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Metal vessels in Northern Gaul: acculturation or exoticism?

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Abstract

The two centuries preceding the Roman conquest were marked by societal and cultural transformations. Even though Caesar describes northern Gaul as resistant to Mediterranean influence, the archaeological record shows the presence of Italic products north of the river Seine. Focusing on metallic vessels, the table manners and their transformations on the eve of the 1st century AD will be questioned in the present paper. Does the arrival of imported goods indicate the adoption of the Roman way of life? Which population groups are affected by these changes? These questions will be approached on the basis of recent data collected for a dissertation project carried out within the scope of a binational PhD between the universities of Lyon 2 and Tübingen.

Keywords: Romanization, banquet, symposium, metal vessels, acculturation, trade.

Résumé

Les deux siècles précédant la conquête de la Gaule par César sont marqués par des transformations sociétales et culturelles. L'archéologie a montré la présence de productions italiennes dans le nord de la Gaule, pourtant décrit dans les sources antiques comme réticent aux produits méditerranéens. À travers le prisme de la vaisselle métallique seront interrogées dans cet article les manières de table et leurs transformations à la veille de la Conquête. La venue de récipients importés indique-t-elle l'adoption de mœurs romaines ? quels groupes de population sont concernés par ces changements ? Ces interrogations seront traitées sur la base de données récentes collectées dans le cadre d'une thèse réalisée en cotutelle entre les universités de Lyon 2 et de Tübingen (Allemagne).

Mots-clés : Romanisation ; banquet ; symposium ; vaisselle métallique ; acculturation ; échanges.

In the introduction to his *Commentaries on the Gallic War* (Caesar, *B.G.*, I. 1.) Caesar underlines the cultural distance between the peoples of *Gallia Belgica* and the Mediterranean world. According to him, they would be 'furthest from the civilization and refinement of [Roman] Province'. Caesar specifies concerning the region that 'merchants least frequently resort to them, and import those things which tend to soften the mind'. These assertions tend to be archaeologically true insofar as amphorae and imported goods are relatively rare compared to more southern sites. More than for fear of softening the bravery of the fierce Belgian warriors, Mediterranean products seem not to have penetrated the social customs of northern Gaul because of a strong sensitive tradition, particularly in local metal dishes such as wooden buckets with metal hoops and bimetallic cauldrons.

Beyond this historical source, *Gallia Belgica* also imposes itself archaeologically as a coherent whole, distinct from the Celtic and Aquitaine Gauls, which, unlike the former, are in permanent contact with the neighbouring Mediterranean world. Northern Gaul, embedded between Celtic and Germanic territories, has no direct relationship with the Apennine Peninsula. These characteristics make it a territory that is naturally more culturally distant and therefore particularly interesting for the study of acculturation phenomena in the 2nd and 1st centuries BC.



1. Approaching metal vessels in Northern Gaul

The 2nd and 1st centuries BC were a period of change for northern Gaul. Framed chronologically by the migration of *Belgae* in the 3rd century (Fichtl 2003: 98) and by the Roman conquest, the period underwent numerous political and cultural upheavals. The feast, as an act of ritualized collective consumption distinct from the daily meal (Dietler 1996: 89), is deeply affected by these transformations and the metal vessel, a privileged accessory of the banquet, reflects this evolution.

In total, nearly 650 items of metal dishes were identified, spread over 149 sites in northern Gaul. More than a hundred objects were observed directly in archaeological depositories or museum repositories, thus providing new technical data for analysis.

1.1. Diffusion

The study of distribution maps allows the analysis to be placed in a broader context and to address the issue of cultural groups and regional particularities. The spread of Italic or local dishes is indicative of the cultural differences within northern Gaul and the different aspects of Romanization within the region. The presence or absence of imported vessels highlights in a regional way the interactions with the Apennine Peninsula or, on the contrary, a possible closure from Mediterranean trade.

The term ‘Romanization’, criticized by historians in particular, is a delicate term. Its use here refers to the societal and cultural transformations that result from contacts with the Italic peninsula (Reddé *et al.* 2011: 9-10). Because exchanges with the Mediterranean world predate the conquest, it is natural to question the cultural impact and influence of imported products on Gallic society. In the same way that it would be preposterous to consider Gaul as instantly converted to the Roman way of life in the aftermath of the Gallic War, the use of Italic objects by certain Gallic social or cultural groups before the conquest does not necessarily mean the early adoption of Roman mores. There is a real risk in considering Italic vessels alone as a marker of Romanization. It is the object and its use that must be taken into account in order to truly perceive the phenomena of acculturation.

With the emergence of oppida and the accentuation of exchanges with the Mediterranean Basin, the late La Tène period saw the development of profound changes leading to the Roman conquest. The intensification of links between the Apennine Peninsula and Gaul is particularly perceptible in the diffusion of wine amphorae from the 2nd century BC throughout the territory. However, these archaeological testimonies of north-south trade exchanges do not necessarily attest to a major transformation in Gallic customs. The distribution of imported metal vessels testifies to a definite Roman influence, but the function of these vessels in a Gallic context remains unknown. However, these objects are often perceived as a testimony to the practice of *symposion* or *convivium*, as if Mediterranean table manners were inseparable from imported vessels (Figure 1).

1.2. Function

The concept of ‘table manners’ refers here to the behaviours and gestures codified during the act of commensal consumption, i.e. the *συμπотικά* of the Greek world, the ‘banquet-related questions’ (Nadeau 2010: 12). There was not a single way of eating and drinking together in the Greek-Roman world, just as there was probably not a single form of banquet in the Gallic world. The terms *symposion* or *convivium* are used here to refer to the Mediterranean banquet in general, it is not a strict framework. Eating and drinking, although separated in the classical *symposion*, are no longer separated in Roman times. The position, for example sitting or lying, varies according to the place and time (Nadeau 2010: 402-404). Similarly, sexual segregation depends on the context, the wife accompanies her husband for meals with the Etruscans or in Rome but very rarely in classical Greece. However, women were perfectly accepted in the Greek *symposion* in the 2nd century AD



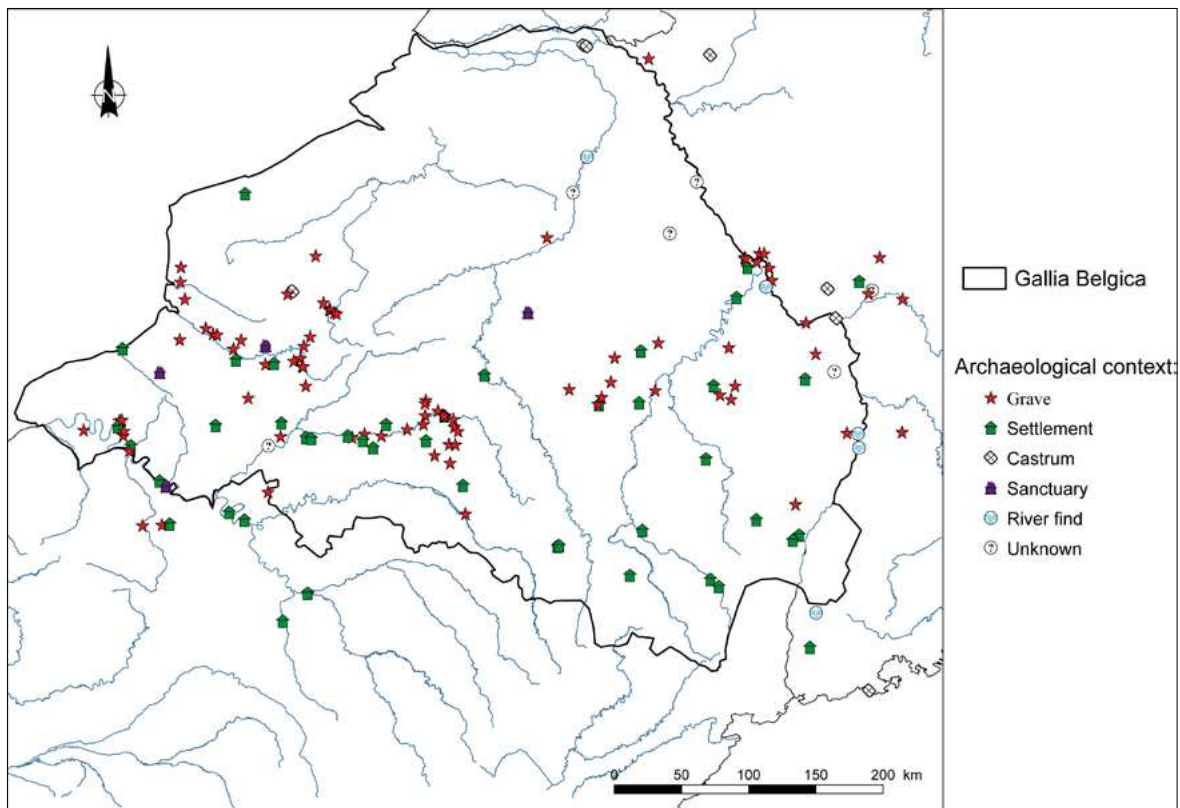


Figure 1. Archaeological sites with metal vessels within *Gallia Belgica* and on its borders.

