IRANIANS AND GREEKS AFTER 90 YEARS: A RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF SOUTHERN RUSSIA IN ANCIENT TIMES*

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Abstract
This introductory essay places Rostovtzeff’s interpretative model of northern Black Sea archaeology in the context of contemporary historical imagination in Russia and Europe. The discussion focuses in particular on Rostovtzeff’s approach to Graeco-Scythian metalwork, as pioneered in his 1913 article on ‘The conception of monarchical power in Scythia and on the Bosporus’, and the possibilities which religious interpretation of the objects’ figured scenes offered in developing the narrative of cultural fusion between Orientals and Occidentals best known in the West from his Iranians and Greeks in South Russia (1922). The author seeks to bring out the teleological tendencies of this account, largely concerned with explaining Russia’s historical identity as a Christian empire between East and West.

I think that it is good for people to read Rostovtzeff, even where he isn’t quite up-to-date.
(C. Bradford Welles)

Western specialists of northern Black Sea archaeology have a particular reason to welcome the recent proliferation of print-on-demand publishing. Not so long ago, the most influential synthesis of the region’s history and archaeology in the Classical period, Michael Ivanovich Rostovtzeff’s Iranians and Greeks in South Russia (Oxford 1922), realised exorbitant prices on the antiquarian book market, beyond the reach of most students and many university academics. Its status as a bibliophile treasure was assured by the fact that, in contrast to Rostovtzeff’s other major works, Iranians and Greeks had never been reprinted by his preferred publisher, Clarendon Press at the University of Oxford. The explanation of this surprising circumstance emerges from the Rostovtzeff papers held at the publisher’s archive.

* An earlier version of this paper was presented in November 2009 at a journée d’études on ‘Archéologie dans le Bassin de la mer Noire’ held by the University of Lausanne and is due to appear in French in the conference proceedings. I thank the conference organisers Pascal Burgunder and Michel Fuchs for their generous hospitality and stimulating discussion. The fact that the appearance of this article actually pre-dates the anniversary featuring in the title is testimony to the competence of Gocha Tsetskhladze, who encouraged me to submit the translation of Rostovtzeff’s essay for publication in AWE. Needless to say, the author should be considered the ultimate source of all errors and misjudgments which this article may contain.
The idea of producing an expanded edition of the book, originally mooted in 1965, was rejected after lengthy consultation, chiefly due to Peter Fraser’s advice:

This book is of course important as is everything by R., but even at the time of publication it suffered from considerable defects which R. explained in detail in his Preface. It was written in America, or England, from material left behind in Russia, largely from memory, and must represent essentially the conclusion R. drew from the material available up to ca. 1914. Unlike the two *Soc. and Econ. Hist.* books, *I. and G.* was very much a pioneer work on material then available, and not a new synthesis based on well-digested evidence, much of which had already been integrated into a general picture by Mommsen (in the case of the Roman book). As a pioneer work, it is more subject to the verdict of the time.¹

The decision was met with obvious disappointment by Rostovtzeff’s student C. Bradford Welles, who had been one of the advisers to the Clarendon Press. Fraser’s point that *Iranians and Greeks* was outdated provoked Welles’s claim, cited in the epigraph of this article, to the effect that the publishers had overlooked a certain pedagogic quality in Rostovtzeff’s work, which was of timeless appeal.² Sadly Welles failed to define this humanistic content any closer; nor did Fraser reveal precisely in which sense he thought the reception of *Iranians and Greeks* to have been clouded by contemporary factors.

With the book’s ninetieth anniversary approaching, reconsideration of the meaning and significance of Rostovtzeff’s work from the perspective of current historiography on the northern Black Sea region would not seem misplaced. The discipline is in particular need of critically reappraising its debt to Rostovtzeff for, in contrast to his social and economic histories of the Roman empire (Oxford 1926; 2nd ed. 1957) and the Hellenistic world (Oxford 1941), *Iranians and Greeks* established an analytical framework that has retained its paradigmatic status to this day, informing current interpretation of the region’s archaeological legacy almost by default. The central idea of this paradigm is neatly encapsulated in the book’s title: Rostovtzeff conceived the historical development of the northern Black Sea area in terms of the meetings and interactions between two clearly distinguished culture groups, the eponymous Iranians and Greeks. His chosen task as an archaeologist was to classify the region’s cultural remains according to these dominant population groups, assess the balance of mutual influences among them, and trace the development of new cultural forms reflecting the mixed outlook of their *milieu*.

¹ Letter, 9 December 1966, OUP archive, Rostovtzeff papers, LB4837, *Iranians and Greeks*. I thank Dr Martin Maw for granting me access to the documents. The transcripts appear in the present article by permission of the Secretary to the Delegates of Oxford University Press.

² Letter, 4 February 1967, OUP archive, Rostovtzeff papers, LB4837.
The idea was not exactly new: in 1913 the Cambridge scholar Ellis Hovell Minns had published a vast repertory of northern Black Sea antiquities, which classified the material generally in similar ways. Yet Rostovtzeff’s use of the term Iranians rather than Scythians points to an important conceptual difference between the two authors. While Minns’s classification of local material culture derived from the ethnic terminology of the ancient sources, Rostovtzeff identified his material with a category which was of modern origin. The difference, however trivial it may seem, had far-reaching consequences. Unlike Minns, whose book is essentially a systematic collection of archaeological and textual sources, Rostovtzeff had selected a set of categories which enabled him to sustain a comprehensive historical narrative – a feat widely acknowledged among contemporary readers, including Minns.

The aim of this essay is to examine the conceptual apparatus that allowed Rostovtzeff to extract meaning from objects. I argue that his history of cultural interaction between Iranians and Greeks was in fact largely one of religious interaction between Orientals and Occidentals, gleaned from the visual evidence of Graeco-Scythian metalwork. Its success as an authoritative historical description rested, as we shall see, on Rostovtzeff’s ability to connect the figured scenes of Graeco-Scythian art with contemporary ideas of Oriental religiosity and thus to integrate northern Black Sea archaeology with an overarching narrative of Hellenism and cultural fusion between East and West. An essay on the subject provides an appropriate introduction to Rostovtzeff’s 1913 article on ‘The conception of monarchical power in Scythia and on the Bosporus’, where he applied his method of religious interpretation for the first time to finds from the northern Black Sea region. The study marks an important broadening of Rostovtzeff’s intellectual scope, previously dominated by the agrarian structure of Rome and the Hellenistic East on the eve of its integration into the empire. It is hoped that the translation of an earlier, Russian-language stage in the gestation of Rostovtzeff’s ideas will assist the reader in gaining a clearer understanding of his vision of northern Black Sea history.

*Iranians and Greeks* was also largely and inevitably a history of the Bosporan kingdom, for only Classical Bosporus offered the range of sources required to endow his story of cross-cultural collaboration and integration among the region’s

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3 Minns 1913.
4 Minns stressed this point when he recommended Rostovtzeff’s book for publication with OUP: ‘... My book does not really clash with R.’s because it costs £3.3.0, also it was put together just too soon to get the benefit of wide generalizations (largely due to R.) recently arrived at, and also of important finds published or made too late for me. R. is therefore in a position to give an account of the archaeology and history of our region in broad outlines bringing out its important reactions with the Mediterranean and Oriental worlds, illustrated with pictures of objects different from those in my book.’ Letter, 28 December 1919, OUP archive, Rostovtzeff papers, LB4837.
diverse inhabitants with the depth and intensity he longed for. According to Rostovtzeff, the Bosporan kingdom of the Spartocids:

Grew out of a compromise between the native population and the Greek colonists. For the natives, the ruling dynasty was always a dynasty of kings, since it was kings that for centuries they had been accustomed to obey. The Greeks, in order to preserve their dominant position and the foundation of their economic prosperity, were obliged to abandon their civic liberties and to take for their chiefs the Hellenized barbarians who ruled the native population. For the Greeks, this form of government was a tyranny, although the official style of the tyrant was the constitutional title of archon. […] Peculiar to the structure of the Bosphoran state is the historical evolution… an Ionian Greek city transforming itself into a Greco-Maeotian state with the Greeks in a privileged position, and gradually changing into a Hellenistic monarchy in which the two elements are confounded, the natives becoming Hellenized and the Greeks gradually adopting the spirit and the habits of the natives.\(^5\)

If the mention of ‘Greek privilege’ and ‘Hellenisation’ does not live up to the standards of our post-colonial world, Rostovtzeff’s stress on reciprocal relations and mutual influence is distinctly modern and was certainly revolutionary at the time. Before Rostovtzeff, the Bosporan kingdom had featured chiefly in synthetic histories of Greece and the Greek colonial expansion, with focus on constitutional questions. In accordance with the political terminology attested in the Greek literary sources, scholars such as August Boeckh and Karl Brandis identified Bosporus as a tyranny or monarchy whose rulers had arrogated the traditional civic powers of the demos through some unrecoverable process and concealed their autocratic privileges through the constitutional ‘fiction’ familiar from 4th-century BC Bosporan epigraphy: *arkhontes* of the Greek cities subsumed under Bosporus and Theodosia and *basileis* of the non-Greek tribes in the Taman peninsula and on the shores of Lake Maeotis.\(^7\) Although the non-Greek names of the Spartocids were understood to indicate non-Greek descent, Bosporan state-formation was thought of as a purely internal process, consistent with the schemata of Greek political theory and developments elsewhere in the Greek world, notably Sicily and Heracleia Pontica. The non-Greek setting of Bosporus was appreciable at best as an antagonistic force which disrupted the ‘normal’ course of Greek civic culture and gave to Spartocid rule that antiquated or traditionalist character stressed by Karl Beloch and Benedikt Niese:

\(^5\) Rostovtzeff 1922, 71–72.
\(^6\) Notably Aeschin. 3. 171, with further references and discussion in Vinogradov 1980, 82; Hind 1994, 495–96; Moreno 2007, 170, 254–55.
\(^7\) Boeckh: *IG II* (1842), 99; Brandis: *RE 5* (1897), 760–62.
Ähnlich wie auf Sicilien lagen die Verhältnisse am anderen Ende der hellenischen Welt, in den Städten am Pontos. Zwar einen Feind wie Karthago hatten die Griechen hier nicht zu fürchten; denn die Perser haben sich um die Gebiete an der Südküste des Schwarzen Meeres nur wenig gekümmert, und die pontische Nordküste lag überhaupt ausserhalb ihres Machtbereiches. Dafür aber waren die griechischen Städte am Pontos zu einem unablässigen Kampfe gegen die Barbaren des Innern gezwungen, die, so oft sie auch besiegt werden mochten, immer wieder aus ihren Steppen oder ihren Bergen hervorbrachen; und dieser Kampf wurde immer schwerer, je mehr die hellenische Kultur auch bei den Urbewohnern Eingang fand. Das Ergebnis war auch hier eine Militärmonarchie.8

Diese Herrscher sind nicht Monarchen in unserem Sinne; sie sind vielmehr die erblichen und lebenslänglichen Archonten der griechischen Städte, die im übrigen nach ihrer alten Verfassung verwaltet wurden; es ist das alte griechische Stadtkönigtum, das sich hier in eigentümlicher Form erhalten hat.9

This text-based account was not exclusive to Western scholars or indeed historians. Indicative in this respect is a series of studies by the Russian Ernst von Stern of Odessa, published between 1906 and 1915, just before Rostovtzeff elaborated his conception of Bosporan archaeology. Not unlike his Western colleagues, von Stern described the Spartocid state as a kind of living anachronism harking back to the Mycenaean and the heroic age. Its innate conservatism was abundantly clear from the monuments of early Bosporus, particularly the elite *kurgans* around the capitals Panticapaeum and Phanagoria:


Rostovtzeff’s explanation of Bosporan statehood and culture, as it is best known from his *Iranians and Greeks*, proposes nothing less than a radical inversion of this one-sided process of acculturation envisioned by his predecessors. To Rostovtzeff the ruling class of Bosporus was not just a heterogeneous mix, the combination of native elements with the Greek colonial aristocracy, but a genuine fusion of mentality and

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8 Beloch 1922, II.2, 132.
9 Niese 1893, I, 412.
identity in which if anything the native element predominated. He inferred this profound transformation from a series of related figured scenes appearing in Graeco-Scythian metalwork of the 4th century BC. The scenes’ shared focus is on the exchange of a drinking cup, either between two men in Scythian dress or more commonly between an un-bearded figure in Scythian dress and a seated woman, wearing a heavily draped long garment and a tall headdress [Pl. II]. Of key importance was the scene in the lower register of an embossed triangular gold plaque, probably from a headdress of the type worn by the woman in the relief, which had been excavated in the Karagodeuashkh kurgan on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus [Pl. II.1]. In Rostovtzeff’s view the subject was of a religious nature – the supreme goddess of the Bosporan pantheon offering holy communion to the king and thereby conferring royal powers in accordance with Iranian notions of monarchy and divine legitimacy:

The religious scenes are mainly concerned with Scythian ideas about the connexion of the royal power with divinity. The chief subject is the rite of the holy communion, a rite which occurs later in the Irano-Pontic cult of Mithra, and which played a considerable part in the Christian religion.

It is difficult to overestimate the novelty of Rostovtzeff’s approach and the impact it had on later scholarship. The intriguing idea that Graeco-Scythian metalwork could yield glimpses of the very ideological foundation of society in the northern Black Sea region encouraged his successors in the field to go considerably beyond his example, seeking out traces of mythology and religious world views through comparison with modern as well as ancient parallels, such as the custom and epic of ‘traditional’ Caucasian peoples. For all its success and longevity, the methodological premises of Rostovtzeff’s approach to visual sources invited very little critical attention. In fact, Rostovtzeff pronounced his identifications of gods and religious scenes not on the basis of iconographical comparanda or chains of transmission that linked Graeco-Scythian metalwork to a contemporary corpus of Iranian sacred imagery. Instead of objective evidence what we find as a unifying logic behind Rostovtzeff’s thesis is a complex theory of migration and syncretism. Its primary building blocks come from Greek literature, in particular Herodotus’ account of the

11 Rostovtzeff 1922, 76–77.
12 The date of the piece is indicated by an Athenian black slip askos from the kurgan burial; see Lappo-Danilevskii and Malmberg 1894, 48–49, fig. 20; cf. Pfrommer 1990, 276, n. 2488.
13 Rostovtzeff 1922, 104.
14 Among the few exceptions are V.Y. Zuev’s and I.A. Levinskaya’s commentary on Rostovtzeff’s ‘Iranskii konnyi bog i yug Rossii’, in Heinen 1993, 164–67 and Mordvintseva 2008. Unfortunately, the very relevant conference paper by Heinen (2006) came to my attention after I had submitted this essay to the publisher.
Scythian sojourn in Asia (1. 103–106. 4. 1) and his description of an otherwise patriarchic Scythian pantheon headed by a goddess with the ‘un-Iranian’ name Tabiti (4. 59). Like many other scholars of his and our time, Rostovtzeff concluded that the Scythians had arrived as one of several successive waves of Indo-European or Iranian invaders, preceded by the Cimmerians and followed by the Sarmatians, who entered the northern Black Sea area from the east and gradually assimilated to the society and religion of the native population as they took up a sedentary lifestyle.15 The native population, composed of Maeotians, Sindians and Sauromatians, were matriarchic in social and religious organisation: hence the hybrid Scythian pantheon described by Herodotus, and hence the prevalence in the Bosporan cities of cults to the goddesses Aphrodite, Artemis and Demeter, in each of which Rostovtzeff recognised an interpretatio Graeca of one and the same Mother Goddess of the indigenous population.16 He saw this native matriarchy also reflected in the myth recounted by Herodotus (4. 1–4) of the abduction by the Greeks of the Amazons from Themiscyra and their subsequent settlement and intermarriage among the Scythians on the shores of the Sea of Azov.

The linguistic derivation of the Scythians from Iran, and their passage through Asia, are controversial in matters of detail which are of no concern to our discussion. The notion of a universal matriarchy that had supposedly prevailed in a deep pre-Indo-European past, on the other hand, is a relic of 19th-century social sciences. It originated in Johann Jakob Bachofen’s peculiar mix of classical philology and Victorian anthropology which experienced a rehabilitation of sorts, at the time Rostovtzeff was writing, through Arthur Evans’s imaginative publications on Knossos.17 In theory one could simply discount this anachronism and let the matriarchy which Rostovtzeff envisaged in prehistoric Bosporus stand as an independent phenomenon – were it not for the fact that he insisted on the presence of the (pre-Aryan) Mother Goddess with such tenacity as to entangle his thesis in serious internal inconsistencies. The inconsistencies are especially clear, as Josine Blok noted, in his interpretation of the Amazon myth, which he wanted to be simultaneously an aetiology for the gynaecocracy of the Sauromatians (the offspring of Graeco-Amazonian intermarriage) and a reflection of an actual historical situation, the cultural continuum uniting the northern Black Sea shore with the southern shore and the world of the Orient. In other words, he wanted to understand the myth concurrently as a Greek explanation of barbarian custom and as an authentic recollection.

15 Rostovtzeff 1922, 38–43.
16 Rostovtzeff 1922, 32–34, 106–07. He treated the same subject in a separate article in French: Rostovtzeff 1921, 462–81.
of the diffusion of the Mother Goddess cult from the Asian homeland of the Amazons.\textsuperscript{18} Blok concluded that Rostovtzeff’s awkward manoeuvres resulted from the fact that he wanted to demonstrate \textit{something else}, the nature of which she was, however, unable to discern.

In the absence of any objective explanation for Rostovtzeff’s reappraisal of Bosporan statehood along religious lines, we may safely turn to the psychological forces that animated his work. The past twenty years have seen a surge of studies on the particularities of Rostovtzean historiography, with focus on his social and economic histories written as an émigré scholar in the United States.\textsuperscript{19} It has become a commonplace that Rostovtzeff’s undoubtedly traumatic experience of the Bolshevik revolution, and his subsequent emigration in 1918 to England and the United States, altered his outlook fundamentally, making him overly susceptible to historical parallels and to writing ancient history from the standpoint of the social dilemmas of late tsarist Russia. Notable in this regard is how he attributed the bourgeoning of ancient civilisation in the Hellenistic kingdoms to the happy concurrence of enlightened monarchy and an enterprising bourgeoisie, and the dissolution of the Roman empire to the exacerbating class struggle between city and countryside under the increasingly despotic rule of Diocletian and his successors. Written in Oxford immediately after his departure from Russia, \textit{Iranians and Greeks} was Rostovtzeff’s first English-language book and remains his most frequently cited work on the subject in Anglo-American scholarship. If the book has barely featured in Western studies on Rostovtzeff, then this is not least because its conception goes back to a pre-Revolutionary original in Russian, \textit{Ellinstvo i iranstvo na yuge Rossii} (‘Hellenism and Iranism in South Russia’), and is accordingly considered a carefully nuanced and dispassionate work of scholarship, uncontaminated by the dogmatic disposition surfacing in his later works.\textsuperscript{20}

The Russian original of 1918 was the product of a frenzied attempt at distilling the main conclusions of his extensive research on northern Black Sea archaeology into a concise book of popular appeal and contemporary relevance.\textsuperscript{21} And it was a work of its time in every respect. Like its English-language successor, \textit{Ellinstvo i iranstvo} described the northern Black Sea region as an ecological zone characterised by the fertility of the steppe belt and the high degree of connective potential between land and sea through the great river routes. The region’s natural properties conditioned its diverse inhabitants over the millennia to enter symbiotic relation-

\textsuperscript{18} Rostovtzeff 1922, 33–34; with Blok 1995, 94–98.

\textsuperscript{19} Most notable are Andreau 1988, i–xlvi; Wes 1988, 207–21; 1990; with review article by Shaw 1992.

\textsuperscript{20} For example Bowersock 1993, 191.

ships, ideally between a militarised nomadic elite controlling the steppe and a sedentary culture along the waterways which exploited the agricultural wealth of the region and established commercial and cultural ties with remote centres of the ancient world. In antiquity the symbiosis had achieved its exemplary expression in the cultural relations between Scythians and Greeks in the Bosporan kingdom. Unlike its English-language successor, Ellinstvo i iranstvo did not require a final chapter on the emergence of the Russian state on the Dnieper. To Russian readers, familiar with Russian historiographical traditions, it was perfectly obvious that Rostovtzeff sought to establish multi-ethnic collaboration and imperial centralisation as inevitable facts of life in Russian lands. The English version spelled out this point in a supplementary chapter, which extended the book’s scope to the establishment of the Rus principalities in the 9th and 10th centuries AD, following the arrival in the region of a new warrior elite, the Varangians, who naturally adopted the region’s deep-rooted traditions:

Thus they founded in South Russia a state of the same type as the Germans [i.e. the Goths] before them, and naturally inherited from them their towns, their trade relations, and their civilization. This civilization was not, of course, a German one, but the ancient Greco-Iranian civilization of the Scythians and the Sarmatians, slightly modified.

As I have argued elsewhere, Rostovtzeff’s understanding of long-term history anticipated some of the chief features of the Eurasian school founded by members of the Russian émigré community in Sofia and Prague, among them Rostovtzeff’s student and protégé, the formidable George Vernadsky. With the Eurasianists Rostovtzeff shared the premise that Eurasia was an independent cultural sphere providing the natural conditions for the growth of vast and politically integrated empires. The various ethnic groups that had dominated this region through the ages were disposed by nature to perpetually recreate what was in fact one and the same trans-historical manifestation. The political tendencies of this approach to Russian history, and the patriotic needs it satisfied among its proponents, need no comment. Yet Rostovtzeff’s Eurasia differed from that of the Eurasianists proper in one important point. In contrast to the Eurasianists he could never accept the Bol-

22 Rostovtzeff 1922, 210–22; published separately in Rostovtzeff 1925.
23 Rostovtzeff’s treatment of the beginnings of the Rus, adopting the perspective of Slavonic court literature, places him firmly in the camp of the monarchical tradition of Russian historiography going back to Nikolai Karamzin’s magisterial history of the Russian state. On Karamzin, see Mazour 1975, 8; Vernadsky 1978, 48–55.
24 Rostovtzeff 1922, 219.
shevik regime as a reincarnation of Eurasia’s timeless destiny. To Rostovtzeff, continuity in Eurasian history entailed a concrete continuity in culture, continuity which the Bolshevik coup had interrupted to catastrophic effect. To demonstrate this continuity was the central goal of Rostovtzeff’s works on northern Black Sea archaeology, as he stated programmatically in the preface to *Ellinstvo i iranstvo*.

The evidence that encouraged Rostovtzeff to set his aspirations on such lofty goals came from the detailed and apparently closely studied records of local society in Graeco-Scythian art, which permitted him to write a long-term historical narrative compatible with the conventions of contemporary scholarly discourse. In accordance with these conventions he described what were in effect prehistoric societies through the lens of such historical categories as political organisation, ideology and above all, as we have seen, religious belief. In order to demonstrate cultural continuities convincingly within this historicising paradigm, he was required to connect significant aspects of the iconographical repertoire of Graeco-Scythian metalwork with specific cultural occurrences described in ancient texts on the one hand and with practices surviving in observable form in modern society on the other.

