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AEGEAN TRADE IN THE ROMAN WORLD: THE VIEW FROM NORTH ADRIATIC

Pottery distribution analysis is a key method for understanding what controlled trading networks and long-distance maritime routes in particular, because these would have been conditioned by political and economic evolutions as much as by demand. The focus of this study is to highlight the correlation between Aegean and Asia Minor areas and the northern Adriatic region through the typological and chronological analyses of amphorae, fine and cooking wares. In order to perform a significant amount of quantitative and qualitative data, both published and unpublished materials have been used with a particular focus on Aquileia as a commercial hub. The result of this study offered the opportunity to reconstruct a comprehensive model of the relations that developed between both areas and makes it possible to trace the evolution of general trends on Aegean trade transformation in the upper Adriatic region over a large period of time from Late Republican to Late Antique times.

Eastern Sigillata B and C – Aegean and Asia Minor amphorae – Aegean Cooking Ware – Late Roman micaceous Cooking Ware – western Asia Minor Gray Coarse Ware

1. Introduction

Trade transformations which involved Adriatic and the Aegean were particularly significant because of the size and nature of trade and of its regularity. In order to reconstruct a comprehensive model of these relations a detailed pottery study has been performed. The aim is to establish how this correlation changes over time and how we can explain some trends. The opportunity to examine a large amount and variety of amphorae, fine and cooking wares facilitated an in-depth analysis of the long-term Aegean imports in northern Adriatic which developed between Late Republican and Late Antique times.

2. The imported pottery finds from the Aegean: the case study of Aquileia

In order to assess aspects relating to the extent, methods, and motivations for the circulation of Aegean ceramics in the upper Adriatic area, the starting point for the present paper was the data that emerged during some recent excavations in what once was the most important Roman city of *Caput Adriae*: Aquileia. The analysed finds here come from the area of the former Cossar property, where investigations carried out between 2009 and 2015 brought to light a *domus* (known as the House of *Titus Macer*), part of the two streets that enclosed the city block in which it stood (**fig. 1**), and a small



Fig. 1. Aquileia, the former Cossar property. Plan of the so-called *Domus* of *Titus Macer* in Imperial age (AQCOS Project's Archive).

sector of the Republican walls. Altogether, the numerous contexts investigated allow us to reconstruct the history of the ancient city from its foundation in 181 BC to the present day (Bonetto et al. 2009; Bonetto and Ghiotto 2011; 2012; 2014; Bonetto, Furlan and Previato 2020; Bonetto, Mazzocchin and Dobrev 2021a; 2021b).

2.1 Quantitative analyses

The excavations of the former Cossar property in Aquileia brought to light a huge number of shards (total of almost 39,500), of which 85% (33,575) belonged to amphorae, fine and cooking wares. This large quantity of shards comprises an estimated 9965 vessels of which 19% are of eastern origin (fig. 2). Most of the eastern ceramics come from the Aegean and Asia Minor areas, about 70% (fig. 3). Included within this huge area are the productions of the Aegean islands, such as Rhodos and Rhodian Peraea, Cnidos, Kos, Crete, and Milos, but also and mostly from the Asia Minor coastal zone, in particular, the valleys of the Hermos and Meander rivers, and from the area nearby: Pergamum, Phocaea, Kyme, Chios, Erythrai, Ephesus, Phygela, and Samos. These are areas where vines and olive growing were widely practised in Classical and Hellenistic times, as testified by ancient sources and archaeological evidence.

2.2 The chronology of the imports

If now we consider the total amount of data, it seems appropriate to make a more general comment on distribution patterns of Asia Minor products in Aquileia. First imports coming from the area around Ephesus and in lower extension from Pergamum, seem to date to 1st century BC, mainly Late Hellenistic relief pottery, the so-called “Megarian” bowls of western Asia Minor (fig. 4, 1-4), “Ephesus” plates and Eastern Sigillata C finds (*krater Kg 4* – fig. 4, 5). These finds document the establishment from at least 1st century BC onwards of trade routes directed respectively towards the territories around the centres of Ephesus and – to a lesser extent – Pergamum (Mantovani 2021). The appearance of these Asia Minor productions might be put in relation to Delos’ role as a sorting centre and the presence of amphorae originating from the Rhodian and Coan area, imported into the city as early as the first half of 2nd century BC (Auriemma and Silvestrelli 2013: 445-446; Badoud 2018: 130-132, Tav. 1; Maggi and Merlatti 2007: 554-560, fig. 5; Mandruzzato, Tiussi and Degrassi 2000: 359; Tiussi and Mandruzzato 1996; Tiussi 2007).

Later, the links are still active and 1st century AD deposits marked an increase in imports of foodstuffs and pottery. The supply of western Asia Minor products beyond the Adriatic, however, was largely restricted to Aegean Cooking Ware, generally attested at Aquileia with higher percentage than the fine wares originated from the same area and dated to the same period. There were regular shipments from the area near Ephesus to Aquileia mostly transporting *Eastern Sigillata B*, attested by some ancient rare forms that arrive along

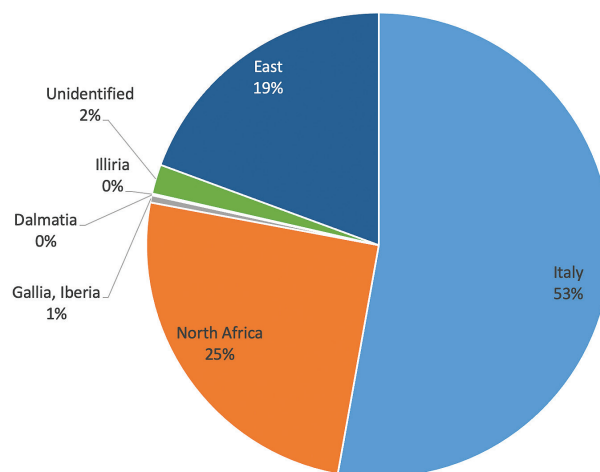


Fig. 2. Graph showing the provenance of amphorae, fine and cooking wares found in the *Domus of Titus Macer* in Aquileia. The calculation is based on a total amount of 9965 estimated vessels (elaboration by D. Dobrev).

