

Formation of the Mithraic Temples in Northwestern Iran in Comparison with Roman Mithraeums

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Abstract

Mithraism was a mystery religion centered on the god Mithras that was practiced in the ancient world including India, Iran, Anatolia, Etc. There is still much uncertainty about its nature and its origin, despite numerous documents such as the most ancient religious books of the world including the *Avesta* and *Rig Veda*, and the oldest inscriptions including: Boğazköy and Achaemenid inscriptions, and finding hundreds of temples in the territory of ancient Rome. One of the ambiguities is that how the temples of this religious tradition were built in Iran. The main question here is that “is there any possible similarities in Iranian temples to the European types or not?” To investigate the question, the plans and architectural spaces and components of the Mithra temples are compared using inductive methods and library studies in two civilizations that are altogether different in terms of their environmental and cultural conditions. The research hypothesis emphasizes the difference between the Roman Mithra temples and Iranian types. Despite that, they have a unique root; however, they have some imagined similarities. Finally, it was found, that different environmental conditions gave rise to a different understanding of religion, and so on. The main purpose of the article is to study and introduce several Iranian Mithra temples. The plan of the Roman temples is rectangular, but a study of the Iranian temples of *Abāzar*, *Varjuvi*, and *Bādāmiyar (Qadamgāh)* showed that the most of them had a dome-shaped space with a circular plan and their walls lacked paintings and sculptures. Nevertheless, as Herodotus has already described, the *Qarashirān* temple has square plan in the meantime; such Iranian temples lack authentic decorations inside and out. The results of the research show that what was depicted in the European Mithra temples, was performed during a special ceremony in Iran; a point that all artistic and written sources acknowledge.

Keywords: *Abāzar* original Mithra temple, *Varjuvi* Mithra temple, Tauroctony, Roman Mithraeums, Nerseh Mithraeum

1. Introduction

Mithra is an Indo-Iranian sun god in Hinduism, he is praised as the binomial Mithra-Varuna. A hymn is also just dedicated to him in *Rig Veda*. He is the Lord of Heavenly light, protector of truth, and is invoked when a contract or oath is taken. It is known that the center of the cult was the Mithraeum, either an adapted natural cave or cavern. Mithraea were dark and windowless, even if they were not actually in a subterranean space or in a natural cave. In Roman territory, its sanctuary at the far end, often in a recess, before which the pedestal-like altar stood. In every Mithraic temple, the place of honor was occupied by a representation of Mithras killing a sacred bull, called a Tauroctony. The Roman had underground temples (called a Mithraeum), which survive in large numbers. This question is, however, of crucial importance, since possible answers determine, to a large extent, subsequent interpretations of Mithraic sources, which consist almost entirely of “mute” archaeological evidence in the form of Mithraea, figural monuments, dedicatory inscriptions or other artefacts. If we accept the hypothesis that the Roman cult of Mithras derives from a Persian religious tradition, it is possible to interpret Mithraic sources by direct reference to Persian sacred texts and thus, at least in

theory, to partially reconstruct the cult's belief and ritual system, which would otherwise be almost completely unknown. However, the turbulent history of Mithraic studies in the 20th century shows that the validation of a direct and uncomplicated descent of the Roman cult of Mithras from a branch of a Persian cultural and religious tradition remains (Chalupa, 2015: 66) In addition, the Iranian Mithra temples in their structure, with the Europeans, have accordance and controversy. Their accordance in the first place is their common name, and the Roman temples, called Mithraeum, have been called Mehrabah, Mehrava, and Mehrabad in Iran. Today, throughout Iran, dozens of places, in particular the village of Mehrabad, are called which are undoubtedly a reminder of the period's past. Their placement in the underground in both the civilization of Iran and Rome is another common feature of them. These temples in the two civilizations on their ceiling have luminaire rings that shine the sun radius. European Mithraeums on both sides have a platform to sit; such platforms are found in some of the Iranian Mithraic temples such as *Abāzar* Mehrabah, (Fig.1) near the city of *Nir*. The author has uncovered three temples of Mithras in the region of *Nir* (Ardabil); two of them have already been introduced by other scholars, and many of them are waiting for the researchers

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steps under the rocks. Their different faces are in plan and space. Persian temples are more dome-shaped and sometimes pyramidal, and planes are circular and in some cases square-shaped. The second issue is that inside the Roman Mithraeums, throughout Europe, there are sculptures and statues of the Mithra, if the interior of the Iranian temples has not been seen so far. Geo Widengren is another western scholar who considers the origin of Mithra in Iran and precisely in the northwest of this country (Azerbaijan and its surroundings). He also refers to the treaty described above, in the following terms: He says that Mithra was perfectly worshiped by many, even outside the party empire, and the foremost value in Asia Minor was more powerful than his position. As a result, Mithra's worship had spread to the land of Greece and Rome (Widengren, 1998, 314). The Mithra remnants in the Comagen are a well-known example: The deities between the animal protectors stand in the same order on both terraces from left to right: King Antiochus I, Commagene /Tyche, Zeus/ Oromasdes, Apollo /Mithras-Helios-Hermes and Heracles/Artagnes-Ares. An inscription (Nomos) comprising the will of King Antiochus I written in ancient Greek is placed behind the row of sculptures that are identical at both terraces. Both the Hellenic and Persian names of the gods are mentioned in the inscription. (Şahin, 2013, 132) The final goal of this article is to introduce and analyze the Mithra temples in Iran, expressing the Iranian roots of these temples outside the country.

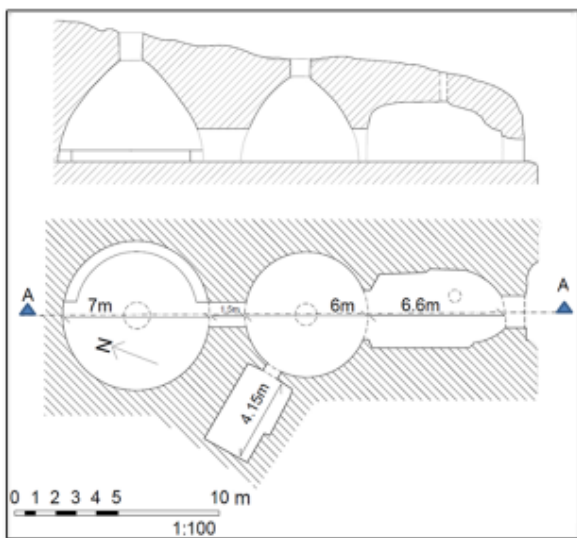


Fig. 1, plan and section of the " Abāzar" Mithra temple (Author)

2. Questions

There are many questions besides many Mysterious. What did the Mithra temples look like in mainland of Iran? Or exactly such temples in Iran must necessarily be like the Roman Mithraeums? What do various documents, especially archaeological evidence, say? Does the study of the Mithra temples outside the Iranian territory eliminate any deficiencies in these fields alone in spite of its considerable potential? It also begs the question whether, despite the common terms of Mithra and Mithraism in Iran and Rome, were they similar in nature? Another

question is that if the ritual of Mithra in Rome has Iranian origins and roots? It is certain that the first is negative and the latter is positive. Because the metaphor of Mithra in Rome has changed over time, in its transformation, according to geographical and culture differences. This change can be seen everywhere; as the religion of Christ in Armenia, varies with Italy; or the religion of Islam in Iran and Saudi Arabia that don't have exactly the same thinking.

3. Research Methodology

The research method of this paper primarily is based on the field studies, especially archaeological and architectural studies of the temples located around the city of Nir (in Ardabil) and other known temples in the northwestern part of Iran. documentary research including the study of texts and resources, especially new research and studies of electronic resources available on the World Wide Web, which involves the most extensive descriptions and comments on the subject of the present study. The main research tools are observation and study. Analysis and survey based on open views of some data and samples discussed in this research for necessary conclusions is based on the comparison of available samples with historical analysis of cultural, artistic, and architectural fields and monuments in Roman Mithraic temples with samples available in the northwestern Iran (Azerbaijan province) Which is necessary for the conclusion for deductive inference conclusion. The present research, studies similarities in two aspects of architecture and fixtures and studies around them and compares similarities in terms of spatial, cultural and artistic time with a stylistic approach.

4. Distribution of Mihr or Mithraic temples in the northwestern Iran

In the northwest of Iran, there are a series of temples dating back to ancient times, all of which have been cut into the rocks. Some of these temples are still used today for religious ceremonies. Although the temples are pre-Islamic, they have long been used by *Sufi* cults throughout Islamic history. All around them, there are cemeteries of the Islamic era, especially the Mongol era. Some have a dome-shaped space *Qadamgāh* and *Qarashirān* temples are of this type. The latter, of course, has a pyramidal shape, and some have more than one dome space. Types of this group can be found in *Varjuvi*, and the rock cut temple at rocky village of *Abāzar* in Nir area of Ardabil province (Mohamadifar, 2017, 105). The inconsistency of these types of places with other religions in Iran is one of the most important reasons for attributing this temple to the Mithra worshipper (Varjāvand, 1976, 14). The starting point for any exploration of Greek and Roman narratives about Persians has to be Herodotus' famous excursus in book one: Persians are different from Greeks as they do

not worship statues, (Sommer, 2017, 346). Thus, in the same form as the cave-like form of the Mithra temples in Iran and Rome, two major differences can be seen here, as the father of history has pointed out that unlike the Greek and Roman temples, the Iranian Mithra temples lack paintings and sculptures. The second is the Iranian-style spaces within the cliffs, mostly dome-shaped with circular planes. There are also examples with a pyramid-shaped space and a square plan. However, European Mithra temples have rectangular or basilica planes. Eubulus tells us that Zoroaster was the first to dedicate a natural cave in honor of Mithras, the creator and father of all; it was located in the mountains near Persia and had flowers and springs. This cave bore for him the image of the cosmos, which Mithras had created, and the things that the cave contained, by their proportionate arrangement, provided him with symbols of the elements and climates of the cosmos. After Zoroaster: others adopted the custom of performing their rites of initiation in caves and grottos, which were either natural or artificial (Amendola, 2018, 26). This is a very important historical document regarding the Mithra ritual and the manner of prayer in the dome-shaped caves in Iran, referring to the 4th century B.C Greek writer Eubulus, who describes the construction of Mithras temples in the studied areas. Underground architecture is also known as Mithraism Temples, because it evokes the cave that Mithra was born in and also making dark halls and illuminated halls, approves the rules of Mithraism temples. So that it is said, passing through them and reaching to bright spaces, is reminiscent of the Mithraism journey. Follower should, after austerity and traversing the darkness, prepare himself for reaching the hierarchy of light (Mokhlesi, 1992). Unique feature of this type of architecture are eternity and totality in comparison to other types of architecture as well as its profound respect towards religious beliefs. In fact, mountain or rock that has placed a cave or residential place inside it, has a power that can preserve history and culture (AliJabbari, & Farahi Nia, 2017, 1031).

