

The Roman Cult Mithras Mysteries

Few direct clues exist to the everyday lives and beliefs of ordinary Jews in antiquity. Prevailing perspectives on ancient Jewish life have been shaped largely by the voices of intellectual and social elites, preserved in the writings of Philo and Josephus and the rabbinic texts of the Mishnah and Talmud. Commissioned art, architecture, and formal inscriptions displayed on tombs and synagogues equally reflect the sensibilities of their influential patrons. The perspectives and sentiments of nonelite Jews, by contrast, have mostly disappeared from the historical record. Focusing on these forgotten Jews of antiquity, *Writing on the Wall* takes an unprecedented look at the vernacular inscriptions and drawings they left behind and sheds new light on the richness of their quotidian lives. Just like their neighbors throughout the eastern and southern Mediterranean, Mesopotamia, Arabia, and Egypt, ancient Jews scribbled and drew graffiti everywhere--in and around markets, hippodromes, theaters, pagan temples, open cliffs, sanctuaries, and even inside burial caves and synagogues. Karen Stern reveals what these markings tell us about the men and women who made them, people whose lives, beliefs, and behaviors eluded commemoration in grand literary and architectural works. Making compelling analogies with modern graffiti practices, she documents the overlooked connections between Jews and their neighbors, showing how popular Jewish practices of prayer, mortuary commemoration, commerce, and civic engagement regularly crossed ethnic and religious boundaries. Illustrated throughout with examples of ancient graffiti, *Writing on the Wall* provides a tantalizingly intimate glimpse into the cultural worlds of forgotten populations living at the crossroads of Judaism, Christianity, paganism, and earliest Islam.

With a history of use extending back to Vedic texts of the second millennium BC, derivations of the name Mithra appear in the Roman Empire, across Sasanian Persia, and in the Kushan Empire of southern Afghanistan and northern India during the first millennium AD. Even today, this name has a place in Yazidi and Zoroastrian religion. But what connection have Mihr in Persia, Miiro in Kushan Bactria, and Mithras in the Roman Empire to one another? Over the course of the volume, specialists in the material culture of these diverse regions explore appearances of the name Mithra from six distinct locations in antiquity. In a subversion of the usual historical process, the authors begin not from an assessment of texts, but by placing images of Mithra at the heart of their analysis. Careful consideration of each example's own context, situating it in the broader scheme of religious traditions and on-going cultural interactions, is key to this discussion. Such an approach opens up a host of potential comparisons and interpretations that are often side-lined in historical accounts. What *Images of Mithra* offers is a fresh approach to the ways in which gods were labelled and depicted in the ancient world. Through an emphasis on material culture, a more nuanced understanding of the processes of religious formation is proposed in what is but the first part of the *Visual Conversations* series.

The Roman cult of Mithras was the most widely-dispersed and densely-distributed cult throughout the expanse of the Roman Empire from the end of the first until the fourth century AD, rivaling the early growth and development of Christianity during the same period. As its membership was largely drawn from the ranks of the military, its spread, but not its popularity is attributable largely to military deployments and re-deployments. Although mithraists left behind no written archival evidence, there is an abundance of iconographic finds. The only characteristic common to all Mithraic temples were the fundamental architecture of their design, and the cult image of Mithras slaying a bull. How were these two features so faithfully transmitted through the Empire by a non-centralized, non-hierarchical religious movement? *The Minds of Mithraists: Historical and Cognitive Studies in the Roman Cult of Mithras* addresses these questions as well as the relationship of Mithraism to Christianity, explanations of the significance of the tauroctony and of the rituals enacted in the mithraea, and explanations for the spread of Mithraism (and for its resistance in a few places). The unifying theme throughout is an investigation of the 'mind' of those engaged in the cult practices of this widespread ancient religion. These investigations represent traditional historical methods as well as more recent studies employing the insights of the cognitive sciences, demonstrating that cognitive historiography is a valuable methodological tool.

