

# LETTER TO EDITOR

## Mithra's Brain

**Dear Editor,**

Finding out about the extent to which a ritual can be similar to the human cognitive system can be very effective in understanding its development. Were the rituals influenced by brain physiology and was this the mystery to their effectiveness? Are these the rituals and continuing prayers which have caused the brain to grow and develop? Perhaps probing into such investigations would show us that human development did not occur unilaterally and is the result of a bilateral interaction between the brain and the surrounding world including the culture.

Visiting the Raise Cave in Niyasar<sup>1</sup> (Figure 1) was a chance to think about some of these questions during a unique experience. The Raise Cave is a man-made cave in Niyasar which dates back to the era of Archimedean and was in fact a Mithra Temple<sup>2</sup>. Mithra is one of the most important goddess in ancient Persian who is protector of truth and contracts<sup>3</sup>. This cave consists of nested tunnels/corridors as short as half a meter at some points. This calm, quiet, and

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1. Niyasar is an old city located in middle of Iran.

2. Acquaintance with Raise Cave, 1389: 26.

3. Malandra, 1983: 112.



dark environment was used for praying and the total length of the rooms' tunnels/corridors is 2500m<sup>4</sup>. Passing through the tunnel/corridors seems to be similar to passing through different stages of a ritual. Although the whole cave could not be accessed due to the risk of falling, approximately 100m was open to the public and even this short distance was quite breath-taking.



Figure 1. Raise Cave in Niyasar. Available from: <http://www.sazesafar.com>.

The height of the tunnels/corridors gradually decreased, which felt like passing from one ritual stage to another. This is quite compatible with seven steps of Mehr religion<sup>5</sup> in Mithraism. Mithraism is a deep and ancient religion and mysterious rituals in Old Persian and Roman Empire<sup>6</sup>.

Passing through tunnels/corridors of the Raise Cave was quite similar to passing through brain tunnel/corridors leading humans to a novel stage of development. This similarity with the brain's processing structure raises a question on the extent to which Mithra rituals were effective in the cognitive development of the brain. Answering the very question requires more comprehensive studies on the relationship between the brain and culture.

### References

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4. Acquaintance with Raise Cave. 1389: 26.

5. Mehr is another name of Mithra in Zoroastrian literature.

6. Vermazen, 1387: 52.

