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Diatreta (cage cups): the debate continues

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DAVID WHITEHOUSE, with the assistance of WILLIAM GUDENRATH and PAUL ROBERTS, *CAGE CUPS. LATE ROMAN LUXURY GLASSES* (The Corning Museum of Glass, Corning NY 2015). Pp. 255, many colour figs. ISBN 978-0-87290-200-8.

Diatreta are a group of luxury glass vessels whose secrets have not yet been — and may never be — fully disclosed. In this volume, the late David Whitehouse, a renowned expert in Roman glass, attempted to get to the bottom of the phenomenon. The foreword, written by the director of the Corning Museum of Glass, K. B. Wight, explains (7) that the book was published posthumously because of the author's untimely death. The second foreword, penned by the author himself, outlines how the work came about, tracing its genesis (8). Parts of the text reworked or written by other colleagues could not be commented upon by Whitehouse before he passed away and unfortunately it is not very clear to the reader who wrote what; nor is it obvious to what extent the manuscript as a whole was reworked.

In the introduction (11-19), we are given definitions of the terms “cage cup” and “Late Roman”. According to the author(s):

A cage cup is a vessel decorated with openwork. A glass cage cup is made by blowing a thick-walled blank, usually of colorless glass (sometimes together with colors), followed, after cooling, by cutting and sandblasting. Because sandblasting was unknown before the 19th century, the term ‘cage cup’, when applied to Roman objects, refers to vessels that were finished by cutting.

The openwork mesh of a cage cup is attached to the body by means of struts. The cage itself consists of successive circles or ovals. Some cups have inscriptions just below the rim with ovolo friezes, others have ovolo friezes without inscriptions. The mesh can be combined with, or replaced by, a frieze depicting human figures or animals. The introduction also deals with the definition of the Latin *diatretum* / *vas diatretum*, which means simply “pierced” or “perforated”. The *diatretarius*, known from Latin literature, thus denotes a person who creates perforated objects. There is also mention of the term *vitrearius* (glassmaker or glassworker). Because many Roman vessels exhibit cut decorations, *diatretarius* is sometimes translated as glasscutter, which in my view is incorrect. Unfortunately, the names of occupations are not often mentioned in ancient literature; if they are, clues are rarely given as to the precise activities or the materials worked with. Constantine's list (*C.Th.* 1952, 13.4.2) does not mention the *vitrearius* and the *diatretarius* together, which perhaps suggests that the latter did not even work with glass. Nor does an oft-quoted passage in the 6th-c. *Digest* (1985, vol. 1, p. 186) reveal whether or not the *diatretarius* worked with glass:

If you gave someone the order to make a *diatretum* cup and he broke it because of lack of skill, he would be held responsible for the damage ...

He would not be held responsible if the material was faulty, but there is no explicit mention of the material itself. Moreover, the first time *diatreta* are mentioned, by Martial (late 1st c. A.D.), is so chronologically distant from the references under Constantine and in the *Digest* that the meaning of the word might have changed in the meantime. These uncertainties are openly discussed here, though in the end the author agrees with the general view that objects with openwork decorations were made of glass or a semi-precious stone.¹

The term “Late Roman” is said to refer to the period between c.250 and 450. A brief history of the period is provided. Cage cups were long seen as an exclusively late phenomenon until two very similar cups were found in graves dating from the late 1st and early 2nd c. in the Netherlands and Belgium. Some researchers today consider those to be precursors to cage cups. The “Pharos beaker” in a hoard at Begram (Afghanistan), whose date is still hotly debated, may also belong to this group, which again brings to mind the verses of Martial.

1 Hot-worked openwork, as seen, for example, on the Disch Cantharus (see below) is not discussed in the book other than for the purpose of comparison.

