the left and Cautes on the right. On the top left corner, we recognize the bust of Sol, with radiate crown. One of the rays of his crown reaches Mithras. On the opposite corner the bust of Luna is represented: she wears a crescent on her forehead.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 95); CIMRM 172; Tran Tam Tinh 1972 (pp. 177-8).

119.* Luna marble base (h. 8,5 cm) found in 1876-9 in the excavation under Santissima Maria Assunta and San Catello church (Castellammare di Stabia), late 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Castellammare di Stabia, Museo diocesano Sorrentino-Stabiese (inv. 67580).

Aug(usto) sacrum | L(ucius) Gavidius M(arci) f(ilius) Lanus | cultoribus dei
Mithr[ae] | donum d(edit) d(edicavit) l(ibens) m(erito)

Consecrated to *Augustus*. *Lucius Gavidius Lanus*, son of *Marcus*, gave as a gift and dedicated willingly and deservedly for the devotees of Mithras.

References: AE 2001, 787; Camodeca 2002; AE 2002, 310; Magalhaes 2006 (pp. 24-5, 84-5); EDR111778 (G. Camodeca).

119bis.* Bronze plaque (9,5x5,5 cm) with inscription found in in Paestum, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Paestum, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (inv. 3596).

This small bronze slab was found in Paestum (debris of temple n. 5).

Collegi(o) dei Invic(ti) | Aurio li(bertus) | p(ecunia) s(ua) d(edit)

For the *collegium* of the Unconquered god. *Aurio* gave willingly from his own money.

References: Mello 1968 (pp. 8-9); AE 1975, 236; EDR076070 (U. Soldovieri).

Southern Italy

Apulia et Calabria

120. Altar with inscription found in Venosa, late 2nd – early 3rd century CE. Currently re-used in the masonry of private house (Palazzo Bagnoli) in Venosa (via vico Manfredi).

Ἡλίῳ | Μίθρα | ὑπὲρ σωτηρίας | Βριττίου Πραΐ | σεντος | Σάγαρις οἴκο | νόμος

To Sol Mithras. For the safety of (his master) *Brittius Praesens*, the manager *Sagaris*.

References: IG XIV 688; IGR I 464; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 150); CIMRM 171; Carlsen 1995 (p. 140); Chelotti 1996 (pp. 15-8); Andermahr 1998 (p. 183); PH141021.

Lucania et Brutii

121. Inscription found in *Grumentum*, second half of the 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in SABAP Basilicata deposit.

At the end of the 18th century CE this inscription was displayed in the garden of house Danio in Saponara, where F.S. Roselli reported to have seen it. It is highly possible that it came from the 18th-century excavations of *Grumentum* by C. Danio.

Soli Invicto | Mythrae T(itus) Fl(avius) | Saturninus | evoc(atus)
Augg(ustorum) nn(ostrorum)

To Sol unconquered Mithras. *Titus Flavius Saturninus*, *evocatus* of our Augusti.

References: CIL X 204; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 151); CIMRM 170; Baschiroto 2009 (p. 12); Caldelli *et alii* 2012 (p. 296); Laes and Buonopane 2020 (pp. 70-71).

Sicilia

122.* A Mithraeum (1 room) was discovered in 1931 in Siracusa (loc. Quartiere S. Lucia).

The main cult room consisted of a rectangular subterranean room partially excavated in the natural rock with niches on the side walls. A door in the right side of the room granted access to this main cult room. On the wall on the left of this entrance door, a niche topped by an arch was found. Red flowers were painted here. The walls and roof of the main cult room were frescoed. The back wall hosted the stucco cult relief, while a hunt scene was depicted on its right. The chronology of the frequentation of the Mithraeum, based on the lamp finds, can be dated from the 3rd to the 4th century CE. Some graffiti testify a medieval frequentation of the site (15th century CE). Fragments of Mithraic monuments (see nrr **122a-c**) were found in the area surrounding this sanctuary.

References: Sfameni 1973 (pp. 158-61, 281-89); Wilson 1990 (p. 301); ThesCRA (p. 277, n. 4); Germanà 2013 (pp. 241-3).

122a.* Fragmentary limestone relief (19x29 cm) with tauroctony found in the area surrounding the Mithraeum, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Siracusa, Museo Archeologico Regionale Paolo Orsi (inv. 45924, 45925).

Only few fragments of this relief were preserved. We can recognize the head and neck of the bull, a paw and part of the head of the dog, the right hand of Mithras who plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull. Other fragments can be referred to the god's vest. Traces of red coloring are preserved on the surface of all of these fragments.

References: Sfameni 1973 (pp. 157, 288; tav. CXII, fig. 153); Wilson 1990 (p. 301); Germanà 2013 (p. 243).

122b.* Parian marble head (pres. h. 16 cm) with Phrygian hat found in the area surrounding the Mithraeum, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Siracusa, Museo Archeologico Regionale Paolo Orsi (inv. 45922).

This fragmentary head exhibits short curly hair and a Phrygian hat. The details of the face were abraded. Traces of red coloring are preserved on the surface of the monument.

References: Sfameni 1973 (pp. 157, 289; tav. CXIII, fig. 154); Wilson 1990 (p. 301); Germanà 2013 (p. 243).

122c.* White marble hand (pres. l. 5,5 cm), found in the area surrounding the Mithraeum, 2nd-3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Siracusa, Museo Archeologico Regionale Paolo Orsi (inv. 545923).

Small marble hand. The fingers are broken, except for the thumb. Iron pins were inserted under the palm and at the wrist to fix this hand to a sculpture or relief. Traces of red coloring are preserved on the surface of this piece.

References: Sfameni 1973 (pp. 157, 289; tav. CXV, fig. 157); Germanà 2013 (p. 243).

123. White marble relief (55x57 cm) found in 1886 in Ortigia (Siracusa), 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Siracusa, Museo Archeologico Regionale Paolo Orsi (inv. 8478).

This relief was re-used as building material in the 16th century for the construction of the Spanish ramparts in Ortigia. It was found in 1886 during the demolition of these structures.

The relief features the tauroctony scene, but only the central part of the monument is preserved. We can recognize Mithras, dressed in his usual attire, pressing the bull to the ground. The head of the god, his arms and his right foot are missing. Of the bull, only the central part of the body is preserved.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 121); Libertini 1929 (p. 158); Pace 1945 (p. 675); CIMRM 163; Sfameni 1973 (pp. 156, 290; tav. CXVII, fig. 159); Savarino 2011 (pp. 34-36); Germanà 2013 (p. 243).

124. White marble relief (24x37 cm) possibly from Catania. Currently preserved in Catania, Museo di Castello Ursino (Coll. Biscari, inv. 851).

This fragment consists in the lower part of a circular relief which should have represented the usual tauroctony scene. Of this central scene, only two hooves of the bull and part of the body of the snake are preserved. A circular band enclosed the central representation. On this band, the zodiacal signs were represented. Libra and Scorpio are the only two signs preserved.

References: Pace 1945 (pp. 675-6); CIMRM 163a; Sfameni 1973 (p. 160); Wilson 1990 (p. 301).

125. White marble statue found in 1968 in the excavation of the Grandi Terme at *Turris Libisonis*/Porto Torres, mid-3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Porto Torres, Antiquarium Turritano.

The statue features a torchbearer, dressed in eastern attire, with long cloak pinned in the middle of the chest with a circular brooch. He wears long-sleeved tunic, anaxyrides and a belt around the chest. He stands cross-legged and holds with both hands a torch pointed to the ground. Head and feet are missing. The subject of this monument has been identified with the Mithraic torchbearer Cautopates.

References: Contu 1968; Mastino 1983 (p. 60).

Ostia

126. *Mitreo della Casa di Diana.* A Mithraic sanctuary (1 room) was discovered and excavated in 1915. It was located in two ground-floor rooms in the north-eastern corner of a building known as Casa di Diana, formerly a housing unit. In the mid-3rd century, while the entire complex became a hostel and the other ground-floor rooms were relocated as stables, shops and utility rooms, the Mithraic devotees adjusted these two rooms for religious purpose. They closed the western door in the first room. A semi-circular niche was cut in the patched masonry which closed the western door. Accessing the sanctuary was now possible only through the southern door. A new door was opened in the wall separating the two rooms. Two benches were built against the eastern and western sides, a pair in each room. They consisted of masonry fronts and they were filled with debris. A single step was added against their front to access their upper surface. The front of the eastern bench in the second room was not parallel to the eastern wall but slanting, to give space to the structured altar built against the back wall. The central aisle was paved with an earthen floor. A small circular pit hosting a pottery basin was dug in the first room, just on the right of the main entrance. Against the back wall a previous structure was adjusted for Mithraic purpose. This rectangular cave base was filled with rubbish and its upper surface was raised. The resulting parallelepiped base supported a new feature made of two pillars topped by a vault, with internal surface was covered in plaster. A red band divided the lower part of this internal surface from the lunette and the vaulted part. This upper part of the vault was painted blue while the lunette was decorated with pumice fragments. The front of the base was decorated with two stucco semi-columns resting on travertine shelves. The front of the base was marked by a stucco cornice painted in red and yellow stripes. Just under it two herms were attached (**126a**). Two steps were built against this front, on the right extremity of the base, on top of a third step pertinent to a previous phase. A square masonry structure was attached in the middle of the front of the base and supported a square altar (**126c**).

References: Calza 1915 (pp. 327-33); Becatti 1954 (pp. 9-15); CIMRM 216; Becatti 1961 (p. 12); Floriani Squarciapino 1962 (pp. 38-9); Marinucci, Falzone 2001 (pp. 238-9); Falzone 2004 (pp. 34, 43-4); ThesCRA (p. 278, n. 18); White 2012 (pp. 452-9); Melega 2018 (pp. 36-40, 206-214); Van Haepelen 2019.

126a. Two herms were attached on the front of the base supporting the cult niche. The male one is currently *in situ* while the female was already lost in 1954. On the left there was the herm of a bearded man (possibly Bacchus), with a crown of vine tendrils, while on the right the herm of a female figure, with a crown of leaves. The female herm was attached such as to show only the face of the figure. These two pieces could have been re-used to shape the faces of Sol and Luna.

References: Calza 1915 (p. 380); Becatti 1954 (p. 14); CIMRM 217.

126b. A graffito was engraved on the front of the base supporting the cult niche, just above the male herm 126a, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved *in situ*. It reads:

[-] Alcumus (!) [-] | Ulas [- -] ((denarios)) V | Babenus SMAXS | Becton
binu(m) ((denarios)) II | Proclus (!) binu(m) ((denarios)) II | Hermes (!)

binu(m) ((denarios)) III | Fortuniu(s) ada[nda] | Maximus binu(m)
((denarios)) III

...*Alcimus*...*Ylas* five *denarii* of ..., *Babenus* ..., *Becton* two *denarii* of wine, *Proculus* two *denarii* of wine, *Hermes* three *denarii* of wine, *Fortunius* food, *Maximus* three *denarii* of wine.

It seems plausible to follow G. Calza suggestion and to interpret this graffito as a report of the offerings made by some devotees to the god.

References: CIL XIV 5293; Calza 1915 (p. 380); Becatti 1954 (pp. 14-5); CIMRM 218; Marchesini 2013 (pp. 127-30); EDR110025 (R. Marchesini).

126c. Square altar (h. 78 cm) with inscription located in front of the cult niche, first half of the 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Ostia, Tempio di Ercole (inv. 1275).

This altar was originally dedicated to Hercules, as testified by the dedicatory inscription (dated between the end of the 1st century BCE and the beginning of the 1st century CE) engraved on two sides:

Aquae Salviae | Herc(u)li sac(rum)

Consecrated to the *Aqua Salvia* (and to) Heracles.

On the main side, just under the dedicatory inscription, it featured a representation of the god reclining, whereas a crown made of oak branches was represented on the back side, and a *patera* and an *oinochoe* on the left side. In the mid 3rd century CE this monument was appropriated by a Mithraic devotee who re-consecrated it to Mithras. The altar was placed upside down and its back side became the front hosting a new dedicatory inscription that read:

M(arcus) Lollianus | Callinucus pater | aram Deo do(num) de(dit)

The *pater Marcus Lollianus Callinicus* gave as a gift (this) altar to the god.

A hole was cut for all of the depth of the altar, piercing the monument from side to side.

References: CIL XIV 4280, 4310; Calza 1915 (pp. 331-33); Becatti 1942; AE 1948, 81; Becatti 1954 (pp. 12-3); CIMRM 219-220; Cébeillac 1971 (pp. 77-8); AE 1971, 73; Zevi 2010a (pp. 117-8); Marchesini 2013 (pp. 111-18); EDR106224/106174 (R. Marchesini).

127. Fragmentary marble architrave (h. 19 cm) with inscription found in 1899 in *via della Fontana*, first half of the 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Ostia, Galleria Lapidaria (inv. 11214).

M(arco) Lolliano Callinico patre | Q(uintus) Petronius Felix Marsus | [[..]]
{L} signum Arimanium do(no) de(dit) d(edicavit)

When *Marcus Lollianus Callinicus* was *pater*, *Quintus Petronius Felix Marsus* gave as a gift and dedicated (this) statue of Arimanius.

This fragment of architrave belonged to the architectural furniture framing a statue of the god *Arimanius* dedicated in a Mithraeum. Due to the identification of the *pater* in charge with the same who dedicated the altar of the *Mitreo della Casa di Diana* (see **126**), this monument is traditionally associated with that Mithraic sanctuary.

References: CIL XIV 4311; AE 1899, 205; Gatti 1899 (p. 62); Paschetto 1912 (p. 171); Taylor 1912 (p. 92); Becatti 1954 (pp. 13-4); CIMRM 221-222; Marchesini 2013 (pp. 118-23); EDR071717 (I. Manzini).

128. Fragmentary marble slab (h. 25,5 cm) with inscription on both sides found in in a *taberna* along the *Decumanus*, not far from the *Mitreo della Casa di Diana*. Currently preserved in Ostia, SS Roma-Ostia Antica deposit (inv. 8200).

The marble slab is engraved on both sides. On one side (late 2nd – early 3rd century CE) it read:

MM(arci duo) Caer[elli Hiero] | nimus (!) et [---] | us sacerdo[tes et antisti]
| tes Solis [Invicti Mithrae] | thronum [---] | fec[erunt]

The two *Marci Caerelli*, *Hieronymus* and ...*us*, priests and *antistites* of the Sol unconquered Mithras built (this) *thronus* ...

On the reverse instead (first half of the 3rd century CE) it read:

[M(arco) Lollia]no Callinico | [patre Q(uintus) Pet]ronius Felix | [sign]um
Deo | [do(no)] de(dit) d(edicavit) | [---]atus xin[...] | [sua p(ecunia)] fecit

When *Marcus Lollianus Callinicus* was *pater*, *Quintus Petronius Felix Marsus* gave as a gift and dedicated (this) statue to the god. ... made with his own money.

References: CIL XIV 4312, 4313; Calza 1915 (p. 332); Becatti 1954 (p. 13); CIMRM 223; Marchesini 2013 (pp. 107-110, 123-27); EDR106225/106227 (R. Marchesini).

129. Fragmentary marble base (pres. h. 23 cm) with inscription found in 1867-8 in the excavation of the Mater Magna temple, late 2nd – early 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Ostia, SS Roma-Ostia Antica deposit (inv. 12295).

----- | d(ono) d(edit) | M(arco) Cerellio (!) | Hieronymo patri | et sacerdoti
suo | eosque antistes | s(upra) s(criptus) | deo libens dicavit

... gave as a gift to *Marcus Caerellius Hieronymus pater* and priest of him (Mithras), and the *antistes* written above dedicated those objects willingly to the god.

The identity of *Marcus Caerellius Hieronymus* with the devotee mentioned in **128** as well as the subject of the consecration point to a relation between this monument and the context of Mithraeum **126**.

References: CIL XIV 70; Visconti 1868 (p. 374); Paschetto 1912 (p. 380); Ross Taylor 1912 (p. 86); Calza 1946 (p. 190); Becatti 1954 (pp. 13, 92); CIMRM 282; CCCA III 411; Rieger 2004 (pp. 293-4); Borlenghi 2011 (p. 210); Marchesini 2013 (pp. 100-106); EDR144061 (R. Marchesini).

130. *Mitreo di Lucrezio Menandro*. This Mithraic sanctuary (2 rooms) was discovered and excavated between 1938 and 1942. It was located in two ground-

floor rooms belonging to a building complex with previous housing destination, which at the time of the Mithraic installation changed his function to commercial and artisanal purposes. These two rooms were covered by the same barrel vaulted ceiling, and in the previous phase they were separated by a thin wall. With the Mithraic occupation in the late 2nd/early 3rd century CE this wall was destroyed to obtain a single room. The mosaic decoration of the floors and the frescoes on the walls, both related to the previous phase, were preserved. The new room was accessible from a northern door, after a small vestibule. Another room on the west of the main cult room probably constituted an ancillary space for cult functions. In the main room, two benches were built in poor technique against the long sides, their upper rim was marked by a ledge. A niche was cut in their front at ground level in the middle of each bench and covered with pieces of amphorae. The western bench was accessible by a single step built in the beginning of the structure and ended 75 cm before the back wall. The eastern bench occupied instead all the extension of the side wall between the entrance and the back wall. A square masonry base was built against the back wall, functioning as an altar. A white marble slab bearing a dedicatory inscription was attached on its front (see **130a**). No Mithraic figurative monuments or small finds were recovered in the excavation.

References: Becatti 1954 (pp. 17-20); CIMRM 224; Floriani Squarciapino 1962 (pp. 39-40); Falzone 2004 (pp. 55-7, 60); ThesCRA (p. 279, n. 25); Oome 2007 (p. 240); Marchesini 2013 (pp. 180-5); Melega 2018 (pp. 41-45, 215-220); Van Haepren 2019.

130a. White marble slab (84x47 cm) with inscription attached on the front of the square structure (w. 55 cm, d. 75 cm) built against the back wall of the Mithraeum, last quarter of the 2nd century CE. Currently preserved *in situ* (inv. 3100).

Deo Invicto Mithrae | Diocles ob honorem | C(ai) Lucreti Menandri | patris
| d(onum) d(edit) d(edificavit)

To the unconquered god Mithras. *Diocles* gave as a gift and dedicated for the honor of the *pater Caius Lucretius Menander*.

On top of this inscription a crescent shape was carved. It corresponded to a small hole cut in the square masonry altar. It was possibly realized to fit a lamp in it.

References: Bloch 1953 (p. 244); Becatti 1954 (p. 20); CIMRM 225; Marchesini 2013 (pp. 177-9); EDR031498 (R. Marchesini).

131. Mitreo di Fructosus. This Mithraic sanctuary (2 rooms) was discovered and excavated between 1938 and 1942. It was located in two semi-subterranean rooms constituting the former *favissae* of a *templum* related to an Ostian *collegium* (it is generally accepted to identify them as the *stuppatores* who were present also in the nearby block; see also **131b**). The rooms at the first floor received housing destination. The whole complex was built during the late Severan period (220-235 CE), but the construction works stopped before finishing the building of the temple. They re-started approximately in the mid-3rd century CE when the *favissae* and the narrow corridor which led to them were relocated as a Mithraeum. Walls in poor masonry technique were built to create a vaulted corridor on the front of the *favissae* room. The resulting small northern door was then the only access to this corridor, which gave entrance to the main room after descending three steps. The ground floor of this room was lowered and the cross-vaulted ceiling was finally built. A

rectangular niche was cut in the entrance wall, on the left of the door. Two side benches were built along the side walls (remains of the right bench were actually found, while the existence of the left one is only supposed), their front was made in poor technique. They were filled with debris and earth and covered in red plaster. A semi-circular niche was cut in the middle of the back wall. Its back was left voluntarily rough to resemble the rocky surface of a cave and painted blue. Two different arrangements of this niche could be detected. In a first phase the niche was framed by two small marble columns resting on shelves, while in the second phase the shelf on the right was obliterated. Under the niche a marble ledge probably stood, supported by two *trapezophoroi*. All the walls were covered in plaster and frescoed. In the excavation two rectangular bases (h. 55 cm), possibly destined to support the statues of the torchbearers, were found. One of them was realized in dark greenish marble and the other in travertine. The Mithraeum seems to have met a violent end: the only figurative monuments find in the excavation consists in fragments of a torchbearer statue (see **131a**) and the debris which filled the main room showed consistent traces of an ancient fire.

References: Becatti 1954 (pp. 21-8); CIMRM 226; Floriani Squarciapino 1962 (p. 40); Hermansen 1982 (p. 125); ThesCRA (p. 279, n. 29); Marchesini 2013 (pp. 194-8); Melega 2018 (pp. 46-51, 221-227); Van Haepelen 2019.

131a. A white marble statue (pres. h. 30 cm) was found in the excavation of the Mithraeum. Currently lost.

This fragmentary statue represents Cautes: the bust of the god (without head) is preserved. He holds a long torch and is dressed in the usual eastern attire.

References: Becatti 1954 (p. 24); CIMRM 227.

131b. Two fragments of white marble cornice (h. 12 cm) with inscription were found in 1938 in the excavation of the building which hosted the sanctuary, first half of the 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Ostia, SS Roma-Ostia Antica deposit (inv. 6125).

[...]rius Fructosus patron(us) corp(or)is s[tupp(atorum) te]mpl(um) et spel(aeum) Mit(hrae) a solo sua pec(unia) feci(t)

...rius *Fructosus patronus* of the gild of the *stuppatores* built this temple and *spelaeum* from the ground with his own money.

Holes for fixing these pieces on a vertical support are present on the lower side of both these fragments in the number of three. The total length of the piece can be esteemed in 2 m.

References: Bloch 1953 (p. 245); Becatti 1954 (p. 26); CIMRM 228; Marchesini 2013 (pp. 186-92); EDR031499 (R. Marchesini).

132. *Mitreo delle Terme del Mitra.* This Mithraic sanctuary (2 rooms) was discovered and excavated in 1938. It was located in a long underground room, formerly a utility room, of the Hadrianic baths complex of *regio I, insula XVII*. A stair led from the ground floor to the Mithraic sanctuary. It is possible that an antechamber would have controlled this northern access to the main room, but unfortunately the archaeological traces of this underground sector are quite scarce. With the Mithraic installation, dated at least in the last quarter of the 2nd century

CE, two walls were built to isolate this a section from the rest of the long corridor. The northern wall hosted the entrance door just mentioned, while the southern one, which constituted the back wall of the main room, hosted another small door which gave access to a second smaller service room not connected with the cult. The main room was divided in two sectors by a big arch which pre-existed the Mithraic installation. Two benches were built against the side walls in the first sector. Their front was made in brickwork and small tufa stones. A ledge run along their upper rim. The right one was necessary shorter, because of the presence of the stairs, while the left one occupied the whole extension of the side wall and was slightly larger in its southern extremity. Two benches were built against the side walls also in the second sector, their front was made in brickwork and small tufa blocks too, and a ledge run along their upper rim as well. In the middle of the front of each of these southern sector benches, a small niche was cut at ground level. Inside them a small tufa altar was placed. A square base, possibly to support a statue, was encased in the southern corner of both benches in the southern sector. Each base supported a pyramid-shaped tufa stone, possibly an allusion to the birth of Mithras from the rock. The floor of the central aisle was paved in bricks. Three skylights opened in the vault in the southern sector: with the Mithraic installation the two southernmost were kept, while the northernmost one was closed. In the southern sector a *bipedalis* brick (with stamp CIL XV 367) was attached in the western wall, in the lower part of the vault. It was framed by a red band: it possibly hosted a stucco representation, already faded at the moment of the discovery. The vault and the side walls were frescoed, but only evanescent traces of the representations were reported at the moment of the discovery, and they were insufficient for an identification of the painted subjects. In the middle of the central aisle, toward the end of the benches, two masonry bases were built. The first one was triangular (side 50 cm), and its top part consisted in three triangular supports which hold a horizontal element (this latter one was never found). The second base was square (side 42 cm), and its top part was missing too. Finally, in the southern part of this sector, a big statue (see **132a**) featuring Mithras was found, resting on a trapezoid masonry base. As said before, the southern door led to a back room. In here no Mithraic features were found. The first Mithraic installation should be dated in the last quarter of the 2nd century CE, as could be indicated by the brick-stamp mentioned above, or at later in the early 3rd century CE. A last phase of restoration of the central floor should be dated in the last decade of the 3rd or first decade of the 4th century CE, based on the finding of a Diocletian brick-stamp (CIL XV 1569). In the 4th century, when a Christian community was installed in the nearby rooms, the Mithraeum seems not to have been in use.

References: Becatti 1954 (pp. 29-38); CIMRM 229; Floriani Squarciapino 1962 (pp. 40-1); ThesCRA (p. 278, n. 15); Marchesini 2013 (pp. 157-69); Melega 2018 (pp. 52-61, 228-234); Van Haeperen 2019.

132a. A Pentelic marble group (h. 170 cm) was discovered in 1938 in the excavation of the Mithraeum. Currently preserved in Ostia, Museo Ostiense (inv. 149).

This group consists of a more ancient statue in Pentelic marble adapted for Mithraic purpose with the addition of some new parts of a different greyish marble. The group originally represented a young male figure, dressed in a thin and short tunic that covered only the left half of his chest. The right part of his bust, his arms and legs were naked. A thin rope encircled his waist and a simple knot was tied on his

belly. A double rope encircled diagonally the chest of the young man, passing from his right shoulder to his left hip. It was used to suspend the sheath of the dagger. The figure stands with his left knee pressed on the back of a bull and his right one slightly flexed resting on the ground beside the animal. He did not wear shoes. His right arm was raised (it was attached by means of a bronze pin) and in his right hand he held a metallic dagger. With his left hand he held the muzzle of the bull just under its jaw. The young man looked toward an indefinite point on the horizon, facing slightly upward. Wavy hair framed his face, and the back part of his head (not sculpted) hosted some holes for the attachment of the Phrygian cap. The bull sits on the ground, his neck bent upward in an unnatural angle pulled by the young male. The rear part of the hind legs of the bull were sculpted from another block of marble and attached later to the group. It was not found during the excavations. On the chest of the bull an inscription was engraved, bearing the name of the sculptor:

Κρίτων | Ἀθηναῖος | ἐποίησεν

Kriton the Athenian made (me).

The original group can be dated in the first half of the 1st century CE. It features possibly an oriental ruler represented as Mithras, that is Antiochus IV of Syria in A. Mastrocinque's opinion (Mastrocinque 2017, p. 56, note 63) or Mithridates VI Eupator in R. Turcan's opinion (Turcan 2003, p. 382). In the last quarter of the 2nd century CE, when the Mithraic devotees came in possession of the group, they added some details to make it fit for their sanctuary: those restorations are realized in a greyish marble. They built a larger rectangular base with marble slabs to enclose the base of the previous monument and they added some details to the bull (a knee, an ear, part of its tail and horns). A snake, sculpted on a long piece of white marble, was placed beside the bull. The major part of the group was found in situ in 1938 whereas some of the attached pieces (heads of Mithras and of the bull, added pieces of the body of the bull) were found in the western drainage channel.

References: Becatti 1954 (pp. 33-8); CIMRM 230-231; Becatti 1957; Paris and Valeri 2016; Mastrocinque 2017 (p. 56); PH329705.

133. Mitreo Aldobrandini. This Mithraic sanctuary (1 room?) was discovered and partially excavated in 1923. Static problems (a modern house is built on top of the sanctuary) prevented a full excavation of the Mithraeum, which was explored only in its northern part. A raised northern sector was discovered, which hosted the altar, and a southern one with the remains of the benches. In this southern sector, two masonry benches were built against the long sides of the room. The western one (discovered for a length of 5 m) had the usual ledge on its upper rim, and two niches on its front (hosting small tufa altars), which was covered with white marble. It encased a square base in its northern corner, possibly to support a small statue. The upper surface of the bench, slightly declining toward the side wall, was plastered. The eastern bench (discovered for a length of 2 m) was built in the same technique, but it did not show the upper ledge. The floor between the benches was missing already at the time of the discovery. A narrow corridor paved in colored marbles was placed between the end of the benches and the raised northern sector. Two steps were built against the side walls at the extremities of this corridor; they were possibly functional to access the benches. Other two masonry bases were built

against the side walls and covered in white marble at the northern end of these steps: they possibly supported statues. The northern sector was raised (few centimeters higher than the rest of the room) and hosted different bases and a large back altar. Two architectural phases can be recognized in the management of this raised sector. In a first phase (possibly dated in the Antonine Age), a large parallelepiped structure was built against the back wall, with two small pillars flanking its front, all of it covered with white marble. It seems possible to suggest that this large base supported a representation of the tauroctony, and that it was topped by a masonry niche. On the front of this large back altar a dedicatory inscription was attached (**133a**). Another square brickwork altar was built in front of this structure. In a second phase (possibly from the beginning of the 3rd century CE) a sort of balustrade was built to separate the southern and the northern sector. Three small pillars supported a marble horizontal slab, and their front was also covered by a marble slab. The northern sector was now accessible from a travertine step on each side of this marble fence. The floor of the raised sector was paved in bricks. Other steps were built to access the back altar. This sanctuary seemed to have known a long frequentation: if the dedicatory inscription (**133b**) can be dated in the end of the 2nd century CE, it seems possible that the original Mithraic installation should have been at least in the mid-2nd century CE. The sanctuary was then in use in the 3rd and possibly until the 4th century.

References: Calza 1924; Becatti 1954 (pp. 39-44); CIMRM 232; Floriani Squarciapino 1962 (pp. 41-3); ThesCRA (p. 278, n. 17); David et al. 2018a; Melega 2018 (pp. 62-69, 235-241); Van Haepelen 2019.

133a. White marble slab (164x59 cm) with inscription, attached in front of the large altar in the back of the main cult room, late the 2nd century CE. Currently preserved *in situ* (inv. 15134).

Deum vetusta religione | in velo formatum et umore obnubi | latum
marmoreum cum | throno omnibusq(ue) ornamentis | a solo omni impendio
suo fecit | Sex(tus) Pompeius Maximus pater | q(ui) s(upra) s(criptus) est |
et praesepia marmoravit p(edes) LXVIII idem s(ua) p(ecunia)

The *pater Sextus Pompeius Maximus* built from the ground at his own expenses a marble (image of the) god, which was previously depicted on a textile conforming an ancient use and was ruined by the humidity, together with a *thronum* and all the other furniture and covered with marble the benches (*praesepia*) for a length of 68 *pedes*.

References: CIL XIV 4313; Calza 1924 (pp. 73-4); AE 1924, 119; Becatti 1954 (pp. 39-43); CIMRM 233; Marchesini 2013 (pp. 139-44). Mastrocinque 2018 (pp. 422-3); EDR106230 (R. Marchesini).

133b. White marble relief (43x26 cm) found in the excavation of the Mithraeum, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Villa Aldobrandini (private owner).

This relief features the figure of *Silvanus* framed by two columns which support a tympanum decorated with a *gorgoneion*. The god is standing, dressed in a short tunic. He holds in his right hand a sickle whereas in his left a tree branch. On the right, beside his feet, a small dog is represented. G. Calza reported that few objects were found in the excavation of the Mithraeum. He listed: a) three small tufa altars; b) an herm of *silenus* (h. 20 cm), with blue hair, braided with fruits and ribbons; c) three small (h. 10 cm) pots of thin-walled pottery, one of them decorated in white

scales; d) a small brick column (h. 18 cm); e) fragments of *trapezophoroi*; f) terracotta lamps without noticeable decorations. These materials are currently lost. References: Calza 1924 (p. 72), Becatti 1954 (pp. 42-3); CIMRM 236-237.

134. Bronze slab (42x29 cm) with inscriptions from Ostia (formerly Castellani Collection), late 2nd – early 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in London, British Museum (inv. 904).

The top of the bronze slab features three triangles. In the central one the bust of Sol with radiated crown is attached, whereas a dagger in the left one and a *patera* in the right one. Under this plastic appliques, the inscription reads:

Sex(to) Pompeio Sex(ti) fil(io) | Maximo | sacerdoti Solis In | victi Mit(hrae)
patri patrum | q(uin)q(uennali) corp(or)is treiect(us) toga | tensium sacerdo
| tes Solis Invicti Mit(hrae) | ob amorem et meri | ta eius semper ha | bet

To *Sextus Pompeius Maximus*, son of *Sextus*, priest of Sol unconquered Mithras, *pater partum, quinquennalis* of the gild of the *Togatensium* ferries. The priests of Sol unconquered Mithras, for his friendship and for the merits he always has.

This inscription is usually associated with the Aldobrandini Mithraeum on the base of the identity of the devotee *Sextus Pompeius Maximus* with the *pater* mentioned in **133a**.

References: CIL XIV 403; ILS 4213; Walters 1899 (p. 169); TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 141); Taylor 1912 (p. 92); Becatti 1954 (p. 42); CIMRM 234-235; Zevi 2010b (pp. 185-6); Marchesini 2013 (pp. 144-48); EDR144062 (R. Marchesini).

135. *Mitreo presso Porta Romana*. This Mithraeum (1 room) was discovered and excavated in 1919. It was located in a room which previously had a sacred purpose, possibly a *Lararium*. With the Mithraic installation, in the 3rd century CE, the southern door was closed, and the western one became a secondary access. The main room was now accessible through a northern passage possibly through a small vestibule. Two benches were built against the side walls. Their fronts were made in brickwork and small tufa stones and filled with rubbish. The usual two niches (one per bench) were cut in them. Against their southern side, two bases were built. The western bench shows an indentation in the segment near the main entrance, while the eastern one runs straight. A single step was built on the northern corner of the eastern bench, to permit the devotees to access its surface. The floor between the two benches was covered in *opus sectile* made with colored marbles. A square pit (side 50 cm) covered in white marble was built just beside the northern entrance. A marble slab with inscription (consecration to the Lares of the Emperor, dated in 205 CE, CIL XIV 4570) was reused to regularize this pit. In the southern sector of the room a trace at ground level indicates the place where the altar had been.

References: Paribeni 1920 (p. 162); Becatti 1954 (pp. 45-6); CIMRM 238; Floriani Squarciapino 1962 (p. 43); ThesCRA (p. 278, n. 21); Marchesini 2013 (pp. 274-82); Melega 2018 (pp. 70-76, 242-247); Van Haepelen 2019.

136. *Mitreo delle Sette Sfere*. The location of this Mithraeum was possibly already known in 1868 by C.L. Visconti, and the sanctuary was excavated in 1886 by R. Lanciani. Since he did not find any small finds in the excavation, he suggested that the room had already been excavated in the past (see **137**). The Mithraeum (1 room)

was located in a single room adjacent to the ‘*Domus di Apuleio*’ and just opposite the complex of the Four Temples. The Mithraeum consisted of a single room, accessible from a southern door, possibly through a small vestibule. Two masonry benches were built against the long sides of the room, their front and upper ledge were covered in black and white mosaics (**136b-d**). Their upper surfaces were inclined toward the back walls. Two square niches were cut (one in each bench) in the fronts in the middle of their length. They were marked by an arched front and deepened into the ground. The right one was covered in white marble. The floor between the benches was covered in black and white mosaic too (**136a**). A small travertine altar was encased in the southern corner of each bench, and a jug was sculpted on the surface of both of them. A circular pit was excavated in the floor on the right of the entrance and plastered. Against the back wall a large altar was built: two phases can be observed in its management. At first it consisted of a long shelf, covered by a marble slab, with an empty space on the right side. In a second moment this enclosure was filled, the surface of the altar was raised and the front part was enlarged with the addition of a masonry structure and a small masonry step on the right.

References: Visconti 1864 (p. 152); Lanciani 1886 (pp. 162-4); TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 84); Taylor 1912 (pp. 90-1); Paschetto 1912 (pp. 394-8); Becatti 1954 (pp. 47-51); CIMRM 239, 244; Becatti 1961 (pp. 90-91); Floriani Squarciapino 1962 (pp. 43-4); Gordon 1976; Beck 1979; Coarelli 1989; Beck 2000; D’Asdia 2002; ThesCRA (p. 278, n. 14); White 2012 (pp. 466-9); Melega 2018 (pp. 77-82, 248-255); Van Haepelen 2019.

136a. A black and white mosaic covered the floor of the central aisle of the Mithraeum. At the beginning of the room, in a central place with respect to the northern prosecution of the floor, a black triangular dagger was represented. It points downward. In the central corridor a sequence of seven black semi-circular lines was represented. They are not perfectly centered but slightly moved to the left bench.

References: Lanciani 1886 (p. 164); Paschetto 1912 (p. 396); Becatti 1954 (p. 48); CIMRM 240; Becatti 1961 (pp. 90-91); Gordon 1976 (pp. 120-6).

136b. A black and white mosaic covered the front of the benches of the Mithraeum. On the left bench, from south to north, we can recognize three human figure symbolizing the planets:

a) Under an arch supported by two vertical beams, a female figure dressed in a long tunic; her hair is combed in a bun, a crescent is represented on her forehead. She holds in her right hand a small fruit and in her left hand an arrow. She represents Luna/Diana.

b) Under an arch supported by two vertical beams, a naked male figure; he holds a *caduceus* in his right hand and a long branch in the left. He represents Mercury.

c) Under an arch supported by two vertical beams, a figure; only its lower part is preserved. The figure is dressed in a long tunic and holds a bundle of lightning bolts in his right hand. He represents Jupiter.

On the right bench, again from south to north, we can recognize other three human figures symbolizing the planets:

d) Under an arch supported by two vertical beams, a naked male figure stands. He is dressed in a long tunic and wears a helmet on his head. He holds a shield in his right hand and a long lance in his left. He represents Mars.

e) Under an arch supported by two vertical beams, a female figure dressed in a long tunic. She holds a torch in her left hand, and a drape from her vest flies arched over her head. She represents Venus.

f) Under an arch supported by two vertical beams, a male figure, dressed in a long tunic which veils his head. His arms are lost. He represents Saturn.

References: Lanciani 1886 (p. 164); Paschetto 1912 (p. 397); Becatti 1954 (p. 50); CIMRM 241; Becatti 1961 (pp. 90-91); Gordon 1976; Beck 1979.

136c. A black and white mosaic covered the upper ledge of the benches of the Mithraeum. Zodiacal signs were represented on the upper surface of the ledge which run along the rim of the benches, each accompanied by a single star with eight rays represented on the vertical rim of the shelf. On the left bench, from south to north we can recognize: a) Aries, b) Taurus, c) Gemini, d) Cancer, e) Leo, f) Virgo. On the right bench, again from south to north, we have: a) Libra, b) Scorpio, c) Sagittarius, d) Capricornus, e) Aquarius, f) Pisces.

References: Becatti 1954 (p. 51); Paschetto 1912 (p. 397); CIMRM 242; Becatti 1961 (pp. 90-91); Gordon 1976; Beck 1979.

136d. A black and white mosaic covered the southern front of the benches of the Mithraeum. On the left bench we can recognize the figure of Cautopates. The torchbearer stands, dressed in the usual eastern attire, holding his torch with both hands. On the right bench we can recognize Cautes. The torchbearer, dressed in a short tunic and anaxyrides, holds in his right hand a lit torch, while on his outstretched left one a cock is perched. Cautes seems not to wear the usual Phrygian hat.

References: Lanciani 1886 (p. 164); Paschetto 1912 (p. 397); Becatti 1954 (pp. 50-1); CIMRM 243; Becatti 1961 (pp. 90-91); Gordon 1976; Beck 1979.

137. Mitreo Petrini. A Mithraeum was discovered between 1802 and 1803 in the excavations conducted by G. Petrini. The three following monuments were recovered from the site, which remained uncovered for several years after its discovery. X. Paschetto suggested this Mithraeum was to be identified with the mention made by C.L. Visconti of a Mithraeum ‘*non molto lungi dai ruderi del teatro*’, and moreover that it was the same sanctuary uncovered by R. Lanciani in 1886 (see **136**).

References: Visconti 1864 (p. 152); Visconti 1868 (p. 412); Taylor 1912 (p. 90); Paschetto 1912 (pp. 387-8); Becatti 1954 (pp. 123-4); CIMRM 245; Floriani Squarciapino 1962 (pp. 43-4); Marchesini 2013 (pp. 68-9); Van Haepelen 2019.

137a. Pavonazetto marble relief (117x109 cm) with inscription found in Ostia between 1802 and 1803 within the Petrini excavations, late 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani – Galleria Lapidaria (inv. MV 6991, 6984, 6999).

In the cave, indicated by a rough rock surface on the lower left corner of the representation, Mithras, dressed in the usual attire, plunges a long dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The inside of Mithras’ flying cloak hosts a lunar crescent and seven stars. The bull is pressed to the ground, and ears sprout from its tail. At the usual places we can recognize the scorpion, the raven and the dog. There are no traces of either Sol or Luna, or of the two torchbearers. This relief shows a peculiar round shape.

Two inscriptions were found together with this monument. A first one was engraved in a semi-circular piece of white marble (h. 19 cm) and attached on the wall above this relief. It reads:

A(ulus) Decimius A(uli) f(ilius) Pal(atina tribu) Decimianus s(ua) p(ecunia) restituit

Aulus Decimius Decimianus, son of *Aulus*, of the *Palatina tribus*, rebuilt with his own money.

The second one, engraved on a grey marble slab (20x141 cm), was also attached to the wall, but under the monument, as a sort of base for the relief. It reads:

A(ulus) Decimius A(uli) f(ilius) Pal(atina) Decimianus aedem | cum suo pronao ipsumque Deum Solem Mithra(m) | et marmoribus et omni cultu sua p(ecunia) restituit

Aulus Decimius Decimianus, son of *Aulus*, of the *Palatina tribus*, restored with his own money the temple with his pronaos, the (statue of the) god Sol Mithras himself, with marble and all the furniture.

References: CIL XIV 60, 61; Visconti 1864 (p. 152); TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 134; *mon. fig.* 82); Paschetto 1912 (pp. 171; 388); Taylor (p. 90); Becatti 1954 (p. 123); CIMRM 245-7; Marchesini 2013 (pp. 55-61); EDR143952/143953 (R. Marchesini).

137b. White marble slab (32,5x60 cm) with inscription was found together with **137a**, late 2nd – early 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani – Galleria Lapidaria (inv. 6992).

L(ucius) Tullius Agatho | Deo Invicto Soli | Mithrae aram d(ono) d(edit) | eanque (!) dedicavit ob | honore(m) dei M(arco) Aemilio Epaphrodito patre

Lucius Tullis Agatho gave as a gift (this) altar to the god Sol unconquered Mithras and dedicated it for the honor of the god while *Marcus Aemilius Epaphroditus* was *pater*.

References: CIL XIV 62; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 135); Paschetto 1912 (pp. 171; 388); Taylor (p. 90); Becatti 1954 (p. 124); CIMRM 248; Marchesini 2013 (pp. 61-65); EDR143954 (R. Marchesini).

137c. White marble slab (19x38,5 cm) with inscription was found together with **137a**, late 2nd – early 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani – Galleria Lapidaria (inv. 7000).

M(arco) Aemilio | Epaphrodito | patre et sacerdote

While *Marcus Aemilius Epaphroditus* was *pater* and priest.

References: CIL XIV 63; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 136); Paschetto 1912 (pp. 170; 388); Taylor 1912 (p. 90); Becatti 1954 (p. 124); CIMRM 249; Marchesini 2013 (pp. 65-66); EDR143955 (R. Marchesini).

138. *Mitreo del Palazzo Imperiale.* This Mithraic sanctuary (4 rooms) was discovered and excavated between 1860 and 1861. It was located in the complex known as Palazzo Imperiale, a late-2nd century CE multi-functional unit which

hosted in the north-west corner of its second courtyard a Mithraeum. The Mithraic rooms were incorporated in the building in the Severan Age (last quarter of the 2nd century CE). In the first quarter of the 3rd century CE the sanctuary obtained the layout currently known. The main room was accessible from a southern door. Its eastern wall was realized closing the gaps among five pre-existing pillars. A small window was opened in the higher part of the wall between the first and the second pillar from south. In the south-east corner of the room, on the right of the entrance, a square masonry structure (CIMRM 253) was built. It consisted of a square base with a cavity opened on one side and on top of it a rectangular niche covered by an arch. Some lamps were found at the moment of the discovery in this cavity. All of the structure was plastered and painted red. Two benches were built against the side walls. Two steps attached on their southern front granted access to their surfaces. A ledge run all along their upper border: at the time of the discovery some lamps were found still set on top of it (CIMRM 262). In the front of the ledges, in the middle of their length, a semi-circular indentation hosted two bases for the statue of the torchbearers Cautes and Cautopates (see **138c-d**). The floor between the benches was paved with mosaic (**138a**). These benches did not occupy all of the length of the room, but ended 4,5 m from the back wall, delimitating a northern sector where a complex masonry structure was built against the back wall. This structure had the shape of a π . On its front five steps were built and covered in marble. A square base supporting a small marble altar (**138e**) was encased between the first and the second step. The walls of this room were plastered and painted red. Other rooms were connected with this main one. A narrow corridor (room 80) connected the in fact this main Mithraic space with other two smaller rooms (rooms 79 and 81) to the south and with a larger square room to the east. No traces survived in the two southern rooms that could permit to indicate a sure religious purpose. In the eastern room a small shrine to *Silvanus* was found (**138b**). The floor level in this room was 1,2 m higher than in the adjacent ones, and a stair led to it.

In the excavation of the Mithraeum were found also:

a) Near the larger altar, some fragments of conic tufa rocks as well as marble some supports for lamps. (CIMRM 260).

b) In front of the altar, some fragments of the cult relief: a head with Phrygian hat and a hands holding a dagger; the pieces showed traces of polychromy. (CIMRM 258).

c) A marble lion head with square pin on the back, to fasten it to a support. (CIMRM 261).

d) A Phrygian cap with seven holes for fastening possibly metallic rays. (CIMRM 263).

Recent unpublished excavations of the 1960s' shed some light on the phases of the sanctuary previous to the early-3rd century CE layout currently known. Under the central mosaic (**138a**), two layers of the previous floor were discovered, both made in beaten earth. A previous phases of the lateral benches was detected too: they showed in the centre of their front two symmetrical square additions instead of the semi-circular niches found at the moment of the discovery of the Mithraeum. A previous management of the altar structure was also discovered, which used a marble slab (**138f**) later covered by the mosaic of the last phase. Comparing all the sources at disposition, we can suggest that the first Mithraic installation occurred in 162 CE (on the base of **138c-d**); a second phase can be set then at latest in the last

decade of the 2nd century CE (on the base of **138f**). In the early 3rd century CE the sanctuary assumed its current layout, with the mosaic floor of *Calendio* (**138a**), the re-dedication of the torchbearers' statues (**138c-d**), and the addition of the room with the *Silvanus* shrine (**138b**).

References: Visconti 1864; TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 83); Vaglieri 1906; Paschetto 1912 (pp. 389-94); Taylor 1912 (pp. 87-88); Becatti 1954 (pp. 53-7); CIMRM 250, 253, 258, 260, 261, 262, 263; Becatti 1961 (p. 167); Floriani Squarciapino 1962 (pp. 44-6); Spurza 2000; ThesCRA (p. 278, n. 7); White 2012 (pp. 459-65); Marchesini 2013 (pp. 47-54); Marchesini 2013b; Melega 2018 (pp. 83-90, 256-265); Van Haepere 2019.

138a. A black and white mosaic covered the floor of the central aisle between the lateral benches. It was extended from the entrance to the back altar. It consisted of a central space in white tassels bordered by two black bands. Two inscription in black tassels run in the center of the white space. They were meant for being read from the benches and thus parallel to their front. Both these inscriptions, the text is the same but specular, read:

Soli Invict(o) Mit(hrae) d(ono) d(edit) L(ucius) Agrius Calendio

To Sol unconquered Mithras. *Lucius Agrius Calendio* gave as a gift.

This mosaic floor can be dated between the late 2nd and early 3rd century CE.

References: CIL XIV 56; ILS 4200; Visconti 1864 (p. 158); TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 131; *mon. fig.* 83b); Paschetto 1912 (pp. 171; 390); Taylor (p. 88); Becatti 1954 (p. 54); CIMRM 251; Becatti 1961 (p. 167); Marchesini 2013 (pp. 18-23); Marchesini 2013b (p. 431); EDR143928 (R. Marchesini).

138b. A polychrome wall mosaic (105x88 cm) was found in the square room adjacent to the main Mithraic room. This room hosted a cult niche bearing the mosaic of *Silvanus*, dated in the early 3rd century CE. In the center of the image *Silvanus*, dressed in a short white tunic and with cloak with red border, stands, holding in his left a tree branch and in his right a small sickle. On his left, a square altar with flames on top is represented, while on the right, beside his feet, a white dog sits. On the background we can recognize some trees.

References: Visconti 1864 (pp. 174-6); Paschetto 1912 (pp. 156; 389); Becatti 1954 (pp. 56-7); Van Essen 1959; CIMRM 252.

138c. A white marble statue (h. 42 cm), resting on a rectangular base (h. 45 cm) with inscription was found in one of the niches in the middle of the lateral benches in Mithraeum **138**. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani – Museo Gregoriano Profano (inv. 10741a-b).

The base supported a statue of *Cautes*, dressed in the usual attire and cross-legged. He holds his torch with both hands. Beside his feet and the lower part of his figure, a rocky surface is sculpted. Traces of gilding were reported at the moment of the discovery, but are now not recognizable. In antiquity the head of the torchbearer was severed from the statue and traces of damage are recognizable on the face of the statue; the torch was damaged too. The statue rests on a base constituted by a rectangular altar. It bears on the right side a *patera* and on the left side a jug. On the front side the altar features another representation of *Cautes*, in low relief, caught in the same stance. Under the torchbearer a dedicatory representation was engraved:

C(aius) Caelius | (H)ermeros (!) ant | istes huius lo | ci fecit sua | pec(unia)

Caius Caelius Hermeros, antistes of this place, made at his own expenses.

This inscription was engraved after the erasure of a previous one.
On the left side of the altar another inscription was engraved:

Posit(a)e XV K(alendas) | Febr(u)arias | Q(uinto) Iunio Rus | tico | L(ucio)
Plautio | Aquilino | co(n)s(ulibus)

Set up on the 15th day before the calends of February, while *Quintus Iunius Rufus* and *Lucius Plautius Aquilinus* were *consules*.

It is possible to date this last inscription on 18th January 162 CE on the base of the mentioned *consules*. This monument was used in at least two phases of the Mithraic sanctuary. First, the base with the low-relief representation of Cautes was dedicated in 162 CE as testified by the inscription on the left side of the monument. A dedicatory inscription was engraved on the front side, just below the relief. This inscription was erased in a second moment, when the altar was reused as a base for a new statue of Cautes. The monument was then re-dedicated by Hermeros. This second phase can be dated in the last decades of the 2nd century CE.

References: CIL XIV 58; ILS 4201; Visconti 1864 (pp. 160-3); TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 133; *mon. fig.* 83k); Paschetto 1912 (pp. 170; 392-3); Taylor (p. 88); Becatti 1954 (p. 54); CIMRM 254-255; Marchesini 2013 (pp. 23-7); Marchesini 2013b (pp. 422-4); EDR143930 (R. Marchesini).

138d. A white marble statue (h. 42 cm), resting on a rectangular base (h. 45 cm) with inscription was found in one of the niches in the middle of the lateral benches in Mithraeum **138**. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani – Museo Gregoriano Profano (inv. 10744a-b).

The base supports a statue of Cautopates, who stands cross-legged, dressed in the usual attire, holding the torch with both hands. A rocky surface frames also the lower part of his body. Traces of gilding were reported at the moment of the discovery, but are now not recognizable. In antiquity the head of the torchbearer was severed from the statue and traces of damage are recognizable on the face of the statue; part of the right arm of the torchbearer and part of the torch are missing. The statue rests on a base constituted by a rectangular altar. It bears on the right side a *patera* and on the left side a jug. On the front side of the base which supports the statue another representation of the torchbearer in low-relief is represented. Under this, a dedicatory inscription was engraved:

C(aius) Caelius | (H)ermeros (!) ant | istes huius lo | ci fecit sua | pec(unia)

Caius Caelius Hermeros, antistes of this place, made at his own expenses.

This inscription was engraved after the erasure of a previous one. The erasure of a previous inscription can be recognized also on the surface of the right side of the base. In analogy with the monument **138c**, we can indicate a first dedication of the base with low-relief of Cautopates in 162 CE, and a second dedication of the monument with the addition of the statue and of the new dedicatory inscription in the last decades of the 2nd century CE.

References: CIL XIV 59; ILS 4201; Visconti 1864 (pp. 160-3); TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 133; *mon. fig.* 83k); Paschetto 1912 (pp. 170; 392-3); Taylor (p. 88); Becatti 1954 (p. 54); CIMRM 254-255; Marchesini 2013 (pp. 27-33); Marchesini 2013b (pp. 424-6); EDR143932 (R. Marchesini).

138e. A Cipollino marble altar (h. 72 cm) with inscription was found in the front of the altar in Mithraeum **138**, 162-200 CE. Currently preserved on site.

C(aius) Caelius Hermaeros (!) | antistes huius loci | fecit | sua pec(unia)

Caius Caelius Hermeros, antistes of this place, made at his own expenses.

References: CIL XIV 57; ILS 4201; Visconti 1864 (p. 160); TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 132); Paschetto 1912 (pp. 170; 391); Taylor (p. 88); Becatti 1954 (p. 54); CIMRM 259; Marchesini 2013 (pp. 23-7); EDR143929 (R. Marchesini).

138f.* A white marble slab (29x44 cm) with inscription was found in the 1960s' excavations in the Mithraeum **138**, 162-200 CE. Currently preserved in Ostia, SABAP deposits (inv. 7174).

The marble slab was used in the altar related to one of the phase(s) previous to the 3rd century CE one. it reads:

[[-----]] | [[-----]] | votum | animo libens | d(onum) d(edit)

For the fulfillment of a vow, ... gave willingly as a gift.

The first two lines were erased. The *ductus* of the letters of this inscription can be compared to the 162 CE inscription present on the base **138c**.

References: Marchesini 2013 (pp. 38-40); Van Haepren 2019.

138g. Marble statue (h. 57 cm) of a torchbearer found in Ostia in 1860, early 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani - Museo Gregoriano Profano (inv. 10743).

The statue of a torchbearer was mentioned by Visconti in a press release in 1860, but did not figure in the excavation report of 1864. In his 1867 catalogue of the sculptures of the Lateran museum O. Benndorf reported that this statue was found together with the statues **138c** and **138d**. The monument features Cautopates, dressed as usual but without Phrygian hat. He holds the lit downward-pointing torch in his right hand, while the left one is missing. Beside his left foot a rock is represented.

References: Benndorf and Schöne 1867 (p. 399); Becatti 1954 (p. 55); CIMRM 256.

139. *Mitreo delle Pareti Dipinte*. This Mithraic sanctuary (2 rooms) was discovered and excavated between 1939 and 1940. It was located in three rooms on the south-west corner of a building with previous housing destination. When Mithraic devotees occupied these rooms, the block had received an artisanal or industrial destination.

In the last decades of the 2nd century CE the Mithraic devotees occupied two rooms at the ground-floor of this building: a long room located in the south-west corner of the building, which became the main cult room, and a second space obtained with the closing of part of the western portico just before the entrance of the main cult

room. The sanctuary was accessible from an open courtyard through a small vestibule. In a second phase, the main cult room was enlarged with the incorporation of the vestibule and of a further section of the portico, whereas a small square room was created to be used as a new vestibule. In the main cult room, the space was divided in two sectors by the wall which previously delimited the corner room. This wall was partially destroyed to enlarge the passage which led from the northern section of the room to the southern one. Two niches were cut at ground level in each part of this wall and were covered with white marble. Two benches were built against the side walls, their front was made in brickwork and small tufa stones. They were plastered and a short shelf run along their upper rim. The upper surface of the benches of the southern sector were inclined toward the side walls. Two steps were built on the northern extremities of each bench against their front. The step relative to the southern bench of the southern sector was reduced in size in a second moment to give more space for the devotees on the bench. In the middle of the length of the front of the benches of the southern sectors other two niches were cut (one in each bench) and plastered. Between these two benches a lime floor with travertine inserts was laid. A large altar was built against the back wall of the southern sector, which was not straight but transverse. This structure consisted in a parallelepiped structure against which three square bases were added. The side ones were smaller, while the central one was higher. On the front of the right base a marble slab with inscription was re-used as a marble slab (**139f**). A square niche was cut in the central base and covered with marble (**139e**). On top of the central base a small niche covered with an arch was built too. Another square base was built against the front of this structure: a marble cornice was re-used as a base and topped by a smaller brick base covered in marble. It supported a marble altar (**139d**). In front of this, a circular pit was dug in the ground and covered by a marble lid. Traces of frescoes were recognized at the moment of the first discovery on the back wall, but they were too evanescent to understand which subjects were represented. Frescoes decorated the side walls of the room too: those on the northern walls are still partially preserved (**139a**).

References: Becatti 1954 (pp. 59-68); CIMRM 264; Floriani Squarciapino 1962 (pp. 46-7); ThesCRA (p. 278, n. 13); Marchesini 2013 (pp. 219-224); Melega 2018 (pp. 91-99, 266-273); Van Haepelen 2019.

139a. Frescoes decorated all the walls of the main cult room. Few traces were preserved at the moment of the discovery of the building on the back wall, behind the altar, and the subject was not clearly recognizable. It had been suggested that there the tauroctony scene was represented.

Most of the frescoes of the northern wall of the southern sector were instead quite well preserved. The surface was divided in three parts with the application of two stucco semi-columns. A red band marked the borders of these parts delimiting three rectangular frames. Human figures were frescoed in each frame. From the left to the right we can recognize:

a) A young male figure, dressed in a log purple tunic and yellow veil standing. His right hand is raised to hold an un-recognizable object (a mirror, in Becatti's opinion), while with the left one he fastens a crown of red leaves on his head. Above the figure the branch of a tree with red and yellow flowers is recognizable.

b) In the second frame two figures are represented. The first one, on the left, is a young male figure, naked except for a purple cloak, running to the right. He holds

a long object with both hands and point to the ground. The other one is also a young male, naked except for the flying purple-and-grey cloak on his shoulders. He runs to the left and he holds in both his hands a long object raised to the sky. Between the two figures a tree is represented, with long branches and thin green leaves.

c) In the third frame we can recognize another young male figure, dressed in a green tunic, purple cloak, and Phrygian hat. He holds in his left hand a torch pointed to the ground. On his right a tree with thin branches and rare small leaves is represented whereas on his right a palm tree is depicted.

On the southern wall only meagre patches of the fresco had been preserved to the moment of the discovery. We can recognize the legs of a male figure with yellow cloak, a head of male figure with blue *nimbus*, a blue sphere, another male figure. On the extreme left of the wall another male figure is recognizable, holding a torch in his hands; the torch seems to point upward. The scene seems here not parted, but displayed in a single long field. Becatti suggested to read these representations as symbolical depictions of the Mithraic grades. In particular, he suggested to identify the two northernmost figure, that are the ones represented just after the entrance in the southern sector with Cautes (on the left) and Cautopates (on the right). The following figures on the right should be identified with a *heliodromus* (young male with raised torch), a *miles* (young male with long object) and a *nymphus* (young male with crown).

The central section of the fresco representations painted on the northern wall of the northern sector was preserved. The surface was here divided in four squares by two perpendicular red bands. In each one of the resulting squares a single figure was depicted. The two figures in the upper squares were missing from the shoulder up, while the two of the bottom squares from the waist down. In the top left square we can recognize a male figure dressed in a long yellow tunic and red mantle. He holds in his left hand a red bag. In the top right square another male figure similarly dressed raises his right hand to the left. In the bottom left corner another male figure, dressed in yellow tunic with red ribbon and a purple mantle stands raising a lit torch in his right hand. In the right square another male figure stands, looking to the right. He holds in his right hand an unidentified object. Becatti suggested to identify these four figures as Mithraic devotees with the grade of *leo*. The frescoes of the southern wall are not preserved.

These frescoes can be dated on the base of stylistic comparison to the last decades of the 2nd century CE.

References: Becatti 1954 (pp. 62-7); CIMRM 268.

139b. Marble altar (h. 30,5 cm) with inscription found in the excavation of Mithraeum **139**, last decades of the 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Ostia, SS Roma-Ostia antica deposit (inv. 11542).

C(aius) Cae | lius (H)e[r] | meros | antis | tes h[ui] | us loc[i] | fecit | s(ua)
p(ecunia)

Caius Caelius Hermaeros, antistes of this place, made at his own expenses.

The devotee mentioned in this inscription should be the same *Caius Caelius Hermaeros* who was active in the Mithraeum of the Imperial Palace in the last decades of the 2nd century CE (see **138c-d**).

References: Becatti 1954 (p. 67); CIMRM 269; Marchesini 2013 (pp. 203-5); Van Haepereen 2019 (p. 175); EDR172949 (G. Tenaille d'Estais).

139c. Fragmentary marble altar with inscription found in the excavation of Mithraeum **139**, late 2nd – early 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Ostia, SS Roma-Ostia antica deposit (inv. 7242-7801).

A(ulus) Aemi | lius An | toninus | pater | Cauti

The pater *Aulus Aemilianus Antoninus*. To Cautes.

References: Becatti 1954 (pp. 67, 130); CIMRM 270, 317; Marchesini 2013 (pp. 205-8); Van Haepereen 2019 (p. 175); EDR172950 (G. Tenaille Details).

139d. White marble altar (h. 60 cm) found in the excavation of Mithraeum **139**. Currently preserved *in situ* (inv. 322).

This monument was found destroyed in small fragments; the base is still missing. On the front of the altar the bust of Sol was sculpted in low relief, with curly hair and radiate crown. Just under him a hole shaped as a lunar crescent was carved. This hole pierces all the width of the monument and corresponded in the back to a square niche, roughly carved, possibly intended to lodge a lamp. On the sides of the altar the two torchbearers were represented, in low-relief. They were dressed in the usual attire and both stood cross-legged: Cautes on the left and Cautopatres on the right.

References: Becatti 1954 (pp. 61-2); CIMRM 267; Marchesini 2013 (pp. 214-6).

139e. White marble slab (26x35 cm) with inscription used to cover the surface of the square niche in the central part of the altar in Mithraeum **139**, late 2nd – early 3rd century CE. Currently preserved *in situ* (inv. 7952).

Only the left part of the inscription is preserved.

Soli [---] | L(ucius) Semproniu(s) [---] | thronum [---] | [-] s [---]

Lucius Sempronius ... thronus to Sol ...

References: Becatti 1954 (p. 60); CIMRM 266; Marchesini 2013 (pp. 199-202); Van Haepereen 2019 (p. 175); EDR172859 (G. Tenaille d'Estais).

139f. Fragmentary white marble slab (57x29 cm) with inscription re-used to cover the altar with precious marble, 8-11 CE. Currently preserved *in situ* (inv. 19838).

It was recently possible to integrate this fragment with other two complementary pieces found in two different spots in Ostia. The resulting completed inscription commemorates the construction of the *macellum* paid by *Nymphodotus* and by his freedman *Pothus*.

References: Becatti 1954 (p. 60); CIMRM 265; Marchesini 2013 (pp. 212-3); Marini Recchia 2014.

140. Mitreo della *Planta pedis*. This Mithraic sanctuary (2 rooms) was discovered and excavated between 1939 and 1940. It consisted of two rooms located in a building which formerly served a commercial purpose. If previously this building consisted in a large covered space structured on pillars, with the Mithraic

installation some walls were built between the pillars to obtain the main cult room. These walls were built in poor technique and were scarcely preserved at the moment of the discovery: some elements of the general layout of the sanctuary remain thus obscure. Entrance to the main room was gained through the eastern door, from an entrance vestibule realized with the building of a wall closing a portion of a courtyard complete with a water well, a small oven and a buried dolium. The main room consisted of a central aisle paved in black and white mosaic (**140a**). Two benches were built against the side walls in the second sector of the room. At the moment of the discovery their remains were quite scarce: their exact depth is unknown. A long shelf covered with white marble marked their upper rim. In the ledge of the right bench a further depression could be found, also covered with white marble. Two niches (one per bench) were cut at ground level in the front of the benches. An irregular semi-circular niche was built against the back wall and framed by two pillars covered with marble. In the space between these pillars a structure consisting of three steps was built: the upper surface of the first (lower) one was covered in mosaic, while that of the other two with white marble slabs. A small square base was put on top of this higher shelf. During the restoration of the higher shelf a coin of *Valerianus* (CIMRM 277) was found, which permitted to fix the time of the construction of the structure in the mid-3rd century CE. In front of the pillars framing this altar, two square masonry bases were built. They supported a travertine (right) and a marble (left) base, possibly for the statues of the torchbearers. Finally, a marble altar should have been placed in front of this structure.

References: Becatti 1954 (pp. 77-85); CIMRM 272; Floriani Squarciapino 1962 (pp. 47-8); ThesCRA (p. 278, n. 9); Marchesini 2013 (pp. 234-245); Melega 2018 (pp. 108-117, 281-289); Van Haepelen 2019.

140a. Black and white mosaic floor covering the central aisle of the Mithraeum, mid 3rd century CE. Currently preserved *in situ*.

The central aisle was paved in white mosaic. A large black band described two rectangles of equal measures which parted the floor in three sectors. The first (eastern) one was delimited by the first black rectangular frame. In the middle of its eastern side it featured the silhouette of a black footprint. Along the north-west corner a snake was represented. The second sector, consisting of the second rectangle, did not bear any figurative representation. The third (western) sector was paved in white tassels, with the exception of a square black frame to mark the location where an altar was placed. This mosaic floor bore traces of restoration in different spots. It can be dated together with the construction of the structure of the altar in the mid-3rd century CE. During the restoration of this mosaic floor a more ancient layer was discovered underneath it. It consisted of a simple lime floor without further decoration apart from a *bipedalis* brick bearing a footprint encased in the floor exactly under the later mosaic footprint. This layer is the major testimony of a previous architectural phase of the Mithraeum, together with **140b** and **140c**, datable on the base of the inscription in **140b** between the last quarter of the 2nd and the beginning of the 3rd century CE.

References: Becatti 1954 (pp. 80-81); CIMRM 272; Becatti 1961 (pp. 281-2).

140b. Marble slab (39x74 cm) with inscription re-used in the higher shelf of the altar, late 2nd – early 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Ostia, SS Roma-Ostia antica deposit (inv. 11460).

The slab was found re-used in the construction of the altar of the second phase (mid-3rd century CE), but it should be attributed to the first phase of the Mithraeum. Its upper part has a semi-circular shape: originally it could have been the decoration of a cult niche. The second ‘g’ in the first line was added later.

Pr(o) sal(ute) Augg(ustorum duorum) | S(oli) I(nvicto) M(ithrae) | [L(ucius)]
Florius Hermadio(n) | sacerdos s(ua) p(ecunia) f(ecit)

For the safety of our two Augusti, to Sol unconquered Mithras. The priest *Lucius Florius Hermadion* built at his own expenses (this sanctuary)

References: Becatti 1954 (p. 82); CIMRM 273; Zevi 2001 (pp. 193-4); Marchesini 2013 (pp. 225-8); Van Haepelen 2019 (p. 180); EDR172952 (G. Tenaille d’Estais).

140c. Fragmentary Luna marble relief (h. 70 cm) found in the excavation of Mithraeum 140. Currently preserved in Ostia, Museo Ostiense (inv. 532-533).

Of the relief only the extreme left and right parts were found. The left fragment features in the upper corner the bust of Sol, with radiate crown. Traces of red paint were reported at the moment of the discovery. In front of Sol, the tail of the raven is recognizable. The right fragment bears instead in its upper corner the bust of Luna. Under the two deities, along the margin of the relief, the rocky surface of the cave is visible. It seems plausible to follow the suggestion of Becatti, that this relief should be related with the first phase of the Mithraeum.

References: Becatti 1954 (pp. 82-3); CIMRM 274; Rodà 2001 (pp. 251-2).

140d. White marble basin (diameter 60 cm) found in the excavation of Mithraeum 140, late 2nd – early 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Ostia, Galleria Lapidaria (inv. 31021).

On the upper rim of the vessel a dedicatory inscription was engraved:

[In]victo Mithrae d(onum) d(edit) M(arcus) Umbilius Criton cum Pyladen
vili[co]

To the Unconquered Mithras. *Marcus Umbilius Criton*, together with the slave *Pyladen*, gave as a gift.

References: Becatti 1954 (pp. 84-5); CIMRM 275; Zevi 2001 (pp. 192-3); Marchesini 2013 (pp. 228-31); Van Haepelen 2019 (p. 180); EDR172954 (G. Tenaille d’Estais).

140e. White marble slab (24x46 cm) re-used in the marble coating of the altar, 225-250 CE. Currently preserved in Ostia, Galleria Lapidaria (inv. 8201).

Silvano | sancto sacrum | Hermes | M(arci) Iulii Eunici | ----- | -----

Consecrated to the holy Silvanus. *Hermes*, slave of *Marcus Iulius Eunicus*, ...

References: Becatti 1954 (p. 83); CIMRM 276; Zevi 2001 (p. 195); Marchesini 2013 (pp. 231-33); Van Haepelen 2019 (pp. 180-1); EDR172955 (G. Tenaille d’Estais).

141. *Mitreo degli Animali*. This Mithraic sanctuary (2 rooms) was discovered and excavated in 1867. It was placed in a room supported by pillars and located in the southern corner of a complex devoted to commercial and utilitarian purpose. Toward the end of the 2nd century CE some walls were built in order to obtain a long main cult room and a parallel antechamber in the corner previously occupied by a single room structured on pillars. The main cult room was divided in two sectors: the southern one consisted of the part previously belonged to the pillar building, while the northern one was newly constructed. The devotees could access the main cult room from a door in the southern sector. The two side benches were built only in the northern sector, but Becatti suggested that they could had been built also along the sides of the southern sector and possibly evicted in the first exploration of the room. Judging from the development of the figuration on the mosaic floor, it seems possible that the side benches could begin in the middle of the southern sector. The floor of the main cult room was covered with mosaic in both sectors (**141a**). Against the northern wall a large masonry structure was built. It consisted of three masonry steps covered with white marble. The second one hosted a square base for a statue. These further steps led to a rectangular raised platform which hosted an arched niche framed by two pillars. The antechamber consisted possibly of a room parallel to the main one and extending as long as the southern sector.

References: Visconti 1868 (pp. 402-13); Ross Taylor 1912 (pp. 84-7); Paschetto 1912 (p. 398); Becatti 1954 (pp. 87-92); CIMRM 278; Floriani Squarciapino 1962 (pp. 48-9); ThesCRA (p. 278, n. 6); White 2012 (pp. 445-51); Marchesini 2013 (pp. 265-70); Melega 2018 (pp. 118-123, 290-297); Van Haepere 2019.

141a. Black and white mosaic floor which paved the central aisle in Mithraeum **141**, second half of the 2nd century CE.

The mosaic consists of a long white corridor featuring six black figures, most of them oriented toward the altar. The first figure, located in the southernmost end of the corridor, is an adult male, without beard, naked except for a thin linen wrapped around his hips. He stands and holds in his right hand a small shovel with holes whereas in the left one a sickle. His hair is rendered with messy threads. He is oriented toward the altar. The second and third figures are respectively a cock (east) and an owl (west): they are placed in the middle of the southern sector. Continuing north, the fourth figure placed in the centre of the corridor is a scorpion. Moreover, the fifth figure, located again in the centre of the corridor, but at the end of the southern sector, is a snake. The last figure is also the only one preserved in the floor of the northern sector. We can recognize the head of a bull, crowned by two ribbons. On the left, part of the triangular blade of a dagger is recognizable, while on the right, the ending part of the tail of the bull is represented.

References: Visconti 1868 (pp. 406-11); Taylor 1912 (p. 85); Becatti 1954 (pp. 88-90); CIMRM 279.

141b. Greek white marble head (h. 46 cm) found near the altar in the excavation of Mithraeum **141**. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani – Museo Gregoriano profano (inv. 10748).

The statue consists of a male head with curly hair and Phrygian hat. Three holes on each temple are visible: they served for fastening metallic rays. Traces of red color can be noticed on the surface of the statue. C.L. Visconti identified it with the head

of Attis, but F. Cumont suggested it should be interpreted as the head of Mithras, given the Mithraic interpretation of the room it was found in.

References: Visconti 1868 (p. 411); Taylor 1912 (p. 85); Becatti 1954 (pp. 90-1); CCCA III 396; CIMRM 280.

141c. Marble head (h. 30 cm) found in the excavation of Mithraeum **141**. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani – Museo Gregoriano profano (inv. 10747).

The statue represents the head of a youth with curly hair. Six holes were drilled in its temples to fasten metal bolts in form of rays. C.L. Visconti identified it with the head of Attis, but F. Cumont suggested it should be interpreted as the head of Sol, given the presence of the holes for fasten metallic rays.

References: Visconti 1868 (pp. 411-2); Becatti 1954 (p. 91); CIMRM 281.

142. Mitreo delle Sette Porte. This Mithraic sanctuary (1 room) was discovered and excavated between 1938 and 1942. A room in the south-east corner of a building, formerly a small storage unit, was relocated as a Mithraic sanctuary in the last quarter of the 2nd century CE. There is no evidence of other room involved in the Mithraic frequentation of the place. With the Mithraic installation two benches were built against the side walls. Their front was made in brickwork and they were filled with rubbish. Two brick steps were built in their western end to access their surface, which was plastered. They had a long shelf which run along their upper rim. The front of these benches as well as the upper surface of the ledge was decorated with black and white mosaic (**142c**). Both benches encased in their western corner a small base, covered with mosaic as well (**142c**). The northern bench hosted another small square base attached to its eastern extremity. Two square niches were cut in the front of the benches, just west of their middle length. A small marble base was found in each niche. The southern niche hosted a small vessel buried in the ground. Inside this, fragments of three beakers were found together with some small bones of cock or rabbit. The central space between the benches was covered with black and white mosaic too (**142b**). In the eastern part of the room, at 180 cm from the back wall, a circular pit was dug in the ground and a pottery vessel was buried in it to regularize its walls. On its right and left side two square pieces of white marble were encased in the floor, each hosting a lead water pipe. At 40 cm from the back wall a circular marble base was placed upside down and a square masonry altar was placed on top of it. This altar was painted white and a hole was pierced in its front. This cavity had a crescent shape and was closed on the front with a glass slab, which was found in pieces just in front of the altar. The cavity possibly lodged a lamp. Just under this hole a bronze pin was nailed, but the object there suspended was not found. A rectangular niche was cut in the back wall, resting on a brick shelf covered with white stucco, and was topped by a brickwork arch. Traces of blue paint were found at the moment of the discovery in the upper surface of the niche, but any further figuration was not recognizable. The rest of the back wall was painted red. All the other walls of the room were frescoed too (**142a**). Two coins found in the filling deposit of the benches (a bronze of Adrian and a bronze of Antoninus Pius) and one found under the brick altar (a bronze of Faustina Minor) give us a *terminus post quem* for the Mithraic adaptation of the room in the last quarter of the 2nd century CE.

References: Becatti 1954 (pp. 93-99); CIMRM 287; Becatti 1961 (pp. 197-9); Floriani Squarciapino 1962 (pp. 50-1); Beck 1979; ThesCRA (p. 278, n. 8); White 2012 (p. 469); Marchesini 2013 (pp. 256-8); Melega 2018 (pp. 124-133, 298-304); Van Haepelen 2019.

142a. Frescoes on the walls of Mithraeum **142**, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved *in situ*.

On the southern wall a garden landscape was represented. Just over the level of the bench, an enclosure made with yellow canes was depicted. This delimited the space of a lush green garden, rich in trees and plants. A palm tree is represented in the centre. The line marked by the yellow enclosure is not horizontal, but slightly inclined toward the western wall in order to achieve a panoramic effect that would make the spectator to perceive the room longer than how it is in reality. The northern wall bears an analogous representation but the fresco is here much evanescent. In the right corner of the southern wall, in correspondence with the steps which granted access to the bench, two rectangular spaces are separated from the garden representation by a large red band. The lower one bears a geometric red and yellow representation whereas the higher one a faded subject. The fresco of the western wall is completely lost in the sector on the left of the entrance door, while some traces of the right part are still preserved. We can here recognize a white background parted in four rectangles by two perpendicular red bands. The lower frame shows a geometric motive and a green branch with leaves. The representation in the two upper frames is lost.

References: Becatti 1954 (p. 96).

142b. Black and white mosaic floor covering the central aisle of Mithraeum **142**, second half of the 2nd century CE. Currently preserved *in situ*.

The corridor is floored in white tassels. A double black band delimits a rectangular field extended for all the length of the aisle. In the southern end of the floor, within the black bands, an architecture consisting in a theory of seven arches is represented. The central arch is bigger than the others and hosts a suspended lamp. The other six arches (three per side) are smaller, but built in the same way. They consist of two columns supporting an arch. The arched wall resulting supports a large white panel. On this panel four small torches are mounted. Other five torches surmount the central arch. Toward the end of the aisle other figures are represented. Just before the circular pit we recognize a crater, a raven on its left perched on an arrow and a snake on its right emerging from a rock. Both the animals are projected toward the rim of the vessel in order to drink from it. Moreover, behind the pit we can recognize a bearded man with wavy hair, standing naked. He holds a long sceptre in his right hand and a bundle of lightning bolts in his left. He should be identified with Jupiter. Finally, at the end of the aisle, outside of the black banded rectangle, another male figure is represented. At the moment of the discovery this representation was covered by the marble base which supported the altar. We can recognize the head of a man, bearded and hooded. He holds a sickle in his left hand. This should be the representation of Saturn.

References: Becatti 1954 (p. 97); CIMRM 288; Beck 1979.

142c. Black and white mosaic covering the front and upper ledge of the two benches in Mithraeum **142**, second half of the 2nd century CE. Currently preserved *in situ*.

The front and the upper ledge of both benches were decorated with a white mosaic with a black theory of vegetal tendril and leaves. On the front of the benches four human figures symbolizing the planetary deities were also represented. At the beginning of the right bench we can recognize a naked male figure with helmet on his head. He holds a lance in his right hand and a long staff with a trophy on top in his left. He represents Mars. In the middle of the same right bench we can recognize the remnants of a female figure holding in her hands a veil which flies over her head. She represents Luna. On the opposite side, in the middle of the front of the left bench, a male figure stands, dressed only in a long cloak, holding in his left hand the *caduceus* and in his right a small bag. He is Mercury. At the beginning of the left bench a female naked figure stands, her hands raised to her face. She is Venus. Moreover, on the base encased in the western corner of the benches other representations can be recognized. On the base encased in the left bench, three branches full of leaves can be recognize on the western side while a square altar on the southern one. The top of the representation is missing. On the base encased in the right bench instead, the northern side bear a similar representation of a square altar, topped by a cross-legged figure. This should be recognized as one of the Mithraic torchbearers. The western side instead features a single branch with leaves. References: Becatti 1954 (pp. 97-8); Beck 1979.

142d. Fragmentary statue (pres. h. 37 cm) of torchbearer found in the excavation of Mithraeum **142**. Currently lost.

Only the lower part of the statue was preserved. It featured the feet and legs of a torchbearer, dressed in the usual attire and cross-legged.

References: Becatti 1954 (p. 99); CIMRM 292.

142e. Of the small finds recovered in the excavation of Mithraeum **142**, G. Becatti reported:

a) A lamp with six wick holes found near the altar.

b) Fragments of a vessel with greenish glazed surface. On the external surface of the vessel some plastic figures were applied: fragments with Minerva (with lance and Shield), Dionysus, Heracles and Jupiter were found at the moment of the discovery. This vessel can be reconstructed as a large glazed crater with wide studded rim bearing a representation of the twelve Olympic deities on its external surface.

References: Becatti 1954 (pp. 98-99); CIMRM 290-291.

142f. Marble altar (h. 28,5 cm) with inscription found just outside Mithraeum **142**, second half of the 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Ostia, Galleria Lapidaria (inv. 6716).

Sex(tus) Fusinius | Felix | don(um) ded(it)

Sextus Fusinius Felix gave as a gift.

References: Becatti 1954 (p. 99); CIMRM 289; Marchesini 2013 (pp. 246-8); Van Haepereen 2019 (p. 183); EDR172957 (G. Tenaille d'Estais).

142g. Statue (pres. h. 80 cm) of female figure dressed in a long tunic. Between her feet is a hole to insert a lead pipe. The head is missing. This statue was recovered during the excavation of the site, but G. Becatti was not sure if it belonged the inventory of Mithraeum **142**.

References: Becatti 1954 (p. 99); CIMRM 293.

143. *Mitreo dei Serpenti*. This Mithraic sanctuary (2 rooms) was discovered and excavated in 1940. It was located in two rooms at the ground floor of a building with commercial purpose. The Mithraic sanctuary was installed in the 3rd century. The antechamber was accessible through the eastern door from a courtyard. A southern door led then to the main cult room. Here, two benches were built against the long sides: two low walls were filled with rubbish and earth. Their front hosted a continuous shelf, and their upper surface was plastered. Two niches were cut at ground level in the middle of their length. A single brick step was incorporated in the northern end of the western bench. Between the two benches a simple earthen floor paved the central aisle. The presence of holes for wooden beams in the upper part of the side walls indicates the presence of an attic or of a pitched roof. Against the back wall a masonry structure was built. Two walls, which possibly supported an arch, enclosed two steps. In front of these steps, a square altar was built. A low shelf departing from the end of the benches enclosed the structure. In the south-east corner of the room, part of the frescoes pertaining the decoration of the room previous to the Mithraic installation was still preserved at the moment of the discovery. Two snakes were represented and the head of a *Genius* with cornucopia. We can reasonably suppose that the southern sector of the room was previously used as a *Lararium*. A travertine altar (h. 38 cm, CIMRM 295) roughly shaped and without any inscription was found in the excavation of the Mithraeum.

References: Becatti 1954 (pp. 101-4); CIMRM 294; Van Hessen 1959; Floriani Squarciapino 1962 (pp. 51-2); ThesCRA (p. 279, n. 28); Marchesini 2013 (pp. 281-5); Melega 2018 (pp. 153-157, 312-317); Van Haepere 2019.

144. *Mitreo di Felicissimo*. This Mithraic sanctuary (2 rooms) was discovered and excavated in 1940. It was located in a single room belonging to a small building of unknown purpose, possibly a commercial or storage unit. It seems possible that at least another room was connected to the Mithraic installation (mid-3rd century CE) with the function of antechamber. The devotees could access the main cult room from a northern door. Two benches were built against the side walls. Their fronts were built in small tufa stones. No remains of the upper shelf or of the cut-in niches were preserved at the moment of the discovery of the room. The eastern part of the room did not preserve any trace of the altar or of the cult niche. A circular pit was cut in the ground floor just after the door. A semi-circular niche cut in the western corner of the southern wall was possibly re-used in the Mithraic phase to host a statue. The floor was paved in black and white mosaic.

References: Becatti 1954 (pp. 105-112); CIMRM 299; Becatti 1961 (pp. 227-30); Floriani Squarciapino 1962 (pp. 52-4); ThesCRA (p. 279, n. 31); Marchesini 2013 (pp. 173-6); Melega 2018 (pp. 158-164, 318-323); Van Haepere 2019.

144a. Black and white mosaic paving the floor of Mithraeum **144**, second half of the 3rd century CE. Currently preserved *in situ*.

The mosaic consists of a white field divided in nine sectors by a large black band, each sector hosts different representations in black tassels. The first sector corresponded to the corridor which connects the entrance door to the minor niche. It features (from the entrance to the niche): a cup with two symmetrical handles, two little Phrygian hats, and an altar with flames on top. The other sectors consisted in rectangular frames laid one after the other in the central aisle of the Mithraeum. From the entrance corridor toward the back of the room we have eight frames. In the first frame we can recognize a raven, a little cup with one handle, a *caduceus*. In the second one a crown and a lamp. The floor is here not preserved, preventing us from recognizing the last object. In the third frame we have a helmet, a spear, and a military bag. In the fourth one instead a bundle of lightning bolts, a shovel, and a *sistrum*. A crescent with a star, a *harpè* and a scythe are featured in the fifth frame. In the sixth we recognize a lit torch, a radiate crown and a whip, while in the seventh an inkwell with *stylus*, a Phrygian hat and a sickle. The eighth frame is larger than the previous ones and hosts the representations of a cup with two symmetrical handles flanked by four different vegetal branches. On top of this representation a dedicatory inscription was written. It reads:

Felicissimus | ex voto f(ecit)

Felicissimus made for the fulfillment of his vow.

References: Becatti 1954 (pp. 106-12); AE 1946, 118; CIMRM 299; Becatti 1961 (pp. 227-30); Marchesini 2013 (pp. 170-3); EDR073574 (Scheithauer).

145.* *Mitreo dei marmi Colorati*. A Mithraeum (1 room) was discovered and excavated in 2014 in Ostia. It was located in a room adjacent to a former *caupona*, within the complex known as ‘Caseggiato delle due scale’. The Mithraic devotees installed a sanctuary in this building in the mid-4th century CE. In the rooms of the former *caupona* the mosaic floors of the previous period were maintained while the walls received a renovated fresco decoration. In these rooms some archeological finds (the possible handle of a *sistrum*, a bronze applique with Isiac crown, and the graffito of a boat) seem to indicate the contemporary worship of Isis. The northern room, accessible from a door on the south-east corner, was instead relocated for the worship of Mithras. The floor was raised and a flooring layer consisting in an elaborate scheme of colored marble was laid (see **145a**). A flowerbed was created in the north-eastern corner. The water well (residue of the previous layout of the room) was framed by a marble *puteal*. A bench was possibly built against the northern wall, just beside the well. Here the floor was raised by ca. 20 cm, and a wooden bench was possibly placed on this raised level. The western wall had a concave shape and hosted, in the center, a rectangular niche, which itself possibly hosted the cult relief. All the walls were frescoed (the lower part of the decoration consists of panels imitating marble slabs). Judging from the materials found in the excavation, it seems that this sanctuary had a limited life: it was in use only for three or four decades before being shut down.

References: David et al. 2016; David 2017; David 2018a; David 2018b; David et al. 2018b; Melega 2018 (pp. 134-151, 305-311); Van Haereren 2019.

145a.* A complex pattern of marble slabs covered the floor of the main cult room. With the Mithraic installation in the mid-4th century CE the floor of the room was raised of ca. 70 cm. A thousand marble *crustae* were laid on the floor, following a geometric scheme possibly functional to highlight the religious function of the space. A square of white marble, containing a semi-circle of purple marble highlights the entrance. From there a straight band departs to arrive to the rectangular niche in the back wall. Two depressions mark the spot where two small altars should be placed: one at the beginning of the northern bench, and one in front of the cult niche. Between this band and the northern bench, the floor shows a succession of bands and squares. An analogous pattern is followed in the space between the central band and the southern wall. The raised level of the northern bench does not contain any peculiar divisions.

References: David et al. 2016; David et al. 2018b.

145b.* Several graffiti were engraved on the walls of the central room (room 3) which gave access to the Mithraic cult room. In the eastern wall a first graffito shows a large boat, possibly a representation of the *navigium Isidis*. In the same room, on the western and southern wall, other graffiti were carved. On the southern wall a name can be read:

Concordius

Just under this name, another graffito was traced (h. 3,5-1,5 cm):

Inv(icto) D(eo) ((arrow)) M(ithrae) ((bow and arrow)) D(eo) M(agno) Kro
| no

To the Unconquered god Mithras (and) to the Great god Kronos.

Other graffiti were carved on the southern wall. Three monograms were recognized, bearing the letters 'M', 'Y' and 'A', possibly referable to the name Mithras.

References: David and Melega 2018 (p. 142); David and Melega 2020 (pp. 114-5).

146. Mitreo Fagan. A Mithraic sanctuary was excavated between 1794 and 1802 by the English painter R. Fagan. Three of the monuments found in the excavation are currently preserved in the Musei Vaticani, but the exact position of the sanctuary, which was located between Palazzo Imperiale and Tor Boacciana, is still unknown. G. Zoega reported that this sanctuary was built in imitation of a natural cave (ref) and that whereas the tauroctony representations were placed at the beginning and in the middle of the sanctuary, the leontocephaline deity was located, almost hidden, in the deepest part of the Mithraeum.

References: Visconti 1864 (p. 148); TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 79-81); Paschetto 1912 (pp. 358-7); Ross Taylor 1912 (pp. 88-90); Becatti 1954 (pp. 119-21); CIMRM 309; Floriani Squarciarino 1962 (pp. 55-6); ThesCRA (p. 278, n. 11); Granieri 2008; Marchesini 2013 (pp. 97-99); Melega 2018 (pp. 170-176); Van Haepere 2019.

146a. Marble group (h. 84 cm) with inscription found in Mithraeum **146**, late 2nd – early 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani - Galleria Lapidaria (inv. MV 6982).

On a rocky base the group of the tauroctony is represented. Mithras is caught in the usual act of piercing the shoulder of the bull with his dagger while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The god is dressed in the usual eastern attire. Inside his flying cloak a lunar crescent and seven stars are represented. The bull is pressed to the ground. Its tail ends in ears and the raven is perched upon it. At the usual places we can recognize the scorpion, the snake and the dog (with collar). All along the front of the thin base a dedicatory inscription is engraved:

Sig(num) Imdeprehensivilis (!) dei G(aius) Valerius Heracles sacerdos s(ua)
p(ecunia) p(osuit)

Statue of the Unconquerable god. The priest *Gaius Valerius Heracles* set up with his own money.

On a second line, which was added later to the previous one, we read:

L(ucius) Sextius Karus et

Lucius Sextius Karus and

This second line was meant to be added before the name of *Gaius Valerius*.

References: CIL XIV 64; ILS 4228; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 138; *mon. fig.* 79); Paschetto 1912 (pp. 167-70; 385); Taylor 1912 (p. 89); Becatti 1954 (p. 119); CIMRM 310-311; Bignamini 1996 (p. 362); Granieri 2008 (pp. 210-11); Marchesini 2013 (pp. 80-86); EDR143956 (R. Marchesini).

146b. Marble statue (h. 165 cm) with inscription found in Mithraeum **146**, 13th August 190 CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani - Museo Chiaramonti (inv. MV 7899).

The statue features a standing male figure with lion head, naked, and encircled in six spires by a snake which rests its head on top of the lion head. The figure keeps his hands on the chest. He holds a key in the right whereas in the left he holds a key and a long scepter. In the center of his chest a bundle of lightning bolts is represented. On the back of the statue are two pairs of wings: one attached at the shoulder, one at the waist. On each wing several animals or plants are represented. From the top left, going clockwise, we can recognize: a dove and a swan; a bundle of ears; a bunch of grapes; two palms and reeds. These objects can be read as symbols of the four seasons, respectively: spring, summer, autumn and winter. Beside the feet of the figure other objects are represented: on the left pincers and hammer, while on the right a cock, a pinecone and the *caduceus*. This statue was realized re-using a piece of architectural cornice. Traces of red paint were reported at the moment of the discovery.

A dedicatory inscription was engraved on a tablet resting beside the feet of the leontocephaline deity. It reads:

C(aius) Valeri | us Heracles pat(er) | et C(aii) Valerii | Vitalis et Nico |
me(de)s sacerdo | tes s(ua) p(e)c(unia) p(o)s(ue)r(unt) | d(e)d(icatum)
Idi(bus) Aug(ustis) Imp(eratore) | Com(mod)o | VI et | Septi | miano |
co(n)s(ulibus)

The *pater Caius Valerius Heracles* and the two priests *Caius Valerius Vitalis* and *Caius Valerius Nicomedes* set up with their own money. Dedicated on the 13th of August, while the Emperor Commodus (for the 6th time) and (*Marcus Petronius Sura*) *Septimianus* were *consules*.

References: Zoega 1817 (p. 89); CIL XIV 65; ILS 4212; Visconti 1864 (pp. 149-51); TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 137; *mon. fig.* 80); Paschetto 1912 (pp. 170, 386); Ross Taylor (p. 89); Becatti 1954 (pp. 119-20); CIMRM 312-313; Bignamini 1996 (pp. 360-361); Granieri 2008 (pp. 211-2); Bortolin 2012 (pp. 201-202); Marchesini 2013 (pp. 86-91); EDR143957 (R. Marchesini).

146c. Marble relief (107x45 cm) found in Mithraeum **146**, early 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani - Museo Chiaramonti (inv. MV 1380). The relief represents a standing naked male figure with lion head. A crater is represented between his feet. A snake, whose head and tail rests in the crater, wraps the body of the figure in two circles. Two pair of wings are represented on the back of the deity, one pair attached at the shoulders, one at the waist. The deity holds his hand on the chest and in each one holds a key. Traces of gilding were reported at the moment of the discovery of the relief.

References: Visconti 1864 (p. 149); TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 81); Paschetto 1912 (pp. 170, 386); Ross Taylor 1912 (p. 89); Becatti 1954 (p. 120); CIMRM 314; Granieri 2008 (pp. 212); Bortolin 2012 (p. 220); Marchesini 2013 (pp. 96).

146d. Inscription found in 1798 in the Fagan excavations near Tor Boacciana, late 2nd century CE. Currently lost.

C(aius) Valerius Heracles pat[e]r e[t] an[tis] | tes dei iu[b]enis (!) inconrupti
(!) S[o]lis Invicti Mithra[e] | [c]ryptam palati concessa[m] sibi a M(arco)
Aurelio | -----

Caius Valerius Heracles, pater and *antistes* of the young god, the uncorrupted Sol unconquered Mithras, ... a subterranean room in the palace granted to him by *Marcus Aurelius* ...

A manuscript of C.L. Visconti informed us that this inscription was found together with the previous numbers.

References: Zoega 1817 (p. 89); CIL XIV 66; ILS 4227; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 139); Paschetto 1912 (pp. 386-7); Taylor 1912 (p. 89); Becatti 1954 (p. 120); CIMRM 315; Bignamini 1996 (pp. 361-2); Granieri 2008 (p. 212); Marchesini 2013 (pp. 91-5); EDR143958 (R. Marchesini).

147. The fragmentary statues of the two torchbearers were found in 1939 in Ostia, between *Semita dei Cippi* and *via della Fortuna Annonaria*. Currently lost.

The fragmentary statue of *Cautes* (pres. h. 22 cm) features the torchbearer dressed as usual and cross-legged. A long cloak is pinned on his chest by a circular brooch. Head, hands, and feet are missing. The fragmentary statue of *Cautopates* (pres. h. 19 cm) features the torchbearer dressed as usual and cross-legged. A long cloak is pinned on his chest by a circular brooch. Head, hands, and legs are missing. The nearest Mithraic sanctuaries with respect to the find spot of these statues are the *Felicissimus* Mithraeum (**144**) and the Mithraeum of the Snakes (**143**).

References: Becatti 1954 (p. 129); CIMRM 296-297; Marchesini 2013 (pp. 295-6).

148. Marble base (h. 34 cm) found in 1910 in Ostia in one of the rooms along the Decumano Massimo, opposite to the Theater, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Ostia, Galleria Lapidaria (inv. 11224).

[Na]ma Victori patri | Aur(elius) Cresce(n)s | Aug(usti) lib(ertus) | fratres ex
| speleo (!) dilap | so in melio | ri restauravit

Hail to the *pater Victor! Aurelius Crescens*, freedman of the Augustus, restored the brothers from a ruined *spelaeum*.

References: CIL XIV 4315; Vaglieri 1910 (pp. 186-7); AE 1911, 63; Taylor 1912 (p. 91); Becatti 1954 (p. 130); CIMRM 308; Marchesini 2013 (pp. 291-5); EDR072411 (I. Manzini).

149. Marble bust (pres. h. 185 cm) with inscription found in 1913 in Ostia, between Decumano Massimo and via dei Molini, second half of the 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani – Lapidario Profano (inv. 6625). The bust of a male figure with naked chest, an original of the 1st or 2nd century CE, was re-consecrated by a Mithraic devotee in the second half of the 2nd century CE. Of the statue only the bust is preserved, without head and arms. On the chest the dedicatory inscription was engraved.

[T(itus)] Atil(ius) T(iti) f(ilius) P(alatina) Glyco | S(oli) Invic(to) Mithr(ae)
| d(ono) d(edit)

Titus Atilius Glyco, son of *Titus*, of the *Palatina tribus*, gave as a gift to Sol unconquered Mithras.

References: CIL XIV 4307; Vaglieri 1913 (pp. 210-11); AE 1914, 152; Tamborini 1938; Becatti 1954 (p. 129); CIMRM 319-320; Floriani Squarciapino 1962 (pp. 56-7); EDR072677 (R. Marchesini, I. Manzini).

150. Bronze disc which decorated a brooch (diameter 7 cm) found in 1899 in Ostia, 2nd-3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Oxford, Ashmolean Museum (inv. AN1927.187).

In the center of the circular field we can recognize Mithras, dressed in the usual attire, caught in the act of piercing the shoulder of the bull with his dagger. The god's head is encircled by a radiate crown. The bull is pressed to the ground and from its tail ears sprout. A band (*dorsuale*) encircles its body. Behind the god we can recognize the raven, and at the usual places beside the bull we can recognize the scorpion, the snake and the dog (with collar). Other two animals flank the scene: on the left a bird (possibly an owl) while on the right a cock. Deep incisions were used for the representation of Mithras and of the animals, while the bull, Mithras' radiate crown, dagger, and his face are rendered with a thin line.

References: Becatti 1954 (pp. 129-30); CIMRM 318; Gordon 2004 (pp. 274-5); Marchesini 2013 (pp. 298-9).

151. Pottery fragment (7,7x11 cm), possibly belonging to a larger vessel, with tauroctony representation found in Ostia. Currently lost (inv. 3253).

This small fragment of terracotta slab with concave profile, possibly belonging to a larger vessel features the schematic representation of the tauroctony scene. We can recognize the shape of Mithras caught in the usual act of wounding the bull. The

Phrygian hat and the flying cloak are quite well distinguishable. The dog and the scorpion can be recognized at the usual places. On the left of the group it seems possible to recognize also the shape of one of the torchbearers.

References: Becatti 1954 (p. 130); CIMRM 316; Floriani Squarciapino 1962 (p. 57); Marchesini 2013 (pp. 300-1).

152. Fragment of marble vessel (relief?) with inscription found in *Portus* in the excavations of prince A. Torlonia (1865-66). Currently lost.

On a fragment of marble vessel Cautes was represented, and above him a Sol, with radiate crown. An inscription was engraved on top of the representation.

Invicto Deo S[oli ---]

To the Unconquered god Sol ...

References: CIL XIV 55; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 142 *mon. fig.* 85bis); Taylor 1912 (p. 92); Thylander 1952 (p. 378); Becatti 1954 (p. 131); CIMRM 322-323; Floriani Squarciapino 1962 (pp. 57-8); Marchesini 2013 (pp. 323-4); EDR144063 (R. Marchesini).

153. Fragment of a marble slab with inscription found in *Portus* in the excavations of prince A. Torlonia (1863-1864), 3rd – early 4th century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Villa Albani.

The slab consists in the central fragment of an *album sacratorum*, which reported the list of names of the members of a community possibly seated in Ostia. The fragment exhibits part of the first line where the nature of the collegium would have been specified, large part of a central column with a list of names, and a minor portion of a third column where the list of names continues. The first column(s) is missing.

The first line on top reads:

[---] album sacrato[rum ---]

... list of the initiated devotees of ...

The second column reads:

[---]reus pater | [--- G]lycon | [---] Rufus | [---] Dafinus | [---] Sinplicius (!)
| [---] Petrus | [---] Crescentinus | [---] Crescentio | [---] Bictorus (!) | [---]
Dafinus (!) | [---] Feston (!) | [--- S]erpentius | [---] Apronianus | [---]
Alexander | [---]acuca

...reus pater, ... Glycon, ... Rufus, ... Dafinius, ... Simplicius, ... Petrus, ... Crescentinus, ...
Crescentius, ... Victurus, ... Dafinius, ... Festus, ... Serpentius, ... Apronianus, ...
Alexander, ...acuca.

The third column reads:

Tr[---] | Petr[---] | Pa[---] | Tr[---] | Ex[---] | Iu[---] | Me[---] | T[---] | Ro[---]
| Sa[---] | Se[---] | A[---] | -----

The Mithraic character of the community here listed resides in the line which separates the two surviving columns of names. The text is written vertically between the second and third column of the *album*, and it reads:

Leo fe[*cit*]

(The devotee with the grade of) *leo* made (this list).

The name of this devotee was possibly written in a similar vertical disposition between the first (not preserved) column and the central one.

References: CIL XIV 286; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 140); Taylor 1912 (p. 92); Thylander 1952 (pp. 368-9); CIMRM 325; Floriani Squarciapino 1962 (p. 58); Thrans 1972 (pp. 153-6); Marchesini 2013 (pp. 324-8); EDR144064 (R. Marchesini).

Rome

Monuments found in Rome, with exact find-spot

154. *Mitreo di Piazza della Navicella.* The existence of a Mithraeum on the Caelius hill in the area of Piazza della Navicella or in the immediate surroundings has been suggested, based on the finding of the following monuments. No architectural trace of a sanctuary was preserved at the time of the discovery of these monuments.

