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About the author

Pamela Bradley has over 40 years' experience in teaching history. She is the author of 13 books on ancient cultures, including seven popular secondary history textbooks, including *Ancient Egypt: Reconstructing the Past*, *Ancient Greece: Using Evidence*, *Ancient Rome: Using evidence* and *The Ancient World Transformed: Societies, personalities and historical periods from Egypt, Greece and Rome*.

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- **Key issues** content from the Year 12 Ancient History syllabus

Subject content is unpacked with the aid of a variety of historical sources, activities and focus questions:

Activities offer source-based activities throughout the chapter for examination revision; both visual and text-based, primary and secondary sources

Research tasks pretty well do what they say they do!

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2

3

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Painting the picture

Within the Roman Empire of the 1st century AD, the Campanian settlements of Pompeii, Herculaneum, Oplontis, Boscoreale and Stabiae were small communities inhabited generally by average people – some rich, some poor – most of whom lived lives of average mediocrity. It is ironic that a devastating eruption in late August 79 AD, which stopped life in its tracks and completely buried these towns so that their existence was obliterated from people's memories for about 17 centuries, should have elevated these sites to such significance in the modern world.

When the ruins of Pompeii and Herculaneum were first discovered, a frenzy of treasure hunting began. The sites became part of the Grand Tour taken by aristocratic young men from Britain and Europe. Artists and writers influenced by the neoclassical and 'romantic' movements of the time left their impressions in travel diaries, watercolours, paintings, engravings, novels and poetry. Most visitors and early archaeologists working on the sites interpreted what they saw from the perspectives of their own times, and the rulers of Naples used the sites for political propaganda.

As archaeologists from the mid-19th to mid-20th centuries adopted more systematic approaches to excavation, two ancient communities, plus the voices of their people and the economic, political, social and religious features of a normal everyday Roman world, were brought to life. However, along the way, much valuable evidence from these sites was lost due to failure to document carefully and to adequately preserve what was unearthed.

Despite the archaeological decision to limit excavation in the late 20th century in favour of conservation, plus the use of more modern technological advancements and implementation of extensive documentation projects, the 'second death' of Pompeii and Herculaneum continued apace. This was not a violent and instantaneous death like the first, but a slow, progressive one due to exposure to the elements, inappropriate human intervention, lack of maintenance and the impact of increasing tourism. This decline finally led to world-wide outrage in 2010–11 when a number of buildings in Pompeii collapsed after days of rain.

Dealing with the problems facing the sites is not just an Italian responsibility, but a worldwide concern. Now, international organisations are throwing their human and financial resources behind preservation and conservation efforts so that a unique cultural legacy can be handed down to the future. However, as more 'voices' need to be taken into consideration in attempting to save these fragile and priceless sites, archaeology has entered the world of politics. One of the greatest problems facing the future of these cities, particularly Pompeii, is the question of tourism, where visitors have now increased to 3 million a year.

It is possible that if a future eruption of Mt Vesuvius (or some other seismic catastrophe) does not engulf the city once more, or if there is not a national or international economic disaster, that the millions of well-meaning tourists will destroy it bit by bit.

PART 1

Survey of the geographical and historical context

CHAPTERS

PREVIEWING KEY IDEAS



Chapter 1 The physical environment of Campania



Chapter 2 The eruption of Mount Vesuvius 79 AD



Chapter 3 Early discoveries and the nature of 19th- and 20th-century excavations



Chapter 4 Representations of Pompeii and Herculaneum over time

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

FOCUS

Students investigate the geographical and historical context of Pompeii and Vesuvius using a range of sources. The historical concepts and skills content is to be integrated as appropriate.

KEY ISSUES

- the geographical setting and natural features of Campania
- the eruption of 79 AD and its impact on Pompeii and Herculaneum
- early discoveries and the changing nature of excavations in the 19th and 20th centuries
- representations of Pompeii and Herculaneum over time

Mount Vesuvius overlooking the Bay of Naples and the Campanian Plain

CHAPTER 1

The physical environment of Campania

Campania is the fairest of all regions not only in Italy, but in the whole world. Nothing can be softer than its climate: indeed, it flowers twice a year. Nowhere is the soil more fertile ...

SOURCE 1.1 Florus, *Epitome of Roman History*, I, ii, 3–6



FIGURE 1.1 The Bay of Naples and environs of Vesuvius



felix fortunate, happy

naturalist (natural historian) a person who studies any category of natural objects or organisms, usually via observation

seismic related to earthquakes or other vibrations of the earth

1.1 Campania *felix*

Ancient Pompeii and Herculaneum were located in the fertile, crescent-shaped volcanic plain in southern Italy known as Campania. The Romans referred to this area, at the foot of the Apennine escarpment, extending from the Volturno River in the north to the mountains of the Sorrentine Peninsula in the south, as Campania **felix**.

Pliny the Elder, admiral of the Roman fleet at the time of the eruption and a well-known **naturalist**, agreed with Florus that Campania was ‘one of the loveliest places on earth ... a fertile region so blessed with pleasant scenery that it was manifestly the work of nature in a happy mood’.¹ In the following quote he gives some of the reasons for his view.

Then indeed there is that wonderful and life-sustaining and healthy atmosphere that lasts all the year through, embracing a climate so mild ... Campania has a wealth of different kinds of forest ... an abundance of corn, vines and olives, splendid fleeces produced by its sheep, fine-necked bulls, numerous lakes, rich sources of rivers and springs that flow over the whole region. Its many seas and harbours, and the bosom of its lands are open to commerce. While even the land runs eagerly out into the sea as if to assist mankind.

SOURCE 1.2 Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, Bk III, 40–1

Was Pliny aware when he wrote his description of ‘nature in a happy mood’ that in fact the fertile landscape of Campania was the result of nature’s periodic violent and devastating outbursts and **seismic** upheavals?

1.2 Mount Vesuvius and the beneficial effects of volcanic processes

Mount Vesuvius, which sits on two fissures in the earth’s crust, dominates the Plain of Campania and divides it into two regions: the larger one to the north drained by the Volturno River, and the smaller one in the south traversed by the Sarno River.



FIGURE 1.2 Mt Vesuvius today, showing the present crater and all that remains of the 1st century AD volcano

Although still active, the mountain’s outline today is different from its ancient form for it has erupted more than 30 times since the devastating explosion in 79 AD. Today, Mount Vesuvius, at a height of approximately 1277 metres, and with a crater 11 km in circumference, is partly encircled by the 1100-metre ridge of Mount Somma, which alone existed in 79 AD.

The Greek geographer Strabo, who lived from about 64 BC to 19 AD, described the flanks of Vesuvius as covered by fertile and beautiful farms, in contrast to its summit which looked unfruitful, with soot-covered cavities in masses of rock, looking like they had been eaten out by fire’.² It is surprising

then that Pliny the Elder, later in the 1st century AD, never identified Vesuvius as a volcano.

Other Greek and Roman writers of the time were more interested in the mythological associations of the mountain and the nearby Phlegraean Fields with the realm of Vulcan, the Roman god of fire, and giants in their gloomy caverns. The area was believed by some of the ancients to be the entrance to the Underworld. The Phlegraean Fields (*Campi Flegri*), which lie behind Puteoli, is a 15-km-wide series of craters, pools filled with boiling mud, and vents (fumeroles) through which sulphur and steam escape.



FIGURE 1.3 A vent in the Solfatara crater (Phlegraean Fields)

A COMMENT ON...

A grim warning for the future of Campania, the most densely populated volcanic region on earth

Recent (2017) accelerated seismic activity in the Phlegraean Fields has escalated fears among experts of a possible super eruption of the Campo Flegri volcano lying beneath Naples. An alert has been issued to the 3 million people presently living in the area that the ancient, slumbering volcano – much larger than Vesuvius – which last erupted in 1538, may be near to its critical pressure point. Although experts can't say when the volcano will erupt, they 'have identified the threshold at which the rising magma at the Campo Flegri volcano could trigger an eruption and have found that it is nearing that point'.³

Also, the still-active Vesuvius is long overdue for another eruption.

ACTIVITY 1.1

- 1 Using Figures 1.1 and 1.2, make a list of the major landform features of Campania.
- 2 Explain what Florus means by:
 - 'nothing can be softer than its climate'
 - 'it flowers twice a year'.
- 3 List the beneficial features of Campania which he mentions in Source 1.2.
- 4 Explain the present appearance of Mt Vesuvius.
- 5 How likely is another devastating seismic or volcanic event in Campania and why would it be even more catastrophic than in 79 AD and any time since?

Lava spurs

The Sarno Plain was dotted with mounds and spurs formed by old lava flows, and from ancient times these provided strategic sites for settlement. Pompeii occupied the largest of these spurs – 70 hectares in area and between 25 and 40 metres above sea level – giving it a commanding position overlooking the mouth of the Sarno River and the sea. On its volcanic spur, Pompeii caught the breezes from both sea and mountains that tempered the heat of summer days. August Mau, working in Pompeii in the early 20th century, commented on these cooling breezes.

About 10 o'clock in the morning a sea breeze sweeps over the city, strong, cool and invigorating. The wind blows till just before sunset. The early hours of the evening are still: the pavements and walls of the houses give out the heat which they have absorbed during the day. But soon – perhaps by 9 o'clock – the treetops again begin to murmur, and all night long, from the mountains of the interior, a gentle refreshing stream of air flows down through the gardens, the roomy atriums and colonnades of the houses, the silent streets, and the buildings about the Forum with an effect indescribably soothing.

SOURCE 1.3 A. Mau, *Pompeii, Its Life and Art*, trans. F. Kelsey

Herculaneum, the smaller town on the coast, was built on a steeply sloping spur of land that projected from the lower slope of Vesuvius and ended in a cliff face where the headland fell away sharply to the sea. The promontory was bounded on both sides by deep ravines. Despite the limitations of its landform, Herculaneum, on the coast of the Bay of Naples, benefited from the moderating influence of the sea and caught the breezes from the south-west. The views from the houses built on terraces that descended to the edge of the cliffs made it an ideal resort town. Strabo commented that nowhere could a period of residence and leisure be more agreeable.

Fertile soil, vegetation and crops

The material that spewed from the volcano weathered into deep fertile soils: grey-black and rust-brown, rich in phosphorus and potash which supported a variety of natural vegetation such as poplars, willows, alder, oak and beech. The soil's spongy nature retained enough of the winter rains to produce an impressive array of crops even during the hot rainless days of summer.

The slopes of Vesuvius in the mid-1st century AD were covered with vines. In fact, we know from Plutarch that back in the days of Spartacus' slave revolt against Rome in 73 BC, he and his rebels escaped from their headquarters on Mount Vesuvius by making ladders out of grape vines. Other literary sources described Vesuvius as covered in vines before the eruption. Martial wrote, 'Here Vesuvius is shaded green with vines; here the noble grape had exuded its juices in vats: these are the ridges which Bacchus loved ...'⁴

Their superior grapes produced the famous Vesuviana favoured by Pliny, showing, he said, the superiority of Bacchus/Dionysus (god of wine) over Ceres (god of grain). He recorded that in all parts of Campania the 'vines never stop growing'. They were staked to poplar trees, climbing 'with unruly arms in knotted course among their branches', rising level with their tops.⁵ Virgil also mentions the vineyards in his *Georgics*, and Strabo refers to the entire area as the wine bowl. A famous fresco in the house of the Pompeian House of the Centenary, showing the god Bacchus and vines on the lower slopes of Vesuvius, verifies the importance of grapes and winemaking in the area

In rockier areas, olives of high quality were grown. The oil from olives was used for cooking, as well as for a basic ingredient – together with flowers such as roses – in the perfume industry. The area also supported a wide variety of fruit: peaches, apricots, lemons, cherries, plums, pears and figs. Cato, in his treatise *On Farming*, revered the figs of Herculaneum, while Lucius Junius Columella, in his work *De re rustica*, spoke of

the importance of cabbages and onions in the area, which also produced three or four cereal crops a year, plus hay for fodder. At the southern end of the Bay of Naples, flocks of sheep roamed the lush fields, providing Pompeii with wool for textile production. Many of the Pompeian **frescoes** and **mosaics** feature the abundant agricultural production of the area.

frescoes wall paintings done while the plaster is still wet

mosaics pictures or decorations made from tiny pieces of stone or glass

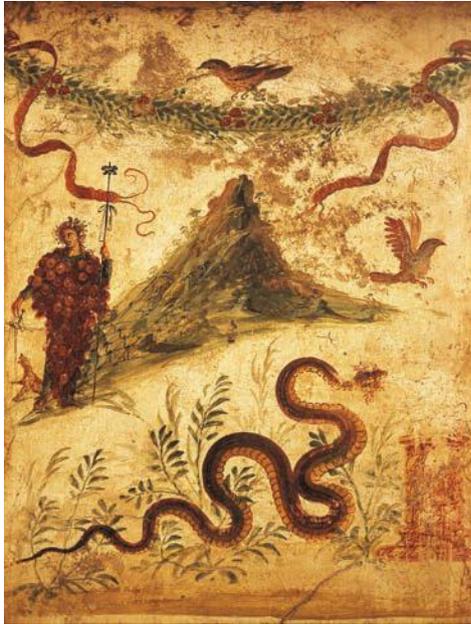


FIGURE 1.4 A fresco of Bacchus and vines on the lower slopes of Vesuvius



FIGURE 1.5 Jars of fruit and raisins from the House of Julia Felix



FIGURE 1.6 A basket of figs from the Campanian area

Volcanic stone

Apart from the fertile soil, the volcano provided for the inhabitants of the plain in other ways: pumice stone was exported and lava was used in stone millstones for grinding grain and pressing olives. Cato noted that the top olive presses made of volcanic stone were to be found in Pompeii and admits that he bought one for his own villa despite the great cost of transportation. Various types of volcanic material, such as **tufa**, were used for building, and other types for paving roads. See Figures 6.7 and 6.8 in Chapter 6 for examples of the use of stone in roads and pavements.

tufa stone formed from compacted volcanic ash



FIGURE 1.7 A millstone, one of the most common objects seen in Pompeii



FIGURE 1.8 Volcanic paving stones in Pompeii

The coastline and the Sarno River

The Campanian coastline, praised for its beauty by ancient writers, faces the Tyrrhenian Sea with the wide sweep of the Bay of Naples partially enclosed by peninsulas on its northern and southern extremities, and the offshore island of Capri and Pithecusae.

The bay provided a number of safe anchorages, particularly at Misenum on the western extremity of the Gulf of Puteoli. There, a double-shaped basin made a perfect natural harbour, which was reinforced during the reign of Augustus and became the main naval station of the Roman fleet. The former Greek port settlements along its northern shore – Naples, Cumae and Puteoli – had trading connections with the Greek East, which contributed to the prosperity of the other settlements in Campania.

Further to the south, the Sarno River widened into a lagoon-like **estuary** as it entered the sea; Columella in his *De re rustica* talks about the delightful estuarine marshes of Pompeii. According to

estuary the lower part of a river where its currents meet the tides of the sea

Seneca in *Naturales Quaestiones*, where the Stabian and Sorrentine coast meets that of Herculaneum is ‘a soft and sinuous bay’⁶ that provided an ideal harbour and port for inland settlements, as the river was navigable to seagoing ships at the time. The port of Pompeii, which Strabo says ‘accommodates a traffic in

both imports and exports’⁷, was at the crossroads of the coastal route from Cumae to the Sorrentine Peninsula and the inland route to Nuceria, Acerrae and Nola. Smaller ports, like Stabiae, lay along the bay’s southern shore.

The rich waters of the bay supported a thriving fishing and shellfish industry. Salt pans – formed where the water of the bay washed into a depression near Herculaneum – and the oily fish, including tuna, mackerel, anchovies and moray eels, provided the raw materials for the famous fish sauce for which the region was known (see Chapter 7).



FIGURE 1.9 An artistic depiction of the naval base at Misenum

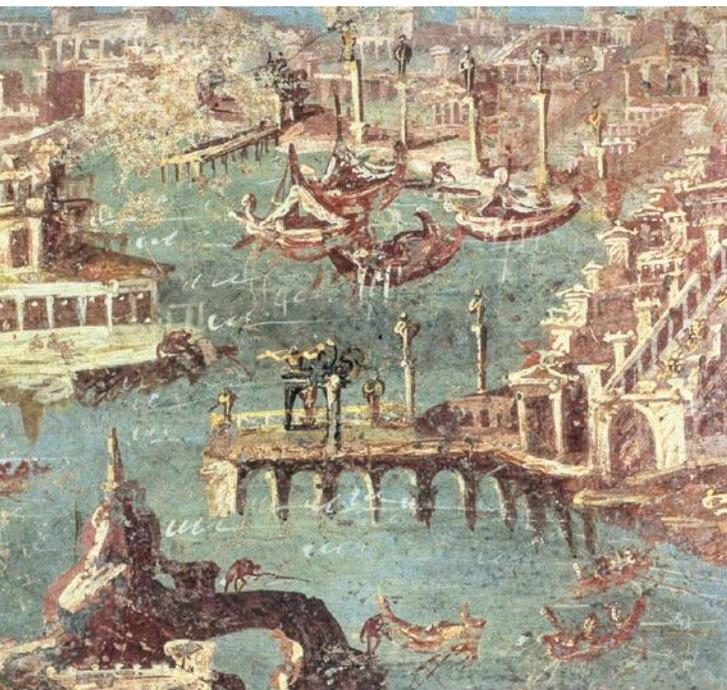


FIGURE 1.10 A fresco of the port of Stabiae



FIGURE 1.11 Mosaic of produce from the sea

A COMMENT ON...

