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MUNICIPIUM CLAUDIUM AGUNTUM

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Izvleček

Municipium Claudium Aguntum leži v jugozahodnem delu province Norik. Arheološka izkopavanja so začeli leta 1912, od leta 1991 pa raziskave vodi Inštitut za arheologije Univerze v Innsbrucku. Najstarejši ostanki Agunta so iz časa cesarja Klavdija. Mesto leži na aluvialnem nanosu stožčaste oblike, zato ulično omrežje ni strogo pravokotno. Poznamo sicer več objektov, kot so obzidje, atrijska hiša, terme in deli foruma s pokrito tržnico (*macellum*), vendar obseg mesta še vedno ni jasen. Večina arheoloških raziskav je bila usmerjena na prostor vzhodno od reke Debant. Južni zaključek obzidja označuje južno mejo mesta, medtem ko njegova severna meja ni raziskana. Proti vzhodu se zunaj obzidja širi predmestje v dolžini vsaj 300 metrov. V prvih dveh stoletjih našega štetja so v Aguntu veliko gradili. Požar je v 3. stoletju uničil velik del središča in tega niso več v celoti obnovili. Zgodnjekrščanska cerkev s sarkofagi priča o številnem prebivalstvu tudi v pozni antiki. Zadnja omemba Agunta v poznoantičnih virih sega v zgodnje 7. stoletje ter se nanaša na spopad med Slovani in Bajuvari. Pozneje so mesto postopno zasule naplavine bližnjih rek in ostalo je skrito do poznega 19. stoletja.

Ključne besede: Norik, Aguntum, rimsko mesto, obzidje, atrijska hiša, *macellum*, kamena strela

Abstract

The Municipium Claudium Aguntum is situated in the southwestern corner of the province of Noricum. Initial excavations were conducted in 1912, and since 1991, the Institute for Archaeologies at the University of Innsbruck has been responsible for archaeological research at the site. The oldest remnants of Aguntum can be traced back to the time of Emperor Claudius. The street layout deviates from being strictly orthogonal due to the town's location on an alluvial cone. While we are aware of several structures like the town wall, the atrium house, the thermal baths, and portions of the forum, including a macellum, the precise size of the Roman town remains uncertain. Most archaeological inquiries have concentrated on the region east of the Debant River. One of the town wall's ends demarcates the southern limit, but the northern extent remains unexplored. To the east, the suburbs stretch at least 300 metres from the town wall. Aguntum witnessed substantial construction during the initial two centuries AD. A fire in the 3rd century destroyed a significant portion of the town centre, with not all of it being rebuilt. The town continued to have a notable population in Late Antiquity, as evidenced by the presence of an early Christian church and numerous sarcophagi linked to it. Aguntum's last mention in Late Antique sources dates to the early 7th century AD, relating to a conflict between Slavs and Bajuvars. Following this, the town gradually became buried beneath alluvial deposits from nearby rivers and remained hidden until the late 19th century.

Keywords: Noricum, Aguntum, Roman town, town wall, Atrium House, macellum, rock crystal

PREFACE

The Roman town of *Aguntum* (1st to 5th century AD) has already been presented several times in overviews. It was Wilhelm Alzinger (1977a) who first compiled the findings known at the time. A quarter of a century later, Elisabeth Walde (2002; 2005) published the state of research. Now, about 20 years later, there is another opportunity to present a summary of the state of research. Since it is necessary to repeat to a certain extent what has already been published, the focus is on the archaeological features and small finds. Reliefs and inscriptions from the town area are considered to a limited degree. Reference is made to the museum catalogues (Gomig 2007; 2016) and to the publications by Walde (2002; 2005; 2011) and Anton Höck (2005). Also, in contrast to the last summary of the state of research, the focus is placed on the town of *Aguntum*, while the nearby hilltop settlement of Lavant is not the theme of this paper. The latter has meanwhile been presented in detail by Barbara Kainrath (2011), and the publication of new research on the so-called Episcopal Church is in preparation[1] (Auer, in print).

RESEARCH HISTORY

The *Municipium Claudium Aguntum* is situated in the southwestern corner of the Roman Province of *Noricum*. The localisation of *Aguntum*, which is mentioned by Pliny as one of the five Norican *municipiae* (Nat. Hist. III, 27), was not clear until the late 19th century. Theodor Mommsen first suggested the area of present-day Dölsach, Eastern Tyrol, Austria as the site of the Roman town (*CIL* III/2, 590). Remains of buildings, findings and a graveyard were already known before all these findings were collected by Adolf Bernhard Meyer and August Unterforcher (1908). This publication was extremely important for the following research in the area. The Franciscan friar Innozenz Ploner (1912) led the first archaeological excavation, uncovering parts of the town walls and immediately publishing his work. Encouraged by the discoveries of Ploner, first excavations organised by the Austrian Archaeological Institute took place in 1912/1913 (*Fig. 1*). These excavations concentrated on the so-called funerary church in the eastern part of the settlement. Meyer and Unterforcher already predicted the location of the church and mentioned numerous inhumations and a 19th century excavation in this area. Rudolf Egger (1914; 1916) led the field research organised by the Austrian Archaeological Institute. He partly worked in parallel with Ploner, but did not have a good relationship with the latter (Müller 2018; 2021).

After this initial research, work was brought to a halt due to the ensuing First World War. Only in the 1930s did the Austrian Archaeological Institute begin excavations in *Aguntum* again, led by Erich Swoboda (1935). The main reason for these excavations was the reconstruction of the modern road leading from East Tyrol to Carinthia. In the course of the road, several buildings east of the town walls were found and the town wall itself was partially excavated. Swoboda also tried to find the continuation of the wall to the north, but stated that after a few metres to the north the wall was very poorly preserved and could no longer be determined with certainty. Egger's research in the funerary church also brought to light a long wall aligned from north to south, but it is still unclear whether this is a part of the town wall (Müller, in print). With Swoboda's discoveries east of the town wall, a discussion about the position of the Roman *municipium* began. The buildings excavated by Swoboda led him to believe that that the town must be located on the eastern side of the wall.

Again, the archaeological work in *Aguntum* stopped due to the Second World War, and in the 1950s the Austrian Archaeological Institute resumed research. For the head of excavations, Franz Miltner, the first question to solve was the location of the town (Miltner 1953a). So, he started to follow the town walls to the south, hoping to find a corner and thus being able to determine the position of the town with certainty. Surprisingly, the town walls ended 180 m from the known main gate without indicating any corner (Miltner 1953a, 97–103). It is very likely that branches of the Drava River delimited the town on the southern side, so perhaps there was no need to build a wall in this area. The buildings found at the southern end of the wall were only partly excavated by Miltner (1955), but high amounts of transport vessels in this area seem to indicate a river harbour (Auer 2019). At the same time, Miltner started to excavate on the western side of the town wall and found the southern rooms of a big building complex, which later was identified as an *atrium* house (Miltner 1953a; 1955). Miltner died in 1959 and Wilhelm Alzinger became his successor. With the discovery of the *atrium* house, the position of the town on the western side of the wall was quite evident, and Alzinger continued his research from the Atrium House towards the north (Alzinger 1959). He discovered several small residential buildings in this area. Remains of fireplaces and metalwork prompted the interpretation as a domestic and artisans' quarter (Langmann 1968–1971; Alzinger 1974, 30–32). During the late 1960s, the *thermae* were discovered, which led to a concentration of the archaeological work in this area until the late 1970s (Schoitsch 1976; Alzinger 1985a, 45–50). The excavation of the so-called domestic and artisans' quarter was left unfinished due to the greater research interest in the monumental building

[1] Der Baubefund der "Bischofskirche" von Lavant – erste Ergebnisse einer Neubewertung. – In: M. Auer, G. Grabherr (eds.), *Frühes Christentum im archäologischen Kontext, Ager Aguntinus.* Historisch-archäologische Forschungen, Wiesbaden, in preparation.

Fig. 1: Excavation history of *Aguntum*. The basis of the map are the Roman structures of the 2nd to 4th century AD. Structures in light grey are only known from GPR-prospections.

of the *thermae*. During the excavation of the *thermae*, the northern street (*decumanus I sinister*) was examined, and on the southern side of this street another monumental building with rich marble furnishings was discovered (Alzinger 1985a, 50–51). Due to land ownership issues, it was not possible to continue the excavations there during the 1970s, so in the late 1970s and 1980s work was again concentrated on the area of the Atrium House and the residential buildings to the north of the latter (Alzinger 1984; Luger 1989). During the campaign in 1974, a roof tile bearing an engraved map was found (Alzinger 1977b). Alzinger was so excited about this discovery that he informed the press immediately after the tile's finding. Unfortunately, this town plan was a practical joke of his excavating students, as is known today. Nobody had the courage to tell Alzinger about this joke after he informed everybody about his allegedly great discovery, which led to an interruption in the exploration of *Aguntum*. Several publications about the *Aguntum* town map came to different conclusions regarding its authenticity (Müller 2020). However, Alzinger determined his excavation strategy according to the town plan (Alzinger 1985b). The search for the theatre, an aim of Alzinger's research, did not yield any results, as for several years excavations took place in areas without any Roman remains.

In 1991, the excavation of *Aguntum* was no longer continued by the Austrian Archaeological Institute, but was taken over by the Institute for Classical Archaeology (nowadays Institute for Archaeologies) at the University of Innsbruck. First works, led by Elisabeth Walde and Michael Tschurtschenthaler (1994), concentrated on the area of the monumental building south of the *thermae* (so-called "Prunkbau") and an unfinished excavation of a residential building north of the *thermae* (so-called "Haus I"). Due to the reconstruction and renovation of the modern street, excavations in the course of the street were necessary in 1994. During these investigations, the marble basin of the *peristylium* in the *atrium* house was found. Due to these results, it was then possible to conclude the excavations in the *atrium* house, which lasted until 2006 (Tschurtschenthaler 2005; 2006; 2007). It was only afterwards that excavation continued in the

