

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE THERMENGASSE

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Photograph by Amt für Städtebau/Juliet Haller

## A. THE ROMAN BATHS IN TVRICVM

The remains of two bathhouses were discovered in 1983/84 during construction work carried out beneath the present-day houses at Weinplatz in the ancient port district beside the River Limmat. The remnants of painted wall plaster and tesserae pointed to the rather luxurious style of furnishings, while traces of soot and lime indicated that the baths had been used intensively.

The earlier of the two baths (Bath 1), built around AD 70, was quite small. After the middle of the 2nd century it was replaced by a significantly larger building (Bath 2a). The last change occurred in the early 3rd century (Bath 2b). It is unknown when this bathhouse closed down; it may have happened in the later 3rd century.

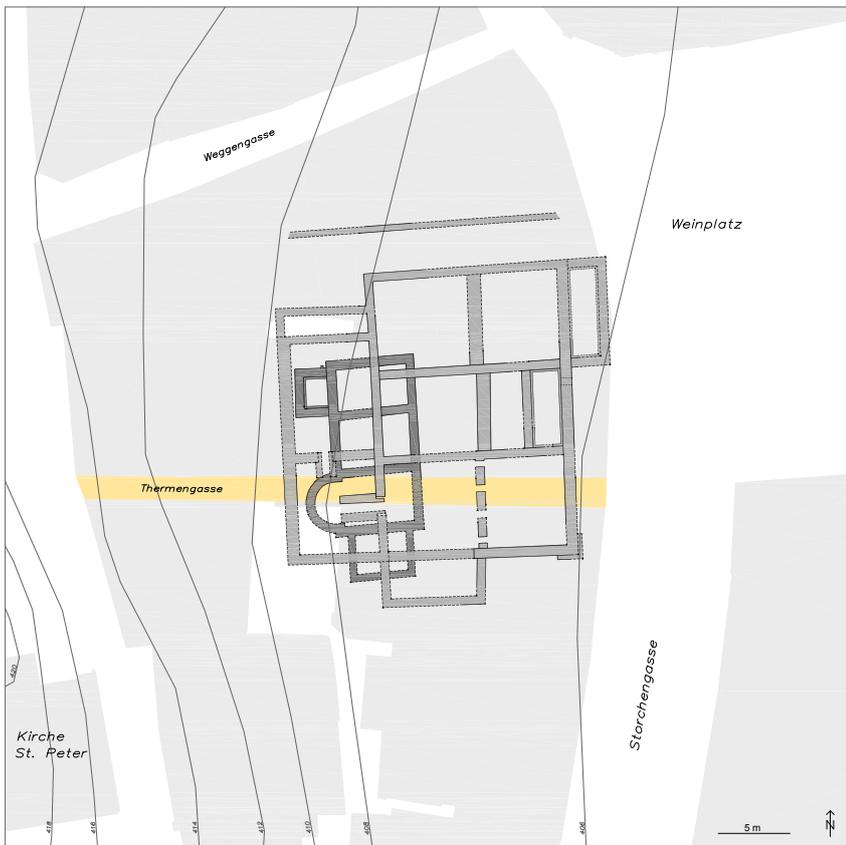
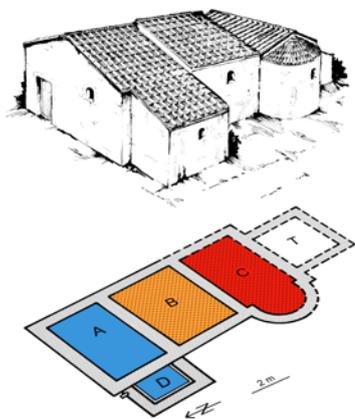


Image Kaarina Bourloud, Archaeological Department of Zurich City



Excavation 1983/84 at Weinplatz 3. Photograph by Archaeological Department of Zurich City

