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## THE FINE WARE SUPPLY OF THE EARLIEST ROMAN UNITS ON THE LOWER DANUBIAN LIMES: THE CASE OF THE FIRST COHORT IN NOVAE<sup>1</sup>

*New excavations in Novae in 2011 were carried out in sector XII of the site located on the eastern side of the principia, expecting to find the barracks of the First Cohort. We have found the remains of an earth-and-timber structure belonged to a double wooden army barracks of VIII Augusta. The excavation revealed 29 pits connected with the two successive building phases revealed by stratigraphic analysis of the remains. The earliest set of pits can be placed around the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, the years 45–49/50 AD. The second phase, associated with rebuilding, thus fell between about AD 50 and AD 69 – the arriving of I Italica. The most interesting finds from the pits are fragments of different types of terra sigillata. One may note, however, some common characteristics. Vessel types are not particularly sophisticated and neither is the decoration. The set is fairly simple and repetitive. But new forms of Italic and southern Gaul products reached both legions very early, directly after starting to be produced. Generally more than half of the vessels (54%) came from Italic workshops; 31% were from southern Gaul and 15% were different Eastern Sigillata.*

New excavations in *Novae* in 2011 were carried out in sector XII of the site located on the eastern side of the *principia*, expecting to find the barracks of the First Cohort of the *I Italica* legion. An unexpected find, already made during the first season, was the remains of an earth-and-timber structure that lay under the stone legionary remains (**fig. 1**) and late antique architecture. The evidence consisted of several postholes forming rows and a number of rectangular pits about 50 cm wide, filled with tamped earth. The rubble layer associated with these remains yielded burnt clay bearing impressions of reeds and thin branches, pieces of preserved roofing and square and round blocks of fired clay covered with a layer of charcoal. A regular pattern of four series of rooms on a longitudinal axis could be reconstructed, leaving no doubt that the remains belonged to a double wooden army barracks. The layout indicates that a doubled *cohors* consisting of two centuries had been located in a single building<sup>2</sup>. The larger postholes were for pillars supporting the roof and for the bearing walls, the smaller one for partition walls, whereas the rectangular pits reflected the box structure of the walls; the clay platforms were what was left of the hearths.

The barrack (**fig. 2**) comprised one large room about 4 m long and another small one measuring about 2.6 m. The rooms were from 2 m to 4 m wide. In effect, the rooms varied from 5 m<sup>2</sup> to 10 m<sup>2</sup> in area for the smaller unit and from 10 m<sup>2</sup> to 16 m<sup>2</sup> for the bigger one. This is naturally associated with the layout of an army barrack, *contubernium*, with a vestibule (*arma*) and living area (*papilio*). There does not seem to be any regularity in the arrangement of the wider and narrower rooms. The only

observed regularity is that in the western row of rooms the big room preceded the smaller one and the opposite is true of the rooms in the eastern row. The portico on the west was 1.50 m deep. The total width of the structure was 16 m.

Another barrack (**fig. 3**) of identical layout and construction was located to the east of the first one. Both appear to have been remodeled after a relatively short period of occupation. The bearing walls were reinforced, the layout of some rooms changed, and the walls plastered white.

The excavation revealed 29 pits of different size and shape, some inside the chambers, others in the open area in front of the portico. They were clearly connected with the two successive building phases revealed by stratigraphic analysis of the remains, as well as the latest phase of dismantling of the structure after its destruction, when some posts were removed and others cut at the base, while the reed roofing and remains of wood were burned. A leveling layer prepared the ground for new stone architecture using also building bricks with the First Italica stamp (**fig. 4**).

