

Bagno Grande 2023: diachronic and spatial news

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Questo contributo presenta alcune delle novità emerse dalla campagna di scavi 2023 presso il santuario termale etrusco-romano del Bagno Grande di San Casciano dei Bagni (SI). In particolare, nonostante prevalgono gli elementi di continuità piuttosto che di discontinuità tra la fase etrusca e quella romano imperiale, più dati testimoniano il complesso processo di 'manipolazione' del passato di età etrusca operato nella prima età imperiale come visibile sia dalla stratificazione del record votivo che della topografia del santuario. Accanto alla permanenza di materiale di età etrusca (tardo-ellenistica in particolare) vengono discusse preliminarmente quelle che potrebbero costituire le prime evidenze strutturali del periodo etrusco e pre-imperiale dallo scavo in corso.

Introduction: the 2023 excavation season at Bagno Grande

The Etruscan and Roman sanctuary of Bagno Grande, with architectural and monumental phases dating back primarily to the Roman Imperial period, was linked to the presence of a thermo-mineral spring, located to the north of the shrine¹ (*Fig. 1*). The 2023 excavation season has clarified that the building consisted of a small temple, with a tetrastyle entrance to the south and a central sacred pool². From the early 1st century A.D. until the decommissioning of the sanctuary that took place at the beginning of the 5th century A.D., various actions of reconstruction took place (*Fig. 2*). Numerous traces of these activities are preserved in the building sequences and associated stratifications. The other structures on the site that emerged partially covering the Roman ones, especially in the northern part of the excavated area, belong to the late-Renaissance and modern periods. Despite the long hiatus after late antiquity, all structures continued to be in use for medical and healing purposes³. At least three major phases characterised the portico built after 1585 (*Fig. 2*, in dark grey) whose foundations were revealed by the excavation to lie directly on top of the Roman ruins, finding there a solid base within a context of clays that were otherwise a hostile environment for the support of the new structures.

¹ For the preliminary publications on the site of Bagno Grande, see MARIOTTI, TABOLLI 2021; MARIOTTI, SALVI, TABOLLI 2023; OSANNA, TABOLLI 2023; OSANNA, TABOLLI 2024; on the project, for an overall summary, TABOLLI 2023a with extensive bibliography, especially on the role of the thermo-mineral spring as the main focus of the research.

² In the southern part of the sacred building, three column bases of the entrance propylaeum have been identified. The two central plinths are preserved, one with an Attic base, while the third base is lost. A fourth column at the south-western corner probably collapsed between the 3rd and 4th centuries CE and completed the architectural system of the façade of the temple. Therefore, the sacred building must have had a tetrastyle entrance. Most recently see MARIOTTI, TABOLLI *forthcoming*. See also E. Mariotti below.

³ MORELLI 2021: 91-92; TABOLLI 2023C; FORTINI, LEDDA, MORELLI 2023: 80-83; on the resumption of medical activities in the late Middle Ages see CHELLINI 2002: 13-14.



Fig. 1: Bagno Grande: aerial view of the excavation area (photo by Gabriele Forti, © SABAP-SI and Municipality of San Casciano dei Bagni).



Fig. 2: Bagno Grande: plan of the structures and periodisation (elaboration by Emanuele Mariotti, © SABAP-SI and Municipality of San Casciano dei Bagni).



Fig. 3: Bagno Grande: western wall (photo by Mattia Bischeri, © SABAP-SI and Municipality of San Casciano dei Bagni)



Fig. 4: Bagno Grande: the legs of Apollo Sauroctonos (photo by Jacopo Tabolli, © SABAP-SI and Municipality of San Casciano dei Bagni)

The enlargement of the excavation to the west has also brought to light an elongated rectangular structure anchored to the western side of what remains of the small Roman temple after its destruction (*Fig. 2*, in light grey). It consists of at least two separated rooms and presents walls in mixed techniques, mainly made of small stones, and of fragments of reused Roman bricks. Although the material associated with this structure is still under investigation, the fact that it is covered by the post 1585 portico and itself covers the few late antique structures found to the north west (*Fig. 2*, in yellow), lead us to associate this building with the early archival mentions of the Bagno Grande, in the fifteenth century A.D., when the entire area of San Casciano underwent a new wave of thermal use for healing practices⁴. Underneath this modern structure, a long north to south wall has appeared further to the west (*Fig. 2*). Associated stratigraphic units are still under excavation but it clearly appears to be a Roman Imperial wall that underwent a series of transformations and marked a partition of the space, possibly identifying an enclosure, or temenos, surrounding the small temple and its spring (*Fig. 3*).

