

## EXCAVATIONS OF *COLONIA ULPIA TRAIANA RATIARIA*: LATEST DATA FROM THE WESTERN NECROPOLIS AND NEW FOUNDED COMPLEXES

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*Cuvinte cheie: Ratiaria, săpături noi, necropole, cupe tip Dacica, terra sigillata*

In 2013, after a break of 24 years were recovered regular archaeological excavations of the Roman legionary camp, colony and provincial capital Ratiaria.

Excavations were initiated by NAIM-BAS and the Ministry of Culture and conducted in September and October. They are a continuation of international scientific program of the Bulgarian-Italian team, excavated the site from 1976 to 1989 (Fig. 1).

Archaeological research has been focused in three main working sectors, according to the general plan of the previous excavation, made by Italian Professor Dario Giorgetti in 1987 (Fig. 2):

1. Residential building from the late antique era – so-called “Residence” of the Governor of late antique province Dacia Ripensis .

2. Baths of late antique period (new founded architectural complex);

3. Three trenches in the centre where we try to find some new data about stratigraphy of Ratiaria (Nr. 1–3).

In the first working sector – so called “Residence” our team work on an area of 1.5 da. Within twenty working days were cleared huge mounds of treasure hunting activity and had reached the level of the previous excavations from 1989, conducted by prof. G.Kuzmanov.

In the second sector – Late Antique bath, we work on an area of about 250 square meters

(Fig. 3). There we found three rooms, with each of them in the south ended with masonry walls, filled in arch form – like *Exedras*.

The interior of the bathrooms was covered with marble slabs, two of which are found displaced from the treasure-hunter intervenes. The outer walls of the bath are formed with separate small pools. Only two of them survived to the present day.

### *Necropolises of the Roman colony Ulpia Ratiaria*

During the excavations team members made daily surveys of the terrain of the two necropolises of Roman town – northern, in “Yaliata” and western, in “Parlozite”. In both of them, there is no place that is not been affected by the treasure-hunting activity. The purpose of these daily terrain works was to gather the maximum amount of pottery and artifacts discarded by looters in holes, galleries and mounds. In this activity of our team we collected more than 150 artifacts and huge amounts of ceramic pieces.

In “Yaliata” we made some photographs of the well preserved structures of late roman tombs (Fig. 4) and huge pieces of sarcophaguses.

### *Cups type „Dacica” and Terra sigillata with stamps of the manufacturers from the Western necropolis “Parlozite”*

Among the archaeological discoveries in the last season in Ratiaria were ceramic vessels, which are relatively compact group. Like technology they are made by hand. It identifies several cups, known in the literature as type “Dacica” or “Thracica”

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(Kabakchieva 1997, 72–73). In 2013 we found pieces from three “Dacian cups” – first is very big, and probably with anthropomorphic decorations, made by relief lines. Second and third are typical examples of the type.

It is noteworthy that the type of “Dacian cups” is found only north of Stara Planina mountain (till the moment there are no findings to the south of the mountain). It occurs in both – villages (Gencheva 2002, 41; Kabakchieva 2000, 62–63) and in the necropolis (Popilian 1976, 133; Ovcharov 1965, 36; Fig. 3). The glasses are discussed in the findings of Nove early 90s of the 20th century (Miltcheva, Gencheva 1991, 31).

G. Kabakchieva collect certain opinions and suggests their use and disposal of the population as gifts in the necropolis (Kabakchieva 1997, 72–73). More precise typology made Popilian (Popilian 1976, 133). The glasses are divided into two types (with one handle and with two handles). By some of them there are traces of use on the inner surface, which leads the author to believe that they are used as lamps (Popilian 1976, 133). The Dacian glasses are affected and research also by the studies of Romanization in the province of Pannonia (Bruckner and others. 1987).

On the question of the dating of the vessels have different opinions. Glasses type Dacica dated within the II c. BC – I c. AD (Crisan, 1976, 34–39). According to B. Sultov, who studied, analyzed and published production from the ceramic centers of Nicopolis Istrum, where the Dacian cups also have their examples, these cups are dated in the period from I to IV century AD (Sultov 1985, 88).

Glasses type “Dacica” from Ratiaria together with new founded terra sigillata give important information about the cemeteries of the city. On the other hand they are of particular interest from a technological and decorative studies of roman ceramics along the Danube river.