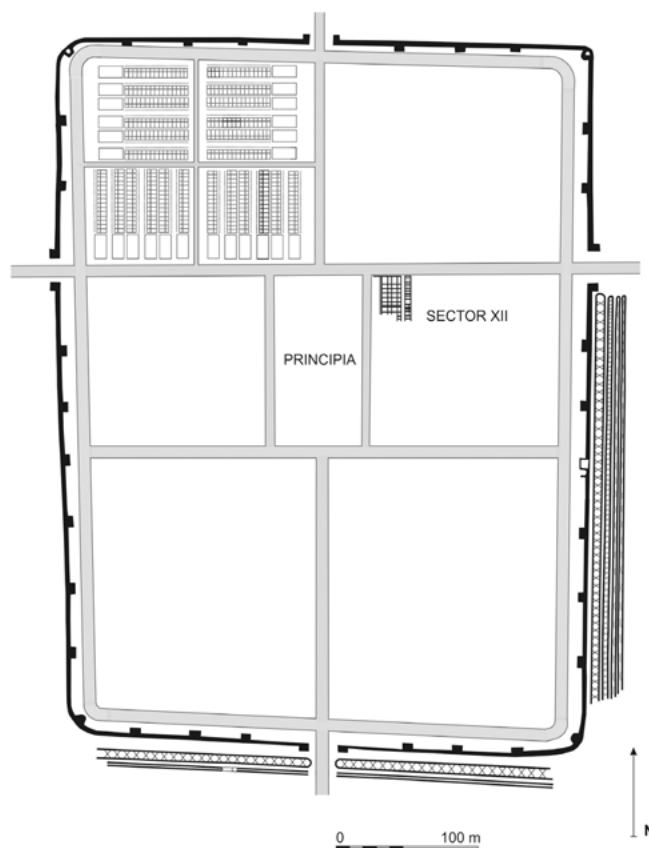
The stratigraphy, analyzed in relation to coins and radiocarbon dating, indicated that the wooden barracks must have been raised for the VIII *Augusta*, which arrived in Novae about AD 45 and stayed until 69, when the *I Italica* replaced it<sup>3</sup>. The stone structure was later identified as the centurion's house featuring an elaborate plan with inner courtyard and a small pool in it.

The dating of the pits is thus based on the general phasing of the structure. The earliest set can be placed around the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD (the years 45–49/50 to be precise taking into consideration historical events). The VIII *Augusta* was deployed in the war with Mithrydates, hence few legionaries would have

<sup>1</sup> The project has been financed with resources provided by the National Science Center, Poland, allotted on the basis of decision: DEC-2014/13/B/HS3/04836.

<sup>2</sup> DYCZEK 2015 in print.

<sup>3</sup> CIOŁEK/DYCZEK 2011, 9–10. – Other dating suggested by T. Sarnowski (that I do not share): SARNOWSKI 2012, 81–83.