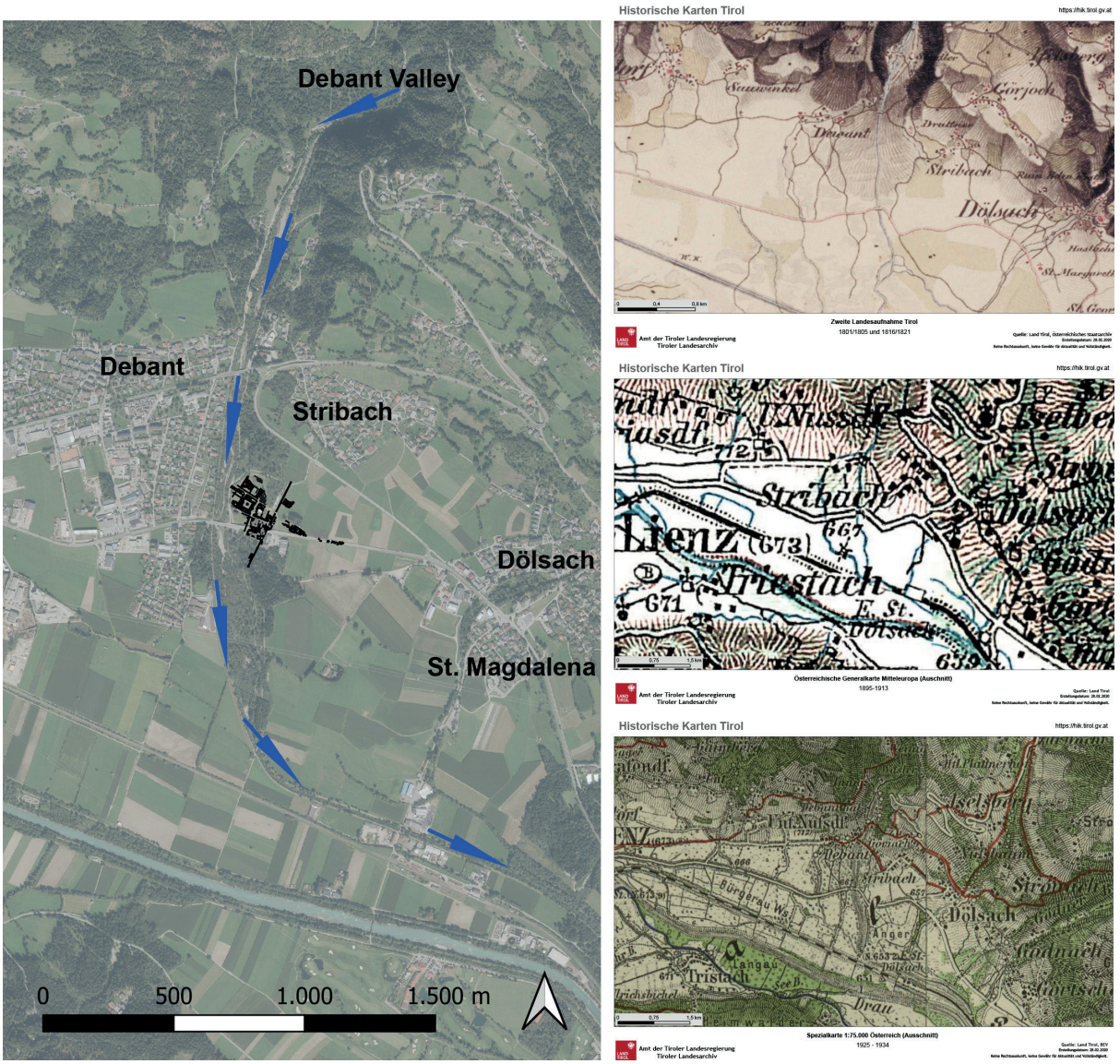

Fig. 2: Localisation of *Aguntum* on the alluvial cone of the Debant River (river course indicated with blue arrows). On the right side: course of the Debant and Drava Rivers in the early 19th century, early 20th century and in 1935 (from top to bottom).

central part of the town, where meanwhile the land in this area had been bought by the *Curatorium Pro Agunto* and was therefore available for archaeological research.

Already in 2000 it was possible to dig a trench through the area: a big rectangular building and a building with rounded walls were found (Tschurtschenthaler 2000). The latter was the first to be excavated from 2006 to 2009 and could be interpreted as a *macellum* (Tschurtschenthaler 2007; 2008; 2018). The big building with rectangular walls east of the *macellum* is still under excavation and interpreted as a traders' *forum* (Auer 2018). In addition to these new findings, the excavations in the domestic and artisans' quarter, which were left unfinished because of the discovery of the *thermae*, were continued and concluded. This work was part of a restoration and redesign of the Archaeological Park *Aguntum* that started in 2013 and led to several re-examinations of different parts of the town during the restoration works. Preliminary reports on the annual excavations are published in the *Fundberichte aus Österreich*.

THE SITE AND ITS GEOLOGICAL POSITION

Aguntum lies on an alluvial cone formed by the Debant River, whose recent course can be seen in *Figure 2*. The river comes from the Debant valley and nowadays crosses the remains of the Roman town. Of course, this was not the case in antiquity. As *Figure 2*

Fig. 3: Layout of the street grid during the 1st century AD. *Cardo II* was abandoned when the *macellum* was built (2nd quarter of the 2nd century), the northern part of *cardo I* was abandoned during the 3rd century, when the buildings expanded to the course of the street.

illustrates, the course of the Debant and the Drava Rivers changed considerably over the last 200 years, and especially the regulation of the Drava has significantly altered the landscape. It remains an open question where the Debant River flowed during the Roman period (Unterweger 2018). The modern-day river makes a bend to the west when leaving the Debant valley and then heads south again. Even in 1952, the river still had two beds, one on top of the alluvial cone like it today and another one further west. Anyway, the whole landscape has changed since antiquity. The Roman buildings in the town are covered by sand and gravel that can reach up to three meters above the collapsed walls. The alternating stratification testifies to alternating slow and fast flowing water. Therefore, it can be assumed that the town was slowly covered by alluvial layers in post-antique times, as is also the case in natural riparian forests.

This process led to a slow but complete burial of the ancient town. In the 16th century, Johann Putsch still saw some ruins of the Roman town (Meyer, Unterforcher 1908, 27–28). However, this leads to great difficulties in geophysical prospection, as the burial under alluvial layers and the construction of the city on an alluvial cone mean that the Roman remains are completely enclosed by them. Especially in the central part of the town, the alluvial layers reach a height of up to 3 m (Auer et al. 2013). As the distance from the Debant River increases, the conditions for geophysics improve, so some recent measurements in the *suburbia* produced better results (Zickgraf, Buthmann 2015).

THE BUILDINGS

The oldest remains of the Roman town date to the reign of emperor *Claudius*. Up to now, only small parts of the town have been excavated. We have knowledge of different buildings and the street grid is roughly reconstructable (*Fig. 3*). The street grid is not orthogonal, which is clearly due to the town's location on an alluvial

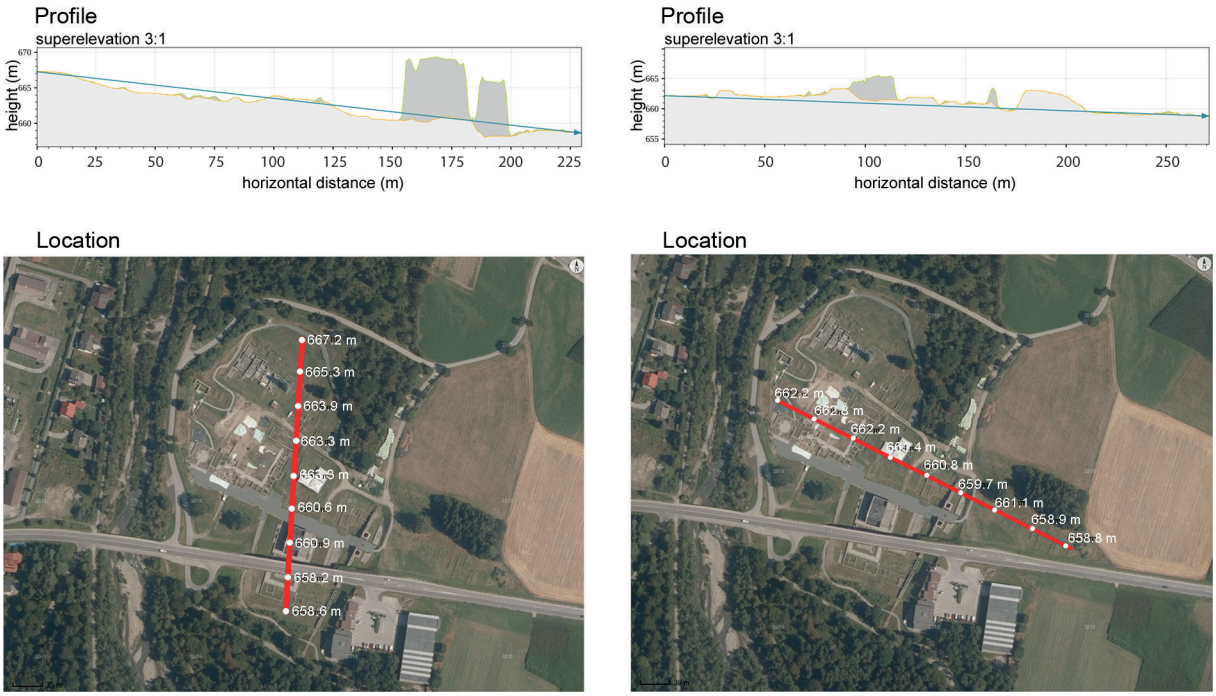

Fig. 4: Slope from north to south (left) and west to east (right) in the excavated area.

cone. The east-west running streets were the most important, and the southern one entered the town through a gate flanked by two towers. This situation led to the assumption that this road was the most important. In fact, however, the town gate was only built during the late 2nd or early 3rd century, and originally the southern street entered the town through a simple 3.5 m wide gate. The main road during the first two centuries of the town was the northern one (Auer 2008), along which the *thermae* and *forum* were aligned in parallel.

The *insula* planning also depended on the shape of the alluvial cone, which is why it was not always possible to create rectangular *insulae* or *insulae* parallel to each other. The original terrain was much steeper than it looks today. The levelling of the excavated area shows a slope of 9 m from north to south and a slighter slope of approximately 3 m from west to east (*Fig. 4*). Therefore, every *insula* was built on its own terrace. One of these terrace walls collapsed in the winter of 2021/2022, providing an opportunity to examine the terrain in this section in more detail. Here, as in other parts of the town, the level difference between the terraces from north to south is approximately 1.5 m.

THE TOWN WALL

The town wall is a cavity wall consisting of two stone walls, built with rounded stones from the alluvial material in the usual technique for *Aguntum*. The total width of the wall ranges from 2.45 m (upper part) to 3.5 m (foundation). The gap between the two walls was filled with mortar, stones and earth. At regular intervals of 50 Roman feet (14.8 m), an interconnection of the external and internal walls through 0.4 m wide walls is visible (*Fig. 5*). The building technique (*emplekton*) is described by Pliny (Nat. Hist. XXXVI, 51) and Vitruvius (De Architectura II, 8, 7 & I, 5, 7).

The course of the town walls is, thanks to Miltner's excavations, well known from the gate at the *decumanus maximus* to the southern end of the wall (Miltner 1953a). There are only a few clues north of the gate. Some test trenches by Swoboda (1935, 22–24) indicated that the wall continues for about 170 m to the north. Egger (1914; 1916) found a part of a long wall when excavating the "Funerary Church", but since his excavations were never finished and are not visible today, it remains unclear whether this wall west of the church was a part of the town wall (Egger 1916, Fig. 6). South of the gate at the *decumanus maximus*, three other gates are recognised. The northernmost leading into the "backyard" of the Atrium House already existed when the wall was built (Miltner 1953a, 97–103). The other two gates, according to Miltner, seem to have been added later. The wall ends about 180 m from the gate without a corner (Miltner 1953a, 105–108). It is most likely that the branches of the Drava/Debant River bordered the town in the south, so that a continuation of the wall was not necessary.

However, as shown by the analysis of the findings from the buildings around the wall (Auer 2008), the wall

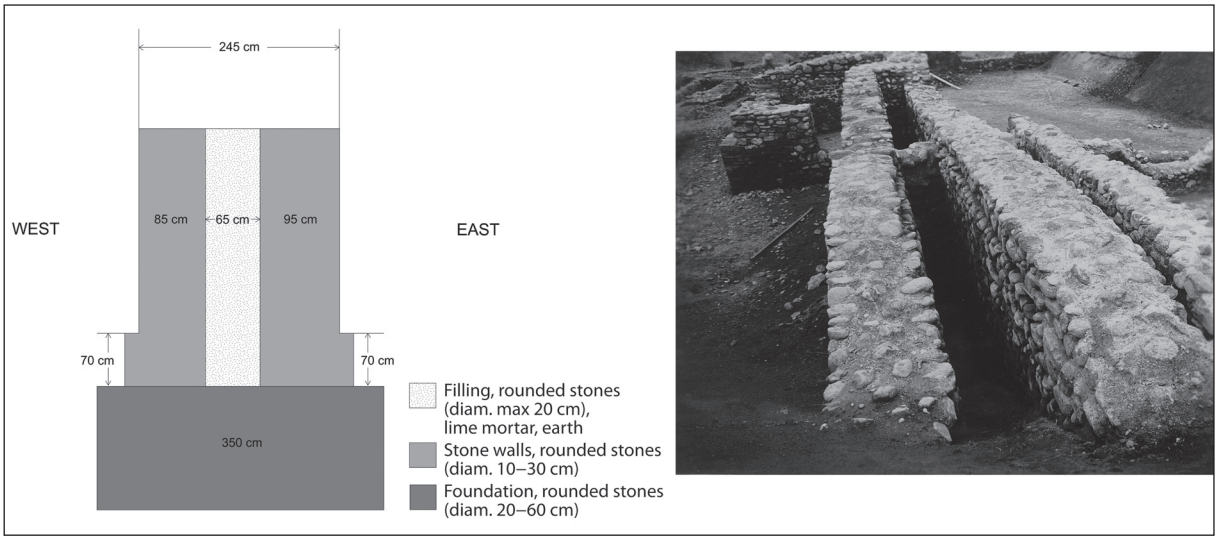

Fig. 5: Schematic layout of the city wall (left) and view of the city wall from north to south (north of the gate at the *decumanus maximus*), where one of the connection walls is visible (right).