The first “Dacian cup” of Ratiaria was found in one of the cemeteries of the city – western necropolis (Fig. 5, 6), but others derived from the embankment in the clearing of late antique bathroom – unfortunately without stratigraphic data (Fig. 7–9).

The cup of the necropolis of the city is of particular importance due to its large size (34 cm diameter at the mouth and 13 cm height) and rich decoration (Fig. 5, 6). It is made of coarse clay with beige-brown colour after baking. No signs of use over the surface. The cup is decorated with relief bands and stylized eyes to the center of the vessel.

In Lower Moesia there are some other archaeological sites with decorated cups, but they are only with a belt of relief bands around the bottom and the mouth of the vessel (Ovcharov 1965, 36; Fig. 3).

The cups with same decoration are well known from level Nr. III and IV in necropolises of Zargidava (Ursachi 1995, 162) and from few other archaeological objects (Vulpe, Teodor 2003, 75).

Given the use of the necropolis and found with other ceramic glass fragments (mostly terra sigillata), it can be dated to the beginning of the second quarter of the I century AD.

The other two cups bear traces of use (Fig. 7–9). The question of their functions arises because of very interesting traces of fire – visible over the inner surface of the vessels. They are made of beige-brown rough clay with an admixture of sand, pebbles and quartz particles. Their dating is difficult due to the absence of reliable stratigraphic data and the lack of full developed typology of the glasses type “Dacica”.

In renovated during the 2013th excavations at Ratiaria were found many ceramic pieces *terra sigillata*, which will be the subject of another studies and publications. Given the subject of the report and presented findings, we will focus on the few fragments with stamps of *Gellius* and *Clodius*, having particular importance (Fig. 10). The brand of this manufacturer is widespread in the provinces of the Roman Empire. Both stamps are in the form of *planta pedis*. Closest in style signs to other seals are known in the literature, dating back to Tiberius Claudius-time coming also from Ratiaria (Milceva 2000, 44). This is one of the most popular brands of Aretinian producers from Tiberius Claudius-time in Pannonia and Upper Moesia (Bruckner 1981, 172–173).

Other newest finds from Ratiaria in 2013 were: also sigillata forms, but from the types with relief decoration, whole sigillata vessel, in form Dragendorf 17 (Fig. 11), few lamps, gravestone slabs and roof tile with the stamps of the roman legions.

Presented here in this report interesting findings from the glasses type “Dacica” and stamps of manufacturer Lucius Gellius on the terra sigillata pieces show the development of local forms and traditions in ceramics, but also on the other hand some of the most important exports of goods in the first decades of the new millennium, the very beginning of the Roman rule in the region of the province of Upper Moesia, which in today’s territory of Bulgaria is poorly studied by archaeological excavations.