(Nadeau 2010: 426-427). The Roman banquet is certainly strongly influenced by Greek practices, but conversely, the Greek banquet is mixed with Roman practices during the imperial period (Nadeau 2010: 411). Whether Greek or Roman, the *symposion* shares common features, a set of values and rules, which fundamentally distinguish it from the Gallic banquet. It is therefore not through the vessels, a simple accessory to the banquet, that Mediterranean practice must be identified, but rather through a combination of elements attesting to the application of the rules and values of *symposia*.

Among these, it is necessary to recall the egalitarian character of the *symposion*, the very opposite of the Gallic banquet, as described by Posidonios, reproducing the social hierarchy (Posidonios, *apud Athenaeus, Dipnosophistarum*, IV, 36, 152a-c). Wine, involving an adapted service, is inherent to the practice of the Mediterranean banquet. Finally, the pre-meal cleansing is an inseparable component of the *symposion* (Nadeau 2010: 191-192). It is reflected in the presence of ablution services generally consisting of the couple jug and *patera* (Poux 2004: 239).

Thus, in order to identify a certain Romanization of table manners, it is essential to determine the function of Mediterranean objects in the Gallic context and to identify the assemblies referring to the practice of *symposion*. Too often, in the absence of a more complete interpretation, the commonplace of wine consumption is repeated as a testimony of 'civilization' (Kaenel 1985: 156-158) or a spontaneous generalization of Italic table manners by the simple diffusion of imported products (Metzler *et al.* 1991: 167). The words chosen to describe the local metal dishes are also not insignificant. Thus, for example, to refer to an iron ladle as *simpulum*, whose shape and material do not evoke Italic productions, is misleading (Robert *et al.* 2008: 51; Auxiette 2012: 72, fig. 36). These biases unconsciously suggest a much greater Mediterranean cultural presence than the archaeological reality.

In order to renew the approach and avoid any ideological bias, the objects and context were placed at the heart of the analysis as the primary sources of information. Rather than relying on the supposed modes of consumption, transmitted in particular by ancient sources, material remains have been favoured over literary sources. In order to guarantee a reliable and homogeneous chronology, the furniture of the graves has been completely reused in order to confirm or specify the dates proposed in the publications. The elements chosen for dating have been selected in the ornament, ceramics or armament rather than in the metal vessels itself to avoid any circular reasoning.

The internal plans of the burials, rather than the furniture lists, proved to be essential to address the function of metal vessels. Furniture association tables have frequently been used to determine the function of the dishes with more or less successful results, but they do not always take into account the internal organization of the funeral offerings. While two objects may be present together in a grave, there is no guarantee that they were clearly associated. Analysis should not be reduced to metal vessels elements alone, at the risk of obtaining a biased image of associations. Indeed, knives, grills and ceramic dishes have their place alongside metal vessels. To conceal them is to assume that metal vessels only works as services, more or less complete, independently of the rest of the table accessories. The assemblies in northern Gaul generally composed of one or two elements of metal vessels, clearly show that this is not the case.

1.3. Typology

To approach the metal dishes and establish a relevant classification, it is essential to identify precisely the technical and stylistic characteristics of each object. Particular attention has been paid here, as far as possible, to the thickness of the sheets, tool marks and alloys, in order to classify the vessels not only on formal criteria, but also according to their technology.

For the alloys used, a reminder of the terminology may be useful. The term ‘bronze’ refers in principle to a binary alloy of copper and tin, regardless of its proportions (Pernot 1998: 123-124). However, the term is frequently misused for any copper base alloy. The expression ‘copper alloy’ has been used here to refer in general to these copper-based alloys. Only two types of alloys were identified over the entire period for the region. The first is ‘real bronze’, composed of copper and tin, and the second is a ternary copper-tin-lead alloy, also called lead bronze. The latter, unsuitable for hammering, only concerns cast objects.

The objects made of thin sheet metal are therefore generally made of real bronze, copper-tin. Only a fraction of the corpus benefited from metallographic analyses to determine these alloys, but parallels were systematically drawn with other objects of similar types outside the analysed corpus.

In the absence of analyses, thickness measurements and the identification of tool marks on metal vessels can indirectly identify alloys. The choice of metal corresponds to the use that will be made of it. A binary copper-tin alloy is preferred, with a tin content rarely exceeding 12%, for hammering work. Ternary lead alloys, which are unsuitable for hammering, are on the other hand perfectly suited for casting (Pernot 1991: 132-133). It is very difficult to cast a sheet under a thickness of 3 mm. Different thickness measurements taken on the bottom, sides and lip of the vessels determine the technique used to produce them. Direct observation of the objects, whenever possible, as well as metallographic analyses provided by the most recent publications, have been essential elements for understanding metal vessels.

It is not always easy to determine the role of local or imported metal dishes. It would be unrealistic to state that the function of each container remained unchanged throughout northern Gaul during the two centuries of the study. The Hochdorf stamnos, filled with mead (Laubenheimer 2015: 13-15), for example, showed that imported vessels can easily be diverted from its original function in

the Gallic context. The spatial analysis of the burial offerings and the associated artefacts makes it possible to address the question of function in a concrete way (Poux 2004: 25-26). It was therefore essential to select within the corpus the sites allowing such an approach, the spatial analysis of the objects being dependent on the excavation and the quality of the information (Poux 1997: 149). The numerous graves with metal vessels in northern Gaul were the raw material for this analysis. But it is a special framework. The setting of each object is charged with meaning in the funeral context, just as it is in the religious context of the sanctuary. The identification of the function or status of metal vessels is based, in this context, on the identification of ritual gestures. A unique case is therefore futile, only the repetition of assembly diagrams in the layout of the offerings or in their associations is relevant (Poux 2004: 26).

Comparing all the tombs in Northern Gaul of the 2nd and 1st centuries BC can rapidly prove counterproductive, as it is so essential to base oneself on coherent cultural and chronological ensembles. In fact, it quickly became apparent that funeral practices, and by extension the table manners of western Gaul in *Belgium*, were fundamentally different from those of its eastern fringe. Similarly, chronologically, it is of little use to use examples from the Early Iron Age such as Vix or Hochdorf, except to see their differences.

2. Production and diffusion

Based on the objects themselves, their technical aspects and their origin, the analysis of metal vessels in northern Gaul during the late La Tène period reveals the technological and economic changes in Gaul and the Italian peninsula. The study of these objects highlights the evolution of workshops in Italy, the development and persistence of certain indigenous productions, and especially social transformations as well as regional particularities specific to *Gallia Belgica* on the eve of the conquest (Figure 2).

2.1. *Italic metal vessels*

The imported metal dishes found in northern Gaul reveal the technical changes of the late 1st century BC and the rise of the workshops in Campania at the expense of production in northern Italy and Etruria. The late republican copper alloy vessels, such as pans, hemispherical strainers and pyriform jugs came mainly from the Aquileia region. These shapes almost disappeared with the change of era. They constitute the first generation of metal vessels distributed in Gaul at La Tène finale. The late republican shapes were followed by casseroles, dippers and strainers with long horizontal handles, as well as basins with vine leaf appliques. This new repertoire of shapes has no apparent link with the first generation, characterized by its decorative motifs and manufacturing techniques (Petrovsky 1993: 29). This first generation comes mainly from the workshops in northern Italy and Etruria, but some shapes were taken over by the Campania workshops at the end of the 1st century BC, thus experiencing a second phase of production, some of which continued for nearly a century. For example, for Aylesford type pans, the use of epigraphic stamping (Petrovsky 1993: 253-254, C.31.0102), such as the lathed specimens (Tassinari 1975: 25, inv. nr. 13694; Santrot 1980: 55, nr. 159), or even the presence of the inscription CAP from Capua on some of them (Feugère and de Marinis: 1991, 106), illustrate this transfer of production. The same is true for the type Pompeii *modioli* with anthropomorphic thumb-plate, whose production continued in the 1st century AD (Bienert 2007: 55), and for the biconical jugs turned with a gadrooned rim, whose production is attributable to the workshops in Campania (Boubé 1991: 27).