In light of his ulterior goals, Rostovtzeff’s focus on scenes of communion, as he called them, is by no means accidental. As a subspecies of the near-universal practice of ritual commensality, communion had featured prominently in comparative religious history as it was studied especially from the 1890s onwards. Comparative study of ancient religions mostly meant at the time tracing the pre-Christian roots of Christianity among the religious currents of the Hellenistic world. The discipline derived its urgency implicitly from the feeling that institutional religion, steeped in dogma and self-interest, was losing its relevance in the modern age or had become a hindrance to the progress of liberal society. As contemporary expectations dictated that ‘true’ religion was religion that cared for the individual and the soul in this life and beyond, it became important to discover this salvific component in early Christianity. A turning point was Johannes Weiss’s *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes* (Göttingen 1892) which demonstrated on the basis of Jesus’ words in the Bible that his ethics were entirely dependent on his apocalyptic expectations – the approach of a final judgment, rather than the coming of an ideal human community. This insight opened a whole new field of enquiry for Weiss’s successors of the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* in Göttingen. Once the supposedly original word of Christ had become distinguishable from a religion of law, the task

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26 Cf. the re-editon Rostovtzeff 2002, 7.
suggested itself naturally of identifying original and secondary traits in the theology and ritual of Christianity by placing them in the comparative religious context of the Hellenistic mystery cults and what became known as ‘late Judaism’ (that is, the folk Judaism of the apocrypha and the pseudepigrapha). In the so-called culture wars of late 19th-century Europe, which pitched the demands of secularised society against the traditional prerogatives of the Church, comparative study descended easily into tautology, aimed at substantiating (according to one’s personal convictions) either the original and revealed character of Jesus’ ‘essential’ eschatology or the dependence of Christian mystery concepts and rituals on one or another source (more often Hellenistic than Jewish).

As Jonathan Smith has shown in his classic work, such instrumentalisation of the comparative method produced almost inevitably flaws in its application, such as the assumption that similarities in religious belief or practice presupposed genetic relationships or shared origins. Communion is a case in point. In the first decade of the 20th century the similarities between Christian communion and the collective meals of initiates in mystery cults had been explored by several influential scholars, such as Albrecht Dieterich, Richard Reitzenstein and Alfred Loisy. The similarities had of course already been noted by the Christian writers Tertullian (De praescr. haer. 40. 4) and Firmicus Maternus (De errore 18. 2), and with rather predictable results their modern successors approached the problem from a similar standpoint, using the descriptions of the apologists as a major source in reconstructing initiation banquets. Depending on where one’s allegiances were, one could stress either the correspondences in ritual practice and terminology, and, impliedly, the continuity in sacramental meaning (i.e. the mystical association with divinity), or the dissimilarity in belief – the idea of theophagy in the Eucharist, which was almost certainly unique to Christianity.

Rostovtzeff appears to have become aware of these controversies indirectly, through the work of Franz Cumont. This much is clear from Rostovtzeff’s publications of his last years in Russia, especially his extended essay translated in the present issue of AWE, ‘The conception of monarchical power in Scythia and on the Bosporus’ (1913), where he examined Graeco-Scythian metalwork for the first time from the point of view of ancient mystery religion. Franz Cumont’s Les Mystères de Mithra features by far as the single most frequently cited work.

29 J. Smith 1990.
30 Dieterich 1903; Reitzenstein 1904; Loisy 1911–12; with Alvar 2008, 413–17. For the relationship between early Christian and Hellenistic mystery concepts in general, see Nock 1972; Wiens 1980.
31 Rostovtzeff 1913.
32 Available to him in the German translation of 1904.
Cumont’s approach must have been supremely attractive to Rostovtzeff, for a variety of reasons. Cumont was the first scholar to develop a coherent account of Mithraic ritual and theology – a feat he accomplished by combining systematic study of the iconography and epigraphy of Mithraic dedications with inferences from texts. Crucially his textual repertoire included not only the obligatory fragments from the writings of the Christian apologists but also the Zoroastrian sacred books, which had become available in translation through Max Müller’s seminal series *Sacred Books of the East* (Oxford 1880–97). In order to connect Roman evidence with Sasanian or later Zoroastrianism he had to adopt a strictly diffusionist approach and hypothesise a diaspora of Persian Magi as a vehicle for the spread of Mithraism through the Roman empire. In some sense Rostovtzeff took this diffusionist position simply to its logical extreme: in keeping with the Cumontian model, the broadly conceived Iranian origins of the Scythians seemed justification enough to connect even earlier archaeological evidence with late antique sources and by extension to identify generic images of feasting *ipse facto* with a Zoroastrian holy communion. The illiterate culture of the Scythians became therefore explicable by reference to the religious dogmas of a mysterious Aryan past.

But Cumont realised another breakthrough, no less important to Rostovtzeff. Cumont’s synthetic account of Mithraism reconciled rigorous scholarship of the highest scientific standards of his day with a grand narrative that was both inoffensive to traditional Christian sensibilities and attractive to those who had come to see in a positive light the redemptive and esoteric aspects associated with pagan mystery cults. Sure enough, Cumont upheld the conformist idea that the spread of Hellenistic mystery cults was a necessary precondition (a *praeparatio evangelica*) for the revelation and ultimate triumph of Christianity. Yet the pagan mystery cults, however defective in comparison with the Christian faith, were nevertheless held to be the source of the spiritual component that was at the time increasingly perceived as essential religiosity.

In the tense spiritual atmosphere that had gripped Russia’s educated elite in the aftermath of the failed Revolution of 1905, this understanding of religious history had something utterly compelling about it. In those years it rapidly dawned on the moderate sectors of the intelligentsia that the overthrow and transformation of the old order, which many of them had previously longed for, required the mobilisation of social strata whose interests were irreconcilable with their own. The moral and material chasm separating the peasantry from the refined culture of Moscow and St Petersburg seemed insurmountable, regardless of the level of com-

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33 See especially the penultimate chapter of Cumont 1956, 127–48 (‘Mithraism and the religions of the empire’).
passion and anthroposophic effort the metropolitan elites were ready to expend. Revolution would spell the inexorable destruction of Russia’s tiny dots of urban culture and with them the country’s wellspring of progress – a price few of the intelligentsia were prepared to pay.\textsuperscript{34} The feeling of impending doom was aggravated among those (Rostovtzeff included) who had gained first-hand experience of state affairs as members of the liberal parties and representatives in the Duma, but who were daily confronted with a remote and unyielding collusion between court and bureaucracy. Realising the dilemma of their own position, a critical number came to view the revolutionary fervour that had sustained the political agitation of 1905 as blind fanaticism, driven by the unthinking acceptance of the materialist and atheist ideologies emanating from the West. Religious healing and the quest for elemental feeling came to be viewed as viable alternatives to the dogmas of state and church, and the scientific determinism of the modern age. Exemplary for this break with the ideals of the revolutionary intelligentsia and their substitution by spiritual self-reflection was the notorious \textit{Vekhi} (‘Landmarks’) collection published in 1909 by prominent former Marxists, among them Petr Bergardovich Struve, deputy of the Second Duma and a fellow member of Rostovtzeff’s in the Constitutional Democratic (Kadet) party.\textsuperscript{35} But the intellectual circles of Moscow and St Petersburg were generally a hotbed of religious movements, with large numbers experimenting with private prayer, esoteric religions, hesychasm, theosophy, occultism, Nietzschean philosophy, and so forth.\textsuperscript{36}

The psychological setting of Rostovtzeff’s last years in Russia explains the radical reorientation from his previous specialism in Roman agrarian history to Russia’s Graeco-Scythian past. Whether Rostovtzeff himself was religious in the conventional sense of the term is beside the point: what is beyond doubt is that he accepted religion as a fundamental aspect of identity and authority, in Russia as elsewhere. His focus on religious questions bespeaks a long-running tendency among Russian thinkers to identify Russia in opposition to the West, as the repository of spiritual endurance and constancy. If Western Europe stood for rationalism, individualism and secularism, then Russia’s sources of distinctive character were the exact mirror image – the eternal realm of instinct, religious community and mystical experience: in short, all those aspects of the inward being which had stubbornly withstood the onslaught of Peter the Great’s reforms. Whenever Russia entered a period of crisis in self-perception Russian intellectuals (from the Slavophiles to the pre-Revolutionary God-seekers) were drawn to seek sanctuary in the myth of holy Russia.\textsuperscript{37} The

\textsuperscript{34} A context well described by Wes 1990, 59–74.
\textsuperscript{36} See recently Florensky 2002; Lachman 2004; Steinberg and Coleman 2007; Graham 2009.
\textsuperscript{37} For the enduring attraction of this powerful cultural myth, see Engelstein 2001.
chief objective of Rostovtzeff’s work was to synthesise northern Pontic archaeology into a dynamic historical description of religious interaction for, according to the predominant understanding of religious mentality set out by Cumont, the fusion of Orient and Occident in the Hellenistic world was a precondition for the rise of Christian modernity.\(^\text{38}\) The thesis that the northern Black Sea region had undergone a period of intensive interaction and mutual assimilation between Orientals and Occidentals suggested a convincing explanation of Russia’s ambivalent identity between East and West – a bulwark of Christianity at the barbarian frontier, civilised but independent of the West. The notion of Graeco-Iranian cultural fusion as a process analogous in its causes and outcomes to Mediterranean Hellenism provided the fertile soil from which accounts of Christian conversion and modernisation could be seen to grow organically, despite Russia’s location beyond the territorial boundaries of the Hellenistic kingdoms and Rome. Hence Rostovtzeff’s categorical statement that South Russia had always been an Oriental land; hence his insistence that the supreme gods of the Bosporan kingdom were Oriental gods Hellenised in name only; and hence his lifelong friendship with Cumont and their joint excavations at Dura-Europos from 1928 – a project obviously devised to uncover the elusive link between Western Mithraism and Eastern Zoroastrianism.\(^\text{39}\)

That link has of course never been found. Since Cumont’s diffusionist account of Mithraism appeared not a single epigraphical or other reference to Zoroaster has come to light in the Western evidence for mystery cults, prompting the great majority of specialists to disconnect Mithraism from the ‘Hellenised’ Magi who were previously thought to have spread an authentic Iranian cult in the Roman empire.\(^\text{40}\) Mithraism is now viewed essentially as a Roman creation, a deliberate ‘Orientalising’ choice requiring explanation within its Roman context.\(^\text{41}\)

The decoupling of Orientalising cults in the West from genuinely Iranian religions of the Parthian East removes the historiographical cornerstone of Rostovtzeff’s account of Graeco-Scythian syncretism and state-formation in the Bosporan kingdom. Three generations after Rostovtzeff the northern Black Sea region has still not produced any unambiguous evidence for an Iranian cult or religion, despite intensive research.\(^\text{42}\) We are still expected to recognise the supposedly Iranian pantheon of Bosporus indirectly, through ingenious interpretations of visual sources and ety-

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\(^{38}\) Herein Cumont was the direct descendent of Johann Gustav Droysen and his conception of Hellenism, as explained by Momigliano 1977; Payen 2006.


\(^{40}\) Gordon 1975.


\(^{42}\) The (meagre) evidence for Mithraic cult in the northern Black Sea region is associated with Roman military presence, a fact which emerges clearly from Blawatsky and Kochelenko 1966.
mologies of dubious value. The chief problem of Iranising interpretations in the Rostovtzean vein is less their unverifiable nature than their complete inability to open historical vistas – a point well borne out by the way in which representations of women in Bosporan political monuments are normally treated. Following Rostovtseff, most modern commentators have identified the women in scenes of ‘communion’, such as that in the Karagodeuashkh headdress, as representations of a native Mother Goddess. In the absence of evidence from iconographical attributes, however, it is practically impossible to distinguish representations of goddesses from those of their cult servants and worshippers, who stylised themselves consciously after their divine patrons, both in art and life. Conversely, the gods were thought to engage in processions and sacrifice just as do humans. The conventional identifications of barbarian divinity and matriarchy in our pictorial corpus are based on negative inference rather than relational comparison, on the a priori standpoint that anything that does not fit our traditional, text-based ideas of Greek civilisation must result from external influence from an obscure Eurasian culture sphere.

The proponents of this intellectualist position are not unaware of the weakness of their claims, to judge from the resourceful ways in which the absent pictorial signifiers are made out. In the Karagodeuashkh headdress the frontal figure at the tip of the plaque is thought (following Rostovtseff’s interpretation of 1913) to hold a cornucopia, which would elevate the scene firmly into the sphere of mythology. Classical Bosporus offers no parallels to corroborate the local use of the cornucopia as an iconographical attribute, religious or otherwise. Furthermore, Classical cornucopiae, most commonly associated with Hades, Heracles, Palaemon and Zeus, look nothing like the parallel ridges running horizontally across the waist of the figure in our piece. The figure in the frontal two-horse chariot is identified as a solar deity on the basis of parallels from the Greek iconographical traditions of Apollo and Helios. True enough, by the second half of the 5th century BC frontal chariots appeared to have been considered particularly appropriate for epiphanies of Ares, Helios and Nike, in contrast to the subject’s earlier frequency in black-figure vase painting in everyday as well as in mythological scenes. But this shift had more to do with the eclipse of the symposion as the primary context of consumption of

43 For an accessible discussion and bibliography of scholarship on the subject since Rostovtzeff, see Ustinova 1999, 113–28.
49 Compare the lists in Hafner 1938, 3–13 and 61–62.
painted pottery. Frontality was a narratological rather than an iconographical choice: its purpose was to transform the viewer from a passive observer of an unfolding story into an active participant of an event, compelling him or her to complete the missing narrative and hence determine its outcome.\footnote{Marconi 2007, 214–22; Osborne 2009, 6–9.}

The gods of ancient visual culture participated essentially like mortals in the recurring occasions of public and private life. Given this basic correspondence, it is clearly inappropriate to interpret non-mythological scenes such as that in the Karagodeuashkh headdress theologically rather than in terms of human behaviour and interests. As a representation of social concerns the scenes in the three registers can be approached as a unity, defining the powers Bosporan women could exercise as communicators between gods and mortals. The action of the figure at the top of the plaque is indicated by her right hand, raised to her right shoulder in a gesture of prayer, and her himation stretched diagonally across her waist – a drapery scheme typical for priestesses freeing themselves temporarily from the constrictions of women’s dress in Classical Greece to officiate the cult proceedings.\footnote{Cf. ‘Prayer’, in \textit{ThesCRA} III, 105–41.} Wheeled transport was an integral part of ancient processions, though probably more so in life than art, where the \textit{pompe} is usually shown after arriving in the sanctuary.\footnote{Cf. \textit{Sylb} 86, 421/0 BC: Chariots are prevented from approaching the sanctuary of Eleusis by a bridge over the Rheito, built purposefully too narrow for them to cross; cf. Herodotus 1. 31: Argive priestess of Hera (and mother of Cleobis and Biton) conveyed to rural sanctuary in oxen carriage; Pausanias 7. 18. 12: Maiden officiating as a priestess to Artemis at Patras rides in processional cart yoked by deer; Men., \textit{Hypobol.} fr. 384 (Kassel and Austin 1998, VI.2): Mother of the protagonist’s lover observes him from a chariot as the Small Panathenaia processes through the Agora.} Chariots are more common in depictions of private processions, especially weddings, where the \textit{biga} is introduced to accentuate status and hierarchies among the participants.\footnote{Laxander 2000, 61–63.} Regardless as to whether or not the three scenes on the plaque portray the same figure, they convey a priestly social persona through the three role-defining activities of procession, prayer or sacrifice, and feasting. If those images were to mean anything to their contemporary viewers, then the scenes must have resonated with real cult experience in Classical Bosporus. According to the Karagodeuashkh headdress, Bosporan cult experience could involve journeys to the liminal regions beyond the city, places appropriate for rites of passage or initiation. The absence of an altar or a temple key (the identifying mark of priestesses of civic cults) corroborates a lack of architectural elaboration and distance from the \textit{polis} and the blood sacrifices performed at its sanctuaries. The ‘outdoorsy’ nature of the cult is also confirmed by the lack of sympotic furniture and the foot-less drinking cups held by the figures in the lower register.\footnote{The seated pose of the central figure does not contradict this impression. For communal drinking among women seated outdoors, see the late 6th-century BC black-figure lekythos in Basel, \textit{Antikenmuseum, Sammlung Ludwig BS 1447}; with Connelly 2007, 190–92.}
Bosporan political monuments provide numerous parallels illustrating the connection between women and private cults of the kind depicted in the headdress. The well-known dedication by Queen Comosarye, the wife of the Bosporan ruler Paerisades I (344/3–311/10 BC), affords an instructive counterpart from epigraphy, comparable in both its subject of representation and its modern history of misinterpretation.55 Like the Karagodeuashkh headdress (found in the secondary deposition of a male kurgan burial), the Comosarye monument (dedicated by ‘the daughter of Gorgippus and the wife of Paerisades’) defined female political status in relation to the male world around her. Like the Karagodeuashkh headdress, the Comosarye monument (dedicated ‘to the mighty gods Sanerges and Astara’) has been viewed from an intellectualist standpoint by modern scholars, focusing on the origins and cultural ‘essence’ of the gods named in the inscription.56 Yet to invoke foreign influence to explain foreign-sounding names in the Bosporan pantheon is misleading. The introduction of new cults, sometimes dedicated to gods with exotic names, is a well-known and intrinsic fact of Greek religion.57 The Greeks knew these gods admittedly as xenikoi theoi, but the associated cult practices and concepts were, as far as we can tell, traditionally Greek. Furthermore, the ‘foreign gods’ were not perceived as a separate sub-group within the larger category of non-established elective cult associations: it was their non-established character rather than the pretended foreignness that could arouse suspicion.

The inference that the cult acts and gender roles encountered in the Karagodeuashkh headdress are incompatible with Greek culture is a function of text-based expectations. The past generation of classical scholarship has transformed our understanding of Greek culture to a degree unimaginable to Rostovtzeff and his contemporaries, precisely because research has turned its attention to those spheres and participants of ancient life previously considered peripheral to the political and economic ‘core’ of the polis. To view women and the organisation of religion and the household as secondary to the institutions of the state at best replicates the priorities of a few privileged ancient texts and at worst introduces inappropriate categories conditioned by modern circumstances. What seems initially alienating about Bosporan culture, the prominence of religious associations of initiatory and private character, is but a reflection of social change – the centralisation of autonomous cities into the territorial state of the Bosporan rulers, the transformation of the state and the public economy into a royal household, and the corresponding co-option the traditional civic magistracies and priesthoods into a network of honorary and of

55 CIRB 1015, providing the only epigraphic mention in classical Bosporus of gods with non-Greek names.
56 For example Ustinova 1999, 52: ‘Astara could be the local name of the goddess known to the Greeks as Aphrodite Urania... the Great Goddess of the Sindo-Maeotians.’
dynastic relationships. As elsewhere in cultural contact zones in the Greek world the significance of initiation cults was amplified in the Bosporan kingdom as they provided interfaces through which outsiders could participate in the communal life of the otherwise closed polis society and establish cross-cultural elite networks.

Rostovtzeff’s interpretation of the Karagodeuashkh finds is illustrative of a broader tendency in his approach to northern Pontic visual culture. Throughout his work, images of commensality are identified with mystery rituals and by implication with contemporary ideas of Oriental religious mentality. The assumption that mystery cults, as expressions of individual religious seeking and irrationality, were fundamentally alien to the civic rites of the ancient city-state was an unstated principle of his historical reasoning, whether applied to northern Black Sea or Western imperial evidence, as his Mystic Italy (New York 1927) further corroborates. The premise became increasingly problematic, not least with Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff’s Glaube der Hellenen, which established the origins and context of initiation cults in Greek society. Western preconceptions of Oriental society as one inherently prone to despotism and superstition go a long way in explaining the nebulous category of oriental mystery religions. Another factor, already sensed by von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, was the deep-rooted conviction that Judaism was an inadequate and undeserving ancestor of Christianity. 58

We would do well to consign Rostovtzeff’s Iranising paradigm to the realm of ideas, as a brilliant artefact of historical imagination in late tsarist Russia. If reconsideration of his work along historiographical lines may be felt to undermine his traditional standing as a venerable master of truth, then this is more than compensated for by the possibility of reappraising his work in a renewable context of enquiry – as a living source of inspiration and a lasting monument to his commitment.

PRINCIPAL TRANSLATOR’S NOTE

The genesis of Rostovtzeff’s article goes back to a paper read at a meeting of the Russian Archaeological Society on 3rd March 1912 to a select audience of 22 members, among them M.V. Farmakovskii, A.A. Markov, A.A. and V.F. Miller, E.M. Pridik, Y.M. Smirnov, N.I. Veselovskii, and the President of the Academy of

IRANIANS AND GREEKS AFTER 90 YEARS

The initial title ‘Monarchy by the grace of god in the Bosporan kingdom’ was modified for the essay’s subsequent publication as ‘Predstavlenie o monarkhicheskoi vlasti v Skifii i na Bospore’ [The conception of monarchical power in Scythia and on the Bosporus] in *IAK* 49 (1913), 1–62, on which the present translation is based. I began this translation on the spur of the moment during a post-doctoral research fellowship in 2007 at the Centre Louis Gernet in Paris (appropriately, as a member of the *Bibliotheca Academica Translationum* – http://bat.ehess.fr/). When I realised that my teaching duties at Birkbeck would not allow me to complete what I had begun, the translation had evolved too far for the project to be abandoned. It is largely due to the efficiency and ability of Muireann Maguire (Wadham College, Oxford) that the text could eventually be submitted for publication. Despite her enormous contribution, I accept all blame for any errors and lack of elegance which my editing will have inevitably imposed on the text.

The translators have retained the rhetorical style of the Russian original, reflecting its origins in a lecture, while simplifying the division of the text into longer paragraphs to bring out the flow of the argument more clearly. Furthermore, several bibliographical references have been transferred from the text to the footnotes to enhance the text’s legibility (my own notes are indicated by Roman numbers and sit as end-notes). We have undertaken some Anglicisation, rather than strict transliteration, of proper names, ancient and modern. As I explain in my introductory essay, the aim of this translation is to promote a better understanding of the conceptual grid through which Rostovtzeff (and most of his successors in the field) interpreted northern Black Sea archaeology. The editorial commentary in the end-notes has been limited to references to more recent illustrations and corpora featuring the primary sources used by Rostovtzeff. Problems of interpretation and subsequent archaeological discoveries have intentionally not been dealt with, for I wanted to avoid the illusory impression that Rostovtzeff’s works could be ‘up-dated’ through the simple addition of factual information: the interpretative framework which he applied to the archaeology and history of the northern Black Sea region throughout his works has to be accepted or rejected in its entirety.

Caspar Meyer

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1 On the background of his work, see the excellent commentary by Zuev and Levinskaya 1993, 164, n. 4.
I. The Period of Early Hellenism

One of the richest discoveries of the last decades of the 19th century in South Russia was that of 1888 by Felitsyn in the Karagodeuashkh kurgan, located near the Cossack village Krymskaya on the lower reaches of the Kuban river. The discovery, as is well known, was duly published and explained by the distinguished Russian scholars A.S. Lappo-Danilevskii and V.K. Malmberg, in a special issue of Materials for the Archaeology of Russia.¹ This publication, however, is hardly exhaustive: apart from the fact that some of the finds had not been properly cleaned, many of them were not given due attention by the aforementioned scholars. The most interesting among the gold objects found in the kurgan, a triangular plaque from a woman’s headdress, was reproduced in a phototype and variously mentioned in the text. But nowhere was it described either as a whole or in detail and an interpretation of its figured decoration was given only incidentally, without introducing analogous material. The same applies to the very interesting rhyta from the same find. These rhyta and the plaque are, however, of great scholarly interest, no less so than the famous Chertomlyk amphora, the Kul-Oba flask and the other objects of that class with realistic figures of Scythians depicted on them.¹

It deserves therefore our wholehearted approval that E.M. Pridik re-studied the objects from this find and decided to clean them chemically, especially the silver items among the grave offerings, above all the three rhyta. The results of this procedure, and the new light they shed on the date and artistic significance of the objects [2], have recently been reported by Pridik in a separate article, precluding the need to consider these problems here in detail.² Yet I feel obliged to supplement his article on a number of points concerning the rhyta as well as the aforementioned plaque, since the question of the meaning of the scenes depicted on

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¹ IAK [Bulletin of the Imperial Archaeological Commission] 49 (1913), 1–62
these objects was hardly touched on in Pridik’s essay, even though it calls for thorough and profound investigation. The task of analysing these figures was greatly assisted by the infinite kindness of E.M. Pridik, who put at my disposal not only the treasures of the Kerch and Nikopol Halls in the Hermitage, but also an excellent drawing by the illustrator, A. Raevskii, published in the article cited above. The description of the whole rhyton is not my task, as I have already pointed out, nor is an analysis of its ornament required: all this has been carried out partly by Malmberg and partly through the subsequent additions by Pridik. I stress only that, according to the ceramic objects among the grave goods, the finds cannot belong to a date later than the second half of the 3rd century BC.