**Fig. 1.** Plan of the timber-and-earth phase of *castrum Novae* – stationing of the *VIII Augusta* legion (P. Dyczek).



**Fig. 2.** Pits of the 1<sup>st</sup> phase (P. Dyczek).

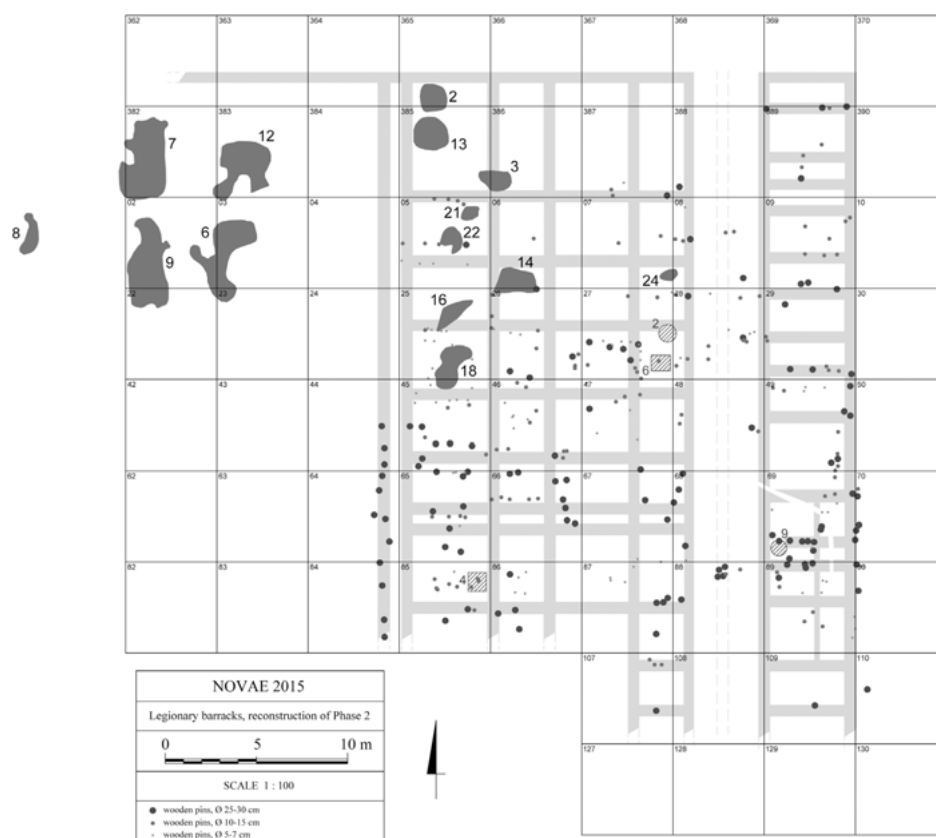


Fig. 3. Pits of the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase (P. Dyczek).



Fig. 4. Pits made by legionists of *I Italica* (P. Dyczek).

remained in the fortress. The second phase, associated with rebuilding, thus fell between about AD 50 and AD 69. The last and presumably the shortest period may have covered one full year, AD 70, when legionaries from the *I Italica* cleared the building site for their stone barracks. It was in this phase that one of the pits was filled with pottery once used by the legionaries of the *VIII Augusta*, swept into the rubbish together with pottery that was smashed during the building of the new structures on site. The assemblage from the pits – glass vessels, amphorae oil lamps – offers a rather general dating framework, but the terra sigillata sherds are studied well enough to precise the chronology, especially as they come from both the barrack floors and from the leveling rubble deposits overlying them.

The assemblage counted overall 30 fragments of terra sigillata<sup>4</sup>. Vessels representing the first phase came from pits 1 and 26; these were a stamped Italic vessel, the stamp reading GE[ ]/OF, presumably GELLI (?) (fig. 5,1), a vessel produced in southern Gaul, type Dr 35 (fig. 5,2), the rim decorated with a *hederae* motif executed in the *barbotine* technique and a piece of Eastern Sigillata B<sup>5</sup> (fig. 5,3). The latter had a distinct black residue on the inside surfaces; these could be traces of ink.

The second-phase pits yielded a larger number of fine ware sherds. Pit 2 contained two vessels from Italic workshops: forms Consp. 34<sup>6</sup> bearing the stamp C T SVC and Consp. 20<sup>7</sup> (figs. 5,4–5). A vessel of Dr 37 type from southern Gaul came from pit 7. A sherd from southern Gaul, Ritterling/Hofheim 12 type<sup>8</sup> (fig. 5,6) and Italic Sigillata form Consp. 20–21 (fig. 5,7) came from pit 13, whereas pit 14 yielded three vessels from three different workshops: a Ritterling/Hofheim 12<sup>9</sup>, Curle 11 vessel<sup>10</sup> (fig. 5,8) an *atramentarium* (fig. 6,9) of uncertain origin, possibly form Consp. 51<sup>11</sup> from Italy or Hermet 18 from southern Gaul and a vessel of Eastern Sigillata C (fig. 6,10). Pit 16 held an Italic Consp. 34<sup>12</sup> vessel (fig. 6,11), the rim decorated with a stamped rosette.

The fragments found in the pure loess floors of the second-phase wooden barracks of the *VIII Augusta*, as described above, included two vessels of the Ritterling/Hofheim 12, Curle 11 type from southern Gaul (fig. 6,12) and an Italic vessel, Consp. 20 stamped with a C[ ]V (fig. 6,13).

A separate group of chronological significance, found sealed in a stratigraphic context, was made up of vessels from the leveling rubble layer. Most, if not all, of the sherds must have come from the wooden barracks, although single pieces could well have belonged to the builders of the *I Italica* Legion. The biggest group among this set is made up of vessels produced in Italic workshops: Consp. 20–21 (figs. 6,14–15) and (fig. 6,16) decorated with a leaf motif, Consp. 39<sup>13</sup> with a

double spiral on the rim (fig. 6,17), and Consp. 43<sup>14</sup> with a leaf motif in the *barbotine* technique on the rim (fig. 7,18). In two cases the specific vessel type was difficult to identify. One of these vessels bore the stamp QLC impressed in a *planta pedis*; it is dated to after AD 30 (figs. 7,19–20). Vessels produced in southern Gaul included types Curle 11 (fig. 7,21) and Dr. 36 (fig. 7,22) with decoration in the form of a garland. Two were Eastern Sigillata B vessels (figs. 7,23–24), one of these with the rim decorated with a volute and a series of parallel incisions.