These changes and the gradual disappearance of late republican shapes are in all likelihood part of a significant renewal in ceramic ware, goldsmithery and architecture, linked to the advent of the Empire with the reign of Augustus (Tortorella 2014: 199-203). The development of the Campania workshops is not only the result of this artistic renaissance, it is also the result of important technical advances, such as the development of ternary lead alloys and especially the shaping on the lathe.

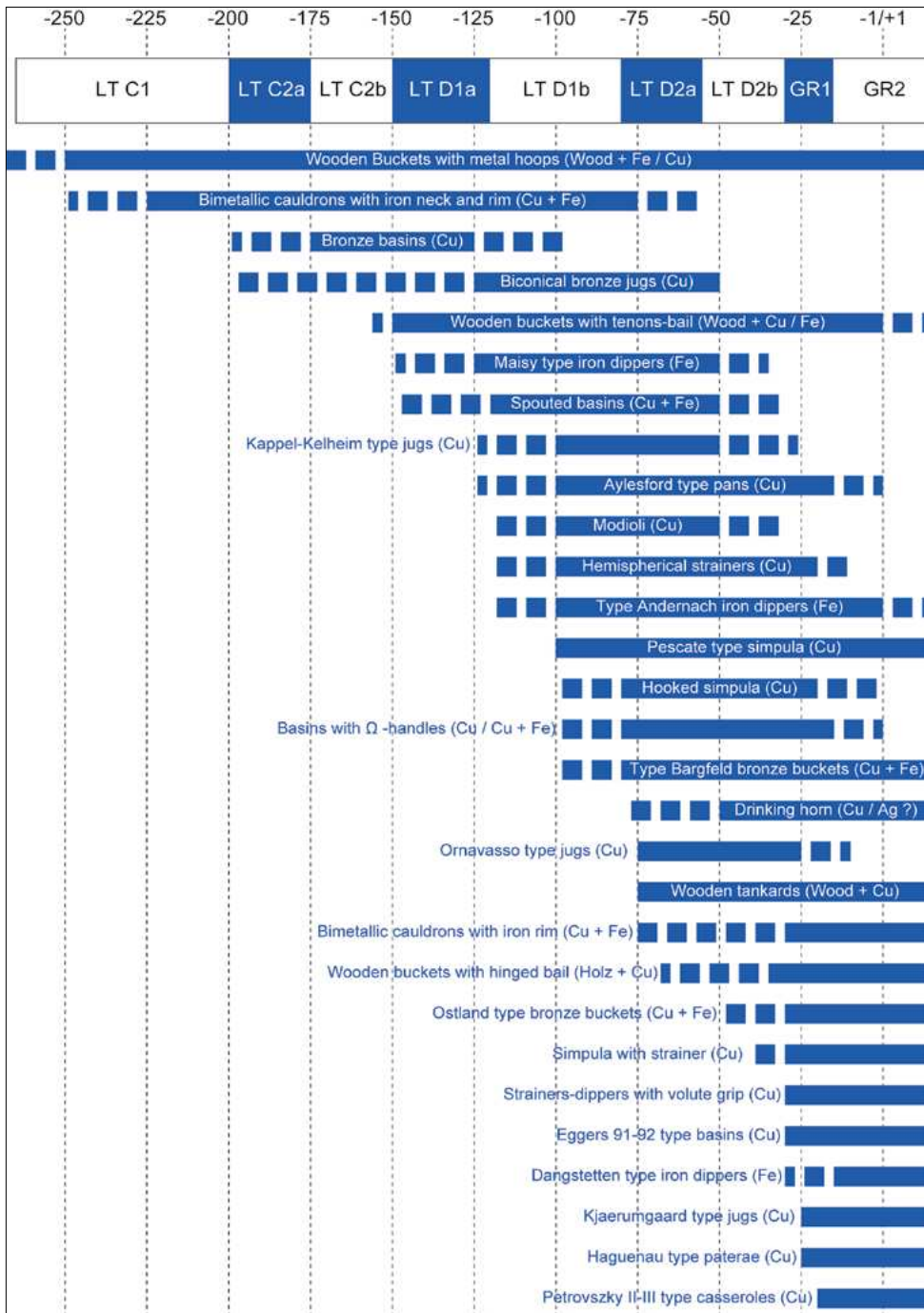


Figure 2. Chrono-typology of the metal vessels of northern Gaul (2nd-1st centuries BC).

The use of more flexible and less expensive alloys (Pliny, *H.N.*, XXXIV, 48) and the introduction of rapid, almost serial production, limited to casting and turning, have obviously boosted production. The first copper alloy pans are a perfect example of this transition period. Petrovsky types II and III, respectively, from the Campania and Aquileia workshops are perfectly contemporary and use similar technologies (Petrovsky 1993: 30-38). The workshops in Campania quickly took advantage of the improvements made to the lathe for shaping, while its use was limited to polishing and decoration in the rest of Italy (Petrovsky 1993: 181).

The disappearance of certain shapes, such as pans for example, in the Augustan period without any functional equivalent afterwards, seems to indicate a change in table manners. Aylesford type pans



are also relatively rare in southern Italy, their distribution is concentrated in the north and in Gaul. This situation may be explained by the particular societal characteristics of northern Italy, which are quite distinct from the south, and by a certain cultural proximity between Etruria and Cisalpine Gaul radiating over the neighbouring transalpine. These regional differences, which survived the conquest of Cisalpine Gaul in the 2nd century BC, tend to disappear in the second half of the 1st century BC with the integration of Etruria and Cisalpine Gaul into Roman Italy (Vitali 2002: 16). Thus, the Italic productions uncovered indirectly testify to the development of the workshops in Campania and the loss of influence of the production centres in northern Italy. This transition and the regional particularities of late republican Italy may explain the birth of a new generation of dishes, breaking with the previous one (Petrovsky 1993: 24).

2.2. Local production

The study of metal vessels from the 2nd and 1st centuries BC in northern Gaul highlights, despite very diverse shapes, the rarity of imported products. The locally made vessels represent nearly half of the certificates over a period including the Roman conquest and the installation of several *castra* along the Rhine border and nearly two thirds of the discoveries excluding the furniture of the Rhine *castra* and 89% of the well dated discoveries prior to the conquest. Like the late Republican Italic productions, Gallic metal vessels are characterized by the use of binary copper-tin alloys, worked by hammering. The work on iron sheet metal, which is particularly long and expensive in terms of fuel (Halbout et al. 1986: 40), is also certified for certain containers, including buckets and cauldrons. The latter appeared at the end of the 3rd century BC in Gaul *Belgium*. First concentrated in *Belgium*, they spread during the La Tène D1 period to the Remi and Suessiones territories, then quickly further east and outside the limits of *Gallia Belgica*. The Roman conquest does not seem to affect these productions since wooden buckets with metal hoops remained in use during the 1st century AD and bimetallic cauldrons until the 3rd century AD (Bienert 2007: 129-130).

The discovery of raw cast Kappel-Kelheim jug supports in the oppidum of Bibracte (Barbau 2015: 129) and a local production handle attachment during the excavation of the Saint Pierre fountain (Dhennequin et al. 2008: 86) testifies to the resumption of Italic production in some workshops in Gaul. Such discoveries are lacking in *Gallia Belgica*. Only a hemispherical strainer thumb-plate worked by hammering, from the oppidum of the Titelberg, could possibly correspond to a local imitation (Welter 2016: 251). However, other non-indigenous containers may have influenced local production. This is the case in particular for the drinking horns during the La Tène D2 period. Although of Germanic tradition, they have been adopted by some elites on the eastern fringe of northern Gaul and reinterpreted locally as in Saverne (Łuczkiewicz 2010: 168) or in the oppidum Donnersberg (Zeeb-Lanz 2015: 50-51, fig. 40-41). In general, the metal vessels from northern Gaul have a local tradition and its own repertoire, without any particular Italic influence. The development of workshops dedicated to the manufacture of copper alloy dishes in the Mediterranean tradition did not take place in northern Gaul until the 1st century AD (Petrovsky 1993: 181). The hammered Rhine casseroles, probably produced in Mainz during the first decades of our era, are an early example of this production (Petrovsky 2003: 120).

