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Novae : headquarters building and rear division of the Roman legionary fortress : excavation of 2003

Światowit 5 (46)/Fasc.A, 119-121

2003

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TADEUSZ SARNOWSKI (*IA UW*)NOVAE. HEADQUARTERS BUILDING AND REAR DIVISION OF THE ROMAN LEGIONARY
FORTRESS. EXCAVATIONS OF 2003**Excavation Director:** Tadeusz Sarnowski.**Fieldwork:** five weeks; 28.07 - 31.08.2003.**Financial assistance:** Ministry of Science, Institute of Archaeology of Warsaw University.**Characteristic of the site:** military base and civilian town.**Chronology:** Roman (1st century A.D. - ca 440) and Early Byzantine (ca 440 - late 6th century).

The excavations of 2003 were carried out in the central (headquarters building – *principia*)¹ and rear parts (*retentura*) of the fortress of the *legio I Italica*. The work in the headquarters building consisted mostly of consolidating the walls and removing traces of robber trenches, dug recently by treasure hunters in the cross hall (*basilica principiorum*) and in the rear range of administrative rooms (*scholae*) on both sides of the chapel of the standards (*aedes principiorum*). It was possible in consequence to complete the recording of the western tribunal (areas Hz and Iz) and entrances to Room Cz and Corridor Dz. In the front section of the *aedes* (Room A), between the steps leading up to the chapel and the stone slabs in its central part, a large masonry platform (3.90 m by 1.30 m), made of stones, once probably carrying similar slabs, was discovered.

In the *retentura* or the rear part of the fortress three trial trenches unifying recent pits dug by treasure hunters were laid out: R1 (northern *retentura*), R2 (mid *retentura*) and R3 (southern *retentura*).

In the trench R1, 10 m (North-South) by 2.50 m, adjacent to the rear wall of the headquarters building, natural loess soil was reached over a distance of 8.50 m south of the *principia*. Nowhere were there any traces of walls belonging to the buildings situated in this part of the fortress. An aqueduct, 0.80 m wide and 1 m deep, with masonry stone walls and a very solid bottom, ca 0.50 m thick, made in *opus cementicium*, was found leading down from east to west parallel to the headquarters

building. Another section of the same aqueduct ran alongside the western wall of the *principia*. The aqueduct went out of use by the late 2nd or early 3rd century AD.

In the trench R2, about 11 m (East-West) by 2-3 m, three walls, made of stones with mortar bonding, were revealed. The floor levels were found totally destroyed by treasure hunting. Several early pits situated beneath the floor levels produced fragments of thin-walled pottery (black and dark orange bowls) dated to the second half of the 1st century AD. At the moment, the available evidence is not sufficient to identify the discovered fragments of a building, which is to be dated to the 2nd century AD. The width of one room (5 m) and very solid masonry walls made of regular courses of medium-size blocks of sandstone seem to point that we are dealing with remains of the legate's house (*praetorium*).

A third trial trench (R3), laid out across the area from east to west and covering an area 13 m by 2-3 m, revealed modest traces of a barrack-block or centurion's quarter. All the discovered walls were made of stones bonded with loess. Two building phases are in evidence, the later one (phase II) having one longer wall running from east to west and two small sections of North-South walls tentatively dated to the 3rd or early 4th century. The floor levels of phase II have mostly vanished, owing to the modern robber trenches. Small undisturbed sections of the floors and fillings of recent trenches contained three worn bronze coins of Claudius II,

¹ For earlier work in the headquarters building, see T. SARNOWSKI, *Novae-Western Sector (Principia)*, 2000-2002, *Archeologia* 54, 2003, p. 65-75 and *idem*, *Intra fines Imperii. Centrum obozu w Novae. Wykopaliska 1997-2002*,

Światowit 45, 2003, p. 161-166. The field work was supervised by the present writer and Mrs. L. Kovalevskaja. Special thanks for very hard work go to the students of the Institute of Archaeology of Warsaw University.