4-1- *Abāzar Mithraic Temple around Nir:*

The city of *Nir* is located in 35 km from Ardabil. *Abāzar* Troglodytic village is about 5.9 kilometers, southeast of *Nir* and 1.5 kilometers from the current village of *Abāzar*. Rocky village at the bottom of a rock, behind a cemetery and a hill not so high, it is not visible until a few steps away. *Abāzar* rocky village has a special defensive position consisting of a combination of 13 units or architectural space and each unit is independently planted on the south slope of the rock. (Mirfatāh & Shekari Niri, 1996, 60). This temple is one of the pristine and most original Mithra temples in Azerbaijan, with less effect than later manipulations. Therefore, the most appropriate

case study is authenticity. Like other examples in Azerbaijan, this temple has a cemetery of the Islamic era along with a monument to its use by Sufi sects. On the other hand, there is a difference with the other temples of this land, which is located nearby to the other Rock-cut architecture is designed and made by man from the start to finish. The temple is 22 meters in length, with three spaces along its length, and its extension is the South-North. There is a rectangular room 4 meters long in the middle of the space (Fig. 1). After the entrance, through the hall 7 m. wide and 5.3 m wide, it can be connected to domed and intermediate halls with a diameter of 6 m and a terminal with a current diameter of 7 m. Its peculiar shape and having a platform at the bottom dome indicates its use as a temple (Soltani M. &, 2018, 214). Each space has a separate aperture on the ceiling. In the *Nir* area, there are several rock-cut villages, and the author has so far identified Several Mithra temples. The acquired Roman experience of northwestern Iran, with its natural historical potential due to the growth and development of Mithraic ideas, led to the adoption of the Mehr faith by the ideas of militarism in the Roman system. (Omran &, 2015, 128) Underground spaces lack external appearance in these two worship areas. The spatial arrangement of these works is along a long axis that is repeated in a row in a sequential and iterative fashion and follows a linear pattern. The emphasis on the importance of space in this architectural form is at the end of the spatial hierarchy (Soltani & Azad, 2018, 219).

4-2 *Gadamgāh Temple (mosque) of Azarshahr*

Qadamgāh is one of the villages of East Azarbaijan province located in *Qibla Dāghi* suburb. The village is 12 km from *Azarshahr* city center, with an ancient cave dating back to pre-Islamic times, making it one of the city's tourist areas. At the top of the dome is a one-meter-wide temple for ventilation and lighting (Kleiss, 1972, 176). Originally used as a temple of Mihr by the Mithra's cult. It was gradually converted into a mosque by the Dervishes and Gnostics in the sixth, seventh and eighth centuries, and later in the Safavid era. Currently, people use the mosque to perform some religious ceremonies. The historic cemetery of *Qadamgāh* is Located 200 meters from the site, dating back to the 6th to 10th century AH. This, historical monument was registered to 1968 at Number 779 in the list of monuments of the country. The altar of the temple (or mosque) in the form of the simple *Moqarnas* belong to the Safavid period (Varjāvand, 1976, 6). There is also this kind of temple of secrets in the cities of Maragheh and Nair, which have numerous domed spaces. Originally these stamps were worshiped by the followers of the mysterious Mihr or Mithra religion (Fig, 2-4)



Fig. 2, Temple Image Inside, dome-shaped space and skylight (Gholami, 2019)

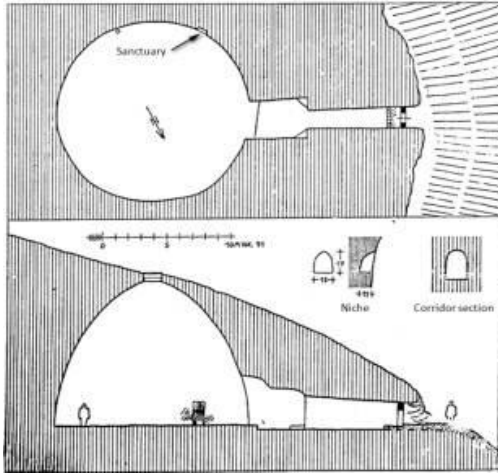


Fig. 3. The Holy Mithraism Temple in "Ghadamgāh" around Azarshahr, re-use by Sufis in the Mongol era. Rock cut Architecture. (Kleiss, 1972, 176)



Fig. 4, Picture in the annex of the Qadamgāh Temple in the Islamic era (author).

4-3- Varjuvy Mithraic Temple in Maragheh

Rock-cut architecture is one of the lesser known aspects of Persian architecture. Apart from the rock-cut royal tombs of the Achaemenian at Naqsh-e Rostam and elsewhere, there are a surprising number of little known rock-cut monuments in Iran, from burial chamber to complete underground Villages. (Ball, 329, 1979). It is necessary to add here the existence of underground cities in Iran to continue Balls explanation. Mithra temple of Maragheh (Mithraeum) plan were representation of Mithra torchbearers or sun and moon indications, But No other Mithraic statuettes and decorations Except Islamic era (Fig. 5). There are no decorations other than re-use time in the Islamic era. Newer findings reveal new horizons to the atheist scholars and reveal the unknowns sometimes vice versa. The *Varjuvy* Temple has a three-part, stables on the northeastern side. The distance to the temple is 50 meters. The stables have 24 refreshers, which were used by the Sufis and earlier by Mithra's followers (Kāmbakhsh Fard, 1994, 148). Mr. Ball do mistake about traces functions so hi said: Despite the several Islamic features in the complex-the mihrab, the inscriptions and the graves- The *Imamzadeh Masum* shows signs of being a non-Islamic Buildings Such a monument in Il- in this field. The most distinctive feature of this temple is that in its plan structure, it contains the sunrise and *khanid* times thatwould most logically have been a Buddhist temple (Ball, 1979, 337-338). in the other pages, repeat his declaration firmly Emphatically: it can thus be seen that the *Imamzadeh Masum*, in its original form, contains all the requisite features of a Buddhist cave complex such as is found in Afghanistan and central Asia (Ball, 1979, 339). Just as opposite, there is no resemblances between so called monuments. In contrast to Warwick's argument Dr. Varjāvand's argument is significant. He says that this mysterious rock cut architecture has no resemblance to the known and common religions in Iran. Therefore, its mysterious nature is more compatible with the temples of Mihr (Varjāvand, 1976, 14). There is no information about a cluster chamber usage numbered 9, 10, and 11, (Fig. 9) is situated 96 m to the east of main temple, which was stable indeed. So Kāmbakhshfard wrought 50m such distance is (Kāmbakhshfard,1994, 148) At the present time, every year in the month of Muharram, Ashura and Taasoa, people of the village of *Varjuvi* gather here to performing ceremonies (Tahmasebi, 2018, 22). (fig.7). Varjāvand's argument is significant. He says that this mysterious rock cut architecture has no resemblance to the known and common religions in Iran. Therefore, its mysterious nature is more compatible with the temples of Mihr (Varjāvand, 1976, 14). There is no information about a cluster chamber usage numbered 9, 10, and 11, (Fig. 9) is situated 96 m to the east of main temple, which was stable indeed. So Kāmbakhtfard wrought 50 m (Kāmbakhshfard, 1994, 148) Some scholars refer to the spread of the Mithra cult in the West as Persianism: These are plausible inferences What is certain is that this text, the very earliest Surviving allusion to the central feature of the Roman cult of Mithras, the subjugation of a bull by main force (i. e. a hunt followed by its sacrificial death),

locates the mythical event in Persia, and is thus also our earliest attestation of Persianism in this context. The strong Iranian hypothesis' is irrevocably associated with the two-volume 'work of Franz Cumont (1868–1947), (Gordon, 2017, 291). But essentially the Roman cult of Mithras was Iranian and its colporteurs were the μαγουσαῖοι, the Greek-speaking, Maggio of Asia Minor attested in Christian sources (Gordon, 2017, 292). I have mentioned, a patron commissioned an exceptionally persianist Image of the bull-killing, the Persian bow has been transferred to the torch-bearers, each of whom holds an unstrung bow in his left hand (Gordon, 2017, 304). The main result of Gordon criticism is that Cumont's continuity hypothesis should be considered just as an unproven theory. In some cases, unusual features are seen, in the Mithraic tauroctony scenes, Mostly the torch of the Mithra guards, one up and the other down and sometimes downward or upward, and sometimes vice versa. If we put vice versa. But sometimes in motifs, both Torches are together a picture of the tauroctony and the full plan of the *Varjuvi* Temple we can see the concepts of the motifs in the *Varjvoi* Temple Plan (Table 2) (Shekari, 2006, 117). The next point about the use of old and new caves in the Islamic period. Historical sources, along with other causes, relate to astronomical predictions in the second half of the seventh century A.H which reported the coming of the Great Flood in 582 (Shekari, 2006, 119-120). Table 1 illustrates the study of drawing process of the *Varjuvi* temple plan (Table 1).

