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Agnieszka Tomas, Emil Jęczmienowski

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

Thanks to continuous excavations conducted since 1960, it has been established that the central part of Novae was occupied by the *principia* [Fig. 1, No. 1]. To the west of this complex (*latus sinistrum praetorii*) lay the legionary baths [Fig. 1, No. 2], while to the east (*latus dextrum praetorii*) stood a building whose precise function remains uncertain, but the discoverers suggest a house of a centurion of the first cohort meaning the *primus pilus*,¹ or *praefectus castrorum* [Fig. 1, No. 3]. In the northern part of the fortress (*praetentura sinistra*) a military hospital was uncovered [Fig. 1, No. 4], and along the main fortress street (*via principalis*) the residence of a tribune was identified [Fig. 1, No. 5]. The rear part of the fortress was excavated in a small area, where a street and a fragment of the barracks were found [Fig. 1, no. 6]. The location of the legionary commander’s residence (*praetorium*) remains unknown, and the area to the south of the headquarters (*retentura*) is still largely unexplored.

In 2021, preparatory works were undertaken in the north *retentura*.² In 2024, the research project received financial support from the Polish National Science Centre.³ The primary objective of the project is to clarify the development of the area in the immediate vicinity of the *principia* and

¹ DYCZEK 2018, p. 56; DYCZEK 2019, p. 122.

² TOMAS 2025a.

³ The research project entitled “Discovering the *praetorium*. Layout, chronology and function of the commander’s

residence in the Roman legionary fortress Novae (today Bulgaria)”, No. UMO-2024/53/B/HS3/03816, received financial support from the Polish National Science Centre.

to determine the nature of the buildings located there. The entire area designated for investigation was marked as Sector XIII [Figs. 1 and 2]. Its aim was to verify the nature and chronology of the architectural remains, assess the stratigraphy and contents of the archaeological layers, and thereby estimate the required resources and select appropriate methods for further research in this area.

The choice of this location was not accidental. In the majority of the legionary bases⁴ where the central zones have been excavated, *praetoria* have been identified either directly behind the *principia* (in twelve instances)⁵ or in the *latus dextrum* (in five instances).⁶ This pattern supports

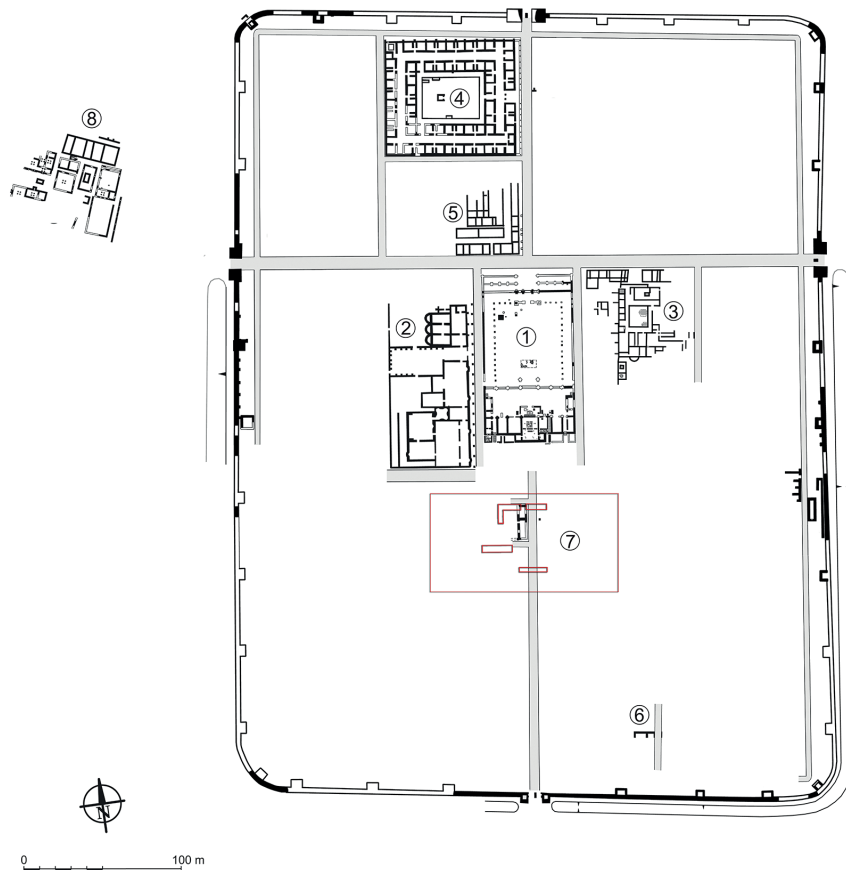


Fig. 1. Novae legionary fortress with Sector XIII marked in red colour. 1 – principia; 2 – legionary baths; 3 – building in the *latus dextrum*; 4 – military hospital; 5 – tribune's house; 6 – barracks in the *retentura*; 7 – buildings in the north *retentura*; 8 – residence in the *canabae* (the vectorized graphic by Emil Jeczmiernowski and Piotr Zakrzewski based on the plan published by T. Sarnowski and J. Kaniszewski in 2008, as well as later published plans by A. B. Biernacki, P. Dyczek, E. Gencheva, P. Vladkova).

⁴ The statistics include the well-investigated wood-and-earth bases from the time of the campaigns in Germania. These statistics do not include auxiliary and vexillation forts, temporary army camps with tents, siege camps, and army camps from the republican period, as the *praetorium* and the *principia* were not separate buildings, as it is well seen in Renieblas III (JIMÉNEZ *et alii* 2020, p. 16, fig. 3), or Late Roman military bases which were given a different layout than the Principate-era legionary bases, although commanders' residences were still built in the fourth-century auxiliary forts (JOHNSON 1987, p. 154).

It is not clear if the *praetoria* existed within the walls of the legionary bases in one-legion provinces like Numidia (Lambaesis) or Lauriacum. In both these cases, the central part has not been sufficiently excavated.

⁵ Anreppen, Carnuntum, Haltern-Hauptlager, Isca, Marktbreit, Noviomagus I, Oberaden, and possibly Aquincum, Mirebeau, Novaesium G, Potaissa, Vindonissa.

