

Roman Settlements and the "Crisis" of the 3rd Century AD

Ager Aguntinus

Historisch-archäologische Forschungen

Herausgegeben von
Martin Auer und Harald Stadler

Universität Innsbruck
ATRIUM - Zentrum für Alte Kulturen
Institut für Archäologien

Band 4

2021

Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden

Martin Auer and Christoph Hinker (Eds.)

Roman Settlements and the "Crisis"
of the 3rd Century AD

2021

Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden

Printed with support of the Austrian Archaeological Institute of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, the University of Innsbruck (Faculty of Philosophy and History, Research Area “Cultural Encounters – Cultural Conflicts”) and the Curatorium pro Agunto.



reviewed by:

Christian Gugl, Manfred Hainzmann, Jana Horvat, Janka Istenič, Susanne Lamm, Manfred Lehner, Elizabeth Murphy, Salvatore Ortisi, Ivana Ožanić Roguljić, Kai Ruffing, Florian Schimmer, Eleni Schindler-Kaudelka, Alexander Sokolicek, Veronika Sossau and Eugenio Tamborrino.

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <https://dnb.de/> abrufbar.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the internet at <https://dnb.de/>.

For further information about our publishing program consult our website <https://www.harrassowitz-verlag.de/>

© Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden 2021
This work, including all of its parts, is protected by copyright.
Any use beyond the limits of copyright law without the permission of the publisher is forbidden and subject to penalty. This applies particularly to reproductions, translations, microfilms and storage and processing in electronic systems.
Printed on permanent/durable paper.
Printing and binding: Hubert & Co., Göttingen
Printed in Germany
ISBN 978-3-447-11593-3
ISSN 2567-7764

Contents

Preface.....	VII
Luca Arioli & Andrea Breda	
Brescia and its Territory: Settlement Transformations and the 3 rd Century Crisis.....	1
Sarah Beal	
Attack of the Herulians: Disaster Response in 3 rd Century Athens.....	17
Simone Benguerel	
<i>Tasgetium</i> : Von der Kleinstadt zum Kastell.....	31
Marta Bottos & Giovanni Tasca	
The Crisis of the 3 rd Century AD in the Territory of <i>Iulia Concordia</i> : The Roman <i>villa</i> of Gorgaz (San Vito al Tagliamento).....	47
Ralf Grüßinger & Alice Willmitzer	
Die Colonia <i>Ulpia Traiana</i> /Xanten im 3. Jh. n. Chr.....	59
Markus Handy	
Fortbestand oder Niedergang? Lokalkult oder Reichsreligion? Zum Kult des <i>Iuppiter Dolichenus</i> im 3. Jh. n. Chr.....	71
Ingrid Mader & Sabine Jäger-Wersonig	
Die zivile Siedlung <i>Vindobona</i> im 3. Jh. n. Chr.....	81
Patrick Marko	
Good Times, Bad Times? An Overview of Findings on the 3 rd Century in the Territory of <i>Flavia Solva</i> /Wagna.....	93
Antonin Nüsslein	
The 3 rd Century Between Meuse and Rhine (<i>Alsace</i> and <i>Lorraine</i> , France): Contrasting Situations in the Rural World.....	107
Javier Andreu Pintado	
Crisis before the ‘Crisis’: The Decline and Fall of the Cities of the <i>Hispania Tarraconensis</i> at the End of the High Empire.....	123
Ursula Schachinger, Raimund Kastler & Felix Lang	
Das 3. Jh. im Umland von <i>Iuvavum</i> – eine Krisenzeit? Numismatische Evidenz – Archäologischer Befund – Interpretation.....	133
Giulia Somma, Christoph Faller & Hubert Steiner	
Nuove ricerche sull’insediamento romano e medievale di <i>Littamum</i> (San Candido–Innichen) 2013–2018.....	169

Contents

Karl Strobel

Die sogenannte Reichskrise des 3. Jh.s n. Chr. im Spiegel historischer, regionaler und lokaler Diversität: Grundlagen einer historisch-archäologischen Quellenkritik 181

List of Credits 215

Preface

The 4th Aguntum Workshop was dedicated to the so-called crisis in the *Imperium Romanum* during the 3rd century AD. The aim of the workshop was to bring together archaeological data from different parts of the *Imperium* pertinent to the 3rd century. In some areas, severe changes occurred during the 3rd century, which is linked to a loss of influence of the Imperial administrative structures. This is the case in the *municipium Aguntum*, where we were able to discover that a destructive fire raged in the area of the town center. This ruination took place during the 3rd century AD and, as a result, the area of the *Forum* of *Aguntum* currently under investigation fell out of use.¹ However, there are no traces of war-like activity that could have led to the fire. Although we do not know why the fire broke out, it is a fact that the area was not renovated afterwards. This neglect can be seen as an indicator of the town's decreasing economic power. Otherwise such an eyesore in the very center of the town would have been remedied. We therefore know that the Roman administration in *Aguntum* was in crisis in the 3rd century AD.