Fish farms along the Campanian coast

Elite Romans cultivated fish along the shoreline of their large coastal villas in Campania, so that they could continue to enjoy a rich and varied diet when they were not in Rome. Fish like bass, trout, 'flatfish and parrot fish and giltheads; lampreys and congers and hake',⁸ grey mullet and particularly the very expensive red mullet were extremely hard to raise. They were kept in ponds called 'stews'. Moray eels, notorious for their aggression, were kept in separate ponds.



FIGURE 1.12 Fresco of a Roman villa by the sea

The Sarno Plain and adjacent coastline were dotted with bustling towns like Pompeii, Nuceria, Boscoreale, Stabiae and Herculaneum, as well as tranquil villages and farms engaged in an intensive form of agriculture.

It is not surprising that Campania, with its temperate sea breezes, mild winters, mountainous background, magnificent panoramas, thermal pools, fertile soil and brilliant sunshine, attracted many famous and infamous Romans who thought it a most delightful place to reside and who made it their playground. Senators, wealthy businessmen and even members of the imperial family in the 1st century AD built imposing villas in the area and transformed farmsteads into luxurious working villas: 'The handiwork of man blended into a landscape of the grand style.'

ACTIVITY 1.2

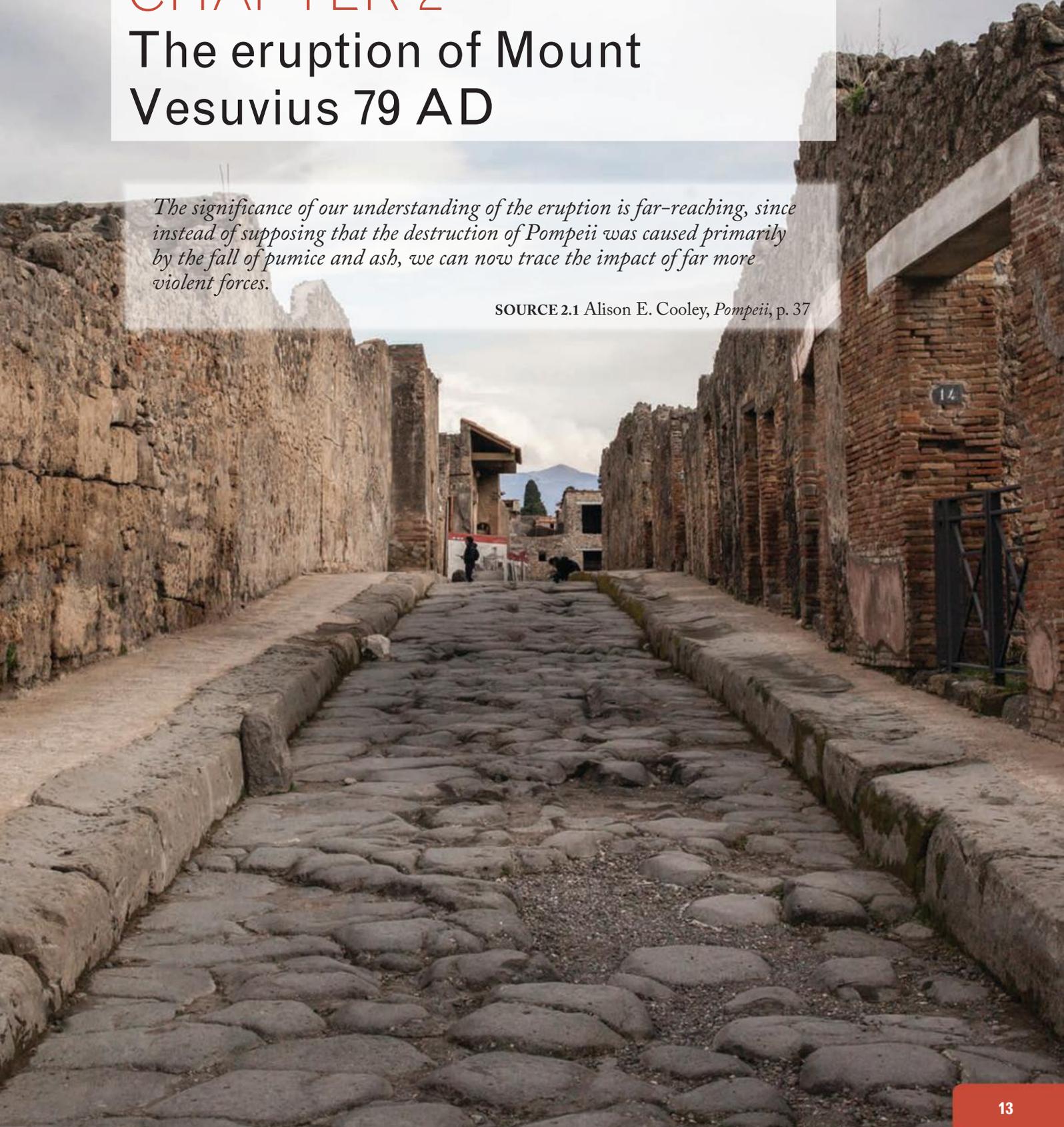
- 1 Describe how the topography of Pompeii and Herculaneum is associated with the former activities of Vesuvius.
- 2 Explain the fertility of the Campanian soil.
- 3 Apart from the growing of grape vines, list the other agricultural products produced in Campania.
- 4 Explain what the object in Figure 1.7 indicates about the economy.
- 5 Examine Figure 1.11:
 - Identify the types of seafood depicted in this mosaic
 - Suggest how this might provide evidence for the health of the inhabitants of Pompeii and Herculaneum.
- 6 Use the text information, sources and figures in this chapter to draw a detailed mind map summarising the reasons why the ancients referred to the Campanian Plain as 'Campania *felix*'.

CHAPTER 2

The eruption of Mount Vesuvius 79 AD

The significance of our understanding of the eruption is far-reaching, since instead of supposing that the destruction of Pompeii was caused primarily by the fall of pumice and ash, we can now trace the impact of far more violent forces.

SOURCE 2.1 Alison E. Cooley, *Pompeii*, p. 37



2.1 Warnings of a volcano stirring into life

The people of Campania were quite unprepared for the eruption on the morning of 24 August 79 AD, as they went on with their busy lives. Even if they had known that Vesuvius was a volcano, they would have believed that it was extinct, for they had no record of the previous eruption c. 1200 BC and had no awareness of the association between seismic activity (earthquakes) and eruptions. However, despite the length of Vesuvius' inactivity, modern experts would have been alerted by an event, 17 years before, a sign that the volcano was returning to life.

The earthquake of 62 AD

According to Tacitus, 62 AD was the year in which an earthquake 'largely demolished the populous Campanian town of Pompeii'.¹ Seneca – a philosopher, as well as tutor and minister to the Emperor Nero – wrote a contemporary account of the earthquake, which he said 'had caused great destruction in Campania which had never been safe from this danger'.²

I have just heard that Pompeii, the famous city in Campania, has been laid low by an earthquake which also disturbed all the adjacent districts ... it occurred in the winter, a season which our ancestors used to claim was free from such disaster. The earthquake was on the Nones [fifth] of February, in the consulship of Regulus and Verginius.

SOURCE 2.2 Seneca, *Naturales Quaestiones*, Bk VI, 1, 1–3

Pompeii was probably the epicentre of the upheaval, although other areas were affected, including Herculaneum and Nuceria. The massive earthquake struck with a tremendous roar, the ground heaved and, according to Seneca, wide clefts in the ground swallowed up a flock of 600 sheep in an instant, entire orchards disappeared into the gaping chasms and a tsunami rolled across the Bay of Naples.

In the towns, the houses, public buildings and statues swayed and collapsed and roads opened up. There is evidence that in Pompeii the situation was chaotic as people hurled themselves headlong outside, abandoned their homes and household possessions and tried their luck outdoors, 'so shocked that they wandered about as if deprived of their wits'.³ Pompeii's town reservoir was damaged and its water pipes broke, flooding the streets; the Forum was in ruins and many homes were uninhabitable. A banker named L. Caecilius Jucundus was an eyewitness of the destruction of the Forum and the collapse of the Temple of the Capitoline Triad, and the many people who tried to make their escape by chariot to the open countryside as aftershocks continued throughout the day. Rubble blocked their way, horses took fright and chariots overturned. Jucundus had these events depicted in a pair of sculpted panels on a shrine that he dedicated to his household gods.

Seismologists think it is unlikely that there was only one quake in the 17 years prior to the eruption. Although there is no literary record of another quake in Pompeii, structural damage in the town points to the possibility of others. Also, both Tacitus and Suetonius mention an earthquake that caused a theatre in Naples to collapse in 64 AD, where the Emperor Nero was performing at the time.

Eventually, the people of Pompeii began a massive demolition and rebuilding program. Obviously, town services such as water supply and the repair of public buildings took priority, as engineers drew



FIGURE 2.1 The collapse of the Capitoline Triad recorded by L. Caecilius Jucundus

up a master plan. Some wealthy inhabitants thought it their duty to contribute to the rebuilding of the city's temples.

However, the state of the city of Pompeii for the 17 years prior to the eruption has been the subject of considerable debate for decades. See Chapter 13.

Other signs of impending disaster in mid-August 79 AD

- 1 On 20 August 79 AD, a series of small tremors began to rock the area. This was recorded by Pliny the Younger: 'For several days we had experienced earth shocks, which hardly alarmed us as they are frequent in Campania.'⁴
- 2 The tremors increased in intensity, and it was reported that waves off the coast were larger than normal.
- 3 Animals began exhibiting agitated behaviour as if sensing something happening.
- 4 It is quite likely that lethal gases with large quantities of suffocating carbon dioxide began collecting in hollows and valleys. These are commonly emitted before an eruption.
- 5 Certain springs ceased to flow and some wells completely dried up. The disappearance of the water indicated an increase in the gases in the underground passages running into the volcano's crater producing an 'enormous pressure upon the stratum of material which formed its cap'.⁵

These early warnings, which went unheeded by the people in Campania, are described in detail in Robert Harris' 2003 historical novel called *Pompeii*, in which his protagonist is a water engineer.

A COMMENT ON...

A curious coincidence ... or not?

The day before the eruption – 23 August – was the annual Roman religious festival of the Vulcanalia to honour Vulcan (Vulcanus), the god of fire in both his beneficial aspects (powerful masculine fertility, warmth and light in the form of candles) and destructive aspects (fires, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions).

The Vulcanalia was associated with a number of other agrarian festivals held in August, during the heat of the summer months, when everything was dry and parched, and at higher risk of burning. It was also the time of the harvest during which the people prayed that the grain and other stored foodstuffs would not be destroyed by fire and their fields harmed, and it was a time of year associated with phenomena for which the Romans had no scientific explanation.

So, on the night before the eruption the people of Campania would have been propitiating the god Vulcan for protection of their lands and crops by lighting bonfires in the god's honour into which they threw live fish and small animals as a sacrifice.

2.2 The eruption

At about 1 pm on 24 August 79 AD, while the inhabitants of Pompeii and Herculaneum were sitting down for lunch, slaking their thirsts in one of the many taverns, relaxing in their shady gardens or cooling off in one of the public bath complexes, Vesuvius split apart with a thundering roar. Everyday life was stopped in its tracks as a towering column of ash and **pumice** rose approximately 30 km into the air, followed by a series of glowing avalanches of superheated gases, ash and rock. Within 24 hours, both cities had disappeared from the face of the earth.

pumice a very light and porous volcanic rock

Scientific and literary sources for the eruption of Vesuvius

In the past few decades, new research in volcanology and seismology, as well as painstaking efforts by archaeologists (structural damage to buildings, the condition of bodies and their location in the various layers of deposits), has provided more insights into the sequence of events, the nature of the eruption and the deposits that destroyed and sealed Pompeii and Herculaneum. This information is vital 'for an understanding of how the archaeological record was created'.⁶

Although research into the exact sequence of events is ongoing, the information presented in this chapter follows what seems to be the consensus at the moment, much of it based on the work of eminent volcanologist Haraldur Sigurdsson. He reconstructed the phases of the eruption by examining the grain sizes in the strata of volcanic material that covered Pompeii and Herculaneum. According to Sigurdsson, 'grain sizes are the fingerprints of an eruption'.⁷

He confirmed his findings by:

- drawing on the experiences of people during the eruption of Mount St Helens (USA) in 1980
- comparing the account of Pliny the Younger in his *Letters to Tacitus* with his own experiences. The two letters by Pliny (VI, 16 and 20), written in response to a request from the historian Tacitus, 25 years after the events that Pliny personally experienced as a teenager, are unique. According to Sigurdsson, 'in the field of science, Pliny's letters ... will remain classics as the first eyewitness report of an explosive volcanic eruption so powerful that it is repeated on our planet only about once in a thousand years'.⁸ Pliny's account has been tested and largely reconciled with the geological evidence from the deposits in Pompeii, Herculaneum and at other sites across the Vesuvian plain.
- examining the condition, location and position of the human remains at Pompeii and Herculaneum, studied by the forensic archaeologists and anthropologists Dr Estelle Lazer, Giuseppe Mastrolorenzo and Dr Sara Bisel.

ACTIVITY 2.1

- 1 Write a short description of the 62 AD earthquake in Pompeii from the point of view of an eyewitness.
- 2 Deduce why the people of Campania ignored the signs of impending danger in the days before the eruption.
- 3 Explain what volcanologists study in order to gain an understanding of the various phases of the eruption of Vesuvius.

pyroclastic relating to or consisting of burning volcanic material

phreatomagmatic explosions explosions that extrude both magmatic gases and steam

Timetable of an eruption

According to recent studies in volcanology, Vesuvius erupted in two phases with a brief lull between them. These were:

- 1 the so-called 'Plinian' phase that produced a rain of pumice and ash
- 2 the 'Peléan' phase of devastating **pyroclastic** surges and flows.

TIMETABLE OF AN ERUPTION

24 August

Late morning

A number of small explosions were supposed to have been heard. Volcanologists would have recognised these as **phreatomagmatic explosions**, caused when ground water seeping down through the volcano interacted with the hot magma, showering very fine ash over the sides of the mountain. This drifted in an easterly direction, leaving a 5-cm deposit spread over 20 km: 'Minor steam explosions are typical opening shots in large volcanic eruptions'.⁹

Early afternoon – about 1 pm The ‘Plinian’ phase – Vesuvius erupted, forming a cloud of gases and volcanic materials that – according to the eyewitness Pliny the Younger, 30 km away from the mountain at Misenum – resembled an umbrella pine, a species common in the Vesuvian area. White frothy pumice (phonolitic **magma**), discharging at 50 000 – 80 000 tonnes per second, was carried by the prevailing winds to fall on Pompeii 9 km to the south, with only a light dusting on Herculaneum 5 km west of the crater.

5–6 pm The layer of pumice at Pompeii accumulated at 15 cm an hour and buildings began to collapse. Some people fled; others took refuge inside buildings.

8 pm Deeper levels of the magma chamber were tapped and the magma composition changed to grey pumice (tephritic phonolite) discharging at 150 000 tonnes per second and carried to heights of perhaps 32–33 km. By the end of this first phase, Pompeii was covered by a layer of pumice 2.8 metres thick.

magma a mixture of molten or semi-molten rock that is found beneath the surface of the earth

This was followed by a brief lull.

25 August

1–2.15 am During the early hours of the morning, the most devastating phase of the eruption had begun. This phase of the eruption is referred to as the Peléan phase, named after the 1902 explosion of Mount Pelée, on the island of Martinique in the Caribbean where this phenomenon was first described.

The volcano’s eruptive vent began to widen, decreasing the support of the towering column which started to collapse under its own weight, generating the first two of a series of six lethal avalanches of red-hot volcanic debris and gases known as pyroclastic surges and flows.

A pyroclastic surge is a billowing cloud of ash and superheated gases (about 100–400°C) travelling at about 100–200 km an hour. Surge deposits are more widely distributed than pyroclastic flow deposits.

A pyroclastic flow is a ground-hugging avalanche of superheated fragments of volcanic material: pumice, ash and gases moving at high speeds of 65–80 km an hour and following the natural topography of the land and streets of the towns.

Surges (S1 and S2) overwhelmed Herculaneum and reached Oplontis and Boscoreale. S1 blasted through Herculaneum with the force of a hurricane, killing most of the people immediately, penetrating metres into the sea, and leaving a thin layer of ash. It has been argued that ‘the presence in Herculaneum of **carbonised** wood and charcoal was generated at a temperature of 400° Celsius’.¹⁰ The denser, ground hugging flow, minutes late, followed the natural topography of the town. S2 was hotter and more powerful than S1 and was responsible for widespread destruction of buildings as it carried columns, statues and portions of walls with it. Herculaneum was destroyed and sealed completely by S1 and S2.

carbonise to reduce or convert a carbon-containing substance to carbon, as by partial burning

2.15–6.30 am Grey pumice continued to fall as the column again rose to about 30 km. A lull at Pompeii allowed those who could to try to leave shelter and escape to the south.

6.30–8 am

caldera a type of volcanic crater formed when a volcano collapses into itself, usually triggered by the emptying of the magma chamber beneath the volcano.

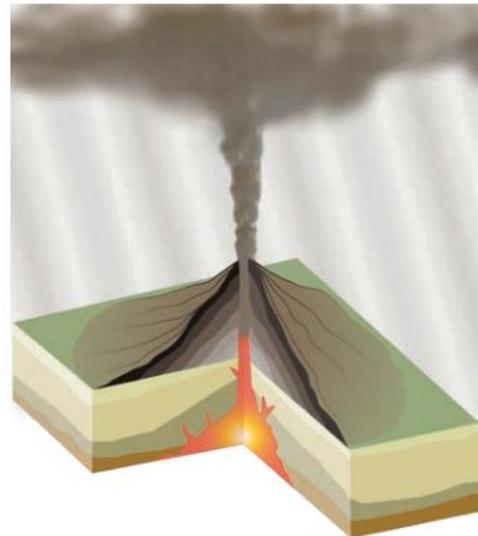
The column collapsed and within hours, surges 3–6 overwhelmed the countryside. S3 reached the north wall of Pompeii, demolishing parts of it, while three more superheated avalanches (S4–6) in quick succession covered the whole town, killing all those who remained in the area. S6 was the most severe, covering the city with 90–110 cm of material and knocking down all walls protruding above the pumice layers of the first phase. What can be seen today are those parts protected by the earlier pumice fall. S6 reached as far south as Stabiae.