These introductory remarks are followed by some background information on the history of research on cage cups. The first attempt at classification, based on a specific number of vessels, was made by D. B. Harden and J. M. C. Toynbee. They divided them into a Group A and a Group B, Group A comprising vessels with figurative depictions or representational ornaments, while Group B contained vessels with an openwork mesh. Inscriptions occurred on some vessels in both groups: the fact that most inscriptions were toasts suggests that the cups were drinking vessels, although they may also have been lamps (16). Some cage cups are quite large and would have been rather heavy when full. It is hard to imagine how a full cup stood on the fragile mesh or how one would have held a full cup by its openwork mesh. The rim, sometimes quite widely outspread, does not lend itself to drinking either (even if J. Welzel did manage to drink from one of his own replicas). A moulding frequently found beneath the rim, in many cases quite irregular and not very carefully worked, was perhaps originally invisible; possibly it served as a ledge for some kind of metal suspension-bracket, as exemplified by the vessel illustrated on the book's title page. This raises the question of whether the toasts belonged to a drinking context or whether there are other possibilities. The earlier literature provides various topics for discussion: the openwork décor used on cage cups is also found on metal objects, in the form of baskets into which glass vessels were fitted. The term "baskets" is occasionally used in the sources in reference to lamps² and Whitehouse himself thought it possible that at least the hemispherical cups may have been used as lamps.³ The fact that other Roman vessels sometimes bear inscriptions in the form of toasts prompted Whitehouse to interpret toast-bearing *diatreta* as components of late-antique vessel-sets alongside pitchers and amphoras, comparable to silver hoards such as the Esquiline and Sevso treasures. He refers to a fragment from Cologne (cat. 47) which can probably be classified as a shoulder fragment from an amphora. Only three baskets with cages have so far come to light. As the term *situla* does not appear in Hilgers' list of Latin vessel-names⁴ either amongst the glass vessels or in the list of tableware, it is not clear whether buckets were even used in the context of eating and drinking. A more compelling argument lies in the depiction of Dionysiac scenes in association with toasts.

The composition of grave-goods in rich late-antique burials makes the reference to glass vessel-sets seem almost irrelevant. I am not aware of any rich glass vessel-sets from a settlement context of this period. The grave at Köln-Braunsfeld, for instance, contained: a cage cup, roughly the same size as a glass beaker with coloured blobs, 3 hemispherical glass beakers, 3 glass jugs, 3 ceramic jugs, 2 glass plates, 1 iron knife with a bone handle, 1 bone die and several glass fragments; there are no silver vessels, pitchers or amphoras. The jugs and beakers are in sets of three, whilst the cage cup and the beaker with blobs and the plates form sets of two. I am not sure if this combination allows us to draw the conclusion that the cage cup was a drinking vessel.⁵ The grave goods from late burials come in a rich variety of combinations; the cage cup from Niederemmel, which was combined with a long, spindle-shaped *balsamarium* and a coarseware cooking pot, is a case in point.⁶ Can we conclude that this cage cup was a drinking vessel, or could it have served some other purpose?

The early cage cups and one or two cage cups of undetermined date are treated on pp. 21-31. The beakers from Tongeren and Nijmegen date from the same general period as the first instance of the word *diatretum* (Martial), although the material of which it is made is not

2 E. M. Stern, "Kaniskia: glass and metal openwork lamps," in *Annales 15e Congrès Assoc. int. pour l'Histoire du Verre* (Nottingham 2003) 98-101.

3 Ibid. 100.

4 W. Hilgers, *Lateinische Gefäßnamen. Bezeichnungen, Funktion und Form römischer Gefäße nach den antiken Schriftquellen* (Düsseldorf 1969) 15 (list of tableware), 22 ("glass" as material and the vessels in produced in glass).

5 O. Doppelfeld, "Das Diatretglas aus dem Gräberbezirk des römischen Gutshofs von Köln-Braunsfeld," *KölnJb* 5 (1960/61) especially 16-19, figs. 8-13.

6 K. Goethert-Polaschek, *Katalog der römischen Gläser des Rheinischen Landesmuseums Trier* (Trierer Grabungen und Forschungen 9; 1977) pl. 19.

specified. The question of early *diatreta* had already been raised by the Pharos beaker found at Begram. That hoard contained many objects from the empire as well as some from India and China. The findspot was identified as Kapisa, summer capital of the Kushan empire. Based on the presence of burnt layers, the excavators assumed that the city had fallen victim to an attack on the Kushan empire by the Sasanian Shapur I in A.D. 241. In his critical study of the hoard, M. Menninger credited this assumption as plausible,⁷ despite the fact that the attack is not supported by any ancient source. As a result, the Begram beaker was dated to a similar period as were the fragments from Athens, purportedly deposited in destruction layers resulting from the attack by the Herulians in 267. Various researchers from a range of disciplines have attempted to date the Begram hoard; the discussion, on the coins in particular, is complex. In the case of the glass vessels, it quickly becomes apparent that the objects are of different dates. The facet cut beakers date from the end of the 1st/beginning of the 2nd c., but the animal-shaped vessels with mesh-like applied trailing are definitely later. Moreover, since hardly any parallels have come to light, they may not have originated from core areas of the Roman empire but were made somewhere along the route between the empire and Begram. A bottle from Italy with similar decorations has been dated to the 1st/early 2nd c., but it cannot serve as any kind of proof without some explanation of how the date was arrived at;⁸ the Disch Cantharus (see below) which bears similar decoration dates from a later period. Whitehouse himself felt that the Pharos beaker was one of the earliest objects in the hoard, which is indeed possible given how similar (though not identical) it is to the beakers from Tongeren and Nijmegen.