⁶ Bonna, Deva, Vindobona, Noviomagus II, Vetera I, and perhaps in Inchtuthil the space in *latus sinistrum* was planned for the *praetorium*.

the widely accepted view that such residences remain understudied components of Roman legionary fortresses.⁷ In 2005, remains of a substantial building were documented at this site in the northern part of the *retentura sinistra*, within an illegal trench which was cleaned, documented, and labelled “R2”. Additionally, foundations interpreted as those of a street portico were found in another trench (“R5”), located along the axis of the *principia*.⁸

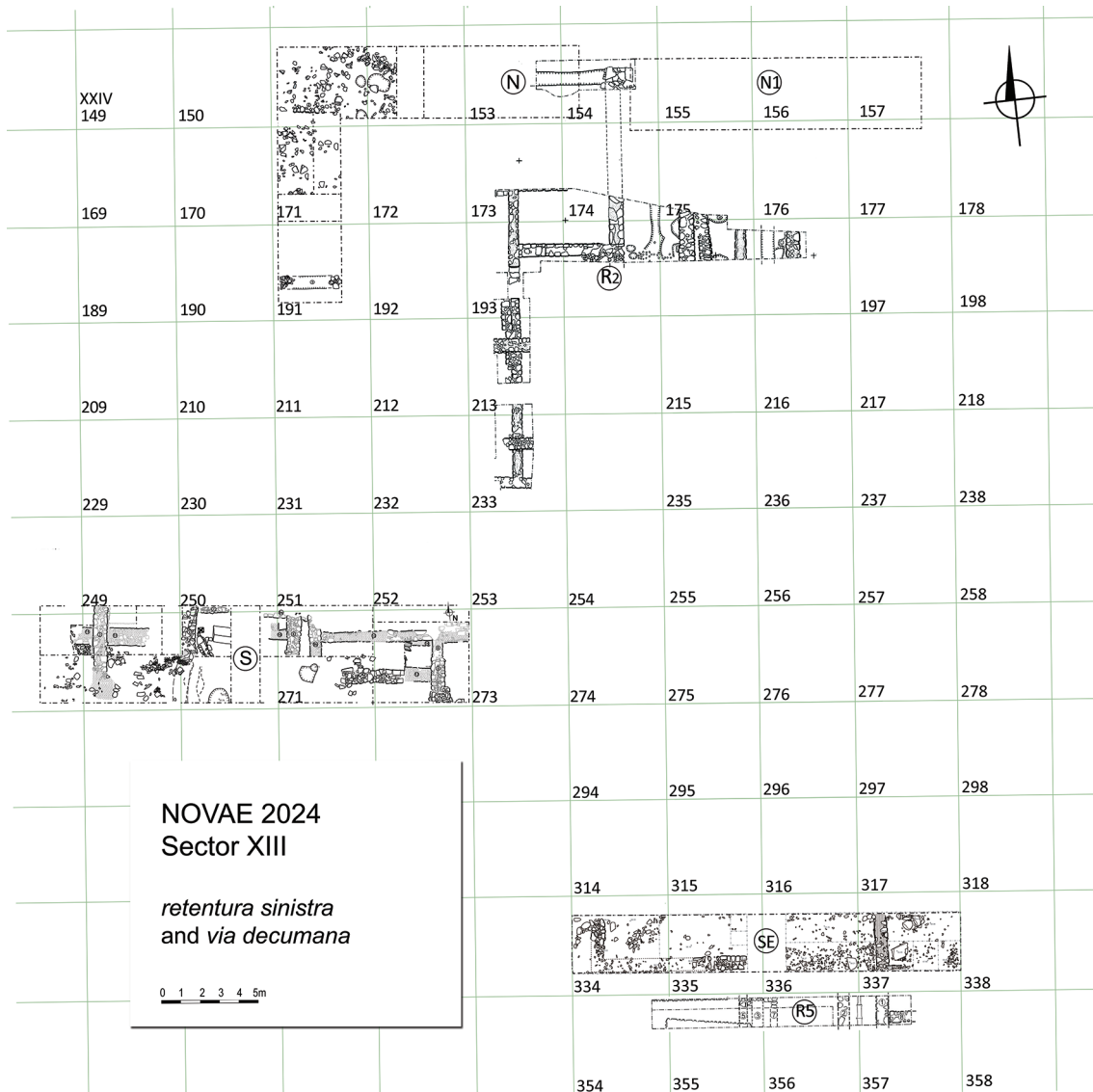


Fig. 2. Novae 2024. Sector XIII (*retentura sinistra*). “N”, “N1” – northern part, “S” – southern part, “SE” – south-eastern part; “R2” and “R5” – sectors excavated in 2005 (drawing by E. Jęczmienowski, L. Kovalevskaia, compilation by A. Tomas)

⁷ VON PETRIKOVITS 1975, p. 67; JOHNSON 1987, pp. 152–161.

⁸ SARNOWSKI, KOVALEVSKAJA, KANISZEWSKI 2006, pp. 145–149, figs. 2 and 4.

A second argument supporting the choice of this area is the discovery of a reused inscribed stone block approximately 50 m west of trench “R2”. The block, which proved to be a statue base, bore the senatorial *cursus honorum* of a legionary legate who served in the First Italic Legion during the reign of Emperor Gordian: most likely Gordian III.⁹ Significantly, the same senator had previously been identified from another statue base discovered in the 1970s in a residence located within the *canabae* (the so-called *villa extra muros*).¹⁰ Assuming the base found in the retentura was not moved far from its original display spot, the legionary *praetorium* may have been situated nearby.

In 2021, the first two sites selected for excavation were designated as trenches “S” and “N”, both located near the area previously documented in 2005, to the west of the *via decumana*. Trench “N” was opened in squares XXIV 151–154, 171, and 191, covering an area of 75 m², while trench “S” was situated in squares XXIV 268–272, with a total area of 110 m². During the 2024 season, a new trench, labelled “SE”, was opened on both sides of the *via decumana*, in squares XXIV 324–327. Additionally, the area directly east of trench “N” was prepared for future excavations and designated as “N1”. To facilitate comparison between the architectural remains documented in 2005 and the newly discovered wall fragments, a compilation of all results was prepared [Fig. 2].

Trench “S” (squares XXIV 268–272)¹¹

In the southern part of Sector XIII, designated “S”, sixteen stone walls were uncovered, dating from the late first or early second century AD through to Late Antiquity [Fig. 3]. Stratigraphic analysis conducted during the 2024 season slightly revised the initial proposed chronology of the layers.¹² Seven construction phases were distinguished, corresponding to seven stratigraphic layers and associated horizons of small finds [Figs. 4 and 5]:

Layer *a* – topsoil, containing mixed finds dated mainly from the fifth century up to the modern period;

Layer *b1* (Phase 7) – last quarter of the fifth–second third of the sixth century (?);

Layer *b2* (Phase 6) – last quarter of the fourth–third quarter of the fifth century;

Layer *c1* (Phase 4/5) – 330s–third quarter of the fourth century;

Layer *c2* (Phase 3) – late third century–330s;

Layer *d* (Phase 2a/b) – late second–middle third of the third century;

Layer *e* (Phase 1) – late first(?)/early second century–late second century;

Layer *f* (Phase 0) – possible earth-and-timber camp, second half of the first century; virgin soil is marked with the letter *g*.