8 am +

There was a final fall of pumice, followed by the collapse of the **caldera** and some final phreatomagmatic activity.

The 'Plinian' phase

My uncle was stationed at Misenum, in active command of the fleet. On August 24, my mother drew his attention to a cloud of unusual size and appearance ... Its general appearance can best be described as being like an umbrella pine, for it rose to a great height on a sort of trunk and then split off into branches, I imagine because it was thrust upwards by the first blast and left unsupported as the pressure subsided, or else it was born down by its own weight so that it spread out and gradually dispersed. Sometimes it looked white, sometimes blotched and dirty, according to the amount of soil and ashes carried.



SOURCE 2.3 An eyewitness account: Pliny the Younger, *Letters to Tacitus*, Bk VI, 16

FIGURE 2.2 Diagram of a Plinian eruptive column



FIGURE 2.3 Umbrella pines in the Vesuvian area



FIGURE 2.4 Artistic reconstruction of a later phase of the eruption

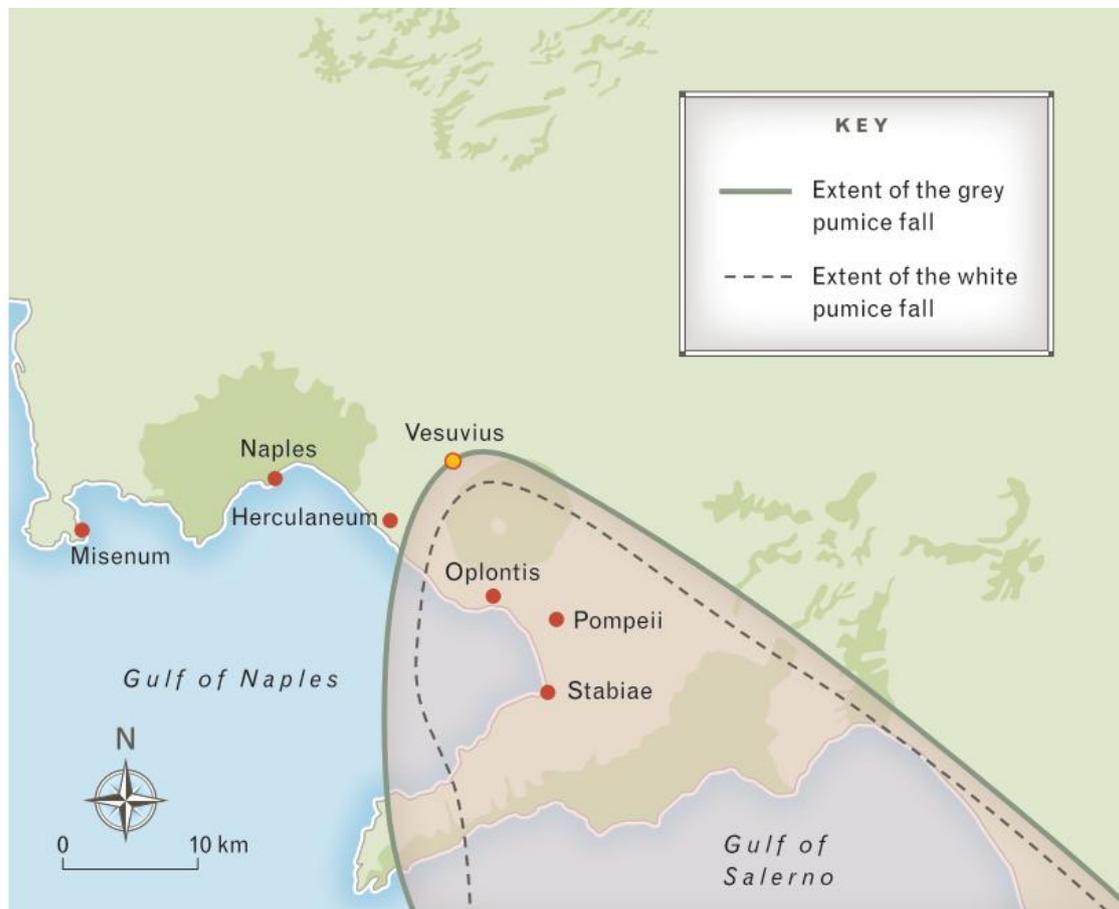


FIGURE 2.5 Map showing the extent of the pumice fall during the first phase of the eruption

Peléan phase

Meanwhile on Mount Vesuvius broad sheets of fire and leaping flames blazed at several points, their bright glare emphasized by the darkness of night. My uncle tried to allay the fears of his companions by repeatedly declaring that these were nothing but bonfires left by the peasants in their terror, or else empty houses on fire in the districts they had abandoned. ... Then the flames and smell of sulphur which gave warning of the approaching fire drove the others to take flight and roused him to stand up. He stood leaning on two slaves and then suddenly collapsed ...

On the landward side a fearful black cloud was rent by forked and quivering bursts of flame, and parted to reveal great tongues of fire, like flashes of lightning magnified in size. ... Soon afterwards the cloud sank down to earth and covered the sea; it had already blotted out Capri and hidden the promontory of Misenum from sight. ... I looked round: a dense black cloud was coming up behind us, spreading over the earth like a flood. ... However, the flames remained some distance off; then darkness came on once more and ashes began to fall again, this time in heavy showers.

SOURCE 2.4 Eyewitness accounts from Stabiae and Misenum: Pliny the Younger, *Letters to Tacitus*, Bk VI, 16, 20



FIGURE 2.6 A pyroclastic surge



FIGURE 2.7 Map showing the extent of surges 1–6

The significance of our new understanding of the eruption is far reaching, since instead of supposing that the destruction of Pompeii was caused primarily by the fall of pumice and ash, we can now trace the impact of far more violent forces.

SOURCE 2.5 Alison E. Cooley, *Pompeii*, p. 37



FIGURE 2.8 Depth of the Pompeian deposits



FIGURE 2.9 The remains of one of Pompeii's thoroughfares, showing the sheared-off upper storeys of houses



FIGURE 2.10 The depth of the Herculaneum deposits seen in present excavations

ACTIVITY 2.2

- 1 If possible, watch the YouTube full-length animation called *A Day in Pompeii* (Dec. 2013), which briefly illustrates the timetable of the eruption.
- 2 Explain the main features of the two phases of the eruption. Approximately how long did each phase last?
- 3 Using the timeline and Figure 2.5, explain why Pompeii felt the effects of the initial eruption before Herculaneum.
- 4 Use the timeline to summarise the evidence from Herculaneum for the superheated nature of the surge that hit the town in the second phase.
- 5 Describe the features of the eruption depicted in Figure 2.6.
- 6 Refer to the timeline and Figures 2.9 and 2.10 to explain why the remains of houses in Pompeii and Herculaneum, later discovered by excavators, were quite different.

Confusion, terror and death

... others believed that the whole universe was being resolved into chaos and fire. Therefore, they fled, some from the houses into the streets, others from outside into the houses, now from the sea to the land and now from the land to the sea; for in their excitement they regarded any place where they were not as safer than where they were.

SOURCE 2.6 Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, Bk LXVI, 23

It is believed that many of the inhabitants of Pompeii fled during the first pumice fall, revealed by the absence of horses or other beasts of burden, apparently all mobilised for escape. In front of the tradesmen's entrance of the House of Menander, a cart packed with wine jars was left behind. It appears that at the last moment the animals had been harnessed and ridden away. 'We must imagine a mass exodus from the city with donkeys, carts and barrows, as the majority of the population left, loading up as many of their household effects as they reasonably could.'¹¹

The rush to escape is revealed in the loaves of bread found in the oven, abandoned as they baked; the team of painters who scurried in the middle of redecorating a room, leaving behind their pots of paint and a bucketful of fresh plaster high up on a scaffold – when the scaffold collapsed in the eruption, the contents of the bucket splashed right across the neatly prepared room.'

SOURCE 2.7 Mary Beard, *The Fires of Vesuvius: Pompeii Lost and Found*, p. 9

Those who escaped at the first pumice fall may have had time to cover some distance, but those who left the city later may not have made it to safety due to the increasing fallout, as well as the confusion in the darkness and the constant earth tremors during the night which would have impeded their escape.

Some of those who eventually decided to venture outside died from falling masonry. For example, it is believed that when the eruption began, the priests from the Temple of Isis were eating a meal of fish and eggs. Apparently, they did not hurry to escape but thought it more important to gather up the objects associated with the worship of the goddess. They threw statuettes, plates and vessels into a cloth sack and

together made their escape. As the priests were crossing the Triangular Forum, a row of columns toppled over, crushing a number of them and scattering the holy objects.

A fleeing mother with a baby clasped to her breast and two small girls hanging on to her robe were struck down as they headed for the city gates, a pregnant woman unable to move quickly enough died near several young women who had taken off their clothes so they could run more easily, and a man died as he struggled to drag a goat with a bell attached to its collar.

Other Pompeians, believing that they could wait it out inside their houses, or in some other kind of refuge, became trapped, often with their animals, and died by the steadily rising layer of ash and pumice. For example, the occupants of a house attached to a tavern, who went down to the vault prepared for a long stay by taking bread, fruit and a goat with them, never emerged and in a villa just outside the walls of the city, 18 people were found dead in a cellar, among them two boys locked in each other's arms.

Some of the wealthy inhabitants appear to have delayed their departure by first collecting and hiding their valuable possessions in the hope of returning to collect them once the danger had passed. Others left it too late. The mistress of the House of Sallust had apparently instructed her servants to collect her valuables before leaving, but they took too long. She and her three maids died with her jewellery, money and a silver mirror strewn about them.

Not all Pompeians, however, had a choice to escape; some were forced to remain. Of the 60 gladiators who died in their barracks, two of them, manacled by the wrists, were locked up in a cell.

'Modern science can now add much more to these individual life stories.'¹²

At Herculaneum, it appears that many of the estimated 5000 inhabitants had read the early signs and escaped by sea, judging by the lack of boats, but whether they reached safety is not known. Others – hundreds so far discovered – gathered on the beach and in the vaulted boat houses on the harbor front, clutching their jewellery, money and other possessions, waiting to be rescued, which is exactly what Pliny the Elder hoped to do.

According to Pliny the Younger, his uncle, the naturalist and admiral of the fleet at Misenum, initially wanted to examine the pine-shaped cloud more closely. He ordered a boat to take him across the Bay of Naples, but, just as he was leaving, he received a message from Rectina, the wife of a friend who lived at the foot of the mountain (Herculaneum). Terrified of the impending danger, she pleaded to be rescued. It was then Pliny realised the full significance of the events and changed his plans. He ordered some of the warships launched 'with the intention of bringing help not only to Rectina but to the many others living on this lovely stretch of coast'.¹³ However, ashes and lumps of pumice were falling on the ships and he was unable to land as the 'shore was blocked by debris from the mountain'¹⁴ He decided to carry on to Stabiae at the far end of the bay and help another friend, Pomponianus.

Of the people of Herculaneum who had not already escaped, many



FIGURE 2.11 Boat chambers at Herculaneum

were waiting on the beach when the first surge of toxic, super-heated gases, saturated with ash, blasted into the town. A terrified family group died as they cowered in terror at the back of the boat chambers, huddled together for protection.

One of the most graphic examples of the power of the surge at Herculaneum was the body of a woman with a smashed skull, crushed pelvis and a thigh bone thrust up to her collar bone, lying on top of a few house tiles. She must have been thrown onto the beach from a great distance.

The suddenness of the surge prevented parents rescuing a baby from its cradle and a sickly bed-bound boy from his bed. The charred remains of both were discovered, with the chicken lunch still on a table beside the sick boy's bed.

Those who died during the surge were entombed by the flow that followed shortly after; two skeletons were found 7.5 metres above the level of the ancient street, forced up by the half-liquid mass.

Another discovery of 54 human skeletons was made in a storage facility in a villa in Oplontis. These victims, like those in Herculaneum, were overcome by the hot gases and poisonous fumes of the first surge. The victims were of all ages, but strangely they were found in two distinct groups: those at the back of the room had no, or few, possessions, while those at the front died with their money, gold and jewellery with them. Were they an entire household of wealthy citizens and their slaves?

While Herculaneum and Oplontis were being overwhelmed by S1 and S2, and Pompeii – already buried in ash and pumice – was hit by a series of surges, Pliny the Elder slept in the home of his friend Pomponianus at Stabiae, unaware of the unfolding tragedies. But about midnight the house was shaken violently by frequent tremors, and the others, who were too agitated to sleep, woke him to make a decision whether to stay indoors or move into the open despite the continued fall of pumice. Deciding that it would be safer to make a break for it, they covered their heads with pillows, and – even though it was morning – ‘it was blacker and darker than night ever was’¹⁵ as they made their way, by torch and lamplight, down to the shore.

However, escape by sea was impossible due to a strong northerly wind and Pliny lay down on a blanket to wait. ‘Flames and the smell of sulphur, which gave warning of the approach of fire’,¹⁶ led the others to



FIGURE 2.12 A skeleton from the beach of Herculaneum



FIGURE 2.13 Skeletons found in the boat chambers

decide to flee by land, but when they urged Pliny to stand up, he collapsed and died on the beach, 'looking more like a sleeper than a dead man'.¹⁷ His friends thought that his breathing was 'impeded by the dense fumes, which blocked his windpipe',¹⁸ but no one else was affected. It is possible he died of a heart attack or a stroke from the physical exertion in attempting to flee the falling ash.

Unaware of the fate of his uncle, at Misenum Pliny the Younger and his mother were woken from sleep by the earth tremors that were 'so violent that everything felt as if it were not only shaken, but overturned'¹⁹ and moved out into the courtyard, where the young man began reading as if perfectly at ease.



FIGURE 2.14 A painting of the death of Pliny the Elder on the beach at Stabiae

We sat down in the open court of the house, which occupied a small space between the buildings and the sea. As I was at that time but eighteen years of age, I know not whether I should call my behaviour, in this dangerous juncture, courage or folly; but I took up Livy, and amused myself with turning over that author, and even making extracts from him, as if I had been perfectly at my leisure. Just then, a friend of my uncle's, who had lately come to him from Spain, joined us, and observing me sitting by my mother with a book in my hand, reproved her for her calmness, and me at the same time for my careless security: nevertheless, I went on with my author.

SOURCE 2.8 Pliny the Younger, *Letters to Tacitus*, Bk VI, 20

However, just before the final devastating surge spread out across the bay, when all the buildings around were tottering on their foundations, they decided to leave Misenum. As Pliny the Younger later recounted to Tacitus, 'the panic-stricken crowds followed us, in response to that instinct of fear which causes people to follow where others lead'²⁰. Their carts were tossed around and the sea appeared to have been 'sucked away' so that 'quantities of sea creatures were left stranded on dry sand'.²¹ His corpulent mother begged him to escape and leave her behind, but he hurried her along.



FIGURE 2.15 A painting of Pliny the Younger and his mother at Misenum, 79 AD by Angelica Kauffmann

'Let's go into the fields so that we can still see the way,' I told my mother – for I was afraid that we might be crushed by the mob on the road in the midst of the darkness ... to be heard were only the shrill cries of women, the wailing of children, the shouting of men. Some were calling to their parents, others to their children, others to their wives – knowing one another only by voice. Some wept for themselves, some for their relations. There were those who in their very fear of death invoked it. Many lifted up their hands to the gods, but a great number believed there were no gods, and that this was to be the world's last eternal night ... Finally, a genuine daylight came; the sun shone but pallidly, as in an eclipse. And then, before our terror-stricken gaze everything appeared changed – covered by a thick layer of ashes like an abundant snowfall.

SOURCE 2.9 Pliny the Younger, *Letters to Tacitus*, Bk VI, 20

Nature of deaths and number of victims

Recent research has now concluded that the fates of Pompeii and Herculaneum were more similar than previously thought: that they were both devastated by pyroclastic surges and flows during the second Peléan phase. There were some people who were sealed up in rooms by the rising level of ash and pumice; others crushed under fallen masonry and struck down by projectiles; trampled to death in the pitch darkness as they tried to escape; or drowned in the tumultuous seas; but most are believed to have died as a result of asphyxiation and thermal shock.

A COMMENT ON ...

Cause of death during a pyroclastic phase of an eruption

Evidence from the pyroclastic eruption of Mount St Helens in 1980 revealed that most of the victims would have died of asphyxiation ('blocked by a plug of mucous and ash'²²) or thermal shock (their bodies 'baked by intense heat'²³) within a matter of two minutes of the surge.

This was confirmed between 1980 and 1982 with the discovery of bodies in the vaulted chambers of the sea wall of Herculaneum. The way the bodies were found in natural positions, e.g. sitting up, standing or lying down, indicates that their deaths were instantaneous. Italian forensic archaeologist Giuseppe Mastrolorenzo believes that, judging by the blackening inside the skulls of the skeletons, discoloured bones and cracked teeth, they were incinerated in temperatures around 500°C.