Next, the early pieces are described in detail, along with their contexts and associated references. The Pharos beaker is also discussed, including the possible significance of the figures depicted on it. Whitehouse cites its restorer Piponnier, who believed that the decorations had been “attached when hot” and the detailing subsequently added by cutting.

The research history of various *diatreta* follows (33-37). Despite discoveries like the Trivulzio cup (1675) and the beaker from Daruvar (1785), they did not attract much scholarly attention until the early 20th c. Individual examples were mentioned here and there but nobody attempted to compile a complete list of all known cage cups. The only aspect that was discussed was how they were actually made. Harden and Toynbee listed various examples in the context of their presentation of the Lycurgus cup in the British Museum, dividing them into two groups.

In this, the final and most comprehensive work on *diatreta* thus far, Whitehouse lists 69 objects with 13 addenda. The first characteristic of cage cups to be discussed is the openwork technique. The author(s) believe that the ornamentation was “cold-worked and not applied as trails of hot glass, such as are found on the Disch Cantharus”. Whilst it is true that the ornamentation would not have been applied, questions regarding the manufacturing technique have by no means been fully answered (see below). Another hot-worked example besides the Disch Cantharus is the shell cup from Cologne, recently dated to the 3rd c.⁹

Diatreta can be divided into 6 different forms: dishes or skillets (*paterae*); bowls; beakers; bottles; amphoras or pitchers; and bucket (*situla*). Closed vessels are usually found on their own, beakers and bowls being the most numerous. Three baskets are known. There is a discussion of what the vessels could have been used for. Various inscriptions have been identified: on a plate (1), on bowls (3) and on beakers (several). Whitehouse lists those with inscriptions, determining their degree of fragmentation and discussing the messages conveyed by the inscriptions.

7 M. Menninger, *Untersuchungen zu den Gläsern und Gipsabgüssen aus dem Fund von Begram (Afghanistan)* (Würzburg 1996).

8 The reasons for the date are given on p. 118 no. 69: other objects from the same grave are from the end of the 1st c. The bottle is, according to the authors, related to the Begram finds for which an early date is assumed. See also M. Cima and M. A. Tomei, *Vetri a Roma* (Milan 2012) 105, fig. 8; 118 no. 69.

9 D. von Boeselager, “Römische Gläser aus den Gräbern an der Luxemburger Strasse in Köln,” *KölnJb* 45 (2012) 107-10.

Most are in Latin but two are in Greek. Toasts exist on many late vessels, not only on glass but also on pottery (e.g., colour-coated beakers of the Niederbieber 33 type). The author also mentions late cameo vessels, such as the bowl from Stein am Rhein (Switzerland [not Germany as stated on 43]).

Fifteen beakers bear a monochrome or polychrome mesh; in some rare cases the interior solid vessel is not colourless but coloured. Some are made of dichroic glass. Other late, multi-coloured glass vessels (e.g., glass with snake-thread decoration) also exist, but they all predate the *diatreta*.

A detailed description of the chemical composition of the different colours comes in a short section (44) on “the chemistry of colour” by M. Taylor. Whitehouse has a discussion (45) of dichroism as a phenomenon, thus far found almost exclusively on *diatreta* or vessels having three-dimensional ornamentation. More fragments similar to the Lycurgus cup have been found since,¹⁰ also of a different colour depending on whether they are lit from the front or the back. Eight of the 11 dichroic objects known to the author bear openwork decoration, who writes: “Dichroic glass may have been developed by glassmakers who supplied the makers of cage cups”. Nine dichroic objects were analysed. R. Brill, who carried out the analyses, discovered that the colour changes cannot be explained solely by the addition of gold and silver to the glass; they were also due to the different temperatures to which the glass was exposed at the time of its manufacture. Recently, new methods of analysis have recently yielded even more precise data.¹¹ The chapter ends with a summary of the analytical results.