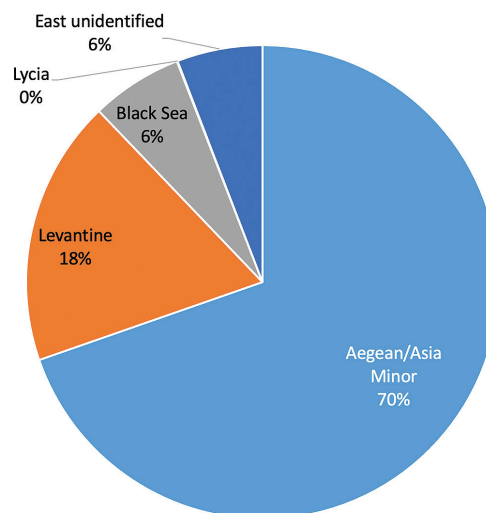


Fig. 3. Graph showing the production areas of 1932 eastern vessels found in the former Cossar property in Aquileia (elaboration by D. Dobrev).

the Adriatic coast in early 1st century AD. The fairly large repertoire of forms included some types *Hayes 30*, *Hayes 36* and *Hayes 37* which represent dishes and bowls relevant to the B1 series (fig. 4, 6-8) and some plates *Hayes 53* and *Hayes 59* and bowls *Hayes 71* from the transitional series B1/B2, easily distinguishable for their grey to black colour fabric and gloss and dated in the third quarter of 1st century AD (fig. 4, 9-13). As one would expect, the marketing of *Eastern Sigillata B* in Aquileia concentrated in the end of 1st and mid/end of 2nd centuries AD, identified in forms related to the series B2. As for the forms present in the assemblages they are basically plates (types *Hayes 60* and *Hayes 58*) (fig. 4, 14-16) and bowls (types *Hayes 71*, 75 and *Hayes 76*) (fig. 4, 17-23).

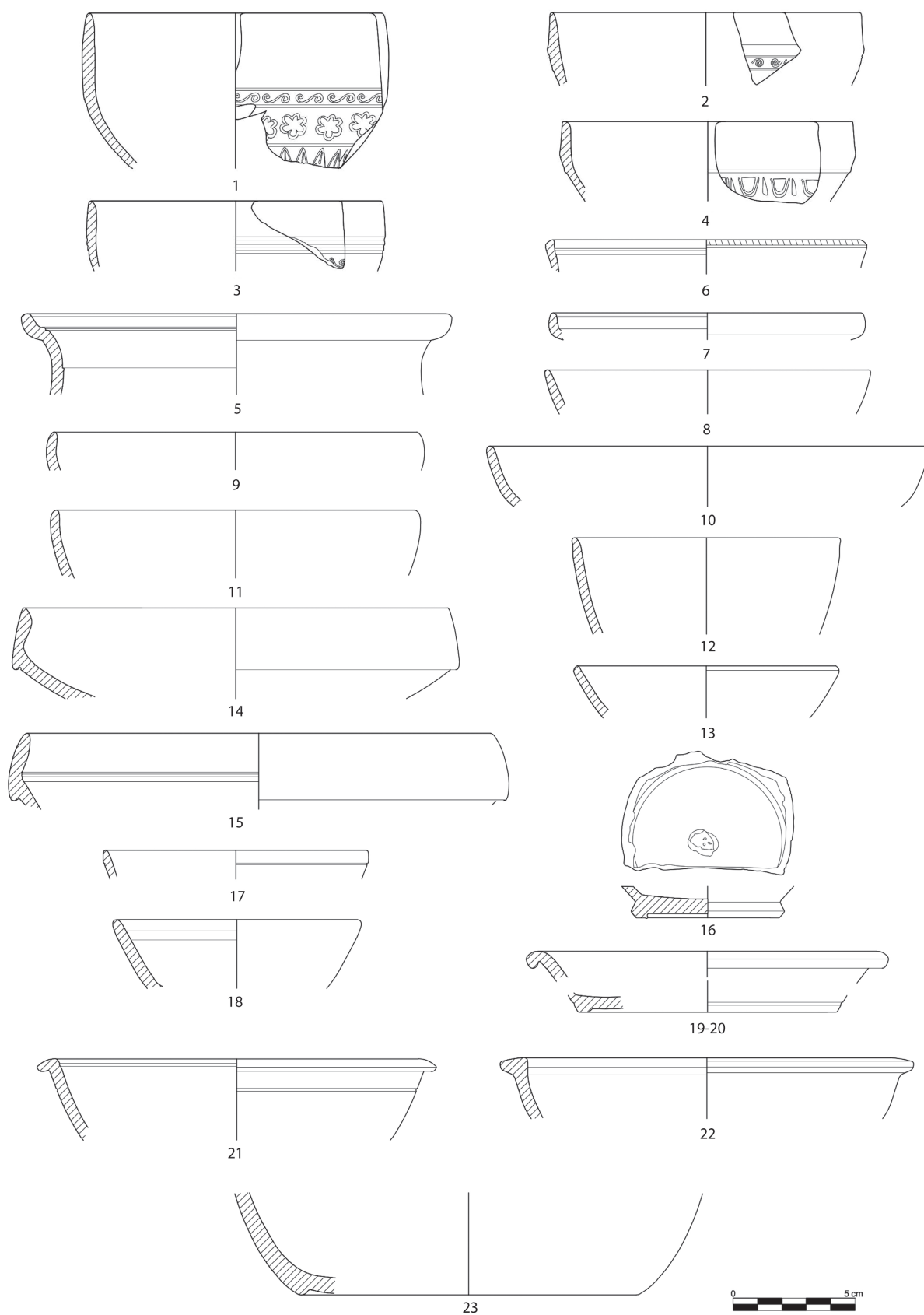


Fig. 4. Aegean and Asia Minor imports from 1st century BC to early Imperial age: 1-4. “Megarian” bowls of western Asia Minor production; 5. *Eastern Sigillata C*; 6-8. *Eastern Sigillata B1* series; 9-13. *Eastern Sigillata* transitional series *B1/B2*; 14-23. *Eastern Sigillata B2* series (drawings by D. Dobrev, A.M. Griggio and V. Mantovani, elaboration by D. Dobrev).