A thin layer of charcoal, marked as Layer *f*, was identified in a small test trench within square 269, located at the corner between Wall 3 and the northern edge of trench “S”. It likely corresponds to the remains of wooden structures formerly present in this area. However, these traces are very vague and have not been documented elsewhere within the sector. For this reason, they have been designated as **Phase 0**. This layer yielded no small finds.

The stone walls dated to the earliest construction phase—Walls 3d, 10, 12, and 16—are associated with **Phase 1**, corresponding to Layer *e*. Large pits filled with rounded stones, laid without mortar, were documented beneath two foundation walls forming the corner of Walls 6a and 12 in square XXIV 272 [Figs. 3, 6 and 7]. These stone-filled pits likely served to stabilise the foundations in the unstable loess substrate. Although such a solution is attested in this context,

⁹ ŁAJTAR, PŁÓCIENNIK, TOMAS 2022.

¹⁰ ČIČIKOVA, BOŽILOVA 1990a; ČIČIKOVA, BOŽILOVA 1990b = *AE* 1990, 863.

¹¹ The northern edge of this trench extends across squares XXIV 248–252.

¹² cf. TOMAS 2025a.

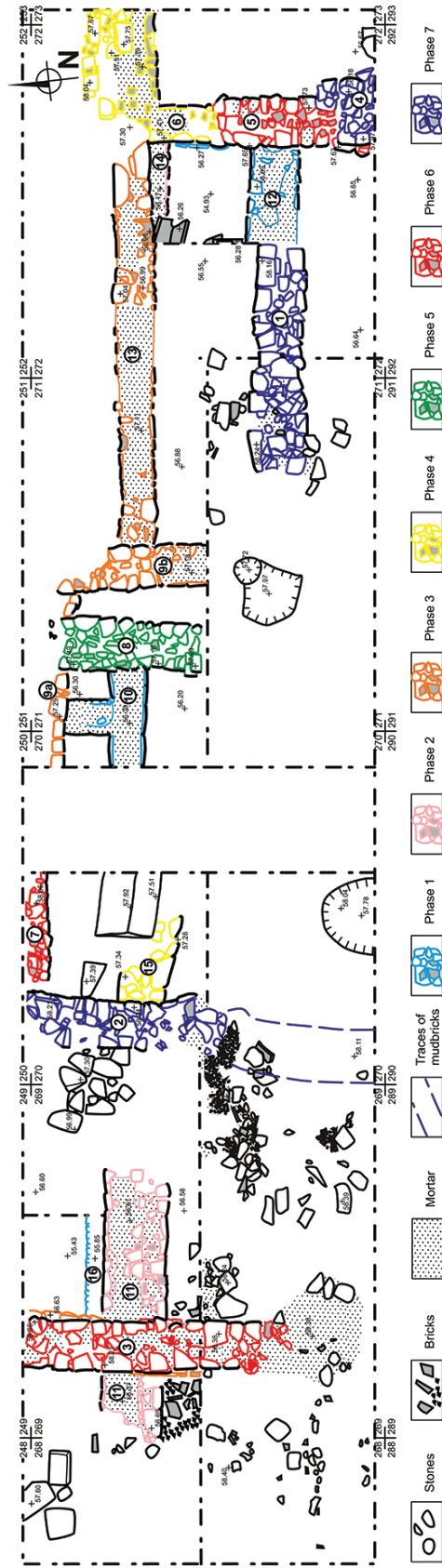


Fig. 3. Novae 2024. Sector XIII (*retentura sinistra*), trench "S" (drawing by E. Jęczmienowski, photo by A. Tomas)

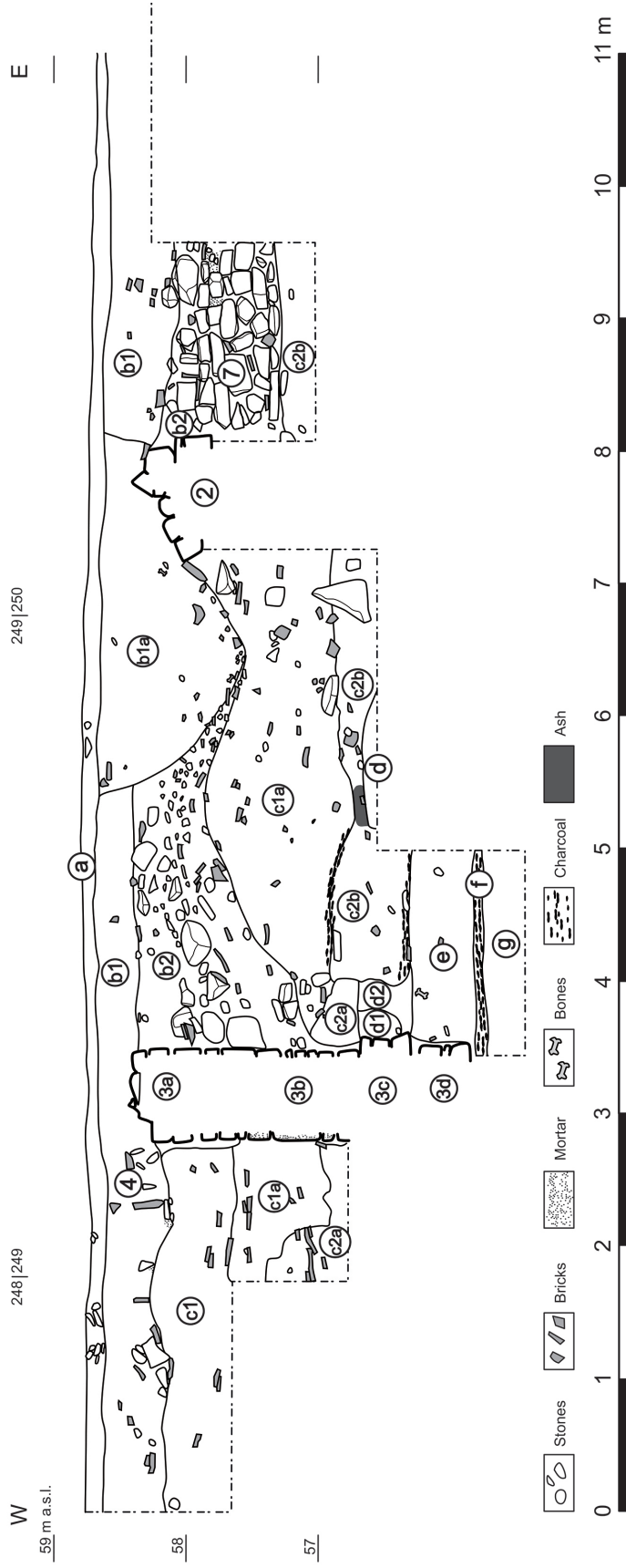


Fig. 4. Novae 2024. Sector XIII (*retentura sinistra*), trench "S". Northern profile, western part, sq. XXIV 248–250. Numbers in ascending order refer to features, while letters in descending order refer to stratigraphic layers (drawing by E. Jęczmienowski)

