



Joseph P. Huffman

# The Imperial City of Cologne

From Roman Colony to  
Medieval Metropolis (19 B.C.-1125 A.D.)

Amsterdam  
University  
Press

## The Imperial City of Cologne

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# The Imperial City of Cologne

*From Roman Colony to Medieval Metropolis*  
(19 B.C.-A.D. 1125)

*Joseph P. Huffman*

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Cover illustrations: Emperor Augustus Caesar (14-24 A.D. by Kyllos?) (left), and Grosses Romanisches Stadtsiegel (ca. 1149) (right)

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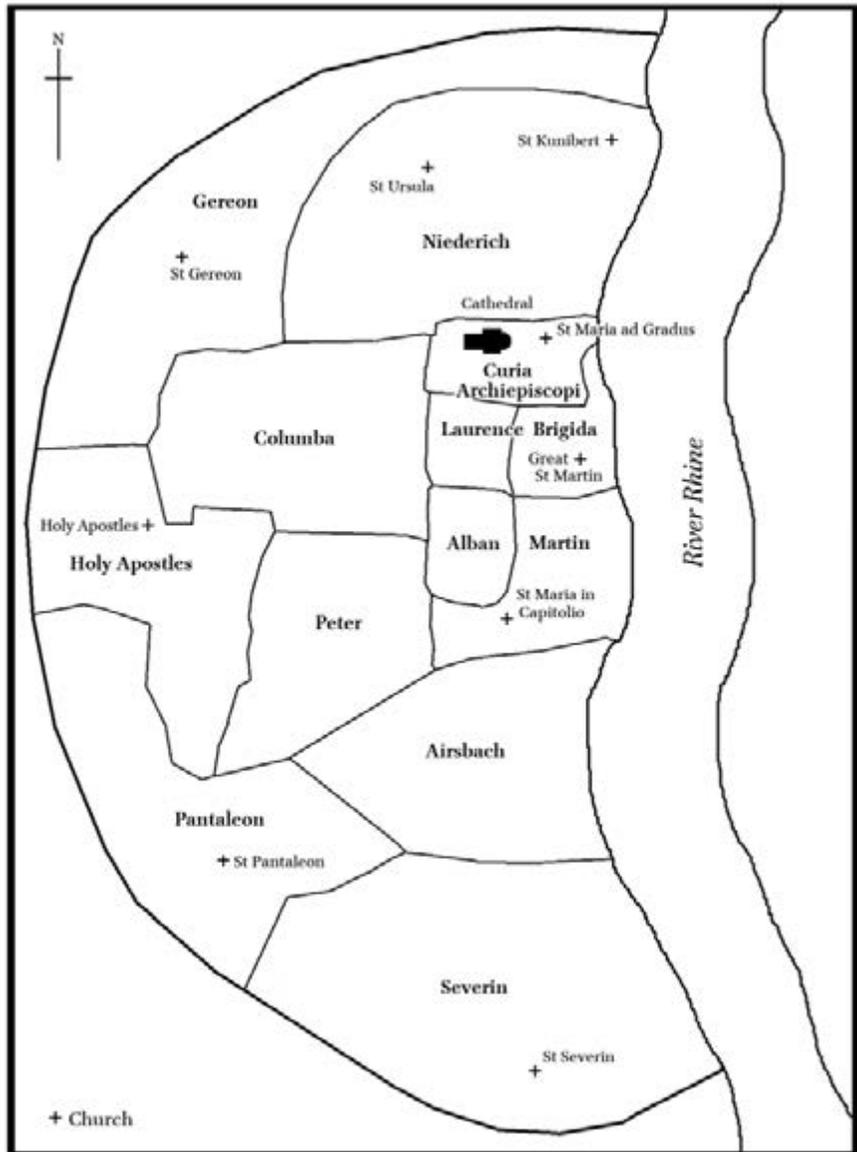
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## Map Medieval Cologne



The parishes and districts of medieval Cologne

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# Foreword

## Historic Preservation and European Urban History

On Tuesday 3 March 2009, at 1:58 p.m., the Cologne city archive suddenly collapsed into a watery crater where its foundation had previously stood. The six-story edifice had been undermined by slipshod excavation work for a new U-Bahn metro line, resulting in the shocking pile of rubble that once functioned as the largest municipal archive in Germany and as one of the few to have survived the bombings of World War II completely intact. As former archivist Eberhard Illner told the *Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger* newspaper, “It’s a catastrophe, not just for the city of Cologne but for the history of Europe.” Though all staff members and visitors miraculously escaped the shuddering building before its downfall, two men living in the adjacent apartment buildings were tragically drawn into the massive rubble pit by the collapsing earth and lost their lives. Many of the 65,000 archival documents (dating from the year 922) were damaged beyond repair, and the subsequent restoration and reconstitution of the surviving yet now widely scattered holdings will be the work of a generation while the completion of a costly new facility in which to house them has been burdened by the city’s fiscal constraints. Digitizing fuzzy and often unreadable microfilms from the 1960s remains the only viable option for the interim period, which has brought medieval manuscript research in particular to a virtual standstill for the time being.<sup>1</sup>