The complex phase of the dismantling of the sanctuary took place in the early 5th century A.D. The breaking up of a marble statue of a copy of Apollo Sauroctonos at the moment of the final closure of the sacred place, discovered during the 2023 excavation season, must belong to this phase. (*Fig. 4*). While this important evidence requires a focused study, especially because of the rare opportunity of finding this type of marble statue in context⁵, it is clear that the early 5th century A.D. is a time in which elements of destruction coexist with elements of preservation.

In this perspective, this contribution investigates the continuous renegotiation and interaction with the past as a characteristic of Bagno Grande throughout its existence. It is also an example of ‘manipulating’ the Etruscan past during Roman Imperial times. By using the concept of ‘manipulation’ we want to stress the physical interaction by those (priests and priestess, and more in general agencies allowed to access the area of the temple and its pool), who engaged with earlier ex votos and with parts of the Etruscan thermo-mineral sanctuary. In our case, these actions were operated by the Romans during the Imperial period. We will look both at ritual elements identified⁶ and at the first structural evidence of an Etruscan / pre-Imperial Roman phase at Bagno Grande⁷.

In this introduction it is important to stress how the preliminary results of the excavation continue to benefit from the close interaction between the Soprintendenza ABAP per le province di Siena, Grosseto e Arezzo, the Municipality of San Casciano dei Bagni and the University for Foreigners of Siena. This collaboration also resulted in a strategy for enhancing the protection of the site. While the acquisition of the nearby fields is in progress in order to expand the excavation, alongside the works for the new museum, a significant role of the Soprintendenza has been to fund and direct a new season of diagnostic analyses on the bronzes discovered in 2022 and 2023, involving the team members already conducting research on the field and in the lab⁸. This synergy will continue to mark significantly the spirit of this research and heritage project, in a constant aim to renegotiate achieved ideas and move beyond the borders between institutions and disciplines.

This paper consists of two different parts that should be considered as a whole. In the first part J. Tabolli presents a brief synthesis of the life of the sanctuary between the 3rd century B.C. and the 5th century A.D., stressing actions of reuse. In the second part, Emanuele Mariotti focuses on the discovery of Etruscan architectural evidence underneath the Roman Imperial small temple. Although the order of the two parts may appear reversed, we have chosen to present them in this order to link the new discoveries with the previous studies and especially with the discussion of the stratigraphy of the ex votos inside the sacred pool that we have already published.

(A S.)

⁴ FORTINI, LEDDA, MORELLI 2023; TABOLLI, BISCHERI *forthcoming*.

⁵ MARIOTTI, PAPINI, TABOLLI *forthcoming*.

⁶ See J. Tabolli below.

⁷ See E. Mariotti below.

⁸ The group, directed by the Author and by Wilma Basilissi for the conservation, is under the scientific coordination of Jacopo Tabolli: Paolo Piccardo and Roberto Spotorno from the University of Genova; Salvatore Siano, Juri Agresti, Daniele Ciofini and Iacopo Osticioli from the IFAC-CNR in Florence; Marco Giamello and Sonia Mugnaini from the University of Siena; Mauro Buonincontri, Maria Perla Colombini, Jeannette Lucejko, Erika Ribechini from the University of Pisa.

'Manipulating' the Etruscan past at Bagno Grande

In the preliminary publications of the results of the 2021-2022 excavation seasons, we outlined the complex action of dismantling an earlier "Etruscan" pool, among the rituals that took place around the years of the reign of Tiberius⁹, or possibly Claudius¹⁰. The deposition of hundreds of votive offerings – mainly bronzes and natural elements – under a thick layer of tiles, sealing the earlier pool, and the presence of a bronze representation of thunderbolt and of silt *kerounia* allowed us to read this evidence as the trace of a *fulgur conditum*¹¹. Statues, statuettes, and anatomical votives were assembled into this small area in groups. It is possible that, before the deposition into the pool, their location was already in a close connection with the Etruscan structure that surrounded the spring¹². The stratification within each group seems to follow a series of common rules. The uppermost part of the deposition in each group (corresponding to ex votos that were placed at the end of the ritual) consisted of representations of large appendages, such as arms, hands, feet, or legs. In at least three groups, underneath these large appendages, votive heads were deposited. At the bottom of each group, the largest statues functioned as the origin for each group. Infants in swaddling clothes and representations of babies are concentrated especially along the internal sides of the pool¹³. With the exception of these general trends, each group placed in the decommissioned and sealed Etruscan pool followed different patterns. It is interesting to outline, for example, how the western group finds its core with the tall trunk of an oak tree¹⁴, encircled by the three levels of a) arms, b) heads and c) a standing female statue¹⁵. The chronology of the ex votos ranges from the mid-3rd century B.C. to the early 1st century A.D. Although the excavation of the deepest part of the early pool has not ended yet and therefore new data could provide a larger time-period for the artefacts deposited into the pool, the concentration of ex votos reveals continuous actions of reuse of earlier offerings. In fact, we have observed how, even prior to the ritual action of the *fulgur conditum*, earlier votive artefacts were manipulated at the beginning of the 1st century A.D.¹⁶ This is the case of a polyvisceral plate that, in a 'second votive life' was added to a cylindrical base with the inscription mentioning the dedication by the slave Atimetus to Fortuna (Fig. 5)¹⁷. Although dating the polyvisceral plate is highly problematic because the comparanda are exclusively in terracotta¹⁸ – with the significant exception of the second polyvisceral plate discovered over the arms of Apollo in the same deposit¹⁹ – we have suggested a possible date around the 2nd century B.C. (based on the best known terracotta examples) for the first creation of the one that was subsequently reused²⁰. It is important to stress that this polyvisceral with cylindrical base was one of the last objects to be placed underneath the tiles, close to the swaddled infants, in the early 1st century A.D.; therefore, its position is not far from the conclusion of the entire ritual.

