

**BATHING CULTURE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF URBAN SPACE:
CASE STUDY POMPEII
TOPOI C-6-8
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Fig. 1: September 2016 Excavation Team from the Freie Universität, the University of Oxford and the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg (Photo M. Trümper, © TOPOI/FU).

In September 2016, the project returned to the Republican Baths (VIII 5,36) to continue the work begun in 2015. As part of this field season all remaining open areas accessible for excavation without destruction of standing remains were excavated. The ground plan was completed and all major walls were documented by photogrammetry. Both aspects of the project were extended into room R of the adjacent building to the West, the Casa delle Pareti Rosse. Here, an area previously excavated was cleaned and earlier trenches reopened, in order to define the western terminus of the lot of the Republican Baths at lower levels (trenches PR1 and PR2). In addition to the traditional approach of excavation and documentation by hand, photographs and photogrammetries, data was gathered for the creation of Structure for Motion (SFM) models of key parts of the site.



Fig. 2: Areas excavated in the September 2016 season (© TOPOI / FU).

In 17 excavated areas across the Republican Baths and in the Casa delle Pareti Rosse, it was possible to gather as much archaeological evidence as possible regarding the development of the Republican Baths. Key areas for understanding this development remain the Laconicum and its surroundings (Areas 2 and 29), the deep well (Areas 21 and 22) and the central furnace (Area 3). The southern set of rooms, studied in areas 37 and 41, as well as Areas 5, 6 and 12 in the northern part of the site provided key evidence for use of the site postdating the Baths. Several elements predating the Republican Baths were investigated in Areas 4 and 25, providing new insights into the function of this part of Pompeii in the 4th to 2nd century BC.

It is now possible to reconstruct a general sequence of the site, for which archaeological levels can be traced back to the Mercato Eruption of Vesuvius around 7000 BC. Isolated pottery sherds

dating to the Bronze Age attest to the known occupation of some parts of Pompeii even at this early date. The main prehistoric eruption (AP3, dated to the 8th/7th century BC) can be identified in the stratigraphic sequence of the Republican Baths as the so-called “grey ash” deposits.



Fig. 3: The sequence of Eruption Deposits identified in Area 29 of the 2016 excavations (© TOPOI / FU).

For the period postdating the 7th century BC, isolated occupation debris points towards late Iron Age activity, but cannot be associated with any structural features. Postholes and a hearth, however, show that the plot at VIII 5,36 was in regular use in the Archaic Period.

From 4th / 3rd c BC onwards, the area investigated appears to have been used for some form of industrial activity. A rectangular tank identified running beneath the drain and northern wall of the later baths in Area 4 contained sediment remains indicating such use. A collapsed well and an adjacent small cistern beneath the later Baths floor in Area 25 add to the water features excavated in other parts of the site in 2015, suggesting that such industrial activity went on across the entire lot. It appears very likely that the deep well south of Areas 21 and 22, later incorporated into the baths, was constructed at some time in this period.



Fig. 4: Tank (filled with light grey material) dug into earlier Archaic levels and running beneath the drain and northern wall of the Republican Baths in Area 4 (view towards the South © TOPOI / FU).



Fig. 5: Collapsed well (center, loose fill behind and around scale) and adjacent cistern beneath the floor of the mens' apodyterium, Area 25 (view towards the East © TOPOI / FU).

The Republican Baths themselves were constructed in the second half of the 2nd century BC, covering most earlier features on the site. Work in the adjacent Casa delle Pareti Rosse (Area PR1) showed that the original layout of the baths extended westwards into the plot now occupied by the house.



Fig. 6: Outer face of the western wall of the Republican Baths identified in the adjacent property, Area PR1 (© TOPOI / FU).

The area around the Laconicum and the deep well appears to have been redesigned repeatedly in several larger phases, as had already been shown last year. These significantly affected the functioning of the baths: knock-on effects could be identified in the praefurnium, both labra, the male pools and the female tepidarium.



Fig. 7: NE corner of the Praefurnium showing later modifications to the heating system (© TOPOI / FU).

The Baths remained in use until the late 1st century BC, when they were demolished and the ground level across the entire plot raised to the level of the Casa della Calce to the north. This property took over the plot, turning it into a second peristyle garden with rooms to that house running along the northern side of the plot. At least two phases of use can be identified in the form of floors in this northern part. Within the open area of the garden, some quarry pits were dug. Some walls of the baths were reused in the new garden plot, and major modifications of the space, such as the construction of new rooms around areas 12 and 13, subdividing the earlier men's caldarium, undertaken.



Fig. 8: West section of Area 6, showing a full sequence of the vicolo north of the baths with archaic surface, pit filled with building rubble and floor level of rooms associated with the Casa della Calce (© TOPOI / FU).



Fig. 9: Section through raised floor levels post-dating the intact opus signinum floor of the Republican Baths indicating two phases of later occupation (© TOPOI / FU).

At a later point in the 1st century AD, possibly as a result of damage in the AD 62 earthquake, the site of the Republican Baths was once again separated from the Casa della Calce. All walls on the site – with the exception of the range of rooms in the south were razed to ground level and possibly used as building materials. This southern range of rooms, in contrast, was rebuilt and may have served as offices. Very large quarry pits were dug across the remainder of the site. Once they had been exhausted, they were filled with building debris – suggesting that the plot at VIII 4,36 may, in its final phase of occupation, have served as some kind of builders' yard.