Next (49-53) comes a discussion of the distribution and dating of cage cups. The objects were widely distributed; 10 probably came from the E Mediterranean, 9 from Italy, the remainder from northern and eastern parts of the empire. The main sites of interest are Rome, Cologne, Trier and what is now Hungary; for dichroic vessels it is Turkey. It is possible that they were manufactured in both East and West. Most cage cups date to the 4th c. Three give rise to the assumption that production began in the late 3rd c.: one from Strasbourg (no. 20), fragments of a cup from Athens (no. 16), and another from Taraneš (no. 25).

(i) The beaker from Strasbourg (now lost) appears to have carried an inscription (it was broken) pointing towards Maximian (r. 286-308). The sarcophagus that contained the cup also yielded a coin from the reign of Constans I that cannot have been minted before 337. Thus this cup was not necessarily made in the late 3rd c. Yet is it likely that a beaker referring to Maximianus would have been made after his reign?

(ii) The cage cup from Taraneš was found in a richly-furnished male burial. Two artefacts of chronological significance are a gold crossbow brooch with onion-shaped knobs that bears an inscription and a niello-decorated silver platter. Both are dated to the 4th c., but the inscription on the brooch has raised concerns. Whitehouse argues that it should be taken as the *cognomen* of Diocletian, which would date the brooch to between 286 and 305. What Whitehouse does not mention is that the excavators attributed the inscription to Licinius I (r. 309-324), the eastern ruler over the region where the brooch was found, along with his son Licinius II (born in 315). The *cognomen* IOVIVS mentioned on the brooch is attested for both Diocletian and Licinius, if not quite as often for the latter.¹² Even more important for the chronology of the burial, however, is the fact that all the datable grave-goods belong to the 4th c., notably the nielloed platter which bears small portrait heads and shares other similarities with one of the platters from the Kaiseraugst treasure. According to A. Kaufmann-Heinimann, the Taraneš platter dates from the first quarter of the 4th c., and the excavators believed it to have been created to commemorate the *decennalia* of Licinius I in 316/317.¹³ It is therefore plausible that the cage cup from

10 See Whitehouse and Höpken on 189.

11 See the footnote on 47 referring to D. J. Barber and I. C. Freestone, “An investigation of the origin of the colour of the Lycurgus Cup by Analytical Transmission Electron Microscopy,” *Archaeometry* 32.1 (1990) 33-45.

12 I am grateful to Markus Peter for advice on this matter.

13 A. Kaufmann-Heinimann, “Die Decennalien-Platte des Constans 59ab,” in M. Guggisberg (ed.), *Der*

Taraneš was possibly made in the first half of the 4th c.

(iii) The early date that has been proposed for the fragments from Athens is also debatable. It is always tricky to link archaeological layers with real events. The accuracy of dates proposed for finds from destruction horizons is generally questionable; even if the entire stratigraphic sequence and precise findspot are known in detail, it is not always completely clear which stratum a particular artefact actually belonged to. In my opinion, the context in this case cannot be used as irrefutable evidence of an early date for this group of vessels.

More generally, I wonder why it is necessary to date the earliest *diatreta* to the late 3rd c. They were definitely in use from the 4th c., and in fact from early within the 4th c., as shown by the burial at Taraneš. Buckets appear to have been a still later development, as they date from the 5th c.

Pages 55-67 are devoted to the manufacture of *diatreta*. This chapter outlines the rather heated debate that has raged at almost every congress in recent years. Though Whitehouse tries to remain objective, his preference (or that of his co-authors?) is apparent in every line of the argumentation. Close observation of the objects is important here and every researcher studying the matter has adhered to this principle. The surface of a cage cup can only be studied in sufficient detail, however, if the glass is not (or at least not severely) weathered. The author also makes the valid point that it is important to study the manufacturing process of modern replicas, but it should still be borne in mind that today's tools, modern glass and current methods may not be exactly the same as in antiquity. A modern-day replica cannot automatically count as proof for how a vessel was made in the past: it is simply *one* of a number of possible ways.