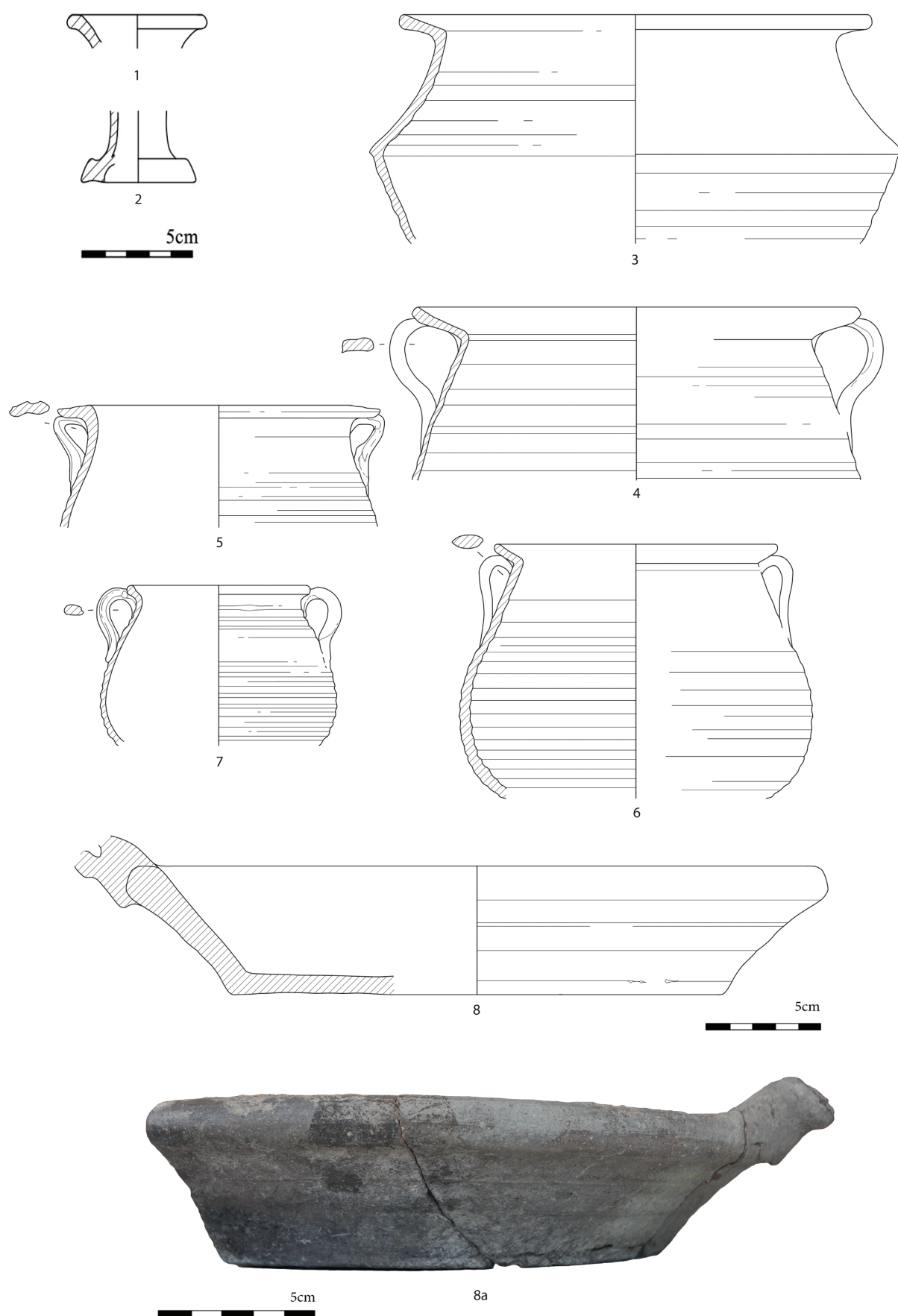


Fig. 5. Mid-Imperial imports from the Aegean and western coast of Asia Minor territories: 1-2. Amphora *Agorà F 65/66* or *similis*; 3-8. *Aegean Cooking Ware* (drawings by A. Riccato, elaboration by D. Dobрева).

Looking further into the upper Adriatic area, *Eastern Sigillata B* is well attested along the East and West coasts, and the ability of the pottery class to penetrate into areas also inland but always linked to important river trade routes, as in the case of the Po and Sava rivers, is evident (Dobrevá and Griggio 2021: 204-208, fig. 11).

Later on, in the period between the second half of 1st century AD and Flavian times, a few examples of one-handed amphorae *Agorà F 65/66* were exported from the same area. (fig. 5, 1-2) Examples of this type present mainly red fine micaceous fabric close to the amphora's fabric A of Ephesus and thought to be typical for the territory around Kuşadası and the valley of the Meander river (Bezeczky 2014: 387). Mineral-petrographic analyses of some amphorae found in the *Titus Macer's House* pointed out the existence of at least two petrographic groups¹. The first one refers mainly to micaceous clay matrix with moderately sorted quartz inclusions and an Ephesian origin could be hypothesised. The second petrographic group is characterised by a beige fine fabric with ferric-calcitic matrix and inclusions of acid metamorphites and limestone. A generic provenance in Asia Minor could be argued for (Dobrevá forthcoming).

Numerous finds of *Aegean Cooking Ware* point to the continuing presence of Asia Minor products in the mid-Imperial period and distinguish the peak of the western Asia Minor cooking ware imports in 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. The vessel repertoire reveals mainly carinated casseroles, identified as *Knossos type 2* (fig. 5, 3) and *Knossos cooking-pots a, type 2 and type 3* (fig. 5, 4-6). Also, well documented are different examples of *Knossos cooking-pot b, type 4* which recall the profile of the casseroles but in smaller dimensions and distinguished by the different shape of the rim. The small dimensions that characterise these vessels have recently led to the hypothesis of their preferential use also as drinking vessels (fig. 5, 7). Pans inside the examined pottery assemblages are well attested, identified as types *Agorà G113-115, K89 or J22* (fig. 5, 8-8a and fig. 6, 1 and 4). Integrate into this scenario are some jugs (often with three-leafed formed rim) (fig. 6, 10-10a), cups type *Marabini LXVIII* (fig. 6, 2-3) and few lids (fig. 6, 5 and 8). These vessels are very common for the period between the end of 1st and 3rd centuries AD, although for some types of pans and jugs, based on parallels and concerning the chronology of the deposits, it is possible to suggest dating around mid-1st century AD (see Riccato 2020: 150 with previous bibliography).

Macroscopic examination reveals three different groups of fabrics (Riccato 2020: 148-149): the first one, used for jugs, pots and pans, is characterised by red or orange colour fine and compact fabric and by the frequent presence on the outer surface of a grey or brown coating; in some specimens, the fabric sandwich effect with a darker, greyish core is evident. Based on published data it seems hypothetically possible to refer the vessels with this group of fabric to the different productions in the western centres of Asia Minor, as one of Phocaea or nearby territory. The second fabric is used mainly for casseroles and presents a beige-coloured fabric

