

Persian translation of this paper entitled:
تحلیل ساختار منظر ستایشگاه‌های مهری
is also published in this issue of journal.

An Analysis on Mithraic Temple Landscape Structure*

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Received 2018/01/21

revised 2018/05/22

accepted 2018/07/02

available online 2019/07/23

Abstract

Architecture and art is the best form of emergence of human attitude towards religious rituals and importance such rituals hold. In ancient Persia one of the most significant ritualistic foundations to form the space has been Mithraic beliefs. The importance of architectural design in Mithraic temples is presented in various periods of art and architecture in Iran and other parts of the globe based on the complexity of Mithraic mysteries. The art affected by Mithraism has been transformed in the passage of time into distinct meaning. Although, astrology and studying the heavenly bodies has been a very major issue among the followers, but in general studies on the Mithraic temples always taken place with a focus on interior architectural design of the Mithraeum, and unfortunately the external environment of the temple and natural elements are missing in previous studies. Purpose of presents study is to survey and evaluate the Mithraic temple appearance based on the available documents and buildings identified up to the present day. According to the explanatory-descriptive survey research methods and studying the ritualistic evidences and available papers and articles, and eventually, evaluating the Mithraic temple appearance we got to the conclusion that despite the fundamental structural changes in Mithraic temples from cave temples into underground Mithraeums in various parts of the world and in long periods of time, the general axis of design in Mithraic temples is the nocturnal landscape.

Keywords: *Mithraism, Mithraic temple, Mithraeum structure, Nocturnal Landscape.*

* This paper is derived from Ph.D thesis of Sara Alipour entitled "Explanation on Iranian praising spaces reflecting on Iranian gardens", supervised by Dr. Mohammad Reza Nasir Salemi and Dr. Mohammad Mansour Falamaki at Islamic Azad University Central Tehran Branch.

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Introduction

Mithraism¹, as one of the most widespread and effective religions of Persian territory has left a deep impression on Persian art and civilization due to its geographical and historical span, and it does

worth the study and research. Before Jesus Christ, this religion was spread in the western territories, up to Northern Britain, and had numerous followers, left Mithraic remnant all over. Curving the cave temples is believed to be the first worshiping places for the religion. Common patterns and items is observed in all architectural aspects of Mithraic temples² despite the geographical and historic span, and such elements are repeated later on in fire temples, churches and even mosques. It could be claimed that the first spatial design basis in Iranian art, is influenced by Mithraism ideas and beliefs.

Problem Statement

Despite the widespread effectiveness of Mithraism, either due to the geographical aspects or the timing characteristics, most of the studies done on this religion and the physical properties of their constructed spaces is affected by ideas and beliefs of the scholars who lived thousands of miles away from Persian territories and generally, did not consider the dominant mental set up shaping the beliefs and rituals of this land. Having in mind that the most of the artistic archetypes of Iranian art is directly or indirectly influenced and developed by Mithraism, the importance of evaluating this notion in art and architecture becomes more distinct. Other issue to consider is the research field of this subject. Evaluation of the Mithraic temples has always been concentrated on the architecture. The question rises, according to the attention on natural elements in ancient Persian religions and rituals, that did Mithraism followers developed the environment and landscape based on the dominant thoughts and ideas? Or in general, how did they influenced by natural elements in their temples? And the mentioned question, actually lead to the idea of analyzing the architectural remnant of Mithraism according to their perspective as well.

Literature Review and Theoretical Foundations

Studying Mithraism rituals and mysteries hidden in this religion has a long history in western world. For the close relationship exists between

Mithraism and Christianity, many theorists and researchers paid attention to this religion. Among the most famous scholars which has accomplished a vast study on Mithraism, is Franz Cumont. After what he has done in this field, there are almost no study which is not influenced by his ideas. What Martin Vermaseren, Nyberg and Grishman done in this field is also valuable. Although history of art in Iran is filled with Mithraism symbols, but studying on this religion was started by Dr. Behrooz, being continued in a comprehensive manner in Ancient Iranian Culture Society since 1964. There were scholars such as Mohammad Moghdam, Zabih Behrooz, Hashem Razi, Mehrdad Bahar, Jaleh Amoozegar, and later, Morteza Sagheb Far, Shohre Javadi, etc. which were always showing a caring approach towards myths and stories of this country. What is obvious from national and international researches, is that Mithraism influenced every single religion afterwards. According to Iraj Alipour, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism (with all the criticism on it), Zurvanism, and other notional, social and pleading movement afterwards like Mazdakism, Khorram-Dinan, and Ismai`lism, are totally dependent on Mithraism. On the other hand, in every honorable trace appeared in Iranian art and culture ever, such as Ferdowsi Shahnameh, Hafiz Poetry, Suhrawardi poems and writings, Nasir Khusraw, Nizami, and the whole unique collection of poetry and speech left as Iranian mysticism, are all praising the light, wisdom, culture, and victory of good over evil, there is an indisputable link observed between Mithraism and vast sea of Persian culture. We may search for cultural core of this land in Mithraism.