References: Lanciani 1908 (p. 74); Colini 1944 (p. 48); CIMRM 327; Coarelli 1979 (p. 70); LTUR.III (p. 259).

154a. Fragmentary marble relief with inscription found in 1555 in the excavation of a vineyard on the Caelius hill, last quarter of the 2nd century CE. Currently lost. This monument survives thanks to two drawings. One is preserved in the codex Pighianus of Berlin (see Vermaseren 1978, planche IV), whereas the second one in a drawing by Dosio in Florence (see Vermaseren 1978, planche V). In the upper part of the relief, three sit deities were represented. We can recognize Jupiter in the center, holding a bundle of lightning bolts and with an eagle beside his feet, Minerva on the left, an owl beside her feet, and Juno on the right. Below this representation, a dedicatory inscription was engraved.

Optumus Maximus | Caelus Aeternus Iup[pi] | ter Iunoni reginae | Minervae
iussus liben | s dedit pro salutem (!) suam (!) | M(arcus) Modius Agatho et
pr[o] || Fausti patroni hominis | s(anctissimi?) et Helpidis suaes (!) cum
s[uis]

Jupiter Optimus Maximus Caelus Aeternus, with Juno regina and Minerva. *Marcus Modius Agatho* gave (this monument) gladly, as ordered, for his safety, and for the safety of *Faustuts*, the most benign *patronus*, and of *Helpidius* and of his familiars.

References: CIL VI, 81; ILS 3949; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 59; *mon. fig.* 71bis); Lanciani 1908 (p. 74); Colini 1944 (p. 48); CIMRM 328-329; Vermaseren 1978 (pp. 3-5); EDR161219 (A. Ferraro).

154b. Fragments of marble base with reliefs and inscriptions found together with **154a**, last quarter of the 2nd century CE. Currently lost.

This monument survives thanks to two drawings. One is preserved in the codex Pighianus of Berlin (see Vermaseren 1978, planche VI), whereas the second one in a drawing by Dosio in Florence (see Vermaseren 1978, planche VII). Three fragments can be recognized:

a) Fragment of the top left part of one side of the base. We can recognize the figure of Sol, naked except for his flying cloak, with radiate crown. He drives his chariot which is pulled by four horses, and he holds a whip in his right. On the upper band of the base:

Dedit M(arcus) Modio [Agatho]

Marcus Modius Agatho gave.

Above the figure of Sol:

Sancto Domino | Invicto Mithrae | iussu eius libens | dedit

(The devotee) gave willingly to the holy master Unconquered Mithras, as ordered by (the god) himself.

b) Fragment of the bottom left part of one side of the base. The chariot of Luna (only her veil is recognizable) is pulled by two horses to the left. Above this representation:

[---]T M(arcus) | [Mod]ius | [Aga]tho | suis

... *Marcus Modius Agatho* with his familiars ...

On the bottom band:

Permissu[---]

With the permission of ...

c) Fragment of a side of the base. This piece features Jupiter standing naked on a cylindrical base. He holds a bundle of lightning bolts in his right and a long scepter in his left. An eagle is represented on the left, together with a man wearing a Phrygian hat. This male figure is naked and holds a long stick in his right and a small bird in his left. Part of a dedicatory inscription can be read on the left and on the right of the figure:

[Domi]no sanct[o] | [Op]tumo Maxim[o] | [Salu]tari iussu eius | [li]bens
dedit | [M(arcus)] Modius Aga[tho] | TO | AT

To the Highest holy god Salutaris, *Marcus Modius Agatho* gave gladly, as ordered by him (the god) himself.

Fragments a and b can be associate with Mithraic worship for the content of the inscription and for the subjects represented. It is not clear however how fragment c, which bears the name of the same devotee, could be integrated with the other two.

References: CIL VI, 82; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 60; *mon. fig.* 71bis); Lanciani 1908 (p. 74); Colini 1944 (p. 48); CIMRM 332-333; Vermaseren 1978 (pp. 3-5); EDR161220/164507 (A. Ferraro).

155.* *Mitreo di S. Stefano Rotondo*. A Mithraeum (2 rooms) was discovered in 1973 and excavated between 1973 and 1975 in Rome (under the basilica of S. Stefano Rotondo).

The Mithraic sanctuary was located in four rooms formerly used for the lodging of the troops in the *Castra Peregrinorum* complex. In the last quarter of the 2nd century CE one of the rooms was relocated as a Mithraeum. A small antechamber gave access to the main cult room. Here, the ground level was lowered, and two benches were built against the long sides, which were plastered and painted red. Their surfaces sloped toward the walls and their upper rim was marked by a small ledge. A rectangular niche hosting the cult image (**155b**) was cut in the back wall, whereas frescos were painted on the same wall on either sides of the niche (**155a**). A small brickwork altar was built against the back wall. In a second phase, at the end of the 3rd century CE, the Mithraeum was enlarged, incorporating the adjacent room. The

previous access door was closed: the main cult room was now accessible from another antechamber. The floor was paved with *bipedales* bricks. A trapezoidal travertine block was buried in the centre of the aisle. Two benches were built against the long side walls. They were plastered and painted red, and on their front a decoration imitating marble slabs was frescoed. A niche was cut in each one, at ground level (rectangular in the left bench, semicircular in the right one). Each contained lamps. The upper surface of these benches could be accessed thanks to some steps built in their southern end. A new altar larger than the previous one was built against the back wall. It had Π shape, with two steps on the front. Other two bases were built in front of the altar. In a later moment those two were incorporated in the main altar. The altar was painted red and frescoed in imitation of marble slabs. Another little enclosure structured with three marble columns was placed on the right side of the main altar. All the walls were frescoed. Panels imitating marble slabs resting on a red skirting covered the previous frescoes on the back wall, while a scene with doves drinking at a crater was painted on the entrance wall and repeated three times. Three rooms on the south of the Mithraeum were linked to the life of the sanctuary: unfortunately, they were only partially excavated. The southernmost room was equipped with four shelves: they were plastered and painted red. The site was abandoned at the end of the 4th century CE.

References: Lissi Caronna 1979; Lissi Caronna 1982; Lissi Caronna 1986; LTUR.I (p. 251); ThesCRA (p. 278, n. 10); Lissi Caronna 2006; Martin 2004 (p. 506); Panciera 2006b (with further references).

155a.* Fresco depicted on the back wall on either side of the altar. Currently preserved *in situ*.

On the left of the altar the bust of Sol was depicted, whereas on the right that of Luna. Of Sol, few traces of the radiated crown can be recognized. Luna is instead better preserved. She is represented in profile, looking to the right, away from the altar. She emerges from a crescent and wears her hair in a bun on the back of the head. Her temples are encircled by a thin double band. This fresco was covered with a layer of fresh paint in the second phase of the Mithraeum.

References: Lissi Caronna 1979 (pp. 206, 213); Lissi Caronna 1986 (pp. 11-2, 24);

155b.* Stucco relief (120x80 cm) attached above the altar in the first phase of the sanctuary, last quarter of the 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano – Terme di Diocleziano (inv. 205826).

A single fragment of this relief was preserved: it consists of Mithras' head. The god is facing slightly to the right and upward. On his head we can recognize the Phrygian hat. Traces of gilding and of polychromy are preserved: the face of the god is golden while the hat is dark red. Other pieces of this stucco relief were found in the excavation: fragments of Mithras' red cloak, part of the white body of the bull, and a brown hoof. In the niche above the altar, the nails used to attach the relief and the grooves drawn to guide the operation are still visible. Feeble traces of stucco are recognizable on either side of the niche. It seems possible to recognize on the right a cross-legged figure, presumably one of the torchbearers.

References: Lissi Caronna 1979 (p. 210); Lissi Caronna 1986 (pp. 12-4); Friggeri 2001 (p. 181); Papini 2005a; Borgognoni 2012a (p. 655).

155c.* White marble relief (148x90x6 cm) found in the sanctuary (main cult room, between the altar and the corner of the western bench), late 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano – Terme di Diocleziano (inv. 205837).

A continuous smooth band frames the rectangular relief. In the center of the scene we can recognize Mithras, dressed with the usual attire. The face of the god is golden, his tunic yellow and gold, while his cloak and trousers are red. He plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils with his left hand. The god looks back to the raven which is perched on his flying cloak. The bull is pressed on the ground. Its body (which originally should have been brown) is wrapped in a colored band. The black scorpion, the yellow snake and the yellowish-brown dog can be recognized at the usual places. On the left and on the right of the scene some rocky surfaces recall the setting of Mithras' deed within the cave. The torchbearers flank the scene: Cautes on the left and Cautopates on the right. They are both cross-legged and dressed with the usual attire. Beside Cautes' feet a rooster is represented, whereas beside Cautopates is an owl. Above Cautes' head, in the top left corner of the relief, we can recognize Sol, with radiate crown, dressed in a flying cloak. He drives his chariot, pulled by four horses. In his right hand he holds the reins, whereas in his left one he holds a sphere. On the opposite corner we can recognize Luna, dressed in a long tunic, with a crescent behind her shoulders. She drives her chariot which is pulled by two oxen. In front of her a small winged child holding a lit torch leads the way. He has been identified with Phosphorus or either with Eros. Rich traces of polychromy are recognizable virtually on all of the subjects.

References: Lissi Caronna 1979 (pp. 209-10); Lissi Caronna 1986 (pp. 315-35); Friggeri 2001 (pp. 181-2); Papini 2005a; Borgognoni 2012b (pp. 647-8); Magrini et al. 2019.

155d.* White marble relief (16,5x16,3x4 cm) found in the sanctuary (main cult room, by the altar), late 2nd – early 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano – Terme di Diocleziano (inv. 205838).

This little relief represents the usual tauroctony scene. In the center we can recognize Mithras, dressed in his usual attire, who plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils with his left hand. Ears sprout from the tail of the animal. The raven is perched on the flying cloak of Mithras. The dog, the snake and the scorpion can be recognized at the usual places. The two torchbearers flank the scene: Cautes on the left, Cautopates on the right. They stand cross-legged, both in the usual attire, holding their own torch with both hands. On the top left corner, we can recognize the bust of Sol, with radiate crown, while on the opposite one the bust of Luna, with a crescent behind her shoulders. A smooth band lies under the scene. Rich traces of polychromy are recognizable on all of the subjects.

References: Lissi Caronna 1986 (pp. 35-36); Gordon 2004 (p. 264); Borgognoni 2012c (p. 656).

155e.* White marble relief (23x35,5x3,5 cm) found in the sanctuary (main cult room, in front of the altar). Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano – Terme di Diocleziano.

Few fragments of this relief were preserved. This monument had a square shape, with rounded top. The central part of the relief features the tauroctony scene, while other scenes were represented on the arched band on top and on the lower band of

the piece. Of the central tauroctony scene only part of the two torchbearers is preserved. We can recognize Cautes on the left and Cautopates on the right. They are both cross-legged and dressed in the usual attire. Above Cautes part of Mithras' flying cloak and part of the raven are recognizable. The top band features five scenes:

- a) Mithras' birth from the rock;
- b) the bull in the shed;
- c) Mithras capturing the bull with a rope;
- d) the bull on the ship;
- e) the so-called water miracle.

Of the lower register, only a corner is preserved: the subjects are not recognizable.

Traces of polychromy were recognized on all of the scenes.

References: Lissi Caronna 1986 (pp. 36-37, pl. XVI); Gordon 2004 (p. 265).

155f.* Luna marble statue (h. 108 cm) with inscription found in the sanctuary (main cult room, between the west corner of the altar and the corner of the western bench), 180-192 CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano – Terme di Diocleziano (inv. 205827).

This statue features the birth of Mithras from the rock. The god emerges from the rock from the knee up. His body is that of a young male, naked, except for the Phrygian hat. His arms are adherent to the bust, with forearms stretched outward holding in the right hand a lit torch whereas in the left one a long dagger. Traces of polychromy are recognizable on the hair of the God, on the rock and on the torch. An inscription was engraved on the base of the statue:

Petram genetricem | Aur(elius) Bassinus aedituus | principiorum cast(rorum)
pereg(rinorum) | dedicavit hoc in loco et d(ono) d(edit) | antistante A(ulo)
Caedicio | Prisciano eq(uite) R(omano) patre

Aurelius Bassinus, responsible for the sacred spaces of the *Castra Peregrinorum*, dedicated (this statue of) the Petra Genetrix in this place and gave (it) as a gift when the *equus Romanus Aulus Caedicius Priscianus* was *pater* and *antistes*.

References: Lissi Caronna 1979 (pp. 208-9); Panciera 1979a (pp. 88-94); AE 1980, 48; Lissi Caronna 1986 (pp. 29-30), Friggeri 2001 (p. 188); Papini 2005a; Di Giacomo 2012a (pp. 642-3); EDR077485 (M. Ferraro, S. Orlandi).

155g.* Luna marble statue (h. 57 cm) found in the sanctuary (main cult room, by the western bench), second half of the 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano – Terme di Diocleziano (inv. 205828).

This statue features the birth of Mithras from the rock. The god emerges from the rock from the waist up. The body is that of an adolescent boy, naked, except for the Phrygian hat and the cloak, which is fastened on the left shoulder with a circular brooch. His forearms are lifted. The young god holds in the right hand a lit torch whereas in the left one a dagger.

References: Lissi Caronna 1979 (pp. 208-9); Lissi Caronna 1986 (p. 31).

155h.* White marble statue (h. 57 cm) found in the sanctuary (main cult room, on the western bench). Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano – Terme di Diocleziano (inv. 360177).

This statue features a male figure standing cross-legged. He wears a short tunic, long trousers and a cloak. Traces of red color were noticed on the cloak. Head, arms and feet are missing. The figure represents one of the Mithraic torchbearers. Iron pins located in the neck and at the junction of the arms were recognized as ancient restorations.

References: Lissi Caronna 1986 (p. 38).

155i.* Marble base (h. 46 cm) with inscription found in the sanctuary (main cult room, near the entrance), 180-192 CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano – Terme di Diocleziano (inv. 370171).

Two surfaces of the base bear engraved inscriptions. On the frontal side we can read:

Deo Cautae (!) | Aur(elius) Sabinus pa | ter huius loci | et B(a)ebius Quinti |
anus ex voto posu | erunt

To the god Cautes. The *pater* of this place *Aurelius Sabinus* and *Baebius Quintianus* placed for the fulfillment of the vow.

On the left side, over the relief of a bundle of lightning bolts:

Leo vivas | cum Caedicio | patre

Hail to the *leo*! While *Caedicius* is *pater*.

References: Panciera 1979a (pp. 88-94); AE 1980, 49; Lissi Caronna 1986 (p. 42); Friggeri 2001 (p. 188); Di Giacomo 2012b (p. 644); EDR077486 (A. Ferraro, S. Orlandi).

155j.* Marble base (h. 47 cm) with inscription found in the sanctuary (main cult room, by the western bench), 180-192 CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano – Terme di Diocleziano (inv. 205823).

Two surfaces of the base bear engraved inscriptions. On the frontal side we can read:

Deo Cautae | opathi (!) | Aur(elius) Sabinus | pater huius loci | et B(a)ebius
Quintianus | leo | ex voto posuerunt

To the god Cautopatēs. The *pater* of this place *Aurelius Sabinus* and the *leo* *Baebius Quintianus* set up for the fulfillment of a vow.

On the band on top of the altar an eagle with spread wings is represented.

On the right side, over the relief of a *patēra*:

Leo vivas cum | Caedicio | patre

Hail to the *leo*! While *Caedicius* is *pater*.

References: Panciera 1979a (pp. 88-94); AE 1980, 50; Lissi Caronna 1986 (p. 43); Friggeri 2001 (p. 188); Di Giacomo 2012c (pp. 645-6); EDR077487 (A. Ferraro, S. Orlandi).

155k.* Marble arula (h. 20 cm) with inscription found in the sanctuary (main cult room, by the altar), 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano – Terme di Diocleziano (inv. 359912).

This monument bears a prayer engraved on the four sides.

Domine ae | terne ro | gat te Casce | l(l)ia Ele[g]ans || per misericor | diam
tuam [pro] | se et pro suos (!) o | mnes (!) quomo | do tu hibus (!) c[r]i |
atoribus (!) mise | rtus es rogat te || aeter[ne] per te[r] | ram et marem (!) |
divinum per | quidquid [b]oni | creasti per sal | et seminata sac(ra) | et mi et
meis ro | g[o] eis miserearis || per tuam pi | etatem per | legem vivam | per
creatur(as) | aeterne te propitium || pro me[o] comser | vo (!) et pro nata ||
mea et pro domi | no meo Primo || et C(a)elia patro | ni domine

This inscription is currently interpreted as a prayer made by *Cascellia* to a *Dominus Aeternus*. We report here the translation made by A. Mastrocique (see Mastrocique 2017, p. 303).

Eternal Lord, Cascellia Elegans begs you, in the name of your mercifulness, in favor of all her relatives! Considering that you were merciful with those creatures, she begs you, O Eternal One, in the name of earth and the divine sea; because of whatever good thing you have created, of salt and sacred sowed fields, I beg you to be merciful with me and my relatives, thanks to your compassion and the living law, and the creatures, O Eternal One; be favorable also with the slave who lives with me, with my daughter, with my master Primus, and with Caelia, patrons of mine, O Lord!

References: Panciera 1979a (pp. 97-108); AE 1980, 51; Mussies 1982; Lissi Caronna 1986 (pp. 43-4); Friggeri 2001 (p. 182); Di Giacomo 2012d; Mastrocique 2017 (pp. 303-5); EDR077488 (S. Orlandi).

156.* *Mitreo dell’Ospedale San Giovanni sul Celio*. This Mithraic sanctuary (1 room) was discovered and excavated in 1974 in the garden of the Ospedale S. Giovanni Addolorata on the *Caelius*.

The main cult room was located in a former cistern, a room belonging to the utility rooms serving a nearby urban villa. In the second half of the 3rd century CE the devotees converted this room in a Mithraeum: two benches were built against the long sides with a narrow ledge marking their upper rim. Two square bases were incorporated at the end of each bench: they were probably bases for statues (the right one preserved a circular trace on top). A semi-circular niche cut in the right bench is recognizable from the plan and the photos, but it was not mentioned in the reports. The left bench was shorter because it had to make space for the access door. The room had vaulted ceiling and white mosaic floor. The cult image was painted on the eastern wall. Against the same wall a low and narrow shelf was built. The materials recovered in the excavation indicate a last frequentation of the room at the beginning of the 4th century CE.

References: Scrinari 1979; Scrinari 1995 (pp. 131-138); LTUR.III (p. 261).

156a.* Traces of a fresco representation of the tauroctony were noted at the moment of the discovery on the eastern wall. The fresco was painted on a quite thin mortar layer. The head of a young male was recognized. It was framed by dark and curly

hair and crowned by a *nimbus*. The figure raises his right arm, while his left leg insists on a dark mass pressed to the ground. Red drops fall to the ground.

References: Scrinari 1979 (pp. 223-4); Scrinari 1995 (p. 132).

157. White marble relief found in the mid-16th century in Ascanio Magarozzi's vineyard on the Caelius, near S. Stefano Rotondo. Some years later it was transferred in the collection of Ottaviano Zeno and at the beginning of the 19th century it became part of the Borghese collection. It was then dismantled: the fragments with the torchbearers ended in Paris, where they are currently preserved (Louvre Museum, inv. 287a-b), the tauroctony scene in Sao Paulo (Museu de Arqueologia e Etnologia of Sao Paulo University, inv. 76/3.141), while the upper part is still missing.

Vermaseren suggested that this relief could come from the supposed Mithraeum **154**, but there is no extant proof of this hypothesis. The general composition and subjects of the relief are known from drawings. The relief is divided in three sectors: a horizontal upper band, a vertical left band and a square central scene. In the central scene the tauroctony is represented: we can recognize Mithras, dressed in the usual eastern attire, who plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils with his left hand. The bull is pressed to the ground but it is fighting the god (raised foreleg). Two ears sprout from the tail of the animal. On the upper left corner, the raven watches the scene. The snake, the dog, and the scorpion can be seen at the usual places. Unusually, a lion squats beside the snake. A tree, an upward-pointed torch and the head of a bull can be recognized on the right of the scene, whereas on the left we can recognize a tree bearing fruits, a downward-pointed torch and a scorpion. In the left band Cautes (top) and Cautopates (below) are represented, both cross legged and dressed with the usual eastern attire. On the upper band we can recognize Sol, with radiate crown. He drives his chariot, which is pulled by four horses. On the left we can recognize Luna, with crescent crown, who drives her chariot pulled by two horses. Between them a sequence of seven flaming altars alternated with six daggers pointed to the ground is represented. Two figures stand at the beginning of the altars sequence and between the third and the fourth one. The first one is a naked male figure, standing in three quarter profile. His body is entwined in four spires by a snake whose head emerges from behind the figure's shoulder. The second one is a naked male figure, standing frontal: his body is similarly entwined by a snake in four spires. He has a pair of wings and he holds a long scepter in his right.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 70); Lanciani 1908 (p. 74); Colini 1944 (p. 48); CIMRM 335; Vermaseren 1978 (with further references); Mangiafesta 2015 (p. 478).

158. Mitreo di San Clemente. This Mithraic sanctuary (5 rooms) was discovered and excavated in several investigations from the mid-19th century to the 1990s'. The Mithraic sanctuary was located in five semi-subterranean rooms previously used as *nymphaeum* and *cryptoporticus* of a *domus*. In the last decades of the 2nd century CE these rooms were isolated from the rest of the building and became a Mithraic sanctuary, and a new mortar layer covered all the walls of the re-purposed rooms. The devotees could access the Mithraeum from the street level through stair S. From stair S, corridor CE led on the left to the main cult room M whereas on the right to room AM (which then led to room PM) and finally to room SM. In the main cult room two benches were built against the long sides. Their upper surface sloped

toward the walls. They hosted a narrow ledge along their upper rims which were also indented by semi-circular niches (two on the left one, three on the right one). Two rectangular niches (one per bench) were cut at ground level in the fronts of the benches. Two steps were built against their eastern front. While the left bench extended to reach the western wall, the right one stopped against a low wall just 90 cm from it. A square base was built between the eastern wall and the beginning of the right bench, and a low shelf was placed between the same wall and the beginning of the left bench. Small rectangular niches were cut in the wall above those structures. A structure consisting in two masonry steps was built against the western wall and a niche was cut in the wall just above it. A small square enclosure was built on its right. This space was closed on top with a *bipedalis* brick. Two bases (one square and one circular) were built in front of this device. The central aisle was paved with a simple lime floor. The room inherited the decoration of the vault from the previous phase: the pumice decoration and the mosaic bands were in fact laid at the end of the 1st century CE, as well as all of the skylights. The side walls were then stripped of the marble slabs and painted in large red bands. The benches were covered in white marble in correspondence of the niches and plastered in red stucco for the rest. Traces of red and yellow bands are partially visible on the back wall. In the corridor between the main cult room and room AM the shaft of a broken red granite column was placed in axis with the cult niche. Room AM was accessible through a triple-arched door: brick pillars were replaced with marble ones, topped by composite capitals. A low bench was built against three sides of the room. From AM a door lead to little room PM. The decorations on the vaults of room AM and SM (marbles, stuccoes, frescoes and shells) belonged to the previous building phase. Also in rooms PM and SM low benches were built along the side walls. A mosaic floor made with oblong white and black stone tassels paved room SM. In the center of this floor there was a square base, maybe for an altar or statue. Traces of painted decoration were here preserved (see **158f**) and the benches were painted red. In the 4th century the Christians occupied the nearby building where they placed a church dedicated to San Clemente. It seems possible that with the Christian intervention the Mithraeum was closed up: the entrance to the main cult room was in fact found walled-up, and pieces of the altar were re-used in a flooring layer dated in the 4th century CE.

References: De Rossi 1863; De Rossi 1870a; De Rossi 1870b (pp. 153-68); TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 19); Cumont 1915; Nolan 1914 (pp. 236-50); Junyent 1928; CIMRM 338; Guidobaldi 1992 (pp. 21-35, 71-94); Bragantini 1992; LTUR.III (pp. 257-259); Guidobaldi et al. 2004; ThesCRA (p. 278, n. 20); Provinciali et al. 2010; ATLAS (p. 318).

158a. Parian marble altar (h. 112 cm) with reliefs on the four sides and inscription on top, 2nd century CE. Currently preserved *in situ*.

The altar consists of four side panels and a top one: the four sides were discovered in the excavations of the 19th century among the debris in corridor CE, while the top part was discovered in the 1914 re-used in a later flooring layer in room AM. On the front panel we can recognize the tauroctony scene: Mithras in the cave, dressed in the usual eastern attire, plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull. The snake and the dog, at the usual place, run to leap the bull's blood. The scorpion also at the usual place pinches the bull's testicles. The raven looks at the scene, perched on the margin of the cave. Out of the cave, in the top left corner we recognize the bust of Sol, with radiate crown, whereas in the opposite corner the

bust of Luna. On the right panel we can recognize Cautes, dressed in the usual attire, holding the upward pointed torch with both hands. On the left panel we have Cautopates, similarly dressed, holding the downward pointed torch with both hands. On the fourth panel we can recognize a snake. The altar was topped by another marble slab, which hosted the dedicatory inscription:

Cn(aeus) Arrius Claudianus | pater posuit

The *pater Cnaeus Arrius Claudianus* set up.

At the four corners of this upper slab, four young male heads are sculpted. Vermaseren identified them as personifications of the four winds whereas Cumont as the four seasons.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 19f); Nolan 1914 (p. 238-43); Cumont 1915 (pp. 207-10); AE 1915, 98; CIMRM 339-340; Guidobaldi 1992 (p. 29); EDR072737 (M. Serra).

158b. Cylindrical marble base (h. 40 cm) with inscription, found in room M in the 19th century excavations. Currently preserved in room SM.

The cylindrical base is cave. It could have supported a statue of the Mithraic torchbearer. On its front a dedicatory inscription was engraved:

Caute | sacr(um)

Consecrated to *Cautes*.

References: de Rossi 1870a (p. 126); de Rossi 1870b (p. 159); CIL VI 748; ILS 4255; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 64; *mon. fig.* 19e); Nolan 1914 (p. 244); Cumont 1915 (p. 209); CIMRM 341.

158c. White marble statue (h. 63 cm) found in the 19th century excavations. Currently preserved *in situ*.

The statue features Mithras *Petrogenitus*, born from the rock. The god is represented with the body of an adolescent male, naked except for the Phrygian hat. He rises from the rock from the knees up, frontal, his arms adherent to the bust but with stretched out forearms. His hands are lost.

References: de Rossi 1870a (pp. 126-7); TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 19c); CIMRM 344.

158d. Fragments of the statues of the Mithraic torchbearers were reported in the 19th century excavations, but they are currently lost.

References: de Rossi 1870a (p. 127); TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 19d); CIMRM 342.

158e. A bust of Sol was found in room M, just on the right of the entrance, in the 19th century excavations. Currently lost.

The bust features the head of a male figure with wavy hair. He looks to the left. On the back of the head seven holes were found: they were meant possibly to insert bronze rays.

References: Nolan 1914 (p. 244); Cumont 1915 (pp. 210-211); CIMRM 343.

158f.* Frescoes were painted on the walls of room SM, 180-200 CE. Currently preserved *in situ*.

All the figures were painted on a thick layer of mortar which covers the decorations belonging to the previous phase. The first two subjects can be dated between 180 and 200 CE, whereas the other two, even if they cannot be dated with certainty, are surely contemporary to the Mithraic installation.

In the centre of the southern wall we can recognize a male figure (h. 47 cm) with short beard. He is dressed in a short white tunic with vertical red stripes. A large red cloth lays on his shoulder and is wrapped across his chest. A red band encircles his temples. The figure walks to the left while holding in his right hand an unidentifiable object. It seems possible that this figure represents a *mystagogus*, on the base of similarities with the Capua frescoes (see **113c**). On the right corner of the southern wall, a female semi-naked figure is represented, leaning. On the left part of the western wall we can recognize a female figure, dressed in a white tunic with yellow margin. Her hair is combed and parted on the forehead, and a thin white band encircles her head. A little Eros with light blue wings flies toward her offering a red crown. She seems to be sacrificing to an altar. On the left of the eastern wall, a male figure leaning is represented. His proportion is bigger than the previous figures.

References: Guidobladi 1992 (p. 84); Bragantini 1992.

159. Some underground rooms were found in 1668 at 50 m from the *Colosseum*. They consisted in five rooms opened on a long corridor. These rooms were floored with marbles and their walls were covered with frescoes. In one of them a fresco representation of the tauroctony was reported and copied. It survived thank to three English copies. The fresco represents the usual tauroctony scene: Mithras, dressed in yellow garments, yellow cap and red flying cloak, plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the grey bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The hooves of the rampant bull end in fins as it is usual for the marine creatures (a mistake of the modern copyist in Lanciani's opinion). Sol rides his chariot which is pulled by three horses. He holds a blue globe in his left hand. The god is unusually positioned on the top right corner of the scene. The raven is recognizable on the left of Sol and on top of Mithras. Beside the bull, the snake is recognizable whereas the scorpion is not visible. At the bottom right corner of the scene a reclined bearded figure is pictured: he is an elder man with a beard. He holds in his right hand a vessel from which water flows and in his left hand an oar. He wears a crown of green leaves. Cautes can be recognized on the left: he stands cross-legged, dressed only in orange Phrygian hat and red cloak. He holds his torch in both hands and he is unusually naked.

References: Lanciani 1895 (pp. 178-179); Ashby 1914 (p. 19); CIMRM 337; LTUR.III (p. 260).

160. Fragment of relief (27x24x8 cm) with tauroctony representation found in 1891 near S. Pietro in Vincoli (former Reale Scuola di Applicazione degli Ingegneri). Currently lost.

Only the lower left corner of the relief was found. It survives thanks to the description by S. Ricci who recognized the lower part of a torchbearer, the lower part of Mithras and the body of the bull, the scorpion and part of the snake. On the lower band of the relief part of a dedicatory inscription was recognizable:

D(eo) S(oli) I(nvicto) Tib[erius ---]

To the unconquered god Sol. *Tiberius* ...

References: Ricci 1891 (p. 205); Cumont MMII (*mon. fig.* 19bis); CIMRM 364-365; LTUR.III (p. 260).

161. White marble relief (120x80 cm) found at the end of the 18th century near S. Lucia in Selci. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani - Museo Chiaramonti (inv. MV 1379).

The relief represents the usual tauroctony scene. In the centre, inside the cave, Mithras plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. Three ears sprout from the tail of the bull. The scorpion, the snake and the dog can be found at the usual places. The raven is perched on the rocky margin of the cave on the left, and it flies toward Mithras. The torchbearers flank the scene: Cautopates on the left and Cautes on the right. On the top left corner, we can recognize the bust of Sol with radiate crown, while on the opposite one the bust of Luna with crescent on her forehead. On top of the arched profile of the cave, six flaming altars are represented, alternated with trees. Seven flaming altars are represented also on the lower part of the relief, under the body of the snake. Seven stars are represented inside the cave, beside Mithras' head.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 13); CIMRM 368; Vermaseren 1982 (pl. XXII); Mangiafesta 2015 (pp. 477-8).

162. *Mitreo di via Giovanni Lanza/S. Martino ai Monti.* This Mithraic sanctuary (1 room) was discovered and excavated in 1885. It consisted of a single subterranean room, formerly used as a cellar, accessible from the street level through two flights of stairs. On both sides of the landing separating the two flights of stairs, a small niche was cut in the wall: it hosted a torchbearer statue (**162b-c**). The cult room was rectangular and covered with a vaulted ceiling. On the wall on the left of the entrance, the cult relief (**162a**) was displayed on a marble shelf. Seven *foculi* were placed in front of the relief¹⁵² and two small vessels too (one at each extremity of the shelf). Other four holes were cut in the same wall: they were possibly slots for wooden beams that sustained another shelf in a previous phase. At the moment of the discovery these holes hosted clay lamps. In front of the relief stood a square base, which consisted of a re-used architectural element. On top of it an Ionic capital was placed upside-down. A little basin was cut on top of it. This piece was possibly reused as an altar.

References: Visconti 1885 (pp. 36-8); TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 15); CIMRM 356; Gallo 1979a; Guidobaldi 1986 (pp. 194-8); LTUR.III (p. 260); ThesCRA (p. 279, n. 34); Sfameni 2012 (pp. 121-3); Sfameni 2014 (pp. 52-6).

162a. White marble relief (44x33x8 cm), late 2nd – early 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Capitolini (Centrale Montemartini deposit, inv. S2976). The relief features the usual tauroctony scene. The cave consists of a smooth band projecting from the upper rim of the slab. In the center of the scene we can recognize Mithras, dressed in his usual attire. The god grasps the bull by the nostrils with his

¹⁵² Visconti reported seven 'foculi o pirei', reported also in the drawing of the Mithraeum. This term indicates small mobile braziers (Vermiglioli 1824, *Lezioni elementari di Archeologia*). Cumont reported '*retrouvé les restes de sept torches de sapin recouvert de goudron, qui avaient brûlé en son honneur ainsi que deux petits vases.*' (Cumont TMM2, p. 200), so seven pine torches; Gallo 1979 and Sfameni 2012 followed Cumont's report.

left hand while he plunges a long and thin sword in the shoulder of the animal. The bull is pressed to the ground, his body long and stretched. A single ear sprouts from its tail. The head of the bull is twisted upward by Mithras, the mouth slightly open, teeth visible. It seems that the artisan miscalculated the perspective and represented horn and ear on both side of the head of the bull. The dog, the snake and the scorpion can be seen at the usual places. On the top left corner, we can recognize the bust of Sol, with radiate crown. The raven is represented between Sol and Mithras: it flies toward Mithras with its wings spread. On the opposite corner the bust of Luna is represented. Her head emerges from a crescent. Traces of polichromy are recognizable: Mithras' cloak and anaxyrides are now pinkish, the faces of Mithras, Sol and Luna are golden.

References: Visconti 1885 (p. 37); CIMRM 357; Pietrangeli 1951 (p. 28); Papini 2005b; Ensoli 2000a.

162b. White marble statue (h. 34 cm), late 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Capitolini (Centrale Montemartini deposit, inv. S2975).

The statue represents Cautopates, dressed in the usual attire, standing cross-legged. He holds his torch with both hands.

References: Visconti 1885 (p. 36); CIMRM 358; Pietrangeli 1951 (p. 27); Ensoli 2000b; Guglielmi 2007b.

162c. White marble statue (h. 25 cm), 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Capitolini (Centrale Montemartini deposit, inv. S2985).

The statue represents Cautopates, dressed in the usual attire, standing cross-legged. He holds his torch with both hands. The head, right arm and part of the torch are missing. Beside his feet an owl is represented.

References: Visconti 1885 (p. 36); CIMRM 359; Pietrangeli 1951 (p. 28); Ensoli 2000c; Guglielmi 2007c.

163. Lower part of marble chandelier (h. 64 cm) with inscription found in 1875 on the Esquiline hill between S. Eusebio church and S. Vito church, 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Capitolini (Centrale Montemartini deposit, inv. S971/NCE2395).

On a triangular base, a cylindrical vertical support stands, decorated in imitation of a palm tree shaft. A dedicatory inscription was engraved on the three sides of the base.

T(itus) Aelius Iustus || Invicto Mithrae || d(ono) d(edit)

Titus Aelius Iustus gave as a gift to the unconquered Mithras.

References: Lanciani 1875 (p. 248); CIL VI 3722 = CIL VI 31037; TMM2 (*Inscr.* 73); Pietrangeli 1951 (p. 11); CIMRM 363; LTUR III (p. 261); SupplIt Imagines - Roma I 2219; EDR121721 (G. Crimi).

164. *Mitreo di piazza Dante.* The following four Mithraic monuments were found in 1874 in the area of Piazza Dante. They were intentionally buried in the past and carefully covered with tiles. Relief **164a** was buried with the sculpted face downward, and on top of it statue **164b** was deposited. The two smaller reliefs **164c** and **164d** were found together with these monuments. They were stolen and later

on retrieved by the Archaeological Commission of the Municipality of Rome. The monuments were discovered in a long room (20x6 m ca.) floored with white mosaic. A perpendicular corridor was detected, branching from the south-west corner of this room. C.L. Visconti excluded a Mithraic purpose for the room these pieces were found in: he detected no typical Mithraic architecture. We signal in the vicinity of this context the existence of a small bath complex dated to the beginning of the 4th century CE. These structures belonged to the area of the *Horti Lamiani*.

References: Visconti 1874; CIMRM 349; Cima 1986 (p. 58); LTUR III (p. 261); Castillo 2015 (p. 407).

164a. White marble relief (92x125x8,5 cm), 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Capitolini (Centrale Montemartini deposit, inv. S1205).

A marble slab (possibly a former wall slab) was re-used to represent three Mithraic subjects. In the upper part we can recognize the tauroctony scene, whereas in the bottom section two initiatory scenes were represented. A dedicatory inscription was engraved under the major scene:

G [[P]] P | Primus pater fecit

GOP, the *pater Primus* made.

The tauroctony scene was framed by the cave ceiling and by a palm tree on each side. Inside the cave Mithras, dressed in the usual attire, plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. Ears sprout from the tail of the animal. The snake, the dog (with collar) and the scorpion can be recognized at the usual places. The raven observes the scene perched on the palm tree on the left. The torchbearers flank the scene: Cautopates on the left and Cautes on the right. They are dressed as usual and stand cross-legged, holding their torches with both hands. On the top left corner of the relief we can recognize the bust of Sol with radiate crown. A single ray departs from him to reach Mithras inside the cave. Just under Sol, another little bust is sculpted: it features a male head. On the opposite corner a similar bust can be recognized, and just above it the bust of Luna with crescent crown.

In the lower part of the relief, we can recognize (from the left to the right):

a) A male figure stands on the left, dressed in eastern attire. He holds in his right hand a pointed object, possibly a bundle of lightning bolts, and he puts his left hand on the head of a second person. This second figure is again a male, completely naked (except possibly for a small cloak on his shoulders). He kneels in front of the first man. It seems possible to interpret this scene as the submission of Sol to Mithras.

b) There are again two male figures, both standing and looking at each other. The left one is dressed in eastern attire, with Phrygian hat, while the right one is dressed in a similar attire but he does not wear a hat and is bearded. Between the two figures a square altar is represented. The man on the left puts his left hand above the altar, while he passes a pointed object to the other figure. The second man puts his right hand above the altar and holds his left one against his body.

Traces of polychromy were reported at the moment of the discovery of this relief. The style used to engrave the figures is quite linear: the subjects result thus sketched and lacking depth. It resembles the technique used in relief **101a**.

References: Visconti 1874 (pp. 228-39); TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 43; *mon. fig.* 16); CIL VI 3730 = CIL VI 31048; Pietrangeli 1951 (p. 18); CIMRM 350-351, 355; SupplIt Imagines - Roma 01, 2203; Castillo 2015 (pp. 407-8). EDR121742 (G. Crimi).

164b. White marble statue (h. 80 cm), 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Capitolini (Centrale Montemartini deposit, inv. S915).

This group features the tauroctony scene. Mithras is dressed in his usual attire: *anaxyrides*, short sleeved tunic, short cloak fixed on the right shoulder with a circular brooch, and Phrygian cap. The god is pressing gently his left knee on the bull. His right leg is stretched and his foot rests on the bull right hind leg. Mithras grasps the left horn of the bull with his left hand. The right one is missing but the orientation of the arm suggests the usual direction toward the shoulder of the animal. The god faces upward, over his right shoulder. Resting on Mithras' side is the sheath of the triangular dagger, with the folded weapon within it. A slim snake is visible creeping on the ground beside the bull. There is no trace of the scorpion nor of the dog. The bull is not pressed on or collapsed to the ground: it resists Mithras' push with the left foreleg at a right angle. A narrow depression on the bull's shoulder indicates the place for the insertion of Mithras' dagger, but no trace of the blood spilling from the wound is visible.

References: Visconti 1874 (pp. 239-41); TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 17); Pietrangeli 1951 (p. 21); CIMRM 352; Guglielmi 2007a; Castillo 2015 (p. 407).

164c. White marble relief (29x29x3 cm), 3rd-4th century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Capitolini (Centrale Montemartini deposit, inv. S2327).

A marble square slab features the figure of Mithras *Petrogenitus*. The god is represented with the body of a young child. His belly is round with the navel well evident. He stands hieratically frontal, emerging from the rock from the thighs up. He is naked except for the Phrygian cap. His forearms are outstretched: Mithras holds in his right hand a dagger and in his left a flaming torch.

On the reverse of the slab an inscription was engraved. It reads:

GOP | Primus pater fecit

GOP, the *pater Primus* made.

References: Visconti 1874 (p. 241); TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 18a); Pietrangeli 1951 (p. 19); CIMRM 353; Castillo 2015 (p. 408).

164d. White marble relief (25,5x29,5x3 cm), 3rd-4th century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Capitolini (Centrale Montemartini deposit, inv. S2326).

A marble square slab features the bust of Sol. The god is dressed in a sleeved tunic, belted on the chest. A cloak is pinned on his right shoulder with a circular brooch. His right hand is raised in a gesture of greeting, while in the left one he holds a sphere. Behind the sphere Sol's whip is recognizable. He wears a radiate crown. A circular incision emphasizes the crown giving the impression of a halo. Traces of polichromy are preserved: the hair of the god is yellow, the cloak is red.

On the reverse of the slab an inscription was engraved. It reads:

GOP | Primus pater fecit

GOP, the *pater Primus* made.

References: Visconti 1874 (p. 242); TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 18b); Pietrangeli 1951 (p. 21); CIMRM 354; Castillo 2015 (p. 408).

165. Altar with inscription found on the Esquiline hill (near SS. Pietro e Marcellino church), 68-117 CE. Currently lost.

Soli | Invicto Mithrae | T(itus) Flavius Aug(usti) lib(ertus) Hyginus |
Ephebianus | d(ono) d(edit) | Ἡλίωι Μίθραι | Τ(ίτους) Φλάουιος Ὑγεῖνος |
διὰ Λολλίου Ῥούφου | πατρὸς ἰδίου

To Sol unconquered Mithras. *Titus Flavius Hyginus Ephebianus*, freedman of the *Augustus*, gave as a gift. To Sol Mithras. *Titus Flavius Hyginus* (gave as a gift) while *Lollius Rufus* was *pater*.

References: CIL VI 732; IG XIV 996; IGR I 77; IGUR I 179; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 66); CIMRM 362; McCrum and Woodhead 1961 (p. 69); Weaver 1964b (p. 124); Gordon 1978 (pp. 151-3); LTUR III (p. 261); Mastrocinque 2017 (pp. 187-8); EDR106137 (G. Tozzi).

166. White marble statue (h. 135 cm) found in the mid-19th century near the Scala Santa. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani – Museo Gregoriano Profano (former Museo Laterano inv. 343).

The group rests on a quite heavy base, roughly cut in the resemblance of the floor of the Mithraic cave. Mithras, dressed in his usual eastern attire, plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The bull is pressed to the ground, and from its tail five ears sprout. The dog and the snake and the dof can be found at the usual place. The surface of the statue is quite rough.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 20); CIMRM 370.

167. Marble base (h. 95 cm) with inscription found in 1655 on the foothill of the Esquiline hill, second half of the 4th century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani (Galleria Lapidaria, inv. MV 9272).

Triangular marble base with inscription on the front side. On top of the base a smaller circular base is set: it supported a statue.

D(eo) Arimanio | Agrestius v(ir) c(larissimus) | defensor | magister et | pater
patrum | voti c(ompos) d(edit)

To the god Arimanius. *Agrestius*, *vir clarissimus*, *defensor*, *magister* and *pater patrum*, gave after the fulfillment of his vow.

References: CIL VI 47; ILS 4263; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 27); CIMRM 369; Thrans 1972 (pp. 165-6); Hertz 1982; AE 1982, 42; Cecconi 1994 (pp. 190-1); Marroni 2010 (p. 65); EDR078374 (G. Almagno, I. Grossi).

168. Cylindrical marble base (h. 16,5 cm) with inscription found possibly on the Esquiline hill, late 2nd – early 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano (inv. 125639).

S[oli] I(nvicto) M(ithrae) | et sodalicio eius | actores de foro suario | quorum
nomina | [[[-----]]] | [[[-----]]]

To Sol unconquered Mithras and to his companion(s). The agents of the *forum suarium*
named ...

References: CIL VI 3728 = CIL VI 31046; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 58); CIMRM 361; LTUR III (p. 261);
Chioffi 1999 (pp. 41-3); EDR157670 (C. Martino).

169.* *Mitreo di via Passalacqua.* This Mithraic sanctuary (2 rooms) was discovered and excavated in 1928 at the corner between via Passalacqua and via Statilia. The Mithraic devotees occupied two subterranean rooms of previous unknown function. A stair led from the street level to the antechamber. Here, three niches were cut high in the walls and a central skylight was placed in the middle of the vaulted ceiling. The main cult room was accessible through an arched door. It also was covered with a vaulted ceiling. A small niche with projecting ledge was cut in the left corner, while a bench was built against the right side of the room. An arched niche in the back wall hosted the cult image, which was painted. A smaller rectangular niche on its left possibly hosted lamps. The scarce materials recovered in the excavation indicate that the frequentation of the shrine ended in the first half of the 4th century CE.

References: Beilelli and Messineo 1994; LTUR.III (p. 259); ThesCRA (p. 279, n. 33).

169a.* Traces of a fresco representation were recognized at the moment of the discovery within the cult niche. The discoverer noted the representation of a male figure, standing on a blue field. He wore a red cloak and a red Phrygian hat. The figure held a lit torch pointed to the ground. Above his head a round red trace was perceivable. Another figure with red cloak was represented on the right. These traces could possibly be the remnants of a tauroctony scene. Only Cautopates seems recognizable. On his right the red cloak could be that of Mithras, while the red round object above the torchbearer's head could indicate the location where the bust of Sol was represented.

References: Beilelli and Messineo 1994 (p. 73).

169b.* A crater (h. 21,5 cm) covered with a brownish glaze was found in the excavation of the antechamber, late 4th – 5th century CE. The vessel had spiraling handles, one of which was preserved, and it showed on the external surface the representation of four of the twelve Labors of Heracles. The subjects were not obtained from a matrix, but were realized by hand and then applied to the surface of the crater. The represented scenes are: Heracles slaying the Nemean Lion, Heracles and the Cerynitian Hind, Heracles and the Lernaean Hydra, Heracles and defeating Antaeus. It seems possible to attribute this peculiar creation to the Late Antique glazed pottery production active in the second half of the 4th and well in the 5th century CE in Rome.

References: Paroli 1992 (p. 346-7); Beilelli and Messineo 1994 (pp. 78-82); Sagui 2004 (pp. 171); Coletti 2012 (pp. 186-7); Martini 2015 (pp. 67-8).

170. Travertine relief (90x178 cm) found in 1862 in Rome (via S. Agata 2, corner of via Baccina), 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Capitolini (Centrale Montemartini deposit, inv. S1204/NCE2407).

This relief was found buried upside-down under the gate of Mr. Chiocca's house, during some renovation works. The relief is sculpted on a long travertine slab, possibly a re-used architectural element. In the center of the scene we can recognize Mithras, dressed in his usual attire, who plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The bull is pressed to the ground; ears sprout from its tail. Its body is wrapped in a band (*dorsuale*). At the usual places we can recognize the scorpion, the snake and the dog. The raven, perched on the rocky margin of the cave, flies toward Mithras. The two torchbearers flank the scene: Cautopates on the left and Cautes on the right. They are both cross-legged and they hold their torch with both hands. On the right of Cautopates, the bust of Sol is represented on top of the margin of the cave. He wears a radiate crown and one of its rays is prolonged to reach Mithras. Inside the cave, on the left of Mithras a tall palm tree is represented. On the right, the bust of Luna emerging from a crescent is represented just above Mithras' left arm.

On the top band of the relief a dedicatory inscription was engraved:

Deo sancto I(nvicto) M(ithrae) sacrathis (!) d(onum) p(osuerunt) Placidus
Marcellinus leo antis{ti}tes et Guntha leo

To the holy unconquered Mithras (and) for the initiated devotees, *Placidus Marcellinus leo* and *antistes* and *Guntha leo* set up as a gift.

References: CIL VI 737 = CIL VI 30824; ILS 4210; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 45; *mon. fig.* 14); Pietrangeli 1951 (p. 17); CIMRM 366-367; SupplIt Imagines - Roma I 2202; EDR121741 (G. Crimi).

171. Fragmentary white marble relief (70x50x6 cm) found in 1928 in a cellar of Palazzo del Grillo. Currently lost.

This relief was in the mid-20th century in possession of the Comtesse de Robilant and it survives only through Vermaseren's description. Only the right part of the relief was found, Vermaseren recognized the foremost part of the bull, the figure of Cautes and the bust of Luna.

References: CIMRM 375.

172. Marble base (h. 7 cm) with inscription found in via Mazzarino, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Istituto Archeologico Germanico.

This oval base was found in the late 19th century CE 'in mithraeo exiguo' in via Mazzarino. An oval depression is excavated on the top surface. On the front of the base a dedicatory inscription was engraved:

T(itus) Camurenus Phil | adelfus Invicto | Mithrae d(ono) d(dedit) per |
No(nium) Fyrmum pa(trem)

Titus Camurenus Philadelphus gave as a gift to the unconquered Mithras while *Nonius Firmus* was *pater*.

References: CIL VI 31039; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 32); CIMRM 377; Neudecker and Granino Cecere 1997 (pp. 147-148); EDR178241 (E. Radelli).

173. *Mitreo di San Vitale*. A room containing the statue **173a** was found at the end of the 16th century CE between the *Quirinalis* and *Viminalis* hill, in the vineyard of

Mr. Muti on the, just opposite S. Vitale church, as reported by F. Vacca. Here, a base supported the statue of a Mithraic Aion (see **173a**). A number of clay lamps were found on site, all with their nozzle pointed to the statue. Later on, a relief with similar subject (see **173b**) was found in the same area. The exact find-spot of this room is currently unknown.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 10); Lanciani 1908 (p. 200); CIMRM 381; Rossetti 2004 (pp. 373-5).

173a. Statue (h. 112 cm) of Mithraic Aion. Currently lost (it was lost not long after its discovery).

The statue survives thanks to the description by F. Vacca and to a drawing made by P. Sante Bartoli on the base of Vacca's memories. A naked male figure with lion head stood on a globe. His body was encircled by a snake in three spires. The snake rested its head on the lion head (Vacca reported that the snake entered the mouth of the figure, but it does not seem likely). The figure had four wings. He kept his hands pressed on the chest, and hold a key in both hands.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 10a); CIMRM 382; Rossetti 2004 (pp. 375-7, fig. 2); Bortolin 2012 (p. 211).

173b. White marble relief (66,5x74 cm) found in the same area of **173a**, 140-195 CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Gardens of Palazzo Colonna.

The relief features a male figure with lion head standing bare-chested and wearing a thin cloth around hips and legs. His arms are stretched and he holds a lit torch in each hand. From his open mouth a flaming breath reaches a circular altar placed beside his feet, setting it on fire. Two pair of open wings can be recognized on his back. They swarm with snakes.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 10b); CIMRM 383; Rossetti 2004 (pp. 377-9); Bortolin 2012 (pp. 229-30).

174. *Mitreo dei Nummi Albinii*. This Mithraic sanctuary was discovered and excavated in 1886. It was located in some subterranean rooms previously used as a cellar or storage room in the area of the *Nummi Albinii domus*. A larger corridor granted access to these subterranean rooms from the street level. A second smaller corridor (*cryptoporticus*) encircled five small parallel rooms. The second of those rooms constituted the main cult room, where the tauroctony fresco was found (see **174a**). It was accessible from the first room. Two phases of the Mithraic occupation can be recognized, based on the management of the cult image as well as of the flooring layers. A first arrangement comprehended an *opus signinum* flooring layer and a fresco representation of the tauroctony in the centre of the back wall of the room. In a second phase the floor was covered with black and white geometric mosaic, a bench was built against the left side of the room, and a stucco representation of the tauroctony replaced the former painted one. The ceiling of the room was painted in imitation of a natural cave.

References: Capannari 1886; TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 11); Santangelo 1941 (p. 153); CIMRM 388; LTUR.III (p. 362); ThesCRA (p. 279, n. 35).

174a. Fresco representation of the tauroctony depicted on the back wall of the Mithraeum, late 2nd – early 3rd century CE, currently lost.

The representation features the usual tauroctony scene. In the centre Capannari recognized Mithras, dressed in eastern attire, all in red, and caught in the usual act

of wounding the bull (the right hand of the god was not visible). A halo was represented around Mithras' head. Ears sprout from the tail of the grey bull. The yellow scorpion, the snake and the dark grey dog can be seen at the usual places, as well as the torchbearers. On the left Cautopates stood cross-legged dressed in orange Phrygian hat and shoes, red cloak, yellow tunic and brown trousers, whereas Cautes also cross-legged stood on the right, similarly dressed but with green trousers. Green traces behind Cautes could indicate the presence of a tree. Few traces remained of the bust of Sol on the top left corner, while on the opposite should have been the bust of Luna (not preserved).

References: Capannari 1886 (pp. 20-2), Cumont MMII (*mon. fig.* 11); CIMRM 386.

174b. Stucco relief with tauroctony scene. The relief was much ruined when the Mithraeum was discovered. Traces of the guide-lines and of the nails to attach the stucco relief on the wall of the cult niche were however recognized. This relief replaced the previous fresco representation in the second phase of the Mithraeum. It was placed on the back wall of the room and slightly moved to the right compared to the previous representation, to respect the new arrangement of the space determined by the building of the left bench.

References: Capannari 1886 (p. 23-4); CIMRM 387.

175. Mitreo di Palazzo Barberini. This Mithraic sanctuary (1 room) was discovered and excavated in 1936. The main cult room was located in a long underground room. In the second half of the 2nd century CE, with the Mithraic installation, a fresco representing the tauroctony was painted against the back wall of the room. This representation was framed by two vertical supports and a brickwork arch. The inside of the vault was decorated with pumice stones and shells, and on its front the zodiac symbols were frescoed. Three skylights opened in the low-vaulted ceiling of the room. Two benches were built against the long sides. In a second phase, at the beginning of the 3rd century CE, four pillars were built in the room, to sustain the weight of the upper levels. One of the four pillars partially covered the tauroctony fresco, while the others were incorporated in the new front of the left bench. The upper surface of these benches sloped toward the walls and was marked by a narrow ledge covered in white marble. Two small niches were cut in their front, one in each side: the left one was semi-circular, whereas the right one was square. Three steps led to the surface of the left bench. In a third phase two bases were built against the back wall, plastered and painted. Another square base was built just in front of these two. It supported a small masonry altar (h. 80 cm) covered with white marble slabs. It had a square hole piercing its entire width. Traces of fire were recognized in this hole: it possibly hosted a lamp. Another small square hole was cut in this structure, on its back.

References: Annibaldi 1938; Santangelo 1941 (p. 152); Gatti and Annibaldi 1945; CIMRM 389; LTUR.III (pp. 263-4); ThesCRA (p. 278, n. 23); ATLAS (pp. 458-9).

175a. A fresco representing the tauroctony scene was depicted on the back wall of the Mithraeum in the first phase of the sanctuary, second half of the 2nd century CE. Currently preserved *in situ*.

The fresco is organized in a larger central space, which features the tauroctony scene, framed by two vertical bands, featuring five scenes each. In the central scene we can recognize Mithras, dressed in the usual eastern attire, here in blue color,

with red flying cloak. Seven stars are painted inside his cloak, and others in gold and purple are painted all around the scene. The god plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal just under the jaw. The bull's pink body is pressed to the ground, and ears sprout from its tail. At the usual places we can recognize the scorpion (brown), the snake (brown and green) and the dog (light brown). The snake slithers on a blue layer. The raven is not visible. The torchbearers flank the scene: Cautes on the right (dressed in green with red cloak, standing on green ground) whereas Cautopates on the left (dressed in brown with red cloak, standing on brown ground). Just above the scene the zodiacal belt is depicted. The zodiacal signs are, from the right to the left: Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, Pisces. In the centre of the sequence a male figure is represented: he stands on a globe and his body is entwined in the coils of a snake. Above the zodiacal belt we can recognize the rocky ceiling of the cave and just above it seven flaming altars separated by little trees. On the top left corner there is the bust of Sol, with radiate crown. A single ray from Sol's crown reaches Mithras. On the opposite corner the bust of is represented.

On both sides of this major scene, five minor subjects are represented, framed by red bands.

On the left side we have (from top to bottom):

a) Juppiter, naked except for a red cloak, raises his right hand holding a lightning bolt in the act of throwing it to a figure with snake feet crouched before him. This subject represent Jupiter fighting the Giant(s).

b) A male figure half-wrapped in a cloak leans on his left elbow. It is possible to identify this scene with the Dream of Saturn.

c) Mithras is born from the rock. The god, dressed in the usual eastern attire, emerges from the rock from his waist up. He holds lit torches in his raised hands. The torchbearers flank him.

d) This fourth scene is quite evanescent. It seems possible to recognize Mithras on the left, standing and striking an arrow to the right. In front of him are two kneeling figures: one reaches toward Mithras, the other toward a vertical dark surface represented on the right. It seems possible to identify this scene with the so-called water miracle.

e) Even this fifth scene is quite evanescent. It seems possible to recognize the scheme typical of the *transitus* scene, with the god dragging the bull on his shoulders.

On the right side we have (from bottom up):

f) A male figure dressed in eastern attire stands in front of a knelt man, who is naked. The standing man holds in his right hand a small brown object raised toward the other figure while his left hand is put on the head of the other man. The knelt man is caught in the act of raising up and stretches his hands toward the first figure in a gesture of supplication. It seems possible to identify this scene with Sol knelt before Mithras.

g) Mithras stands with one knee to the ground and the other leg stretched. He reaches to grab the celestial vault with his right hand while with his left one he touches the ground.

h) Mithras (on the left) and Sol (on the right) stand before each other. Between them a cylindrical altar is placed. The two gods hold in their hand a long spit with

meat. It is possible to identify this scene with Mithras and Sol sacrificing at the altar.

i) Sol drives his chariot pulled by four horses. Mithras (almost entirely faded) is about to mount the *quadriga*. It is possible to recognize in this scene Mithras and Sol ascending the Heavens.

j) Six (or seven) people recline at a banquet; a small tripod is placed in front of the *mensa*. Mithras stands beside them, on the left.

Traces of a previous fresco can be recognized in the top right corner of the Mithraic representation. The previous depiction showed a blue background.

References: Annibaldi 1938 (p. 252); Gatti and Annibaldi 1945 (pp. 102-7); CIMRM 390.

175b. Two figures were painted also on the first pillar, directly on the brickwork. The first one is a standing man, dressed in red, with Phrygian hat, looking to the right. He keeps his left hand on the chest, while his right one is stretched to the right toward the second figure. This second figure is represented in profile, knelt, wearing a crown made with ivy. Both his hands are outstretched in the act of receiving something by the first one. This representation belongs at least to the second phase of the Mithraeum, which is from the 3rd century CE. It seems possible to interpret this scene as the depiction of an initiation ritual.

References: Gatti and Annibaldi 1945 (p. 107); CIMRM 393.

175c. A figure was painted also on the second pillar, directly on the brickwork. A standing male figure is represented. He is dressed in a short tunic and he holds in his hands fruit offerings. It seems possible to interpret this scene as the depiction of a devotee bringing offerings.

References: Gatti and Annibaldi 1945 (p. 108); CIMRM 394.

175d. A graffito was engraved on the left wall of the Mithraeum:

Macarius | Macarius

References: Gatti and Annibaldi 1945 (p. 108); CIMRM 395; Solin 1979 (pp. 140-1); Guarducci 1979a (p. 188); AE 1980, 59b; EDR161421 (A. Ferraro), EDR077496(A. Ferraro).

175e. A graffito was engraved on the left wall of the Mithraeum, just above the previous one.

Ascontio | sum

I am Ascontio.

References: Guarducci 1979a (p. 188).

175f. A graffito was engraved on the pillar on the right of the altar.

ΥΠΙΑΓΓΕΛΙΑΙ

References: Solin 1979 (pp. 141-2); Guarducci 1979a (pp. 187-8).

175g. A white marble slab (30x30 cm) with inscription was attached on the front of the right base built against the back wall of the Mithraeum, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved *in situ*.

Yperanthes | basem Inbicto | donum | dedit

Yperanthes gave as a gift (this) base to the Unconquered.

References: Gatti and Annibaldi 1945 (p. 102); AE 1948, 100; CIMRM 391; EDR073704 (A. Carapellucci).

176. Fragmentary white marble group (h. 115 cm) found at the end of the 19th century in via Rasella. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Capitolini (Centrale Montemartini deposit, inv. S1177).

The group stands on a trapezoidal base, sculpted such as to recall the rocky floor of a cave. Only the right foot of Mithras is preserved. The body of the bull is pressed to the ground: its right foreleg and left hind leg are folded under the body, the left foreleg stands at a right angle, and the right hind leg is stretched and pressed to the ground by Mithras' foot. The muzzle and the tail of the bull are missing. The scorpion, the snake and the dog (partially preserved) can be recognized at the usual places. A big round hole is visible on the back of the group.

References: BCom 1880 (p. 241), Cumont MMII (*mon. fig. 10bis*), Pietrangeli 1951 (p. 19); CIMRM 385.

177. Two fragmentary reliefs were signaled by F. Cumont, who saw them walled up in a house in via Boncompagni 101. They were probably found during the construction of the house or during other construction works in the complex. M. Vermaseren was not able to find them back in the 1950s'. They survive only thank to Vermaseren's report.

a) Only the lower part of this tauroctony group was found. F. Cumont recognized Mithras, the bull, and 'the usual animals'. The bull's body was wrapped in a large band.

b) Lower part of a tauroctony scene.

References: CIMRM 396.

178. The two following monuments were dedicated in the house of *Alfenius Ceionius Iulianus Kamenius*. Several arstructures belonging to this Late Antique domus had been discovered in the past centuries, but the general layout of the house remains quite disorganic.

References: Santangelo 1941 (p. 153); Guidobaldi 1986 (p. 213); LTUR II (pp. 119-20); Sfameni 2014 (p. 57).

178a.* Marble base (h. 130 cm) with inscription found in Rome (gardens of Palazzo Barberini by piazza delle Quattro Fontane), 374-380 CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Antiquarium del Celio (inv. 4793).

On the upper band of the base, it reads:

[Kamenii]

Staute of *Kamenius*.

On the major side of the base, it reads:

Alfenio Ceion[io I]uliano | Kamenio v(iro) c(larissimo) [q(uaestori)
k(andidato) pr]aetori | triumf(ali) VI[Iviro ep]ulonum | mag(istro) num(inis)
patr[i sac]rorum | summi Invic[ti M]ithrae {e}hiero | phantae Heca[ta]e
archibucolo | dei Liberi XV[vi]ro s(acris) f(aciundis) taurobo | liato deum
M[atri]s pontifici | maiori con[sul]ari Numidiae | iustitia eius e[st]
pr]ovisionibu[s] | confotis omnibus dioeces[EOS] | s[u]ae | Ianuarius [-]fidius
et I[-] | promoti cum [c]ollegis | officii statua[m] in d[omo] sub aere |
p[os]uer[unt]

To *Alfenius Ceionius Iulianus Kamenius*, vir clarissimus, candidate to the quaestorship, praetor of the triumphs, *septemvir epulonum*, magister of the numen, pater sacrorum of the highest and unconquered Mithras, hierophant of Hecate, *archibucolus* of the god Liber, *quindecemvir sacris faciundis*, *tauroboliatus* of the Mater Deum, higher priest (and) governor of the province of Numidia. On account of his justice and forethought, cherished by all the people he governed, *Ianuarius ...fidius* and ..., promoted together with the colleagues of his office, set up a bronze statue in (his) house.

References: Lanciani 1884 (pp. 43-44); CIL VI 41331 = CIL VI 31940; CCCA III 283; LSA 1569 (C. Machado); EDR093567 (A. Ferraro).

178b. Marble base (h. 112 cm) with inscription found in Rome, 374-380 CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Palazzo Barberini.

On the upper band of the base, it reads:

Kamenii

Staute of *Kamenius*.

On the major side of the base, it reads:

Alfenio Ceionio Iuliano | Kamenio v(iro) c(larissimo) q(uaestori)
k(andidato) praetori tri | umf(ali) VIIviro epulonum mag(istro) | p(atri)
s(a)c(rorum) summi Invicti Mitrai ier | fante Aecate arc(hi)b(ucolo) dei
Liberi XV | viro s(acris) e(aciundis) tauroboliato d(eum) M(atris) | pontifici
maiori consula | ri provinciae Numidiae | iustitiae eius provisioni | busq(ue)
confotis omnibus | dioceseos | [---] Gentilis PM Restutus cornicu | larius
cum cartularis officii statua[m] | in domo sub aere posuerunt

To *Alfenius Ceionius Iulianus Kamenius*, vir clarissimus, candidate to the quaestorship, praetor of the triumphs, *septemvir epulonum*, magister of the numen, pater sacrorum of the highest and unconquered Mithras, hierophant of Hecate, *archibucolus* of the god Liber, *quindecemvir sacris faciundis*, *tauroboliatus* of the Mater deum, higher priest (and) governor of the province of Numidia. On account of his justice and forethought, cherished by all the people he governed, the secretary *Gentilis PM Restitutus* together with the keepers of the archive of his office set up a bronze statue in (his) house.

References: CIL VI 1675; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 24); CIMRM 516; CCCA III 284; SupplIt Imagines - Roma V 5054; LSA 1392 (C. Machado); EDR149373 (A. Ferraro).

179. Marble altar found in 1873 in via XX Settembre. Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano – Terme di Diocleziano (inv. 125654).

Soli | Invicto | Mithrae | v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito) | S(extus) C(?)
I(?) | antistite | T(ito) Fl(avio) Ianuario

To Sol unconquered Mithras. *Sextus C.I.* vowed willingly and deservedly while *Titus Flavius Ianuarius* was *antistes*.

References: CIL VI 3724 = CIL VI 31041; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 50); CIMRM 631.

180. White marble slab (172x48x6 cm) with inscription found in 1925 in via Sicilia 180, 198-211 CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano – Terme di Diocleziano (inv. 106543).

Pro salute et reditum (!) | et victorias (!) imp(eratorum) Caess(arum) | L(uci)
Septimi Severi Pii Pertin(acis) | Aug(usti) Arab(ici) Adzab(enici) Part(hici)
Max(im)i | et M(arci) Aurel(i) Antonin(i) Aug(usti) | [[et P(ubli) Septimi
Gethe (!) Caes(aris)]] | [[fil(ii) et fratris]] Augustorum nn(ostrorum) |
totiusque domus divinae | deum Invict(um) Mithr(am) | Aurelius Zosimion
et | Aurelius Titus Augg(ustorum) lib(erti) | suis impendiis conlo | caverunt
item antrum | suis sumptibus | exstructum fecerunt | item consummatum |
consacraverunt

For the safety, the return, and the victory of the Emperors *Caesares Lucius Septimius Severus Pius Pertinax Augustus Arabicus Adiabenicus Parthicus Maximus* and *Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Augustus* and *Publius Septimius Geta Caesar* son and brother of our Augustii and for all of the divine family. *Aurelius Zosimion* and *Aurelius Titus*, freedmen of our Augusti, placed (a statue of) the unconquered god Mithras at their own expenses and built an *antrum* and, once it was furnished, they consecrated (it).

This inscription was found in the area of the *Horti Sallustiani*. Unfortunately, no architectural trace of the mentioned sanctuary has been preserved.

References: Mancini 1925 (pp. 48-9); AE 1926, 116; CIMRM 407; Hackethal 1968 (pp. 222-3); Palmer 1978 (pp. 1092-4); Mancini 1980 (p. 174); LTUR III (p. 264); Friggeri 2001 (p. 74); Crimi 2012; EDR073001 (M. Giovagnoli).

181. Fragment of white marble relief (15x20 cm) found in the end of the 19th century in the area of the *Castra Praetoria*. Currently preserved in Mannheim, Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen (inv. E45755).

Only one corner of the relief is preserved: it is sculpted on both faces. On one face, we can recognize some elements of the tauroctony scene: only the bottom left corner of the representation is preserved. We can recognize the rocky wall of the cave and the right leg of Mithras pressing the bull's hoof to the ground. Part of Mithras' flying cloak is visible. Three ears sprout from the tail of the bull. The scorpion can be seen at the usual place. On the opposite side of the relief, which constitutes the bottom right corner of the representation, we can recognize the banquet of Mithras and Sol. A figure dressed in a long-sleeved tunic and wrapped in a cloak pinned on his left shoulder leans on his left elbow, reclining on a couch. In front of him a drinking horn is represented. Even if the face of the figure is not preserved, his attire suggests to identify him with Mithras. The table he is reclining

at is made with the body of the bull: its head is well recognizable on the right. A small circular table stands in front of the two figures: loaves of bread are put on top of it. A sitting dog (with collar) is represented beside the table. Another drinking horn seems represented in front of it. The scene is framed on the right by a thin band, possibly a small column. On the right of this band, the figure of Cautopates, dressed in the usual attire, is represented. The torchbearer stands cross-legged and holds his torch with both hands. Just under the torchbearer, in the right corner of the relief, a male figure with raven head is represented. He stands, looking toward the banquet. He holds in his left hand a small circular object, while in his right one a drinking horn which he raises toward the banquet.

References: Cumont 1902 (pp. 10-13); CIMRM 397.

182. Marble inscription found in Rome, in the area of the *castra Praetoria*, early 3rd century CE. Currently lost.

Pro salute et reditu Imp(eratoris) Caes(aris) L(uci) Septim[i Severi Pii Pertinacis Aug(usti) et] | Imp(eratoris) Caesaris M(arci) Aureli Antonini Aug(usti) Pii [Felicitis et P(ubli) Septimi Getae totiusq(ue) domus] | divinae item cohortium pr[ae]toriarum [...] | deum [Invictum Solem] | procurantibus Hermete et Euphrata Augg(ustorum) lib(ertis) [...] | Q(uintus) Pompeius Primigenius pater et sacerdos huius loci cum [...] | feci(t) item sacrarium suis sumptibus cum deo a solo exornatum [...]pro] | victoriis Augg(ustorum) nn(ostrorum) inchoatum agente Nicephoro Augg(ustorum) lib(erto) adiut(ore) procc[ur]atoribus...

For the safety and the return of the Emperor Caesar Lucius Septimius Severus Pius Pertinax Augustus and of the Emperor Caesar Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Augustus Pius Felix and of Publius Septimius Getae and all of the *Domus divina* and the Praetorian corps. Under the management of *Hermes* and *Euphrata*, freedmen of the Augusti, *Quintus Pompeius Primigenius*, *pater* and priest of this place, together with ... , built this sacred place from the foundations at his own expenses with (an image) of the god ... and furnished it. For the victories of our Augusti. (This sanctuary was) planned by *Nicephorus*, freedman of our Augusti, assistant to the *procuratores*...

References: CIL VI 738; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 37); CIMRM 626; Hackethal 1968 (pp. 223-4).

182bis. Fragmentary statue (h. 50 cm) of torchbearer found in the end of the 19th century in the area of the *Castra Praetoria*. Currently lost.

Fragmentary statue of torchbearer statue: head, arms and feet are missing. He was dressed in the usual eastern attire and stands cross-legged. Traces of red paint were visible at the moment of its discovery.

References: BCom 1882 (p. 240-241), Cumont MMII (*mon. fig.* 12); CIMRM 398.

183. *Mitreo degli Olympii*. R. Lanciani suggested the identification of an underground room discovered in 1886 under S. Giovannino church by S. Silvestro in Capite church with a Mithraeum. Even if several Mithraic inscriptions were discovered in this area through the centuries, there is no extant proof of the Mithraic nature of this particular space, which was connect with the *Templum Solis* built by the Emperor Aurelian. Nonetheless, it seems possible to ascribe the following monuments to the same Mithraic community, who gathered in a still unknown precise location in this area, possibly within the domus of the Olympii family.

References: BCom 1886 (p. 358); Lanciani 1894 (pp. 289, 293-5); TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 9); Lanciani 1902 (p. 99); CIMRM 399; Gallo 1979b; LTUR.III (pp. 264-5); ATLAS (p. 487 and note 147); Cameron 2011 (pp. 142-4); Machado 2019 (pp. 173-5).

183a. Inscription preserved in the mid-15th century CE in S. Giovannino church, by S. Silvestro in Capite church, 357 CE. Currently lost.

This inscription was possibly reused in the floor of the church.

Constantio VIII et Iuliano II con[s(ulibus)] | Nonius Victor Olympius v(ir) c(larissimus) p(ater) p(atrum) | et Aur(elius) Victor Augentius v(ir) [c(larissimus)] p(ater) | tradiderunt leontica IIII Idus | Aug(ustas) felic(iter) | alia tradiderunt cons(ulibus) supra s(criptis) | XVII Kal(endas) Oct(obres) felic(iter)

While *Constantius* was consul for the 9th time and *Iulianus* was consul for the 2nd time, *Nonius Victor Olympius*, *vir clarissimus*, *pater partum*, and *Aurelius Victor Augentius*, *vir clarissimus*, *pater*, transmitted the *leontica* with favourable outcome on the 10th of August, and transmitted the other grades with favourable outcome on the 15th of September, while the above-mentioned were consules.

References: CIL VI 749; ILS 4267a; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 7); CIMRM 400; Cameron 2011 (p. 143); EDR167160 (S. Orlandi).

183b. Inscription preserved in the mid-15th century CE in S. Giovannino church, by S. Silvestro in Capite church, 358 CE. Currently lost.

This inscription was possibly reused in the floor of the church. It was engraved on a base.

Datiano et Cereale cons(ulibus) | Nonius Victor Olympius v(ir) c(larissimus) p(ater) p(atrum) [et] | Aur(elius) Victor Augentius v(ir) c(larissimus) p(ater) | tradiderunt persica pri(die) Non(as) April(es) | fel(iciter) | cons(ulibus) s(upra) s(criptis) tradiderunt aeliaca | XVI Kal(endas) Ma[i(as)] felic(iter)

While *Datianus* and *Cerealis* were consules, *Nonius Victor Olympius*, *vir clarissimus*, *pater partum*, and *Aurelius Victor Augentius*, *vir clarissimus*, *pater*, transmitted the *persica* with favourable outcome on the 4th of April, and transmitted the *aeliaca* with favourable outcome on the 16th of April, while the above mentioned were consules.

References: CIL VI 750; ILS 4267b; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 8); CIMRM 401; Cameron 2011 (p. 143); EDR167159 (S. Orlandi).

183c. Inscription preserved in the mid-15th century CE in S. Giovannino church, by S. Silvestro in Capite church, 358 CE. Currently lost.

This inscription was possibly reused in the flooring of the church. It was engraved on a 'base'. Two inscriptions were engraved on the same slab: the first one can be dated in 358 CE whereas the second one in 376 CE.

Datiano et Cereale cons(ulibus) | Nonius Victor Olympius v(ir) c(larissimus) p(ater) p(atrum) | et Aur(elius) Victor Augentius v(ir) c(larissimus) | tradiderunt patrica XIII K(alendas) Mai(as) felic(iter) | cons(ulibus) s(upra) s(criptis) ostenderunt cryfios | VIII Kal(endas) Mai(as) felic(iter)

While *Datianus* and *Cerealis* were consules, *Nonius Victor Olympius*, *vir clarissimus*, *pater partum*, and *Aurelius Victor Augustus*, *vir clarissimus*, transmitted the *patrica* with favourable outcome on the 19th of April, and presented the *cryfi* on the 23rd of April with favourable outcome, while the above-mentioned were consules.

Dd(ominis) nn(ostris duobus) Valente V et Valentiniano | iunior primus
Augg(ustis duobus) VI Idus April(es) | tradidit hierocoracica Aur(elius)
Victor | Augustus v(ir) c(larissimus) p(ater) p(atrum) filio suo Emiliano |
Corfoni Olympio c(larissimus) p(uer) anno tricensimo | acceptionis suae
felic(iter)

While our two Augusti were consules, respectively *Valens* for the 5th time and *Valentinianus junior* for the first time, *Aurelius Victor Augustus*, *vir clarissimus*, *pater partum*, transmitted the *hierocacica* on the 8th of April to his son *Emilianus Corfinius Olympius*, *puer clarissimus*, with favourable outcome, on the 30th year of his own admission.

References: CIL VI 751; ILS 4267c, 4268; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 9-10); CIMRM 402-403; Vollgraf 1957; Blomart 1992 (pp. 626, 632); Cameron 2011 (p. 143); Orlandi 2019 (pp. 516-9); EDR073473/126724 (S. Orlandi).

183d. Inscription preserved in the mid-15th century CE in S. Giovannino church, by S. Silvestro in Capite church, 358-359 CE. Currently lost.

This inscription was possibly reused in the floor of the church. It was engraved on a 'base'.

Eusebio [et Hy]patio cons(ulibus) | Nonius Victor Olympius v(ir)
c(larissimus) | et Aur(elius) Victor Augustus v(ir) c(larissimus) | tradiderunt
leontica V Idus | Martialis fel(icititer) | Datiano et Cereale con[s(ulibus)] |
Nonius Victor Olympius v(ir) c(larissimus) p(ater) p(atrum) | et Aur(elius)
Victor Augustus v(ir) c(larissimus) p(ater) | tradiderunt leontic[a ---
K]al(endas) Apri[l(es)] | felic(iter)

While *Eusebius* and *Hypatius* were consules, *Nonius Victor Olympius*, *vir clarissimus*, and *Aurelius Victor Augustus*, *vir clarissimus*, transmitted the *leontica* on the 11th of March with favourable outcome. While *Datianus* and *Cerealis* were consules, *Nonius Victor Olympius*, *vir clarissimus*, *pater partum*, and *Aurelius Victor Augustus*, *vir clarissimus*, *pater*, transmitted the *leontica* on the ... of March with favourable outcome.

References: CIL VI 752; ILS 4267d; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 11); CIMRM 404; Cameron 2011 (p. 143); EDR167158 (S. Orlandi).

183e. Marble slab with inscription found in 1648 in S. Giovannino church, by S. Silvestro in Capite church, 362 CE. Currently lost.

Mamertino et Nebitta co[ns(ulibus)] | Nonius Victor Olympius v(ir)
c(larissimus) [p(ater) p(atrum)] | et Aur(elius) Victor Augustus v(ir)
[c(larissimus) p(ater)] | [t]radiderunt leontica | kal(endas) apr(iles) felic(iter)
| alia [t]radiderunt con[s(ulibus)] s(upra) s(criptis) | VI idus apr(iles)
felic(iter) leont[ica] | cons(ulibus) s(upra) s(criptis) tradiderunt | chryfios VI
idu(s) apr(iles) felic(iter)]

While Mamertinus and Nevitta were consules, *Nonius Victor Olympius, vir clarissimus, pater partum*, and *Aurelius Victor Augentius, vir clarissimus, pater*, transmitted the *leontica* on the 1st of April with favourable outcome, and transmitted the other *leontica* on the 8th of April with favourable outcome while the above mentioned were consules, and presented the *cryfii* on the 8th of April with favourable outcome while the above-mentioned were consules.

References: CIL VI 753; ILS 4267e; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 12); CIMRM 405; Vollgraf 1957; Blomart 1992 (pp. 627-9); Cameron 2011 (p. 143); EDR073474 (S. Meloni).

183f. Marble slab (54,5x227x35,5 cm) found in 1867 at Palazzo Marignoli (via S. Claudio, area of S. Silvestro in Capite church), last quarter of the 4th century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano (inv. 662).

On one side of the slab a dedicatory inscription is engraved, framed by a *tabula ansata*. It reads:

Olim Victor avus caelo devotus et astris | regali sumptu Phoebelia templa
locavit | hunc superat pietate nepos cui nomen avitum est | antra facit
sumptusque tuos nec Roma requirit | damna piis meliora lucro quis ditior
illo est | qui cum calicolis parcus bona dividit heres

Once upon a time the grandfather *Victor*, devoted to the heaven and to the stars, built a temple of Apollo with kingly expenditure. His grandson, who bear his same name, surpasses him in piety and builds an *antrum* and do not asks for money to Rome: pious men prefer losses over gain. Who is richer than that man, frugal heir, who shares his patrimony with the gods who inhabit the heaven?

On the top band of the slab, the word *Olympii* is engraved. On the left end of the slab and on the left part of the central field of the *tabula ansata*, the word *Tamesii* is repeated, vertically written. On the right end of the slab and on the right part of the central field of the *tabula ansata*, the word *Augentii* is repeated, vertically written.

On the opposite side of the slab, seven niches are carved. They are framed by small columns and pillars with composite capital. Three of these niches are semi-circular while four are rectangular. The central niche is framed by an arch supported by two thin pillars.

References: Henzen 1868; Lanciani 1894 (p. 289); CIL VI 754; ILS 4268; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 13); CIMRM 406; Bertinetti and Pettinau 1985; Cameron 2011 (p. 143); Machado 2019 (pp. 174-5); EDR167157 (S. Orlandi).

184. White marble relief (205x59 cm) with inscription found in the *Quirinalis* hill area. Currently preserved in Rome, Torlonia collection.

In the center of a naturalistic cave we recognize Mithras who plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The bull is pressed to the ground and two ears sprout from its tail. The dog, the snake and the scorpion can be seen at the usual places. The raven is perched on the margin of the cave, on the left of Mithras, looking at the scene. The two torchbearers flank the scene: Cautes on the left, Cautopates on the right. A scorpion stands beside Cautes' feet, whereas a little bull at the feet of Cautopates. On the top left corner, the bust of Sol is visible, with radiate crown. On the left of Sol, we find the uncommon representation of *Pegasus* and on his right a little bird. On the opposite corner the

bust of Luna is missing: only a part of the crescent is preserved. On the right of Cautopates a snake climbs on the corner of the cave and a wild boar runs to the right beside Luna.

An inscription was engraved beside the neck of the bull, and is currently lost due to modern restorations:

[Soli Invicto | L(ucius) Aur(elius) Severus | cum paremboli | et (h)ybobasi | voto fecit]

To the unconquered Sol. *Lucius Aurelius Severus* made for the fulfilment of a vow together with *paremboli et hypobasi*.

Another dedicatory inscription runs along the lower band of the relief:

Soli Invicto Mithrae fecit L(ucius) Aur(elius) Severus praes(idente) L(ucio) Domitio Marcellino patr(e)

To Sol unconquered Mithras. *Lucius Aurelius Severus* made while *Lucius Domitius Marcellinus* was *pater praesidens*.

References: Visconti 1885 (p. 134, tav. XLVIII); CIL VI 726 = CIL VI 30821; ILS 4205; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 30; *mon. fig.* 8); CIMRM 408-409; Vermaseren 1978 (pl. XXVIII-XXIX); Gasparri and Ghiandoni 1994 (pp. 172-4); Mangiafesta 2015 (p. 480).

185. Marble altar with inscription found in the *Quirinalis* hill area. Currently lost.

Invicto | n(umini) ad ritus | Atticus p(ater) | d(ono) d(edit)

To the Unconquered *numen*. The *pater Atticus* gave as a gift for the rites.

References: CIL VI 722; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 44); CIMRM 380.

186. Triangular marble slab (side 39 cm) with inscription found in 1933 in Rome (foro di Nerva), 4th century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Capitolini (Centrale Montemartini deposit, inv. S2969/NCE6709).

The corners of the slab are damaged. In the centre we can recognize the representation of Sol, with radiate crown. The god raises his right hand in a greeting gesture, while he holds in his left a sphere and the whip. He raises from behind a mountain. Under the mountain, a round face framed by hair is represented. It could be identified with Luna. These subjects are roughly sketched. An inscription is engraved on the band that frames the slab. It reads (from the left band, to the right one, to the lower one):

[Si]mulacrum restitu | tum deo Soli Invicto [-] | [s]acratis speleus (!) patet a p[-]

(This) statue was restored to the unconquered god Sol, from the initiated devotees. The *spelaeum* is accessible...

References: Paribeni 1933 (pp. 478-80); AE 1934, 156; Pietrangeli 1951 (p. 13); CIMRM 411-412; EDR073234 (A. Carapellucci).

187. Marble base (h. 31 cm) with inscription found in a private house along via Sacra, almost opposite the Constantinian Basilica, mid 2nd – mid 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Antiquarium Palatino (inv. 18862).

[Deo] Invicto Mithrae | [U]lpus Paulus | ex voto | d(ono) d(edit) | antistante
L(ucio) Iustino | Augurio p(atre) et Melito

To the unconquered god Mithras. *Ulpus Paulus* gave as a gift for the fulfilment of a vow, while *Lucius Iustinus Augurius* was *antistes* and *pater* and *Melitus*.

References: CIL VI 36831; Hulsen 1902 (p. 237); AE 1903, 6; Paribeni 1933; CIMRM 413a; EDR071871 (S. Meloni).

188. Mitrei del Capitolino. Written sources reported the existence of caves in the Capitoline hill over the centuries: some of those has been associated with Mithraic cult places.

188a. The first one, known as ‘Lo perso’, is a subterranean space reported in the 15th century in the *Sylloge Signoriliana*, and by *Cyriacus Anconitanus*. This room was possibly located on the slope of the *Capitolium*, just under S. Maria in Ara Coeli church, overlooking to the east, and was identified at that time as the tomb of Caesar. While the *Sylloge Signoriliana* reported that a Greek inscription (not transcribed) could be read in that place, *Cyriacus Anconitanus* reported a Latin inscription (*C(aius) Iulis Caesar Deo Soli Invicto Altere*). Based on these scattered data, it is not possible to establish a sure Mithraic nature for this first reported cave.

188b. The existence of a second subterranean room was reported in the mid-16th century by Flaminio Vacca and forwarded by several scholars (*Smetius*, *Pighius*, *Waelscapple*, *Ligorius*, *Vacca*, etc.). In this case the Mithraic nature of the cave is assured by the finding of relief **189**. The exact find spot is unfortunately unknown, but it is sure that it was found on the *Capitolium*.

188c. The existence of a third Mithraic sanctuary by the ‘Salita delle tre pile’ was suggested by C.L. Visconti, after the finding of relief **190**, but no architectural trace of a Mithraeum was actually detected.

References: Lajard 1867 (pp. 663-8); Lanciani 1872 (pp. 146-7); Visconti 1872 (pp. 113-4); CIL VI 719; TMM2 (*Inscr.* 62); Lanciani 1913 (pp. 209-10); Muñoz and Colini 1931 (p. 44); Cecchelli 1938 (pp. 137-57); Colini 1938 (p. 258); CIMRM 414; Arata 1997 (pp. 143-4); LTUR.III (p. 265); Arata 2010 (p. 131).

189. White marble relief (254x275x80 cm) with inscription, found in the mid-16th century in a subterranean room in the Capitole hill, 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Lens, Musée du Louvre-Lens (inv. MA 1023/MR 818).

The relief represents the usual tauroctony scene. In the center, inside a cave, we can recognize Mithras, dressed in his usual attire, who plunges the dagger in the shoulder of the bull. Three ears sprout from its tail. The head and arms of Mithras and the muzzle of the bull were missing (as seen in a drawing by *Pighius*): the current layout of the relief consists of a modern restoration. The bull is pressed to the ground. The scorpion, the snake and the dog (with collar) can be seen at the usual places. The raven is perched on a rock on the left of the scene. The two torchbearers flank the scene: *Cautes* stands on the left, whereas *Cautopates* on the right. On the top left corner of the relief we can recognize *Sol* driving his chariot

which is pulled by four horses. The god is naked except for a short flying cloak. He wears the radiate crown. A young male figure, naked, holding a small torch precedes his chariot: he should be identified with Phosphorus. On the opposite corner we can recognize Luna driving her chariot which is pulled by two horses. She is preceded by a young male figure, naked: he could be identified with Hesperus or Cupid. Between Sol and Luna, on the top part of the relief, three trees are represented. On the body of the bull, three inscriptions can be read. Just under Mithras' knee:

Deo Soli Invict[o] Mitrhe

To the god Sol unconquered Mithras.

On the body of the bull, just after the previous one:

Nam[a ---]ne CS

Hail to ... !

On the shoulder of the bull, just left of the wound:

Nama | Sebesio

Hail to *Sebesius*!

On the lower band of the relief part of the dedicatory inscription can be recognized:

C(aii) Aufidii Ianuarius [---]

The two *Caii Aufidii, Ianuarius* ...

References: Lajard 1867 (pp. 663-8); Frohener 1869 (pp. 495-501, n. 596); CIL VI 719 = CIL VI 30819 = CIL VI 36752; ILS 4238; TMMM2 (*Inscr. 62; mon. fig. 6*); CIMRM 415-416; Mandowski and Mitchell 1963 (pp. 59-60, pl. 9; with previous references); Charbonneaux 1963 (pp. 184-5); Thrams 1972 (pp. 164-5); Orlandi 2008 (p. 25); EDR161572 (A. Ferraro).

190. White marble relief (85x56x10 cm) found in 1872 on the Capitoline hill, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Capitolini (Centrale Montemartini deposit, inv. S1204).

This relief was found re-used as a step in the stairs of a garden located on the Capitoline hill, by the Salita delle Tre Pile. It was placed upside-down, with the sculpted face resting on the natural bedrock where the stair was cut. The finding of this relief suggested the possibility of the existence of a third Mithraic sanctuary on the Capitoline hill by the Salita delle Tre Pile, but no sure architectural trace of a Mithraeum was found. The relief features the usual tauroctony scene. In the center, inside the cave, Mithras plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The god is dressed in his usual attire and faces backward toward Sol. Two ears sprout from the tail of the bull. The scorpion, the snake and the dog (with collar) can be found at the usual places. The raven is placed on the left on the margin of the cave: it flies toward Mithras. The torchbearers flank the scene: Cautes on the left, Cautopatēs on the right. They both stand on a square base, cross-legged, holding their torch with both hands. The bust of Sol, with radiate

crown and halo, can be recognized on the top left corner, while the bust of Luna, with crescent behind her shoulders, is on the opposite corner. The upper part of the cave ceiling is missing.

References: Lanciani 1872 (pp. 146-7); Visconti 1872; TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 7); Pietrangeli 1951 (p. 12); CIMRM 417.

191. Marble base with inscription preserved on the Capitoline hill, near S. Maria in Ara Coeli church, by the *obeliscus*, and later in 1731 'in monte Celiolo', 2nd – 3rd century CE. Currently lost.

Deo Caute | Flavius Antistianus | v(ir) e(gregius) de decem primis | pater
patrum

To the god Cautes. *Flavius Antistianus, vir egregius de decem primis, pater patrum.*

References: CIL VI 86; ILS 4254; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 26); CIMRM 336; LTUR III (p. 259); Arata 2010 (p. 131); EDR161222 (A. Ferraro).

192.* *Mitreo della Crypta Balbi.* A Mithraeum (6 rooms) was discovered and excavated in 2000 in the area of the Crypta Balbi.

This Mithraic sanctuary was located in some rooms at the ground level of a complex of utilitarian purpose connected with the exedra belonging to the *Theatrum Balbi*. The room, which became the main cult room with the Mithraic occupation, was possibly also used in a previous phase (second half of the 2nd century CE) as a gathering space. Between the end of the 2nd and the beginning of the 3rd century CE, the devotees relocated at least 2 rooms for Mithraic purpose. Access to the sanctuary could be gained passing through a small vestibule, paved with a simple lime floor. In the main cult room two benches were built against the long sides. Their upper surface sloped to the back walls and their front was marked by a continuous ledge. The benches were covered with plaster. A square base was built in the north-west corner of the room. The central aisle was paved with a simple earthen floor. Three layers of this floor were recognized, dating from the first Mithraic use of the space in the beginning of the 3rd century CE to the last phase. An altar was built against the western wall and some steps were built in front of it. A smaller square base was built against the southern side of this altar. A cylindrical piece of travertine was embedded in the central aisle, at 4,5 m from the altar. The ceiling was plastered and the walls were plastered and possibly painted. Travertine blocks were used to refurbish the entrance to the main cult room. Just before the entrance, two square bases in brickwork possibly for a basin or for a statue were built. Between the end of the 3rd and the beginning of the 4th century CE, a new layout of the main cult room and of the northern rooms was developed. Four rooms on the north of the sanctuary were united in a single space and divided in four sectors. The entrance to this new space was monumentalized with two columns with a travertine base, topped by an arch. The new space was floored with black and white geometric mosaic in the first sector, *bipedales* bricks in the second sector, *opus sectile* in the third sector, and again in *bipedales* bricks in the last sector. From here a door possibly led to the main cult room. A basin was built in the northern corner of the third sector. Two columns in Greek marble topped by a wooden lintel were used to monumentalize the access to the fourth sector. Traces of rails for the installation of

transennae were recognized on each of the door's side. The walls of these northern sector were plastered and painted with geometrical patterns, fake marble tiles and festoons. In the main cult room, the northern bench was enlarged. Four small bases were built against the front of the benches (two per side), facing the central aisle. The two eastern ones had cut-in niches in their front, at ground level. A small pot was buried in the ground just before the northern one, while the southern one possibly hosted a lamp. A square base was built behind the north-east base, possibly a support for a statue. Two stairs were built against the altar and covered with white marble. The northern one was narrower and ended in the altar, whereas the southern one was larger and ended in a niche which was cut in the back wall. A stucco arch resting on two vertical supports was attached to the western wall and framed the features of the altar. A square base was built against the eastern corner of the southern bench. At the beginning of the 5th century CE the main cult room was abandoned and closed: traces of holes for the lodging of wooden beams were recognized by the northern access.

References: Ricci 2004a; Ricci 2004b; Sagui and Coletti 2004; Sagui 2004; De Grossi Mazzorin 2004; ATLAS (pp. 519, 526).

192a.* White marble relief (24x9 cm ca.) found in the sanctuary, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano – Crypta Balbi.

Only the upper part of the relief was found. The relief features the tauroctony scene. Inside the cave we can recognize Mithras, dressed in the usual attire, who plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. On the left, the raven is perched on the flying cloak of the god. Three ears sprout from the tail of the bull. In the top left corner, outside the cave, we can recognize the bust of Sol, with radiate crown. The god is represented in profile and looks upward. Behind his shoulder a flying cloak is represented. On the opposite corner we can recognize the bust of Luna. A small crescent is placed on top of her forehead. It seems that the two torchbearers were not represented in this small relief. Traces of gilding are recognizable on Mithras' face and garments and on the face of Luna.

References: Ricci 2004a (p. 238); Sagui 2004 (p. 168).

192b.* White marble statue (h. 13 cm ca.) found in the sanctuary, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano – Crypta Balbi.

A single fragment of the statue was found. This piece features the head of a lion with open mouth facing slightly downward. The head of a snake rests on top of the lion head. It seems highly probable that this piece constitutes the fragment of a statue of the leontocephaline deity.

References: Sagui 2004 (p. 168).

192c.* White marble statue (h. 40 cm ca.) found in the sanctuary, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano – Crypta Balbi.

Two fragments of this statue were found. The statue features a male figure dressed in eastern attire standing cross-legged. He holds in both hands a torch which seems pointed upward. The head and the feet are missing. It seems possible to identify the subject with Cautes.

References: Sagui 2004 (p. 168).

192d.* White marble statue (h. 15 cm ca.) found in the sanctuary, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano – Crypta Balbi.

This single fragment of a statue represents a young male figure, possibly wearing a Phrygian hat. A circular pin fastens a garment on his left shoulder. This bust could represent a Mithraic torchbearer, possibly Cautopates.

References: Sagui 2004 (p. 168).

192e.* Fragmentary crater, covered with a brownish-yellow glaze. The external surface was decorated with four or six panels, realized from a matrix and then applied on the surface of the vessel. The only surviving panel features a naked female figure, identified with a *Victoria*, who holds a weapon trophy. The two spiralling handles were decorated with an applied snake. Only three fragments of this vessel were recovered. It seems possible to attribute this peculiar creation to the Late Antique glazed pottery production active in the second half of the 4th century CE.

References: Sagui 2004 (pp. 170-3); Sagui and Coletti 2004 (pp. 253-6); Coletti 2012 (p. 187); Martini 2015 (pp. 69-70).

193. *Mitreo della Cancelleria Apostolica.* This Mithraic sanctuary was discovered and excavated in 1937 in a cellar under the Palazzo della Cancelleria Apostolica. Scarce traces of the architecture were preserved: a white mosaic floor and a semi-circular arched niche opened in a side wall were the only recognized features. Traces of a red fresco with stars and small lunar crescents were reported by B. Nogara and A. Magi. The general layout of this sanctuary remains unknown.

References: Nogara 1941 (pp. 8-10); Nogara and Magi 1949; CIMRM 421; Royo 1984; LTUR III (p. 266); ThesCRA (p. 279, n. 30); Pentiricci 2009a (pp. 85-8); Pentiricci 2009b (pp. 171-3); ATLAS (p. 523).

193a. Fragmentary white marble relief (95x66x6,5 cm), 250-310 CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Palazzo della Cancelleria (inv. 39122).

Only the lower part of the relief is preserved. In the left corner we can recognize Cautopates, dressed in the usual eastern attire, holding his torch with both hands. Behind him the artist sculpted the naturalistic rock wall of the cave. Proceeding to the right we can recognize the lower part of the body of the bull pressed to the ground by Mithras. Only the foot of the god is preserved. At the usual places we can recognize the scorpion, the snake and the dog (with collar).

References: Nogara and Magi 1949 (p. 239); CIMRM 426; Carignani and Spinola 2009 (p. 520).

193b. Fragmentary statue (h. 55 cm), 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Palazzo della Cancelleria (inv. 39119).

The statue features Mithras *Petrogenitus*. The god is naked, his body is that of a young male, with slightly pronounced round belly. He emerges from a rock from the thighs up. His arms are pressed against the bust, holding in the right hand a lit torch whereas in the left one a dagger. The head of the god is missing.

References: Nogara and Magi 1949 (p. 240); CIMRM 428; Carignani and Spinola 2009 (p. 510).

193c. Fragmentary marble statue (h. 95 cm). Currently preserved in Rome, Palazzo della Cancelleria.

The statue features a Mithraic torchbearer dressed in the usual eastern attire and standing cross-legged. He holds his torch with both hands. Beside his feet, on the

base, a tree trunk is represented, and a cock. The presence of the cock suggests an identification with *Cautes*. Arms and a major part of the torch are missing. The head was found separately from the bust.

References: Nogara and Magi 1949 (pp. 239-40); CIMRM 427.

193d. Cylindrical marble altar (h. 72,5 cm) with inscription found in the ruins of the sanctuary, mid-3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Palazzo della Cancelleria (inv. 39120).

On its front, inside a raised square field, a dedicatory inscription was engraved.

Aebutius Restituti | anus qui et Proficen | tius antistes dei | Solis Invicti
Mithrae | aram | d(ono) d(edit)

Aebutius Restituvianus Proficientius antistes of the god Sol uncoquered Mithras gave as a gift to the god (this) altar.

References: Nogara and Magi 1949 (p. 230); CIMRM 422; AE 1937, 231; AE 1945, 139; AE 1949, 172; Carignani and Spinola 2009 (p. 535); EDR073358 (S. Meloni).

193e. White marble slab (39x65 cm) with inscriptions found in the ruins of the sanctuary. Currently preserved in Rome, Palazzo della Cancelleria (inv. 39117).

In a first moment, in the 2nd century CE, this slab constituted the base for a statue (its fastening hole can be recognized piercing the center of the slab). On the face of one of its short sides a dedicatory inscription can be read:

L(ucius) Castricius Probus d(ono) d(edit)

Lucius Castricius Probus gave as a gift.

In a second phase, in the mid-3rd century CE, this slab was reused and dedicated to Mithras. We can read the dedicatory inscription engraved on one of its major sides:

Hic locus est felix sanctus piusque benignus | quem monuit Mithras
mentemque dedit | Proficientio patri sacrorum | utque sibi spalaem faceret
dedicaretque | et celeri instansque operi reddit munera grata | quem bono
auspicio suscepit anxia mente | ut possint syndexi hilares celebrare vota per
aevom | hos versiculos generavit Proficientius | pater dignissimus Mithrae

This is a good, holy, pious and favourable place, which Mithras recommended and suggested *Proficientius*, *pater sacrorum*, to build a spelaeum for him and to consecrate it; and here he is, working willingly and quickly on this endeavor that he undertook under good omens with solicitous mind because the *syndexi* could celebrate gladly the rites in the centuries. *Proficientius*, the worthiest Mithraic *pater*, wrote those verses.

References: Nogara and Magi 1949 (pp. 230-8); AE 1950, 199; CIMRM 423; Carignani and Spinola 2009 (pp. 533-4); EDR073778/132401 (S. Meloni).

193f. Fragmentary white marble slab (30x41 cm) with inscription found in the ruins of the sanctuary, 253 CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Palazzo della Cancelleria (inv. 39118).