This situation is not surprising in itself and it is no different from the rest of Gaul. As Italic metal vessels are not very common on Gallic tables (Poux 2015: 287-289), their influence on local production is very limited. Local metal vessels are in keeping with regional cultural practices. The various local vessels, such as buckets and cauldrons, fulfil specific functions and cannot easily be replaced by imported products, which themselves fulfil other uses. If the manufacture of traditional Mediterranean dishes in Gaul only began in the 1st century AD, it is because mores have changed, and these vessels have fully integrated local practices.

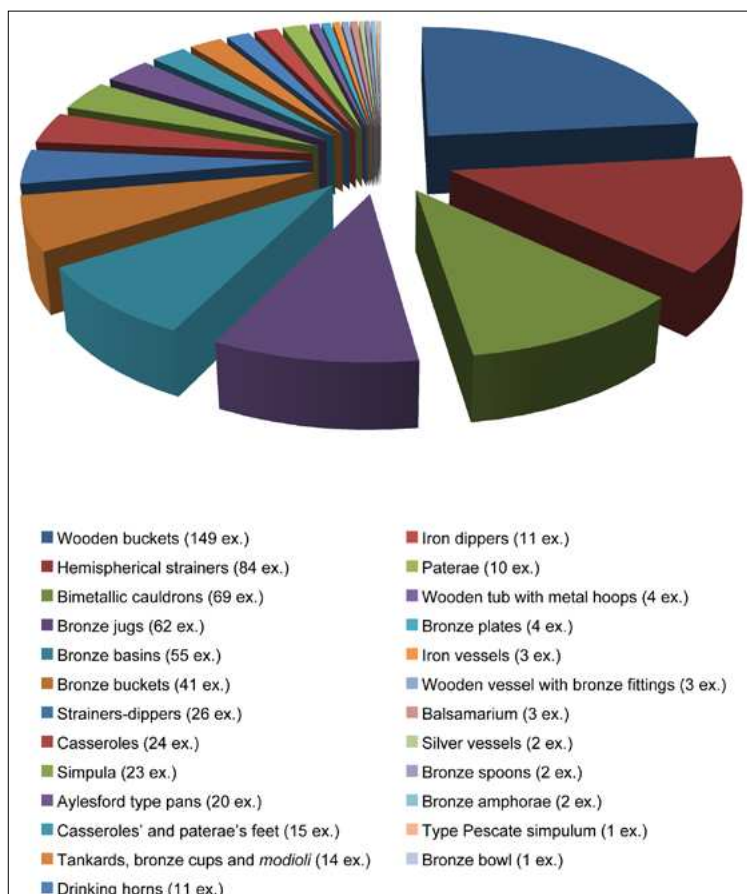


Figure 3. Quantitative diagram of the shapes represented in northern Gaul during the 2nd and 1st centuries BC.

2.3. Metal vessels and regionalism

The maps of the distribution of metal vessels in northern Gaul highlight certain regional differences with regard to certain local vessels or imported dishes. Some local products such as wooden buckets with metal hoops and bimetallic cauldrons are cultural markers that distinguish *Belgium's* territories from the rest of Gaul at the end of the middle La Tène period. The birth of these shapes at the end of the La Tène C1 may have its origin in the migratory phenomena mentioned in ancient literature (Caesar, *B.G.*, II, 4, 1-2). These population movements are dated according to historical sources from the middle of the 3rd century BC (Fichtl 2003: 98). Archaeologically, these transformations are significant in the development of large sanctuaries during La Tène C1 and in a new regional organisation (Fichtl 2003: 103). Wooden buckets with metal hoops and bimetallic cauldrons appeared in Gaul at that time. The diffusion maps argue for a very localized origin in ancient *Belgium*. These objects are absent from the rest of Gaul before La Tène D1. Like the cauldrons, the buckets characterize the richest graves in *Belgium* and their position seems to comply with precise rules. The cauldrons, on the other hand, are part of a set of monumental accessories that lead back to the fireplace. The appearance of buckets and cauldrons in *Belgium* in the second half of the 3rd century AD, and their place in aristocratic tombs, clearly manifest changes in mores in connection with the migrations mentioned by the ancient authors. This regional particularism tends to fade during La Tène D1 with the diffusion of wooden buckets with metal hoops outside *Belgium* and their adoption by other cultural entities such as Remi and Suessiones. Fireplace symbols such as firedogs and cauldrons remain strong symbols in *Belgium*. These accessories clearly distinguish the region from its neighbours since they are absent from the graves of Remi and Suessiones for example. However, the cauldrons appear in the Treveri graves during La Tène D2, even though they become rarer in their region of origin.

The Remi and Treveri territories are characterised by a high concentration of Mediterranean vessels compared to the rest of *Gallia Belgica*. For the former, this apparent concentration is relative

guests, insofar as the latter are indebted to him, but reciprocity is impossible (Dietler 1992: 404). In *Gallia Belgica*, during the late La Tène period, bimetallic cauldrons and large iron firedogs, whose capacity and dimensions make it possible to prepare large quantities of food, are associated with the status of banquet organiser (Feugère and Poux 2002: 202). Thus, Phylarchus, in the 2nd century BC, mentions the use of cauldrons made for the occasion and filled with meat, during a public feast organized by the Celt Ariamnes (Phylarchus, *Hist. apud Athenaeus, Dipnosophistarum*, IV, 34, 156df). It is no coincidence that the cauldrons appear associated with the horse on the coinage of northern Gaul as symbols of power (Poux 2004: 391, fig.194). The role of these objects is highlighted in the aristocratic tombs of *Gallia Belgica* and their religious value is sensitive in particular in the discoveries of the Fesques sanctuary (Mantel 1997: 279-282) and in the very special staging of the Eckbolsheim cauldron (Bataille 2014: 251-255). Wooden buckets with metal hoops also seem to carry a strong symbolic value and a cult role. They are sometimes accompanied by a butcher's knife, as in Marcelcave (Bucheux *et al.* 1997: 910), or contain fresh meat offerings, as in Vieuxlès-Asfeld (Lambot *et al.* 1994: 225, fig. 116). Similarly, some copper alloy basins, such as the one in the graves 3 from Tartigny (Rapin 1986: 71-73), may have been used to collect blood or meat wedges during the sacrifice. However, these various accessories are not representative of all of *Gallia Belgica*.

The region is characterized by a great cultural diversity sensitive in the variations of funeral furniture. Table manners such as the banquet probably followed different rules depending on the cultural groups. The cauldrons and the symbols of the hearth characterize *Belgium*, for example. The buckets with metal hoops, also originating from this region in the 3rd century BC, spread to the rest of Gaul during La Tène D1 and in particular to the Remi and Suessiones territories with more diverse functions, detaching themselves from the traditions of their region of origin. The role of the basins is more uncertain, their shape changes radically during the late La Tène period and it is probably the same for their function. On the one hand, the basins made of thin hammered sheet metal, such as those of the Bucy-le-Long necropolis or the graves 3 from Tartigny, are characterized by a shallow open shape, close to the plate, on the other hand the basins with an umbilical bottom and omega handles of the Treveri territory are deep with a narrowing neck. The shape of the former is not suitable for containing liquids, they were probably intended for serving or eating meat, as indicated by the incisions on the bottom of the Tartigny basin (Rapin 1986: 71-73). The latter may well have been used to contain liquids or even for ablutions. However, the basin of the burial A from Goebblange-Nospelt, filled with meat offerings (Metzler and Gaeng 2009: 57-73), does not support such an interpretation.