Known as Mitra to the Indians, Mithra and Zarathustra (Zoroaster in Greek) to the Iranians, and Mithras to the Romans, this is the oldest of all living deities. Mithras was recognized as the greatest rival of Christianity, a greater threat even than the religion of Isis. If Rome had not become Christian, it would have become Mithrasian. Mithrasians had a sacrament that included wine as a symbol of sacrificial blood. Bread in wafers, or small loaves marked with a cross, was used to symbolize flesh. The priestly symbols were a staff, a ring, a hat, and a hooked sword/ members were called brothers, and priests were called "Father." Mithras was born on December 25th. He offered salvation based on faith, compassion, knowledge, and valor. He appealed to the poor, the slave and the freeman, as well as to the Roman aristocracy, the militia, and even to some emperors. The Christians sacked his temples, burned his books, and attacked his followers--they desecrated his temples, and built their own churches on the same foundations as the old Mithraic temples. Cooper examines Mithras and his religion in the most complete study ever done. He explores the various forms of this godworshiped from Lisbon to modern Bangladesh, from the Scottish border to the Russian Steppes and investigates the worship. This is an exciting journey into living mythology, the history of a living god, and will fascinate modern Western readers who want to know more about the spiritual path whether they want to better understand contemporary Christianity, the basis of many contemporary ideologies, mythology, or the Western Mystery Tradition.

This book fills a gap in the study of mystery cults in Graeco-Roman Antiquity. Focusing on the visual language surrounding these cults, it aims to understand how images depict mysteries in different cults: Dionysus, Mithras, Mother of the Gods, and Isiac cults.

*Includes pictures *Includes ancient accounts describing Mithras *Includes online resources and a bibliography for further reading *Includes a table of contents "It is as though the living tradition and written records of Christianity had disappeared from the world for fifteen hundred years, and there remained to us only a few hundred monuments and the

ruins of some three-score churches. What could we glean from these of the doctrines of the faith? How, from such meagre remains, could we reconstruct the story of the God, the saving doctrines, the rituals, the liturgies?" - G.R.S. Mead, *The Mysteries of Mithra* In the early Roman Empire, as Christianity struggled to gain a foothold and survive in the polytheistic pool of Roman theology, its greatest rivals weren't the Caesars or the Roman aristocracy but rather the faith and devotion of the common Roman legionary. The faith of these men was centered on the god Mithras, who, they believed, led them to victory upon the field of battle and had done so for nearly four centuries. Despite this widespread belief among soldiers, the cult of Mithras was not a creation of the Romans, although they would eventually add their own rituals and mysteries to the ancient religion. In fact, the Mithraic religion was an Indo-Persian creation, a theology which managed to travel from India and back into the Hellenic and Roman world by way of Alexander the Great's conquest of the Persian Empire. Eventually, the cult of Mithras would spread across the ancient world, and Mithras would be worshiped from the mountains of India to the coasts of Spain. As a result, the cult of Mithras could ultimately be found in every corner of the Roman Empire. The Mithras cult was one of the many "mystery religions" that the Romans adopted, several of which came from cultures outside of Rome. Isis, an Egyptian goddess, and Cybele, an Anatolian goddess, were both popular with Roman women, while Mithras, which was a variation of the name of the Zoroastrian demigod Mithra, was popular with Roman soldiers and the political elite for over 400 years. Since the Mithras cult, like all of the Roman mystery cults, was esoteric in nature, the exact nature of the influence other cultures had on the cult remains unknown, but some archaeological evidence has led modern scholars to make educated deductions. Some believe that the conscription of Persian soldiers into the Roman army and continued contact between the Parthians and Romans led to some members of the ever-eclectic Roman society adopting the cult directly from the Parthian/Zoroastrian religion (Clark 2001, 157). This seems like the most plausible explanation, but others have argued that the Mithras cult was actually a Roman religion that was given a Parthian facade to make it appear more exotic in order to attract Romans who were enthralled with eastern spirituality (Clark 2001, 157). The best evidence to determine the origins of the Mithras cult can be found in the many temples throughout Europe that the Romans erected to the god. These temples, known as mithraea, were subterranean chambers where the secret rituals of the cult took place. The best evidence from extant mithraea are the reliefs on the altars, which depict a graphic mythological story. The altar reliefs usually depict the god slaughtering a bull and often accompanied by a leaping dog (Clark 2001, 158). The references to Zoroastrian theology are unmistakable; the bull slaughter is similar to an account from a Zoroastrian text (the *Bundahishen*), while dogs were viewed as *asha* animals in Zoroastrian theology and an important part of the funerary ritual (Clark 2001, 158). The detailed iconography on the Mithras altars suggests that the inventors of the Mithras cult had more than just a superficial knowledge of Zoroastrianism, which in turn indicates a provenance of the religion somewhere in Persian or Parthia. This book is about the multiplicity of gods and religions that characterized the Roman world before Constantine. It was not the noble gods such as Jove, Apollo and Diana, who were crucial to the lives of the common people in the empire, but gods of an altogether more earthly, earth level, whose rituals and observances may now seem bizarre. As well as being of wide general interest, this book will appeal to students of the Roman Empire and of the history of religion. *The Mysteries of Mithras* presents a revival of this ancient Roman mystery religion, popular from the late second century B.C. Payam Nabarz reveals the history and tenets of Mithraism, its connections to Christianity, Islam, and Freemasonry, and the modern neo-pagan practice of Mithraism today. Included are seven of its initiatory rituals.