The figured scene which initially attracted my attention became intelligible through the cleaning of the rhyton and Raevskii’s drawing. Prior to this process the image could of course not be properly interpreted, since the figures were visible only in faint contours. The scene is at the upper edge of the flaring body of the vessel, occupying a broad frieze. Depicted are two horsemen facing each other in heraldic stance, both of them dressed in typical Scythian attire, bareheaded and long-haired, with thick beards. Beneath the hooves of his horse lies a prostrate man. Opposite, to his left, stands an identical horseman: his left hand has not survived; his right is raised, with the palm turned towards his companion vis-à-vis. Whether this horseman was armed one cannot make out as the whole of his body, except his right hand, is severely damaged. Beneath the hooves of his horse is another prostrate man.

Even at first sight the scene appears to be of a ritual rather than realistic nature. The gesture of the horseman to the right is undoubtedly a gesture of adoratio. If we were ignorant of the parallels given below, we would interpret the scene perhaps plausibly as an adoratio of a king or toparch by one of his vassals or subjects, with the identity of the former being indicated by the rhyton and the sceptre. But the weakness of this interpretation is revealed above all as we compare our scene with one of the most common scenes to be depicted in Sasanian rock reliefs. Beginning with the founder of the dynasty, Ardashir (from AD 224), the most popular subject in these reliefs is the investiture of the king by the supreme god

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3 In this dating I agree almost precisely with E.M. Pridik, op. cit., 177.
4 See Lappo-Danilevskii and Malmberg, op. cit., 67, fig. 56, cf. 147, fig. 22 and 150, fig. 23.
5 Ibid., 76, fig. 56.
6 The sceptre resembles that found in two fragments in the Kul-Oba kurgan; Pridik, op. cit., 169, n. 5 (cf. ABC pl. 27, 12), cf. Chapter II below.
7 Malmberg had previously drawn attention to this; see Pridik, op. cit., 171.
of Persia, Ormuzd.\(^8\) The closest correspondence can be observed in those examples in which the equestrian god grants power to the equestrian king. In a relief from Naqsh-i-Rustam \([4]\) we have the god to the right and the king to the left, both seated on horses at rest.\(^9\) The god stretches out his right hand to offer the king a symbolic ring with fillets or a diadem, while holding the sceptre in his left hand. The king, in turn, holds out his right hand towards the emblem of power being granted to him and raises his left in a gesture of veneration: the palm of the hand is turned towards the god, the index finger raised. A prostrate enemy lies beneath the hooves of each of the horses.

From this comparison it is plainly obvious that we have before us one and the same scene and one and the same idea, in spite of the fact that the two renderings are separated by no fewer than five centuries. This phenomenon is no doubt explained by the endurance of the Iranian tradition, the idea of which was embodied in an iconographic form most likely not in Persia itself, but in those numerous states of Asia Minor organised in the Persian manner, where Iranian religion and Iranian conceptions of power were deeply rooted. In their main features these conceptions had been given their artistic forms evidently through the East Greek art of Asia Minor, from where they were probably passed on to semi-Hellenised Parthia and eventually to the Sasanians. Precisely the same course of development must be envisaged for another favourite subject of the Sasanian reliefs – the equestrian battle between two knights, for which we have in the relief of Gotarzes a Parthian connective link.\(^{10}\)

The comparison we have established gives us monumental and unshakeable confirmation of the fact that the Scythian kingdoms aspired to organise themselves on the very same structure and on the same religious basis as the kingdoms of Cappadocia, Commagene, Armenia, Iberia, Albania and finally Parthia.\(^{11}\) Among those Scythian kingdoms was for instance that of Scilurus and his sons in Tauris, which we partly know and partly suppose to have been located in the steppes of South Russia in the 3rd to 2nd centuries BC. Their formation had been encouraged by the colossal prosperity of Panticapaeum and the other Greek cities of South Russia, which in turn derived from the \([5]\) unprecedented volume of trade between Greece and the Black Sea and which is visible to us in the rich _kurgan_ burials on the rivers

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\(^8\) F. Sarre and E. Herzfeld, _Iranische Felsreliefs: Aufnahmen und Untersuchungen von Denkmälern aus alt- und mittelperscher Zeit_ (Berlin 1910), pl. 5, cf. pl. 13, with 245 ff. (Sarre).

\(^9\) Ibid., pl. 5; cf. Fig. 1 in the present publication.

\(^10\) For these scenes, see my analysis in the forthcoming _Monuments of Ancient Decorative Wall-Painting in South Russia_, chapter on the tomb of 1872.

Kuban, Don, Dnieper and Bug. Our kingdoms inherited this religious basis from Old Persia, establishing a tradition that was so strong and enduring that it could not be suppressed by either the Hellenistic monarchy or, subsequently, by the Roman Republic and the Empire. In accordance with this tradition, the roots of which lie in Assyro-Babylonia, the monarchs are by no means gods, as in Egypt. Nonetheless, the authority of the king was sacred, since his power was conferred on him by god, by whose will he was called to the throne. The rule of the monarchs was by the grace of the creator of heaven and earth. This doctrine raised the monarch aloft and gave him the likeness of divinity, endowing him as it were with rights equal to those of a god, but without separating him from the people. By virtue of this peculiarity the doctrine remained supremely attractive and enticing, outlasting its founders for a millennium.

However, this is not the place to dwell on the history of this conception of monarchy by the grace of god, a history that has been studied to no inconsiderable degree. For me it was important to establish the fact that our monument is inextricably linked to this idea, as indeed the entire way of life of the Scythian monarchies of the steppes was evidently linked to Iran. This is all the more probable if we consider that the Scythians were in respect of their nationality in all likelihood closely related to the Iranians, and that Scythian religious beliefs, as portrayed for us by Herodotus, bear very close resemblance to the religious doctrine of Iran. It is thus plainly obvious that the god with the sceptre and the rhyton is almost certainly the supreme god of the Scythians, corresponding to the Persian Ormuzd – perhaps that same god Herodotus calls Papaeus and who is on the other hand without doubt closely related to Papas of Asia Minor, later known as Attis, an immediate kinsman of the Thracian Sabazius-Dionysus. We need not be surprised by the fact that the god is dressed in identical fashion to the Scythians, wears the same hairstyle, and displays no recognisable attributes of divinity; we have seen nearly the same degree of resemblance between god and mortal in the Sasanian relief described above, and we observe the same resemblance in the famous reliefs from Commagene, in the scene of annunciation, or perhaps transferral, of power to Antiochus by Ormuzd.
Mithra also appears in this local aspect on the Bactrian coins of Kanerkes and Hooerkes, where he probably plays the same role of power-granting god as in our monument.16

Of special interest are the attributes of authority, such as the sceptre and especially the rhyton. The latter emphasises even more forcefully the mystical character of the king’s power, for it is obvious that with the conferral of the rhyton the king communes with the god, just as the mystes communes with him by drinking from the sacred rhyton during the mysteries and especially during the mysteries of Mithra.17

The accuracy of our considerations is substantiated by a number of monuments of outstanding interest which, even though contemporary with our rhyton and correctly explained. I have in mind especially the well-known clothing plaques from Kul-Oba and Chertomlyk, illustrating to the right a goddess in a long robe seated in a chair, with a loose-fitting peplos covering her head and a low headdress. She grasps the hemline of her peplos in her right hand and a round object with a handle, perhaps a mirror, in her left. To the left, in front of her [7], stands a young Scythian raising his right hand to drink from the rhyton which he is holding, while placing his left on his chest.18 Characteristically, this plaque was found in a number of reproductions in both the Kul-Oba and the Chertomlyk tombs, and this manifestly attests to the wide currency of these religious beliefs among the Graeco-Scythian ruling elite [Pl. II.4]. I refrain from asserting that we have before us the act of granting power to the king or of his investiture, although in view of the later monuments to be discussed below this would

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16 Ibid., 185 f., figs. 1–7.
17 See the relief from Konitsa in Bosnia [now northern Greece – ed.] in Cumont, Textes et monuments I, 275–76, fig. 10; idem, Mysterien pl. 2. 6, where the administering of the sacrament is likewise performed through a rhyton; cf. also the role of the rhyton in the funerary feast. For the rhyton, and its sacred significance and close relationship to royal power in the Aegean period, see G. Karo, ‘Minoische Rhyta’. Jdl 26 (1911), 249–70. The rhyton is also common in reliefs with representations of Mithra slaying the bull, and in associated scenes of Roman times in which the mystical feast of Mithra and the Sun is illustrated – the prototype of the mystical feast of the followers of the cult; see Cumont, Textes et monuments, II, passim, I, 174–75, 306, 320–21. Alternative interpretations of the figures on the relief from Konitsa, which may be more correct than that of Cumont, were proposed by H. Stuart Jones (who recognised pater on the horse, the priest as an earthly hypostasis of Mithra, and Heliodromus, the messenger of Helios, or his earthly hypostasis) and W.J. Phythian-Adams (identifying Cumont’s miles as a cryfius). For these, see Mrs S. Arthur Strong, ‘The exhibition illustrative of the provinces of the Roman empire, at the baths of Diocletian, Rome’. JRS 1 (1911), 14; cf. W.J. Phythian-Adams, ‘The problem of the Mithraic grades’. JRS 2 (1912), 53–64. For another fragment of a mystical feast, see F. Cumont, ‘Notice sur deux bas-reliefs mithraiques’. RA 40 (1902), 10, figs. 1, 2.
18 See ABC pl. 20.11; RAİ pl. 30.16; Tolstoy and Kondakov II, 108, fig. 94; see also the literature referred to in S. Reinach’s re-edition of ABC (1892), 65, no. 11.
IRANIANS AND GREEKS AFTER 90 YEARS

It appears inarguable to me, however, that we have before us the moment of the king’s initiation to the goddess, or simply that of an ordinary mystes.

Both of the monuments just described offer an explanation of a recently published but as yet unexplained piece, which was found by S.A. Mazaraki in the kurgan burial near the Cossack village Aksytintsy in the Romenskii district, Poltava province, and donated in 1906 to the Imperial Historical Museum in Moscow. First of all, I observe that the burial discovered by Mazaraki can be dated fairly precisely by the two vessels found there and by the style of the ornaments on the golden diadem found near the head of the left skeleton of the main burial. These distinctive vessels include a shallow black patera, with an uneven slip and a reddish tint in some areas, and a palmette rosette stamped on its bottom [8], and a large black kylix of coarse fabric, heavy shape and irregular firing, but with a fine slip and the same palmette rosette stamped on the bottom. These relatively late products of plain black slip ware belong roughly to the same time as the pottery from the Karagodeuashkh kurgan (see below) and the finds indicating a date for the Kul-Oba and Chertomlyk burials. Taken together they determine the period when Scythian statehood and culture attained their peak in the steppes of the Dnieper, Bug, Don and Kuban. They cannot be dated earlier than the very end of the 4th or even the first half of the 3rd century BC. Also to this period belong, with some certainty, the ornaments of the gold diadem, which bear a striking resemblance to the décor of some of the finds from the Chertomlyk tomb.

Among the considerably earlier monuments are interesting Hittite reliefs showing initiation scenes; see A.H. Sayce, ‘Unpublished Hittite inscriptions’. Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology 28 (1906), 95 and idem, ‘The Hittite communion table at Mar’ash’. Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology 32 (1910), 153 for monuments from Mar’ash and Malatia depicting a believer (or a priest) and a goddess seated on a chair, with the priest or mystes drinking from a cup, and three loaves of bread and a cup of wine placed on the table.

As an example of such an act of mutual mystical union I include that described by Herodotus and Lucian (see Herodotus. 4. 70; Lucian Tox. 37), the custom of concluding a treaty and friendship, which is depicted on the famous appliqué ABC pl. 32.10, with two Scythians drinking from the same rhyton [see Pl. II.2]. In this scene the rhyton carries undoubtedly religious and symbolical significance. Compare also the ritual union of the warriors by the king in Herodotus 4. 66. The famous rhyton from the Kul-Oba tomb serves as an illustration of this oath of friendship; see ABC pl. 36.5, with the text in ABC (1892), 88 for literature.

See the Otchet Imperatorskogo istoricheskogo muzeya im. Imp. Aleksandra III v Moskve 1906 (Moscow 1907), 14 ff. Figs. 1 and 2 illustrate the layout of the grave chamber in the kurgan; part of the objects found there are illustrated in Pls. I and II of the present publication.

Cf. a similar patera from the Karagodeuashkh kurgan, published by Lappo-Danilevskii and Malmberg, op. cit., 13, 48, fig. 17.

See RAS Atlas, II, pls. 36 and 40.23.
Among the objects from the *kurgan* under consideration, the gold plaques are of special interest. To judge from Mazaraki’s drawing, they had served as adornments of the belt worn by the male inhumed in the grave. These plaques [Fig. 3] depict a Scythian in left profile view sitting on a four-legged stool without a back rest. He wears his long hair loose over his shoulders, and a moustache and a short beard are also visible. He is dressed in a short jacket, possibly trimmed with metal plaques at the shoulders and the hemline. At the waist the jacket is held together with a broad belt with gold appliqués, and with a *gorytos* and a bow hanging from it at the left side. Below, he wears tight-fitting trousers and high boots. In his left hand the Scythian holds a rhyton, in his right hand, propped up by the bent elbow on his right knee, a short sceptre with a peculiar knob, curved in the shape of a snake. It is also possible, however, that the object represents not a sceptre but a battle-axe of the same shape as that shown on the gilt silver flask from a *kurgan* near Voronezh. In his hair one may perhaps recognise the craftsman’s attempt to indicate the presence of a diadem with a customary emblem above the forehead. Remains of the gold covering from the sceptre may indeed be recognisable among the finds from the tomb: they include the five gold tubes which were found near the right hand. Whether the two triangular gold plaques also belong to the sceptre one cannot say with any certainty.

It is clear from this description that the craftsman who made the belt plaques intended to depict, almost certainly, the noble Scythian buried in the tomb or even a Scythian king, whose status was indicated by the sceptre (or battle-axe) and the rhyton – the same insignia as those shown on the rhyton from the Karagodeuashkh *kurgan*. We may therefore conclude that these insignia of monarchical power were widely recognised in the steppes of South Russia of early Hellenistic times and that they do not present a local peculiarity or a solitary case.

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25 *Otchet Imperatorskogo istoricheskogo muzeya* 1906 (Moscow 1907), figs. 2, 12.
26 Mazaraki’s drawing and the distribution of the finds in the tomb suggest that the burials belonged to a man and a woman. In the antechamber was a horse burial and possibly that of the groom.
30 Unfortunately, I cannot pass over in silence the differences in opinion between me and B.V. Farmakovskii, with whom I discussed this interpretation, both about the general situation of the finds of Mr Mazaraki and in particular about the gold plaques. Leaving aside the discrepancy between the dates of the so-called diadem and the pottery to which Farmakovskii drew attention (a discrepancy connected to Farmakovskii’s dating of the finds from the Chertomlyk *kurgan*, on which I do not concur), I cannot leave unmentioned the different character of the two graffiti of the vessel
In combination with other monuments, the Kul-Oba appliqués described above and interpreted (insofar as is possible) above allow us to make sense of the triangular gold plaque from the headdress of the queen buried at Karagodeuashkh, which we have so far mentioned only in passing. The plaque shows three scenes, one placed above the other [Pl. II.1]. The mould had not been designed for our plaque, as is evident from the fact that the scene overlapped the left and right borders of the field by at least one figure. The lower scene is the most interesting one. In the centre it shows a woman in heavy ritual dress, perhaps gold-brocaded, who is seated in a chair and faces the viewer in a static posture. She wears a long-sleeved chiton beneath the heavy robe, which falls in vertical folds, as well as a headdress in the form of a Phrygian cap with a sharply turned-up brim and covered by a veil falling over her shoulders and back. Behind her we can see the heads of two women flanking her symmetrically and, like her, looking ahead, with their peplois thrown over their heads. In the right hand (the left is not visible), the seated woman holds the flaring end of a large rhyton. From the right she is approached by a beardless Scythian, wearing a caftan trimmed with embroidery and tied together at the waist by an elaborately studded belt. On his head, he appears to wear a turban. His right hand reaches out to receive the rhyton offered by the woman. From the left the woman is approached by another figure, perhaps also male. Of this figure only the right hand has survived, offering the woman a wide-mouthed spherical flask of the same type as the famous Kul-Oba vessel with realistic depictions of Scythians and a series of other gilt silver vessels of that time. A fifth figure, perhaps female, with a tiara or turban on her head, approaches the seated woman to the left from behind, apparently grasping her robe. (ibid., pl. 2.8) and some peculiarities in the way the seated Scythian is represented. He sits on a stool of somewhat unusual form (compared with that shown on the plaques from Kul-Oba and Chertomlyk). Somewhat unusual also is the sceptre or battle-axe, the upper part of which closely resembles that of a bow (compare this with the bow-shaped sceptres from the kurgans in the same region around Poltava published by Count A.A. Bobrinskii, Kurgany i sluchainye arkeologicheskie nakhodki bliz mesteckha Smely [St Petersburg 1901], III, 63, pls. 3.2.7, 11.1 2, cf. II, pl. 24.20). Striking is the focus on the belt with gold plaques, which is uncommon in other representations of Scythians. These peculiarities are however not so grave as to seriously cast doubt over the authenticity of the pieces. As I pointed out earlier, the finds from the burial near the village of Aksyutintsy are closely analogous to the objects which Mazaraki discovered in the kurgans near the village of Volkovets, in the vicinity of Aksyutintsy; see Drevnosti Pridneprov’ya: sobranie B.I. i V.I. Khanenko = Antiquités de la région du Dniepre: collection B. Khanenko (Kiev 1899), II, 5 ff.

31 An observation previously made in the original publication of our piece.
32 The exchange cannot be interpreted the other way round as the woman is clearly identified as the donor through her static pose, whereas the man moves towards her to receive the vessel.
33 If my interpretation of the ritual nature of all these scenes is correct, then it becomes all the more likely that this type of vessel had ritual and votive significance.
The same scene, or one of a similar kind, is also shown on some of the clothing plaques of barbarian production from the Chertomlyk kurgan [Pl. II.5].34 They illustrate the upper part of a female figure wearing almost the same attire as that on the plaques from the Chertomlyk and Kul-Oba burials considered above, only less Hellenised. It is possible that another heavy veil is shown under the Greek himation thrown over the head of the goddess, of the same kind as that we have seen on the Karagodeuashkh plaque, or perhaps there is a round [11] tiara on the goddess’ head, covered by a heavy veil falling over her shoulders. The hands of the goddess are folded in front of her abdomen, holding a rhyton. To her left is a figure corresponding precisely to that to the left of the goddess on the Karagodeuashkh plaque. Whilst in that piece a man is shown in a long woven dress (a priest?) unveiling the goddess and offering her a spherical flask, in the latter the figure to the left of the goddess, looking to the right, is holding with the left hand the end of the goddess’ veil, and with the right some kind of implement. In the handwritten description of these plaques, G.E. Kizeritskii identifies it as a mirror, but to me it seems more likely identifiable with a thymiaterion, although I would not insist on this.

It is highly illuminating to compare the two main male figures from the lower scene of the Karagodeuashkh headdress with some of the figured plaques from the Kul-Oba tomb designed to be sown or strung onto a belt. One of them is known from four examples in the Hermitage and a fifth one in the collection of Count A.S. Uvarov.35 Although the type has been published frequently and is fairly well known, as yet no one (as far as I am aware) has noted the fact that it presents a companion piece to a similar figure of the same make and the same technique, with the same device on the reverse for attaching the plaque to a fine strap or a string. This plaque is known apparently only in one example, acquired by Prince V.V. Kochubey, probably from the people who notoriously plundered the Kul-Oba tomb in the night after its discovery.36viii

The first type of these plaques [Pl. II.7, drawn after a photograph] shows a long-haired Scythian with a beard and moustache. He wears the customary caftan and voluminous trousers falling in a series of folds. The figure is standing frontally, his head turned to the left. In his right hand he holds the neck of an aryballos-shaped

34 RAS 114, Atlas pl. 30.20; cf. Tolstoy and Kondakov II, 44, fig. 31.
35 See ABC, pl. 32.1; (1892), 83; Tolstoy and Kondakov II, 61, fig. 44. The plaque from the collection of Count Uvarov was published in J. Sabatier, Kerch i Bospor (St Petersburg 1851), pl. 5.11. The plaques in the Hermitage are of two types: two slightly smaller (H 0.06) and two slightly taller (H 0.063).
36 Its current whereabouts is unknown to me. It was published by Sabatier, op. cit., pl. 5.3 and 4, cf. 105.
vessel of the type already known to us, while the left rests on the *gorytos* hanging, evidently by the belt, at his left hip. The second, which unfortunately we have to describe and publish [Pl. II.6] from the drawing in Sabatier’s book, shows a man standing upright with [12] smooth long hair, a moustache and a broad and thick beard. He is dressed in a tight-fitting knee-length coat, or *kazakin*, close-fitting trousers and soft low boots, tied at the ankles with a strap in the place where they pass under the trousers. The left leg is advanced and slightly bent at the knee (*Spielbein*). His right arm is bent at the elbow, holding a large rhyton near his chest. A *gorytos* with a bow is hanging from his left hip. With his left hand he appears to be leaning on a sceptre, a club or, most likely, a battle-axe of the same type as those depicted in the hands of the figures on the gilt silver vase of aryballos shape recently found in one of the *kurgan* burials near Voronezh, which represents a tremendously interesting pendant to the well-known electrum flask from Kul-Oba. This plaque, as indeed is the case with the rest of the objects published by Sabatier, is reproduced in actual size. Its height is equal to that of the other appliqués described above, i.e. about 6 cm. To which part of the dress or armour of the humans and horses buried in the Kul-Oba tomb the ornaments belonged is difficult to tell. Judging from their reverse side, they were strung on vertical straps. Such straps may be seen, for instance, on the Scythian *gorytoi* depicted on the Voronezh flask. In later times, such straps can also be seen hanging from the saddles of the Bosporan and Sarmatian noblemen depicted on Panticapaean stelae and on the murals of Panticapaean tombs. But this interpretation is only one of many possibilities.

There is a clear distinction in how the barbarians in the two types of plaques are dressed. That of the barbarian holding a rhyton resembles the Sarmatian costume known from Panticapaean stelae. The thought naturally occurs that we are faced with a representation of two ethnic strata in the population of the South Russian steppes of the 3rd to 2nd centuries BC. Be that as it may, the fact that these figures offer a remarkable analogy to the two on the plaque from the Karagodeuashkh female headdress is entirely obvious. On the latter, the figure with a rhyton most likely represents the protagonist, a king or toparch, and the figure with the round vessel a worshipper. Whether it follows that the third figure should really be identified as a goddess is not a straightforward decision to make. But it is certainly not inconceivable that the Scythian wearing a caftan is offering the flask to the figure holding the rhyton as a sign of reverence or acquiescence. Interestingly, similar figures of [13] Scythians or Sarmatians, equipped with weapons in addition to the large rhyta in the right hand, were found in several examples in the vicinity of ancient Tanais. I have in mind the roughly hewn statues of local stone, discovered by A.A. Miller whilst conducting his excavations in the *kurgans* in the vicinity of
the Greek city-site. I rest content with this reference since Miller will publish these statues shortly in a detailed investigation.