Only the right part of the slab was found: it reported an inscription engraved in a *tabula ansata* frame.

[-----] | [---] et | [---]rrius | [---] Solis | [Imp(eratore) Volusiano e]t Maximo
co(n)s(ulibus)

... and ...rrius, of Sol ..., when *Volusianus* and *Maximus* were consules.

References: Nogara, Magi 1949 (p. 238); AE 1950, 200; CIMRM 424; Carignani, Spinola 2009 (p. 534); EDR073779 (S. Meloni).

193g. Fragmentary white marble slab (10x17 cm) with inscription found in the ruins of the sanctuary, mid-3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Palazzo della Cancelleria (inv. 39121).

A single fragment of the slab is preserved. It should have hosted a dedicatory inscription by the same *Proficientius* who dedicated the other monuments.

[--- I]nvicto [---] | [--- Aebu]tius Pr[oficientius] | -----

To the Unconquered ..., *Aebutius Proficientius*

References: Nogara and Magi 1949 (pp. 238-40); AE 1950, 201; CIMRM 425; Carignani and Spinola 2009 (p. 535); EDR073784 (S. Meloni).

194. Fragmentary gypsum relief (h. 90 cm) found in 1907 in Rome, under Palazzo Montecitorio, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Frankfurt am Main, Museum Liebieghaus (inv. 333).

The characters of the typical tauroctony scene are recognizable. Mithras, dressed in the usual attire, plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull. The body of the animal is wrapped in a large band decorated with incisions. The head of the dog is visible leaping at the blood spilling from the wound of the bull. A curved trace on the body of the bull indicates the place where the snake was attached. The two torchbearers flank the scene: Cautes on the left and Cautopates on the right, cross-legged. Traces of polychromy and of gilding are recognizable on the surfaces of the relief.

References: CIMRM 430.

195. Large base with inscription found in Rome, area of the *Quirinalis* hill. Currently lost.

Soli | Mithrae

To Sol Mithras.

References: CIL VI 713; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 76); CIMRM 429.

196a-b. White marble statues of the torchbearers found in 1886 at the foot of the Palatine hill (in the debris filling some rooms of unknown purpose), late 3rd – early 4th century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano.

The two Mithraic torchbearers stand both cross-legged and are dressed in the usual eastern attire. They hold their torch in both hands. Beside Cautes' feet (h.45 cm) a cock is represented, whereas beside Cautopates' (h. 50 cm) a dog. Traces of polychromy were noticed on both statues at the moment of the discovery.

References: NSc 1886 (pp. 53, 123); Caetani Lovatelli 1892; TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 21); Paribeni 1920 (p. 95); CIMRM 431; Bartoli 1958 (pp. 23-5).

197. White marble altar (h. 118 cm) with inscription found by Ponte Rotto, 180-192 CE. Currently preserved in Baltimore, The Walters Art Gallery (inv. MD.Balt.WAG.L.23.17).

Soli Invicto | Mithrae | pro salute Commodi | Antonini Aug(usti) domini
n(ostri) | M(arcus) Aurel(ius) Stertinius | Carpus una cum Carpo |
proc(uratore) k(astrensi) patre et Her | mioneo et Balbino | fratribus | v(otum)
s(olvit) f(eliciter)

To Sol unconquered Mithras. For the safety of our Emperor *Commodus Antoninus Augustus*, *Marcus Aurelius Stertinius Carpus*, together with his father *Carpus, procurator kastrensis*, and his brothers *Hermioneus* and *Balbinus*, fulfilled his vow willingly.

References: CIL VI 727; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 34); CIMRM 510; Chioffi 2008 (p. 262); EDR129704 (L. Benedetti, S. Meloni).

198. *Mitreo del Circo Massimo*. This Mithraic sanctuary (4 rooms) was discovered and excavated in 1931. It was restored and made available for visits in 1939. A new survey campaign was undertaken in 2010.

In the second half of the 3rd century CE the Mithraic devotees occupied four rooms located at ground level in the substruction of a terrace which served the *Circus Maximus* complex. A small chamber paved with white and colored marble led to a corridor which led to the main cult room (on the left) or to an ancillary room (to the right). It is not sure if the small room beside this first chamber was also in use during the Mithraic occupation. No decorative features were preserved in the ancillary room to the right: we could suppose for this space a storage or utility purpose. On the left, the devotee could access the main cult room. This space was divided in two sectors. In the first sector the floor of the central aisle was paved with *bipedales* bricks. On the right of the central aisle, a single step led to a small room resting on a slightly raised level. Here a rectangular niche was cut in the right wall and covered in white and colored marble. A small ledge hanged in front of this niche. Returning to the main room, just after this door, two rectangular niches were cut in each side of the room. They were coated with plaster and framed by an arch resting on two small columns supported by marble shelves. They hosted small marble bases which possibly supported a statue. Two small square bases were placed in front of these niches: one in white marble, the other in travertine. A small shelf was discovered on top of the right niche: it hosted two clay lamps (one entire, one in pieces), a bronze bell and some bones. On the floor beside the left niche a circular marble sewer cover was placed. In the final part of the first sector, a bench was built against the right side. A small ledge marked its upper rim and three small steps were built against its western end. The front and the ledge was covered with white marble. In the second sector, the central aisle was paved with colored and white marble. A composite capital was buried in the ground upside-down: it possibly served as base

for a statue. A bust (the head was not found) was placed on top of the arch separating the two sectors of the main room. Two semi-circular niches were opened at ground level, one in each pillar supporting this arch. The right one hosted a pottery jar embedded in the ground. Its bottom was perforated and the marble head of a snake (CIMRM 439) was found inside it. These niches were plastered, framed by two columns supporting a marble arch. In the floor between these two niches a round pit regularized by a cut amphora was covered with a circular marble lid. Two benches were built along the sides of the room. Both were covered on their front and ledge with white marble. Their upper surface was plastered and sloped toward the wall. Four steps built in their western end led to their upper surface. In a second phase the right bench was raised and a polygonal space was created on its upper surface. The back wall behind this bench preserved traces of decoration on the plaster: 12 concentric circles and four external symmetric ones and traces of color. In the back wall of the last sector a large brickwork arch framed a space obtained cutting the previous walls. The intrados of this arch was lined with pumices in resemblance of a natural cave. Inside the arch, some steps covered with white and colored marble led to a raised semicircular platform where a statue or the cult relief was possibly displayed. On the back wall, on the left of the arch, a little relief should have been placed on two marble shelves: it was framed by two stucco semi columns. Below this relief, other two larger marble shelves were placed. On the same wall, on the right side of the arch, a small tauroctony relief was placed. Four bases were built against the back wall: two were square and symmetrical, one triangular, and another one was square too. They were possibly bases for statues, while other small shelves between them were possibly supports for lamps.

References: Colini 1932; Pietrangeli 1941; CIMRM 434; LTUR.III (pp. 266-7); ThesCRA (p. 279, n. 32); ATLAS (p. 436); Tavolieri and Ciafardoni 2010; ATLAS (p. 436).

198a. Graffito found in the back wall of the sanctuary, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved *in situ*.

Magicas | inbictas | cede Degentio | A[---]S | B [---]

Give the unconquered magical arts to *Decentius*

References: Pietrangeli 1941 (p. 170-1); CIMRM 454; Guarducci 1979c; Solin 1979 (pp. 137-40); AE 1980, 58; Solin 1982; Mastrocinque 1998 (pp. 45-7); EDR077495 (A. Carapellucci).

198b. White marble relief (164x87 cm) with inscription, found in the debris filling the sanctuary, late 3rd century CE. Currently preserved on site.

It is not sure where this relief was originally placed within the sanctuary. It should have been laid on a shelf and displayed possibly against a wall. Traces of the clamps for fastening the relief to a vertical surface can be recognized on the lateral and upper side. A rectangular piece of cornice was re-used to carve this relief: moldings of this original use can be seen along the upper and left side of the monument.

The relief features the usual tauroctony scene, framed by a smooth band on top and bottom and by two columns on the sides. The left column is placed upright, whereas the right one is placed upside-down. A dedicatory inscription is engraved on the top band. It reads:

Deo Soli Invicto Mithrae Ti(berius) Cl(audius) Herm[[es]] ob votum dei
typum d(ono) d(edit)

To the god Sol unconquered Mithras. *Tiberius Claudius Hermes* gave as a gift this image of the god for the fulfilment of a vow.

Between the erased letters and the following ones, a small flower encircled by a laurel is sketched. This decoration is placed just on top of Mithras' head. In this place the upper band is slightly restricted to give more space to the hat of the god. In the center of the relief we can recognize Mithras, dressed in his usual attire, who plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. A single ear sprouts from the tail of the animal. The scorpion, the snake and the dog can be seen at the usual places. The raven is on the left, perched on a mass of rocks. The torchbearers flank the scene: Cautes on the left and Cautopates on the right. The bust of Sol, with radiate crown, is represented in the top left corner, while in the opposite one there is the bust of Luna, emerging from a crescent. Four stars are carved in the space between the head of Mithras and Luna's bust. The peculiar feature of this relief consists in the representation of the *transitus* scene just on the left of the tauroctony. On the left of the main scene, a mass of rock is represented under the bust of Sol and on the left of Cautes. A small lizard is represented, emerging from a hole within the rocks. Just under these rocks, we can recognize Mithras, dressed in his usual attire, dragging the bull by the hind legs on his back toward the entrance of the rocky cave. Traces of polychromy were recognized at the moment of the discovery on Mithras' garments, on Sol and on the blood spilling from the wound of the bull.

References: Colini 1932; Pietrangeli 1941 (pp. 156, 166); CIMRM 435-436; AE 1993, 96; EDR073200 (A. Carapellucci).

198c. White marble relief (62x48x12 cm). Currently preserved *in situ*.

This small relief was found in the debris filling the sanctuary: it was clearly fallen from its slot, on the right of the arch which marked the southern wall of the sanctuary. In the center of a rocky cave, Mithras plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The dog, the snake and the scorpion can be seen at the usual places, while the raven is perched on the left on the margin of the cave. The bust of Sol with radiated crown can be recognized on the top left corner, while on the opposite one the bust of Luna, with a crescent behind her shoulder, is represented. There is no trace of the torchbearers. Traces of polychromy can be recognized on Mithras, Sol and the bull.

References: Pietrangeli 1941 (p. 157, 166-7); CIMRM 437.

198d. Fragmentary white marble slab (33x45x5 cm) with inscription re-used to cover a base attached to the main altar, late 2nd – 3rd century CE. Currently preserved on site.

Soli Invict[o Mithrae] | sacrarium [fecit] | P(ublius) Aelius Ur[-] | sub A(ulo)
Sergio Eutycho | sacerdote

To Sol unconquered Mithras. *Publius Aelius Ur...* built a *sacrarium*, when *Sergius Eutychnus* was *sacerdos*.

References: Pietrangeli 1941 (p. 169); AE 1946, 87; CIMRM 449; EDR073558 (A. Carapellucci).

198e. Marble slab (37x22,5 cm) with inscription found in the excavation of the sanctuary, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved on site.

D{a}eo | Invicto d(ono) d(edit) | L(ucius) Reminius | Fortunatus

To the Unconquered god. *Lucius Reminius Fortunatus* gave as a gift.

References: Pietrangeli 1941 (p. 170); AE 1946, 88; CIMRM 450; EDR073559 (A. Carapellucci).

198f. Fragmentary white marble slab with inscription found in the excavation of the sanctuary, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved on site.

This inscription was fractured in three pieces: one is currently lost, one was re-used in the flooring layer of the main cult room, and the third one was re-used to cover one of the bases built against the back altar.

Sububsed[e]nte | [-] Cossio [-]tiniano | patre

While *Cossius ...tinianus* was *pater subsedens*.

References: Pietrangeli 1941 (p. 170); AE 1946, 89; CIMRM 451; EDR073560 (A. Carapellucci).

198g. Fragmentary white marble slab (65x38 cm) with inscription found in the excavation of the sanctuary. Currently preserved on site.

L MO[---] | magn[---] | dev[---]

This inscription was found in the sanctuary, but it is not clear if it was re-used or if it was part of an inscription destined to be displayed there.

References: Pietrangeli 1941 (p. 170); CIMRM 452.

198h. White marble pillar (l. 101 cm) found in the last room of the sanctuary. On one of the minor sides it features a relief representation of the head of Sol, in profile, with radiate crown. This piece was possibly part of the furniture of the sanctuary, but its precise function and location remain unknown.

References: Pietrangeli 1941 (p. 167); CIMRM 440.

198i. Fragments of statues, inscriptions and various small finds (CIMRM 444-448, 453) were found in the excavation of the site. They could either come from the sanctuary itself, from the nearby rooms or either from other sectors of the excavated area. Among the statues we could signal: lower part of a statuette of Minerva (CIMRM 441), fragment of marble hand, lower part of two statuettes of Venus (CIMRM 442), lower part of another statuette, fragmentary male bust with *lorica* and *paludamentum* (CIMRM 443). Other two fragmentary inscriptions (CIMRM 453, CIMRM 455) were found on site, but also for these fragments it is not possible to ascertain precisely if they pertain the Mithraic sanctuary or not.

References: Pietrangeli 1941 (pp. 170-3).

198j. A single fragment of a crater was found in the excavation of the site. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Capitolini (inv. AC 45485).

The pertinence of this fragment to the Mithraic sanctuary is not sure. The external surface of the vessel was decorated with a theory of applied spiraling columns supporting a lintel decorated with digital impression. A sinuous snake was applied on top of this theory. In the spaces framed by the columns oval appliques were attached. They featured applied figurines obtained through the impression of a matrix. A single applique was found: it features a young female figure, dressed in a short tunic, looking to the left. She holds a spear or arrow in her left hand. It has been suggested to identify her as Artemis/Diana.

References: Pietrangeli 1941 (p. 172); CIMRM 446; Martini 2015 (pp. 70-2).

198k. White marble relief (13x26x5 cm). Currently lost.

This relief features Cautes, dressed in long-sleeved tunic and cloak, holding the raised torch in his right hand. It should come from the *Circus Maximus* Mithraeum, as suggested by A.M. Colini and reported by M.J. Vermaseren.

References: CIMRM 438.

199. *Mitreo delle Terme di Caracalla.* This Mithraic sanctuary (3/6 rooms) was discovered and excavated in 1912. It was located in six rooms in the subterranean level of the *Thermae Antoninianae*, formerly utility rooms. A first room gave access to the chambers of the sanctuary and (to the right) to other two smaller chambers possibly connected with Mithraic use too. A water basin covered with a small semi-dome occupied the left side of this first room. The second room hosted a small sewer on its left side. From this room the devotees could access the main cult room through a door on the right. The main cult room was paved with black and white mosaic floor. Three couples of pillars sustained its cross-vaulted ceiling. Two benches were built along the side of the room, encasing the pillars in their fronts. Two semi-circular niches were cut at ground level in each bench. A continuous shelf, possibly covered in white marble slabs marked their front, whereas their surface sloped toward the walls. Two small steps were built in their southern extremities to reach their upper surfaces. A large jar was buried in the ground in the middle of the central aisle just beyond the entrance door. It was covered with a circular marble lid. Almost at the center of the room there was a rectangular depression: it hosted a shaft which led to a tunnel (see below) and moreover it encased a rectangular base connected to a lead pipe. Other two rectangular bases were encased in the center of the aisle in the second part of the room. A masonry structure consisting of four steps and a central niche was built against the back wall. It led possibly to the cult niche, which was destroyed in the first explorations. In front of it, a triangular base supported a representation of Mithras *Petrogenitus* (see **199c**). A small enclosure was realized in the right corner of the room. The fifth room could either be accessible from the first one, or from the tunnel coming from the main cult room. The former destination of this room as a *latrina* was possibly changed to that of ancillary room connected with the cult at the time of the Mithraic installation. The same fate seems possible for the sixth room.

References: Gatti 1912; Ghislanzoni 1912; Parpagliolo 1914 (pp. 57-59); CIMRM 457; Cosi 1979; LTUR.III (pp. 267-8); ThesCRA (p. 278, n. 22); ATLAS (p. 382).

199a. Fresco located in the first niche on the right wall of the main cult room. Currently preserved *in situ*.

The fresco is very badly preserved: a male figure possibly wearing a Phrygian hat is recognizable. His right arm seems outstretched, whereas in his left hand he seems to hold a round blue object.

References: Gatti 1912 (pp. 155-8), Ghislanzoni 1912 (p. 322), Parpagliolo 1914 (p. 58, fig. XV); CIMRM 459.

199b. Some fragments of marble were found in the excavation of the sanctuary: they could represent the tauroctony scene. Currently lost.

References: Ghislanzoni 1912 (p. 322), Gatti 1912 (p. 157); CIMRM 461.

199c. Marble base (h. 60 cm) found in the south-west corner of the main cult room. Currently preserved on site.

This statue consists in a piece of re-used cornice, placed on a minor side and sculpted in imitation of the natural rock. A snake is represented encircling the rock and reaching the top of it. A trapezoidal hole on top of the piece was meant to fasten the upper part of the statue, which was not found at the moment of the discovery. The subject was surely the birth of Mithras from the rock.

References: Ghislanzoni 1912 (pp. 323-4), Gatti 1912 (p. 157); CIMRM 462.

199d. A small marble altar (33x18x21 cm) with inscription found at the entrance of the second room of the sanctuary. Currently lost (formerly in Museo Nazionale Romano – Terme di Diocleziano, inv. 59654).

On the two sides a *patera* is represented. Inscriptions are engraved on the front and on the back of the altar. On the front:

Εἷς Ζεὺς | Μίτρας | Ἥλιος | κοσμοκράτωρ | ἀνείκητος

Zeus Mithras Sol (is) unique, lord of the universe, unconquered.

On the back:

Δί Ἥλιω | μεγάλω | Σαράπιδι | σωτήρι | πλουτοδότῃ | ἐπηκόω | εὐεργέτῃ | ἀνεικήτῳ | Μίθρα | χαριστήριον

To Zeus Sol the great Serapis, saviour and giver of wealth, benevolent and benefactor. To the Unconquered Mithras, as a thanksgiving.

On the front of the altar, the name of Mithras was engraved after the erasure of the name of another god. It was possible to read in fact in the erased field the name Σάραπις.

References: Ghislanzoni 1912 (pp. 322-3); Gatti 1912 (p. 157); Parpagliolo 1914 (p. 58, fig. XIII); Cumont and Canet 1919; Paribeni 1920 (p. 95); Cumont 1934 (p. 63); CIMRM 463.

199e.* Three fragmentary stone bases (h. 45 cm) were found in the main cult room. Currently lost.

They consist of three pieces of stone roughly worked in resemblance of the natural rock, with a square hole on top to attach a statuette.

References: Ghislanzoni 1912 (p. 323), Parpagliolo 1914 (p. 58).

199f.* A small triangular marble base with triangular hole on top was found in the third room.

References: Ghislanzoni 1912 (p. 324).

199g. Fragmentary marble slab found in the excavation of the sanctuary. Currently lost.

The relief features in the center the bust of Sol, with radiated crown. He raises his hand in a greeting gesture. The rays of his crown are perforated: the slab was possibly intended to be located in front of a source of light, as to let the light diffuse from the slits. In the lower right corner of the slab the bust of Luna is represented. She is in profile, looking to the right. A crescent is represented behind her shoulders. Reference: Parpagliolo 1914 (p. 58, fig. XIV); CIMRM 458.

199h. Fragmentary statue of Venus (without head) found in the third room of the sanctuary.

References: Ghislanzoni 1912 (pp. 324-5); Gatti 1912 (pp. 155-6); Parpagliolo 1914 (p. 58, fig. XII); CIMRM 460.

200. Triangular base with inscription found in 1727 by Santa Balbina church. Currently lost.

[[T]] Invicto d(eo) Nabarze (!) | Terentius Priscus | P(ubli) f(ilius) | Eucheta curante | et sacratis | d(ono) d(edit) c(ompos) b(oti) (!)

To the unconquered god Nabarze. *Terentius Priscus*, son of *Publius*, gave as a gift willingly fulfilled in his vow, with the help of *Eucheta* and together with the initiated devotees.

References: Morcelli, Fea and Visconti 1869 (p. 181, n. 45); CIL VI 742; ILS 4262; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 55); CIMRM 501.

201. A Mithraic destination was suggested for some rooms discovered in 1925 in the area of S. Saba church, on the Aventine hill. The only Mithraic feature clearly recognizable was a small relief (see **201a**) discovered on the site, but any further information on its discovery is missing.

References: Gatti 1925 (pp. 382-7); CIMRM 464; LTUR.III (p. 269); ATLAS (p. 380).

201a. White marble relief (20,5x24x3 cm), 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Capitolini (Centrale Montemartini deposit, inv. S1198).

The relief is badly preserved and possibly unfinished. The subject is clearly a tauroctony scene, and the usual characters are recognizable: Mithras and the bull in the centre of the scene, the snake and the dog at the usual place. The scorpion is lost and the location of the raven in the top left corner is barely recognizable. Just under the raven a knot of stone could consist in the head of Sol, looking toward Mithras. The top right corner is missing. There is no trace of the torchbearers. The back field is roughly shaped and numerous drill holes could recall the cave location.

References: Gatti 1925 (p. 387); Pietrangeli 1951 (p. 10); CIMRM 465.

202. *Mitreo di Santa Prisca*. This Mithraic sanctuary (4/5 rooms) was discovered and excavated between 1935 and 1938. Some further excavation works were conducted between 1952 and 1959.

The sanctuary was located in five subterranean rooms which previously served as a substruction of the terrace of a *domus*. At the beginning of the 3rd century CE the Mithraic devotees adapted these rooms to host a Mithraeum. In a first phase the sanctuary was accessible from a small antechamber (room V), after descending from the street level. In the main cult room, two benches were built against the long sides. The front of these benches was plastered and painted red. Frescoes decorated the side walls (202f) and the ceiling was painted blue and decorated with stars. Against the back wall an arched niche was built, supported by brickwork pillars. This structure hosted fresco and stucco cult images (202a-b): the lunette was decorated with pumice stone and the vault was painted blue with yellow stars. A small square basin with marble lid was embedded in front of the niche: it was connected with a sewer which run toward the fourth room. A small enclosure was built on the left of this feature. In a second phase, the antechamber and the main cult room were united to form a single space. Benches were built also in the antechamber: they were plastered and painted red. A square base to support a statue was built in the south-east corner of the room. The benches in the main room were raised and partially covered with white marble. Two steps were built at the end of the southern bench to access it. Two large features were built at the beginning of each bench: they were domed niches which hosted the statues of the torchbearers. The left one was painted purple, and possibly hosted Cautopates, while the right one was orange and possibly hosted Cautes. A niche was cut in the middle of the front of each bench (a square one in the left bench, a semi-circular one hosting a small pot in the right one). The floor was paved with *bipedales* bricks. A second layer of frescoes decorated the side walls (202d-e-g), and a second phase was recognized also in the stucco decoration of the cult niche. A large travertine shelf resting on two small brick walls was placed in front of the cult niche. The other two rooms were now surely part of the Mithraic sanctuary. In the little enclosure beside the cult niche, the bottom part of five large amphorae was buried in the ground. Just beside them a piece of stone covered in red stucco supported a cooking pot. It is not clear if these finds belong to the Mithraeum. On the wall of the niche a graffito (202c) was engraved and two little brick shelves were fastened. The third room showed an earthen floor, and high but narrow benches were built along all of the walls. In the fourth room two benches were built against the lateral sides and a niche was built against the back wall. This niche was framed by two small pillars and topped by an arch. It preserved some traces of a stucco representation: traces of the head of Sol encircled by the zodiacal belt were recognized by M.J. Vermaseren. A narrow shelf was built in front of it, possibly for supporting lamps. A sort of counter was built against this wall: it hosted a pottery basin (*mortarium*) in front of the niche. In the fifth room, a bench was built against the western wall (plastered and painted red) and a raised *podium*, which hosted a large *dolium*, was built in the center of the room (202m). It is possible that this last room was used for initiatory rituals.

References: Ferrua 1940a; Ferrua 1940b; Cumont 1945 (pp. 402-7); CIMRM 476; Vermaseren and Van Essen 1956; Vermaseren 1957; Vermaseren and Van Essen 1965; Paparatti 1979; LTUR.III (pp. 268-9); ThesCRA (p. 278, n. 19).

202a. Stucco relief attached inside the main cult niche. Currently preserved *in situ*. Inside the main cult niche, a relief representation of the tauroctony was attached on the back wall. It was made in polychrome stucco. Mithras' body, head and red cloak

are preserved, as well as part of the bull's body, and part of the dog. The other characters are lost. On the right side of the niche another representation of Mithras and the bull was attached, but the subject is not recognizable. On the left side another scene was featured: it was possibly Mithras on a tree (in Ferrua's interpretation) or either Mithras *Petrogenitus* (in Vermaseren's interpretation).

References: Ferrua 1940 (pp. 69-70); CIMRM 479; Vermaseren and Van Essen 1965 (pp. 129-31).

202b. Stucco statue found in the main cult niche. Currently preserved *in situ*.

The monument features a male figure, bearded, reclining on his left elbow. He is bearded and wears a lung tunic which wraps his body leaving his chest bare. A veil covers his head. In his right hand he holds a long object, possibly an oar, while in his left a *patera*. Traces of polychromy are noticeable: his tunic was red-blue, the veil blue, his body red.

References: Ferrua 1940a (pp. 68-9); CIMRM 478; Vermaseren and Van Essen 1965 (pp. 131-3).

202c. A graffito was engraved in the external part of the cult niche, 20th November 202 CE. Currently preserved *in situ*.

Natus prima luce | duobus Augg co(n)s(ulibus) | Severo et Anton(ino) | XII
K(alendas) Decem(bres) | dies Saturni | luna XVIII

Born at the first light, when the two Augusti Severus and Antoninus were consules, on Saturday 20th of November, the 18th day of the Lunar month.

References: Ferrua 1940a (pp. 93-4); AE 1941, 77; Merlin 1941; AE 1946, 85; CIMRM 498; Vermaseren and Van Essen 1965 (pp. 118-26), Guarducci 1979c; AE 1980, 60; EDR077498 (A. Carapellucci).

202d. On the right wall of the main cult room, a fresco was depicted, 200-225 CE. Currently preserved *in situ*.

The wall was divided in two rectangular field framed by a red band. The left field featured the procession of the seven Mithraic grades, the right one the procession of other devotees.

The procession of the Mithraic grades features seven male figures dressed with the attribute of the seven initiatory grades. From the left to the right we can recognize: a) The Pater, seated on a throne, looking to the procession in the act of speaking to the devotees. (Vermaseren, Van Essen 1965, p. 155 + pl. LIX). On the right and on the left of the head of the figure:

Nama [patribus] | ab oriente | ad occiden[tem] | tutela Saturni

Hail to the *patres*! From the east to the west, (they are) under the protection of Saturn.

b) The Heliodromus, walking toward the Pater. He wears a radiate crown and holds in his left hand a blue globe. His right hand is raised in a greeting gesture. (Vermaseren, Van Essen 1965, p. 156 + pl. LIX). Above his raised hand:

[N]ama h[eliostro]mis | tutela S[ol]is

Hail to the *heliostromi*! (They are) under the protection of Sol.

c) The Perses. He holds in his right hand some branches or ears and in his left hand a long object. Scarce traces are preserved. (Vermaseren, Van Essen 1965, p. 156). Above the figure:

Nama persis | tutela Lunae

Hail to the *perses*! (They are) under the protection of Luna.

d) The Leo is dressed completely in red. He holds in both hands an unrecognizable object. (Vermaseren, Van Essen 1965, p. 156 + pl. LX). Above the figure:

Nama l[e]on[i]b[us] | tutela Iovis

Hail to the *leones*! (They are) under the protection of Jupiter.

e) The Miles holds a hem of the cloak of the Leo in his right hand. In his left hand he holds a military bag which rests on his shoulder. At least three arrows are fastened at his belt. (Vermaseren, Van Essen 1965, p. 157 + pl. LX). Above the figure:

Nama militibus | tutela Mart[i]s

Hail to the *milites*! (They are) under the protection of Mars.

f) The Nymphus stands with his head covered by a veil. He holds with both hands a little red object, probably a lit lamp. (Vermaseren, Van Essen 1965, p. 157). Above the figure:

Nama [ny]mphis tut[el]a [Veneris]

Hail to the *nymphi*! (They are) under the protection of Venus.

g) The last figure is the Corax, who is very scarcely preserved.

The procession of the other devotees features six male figures and some animals, all of them walking to the left (Vermaseren, Van Essen 1965, pl. LXI). From the left to the right we can recognize:

a) The first figure is almost vanished.

b) The second figure is a young male, leading a white bull. (Vermaseren, Van Essen 1965, pl. LXII, n. 1). In this area, on the upper part of the fresco it reads:

[N]am[a]

Hail to ...

c) The third devotee carries in his arms a large rooster. (Vermaseren, Van Essen 1965, pl. LXII, n. 2). Above the figure:

[N]a[ma] T[---]LIO [---]

Hail to *T.lius!* ...

d) The fourth one leads a ram. The hands of the devotee are laid on the back of the animal. (Vermaseren, Van Essen 1965, pl. LXIII, n. 1). Above the figure:

[N]ama CA[---]

Hail to *Ca...*!

e) The fifth one holds a crater in his hands. (Vermaseren, Van Essen 1965, pl. LIV and LXV, n. 1). Above the figure:

Nama | Niceforo leoni

Hail to the *leo Niceforus!*

f) The sixth one is leading a pig. The hands of the devotee are laid on the back of the animal. (Vermaseren, Van Essen 1965, pl. LXIV and LXV, n. 2). Above the figure:

Nama Theod[o]ro Leoni

Hail to the *leo Theodorus!*

References: Ferrua 1940a (pp. 73-5, 78-80); AE 1941, 75; AE 1946, 83; CIMRM 480-481; Vermaseren&Van Essen 1965 (pp. 148-64); EDR073543 (A. Carapellucci), EDR073542 (A. Carapellucci).

202e. On the left wall of the main cult room, a fresco was depicted, 200-225 CE. Currently preserved *in situ*.

The field of the fresco was framed by a large red band. The subject here is the procession of eight devotees carrying offerings toward a cave which hosts two seated people and two standing ones. From the left to the right we can recognize:

a) The first male figure holds the handle of a pan with his right hand while the left one is protecting its content or steadying its lid. (Vermaseren, van Essen 1965, p. 148 + pl. LIII). Above the figure:

Nama F[---]BO leoni

Hail to the *leo F...bus!*

b) The second figure carries a big terracotta vessel with both hands. (Vermaseren, van Essen 1965, p. 148 + pl. LIII). Above the figure:

Nama He[l]iodoro leoni

Hail to the *leo Heliodorus!*

c) The third one holds a glass plate with a loaf of bread. (Vermaseren, van Essen 1965, p. 149 + pl. LIII-LIV). Above the figure:

Nama Gelasio leoni

Hail to the *leo Gelasius!*

d) The fourth figure is very badly preserved: he seems to hold a vessel again. (Vermaseren, van Essen 1965, p. 149). Above the figure:

Nama Phoebos leoni

Hail to the *leo Phoebus!*

e) The fifth one is very poorly preserved too: he seems to hold a loaf of bread. (Vermaseren, van Essen 1965, p. 149). Above the figure:

Nama [--- leoni]

Hail to the *leo ...!*

f) The sixth figure is carrying four objects, probably candles. (Vermaseren, van Essen 1965, p. 149)

g) The seventh one carries a cock. (Vermaseren, van Essen 1965, p. 150 + pl. LVI)

h) The eighth one carries a lit candle in the right hand, other four candles in the left one. (Vermaseren, van Essen 1965, p. 150 + pl. LV). Above the figure:

Nama [---] le[o]n[i]

Hail to the *leo ...!*

This procession finally arrives to a cave: within a rocky arched ceiling the background of the cave is blue. Four people are represented inside: two at the extreme left and right stands, while the two central ones are reclined at a table. The two standing people are smaller than the others. They are two servants, ready to help the banquet of the other two. From the left to the right we can recognize:

a) a servant, dressed in a long tunic, with the head of a black raven. He offers to the reclined figures foods which are not recognizable. (Vermaseren, Van Essen 1965, pl. LVI)

b) the reclined figure of Sol, with radiate crown. His right hand is raised in a greeting gesture while the left one holds a globe. (Vermaseren, Van Essen 1965, pl. LVII)

c) the reclined figure of Mithras. His right hand is raised in a greeting gesture. (Vermaseren, Van Essen 1965, pl. LVIII)

d) a second servant, but his features are almost unrecognizable.

References: Ferrua 1940 (pp. 80-4); CIMRM 482-483; Vermaseren and Van Essen 1965 (pp. 148-64).

202f. More ancient layer of frescoes detected under **202d** and **202e**, 195-200 CE. Currently preserved *in situ*.

On both side walls of the main cult room, a second layer of fresco, more ancient than the just described **202d** and **202e**, was recognized. The subjects depicted in

these more ancient frescoes are quite similar to the later ones. On the right wall, the more ancient fresco depicted a procession of the Mithraic grades (on the left) and of lion-grade devotees (on the right). On the left wall a procession of other devotees, but without animals and cave scene has been recognized.

Apart from some figures, other inscriptions were detected in this second layer.

In the left wall, above the figures of the devotees' procession:

[Nam]a Salutio leoni || [Nama ---]IANO leoni || [N]ama Steturstadio
leo[oni] || Nama Ianuario leoni

Hail to the *leo Salutius!* Hail to the *leo ...ianus!* Hail to the *leo Steturstadius!* Hail to the
leo Ianuarius!

In the right wall, above the figure of the lion-grade procession:

Under a):

Under b):

Nama T[i]ne[tl]io leoni

Hail to the *leo Tinetlius!*

Under c):

Nama Satu[rnio] leoni

Hail to the *leo Saturnius!*

Under d):

[N]ama Florentio [leoni]

Hail to the *leo Florentius!*

In the right wall, above the figure of the seven-grades procession:

Under b):

Nama he[l]iodromis tutel[a] Solis

Hail to the *heliodromi!* (They are) under the protection of Sol.

Under d):

[Nama leonibus t]u[tela] Io[vis]

Hail to the *leones!* (They are) under the protection of Jupiter.

Under e):

Na[m]a ac[ri]b[us] mi[litibus tu]t[ela Mar]t[is]

Hail to the ferocious *milites!* (They are) under the protection of Mars.

Under f):

[N]a[ma] Nymph[i]s t[ut]e[la V]ener[i]s

Hail to the *nymphi!* (They are) under the protection of Venus.

References: CIMRM 484; Vermaseren and Van Essen 1965 (pp. 165-72); EDR073542 (A. Carapellucci).

202g. In the lower layer of the fresco of the main cult room, other inscriptions can be read. Twenty-one lines had been discovered, seventeen on the left wall (arranged in six groups), while four on the right one (arranged in three groups).

On the left wall:

Fecunda tellus cuncta quae generat Pales | quos tu [---] tibi | unde omn[..
laetas [---] amant sua

Fertile earth, through which Pales creates all things ...

Fons concludit petris qui geminos aluisti nectare fratres | semper siti[---] | [-
--]em[---]sumi[---]

Rock-bound spring that fed the twin brothers with nectar, always ...

Hunc quem aureis humeris portavit more iuvenum | ----- | atque perlata
humeris t[u]li m[a]xima divum

This young bull which he carried on his golden shoulders. ... And to the end I have borne
the order of the god on my shoulders.

Dulc[i]a sunt fi[cata] avium [s]ed cura gubernat | pi[e] r[e]b[us] renatum
dulcibus atque creatum | nubile per ritum ducatis tempora cuncti

Sweet are the livers of the birds, but care guides him who is piously reborn and created by
sweet things. You all must perform the rite through clouded times.

Primus et hic aries astrictius ordine currit | et nos servasti eternali sanguine
fuso | [of]fero ut [---] numina magna Mithre

Here too the ram runs first, more strictly in the line. And you saved us, after having shed
the eternal blood. I bring offerings so that the powers of Mithras (are shown?).

Accipe thuricremos pater accipe sancte leones | per quos thuradamus per
quos consumimur ipsi

Accept, holy father, accept the incense-burning leones, through whom we offer incense, through whom we ourselves are made perfect.

On the right wall:

Nama leonibus novis nov[i]s et multi annis

Hail to the leones for new and many years!

H[---]su nemin[i ---] fero [---mort]alium omnium et[er]norumque omnium
[---]icit[---]ucta reddite cantu

... all of the mortals ad all of the immortals ... Sing!

References: Ferrua 1940 (pp. 85-6); CIMRM 485; Vermaseren and Van Essen 1965 (pp. 187-240); Betz 1968; EDR073551 (M. Giovagnoli), EDR073556 (M. Giovagnoli), EDR074247 (M. Giovagnoli), EDR073468 (A. Carapellucci).

202h. Greek marble statue (h. 102 cm) found in the right niche in the main cult room. Currently preserved *in situ*.

This statue featured originally the scheme of a young Hermes. The Mithraic devotees then possibly transformed it in a representation of Cautes. The bust and arms of the statue were worked to bear the typical Eastern attire of the torchbearer (that is the long-sleeved tunic), and the legs were possibly covered with stucco trousers (nicks are still recognizable on the legs of the statue: they were possibly functional to increase the adhesive power of the stucco). Cautes holds his torch (which is currently lost) in both hands. Beside the torchbearer a support in the form of a tree trunk was present. At his base, beside Cautes' feet, a rooster was sculpted. The head of the statue is missing.

References: Ferrua 1940 (pp. 65-66); CIMRM 477; Vermaseren and Van Essen 1965 (p. 341).

202i. Lead plate (55x43x0,3 cm) with representation of the head of Sol. The rays of his radiate crown are pierced.

References: Ferrua 1940 (p. 70); CIMRM 494; Vermaseren and Van Essen 1965 (p. 346).

202j.* Another Sol representation in marble intarsio was found in 1954. See Vermaseren

References: Vermaseren 1957.

202k. Marble slab (24x63 cm) with inscription found in the debris filling the rooms, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Mitreo di Santa Prisca.

Deo Soli Invicto Mithre | quod saepe numini eius | exaudito gratias e[gi---]
| [---]T[---] | -----

To the god Sol unconquered Mithras. I thank him because, after having often listened to him, ...

References: Ferrua 1940 (p. 62); CIMRM 497; Vermaseren and Van Essen 1965 (pp. 340-1).

202l. A large *dolium* was found embedded in the center of the fifth room. This vessel was cut at two thirds of its height, and covered with the upper part of an amphora. Moreover, a hole was cut in its base. A cylindrical pottery vessel was placed in the larger *dolium*: it had a hole in the center of its base, covered with a small glass plate. A graffito was engraved on the rim of this cylindrical vessel. Two readings were given to this inscription: ‘Te cauterio i Saturne i Ata[- i] Opi’ by W. Vollgraf that translates as ‘I burn you, come Saturn! Come Atar(?)! Come Ops!’, or ‘M(arcus) Aur(elius) [- pa]t(er) Cauti dat l(ibens) a(nimo) by R. Egger that translates as ‘the *pater Marcus Aurelius* ... gives willingly to Cautes’. M. Vermaseren indicated Egger’s reading as the most plausible. The precise function of this device is still uncertain: it seems highly possible nonetheless that it was linked to some ceremonial purpose.

References: Ferrua 1940 (p. 89); CIMRM 495; Vollgraff 1957; AE 1960, 88; Egger 1960; Vermaseren and Van Essen 1965 (pp. 145-7), Guarducci 1979.

202m. About the other materials found in the excavation see Vermaseren and Van Essen 1965.

References: CIMRM 500; Vermaseren and Van Essen 1965 (pp. 338-).

203. Marble base with inscription found in Rome (area of S. Sabina), second half of the 4th century CE. Currently preserved in Villa Albani.

C(aius) Ruf(ius) | Volusianus v(ir) c(larissimus) | pater ierofanta | profeta
Isidis | pontifex dei Solis vot(um) solvi(t)

Caius Rufius Volusianus, vir clarissimus, pater (of the Unconquered god Sol Mithras), hierofant of Hecate, prophet of Isis, *pontifex* of the god Sol, fulfilled his vow.

References: CIL VI 846; ILS 4413; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 25); CIMRM 466; SIRIS 434; Cameron 2011 (p. 147); EDR144485 (S. Orlandi).

204. Three Mithraic reliefs and a fragmentary inscription were discovered in 1935 in the excavation of the *Dolichenum* on the Aventine hill. This peculiar sanctuary was born as a private shrine, but in the mid-3rd century CE it was enlarged and possibly opened to the public worship. The shrine was divided in at least three rooms, and covered with a roof. Different deities were worshipped: the main god was surely Jupiter Dolichenus, but statues and reliefs of other deities were found as well (Isis, Serapis, Silvanus, Heracles, etc.).

References: Colini 1936; Colini 1939; CIMRM 467; Beelli 1996; ATLAS (pp. 408-9).

204a. Fragmentary white marble relief (70x76x9 cm), late 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Capitolini (Centrale Montemartini deposit, inv. AntCom9754).

The scene of the tauroctony is clearly recognizable, even if this relief is quite fragmentary. Inside the cave Mithras, dressed in his usual attire, plunges the dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. Three ears sprout from the tail of the bull. The snake and the dog can be found at the usual place. The fragment with the scorpion is missing. The torchbearers flank the scene: Cautes stands on the left, cross-legged, and Cautopates on the right. In the top right corner Luna is represented: she drives her chariot pulled by two horses to the right.

Her hair is arranged in a braid which runs along the temples and ends in a bun on the nape. On her forehead a small crescent is placed.

References: Colini 1936 (p. 152); Merlat 1951 (p. 169, n. 187); Pietrangeli 1951 (p. 38); CIMRM 468; CCID 367; Beilelli 1996 (pp. 381-2).

204b. White marble relief (15x10 cm), second half of the 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Capitolini (Centrale Montemartini deposit, inv. AntCom9913).

The relief shows a stele shape that is square bottom and rounded top. In the central part of the relief we can recognize the usual tauroctony scene. Mithras, dressed in his usual attire, plunges the dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The dog, the snake and the scorpion can be found at the usual places. On the top left, the raven flies toward the god. The torchbearers flank the scene: Cautopates on the left, Cautes on the right. The busts of Sol and Luna are represented on top of the scene, respectively on the left and on the right of Mithras' head. In the top right corner of the monument, we recognize the representation of the birth of Mithras from the rock. The god emerges from the rock with raised forearms. In the lower part of the relief, a thin band separates the main scene from three minor ones. The relief is here broken and the only subject recognizable with a fair certainty is the central scene that represents the banquet of Mithras and Sol. On the base of similar products, we can suggest that the scene on the left should have been Sol kneeling before Mithras, whereas that on the right Mithras ascending the heavens of Sol's quadriga. The style is very dry and linear, and the absence of plastic sense is quite noticeable. These characteristics, together with the general distribution of the scenes is typical of the Danubian style reliefs.

References: Colini 1936 (p. 153); Merlat 1951 (p. 170, n. 188); CIMRM 469; Lavagne 1974 (p. 486); CCID 369; Beilelli 1996 (p. 382).

204c.* Fragmentary white marble relief (75x41x6 cm), second half of the 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Capitolini (Centrale Montemartini deposit, inv. AntCom9973).

The scene of the tauroctony is clearly recognizable, even if this relief is quite fragmentary. Inside the cave Mithras, dressed in his usual attire, plunges the dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The bull is pressed to the ground. Three ears sprout from its tails. The snake, the dog and the scorpion can be seen at the usual places. The torchbearers flank the scene: Cautes on the left, standing cross legged, and Cautopates on the right (only his head is preserved). In the top right corner, the bust of Luna is represented. She looks to the right, and a crescent is represented behind her shoulders. Traces of polychromy are recognizable on Mithras' clothes and on the band (*dorsuale*) which wraps the body of the bull.

References: Colini 1936 (p. 152); Merlat 1951 (p. 169, n. 187); Pietrangeli 1951 (p. 38); CCID 368; Beilelli 1996 (p. 382).

204d. Fragmentary marble slab with inscription, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Capitolini (Centrale Montemartini deposit, inv. NCE6733).

[De]o Soli [In]vic(to) M[ithrae] | [N]umi[ni s(ancto)] et pr[aest(antissimo)]
| [---]me[---] | [p]ro salute s[ua et] | [s]uorum o[mnium] | [In]victo Nu[mini]
| [---]umm[---] | [--- ded]ica[vit ---] | -----

To the unconquered god Sol Mithras, holy and excellent *numen*, ..., for his safety and for that of all his family, consecrated to the unconquered *numen* ...

References: Colini 1939 (p. 139); CCID 370; AE 1940, 81; Merlat 1951 (p. 170, n. 189); CIMRM 470; Pietrangeli 1951 (p. 38).

205. Three Mithraic inscriptions were discovered in 1931 during some infrastructural work in via Marmorata, at the foot of the Aventine hill. Apart from the three inscriptions here described, other two pillars were found on site, but they did not bear any text.

References: Patriarca 1932; CIMRM 472; LTUR.III (p. 270).

205a. Marble pillar (h. 157 cm) with inscription, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Capitolini (Centrale Montemartini deposit, inv. AntCom1187).

Διὺ Ἡλ[ί]ω | μεγάλω | Μίθρα ἀνει | κήτω καὶ τοῖς | συννάοις θε | οἷς δῶρον |
ἀνέθηκαν | λύχνους χαλ | κοῦς ἑξαμύ | ξους δύο | Κάστος πατή[ρ] | καὶ
Κάστος υἱὸ[ς] | ἱερὸς κόραξ | καὶ καθιέρωσα[ν] | ὑπηρετούντων | Λ Σατυρίου
Σπό | ρου καὶ Πακτουμ(ηίου) | Λάουσου πατέρων | Μο[δ]έστου Παραλί | ου
(!) Ἀγαθημέρου | Φήλικος Ἀπαμη | νίου Κηλωήδι | λεόντων

To Zeus Sol the great Mithras unconquered and to the *sunnaoi* (worshipped in the same temple) gods. *Castus* father and *Castus* son, with the grade of *corax*, consecrated as a gift two bronze lamps with six wickholes, under the office of the *patres Lucius Saturius Sporos* and *Pactumeios Lausus* were *patres*, and of the *leones Modestus, Paralios, Agathemeros, Felix, Apamenius, and Celoe dius*.

References: IGUR I 106; Patriarca 1932 (pp. 239-44); Cumont 1934 (p. 63); CIMRM 473.

205b. Marble pillar (h. 188 cm) with inscription. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Capitolini (Centrale Montemartini deposit, inv. AntCom1190/S2979).

Διὺ Ἡλίω Μίθρα | ἀνεικήτω Κάστος | πατήρ καὶ Κάστος | υἱὸς ἱερὸς κόραξ

To Zeus Sol Mithras unconquered, *Castus* (father) and *Castus* (son), with the grade of *corax*.

References: IGUR I 107; Patriarca 1932 (p. 245), Cumont 1934 (p. 64); CIMRM 474.

205c. Marble shelf (h. 21 cm) with inscription. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Capitolini (Centrale Montemartini deposit, inv. AntCom1187/S2981).

Διὺ Ἡλίω Μίθρα | Φάνητι | ἱερεὺς καὶ πατήρ | Βενοῦστος σὺν τοῖς |
ὑπηρεταῖς θεοῦ ἀνέθ(ηκεν)

To Zues Sol Mithras Phanes, *Venustus, pater* and priest, consecrated together with the servants of the god.

References: IGUR I 108; Patriarca 1932 (pp. 245-7), Cumont 1934 (p. 64); CIMRM 475.

206a. White marble statue (h. 34 cm) found in construction works for the regulation of the Tiber River (they should come from the nearby Aventine area). Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano (inv. 287, former Terme di Diocleziano nr. 4239).

The statue features a naked male figure, standing and frontal, with arms folded and crossed on his chest. In the left hand he holds a key, while in the right a long object, probably a scepter. His body is encircled by a snake in three spires. The head of the animal rests on the belly of the man. Head and feet of the subject are missing. Traces of gilding were reported.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 22); Paribeni 1920 (p. 95); CIMRM 503; Bortolin 2012 (p. 209).

206b. White marble statue (h. 49 cm) found on the same occasion of the previous one. Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano (former Terme di Diocleziano nr. 4237).

Statue of Cautes, dressed in the usual attire. The torchbearer stands cross-legged and holds the torch with both hands. Beside his feet a cock is represented. The larger part of the torch is missing. Traces of polychromy were reported: his tunic was blue, while trousers and cloak appeared red.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 23); Paribeni 1920 (p. 95); CIMRM 504.

207a. Parian marble statue (h. 138 cm) found in Rome, in 1785 in a cave by the Tiber River. Currently preserved in London, British Museum (inv. 1846,0507.1).

The statue represents a torchbearer (possibly Cautes), dressed in the usual attire. The right arm and left hand are modern restorations. The statue has been restored as Paris, as well as his twin preserved in the Musei Vaticani (see next number).

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 27); Smith 1904 (p. 89, n. 1722); CIMRM 506.

207b. White marble statue (h. 146 cm) found in Rome, in 1785 in a cave by the Tiber River, together with the previous one. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani.

The statue represents a torchbearer (possibly Cautopates), dressed in the usual attire. The left arm and the left foot are modern restorations. The statue has been restored as Paris, as well as his twin preserved in the British Museum (see previous number).

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 27); CIMRM 507.

208. Fragment of marble relief (30x35x12 cm) found in 1891 during construction works in via Borgo Vecchio. Currently lost.

Only the lower left corner of the relief was found. Visconti recognized the figure of Cautes, the bull's tail ending in ears, and part of Mithras' legs. The god is dressed in a long tunic fastened at the waist with a band.

References: Visconti 1891 (p. 296); TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 24); TMMM2 CIMRM 456.

209.* Among the inscriptions collected in the *Phrygianum* of the Vatican hill, there are three which mention, among other religious titles, the Mithraic grade of the

devotee who dedicated them (209a, 209b, 209c), and two more (209d, 209e) which can be similarly integrated.

References: Apollonj Ghetti et al. 1951 (pp. 14-17); Castagnoli 1992 (pp. 71-80); Liverani 1999 (pp. 28-32, 127-8); Liverani 2008; Cameron 2011 (pp. 144-152).

209a. Marble base with inscription found in 1609 under the façade of S. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City, 13th May 377 CE. Currently lost.

M(atri) D(eum) M(agnae) I(daeae) | et Attidi Meno | tyranno conser | vatoris
suis Cae | lius Hilarianus v(ir) c(larissimus) | duodecimbyr | urbis Romae |
p(ater) s(acrorum) et hieroceryx | I(nvicti) M(ithrae) s(acerdos) d(ei)
L(iberi) s(acerdos) d(eae) | Hecate | d(omino) n(ostro) Gratiano Aug(usto) |
et Merobaude | cons(ulibus) III Idus | Maias

To the Great Mother of the Gods from the Ida and to Attis *menotyrannus*, her follower. *Caelius Hilarianus*, *vir clarissimus*, *duodecemvir* of the city of Rome, *pater sacrorum* and *hieroceryx* of the unconquered Mithras, priest of the god Liber, priest of the goddess Hecate. On the 13th of May, when our Emperor Gratianus Augustus and Merobaude were consules.

References: CIL VI 500 = CIL VI 30779; ILS 4148; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 19); CCCA III 229; CMRDM I 24; CIMRM 513; Castagnoli 1992 (p. 72); Lanciani SSc5 (p. 50); Liverani 2008 (p. 41); Cameron 2011 (p. 145); EDR169592 (M. Butini).

209b. Marble base with inscription found together with the previous number, 13th August 376 CE. Currently lost.

Dis Magnis | Ulpus Egnatius Faventinus | v(ir) c(larissimus) augur
pub(licus) p(opuli) R(omani) Q(uiritium) | pater et hieroceryx d(ei) S(olis)
I(nvicti) M(ithrae) | archibucolus dei Liberi | hierofanta Hecatae sa | cerdos
Isidis percepto | taurobolio crioboluo(ue) | Idibus Augustis dd(ominis)
nn(ostris) duobus | Valente Aug(usto) V et Valentinia | no Aug(usto)
conss(ulibus) feliciter | vota Faventinus bis deni | suscipit orbis | ut mactet
repetens aurata | fronte bicornes

To the Great Gods. *Ulpus Egnatius Faventinus*, *vir clarissimus*, state *augur* of the Quirite people of Rome, *pater* and *hieroceryx* of Sol unconquered Mithras, *archibucolus* of the god Liber, hierophant of Hecate, priest of Isis, who received the *taurobolium* and the *criobolium*. On the 13th of August, when our Emperors were consules, Valens (for the 5th time) and Valentinianus (for the 1st time). *Faventinus* took his vows for the vicennial of the Emperor of sacrificing the horned animals hitting their golden head with good outcome.

The expression *bis deni orbis* translated with 'for the vicennial of the Emperor' refers to the vows Faventinus took at the beginning of the second decade of reign of the Emperor Valentinianus.

References: CIL VI 504 = CIL VI 30779; ILS 4153; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 20); CIMRM 514; CCCA III 233; Mandowsky and Mitchell 1963 (p. 67, pl. 16); SIRIS 457; RICIS II 501/208; Castagnoli 1992 (p. 73); Stenhouse 2002 (pp. 60-61); Liverani 2008 (p. 41); Orlandi 2008 (p. 55); Cameron 2011 (p. 144); EDR151218 (A. Ferraro).

209c. Marble base (h. 111 cm) with inscription found in under S. Peter's Basilica square in Vatican City, 19th July 374 CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani – Museo Gregoriano Profano (inv. MV 9937).

Di{i}s Magnis | M(atri) D(eum) M(agnae) I(daeae) et | Attidi sancto
Menotyranno | Alfenius Cepionius (!) Iulianus | Kamenius v(ir)
c(larissimus) VII(vir) epu(lonum) | pater et hieroceryx sacr(orum) S(olis)
I(nvicti) | Mitrae hierofanta Haicatae (!) | arch(i)bucolus dei Liberi | aram
taurobolio criobolio | que percepto dicabit | die XIII Kal(endas) Aug(ustas)
d(omino) n(ostro) Gratiano | Aug(usto) III et Equitio cons(ulibus)

To the Great Gods, to the Great Mother of the Gods from the Ida, and to Attis, holy *menotyranus*. *Afenius Ceionius Iulianus Kamenius*, *vir clarissimus*, *septemvir epulonum*, *pater sacrorum* and *hieroceryx* of mysteries of Sol unconquered Mithras, hierophant of Hecate, *archibucolus* of the god Liber, consecrated this altar after receiving the *taurobolium* and the *criobolium*. On the 19th of July, when our Emperor Gratianus (for the 3rd time) and Equitius were consules.

References: Apollonj Ghetti *et alii* 1951 (pp. 14-5); CMRDM I 27; CCCA III 241b; AE 1953, 238; CIMRM 515; Castagnoli 1992 (p. 75); Liverani 2008 (p. 41); Cameron 2011 (p. 146); Liverani 2016 (p. 72); EDR073947 (A. Carapellucci).

209d. Fragmentary marble altar (h. 52 cm) with inscription found in 1949 by S. Lorenzo in piscibus church, 361-388 CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Antiquarium del Celio (inv. 6206).

Diis M[agnis] | M(atri) d(eum) M(agnae) I(daeae) et A[ttidi Meno] | tyranno
[Sextius Rus] | ticus v(ir) c(larissimus) [inlust] | ris pater pa[trum dei In] |
victi Mithr[ae ---] | -----

To the Great Gods, to the Great Mother of the Gods from the Ida, and to Attis, *menotyranus*. *Sextius Rusticus*, *vir clarissimus*, famous (?) *pater patrum* of the uncoquered god Mithras, ...

References: : Apollonj Ghetti *et alii* 1951 (p. 15); CMRDM I 26; CCCA III 240; AE 1953, 237; CIMRM 378; Bcom 1985 (p. 392); Castagnoli 1992 (p. 75); Liverani 2008 (p. 41); EDR073946 (A. Carapellucci).

209e. Fragmentary marble slab (pres. h. 55 cm) with inscription found in 1959 during construction works in the area of the old Vatican mint, 13th August 376 CE. Currently lost.

This slab was re-used to build a modern manhole.

----- | [--- Mi] | thrae sacerdos deae | Isidis hierfo(anta) Haicatae | taurobolio
criobolioq(ue) | percepto die Id(ibus) Aug(ustis) dd(ominis) nn(ostris) |
Valenti V et Valentiniano | Aug(ustis) co(n)ss(ulibus)

... of Mithras, priest of the goddess Isis, hierophant of Hecate, after receiving the *taurobolium* and the *criobolium*. On the 13th of August, when our Emperors were consules, Valens (for the 5th time) and Valentinianus (for the 1st time).

References: CCCA III 245a; Magi 1970; AE 1971, 35; Liverani 1999 (pp. 149-50); EDR075070 (A. Carapellucci).

Monuments found in Rome, without exact find-spot

210. Cylindrical altar with inscription found in S. Martino ai Monti church or in Santa Maria Traspontina, 3rd-4th century CE. Currently lost.

This monument survives thank to a drawing by P. Ligorio. A theory of garland and bucrania runs around the altar just under the inscription.

Deo Soli Invicto Mithre (!) | Fl(avius) Septimius Zosimus v(ir)
p(erfectissimus) | sacerdu(s) (!) Dei Brontontis | et Aecate (!) hoc speleum (!)
| constituit

To the god Sol unconquered Mithras. *Flavius Septimius Zosimus, vir perfectissimus*, priest of (Zeus) Brontontis and of Hecate, built this *spelaeum*.

References: CIL VI 733; ILS 4226; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 61); CIMRM 360; Mandowsky and Mitchell 1963 (pp. 60-1; pl. 10); Magister 1998 (pp. 174-5); Orlandi 2008 (p. 33).

211. White marble relief (93x74 cm) found in Rome, late 2nd – early 3rd century CE. It was preserved in the Altieri collection (Casino di Villa Altieri) for centuries, before coming in possession of the de Merode family. Currently preserved in Rome (private collection, de Merode family).

The relief has a concave shape and it is roughly worked on the back side. The subject is the tauroctony, but the iconographical scheme featured is quite unique: Mithras, dressed in the usual eastern attire, is represented in the center of the scene, in the cave, standing up triumphantly on the bull. He raises his right hand holding the dagger while in the left one he holds a globe. The bull is under the god's feet, dying, with head raised in the last spasm of agony. Two ears sprout from the tail of the animal. On the left of the scene, the snake and the dog run to leap at the blood spilling from the body of the bull. There is no trace of the scorpion. On the bottom right corner, beside the bull, a small palm tree is represented. On the left of the scene Cautes stands, while on the right Cautopates sits, in an unusual mourning pose. The raven is represented just above Cautes' head, perched on the rocky margin of the cave and looking at Mithras. Just beside the raven, and in front of Cautes' head, a scorpion is represented. On the top left corner, the bust of Sol is represented (an ear on his left), while on the opposite corner the bust of Luna (an undiscernible ear on her right), emerging from a crescent. Just under Sol, a lion emerging from a den is recognizable. A crowing rooster is figured just under Luna and moreover a small eagle holding a bundle of lightning bolts in its claws is represented just beside Cautopates. Palm trees are represented on the left and on the right of the scene. M.J. Vermaseren suggested that this monument could pertain Mithraeum **154**, but there is no extant proof of it.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 54); Vermaseren 1950; CIMRM 334; Vermaseren 1978 (p. 5); Candilio 2008.

212. White marble base (h. 142 cm) with inscription found in Rome, 1st February 387 CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano – Palazzo Altemps (inv. 80733).

On a band on top of the base:

Agorii

Statue of *Agorius*.

On the main side of the base:

Vettio Agorio Praetextato v(iro) c(larissimo) | Pontifici Vestae | pontifici Soli
| quindecemviro | auguri | tauroboliato | curiali | neocoro | hierofantae | patri
sacrorum | quaestori | candidato | praetori urbano | correctori Tus | ciae et
Umbriae | consulari | Lusitaniae | proconsuli | Achaiae | praefecto Urbi |
prae(fecto) praet(orio) II | Italiae et Illyrici | consuli | designato

To *Vettius Agorius Praetextatus*, *vir clarissimus*, *pontifex* of Vesta, *pontifex* of Sol, *quindecemvir*, *augur*, *tauroboliatus* (initiated to the cult of Cybele), *curialis* (of Heracles), *neocorus*, hierophant (of Hecate), *pater sacrorum* (of the unconquered Mithras), *quaestor*, *praetor urbanus*, governor of Tuscina ad Umbria, governor of Lusitania, governor of Achaia, praefectus Urbi, Praetorian prefect of Italia and Illyricum for the second time, designate *consul*.

On the right side of the base:

Dedicata Kal(endis) Febr(uariis) | d(omino) n(ostro) Fl(avio) Valentiniano
Aug(usto) III | et Eutropio cons(ulibus)

Consecrated on the 1st of February, when our Emperor Flavius Valentinianus (for the 3rd time) and Eutropius were *consules*.

References: CIL VI 1778; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 14); CIMRM 420; LSA 1473 (C. Machado); EDR126995 (C. Ferro).

213. White marble slab (24x58 cm) with inscription found in Rome, 209-211 CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani – Galleria Lapidaria (inv. MV6831).

D(is) M(anibus) | L(ucius) Septimius Auggg(ustorum trium) lib(ertus)
Archelaus | pater et sacerdos Invicti | Mithrae domus Augustanae | fecit sibi
et Cosiae Primitivae | coniugi bene merenti libertis liberta | busque
posterisq(ue) eorum

To the Manes gods. *Lucius Septimius Archelaus*, freedman of the three Augusti, *pater* and priest of the unconquered Mithras in the domus Augustana built (this tomb) willingly for himself and for his wife *Cosia Primitiva*, for the freedmen and freedwomen and for their descendants.

References: CIL VI 2271; ILS 4270; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 35); CIMRM 511; Bartoli 1958 (pp. 25-6); Hackethal 1968 (p. 246); ATLAS (p. 258).

214. White marble altar (h. 87,5 cm) with inscription found in Rome, late 2nd – early 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Verona, Museo Lapidario Maffeiiano (inv. 28572).

Deo | Invicto | Mithrae | C(aius) Lucretius Mnester | M(arcus) Aemilius Philetus | summag(istri) anni primi | M(arci) Aemili Chrysanti | d(e) s(uis) d(ono) d(ederunt)

To the unconquered god Mithras. *Caius Lucretius Mnester* (and) *Marcus Aemilius Philetus*, *summagistri* of the first year of *Marcus Aemilius Chrysantius*, gave as a gift at their own expenses.

On the right side of the altar a sheaf of three poppies is represented, on the left one a sheaf of five ears, while on the back a tree is figured.

References: CIL VI 734 = CIL VI 30822 = CIL V 429; ILS 4218; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 48); CIMRM 517; SupplIt Imagines - Roma 04, 4574; Mancini 1980 (p. 175); Modonesi 1995 (pp. 82-3); Stenhouse 2002 (p. 57); Orlandi 2008 (p. 29); EDR132968 (S. Ganzaroli).

215. Marble base with inscription, found possibly in Rome. Currently lost.

L(ucius) Valerius Megi[-] | p(ater) et sac(erdos) Invicto Mithr[ae]

Lucius Valerius Megi..., *pater* and *sacerdos* of the unconquered Mithras.

References: CIL VI 3727 = CIL VI 31045; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 36); CIMRM 622.

216. Fragment of Luna marble relief (65x85 cm) found in Rome, 125-175 CE. Currently preserved in Boston, Museum of Fine Arts (inv. 92.2692).

This relief was found in Rome, possibly by Ponte Palatino, and donated by E. Perry to the Museum of Fine Arts of Boston in 1892. Only the bottom left corner of the relief is preserved. Mithras, dressed in the usual attire rides the bull, and is caught in the act of raising a short sword to wound the throat of the bull while holding the animal by the muzzle. The dog (with collar) and the snake can be found at the usual places. There is no trace of the scorpion, of the raven or of the torchbearers. The top part of the relief is missing.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 67); CIMRM 607; Murley 2012 (pp. 308-310).

217. Fragmentary marble inscription (pres. h. 87 cm) found in Rome, mid 4th century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Casale Nicolai Santambrogio (vicolo delle Sette chiese, 123).

----- | [---iu]s Germa[nus ---] | [--- procurato]r August[i ---] | [volu]ntas mea
[---] | [---]onem cont[---] | [---]iam meam t[---] | [---]bus quem [---] | [---]er
meam [---] | [---]III Idus Se[ptembres] | [--- B]asso [---] | [---]o c(larissimo)
v(iro) cur[at]ore operum publicorum | [curant]ib(us) C(aio) Trebic[---] |
[sacerdot]e [---] | [dei] Solis In[victi Mithrae] | [---] T(itus) Obst(orius)
Callistus V[---] | [---] M(arcus) Aur(elius) Marianus [---] | [---]r Numm(ius)
Eleuthe[r ---] | [---] M(arcus) Aur(elius) Callicrat[es] | -----

...ius Germanus ... procurator of the Augustus, of my own will ... on the 3rd day before the Idus of September. With ... *Bassus*, vir clarissimus, curator of the public constructions, with the help of *Caius Trebic...* priest of the god Sol unconquered Mithras, ... *Titus Obstorius*, *Callistus V...*, *Marcus Aurelius Marianus*, ... *Nummius Eleuther...* *Marcus Aurelius Callicrates ...*

References: CIL VI 1222; SupplIt Imagines - Roma 05, 5183; EDR112723 (G. Crimi).

Monuments found in Rome surroundings

218. Fragmentary white marble group (h. 95 cm) found in 1925 in Rome (viale Latino, 200 m from Porta San Giovanni), late 2nd – early 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Capitolini (Centrale Montemartini deposit, inv. S2029). The group was discovered 6 m under the ground level: only its lower part was found. It stands on a trapezoidal base, worked to resemble the rocky floor of the cave. We can recognize Mithras' legs and right foot, dressed with a closed shoe, pressing the bull's hind leg to the ground. We can recognize also the terminal part of the god's cloak and of his short tunic. The bull's body is preserved with the exception of the head. The right foreleg and left hind leg are folded under the bull's body. The right foreleg is stretched backward and pressed to the ground by Mithras' foot. The left foreleg is at a right angle, trying to resist Mithras' push. A large band wraps the body of the bull (*dorsuale*): it preserved traces of gilding. On the right foreleg and on the left hind leg of the animal two small wreaths are recognizable. At the usual place we can recognize the scorpion, the snake and the dog (only its paws are preserved). Traces of gilding are recognizable also on Mithras' tunic. References: Gatti 1925b (pp. 301-303); Pietrangeli 1951 (p. 18); CIMRM 374.

219.* Inscription found by via Nomentana, in Villa Patrizi, 31st August 205 CE. Currently lost.

Soli In[victo] | Mitrir (!) | Ael(ius) Victorinu[s vet(eranus)] | Augg(ustorum) nn(ostrorum) ex be(neficiario) a[b Imp(eratore) n(ostro) | [miss(us)] omni honoris st[-] | d(ono) d(edit) dedic[avit] K(alendas) S[ep(tembres)] | Imp(eratore) Antonino Aug(usto) [II Geta Caes(are)] | co(n)s(ulibus) antis(ti)te M(arco) Aur(elio) Aug(usti) li[b(erto)] | Romulio h(uis) l(oci) sac(erdote)

To Sol unconquered Mithras. *Aelius Victorinus*, veteran of our Augusti, former *beneficiarius*, discharged by our Emperor with all the honours ... consecrated on the 31st of August while the Emperor Antoninus Augustus (for the second time) and Geta Caesar were consules, when *Marcus Aurelius Romulius* freedman of the Augustus was *sacerdos* and *antistes* of this place.

References: CIL VI 716; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 49); Durry 1938 (pp. 341-2); CIMRM 630; EDR175536 (E. Melmuzzi).

220. M.J. Vermaseren reported a piece of news from 1929, about a fragmentary representation of the tauroctony coming from a funerary zone in the Roman *suburbium*, found in an underground room. About the find-spot, his sources reported 'in Agurzano bei Ponte Mammolo an der via Tiburtina'. The Dutch scholar later suggested that the location should be more correctly identified with Aguzzano, along via Nomentana. Another source (Mr. F. Vettraio) told him that the relief was quite large (bigger than the Santa Prisca one) and that it was kept in the Museo Nazionale Romano. In the 1960s' it seemed this relief was lost.

References: CIMRM 640.

220bis.* Marble altar with inscription, found in the 17th century in Rome. Currently preserved in Cape Town, South Africa (private owner).

Ἡλίῳ Μίθρα | ἀστροβροντο | δααίμονι | Ναβαρζῆ | Εὐτυχὸς δῶρον

To Sol Mithras, divine lord of stars and thunder, Nabarze. Eutychos (gave) as a gift.

References: IG XIV 998; IGUR 125; Gordon 2006.

Monuments found possibly in Rome

221. Altar with inscription, found probably in Rome, 13th August 376 CE. Currently lost.

On the right of the altar a pine tree, flutes, a tiara and a ram were represented, while on the left another pine tree, a tympanum, a flute and a bull. On the back a *patera*, a torch and a vessel were represented. On the front side of the altar, the dedicatory inscription was engraved:

Dis | Magnis | Matri deum et Attidi Se | xtilius Agesilaus Aedesius | v(ir)
c(larissimus) causarum non ignobi | lis africani tribunalis ora | tor et in
consistorio | principum item magiste | r libellor(um) et cognition(um) |
sacrarum magister epistu | lar(um) magister memoriae | vicarius
praefector(um) per | Hiaspanias vice s(acra) c(cognoscens) pa | ter patrum
dei Solis Invi | cti Mithrae hierofanta | Hecatar(um) dei Liberi archi | bucolus
taurobolio | criobolioq(ue) in aeter | num renatus aram sacra | vit dd(ominis)
nn(osstris) Valen | te V et Valentiniano | Iun(iore) Augg(ustis) cons(ulibus)
Idib(us) | Augustis

To the Great Gods, to the Mother of the gods, and to Attis. *Sextilius Agesilaus Aedesius*, *vir clarissimus*, lawyer in the non-unworthy African forum, *magister libellorum*, *magister cognitionum*, and *magister sacrarum* of the Imperial council, *magister epistularum*, *magister memoriae*, *vicarius* of the praefect of the Hispaniae, judge representing the Emperor, *pater patrum* of the god Sol unconquered Mithras, hierophant of Hecate, *archibucolus* of the god Liber, reborn forever in the *taurobolium* and in the *criobolium*, consecrated (this) altar on the 13th of August when our Emperors Valens (for the 5th time) and Valentinianus Iunior were consules.

References: CIL VI 510; ILS 4252; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 17); CCCA III 242; CIMRM 520; EDR177167 (G. Crimi).

222. Base with inscription, found probably in Rome, 274-380 CE. Currently lost.

Iunio Postumiano v(iro) c(larissimo) p(atri) p(atrum) | dei Solis Invicti
Mithre | XVviro s(acris) f(aciundis) pontifici | dei Solis ordo sacer | dotum
magistro suo | curante et dedicante | Flavio Herculeo viro | religiosissimo

To *Iunius Postumianus*, *vir clarissimus*, *pater patrum* of the god Sol unconquered Mithras, *quindecimvir sacris faciundis*, *pontifex* of the god Sol. The order of the priests (dedicated) to his master, and *Flavius Hercules*, the most pious men, took care of and consecrated it.

References: CIL VI 2151; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 18); CIMRM 521; Orlandi 2008 (p. 32); LSA 1488 (C. Machado); EDR126711 (S. Orlandi).

223. Altar with inscription, found probably in Rome, 12th March 377 CE. Currently lost.

M(atri) d(eum) M(agna) Id(ae) et Attidi Menoturan(n)o s(acrum) | nobilis
in causis forma celsusq(ue) Sabinus | hic pater Invicti mystica victor habet |
sermo duos [---] reservans | consimiles aufert [---] | et veneranda movet
Cibeles Triodeia signa | augentur meritis simbola tauroboli | Ruf(ius)
Cae(i)oni(us) Cae(ioni) Sabini f(ilius) v(ir) c(larissimus) p(ontifex) m(aior)
hierof(anta) d(eae) Hecat(ae) aug(ur) | pub(licus) p(opuli) R(omani)
Q(uiritium) pater sacror(um) Invict(i) Methrae tauroboliatus | M(atrix)
d(eum) M(agna) Id(ae) et Attidis Minoturan(n)i et aram III Id(us)
Mart(ias) | Gratiano V et Merobaude consulibus dedicabit | antiqua generose
domo cui regia Vestae | pontifici felix sacrato militat igne | idem augur
triplicis cultor venerandae Dianae | Persidiciq(ue) Mithrae antistes
Babilonie templi | tauroboliq(ue) simul magni dux mystice sacri

Consecrated to the Mother of the gods from the Ida and to Attis *menotirannus*. The noble and gentle-looking *Sabinus*, *pater* of the Unconquered (god), conqueror of the sacred mysteries. Two speeches And the venerable Hecate moves the images of Cybele, (and) the symbols of the taurobolium are strengthened with their benefits. *Rufius Ceionius Sabinus*, son of *Ceionius Sabinus*, *vir clarissimus*, *pontifex maximus*, hierophant of Hecate, state *augur* of the Quirite people of Rome, *pater sacrorum* of the unconquered Mithras, *tauroboliatus* of the Great Mother of the gods from the Ida and of Attis *menotirannus*, consecrated (this) altar on the 12th of March when Gratianus (for the 5th time) and Merobaude were consules. Generously in the ancient regia, for which *pontifex* he happy serves with the sacred fire of Vesta, equally he is *augur*, and devotee of the triple venerable Diana and of the Persian Mithras, priest of the Babylonian temple (of Bel), and at the same time chief of the great and saint *taurobolium* in a mystic way.

References: CIL VI 511; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 21); CCCA III 243; CIMRM 522; Mandowski and Mitchell 1963 (p. 68, pl. 17); Stenhouse 2002 (pp. 226-7); Orlandi 2008 (p. 56); EDR147399 (S. Orlandi).

224. Altar with inscription, found probably in Rome, 15th April 313 CE. Currently lost.

Dd(ominis) nn(ostris) Constantino et | Maximino Augg(ustis) III
co(n)s(ulibu)s | C(aius) Magius Donatus | Severianus v(ir) c(larissimus) |
pater sacrorum | Invicti Mithrae | hierophantes | Liberi Patris et | Hacatarum
[t]au | robolium feci | XVII K[a]l(endas) Maias

When our Emperors Constantine (for the first time) and Maximinus (for the third time) were consules, *Caius Magius Donatus Severianus*, *vir clarissimus*, *pater sacrorum* of the unconquered Mithras, hierophans of Liber Pater and of Hecates, *tauroboliatus*, built (this monument) on the 15th of April.

References: CIL VI 507; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 22); CCCA III 234; CIMRM 523; EDR176880 (G. Crimi).

225. Altar with inscription, found probably in Rome, 16th June 370 CE. Currently lost.

On the left of the altar two scenes were carved: on top, Cybele seated in a chariot is pulled by two lions, whereas on bottom a bull walks to the right. On the right of the altar, Attis was represented: he stands, wearing his usual attire and Phrygian hat. He holds in his right a *syrinx* whereas in his left a shepherd's crook. A dog sits beside his feet. On the main side of the altar, the following inscription was engraved:

Μητέρι τῆ πάντων Ῥεΐη [θείῳ] τε γενέθλω | Ἄττει θ' ὑψίστω καὶ συ[νέχο]ντι
τὸ πᾶν | τῷ πᾶσιν καιροῖς θεμε[ρώτε]ρα πάντα φύοντι | κριοβόλου τελετῆς
ἡ[δ' ἔτι τ]αυροβόλου | μυστιπόλος τελετῶν [ιερῶν ἀ]νεθήκατο βωμὸν |
δῶρον Ἀπόλλωνος [τοῦνομ'] ἔχων ἐπίκλην

Petronius Apol[l]odorus v(ir) c(larissimus) | pontif(ex) maior X[Vvir
s]acr(is) fac(iundis) | pater sacr(orum) dei In[vic]ti Mithrae | taurobolio
crio[boli]oq(ue) percepto | una cum Ruf(ina) Vol[usi]ana c(larissima)
f(emina) con | iuge XVI Kal(endas) Iu[l]ias dd(ominis) nn(ostris) |
Valentiniano et Val[ente] augg(ustis) co(n)ss(ulibus) || aram dic[a]vit

To Rhea the Mother of all the gods, and to the offspring Attis, highest and who encompasses everything, producer of all seasons and steady things. The devotee who holds the same name of Apollo, initiated to the *criobolium* and the *taurobolium*, who performs the sacred mysteries, consecrated (this) altar as a gift.

Petronius Apollodorus, vir clarissimus, pontifex maior, quindecimvir sacris faciundis, pater sacrorum of the unconquered god Mithras, who received the *taurobolium* and the *criobolium*, consecrated (this altar) together with his wife *Rufina Volusiana, femina clarissima*, on the 16th of June when our Emperors Valentinianus and Valens were consules.

Under the inscriptions, two crossed torches were represented. Beside those a patera, an urceus, and a shepherd's crook.

References: CIL VI 509; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 23); CCA III 236; IG XIV 1018; IGUR I 129; CIMRM 524; Mandowski and Mitchell 1963 (p. 107, pl. 62); Orlandi 2008 (p. 379); EDR106599 (G. Tozzi).

226. Marble base (h. 124 cm) with inscription, found probably in Rome, 25th June 194 CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani – Galleria Lapidaria (inv. MV9308).

Numini Invicto | Soli Mithrae | M(arcus) Aurelius Aug(usti) l(ibertus) |
Euprepes una cum | fili(i)s suis d(ono) d(edit) | sacerdote Calpurnio |
Ianuario dedicata | VII Kal(endas) Maias imp(eratore) | L(ucio) Septimio
Severo Pertin(ace) II | [[D(ecio) Cl(audio) Septimio Albino]] II |
co(n)ss(ulibus)

To the *numen*, the unconquered Sol Mithras. *Marcus Aurelius Euprepes*, freedman of the Augustus, together with his sons gave as a gift while *Calpurnius Ianuarius* was *sacerdos*. Dedicated on the 25th of June when the Emperor *Lucius Septimius Severus Pertinax* and *Decius Claudius Septimius Albinus* were consules for the second time.

The inscription is engraved on the side of a base. On top of it a lower cylindrical base is placed. It is encircled by a crested snake which bites its own tail. A statue was presumably set up on top of this monument.

References: CIL VI 724; ILS 4204; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 29; *mon. fig.* 25); CIMRM 525-526.

227. Marble base (h. cm) with inscription, found probably in Rome, 2nd June 184 CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani – Galleria Lapidaria (MV 2740).

M(arcus) Aurelius | Aug(usti) l(ibertus) Euprepes | Soli Invicto Mi | thrae
aram | ex viso posuit | prosidentibus Bi | ctorino patre et Ia | nuario dedicata
| IIII Non(as) Iunias L(ucio) Eggi | o Maryllo et Gn(aeo) Papi | rio Ailiano
c[o](n)s(ulibus)

Marcus Aurelius Euprepes, freedman of the Augustus, set up this altar to Sol unconquered Mithras as ordered by the god himself, while the *pater Victorinus* and *Ianuarius* were *proidentes*. Dedicated on the 2nd of June, when *Lucius Eggius Marullus* and *Gnaeus Papirius Ailianus* were *consules*.

References: CIL VI 723; ILS 4203; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 28); CIMRM 527.

228. Marble altar (h. 96 cm) with inscription, found probably in Rome. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani – Galleria Lapidaria (MV 9309).

Soli Invicto | Mithrae | Vestalis | Caes(aris) n(ostri) ser(vus) | et C(aius)
Vettius | Augustalis | d(ono) d(ederunt)

To Sol unconquered Mithras. *Vestalis*, slave of our Caesar, and *Caius Vettius Augustalis* gave as a gift.

References: CIL VI 744; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 67); CIMRM 528.

229. White marble relief (50x60 cm) with tauroctony, found probably in Rome. Currently preserved in Rome, Villa Massimo (via Boiardo 16; private collection). This relief was preserved in the Casino Giustiniani at the end of the 18th century and later it was moved to Palazzo Massimi-Lancelotti where it was preserved in the mid-20th century.

The relief features the usual tauroctony representation. Inside the cave, Mithras plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The dog, the snake, and the scorpion can be recognized at the usual places whereas the raven can be seen on the left, perched on the rocky margin of the cave. The two torchbearers flank the scene: *Cautes* on the left, and *Cautopates* on the right. The busts of Sol and Luna can be seen on the top left and right corner of the relief. The relief was very badly damaged by weathering.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 45); CIMRM 529.

230. White marble relief (82x166 cm) with tauroctony, found probably in Rome. This relief was part of the Giustiniani collection since at least the 1630s. It was preserved in Palazzo Giustiniani from the end of the 18th century to the first decades of the 20th century. This relief is testified by the drawing contained in the *Galleria Giustiniana* (vol. 2, pl. 82). The usual subjects of the tauroctony scene are presented: in the centre, Mithras wounds the bull with his dagger, whereas the scorpion, the snake, and the dog are represented at the usual places. The torchbearers (*Cautes* on the left, *Cautopates* on the right) flank the scene. The raven, Sol and Luna are missing: it seems possible that all of the top part of the relief was lost in antiquity.

Two peculiar details are worth noticing: a crater is represented beside Cautes' feet and Mithras grasps the bull by its left horn.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 68); CIMRM 530.

231. White marble group (h. 92 cm) with tauroctony, found probably in Rome, 4th century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano – Terme di Diocleziano (inv. 35196).

This group was part of the Musaeum Kircherianum collection, and in the late 19th century it was incorporated in the Museo Nazionale Romano collection, where it is preserved nowadays. The group represents the usual tauroctony scene. On an oval base, sculpted in resemblance of the rocky surface of the cave, Mithras plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull, while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The god is dressed in his usual eastern attire and faces away from the bull. The dog and the snake run to leap at the blood spilt from the fresh wound on the bull's neck, whereas the scorpion can be found at the usual place. A peculiar feature can be observed in the positioning of Mithras' right foot. The foot of the god stomps the hind leg of the bull as usual, even if the hind leg of the bull is not stretched out, but folded almost under the body of the animal. This shift results in an almost vertical stance for the god. Traces of polychromy can be noticed on the garments of the god. References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 43); CIMRM 531.

232. White marble relief (102x65 cm) with tauroctony, found probably in Rome, second half of the 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Galleria Doria Pamphilj.

This relief was preserved in the collection of Villa Doria Pamphilj. It features the usual tauroctony scene. In the centre, in a naturalistic cave, we can recognize Mithras, dressed in his usual attire, who plunges the dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The god faces away from the bull, slightly backward. The bull is pressed to the ground, and three ears sprout from its tail. At the usual places we can recognize the scorpion, the snake and the dog. The raven is perched on the flying cloak of Mithras. On the left of the scene we can recognize Cautes, cross-legged, dressed in the usual attire. Beside his feet we can recognize a rooster and a pinecone. On the right of the scene Cautopates stands cross-legged; beside his feet a bundle of ears and a sickle are sculpted. Outside the cave, on the top left corner we recognize Sol, driving his chariot pulled by four horses while on the opposite corner there is Luna, who also drives her chariot pulled by two oxen.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 44); CIMRM 532; Calza 1977 (pp. 114-5, t. LXXXVIII).

233. White marble relief (70x96 cm) with tauroctony, found probably in Rome. Currently lost.

This relief was preserved in Palazzo Gioia, then in Palazzo Buratti-Alberoni and finally in Palazzo Vaccari. It was lost already in the mid-20th century. The relief survives thank to the drawing by P. della Torre. It features the usual tauroctony scene: in the center of the cave, Mithras plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The dog, the snake, and the scorpion can be found at the usual place. The raven is perched on Mithras' flying cloak. The torchbearers flank the scene: Cautes on the left, cross-legged, and Cautopates on the right. On the upper corners there are the busts of Sol and of Luna. They both

look to the right and show a quite unusual small dimension compared to the other subjects.

References: Della Torre 1724 (p. 159); TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 46); CIMRM 533; Mangiafesta 2015 (pp. 480-1).

234. White marble relief (95x185 cm) with tauroctony, found probably in Rome. Currently preserved in Rome, Palazzo Mattei.

This relief was part of the Palazzo Mattei collection at least from the end of the 18th century. The relief features the usual tauroctony scene. In the centre of the cave we can recognize Mithras plunging his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping at the animal by the nostrils. Three ears sprout from the tail of the bull. The scorpion (hardly visible), the snake and the dog can be found at the usual places. The raven is perched on the rocky margin of the cave. On the left of the scene Cautes stands whereas on the right is Cautopates, cross-legged. The upper part of the relief and Mithras' head are modern restorations.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 47); CIMRM 534; Guerrini 1982 (pp. 159-60; t. LXXXVIII).

235. Fragmentary marble group (pres. H. 51,5 cm) with tauroctony, found probably in Rome, late 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, San Saba church.

This marble group was preserved in the Collegio Germanico collection at least from the late 19th century CE. Only the base and part of the body of the bull are currently preserved. Part of the body of the snake and the left knee of Mithras are recognizable too. In the Matz-Duhn catalogue it was mentioned also the left hand of Mithras which grasped the nostrils of the bull, but I was not able to find it. On the front of the base part of the dedicatory inscription is preserved:

Deum sibi [---] sua pecunia

To the god, for his own ... with his own money.

The other inscriptions engraved on the body of the bull are all contemporary graffiti.

References: CIL VI 31049; TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 48); CIMRM 535-536; Bonanno Aravantinos 2012.

236. White marble relief (26x28 cm) with tauroctony, found probably in Rome. Currently preserved in Rome, Palazzo Rondinini.

This relief was preserved in Palazzo Rondinini from at least the end of the 18th century. The relief is currently framed by a round moulding: it is thus not possible to know its original shape, which could have been rectangular as usual. Mithras, dressed in his usual attire, plunges the dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. Beside the bull, at the usual places, the snake, the dog and the scorpion can be seen.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 49); CIMRM 537; Paribeni 1964 (p. 226, cat. 38).

237. Relief with tauroctony and inscription, found probably in Rome. Currently lost.

The relief was reported in the collection of Villa Wolkonski, but is currently lost.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 52); CIMRM 539; Bucolo 2020 (p. 112).

238. White marble relief (67x63 cm) with tauroctony, found probably in Rome. Currently preserved in Villa Wolkonski.

The relief features the usual tauroctony scene. In the centre of the cave Mithras, dressed in his usual attire, plunges the dagger in the shoulder of the bull, while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The dog, the snake, and the scorpion can be seen at the usual places, whereas the raven is perched on the left on the rocky margin of the cave. The torchbearers can be seen flanking the tauroctony: Cautes on the left whereas Cautopates on the right. The busts of Sol and Luna in the top left and right corner complete the scene.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 53); CIMRM 540; Bucolo 2020 (pp. 111-2).

239. White marble relief (120x100 cm) with tauroctony, found probably in Rome. Currently preserved in Rome, Villa Albani (?).

Usual tauroctony scene: Mithras, the bull (two ears from its tail), the scorpion, the snake, the dog. An ant beside the scorpion. The raven on Mithras' cloak. The busts of Sol and Luna on the top left and right corners. This description relies on Vermaseren's entry: I was not able to trace this monument.

References: Morcelli, Fea, and Visconti 1869 (pp. 127-8); TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 38); CIMRM 542.

240. White marble relief (28x78 cm) with Aion, found probably in Rome, late 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Torlonia collection/Villa Albani (?).

The relief features a naked male figure with lion head, standing on a globe which is encircled by two bands. The body of the figure is encircled in six spires by a snake, which comes to rest its head on top of the lion head. The lion head is represented with open mouth: a hole is cut in the opening. The figure has two pair of wings: one at the shoulders, one at the waist. In the right hand he holds a long scepter whereas in the left one a key. On the top left corner of the relief a star is represented. This description relies on Vermaseren's entry: I was not able to trace this monument.

References: Morcelli, Fea, and Visconti 1869 (p. 82); TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 39); CIMRM 543; Bortolin 2012 (p. 267).

241. White marble statue (h. 59 cm) with Aion, found probably in Rome, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Torlonia collection/Villa Albani (?).

The statue features a male figure with lion head, standing on a cone decorated with a lunar crescent. His feet are claws. He keeps his hand pressed alongside the chest: in each one he holds a key. His mouth is pierced by a hole. His body is encircled in seven spires by a snake, which rests its head on the lion head. On the chest of the figure a bundle of lightning bolts is represented. This description relies on Vermaseren's entry: I was not able to trace this monument.

References: Morcelli, Fea, and Visconti 1869 (p. 83); TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 40); CIMRM 544; Bortolin 2012 (p. 251).

242. Fragmentary marble (Bigio antico) statue (h. 155 cm) with Aion, found probably in Rome, late 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani – Biblioteca Vaticana.

The statue represents the bust of a naked male figure, frontal, preserved from the knees to the neck. The right arm is pressed on the side of the chest and preserved almost till the elbow. The body is encircled in three coils by a snake. On the upper part of the chest, two low reliefs representing the two zodiacal signs of Aries and Libra signs are visible. On the upper part of the thighs instead we can recognize

Cancer and Capricorn. The statue has been restored in the 18th century with the integration of the missing parts, giving him a lion head and a globe as a pedestal. References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 37); CIMRM 545; Bortolin 2012 (p. 244).

243. White marble relief (76x75 cm) with tauroctony and inscription, found probably in Rome, mid 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani – Cortile Belvedere (inv. MV870).

The relief was bought by the Vatican Collection between 1775 and 1792. It features the tauroctony scene. Inside a rocky arch resembling a natural cave, Mithras, dressed in eastern attire but without shoes, plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. Behind the flying cloak of the god, two objects emerge: a bow and a quiver. The bull is pressed to the ground and from its tail three ears sprout. The dog and the snake can be seen at the usual places. The raven is on the left, perched on the rocky margin of the cave. The scorpion is not at the usual place: it could possibly be recognized under the dog. On the top left corner, we can recognize Sol's bust, with radiate crown, whereas on the opposite corner the bust of Luna, emerging from a crescent with two stars. The absence of the torchbearers is quite unusual, but the extreme left and right bands seem to have been compromised possibly still in antiquity.

Under the relief is placed a dedicatory inscription which can be dated between the end of the 2nd and the beginning of the 3rd century CE. It reads:

Soli Invicto deo | Atimetus Augg(ustorum) nn(ostrorum) ser(vus) act(or) |
praediorum Romanianorum

To Sol the unconquered god. *Atimetus*, slave of our Augusti, overseer of the public estates.

References: CIL VI 721 = CIL VI 30820; ILS 1615; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 68; *mon. fig.* 29); CIMRM 546-547; Carlsen 1995 (pp. 130-1); Spinola 1996 (pp. 81-2); EDR129096 (S. Meloni).

244. White marble statue (h. 150 cm) with tauroctony, found probably in Rome, second half of the 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani – Museo Pio Clementino (inv. MV437).

This group was part of Mr. Pacetti private collection (last decades of the 18th century), then Mr. Franzoni restored it and sold the statue to the Vatican Collection between 1775 and 1792. The group represents the tauroctony scene. Mithras, dressed in his usual eastern attire (the lack of the shoe at the right foot is due to a wrongful restoration), plunges the dagger in the shoulder of the bull. The snake, the dog and the scorpion can be found at the usual places. Mithras' head, cloak, right foot, arms and hands are modern restorations as well as the bull's tail and muzzle, forelegs, part of the right hind leg, parts of the dog and of the snake.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 28); CIMRM 548; Spinola 1996 (p. 176); Spinola 2003 (pp. 29-30, 100-101); González-Palacios 2013 (p. 278).

245. Fragmentary white marble relief (20x29 cm) with tauroctony, found probably in Rome. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani – Museo Gregoriano Profano (inv. MV9918).

Only the right and top part of the relief is preserved. We can recognize the bull, grasped by the nostrils by Mithras. On the right Cautopates stands, looking away

from the scene. On the top right corner, the head of Luna is represented emerging from a crescent.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 33); CIMRM 549.

246. Fragmentary white marble statue (h. 42 cm) with Aion, found probably in Rome. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani – Museo Gregoriano Profano (inv. MV9900).

On a square base a standing male figure with lion head is represented. On his back two pair of wings are attached. His feet are human. The forearms were stretched forward, but are now lost. Traces of red polychromy are recognizable on the surface of the monument.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 34); CIMRM 550; Bortolin 2012 (p. 256).

247. White marble statue (h. 79 cm) with Aion, found probably in Rome, late 2nd – early 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani – Museo Gregoriano Profano (inv. MV9900).

The statue represents a male figure with lion head standing on a half globe. He is naked, except for a thin cloth around his loins and legs, fastened with a knot on the lower abdomen. His body is encircled in four spires by a snake which rests its head on top of the lion head. The figure keeps his hands pressed on the chest, holding a key in each one.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 35); CIMRM 551; Bortolin 2012 (p. 249).

248. Fragmentary marble inscription (pres. h. 34 cm), found probably in Rome, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani – Galleria Lapidaria (inv. MV6824).

This inscription was part of the Capponi Collection and was bequested to the Vatican Collection in 1746. This piece consists in the top right part of a marble slab which possibly crowned the cult image. Half of an arch with inscription is preserved as well as an *akroterion* on the right margin. A chariot pulled by two running horses and driven by Luna is represented within this *akroterion*. The inscription reads:

[-]nvinci numinis Mithrae | [- aedicula]m cum culumnis d(ono) d(edit)

... of the unconquered *numen* Mithras, gave as a gift a niche with columns.

References: CIL VI 747; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 52; *mon. fig.* 36); CIMRM 552-553.

249. White marble relief (75x43 cm) with tauroctony and inscription, found probably in Rome, second half of the 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani – Museo Pio Clementino (inv. MV422).

This relief was bought by the Vatican Collection between 1775 and 1792. In the centre of the cave Mithras plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The god is dressed in his usual eastern attire and faces away from the bull. The bull is pressed to the ground and from its tail three ears sprout. On the right, the raven is perched on the rocky margin of the cave. The dog, the snake and the scorpion can be found at the usual places. On the top left corner, we can recognize Sol, with radiate crown, driving his chariot pulled by four horses to the right. On the top right corner there is Luna, with crescent crown,

driving her chariot pulled by two oxen to the right. There is no trace of the torchbearers. On the lower band of the relief a dedicatory inscription is engraved. At its beginning and end a stylized tree is represented, possibly a pine tree. The inscription reads:

Χρηστος πατή[ρ] και Γαῦρος ἐποίησαν

The *pater Chrestos* and *Gauros* made.

References: IGUR I 181; IG XIV 1272, 2115; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 39; *mon. fig.* 31); CIMRM 554-555; Spinola 1996 (p. 176); González-Palacios 2013 (p. 277); PHI87815.

250. Marble group (bigio antico, h. 70 cm) with tauroctony, found probably in Rome. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani – Museo Pio Clementino (inv. MV358).

The group represents the tauroctony scene. Mithras plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The snake and the dog can be seen at the usual places, but there is no trace of the scorpion. On the left of the scene a bust emerges from a rock: it was restored as a female bust, but it should have been either Sol's bust.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 30); CIMRM 557; Spinola 1996 (pp. 155-6); González-Palacios 2013 (p. 241).

251. Marble reliefs (40x100 cm) with torchbearers. Currently preserved in Rome. Two reliefs featuring the Mithraic torchbearer (the torches were shaven off) were reported by F. Cumont. At the end of the 19th century they were preserved in Rome, Palazzo Corsetti. This description relies on Vermaseren's entry: I was not able to trace this monument.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 51); CIMRM 558.

252. Marble altar (h. 78 cm) with inscription, found probably in Rome, 183 CE. Currently preserved in Firenze, Palazzo Medici Riccardi.

Ara posita as{s}tante sacerdote Sex(to) | Creusina Secundo ut voverant Ma
| ximus et Maximinus filii Imp(eratore) Comm | odo Aug(usto) Pio Felice
III et Victorino II co(n)s(ulibus) || Soli Inbicto (!) Mitre (!) | M(arcus)
Ulp(ius) Maximus prae | positus tabellari | orum aram cum | suis ornamentis
| et bela (!) domini | insicnia (!) habentes | n(umero) IIII | ut voverat d(ono)
d(edit)

This altar was set up while the priest *Sextus Creusina Secundus* was present, by the sons *Maximus* and *Maximinus* for the fulfilment of a vow, while were consules the Emperor Commodus Augustus Pius Felix for the fourth time and *Victorinus* for the second time. To Sol unconquered Mithras. *Marcus Ulp(ius) Maximus, praepositus tabellariorum*, gave as a gift, as he vowed, an altar with its decorations, and four images of the god.

References: CIL VI 746; ILS 4202; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 51); CIMRM 563; SupplIt Imagines - Roma III 3960; EDR125148 (G. Crimi).

253. Travertine altar (h. 99 cm) with inscription, found probably in Rome, 154 or 177 CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani – Galleria Lapidaria (inv. MV9307).

The altar was part of the Villa Montalto collection. It became part of the Vatican Collection possibly in the last decades of the 18th century.

Soli Invicto | Mithrae | Victor vilicus | praedior(um) Maecianor(um) | d(ono)
d(edit) | et sacerdoti | M(arco) Stlaccio Rufo | dedicavit VII Id(us) April(es)
| Aur(elio) Commodo co(n)s(ule) | curante Hermete | conser(vo)

To Sol unconquered Mithras. *Victor*, slave overseer of the *Maecianii* estate, gave as a gift and dedicated while *Marcus Stlaccius Rufus* was priest, on the 7th day before the Idus of April, when Aurelius Commodus was consul, and his colleague *Hermes* took care of it.

References: CIL VI 745; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 53); CIMRM 564; Carlsen 1995 (pp. 83-4).

254. Marble slab (40x66 cm) with inscription, found probably in Rome, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani – Galleria Lapidaria (inv. MV6821).

This inscription was part of the card. Francesco Saverio Zelada collection, and was bought by the Vatican Collection in 1807.

Deo Soli Invicto | Mytrae Felix Messala | cum omnes sacratos (!) Catel | lus
et Dianus posuerunt

To the god Sol unconquered Mithras, *Felix Messala* with all the initiated devotees, *Catellus* and *Dianus* set up.

On the right and on the left of the inscription, a stylized pine tree is represented. The left one is topped by a stylized solar disk with rays.

References: CIL VI 730; ILS 4211; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 56); CIMRM 566.

255. Marble inscription found possibly in Rome, 181 CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani – Galleria Lapidaria.

This inscription was part of the card. Francesco Saverio Zelada collection, and was bought by the Vatican Collection in 1807.

L(ucius) Aur(elius) Severus sic ut | voverat Invictum | deum dedic(atum)
mens(e) Apr(ile) | Commodo Aug(usto) III et | L(ucio) Antistio Burro
co(n)s(ulibus) | [p]raes(idente) Domit(io) Marcellin(o) patr(e)

Lucius Aurelius Severus, as he vowed, dedicated (this monument) to the Unconquered god in the month of April when Commodus Augustus for the 3rd time and *Lucius Antistius Burrus* were consules, while *Domitius Marcellinus* was *pater* and *praesidens*.

References: CIL VI 725; ILS 4206; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 31); CIMRM 410.

256. Marble slab (ca. 26x46 cm) with inscription, found probably in Rome, 3rd-4th century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Capitolini (inv. NCE2089).

Brumasius | deo me(n)sa(m) posuit | Salbum | patre cum | [o]mnis by{y}ris
| [sa]cratis

Brumasius set up a dining table for the god, while *Salvus* was *pater*, together with all the fellow initiated devotees.

References: CIL VI 3722a = CIL VI 31038; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 57); Pietrangeli 1951 (p. 49); CIMRM 567; SupplIt Imagines - Roma I 1212; EDR119331 (G. Crimi).

257. Marble altar (h. 60 cm) with inscription found possibly in Rome, late 2nd – 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani – Galleria Lapidaria (inv. MV6807).

Only the frontal side of the manufact is preserved. It was part of the card. Alberoni collection, then it became part of the card. Passionei collection (18th century) and it was finally acquired by the Vatican Collection in 1771.

Soli Mithrae | aram d(ono) d(edit) | Ralonius | Diadumenus

To Sol Mithras. *Ralonius Diadumenus* gave (this) altar as a gift.

References: CIL VI 741; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 70); CIMRM 574.

258. Inscription found probably in Rome.

Sancto Invicto Mithrae | C(aius) Tullius Trophimianus | d(ono) d(edit)

To the holy unconquered Mithras. *Caius Tullius Trophimianus* gave as a gift.

References: CIL VI 3726 = CIL VI 31044; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 71); CIMRM 575.

259. Inscription found probably in Rome.

S(oli) In(victo) M(ithrae) | L(ucius) Domitius Frontinus | d(ono) d(edit)

To Sol unconquered Mithras. *Lucius Domitius Frontinus* gave as a gift.

References: CIL VI 31040; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 72); CIMRM 576.

260. Altar with inscription found probably in Rome.

Ἡλίῳ | Μίθρα | ἀνικῆ | τῷ

To Sol Mithras unconquered.

References: IGUR I 180; CIMRM 578.