A comparison of the framework dating of particular sigillata types with the dating of the pits indicates their very early occurrence, practically on the borderline for the emergence of given types. This regularity proves true in the case of both legions. The supply process is so efficient that were we not aware of the change of legions around AD 69, we would not have guessed it from the assemblage, viewing the transformation as evolutionary rather than anything else.

The group illustrates certain trends despite the relatively few vessels in it, precluding conclusions of a statistical nature. The same trends can be identified for amphorae as well as the sigillata<sup>15</sup>, at least in the case of *Novae*. These trends therefore typify the general legionary supply. Interestingly, as regards *Novae*, we are dealing with two different legions transferred to the Lower Danube from different parts of the Empire and yet there do not seem to be any evident differences in terms of the imported products used by the legions. The *VIII Augusta* was stationed in *Poetovio* (Ptuj) after AD 9 and was probably engaged first against the Marcomanni and then against the Panonians before reaching *Novae*. The *I Italica* formed by Nero of Italics was stationed in Gaul after the Emperor's death; it was later sent to *Novae*. Keeping the different histories in mind, one would expect to see some differences in the fine-ware vessel repertoire. And yet there are none; no characteristic elements that could signify specific tastes of different legions or identify import sources, or even establish the special importance of the first cohorts by more ornate vessels for example. One may note, however, some common characteristics.

1. Vessel types are not particularly sophisticated and neither is the decoration.
2. The set is fairly simple and repetitive: plate, small bowl and beaker.
3. Bowls are the most differentiated as a group, in shape as much as in decoration, as well as in place of production.
4. No special forms are present save for one *atramentarium* and one bowl that could have served the same purpose.
5. More than half of the vessels (54%) came from Italic workshops; 31% were from southern Gaul and 15% were different Eastern Sigillata.
6. New forms of Italic and southern Gaul products reached both legions very early, directly after starting to be produced.

Some general conclusions can be drawn from these noted trends. The Lower Danube was not well organized yet when the two legions were transferred to the region. *Moesia* was

<sup>4</sup> I thank K. Domžalski very much for his valuable comments and help in the preliminary study of finds.

<sup>5</sup> DOMŽALSKI 1998, 127–130.

<sup>6</sup> Conspectus 112.

<sup>7</sup> Conspectus 86–88.

<sup>8</sup> GARBSCH 1982, 41.

<sup>9</sup> RITTERLING 1913, 210 tab. 31,12.

<sup>10</sup> CURLE 1911, 198 tab. 39,11.