In general, throughout northern Gaul, table manners seem miscellaneous. Only *Belgium* stands out for its strong and sensitive tradition, particularly in the internal organisation of burials (Figure 4). They have strict codes that were supposed to reflect the world of the living and more particularly the banquet. These practices reflect a strong social hierarchy and are in line with the descriptions of Phylarchus or Posidonius who described the banquet as a demonstration of strength, fixing the organization of society around an autocratic leader (Poux 2004: 251-253).

3.2. Imports

Mediterranean productions have been present in Gaul since the early Iron Age. The discoveries in Vix or Hochdorf testify to the early importation of ceramics, metal vessels and wine from Greece or Italy. However, this opening was short-lived because it was interrupted as early as the 5th century BC (Feugère and Poux 2002: 209) and it was not until the 3rd century BC that the diffusion of Italic productions in Gaul was again seen (Poux 2004: 192-193). In the north of the river Seine, Greek-Italic amphorae spread sporadically from the 2nd century BC, but imported metal dishes remain rare (Poux 2004: 5354). The grave of Sinsheim Dühren, on the right bank of the Rhine, is an exception. Dated from the second half of the 2nd century BC, it contained elements of metal vessels, ornaments and glass tokens testifying to close trade with Etruria. The hemispherical copper alloy strainers are, during La Tène D1b, the first imported metal vessels to really spread.



The Italic pans of Éterpigny and Hannogne-Saint-Rémy, also attributed to the La Tène D1b period, are the oldest examples for the region. With only six testimonies – three strainers, two pans and a jug – Mediterranean metal vessels remained very rare for the period.

More discoveries are made during La Tène D2a, but they remain reduced to about ten objects, half of which are hemispherical copper alloy strainers. The Italic pan of Raillencourt-Sainte-Olle is also dated from this period. The Remi and Treveri territories seem to be slightly more receptive to Mediterranean productions, but the examples of Raillencourt-Sainte-Olle and Éterpigny, in the Nervii and Viromandui territories, also show a certain permeability to the Italic influence on the west of *Gallia Belgica*. Like the vine amphorae, these objects are clearly spreading along trade routes such as the Seine and Aisne valleys, the Somme valley in the case of Eterpigny, and possibly the Rhine valley (Poux 2004: 193194, fig. 114). Metal vessels were obviously a luxury item for the period. Their diffusion is in no way linear, nor does it correspond to a logic of expansion from south to north (Figure 5).

3.3. Romanization or exoticism?

In view of the low distribution of Italic metal vessels in northern Gaul, it is natural to wonder about the influence they exert on their users. Is their use linked to the adoption of practices related to these dishes in their original context or are they are only ostentatious signs of wealth, whose distant origin further enhances luxury?

To answer this question, it is necessary to consider not only the function of imported tableware in the Gallic context, but also the associations of furniture and the presence or lack thereof of other Mediterranean productions. It must be noted that the elements of Italic metal vessels dating from before the conquest uncovered in northern Gaul are relatively isolated since they rarely coexist with other imported products. Thus, the habitat of La Warde in Acy-Romance and its copper alloy

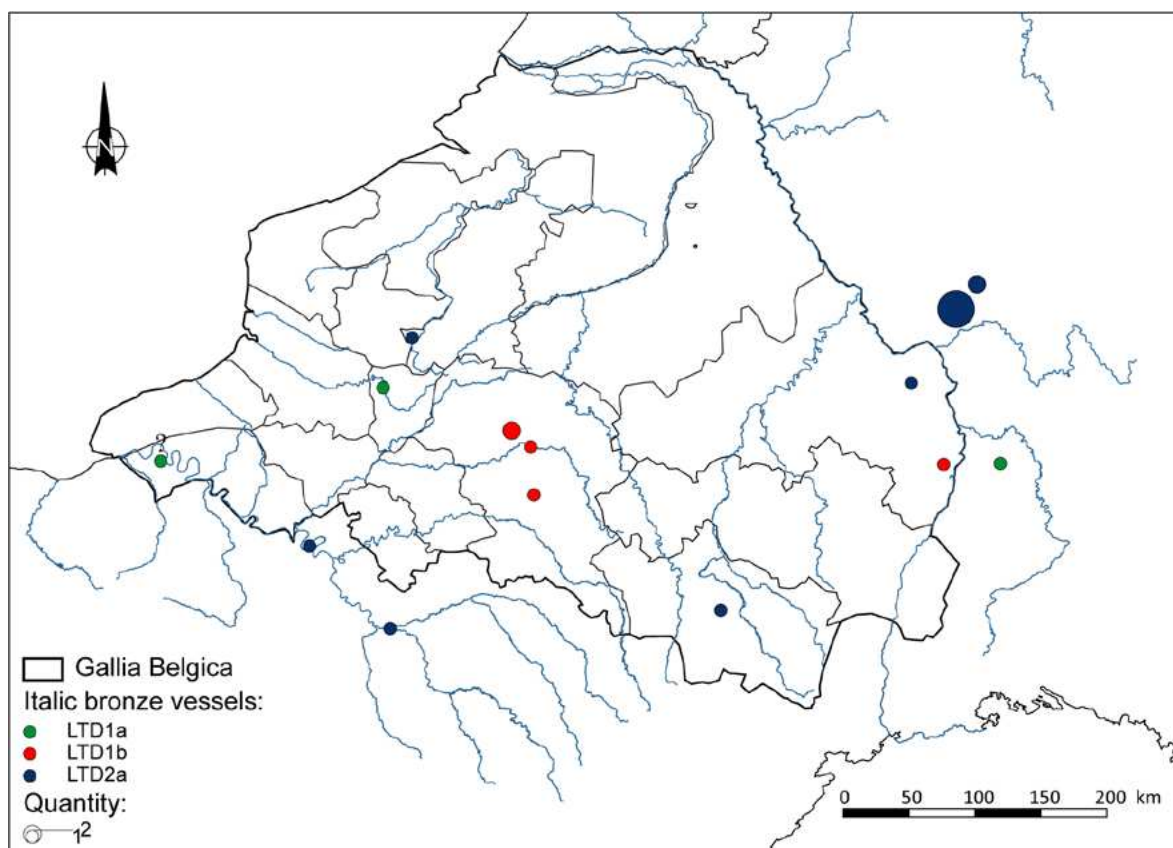


Figure 5. Distribution of the Italic bronze vessels in northern Gaul before the Roman conquest.

thumb-plate, or the oppidum of Castelberg in Wallendorf and its complete hemispherical strainer, delivered neither Mediterranean ceramics, nor amphorae, nor any Italic import. The same applies to the graves of Aubérive, Flonheim, Éterpigny and Raillencourt-Sainte-Olle. Conversely, Remi amphora burials, such as those at Vieux-lès-Asfeld or La Noue Mauroy in Acy-Romance, did contain wooden buckets with copper alloy hoops, but they did not have imported metal dishes (Poux 2004: 66). The Treveri tomb of Clémency, dated La Tène D2a, contained more than thirty amphorae and a copper alloy basin with a movable omega handle sometimes attributed to Italic productions (Barbau 2015: 508, fig. 333). The spread of this type of basin, limited to the territory of the Treveri, rather suggests local production (Welter 2009, 326). The Remi burial of Hannogne Saint Rémy is an exception. It contained an amphora neck fragment, an Italic copper alloy pan and a Kappel-Kelheim jug of the same metal. The structure is dated during La Tène D1b by the presence of a sword scabbard of the preLudwigshafen type (Pernet 2010: 248, B13). However, the coherence of the whole is uncertain. The grave was looted shortly after its closure and was severely disrupted by agricultural work. Only the northern end of the structure was still in place when it was accidentally discovered during ploughing (Flouest and Stead 1977: 55-56). Under these conditions, the function of imported vessels is uncertain because the organisation of the offerings is unknown. To attribute this assembly to the practice of *symposion* is all the more doubtful as the direct association of a jug and a patera as an ablution service is not attested in northern Gaul before the 1st century BC. By comparison, the grave B from Goebblange-Nospelt necropolis, dated from the early Augustan period, also contained a late republican jug and a copper alloy pan. However, the two objects were not associated, since the pan was located more than one metre from the jug, immersed in the bimetallic cauldron filled with meat (Metzler and Gaeng 2009: 313-314, fig. 291).