The goddess on the plaque from Karagodeuashkh, and a considerable number of scenes resembling the group of images under consideration, appear on a sheet-gold diadem, discovered, according to Mr Hesse, in a kurgan near Kanev. The images on this piece replicate in its centre the group depicted on the triangular plaque from Karagodeuashkh and on the clothing plaques mentioned above, albeit with slight modifications. The group to the left of the central composition reproduces with minor changes the motif of Scythians consecrating their friendship ties. The remaining groups to the left and the right were in the craftsman’s mind obviously meant to illustrate a sacrifice or preparations for it. From a stylistic point of view, the plaque should also be related to the plaque from Karagodeuashkh. Unfortunately, the images on the plaque exhibit a series of idiosyncrasies in their manner of representation, ranging from the peculiarity of the dress, the genuflectory poses of all the figures, the compositional disunity in spite of the overarching thematic unity of ritual, to technical anomalies. The genuflectory poses may have been introduced with a view to achieving isocephaly with the seated main figure. The craftsmen of the Kul-Oba and Chertomlyk plaques pursued the same aim, depicting a standing Scythian of considerably smaller size than the seated goddess. Yet overall these details of technique and figural representation (in addition to the inconsistent reports of the piece’s acquisition) prevent me from suppressing my doubts over its genuineness. Besides, it adds little new information, and for this reason we may without jeopardising our overall argument confine our discussion of it to what has already been said [14].

But let us return to the scene just described in the plaque from the headdress from Karagodeuashkh. It is very regrettable that the representation has not been fully preserved, since a number of important details must thus remain unexplained and inexplicable. In the second register is a chariot with a pair of yoked horses, although the original mould from which the piece was made undoubtedly showed a quadriga. The

37 Published by A. Miller and A. de Mortillet in L’homme préhistorique (Paris 1904), II, 273 ff., illustrated on 279. I will not conceal, however, that an argument against the falsity of this piece is provided by the distinctive emphasis on the ritual and religious character of all scenes, which has prior to our research not been adequately stressed in scholarly literature. The next scene to the right underlines the ritual significance of the rhyton and the spherical flask, which has hitherto also not been known. If the piece is genuine then the representation of a goddess holding a spherical flask would corroborate my supposition, established independently from Hesse’s plaque, concerning the ritual character of this type of vessel and its close association with the great female goddess of the Scythians. Finally, the strap to which the gorytos had been attached was not known to scholarship prior to the discovery of the broad-mouthed silver vessel with gilding from Voronezh, about which we have spoken repeatedly. By virtue of all of these considerations I cannot rule out the authenticity of the sheet-gold diadem, although I cannot confirm it as long as I have not examined the piece myself.
chariot, harnessed with strong and sturdy horses, has a very unusual appearance for which I cannot think of any parallels. On the chariot a beardless figure, apparently male, stands in a solemn, immobile posture facing the viewer, as indeed do the horses. The figure’s coiffure consists of eight regular curls. Finally, a female figure is facing us in the upper register, holding with both hands a large horn of plenty. The first and the second registers are divided by a frieze showing two griffins, one facing the other, and each with a paw on the rim of a ribbed chalice, probably containing a fire. In the lower frieze are decorated bucrania alternating with facing heads.

For me, it is incontrovertible that the interpretation of these images as realistic genre scenes, representing king and queen, cannot be accepted. The cultic character of the images before us seems undeniable. The lower scene replicates that known from the Kul-Oba plaque – a goddess, accompanied by her priestesses behind her, is initiating a young noble Scythian either to herself or, more likely, to divinely sanctioned royal power. To the left approaches a worshipper offering a sacred vessel. The gesture of the latter figure (a priest?), may indicate an act of revelatio of the divinity. In the second register we have either a masculine hypostasis of the supreme god on a chariot, or a king in the halo of his power, while the third shows Týxj. On the basis of all the images surveyed, we may conclude that they attest with reasonable clarity to a cult of the supreme god and goddess. I do not think I am mistaken in identifying the god and the goddess with the supreme deities of the Iranian pantheon in that stage of its development when it had already merged with the Syrian pantheon: i.e. Ormuzd with Bel, Anahita with Astarte, and Mithra with Shamash, and when the leading role in the cult of the kings was being played simultaneously by the female goddess, whose temples were scattered over all the Asiatic coast of the Black Sea, and by the god Mithra, the vanquisher of evil, Ἡλιος Ἀναχαιμ, the invincible Sun, whom the Iranians commonly represented in a sun chariot drawn by four horses. The image of the griffins near the burning vessel on the Karagodeuashkh plate is also compatible with this interpretation. The identification of Týxj in the upper register is clear enough too: it is the Týxj of the king who, according to the brilliant research of Cumont, derives from the Iranian Hvareno (Semitic Gad) and symbolises the god’s favour of the kings, having originally been closely associated with Mithra due to the influence of astrology and the dominating role of the Sun, but eventually merging with the concept of luck and fortune, Greek Týxj.

38 See Cumont, Mysterien 9; idem, Textes et monuments I, 231 ff.
39 Cumont, Mysterien 2; idem, Textes et monuments I, 225, 3. On Mithra and Anahita juxtaposed in inscriptions of Artaxerxes, see Cumont, Mysterien 7, cf. 9; idem, Textes et monuments I, 230 f.
40 Cumont, Mysterien 70; idem, Textes et monuments I, 284 ff. Compare Cumont’s interesting remark that the Sasanians called themselves brothers of the Sun and the Moon in Mysterien 76 and Textes et monuments I, 286, especially n. 4.
This correspondence and the interpretation of the scenes described above find their confirmation in a number of monuments of undoubted Iranian origin – the finds from the so-called Amu-Darya treasure, recently published with an extensive commentary by Dalton. Evident points of comparison for our male worshippers come above all from the closely similar figures of worshipping Magi(?) on golden clothing plaques from the treasure. Besides the thematic similarity, which will shortly be discussed, they are connected by a shared coarseness of style, indicating local craftsmanship. This local character strongly suggests the plaques were only of local importance and thus corresponded to local religious concepts and tastes. The same applies to the majority of the plaques from the South Russian steppes considered above. Thus we can recognise in almost all of the figures on the plaques sacred attributes of one kind or another – most often flowers, birds, or a bundle of twigs, representing most likely the so-called baresman, a cult implement which played a central role in Mazdaism. One of these figures is especially relevant to the present discussion: namely no. 69, which shows a man with a caftan-like dress draped around the shoulders and a traditional Persian headgear [16]. In his right hand he holds a bundle of twigs and in his left a vessel of the same shape as those familiar to us from the flasks from Scythian contexts, resembling the Greek aryballos. A comparison between this figure and a pair of statuettes yields further insights. One of them shows a priest or a Magus(?) in rich dress and headgear, holding with both hands an object close to his chest. In my eyes the object resembles a rhyton rather than the bundle of twigs identified by Dalton. The other statuette probably represents a king, holding in his right hand an object near his chest which resembles that seen in the hand of the goddess in the Chertomlyk plaque. Finally, I point out that some cylinder seals and carved gems depict a goddess, probably Anahita, wearing the same attire as the goddess on our South Russian plaques. To be sure the attributes of the goddess on our and other monuments are different from those of the goddess of the South Russian steppes; but one must not forget that in South Russia Anahita merged with Greek Aphrodite at an early date, as already attested by Herodotus (1. 131).

42 Ibid., I, 1, pl. 14, cf. 94 ff., nos. 48–100.
43 Ibid., pl. 12.2.
44 Ibid., pl. 2.1.
45 See J. Menant, Recherches sur la glyptique orientale (Paris 1886), II, 174, fig. 152, pl. 9.2; Dalton, op. cit., 45, 29.
46 Our discussion will return to Anahita later on, in the third chapter, where the relevant secondary literature is cited. There we will also adduce the evidence corroborating the worship of Anahita in South Russia, as goddess of water and protectress of horses. Significantly, the aryballos-shaped cult vessels very often include water birds in their decoration.
If my interpretations of the iconographical material are correct, then this enables us to understand the enigmatic votive monument to the gods Sanerges and Astara, dedicated by Comosarye, the daughter of Gorgippus (ca. 342–309 BC), during the rule of Paerisades. If my interpretations of the iconographical material are correct, then this enables us to understand the enigmatic votive monument to the gods Sanerges and Astara, dedicated by Comosarye, the daughter of Gorgippus (ca. 342–309 BC), during the rule of Paerisades. There can be no doubt that Astara is Ishtar, while Sanerges may plausibly be identified with one of the supreme gods of Asia Minor, possibly the Hittite Sandas. It is clear enough therefore that Syrian as well as Iranian [17] influence made itself felt in Scythia during the 3rd century BC not only directly from Persia, which came under Greek rule at the time, but also from Persian-Semitic Asia Minor. The same Astara-Anahita appears most likely in the guise of Greek Aphrodite Urania in the plaques from Kul-Oba and Chertomlyk mentioned earlier. This much seems to be corroborated by her native dress-style and by the mirror in her hand. Given these circumstances, it seems clear that the cult of Aphrodite Urania, attested as supreme goddess both locally and in Asia Minor, had found itself an honourable place not only in Phanagoria, but also in Panticapaeum; there as well as here it readily merged with the cult of the old Milesian Aphrodite who had a large temple near Phanagoria – a temple whose organisation came over time to resemble ever more closely that of the Asiatic sanctuaries of the supreme goddess. It is not without reason that we have a famous dedication to her for the good fortune of Paerisades, Argotas and Comosarye, where she is called. Since we have no evidence for a temple of Demeter in Phanagoria, I would attribute the fragment of an inscription from Phanagoria preserving part of a mystic ritual to the mysteries of this Phanagorian goddess, rather than to those of Demeter. From the evidence surveyed we may therefore draw two conclusions. First of all, it is beyond doubt that the Scythian kingdoms, being for the most part independent

47 IOSPE II, 346 [= CIRB 1015].
48 See Höfer in Roscher s.v. ‘Sanerges’ and ‘Sandas’. It is interesting to bring our inscription together with the depiction on the cylinder seal from the kurgan burial of Anapa of the 3rd century BC, where a worshipping king with a Persian headdress is shown in front of a goddess with a nimbus and a tiara, standing on a lion. It is known that the goddess standing on a lion and wearing a high tiara originates in the sphere of Hittite culture, from where this image probably arrived in the Iranised regions. See OAK 1882–88, 63 f. Atlas pl. 5.3 and 3a. On Hittite religion, see recently E. Meyer, Geschichte des Alterthums, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart 1882), I, para. 477 ff. However, in connection with the god Sandas or Sandon it would be natural to look for a goddess of the earth rather than the sun, as depicted on the cylinder. For that reason I prefer to connect our Astara with the Hittite goddess of the earth, Ischara, the ancestor of Aphrodite; see Meyer, op. cit., paras. 481, 486, and 484 on Sandon.
49 IOSPE II, 19 [= CIRB 75], cf. 21, 22 and IV, 418 (Paerisades I) [= CIRB 17, 13, 971].
50 IOSPE II, 342 [= CIRB 1005]. On the contrary, the cult of Aphrodite Urania is variously attested at Phanagoria, above all in the period of the early Spartocids; see IOSPE II, 343 (Leucon), 347 (Paerisades), 349 (Spartocus) [= CIRB 1111, 972, 1043].
of Bosporus, were kingdoms of Irano-Persian type in their structure as well as their ethnic composition, just like the majority of the other superficially Hellenised kingdoms of the Black Sea coast and the interior of Asia Minor. The religion of these kingdoms was also Iranian, a shared tradition whose persistence among the Scythians was promoted by the fact that it went back to the same sources as the religion of Persia. Yet the official aspect which the religion of the Scythian kingdoms assumed was not the most ancient form of Iranian religion, but that in which Mazdaism existed in Asia Minor in the age of early Hellenism: i.e. with a considerable admixture of Semitic elements and Assyro-Babylonian theology and, with regard to its external appearance, of those forms through which the figures of several gods had been translated into the anthropomorphic arts of East Greek Asia Minor. It is very likely that the Irano-Semitic religious notions also influenced the Bosporan kingdom, given that syncretic tendencies between the Greek gods from the Ionian homeland and the gods of the Iranian pantheon of Asia Minor were at the time already well underway. This is borne out with particular clarity by the cult of Aphrodite Άπατωλου, who had transformed into Aphrodite Urania, one of the hypostases of Astarte-Anahita. I do not know, however, whether it would be justifiable to claim that this religious influence was powerful enough to affect Bosporan notions of monarchical power. As yet we have too little evidence to firmly distinguish in the Bosporan archonship the elements deriving from Ionian urban tyranny, Hellenistic royal power and the hypothesised elements of Iranian monarchy by god’s favour. To judge by the coins, it was the influence of Hellenistic monarchy that had the strongest impact and made itself felt during the entire 3rd and probably also the 2nd century BC.51

II. The Period of Roman Rule
From the 2nd century BC onwards, life on the Bosporus and the South Russian steppes changed profoundly. Among the major events which defined this period I would include, first of all, the weakening of the Greek cities on the Black Sea;
secondly, the growth of several Scythian kingdoms; and thirdly, the steady movement of nomadic tribes into the steppes, which led to the destruction of a number of emergent states established there. As a result of these processes, one can observe a general decline in standards of living, reflected in the impoverishment of our archaeological evidence. [19] The Greek towns in South Russia did not revive again until the great Scythian kingdom of Scilurus and Palacus in the Crimea perished at the hands of Mithradates; thereafter the Greek towns of South Russia found themselves under the powerful hand of Rome, which had assumed the task of defending Greek civilisation on the Black Sea coastline. As a result of this protectorate, the nature of monarchical power on the Bosporus also changed, a fact clearly borne out by the numismatic evidence from the region, beginning in the 1st century BC. After the short episode of Mithradates’ rule, when Bosporus partook in the brief revival of universal monarchy on the Persian model with a Hellenistic base, and of the similarly short-lived rule of his dynasty down to his last descendent on the Bosporan throne, the kingdom entered a period of close, vassal-like dependence upon Rome, principally expressed by the substitution on Bosporan coin issues of monograms for the names of individual rulers. This was a time when the Roman empire moved rulers like pawns throughout the entire East, preparing the region for the transition from imperial to provincial government.

At one time it appeared that Bosporus would disintegrate into a string of provincial urban territories and be absorbed into the province of Moesia or into some new province, as actually happened to Olbia and Chersonesus. However, the Roman government did not deem it either necessary or possible to bring matters to this stage in Bosporus. Beginning with Vespasian’s reign, the names of the Bosporan kings reappear at least on the bronze coins as if they were independent monarchs. These bronze issues admittedly betray the subject status of the Bosporan rulers by the very variety of reverse types, but nonetheless neither the names nor the portraits of the emperors feature on the coins. The era of these kings was the time of Bosporus’ greatest flourishing. This is attested both by the perfection of coinage during this period and by the wealth of new and original types, attempting, as we will see below, to bring out the clearest possible elements of the characteristics of royal power, and by the abundance and variety of coin issues, in which gold was gradually beginning to play a dominant role. I have attempted to indicate elsewhere the reasons for this advancement. There, I identified as a symptom of this progression the affluence [20] of burials at this time and the renewal of old traditions of the funeral rite in a built chamber with a mound raised over it, as

52 See Rostovtzeff, ‘Bosporskoie tsarstvo i Kerchenskie kurgany’. Vestnik Evropy 6 (1912), 113 ff. and Trudy pervogo vseross. s’ezda prepodavatelei drevnykh iazykov (St Petersburg 1912), 344 ff.
familiar from the period of the great *kurgans* Tsarskii, Melek-Chesme, Zolotoi, Kul-Oba, Yuz-Oba, and so forth.

Indicative of this development is also the fact that the portraits of the kings, from now on again appearing regularly on coins, attempt with some degree of success to portray the genuine appearance of the king, through representation of not just his insignia of power, which will be discussed later, but also his facial features. The royal coin portraits from this period provide excellent samples of the die-cutter’s art. We are offered a glimpse of the true likeness of Rhescuporis I, Sauromates I, Rhescuporis II, Rhoemetalces, Eupator, and finally Sauromates II, after whom the ruler portraits, as well as the rest of the coins, become standardised and coarse in style.

Interestingly, the only marble portrait of one of these kings which has come down to us dates approximately to this period. I have in mind the bust preserved in the Imperial Hermitage Museum which was found in Kerch in 1862 and brought to St Petersburg by Baron Tizengauzen [Pl. III.1–2]. This bust undoubtedly formed part of a statue, possibly acrolithic, as the Director Otto Waldhauer believes. The head has not been preserved in its entirety (the nose has been broken off), yet its wide base allows us to imagine its considerable dimensions. The bronze curls, probably gilded, which were once attached to the marble head of hair, have been lost. An entire wig, which would have covered the unfinished top and rear of the head, may have been lost too. This is more probable than the suggestion that the bust had been carved into a structure or leaned against a wall in such a way that only the front of the statue was visible. The statue as a whole must be imagined to resemble those statues depicted on the coinage of this period, where the king is represented either sitting on a curule chair or standing and trampling upon defeated enemies. The diadem in his hair proves that we are looking at a portrait of a king, and not that of an ordinary Bosporan magnate, since the diadem is the chief royal attribute, inherited from Hellenistic times. His royal status is also clear from the lavish finish of the hair, illuminating the king’s face with its golden glint. Thus the bust of the king shows a young, beardless ruler with thick, curly hair, possibly even a wig, falling to his shoulders, similar to the figures without beards or moustaches we see on the coinage. The separate hair attachments, probably made of gold, were covered by the diadem. The slightly slanting eyes were most likely enhanced by paint. The shape of the face

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53 Displayed in the Kerch Hall at the Hermitage, no. 22c.
54 Its dimensions are as follows: height 0.43, the height of the face without the hairline 0.21, and the circumference of the head at the diadem 0.835.
55 This is indicated by the row of deep drill holes. In these openings there is no remnant of marble or plaster, and therefore marble curls are to be ruled out.
56 The hairline passes in the middle of or even immediately above the brows; on coins it lies above the forehead.
is soft and rounded, rather female, which has led some scholars to class the bust as a statue of a woman.\footnote{57} The delicate and skilful workmanship of the piece almost certainly predates the Hadrianic period, but is no earlier than the second half of the 1st century AD. Although it is impossible to state with certainty precisely who is depicted in this bust, comparison with coin portraits shows that the choice must be between Rhescuporis I, Cotys, and Sauromates I. The kings following Sauromates II cannot be identified with our bust, as its workmanship cannot be post-Hadrianic, and the decline in the technique of coinage at that time prevents us from assuming that such an outstanding marble portrait could have been created for one of the kings of the end of the 2nd or the 3rd century AD. Among the kings named above the least probable subject is Sauromates I, as in all of his portraits he is shown, like Rhescuporis I, with a moustache. It is therefore possible to consider the so-called Rhescuporis known from coin portraits of the period of Tiberius and Gaius,\footnote{58} as the styling of his hair and the rounded shape of his face are very similar to our bust [Pl. III.3], or Cotys II, the precursor of Sauromates I [Pl. III.4].\footnote{59} It is curious that another marble portrait of a Bosporan king also dates to this period – the outstanding marble head of Rhescuporis I, Rhoemetalces, or Eupator, found in Athens and preserved [22] in the Athens National Museum [Pl. III.5, 6, cf. 7 and 8].\footnote{60} The discovery of this head in Athens bears witness to the fact that the Thraco-Sarmatian dynasty of the Bosporan kings followed the tradition of their ancestors of the 4th century BC in their relationship with Athens, and that the welfare of Bosporus was based at this time on a lively trade with Greece, which even then continued to depend on goods imported from the Black Sea coast.

But let us return to the Bosporan coins. These coins are primarily interesting to us insofar as the variations of their obverse types give us intriguing insights into the nature of the power of the Bosporan kings, as they themselves understood it. During the period between the reigns of Rhescuporis I and Eupator (AD 71–170), the most important obverse types were those which emphasised the vassal character of the

\footnote{57} Thus, in any case, it is listed in the catalogue of the Hermitage, evidently after the account of Baron Tizengauzen.
\footnote{58} See his coins in A.L. Bertier-Delagard, ‘O monetakh vlastitelei Bospora Kimmeriiskogo opredelyaemykh monogrammami’. Zapiski Odesskogo obshchestva istorii i drevnosti 29 (1911), 223 ff., nos. 23–30.
\footnote{59} For Rhescuporis I (Bertier-Delagard, op. cit., nos. 80, 89), Rhoemetalces and Eupator see below. Sauromates II was bearded.
\footnote{60} See R. Delbrueck, Antike Porträts (Bonn 1912), 52, no. 46 and fig. 22, where the previous literature can be found. Besides the kings mentioned, the bust could portray Rhescuporis I, who is similarly depicted on coins with the short curly beard so typical for our bust. Of course, the inspired workmanship of this bust cannot be compared with the craft of the head described above. Unfortunately, the identification of this bust with the named individuals is far from certain.
kings’ power, its bestowal by the grace of the emperors – here we have both the depiction of all the insignia of investiture as seen, for instance, on the coin of Rhescuporis I [Pl. IV.5], and the figure of the king seated on a curule chair holding a sceptre, decorated with the head of the emperor, as familiar from a further coin of Rhescuporis I [Pl. IV.1]. Another set of variations characteristic of this epoch is of a martial or triumphal nature, with scenes showing: 1) the king fully armed, but bareheaded, galloping on horseback into the thick of battle [Pl. IV.4, 7; coins of Cotys and Sauromates I]; 2) the king beside a trophy, trampling the defeated underfoot [Pl. IV.2; Rhescuporis I]; 3) most likely, the gates of a once again strongly defended city, flanked by two towers [Pl. IV.8; the same specimen]; 4) and the figure of a defeated barbarian or, perhaps, the personification of the defeated nation standing outside the gates, as known from similar coinages of the Roman emperors.\(^{61}\) Sometimes the king is shown with the attributes of the gods Heracles or Poseidon, and sometimes he is being crowned by Nike, flying behind him [Pl IV.3].\(^{62}\)

This emphasis on vassaldom is also evident from the kings’ titulature, which at this time had finally \([23]\) become more consistent.\(^{63}\) The titles stress that the kings were φιλοκισσαρες and φιλορωματος, and more than once mention their connection to the cult of the emperors and their function as imperial priests. The Iranian tradition transpires only in the retention of the title βασιλευς βασιλεως. Much stronger than this was the element linking these kings with Thrace and the Hellenistic monarchy. Thus the image of the king galloping on horseback in a warlike charge was borrowed from coins of the Thracian kings. The genealogy of Sauromates I, ἀπὸ Ποσειδώνους and Ἀρχάλεους,\(^{64}\) takes us into the Hellenistic sphere, while in an inscription of Rhescuporis II the same qualification emphasises the Thracian origin of the bloodline through the insertion of the name of Poseidon’s son, the Thracian Eumolpos, between those of Heracles and Poseidon.\(^{65}\) This tradition is expressed on coins through, for example, the depiction of the Labours of Heracles on the issues of Sauromates II,\(^{66}\) and the portrayal of the king as Poseidon with the attributes of Heracles, being crowned by Nike, as on the coins of Sauromates II and Rhescuporis II [Pl. IV.3; Sauromates II].\(^{67}\)

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\(^{61}\) P.O. Burachkov, Obshchii katalog monet, prinadlezhashchikh ellinskim koloniyam, sushchestvovavshim v drevnosti na severnom beregu Chernogo Morya (Odessa 1884), pl. 28, no. 157.