4-4- *Qarashirān* Mithraic temple around Nir

Qarashirān village is located 7 km south of *Nir*. Adjacent to this village is a cemetery dating from the 8th-11th century AH, such as *Abāzar*, *Qadamgāh*, *Varjuvi*, and *Wind*, indicating its existence in the Islamic era, and pre-Islamic cemeteries were also abundant in the area, most unfortunately, destroyed by antiquities thieves. Due to the constant river water and green nature and human life throughout history, this has been a common trend in the region. About two kilometers west of this village is one of the rocky areas of the country which due to its type and form and the multitude of villages and underground cities and Mithra temples in the *Nir* area can also be categorized as Mithra Temple. There are traces and signs of the pre-Islamic era beside this temple. The site has a long entrance from the east and facing the sun to access the main space. But over time, this corridor has been blocked and it is possible to penetrate it through the skylight. The length of the building is approximately 25 meters. The interior is cube-shaped and quadrilateral, and unlike many of the Mithra temples known as the dome, the roof is pyramid-shaped. There is also an altar at the far end inside it is stacked with stone and soil; however, the survey was partly made possible by the author. In terms of the shape of the interior volume, it is in a new typology. The surface of its interior walls has been blackened by fire, indicating the long-term use of the temple (Fig. 11).

Mehr Temple in *Qarashiran*, *Maragheh*, *abazar*, and *Qadamgah* Temple in *Azarshahr* are the rock temples in

northwest of Iran that are totally devoid of any statue, with completely Iranian effects and are different from European Mithraism temples. Their obvious characteristic is circular dome-shaped spaces; simplicity, arrangement of spaces and the way of creating light that correspond with the tradition of Mithraism in Iran (AliJabbari & FarahiNia, 2017. 1040). In terms of the shape of the interior volume, it is in a new typology. The surface of its interior walls has been blackened by fire, indicating the long-term use of the temple (Fig. 11) The rock-cut caves or grottoes offered spatial distraction and visual interest, and served as cool, shady venues for displays of small motives to unknown deities; (Rice, 1995, 383-404), have been used for various purposes in the shape of tombs, monasteries, temples, mosques and houses. In addition to the above, fortresses, water reservoirs, pools, baths, pigeon nests, shelters and even villages and cities are cut into the rocks and used as habitat. Mithraic ck-cut architecture first appeared in Iranian Plateau.

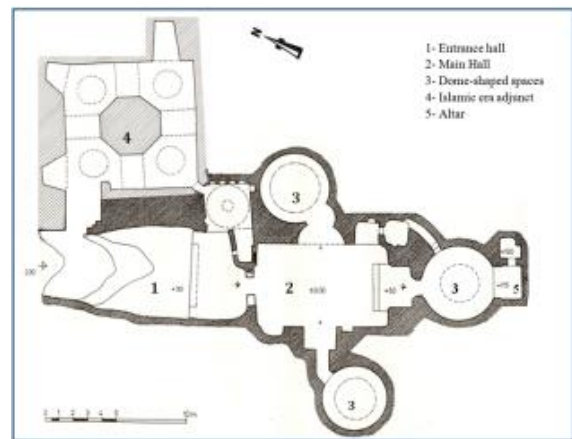


Fig 5, The Mithra or Meihar Temple in "Varjuvi" with a globe in each hand symbolizing moon and the sun. Rock Cut Architecture (Author).

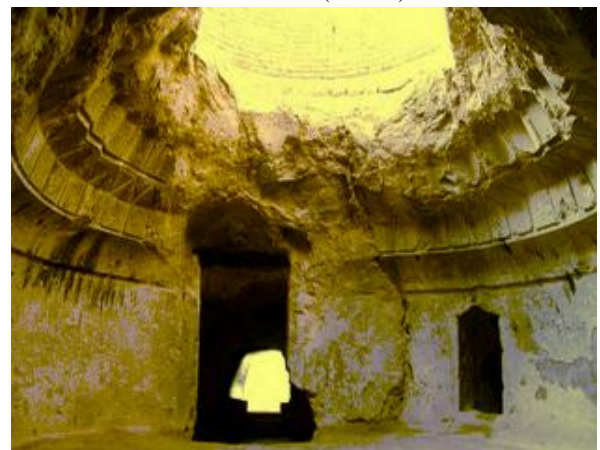


Fig. 6, the main dome space or head plan with geometric elements of the Islamic era (Author)



Fig 7, religious ceremony in the shrine of the Imamzadeh Masum in the present age (mabademehr.persianguig.com, 2019)

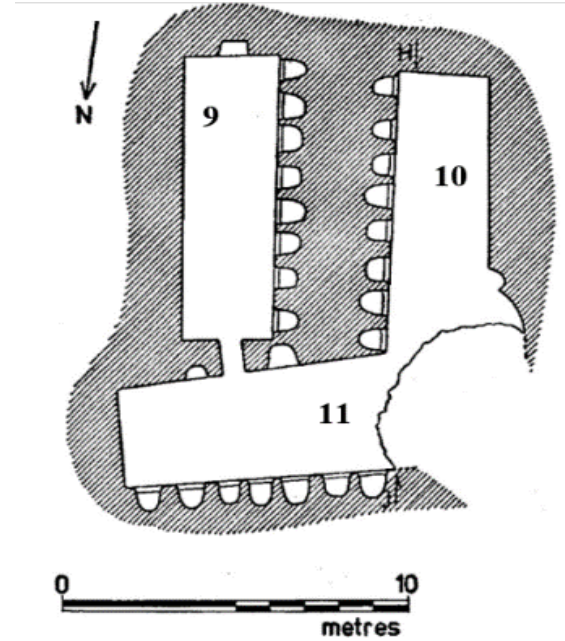


Fig 9, Triple part stable varjuvi shrine, 90 m on the northeastern side (ball, 1979, 331)



Fig 8, Entrance and exterior image of the shrine, (Warna, 2017)

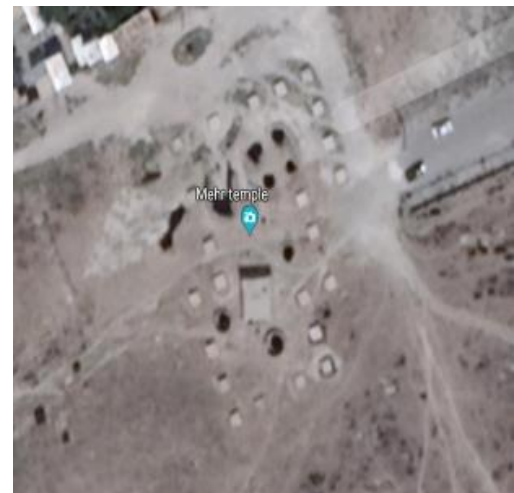


Fig 10, varjuvi Mehr temple Satellite pictures (Googol earth)

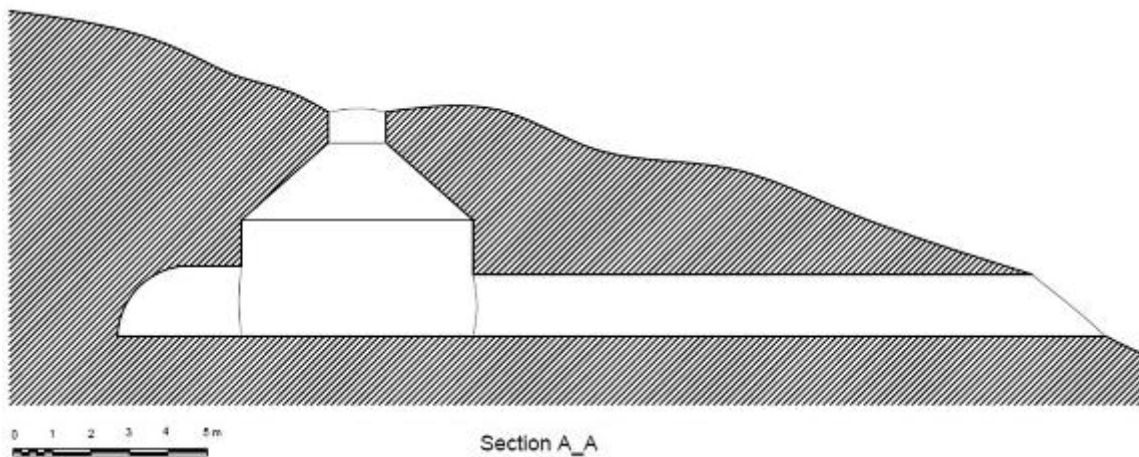


Fig. 11, The Mithraism Temple of "Qarashirān " around the city of Nir has its pyramidal roof Space rock cut Architecture (Author).

Table 1

Drawing maps of the *Imamzadeh Masum* of *Varjawi* temple in Maragheh from 1972 (Author).