Research Methodology

Analyzing the Mithraism notion is not an easy task due to the mysteriousness and furtiveness of the doctrine and ideas. Although the footprint of Mithraism is observed in each and every mystic types of Iran but still, outsiders are not allowed to know the secrets and mysteries, and they only are

permitted to attend the rituals. However, analyzing and studying the Mithraism is taken place in various researches but as mentioned before, no studies are done according to visual impression and form, especially in regards of the landscape, no studies is still done on Mithraeum and other locations used to hold the rituals. In several references we face the possibility that Mithras followers had passion for music and dance. Obviously by architectural analysis of limited space of Mithraeum, this idea does not seem to be rational. In other references, it is claimed that worshippers of Mithras used to wear a mask in their worshipping ceremony based on their religious position for not being recognized by others, again we believe that it could not be possible in such a small and narrow place. Thus, present study, based on inductive reasoning, first evaluates the ritualistic beliefs and evidences, and accomplished an analysis on available books and articles to review the Mithraism core. Then, since most of the studies taken place on architecture, especially Mithraeum architecture design, an analysis on the Mithraic temple structures were done. Eventually, according to available descriptions and based on qualitative research, a final analysis was done on the whole information.

Myth and the Religion

Religion in Iran, before and after Aryans entering the country is a place of controversy. It is obvious that they used to worship the sky, water and fire most of all. Worshipping the stars, especially the Sun, played a specific role because later on it was incarnated as Mithras. In none of the Persian dynasties, such as Medes, Achaemenid, Parthian, or Sasanian, it could not be claimed that country was following a specific religion as the formal religion (Kajdan, Nikolski, Abramovitch, Iline & Filippov, 2007: 365). Mithras, was the most significant Indo-Persian god before Zoroaster, and probably the most popular one after Zoroaster (Ardeshirbod, 1963: 59). Rituals honoring Mithras still are observed in Sufism. Formation of

Mithraic mythology began in Persia with a touch of sacredness, eventually turned as a ritualistic composition. A religion, facing the sky and believes in fortune of the stars, and praises the fire as it illuminates the dark nights, and praises the sun for being sacredly generous for every day.

Mithraism Rituals and Beliefs

Mithras religion, being a mystic doctrine, aimed on waking human conscience, and bringing him close to integrity and perfection (Shinor, 1971: 15). As a mentality, Mithraism focused on wisdom, knowledge, consciousness, and ontology. Mithras followers, regardless of the time they lived in, has been mastered in the knowledge of that time, had affection for music and dance. Such affection could be observed in the scripts and poetry of Iranian artists and scholars of next generations as well. On the other hand, Mithras followers used to practice hidden wisdoms, and were expert in prediction and prophecy, (Alipour, 1995: 159) sacrifice rituals, especially cow annihilation. Sacrifice or ceremonies, used to be held during the night time when the sunlight was absent (Razi, 2002: 251). A significant interest and attention towards astrology, planets, constellations and galaxies was too strong that Roger Beck believes that in Mithraeum and sitting place for new comers, has been decorated by constellations. In tile works and decoration of the temples winter-summer equinox could be seen, probably showing the continuity of the outside world into the interior space (Beck, 2006: 102-112). In addition to observing the night sky, Mithras followers also deeply believed in eternal permanence of the soul. They persisted in doing good deed in persuasion of eternity of soul and joining the eternal light. Ulansey believes a symbolic relationship exists between climbing the mountain and reaching the caves which is a symbol of Mithras birth place and temple of the doctrine by followers, and imagination of symbolic arise of the soul

and reaching the higher levels of the sky, where the sun resides (Ulansey, 1991: 3). Mithras followers usually used to appear with a mask in their religious rituals, which probably was a sign for their religious position in the seven stages of mysticism. Although there are still hidden secrets in Mithraism, but interest in astrology, having respect for the sun, group rituals, chanting sacred hymns, sacrifice in places away from the sunlight, drinking Haoma extract, seven stages of Ayyaran path, having respect for previous goddesses like Anahita, and respecting the natural elements is known as their general rituals.

Architecture and Appearance of Mithraeum

In ancient world, religions used to be the dominant factor in determination of ideas, rituals and nature of the societies, played a significant role in formation and development of various types of arts in a way that in ancient world, religion has been a participant for life and art philosophy (Qodusifar, Habib & Shahbazi, 2012: 37). Architecture, as a body which comes to life through mentality, has always borrowed the philosophy of time. Worshipping places has always been influenced by Gods and Goddesses like Moon, Sun, Mithras and Anahita, which are Gods of light, illumination, fertility and holder of pure waters. Such places usually were constructed next to springs and old aged trees (Javadi, 2015). One of the characteristic of Mithraic elements which is totally known to us and is observed in all various levels of distribution, is having interest and attention towards natural elements such as water, fire, heavenly bodies, vegetation cover and time (Saghebfar, 2007: 521). If we study the Mithraic inscriptions we realize that these temples are divided into two main groups: some use the specific term of spelaeum or the poetic phrase of antrum, others use the simple term of templum or aedes (Ibid: 314). What we consider in this study as a Mithraeum, is the mountain spelaeum which is underground, and other patterns are not studied here.

