

HABILITATION THESIS REVIEWER'S REPORT

Masaryk University

Applicant

Mgr. Aleš Chalupa, Ph.D.

Habilitation thesis

The Roman Cult of Mithras: Atlas of Sites and Catalogue of Evidence I

Reviewer

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Mr. Aleš Chalupa's habilitation thesis, entitled *The Roman Cult of Mithras: Atlas of Sites and Catalogue of Mithraic Evidence I*, takes the form of a 626-page volume.

The volume sets out to list all Mithraic finds in Italy, Gaul, Hispania and Brittany, Egypt, Asia Minor and the Levant, Africa and Crete. This geographical area corresponds to that covered by the first volume of Maarten Jozef Vermaseren's *Corpus Inscriptionum et Monumentorum Religionis Mithriacae (CIMRM)*, published in The Hague in 1956. Even today, the CIMRM is the reference work for many studies on the Roman cult of Mithras. However, almost 70 years later, its use is no longer sufficient. On the one hand, a number of the documents Vermaseren includes in his corpus concern the cult of Sol invictus and not that of Mithras. Secondly, since the 1950s, dozens of mithraea have been unearthed throughout the Empire, adding hundreds of artefacts and archaeological monuments of great importance to the CIMRM. It is therefore with the greatest interest that we welcome Mr. Chalupa's very important work.

His investigation joins similar or partially similar works carried out in recent years on Brittany, Dacia, Gaul, the Iberian Peninsula and Italy: the volumes by Barbara Rossi, *I mitrei della Britannia romana nelle testimonianze architettoniche, scultoree ed epigrafiche* (Oxford 2004), Gabriel Sicoe, *Mithräischen Steindenkmäler aus Dakien* (Cluj-Napoca 2014) and Jaime Alvar Ezquerra, *El culto de Mitra en Hispania* (Madrid 2018), the catalog of Philippe Roy's thesis on *La réception du culte de Mithra en Italie et dans les provinces occidentales de l'Empire romain (Ier - IVe siècle)* (Toulouse 2016), as yet unpublished and unavailable to the author (cf. his remark p. 9), and the theses by Claudina Romero Mayorga, *Iconografía mitraica en Hispania* (Madrid 2016) and Vittoria Canciani, *Archaeological Evidence of the Cult of Mithras in Ancient Italy* (Verona 2022), unpublished but available on the web, to name just a few.

Mr. Chalupa is perfectly familiar with all these works, as demonstrated by the very rich and precise bibliography of almost 50 pages he gives on pp. 531-579 and the accuracy and the richness of the references in the footnotes.

After a short but extremely clear, even essentially bibliographical/historiographical and methodological introduction (pp. 1-10), the bulk of the volume consists of the catalog itself (pp. 11-445), followed by 131 illustrations, most of them in color (with a list of his iconographic sources on pp. 591-601). Although these illustrations are often of good quality, one wonders what criteria dictated their selection (their accessibility on the web (?), as the author does not

appear to have requested original photographs of monuments preserved in museums). A concordance index with the CIMRM (p. 603-618) closes the volume. 13 maps and several summary tables are scattered throughout the volume. The captions for the maps, whose colors correspond to those used in the summary tables, is given on p. 2. Perhaps it would have been more practical to associate it with each map?

A comment on the footnotes: it would be important to always give the year of publication after the author's name, to avoid confusion; thus, on p. 424, note 84, we read Walters 1974: 155-156, but just above, note 74, only Walters 45; ditto for Schwertheim in the same note. A question: what is the order of references in the notes? Thus, n. 81, reads CIMRM 989 = TMM II, no. 237bis (p. 396) = Walters 43 = Schwertheim 198a = Hettner 1893: no. 114 (p. 67) = CSIR DE IV.3, no. 262 (pp. 128-129) and pl. 60, but the order adopted escapes me. Perhaps a chronological order of publication would have been more rigorous?

The catalog itself is of considerable interest and is a fantastic addition to the Mithraic Studies. Mr. Chalupa has done a lot of reading and thinking, and his critical analysis of the documentation is as precise as it is pertinent. Admittedly, there are inevitably a few typos (e.g., p. 415: Nérís-les-Baines instead of Nérís-les-Bains; id. p. 432), but this very rigorous work is fascinating to consult. I don't think I've found any point of disagreement with the author in the entries I've consulted in detail, and I fully share the rigor of his analysis and reasoning, which are of the highest standard.

Mr. Chalupa's work, while not replacing the CIMRM (which will continue to be consulted for descriptions, dimensions and places of conservation of monuments, in particular), modernizes, updates and completes it. In a way, it almost gives it a second life. This Atlas is an indispensable tool for anyone wishing to study the Roman cult of Mithras. I look forward to reading Volume II soon.

But I'd already like to offer my warmest congratulations and thanks to Mr. Chalupa for the wonderful tool he has given us with his Atlas.

Reviewer's questions for the habilitation thesis defence (number of questions up to the reviewer)

What criteria dictated the selection of the illustrations?

What is the order of references in the notes?

Did you start to work on Volume II?

Do you plan an open access publication of the volumes?

Conclusion

The habilitation thesis entitled *The Roman Cult of Mithras: Atlas of Sites and Catalogue of Evidence I* by Mgr. Aleš Chalupa, Ph.D., fulfils requirements expected of a habilitation thesis in the field of Classic Philology.

Date: 1 Feb. 2024

Signature: 