The presence and manipulation of earlier Etruscan artefacts during Roman Imperial times is also evident after the sealing of the '*fulgur conditum*', when the place became a *bidental*. The existence of offerings that had been excluded from the ritual burying of the lightning bolt is significant. In the sequence of votive depositions that took place between the second half of the 1st century A.D. and the late 4th century A.D. we encountered the presence of earlier, Etruscan, ex votos associated with later finds²¹. The *putto* in bronze, dating to the first half of

⁹ See especially TABOLLI 2023b: 105-107; most recently MARIOTTI 2023b.

¹⁰ TABOLLI *forthcoming*.

¹¹ TABOLLI 2023b: 101-102; See also TABOLLI 2023c: 236-237.

¹² TABOLLI 2023b: 105.

¹³ SALVI 2023.

¹⁴ TABOLLI 2023b: 108-109.

¹⁵ PAPINI 2023: 117-119; PAPINI 2024.

¹⁶ See also a preliminary mention of the "afterlife" of the bronze offerings at Bagno Grande in TABOLLI 2024.

¹⁷ Most recently TABOLLI, GREGORI 2023, with previous bibliography.

¹⁸ FABBRI 2004-2005; FABBRI 2019: 105-115. For the palaeopathological elements on terracotta polyvisceral plates, see, in particular, TRAVERSARI *et alii*.

¹⁹ TABOLLI 2023c: 240, fig. 17.2.

²⁰ For the chronological problem in identifying precise dates for this types of votives preserved only in bronze, see most recently TABOLLI 2024; for the general complexity of dating ex votos, see DE CAZANOVE 2015.

²¹ TABOLLI 2023b, fig. 8.13.



Fig. 5: Bagno Grande: polyvisceral plate (photo by Francesco Marsili, © SABAP-SI and Municipality of San Casciano dei Bagni)

the 2nd century B.C., offers the most evident case (*Fig. 6*)²². This bronze naked child wears a large bulla on his chest, held by a band, folded to the back. The right hand must have been grasping a small bird (which is not preserved) while the left held a fruit. An inscription in Etruscan runs along the right thigh, with the dedication:

persile.ancariale.amθnesle / eca.cver.clen.ceḡa / flereš.havenšl. / tenine.tlenaxeiš

Adriano Maggiani reads the inscription as follows: "On behalf of Ancari, (wife) of Amthne, this, as a sacred thing, in favour of her son, to the spring, is placed for (a vow) to be fulfilled."²³ At the end of the 1st century A.D., this small bronze statue was placed under the stone block on the inner face of the pool, carved with a bull's head in bas-relief that covered the overflow drainage channel²⁴. Indeed, it is probable that this stone block also represents the reuse of an earlier structure²⁵. The putto was deposited together with a Roman dancing *lar*, thus confirming a possible deposition after the Flavian reconstructions of the eastern sector of the small temple²⁶. Entering at different times into the pool, someone had manipulated this area of the deposit before the deposition of the bronze putto. Within a receptacle formed by reusing old and irregular blocks at the south-western edge of the apse of the renewed sacred pool had been placed an aniconic figure, an elongated arm, and a female figurine represented in the act of offering²⁷. These *ex votos* date between the 2nd and the 1st centuries B.C. Although we tend to exclude the use of the sacred pool for bathing and healing practices, as it functioned as the central focal point of the 'cella' for the small temple²⁸, and notwithstanding the fact that the spring itself was the deity worshipped from the earliest period (in the form of *Fleres Havensl*), the inside of the pool was certainly entered occasionally, as is demonstrated by this evidence of the moving votive objects. It was thus possible for some people to engage in a direct interaction with the most sacred space of the shrine²⁹.

