

## The Sims IV *Balneum* Building:

### Interconnections and Potential Templates in Central Italian Bath Design

In the simulation game, The Sims, gamers can construct original homes and businesses. While imagination is a core component of The Sims, there are pre-designed rooms – kitchens, bedrooms, bathrooms, etc. – and there are limits to how architecturally creative players can be. In a similar vein, the architecture of small- and medium-sized public baths in Central Italy follows model designs that evolve as different bathing customs become popular or outmoded.

Public bathing in Central Italy was a foundational aspect of Roman society with archaeological roots dating back to the second century BCE, (Tsiolis 2013) Discussion concerning those who bathed in these private establishments have been conducted, but less attention has been paid to those who planned these baths and the steps taken to realize these designs. (Fagan 1999; Yegül 2010) Benefactors and architects constructing these baths paid close attention to the physical environs of the lots into which these baths were set, changes in bathing habits, and previously constructed baths from which inspiration was drawn. By looking at the evidence, or absence of evidence, for divided bathing sectors for men and women, the overall organization of heated versus unheated bathing rooms, and the installation of certain features in baths that were constructed and renovated between the second century BCE and the fifth century CE, a pattern highlighting the interconnection of Central Italian bath planners emerges.

Early Roman baths are thought to exhibit the social *mores* of the communities in which they were constructed. Separate sections for men and women were installed in the late Republican and early Imperial Fregellae Baths, the Republican Baths at Pompeii, and the Central

Baths at Aquinum. (Tsiolis 2013; Mania and Trümper 2018; Ceraudo 2019) Yet more frequently than not, the public baths of Central Italy do not feature distinct suites for men and women bathers, even after a purported law of Hadrian banned mixed-gender bathing in the second century CE. (*HA* 18.11) By diachronically examining the architectural and epigraphic record of baths in Central Italy, it appears that such a custom of designing baths with gender-separated sectors, particularly in smaller towns, was not part of the architectural zeitgeist from the first century CE. Evidence for single-gender facilities and restricted bathing by the time of day is also considered, as well as the literary attestations for mixed bathing.

Certain freedom when designing these buildings is clear from the idiosyncratic nature of each bath, though there are caveats. (Maréchal 2020, 20) The inclusion of certain rooms is standard depending on the period in which the baths were built, but a strict arrangement of these rooms is not apparent. Stepping back from individual rooms, some commonalities develop. I propose a basic typology for the laying out of heated and unheated rooms; when a *palaestra* is present in the archaeological record, its placement with respect to the bathing rooms also falls into general categories. Schematics of differently heated sectors reveal more similarities than differences in bath plans. The interrelationship of these sectors' dimensions also allows for insights into preliminary design processes. Moreover, the ever-cited Vitruvius falls by the wayside when scrutinizing the actual organization and orientation of these thermal subdivisions, thus allowing for the consideration of non-Vitruvian influence and communications between bath planners.

The final section of this paper examines the shared evolution of bath planning, particularly in the renovations of baths that were operational for long periods. Benefactors and architects at several sites worked to keep up with bathing trends in these public establishments.

Although there is little evidence for traveling architects or architectural firms, the archaeological record presents a picture of traveling concepts and models. This paper argues that while baths in Central Italy may at first glance appear distinct, there are general ties that bind them in a way that emphasizes the interconnected relationship of the people who built these facilities.

### Bibliography

- Ceraudo, G. 2019. "Aquinum (Castrocielo, FR). Le Terme Centrali o Vecciane." In *Le Terme Pubbliche nell'Italia Romana (II secolo a.C. – fine IV d.C.)*, edited by M. Medri and A. Pizzo, 67-80. Rome: Roma TrE-Press.
- Fagan, G.G. 2002. *Bathing in Public in the Roman World*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Tsiolis, V. 2013. "The Baths at Fregellae and the Transition from Balaneion to Balneum." In *Greek Baths and Bathing Culture. New Discoveries and Approaches* Vol. BABESCH Annual Papers on Mediterranean Archaeology Supplement 23, by Sandra K. Lucore and Monica Trümper, 89-112. Walpole, MA: Peeters.
- Trümper, M. 2018. "Gymnasium, Palaestra, Campus and Bathing in Late Hellenistic Pompeii: A Reassessment of the Urban Context of the Republican Baths (VIII 5, 36)." In *Development of Gymnasia and Graeco-Roman Cityscapes*, edited by U. Mania and M. Trümper, 87-114. Berlin: Edition Topoi.
- Yegül, F. 2010. *Bathing in the Roman World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.