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POTTERY IMPORTS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON LOCAL PRODUCTS IN AGUNTUM, NORICUM

During the 500 years of settlement history in the Roman Municipium of Aguntum pottery was imported for diverse purposes. Besides amphorae, especially table ware, cooking ware and mortaria have always been imported up to a certain amount. These products did definitely inspire regional products, especially when a certain imported vessel-form was no longer available. This applies for instance to Pompeian Red Ware during the 2nd century, but also to African Red Slip Ware during the 4th and early 5th centuries. Pottery for other purposes, like short time storage, shows strong regional traditions and its morphology and decoration is not influenced by imported wares. The focus of this paper lies on the comparison of assemblages from the Atrium House of Aguntum, which are dating to different periods from the 1st to the 5th century AD. The aim of this paper is to analyse in which ways imported cooking or table ware is interacting with local pottery during different time periods.

Noricum – Aguntum – Pottery – Imports – Local Production

The archaeological fieldwork in the area of the Roman *Municipium Claudium Aguntum* started already in the early 20th century. These early works have been done by the Franciscan Innozenz Ploner (1912) and the archaeologist Rudolf Egger (1914, 1916) who worked on separated spots during different periods of the year. Until 1913 parts of the city walls (Ploner 1912) and an Early Christian church (Egger 1914) have been revealed, but the work was interrupted by the First World War and the subsequent economic crisis. As a result of the route planning of the transit route B100 archaeologist Erich Swoboda (1935) continued the excavations from 1931 to 1935 and excavated the city gate and some buildings on the eastern side of the gate. The exploration of *Aguntum* was interrupted once more by the Second World War, but from the 1950's onwards the Austrian Institute for Archaeology (ÖAI) conducted several excavation campaigns in *Aguntum*. Franz Miltner (1953, 1955), Wilhelm Alzinger (1959, 1994), Stefan Karwiese (1974, 1975) and Gerhard Langmann (1971) conducted excavations of the city walls, the *Thermae*, the Atrium House, and the so called Artisan's Quarter (Handwerker-/Wohnviertel) (fig. 1).

In 1991 the Institute for Archaeologies (former Department of Classical and Roman Provincial Archaeology) of the University of Innsbruck started excavations in *Aguntum*. From 1991 to 2007 under the direction of Elisabeth Walde (2002) and from 2008 until today under the direction of Michael Tschurtschenthaler, who had already been a site supervisor from 1991 to 2007 (Tschurtschenthaler and Auer 2013). In the first years the work of the predecessors was continued, so 'Haus 1' as part of the Artisan's Quarter and afterwards the so called 'Prunkbau' – where excavations had already started under the direction of Wilhelm Alzinger – were examined (Tschurtschenthaler and Walde 1993, Tschurtschenthaler

1994). The city centre was in focus of the excavations when the 'Prunkbau' – which is interpreted as part of the *Basilica* of *Aguntum* – was examined, but due to the replanning of the main transit road in Eastern Tyrol (B 100), which passes straight through the ancient city this work had to be stopped. In the years 1994 and 1995 excavations around the location line of the road had to be conducted (Tschurtschenthaler 1997). During these excavations the central part of the 'Atriumhaus' was uncovered. Due to the rich archaeological residues, including a Peristyle with a water basin, paved with big marble plates (fig. 2), the archaeological activity during the following years concentrated on the Atrium-House and its surroundings (Tschurtschenthaler 2005).

The long research history of the Atrium House with first excavations in the 1950s and their continuation in the 1990s, results in different qualities of the archaeological documentation. Especially pottery contexts have not been recorded very well during the older excavations. In many cases we barely know in which room the pottery was found and detailed context information is totally missing. More recent excavations during the early 1990's unfortunately had the character of rescue excavations. Due to the reconstruction of the modern street, which is the region's main traffic artery, a big area had to be investigated in relatively short time. Therefore the fieldwork took place in several smaller and bigger trenches, which is problematic regarding the determination of pottery contexts. Only from 2002 onwards, excavations were conducted as open area excavations, mainly oriented on ancient features and not that much on artificial trench borders.

