



Summary :

In Ephesus, the capital of the province of Asia, archaeological excavations brought to light five bath-gymnasium complexes, one of which is the so-called Vedius Gymnasium. The baths were symmetrically planned, while the palaestra is unified on the same axis, with an east-west orientation. It dates from the mid 2nd century AD.

Date

2nd century AD

Geographical Location

Ephesus

1. Baths/gymnasia of Asia Minor and the history of research at the Vedius Gymnasium

The architectural type of the baths/gymnasia developed particularly in Asia Minor, where the complicated design of the imperial thermae was combined with the simple plan of the Greek [gymnasium](#). This combination of athletic facilities and baths had already appeared in Italy. In Asia Minor, however, it gained a special character as architects adjusted the architectural tradition of the Greek gymnasium to the new creations. Most of the [bath-gymnasium](#) complexes found in Asia Minor date from the end of the 1st century and mainly to the 2nd century AD and their construction reflects a more general adoption of Roman customs, as the visit to the baths was considered part of the everyday life for the inhabitants in the cities of the Roman world.¹

[Ephesus](#), the capital of the [province of Asia](#), counted five bath-gymnasium complexes, among them the monumental complex of the Vedius Bath-Gymnasium (map. no. 106), which during the Imperial era was known as the «Gymnasium in Coressus». ² Excavations took place in 1927-1930 by the Austrian Archaeological Institute, under J. Keil and later by M. Theur and F. Miltner. ³ In 2000 the archaeological research on the gymnasium was continued by the Austrian Archaeological Institute, aiming at the monument's theoretical reconstruction, the clarification of the construction's technical aspects, while emphasis was given to its historical and archaeological importance and the interpretation of the area.⁴

2. Location and Architectural Description

The Vedius Gymnasium (map. no. 106), is located on the north-western slope of Panyirdag, in the northern section of Ephesus next to the stadium (map. no. 104).⁵ The complex, measuring 135x75 m. has a symmetrical ground plan and its rooms were arranged on the same axis, with an E-W orientation, as it is often the case with the Bath-Gymnasium complexes in [Sardis](#) and [Aezani](#). The complex is divided in two sections; the [palaestra](#), situated on the eastern side and the bath block, which occupied the complex's western facilities. Between the two sections there were spacious, oblong auxiliary halls, which functioned as an insulation zone .

The main entrance was situated in the complex's north side. A square [propylon](#) (vestibulum) with niches on the side walls lead to the rectangular palaestra (2). Next to the propylon lies the latrine (16), a structure 17 m. long which contained an anteroom and a courtyard, surrounded by colonnades.⁶

The palaestra's open courtyard, measuring 40x50, was defined by [porticos](#), necessary for the protection of the athletes from bad weather. The western side contained an [exedra](#) with aedicular décor (3). On its facade, which was oriented towards the palaestra's central courtyard, was a colonnade rather than a continuous wall. The walls of the hall's interior bore lavish architectural and sculptural decoration, while the western wall contained a semi-circular niche where the statue of Antoninus Pius would have been placed. In front of this niche there was a small altar. Statues, such as that of Androclos, hero founder of Ephesus, Dionysus and Asclepius, as well as a copy of Diskobolus, (Discus-thrower), of Myron, come from the statuary programme of the interior



decoration.⁷ This large aedicular hall possibly served the imperial cult.⁸

The imperial hall was flanked by two smaller square chambers, accessible from the palaestra, which functioned as anterooms and communicated with an oblong hall (4). This gallery (ambulatory) constituted the dividing zone between the palaestra and the bath block and functioned possibly as a spacious meeting place and a changing room (**apodyterium**). It occupied half the length of the bath facilities and represents an H-shaped layout. Projecting piers supported arches, while the hall was covered by a barrel vault. It is notable, that the architectural solution of **pillars** as supports of the vaulted ceiling is one of the characteristic architectural features of the Baths in Asia Minor.⁹

The thermal facilities occupy the complex's western section. The organization of the cold (frigidarium) and heated halls (tepidarium, caldarium) is symmetrical and uniform. More particularly, they are arranged in zones with two or more rooms flanking a central area. This arrangement is repeated throughout the bath facilities and served the building's function.

A rectangular hall (5) contained a large unheated pool (natatio frigida),¹⁰ which was decorated with statues of river-gods,¹¹ and two side auxiliary chambers. The hall's architectural form, with a central pool occupying almost the entire area of the interior space, was yet another typical characteristic of baths in Asia minor found in similar bathing establishments in Ephesus (the [Harbour Baths](#) and the East Gymnasium), in Sardis and [Ankara](#).¹²

The rectangular hall with the pool communicated to the west with two oblong halls, identified possibly as changing rooms (6). These halls flanked a central square area, which also housed two pools for cold bathing (**frigidarium**) (7) to the north and south. The central hall offered access to the **tepidarium** (10), a room for warm bath, which functioned as the spatial transition from the cold to the hot washing rooms or the opposite, and the **sudatoria** (14), two smaller sweat chambers on either side. The tepidarium communicated with the heated halls, which were situated on the building's western side taking full advantage of the natural light and the sun's heat during the afternoon hours.