261. White marble group (h. 110 cm), found probably in Rome, 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Venezia, Museo Archeologico (inv. 193).

The statue was bequeathed to the Venitian ambassador G. Zulian in 1793. Mithras, dressed in his usual attire, plunges the dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The god faces away from the scene. Ears sprout from the tail of the bull. At the usual places we can find the scorpion, the snake and

the dog (with collar). Mithras' arms and right foot, the muzzle of the bull, and its horns, ears and tail, part of the body of the snake and part of the base are modern restorations. Traces of polychromy are visible on the surfaces.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 56); CIMRM 584.

262. Bronze grip (h. 11 cm) with the shape of a Mithraic Aion. Private collection. This peculiar piece consists of a bronze grip crafted in the shape of a Mithraic Aion. The human male figure with lion head is encircled in the spires of a snake who rests its head on top of the lion head. The Aion holds in his hands a key and a dagger (in *Catalogue Pourtalès-Gorgier*) or torch (in Vermaseren).

References: *Catalogue Pourtalès-Gorgier* (p. 124); TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 75); CIMRM 589.

263. White marble group found possibly in Rome. Currently preserved in Dublin, Library of the Trinity College.

This group was once part of the Giustiniani collection. In 18xx it was acquired in Rome by dr. E. Hill and gifted to the Library of the Trinity College of Dublin, where it is currently preserved.

This group represents the birth of Mithras from the rock. The god is represented as a young man, sprouting from the rock from the waist up. The god poses in a peculiar stance: he raises his right arm (unfortunately his right forearm and hand are missing) whereas his left one is touching the rock he is sprouting from. He looks upward, to his raised hand. The two torchbearers flank the scene: Cautes is on the left, cross-legged, holding his torch with both hands, whereas Cautopates is on the right. He stands cross-legged, holds his torch in the left whereas he reaches his chin with the right hand in a gesture of awe. On the rock, just before Mithras, several objects are represented: a small triangular dagger, a bow and quiver, and an arrow. On the base of the group, a dedicatory inscription was engraved:

L(ucius) Fl(avius) Hermadion | hoc mihi libens | don(o) dedit

Lucius Flavius Hermadion gave me this willingly as a gift.

Beside the triangular dagger, just under Mithras' left hand, the word *nama* (hail!) was engraved.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 69); Vermaseren 1951 (pp. 346-349); CIMRM 590-591.

264. White marble group (h. 129 cm) with tauroctony, found probably in Rome, 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in London, British Museum (inv. 1825,0613.1).

This group was bought in Rome in 1815 by C. Standish, who then moved it to London, where it was bought by the British Museum in 1825. The group represents the usual tauroctony scene. On a rocky base Mithras, dressed in his usual attire (but without shoes), plunges the dagger in the shoulder of the bull. Blood spills from the wound. The dog, the snake, and the scorpion can be found at the usual places. The head of Mithras as well as his arms, great part of the dagger, the body of the dog, ears and horns of the bull are modern restorations.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 64); Smith 1904 (pp. 86-87, n. 1720); CIMRM 592.

265. White marble group (h. 77,5 cm) with tauroctony, found probably in Rome, 100-130 CE. Currently preserved in London, British Museum (inv. 1805,0703.270).

This statue was part of card. Farnese collection in the 16th century. It came into possession of the sculptor Mr. Giuseppini in the mid-18th century and in 1768 it was bought by C. Townley, whose collection was bought in 1805 by the British Museum. The group fettaures the tauroctony scene. On the right, on a smooth base, Mithras, dressed in his usual attire, plunges the dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. Three ears sprout from the wound. The dog, the snake and the scorpion can be seen at the usual places. On the left, behind the bull, the two torchbearers are represented. They are smaller than Mithras and the bull. Cautes holds his torch in the left hand and supports the tail of the animal with his right. On the extreme left Cautopates stands holding his torch with both hands. The heads of the torchbearers, the final part of the tail of the bull and part of the body of the snake are lost. A drawing attributed to C. Townley shows a bird juste between the bull and Cautes. This subject is currently missing, but it could have represented the last animal which usually accompanies Mithras' deed, that is the raven.

On the base of the group a dedicatory inscription is engraved:

Alcimus Ti(beri) Cl(audi) Liviani ser(vus) vil(i)c(us) Sol(i) Mi(thrae)
v(otum) s(olvit) d(ono) d(edit)

Alcimus, slave of *Tiberius Claudius Livianus*, fulfilled his vow and gave as a gift to Sol Mithras.

The text is repeated almost identical on the back of the statue:

Alcimus Ti(beri) Cl(audi) Liviani ser(vus) vil(i)c(us) S(oli) M(itthrae)
v(otum) s(olvit) d(ono) d(edit)

Alcimus, slave of *Tiberius Claudius Livianus*, fulfilled his vow and gave as a gift to Sol Mithras.

References: CIL VI 718 = CIL VI 30818; ILS 4199; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 69; *mon. fig.* 65); Smith 1904 (pp. 87-89, n. 1721); CIMRM 593-594; Gordon 1978 (p. 156); Carlsen 1995 (pp. 82-3); EDR133490 (S. Meloni).

266. Bronze statuette (h. 12,8 cm), found probably in Rome, 2nd-3rd century CE. Currently preserved in London, British Museum (inv. 1974,1201.4).

This bronze statuette came possibly from the Castellani Collection. The statue features Mithras, dressed in the usual attire and caught in the usual stance. His face looks at an indefinite point at the horizon. The bull and the other animals are missing.

References: Walters 1899 (p. 184); CIMRM 595.

267. White marble relief (163x187 cm) with tauroctony, found probably in Rome. Currently preserved in Paris, Louvre Museum (inv. 1024).

This relief was part of the Borghese Collection. It features the usual tauroctony scene.

References: Clarac 1841 (vol 2.1, p. 308, cat. 58 - n. 122); TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 57); CIMRM 586.

268. White marble relief (67x97 cm) with tauroctony found possibly in Rome. Currently preserved in Paris, Louvre Museum (inv. 1025).

This relief was part of the Borghese Collection. A thin band delimits the top and bottom of the scene. In the centre we can recognize Mithras, dressed in his usual attire, who plunges the dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The dog, the snake, and the scorpion can be seen at the usual places, whereas the raven is perched on the flying cloak of the god. The two torchbearers flank the scene: Cautes on the left and Cautopates on the right. The busts of Sol and Luna can be seen at the usual places on the top left and right corner of the representation.

References: Clarac 1841 (vol 2.1, p. 309, cat. 59 - n. 726); TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 58); CIMRM 588.

269. White marble group (h. 85 cm) found probably in Rome, late 2nd century CE. Currently preserved at Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek (inv. 716).

The group represents the usual tauroctony scene. Mithras, dressed in his usual attire, plunges the dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The dog, the snake and the scorpion can be found at the usual places.

References: CIMRM 596; Poulsen 1951 (pp. 259-60, n. 389).

270. Fragmentary white marble relief (76,5x37 cm) with tauroctony found possibly in Italy. Currently preserved at Copenhagen, Nationalmuseet (inv. 2229).

This relief was acquired by the Nationalmuseet in 1884 from the collection of the J.A. JERICHAULT. In the 1980s' the Danish fragment was associated by with another fragment preserved in Munich pertaining to the same monument. This second fragment of the relief is preserved at the Prähistorische Staatssammlung of Munich (inv. E1970.4). About their provenance, Vermaseren reported that the Danish fragment was located in JERICHAULT's workshop in Rome, but the Nationalmuseet was not able to confirm this piece of information. As for the fragment preserved in Munich, it is reported to come generically from northern Italy (*Oberitalien*). In the center of the cave we can recognize Mithras, dressed in the usual attire, who plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull, while grasping the animal by the nostrils. Three ears sprout from the tail of the bull. The snake and the scorpion can be found at the usual places, while the dog is located almost in front of the bull, at a higher place than usual. The tail of the raven can be recognized on the left: it should have been perched on the rocky margin of the cave. The two torchbearers flank the scene: both are inside the cave and stand cross-legged. Cautes is on the left, while Cautopates is on the right holding a quite long torch. On the top left corner, we can recognize the bust of Sol, with radiate crown, looking toward the centre of the cave. The bust of Luna is lost.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 66); CIMRM 597; Tamburini Müller 1985; Garbsch 1989a.

271. White marble relief (56x37 cm), found probably in Rome. Currently preserved in Brussels, KMKG (inv. 59 – former A909b).

This relief was bought in 1896 in Rome by F. CUMONT from a merchant who said the relief was dug up in a vineyard near between Porta Portese and San Pancrazio. Only the upper part of the relief is preserved. In the center of the cave Mithras plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The god faces backward at the raven that is perched on his flying cloak.

The torchbearers flank the scene: Cautopates on the left, Cautes on the right. Only the upper part of Cautopates is preserved. He is caught in the unusual gesture of bringing the left hand to his face, resting his chin on his hand. On the top left corner, the bust of Sol is recognizable. He wears the radiate crown, but his face is shaven off. On the opposite corner the bust of Luna is represented, a crescent behind her shoulders. Traces of polychromy are recognizable on the clothes of the figures and on the background of the cave.

References: Cumont 1913 (pp. 76-77); CIMRM 585.

272. Sandstone relief (28,5x45,5 cm) with tauroctony found possibly in Rome, 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Amsterdam.

This relief was donated to the Museum by the family of M.J. Vermaseren, who bought it in 1961 from a private collector (Mr. A. Csikszentmihályi). The collector reported that the relief came from Rome or from its immediate surroundings. The relief is actually made with a red sandstone quite common as raw material in the area of the Rhine around Frankfurt and Cologne. In the center of the cave Mithras, dressed in his usual attire (but without shoes), plunges the dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal under the muzzle. The dog, the snake and the scorpion can be found at the usual places. On the top left corner Sol drives his chariot pulled by four horses whereas on the opposite corner Luna drives her chariot pulled by two horses. There is no trace of the raven or of the torchbearers.

References: Vermaseren 1969 (pp. 643-5); Vermaseren 1982 (p. 2, note 1.5; pl. XXVI).

273. White marble relief (72x61 cm) with tauroctony found possibly in Rome. Currently preserved in Berlin, Staatliche Museen - Antikensammlung (inv. Sk 707). This relief was bought by E. Gerhard in Rome in 1835 for the Altes Museum Collection, where it is currently preserved. In the center of the cave Mithras, dressed in the usual attire, plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The dog (with collar), the snake and the scorpion can be recognized at the usual places. On the left of the scene the raven is perched on the rocky margin of the cave. In the top left corner of the relief the bust of Sol (with radiate crown) can be recognized, whereas on the opposite corner the bust of Luna is represented. In the lower part of the scene, just beside the bull and the other animals a female figure dressed in a long tunic is reclined, lying on her left elbow. She looks at the scene while holding a basket filled with fruit with her right hand. She should be identified with Tellus.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 60); CIMRM 598.

274. White marble statue (h. 29 cm) with Mithras *Petrogenitus*, found possibly in Rome. Currently preserved in Berlin, Staatliche Museen – Antikensammlung (inv. Sk 217).

This statue was bought in Rome by E. Gerhard and was in the Altes Museum Collection before WW2. Mithras is represented as a youth, emerging from the rock with his upper body. He is naked except for the Phrygian hat. His arms are outstretched and raised, but his hands are lost.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 62); CIMRM 599.

275. Fragmentary white marble statue (h. 27 cm) with tauroctony. Currently preserved in Berlin, Staatliche Museen – Antikensammlung (inv. Sk 216).

This small group represents the usual tauroctony scene, with Mithras wounding the bull and at the usual places the dog, the snake and the scorpion. The head of the god as well as his left hand, right arm, and part of the body of the dog are lost.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 61); CIMRM 601.

276. Fragment of bowl with tauroctony representation, probably found in Rome. Currently preserved in Bonn, Akademisches Kunstmuseum (inv. 671).

This vessel consists in a bowl (shape Hayes 53) of African red slip ware. Half of the vessel is preserved. We can recognize an applied decoration featuring the tauroctony scene. Mithras, dressed in his usual attire, plunges the dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the nostrils of the animal. The god looks backward. The other animals are not visible.

References: CIMRM 602; Garbsch 1989b.

277. White marble group (h. 125 cm) with tauroctony found possibly in Rome. Currently preserved in Warsaw, Warsaw National Museum (inv. 143396 MNW - MND 2215).

This group was part of the Borghese Collection. It was then transferred at the *Parc de Fontainebleau* and exhibited as a decorative element. It was moved to Paris in the last decades of the 19th century. It was at Salle de Paix in the Louvre Museum, and from the 1920s' it was moved in a storage. From 1960 the monument was deposited at the National Museum of Warsaw, where it is currently exhibited. The group represents the usual tauroctony scene: Mithras, dressed in the usual attire, plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull. At the usual places we can recognize the dog, the snake and the scorpion. The head of Mithras and his right forearm as well as the muzzle and left foreleg of the bull and the corresponding base, with part of the dog are modern restorations.

References: Clarac 1850 (vol 4, p. 27, cat. 1194); CIMRM 587.

278. Fragment of marble relief with tauroctony, acquired in Rome, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Krakow (inv. DMNK Cz.1968).

This fragment represents the left part of a larger relief. We can recognize on top the bust of Sol, with radiate crown. Cautus stands cross-legged, dressed in his usual attire, and holds the torch with both hands. Beside his feet a rooster can be recognized.

References: Hirsch 1970 (pp. 115-6, fig. 89); Vermaseren 1982 (p. 2, note 1.8; pl. XXIX).

279. White marble relief (37x32,5 cm) with tauroctony and inscription, found possibly in Rome, 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in St. Petersburg, Hermitage Museum (inv. 1711).

The relief features the usual tauroctony scene: Mithras, dressed in the usual attire, plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. Three ears sprout from the tail of the bull. A quiver is represented behind the god's left shoulder. At the usual places we can recognize the dog, the snake and the scorpion. The raven is on the left, perched on Mithras' flying cloak. There is no trace of the torchbearers or of the busts of Sol and Luna. A moulding encloses this representation. On the top and lower band of the relief, as well as on the plain background, a dedicatory inscription was engraved.

D(ono) deo Invicto d(ederunt) || Marci Matti | Fortuna | tus | et Alexander |
et Pardus | et Eficax || per Fl(avio) Alexandro patr[e]

Marcus Mattius Fortunatus and *Marcus Mattius Alexander*, and *Marcus Mattius Pardus*,
and *Marcus Mattius Efficax*, gave as a gift to the Unconquered god, while *Flavius
Alexander* was pater.

References: Ermitage Imperial 1865 (p. 21, n. 94); CIL VI 735; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 33; *mon. fig.* 65bis,
71); CIMRM 603-604; Mandovski and Mitchell 1963 (p. 59, pl. 8); Vermaseren 1982 (p. 3, note 1.9;
pl. XXX); Casamassima and Rubenstein 1993 (pp. 85-6); Russel 2007 (pp. 255, 257); Orlandi 2008
(p. 24); Mangiafesta 2015 (pp. 478-80); EDR161574 (A. Ferraro).

280. White marble relief (96,5x141 cm) with tauroctony, found possibly in Rome,
mid-2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Toronto, Royal Ontario Museum (inv.
927.68).

The right part of the relief is a modern restoration. The monument features the usual
tauroctony scene: in the centre of the cave Mithras, dressed in the usual attire,
plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the
nostrils. The dog (with collar), the snake and the scorpion can be found at the usual
places. On the left, the raven is perched on the rocky margin of the cave. The
torchbearers, both cross-legged and both holding a raised torch, flank the scene. On
the top left corner, the bust of Sol (with radiate crown) is recognizable, while on the
opposite corner the bust of Luna/Diana is represented (with a quiver emerging
behind her left shoulder).

References: CIMRM 606; Davidson and Beck 1980.

282.* Luna relief with tauroctony found possibly in Rome. Currently preserved in
Rome, private collection.

The relief features the usual tauroctony scene. In the center of the scene, Mithras,
dressed in his usual attire, plunges the dagger in the shoulder of the bull while
grasping the animal by the nostrils. The dog, the snake and the scorpion can be seen
at the usual places. The raven, on the left, looks toward Mithras. On the top left and
right corner, the busts of Sol and Luna can be seen, whereas the torchbearers flank
the scene. Cautopates stands on the left whereas Cautes on the right.

References: Lissi 1978; Vermaseren 1982 (p. 2, note 1.6; pl. XXVII).

283.* Fragmentary basalt group (h. 45 cm) with tauroctony, possibly found in
Rome. Currently preserved in Santa Barbara at Santa Museum of Arts (inv.
2002.31.1).

This monument was acquired in the 1970s at an antiquarian in Rome by a private
collector. It was then bequested to the Santa Barbara Museum in 2002 by S. Morton
Davidson. The group features the usual tauroctony scene. The head of Mithras is
missing. The god holds the bull by its throat.

References: Vermaseren 1982 (p. 2, note 1.3).

284. Fragment of Pentelic marble relief (50x28 cm) with tauroctony, possibly from
Rome, 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Baltimore, The Walters Art Museum
(inv. 23.238).

This monument was donated to the Museum in 1984 by M. Falk. Only a fragment
of the relief is preserved. It represents Cautopates (head and arms are missing) who

stands cross-legged. On his left a band with zodiacal sign can be recognized. It should have encircled the tauroctony scene. The signs run counterclockwise: part of the head of the Capricorn is recognizable, then the entire figure of the Sagittarius, and the tail of the Scorpion.

References: <https://art.thewalters.org/detail/33798/attendant-of-mithras-with-signs-of-the-zodiac/>

285. Limestone relief (62,5x95 cm) with tauroctony found possibly along via Praenestina, mid 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Cincinnati, Cincinnati Art Museum (inv. 1968:112).

This relief was acquired by the Cincinnati Art Museum in 1968. On a rocky background Mithras, dressed in the usual attire (but without shoes), plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while holding the animal by the throat. The dog, the snake and the scorpion can be found at the usual places. The bust of Sol (with a halo of rays) is represented in the top left corner, while the right one is missing. There is no trace of the raven or of the torchbearers.

References: Vermaseren 1982 (p. 2, note 1.4; pl. XXV).

Monuments with unknown find-spot, possibly from Italy

286. Marble relief (27x22 cm) with tauroctony, unknown provenance, 3rd century CE. Currently lost.

This relief was part of the Palagi collection, of the Civico Museo Archeologico of Bologna (inv. G 1051). It was part of the permanent exposition of the Museum until it was stolen in the 1970s. Inside an arched space that recalls the Mithraic cave we can recognize the usual tauroctony scene. Mithras, dressed in his usual attire, grasps the bull by the nostrils with his left hand while sinking the dagger in the shoulder of the animal with his right. The bull is pressed to the ground; the tongue protrudes from its muzzle. Its body is encircled in a band decorated with a garland. A single ear sprouts from its tail. The scorpion, the snake and the dog can be seen at the usual places, and the raven is perched on the margin of the rocky vault, on the left. The torchbearers flank the scene: Cautopates on the left and Cautes on the right. In front of Cautopates a tree and a scorpion are represented whereas in front of Cautes another tree and the head of a bull can be recognized. On the lower band of the relief three subjects are represented:

- a) Three people recline at a banquet. A small table is set in front of them. The first person is cloaked in a long mantle that leaves his chest bare. He is bearded. The other two are dressed in tunics and the last one wears a radiate crown.
- b) A winged naked child (Eros) drives a chariot to the right.
- c) A male bearded figure with long hair reclines on his left elbow. He is cloaked in a long mantle that leaves his chest bare.

On the arched band that delimits the cave the busts of seven deities are represented. From the left to the right we can recognize:

- a) Sol, with radiate crown, looking to the right.
- b) Saturn, bearded, looking to the right.
- c) Venus, with a diadem, looking to the right.
- d) Jupiter, in the center, frontal. He has long beard and hair and wears on top of his head a *kalathos*.
- e) Mercury, with winged *petasus*, looking to the left.
- f) Mars, with helmet, looking to the left.
- g) Luna, with a crescent on her forehead, looking to the left.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 106); Ducati 1923 (p. 69); CIMRM 693; Brizzolara 1977 (pp. 94-100).

287. White marble relief (71x48 cm) with Aion, unknown provenance, 2nd quarter of the 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Modena, Galleria Estense (inv. 2676). The provenance of this relief is quite uncertain: it was said it could come either from Modena or Rome. In the center of the relief a naked male figure stands, encircled in four spire by a snake. He holds in his right a bundle of lightning bolts and in his left a long scepter. Three animal heads are represented on his chest: a lion in the center, a goat on the left and a ram on the right. A pair of wings is attached at his shoulders. The figure rests his hoof-shaped feet on a half egg from which flames and the other half egg is placed over his head. Flames burst from this two half eggs. The figure is encircled by an oval band which hosts the representation of the twelve zodiacal signs. At the four corners of the relief the heads of the four Winds are

represented. Inside the oval band, on the left of the figure's legs, an inscription was engraved, and erased. Some letters are still recognizable:

[[IIIII ROSY| N[...] I IIIX | ----- | -----]]

Outside the band, a dedicatory inscription reads:

P(ater) p(atrum) | Felix pater

The father of fathers *Felix pater* (gave).

This representation mixes some typical elements of the Mithriac Aion (the snake acircling the body of the deity, the scepter and bundle of lightning bolts,) with some elements of the Gnostic Phanes (the flaming egg, the zodiacal belt).

References: Cavedoni 1863; Cumont 1902; Nilsson 1945; CIMRM 695-696; Mastrocinque 1998 (p. 102, note 351); Bortolin 2012 (pp. 232-4); Osek 2018 (with further references).

288. Fragmentary white marble group (h. 37 cm) with tauroctony, unknown provenance. Currently preserved in Firenze, Palazzo Corsini.

The group features a fragmentary tauroctony scene and it is heavily restored. Only the upper part of Mithras is preserved, as well as the hindmost part of the bull. The scorpion is still visible at the usual place.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 103); Ross Taylor 1923 (p. 215); Cumont 1937 (p. 96); CIMRM 664.

289. Luna marble statue (h. 114 cm) with Aion, unknown provenance, mid-3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Firenze, Galleria degli Uffizi (deposit, inv. 386).

This statue was bought in 1824 by the Galleria degli Uffizi from the Borgo-Antella collection. A male figure with lion head stands on a half globe. This globe is encircled by a band which bears the representation of the zodiacal signs *pisces*, *scorpio* and *libra*. The Aion shows an open mouth and is dressed in a long-sleeved tunic. His body is encircled by a snake in six spires. The snake rests its head on top of the lion head of the god. On the back of the figure two pairs of wings were attached: one at the shoulder, the other at the hips. Both arms are folded on the chest: in the right gloved hand he holds a long object, probably a sceptre, while in the left one a key. At the height on his left knee a lightning bolt is represented. A human bust emerges from it. The ankles of the god and the tail of the snake are moder restorations.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 101); Taylor 1923 (p. 215); Cumont 1937 (p. 96); CIMRM 665; Bortolin 2012 (pp. 206-7).

290. Fragmentary Luna marble statue (h. 72 cm) with *Mithras petrogenitus*, unknown provenance. Currently preserved in Firenze, Galleria degli Uffizi (deposit, inv. 180).

This peculiar piece of furniture consists of a parallelepiped block sculpted each side. On one side the stone is sculpted in resemblance of the natural rock. From the top of this rocky mass, a human figure emerges. Only a small portion of the body is preserved, that is the lower part of the belly up to the navel. It seems possible to identify this subject with *Mithras petrogenitus* that is born from the rock. On the opposite side of the monument, a male bearded face is sculpted. It could be

identified possibly with the head of Oceanus. A water pipe run through the body of Mithras as well as through the mouth of the bearded god. The other two sides of the monument are sculpted in resemblance of the natural rock.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 102); Taylor 1923 (p. 215); Cumont 1937 (p. 96); CIMRM 666.

291. White marble relief (68x50 cm) with tauroctony, unknown provenance. Currently preserved in Firenze, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (inv. 89071). This relief was bought in 1945 by the Museo Archeologico di Firenze from the collection of Villa Martin di Settignano. It features the usual tauroctony scene. In the centre of the cave we can recognize Mithras, dressed in the usual attire, who plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The body of the bull is encircled by a band. From its tail three ears sprout. We can recognize at the usual places the scorpion, the snake and the dog. On the left, the raven is perched on Mithras' flying cloak. The cross-legged torchbearers flank the scene: Cautes on the left, Cautopates on the right. Outside the cave, in the upper corners of the relief, we can recognize the busts of Sol (on the left) and of Luna (on the right) with a crescent behind her shoulders.

References: Minto 1949 (pp. 205-8); CIMRM 668.

292. Pentelic marble statue (h. 112 cm) of torchbearer, possibly from *Antium*. Currently preserved in Oxford, Ashmolean Museum.

The actual provenance from *Antium* of this monument has never been proven. The statue represents a male figure dressed in a tunic fastened by a belt at the chest, anaxyrides and long cloak. Arms are outstretched to hold an object unfortunately lost, possibly a torch. The lower part of the legs, the feet and the right arm are modern restorations, whereas hands and head were missing at the time of the discovery.

References: CIMRM 205; Venetucci et al. 2018 (pp. 521-523).

293. White marble relief (73x67 cm) with tauroctony, unknown provenance. Currently preserved in Palermo, Museo Archeologico Regionale Paolo Orsi (Coll. Astuto di Noto, inv. 751).

This relief features the tauroctony scene in a frame-like structure. In the center of the relief Mithras, dressed in the usual attire, plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The scorpion, the snake and the dog can be recognized at the usual places. The head of a lion is visible under the dog. The two torchbearers flank the scene: Cautopates on the left and Cautes on the right. Cautopates stands cross-legged and holds the torch in his left hand (the top is lost) while in the right one he holds a sword. Cautes, not cross-legged, holds the torch in his right (the top is lost). Traces of polychromy are recognizable on Sol's head and on Cautopates' clothes. Mithras' dagger and Caute's head, Cautopates' right arm and the tip of the muzzle of the bull are modern restorations.

References: Cumont TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 119); Pace 1945 (p. 675); CIMRM 164; Sfameni 1973 (pp. 156, 293; tav. CXX, fig. 163); Wilson 1990 (p. 301).

294. White marble statue (h. 69 cm) with torchbearer, unknown provenance. Currently preserved in Palermo, Museo Archeologico Regionale Paolo Orsi (Coll. Astuto di Noto, inv. 729).

The statue represents the Mithraic torchbearer Cautes, dressed in the usual attire, with long-sleeved tunic, anaxyrides, closed shoes, Phrygian hat and cloak pinned on the chest with a circular brooch. He stands cross-legged and holds with both hands his lit torch. Traces of red coloring are visible on the lower part of the statue. References: Cumont TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 120); Pace 1945 (p. 675); CIMRM 165; Sfameni 1973 (pp. 156, 293-4; tav. CXXI, fig. 164); Wilson 1990 (p. 301).

295. White marble statue (h. 71 cm) with torchbearer, unknown provenance. Currently preserved in Palermo, Museo Archeologico Regionale Paolo Orsi (Coll. Astuto di Noto, inv. 730).

The statue represents the Mithraic torchbearer Cautopates, dressed in the usual attire, with long-sleeved tunic, anaxyrides, closed shoes, Phrygian hat and cloak pinned on the chest with a circular brooch. He stands cross-legged and holds with both hands his lit torch pointed downward.

References: Cumont TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 120); Pace 1945 (p. 675); CIMRM 166; Sfameni 1973 (pp. 156, 293-4; tav. CXXII, fig. 165); Wilson 1990 (p. 301).

296. F. Cumont reported that two Mithraic monuments (a head with Phrygian hat and the central part of a tauroctony relief) from Narni were gifted in 1896 to the Museo Nazionale Romano in Rome. When M.J. Vermaseren asked the Museum for confirmation, they were not able to ascertain the provenance of those two pieces. References: CIMRM 671.

297. White marble relief (33x30 cm) possibly from Narni or Nemi, the exact find-spot is unknown. Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano.

The relief is quite fragmentary: part of the bull is preserved, then part of the dog is recognizable while the snake is quite evanescent. Before the bull Cautopates stands cross-legged.

References: CIMRM 669.

298. Relief with tauroctony, unknown provenance. Currently lost.

This relief is testified by a single engraving by J. Barbault (18th century). Since it was published with other monuments coming from Tivoli, it is supposed this relief came from there too. F. Cumont expressed doubts about the reliability of this drawing, which in his opinion depended largely on another Roman relief ('Borghese relief'). We can recognize the usual tauroctony scene. Mithras plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The snake and the dog can be found at the usual places. The raven is perched on the rocky margin of the cave, behind the god. The torchbearers flank the scene: both hold an upraised torch. In the upper left corner of the relief Sol drives his chariot pulled by four horses. Luna and the scorpion are lost.

References: Cumont TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 288); CIMRM 212.

299. Gem with tauroctony, possibly from Italy. Currently preserved in Firenze, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (inv. 15110).

This gem features on the reverse side a lion walking to the left with an insect (possibly a bee) in his mouth. Seven stars encircled by magical phrases complete this side of the artifact. On the obverse side we can recognize a tauroctony representation complete of the two torchbearers (Cautes on the left, Cautopates on

the right), of Sol and Luna. Several other Mithraic symbols appear around this main scene: a palm branch, a star, a Persian short sword, another small sword, three stars, an eagle, an arrow, a *caduceus*, a bundle of lightning bolts, other two small stars and two small caps, and finally a radiated crown.

References: CIMRM 2354; Mastrocinque 1998 (pp. 1-10); Mastrocinque 2003 (pp. 304-5, cat. 256); Mastrocinque 2007 (pp. 56-57, cat. Fi 59; with further references).

300.* Obsidian amulet with Mithraic subjects, unknown provenance. Currently lost. This artifact consists of a black obsidian axe head, possibly prehistoric, which in the Roman Age was engraved with Mithraic subjects. On the convex side of the axe, Mithras is represented. The god stands, dressed in his usual attire, holding in the right hand the *daggere* whereas in the left a long spear. Beside his feet the head of the killed bull is recognizable, together with a tree-legged small table or similar object. A halo of rays is represented around the god's head. All around the representation, a theory of 28 magic symbols. On the concave side, Saturn is instead represented. The god is represented bare chested, with a gown around his hips and legs. He wears a veil on his head as well as a rich headgear composed by a central beetle, two snakes and feathers. He holds in his right a long staff topped by two male busts, whereas in his left a *harpe*. All around the representation, 28 magic symbols were engraved. On the upper band of the convex field, a two-line Greek magical inscription was engraved.

References: Mastrocinque 1998 (pp. 59-92); Mastrocinque 2007 (pp. 203-4, cat. GM10).

301.* White marble relief (31x38 cm) with tauroctony, possibly from Italy, early 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Richmond, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (inv. 67.58).

This relief was donated to the Museum in 1968; it was previously in possession of J. Eisenberg who reported it came probably from Italy. The relief features the usual tauroctony scene: in the center of the cave Mithras, dressed in the usual attire, plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The dog (with collar), the snake and the scorpion can be found at the usual places. The raven, on the top left, is perched on the rocky margin of the cave. The two torchbearers, both cross-legged, flank the scene: Cautes on the left and Cautopates on the right. On the top left corner, the bust of Sol is represented, while on the opposite corner there is the bust of Luna (emerging from a crescent).

References: Vermaseren 1969 (pp. 646-7); Vermaseren 1982 (pp. 2-3, note 1.7).

302.* Fragmentary white marble relief (pres. h. 31 cm) with tauroctony, possibly from Italy, mid-2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Los Angeles, Paul Getty Museum (inv. 76.AA.63).

This fragmentary sculpture was donated to the Getty Museum in the 1970s. Only the lower right part of the group is preserved. On a smooth base, the body of the bull is pressed to the ground by Mithras. The dog can be found at the usual place, while the scorpion and the snake show inverted locations.

References: Oikonomides 1977; Vermaseren 1982 (p. 1, note 1.2).

303.* Fragment of tauroctony group possibly from Italy. Currently preserved in Paris, Musée Rodin (inv. 70).

Only a fragment of the original group is preserved. It features the right knee of the god pressing the back of the bull, large part of the body of the animal and of the dog.

References: Vermaseren 1982 (p. 4, note 1.10; pl. XXXI); Rodin Collectionneur (cat. 185).

304.* Bronze plaque (35,5x29,5 cm) with tauroctony, possibly from Italy, mid 2nd to early 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in New York, Metropolitan Museum (inv. 1997.145.3).

This piece was donated to the Museum in 1997 by a private owner (Mr. and Mrs. Klaus G. Perls). Mithras, dressed in the usual attire, plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the bull while grasping the animal by the nostrils. The bull is not subdued, but it is still standing. The dog, the snake and the scorpion can be found at the usual places. In the top left corner, we can recognize the bust of Sol (with radiate crown) while on the opposite one the bust of Luna (with crescent emerging behind her shoulders).

References: Recent Acquisitions 1997 (p. 17).

305. Bronze statuette (h. 10 cm) of torchbearer, found possibly in Italy. Currently preserved in London, British Museum.

This small statuette features a young male figure dressed in eastern attire and standing cross-legged. He holds in his right hand a dagger whereas in his left the head of a ram. It has been identified with a Mithraic torchbearer by M. Vermaseren.

References: Walters 1899 (p. 259); CIMRM 761.

306. Vermaseren listed between CIMRM 608 and CIMRM 621 Mithraic monuments such as reliefs and statues known from written sources, or from oral news by F. Cumont, or from the antiquarian markets which were already lost at his time, meaning he did not find any news about the owner of these monuments. I was not able to find further pieces of news about those monuments either.

References: from CIMRM 608 to CIMRM 621.

Possibly Mithraic Monuments

P1. Inscription found in the 18th century in Bulciaghetto (Lombardy, between Como and Lecco). Currently lost.

D[I]M / Varia / Q(uinti) f(ilia) / Severa / v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)

This inscription, currently lost, survives through the testimony of Alciato. The existing photographic images of the monument does not show the existence of the engraved inscription. T. Mommsen suggested to integrate DM with D[I]M, giving the inscription a Mithraic interpretation. Alciato instead read it as D(eo) M(ercurio). The same Alciato possibly restituted the DM with MERCURIO, starting a double tradition for the same monument (CIL V 5650 and 5659). Given the loss of the monument, there are no sufficient elements to validate either reading.

References: CIL V 5969; CIMRM 705; Resnati 1995 (p. 36); EDR124669 (S. Zoia, A. Sartori).

P2. Inscription found in Milan (via Visconti). Currently lost.

D(eo) I(nvicto) [M(ithrae)] | L(ucius) Atilius | Pupinius | v(otum) s(olvit)
l(ibenter) m(erito) | l(ocus) d(atus) d(ecreto) d(ecurionum)

This inscription, currently lost, survives through the testimony of Alciato. T. Mommsen noticed this monument should have been broken on the top right corner, and he suggested to integrate DI[-] with DI[M]. The Mithraic value of this inscription is far from sure: the phrase LDDD at the end is quite rare for a Mithraic dedication, and could be more fit for a funerary inscription. Given the loss of the monument, there are no sufficient elements to validate either reading.

References: CIL V 5796; CIMRM 707; EDR124116 (S. Zoia, A. Sartori).

P3. Inscription found in 1832 in Introbbio (loc. Cravéro, by the Como lake), 1st century CE. Currently lost.

----- | Invicto | v(otum) s(olvit) | C(aius) V(alerius) Rufinus | VLV

The first line of the inscription was not preserved: it could be completed either with the name of Mithras or Heracles or other deity (Mercurius, Mars, etc.).

References: CIL V 5204; CIMRM 711; EDR092109 (M. Vavassori).

P4. Inscription preserved at Agliate in the 18th century, 2nd – 3rd century CE. Currently lost.

D(is) M(anibus) T(itus) | Ver(ginius) A[t]ilianus | arispex DMS | q(ui) v(ixit)
a(nnos) CXXXV | SCM ipse se vi | vo fecit M | Marcellina

The reading of DMS at line 3 in this funerary inscription has been solved as *dei Mithrae sacerdos* (by T. Mommsen) or either as *deum Matris sacerdos* (by C.O. Thulin).

References: CIL V 5704; Resnati 1995 (p. 53); Haack 2006 (pp. 122-3); EDR124672 (S. Zoia, G. Frumusa).

P5. Relief **17** was found by a peasant, together with a small golden plate shaped as an ear (or leaf) and other objects as well (Roman coins, some bronze statuettes): they were sold to a traveller whereas the relief remained in the city of Sanzeno. The ruins of a wall were also found in the same spot. In the past these discoveries led to hypothesize the existence of a Mithraeum just outside Sanzeno. Unfortunately, the exact find-spot is forgotten and the hypothesis is destined to remain such.

References: de Vigili 1882; CIMRM 728; Roberti 1960 (p. 4).

P6. Inscriptions **21a** and **21b** were found in 1868 in loc. San Niccolò. They probably fall from up-slope due to the action of the Sardagna waterfall. Other objects found on site suggested that the place could have been a funerary area. Vemaseren suggested a Mithraeum could have existed there, but there is no extant proof of it.

References: CIMRM 731.

P7. Inscription once preserved in S. Martino church in Trento, 3rd century CE. Currently lost.

Soli[-] | Q(uintus) Mu(ielius) [-] | Iustus | c(um) s(uis) [-]

The inscription does not mention Mithras, but the possible identification of the devotee who dedicates to *Sol* with the same devotee of inscription **21b** suggest that these two inscriptions could belong to the same Mithraic context.

References: AE 1914, 256; CIMRM 734; Buonopane 1990 (p. 151); EDR072704 (C. Girardi).

P8. Fragmentary inscription (pres. h. 14 cm) found in Ljubljana (loc. Na Mirju). Currently lost.

[-]M | [-]uartus

The name of Mithras is missing and there are too few elements to trust a integration which involves Mithras.

References: CIMRM 1462; Selem 1980 (pp. 77-8); Murgia 2019 (pp. 306-7); EDR152850 (A. Ragolic).

P9. Fragmentary inscription found in Gradišče (loc. Ilirska Bistrica). Currently lost.

----- | [-s]acru[m-] | [---]M[---] | -----

See the comment to the previous record.

References: Murgia 2019 (p. 307); EDR156367 (A. Ragolic).

P10. Limestone altar (pres. h. 46 cm) with inscription found walled up together with inscriptions **24a** and **24b**, first half of the 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Aquileia, Museo Archeologico Nazionale of Aquileia (inv. 244).

----- | [S]eptim(ius) | Marcian(us) | opt(io) leg(ionis) II ad(iutricis) | p(iae)
f(idelis) | [[-----]] | pro salute | sua et suorum | v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens)
m(erito)

This monument was found in a secondary context together with inscriptions **24a** and **24b**, dedicated to Mithras by soldiers garrisoned in Aquileia. The missing part of the text could be integrated with a consecration to the same god.

References: CIL V 811; SupplIt 1115; CIMRM 743; Brusin 1991 (pp. 148-9); EDR116887 (F. Mainardis).

P11. *Epistylum* fragment (h. 21 cm) with inscription found in 1860 in Aquileia, Augustan Age. Currently preserved in Aquileia, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (inv. 2169).

[-]ICTO[-] | [-]TH[-]

The inscription is quite fragmentary, and the chronology seems too ancient to be consistent with a Mithraic interpretation.

References: CIL V 8240; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 177); CIMRM 749; Brusin 1991 (p. 105); EDR117013 (F. Mainardis).

P12. Fragmentary limestone altar (pres. h. 31 cm) with inscription, found in Aquileia, Augustan Age. Currently preserved in Aquileia (Casa Tuzet, private owner).

M[-]TH[-] | -----

The inscription is quite fragmentary, and the chronology seems too ancient to be consistent with a Mithraic interpretation.

References: Brusin 1991 (p. 152); EDR117136 (F. Mainardis).

P13. Lamps with *corax* figure. A Mithraic interpretation has been suggested for a peculiar iconography shown on several African lamps (Atlante X type, dated from the 4th to the 6th century CE) attested in Aquileia as well as in several Mediterranean sites in Late Antique contexts. On the disc, a standing human figure, dressed in a short and pleated tunic, with arms raised in a praying gesture is represented. F. Maselli Scotti suggested that this figure, represented sometimes with a long hat or mask, could represent a Mithraic devotee wearing a raven mask, as shown in the reliefs from Konjic and Elleri (Maselli Scotti 2001, p. 281). A recent critic to this Mithraic interpretation has been moved by E. Murgia, who linked the figure with the saints or martyrs dressed in military or Eastern attire, quite more common in the Late Antique iconographical environment.

References: Maselli Scotti 2001; Maselli Scotti 2007; Giovannini 2013b; Murgia 2014.

P14. Lamps with Mithraic inscription. A Mithraic interpretation has been suggested for other two lamps found in Aquileia. These lamps (Iványi XXII type, variant 1, dated between the late-3rd and the 5th century CE) bear on the shoulder an applied text, which reads:

Utere fel(ix) ego leon v(aleam)

F. Maselli Scotti suggested to link this *leon* with the Mithraic grade of *leo* (Maselli Scotti 2001, p. 280).

References: Di Filippo Balestrazzi 1988 (pp. 430-1); Maselli Scotti 2001 (p. 280).

P15. *Petra Genetrix* from *Tergeste*. This monument was discovered in 1942: it was re-used as the foundation of a column in the S. Giusto church in Trieste. The statue consists in a conical (?) piece of stone with a hole on top. Its surface is sculpted in scales, possibly resembling the natural rock. Different scholars suggested a Mithraic interpretation of this monument, which was although not included in CIMRM.

References: Brusin 1942; Buchi 1984 (p. 58).

P16. Trachite altar (h. 77 cm) with inscription found in 1669 in Padova (near S. Sofia church), 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Padova, Museo Civico Agli Eremitani (inv. 23).

ID | C(aius) Helvius | Romanus | pro se et suis | v(otum) s(olvit)

T. Mommsen suggested to solve ID at line 1 as *Invicto deo*, that is Mithras, while W. Henzen suggested *Iovi Dolicheno*. More recently M.S. Bassignano suggested an Isiac interpretation as *Isidi deae* or *Isidi domnae*.

References: CIL V 2800; Bassignano 1981 (pp. 217-8); EDR177992 (F. Luciani).

P17. The statue of a torchbearer with downward pointing torch bearing a sorrowful expression as well as a relief featuring the same subject were mentioned by H. Dütschke in the collection preserved at the end of the 19th century in the Catajo castle, south of Padova. Two small heads with Phrygian hat were mentioned too. These monuments are currently lost, with the exception of a statuette, currently preserved in Wien, where part of the Catajo collection was moved in the early 20th century. The pertinence of this subject to a Mithraic torchbearer is not sure: it could also be a funerary *Attis*.

References: CIMRM 762-4; Coppola 2017.

P18. Limestone relief (37x27 cm), unknown provenance. Currently preserved in Bologna, Museo Civico Archeologico (inv. G1102).

The relief features a young man dressed in a long-sleeved tunic, trousers and closed shoes, standing cross-legged. He holds a lit torch pointed downward. He wears on his forehead a diadem with a disc. On his left a water vessel is represented: it is placed bottom up and water streams from it. On the lower right corner of the relief some plants are figured (possibly willows) while on the opposite top left corner a lunar crescent is represented. This representation quite differs from the usual *Cautopates* images.

References: Cumont TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 107); Ducati 1923 (p. 68); CIMRM 694; Brizzolara 1977 (pp. 96-7).

P19. A relief with *Aion* and an altar dedicated to *Sol Invictus* were found together with other statues (*Fortuna*, *Serapis*, *Hecate*, and *Heracles*) in 1946-48 during construction works in Fano, in the area of the Palazzo Vescovile (via Rainerio).

Other statues (Isis and two statues of Mercury) were found in the same area in the 17th century.

The contemporary presence of these deities could point to the existence of one or several cultic places in the nearby area, maybe even of a Mithraeum.

References: Annibaldi 1949; Battistelli and Deli 1983 (pp. 77-9, 81, 91); Bernardelli Calavalle 1986; AE 1990, 331; Bernardelli Calavalle 1992 (pp. 467, 474); Catani 1992 (pp. 300-301, 316-7); EDR081846 (F. Branchesi).

P20. Male head with wavy hair and pathetic expression of unknown provenance, preserved in Firenze (Galleria degli Uffizi). This monument was identified as ‘head of Mithras’ by F. Cumont.

References: CIMRM 667.

P21. Graffito found in Caere (Clepsina hypogeum), 195-235 CE. In a large subterranean complex, dating back to the Iron Age and used for religious purposes until the Severan period, a peculiar graffito was discovered. In particular, the room where this graffito was engraved was deputed in the 3rd century CE to the celebration of the *Rosalia*. We can recognize a male figure with radiated crown, his bust slightly bent backward. With his left hand he reaches the horn of the bull which is represented beside him. This animal, the two stulized horns suggest to identify it with a bull, runs to the right, its forelegs slightly bent. The human figure seems to be riding the animal, as indicated by the position of his right leg resting on the side of the bull. This image has been identified in the past with Sol driving his chariot, as suggested by the semicircular lines on the lower part of the representation, which could be considered wheels. More recently it has been suggested to read this subject as Mithras killing the bull.

References: Cristofani 1986 (p. 26); Cristofani and Gregori 1987 (p. 12); Torelli 2000 (pp. 150, 158); Colivicchi et al. 2016 (pp. 388-9); Luciani 2018 (p. 28).

P22. A Mithraic occupation has been suggested in the 1930s for site currently held by the church of S. Maria del Parto (formerly S. Michele Arcangelo) in Sutri by P. Sestieri and endorsed by F. Cumont, based on architectural similarities to other Mithraic sanctuaries. The site exhibits a quite complex stratification of purposes through the centuries. Between the 4th century BCE and the 2nd century CE the cave had a funerary destination, and was in fact used as a sepulcher, whereas a Mithraic occupation has been suggested for the 3rd and 4th century. The site received a housing destination in the Early Middle Ages, and became finally a Christian church from the 10th-11th century CE. Although recent critics on this hypothesis (see Apollonj Ghetti 1986), the Mithraic phase has not been convincingly disproved.

References: Frothingham 1889; Taylor 1923 (pp. 109-110); Sestieri 1934; Cumont 1937 (pp. 97-100); CIMRM 653; Morselli 1980 (pp. 42-5); Apollonj Ghetti 1986 (pp. 81-102); Mecchia 2013 (pp. 105-122, with further references).

P23. A Mithraic purpose has been suggested for three subterranean rooms partially excavated in 1989 in Castel di Guido (loc. casale Bottaccia). These three long rooms were excavated in the natural bedrock and linked by a small corridor. At the end of the smallest of the three, the bearded face of a deity was carved in the wall. The Mithraic character of this space has been suggested on the basis of the finding in a nearby area, back in 1824, of statue **88**.

References: Mineo 1990.

P24. An underground room was discovered in the 19th century in *Antium* and identified with a Mithraeum. This discovery and identification is given as a certain fact by P. Chiarucci, but dismissed as a local rumor by Jaja.

References: Chiarucci 1989 (p. 58); Jaja 2004 (p. 256); Venetucci *et alii* 2018 (p. 527).

P25. Two marble busts (h. 96 cm) found possibly in *Formiae*. Currently preserved in Copenhagen, Carlsberg Glyptotek (inv. 1905-1906).

These two monuments were part of the Borghese collection until 1902 when they were bought by the Carlsberg Glyptotek. Two very similar busts of young male with long curly hair and Phrygian hat (restored). He wears a cloak fastened on his left shoulder by a circular pin. Hat, lips, nose and eyebrows are modern restorations. Although F. Cumont suggested to identify them as Mithraic torchbearers, these monuments were published as busts of Attis by F. Poulsen. The iconographical scheme of the bust instead of the usual total body representation for the Mithraic torchbearers is unique.

References: Poulsen 1951 (p. 196, n. 122-3); CIMRM 202.

P26. Marble bust, copy of statue **132a**, once part of in the Giustiniani collection in Rome. Currently preserved in Ostia, Museo Ostiense (inv. 149).

This fragmentary marble group consists in the copy of statue 132a, that is the group of young men fighting with the bull, later converted in a group of Mithras killing the bull by the community located in the Mithraeum of the Mithras' Baths in Ostia. The origin of the copy is not sure: already in 1957 G. Becatti, who first noticed the similarity of the two statues on a suggestion of E. Paribeni, was not sure if the Giustiniani group was to be considered a copy after the Ostia statue, or if both groups should be regarded as copy of a same original.

References: Becatti 1957; Paris and Valeri 2016.

P27. Terracotta slab (36x32 cm) found in *Cales*, 4th century CE. Currently preserved in Napoli, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (inv. 6854).

This square slab is framed by a wave pattern. In the center of the scene a young male figure dressed in short-sleeved tunic, boots, Phrygian cap and short flying cloak stands beside a recumbent bull. The man holds the muzzle of the bull with his left hand while his right one is lost. If the iconographical scheme resembles closely that of Mithras wounding the bull, we must also acknowledge the absence of the other animals (scorpion, snake, dog and raven), of Sol and Luna, and of the torchbearers. Given that this slab was found together with another one representing Heracles slaying the Ceryneian Hind, we could suspect that the male figure here represented could be Heracles capturing the Cretan Bull. This subject is quite more common on this particular type of support.

Reference: Cumont TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 91); CIMRM 200.

P28. Terracotta slab (h. 25 cm) found in *Cales*. Currently preserved in Berlin, Antiquarium (inv. 8492).

This scene features a male figure, naked except for a short flying cloak, standing beside a bull. The man holds the bull by the muzzle while in his right hand he holds a dagger. The bull is not subdued, but standing. Given the absence of clothes and of

the other characters that usually appear in the Mithraic tauroctony scene, it seems possible to suggest that this subject could be either identified with Attis.

Reference: Cumont TMMM2 (*mon. fig. 92*); CIMRM 201.

P29. CIMRM 179. Terracotta antefix (h. 68 cm) found in Capua, by the amphitheater. Currently lost.

The piece represents a male head with sorrow expression and Phrygian hat. This character could either represent Mithras or a sorrowful Attis.

References: CIMRM 201.

P30. Marble labrum found in 1939 in Castellammare di Stabia (via Surripa 25, proprietà Cascone). Currently lost.

C(aius) A Phoebus CDM d(ono) d(edit)

The group CDM has been solved as *cultoribus dei Mithrae* by M. Megalhaes, whereas as *cultoribus Deae Magnae* by Di Capua.

References: AE 1948 157; Camodeca 2002; Magalhaes 2006 (p. 85); EDR073711 (A. De Carlo).

P31. Head with Phrygian hat found in the bed of the Millicri stream. The subject could be Mithraic as well as it could belong to a representation of Attis.

References: CIMRM 169.

P32. Mithraeum of Siracusa. E. Pace reported the news of a discovery of a Mithraeum in Siracusa (corso Umberto), but the exact find-spot of the sanctuary as well as its extent and content have been forgotten.

References: Pace 1945 (p. 675); Sfameni 1973 (pp. 156-7).

P33. *Sabazeum*. A sanctuary (1 room) was discovered and excavated in Ostia in 1908-1909. This rectangular room was located in a building with storage destination. In the first half of the 3rd century CE two benches were built against the long sides of this room as well as against one of the short sides. Against the back wall instead an altar consisting of three steps was built. The floor paving the central aisle was divided in two sectors: the first consisted in a mosaic floor whereas the second in a layer of marble slabs. A circular pit was embedded in the floor of the second sector of the sanctuary. An inscription found within the sanctuary mentions a consecration to Jupiter Sabazius. The sacred place has been interpreted thus in the past as a shrine to Sabazius, and constitutes as of today the only occurrence of its kind. Of different opinion was G. Becatti who, despite the absence of any direct evidence, identified the sanctuary as a Mithraeum, on the base of the architectural similarities with other Mithraea found in Ostia.

References: Vaglieri 1909 (pp. 19-23); Becatti 1954 (pp. 113-117); Floriani Squarciapino 1962 (pp. 54-5); Marchesini 2013 (pp. 349-353, 302-318).

P34. Fragments of marble architrave with inscription (h. 4,5 cm) found in 1909 Ostia. Currently preserved in Ostia, Galleria Lapidaria (inv. 6681).

[---]κήτω καὶ το[---]ος ἰδίαις δαπάναις ἐκόσμησεν

M.L. Lazzarini originally suggested to integrate this fragmentary inscription with the name of Mithras, having Δι Ἡλίω Μίθρα ἀνεκλήτω καὶ τοῖς συννάοις θεοῖς. She changed her mind later, aware that this formula occurs only once in Mithraic inscriptions whereas it is more common in Serapis' phrasing. Her last opinion is in fact this inscription should be referred to an Isiac context.

References: Vaglieri 1909 (p. 97); Lazzarini 1979.

P35. White marble altar (h. 61 cm) with inscription found in Rome by S. Maria in Monticelli church, late 2nd – early 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani – Galleria Lapidaria (inv. MV9306).

Soli | Invicto | M(arcus) Aemilius | MM(arcorum) I(ibertus) Chrysantus |
mag(ister) anni primi et | M(arcus) Limbricius Polides | dec(urio) et
sodalicio eius | d(e) s(uis) d(ono) d(ederunt)

This monument was found possibly together with inscription **212**, very likely in a secondary context.

References: CIL VI 717; ILS 4217; CIMRM 518.

P36. Fragmentary marble slab (55x85 cm) with inscription found in Rome (via Nazionale), late 4th – 5th century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Capitolini (inv. NCE18).

----- | [-]que piamine saeptus | [---] Cereris quoque mystes | [---]um quinque
decemvir | [---]la conptus | [---]libus undis | [---] nuernatus odore | [---
insu]perabilis aethrae

References: CIL VI 32433; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 16); CIMRM 376; SupplIt Imagines - Roma 1, 1241; EDR102330 (A. Ferraro).

P37. Marble slab (32x39 cm) found in Rome (Celio, Villa Casali), late 2nd – early 3rd CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani – Galleria Lapidaria (inv. MV6773).

Invic{i}te Cele | sti Uranie do(mi)na po(suerunt) | G(?) Gi(?) Fi(?) V(?)
UI(?) Fi(?) | leones

Two pairs of feet are represented between the second and the third line. The Mithraic character of this inscription could be given by the last word *leones*, which however is divided by points as 'le.o.nes'.

References: CIL VI 80; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 46); CIMRM 561; EDR161218 (A. Ferraro).

P38. Inscription found possibly in Rome.

DIMS | [[-----]]

References: CIMRM 577.

P39. Inscription found probably in Rome.

Ἡλῖο ἀνικῆτο | Βάλβιλλος ἠουοκάτος | ἐξ ὑδάτων σωθεὶς | ὕδατα ἤνεκα
λέοντι | ἐπὶ Βάσσου ἱερέως

To the Unconquered Sol, I, the *evocatus Balbillus*, saved from the waters, bought the water to the lion, when *Bassus* was priest.

This consecration to Sol Invictus could have a Mithraic value if we read the mention of the priest *Bassus* as a typical Mithraic feature, even in the absence of an explicit mention of the name of Mithras.

References: IGUR I 124; CIMRM 568.

P40. Fragmentary statue (h. 21 cm) of torchbearer found in the end of the 19th century in the area of the *Castra Praetoria* (via del Macao). Currently preserved in Milan, Civico Museo Archeologico (inv. A 0.9.4037).

Fragmentary statue of torchbearer statue: head, left arm and legs are missing. He was dressed in the usual eastern attire, the long tunic was fastened by a thin belt around his waist, and a round brooch pinned his cloak on the chest. This statue was found together with fragmentary statues of Heracles, Serapis and of a female statue.

References: Camporini 1979 (pp. 45-6); Cadario 2013b.

P41. Pentelic marble head found possibly in Rome, 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Barracco (inv. MB157).

Male head with wavy hair, facing a point high on the horizon. The position of the neck supports a movement of the head to the right. On top of the head a hole to fasted another piece of statue, possibly a Phrygian hat. Cumont suggested it could be a head of Mithras. The Museum currently identifies the subject as ‘Head of Alexander the Great’.

References: CIMRM 559.

P42. White marble head (h. 20 cm). Currently preserved in Rome, Musei Vaticani – Museo Gregoriano Profano (inv. MV10261).

This piece represents the head of a young male figure with curly hair wearing a Phrygian hat. The face is looking to an indefinite point on the horizon, slightly rotated on the right. Vermaseren suggested it could be interpreted as a head of Mithras.

References: CIMRM 560.

P43. Fragmentary marble statue (pres. h. 82 cm) of torchbearer, found probably in Rome. Currently preserved in Rome.

Head, feet, right arm and the lower part of the cloak of the figure are modern restorations. The statue features a male figure holding a torch, and the figure is restored as Paris. It could also represent Attis or either be a Mithraic torchbearer.

References: TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 50); CIMRM 538.

P44. White marble statue (h. 61 cm) with torchbearer. Currently preserved in Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Antikensammlung (inv. SK 202; from the former Baiereuth Collection).

A young male figure, dressed in Eastern attire and leaning on a rock stands cross-legged and holds with both hands a torch pointed to the ground. This torchbearer could either represent Cautopates or a funerary Attis.

References: CIMRM 600.

P45. Small bronze head with Phrygian found possibly in Italy. Currently preserved in London, British Museum (inv. 1814/0704.746; former Towneley collection). This monument consists of a small bronze head wearing a Phrygian hat and seven rays around the temples, one of which is lost. It could represent either Sol or Mithras.

References: Walters 1899 (p. 184); CIMRM 760.

Non-Mithraic Monuments

Inscriptions dedicated to *Sol*:

Sol: CIMRM 215, 347, 418, 432, 580, 581, 582, 649, 701, 702, 712, 756-757,

deus Sol: CIMRM 722, 750

Sol divinus: CIMRM 714,

Sol sanctissimus: CIMRM 562.

Sol Deus Invictus/Deus Sol Invictus: CIMRM 569, 570, 571, 573, 713, 752

Sol Invictus: CIMRM 372-373 (and *Genius Equitum Singulariorum*), 379, 512, 572, 683, 672 (*comes Augusti*)

Sol dominus: CIMRM 583, 753

Oriens: CIMRM 518.

Inscriptions or monuments dedicated to other deities:

Iuppiter Optimus Maximus: CIMRM 330-331 (and *Minerva*), 471, 720-721, CIL V 5661.

Iuppiter Dolichenus: CIMRM 413b.

Invictus Patrius: CIMRM 709.

Heracles: CIL VI 312.

Silvanus: CIMRM 502, 565.

Egyptian deities: CIMRM 419.

Syrian deities: CIMRM 508-509.

Funerary inscriptions: CIMRM 748, CIMRM 758

N1. The two small heads of torchbearers preserved in Turin have been later on identified with a mask with Phrygian hat and the statuette of *Telesphorus*.

References: CIMRM 700; Mercado 1992 (p. 50).

N2. A 19th-century tradition started by B. Biondelli and validated by F. Cumont identified the natural cave known as *Tana del Lupo*, located on the slope of the mound where the castle of Angera was built, with the site of a Mithraic sanctuary. The data collected from different surveys conducted in the 20th century (see De Togni 2018 for a synthesis on the excavations) actually revealed that the cave was surely a sacred place (due to traces of cuts in the rock surface for the installation of votive inscriptions), but also that the identification with a Mithraeum is far from sure. In particular, De Togni underlines the ‘public’ features of the site, *versus* the more ‘private’ character of the known Mithraea. He suggested, with a more plausible explanation, that the cave could be read as the seat of a cult related to therapeutic waters.

References: Biondelli 1868; Cumont TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 109); CIMRM 716; David and De Togni 2009; Facchinetti 2009; De Togni 2018.

N3. Six fragments of small columns were discovered in the garden of house Castiglione in Angera. Biondelli suggested that they could pertain to the architectural furniture of the Mithraeum which in his opinion hosted also inscription **8**. There is no extant proof that these monuments belonged to the same context of the Mithraic inscription.

References: Biondelli 1868; Cumont TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 110); CIMRM 719; De Togni 2018 (p. 146).

N4. Inscription preserved in Cavedine, engraved on the *Fontana del Fiaschet*. The original erroneous Mithraic reading by P. Chistè was later rectified by G. Ciurletti in 1992.

References: Chistè 1971 (p. 88); Ciurletti 1992 (pp. 97-98).

N5. Relief with funerary Attis.

References: CIMRM 735.

N6. Fragment of white marble relief (16x22x5 cm) found in Aquileia, 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Aquileia, Museo Archeologico Nazionale.

The relief features the hind legs of a standing bull and a human foot with shoe. It is not possible to recognize a Mithraic subjects based on these elements, as already suggested by M.J. Vermaseren.

Reference: CIMRM 753bis; Scrinari 1972 (p. 185).

N7. Leontocephaline deity from Aquileia. This statue (Aurisina limestone, pres. h. 65 cm) was found possibly in Aquileia, and is currently preserved in Trieste, Civico Museo di Storia ed Arte. The statue was previously interpreted as a Mithraic leontocephaline deity, but it should be more correctly identified with a funerary sphinx.

References: Casari 2001.

N8. Attis *tristis* from Aquileia. A recent study by A. Mio and L. Zennarolla reclassified several representations from Aquileia previously identified as ‘torchbearers’ by V.M. Scrinari. The scholars associated these statues with the type of the Attis *tristis*, and underlined their frequent occurrence in funerary contexts.

References: Mio and Zennarolla 2005; Giovannini 2013c.

N9. Mithraeum under S. Sofia church (Padova). In the 1960s’ C. Gasparotto suggested the existence of a Mithraeum under the church of S. Sofia in Padova. More recent studies on the site revealed insufficient data to support that identification.

References: Gasparotto 1961 (pp. 112-23); Bassignano 1981 (p. 217).

N10. White marble relief (16x52 cm) found in 1850 in Ganaceto (territory of Modena), re-used in the masonry of a rural house. Currently preserved in Modena, Museo Lapidario Estense (inv. 7054).

A single fragment of the relief is preserved, constituting its extreme left part of a bigger artifact, possibly a sarcophagus. The figure of a torchbearer can be recognized. The torchbearer is dressed in the usual attire and stands cross-legged. He holds his torch with both hands. A branch with leaves is represented above his head. The pertinence of this type to a funerary Attis rather than to a Mithraic torchbearer has been suggested in the 1970s.

References: Cavedoni 1846 (p. 27); Cumont TMMM2 (*mon. fig.* 108); CIMRM 697; Giordani 2005 (with further references).

N11. At least one Mithraeum should have existed in the city of *Sentinum*, as testified by the finds **51a**, **51b**, **51c**, and **51d**. Unfortunately, no architectural remain of the

sanctuary was reported at the time of the discovery. C. Ramelli reported that the find-spot of these inscriptions was not far from the find-spot of the renowned mosaic with Aion discovered in 1806 and currently preserved in Munich. On the base of this note, it is possible to suggest a location for the Mithraeum in the area of the so-called *Insula del Pozzo*, but its exact location is still unknown.

References: Ramelli 1853 (pp. 26-9); CIMRM 686; Catani 1996; Catani 2018.

N12. A Mithraic occupation has been recently suggested for two sites in Umbria: the underground levels of the Basilica di S. Valentino in Terni and the Catacombs of Grotta Traiana in Villa San Faustino (Massa Martana). the Mithraic phase of these two sites is based solely on conjecture, without any extant literary or archaeological proof.

References: Sisani 2006 (p. 180).

N13. Inscription found by the Roman theatre of *Interamna Nahars/Terni*, Augustan Age. Currently lost.

References: CIL XI 41889; ILS 6627; EDR130572 (G. Cenerini).

N14. Bronze *tabula ansata* (12x7 cm) with inscription found in Montalcino (rione S. Margherita), late 2nd – early 3rd century CE. Currently lost.

This inscription was once preserved in Firenze, but it is currently lost.

L(ucius) Granius Pudens veter(anus) | ex coh(orte) VII pr(aetoria) d(at) |
(denarius) VIII (milia) d(e) p(roprio) | ut gens eos (denarios) in usu | ris dent
et die n(atali) festo | sollemne oleum in | lucerna quem dedi | d(e) p(roprio)
ex usuris praes | teretur d(eo) I(nvicto) M(ithrae)

H. Dessau suggested to read DIM as Dis Inferis Manibus: the funerary interpretation seems to be more fit to the text rather than a Mithraic one.

References: Taylor 1923 (p. 182); Traverso 2006 (p. 186); Luciani 2018 (p. 30); EDR157415 (G.A. Cecconi, C. Gabrielli).

N15. Gold plaque (11x6 cm) found in the 1940s in Ciciliano (loc. Ospedale di S. Giovanni), 2nd century CE. Currently lost.

This small manufact was found in the area related to a Roman villa excavated in 1948 in Ciciliano (loc. Ospedale di S. Giovanni, site of *Trebula Suffenas*). It consists of a small gold plaque featuring the representation of an Aion. In the center we can recognize a naked male figure standing. He keeps his hand on his chest, holding in the right a key whereas in the left four poppies. His body in wrapped in the spires of a snake which rests his head on the chest of the man. The figure is enclosed in an oval field. A magic inscription run inside this oval contour. It reads:

IAω AKPAMAXAMAPI AΔωNAεI ABΛANAΘANAΛBA

Other letters can be recognized on the side of the central figure, and on the topleft corner.

References: Facenna 1948 (p. 306); CIMRM 168; Mastrocinque 1998 (pp. 43-44).

N16. A subterranean room, located in the cryptoporticus of an extraurban villa few km from the modern city of Itri, has been identified with a Mithraeum from its first

modern publisher, M. De Spagnolis. This service room was related to the hydraulic system of tanks and cisterns of the villa, and in a second moment it was possibly adapted for leisure activities (a small *nymphaeum*?). It does not seem possible to recognize the typical Mithraic features in this room.

References: De Spagnolis and Sotgiu 1980 (pp. 7-32).

N17. Inscription (30x37 cm) found in *Histonium/Vasto*, 2nd half of the 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Vasto, Museo Archeologico.

C(aius) Artenna Pudens | m(iles) c(o)ho(rtis) II pr(aetoriae) Valeri | C(aius)
Vettius Super | m(iles) c(o)ho(rtis) II pr(aetoriae) Lucili | L(ucius) Corisius
Saturni | nus m(iles) c(o)ho(rtis) II pr(aetoriae) Vesi | S(oli?) d(onum)
d(ederunt)

References: CIL IX 2838; Buonocore 1992 (p. 226); EDR175971 (D. Fasolini).

N18. White marble statue, found in Siracusa, 1st - 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Siracusa, Museo Archeologico Regionale Paolo Orsi (inv. 50712).

This statue features a female figure dressed in a long tunic fastened on the chest with a band. She is knelt on her left knee and looks to the right. She rests her right her on the knee. Despite being identified as a Mithras in the Museum tag and also in a recent publication, there are no features that could qualify this monument as a Mithraic subject.

References: Germanà 2013 (p. 243).

N19. A fragmentary statue of ‘Good Shepherd’ was found in the 19th century excavations. Currently preserved in Rome, S. Clemente basilica.

References: CIMRM 345.

N20. *Sacello delle Tre Navate*. This sanctuary (2 rooms) was discovered and excavated in Ostia in 1938. It consisted in a long room with terminal apse, divided in three naves, and in an adjoined kitchen. It was included in Becatti’s publication on the Ostian Mithraea because of distant architectural similarities with Mithraic sanctuaries (namely the presence of the side benches), but its Mithraic value was not sure. The scholar suggested instead the identification with a sanctuary to Juppiter Dolichenus or Juppiter Heliopolitanus. The hypothesis of a Dolichenum seems to find a right comparison with the layout consisting of a long room with side benches plus adjoined kitchen found in the Dolichenum of the Aventine hill in Rome.

References: Becatti 1954 (pp. 69-75); Floriani Squarciapino 1962 (p. 47); Belevi 1996 (pp. 307-312); Marchesini 2013 (pp. 319-322).

N21. Marble slab (96x27 cm) with inscription found in the Roman *suburbium* - Torre Pignataro (loc. vigna Dionigi, formerly vigna Montanari), 1st century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Antiquarium Comunale del Celio (inv. NCE 5693).

Dis Manibus | Sex(ti) Hei Restituti | indulgentissimo | patri sacrorum | fili et
mater | benemerenti | posuerunt

The term *pater sacrorum* seems not to be identified with a Mithraic title in this precise context, but rather with an Isiac title.

References: CIL VI 2268; CIMRM 624; Malaise 1972 (p. 125, n. 38); SupplIt Imagines Roma 2, 2816; EDR029419 (G. Crimi, A. Anastasi).

N22. Marble altar with inscription found in Rome, late 3rd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano (inv. 56201).

M(arco) Aur(elio) Victori | c(larissimo) v(iro) | praef(ecto) feriar(um) |
Latin(arum) sacerdoti | dei Solis | religiosissimo | Iovinus Callidianus |
condiscipul(us) patron(o) dignissimo

The word *patronus* does not constitute a specifically Mithraic office.

References: CIL VI 1358; ILS 1205; CIMRM 579; EDR033529 (P. Iori).

N23. Inscription found in 1733 *in vinea Nari* that is just north of Rome, possibly in the funerary area between via Pinciana and via Salaria. Currently lost.

D(is) M(anibus) | M(arco) Equitio Ares | con[t]i patri sa | crorum Iunia |
Thallusa sibi | et coniugi pi | entissimo fecit | b(ene)m(erenti)

It seems more correct to refer the phrase *pater sacrorum* to the cult of Isis rather than to that of Mithras.

References: CIL VI 2277; TMMM2 (*Inscr.* 40); CIMRM 623; Malaise 1972 (p. 124, n. 37).

N24. Head of Marcus Aurelius, found in the same excavations of statue **166**.

References: CIMRM 371.

N25. News of a Mithraeum was reported in Lanciani 1908, p. 200, discovered in 1868 in the former Stati property (scavi de Merode). The discovered architecture does not present any Mithraic feature.

References: Lanciani 1908 (p. 200); CIMRM 384; LTUR III (p. 263); Castagnoli 1949-50 (p. 141).

N26. In 1885 a subterranean complex consisting of several room, possibly a nymphaeum, was discovered in via XX Settembre, in the location of the Horti Sallustiani. Their first discoverer suggested to identify this complex with a Mithraeum, but none of the typical Mithraic features can be recognized.

References: Buti 1885; ATLAS (p. 459).

N27. Head in Parian marble (h. 29 cm), found in 1930s' in the area of the *Domus Augustana* on the Palatine hill, 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Palatino (inv. 475901/12486).

The piece represents the head of an adolescent boy with wavy hair and Phrygian hat. This monument was identified with a Mithraic torchbearer in the 1950s', but it has been recently suggested an identification with Ganymede.

References: Bartoli 1958; Castagnoli 1964; Tomei 1997; Pafumi 2014; ATLAS (p. 258).

N28. Head in Parian marble (h. 32 cm), found in 1930s' in the area of the *Domus Augustana* on the Palatine hill, 2nd century CE. Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Palatino (inv. 475902/12488).

The piece represents the head of a young man with wavy hair and Phrygian hat. This monument was identified with a Mithraic torchbearer in the 1950s', but it has been recently suggested an identification with Paris.

References: Bartoli 1958; Castagnoli 1964; Tomei 1997; Pafumi 2014; ATLAS (p. 258).

N29. Marble statue (h. 58 cm) found in Rome. Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano (inv. 283). The statue represents a male figure, dressed in eastern attire. He stands cross-legged and his arms are folded on the chest. He brings his right hand to his chin. It seems possible to identify this subject as a funerary Attis.

References: CIMRM 505.

N30. White marble relief (72x39 cm) found possibly in Rome. Currently preserved in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano – Terme di Diocleziano (inv).

This relief was preserved at Galleria San Giorgi (in Palazzo Borghese) and then moved to the Terme di Diocleziano. A male figure dressed in eastern attire (anaxyrides, long-sleeved tunic, cloak and Phrygian hat) stands. He holds in his right hand a long object which is currently missing: it could be either a torch or a sort of scepter. His left hand is raised at the height of his shoulder sustaining a small bust of Luna. The face of the male figure is lost, possibly shaven off in antiquity. It seems possible to identify this subject as Men.

References: CIMRM 541.

N31. A fragmentary relief preserved in Villa Wolkonski in Rome has been recently suggested to be identified with a Mithraic subject by R. Bucolo. The relief features the lower part of a naked figure, cross-legged, beside what seems a down-pointed torch.

References: Bucolo 2020 (p. 112).

N32. Relief found along via Cassia. In Vermaseren's opinion this is a representation of Atargatis.

References: CIMRM 644

N33. Inscription recognized as a modern copy. Currently preserved in Napoli, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (inv. 2821).

Ti(berius) Claud(ius) Ti(beri) Aug(usti) ver(na) | Thryph(o) a Iano ab atr(iis)
| hic situs est || Claudius Fuffeci | us sacerd(os) Sol(is) Inv(icti) M(ithrae) |
his sit(us) est || Claudiae Florae | Ti(berius) Claudius ostiar(ius) | coniugi
b(ene) m(erenti)

References: CIL VI 968; Camodeca and Solin 2000 (p. 183, cat. 637).

N34. Gem with Mithraic subject preserved in Udine, Museo Civico (inv. 1138).

This Mithraic gem was recognized as a modern (18th century) copy after the gem preserved in Florence (CIMRM 2354) by A. Mastrocinque.

References: CIMRM 2355; Ianovitz 1972 (pp. 30-3); Mastrocinque 2007 (p. 162, cat. UD1).

N35. Glass slab with tauroctony scene and inscription. Currently preserved in Pesaro, Museo Archeologico Oliveriano (inv. 3306; inv. epigr. 401).

This rich tauroctony representation as well as its dedicatory inscription were recognized as a modern forgery by F. Cumont (see TMMM2, p. 443).

References: CIL VI 736 = CIL VI 30823; TMM2 (pp. 443-4); EDR126831 (S. Orlandi).

N36. Inscription engraved on an amber amulet in the shape of a foot.

D(eo) S(oli) M(ithrae) | Venera (!) felici | Cupidint (!) | Caelesti | victrici

A recent study by J. Kolendo recognized this peculiar find as a modern (17th century) forgery.

References: CIL VI 756 = CIL VI 30825 = CIL V 133; TMMM2 (p. 174); Kolendo 1996.

N37. A bronze arm with svastikas engraved on the garments, from the Ashmolean Museum of Oxford. It was already recognized as non-Mithraic by M. Vermaseren.

References: CIMRM 765.

N38. Two terracotta lamps with Mithraic subjects, formerly preserved in Pesaro (Passeri collection). They were recognized as forgeries by H. Dressel.

References: CIMRM 766.

Chapter 3

Where to find Mithras? How was he called?

1. Where and When to find Mithras? Geographical and Chronological distribution of Mithraic finds

1.1 Northern Italy

Generally speaking, Mithraic finds from northern Italy consist mostly of inscriptions, with few figurative monuments, all of them reliefs (fig. 1-2). They appear quite scattered and rarefied in the western area of Transpadana whereas a more capillary distribution can be noticed in the Venetia, with a particularly high concentration in the city of Aquileia, which is the first site in Italy for the number of Mithraic finds¹⁵³. The earliest tokens of Mithraic worship in northern Italy consist of two inscriptions located in the extreme western and eastern areas of the region. In the Transpadana a fragmentary inscription from *Dertona/Tortona* (**5**) speaks of five devotees (a *sevir* and at least other four people, three of which were surely freedmen) who consecrated a monument to the god in the 1st century CE¹⁵⁴ whereas in the eastern area we can notice in Aquileia the consecration of a small altar to Cautopates Augustus (**29**) in the same century. The 2nd century saw a marked spread of the cult within the city of Aquileia (**27, 28, 30, 31, 33*, 36**), where Mithraic worship continued to be popular also in the second half of the century (**23a, 26, 35***) as well as in the following one (**23b*, 24a, 24b, 25, 32, 37**). There are no architectural traces of the cult of Mithras in Aquileia, but the existence of at least one Mithraeum is assured by the inscription dedicated by the slave *Velox* who built in the city a *speleum* (sic, **32**) equipped with all the necessary furniture (*cum omni apparatu*). Moreover, judging from the find-spots of other Mithraic inscriptions and monuments, we can cautiously suggest the presence of a Mithraic sanctuary in the north-eastern area of Monastero¹⁵⁵ where the high relief **23a** and altar **23b*** came to light, and not far also inscriptions **24a, 24b**, and **25**, and in the southern area of Beligna¹⁵⁶ (**27, 29**). Within the territory of Aquileia, Mithraic

¹⁵³ With the exclusion of the cities of Rome and Ostia.

¹⁵⁴ For this early date see Pettrossi 2007, p. 57. Unfortunately, this inscription is currently lost.

¹⁵⁵ The precise findspot of relief **23a** is marked in Maionica's Fundkarte (see Buora 2000, p. 73). Since it was found upside down, and no architectural remains were found together with it, we can infer it was not in its primary context.

¹⁵⁶ In a letter by G. Asquini to G. Labus, we read that four inscriptions were found 'tutte insieme nelle macerie di un antico edificio della città d'Aquileia' that means 'all together in the ruins of an ancient building of the city of Aquileia' (see Panciera 1970, p. 36). When he published them, G. Labus (Labus 1846, p. 273) reported that they were excavated '*dallo stesso speco*' that is 'from the same cave' in Aquileia. C. Gregorutti recalled this information some decades later and inferred that a sanctuary to the Underworld gods was to be found in the location known as Beligna (Gregorutti 1891, pp. 380-3). The inscriptions are seven. Apart from the two mentioned altars to Cautes and Cautopates, from the same devotee *Quintus Baienus Proculus* we have an altar dedicated to the

communities should have existed also on the coast where the Mithraeum of Duino (40*) was active from the 2nd to the 4th century CE. In the internal area run by the via Aquileia-Aguntum, which led from Aquileia to *Aguntum*/Lienz passing through *Iulium Carnicum*/Zuglio, the presence of a Mithraic community within the first half of the 2nd century CE is revealed by an *album sacratorum* of Mithraic devotees found in the settlement of Ospedaletto di Gemona del Friuli (38*), where it seems also possible persistence in the following century¹⁵⁷ (39). Mithraic devotees are also known in several coastal settlements on the western (46, 47, 48) and eastern (42*, 43, 44*, 45) Adriatic shores as well as in *Iulia Emona*/Ljubljana (41). The 3rd century CE reveals the appearance of a Mithraic community also in Val di Non (16, 17, 18*, 19, 20), as well as the presence of Mithraic devotees in several settlements located along the via Claudia Augusta in the nearby Val d'Isarco (14, 15) and southwards in *Tridentum*/Trento (21) and in Valpolicella (22*). In the 2nd century, we recorded the spread of Mithraic dedications also in several cities of the Transpadana, as it is the case of *Augusta Praetoria*/Aosta, where in the second half of the century a Mithraeum was built (1*), Milan (10) where a Mithraeum was restored (9), Industria (3), and *Bergomum*/Bergamo (12), as well as in minor settlements located by several alpine lakes (8, 13). Mithraic worship continued to be practiced in Transpadana in the 3rd century CE (2, 4, 6, 7), but its presence results quite scattered if compared with the more capillary distribution of finds in the Venetia. The latest testimony of the cult of Mithras in northern Italy can be indicated in a fragmentary statue of Cautes found in Milan (11*), in a fragmentary altar from the area of *Parentium*/Poreč (44), dated between the late 3rd and early 4th century CE, and in the site of the Mithraeum of Duino which was frequented until the 4th century CE. Aemilia revealed a single Mithraic find surely coming from the region (49, possibly from Ravenna): unfortunately, the exact provenance of the peculiar relief preserved in Bologna (286), as well as the Aion preserved in Modena (287), is unknown.

Fatae Augustae (CIL V, 34 = EDCS-25601337), and from other devotees three dedications to Dis Pater (CIL V, 35 = EDCS-25601336; CIL V, 36 = EDCS-64300087; CIL V, 37 = EDCS-25601335), and one to Hera (EDCS-64400384).

¹⁵⁷ Both these inscriptions were found in secondary contexts: they were found in Ospedaletto di Gemona and possibly came from the nearby area but their exact provenance is unknown. C. Zaccaria suggested linking this *album sacratorum* with the settlement of the nearby post of *statio Ploruncensis*/Resiutta, last custom post before entering the province of Noricum (see Zaccaria 2001, p. 217 and note 70). This settlement was located on a road that departed from the via Aquileia-Aguntum at the convergence of the Fella river in the Tagliamento river. This connection, although quite suggestive especially considering the presence of a Mithraic community in the first customs house found along the same road in Noricum that is the Mithraeum of *statio Bilachinensis*/Camporosso (see Casari 2015), is at present time bound to remain a hypothesis.

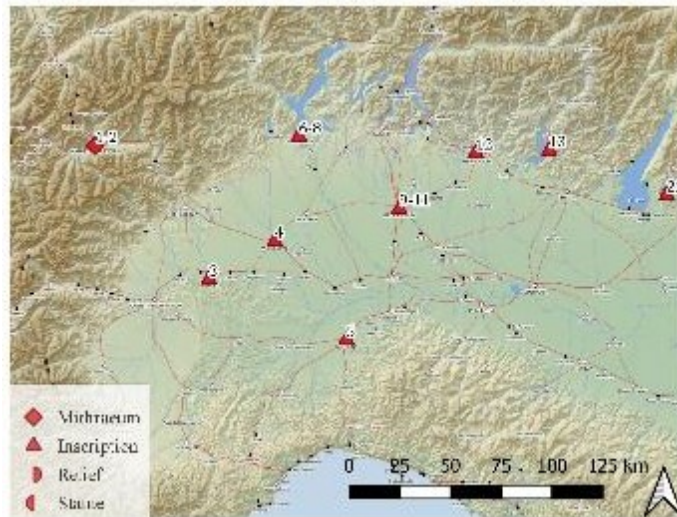


Fig. 1. Distribution of Mithraic finds in Transpadana.

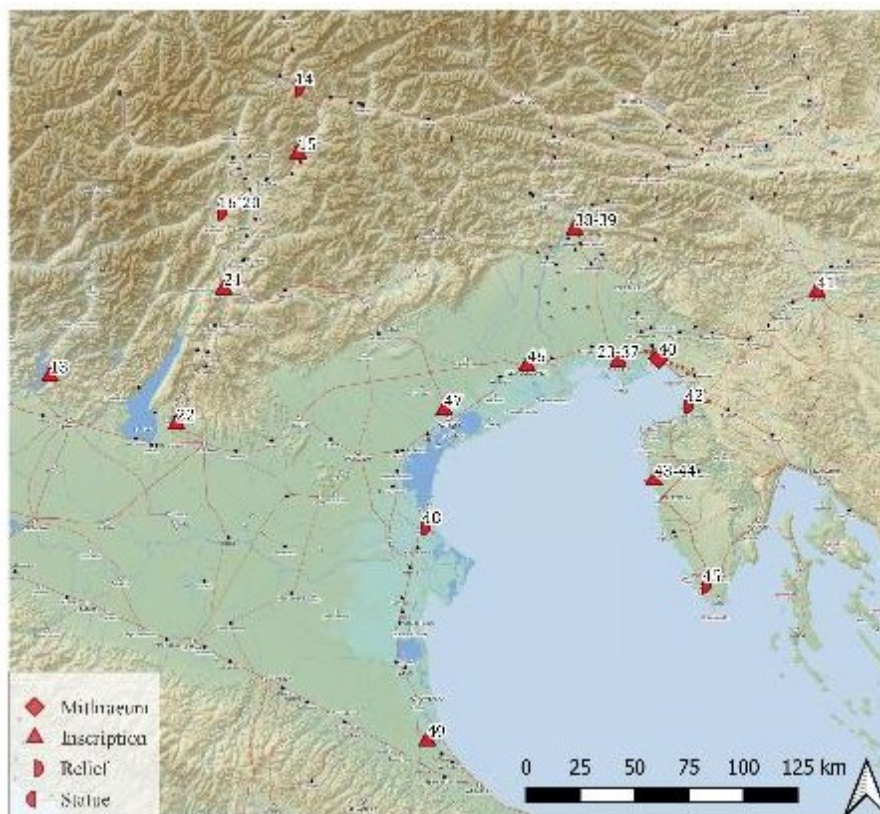


Fig. 2. Distribution of Mithraic finds in Venetia et Histria.

1.2 Central and Southern Italy

Mithraic monuments are virtually unknown on the Adriatic coast of central and southern Italy. A single find is known from Picenum, namely relief **50** possibly found in *Urbs Salvia*/Urbisaglia. Passing in Umbria, from the northern site of *Sentinum*/Sassoferrato, where one relief and three inscriptions (**51a**, **51b**, **51c**, **51d**) revealed a community of at least 37 devotees worshipping the god in the 3rd century CE, we continue to record Mithraic finds moving southwards along the via

Flaminia. Both of its routes preserved Mithraic memories. The eastern path accounts for the Mithraeum of *Spoletum*/Spoleto (**53**) and possibly for two reliefs from *Trebiae*/Trevi (**52***) and *Interamna Nahars*/Terni (**54**). Its western path instead provided an inscription from *Carsulae* (**55***). Moreover, where the two paths merged, Mithraic monuments were also preserved in the settlement of *Ocriculum*/Otricoli (**57, 58**), and possibly also in *Nequinum* (**56***). Mithraic worship in Umbria is to be regarded as a relatively late phenomenon: the majority of the finds are dated in the 3rd century CE (**51a, 51b, 51c, 51d, 55*, 57**), and only relief **54** from *Interamna Nahars*/Terni and inscription **56** possibly from *Nequinum* can be dated few decades before in the late 2nd century CE. The same chronological span from the 3rd to the first decades of the 4th century CE is confirmed by the activity of the Spoleto Mithraeum (**53**).

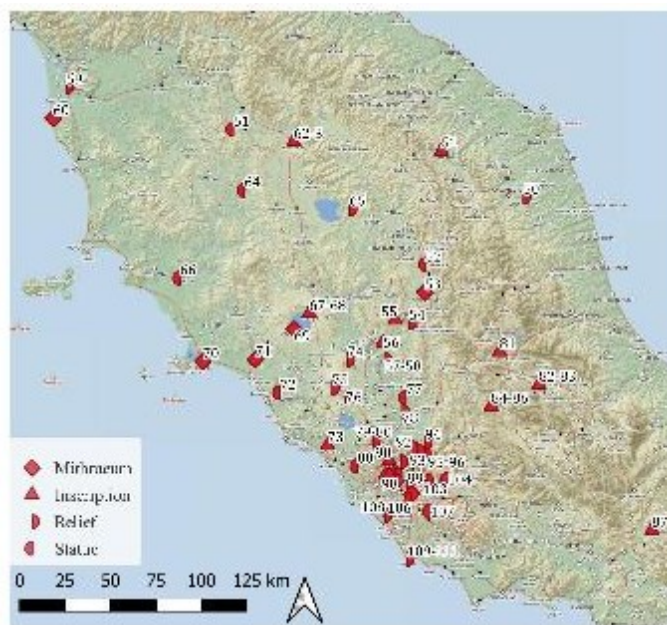


Fig. 3. Distribution of Mithraic finds in central Italy.

In Etruria, evidence of Mithraic monuments is quite scattered (fig. 3), consisting mainly of single finds such as reliefs or statues, and becomes denser approaching Rome. Along the northern coast, we recorded the site of the Mithraeum of *Portus Pisanus*/Livorno (**60***), and the possible relative relief **59** currently preserved in Pisa. The frequentation of this sanctuary can be dated between the 3rd and the beginning of the 5th century CE. Moving to the interior, Mithraic finds, although none in primary context, were found in the city of *Arretium*/Arezzo (**62*, 63***) and *Rusellae*/Roselle (**66**) as well as in the minor settlements of Asciano (**64**), Cavriglia (**61***), and Magione (**65***). Moving south, a Mithraeum was discovered just outside the settlement of *Bisentium*/Capodimonte on the western shore of the Bolsena lake, whereas on the opposite coast a peculiar bronze with Mithraic applique (**67**) and an altar which commemorated the construction of a *spelaeum* (**68**) were found in the area of *Volsinii*/Bolsena. Going south along the via Cassia, Mithraic reliefs were found in Soriano nel Cimino (**74**), *Sutrium*/Sutri (**75**), *vicus Matrini* (**76**), and finally in *Veii*/Veio (**79*, 80***). Following the course of the Tiber from Rome to the north, between the territories of *Capena* and *Cures*, a fragmentary statue of torchbearer (**77**) and the famous double-face relief from Fiano Romano (**78**) were discovered.

Going back toward the coastal area, Mithraic finds become denser while approaching Rome. We must recognize the Mithraea discovered in Cosa (70) and Vulci (71*), as well as the recently discovered statue from Tarquinia (72*) and an altar from the ager of *Caere/Cerveteri* (73*). Few are the chronological data for these finds, given the fact that most of these reliefs and statues exhibit features not clearly attributable to the 2nd rather than the 3rd century CE. As for the Mithraea, that of Cosa was in use from the mid-2nd to the mid-3rd century whereas that of Vulci all through the 3rd century CE. The inscription from *Volsinii/Bolsena* locates also the construction of a *spelaeum* in the area in the second half of the 2nd century CE. The earliest finds from the Etruscan region are nonetheless the relief from *Veii/Veio* (79*), dated between 120 and 160 CE, and the group with tauroctony from Tarquinia (72*) dated a few decades later.

In Latium, we recorded a high concentration of Mithraic evidence in the area around the city of Rome and a sensible decrease in areas far from the capital. Reliefs are testified in minor settlements located on routes exiting from Rome: in *Lorium*, along via Cornelia (88), in the area of the Catacombs of Priscilla, along the via Salaria (90), in Tor Cervara, along the via Tiburtina (91), in the road station *Ad duos lauros*, along the via Labicana (97), and in the area of the Catacombs of Commodilla, along the via Laurentina (89). In the internal part of the region, single finds are recorded in several minor settlements (92, 93, 94, 102) as well as in *Tibur/Tivoli* (95, 96) and *Praeneste/Palestrina* (103). Going from Rome to the Alban Hills, two Mithraea should have existed in the area of two suburban villas along the via Appia, judging from the finding of major concentration of Mithraic monuments. They are respectively the Quintilii villa (101), at the 5th mile of the via Appia, and the Centronii villa (99), at the 9th mile of the via Latina. In the area of the Alban Hills, the renowned Mithraeum of Marino (105*) is accompanied by the Mithraic Aion preserved in Castel Gandolfo (106) and by the group with tauroctony possibly found in Velletri (107). Few finds are testified in coastal sites, such as the pottery with tauroctony representation from *Lavinium/Pratica di Mare* (108) and the reliefs from *Antium/Anzio* (109, 110). Few are the datable finds, which are nonetheless equally distributed between the mid to late 2nd century (91, 94, 105*) and the 3rd century CE (95, 96, 99, 100*, 101). Remarkable is the presence of an African red slip ware bowl in *Lavinium* (108) which shows an applied decoration featuring the Mithraic tauroctony on a vessel produced in northern Africa between 350 and 425 CE.

In Samnium, Mithraic monuments are known in several communities located on the Appennines. A fragmentary inscription from the Sabine settlement of *Amiternum* (81*) is generically dated in the 2nd or 3rd century CE, while from *Nersae/Nesce* in the territory of the *res publica Aequiculorum*, the activity of the devotee *Apronianus* (84), public slave and treasurer of the city, promoted the consecration of a relief to the god (86) and the restoration of a sanctuary (85) in the years around 172 CE. The settlement of *Aveia Vestina/Fossa* also preserved two testimonies of Mithraic worship: they are namely two inscriptions dated in 213 CE (82) and 244-248 CE (83*).

Mithraic evidence in southern Italy is quite scattered (fig. 4) and virtually non-existent if compared with the richer evidence from central and northern Italy. The southernmost Mithraic devotee from Samnium can be traced in *Aesernia/Isernia* (87) and be generically dated between the 2nd and the 3rd century CE. The

Mithraeum of *Capua*/Santa Maria Capua Vetere (**113**), which was in use since the last decades of the 2nd to the mid-4th century CE, represents the more complete document on the cult of Mithras available in the region of Campania and all southern Italy. A minor concentration of Mithraic monuments is noticeable around the gulf of Naples: a Mithraeum (**114**) and two reliefs (**115, 116**) were found in the city, whereas another sanctuary was discovered in the isle of Ponza (**112***), and inscriptions in *Pithecoussai*/Ischia (**117**), *Caprae*/Capri (**118**), *Stabiae*/Castellamare di Stabia (**119***), and not too far south in *Paestum* (**119bis***). Two inscriptions from *Venusia*/Venosa (**120**) and *Grumentum*/Grumento (**121**) represent the last testimony of Mithraic worship in the Italian peninsula.

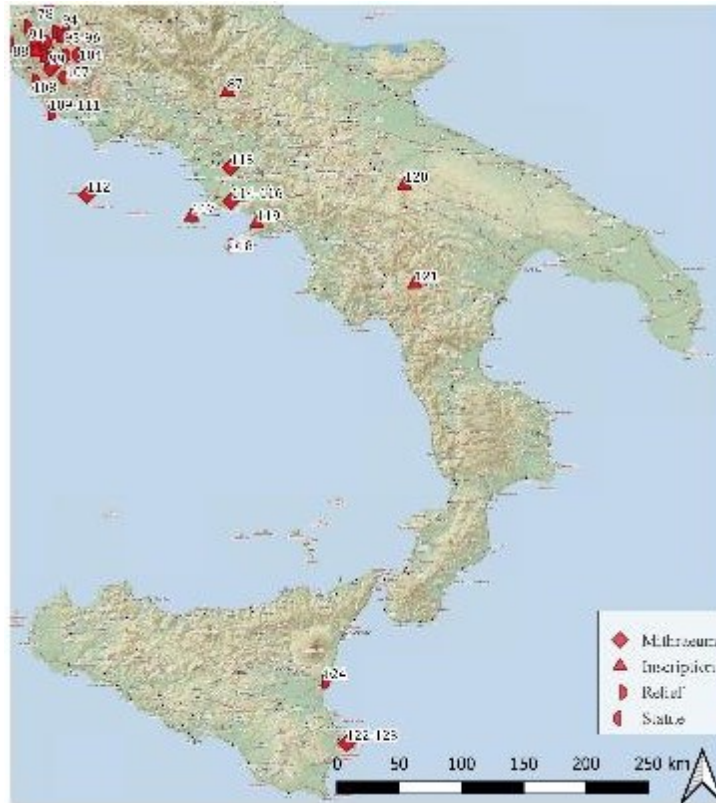


Fig. 4. Distribution of Mithraic finds in southern Italy.

This trend of decrease in the number of Mithraic evidence is confirmed by three sole monuments from Sicily (**122***, **123**, **124**) and by a single find from Sardinia (**125**).

1.3 Rome and Ostia

The distribution of Mithraic finds in the city of Ostia (fig. 5) represents an exceptional case study: apart from a few sporadic finds (**147, 148, 149, 150, 151**), the largest share of monuments can be pinned to a single sanctuary and quite precisely located also in terms of chronology. As for their spatial distributions, Mithraea are spread all across the city, without showing particular clustering. As for their chronology, one of the earliest Mithraea in Ostia, the Mitreo di Palazzo Imperiale (**138**) was founded in 162 CE, but its precise layout in this phase is

unfortunately unknown¹⁵⁸. Other Mithraea founded in the Antonine age were: Mitreo delle Terme del Mitra (132), Mitreo della Planta Pedis (140), and possibly Mitreo Aldobrandini (133). In the following moment, between the last decades of the 2nd and the early 3rd century CE, other sanctuaries were founded: Mitreo delle Sette Sfere (136, 137), Mitreo di Lucrezio Menandro (130), Mitreo delle Pareti Dipinte (139), Mitreo degli Animali (141), Mitreo delle Sette Porte (142), and Mitreo Fagan (146). In these decades several Mithraea show phases of restoration (133, 138, 140) and enlargement (139). In the 3rd century other sanctuaries were founded, like the Mitreo di Porta Romana (135), Mitreo dei Serpenti (143), Mitreo di Felicissimo (144), Mitreo della Casa di Diana (126), and the Mitreo di Fructosus (131). It seems that all these sanctuaries were in use well in the 3rd century, until the beginning of the following one. The last Mithraic sanctuary founded in Ostia was the Mitreo dei Marmi Colorati (145*), which lived only a few decades between the mid-4th and the beginning of the 5th century CE. The overview of the finds from Ostia is completed by two fragmentary inscriptions found in *Portus* (152, 153).

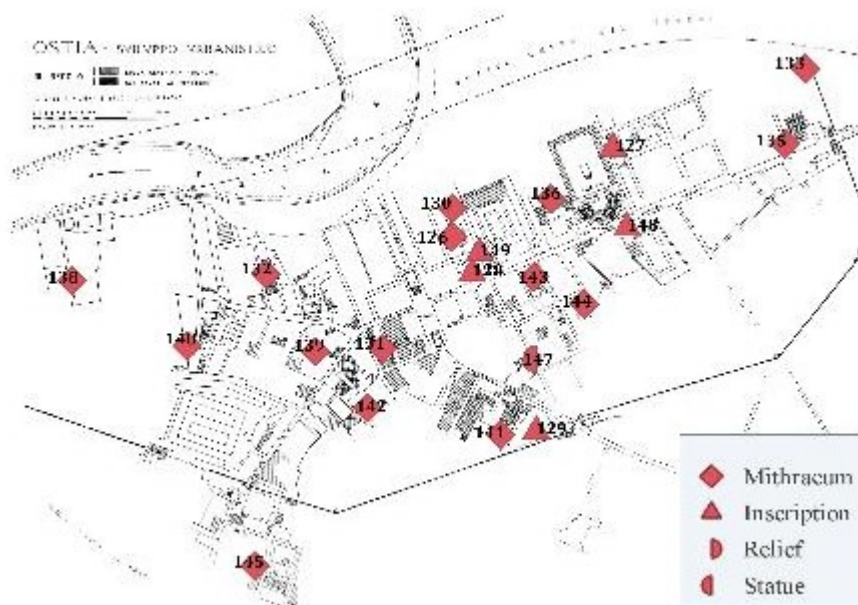


Fig. 5. Distribution of Mithraic finds in Ostia.

Also in Rome, we can notice an even distribution of Mithraic sanctuaries all across the city without any particular clustering (fig. 6). Although the sporadic finds from the city represent a numerically consistent group (from 210 to 283), the exact location of 26 Mithraic sanctuaries is known, as well as the precise find-spot of

¹⁵⁸ A base supporting a statue of Cautes was consecrated on the 18th of January 162 CE, as revealed by the consular date written on a side of the altar (see 138c). This base was re-used a few decades later: the first dedicatory inscription was erased, and a new one was engraved by the devotee *Caius Caelius Hermeros*. The inscription bearing the consular date of 162 CE was not erased, possibly because that side of the monument was placed against a wall and was not visible to the later devotees. If it is a fact that base 138c and its twin monument 138d were re-used in the *Mitreo del Palazzo Imperiale*, it is also a fact that the sanctuary exhibits a layout dated in the late 2nd – early 3rd century CE. These bases must be either be related to a previous management of the Mithraeum currently unknown or a different sanctuary not yet located, possibly destroyed in the 3rd-century transformations of the area.

other 24 single monuments¹⁵⁹. The earliest Mithraic find from Rome consists of an altar dedicated by an Imperial freedman between the last decades of the 1st and the early 2nd century CE (**165**) and of a tauroctony group dedicated by another freedman in the first decades of the 2nd century CE (**265**): these are among the two earliest Mithraic monuments known in the entire Empire. Unfortunately, no architectural evidence for the cult of Mithras has been detected in Rome in the same decades. Nonetheless, several monuments testify to the presence of Mithraic communities in the capital from the 2nd century CE, especially from the middle of the century (**189, 216, 232, 243, 244, 253, 261, 264, 272, 280, 283**) when we can find also the earliest Mithraeum, that is the Barberini Mithraeum (**175**; first phase: second half of the 2nd century CE). In the last quarter of the century the Mithraeum of the *castra peregrinorum* was founded (**155***; first phase), and between the late 2nd and the early 3rd century CE several other Mithraic sanctuaries were set up: the Mithraeum under S. Clemente (**158**), the Mithraeum of S. Vitale (**173**), the Mithraeum of the Nummi Albini (**174**), and the Mithraeum within the Crypta Balbi (**192***; first phase). Several monuments and inscriptions testify to a steady increase of devotees in these decades (**197, 226, 227, 235, 240, 242, 252, 255, 269, 180, 214, 218, 247**). A new Mithraeum was founded in the 3rd century, namely the S. Prisca Mithraeum in the earliest years (**202**), whereas the Barberini Mithraeum was renewed (**175**, second phase). The cult of Mithras lasted all through the 3rd century, as testified by the consecration of monuments and inscriptions to the god (**170, 172, 181, 190, 194, 201, 213, 219*, 241, 248, 249, 254, 278, 279**), as well as by the setting up of new sanctuaries from the mid of the century, such as the Mithraeum under the S. Giovanni Hospital on the Caelius hill (**156***), the Mithraeum of Piazza Dante (**164**), the Mithraeum under S. Lorenzo in Damaso (**193**), the Mithraeum of the Circus Maximus (**198**; first phase), the Mithraeum in the Caracalla Baths (**199**), and the Mithraeum of via Marmorata (**205**). The S. Prisca Mithraeum was enlarged in this century (**202**; second phase), followed after a couple of decades by the Mithraeum of the *castra peregrinorum* (**155***; second phase), and the Mithraeum of the Crypta Balbi (**192***; second phase). Mithraic devotion is still consistent in Rome in the late 3rd and early 4th century CE, as testified by the consecration of monuments and inscriptions (**196a-b, 210, 231, 256**) and the renovation of the Circus Maximus Mithraeum (**198**; second phase). Nonetheless, in the following decades, we can notice the abandonment of long-lived sanctuaries such as the Mithraeum under S. Clemente (**158**), that of the *castra peregrinorum* (**155***), and that under the S. Giovanni Hospital on the Caelius hill (**156***). Mithraic devotion is nonetheless attested in the 4th century by the foundation of small sanctuaries as that of via Passalaqua (**169***) and that of via G. Lanza¹⁶⁰ (**162**). In the third quarter of the 4th century, we assist also in the continuation of Mithraic worship within the Olympii family in their Mithraeum (**183**) as well as in the peculiar public display of pagan priesthoods made by a group of senators in the Vatican Phrygianum (**209**).

