



Paris, 3 June 2013

THE POLICE HEADQUARTERS AND THE INSTITUT NATIONAL DE RECHERCHES ARCHÉOLOGIQUES PRÉVENTIVES OPEN A WINDOW INTO THE HISTORY OF PARIS

The police headquarters (PH) and the Institut National de Recherches Archéologiques Préventives (Inrap) invite you to travel back in time and to look through a window into the history of Paris on the occasion of an exceptional presentation of the 300 m² of preventive archaeological excavations realized in the center of the Ile de la Cité, at 2 rue Lutèce, within the walls of the police headquarters. This research, taking place in advance of the construction of a new public reception hall, is lead by four specialists of Parisian urban archaeology and one physical anthropologist.

For the 4th edition of the National Archaeology Days, the police headquarters, in collaboration with Inrap, will welcome the public free of charge on Saturday 8 and Sunday 9 June, from 10:00 to 18:00. Visitors will be able to discover the profession of archaeology through a photographic exhibit and follow a guided visit of the excavations. Novices and knowledgeable visitors alike will thus learn about the history of the capital, from its creation until today, through discussions with the archaeologists.

What can you discover on the Ile de la Cité?

The history of the Cité begins with the gradual emergence of a sand bank in the Seine river bed starting in the Neolithic period. The archaeologists, directed by Xavier Peixoto, are working to obtain a better understanding of the geological formation of the Ile and its evolution over time. The research will be possible in the deepest layers of the site once all of the archaeological remains have been uncovered.

The emergence of the urban phenomenon in Paris (the distant origins of the Gallic Lutèce) has always played a major role in history and is the subject of debate in the archaeological community. Recently, some archaeologists proposed that the Cité of the *Parisii* was implanted in the meander of the Seine at Nanterre. In effect, though Cesar placed Lutèce on an island, no remains from the Gallic period have been discovered on the Ile de la Cité.

At the beginning of the Gallo-Roman period, the center of Lutèce was developed on the Sainte-Geneviève mountain. The Ile de la Cité was then the site of craft and commercial activities linked to the river port. At the beginning of the 4th century, the Ile was fortified and surrounded by ramparts. It then became the center of the city. Earlier excavations on the rue de Lutèce had already revealed modest constructions and a street connecting the basilica of the flower market at the “Palais”, a large administrative or military building, now buried beneath the Palais de Justice.

The current archaeological excavations are being conducted at the location of the modern church of Saint-Éloi, reconstructed in 1632 by order of the Barnabites. In 635, under the direction of Saint-Éloi and the protection of King Dagobert 1st, a female monastery was founded, dedicated to Saint-Martial of Limoges, today known as Saint-Éloi.

What were the first discoveries?

Since mid-April, the archaeologists have revealed the south-east angle of the nave of the church of the Barnabites and part of its cloister. Their task is to find all of the elements related to the history of this religious establishment since its Merovingian origins. Its robust masonry nearly obliterated the earlier layers. In this structure, Medieval lapidary elements were re-used in the foundations of the 17th century church. Inside the cloister, Medieval graves are preserved. Around ten of them, attributed to the 13th - 14th centuries are currently being excavated. Some contain incense vases. These graves are attributed to a period during which the monks of Saint-Maur-des-Fossés overcame the nuns, who were sent away for supposed misconduct in 1107.

As of today, no artefacts linked to the church and cemetery of the nuns have been found. If confirmed, this absence of evidence would support the hypothesis that the original church founded by Saint-Éloi occupied the location of the Saint-Martial oratory, which no longer exists, erected a few dozen meters to the east of the current excavation.

The Antique layers have not yet been excavated. The oldest layer currently identified is five meters below the current ground level. It corresponds to a flood deposit containing pottery dated to approximately the beginning of the modern era. Other more ancient layers could thus be present.

TWO INSTITUTIONS AT THE HEART OF HISTORY

The police headquarters

Since its creation in 1800, the police headquarters, whose main office is located in the center of the Ile de la Cité in Paris, has ensured the safety and liberty of all those who inhabit or work in Paris and its suburbs, as well as those who come to visit our capital.

The approximately 46,000 women and men, including 30,000 police officers and 8,500 firefighters, composing the force today constitute the main “human force” of the city of Paris and its suburbs. But in addition to the personnel who ensure these activities, this institution is a vector of operations, innovation and modernization. For the past two centuries, the PH has devoted all of its resources to serving the population by combatting delinquency, informing citizens of impending natural or technological catastrophes and urban, road or sanitary risks. It also provides high quality public services to its citizens through the delivery of administrative titles and the realization of unequalled expertise missions, such as in technical and scientific police operations.

L’Inrap

With more than 2000 collaborators and researchers, Inrap is the largest archaeological research structure in France and one of the most important in Europe. As a national research institute, it realizes around 1500 diagnostic operations and 250 excavations per year, in partnership with private and public developers in metropolitan France and its overseas territories. Its missions also include the scientific exploitation of the results and the diffusion of archaeological knowledge to the public.

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