Cave Templum

The common mythology in Mithraism which could be emerged from the inscriptions and sculptures, is based on the idea that Mithras is saxigenus, means a person who is born out of stone (this could be the other side of the Zoroastrian idea of Mithras, which believes him to be rising from mountains just like dawn, a creator who causes water bubbles out of rocks and stones, who kills the bull so the life would begin from his action, a predator who destroys all evil, and a close partner of the sun (Asmussen, 1993: 48). Since it was believed that Mithras is born in the mountain and would pass away right there, thus any mountainous site which a flowing water stream was found, believed to be the place for worshipping Anahitia and Mithras, such place was a location for praising these two and people used to go there to pray for their needs and wishes (Javadi, 2007: 14). It seems that according to Mithraism worldview, the structure of Mithraeum must remind of a cave which reflects the primitive world and space (Vaage, 2006: 179). That could be the reason for Mithraeum being constructed in a narrow and dark places (Soltanzadeh & Ashtiani Rezae, 2011: 57). In addition to ritualistic patterns in Mithraeums, a number of symbolic signs related to astrology and calendar is also found (Ulansey, 1991). Learning astrology and having attention for constellation was a basis for new comers, actually Mithraeum was a place to have a direct experience of space and environment which could create an independent comprehension from the universe. In fact, Mithras legendary birth from the stone and combining it with sacred mountain myth, has made the mountains a holy place and most of the Mithraeums were constructed in the mountains (Tilley, 2004: 1). On the other hand, mysteriousness of the teachings, the importance of having their rituals in darkness and away from the sun light, and believing in confrontation of antithetical concepts such as good and evil, truth and false, light and darkness which eventually

causes the victory of light over evil could be considered as other factors. Cave like places were lightened up only through limited apertures, and the rest of the place was lightened up by the candlestick. Such places were usually dug in the mountains facing the direction where sunrise could be observed from. On the other hand, having interest in astrology also influenced the general form of the internal space of those caves, and interior design was based on recreating the night sky, to create a tiny universal space as a copy of the bigger space. Wherever the possibility of constructing a temple was not provided, temples used to be curved into the rocks which was exactly imitating the same pattern and style. But the difference was that in those temples, the night sky was reconstructed underground, and stairs faced towards a lower level.

Mithraic Temple landscape Analysis

• Mithraeum

A Mithraic temple is called Mithraeum (Mehrabe in Persian). The original word in Persian is combined from two words, "Mehr" which refers to Mithras, and "Abe" which refers to a low place. This indicates to the lower level of the caves, which were usually constructed in a location which was at least one or two steps lower than the entrance level. In underground caves also, the mithraeum is usually located in a lower level. The halls were constructed at a surface lower than the ground floor (Ghandgar, 2005). There is another theory that suggests Mithras followers usually curved the temple caves in a way that the final ceiling looks like a dome. Dome in Persian is called as "Abe" or "Ave". This phrase is seen in words such as "Sardabe" which means a vault, "Garmabe" which refers to the old baths, and "Goorabe" which refers to the domes used to be constructed over a grave in old times. Islamic term of Mihrab (the semicircular niche in the wall of the mosques) being derived from the word "Mehrabe", the same Mithraic dome which used to be worshipping place

in Mithraeum. The Mithraeum roof always had a concave form, reminding of the sky. The concave roof was decorated by the stars, or the moon figure in its orbit and the bull (Moghadam, 1964: 57). Sometimes in Mithraeum there were a number of rooms and corridors, parallel to the Mehrabe, which must be a place for paying or conducting religious rituals³, or a place to worship other goddesses, or a place for educating religion new comers which in this case, these places used to have platforms for sitting⁴. In constructing churches, the Mithraeum plan and front view is imitated (Ibid: 59). But in Mithraeum, the central core used to be an altar, not the podium (Saghebfar, 2007: 515)⁵. Additionally, we are aware of presence of an immersion pond in Mithraeum, but that does not necessarily mean it was used for baptism ritual. A new Mithras follower, used to attend the immersion ritual to adopt the new condition, which refers to the purity and immaculacy of his creator. This ritual took place by drinking water, wine and Haoma, and eating raw beef⁶ (which later was banned by Zoroastrians). In underground caves, Mithraeums had one entrance leading to an internal corridor dividing to three hallways. The head-on hall, was the biggest and the major hall of the temple. Two other hallways on left and right were narrow and had a shorter ceiling. Disciples had to pass through the dark and narrow hallways, which were illusory, to enter the holy place and the Mithraeum (Cumont, 2004: 166). Mithraeum, usually was placed in the main hall, and included a concavity in the wall with an inscription or a sculpture of Mithras during killing the bull, while two guards standing on his both sides. On two sides of the main hall there were stone platforms. Mithraeum was getting lightened up by small openings in the ceiling or narrow windows, but the interior space was almost dark, to remind the real space of a cave. Mithraeum is defined by main elements of darkness, silence and spatial calmness. The light of the fire pots or movement of the sun light from the ceiling, were bring the dynamicity and life into

the worshipping place. This space belonged to the followers, and the whole religion rituals took place here. The space compartment were in accordance with the number of the followers and rituals, which means the whole design had an interaction with temple's surrounding.