The heated facilities contained the **caldarium** (12), the rectangular main hot room, which was situated in the centre, and four auxiliary side rooms, two to the north and two to the south. The caldarium contained projecting piers. This architectural type of caldarium with projecting piers is also a characteristic of other baths in Asia Minor such as the Harbour Baths in Ephesus, the Baths in Sardis, in [Alexandria Troas](#) and in [Caunus](#).¹³ The heated zone of the bath was heated by hypocausts, a type of under-floor heating system and by clay tubes in the core of the walls.¹⁴

3. Date

According to inscriptions found during excavations, the building was a Gymnasium dedicated to Artemis, the emperor [Antoninus Pius](#) (138-161) and his family. The gymnasium was built by the eminent Ephesian, friend of the emperor, Publius Vedio Antoninus), known civic donor, and his wife Flavia Papiana. According to the evidence the building is dated after 140 AD.¹⁵

1. Ramage, N.H. – Ramage, A., *Ρωμαϊκή Τέχνη* (transl. Ch. Ioakimidou, ed. Th. Stefanidou-Tiveriou) (Thessaloniki 2000), p. 284.

2. Orator Aristeides had visited the gymnasium, Aristeid. 2,83. Regarding the identification of the complex with the "Gymnasium in Coressus" see, Steskal, M. – La Torre, M., «DasVediusgymnasium in Ephesos», *ÖJh* 70 (2001), p. 231-234.




3. See, Keil, J., «Vorläufiger Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Ephesos», *ÖJh* 26 (1930), p. 17-20; Keil, J., «Vorläufiger Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Ephesos», *ÖJh* 25 (1929), p. 21-38; Keil, J., «Vorläufiger Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Ephesos», *ÖJh* 24 (1929), p. 20-45. In detail on the chronicle of the excavations and the history of the research at the Vedio Gymnasium see Steskal, M. – La Torre, M., «DasVediusgymnasium in Ephesos», *ÖJh* 70 (2001), p. 231-234.

4. See, Steskal, M. – La Torre, M., «DasVediusgymnasium in Ephesos», *ÖJh* 70 (2001), p. 231-234.



5. For the importance of the topographical location of the complex see Kalinowski, A., «The Vedii Antonini: Aspects of Partonage and Benefaction in Second-Century Ephesos», *Phoenix* 56 (2002), p. 124-127.
6. For the latrine see Scherrer, P., (ed.), *Ephesus, The New Guide* (2000), p. 168.
7. The torso of a figure of Asclepius, and of a figure of Dionysus, the head of Eros and a copy of Diskobolus of Myron, come from the statue programme of the gymnasium's imperial hall. Aurenhammer, M., *Die Skulpturen von Ephesos: Bildwerke aus Stein, Idealplastik I. Forschungen in Ephesos X/1* (Wien 1990), p. 47 (numb. 23 Asclepius), p. 37 (numb. 37 Dionysus), p. 87 (numb. 66 Eros), p. 126 (numb. 105 Androclos), p. 156 (numb. 138 Disk-Thrower).
8. For the imperial (or marble) hall and its use, see Kalinowski, A., «The Vedii Antonini: Aspects of Partonage and Benefaction in Second-Century Ephesos», *Phoenix* 56 (2002), p. 135-138.
9. Baths of Faustina in Miletus, East Baths in Pergamon, Baths in Magnesia on the Meander, Harbour Baths in Ephesus, Caracallan Baths in Ankara and Bath-Gymnasium in Termessus.
10. It is possible that the room IV with the pool was part of the frigidarium. Steskal, M. – La Torre, M., «DasVediusgymnasium in Ephesos», *ÖJh* 70 (2001), p. 226. Yegül, F., *Baths and Bathing in Classical Antiquity* (New York 1992), p. 416-417.
11. For the figures of the river-gods see Aurenhammer, M., *Die Skulpturen von Ephesos: Bildwerke aus Stein, Idealplastik I. Forschungen in Ephesos X/1* (Wien 1990), p. 105-107 (no. 86-87).
12. Yegül, F., *Baths and Bathing in Classical Antiquity* (New York 1992), p. 416-417.
13. Yegül, F., *Baths and Bathing in Classical Antiquity* (New York 1992), p. 417-418, 420.
14. For the architectural design of the Vedius Gymnasium, see Krencker, D., *Die Trierer Kaiserthermen* (1929), p. 287-288; Keil, J., «Vorläufiger Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Ephesos», *ÖJh* 26 (1930), p. 17-20; Keil, J., «Vorläufiger Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Ephesos», *ÖJh* 25 (1929), p. 21-38; Keil, J., «Vorläufiger Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Ephesos», *ÖJh* 24 (1929), p. 20-45; Keil, J., *Führer durch Ephesos* (Wien 1964), p. 56-61; Yegül, F., *Baths and Bathing in Classical Antiquity* (New York 1992), p. 282-284; Boethius, A. – Ward Perkins, J.B., *Etruscan and Roman Architecture* (1970), p. 399-401; Farrington, A., «Imperial Bath Buildings in South-West Asia Minor», in Macready, S. – Thompson, F.H. (ed.), *Roman Architecture in the Greek World* (Society of Antiquaries, Occasional Papers, New Series 10, London 1987), p. 50-51; Ward Perkins, J.B., *Roman Imperial Architecture* (London – New Haven 1989), p. 292-294; Scherrer, P. (ed.), *Ephesus, The New Guide* (2000), p. 168-169.
15. These are inscriptions from the architrave of the Palaestra and the great hall (ambulacrum). Keil, J., «Vorläufiger Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Ephesos», *ÖJh* 24 (1929), p. 26-28; Keil, J., «Vorläufiger Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Ephesos», *ÖJh* 25 (1929), p. 25-28; Börker, C. – Merkelbach, R. – Engelmann, H. – Knibbe, D., *Die Inschriften von Ephesos II, Nr 101-599* (IK 12, Bonn 1979), no 431, p. 155, no. 438, p. 159-160; Yegül, F., *Baths and Bathing in Classical Antiquity* (New York 1992), p. 454, note 22; Kalinowski, A., «The Vedii Antonini: Aspects of Partonage and Benefaction in Second-Century Ephesos», *Phoenix* 56 (2002), p. 121-127.