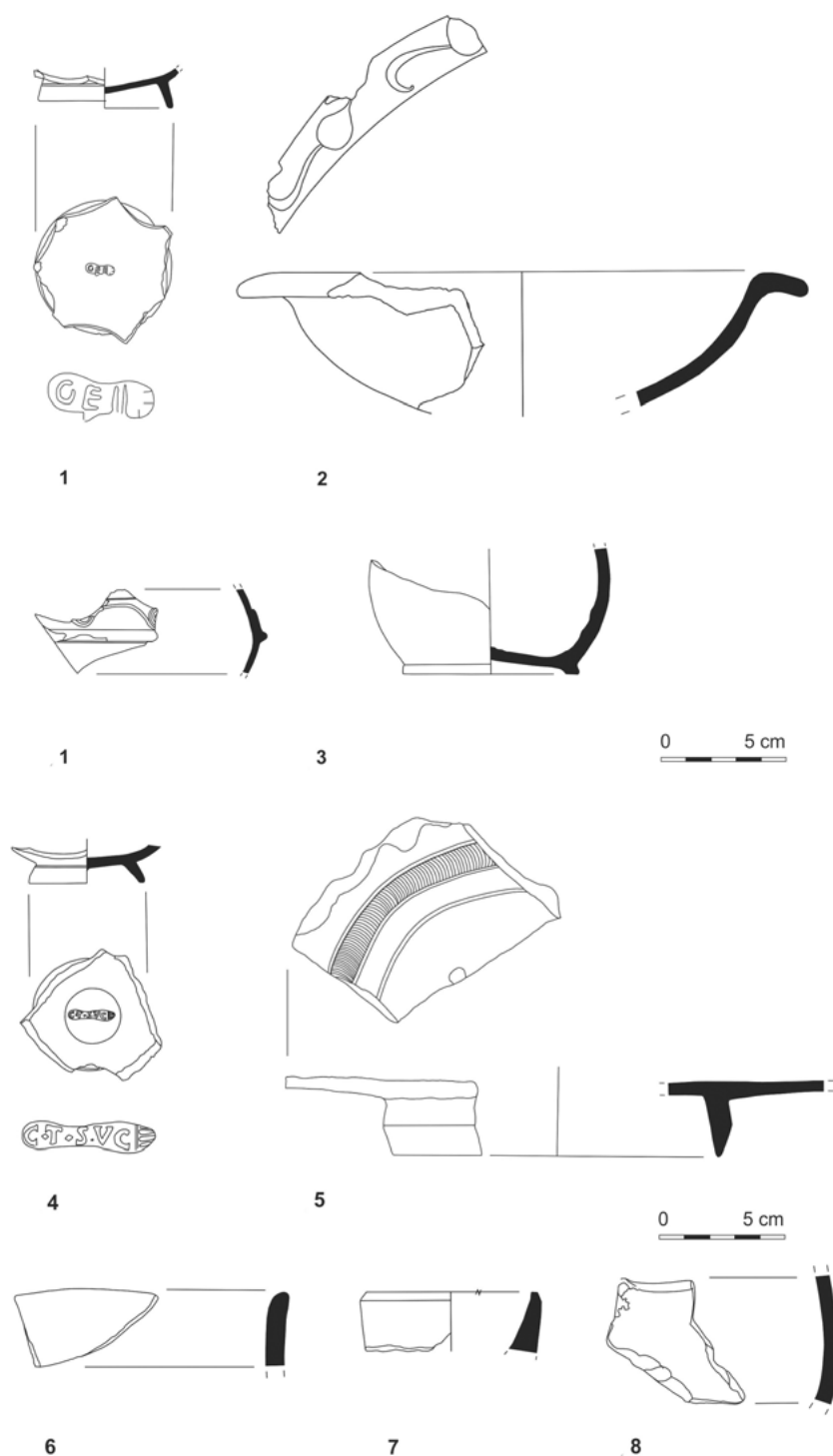
<sup>11</sup> Conspectus 140–141.

<sup>12</sup> Conspectus 112–113.

<sup>13</sup> Conspectus 120–121.

<sup>14</sup> Conspectus 128–129.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. DOMŽALSKI 1998, 127–137; DIMITROVA-MILČEVA 2000, 27–29; SARNOWSKI/KOVALEVSKAJA/TOMAS 2012, 189–194.