• Locating a Mithraeum

In Persian theology and mythology, Mithras is considered to be the mediator. He is the mediator of the earth and the sky, and somehow, a mediator between the gods and people (Razi, 2002: 156). In fact, Mithras as a thoughtful character appears as a judge of universe and creation. He is also considered to be the arbitrator for defunct souls passing the Chinvat Bridge (Ardeshirbod, 1963: 74). While making decision for legal issues, Persians used to oath to Mithras, thus in some cases, the person in charge for fire temple was called as Mithras (a court in the fire temple) where the justice was held (Javadi, 2015). Regardless of construction date or the style, the general characteristic of Parthian temples, which mainly were Mithraic temples, was being located next to the governmental institutes (Shekari Nayeri, 2006). Thus, Mithraeums in general scope, used to be a place for justice so they were placed next to official institutes of the government as a legal and religious base.

• Spatial Access

Ancient Persians always picked a high peak for praying and worshipping the creator. Their rituals included chanting prayers and hymns for Ahura Mazda and other gods (Videngren, 1998: 344). Building caves in high hills and natural rocks is resulted from one of the oldest beliefs which almost exists in every religion, and that is the existence of sacred mountains. Such belief left a very important influence on architectural design of the temples (Qodusifar et al., 2012: 41). Such attitude in Mesopotamia is originated from Sumerian mythology. Concept of sacred mountain in Sumerian civilization dates back in ancient times (Rice, 2004: 58). Many religions

believe that God resided on the peak of the mountains, for instance John Nass claims that in Greek mythology quoted from Homer, there are several goddesses residing in a heavenly place in Mount Olympus which is the higher than any known mountain. In Mithraism, Mithras is born out of rocks, the first bull is killed by him inside a cave, and religious rituals were taking place inside the caves, or artificially constructed caves used as the Mithraeum (Cumont, 2004: 47). Moving towards the higher levels and paying attention to the sky has a great position in Mithraic conceptual nature⁷. Temple caves which are constructed in the mountains provoke the spatial access towards the mountain peak, and underground temples remind of the downward facing movement.

• Orientation

We observe the most significant influence of sun and lighting in the temples when it comes to the orientation and spatial organization of the temple. Linear axis of temples in various religions is towards the east side, where the sun rises (Qodusifar, et al., 2012: 44). In Mithraism also, Mithraeum was located on the eastern-western axis. During the fifth century, worshipping the sun had such deep origin in the human culture that in Europe not only Mithras followers, but also Christians had the old habit of bowing down towards the rising sun and praise its glory (Cumont, 2004: 200). In Christian architecture church orientation is also on eastern-western axis. The east side represents God, while the western side represent human being (Pourjafar & Shahidi, 2009: 25). One of the assumptions that Vermaseren points at in his book on Mithras –Mithras, Geschi- is that he believes that the purpose of constructing the Mithraeum is to observe the heavenly bodies, thus the Mithraeum has always been located towards the sky, and the orientation of such buildings were usually towards the east side, where the sun rises. This theory comes under dispute by observing Mithraeums being constructed in other

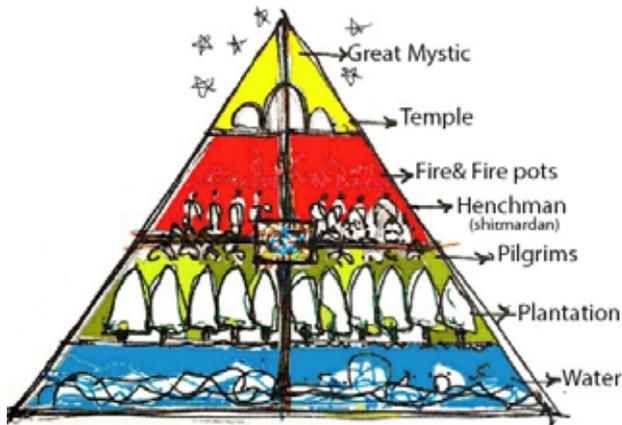


Fig. 1. Spatial hierarchy of the cave Temple. Source: authors.

directions, while they had the chance of being constructed towards the east side. Astrology was one of the discussions which were very praised by Mithras followers, thus the interior design of the Mithraeum was similar to the sky to the extent possible⁸.

• Spatial Apportionment

Presence of water, plants and level difference of Mithraeum in compare to the environment, an apportionment could be recognized. The first part, is the presence of pond, spring or flowing stream which is observed at the first level. Then, it comes to plants and trees which are followed by availability of water. In next part and on a higher level, application of platform for worshippers in a secure distance from the praising area, which probably were a place for common pilgrims. The main temple were located at the higher altitude, providing an inviting sensation by lighting up a fire. Since in Mithraism men and women were allowed to be devotees for Mithras, but not everyone is allowed to be present during the mysterious rituals. Such mentioned apportionment provided a hierarchy in the space which is almost observed in every Mithraeum. In rock caves this hierarchy could create a feeling of wish or desire for rising to the higher levels through watching the sky, and in underground caves, the same hierarchy would case a downwards facing sensation, and increase the focus (Fig. 1).