This human, historical, and cultural tragedy served as the motivation to produce the present volume. As the shock of it all settled into a sad realization that new archival research on premodern Cologne would likely prove unfeasible for the remainder of my own professional career, it also gradually dawned on me that a signal contribution to the ongoing historical preservation of Cologne’s history could still be made. Although the premodern histories of major European cities in England, France, the Netherlands, Italy, and Spain have been written in English,<sup>2</sup> Cologne has

1 Bettina Schmidt-Czaia, „Einsturz, Bergung und Wiederaufbau: das Historische Archiv der Stadt Köln,“ in Joachim J. Halbekann, Ellen Widder, and Sabine von Heusinger, eds., *Stadt zwischen Erinnerungsbewahrung und Gedächtnisverlust* [Stadt in der Geschichte. Veröffentlichungen des südwestdeutschen Arbeitskreises für Stadtgeschichtsforschung 39] (Ostfildern: Thorbecke Verlag, 2015) 375-386.

2 For example, Christopher Brooke and Gillian Keir, *London 800-1216: The Shaping of a City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); William Page, *London: Its Origin and Early*

yet to have a comprehensive history produced either in English, let alone in German, though it was by far the largest medieval German city.<sup>3</sup> Lacking

*Development* (London: Constable, 1923); Caroline Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages: Government and People, 1200-1500* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Simone Roux and Jo Ann McNamara, *Paris in the Middle Ages* [Middle Ages Series] (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); John Baldwin, *Paris, 1200* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010); Joëlle Rollo-Koster, *Avignon and Its Papacy 1309-1417: Popes, Institutions, and Society* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015); Chris Wickham, *Medieval Rome: Stability and Crisis of a City, 900-1150* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Julia H. M. Smith, ed., *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West: Essays in Honour of Donald A. Bullough* (Leiden: Brill, 2000); Andrea Gamberini, ed., *A Companion to Late Medieval and Early Modern Milan: The Distinctive Features of an Italian State* (Leiden: Brill, 2015); Giovanni Tabacco, *The Struggle for Power in Medieval Italy: The Structures of Political Rule* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Gene Brucker, *Florence: The Golden Age, 1138-1737* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Carol Lansing, *The Florentine Magnates: Lineage and Faction in a Medieval Commune* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); John Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Medieval Florence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Thomas Madden, *Enrico Dandolo and the Rise of Venice* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Ellen E. Kittell and Thomas F. Madden, eds., *Medieval and Renaissance Venice* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Thomas F. Madden, *Venice: A New History* (New York: Penguin, 2012); David Chambers and Brian Pullan, eds., *Venice: A Documentary History, 1450-1630* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); Steven A. Epstein, *Genoa and the Genoese 958-1528* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Paul Arthur, *Naples from Roman Town to City-State* (London: British School at Rome, 2002); Caroline Astrid Bruzelius and William Tronzo, *Medieval Naples: An Architectural and Urban History, 400-1400* (New York: Italica Press, 2011); Paul Oldfield, *City and Community in Norman Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Patricia Skinner, *Medieval Amalfi and Its Diaspora 800-1250* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); James M. Murray, *Bruges, Cradle of Capitalism 1280-1390* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); David Nicholas, *The Metamorphosis of a Medieval City: Ghent in the Ages of the Artevelde, 1302-1390* (Leiden: Brill, 1987); David Nicholas, *The Domestic Life of a Medieval City: Women, Children, and Family in Fourteenth-Century Ghent* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985); David Nicholas, *Medieval Flanders* (New York: Longman, 1992); Elka Klein, *Jews, Christian Society & Royal Power in Medieval Barcelona* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009); Stephen P. Bensch, *Barcelona & Its Rulers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Maria Asenjo-González, ed., *Oligarchy and Patronage in Late Medieval Spanish Urban Society* [Studies in European Urban History 10] (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009); Carolina Carl, *A Bishopric Between Three Kingdoms: Calahorra, 1045-1190* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); and Jeff Fynn-Paul, *The Rise and Decline of an Iberian Bourgeoisie. Manresa in the Later Middle Ages, 1250-1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). Margret Wensky's brief article "Erwerbstätige Frauen in Paris, London, und Köln im Mittelalter," in Günther Hödl, Fritz Mayrhofer, and Ferdinand Opll, eds., *Frauen in der Stadt* [Beiträge zur Geschichte der Städte Mitteleuropas 18] (Linz: 2003) 137-150 has been the only intra-regional study of any urban history subject that included Cologne since my 1998 book (see below note 3).