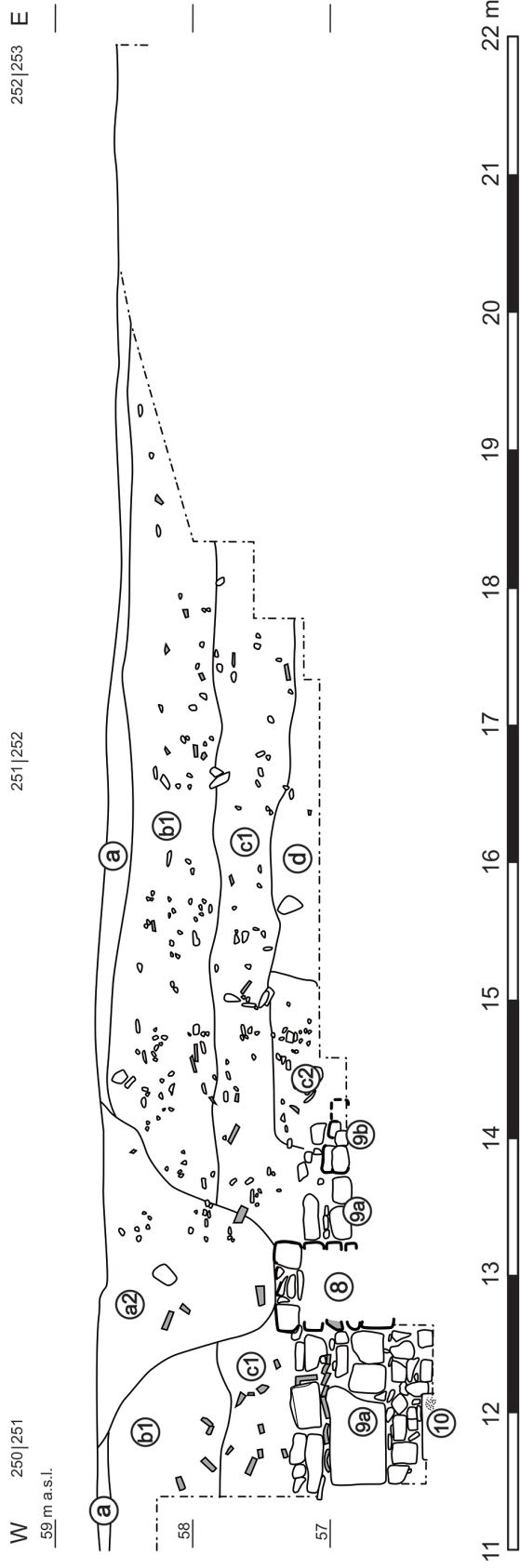


Fig. 5. Novae 2024. Sector XIII (*retentura sinistra*), trench "S". Northern profile, eastern part, sq. XXIV 250–252. Numbers in ascending order refer to features, while letters in descending order refer to stratigraphic layers (drawing by E. Jęczmienowski)

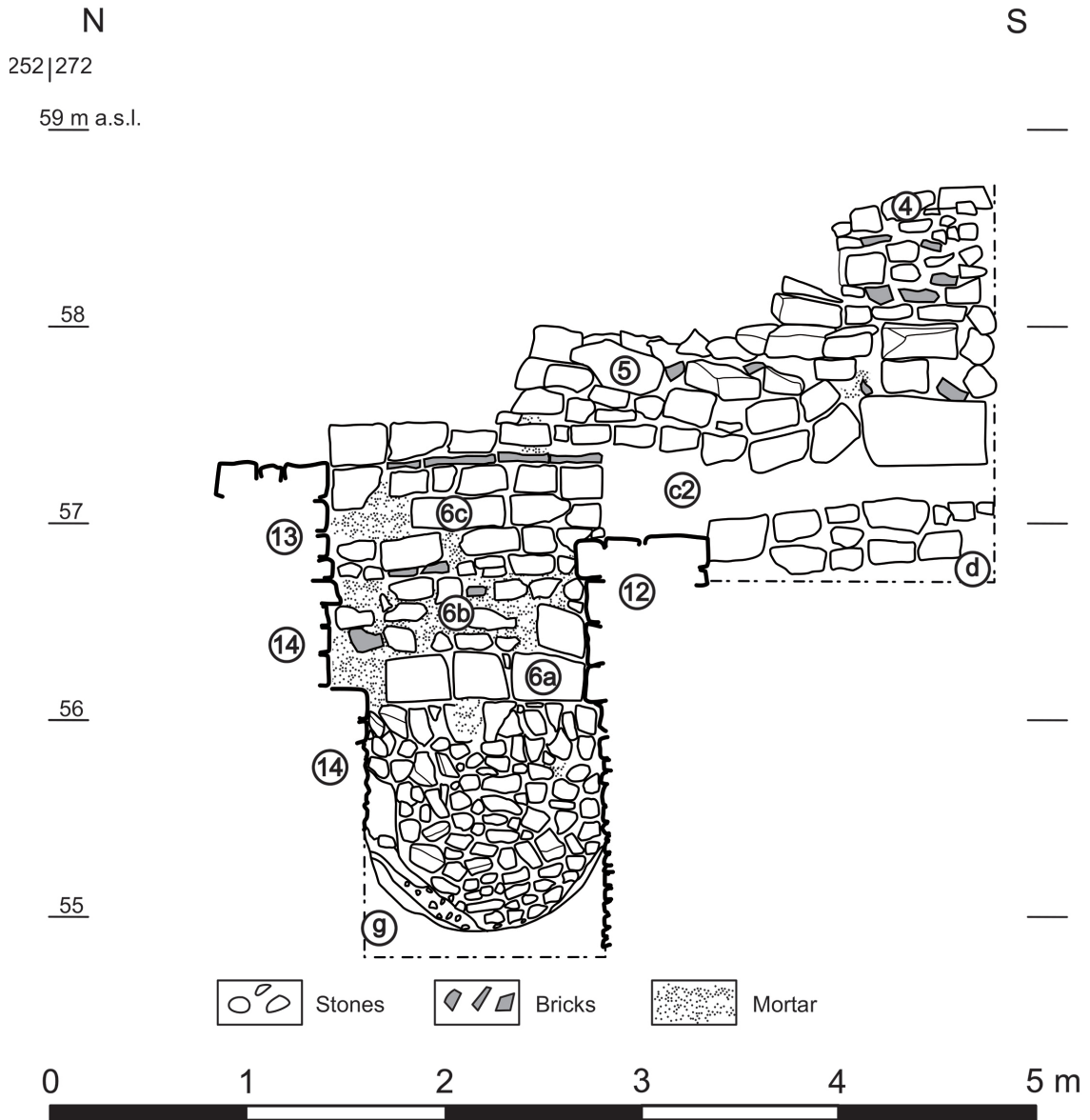


Fig. 6. Novae 2023. Sector XIII (*retentura sinistra*), trench “S”.
Eastern profile in square 272 (drawing by A. Tomas and E. Jęczmienowski)

it remains uncommon at Novae. The foundations of Wall 12 were laid directly atop these pits, at approximately 56.15–56.20 m a.s.l. The early foundations, later used as a support for Wall 11, are laid at 55.85 m a.s.l. (Wall 16). This foundation wall was built earlier than Wall 11 and Wall 3d, therefore, should be associated with Layer *e*.