¹⁵⁹ **160, 161, 165, 166, 167, 168, 170, 172, 176, 179, 184, 185, 194, 195, 196, 197, 200, 203, 206, 207, 208, 218, 219*, 220.**

¹⁶⁰ The Mithraeum was in use well in the Constantine Age, as well as the shrine of Isis placed just outside its entrance. As in the Isiac shrine, the monuments displayed in the Mithraeum belonged to the previous century, being dated in the late 2nd and 3rd century CE. See Sfameni 2012.

The closing up of the Mithraeum of the Crypta Balbi (192*) in the early 5th century CE marks the last material evidence of the Mithras cult in the capital.

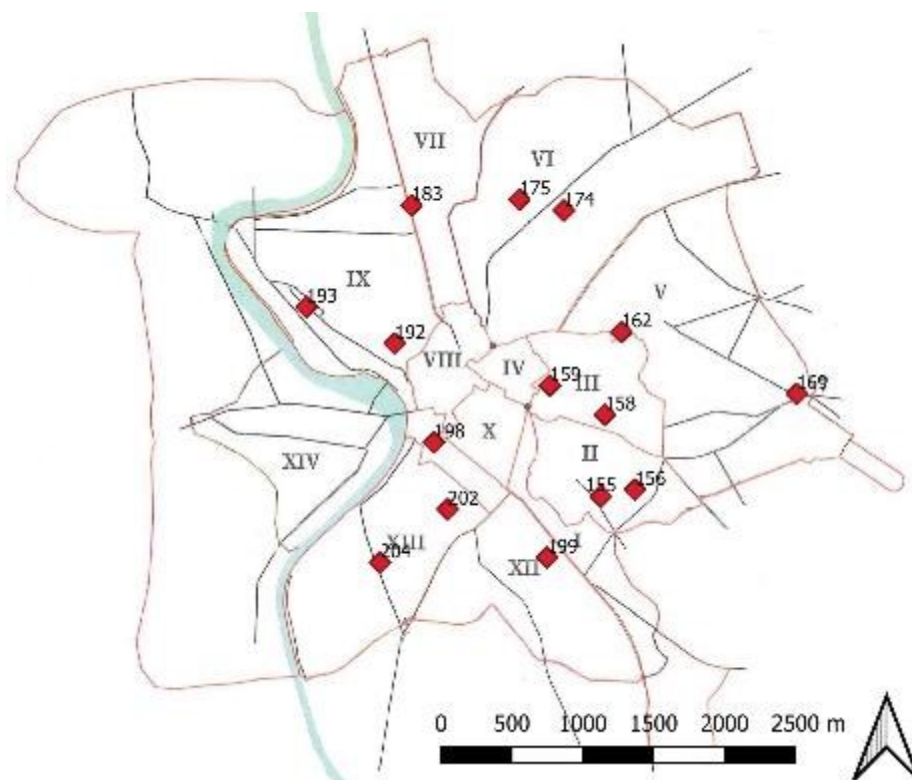


Fig. 6. Distribution of Mithraea in Rome.

2. Who was Mithras? The names of the god and *formulae* used to address him

2.1 The names of the god

The inscriptions related to the cult of Mithras found in northern Italy are 46. They represent the most common testimony of Mithraic worship in this area compared to the relative scarcity of figurative monuments¹⁶¹.

In 38 texts, the name of the god was preserved. We recorded a preference for the phrasing of Mithras' name without the mention of Sol, such as DIM (3, 15, 20, 21a, 24a, 24b, 25, 33*, 37, 40a*, 40b*, 40c*, 41, 47*), DI (4, 12, 22a*, 36), IM (1a*, 1b*, 2*), and in one case the single mention of Mithras (44*). In two cases the consecration of the monument is dedicated to Mithras and another deity. It is the case of the altar from *Sublazio/Ponte Gardena* (15), the devotee *Valentinus* consecrated the monument to Mithras and Sol Socius. A recent study by T. Vágási claimed a Pannonian origin for the cult of Sol Socius, interpreted as a solar cult with Syrian traits spread from *Intercisa/Dunaújváros* in the late Severan age thanks to Syrian troops and custom officers¹⁶². The other record consists of the fragmentary altar from *Iulia Emona/Ljubljana* (41), where a devotee dedicated the monument to

¹⁶¹ Only 14 records, see next chapter.

¹⁶² See Vágási 2018, in particular p. 370.

Mithras Silvanus Augustus. Even if the presence of Silvanus in Mithraea is known in several cases¹⁶³, this inscription represents an unprecedented in the cult as for the explicit association of the two deities¹⁶⁴ on the same monument. Moreover, the association of their two names without the presence of the conjunction *et* could point toward an identification of the two gods in the same deity¹⁶⁵. Less spread but still well testified are the consecrations to the god with the phrasing Sol Mithras, such as SIM (41), DSMI (5), and the more common DSIM (7, 9, 18*, 43). A peculiar long phrasing is shown on a fragmentary altar preserved in Novara (6), which refers to *Sol Mithras numen victor Invictus deus*.

In northern Italy, we also recorded 5 inscriptions dedicated to Cautopates (8, 13, 27a, 29, 39) and 1 dedicated to Cautes (27b). In one case the name of Cautopates is accompanied by the epithet Augustus (29). This is a unique occurrence: nowhere else in the Empire either Cautopates or Cautes are called Augusti¹⁶⁶. The use of this epithet is quite common in Venetia et Histria¹⁶⁷, but its use associated with Cautopates, that is to the cult of Mithras, could reveal a specific intention of the community to relate to the Imperial power¹⁶⁸. The overview of Mithras' name is completed in northern Italy by 3 altars dedicated to the Birth of Mithras from the rock that is referred to as *Genetrici* (with reference to the *petra genatrix*, from which Mithras was born) *pro genitura dei* (21b), *Geniturae Invicti* (22b*), and PG (unshortened as *Petrae Genetrici* by E. Buchi, 46*).

In central Italy, the general overview of inscriptions is virtually the opposite of in the northern area: figurative monuments (53 records) almost double inscriptions (28 records). To these 28 inscriptions, we must add also other six which were engraved on figurative monuments such as reliefs (50, 57, 75, 86) and statues (77, 107), reaching a total of 34 inscriptions. Those are distributed as follows: 9 from

¹⁶³ In Ostia a shrine to Silvanus is known within the Mithraeum of the Palazzo Imperiale (see 138b) as well as in the Aldobrandini Mithraeum (see 133b), whereas a relief with Silvanus (CIMRM 1604) was found in Mithraeum III of *Poetovio/Ptuj*.

¹⁶⁴ The cult of Silvanus Augustus shows a particularly high concentration in Aquileia, with 75% of all the inscriptions dedicated to Silvanus in Venetia et Histria, and with devotees recruited solely among freedmen of male gender (see Gregori 2009, p. 313). In general, for the cult of Silvanus see the analysis in Dorcey 1989, whereas for specific aspects of this cult in the area see Matijasic&Tassaux 2000, pp. 79-81.

¹⁶⁵ The monument is unfortunately known only from literary sources and is currently lost. A sceptic of this association of divine names could also suggest that the DIM could have been added afterwards to an altar already consecrated to Silvanus Augustus.

¹⁶⁶ We have few records of Mithras Augustus too, and none from Italy or Rome. A single occurrence is testified in Hispania Citerior (CIL II, 2785 = EDCS-05502094) whereas four are recorded in Gallia Lugdunensis (EDCS-69000027; EDCS-69000028; EDCS-69000032; CIL XIII, 2906 = EDCS-10501901).

¹⁶⁷ As underlined by C. Zaccaria in Zaccaria 2008, p. 234. Consecrations to Augusti and Augustae deities consists in the *regio X* in 62% of all the records from the Italian peninsula (with the exclusion of Rome), as shown in Gregori 2009. For a synthesis on this phenomenon in Italy see Gregori 2009, whereas for Rome see Panciera 2003.

¹⁶⁸ The question of the value of the epithet Augustus when referred to a deity is still an open issue (see for instance Panciera 2003, and Fishwick 1991, pp. 446-54). In this specific case, we could suggest that the gesture of associating the epithet Augustus to Cautopates could be read as the will of the unnamed devotee who consecrated the monument to use a word with strong implicit value to please the Mithraic community which was likely composed of members closely linked to, and possibly also including, Imperial officers.

Umbria and Picenum, 5 from Etruria, 7 from Samnium, and 13 from Latium (with the exclusion of Rome and Ostia). Even if the number of inscriptions is comparatively lower in this area, their contents add some striking features to the picture that emerged from the analysis of the northern specimens.

We recorded in central Italy a slight preference for calling the god Sol Mithras rather than simply Mithras. A slightly major number of inscriptions reads in fact SIM (**53b**, **68**, **81***, **85**, **96**), DSIM (**51c**, **73***, **95**, **97**, **100a***, **100b***, **101e**), SI (**82**), rather than ID¹⁶⁹ (**62**, **83***, **87**, **105c***), IM (**56***, **57***, **84**, **111***), I (**50**, **51d**, **77**, **89**), M (**58**). A variation on the normal phrasing with Sol Mithras can be considered the form NSSIM (**51b**) unshortened as *numen sanctus Sol Invictus Mithras*. In two cases we underline the addition of the adjective *sanctus* to the name of the god (**62**, **89**) whereas in another case the addition of the adjective *propitius* (**50**). In a single case, we found the two deities of Sol and Mithras mentioned as separate entities that are *Sol et Invictus Mithras* (**56***). Peculiar is also the expression *summus Invictus Mithras* used in the funerary inscription of *Alfenius Ceionius Iulianus Kamenius* (**111***), but it is nonetheless compliant with other testimonies of Mithraic devotion by this senator in Rome (see below). We do not record in central Italy any inscription dedicated to the torchbearers whereas a single example of consecration to the birth of Mithras is attested. This is the case of the altar dedicated in the Mithraeum of Marino, *Genesi sacrum* (**105d***).

Only 6 Mithraic inscriptions naming Mithras are preserved in southern Italy. We find here the only 2 Greek inscriptions consecrated to Mithras outside of Rome. They are namely a limestone inscription found in *Aenaria/Ischia* (**117**) and an altar possibly from *Venusia/Venosa* (**120**). The phrasing they use to call the god is in accordance with the Latin records, being *Ἥλιος Μίθρας* (**120**) and *Ἥλιος Μίθρας ἀνίκητος* (**117**), parallels of Sol Mithras and Sol Invictus Mithras. SIM (**121**) is the form we encounter also in the inscription from *Grumentum* in Lucania. As for the other three inscriptions from Campania, we find in Naples the peculiar expression *omnipotens deus Mithras* (**115**), with an adjective referred to the Persian god unprecedented in Italy which finds few comparisons in the Empire¹⁷⁰. The other two mention instead a community of *cultores dei Mithrae* (**119***) and a *collegium dei Invicti* (**119bis***).

Only 17 of the 31 Mithraic inscriptions found in Ostia report the name of the god or his assistants. They are usually written on altars or small bases, all in marble, with the exception¹⁷¹ of two inscriptions written on mosaic floors (**138a**, **144a**) and two graffiti (**126b**, **145b***). We observe in Ostia a preference for naming Mithras together with the name of Sol. We recorded in fact the phrasings SIM (**134**, **138a**,

¹⁶⁹ With an inversion with respect to the phrase DI found in northern Italy (see above). We use here the signature ID for ease of reference, but it should be noticed that in these four inscriptions the phrase appears written in its extended form that is *Invicto deo*.

¹⁷⁰ See for instance *Deo Soli Omnipotenti Mithrae* in Pannonia Inferior (EDCS-09900472), *Deo Omnipotenti Mithrae Invicto* in Noricum (EDCS-14500061), *Deo Omnipotenti Invicto Mithrae* in Germania Superior (EDCS-70900915), and *Invicto Soli Omnipotenti Mithrae* in Dalmatia (EDCS-67400473).

¹⁷¹ Inscription **132a** consists of the signature of *Kriton*, the Athenian sculptor who made the original statue later set up in the Mithraeum of the Mithras' Baths. The name of the sculptor was engraved directly on the statue, on the neck of the bull.

140b, 146d, 149), or DSM (**137a**) or DISM (**137b**) and few phrasings like DIM (**130a**), IDM (**145b***), IM (**140d**), and M (**131b**). Peculiar is the case of the three inscriptions from the Mitreo della Casa di Diana, where the god is referred to simply as *deus* (**126c, 128, 129, 133a**). Peculiar variations of the name of the god are related to the dedications by the devotee *Caius Valerius Heracles*. He consecrated a marble group to the *Indeprehensibilis deus* (**146a**), with an unprecedented term in Latin epigraphy, whereas in another inscription he declares himself, with a peculiar variation, priest of the *deus iuvenis incorruptus Sol Invictus Mithras* (**146d**). Moreover, we can observe in Ostia a single monument dedicated to Cautes (**139c**) and the mention of a restoration of the *fratres*, which possibly refers to two statues of the torchbearers (**148**). The name *Arimanius* (**127**) recurs only once, and it is likely referred to the statue of a Mithraic lion-headed Aion.

the Mithraic inscriptions found in Rome are 96. They were usually engraved on altars and bases, all on marble supports¹⁷², with the exception of the painted inscriptions of the S. Prisca Mithraeum (**202d-f**), and of six graffiti from the Circus Maximus (**198a**), Barberini (**175d-f**), and again S. Prisca (**202c, 202i**) Mithraea.

67 of these inscriptions preserved the name of Mithras. As already observed in Ostia, we can also notice in Rome a preference for phrasings referring to Sol Mithras, such as: SIM (**165, 168, 179, 184, 197, 209c, 219*, 227, 228, 252, 253, 259, 260**), DSIM (**189, 193d, 198b, 198d, 202k, 209b, 210, 221, 222, 254**), DSI (**160**), SM (**195, 257, 265**), SID (**243**). A peculiar variation of the name Sol Mithras can be noticed in inscription **226** which was consecrated to the *numen Invictus Sol Mithras*. In Greek inscriptions, the name of Mithras appears always as Ἥλιος Μίθρας (**165**) and in one case we have the phrase Ἥλιος Μίθρας ἀνίκητος (**260**). Moreover, in Greek inscriptions, we can notice other two peculiar cases. The first consists of the small altar (**199d**) with Greek inscription found in the Mithraeum of the Caracalla Baths. Dedicatory inscriptions were engraved on the front and back sides of the altar. The original inscription on the front of the altar reported a consecration to Sarapis, but in a second moment, the name of the god was erased and substituted with that of Mithras. This resulted in the addition of epithets usually referred to Sarapis to the name of Mithras. This fact seems not to have bothered the devotees who set up this small altar in the Mithraeum, who did not cancel them. Moreover, on the back of the altar, the name of Sarapis was not erased at all, and the name of Mithras was added just after that of the Egyptian god. It is possible to suggest that within the Caracalla Mithraeum the devotees worshipped Mithras, as readable on the front of the altar, but were also not alien to the worship of Sarapis, and did not feel problematic to read the names of both gods on the same altar. Moreover, even the Greek inscriptions from the Mithraic context of via Marmorata (**205**) offer a similar combination of Mithras with other deities. On inscriptions **205a** and **205b** we can notice the peculiar assimilation of Sol Mithras with Zeus in

¹⁷² With the exception of relief **170** and altar **253** realized in travertine. As for the marble supports, they consist mostly of altars or bases for statues and slabs. 11 inscriptions were engraved on marble reliefs (**154a, 154b, 160, 164a, 164c, 164d, 184, 186, 198b, 249, 279**) and 3 on marble statues (**155f*, 189, 265**), whereas inscription **163** was engraved on the base of a marble chandelier. For 22 inscriptions (**165, 183a-e, 195, 200, 210, 219*, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 257, 258, 259, 260**) which were recorded in the past but are currently lost we do not possess exact information on the material they were engraved on. Nonetheless, given the account at the previous line, white marble seems the most plausible hypothesis.

the phrasing Ζεὺς Ἥλιος μέγας Μίθρας ἀνίκητος (205a) and Ζεὺς Ἥλιος Μίθρας ἀνίκητος (205b) and the assimilation with the gnostic Phanes in 205c, reading Ζεὺς Ἥλιος Μίθρας Φάνης. As for the occurrence of the name of Mithras, we have: DIM (170, 180, 187, 209d, 214, 225), IM (154b, 163, 172, 178a*, 178b, 209a, 213, 215, 223, 224, 248, 258), M (193e), I (175g, 185), ID (255), DI (198e, 279). These phrasings seldom show the addition of further elements, such as the adjective *sanctus* which appears as: *sanctus dominus Invictus Mithras* (154b), *deus sanctus Invictus Mithras* (170), and *sanctus Invictus Mithras* (258) or, moreover, the form *summus Invictus Mithras* in two honorary inscriptions for the devotee *Alfenius Ceionius Iulianus Kamenius* (178a*, 178b). Finally, we recognized the recurrence of the term *numen* in the phrasings *Invictus numen* (185) and *Invictus numen Mithras* (248), and the simple use of the noun *deus* to refer to the god in other two cases (235, 256), as already observed in Ostia. In three cases Mithras is referred to with epiclesis of Iranian inspiration¹⁷³ such as *Nabarze* (200, 220bis*) and *Sebesius* (189).

As for the inscriptions which mention Mithras' assistants, the torchbearers, we recorded 3 dedications to Cautes (155i*, 158b, 191) and 1 to Cautopates (155j*). The Birth of Mithras from the rock is celebrated by a single consecration, with the dedication of the *petra genatrix* (*petram genetricem dedicavit*, 155f*). Finally, we have a single inscription dedicated to the god Arimanius (*deus Arimanius*, 167).

Area	North. It	Centr. It.	South. It	Ostia	Rome	Total
Phrase						
	Sol Unconquered Mithras					55
SIM	1	5	1	5	13	25
DSIM	4	7	0	0	10	20
DISM	0	0	0	1	0	1
DSMI	1	0	0	0	0	1
DSM	0	0	0	1	0	1
DSI	0	0	0	0	1	1
SM	0	0	0	0	3	3
SI	1	1	0	0	0	2
SID	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Unconquered Mithras					78
DIM	14	0	0	2	6	22
DM	0	0	2	0	0	2
M	1	1	0	0	1	3
IM	3	4	0	1	12	20
I	0	4	0	0	2	6
DI	4	0	0	0	2	6
ID	0	4	0	0	1	5
D	0	0	0	4	2	6
Greek	0	0	2*	0	7**	9

¹⁷³ For a critical analysis of the Iranian origin of these two words and their later migration into Greek and Latin, see König 2015, with further references.

Cautes	1	0	0	1	3	5
Cautopates	5	0	0	0	1	6
Gen. dei	3	1	0	0	1	5
NN	8	6	1	13	30	58
Further names of Mithras: <i>Sol Mithras numen victor Invictus deus</i> (x1), <i>numen sanctus Sol Invictus Mithras</i> (x1), <i>Arimanius</i> (x2), <i>Indeprehensibilis deus</i> (x1), <i>fratres</i> (x1), <i>Nabarze</i> (x1), <i>Sebesius</i> (x1), <i>numen Invictus Sol Mithras</i> (x1).						
* Ἥλιος Μίθρας, Ἥλιος Μίθρας ἀνίκητος. ** Ἥλιος Μίθρας, Ἥλιος Μίθρας ἀνίκητος (x2), Εἷς Ζεὺς Μίτρας Ἥλιος, Ζεὺς Ἥλιος Μίθρας ἀνίκητος (x2), Ζεὺς Ἥλιος Μίθρας Φάνης, Ἥλιω Μίθρα ἀστροβροντο δααίμονι						

What can we infer from this overview on the names of the god? Naming a god, calling a deity with a specific name (or names) is by no means a secondary question when studying a deity, but it is an issue of primary importance for the understanding of the image and the nature of the god himself¹⁷⁴. Concerning our overview, Mithras was addressed using several combinations of words which can be divided into two groups: the first one which refers to the god as Mithras Unconquered and the second which refers to the deity as Sol Unconquered Mithras¹⁷⁵.

The relationship between Mithras and Sol has been often debated in specialized literature. The solar nature of Mithras was already inherent in the Vedic and Persian Mithras¹⁷⁶, and it was acknowledged also in Asia Minor in Hellenistic times¹⁷⁷. Coming to Rome, in the late 1st century CE that is when the earliest Mithraic monuments are known, it seems clear from these earliest dated inscriptions that Mithras continued to embody this solar nature: he was called Sol Mithras in monuments **265** and **165**, where he appears in Greek as Ἥλιος Μίθρας and in Latin as Sol Invictus Mithras. Again in the next century monuments, he appears as Sol Invictus Mithras (**253**), simply as Sol Invictus deus (**253**), and deus Sol Invictus Mithras (**189**) together with the invocation Sebesius (**189**). From these earliest occurrences, we can acknowledge that Mithras was strongly associated with Sol Invictus already from his first appearance in Rome.

But what does this association mean? Were they the same deity, as the close association of their names could suggest? Of course not: Mithras and Sol were regarded as two separate deities, as it is patent from figurative monuments which show both of them (as we will see in the next chapter), or inscriptions where Mithras is addressed only with his name, or inscriptions where Mithras and Sol are addressed as two separate deities (**15**, **56***). But then, why Mithras could not be

¹⁷⁴ As it is made clear for example in the proceedings with the title ‘*Nommer les dieux: théonymes, épithètes, épicleses dans l’antiquité*’, see Belayche *et alii* 2005.

¹⁷⁵ We can rule out the word *deus* as a feature of differentiation because its use in our inscriptions falls under a general trend already observed in Italy in Imperial centuries: see Mancini 1980. As for the epiclesis *Invictus*, we will address the question below.

¹⁷⁶ In the Avestan *Hymn to Mithras*, the god is regarded as the ‘first light of the day’ whereas in Greek sources it is reported that the Persians called the Sun ‘Mithras’. See first chapter, note 47.

¹⁷⁷ As it is patent in the funerary monument of Antiochus I of Commagene who is portrayed shaking hands with a deity named Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes. See CIMRM 28-32, in particular n. 32, line 55.

called simply with his own name? Why in Rome was he addressed mostly as Sol Mithras? This question could be better answered if we take it from the opposite direction that is asking why Sol (Invictus) was called Mithras.

In the late-1st century Rome there was an ancient cult of Sol, dating back to Republican times¹⁷⁸. Even if he was by no means a chief deity within the Roman pantheon, he had nonetheless his own sanctuaries and priests¹⁷⁹. Moreover, the association of the figure of Sol to the figure of the Roman Emperor inaugurated by Augustus¹⁸⁰ was continued by the later rulers¹⁸¹ and by the time of Aurelian Sol, with the typical epiclerosis of Invictus, became the center of the religious reform of this Emperor.

When Mithras appeared in Rome in the late-1st century CE his main features were of course his exotic name and the scheme of the sacrificing hero, as testified to by reliefs and a literary source. The early appearance of the image of Sol in the added scenes of sacred images (see for example **175a**) shows the early integration of the Persian god within the religion of the people of Rome, especially considering that the first known devotees were Imperial freedmen. The association between Mithras and Sol as it appears in the scenes where Mithras helps Sol obtain his crown and shakes hands with him has had recently been read through an *interpretatio romana*¹⁸²: Mithras and Sol have been read as respectively the Emperor and his chosen successor. This Roman interpretation of the god obtained an immediate important result: it favoured the spread of this new foreign deity within groups of men linked with the Emperor that means, first of all, his entourage of freedmen.

Under the light of these considerations, we can better understand why Mithras was usually called Sol Mithras and why this double name did not generate confusion among the contemporaries: there was no possible confusion between the two gods since they were not the same entities, and Mithras could have been called Sol Mithras because they both shared the same nature. The preeminence of Sol in the addressing syntagm was natural since he was a god already rooted in Rome.

Finally, the slightly later appearance of the epiclerosis Invictus, which does not constantly appear in the earliest documents naming Mithras, points toward a passage of this epithet from Sol Invictus to Mithras.

2.2 Occasions for dedications

¹⁷⁸ The paradigm of Sol Invictus being a solar deity of Oriental origin imported in Rome and enforced by the Emperors (Halsberghe 1972) has been recently argued and convincingly reformulated: see the excellent synthesis in Hijmans 1996 and Hijmans 2010, with further references. If the old model can function for explaining the failed attempt of Helagabalus, the religious reform of Aurelian should be seen in the light of the emphatization of a traditional cult enriched with minor Oriental features. See again Hijmans 1996 and also Berrens 2004 (pp. 115-20) who suggests reading Aurelian's reform as a recall to the Augustan experience of Apollo's patronage over the Emperor.

¹⁷⁹ As punctually synthesized in Hijmans 2010.

¹⁸⁰ Augustus chose as his tutelary deity Apollo,

¹⁸¹ Only Nero after Augustus was represented as Apollo, whereas other Emperors chose to recall their link with the solar deity in a more metaphoric way like minting coins representing the more 'Roman' image of Sol riding his four-horsed chariot as a symbol of the steadiness of the Imperial power. See the punctual list in Hijmans 1996, p. 127 and 135-138.

¹⁸² By A. Mastrocique, who convincingly reads the story of Mithras and Sol in light of the complex succession of Augustus and Tiberius. See Mastrocique 2017, §44 and 49.

The larger part of the 46 Mithraic inscriptions found in northern Italy consists of consecrations of monuments such as altars¹⁸³ or more rarely reliefs¹⁸⁴ made of white marble or local stones¹⁸⁵.

These inscriptions are generally sacred in nature and conform to the usual votive phrasing. In 14 cases we have the explicit mention of the fulfilment of a vow. We recorded phrasings such as: VS (**1a***, **1b***, **7**, **31**), VP (**42***), VSL (**4**, **40c***), VSLP (**17**), VPLM (**47***), VSLLM (**24a**, **24b**), VSLLM (**18**), *ex voto* (**38***). In one case the devotee was ordered by the god himself as we are informed by the phrase *ex visu iussus* (**5**).

Consecrations to Mithras were also made *pro salute*, that is for thanking the god who preserved safely someone. Two are the occurrences of this phrasing. The slave *Velox* dedicated a Mithraeum for the safety of his master¹⁸⁶ (*pro salute Tiberi Claudi Macronis*, **32**), and the devotee *Tullius Paulinianus* made a dedication for his own sake and that of his brothers (*pro salute sua et fratrum sourum*, **40a***). In a single case we have two Imperial freedmen who made a dedication for the safety and the victory of the Emperors and of the Empress (*pro salute et Victoria sanctissimorum dominorum nostrorum Philipporum Augustorum et Otaciliae Severae Augustae*, **43**) that are Philip the Arab, his son Philip II, and his wife *Otacia Severa*.

In three cases the devotees gave the monument as a gift to the god - DD (**2***, **3**, **21a**) – and in a single case, we recorded the use of the formula LDS (**12**) solved as *libens de suo (dedit)*.

Among these sacred inscriptions, we must single out, because of their particular content, two dedications of Mithraic sanctuaries (**9**, **32**), the list of Mithraic devotees from Ospedaletto di Gemona (**38***), and the funerary inscription of *Marcus Valerius Maximus* (**10**). The latter, in particular, belongs to the class of funerary inscriptions and is included in our Mithraic selection because the deceased declares himself *sacerdos DSIM*, that is priest of the god Sol Invictus Mithras, and *studiosus astrologiae*, that is a scholar of astrology. Mentioning oneself belonging to a Mithraic community on their tombstone represents a peculiar choice, but not a unique one (see below the cases from Rome). As for inscriptions **9** and **32**, they inform us of some devotees who restored Mithraea with their own money. This is the case of *Publius Acilius Pisonianus* (**9**) who rebuilt a Mithraeum (*speleum*, sic) with his own money (*pecunia sua restituit*) in the city of Milan because the previous one was destroyed in a fire. In the city of Aquileia, we recorded instead (**32**) the building (*fecit*) of a Mithraeum (*speleum*, sic) equipped with all the necessary furniture (*cum omni apparatu*) by the slave *Velox*. The fragmentary list of devotees from Gemona (**38***) has been ascribed to the Mithras cult by C. Zaccaria¹⁸⁷. Even though the text is quite fragmentary, it is possible to recognize the usual structure

¹⁸³ 33 out of 46 inscriptions were engraved on altars (**1a, 1b, 2, 3, 4, 6, 12, 13, 15, 18, 21a, 21b, 22a, 22b, 23b, 24a, 24b, 25, 26, 27a, 27b, 8, 29, 31, 33, 36, 37, 39, 40c, 41, 43, 44, 47**). A single one was instead engraved on a base for the statue of a torchbearer (**8**).

¹⁸⁴ Only five cases are known: **17, 20, 40a, 40b, 42**.

¹⁸⁵ See for instance altars **1a, 1b** and **2** from *Augusta Praetoria/Aosta* made of Bardiglio di Aymavilles, or base **8** made of marmo di Candoglia, or inscription **10** made of Serizzo or again monuments **40b** and **42** made of local limestone as well as relief **40a**, statue **34** and other inscriptions from Aquileia made of calcare di Aurisina.

¹⁸⁶ The exceptionality of this occurrence has been underlined in Zaccaria 2017 (p. 192, note 15).

¹⁸⁷ See Zaccaria 2001, p. 217 (note 70).

of this kind of texts, that is a heading on top, then the list of devotees (grouped into two columns), and a final dedication.

Dedicating to Mithras could be in northern Italy the action either of a single devotee (28 records) or of two or more devotees (11 records). In the Transpadana we found in Tortona/*Dertona* the fragmentary dedication by a group of four freedmen¹⁸⁸ who consecrated together to Mithras (5), whereas in Milan two devotees with the grade of *leo* consecrated together a base to Cautopates (8). Another couple of devotees from the same family dedicated together an altar in the Mithraeum of Duino (40c*) whereas three devotees dedicated together an altar to the Unconquered god in Valpolicella (22a*). Two couples of devotees dedicated altars to the god in Aquileia (24a, 25), where another collective consecration was set up by three soldiers (24b). It is the case of *Flavius Exuperatus*, *Aelius Severus* and *Valerius Valens* (24b) who also mentioned their military ranks and their superior officers within the inscription. Moreover, two Imperial freedmen dedicated together an altar to the god for the safety and victory of the Imperial family in Histria (43). Finally, quite peculiar are three cases of devotees who decided to associate their sons with their dedication. This is the case of *Caius Munatius Tiro* and his son *Caius Munatius Fronto* who consecrated together a base to Cautopates (13), of *Lucius Claudius Iustio* who dedicated an altar to Mithras together with his two sons *Iustus* and *Iustinus* (21a), and possibly of *Quintus Muielius Iustus* who consecrated an altar to the *Petra Genetrix* together with his family members (*cum suis*, 21b). Quite exceptional is also the case of *Valentinus*, son of *Secundio*, who dedicated an altar in *Sublazio*/Ponte Gardena for the memory of his father (*ob memoriam patris sui*, 15). The importance of family relationship for the perpetuation of Mithraic worships is also observable in Umbria (see below) and in *Virunum*¹⁸⁹.

The larger part of the 34 inscriptions from central Italy was engraved on altars and bases¹⁹⁰ made generally of white marble and seldom also with local stones¹⁹¹, whereas in a single case we recorded a graffito (105e*) and in another one a painted inscription (100b*). Moreover, of these 33 inscriptions, 6 were engraved on figurative monuments such as reliefs (50, 57, 75, 86) and statues (77, 107).

The largest part of these inscriptions can be described as sacred inscriptions. In 8 cases the fulfillment of a vow is explicitly mentioned. Variations of the common VSLM (73*, 95) are testified. We have in fact: VS (87), VP (51b, 57), and *voti compos dedit* (68).

The phrasing DD, referring to a gift made to the deity, is testified in several cases and shows a lot of singular variations. We have the common DD (84, 89), varied

¹⁸⁸ Or possibly five. The inscription is quite fragmentary, see Pettirossi 2007.

¹⁸⁹ Where at least four sons followed their father in the cult, and at least other two devotees were likely brothers (see Gordon 1996, p. 426), as shown in the list of devotees from the city (see Gernot-Piccottini 2001).

¹⁹⁰ 8 inscriptions were engraved on altars (51d, 53b, 68, 73, 87, 101e, 105c, 105d) whereas 2 on bases (56, 62). The others are currently reduced to simple slabs or lost.

¹⁹¹ These supports are usually made of white marble, but not a few are the exceptions. We recorded in fact the use of limestone (51b, 51d, 68, 82, 83, 87), sandstone (73), and travertine (53b). The setting up of the two peperino altars 105d and 105d in the Marino Mithraeum is to be interpreted in the light of the nearby quarries of the Alban hills.

by the phrasing DDD (107), LDD (90), and DP (50). The simple form P is used in a single case (75) too.

Quite peculiar is the mention of a promise made to the Unconquered god by a Thracian soldier who consecrated a monument to the god in *Aveia Vestina* in the mid-3rd century CE (83*). *Aurelius Mucatra* informs us that he built willingly (*fecit libens animo*) a monument to Mithras as he promised to the Unconquered god (*deo Invicto promissum*). It is also interesting to notice the insistence on the presence of the god in the consecration of a Mithraeum made by the devotee *Victorinus* (96). *Victorinus* informs us that Mithras himself ordered him to restore the sanctuary (*ipse se in visu iussit refici*): he was thus ordered by the presence of the god¹⁹² (*numini praesenti*). Moreover, in Picenum we have the case of the slave *Lucianus* who consecrated a relief to Mithras who was ‘favorable’ (*propitio*) to his master *Salvius Novanius* (50). A similar case is recorded in Etruria, where the slave *Myron* consecrated an altar to Mithras because the god made his master *Prunicianus* safe (*salvo Pruniciano nostro*, 62). We also recorded the case of the public slave *Apronianus* (84), treasurer of the *res publica Aequiculorum* in the settlement of *Nersae/Nesce*, who consecrated a *spelaeum*¹⁹³ *pro salute ordinis et populi*, that is for the safety of the people of the city and the city senate. Quite peculiar is also the consecration made by the devotees of the local Mithraic community testified by the graffito within the Marino Mithraeum. They dedicated the restoration of the Mithraeum (*restituimus*) for the safety (*pro salute*) of a *Cornelius Aemilianus* and of his wife *Titiaena* (105e*). The latter was presumably an important member of the community who gathered in the sanctuary (see below).

In central Italy we also recorded the occurrence of mentions of Mithraic worship in inscriptions not strictly votive, such as a list of devotees (51c), the consecration of the construction or restoration of Mithraea (55*, 56*, 68, 82, 85, 96), and in funerary inscriptions (89, 90, 100a*, 100b*, 111*). In the list of devotees found in *Sentinum/Sassoferrato* (51c), we found the typical structure of this kind of text.

If in inscription 90 the Mithraic qualification of the devotee appears not so patently¹⁹⁴, there is little doubt for the other three texts. Inscriptions 100a* and 100b* belong to a funerary context, that is the Catacomb of Vibia¹⁹⁵. In the first case, the sons of *Aurelius Faustianus* built a sepulcher for their father and their uncle, that means his brother, *Aurelius Castricius*, and call both of them priests of the Unconquered Sol Mithras (*sacerdotes dii Solis Invicti Mithrae*, 100a*) whereas in the second case the deceased *Marcus Aurelius* is similarly called *sacerdos dii Solis Invicti Mithrae* (100b*). The case of the funerary inscription of *Alfenius Ceionius Iulianus Kamenius*, found in Fogliano presumably in the area of the senator’s extra-urban residence, refers to the man as *pater sacrorum summi Invicti Mithrae* (111), with an expression that also recurs in the urban honorary inscriptions dedicated to the same *Kamenius* (see below).

¹⁹² For the relevance of this ‘presence of the god’ see the analysis of C. Ando in Ando 2010.

¹⁹³ Or a *signum* (statue). The inscription is fragmentary, and only the last letter of a word ending in M is preserved. *Apronianus* dedicated also with the same phrasing *pro salute ordinis et populi* two statues (*signa*) of Isis and Serapis and a shrine (see CIL IX, 4112 and EDCS-14805143).

¹⁹⁴ The devotee *Quintus Hostilius Euplastus* simply informs us he had the grade of *leo* (90).

¹⁹⁵ From the name of one of the most famous people buried there, Vibia, and his husband Vincentius. The Catacomb of Vibia hosted the tombs of both Christians and Pagans from the mid-4th century CE. For the investigations on the site see Ferrua 1971 and Ferrua 1973.

As for the inscriptions referring to the restoration or construction of Mithraic sanctuaries, we are informed that in *Carsulae* (**55***) 9 devotees, coordinated by the *pater Egnatius Reparatus*, collected together five thousand *sestertii* of their own money (*sua pecunia*) for the construction of a Leonteum¹⁹⁶ from the foundation (*a solo fecerunt*). Not far from *Carsulae*, and only a few decades before, *Sextus Egnatius Primitivus* (**56***) rebuilt or restored (*refecit*) a *splaeum* with his own money (*ex suo omni impensa*), after the previous one was damaged by an earthquake (*vi motu terrae diruptum*). In *Nersae/Nesce*, a settlement belonging to the *res publica Aequiculorum*, we recorded three consecrations by *Apronianus*, local public treasurer (see below), who emphasized his active role in the cult, with the insisted use of the verb *facere* in two different inscriptions. He informs us that the relief with tauroctony and side scenes was made with his own money (*sua pecunia fecit*, **86**) and that he financed with his own money the restoration (*sua pecunia restituit*, **85**) of a *splaeum* previously collapsed because of its old age (*vetustate conlapsum*). In the settlement of *Aveia Vestina/Fossa* we are informed of two devotees (**82**) who completed the construction (*consummaverunt*¹⁹⁷) of a *speum* (sic). The devotee *Victorinus* (**96**, in Rome or in *Tibur/Tivoli*) informs us that he managed the reconstruction or restoration (*reficiendum curavit*) and dedication (*dedicavit*) of an unnamed monument (possibly a *spelaeum*) at his own expenses (*suis impendis*). The altar consecrated by *Tiberius Claudius Thermodon* (**68**) stands out in this context: he gave a *spelaeum* equipped with statues, altar, and all the necessary furniture (*cum signis et ara ceterisque*) for the fulfilment of his vow (*voti compos dedit*) neglecting the common use of the verbs *facere/reficere*.

Even in central Italy dedicating to Mithras usually depends on the action of a single devotee (25 records) rather than on two or more devotees (6 records). Between Umbria and Samnium, we have three couples of devotees (**51b**, **51d**, **82**) who consecrated monuments to Mithras, and a group of nine devotees coordinated by their *pater* who consecrated a Leonteum (**55***). Another couple of devotees is documented by a fragmentary inscription from Latium (**95**) whereas another collective dedication is known from the Mithraeum of Marino (**105e***), where the authors of the consecration are all the devotees (*devoti*), who acted on behalf of the entire community¹⁹⁸. No collective dedications are known from Etruria.

The few inscriptions from southern Italy belong to the sacred sphere, even if the explicit mention of the fulfillment of a vow is absent. Inscriptions were engraved on altars (**117**, **120**), bases (**119***), and in one case on a relief (**115**) and a bronze plaque (**119bis***) and used of the standard *formulae*. We underline, as a unique example in southern Italy, the use of the phrasing ὑπὲρ σωτηρίας in the Greek inscription from *Venusia/Venosa* (**120**). This is the case of the slave *Sagaris* who consecrated an altar to Sol Mithras for the safety of his master *Brittius Praesens*.

It is also noticeable the collective interest of two monuments dedicated respectively in *Stabiae/Castellamare di Stabia* (**119***) and Paestum (**119bis***) by two single devotees. These monuments were both consecrated by a devotee for all the

¹⁹⁶ See chapter 5.

¹⁹⁷ ThLL 4:600.

¹⁹⁸ M.G. Granino Cecere suggested reading *collegium devoti restituimus* as ‘the devotees restored (this sanctuary) for all the community’, considering *collegium* a misspell for *collegio*. See Bedetti and Granino Cecere 2013, p. 240.

fellow devotees of the community. In the case of Paestum, the nature of the dedicated monument is unknown, being the inscription engraved on a bronze plaque. The small marble base dedicated by *Lucius Gavidius Lanus* for the local Mithraic community, explicitly identified as *cultores dei Mithrae*, was dedicated to Augustus¹⁹⁹.

Virtually all the Mithraic inscriptions from Ostia are sacred²⁰⁰ and were engraved on altars (**126c**, **133a**, **138e**, **139b**, **139c**, **142f**), bases (**129**, **138c**, **138d**, **146a**, **148**), reliefs (**137a**), statues (**146b**, **149**) and even on architectural elements (**127**, **131b**, **140d**) and mosaic floors (**138a**, **144a**), and, in one case, on a wall (graffito **145b***). The *formulae* used to indicate the occasion for which a monument was consecrated to the god exhibit nonetheless quite different patterns from those seen until now. In a single case we found a dedication *pro salute* of two Emperors (**140b**). In only two cases the fulfilment of a vow is mentioned explicitly²⁰¹ (**138f**, **144a**), whereas in the majority of cases the devotees refer to a gift given to the god with the phrasing DD (**126c**, **138a**, **140d**, **142f**, **149**), DDD (**127**, **130a**, **137b**), or similarly LD (**129**). M. Clauss rightly observed that these linguistic devices were possibly used to mark the social achievements of the devotees, by showing off their economic possibilities within their communities with the consecration of temples, altars and furniture²⁰². Marked attention for the active role of the devotees in the material organization of the cult is also recognizable in the frequent occurrence of phrasing referring to the worshippers' actions such as *fecit/fecerunt* (**128**, **131b**, **133a**, **138c**, **138d**, **138e**, **139b**, **140b**), *restituit sua pecunia* (**137a**), *restauravit* (**148**), and *sua pecunia fecit* (**146a**, **146b**). The written mention of the dedicated object is also quite common. We have devotees consecrating a *signum*, that means a statue (of Mithras like **146a** and **133a**, of the leontocephalic deity like in **127**, of the torchbearers as **148**, or of an unmentioned subject as in **128**), an image of the god or an *ara*, that is an altar (**126**, **137b**), or complex altars named *thronus* (**133a**, **139e**). Some devotees consecrated entire buildings for meetings referred to as *crypta* (**146d**) *templum et speleum* (**131b**) or again *aedes cum pronao* (**137a**) of course complete with all the necessary furniture (*marmoribus et omni cultu*, **137a**; *omnibusque ornamentis*, **133a**).

Quite new is also the case of the dedication for the honour of a devotee. We found in Ostia two monuments dedicated *ob honorem* that is for honouring two devotees with the grade of *pater* (**130a**, **137b**), and in the same honorary area can be classified inscription **134** that consists of a bronze slab dedicated by the priests of Mithras to a devotee with the grade of *pater patrum* for his merits and his

¹⁹⁹ For other examples of this occurrence from Campania see Magalhaes 2003, whereas in general see Clauss 1999 (pp. 285-9) and Fishwick 1991 (pp. 436-45).

²⁰⁰ With the exception of inscription **132a**, which belongs to the class of the domestic inscriptions. It consists of the signature of the Athenian sculptor *Kriton* on the marble statue later adapted by the Mithraic devotees to a tauroctony representation. Another exception, again a domestic inscription, is represented by inscription **126b** that is a graffito written on a side of the altar of the Mithraeum of the Casa di Diana containing a list of names next to quantities of food or wine.

²⁰¹ If in the case of the Mithraeum of *Felicissimus* the intention is unmistakable, because of the explicit phrasing *ex voto fecit* (**144a**), for inscription **138f** we are not even sure that this monument is to refer to the cult of Mithras. Since the name of the deity was erased, this monument could consist of the reuse of a marble slab previously consecrated to another god.

²⁰² See Clauss 1992, p. 41.

benevolence toward the community. This text can be understood in the milieu of the city of Ostia, where honorary inscriptions dedicated to wealthy members of a community who financed professional *collegia* constitute a quite common occurrence.

Dedications in Ostia were usually dedicated by single devotees, with only a few exceptions where we found two (**128**) or three (**146b**) devotees dedicating together. In one case a devotee associated his slave to this dedication (**140d**) whereas in another case a dedication by a single devotee underwent the later addition of a second name (**146a**). It seems worth noticing that in 5 cases (**127, 129, 130a, 137b, 128**) these devotees mentioned a second devotee in their texts, with the title of *pater* or priest, in the ablative form. In Ostia, we recorded a single occurrence of a collective dedication. This is the case of inscription **134**, just mentioned above, given by the priests of Mithras altogether.

As the last comment on Mithraic inscriptions from Ostia, we should mention the list of devotees from Portus (**153**). Even though the inscription is quite fragmentary, the basic elements of the text are recognizable: namely the heading stating that what follows is an *album sacratorum*, and the list of names, arranged into three columns. The Mithraic attribution of this text relies on the phrase *leo fecit*, which means ‘the devotee (the name is lost) with the grade of *leo* wrote this text’.

The Mithraic inscriptions found in Rome are 97. They were usually engraved on altars and bases²⁰³, or again on reliefs and statues²⁰⁴, all of them are made of marble²⁰⁵, with the exception of the painted inscriptions of the S. Prisca Mithraeum (**202d-f**), and of 6 graffiti from the Circus Maximus (**198a**), Barberini (**175d-f**), and again S. Prisca (**202c, 202i**) Mithraea.

As observed in the rest of Italy, the majority of these texts belong to the class of sacred inscriptions. The texts report the dedication to the god but the fulfilment of a vow is rarely mentioned openly and appears in a variety of phrasings: VSLM (**179**), VF (**184**), VS (**203, 255, 256**), VSF (**197**), *ex voto* P (**155i***, **155j***, **187**), *ob votum* (**198b**), *voti compos dedit* (**167, 200**), *ut voverat* (**252, 255**). Two inscriptions mentioning a thanksgiving (*gratias egi*, **202k**; *χαριστήριον*, **199d**) can be included in the same semantic area. Far more common is the emphasis put on the action of the devotee(s) who consecrated these texts, with a frequent occurrence of the phrasings related to the gift made to the god, usually accompanied by verbs such as

²⁰³ 19 inscriptions were engraved on altars (**158a, 165, 179, 185, 193d, 197, 198d, 209d, 210, 214, 221, 223, 224, 225, 228, 252, 253, 257, 260**) whereas 24 on bases (**155f***, **155i***, **155j***, **158b, 167, 168, 172, 178a***, **178b, 187, 191, 195, 200, 203, 209a, 209b, 209c, 212, 215, 222, 226, 227, 235, 265**). Moreover, inscriptions **205a** and **205b** were engraved on re-used marble pillars whereas **205c** and a re-used marble shelf and **248** on a marble architrave. Other 18 were preserved on marble slabs (**175g, 180, 183f, 193e, 193f, 193g, 198d, 198e, 198f, 198g, 202k, 204d, 209e, 213, 217, 254, 255, 256**).

²⁰⁴ 12 inscriptions were engraved on marble reliefs (**154b, 160, 164a, 164c, 164d, 170, 184, 186, 198b, 243, 249, 279**) and 2 on marble statues (**189, 265**), whereas inscription **163** was engraved on the base of a marble chandelier.

²⁰⁵ With the exception of relief **170** and altar **253** realized in travertine. As for the marble supports, they consist mostly of altars or bases for statues and slabs. For 22 inscriptions (**165, 183a-e, 195, 200, 210, 219***, **221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 257, 258, 259, 260**) which were recorded in the past but are currently lost we do not possess exact information on the materials they were engraved on. Nonetheless, given the account at the previous line, white marble seems the most plausible hypothesis.

ponere and *facere*. We find in fact: DD (155f*, 165, 172, 175g, 185, 187, 193d, 198b, 198e, 200, 205a, 214, 226, 228, 248, 252, 253, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259), LD (154b), D (279), DP (170). Less attested are the single mentions of P (158a, 227, 249, 254, 256) and F (164a, 164c, 164d) and only two mentions of devotees dedicating monuments with their own money are known (DS, 214; *sua pecunia*, 235). Moreover, we are informed of the direct order of the god to the devotees in the cases of 154b (*iussu eius*) and 227 (*ex viso*). Only three inscriptions were dedicated *pro salute* of someone, and in every case, they refer to the safety of the Emperor(s) (197, 180, 182). In three cases the objects of the dedication are explicitly mentioned in the texts. They are: an image of the god (*typum dei*, 198b), a decorated altar (*aram cum ornamentis*, 252), and an altar (*aram*, 257).

Apart from these sacred inscriptions, Mithraic worship is also mentioned in Rome 6 times in texts commemorating rituals (183a-f), 6 times regarding the consecration of a Mithraic sanctuary (180, 182, 193e, 198d, 210, 248), 1 time in a funerary inscription (213), 4 times in honorary inscriptions (178a*, 178b, 212, 222), and 9 times in sacred inscriptions dedicated to a deity other than Mithras (209a-e, 221, 223, 224, 225). 6 graffiti were detected in the Circus Maximus (198a), Barberini (175d-f), and S. Prisca (202c, 202i) Mithraea. Moreover, a place apart must be set for the painted inscriptions of the S. Prisca Mithraeum (202d-g).

As for honorary and votive inscriptions dedicated to a non-Mithraic deity, the phenomenon can be circumscribed in the second half of the 4th century CE. It involved men of senatorial rank. In the case of the honorary inscriptions, we have texts engraved on the base for the statue of an important man (namely *Alfenius Ceionius Iulianus Kamenius* in 178a* and 178b, *Vettius Agorius Praetextatus* in 212, and *Iunius Postumianus* in 222), where religious as well as civic offices of the said senators were recalled in a list, in a scheme well known in the Late Antiquity.

The 9 texts dedicated to a non-Mithraic deity consist of nine bases or altars dedicated to Cybele, where the devotees, similarly to those of the previous case, listed all their religious affiliations, and among them of course the mention of their Mithraic office could not be omitted.

In the case of funerary inscriptions, we have the devotee *Archelaus*, freedman of the three Augusti, who built a tomb for himself and for his wife, and who deemed worth mentioning on their tombstone his office as *pater* and priest of the Unconquered Sol Mithras (214).

The 6 texts commemorating Mithraic rituals consist of six inscriptions found in the context of the Olympii Mithraeum. They all share the same structure, with the exception of 183f. 183a to 183e show in fact on top of the text the indication of the consular date, followed by the names of the two preeminent ministers of the community who were *Nonius Victor Olympius* with the title of *pater patrum* and *Aurelius Victor Augentius* with the title of *pater*, and followed by the mention of the ritual(s) they performed expressed by the verb *tradere*. These two ministers *tradiderunt*, that can loosely be translated with ‘transmitted’, the ceremonies involving the grades of the leo (*tradiderunt leontica*, 183a and 183d), perses and heliodromus (*tradiderunt persica...tradiderunt aeliaca*, 183b), pater (*tradiderunt patrica*, 183c), corax (*tradidit hierocoracica*, 183c), and nymphus²⁰⁶ (*ostenderunt cryphios*, 183c).

²⁰⁶ For a discussion on the meaning of the term *cryphios* see Vollgraf 1957 and Blomart 1992.

As for the consecration of Mithraic sanctuaries, we have 5 texts. Inscription **180**, found unfortunately out-of-context in via Sicilia, that is on the outskirts of *regio VI*, begins with a dedication *pro salute et reditu et victoria* of the Emperors Septimius Severus and Marcus Aurelius, Geta, and all of the *Domus divina*. It continues with the names of the two dedicating freedmen, who are *Aurelius Zosimion* and *Aurelius Titus*. They inform us that they, at their own expenses, set up a statue of the Unconquered god Mithras, built an *antrum*, that is a sanctuary, to the god, and that, once it was finished, they consecrated it. Similar elements appear in inscription **193a**, where the devotee *Proficientius* informs us in hexameters that he built and consecrated a *spelaeum* to the god, because the god ordered him, with the intention of giving his fellow devotees (*syndexi*) a place to celebrate the rites. Quite unfortunately, few traces of this sanctuary survived: no more than a wall and elements of the furniture of the Mithraeum (see **193**). The name of the devotee who dedicated the *sacrarium* of the Circus Maximus to the Unconquered god Sol Mithras survives in inscription **198d**. In this case the general layout of the sanctuary survived too (see **198**). Other two Mithraea are known from sporadic inscriptions found in Rome. They are namely the *speleum* (sic, **210**) built by *Flavius Septimius Zosimus* and the *aediculam cum columnis* gifted by an unknown devotee (**248**). In this last case the devotee seems responsible for the dedication of a shrine, or structure that could be similar to the *thronus* known from the Ostian inscriptions.

As for the graffiti, if in the case of Barberini Mithraeum (**175d-e-f**) we face the simple writing of the name of a devotee, the cases of the graffiti of the Circus Maximus and S. Prisca Mithraea involve more complex texts. In the case of the Circus Maximus graffito (**198a**), we can read the invitation to give or to hand on the magical arts (*magicas*) to a *Degentius*, possibly one of the devotees attending the Mithraic rituals. The connection between Mithraism and magical arts is not unheard of²⁰⁷, and finds in this text a quite strong element of confirmation. In graffito **202c** from S. Prisca we have the precise date of 20th November 202 CE, expressed with the consular date and complete with the notation of the moment of the day, that is at dawn (*prima luce*), day of the week, that is Saturday (*Saturni dies*), and the lunar date, that indicates the 18th day of the lunar month. In Vermaseren's opinion, this extremely precise chronological indication is referred to the birth into the Mysteries of the devotee who consecrated the Mithraeum, but it is not impossible that it could instead indicate the date of the consecration of the sanctuary itself. The second graffito from S. Prisca shows instead a more votive nature. Text **202i** was engraved in cursive letters on the rim of the vessel embedded in a secondary room of the sanctuary. It was placed on a device of uncertain function, possibly connected with a particular ritual performed in the room.

The painted inscriptions from S. Prisca represent a unique case. Two layers of frescoes were detected on the right and left walls of the cult room of the Mithraic sanctuary. The more ancient (**202f-g**) is dated in the last years of the 2nd century CE whereas the more recent (**202d-e**) in the first quarter of the following century. The more ancient layer of fresco (**202f**) on the right wall of the Mithraeum represents a procession of the seven Mithraic grades and a procession of devotees with the grade of *leo*. A similar procession of devotees with the grade of *leo* was represented on the left wall. The figures of the devotees and the grades of this more ancient layer

²⁰⁷ See the studies of A. Mastrocinque on this argument (for instance Mastrocinque 1998, with an update in Mastrocinque 2017, chapter 8) and the recent synthesis in Alvar 2010.

of fresco are virtually all lost, but part of the painted inscriptions which completed the fresco were still readable in the 1960s'. On the right wall, above each devotee with the grade of *leo*, a single line was painted conveying an acclamation (*nama*) and the name (*Salutius, Ianuarius, Florentius*, etc.) and grade (*leo*) of the devotee. The text painted above the procession of the Mithraic grades was quite similar: the acclamation (*nama*) was followed by the grade (*heliodromus, leo*, etc.) and by the mention of the corresponding tutelary planet (*tutela Solis, tutela Iovis*, etc.) protecting each grade. Moreover, other 21 lines (**202g**) of painted inscriptions were detected on this more ancient layer of frescoes. On the left wall, 17 lines were arranged in six groups, whereas on the right only 4 lines survived, arranged in three groups. These lines were not strictly related to the fresco representation: they show more didactic content. The first three groups of lines on the left wall report texts that seem related to Mithras' story. The generation of the world is mentioned, as well as the god dragging the bull on his shoulders, and the spring of nectar that fed the two twin brothers. The other three groups are concerned with the role of Mithras as a guide and a saviour, and with multiple exhortations to follow his teachings, to bear through difficult times, and to bring him offerings. The prime role of the *leones* in these rites is also clearly highlighted. The texts on the right wall are scarcely preserved. We can read with a certain degree of certainty only a salutation the *leones* and three almost undiscernible verses concluded with an invitation to sing. The more recent layer of frescoes repeated the lines with the acclamations of the *leones* (**202e**) and the grades (**202d**), but the didactic text was not re-written.

Dedications in Rome are more frequently set up by single devotees. It is nonetheless interesting to notice that 12 out of 34 monuments dedicated by single devotees²⁰⁸ report also the name of a second devotee, mentioned in the ablative form usually with the title of *pater* or priest (**155f***, **165**, **172**, **184**, **187**, **198d**, **200**, **227**, **252**, **253**, **255**, **256**). Moreover, in two cases the devotee associates members of his family not initiated in the mysteries to his consecration and another devotee with the title of priest or *pater* (**197**, **226**). Consecrations made by couples of devotees are comparatively rare, occurring only 10 times (**155i***, **155j***, **170**, **180**, **189**, **205a**, **205b**, **214**²⁰⁹, **228**, **249**). A group of four devotees, possibly brothers, named *Fortunatus, Alexander, Pardus* and *Eficax* dedicated a relief mentioning also the *pater Flavius Alexander* (**279**). A single collective dedication is known: it is inscription **168**, dedicated by the *actores*, that means managers, of the *forum suarium*. Moreover, there are 6 cases where a single (**186**, **200**, **205c**, **256**) or two (**170**) or three devotees (**254**) dedicated a monument together with the entire community, as seems indicated by the expression *cum sacratis*, that can be translated with 'together with the other initiated fellows' (see below).

3. Who worshipped Mithras? Devotees, grades and priesthoods

3.1 Civic status and profession of Mithraic devotees

²⁰⁸ **154b**, **155f***, **158a**, **163**, **164a**, **164c**, **164d**, **165**, **167**, **172**, **175g**, **184**, **187**, **191**, **193c**, **197**, **198b**, **198d**, **198e**, **200**, **215**, **219***, **226**, **227**, **235**, **243**, **252**, **253**, **255**, **256**, **257**, **258**, **259**, **265**.

²⁰⁹ In the case of inscription **214**, the two devotees mention also the name of their *summagistrus* (**214**), possibly referring to a non-better identified urban office.

The devotees mentioned in inscriptions from northern Italy are 53. 6 of them are slaves²¹⁰ (**1a***, **1b***, **2***, **22a***, **32**), 12 are freedmen²¹¹ (**3**, **5**, **8**, **25**, **31**, **36**, **43**), and 30 are presumably freeborn citizens²¹² (**4**, **5**, **6**, **7**, **8**, **9**, **10**, **13**, **15**, **18***, **21a**, **21b**, **24a**, **24b**, **26**, **27**, **28**, **37**, **40a***, **40c***, **44**, **47**), whereas for the other 5 there are no sufficient elements to indicate their civic status with certainty²¹³ (**29**, **33**, **40b***, **41**, **46***). We should also add to this number the partial names of 14 devotees mentioned in the *album sacratorum* from Gemona del Friuli (**38***). Among the slaves, we found in *Augusta Praetoria/Aosta* two members of the *familia Caesaris*. They are namely *Bassus*, slave of the Caesar (**2***), who was employed as *circitor*, that is in this case as travelling officer deputed to the patrol of mountain paths for preventing illicit trafficking²¹⁴, in the custom house of the city. It does not seem impossible that also the devotee named *Antiochus* (**1a***, **1b***), who was a slave of the Augustus in the same century and in the same city, was employed in the same customs office too. In Aquileia, we are informed of the presence of the slave *Velox* (**32**), who was employed as a *vilicus*, that is a manager²¹⁵, of *Tiberius Claudius Macro*, a private contractor²¹⁶ managing the iron mines located in the province of Noricum (*conductor ferrariorum Noricarum*). We have no further information for the slaves *Pergemus*, *Primus* and *Tavanus* who dedicated an altar to the god (**22a***). Other three members of the *familia Caesaris*, three freedmen, are known at the other extremity of the region, in Aquileia and Histria. They are two Imperial freedmen, *Charitinus* and *Sabinianus* (**43**), who consecrated an altar to Mithras for the safety and victory of the Emperors. They were employed respectively as *subprocurator*, that is the vice manager of the Imperial patrimony, and as *adiutor tabulariorum*, that is an assistant employed in the same office²¹⁷. The third one, *Titus Aelius Verecundus* who dedicated an altar to Mithras together with another devotee (**25**), is known from another inscription to be an *Augusti libertus a cognitionibus* that is

²¹⁰ Identified thanks to the explicit mention of their slave status or thanks to the mention of the name of their master. In the case of the three devotees from the *pagus Arusnatum* (**22a**), their slave status has been suggested by E. Buchi (see Buchi 1984, p. 62).

²¹¹ Identified thanks to the explicit mention of their freedman status. The freedman status of *Titus Aelius Verecundus* is revealed by another inscription (SupplIt 179 = EDCS-01300222), whereas the freedman status of the devotee who dedicated with him, *Marcus Aurelius* ... is suggested based on his name and of his association with *Verecundus* (**25**). In the case of *Marcus Staius Niger* (**8**) the freedman condition is not explicit but suggested by the sevirate magistrature (see Claus 1992, p. 61) whereas in the case of *Caius Industrius Verus* (**3**) the freedman condition is suggested by his *nomen*, that makes him a freedman of the city of Industria.

²¹² Identified by two or three *nomina* and by the absence of indication of freedman or slave status. Sometimes their name is accompanied by the mention of their family relationships (as in **13**, **15**, **21a**, **40a**). In some cases, their *nomen* could indicate a freedman status or freedman descendance (**6**, **21a**, **27**, **28**, **40c**, **44**). We underline the presence of a soldier bearing a Celtic name that is *Tessignius* (see Rayboud and Williams 2007, pp. 109-110), and two devotees bearing indigenous *nomina* in Val di Non (**17**, **18**; see Chisté 1971, pp. 57-9). Possibly indigenous is also the name *Muielius* (see Chisté 1971, p. 54).

²¹³ Even if the name *Callistus* (**29**) could be referred to a slave or freedman, and both **40b** and **40c** could be referred to freedmen or freedmen descendants.

²¹⁴ See France 2001, pp. 158-9, 328-9, 443-4 and Lewis 2016 (p. 527).

²¹⁵ For a definition of the term *vilicus* as a manager see Carlsen 1995, pp. 43-56.

²¹⁶ For a synthesis on private conductors and other related offices see Hirt 2010, pp. 261-89. For *Tiberius Claudius Macro* see in particular Hirt 2010, p. 284.

²¹⁷ For the role of the *adiutor* see Weaver 1964, pp. 79-85 and Weaver 1972, pp. 231-40.

a freedman employed in the office responsible for the Imperial law court²¹⁸. As for the devotees involved in civic offices, we recall the case of the freeborn citizen *Caius Munatius Tiro* (13), who was *duovir iure dicundo* in an unnamed city²¹⁹. The two devotees *Marcus Staius Niger* and *Caius Valerius Iulianus* (8) were both *legati* of the *collegium dendrophororum* of the city of Milan, and the former was also a *sevir Augustalis*. Another devotee who hold the *sevirate* is testified in the city of Aquileia: this is the case of the freedman *Caius Calidius Agathopus* (31). Devotees serving as soldiers and dedicating monuments to Mithras are known only in the city of Aquileia: they consecrated their altars within the reign of Philip the Arab (244-248 CE). Three soldiers from two different legions dedicated together an altar (24b). They were named *Flavius Exuperatus* and *Aelius Severus* of the 4th legion *Philippiana*, and *Valerius Valens*²²⁰ of the 13th legion *Gemina*. As for the motive of their contemporary presence in Aquileia, it seems reasonable to accept the suggestion of A. Mócsy²²¹ who connected their role with the duty of the *annona militaris*. Those soldiers were *agentes in lustris* that is managers for the duty expected of their superior officers, the three *primipili* who are also mentioned in the inscription. A second inscription was dedicated by *Lucius Septimius Cassianus, signifer* of the 6th legion *Hispana* (37). The scheme is similar the previous example: *Septimius* mentions his superior officer, the *primipilus Publius Porcius Faustus*, and calls himself *agens in lustris*. It seems possible he was temporary stationed in Aquileia to fulfill duties which were required of his superior officer, just like the soldiers of inscription 24a. Back to civilian devotees, we are informed that the devotee ...*urix Saecillus* (4) was a *negotiator*, that is a rich merchant²²².

The Mithraic devotees known from Umbria are 55. 35 of them are listed in the *album sacratorum* from *Sentinum/Sassoferrato* (51c). Of these 35 devotees, no one explicitly mentioned his civic status, but we could suggest, after the analysis of M. Petracchia Lucernoni, that two could be freedmen whereas another one a slave of the city of *Sentinum*²²³. Three of the devotees, namely *Aetrius Romanus*, *Casidius Rufinus*, and *Staius Velox*, appear also in the album of the *collegium fabrorum Sentinatium*²²⁴.

Among the other 20 devotees, 2 were slaves (55*), and another one was a freedman (56*). The two slaves were *Alexander* and *Amicus* (55*) who declare themselves *circitores Augusti nostri* that means they were slaves of the *Familia Caesaris* employed as *circitores*. This term should have here a different connotation with respect to *Bassus* (2*), the *circitor* we met in *Augusta Praetoria/Aosta* charged with patrolling duties along the mountain routes that led from *regio XI* to Gallia Narbonensis. As the traditional view of the *circitores* being watchmen of public

²¹⁸ SupplIt 179 = EDCS-01300222. For the role of *Aelius Verecundus* as a *cognitionibus* see Weaver 1964, p. 91.

²¹⁹ Possibly *Brixia/Brescia* or *Bergomum*, given the find-spot of the altar.

²²⁰ This same *Valerius Valens* dedicated also, together with the *Domitius Zosimus*, an altar to Liber Pater (EDCS-05000284) and an altar to Mercurius Augustus (CIL V 8237 = EDCS-01601063), both in Aquileia.

²²¹ See in particular Mócsy 1966, p. 323.

²²² For a synthesis on the term *negotiatores* see Andreau 2012.

²²³ As suggested by their *nomen*, respectively *Sentinas* for the freedmen and *Sentinatium* for the slave. See Cervetti *et alii* 2006, p. 128.

²²⁴ CIL XI, 5748 = ILS 7220 = EDR016194 (F. Branchesi).

aqueducts has been recently criticized²²⁵, we cannot indicate with certainty an exact field of action for these two Imperial slaves in absence of an explicit mention. The role of watchmen, or travelling officers, should nonetheless be kept valid. The presence of travelling agents working for the Emperor in the city of *Sentinum*/Sasoferrato could be linked in fact with the crossroads vocation of the city, that in Imperial times was a lively intersection for people crossing the peninsula from the west to the east and from the north to the south, and vice versa²²⁶. *Sextus Egnatius Primitivus* (55*) was possibly a freedman²²⁷ who held the offices of *sevir Augustalis* of the communities of *Casuentum* and *Carsulae*, and of *quaestor designatus arcae Augustalium*, that is appointed treasurer of the order of the *Augustales*. We are informed that among the *leones consummati* by *Egnatius Reparatus*, there is a *faber*, namely *Lucius Longinius Stachys* (55*). As rightly observed by M. Clauss²²⁸, Mithraic devotion seems to be passed on through family relationships in this area. Members of the same family are known in fact to dedicate monuments together, such as the *Gessii* (51b), the *Coiedii* (51c), the *Umbrii* (51d), the *Vicrii* (55*), the *Sevii*²²⁹ (51, 51d), and members of the same family are known to be into Mithras' worship for more than one generation, as it is the case of the *Gessii* and of the *Propertii* who appeared both in inscription 51b dated just after 219 CE and in 51c dated ca. 40 years later. Moreover, the transmission of a preeminent role within the Mithraic community for the *Propertii* is suggested by the fact that both of them appear in the role of *pater prosedens*. A familiar relationship is possibly also testified in the case of the *Egnatii*, who show a Mithraic devotee in the list of *Sentinum* (51c) and a freedman restoring a Leonteum in the same years in the nearby *Carsulae* (55*). A single devotee is known from Picenum: he is the *Lucianus*, the slave who consecrated a relief for his master *Salvius Novanius* (50).

The devotees mentioned in inscriptions from Etruria are only 6. They are namely two slaves²³⁰ (62, 77), two freeborn citizens²³¹ (68, 75), and other two people who did not mention their civic status²³² (73*). We do not have any information about their profession²³³.

Of the 15 devotees mentioned in inscriptions from Latium and Sabina, only five transmitted information about their civic status and profession. *Victorinus* (96) was a home-born slave of the Imperial family (*verna Caesaris nostri*) and was employed as *dispensator*; that is an intermediate clerical grade identifying the head of often

²²⁵ As recently argued by J.P. Lewis; see Lewis 2016, in particular p. 528.

²²⁶ For a study on the Roman routes crossing this area see among others Dall'Aglio and Marchetti 2004 with previous references.

²²⁷ He did not explicitly mention it in the inscription, but his freedman status could be suggested by the two civic offices he gave in the same inscription, which suggest a freedmens' career. See this suggestion in Clauss 1992, p. 55.

²²⁸ See Clauss 1992, pp. 57-8.

²²⁹ Two members of the *gens Sevia* appear actually in two different inscriptions from *Sentinum*, dated in the same chronological period.

²³⁰ *Myron* (62) said that explicitly, whereas for *Hymnus* (77) the servile *status* is suggested based on the single name and its Greek character.

²³¹ As it is inferred from the absence of explicit mention of other status connotations.

²³² They are probably freeborn citizens, as suggested in Antolini 2017, p. 22.

²³³ But we know that *Claudius Thermodon* (68) consecrated other monuments one to Diana (CIL XI, 2683 = EDR126846) and one to *Fortuna Primigenia* in Palestrina (CIL XIV, 2853 = EDR163961). For an analysis of these documents see Buonocore 2011.

more than one department within the household²³⁴. *Crescens* (**105c***) was also a slave and was employed by his master *Alfius Severus* in the position of *actor*; that is as a manager who usually has financial duties²³⁵. It seems possible to suggest *Marcus Aurelius* ... (**100b***) was a private teacher, as the expression *alumnis suis* written on his tomb could indicate. Very precise and exhaustive is the inscription on the tombstone of *Alfenius Ceioius Iulianus Kamenius* (**111***), set up by his wife. As usual in inscriptions honouring 4th-century Roman senators, this text exhibits a list of both civic and religious offices held by the deceased. We are informed that *Kamenius*, *vir clarissimus*, at the highest point of his career was high priest and governor of the province of Numidia and governor of the province of Africa. He was a distinguished member of several pagan cults (Mithras, Hecate, Liber, Cybele) as well as a member of the most exclusive priestly colleges (*praetor*, *triumphalis*, *septemvir epulonum*, *quindecimvir sacris faciundis*).

Of the 7 devotees mentioned in inscriptions from Samnium, we know a public slave of the *res publica Aequiculorum* (**84, 85, 86**), *Apronianus*, who worked as treasurer (*arkarius*) of the city. The munificence of *Apronianus* must have been quite noticeable²³⁶: he dedicated three monuments to Mithras and another monument to Isis and Sarapis, associating his sons in this last dedication too²³⁷. Other 4 devotees were instead freeborn citizens (**82, 83*, 84**). *Titus Flavius Lucilianus* and *Titus Avidiacus Furianus* were citizens of equestrian rank²³⁸, who proudly declared they were gifted with the *equus publicus* (*equo publico*, **82**). We are informed of *Aurelius Mucatra* (**83***), a soldier of Thracian origin²³⁹, serving in the 2nd legion *Parthica Filippiana*, who was posted in the settlement of *Aveia Vestina* with the role of *stationarius*, that is an officer deputed to maintaining the order and, in this part of the peninsula, of guarding the transhumance routes for bandits and thieves²⁴⁰. For the last devotee (*Verus*, **87**) we do not have enough information to determine his civic status or profession²⁴¹.

Only 5 devotees are mentioned in inscriptions from Southern Italy. A single name from Napoli has been preserved: this is the case of *Appius Claudius Tarronius Dexter* who dedicated a relief to the god between the late 3rd and the early 4th century CE (**115**). He declares himself *vir clarissimus*, that means he was a citizen of senatorial rank. From *Paestum*, we have the freedman *Aurio* (**119bis***) whereas from *Stabiae/Castellamare di Stabia* we have *Lucius Gavidius Lanus* (**119***). Other two Mithraic devotees are mentioned in Lucania and Brutii. The first one is the slave *Σάγαρις*, who was an *οικονόμος*, that is probably a manager²⁴², in the house

²³⁴ See Carlsen 1995, pp. 147-9.

²³⁵ See Carlsen 1995, pp. 125-130.

²³⁶ As rightly noticed in Buonocore 2009, p. 253.

²³⁷ CIL IX, 4112.

²³⁸ For a definition of this class see Duncan Jones 2016 (pp. 89-97), and for the equestrian order in the 3rd century see in particular Davenport 2012.

²³⁹ As recognized in Mateescu 1923, pp. 201-2.

²⁴⁰ For an analysis on the duties of the *stationarii* see Petraccia 2001, particularly pp. 28-40.

²⁴¹ Even if the use of a single name could point toward a servile status, nonetheless it would be unprecedented given the mention of his priesthood as an *antistes*.

²⁴² This same *Sagaris* consecrated in the same area of *Venusia/Venosa* an altar to *Mercurius Invictus* (CIL IX, 425 = ILS 3197 = EDR164551) again for the safety of his master *Praesens*. In this monument, the slave declares himself *actor* that is a manager. For a definition of *actor* see Carlsen

of his master *Brittius Praesens*²⁴³ (120). The second one is *Titus Flavius Saturninus* (121), who declares himself *evocatus Augustorum nostrorum*, that means he was a skilled soldier, re-enlisted in the army after serving his 16 years in the corps of the Praetorian Guard²⁴⁴. The presence of an *evocatus Augustorum* in *Grumentum* in the second half of the 2nd century CE should be read, as suggested by the analysis of C. Ricci²⁴⁵, in light of the later incorporation in the Imperial domains of the properties of the *Bruttii Praesentes*, after the marriage of Commodus with *Bruttia Crispina*. It follows that soldiers were stationed in the area possibly for the protection of the Imperial family²⁴⁶.

Not a single name of Mithraic devotee was preserved in Apulia and Calabria and neither in Sicily or Sardinia.

In Ostia, virtually no one of the 36 devotees mentioned by their name expressed explicitly their civic status or profession. The only exceptions are constituted by *Aurelius Crescens* (148) who declares himself *libertus Augusti* that is a freedman of the Augustus, and *Pyladen* (140d) who is referred to as *vilicus* and is very likely a private slave. It is possible to suggest the identification of another *Augusti libertus* in *Marcus Aurelius*²⁴⁷ (146d), however, his belonging to the devotees of the god is not quite sure²⁴⁸. Moreover, *Sextus Pompeius Maximus* is referred to as *quinquennalis* of the *corpus traiectus togatensium* (134), that means he was a preeminent member of one of the five ferry guilds located in Ostia²⁴⁹ and *Fructosus* (131b) declares himself *patronus corporis stuppatorum* that means he was a preeminent member of the guild of the *stuppatores* who were responsible for the production of semi-refined textiles such as tow, oakum and hemp²⁵⁰. He was a free citizen as well as *Aulus Decimius Decimianus* (137a) and *Titus Atilius Glyco*²⁵¹ (149). Apart from these cases, the rest of the Ostian devotees could either be free citizens, freedmen, or freedmen descendants²⁵², at least judging from their

1995, pp. 121-142, where he also express doubts on the correspondence of οἰκονόμος with *actor* (p. 140).

²⁴³ For an analysis on the epigraphic evidence of the Bruttii family in the area see Andermahr 1998, pp. 182-7.

²⁴⁴ For the term *evocatus Augusti* see Birley 1981, and Le Bohec 2013, pp. 48 and 58.

²⁴⁵ See Caldelli *et alii* 2012, in particular p. 297.

²⁴⁶ For the villa of the *Bruttii Praesentes* in Barricelle see Di Giuseppe 2007 and Di Giuseppe 2010.

²⁴⁷ As his name seems to suggest. We should nonetheless recall that the name Marcus Aurelius was used for Imperial freedman briefly under Marcus Aurelius (180-191 CE), and more commonly under the following Emperors all through the Severan dynasty. See Marchesini 2013 (p. 93) with further references.

²⁴⁸ He is mentioned as possibly an officer administering the *palatium* that is an Imperial residence in Ostia, but its actual involvement in the cult is not known because of the fragmentary state of the inscription, which is broken just after his name, where his civic status, his profession and his position within the consecration would likely have been mentioned. See inscription 146d.

²⁴⁹ For the term *quinquennalis* as five-year-long office and related criticism see Royden 1989, whereas for the ferry guilds of Ostia see Casson 1965 (in particular p. 34).

²⁵⁰ For an analysis of this *collegium* see Hermansen 1982.

²⁵¹ Either *Pompeius Maximus*, *Decimius Decimianus*, or *Atilius Glyco* exhibit the patronymic in their onomastic phrasing. Moreover, both *Decimius Decimianus* and *Atilius Glyco* refer to the *tribus* they belonged to. Nonetheless, they could be freedmen descendants as well as, allegedly, the majority of the Ostian devotees.

²⁵² Freedmen or freedmen descendants possibly of an African family should be in particular the *Caerellii* (128, 129), the *Valerii* (146a, 146b, 146d), and *Lucius Agrius Calendio* (138a). See

onomastic²⁵³. In a few cases, we could suspect that Mithraic devotees belonged to the servile class²⁵⁴. For the 27 devotees listed in the *album sacratorum* found in Portus, the same consideration applies: we are possibly in front of devotees of middle or low social extraction, judging from their onomastic²⁵⁵, but further information on their status or profession is virtually absent.

Of the 131 devotees mentioned in Roman inscriptions, comparatively few are the ones who preserved explicit mention of their profession or civic status. 5 of these devotees are explicitly mentioned as slaves (**228**, **243**, **253**, **265**), whereas 9 as freedmen, (**165**, **180**, **182**, **219***, **226**, **227**), all of them Imperial freedman, and a freedman condition could be suggested for other 6²⁵⁶. As for the slaves, we are informed that *Vestalis* (**228**) and *Atimetus* (**243**) were slaves belonging to the *familia Caesaris*. We do not have any information concerning the field of employment of *Vestalis*, whereas *Atimetus* was an *actor praediorum Romanorum*, which means he was an overseer of the Imperial estates²⁵⁷. The devotee *Alcimus* (**265**) should have had a similar function of manager (*servus vilicus*). Moreover, he informed us that he was a slave of *Tiberius Claudius Livianus*, that we know from other inscriptions and written sources to have been Praetorian prefect under Trajan and continued to

respectively Marchesini 2013, pp. 103-5, 82, and 20-22. We should also underline a connection between the devotees of the Mithraeum **126** and the *collegium* of the *pistores*, on the base of the known field of work of other *Caerellii* (Marchesini 2013, p. 110) and of the topographical location of the sanctuary (see Bakker 1999, pp. 124-5). Nonetheless, the suggested identification of our *Caerellius Hieronymus* with the *Cerellius Hieronimus* mentioned in an *album* of the *collegium* of the *fabri tignuariorum* dated in 198 CE (CIL XIV, 4569 = EDR073099), and thus in agreement with the chronology of both **128** and **129**, could suggest our devotee worked instead as a carpenter (as suggested in Becatti 1954, p. 13 and Clauss 1992, p. 35). The identification of the devotee *Lucius Agrius Calendio* with a member of the same *collegium* has been suggested (Becatti 1954, p. 54 and Clauss 1992, p. 36), but the fragmentary state of the *album* does not permit a sure correspondence. The belonging of the devotee *Marcus Umbilius Criton* (**140d**) to the family of the senator *Marcus Umbilius Maximinus* has been also suggested (see Becatti 1954 pp. 37, 83-4). Finally, *Sextus Fusinius Felix* (**142f**) was possibly part of the same family of *Sextus Fusinius Augustalis* who appeared in inscription CIL XIV, 246 = EDR164513.

²⁵³ For a detailed study on these onomastic aspects see the punctual epigraphic analysis in Marchesini 2013.

²⁵⁴ Based on the appearance of a single name of Greek origin, we could suppose the devotees mentioned in graffito **126b** were slaves (as suggested in Clauss 1992, p. 35), as well as *Diocles* (**130**).

²⁵⁵ See Marchesini 2013, p. 327.

²⁵⁶ Or at least the condition of freedman descendants, on the base of the onomastic evidence: **163**, **184**, **198b**, **198d**. It seems possible that *Marcus Ulpius Maximus* (**252**), who dedicated an altar to Mithras in 183 CE, was also a freedman, even if not explicitly mentioned in the inscription. His rank of *praepositus tabellariorum* recalls a senior post with a supervisory role in the organization of the couriers within the public service of the *tabellarii*, usually composed of slaves. For major information on the sub-clerical group of the *tabellarii* and on the *praepositus tabellariorum* see Weaver 1964 (p. 78), Weaver 1972 (pp. 227-8), and generally for the *tabellarii* see also Meyers 2012. The same applies for *Marcus Aurelius Stertinius Carpus* (**197**), who dedicated an altar to Mithras together with his brothers and his father, who was a *procurator castrensis* that is a financial supervisor within the Imperial household. This office was could be held by Imperial freedmen (see Weaver 1972, p. 270-1) as well as by freeborn citizens of equestrian rank. Toward a possible identification with a freedman in this case stand the *praenomen* and *nomen Marcus Aurelius*.

²⁵⁷ For this designation see Carlsen 1995, pp. 130-1.

serve also into Hadrian's reign²⁵⁸. This inscription, dated within the first two decades of the 2nd century CE, is one of the earliest appearances of the Mithras cult in Rome. Again an overseer, but of a private estate this time, must be recognized in the slave *Victor*, who declares himself *vilicus praediorum Maecianorum* (253). He dedicated an altar to Mithras with the help of his fellow slave *Hermes* (*curante Hermete conservo*).

As for the Imperial freedmen dedicating to Mithras, the bilingual inscription dedicated by *Titus Flavius Hyginus Epebrianus* (165) represents another of the earliest finds from Rome and Italy in general, dated between the last two decades of the 1st and the first two decades of the 2nd century CE²⁵⁹. A century later, *Marcus Aurelius Euprepes* consecrated two monuments to Mithras in 184 CE (227) and in 194 CE (226) as the consular dates inform us. A few years later, the two Imperial freedmen *Aurelius Zosimion* and *Aurelius Titus* (180) built a *spelaeum* equipped with all the necessary furniture for the safe return of the Emperors *Septimius Severus* and *Marcus Aurelius* from the second campaign of the Parthian war after 198 CE. In these same years *Lucius Septimius Archelaus*, freedman of the three Augusti, mentioned his office as *pater* and priest of the Unconquered Mithras of the *domus Augustana* on his tombstone (213). On 31st of August 205 CE the Imperial freedman *Marcus Aurelius Romulius* (219*) was mentioned as a supervisor in an inscription dedicated by a veteran (see below). Inscription 182 can be placed between these two inscriptions. It informs us of a devotee, which does not mention his civic status or profession, who with the help of three Imperial freedmen built a sacred place for Mithras in the area of the *castra Praetoria* and consecrated it for the safety of the Emperors, of the Imperial family, and the Praetorian corps.

Surprisingly few are the soldiers dedicating monuments to Mithras in Rome: only 2. The first one is *Aelius Victorinus* (219*), a veteran of the two Augusti who consecrated an altar to Mithras in 205 CE. He served as a soldier, and as a *beneficiarius*²⁶⁰. Considering that this inscription was found in Villa Patrizi, just outside the area of the *castra praetoria*, it seems possible to suggest a relation between this monument and the other Mithraic finds from the area²⁶¹. The second case of a military devotee dedicating to Mithras comes, quite unsurprisingly, from the Mithraeum of the *castra peregrinorum*. Here, three monuments report Mithraic dedications. The first one, that is the consecration of a statue of Mithras *petrogenitus*, was dedicated by *Aurelius Bassinus* while *Aulus Caedicius Priscianus* was *pater* (155f*). In this inscription, *Bassinus* declares himself *aedituus principiorum castrorum peregrinorum*, which means he was the keeper of the sacred places that existed within the headquarters of the *castra peregrinorum*. Moreover, from another inscription²⁶², we know that *Bassinus* was called *Marcus Aurelius Bassinus*, that he was a *centurio* employed as *exercitator* of the *equites singulares*, and that he had a son named *Aurelis Sabinus* who obtained the equestrian rank. Of

²⁵⁸ He possessed also a *figlina* not far from Rome, in *Praeneste*. For a synthesis of *Claudius Livianus'* career see Syme 1980.

²⁵⁹ See Gordon 1978, p. 152. As his *agnomen* suggests, *Hyginus Epebrianus* should be identified with a *vikarianus* that is a slave entered in the service of the *familia Caesaris* by gift of bequest, and retained the name of his former master in the *agnomen*.

²⁶⁰ *Beneficiarii* were non-commissioned officers of sub-centurionate rank, employed in a variety of tasks. For a definition see Le Bohèc 2015 (pp. 689-90).

²⁶¹ See catalog 181, 182, 182bis.

²⁶² A votive inscription to Heracles, see CIL VI 273 = EDR128975 (S. Orlandi).

equestrian rank was also the *pater Aulus Caedicius Priscianus*, who also belonged to a list of devotees of the Imperial cult within the *domus Augusta*²⁶³. In the other two inscriptions (**155i*** and **155j***) we find again *Caedicius Priscianus* hailed as *pater*, but placed in the background with regard to the two devotees who dedicated the statues of the torchbearers these inscriptions were engraved on. The devotees are namely *Aurelius Sabinus*, the son of *Bassinus*, who is called *pater*, and *Baebius Quintianus*, who one time is referred to without title (**155i***) whereas the second time as *leo* (**155j***).

In Rome, at least 4 devotees belong to the equestrian rank. Apart from the equestrians *Aurelius Sabinus* and *Aulus Caedicius Priscianus* just mentioned above, we also have *Flavius Antistianus*, *vir egregius* (**191**), and *Flavius Septimius Zosimus*, *vir perfectissimus* (**210**). Moreover, a substantial number of Mithraic devotees belong to the senatorial rank: they are 17 people, all *viri clarissimi*²⁶⁴. It is interesting to observe that 12 of them²⁶⁵ mention the worship of Mithras as only one of their religious allegiances, among other official religious titles such as *quindecimvir sacris faciundis*, or *augur publicus populi Romani*, and other religious associations such as devoted to Cybele and *tauroboliatus*, hierophant of Hecate, *archibucolus dei Liberi*, etc. Different is the case of the senator *Agrestius* and the members of the Olympii family. *Agrestius* consecrated a Mithraic monument, a statue of the leontocephalic Aion (**167**), without mentioning in the text other pagan priesthods. Finally, the Olympii family appears in six inscriptions (**183a-f**) with four different members celebrating rites of the cult of Mithras. The names of the four members known are *Nonius Victor Olympius* (grandparent), *Aurelius Victor Augentius* (son of *Olympius*), *Emilianus Corfinius Olympius* (grandchildren, son of *Augentius*), and *Tamesius Olympius Augentius* (grandchildren of *Olympius*).

3.2 Grades and priesthods within the Mithraic community

In northern Italy, we have a single mention of a Mithraic grade other than that of *pater*: on a base consecrated to Cautopates found in Angera (**8**), the two devotees *Marcus Stadius Niger* and *Caius Valerius Iulianus* call themselves *leones*. The former mentions also in the same inscription his belonging to the *collegium dendrophorum* of the city of Milan in the quality of representative (*legatus dendrophorum*). The term is iterated in the last line, giving the expression *leones legati*. This phrase results unprecedented with respect to the Mithraic organization, and it thus seems more likely to belong to the community of the collegium of the *dendrophoroi*, of which both the devotees should have been representatives²⁶⁶. The mentions of the highest grade of *pater* are quite scarce. We recorded only 5

²⁶³ Dated between 180 and 184 CE. See CIL VI 2010 = EDR128976 (S. Orlandi).

²⁶⁴ With the inclusion also of a *clarissimus puer* (**183c**).

²⁶⁵ *Alfenius Ceionius Iulianus Kamenius* (**178a***, **178b**, **209c**), *Caius Rufus Volusianus* (**203**), *Coelius Hilarianus* (**209a**), *Ulpianus Egnatius Faventinus* (**209b**), *Sextus Rusticus* (**209d**), *Vettius Agorius Praetextatus* (**212**), *Sextilius Agesilaus Aedesius* (**221**), *Iunius Postumianus* (**222**), *Rufius Ceionius Volusianus* (**223**), *Caius Magius Donatus* (**224**), *Petronius Apollodorus* (**225**).

²⁶⁶ As rightly observed by M. Clauss (see Clauss 1992, p. 61), but not acknowledged by A. Sartori (see Sartori 1995, p. 40).

mentions from 47 texts, 3 of which referred to the same devotee. He is *Quintus Baienus Proculus* who consecrated three altars in Aquileia to the torchbearers and Mithras declaring himself *pater* (27a and 27b) and *pater nomimus* (28). This last epithet represents an unprecedented in Latin epigraphy and consists actually in the transliteration of the Greek νόμιμος²⁶⁷, which means lawful, with a parallel in the Latin calque *legitimus*²⁶⁸. In Milan, *Publius Acilius Pisonianus*, who rebuilt a *speleum* (sic) with his own money, declares himself *pater patratus* (9). Moreover, in Aquileia, we recorded the case of *Titus Aurelius Victor*, who is mentioned in the monument dedicated by other two devotees as *pater prosedens* (24a). It is worth noticing that in this specific occurrence the devotee with the grade of *pater* is mentioned with an eponymous form, which means his name and grade appear together with the adjective *prosedens* in the ablative case, to indicate his preeminent role in the specific moment of the consecration of this monument. The term *prosedens*²⁶⁹ is a Mithraic creation, from the verb *praesidere*, used here in a specific semantic sphere to indicate a function of preeminence within a ritual act occurring in the community²⁷⁰.

As for Mithraic priesthoods, a single testimony was found in northern Italy. On the tombstone that *Marcus Valerius Maximus* made for himself and his wife (10), the man tells us that he was *sacerdos dei Solis Invicti Mithrae*, which means priest of Mithras, and *studiosus astrologiae*, that is a scholar of astrology.

The *album sacratorum* found in Ospedaletto di Gemona (38*) is unfortunately too fragmentary to preserve useful elements for the understanding of the internal organization of the local Mithraic community.

The 9 inscriptions from Umbria and Picenum reveal alone a lot more data on grades and priesthoods. We are informed that there are at least 11 devotees with the grade of *leo*: two of them (*Umbrius Rufinus* and *Umbrius Aemilianus*, 51d) dedicated an altar to the god, while the other nine were mentioned in the dedicatory inscription commemorating the building of a Leontium (55*). This last group informed us also that they were *consummati*, that is brought to perfection meaning instructed or initiated²⁷¹, by the *Egnatius Reparatus*, who is remembered as *sacerdos legitimus*, with a phrase recalling the *pater nomimus* of inscription 28. We have only two mentions of the grade of *pater* in Umbria. The first one (57) is from *Ocriculum/Otricoli*, where we know of a *Valerius Marinus* with the grade of *pater* who dedicated an image (*signum*, in this case a relief). The second one is a quite puzzling mention: in the *album sacratorum* from *Sentinum/Sassoferrato* (51c), the devotee *Sentinas Ianuarius* is called *pater leonum*.

As for the mention of priesthoods, apart the *sacerdos legitimus* (55*) mentioned above, we recorded also the mention of *Sextus Egnatius Primitivus* (56*), who was called *sacerdos probatus*, with an adjective recalling the same semantic area of the *pater patratus* in 9. Another priest is mentioned in inscription 51b: the devotee *Caius Propertius Augurinus* is referred to as *sacerdote prosedente* (see above). The term *prosidens* accompanied by the name of a devotee and expressed in the ablative

²⁶⁷ See CIMRM 78-9 for the only known Greek parallel of the term.

²⁶⁸ As observed also by G. Brusin, see Brusin 1991, p. 151.

²⁶⁹ For the variation *prosedens/praesidens* see below.

²⁷⁰ As punctually explained by F. Mitthof, see Mitthof 1992, in particular p. 284.

²⁷¹ ThLL 4:603.

form occurs also other two times in **51c** and **51d**, but this time without the explicit mention of a priesthood.

Two are the mentions of initiatory grades in Etruria. The same inscription (**73***) informs us of the presence of a devotee with the grade of *heliodromos* who mentions also the *pater* who consecrated him (*sacratu a patre*). A single devotee with the grade of *pater* is known in Samnium (*Caius Arennius Reatinus*, **84**²⁷²), whereas another single occurrence of initiatory grade is known in Latium that is the case of *Quintus Hostilius Euplastus* who calls himself *leo* (**90**).

No mentions of priesthoods are known in Etruria, whereas in a fragmentary inscription from *Tibur/Tivoli* (**95**) we can recognize a *Caius Cattius C...* who is mentioned as *sacerdos* that is priest. Other three priests of Mithras are known from Latium: they are namely *...coni...* (**97**), the two *Aurelii Faustianus* and *Castricius* (**100a***), and *Marcus Aurelius ...* (**100b***).

One mention of the Mithraic community as a whole is given in the graffito found within the Marino Mithraeum. In this case (**105e***) the devotees restored a particular installation within the sanctuary and consecrated it to the god for the safety of *Cornelius Aemilianus*, of his wife *Titiaena*, and of the entire community (*collegium*, sic). It is interesting to notice the mention of a woman in this inscription, but the meaning of her presence within the Mithraeum should be traced back to his relationship with *Cornelius Aemilianus*, possibly a preeminent member of the community, rather than to her belonging to the Mithraic community as a devotee.

Two collective mentions of the Mithraic community are known also from a base consecrated in *Stabiae/Castellammare di Stabia* for the devotees of Mithras (*cultoribus dei Mithrae*, **119***) and from a plaque consecrated in Paestum for the *collegium dei Invicti* (**119bis***).

Nor initiatory grades or priesthoods are mentioned in inscriptions from Campania or southern Italy.

In Ostia, we did not record any written mention of Mithraic grades²⁷³ with the exception of the highest one that is the *pater*. 7 devotees are mentioned as *patres* and if three of them are called simply *pater*²⁷⁴, variations and additions to this term are also known. *Marcus Caerellius Hieronimus* appears in fact as *pater et sacerdos* (**129**) as well as *Marcus Aemilius Epaphroditus*²⁷⁵ (**137c**). Similarly, *Sextus Pompeius Maximus* appears as *sacerdos* and as *pater patrum* (**133a**, **134**). This last expression seems to indicate a position of preeminence of the devotee with the grade of *pater* among other devotees with priestly offices who dedicated the monument. In addition, the devotee *Caius Valerius Heracles* appears one time as *pater* (**146b**) and one time as *pater et antistes* (**146c**), and one time as *sacerdos*

²⁷² It is the case of *Caius Arennius Reatinus*, who is not the devotee who dedicated the monument, but the one who supervised his dedication, with a function likely identical to that indicated by the term *prosidens* (see above).

²⁷³ Nonetheless we can record in Ostia the presence of the most complete testimony of the grade system and of the related symbols in the mosaic floor of the Mithraeum of *Felicissimus* (**144a**).

²⁷⁴ *Marcus Lollianus Callinicus* in **126c**, **127**, **128**; *Caius Lucretius Menander* in **130a**; and *Aulus Aemilius Antoninus* in **139c**. It should be noticed that in two cases these devotees are mentioned as *pater* using the eponymous form (**127**, **128**) just seen in Umbrian cases and that in other two cases they are referred to with likely the same eponymous intention with the phrase *ob honorem* (**130a**, **137b**). It is quite puzzling on the other hand the absence of the use of the term *prosidens/praesidens*.

²⁷⁵ He appears also simply mentioned as *pater* in inscription **137b**.

(146a). The priesthoods continue with three devotees appearing as *sacerdotes*. They are namely *Lucius Florius Hermadion* (140b) and the two brothers of *Caius Valerius Heracles*, *Vitalis* and *Nicomedes* (146b). Moreover, the two *Marci Caerellii* are called *sacerdotes et antistites* (128). The overview on Mithraic priesthoods in Ostia is completed by the cases of *Caius Caelius Hermeros*, who appears in four different inscriptions (138c, 138d, 138e, 139b) as *antistes huius loci*. As for the term *antistes*, that means literally chief and supervisor, it seems possible to suggest a role of supervision of a specific sanctuary for the devotees it is mentioned with²⁷⁶.

The album from Portus preserved also a single mention of grade, namely that of *pater* (153).

In Rome we found only three mentions of the grade of *leo* (155j*, 170²⁷⁷) and one of the grade of *corax* (205a, 205b) whereas the most attested grade is that of *pater*, which recurs 9 times (155i*, 155j*, 164a, 164c, 164d, 182, 185, 250), 4 of which associated with the term *sacerdos* (182, 205c, 213, 215). Moreover, all of the initiatory grades appear at least one time in the painted inscriptions of S. Prisca (202d), with the addition of the name of 13 devotees with the grade of *leo* (202e, 202f). We recorded in Rome also the occurrence of the terms of *pater patrum*²⁷⁸ and *pater sacrorum*²⁷⁹: it seems worth to notice that they are virtually only used by senators dedicating in the last quarter of the 4th century CE²⁸⁰ (see above). In three cases we recorded also, among these 4th-century senators, the use of the term *hieroceryx* (209a, 209b, 209c), every time preceded by the title *pater*²⁸¹. Even if an ancient mis-reading of the term related to the grade of *corax* has been suggested for this word²⁸², it seems unsuitable that a *pater* was contemporary mentioned as *corax*²⁸³. This term seems more probably referable to the aulic style of the text, recalling the Greek word meaning ‘sacred herald’ of Eleusinian memory²⁸⁴, here originally used in connection with Mithraism. The circumscribed occurrence of this term in terms of context, time, and place as well as its non-fixed order (209a *pater sacrorum et hieroceryx IM*, 209b *pater et hieroceryx DSIM*, 209c *pater et hieroceryx sacrorum SIM*) speaks for a circumscribed and particular use chosen by these three Senators. Again on the mention of the grade of *pater*, we can find in Rome a number of devotees who are mentioned as *patres* in the eponymous form

²⁷⁶ As observed in Mitthof 1992, p. 284. See also chapter 5, paragraph 4.2.

²⁷⁷ Two devotees dedicated this monument. *Placidus Marcellinus* refers to himself as *leo antistes* whereas *Guntha* simply as *leo*.

²⁷⁸ 183a 183b, 183c, 183d, 183e, 191, 209d, 221, 222.

²⁷⁹ 178a*, 178b, 212, 223, 224, 225.

²⁸⁰ With the exception of inscription 191 and 193f, dated in the mid-3rd century CE and dedicated respectively by a citizen of equestrian rank and by another quite wealthy devotee, who appears also as *antistes* (193d). The senators in 183a, 183b, 183d, 183e, 203, and 223 called themselves simply *pater*.

²⁸¹ In 209a we read *pater sacrorum et hieroceryx Invicti Mithrae*, in 209b *pater et hieroceryx dei Solis Invicti Mithrae*, and in 209c *pater et hieroceryx sacrorum dei Solis Invicti Mithrae*.

²⁸² As in Cameron 2011, p. 150.

²⁸³ As already noticed in Mastrocinque 2017 (p. 318) who proposes to translate the term with ‘sacred herald; attendant at a sacrifice’.

²⁸⁴ See for instance Mylonas 1961, p. 233.

that is in the ablative case. Sometimes they are mentioned simply as *pater*²⁸⁵ (155j*, 165, 172, 279), sometimes as *pater antistes* (155f*, 187), some other as *pater praesidens/prosidens* (184, 227, 255) and a single time as *pater subsedens* (198f). It seems possible to identify this last term as a variation of the more common *prosidens*.

As for Mithraic priesthoods found in Rome, we can count other 7 records, all of them appearing in the eponymous form. These occurrences are: 3 times the simple term *sacerdos* (198d, 226, 254), 1 time *sacerdos antistes* (219*), 1 time the simple term *prosidens* (227), 1 time *sacerdos astans*²⁸⁶ (252), and 1 time the simple term *antistes* (179).

The actions of the devotees expressed in the above-mentioned inscription generally conform to the normal acts expected in sacred and votive dedications: they usually fulfilled their vows (*votum solvit/solverunt*), gave gifts to the god (*donum dedit/dederunt*), and set up (*posuit/posuerunt*) or built (*fecit/fecerunt*) monuments. The inscriptions regarding the construction (*fecit/fecerunt*), dedication (*dedicavit/dedicaverunt*), restoration (*refecit/restauravit*) or completing (*consummaverunt*) of a Mithraeum are comparatively fewer but are well attested nonetheless.