The 2023 excavation campaign also brought to light a third example of 'manipulation' of the Etruscan past in Roman Imperial times, although in this case the object of the manipulation was in itself an expression of the transformations that were taking place in the sanctuary at the end of the 1st century B.C. Following the dramatic collapse of the western wall of the temple, in the early 4th century A.D., the process of rebuilding involved the reuse of earlier stone blocks (*Fig. 7*)³⁰. The new walls had an entirely new foundation: on the outside of the temple a continuous curb in *opus caementicium* guaranteed the stability and still preserved the external traces of its shuttering³¹; on the inside, the long fracture created by the collapse was filled in by tiles and small stones (*Fig. 8*). In the lowest course of the newly rebuilt wall, the moulded base of a *donarium* (*ex voto*) in travertine appeared, slightly outside of the inner face of the wall³². On the southern corner of this base, sticking slightly out of the line of the wall, could be seen the lower moulding of the *donarium*, with a characteristic *ovolo* shape. The side of the *donarium* towards the inner wall was partially cut. Furthermore, we observed the first letters carved of an Etruscan inscription, written on the southern side. It read [*f*]lere h. The rest of the inscription was not visible because the base had been inserted into the wall. In addition the first letter "θ" (*f*) is only partially visible because of the cut of the side. Employing a complex detachment process, the excavation and restoration team 'extracted' the base of the *donarium* while leaving the rest of the wall intact³³. This operation revealed not only the Etruscan text, but also an inscription made of two different two texts that converge towards the centre of the epigraphic

²² Most recently see TABOLLI, MAGGIANI 2023. On the putto also SALVI 2023: 148, fig. 10.18.

²³ MAGGIANI 2023:183, fig. 13.4.

²⁴ MARIOTTI 2023a: 40-41, fig. 3.13; on the system to regulate the overflow of the sacred pool, see also E. Mariotti below.

²⁵ Similarly to the case of the *donarium* that we will discuss below.

²⁶ BISCHERI 2023: 159, no. 18.

²⁷ SALVI 2023: 147-158, fig. 19.17; PACIFICI 2023: 207-208, no. 2, fig. 15.3; BISCHERI 2023: 155, no. 4. The receptacle, formed using pre-existing blocks coming from the partial dismantling of the southern edge of the "Etruscan" pool, is discussed in TABOLLI 2023b: 109-111.

²⁸ See the conclusions by E. Mariotti.

²⁹ It is important to stress how in the Etruscan period in all the inscriptions of dedication the only deity present is the Spring (the *Flere* of *Havens*). In Roman Imperial times we observe a multiplication of deities at Bagno Grande. On this passage between "one" deity to "multiple" deities, see MAGGIANI, GREGORI *forthcoming*.

³⁰ MARIOTTI 2023a: 38. In the first publication, the wall had been provisionally assigned to a pre-Roman period, see CAMPOREALE 2021.

³¹ MARIOTTI 2023a: fig. 3.10.

³² For a preliminary study on the *donarium* see TABOLLI 2024b.

³³ We would like to thank Carlo Brecciaroli and EcolB for conducting a perfect operation of detachment.



Fig. 6: Bagno Grande: the putto from San Casciano dei Bagni in the exhibition at Palazzo del Quirinale (photo by Jacopo Tabolli, © SABAP-SI and Municipality of San Casciano dei Bagni)