Therefore, the contextualisation of the pottery is of differing quality, depending on the period and method of excavation. Nevertheless, it is possible to distinguish several phases of the Atrium House, to which the pottery can be assigned (table 1). The first phase is connected to the construction of



Fig. 1. General plan of Aguntum.



Fig. 2. Plan of the Atrium House (right) and photographic documentation of the marble plates in Room 213 (left).

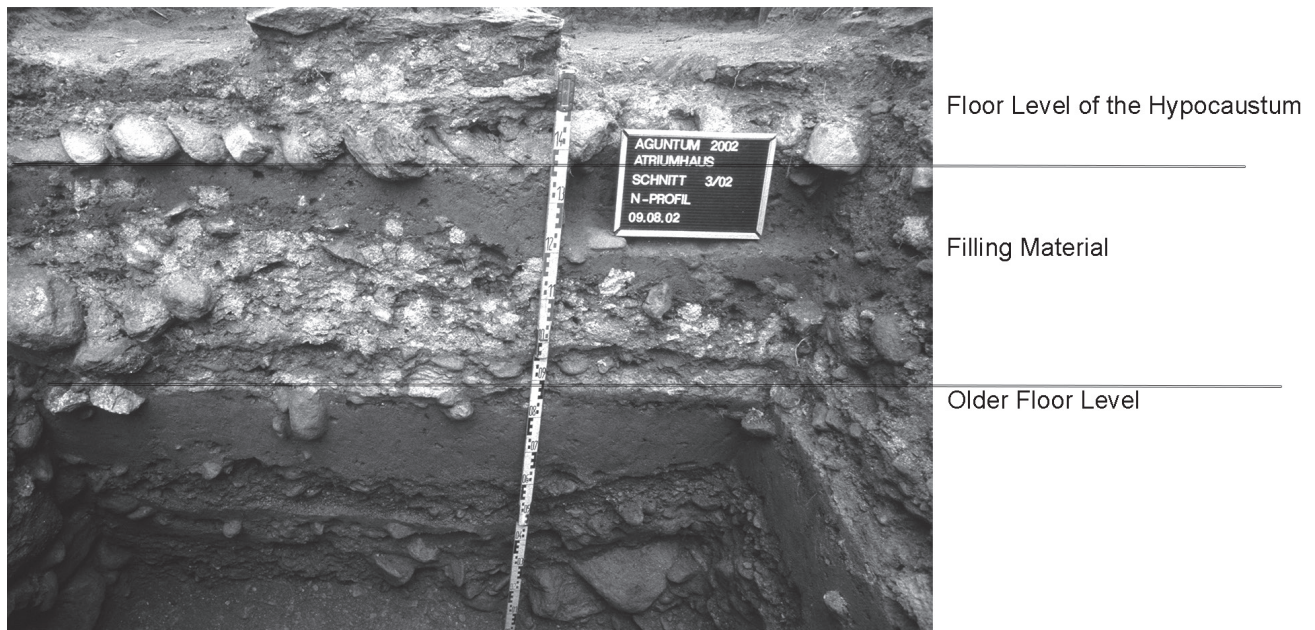


Fig. 3. Floor levels in Room 42 of the Atrium House.

the Atrium House and first adaptations of the ground plan during the 1st century AD. The early Atrium House, built in Claudian time, did not have any heating facilities. In the early 2nd century this situation changed and several rooms were equipped with hypocaust systems (**fig. 3**). This event of rebuilding produced some pottery contexts and is labelled as Phase 2. During the 2nd century the eastern part of the Atrium House was rebuilt and a new building was constructed. The renewed building consists of big heatable rooms decorated with wall paintings (Brandlechner 2008) and it seems probable that these rooms fulfilled representative purposes (Rooms 14, 15, 230 and 240 in **fig. 2**). In contrast to the representative part of the Atrium House itself, the former could also be used during winter. The findings belonging to the older structures beneath this building are labelled as Phase 3. These findings include also the content of a cellar room which was filled in with earth when the new Eastern Wing was built (**fig. 4**).

