



## Summary :

The foundation of the complex of baths situated in the east side of the Agora is dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. The building was probably constructed over an earlier Hellenistic gymnasium, epigraphically known as Ephesus' Upper Gymnasium.

## Date

2<sup>nd</sup> century AD

## Geographical Location

Ephesus

### 1. Location

Part of a bath complex was discovered in the east section of the [Public Agora \(no. 16\)](#), in the eastern edge of the Royal Stoa (no. 21), to the southeast of the [Odeion \(Bouleuterion\) \(no. 22\)](#).

### 2. Architectural type

Although the overall architectural plan of the Baths at the Agora remains unknown, what survives indicates that the building featured asymmetrically arranged chambers, contrary to the other bath complexes found in the city of [Ephesus](#), whose architectural plans are defined by symmetrical formations. This asymmetrical arrangement should probably be attributed to the limitations imposed by the space available for erecting new structures in this part of the Agora, which contained other public edifices since the Hellenistic period.<sup>1</sup> [Baths](#) with their main spaces asymmetrically arranged have been found in other cities of Asia Minor as well. The Baths at the Agora exhibit similarities mainly with the [Baths of Faustina](#) in [Miletus](#).<sup>2</sup>

### 3. Short description of the edifice

The building would have extended over an area of more than 3,500 sq.m. Thanks to the excavation conducted so far in the site, four large successive chambers have come to light in the north side of the complex, belonging to the bath, and a part of a long chamber in the south side. Best preserved is the north side's first chamber to the west, which must be identified as the warm bath room, the [caldarium](#). The architectural plan of the rectangular chamber, with successive [niches](#) along its walls, embodies the typical arrangement of such rooms. In total there are seven niches. Each of the chamber's long sides featured three niches; the central one was semicircular and was flanked by two more rectangular niches, while an even larger rectangular niche was formed in the west, narrower side of the chamber. Small basins in which warm water flowed were placed in these niches. The form of the other three chambers, parts of which were found in the north side of the complex, is not precisely known.

The remains of latrines (*latrinae*) were discovered in the south side of the caldarium, as well as smaller spaces, which were probably used for various commercial purposes. Parts of chambers were discovered in the south and west side of the building; these featured floors paved with marble slabs. One such chamber in the building's south side, more than 40m in length and adorned with a marble floor probably had the form of a [basilica \(basilica thermarum\)](#), i.e. a spacious chamber of great length with one of its narrow sides arched. Such chambers were common in bath buildings of this type and rendered the structure more functional by facilitating the movement of visitors between the chambers of the main baths. According to another suggestion, however, such chambers had also various other uses, e.g. they were employed for physical exercise, as places for relaxation, even for holding discussions and giving lectures.<sup>3</sup>

A [palaestra](#), i.e. a rectangular open-air courtyard with a [peristyle](#), suitable for physical exercise, would have completed the bath's south side. No such remains have come to light yet. However, we can surmise the existence of a palaestra by analogy to other baths



belonging to the same architectural type as the Baths at the Agora.<sup>4</sup>

#### 4. Decoration

The excavation on the building, although limited, has brought to light significant finds. Three male marble portrait heads, dating to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, belong to the sculptural decoration of the chambers, and probably depicted prominent citizens. A female head donning a **diadem**, probably depicting a priestess, was unearthed and has been dated to the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD.<sup>5</sup>

#### 5. Construction methods

From what remains of the surviving walls it appears that in the construction of the Baths at the Agora two building techniques were combined: **opus quadratum** and opus incertum (a building technique in which small irregular stones are half-inserted into a wall core of mortar). Similar building methods can be observed in all the large bath complexes at Ephesus. As we know from other, better preserved examples, baked bricks were used for the construction of the **hypocausts** and the vaulted roofs. These construction techniques were novel, having been recently introduced into the East from Italy, and were originally employed in buildings like baths.<sup>6</sup> The Baths at the Agora also preserve remains of large windows on the west wall of the caldarium, which were used to provide natural lighting and heating.

#### 6. Dating

According to one suggestion, a likely foundation date of the Baths at the Agora is the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. This is mainly based on the architectural design of the building and its similarities to the Faustina Baths in Miletus, which were probably erected before 176 AD.

The study of the building's architecture and construction techniques has led to the identification of successive building phases, which include minor repairs or major interventions; these, however, are difficult to date. The floor of the long chamber (*basilica*) was covered with a mosaic, possibly as late as the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>7</sup>

#### 7. History of research

Part of the baths building in the east side of the Agora was excavated in the 1920s. This edifice, which remains unpublished, had been earlier misidentified as the **Baths of Scholasticia** or Varius Baths.<sup>8</sup> This building was probably erected over an earlier **gymnasium** of the Hellenistic period, epigraphically known as the Upper Gymnasium of Ephesus.<sup>9</sup>

#### 8. Current state of preservation

The Baths at the Agora are among the first set of ruins visitors encounter on their right as they enter the archaeological site from the modern upper entrance. The remains of the walls of the caldarium are imposing, with the rather impressive, and relatively well-preserved, large window openings on the west side of the chamber. A large part of the baths complex remains unexcavated.