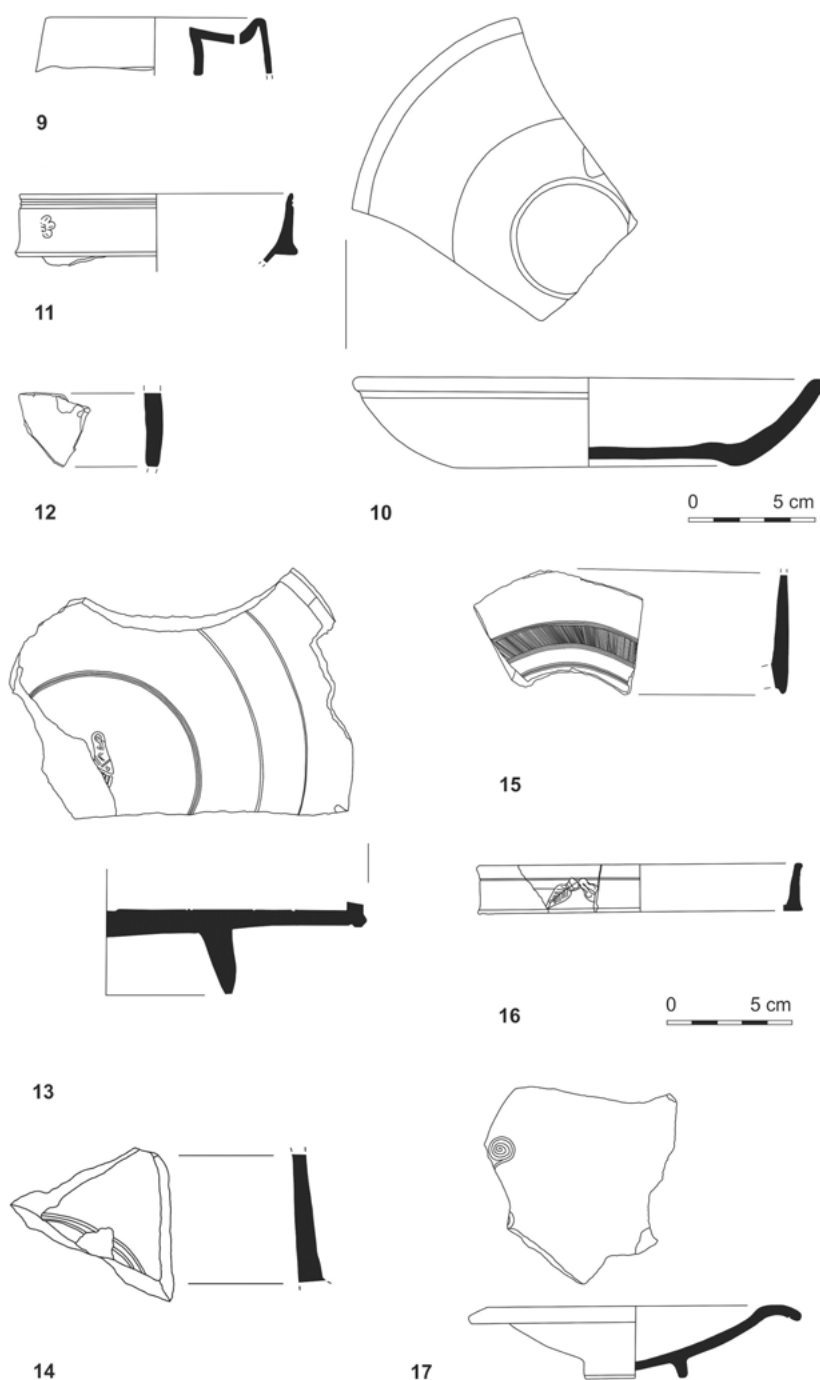
**Fig. 5.** Types of terra sigillata vessels from *Novae* – 1<sup>st</sup> century AD (P. Dyczek, A. Momot).

already in existence as a province, but the organization was still lagging behind<sup>16</sup>. Supplies came for the legions mostly from the west. Eastern products presumably made their way to the legions owing to their war histories in the Black Sea region: the *VIII Augusta* warred with Mithrydates and the *I Italica* was stationed in the East. It is unlikely (at least there is no information in favor) that Roman *mercatores* and *negotiatores* were penetrating the markets of the Lower Danube

and trading terra sigillata wares at this early date. The legions would have rather been supplied from the same suppliers (the same workshops or production centers) that had served them in their previous location. Already at *Poetovio* the *VIII Augusta*<sup>17</sup> was on the main supply route from Italy and Gaul to *Pannonia* and the *I Italica* was well acquainted with the products of Italy and Gaul, having been stationed in Gaul in the ‘year of four emperors’ in Italy.

<sup>16</sup> DYCZEK 2001, 9–12.

<sup>17</sup> MIKL-CURK 1969, 6–20.



**Fig. 6.** Types of terra sigillata vessels from *Novae* – 1<sup>st</sup> century AD (P. Dyczek, A. Momot).

These observations seem to indicate that at least in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD (and perhaps also later with regard to at least some of the buildings) the legions used to cultivate their own trade relations to import not only foodstuffs for the legion's subsistence, but also some of the vessels, including terra sigillata, the various types of which were purchased(?) by the legionaries depending on their taste<sup>18</sup>. The same situation was observed in the case of products transported in amphorae<sup>19</sup>.

The material from pits lying just by the barracks of the First Cohorts was dated to this stage, reflecting a time when

the *I Italica* arrived<sup>20</sup> and started to clear the *principia*, leveling the ground under the new stone architecture.