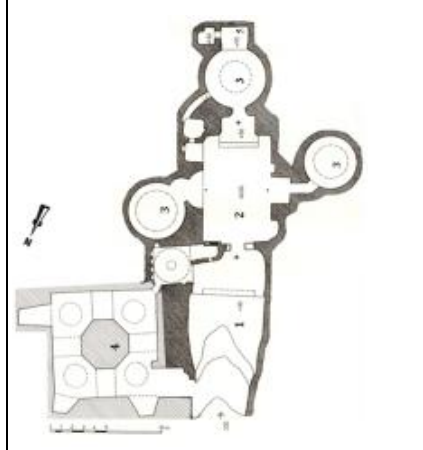
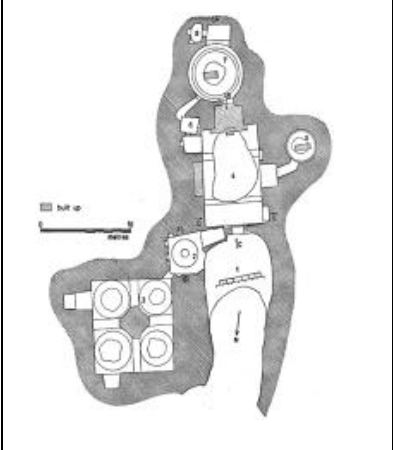
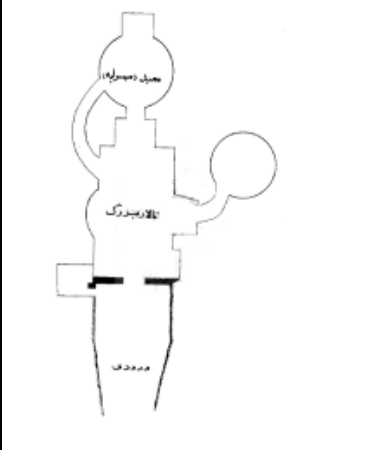

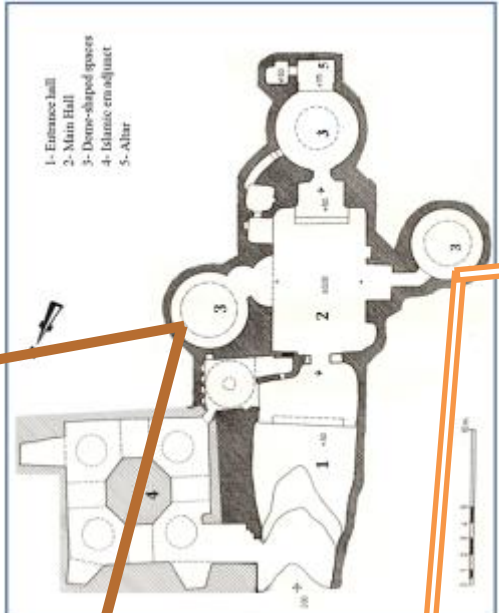




Complete plan (outer)	\ Warwick Ball plans, (1979)	Parviz Varjavand plan (1972)
		

Table 2

Tauroctonic concepts, moon and sun and torch bearers of European Mithraeums, in the plan of the Vrjuvi Mihr temple, represent the stations of sunrise and sunset (outer).

Cautopates	Varjuvi Mihr templ	Cautes
		
<p data-bbox="188 1534 534 1668">Ancient Roman marble relief of depicting the god Mithras, second half of the 2nd century CE. Vienna. (torch directions, Sunrise and sunset)</p> 		<p data-bbox="1093 1534 1396 1646">Plaque of Mithras slaying the bull Second Century AD Metropolitan Museum (Moon and Sun)</p> 

5. Different kind of a Temple Attributed to Mihr in Ai Khānum

According to the finding of the three-part temple, in Ai Khanum, some suggested scholars suggest that they should be used in accordance with the *Avesta* texts and the inscriptions of Persepolis. The second temple at Ai Khanum was uncovered some 100 Meters to the north of the city's fortifications. The 'Extramural Temple' was found devoid of any finds. It is thus impossible to establish who was worshipped in this monumental structure. It has been proposed that the cell, divided into three chambers, (fig.12) each entered via a separate staircase, might indicate a triad of deities, the possible contenders being Ahura-Mazda, Mithra and Anahita (Shenka, 2011, 129). It is noteworthy that beside the Greek winged Nike and the Graeco-Kushan Zeus/ Ahura-Mazda, the Hellenistic Mithra represents a third type of Greco-Iranian syncretism. The Kushans may already have been acquainted with the cult of Mithra in Sogdiana before they invaded Bactria proper, because the name of an Iranian noble (*Sisi-mi-ra*-, 'devoted to Mithra) provides evidence for the cult of Mithra on territory north of the Oxus in the time of Alexander the Great (Harmatta &, 1994. 309). Cybele Plate found at Ai Khanum, in a temple, depicting Cybele, a votive. Approximately 150 BC. (fig.13). These cases show the spread of the Iranian Mithra ritual from east to west. Indo-Iranians divided the world into three parts-earth, atmosphere, and heaven. This tripartition of the world provides the basic orientation of religion (Ara, 2008, 72). If this temple were to worship the three deities Ahura-Mazda, Anahita and Mithra, it would be part of the transformations of the next era.

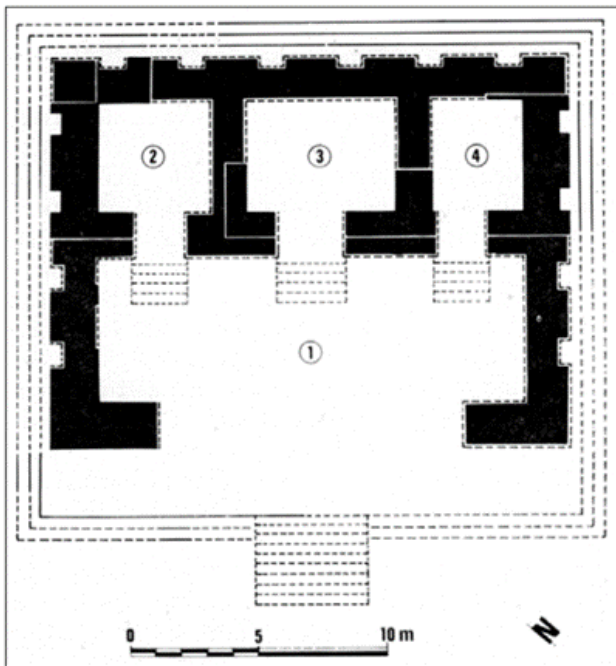


Fig 12. The Extramural Temple, Ai Khanum (Shenkar, 2011, 130).



Fig 13- Plate found at Ai Khanum, in a temple, depicting Cybele, a votive sacrifice and the sun God. 2nd century BCE. (Muséé Guimet, Paris, 2012).

Sogdian art depicted images of multiple gods, but these were sometimes altered to conform to an Iranian model. Among the identified deities portrayed are twenty-three of Zoroastrian origin, including Sroasha, Verethagna, Anahita, Mithra, and 'Meh-Ahura.' The veneration of fire was common and archeological findings have revealed places of worship where these deities were honored (Shroff, 2016, 2). The cultural and civilizational similarities of these two lands are so far-fetched that there is no need to prove it (Shekari Niri, 2017, 28-34).

6. More Evidence of Iranian Mithra Authenticity

Modern understanding of ancient Iranian religion is impeded by the limitations of the available sources, which are inevitably of two sorts: textual and material. Textual sources are both indigenous and foreign, the latter being primarily Greek, although for purposes of historical reconstruction the ancient Indian Vedic literature is indispensable. The main indigenous sources are the Achaemenian royal inscriptions in the Old Persian language and the *Avesta* (Malandra, 2017). There is a wide range of Mithraic cult documents available on the Iranian territory. Most of them are sources of archeology and architecture, religious and historical texts and mythical and literary. Despite numerous documents such as the most ancient religious books of the world including the *Avesta* and Rig Veda, and the oldest inscriptions, including: Boğazköy, and Achaemenid inscriptions, there is no much uncertainty about its nature and its Iranian origins. In other words, many Mithra signs with widespread dispersal in Iran can be found in the Roman Mithra in one place (Table 4). In addition to the above, mythological, historical, geographical, and literary sources also suggest extensive material about Mihr or Mithra, which illustrates the authenticity of this Iranian deity. The pre-Zoroastrian worship of Mithra, are attested

by linguistic evidence (Harmatta et al., 1994. 308). Here are some of these original sources that emphasize the solidity of the theory of Franz Cumont, and Vermaseren, and other scholars. An important value of the tiara ('Phrygian cap') was that it could denote not just the Persian deities but also the leaders of Mithraic groups the Patres, Fathers. Thus the rank of the Patres depicted in barbotine technique on the two faces of the Schlangengefäß from Mainz. One of the more important Greek topoi about the Persians was their skill at archery, both in hunting and in warfare: we need only think of Aeschylus' coinage of the epithet τόξαρχος for King Darius. (Gordon, 2017, 301-3). There is another point to consider about performing some Mithra ceremonies: The visual effect of the Zeugma sanctuary would have been very much in keeping with the syncretized Greco-Persian nature of the deities honored there. Although the posted religious decrees were in Greek, the priests were required to wear Persian garb (Rose, 2013, 227). The figure of Mihr possesses a radiate halo, as does Mihr at *Taq-e Bostan* and Apollo-Mithras at Nemrut Dagi, identifying them as solar deities. Specific to our study, we observed numerous features that retained their attachment to the name of Mithras, Mithra, Mihr, or Mihr in more than one of our test cases. Some of these observations may seem superficial, or are already widely recognized, but even these can prompt new avenues of enquiry (Adrych &, 2017, 159). The Author believes that the same halo and nominal similarity, along with other commonalities, is sufficient to show unity in Iranian and Eastern Mithra authenticity throughout the East and West. Obviously these types of transmissions will be accompanied by appropriate remains of Persepolis, transformations. One of the common and equivalent terms for the sun in Persian literature is the word Mihr. The most famous of these is the Shining Mihr. Important evidence for Mithraic thought can surely be procured in the first which can be compared to the Tauroctone scene—Mithra slaying the bull is lion attacking a bull (Table 4). This motif occurs twenty-seven times at Persepolis, (Milani, 2014. 52-53) the introduction of tarot cards in Europe is dated between 1375 and 1378. (Latin and Gk Mithrās, Old Persian Mithra, derives from proto-Indo-Iranian Mithra, from the root mi- "to bind"), the god of light and truth, and represented by the sun. As Reinhold Merkelbach of Britannica reports: (Novin, 2017). This form of medieval zodiac circulation manifests itself in a time between a thousand years ago in a London Mithraeum's and a thousand years later somehow in the Aminiha Husseinieh of Qazvin (Table 3). The well-known image of Mithras from Iran is that of a relief from *Taq-e Bostan*. It depicts the coronation of Artashir II (379-383 CE) who receives his power from Ahura-Mazda and is accompanied by Mithras. Mithras was even more specialized as a protector of Persian kings. According to some scholars, Artashir had Kushan origin, and Kushans worshiped Mithras (Mastrocinque, 2017, 52). As such, Shāpur II rock relief. *Tāq-e Bostān*, Mithra standing over a lotus flower in the victory relief of Shāpur II over Julian projects the full backing of the purveyors of khvarenah for the Sasanian king (Soudavar, 2014, 201).