Water Spring and Mithraeum

Water element appears in most of the scenes presenting Mithras birth. Water spring or a pond which is related to Mithras birth, is the ever flowing and living eternal water source (Vermaseren, 1963: 88). Saoshyant, the savior figure in Mithraism and then, Zoroaster is born after a virgin is taking bath in a water pond where Zoroaster sacred seed is kept there. Natural caves with a flowing water spring nearby, are still sacred and praised, and even there might be some Mithraic symbols still observable. Taq-e Bostan in Kermanshah is a perfect and glorious example of caves with Mithraic decorative elements which were retouched in Sasanid era (Moghadam, 1964: 71). A water spring flows outside and inside of the Mithraeum (Ibid: 43). In Mithras and Anahita temples presence of water pond was always a necessity, thus we can conclude that since ancient times up to now, water element has been available in sacred places in forms of spring, well, water pond or huge stone bowls (Javadi, 2015). Mithraeum has to be built in a location where flowing water was available (Mohamadifar, 2009: 238). Water, in addition to the mythic aspect it has in Mithras birth, plays two important roles in the temples: holiness of the water goddess Anahita, natural correlation between Mithras and Anahita, and the other is the purity of water which was required for cleansing the body before religious rituals. If the water resource were present in the place in its natural form as a spring, it was used in the Mithraeum, and if it was not present there, then water ponds used to be constructed inside the temple. (There is a theory that claims Mithras followers used to pour the blood or urine of the sacrificed animal into the Mithraeum pond, and then they used to drink it or rub it to their bodies. In ancient era, some nations believed that blood could increase human power and force, and whoever drinking or applying the blood on his body, could transfer the animal totem into his own body)⁹.

Table. 1. Mithraic temple landscape analysis. Source: authors.

Construction Pattern	Ritual Analysis	Landscape Analysis
Location	Dual functioning of Mithraeum as a place to worship and sacrifice, and as a place for justice and social judgment. These places usually were located next to governmental Buildings.	Having an appropriate view from The temple towards the city and vice versa, providing a safety Feeling from both social and Religious point of view.
Altitude Level	Where the environment was suitable, temples were getting Constructed on high levels of mountains to resemble birth Mithras. Otherwise, to create the cave like style of the Mithraeum, they used to be constructed underground	Looking at the temple which was constructed at higher altitude induced the heavenly. Sensation that Mithras birth Is not similar to any human Being. Locating a temple in The sky could induce Heavenly feelings.
Access	Upward facing hierarchy of a cave temple where the Pilgrim walks towards the mountain and the sky with all the difficulties he faces on the path resembles of The seventh sky where Mithras resides. In underground temples such hierarchy has a downward facing theme, And induces the feeling of getting ready for pilgrims.	A pilgrim needs to be prepared for entering a temple, and he is not allowed to enter a holy place with no prologue.
Entrance	In entrances, we observe a difference in nature. There are entrances with a low altitude, and wide entrances or even entrances with arch design. Very simple and Square like entrances or highly decorated entrances is Also observed.	Mithraeum is separated from the flat exterior area of the temple which was a place to hold the rituals by a doorway And gate.
Water	Mithras followers deeply respected the water element And water goddess, Anahita. Additionally, many rituals Such as basic education of the soldier or baptizing of pilgrims was correlated with presence of water.	One of the main principles of Mithraeum appearance is water element, which appears In the form of a spring, flowing stream or a stony water pot Which is observed in every Mithraeum.
Fire Pot(Adrian)	Respecting the fire and light, as a base for Mithras and a Sign of his presence, was always a ritual for Mithras Followers.	Sacred fire burning on top, was a sign for announcing a Mithraic temple exists from A far distance.
Plantation	In addition to consuming the extract of Haoma plant during holy rituals, the fig tree is also sacred to Mithras followers because they believed Mithras has covered his body with fig tree leaf during his childhood. Cedar tree was also a symbol of Mithras, and the lotus flower which Kept the sacred seed and was respected by Mithras Followers.	Just like the water is always present in the Mithraeum, so is the plants. Unless the temple has remained vacant for some years.
Colors	The red color, as a sign of blood or the sun, is one favorite color of Mithraism. We see the master and messenger of the sun is also worn a red robe with a golden belt. In underground caves we observe a layer of sky blue color on the ceiling as a symbol of The sky.	Colorful cloths, especially the red color, adds a dynamic and excitement sensation to the ambience.
Patterns	There are images of Mithras hunting and sacrificing the bull, the cross, moon and the stars, lotus flower Lion, and sacred tree is also seen in Mithraic temples.	There are less inscriptions seen in primitive images, which raises the possibility that such patterns Are faded away later on Intentionally. But outside of Iran Mentioned patterns still exist.
Mithraeum	Was the main location for doing rituals or even training the soldiers? In fact, both physical and Spiritual training was taking place here. A place to deliver the Mithraism Mysteries to new comers, through messenger of sun, the master and higher ranking followers. These trainings were not available to everyone, and should be saved properly. Such training was usually accompanied by magic, but due to high protection, it is still unknown to us.	Mithraeum plan is based on a simple square as is the Roman basilica, containing chapel, a stony water pot and platforms to sit. There are vaults on the walls installed to burn a fire or keeping holy objects on. Also, decorative figures of Sacrifice ritual and Mithras Was observed. Mithraeum Ceiling was concaved in both Rocky and underground temples to induce the sky.