was built in the second half of the 1st century AD. The archaeological evidence already pointed to this early date during the excavations of Swoboda (1934) and Miltner (1953b, 32–34), but in the absence of historical reasons for a wall in the 1st century, a later date of the wall was proposed in Swoboda's main publication (Swoboda 1935, 49). A late 2nd century dating of the wall was based on the typological comparison of the known gate with its towers (Alzinger 1960; Gassner 1985–1986), but the gate at the *decumanus maximus* was built in a second phase, most likely during the 2nd century AD (Auer 2008). Before that time it was much narrower, with a width of 3.5 m, corresponding to the side gate leading to the "backyard" od the Atrium House. Therefore, the main gate of the Roman *municipium* remains unknown; much points to a localisation of the main gate in the course of the *decumanus I sinister*, as the oldest known buildings of *Aguntum* were orientated towards this road. However, the area in question has not yet been excavated, which leaves the interpretation of the wall open. The evidence known so far indicates an interpretation of the town wall as a representative building erected after the settlement received municipal rights. If this interpretation is correct, a representative gate of this first wall would be expected. Other scholars associated the wall with a dam that would have served to control the passage from east to west (Swoboda 1935, 49), with a dam for flood protection (Wotschitzky 1952; Alzinger 1981–1982) or with an *aquaeductus* (Scherrer 2016, 32). An interpretation as a barrier wall would be connected to the question of who should have been prevented from crossing from east to west here. Since the 1st century dating of the wall is certain, it seems unlikely that such a barrier wall would have been erected in the immediate vicinity of the town. Considering the observed geomorphological processes in the ancient town, a flood protection would have been a good idea, but the position of the wall, especially its continuation on the higher level in the north and the lack of continuation on the southern side of the town, where the branches of the Drava and Debant Rivers may have posed the highest flood risk, argue against it. Finally, there are also several arguments against interpreting the wall as an *aquaeductus*: there are no known findings in or near the wall that would indicate water flow (like lead pipes, hydraulic mortar or the like). One would also expect an *aquaeductus* to be connected to the *thermae*, which is not the case. Furthermore, a well was found on the southern end of the wall, only one meter away from it (*Fig. 6*). Overall, the interpretation of the town wall, which is so far only known on the eastern side of the town, is still to be discussed.

THE "HARBOUR"

During Miltner's excavations along the town wall, he also investigated parts of a building near its southern end (Miltner 1955, 82–90). Six rooms were partly excavated and show different building phases of the 1st and 2nd century AD (*Fig. 6*). Especially the 1st century layers contained lots of transport vessels (Alzinger 1955; Auer 2019) and could indicate a nearby river port where these vessels arrived and were discarded (Auer 2019). According to Miltner, the excavated rooms themselves belonged to a building connected directly to the town wall. Remains of a staircase seemed to allow access to the wall here (Mitner 1955, 85–86).

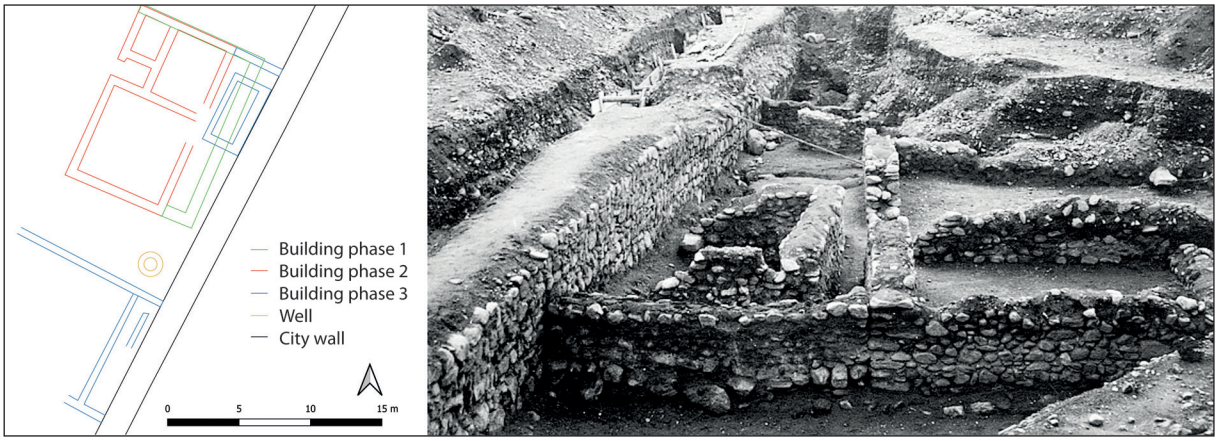

Fig. 6: Buildings near the southern end of the city walls. Building phases according to Miltner (left) and view from north to south during the excavation in the 1950s (right).

THE *ATRIUM* HOUSE

The first phase of this building dates to the time of emperor *Claudius* and was then built as a classical *Atrium* House with big rooms and an open roof (Alzinger 1992; Tschurtschenthaler 2005). Several alterations took place until the 2nd century, especially heating systems were installed and rooms were partly reduced in size (Tschurtschenthaler 2005). During the 2nd century, the eastern part of the Atrium House area was completely rebuilt and private bathing rooms as well as representative rooms with underfloor heating were added (*Fig. 7*).

The dating of the building phases by Alzinger and Tschurtschenthaler did not consider all findings, so their examination brought new insights into the absolute dating (Auer 2017; 2020). The first, Claudian period consists of the central Atrium House and several rooms east of it (*Fig. 7a*). Most of these rooms were already excavated in the early 20th century and during the 1950s and interpreted as servant's rooms (Miltner 1953a; Alzinger 1959). They were related to older building phases under the eastern part of the 2nd century AD house, of which only a small part was uncovered because of the good preservation of the heating system in the 2nd century building. Finds from this older phase include numerous transport vessels, which, along with some broad wall foundations, could indicate an interpretation as a storage facility (Auer 2019). Also, the direct access to this area from the outside through a side gate of the town wall can support such an interpretation. However, this part of the Atrium House area was completely renewed during the 2nd century and several heatable rooms decorated with wall paintings (Brandlechner 2008) were built (*Fig. 7b*).

During the 3rd century, no major building activities took place in the Atrium House and it seems that the building was maintained but not renovated. Clear traces of reconstruction can be dated to the 4th century, when heating systems (Y-shaped channels) were installed (*Fig. 7e*) in several parts of the house (*Fig. 7c*). In addition, the marble-clad water basin in the *peristylium* (*Fig. 7d*) was then filled with construction debris (Rückl 2003), and a room with Y-shaped heating channel was erected on top of it. The latest findings from the Atrium House belong to the 5th century AD. It is noteworthy that imported tableware (African Red Slip Ware) was used in the last phases, which – in contrast to other Late Antique buildings such as the dwellings built in the *macellum* area – indicates wealthy inhabitants even in Late Antiquity (Auer 2016).

THE *SUBURBIA*

The excavation east of the town wall took place under the leadership of Swoboda (1935). He aimed to prove the localisation of the town in this area and excavated several rooms of residential buildings in the *suburbia*. Some of these rooms had hypocaust heating systems and the findings from this area, which are kept in Schloss Bruck (Lienz), point to continuous use of the *suburbia* from the 1st until the 5th century (*Fig. 8*). During the latest phases, a funerary chapel was built above the ruins of a residential building, where five inhumations were placed, one in a sarcophagus, the others in side rooms of the chapel (Swoboda 1935, 81–84). Unfortunately, the buildings in the *suburbia* were never fully excavated, so only individual rooms are known, but not their interconnection. In 2013, geophysical measurements were carried out north of the buildings excavated by Swoboda (Zickgraf, Buthmann 2015). The results point to dense building development in this area. Two more partly excavated buildings were situated immediately east of the town gate. The southern one was already excavated by Swoboda (1935), the northern one was excavated in the 1990s (Auer 2008). Again, we

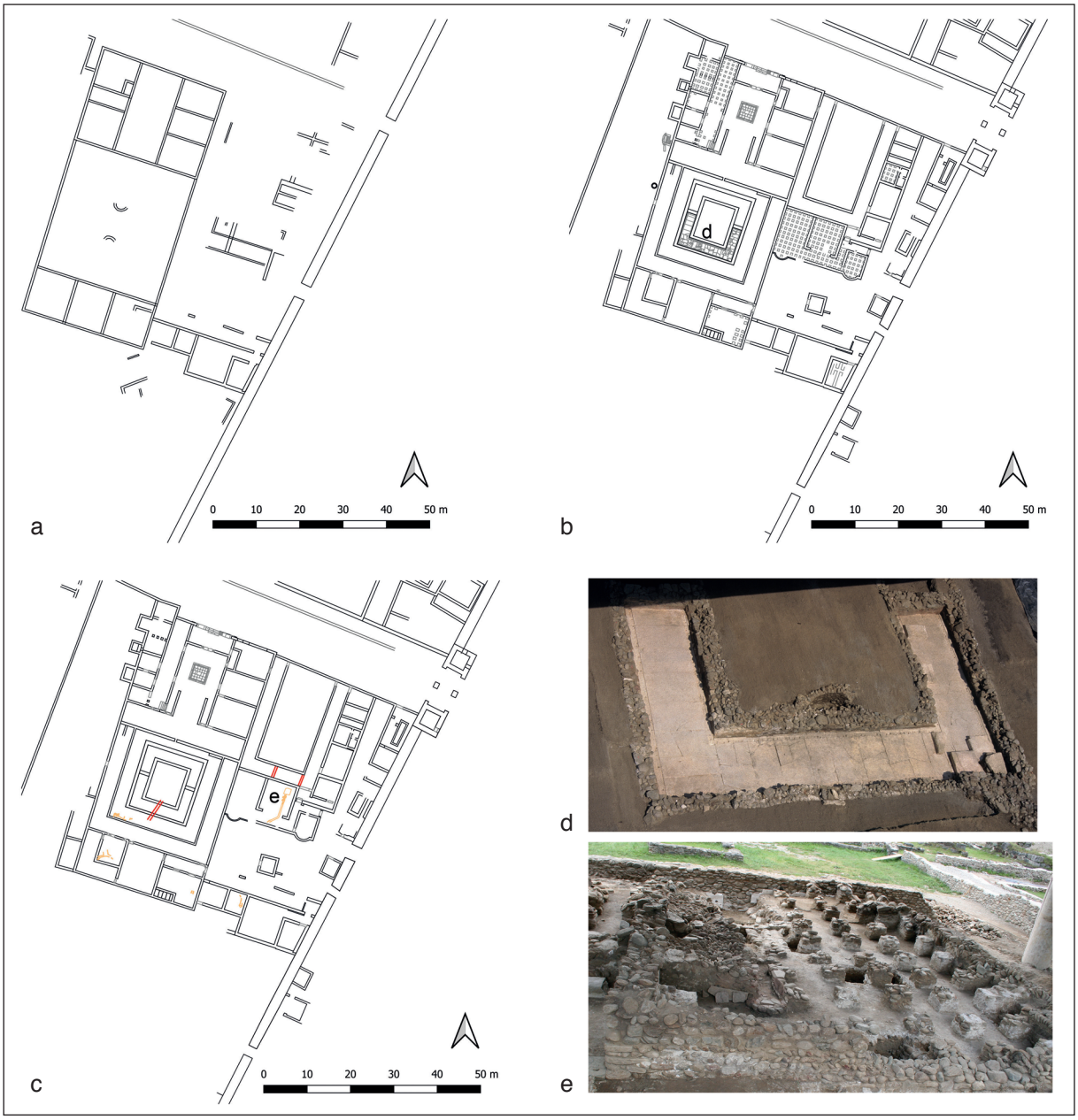

Fig. 7: Main building activities in the *atrium* house: a – from Claudian times to the last quarter of the 1st century A; b – the late 1st to 3rd century AD; c – Late Antique adaptations (walls in red, heating systems in orange); d – marble basin in the *peristylium* and older, rounded structure (part of a fountain?; photo from south to north); e – detail of the eastern part of the Atrium House, 2nd century hypocaust room with Late Antique installation of a *praefurnium* and a heating channel (photo from north to south).

only know parts of the buildings, their entire extension has not yet been investigated.

