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An early bath house in the suburbs of Roman Cologne

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Cologne on the Rhine was founded at the very beginning of the 1st c. A.D. by the Romans for a Germanic tribe, the Ubii, with whom they had entered a treaty a few decades before. This settlement, the *Oppidum Ubiorum*, was elevated in status to a colony (*Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium*) in 50 (fig. 1). In the decades thereafter the city was fortified and building activity within and around the city intensified.¹ Excavations in the suburban areas of Cologne have uncovered not only cemeteries along the major roads but also houses and industrial complexes of various dates down to the 4th c. Investigations on Benesisstrasse in the western Roman suburbs in 1994 revealed a bath house of the 1st c. just N of the continuation of the *decumanus maximus* (now Hahnenstrasse/Aachener Strasse) which linked the city with other Roman towns in Germania Inferior and Gaul.² The bath house was probably a minor public bath on the road leading into the city, and is the only building of its kind excavated in the suburbs. Excavations have shown that in all extramural quarters of Roman Cologne cemeteries could be superseded by domestic buildings or industrial complexes, and vice versa. This proved to be the case here as the bath building was succeeded by a house of the 2nd c., which in turn was demolished for a cemetery extension in the 4th c.

The bath house

The bath house as excavated is not complete since the southern rooms continue beyond the limits of the site under modern buildings. Nevertheless, the plan of the building is clear (fig. 2). This type of bath building, in which the individual rooms are arranged axially in the order in which the bather would have entered them and crossed them again to leave, is known as the *Reihentyp*.³ The changing-room or *apodyterium* at the S would have been entered first, then the *frigidarium*. Traces of a doorway leading from the *frigidarium* to the *tepidarium* were preserved. The *tepidarium* measured 6.20 x 4.30 m, internally, and gave access to the *caldarium* or hot bath measuring 6.20 x 6.10 m. At the extreme N was the *prae-furnium* or furnace room (3.80 x 2.10 m) from which *caldarium* and *tepidarium* were heated.

Both the *caldarium* and the *tepidarium* had a full pillared hypocaust system consisting of tile stacks (*pilae*) standing on a sub-floor of *opus signinum* (fig. 3). The *pilae* would have been capped by larger tiles (*bipedales*), giving a total height for the hypocaust system in the *tepidarium* of c.80 cm. and in the *caldarium* of c.1 m. A single vaulted flue directed the hot air from the *prae-furnium* into the *caldarium*, and from there it passed into the *tepidarium* via two flues in the dividing wall. Both heated rooms had cavity wall-heating. The walls were lined with flanged half-box tiles held in place by iron nails, some of which survived in the masonry of the *tepidarium* (fig. 4). The *tepidarium* was decorated with a mosaic, fragments of which were found in the demolition débris of this room and elsewhere in backfills (see below).

The *caldarium* had an apse at the E with a pillared hypocaust system resting on a sub-floor of *opus signinum*. The rectangular area in the middle measuring 90 cm by at least 1.10 m is the

1 On the topography and history of Cologne cf. O. Doppelfeld, "Das römische Köln," ANRW II.4 (1975) 715-50; H. G. Horn (ed.), *Die Römer in Nordrhein-Westfalen* (Stuttgart 1987) 459-521; H. Galsterer, "Von den Eburonen zu den Agrippinensiern. Aspekte der Romanisation am Rhein," *KJb* 23 (1990) 117-26; M. Carroll-Spillecke, "Neue vorkoloniezeitliche Siedlungsspuren in Köln," *Archäologische Informationen* 18/2 (1995) 143-52.

2 I should like to thank H. Bernhardt, J. Butler, D. Godden and R. Greatorex for supervision of the excavation and fruitful discussions.

3 Defined by D. Krencker, *Die Trierer Kaiserthermen* (Augsburg 1929) 177f.