with surfaces darkened by the usual brown or grey coating. Fabrics with similar characteristics were hypothetically traced to the production centres in the Pergamum area (Berlin 1997: 110; Pellegrino 2007: 153; 2009: 257-258; Slane 1986: 312, nt. 76). The third group of fabric, which is also generally rather hard and compact, is also a purplish-grey colour or, more often red or brown, sometimes with a grey surface coating; also, in this case on some specimens, sandwich firing is documented. The surfaces are rough and the fracture irregular. The inclusions are abundant, generally larger than that found in the other groups. This fabric is used mainly for the manufacture of pans, including those of large dimensions and with rather thick walls, and of lids. In this case it is more difficult to speculate on its provenance. Focusing on the *Aegean Cooking Ware* alone, it is possible to note that vessels made with the first group fabrics account for as much as 69% of the attestations, while the second one appears to be marginal (only 4% of the total); 27% are attested as the products of the fabric group 3 (Riccato 2020: 183). This data is in line with the picture offered by all the studies conducted in the Adriatic area, where most of the evidence has been traced back to Phocean production, prompting some authors to speak of mass production and of a true monopoly of this manufacturing centre on the production and trade of cooking ware (Istemić and Schneider 2000: 343; Hayes 2000: 292). However, we should recall here that further sampling is needed, especially on the recently identified finds. Latest studies suggest a plurality of production centres probably to be placed on the western Asia Minor area. It seems to be the case of some finds from Corinth where at least four fabrics have been identified and only two of them match those previously identified by G. Schneider for the Adriatic materials². Due to some generic petrographic composition of the fabrics, the localisation of the production centres is difficult when reference samples are lacking.

Overall, the pottery class seems to enjoy a widespread diffusion along the entire upper Adriatic coastal arc, with a gradual thinning out of attestations as one moves inland. The trade in *Aegean Cooking Ware* could also reach locations far from the littorals, if these offered a sufficiently dynamic market and, above all, were easily accessible via land and river routes (Riccato 2020: 161, fig. 12). The same trend can be observed also for the *Eastern Sigillata C* for which recent chemical analyses have revealed that was produced both in Pergamum and Çandarlı (Schneider and Mommsen 2009; Schneider and Daszkiewicz 2020: 430). In middle Imperial age this pottery class marked the period of major exchange in the upper Adriatic. It comprises mainly hemispheric bowls with listel referred to type *Hayes L19* or its late version *Hayes H3*, but some plates type *Hayes 4* are also known and possibly one jug (fig. 6, 6-7 and 9). Meanwhile the *Eastern Sigillata B* finds definitively disappeared after the end of 2nd century AD. By contrast, concerning the amphorae, their number significantly increases from the end of 2nd to 3rd centuries AD. During this period of time both imports from Ephesus, confirmed by petrographic analyses of some *Agorà M 125* amphora samples (Dobrevá in press), and the valley of Meander

¹ The analyses were performed by Claudio Capelli as part of the Aquileia Cossar Project.

² Pers. comm. Kathleen W. Slane.

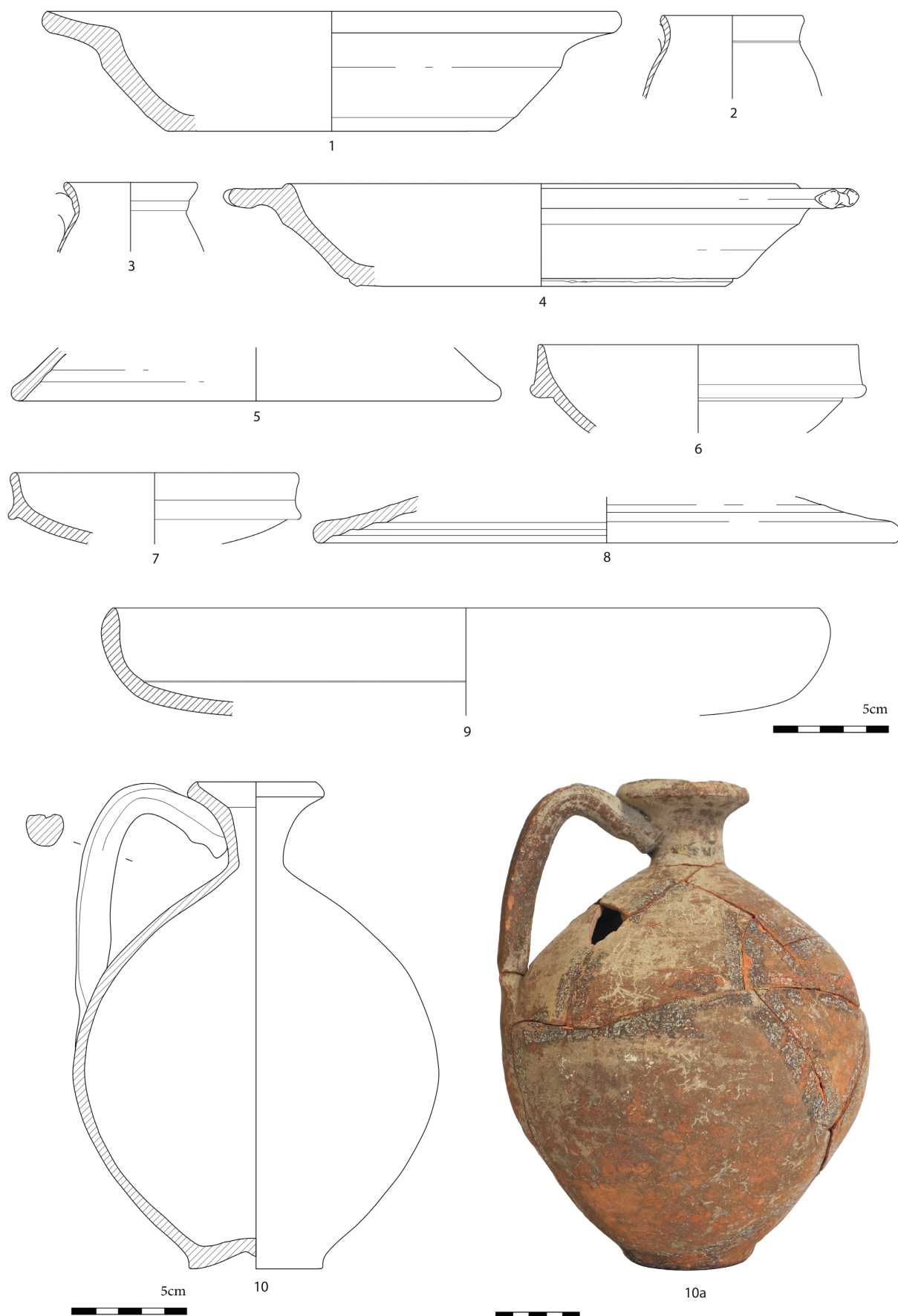


Fig. 6. Mid-Imperial Aegean and Asia Minor imports: 1, 4, 5, 8, 10. *Aegean Cooking Ware*; 2-3. *Thin-walled pottery*; 6-7, 9. *Eastern Sigillata C* (drawings by A. M. Griggio, V. Mantovani and A. Riccato, elaboration by D. Dobрева)