Fire and Fire Pots¹⁰

Although ancient Persians had respect for water goddess and believed that the highest truths rises from a spring located in the highest level of the skies, and they always reminded of water as the seed of the truth, and believed that Mithras was born out of water but they believe that residence of Mithras in inside the fire and not the water (Ardeshirbod, 1963: 62). Since they believed in Mithras as a savior of the oat and the most righteous entity which is the mediator between the earth and the sky, and is the one who would judge the right and evil and human deed, but later on fire played such role in the mythology instead of Mithras. In front of the Mithraeum, there were two fire pots¹¹ to keep the fire burning (Moghadam, 1964: 75) and before reaching to the fire pots, the worshipper must have cleared himself from any impurity¹². The cleansing procedure used to take place in front of the fire pot or the Mithraeum. The sacred fire would have been burned inside the mentioned fire pots, and could be seen from the far distance. Especially during the night time, this fire acted as the golden peak of Mithraeum construction, because the place were glowing during the night, and fire was the element which made the temples highlighted for inviting the passengers to pray and worship.

• Mithraic Temple landscape Analysis

According to what has been said, it can be concluded that, in addition to the Tactile Sensation, the Mithraic temple also need a landscape space. an environment capable of carrying out religious rituals. The environment and landscape of which the pattern of construction is presented in Table 1.

Nocturnal landscape

Mithras followers have always had a lot of respect for previous goddesses, having enough attention for water goddess and trying to construct a temple which is close to flowing water streams and springs¹³ has an ever flowing stream which represents the spring of life, is a

symbol of Mithras birth (Vermaseren, 1963: 88) or the Capua Mithraeum which has a water pond (Vermaseren, 1956: 106). Temples were also constructed with an attention towards green plants, sky, moon, sun, ominous and propitious stars and their movement path, prediction, etc. was all included in Mithraism educative activities which was passed to the followers. This could be the reason they had too much attention for natural element, water, sky and the stars. Having attention to Mithraic temple environment and appearance is due to the very limited space of internal Mithraeum, which was designed for attendance of very few people while we know that Mithraism rituals has always been glorious and many followers were participating in such ceremonies. In Pythagoras travelogue on visiting Iran we read that: elected ones left the temple in full harmony and respect after finishing the ritual. People waiting outside with a mirror like saw. A beautiful young man riding a white horse opened the way to the crowd, holding a feather hand fan. The crowd followed him (Razi, 2002: 263). Most probably, during the day time the temple was dedicated for legal and judicial activities¹⁴, or a place to learn combat skills¹⁵ and internal space of the Mithraeum was dedicated to teaching the mysteries to a very elected number of people, sacrificing the bull, or prayers. However, what we know for sure, is that the interior part of the Mithraeum was designed to be completely dark. Presence of small openings in ceiling¹⁶, placement of fire pots¹⁷ and star motifs on the dome, proves the idea. Since the sacrifice ritual was the most significant ceremony and it used to take place after the sunset in a dark environment¹⁸, the Mithraic temples always designed to meet this nocturnal demand. Disciples face the elements creating the appearance while climbing a mountain to reach the temple, and any other person would observe the same when looking at a Mithraic temple standing over the mounts. Although we can claim that Mithraism is the first

Persian religion which brought its own specific rituals, but in fact the primitive Mithraism has not considered to be similar to any Abrahamic religion with rituals we know today. The whole ritual consisted of a simple and rational method for life, and a mystic manner for having a better and kinder lifestyle. People had simple beliefs, including astrology and faith in natural forces and magic, all controlled by Mithras, the one who was carrying out the justice. In ancient Persian beliefs, mythical Mithras was born out of a stone in a deep cave at a very long and cold night (Javadi & Nikoei, 2016: 17). Nightly worshipping and praying in sacred mountains and having hope for a luminous light and rebirth of Mithras who is the symbol of light himself, has a continuous presence in Persian faith. In addition, knowing the level of the interest Mithras followers had for the sky and the stars, we can get to the conclusion that the most important timing of a Mithras temple was during the night time and before the sun rise, thus temples were made facing the sun¹⁹, so the pilgrims or the followers could observe the rising sun after accomplishing the prayers and rituals in a peaceful environment. Lighting a fire and dancing rituals²⁰, was most probably taking place during the night time. It is believed that during the Mehregan festival, sacrificing, dancing, playing music and drinking wine was common (Razi, 2002: 202). Mithras followers needed the nocturnal silence for worshipping their own god under the influence of Hoama extract. On the other hand, even today there are many religions affected by Persian mysticism choose the night time for Sama and other rituals. Silence of the night, being outside of the city and being close to sacred mountains are necessity of such rituals²¹. In underground temples also, the interior part was designed to be dark and induce the night time. In this cases, ceiling of the temple was designed by the stars and nocturnal decorative elements, resembled the night sky. Fire pots were placed inside the temples so pilgrims could pray towards the fire