Recent work done on the find spots of bodies in Pompeii show that of the bodies found so far, 394 were found in the initial lower pumice layer mostly within buildings, while 650 bodies were found in the upper ash layer resulting from the pyroclastic surges, and of these latter victims most were found in open areas and streets, and near or just beyond the city gates. 'Ironically, it is the layer of fine ash left by the surges covering the bodies that has been the archaeologist's best friend in allowing casts to be made that reveal fine details.'²⁴



FIGURE 2.16 Plaster cast of the head of a Pompeian victim

It is almost impossible to estimate the number of people who died during 24–25 August 79 AD, but Cambridge classicist Professor Mary Beard, in Source 2.10, makes some interesting observations about Pompeii.

Many did leave, as the tally of bodies found in the city confirms. Around 1100 have been unearthed in the excavations. We need to make allowance for those that still lie in the unexcavated part of the town (about a quarter of ancient Pompeii is as yet unexplored), and for those human remains missed in earlier excavations (children's bones can easily be mistaken for those of animals, and discarded). Even so, it seems unlikely that more than 2000 of the inhabitants would have lost their lives in the disaster. Whatever the total population – and estimates vary from 6000 – 20 000 (depending on how tightly packed we imagine these people to have lived, or on what modern comparisons we choose) – this was a small, or very small, proportion.

SOURCE 2.10 Mary Beard, *The Fires of Vesuvius, Pompeii Lost and Found*, p. 10

ACTIVITY 2.3

- 1 Summarise the evidence that many people in both Pompeii and Herculaneum fled soon after the volcano erupted.
- 2 List the problems that were faced by those who left it until later to escape.
- 3 Provide evidence from Herculaneum of the force and speed of the first pyroclastic surge.
- 4 Explain why the remains of the victims of Pompeii and Herculaneum present differently to excavators.
- 5 Write a paragraph for each of the following:
 - Pliny the Elder's reaction to the first phase of the eruption
 - The reaction of Pliny the Younger to the catastrophe
 - The behaviour of the population of Misenum as S6 blasted across Campania.

The reliability of Pliny's *Letters to Tacitus*

Despite the *Letters* being valuable historical and scientific sources for the eruption of Vesuvius, there are some surprising omissions, and several factors that should be considered when gauging reliability.

- Although the letters provide two geographical viewpoints of the eruption (from Misenum and Stabiae), unfortunately Pliny says nothing of the overwhelming of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Nor does he record the year as 79 AD, and makes no mention of the tremendous detonation that must have preceded the eruption. He was only 30 km from Vesuvius. It is also surprising that someone who experienced such a catastrophe first-hand should not have written more about it.
- The description of his uncle's experiences, behaviour and death was second-hand. Pliny the Younger was not on the ship with him, at the home of Pomponianus or on the beach at Stabiae. He had to rely on the reports of those who survived – predominantly sailors and members of the household of Pomponianus – all of whom would have been seriously traumatised.
- The evidence suggests that the events were not documented until 103–107 AD; that is about a quarter of a century after the event, and in the intervening years Pliny must have forgotten much of what he heard and experienced when he was a young man, especially the sequence of events.

- It is obvious from the content of the first letter – particularly its introduction – that Pliny and Tacitus were concerned more with celebrating Pliny the Elder’s bravery, and in the carefully composed letters both uncle and nephew lose nothing in the telling.

Thank you for asking me to send you a description of my uncle’s death so that you can leave an account of it for posterity; I know that immortal fame awaits him if his death is recorded by you. It is true that he perished in a catastrophe which destroyed the loveliest regions of the earth, a fate shared by whole cities and their people, and one so memorable that it is likely to make his name live forever; and he himself wrote a number of books of lasting value; but you write for all time and can still do much to perpetuate his memory.

SOURCE 2.11 *Letters to Tacitus*, Bk VI, 16

ACTIVITY 2.4

- 1 Explain what Pliny the Younger’s stated purpose was in writing a letter in answer to Tacitus’ request for information on the death of his uncle.
- 2 Outline the deficiencies of Pliny’s *Letters* as a source of evidence for the eruption and its effects on Pompeii and Herculaneum.

A COMMENT ON...

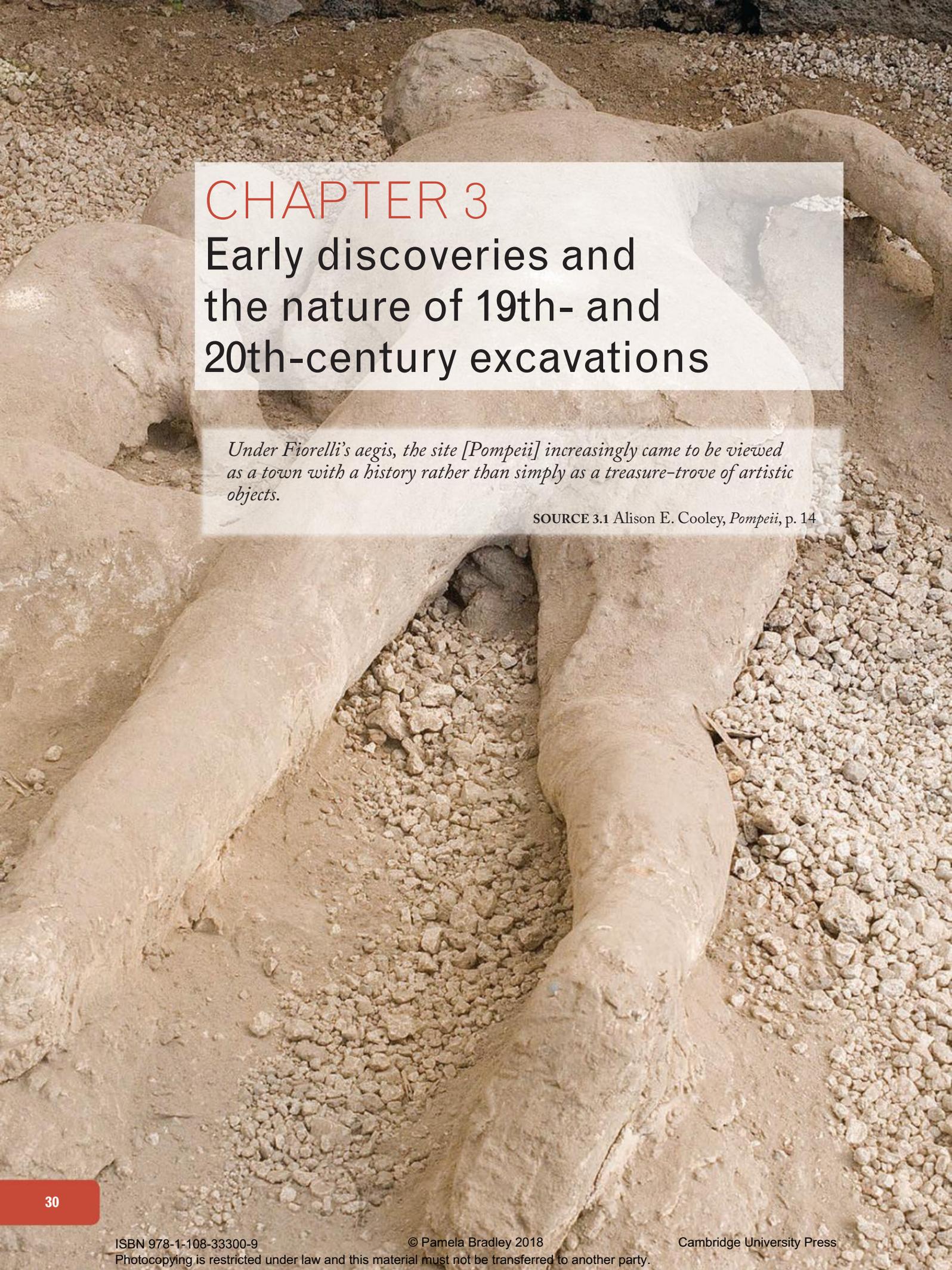
Eruptions of Vesuvius since 79 AD

Since the eruption of 79 AD, Vesuvius has erupted over 30 times.

- 203 – recorded by Dio Cassius
- 472 – falls reported as far away as Constantinople (Istanbul)
- 512 – a number of severe eruptions in the one year
- Subsequent eruptions in 787, 968, 991, 999 and 1007
- 1036 – the first recorded lava flows
- A period of quiescence when the volcano once again became covered in gardens and vineyards.
- December 1631 – the volcano entered a new eruptive phase – 3000 victims, torrents of lava buried many villages and, thereafter, volcanic activity was almost continuous with severe eruptions occurring in:
 - 17th century – 1660, 1682, 1694, 1698
 - 18th century – 1707, 1737, 1760, 1767, 1779, 1794
 - 19th century – 1822, 1834, 1839, 1850, 1855, 1861, 1868, 1872
 - 20th century – 1906, 1926, 1929 and 1944.



FIGURE 2.17 The eruption of Vesuvius in 1944



CHAPTER 3

Early discoveries and the nature of 19th- and 20th-century excavations

Under Fiorelli's aegis, the site [Pompeii] increasingly came to be viewed as a town with a history rather than simply as a treasure-trove of artistic objects.

SOURCE 3.1 Alison E. Cooley, *Pompeii*, p. 14

There are some signs in many parts of Pompeii – including tunnels and holes in the walls of some houses – that suggest that in the months after the eruption, some people may have come back to:

- reclaim what they had left behind
- search for ‘reusable material, such as bronze, lead or marble’.¹

Whether these people, who took a chance of digging through the volcanic debris into some of the rich houses, were the original owners of the property who had survived, or looters, is not known. However, a message, ‘house tunnelled’, scratched into a wall – perhaps ‘a message to other members of their gang’² – uncovered by excavators in the 19th century – indicates that they were probably treasure hunters. This must have been an incredibly dangerous activity and it poses the question: is it possible that some of the skeletons found in Pompeii centuries later did not belong to victims of Vesuvius, but to those who returned to the city to loot soon after the eruption?

The image in Figure 3.1 was once thought to have been evidence of an attempt by those trapped in the House of Menander to escape the build-up of pumice. There is now a possible alternative explanation.

It took another 1500 years before these cities began to give up their secrets. At first this only occurred by accident and it was some time before the discoveries were seen as significant.

- 1 In 1592, Domenico Fontana, the court architect for the Austrian Hapsburg rulers who, at the time, controlled Naples, discovered slabs of marble and frescoed walls as he directed a civil engineering project, close to the former site of Pompeii, to divert the waters of a tributary of the Sarno River.
- 2 In 1709, the site of Herculaneum was rediscovered when an Austrian general, Count D’Elbeuf, was searching for antiquities and a cheap source of marble with which to decorate a villa he was building nearby. When his workmen sunk a shaft, reaching the level of the stage of an ancient theatre, the ‘rapacious looting of the only intact theatre remaining from Roman antiquity’ began and ‘for years they literally mined the theatre of its marble facing and statuary’.³ Shafts and tunnels were dug – at times gunpowder was used – and the site was plundered with little care for the destruction that occurred. Many of the marble pieces found were given to European royalty while others disappeared into private collections. Eventually the shaft entrances were sealed up because of the difficulty of penetrating the solidified volcanic mud, and because the town of Resina lay over ancient Herculaneum.

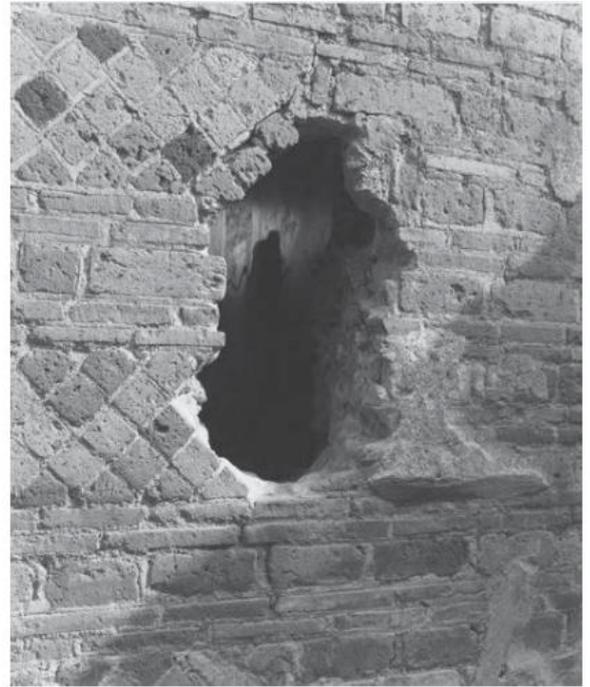


FIGURE 3.1 A hole in the wall of the House of Menander

3.1 Early discoveries at Herculaneum and Pompeii

When Charles III of Spain became Charles VII of Naples in 1734, he initiated a program of feverish exploration and excavation. The king appointed a Spanish military engineer, Rocque Joachim de Alcubierre, to resume excavations at Herculaneum.

The aim of the excavations was not primarily to gain knowledge about the past, but to gain prestige for the present, and it is this that overwhelmingly influenced the progress of the excavations throughout the rest of the 18th century.

SOURCE 3.2 Alison E. Cooley, *Pompeii*, p. 69

De Alcubierre directed an engineering corps to hack 20 metres into the hardened volcanic material of Herculaneum and to dig more tunnels out from the ancient theatre discovered nearly 30 years before. The labourers worked in the faint light provided by oil lamps and smoky torches, 'which were constantly being extinguished, plunging the men into claustrophobic blackness or threatening them with suffocation'.⁴ They carelessly broke through painted walls and tunnelled through houses, destroying many precious artefacts in the process.

As rooms or buildings were uncovered, objects and statues were set aside. Light documentation would take place for tax purposes and Camillo Paderni, curator of the king's museum at Portico, would arrive and the selection process would begin with the task of choosing only the finest objects for the king's collection.

SOURCE 3.3 C. Amery & B. Curren, *The Lost World of Pompeii*, p. 35

Other more common artefacts, as well as damaged frescoes, were destroyed by hammer or discarded, and once a site had been cleared of all the finest objects, it was usually back-filled. Years later (1771), the art historian Johann Winckelmann wrote that de Alcubierre 'knew as much of antiquities as the moon does of lobsters'.⁵

The workmen having discovered a large public inscription ... in letters of brass two palms high; he ordered these letters to be torn from the wall without first taking a copy of them, and thrown pell mell into a basket; and then presented them in that condition to the king.

SOURCE 3.4 Johann Winckelmann, *A Critical Account of the Situation and Destruction of Herculaneum, Pompeii and Stabiae*, 1771

By 1748, the flow of treasure from Herculaneum was beginning to dry up and the king gave de Alcubierre permission to dig into the mound known as *civitas* or 'settlement', the former city of Pompeii, which he carried out with a small crew of slave labourers. But Pompeii had its problems, which caused endless delays, such as pockets of a foul-smelling and lethal combination of carbon monoxide, hydrogen sulphide and decayed matter trapped in some of the strata.

De Alcubierre, motivated by the search for treasure and not with the discovery of a past civilisation, became impatient with the constant hold-ups and disappointment at the quality of the finds at Pompeii. He returned to Herculaneum, leaving only a small workforce at Pompeii.

Even though the court at Naples kept strict control of the excavations, two Englishmen, Horace Walpole and the poet Thomas Gray, were able to visit Herculaneum as early as 1740. Gray, in a letter to his mother, informed her of his astonishment at the excavations.

Today we have seen something of which I am certain you have never heard tell. Have you ever heard of a subterranean city, an entire Roman city, complete with its buildings, that has remained beneath the earth's surface? In the whole world, there is nothing like Herculaneum.

SOURCE 3.5 Duncan C. Tovey (ed.), *Thomas Gray and his Friends*, p. 252

context an event in time which has been preserved in the archaeological record

provenance the place of origin or ownership of an artefact

It was fortunate that, in 1750, the king appointed a Swiss engineer named Karl Weber to join the excavation team to work under the supervision of de Alcubierre at Herculaneum. Unlike de Alcubierre, who excavated randomly and kept no records of the **context** or **provenance** of the objects removed, Weber believed it was important to uncover the site systematically and to document the excavations. Over a period of 15 years, he excavated Herculaneum by means of underground tunnels, began

drawing up plans and maps of all the subterranean galleries and buildings, and recording artefacts and paintings wherever he could.

De Alcubierre thought Weber's methods were ridiculous and often deliberately put obstacles in his way, but, despite his supervisor's destructive methods, Weber's systematic approach led to the discovery of the Villa of the Papyri, sprawling along the coastline in Herculaneum and one of the most luxurious in the Roman world – with a library of 1800 carbonised papyrus rolls (see page 128). The discovery of this villa was later lost when excavation at Herculaneum was suspended. It was another 200 years before it was excavated again.

The King of Naples exploited these new discoveries for political influence, opening up the sites and the royal **antiquities** collection to foreign dignitaries, and in 1755 he founded the Herculaneum Academy to record some of the more important finds.

Finally, in 1763, an inscription – *respublica Pompeianorum* or commonwealth of Pompeii – was discovered in the Street of the Tombs, positively identifying the site of Pompeii. This created great interest in Europe, and the Grand Tour, undertaken by young aristocrats, soon included Naples on its itinerary. No longer did the tourists turn around at Rome but travelled south to see the excavations at the open-air museums of Herculaneum and Pompeii.