Three verbs involved with the actions of Mithraic devotees deserve further comment. They are respectively *consummare*, *sacrare*, and *tradere*. *Consummare* appears in inscription 55* in the past participle form. We read that nine devotees with the grade of *leo* were *consummati* by the priest *Egnatius Reparatus*. *Consummare* literally means ‘bringing to the highest point’ which metaphorically becomes ‘bringing to perfection’²⁸⁷. It seems possible to suggest a semantic link of this term with the sphere of initiation. We have nine devotees who were brought to the grade of *leo* by a priest. The structure of the sentence (name of the grade – verb in the past participle form – name of the authority who performed the religious act) recalls another inscription which can surely be linked with the semantic area of the initiation as well, but which uses the verb *sacrare*. In inscription 73*, the devotee *Memmius Placidus* tells us he was *sacratus a Curtio Iuvenale patre* which means he was ‘consecrated by the *pater Curtius Iuvenalis*’. *Sacrare* means literally ‘making sacred’, and, in this context, it appears clearly that the *pater* sanctioned the promotion of the devotee to the grade of *heliodromus*. Unfortunately, if both these verbs can be reasonably referred to the initiation of the devotees and to the sanction made by a priest or *pater*, they do not let us speculate further on how this passage was performed. Moreover, it seems interesting to notice that both these verbs express the initiation, or at least the recognition of the promotion to a grade, from the point of view of the devotees. On the other hand, we have the verb *tradere*, which could represent the same moment but from the point of view of the officiating authority, more specifically the *pater*.

The verb *tradere* occurs in five texts belonging to the context of the S. Silvestro in Capite Mithraeum (183), known also as the Mithraeum of the Olympii. Despite

²⁸⁵ In inscriptions 172 the eponymous form is rendered as *per* plus the accusative case, as already seen in inscription 84 from Samnium.

²⁸⁶ Even in this case it seems possible to identify *astans* with a variation for the more common *antistes* or *prosidens*.

²⁸⁷ ThLL 4:603.

no architectural remains of this sanctuary being preserved, five monuments were discovered in the same site located in the area of S. Silvestro in capite church. The texts were engraved between 357 and 376, and they bear the same scheme. After the consular date, two officiating authorities are mentioned: the *pater patrum Nonius Victor Olympius* and the *pater Aurelius Victor Augentius*²⁸⁸. The verb *tradiderunt* follows, with a single exception that we will address below, and then the object of the verb. The precise day and month of the ceremony continue the texts which are closed by the adverb *feliciter* referring to the good outcome of the religious act. This second part, from *tradiderunt* onward, is repeated two times designating two different objects. The objects of the verb *tradiderunt* are expressed with a neuter plural adjective, with a single exception that we will address below; they are: *leontica*, *persica*, *aeliaca*, *patrica*, and *alia*. It was convincingly demonstrated that these adjectives imply a noun such as *sacra/sacramenta* which can be regarded as the Latin calque of μυστήρια²⁸⁹. These objects constitute the mysteries of the Mithraic grades which the two patres *tradiderunt*, that literally means ‘passing on’, with a parallel in the Greek παραδιδόναι²⁹⁰. The verb the Mithraic devotees used to indicate the ceremony which sanctioned the passage into a grade was then expressed with *tradere* when viewed from the point of view of the *pater*. But these texts also reveal another technical verb regarding initiations. Only one time *tradere* is used with a non-neuter adjective: **183e** reports *tradiderunt chryfios*. Moreover, *chryfios* also appear with a different verb: in **183c** it is written *ostenderunt chryfios*. *Chryfios* is the object of the verb *tradere* and indicates some persons, as the masculine plural accusative shows. Who are the *chryfi*? The word *chryfius*, which literally means ‘hidden’, designates the devotee not-yet-initiated into the Mithraic grade system²⁹¹. The use of the specific verb *ostendere*, that means ‘disclosing’, implies that with this ceremony the *pater* disclosed these devotees to the god and the community²⁹².

Finally, concerning the terms used for designating the devotees, we must mention the words used by the devotees to refer to themselves as a group. The generic term *cultores* appears on the first line of the *album sacratorum* of Sentinum (**51c**) where it is accompanied by the name of the deity DSIM, whereas it is lost in the lists from Gemona (**38***) and Portus (**153**). The same term, with the specification of the name of the deity in the form *dei Mithrae*, appears on the bronze plaque found in *Paestum* (**119***) to refer to the community of the devotees. The devotees of Mithras refer to themselves as a collegium in monuments **150e** (*collegium devoti*, sic) and a single devotee refers to his community as a *collegium DI* (**119bis***) in *Stabiae*. In six monuments (**153, 170, 186, 200, 254, 256**) the devotees refer to other members of the community as the *sacrati*, which, following the analysis suggested above, we can translate in this specific Mithraic contexts with ‘initiated devotees’. Finally, a single occurrence of the Greek transliteration *syndexi* is known (**193e**).

²⁸⁸ Apart from the second text of **183c**, where *Victor Augentius* appears alone in performing the ceremony and with the grade of *pater patrum*. Given the fact that this text was engraved a decade after the first, we can assume that *Victor Olympius* was dead in the meantime.

²⁸⁹ See Vollgraf 1957, p. 528.

²⁹⁰ See again Vollgraf 1957, p. 528.

²⁹¹ See Vollgraf 1957, pp. 519-527.

²⁹² For the question of whom they were disclosed to see the analysis in Blomart 1992, pp. 628-9.

Grade	Northern Italy	Central and Southern It.	Ostia	Rome
<i>Corax</i>	0	0	0	2
<i>Nymphus</i>	0	0	0	2
<i>Miles</i>	0	0	0	2
<i>Leo</i>	2	12	0	20**
<i>Perses</i>	0	0	0	1
<i>Heliodromus</i>	0	1	0	2
<i>Pater</i>	5	4*	12	46

* 1 *p. leonum*; **1. *antistes*;

Priesthood	Northern Italy	Central and Southern It.	Ostia	Rome
<i>Sacerdos</i>	1	4	4	3
<i>S. probatus</i>	0	1	0	0
<i>S. legitimus</i>	0	1	0	0
<i>S. prosedens</i>	0	1	0	1
<i>S. astans</i>	0	0	0	2
<i>S. et antistes</i>	0	0	2	0
<i>Pater</i>	2	0	12	21
<i>P. legitimus</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>P. nomimus</i>	1	0	0	0
<i>P. patratus</i>	1	0	0	0
<i>P. prosedens</i>	1	0	0	2
<i>P. subsedens</i>	0	0	0	1
<i>P. antistes</i>	0	0	0	2
<i>P. et sacerdos</i>	0	0	2	2
<i>P. sacerdos</i>	0	0	0	1
<i>P. et antistes</i>	0	0	1	0
<i>P. antistes</i>	0	0	0	2
<i>P.P.</i>	0	0	0	10
<i>P.P. et sacerdos</i>	0	0	2	0
<i>P.S.</i>	0	0	0	7
<i>Antistes</i>	0	0	4	1
<i>Prosedens</i>	0	0	0	1
<i>Hieroceryx</i>	0	0	0	3

Chapter 4

Who was Mithras? How was he represented?

1. Mithras and his deeds: Mithraic images

When speaking of Mithras and Mithraism, the most famous image that every scholar of antiquity pictures for himself is that of the tauroctony. And at reason: tauroctony is the most represented Mithraic subject, appearing only in Italy 154 times on a variety of supports and in different sizes. Moreover, it is the most represented Mithraic subject also in the rest of the Empire.

Moreover, Mithraic iconography means not only the tauroctony scene but also an array of minor subjects usually represented as side scenes. Their meaning and understanding were indissolubly linked with the major scene of the tauroctony. Only three of these subjects appear as stand-alone subjects. They are namely the Birth of Mithras from the rock, the *Transitus Dei*, and the Banquet of Mithras and Sol. We will start our iconographical analysis with the tauroctony whereas the minor subjects will be analyzed separately in the paragraphs below.

2. The tauroctony scene

2.1 Supports and size

The tauroctony, literally ‘the killing of the bull’, constitutes the most represented Mithraic subject. In Italy, it is staged 154 times: 14 times it is accompanied by side-scenes, whereas in 140 cases it appears as a stand-alone subject. The tauroctony image represents the cultic center of Mithraic worship, being displayed in a focal spot within the Mithraic sanctuary and constituting one of the main features of the Mithraeum itself. Generally speaking, 124 representations of the tauroctony were found in Mithraea or at least in places where the presence of a Mithraeum can be reasonably suggested. In other 30 cases, Mithraic representations constitute sporadic finds that could not be related with certainty to Mithraic sacred places²⁹³. As a fundamental part of the cult place, the tauroctony representation could appear on supports such as reliefs (97 cases, 63%) or statues (31 cases, 20%), but cases of more perishable supports such as fresco (7 cases, 5%) and stucco (6 cases, 5%) are known, as well as tauroctony representations on small finds (13 cases, 8%). In the cases of stucco and fresco representations, the dimension of the tauroctony is constrained by the dimension of the sanctuary, or better by the dimension of the architectural structure it was applied on. In the Barberini (175a), S. Maria Capua Vetere (113a) and Marino (105a*) Mithraea the tauroctony representation occupies all of the surfaces of the back wall of the main cult room, whereas the stucco representations of S. Prisca (202a), Napoli (114a*) and Ponza (112a*) were inscribed in arched niches that took all the space at disposition.

²⁹³ 61*, 63*, 64, 65a*, 65b*, 66, 67, 73*, 91, 93a, 108, 150, 151, 211, 216, 244, 266, 276, 286, 288, 291, 293, 297, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305.

In the case of statues (31 cases), we find in Mithraea monuments of four orders of measure. The small groups, measuring less than two Roman feet that is 60 cm are only 3 (12% of all the statues). The most represented dimension is the middle one, ranging between two and three Roman feet that are between 60 and 90 cm, with 48% of the total number of statues. A good number of monuments ranges between four and five feet that meaning between 120 and 150 cm (32% of all the statues), with one monument exceeding the six Roman feet, with a dimension of 170 cm. As for the specific function of the smaller group, we are informed by the case of the Vulci Mithraeum that the smaller tauroctony representation did not constitute the focal point of the sanctuary, but it was possibly destined to decorate a secondary niche (see **71b***). The case of statue **132a** is quite exceptional too, but in this case, its massive dimension seems to be linked to its previous use rather than to a precise Mithraic choice. The group in fact was only re-used in the late 2nd century CE by Mithraic devotees who appropriated this large statue and added here and there elements useful for the conversion of the previous subject in a Mithraic tauroctony (see **132a**). With the exclusion of these extremely small and large groups, the average measure of tauroctony statues results in a little bit over three Roman feet, which means 97 cm in height. All of these monuments are made of white marble²⁹⁴ and in 3 cases we recorded traces of coloring and gilding on the surface of the statues (**218, 231, 261**).

As for tauroctony reliefs, most of them were made of white marble (80 cases, 82%), whereas a minority of limestone (7 cases, 8%). We recorded also a single occurrence of tauroctony relief made of travertine (**170**), a single one of peperino (**75**), another one of sandstone (**272**) and a last one in colored marble (Pavonazetto, **137a**). Traces of coloring and gilding were recognized on some specimens (**17, 59, 78, 91, 162a, 164a, 194, 198c, 202a, 204c, 218, 293**). With the exclusion of 33 reliefs too fragmentary to suggest their possible general dimensions²⁹⁵, we are left with 64 complete – or virtually entire – monuments. These monuments show rectangular shape, generally wider than higher, with few exceptions²⁹⁶. A unique case is represented by relief **23a** from Aquileia. This high-relief shows in fact a rhomboidal shape which recalls the rocky nature of the setting of the tauroctony scene. Looking at their dimension, we can notice at least three size groups. The most conspicuous group (40% of the total cases) consists of reliefs with mid-range measures, with width comprised between 45 and 80 cm and height between 40 and 70 cm. A second group (21%) of mid-to-large dimension can be recognized, with width between 95 and 105 cm and height between 60 and 85 cm. A third group of large dimensions (17%), with width between 120 and 180 cm and height between 80 and 120 cm, can be recognized too. Finally, we can notice also a small group of

²⁹⁴ With the exception of **250** realized with *bigio antico*, and of **283** realized in basalt. We must mention here also the use of different species of white marble utilized in groups **71a*** and **132**. In both these cases, the main group was realized in a variety of white marble whereas minor parts were carved out from pieces of white marble of different lithology and added to the monument by means of bronze pins.

²⁹⁵ Or for which we do not possess data on their general size.

²⁹⁶ See **164a, 49, 158a**. If in the cases of **49** and **158a** the preference for a ‘tall’ representation is imposed by the specificity of the supports – both the reliefs are in fact carved on the side of an altar – in the case of **164a** the preference for the vertical picture seems due to the addition of two minor scenes below the representation of the tauroctony.

reliefs of small dimension (17%), with width and height comprised between 20 and 40 cm, and three out-of-scale monuments (**267**, **79**, **189**).

We cannot conclude this overview on sizes and supports without mentioning the tauroctony representations found on small finds. We recorded 13 of these small-scale images in Italy. First of all, we will mention 4 representations of the tauroctony on pottery products. In the case of the finds from the eastern bank of the Trasimeno lake (**65a***, **65b***), we have two fragmentary terracotta slabs featuring the representation of the tauroctony scene. The context these two fragments belong to is unfortunately not clear. They were found in the filling of a votive pit belonging to a Republican and early Imperial rural sanctuary, but their production must be dated at least in the mid-Imperial Age and possibly even later given the presence in the same pit of early 4th century coins. Traces of misfiring observed on these two fragments seem to point toward a kiln waster more than to a votive intention. Nonetheless, the custom of producing a Mithraic image on terracotta support finds no comparisons in Italy itself and in the Mediterranean in general²⁹⁷. As for tauroctony on pottery vessels, we found in Italy 4 examples. We can clearly recognize the tauroctony scene (**108**, **276**) as well as the *transitus* scene (**108**) applied on the internal surface of two bowls of African red slip ware found respectively in Rome and in *Lavinium*/Pratica di Mare. The representation of a Mithraic subject strikes us as peculiar, given the popularity of Christian characters and episodes usually found on this kind of ceramic production²⁹⁸. Other two cases of application of Mithraic subjects on ceramic vessels were traced in the Vulci Mithraeum. Here two vessels in common ware (**71d***) were decorated with the application of Mithraic symbols such as the snake, the lion head, the bust of Sol, and the bull. A vessel with applied tauroctony decoration was also reportedly found in Ostia but is nowadays lost and no photos or drawing of the piece survives (**151**). We are not entirely sure of the Mithraic value of the applied decoration featured on vessel **93a***. The general stance of the man represented as well as the animal below him – interpreted tentatively as a bull – and the presence of Mithraic animals such as the snake, the scorpion, and the raven could point to a Mithraic identification. On the other hand, the nakedness of the figure and the unusual positioning of his right hand raised in the air ready to strike the subdued animal could point either toward an unusual iconographical variation for Mithras or toward the integration of Herculean elements within a Mithraic context. Two incomplete small bronze statuettes representing the tauroctony come allegedly from Italy (**266**, **304**) as well as a bronze plaque with an incised representation of the tauroctony (**305**). Quite peculiar is also the bronze applique featuring the tauroctony scene applied on the chest of a bust of Sabazius found possibly in the area of *Volsinii*/Bolsena (**67**). Also in this case any piece of information on the context of provenance of the piece lacks. Another representation of the tauroctony scene on a small find comes from Ostia: it is the case of the bronze disc decorating a brooch (**150**) found in the city in the 20th century. The tauroctony is thinly incised on the bronze plaque, with rich precision of details and clear readability. Finally, we mention here a magical gem (**299**) and an amulet (**300***) both bearing the tauroctony representation on the obverse side and magical elements on the reverse side.

²⁹⁷ These peculiar tauroctony images are currently being studied by F. Morandini.

²⁹⁸ See Sagui and Tortorici 1981.

2.2 General scheme and variations

The iconographical scheme of the tauroctony remains constant through time, space, and supports (reliefs, statues, frescoes, stuccoes, and on small finds such as gems, bronze and pottery), without any changes in its fundamental characters. The scene is set in a cave²⁹⁹. In the center of the scene, the god fights the bull. Mithras is always portrayed dressed in eastern clothes, which means he wears closed shoes, long trousers (*anaxyrides*), long-sleeved tunic, flying cloak fastened on his shoulder with a circular pin and Phrygian hat. Mithras' garments are usually red in color, and in some cases the internal side of his flying cloak is colored in blue and stars are pictured on it³⁰⁰. It is known only one example of the god not wearing his usual attire, that is statue **132a**. This peculiar feature must be attributed to the previous use of the statue, and we cannot exclude that the garments were added in stucco or perishable materials which were not preserved at the time of the discovery of the group. Minor variations on Mithras' attire are otherwise unknown of³⁰¹, but minor elements added to this scheme can be sometimes noticed. It is the case, for example, of monuments where Mithras is shown wearing a radiated halo around his head (**49, 50, 150, 174a, 300**), or a bow and quiver (**79***, **243**). In some cases, we can also notice the presence of stars and a lunar crescent carved within the cloak of the god (**105a***, **113a, 137a, 146a, 175a**) or inside the cave (**161, 175a, 198b**).

The god is caught always in the same stance: he leans on his left knee which is pressed on the back of the bull, whereas his right leg is stretched back, pressing his foot on the hoof of the animal. Mithras grasps with his left hand the nostrils of the bull, forcing the animal to twist unnaturally his head up, whereas he plunges his dagger in the shoulder of the animal with his right hand. The god does not look at his victim, but back, over his shoulder, to Sol³⁰². The bull on the other hand is almost completely subdued: his right hind leg is stretched back, stomped by the god, whereas its left one, when represented, is folded under its body. Its right foreleg can be either at a right angle with the ground or folded under its body, whereas the left one, when represented, is usually rampant, in the last spasm of the fight. His mouth is slightly open, with his tongue protruding. From the tail of the bull, ears sprout³⁰³.

²⁹⁹ which in Italy it has been observed is usually a naturalistic cave, see Lavagne 1974, p. 500. On the theme of the cave see also Lavagne 1988.

³⁰⁰ For the red color of Mithras' garments see for instance **105a***, **113a, 155b***, **155c***, **155d***. For the blue of his cloak see **105a***, and **113a**. In **175a** the god is represented on the contrary with blue clothes and red cloak.

³⁰¹ In monument **244**, a modern restoration integrated Mithras' right leg with a bare foot rather than with the normal closed shoe. It seems possible to suggest that also in other cases where we can observe this 'bare foot' variation (**64, 264, 283, 285**), the motivation lies in modern restorations which possibly took the famous **244** (which was exhibited in the Musei Vaticani since the late 18th century) as an example.

³⁰² In 3 monuments (**64, 244, 285**) the gaze of the god is not directed to Sol but to the bull. If in the case of monument **244** this particular can be ascribed to a modern restoration of the group, for the other small group **64** and relief **285** the explanation could be similar. Their provenance from the antiquarian market, put together with this unusual direction in the gaze of the god and other minor 'suspicious' elements (as for instance the missing shoe at the foot of Mithras in both the monuments) could point toward a non-antique origin of the pieces. The frontal direction of Mithras' gaze recorded in monument **280** should be better investigated to exclude a similar hypothesis too.

³⁰³ They can be a single one, two, three, or even five. In only one case, that is monument **265**, we recorded ears sprouting from the wound of the bull rather than from the tail.

In some cases, the bull is represented wearing a large band around his body, the *dorsuale* (**48***, **50**, **57**, **88**, **115**, **150**, **155c***, **164a**, **170**, **204c**, **218**, **286**).

Few are the exceptions to this positioning of the god and of the bull: slight shifts in the stance of the two characters can be noticed in at least 3 monuments³⁰⁴, but they seem more likely linked with a choice of the sculptor rather than to a conscious variation on the scheme just outlined. A minor variation can be instead recognized in reliefs **57** and **110**. In both this cases, Mithras holds the bull with his left hand by the muzzle and not by the nostrils as it is more common. Another variation in Mithras' grasp can be noticed in other 7 representations³⁰⁵: in these cases the god holds the bull keeping his left hand on the throat of the animal. A peculiar gesture of the god can be noticed also in relief **230** and **280**, and in statue **164b**³⁰⁶. In this cases Mithras grasps the bull with his left hand by the left horn.

The only case we recorded a completely different scheme used to represent the tauroctony scene consists of relief **211**. In this case, Mithras and the bull borrow the iconographical scheme typical of the representations of other two deities that are Jupiter Dolichenus and Men. The god in fact stands triumphantly on the animal, as in the Jupiter Dolichenus typical scheme, stomping the bull's head with his foot, as usual in the representations of Men. Moreover, he holds the dagger raised in his right hand, and in his left he holds a small rounded object, possibly a pinecone, as it is usual for the representations of Sabazius. This peculiar scheme, besides being Mithraic in the sense that all of the characters of the Mithraic tauroctony are represented, consists of a mixture of schemes and minor elements borrowed by other Oriental cults popular in the mid-Imperial Age.

Going back to the usual tauroctony scheme, four animals and the torchbearers accompany the group of Mithras and the bull. Before the bull, the dog³⁰⁷ stands with its foreleg resting its paws on the chest of the subdued animal, leaping at the blood spilt from the wound of the dagger. Similarly, the snake slithers on the ground beside the bull – from the left to the right - and raises his head to leap at the spilt blood. The scorpion is located under the abdomen of the bull, in the act of pinching the testicles of the animal. On the top left of the scene, the raven is represented: it can be represented perched on the rocky margin of the cave or on the flying cloak of Mithras, its body directed to the fighting scene with spread wings. The two torchbearers Cautes and Cautopates flank this scene. They are dressed in eastern attire, with the same clothes as Mithras. They are usually represented cross-legged, but also the common standing position is known. They hold in their hands the lit torch: Cautes points the object upward, to the sky, whereas Cautopates downward,

³⁰⁴ A slight shift in Mithras' stance can be noticed in group **231**, where the god stomps with his right foot the knee of the bull instead of the hoof, resulting in a more vertical composition. In reliefs **115** and **118** the bull is not completely subdued, but is still fighting the god, with one foreleg pointed firmly to the ground and the other rampart.

³⁰⁵ **64**, **132a**, **175a**, **244**, **272**, **283**, **285**.

³⁰⁶ group **164b** shows other quite peculiar features, which are quite difficult to account for. First of all, the absence of the dog and of the scorpion results quite puzzling. Secondly, Mithras wear a belt around his chest, where the sheath of his dagger is attached. This dagger is indeed sheathed. He should have hold in his right another dagger (his right arm is unfortunately lost). Moreover, the carved decoration on the sheath of the dagger recalls the one observed on the same object appearing in monument **244**.

³⁰⁷ Sometimes the dog wears a collar: **14**, **48***, **51a**, **59**, **64**, **78**, **86**, **115**, **116**, **146a**, **150**, **157**, **162a**, **193a**, **216**, **261**, **273**, **301**.

to the ground. In northern Italy, Cautopates appears on the left of the tauroctony, and Cautes conversely to the right. In central Italy, which means mainly in Rome, the order is generally inverted, with a marked preference for the location of Cautes on the left and Cautopates on the right. Outside the cave, on the top corners of the image, Sol and Luna are represented, respectively on the left and on the right. They can be shown as simple busts, Sol with the attribute of the radiate crown, and Luna with the attribute of the lunar crescent, or sometimes as full-body characters. In this second case, Sol drives a chariot pulled by four horses whereas Luna a chariot pulled by two oxen.

As for the constant presence of all of these characters, in statuary groups, the tauroctony scene is usually represented by Mithras and the bull and by the dog, the snake, and the scorpion. The presence of the raven as well as of the torchbearers is virtually never testified and nor Sol or Luna appear ever. It is also true that the torchbearers have a tradition of stand-alone representations, and could easily be realized on different supports and be added to the main group. In reliefs, these characters usually appear altogether, but 15 cases are known of the torchbearers not showing, and another 4 without the representation of Sol and Luna. Sporadically, characters like the raven or the scorpion do not appear³⁰⁸.

Sometimes, minor elements can be added to this scene, usually adding to the symbolic meaning of the sacred representation. First, we can mention the cases where a ray of light departing from Sol's radiated crown is prolonged to reach Mithras (**14**, **78**, **105a***, **113a**, **118**, **170**, **175a**). This particular add on the relation between Mithras' deed and the order of Sol, already hinted by the axial position of Sol, the raven (his messenger) and Mithras. Adding to the general cosmic setting of Mithras' deed, we can sometimes find the zodiacal belt represented in addition to the tauroctony characters. It is usually depicted above the tauroctony, as it appears in fresco **175a** as well as in reliefs **101a**, **124**, **284**, and **286**³⁰⁹. Again on the cosmic and terrestrial setting of Mithras' deeds, we can mention the sporadic presence of Oceanus (**113a**, **159**), Tellus (**113a**, **273**), and the Winds (**158a**, **164a**) on some monuments. Other elements that can sometimes be added to the tauroctony scene are a series of flaming altars (**161**), or trees (**189**), or both (**54**³¹⁰, **161**, **175a**), usually placed in a row on top of the cave or on the bottom of the representation. Wild animals appear also on the margins of relief **14**, in accordance with a custom recorded in the nearby region, whereas a group of three grazing sheep appears on the left part of the tauroctony in relief **24a**. Adding on the symbolic value of Sol and Luna, on reliefs **155c** and **189** a small winged Eros appears, guiding Luna's chariot.

2.3 Roman models for a Roman image

When inquiring about the history of the iconographical scheme used in the tauroctony, F. Cumont recognized this central image as the Hellenistic transposition of an artist of the School of Pergamum of the famous image of the 5th-century

³⁰⁸ See for example monuments **272** and **285** without the raven, monument **250** without the scorpion, and monument **164b** without the scorpion and the dog.

³⁰⁹ In relief **286**, on top of the cave, the busts of the seven tutelary deities of the Mithraic grades are also represented.

³¹⁰ Moreover, in relief **54**, a row of 7 water vessels decorates the lower band of the representation.

Athena βουθυτοῦσα sculpted on the balustrade of the temple of Athena Nike on the Athenian acropolis³¹¹. That the Athenian specimen could constitute a far example for the early Mithraic devotees, it seems not impossible, though the five centuries separating that image from the earliest tauroctonies call for intermediate steps in the transmission of this iconographical scheme. If we have a look into the first testimonies of this cult image from Italy, we observe that the earliest examples can be dated from the last decades of the 1st century CE³¹². Already E. Will in the 1950s' underlined how the scheme of Victory sacrificing the bull in the Hellenistic times was a theme as popular as not so formalized in terms of gesture and posture of the goddess³¹³. The image of Victory sacrificing the bull was surely known in Rome in the 1st century CE: it constituted a quite popular subject decorating terracotta slabs. These products were destined to decorate rich private houses in the capital as well as public buildings³¹⁴. In an even more official context, this subject appeared at least two times on coins³¹⁵ with the patent purpose of celebrating the military victory of the Emperor³¹⁶. This tradition was amplified in the late 1st century CE by the emperor Trajan, who used it to decorate his *forum* as well as other public monuments³¹⁷. As shown by these examples, the image of Victory killing the bull was quite popular in Rome in the 1st century CE, in private as well as in public contexts: we can imagine that the early Mithraic devotees looking for a format to use for the representation of the deed of Mithras resorted to a quite popular iconographic scheme and adapted it to their religious purpose with specific additions such as: Mithras (substituting Victory with the consequent fixing of the posture and gesture of the god), the animals³¹⁸, the setting within the cave, and the characters of the torchbearers, Sol, and Luna. The existence of an 'Imperial' source for the earliest Mithraic images carries an important corollary also in terms of the interpretation of the meaning of the tauroctony representation.

A recent re-interpretation of the meaning of the central image of the cult has been proposed by A. Mastrocinque following a 'Roman' perspective. Without necessarily excluding the previous theories on the tauroctony³¹⁹, the Italian scholar

³¹¹ See TMMM1, pp. 179-188 and 213-220.

³¹² Namely the famous verse of *Statius* (*STAT. Theb. I, 719-720*) and the group dedicated by *Alcimus* (see **265**).

³¹³ See Will 1955, pp. 169-76. E. Will also criticized the idea of a Pergamian sculptor for the first tauroctony (see pp. 176-86), and suggested to move the creation of the Mithraic tauroctony further into the 1st century BCE (p. 209).

³¹⁴ For a synthesis on the contexts of provenance and on the iconographical themes employed in Campana slabs see Tortorella 1981.

³¹⁵ They are namely the *aureus* of Augustus celebrating the submission of Armenia, with the representation of Victory killing the bull on the obverse (RIC I, Augustus 514), and a bronze of Vespasian with the same figure on the obverse (RIC II, Vespasian 1504).

³¹⁶ Continuing in this sense a known Hellenistic tradition. On this subject see the comment in Mastrocinque 2017, pp. 148-50.

³¹⁷ Marble friezes depicting Victory slaying the bull were used in the decoration of the Basilica Ulpia (see Meneghini 2009, pp. 139-46) as well as in the Arch of *Beneventum*.

³¹⁸ It is interesting to note with C. Faraone the parallelism between the location and gesture of the Mithraic animals and the animals appearing on the evil-eye amulets. In the opinion of the American scholar, the reciprocal influence between Mithraic tauroctony and evil-eye amulets could even point toward a priority of the amulet design rather than of the Mithraic image. See Faraone 2013.

³¹⁹ Such as the tauroctony representing a myth of the foundation of the cult, or the liberation from a form of danger or evil, or from a condition of savagery in contraposition with order and civilization,

shown that the meaning of the Mithraic bull was linked, in the mind of a Roman citizen of the 1st century CE, with a danger for the Empire, such as an enemy of the state, and therefore Mithras was to be linked to the victory of the Roman Emperor over the enemy³²⁰. To assert the true meaning of the Mithraic tauroctony, if it would have ever been possible, is not the goal of the present dissertation. Nonetheless, the suggestion of using a Western lens rooted in Roman tradition for inquiring into the possible interpretation of the tauroctony seems a valid starting point for future studies.

3. Not only tauroctonies: the other Mithraic subjects

3.1 Stand-alone subjects

We must start this discussion on minor Mithraic subjects by observing where these minor scenes occurred in figurative monuments. Only three of these subjects in fact are testified as a stand-alone scene. They are namely the Birth of Mithras from the rock, appearing 10 times as a stand-alone subject (**34***, **155f***, **155g***, **158c**, **164c**, **193b**, **199c**, **263**, **274**, **290**), the *Transitus Dei*, occurring only one time (**35***), and the Banquet of Mithras and Sol, with 7 occurrences (**19**, **20**, **42**, **78**, **101a**, **181**, **202e**). For this last one, it seems actually a bit inaccurate talking of a stand-alone subject. It is true that the representation of the Banquet occurs as a stand-alone subject in 6 of the listed monuments, but it is also true that it is represented on the reverse side of a relief having the tauroctony on the obverse side³²¹, whereas in the cases of the other two subjects of the Birth of Mithras and *Transitus* we recorded true stand-alone monuments in the form of statues. The stand-alone status of the banquet of Mithras and Sol could be ‘saved’ from the testimony of the frescoes of the S. Prisca Mithraeum, where the Banquet appear represented on a side wall (**202e**).

The iconographical scheme adopted in the monument representing the Birth of Mithras is quite constant³²². The god is represented in a fixed frontality, as an adolescent boy, emerging from a rock from the knees up. He is naked, except for the Phrygian hat and in one case for the cloak (**155g***). His arms are adherent to the bust whereas the forearms are outstretched holding in his right a dagger or short sword pointed upward whereas in his left a lit torch³²³. As for the supports, in 9 out of 10 cases the Birth of Mithras is represented on statues. They show usually a mid-range size, with a height of ca 60-70 cm. In one case we have a statue measuring only 30 cm in height (**274**) which can be compared to the small size of the only relief known of the subject, measuring 30x30 cm (**164c**). Statue **263** constitutes the only representation diverging from the mentioned features. It represents Mithras as a young male, but in this case, both the torchbearers are represented too. On the left Cautopates stands, cross-legged, looking at Mithras, whereas on the right stands

or moreover as the end of the astrological ‘age of *Taurus*’. For a synthesis see Mastrocinque 2017, pp. 38-40 with further references.

³²⁰ See Mastrocinque 2017, in particular §§ 38-39.

³²¹ For an explanation of the function of these two sculpted sides see the analysis in Turcan 1978.

³²² In general, for the study of the representation of the subject of the Birth of Mithras in the Roman Empire see the study by I. Neri in Neri 2000.

³²³ The only inversion with the torch in the right and the dagger in the left occurs in monument **193b**.

Cautes, looking at Mithras and touching his mouth with his right hand in a gesture of awe. Mithras on the other hand is not frontal, but he turns to look at a point up and to his right. His left hand is resting on the rock, near a dagger and a bow, whereas his right – possibly holding the lit torch - is lost.

The only known representation of the *transitus dei* as a stand-alone subject (35) consists of a statue measuring 80 cm of height showing the usual iconographic scheme, that is the god slightly bent forward dragging the bull on his shoulders by its hind legs.

The iconographic scheme of the Banquet appears more varied. As mentioned above, it appears usually as a counter-part of the tauroctony in the reverse side of cult reliefs, and only one time as a stand-alone subject on a fresco (202e). Even if the major part of the reliefs featuring this scene is only partially preserved and fresco 202e is also hardly preserved, nonetheless we can recognize some general elements of this composite scene. First of all, the center of the scene is focused on Sol (on the left) and Mithras (on the right) reclined at the banquet. The table they reclined at consists of the hide of the bull (78, 181) and is preceded by a small three-legged table (42, 181). The scene takes place either in the cave (202e) or under the branch of a tree (101a). Apart from Mithras and Sol, other characters appearing in this scene are the torchbearers (78, 101a, 181). If in the case of relief 181 the torchbearer seems to have more of a symbolic function since he does not take part actively in the scene but stands cross-legged at the margin of it, in relief 78 the two torchbearers participate actively in the banquet. One in fact offers a *rhyton* to Sol whereas the other uses a *caduceus* to start the fire from a cylindrical altar set up in front of the banquet. The dog (181) and the raven (19) are also shown beside the banquet. Other characters represented in the banquet scene are the servants who assist Mithras and Sol. They are represented as human figures with raven masks (42, 181, 202e). In these three cases, they offer a vessel or plate to the reclined gods. Apart from these general features, the only two complete representations of the banquet scene survived till today reveal two different iconographical schemes. The first is that of fresco 202e: we have Mithras and Sol reclined at the banquet inside the cave, and masked figures attending at them. This scheme can be encountered also outside of Italy, in the northern Provinces³²⁴. The second scheme, which is a unique one, consists of the banquet scene appearing on relief 78, from Fiano Romano. Here we have Mithras and Sol reclined at the banquet on the top part of the field, whereas the lower part features the two torchbearers and the cylindrical altar.

3.2 Side scenes and Added scenes: the minor Mithraic subjects

In 14 cases, the tauroctony scene is accompanied by other scenes (14, 19, 20, 40a*, 57, 86, 98, 99a, 105a*, 155e*, 164a, 175a, 198b, 204b), represented at a smaller scale at the sides of the major representation. Looking at the different arrangements of the subjects, their disposition in the monuments, and their style, we can identify 4 sub-groups of representations³²⁵.

³²⁴ See for example CIMRM 1896 or the relief in Schwertheim 1974, n. 144, pp. 188-9, t. 42.

³²⁵ We propose here a sub-classification that slightly departs from that suggested by H. Lavagne in Lavagne 1974.

First, the small reliefs **155e*** and **204b**, found respectively in the contexts of the S. Stefano Rotondo Mithraeum and the Aventine Dolichenum, can be ascribed to the tradition of the Danubian reliefs³²⁶, for the non-plastic style of their executions as well as for their general shape and layout, and the choice of subjects. Given their find-spot, it seems possible that these two small size reliefs were brought to the capital by devotees coming from the Rhine area. Both these monuments can be dated to the 3rd century CE.

The second sub-group of reliefs was also already known as a homogeneous group of monuments. These are reliefs **14**, **19**, and **20**, found in northern Italy in the area next to the border with the province of Raetia. They conform in fact to the characteristics of the Raetian reliefs³²⁷ for general layout, size, and choice of subjects. Even these three monuments can be dated to the 3rd century CE.

A third sub-group consists of the two frescoes of the Marino (**105a***) and Barberini (**175a**) Mithraea, with the addition of reliefs **86** and **99a**. In the cases of frescoes **105a*** and **175a**, the side scenes are represented on two columns of small panels framing the central tauroctony scene. They are five on each side in the **175a**, whereas four per side in **105a**, where the top fifth panel hosts the bust of Sol (left) and Luna (right). Relief **86** shows three panels on each side, whereas relief **99a**, which preserved only the top left corner of the monument, features at least three side scenes. Fresco **105a*** can be dated between 160-170 CE, and quite similar is the chronology of fresco **175a**, whereas relief **86** can be dated around 172 CE³²⁸. We possess no further elements for dating relief **99a**, but the non-plastic and linear style of the carving suggests a later date, at least in the 3rd century CE³²⁹. A partial identity in the selection of represented subjects can be noticed for these four monuments: the first three scenes are identical and follow the same order. A similar choice of subjects follows for the other scenes, as shown in the table below.

The last sub-group of monuments includes 5 reliefs where the minor subjects are represented beside the tauroctony, again at a smaller scale, but without a fixed order. They could either be one (**40a***³³⁰, **198a**), two (**57**, **164a**), or three (**98**³³¹) subjects and they are represented without solution of continuity in the same field of the tauroctony. More than side scenes, it seems correct here to define these subjects as added scenes.

As for the identification of these side and added scenes, their subjects are listed in the table below.

³²⁶ For a definition of the Danubian type reliefs see Will 1955, pp. 356-60.

³²⁷ For a definition of *réto-rhenanes* reliefs see again Will 1955, pp. 361-4 and the further considerations made in Gordon 1980. We intend nowadays with the term 'Raetian reliefs' not a category based on fixed formal features (since the choice of subjects and their reading order is not so fixed as it seemed in the past) but rather a group of reliefs found in the same geographical area sharing some choices of subjects and a general layout.

³²⁸ This precise date is given by inscription **84**, dedicated on the 25th of June 172 CE by the public treasurer *Apronianus*, the same devotee who consecrated relief **86**.

³²⁹ As observed for relief **164a**.

³³⁰ In the case of relief **40a**, the *transitus dei* is actually encased in a small square frame resting at the base of the architectural frame which encloses the tauroctony scene.

³³¹ In the case of relief **98**, apart from the three side scenes of the Dream of Saturn, *transitus dei*, and Sol knelt before Mithras, it is possible to notice other symbolic representations such as a tree with Phrygian hat hanging from its branches and a downward pointed dagger.

Table 1 – List of minor Mithraic subjects	
<i>Scenes with Mithras</i>	
Birth of Mithras from the rock	14, 57, 86, 99a, 105a, 155e, 175a
Water miracle	14, 105a, 155e, 175a
Mithras riding the bull	86, 105a
Mithras capturing the bull	155e
<i>Transitus Dei</i>	14, 19, 40a, 57, 98, 105a, 175a, 198b
Mithras harvesting	14
Mithras-Atlas	14, 20, 175a
<i>Scenes with Mithras and Sol</i>	
Sol knelt before Mithras	86, 164a
Mithras striking Sol	14, 19, 86, 105a, 175a
Mithras crowning Sol	98
Mithras and Sol shaking hands	14, 20
Mithras and Sol at the altar	105a, 164a, 175a
Mithras and Sol at the banquet	14, 175a
Mithras on Sol's chariot	14, 175a
<i>Scenes without Mithras</i>	
Jupiter fighting the Giants	14, 20, 86, 99a, 105a, 175a
The dream of Saturn	14, 20, 86, 98, 99a, 105a, 175a
Saturn points his staff to a rock	20
The Bull	14
The bull in the shed	155e
The bull on the ship	155e

For the explanation and interpretation of these Mithraic subjects, we refer to the most recent and complete work on Mithraic imagery, that is *The mysteries of Mithras: a different account* by A. Mastrocinque³³². We will add here some observations on the iconographical schemes of the most represented scenes.

Starting from the subject of the Birth of Mithras from the rock, with respect to the scheme reported for the statuary groups, the only addition in reliefs and fresco representation of the same subject is the appearance two times (**86, 175a**) of the two torchbearers as testimonies of the birth of Mithras from the rock³³³. Continuing with the scenes involving Mithras, the *transitus* show the same scheme already recorded in statue **35**. As for the scene of the banquet, we can notice in relief **14** and fresco **175a** new variations on the subject. In relief **14** the banquet shows a semi-circular shape, and three (or possibly four) people are reclined at the table. The small three-legged stool is placed in front of the *mensa* as already seen in the reliefs mentioned above. In fresco **175a** the banquet shows a similar semi-circular shape, and the three-legged table is in the usual place, but the participants to the feast are a lot more than elsewhere recorded. At least seven people (maybe eight) are in fact reclined at the banquet, with another one, cloaked, looking at the scene on the extreme left of the picture.

³³² See Mastrocinque 2017, chapters 3 to 5.

³³³ In the case of relief **86** they both hold their hands on their mouths in a gesture of awe, recalling the same gesture of monument **263**.

Again on the scenes involving Mithras and Sol, we must notice that whereas the subjects of Mithras on Sol's chariot and of Mithras and Sol shaking hands or sacrificing at the altar are not so problematic to recognize (the scheme is quite simple and constant), more intricate is the question regarding the identification and interpretation of the scenes where Sol kneels in front of Mithras. In this case, we can recognize at least three different scenarios. The first one (**14, 19**³³⁴, **86, 105a***, **175a**) features Sol (on the right) knelt before Mithras (on the left): in this case, Mithras raises his right hand in the air, holding an unidentified object³³⁵. His gesture seems directed to strike a blow at the knelt Sol, who stretches his hands toward the Persian god in a pleading gesture. In the second case (**98**) we can recognize the same two characters in the same stance, but this time Mithras does not raise violently his right. He instead places his left gently on Sol's head, crowning him with the radiated diadem. In his right, Mithras holds another object, possibly an empty vessel. Sol is knelt, looking at the ground. He holds his left hand down whereas he seems to raise his right holding a dagger toward Mithras, not in a menacing gesture but as an offering. The last case (**86, 164a**) features the same two characters of Mithras and Sol, again in a similar standing/kneeling stance, but this time their reciprocal intention is even less clear. In relief **86** in fact Sol is on the left, knelt but on the way of raising up. He raises a dagger pointed downward toward Mithras, whereas the god offers him an unidentified small object, possibly a small knife, pointed upward. In relief **164a** instead, we have Mithras, on the left, holding a bundle of lightning bolts in his right while placing his left on Sol's head. His gesture is not menacing. Sol on the other hand looks completely subdued to the will of the Persian character. What to make of these similar yet different representations? We should notice that in the cases of the first and second scenarios as well as in relief **86**, that are Mithras striking Sol and Mithras crowning Sol, we have - without any doubt - the representation of a sacred narrative that fits with the rest of the side scenes, even if we cannot fully understand its meaning³³⁶. The kneeling scene appearing on relief **164a** resembles the others for the general scheme, but the bundle of lightning bolts held by Mithras and the absence of the crown leave us with more doubts than certainties when coming to the understanding of the meaning of the scene. A last observation must be suggested when dealing with this particular scheme: the submission/coronation of Sol could have recalled the devotees the scheme of some ritual of initiation, as it seems possible to suggest from the consonance of the above-mentioned scheme and the kneeling scenes visible on the benches of the Capuan sanctuary (see **113d** and **113f**).

New are the scenes of Jupiter fighting the Giants and of the Dream of Saturn: both show a constant scheme. In the first case, we have Jupiter, on the left, bearded, raising his arm to strike the Giant(s) at his feet with a bundle of lightning bolts. The

³³⁴ In the case of relief **19**, quite curiously the knelt figure wears a Phrygian hat, and should consequently be identified with Mithras, whereas the standing figure is bearded, and could be identified with Jupiter or Saturn. Similarly, in relief **20**, the two figures shaking hands seems identifiable with Sol and Jupiter or Saturn.

³³⁵ The best-preserved images are that from the Marino (**105a**) and Barberini (**175a**) Mithraea. In the first one, we can recognize Mithras holding an object of medium size, slightly larger than his head, similar to a short oar, of bright yellow color. In the case of the Barberini fresco instead, the object is quite smaller, and brown in color. Different identifications have been advanced of this object in the decades: an oar, a bull hindquarter, a club, but none really made sense of the scene.

³³⁶ See Mastrocinque 2017 §44 and 49 for a recent re-interpretation of this scene.

Giant(s) are represented on the right and characterized by snake feet. In the case of the Dream of Saturn, we have the deity reclined on his left elbow, wrapped in a cloak that usually wraps also his head. He sometimes holds a sickle in his right hand (**86, 175a**).

4. The representations of the Mithraic torchbearers

Torchbearers in Mithraic images³³⁷ are virtually always included in the tauroctony scene on reliefs and frescoes, whereas in the case of statuary groups they are usually not represented³³⁸. They rarely appear also in the Birth of Mithras from the rock, as testimonies to the event (**86, 175a, 263**), and in the scene of the Banquet between Mithras and Sol (**78, 101a, 181**). They nonetheless appear as stand-alone subjects, usually on statues, but seldom also on reliefs (**251, 281**), and once also on mosaic (**136d**) and fresco (**105b***). In the case of statuary representations of the torchbearers, we can have statues of small dimension, ca. 40 cm in height, destined to small Mithraea³³⁹, or medium³⁴⁰ (between 65 and 90 cm) and large statues³⁴¹ (more than 100 cm) destined to larger sanctuaries.

They are usually represented as young men, dressed in eastern attire such as Mithras, that means with Phrygian hat, cloak, long-sleeved tunic, long trousers and closed shoes. These two characters are gods³⁴², twin-brothers³⁴³, and they were present on earth possibly before Mithras³⁴⁴. Their typical stance can be either cross-legged or standing. We can observe a general preference for the disposition of Cautopates on the left of the tauroctony scene and Cautes on right in figurative monuments from Northern Italy, whereas a preference for placing Cautes on the left and Cautopates on the right in central Italy, Ostia and Rome. They are generally represented on a slightly smaller scale than the main characters of the tauroctony.

What really marks their representation are the torches they hold: Cautes holds in fact a lit torch pointed up, to the sky, whereas Cautopates a lit torch pointed down, at the ground. This difference in the direction of the torches creates a chiasm that characterizes their reciprocal positioning and is matched also by other attributes they can be given. The interpretation of the meaning of the two torchbearers has been in fact always linked with an opposition, such as sunrise and sunset, or the increasing of light in spring and the diminution of light in autumn, or again heat and cold, life and death³⁴⁵, where Mithras is the central point of balance, the middle term of the opposition. This opposition was immediately marked in fresco

³³⁷ For a synthesis on the distribution of the torchbearers in Mithraic representations see the paper by J.R. Hinnels in Hinnels 1975.

³³⁸ The only exception is represented by monuments **88** and **265**.

³³⁹ For example, the two statues **162b** and **162c** found in the Mithraeum of via G. Lanza, or the two statues **138c** and **138d** belonging to the earliest phase of the Palazzo Imperiale Mithraeum in Ostia.

³⁴⁰ See for example monuments **155h*** from the S. Stefano Rotondo Mithraeum.

³⁴¹ As for instance statue **202h** from the S. Prisca Mithraeum.

³⁴² As evident from the epigraphical sources who address them as gods. See for instance inscriptions **29, 39, 155i*, 155j*, 191**.

³⁴³ As inferable from the verse found in the S. Prisca Mithraeum which says '*geminos aluisti nectare fratres*' (**202g**) and from monument **148** from Ostia which reported the restoration of the *fratres*, possibly meaning a statue of the torchbearers.

³⁴⁴ As inferred from their presence in the scene of the Birth of Mithras from the rock.

³⁴⁵ A magisterial explanation of these oppositions can be found in Gordon 1976, see in particular pp. 126-130.

representations - and also in some reliefs – with the use of different colors. They were usually employed brighter colors for Cautes and darker ones for Cautopates³⁴⁶.

The attributes which we can sometimes see associated with them are consequentially expressions of one or more of these oppositions. We recorded in fact on reliefs and also on statues, the association of Cautes with a rooster (**136d**, **150**, **155c**, **193c**, **196**, **202h**, **232**, **278**) and of Cautopates with an owl (**150**, **155c**, **162c**) symbolizing the opposition of sunrise and sunset. On the astronomical opposition between spring and autumn, we can have sometimes Cautes associated with the head of a bull (**157**, **286**), and Cautopates with a scorpion (**157**, **286**), or with a dog (**196**). The first pair of symbols scorpion-bull stands for the constellation of Scorpio and Taurus which were associated with the seasons of autumn and spring³⁴⁷. Similarly connected with the opposition of spring and autumn are also the attributes of the tree bearing fruits appearing beside Cautes (**157**, **286**), and the one without fruit beside Cautopates (**157**, **286**). Adding on this ‘seasonal’ characterization, only once we can see Cautopates represented with a bundle of ears and a sickle beside his feet (**232**), symbolizing the moment of the harvest. In one case, they are both represented holding, besides the torches, a bow (**113a**).

5. The representations of the Mithraic Aiones

21 are the representations of Mithraic Aiones coming from Italy, almost 40% of all of the records of the entire Roman Empire³⁴⁸. Of those, only 3 picture the human-headed Aion whereas the others depict the lion-headed deity.

The human-headed Aion appears in two reliefs. The first one (**287**) is currently preserved in Modena, but its context of origin is unfortunately unknown. This relief features in the center the human-headed deity, encircled in four spires by a snake, with the head of three animals (goat, lion, and ram) appearing on his chest. On top of his head and under his hoof-shaped feet, the fragments of a flaming egg enclose the figure. The zodiacal band delimitates an oval field around the deity. This representation mixes together Mithraic features (the human-headed Aion himself) with Gnostic elements³⁴⁹ (the flaming egg, the hoof-shaped feet, the zodiacal belt). Other two Aiones were represented on top of the so-called Ottaviano Zeno relief, that is monument **157**. Unfortunately, the top part of the relief is not preserved as of today, but it nonetheless survives in drawings and ancient descriptions. From the drawings, it seems that the two represented Aiones had both human heads, with the only difference that the left one does not have wings whereas the right one has

³⁴⁶ See for instance the yellow and pink garments of Cautes vs. the blue garments of Cautopates in the Marino Mithraeum (**105a***, **105b***), the yellow vs. grey garments they show in the S. Maria Capua Vetere Mithraeum (**113a**), and the green vs. brown garments in frescoes **174a** and **175a**.

³⁴⁷ In the case of relief **184**, the attributes are exchanged: we can recognize in fact a scorpion beside Cautes’ feet, and a small bull beside Cautopates’. Peculiar is also the attribute appearing in relief **211**: we find in fact a crowing rooster near Cautopates and a scorpion near Cautes. But this is not the single peculiarity shown on this relief (see catalog).

³⁴⁸ For a complete catalog of the Mithraic Aiones in the Roman Empire see Bortolin 2012.

³⁴⁹ As a parallel we must mention the Aion incised on the golden *philakterion* found in Ciciliano, see monument **N15**.

wings and a long scepter³⁵⁰, but a written source testified the contrary, that is that both had lion heads³⁵¹.

As for the lion-headed Aion, it appears 10 times on statues (**106, 146b, 173a, 192b, 206a, 241, 242, 246, 247, 289**), 3 on reliefs (**146c, 173b, 240**), 1 time as a bronze handle (**262**), 2 times on fresco³⁵² (**113c, 175a**), and 2 times it was mentioned in inscriptions³⁵³ (**127, 167**). The deity is always represented as a male figure with a lion head, generally with an open mouth. His body, naked or more rarely wrapped in a thin linen (**106, 173b, 247, 289**), is encircled in the spires of a snake³⁵⁴ which rests his head on top of the lion head. He shows one (**106**) or more commonly two pairs of wings (**146b, 146c, 173a, 173b, 240, 246, 289**) attached on his back. He holds his arms crossed on the chest and generally he holds in his hands a key and a long scepter (**146b, 175a, 206a, 240, 289**), or two keys (**146c, 173a, 241, 247**), or in one case two torches (**173b**).

This basic scheme is frequently accompanied by further symbols and attributes which add to the powers and significance of the god. In one case zodiacal signs are represented on his body (**242**) whereas in another case symbols of the seasons are represented on its wings (**146b**). The deity is sometimes depicted standing on a half globe (**173a, 175a, 240, 241**³⁵⁵, **247, 289**) where astrological signs can be depicted (**240, 241, 289**). Two times a bundle of lightning bolts is represented on the chest of the deity (**146b, 241**) and one time it is also depicted on one of his knees together with a small human bust (**289**).

Moreover, in statue **146b**, several other objects are represented beside the feet of the deity: on the left pincers and hammer, while on the right a cock, a pinecone and the *caduceus*. Particular is also relief **146b**, where we can see the snake encircling the god resting its head not on top of the lion head, but below the deity, at a crater.

A quite different scheme is recognizable in relief **173b**. In this case, the deity stands, holding in his hands two lit torches. His mouth is open, and he exhales a trail of fire which is directed to a small cylindrical altar standing beside his feet. This fiery breath lights up the altar. Moreover, snakes swarm on his spread wings.

Another representation of the god departing from the usual scheme described above can be found in monument **106**. In this case, the deity with lion-head is not encircled by the snake, even if snakes are represented on his left and right climbing up and down supports that frame the figure. The deity has only one pair of wings, and an open eye is represented in the center of his chest. A lion head sprouts from the centre of his belly and another one from each knee. Beside his right foot a hydra and a lion-head rest, while beside his left one a three-headed Cerberus (ram head-lion head-dog head) sits.

6. The representations of Mithraic grades and devotees

³⁵⁰ See for example the drawings in Vermaseren 1978, pl. XI-XVII.

³⁵¹ See Mastrocinque 2017, § 52, note 9.

³⁵² The representation of an Aion was reported by A. Minto in his first report on the S. Maria Capua Vetere Mithraeum (Minto 1924, p. 366), but it was detected by M.J. Vermaseren 30 years later, nor it is visible today (see Sirano 2016). See **113c**.

³⁵³ It is the case of two bases, **127** from Ostia and **167** from Rome, which supported statues dedicated to *Arimanius*, that we know from other sources can be identified with the Mithraic Aion (see chapter 1, paragraph 4.5).

³⁵⁴ Apart from monument **106**.

³⁵⁵ In this case, the Aion also shows claw feet instead of the usual human feet.

Other subjects found in Mithraea consist in the representations of the Mithraic grades and of the linked tutelary planets. The grades can be either appear as symbolic representations, as in the famous case of the mosaic floor in the Mithraeum of *Felicissimus* (144a), or as human figures bearing attributes distinctive of their grade, as it appears in the frescoes depicted on the sidewalls of the Mitreo delle Pareti Dipinte (139a) and in the S. Prisca Mithraeum (202d, 202f). In 139a, some traces are preserved on the fresco depiction running on the right side of the Mithraeum that can be dated in the late 2nd century CE. Here, in the left part of the wall, G. Becatti suggested identifying the three preserved figures with an *heliodromus*, represented as a young man with a cloak, running to the left, holding with both hands a long torch. Moreover, he recognized the figure of a *miles*, a young man holding a long spike, and of a *nymphus*, represented as a young man, wearing a small crown and a long vest. On the right part of the fresco, other four male figures are represented, one of them holding in his right a lit torch. G. Becatti suggested identifying these characters with devotees with the grade of *leo*. The identifications of the characters represented in the S. Prisca Mithraeum rest on more solid ground, being paired with written texts naming them with their precise grade. On the right wall, from the left to the right, we can recognize the procession of the seven Mithraic grades followed by the procession of devotees with the grade of *leo* (202d), dated in the second phase of the sanctuary that means in the first quarter of the 3rd century CE. The seven characters representing the Mithraic grades are surely identified thanks to the written texts that accompany the representation like captions. Their specific attributes are not always preserved. For the *pater*, we can recognize he is sitting on a throne, whereas the *heliodromus* holds a blue sphere and wears a radiated crown. Moreover, the *miles* holds a small military bag whereas the *nymphus* wears a veil over his head and holds in his hand a small object, possibly a lit lamp. The devotees with the grade of *leo* represented on the right as well as the ones represented on the left wall (202e) are recognized by the written texts that hail to them as *leones*. They parade, bringing in their hands gifts and sacrifices. It seems possible to recognize a devotee bringing offerings also in a faded fresco reported in the Barberini Mithraeum (175c).

The tutelary planets linked with the initiatory grades could be represented in Mithraea too, usually on the front side of the lateral benches, as recognized in the Spoleto Mithraeum (53a) and in the two Ostian Mithraea *Sette Sfere* (136b) and *Sette Porte* (142c). Even in the case of the representation of the tutelary planets, the deities are represented as human figures bearing typical attributes.

We recorded also other cases in which devotees were depicted in Mithraea. They are namely the famous frescoes depicted on the front of the benches of the S. Maria Capua Vetere Mithraeum (113e, 113f). They represent 13 scenes – even if only 8 of them are still readable – depicting trials which can be interpreted as initiatory rituals. The main characters involved are usually three³⁵⁶. The first one appears in all the preserved scenes: he is a male figure, naked, his body painted with reddish-brown color. He appears to endure a series of trials by the hands of the other two figures. The second character, appearing in all of the preserved scenes, is dressed in a dark-red tunic and short red cloak; he wears also a red helmet or a red Phrygian

³⁵⁶ For a synthesis of these scenes, see Gordon 2009 and catalog 113e and 113f.

hat. He is represented in front of the naked character, and he is the one who administers the trials. The third character appears in six of the preserved scenes. He is dressed in white tunic and short cloak with red stripes. He appears in several scenes restraining the naked character, as a helper of the person administering the trials. The interpretation of these scenes did not miss to raise questions concerning the nature of the represented acts and their subjects. If M. Vermaseren suggested to read them as the representation of the actual initiation of a devotee into a grade³⁵⁷, other scholars more cautiously suggested to recognize in these images the suggestion of the trials the devotees could have been subjected to and guard against a comprehensive interpretation of these images due to the lack of contextual information³⁵⁸.

It seems possible to read an iconographical scheme similar to the Capuan scenes also in fresco **175b** preserved in the Barberini Mithraeum (with a standing mystagogus and a knelt devotee) and in the figure depicted in a secondary room of the S. Clemente Mithraeum (**158f**, in this case only the figure of the mystagogus seems recognizable).

Other symbolic representations can be found in Mithraea: the Ostian sanctuaries in particular are rich in mosaic representations of animals and other characters and objects (**136a**, **136c**, **140a**, **141a**, **142b**, **142a**) whose significance for the cult is sometimes not easy to grasp. Besides the Ostian sanctuaries, we must also mention as subjects appearing in Mithraea the zodiac representation made with stucco (**112b***) depicted on the ceiling of the Ponza Mithraeum and the relief with Amor and Psyche (**113d**) attached on the right wall of the S. Maria Capua Vetere Mithraeum.

In addition to the images listed in the paragraphs above, in Mithraea we can find also a few representations of either Sol (**158e**, **164d**, **186**, **202i**, **202j**) or Luna (**113b**) or of both of them together (**199g**). In the case of fresco **113b**, Luna appears on the wall opposite the tauroctony, constituting a counter-altar to this main image of the cult. In the other cases instead, Sol is represented with small busts or reliefs, possibly decorating secondary niches within the sanctuaries.

³⁵⁷ See Vermaseren 1971, pp. 24-48.

³⁵⁸ See for example Gordon 2009, p. 297. For a critical approach to the images of initiations into the cult of Mithras see also Belayche 2021.

Chapter 5

Where was Mithras worshipped? Analyzing Mithraic sanctuaries

1. Literary sources on Mithraea and previous studies

1.1 Models for the Mithraeum: a brief literature overview

The places where Mithraic devotees met, known in the literature as Mithraea, has always been a secondary focus point in Mithraic studies and only from the 1990s' they began to become an autonomous subject of study. F. Cumont addressed the matter of Mithraic temples in his TMMM1, suggesting a model for the layout of the Mithraeum based on the knowledge and study of the 15 temples discovered at his time³⁵⁹. He suggested the existence of a general layout consisting of a portico which mediated from the street to the sacred space, a *pronaos* functioning as an antechamber, an *apparatorium* for utility purposes like preserving cult objects and tools, and finally the *crypta*, which means the main cult room. The main cult room was usually subterranean and did not have a fixed orientation. It was usually covered by a vault and the side walls could be decorated in imitation of a natural cave. The space of the main cult room was characterized by a long central corridor and two benches which were accessed by small steps and showed a ledge on their front. These benches were too tilted to be comfortable to sit on, yet they also were too narrow to be comfortable for dining; F. Cumont concluded that they were meant for the devotees to lay down in specific moments of the ceremonies there performed. Bases for statues were placed in the main cult room, and the extreme part of the central aisle on the back of the room was occupied by the main cult image, that is the tauroctony. This could be placed on a simple base, or in a niche, or again in an apse. The Belgian scholar concluded his model of the Mithraeum observing that all these temples were of small dimension, possibly as a consequence of the scarce economic possibility of the groups of devotees who founded them. He admitted also the possibility of the existence of domestic Mithraea, which means Mithraic temples located within private houses. Lastly, he focused on the furniture and small finds found within Mithraic sanctuaries.

In the following century, few elements were added to this Cumontian model by scholars. Merkelbach's study³⁶⁰ added some specifications on the small size of Mithraea, which ranged from 8/10 m in width to 15/20 m in length, and that could host between 30 and 50 devotees. He also suggested that secondary rooms were added to the temple when the community grew up, and he observed that Mithraea were usually reached through a maze of narrow streets and passages. He also added that the most common orientation for Mithraea was to the East, and that the access to the main cult room was usually lateral, to preserve the secrecy of the mystery, and that the side benches were used for dining. He concluded his overview with a

³⁵⁹ See TMMM1, pp. 54-70.

³⁶⁰ See Merkelbach 1984, chapter 4.

study on the artificial devices used for bringing light to the main cult room. M. Clauss³⁶¹ developed the previous generalization with the observation of the great idiosyncratic variability that characterized Mithraea. He acknowledged the general layout already pointed out by the mainstream of Mithraic studies as valid, but he underlined that internal features varied from one area to the other, corresponding to the different customs of Mithraic communities spread all over the Empire. Times were apt for Mithraic architecture to become an independent branch of research in Mithraic studies.

In 1990, in his treatise *The Social Origins of Christian Architecture*, M. White dedicated a chapter to the architectural analysis of Mithraea as an example of the architecture employed by a Roman private cult characterized by a strong adaptive capability³⁶². He recorded³⁶³ that besides the constant tripartition of the main cult room (meaning central aisle and side benches), yet a great variety of adaptive measures were employed by Mithraic devotees when building their sanctuaries. Mithraea were usually installed in already existing buildings, they had no evident external identification markers, and also the internal ones were feeble. He first brought to the attention of the public that Mithraic sanctuaries must be considered also in their architectural development, being in several cases testified different architectural phases in the same Mithraeum. He also warned against considering the Mithraic architecture as the expression of humble devotees, but rather that of a middle urban class, where the role of wealthy patrons in the founding and furnishing of Mithraea was essential. In the next decade, White further developed his analysis of Ostian Mithraea³⁶⁴. He contextualized these architectures within the urban layout and elaborated a first analysis of the spatial organization of Mithraea and of their artistic features. He revised the chronological definition of the Ostian sanctuaries and approached spatial questions³⁶⁵ such as: how many devotees could fit in the sanctuary? How were Mithraea accessed? What artistic products were displayed in the temples?

A spatial approach to the Mithraea of Rome was used a few years later by J. Bjørnebye³⁶⁶, who focused his study on the late Antique sanctuaries of the capital. The goal this time was not only descriptive, but furthermore, Bjørnebye elaborated a model for explaining the differences he recognized in the 4th-century Mithraea of Rome. Based on relative size and pattern of access, he identified two types of Mithraea. First, the neighborhood Mithraeum: this was small in size and located in neighborhoods hidden within the urban block. In Bjørnebye's model, these small sanctuaries were meant to be attended by stable groups of devotees, small groups connected by proximity links for instance Mithraists living in the same or nearby blocks. The second type is the semi-public Mithraeum: this was a large sanctuary, located in more accessible spaces such as public baths and busy streets. These larger Mithraea were meant to be attended by more heterogeneous groups of devotees,

³⁶¹ See Clauss 1990, chapter 4.

³⁶² See White 1990, pp. 47-59.

³⁶³ Working on the 58 Mithraea known in his time, 25 of which were located in Italy. Of those, 14 were located in Ostia and 7 in Rome.

³⁶⁴ For the following analysis see White 2012.

³⁶⁵ A strong input to the spatial analysis of the urban layout of Ostia was given in 2011 by the publication of H. Stöger with the title *Rethinking Ostia: a spatial enquiry into the urban society of Rome's imperial port-town*.

³⁶⁶ See Bjørnebye 2015a and Bjørnebye 2015b.

that is by people coming and going from Rome. This model was recently tested by A. Danilova on Ostian Mithraea³⁶⁷, not without some difficulties: the clear differentiation in size and locational choices recognized in 4th-century Rome is not so evident in Ostia, where temples of small to medium size and local orientation are prevalent.

These sparse papers and contributions began to attract attention to the problem of the spatial analysis of Mithraic contexts. If Ostian sanctuaries were addressed by M. White, the temples of Rome as well as Mithraea from the rest of Italy still need to be analyzed with a specific spatial lens. A first spatial analysis of Italian Mithraea will be developed in the following chapter, with the double goal of describing the extant evidence and of looking for an alternative to Bjørnebye's model for 2nd and 3rd century Mithraea.

1.2 Literary and Epigraphical sources: the *Spelaeum* and its furniture

As seen in the first chapter, ancient literary sources on the mysteries of Mithras are generally quite scarce. For what concerns the place where Mithraic devotees met, we can find in written accounts a few traces as well. Different sources mention the cave as the place where Mithras accomplished his deed³⁶⁸, and Porphyry reported the story that Zoroaster was believed to have been the first to consecrate a cave to Mithras. This cave was rich with springs and plants, and it was made in the image of the world, in a manner that the symmetry of the elements placed in the cave reflected the symmetry of the cosmos. After Zoroaster, Mithraic devotees started the custom of consecrating caves to their god, either natural or artificial³⁶⁹. The places where Mithraic devotees met was referred to in contemporary written reports with the metaphor of the 'cave', that is *spelaeum*³⁷⁰, *spelunca*³⁷¹, or *specus*³⁷² in Latin, and σπήλαιον in Greek³⁷³. Three times these terms were accompanied by the insistence on the darkness typical of Mithraic meeting places³⁷⁴. A single mention is made in written sources about a particular feature sometimes found in Mithraea. This is the mention, again in Porphyry³⁷⁵, of the existence of water vessels in the vice of natural springs in Mithraic sanctuaries.

³⁶⁷ See Danilova 2020.

³⁶⁸ Stat. *Theb.* I 719-720.

³⁶⁹ Porph. *De antro* 5-6. Another passage again from Porphyry (Porph. *De antro* 24-25) constitutes the basis of the most influential explanation of the Mithraeum as micro-cosmos seen in Beck 2006.

³⁷⁰ Tert. *De cor.* 15; Paul. Nol. *Carm.* 22, 113-127.

³⁷¹ Firm. Mat. *De err. prof. rel.* V 1-2.

³⁷² Hieron. *Adv. Iov.* I 7; *Epist. 107 Ad Laetam* 2.

³⁷³ Iust. *Dial. C. Tryph.* 70, 1; 78, 6; Porph. *De antro* 20.

³⁷⁴ In the passage by Tertullian (see note above) the *spelaeum* is called *castrum tenebrarum*, that means 'headquarters of the darkness', whereas in Paulinus of Nola (see note above) the author insists on the pagans that hid the Sun star in dark caves (*sub atra spelea ... tenebris*). Firmicus Maternus also speaks of the *obscuro squalore tenebrarum* that means 'in the black squalor of darkness'. In this last case the image is used by the author is also functional to the contraposition to the true light of the divine (Christian) Grace mentioned few words afterwards in the text.

³⁷⁵ Porph. *De antro* 17-18.

Some more information comes from Mithraic epigraphic sources. Regarding the name of the meeting place³⁷⁶, in Italy, the most used term was *spelaeum*, occurring 7 times (9, 32, 56, 68, 82, 85, 210), and one time as *templum et spelaeum* (131b). More rarely it was referred to as *antrum* (180, 183f) and only once as *leonteum* (55). The term *leonteum* represents an unprecedented in Latin epigraphy³⁷⁷. Some scholars suggested identifying this place with a room in the Mithraeum specifically destined to the meetings of devotees with the grade of *leo*, or with a niche containing the image of the lion-headed Aion, or possibly even with a specialized building reserved to the *leones*³⁷⁸. These hypotheses are nonetheless based on sole conjecture. A closer inspection of inscription 55* reveals in fact that the devotees consecrating the *leonteum* put together a large sum of money, too huge to be destined only to a niche, and that they did not mention any other sacred building they added the *leonteum* to. As for the hypothesis of the building reserved to the *leones*, archaeological testimonies of this kind of structure lacks too, and to admit this reading we should be forced to admit the existence of a building not yet testified by material remains. Moreover, we must notice that in the S. Prisca Mithraeum the sidewalls of the main cult room show frescoes with the procession of the Mithraic grades and the devotees with the grade of *leo* (202e). Any trace of partitioning between the devotees with the grade of *leo* and the other devotees lacks in this sanctuary, which was nonetheless a quite large one and, if a division was needed, devotees could have had surely the possibility of setting it up. That the *leones* constituted the most recorded Mithraic grade is also testified by epigraphic evidence³⁷⁹. Given these facts, we are more inclined to consider the term *leonteum* in the precise case of inscription 55* as a synonym of the word *spelaeum*.

The more generic terms of *sacrarium* (182, 198d), *crypta* (146d), and one time also *aedes cum pronao* (137a) are also testified with reference to Mithraea. The Mithraeum could also appear generically as *hic locus* (138c, 138d, 138e, 155i*, 155j*, 182, 193e): in these cases, the Mithraic value is inferred from other elements of the text.

From this brief overview, it emerges that the most used term in antiquity to refer to the Mithraeum was *spelaeum* or more rarely *antrum* and *leonteum*, which were words specific to Mithraic places of worship. *Leonteum* is properly unprecedented, whereas *spelaeum* and *antrum* are used metaphorically and have a specific Mithraic connotation. Other terms could have been employed (*sacrarium*, *templum*, *aedes*, *crypta*), but their intrinsic meaning was in these cases more general, and their Mithraic significance can only be understood when paired with other contextual elements.

Epigraphic texts inform us also of other architectural features found in Mithraic sanctuaries. A number of inscriptions mentioning the building or restoration of Mithraea state the setting up of various elements of furniture as well. We can have the generic mention of furniture (*cum omni apparatu* 32, *cetero cultu* 55*, *ceteris*

³⁷⁶ We must remember that the term Mithraeum is a modern invention: it became the usual word used to indicate Mithraic relief - and for extension also sacred places - in the German literature of the late 19th century (See TMMM1, p. 58, note 1).

³⁷⁷ It appears only one other time as $\lambda\epsilon\omicron\nu\tau(\epsilon)\acute{\iota}\omicron\upsilon$ in a 4th-century Greek papyrus from Hermupolis. See Brashear 1992, pp. 27-8.

³⁷⁸ For a synthesis of the different meanings attributed to the *leonteum* see Rubio Rivera 1996.

³⁷⁹ See chapter 3, and see also the comment in Mastrocinque 2017, § 4.

68, *omnibus ornamentis* 133a, *omni cultu* 137a), or the more specific mention of altars (68) and statues (55*, 68, 182). The explicit mention³⁸⁰ of the dedication of statues to the god appears other 8 times (51b, 127, 128, 133a, 137a, 146a, 155f*, 198b) as well as other 7 are the dedications of altars (126c, 137b) and bases (175g, 193d, 227, 252, 257). The Mithraea of Ostia revealed us also other two features found in Mithraic sanctuaries: the *thronus* (128, 139e, 133a) and the *praesepia* (133a). It seems possible to identify the first one with the complex structure supporting the main cult image, located in the back of the main cult room, whereas the second term refers surely to the side benches³⁸¹. A particular structure consecrated in an unknown Mithraeum in Rome is referred to as *aedicula cum columnis*, and can be translated as a ‘niche framed by columns’ (248). Again from two unknown Mithraea from Rome we have the mention of the consecration of a *mensa* (256) and *paremboli et hypobasi* (184).

2. Mithraic topography: locational choices of Mithraic sanctuaries

The Mithraic sanctuaries currently known from archaeological sources in Italy are 62. 16 of those survive thanks to epigraphic evidence, which means we have inscriptions transmitting information about their foundation (32, 55*, 68, 82, 180, 182, 183, 210, 248) or restoration (9, 56*, 85, 96), or lists of devotees (51, 153, 205). Moreover, in 5 cases (99, 101, 146, 164, 173) we are left with the monuments constituting the cult furniture, but the exact findspot of those or any architectural traces of the sanctuary is currently forgotten or untraceable. In the end, Mithraea testified to by proper architectural traces are 41. 14 Mithraea are located in Rome, 15 in Ostia, and the other 12 are located in the rest of Italy.

2.1. Did Mithraic sanctuaries had a rural or urban location?

From the analysis of these 41 Mithraea, it emerges that Mithraism in Italy should be regarded primarily as an urban phenomenon. Only 6 of these sanctuaries were located outside the city walls. It must be underlined that in none of these cases the place chosen for their location was really secluded nor far away from nearby residential areas. The Marino (105*) and Spoleto (53) Mithraea were located in rooms belonging to extra-urban villas. If the Spoleto villa lies only 4 km from the city walls, the Marino Mithraeum was located less than 1 km from the northern bank of Alban Lake, in a rich landscape consisting of large villas, small farms, peperino quarries, and also military settlements³⁸². The Portus Pisanus (60*) Mithraeum was located in an area where facilities of one of the harbors constellating the *Sinus Pisanus*, possibly the settlement of *Portus Pisanus* itself, were found³⁸³. The Duino Mithraeum (40*) was located also in a coastal area, on the slope of a hill overlooking a small harbor of the *Lacus Timavi*. The human landscape in Roman

³⁸⁰ We mean the cases where the word *ara* or *signum* or *basis* is explicitly mentioned in the inscription, in contrast with the other cases where the consecration to the god does not mention explicitly the monument it should be referred to.

³⁸¹ For an explanation of this peculiar term see Mastrocinque 2018, part. pp. 422-3.

³⁸² For an account of the landscape of Albano Laziale in the 3rd century CE see Aglietti 2017.

³⁸³ For the area see Kaniewski *et alii* 2018, whereas for the archaeological excavations of the site see Ducci *et alii* 2011.

times was here characterized by maritime villas, the nearby limestone quarries of Aurisina, and the military settlement of *Castellum Pucinum*³⁸⁴. The small Ponza Mithraeum (**112**) was not located in a major city, but on a small island in the Gulf of Gaeta. Lastly, Mithraeum **69*** was located on the outskirts of the Roman settlement of *Visentium*/Bisenzio, on a road overlooking the western bank of Bolsena Lake³⁸⁵.

Another interesting fact must be noticed concerning these extra-urban Mithraea. Sanctuaries **40***, **69*** and **112** constitute the only three examples in Italy of Mithraea built with the exploitation of natural caves. The Duino Mithraeum (**40***) for instance was located in a natural cave, adapted in a previous constructive phase to be used possibly as a storage room³⁸⁶. When Mithraic devotees transformed it into a sanctuary, they simply added the cult images and specific furniture. The case of the Ponza Mithraeum (**112**) could be similar, but unfortunately, no architectural traces of the previous phase were preserved, nor of the destination of the building which it belonged to. The *Visentium* Mithraeum (**69***) was built carving the side benches and part of the furniture in the natural rock of the cave and constitutes thus the only proper cave sanctuary found in Italy. Unfortunately, the absence of scientific excavations on the site does not allow us to understand its general context or its chronology. Lastly, the Marino Mithraeum (**105***) was located in a room carved in the natural bedrock and previously used as a water cistern.

2.2 Which buildings were Mithraic sanctuaries located in?

When Mithraea were set up within the cities, locational choices were quite varied. Of the 35 preserved urban architectures, 7 did not preserve any information about the previous destination of the building or rooms the Mithraic sanctuaries were located in (**113**, **122***, **133**, **159**, **169***, **175**, **193**). For the other 29, we have various options. 11 Mithraea were located in rooms that had - in a previous phase - housing destination (**1***, **71***, **126**, **130**, **136**, **139**, **156***, **158**, **162**, **174**, **202**). With the Mithraic settlement, the rooms taken by the devotees received a new religious purpose, and in some cases, the entire building complex was interested by a general change of destination³⁸⁷. But what rooms were chosen for the placement of the Mithraeum? Even in this case, the answer is quite diverse. In 4 Mithraea of Rome, we recorded *cryptoportici* adapted to become cult rooms (**158**, **174**, **202**). In the case of **158**, it is sure that the Mithraic settlement meant the end of the communications with the housing unit the *cryptoporticus* previously belonged to³⁸⁸, as it seems also the case of **202**³⁸⁹. Even in Capua, we recorded a *cryptoporticus* adapted to become a Mithraeum (**113**), but unfortunately in this case we do not possess enough data to understand the previous destination of the building it belonged to. Another common occurrence in Rome is that of subterranean service

³⁸⁴ The exact location of this military settlement is still unknown. For the maritime landscape of the *Lacus Timavi* see Auriemma *et alii* 2008.

³⁸⁵ For an overview of the area, see the recent synthesis by Pellegrini *et alii* 2011.

³⁸⁶ As suggested by the ceramic evidence. See Canciani 2020.

³⁸⁷ It is the case for example of the Casa di Diana (**126**), which became a hostel (see Marinucci and Falzone 2001, p. 238), Lucrezio Menandro (**130**) and Pareti Dipinte (**139**) Mithraea.

³⁸⁸ As it seems possible to infer from the closing of old access points and the opening of new ones not related to the housing unit. See Guidobaldi 1992, p. 78.

³⁸⁹ See Armellin and Taviani 2017.

rooms such as cellars (162) or utility rooms (156) belonging to large urban villas later adapted to become small Mithraea. Moving to Ostia, we have the example of the Casa di Diana Mithraeum (126), where two rooms previously used as *cubicula* were adapted to become a Mithraic sanctuary. The other rooms of the housing unit became shops, storage rooms, and stables. Quite similar is the case of the Pareti Dipinte Mithraeum (139), where a long room adjacent to the *tablinum* and part of the *perystilium* of the house were relocated as a Mithraic sanctuary whereas the other rooms were re-partitioned and destined to different utilitarian purposes. The Lucrezio Menandro Mithraeum (130) shows a similar trend, with the Mithraic settlement within two rooms previously belonging to a small private apartment. In Aosta, the sanctuary (1*) was located in an internal courtyard, re-using two rooms previously destined for housing purposes. Other adjacent rooms were relocated as shops and storage rooms. Similarly, in the Sette Sfere Mithraeum (136), we have a Mithraic sanctuary located in a room previously belonging to a private house. This sanctuary was located in a room adjacent to the domus of *Apuleius*³⁹⁰ and has been considered for decades a Mithraic private shrine belonging to the owner of the house³⁹¹. Nonetheless, recent studies on the spatial definition of the block have shown that the link between the Mithraeum and the domus cannot be proved for certain and that it is actually not so likely³⁹². Unfortunately, we do not possess enough information to understand the exact previous use of the rooms later relocated as a Mithraeum in Vulci (71*). We know nonetheless that they belonged to an urban housing unit.

In 5 cases, Mithraea were located in rooms or buildings characterized by previous commercial (140, 141, 143) or storage (142, 144) destinations, belonging possibly to private citizens. It must be said that these cases occur only in Ostia, where we know the general layout of buildings extensively enough to be able to assign them a specific function. In the cases of the Animali (141) and *Planta pedis* (140) Mithraea, the sanctuary was located in a storage unit consisting previously of a large space covered by a roof supported by pillars. With the Mithraic settlement, the previously open space was partitioned into smaller rooms with the construction of walls among the rows of pillars. The Sette Porte Mithraeum (142) was located in a room previously destined to storage function within a storage facility block, and the Felicissimo Mithraeum (144) was also located in a room previously possibly used as a deposit. The room used for the location of the Serpenti Mithraeum (143) could also have previously had a commercial or artisanal function.

Finally, other 12 Mithraea were located in rooms or buildings with a public destination (70, 114*, 131, 132, 135, 138, 145*, 155*, 192*, 198, 199, 204). A popular choice was locating Mithraea in rooms belonging to public baths. The most famous example is of course that of the Caracalla's Baths Mithraeum (199). In this case, the spaces taken by the Mithraic sanctuary consisted of subterranean service rooms located below the northern exedra of the complex. The Mithraic devotees settled in subterranean service rooms belonging to small urban thermal complexes also in the cases of Terme del Mitra Mithraeum (132) in Ostia and of the Napoli

³⁹⁰ from the name of his owner *Lucius Apuleius Marcellus*. See the paper by F. Coarelli who suggested identifying this Apuleius with the novelist of the Golden Ass, namely Coarelli 1989.

³⁹¹ See also the paper Beck 2000, where the Canadian scholar readdresses the matter.

³⁹² See for instance Rieger 2004, pp.75-78. For a synthesis on the architectural phases of the domus and on the patterns of access see Pansini 2017.

Mithraeum (114). Modern studies have identified the destination of the building where the Palazzo Imperiale Mithraeum (138) was located as a large public housing complex complete with baths. The Mithraeum (138) discovered within this building was located in rooms adjoined to the southern courtyard of these baths. Another case regarding the settlement of a Mithraeum in a public building is that of S. Stefano Rotondo Mithraeum (155*). In this case, the sanctuary was located in two rooms belonging to the quarters of the *castra peregrinorum*, that is the urban encampments of the *peregrini*, provincial soldiers involved with the food supplies for Rome. In the other two cases, the devotees settled in public spaces with service functions. In Cosa, the Mithraeum (70) was installed in the semi-subterranean room below the Curia of the city, whereas the Circus Maximus Mithraeum (198) in Rome was located in some semi-subterranean rooms belonging to a public building which hosted services depending on the nearby Circus Maximus. Finally, the Porta Romana Mithraeum (135) in Ostia was located in a room previously functioning as a public Lararium.

Partially different are the cases of sanctuaries 131, 145, and 192*, which belonged to contexts that we may call semi-public. Mithraeum 131 in Ostia, better known as the Mithraeum of *Fructosus*, was located in the cellar of a temple belonging to the seat of a *collegium* or professional guild. The *collegium* was probably that of the *stuppatores*³⁹³, as inscription 131b reveals. The history of this building is quite peculiar. Its construction began in the Severan Age and included the building of several rooms around the central courtyard and the beginning of the construction of the temple at the eastern end of the complex. The works stopped at a certain point for reasons that we do not know³⁹⁴ when only the substructure of the temple was laid but not finished. A change of plans occurred then³⁹⁵, when *Fructosus*, a wealthy patron of the guild, financed the building of a Mithraeum in the substructure of the temple and completed its construction with a vaulted ceiling and a small vestibule. The *Crypta Balbi* Mithraeum (192*) in Rome was located in a room previously used as a meeting hall³⁹⁶. The Colored Marbles Mithraeum (145*), the latest Mithraeum ever documented, was located in the rooms of a building previously used as a *caupona*, which is a small inn with a kitchen.

A particular case in terms of locational choices is represented by context 204. In this peculiar case, three Mithraic reliefs and one Mithraic inscription were found in the 1940s excavation of the *Dolichenum* of the Aventine hill. It has been recognized that the building they were found in was a sanctuary consecrated to Jupiter Dolichenus, consisting of three rooms that underwent several phases of restorations dating from the early 2nd to the mid-4th century CE³⁹⁷. The Mithraic monuments are much fragmentary, and their precise location within the sanctuary is unfortunately

³⁹³ responsible for the production of semi-refined textiles such as tow, oakum and hemp. For an analysis of this *collegium* see Hermansen 1982.

³⁹⁴ G. Becatti suggested a temporary financial crisis of the *collegium* (see Becatti 1954, p. 27). The same suggested G. Hermansen (Hermansen 1982, p. 125).

³⁹⁵ The original plan was possibly that of building a small substructured temple, preceded by a staircase as it was usual in Roman sacred architecture.

³⁹⁶ As suggested by M. Ricci, based on the evidence of the conformation of the western wall of the main cult room, which hosted small niches possibly for hosting statuettes or fresco cult images. See Ricci 2004, p. 160.

³⁹⁷ For a synthesis on the Dolichenum of the Aventine hill see Beelli 1996 (part. pp. 306-12) and Chini 1996.

unknown. More than the integration of the two cults, it seems more sensible to suggest³⁹⁸ a relationship of good neighborhood and to hypothesize the existence of a nearby Mithraeum, whose monuments were at a certain moment deposited in the sanctuary during the dismantling of this same.

2.3 How were Mithraea accessed?

In none of the 41 preserved Mithraea, we recorded traces of outwards signs which could indicate the presence of a sacred Mithraic place to outsiders. Mithraea in Italy never show a façade opening on the street or an entrance marked by a portico or similar structures. The entrance to the sanctuary should have been generally quite inconspicuous. The main cult room was usually accessed through a small vestibule. It seems possible to suggest that the location of the sanctuary must have been revealed to the devotees once they entered the community and be remembered by heart.

Moving on to the analysis of the pattern of access to Mithraic sanctuaries, we will start our analysis with the Mithraea of Ostia, some of which have already been studied through a spatial approach. Exemplary in this regard is the study of the pattern of access to the Mitreo degli Animali included in the broader spatial analysis of *insula* IV-2 of Ostia by H. Stöger³⁹⁹. The scholar modeled the topological connections between all the spaces of *insula* IV-2 in a graph (fig. 7) and outlined the existence of 10 layers of depth from the outside carrier to the most secluded spaces of the block. The Mithraeum, accessed after passing two internal courtyards, emerges as ‘one of the most segregated rooms within the entire *insula*’. Following in the steps of the study of paths of access, the analysis by M. White on the spatial

³⁹⁸ Together with E. Sanzi: see Sanzi 2018.

³⁹⁹ See the extensive analysis in Stöger 2011a, pp. and the more synthetic paper Stöger 2011b.

location of the Ostian Mithraea revealed that similar patterns of ‘nesting’ are shown by other Mithraic sanctuaries as well⁴⁰⁰.

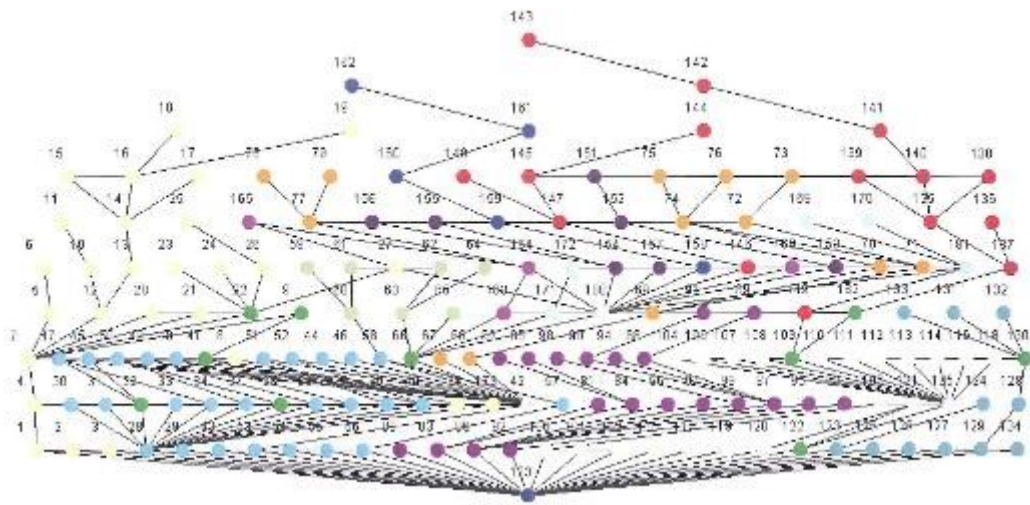


Fig. 7 Model of the layers of depth within Insula IV-II of Ostia. From Stöger 2011, p. 185, f. 6.18.

A re-analysis of the pattern of access of the Mithraic sanctuaries of Ostia confirms the private character of the location of Mithraic sanctuaries, accessible usually from internal courtyards (**126, 130, 131, 139, 140, 141, 143, 144, 145***) or secondary streets (**135, 136, 142**). When located in public buildings, we can notice that access to the main cult room was mediated by a vestibule (**132, 138**).

Data on the urban layout of the cities Mithraea were set up in is unfortunately not every time as well-known as in Ostia. Moving to Rome, for example, only 8 out of 14 Mithraea revealed information about their pattern of access. First of all, Mithraea located in public buildings were accessed thanks to the mediation of small vestibules. The Caracalla’s Baths Mithraeum (**199**) was accessed from the external courtyard thanks to a stair that led to several subterranean service rooms, whereas the Circus Maximus Mithraeum (**198**) was accessed through a long corridor coming from the street which separated the service building from the nearby circus. The Crypta Balbi Mithraeum (**192***) was located at the ground level of a multi-storied building and was accessed from some antechambers opened on the narrow street that encircled the exedra of the *porticus post scaenam* of the theater of *Balbus*. Quite peculiar is the case of the small Mithraeum of via Lanza (**162**) which was possibly accessed from the street through a double-case stairwell, similarly to the other small sanctuary of via Passalacqua (**169***). The San Clemente Mithraeum (**158**) was also accessed from a stair opened on the street level, and similar could be the cases of the Barberini (**175**) and S. Prisca (**202**) Mithraea even if in both these cases we do not possess enough data to be certain of it. The general preference for secluded locations reached through internal courtyards that we met in Ostia is generally not followed in Rome, where Mithraic sanctuaries were preferably ‘buried’ in the ground and were reached through narrow passages and staircases.

⁴⁰⁰ White 2012, particularly pp. 474-81. M. White also warned us of the more ‘open’ character of sanctuaries located in public buildings such as the Palazzo Imperiale Mithraeum suggesting they could have possibly been attended by devotees living in the neighborhood (p. 478).

A similar solution was possibly used in the Capua Mithraeum (113), but the lack of information on the general layout of the Roman city prevents a better understanding of its actual location within the urban planning. The Mithraeum of Aosta (1*) was accessed through a vestibule from an internal courtyard, as seen in the Ostian examples, whereas the Cosa Mithraeum (70) seems to have been accessed directly from the street that flanked the rear part of the Forum square. The presence of a small vestibule, never recorded in the excavation of the site, should nonetheless not be disregarded. In Vulci, a long and open-air corridor led possibly from a secondary street to the main cult room (71*).

A staircase from the upper levels of the villa gave access to the Marino (105*) and Spoleto (53) Mithraea, whereas minor rural roads should have led devotees to the Mithraea of Duino (40*) and *Visentium* (69*). The Mithraeum of *Portus Pisanus* (60*), located in the corner room of a storage unit, should have been accessed from the central courtyard of the building.

The preference for subterranean or semi-subterranean locations relies heavily upon the preexistent character of the building Mithraic sanctuaries were located in. Only four are the known examples of location within a natural cave, adapted to become a Mithraic temple. We mentioned above the four Mithraea of Duino (40*), Visentium (69*), Marino (105*), and Ponza (112), all located outside the city walls. We must add to this list the Mithraeum of Siracusa, located in a semi-subterranean room excavated in the natural bedrock (122*). The exact location of the sanctuary is unfortunately forgotten. As for the urban Mithraea, we can have sanctuaries located in subterranean (113, 132, 156, 162, 169*, 174, 175, 199, 202) or semi-subterranean (70, 130, 131, 155, 158) rooms, but cases of Mithraic sanctuaries located in above-the-ground spaces is well testified as well (1*, 53, 60*, 71*, 114*, 126, 133, 135, 136, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145*, 192*, 198) and represent actually the more common occurrence.

A similar discourse on the heavy conditioning of preexistent buildings must be made about the orientation of Mithraic temples. A precise choice in the orientation of the main cult room was not possible in the case of preexisting architectures. Thus, we are left with Mithraea variously oriented⁴⁰¹: north (126, 133, 136, 155*), north-east (105*, 156*), east (131, 202), south-east (40*, 53, 132, 143, 174, 175), south (130, 135), south-west (70, 139, 144, 169*, 198, 199), west (69*, 60, 112, 113, 122*, 140, 142, 145*, 158, 192*), and north-west (1*, 71*, 114*, 138, 141, 145*).

This overview of the locational choices and patterns of access to Mithraic sanctuaries revealed quite diverse solutions. First of all, we noticed that Mithraic sanctuaries were generally set up within cities rather than outside of the city walls. When they were set up in extra-urban sites, Mithraic sanctuaries were located in central places such as villas or small ports linked to major cities. On the matter of which places Mithraea were set up in, these sanctuaries have been located either in public or privately owned buildings. If we consider the chronology of these sanctuaries, we can notice that the ratio between the public and private locations does not change over time. We cannot identify an initial preference for private locations, and we can notice instead a stable contemporary presence of public and private settlements from the mid-2nd all through the 3rd century CE till the

⁴⁰¹ For the inconclusiveness of looking for a precise orientation in Mithraea, see the paper by Sclavi *et alii* 2016 on the Mithraea of Ostia.

early/mid-4th. It must be acknowledged that, about the city of Rome, we can notice a concentration of Mithraea located in private premises, especially in the 4th century. As for the accessibility of Mithraic sanctuary, they all show a rather hidden character, being always embedded within the urban layout. Mithraic sanctuaries were never directly opened on busy streets, and access to their spaces was gained through a maze of passages constituted at times by internal courtyards and passageways, as it was common in Ostia and as seen for example in Aosta, or by staircases, as it was more common in Rome. Finally, the relative level and orientation of Mithraic sanctuaries were heavily conditioned by the preexisting structures Mithraea were located in.

3. Mithraic architecture: a variety of sanctuaries

As seen in the previous paragraph, most Mithraea were located in an already existing building. It follows that their specific layout would have been strictly conditioned by the preexistent structures. This heavy constraint is the major argument against a typology of Mithraea based on relative size and precise layout⁴⁰². Each sanctuary was unique in its adaptation to the context it was located in. Nonetheless, the question of size and number of rooms represents an inescapable issue for the continuation of the spatial analysis started in the previous paragraph. Moreover, we expect that crossing these data with the chronological information at our disposition could prove useful for a better understanding of the development of Mithraic architecture.

3.1 General layout of Mithraea

First of all, let us raise the question of how many rooms did Mithraea consist of. An overview of the 41 Mithraea for which we have archaeological evidence reveals three possible arrangements of Mithraic sanctuaries, testified to by 36 examples⁴⁰³.

In 9 cases, that is 25% of the total, we have Mithraea consisting of a single room (**40***, **60***, **69***, **70**, **112**, **122***, **126**, **142**, **162**) which can always be identified with the cult room for the constant presence of cult image and side benches. Those sanctuaries could be accessed either after descending a flight of stairs (**40***, **69***, **112**, **162**) or passing through an internal courtyard (**60***, **126**, **142**) which mediated the entrance from the public level of the street to the private space of the temple. In only one case a sanctuary was accessed directly from a street – that was a secondary street - that is the case of the Cosa Mithraeum (**70**). The entrance was usually on the side opposite to the altar, and not on axis with the central aisle (**40***, **70**, **112**, **126**). The entrance could also be located side-ways on one of the long sides of the room (**60***, **69***, **122***, **162**). A single occurrence of axial access is known (**142**).

⁴⁰² As it is demonstrated also by the absence of a precise typology of Mithraea in the archaeological literature.

⁴⁰³ We exclude from the following considerations on the general layout of Mithraic sanctuaries numbers **133** and **175**, which were only partially excavated, and **193** and **159**, whose layout was never clearly understood or recorded. We exclude also from this paragraph the case of context **204**, explained above.

A second possible arrangement of spaces comprehends a single room identified with the main cult room preceded by a small vestibule. 19 Mithraea⁴⁰⁴ show this configuration (**1***, **71***, **105***, **113**, **114***, **130**, **131**, **132**, **135**, **136**, **139**, **140**, **141**, **143**, **144**, **155***, **156***, **169***, **174**): this layout represents the most widespread model of Mithraic temple, with 53% of occurrences. The size of the vestibule varies generally between ca. 10 and 25 sq. m. The small size shown by these entrance rooms seems too small to be consistent with a cult purpose. It is more likely to suggest that the primary function of these small vestibules was separating the outside public space from the internal private sacred space of the sanctuary. The devotees attending the Pareti Dipinte Mithraeum (**139**) reserved quite an importance to the existence of a small vestibule just before the cult room. This is proven by the existence of a small entrance vestibule in the first phase of the sanctuary, and by its reconstruction in the second architectural phase of the temple, after the enlargement of the main cult room which encased the space of the previous vestibule.

At least one time, the vestibules hosted cult images, as it can be seen in the vestibule which gave access to the Marino Mithraeum (**105***). Here the devotees accessing the vestibule could see Cautes on the right wall and Cautopates on the opposite. Small niches carved in the walls hosted lamps which were a necessary light source for this subterranean sanctuary. The vestibule was divided from the main cult room thanks to a wooden wall: the holes for lodging the beams are still visible on each side of the cave. It must be underlined nonetheless that the vestibule of this sanctuary was not directly opened on the street, but it was accessed through a stair. In this case, then, saved the vestibule from that primary parting nature it had in all of the other listed cases, this antechamber could host cult images without the risk of being seen from the outside.

The cases of the Planta Pedis Mithraeum (**140**) in Ostia and of the Vulci Mithraeum (**71***) deserve a special mention concerning the structure and size of their vestibule. In both cases, these vestibules were slightly larger than the normal size mentioned above, with the Vulci one measuring ca. 40 sq. m and the Planta Pedis ca. 44 sq. m. Moreover, they were only partially covered by a roof. In the case of the Vulci Mithraeum, the vestibule was configured as a long corridor, partially covered by a roof, which connected the sanctuary with a secondary street. In the Planta Pedis case, the vestibule consisted of a courtyard realized thanks to the building of an enclosure. It is interesting to notice that in both cases devices linked with the cooking of foods were found in these open-air vestibules. In Vulci, a small fireplace structured with small stone walls was discovered, whereas in the Planta Pedis courtyard a small oven and a buried *dolium* were installed just on the left of the entrance to the main cult room. A similar case could be represented by the Porta Romana Mithraeum (**135**). Even in this case, the main cult room was accessed from

⁴⁰⁴ For Mithraea **114***, **132**, and **136** the existence of a small vestibule before the entrance is suggested based on the general layout of the building they were located in, which admitted the existence of such an entrance room.

a small courtyard. Scant traces of a structure⁴⁰⁵ located in this quite large vestibule⁴⁰⁶ could tentatively be identified with the remains of a kitchen.

The third arrangement of spaces was recorded in 8 Mithraic sanctuaries (**53, 138, 145*, 158, 192*, 198, 199, 202**), which is 22% of the total. This third option includes the presence of the main cult room, preceded by a multi-functional vestibule, with the addition of other ancillary rooms, which vary in size and function. Since the layout of this third type of temples is quite heterogeneous, we will have a close look at each one of these sanctuaries.

The first example consists of Palazzo Imperiale Mithraeum (**138**) located in Ostia, in an urban block in the northwest area of the city. We know at least two architectural phases of this sanctuary. The main difference between these two consists in the later monumentalization of the cult room, with the refurbishing of the floor and back altar with mosaic and marbles. The rooms of this sanctuary, which was active from the mid-2nd century, consist of the main cult room (room 75⁴⁰⁷) and other three small rooms (rooms 79, 80, 81). The entrance points to the sanctuary were two. The first one, from the west, was never excavated in detail. From the portico which overlooked the street delimiting the block on the west, devotees could access, possibly through a door, room 80, which led to rooms 81 and 79 as well as to the main cult room 75. Another entrance was located on the northeast. A devotee could here access small room 77, of unknown function, either from the northern courtyard or from the eastern one. Once entered this small room, a stair led to room 78, which hosted a niche with the mosaic image of Silvanus. From this small room, the devotee could descend another small stair which led to room 79. From here he could reach room 80, and consequently all of the remaining spaces of the sanctuary. We must underline here the multifunctional character of the distribution space named room 80: it worked contemporary as a small vestibule before entering the main cult room, but also as a passage from the eastern and western entrances of the sanctuary, and also as a passage between room 79 and room 81. It seems interesting to notice that Visconti, who excavated the Mithraeum in 1860-1861, reported that in one of the small rooms (79, 80, or 81) he saw the remains of a fireplace⁴⁰⁸, probably the structure of a kitchen counter. Judging from old plans of the excavations, we could suggest this kitchen structure was found in room 79, where two symmetrical devices were recorded, built against the southern wall. The pertinence of these rooms to the Mithraic sanctuary seems possible, also

⁴⁰⁵ Two masonry bases can be seen in the plan Scavi di Ostia I. Unfortunately, they were not mentioned by Becatti, and their remains are currently too scarce to deduct their original function and shape (see the comment in Battisti 2020, p. 67). An old plan published by E. Paribeni (see Paribeni 1920, p. 158) shows two short walls supporting a horizontal element.

