



## CAUTES AND CAUTOPATES

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**CAUTES AND CAUTOPATES**, the two *dadophoroi* or torch bearers who often flank Mithras in the bull-slaying scene and who are sometimes shown in the birth scenes of Mithras. They are normally shown with Cautes holding an upraised torch, Cautopates with lowered torch. Sometimes they both hold a pedom or shepherd's crook (for complete iconographic details, see Hinnells, pp. 36-67; Campbell, pp. 29-43). The etymology of the two names remains obscure. Apparently Cautopates is a compound containing the same initial element as Cautes. From an Old Iranian point of view this *˚pates* might represent either *\*pāta-* "protected (by)" or *\*pati-* "lord, master (of)." As for *cautes*, *cauto-*, it is tempting to understand the two names as deriving from a single epithet of Miθra attested in Avestan as *vouru.gaoiiaoiti-*; thus, Cautes would be a latinized form of a hypocoristic *\*Gauti* of *\*(varu-)gau(yau)ti-* and Cautopates, *\*Gautipāta/\*Gautipati* a secondary formation on *\*Gauti* (Gershevitch, pp. 151-52). Another possibility is to derive Cautes from Median *\*kauta-* "small, young" (cf. Mid. Pers. *kōdag*), either as an epithet of Miθra himself or as a reference to the diminutive size of his attendants (Schwartz, pp. 413-22). But all this is uncertain.

In the *Mihr yašt*, Miθra is accompanied on his diurnal course across the sky by the gods of judgment, Rašnu on his right and Sraoša on his left, with the positions reversed for his nocturnal passage (cf. Gershevitch, p. 39). This ancient association, vague as it is, may have provided a precedent for the Mithraic figures, but the real source of Cautes and Cautopates, regardless of etymology, is in the astrological speculation so fundamental to all of



Mithraism and which is not derived from traditional Iranian religion. Their identity can be established only with reference to the iconography of the tauroctony. There, in the series of zodiacal signs running from right to left (i.e., from west to east), Cautes with upraised and Cautopates with lowered torch are normally associated with the signs for the constellations Taurus and Scorpio respectively. Since, as Insler has shown (pp. 522ff.), the tauroctony marks the advent of the vernal agricultural cycle (and is most likely connected with the festival of Mehragān)—not precisely with the vernal equinox, through the overcoming of Taurus (the constellation dominating winter) by the Sun it should follow that Cautes would symbolize, or at least introduce, the half-year from planting to harvest and Cautopates the other half. Beck has argued for the possibility that an astral identity was made in this regard between Cautes as Aldebaran and Cautopates as Antares (pp. 5ff.). In such tauroctonies they are situated on the left and right, respectively; however, because their positions are reversed on about one quarter of the tauroctonies, Beck proposed to see them in these cases as representing dawn (east, left) and, twilight (west, right), with Mithras as noon in the diurnal passage of the sun (cf. Cumont, 1902, p. 109). Owing to these and many other iconographic variations, it is difficult to ascribe only one function to the *dadophoroi* in the mysteries. Since they are frequently shown as mere miniatures of Mithra, and in a number of dedicatory inscriptions appear to be only his epithets, Cumont (1902, p. 108; 1895, p. 11) understood the phrase of Pseudo-Dionysius *triplasiou Mithrou* to mean that they formed a trinity with Mithra. As the expression means “thrice-great Mithra” and its reference is obscure, it is best to view Cautes and Cautopates as close companions of Mithra who are sometimes identified with him and sometimes held distinct.

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