\(^{62}\) Ibid., pl. 30, no. 229

\(^{63}\) For a comparison of these titles see V.V. Latyshev’s introduction to the second volume of IOSPE, entitled ‘Historia regni Bosporani’, 46 ff. For a translation of this work into Russian with many additions, see his V.V. Latyshev, Pontika (St Petersburg 1909), 112 ff.

\(^{64}\) See IOSPE II, 358 [= CIRB 1048].

\(^{65}\) See IOSPE II, 41; Latyshev, Pontika 113 f. [= CIRB 53].

\(^{66}\) Burachkov, op. cit., pl. 30, nos. 230–238.

\(^{67}\) Ibid., pl. 30, nos. 228, 229 and pl. 32, no. 285.
However, alongside and gradually replacing this Hellenistic-Thracian tradition of vassaldom was a new and different tradition which no-one has yet described. This tradition which links the royal power of Bosporus with Iran or, more accurately, with the tradition of the Scythian kings sketched out above, grew stronger in Bosporus during the epoch of the last Spartocids. It begins with Eupator and achieves its greatest flowering under Sauromates II, Rhescuporis II and Cotys III. The awakening of this ancient tradition is attested by the character of the burials and the burial artefacts from this period, and by the bronze coins of the kings named above and those of their successors [24]. Particularly representative of this relationship are three interments in two kurgan burials, one of which was excavated in 1837, the other in 1841. The items found in the three burials within these two mounds have been published in Drevnostyakh Bosfora Kimmeriiskogo, where there are only meagre comments about the circumstances of the discovery and the burial ritual. It would be most desirable to republish all the data about these findings, re-establish the burial ceremony and compare all of the objects found there using new reproductions. There can be no doubt that both burial mounds – one on an elevation above Glinishche, the other near a quarry – contain not only burials from the same period, but burials of members of the same royal family. This is shown by the complete uniformity of all the objects, especially the gold funeral diadems, and the close formal similarity among all items, offering typical examples of that style which leads directly to the so-called Gothic style, as well as an entire assemblage of objects directly associated with royal power and royal attire. Moreover, by a happy coincidence, both mounds are dated. In one (1841), impressions from coins of the reign of Rhescuporis II were found, in the other (1837) dishes with his name which date evidently also from the time of Rhescuporis II, to judge from the style of the artefacts and its close similarity to that of the objects found in the 1841 tombs. I therefore venture to suggest that in our burial sites we have interments of the family of the Bosporan king, Rhescuporis II, although I would not go so far as to assert that he himself might have been buried in one of these tombs.

68 Unfortunately, I cannot discuss this subject here, as it would lead me to stray too far from the focus of this article. However, I cannot avoid expressing my regret that nothing, to date, has been done to reconstruct the burial rites in kurgan burials of the Roman period.

69 See ABC, text to pl. 1 and pl. 3.3 and 5.

70 A stone-built tomb in the same mound, containing the remains of a female inhumation, yielded another gold wreath. These objects appear to be from the same period as our two tombs, which is completely out of keeping with the discovery here of a lekythos decorated in the red-figure technique (see ABC pl. 58.6–7). However, I have not been able to study the originals of these artefacts and hence cannot judge the accuracy of Ashik’s remarks published in ABC. This third burial does not have any significance for our two interments; it could belong to a considerably earlier period and have been covered by the burial mound associated with Rhescuporis II.
The 1837 tomb is particularly rich in artefacts and famed for its gold funeral mask.\textsuperscript{71} Mainly two objects from this female elite burial are of interest to us: first, a silver sceptre, published together with the sceptre from the Kul-Oba crypt, which is indeed very similar to our piece (on both its ends we find a simple rounded knob) \textsuperscript{[25]};\textsuperscript{72} secondly, a diadem resembling that found in the burial of the 1841 mound so closely in every detail as to suggest the two were made as a pair.\textsuperscript{73} In this diadem the central place is taken by a four-sided plaque decorated with stones at the corners, instead of the emblems that are typical for this type of diadem, such as gold impressions from coins, usually of Roman emperors. On the plaque is a relief image of a rider on a horse standing at rest. The rider is beardless, long-haired and dressed in Sarmatian costume. In his right hand he holds up a large rhyton, as though he were displaying it; in the left he appears to grasp the reins. In front of him stands a cylindrical altar with a flame [Pl. V.1].

The pendant to this valuable diadem was discovered in the 1841 grave, in a wooden coffin with a lead covering. The male skeleton, on whose skull the diadem was found, was covered in purple material woven with gold thread. Beside the skeleton lay a sword and a spear, a knife with the remains of gilding, a dagger with the same gilding,\textsuperscript{74} and a whetstone. At the feet were several vessels, some of alabaster, the remains of a bridle,\textsuperscript{75} and a gold plaque with a representation of Nike.\textsuperscript{76} In the ground near the coffin were two sheet-gold impressions from the reverse side of a coin of the period of Rhescuporis II (AD 211–228). The diadem in this grave differs from the queen’s diadem only in that we have a different design on the plaque covering the forehead. It shows a long-haired, beardless rider on a horse standing at rest and facing to the right, with its left leg raised. The rider grasps the reins in his left hand, while the right is raised in a gesture of veneration: that is, with the palm facing forwards. The rider is dressed in typical local attire. Behind him, to the right, Nike is about to place a crown on his head [Pl. V.2].\textsuperscript{77}

This description already shows beyond doubt that we are dealing with precisely the same theme on both plaques: the bestowal of the king’s authority by a god, just as in the scene depicted on the rhyton from Karagodeuashkh. The rider hold-

\textsuperscript{71} ABC pl. 1.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., pl. 2.5.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., pl. 3.4.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., pl. 28.7.
\textsuperscript{75} A pendant to the bridle in the 1837 tomb; see Ibid., pl. 29.17.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., pl. 24.6.
\textsuperscript{77} Outside South Russia (where one such gold mask was also found in Olbia, as is well-known, and another in the Kiev district) gold masks have been excavated in Mesopotamia and date to the period of the Parthian dominion; see Tolstoy and Kondakov III, 24, cf. I, 66 ff.
ing the rhyton on the panel from the queen’s diadem is indisputably the supreme god, as is also shown by the burning altar. Like the god on the rhyton [26] from Karagodeuashkh, he holds out a drinking horn, obviously offering it to the king who is standing opposite him in the composition which served as the model for our panels. This king is depicted in a pose of veneration on the diadem from the 1841 grave – the grave of the king or of a member of his family. His royal status is confirmed by the depiction of Nike in the act of crowning him. If we acknowledge the extensive similarity between the composition of the panels and the rhyton, then we become still more aware of the similarity between the panels and the Sasanian reliefs mentioned above, if only in the pose of the horses. Yet, is it possible that the emblems on our diadems are neither characteristic nor typical, and appeared there accidentally as a reflection of a long-forgotten and obsolete image repertoire? This suggestion is a priori unlikely as is shown beyond doubt by our examination of the bronze coins of the Bosporan kings, beginning with those of Eupator. From this period, we notice a highly significant change in the varieties of the coins’ reverse designs. Depictions of the vassal type become increasingly rare, and are gradually superseded by images of a different kind. To begin with, the Thracian rider king, armed and galloping, disappears completely and is replaced by a very different royal image, corresponding in almost every detail to the type of king from the gold panels described above. We have a depiction of a long-haired, bearded king, seated on a large and sturdy horse facing to the right, with its left front leg raised. The king wears either a long, belted coat of mail of Sarmatian type [Pl. IV.6; Rhescuporis II] or an ordinary tunic [Pl. IV.9; Sauromates II], and usually a cloak, leggings and boots. His right hand is always extended forwards, with the fingers stretched out (a detail to which the engraver gives special emphasis), sometimes with the palm facing forward. In his left hand he holds the reins and a very long sceptre, almost touching the ground. In almost every detail this sceptre corresponds to the god’s sceptre in the Karagodeuashkh rhyton, as indeed to the queen’s sceptre from the mound of 1837. At each end the sceptre has spherical finials, and at the upper end, just below the upper finial, another sphere has been added.

It is perfectly possible that this image shows the investiture of the king by a god. The divinity itself is usually not portrayed on coins with the depiction of a rider, but we know of one significant exception. On one coin design from the time of Eupator, apparently the archetype of the entire series,78 we find on the obverse an engraving of a king on a horse and on the principal side two [27] heads, turned towards each other, rather than the usual head of the king. One

78 Burachkov, op. cit., pl. 32, no. 287.
head is male and bearded, with a radiate crown; the other is a woman’s head, wearing a kalathos [Pl. IV.12]. One might assume that the head with the radiate crown was a Roman emperor, but our head does not resemble any one emperor – rather does it resemble Eupator himself, although I doubt that he would have represented himself in the guise of the Unconquered Sun. The female head is easier to interpret as she has already appeared sporadically on the coins of Gepaepyris [Pl. IV.10] and, as we will see below, depicts Aphrodite Urania-Astarte-Anahita, with whom we are already familiar. Therefore it seems very probable that the male head represents a god – the supreme god of the sun and the male consort of Aphrodite Urania. If, however, I am mistaken in my interpretation of this head, and it should be seen as a portrayal of the king with a nimbus on his head (like the Persian Hvareno), then the coin type I have described, which reappears in later periods, turns out to be highly significant. It would seem that the godhead who granted power in the Bosporan kingdom was the female supreme goddess, Aphrodite Urania, whose temple stood near Phanagoria and with whose early history we are already acquainted. By this period she evidently featured as the official goddess of the kingdom, like Ma and Anahita in Pontus and Cappadocia. It is notable that in the period under consideration she often appears with a crowned tower on her head, instead of the kalathos.

Our conclusion finds further confirmation in the following observations. I have already referred to the roughly simultaneous disappearance from Bosporan bronze issues in the second half of the 2nd century AD of types conveying the concepts of vassaldom and victory. Towards the 3rd century, two new varieties begin to dominate – the mounted king already described and the goddess seated on a throne. The portrayal of this goddess is highly uniform and consistent. Sometimes she is seated on a simple wooden throne with a tall, straight back, and sometimes on a throne with armrests carved in the shape of lions’ or griffins’ paws. On her head she always wears a kalathos or a (towered) mural crown. In her extended right hand she usually holds a globe and in the left a sceptre with two circular knobs, of the type with which we are already familiar. Sometimes, however, she is depicted without any attributes. She is usually shown alone, sometimes with Eros standing before her [Pl. IV.13–15]. One type of coin from the reign of Rhescuporis II is particularly curious [Pl. IV.13]. It shows the goddess on the usual throne, facing to the left, but in her right hand she holds a patera instead of a globe, from which she offers the sacrament to Eros standing before her [28]. In her left hand she holds...

79 Pl. IV.12 shows the variant with the monogram MH on the reverse, with an obverse as described above.
80 Burachkov, op. cit., pl. 32, no. 282.
the familiar globe, while beside her in the countermark we occasionally find a bust of the king, turned towards her [Pl. IV.14]. A golden medallion found in the Kuban region shows almost exactly the same image.81 The medallion is now in the collection of Count D.I. Tolstoy, to whose generosity I am indebted for permission to republish this curious find [Pl. II.3]. The goddess is seated on a throne, the front legs of which are shaped in the form of two Erotes, one raising his right hand, the other his left. In her right hand is what may be a patera, in her left a globe. Her headdress is not clearly recognisable: it may be of the very same type as that on the head of the goddess from the gold plaque found in the Karagodeushkh kurgan. But I do not understand the significance of the raised rectangular panel over the transverse crossbeam at the back of the chair.

These variations are extremely instructive. To judge from the presence of Erotes, one cannot doubt that we have before us a typical representation of the chief goddess of Bosporus, Aphrodite Urania. It is not surprising that this variation holds sway virtually unchallenged over all coins in the 3rd century AD, especially during its second half.82 The goddess is portrayed as a genuinely royal deity, with a royal sceptre and a sphere. The sphere and sceptre are decorated above and below, and she is proffering the sceptre to a king. She participates in mystic communion, like the goddess in the Kul-Oba plaque, and belongs therefore to a mystery cult. She is evidently sharing the sacrament of power between herself and the king. Epigraphic details concur with this interpretation of the goddess of the Bosporan kingdom. We recall that, besides the dedication of Aphrodite Urania in the epoch of the Spartocids in Panticapaeum and Phanagoria, we encounter dedications of her even in Roman times.83 But it is even more significant that in AD 105 (if Dubois de Montpéureux copied the date correctly from the inscription) Sauromates I [29] restored the damaged or deteriorating sanctuary of Aphrodite in Phanagoria, which possibly signifies one of the first incidents in the rebirth of the cult.84 Thus under Rhoemetalces in AD 151 we have the following curious and, unfortunately, little-used inscription:

81 See Tolstoy and Kondakov II, 45, fig. 32.
82 It is curious to note that in the Panticapaean tombs, especially in those tombs from the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, a bust of Aphrodite with one or two Erotes is frequently depicted on ordinary sheet-gold bridle plaques, many of which had been struck from the same die (V.V. Shkorpil, IAK 40, 88, fig. 30, with further references. For the same type in Chersonesus, see OAK 1896, 76, fig. 323, in steppe burials OAK 1895, 62, fig. 141). For the same subject appearing on medallions, possibly from spears, see ABC pl. 24. 12 (cf. OAK 1872, xvi; IAK 47, 22, fig. 13; with S. Reinach’s commentary on the plate in ABC just mentioned).
83 For such a dedication in Kerch see IOSPE II, 28 [= CIRB 35].
84 IOSPE II, 352. If Dubois de Montpéreux’s date is incorrect, then the dedicant is more likely to have been Sauromates II [= CIRB 1045].
From this inscription we can conclude not only that Aphrodite’s temple enjoyed the king’s special regard and particular attention from the aristocracy, but also that, from an economic perspective, it was organised precisely like the large temples of the ancient Persians in Asia Minor, with their own landholdings and serfs.

Towards what conclusions are we led by the research discussed above? We must conclude that the state, in regulating itself, once again underwent from the 2nd century AD onwards strong Iranian influence, simultaneous with its attainment of relative independence and self-sufficiency. This ‘Iranisation’ affected both religion and royal power. Whereas the Bosporan king continued to be represented as a vassal of Rome on gold coins, on the smaller-denomination coins used by his own subjects he appears in the aspect of a king ruling by the divine grace, having received the signs of his authority from a god.

It is not accidental that, at the very same time, the identical process occurs in Sasanian Persia too, and that the art employed for its immortalisation assumes the same forms as in Bosporus. However, this historical development went further in Bosporus. Together with Aphrodite Urania, the male supreme god once again becomes increasingly prominent, with a new aspect which blends...

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85 IOSPE II, 353 [= CIRB 976].
86 Ἡ θεῖα is evidently Aphrodite: that is, the goddess of Phanagoria κατ᾽ ἑξορία. There is no evidence of temples to other goddesses in Phanagoria, and it is unlikely that we can ascribe the high degree of orientalisation of an entire layer of religious life expressed in this inscription to any other goddess. The appearance of a particular magistrate of this cult is entirely in keeping with the Iranian monarchy: ἡ ἐπὶ τῶν ἱερῶν — i.e. the heir, as evidenced in Pontus and Cappadocia, of the high priest of the main temple, and the second highest individual after the king (see M. Rostowzew, Studien zur Geschichte des römischen Kolonates [Leipzig/Berlin 1910], 270 ff., cf. RE s.v. ‘Hierodouloi’ VIII, 1459 ff. [Hepding]). V.V. Latyshev was the first to give the correct interpretation of this inscription, which had been rendered unintelligible by the stone cutter’s grammatical errors and the unlikely reading of Σωλ instead of σοις in the original publication.
87 In the inscription of Tiberius Iulius Tiranus, IOSPE II, 29 (AD 275–288) [= CIRB 36], the supreme gods of Bosporus appear in the guise of divine vapour Ζεὺς σωτήρ καὶ Ἡρα. The epithet θεῖος ἐπουράνιος shows that we are not dealing with the Greek Hera and Zeus. Their significance as the principal gods of the kingdom is emphasised by the dedication to them of the entire court, organised in a special sacral college under the name ἄριστοι κυρίαται. However, in this inscription we can already see how the supreme masculine god, θεῖος υἱόστος, again comes to the forefront as in the dedications from Tanais of the same period. It is characteristic that also in the Tanais dedications there appeared the triad of Irano-Semitic gods already familiar to us: Zeus (Ormuzd), Ares (Mithras), and Aphrodite (Anahita-Astarte); see IOSPE II, 423 (AD 193) [= CIRB 1061].
ancient Iranian and Semitic features with the Phrygian Sabazius from Asia Minor, the latter combining a number of elements of the one supreme god – the Jewish Sabaoth.88

III. The Mounted Mithras and the Monuments of his Cult
The monuments from South Russia of the Early Hellenistic period discussed above, depicting a mounted god opposite a mounted king standing upon defeated foes, can only become clear to us through comparison with the considerably later monuments of the Sasanian period – monuments which, being products of the national renewal of Persia, harked back to the ancient tradition of the local population. In Bosporus we also found a reflection of this renewal in a somewhat earlier period in the Sarmatianised and Iranised kingdom of the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. The religious and artistic tradition which inspired this renewal was doubtlessly preserved within Persia itself as it was in countries culturally independent of her. To be sure, the Sasanian renaissance with which we are dealing was a manifestation rather than the origin of this ancient tradition, enriching it with new elements from the creative arts. The conclusions we have reached are important from the point of view of religious history, not only for the light they shed on the development of the concept of royal power by the grace of god: for at the same time they give us an interesting insight into the contemporaneous depiction of the mounted supreme god of Persia – Ahura Mazda or Mithras – in his typical representation as a vanquishing deity together with slain or [31] overthrown foes, trampled by his horse. This clear symbol of Iranian dualism was not only adopted within Iran, including Parthia and the Iranised nations, but tenaciously survived in them until recent times, almost to the present day.

This interesting fact calls into question how and when the conception of Ahura Mazda or Mithras as mounted gods came into being, and whether there is any evidence for this conception outside the Bosporan kingdom. I find that the point of departure for this difficult and complicated research is another late Sasanian monument – a carved chalcedony seal of rather crude craftsmanship. Judging from my acquaintance with two variants of the same image on seals of this type, I find it probable that seals bearing similar designs circulated widely in Sasanian Persia and expressed contemporary religious conceptions. One of these seals is in the possession of the Academician N.P. Kondakov (purchased by him in South

88 It is curious that Aphrodite Urania is honoured in the same places where the cult of θεός ψυστος is encountered; see G.M. Hirst, ‘The cults of Olbia: part II’. JHS 23 (1903), 27; Jessen, RE I, 2671 f.; F. Poland, Geschichte des griechischen Vereinswesens (Leipzig 1909), 191. This θεός ψυστος tends to merge with Mithras; see the inscription in Cumont, Textes et monuments II, 92.
Russia), while another can be found in the Imperial Hermitage (acquired by purchase). The first of these seals is the larger (0.024–0.0225 m) and gives a more detailed representation [Pl. I.3]. The entire field of the seal is covered by a depiction of two riders standing opposite each other. The riders are mounted on large, heavy horses: the one to the right is raising its right front leg, the one to the left its left front leg. The only detail one is able to make out in these crudely composed figures of riders is the brow area between the ears of the horses. The hands of the figures are not shown. Stars and half-moons are depicted between the horses, and beneath them lies the prone figure of an injured enemy who appears to be wearing a long vestment of some kind. On the upper edge of the stone is an inscription – *apes*tan (hope), according to the interpretation of Academician K.G. Zaleman. The stone in the Imperial Hermitage (0.020–0.019 m) has the same inscription and the same representation. The gestures of the riders’ hands are visible: each rider has a hand raised (one the left hand, the other the right) in a gesture denoting prayer. The attributes of stars and the defeated enemy are absent. The scheme underlying both these examples is very familiar to us. The difference to the monumental reliefs lies only in our inability to determine which of the figures in the seal stones represents the king. Before us is beyond doubt a divine pair, the doubling of one and the same [32] divinity. This is confirmed by the inscription, which represents, according to Academician Zaleman, an abbreviation of the standard formula ‘Hope in God’.

It is therefore clear that in Sasanian Persia the group which interests us represents not always a god and a king; instead, it is possible that the basic form was that of the two heraldic figures, a form typical of Eastern art, where it could depict the same god or two closely associated gods. The character of the gods is clearly indicated by the presence of stars and half-moons. Thus, the rider god of light undoubtedly had firmly caught on in Persia and had put down deep roots. It would seem strange if this particular iconographical variant of the god, which was almost certainly – as far as we can judge from the Karagodeuashkh rhyton – of Greek rather than local origin, had not left traces beyond Persia and Bosporus, at a time when Iranian religious concepts were so widely distributed throughout the Roman empire, chiefly in the form of the cult of Mithras Tauroctonos. Although Cumont denies the existence of widely distributed depictions of Mithras as a rider god in his wonderful comparative studies and researches on monuments pertaining

89 Stones of our type are not mentioned in the excellent work by P. Horn and G. Steindorff, *Sas- sanidische Siegelsteine. Staatliche Museen Berlin, Mitteilungen aus den orientalischen Sammlungen* 4 (Berlin 1891). Evidently, no stones of this kind were in the Berlin collection in 1891.