THE "FUNERARY CHURCH"

Excavated in 1912/1913, the "funerary church" stands on the remains of a residential building (Egger 1914; 1916). The known part of the church consisted of a central, rectangular hall with a horseshoe-shaped priests' bench in the east and a smaller room in the north-eastern corner, interpreted as a vestry (*Fig. 9*). Due to problems with the landowners, Egger could not finish his excavations (Müller, in prep.), so the extension of the church and its associated graveyard remain unclear. However, the church and the numerous inhumations and sarcophagi mentioned by Meyer and Unterforcher (1908, 13–26) imply a still substantial Late Antique population in *Aguntum*.

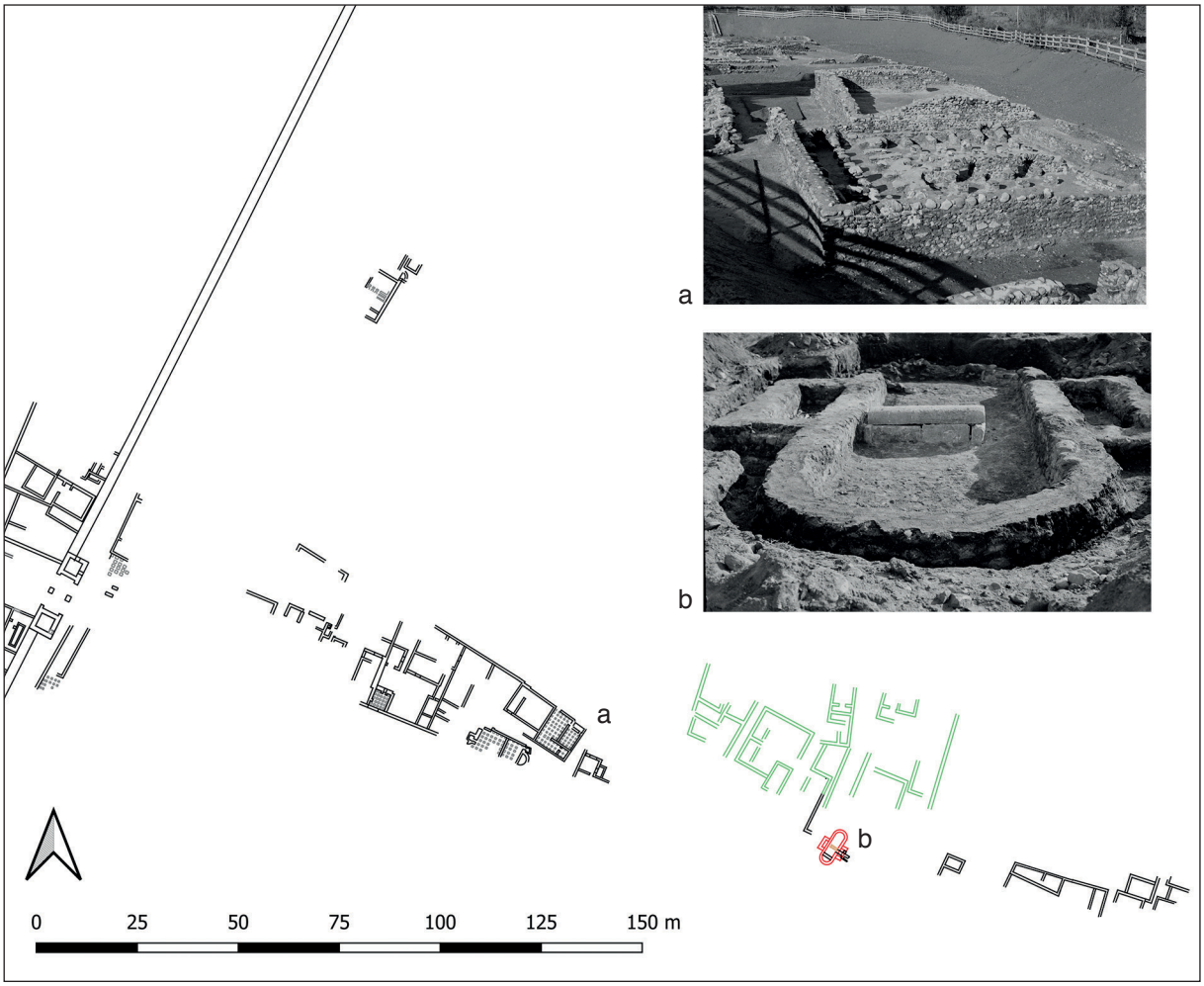

Fig. 8: Known buildings (1st to 4th century) in the *suburbia* east of the city wall. Black walls have been excavated; green walls are known from geophysics. The funerary chapel is indicated in red. **a** – Photo during Swoboda's excavation (from east to west); **b** – funerary chapel during excavation (from north to south).

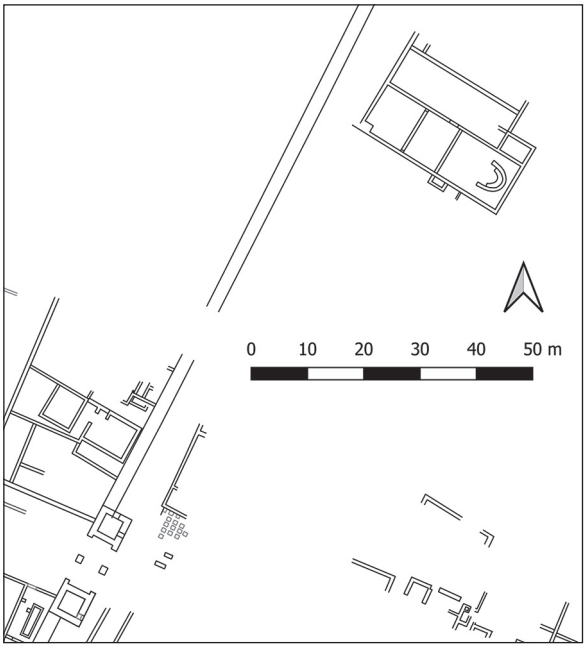

Fig. 9: So-called "Funerary Church", partly excavated in 1912/1913, in relation to the city walls and the *suburbia*.

THE DOMESTIC AND ARTISANS' HOUSES

Several small residential buildings and workshops are situated in the west of the town wall. Most of the domestic and artisans' houses were excavated during the late 1950s and early 1960s, and the knowledge about various building phases is limited. The area was referred to as residential quarter ("Wohnviertel") and craftsmen's quarter ("Handwerkerviertel") in the literature (Langmann 1968–1971; Alzinger 1977a, 399–400; Alzinger 1985a, 46). This designation is problematic as a localisation of living and working in different regions of the town is impossible. Therefore, it seems more appropriate to divide the "domestic and artisans' houses" into various building complexes.

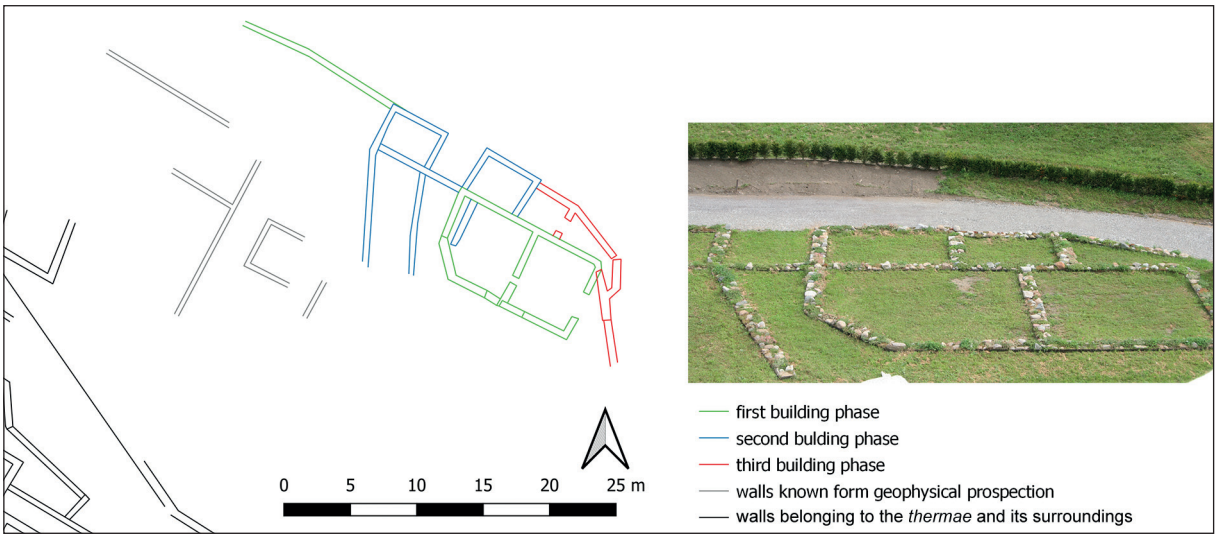

Fig. 10: Construction phases of building complex 1 ("Haus I") and presentation of the building in the Archaeological Park.

Building Complex 1 (Haus I)

First excavations during the 1970s in this house were continued during the early 1990s and the findings were processed by Wolfgang Klimesch in his diploma thesis (Klimesch 1995). The finds suggest a continuous use of the area from the 1st to the 5th century AD. The currently visible building phases (*Figs. 3:* C1; *10; 14*) belong mainly to the later phases from the 2nd/3rd century onwards; the appearance of the earlier house remains unclear.

Building Complex 2 (western part of the "Handwerkerviertel", Insula C)

This complex was re-excavated during necessary restoration works. Based on the excavation results, the oldest features were from the 1st century, but the main building activity in this area took place during the 2nd and 3rd centuries (*Figs. 3:* C2; *11; 14*). Regarding workshops, a bronze workshop from the late 1st/early 2nd century can be located, which went out of use when the living areas were enlarged during the 2nd century (*Fig. 11b*). In addition to the hypocaust systems in the living rooms (*Fig. 14*), smaller heatable rooms were also built during the later construction phases (*Fig. 11d, f*). No specific function can be deduced from the findings, but at least the small room erected in phase 2 (*Fig. 11d*) could have served as a drying kiln.

Building Complex 3 (eastern part of the "Handwerkerviertel", Insula B)

The complex comprises the so-called "House of the Christian lamp" ("Haus der christlichen Tonlampe"), the "House of Lucius Severus" and adjoining rooms (*Figs. 3:* C3; *12; 14*). The excavation was published in detail by Gerhard Langmann (1968–1971, 166–171), although the oldest phases remain unclear. According to Langmann, both houses were connected during the 2nd century AD and were separated in the 3rd century. The houses remained in use until the 5th century, but there were no indications of craft activity, despite a fireplace that could also have been used for cooking. Due to the flooding of the whole excavation area during the 1960s, most of the walls had to be reconstructed after the inundation; their re-excavation during restoration works in 2020 did not yield many new results.

Building Complex 4 (western part of the "Wohnviertel", Insula A)

Langmann identified three houses in this area: The "Small Corner House" ("Kleines Eckhaus"), the "Longhouse" ("Langhaus") and the Archway House ("Torbogenhaus") (Langmann 1968–1971, 152–166). The area of "Small Corner House" and "Archway House" shows an older building phase consisting of at least three rooms. Two further building phases were identified by Langmann and the "Longhouse" was also built during one of these later phases of the building complex (*Figs. 3:* C4; *13; 14*). The earliest building activities were dated to the 2nd century by Langmann and the area remained in use until the 5th century, although architectural remains of the latest phase are limited to heating channels (*Fig. 13*). The complex has not been fully explored, as its connection to the *cardo* in the west is still unexcavated. Re-excavation in the eastern part as well as geophysical measurements show that the building complex extends to the east. The area towards the *decumanus maximus* in the south has not been completely excavated, which only allows a preliminary phase assignment of the walls.