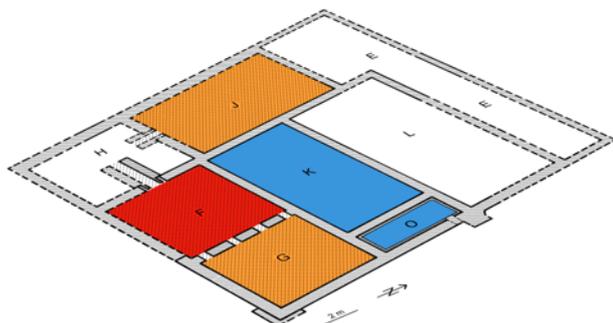
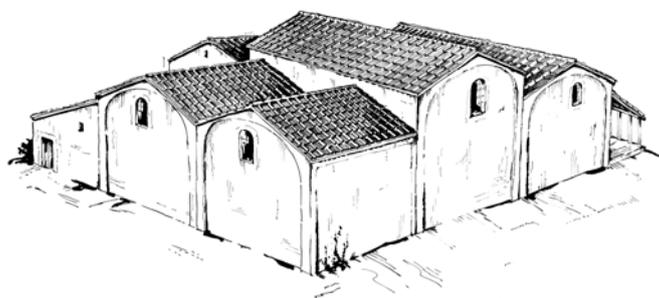


**Bath 1**

It contained a FRIGIDARIUM (A) with a basin (D) and two rooms heated with a hypocaust – a TEPIDARIUM (B) and in the very south a CALDARIUM (C) with an apse.

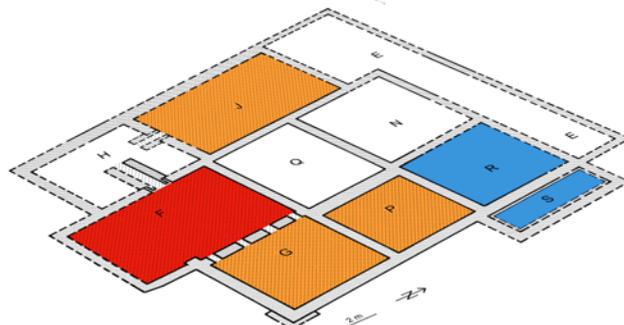
**Bath 2a**

A spacious changing room (L) was located in front of the actual bathing section. From this changing room, one could enter the cold room which has a basin (K and O) and was more than double the size of its predecessor. Various other rooms lay adjacent and were heated by the same furnace room (H) – a TEPIDARIUM (G), a CALDARIUM (F) and another large room (J), where one could probably while away the time and be pampered.



**Bath 2b**

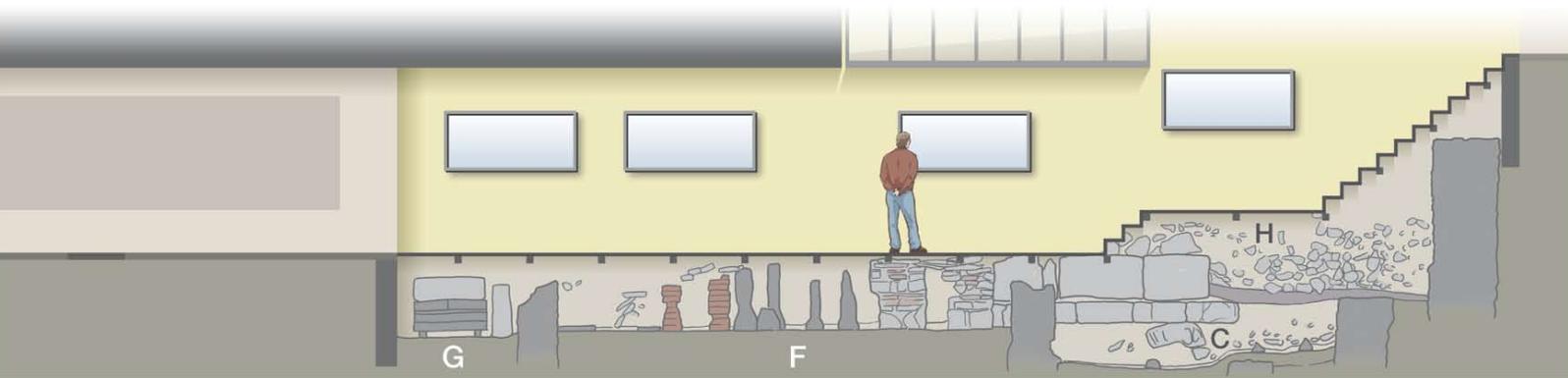
Renovation works enlarged the heated area of the bath by extending the CALDARIUM (F) and by dividing off a section of the old FRIGIDARIUM and heating it (P). The FRIGIDARIUM was now relocated and fitted with a new pool (R and S).