90 On this legend, typical in Sasanian carved stones, see Horn and Steindorff, *op. cit.*, 37, no. 39.
to the Mithras cult, it seems to me that he is mistaken. I believe that, while the representation of Mithras on horseback was not as popular as the widespread Anatolian-derived representation of Mithras slaying a bull, it was still not unusual. Above all, I see no reason to doubt that the cult statue of the sanctuary of Mithras in Trapezus was not as usual a relief of Mithras Tauroctonos, but a representation of Mithras riding a horse. Since the publication of the Papadopoulos-Kerameus texts we have known that the Mithras cult was firmly rooted in Trapezus and remained so until a late period. It is impossible to doubt any longer that the figure of a mounted god appearing on the coins of Trapezus from the rule of the emperor Trajan onwards, with a Phrygian cap, Persian clothes and his head close to the horse’s head, represents any other god than Mithras. Accordingly, we can reject the figure’s identification with Men, as suggested by Roscher, or with a synthesis of Men and Mithras, as hypothesised by Cumont. This much is clear from the fact alone that nothing on the coins refers to Men – the ubiquitous half-moon behind the shoulders of the god in one of the variations of his image is not found on any of the imperial coins of Trapezus. Furthermore, Men on horseback is by no means the most common image of this god: indeed, his ‘horsemanship’ is likewise a variation, as in depictions of other Anatolian, Syrian and Iranian gods of light (see below, p. 35). The supposition that this figure depicts Mithras is on the other hand supported by the presence of his usual attributes and accompanying figures. Thus, in the more detailed representation on the coins of Severus Alexander we find the same Mithras Tauroctonos entourage as on the votive reliefs – a tree and an altar, Cautopates, a raven flying above, and a snake below. A coin of Julia Domna attests to certain modifications, if I am

92 See A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, Fontes historiae imperii Trapezuntini (St Petersburg 1897), 8 f. and 63, cf. Cumont, Textes et monuments I, 362 f. and 213. On Mithras in Trapezus, see Cumont, Studia Pontica (Brussels 1906), 368; idem, Mysterien 221.
93 See Cumont, Textes et monuments II, 189, no. 3 bis; E. Babelon and T. Reinach, Recueil général des monnaies grecques d’Asie Mineure (Paris 1904), I, 1, 107 ff. (Trapezus). Further literature is cited by Cumont.
95 This is definitely confirmed through consultation of Babelon’s work. Nor did I find traces of the half-moon on any of the coins in the Trapezus collection of Prince Aleksandr Mikhailovich in the Imperial Hermitage.
96 Babelon and Reinach, op. cit., no. 39; for the raven see no. 34. The same composition can be found on a coin of Elagabalus; see ibid., no. 26.
correct in assuming that the figure behind the god is Nike with a crown.97 Another significant modification of this variety is the representation of the god beside a column, on which an eagle or a raven is perched and a star placed above.98 On several of the coins Mithras appears to hold some sort of attribute. I cannot judge whether Roscher and Smirnov are correct in identifying the attribute as a sphere [34].99 If our deductions are correct, then those rare depictions of Mithras on horseback, which we encounter among ordinary representations of Mithras Taurroctonos, are undoubtedly derived from these notions of Mithras as a rider god. We have one such representation of Mithras, mounted and firing a bow, on the relief from Osterburken.100 I have not the slightest doubt that Mithras also appears on another relief republished by Cumont.101 His attribute is very interesting too – a globe or sphere, an attribute which is not at all unique to Men. Indeed, I do not make out any signs characteristic of Men in either of these monuments.102 That the variant of the mounted god of light, with all its indications of Iranian-Anatolian origin, dates at least to Hellenistic times is documented by the monuments discussed in Chapter 1, where the clothing and figural type of the rider god is adapted to Irano-Scythian tastes, and by finds of a generally Asiatic character, which may date to the Hellenistic period. I must now begin to discuss a very interesting terracotta found in South Russia. It depicts a youth with a Phrygian cap, facing right and mounted on horseback. Before him is a leafless tree. The horse is of heavy and sturdy build, and adorned with phalerae. The youth is dressed in a generic eastern style – in leggings, a tunic and a cloak. In his extended right hand he holds a round metallic vessel of the same shape as the cult vessels which we also encountered on the gold plaque of the headdress from Karagodeuashkh.103 I do not doubt that the figure represents the Iranian-Anatolian god of the type that presently concerns us. The bronze rider statuettes with spheres in their hands from the Moscow Historical and the Ottoman Museums, published and skilfully analysed

97 Ibid., no. 19.
98 Ibid., no. 25 (Diadumenianus), no. 50 (Gordian), no. 56 (Philip Iunior).
99 See Y.I. Smirnov, ‘Dve bronzovye statuetki vsadnikov Istoricheskogo Muzeya v Moskve i Ottomanskogo Muzeya v Konstantinopole’. Arkheologicheskie izvestiya i zametki 4 (1895), 22. Babelon does not recognise globes on any of the coins he has published. In terms of composition and interpretation the coins of Trapezus closely resemble several carved stones where Mithras is also represented between a tree and an altar, with a radiate crown near his Phrygian cap; see A. Furtwängler, Königliche Museen zu Berlin. Beschreibung der geschnittenen Steine im Antiquarium (Berlin 1896), no. 2935 f. One of these carved stones originates from Tehran.
100 Cumont, Textes et monuments II, 350, no. 246, fig. 10, cf. I, 174.
101 Ibid., II, 424, no. 310, fig. 357.
102 Ibid., II, no. 304 and nn. on p. 424.
by Y.I. Smirnov, can also be included in the same group. Smirnov himself notes the impossibility of reconstructing the shoulders of these riders with the half-moon typical of Men, which as a matter of fact eliminates the probability of their classification as representations of the god Men. It is even less likely that they can be identified with the conventional barbarian in Anatolian dress hunting hares, a typical figure among the South Russian terracottas [35]. But we must not forget that even the representation of Mithras Tauroctonos in South Russian terracottas is unusual. The same type familiar from several statues of the Sidonian Mithras is variously reflected in our region, as Cumont pointed out, and I do not find definite reasons for recognising a synthesis of Mithras and Attis.

It is therefore certain that in those countries influenced by Iranian culture, Iranian religion and the living forms of Hellenistic art, Mithras found a representation suitable for his nature and for the way of life of the nations who worshipped him: that is, he was depicted mounted in a serene ritual pose. In several monuments the influence of Greek representations of the hunter god can also be seen, but this iconographical scheme failed to take root and remained isolated, for it was not characteristic of the god’s nature. Other gods of light from Asia Minor and Syria underwent the very same process of modification in Asia Minor. Men has already been discussed. More interesting in this respect is another god of Asia Minor and of northern Syria who, from the Late Hellenistic period onwards, was usually known in Asia as θεóς Σώζον. I am not going to digress into the research on this god’s cult and its various local manifestations in Asia Minor. However, for me it is important to stress the fact that he is closely related to the Syrian sun god, identified in Asia Minor with Helios and Apollo, and is similarly closely linked to Mithras, whose struggle with Helios and their eventual truce represented on Mithraic reliefs was in Asia Minor the very core of the mythology of Mithras. For me it is beyond question that this myth expresses the victorious struggle of Iranian religious elements with Semitic ones on the soil of Asia Minor, as seen, naturally, from the point of view of the adepts of the Iranian cult. It is interesting that this struggle led,

104 See for example ABC, pl. 64.2; cf. the bibliographical references in the re-edition ABC (1892), 113.
106 Ibid., 221.
107 In the near future, the literature on this god will be surveyed in the article on Σώζον in Roscher’s lexicon. For the moment, a good treatment of the literature and the relevant archaeological evidence can be found in the abovementioned article by Y.I. Smirnov in Arkheologicheskie izvestiya i zametki 4 (1895), 18 ff., with further literature cited in Drexler’s article on Men, in Roscher II, 2756 and in Eisele, ibid., III, 2, 262 f. (article on Sabazius).
108 See Cumont, Mysterien 116 and 120.
on the Anatolian side, to a doubling of the solar divinity, and also to his inclusion into a single triad with a female divinity representing the fertility of the earth – namely, with one of the hypostases of Anahita-Ishtar-Diana. I have in mind the interesting relief from Mossyna in Phrygia [36], where two solar gods with battle-axes and paterae stand on either side of a goddess, depicted in the style of Ephesian Aphrodite.\[109\] We must not forget that Ramsay himself, on the basis of unconfirmed data, drew attention to the strong connection between the mystical cults of Anatolia and especially of Phrygia with Mithraism.\[110\]

I note that even in the north of Syria the mounted Helios is typical, and that elements of Persian influence on this god have been observed quite recently. I have in mind a relief with a representation of a youthful god on horseback carrying a whip and a quiver, wearing Persian costume (without a Phrygian cap); the relief was dedicated to θεός Γεννέξ πατριώρω by an individual with a Persian name.\[111\]

In relation to this, a monument in the Berlin Antiquarium takes on a special meaning, even if its provenance is unfortunately unknown [Pl. VI.1].\[112\] In general, the god depicted does not differ in any significant point from the Σωζον familiar from Syria and Asia Minor: we recognise the same battle-axe and the same costume. But a set of attributes is new, including the defeated enemy lying prostrate under the hooves of the horse, the two cypress trees framing the background of the relief at the sides and the two snakes rising from the trees, which form a kind of arch over the central composition. The snakes, each holding a mask in its mouth, were correctly identified with the Mithraic Aeon by Hampel. Moreover, the solar

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\[112\] The piece was purchased in Rome and is now in the Berlin Antiquarium; see T. Antonescu, *Culăt cabirilor in Dacia, studiu arheologic, si mythologic asupra unor monumente antice* (Bucharest 1889), 4 ff.; J. Hampel, *Archaeologii értesítő* 23 (1903), 321 ff.; Reinach, *op. cit.*, II, 30, 3; E. Gerhard, *AZ* 12 (1854), 209 ff., pl. 65.3; Becker, *Neujahrsblatt des Vereins für Geschichte und Altertumskunde zu Frankfurt am Main* (1862), 23; F. Lenormant, ‘Sabazius’, *RA* 29 (1875), 50; Drexler in Roscher II, 2744; Eisele in *ibid.*, III, 2, 234 (under the entry Sabazius other remarks may be found).
element of the relief is underlined by the presence of a sun and a moon and two stars nearby in the corners of the field. The god’s consorts – to the left a bearded man with a torch or a rhyton in his raised right hand, and to the right a beardless man holding what must be a rhyton in his raised right hand – are dressed in the clothing of Cautes and Cautopates of the Mithraic reliefs. Below, apart from sacrificial animals (a bull and a ram), we also see the Mithraic raven, and in the upper left corner, above the bearded consort, we can make out the head of another ram. Altars are visible in the background and the right foreground. Finally, in the lower part of the image we have a lamp and a kantharos. But the most interesting point here is that the god is joined by a goddess, depicted in profile facing to the left, with her hands extended towards the rider. Below her in the lower border is an altar with a fish upon it. Without straying into a discussion of the instruments of the cult, which are more or less identical in all mystery religions, I would emphasise, alongside the elements of the Mithras cult already mentioned, the defeated enemy so familiar to us and yet so untypical for representations relating to the cults of Syria and Asia Minor, and the rhyta in the hands of the consorts, readily recognisable to us as symbols of communion. Both the goddess and the altar with the fish are therefore new features.

We encounter the majority of these novelties again in a series of reliefs in stone, bronze and lead, which to this day have not been satisfactorily explained. They lack only the attribute of the god in the Berlin relief, the battle-axe, the only item which connects him to the mounted god of Asia Minor and Syria, suggesting that the god on the Berlin relief had entered an unfamiliar entourage. On the other hand, his beard connects him to the iconography of Sabazius, and constitutes therefore another exception within the series of reliefs we are examining. The series of small relief tablets just mentioned is relatively coherent and probably belongs to roughly the same period. Unfortunately, due to the absence of any inscriptions they cannot be accurately dated. One can only establish that the reliefs become progressively cruder, deteriorating into mere suggestions of the design. The better reliefs, to judge by their style of representation, can hardly be earlier than the 2nd century AD. The area of distribution of these reliefs is comparatively limited, with most examples reported from Dacia and Pannonia, as well as Lower Moesia, fewer from Thrace and the other Danubian provinces. Only one has been found in Italy (in Terracina). The remaining areas of Europe have yet to yield any of those reliefs, and likewise none of them is known from the Southern and Eastern provinces.

113 Thus, the bull and the ram doubtlessly refer to the taurobolia and the criobolia as does the ram’s head: see below, [Rostovtzeff’s] p. 52. The kantharos and lamp are typical too.
114 See below, [Rostovtzeff’s] p. 59.
of Rome. For the most part, the reliefs are kept in the museums of Hungary and Bucharest, supplemented by individual examples in Sofia and Belgrade. They are made either from stone or lead, rarely clay, and the variation in medium is reflected in the rendering of the subjects. Two bronze tablets, currently in Bucharest, are markedly different from the others and correspond closely to the Berlin tablet. Near them we find a group of comparatively small stone reliefs, for the most part very crude, some in the shape of typical Thracian reliefs, others in the form of discs or ovals. The lead tablets in the shape of an aedicula and the other lead discs differ from the small stone reliefs in a whole series of points, both formal and compositional. To judge from their size and treatment, they were most probably amulets carried on the body or attached to some object, although their possible role as ordinary votives should not be overlooked, despite the total absence of dedicatory inscriptions. With these lead plaques we may associate in turn some cut seal stones, though very few in number. Overall, from all the different categories, Hampel estimates that the entire group of artefacts consist of about one hundred items, a number which is however constantly increasing; indeed, not a year passes without the appearance of new materials and new tablets being reported.

Only very recently has modern science begun to pay attention to these monuments. The Romanian scholar Antonescu was the first to compile a considerable quantity of the relevant material. He was followed by Novotnyi and Hampel, the latter of whom increased the number of examples significantly and classified them systematically for the first time. Several interesting specimens were published almost simultaneously by Hoffiler, Nowotny, Dobruski and Kazarow. Unfortunately, the majority of the works of these scholars, particularly those by Hampel, were not used by their peers in other countries, and the exciting material which they presented failed to enter general scholarly attention. One obstacle is that Hampel wrote all his work in Hungarian and only two publications (1903 and 1904) were subsequently summarised in German.

115 See T. Antonescu, *Cultul cabirilor in Dacia* (Bucharest 1889).
116 From Hampel’s publications I would stress the article in *Archeologiai értesítő* 23 (1903), 305–65 (for references to earlier literature, see ibid. and Antonescu’s work). A table of contents and remarks on this publication are given by J. Ziehen, AA 19 (1904), 11 ff.; J. Hampel, *Archeologiai értesítő* 25 (1905), 1–16, 116–24; ibid., (1911), 409–25; ibid., (1912), 330–52; also *Budapest régiségi* 8 (1904), 1–47; cf. Berliner philologische Wochenschrift (1904), 1229 f.
I have already noted that the two bronze tablets in the Bucharest Museum differ sharply in form, material and manner of representation from the variety usually found in Danubian countries. Both are very distinctive. The first example shows a figure resembling closely the type of Mithras on the coins from Trapezus – a rider, facing to the right, in customary dress with a Phrygian cap. In the right hand, extended upwards, he holds a rhyton or simpulum – in either case, the god is clearly performing a ritual gesture. Under the hooves of the horse a man lies with his head towards the right and facing down. Before the god and seen from the left, stands a veiled goddess holding a patera in her outstretched right hand. On either side of this central group stands a young man in Persian dress with a Phrygian cap, both similar in their poses and treatment to Cautes and Cautopates. In his lowered right hand the figure to the left holds what may be a lantern and in his right some sort of round object (a sphere?). Two snakes, symbols of the heavenly vault, are above the representation. Below and to the left of the snakes is a fish, to the right a caduceus. A ram’s head is visible below the horse, and further down are three cups and an amphora. A comparable relief of the same type can be found in the same museum. In this piece, however, the lower sections of the composition are not shown, including that of the defeated enemy. The rider holds in his raised right hand a large vessel, whereas his consort (only one is shown in this example, standing in the background in the Cautopates pose) holds a rhyton in his raised right hand. Significantly, a fish is placed directly above the woman’s head, while the head of the ram is between the rider and the consort.

No-one could deny how closely these reliefs resemble those in Berlin on the one hand, and the South Russian representations of the rider god on the other. The wounded enemy is characteristic, as he is indeed in the Karagodeuashkh rhyton and the Sasanian reliefs. All this suggests that our god is none other than the mounted Mithras. Rather more complicated is the interpretation of the group of numerous small, round or aedicula-shaped reliefs of stone or lead. The representations on these can usually be divided into three, and occasionally four, tiers. Moving away from the middle tier as the principal scene, always consisting of two mounted gods in heraldic pose and a goddess between them. Very rarely is the mounted god represented singly; the goddess is always beside him. As far as the composition of the reliefs is concerned they can be divided into three categories, corresponding to their separation into groups according to medium.

121 Antonescu, op. cit., pls. 1 and 2; Hampel, Archaeologiai értesítő 23 (1903), 315, 11.
122 Antonescu, op. cit., pl. 1; Hampel, Archaeologiai értesítő 23 (1903), 314, 10.
123 For the vessel shape, see O.M. Dalton, The Treasure of the Oxus (London 1905), 70, pl. 16.
from the relief discussed by Hampel,\textsuperscript{124} which forms the unifying core between the bronze reliefs mentioned above and our series, we can place in a single category:

1) The stone tablets with three ordinary tiers and a moderate quantity of additional representations. The representation of the upper register appears in examples of this category in a shortened form in comparison with those of the next. In the central register the goddess is shown sitting or standing before a table on which a fish is placed. She forms the central group which is accompanied by different gods from those in the next category. Finally, in the lower tier there is an original and quite varied choice of representations, for the most part little understood. To this category belong Hampel’s reliefs (1903), 328, 18; 325, 19; 326, 20; 327, 22; 328, 23; 331, 26; and 333, 30–39 inclusive.\textsuperscript{125} In the same category is Hampel’s relief (1905), 117, and several carved seal stones are clearly related, including Hampel (1903), 359, 64; 361, 66; and 362, 67.

2) To the second category belong the two lead tablets Hampel (1903), 340, 40 and 341, 41, forming a transition between the first group and the third. The second of these is closer to the first category, while the first is closer to the third.

3) Finally, the third category also consists, for the greater part, of lead tablets, of which some are disc- and others aedicula-shaped. The composition was created in first-category items; on artefacts from the second category the elements, which are strictly arranged in four tiers in the first series, are randomly distributed. Distinctive features of this third category are the arrangement of the whole tablet in four tiers and the treatment of each separate tier, including the central section. In this category can be placed Hampel’s reliefs (1903), 343, 43; 347, 46; 348, 51; 349, 52; 351, 55; (1912), 345, 78; (1906), 40; and the discs (1903), 354, 59; 355, 60; 356, 61. Several reliefs indicate contamination insofar as they combine [41] elements of the first and third groups (Hampel [1903], 358, 62; 359, 63; and [1912], 341, 75; [1905], 15). The Berlin carved stone ([1903], 361, 65) can also be added to this category.

I am inclined to follow Hampel in this classification, basing my judgment on the perusal of the objects illustrated in his works.

After these initial remarks I will proceed to the characterisation of individual subjects depicted on our tablets, concentrating primarily on the central group. However, I must caution that I am not able to give exhaustive analyses of all the monuments with all the variants we have discussed. For this it would be necessary to have access to casts and photographs of all known examples and, moreover, to

\textsuperscript{124} See Hampel, \textit{op. cit.}, 318, 13, \textit{cf.} 320, 14.

\textsuperscript{125} It is necessary to include in a completely separate category those reliefs singled out by Hampel in \textit{Archaeologiai értesítő} (1911), 417 ff.; \textit{cf. ibid.} (1903), 329, 24 and 330, 25.
inspect them all in their current locations – a task which I find myself unable to accomplish. Besides, the reproductions available in publication are mostly inadequate and likewise I have not been able to make full use of the descriptions in Hampel’s publications, as they were written in a language foreign to me. We remain hopeful that in the near future a complete collection of our reliefs will appear, accompanied by excellent photographic reproductions. In its absence, we must satisfy ourselves with discerning the chief outlines of what is clear and important about these objects.

The characteristic features of the two riders in the central group of all the tablets are as follows: they are always dressed in that semi-conventional Eastern costume, which was especially characteristic of Mithras. On their heads they wear the usual Phrygian cap. Rarely only one is shown in a cap (Hampel [1903], 343, 43; [1912], 345, 78); more commonly, both are bareheaded (Hampel [1903], nos. 40, 46, 51, 52, 62, 65; [1912], 334, 93). There is a very interesting carved seal stone published by Antonescu and Hampel in which the rider to the left has a nimbus of rays, while the rider to the right wears a radiate crown on his head. The majority of the riders are represented either in a pose of prayer (or performing some sacred act), or as victorious warriors. Representations of the god in battle are comparatively rare, and those pieces among the reliefs which differ from the others in a large number of details cannot be unreservedly included in our series. The characterisation of the riders as gods of victory is especially typical for the group of stone tablets associated, to a certain extent, with the bronze reliefs which we described above. A link between the two groups is indicated by Hampel’s relief (1903), 325, 19, showing two riders clearly distinguished by their attributes: the left holds a rhyton in his right hand, and a slain enemy lies beneath his mount’s hooves, while the right lacks these attributes. At the same time, the two riders are linked by the flags which they hold in their hands – vexilla of a distinctive design, not at all of the conventional Roman type and not that which was characteristic for reliefs of our class, showing images of dragons. But the right-hand rider is singled out again by the presence of Nike behind him, depicted in the act of crowning him, whereas the left-hand rider is accompanied by a youth in a Phrygian cap, resembling the typical consort known from the bronze tablets of our type. Most of the stone tablets are more distant from the bronze tablets and from our South Russian prototypes. On the stone tablets, the focus is on the gods’ victorious nature rather than the scenes’ ritual character. This peculiarity is also shared by two seal stones: one from the

127 The form of these flags is unusual; they strongly resemble bunchuks and probably have parallel forms in the east.
128 See Hampel’s comparison of relevant pieces in Archaeologiai értesítő (1912), 338 ff.
Berlin Museum and one in an English private collection. Sometimes one rider is depicted in greater detail – either the rider holding the flag or the one crowned by Nike (Hampel [1903], 341, 41; cf. [1912], 339 and possibly [1912], 431, 75). In some examples the warlike character of the gods is emphasised by spears held in their hands instead of the flags (Hampel [1912], 333, 90), and occasionally by the appearance of Nike behind the riders, crowning them (Hampel [1912], 334, 93; and our Pl. VII.3).

The attributes discussed must undoubtedly characterise the riders as gods of victory, gods of the invincible, gods of victorious war. I very much doubt that it is possible to use the forms of the flags as a basis to search, as Hampel does, for indications of the monument’s dates and of Trajan’s victory over the Dacians. It is a priori possible that the victorious soldiers ascribed their triumph to their gods and depicted them with the attributes of victory but, first of all, the inconsistency in the design of the flags seems strange and, secondly, the flags are in no way characterised as booty but rather as an attribute original to the god and characteristic of him. One must not forget that the form of the flags is Iranian, and not particularly Dacian. It would have been natural to bring Iranian flags to the Iranian god of victory. The lead tablets in the form of an aedicula give a completely different rendering of the mounted gods. In the lead tablets the riders are performing gestures of prayer (Hampel [1903], 343, 43; 347, 46; 348, 51; 349, 52; 355, 60; 356, 61), the same gesture that is so characteristic of the riders from South Russian finds. The gesture is not directed towards the goddess standing between the riders, making her appear in an ancillary position in relation to the two riders, but rather towards the supreme god opposite, whose four horses occupy almost the entire field in the upper tier of the tablets [Pl. VI.2].

The most distinctive characteristic of our riders, which places them in a unique category and precludes any possible confusion with analogous monuments, is common to all series – the depiction of a defeated enemy under the horses of the riders. The different categories of reliefs give this detail in varying treatments. The series of stone reliefs and the two associated lead reliefs, which seem to reflect a transitory stage between the series in stone and lead, may reserve

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129 Hampel, Archaeologiai értesítő (1903), 359, no. 64 and 361, no. 65.
130 See also Kazarow, ARW 15 (1912), I, 2.
131 See also ibid., I, 1; cf. the cut stone in Hampel (1903), 359, 64.
132 It is with great reluctance that I am forced to express my doubts about Hampel’s explanation, given that he provides an excellent chronological framework for the whole of the first group of tablets, entirely compatible with our stylistic analysis. We will see below that, using another means of interpretation, we must date the group under consideration to approximately the same period.
133 The link between these and the other tablets are the two lead reliefs mentioned above from Virunum and Bucharest, published in Hampel, Archaeologiai értesítő (1903), 340, 40 and 341, 41.
this attribute for just one rider (Hampel [1903], 325, 19; 331, 26; 340, 40; 341, 41; 354, 59; see our Pl. VII.5). More often, however, the defeated enemies lie in both categories beneath the hooves of the horses of both riders [Pls. VI.2 and VII.1–4]. A distinctive peculiarity unique to the lead tablets is the enormous fish lying under the hooves of the horse of one of the riders, while a man lies under the other [Pl. VI.2]. This also appears on those reliefs of our third category in which both riders make a gesture of prayer (see Hampel [1903], 343, 43; 347, 46; 348, 51; 349, 52; [1912], 345, 78). It is undeniable that in these reliefs, as in the monuments from South Russia and Sasanian Persia, the defeated man is a symbol, precisely like the fish. Below I will attempt to explain this peculiarity of our artefacts [44].