Fig. 11: Building phases of complex 2: a,b – during the 1st; c,d – late 2nd; e,f – 3rd century AD. Walls displayed in dotted lines were not re-excavated and their phase affiliation remains unclear.

Fig. 12: Building phases of complex 3 from the 1st to the 3rd century AD. The northern part of the complex was named as "House of Lucius Severus" and the southern part as "House of the Christian lamp" by Langmann (1968-1971).

↓ *Fig. 13:* Building phases of complex 4 and 5. The interconnection of the phases in both complexes is not clear. Especially regarding phase 2 in complex 4, a further subdivision seems necessary, but this would only be possible through new excavations in the area. a – "Kleines Eckhaus"; b – "Torbogenhaus"; c – "Langhaus".

Building Complex 5 (eastern part of the "Wohnviertel")

The structure northwest of the gate has not been included in the "Wohnviertel" in the literature up to now. Nevertheless, these rooms also seem to have been part of residential buildings, although their layout and phases can only be reconstructed roughly given the current state of research (*Figs. 3:* C5; *13*). First excavated by Ploner (1912) and Swoboda (1935), the rooms were partly re-excavated in the 1980s (Luger 1989), but a plan of the building phases was never drawn up.

Complexes 4 and 5 were enclosed towards the *decumanus maximus* by a 3.5 m wide *porticus*. The connection between these building complexes is still unexcavated. Complex 4 bordered a *cardo* to the west. To the north, a 1.5 m high terrace wall demarcated the premises to the *decumanus I sinister*, which was higher than the floor level of the room.

Overall, the area of the domestic and artisans' houses shows a continuous development from the 1st to the 3rd century AD. Especially during the 2nd and 3rd centuries, intense building activity is visible. This was accompanied by an enlargement of living areas and an improvement of the equipment, especially in the form of heating systems (*Fig. 14*). Late Antique features are less apparent; although clear architectural remains of this period are missing, the finds point to continuous use of the area at least during the 4th century.

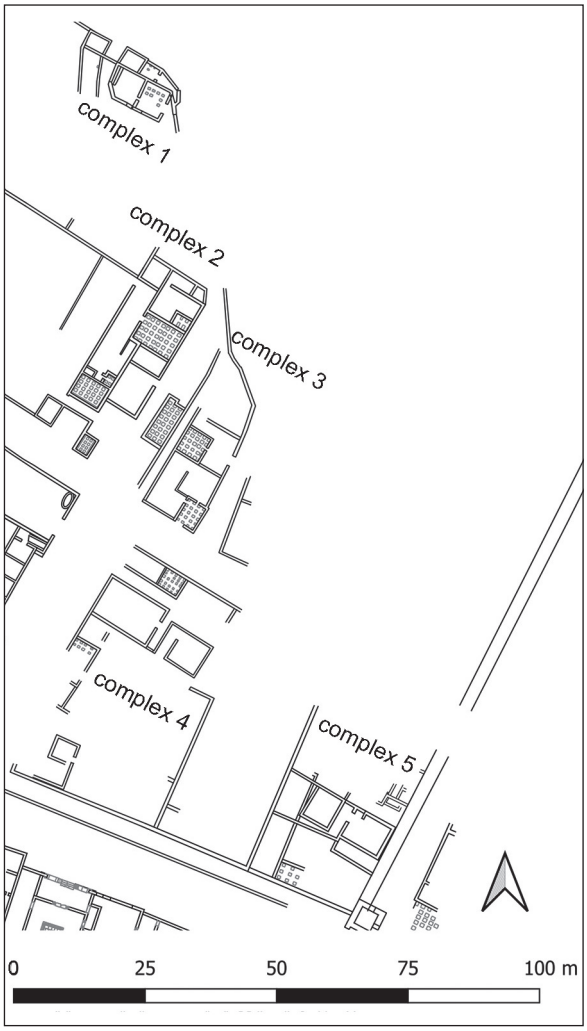

Fig. 14: Distribution of hypocaust systems in the 2nd and 3rd century domestic and artisans' houses.

THE *THERMAE*

Excavated between the early 1960s and the mid-1970s, the walls of the *thermae* were completely renewed in the early 1990s. Therefore, the original walls are not visible anymore and a discussion of the construction phases of the *thermae* relies mainly on the original documentation, which fortunately is quite detailed.

The first phase was already built in Claudian times or even earlier (Alzinger 1977a, 385–390; Alzinger, Trummer 1987–1988). The layout of the *caldarium* of this first *thermae* (*Fig. 15*) displays a very good parallel on the Magdalensberg and, moreover, this type of *caldarium* is quite common in the 1st century Roman architecture (Tschurtschenthaler, Auer 2015). It is also striking that the first phase of the *thermae* is the only building known in *Aguntum* where stone pillars were used to construct the hypocaust system. All later hypocausts were built with rounded stones ("field stones"). According to the excavators, the *thermae* were rebuilt in the late 1st century AD, which led to a total change in the building's layout. The second *thermae* had its entrance in the west and belonged to the "Reihentypus" (*Fig. 16*). In the *caldarium*, there were marble-lined pools on the north and south sides, and two more pools were visible in the *frigidarium*. During the 2nd and 3rd centuries, several rooms were added, although the exact construction sequence is still under investigation (*Fig. 17*). Traces of the water supply were found in the north-western corner of the *thermae*, where a wall flanked by fragmented pillars was interpreted as the remains of an aqueduct. Whether the aqueduct was already in operation during the first phase is yet to be determined. A destructive fire took place in the 3rd century, after which the *thermae* were restored and stayed in use (Alzinger 1977a, 402–403). Only after the end of the town, beginning in the 6th/7th centuries, several inhumations were carried out in this area (Auer et al. 2018).

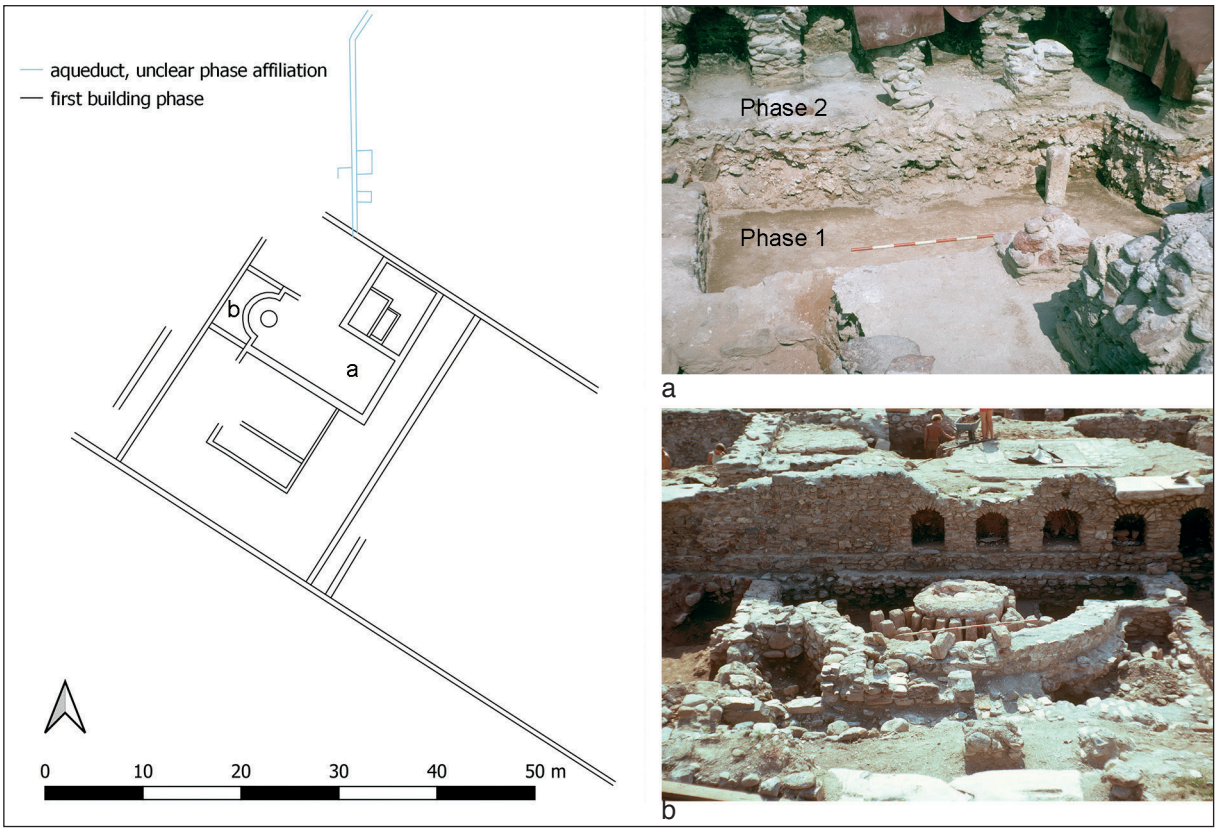

Fig. 15: Remains of the first building phase of the *thermae*. a – floor levels of the first and second phase during the excavation; b – view of the western part of the first phase of the *caldarium*.

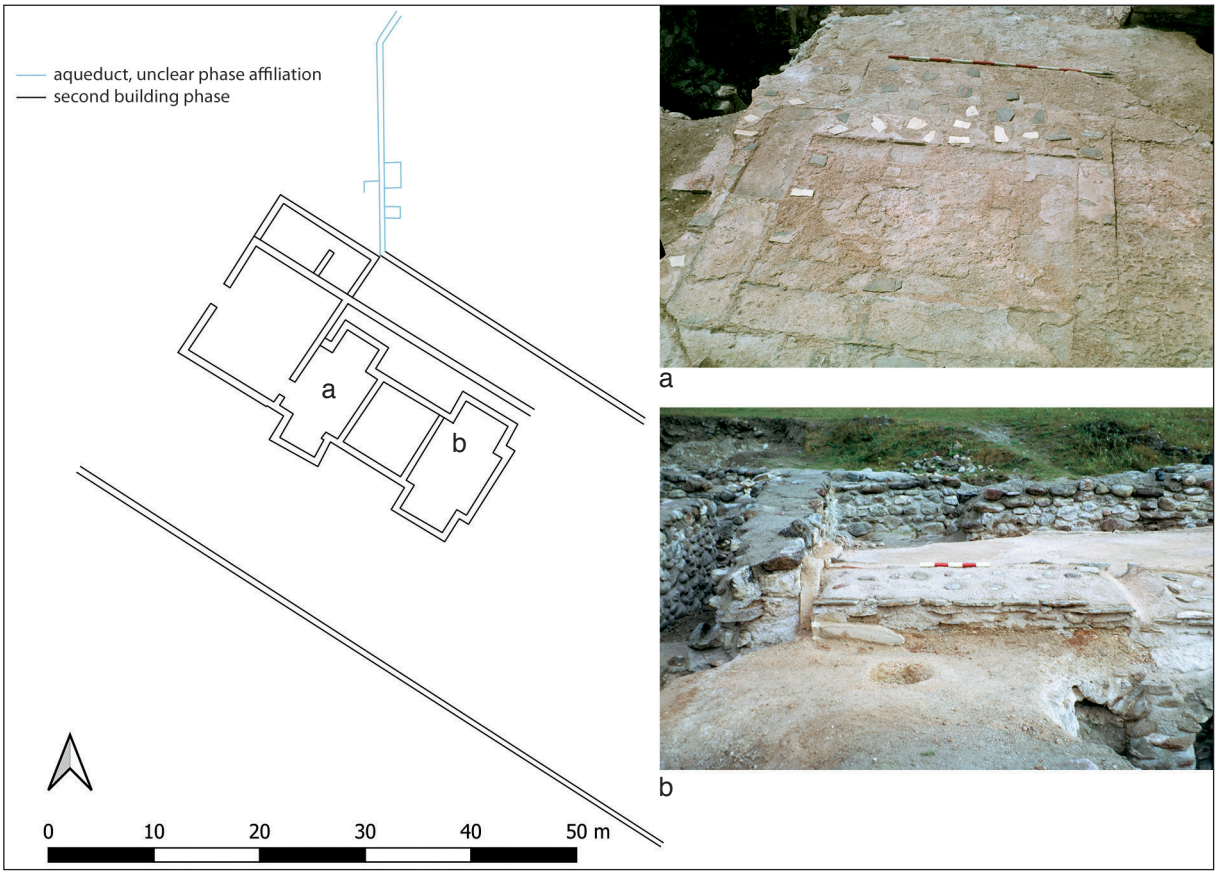

Fig. 16: Second building phase of the *thermae*. a – remains of the floor construction in the *frigidarium*; b – northern water basin in the *caldarium*.