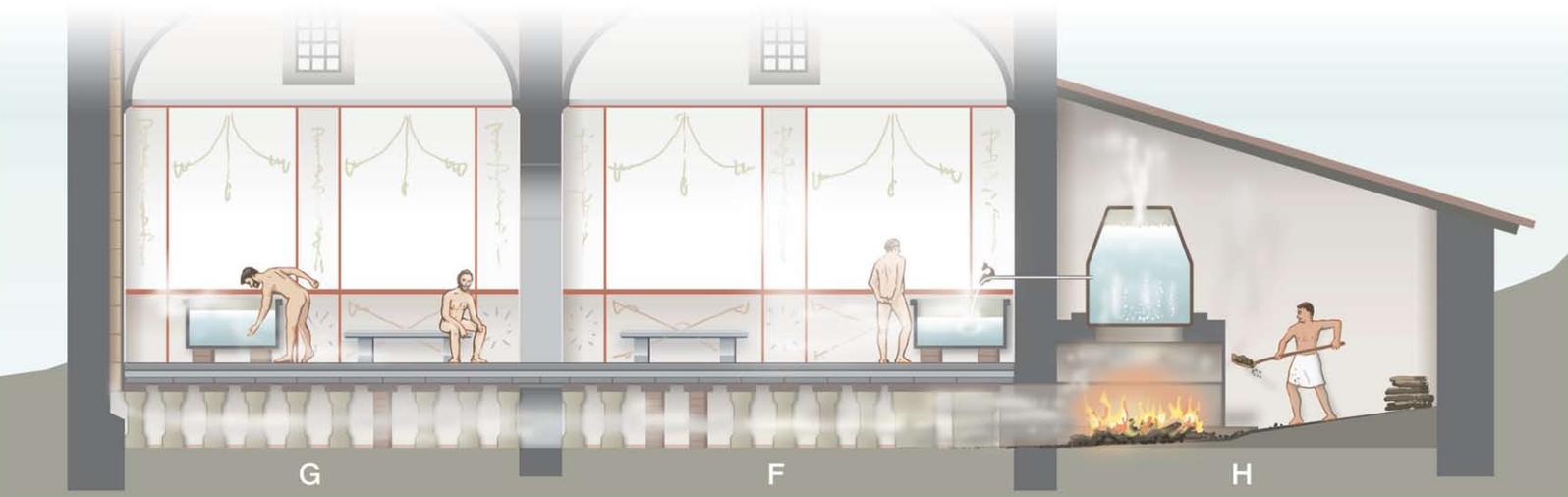
Drawings by Beat Scheffold, Winterthur

## B. TIME TRAVEL AT THERMENGASSE

Today



1800 Years earlier



Drawings by Oliver Lüde, Winterthur

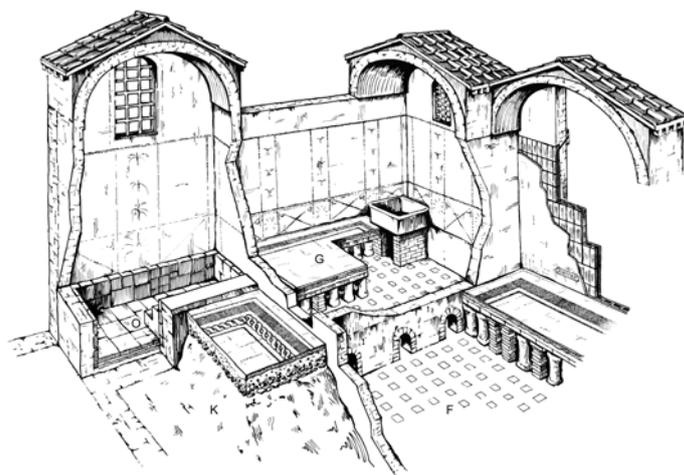


### A Fragment of TEPIDARIUM G

Just short of the lower end of the archaeological zone one can see the partition wall between the CALDARIUM and the TEPIDARIUM. This wall contained openings through which the hot air could flow from the CALDARIUM into the TEPIDARIUM. Here, the archaeologists have placed a fragment of the cold water basin from the FRIGIDARIUM of Bath 2a and a step from the demolition rubble from Bath 1.

### CALDARIUM F of Bath 2

The best insight Thermengasse has to provide is into the CALDARIUM of Bath 2. There are remarkably large foundations beyond the dividing wall between it and the furnace room: these would have supported a basin. It was situated immediately above the outlet from the channel of the PRAEFURNIUM and could be heated directly with the hot flue gas. Irregularities in the hypocaust pillars probably represent Roman-period repairs.



View into Bath 2, looking southeast. The basin of the FRIGIDARIUM is on the left. Drawing by Beat Scheffold, Winterthur

### Furnace Room H of Bath 2

The remains of three rooms that belonged to Bath 2 are still visible today. Towards the slope of Thermengasse, part of the furnace room has survived. Noticeably heavy sandstone blocks once formed one face of the firing channel (PRAEFURNIUM) in the furnace room. The opposite face of the channel was destroyed when the present-day building was erected, if not prior to that.