The female divinity is a constant figure in the central group, appearing seated or standing in varied poses and in different positions relative to the riders on either side of her. In view of the combination of this goddess in the series of stone reliefs (the first in our classification) with a dining table bearing a fish [Pl. VII.3 and 5], and the constant appearance in the lead series of adepts of our fish cult at this mystical trapeza, and finally the fish that characterises the goddess on the Budapest bronzes, it seems highly probable to me that the goddess depicted is the great Anatolian and Semitic goddess in whose cult the fish played a most important role, the same goddess who was in Asia Minor naturally combined with the Iranian water goddess, Anahita.134 However, I do not wish to conceal that even though on the

134 See Cumont, Mysterien 100 f. Dölger was the first to link our goddess with the cult of Atargatis and Derketo, comparing the appropriate material in considerable depth; see F.J. Dölger, Ἰχθύς: Das Fischsymbol in frühchristlicher Zeit (Rome 1910) (originally published in Römische Quartalschrift 1910), especially chapter 1, para. 12, 143 ff. and chapter 3: ‘Der Fisch in den semitischen Religionen des Morgenlandes’. 425 f. For further literature, see I. Scheftelowitz, ‘Das Fisch-Symbol im Judentum und Christentum’. ARW 14 (1911), 342 and J. Hampel, Archaeologai érestîô (1912), 348 ff. I greatly regret that I do not understand Hampel’s critique of Dölger’s theory. To the material compiled by Dölger I add only the remark that the fish is by no means only characteristic of Semitic goddesses: it is no less typical for Anatolian and probably pre-Semitic (including Hittite) goddesses of the earth and of fertility. This is witnessed by the pre-Semitic megalithic fishes of Armenia, which will be published by Y.I. Smirnov and N.Y. Marr, and by the association of fishes with the πῶς ἡ ῥᾶ on several of her representations from Boeotia and Sparta (see G. Radet, Cybélé: étude sur les transformations plastiques d’un type divin [Paris 1909], 37, fig. 50; M.S. Thompson, ‘The Asiatic or winged Artemis’. JHS 29 [1909], 293, fig. 3; G. Perrot and C. Chipiez, Histoire de l’art dans l’antiquité [Paris 1882–1914], VII, 166, 48). The combination with water birds is also a characteristic and constant trait of this same goddess, which perhaps explains the recurring appearance of water birds and other kinds of animals on the spherical ritual vessels of silver discussed earlier on. Such vessels were closely associated with Aphrodite Urania and are often found in the royal tombs of our southern provinces; see ABC pl. 35 (on one of these vessels is a characteristic combination of fish and geese) and the finds made by N.I. Veselovskii in the Chmyrevoi mound; see Veselovskii, ‘Chmyrey kurga’. Gernes 7 (1910), 302 ff. cf. V.V. Sakhaney, IAK 45, 111 ff. The same ornament can be seen on the rhyton published above [Pl. I.1].
stone reliefs (first category) the combination of the goddess with the fish is typical, on the lead reliefs (third category) she appears in the form of a goddess, holding in both hands the stem of her rhyton or a special kind of veil [Pl. VI.2]. Needless to say, for the goddess of fertility – the goddess of the creation of the seasons – such attributes are entirely appropriate. Furthermore, on several reliefs, especially the round pieces of lead, the goddess is closely linked to the horses of the riders and in this [45] aspect resembles the Celtic Epos.\footnote{The goddess appears closely associated with the horses on the bronze tablets from the museums of Budapest and Berlin, as well as on the reliefs in Hampel (1903), 341, 41; 352, 56; cf. the Berlin carved stone \textit{ibid.} 361, 65 as well as other stones, especially the relief from Carnuntum, \textit{ibid.}, 327, 22. See our Pl. VII.1 and 2.}

It is quite probable, however, that this similarity to Epos is purely superficial. In any case, I do not consider it accidental that in the Early Hellenistic period the fish was already playing a notable role in those costumes for horses which were such a characteristic feature of the so-called Scythian burials of South Russia. Golden fish in a naturalistic and later increasingly stylised rendering typically serve as brow-bands in the bridle. Their distinctive naturalism is accurate to such a degree that in several cases one can determine even the species of the fish (usually a type of sturgeon). At the present time the following exemplars of this costume are known to us: two fishes (a pair?) found in 1912 by Prof. N.I. Veselovskii in the Solokha burial mound near the village of Bol’shaya Znamenka (Tauride region, Melitopol uezd);\footnote{Unpublished. The circumstances of their discovery leave no doubt as to their significance and their positioning on the horse’s face. N.I. Veselovskii will publish the find in the very near future.} the fish of the famous Vettersfelde hoard, published by Furtwängler;\footnote{A. Furtwängler, \textit{Der Goldfund von Vettersfelde. 43. Programm zum Winckelmannsfeste} (Berlin 1883), 3 ff.; \textit{idem, Kleine Schriften} (Munich 1912), I, 469 ff., especially 484 and 492 f.} the fish kept in the Imperial Hermitage among a number of so-called Siberian items;\footnote{Unpublished to this day, although its significance has been rightly stressed by the late G.E. Kizeritskii in his manuscript catalogue of the Nikopol Hall in the Hermitage.} and, finally, the fish found in a burial mound near the village of Volkovets (on the River Sula, Poltava province), which undoubtedly served as a frontlet, not as an adornment to a quiver, as stated in the first publication.\footnote{B.I. and V.I. Khanenko (eds.), \textit{Drevnosti Pridneprov’ya Chernogo Morya i poberezhbiya} (Kiev 1899), II, pl. 23, no. 404 and p. 6 (the excavation of Mazaraki, collection Khanenko). The find is dated by the presence of a black slip kylix among the items (\textit{ibid.}, pl. 34, no. 797, cf. pl. 35, no. 807), to a time no earlier than the middle of the 3rd century BC. Compare the golden fish from the area near Smela, in Count A.A. Bobrinskii, \textit{Kurgany i sluchainye arkeologicheskie nakhodki bliz mestechka Smely} (St Petersburg 1901), III, 86, fig. 25.} Stylised fish were found in the famous Il’inetskii burial mound,\footnote{See B.V. Farmakovski, \textit{Sbornik staei v chesti gr. A. A. Bobrinskogo} (St Petersburg 1911), 54, pl. 3.} and in the burial mound of Volkovets village, as mentioned above. Significantly, a similar type of fish was found
among the artefacts in the Amu-Darya horde. On the other hand, in other horse costumes the ear coverings, which are usually wing-shaped, are made in the form of fish [46]. Examples of this include the coverings from the Tsymbalka tomb, the ear coverings from Olbia (unpublished), and others. It is typical that the frontlet, forming part of the bridle from the Tsymbalka tomb (with fish-shaped ear coverings) is adorned with a representation of a πότνια θηρόν. All these occurrences can be explained by the fact that the πότνια θηρόν was in Greece, and even more so in the semi-Iranian and pre-Semitic East, the protective goddess of horses. In this respect, several representations of Artemis Orthia in Sparta are particularly revealing. Taking into consideration the spread of the cult of Anahita-Ishtar throughout South Russia, as established above, I would imagine that she serves here as the protective goddess of horses, functionally equivalent to Poseidon in Greece.

Near the central triad in the group of lead plaques in the shape of an aedicula (third category, first group) there appear two accompanying divinities: a female figure (usually placed to the right), lifting her right hand to her face, and a male figure (usually to the left) in full Greek armour – in a helmet and mailcoat, with a shield and a spear [Pl. VI.2]. The male figure appears only on the tablets from our series, while the female figure also appears on the tablets in Hampel (1903), 318, 13 and in the upper tier of several round examples of lead (see Hampel [1903], 354, 59 and 355, 60; cf. 356, 61). The association of the female and male figures gives us the key to their interpretation. The Greek costume clearly shows that we are dealing not with the figure of a Roman warrior, but with a divinity such as Ares-Mars, who is habitually represented in this form. If this is the case, then the female divinity must surely be Nemesis, an identification further corroborated by the characteristic gesture of her right hand. Ares and Nemesis were incidentally the preferred protective gods of the soldiers in the Danube army. This explanation for the female figure in the second tier seems to me considerably more satisfactory than Ziehen’s proposal for the explanation of the warlike figure as a miles (a degree of initiation in the Mithras cult) and of the female figure as Σερί, the embodiment of the secrets of mystical learning. It must be noted that we do not know how Σερί was represented in ancient art, whereas representations [47] of Nemesis are familiar from numerous instances.

141 See Tolstoy and Kondakov III, 25, fig. 20; cf. O.M. Dalton, The Treasure of the Oxus (London 1905), pl. 6.16.
143 See Thompson, op. cit., 290 f.
144 We must note that precisely the representational realism of the fish suggests that its function is not ornamental but rather cultic-apotropaic or defensive. For those aware of how in the east and in the Roman south amulets and ritual symbols were carefully arranged on horses and draught animals, my explanation will appear not only probable, but the only one admissible.
145 See Ziehen, AA (1904), 14 and 15; cf. A. Dieterich, Eine Mithrasliturgie (Leipzig 1903), 42 f.
Our interpretation is also confirmed by the fact that the warlike figure is represented in the same iconographical form in which Mars was usually depicted. Finally, both figures are far from being subordinated to the main ones – in some examples the representation of Nemesis is even transferred into the upper tier.146

If our explanation is correct, then these figures give us a good indication of the origins of our tablets: they were without doubt created for the soldiers of the Danube army and express their religious views. In all of our reliefs the upper tier has been treated almost identically (with a few exceptions, where it has been omitted), sometimes a little more detailed, sometimes simplified. The idea of the representations is the same as on those reliefs representing Mithras Tauroctonos – the depiction of the upper spheres of the world. As in the reliefs of Mithras Tauroctonos, busts of the Sun and the Moon and two stars are frequently included. On many reliefs, the heavens are symbolised by two snakes.

A distinctive peculiarity of the most interesting series among our tablets in relation to both our material and the Mithras Tauroctonos reliefs – the lead tablets in the form of an aedicula – is the dominant role of the crowned supreme god on the quadriga, holding a sphere in his left hand and performing the commanding gesture of the ruler of the universe with his left. The gestures of prayer from the riders in the middle tier are apparently directed towards this dominating figure, which takes up the entire field of the upper tier. The large tablet from Divoš in the Zagreb Museum, published by Hoffiler, shows busts of Hesperos and the Moon next to the figure [Pl. VI.2].

As on the reliefs of Sabazius,147 we are obviously dealing with the sun ruler, the supreme being originating from [48] the Iranian teachings on Ahura Mazda and the cosmic quadriga, and from Assyro-Babylonian ideas about the supreme god of the sun,148 as well as those teachings about solar pantheism which inspired the notion of an all-powerful and eternal god. It is significant that in our tablets this conception is sharply

146 On the cult of Nemesis in Pannonia and Dacia see Zingerle, Archäologisch-epigraphische Mitteilungen aus Österreich-Ungarn 20 (1897), 288 ff., see especially CIL III, 1126 and 4008. She appears together with Mars on the relief published in Bullettino della Commissione archeologica Comunale di Roma 3 (1875), 83 ff. and 4 (1876), 66 ff., pl. 6, 8; cf. Rossbach in Roscher, s.v. ‘Nemesis’, 160; G. Wissowa, Religion und Kultus der Römer, 2nd ed. (Munich 1912), 377 f. The cult of Nemesis was especially widespread in Dacia where we have a number of her sanctuaries, the largest being in Sarmingetusa (CIL III, 1438, 13777–13780), compare 825 ff. (sacrarium) and 1547 (Pons Augusti, templum); cf. 902, 1124 f., 1304, 1358, 1547, 8028. In Pannonia there is evidence of two large sanctuaries: one in Aquincum (CIL III, 3484, 10539–10542), and the other in Carnuntum (CIL III, 11121, 11154, 14071–14076, 14357, cf. 14358; 14072 is dedicated to Mithras); cf. other dedications in Pannonia, CIL III 4161, 10911, 10939. For Moesia (the camp of Viminacium), see CIL III, 8107–8108. Suggestively, nearly all the named locations were army barracks.

147 See Chr. Blinkenberg, ‘Darstellungen des Sabazius und Denkmäler seines Kultus’. In Archäologische Studien (Copenhagen 1904), 97, fig. 40 and pl. 2; Eisel in Roscher, s.v. ‘Sabazius’.

emphasised, much more so than in the reliefs of Mithras Tauroctonos or on the majority of artefacts with which we are presently occupied.

The lower tiers take us into a completely different sphere of belief. Here we are plunged into the repertoire of scenes from the mystery cult associated with the gods of the two upper tiers. Let us pause initially on the scenes in the lower tier of the aedicula-shaped lead tablets, directly below the main divinities, where three separate, but evidently inter-related, scenes are regularly repeated. The centre is always occupied by the scene of a mystical triad of three banqueters, among which the middle figure is distinguished by a cup in his hands (on the tablets from Divoš this figure has placed his left hand upon his head, see Pl. VI.2). A round table with a fish on a plate on it is placed in front of the couch on which the banqueters are seated. Closely related to this scene is a group of two or three nude male figures approaching the table hand in hand, with the first figure extending his right hand to those seated at the table. To the left of the table is a scene showing a tree with a carcass of a ram suspended from it, which is being gutted by a man standing under the tree. In several representations this butcher is dressed in a tunic; in others he appears to be naked or perhaps clothed in an exomis. Near him, dressed in a belted tunic and possibly leggings and boots, is a man who has placed the ram’s head on his own. This last figure is usually represented in greater detail than the man butchering the ram.

The interpretation of the principal scene in the centre leaves little room for doubt. It is the same scene of mystical communion which we discussed earlier on and which is represented not only on the reliefs from Konitsa but also on an entire series of typical Mithraic reliefs, where Mithras administers the sacrament to conquered Helios (see below, [Rostovtzeff’s] p. 50). We have the same scene of communion involving the consumption of fish and beverages on the two reliefs from Bucharest, where the ritual is conveyed through the cup [49] or rhyton in the hand of the rider god, the rhyton held by the god’s consort, and the fish on the ground. On the relief with two consorts the same act of receiving communion is symbolised by three cups next to an amphora.149 We encounter the same arrangement on the Berlin tablets, where the consorts of the god each have a rhyton in their hands, with a table bearing fish below and a krater nearby. The same conception also

149 On this communion, see Cumont, Textes et monuments 174 ff., figs. 10 and 320; idem, Cumont, Mysterien 146, pl. 3.7; cf. idem, ‘Notice sur deux bas-reliefs mithraiques’. RA 40 (1902), 13, which shows the same scene on a fragment of a Mithraic relief, of which Cumont says: ‘Nous avons ici sans doute une combinaison de deux sujets différents, bien qu’étroitement unis: le festin auquel, suivant la légende, Mithra avait convié le Soleil à la fin de sa mission terrestre, et la communion liturgique que des fidèles célébraient en mémoire de ce banquet divin.’ In this relief, therefore, we have a transitional stage between the prototype of Mithraic communion and the actual act performed in his cult; cf. Cumont, Die orientalischen Religionen 51 and 258, n. 33.
dominates the relief from Apulum, where we can recognise a fish in the lower tier, with a krater nearby with two rhyta inside it (see Hampel [1902], 318, 13). Finally, we can make out these iconographical components yet again in the lower tier of the tablets from Bucharest and Virunum. Beneath the main scene of the former piece (Hampel [1903], 341, 41) are three goblets to the left, a tripod and possibly a fish in the middle, and one more vessel, three pretzel-shaped loaves of bread and what seems to be a dish to the right. On the latter is a simplified version of the scenes on the lower tiers of the aedicula-shaped tablets (see Hampel [1902], 340, 40), with a butchered ram on the left side, a man with a ram’s head to the right, a table with three loaves and a fish (?) in the middle, and another fish to the right of the table (I will discuss the remaining figures of this scene further below). The scene with the dining table includes many details which recall the Berlin seal stone. The scene on our reliefs differs from the pure Mithraic communion only in the inclusion of fish on the table, in addition to the bread and the drink. On the basis of our earlier discussion of the goddess, we can assume that our reliefs with the fish bear some relation to her cult.

Closely related to the scene of communion is, as stated, the scene of the three nude men approaching the table, holding each other by the hand. The first of these appears to wish to take part in the meal or in whatever sacred ritual the dining table symbolises. Apart from the aedicula-shaped lead tablets, only the relief from Virunum, which we have just discussed, has anything in common with our scene. In the lower tier of this piece a nude youth approaches a table with bread and fish(?), raising his right hand to his mouth. Although the representation of the youth has not been preserved in its entirety, I would hesitate to interpret him as a depiction of Nemesis (see above, [Rostovtzeff’s] p.46), as to me it appears almost unquestionable that the scene shows the figure of a naked youth, not a clothed woman.

When interpreting our scene we must fix our attention on the following points: 1) the link between the young men and the dining table; 2) the close ‘fraternal’ connection between them; 3) their nudity; 4) the gesture made by the youth on the tablet from Virunum.

150 The same type of vessel is known from the Mithraeum at Sarmizegetusa; see Cumont, Textes et monuments II, 282, fig. 128.

151 Very similar loaves of bread can be seen on a lead disc in the Belgrade Museum, published in Hampel (1905), 15, 75; (1912), 341. There are also three loaves on the tablet in Hampel (1903), 352, 56; on a disc ibid., 354, 59, and on the disc from Mitrovitsa in the Zagreb Museum (V. Hoffiler, Vjesnik hrvatskoga arheoloskoga društva 8 [1905], fig. 1); finally, three loaves of the same type as on the relief of Konitsa are depicted on a tablet in the Sofia Museum (Kazarow, ARW 15 [1912], pl. 1, fig. 8) where they are shown near a table on which a fish is lying (cf. Hampel [1912], 335, 95); see our Pl. VII. 1.

152 Cumont, Mysterien 146.
Let us concentrate initially on the first point. It seems entirely likely that in the scene with the nude youths we find an act of mystical ritual, as in the scene with the dining table. The hand gesture of the leading youth signifies the desire of the nude ‘brothers’ to join in the activities at the dining table: that is, the ritual performance underpinning this scene. But the decisive indicator is their nudity. J. Heckenbach has already noted that in the ancient mystery religions nudity was obligatory for initiation rituals, a point corroborated by the representations of initiation scenes on reliefs of Mithras Tauroctonos. However, Heckenbach is mistaken in thinking that this is simply a scene of initiation. Cumont, on the other hand, is undoubtedly correct in suggesting that the kneeling figure is Helios, even though he errs in his discussion of the investiture of Helios as Mithras. The subject of the image can only be the initiation or even the ‘baptism’ of Helios, as is indicated by the following: on an entire range of reliefs Helios is undeniably naked, like a mystes consecrated to the mysteries. Moreover, it is entirely clear, that wherever the object in Mithras’ hand can be made out, it turns out to be a rhyton. Thus, to judge from the drawing published by Cumont, Helios is naked on the Esquiline relief, while Mithras is placing his left hand on his head, holding a rhyton in his other. On the relief from Bessarabia in Thrace, a nude Helios sits or kneels before Mithras, who has placed his left hand on Helios’ shoulder and holds a rhyton above the solar god’s head with his right hand. The same subject is found on reliefs from Koniovo in Lower Moesia, and Orshova, Romula and Sarmizegetusa in Dacia. The scene on another relief from Dacia is especially clear, showing Helios in his characteristic pose and Mithras holding the rhyton above Helios’ head – the same rhyton which he raises in the scene set at the dining table of the initiates. It is therefore evident that our scene had become canonical in Dacia and is always closely linked to the scene with the dining table. The same seems to apply to Pannonian examples, to judge from the evidence currently available. On the relief from Virunum (now in Klagenfurt) we have the same scene, but Helios is wearing a cloak (though with

153 See J. Heckenbach, De nuditate sacra sacrisque vinculis. Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten 9.3 (1911), 12 (on mysteries in general) and 13 (on the mysteries of Mithras in particular).
154 Cumont, Textes et monuments I, 174 f. and idem, Mysterien 120, 1.
155 Cumont, Textes et monuments II, 201, fig. 26.
156 Ibid., 275, 134, fig. 119 (Koniovo: naked Helios kneeling), 278, 136 (Orsova, same subject as on the relief from Bessarabia), 278, 137, fig. 122 (from Romula), 294, 166, fig. 149, cf. 291, fig. 146 (from Sarmizegetusa).
157 Ibid., 296, no. 169, fig. 152; cf. 297, fig. 153; 298, fig. 154; 300, fig. 156; 304, fig. 161; 305, fig. 163; 312, fig. 170; 313, fig. 171; 315, fig. 175; 317, from Brucla, provides another particularly clear example.
158 Ibid., 322, fig. 188 and 326, fig. 193.
his body exposed) and has a nimbus above his head.\footnote{Ibid., 336, fig. 213, cf. idem, Mysterien 120, pl. 2.6.} In Germany we can observe new elements. On the well-known relief from Osterburken Helios’ pose is the same: he bows before Mithras in a kneeling position, with his cloak removed (it is in his hands) and a shining crown at his feet, while his arms are extended towards Mithras.\footnote{Cumont, Textes et monuments II, 246, fig. 8, pl. 6.} Mithras holds a large, shallow cup over Helios’ head, evidently intending to pour its contents over him. Apart from the example from Osterburken, our scene can also be found in pieces from Heddernheim in Germany and from York in Britain.\footnote{Ibid., 366, fig. 250 and 379, fig. 293; 391 f., no. 270, fig. 309.}

This list shows that the distribution of our scene coincides with that of our tablets: i.e. in Dacia and in the Danube region in general. The type is also preserved in Germany, but its interpretation clearly emphasises the divine being of the initiate. The very positioning of the dining table scene and the scene of communal sacrifice shows that our tablets represent the three acts leading to the consecration of Helios into the mysteries of Mithras – baptism, sacrifice-offering and communion. All these acts naturally belong to an extremely ancient ritual. We must not forget that at least one of these acts, the act of communion or investiture, can be traced back to the 3rd century BC in South Russian monuments. After these comparisons there remains no doubt about the interpretation of the scenes on our tablets, and the gesture of consecration [52] on the relief from Virunum acquires particular significance. What is represented ought to be understood as a symbol of the vow of silence made by those undergoing consecration, a promise to observe the $\sigma\nu'\varphi$.\footnote{On baptisms in the mysteries of Mithras, see Cumont, Mysterien 6, 144.}

To explain the scene to the left of that with the dining table is more straightforward. Hampel has already found a correct explanation, as has Cumont.\footnote{See Kohlbach, Berliner philologische Wochenschrift (1904), 1230; Cumont, RA (1905), 25 ff., especially 28 ff. and his other articles, listed in Die orientalischen Religionen 80 f. and 263, n. 34.} We are undoubtedly faced with a taurobolium, which formed part of the cult of Anahita in Armenia and that of the Great Mother in Phrygia. The mystes makes a libation of blood to the female hypostasis of the religion of the rider gods and transforms into an animal, the blood of which renews him, and the innards are removed from the sacrificed animal and given to the resurrected one to taste. Our representations are especially characteristic in that they convey the still-primitive conception, which is often mitigated in the later renderings of taurobolia. If the scene of communion combines elements from the mysteries of both Mithras and the female Persian-Semitic and Anatolian goddess, then we see in the scenes of initiation to the right the mystai who are being initiated by Mithras through baptism with water, and to
the left the mystai of the great female goddess, reborn through the blood of a ram from a criobolium.