3 The only two anglophone monographs on medieval Cologne published to date are Paul Strait, *Cologne in the 12th Century* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1974); and Joseph P. Huffman, *Family, Commerce, and Religion in London and Cologne: Anglo-German Emigrants, c. 1000-c. 1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998; rpt. 2002). Of the long-planned 13-volume *Geschichte der Stadt Köln* series sponsored by the *Historische Gesellschaft der Stadt Köln*, just five

such an available history in one or two volumes, Cologne has not been well integrated into the wider historiography of premodern European urban history, even though it was equal in size to any city of the Low Countries and as dominant in English trade as any other European city. And indeed the absence of the German Kingdom's largest and most powerful city is symptomatic of the fact that German urban history as a whole finds little if any place in the historiography of premodern urban development in Europe.<sup>4</sup>

And so I have worked over the last several years to sequester time amid many other scholarly projects, administrative assignments, and courses taught to produce this first volume on Cologne's premodern history, which considers its evolution from a Roman military outpost into a medieval Rhineland metropolis by the end of the twelfth century. What appears here will hopefully go some way toward filling the historiographical gaps mentioned above as well as providing a Rhineland perspective on the perennial

have been published to date, and of these two cover portions of premodern history. Volume 1 by Werner Eck, *Köln in römischer Zeit. Geschichte einer Stadt im Rahmen des Imperium Romanum* (Cologne: Greven Verlag, 2004) was well received. Volume 3 remained unfinished at the death of its assigned author, Hugo Stehkämper, in 2010. Journalist and historian Carl Dietmar has since edited Stehkämper's typescript into publishable form, and the volume finally appeared in the spring of 2016 as *Köln im Hochmittelalter*. This volume is not as expansive as its title suggests, as it only covers the years 1074-1288 (critical though they are) and is essentially a reiteration of Stehkämper's previous publications on this time period. Carl Dietmar and Werner Jung have expanded their popular paperback *Kleine Illustrierte Geschichte der Stadt Köln*, 10th ed. (Cologne: Bachem Verlag, 2009) into the handbook *Köln. Die große Stadtgeschichte* (Cologne: Klartext Verlag, 2015), which joins Barbara and Christoph Driessen, *Köln. Eine Geschichte: Vom Urwald zur Millionenstadt* (Cologne: Greven Verlag, 2015) as one-volume *populärwissenschaftlich* surveys of Cologne's entire history, but they are no substitutes for a thorough and scholarly exposition of premodern Cologne. Thus, no comprehensive history of medieval Cologne has been produced in either German or English since the first three of Leonard Ennen's pioneering five-volume work, *Geschichte der Stadt Köln, meist aus den Quellen des Kölner Stadt-Archivs* (Cologne: L. Schwann, 1863-1880).

4 The most recent example of the exclusion of German cities in monographs on medieval urban history is Marc Boone and Martha C. Howell, eds., *The Power of Space in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe: The Cities of Italy, Northern France, and the Low Countries* [Studies in Urban History (1100-1800) 30] (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013); and Patrick Lantschner, *The Logic of Political Conflict in Medieval Cities: Italy and the Southern Low Countries 1370-1440* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). Such a modern nation-state based definition of Cologne as German and thus separate from the Low Countries is belied by the fact that until 1795 the bishoprics of Liège and Utrecht were suffragans of the metropolitan province of Cologne. Only David Nicholas has done a laudable job of referencing Cologne as a comparative exemplar of medieval urban history in his books *The Growth of the Medieval City: From Late Antiquity to the Early Fourteenth Century* (London: Longman, 1977; rpt. New York: Routledge Press, 2014), *The Later Medieval City 1300-1500* (London: Longman, 1977), and most especially *The Northern Lands: Germanic Europe, c. 1270-c. 1500* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

scholarly debates about the impact of the migrations of Germanic tribes into the western provinces of the Roman Empire, the nature of post-Roman urban life during the Merovingian, Carolingian, and post-Carolingian eras in continental Europe, the effect of Viking incursions, and finally the roots of communal civic life in urban centers of the early twelfth century. May this volume help to broaden the vision of English-language historiography on the European Middle Ages through the inclusion of a great imperial city along the Rhine.<sup>5</sup> A second volume is already underway that will cover the period from 1125 to 1475 as Cologne evolved further from a European metropolis to an imperial free city.