### CALDARIUM C with Apse in Bath 1

Remains of both bath houses have survived at Thermengasse. A masonry apse with a mortar floor and stumps of sandstone hypocaust pillars can be seen at the end of the archaeological zone towards the slope. These are the remains of the CALDARIUM of Bath 1, which lay beneath the overlying new construction of Bath 2.

### Underfloor Heating – HYPOCAUSTUM

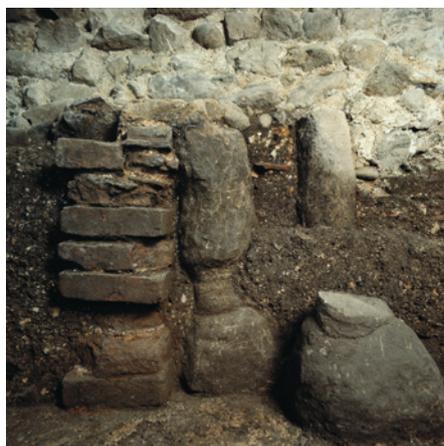
The Romans had a sophisticated heating system. A raised floor (SUSPENSURA) was installed in each room and supported on pillars of clay slabs or sandstone (PILAE). This created a hollow space beneath the floor which could be heated by a heating duct (PRAEFURNIUM). The hot flue gas flowed into the hollow space, from there upwards through ducts in the walls (TUBULI) and finally into chimneys. This way, the walls and floor radiated heat regularly. A boiler-like appliance was usually installed above the heating duct. This was a metal water container used to heat the water for the hot baths.

- a Various hypocaust pillars in the CALDARIUM.
- b Hypocaust pillar in the CALDARIUM of Bath 2.
- c Apse of Bath 1; behind it one can see the sandstone pillars of the heating duct of Bath 2.

Photographs by Archaeological Department of Zurich City



a



b



c

## C. TRACES OF EVERYDAY LIFE



**A**



**B**



**C**



**D**

Many artefacts were discovered among the ruins of the baths, which once would have characterised day-to-day life in the bathhouses. Oil phials, hairpins and jewellery that had belonged to the bathers, as well as fragments of window glass, remnants of wall paintings and mosaics from the buildings themselves.