Small finds from this layer were not numerous. They include fragments of two blue glass handles (inv. nos. 22/23w; 69/23w) and a disc of an vaulted oil lamp (63/23w) depicting an erotic scene [Fig. 8].



Fig. 7. Novae 2024. Sector XIII (*retentura sinistra*), trench "S". Pit filled with stones under Wall 6a (photo by A. Tomas)



Fig. 8. Novae 2023. Sector XIII (*retentura sinistra*), trench "S". Fragment of a terracotta lamp with erotic scene, found in Layer *e* (photo by A. Tomas)

During **Phase 2**, corresponding to Layer *d*, a substantial wall measuring 0.90 m in width and oriented east–west was constructed (Wall 11, square XXIV 269). The wall, which was bonded with white mortar, rested on the earlier foundation from Phase 1 [Figs. 3 and 6]. Walls 3d and 11 formed the south-western corner of a building associated with Layer *d* [Fig. 9]. Wall 6b was built atop the earlier foundations of Wall 6a [Figs. 6 and 11]. It is possible that the foundation support, laid in a pit filled with stones and bonded with mortar (Wall 14), was initially constructed during this phase, and subsequently reused or incorporated in Phase 3.¹³ This hypothesis, however, requires further verification in the forthcoming excavation season.

Layer *d*, related to Wall 11, yielded a range of small finds, including numerous tesserae, two fragments of the same *pilum* (44/23w), and numerous coins from Septimius Severus (109/22) up to Gallienus (134/23w).¹⁴ A substantial quantity of kitchenware and storage vessels was collected, while in contrast, tableware comprised only a minor proportion of the assemblage.

Among the most notable and latest-dated finds recorded on the top of Layer *d*, in the eastern part of the trench, was a bronze base with incised markings indicating secondary use (179/22w), found alongside five coins, at least three of which date to the reign of Gordian III (209/22w). These objects could be interpreted as a collection of valuable items deliberately gathered in one place, potentially during the unrest of the mid-third century.

In **Phase 3**, related to Layer *c2*, new buildings were erected primarily in the central and eastern parts of the investigated area. These structures include the remains of 50 cm-wide walls bonded with white mortar. These walls form a large room, which may have reused old foundations on its eastern side, aligned along the north–south axis [Fig. 3, Walls 9b and 13]. Further development included the addition of an east–west wall on the western side of this room [Fig. 3, Wall 9a]. Wall 3 has a construction phase that can be assigned to this period as well [Fig. 4, Wall 3c].

In layer *c2*, discoveries included a silver ring (181/22w), tesserae, numerous amphora fragments, animal bones, and parts of weaponry. The coins recovered from this layer date from Probus (140/23w) to around the middle of the fourth century (3/22w; 5/22w).

Phases 4 and 5 were distinguished as separate building episodes, both associated with the same layer, labelled *c1*. During Phase 4, the north-west corner formed by Wall 6c constructed atop Wall 6b, and the eastern part of Wall 13 were built. Slightly later (Phase 5), Wall 8 was erected aligned along the north–south axis to the west of Wall 9b. Walls 9a, 9b, and 13 were dismantled, and two separate buildings, based on Walls 6c and 8, replaced the previous one from Phase 3 [Fig. 3]. Wall 8 was built in *opus mixtum* using clay as the sole bonding material [Figs. 5 and 10]. Stratigraphic analysis indicates that during the same period, construction activity also took place approximately 13 m to the west [Fig. 3, Wall 15]; however, this structure is difficult to associate with any other unearthed features. Wall 3b was retained and was given new solid foundations.

This layer yielded a large number of coin finds, as well as locally manufactured glass products, and tesserae. Numerous coins yielded by Layer *c1* correspond to the horizon of the third quarter of the fourth century.

In **Phase 6**, related to Layer *b2*, further rebuilding introduced Walls 5 and 7. Wall 3 in its next phase (Wall 3a) was constructed atop earlier foundations, resulting in it being the highest preserved structure in this area, reaching 2.5 m [Figs. 4 and 9]. The wall, built on foundations dug in the ground, was made of stones bonded with mortar and oriented north–south. Eleven coins found at the base of Wall 3a dating from AD 361–363 up to 364–375,¹⁵ suggest that its construction

¹³ Initially, Wall 14 was identified with Phase 2; cf. TOMAS 2025a, p. 272, fig. 11.

¹⁴ The coins were identified by Piotr Jaworski, Szymon Jellonek, and Michał Mozyński from the Faculty of

Archaeology, University of Warsaw whom I would like to thank.

¹⁵ JELONEK 2026, *forthcoming*.



Fig. 9. Novae 2023. Sector XIII (*retentura sinistra*), trench "S". Walls 3, 11, and 16 (photo by A. Tomas)



Fig. 10. Novae 2024. Sector XIII (*retentura sinistra*), trench "S". Walls 8 and 9b (photo by J. L. Gašpar)

occurred no later than during the reigns of Emperors Valentinian I and Gratian; therefore, it most likely dates to the period preceding the battle of Adrianople, and may be related to these events or the last moments of building activity in this period.¹⁶ Walls 5 and 7 were probably built after AD 375. They were constructed from stones and fragmented bricks, and bound with clay.

Coins found in Layer *b2* are dated between the last quarter of the fourth–middle of the fifth century (54/22w; 150/23w; 182/22w). A quite well-preserved bone comb is among the characteristic finds of this period (88/23w). A fragment of a column, oval in cross-section and identical to one discovered in the Episcopal complex, was found lying on the ground in this layer (73/23w).

The youngest building phase, associated with Layer *b1* and related to Phase 7, includes the remains of four foundation walls of poor quality, constructed less carefully and without mortar [Figs. 3, 4, and 11, Walls 1, 2, and 4]. Traces of clay bricks, which possibly stood on top of Wall 2, were discovered in the southern part of square XXIV 270. At the beginning of this phase, the foundations of Wall 3a were repaired with regular stones bound with clay only, but its top was reinforced with mortar [Figs. 4 and 9]. To the east of it, a channel dating to the fifth–sixth century was identified, along with a layer of compacted soil containing small stones and gravel, possibly corresponding to an open area of the building.