Mithraism was a Roman mystery cult that drew upon the mythology of Mithras from the Persian Zoroastrian religion. In this unique book, first published in 1903, Cumont explains how the Roman version differed from the original worship of Mithras and then identifies those rituals that have some historical accuracy. Often, the Roman rituals preserved only the external trappings of Zoroastrian worship, such as using animals skins during rites and designating caves as holy places. Cumont also shows his readers how Mithraism adopted beliefs and rituals from other sources as well, creating the cult in its fully realized form. He then goes on to show how the cult fell from favor and was finally overwhelmed by Christianity. Students of history and religion, as well as anyone interested in cult religions, will find this book an intriguing journey through an obscure era. Belgian archaeologist and historian FRANZ-VALÉRY-MARIE CUMONT (1869-1947) wrote numerous books, often making use of his interest in philology and the study of inscriptions. Among his books is *Life After Roman Paganism* (1922).

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Although by its title, this book seems to be about a specialized topic, the spread of Mithraic societies and its avatars, in time and geographical expanse, much enhances its relevancy. From Roman legionaries to chivalry orders, from dervish circles to guild organizations, and from Freemasons to French revolutionaries, the hierarchy of Mithraic societies, their initiation rites, and their oaths of secrecy, provided a model for brotherhood organization that was efficient, but also flexible; they could adapt their philosophy to the prevailing politico-religion conditions of the day, because they did not worship any particular god, but could also be comrades in arms with nascent religious movements, such as with Christianity. Mithra was the initial guarantor of their oath, and if need be it could be replaced by Jesus, Allah or any other divinity. Their "religion" was their brotherhood, and as such they usually provided a counter-balance to the power elite, and had the potential to become politically active.

Drawing on the cutting edge of modern scholarship, this astonishing book completely undermines the traditional history of Christianity that has been perpetuated for centuries by the Church and presents overwhelming evidence that the Jesus of the New Testament is a mythical figure. "Whether you conclude that this book is the most alarming heresy of the millennium or the mother of all revelations, The Jesus Mysteries deserves to be read." —Fort Worth Star-Telegram Far from being eyewitness accounts, as is traditionally held, the Gospels are actually Jewish adaptations of ancient Pagan myths of the dying and resurrecting godman Osiris-Dionysus. The supernatural story of Jesus is not the history of a miraculous Messiah but a carefully crafted spiritual allegory designed to guide initiates on a journey of mystical discovery. A little more than a century ago, most people believed that the strange story of Adam and Eve was history; today it is understood to be a myth. Within a few decades, authors Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy argue, we will likewise be amazed that the fabulous story of God incarnate—who was born of a virgin, who turned water into wine, and who rose from the dead—could have been interpreted as anything but a profound parable.

Explores mysterious religious cults of ancient Greece and Rome, discussing the deity that each group worshiped, the initiation ceremonies, and how the cults' practices influenced early Christianity.

One of the most challenging objections to the historicity of the New Testament documents and the uniqueness of first century Christianity is the accusation of wholesale borrowing from earlier pagan sources. Such accusations are common in the fields of comparative religion and mythology. Parallels have been drawn between the story of Jesus and various other religious leaders, heroes, and pagan dying and rising gods. Though these parallels are found in stories from various cultures going back several millennia before the Christian era, the most prevalent challenge has come from what have become known as the mystery religions or mystery cults. From among these numerous cults, one has presented the greatest challenge and most striking parallels. That is the cult of Mithras, or Mithraism. This book addresses the theory that early Christianity borrowed heavily from Mithraism, and it investigates ancient textual and archaeological evidence as it seeks to evaluate that claim.