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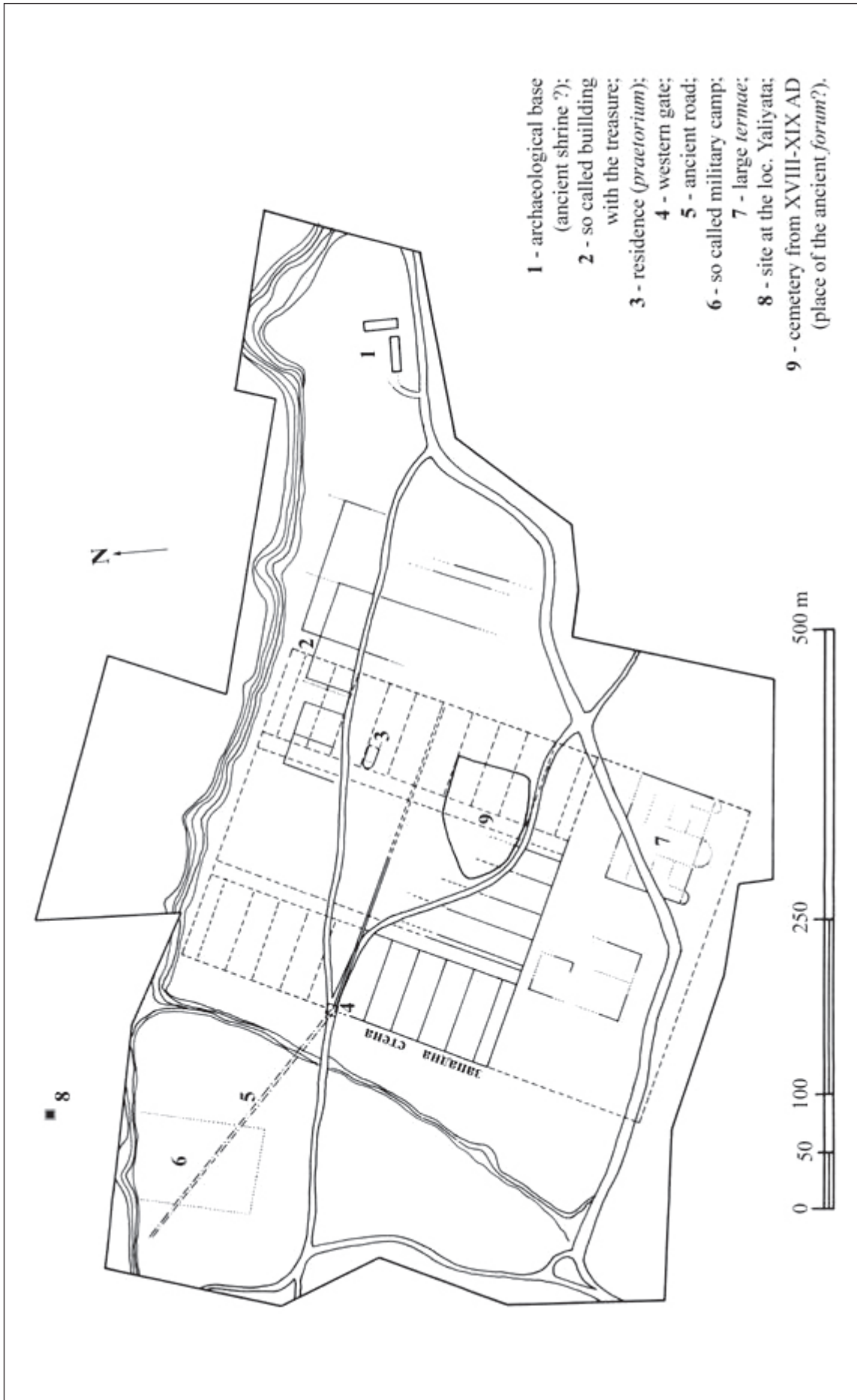


Fig. 1. Hypothetical plan of Ratiaria fortress, according to the researches of prof. Dario Giorgetti – 1987;

