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FIELDWORK AT NOVAE 2011

The Roman legionary fortress of Novae was located in northern Bulgaria, near modern day Svishtov/Svištov, on the southern bank of the Danube. Excavations have been carried out since 1960 by a joint Polish-Bulgarian team and the results are regularly published.¹ There are altogether three Polish teams excavating at Novae, one of which is from the Antiquity of Southeastern Europe Research Centre of the University of Warsaw.² Novae was once the headquarters for the 1st Italic legion (*Legio I Italica*) in the province of Moesia Inferior.

The year 2011 saw the commence of fieldwork at an altogether new sector (1 August – 9 November 2011). For the past 21 years the Centre³ focused on unearthing the former *valetudinarium* of the army camp, as well as the layers above and underneath it. Now, virgin terrain⁴ (dubbed Sector XII) was selected for excavation, in the right *latus praetorii*, east of the *principia*, south of the *via principalis* (Fig. 1). The area prepared for fieldwork has a surface of about 450 m².

According to the standard Roman fortress layout, the *praetorium* or houses of the *immunes*⁵ or legionary barracks should be located here, possibly those housing the first cohort.⁶ This interesting problem has been under discussion for a long time, and every piece of archaeological evidence is likely to be valuable. The main issue is the question to what degree the double strength of the first cohort is reflected in the size of its barracks.⁷



The earliest remains discovered date back to the presence of the 8th Augustan legion in Novae (ca. AD 45–69). Just above virgin soil, the lower foundations of four walls made of sandstone without mortar were discovered. These we correlate with an adobe floor. This early structure was dismantled and burned, and its remains were deposited into waste pits. The rubble layers held sherds of pottery and glass, bones, small fragments of bronze items, lamp fragments, and charcoal.

After this first phase, the terrain was prepared anew and stone buildings were erected. The walls were

¹ T. DERDA, P. DYCZEK, J. KOLENDO (eds.), *Novae. Legionary Fortress and Late Antique Town*, vol. I: *A Companion to the Study of Novae*, Warsaw 2008 – includes a complete bibliography for the years 1726–2008. Annual reports are published in “Archeologia” (Warsaw). See also: T. SARNOWSKI, *The Name of Novae in Lower Moesia*, “Archeologia” (Warsaw) LVIII (2007), 2009, 15–23; A. BIERNACKI (ed.), *Novae. Studies and Materials*, I–III, Poznań 1995–2008.

² Our research is kindly supported by the University of Warsaw and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education.

³ For a history of research at Sector IV see: P. DYCZEK, *Archaeological Excavations at Novae. A History of Research with Special Consideration of Sector IV (Legionary Baths, Valetudinarium Late Architecture)*, (in:) T. Derda, P. Dyczek, J. Kolendo (eds.), *Novae...*, 31–70.

⁴ With the exception of a small unpublished trial trench from the 1970s by V. Božilova.

⁵ R. IVANOV, *Architecture and Layout of Roman Military Camps during the Principate*, (in:) R. Sucznov (ed.), *Archaeology of the Bulgarian Lands*, vol. 1, Sofia 2004, 154–181 (esp. 162–163); H. VON PETRIKOVITS, *Die Innenbauten römischer Legionslager während der Prinzipatszeit*, *Abhandlungen der Rheinisch-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 56, Opladen 1975, passim, esp. pls. 1–5.

⁶ “Hyginus,” *De munitione castrorum*, 21; Vegetius, *Epitoma rei militaris* II 6,8; R. IVANOV, *Architecture and Layout...*, 165–167.

⁷ D. BREEZE, *The Organization of the Legion: The First Cohort and the Equites Legionis*, “*Journal of Roman Studies*” 59, No. 1/2, 1969, 50–55; S. FRERE, *Hyginus and the First Cohort*, “*Britannia*” 11, 1980, 51–60.



Fig. 1. Novae. The new sector on the aerial photo (M. Pisz, J. Balcerzak).

Ryc. 1. Novae. Nowy sektor, zdjęcie lotnicze.

made of limestone, sandstone and lime mortar. Only one room measuring 6×6 m was entirely uncovered during excavation. Also, two sewage channels constructed during this time were discovered. Both run along a N-S axis and towards the river Danube (Fig. 2). The excavated area was

subsequently enlarged westwards with a slim trench, in order to get hold of the east wall of the *principia*, which had been excavated earlier in the area,⁸ and the adjoining street dividing the *scamnum* from north to south. The width of the street measured 3.8 m (Fig. 3).⁹

⁸ Cf. T. SARNOWSKI, *Novae – Western Sector 1989*, “Archeologia” (Warsaw) XLII, 1991, 133; T. SARNOWSKI, L. KOVALEVSKAJA, J. KANISZEWSKI, *Novae – Castra Legionis, 2003–2005*, “Archeologia” (Warsaw) LVI (2005), 2006, 141–162.