The construction of the Eastern Wing was followed by a time of usage, which left almost no contexts in the house itself. The contexts of this time consist of secondary refuse found in the gardens south and west of the building (Room 220 in **fig. 2**). The findings in the garden area mainly date to the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, but do also contain residuals from the first century. As a consequence the findings in the garden were separated and referred to as Phase 4. Another building activity took place within the Peristyle (Rooms 212 and 213 in **fig. 2**) during the 2nd century. The marble basin was reorganised and only the southern part of the basin (Room 213) remained paved with marble. The marble plates in the northern part were removed. Although this event can be dated into the 2nd century, there are some problems regarding the pottery contexts, which result from the formation processes of the fillings, which may contain material not belonging to the Atrium House. Other problems are caused by the organisation of the excavation in trenches. Hence this building activity is

Phase 1	Building activities	1 st century AD
Phase 2	Addition of heated rooms	End of 1 st – early 2 nd century AD
Phase 3	Remains under the newly built Eastern Wing	End of 1 st – mid of 2 nd century AD
Phase 4	Garden Area	Beginning of 2 nd – end of 3 rd century AD
Phase 5	Rebuilding of the marble basin	2 nd century AD
Phase 6	Destruction fire	Early 3 rd century AD
Phase 7	Garden Area	3 rd – early 5 th century AD
Phase 8	Late antique house	Late 3 rd – early 5 th century AD
Phase 9	Mixed layers after abandonment	5 th century AD onwards

Tab. 1. Main archaeological phases – according to pottery contexts – of the Atrium House.

also separated and referred to as Phase 5. Phase 6 includes the findings connected to a destructive fire. Traces of this fire can be found in several parts of the Atrium House and it can be dated to the first half of the 3rd century AD. Phase 7 contains material from the garden area again. The stratigraphic units in the garden connected to Phase 7 contain a certain amount of stones, which may indicate partly collapsed walls following the destruction fire (**fig. 5**).



Fig. 4. Cellar Room (233) under the Eastern Wing (right) and parts of the content of this room (left).



Fig. 5. Section in the Garden Area of the Atrium House (Room 220). The upper layers contain more stone material than earlier garden layers.

However, the house itself remained in use, but during the late 3rd and the 4th centuries most of the representative rooms have been abandoned and also the marble basin in the Peristyle was no longer in use and filled with earth and waste. As latest features, late antique heating channels were added in several rooms (see Sossau 2018). This reorganisation of the house in late antiquity is labelled as Phase 8. Regarding the pottery contexts, considerable problems are caused again by fillings which contain material from different time periods, especially regarding the marble basin. In the course of the abandonment of the house, the walls collapsed slowly and

humus arose above the collapsed structures. Later events, like the usage of the area as meadowland and several floods caused by nearby rivers (Auer et al. 2013) disturbed the latest layers of the house which are referred to as Phase 9.

This rough separation into different phases does not cover the more complex stratigraphy of the Atrium House in every detail. But the resulting bigger contexts contain enough pottery for an analysis of the relationship between imported and local material from a diachronical perspective from the 1st to the 5th century AD. For this analysis the pottery is classified in functional groups.

Functional Purpose	Including
Long Time Storage and Transport	Amphorae, Jars
Short Time Storage and Transport	Pots
Preparation of Food	Bowls, Tripods, Mortaria, Baking plates and lids, Cooking pots
Serving and Consumption of Food	Bowls, Plates
Serving of Liquids	Jugs, Jars
Consumption of Liquids	Beakers
Bifunctional Vessels	Lids
Fragrances	Balsamaria, Incense bowls
Light	Lamps
Converted Pottery	Gaming pieces
No determinable Function	Depending on the preservation of the vessels
Handicraft Purposes	Pots filled with paint, melting pots, spindle whorls

Tab. 2. Functional categories based on Kistler and Mohr (2015, 2016) and assigned pottery forms from the Atrium House.

This is done by using functional categories, which were originally developed for Greek Archaic material in the Mediterranean (Kistler and Mohr 2015; 2016). Although the functional categories are rather broad, there are still problems regarding the assignment of the pottery. For instance pots and bowls can be used for the preparation of food or cooking; but especially pots can also be used for short term storage. It is impossible to assign a clear function to every pottery fragment, so the assignment remains partly subjective (**table 2**).