Roman Cult of MithrasThe God and His MysteriesEdinburgh University Press

In Vergil's Aeneid, the poet implies that those who have been initiated into mystery cults enjoy a blessed situation both in life and after death. This collection of essays brings new insight to the study of mystic cults in the ancient world, particularly those that flourished in Magna Graecia (essentially the area of present-day Southern Italy and Sicily). Implementing a variety of methodologies, the contributors to *Mystic Cults in Magna Graecia* examine an array of features associated with such "mystery religions" that were concerned with individual salvation through initiation and hidden knowledge rather than civic cults directed toward Olympian deities usually associated with Greek religion. Contributors present contemporary theories of ancient religion, field reports from recent archaeological work, and other frameworks for exploring mystic cults in general and individual deities specifically, with observations about cultural interactions throughout. Topics include Dionysos and Orpheus, the Goddess Cults, Isis in Italy, and Roman Mithras, explored by an international array of scholars including Giulia Sfameni Gasparro ("Aspects of the Cult of Demeter in Magna Graecia") and Alberto Bernabé ("Imago Inferorum Orphica"). The resulting volume illuminates this often misunderstood range of religious phenomena.

This book sheds new light on the religious and consequently social changes taking place in late antique Rome. The essays in this volume argue that the once-dominant notion of pagan-Christian religious conflict cannot fully explain the texts and artifacts, as well as the social, religious, and political realities of late antique Rome. Together, the essays demonstrate that the fourth-century city was a more fluid, vibrant, and complex place than was previously thought. Competition between diverse groups in Roman society - be it pagans with Christians, Christians with Christians, or pagans with pagans - did create tensions and hostility, but it also allowed for coexistence and reduced the likelihood of overt violent, physical conflict. Competition and coexistence, along with conflict, emerge as still central paradigms for those who seek to understand the transformations of Rome from the age of Constantine through the early fifth century.

This illustrated book traces the history of an unlikely force in the shaping of Western civilization: the use of psychedelic mushrooms, namely by a secret society called the cult of Mithras. Nero was the first emperor to be initiated by the group's "magical dinners," and most of his successors embraced the ritual as a source of spiritual transcendence. The cult was officially banned after the Conversion, but aspects of their rituals were assimilated or co-opted by Christianity, and the brotherhoods persist today as secret societies such as the Freemasons. This is a fascinating exploration of a powerful force kept behind the scenes for thousands of years.

This volume sets forth a new explanation of the meaning of the cult of Mithraism, tracing its origins not, as commonly held, to the ancient Persian religion, but to ancient astronomy and cosmology.

The foremost historian of Greek religion provides the first comprehensive, comparative study of a little-known aspect of ancient religious beliefs and practices. Secret mystery cults flourished within the larger culture of the public religion of Greece and Rome for roughly a thousand years. This book is neither a history nor a survey but a comparative phenomenology, concentrating on five major cults. In defining the mysteries and describing their rituals, membership, organization, and dissemination, Walter Burkert displays the remarkable erudition we have come to expect of him; he also shows great sensitivity and sympathy in interpreting the experiences and motivations of the devotees.

Attilio Mastrocinque explains the mysteries of Mithras in a new way, as a transformation of Mazdean elements into an ideological and religious reading of Augustus' story. The author shows that the character of Mithras played the role of Apollo in favoring

Augustus' victory and the birth of the Roman Empire.

Renowned art historian Herbert L. Kessler authors a love song to medieval art inviting students, teachers, and professional medievalists to experience the wondrous, complex art of the Middle Ages.

Roger Beck, a world authority on Mithraism, brings together his major writings on the Mysteries of Mithras in the context of the culture and religions of imperial Rome. In these studies he opens new vistas on myth making, ritual, symbolism, the role of astrology in the cult, recently discovered Mithraic monuments and artefacts, and the emergence of Mithraism and Christianity concurrently in the first century. Beck offers new introductions to his thematically framed groups of writings and adds six entirely new essays published here for the first time. These essays link his research to contemporary studies in cognitive science of religion and anthropology of religion. This collection will appeal particularly to scholars exploring contemporary aspects in anthropology of religion, astronomy and astrology, cults and myths, images and symbols, as well as traditional scholars of Greco-Roman antiquity and Christian origins.

In *The Cult of Mithras in Late Antiquity* David Walsh examines how and why the cult of Mithras vanished from the Roman Empire by the early 5th century C.E.