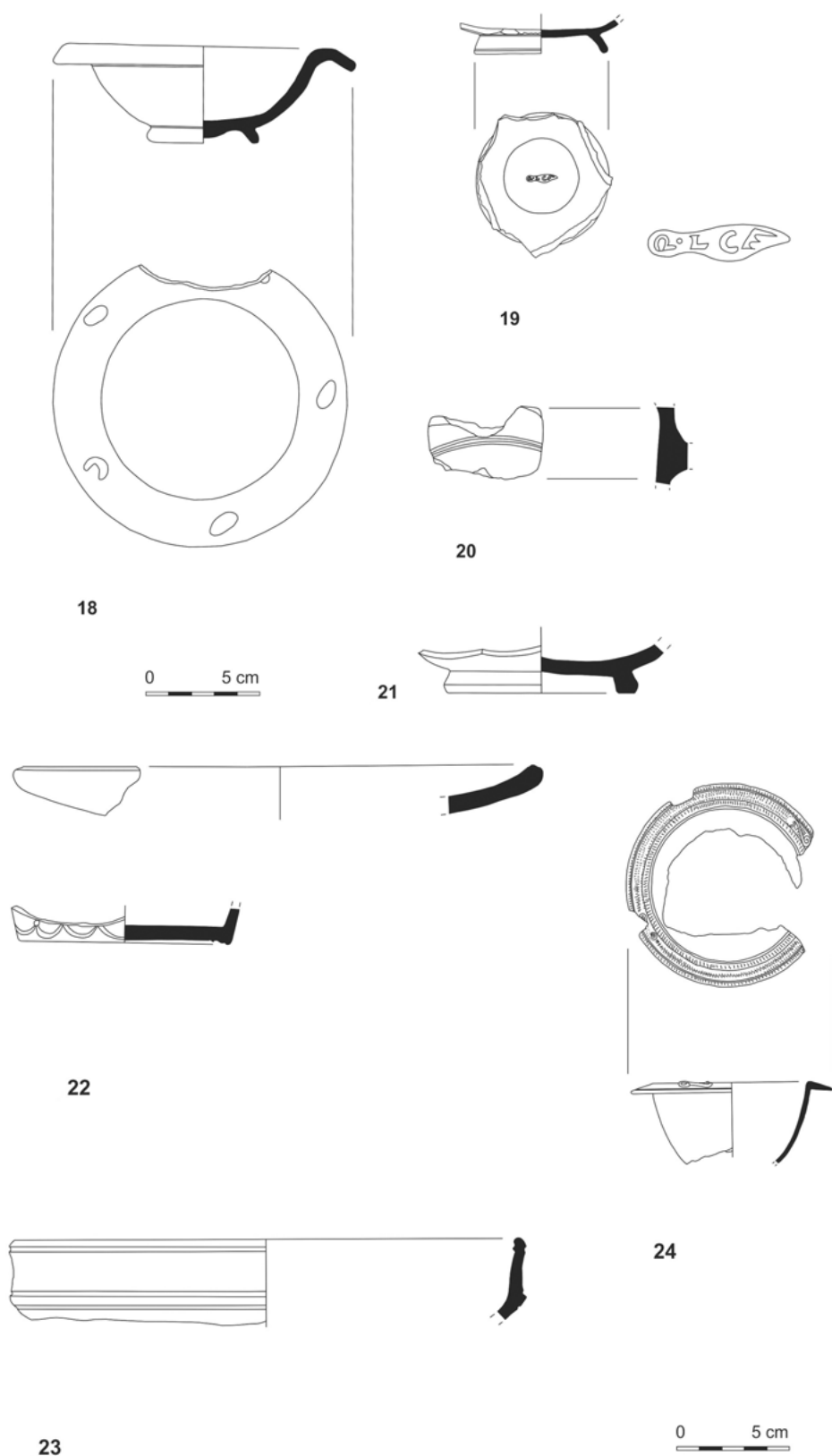
The barracks of the first cohort of both legions, *VIII Augusta* and *I Italica*, will continue to be explored for several years owing to their size. Every season so far has brought new data that will lead to more detailed studies and general conclusions, but the provisional results presented here are already contributing information for the investigation of legionary supply networks.

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. ZABEHLICKY-SCHEFFENEGGER 1982, 105–115; DIMITROVA-MILČEVA 1992, 482–492; BJELAJAC 1990, 133.

<sup>19</sup> DYCZEK 2016, 63–570.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. DOMŻALSKI 1998, 134.



**Fig. 7.** Types of terra sigillata vessels from *Novae* – 1<sup>st</sup> century AD (P. Dyczek, A. Momot).

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