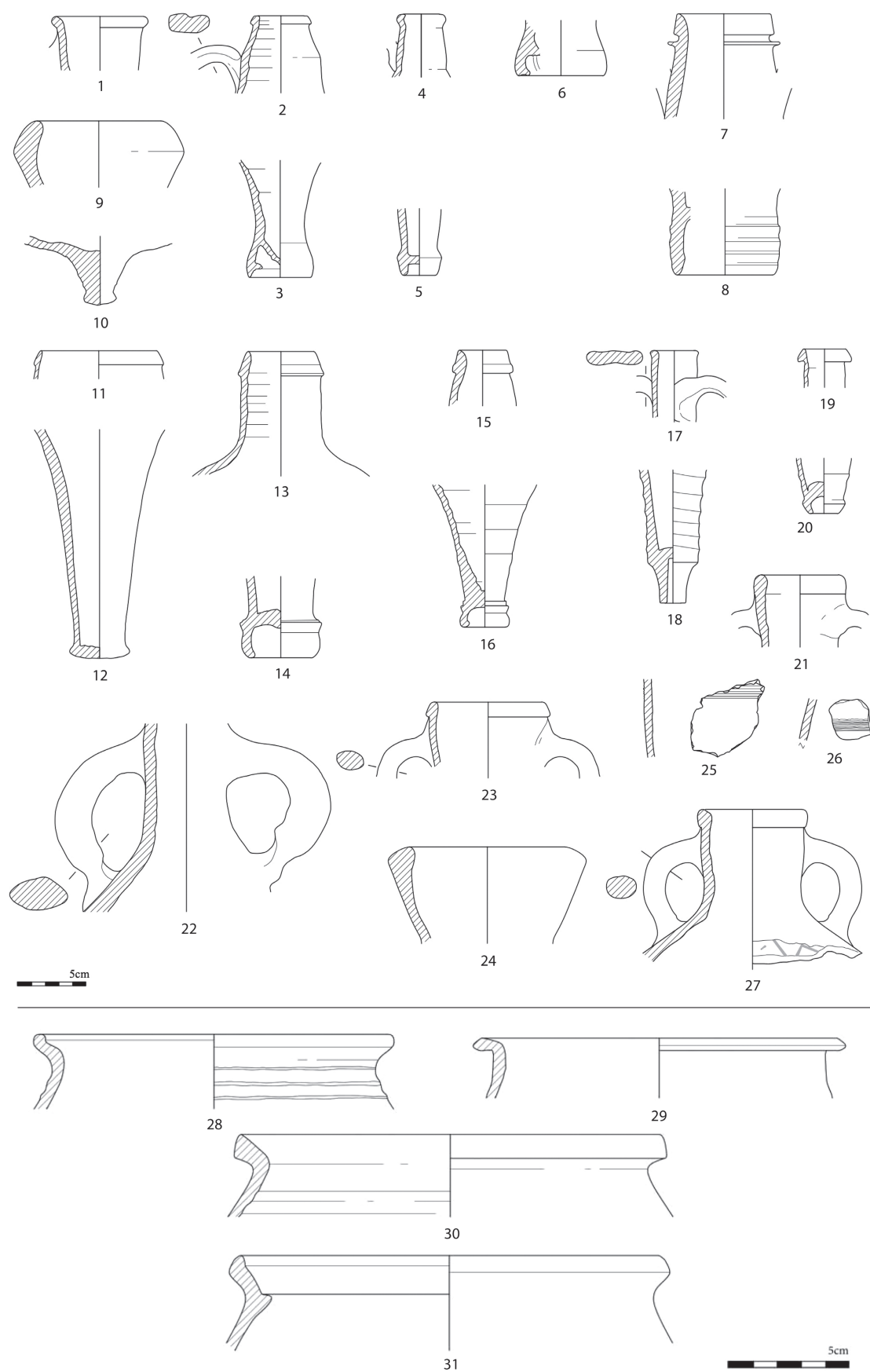


Fig. 7. Aegean and Asia Minor imports: 1-10. Eastern amphorae from 2nd and 3rd century contexts; 11-16. Asia Minor amphorae from 4th century deposits; 17-27. Late Roman amphorae; 28-30. *Late Roman micaceous Aegean Cooking Ware*; 31. The so-called *Ephesos Grey Coarse Ware* (drawings by A. Riccato and S. Tinazzo, elaboration by D. Dobrev)

river (for instance, examples of *Agorà J 46-47*, *Agorà M 125* and *Kapitän II* types) are attested (fig. 7, 1-8). Within the mid-Imperial deposits of the *Titus Macer's* House, imports from the region of Kyme, Phygela, Erythrai, and Chios are also recorded. It is a type of vessel similar to Dressel 24 amphorae, but characterised by some distinct morphological elements, recently identified as Knossos 15/Zeast 90 (see Dobрева 2017: 231-233) (fig. 7, 9-10). The characteristics of the fabric, which show some similarities with both the Dressel 24 and also with the later *Carthage Late Roman 2* amphorae, seem to increasingly point to a continuity of production. The fabrics found in the Cossar deposits are similar to those described for products from Chios characterised by light brown to orange-red fabrics, with inclusions of calcite, silver mica, quartz granules and small iron oxides (Tsaravopoulos 1986; Opař and Tsaravopoulos 2011: 303) and Erythrai where it seems that at least two fabrics exist (Lungu 2010: 48), later also confirmed by finds from Ephesus, identified through archaeometric analysis (Erythrai fabric A and B, see Bezeczek 2013: 73-74). The former is beige to pinkish in colour, compact with small limestone inclusions and rare mica, the latter is brown or purplish-brown with numerous limestone inclusions, hard and compact to the touch. On the surface of the amphorae there is usually a light, cream-coloured coating that extends irregularly.

Asia Minor amphorae are dominant at Aquileia also in 4th century deposits. As an example, one could cite the presence of *Agorà M 240-242* and *Agorà M 255* (fig. 7, 11-16) in fine micaceous fabric in contexts dated to the third quarter of the 4th century AD (Dobрева 2014: 78-83). Archaeometric analyses once again identify Ephesus as a production centre (Dobрева forthcoming).