Changing room (APODYTERIUM) of the women's bath in the forum baths in Herculaneum. The remnants of paintings and mosaics from Bath 1 in Turicum were similar to those seen here, but it would have been more modestly furnished. Photograph by Leonard von Matt, Leonard von Matt Foundation, Buochs NW.

**A** Fragments of an oil phial from a drainage channel from Bath 1.

**B** Hairpins, a writing implement (?) and bone gaming pieces. Finger rings and a crescent-shaped bronze pendant. These finds were recovered from the layers of both baths.

**C** Remnants of painted wall plaster from the bathhouses. Bath 1, in 1st century AD style adorned with strong colours yellow, red and black (left), and Bath 2 dating from the 2nd/3rd centuries with fine coloured lines on plain white walls (right).

**D** Fragments of mosaics with simple black and white limestone designs from Bath 2. Right: surfaces of mosaics badly soiled with calc-sinter, testimony to their everyday use.

Photographs by Archaeological Department of Zurich City

## D. ANCIENT SPAS

### Complaint about the Noise Emanating from Roman Baths

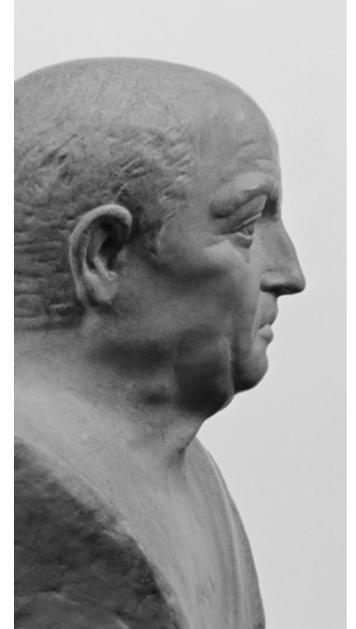
ECCE UNDIQUE ME VARIUS CLAMOR CIRCUMSONAT: SUPRA IPSUM  
BALNEUM HABITO. PROPONE NUNC TIBI OMNIA GENERA VOCUM, QUAE  
IN ODIUM POSSUNT AURES ADDUCERE:

«Here I am with a babel of noise going on all about me. I have lodgings right over a public bath-house. Now imagine to yourself every kind of sound that can make one weary of one's ears! When the strenuous types are doing their exercises, swinging weight-laden hands about, I hear their grunting as they toil away – or go through the motions of toiling away – at them and the hissings and strident gasps every time they expel their pent-up breath. When my attention turns to a less active fellow who is contenting himself with an ordinary inexpensive massage, I hear the smack of a hand pummelling his shoulders, the sound varying according as it comes down flat or cupped. But if on top of this some ball player comes along and starts shouting out the score, that's the end!

Then add someone starting up a brawl, and someone else caught thieving, and the man who likes the sound of his voice in the bath, and the people who leap into the pool with a tremendous splash.

Apart from those whose voices are, if nothing else, natural, think of the hair remover, continually giving vent to his shrill and penetrating cry in order to advertise his presence, never silent unless it be while he is plucking someone's armpits and making the client yell for him! Then think of the various cries of the man selling drinks, and the one selling sausages and the other selling pastries, and all the ones hawking for the catering shops, each publicizing his wares with a distinctive cry of his own.»

Seneca, Letters to Lucilius, Sen. epist. 56.