as a representative of Mithras²², as Ardeshirbod (1963: 62) suggests Mithras was the representative of the heavenly light and he resides in the fire. Mithras followers used to cover their faces by mask during the ceremonies, and wished to fulfill their desire for the glorious eternity (Ghadyani, 1997: 94). The reason for wearing a mask is that their religious position could not been recognized in this way, and even normal people could participate in the ceremony. Today masquerade ball events are a copy of this Mithraic ritual. Presence of lightened up fire pots in night, pleasant odor of hemp and Hoama extract, and Sama dance in the silence of the night could create a spiritual ambience to pray and worship.

Nocturnal Appearance Analysis

In addition to paying attention to landscaping and the use of natural elements in the environment of the temple, it is important to have the environment and the landscape during nightfall, due to more outdoor activities of the temple and after sunset. As shown in Table 2, Mithraic temple were multi-sensual appearance and were more for use at night.

Discussion

Persians with their creative mentality has described the emergence of the universe and themselves in a very basic and primitive framework in the form of the stories, narratives and myths. Mythology of every nation reflects the culture and origin of that nation, and the dominant spirit of the time. Before Zoroaster, Mithras was one of most significant Indo-Persian god. His tales is combined with the myths and legends. To evaluate the symbols of this religion and thinking about the beliefs and opinions of Mithraism to reopen its dimensions and requirements of the structures left by them is equal to value the footprints of a several thousand years old civilization. There are no point in Iranian art missing a sign of Mithraism. We face the lack of spatial accordance in

Table. 2. Nocturnal appearance analysis. Source: authors.

Multi-sensual Appearance	Analyzing the Mithraic temple appearance in regards of relating to human senses in the night
General Orientation	First, the walking through the path towards the temple and joining other pilgrims, a symbolic action In climbing up for the rock temples and moving downward in underground temples. After accomplishing the ceremony and Sama, during the sun rise the ritual was becoming complete Facing the rising sun
Visual	To see the lightened up fire pots and the circle of the worshippers around the fire To see the ceremonies, dancing and Sama ritual To see the sacrifice ceremony inside the temple in presence of the master. To see the stars and the movement of the heavenly bodies which is believed to hold a very significant Importance in Mithraism according to some scholars, up to the level that in underground temples Ceiling was designed with the inscriptions of stars. To see the sunrise, which was the highlighted part of the ceremony
Audition	Listening to the sound of flowing water and streams which usually were available next to the Mithraic temple, a sign of presence of Anahita during the ceremonies. Listening to the sound of blowing wind in the trees which were present next to the Mithraic temple And generally a specific type of tree was chosen for this purpose. (Mithras counteracted the demon Interference by the help of the wind) Listening to the religious hymns which was sang aloud in groups
Olfaction	Smell of the poppy flower seeds on the molten stones and fire to create a trance state. Smell of the incense sticks in the temple
Taste	Drinking the Hoama extract to enter the trance state in accordance with the religious position of the Person, only The Master could drink seven lines of the bowl. That is the reason he wall called as “Haft-Khat”, means holder of the “Seven lines”. Drinking the holy wine which was a combination of sacrificed animal blood and Hoama extract. Eating the sacrificed animal meat Eating the holy bread
Tactile Sensation	Baptism and provoking a sensation of purity and cleanliness for attending the ceremony. Feeling the heat in presence of fire. For followers of the path, tactile sensation was considered to be a valuable stage, And they believed they could set free from the egoistic boundaries. They used to get a stamp or tattoos Of Mithras while joining the religion

Mithraeum architectural design when studying the specific architectural style of Mithraism, which was based on cave temples, thus a need for a complementary space is felt. This specifies the need for a complementary space. According to present study, it seems that such lacked spaces could be the exterior environment of the temples which has been designed to be used during a specific time of the day. Due to the absence of enough evidence and limited research area, architectural elements are not studied fully, and that causes an incomplete final result. However,

this studies could be a fundamental platform for future researches on Mithraeums.