In this chapter, Whitehouse or his co-authors attempt to verify his preferred method of production, namely the cutting and carving of the vessel from a solid, thick-walled blank. He also mentions two other methods proposed by various scholars: hot-working the cage by fusing prefabricated parts, or pressing the cage in a mould and then finishing it by cutting. The first method (hot-working and fusing together prefabricated parts) is favoured by only a few researchers, although it has been re-created by craftsmen. It cannot really be reconstructed on the basis of the finished products but it could potentially have been used in the manufacture of so-called early *diatreta* in order to apply vegetal decorations. As the branches on these early *diatreta* are round in cross-section, it is unlikely that they were cut. However, in my view these early vessels are not associated with the later ones: they appear to be isolated finds, and too much time elapsed between the "early" and the "late" *diatreta*. The alternative method, that of pressing a double-walled cage cup in a mould and finishing it by cutting, was proposed by R. Lierke. She has worked with glass herself and knows how the material reacts; she is also a shrewd observer. By studying the "mould-pressing" technique in more detail, various aspects become apparent, aspects which I have also seen on originals.¹⁴ Other colleagues have identified the same elements, which in fact support Lierke's theory: for example, semicircular struts that can be round where they meet the internal cup; links between the struts and both cups that are visible under a microscope; a spiral structure within the struts; the absence of cut bubbles but the presence of horizontally elongated bubbles; and the completely smooth inner surface of the cage. The cage links are trapezoidal in cross-section and the bottoms are flat with acute angles towards the bevelled edges. Although Lierke carried out experiments to prove her theory, further in-depth experiments are still required. Upon closer inspection of the theory, it quickly becomes apparent that it would have required extremely talented and experienced craftsmen to put it into practice; from a technical point of view, the method is by no means inferior to the "cutting" method and it would most certainly have been anything but "cheap". The paragraph "How cage cups were finished" includes a detailed description of how George Scott and Josef Welzel (who are not the only experts in this field) created replicas of *diatreta* by cutting and carving thick-walled blanks. They managed to make the most splendid and renowned replicas.

spätromische Silberschatz von Kaiseraugst. Die neuen Funde (Forschungen in Augst 34, 2003) 129-30, 142 and 149.

14 Here I owe thanks to the staff of the Landesmuseum in Trier.

The detailed catalogue (69-166) describes beautifully both the vessels and the fragments. In some instances, even more detailed photographs would have allowed the reader to verify certain statements. I refer in particular to the vessels housed at the Corning Museum of Glass which would have been readily available to Whitehouse. Vessel profiles as well as profiles/diameters of struts and cage links are also largely missing. It would also have been helpful to be given the total thickness of the vessel (i.e., the cup and the cage) and the distance between cage and cup. I am aware, of course, that this information would not have been available for every vessel, but it would have been useful to have it at least for those objects that the author had the opportunity to study in person.

A number of addenda (167-89) which Whitehouse could not provide are written by various other researchers. There follow various useful appendices: lists of cage cups with inscriptions, monochrome and polychrome vessels, chemical analyses, datable and roughly datable artefacts, and lost or misidentified cage cups. A lengthy excursus is devoted to a silver and glass cage cup in context. It describes a small fragment of silver openwork that is quite similar to the meshes seen on cage cups and was probably part of a bucket.¹⁵ The bottom of the bucket with openwork attachments has also survived. It came from a late-antique hoard of hacked silver found at Trapain Law (Scotland). The back of the "mesh" has very short pegs with slightly thickened, disc-like ends attached to the points where the oval links of the mesh meet. Some of the attachment points can also be seen on the front. The discoid ends of the pegs show that the metal mesh must have been attached *to the outside* of a receptacle. The bottom of the basket has traces of solder on the inside. Something was clearly soldered onto the piece to support the inner receptacle, or perhaps it served as its base.¹⁶ It is not known which part was used as the model for the other, nor do we know what the receptacle was made of. Various vessels consisting of an outer metal cage with an inner glass bowl are also described. Inkwells from N Italy (196) that consist of a simple cylindrical glass beaker on the inside with another cylindrical beaker made of hammered sheet silver on the outside in my view do not necessarily belong in the same category. None of them has any openwork decorations and they appear to be a regional phenomenon.

Appendix 7 deals with various vessels and objects cut from semi-precious stone, including the Rubens Vase and other well-known pieces cut of stone which were partially decorated in openwork. Appendix 8 describes 4 cage cups that Whitehouse wished to be published, including two almost identical pieces (nos. 1 and 4). They appear to be different from the originals and all four are probably forgeries. Some of the comments on these vessels were added by S. M. Goldstein. Appendix 9, on the wheel-cutting of cage cups, was written by D. Hill who has vast experience in the study of ancient methods of manufacturing glass vessels. He makes special reference to an unfinished fragment in the Benaki Museum, using it to present various stages in the cutting of the inscribed frieze. He also uses for illustration a small fragment of mesh from Grenoble since it shows a preparatory pattern on the front. He demonstrates the individual stages that result in a finished letter in the inscription. The diagram showing how the cutter proceeded when it came to working the mesh is taken from Welzel. Like the buckets, the Grenoble fragment belongs to the late group of *diatrete* which were in fact cut from a solid blank. As already stated by T. E. Haevernick,¹⁷ they are much heavier than other *diatrete*. A second difference is a massive ledge around the vessel mouth and the upper edge of the mesh, which is flush with the vessel wall and does not stand out from it. The vessels are cylindrical to slightly conical in shape and have flat bases (an artefact from San Marco is the only complete example).

