

“Bull in the Boat” - An Interpretation for One of the Depictions of Mithraic Iconography

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Abstract : Since the publication of Franz Cumont, there have been countless works on the mysteries of Mithras and the iconography of Mithraic, but there are elements that have received less attention in research. Most of the works on the subject deal with the bull-killing-motif, whose astronomical significance has been well proven by several eminent scholars. Among the iconographic elements that survive in the reliefs and frescoes of Mithras, there are several that have not yet been clearly interpreted. These include the depiction of a bull in the boat, which occurred mainly in the Danubian provinces. Using CIMRM, one collected the cases that contain the motif under study, created a database of them grouped by location, and then used a comparative method to compare the representations adjacent to the motif. The aim of this research is to find an explanation for this neglected motif in the iconography of Mithras and to try to map its origins. The interpretation may be given to a mithraic representation for which to the author’s best knowledge no explanation has been given so far, and the question may be reopened for discussion.

Keywords : roman history, religion, Mithras, iconography

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