During mid-4th century AD, a morphological revolution took place, when the container changed from one-handed to two-handed and the bottom took on a tubular appearance. The most widespread late version, classified as *Carthage Late Roman 3*, is also joined by coeval types such as *Pieri LR 3A* and *B* (fig. 7, 17-20) and *Ephesus 56* originating from the Ephesian area (fig. 7, 21-23). The chronology of the contexts in Aquileia mainly marks the presence of *Ephesus 56* in late 4th and 5th centuries AD levels. The rest of the presences are identified as *LR 3*, generally documented in the second half of 5th - 6th centuries AD. The deposits dated to late 4th, and especially 5th and 6th centuries AD, are also characterised by the presence of amphorae with a globular body, crossed by ribs and a wide funnel-shaped rim. Macroscopic analyses on the fabrics show similarities to the Argolid production centres. These vessels, generically known as *Carthage Late Roman 2*, become one of the chronological finds in Late Antique urban stratiographies. According to published data, *LR 2* amphorae are rare along the Adriatic coast, and Aquileia is no exception in this regard. Excavations conducted at the former Cossar property have only brought to light a few specimens found in contexts dated between the second half of 5th and the beginning of 6th centuries AD (fig. 7, 24-26).

The manufacture of some of the wine amphorae found in Aquileia originated in the region of Lesbos, Ephesus, Samos, and Cos. The specimens that can be traced back to these centres show rather coarse, rough, brick-red fabrics, similar to those from Ephesus, without possibly excluding the island

of Samos. In the analysed contexts, *Kapitän II* amphorae are known mainly in levels dated between 3rd and 4th centuries AD, in line with the general chronology of the type (fig. 7, 7-8). The *Agorà M 273*, considered as the predecessor of the *Samos cistern type* amphorae, come mainly from contexts dated between the second half of 5th and the beginning of 6th centuries AD (fig. 7, 27). Carbonate clay matrix with quartz and micaceous inclusions point to an Aegean origin, perhaps along the Asia Minor coast (Dobрева in press).

The vitality of these commercial ties is also proved by some cooking ware finds of Aegean origin. The largest group is represented by the so-called *Late Roman micaceous Aegean Cooking Ware*, manufactured between the 4th and 6th centuries AD in workshops that are still unknown at present, but are most likely to be located along the coasts of Asia Minor or in the Cyclades, and widespread mainly in the period between the middle of 5th century and the beginning of the next century (Slane and Kiriatzi 2014: 910). The represented forms are mostly deep and carinated casseroles, corresponding to the *Stewpots 17* (fig. 7, 28) identified by Guy D. Sanders among the Corinth materials of 5th century AD (Sanders 1999: 471, fig. 12). There are also attested deep casseroles with simpler rims with a concave or flattened inner edge, attributable to *Form 1, nos. 61a-d and 64* (fig. 7, 29-30) from the S. Giacomo degli Schiavoni site (Albarella, Ceglia and Roberts 1993: 180-182, fig. 11). More rarely attested are shallow casseroles with a low, hemispherical profile, referable to *Form 4, no. 69* of the same site (Riccatò 2021: 374, fig. 2, 15). Macroscopically, the analysed fabrics are grey or, more rarely, reddish-brown or beige, with black or grey (even dark) surfaces and small white, black and translucent grey inclusions, which are associated with abundant mica flakes (Riccatò 2020: 164-165). The second group is known as *Ephesos Grey Coarse Ware*, but whose workshops, active between 4th and 7th centuries AD, should be sought not only in the region of Ephesus but also in the south-central sector of the island of Samos and probably in other western Asia Minor workshops (Turnovsky 2005; Waksman and Tréglià 2007). The most common form is the *Fulford 35 cooking-pot*, represented both by specimens of the early variants, with ribbed walls and strongly fluted rims at the top, and by variants from the second half of 5th/early 6th centuries AD (fig. 7, 31). The fabrics are red-brown with dark outer surfaces and have numerous small, translucent grey or - more rarely - white, black and red micaceous inclusions (Riccatò 2020: 168-169). The presence of both groups of cooking wares of Aegean origin in the House of *Titus Macer* deposits dated to the first half of 6th century AD, together with the samples of the bowl *Hayes 3* in *Late Roman C/Phocaeen Red Slip Ware* dated back to the same period, testify to the long-lasting links between Aquileia and the Aegean area.

3. The areas involved in Aegean trade to the North Adriatic

3.1 Distribution model of the finds

If we now consider the distribution model of the three main pottery categories used to map this study (eastern sigillata,

cooking wares, and amphorae) in the northern Adriatic region, the role of Aquileia as a commercial hub in the area can be easily distinguished. For example, the diffusion of the earlier *ETS B1* series is mainly attested between Augustan times and the middle of 1st century AD in some important coastal cities (as well as Aquileia, at Trieste, Concordia, Sevegliano, Classe, and along the eastern Adriatic coast at Pola, Brioni island, Omisalj, and Naron) but its absence inland is significant. The later *ETS B2* series (between the second half of 1st and the end of the following century) records a widespread diffusion (**fig. 8**) in larger quantities and over a wider area. It reaches many coastal sites, especially on the eastern Adriatic coast, but also sites inland, located near important river and land routes, with a commercial function. The great export of the B2 series is due to the conquest of part of the market previously dominated by *sigillata aretina* and by the products of the Italic workshops, whose activity declines in this phase, leaving space for eastern alternatives.

A similar trend can also be observed for the Ostia market: progressive increase of the *ETS B* imports with values very similar to those of the Ephesus amphorae, and the greater penetration capacity of incoming goods from maritime trade (Rizzo 2023: 484, figs. 7-8). Once again, the topography of the North Adriatic finds points to a predominantly coastal distribution but now with some important penetrations inland and redistribution along the great rivers such as the Po and Adige to the west and the Sava and Drava to the east.

As we have already seen, mid-Imperial period is predominant for the distribution of *Aegean Cooking Ware* in the upper Adriatic area. Considering the typology of sites affected by the presence of *Aegean Cooking Ware*, alongside to the numerous findings in built-up areas, the evidence of *villae*, residential, and/or productive contexts that evidently played a decisive role as centres of consumption of this pottery class. Also significant is its presence in smaller settlements, which perhaps played a role of some importance in the redistribution of this



Fig. 8. The distribution of *Eastern Sigillata B* along the North Adriatic coast: 1. Zuglio; 2. San Daniele; 3. Coseano; 4. Cividale; 5. Teor; 6. Palazzolo dello Stella; 7. Torre di Pordenone; 8. Sevegliano; 9. Ronchi dei Legionari; 10. Aquileia; 11. Duino; 12. Trieste; 13. Muggia; 14. *Aquincum*; 15. Ljubljana; 16. Celeia; 17. Ajdovščina; 18. Školarice; 19. Simonov Zaliv; 20. Fizine; 21. Loron; 22. Červar Porat; 23. Brioni; 24. Pula; 25. Medulin; 26. Rijeka; 27. Bakar; 28. Omišalj; 29. Krk; 30. Osor; 31. Ilovik; 32. Nin; 33. Zadar; 34. Pakoštane; 35. Velika Mrdakovica; 36. Skradin; 37. Danilo Gornje; 38. Rogoznica; 39. Sinj; 40. Split; 41. Pakleni Otoci; 42. Lastovo; 43. Mljet; 44. Otok; 45. Naron; 46. laguna nord di Venezia; 47. Concordia; 48. Altino; 49. Corte Cavanella; 50. Chiunsano; 51. Ferrara; 52. Classe; 53. Portorecanati; 54. Verona; 55. Brescia; 56. Modena; 57. Reggio Emilia; 58. *Sirmium*; 59. Višići; 60. Mogorjelo; 61. Čipulić (reworked from Dobrev and Griggio 2021, fig. 11).