5 As the overwhelming amount of scholarship published on the history of medieval Cologne is in German, the works cited in the footnotes will mostly be the essential German-language scholarship that any historian should be aware of when considering Cologne's history. To ease the linguistic challenge that may exist for anglophone readers I have translated into English all cited quotations from the original German.

# Prologue

## Natural History and Prehistoric Human Habitation

The fertile lowland region known as the Cologne Bight (*Kölner Bucht*) encompasses a variety of landscapes that have proved quite amenable to human habitation.<sup>1</sup> A terraced lowland area along the Rhine River's western shore, it radiates in a northwesterly arc from Königswinter in the south to Aachen in the west and Krefeld in the north. The terrace carved most deeply by the glacial evolution of the Rhine extends some ten kilometers inland from the river and contains ancestral debris from the Alps, Eifel, Hunsrück, and Westerwald mountains. Throughout the bight, sand and gravel accumulated wherever the river's ancient branches flowed fastest to the North Sea, whereas clay was left behind wherever they meandered.

The bottom terrace nearest the modern Rhine River has fed innumerable generations of Cologne's denizens through a fruitful combination of its sandy clay loam deposits with the bight's mild climate. The middle and top terraces located along the arc from Geilenkirchen to Erkelenz, Odenkirchen, and Gerresheim also produced exceptionally fruitful farmland, especially in the flood plains of nearby Jülich, Zülpich, and Euskirchen along the rivers Erft and Rur (Roer). The south and southwest reaches of this rich alluvial lowland expanse was complemented by the Münstereifel mountains and southern Rhineland Massif, which provided lead and silver ore, coal for iron smelting, clay for pottery and glass production, and slate, basalt, and trachyte for roads and public buildings. Only quality limestone was lacking and so was imported from the upper Mosel River valley. The environmental assets so critical to Cologne's medieval economy thus had a very ancient pedigree.

The eastern shore of the Rhine River by contrast (known as the *Bergisches Land*) possessed only a narrow strip of rich loamy soil along the riverside's bottom terrace, because the last Ice Age left deep deposits of heavy sand and sharply carved valleys throughout the middle terrace of the region. Instead of agriculture, therefore, this area contained extensive forests, which would

<sup>1</sup> A bight is a bend in the line between water and land producing an open bay: Friedrich Reinhard and Bernd Paffgen, *Mittelalterliche Burganlagen in Kölner Bucht und Nordeifel bis zum Ende des 13. Jahrhunderts* [Publikationen der Gesellschaft für Rheinische Geschichtskunde, neue Folge 12, Abteilung 1b] (Bonn: Habelt-Verlag, 2007).

prove invaluable as a wood and wood coal reserve once the left bank of the Rhine was substantially cleared for farming.<sup>2</sup>

The oldest surviving evidence to date of human habitation in Cologne's environs dates back to around 100,000 B.C., in the finely grained quartzite stone core (*Kernstein*) from Dellbrück and hand axe from Königsforst/ Porz-Heumar.<sup>3</sup> Around 35,000 B.C., Neanderthals followed by Cro-Magnons each in turn maintained their paleolithic hunter-gatherer cultures even after the Rhine become navigable, once its glacier cut a swath below the bottom agricultural terrace before a complete thaw at the close of the Würm glaciation period (ca. 10,000 B.C.).

The first Neolithic settlers brought farming and livestock breeding to the loamy bight zone only around 5,500 B.C. Their remnants were first discovered in Lindenthal during a 1930-1934 excavation that unearthed an oval village of some 3.25 hectares enclosed with palisade and ditch. Inside the defensive structure remained some 52 longhouses (some up to 36 meters long) and portions of 45 others, all complete with foundations and strewn with the distinctive pottery of the Band Ware Culture (*Bandkeramische Kultur*).<sup>4</sup> The Lindenthal community has been dated from the fifth to the fourth century B.C. and is exemplary of the dozens of such Band Ware settlements that have been unearthed in the Cologne Bight. In turn they were soon joined by Rössen Culture settlements with their flint tools and linear pottery, after which they both were replaced by successors of the late Neolithic Michelsberg Culture (*Michelsberger Kultur*).