This phase ends with abandonment and slow dismantling of walls. Architectural elements, including a fragment of a cornice with an egg-and-dart frieze (square XXIV 269) and a large stone set with its sharp corner facing upward [Fig. 3, square XXIV 270], were found in the pits. Within the same layer, four pits were documented, containing fragments of amphorae, coarse pottery, and bones.

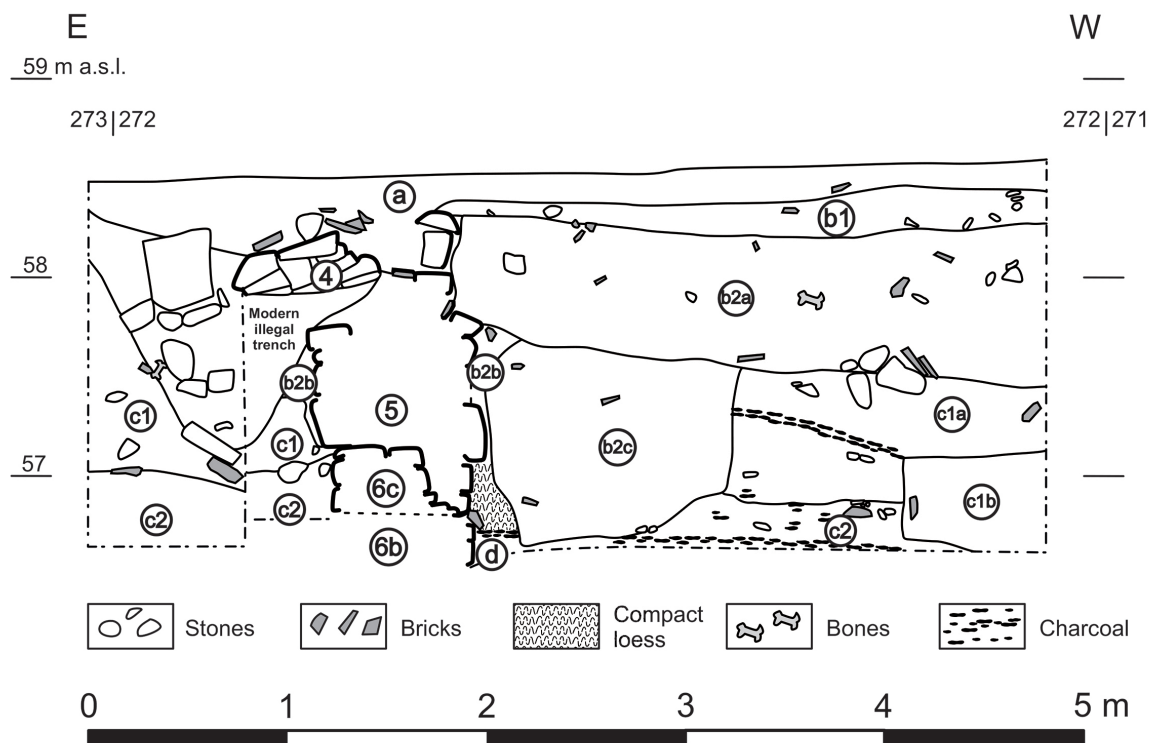


Fig. 11. Novae 2024. Sector XIII (*retentura sinistra*), trench “S”. Southern profile in square 272 (drawing by E. Jęczmienowski)

¹⁶ JĘCZMIENOWSKI 2025.

The latest coins found in this layer are dated to AD 497–518 (192/22w) and 527–538 (138/23w). A fragmentarily preserved copper-alloy fibula, dated to the period from the late fifth century to the turn of the sixth and seventh centuries,¹⁷ confirms this chronology.

Illegal trenching has disrupted the stratigraphy with mixed materials, making it very difficult to determine whether Layer *b1* marks the end of the Roman presence or if a largely corrupted topsoil corresponds to this final period.

Trench “N” (squares XXIV 151–153)

Only the Late Roman phases were excavated in Trench “N” [Fig. 12]. The architectural remains are very poorly preserved, primarily due to damage caused by the roots of tall trees and deep illegal trenching.

Four layers and possibly three building phases were provisionally identified:

Layer *a* – topsoil; containing mixed finds, mainly dated to the Late Roman up to the modern period;

Layer *b* – third quarter of the fourth century–third quarter of the sixth century;

Layer *c1* – mid-fourth–third quarter of the fourth century;

Layer *c2* – earlier than mid-fourth century.

The earliest remains documented so far (Layer *c2*) can be preliminarily dated to the first half of the fourth century. Wall 2b was built from quite regularly arranged worked limestone bound with clay [Fig. 12].¹⁸ Further examination should answer the question as to whether this phase was related to Phase 5 and Layer *c1* in trench “S”.

The earliest coins found on the bottom of Layer *c2* in trench “N” were issued by Gordian III (189/22w) and Probus (144/23w), but the majority of all dated coins come from the first and second third of the fourth century.

The next layer, also tentatively dated, in this case to the mid-fourth–third quarter of the fourth century, was labelled Layer *c1*. Wall 2a, made of irregularly laid medium- and small-sized limestone pieces, fragmented bricks, and roof tiles bound with clay, built on top of Wall 2b, seems to belong to this period. The disturbed stratigraphy made it very difficult to firmly associate Wall 2a with Layer *c1*, and one cannot exclude that it should rather be associated with Phase 6 in trench “S”, and therefore related to Layer *b2*.

The youngest layers, including Layer *b*, were badly damaged. The southern part of trench “N” (square XXIV 191) had been explored by illegal trenching. Remains of the east–west-oriented Wall 1—preserved in two separate fragments—was documented on both sides of the illegal trench in square XXIV 191 [Fig. 12, Nos. 1a and 1b]. This wall should be associated with the latest building phase. It is possible that this period corresponds to Phase 7 and Layer *b1* in trench “S”.

Coins from this layer are often heavily worn and difficult to date. In general, they can be attributed to the second half of the fourth and the fifth century. The latest specimen is dated to AD 556–558, issued by Justinian I (183/23w).

Two large pits were observed in squares XXIV 151 and 152 within Layer *b*. Both contained burnt, orange-coloured clay. In one of them (square XXIV 152), fragments of architectural elements were discovered, including a fluted column fragment (78/23w) and an inscribed fragment of a column bearing a dedication to Jupiter and Juno by the four local magistrates.¹⁹ It is likely that all of these limestone elements were prepared for calcination in order to obtain lime for cement.

¹⁷ GENČEVA 2004, pp. 110–111.

¹⁸ Cf. TOMAS 2025b, fig. 1 (in this volume).

¹⁹ TOMAS 2025b (in this volume).