The detailed catalogue was compiled with great care although it is not clear in every case who wrote the individual sections that accompany the catalogue or to what extent an original text was reworked, making them somewhat more difficult to assess. It is a pity that a certain degree of polemics that has plagued the debate on the manufacturing technique of *diatrete*

15 Thanks go to S. Martin-Kilcher who has studied the object.

16 I owe this observation to S. Martin-Kilcher.

17 T. E. Haevernick, "Zu dem Diatret von Termantia," *MadMitt* 12 (1971) 202-4.

comes to the fore here too; there is nothing wrong with disagreeing but everyone's opinions should be respected. If an ancient vessel can be replicated under current conditions using modern tools, then this *may* have been the method used in the past, but there may also have been other ways of achieving the same result. Modern thinking is different from ancient thinking and it is entirely possible that the ancients proceeded in ways that would not even occur to us today. Moreover, many tasks that were everyday activities have long since disappeared from our micro-managed and mechanised world. Therefore reconstructing ancient operating sequences is not a simple task.

Upon closer study of Lierke's theory, various aspects which are not compatible with that of cutting from solid glass blanks stand out. A high-quality, objective and detailed description of the Trier *diatreta* that confirms many of Lierke's observations has been provided by A. Gerick, conservator/restorer at the Rheinisches Landesmuseum.¹⁸ Points that are not answered by the theory of cutting from solid glass blanks are the following:

- the semi-circular struts;
- bubbles that have not been cut open;
- the fact that the wall of the inner cup and the inner wall of the mesh are parallel;
- the smoothness of the inner surface of the mesh;
- the ledge just below the rim, which is often unevenly shaped;
- scratches running around the inside of the inner cup just beneath the rim;
- struts with rounded ends that do not reach the outer cage;¹⁹
- continuous links between the outer cage, the struts and the inner cup (and twisting inside the struts that is visible under the microscope); and
- the amount of material wasted.

The process of mould-pressing is highly complex: it is at least as difficult for craftsmen to achieve as the process of cutting from a solid blank. More experiments are needed. Meanwhile, Lierke's ideas cannot simply be dismissed; in fact, they offer an adequate alternative model for the manufacture of these vessels.

It is sad to think that David Whitehouse was not able to complete the work himself and see its publication. It is essential reading for all those colleagues who have been fortunate enough to excavate such a precious vessel or for those who have one as part of their collections for it provides a comprehensive overview and countless invaluable pieces of information.

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Augst

18 A. Gerick, "'... den man muss die Originale s prechen lassen' (F. Fremersdorf 1956). Die Trierer Diatrete und die Frage nach der Herstellung römischer Netzgläser," in *Restaurierung und Archäologie* 3 (2010) 117-36.

19 Here it is not right to simply accuse A. Kisa of making erroneous observations.

Le culte de Mithra dans les provinces occidentales durant l'Antiquité tardive

Françoise Van Haepelen

DAVID WALSH, *THE CULT OF MITHRAS IN LATE ANTIQUITY. DEVELOPMENT, DECLINE AND DEMISE ca. A.D. 270-430* (Late Antique Archaeology, Supplementary Series vol. 2; Brill, Leiden 2018). Pp. xii + 146. ISBN 978-90-04-38080-6. EUR 121.

L'ouvrage de D. Walsh consacré au culte de Mithra durant l'Antiquité tardive est issu d'une dissertation doctorale soutenue à l'Université de Canterbury sous la direction de L. Lavan. Le sous-titre en précise l'objet et l'arc chronologique: il s'agit d'étudier le développement, le déclin et la fin du culte entre 270 et 430. Pour ce faire, l'auteur prend en considération les *mithraea* dont on peut supposer, sur la base des vestiges retrouvés, qu'ils étaient encore en activité durant cette époque. Un appendice consiste en une liste des *mithraea* construits et réparés entre 201 et