



Summary :

The Gymnasium and the Harbour Baths of Ephesus were given this name due to their proximity to the harbour of the city. It is a complex with three parts, consisting of the Halls of Verulanus, the palaestra and the baths, and dates to the years of Domitian (81-96), although there are subsequent construction phases as well. The complex was fully excavated in the late 19th and the early 20th century by the Austrian Archaeological Institute.

Date

1st c. AD.

Geographical Location

Ephesus, Ionia

1. Introduction

The Harbour Baths of Ephesus are situated near the harbour, on the northern side of the main road artery ([Arcadian Street](#)) leading from the harbour to the centre of the city. They date from the years of [Domitian](#)'s reign (81-96) and are considered a typical example of the architectural type of [Bath-Gymnasium of Asia Minor](#), where the adoption of the imperial [thermae](#) was combined with the deeply rooted Greek architectural tradition of the simple [gymnasium](#). In the capital of the province of Asia, [Ephesus](#), the presence of five baths, four of which were in the imperial style, reflects the extensive Romanisation of the provinces.

2. Architectural Description

The Harbour Baths formed a complex including the [Thermae](#), the [Gymnasium of the Sebastoi](#) and the [xystoi](#), which were called stoas or Halls of Verulanus. The [xystoi](#) were named after [Claudius Verulanus](#), an Ephesian priest of the imperial cult, who had donated the marble slabs of the walls in [Hadrian](#)'s years. The Halls of Verulanus was an almost square, vast peristyle space measuring 200 x 240 m, with three rows of columns. To the west there was an opening with four columns, which led to an anteroom, which, in turn, gave to the palaestra through a [pentabelon](#).

The palaestra was between the open space used for physical exercise and the closed space of the bath compartments. Two rooms of almost the same dimensions existed at the centre of the northern and the southern side of the palaestra, on the same axis as the peristyle open space. The southern room was used for lectures, while the northern one (M), the so-called Marble Room, was dedicated to the imperial cult. The latter was rectangular, while rectangular and semi-circular niches opened interchangeably in the walls and were decorated with small temples ([aediculae](#)); a larger semi-circular niche existed at the centre of the northern side.¹ Generally, the interior surfaces of the room must have formed a monumental two-storey structure with rich decorations, according to the Roman aesthetic standards, combining porticos and aediculae adorned with [statues](#), columns and [pediments](#), with the colourful marble floor, thus bringing out the luxury and the imposing architectural style of the composition. Access to the baths from the central road artery of the city was through an elliptic yard (the so-called atrium [thermarum Constantianarum](#)), which was surrounded by a colonnade.² On its northern side there was an oblong passage with a colonnade along its long sides.

The baths had a double row of compartments; the first row included the [frigidarium](#) and the second the [caldarium](#). The oblong rooms with the projecting pillars, which framed the main space of the [frigidarium](#), served as [apodyterium](#) and [basilica](#). The architectural style with the projecting pillars, as in the B/A space, is a characteristic of the baths of Asia Minor and can be found at the [Baths of Faustina](#) of Miletus, at the Eastern Baths of [Pergamon](#), at the complex of Baths-Gymnasium and 'Caserma' Baths of [Magnesia](#), at the [Baths of Caracalla](#) of Ankara and, finally, at the Baths-Gymnasia of [Termessus](#).³

The [frigidarium](#) of the Harbour Baths included the pool ([natatio](#)), which covered almost the entire room – a characteristic common in all



the buildings of this type in Asia Minor.⁴ The second row of compartments included the central tepidarium, three auxiliary spaces on the southern side and three on the northern. The tepidarium gave to the caldarium, which had projecting pillars. The presence of projecting pillars in the caldarium is also common in other baths of Asia Minor, such as the Eastern Baths and the complex of [Gymnasium-Baths of Vedius](#) in Ephesus, the Imperial Baths in [Sardis](#), the Baths-Gymnasia in [Alexandria Troas](#) and the Harbour Baths in [Caunus](#).⁵ The Harbour Baths have some similarities with the complex of Gymnasium-Baths of Vedius, mainly as regards their internal layout. The internal arrangement of the baths in two rows serves their functions. The first row of compartments accommodated the entrance, the changing room, the physical exercise and, finally, the cold bath in the pool of the frigidarium, while the second row included the hot bath, the perspiration room and the massage. However, the general division of the complex into three parts is dictated by the triple character of the whole and serves the different uses of its separate spaces.⁶

3. Chronology

The Harbour Baths are one of the oldest known complexes of the type of Thermae-Gymnasium in the city of Ephesus and, generally, Asia Minor. They went through at least three construction phases. The complex was basically designed in Domitian's years (81-96). Some particular characteristics of the palaestra must belong to the middle or the end of the 2nd century. Finally, the elliptic yard with the colonnade, which connected the baths with Arcadian Street, was added in the 4th century, in the years of Emperor Konstantios (337-361). Private houses were built in the area during the Byzantine years.⁷

1. Ward-Perkins, J., *Roman Imperial Architecture* (London – New Haven 1981), p. 294, fig. 191. According to epigraphic evidence, the Marble Room was founded by the Ephesian Tiberius Claudius Aristion in honour of Emperor Domitian. The bronze statue of the adolescent athlete, today exhibited at the Museum of Vienna, was also found in this room. Scherrer, P. (ed.), *Ephesus. The New Guide* (Vienna 2000), pp. 174-176.

2. Scherrer, P. (ed.), *Ephesus. The New Guide* (Vienna 2000), p. 174; Wiplinger, G. – Wlach, G., *Ephesus. 100 Years of Austrian Research* (Vienna – Cologne – Weimar 1995), p. 18.

3. Yegül, F., *Baths and bathing in Classical Antiquity* (New York 1992), pp. 414-416.




4. See Eastern Baths and Baths of Vedius in Ephesus, Imperial Baths in Sardis and Baths of Caracalla in Ankara.

5. Yegül, F., *Baths and bathing in Classical Antiquity* (New York 1992), pp. 417-418, 420.

6. Yegül, F., *Baths and bathing in Classical Antiquity* (New York 1992), pp. 272-273.

7. Yegül, F., *Baths and bathing in Classical Antiquity* (New York 1992), p. 304.

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| | The Harbor Gymnasium and Baths (Ephesus) http://www.focusmm.com/aceph_32.htm |
| | Verulanushallen http://www.ephesos.at/geschichte/plan7.html |

Glossary :

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| | aedicula Small pedimental naiskos, either a free-standing construction or integrated into a larger building's facade. |
| | 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". |
| | 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 palaistra. As the largest room in the thermae and often functioned as a hall for social events or communication |
| | gymnasium 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. |
| | pediment, the The triangular structure, over a building façade, between the horizontal entablature and the sloping roof, often decorated with sculptures, reliefs or painted figures. |
| | pentabylon The five-arched opening between two areas. |
| | pillar Pier of square or rectangular cross-section. |
| | tepidarium |



The word is derived from the verb tepo 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.



thermae

Building complexes dated in the Roman Period housing the public baths. Within the building there were three rooms, the frigidarium, the tepidarium and the caldarium and several other facilities rooms. The Roman bath-houses were also used as meting places and they often included a palaestra and a gymnasium.



xystus, the

Th greek term for the covered portico of the gymnasium, in which the exercises took place during the winter or in rainy weather. The Romans applied the term to the garden walk in front of the porticoes, which was divided into flower beds with borders of box, and to a promenade between rows of large trees.