Below the overall tendencies regarding the provenance of pottery during the different phases of the Atrium House will be discussed (**fig. 6**). During the 1st century, there is a high percentage of imports used for preparation, serving and consumption of food and liquids. The paper will focus mainly on these functional categories, because it is here that one can find local/regional and imported material side by side, whereas other categories are comprising almost only imports or only local products.

In Phase 2, which is a very short time period and includes material belonging to the earlier settlement phases, the tendency remains the same as in Phase 1. We can see slightly more imports than local products involved in preparation as well as in serving and consumption of food and liquids. The same is true for the third Phase; especially Italian imports make up the majority of vessels.

Phase 4, dating a bit later than the phases discussed earlier, represents the garden area, which is a discard area

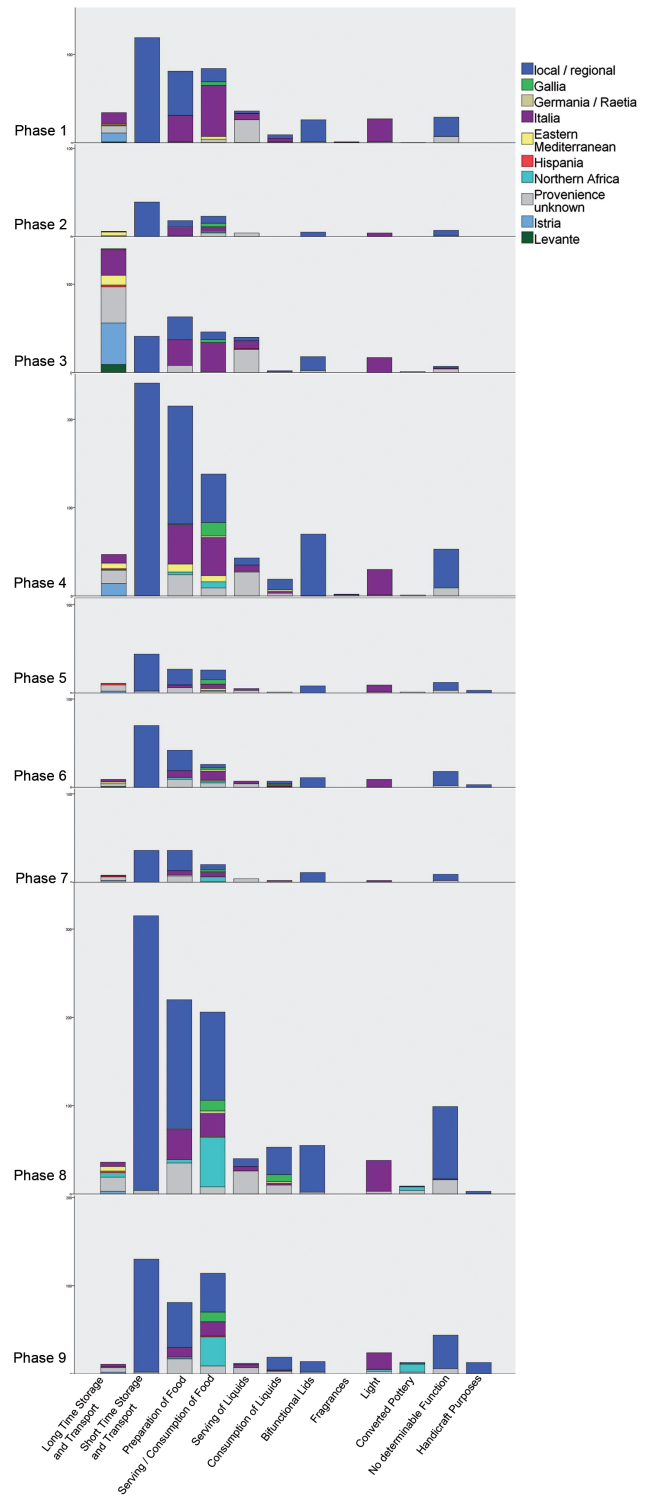


Fig. 6. Ratio between imported and regionally produced pottery according to functional categories in different phases of the Atrium House.

where broken vessels frequently ended up. It shows a higher amount of local products, especially in the preparation of food and the consumption of liquids. Phase 5, again dating to the 2nd century, is comparable to Phase 4, but represents features difficult to interpret owed to the formation processes and excavation methods.

