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NOVAE, SECTOR XIII (*RETENTURA*), 2021–2024.

A POSSIBLE LOCATION OF THE *PRAETORIUM* AND THE *VIA DECUMANA*

Abstract: Between 2021 and 2024, excavations in Sector XIII (*retentura*) of the legionary fortress at Novae focused on the possible location of the *praetorium* and the course of the *via decumana*. Previous evidence—including a reused inscription of a legionary legate and structural remains—suggested this area behind the *principia* as a candidate for the legionary commander's residence (*praetorium*). Excavations in trenches “S”, “N”, and “SE” revealed multi-phase architectural remains spanning from the late first century to Late Antiquity, with the latest find dated to the beginning of the twentieth century. Findings included fourteen stone foundation walls, pits, and numerous small artefacts such as coins, weapons, and luxury items. The main purpose of these preparatory field works was to estimate the depth at which the stratified structures are located and to assess the architectural changes in this part of the fortress, thereby supporting the application of appropriate methods for the further exploration of Sector XIII.

Keywords: Novae, *praetorium*, Roman legionary fortress, *via decumana*, *retentura*, Lower Moesia