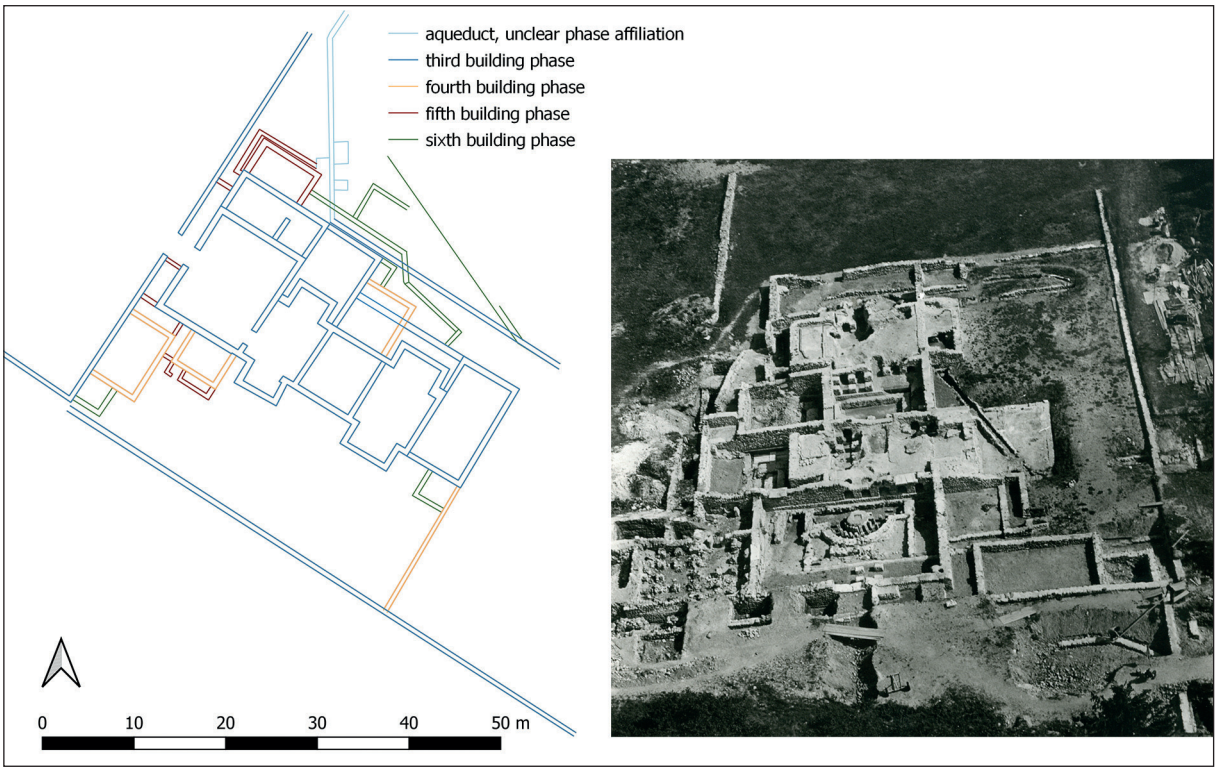

Fig. 17: Preliminary building phases of the *thermae* (left) and view of the building during its excavation in the 1970s (photo from west to east).

THE *FORUM* AREA

South of the *thermae* and of the *decumanus I sinister*, a building with rich marble decoration was discovered during the 1970s (so-called "Prunkbau"; Alzinger 1972–1975; 1974; 1977b) (*Fig. 3:* forum area). The excavations continued in the 1990s, but were stopped due to the re-planning of the modern road leading through the area of the *atrium* house. The rooms seemed to belong to the administrative centre of the town, but further excavations are prevented by the flood protection dam on the western side of the Archaeological Park. During restoration works, traces of an open area and a marble staircase leading from the open space in the south to the administrative rooms were found (*Fig. 18:* c). These structures enable the localisation of the *forum* of *Aguntum* in this spot. The excavated buildings in the east, the *macellum* and the traders' *forum* strengthen this argument, as these kinds of buildings were often found in the immediate vicinity of the urban *forum*. Further excavation to the west is impossible due to the modern flood protection dam; the easternmost rooms of the so called "Prunkbau" are still to be investigated.

FORUM AREA – THE *MACELLUM*

The *macellum* was the first building belonging to the town centre which was fully excavated. The excavation from 2006 to 2009 brought to light a square building with a centred circular structure. The circle was divided into eight segments that led to an octagonal interior in the middle of the *macellum* (*Figs. 3; 19*). The style of architecture is remarkable and has its best parallels in Italy and generally in the southern and eastern parts of the *Imperium Romanum* (Auer, in print). The *macellum* was built in the first half of the 2nd century AD as one of the last new public buildings in the town (Auer 2018; Tschurtschenthaler 2018). During the 3rd century AD a fire destroyed it and in the 4th century AD small dwellings and a workspace were built in the ruins of the *macellum* (Sossau 2018; Auer et al. 2023).

FORUM AREA – THE "TRADERS' FORUM"

East of the *macellum*, a rectangular building with several rooms of equal size was discovered (*Fig. 3*; Auer 2018; Tschurtschenthaler 2018). Excavation is ongoing; about three quarters of the building are known so far. Two main building phases and some older structures below them can be distinguished. The oldest structures

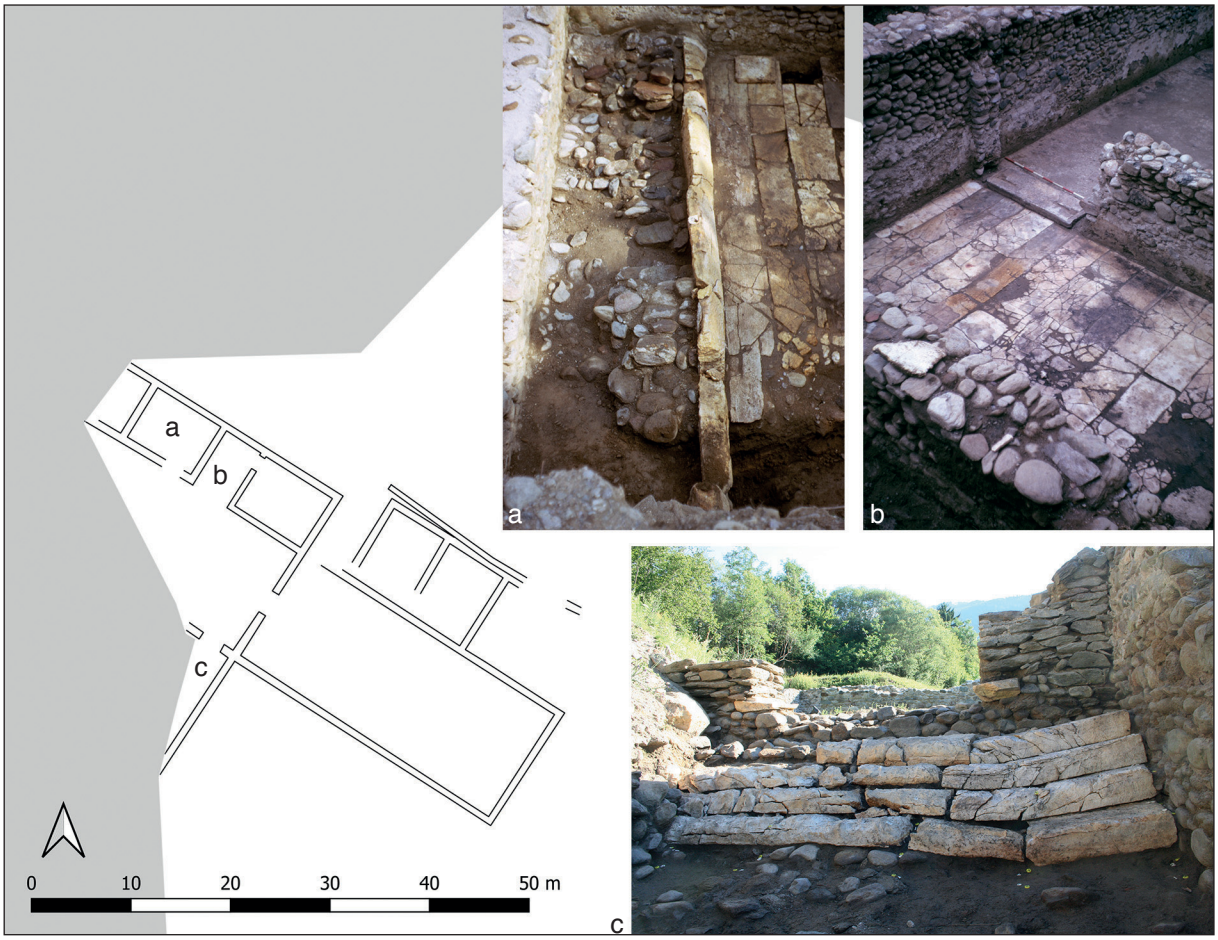

Fig. 18: Known rooms of the so called "Prunkbau". a,b – marble pavements in two different rooms during the excavation in the 1970s; c – marble staircase found in 2016. The grey area is not excavatable due to a flood protection dam.

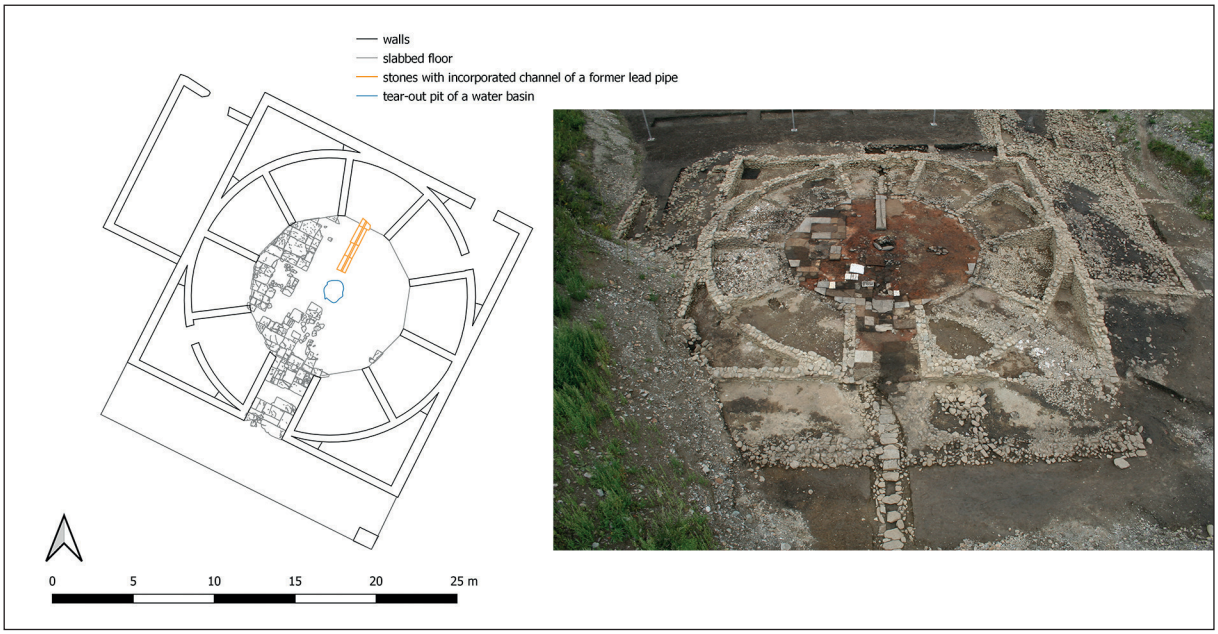

Fig. 19: Plan and photo (from south to north) of the *macellum*.