In 1764, Weber died and was replaced by another Spanish engineer, Francesco La Vega, who, although still responsible to de Alcubierre, built on the work done by Weber. His approach included uncovering each building in its entirety, making a complete search for artefacts, documenting all notable interiors and writing detailed diaries of all work carried out. In Pompeii, he unearthed the Odeon, or small theatre, and the intact Roman Temple of Isis, complete with frescoes. Suddenly 'the lure of Italy became irresistible'.⁶

In 1780, de Alcubierre died, removing 'one of the greatest hindrances to the development and execution of proper archaeological practice at Pompeii'.⁷

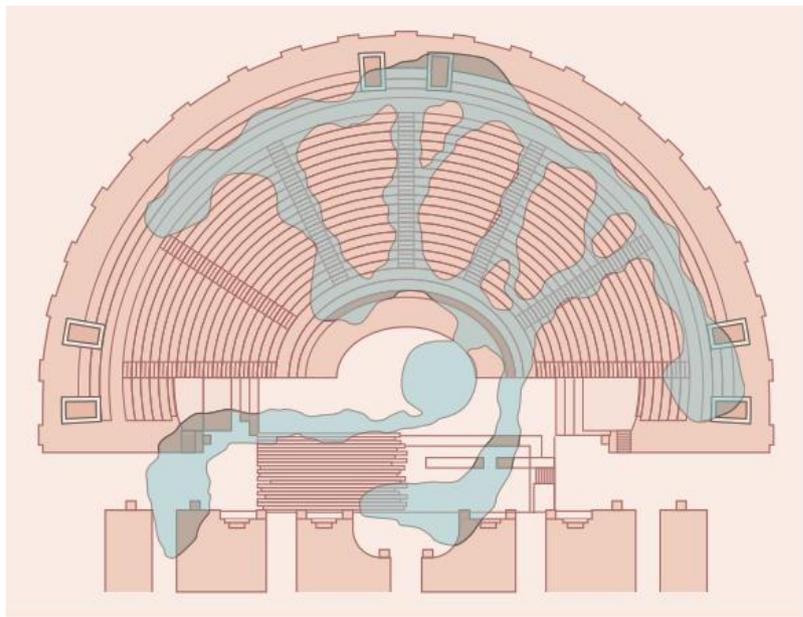


FIGURE 3.2 Original tunnels to Herculaneum theatre showing the central shaft and later plan

antiquities objects remaining from ancient times

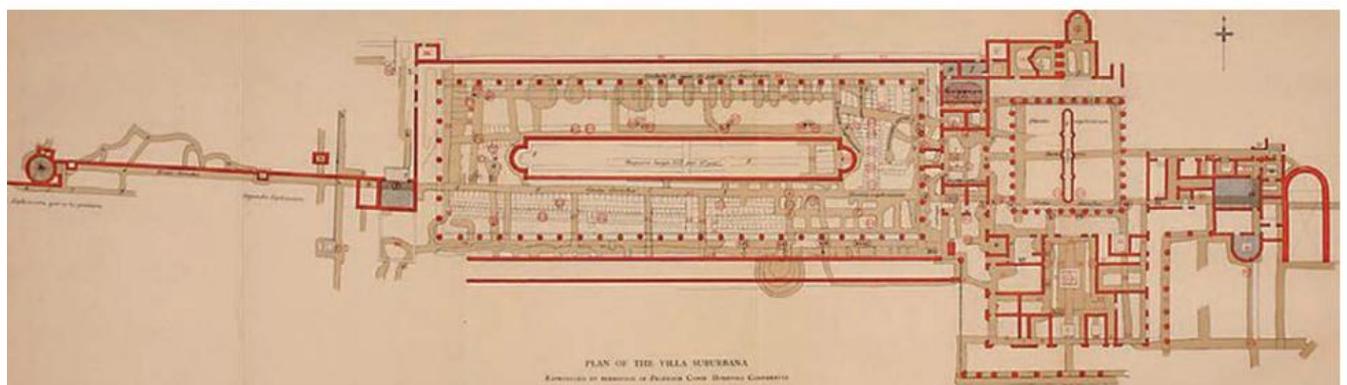


FIGURE 3.3 The original tunnels (shown in brown) that led to the discovery of the Villa of the Papyri and an early plan



FIGURE 3.4 An etching of the discovery of the Temple of Isis at Pompeii, buried under pumice and other volcanic matter, by Pietro Fabris, 1776

Despite de Alcubierre's death, and a short positive interlude under Napoleonic patronage, the Kingdom of Naples once more came under the control of the Bourbon rulers and in their desire for self-promotion, they encouraged artists, architects, engravers and writers to record the glory of all aspects of the Bourbon kingdom.

Excavation recommenced at Herculaneum in 1828, but the methods of excavation were crude and destructive.

- The director of the sites, Carl Bonucci, was corrupt and incompetent, with no concern for the preservation of finds.
- Administrative irregularities and even theft were rife in both the museum and excavations, and Pompeii was faced with financial difficulties.
- Political unrest (moves to unify Italy) during the 1840s and 1850s did not help the situation.

However, despite these difficulties, many important finds were unearthed between 1824 and 1860: the Forum Baths, the Temple of Fortuna Augusta, the House of the Tragic Poet, the House of the Faun, whole city blocks and the Stabian Baths in Pompeii, as well as the House of Argos in Herculaneum.

The Bourbon monarchs were finally expelled from Naples in 1860, and with the appointment of Giuseppe Fiorelli as superintendent of the sites, the excavations of Pompeii entered a new phase.

ACTIVITY 3.1

- 1 Describe what Sources 3.2–3.4 reveal about the aims and methods of the earliest excavators and the methods they employed.
- 2 Define 'context' and 'provenance'.
- 3 Explain the statement by the German traveller, Goethe, in his *Italian Journey*: 'It is a thousand pities that the site was not excavated methodically by German miners, instead of being casually ransacked as if by brigands'.
- 4 Describe the difficulties faced by the early excavators at Herculaneum and Pompeii and their impact on the sites.

3.2 A new era of excavation: 1860–1960

By 1860, the earlier destructive and haphazard excavation methods, which focused on finding precious objects and beautiful paintings for a jealously guarded royal collection in the Naples Museum, were coming to an end. For the next hundred years, men such as Giuseppe Fiorelli, Vittorio Spinazzola and Amedeo Maiuri changed the face of Pompeii by adopting a more systematic and scientific approach to excavation and the documentation of finds. Unfortunately, excavation at Herculaneum was suspended in 1877 because the residents of Resina (the town on top of the site) objected to their land being taken from them. It was not resumed until 1927.

Giuseppe Fiorelli (1860–75)

In 1860, Giuseppe Fiorelli was appointed as inspector of the excavations and three years later was given direction of the Naples Museum as well as the superintendency of Pompeii.

Significant achievements

- 1 Fiorelli introduced a uniform numbering and naming system for houses and buildings. Previously, the houses were given names according to a notable feature or possible owner, but this led to confusion when some houses had several names. He divided the topography of the site – including those areas not yet excavated – into nine regions each containing up to 22 blocks (*insulae*), and every entrance within each *insula* was given a number. For example, the House of the Faun, which over time had eight different names, became VI.xii.2, 5, 7 (region VI, block 12, entrances 2, 5, 7). This system made it easier to draw up plans, locate individual structures and record where objects were found. It is still used by those working on the site and in their publications.
- 2 He also introduced a more systematic approach to excavation. With a workforce of 500 people and following the line of the roads, he connected different parts of the site: ‘He first set about clearing the undisturbed places between the excavated portions; and when in this way the west part of the city had been laid bare, he commenced to work systematically from the excavated part to the east.’⁸
- 3 He imposed a system of slowly uncovering the houses from the top down, unlike those before him who dug straight down to the ground level of 79 AD, extracting anything of interest and shovelling the debris aside. Fiorelli’s method enabled him to collect data to help restore the ancient buildings and their interiors and gain a better understanding of the process of burial. After excavation, he made sure the buildings were shored up: ‘Although Fiorelli’s method was still a far cry from modern **stratigraphic digging** techniques ... it was a first step in the right direction.’⁹ Wherever possible, he left paintings in situ, although the best ones continued to be cut from the walls and shipped off to Naples. Other objects were removed for display to the small **antiquarium** built on the site.
- 4 He made a discovery that contributed more than anything to his fame: his recognition of the significance of cavities in the deposits of hardened ash at Pompeii as the impressions of bodies. With the passage of time, the ash had solidified around the body contours as they decomposed, and an impression was left. He devised a method of injecting liquid plaster into the cavities, enabling him to recover not only the shapes of humans and animals as they died, but other objects made of perishable material.
- 5 Fiorelli introduced a new system for recording the work in progress. Day books or diaries were to include the date, the number of workers employed, the time the job started and finished, the exact place of excavation and a precise description of the number, type and quality of the objects found. An architect had to add his observations and a superintendent stamped every page before it was submitted to the inspector of the excavations. He published his finds in a journal with monthly updates. He changed the character of Pompeii by the introduction of an entrance fee for access to the site, opening it up to a wider cross-section of society.

insulae (singular: *insula*)
town blocks isolated by four streets

stratigraphic digging
observing and recording the sequence of layers within an excavation

antiquarium a repository for objects from the past

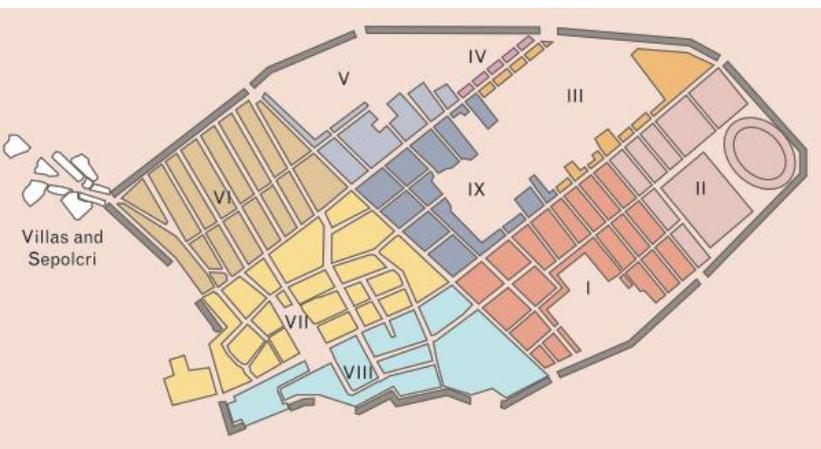


FIGURE 3.5 Fiorelli's regions and *insulae*



FIGURE 3.6 Signs in Pompeii indicating regions and *insulae*

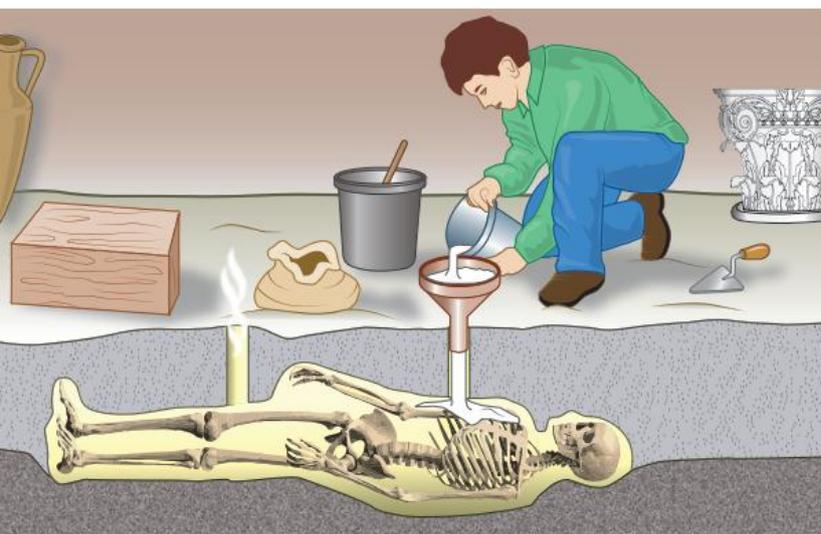


FIGURE 3.7 Pouring plaster into a cavity left by a decomposed body in the ash layer of Pompeii

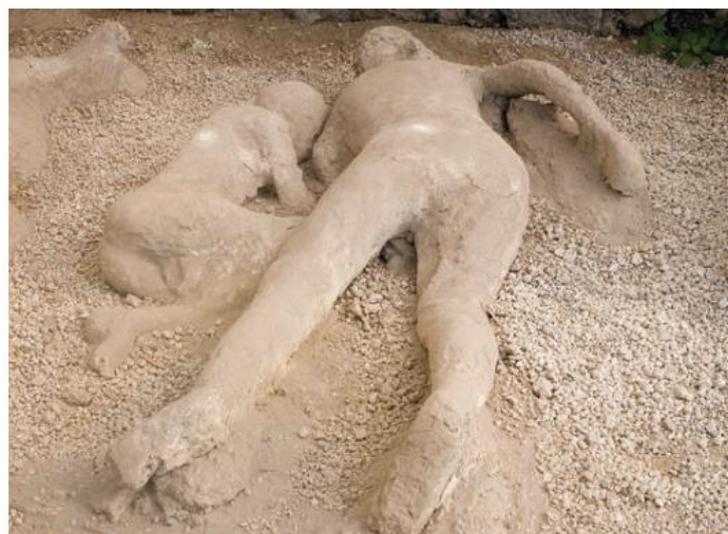


FIGURE 3.8 Plaster casts of victims from Pompeii

According to Alison E. Cooley, 'Fiorelli remains the individual who had the greatest impact upon the way in which Pompeii has been excavated and perceived.'¹⁰

By the time Fiorelli was promoted to the position of Director General of Antiquities throughout Italy in 1875, three-fifths of Pompeii had been excavated and he believed that the town could be completely unearthed in little over 70 years if the excavations continued at the same rate.

ACTIVITY 3.2

Evaluate the contributions of Giuseppe Fiorelli on the future of excavations at Pompeii.

August Mau

In 1882, August Mau, an art historian who worked for the German Archaeological Institute in Rome, visited Pompeii. Using Fiorelli's systematic work, and comments made by the ancient architect Vitruvius in his *De architectura* on pictorial styles, Mau developed a sequential classification of wall paintings.

TABLE 3.1 Mau's classification of wall paintings

Style	Comment
The first style (c. 175–80 BC)	Often referred to as the 'incrustation' or 'masonry' style because the shiny stucco wall decoration is in the form of solid colours to represent stone or marble
The second style (c. 80–10 BC)	Referred to as the 'architectural' style as it featured columns, porticoes and niches, creating a three-dimensional illusion of extended space with landscape vistas through arches and painted windows.
The third style (10 BC – 50 AD)	Referred to as the 'ornamental' style with the wall divided into three horizontal zones and two pairs of narrow vertical panels, creating a large central area usually occupied by a mythological painting (stories of the gods, heroes and famous lovers). Smaller panels on each side featured paintings of theatre masks, fantastic figures, imaginary gardens and features of the natural world.
The fourth style 50–79 AD	Referred to as the 'intricate' style. Most of the surviving paintings in Pompeii were of this style. Their bright shimmering colours created a theatrical fantasy with a greater range of motifs, framework and colour.

A COMMENT ON...

Things to consider when analysing the four styles of painting

The categorisation of the four styles has been proven to be too rigid. Although approximate dates have been allocated to each style there was some overlapping of categories.

- The distinction between some of these styles is not quite clear.
- There are more similarities than differences.
- Although there were 'cultural' rules for decorating houses, there were always personal whims.
- This categorisation pays no attention to the possible link between the room function and the type of decoration on the wall.

ACTIVITY 3.3

Discuss the following statement:

Mau believed it was a mistake to cut the best pictures from the walls while leaving the decorative framework intact because the pictures needed to be viewed as a whole. He thought the whole painting could be left in situ while providing it with whatever protection was necessary.

Do you agree or disagree with Mau's views?

Those who followed Fiorelli in the last years of the 19th and early 20th centuries faithfully carried on his work, but proceeded more slowly because of the greater care taken for the preservation of the remains. These men: Michele Ruggiero (1875–93), Giulio De Petra (1893–1901), Ettore Pais (1901–05) and Antonio Sogliano (1905–10) helped to bring the city to life.



FIGURE 3.9 Mau's first style of painting (House of the Faun)



FIGURE 3.10 Mau's second style of painting (Villa of Fannius Synistor in Boscoreale)

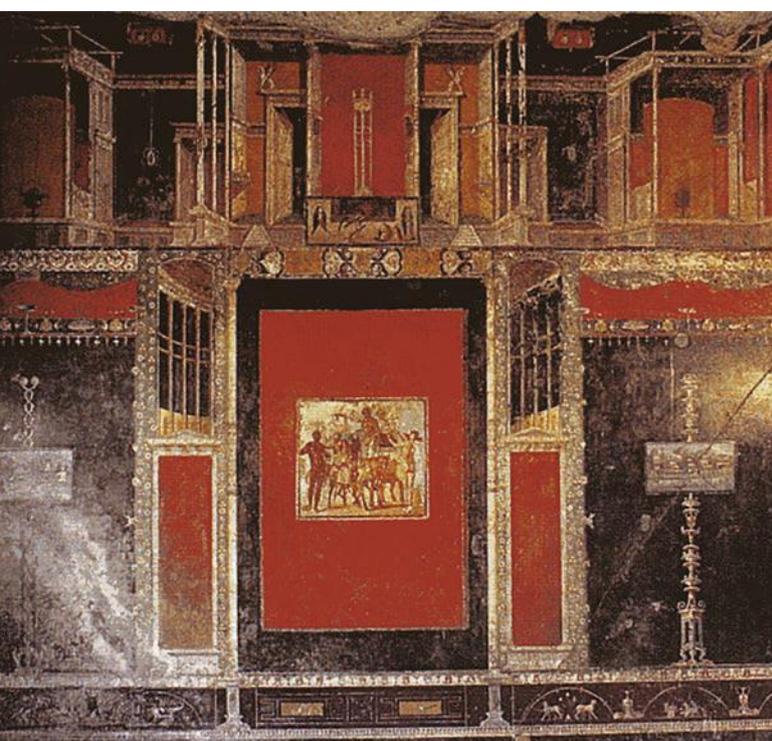


FIGURE 3.11 Mau's third style of painting (House of Lucretius Fronto)

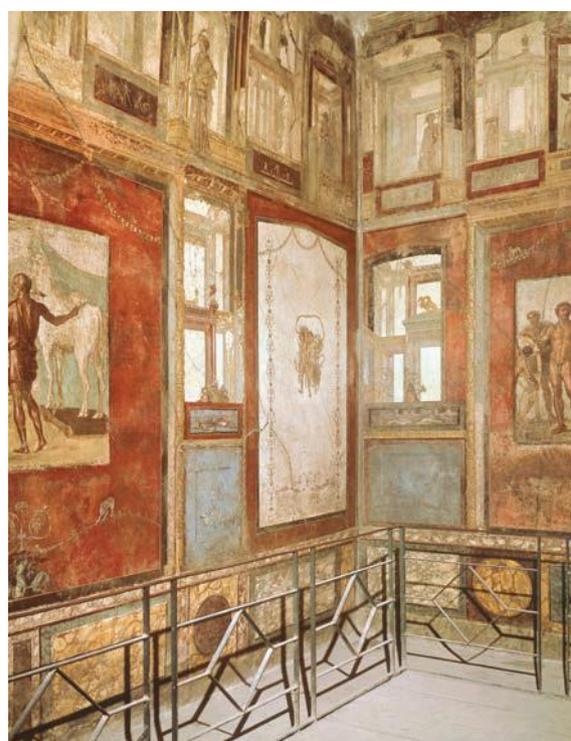


FIGURE 3.12 Mau's fourth style of painting (House of the Vetti)

Vittorio Spinazzola (1910–23)

Vittorio Spinazzola chose to focus on the excavation of a 600-metre length of the main commercial road – the Via dell'Abbondanza or Street of Abundance – that ran west to east through Pompeii, linking the Forum with the Amphitheatre and the Sarnian Gate.