Maximianus and Constantine I. Nowhere in the trench R3 was virgin soil reached. The trench yielded a small limestone altar and a round moulded bronze base, originally bearing a small bronze statuette. The numerous

tiles found in the trench show neither raised flanges nor stamps. The roofing over the building of phase II and probably also of phase I was made of large carved tiles.

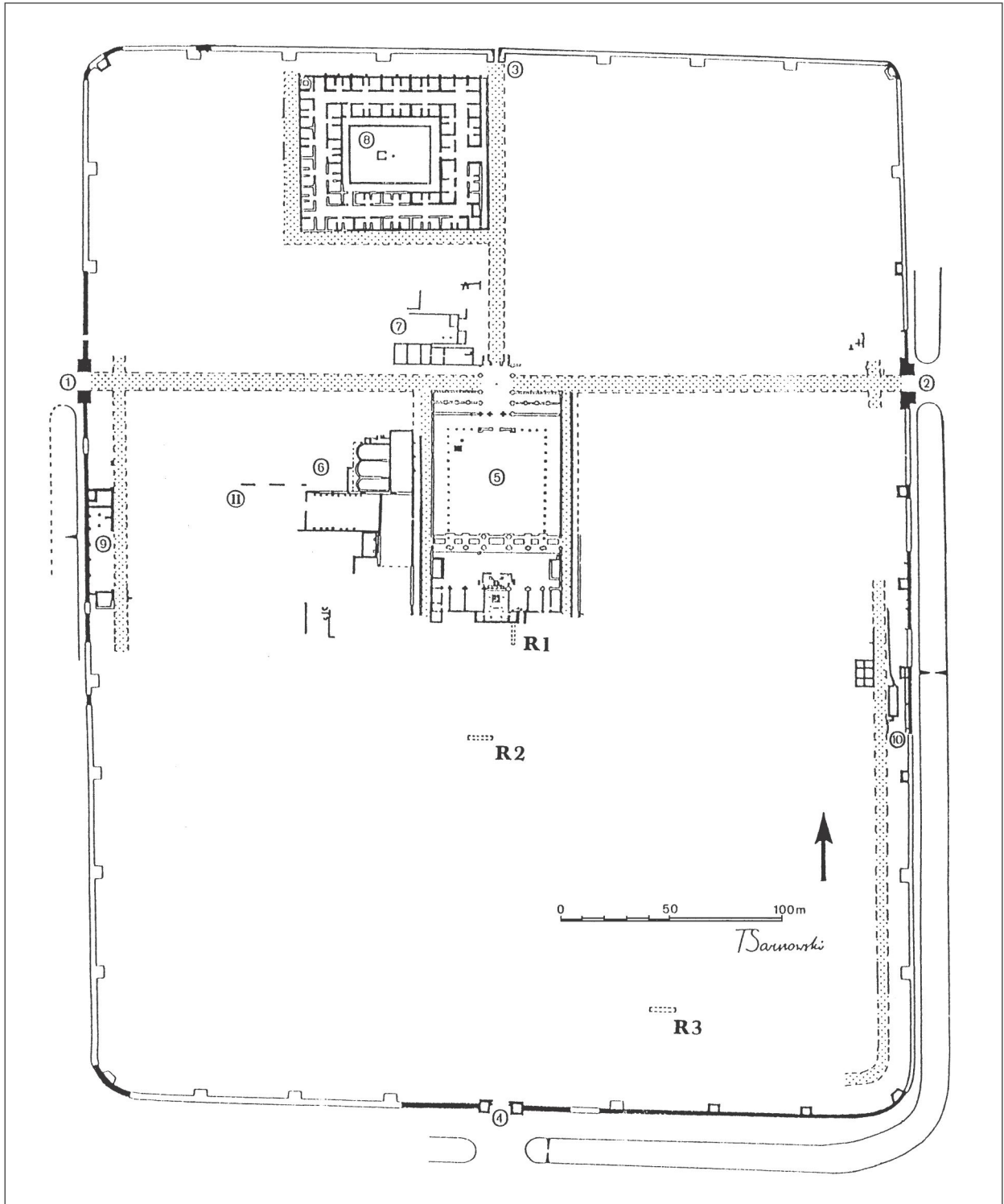


Fig. 1. Novae. Legionary fortress. Plan including three excavated areas (trial trenches R 1-3) in the *retentura*

