

The drainage system at Pompeii: mechanisms, operation and design

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Water in ancient towns has been a perennial topic of discussion, from ancient authors remarking on contemporary towns to modern scholars researching urbanism,¹ but interest has focused disproportionately on the means of supply rather than the mechanisms of removal.² For Pompeii³ this gap in our knowledge is surprising given the nearly three centuries of research at the site. It was not until 1900 that the first discussion dedicated to sewerage was published by S. Cozzi and A. Sogliano,⁴ and it is still the only description or illustration of a number of subsurface features,⁵ but, as H. Mygind noted,⁶ it is frustratingly incomplete and difficult to use. Late in the 20th c., more comprehensive attempts to describe drainage out of the town were made by L. Richardson, jr. and by H. and L. Eschebach,⁷ but their reconstructions of sewer lines contain omissions and errors and are surprisingly different from one another (fig. 1).⁸ The general lack of interest may perhaps



Fig. 1. Composite map of sewers reported in Pompeii.

- 1 On ancient sources, see Reimers 1989, 137-41. For water studies at Pompeii, see Poehler, Flohr and Cole 2011, 7-8. Examples in the wider Greco-Roman world include Bodon, Riera and Zanovello 1994, Crouch 1993 and 2003, R. J. A. Wilson 1996; A. Wilson 2000.
- 2 Eschebach and Eschebach 1995, 141; Koloski-Ostrow *et al.* 2001, 97; Reimers 1989, 137.
- 3 Due to the difficulties of reproducing a full-scale map of Pompeii's many toponyms, I have posted a map for reference and download: http://pompeiana.org/Pompeii_Reference_Map.png
- 4 Cozzi and Sogliano 1900, 587-99.
- 5 See Maiuri 1973, 69, fig. 28 and Sogliano 1925, 246-48, fig. 2. Bodon, Riera and Zanovello (1994, 411) reproduce Cozzi and Sogliano's drawings.
- 6 Mygind 1921, 270-71.
- 7 Richardson 1988, 59-63, fig. 3; Eschebach and Eschebach 1995, 141-47, fig. 41.2.
- 8 Fig. 1 is a composite map of sewers illustrated by Eschebach and Eschebach (1995, 142, fig.