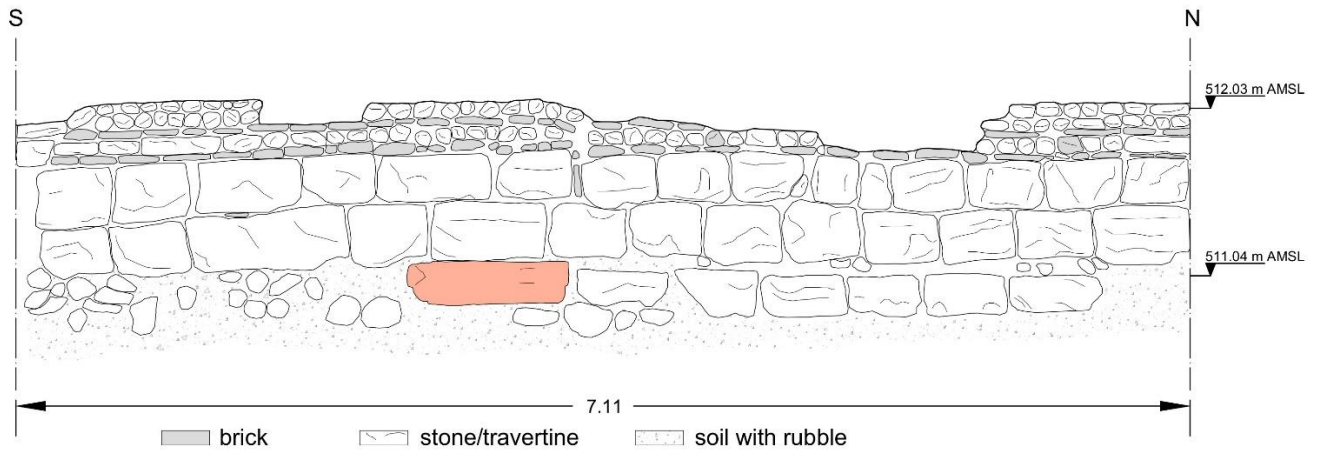


Fig. 7: Bagno Grande: western wall of the temple - inner face. The purple filling indicates the location of the donarium inserted into the wall (drawing by Emanuele Mariotti, © SABAP-SI and Municipality of San Casciano dei Bagni)



Fig. 8: Bagno Grande: detail of the donarium out of joint on the inner western face of the temple (photo by Jacopo Tabolli, © SABAP-SI and Municipality of San Casciano dei Bagni)



Fig. 9: Bagno Grande: travertine base of altar with bilingual inscription (photo by Jacopo Tabolli, © SABAP-SI and Municipality of San Casciano dei Bagni)

space: one in Latin and the other in Etruscan (*Fig. 8*). These texts form an extraordinary bilingual inscription. In the 2024 catalogue of the exhibition at the Archaeological National Museum of Naples, we have provided a preliminary reading for the inscription as *[f]lere havens - [fon]s caldus*³⁴. Both in the Etruscan and Latin texts the inscriptions are made of two lemmas to the nominative³⁵. On the contrary to the interpretation given to *havens* in the first publication as spring, it is now possible, based on the bilingual inscription, to suggest that the words “*caldus*” and “*havens*” should correspond. In this perspective we argued that *flere* could correspond to Latin *fons*³⁶, at least at the beginning of the Roman Empire. Both texts therefore mentioned the “hot spring”. It is impossible to understand why this *donarium* was left a few centimetres out of joint. The cutting suggests that the importance of this travertine base and of its inscription was no longer relevant in the 4th century A.D., although a few letters were still visible³⁷. Regardless of the appearance of the first letters of the Etruscan inscription, the *donarium* had certainly lost its original function, when the presence of the two languages stressed the existence of different recipients in multilingual communities that frequented the sanctuary between the 1st century B.C. and 1st century A.D.

(J. T.)

New evidence for Etruscan aspect of Bagno Grande

As we have outlined, the excavation inside the sacred pool and near the south-west corner of the Imperial small temple uncovered a significant number of objects from the Etruscan (late Hellenistic) period, in particular the votive bronzes of various types³⁸. Sealed inside the Roman small temple³⁹, these *ex votos* testified to the continuity of frequentation of the site and the presence of earlier sacred buildings/spaces around the spring. Evidence for these emerged constantly during the 2023 excavation campaign⁴⁰, particularly in the eastern and southern sectors of the excavated area⁴¹ (*Fig. 2*). Underneath the stratigraphic units levelling the area and preparing the soil for the early Imperial building, a structure with a north-west/south-east orientation appeared. This structure occupies a rectangular space, of which the south-eastern corner is visible. It followed a plan with similar characteristics to that of the Roman Imperial period. This structure occupied approximately the same area as the Roman building, differing in its orientation, almost 15 degrees in rotation towards the south-east, and was slightly wider on its shorter side, to be identified with the south front. Before describing its characteristics in detail, it is immediately clear that the architecture of the Roman Imperial period⁴² was based on this model, and that the building erected at the time of Tiberius or of Claudius was a reconstruction of the previous one, albeit with some planimetric variations and perhaps with a more marked monumentality⁴³. Location and orientation of both earlier and later structures remain the same, as was the space circumscribed towards the spring, although the western limit remains uncertain in the case of the earlier structure, as only two squared blocks are preserved (*Fig. 10*).

³⁴ TABOLLI 2024b.

³⁵ On the catalogue we have suggested that *Havens* could actually indicate a hot spring (TABOLLI 2024b: 159).

³⁶ TABOLLI *forthcoming*. If this interpretation is correct we will have to reconsider the tradition of reading *flere* as *numen*.