Human activity during this period is evidenced by finds related to manufacturing. Numerous fragments of lead waste were recovered, along with traces of other materials, such as iron slag and objects made of bone and antler, including a hairpin and a gaming die (139/22w). Coins and other finds from this layer date it to the period ranging from the last quarter of the fourth century up to, at the latest, the third quarter of the sixth century.

The latest evidence for Roman presence is a coin of Heraclius I, minted in the early seventh century (187/22w), found in topsoil (Layer *a*). The same layer contained a two-*stotinki* coin from 1901.

The area east of trench “N” was prepared for future investigation and designated as “N1” (squares XXIV 155–157). However, it was not excavated within the timeframe covered by this publication.

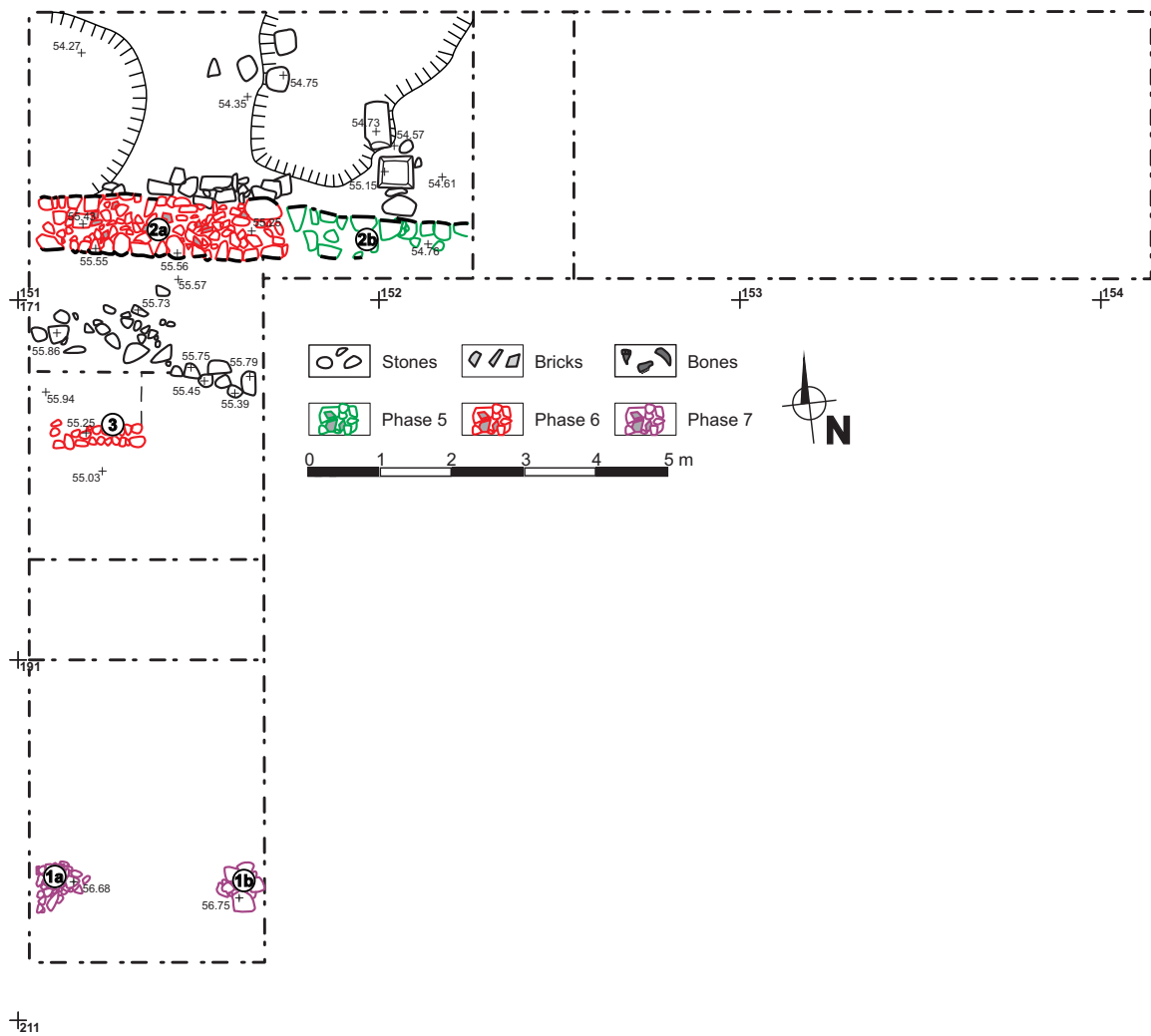


Fig. 12. Novae 2024. Sector XIII (*retentura sinistra*), trench “N”
(drawing by E. Jęczmienowski)

Trench “SE” (squares XXIV 334–337)

The layout of other Roman camps suggests that the position of the *praetorium* may also have been influenced by the course of the *via decumana*. In cases where the *praetorium* is located at the rear of the headquarters building, it could stretch over the insula of the same width as the *principia* (e.g. Carnuntum, Novaesium). If this street extended up to the *principia* and divided the rear part of the fortress into two sections (Lambaesis, possibly Inchtuthil), the residence could have been located on one side of it. Therefore, determining the route of the *via decumana* is crucial for understanding the division of buildings in this part of the fortress. To establish the axis, extent, and chronology of the *via decumana* in Novae in its northern section, trenches “SE” and “N1” were established [Figs. 1 and 2].

Before the start of excavations, the results from 2005 were compared with those of the geophysical surveys conducted in 2012. During the excavations in 2005, a fragment of a foundation interpreted as part of a street portico was uncovered, but it was very short and required further verification.²⁰ The image based on the 2012 geophysical measurements confirmed that the Late Roman street followed the route of the earlier *via decumana*; however, its exact position did not quite match the 2005 results, and the northernmost section still remained unclear.²¹

In 2024, one of the two trenches, designated “SE” and measuring 3 × 20 m along the east–west axis across the street, was excavated [Fig. 13].

Three layers and two building phases were provisionally identified there:

Layer *a* – topsoil; containing mixed finds, mainly dated to the Late Roman up to the modern period;

Layer *b* – the late fourth century to the mid-fifth or early sixth century;

Layer *c* – fourth century.