The layers connected with the destruction fire during the early 3rd century contain lots of imports for serving and consumption purposes. The preparation of food is now more and more dominated by pottery produced in the region surrounding *Aguntum*.

The late antique garden layers cover quite a long time period, but the quantity of pottery found here is low. This may be explained by the fact, that the main late antique structures are located in the eastern part of the building, whereas the garden is situated to the south and west. The overall tendency of more local pottery being used in the preparation of food continues also in this Phase. The late antique house shows a considerable amount of local products used for the preparation and consumption of food, as well as for the consumption of liquids. The presence of Italian imports is in many cases clearly residual and connected with fillings, which contain this older material. Nevertheless imports from Northern Africa play a major role during late antiquity. More or less the same picture emerges within the latest phase of the Atrium house (Phase 9), which generally consists of disturbed late antique layers.

It is evident, that for some purposes imported pottery was used alongside locally produced pottery. Regarding the functional categories the question whether imported goods have influenced the local production can be addressed. The production of pottery in or around *Aguntum* is proven by chemical and MGR analysis, conducted by Malgorzata Daszkiewicz and Gerwulf Schneider (Auer and Daszkiewicz 2017). About 90% of the locally and regionally produced pottery is tempered with calcite or marble, in some cases also quartz, and was fired in a not fully oxidising atmosphere at about 800 °C. There is no possibility to distinguish between local pottery and regional imports macroscopically (Auer and Daszkiewicz 2017: 110). Therefore, the terminus 'import' as used below is reserved for imports from long distance trade only.

The other 10% of regionally produced pottery is made up by the so called 'Aguntiner Napf', which in fact is a bowl made of the characteristic, roughly tempered clay (Auer and Daszkiewicz 2017: 98; **fig. 7**). The combination of form and clay is unique and these bowls can only be found in and around *Aguntum*, in an area of about 50-60 km distance to the ancient city (Auer 2019: 84-89). These bowls are connected with the preparation of food, which is indicated by residue analyses which show traces of dairy products in some of the vessels, as well as traces of animal and plant fats (unpublished data; Cramp, L.). The question is why do these vessels occur in *Aguntum* during the 1st century? Not only is their sherd quality remarkably different from the majority of regional products, the shape is also not present amongst the other local and regional pottery products. During the 1st century we can find imported bowls in *Aguntum*, which most probably came to *Noricum* from Northern Italy. These bowls are also found in other places in southern *Noricum*, such as the Magdalensberg or the Gurina (Auer 2012a). These bowls are referred to as 'Weitling' and they are of similar shape as the 'Aguntiner Napf', but usually two handled. In *Aguntum* there are some 'Aguntiner Napf' specimens, who have comparable handles, but these are not fit for use and can be interpreted as some kind of typological rudiment. Obviously there is a connection between the 'Aguntiner Napf' and the imported

'Weitling', the latter may have inspired local potters to create comparable vessels. As the quality of clay around *Aguntum* is rather modest, the potters had to use the very rough material, which is not very suitable to form small handles. The low quality of the raw material could be one of the reasons, why the 'Weitling' developed into the simpler form of the 'Aguntiner Napf'. Nevertheless it is still an unanswered question, why this development did only take place in/around *Aguntum*, where the 'Aguntiner Napf' is very common until the 4th century AD in slightly variable morphologies.

However most of the regionally produced pottery is technologically different and consists of calcite tempered, grey fired clay (Auer and Daszkiewicz 2017: 112-114). The traditional forms, like pots and tripods, were not affected by imports. Pots used for short term storage are, apart from some vessels with unknown provenience, mostly local and do not imitate any imported pottery.