Exhaustively annotated and illustrated, this explosive work of history unearths clues that finally demonstrate the truth about one of the world's great religions: that it was born out of the conflict between the Romans and messianic Jews who fought a bitter war with each other during the 1st Century. The Romans employed a tactic they routinely used to conquer and absorb other nations: they grafted their imperial rule onto the religion of the conquered. After 30 years of research, authors James S. Valliant and C.W. Fahy present irrefutable archeological and textual evidence that proves Christianity was created by Roman Caesars in this book that breaks new ground in Christian scholarship and is destined to change the way the world looks at ancient religions forever. Inherited from a long-past era of tyranny, war and deliberate religious fraud, could Christianity have been created for an entirely different purpose than we have been lead to believe? Praised by scholars like Dead Sea Scrolls translator Robert Eisenman (James the Brother of Jesus), this exhaustive synthesis of historical detective work integrates all of the ancient sources about the earliest Christians and reveals new archeological evidence for the first time. And, despite the fable presented in current bestsellers like Bill O'Reilly's *Killing Jesus*, the evidence presented in *Creating Christ* is irrefutable: Christianity was invented by Roman Emperors. I have rarely encountered a book so original, exciting, accessible and informed on subjects that are of obvious importance to the world and to which I have myself devoted such a large part of my scholarly career studying. In this book they have rendered a startling new understanding of Christianity with a controversial theory of its Roman provenance that is accessible to the layman in a very powerful way. In the process, they present new and comprehensive archeological and iconographic evidence, as well as utilizing the widest and most cutting edge work of other recent scholars, including myself. This is a work of outstanding and original scholarship. Its arguments are a brilliant, profound and thorough integration of the relevant evidence. When they are done, the conclusion is inescapable and obviously profound. Robert Eisenman, Author of *James the Brother of Jesus* and *The New Testament Code* "A fascinating and provocative investigative history of ideas, boldly exploring a problem that previous scholarship has not clearly or credibly addressed: how (and why!) the Flavian dynasty wove Christianity into the very fabric of Western civilization." -Mark Riebling, author of *Church of Spies: The Pope's Secret War Against Hitler*

A fascinating tour of the mushroom-centered mystery religions which have profoundly influenced Western civilization

The publication of this *Corpus Inscriptionum et Monumentorum Religionis Mithriacae* is due mainly to the activities of the Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie van Wetenschappen, Kunsten en Schone Letteren (The Royal Flemish Academy of Arts and Sciences) at Brussels, for this work was begun as an entry in a competition organized by their Department of Fine Arts and Literature. It was then awarded a prize by a committee elected by the Academy and consisting of the theologian Prof. J. Coppens, the orientalist Prof. G. Rijckmans and the archaeologist, the late Prof. H. van de Weerd. Among the first who should be mentioned with respect and gratitude is my teacher Dr. F.J. de Waele, Professor in Archaeology and Ancient History at the Nijmegen University and member of the Royal Flemish Academy. This remarkable teacher inspired a deep interest in the study of Archaeology and of the Mithras cult, and his help has always been invaluable. I am also greatly indebted to the renowned Belgian scholar Prof. Franz Cumont. He was among the first to recognize the necessity of a revision of his standard work *Textes et Monuments relatifs aux Mysteres de Mithra*. During the last few years before his death he showed a lively interest in the present study, supplied much material and often gave advice, devoting a great part of his leisure and his love of Classical Culture to this new publication of the Mithraic Monuments.

The relative sophistication of the three major 'Oriental cults' of the Roman Empire, combining unfamiliar myth with distinctive ritual, enabled them, like Early Christianity, to offer a properly ethical salvation in the Weberian sense.

Please note that the content of this book primarily consists of articles available from Wikipedia or other free sources online. Pages: 26. Chapters: Aion (deity), Arimanius, Cautes and Cautopates, CIMRM, Fert rakos mithraeum, Mithras (name), Mithras in comparison with other belief systems, Mithras Liturgy, Rudchester Mithraeum, Tauroctony. Excerpt: The Mithraic Mysteries were a mystery religion practised in the Roman Empire from about the 1st to 4th centuries AD. The name of the Persian god Mithra, adapted into Greek as Mithras, was linked to a new and distinctive imagery. Writers of the Roman Empire period referred to this mystery religion by phrases which can be anglicized as Mysteries of Mithras or Mysteries of the Persians; modern historians refer to it as Mithraism, or sometimes Roman Mithraism. The mysteries were popular in the Roman military. Worshippers of Mithras had a complex system of seven grades of initiation, with ritual meals. Initiates called themselves syndexioi, those "united by the handshake." They met in underground temples (called mithraea), which survive in large numbers. The cult appears to have had its centre in Rome. Numerous archeological finds, including meeting places, monuments, and artifacts, have contributed to modern knowledge about Mithraism throughout the Roman Empire. The iconic scenes of Mithras show him being born from a rock, slaughtering a bull, and sharing a banquet with the god Sol (the Sun). About 420 sites have yielded materials related to the cult. Among the items found are about 1000 inscriptions, 700 examples of the bull-killing scene (tauroctony), and about 400 other monuments. It has been estimated that there would have been at least 680-690 Mithraea in Rome. No written narratives or theology from the religion survive, with limited information to be derived from the inscriptions, and only brief or passing references in Greek and Latin literature. Interpretation of the physical evidence remains problematic and...

