

THE STABIAN BATHS

A STUDY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF POMPEIIAN CULTURE AND SOCIETY

INTRODUCTION

The Stabian Baths are located towards the centre of Pompeii in region 9. They were initially built as early as the second century B.C, with renovations happening often, and the most recent being after the earthquake in 62.

(Robinson et.al., 2019)

HELLENIC ORIGINAL V.S THE RENOVATIONS POST 69 A.D

According to Hans Eschebach, there are a proposed seven phases for the development of the Stabian baths, beginning at around the second century B.C. (DeLaine, 1988)

The first style is relatively simple and has five hip baths and a palaestra for exercising. These hip baths are then subbed out for immersion baths in the second style.

The third style includes the development of more rooms instead of such a large palaestra, and the addition of a house.

Henceforth from this phase across to the 7th, the development continues into a more roman style. (Fagan, 2001)

However, this proposal of styles is contested by some due to a lack of sufficient evidence for these distinctions.

Even with the use of Eschebach's theory, the original hip-baths are actually quite different from the original Greek bathing systems, indicating that even before the Stabian baths were constructed, there was a distinctive style to the Roman equivalent of the Hellenic baths.

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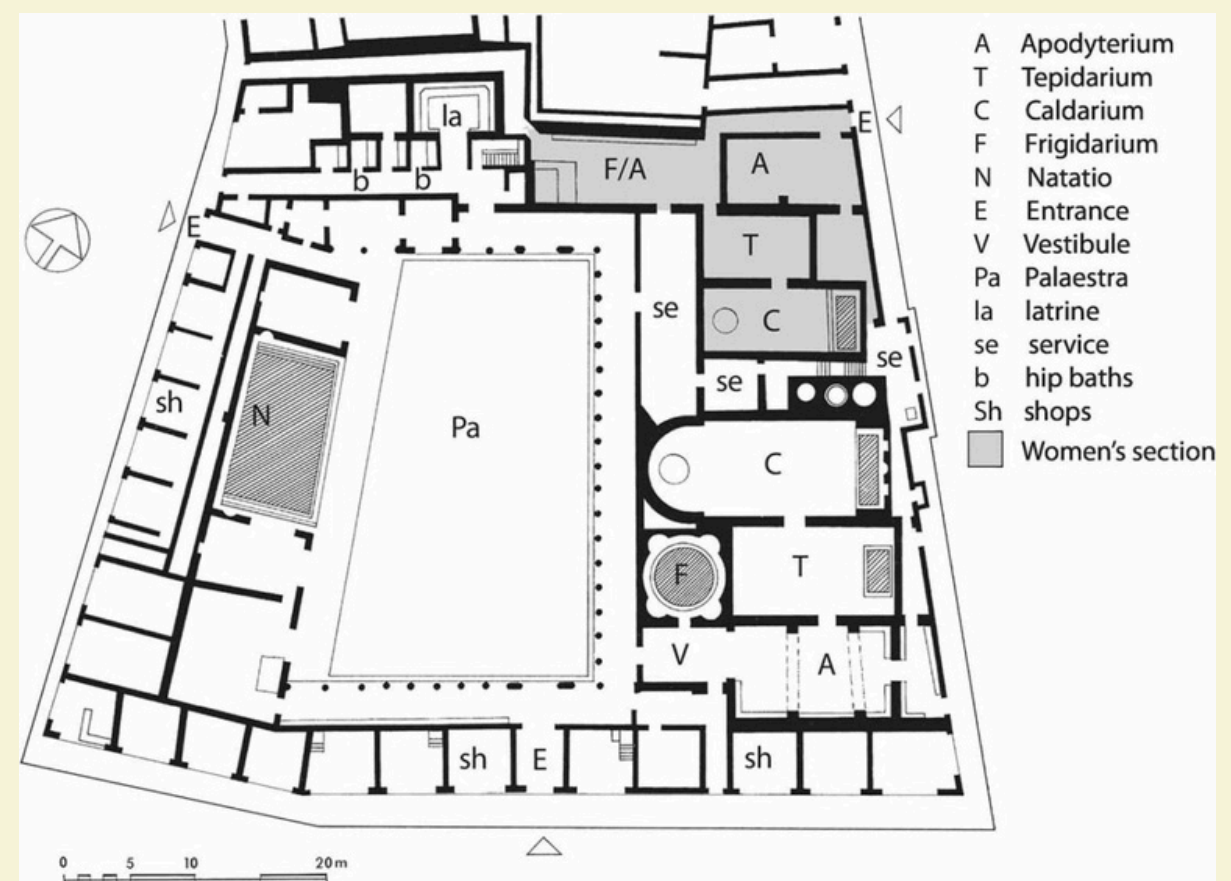
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BELOW: A PLAN OF THE STABIAN BATHS(YEGUL AND FAVRO, 2019)



GENDERED SPACES

the baths also show the cultural divides in Pompeii.

this site has a separate changing room (apodyterium) and bath that have been argued to be women-only spaces. the separate nature of this space is not overly common for baths to have, despite mixed bathing being occasionally banned.

The reason for this hypothesis is the lack of detail in these spaces. The rest of the baths are ornately decorated, with the other apodyterium having stucco ceilings (Fagan, 2001), but this part is noticeably plain, with the main decoration for the changing room being decorations of ducks on the walls. the ducks are also significant in pointing towards this space

being a women-only space due to them being signs of fertility and associated with the goddess Venus ((Ducks as symbols of love and fertility in ancient Rome, no date)

SOCIAL USE: SPACE

The baths would have been used for a range of purposes, including as a socialising and economic tool.

Bathing was considered a part of daily ritual, at around 1pm, the baths would have been filled with all sorts of people. In the baths, games were common, and sellers were often selling their wares (Fagan, 2013). The mixing of social classes also means that this space becomes significant in helping to up one's own social status by gaining invites to dinners (Fagan, 2013). The Stabian Baths' location to the south-east of the centre of the town (Robinson et. al., 2021)

CONCLUSION

THIS SPACE IS SIGNIFICANT IN STUDYING AND UNDERSTANDING NOT ONLY POMPEII BUT ALSO BATHING CULTURE ACROSS THE ROMAN PERIOD, BUT ALSO IN UNDERSTANDING HOW THE BATHS INTERACT WITH THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE SPACE, AND AIDS OUR HYPOTHESISING ON THE USE OF BATHS AND HOW THEY CHANGE ACROSS ROMAN ANTIQUITY.