

## **Analysis of the Symbolic Function of the Cave in Mithraism Based on the Mircea Eliadeh's point of views**

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### **Abstract**

Mithraism, as one of the oldest Iranian religions, used mythical symbols to lead its followers which can be the leader of the audience for an accurate understanding of the various aspects of these symbols in this ritual. Mehrabeh, as the sanctuaries of the followers of this ritual, have a symbolic structure; they are either built in natural caves or form a cave. In this study, based on the mythological and religious views of Mircea Eliadeh, the cave symbol and the its functions in various texts, have been investigated, using the analysis of Eliadeh in its various works, the authors have tried to study the symbolic function of the cave in the religion of mithraism. The symbolic function of the cave in Mithraism, should be categorize in the subtitle of the "symbolic place of the ritual of sympathy", which is itself linked to "the womb of the mother earth" and "the inner and unconscious world", Based on the new classification presented in this study and study of the Eliadeh's works.

Mithraism is one of the oldest Iranian cultures dating back to the second millennium BC. The link between the ritual and the ritual symbols of this cult with natural elements indicates that it originated from a pastoral period in the ancient ages; among these rituals is the tragedy in the cave or the sanctuary there was a Mithratian-like cave, that is, Mehrbah. The symbol of the cave has different and sometimes seemingly contradictory functions in religious, literary and mythological narratives. The researchers' efforts to categorize these functions, despite the useful and relevant results, have failed to correctly illustrate the functional contradictions in the cave icon in mythology; in fact, the fundamental question of these categories was that they did not seek to explain why these contradictions were made, and only categorized. While the precise categorization of the cave symbol on the Mircha Eliadeh thought foundation, along with its comparative analysis with other interpretations presented by researchers in this field,

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can lead to a thorough understanding of the seemingly contradictory functions of this symbol.

Mithraism, as the ancient religion and creed, represents a way of thinking in which mythical symbols and images have a direct impact on the reality of people's lives and contribute to the understanding of the world. This way of thinking, which uses mythical symbols to understand the world, is close to the elemental human mindset; a person who is thought to have a very similar childhood; In symbolism, multiple and multiple symbols that carry a word and make it multi-dimensional are common; therefore, it is natural that in the case of an ancient symbol such as a cave, these dimensions and multiple manifestations, over the centuries and in the midst of narratives Multiple myths are overlapping; therefore, the functions categorized as representations of the following symbol are used in some symbols by overlapping.

As a natural phenomenon, due to its apparent structure, the cave leads to the mother-in-law of the mother's womb and relates to a safe refuge and shelter, and on the other hand, due to its darkness, the entrance to the unconscious and the color of losing its appearances and recognition of itself So this natural phenomenon has always been used as a symbol of these aspects. In addition to the aforementioned, the sum of the two discoveries of the inner world, which is in the symbol of the caves, has made it a suitable place for the traditions of entering and entering a time and place; therefore, in the Kish of Mithraism, as an ancient cult Iran, the symbol of the cave of all three points, namely the wolf of the mother's land, the discovery of the inner world and the place of encouragement.

The Mehrabeh of Mithraism, utilizing various aspects of the cave symbol in worship, provided all the important elements needed to enter the sacred time and place and return to eternity; The title of Mother Earth ascetic, the discovery of the inner world, as well as the status of initiation, prepared the minds and souls of its followers for initiation and practice of rituals. The sum of these conditions indicates the importance of the different functions of a symbol in an ancient cult. Indeed, the symbol of the cave in Mithra's Kish has been so influential and appropriately used that it has, along with symbols such as the sun, borne the burden of communicating the message and realizing the rituals of an ancient cult.

**Keywords:** Mithraism, cave, symbol, myth, Mircea Eliadeh.

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