

Communiqué de presse  
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## Origins of Roman Lutetia : excavations on top of the Montagne Saint-Genève

A team of archaeologists of the Institut national de recherches archéologiques préventives (Inrap), directed by Didier Busson (Department of the History of Architecture and Archaeology of Paris at the Town of Paris) is at present bringing to light a new aspect of the history of Lutetia: one of the first quarters of habitations of the antique town. This preventive excavation, curated by the State (Ministry of Culture – DRAC/SRA Île-de-France), is being carried out on top of the Montagne Sainte-Genève.

### Antique levels under a 17<sup>th</sup> century convent

In 1632, in the old Rue du Faubourg Saint-Jacques, the convent of the Visitation was founded and built on François Mansart's plans. The building itself followed the line of the present Rue Saint-Jacques, but its garden stretched much further to the east, as far as the present Rue Lhomond.

Sold in 1903 by the Order of the Visitandines, the convent was demolished in 1903 to make place for the Institut de Géographie.

The excavation concerns part of the eastern wing of the cloister of this convent, set back from the line of the Rue Saint-Jacques. Its foundations have been found as well as a thick layer of vegetal earth of its garden.

Under these levels and protected by them, the remains of the ancient town have just been discovered.

### A quarter of habitations

The monumental Roman installations of Lutetia rise in tiers over the northern slope of the Montagne Saint-Genève with, on top, the forum (Rue Soufflot) and its baths (rue Gay Lussac), then the theatre (Rue Racine), the baths of the College de France (Rue des Ecoles), lower down the baths of Cluny (Boulevard Saint-Germain), and lastly to the east, the amphitheatre (Rue Monge).

On the contrary, to the south, the summit of the plateau is only occupied by dwellings.

### A street under Emperor Augustus

The present excavation has revealed the existence of a Roman street that can be dated from the reign of Augustus (27 BC – 14 AD). Its creation was preceded by a small pioneer installation, still during the reign of Augustus, doubtless intended to prepare the site before the foundation of the Roman town. One of the objectives of this research was to give a precise date to this very first installation. Six metres wide, the street was bordered, from the beginning, by ditches. Afterwards it was subjected to a series of refills until its abandon in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. Slightly cambered, it was made up of gravel and small stone fillings.

Successive improvements included the constitution of gutters and side pavements. Along this street houses were constantly rebuilt, keeping the same orientation, respecting the original plots, but with different internal dispositions.

The first houses were built of cob walls reinforced by wattle fencing and resting on stringer beams. The floors were of beaten earth. The excavation should improve our knowledge of these first states of private architecture and to date them with more precision.

From the second third of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, masonry was progressively used. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, more sophisticated states appear, in particular elements of private baths with paving and systems of heating from the ground (hypocaust). Elements of paintings on walls that have usually collapsed are also present.

### **The abandon of the quarter in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century**

During the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD the quarter was progressively abandoned, the rubble stones of the masonry were partly recuperated, often leaving for archaeologists only "phantoms" of walls, of floors and of objects of everyday life. Human occupation was restricted to the monumental centres then in the Île de la Cité, protected from the 4<sup>th</sup> century by a rampart.

This vast movement of the shrinking of towns can be observed all over Gaul. One had to wait fourteen centuries and installation of the Convent of the Visitation for the town to regain the lost land.

### **Inrap**

With more than 1,800 collaborators and researchers Inrap is the largest French archaeological organization and one of the foremost in Europe. A public research establishment, it carries out most of the archaeological evaluations and excavations in France, in partnership with private and public property developers, i.e. more than 2,500 excavation sites a year in metropolitan France and in the D.O.M. (French overseas departments). Inrap collaborates regularly with the recognised archaeological services of the territorial collectivities.

Site: Université Pierre et Marie Curie

Scientific control: Regional Service of Archaeology (Drac – Île-de-France)

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The Department of the History of Architecture and Archaeology of Paris Permanent secretariat of the Commission of Old Paris, incorporated into the Department of Cultural Affairs of the Mairie of Paris in 2004, the Dhaap is a recognised archaeological service. It groups specialised researchers in archaeology of Paris, who carry out studies, establish evaluations and take part in some important excavations such as, recently, that of the College Sainte-Barbe, in partnership with Inrap.

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