These 'New Excavations' as they came to be called, 'revealed a Pompeii that had been scarcely dreamed of'¹¹ with its election posters, popular paintings and numerous shops and workshops, such as the Laundry of Stephanus and the Inn of Asellina, interspersed with fine houses. His meticulous excavation method showed how the buildings along the main east–west street had been buried, and allowed him to reconstruct

their facades as fully as possible, particularly the upper floors, with their windows, balconies and roofs.

However, by focusing on unearthing the frontages only, he was forced to shore them up to prevent them collapsing from the weight of the earth behind. Also, he could only guess at the exact function of many of the shops.

By the time he retired in 1923, the town's most important business artery, the Street of Abundance, had been cleared for most of its length. It was left up to his successor, Amedeo Maiuri, to bring it to the condition that visitors enjoy today.



FIGURE 3.13 Signs along the Street of Abundance

ACTIVITY 3.4

- 1 Analyse what is meant by, 'Spinazzola revealed a Pompeii that had been scarcely dreamed of'.
- 2 List the main criticism of his method. Keep this in mind when you study Chapter 13.

Amedeo Maiuri (1924–61)

Amedeo Maiuri took over the directorship of Pompeii in 1924 and remained in charge until his retirement in 1961. He has often been described as the most productive, determined and controversial director in the history of the excavations.

His most productive period (1920s to the outbreak of WWII) corresponded with the **Fascist government** of Mussolini, which ruthlessly exploited the potential of Italy's imperial past in order 'to create a model for a new imperialist Italy'.¹² Maiuri benefited from the dictator's financial support and, whether consciously or not, he followed the political line by excavating glorious monuments such as the House of Menander and the Villa of Mysteries in Pompeii, which were a testament to the magnificence of Italy's past.

In Herculaneum, from 1927, his excavation and restoration program was driven by the same need to glorify the country's past by creating an almost ideal Roman city, attracting tourists and guaranteeing a continued injection of state funds. (See Chapter 12).

Excavation ceased during the war, and Pompeii suffered serious damage from the 160 bombs dropped by the allies in 1943. Digging was resumed in 1947, and from 1951 until 1961 there was intensive activity at Pompeii with more than 10 *insulae* totally cleared. However, much of the latter work was hurried and chronically underfunded.

Despite Maiuri's wide-ranging excavations, by the time he retired, 26 hectares of the total site area of 66 hectares were still not excavated, and by the late 1950s and early 1960s Pompeii was in a bad way.

Fascist government a form of government that features dictatorial power and radical nationalism, suppression of opposition and control of all affairs of the nation

TABLE 3.2 Significant achievements of Amedeo Maiuri in Pompeii and Herculaneum

Pompeii	Herculaneum
<p>He continued the work of Spinazzola along the famous Via dell'Abbondanza in an attempt to uncover the <i>insulae</i> on either side and gain a view of the whole. He uncovered 140 metres of the road as far as the Amphitheatre and excavated the palaestra.</p> <p>He worked on the House of Menander with its famous silver treasure and the House of the Surgeons, as well as completing work on the Villa of Mysteries outside the wall of Pompeii.</p> <p>He cleared and restored the area behind the Triangular Forum, which revealed the terrace houses on the steep flank of the Pompeian mound, restored public buildings such as the Basilica and the roofs of many houses.</p> <p>He resumed excavations after WWII with the Villa Imperiale discovered under the damaged Antiquarium; brought to light the House of Julia Felix, which had originally been uncovered in 1775 then reburied; and cleared the cemetery outside the Nucernian Gate.</p>	<p>He supervised the reopening of the excavations at Herculaneum in 1927; abandoned the former tunnelling technique and worked from the surface down, removing hundreds of thousands of cubic metres of compact volcanic material.</p> <p>He set the agenda for future work by initiating an ahead-of-its-time experiment by appointing masons, carpenters and restorers who worked alongside the excavation team, propping up structures and carrying out urgent conservation work.</p> <p>He furnished the houses in every detail with the artefacts discovered, including those illustrating daily life, building display cases in the houses and replanting gardens. He turned it into an open-air museum and opened it to the public. (See Chapter 12.)</p> <p>He discovered the House of the Bicentenary, the town's largest and richest residence, containing 18 wax tablets.</p>
<p>Most of those who worked at Pompeii – and Herculaneum after 1927 – would probably agree with Professor Andrew Wallace-Hadrill that Maiuri was a 'towering figure ... endlessly energetic, learned and imaginative' and that 'his massive presence lies behind the excavation, publication and interpretation of the majority of houses'.¹³</p>	

palaestra sportsground with an open courtyard dedicated to athletics and training



FIGURE 3.14 The house of the Bicentenary at Herculaneum



FIGURE 3.15 A restored shop in Herculaneum

Criticisms of Maiuri's work

- Much of his excavation in Pompeii (1924–61) was rushed, with few of the excavated buildings restored or protected, and in the same period there was virtually no documentation, let alone publication.
- His publication in 1933 of the House of Menander and its treasure, although long and lavish, lacks detail and scientific precision; it was descriptive rather than analytical. In concentrating on descriptions of the paintings and discussions of the more spectacular finds, at the expense of ordinary artefacts, he was following the Fascist political line of the time in glorifying the greatness of Italy's past.
- His interpretation of a social and economic decline after the earthquake of 62 AD, and his disgust at what he believed had happened, was based on anecdotal rather than statistical evidence and on false assumptions about the elite, trade and the use of property and about the mix of commercial and residential. Professor Wallace-Hadrill says that, although there may be some truth in Maiuri's account of the crisis after the earthquake, 'his model is simply too rigid'.¹⁴

It is easy in hindsight to criticise some of Maiuri's methodology and interpretations, but it should take nothing away from his tremendous contribution to our understanding of Pompeii and Herculaneum.

ACTIVITY 3.5

- 1 Describe the Fascist government's aim with regard to archaeology.
- 2 Account for Amedeo Maiuri's reputation as the most productive director in the history of the excavations at Pompeii and Herculaneum.
- 3 Explain why many of his interpretations have been questioned.

CHAPTER 4

Representations of Pompeii and Herculaneum over time

... and here are the Venuses, and Bacchuses, and Adonises, making love and getting drunk in many-hued frescoes on the walls of saloon and bed-chamber.

SOURCE 4.1 Mark Twain, *Innocents Abroad* (1867), ch. 31, p. 33



4.1 Neoclassicism and romanticism: 18th and 19th centuries

The various representations of Pompeii and Herculaneum during these centuries were influenced by two European movements:

- 1 neoclassicism – a movement in the decorative and visual arts, theatre, music and architecture that drew its inspiration from ancient Greece and Rome.
- 2 romanticism – an artistic, literary, musical and intellectual movement characterised by its emphasis on emotion, imagination, individualism and glorification of the past and nature.



FIGURE 4.1 An engraving of the Temple of Isis at Pompeii by Giovanni Battista Piranesi who inspired the neoclassical movement in Europe.

The poets and artists associated with the ‘romantic’ movement ‘revelled in the melancholy engendered by the aspect of ruins’,¹ recording what they felt rather than what they saw. They presented an interpretation based on their own moods and memories, and added characteristic touches of their own.

Jakob Philipp Hackert, as the official painter for the court at Naples, was one of the first to record his impression of the state of the excavations in 1799. In his painting, *The Excavations at Pompeii*, he combined an image of the ruins with that of a pastoral idyll: a peaceful, fertile landscape with flocks, orchards, vineyards and peasants.

The architect/artist Francois Mazois in his 454 drawings in *The Ruins of Pompeii*



FIGURE 4.2 *The Excavations at Pompeii* by Jakob Philipp Hackert, 1799, showing the theatre district of Pompeii



FIGURE 4.3 A Pompeian house from Francois Mazois' *Les Ruines de Pompeii*, 1812



FIGURE 4.4 *Dream Amid the Ruins of Pompeii* by Paul Alfred de Curzon, 1866

(1812) seemed to bring out ‘the poetry of the ruins’,² even while attempting to document what he saw. In a letter to a friend, Mazois continued his poetic feel for the site.

I was in Pompeii perched on a narrow, ruined wall, when suddenly it shifted and then collapsed, throwing me straight down, head first onto the antique marble floor beneath. I must confess, I can think of no better way to die, nor of any better place to be buried.

SOURCE 4.2 F. Mazois, ‘Letters to Mlle. Duval’, in R. Etienne, *Pompeii: The Day a City Died*

While some visitors wanted to experience the ruins in a romantic fashion, such as under moonlight, for others it was the mysterious and macabre that was fascinating. Grisly scenes, complete with skeletal remains, were often staged (conveniently discovered) for visiting dignitaries. (See Chapter 15.)

Charles Dickens, who spent extended periods of time in Italy, was ‘fascinated by Pompeii’s mixture of the macabre and beautiful’ and ‘the thought of sudden death’.³ In 1846 he wrote in *Pictures from Italy* that at Pompeii ‘one loses all sense of time and heed of other things in the strange and melancholy sensation of seeing the Destroyed and the Destroyer making this quiet picture in the sun.’⁴

Other artists imbued their representations of the ruins with a number of fantasy elements – inaccurate, but appealing to their audiences – like Paul Alfred de Curzon’s painting *Dream Amid the Ruins of Pompeii* and Édouard Alexandre Sain’s *Excavations at Pompeii*, while Theodore Chasseriau in his *Women in the Tepidarium* chose to evoke the type of ‘languid sensuality popular at the time’⁵ in Europe.

Many artists and writers used the fate of Pompeii as a powerful metaphor for ‘death’s abrupt invasion’ and ‘universal extinction’.⁶ A host of paintings focused on the cataclysmic and apocalyptic end of Pompeii, such as V. H. Valenciennes’ painting of *The Death of Pliny* (see Chapter 2), Bruelow Karl Pawlowitsh’s *Doomsday in Pompeii*, as though God was taking vengeance on a pagan people (see cover), and John Martin’s *The Destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum*. Like all his other visions of catastrophe, Martin shows small terror-stricken figures and the energy of the forces about to overpower them, man’s helplessness in the face of nature and the wrath of God. Figure 4.8 shows something of what Christians at the time might have envisaged as a scene from Hell.



FIGURE 4.5 *Excavations at Pompeii* by Édouard Alexandre Sain, 1865



FIGURE 4.6 *Women in the Tepidarium* by Theodore Chasseriau, 1853



FIGURE 4.7 *The Destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum* by John Martin, 1822

In the popular culture of the 19th century, Giovanni Puccini wrote an opera, *The Last Day of Pompeii*, complete with erupting Vesuvius, which was an immediate hit at La Scala; and the popular novel *The Last Days of Pompeii* written several years later by Edward George Bulwer-Lytton – an imaginative reconstruction of the human and social tragedy – became a best seller. He was supposed to have been inspired by the sight of a preserved skeleton and to have kept a skull on his desk as he wrote. It is a romantic story with a Pompeian setting, ‘a story in the grand Victorian tradition’.⁷ In it, he describes in vividly descriptive language ‘how the elements of civilization disappeared in this night flight to self-preservation’ and ‘narrates the final horror of the lava flow, which transforms Pompeii and its environment into a scene from Hell.’⁸



FIGURE 4.8 Alessandro Sanquirico's set design depicting the eruption of Vesuvius, the climactic scene of Giovanni Puccini's opera, *The Last Day of Pompeii*, which premiered in Naples in 1825.

... in proportion as the blackness gathered, did the lightnings around Vesuvius increase in their vivid and scorching glare. Nor was their horrible beauty confined to the usual hues of fire ... now a livid and snake-like green, darting restlessly to and fro as the folds of an enormous serpent. ... Sometimes the cloud appeared to assume quaint and vast mimics of human or monster shapes, striding across the gloom, hurtling one upon the other, and vanishing swiftly into the turbulent abyss of shade; so that, to the eyes and fancies of the affrighted wanderers, the unsubstantial vapours were as the bodily forms of gigantic foes, — the agents of terror and of death ... Suddenly, the place became lighted with an intense and lurid glow. Bright and gigantic through the darkness, which closed around it like the walls of hell, the mountain shone, — a pile of fire! Its summit seemed riven in two; or rather, above its surface there seemed to rise two monster shapes, each confronting each, as demons contending for a world.

SOURCE 4.3 Edward George Bulwer-Lytton. *Last Days of Pompeii*, Bk 5, Chp. 7–8

As photography developed, some visitors left their impressions of Pompeii in photographic images, and as the sites became more accessible to the public from the mid-19th century, others, such as the American author Mark Twain who travelled to Europe in 1867, left their impressions in travel diaries and books. Twain saw Pompeii through a distinctly irreverent American perspective, as he 'flippantly criticized ancient bureaucratic inefficiency'.⁹

Twain's representation of Pompeii serves to show how greatly a person's background affects his interpretation of the past. Being a member of a relatively young nation, Twain had a different concept of history than the European writers who used Pompeii in their works.

SOURCE 4.4 Wolfgang Lepmann, *Pompeii, Fact and Fiction*, p. 158

4.2 20th- and 21st-century representations

Throughout the 20th century, Pompeii and Herculaneum continued to be represented in both fact and fiction and often sensationalised, mainly through film adaptations of Bulwer-Lytton's 19th-century novel.

In 2003, author Robert Harris published his best-selling novel *Pompeii*, which gives an entirely different perspective on the eruption as he focuses on the 22nd to 25th of August 79 AD through the eyes of a Roman water engineer.



FIGURE 4.9 A pre-1923 photograph of the Pompeian Forum against the backdrop of Vesuvius

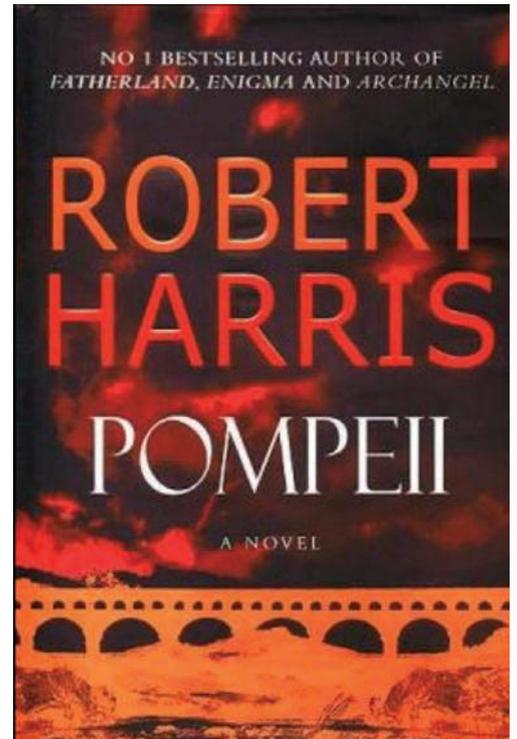
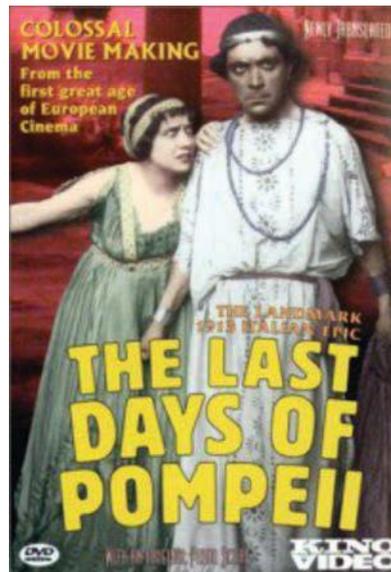
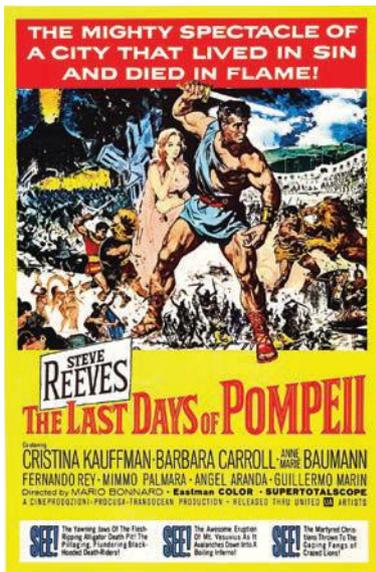


FIGURE 4.10 Cover for 2003 historical novel by Robert Harris



FIGURES 4.11, 4.12 AND 4.13 A collage of 20th-century movie posters



FIGURE 4.14 A promotional film poster of the 2014 film

A COMMENT ON...

