

**TOPOI C-6-8: BATHING CULTURE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF URBAN
SPACE: CASE STUDY POMPEII
REPORT OF THE SIXTH SEASON, MARCH/APRIL 2018**

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Fig. 1: March/April 2018 Excavation Team Photo (© M. Trümper/FU Berlin)

The 2018 field season of the project took place in the Stabian Baths in March and April 2018. Several new trenches were excavated in the northern section, the palaestra and the service tract in order to provide a fuller understanding of the development of the earlier phases of the baths, as well as to clarify questions regarding the heating system and water management of the complex. Particularly with a view to the latter, several trenches that had been dug by earlier excavators were reopened or cleaned, in order to verify their observations and interpretations. In addition, standing remains and decoration were studied.

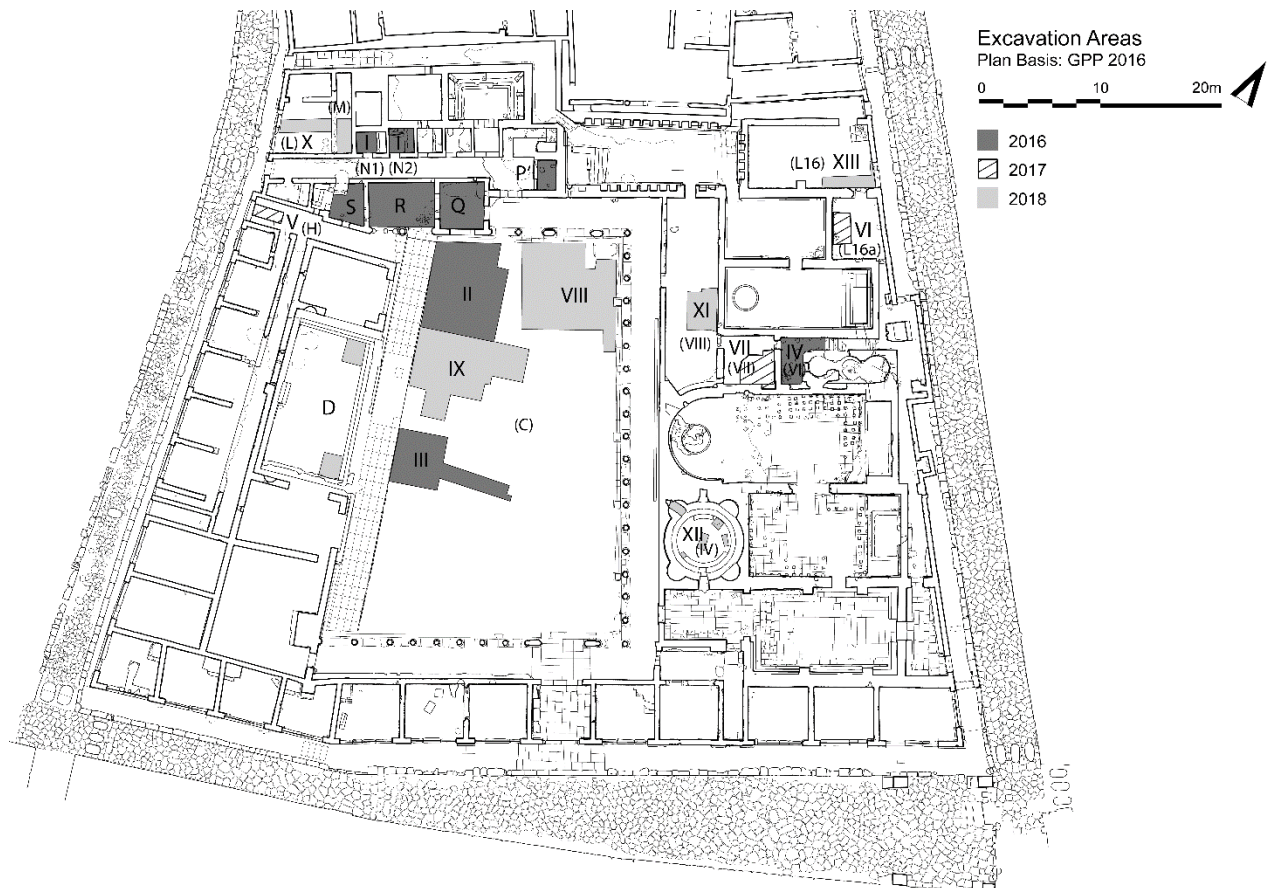


Fig. 2: Areas excavated or cleaned during the March/April 2018 season, marked in light grey (© Topoi Project/FU Berlin)

A focus of the work lay on providing a better understanding of the development of earlier bath phases in the area of the Palaestra. To this end, two large open areas were excavated in parts of the open space that were not investigated as part of the 2016 field season. In combination, the four areas now excavated in the palaestra provide an overview of nearly all of the northern, as well as the northern half of the western, open space.