⁴⁰⁶ The area enclosed by side walls measures ca. 57 sq. m, as it can be measured from the plan in *Scavi di Ostia I*.

⁴⁰⁷ The number of rooms follow the count made by J. Spurza (see Spurza 1999). I do not consider room 78 part of the Mithraic settlement: the niche with Silvanus representation is not completely integrated into the sanctuary and could have constituted an independent sacred place, with more public vocation than the Mithraeum. The fact that to enter the Mithraeum a devotee had to pass the room with Silvanus seems only incidental.

⁴⁰⁸ See Visconti 1864, p. 174. Visconti reported that in rooms 79, 80, and 81 he discovered the remains of a fireplace and other devices useful for daily life. He suggested that these three rooms consisted in the house of the chief priest of the Mithraic temple, following a theory popular at his time. We know now that Mithraic priests did not form a caste and did not have public funds to support their living, but they were private citizens who formed self-financed communities.

in reason of the fact that their integration within the southern *medianum* apartment created in the same years of the Mithraeum seems non-existent. We suggest then to identify these small rooms as service rooms functional to the cult practices, for example for preparing or at least for warming up communal meals.

The second case is represented by the Marmi Colorati Mithraeum (145*) discovered in 2015 in Ostia, in the urban block just outside the southern gate of Porta Marina. The main cult room was located in a space previously used as the service room of a *caupona*. In the opinion of the discoverer of this temple, all of the rooms previously belonging to the *caupona* became accessories to the religious purpose of the site. The side room 1⁴⁰⁹ became a cult room dedicated to Mithras. It was accessible either from small vestibule room 2, opened on the street, or from room 3, the central room of the former *caupona*. With regard to Mithraic worship, rooms 1 and 2 constitute the common binomial main cult room and vestibule. But traces of Mithraic worship were detected also in room 3, where a graffito reveals the name of Mithras (see 145b*). Moreover, in room 3, traces of Isiac worship were discovered too, such as a graffito identified possibly with the subject of the *navigium Isidis*⁴¹⁰. The rich painted decoration of rooms 5, 7, and 8 suggests an occupation of these spaces as ancillary rooms for cult practices, whereas room 6 could be considered a small storage room. This site results then as a composite example of a sacred place, where Mithraic worship stood side by side with Isiac worship.

Moving to Rome, the third example of this multiple-room layout is represented by the S. Clemente Mithraeum (158). Located in the cryptoportico of a former housing unit, this Mithraic sanctuary was accessed from a southern stair that descended from the street level. The devotees then entered the small vestibule PS⁴¹¹ which led to the long corridor CE-CM. The corridor led to the left into the main cult room M, whereas to the right into rooms AM and SM. Room AM was accessed from a triple-arched door and once entered it gave access to the smaller room PM. Small benches, plastered and painted red, were built along the sides of rooms AM, SM, and PM. Moreover, a square base, possibly for a statue, was placed in the center of room SM, which had also a mosaic floor. Fresco decorations with Mithraic subjects were found on the walls of room SM. The rich stucco and painted decorations of these three small rooms, paired with the existence of the small benches and the square base in room SM, suggests a function connected with cult practices rather than with service spaces. The narrow corridors CN, CO, and CS, which were never fully excavated, could instead have been used as storage or service spaces, in reason of their narrow shape and secluded position. Even in this case, we should underline the multi-functional nature of corridor CE. It linked the entrance vestibule with all the other rooms, it connected the main cult room with the ancillary rooms, and the cylindrical base located against the entrance of AM and axial to the back altar of room M could also have supported a cult statue.

Continuing with the overview on the multiple-room Mithraea of Rome, we have the case of the *Crypta Balbi* Mithraeum (192*). This sanctuary was accessed either from the portico of the theater of Balbus or from the attached latrine. From these

⁴⁰⁹ We follow here the count of rooms suggested by David and his team (see David 2018).

⁴¹⁰ See David 2018.

⁴¹¹ We follow here Guidobaldi's count of the rooms. The existence of an entrance corridor from a semi-subterranean level next to the stair seems highly unlikely (see Guidobaldi 1992, pp. 78-9).

two public spaces, a devotee could reach a corner space that gave access to a small vestibule. From here the devotee could enter a second larger room, which led to another quite large chamber, which finally led to the main cult room. The main cult room was accessed directly from this antechamber, possibly from an open passage⁴¹². Excavations did not provide any trace of the existence of a wooden door or other fixed closing device for the only passage found leading from the antechamber to the main cult room. We could suggest the existence of a mobile device, a curtain, for instance, to isolate the main cult room from the antechamber. The antechamber had a simple lime floor, and two small bases were built against its southern wall on each side of the entrance to the main cult room. It must be underlined that in a previous phase this antechamber constituted the last part of a *via tecta*, that is a street covered by a roof, which runs between the two buildings the main cult room and the other rooms were part of. It seems reasonable that the stair leading to the upper floor, accessed right beside the vestibule, should have remained open for public access. This consideration poses a question on how the ancillary rooms and the main cult room were connected. The path from the street to the staircase intercepted the path from the ancillary rooms to the vestibule, creating a crossroad not-so-in-line with the privacy requested from Mithraic sanctuaries. Are the northern rooms and the main cult room connected? Unfortunately, there is no final answer to this question, especially given the fact that the excavation of the eastern sector of the sanctuary was not possible due to static reasons⁴¹³.

The next case is that of the Circus Maximus Mithraeum (198). This sanctuary was located at the ground level, in the substruction which supported two large staircases leading to an upper terrace where the seat of the *secretarium Circi* was possibly located⁴¹⁴. The substruction consisted originally of four rooms and was possibly used as a storage space. With the Mithraic settlement, an entrance (room S⁴¹⁵, paved with colored marble tiles) and a long corridor (room D) led from the street to a small vestibule (room C). From here, devotees could access on the left the main cult room (which was built unifying the previous rooms G, H, I, L, and M) and a minor ancillary room (room E), whereas on the right other another ancillary space (rooms A and B). The ancillary room E consisted of a proper room, accessed from the beginning of the central aisle in the main cult room through a single step. A niche coated with white and colored marble was located in its north-

⁴¹² M. Ricci did not detect any trace of a door in the passage leading from the antechamber to the main cult room. He hypothesized the existence of other two passages opened in the same northern wall based on the architectural symmetry of the construction. Unfortunately, he was not able to excavate the eastern part of either the antechamber or of the main cult room, leaving open the hypothesis of the existence of another western entrance to the main cult room. Nonetheless, Ricci's reconstruction of the pattern of access to the main cult room works as it is, without the necessary postulation of the existence of another eastern access which would raise more questions about the existence of other Mithraic spaces in the eastern unexcavated area. See Ricci 2004.

⁴¹³ A radically different lecture of the extant remains found in the excavation could also suggest that the main cult room and the northern spaces were not linked at all, belonging to different contexts. The main cult room could have been accessed from an eastern antechamber which could lay in the unexcavated area, whereas the northern rooms could have belonged to an associative purpose other than that of a Mithraic group. The feeble structuration of the space currently interpreted as an antechamber and its problematic pattern of intersection with the viability of the *via tecta* could support this criticism toward an integrated interpretation of the excavated rooms.

⁴¹⁴ See ATLAS, pp. 434 and note 295.

⁴¹⁵ We follow here Pietrangeli's count of the rooms. See Pietrangeli 1940.

eastern wall, whereas the threshold leading to the room was also made of white marble. It seems possible that this small room, accessible only from the initial part of the central aisle, was destined to host other cult images and that it served a purpose linked with cult practices. Small vestibule C, as well as ancillary space A-B, were paved with an *opus spicatum* floor. Space A-B, given its poorer flooring technique and its irregular covering (space B is an under-stair closet), could have had a storage or service function. In the main cult room (rooms G, H, I, L, and M), two different flooring techniques were used: in the first part of the aisle, the floor was paved with *bipedales* bricks, whereas in the second part it was paved with colored and white marbles.

The Caracalla's Baths Mithraeum (199) shows another example of this multiple-room layout. The sanctuary was located in the subterranean level of the northern exedra of the baths complex. A service space (room A⁴¹⁶, an under-stair closet), complete with a fountain or water basin, accessed after descending a staircase from the ground level, gave access to the entrance of the sanctuary. Here a large vestibule (room B) showed a hydraulic feature in the northern corner and the remains of a *spicatum* floor. From this vestibule, the devotees could access the main cult room. It is not sure whether small room C was connected with cult practices or not⁴¹⁷. The connection with the main cult room of rooms E and F is also not so easy to detect. If room E was originally a latrine, we should suppose that with the Mithraic settlement its purpose changed. Moreover, room E was the arrival point of the subterranean passage coming from the floor level of the main cult room. It seems possible to suggest that room E had, contemporary to the Mithraic use of these spaces, a service function. In room F, the remnants of a long counter built against the western wall were found, together with a small circular basin accessed through a few steps. Their chronology is unknown.

The last example of this multiple-room layout comes from Rome: the S. Prisca Mithraeum (202). There are virtually no traces of the mode of access to this sanctuary: a stair descending from the street level should have given access to these subterranean spaces, which were located in the cryptoportico of a building with previous housing purpose⁴¹⁸. In the first phase, the devotees accessed a small vestibule (room V⁴¹⁹) and then the main cult room (room W), whereas in a second phase the main cult room was enlarged to include also the vestibule. From the main cult room, the devotees could access other two smaller rooms Y and Z⁴²⁰. In room Y, two benches were built against the sidewalls, and a niche was built against the back wall. This niche was framed by two pillars and topped by an arch. It preserved

⁴¹⁶ We follow here the letters given to the rooms of the sanctuary in the recent survey by Modus society. See LTUR III, p. 479.

⁴¹⁷ Ghislanzoni did not register any door connecting room C with room B.

⁴¹⁸ We are here in the middle of an urban block located to the east of the Decian Baths and the south of the *Balneum Surae*. The stair which led to the entrance of the S. Prisca Mithraeum was possibly located on the east of a large Nymphaeum built in the 2nd century CE and possibly belonging to a rich urban villa. It is still unknown what was the exact nature of the building complex the S. Prisca Mithraeum was located in. See Armellini and Taviani 2017.

⁴¹⁹ We follow here the same letters used in Vermaseren and Van Essen 1965.

⁴²⁰ In room X no traces referable to cult practices were found. Its floor was paved with a simple beaten earth layer: this could point toward a service function for the room. Besides, in the narrow space between the cult niche and the western wall in room W, a small fireplace was detected. This discovery could be linked with a service function for these spaces.

some traces of a stucco representation: traces of the head of Sol encircled by concentric lines were recognized by M.J. Vermaseren. A narrow shelf was built in front of it, possibly for supporting lamps. A counter which encased a pottery basin (*mortarium*) was built before this niche. In room Z, a bench was built against the western wall (plastered and painted red) and a bench that encased a large *dolium* was built in the center of the room (**202m**). It seems possible to suggest that these two rooms hosted spaces related to the cult practices.

We included also the Spoleto Mithraeum (**53**) in this group, but not without any reserve. The general plan of the building this sanctuary was located in is unknown, and the reading of the pattern of access to the main cult room is not clear. Two entrances to the main cult room were recorded in the plan of the excavations of the temple. The existence of other rooms on each side of the main cult room is ascertained by the same plan, but whether these spaces were connected with the cult cannot be said.

This overview of the rooms and spaces which constituted Mithraic sanctuaries revealed three possible arrangements of spaces in Mithraea, which can be further adjusted into two major layout options. First, we can have the single-room Mithraea (25% of cases), consisting of a single room identified with the proper cult room. Then we can have single-room Mithraea with a vestibule (53% of cases), which means the sanctuary consisted of the main cult room and a small vestibule that had the main function of separating the outside public space from the inside private and sacred space. Third, we can have multiple-room Mithraea (22% of cases) that are sanctuaries consisting of main cult room, multi-functional vestibule, and ancillary rooms destined to host cult functions or to serve as service spaces. The two major options for the arrangement of spaces in Mithraic sanctuaries consist of single-room Mithraea (with or without vestibule) and multiple-room Mithraea. We will return below on the interpretation of these two possible layouts.

3.2 Size of Mithraic sanctuaries

Concerning the size shown by these sanctuaries, the situation is as follows. In single-room sanctuaries without vestibules, the size of the main cult room shows always a small range of dimensions, varying from a minimum of 36 to a maximum of 70 sq. m. For single-room Mithraea with vestibule, we mentioned above that the size of this entrance room varies between a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 25 sq. m, with the only exceptions of Mithraea **71*** and **140** which show large vestibules of ca 45 sq. m. As for the size of the main cult room, two ranges are represented. We have in fact 14 cases (**71***, **105***, **113**, **114***, **130**, **131**, **132**, **136**, **139**, **143**, **144**, **155*** first phase, **156***, **169***) of cult rooms showing small size, between 35 and 70 sq. m, but also 5 cases of cult rooms of medium size (**1**, **135**, **140**, **141**, **174**), between 80 and 100 sq. m, and moreover also a single case of a cult room of large size that is more than 100 sq. m (**155***, second phase). In multiple-room Mithraea, the size of the main cult room can be either of small size (**53**, **145***, **158**, **202** first phase), medium size (**198**), or large size (**138**, **192***, **199**, **202** second phase), that means more than 100 sq. m. If we sum the space occupied by the main cult room with all of that taken by ancillary spaces, we obtain sanctuaries ranging from 150 to 330 sq. m.

The variability seen in the size of main cult rooms in Mithraic sanctuaries demonstrates that the dimension of the cult room should not be taken alone as an index of the complexity of the Mithraeum. Having small cult rooms does not imply we are dealing with single-room Mithraea. For a correct evaluation and understanding of a Mithraic sanctuary, we should always take into account all of the spaces the main cult room was connected with.

A last note on the matter of the general size of Mithraic sanctuaries must be made about their proportions. If we look for a general rule in the relative length and width of the main cult room, we can clearly notice that the conditioning imposed by preexistent structures leave no space for a constant system of proportions. We have in fact main cult rooms showing all the range of proportions between 1:1 and 2,5:1, with few longer cases⁴²¹.

When dealing with the size of Mithraea, we cannot escape addressing the matter of the seating capacity of these sanctuaries. The first to systematically address this question was T. Bakker, in his analysis of the Ostian Mithraea⁴²². Bakker calculated that being reclined on their left side, each devotee should take to rest comfortably at least 50 cm of space on the side benches. His calculation was perfected a few decades later by M. White⁴²³, who suggested more refined ranges of capacity for these same sanctuaries. In the end, both scholars agreed that the mean number of devotees these sanctuaries could host was quite meagre: between 20 and 40 devotees, with a mean value of 35.

White suggested other two important observations on this matter. First, he warned that the seating capacity actually regarded only the available space within the main cult room, but that in terms of general capacity of the sanctuary, the ancillary rooms should also have been taken into account. He did not explore further, however, how to integrate these added spaces into the calculations of the seating capacity of Mithraea. Secondly, he noticed that if the devotees reclining on the right-hand couch were naturally resting on the left side and thus looked at the cult image on the back of the room, those reclined on the left-hand couch should have been facing the entrance door rather than have chosen to recline on their right side.

3.3 Recurrent architectural features

Despite the great variability of general layout, size and proportions of Mithraic sanctuaries, it is possible to identify recurrent architectural features in most of these temples.

The first feature encountered in virtually all of the 38 sanctuaries for which we have enough architectural remains is surely the tripartite scheme shown in the main cult room. This feature consists of the longitudinal division of the space of the main cult room in three parts: left side bench, central aisle, and right side bench. The central aisle measures between 1,2 and 2,8 m in width, with a mean value of 1,9 m. It can be paved in poor technique with simple beaten earth layers (**126, 143, 192***), brickwork floors (**132, 133, 155*, 198, 202**) or lime floors (**40*, 60, 71*, 113, 139,**

⁴²¹ See the examples of sanctuaries **139, 113, 132,** and **141** which surpass the 3:1 proportions and the single case of sanctuary **105*** which arrives at 5:1.

⁴²² See Bakker 1994, pp. 114-115.

⁴²³ See White 2012, pp. 472-474.

140, 158, 174). In richer sanctuaries, the central aisle can be paved with mosaic floor (**130, 138, 140, 156*, 174, 199**) sometimes bearing rich figurative documents of the cult (**136, 141, 142, 144**), or with *opus sectile* technique (**53, 133, 135, 145, 198**).

Few are the exceptions to this tripartition of the space in the main cult room. No signs of the existence of the side benches were detected in the explorations of the Mithraea of Ponza (**112**), Siracusa (**122***), and of via Lanza (**162**), whereas a single bench has been detected in the Mithraea of Marmi Colorati (**145***), via Passalacqua (**169***) and Nummi Albini (**174**). In the case of sanctuary **145***, a raised platform on the right side of the main cult room has been associated with the place where the bench for the devotees could have been placed. The discoverers suggested also that another device for seating the devotees could have been placed along the other side of the room: it was possibly made of perishable materials such as wood and it did not leave any trace in the archaeological record. This suggestion could be confirmed by the management of the decoration of the floor of the room. Therefore, in this sanctuary, we assist to the intention of preserving the tripartite scheme, but also to the conditioning of the limited space at disposition which imposes the choice of a right bench possibly similar to the usual *podia* and of a narrower left bench, possibly useful only for seating instead of reclining. In sanctuary **174**, the existence of the bench only on the right side of the main cult room seems assured by the precise notes of the discovery. Capannari in fact observed that the floor of the main cult room was missing along the left side of the space, deducting that in that blank space a side bench must have been placed. On the right side of the room, he did not record any trace of a possible second bench. Even in this case, we could suggest that the missing of the second bench could be originated by the limited dimension of the room. Analogous is the example of sanctuary **169***, where only the right bench was discovered.

Again on the management of the space in the main cult room, apart from the just mentioned tripartite scheme, we can sometimes notice the existence of a second division of space, perpendicular to that first one. We recorded in fact in several cases a division of the main cult room in three sectors proceeding from the entrance to the back. These three sectors can be described as: a first entrance space, a second space where the side benches were located, and a third space where the cult images and the altar, showing more or less complex structures, were located. It is important to underline that this secondary tripartition bears a sure functional character and that it seems always implicit in Mithraic architecture. The triplet entrance-benches-altar/cult image can be in fact traced in all of the known sanctuaries, even if a precise material structuration of these spaces was recorded in only 17 of them (**53, 69*, 71*, 105*, 113, 114*, 122*, 132, 133, 138, 140, 141, 143, 145*, 192*, 198, 202**).

The side benches were built always in poor technique. They consisted generally of low walls in poor materials such as fieldstones or small tufa blocks, or bricks and broken roof tiles. The front was usually parallel to one of the long sides of the room, and two shorter segments connected this front with the sidewall. The resulting space was filled with debris and earth, and the top surface was then covered with lime and plaster. Steps could be incorporated at one of their extremities to permit the devotees to reach their upper surfaces (**71*, 126, 130, 136, 138, 139, 142, 155*, 158, 175, 198**). Unique is the case of the Vulci Mithraeum (**71***) where the front of the side benches consists of a series of six small arches made in brickwork. The backspace

was not filled with debris, but it was empty. Unique is also the case of the *Visentium* Mithraeum (69*), where the two side benches were carved out of the natural rock which constituted the walls of the cave the sanctuary was located in. The upper surface of these side benches was not even but slightly inclined toward the side walls (60, 69*, 113, 133, 136, 158, 175, 192*, 198, 199). It seems possible that, in order to guarantee more comfortable seating for the devotees, the surface of the benches was completed with cushions or similar devices. Moreover, on top of the front of the benches, a narrow ledge could sometimes be realized (69*, 130, 132, 133, 136, 138, 139, 140, 142, 143, 156*, 158, 175, 192*, 198, 199, 202). It was possibly used to set up lamps for the illumination of the room⁴²⁴, or even glasses and beakers in the event of dining within the sanctuary. The front of the benches was usually plastered and painted red (60, 105*, 113, 131, 155*, 202), but occasionally marble coating (133, 175, 198, 199, 202) or more complex decorations were recorded. It is the case of the frescoes on the front benches of the second phase of the Capua Mithraeum, which show depictions of initiatory rituals underwent by the devotees (see 113e and 113f), or of the fresco (53a) and mosaic (136b, 142c) representations of the tutelary planets found in other sanctuaries.

A quite common feature, usually linked with the benches, is the construction of small niches within the fronts of the said *podia*. Usually, they were two niches, one in each *podium*, commonly excavated at ground level in the middle of the bench (70, 113, 130, 132, 135, 136, 139, 140, 142, 143, 155*, 158, 175, 199, 202). In rare cases, we recorded the presence of two niches per bench (53, 133, 198). The function of these niches is not indisputably clear. An opposition in their conformation⁴²⁵ is testified from the examples of Mithraea 155*, 175, and 202, where one of the niches was square and the other semi-circular. Moreover, it seems interesting to notice that a small pot was embedded in the right niche of sanctuary 142 as well as in the right niche of sanctuaries 202 and 198. Lamps were found in both niches of Mithraeum 155* whereas small tufa (132, 133) and marble (142) bases were found in the niches of three Ostian sanctuaries. The example of Mithraeum 138 could actually help us to better understand the kind of opposition existing between the two niches. Here in fact two large niches located in the middle of the front of the benches hosted respectively bases with the statues of Cautes and Cautopates. We could then read the symbolical opposition of the two niches as an aspect of the more complex opposition rooted in the astronomy of the microcosm of the Mithraeum⁴²⁶.

Another typical feature usually connected with the benches is the presence of small altars or bases set up against their fronts. In some cases, we have bases or small altars set up against the fronts of the benches in correspondence of their beginning (1*, 136, 142, 202) or in their middle part (60*, 70⁴²⁷) or again in their

⁴²⁴ As testified at the moment of the discovery of the Palazzo Imperiale Mithraeum.

⁴²⁵ In Mithraeum 53 the two pairs of niches were realized with different techniques: the two northern ones were built in roof tiles, and a shallow basin was realized on the ledge of the bench on top of them, whereas the southern ones were realized in fieldstones and coated with plaster. The opposition, in this case, is not axial in terms of right vs left bench, but in terms of middle vs back sector of the main cult room. This opposition could also be dependent on a different phase of construction rather than from a symbolical opposition.

⁴²⁶ As clearly explained by R. Gordon in Gordon 1976.

⁴²⁷ In the case of the Cosa Mithraeum (70), the two bases were set up in the middle of the length of the benches, but not against their front. It seems possible that due to the small size of this

end corner (**132, 135, 156***), in a symmetrical position, one per each bench. In the cases of Mithraea **69*** and **71***, we recorded the presence of 6 bases located against the front of the benches, three per bench. These bases had small niches excavated at their foot, possibly for hosting lamps. In the case of Mithraeum **192***, two bases per bench were found, located in the middle and final part of the podia. It seems possible that a further couple of bases could have existed at the beginning of the benches, but unfortunately, the eastern part of the sanctuary was not excavated. The pair in the middle length of the benches showed two niches cut at ground level. As for the function of these pairs of bases, we can state with a fair degree of certainty that the pairs placed at the beginning of the benches were destined to support statues of the two torchbearers Cautes and Cautopates, as exemplified by the cases of sanctuaries **142** and **202**. The same explanation could be applied to the couple of bases in Mithraea **60*** and **70**. Even if in these cases the bases were placed in the middle of the length of the benches, but the restricted space at disposition of the devotees near the entrance could have called for a moving of the usual placement of these pair of supports. The function of the bases placed at the end of the benches seems that of supporting statues. In the case of Mithraeum **132**, two small tufa pyramid artifacts were placed on the bases at the end of the benches. It seems possible to suggest that these couples of supports placed at the end of the benches were generally meant for supporting statues other than those of the torchbearers.

For what concerns the focal point of the sanctuary, that is the back part of the main cult room where the altar(s) and the cult image(s) were located, we observed different arrangements. The first solution - and the simplest one - is the placement of a square altar in the back part of the main cult room (**40***, **69***, **70**, **105***, **130**, **132, 135, 144, 162**), just before the cult image of the tauroctony which could have been represented by a fresco, stucco, statuary group, or by a relief attached directly on to the back wall of the Mithraeum or in a niche simply cut in the back wall (**169***, **174**). A second solution shows a more complex structuration of the niche hosting the main cult image. We recorded in this second case the building of a masonry niche, realized with the construction of two side pillars covered by an arch. In the simplest cases, this niche was realized on a narrow shelf (**131, 136, 142, 145, 155, 192***, **198, 199**), whereas in other cases the parallelepiped base it rested on was quite large (**60***, **71***, **126, 133, 139, 140, 141, 143, 175, 202**). It seems possible to identify this focal point of the main cult room with the term *thronus*, known at least from three Ostian inscriptions (**128, 133a, 139e**). The term, from the Greek θρόνος, constitutes an unprecedented in Latin epigraphy⁴²⁸. On the basis of the analyzed contexts, it seems now possible to identify the *thronus* with the structured niche complete with cult image and altar, as seen in the Mithraea of Casa di Diana (**126**), Aldobrandini (**133**) and Pareti Dipinte (**139**).

The altar(s) set up before these niches could be either more or less complex. In the simplest examples, they were square altars (**60***, **71***, **133, 139**) placed in the back part of the sanctuary. More commonly, they were encased in structures comprehending a variety of bases and shelves. These consisted of several (between

sanctuary these bases were located against the side walls: in this way, the central space remained free for the passage of the devotees.

⁴²⁸ A quick research on the epigraphic database Clauss-Slaby restituted 8 matches: 3 are the mentioned Mithraic inscriptions, whereas the other 5 are constituted by later (5th-6th century) Christian inscriptions.

two and three) masonry steps located before the cult image and destined to host on their shelves lamps and offerings; simple square altars were then placed before these structures (**1***, **140**, **143**) or in several cases they were encased within the steps (**126**, **138**, **155***, **158**, **192***, **198**, **199**). Quite unique is the case of sanctuary **53**, where the back part of the main cult room shows a narrow shelf running along the back and left wall, whereas three altars occupy the central space. They are namely constituted by a square altar, a triangular altar⁴²⁹, and by a third artifact shaped like a pointed rock. A particular mention deserves also sanctuary **133**, where the back part of the room which hosted the cult niche and a square altar was divided from the sector with the benches by a marble balustrade.

Another feature detected in several Italian Mithraea consists in the presence of a circular or square pit excavated in the floor of the central aisle. It was usually located just after the entrance (**126**, **135**, **136**, **144**, **145***⁴³⁰, **199**), and in sanctuary **198** it was located at the beginning of the second sector of the main cult room. On the other hand, in Mithraea **70** and **142** this circular pit was located just before the altar. Few are the doubts about its function: this device possibly contained water and it was probably a memory of the springs which decorated the first cave consecrated to Mithras by Zoroaster⁴³¹.

Peculiar, and testified only in three cases (**140**, **155***, **199**), is the presence of a small enclosure on the right of the masonry structure of the altar. In sanctuary **155*** the enclosure, which measured ca. 2 sq. m, was delimited on the left by the structure of the altar, on the back by the back wall of the Mithraeum, on the right by the right bench, and on the front by three small marble columns supporting another marble horizontal element. In Mithraeum **140**, a small room which measured ca. 2,9 sq. m, was accessible after descending a couple of steps on the right of the altar. A small enclosure measuring ca. 2,7 sq. m was detected in Mithraeum **199** in the corner of the main cult room, just on the right of the altar. The exact function of these enclosures is unknown. We could cautiously suggest a dedicated space for the worship of a particular deity associated to the cult of Mithras, such as the Mithraic Aion in the cases of Mithraea **155*** ad **199**.

In several other cases, we recorded the presence of square bases made of masonry and painted red. They were located in the main cult room, in the corner just beside the entrance (**138**, **158**) or in the back (**70**, **105***) of the sanctuary. These devices certainly supported secondary cult images.

Returning to another feature constantly found in Mithraea, we must address the presence and location of cult images within Mithraic sanctuaries. In all of the sanctuaries, there must have been at least one representation of the tauroctony, that was located in the back sector of the main cult room and that was represented on a variety of supports such as fresco (**105***, **113**, **133**, **156***, **159**, **169***), stucco (**112**, **114***, **155***, **202**), relief (**40***, **69***, **155***, **162**, **193**, **198**), and statuary groups (**71***, **132**, **133**). More than one tauroctony representation could have been present in the

⁴²⁹ The triangular altar occurs also in other three sanctuaries (**199**, **198**, **132**).

⁴³⁰ In this peculiar case, the basin was actually constituted by a water well belonging to a previous constructive phase which, with the Mithraic occupation of the room, could have served the same symbolical function of the water basin. In addition, in the corner opposite to the entrance door of the main cult room, a flower bed was built. This feature too could be connected with Porphyry's mention of flowers and springs (see next note).

⁴³¹ See chapter 1.

same sanctuary, as recorded in several cases (**71***, **155***, **198**). The main cult image occupied the focal point in the center of the back wall of the Mithraeum, whereas the other representations could either be attached on the back wall beside the major one (**198**), or either have dedicated niches (**71***). The torchbearers were then the second most represented subject. They were placed at the entrance of the Mithraeum, either in the vestibule (**105***, **162**) or at the beginning of the main cult room. They were usually represented with statues (**71***, **131**, **138**, **142**, **155***, **162**, **192***, **202**) but mosaic representations (**142**) and frescoes (**105***, **113**) are known too. Another subject represented in Mithraea was for sure the Birth of Mithras from the rock, as testified by sanctuaries **158**, (see **158c**), **193** (see **193b**), and **199** (see **199c**). Other bases⁴³² could have hosted the image of the Mithraic Aion, but unfortunately, none of these subjects was actually found inside a Mithraeum⁴³³. In the more refined sanctuaries, images connected with cult practices and symbols⁴³⁴ would have been found depicted on mosaic floors (**136**, **141**, **142**, **143**) and side walls (**113**, **139**, **202**), and on the front of the benches (**53**, **113**, **136**, **142**). A particular decoration was detected on the ceiling of the Capua Mithraeum (**113**). Here in fact stars consisting of 8 rays were painted on the vault covering the main cult room. They were either red or blue, and a small element, possibly a glass bead or a gemstone, was attached in their center, creating a suggestive light effect. The Mithraeum of Ponza (**112**) deserves a particular mention when speaking of ceiling decorations. In this small sanctuary in fact, on the vault covering the cult room, the stucco representation of the zodiacal belt was discovered (see **112b**). Again on the decorations detected on Mithraea ceilings, we should mention here that the pumice decoration of the ceiling of the main cult room of the S. Clemente Mithraeum (**158**), usually linked with the cave-like nature of the Mithraeum, as well as the rich stucco decoration of the other rooms belonging to the same sanctuary, do not belong to the Mithraic phase of the site. They were made in a previous constructive phase and later kept by the Mithraic devotees who occupied these spaces.

A peculiar feature occurring only once can be seen in Mithraeum **199**. Here, a tunnel connected a shaft opened in the center of the central aisle of the main cult room with a secondary room, used in a previous phase as a latrine. The pertinence of this feature to the Mithraic occupation is far from certain. In the past, it has been suggested to recognize in this arrangement a device useful for the performance of the rite of the *taurobolium*⁴³⁵. The later suggestion of reading this device as functional to a ‘miraculous apparition’ in the context of a Mithraic rite or performance seems actually more plausible⁴³⁶.

Now that we have explored the recurrent (and also the less common) features found in Mithraic sanctuaries, we are ready to put all the elements together and to address the development of Mithraic architectures through time.

3.4 Development of Mithraic sanctuaries: a diachronic perspective

⁴³² For example, the triangular base in **132**, the oblong base in the center of **155***, the circular bases in **192*** and **198**, the two square bases in **199**, and the square bases mentioned above.

⁴³³ With the only exception of **146b** found in the Fagan Mithraeum, of which we do not know the exact location.

⁴³⁴ See the previous chapter for an account of these secondary subjects.

⁴³⁵ As suggested in Parpagliolo 1914, p. 58, and as argued in Cosi 1979.

⁴³⁶ As suggested in Cosi 1979, p. 941 and developed in Mastrocinque 2017, §73.

The earliest Mithraic sanctuaries known in Italy can be dated just after the mid-2nd century CE, in the Antonine Age. The fresco of the Marino Mithraeum (**105***) can be dated between 160 and 170 CE, whereas a similar chronology can be indicated for Mithraea **132**, **133** and **140** on the base of brick stamps and inscriptions⁴³⁷. The date 18th January 162 CE can be read on an altar dedicated to Cautes in the Palazzo Imperiale Mithraeum (**138**), which testifies to the first Mithraic occupation of the site unfortunately not readable in the architectural development of the building. These early Mithraic sanctuaries are all located in Ostia, but epigraphic sources inform us that Mithraea existed possibly from this same decade also in Milan (**9**) and *Carsulae* (**56***). The earliest examples of Mithraic architectures can all be found in urban settings and are preferentially located in buildings of public interest such as baths, either more (**138**) or less (**132**) complex, or storage units (**140**). The explicit permission of public authorities for the reconstruction of the Mithraeum is mentioned in both inscriptions **9** and **56***. The Marino Mithraeum (**105***), built in an extra-urban location, indicates an early presence of Mithraic worship also in extra-urban settlements. As for the layout of these first Mithraea, we have **105*** and **132** which show a single-room layout with vestibule, and **138** which shows a multiple-room layout. Mithraeum **140** could be classified with the single-room type, but the large size of its vestibule allows us to list it with the multiple-room layout. The size of the main cult rooms is either small (**105***, **132**) medium (**133**, **140**), or large (**138**). The double tripartite scheme of the main cult room can be seen in all of these sanctuaries.

Only generically dated in the second half of this century are Mithraea **1***, **40***, **70**, **114***, **141**, **142** and **175**. The construction of Mithraeum **155*** can be dated around 180 CE, and between 180 and 190 CE are dated also the frescoes of Mithraeum **113**. In the last decades of the 2nd century can be dated also Mithraea **130**, **136**, **139**, **158**, and the second phase of Mithraeum **138**. In the last decades of the second century, Mithraea are still a strongly urban phenomenon, located mainly in Ostia and Rome but also in other Italian cities⁴³⁸, with only one sanctuary built outside an urban center (**40***) in the territory of Aquileia. Besides sanctuaries located in buildings of public interest such as again baths (**114***) and commercial or storage units (**141**, **142**), we have also a civic house (**70**) and military barracks (**155***). It is interesting to notice that in this period quite large is the number of Mithraea located in buildings of private interest such as housing units (**1***, **130**, **136**, **139**, **158**). As for the layout of the sanctuaries built in the final decades of the 2nd century, the most represented layout is the single-room type with (**1***, **113**, **114***, **130**, **136**, **139**, **141**, **155***) or without (**40***, **70**, **142**) vestibule, followed by a single new multiple-room sanctuary (**158**). A phase of restoration is known also in these decades for sanctuary **138**, which obtained its currently-known layout. The size of

⁴³⁷ In the case of Mithraeum **132**, a brick stamp dated in the reign of *Marcus Aurelius* and *Lucius Vero* (CIL XV 367) was found in the ceiling of the sanctuary, whereas in the case of **133** an inscription dated in the late 2nd century CE (**133a**) informs us of a previous phase of the cult image. In inscriptions **140b** instead we see the insertion of a second 'G' in the dedication of the sanctuary to the two Emperors (presumably *Marcus Aurelius* and *Lucius Verus*).

⁴³⁸ Such as *Augusta Praetoria/Aosta* (**1***), *Cosa* (**70**), *Capua* (**113**), and *Naples* (**114***). Other Mithraea were surely located in cities such as *Volsinii* (**68**) and *Nersae* (**85**).

the cult room in this period is generally of small dimension (**40***, **70**, **113**, **114***, **130**, **136**, **139**, **142**, **155***, **158**), with only two cult rooms of medium size (**1**, **141**).

In the Severan Age, between the late 2nd and the early 3rd century CE, the Crypta Balbi (**192***) and Nummi Albini (**174**) Mithraea in Rome were founded, and the restoration of the Aldobrandini Mithraeum (**133**) took place in Ostia. In the first quarter of this century the Porta Romana Mithraeum in Ostia (**135**), and the S. Prisca (**202**) and Caracalla's Baths (**199**) Mithraea in Rome were founded, and sanctuary **138** in Ostia underwent a third phase of restoration. Mithraea are still a chiefly urban phenomenon, with no sanctuaries known in these decades to have been built outside the city centers⁴³⁹. Only one more sanctuary is built in Ostia, in the space previously occupied by a public Lararium (**135**). Mithraea set in buildings of public interest continue to be represented in Rome by the Caracalla's Baths Mithraeum (**199**) and by the Castra Praetoria Mithraeum (**180**). In a space of public interest should have been located also the Crypta Balbi Mithraeum (**192**) whereas the S. Prisca Prisca (**202**) and the Nummi Albini (**174**) Mithraea were located in subterranean spaces previously belonging to housing units. As for the layout type, sanctuaries **135** and **174** belong to single-room type with vestibule, whereas Mithraea **192***, **199**, and **202** to the multiple-room layout. Whereas in the case of **192*** and **199** there are no particular traces in the added rooms that could suggest their specific use in Mithraic rituals, the S. Prisca sanctuary shows the existence of particular devices and decorations in these ancillary rooms that can be linked with the performance of rituals or community functions. The size of the main cult room in sanctuaries built in these decades is either medium (**135**, **174**), or large (**192***, **199**, **202**⁴⁴⁰).

Mithraea **53**, **60***, **71***, **122***, **143**, **169***, and phases of restoration of Mithraea **174** and **175** can be generically dated from the 3rd century CE. The prevalence of urban sanctuaries⁴⁴¹ is confirmed, with only two cases of extra-urban Mithraea⁴⁴² (**53**, **60***). Among these 3rd-century sanctuaries, none is located in large public buildings. Two were located in housing units (**53**, **71***) and two in buildings with commercial or storage destinations (**60***, **143**). All the possible layouts are represented. From the single-room Mithraeum without vestibule (**60***) to the one with vestibule (**143**, **169***), to the sanctuary with added rooms (**53**). As for the size of the main cult rooms, in all of the above-mentioned sanctuaries, we can find small-sized cult rooms.

Mithraea **126**, **131**, **144**, the restoration of sanctuary **140** in Ostia, Mithraea **156***, **193**, **198** in Rome, and the restoration phase of **155** again in Rome can be dated from the mid-3rd century. All of these sanctuaries are located within urban centers, either in buildings with previous housing destinations (**126**, **131**, **156***) or with commercial or storage purposes (**140**, **144**). In one case we have a sanctuary, namely the *Circus Maximus* Mithraeum (**198**), located in a building of public interest. The represented layouts are the single-room Mithraeum with (**131**, **140**, **144**, **156***) or without (**126**) vestibule, and a single case of multiple-room Mithraeum (**198**). In

⁴³⁹ Apart from the just mentioned sanctuaries of Ostia and Rome, a Mithraeum was built also in *Aveia Vestina*/Fossa as testified by inscription **82**.

⁴⁴⁰ The main cult room of the S. Prisca Mithraeum in a first phase measures 74 sq. m, showing a medium size, whereas in the second phase it was enlarged to reach 112 sq. m and large size.

⁴⁴¹ Other sanctuaries testified only by the epigraphic record are known in the cities of Aquileia (**32**), *Sentinum* (**51**), *Carsulae* (**55***), *Tibur*/Tivoli (**96**), and Rome (**182**, **202**, **210**, **248**).

⁴⁴² With the addition of context **101**, a possible Mithraic sanctuary located in the area of the Quintili villa, just outside Rome.

this last case, one of the ancillary rooms should have had a religious function as indicated by its furniture, whereas the other two were more probably service rooms. The size of the main cult rooms of these sanctuaries is generally small (**126, 131, 144**) or medium (**140, 198**).

In the late 3rd century can be dated the last restoration of the floor of Mithraeum **132** in Ostia, as revealed from a brick stamp⁴⁴³. Mithraeum **162** from Rome is generically dated in the 4th century CE with the rest of the building it was located in, but it re-used more ancient figurative monuments which can be dated between the late 2nd and early 3rd century CE. It shows a single-room layout and small size.

The latest Mithraea known to us were located in Ostia and Rome. In Ostia, it is the case of the Mithraeum of the Colored Marbles (**145***), located in a former *caupona* in the mid-4th century CE. This sanctuary shows quite peculiar features, such as the presence of only one bench, and the presence of a flowerbed in one corner of the main cult room. The layout of this sanctuary can be ascribed to the multiple-room Mithraeum, and its cult room shows really small dimensions. Elements of Isiac worship were found on this site too. In Rome, we have other two mid-4th century contexts. The first one consists of the inscriptions of the Olympii Mithraeum (**183**), which is a group of six altars that bear the name of two Fathers of the mysteries and of the rituals they performed, together with the exact date of these ceremonies. We are informed that between 357 and 362 CE *Nonius Victor Olympius* and *Aurelius Victor Augentius*, both *virii clarissimi*, that is men of Senatorial rank, performed several initiations into the mysteries for all of the known Mithraic grades. Moreover, in the second half of the century, the grandson of one of the two rebuilt at his own expense a sanctuary which he states was also better than the one set up by his ancestor. Quite unfortunately, the material remains of these two sanctuaries did not survive to the present age. The other context from Rome shows a quite different type of Mithraic worship. It consists in fact in the mention of Mithraic priesthoods within the inscriptions dedicated by five Senators in the so-called Phrygianum (**209**) located on the Vatican Hill. In this case, these Senators made a list of their various religious offices, and the Mithraic priesthood is only one among the many more quoted in the texts. The place dedicated for the display of these inscriptions was not a Mithraic sanctuary, but a sacred space dedicated to Mater Magna.

In the course of the 4th century, Mithraic devotees progressively rarified, and Mithraic temples of Ostia and Rome were abandoned, as it seems to be the case of **126, 132, 136, 138, 155*, 156*, 158, 162** and **193**. Sanctuary **192*** was closed up in the early 5th century CE as well as Mithraeum **60***.

3.5 Hierarchy of Mithraic sanctuaries: a suggestion

Even from this chronological overview, it seems that no particular patterns can be discerned for the development of Mithraic sanctuaries. The distribution of locational choices, layouts, and size does not show any immediately distinguishable feature. We must acknowledge at this point that Mithraic sanctuaries were represented in the same city usually by sanctuaries with different layouts and sizes which lived together. A smaller number of multiple-room Mithraea was

⁴⁴³ CIL XV 1569. See Marchesini 2012/2013 p. 163.

accompanied by a far larger number of single-room Mithraea. Both were set up steadily from the second half of the 2nd through all of the 3rd century CE. Few are the Mithraea set up in the 4th century. In the 4th century CE, the already built sanctuaries which were still in use lost their last devotees and by the early 5th centuries they were shut down for good.

A last question remains for us to answer: why do we find Mithraic sanctuaries with different layouts coexisting? What does their different structure stand for?

First of all, let us approach this question by saying that the distinction between single-room Mithraea and multiple-room Mithraea, which constitute only a fraction (22%) of the total number of sanctuaries, is not chronological - both layouts are quite evenly distributed through time – but it is structural. The single-room Mithraea were constituted by the main cult room and usually also by a small vestibule. Multiple-room Mithraea always showed similarly a main cult room and small vestibule, but in addition, they also comprehend other ancillary rooms. A reflection on the functions of these different rooms can help us understand the inherent difference between these two groups. The cult room surely had a religious purpose. The constant presence of the cult images in this room assures us that this space was devoted primarily to the worship of the god. Moreover, the recurrent double tripartite scheme employed in its architecture and in particular the constant presence of the two side benches reveals that another fundamental function of this space was the meeting of the devotees and possibly also the performance of rituals in form of a banquet. The vestibule, on the other hand, being too small to host a consistent group of devotees and usually lacking any particular feature directly linkable with cult practices, should have had primarily a partitioning function, acting as a diaphragm separating the sacred space of the cult room from the publicly accessible space resting outside of the sanctuary. Ancillary rooms could have had either a living or service purpose. Ancillary rooms with simple (**198, 53**) or no decorations (**138, 158, 199, 202**) and humble furniture such as cooking stands (**138, 140, 71*, 202**) were recognized in several multiple-room Mithraea: it seems possible that these rooms could have had service purposes, such as preparing foods for the community functions or storing objects used in rituals and ceremonies. Given this consideration, we should include in this group also sanctuaries **71*** and **140**, which showed quite large entrance spaces complete with cooking stands (see above). Moreover, ancillary rooms characterized by rich decorations (**158, 192***) or by furniture (**198**) and devices (**202**) which could be linked to cult practices have been detected in several of these Mithraea.

This difference, or better, this addition of functions assumed by multiple-room Mithraea suggests a new hierarchy for Mithraic sacred places, which can be read also in their topographical distribution within the cities. The case of Ostia is quite exemplary in this sense (fig. 8). Here, the earliest Mithraea, dated within the end of the 2nd century CE, are constituted by multiple-room Mithraea (**134**⁴⁴⁴, **138, 140, 141**) quite well distributed within the urban layout, followed by a more capillary distribution of single-room Mithraea (**130, 132, 135, 136, 139, 142**). In the 3rd

⁴⁴⁴ We suggest here to count the Aldobrandini Mithraeum among the multiple-room Mithraea, based on the importance of the sanctuary, of its early date of foundation, and the lacking of other Mithraic evidence in the area. Its long architectural history – at least three phases of restoration are known from material evidence and monuments – similarly to the case of sanctuary **138** seems to point in this direction too.

century CE, judging from the data at our disposition, only single-room Mithraea were added to the urban layout (**131, 143, 144**), whereas multiple-room sanctuaries set up in the previous period continued to be used and restored. In the 4th century, the only newly founded sanctuary was Mithraeum **145***, showing peculiar features (see above). In Rome, the situation was quite similar, even if the general picture is more fragmented. Multiple-room Mithraea were quite evenly distributed among the *regiones* of the capital. Within the end of the 2nd century the Mithraic landscape of Rome was constituted by two multiple-room Mithraea (**158, 192***), and a few single-room sanctuaries (**155*, 174, 175**). In the 3rd century other multiple-room Mithraea were founded (**198, 199, 202**) as well as single-room sanctuaries (**156*, 169*, 193**). In the 4th century only two Mithraea were founded (**162, 183**). If sanctuary **162** was a single-room Mithraeum, we are not sure of the layout of sanctuary **183**. What is sure is that in this sanctuary Mithraic initiations were performed by the two Mithraic fathers *Nonius Victor Olympius* and *Aurelius Victor Augentius*.

Judging from the suggested specialized functions of the ancillary rooms, and on their even distribution within the urban layout, we could suggest that multiple-room Mithraea had a vocation for performing, besides the usual worshipping and meeting functions, also more complex rituals, which could have been for instance initiations or teachings, or larger ones, such as banquets. Single-room Mithraea on the other hand could have been dedicated to worship and smaller gatherings, as their simpler architecture could suggest.

If these hypotheses can be advanced based on the specimens found in Ostia and Rome, the situation outside of these two privileged theatres is less clear. In Aquileia for instance, the scattered material evidence does not allow us to recognize this hierarchy of sacred places. We could nonetheless suggest that the community attending the small Duino Mithraeum (**40***) could have been linked to the larger ones surely worshipping the god in the city of Aquileia, head of this territory. A similar discourse could be advanced for the small *Visentium* Mithraeum (**69***) located in the territory of Vulci. The single-room Mithraea of *Portus Pisanus* (**60***), Cosa (**70**), Ponza (**112**), Naples (**114***), and Siracusa (**122***), could point toward a placement at the base of the hierarchy of local Mithraic sanctuaries of the respective cities. The Capua Mithraeum (**113**) and the Aosta Mithraeum (**1***) represent quite uncertain cases. They do not show the presence of added rooms, even if the Aosta Mithraeum could have profited from a closed courtyard just outside its vestibule, and the Capua one of a room only partially explored at the time of its discovery. Moreover, scenes of initiatory rituals were depicted on the benches of the Capua Mithraeum. Sure, their representation does not imply that these rituals were performed in the sanctuary, but their presence in a sanctuary not involved with initiatory rituals would seem harder to explain than admitting the possibility that they were performed on-site. Based on these observations, we could tentatively suggest that these two sanctuaries were not located at the base of the hierarchy of sacred places of their respective cities, but actually in a fairly high position. The Marino (**105***) and Spoleto (**53**) Mithraeum represent another difficult issue to solve. They were located in extra-urban settlements, but their large volumes seem hardly connected to small communities depending on larger urban groups. The lack of information on the material and cultural landscape including these two sites

unfortunately prevents us to suggest a solution for their place in the hierarchy of Mithraic sacred places.

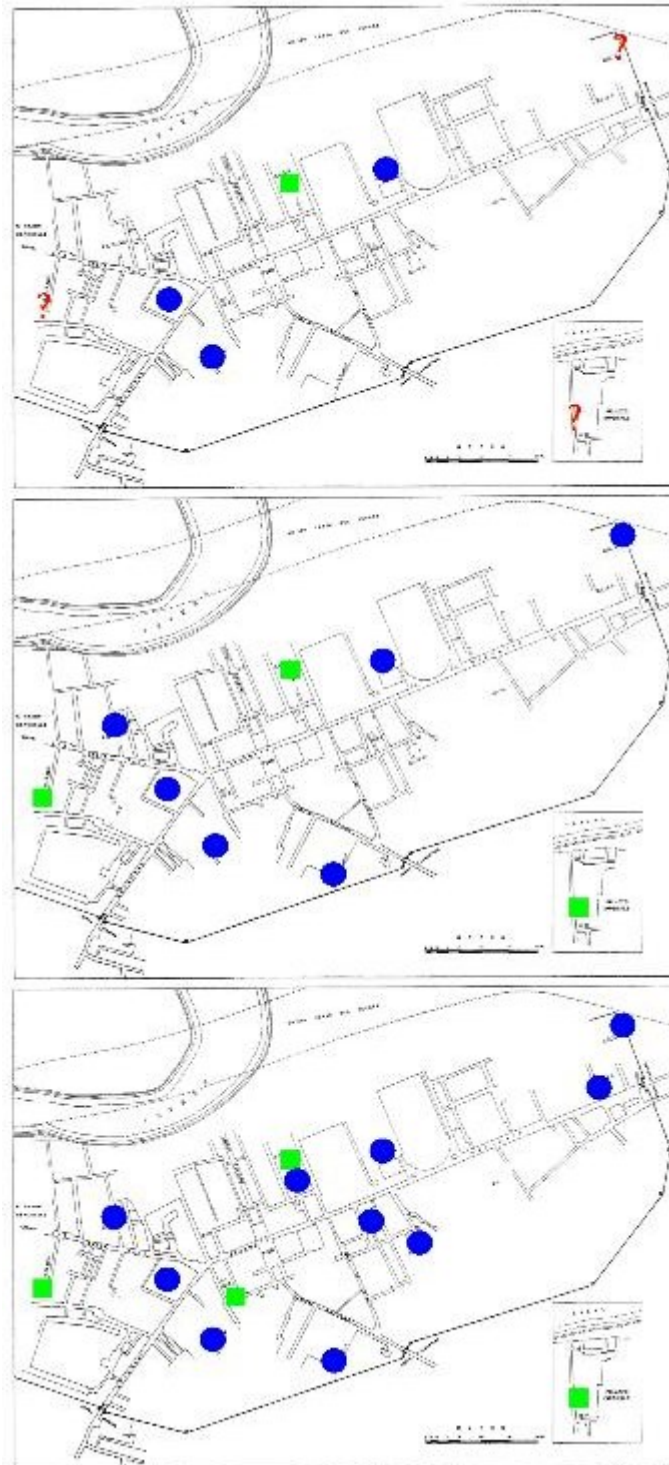


Fig. 8. Distribution of Mithraea within the cit of Ostia. The green squares represent multiple-room Mithraea whereas the blue dots represent single-room Mithraea. The three pictures represent the distribution of Mithraic sanctuaries in the last decades of the 2nd century CE (on top), between the late 2nd and the early 3rd century CE (middle) and in the 3rd century CE (bottom).

4. The management of Mithraea

4.1 Private funding and public concessions

Mithraea were not public temples: they were not funded with public money that means by the Emperor or by the civic communities, but rather the construction (and restoration) of these sanctuaries were undertaken by private citizens, usually single devotees.

The epigraphic records transmitted us the names of several wealthy patrons. In Ostia for instance we have the rich *Sextus Pompeius Maximus*⁴⁴⁵ (133a) who financed the construction and refurbishing of the Aldobrandini Mithraeum as well as the wealthy *Fructosus* (131b) who financed the *templum et spelaeum* of the homonymous Mithraeum. Both these devotees were quite important members of two Ostian *collegia*, respectively that of the *Togatensium* ferries and that of the *stuppatores*. Again in Ostia, *Aulus Decimius Decimianus* (137a) paid for the restoration of the Petrini Mithraeum. Moving to northern Italy, we have *Publius Acilius Pisonianus* (9) who paid for the reconstruction of a Mithraeum in Milan, after the previous one was destroyed by a fire, whereas the slave *Velox* (32) built a new Mithraeum in Aquileia. In *Carsulae*, *Sextus Egnatius Primitivus* (55*) financed the re-building of a Mithraeum after the previous one was destroyed by a fire, whereas a group of nine devotees coordinated by the priest *Egnatius Reparatus* (56*) collected a sum of five thousand *sestertii* for the construction of a Leonteum. *Tiberius Claudius Thermodon* (68) paid for the construction of a Mithraeum in *Volsinii*, whereas *Titus Flavius Lucilianus* and *Titus Avidiacus Furianus* (82), both citizens of equestrian rank, built a Mithraeum in *Aveia Vestina*/Fossa after the previous one in use collapsed for its old age. In *Tibur*/Tivoli, the slave *Victorinus* (96) rebuilt with his own money the local Mithraeum, whereas a Mithraic temple was restored by the public slave *Apronianus* (85) in *Nersae*/Nesce. In Rome, Mithraea were built by the devotees *Aurelius Zosimion* and *Aurelius Titus* (180, together), *Quintus Pompeius Primigenius* (182), *Victor Augentius* (183f), *Proficentius* (193e), and *Publius Aelius Ur.* (198d). Another Mithraeum was built in Rome by *Flavius Septimius Zosimus* (210). Wealthy patrons (131b, 133a) and private citizens (9, 68, 137a, 82, 183f, 193e, 198d, 210), rich slaves (32, 85, 96) and freedmen (56*, 180), and also one time a group of devotees (55*) funded the building and restoration of Mithraic temples all across Italy. Public authorities were not directly involved in the funding of these temples, but they were sometimes mentioned in the dedications of a sanctuary or monuments with the usual phrasings of *pro salute* of the Emperor(s) (43, 180, 182, 197) or the civic community (85).

On the matter of the relationship between Mithraic communities and public authorities, local senates are mentioned a few times in inscriptions for the construction or restoration of a Mithraeum. The *sanctissimus ordo* that means the local senate of the city of *Carsulae* gave permission at least two times to Mithraic devotees of building their temples. The first inscription testifies to the permission given to the priest *Sextus Egnatius Primitivus* (56*) to re-build a Mithraeum after the previous one was destroyed by an earthquake. Moreover, the second inscription

⁴⁴⁵ The same devotee was furthermore honored by the Mithraic community with the dedication of a bronze table (see 134).

from half a century later mentions nine devotees coordinated by the priest *Egnatius Reparatus* which were given permission for building a Leonteum, and were given possibly also the land (55*). The expression *loco dato decreto decurionum* employed in the text, which means ‘in a place given by decree of the city senate’, seems to be referred to a place given by the civic community to the Mithraic devotees. Again the concession for using a seemingly public space for the set-up of a Mithraeum could be read in inscription 146d from Ostia, where *Caius Valerius Heracles* quotes a *crypta*, that is a subterranean or semi-subterranean space, given to him (*concessa*) by a certain *Marcus Aurelius* ..., possibly an Imperial slave. It seems possible to suggest reading this concession as a long-term rental agreement of an Imperial possession to a local Mithraic community. In another case, the devotee *Acilius Pisonianus* instead informs us that he bought (*comparata*) from the city of Milan the land where he built his *spelaeum* (9).

These scattered documents show us a double possibility for the set-up of Mithraic temples. A first option, testified to by the case of inscription 9 but also from context 193, sees the construction of Mithraic temples in places belonging to private owners. A similar situation, based on the location of Mithraea in housing units could be suggested for sanctuaries 71*, 105*, 126, 136, 157, 158, 162, 202. A second option includes Mithraic temples located in public places thanks to the institute of the concession by public authorities, as testified by inscriptions 55* and possibly 146d. This occurrence could be suggested for those sanctuaries located in buildings of public interest such as baths complexes (114*, 132, 138, 199), barracks (155*, 182), or others (143, 135, 198). It seems not impossible that also in the case of Mithraea located in spaces with previous commercial or storage destination, the place was given or rented to the Mithraic communities through a private agreement between the owner and the devotees. Unfortunately, no records of such contracts survived.

4.2 the *antistes*: a devotee in charge of the management of the Mithraeum?

Once Mithraic sanctuaries were built, they were used. The wearing of furniture and cult images due to the passing of time, the changes in the numerical consistency of the group of devotees attending a sanctuary, the inevitable fortuitous accidents such as fires and earthquakes, inevitably called for works of rebuilding, restoration and adaptation. For instance, in the case of Ostia, at least 8 out of the 15 known Mithraea show traces of restoration. Material traces of these changes consist usually in the simple restoration or rebuilding of particular pieces of furniture such as the back altar (131, 133, 136, 138, 140, 142) or of the floor layer (132, 138, 140), or again of the side benches (138). They are overall small adjustments, generally accompanied by the dedications of new statues and images. In a single case, we can detect consistent proof of two extant architectural phases: this is the Pareti Dipinte Mithraeum (139). In the first phase, the sanctuary showed a single-room (with vestibule) layout, with the main cult room measuring ca. 45 sq. m. In the second architectural phase, the general layout remained the same, but the main cult room was enlarged encasing the space previously destined as an entrance vestibule and reaching a dimension of ca. 74 sq. m. A new antechamber was built in substitution of the previous vestibule. Quite analogous examples can be seen in Rome too. It is

the case of the S. Prisca (202) and S. Stefano Rotondo (155*) Mithraea. Both sanctuaries were enlarged in a second phase to encase the vestibule (in the case of S. Prisca) or the adjacent room (in the case of S. Stefano Rotondo). Adjustments in the back altars of some Roman Mithraea were detected too (155*, 175, 192*). With regard to the restorations recorded in Mithraea outside Ostia and Rome, we should mention the remodeling of the side benches in the Capua Mithraeum (113) and of the back altar in the *Portus Pisanus* Mithraeum (60*). These small maintenance works exactly as the more demanding rebuilding activities were financed by the devotees themselves, as testified by consecrations written on some of the new or renewed furniture⁴⁴⁶. The complete rebuilding of Mithraea due to the destruction of the previous temple by means of natural accidents such as fires (9) or earthquakes (56*) or old age (85) is known in three cases.

But who took care of the sanctuaries? We know that Mithraic communities consisted of relatively small groups of men and that they were characterized by a hierarchical organization depending on a grade system. Besides that, they had also a variety of priestly titles, among which the *antistes* is quoted 16 times in inscriptions from Italy. Already in the 1990s, based on epigraphic analysis, F. Mitthof suggested⁴⁴⁷ that, when dealing with Mithraic inscriptions, the term *antistes*, which means generally chief and supervisor, could indicate the role of supervision of a specific sanctuary given to the devotee mentioned with this title. Of the 14 devotees called *antistes*, 9 are indicated in the nominative form and reveal explicitly the consecration to the god of pieces of furniture such as altars (87, 193d), statues (129, 138c, 138d, 138e, 139b, 170), or once also a *thronus* (128). Other 5 times devotees are mentioned as *antistes* in the ablative form (96, 155f, 179, 187, 219) probably exactly in reasons of their role of supervision within the community. In these cases, the consecrations of pieces of furniture are made by other devotees who mention their *antistes* as a reference figure within the community. The role of the *antistes* could be fulfilled by devotees with the grade of either *pater* (146d, 187) or of *leo* (179) or also by devotees with a priestly role (219). If we compare the occurrences of the *antistes* with those of the *praesidentes*, we notice immediately that the devotees called *praesidentes* are mentioned always in the ablative form, and that they were always *patres* (24a, 184, 198f, 227, 255). Between the two terms, it would seem more appropriate to recognize a title of preeminence to the *praesidens*, which appears always associated with the grade of *pater* and is always mentioned as a reference figure within the Mithraic community. It seems possible to suggest that the *antistes* was generally instead a second in command, given the fact that rarely it appears associated with a specific grade, and that when it appears he can be either a *pater* or a *leo*. He had a more active role in the sanctuary: he consecrated statues and furniture and was sometimes referred to as a chief figure within a specific sanctuary.

5. When and how did Mithraea meet their end?

Solid chronological information about the last phases of life of Mithraic sanctuaries is unfortunately quite rare, given the fact that most of these buildings

⁴⁴⁶ See the dedicated paragraph in chapter 3. For the consecration of rebuilt sanctuaries see 9, 56*, and 85.

⁴⁴⁷ See Mitthof 1992, p. 284.

were not excavated with the stratigraphic method and that layers of abandonment were usually regarded as not interesting at the time of their excavation. Of the few which preserved chronological data on their last moments of life, the *Portus Pisanus* Mithraeum (**60***), founded in the 3rd century CE, reveals that it was in use still the 4th century and that it was abandoned in the early 5th century CE, as testified to by the materials from the last layers of occupation of the room. The abandonment of the Crypta Balbi Mithraeum (**192***) in Rome was dated also from the early 5th century CE. Here, the northern entrance to the main cult room was closed with a palisade, and a few decades later a stable was located in the rooms which previously had been used as a Mithraeum. The new walls built for partitioning this humble space re-used pieces of sacred furniture, such as the statues of the torchbearers. Those statues were found broken, but it is not possible to say if they were broken at the time of the building of the stable or in a previous moment. Moreover, in Rome, the S. Clemente Mithraeum (**158**) was abandoned at least a century before sanctuary **192***. The construction of pillars for the substruction of the walls of the nearby Christian church marked the closing up of the Mithraeum. In the 4th century, a new flooring layer was laid in room AM: it was irregularly built, and it encased as a floor tile the top part of the destroyed Mithraic altar **158a**. A chronology between the two just mentioned examples was advanced for the abandonment of the S. Stefano Rotondo Mithraeum (**155***). Written sources⁴⁴⁸ informed us that the barracks were still in use in the mid-4th century CE and that the Christian church which destroyed the upper part of their structures was built only a century later in the mid-5th. A number of statues and monuments dedicated to other deities was found inside the sanctuary at the moment of the discovery of the site. They include a head of Isis, a small statue of Telesphorus, inscriptions dedicated to the *Genius* of the *castra peregrinorum*, various consecrations⁴⁴⁹ made by military personnel, and the so-called prayer of Cascellia (**155k***). It was possible to exclude that those monuments entered the sanctuary by chance, at the moment of the abandonment of the site. The regular disposition of some of these inscriptions and statues called for a different interpretation of this assemblage. E. Lissi suggested that in a moment of the late 3rd or early 4th century CE, the Mithraeum could have hosted, beside Mithraic monuments, monuments dedicated to other deities dear to the devotees who attended the sanctuary⁴⁵⁰. We could have here a case perfectly parallel to that of the Dolichenum on the Aventine hill, with a reverse perspective: instead of Mithraic monuments in a temple of a different deity, we have other deities within a Mithraeum. Returning on the matter of the chronology of the site, the *castra* were abandoned in the early 5th century, and the Mithraeum was presumably abandoned with them. A last frequentation of the two small Mithraea **169*** and **156*** could be indicated in the early or mid-4th century, as the material record seems to reveal⁴⁵¹. There are virtually no archaeological traces that could shed some light on the date of the dismantling of the Caracalla's Baths (**199**) and Circus Maximus (**198**) Mithraea. The Bath of Caracalla were still in use in the early 5th century, and only

⁴⁴⁸ See Lissi 1986, p. 38.

⁴⁴⁹ See Panciera 1979 and Panciera 2006 for a complete account of these documents.

⁴⁵⁰ See Lissi 1986, pp. 38-39.

⁴⁵¹ For sanctuary **156*** V.M. Scrinari indicated the early 4th as a last moment of occupation based on the finding of a lamp with *chi-rho* Christian monogram (Scrinari 1995, p. 138). The same type of lamps was found in sanctuary **169*** (Beelli and Messineo 1994, p. 75).

in the early 6th century, a graveyard was realized in the southern exedra. It could be possible that the large Mithraeum located in the subterranean level of the northern exedra, just beside the waterwheel, was still in use all through the 4th century. There are no traces of restoration works within the sanctuary: it would seem suspect not to have recorded any restoration of the benches, or the central aisle if the temple had been in use for more than a century. It seems more plausible that the frequentation of the site for Mithraic purposes gradually decreased in the 4th century to arrive finally at his abandonment at the end of the century or at latest in the early 5th. The Circus Maximus also was in use into the 5th century CE, and the frequentation of the nearby Mithraeum, installed in the mid-3rd century CE should have been in use well into the 4th century CE, as testified also by the last restoration of the floor of the central aisle in the late 3rd century. In the case of the S. Prisca Mithraeum (**202**), installed at the beginning of the 3rd century CE, we could suggest an abandonment in the course of the 4th century CE.

In Ostia, the chronological data for the end of Mithraic temples are even scarcer. The only recent and fairly precise data come from the excavation of the Marmi Colorati Mithraeum (**145***). This sanctuary was installed in the mid-4th and abandoned within the early 5th century CE. The dismantling of sanctuaries **126** and **130**, together with the general ruin of the urban block they were located in, can be dated from the 4th century. Outside Ostia, it seems possible that the small Duino Mithraeum was also abandoned in the early or mid-4th century CE, as appears from the materials found in its excavation⁴⁵², and a similar date can be advanced for the Spoleto⁴⁵³ (**53**) and Capua⁴⁵⁴ (**113**) Mithraea.

In these last paragraphs, we used the terms ‘abandonment’ or ‘dismantling’ when speaking about the end of Mithraic sanctuaries. But is it correct? Were Mithraea abandoned or were they destroyed? Written sources indeed reported at least two cases, one in Rome⁴⁵⁵ and one in Alexandria of Egypt⁴⁵⁶, of the violent destruction of Mithraic temples, but, on the other hand, sure traces of violent end for these temples are quite feeble. The earliest Mithraeum to have been abandoned was surely that of Aosta (**1**): it was in use until the end of the 3rd century CE, as indirectly confirmed by the chronology of the building it belonged to. In the late 3rd century it was not used anymore, and its rooms were canceled for the construction of an open courtyard. In Ostia, traces of fire were recorded in the upper layers of the Fructosus Mithraeum (**131**), but if this fire meant the end of the sanctuary or if it happened when the temple had already been abandoned it is unknown. Traces of violent destruction on the big statue **132a** in the Terme del Mitra Mithraeum (**132**) as well as on the cult furniture of the Pareti Dipinte Mithraeum (**139**) were recorded too: even in here the time of these wrongdoings cannot be exactly pinpointed. None of the Ostia Mithraea showed traces of re-use in a later phase. They were possibly gradually abandoned and suffered the same fate of the urban block they were located in. Going back to Rome, traces of misplacement of the cult statues and voluntary damages inflicted to relief **155c*** were detected in the case of the S. Stefano Rotondo Mithraeum (**155***) as well as on the monuments and frescoes of

⁴⁵² See Canciani 2020, p. 22.

⁴⁵³ See Gori 1879, p. 62.

⁴⁵⁴ See Minto 1924, p. 354 and Sirano 2016, p. 288.

⁴⁵⁵ Hieron. *Ep 107 ad Laetam*, 2.

⁴⁵⁶ Socr. Scol. *Hist. Eccl.* III 2.

the S. Prisca Mithraeum (202). On the other hand, the monuments of the *Circus Maximus* Mithraeum (198), as well as those of minor sanctuaries of Rome (156*, 162, 169*, 173, 174, 175), were found intact. No traces of the major cult images of the tauroctony were found in the Caracalla's Baths Mithraeum (199) or either in the S. Clemente Mithraeum (158). We cannot say if they were displaced voluntarily by the last devotees, or by robbers stealing in the sanctuary after their dismantling⁴⁵⁷. Context 164 is quite peculiar in this sense: it consisted of four Mithraic monuments which were found buried in the ground and carefully covered with broken roof tiles. More than a ritual, this assemblage resembles a stash hidden probably by robbers (it is unknown in which age) that they did not come back to retrieve.

So, what happened to Mithraea in the 4th century? If a single case of abandonment of a Mithraic temple can be detected in the late 3rd century CE (1), it is in the 4th century that we recorded the last frequentation for the majority of Mithraea either in Rome, Ostia, or other parts of Italy. Mithraic temples could have in a few cases met a violent end (131, 132, 139, 202), even if archaeological traces are not undisputable. What is sure is that in the 4th century Mithraic communities began to shrink, as is confirmed by the small size of temples still in use, and they gradually faded away.

Generally speaking, the 4th was a century marked by the spread of Christianity among all layers of the Imperial society. From its acknowledgement as a legit religion with the Edict of Milan (313 CE) to its acknowledgement as the sole legit religion in the Empire with the Edict of Thessalonica (380 CE), and the general ban of pagan forms of religion (from 392 CE all through the next century), more and more citizens were driven to abandon the old gods in favor of the god of the Christians. That urban middle class which previously formed the basis of recruitment for Mithraic devotees was attracted to this new trend too. In other words, Mithraism in Italy followed the general demise of the pagan religion. The latest examples of Mithraic sanctuaries are well readable in the background of the struggle of 'the last pagans of Rome', as magisterially explained by A. Cameron in his 2011 work⁴⁵⁸.

Cat. ID	City, Name	Chronology	Chronological Source
1	Aosta	From mid-2 nd to mid-3 rd CE	Excavation
9	Milan	2 nd CE	Inscription
32	Aquileia	3 rd CE	Inscription
40	Aquileia, Duino	From mid-2 nd to mid-4 th CE	Materials from excavation
51	Sentinum	3 rd CE	Inscription
53	Spoletum	From 3 rd to early/mid-4 th CE	Chronology of building, Materials from excavation
55	Carsulae	First half of 3 rd CE	Inscription
56	Carsulae (?)	From mid-2 nd to mid-3 rd CE	Inscription
60	Portus Pisanus	From 3 rd to early 5 th CE	

⁴⁵⁷ We should add here that also Mithraea 133 and 138 in Ostia did not preserve the main cult image of the tauroctony.

⁴⁵⁸ As extensively explained by A. Cameron in his 2011 homonymous work. For the particular case of Mithraic consecrations of the late 4th century see Cameron 2011, pp. 142-153.

68	Volsinii	Last quarter of 2 nd CE	Inscription
69	Visentium	nd	-
70	Cosa	From mid-2 nd to mid-3 rd CE	Chronology of building, Materials from excavation
71	Vulci	3 rd CE	Materials from excavation
82	Aveia Vestina	213 CE	Inscription
85	Nersae	Second half of 2 nd CE	Inscription
96	Tibur	3 rd CE	Inscription
99	Rome, extraurban	nd	-
101	Rome, extraurban	3 rd CE	Monuments
105	Marino	From mid-2 nd to 3 rd CE	Monuments
112	Ponza	nd	-
113	Capua	From late 2 nd to mid-4 th CE	Monuments
114	Naples	From mid-2 nd CE	Chronology of building
122	Siracusa	From 3 rd to 4 th CE	Materials from excavation
126	Ostia, Casa di Diana M.	From 3 rd to early/mid-4 th CE	Chronology of building
130	Ostia, Lucrezio Menandro M.	From late 2 nd /early 3 rd to early/mid-4 th CE	Chronology of building
131	Ostia, Fructosus M.	From mid-3 rd CE	Chronology of building
132	Ostia, Terme del Mitra M.	From last quarter of 2 nd to 4 th CE	Chronology of building, brick stamps
133	Ostia, Aldobrandini M.	From mid-2 nd to early 4 th CE	Chronology of building, inscriptions
135	Ostia, Porta Romana M.	From early/mid-3 rd CE	Chronology of building, inscriptions
136	Ostia, Sette Sfere M.	From late 2 nd to early 4 th CE	Chronology of building, monuments
138	Ostia, Palazzo Imperiale M.	From 162 CE	Chronology of building, inscriptions, excavations
139	Ostia, Pareti Dipinte M.	From 162 CE	Inscriptions
140	Ostia, Planta Pedis M.	From late 2 nd CE	Inscriptions, coins
141	Ostia, Animali M.	From late 2 nd CE	Chronology of building
142	Ostia, Sette Porte M.	From last quarter of 2 nd CE	Coins, Monuments
143	Ostia, Serpenti M.	3 rd CE	Chronology of building
144	Ostia, Felicissimus M.	From mid-3 rd CE	Monuments
145	Ostia, Marmi Colorati M.	Mid-4 th CE	Excavation
146	Ostia, Fagan M.	190 CE	Monuments
153	Ostia, Portus	3 rd CE	Inscription
155	Rome, S. Stefano Rotondo M.	From last quarter of 2 nd to 4 th CE	Excavation
156	Rome, Celio Addolorata M.	From mid-3 rd to early 4 th CE	Materials from excavation
158	Rome, S. Clemente M.	From late 2 nd to early/mid-4 th CE	Chronology of building
159	Rome, nd	nd	-
162	Rome, via Lanza M.	4 th CE	Chronology of building, Monuments
164	Rome, piazza Dante M.	From 3 rd to 4 th CE	Monuments
169	Rome, via Passalacqua M.	From 3 rd to mid-4 th CE	Materials from excavation

173	Rome, S. Vitale M.	Second half of 2 nd CE	Monuments
174	Rome, Nummi Albini M.	From late 2 nd /early 3 rd CE	Monuments
175	Rome, Barberini M.	From second half of 2 nd CE	Monuments
180	Rome, via Sicilia M.	198-211 CE	Inscription
182	Rome, C. Praetoria M	3 rd CE	Inscription
183	Rome, Olympii M.	Second half of 4 th CE	Inscriptions
192	Rome, Crypta Balbi M.	From late 2 nd /early 3 rd to early 5 th CE	Excavations
193	Rome, Cancelleria Apostolica M.	Second half of 3 rd CE	Monuments
198	Rome, Circus Maximus M.	From mid-3 rd to early/mid-4 th CE	Chronology of building, brick stamps
199	Rome, Caracalla's Baths M.	From early 3 rd CE	Chronology of building
202	Rome, S. Prisca M.	3 rd CE	Excavations
204	Rome, Aventine Dolichenum	3 rd CE	Excavations
205	Rome, via Marmorata M.	3 rd CE	Inscriptions
210	Rome, nd	3 rd CE	Inscription
248	Rome, nd	3 rd CE	Inscription

Conclusions

The collection of Mithraic finds presented in the second chapter of this thesis represents at the same time the update of the already known Mithraic material finds from the Italian peninsula - with either the confirmation or update of data such as place and state of preservation – and, more importantly, it supplements 108 new entries, constituting a 25% increase of Mithraic finds from Italy.

The 24 entries added to the corpus of Mithraic finds from northern Italy reveal previously unknown Mithraic communities and contribute to expanding our knowledge of devotees who worshipped Mithras in these regions. The role of the members of the administrative posts of the *publicum portorium Illyrici* for the spread of Mithraism - already noticed in the eastern areas - finds a perfect comparison in the western part of the region. In *Augusta Praetoria/Aosta* we record the existence of a Mithraic community (1*, 2*) including at least two Imperial slaves, *Antiochus* and *Bassus*, the latter surely working for the office of the *Quadragesima Galliarum* located in the city. A similar social basis of slaves and freedmen involved with the trade routes between Italy and Raetia could be suggested for explaining the concentration of Mithraic finds along the via Claudia Augusta on the axis Val d'Adige-Val di Non-Val di Isarco (14-22).

As for the internal organization of the Mithraic communities of northern Italy, the use of the grade system is scarcely testified. Nonetheless, we find mentions of *leones* and *patres*. Moreover, a quite fragmentary *album sacratorum* from Ospedaletto di Gemona del Friuli (38*) reveals the existence of a community consisting of at least 13 devotees in this small settlement located just before the border of Noricum. This album testifies to a quite small community, especially if compared with the more famous *album sacratorum* of the nearby city of *Virunum*, consisting of at least 34 devotees. Quite large should have been on the other hand the Mithraic community – or communities – worshipping Mithras in Aquileia. This city disclosed the highest number of Mithraic finds in Italy (with the exceptions of Rome and Ostia) revealing a heterogeneous community consisting of slaves, freedmen, soldiers, and freeborn citizens, active from the 2nd to the 4th century CE.

The 30 entries added to the corpus of Mithraic finds in central Italy contribute to expanding our knowledge of the communities located in these regions. In Umbria, where the lively presence of a Mithraic community in *Sentinum/Sassoferrato* in the 3rd century was already known, inscriptions reveal the existence of similar communities in the settlements of *Carsulae* (55*) and *Nequinum/Narni* (56*). A particular representation of the tauroctony was found in Umbria, in a site overlooking the eastern bank of the Trasimeno Lake. The image consists of the

usual tauroctony, made of terracotta, and covered by a lead-glazed varnish (65*). On the Tyrrhenian coast, the discovery of a Mithraeum in *Portus Pisanus* (60*) consists of the first architectural trace of the cult of Mithras in northern Etruria. Southern Etruria, on the other hand, disclosed a number of new communities, revealed by the discovery of Mithraea in Cosa (70), Vulci (71*), *Visentium*/Bisenzio (69*), and by figurative monuments and inscriptions in Tarquinia (72*), Caere (73*), and *Veii*/Veio (79*, 80*). The spread of Mithraism in Southern Etruria was quite precocious, with the earliest figurative monuments and Mithraea dating from the central decades of the 2nd century CE. A particular mention must be made for *Aurelius Mucatra*, the Thracian soldier serving as *stationarius* in *Aveia Vestina*/Fossa, who consecrated a monument to Mithras in the mid-3rd century CE. His consecration reveals a further pattern of the spread of Mithraism in central Italy: a soldier from abroad, who was already acquainted with the cult, brought Mithraism back to Italy in a community in the center of the Apennines.

11 entries contribute to expanding our knowledge of Mithraic communities in Southern Italy. The Mithraic cult in Naples, already known from figurative monuments, is now confirmed by the discovery of a Mithraeum (114*). Now we know of Mithraic communities in *Paestum* and *Stabiae*, thanks to the discovery of inscriptions. A Mithraeum was discovered in Siracusa, where Mithraic figurative monuments were already known since the Vermaseren's catalogue.

Only one sanctuary⁴⁵⁹ was added to the already famous Mithraea of Ostia: the Marmi Colorati Mithraeum (145*). This sanctuary reveals that Mithraism in Ostia was alive still in the mid-4th century CE, even if the cult showed some quite peculiar features in these late times. This temple reveals a different Mithraism: the small room available for the cult image and the benches testifies to a small community. Moreover, the presence of elements connected with the cult of Isis could point toward the contemporary worship of the Egyptian deity in the rooms abutting the small Mithraic cult room. Few are the new entries in the city of Rome. They consist of 4 Mithraea: S. Stefano Rotondo (155*), Ospedale Addolorata (156*), via Passalacqua (169*), and Crypta Balbi (192*). Even though these additions are numerically scarce, their excavations disclosed new data which are quite important for a better understanding of the overall dimension of Mithraism in Rome. In particular, the Crypta Balbi, Ospedale Addolorata, and via Passalacqua Mithraea, testify that Mithraism was still practiced in Rome in the 4th century CE, as already documented in Ostia.

The analysis of the topographical choices of the Ostian devotees, crossed with the analysis of the organization of the spaces within Mithraic sanctuaries and their

⁴⁵⁹ In February 2022, within restoration works undergoing in the *domus dei capitelli di stucco*, fragments of a Mithraic relief made with stucco were discovered, possibly adding another *Spelaeum* to the total number of the Ostian sanctuaries. The relief and its context are currently under study by the Ostian Superintendence. For the news of the discovery see: https://www.ansa.it/canale_viaggiart/it/regione/lazio/2022/02/13/a-ostia-antica-scoperto-rilievo-mitra-in-stucco_8cdeb4eb-65b5-46c8-8e39-d695de3ec709.html

chronology also gave interesting results, which will be briefly summarized. First of all, in terms of locational choices, all of the Ostian Mithraea, either those located in buildings of private character or those in public complexes, were well hidden within the urban fabric. Accessing a Mithraeum required knowing its location beforehand. It was a space never open directly on a busy street, but more commonly on internal courtyards. Secondly, as for the general layout of Mithraea, we detected two possible choices for Mithraic sanctuaries. Most of them – despite varying in dimensions and being conditioned by architectural constraints of the building they were located in – were organized into two spaces: a small vestibule (between 10 and 25 sq. m) and a cult room (between 35 and 95 sq. m). The cult room showed a double tripartition of space. It was divided in the sense of the width into a central aisle and two side benches, whereas it was separated longitudinally into entrance space, space of the benches, and area of the altar. The vestibule served the sole function of separating the internal sacred space of the Mithraeum from the outside public space, whereas the cult room hosted the meetings of the devotees, as revealed by the constant presence of benches and cult images. We can call this first kind of layout ‘single-room Mithraeum’. A small fraction of the known sanctuaries of Ostia showed a second type of layout, consisting of a multifunctional vestibule, a main cult room, and ancillary rooms with service function. Being vestibule and cult rooms virtually identical to the ones in the sanctuaries of the previous type, the core difference between these two layouts resides in the presence of ancillary spaces. We can call this second type ‘multiple-room Mithraeum’.

If we extend these observations to Mithraea from the rest of Italy, we obtain the following picture. 78% of Mithraic temples show the single-room layout, whereas the remaining 22% show the multiple-room layout, where the added spaces can have either a service function or a living purpose. The difference between the two layouts is not chronological, nor specific to a geographical area, nor depending upon the status of devotees. How to explain then this structural difference? If we rule out the chronological, geographic, and economic factors, our answer must take into account the functional aspect. The first - and most common – layout guaranteed the devotees the possibility of meeting privately, of worshipping the god, and of having assemblies that could involve food and drinks – always brought from outside since there were no kitchens in these temples. The second layout, on the other hand, added new opportunities for the community. The service spaces could be used to store all kinds of objects useful for rites and celebrations, from crockery to clothing and other specific tools. In addition, open spaces could easily host fireplaces and kitchen counters to prepare or re-heat foods for banquets. Moreover, open spaces such as secluded internal courtyards could have been used for setting up the initiatory rites that are so famous among ancient written sources. Finally, the living spaces could have hosted assemblies with a further aim besides worshipping the god or having a banquet: they could have been used for teaching. If we admit this functional difference between the two layouts of Mithraea, the matter of hierarchy

among different sanctuaries arises. Were multiple-room Mithraea more important than single-room sanctuaries? Concerning the function of the temple, I think that multiple-room Mithraea were preeminent. Devotees were initiated into the mysteries in these spaces, and they performed rituals more complex than usual meetings going on in single-room sanctuaries.

This conclusion is based on the analysis of Mithraic sanctuaries located in Italy, which represent only a fraction (ca. 40 %) of the total number of Mithraea built all over the Roman Empire. The comparison between this Italian overview and the picture provided by the Provinces should constitute a profitable testing ground for the just exposed results in future research.

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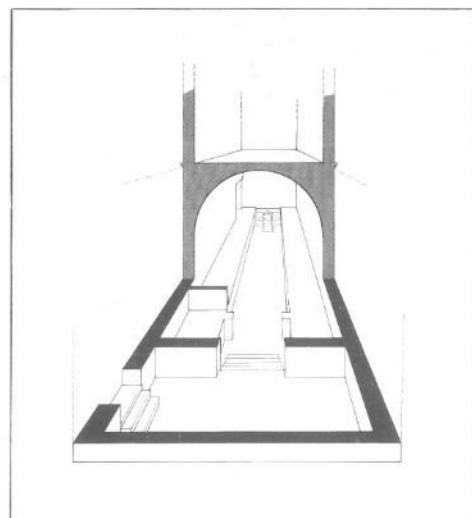
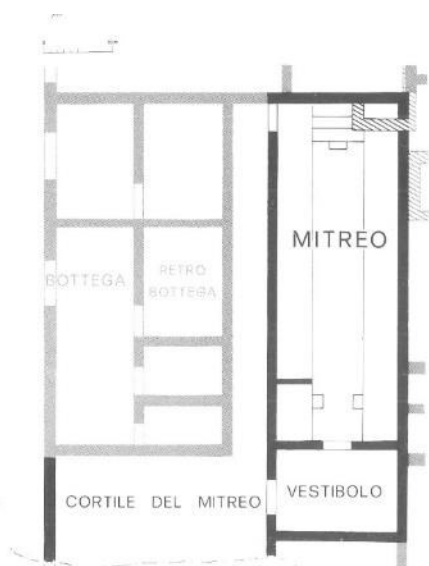
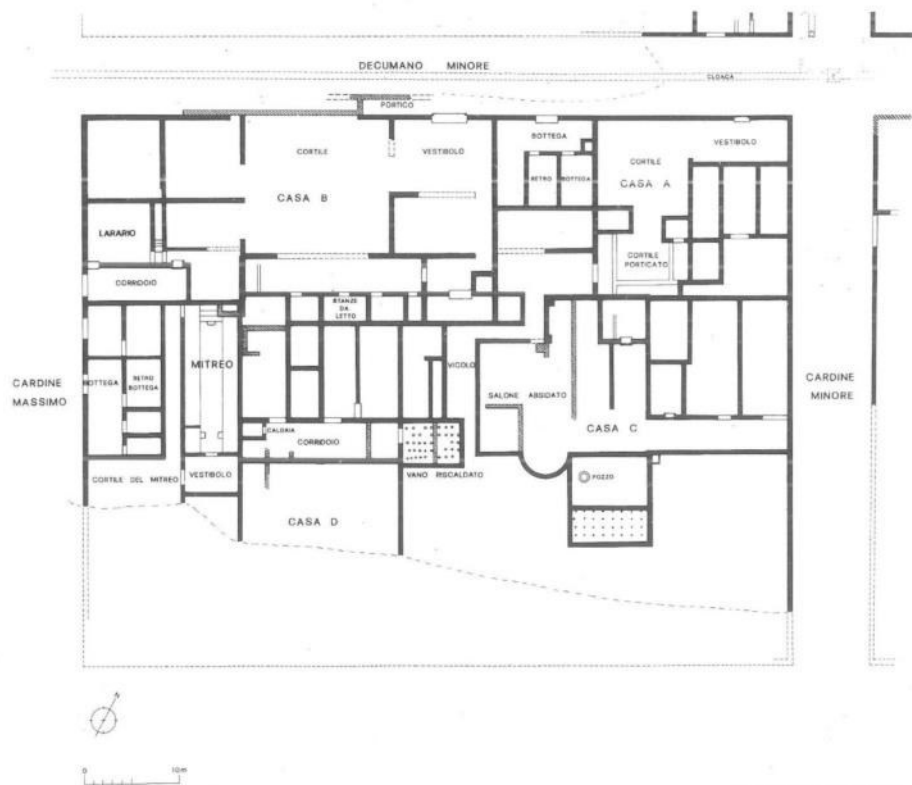
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Appendix: Images



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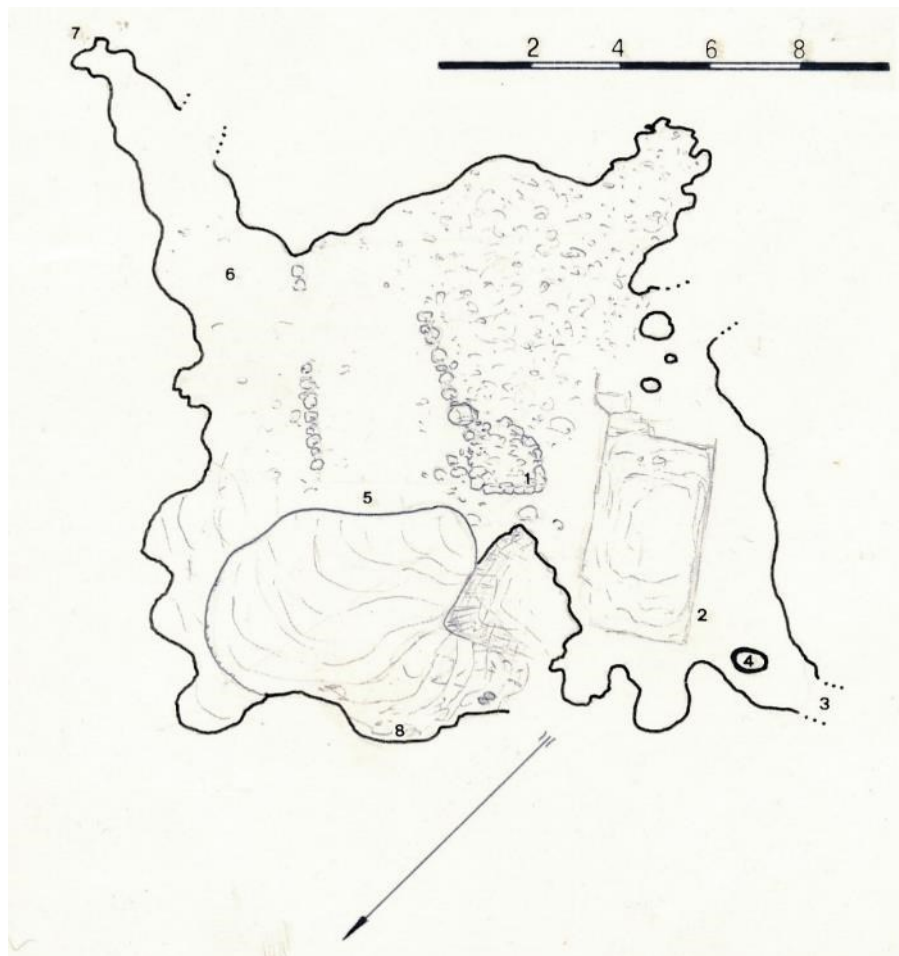
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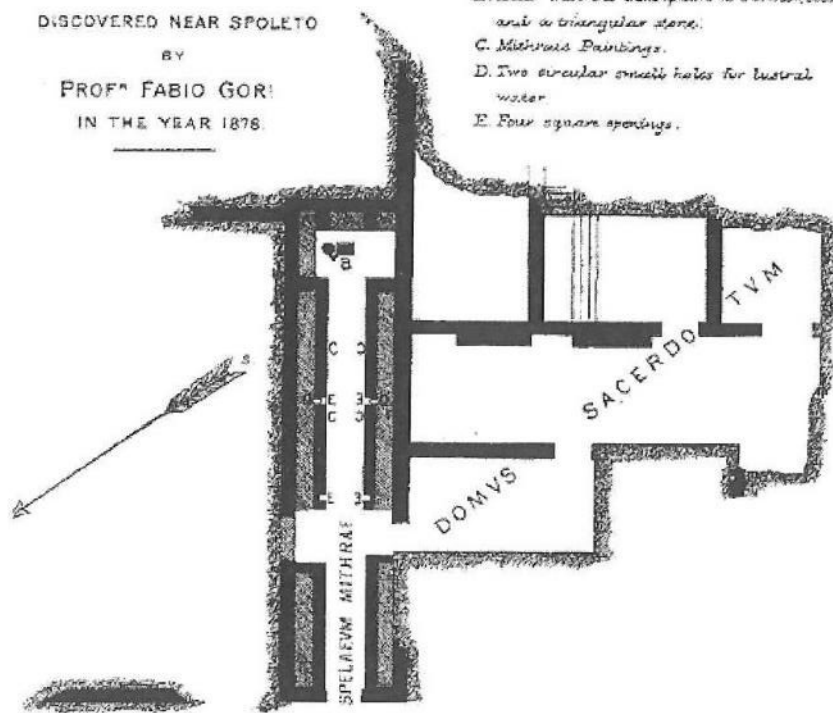
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PLAN OF THE
MITHRAEUM
DISCOVERED NEAR SPOLETO
BY
PROF. FABIO GORI
IN THE YEAR 1878

EXPLANATION.

- A. Niches for the statues of Mithras and of the two Genii Lampadophori.
- B. Alear with the inscription to the Sun, column and a triangular stone.
- C. Mithraic Paintings.
- D. Two circular small holes for lustral water.
- E. Four square openings.



Scale of 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Meters

A. SILVESTRI delin.

Cat. 53

© Coote 1882.



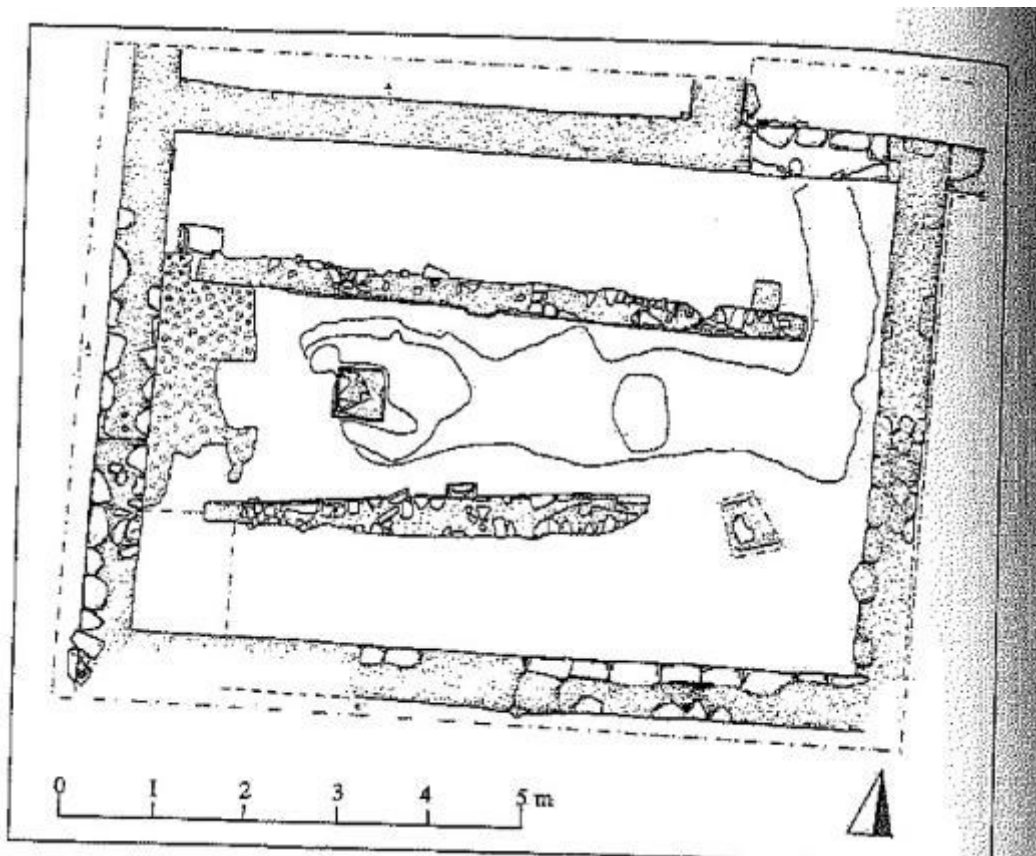
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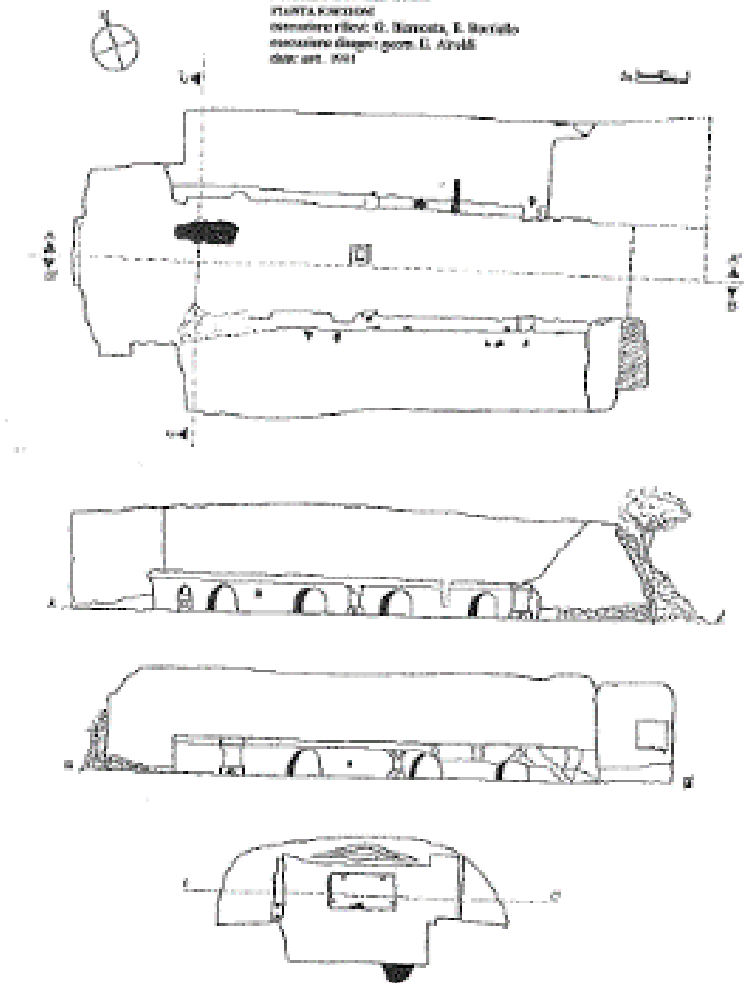
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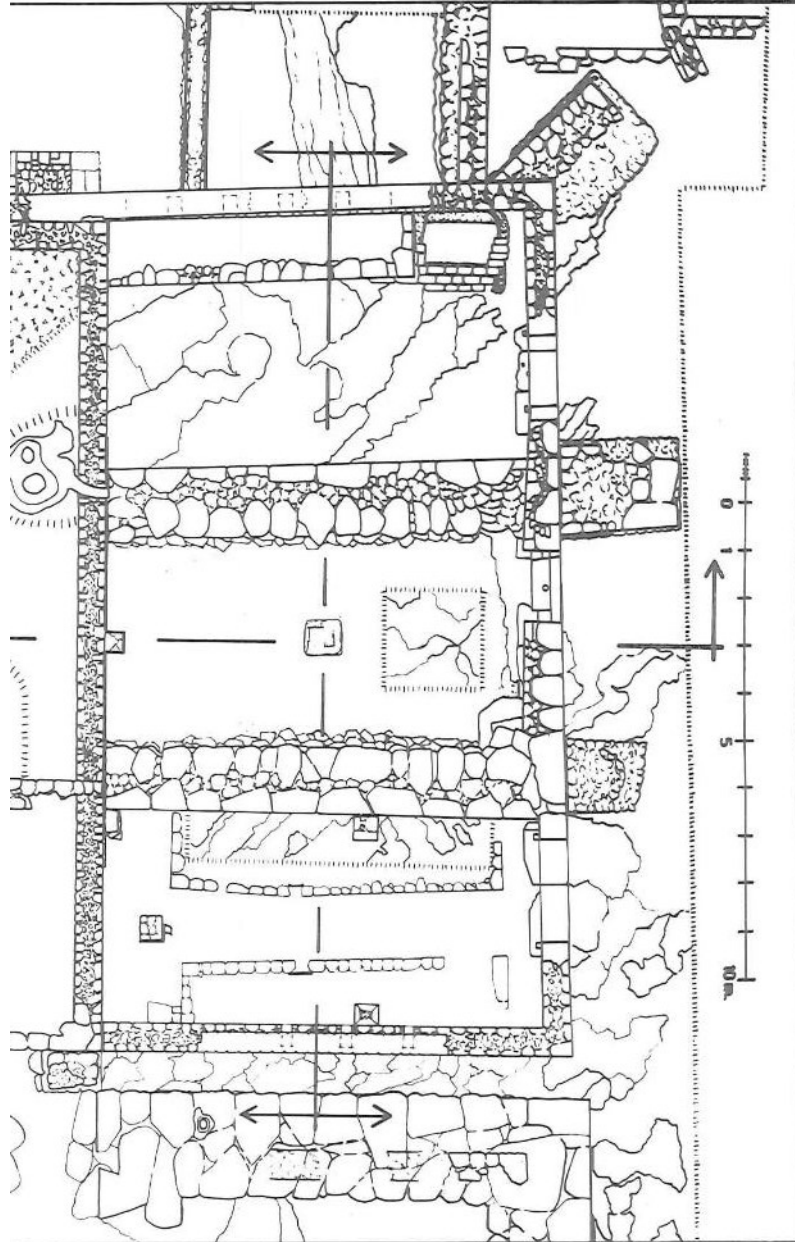
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CUMULO DI CIPRESSI (VI)
LOCALITÀ "PROCONTOCANTO"
MUNICIPIO DI MANTOVA
PIANTA KOCHER
CONSEGNA RILEV. G. BARONIA, E. MARINO
ESCAVATO DAGLI SCOP. L. AIOVILI
OCTUBRE 1991



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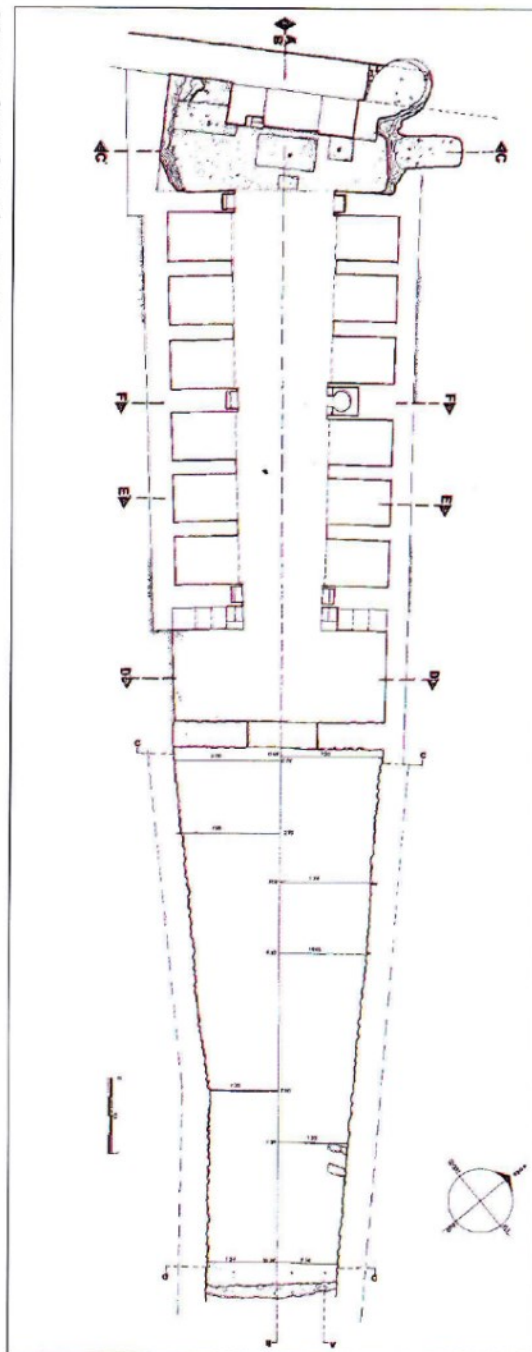
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Mitreo di Vulci, planimetria.