6.1. Other Iranian Mithraeums, MehrKadeh-i Nerseh (Nerseh Mithraeum)

Subsequent excavations in the Sefidshahr area have uncovered an underground temple dedicated to Mithraism. The Nerseh Mehrkadeh (Mithraeum), with its cruciform plan and pointed barrel vault of roofs. Platforms to sit on and a well of water, was discovered during archeological excavations in year



Fig. 14. Mehrkadeh-i Nerseh (Mithraeum) Inside) author)

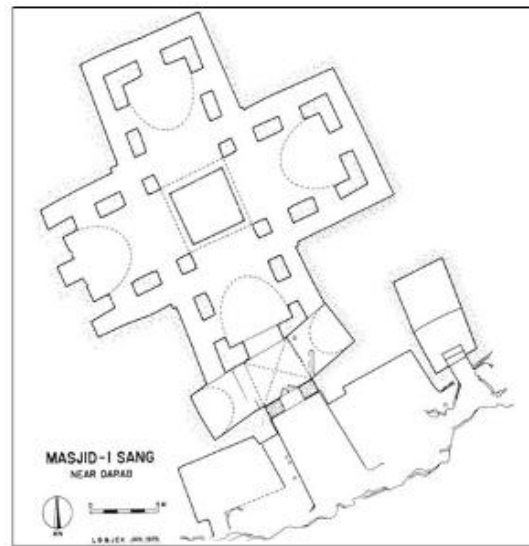


Fig. 15, Cruciform Plan of the Masjid-i Sang near Dārāb (Bier, 1986, 119)

2018 (Fig. 14). The underground city of Tasmijan in Sefid Shahr, by Aran and Bidgol environs. White City is 21 km northwest of Aran and Bidgol city and 18 km northwest of Kashan city. The monastery of Nerseh was discovered under a religious monument called Qadamgah. It is 15 meters long, 9 meters wide and 240 cm height, and has a short dome roof with a hole in the center. Cedar, cross and sun motifs were discovered from this Mithra temple. Zohuri on the probability of this work being associated with Mithraism explains: The prevalence of Mithra worship in ancient Iran and its symbols and buildings, despite their similarities, certainly differ from those of

Roman Mithraeums, and one should not expect to find traces such as Mithra poitigs and statues. Since ancient times, Iranian culture has not been humanist in contrast to Western culture (Zohuri, 2018). Its plan has resemblance to masjid-i Saangi-y Darab (fig.15). David Mayer, a German archaeologist visiting the underground city of Tasmijan White City, said: Given the multilevel underground city and the sacred number 7 in Mithraism, the discovery of the Mithraium (Merkadeh) and the seven spiritual mystical journeys are likely The land of "Tasmijan White City" from the pre-Islamic era (Tasnimnews, 2019). The plan of the Nerse Mehrkadeh and the plan of the Masjid-i Sang near Dārāb and the Kalat-e Vraju shrine, each appear to be cruciform, representing another type of temple of Mithraism. Interestingly, both Warwick and Bier have attributed these temples to non-native religions, including Buddhism. Warwick has emphasized in another article. However, there are no signs of Buddhism in this remains. The Mongols were originally adherents of the Shamanic rituals, but later a number of Ilkhans and other elders converted to the Buddhist religion. Huff (2005: 437) have identified temple.

6.2. Qalāt-i Haidarī (Varāwi) halidome.

The Village of Qalāt-I Haidarī , is situated on the Khurmūj plain between Būshihhr and kangān, about 18 kilometer, south-west of the town of Khurmūj. The caves are a further 8 km. west of the village, in the landward foothills of Kūh-i Mānd, a low but very spectacular costal range parallel to the Persian Gulf. The caves are approached up a Wadi bed, part of a footpath that is said to eventually lead through to the coast (it was not followed). Sighted about 1 km. into the range, cut in to the cliffs forming the north side of the wadi (Bull, 1986, 95). The famous Kalat monument is about three kilometers west of the village of Verawi, which is in the mountains. Interestingly, the original name of the Maraghev Varjovi, was also Veravi. The similarity of these two names with thousands of kilometers (Verawi) cannot be linked to the Mehr Temple.



Fig. 16. inside the Verawi Shrine (Author)

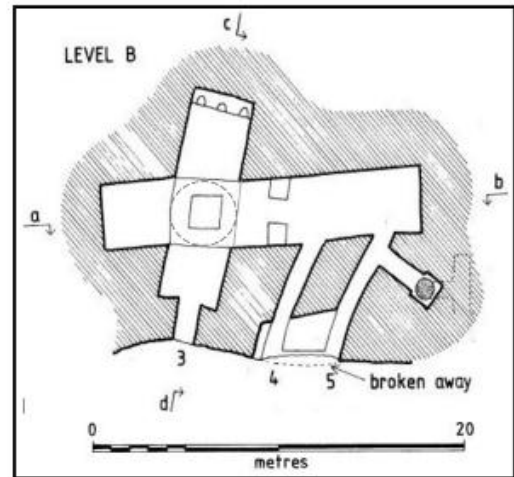


Fig.17, Verawi shrine plan (Ball, 1986, 98)

There is cruciform chamber, measuring 16.5×10m. Along its axes. The “crossing” is crowned by an elliptical dome, 6.90 m. height, resting directly on the square plan of the “crossing” without any zone of transition apart from four simple semicircular squinches (fig.16 & 17). Below the dome, “crossing” is taken up by a 1.70 m. Square platform cut from the bed-rock, raised to the same level as floors of the “trancepts” and “chancel” (Ball, 1986, 95). Interestingly, Ball have attributed these temples to non-native religions, such as the Christianity and Buddhism. Warwick has mentioned this in a joint article with White-House and in another article (Ball & Whitehouse 2017, 147-150). In another independent article, he emphasized their Buddhism Functions (Ball, 1998, 1-14). However, there are no signs of Buddhism in the remains. The resemblance of the plans to the cruciform, and the oval arches of these remains, confirm the authenticity of the pre-Islamic era and affirm their use as a Mehr temple. The Masjid-i Sang near Dārāb where it is presented, mainly on the strength of the rounded (elliptical) profiles and the cruciform plan, as a Sasanian fire temple re-cut for Muslim use (bier, 1986, 117). It should be noted here that this monument was not a fire tempel (Ātashkadeh) but a Mehrkadeh (Mithraeum). The Indian and Iranian Mithra differ from the European Mithra. Therefore, one should not expect the Mithra temples in Iran to be the same as Europe. Alongside the similarities, the lack of motifs and statues in Iranian temples is the most obvious of these differences. The Indo Iranian Mithra differ from the European seal. Therefore, one should not expect the Mithra temples in Iran to be the same as Europe. Alongside the similarities, the lack of motifs and statues in Iranian temples is the most obvious of these differences (Labfaf, 2012, 105). After the Romans adopted Mithraic beliefs from the Iranians, they gave their version of Mithra a human shape in the same way they gave their many gods human shapes (Eduljee, 2016, 2).

Table 3

Continuation of the constellation and Mithra circle from ancient Rome to the present day in artistic and architectural remains (author).

<p>Tauroctony encircled by zodiac in the London Mithraeum</p>	<p>Mithra-Sol in a chariot drawn by 4 horses, circle of zodiac by Petrus. Agricola (1525-1585)</p>	<p>Circle of zodiac in Hosseiniyeh-ye-Aminiha, Qazvin, Iran. 1858 (Sun or Mihr in the center)</p>
		









Porphry, the neo Platonic pagan philosopher in the second half of the third century, as a matter of fact, He displays respect and a non-superficial, almost esoteric, knowledge of Mithraism, In De- Abstinencia, Porphyry mentions that the Persians believed in the transmigration of souls, “and this they also appear to indicate in the mysteries of Mithra.” The Persians call the place a cave where they introduce an initiate to the mysteries, revealing to him the path by which souls descend and go back again. This cave bore for the Persians the image of

the cosmos, which Mithras had created (Amendola, 2018, 26). With the Iranian survivals in Roman Mithraism, not just tauroctony ritual but also the association of Mithra with The sun and “his role savior or conductor of the soul (Foltz, 2013, 175). Mithras was also associated with sovereignty and the leadership of armies. Mithras was the “whom the heads of countries worship as they go to the battlefield” (hymn to Mithras 8) and as “having taken his stand in the battle,” the one who “smashes the regiments” (Hymn to Mithras 35) (Mastrocinque, 2017, 48).