Since its publication in Germany, Manfred Clauss's introduction to the Roman Mithras cult has become widely accepted as the most reliable, as well as the most readable, account of its elusive and fascinating subject. For the English edition the author has revised the work to take account of recent research and new archaeological discoveries. The mystery cult of Mithras first became evident in Rome towards the end of the first century AD. During the next two centuries, carried by its soldier and merchant devotees, it spread to the frontier of the western empire from Britain to Bosnia. Perhaps because of odd similarities between the cult and their own religion the early Christians energetically suppressed it, frequently

constructing churches over the caves (Mithraea) in which its rituals took place. By the end of the fourth century the cult was extinct. Professor Clauss draws on the archaeological evidence from over 400 temples and their contents including over a thousand representations of ritual in sculpture and painting to seek an understanding of the nature and purpose of the cult, and what its mysteries and secret rites of initiation and sacrifice meant to its devotees. In doing so he introduces the reader to the nature of the polytheistic societies of the Roman Empire, in which relations and distinctions between gods and mortals now seem strangely close and blurred. He also considers the connections of Mithraicism with astrology, and examines how far it can be seen as a direct descendant of the ancient cult of Mitra, the Persian god of contract, cattle and light. The book combines imaginative insight with coherent argument. It is well-structured, accessibly written and extensively illustrated. Richard Gordon, the translator and himself a distinguished scholar of the subject, has provided a bibliography of further reading for anglophone readers.

A study of the religious system of Mithraism, one of the 'mystery cults' popular in the Roman Empire contemporary with early Christianity. Mithraism is described from the point of view of the initiate engaging with its rich repertoire of symbols and practices.

The ancient Mysteries have long attracted the interest of scholars, an interest that goes back at least to the time of the Reformation. After a period of interest around the turn of the twentieth century, recent decades have seen an important study of Walter Burkert (1987). Yet his thematic approach makes it hard to see how the actual initiation into the Mysteries took place. To do precisely that is the aim of this book. It gives a 'thick description' of the major Mysteries, not only of the famous Eleusinian Mysteries, but also those located at the interface of Greece and Anatolia: the Mysteries of Samothrace, Imbros and Lemnos as well as those of the Corybants. It then proceeds to look at the Orphic-Bacchic Mysteries, which have become increasingly better understood due to the many discoveries of new texts in the recent times. Having looked at classical Greece we move on to the Roman Empire, where we study not only the lesser Mysteries, which we know especially from Pausanias, but also the new ones of Isis and Mithras. We conclude our book with a discussion of the possible influence of the Mysteries on emerging Christianity. Its detailed references and up-to-date bibliography will make this book indispensable for any scholar interested in the Mysteries and ancient religion, but also for those scholars who work on initiation or esoteric rituals, which were often inspired by the ancient Mysteries.

The Roman Mithras Cult: A Cognitive Approach is the first full cognitive history of an ancient religion. In this groundbreaking book on one of the most intriguing and mysterious ancient religions, Roger Beck and Olympia Panagiotidou show how cognitive historiography can supplement our historical knowledge and deepen our understanding of past cultural phenomenon. The cult of the sun god Mithras, which spread widely across the Greco-Roman world at the same time as other 'mystery cults' and Christianity, offered to its devotees certain images and assumptions about reality. Initiation into the mysteries of Mithras and participation in the life of the cult significantly affected and transformed the ways in which the initiated perceived themselves, the world, and their position within it. The cult's major ideas were conveyed mainly through its major symbolic complexes. The ancient written testimonies and other records are not adequate to establish a definitive reconstruction of Mithraic theologies and the meaning of its complex symbolic structures. Filling this gap, The Roman Mithras Cult: A Cognitive Approach identifies the cognitive and psychological processes which took place in the minds and bodies of the Mithraists during their initiation and participation in the mysteries, enabling the perception, apprehension, and integration of the essential images and assumptions of the cult in its worldview system.

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