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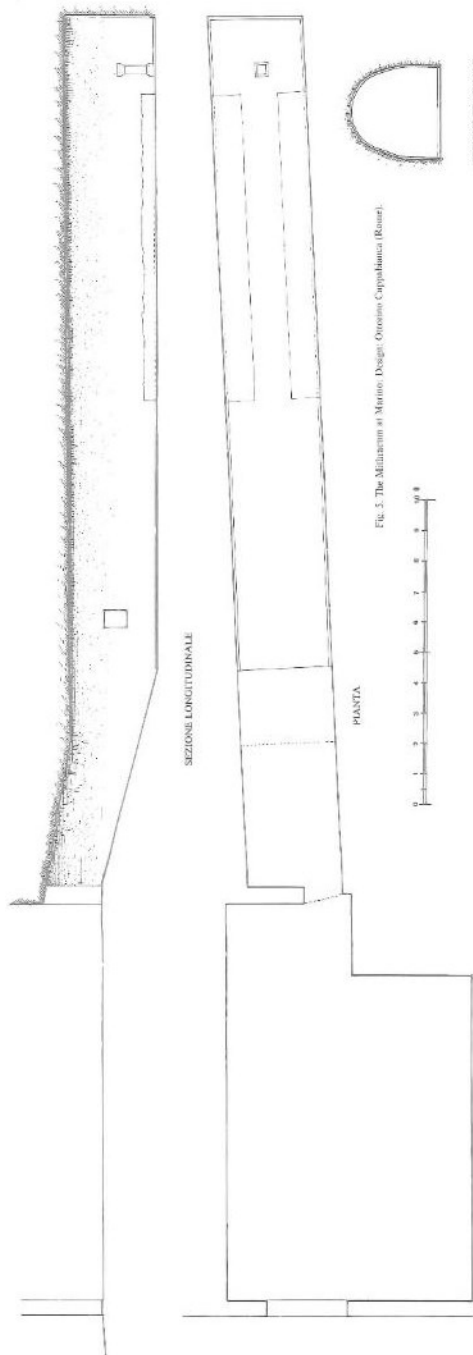


Fig. 5. The Millicium at Marino. Design: Ottavio Cappabianca (Rome).

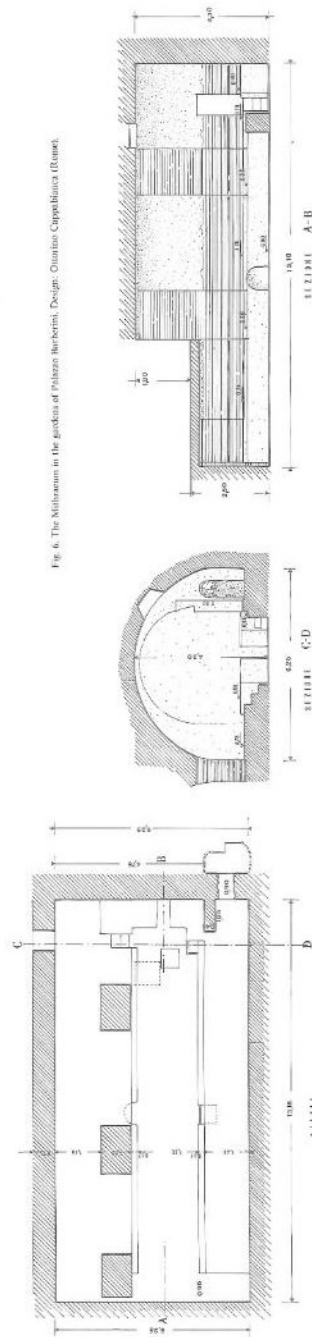


Fig. 6. The Millicium in the gardens of Palazzo Barberini. Design: Ottavio Cappabianca (Rome).

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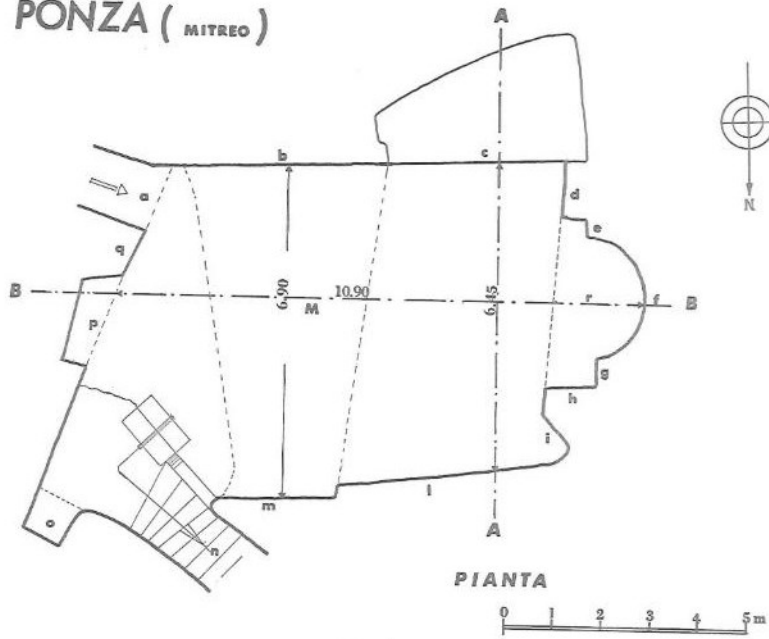
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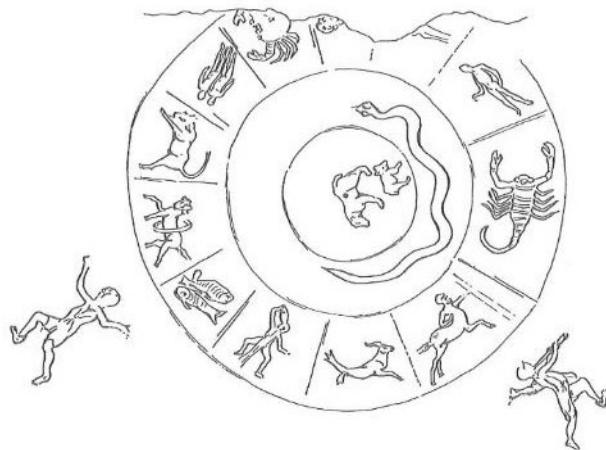
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PONZA (MITREO)



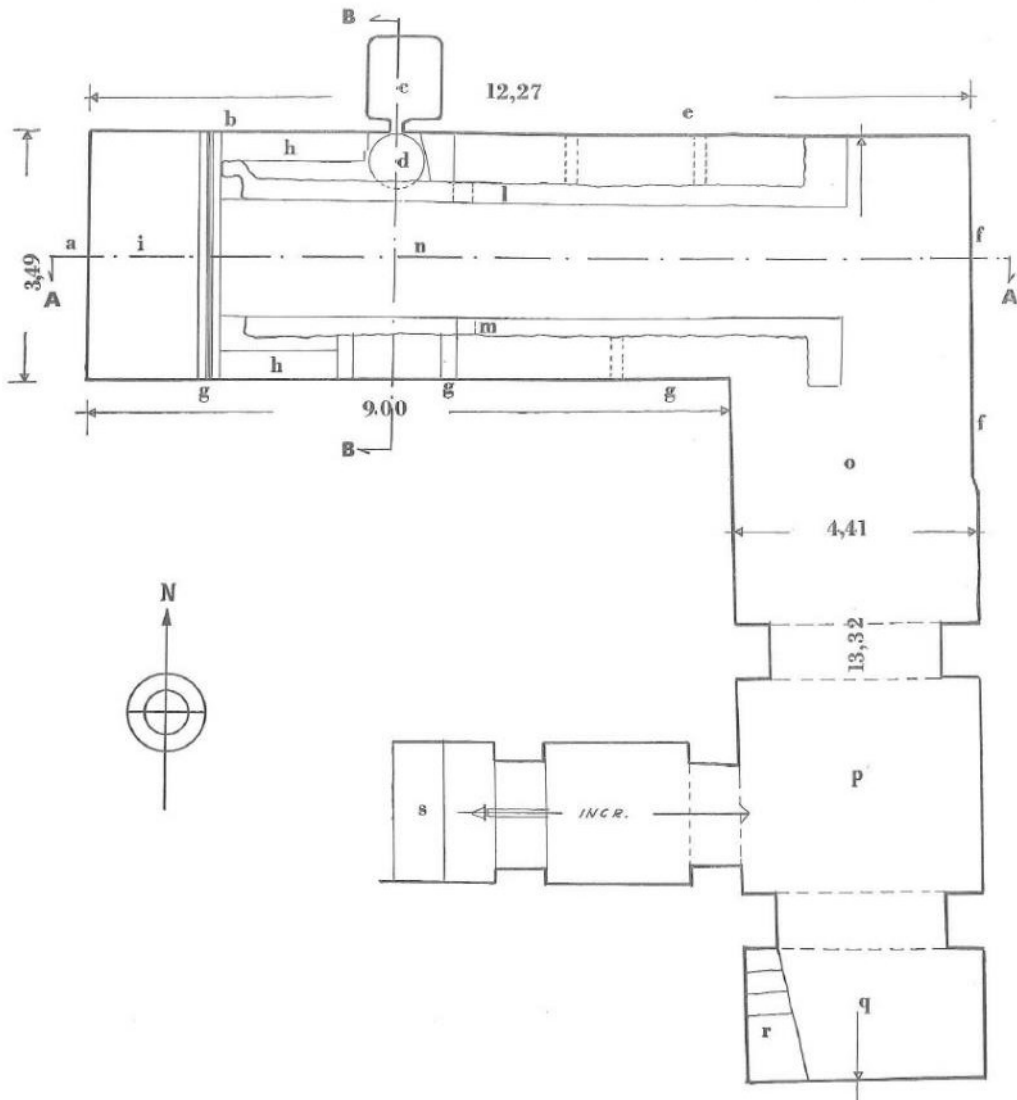
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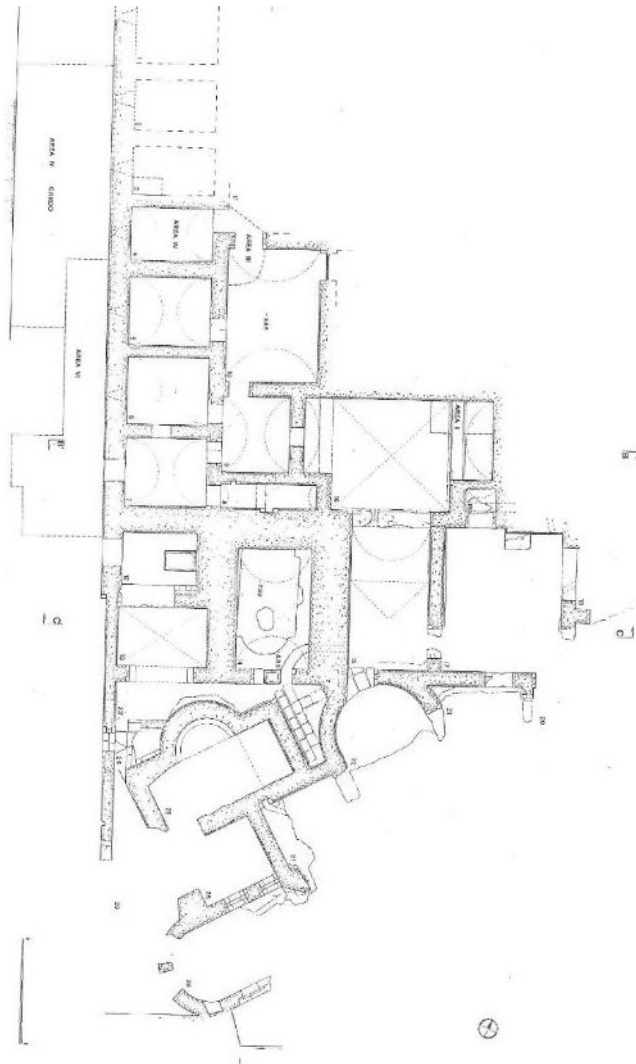
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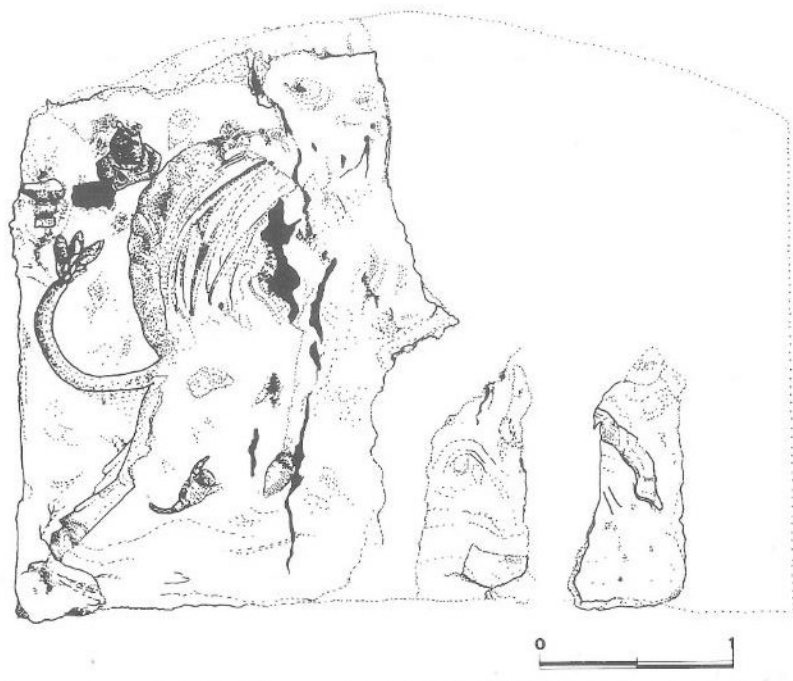
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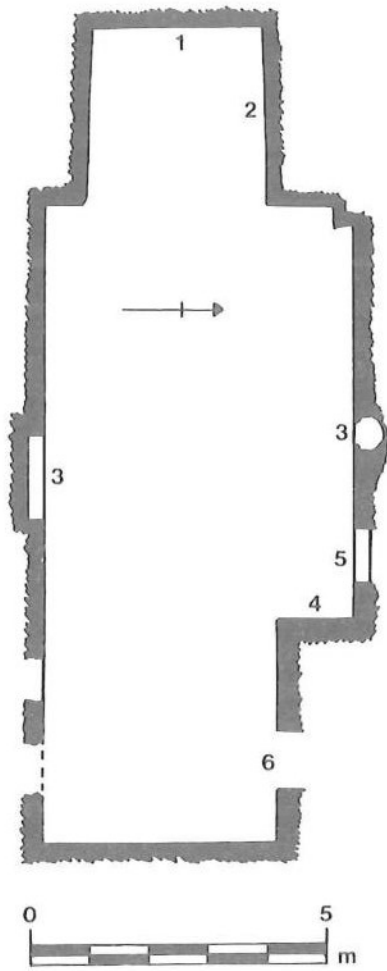
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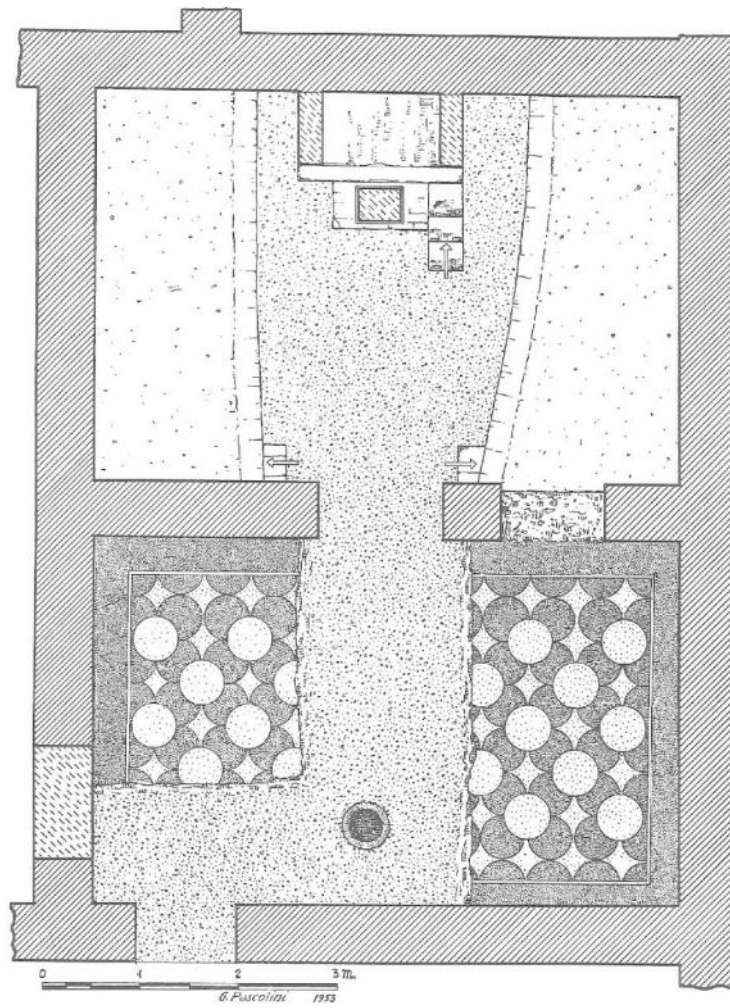
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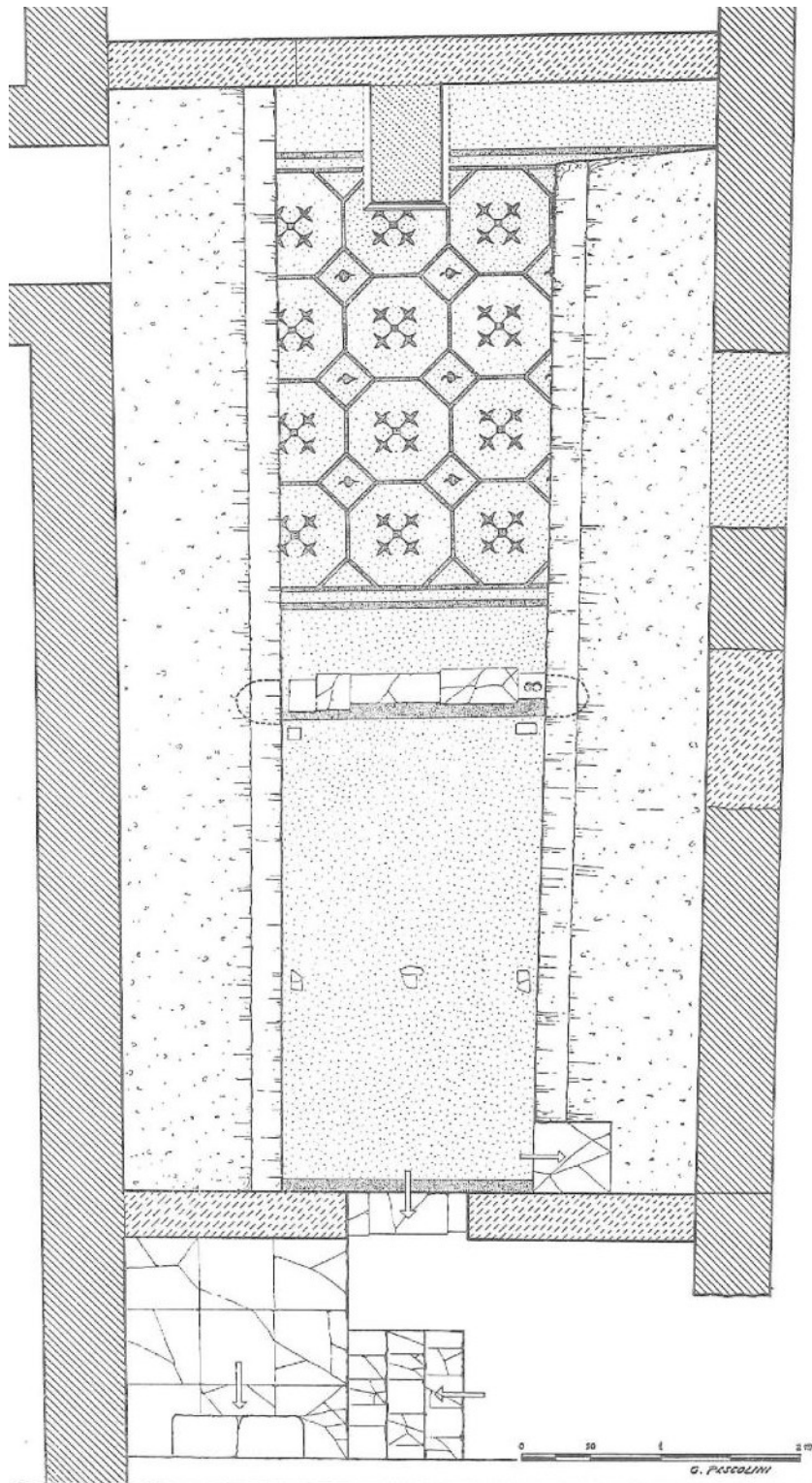
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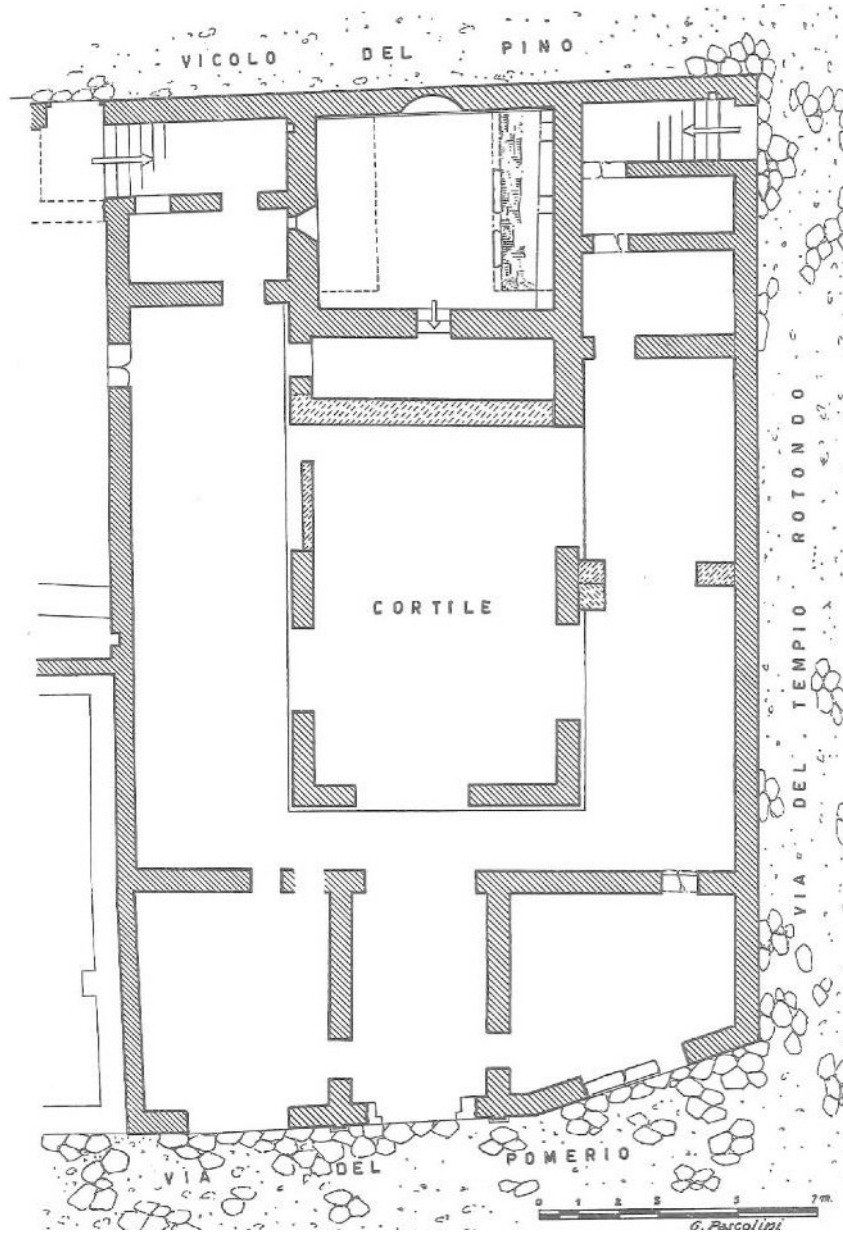
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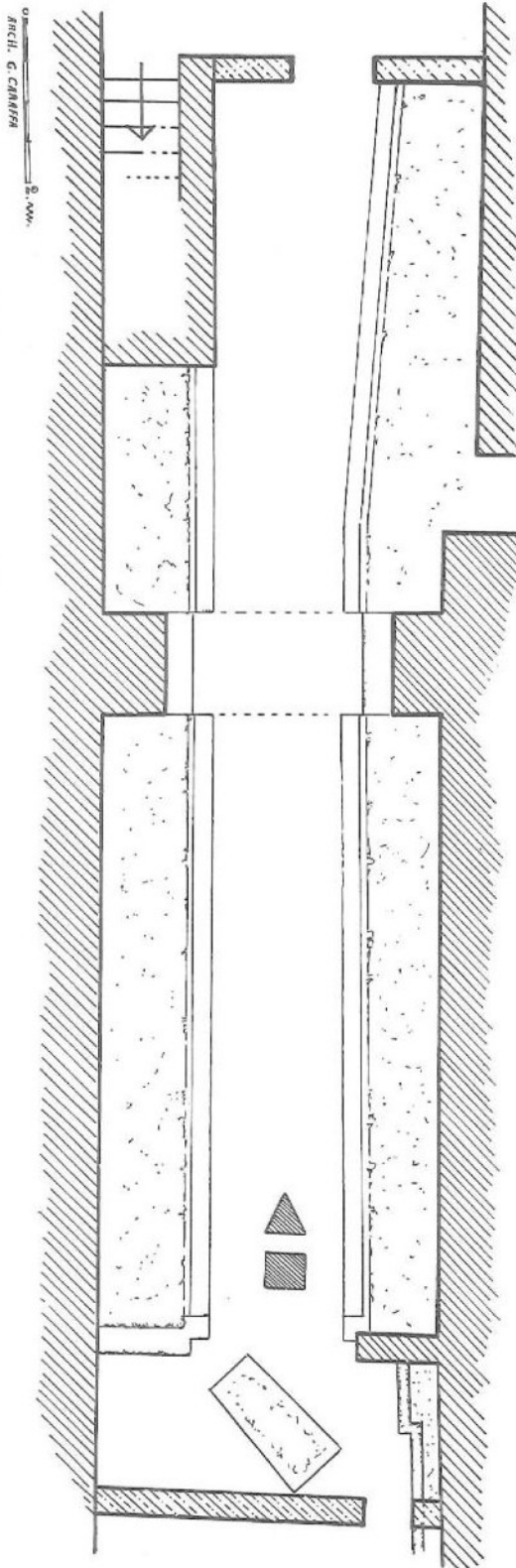
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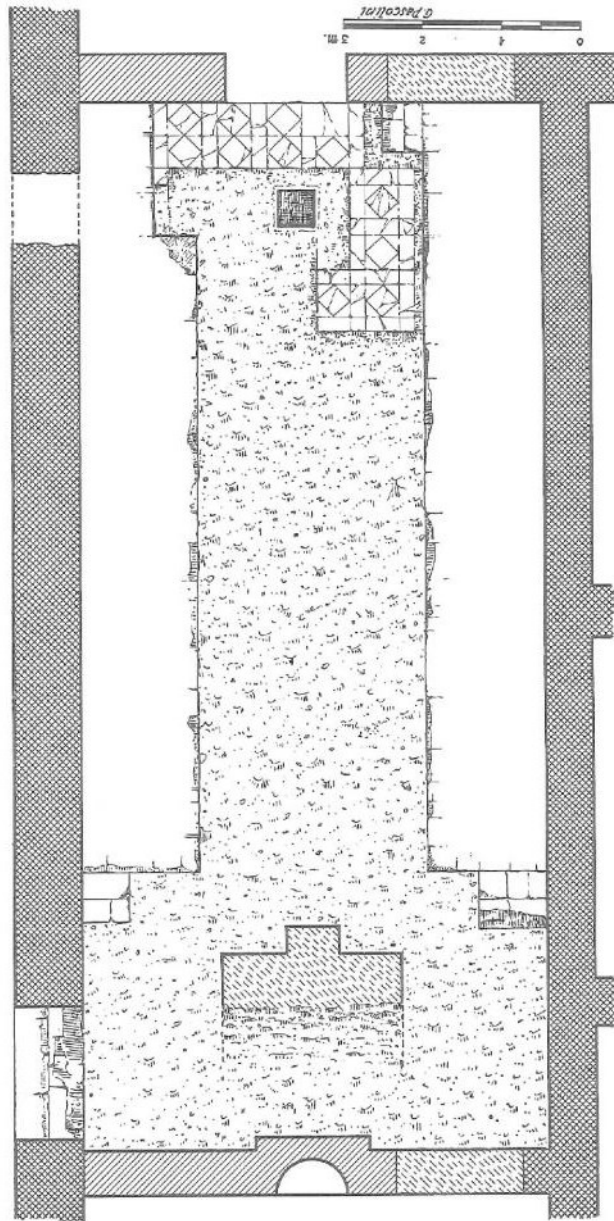
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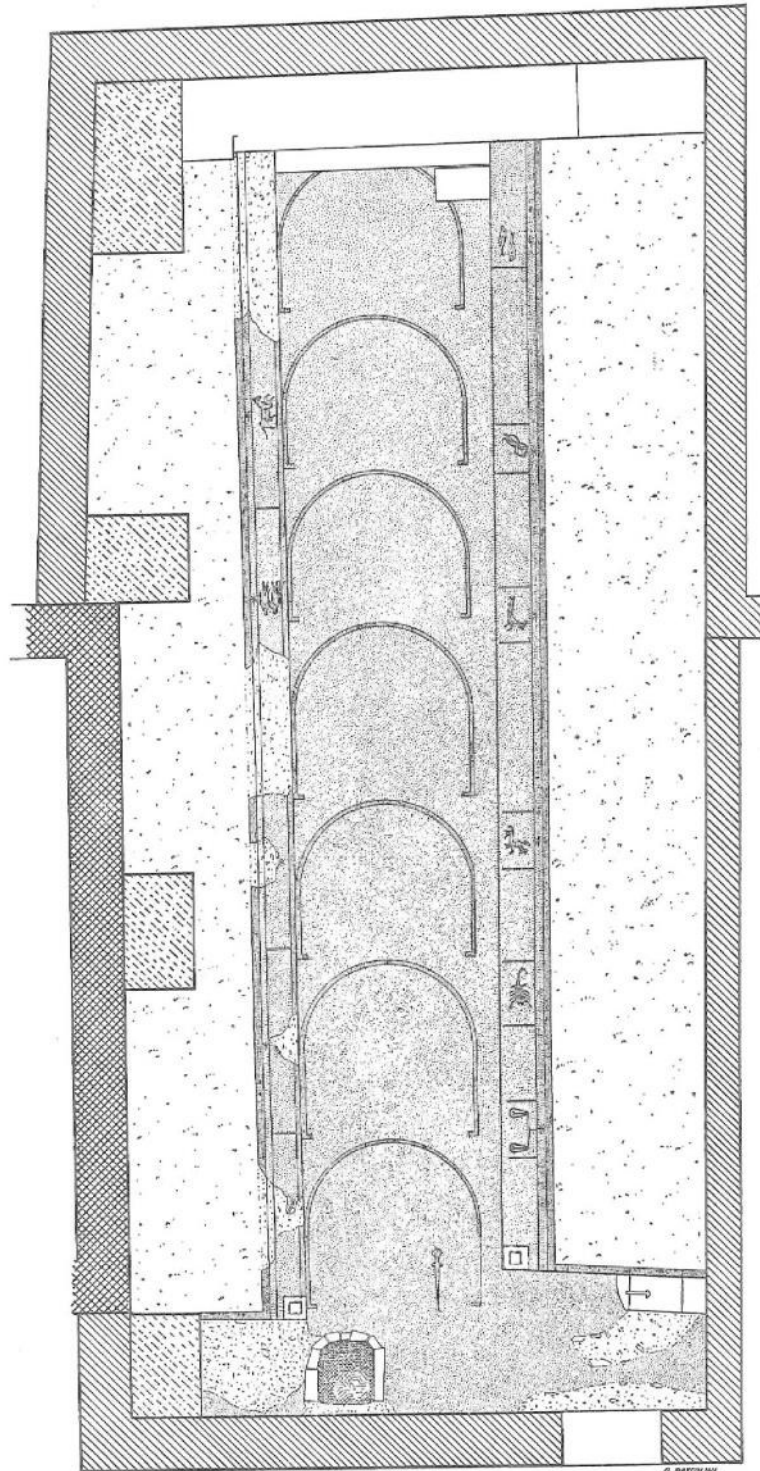
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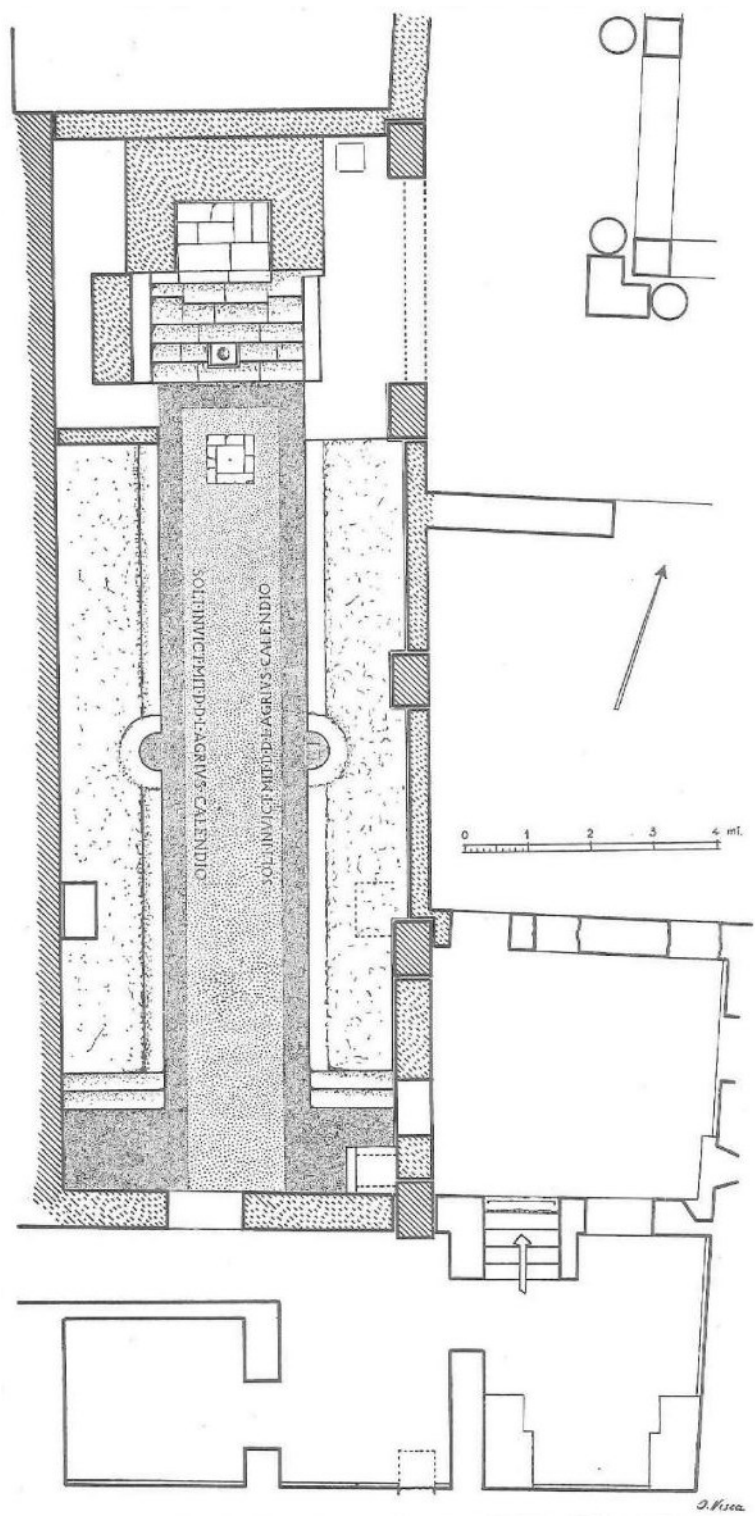
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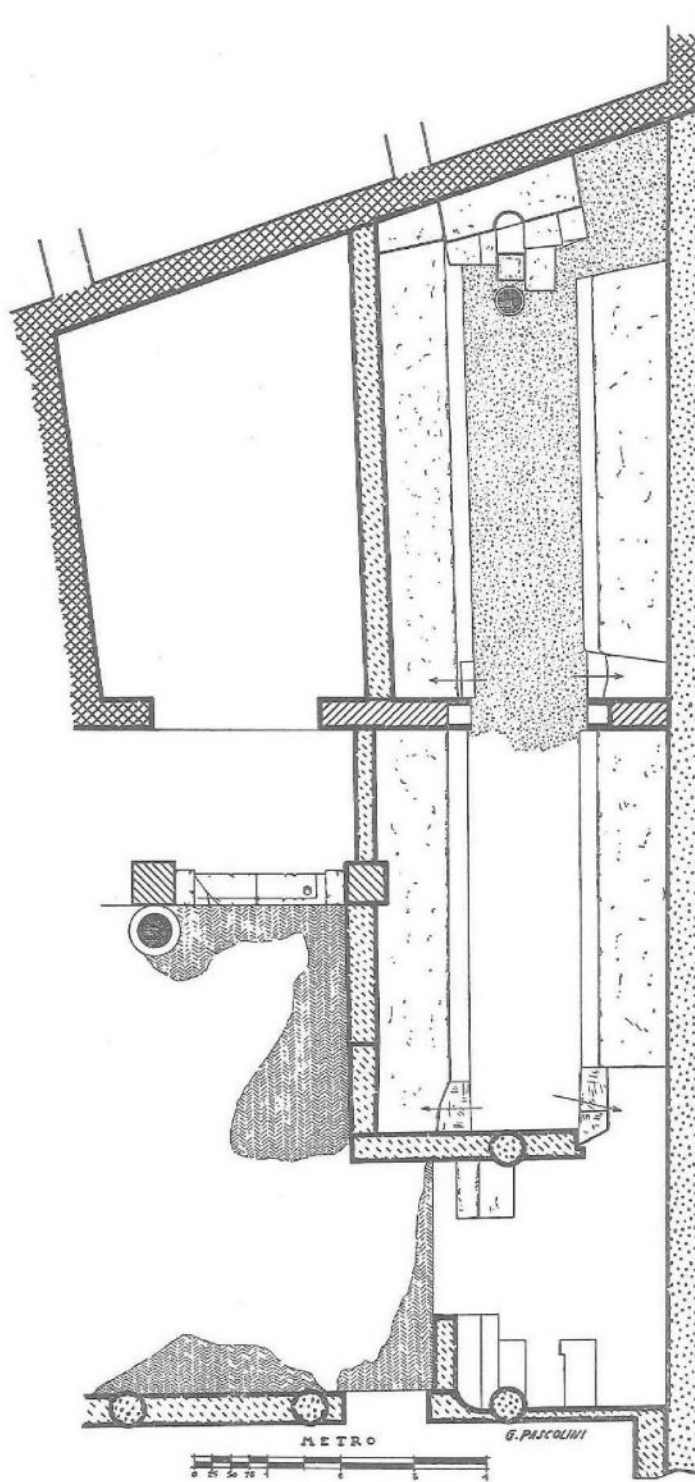
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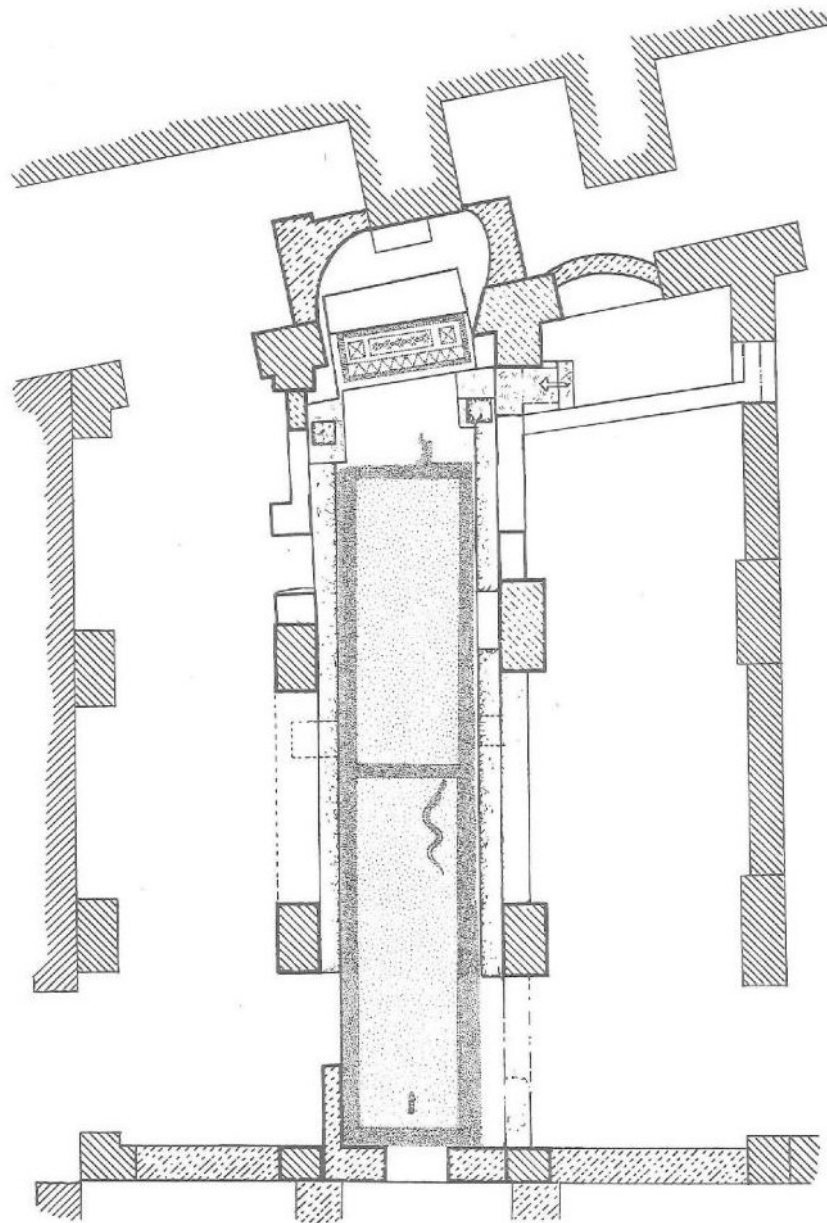
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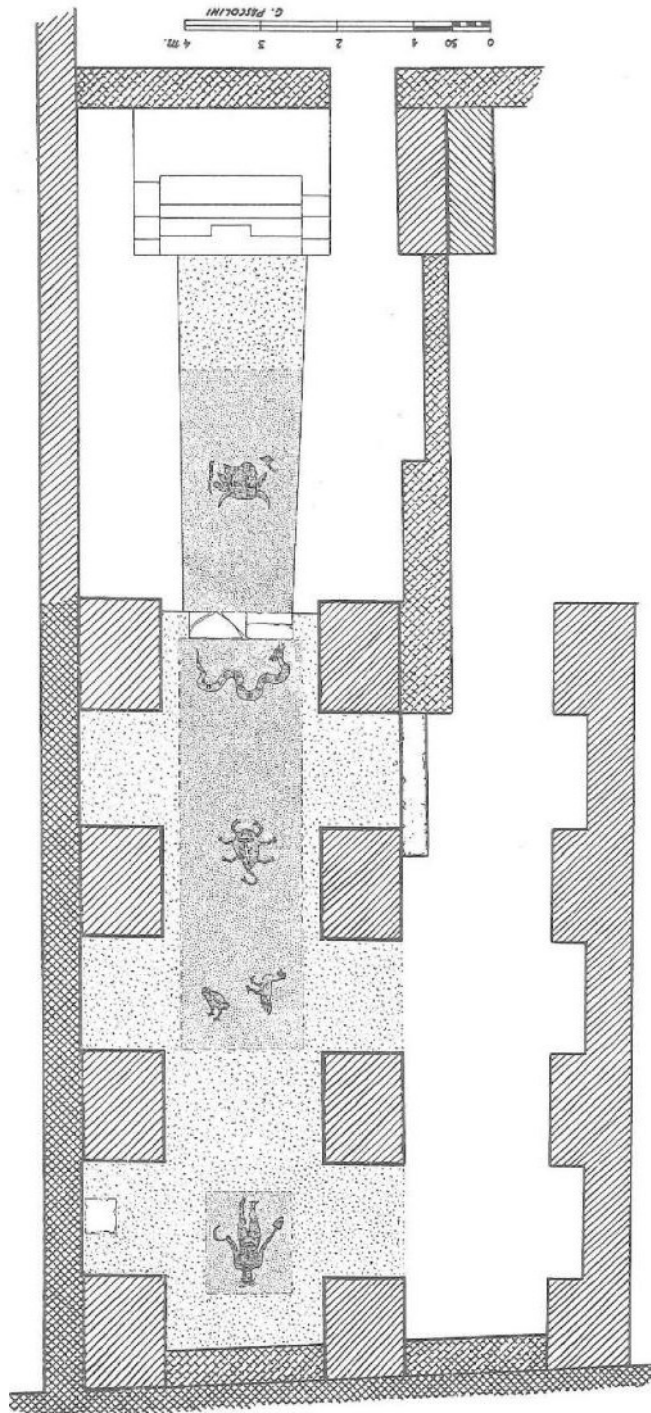
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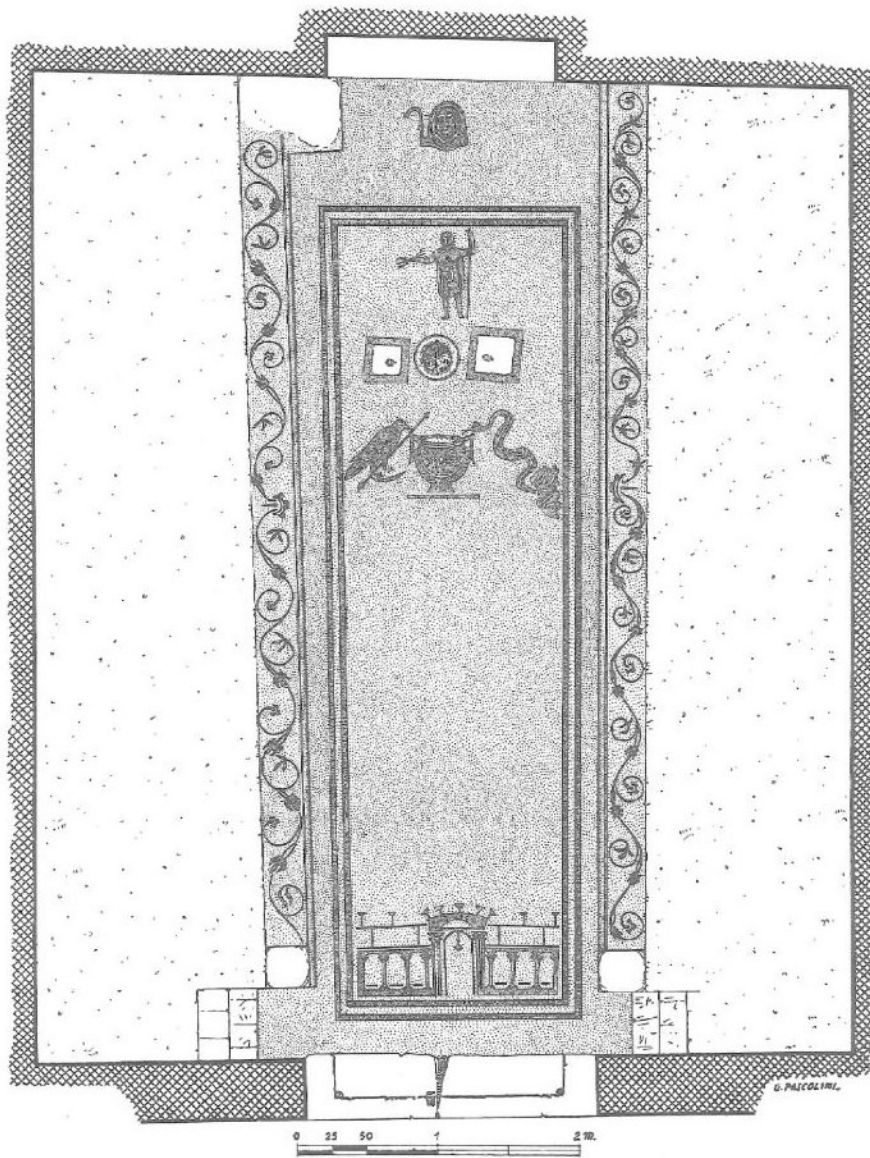
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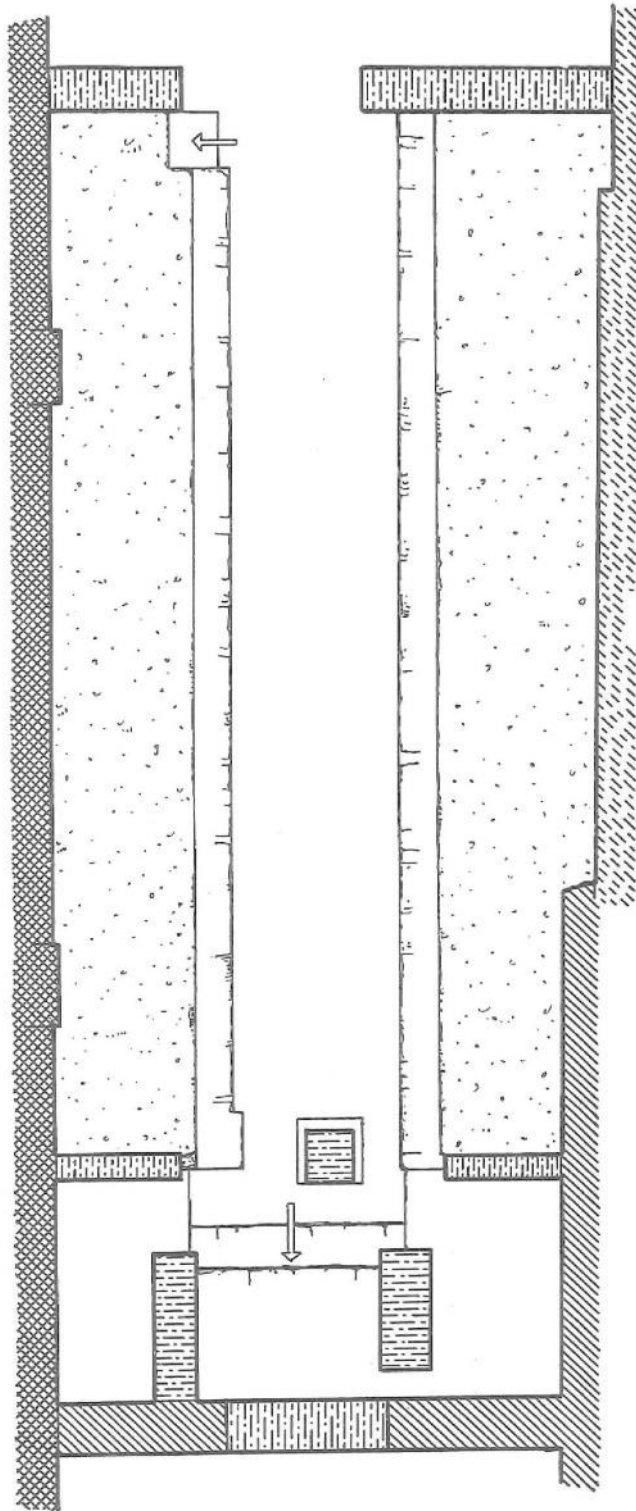
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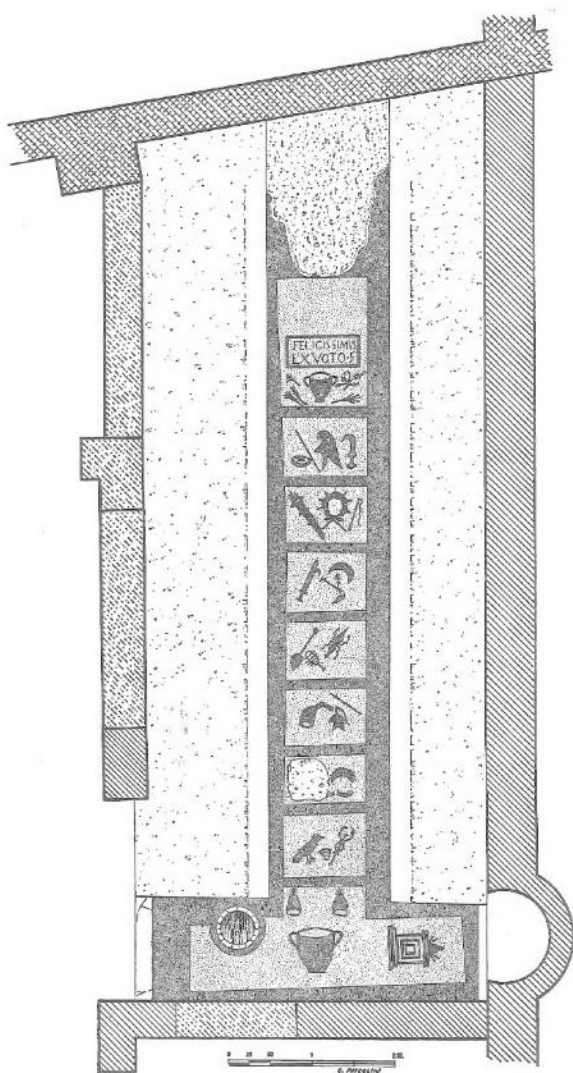
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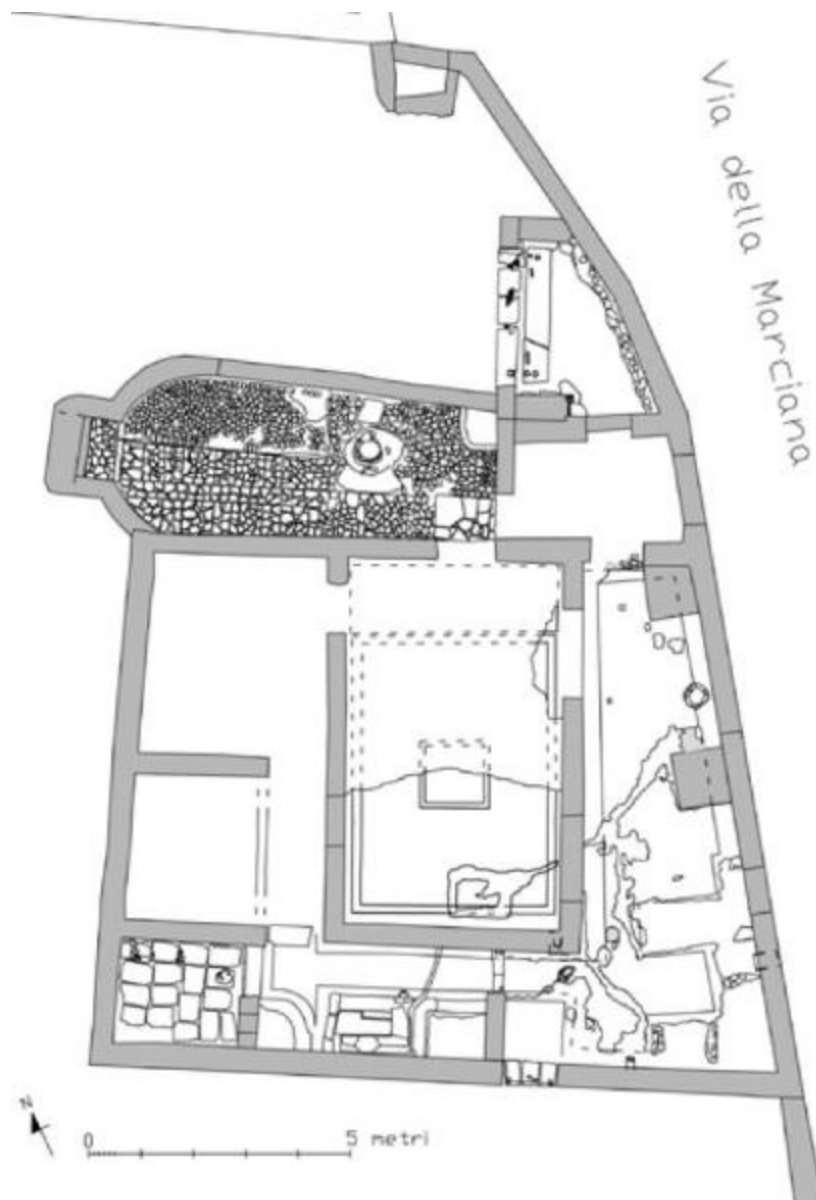
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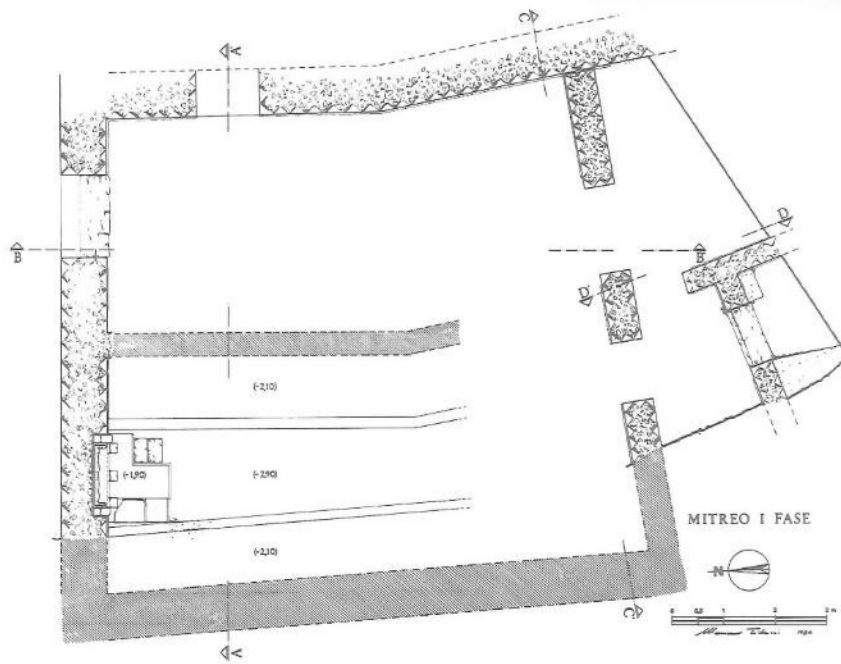
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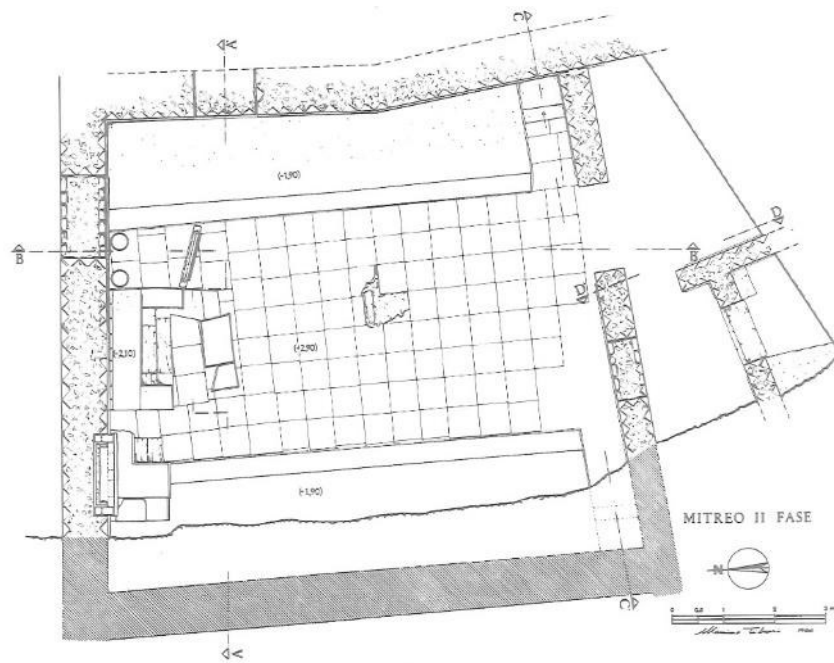
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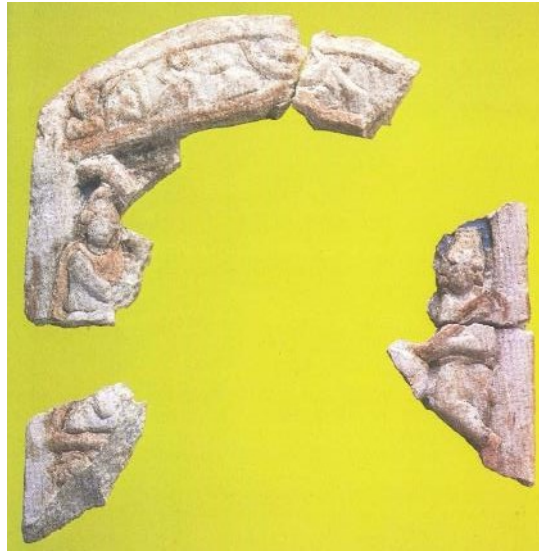
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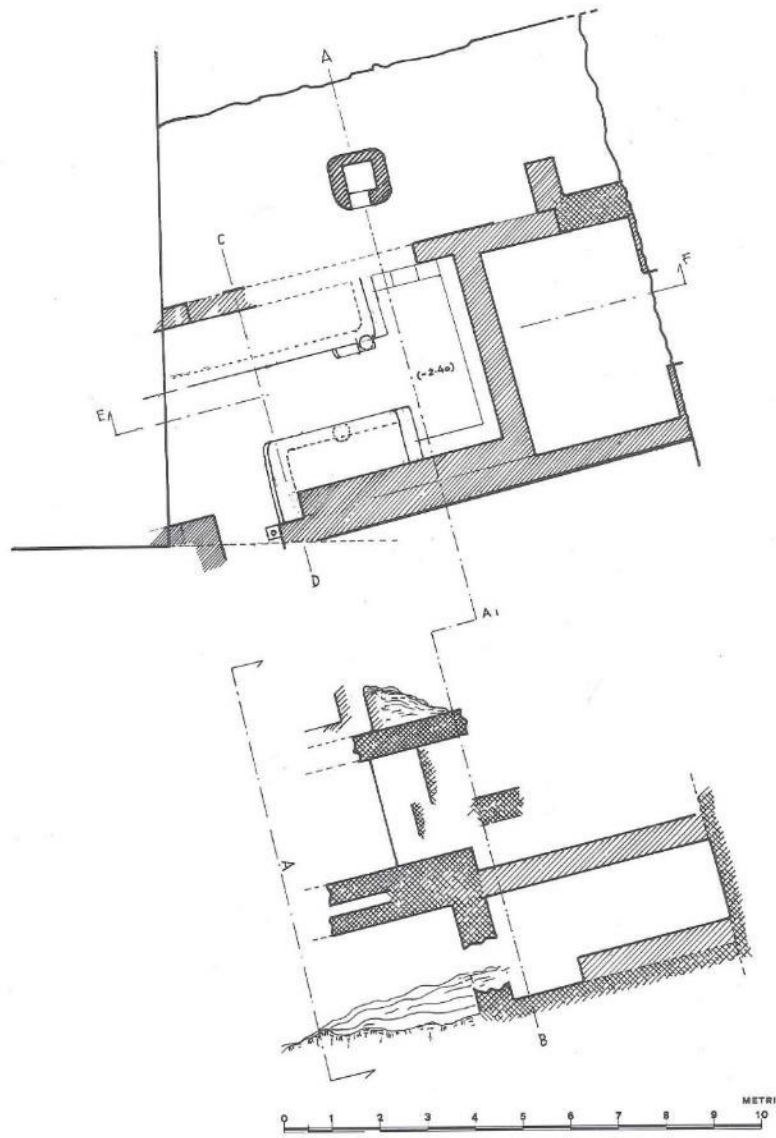
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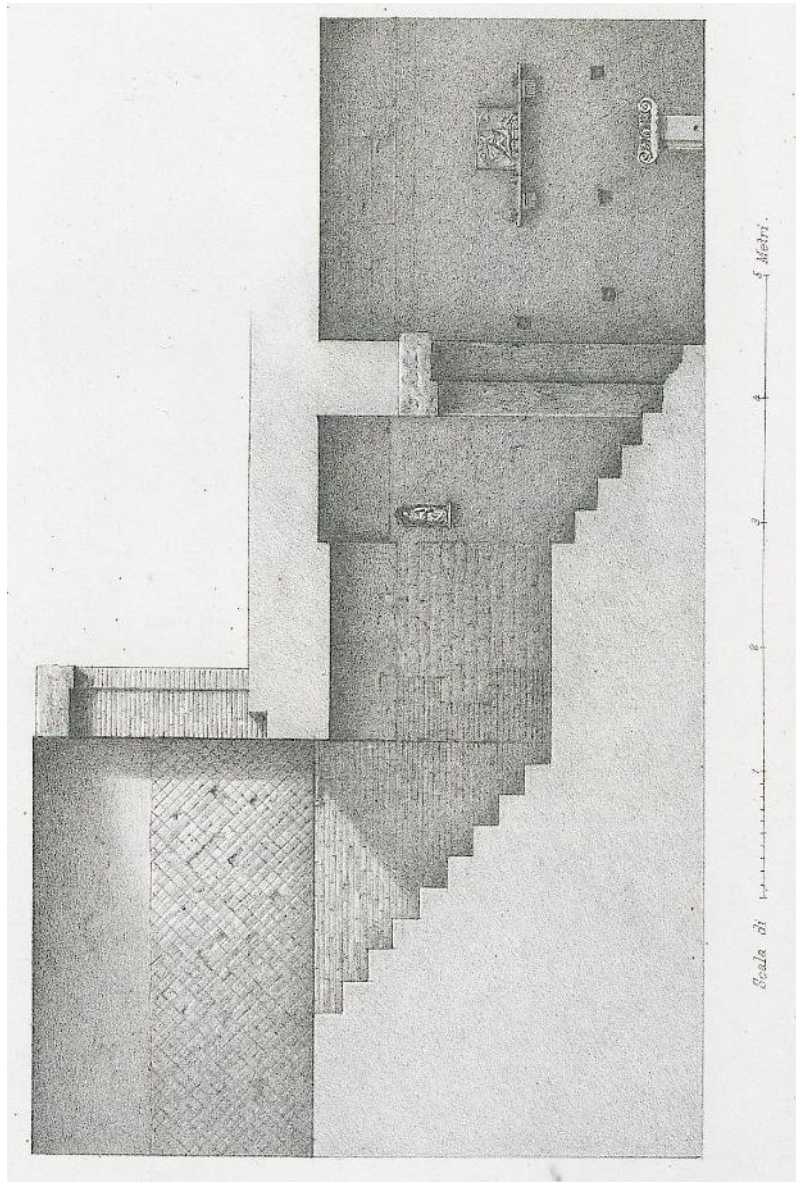
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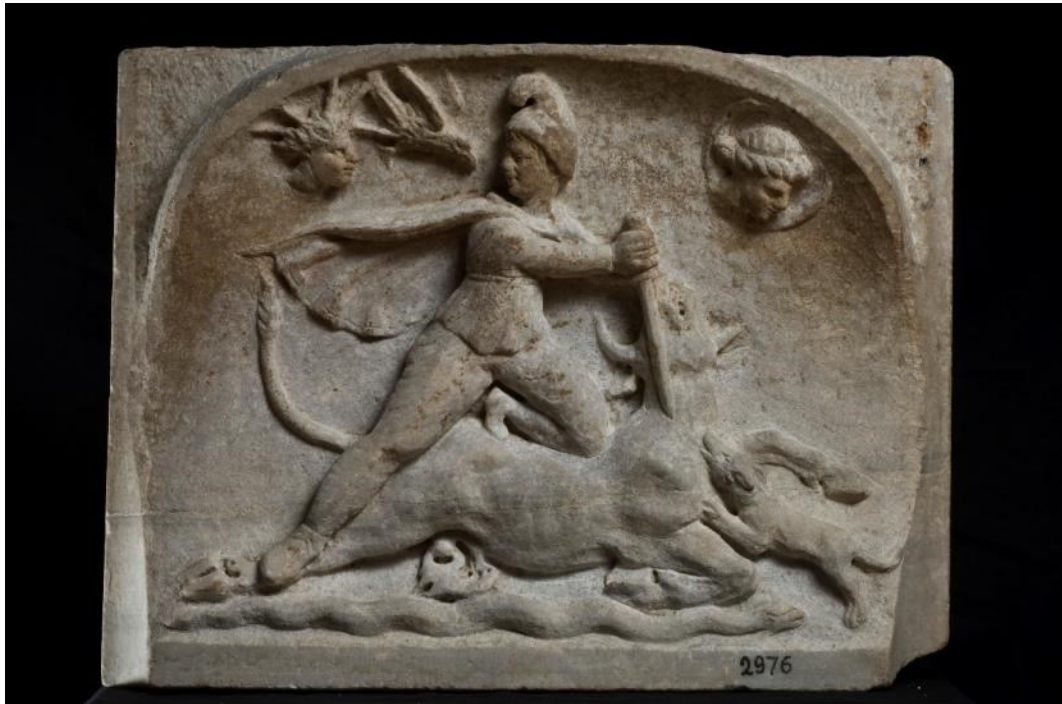
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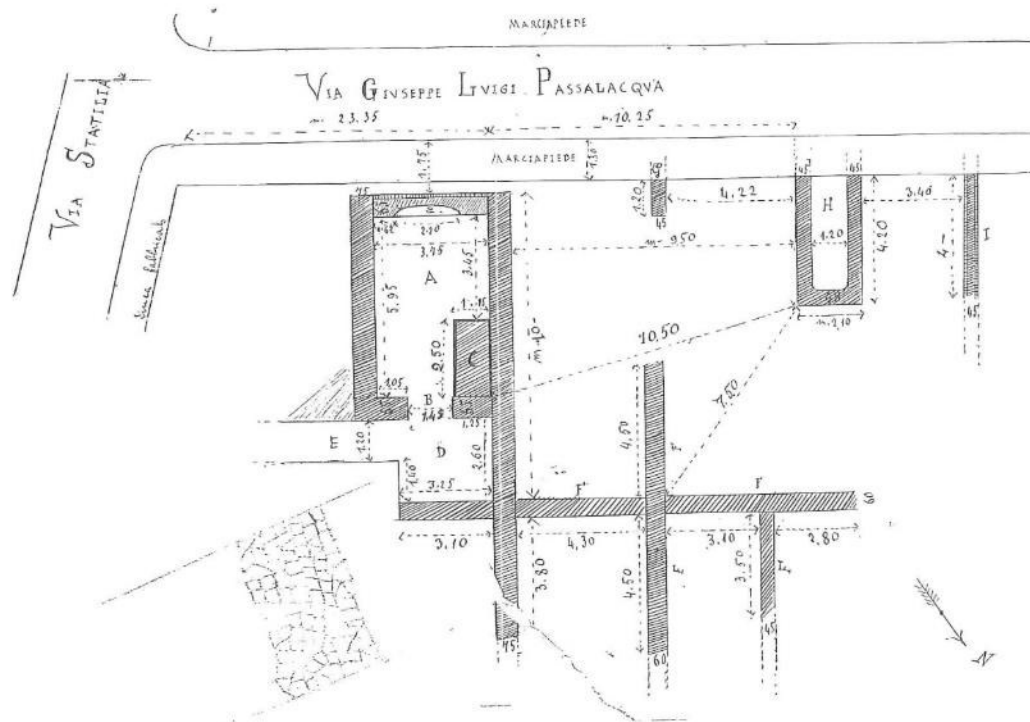
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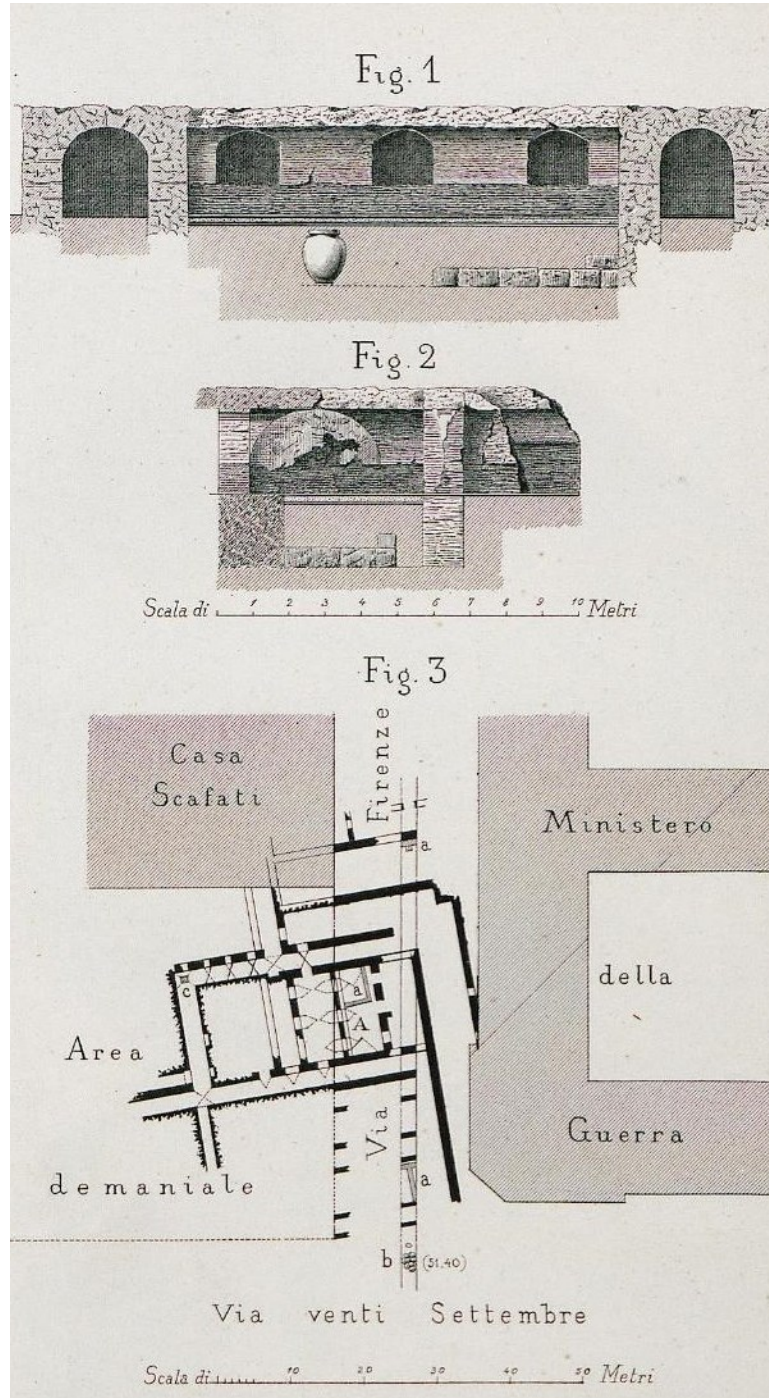
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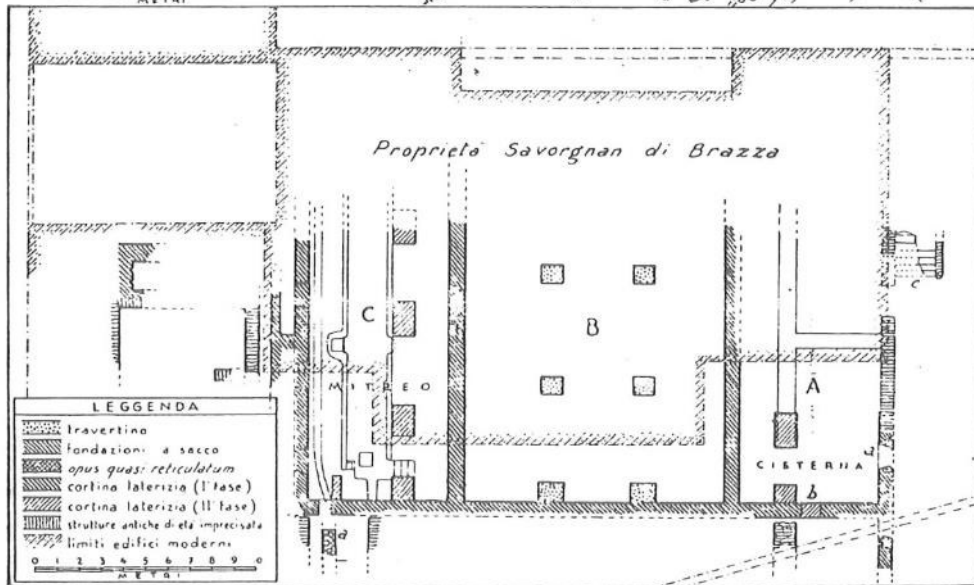
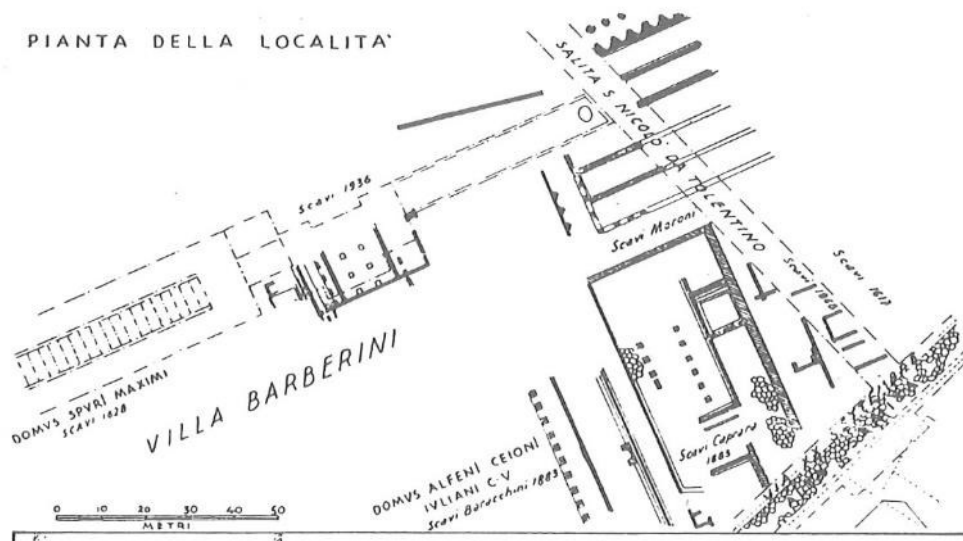
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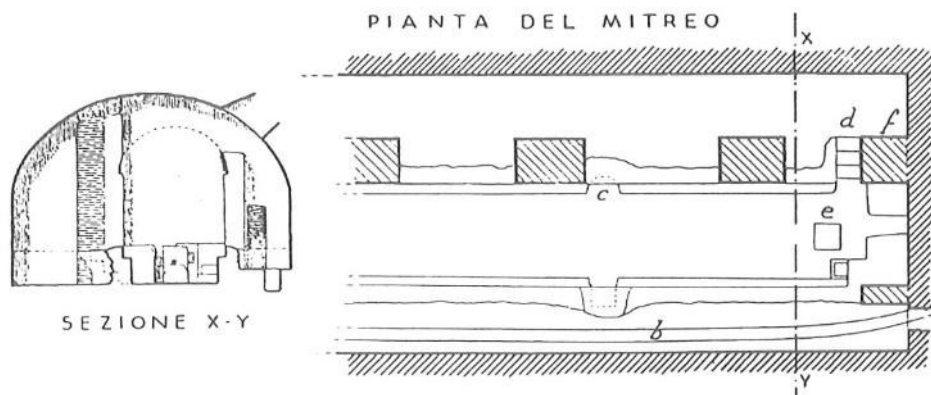
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PIANTA DELLA LOCALITA'

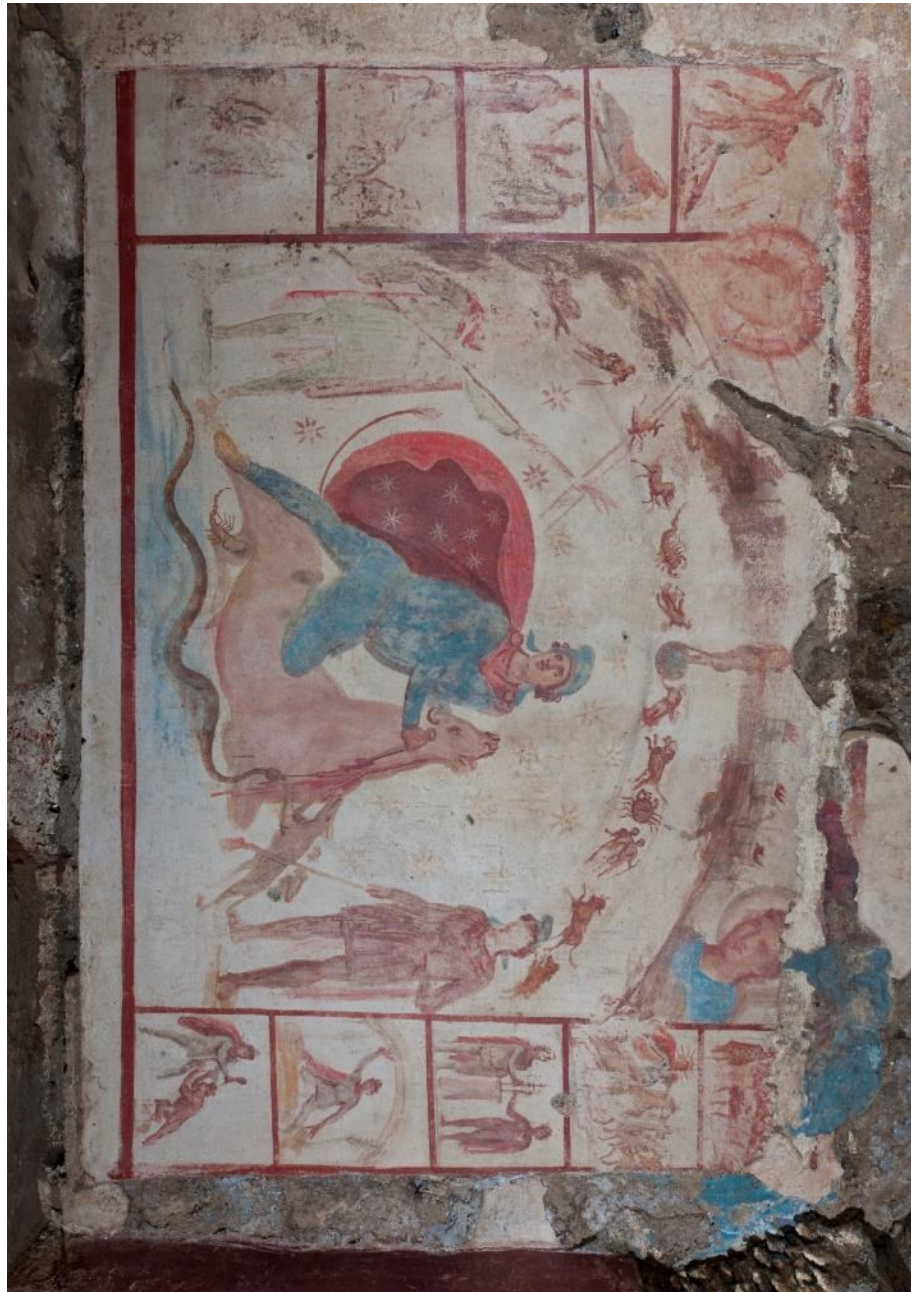


PIANTA DEL MITREO



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Mitreo di Palazzo Barberini



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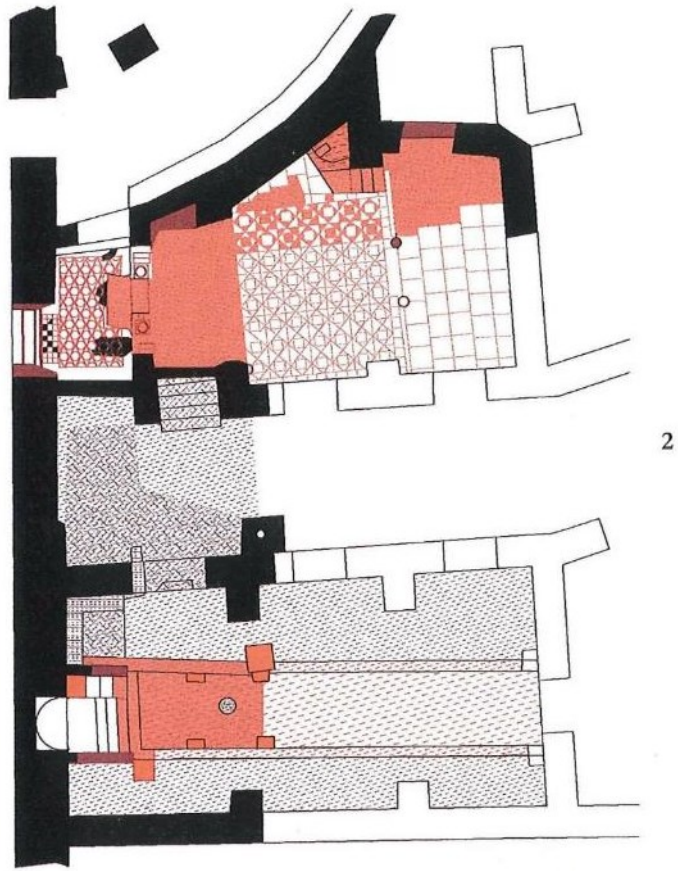
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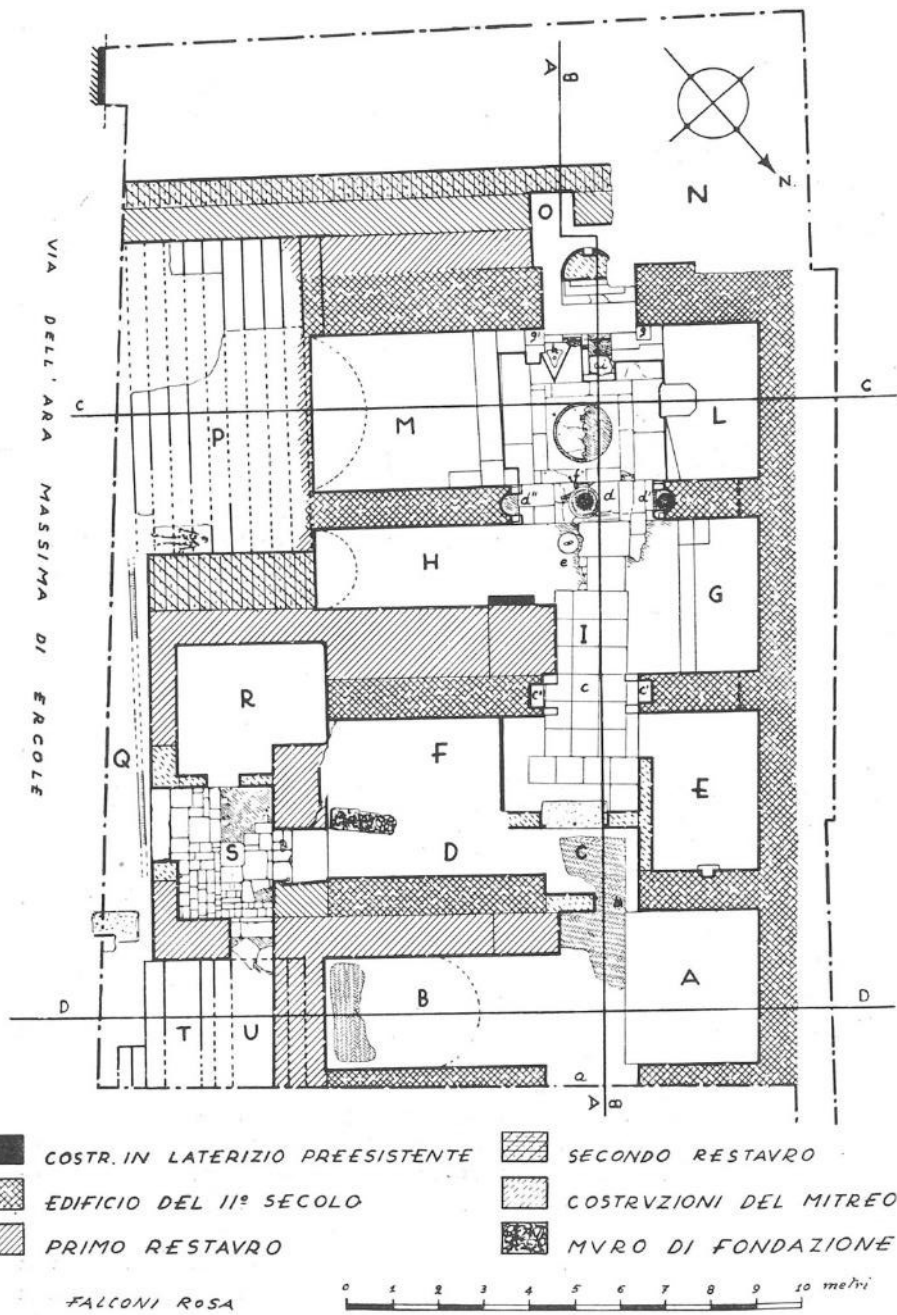
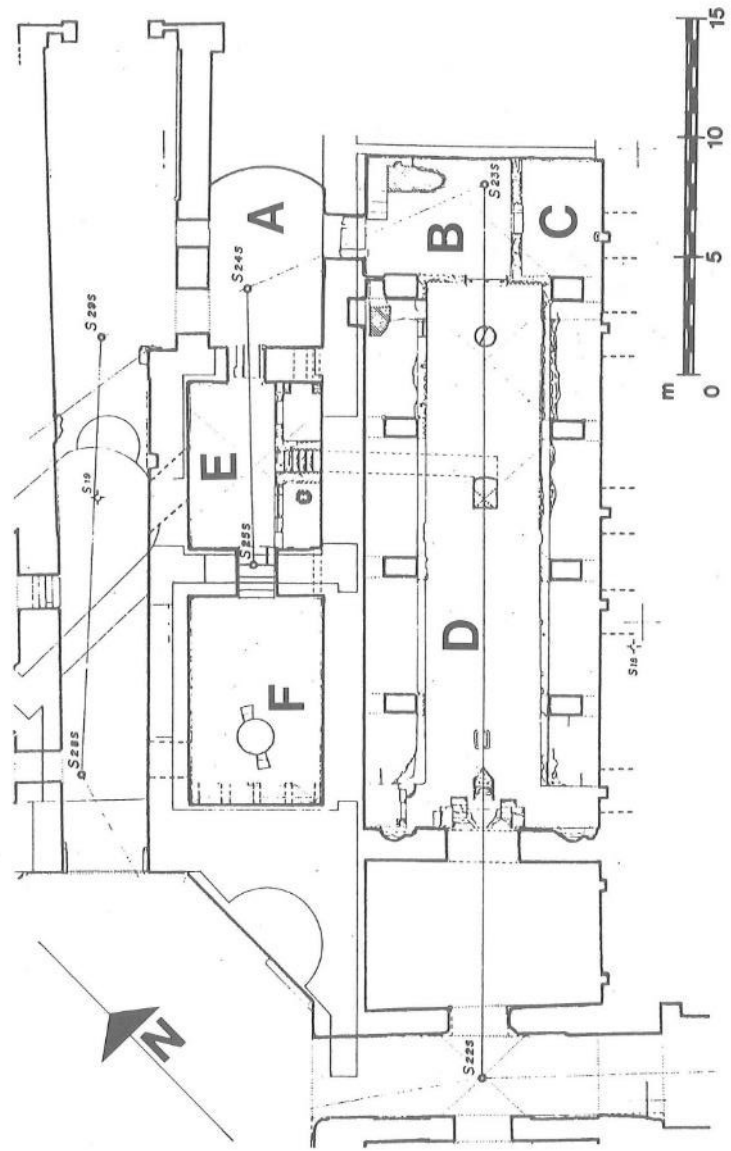


FIG. 4. - PIANTA DEL MITREO E DELLE COSTRUZIONI PREESISTENTI.

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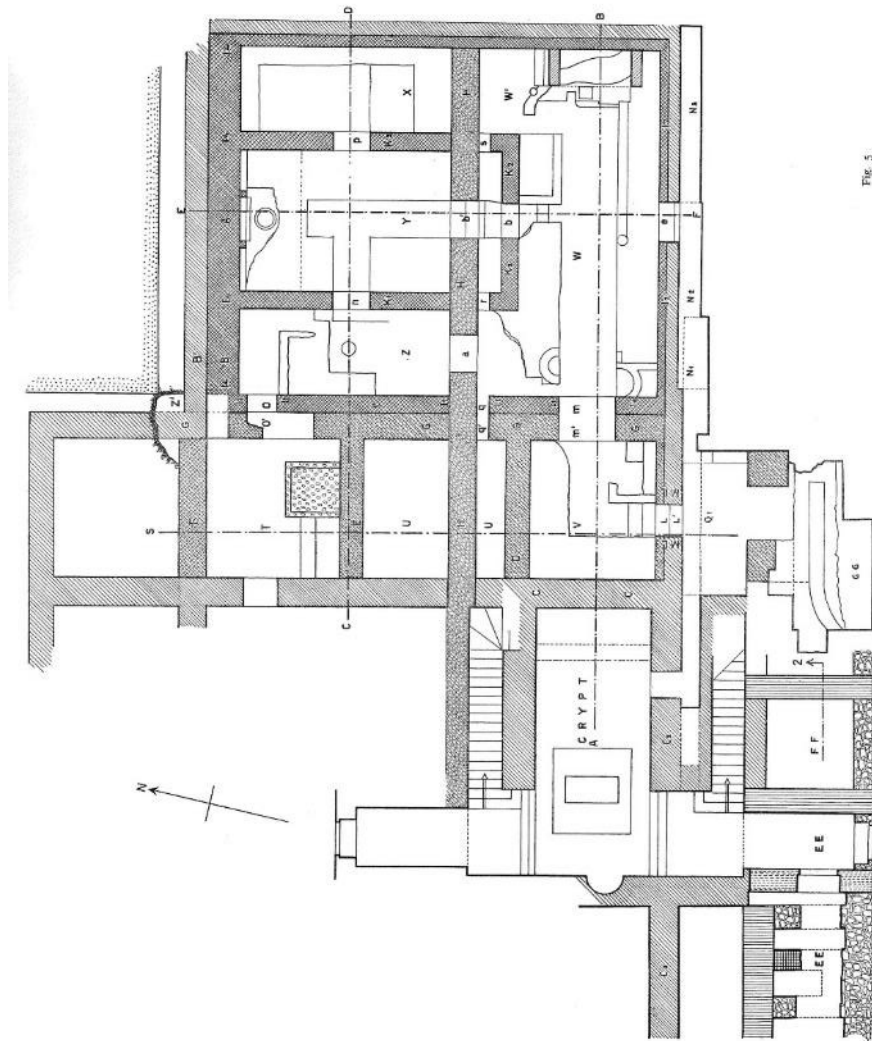


FIG. 5

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Mitreo di Santa Prisca



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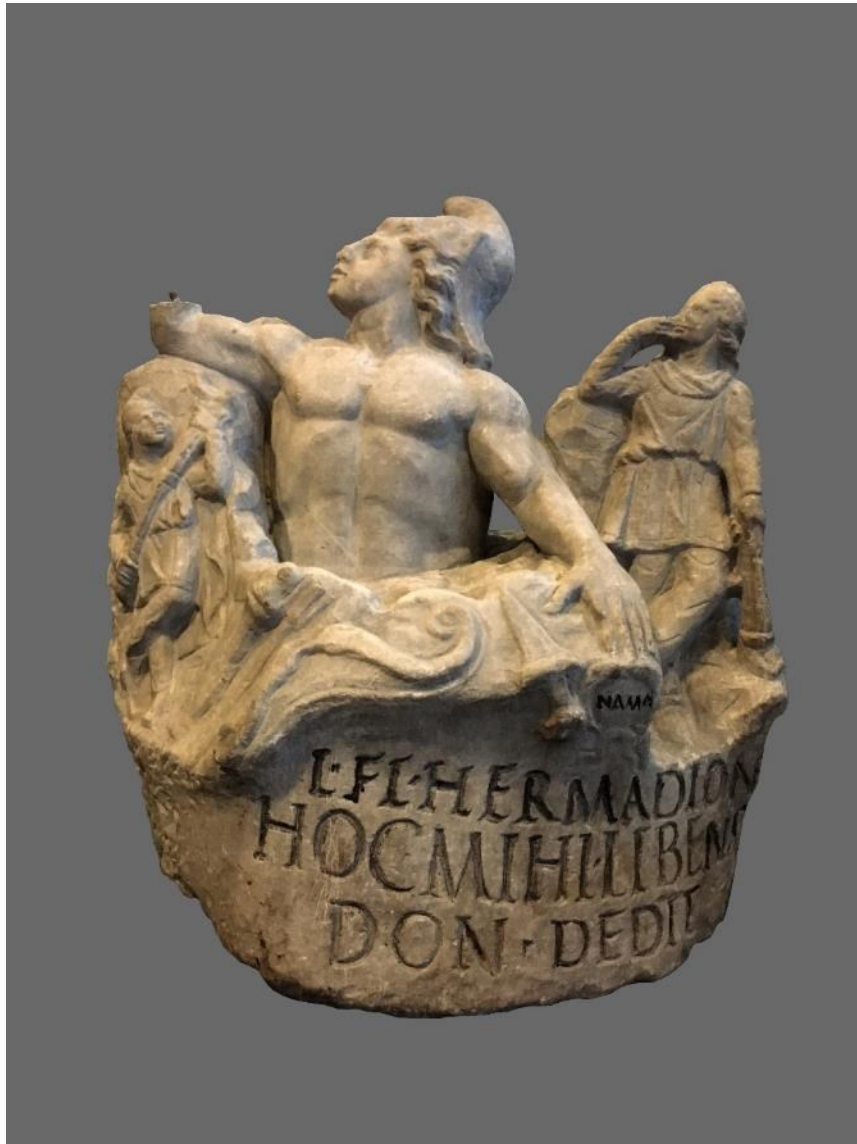
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