pottery locally. This might be the case, for instance, for some small harbours located in the lagoons of Venice and Marano or of the *mansio* located along the Aquileia-Emona route (Ajdovščina, Hrušica, perhaps Bukovica) or along the course of the Po River (Gaiba-Chiunsano). Both in large centres and in those of more modest development, the discovery of *Aegean Cooking Wares* (in particular of some forms as jugs and mini-pots) in necropolis and production sites is frequent. In addition, a significant quantity of specimens was found inside wrecks or, more generally in the context of underwater research (Riccatò 2020: 160-162 with previous bibliography).

However, from 4th century AD onwards, trade with the Aegean area is mainly represented by amphorae from the western Asia Minor coast, whose importance grows and reaches its peak in the first half of 5th century AD, when, alongside the massive arrival of products from North Africa, more and more eastern imports are recorded. Towards the middle of the following century, it reaches and, in some of the contexts examined, even surpasses the levels of North African containers (Dobrevá and Zago 2021: 325-332).

As a reflection of this revival in trade with the Aegean area, one can recall here the presence of cooking-pots in *Late Roman micaceous Aegean Cooking Ware* and *western Asia Minor Gray Coarse Ware* which cover 20% of the cooking ware in use between 425 and 475 AD in the House of *Titus Macer* in Aquileia; the rest of imported kitchen pottery is of North African origin (7%), meanwhile as one might expect the majority of the finds (73%) comprise local and regional productions. This trend continues also in the next period, dated between 475 and 550 AD when the *Aegean Cooking Ware* is the only transregional imported kitchen pottery class and covers 9% of the total (Riccatò 2021).

Aquileia played a considerable role in the Adriatic distribution system until at least the first half of 6th century AD; after this period Ravenna became a major commercial hub in the Adriatic. During mid-6th century AD it represents a real social divide when one observes, in a context of general impoverishment, a greater resilience of commercial relations in the regional sites compared to Aquileia. An organism dominated by a single large port with the function of *emporion* at the regional level is replaced by a complex, more dispersive sorting system, made up of several multiple port sites of lesser importance, which have arisen in the recent lagoons of Grado and Marano (Dobrevá and Zago 2021: 362-364).

3.2 The imported products

The strong relationships between both territories depends mainly on the prosperity of the Asia Minor area and of the permanent request of foodstuffs originating from the western Anatolian coast. According to literary sources and epigraphy, wine productions of different quality and variety are located in the province of Asia and in the territory of Ephesus. Both Strabo and Pliny the Elder mentioned wines manufactured in the area near Ephesus and in the *Castrum* river valley. Nevertheless, if we consider some amphora types (as *Ephesus* 56), a hypothesis of oil content has been made. This suggestion is also strongly supported by the tradition of olive

growing, still in use in the *Castrum* and Meander valleys. Another critical point is the content of the amphorae of the so-called “Dressel 24” group that brings together vessels that most probably transport different foodstuffs: olive oil, fish sauces, and wine. However, the variety of different goods that could fill these amphorae can be interpreted as the result of several production areas that were involved in the manufacturing. It’s important also to remember that the city of Erythrai has been mentioned by the sources for producing a variety of salt wine, sour and pungent in flavour, not aromatic, but particularly suitable for mixing with sweet wines. The produced effect from this recipe was the contemporary destruction of the lesser quality features of the mixed wines by highlighting the aroma of the first and the sweetness of the second (Dobrevá 2017: 229).

Therefore, wine and olive oil do not complete the entire spectrum of products for which the Aegean region was famous. We need to mention the marble, sought-after in the West and probably responsible, at least in part, of the widespread distribution of some pottery classes. Recent studies show the primary role of Aquileia in the use of different marble originating from western Turkey (Prevato and Mareso 2015: 308, fig. 14b). It’s remarkable to mention that in some shipwrecks found in the Adriatic (for instance Izmetište or Veliki Školj), the association between *Aegean Cooking Ware*, *Eastern Sigillata B* and stone blocks of Asia Minor origin is documented. In other cases, the aforementioned pottery classes represented the predominant part of the load: these, therefore, had to represent goods with an inherent value, specifically requested. In this regard, the case of Nerežine seems particularly interesting: at the site, such a quantity of *Aegean Cooking Ware* containers was observed which suggests the remains of a ship in which this type of pottery represented the main part of the cargo (Jurišić 2000: 37, 70). The trend of *Aegean Cooking Ware* evidence in the Mid Roman stratigraphy of the House of *Titus Macer* in Aquileia (fig. 9) leads one to think that *Aegean Cooking Ware* could also have been traded independently and not only as accompanying goods for foodstuffs, marble, or other more valuable products.

Meanwhile extremely interesting is to note the perfect chronological overlap between ceramics and Roman coins (*cistophorus*) from the Pergamum and Ephesian mints found at Aquileia (Stella 2017). To complete this scenario of archaeological evidence, some epigraphic documents can also be used. Significant in this sense are some inscriptions dated to 2nd century AD found at Aquileia that mention *naukleroi* originating from Nicomedia in Bithynia. They are ship owners who were specialised in the trade connections between East and West Mediterranean and who most probably had an important role in the management of Asia Minor supply at Aquileia.

But who were the people involved in the trade between Aquileia and the western coast of Asia Minor?