⁹ The street has been researched further to the south by T. SARNOWSKI: cf. *Novae – Sektor Zachodni, 1981*, “Archeologia” (Warsaw) XXXIV, 1983, 150–153, fig. 15:1.



Fig. 2. Main trench in 2011 (Photo M. Lemke).

Ryc. 2. Główny wykop w 2011 r.



Fig. 3. The eastern wall of the *principia* (Photo M. Lemke).

Ryc. 3. Wschodni mur *principia*.



Fig. 4. Fragment of a *terra sigillata* bowl with a potter's mark (Photo M. Lemke).

Ryc. 4. Fragment miski *terra sigillata* z pieczęcią producenta.



Fig. 5. Lamp 138/11 (Photo J. Reclaw).

Ryc. 5. Lampka 138/11.



Fig. 6. Lamp 142/11 (Photo J. Reclaw).

Ryc. 6. Lampka 142/11.



Fig. 7. Bone spoon (Photo J. Reclaw).

Ryc. 7. Łyżka kościana.

Coin finds have suggested earlier that during the later half of the 3rd c. the legionary buildings were dismantled, making place for civilian compounds. Here, stones from earlier walls were reused. A number of small rooms was erected, set partially on earlier foundations. In the southern part of the trench a legionary water tank was transformed into a basin measuring 2.5×2.5 m. Its floor and walls were made of *tegulae*. Some of the civilian walls and the basin were destroyed.

Towards the southern border of the fieldwork area, a portico was discovered. Five bases for columns were unearthed so far. Capitals and bases were used and set on square slabs of stone. This late antique portico was obviously built from material gathered in the ruins of the *principia*, but the exact date of construction is not known yet.

A number of finds deserve special attention, especially a hitherto unknown tile stamp on a *tegula*¹⁰ and a large Greek inscription.¹¹ The inscription was discovered in a late antique layer. The original stone, a statue base, had been cut in two and reshaped as a *mortarium*. Still, the text is well preserved (Greek inscriptions are rare in Novae). It records the name Novae, in a context where also the *Legio*

Italica is mentioned. In one paragraph it is stated that two envoys from different towns on the Hellespont, “first citizen of Ilion”, and an equally “first citizen” from the Roman colony of Alexandria Troas founded a monument for the “splendid town of Novesians” and the First Italic Legion. The function of these two foreigners seems to correspond with a number of other inscriptions found earlier on the premises of the *principia*, concerning late Roman, civil *primipilarii* providing long distance logistical support for the army, especially from the Hellespont region.¹² Among the smaller finds, the comparatively high amount of lamps (18) and *terra sigillata* sherds (9) (Fig. 4) are worth mentioning. The two early lamps: 138/11 (Fig. 5) and 142/11 (Fig. 6) are well preserved, either type is seldom found in this area. Another interesting and entirely preserved find is the bone spoon 116/11 (Fig. 7).

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¹⁰ J. ŻELAZOWSKI, *A New Name Stamp from Military Camp at Novae*, “Novensia” 23, forthcoming.

¹¹ A detailed analysis is being prepared by prof. A. Łajtar.

¹² T. SARNOWSKI, *Drei spätkaiserzeitliche Statuenbasen aus Novae in Niedermösien*, (in:) M. Mirković (ed.), *Römische Städte und Festungen an der Donau. Akten der regionalen Konferenz, Beograd, 16.–19. Oktober 2003*, Beograd 2005, 223–230.

BADANIA TERENOWE W NOVAE W 2011 R.

Po zakończeniu prac w sektorze IV, w roku 2011 w Novae rozpoczęto wykopaliska na nowym odcinku – oznaczonym numerem XII (**Ryc. 1**). Został on zaplanowany w prawym *latus praetorii* po wschodniej stronie *principia*, na południe od *via principalis*. W tym miejscu, zgodnie ze standardowym planem rzymskiego obozu wojskowego, powinny się znajdować koszary I kohorty. Odkryto obiekty należące do pozostałości architektonicznych po legionie *VIII Augusta* (od ok. 45 do 69 roku n.e.), jak i późniejsze, wybudowane już przez legion I Italski oraz w III w. przez cywili (**Ryc. 2**). Wąskim, podłużnym sondażem poszerzo-

no wykop zasadniczy na zachód, aby uchwycić wschodni mur *principia* oraz przekrój przez ulicę rozdzielającą od wschodu komendanturę od domniemanych koszar I kohorty (**Ryc. 3**). W południowej części odcinka odkryto pięciokolumnowy portyk z późnego antyku.

Pośród zabytków należy przede wszystkim zwrócić uwagę na stosunkowo dużą liczbę fragmentów naczyń *terra sigillata* (**Ryc. 4**) i lampek (**Ryc. 5, 6**), jak i na nieznaną dotychczas typ stempla legionowego, odcisnięty na powierzchni jednej z dachówek, oraz inskrypcję grecką wymieniającą „najwspanialsze miasto nowocyzyków”.