At the same time, the hilltop settlements around the Roman town begin to flourish again. Especially in Lavant, ca. 5 km east of *Aguntum*, the archaeological evidence shows a clear increase of findings connected to the 3rd century compared to those from the 1st and 2nd centuries.²

Although *Aguntum* was inhabited until at least the 5th century AD³, severe changes took place in the area during the 3rd century. These concern the organization of the settlement and administration of the area. Contrary to the first two centuries AD, when a strong central settlement controlled the *ager Aguntinus*, from the 3rd century onwards, different smaller centers are established. However, this does not necessarily mean that people living in the 3rd century would have recognized these changes as a crisis, but at least from a historical point of view it is clear that the administrative power of the *Imperium* began to crumble.

The abovementioned trends are true for the *ager Aguntinus* but cannot be applied to the *Imperium Romanum* as a whole. As urged by Karl Strobel, the developments of the 3rd century should not be referred to as a "Crisis of the *Imperium*" but instead have to be considered in the context of regional circumstances. Archaeological contexts have to be analyzed in detail before linking them to historical events mentioned in the written sources.⁴ However, considering both archaeological and historical data can be fruitful, as seen in the case of Athens (Beal). How new research can change the old picture developed of this decline has been shown in the areas of Eastern Gaul (Nüsslein), Northern Italy (Arioli; Bottos / Tasca) or Eastern *Noricum* (Marko). Although towns that emerged during the High Empire seem to lose their importance during the 3rd or even already towards the end of the 2nd century (Marko, Pintado, Grüßinger / Willmitzer, Mader / Jäger-Wersonig), there is a great variance in the further development of small settlements, as seen in the case studies analyzed by Benguerel, Bottos / Tasca, Marko, Schachinger et al. and Somma et al. In some cases it is especially the *villae* that become increasingly wealthy during the 3rd century. This may be seen as a development similar to the hilltop settlements, which also become increasingly important during the 3rd century, whereas the central administration of municipal territories seems to suffer from a lack of "imperial power". Nevertheless, there is also evidence for a crisis that affected a whole region, towns and the countryside alike. This might be especially true for North-Western *Noricum*, although there seems to be no historical explanation for the missing coins (Schachinger et al.). Despite this general

1 Auer 2018.

2 Kainrath 2011; Auer / Deschler-Erb / Sossau, in print.

3 Auer 2016; Auer / Deschler-Erb / Sossau, in print.

4 For a methodical approach: Hinker 2015.

development of settlement structures, new developments in the intellectual sphere also emerged in the 3rd century (Handy).

Altogether the 4th Aguntum Workshop has shown that the 3rd century was a time of severe transformation in different regions of the Roman Empire. However, change does not automatically mean crisis and for some settlements and regions the 3rd century was a time of great prosperity. Nevertheless other regions show a tendency towards the reduction of towns and decrease of centralized administration in favor of a range of smaller centers like rural and hilltop settlements or *villae*.

Innsbruck and Vienna, August 2020
Martin Auer & Christoph Hinker

Bibliography

- Auer 2016: M. Auer, Municipium Claudium Aguntum. Keramik als Indikator für die spätantike Sozialstruktur?, REI CRETARIAE ROMANAE FAVORVM, ACTA 44, 2016, 453–458.
- Auer 2018: Municipium Claudium Aguntum. Excavations in the city centre (2006–2015), in: M. Janežič / B. Nadbath / T. Mulh / I. Žižek (Eds.), New Discoveries between the Alps and the Black Sea. Results from Roman Sites in the period between 2005 and 2015. Proceedings of the 1st International Archaeological Conference, Ptuj, 8th and 9th October 2015. In memoriam Iva Mikl Curk (Ljubljana 2018) 93–113.
- Auer / Deschler-Erb / Sossau, in print: M. Auer / S. Deschler-Erb / V. Sossau, The periphery of the Mediterranean – Aguntum (Southwestern Noricum) in Late Antiquity, Acta of the TRADE (Transformation of Adriatic Europe) Congress, Zadar 2016, in print.
- Hinker 2015: C. Hinker, acta cruenta und Brandschicht = Flavia Solva in Schutt und Asche? Die Archäologie der römischen Provinzen, ihre Quellen und deren historisches Potenzial, Jahreshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts in Wien 84, 2015, 51–96.
- Kainrath 2011: B. Kainrath, Die Spuren der Römer auf dem Kirchbichl von Lavant. Fiktion und Wirklichkeit, in: G. Grabherr / B. Kainrath (Eds.), Die spätantike Höhensiedlung auf dem Kirchbichl von Lavant, Ikarus 5 (Innsbruck 2011) 13–439.