The historical accuracy of 2014 film *Pompeii*

Although this romantic historical disaster film released in 2014 received generally negative reviews, it did get positive feedback for visual effects and some historical accuracy.

- It seems in part to have been based on Pliny the Younger's account of the eruption and some of the depictions of recent volcanic explosions.
- According to a volcanologist at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California, it 'realistically captured the earthquakes that preceded the eruption, the explosions and pyroclastic forces of hot ash and gas'.¹⁰
- It included some real footage of 'lightning' often seen in ash clouds.
- The layout and architecture of the city was based on photographs of the actual remains and a computer-generated image placed over the top.
- Further support for some of the details in and along the streets (stepping stones, graffiti) as well as the Amphitheatre came from an archaeologist who has spent much of her academic life studying Pompeii.

For those who will never get the opportunity to see the cities of Vesuvius first-hand there are any number of excellent documentaries and digital tours on YouTube. Those who, unlike the leisurely travellers of the 18th and 19th centuries on the Grand Tour, brave the three million or so tourists who descend on Pompeii annually, can be completely immersed in a three-hour time travel experience on site – a 360-degree virtual reality re-creation of ancient Pompeii as it once was before the eruption – via 3D virtual headsets with accompanying commentary. (See Chapter 15 on modern mass tourism.)

ACTIVITY 4.1

- 1 Make a list of the changes in the perspectives and representations of Pompeii between the 18th and 21st centuries.
- 2 Read pp. 282–366 of Robert Harris' historical novel, *Pompeii* to get a feel for what happened in the last hours in the lives of many of the inhabitants of Pompeii. Present your reactions to Harris' descriptions in a short writing piece or write a review.

PART 1 REVIEW

PART SUMMARY

THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT OF CAMPANIA

- 1 Campania *felix* ('fortunate', 'happy') in south-west Italy – formed by volcanic processes
- 2 Mount Vesuvius dominates the plain
 - Volcanic spurs and mounds – sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum
 - Mineral-rich volcanic soils – support vines, olives, fruit, sheep
 - Volcanic rock – pumice, lava, tufa – building material, roads and millstones
- 3 Coastline of the Bay of Naples
 - Sheltered harbours – e.g. double-shaped basin of Misenum, Roman naval station
 - Safe anchorages for trading and fishing fleets – seafood resources
 - Estuary of Sarno River – port of Pompeii – river navigable – imports and exports
- 4 Climate
 - Hot, dry summers with breezes from sea and mountains
 - Mild, wet winters
- 5 Major towns and cities
 - Naples (Neapolis), Cumae, Puteoli
 - Herculaneum, Pompeii, Stabiae, Oplontis, Boscoreale, Nuceria

THE ERUPTION OF MOUNT VESUVIUS 79 AD

- 1 Warnings of a volcano stirring into life: the earthquake of 62 AD
- 2 Early August – warnings
 - Earth tremors
 - Wells and springs dried up
 - Waves increased in size
 - Animals became agitated.
- 3 Morning of 24 August
 - Minor explosions (phreatomagmatic), showers of fine tephra.
 - Few people appeared to have noticed.
- 4 'Plinian' eruption
 - Late morning to early afternoon, an umbrella-shaped cloud moved east; white pumice fell over Pompeii and day turned to night. By 8 pm, there were heavy falls of grey pumice, tremors and electrical storms.
 - Some Pompeians fled immediately, others delayed, many took shelter in sealed rooms and cellars from which they never emerged. Many of those at Herculaneum escaped by sea; others remained. Pliny the Elder, Admiral of the Roman fleet at Misenum, launched warships to rescue those caught on the coast. Sailed to Stabiae.
- 5 'Peléan' phase: pyroclastic surges and flows
 - Between 1 and 8 am, 25 August, the towns of Vesuvius were hit by six surges (billowing volcanic ash and superheated gases) and flows (larger volcanic fragments made fluid by high temperatures).

- The inhabitants of Herculaneum who had not already escaped, waited on the beach to be rescued, but died in S1 by asphyxiation and thermal shock, and the town was sealed forever in S2.
- Pompeii was hit by the subsequent surges S3–S6, and people were killed, as at Herculaneum, by thermal shock and asphyxiation. Pliny the Elder died on the beach at Stabiae, while Pliny the Younger and his mother escaped Misenum just before the final surge.

EARLY DISCOVERIES AND THE NATURE OF 19TH- AND 20TH-CENTURY EXCAVATIONS

- 1 16th to 17th centuries – *civitas* (Pompeii) begins giving up its secrets – marble slabs, frescoed walls and inscriptions
- 2 18th century
 - Herculaneum discovered in 1709
 - Bourbon monarchy at Naples uses excavations for political prestige
 - De Alcubierre – in charge of royal looting, careless destruction at Herculaneum
 - Excavations begin at Pompeii – Karl Weber, under de Alcubierre, recognises the need for a more systematic approach but opposition from de Alcubierre
 - Pompeii positively identified 1763
 - Francesco La Vega builds on work of Weber and improves methods
 - De Alcubierre dies 1780, removing a major obstacle to proper archaeological practice. The same year, excavations at Herculaneum suspended.
- 3 19th century
 - Brief patronage under Napoleonic regime – attempts to draw up a plan for a unified archaeological approach
 - Restoration of Bourbons – corruption, theft, lack of preservation and political unrest affect excavations
 - Expulsion of Bourbons and unification of Italy
- 4 A new era of excavation 1860–1960: More scientific archaeology
 - Giuseppe Fiorelli (1860–75) – uniform numbering and naming system; systematic digging; plaster casts of victims; careful documentation; and attempts to see the big picture
 - August Mau – sequential classification of wall paintings
 - Antonio Sogliani (1905–10) – early conservation methods
 - Vittorio Spinazzola (1910–23) – excavated main commercial artery of Pompeii (Via dell'Abbondanza)
 - Amadeo Maiuri (1924–61) – excavation on a massive scale; some poorly documented; some interpretations reflected current political and cultural context. His 'crisis theory' challenged later.

REPRESENTATIONS OF POMPEII AND HERCULANEUM OVER TIME

- 1 Neoclassicism and romanticism
 - Movements that drew inspiration from ancient Greece and Rome and characterised by emphasis on emotion and imagination.
 - Engravings, paintings and descriptions that emphasised the poetry of ruins – Piranesi Hackert and Mazois

- Descriptions by those fascinated by the mysterious, beautiful and macabre and the thought of sudden death – Dickens
 - Paintings that were imbued with fantasy elements and a languid sensuality – Curzon and Chasseriau.
- 2 Cataclysmic representations and social and human tragedy
 - Pompeii became a metaphor for sudden death and God's vengeance on pagan Pompeians – John Martin's paintings.
 - Puccini's opera *The Last Day of Pompeii*.
 - Popular novel *The Last Days of Pompeii* by Edward George Bulwer-Lytton
 - 3 Impressions of travellers (Mark Twain) and early photographs
 - 4 20th-century films based on Bulwer-Lytton's novel
 - 5 21st-century documentaries, video clips on YouTube, best-selling author Robert Harris' novel *Pompeii* and big-budget 2014 film.
 - 6 Virtual reality tours through digitally-reconstructed houses and buildings.

Historical concepts and skills

All chapter activities address the following important concepts and skills that students are expected to master throughout the course.

Concepts

- continuity
- causation
- perspectives
- significance

Skills

- understanding and use of historical terms
- historical interpretation
- historical investigation and research
- explanation and communication

As you review the chapter, make sure you can identify where examples of each of these concepts and skills may have been called for.

Part review questions

Key terms and names

Use the following terms in a sentence for each to show that you understand what they mean:

- seismic
- pumice
- pyroclastic
- *insulae*
- stratigraphic digging
- romanticism

Historical concepts

Continuity and change

- 1 Describe what changes occurred:
 - in Pompeii as a result of the earthquake of 62 AD
 - in the way excavators approached the sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum between the 18th and early 20th centuries.

Significance

- 1 Explain the significance of remnants of old lava flows for the people of Campania.
- 2 Explain the significance of the following dot points in understanding the sequence of events during the eruption of Mount Vesuvius.
 - The experiences of those who were affected by the 1980 eruption of Mt St Helens (USA).
 - Pliny the Elder's *Letters to Tacitus*.
 - The location and position of the human remains at Pompeii and Herculaneum.
- 3 Explain what you consider the most significant innovation of Giuseppe Fiorelli at Pompeii.

Perspective

- 1 Summarise the different perspectives that the following men had of Pompeii:
 - Francois Mazois
 - Charles Dickens
 - Paul Alfred de Curzon
 - John Martin
 - Mark Twain.

Historical skills

Analysing sources

- 1 Analyse and, in your own words, define what is meant by the following statements:
 - Campania was 'manifestly the work of nature in a happy mood'?
 - 'modern science can now add much to the individual life stories' of the victims of the eruption?
 - 'the aim of the early excavators was not to gain knowledge of the past but to gain prestige for the future'?

- 2 Show the evidence which suggests that many people from Pompeii and Herculaneum escaped the destruction of the eruption?

Research and interpretation

In your own words, explain how rediscovery of Pompeii impacted on popular culture in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Explanation and communication

Explain why Professor Andrew Wallace-Hadrill believes that Amadeo Maiuri was a towering archaeological figure, 'endlessly energetic, learned and imaginative' and yet there is much to criticise about his work.

PART 2

Investigating and interpreting the sources for Pompeii and Herculaneum

CHAPTER

PREVIEWING KEY IDEAS



Chapter 5

The nature and range of sources



Chapter 6

Cities and their population



Chapter 7

Commercial and political life



Chapter 8

Houses, villas and domestic life



Chapter 9

Leisure and entertainment



Chapter 10

Religion and death



Chapter 11

The influence of Greek and Hellenistic cultures

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

FOCUS

Students investigate and interpret sources for Pompeii and Herculaneum. The historical concepts and skills content are to be integrated as appropriate.

KEY ISSUES

The evidence provided by the range of sources, including site layout, streetscapes, public and private buildings, ancient writers, official inscriptions, graffiti, wall paintings, statues, mosaics, human, animal and plant remains from Pompeii and Herculaneum, as relevant for:

- the economy: role of the forum, trade, commerce, industries, occupations
- the social structure: men, women, freedmen, slaves
- local political life: *decuriones*, magistrates, *comitium*
- everyday life: housing, leisure activities, food and dining, clothing, health, baths, water supply, sanitation
- religion: household gods, temples, foreign cults and religions, tombs
- the influence of Greek and Egyptian cultures: art and architecture

CHAPTER 5

The nature and range of sources

Each generation discovers with horror the extent to which information has been ignored, neglected, destroyed, and (the most wanton damage of all) left unreported and unpublished.

SOURCE 5.1 Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum*, p. 65



There are three broad categories of **primary sources** that throw light on the fate of the cities of Vesuvius, as well as on their architecture, social structure, politics, commerce, religion and aspects of everyday life. However, while there is an abundance of archaeological and **epigraphic** material, the literary sources, apart from Pliny the Younger, are relatively few and fragmented. As Andrew Wallace-Hadrill says, ‘It is premature to say that we understand Pompeii. It is at once the most studied and least understood of sites.’¹

primary source something made or written at the time being investigated

epigraphic referring to inscriptions engraved on clay, stone and metal

The ‘Pompeii paradox’ is that we simultaneously know a huge amount and very little about ancient life there. It is true that the city offers us more vivid glimpses of real people and their real lives than almost anywhere else in the Roman world ... but the bigger picture and many of the more basic questions about the town remain very murky indeed.

SOURCE 5.2 Mary Beard, *The Fires of Vesuvius: Pompeii Lost and Found*, pp. 15 & 16

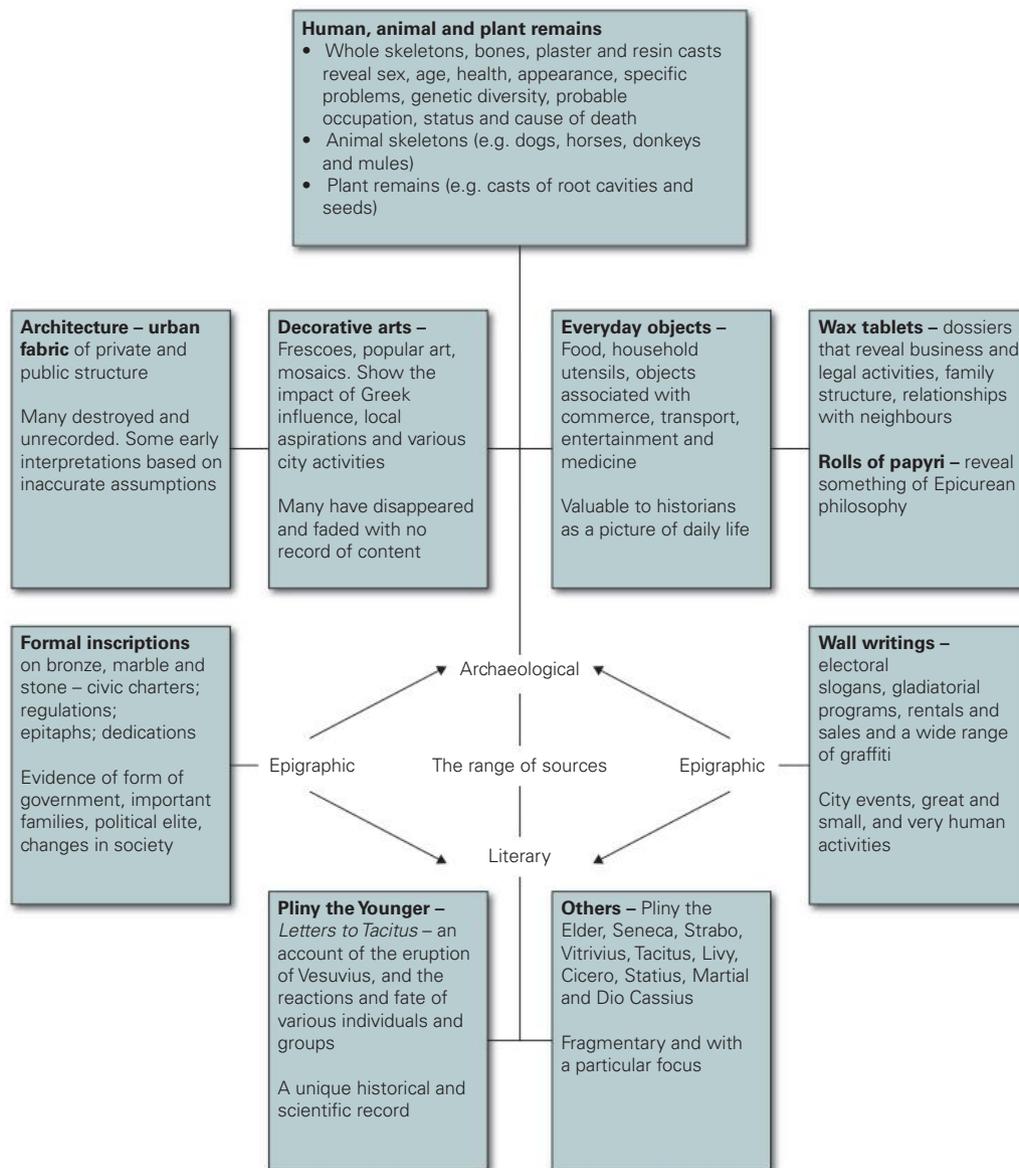


FIGURE 5.1 Categories of sources available for a study of Pompeii and Herculaneum

As an archaeologist, I am aware that ... we have only a narrow insight to any scene of the past. Even if Pompeii provides a unique snapshot of a Roman colonial town, we are missing most of the factors necessary to create an overall picture.

SOURCE 5.3 Dorothea Castell, *Funerary Inscriptions in Pompeii*, p. 10

ACTIVITY 5.1

- 1 Summarise, in your own words, the views of Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, Mary Beard and Dorothea Castell about the material remains at Pompeii, in no more than a paragraph.
- 2 Define epigraphy.
- 3 Using Figure 5.1:
 - explain why material remains are more valuable in understanding Pompeii and Herculaneum than literary sources
 - discuss the types of material remains that you consider would be most useful in understanding life in Pompeii and Herculaneum.

5.1 The archaeological record

When we see the amount of material remains already unearthed from below the 4 metres of pumice, ash and other volcanic debris at Pompeii, and from under the 20 metres of solidified volcanic material at Herculaneum, we should remember that:

- 1 only two-thirds of the 66 hectares of ancient Pompeii has been excavated
- 2 the excavation carried out at Pompeii has proven to be over the years ‘a nightmare of omissions and disasters’²
- 3 only about four blocks of Herculaneum have been completely unearthed, the rest being hidden under the modern town of Resina/Ercolino.

Public and private structures

TABLE 5.1 Public and private structures

Public structures	Private structures
These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • roads • town walls and gates • water towers and fountains • temples • law courts and markets of the forum • public baths • lavatories • theatres • amphitheatre • exercise grounds • port facilities. 	These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • town houses from palatial to humble • apartments • suburban and country villas • shops • taverns and inns • workshops • brothels • tombs.