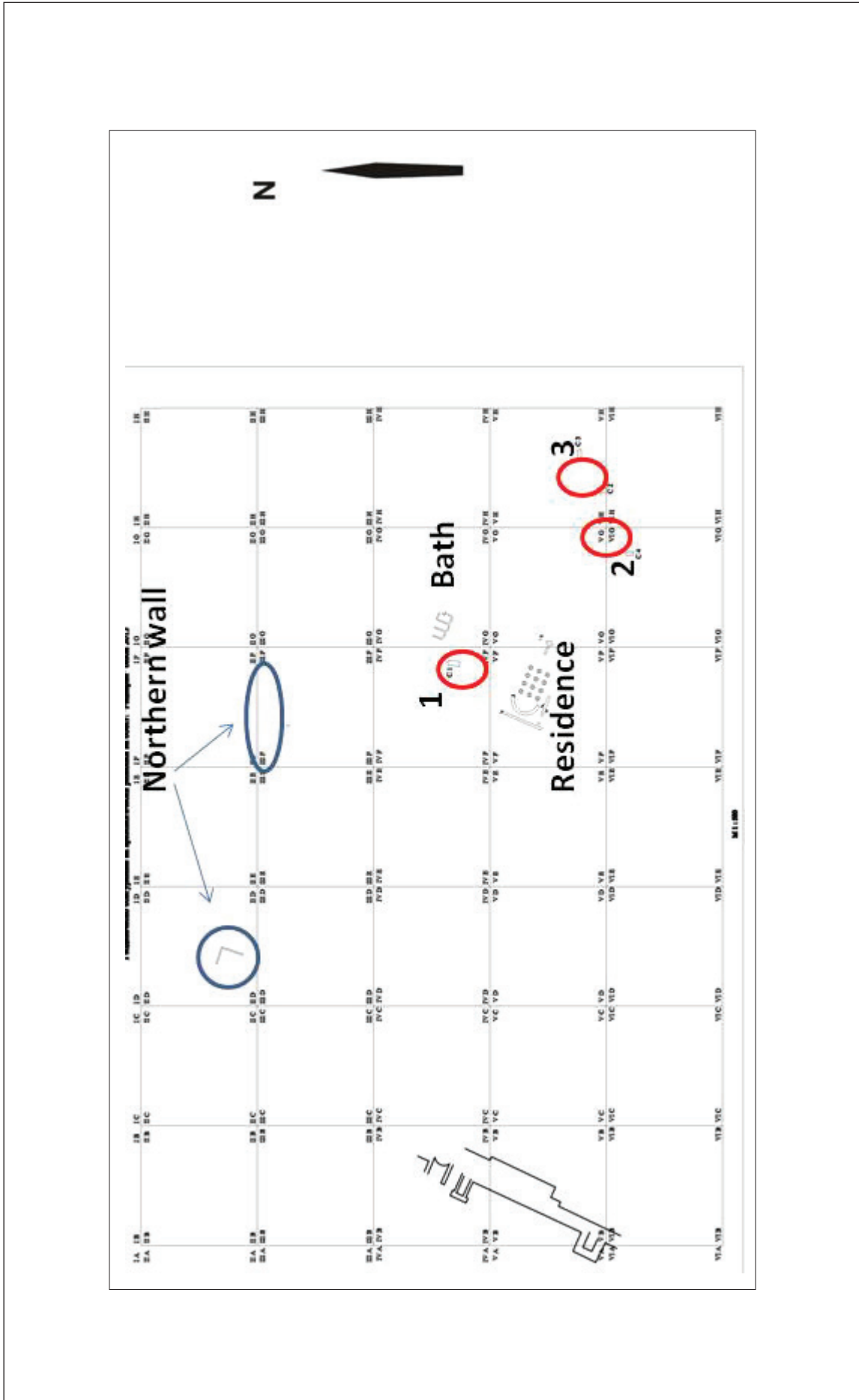


Fig. 2. The new geodesic plan and net of Ratiaria in sector of Western fortress wall and Residential building with the new founded bath complex and stratigraphic trenches (Nr. 1–3);



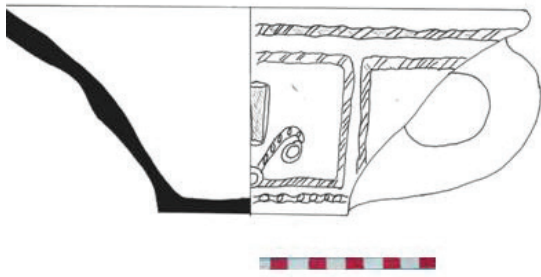


*Fig. 3. Late roman bath, founded in 2013;*



*Fig. 4. Late Roman tomb from the northern necropolis in "Yalyata" – semi-cylindrical construction;*

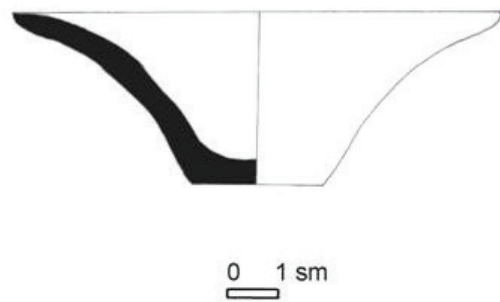




*Fig. 5. Dacian cup with Inv. Nr. 50, found in the western necropolis of Ratiaria – photo and graphic reconstruction;*



*Fig. 6. Details of the relief decoration of the Dacian cup with Inv.Nr. 50;*



*Fig. 7. Dacian cup with Inv. Nr. 36, found in the Late Roman bath of Ratiaria by the excavations of 2013 – photo and graphic reconstruction;*