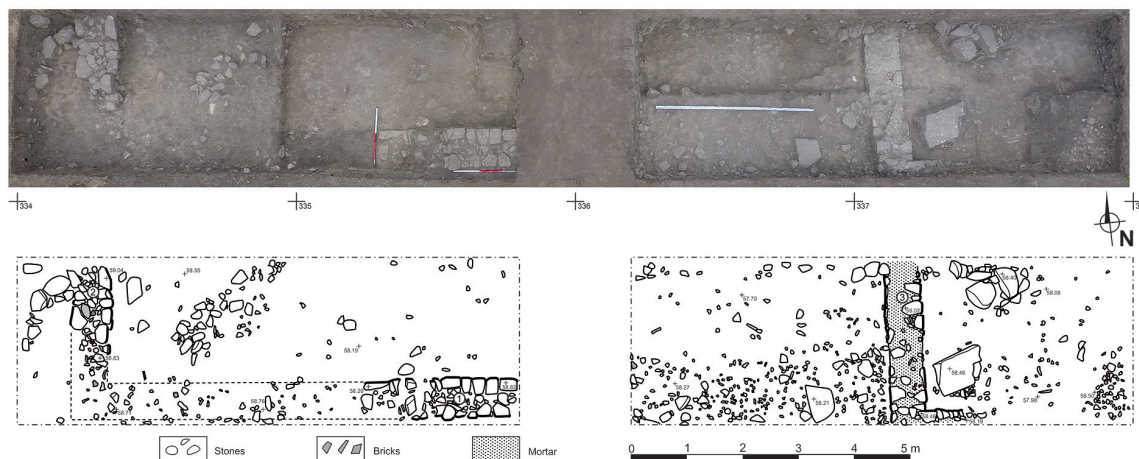


Fig. 13. Novae 2024. Sector XIII (*retentura sinistra*), trench “SE”. Walls 1 and 2 related to Layer *b* and Wall 3 associated with Layer *c* (drawing by E. Jęczmienowski, photo by A. Tomas)

²⁰ SARNOWSKI, KOVALEVSKAJA, KANISZEWSKI 2006, p. 148, fig. 4.

²¹ TOMAS 2023, pp. 71–72, fig. 50.

The earliest layer identified so far in this area, tentatively dated to the fourth century, was designated as Layer *c* [Fig. 14]. The sections adjacent to the central part of the excavated area contained a number of coarser ashlar blocks of limestone covered with compacted earth mixed with clean loess clay, which may indicate the presence of a hardened street, perhaps without a stone pavement. In square XXIV 337, to the east of this street, a foundation corner was revealed and labelled Wall 3. Its location suggests that it belonged to a fourth-century building situated probably to the east of the *via decumana*.

The most recent street remains appear to be located in square XXIV 336 and belong to the period identified as Layer *b*, which is tentatively dated from the late fourth century to the mid-fifth or early sixth century. At that time, the street more closely resembled a narrow path composed of compacted soil overlying small- to medium-sized limestone pieces. On the western side of the street, a building constructed of sandstone and brick fragments was erected, of which two foundation walls forming a corner (Walls 1 and 2) have been uncovered in squares XXIV 334 and 335. The wall was built using the *opus mixtum* technique [Fig. 14]. In the eastern part of the site, in the upper surface of this layer, three stone catapult projectiles (53/24w; 55/24w; 92/24w) and a trilobate arrowhead (74/24w) were found, likely associated to the latest period of more permanent occupation here. The building to the west of the street was in ruins, and the roof had collapsed onto the street.

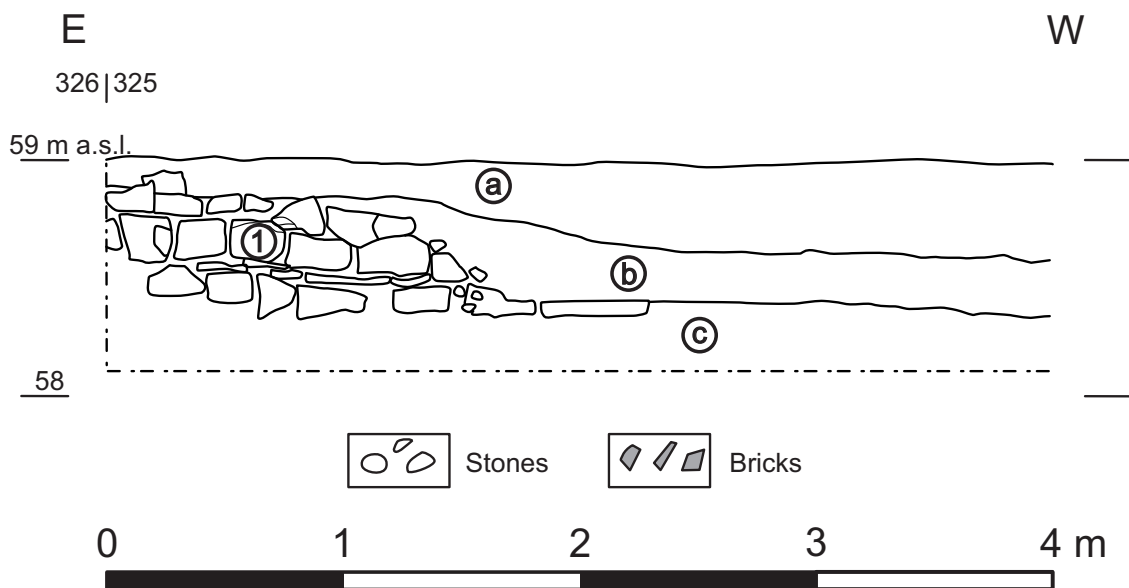


Fig. 14. Novae 2024. Sector XIII (*retentura sinistra*), trench “SE”.
Southern profile near Wall 1
(drawing by E. Jęczmienowski)

The topsoil (Layer *a*), contained mixed finds that had been disturbed by the roots of small trees. The latest feature uncovered in this area was a pit, probably dating to as late as the late sixth/early seventh century. It contained fragments of pottery and animal bones, as well as a bronze belt

buckle (75/24w) of the Sucidava-Kranj type with a human face [Fig. 15], representing a variant of the so-called Sucidava-type belt buckles.²² By that time, Walls 1 and 2 had been partly dismantled, and all architectural structures in this place already buried beneath the soil.



Fig. 15. Novae 2024. Sector XIII (*retentura sinistra*), trench “SE”.
Bronze belt buckle of the Sucidava-Kranj type
(photo by A. Tomas)

Summary

The results of the preparatory investigations in the northern *retentura* indicate that the area was intensively used during the Late Roman period, with several phases of construction introducing new buildings or rooms, many of which were erected atop earlier structures. Architectural remains from the Principate period are poorly preserved, largely due to later dismantling and reuse of building materials. However, the elements that have survived, such as Wall 11, appear to belong to monumental architecture.

A total of almost 600 selected small finds were documented from the entire investigated area between 2021 and 2024, and thousands of further mass finds, such as amphora sherds, cooking and tableware, iron and lead objects, were collected and labelled according to their stratigraphy. These items of material culture require detailed study by specialists. Over the next four years, research will focus on further investigation in Sector XIII, including both non-invasive methods and targeted excavations in key areas. Continued exploration of the northernmost section of the *via decumana* is essential to reach more definitive conclusions. Many discoveries remain to be fully analysed or published, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive documentation.

Abbreviation

AE *L'Année épigraphique*, Paris.

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²² CURTA 2021, pp. 76–77.

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