³⁷ It is difficult, if not impossible, to prove that the few letters were visible because of the understanding of the significance of the moulded base also in the 4th century A.D. The *donarium* would not have been partially cut on the inner side of the wall if this was the case.

³⁸ BISCHERI 2023; PACIFICI 2023; PAPINI 2023; TABOLLI 2023b: 103-110.

³⁹ MARIOTTI 2023a: 42-43; TABOLLI 2023b.

⁴⁰ The presence of an older sacred pool, compared to the one from the Roman period, is documented by the 2022 excavation and discussed in MARIOTTI 2023a: 30-32; see also TABOLLI 2023b.

⁴¹ We limit the analysis here to a preliminary description of the building; it is too early at the moment to hazard reconstructive hypotheses or comparisons. On this topic in general, see CHELLINI 2002: 221-228 with an *excursus* on “architectural arrangements” for the Etruscan and Roman periods; MAGGIANI 2023: 39-43; GIONTELLA 2006: 75-86; GIONTELLA 2012: 95-131; EDLUND-BERRY 2018: 35-39.

⁴² CARPENTIERO, MARIOTTI 2023: 52-57.

⁴³ In general, porticoes and articulated spaces are also hypothesised in the Etruscan thermal sanctuary of Sasso Pisano (Castelnuovo in Val di Cecina), albeit in a completely different architectural and topographical context from that of the Bagno Grande: CUNIGLIO, HOSKING, SARTI 2014: 342-343; previously ESPOSITO 2006; ESPOSITO 2011.

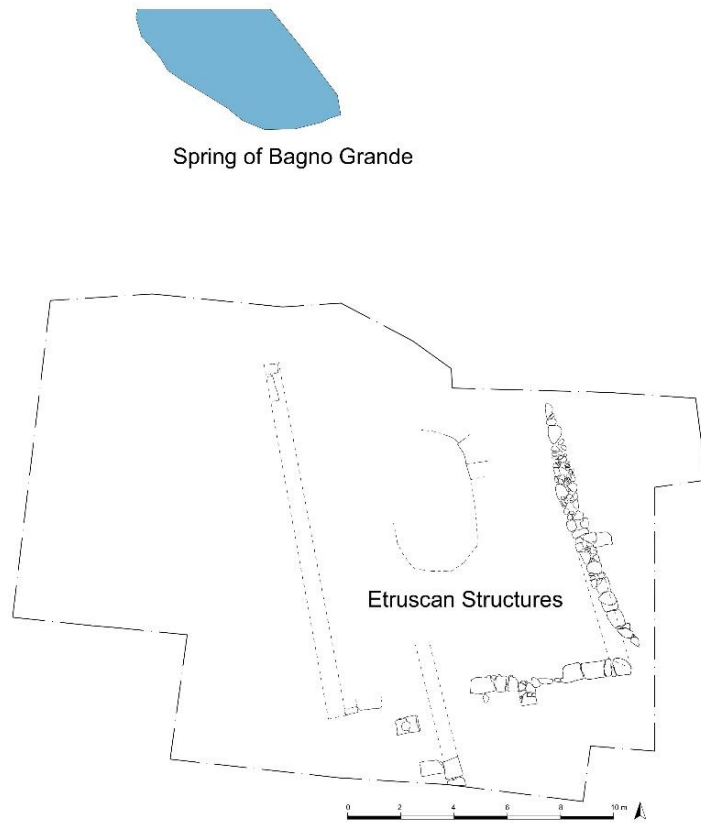


Fig. 10: Bagno Grande: plan of the Etruscan structures (elaboration by Emanuele Mariotti, © SABAP-SI and Municipality of San Casciano dei Bagni)



Fig. 11: Bagno Grande: south-eastern corner of the excavation area (photo by Gabriele Forti, processing by Emanuele Mariotti, © SABAP-SI and Municipality of San Casciano dei Bagni).



Fig. 12: Bagno Grande: southeastern corner of the structures, view from the east (photo by Emanuele Mariotti, © SABAP-SI and Municipality of San Casciano dei Bagni).