My suggested interpretation also renders comprehensible several elements from scenes on other varieties of our reliefs. So, for example, the head of a ram and the fish on the relief from Bucharest (Hampel [1903], 314, 10), the ram beside a fish on a relief from Apulum (ibid., 318, 13), the head of a ram, the ram, the bull and the fish on the Berlin relief, the ram on the relief from Segesvár (ibid., 323, 18), the ram at the altar on the Terracina tablet (ibid., 328, 23), the ram on the reliefs from the Sofia Museum (Kazarow, op. cit., pl. 1.1, 2, 4; Hampel [1912], 333 ff., 90, 92, 93, 95), the head of a ram on the fragment of a relief from Sofia (Kazarow, op. cit., fig. 4), and the corresponding representations on carved stones [Pl. VII.1 and 5]. The ritual of the criobolia may even provide an explanation for the nets on the Berlin tablet, if we consider them analogous to the structure resembling a staircase on the krater from Friedberg. One could think of the net as the object through which the blood of the ram or bull flowed.

The objects and scenes represented on the lowest tier of our lead tablets are readily understood and have been so for a long time: a group consisting of a lion, a krater and a snake – a combination of symbols familiar from the Mithraic reliefs. They appear together with a cock, another well-known figure in Mithraic reliefs, and the dining table with the fish, emphasising the cult of the female goddess. The lamps, which occur so frequently on our tablets, sometimes on a column, are also a relatively familiar accessory of the Mithraic initiates.

More difficult to explain are the representations on stone reliefs depicting our gods. The stone tablets and the discs and oval reliefs are for the most part so carelessly executed, and so badly preserved, that we can only guess at the scenes depicted on them. But one typical scene, not fully understood to this day, does allow us to propose an explanation. I have in mind the scene on a relief recently published by Kazarow. The figured scene is well preserved and intelligible [Pl. VII.5]: it shows a man in typical Asiatic attire, with a Phrygian cap on his head, kneeling on a flat rectangular stone, his hands lowered. Two similarly dressed men in front of him are holding an animal pelt. To the left of the stone is an amphora, dug into the ground. Nearby, to the left of the central scene, a woman is standing with her right hand raised to her mouth. I have deciphered the same representation, much more crudely executed, in the relief on the disc from Apulum (Hampel [1905], 117),

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164 Cumont, Textes et monuments II, 358, fig. 240.
165 A complete structure of this type may be depicted on the lead disc from the Belgrade Museum; see Hampel, Archaeologiai értesítő (1905), 15, no. 75 (cf. [1912] 341).
166 See Cumont, Mysterien 104.
167 Ibid., 170.
168 Kazarow, ARW 15 (1912), pl. 1, fig. 4; Hampel (1912), 334, 92.
which shows the same woman to the left of the central group. Finally, if I am not deceived by the crudeness of the work and the poor quality of the reproductions, the same scene appears on both the relief from the museum in Segesvár (Hampel [1903], 323, 18) and that from Dunapentele (ibid., 331, 26). In these examples we find ourselves confronted with a scene from the sphere of the mysteries. The kneeling mystes is apparently being covered by the hide of the sacrificial animal or, on the other hand, he may be undressing himself in preparation for the ritual. The figure with the hand at her mouth may allude to the mystical, secret nature of the scene, as suggested by the parallel scene on the Virunum relief. This act of revelation or occultation on the part of the mystes is known to us from the mysteries of Mithras. Of this act Cumont writes the following: ‘After the mystes had become a “raven”, he was promoted into the ranks of the “secret” and the “hidden” (κρύφτος). The members of this class were hidden by a sort of veil and remained invisible to the other participants: to show them forth (ostendere) was a ceremonial act (CIL VI 751*: ostenderunt cryfios).’

169 I have no doubt that in our scene we are met by one of the acts described – either the ostentatio of the mystes or, more likely, the consecration, or occultatio, in which the future cryfius is concealed.

The scene from the upper tier of the disc from Apulum (Hampel [1905], 117) provides a corresponding representation from the sphere of the cult of the female goddess. Unfortunately, the relief is published in such poor reproductions that I cannot interpret all of the scenes from the upper register. Yet their relation to the cult of the goddess with the fish is unmistakeable. It is not accidental that the central group (three female busts, apparently wearing strange headdresses) is approached from the right side by a man with an enormous fish under his arm, while on the left stands a table with a fish upon it. To the left of that is an indistinct image of a human figure, and in either corner a bust. Analogies to this representation may be found in the relief from Segesvár (Hampel [1903], 323, 18), the stone relief from Bucharest (Hampel [1903], 325, 19),171 the fragment from Carnuntum, showing three busts in the upper tier and a fourth on the right (Hampel [1903], 327, 22), and finally in a relief from Terracina, with three busts in the upper tier – probably Luna flanked by heads wearing radiate crowns (Hampel [1903], 328, 23). The latter relief may yield the key to understanding the others. On it, the three heads in the upper tier clearly correspond to the three figures in the middle tier – two masculine gods, who are evidently both to be identified as the sun god, and a single female goddess, resembling the goddess Luna. Does it not follow that the figures in

169 Cumont, Mysterien 140.
170 See also Catalogo della mostra archeologica nelle Terme di Diocleziano (Bergamo 1911), 71.
171 I cannot agree with Ziehen’s interpretation of the three busts in the lower tier as Celtic matres, with some sort of ritual scene depicted nearby.
the relief from Apulum should be recognised as a central female bust with a half-moon underneath it, framed by two busts wearing Phrygian caps?

The selection of representations on our tablets discussed above shows how clearly the two coexisting religious traditions were separated: one, as far as we can tell, was characterised by the worship of Mithras, the other, by the worship of the great goddess of Iran, Syria and Asia Minor. Judging by the visual evidence, the two religious movements coexisted in parallel, not blending into one another, but the adepts of their teachings, as portrayed by our tablets, were evidently adepts of both cults.

I shall now return to the question concerning the identity of the rider gods represented in the central register of our tablets. I must set out in advance that the entire composition of our tablets, with a few exceptions, is strictly logical and consistent, so that the grouping is almost exactly the same as on many reliefs of Mithras Tauroctonos. The upper zone belongs to the sky and its supreme ruler, the great single god and sovereign of the world – the Sun. The middle portion is primarily occupied by gods who are more closely related to mankind, the gods to whom humans address their rituals but who themselves make gestures of prayer towards the supreme god. These are intermediary gods, ranked close to the people. The next zone is filled with depictions of the most important mystic acts – holy communion and initiations of the mystes through baptism by water or blood. On several reliefs these components are supplemented by a representation of the act of revelatio (ostentatio) or occultatio of the mystes, a scene which may in turn be accompanied in the lower tier by symbols of the elements and the instruments of the ritual. The discussion of the mounted Mithras above and the characteristics of the mounted gods on our tablets leave us in no doubt that our rider gods developed from the same roots as Mithras Tauroctonos. We are concerned with intermediary gods, with victorious and invincible gods, with gods standing in the closest relation to the supreme god of victory and of the sun, who trample on defeated enemies and whose cult has a purely mystical character. Moreover, the distinctive features of that mystery cult coincide with those of the cult of Mithras. The external appearance of these gods resembles the appearance of Mithras Tauroctonos, while their Iranian character is emphasised by several details of representation found only in monuments whose relation to the Iranian cult is beyond doubt. Among these particularities, the most revealing is the representation of gods trampling upon a defeated opponent. This is the same image that we met in South Russia as far back as the 3rd century BC, long before it reappeared in Sasanian court art. The image can only be explained as a derivation from the dualistic conceptions of Iranian religion and its ideas about the victory of good over evil.

172 See Cumont, Mysterien 4 f., 7, 9, 11, 128.
However, one detail has to date remained unexplained – the large fish which on one class of our tablets is being trampled by one of the riders. This image conforms poorly to the general character of our monuments, where the fish is represented as an object of a cult, a symbol of the goddess’ respected place among our riders [56]. The first analogy to spring to mind relates our image to those in which the god of the sun is shown as the conqueror of the earth’s fertility: Apollo and Python, and so on. But how did the fish take on this role of embodying the power of the earth, and what are the roots of this conception? It is unlikely that I can settle this question decisively, although some initial approaches can be made. In connection with this, I recall the information recently collated by Scheftelowitz concerned with the Semitic (and pre-Semitic?) populations of the Near East and their conception of a world fish, the Leviathan, with which the Messianic hopes of the Semitic world were linked.173 The same conception may be reflected in those enormous Megalithic monuments of southern Armenia, the so-called vishapy, whose collection and interpretation is conducted by Y.I. Smirnov and N.Y. Marr.174 The dim echoes of myths about the battle of the Iranian sun god with this pre-Iranian divinity from Armenia has perhaps been preserved in the legends about Vahagn and his battle with the dragon, from which the hero emerges victorious.174 In our tablets we may also have echoes of these or similar conceptions of the victory of the sun god Mithras over the forces of the earth, which can be correlated to the legends of Mithras Tauroctonos and of Mithras, conqueror of Helios. However we interpret this representation, it remains clear that we have in our riders a clearer symbol of Iranian dualism than we find in any other known ritual representations.

All this leads us to place our riders in the closest and most direct connection with Mithras and to see in them derivations of [57] Iranian religious conceptions, independent of the cult of Mithras Tauroctonos, although sharing many common features with it. However, there are two of our riders and only one Mithras, which had previously been the main reason for identifying our riders with the Cabiri, an identification which we found to rest on shaky foundations. It does not explain any of the features interpreted above, which convincingly connect our monuments to the Irano-Semitic religious conceptions of Asia Minor. The unclear reference to the

173 See I. Scheftelowitz, ARW 14 (1911), especially 8 ff., 38 f., 49 and 378.
174 See N.O. Emin, Vahagn – vishapakakh armyanskoj mifologii est’ Indra Vitrahan Rig-Vedy (1873), 17, 36 f.; H. Gelzer, Zur armenischen Götterlehre. Berichte der Königlich-Sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften 48 (1896), 108 f. It is curious that in several reliefs, in which the representation of the Thracian rider hunter may have been influenced by our reliefs so as to create a fusion between the rider and the goddess with the fish, a snake or a dragon, instead of a man, can be seen under the hooves of the horse. Reliefs of this type tend to be a peculiarity of countries with a Thracian population; see the relief from Sofia, Kazarow, ARW 15 (1912), pl. 1.6 and the relief from Belgrade in Hampel [1903] 320, 15 (two examples in which not two, but one rider, is portrayed).
fish πῶμπιλος in the cult of the Cabiri gives the interpretation of the reliefs barely enough support, nor does the myth of the murder of a third Cabirus. The two defeated enemies under the hooves of our riders’ mounts completely discredit the possibility of such an interpretation. Finally, we know so little about the mysteries of Samothrace that one shared feature relating to the mystical character of their cult does not allow us to connect our riders with the Cabiri. Moreover, we must keep in mind that the cult of the Cabiri is not epigraphically attested on the Danube and that it is wholly improbable to imagine the transmission of the mysteries via the mediation of Thrace, where our artefact class occurs very rarely. This argument, already suggested by Kazarow, besides the clear contrast between the tablets of our artistic type and the reliefs of the Thracian rider, completely contradicts any notion of a close link between the Thracian series and our own. The influence of the Cabiri on our tablets may possibly be proven only insofar as the representations of the Dioscuri and Helen, who were subsequently connected to the Cabiri, may have influenced the type of representation seen in our triad of gods. But we must not forget that the heraldic confrontation of two figures (animal or human) with a third figure in between is older than the Dioscuri, deriving as it does from Eastern art. Thus, there is no need to look as far afield as Sparta to trace the origins of our figural type, when one may equally well remain on that very Anatolian ground where the analysis of religious ideas had originally taken us.

Thus we will find an explanation for the twinning of our gods not in these similarities, but rather in the same spheres of religious imagination that we have already been investigating. We must recall [58] that the triad of two male and one female divinities is characteristic for Asia. I bring to mind Ahura Mazda, Mithras, and Anahita in the inscriptions of Artaxerxes, Bel, Shamash and Ishtar from the Semitic religions, and finally that class of triads, linked to the cult of the Great Mother Goddess, of which we can form an impression from cults in the area of Cyzicusos and in Phrygia. This same tendency to double the male divinity, and his appearance together with a female divinity, are reflected in our monuments.

175 The interpretation of our riders as the Cabiri can be traced to the careless hand of T. Antonescu, Cultul cabirilor in Dacia (Bucharest 1889) and to E. Nowotny, Wissenschaftliche Mitteilungen aus Bosni und der Herzegovina 4 (1896), 292.
177 Cumont, Textes et monuments II, 87 ff.; idem, Mysterien 8 and 10.
178 On Chaldaean-Semitic triads, see Cumont, Die orientalischen Religionen 145 and 289, 55; H. Usener, ‘Dreheit’. Rheinisches Museum 58 (1903), 32. Characteristically, on our tablets the triad is preceded by a pair – a male and a female divinity.
179 F.W. Hasluck, Cyzicus (Cambridge 1910), 215; 225 f.; W.R. Ramsay, The Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia (Oxford 1897), II, 566, (468), cf. I, 357 (171) and so on.
The mythological explanations given for this doubling have varied. One explanation is indicated by the cut seal stone mentioned above, on which one rider is portrayed as Mithras, the other as Helios – precisely the same combination which was canonical on monuments related to the cult of Mithras Tauroctonos, where Mithras is at the end united with Helios.

It may be possible to make a historical connection. It is well known that Elagabalus established the worship of his sun god of Emesa, Baal, as an official religion. It is also known that in 221 he combined his god with Caelestis, the great Semitic goddess of Carthage, whose symbol in Africa was a fish. Finally, we know that Elagabalus’ god was closely connected to the cult of Mithras and, together with the latter, bore the title of *deus invictus*, which is also highly typical of our reliefs.

Thus, in Rome at the beginning of the 3rd century we may recognise clear signs that our triad had at least in part gained official recognition, for which one of the primary motives may have been the desire to satisfy the soldiers of the Danube region. What could be more natural than to suppose that the Anatolian ἱερὸς γάμος, ceremoniously celebrated in Rome in 221, had already been officially recognised by the beginning of the 3rd century BC in order to acknowledge its long history as an object of reverence and ritual among the soldiers closest to the emperor? After all, it is well known that Septimius Severus, who first brought the cult of Caelestis to Rome, had close links to the Danubian forces. Nor must we forget that, after Elagabalus’ demise, the sun god did not disappear from the official pantheon and in fact, under Aurelian, became the supreme official god of Rome. This shows how well established his cult remained among the troops, regardless of the changing religious outlooks of the emperors. It was precisely at this time, as the style of our artefacts shows, that we find the period of the greatest distribution of our tablets among the soldiers of the Danube forces. It seems tempting to accept these events as a causal link, and to find in the appearance of our tablets a result of that stimulus which Rome received during the triumphal procession of the Syrian gods and their rise to precedence in Rome.

However, this is unlikely to be entirely accurate. Although our tablets are not dated, it is clear that they can be grouped by age as well as by content. Confining ourselves to those tablets which have undergone stylistic analysis, we must state

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180 In a private conversation, T.F. Zelinskii quite correctly pointed out to me that we are entitled to consider as a part of Iranian religious conceptions the twinning of male gods of light, which we see for example in the Indian Ashvins and the Greek Dioscuri. This same entirely independent process probably led to the twinning of Mithras in countries with a semi-Iranian culture. However, I do not believe that this could be a matter of borrowing.


182 For more on all this, see G. Wissowa, Religion und Kultus der Römer, 2nd ed. (Munich 1912), 366 ff. and 373 ff.; Cumont in RE s.v. ‘Caelestis’ and ‘Elagabalus’; O.F. Butler, Studies in the Life of Heliogabalus (New York 1908), 78 ff.
that the group of bronze tablets stands out as the most ancient, followed by the group of lead rectangles, among which several tablets can be separated as either older or undoubtedly later, and finally, a group of indisputably later round lead tablets, which quite often yield only hints as to their representations. If this rough classification is correct, then we can hardly justify placing all of our tablets in a period beginning in the 3rd century AD, when some of them ought to be considerably older. In this case, we must acknowledge as fact a historical link different to that just mentioned. We must, then, acknowledge that before our eyes is the completion of processes, whose official recognition took place in Rome in 221. Chief among these processes were the unification of the Persian Mithras, having assumed several features of the sun god of Asia Minor and Syria, with the great Semitic and Anatolian female goddess, and the recognition and diffusion of this dominant couple and their cult among the Danube troops. But in conjunction with this, another process was in motion. The great Persian god who had, since his inception, acquired features of the Syrian and the Anatolian Baal, divides in two – from one god a pair is created, which is eventually united into a triad with the great female goddess. This division was without a doubt provoked by the combination into a single mounted god of the two elements discussed above. Thus we have definite evidence that the Mithras pairing includes the sun god Helios, although Mithras always dominates. The same appearance of a dual hypostasis of a male god can be observed in reliefs of Mithras Tauroctonos, where Mithras also plays the commanding role, offering Helios communion as a conquering god.

But on an entire group of tablets this relationship is seen to have changed. The modest indications of solar significance, depicted in the corners of tablets showing gods in the form of busts of the Sun and the Moon, suddenly transform towards a complete dominion of the great sun god, the ruler of the world, to whom the god who formerly dominated the tablets appears to be subjugated. This change in attitudes, which we can observe on only one group of tablets (limited in number and homogenous in theme) does not last long. The dominion of the Sun does not transpire from the discs, where the iconographic elements of the lead rectangular tablets are capriciously mixed in varied combinations. It is therefore possible to recapture in the sun god’s dominion an echo of his temporary triumph over Mithras in the time of Elagabalus and later of Aurelian. Thus, only these tablets are contemporaneous with the emperors of the first half of the 3rd century, whereas the others are either older or more recent. This confirms the hypothesis suggested above about the organic preparation for what took place in Rome in 221 in the religious perceptions of the Danubian troops, which the wars of Trajan and Lucius Verus had placed in close association with the East, and which will magnify additionally the value of the information communicated to us. What is revealed before us is a new chapter in the history of religious syncretism in the East, where Iranian, Anatolian and Semitic
elements are combined in a single whole, and also in the history of the penetration of these syncretic cults into the Western provinces of Rome and ultimately into Rome. The Roman army was an important conduit for the diffusion of new religious ideas and undoubtedly the main reason why the Eastern religious ideas gained precedence in Rome. I do not doubt that the troops during their time in Syria recognised Elagabalus as their emperor, not in spite of the fact that [61] he dedicated his life to serve the god, but precisely because he was the incarnation of god on earth, the same god in whom great numbers of the legionary and auxiliary soldiers had believed for a very long time. Elagabalus did not die at the hands of these troops, but from an assault by the Praetorians, among whom either the official Roman religion or the local national religions of the recruits, newly arrived from the German or Thracian villages straight into the ranks of the Imperial Guard, tended to dominate at the expense of their receptivity to new religious ideas.

I am not incorrect, therefore, in repeating what I stated earlier: that, in completing his hieros gamos between Elagabalus and Caelestis, the fanatical young emperor wanted not only to satisfy his own religious demands, but also to please the soldiers from his Dacian and Pannonian legions, on whom he could depend for support against the hostile Praetorians. The interest of our tablets is further increased by the fact that these tablets show us not only the gods but also the cult in all its varieties and complexities, combining mystical elements from Iran, Syria and Anatolia. At the same time it is characteristic that no elements of local religions are manifest in these representations: where any influence is visible, it is the influence of the East upon the West. This influence is perhaps most clearly felt in some of the monuments of the Thracian rider, but we cannot discern a reciprocal cultural transfer anywhere. Very rarely we sense a certain convergence between our victorious rider, parading on his majestic horse, with the Thracian god of the hunt, following the tracks of game, or with a chthonic Graeco-Thracian hero, mounted on a horse in front of a tree with a snake. But I repeat that convergences of this type are exceptionally rare, and rarely is it possible to determine their substance.

The cult portrayed in our tablets is therefore, without any doubt, the same Eastern cult as the cult of Mithras Tauroctonos, which reached the Danube, like the latter, from Anatolia. Significantly, the cult was also accepted in Dacia and Pannonia, where the veneration of Mithras Tauroctonos was also widely disseminated owing to the legions and the auxiliary troops present there and by the mix of nationalities which Dacia’s population became after the war [62].\textsuperscript{183} Our cult differs from that of Mithras, with which it had extremely close and direct associations, in as much as it attests to a variation of Mithraism and a somewhat different con-

\textsuperscript{183} See Cumont, Mysterien 39 ff.
ception of the god, closer to that which persisted in Iran itself and in countries culturally dependent on Iran. But this cult did not reach the Danube in its pure form: it was closely combined with the cult of the female goddess, who is absent from the pantheon of Mithras Tauroctonos. This female goddess is the result of the syncretism of Iranian, Anatolian and Semitic elements. It is impossible to give her a definite name, for she is as complex and many-named as all the great female divinities of the Eastern religions in the time of Imperial Rome. The cult of our triad is purely Eastern and mystical, and as complex as the triad itself. But the same Iranian conceptions, which we observe in the mysteries of Mithras Tauroctonos, are seen to be dominant within it.

The results we have gained have brought us far from Bosporus and Iran, but they have shown us how Iranian conceptions, which have such a long history in our half-Iranian south, filtered far into the West, conquering the minds and hearts of those who were not satisfied by the half-barbarian elements of their local religion or by the Greek religious ideas entirely foreign to the West.

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3 Rostovtzeff refers to the relief in Behistun showing the equestrian fight between Gotarzes II (AD 39?–51) and his enemy Meherdates. For his subsequent treatment of the subject mentioned in n. 10, see Rostovtzeff 1913–14, 309–45 and 2004, 389–435.
5 For the amphora stamp from Kul-Oba (now dated to the third or fourth quarter of the 4th century BC), see Brashinskii 1975: Thasian amphora (Bon, type 1b). For the black slip bowl and the kantharos from Chertomlyk (now dated between 350 and 320 BC), see Hermitage Inv. Dn 1863 1/471, 1/482; Rolle et al. 1998, II, 26–27, nos. 149–150. On amphora fragments of the third quarter of the 4th century recovered from the main chamber in 1983, see Rolle et al. 1998, III, 164, cf. 165–66; Alekseev 2003, 268.
6 Subsequently discussed in Rostovtzeff 1914.
8 Also shown in Sabatier 1849, 119, pl. 5. 3–4.
9 Cf. Rostovtzeff 1914.
10 For a more recent English-language survey of the evidence, see Frolova and Ireland 2002. For the later coin issues discussed below, see Frolova 1979; 1983.
11 For more recent work on Bosporan portraiture, see R. Smith 1988, 141–43.
13 Alias Schässberg, now Sighișoara, in Transylvania.
14 Later published in Smirnov and Marr 1931.
Fig. 1: Relief from Naqsh-i-Rustam. The investiture of Ardashir (after Sarre and Herzfeld, *Iranische Felsreliefs*, pl. V).

Fig. 2: Relief from Bishapur. The investiture of Narses (after Sarre and Herzfeld, *Iranische Felsreliefs*, pl. XLI).

Fig. 3: Gold plaque from Poltava province.
Pl. I: 1–2. The upper part of the rhyton from Karagodziskh. 3–4. Two Sasanian seal stones.
Pl. IV: Depictions characterising monarchical power on coins from Panticapaeum.
Pl. V: 1–2. Two diadems from a burial associated with Rhescuporis II and his wife.
Bibliography

Note that Rostovtzeff’s own bibliography is retained in his footnotes

Abbreviations

For Translations and for Introductory and Editorial matter

**ABC**  
*Antiquités du Bosphore Cimmérien*, ed. F. Gille and L. Stephani (St Petersburg 1854); Rééditions avec un commentaire nouveau, ed. S. Reinach (Paris 1892).

**ARW**  
*Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*

**CIL**  
*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*

Cumont, Mysterien  

Cumont, Textes  

**IAK**  
*Izvestiya Imperatorskoi Arkheologicheskoi Komissii*

**MAR**  
*Materiály po Arkheologii Rossii*

**OAK**  
*Otchety Arkheologicheskoi Komissii*

**RAS**  

Tolstoy and Kondakov  


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