Among the vessels for food preparation a considerable quantity of imports is present during the earlier phases, with Pompeian Red Plates being the most important group. Baking plates are imported from Italy until the 2nd century. The same forms, also with internal red slip, are present in other clay qualities, most probably coming from Northern Italy or today's Slovenia (Auer and Daszkiewicz 2017: 104-111). During the late second century these forms do also occur made of local clay. The number of locally produced baking plates in the Atrium House is increasing from eight specimens until the 2nd century to more than 50 in the 3rd and 4th centuries. This clearly points to a successful adaptation of an imported form.

Maybe not that successful, but remarkable anyway are local imitations of pottery used for serving and consumption of food. Platters and plates are very uncommon in the locally produced, calcite tempered material. Nevertheless two specimens, dating to the 1st century AD can be interpreted as plates (**fig. 8**). Their archetype may be found among imports from Italy (Tardopadana, Conspectus forms 18-21).

During the 2nd century there are no visible external influences on the local, calcite tempered wares. But towards the end of the 2nd century the so called 'fine grey ware' appears in *Noricum* (Gugl and Sauer 1998). These vessels resemble *sigillata* forms like Dragendorff 37 and are comparable to developments in other regions, like *Pannonia* where the 'Pannonische Glanztonware' (Adler-Wölfl 2004) results from similar developments. There is some evidence for the production of fine grey wares also in *Aguntum* according to the chemical analyses, but the analysed fine grey ware from *Aguntum* generally shows both, local and clearly non local – but presumably regional – production.

During the 3rd century some vessels made of local clay seem to resemble Hayes 50 ARS bowls. Although it cannot be clearly proven that Hayes 50 bowls functioned as direct archetypes for local bowls of similar morphology, it is remarkable that especially from the 4th century onwards, wide bowls become very common within the Atrium House material. Often they are decorated and show clear morphological differences to bowls common in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD (Auer 2019: 37-49). These new forms seem to be inspired by ARS bowls, which are not only common in *Aguntum*, but more generally in Southern *Noricum*. Besides the morphology,