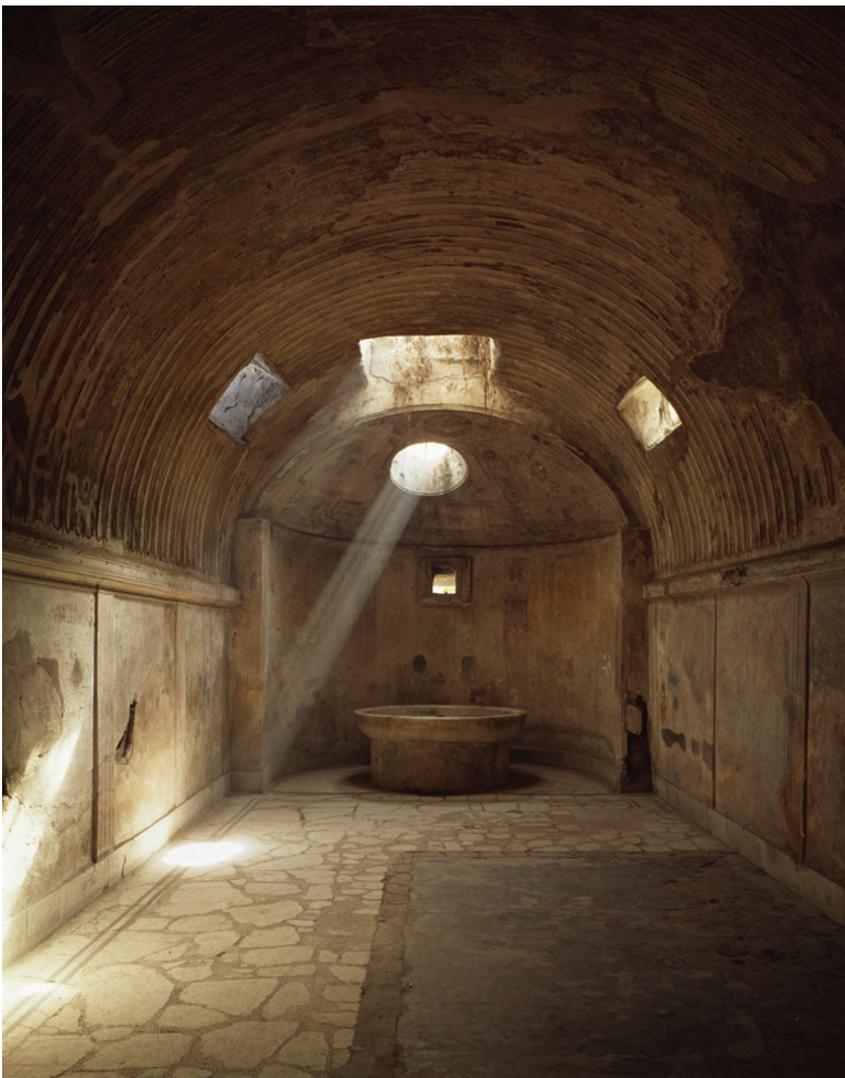
The philosopher and writer  
Lucius Annaeus Seneca, born  
AD 1, died AD 65. Image Silvia  
Hertig, School of Archaeology  
at the University of Zurich, Inv.  
G 832.

### More than just Personal Hygiene

The Romans adopted their culture of bathing from the Greco-Hellenistic region. While the Greek washrooms were usually just simple affairs, the Romans created complex edifices with their own particular style of architecture, where one tended to spend long periods of time. One could get massages, rub-downs with fragrant oils and have one's hair dressed, as well as play games and pursue sports, and buy and consume food. Bathhouses became centres of Roman social life, where business contacts were made, and where people met to talk and attend lectures. Because only members of the rich upper classes could afford to have their own bathing facilities, public baths played an important role in Roman towns and cities.

### The pleasures of bathing

A typical Roman bath had at least three bathing rooms, often with the addition of a changing room (APODYTERIUM). Firstly, there was the hot room (CALDARIUM), which was heated directly and usually faced south and where a moist heat prevailed (50°C with 100% humidity). Right beside it was located the warm room (TEPIDARIUM), which was only luke-warm and indirectly heated, and the unheated moist cold room (FRIGIDARIUM), where one could acclimatize or cool down. There was often also a sweat room (LACONICUM/SUDATORIUM) with a hot and dry atmosphere achieved by smouldering charcoal embers. Larger bath houses contained separate areas for men and women, while smaller baths had different opening hours for both sexes.