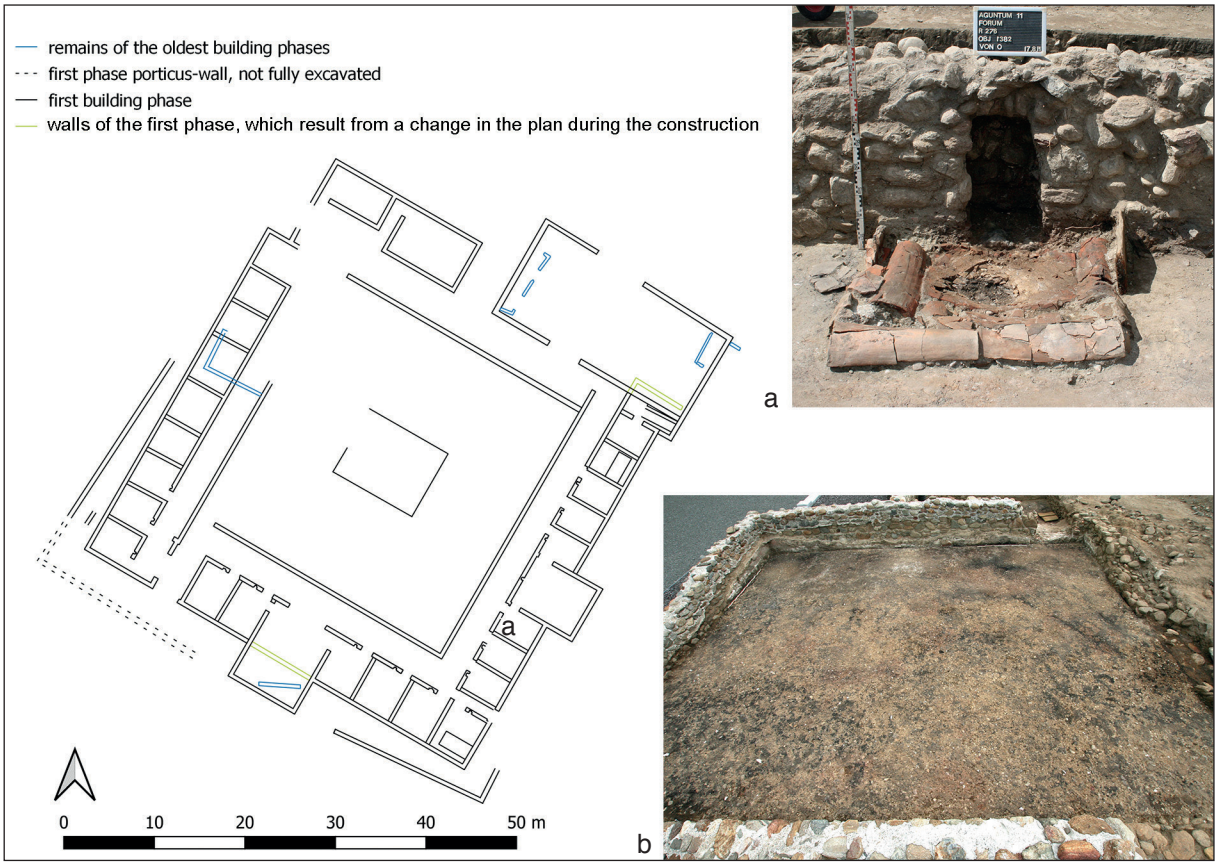

Fig. 20: Preliminary plan of the traders' *forum*, building phase 1. a – the small rooms were equipped with clay floors and niche ovens (from east to west); b – the bigger rooms in the east, south and the north-western corner have a mortar floor; (b) Photo from east to west.

known in this area have not yielded any findings up to now, so function and dating remain open. The first phase of the traders' *forum* consisted of three more or less equal sides in the west, east and south (*Fig. 20*). The main entrance to the building of the first phase was on the north side. In a second building phase, the northern access was closed and a new door in the north-eastern corner was installed. At the same time, most probably when the *macellum* was built, the southern entrance got a new layout and a *porticus* was added on the southern front of the building. The eastern wing remained untouched by these reconstruction works, a new layout of rooms was only created in the western wing: the walls of the small rooms were partly removed and bigger, interconnected rooms were erected. Two of these rooms also had access to small, heatable chambers (*Fig. 21*). Whether these rooms were ever in use is not clear. The whole building was destroyed by fire during the 3rd century, but no finds were recovered from the floors of these rooms. In contrast, a high concentration of findings was discovered in one of the northern rooms, where different materials had been stored and burnt during the destruction fire (Auer 2018; Angerer et al. in print). After the fire, the remains were levelled and Late Antique use was limited to the north-eastern corner, parts of the corridors and the central space.

The first interpretation of the central space as a marketplace could not be confirmed by further excavations. On the contrary, a structure buried in the earth was discovered. The walls of the first phase of this structure were built from slate slaps, which did not correspond to the usual construction method in the town using rounded stones (*Fig. 22*). Whether the recessed area was used as a water basin is not clear yet, as no traces of water supply and no sewer were found. By 2022, the northern, eastern and southern parts of the structure had been uncovered, while the western part is still under investigation. Inside this first dug-in section, a smaller building made of rounded stones was built and the space between the earlier and the later wall was filled with gravel. The walls collapsed into the inside of the building, which does not allow the interior to be excavated before the whole structure is visible, and therefore the function of the second phase building remains unclear.

Parallels for the architecture of the traders' *forum* can be found in the Mediterranean (Trümper 2008, 386–401) as well as in the *fora adiecta* (Villicich 2007, 61–71) in northern Italy. A good parallel is also known,

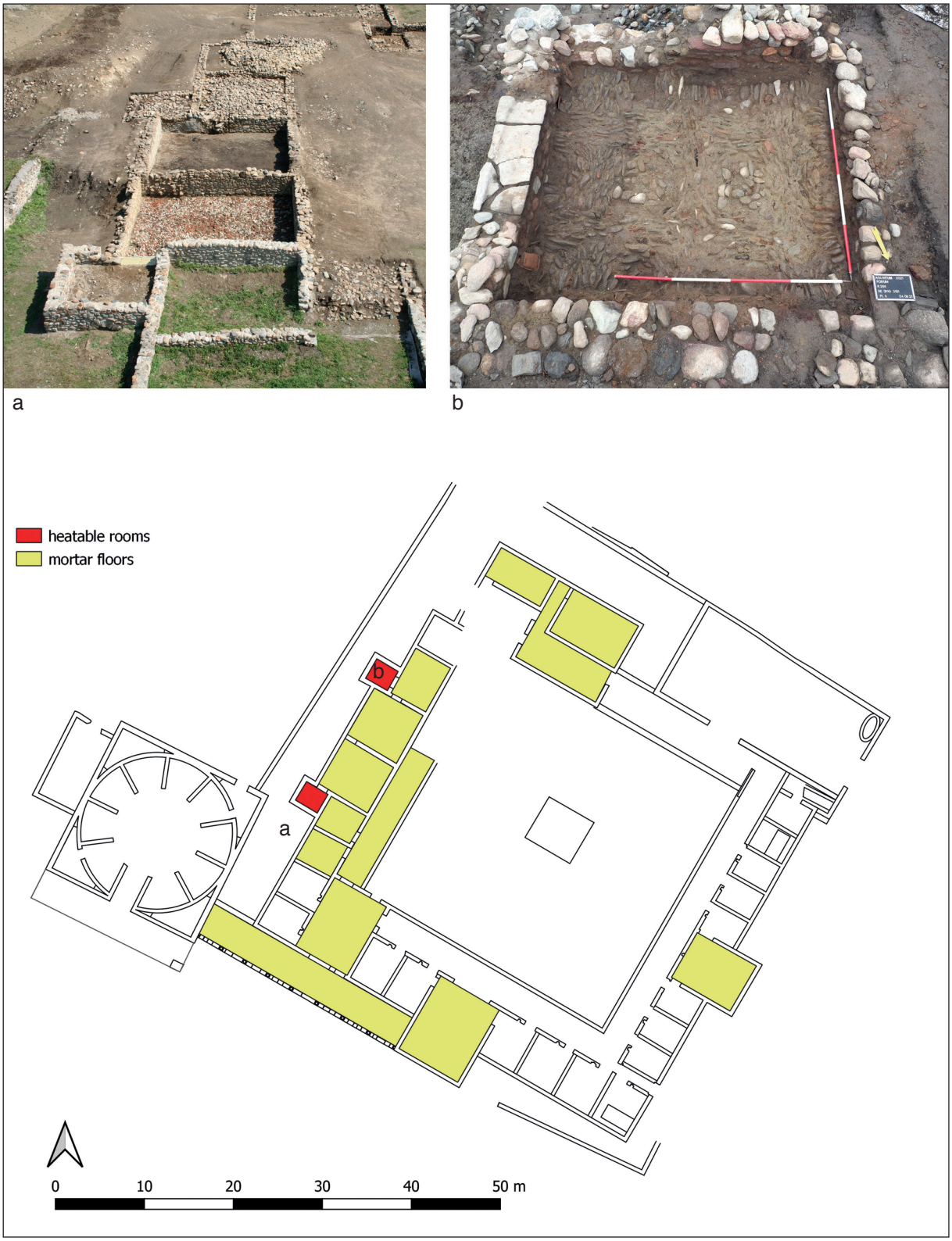

Fig. 21: Preliminary plan of the traders' *forum*, building phase 2; (a) Phase 2 walls in the western wing of the building during excavation (from south to north); (b) Well preserved hypocaust system (from north to south).

Fig. 22: Traders' *forum*. Central recessed area (basin?): a – from east to west, green: first phase, red line: second phase; b – from south-east to north-west, view of the second phase wall and the filling material between the first and second phase walls; c – from south to north, view of the second phase wall, in the background the first phase slate slabs wall is visible.

thanks to a tip from Jana Horvat, from *Emona*, where a similar building connected to a water basin was excavated by Walter Schmid (Schmid 1913, 96–102). He interpreted the building as soldiers' accommodation. In case of *Aguntum*, an interpretation of the small rooms with simple heating systems as accommodations, presumably used by traders, is likely. Among the finds, especially rock crystals are of great importance. Several hundred small fragments were found scattered around the building in layers belonging to the 1st to the 2nd centuries. Supplementary to these, two rock crystal concentrations including low-quality material (yellow and black discolourations) were found in the northern part of the building (Auer, Kandutsch 2018). Rock crystals from the Alps and other regions of the Roman Empire were highly appreciated in literary sources (*Plinius*, Nat. Hist. XXXVII, 9–10) and *Aguntum* is, along with the Magdalensberg as its predecessor (Piccottini 1994, 475–477), the first known large-scale trading place for this material.

However, other trading goods are harder to identify. Pottery and glass recovered throughout the area do not show any particularities; only the composition of the finds in the north of the building may hint at other commodities, such as Egyptian blue (Zerobin et al., 2021) or barley (Auer 2018). The Late Antique layers at the central space contained melted glass and bronze fragments, indicating a recycling of materials. In the north of the building, also a furnace used for melting iron was discovered. The Late Antique features, including a Y-shaped heating channel in the north-eastern corner, match the features in the *macellum* and show the erection of dwellings and workplaces in the area of the former town centre (Sossau 2018; Auer et al. 2023).