Table 4

Symbols of Mithra in Iranian Cultural and Artistic Heritage and its Evolution in Ancient Roman Temples (Author)

Description	figures & shapes	Description	figures & shapes
<p>Anahita on a Lion, from a Fourth Century Cylinder Seal. Courtesy of The State Hermitage Museum</p>		<p>Kanishka I Gold dinar, Miir reverse 127-150 CE King of the Kushan</p>	
<p>Bronze Helmet Iranian, Parthian, 249-224 BC The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston Iran or eastern Anatolia</p>		<p>Antiochus of Commagene and Mithra. Nemrud Dag, Asia Minor</p>	

<p>Mithra slaying the bull is lion attacking a bull. This motif occurs twenty-seven times at Persepolis.</p>		<p>1- TARSOS CILICIA Authentic Ancient 331BC Silver</p> <p>2- Lion-Bull combat and Perseus on coin of Tarsus</p>	
<p>Taq-e Bostan in Kermanshah, carved around the 4th century AD. Sassanid era</p>		<p>Plate found at Ai Khanum, in a temple 2nd century BCE</p>	
<p>Mithra in 4th century - Taq-e Bostan, investiture relief of Shapur II Taq-e Bostan in western Iran.</p>		<p>Mithra in Phrygian cap with solar rays, with 1st century BC at Nemrut Dagh</p>	
<p>The relief of Bahram II (274-293 AD) in the Bishapur. people with frigid hats,</p>		<p>Mithras tauroctony from Sterzing in the Tyrol.</p>	



6.3. Ancient inscriptions

The first written mention of the Vedic Mithra dates to 1400 BC. The oldest inscription with names of Mithra gods was discovered in Bogazkoi area of Turkey, in a treaty between the Hittites and the Mitanni (between Suppiluliuma and Shattiwaza, C. 1380 BC), the deities Mithra, Varuna, Indra, and Nasatya (Ashvins) are invoked. It is evident that these names correspond to Mithra of Vedic pantheon (Harris, 2001, 29). The king Artaxerxes II (404 BC- 358 BC) building inscriptions is the mention of the gods Anahita and Mithra, alongside Ahura-Mazda in the invocation formula, for example in the inscription that refers to building the new palace at Susa: "By the favor of Ahura-Mazda this is the palace which I built.... May Ahura-Mazda, Anahita, and Mithras protect me and what I have built from all evil..." it is said rather in the inscription describing the reconstruction of the Apadana of Dariush I at Susa: "By the favor of Ahura-Mazda, Anahita, and Mithras, this palace I (re) built" (Table 5) Artaxerxes III inscription in Persepolis read: Me

may Ahura-Mazda and the god Mithras (*Mithra Baga*) protect, and this country, and what was built by me" (Briant, 2002, 676). The gods were therefore given both Greek and Persian names. There is this relief from Arsameia in Commagene, King Mithradates Kallinikos (a name mixing Persian and Greek elements) is shaking hands with a god named in the inscription as Hercules - Verethragna. Some scholars have incorrectly identified this King as Antiochus, and mistakenly located at the relief at Nimrud Dag in Commagene (Hinnells, 1997, 24). However, strong evidence that "Baga" was sometimes used as a by-name of Mithra is provided by calendrical data first exploited by J. Marquart. It is this latter word, which is personified in the Rigveda as the minor deity Bhaga (one of the Ādityas, a group headed by Varuṇa and Mithra. Likewise, the sixteenth day of the month is known as" Mihr rōz" in Mid. Pers., mtr in early Chor., myš in the Sogd. Calendar given by Bīrūnī, etc. (Williams, 1988, 403-406).

Table 5

Artaxerxes II and Artaxerxes III inscriptions, Contains the name Mithra, or Mithra

<p>Artaxerxes II, Ecbatan Susa, (404 BC- 358 BC)</p>	<p>Artaxerxes III, Persepolis (359-339BC)</p>	
<p>𐎠𐎡𐎹𐎷𐎡𐎹𐎠𐎹𐎡𐎹𐎠𐎹</p>	<p>𐎠𐎡𐎹𐎷𐎡𐎹𐎠𐎹𐎡𐎹𐎠𐎹𐎡𐎹𐎠𐎹</p>	
<p>Mitra</p>	<p>Mithra \ Baga \ (God)</p>	

6.4. Geographical locations and Iranian buildings with the name of Mehr (Mithra).

First, it should be noted that the place of worship of Mehr in Iran with two well-known names such as Mehrkadeh (mithreum) and Mehrabeh or Mehraveh (Mehr dome) has remained in literature and history. There are dozens of names in the book of geographical culture of Iran which are used in naming rural places and so on and most of them are "Mehrabad" (Razmara, 1949). One expert has researched the names of places that have been started in the geography of Iran by the name of Mehr, and has found 84 cities and villages. Most of the names are Mehrabad (Najmi, 2007, 117). In addition to towns and villages, there are more buildings and monuments that contain the name Mihr or a combination of the name Mehr, the most famous of which are Mehrava (Joneydi, 1984, 568) and the "Āzar Borzin Mehr" Fire Temple and Even we can name Mehrabad Mosque in Bonab (Kā mbakhsh Fard, 1994, 156). The presence and influence of Mehr in naming the places, villages and cities of Iran to such a large extent, on the one hand, reflects the prevalence of Mithraic ideas in the distant past in the territory of Iran, and on the other hand, the cultural burden of this term and mythological beliefs related to it. It has also survived with its changes throughout the Islamic era to the present day (Najmi, 2007, 163). Citing Pahlavi texts, specifically Bundahišn, The Āzar borzin- mehr, ["Ādur Ī Burzēn-Mihr", According to Bundahišn] was one of the three main Iranian Fire Temples, in the pre-Islamic era and belonged to the farmers caste (Sadeghi, 2003, 5). The use of the Mehr for naming one of the three major fire Temples after Zoroastrianism, Expresses the continuity of Mehr's acceptance at the later times.

6.5. Mithra in ancient texts and literary, geographical and historical sources.

In That unknown epoch when the ancestors of the Persians were still united with those of the Hindus, they were already worshippers of Mithra. The hymns of the

Vedas celebrated his name, as did those of the *Avesta*, and despite the differences obtaining between the two theological systems of which these books were the expression, the Vedic Mithra and the Iranian Mithra have preserved so many traits of resemblance that it is impossible to entertain any doubt concerning their common origin (cumont, 1910, 1). It was interesting that in at least two Zoroastrian texts, the Mehr Yašt (10.93) and a passage from the VĪ dēvdāt which seems to be based on it (19.28-9), Mithra is depicted as saving the devotee from death's bonds and assisting the ascension of his soul just as he assists the rising of the sun (Foltz, 2013 ,175). In Mihr Yašt Mithra is a Yazata of prayer and the great Judge of the soul at the Činvat Bridge (Gnoli, 2009, 143). In the Consultation text of "Behrooz Alexander Goshtasb" praise the sun, praise the mehr and praise the month, recommended three times a day, and the celebration of the god of Mehr has been reminded several times (Sourshian, 1983, 546). Iranian literature is full of Mehr signs and symptoms. In the 11th century, Samarkandy made a few points in his poems about sacrificing Mehregan's celebration, which expresses the symmetry of the bloodshed of Mihr in parallel with the fall leaf. His poetry depicts Mithraic Tauroctony scene in the Roman Mithraic temples. The poems below have the same thematic meaning:

آمد خجسته موسم قربان به مهرگان

خون ریز این بهم شد با برگ ریز آن

Poetry Conceptual translation: A good and weird event happened on the eve of Mehregan. At the same time, the deciduous (autumn) and bloodshot (Mithra) were revealed together (Sozeni, 1959, 318). Belief in different forms of sacrifice to be immune from the evil forces and to find blessing has been pinned to the lives of residents of Iranian Plateau thorough the history. This happy sacrificing became one of the themes in Persian literature and was recreated in the works of many poets and writers. Among these, Nezami Ganjavi has paid especial attention

to the ritual of sacrifice in his story "Haft Peykar" (Khorasani et al., 2013, 1). Joneydi considers the sacrifice of a cow called the "Gabakh" a remnant of the secrets of Iranian culture (Joneydi, 1984, 493). Other scientists, of course, agree with him. "[The Yazidis] are performing a "Gabakh" ceremony on the fifth day of their mass celebration. The animal to be sacrificed in this ritual is the "cow", which is performed in front of the tomb of Sheikh Shams; Shams is the "Mihr", so it can be said that this ritual is related to Mithra and in fact a summary form. It is about how to arrest the cow and slaughter it by Mithra (Wahabi, 1982, 73). Names such as Mithradad do not date back to the Parthians, but in the 5th century BC such names appear in Iran. He sent off a messenger to fetch a certain Mithradates, one of the herdsmen of Astyages, (Herodotus, 2013, 50). After all, the father of history gives a good address of Mithra and its origin: The customs which I know the Persians to observe are the following they have no images of the gods, no temples nor altars, and consider the use of them a sign of folly.... These are the only gods whose worship... and the Persians Mithra. To these gods the Persians offer sacrifice in the following manner: they raise no altar, light no fire, but the man who wishes to sacrifice brings his victim to a spot of ground which is pure from pollution, and there calls upon the name of the god to whom he intends to offer. The sacrificer is not allowed to pray for blessings on himself alone, He cuts the victim in pieces, and having boiled the flesh. It is not lawful to offer sacrifice unless there is a Magus present (Herodotus, 2013, 61). Mithrakāna (Mehrgan) festival in the Old Persian, calendar, competing with Nowruz, for the honour of being the most important festival of the Persians which mentioned by Strabo and in scription from Amorium (Phrygia, first century CE.) Mithrakāna in Strabo time was celebrated an autumn festival. In some other passages a "festival for Mithras" evidently Mithrakāna, is described. Ctesias says that in only one of the festivals celebrated by the Persians, that to Mithra, the king gets drunk and dance (De Jong, 1997, 372). However, strong evidence that "Baga" was sometimes used as a by-name of Mithra is provided by calendric data first exploited by J. Marquart. It is this latter word, which is personified in the Rigveda as the minor deity Bhaga (one of the Ādityas, a group headed by Varuṇa and Mithra. Likewise, the sixteenth day of the month is known as " *Mihr rōz*" in Mid. Pers., *mtr* in early Chor., *myš* in the Sogd. calendar given by Bīrūnī, etc. (Williams, 1988, 403-406). The main discussion of the "Haft Paykar" or Haft Gonbad (seven domes) is the story of the Sassanian ruler Prince Bahram V Gur and his progress towards wisdom, series of visits of

the seven climates in seven domes with the seven different colors (fig. 23). The role of the cave in this myth is very prominent which can be related to the dome-shaped mehravas. It also refract the seven stages of Mithraism (Meisami, 2015).

