

EARLY MUD-BRICKS IN GERMANY

First I have to excuse myself - when this admirable invitation arrived two weeks ago I was not in Germany. On coming back it was too late for me to make more investigations into our very important subject.

In our popular literature we read that there were not mud-bricks in Germany before Roman times, that is before the first century after the birth of Christ.

But since 1950 excavations have been made on a mountain near the Danube in South Germany, called Heuneburg near Hundersingen in Wurttemberg. On top of a hill a Celtic castle was found. Six periods were identified, the first dating from the 6th century before Christ, the last uncertain, but maybe from the latest Hallstatt period or the beginning of the "urnfields" period.

Period IV, of the late Hallstatt period (5th century), shows a long wall of mud-bricks, more than 250 meters long. Towers project from the wall to a distance of 9 meters.

The whole wall is built upon foundations of broken limestone, under which lies a bed of gravel.

The mud-brick wall is 3 meters thick.

The bricks were formed in moulds and dried by air. They were roofed over. The inner or outer surfaces have a thin plaster, to protect them against water and wind. One has not to forget, that the climate was already very damp by this time. It seems that this plaster was renewed once every year; its physical composition is not yet clear. At the moment we are investigating whether the material of the plaster is the same as that of the mortar between the bricks.

Traces in the ground between the walls show that the houses were floored with flagstones of the same material. They come from the same period. We can therefore speak of a real mud-brick culture.

The wall of mud-bricks may have been erected under the influence of Mediterranean culture. It is said to be the only one in existence north of the Alps. But it lasted only for a short time.

This very important monument was destroyed by fire during the late Hallstatt period. The following period used quite different techniques. Mud-bricks were forsaken for several centuries north of the Alps.

After a long space we found in TRIER on the river MOSEL two years ago a few remains of a mud-brick wall, at a site near the bath of the Roman emperor's residence.

These remains belong to the first century after Christ.

The Romans soon came to prefer bricks and used mud-bricks only for buildings of minor importance in the German provinces. In the Middle Ages and later on we have nothing of this kind in our architecture. The reason why is, however, another story.

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