The longest remaining part is the eastern wall, parallel to the later Roman building and slightly separated from it towards the east (from 2 m at the south-eastern corner to 0.5 m in the northernmost section). The foundation of the Roman Imperial small temple intercepted the first courses of the pre-existing wall (Figs. 11-13), abutting the structures of the sacred building and the pool itself. Here, one can see how all these constructions proceed in the same direction and in the same manner towards the spring, approximately 12 m further north. The presence of the 17th-century baths does not allow for a complete understanding of the plan of the Roman Imperial and pre-Roman structures, but there is no doubt that these continued below the section, underneath the modern baths⁴⁴. The wall of the earlier structure is preserved for a row or two at the foundation level, embedded directly into the surrounding clay⁴⁵ with a very narrow foundation trench. The masonry consisted of medium to large travertine blocks⁴⁶, laid without mortar or with an earth (clay) binder, which is difficult to locate due to the nature of the soil, particularly exposed to runoff. The visible section is approximately 10 m long and 0.65 m wide. A 4.8 m from the south-eastern corner of the structure is a small pilaster projecting outwards, measuring 0.73 by 0.55 m, also preserved for two rows at foundation level. No other parts remain, at least on this side, but this is due to the numerous Roman and modern building activities that took place in the area⁴⁷. The presence of external piers appeared already in the earlier structure, and was enforced in various phases of restoration, especially in the

⁴⁴ The results of geophysical surveys also point in this direction: FELICI, MORELLI 2023: 26-27.

⁴⁵ Clay was also used in later phases; for example, in construction works to level floors, as a filler to support new structures, and as a binder in the foundation levels of the Imperial walls, consisting of small limestone and travertine blocks, as well as insulation and waterproofing around the sacred pool.

⁴⁶ The dimensions are variable, ranging from 0.2 m to 0.6 m in length, and the material used is either limestone or local travertine. The barely sketched nature of the workmanship and of the blocks in general does not allow any consistent metrological analysis.

⁴⁷ MARIOTTI 2023a: 30-36.



Fig. 13: Bagno Grande: eastern wall and its foundation pit of the Roman-era building (photo by Emanuele Mariotti, © SABAP-SI and Municipality of San Casciano dei Bagni).



Fig. 14: Bagno Grande: aerial view of the southern part of the excavation area; note the presence of the above-mentioned well close to the later Roman pavements (photo by Gabriele Forti, © SABAP-SI and Municipality of San Casciano dei Bagni).



Fig. 15: Bagno Grande: US 4134, excavation detail (photo by Marco Pacifici, © SABAP-SI and Municipality of San Casciano dei Bagni).

Roman Imperial period⁴⁸, testifying to what must have been a static necessity: the clay nature of the ground and the continuous inflow and movement due to water table must have been one of the major problems for the stability of the structures⁴⁹. Near the south-eastern corner, the east wall bends sharply to the east (Figs. 10-11), distorting the general perception of what must have been the south front of the pre-Imperial building. This bend is due to two different factors: the aforementioned instability of the clay soil, which bends and changes the course of the structures⁵⁰, even later; and the presence of a trace of stone removal⁵¹ at the corner itself. The corner of the pre-

⁴⁸ CAMPOREALE 2021: 173-178; MARIOTTI 2021: 148-160.

⁴⁹ The phenomenon is known as *spring sapping*, a widespread instability of the ground around a spring, in this case with strong water flow (25 litres per second). In the Roman Imperial period, lead reinforcements were used at the base of columns to counter this problem: CAMPOREALE 2021, pp. 173-178; MARIOTTI 2021, p. 159.

⁵⁰ An interesting comparison comes from the locality of Pasticcetto (Magione, Perugia), a site known for the numerous votive bronzes found and frequented between the 5th and 3rd centuries B.C. (BRUSCHETTI 1989): the walls of a small rectangular sacred basin, adequately reinforced, bent inwards due to the thrust from the clayey soil and its movements due to the presence of the spring (BRUSCHETTI 1986: 384-385).

⁵¹ This pit was possibly related to the obliteration of the structure itself and the subsequent Roman building site.

Imperial building, of which this was the eastern wall, should be identified in the large square block that constitutes the beginning of the southern wall (*Fig. 10*). This constitutes the second relevant portion of this structure. It measures 11.3 m long and 0.65 m. wide. As the excavation is still ongoing, this southern wall is only visible at its upper course and in correspondence with its levelling at the time of its decommissioning, although the greater regularity of the blocks (and of the masonry in general) suggests that it is better preserved in elevation than the eastern wall that we just described⁵². A column base (“small pilaster”) measuring 0.55 x 0.60 m., was also preserved on this side, as it was not directly affected by the Imperial building (*Fig. 11*). It is located approximately 4.3 m from the south-eastern corner of the building and, at least on the surface, is well-preserved and more carefully constructed, as is the entire south wall of the pre-Imperial building. The later Roman Imperial structures and especially the entrance of the small temple were installed in this area, affecting the preservation of the earlier southern wall. The south-eastern corner of the Roman Imperial building, with its regular blocks of three Roman feet on a side and the *opus mixtum* technique used in the rest of the masonry, was built on top of it, cutting it cleanly. The entrance propylaeum, with its paving phases, first in “cocciopesto” and then with paving stone, was laid on top of it, levelling it evenly. What looks like the rim of a well, consisting of two parts with dimensions of 0.78 by 0.65 m and an opening diameter of 0.3 m, still of uncertain date⁵³, is located close to the south wall in its central part (*Fig. 14*); it was also obliterated and intercepted by later Early Imperial actions. As a whole, the pre-Imperial building has visible dimensions of approximately 13.5 m by 11.5 m, but it is probable that it extended further towards the spring, as the Roman small temple later did, so its length can be estimated at between 15 and 20 m⁵⁴.