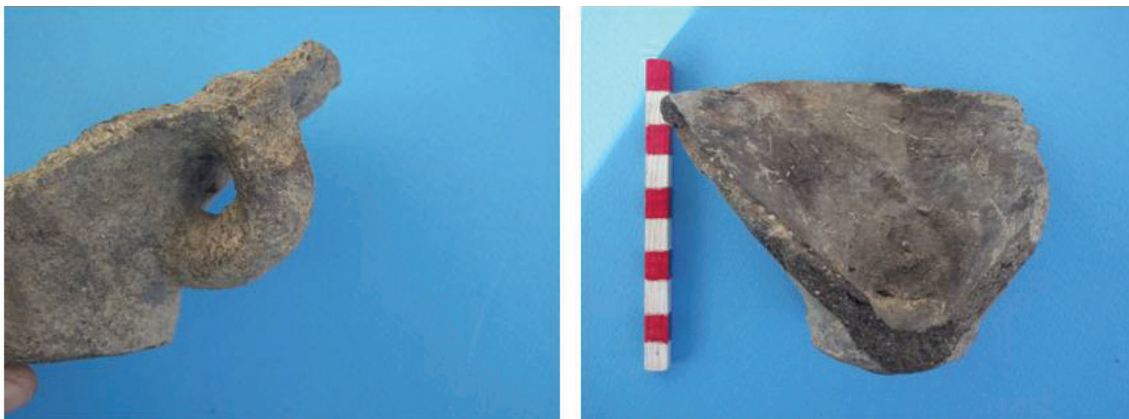


Fig. 8. Dacian cup with Inv. Nr. 43, found in the Late Roman bath of Ratiaria by the excavations of 2013 – photos;

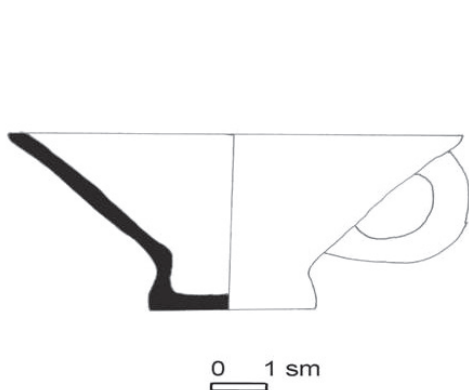


Fig. 9. Dacian cup with Inv. Nr. 43, found in the Late Roman bath of Ratiaria by the excavations of 2013 – graphic reconstruction;

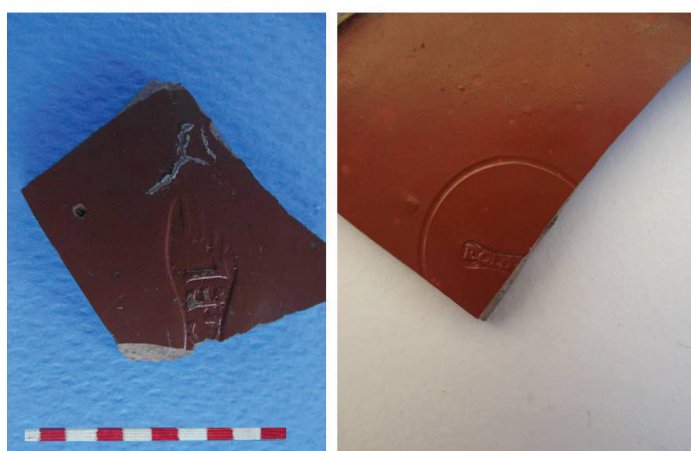


Fig. 10. Terra sigillata pieces with stamps in form of planta pedis. Production: Aretina, North Italy. Fabricants: Gellius (Stamp: **L. Gellius**) and Clodius (Stamp: **P. CLO**);

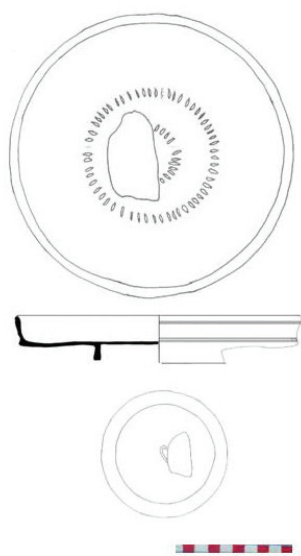


Fig. 11. Whole Terra sigillata vessel. Form of the vessel: “Dragendorf 17” (= Consp. 20). Production: Aretina, North Italy. Probably the vessel is also with Gellius’ stamp in planta pedis, but the lowest part is broken.