7. Traces of Mithra in India

The Vedic hymns are addressed to the various deities with natural and ethical attributes to name a few: Sūrya (Sun), Agni (fire), Āpah (Water), Mithra (Friend, Covenant), etc. (Ara, 2008, 87). The name of the Persian god Mithra, adapted into Greek as Mithras, was linked to a new and distinctive imagery. Romans also called the religion Mysteries of Mithras or Mysteries of the Persians; Indo-Iranians divided the world into three parts-earth, atmosphere, and heaven. This three partitions of the world provides the basic orientation of religion (Ara, 2008, 72). The Sanskrit word Vastu means a dwelling, Purusha refers to an Energy, Soul or Universal Principle. Mandala is the generic name for any plan or chart which symbolically represents the cosmos. Vastu Purusha is worshiped during the five stages of the constructions i.e. Plot demarcation, Space clearing (Bhoomi Shodhan), Door installation, Laying Stone for Foundation and on the day of housewarming. Vastu Purusha Mandala is the square which represents the earth and represents the universe suggesting timelessness and infinity (Fig. 19). The mandala is actually a square divided into smaller squares arranged in the form of a grid. Each smaller square depicts the area of the respective Gods. The most commonly used mandala is the square subdivided into 64 and 81 squares. In the Mandala of eighty-one squares (Fig. 18) Brahma Occupies the central nine plots, surrounded by Aryama on the east, Vivasvan on the south, Mithra on the west and Bhudhara on the north, occupying six each plots (Chacrabarti, 1998, 67). Mithra is one of the Adityas, and rules the lunar asterism of Anuradha (Chacrabarti, 1998, 70). Mithra is located next to Brahma and to the west, thus holds a special place alongside Brahma in the design of Indian architecture based on mythology and Mandala (fig. 19). The Avesta Hymn to Mithras (Mihr Yasht) devotes an entire chapter (the 19th) to treatise, pacts or alliances which were protected by Mithras. In India Mithra sherd several features of the Iranian tradition. In the Rigveda Mithra is in fact the patron of honesty, friendship, contacts, and meeting. The Indian Mithra was also concerned with the truth, and he punished falsehood. Therefore, treaties were one of Mithra major concerns, but this was neither the only one, nor probably, even the most important one (Mastrocinque, 2017, 48).

Roga	Abi	Mukhya	Bhahata	Soma	Bhujaga	Aciti	Diti	Agni
Papa-Yaksh-man	Rudra						Apa	Par-jariya
Shosha		Raja Yaksh-man	PRTHIVIOHARA			Apa Vatsa		Ja-yenta
Asura		M I T R A	BRAHMA			A R Y A M A N		Indra
Varuna							Surya	
Kusuma Danta							Satya	
Sugriva		Indra	VIVASVAN			Savitr		Bhrsha
Deu-vanika	Jaya						Savitra	Antar-iksha
Pitarah	Mrga	Bhrnga-Raja	Gen-dharva	Yama	Brahat-Kshata	Vitatha	Pushan	Anila

Fig. 18, The Vastu Purusha Mandala 81 squares is it the metaphysical plan of a building, Mithra in the west side of Brahma.

8. Differences of Iranian temples with European type

Mithraism is the ancient Roman mystery cult of the god Mithras. Roman worship of Mithras began sometime during the early Roman empire, perhaps during the late first century of the Common Era (hereafter CE), and flourished from the second through the fourth centuries CE. Mithras is the Roman name for the Indo-Iranian god Mithra, or Mithra, as he was called by the Persians. Mithra is part of the Hindu pantheon, and Mithra is one of several *yazatas* (minor deities) under Ahura-Mazda in the Zoroastrian pantheon. Mithra is the god of the airy light between heaven and earth, but he is also associated with the light of the sun, and with contracts and mediation. The fame of Mithra extended to the borders of the Aegean Sea; he is the only Iranian god whose name was popular in ancient Greece, and this fact alone proves how deeply he was venerated by the nations of the great neighboring empire (Cumont, 1910, 9). Worship took place in a

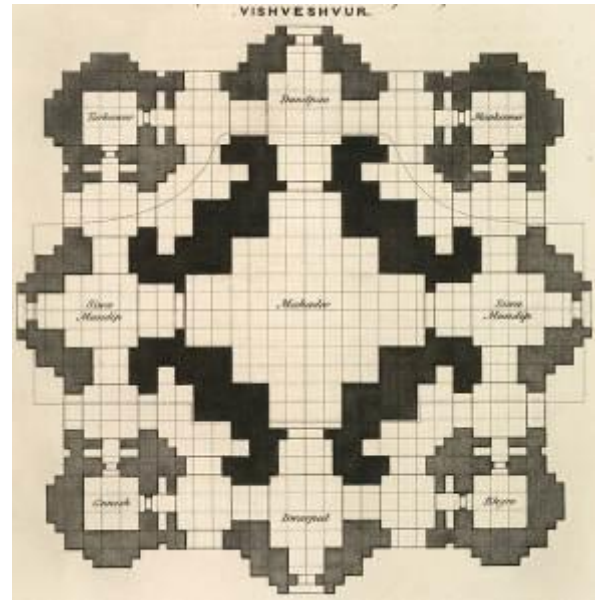
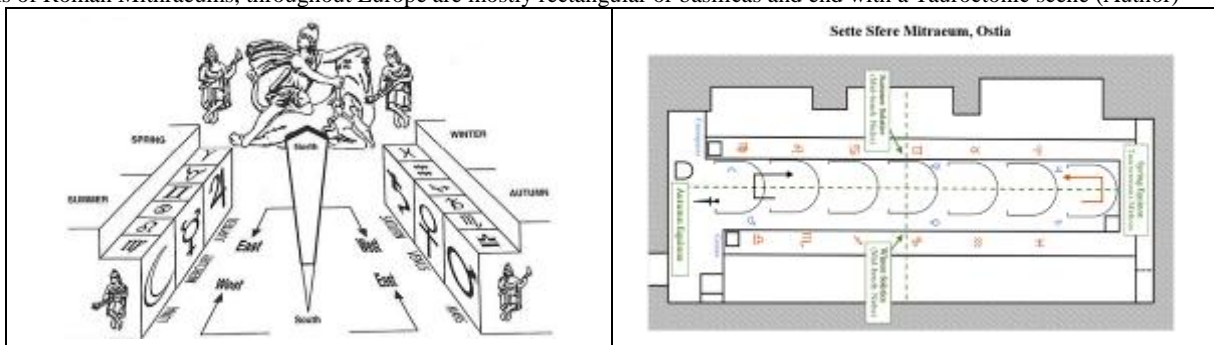


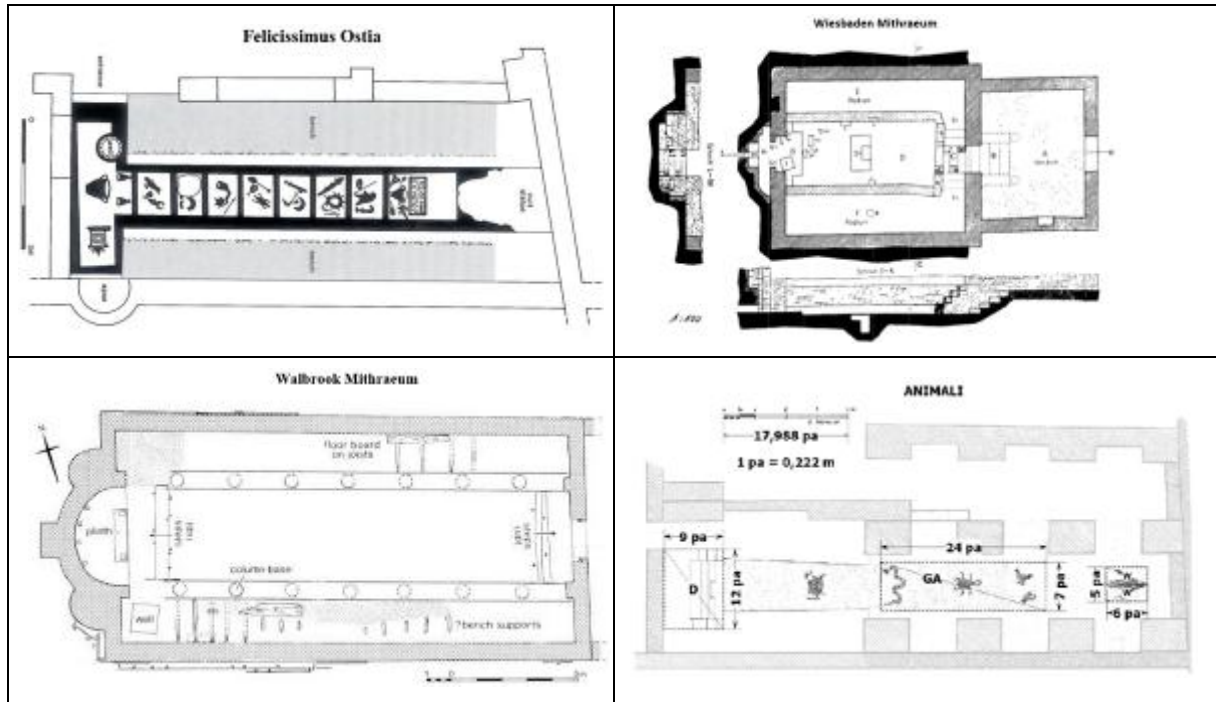
Fig. 19, the vastu-purusa-mandala (symmetrical floor plan) of the Vishveshvar temple, India. (Astrovish, 2019)

temple, called a Mithraeum, which was made to resemble a natural cave. Sometimes temples were built specifically for the purpose, but often they were single rooms in larger buildings which usually had another purpose (for example, a bath house, or a private home). There are about one hundred Mithraea preserved in the empire. Mithraea were longer than they were wide, usually around 10-12 m long and 4-6 m wide, and were entered from one of the short sides. (Table 6) At the end of this aisle, opposite the entrance, was the cult image showing Mithras sacrificing a bull. To enhance the resemblance to a natural cave the ceiling of the mithraeum was vaulted (Griffith, 2016, 1). Most of the Mithraeums found in Europe are similar in structure and their plan is rectangular. European skirts have a platform that was used to seat people. The ceiling of most of them is curved or, in other words, has a half-circle cover (Soltanzadeh & Rezaei, 2011, 75). In addition, the Iranian Mithra temples in their structure, with the Europeans, have accordance and controversy.