Fig. 3: Overview of Area VIII in the NE corner of the Palaestra (© M. Trümper/FU Berlin)

The data from the two areas shows the main drain of the baths running through the palaestra from north to south, as had been identified by Amedeo Maiuri in the early 1930s. It was possible to identify changes in construction technique of the drain, indicating repeat repairs or modifications (fig. 3: cf. nos. 5 and 6). A large construction pit was identified in the northern part of the palaestra, which appears to be related to the construction of the north façade of the palaestra in its current state.

The key features of the palaestra excavations are series of parallel structures already identified by Sulze and Eschebach in their earlier excavations (fig. 3: nos. 1-4). These take the form of earth-mortar bonded stone fortifications with level upper surfaces and appear to have supported earlier colonnades of the palaestra. As such they show that the open space changed repeatedly in terms of layout and size during the history of the baths. The same is true of several semi-circular, niche-like structures that were identified in the western part of the palaestra (fig. 4). These provide further insights into the design of an earlier phase of the Stabian Baths, during which the palaestra bordered on a private house that occupied the south-western corner of the plot now covered by the Stabian Baths. As during the 2016 excavation season, parts of the floor of this earlier house were excavated. Material from beneath this floor, as well as finds from pits dug into it after abandonment, provide a chronological bracket for the period of occupation of this house.



Fig. 4: Area IX in the NW part of the Palaestra (© M. Trümper/FU Berlin)

Earlier developmental phases of the Stabian Baths were also investigated through trenches excavated in the north-eastern and north-western corners of the baths (fig. 2: areas X, XIII). In both areas, continuous poured earth mortar foundations following a common construction technique were found. Similar foundations had been found in 2016, where they belonged to walls of the original baths. Work in the NW and NE areas of the baths also showed a full occupation sequence for taberna L in vicolo del Lupanare (fig. 5) and service/ storage room L16 on via Stabiana.



Fig. 5: Excavations in taberna L (area X) (© Topoi Project/FU Berlin)

A further focus of the work carried out in this season was on technical aspects of the baths and their development. To this end, two areas were excavated to investigate drains and canals. These provided new insights into the development of the water management system – an aspect that has also been investigated as part of an MA thesis at the FU Berlin (Thomas Heide) and will be further investigated in future. Of particular interest was the discovery of entirely new drains in some parts of the baths (e.g. fig. 2, Areas VII, XI; fig. 6), as well as the identification of complicated rebuilding-work in some of the main drains leading away from the large latrine of the Stabian Baths (see above, fig. 3, nos. 5-6).



Further work on the heating system of the Baths was carried out next to the central furnace area. This showed that at the time of eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79 the furnace was not functional, having been destroyed previously (fig. 7). Work in this area also provided further insights into the development of earlier phases of the heating system, particularly of the men's section of the baths. Several razed walls were found, which must have belonged to predecessors of the currently visible complex with three cauldrons (fig. 8).



Fig. 7: Excavations in the furnace area (room VI, area IV) (© Topoi Project/FU Berlin)



Fig. 8: SFM model of room VI, area IV: walls of earlier phases (© Topoi Project/FU Berlin)

Excavation in room VIII (fig. 3, area IX) yielded an intriguing complex of features. A basin and channel system were found that were clearly related to the installation of the labrum in the women's caldarium. These did not serve for heating, as previously argued by Eschebach (and others before him), but were clearly related to the use of water (fig. 9). To the west of this basin, a large vaulted drainage channel was found that had partially been destroyed by the construction of the basin. The function and course of this drainage channel currently cannot be securely determined. Room VIII, Eschebach's "Holzhof" (wood storage courtyard) was clearly a central service room of the baths from the second phase onwards. Full assessment of this important room requires further large-scale excavation, which could not be carried out in the 2018 season.



Fig. 8: Room VIII, area IX: basin related to labrum of women's caldarium
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In addition to these excavations, several key sectors of the baths were cleaned in order to better understand the construction and details of the development of some of the standing remains (fig. 9). Parallel to the fieldwork, all finds from earlier seasons were evaluated in full. All work was documented digitally, including 3D Modelling of excavated areas and key structural elements by means of Structure from Motion (figs. 8, 10).



Fig. 9: Cleaned north-east corner of the Natatio D showing several phases of floor
(© Topoi Project/FU Berlin)



Fig. 10: SFM model of men's caldarium (© Topoi Project/FU Berlin)

Overall, it is now possible to develop a detailed understanding of the changes the Stabian Baths underwent in their c. 200 years of history (currently, four large phases: 2nd half 2nd c BC, after 80 BC, early Imperial/Augustan period, after 62 AD). The project has shown that some currently accepted key theses regarding the development of the Stabian Baths and the area of Pompeii they occupy need to be revised fundamentally. Overall, the new excavations have provided key data and filled important gaps in our understanding of the site, which will enable the project to produce a detailed reconstruction of its development as the final project outcome in the near future.