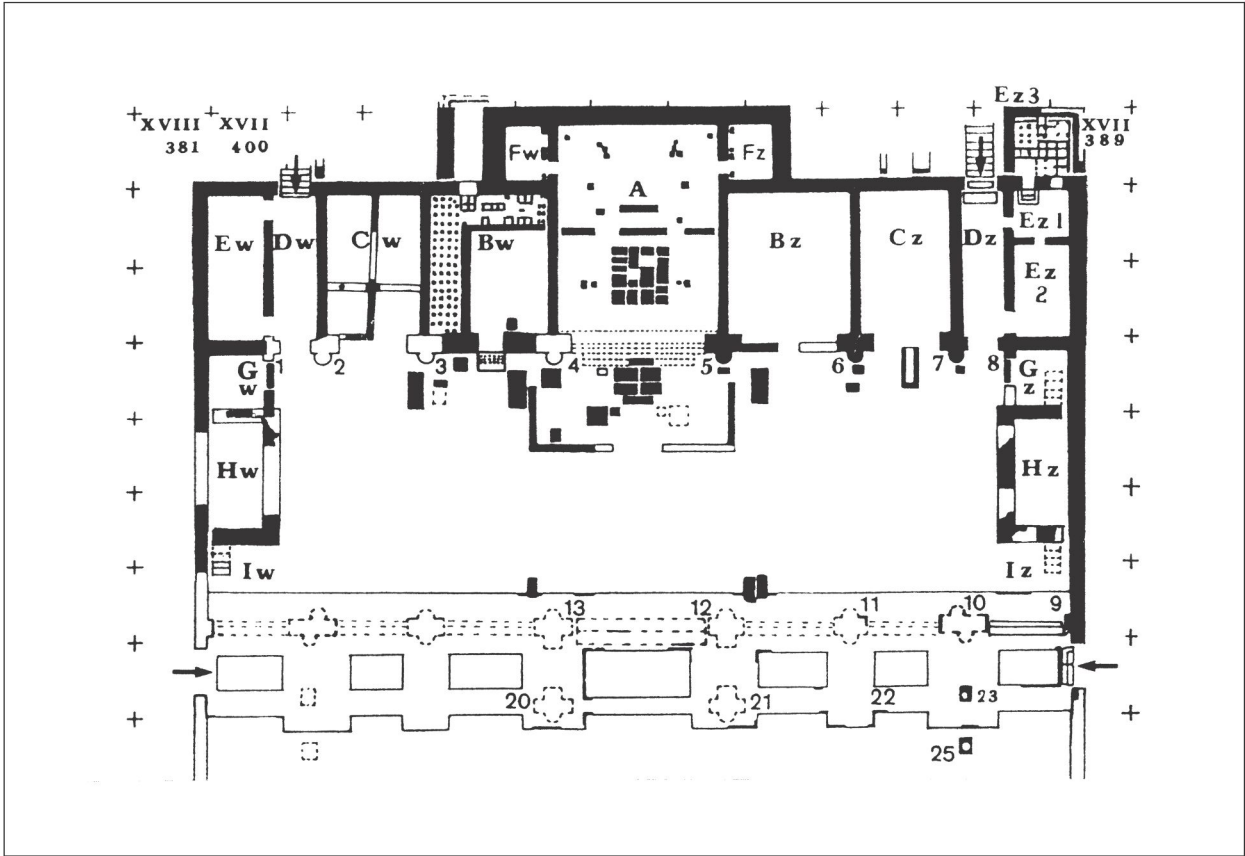


Fig. 2. Novae. Headquarters building. Plan of the southern part, 1:500