Table 6

Plans of Roman Mithraeums, throughout Europe are mostly rectangular or basilicas and end with a Tauroctonic scene (Author)





Their accordance in the first place is their common name, and the Roman temples, called Mithraeum, have been called Mehrbah, Mahrava, and Mehrabad in Iran. Today, throughout Iran, dozens of places, in particular the village of Mehrabad, are called, which are undoubtedly a reminder of the periods past. Their placement in the underground in both the civilization of Iran and Rome is another common feature of them. These temples in the two civilizations on their ceiling have luminaire rings that shine the sun's radius. European Mithraeums on both sides have a platform to sit; (Fig. 20 & 21) such platforms are found in some of the Iranian Mithraic temples such as *Abāzar Mehrabah*, near the city of *Nir*. The author has uncovered 3 temples of Mithras in the region of *Nir* (Ardabil); two of them have already been introduced by other scholars, and many of them are waiting for the researchers' steps under the rocks. Their different faces are in plan and space. Persian temples are more dome-shaped and sometimes pyramidal, and planes are circular and in some cases square-shaped. The second issue is that inside the Roman Mithraeums, throughout Europe, there are sculptures and statues of the Mithra, if the interior of the Iranian temples has not been seen so far. By the third century AD/CE Mithraism and its mysteries permeated the Roman Empire and extended from India to Scotland, with abundant monuments in numerous countries amounting to over 420 Mithraic sites so far discovered (Novin, 2017). Local aristocrats in the western part of the former Persian empire retained their devotion to Mithra. The kings and nobles of the border region between the Greco-Roman and the European skirts have a platform

that was used to seat people. The ceiling of most of them is curved or, in other words, has a half-circle cover (Soltanzadeh & Rezaei, 2011)

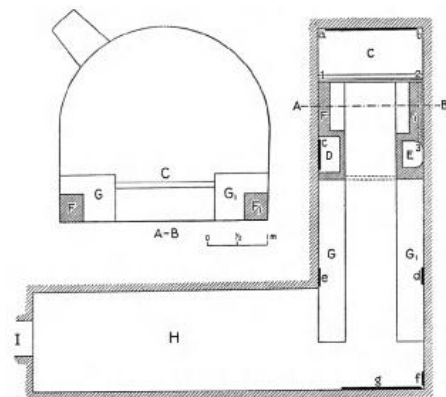


Fig. 20, Santa Maria Capua Vetere, Mithraeum (Vermaseren, 1971, 50)



Fig.21, wall with tauroctony fresco in the Mithraeum, 2nd century.

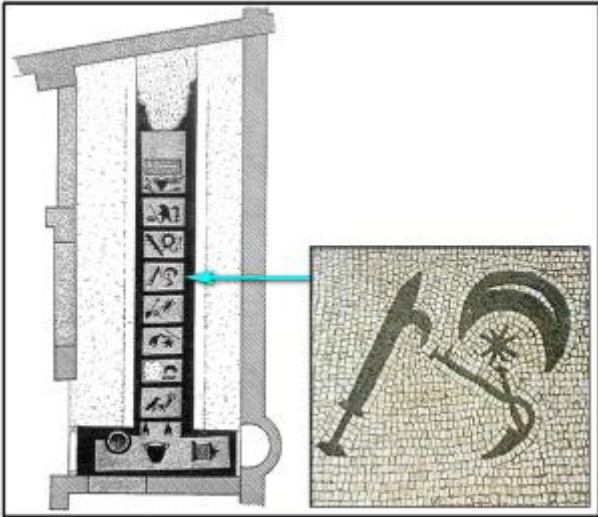


Fig. 22. Plan of the Ostia Mithraeum with the seven Mithraic degrees, the fifth Symbols is Perseus (Persian) and Perseus was the hero of the Persians (Taylor, 2005)



Fig. 23. Haft Gonbad (Seven domes) refract the seven stages of Mithraism in Nizami-Haft pakar. (Parvizi, 2007)

75). The fifth Symbols of the seven grades of Mithraic initiation in the mosaics of a Mithraeum in Ostia (fig.22 & 23) called Perseus (Greek for "the Persian") (Ulansey, 1991, 37). Certainly the fact that (Perseus) Perseus wears a Phrygian cap and is connected with Persia, (Ulansey, 1991, 39) Our current data indicate that women did not participate in the Mithraic cult. No archaeological evidence supports the existence of a grade such as *leia* or *mater* for women. More importantly, there is not a single inscription that is both undeniably Mithraic and made by a woman (Griffith, 2006, 77). This, together with the body of men in Roman Mithraeum, is one of the strongest indications of this tradition being split from ancient Iranian culture. This is evident in the prominent motifs of Persepolis and other Achaemenid sites. Not only is there a female image in Persepolis Rock reliefs, but the men's

bodies are also covered in contrast to the Greek and Roman Motifs. Which is called *hijab* and *privacy* in Iranian culture. Although the link to the ancient Persian prophet Zoroaster is quite speculative, the adoption of the cave (*speleum*) as the model for the temple of the roman cult of Mithras is quite accurate (Louis 2018, 44).

9. Conclusion

The results of the research show that, undoubtedly, the temples of Mithra have penetrated the Roman civilization with the combination of Iran and Greco-Roman, appeared in the triple composition. Therefore, the arrangement of the temple of Mithra in Rome is completely different from its principle land of Iran, because most of the temples of Mithra in Iran have dome-shape spaces and their main similarity is formed in the underground. These sacred underground temples were preserved after the Islamic period by the Sufi sects and later used as mosques and shrines and are even used today in religious ceremonies. Iranian temples, especially the Mithra temples in the northwest, with its feature, is one of the most important conceptual proofs of the origin of Iranian Mithraism in the field of architecture. Once upon a time, it appeared and expanded throughout the Roman territory with yet another effect. In addition, the Iranian Mithra temples in their structure, with the Europeans, have accordance and controversy. Their accordance in the first place is their common name, and the Roman temples, called Mithraeum, have been called Mehrabah, Mahrava, and Mehrabad in Iran. Even in hundreds of places, their names are still preserved. Throughout Iran, dozens of places, in particular the village of Mehrabad, are called, which are undoubtedly a reminder of the periods past. Their placement in the underground, in both the civilization of Iran and Rome, is another common feature of them. These temples in the two civilizations, on their ceiling, have luminaire rings that shine the sun radius. European Mithraeums on both sides have a platform to sit; such platforms are found in some of the Iranian Mithraic temples such as Abāzar Mehrabah, near the city of *Nir*. The author has uncovered 3 temples of Mithras in the region of *Nir* (Ardabil); two of them have already been introduced by other scholars, and many of them are waiting for the researcher's steps, because they haven't revealed their location yet, below the under the rocks. Persian temples are more dome-shaped and sometimes pyramidal, and planes are circular and in some cases square-shaped, and other types found is crossiform have a dome-shaped ceilings. The Mehrkade-i Narsesse (Nerseh Mithraeum) and the Qalāt-i Haidarī (Varawi) Temple and the Masjid-i Sangy near Dārāb (fig.15) are three comparable tangible traces of Mithraism with cruciform plans. Their Roman type plans are all rectangular. The second issue is that inside the Roman Mithraeums, throughout Europe, there are sculptures and statues of the

Mithra, if the interior of the Iranian temples has not been seen so far. If we put together a picture of the tauroctony and the full plan of the Varjuvi Temple, see the concepts of the motifs in the Varjuvi Temple Plan. What is depicted in the Roman Tauroctonic as the Mithra torches with the sun, is manifested in the plan of the temple of Varjuvi. In this plan, we can consider the human figure that holds the moon in one hand and the sun in the other and embodies the dawn and dusk. The next point about the use of old and new caves in the Islamic period. Historical sources, along with other causes, relate to astronomical predictions in the second half of the seventh century A.H which reported the coming of the Great Flood in 582 AH. (1187 A.D). Although in the Iranian temples a Tauroctonic image like the temples of Europe has not been seen so far, such a sacrifice in Iranian Mehr culture has long existed and been performed, most prominently displayed in historical, Literary, religious and mythological sources, especially poems of Past centuries, such as: Jami, Suzani-ye- Samarqandi and so on clearly observed. The results show that Mithraism has been altered throughout history and place. All documents, including inscriptions and books, architecture and archeological Sources, indicate the Iranian originality of this ritual function. Due to the wide range of rock cut religious sites reconnaissance, it seems that Mithraic rock cut temples first appeared on the Iranian plateau and then in the Roman era, in a different style, it spread throughout Europe.

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