Thus, although there was certainly a penetration of Mediterranean production in northern Gaul as early as the second half of the 2nd century BC, it remained very limited and did not seem to lead to any major change in local customs. The graves of Éterpigny and Raillencourt-Sainte-Olle perfectly illustrate this situation. The first, located in the heart of the Viromandui territory, fully belongs to *Belgium*. The second, located on the border between the Atrebates and the Nervii, comes, as its funeral offerings indicate, from the same cultural sphere. Both have a strong tradition materialized in Éterpigny by a pair of firedogs topped by two charred logs and a bimetallic cauldron placed in the centre of the tomb, and by a large iron frame firedog also in a central position at Raillencourt-Sainte-Olle. In both cases, the presence of a copper alloy pan does not modify the canonical organization of *Belgium*'s burial sites. Like the Greek *dinos* of Hochdorf in the 4th century BC, filled with local mead and not imported wine (Dietler 1992: 407), the Italic vessels seem to integrate into these two sets by adopting a new function, distinct from that of their region of origin. Thus, before the Roman conquest, imported metal vessels, which were still rare, seemed more exotic than a real phenomenon of acculturation. These may be products acquired on the fringes of trade with the Mediterranean or during the transit of imported foodstuffs on transport routes crossing western *Gallia Belgica* (Poux 2004: 205-206).

4. The Roman conquest

Whether through amphorae, Campanian ceramics or metal vessels, Italic productions were present in northern Gaul in a scattered and sparse manner before the Roman conquest (Barbau 2015: 493-509), without apparently affecting table manners or local customs. The question then arises as to the extent to which the conquest has changed local mores and what are the vectors of these social transformations.

4.1. Imported metal vessels in the aftermath of the Roman conquest

During the La Tène D2b period, Italic productions were more prevalent in northern Gaul. Their diffusion is concentrated among the oppida of eastern *Gallia Belgica*, among the Suessiones and Treveri, but also on the eastern fringe among the Mediomatrici, the Leuci and the Rauraci. The discoveries come mainly from residential sites, well-dated funeral complexes containing Italic



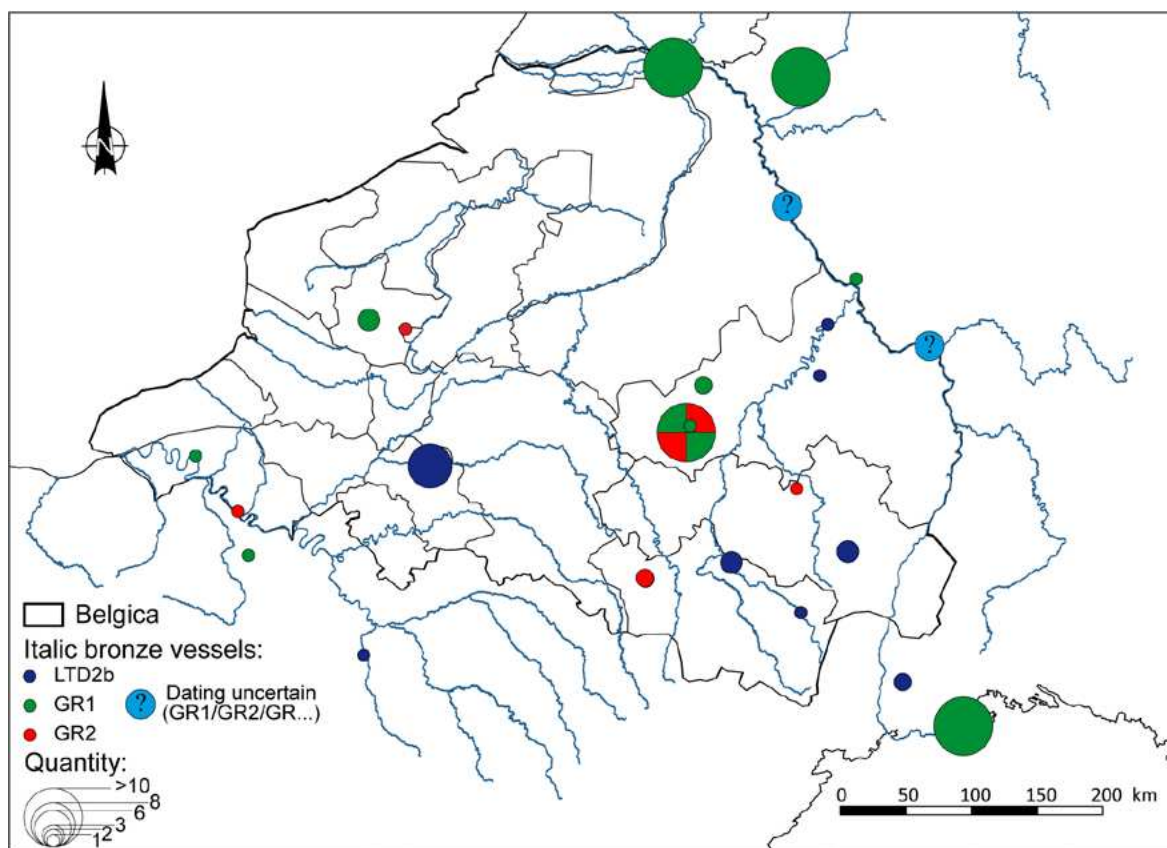


Figure 6. Distribution of the Italic bronze vessels in northern Gaul after the Roman conquest.

metal vessels remain rare for the period. However, it is worth mentioning the grave 142 of the Wederath *Belgium* necropolis and its copper alloy *modiolus* (Bienert 2007: 57-58, nr. 60), a relatively rare form for the region. The jugs and pans of the Porcien's tombs are eventually to be attached to this period, but their dating remains uncertain due to the conditions of discovery.

Hemispherical strainers were by far the most common form during La Tène D2b, followed by copper alloy jugs. In western *Gallia Belgica* aristocratic burials seem to have declined during this period. The grave 1025 of Oisy-le-Verger, characterized by the deposition of two wooden buckets with metal hoops and a pair of iron firedogs in a central position (Marcy 2011: 67-72), testifies, however, to the preservation of local traditions. Imported metal vessels seem to be absent from *Belgium* during La Tène D2b. It is totally absent from sanctuaries and relatively rare in burials. In general, Mediterranean metal vessels increased in northern Gaul during La Tène D2b following a trend that began at the beginning of the 1st century BC, but it was not until the reign of Augustus that there was a real break and a significant increase in imports.

The sudden increase in imports during the first decades of Augustus' reign is very localized in northern Gaul. The territory of Treveri and more particularly the oppidum Titelberg concentrates more than three quarters of the discoveries for the period between 30 BC and the installation of the first Rhine castra. The establishment of a Roman trading post within the oppidum during La Tène D2b may be the cause of this high concentration. The period saw the advent of the second generation of metal vessels, mainly from the workshops in Campania, with the appearance of casseroles and pans as well as strainers and dippers with long horizontal handles. Their diffusion remains modest until the first Rhine *castra* are set up (Figure 7).