This sector presents a complex stratification, in which one can recognise a series of activities that are fundamental for understanding the building and chronological development of the area at the beginning of the 1st century A.D. The pre-Imperial structure was razed and obliterated by a series of construction layers, spoliations and pits related to the rearrangement of the area for the new sacred building. Among these actions, the removal of the south-eastern corner of the earlier complex and the large foundation trench of the Imperial wall strongly affected what remained of the previous stratification, consisting exclusively of clayey levels with very little ceramic material, which is rarely diagnostic.

In the opposite sector, to the south, a series of ritual and construction activities have been identified⁵⁵, which lie between the razing of the Etruscan structure and the laying of the Early Imperial paving at the entrance to the sacred building. A hearth, into a pit, contained in its ashes fragments of altars and a bronze mask. This hearth obliterated the south-eastern corner of the Etruscan structure⁵⁶. In the area of the entrance (southern part, *Fig. 2*) part of a Sigillata Italica plate⁵⁷ was placed upside down to close the aforementioned pit. A short distance away, another large ceramic fragment of the same plate was placed in a similar way in a group of finds, including a small bronze figurine of a man in the act of offering and fragments of travertine altars. The whole was intercepted and cut by the laying of the third column base to the west, relating to the monumental entrance of the Roman small temple (*Fig. 15*). Other actions, with pits, positioning of tiles, and the restoration of the drainage channel for the overflow water from the sacred pool are stratigraphically located between the razing of the pre-Imperial building and the later architectural complex. The study of the finds is on-going, but an intermediate phase between the two sacred buildings cannot be ruled out, in which the fabrication of the new building site proceeded, culminating with the construction of the new sacred pool and the closing ritual of the previous one⁵⁸. The ritual actions brought to light in this sector⁵⁹, while demonstrating the persistence of earlier materials compared to the

⁵² The elevations are almost the same for the entire structure, both south and east, around 511 m above sea level.

⁵³ The context is still under excavation but is likely to be related to pre-Imperial structures.

⁵⁴ In the current state of research, it is not possible to be more precise. The width of the southern front, 11.5 m, suggests a slightly larger structure than the Roman Imperial one.

⁵⁵ Materials and documentation, coming from the 2023 excavation, are still being processed in these months. We are limiting our analysis to a preliminary reading of the contexts.

⁵⁶ DE LUCIA BROLLI 2023: 224-229.

⁵⁷ *Conspectus* 18.2, p. 154, Table 48.

⁵⁸ TABOLLI 2023B: 101-103.

⁵⁹ On the ritual actions related to the foundation phases of private and public building sites, see, for example, FACCHINETTI 2012: 338-339, with discussion and bibliography.

first phase of the Imperial small building, such as the small bronzes representing offerants⁶⁰ that continue to circulate, show a glimpse of the vitality of the area linked to the building site in progress. These depositions respected the sacred space where works were being carried out and stressed the healing properties of the place, expressed by the numerous artefacts linked to ritual activities (ceramics, altar fragments, small bronzes, traces of fire, and etc.) as well as the topography in which these actions took place, particularly along the front entrance to the sacred buildings.

In conclusion, this preliminary analysis of the pre-Imperial structure, reveals how an architectural arrangement of the area to the south of the natural spring was clear already in Etruscan times, with structures annexed to the spring and with possibly a wall to enclose the area (in parallel to the later Imperial period)⁶¹, while at the same time safeguarding the natural landscape of the water, the place where the presence of the divine was to be most evident⁶². Therefore, the excavation confirms how the design of the plan for the sacred area and the layout of the spaces, even if not yet visible in their entirety, from Etruscan to Roman times, depended on the water itself, on the geomorphology of the surrounding landscape.

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⁶⁰ BISCHERI 2023: 153-165.

⁶¹ MARIOTTI 2023: 43-45; CARPENTIERO, MARIOTTI 2023: 52-56; Bathing in the sacred spring was not permitted: BEN ABED, SCHEID 2003: 7-14; FACCHINETTI 2010: 44-45.

⁶² FACCHINETTI 2010: 45-46.

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