Conclusion

Landscape design, and the appearance in general is considered to be the first comprehension from the environment and somehow, is the first confrontation between the architecture and the observer. Such comprehension surrounds the observer and shapes the total perception of any space. No architectural perception would be completed without missing the landscape. This is

considered to be one of the most important points in understanding a space which is evaluated in Mithraic temple architecture. Persian's compassion towards nature, the holy mount, water and plants is too strong that we may claim that the landscape design has never been missing natural elements. Obviously, Mithraic temples and worshipping places attributed to Mithraism are developed in accordance with mentioned elements. These worshipping places are formed in the dark caves of mountains or in a simulated space, to provide the conditions for presence of Mithras and Anahita. Colors and patterns are repeated in accordance with conceptual notions of Mithraism, the religious position and in full appropriateness with divine signs of Mithras. Considering landscape and appearance of Mithraic temple comes into importance when we realize that astrology and forecasting based on the stars is one of the most important foundations of Mithraic instructions. Additionally, the interior design of the Mithraeum was always done for some specific people, while the ceremonies of Mithraism was always held with attendance of enormous number of followers. Mithraism followers believed that Mithras resting place is located in the earthly fire and heavenly sun. Watching the sunrise at dawn -in the darkness before the sun rises- and sacrificing ceremony away from the sunlight, doing their rituals around the fire in the silence and calmness of the night are considered to be essential requirements for Mithraism religious rites.

Fire, tearing away the darkness during the night and the sun, bestowing an unsparing light on earth. In between, we always observe a confrontation between day and night, darkness and light, good and evil, wisdom and ignorance. Followers of Mithras had to stay focused on going through the path from the darkness towards the light while participating in rituals. Thus, to create such experience, every single human sense have been used on the way to reaching the temple which

usually were located on a high mount. Mithraeum was usually narrow, has a place for baptism and sacrificing and a platform for followers to sit on it. It also had a spot for The Master with decorative features. Drinking Haoma, smelling hashish, watching the fire over the fire pots, sama dance, chanting religious hymns, group ceremonies, etc. all required a mystic environment outside of the temple which provides the opportunity for gathering all the devotees together even people outside of the circle. An environment which holds meaningful values as well as practical aspects suitable for a Mithraic worshipping place.

A spot which was practical, in addition to employing the conceptual values; since all the pilgrims could not attend the special ritual, an elevated level was available to reach the temple. Only The Master which was doing the sacrifice and Ayyaran could be present in the Mithraeum, and other followers had to stay outside, and watch the ceremony in bigger groups.

For achieving the requirement of performing the sacrifice in absence of the sun, importance of astrology, necessity of attendance of followers in exterior spaces, and pre sunrise ceremonies it seems that Mithras followers were the first landscape designers in Iran and even the world, which have tried to construct a nocturnal appearance for their temples, thinking about every needful measure for landscape perception in accordance with the rituals. A landscape which was multi-sensual, and creates inspiration and vitality not only for Mithras soldiers, but also for every pilgrims who wanted to experience the mystic trance under the moonlight.

Endnote

1. Mehr, Mithras
2. Worshipping means to get around something and it is different from the temple, which means a place to be a devotee according to lexicology. Here, we consider the Mithraic temple as a place to worship Mithras, not to pray. In present study wherever the term temple is used, it indicates the act of worshipping.
3. Aquincum Mithraeum in Hungary
4. Mithraeum of San Clemente in Rome

5. The general discussion in "Mithraism in Ancient World" book in which authors comments on other articles, and get to a total conclusion.
6. Getting in touch with sacrificed animal blood and consuming the flesh could lead to a magical power and identification (For more information see "Totem and Taboo" by Sigmund Freud) and was a symbol of divine power. Soldiers used to bind to such powers.
7. For more information see "Mithras and the Hypercosmic Sun" by David Ulansey.
8. To read more on similarity level of Mithraeum and the sky, read "From Body to Space and Time: Perceiving Space and Time in the Mithras Cult".
9. For more information please read the article "A Review on Two Pahlavi Terms of Padyab and Neyrang" by Mary Boyce.
10. Adrian
11. The sacred fire is observed from far distance. These fire pots are preserved in late fire temples, because they were in tune with keeping the Zoroastrian sacred fire alive. In Achaemenid era, fire used to be lighten up in open air and on high platforms (Dadvar & Barazande Hoseini, 2010: 10).
12. Padiavi ritual must have been done on front of the Mithraeum or fire pot (Cumont, 1956: 157).
13. Like Geghard monastery (Javadi, 2015).
14. Dare mehr
15. As Roman soldiers were very interested in this religion.
16. Ceasarea Mithraic Temple in Israel.
17. San Clemente Mithraic Temple.
18. Razi, 2002: 135.
19. Just like stone city Uplistsikhe (Javadi, 2015).
20. Sama (Sufism dancing), Sama Dance (Engheta, 2008: 91).
21. In religious rituals of Yazidis. Such ritual is highlighted in "By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept" by Paulo Coelho pointing at one Christian cult
22. Mithras was the representative of heavenly light. He is the light of almighty. Mithras resided in the fire (Ardeshibod, 1963: 62-63).

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HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Alipour, S; Nasir Salemi, M.R. & Falamaki, M. (2019). *An analysis on Mithraic Temple landscape Structure*. *Bagh-e Nazar*, 16 (74):35-48.

DOI: 10.22034/bagh.2019.99171.3235

URL: http://www.bagh-sj.com/article_91008_en.html