THE SIZE OF THE TOWN

At the current state of research, the extent of the Roman town is only roughly known. All intra-urban archaeological investigations concentrated on the area east of the Debant River. The southern end of the town wall indicates a boundary of the town there, but the extend to the north is still unexplored. To the east, the *suburbia* continued for at least for 300 m, as shown by Swoboda's excavations and more recent geophysics.

GRAVEYARDS

During sewer construction work in the 1970s, parts of a funerary monument were discovered near the St Margaretha chapel in Dölsach. In the same area, an urn was discovered in the 18th century (Meyer, Unterforcher 1908, 51). The eastern graveyard of *Aguntum* can therefore be located around the St Margaretha chapel (*Fig. 23:* a). The hints to localise the graveyards in the north and west are meagre. An inscription found in the 19th century names a burial ground north of the town (*CIL* III, 11485). Thanks to the documentation of Meyer and Unterforcher (1908, 10–13), the findspot of the stone can be roughly determined (*Fig. 23*). This inscription may be connected with the northern graveyard, which is to be expected along the important road to the Iselsberg. The western graveyard is still unidentified; a gravestone found near Schloss Bruck in Lienz (Höck 2005, 48) is too far away from *Aguntum*. It might be connected to a Roman settlement or *villa* in Patriasdorf, a part of present-day Lienz. For an "urn" found on the right bank of the Debant River in 1844 (Meyer, Unterforcher 1908, 67), neither the exact site of discovery can be determined, nor is it clear whether the designation "urn" really referred to an ash container or only generally meant a ceramic vessel.

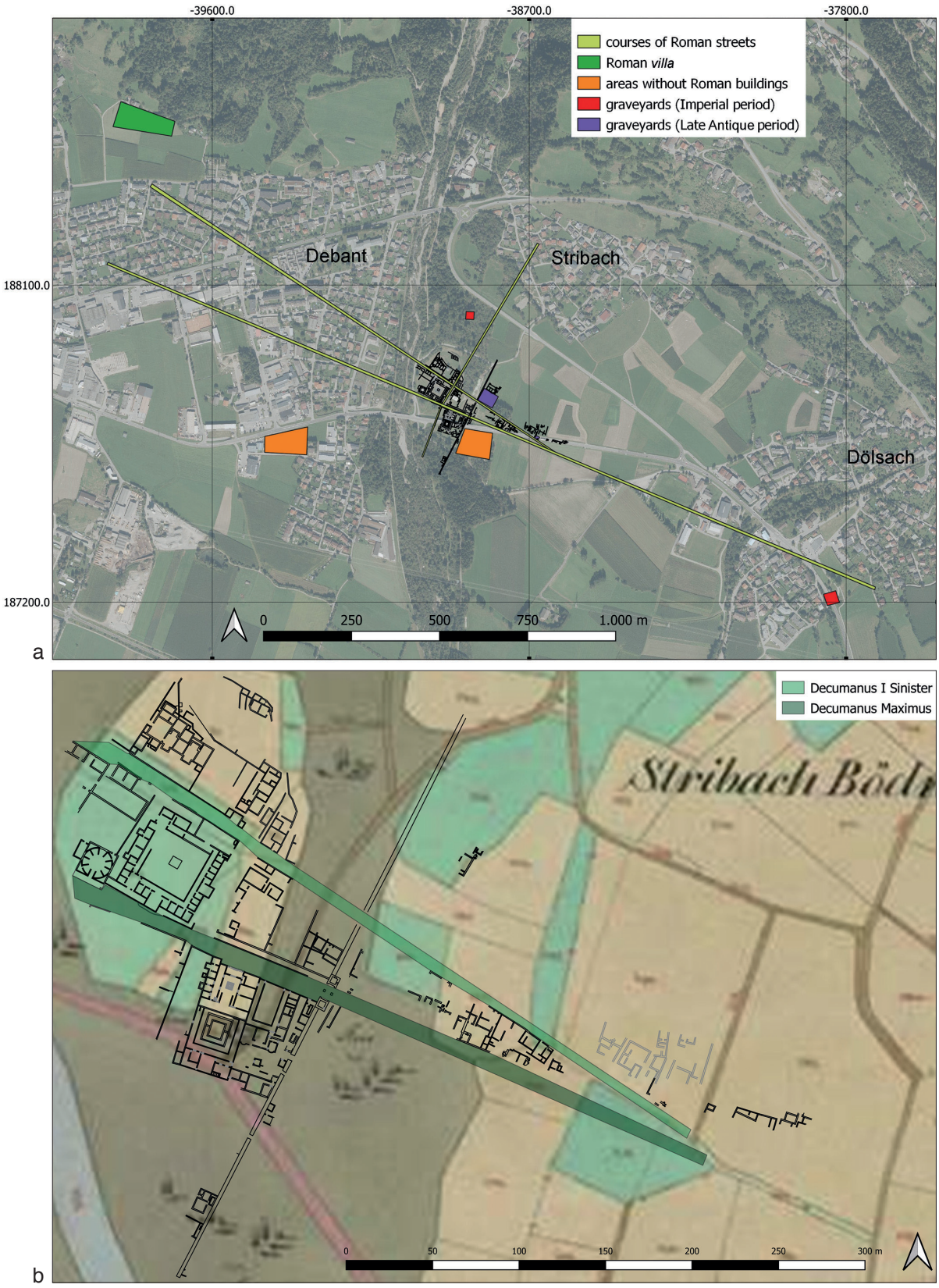

Fig. 23: Position of the Aguntum area: a – position of the Roman remains in the present landscape; b – excavated street grid and connecting fragment of a street recorded in the Franciscan land register.

ROMAN REMAINS IN THE SURROUNDINGS OF THE EXCAVATED PART OF THE TOWN

On the western side of the Debant River, geophysical measurements were conducted due to modern construction works. The surveyed area contained no evidence of dense, urban building. So, a continuation of the town can be excluded here. Also, under the modern *Aguntum* Museum, no Roman structures were identified during construction works in 2006. In some distance to the known remains of *Aguntum*, a Roman *villa rustica* was discovered already in the 18th century. Parts of the *villa*, especially the bath, were re-excavated by Florian M. Müller (2007). Since a *villa rustica* should be located at some distance from the town, its position gives another indication of the extent of *Aguntum* (*Fig. 23*).

STREETS

The main streets of the Roman town are known in the relatively small excavated area (*Fig. 3*). An extension of the known courses in all directions does not yield useful results, because the town was built in a non-orthogonal grid on an alluvial cone. Only the course of the *decumanus maximus*, which merged with the *decumanus I sinister* 250 m east of the town wall, seems to be headed straight towards the St Margaretha chapel and thus the remains of the eastern graveyard. This course can also be traced in cadastral maps from the 19th century (*Fig. 23b*). Also, the course of the only known *cardo* led to a point near the find spot of the burial ground inscription mentioned above, but it remains unclear whether this *cardo* continued north of the building complexes 2 and 3.

Altogether, there are some clues to narrow down the total extent of the town, and considering the diverse riverbeds of the Debant River while presuming an Antique riverbed west of the alluvial cone (Unterweger 2018), a maximum extension of the town in a square of approximately 400 to 500 m seems possible. This size is in line with known municipal extents in *Noricum* (Groh 2021, 183–85) and, of course, the Alpine town of *Aguntum* is one of the smaller ones.

SUMMARY AND CURRENT RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Intensive building activity in *Aguntum* commenced in Claudian times and comprised typical Roman architecture such as the *thermae*, the Atrium House and the traders' *forum*. These buildings seem to have been created on the drawing board in the course of town planning. As most of the *municipia* in *Noricum* date back to pre-Roman or at least pre-Claudian settlements, it seems tempting to locate an older nucleus of the town north of the *thermae* in the higher part of the alluvial cone. The first Roman buildings, the *thermae* and the traders' *forum* (there is not enough data on the other parts of the *forum* area at the current state of research), initiated the building of the Roman town, whose buildings were orientated parallel to the *decumanus I sinister*.

A feature already excavated during the 1970s, which never received much attention, was re-excavated for documentation in 2022. The oval wall, which is situated west of the *thermae* and is also attested in the course of the *decumanus I sinister*, is still to be interpreted (*Fig. 24*). So far, it is only clear that this wall belonged to the earliest (Claudian?) phase of the town, its purpose will be investigated during the coming years.

The town wall was also built during the first building phase and was already finished when two buildings east of the wall were erected in the early 2nd century. During the 2nd century, the main axis shifted to the *decumanus maximus*, as evidenced by the erection of the town gate and the *macellum*, which referred to this street. At the same time, considerable building activity could be detected in the Atrium House, the *thermae* and the *forum* area (*Fig. 25*). During the 3rd century, a fire destroyed many parts of the town centre, which to a large extent was not rebuilt. Only the *thermae* re-

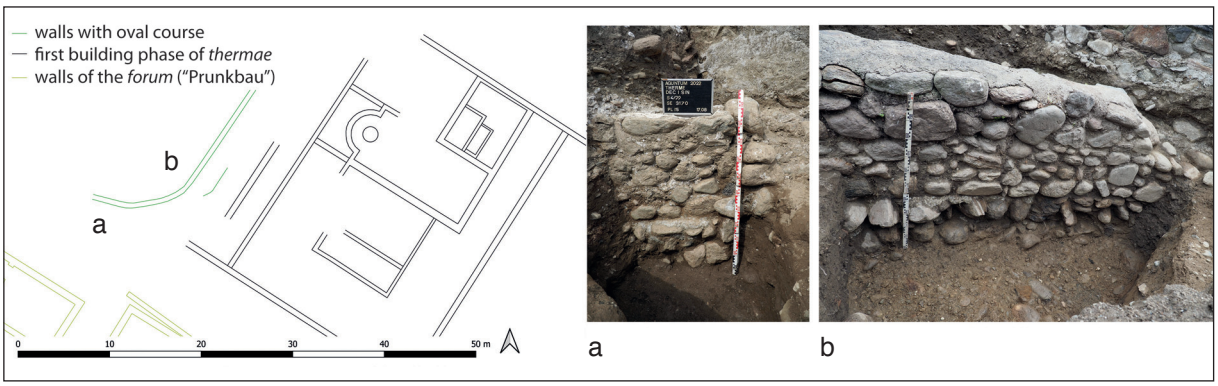

Fig. 24: Walls with oval course west of the *thermae*; (a, b) Details of the western wall during the excavation in 2022.

Fig. 25: Aguntum: a – during the 1st century AD; b – from the late 1st century AD to the 3rd century AD (later buildings are marked red).

mained in use and, interestingly, intensive construction activity could be traced in the domestic and artisans' houses in the 3rd century. The former administrative and economic centre of the town lost its importance and by the 4th century at the latest, dwellings and workspaces associated with a kind of recycling industry had developed in this area (Auer 2018; Auer et al. 2023; Auer, in print). A larger population can still be expected for Late Antiquity, as indicated by the substantial number of sarcophagi recovered around the early Christian church. The latest activities in the town were marked by inhumations in the *thermae* and the *forum* area, dating to the 6th/7th century AD (Auer et al. 2018). *Aguntum* was last mentioned in Late Antique sources by *Paulus Diaconus* (Historia Langobardorum IV, 39), who referred to the battle between Slavs and Bajuvars in the year 610 AD. After that, the town sank into the alluvial material of the nearby rivers and was only rediscovered 1,300 years later.

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Illustrations:
Figs. 1, 3, 7, 9–14, 19–22, 24, 25: Author (QGIS 3.28), photos: University of Innsbruck, Department of Archaeologies;
Fig. 2: Author (QGIS 3.28), data: *tirisMaps 2022;*
Fig. 4: Author, data: *tirisMaps 2022;*
Fig. 5: Author (QGIS 3.28), photo: ÖAI, FoN2095;
Fig. 6: Author (QGIS 3.28), photo: ÖAI, AGU0028;
Fig. 8: Author (QGIS 3.28), photos: ÖAI, A-W-OAI-GPL-N-I-1315; A-W-OAI-GPL-N_I-1298;
Figs. 15–18: Author (QGIS 3.28), photos: ÖAI, A-W-OAI-Dia-02-8252, -8384, -8397, -8506, -8507, -8577 and -8676; SOAI217;
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