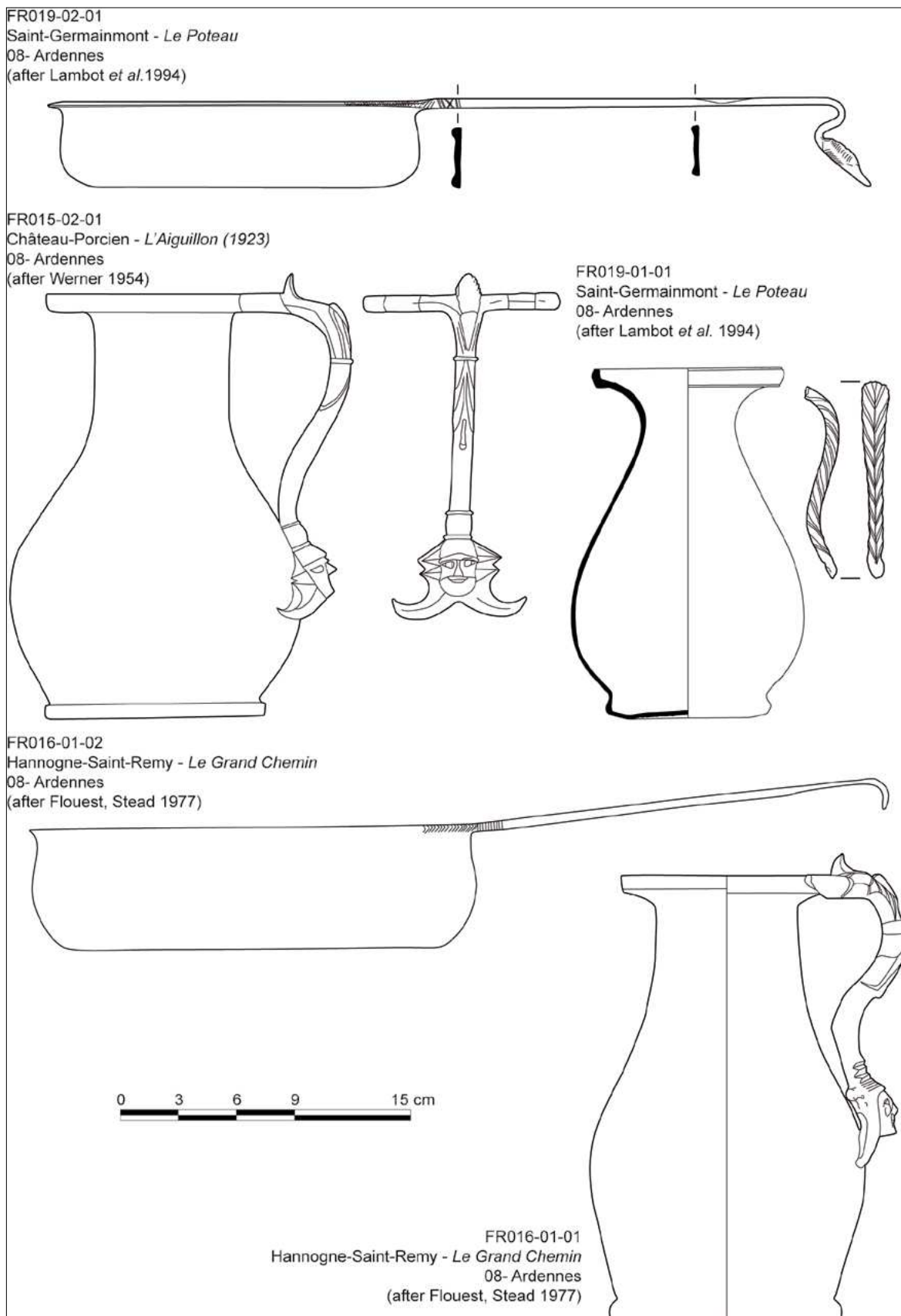


Figure 7. Distribution of the Italic bronze vessels in northern Gaul after the Roman conquest.

4.2. Imported metal vessels in the aftermath of the Roman conquest

The second generation of Italic metal vessels seems to be closely linked to the Roman military sphere in northern Gaul. The Drusus campaign, from 12 to 9 BC, marked the beginning of the Germanic wars and led to the construction of several *castra* along the Rhine border and on the Lippe River in Sicambri territory. The vessels found in the oldest *castra*, particularly in Dangstetten, Nijmegen and Haltern am See, are particularly rich. They are composed of many elements of jugs, casseroles, paterae, dipper-strainer-sets and simpula. Bronze sheet buckets are also an important part of the discoveries. Many of these objects, including casseroles and pans and simpula, are very poorly represented outside the military sphere.

Apart from this context, second generation Italic metal vessels are mainly found in the Treveri tombs in Goebange-Nospelt. It is also worth mentioning the graves of Saint-Nicolas-lez-Arras, particularly rich for the region, which contained several simpula, jugs and paterae, attributable to the second generation. However, the documentation of these ancient discoveries testifies to a confusion in the furniture and anachronistic assemblages that cast doubt on the reliability of the whole. In *Belgium*, the grave 1017 of Oisy le Verger delivered a copper alloy casserole (Marcy 2011: 50-58). It is probably no coincidence that this tomb, like the tombs A, B and D of GoebangeNospelt, also contained military weapons. The Italic vessels of these structures are very similar to that of

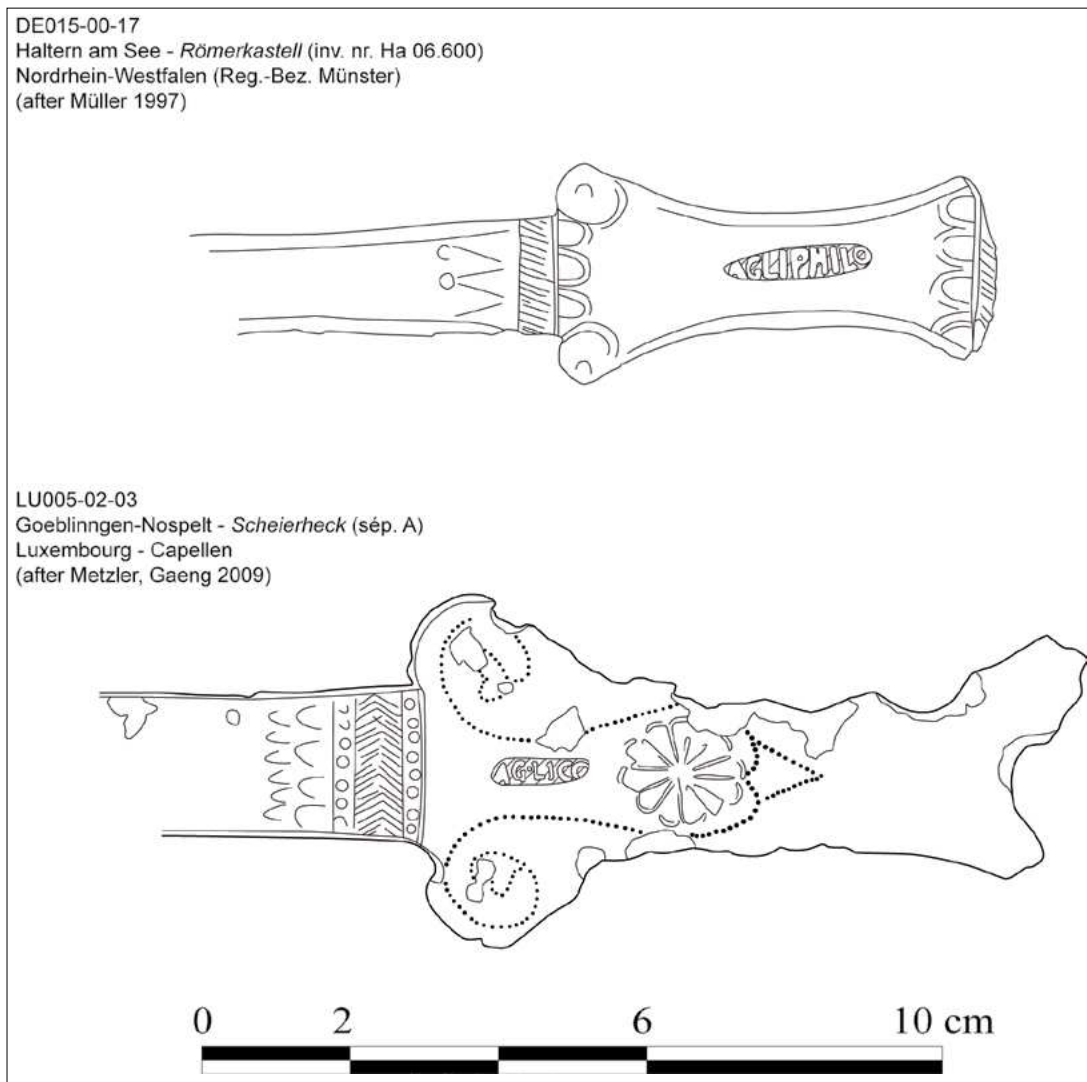


Figure 8. Master's stamp from *Staglius Philocalus* (?) on the bronze strainers from Haltern am See and from grave A from Goebange-Nospelt.



the Nijmegen or Haltern am See *castra*. Some of the long-handled horizontal strainers unearthed in Goebange-Nospelt also come from the same workshops as those at Haltern am See camp, as evidenced by their stamps. These strainers, like casseroles and pans and bronze buckets, can be identified as an integral part of military equipment. These vessels are indeed visible on the reliefs of the Trajan's column. The Roman army is obviously an important vector of diffusion for this new generation of vessels in northern Gaul. These objects remain scarcely present outside the territory of the Treveri and far from any military context (Figure 8).