The Bronze Age accompanied the arrival of the Bell-Beaker Culture (*Glockenbecherkultur*) in the third century B.C., whose people seem to have abandoned agriculture in favor of a solely pastoral cattle economy.<sup>5</sup> Then around 1,200 B.C. they in turn were replaced by new immigrants from the

2 Werner Eck, *Köln in römischer Zeit. Geschichte einer Stadt im Rahmen des Imperium Romanum* [Geschichte der Stadt Köln I] (Cologne: Greven Verlag, 2004) 22-30. These forests also proved frustrating mazes for the Roman soldiers pursuing Germanic raiders back across the Rhine.

3 W. Meier-Arendt, „Vorgeschichtliche Besiedlung im Stadtgebiet von Köln, Mainz,“ *Führer zu vor- und frühgeschichtlichen Denkmälern* 37 (Mainz: Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseum, 1980) 17-37, 63-72.

4 Gert Ritter, „Der Kölner Raum in vorrömischer Zeit,“ in Heiner Jansen et al., eds., *Der historische Atlas Köln. 2000 Jahre Stadtgeschichte in Karten und Bildern* (Cologne: Emons Verlag, 2003) 16-18; M. Dohrn-Ihmig, „Untersuchungen zur Bandkeramik im Rheinland,“ *Beiträge zur Urgeschichte des Rheinlandes* 1 (1974) 51-142; M. Dohrn-Ihmig, „Bandkeramik an Mittel- und Neiderrhein,“ *Beiträge zur Urgeschichte des Rheinlandes* 3 (1979) 191-362.

5 Walter Lung, „Die Stein- und Bronzezeit im Stadtgebiet von Köln,“ *Kölner Jahrbuch für Vor- und Frühgeschichte* 3 (1958) 62-92; Jürgen Wilhelm, ed., *Das Grosse Köln Lexicon*, 2nd ed. (Cologne: Greven Verlag, 2008) 179.

middle Rhine Urnfield Culture (*Urnenfelderkultur*), best known for their custom of cremation and burial of the remains in urns within shallow graves. One of their burial grounds lies in Cologne's southern suburb of Bayenthal near the Bonn Gate (*Bonntor*).<sup>6</sup>

Iron Age technology appeared in the middle of the first century B.C. among the peoples of the overlapping Celtic *Hallstatt* and *Le Tène* cultures, the former likely only having marginal engagement with the Cologne Bight. Both introduced the custom of burial mounds so welcome among modern archaeologists and historians alike.<sup>7</sup> The most extensive burial grounds discovered to date lie in the Iddelsfelder Hardt south of Dellbrück and east of the Rhine, with an estimated 1,200 grave mounds averaging 30 meters in height and containing ceramic products, clay urns with ash remains, eating implements, jewelry, and armor.<sup>8</sup> Similar burial mounds have been found on the western side of the Rhine in Müngersdorf, Lindenthal Riehl, Longerich, and Worringen. From 450 B.C. onward these population clusters were associated with the rise of loose confederations of Celts, whose presence in a first-century settlement just south of today's Cologne cathedral has been materially confirmed by discovery of a handle attachment along the wall in the southeast corner of the later Roman city.<sup>9</sup>

Thus by the dawn of Roman and Germanic immigrations, the Cologne Bight's abundant resources had been utilized by a succession of Stone-, Bronze-, and Iron-Age peoples for some 100,000 years, with the Neolithic transition having been effected some 5,000 years beforehand. Given this deep record of natural and human history whose imprint is everywhere to be found even today, it is well worth remembering that neither the Germanic nor the Roman peoples brought either the first walled settlements or Neolithic and Iron-Age technologies to the region. Human agency, climate, and the natural environment had already combined to produce a Cologne Bight so advantageous, even so strategic, for human habitation that it would draw the imperial attention of Roman and Germanic rulers for another 1,500 years.<sup>10</sup>

6 Clara Redlich, „Ein Urnengräberfeld im Stadtgebiet Köln,“ *Rheinische Vorzeit in Wort und Bild* 4 (1941) 35-42.

7 Walter Lung, „Die Hallstatt- und Latènezeit im Stadtgebiet Köln,“ *Kölner Jahrbuch für Vor- und Frühgeschichte* 2 (1956) 71-101.

8 The 1949 excavation could only confirm 685 mounds with certainty.

9 The Celtic handle attachment is preserved in Cologne's Römisch-Germanisches Museum: Gerta Wolff, *Das Römisch-Germanische Köln*, 6th ed. (Cologne: Bachem Verlag, 2005) 28-29.

10 E. Bruntte, R. Immendorf, and R. Schlimm, *Die Naturlandschaft und ihre Umgestaltung durch den Menschen. Erläuterungen zur Hochschulexkursionskarte Köln und Umgebung* [Kölner Geographische Arbeiten 63] (Cologne: Geographisches Institut der Universität zu Köln, 1994).