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1. Nielsen, I., *Thermae et Balnea. The Architecture and Cultural History of Roman Public Baths* (Aarhus 1990), C299.

2. Nielsen, I., *Thermae et Balnea. The Architecture and Cultural History of Roman Public Baths* (Aarhus 1990), C306- Yegül, F., *Baths and Bathing in Classical Antiquity* (New York 1992), p. 291.

3. On the possible uses of the *basilicae* in the baths of Asia Minor see Nielsen, I., *Thermae et Balnea. The Architecture and Cultural History of Roman Public Baths* (Aarhus 1990) p. 106.



4. Scherrer, P., (ed.), *Ephesus. The New Guide* (2000) p. 74.
5. Alzinger, W., *Die Ruinen von Ephesos* (Berlin-Wien 1972) p. 32.
6. Typical combinations of rectangular masonry and backed bricks can be seen in the Baths at the Theatre in Ephesus, in the Baths at the Gymnasium in Pergamum and in the baths in the cities of Tralles and Aspendus, see Yegül, F., *Baths and Bathing in Classical Antiquity* (New York 1992) p. 266 pl. 325, p. 269 pl. 331.
7. Alzinger, W., *Die Ruinen von Ephesos* (Berlin – Wien 1972), p. 32.
8. Manderscheid, H., *Bibliographie zum römischen Badewesen* (München 1988), p. 109 ff., fig. 150, with bibliography. Nielsen, I., *Thermae et Balnea. The Architecture and Cultural History of Roman Public Baths* (Aarhus 1990), C. 306 (for the Baths of Scholasticia).
9. For the gymnasia of Ephesus during the Hellenistic period, see Delorme, J., *Gymnasion. Étude sur les monuments consacrés à l' éducation en Grèce (des origines à l' Empire romain)*, (BEFAR 196, Paris 1960), pp. 88 ff.

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	<b>Alzinger W.</b> , <i>Die Ruinen von Ephesos</i> , Berlin – Wien 1972
	<b>Scherrer, P. (ed.)</b> , <i>Ephesus. The New Guide</i> , Istanbul 2000
	<b>Nielsen I.</b> , <i>Thermae et Balnea. The Architecture and Cultural History of Roman Public Baths</i> , Aarhus 1990
	<b>Keil J.</b> , "XII. Vorläufiger Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Ephesos", <i>ÖJh</i> , 23, 1926, 271-280

#### Webliography :

	Ephesos- Gesamtplan <a href="http://homepage.univie.ac.at/elisabeth.trinkl/forum/forum0897/04plan.htm">http://homepage.univie.ac.at/elisabeth.trinkl/forum/forum0897/04plan.htm</a>
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#### Glossary :


	<b>basilica</b> In ancient Roman architecture a large oblong type building used as hall of justice and public meeting place. The roman basilica served as a model for early Christian churches.
	<b>caldarium</b> Derivative of the Latin verb caleo (= warm up). It is the strongly heated room of Roman baths. Its hot plunge pool was used to take not only a hot bath but also a steam bath due to high levels of humidity. It was also called the "inner room".
	<b>diadem, the</b> Band of textile or metal that was bonded around the head. It was not only an ornament but also a religious emblem. For eastern people it symbolised royal authority, too. Alexander the Great inherited from Persians its function as a royal symbol.
	<b>gymnasium</b> The gymnasium was one of the most important centres of public life in Greek cities. The institution of the gymnasium, directly connected with the development of the Greek city, aimed to create virtuous citizens and gallant warriors. As educational institutions of public character, the gymnasia were intended for the physical and theoretical education of the young and consisted of separate spaces for special purposes.
	<b>hypocaust, the</b>



the main system for the heating of ancient baths. The word means literally a “furnace that burns underneath”. With this system the room’s floor was supported by small poles and the space underneath the floor was heated by the circulation of hot air, while the heat was transferred through the walls by conductors.

 **isodomic masonry (opus quadratum)**


A type of masonry in which blocks of equal length and thickness are laid in courses, with each vertical joint centered on the block below.

 **niche**

Semi-circular recess on the surface of the wall.

 **palaestra**

A colonnaded enclosure for athletic exercise. The palaestra functioned both independently and as a part of the Greek gymnasium. It was formed as an open court surrounded by colonnades with adjoining rooms.

 **peristyle**

A colonnade surrounding a building or a courtyard .