Quantitatively, imported metal vessels continued to grow exponentially during the last decade of the 1st century BC, but the discoveries were almost exclusively spread between Roman *castra* and the graves of *Auxilia*. It is therefore natural to question the influence of these objects on post-conquest civil societies in northern Gaul.

4.3. Assimilation or multiculturalism?

The term 'Romanization' refers to the processes of acculturation of a population, in this case *Gallia Belgica*, in contact with the Roman world (Reddé, M. *et al.* 2011, 9). These transformations are often perceived as the translation of a certain Roman cultural domination, as the natural evolution of barbaric, drunken and bellicose peoples in contact with the civilized world. In this case, Romanization would correspond to a process of pacification or rather assimilation, involving the disappearance of the receiving culture to the benefit of the Roman culture (Barbau and Labrude 2014: 186-187). In the context of this outdated representation, linked to a civilizing vision of colonialism, the adoption of Italic mores is perceived as a progress resulting from the confrontation between an 'inferior' civilization and the Latin world, the paragon of culture and civilization. The Gauls, and more particularly the Belgae whom Caesar describes as so far from the Roman ways (Caesar, *B.G.*, I, 1), would thus naturally have discarded their barbaric rags to put on the robe of civilization (Dietler 1990: 356-357). However, this vision does not survive the archaeological facts.

Anthropology has shown that, in the context of colonization, indigenous populations have not blindly adopted the goods offered by European merchants but have turned to products with a cultural or social resonance locally (Dietler 1997: 72). Similarly, in Gaul, indigenous populations have adopted Mediterranean productions that were used in local practices. Thus, imported metal tableware does not erase regional customs but rather integrates into them and sometimes changes its function. It is therefore not a question of assimilation phenomena, but rather of hybridization. The Italic pan of the Goebange-Nospelt tomb B, for example, was associated with the bimetallic cauldron, the local form par excellence. In a reciprocal way, buckets and cauldrons, although they belong to the *Belgium's* tradition, became widespread during the Augustan period outside their sphere of influence and in very 'Romanised' tombs, such as those of Goebange-Nospelt or Fléréla-Rivière (Ferdrière and Villard 1993: 27; fig. 119, nr. 8 and 16). Bimetallic cauldrons thus lacked their symbolic value, since they spread widely within the Empire and remained in use until the 3rd century AD (Bochnak 2011: 67, fig. 6).

The appearance of drinking horns in Gaul in the second half of the 1st century BC was the result of a Germanic influence, perhaps due to the integration of Germanic *Auxilia* into the Roman army. Here again, it illustrates these hybridization phenomena (Sueur 2018: 300-303). Unlike Germanic horns, they are deposited alone in Gallic graves and not in pairs. They thus seem stripped of their tradition and cultural value to integrate the table of certain elites. Thus, the metal vessels of the Augustan period saw the integration of new forms, without immediate adoption of Roman manners. Some accessories of the Mediterranean *symposion* were adopted, but they lacked their original function and they still coexisted with the monumental vessels of the Gallic banquet, even contrary to the principles of equity of the *symposion* (Poux 2004: 246-247).

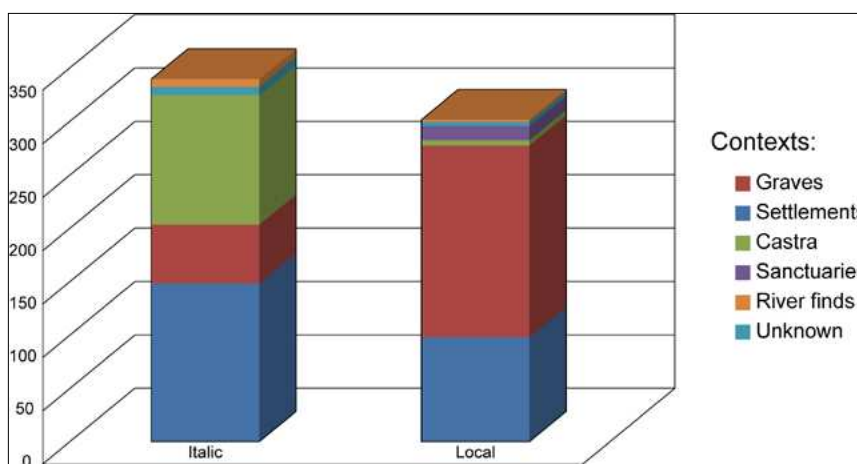


Figure 9. Distribution of local and Italic metal vessels according to their discovery contexts.

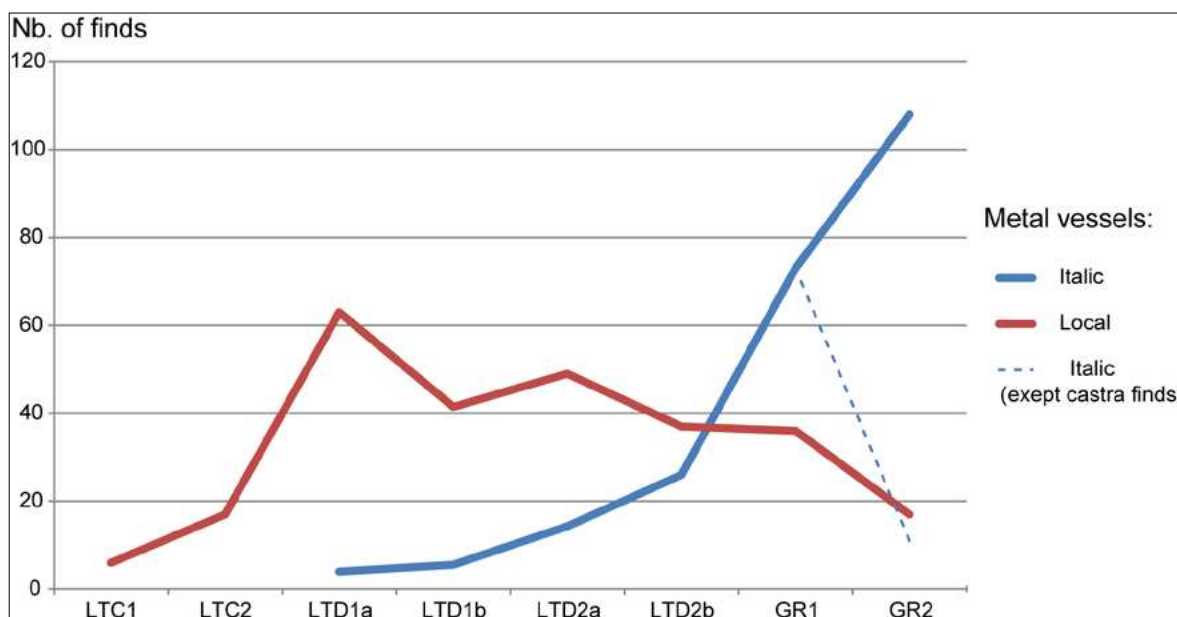


Figure 10. Quantitative chronological diagram of local and Italic metal vessels in northern Gaul.

Despite a sharp increase on the Rhine border due to the Roman military presence, Italic metal vessels were less common in northern Gaul during the Augustan period. This decrease can possibly be compared with the sudden decrease in imports of wine amphorae in the 1st century BC over the whole of Gaul (Poux 2004: 196200). In *Gallia Belgica* it is accompanied by the increasing scarcity of local metal vessels. The Gallic War was certainly a cause of political and economic instability, but it is probably not the reason for the sudden disappearance of the attributes of the banquet after the Roman conquest. More than the annihilation of the elites, it must be seen as the consequences of a ‘pacification’ of the banquet, the abolition of the great martial feasts and a normalisation of consumption, reduced to the private sphere (Poux 2004: 382).

The cultural impact of the metal vessels imported into northern Gaul during the 2nd and 1st centuries BC is, on the whole, relatively limited. The Augustan period saw the arrival in large quantities of new forms of copper alloy vessels imported from the Italian peninsula, but it was not until the 1st century AD, with the establishment of local workshops, that they left the military sphere to be adopted by the now Romanized local population. It was not until the 1st century AD that Roman manners and symposium were established, permanently erasing the great Gallic banquets (Figures 9 and 10).



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