Men's caldarium in the forum baths of Pompeii. Photograph by Leonard von Matt, Leonard von Matt Foundation, Buochs NW.

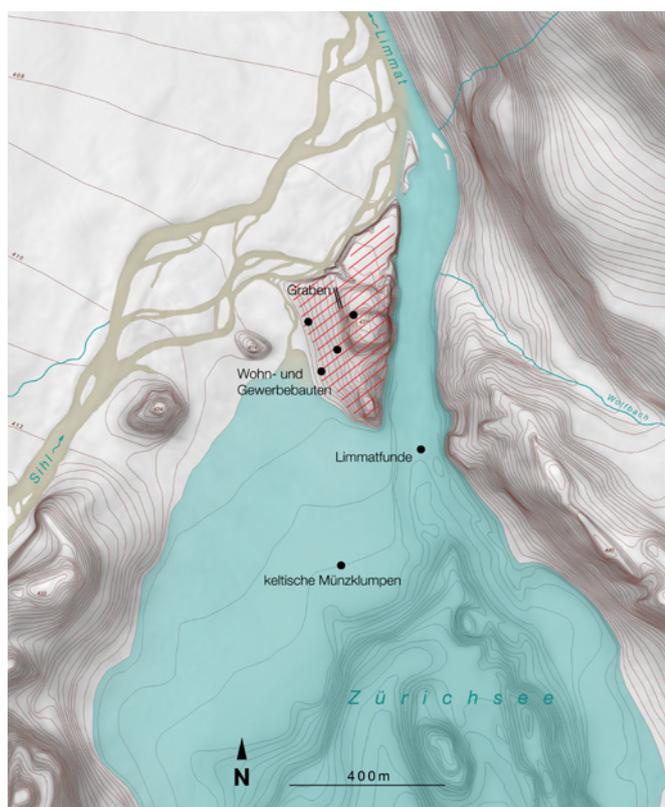
## E. TVRICVM – CELTIC AND ROMAN ZÜRICH

### Celtic centre

The roots of present-day Zurich reach back to around 80 BC when the site was incorporated in the tribal community (CIVITAS) of the Celtic Helvetians. Situated in an area which was important in terms of national trade and communications, on a north-south axis linking Italy with the River Rhine via the Grisons mountain passes, an urban settlement (OPPIDUM) with fortifications, a sanctuary and commercial districts extended on and around the Lindenhof at that time.

### Small Roman town

Roman influence gradually increased when Roman soldiers started settling here from around 40 BC onwards. Over the course of the 1st century AD the settlement grew into a prosperous small town (VICUS) with public buildings as well as residential and commercial districts located on both sides of the River Limmat. Because of its location on the border with the province of Raetia, a Gaulish toll



Landscape and settlement area at the time of Celtic Turicum in the 1st century BC showing the most important sites. Red shading highlights the presumed extent of the settlement.

Images Urs Jäggin, Archaeological Department of Zurich City



Landscape and settlement area at the time of Roman Turicum in the 2nd century AD showing the location of the baths and other important sites. Red shading highlights the presumed extent of the settlement.



Detail of the picture called 'Roman Zurich' created by Jörg Müller in 1982. At that stage, the Roman baths had not yet been discovered. Image Jörg Müller, Bienne.

station was installed in the Vicus. Farmsteads (VILLAE) in the surrounding area were responsible for farming the land. As archaeological evidence has shown, the people living in these farmsteads enjoyed a high standard of living.

### Fort

The reaction in many places throughout the Roman Empire to the unrest and threat to peace of the 3rd and 4th centuries AD was to build a fortification (CASTELLUM) for the protection of the population. The Lindenhof hill in Turicum was no exception and was also massively fortified. This Late Roman fort with its towers would later become the core of the medieval town. The walls of the fort still to this day support most of the retaining walls of the Lindenhof terrace.



Reconstruction of the Roman fort on Lindenhof as seen from present-day Limmatquai. Image Oliver Lüde, Winterthur.