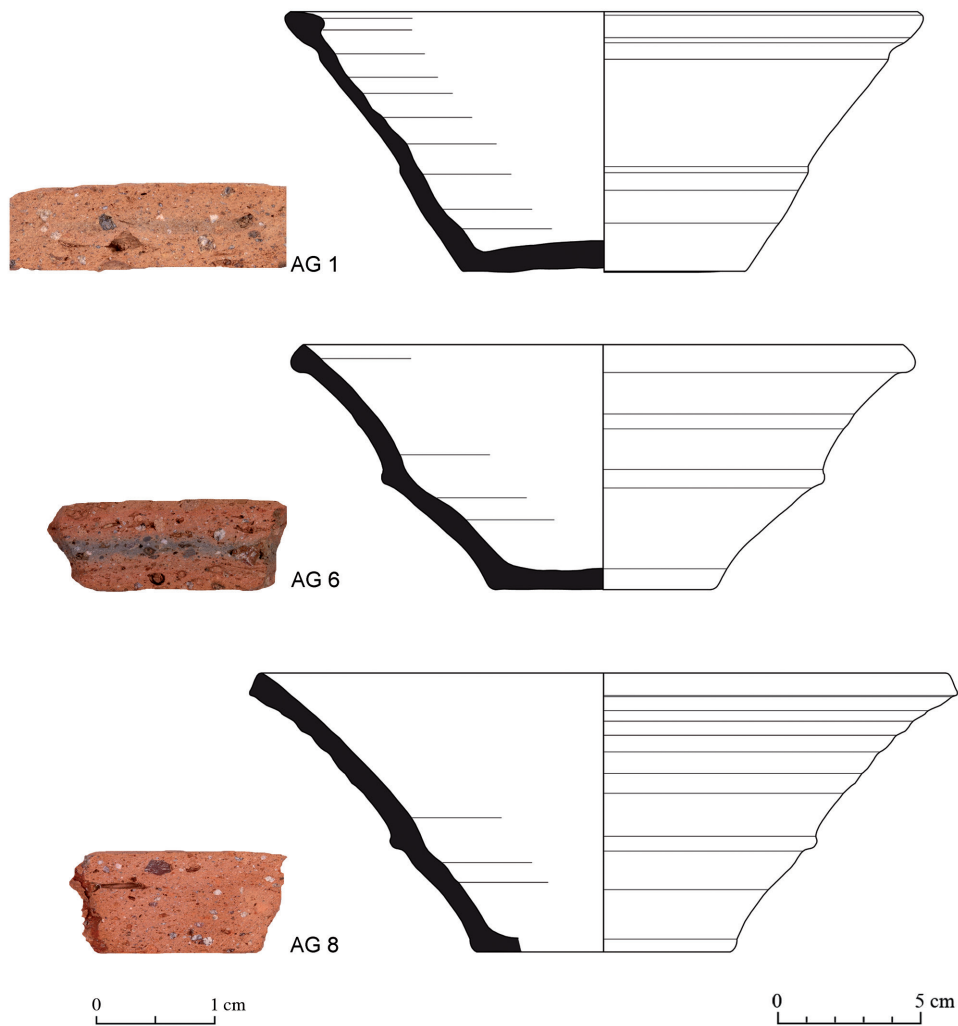


Fig. 7. Examples of the pottery type ‘Aguntiner Napf’.

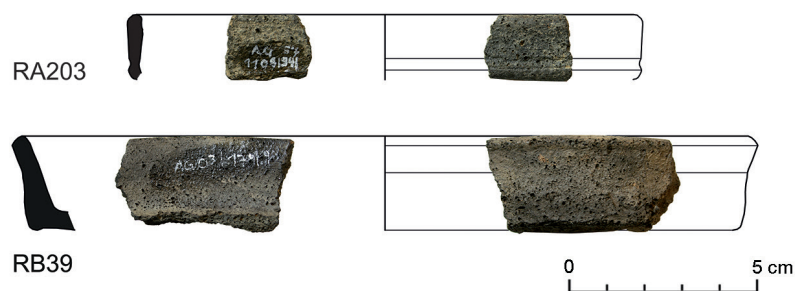


Fig. 8. Locally/regionally produced plates which are reminiscent of imports from Northern Italy.

another new feature is the decoration of the bases inside the vessels (Auer 2012b), which is also reminiscent of imports from Northern Africa. But it might be more probable to see hallmarks on metal vessels as archetypes for the majority of these decorations (Ladstätter 2000: 153-156). On the other hand, stamped decorations are also occurring in late antique *Noricum* and these are likely to be influenced by imports of ARS (Kainrath 2011: 168).

In conclusion, the pottery contexts coming from the Atrium House of *Aguntum* show clear tendencies regarding the provenance of pottery used in the context of eating and drinking, although biased by the long research history and by the fact that the contexts are often only secondary refuse deposits. Whereas the pottery is predominated by imports in the 1st and 2nd century, local products gain more importance in later times. Besides baking plates and ‘Aguntiner Napf’

pottery, used for the preparation of food, there were some attempts by local potters to imitate table wares like plates and Dragendorff 37 bowls as well. During the 3rd century, and especially in Late Antiquity the forms of table ware change dramatically and imports are now predominantly coming from Northern Africa. These changes also affected the local pottery production and a new form of wide bowls was established. These were influenced by imports from Northern Africa and were probably used for the consumption of food.

Comparable developments cannot be spotted amongst vessels for the serving and consumption of liquids. Jugs and Jars were never equally important in *Aguntum* and locally produced jars are always present in small amounts without showing clear external influences. Beakers used for the consumption of liquids are also present in small quantities only. Locally produced beakers do not show any influence of imported wares and follow a regionally established morphology, but one has to keep in mind that glass plays a very important role in the context of liquid consumption.

Also pottery belonging to other functional categories does not show distinct external influences. Long term transport vessels are completely imported and there is no local production of *dolia* for long term storage. For short time storage local pots are used exclusively and these follow a regional morphology without influences by long distance trade. Last but not least, vessels used for fragrances or used for lighting purposes are solely imported and do therefore not affect any local products.

The composition of the pottery contexts from the Atrium House of *Aguntum* shows slight diachronical changes regarding the proportions of imported and local material. Regarding functional categories, the concurrent presence of imported and local pottery can mainly be observed among the preparation and consumption of food. These are the only functional categories where a clear influence of imported material on the local pottery production can be attested.

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