Bibliography :

	Scherrer, P. (ed.), <i>Ephesus. The New Guide</i> , Istanbul 2000
	Nielsen I., <i>Thermae et Balnea. The Architecture and Cultural History of Roman Public Baths</i> , Aarhus 1990
	Yegül F., <i>Baths and Bathing in Classical Antiquity</i> , New York 1992



	Wiplinger G., Wlach G., <i>Ephesus. 100 Years of Austrian Research</i> , Vienna – Cologne – Weimar 1996
	Ward-Perkins J.B., <i>Roman Imperial Architecture.</i> , London – New Haven 1981
	Ward-Perkins J.B., Boëthius A., <i>Etruscan and Roman Architecture</i> , Harmondsworth 1970
	Keil J., <i>Führer durch Ephesos</i> , Wien 1964
	Steskal M., La Torre M., "Das Vediusgymnasium in Ephesos", <i>ÖJh</i> , 70, 2001, 221–244
	Farrington A., "Imperial Bath Buildings in South-West Asia Minor", Macready, S. – Thompson, F.H. (eds.), <i>Roman Architecture in the Greek World</i> , London 1987, 50-59
	Keil J., "Vorläufiger Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Ephesos", <i>ÖJh</i> , 26, 1930, 5-66
	Keil J., "Vorläufiger Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Ephesos", <i>ÖJh</i> , 25, 1929, 1-51
	Keil J., "Vorläufiger Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Ephesos", <i>ÖJh</i> , 24, 1929, 20-45
	Kalinowski A., "The Vedii Antonini: Aspects of Patronage and Benefaction in Second-Century Ephesos", <i>Phoenix</i> , 56, 2002, 121-127

Webliography :

	Ephesos- Gesamtplan http://homepage.univie.ac.at/elisabeth.trinkl/forum/forum0897/04plan.htm
	Ephesos, Plan http://www.ephesos.at/geschichte/index_plan.html
	Ephesos, Vedius Gymnasium http://www.ephesos.us/ephesos/vediusgymnasium.htm
	Griechische Gymnasien und Romische Thermen http://homepage.univie.ac.at/elisabeth.trinkl/forum/forum0605/35steskal.htm
	Research on Sculpture in Ephesos http://www.oeai.at/index.php/sculptures.html

Glossary :

	apodyterion, -a An undressing room, next to the entrance in a bathhouse, or a gymnasium, or a palaestra.
	caldarium 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".
	exedra, the 1. Large semicircular niche-like structure with stone seats ranged around the walls, often outdoors or with a hemidome over. An exedra may also be expressed by a curved break in a colonnade, perhaps with a semi-circular seat. 2. The rectangular hall of the palaestra, open to the courtyard with columns at the front. The exedrae in gymnasium and palaestra could have served many functions. Usually a hall of such type was the Ephebeum.
	frigidarium



A large cold pool to drop into after enjoying a hot Roman bath (from frigeo). Normally frigidarium has used after a visit to warm rooms (caldarium) or after a training in palaestra. As the largest room in the thermae and often functioned as a hall for social events or communication



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.



pillar

Pier of square or rectangular cross-section.



propylon

Monumental architectural entrance, most often to a sanctuary or a building complex.



stoa, portico, the

A long building with a roof supported by one or two colonnades parallel to its back wall.



sudatorium

It is the architectural term, deriving from the latin verb "suda" (=sweat), for the sweating room of the roman baths. It is usually a vaulted room of rectangular form between the caldarium and the tepidarium. In the Early Roman times (1st- 2nd c. B.C.) sudatoria used to be of circular form.



tepidarium

The word is derived from the verb tepeo meaning 'to be tepid'. It is the room of tepid water in the Roman thermae. It was also called middle house or tepid house and was usually situated between the caldarium and the frigidarium. Its main function was the acclimatization of the bather to the change of temperature. Being at the Tepidarium the visitor could also apply ointments on his/her body before or after the hot bath, although, there was a special room for this function called unctorium.