The most precise information we have dates from 256 AD. A bilingual inscription (in Greek and Latin: *Inscr. Aq.* 182) probably drawn up at Aquileia contains the text that mentions *Tiberius Claudius Magnus*, Ephesian by birth, member of the senate of Aquileia, who has decorated and

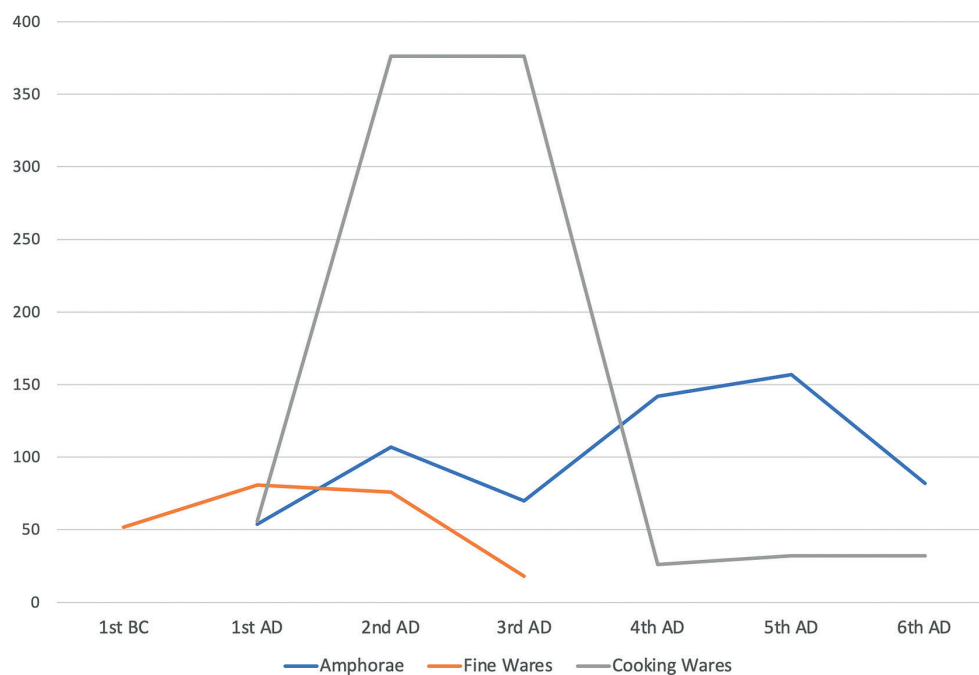


Fig. 9. Overall proportions and distribution of amphorae, fine and cooking wares of Aegean and Asia Minor origin by chronology: total 1738 MNI (minimum number of individuals) (elaboration by D. Dobрева).

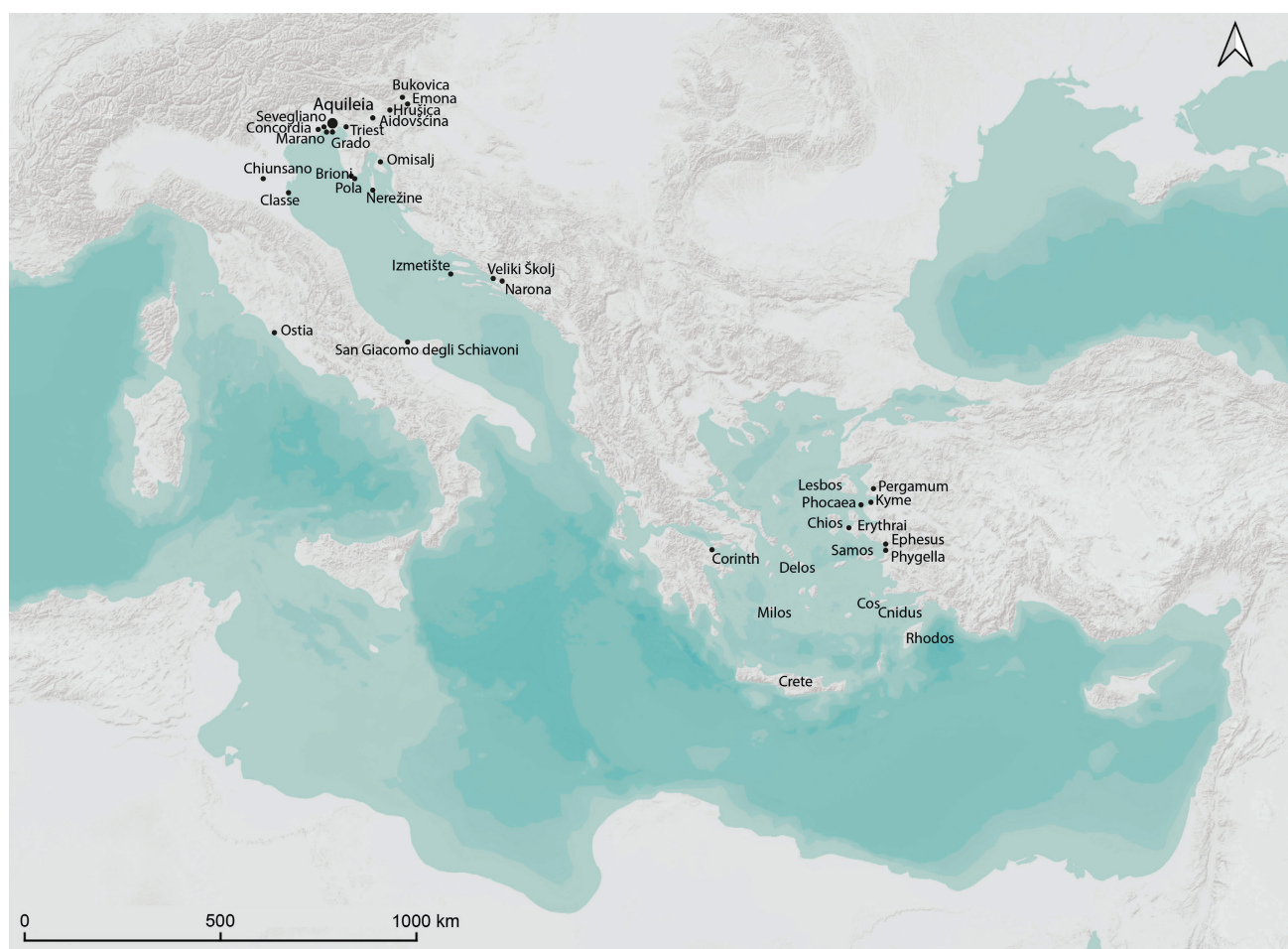


Fig. 10. Sites cited in the text (drawing by Diana Dobрева).

consecrated at his own cost, a temple dedicated to Artemis of Ephesus. The inscription found in 1958 in the former Cossar property sheds light on the multi-ethnic society of Aquileia, in which the Asia Minor community, or better yet, Ephesian one, played a major role (examined in Boffo 1996). Furthermore, the cult of Artemis of Ephesus/Diana is also documented in Aquileia by a votive altar probably dated to Severan period (Maselli Scotti 2002: 142). The reason for this presence is certainly linked to the strategic geographical position of the city, particularly concerning trade patterns with the Asia Minor coastal zone. This business must have been flourishing if it allowed some of those people, as in the case of *Claudius Magnus*, to climb the top of local society, ensuring at the same time the presence of an Ephesian community spokesperson in the city senate.

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