FIGURE 5.2 A Herculaneum house



FIGURE 5.3 A Pompeian theatre (the Odeon)

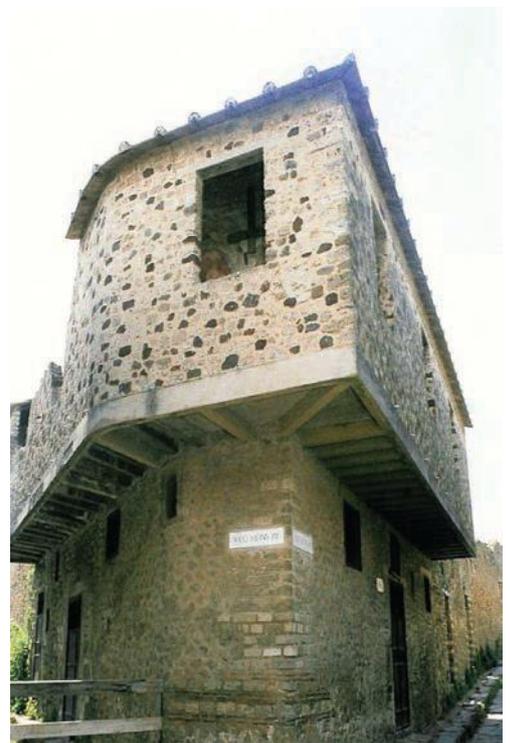


FIGURE 5.4 A Pompeian brothel (a *lupanar*)

Problems associated with studying and interpreting the architecture of Pompeii and Herculaneum

- Much of the architecture of Pompeii that has been unearthed has disappeared forever, and many of the 800 houses, 600 shops and workshops excavated have not been the subject of serious study.
- Without some knowledge of the artefacts, decorations and epigraphy associated with the buildings, many of which were removed or stolen without any record of their context, it is hard to deduce such things as ownership, functions of rooms, standards of living and status of the people who used the buildings.
- There is often no available literary evidence to check against, or, if it does exist, it does not tally with the archaeological record.
- There are few public buildings and spaces in Herculaneum, and no Forum as in Pompeii. This limits the opportunities for an understanding of the town's political and commercial life.
- Some of the questions asked of the architectural remains in the past were based on '**subjective impression** and uncontrolled **conjecture**'.³
- Many of the early archaeologists did not know how to 'read' the architecture of private structures. For example, they failed to appreciate that the Romans:
 - did not see work and home as separate
 - had a different concept of room usage
 - did not segregate women within the house and create special places for children.
 - lived in close proximity with their dependents, slaves and freedmen, clients and tenants who were the source of their economic power
 - did not distinguish between residential and commercial units.

ACTIVITY 5.2

Distinguish the difference between Pompeii and Herculaneum with regards to the material remains left for archaeologists to study.

subjective impressions

based on personal feelings or prejudice

conjecture an opinion or conclusion formed on the basis of incomplete information

archive a place where records are kept

imperial cult a cult to the worship of the emperor

Inscriptions and wall writings

Pompeii 'may be likened to one vast **archive**'.⁴ Apart from the formal inscriptions on stone, marble and bronze that reveal important events, most of the epigraphy 'is of a spontaneous character'⁵ painted or scratched on the outer walls of both private and public structures. Those examples that have survived reveal very intimate and human moments.

Formal inscriptions

These inscriptions include:

- civic charters and regulations on bronze plates fixed to walls of public buildings
- dedications by wealthy citizens who saw it as their social duty to provide buildings and festivals, and to support the **imperial cult**. Their commemorative plaques can

be found at prominent positions within the city, on public buildings, temples and pedestals for statues around the Forum. One such commemorative plaque in the Forum honours Quinctius Valgus and Marcus Porcius who paid for the building of the Amphitheatre (see Figure 5.1).

- funerary inscriptions found on the tombs lining both sides of the road outside the Herculaneum Gate in Pompeii.

From these inscriptions, historians can learn who the prominent families were in various periods; the structure of government; the main political players; when buildings were constructed or renovated; and the economic, political and social transformations that occurred in society, especially in the 1st century AD.

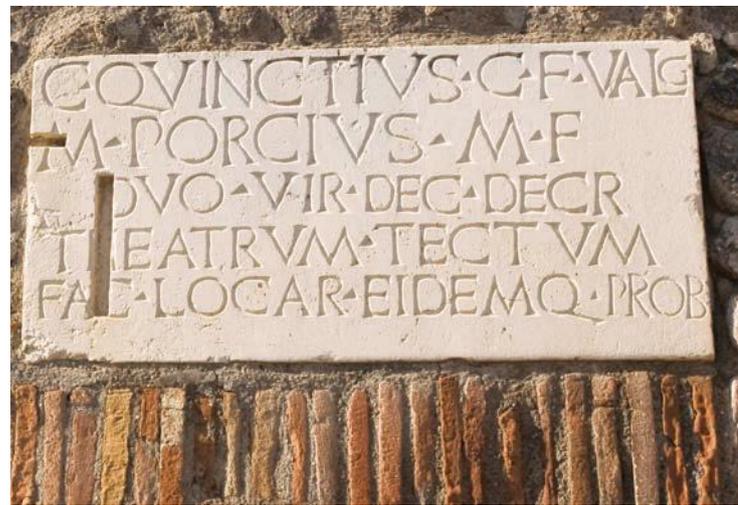


FIGURE 5.5 An example of Pompeian epigraphy: a commemorative plaque in the Forum

Wall writings

Most of the wall writings, such as public notices and graffiti, refer to activities and events in the years immediately preceding the eruption of 79 AD.

Public notices

Public notices were written with a brush in red or black on freshly whitewashed walls. Most of these notices were painted by professional scribes on the outer walls of houses or other buildings at the person's disposal. The walls were whitewashed with lime by a whitewasher, and then at night the scribe wrote his message by the light of an oil lamp. However, sometimes an individual did not employ professionals, but did the job him or herself. Public notices were of three types:

- Electoral posters (*programmata*), of which 2500 have been identified, that urged citizens to vote for a particular political candidate. They covered the outer walls of houses and other buildings and many



FIGURE 5.6 An election slogan on a wall in Pompeii

of them were found on the main roads where they were more likely to be seen. The candidate himself did not sign these slogans; they were usually signed by family, friends, clients or guilds. For example: 'Vesonius Primus urges the election of Gnaeus Helvius as *aedile*, a man worthy of public office.'⁶ Of the 30% that were signed, 52 were by women, even though they could not vote (see Chapter 6).

- Programs that announced the shows coming to the Amphitheatre – *edicta munerum*: These were as important as electoral posters. Local magistrates – *editores munerum* – were responsible for paying all or part of the expenses of the gladiatorial shows or spectacles. These programs included the magistrate's name, political and religious positions, the occasion and type of spectacle (see Chapter 7).
- Notices for property sales and rentals: Advertisements for sales and rentals were also painted on the city walls. For example, Julia Felix – one of Pompeii's chief property owners – in the years before the eruption advertised part of her property for rent.

Graffiti

Graffiti, in the form of inscriptions or drawings, were scratched into the surface of any available wall 'with stylus, iron nail, wooden splinter or tooth pick'.⁷ Any Pompeian could share his or her own deepest feelings and jokes, spread gossip, express contempt, threaten an enemy, give a political opinion and advertise services and fees. Writing on walls was so widespread that the following comment in various forms circulated in Pompeii: 'I wonder, Wall, that you do not go smash, who have to bear the weight of all this trash.'⁸ It may have seemed trash or nonsense at the time, but today the ancient graffiti is an invaluable source of information about the inhabitants of Roman towns.

- Since Pompeii was a town dedicated to Venus, graffiti concerning love, devotion, jealousy, bitterness and sexual frustration were scattered throughout the city: 'Faithful Caesius loves M ...'⁹ and 'Serena hates Isadore'.¹⁰
- Much of the graffiti was related to gladiators, who were adored by Pompeian women, and gladiatorial spectacles, rather like the sports page of a modern newspaper with a bit of sex thrown in. Most of these graffiti were concentrated near the Amphitheatre where the victories and losses would have been fresh in the minds of spectators.
- The most explicit graffiti were found in brothels, baths and public lavatories: 'May I always and everywhere be as potent as I was here.'¹¹ In the lavatory of the House of the Gem in Herculaneum was the graffito 'Apollinaris, the physician of the Emperor, Titus, had a good shit here'.¹²
- Businesses took advantage of the wall space to promote their services, and customers did not hesitate to express their opinions or calculate their expenses. Crude scratchings were found on the walls of taverns, along with comments about drinking and gambling, and others by disgruntled tavern owners: 'I won 855 sesterces at dice – no cheating',¹³ 'Suavis demands full wine-jars, please, and his thirst is enormous',¹⁴ and 'Scram! Do your quarrelling outside'.¹⁵
- Random declarations offering political opinions were found everywhere but some of the angrier examples were found, as might be expected, around the Basilica in Pompeii, where justice was administered, trials were held and business transactions carried out: 'Samius to Cornelius: Go hang yourself'.¹⁶

We meet unlucky lovers ('Successus the weaver's in love with a barmaid called Iris and she doesn't give a toss' as one scrawled graffito runs) and shameless bed-wetters ('I've pissed in bed, I messed up, I haven't lied / But, dear landlord, there was no chamber pot supplied,' boasts the rhyme on a lodging house bedroom wall).

SOURCE 5.4 Mary Beard, *The Fires of Vesuvius: Pompeii Lost and Found*, p. 9

ACTIVITY 5.3

- 1 Explain why Pompeii has been likened to 'one vast archive'.
- 2 Describe where you would expect to find commemorative plaques and explain their significance to historians.
- 3 Identify what kind of public notices could be found on the walls of Pompeii.
- 4 Explain why most of the wall writing of Pompeii has been described as 'of a spontaneous nature'.
- 5 How valuable is this 'spontaneous' form of writing?

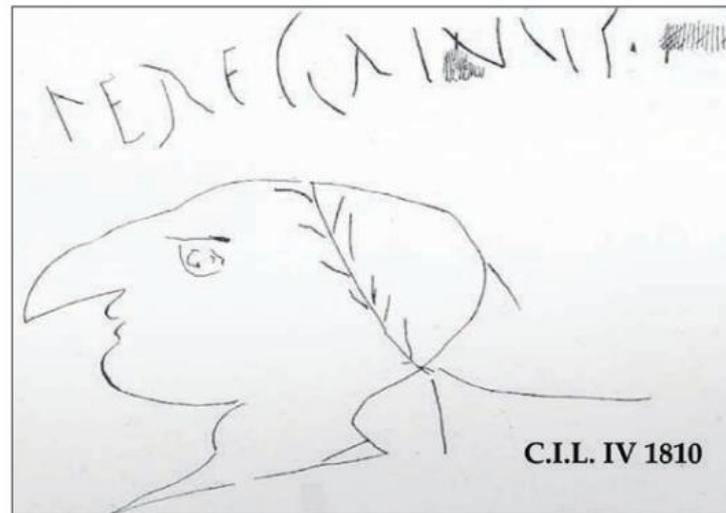


FIGURE 5.7 A graffito in Pompeii

Wax tablets and rolls of papyri

Two bundles of wooden tablets coated with wax have been excavated from Pompeii and reveal the business activities of the banker Caecilius Jucundus and two merchants, Sulpicius Cinnamus and Sulpicius Faustus. Three more dossiers, referred to as the 'Herculaneum Tablets', throw light on the legal status of a freed slave, relationships between neighbours, family structure and quarrels over slaves and between landowners.

In the remains of the Villa of the Papyri just outside Herculaneum, archaeologists found a cache of 1800 fragile rolls of **carbonised papyri**. However, difficulties involved in opening these rolls to read their contents were formidable and numerous attempts over the years failed due to their extreme fragility and the fact that they were burnt by the c. 300°C volcanic flow, compressed by the weight of rubble and mud, and congealed by water. Eventually, several hundred were partly cut apart. They turned out to be works of **Epicurean** philosophy by the 1st century BC Epicurean philosopher Philodemus of Gadara, who came to Italy around 80 BC. Apparently, the Villa of the Papyri contained an extensive library. The difficulties were not overcome until recently due to the efforts of the International Center for the Study of the Herculaneum Papyri. (See Chapter 13 for the Philodemus Project.)

Decorative arts

Wall paintings

The decoration of walls with frescoes was found at all levels of society, from the elaborate mythological paintings in the great reception rooms of the wealthy to the simple thin lines of colour or geometric patterns in the homes of those lower down the social scale. Even the walls of garden porticos became 'veritable outdoor art galleries'¹⁷ in wealthy homes, often featuring representations of decorative garden furnishings such as bronze and marble sculptures, pedestals displaying **herms**, masks and statues of Bacchus, Venus and various woodland deities. The Villa of Mysteries, just outside Pompeii (see Chapter 8), featured a style of painting referred to as **megalography**. Since the discovery of these

carbonise to reduce or convert a carbon-containing substance to carbon, as by partial burning

papyri ancient documents written on material made from the papyrus plant

Epicurean referring to a form of philosophy that taught the highest good in life is pleasure



FIGURE 5.8 One of the carbonised papyrus rolls from the Villa of the Papyri in Herculaneum

herms statues in the form of pillars with the head of the god Hermes

megalography larger-than-life figures extending all over the wall



FIGURE 5.9 Mythological themes in wall painting

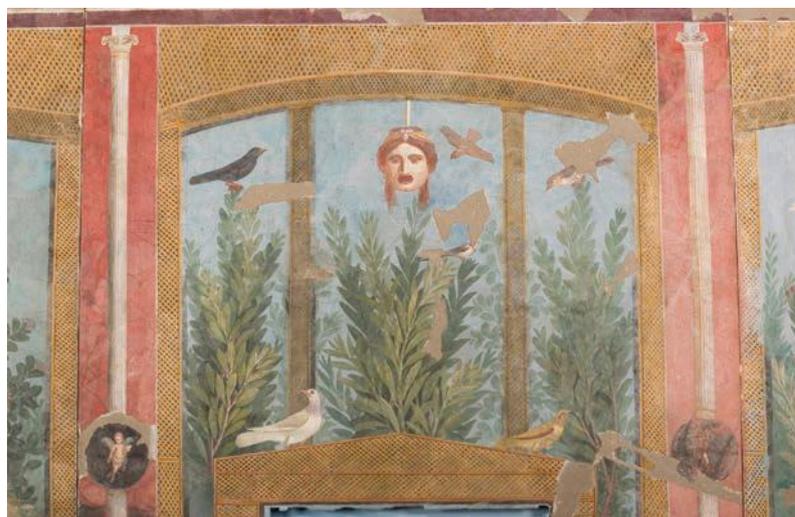


FIGURE 5.10 A garden wall painting

larger-than-life figures in the early years of the 20th century, the paintings have provoked debate as to their meaning (see Chapter 10).

Only those areas isolated from public view, such as kitchens and the slaves' quarters, were usually devoid of paintings. In the last 20 years, the study of painting has expanded to reveal a much more complex and interesting purpose behind the use of decoration in Pompeian homes (see Chapter 8).

Mosaics

Mosaics are pictures and designs done in thousands of *tesserae* or tiny chips of coloured glass, stone or pottery. Floors of buildings in Pompeii and Herculaneum featured a variety of geometric designs and figurative elements, generally in black and white. The most famous coloured mosaic floor, in the House of the Faun, featured a copy of a Hellenistic composition: Alexander the Great fighting Darius at the Battle of Issus (see Chapter 11). The floor mosaics of this house had more in common with Hellenistic 'palaces' than most other local upper-class houses. Mosaics were found also on walls, columns, **nymphaeum** and even the vaulted roofs of baths.

nymphaeum a grotto, usually with a fountain, dedicated to the nymphs



FIGURE 5.11 A floor mosaic



FIGURE 5.12 A wall mosaic



FIGURE 5.13 A multi-coloured marble floor from a house in Herculaneum

A COMMENT ON...

Decorative household items as a sign of social status

Silver was rare in the Roman world and refined Romans, according to Pliny, collected the finest embossed silverware. Antique pieces were particularly sought after. Wealthy families loved to flaunt these silver dinner settings as well as silver and fine ceramic ware and glass vases at their feasts and banquets as a way of advertising their wealth and as a sign of their social status. There is also documentary and archaeological evidence that silver plate could be used as security against loans.

- In 1895, during an excavation of the Villa of Pisanella at Boscoreale thought to have been owned by the Pompeian 'banker' L. Caecilius Jucundus, a hoard of 109 pieces of silverware were found in a chest hidden in a well in the room containing the olive and wine presses.
- Thirty-five years later, when Amadeo Maiuri was excavating the House of Menander in Pompeii, he located a treasure that comprised 118 pieces of silverware, several of which were quite ancient and evidently restored, as well as earrings, gold bracelets and rings set with precious stones, a silver purse and mirror, and a hoard of gold and silver coins amounting to 1432 **sesterces**. They were found, carefully wrapped in pieces of cloth and wool, at the bottom of a wooden chest in the cellar of the house. Among the silverware were several valuable cups embossed with scenes of Greek myths and traditional Hellenistic landscapes (see Chapter 11).
- Almost three-quarters of a century later in 2000, 20 pieces of silverware were discovered in a wicker basket in the dining room of a complex at Morigene, not far from Pompeii.

sesterces bronze coins used for everyday transactions



FIGURE 5.14 Decorative silverware from the House of Menander in Pompeii

Popular art and objects of everyday life

What is referred to as popular painting, most of which is found on exterior walls or trade signs, covers the whole range of human activities such as:

- scenes of different phases in the production of wool from the walls of Pompeii's largest textile workshop
- cloth makers and sellers
- a carpenter at work
- a baker handing out loaves of bread
- tavern life
- religious processions
- the bustle of the Forum
- the profession of prostitution.

Unfortunately, much of this type of painting has now disappeared completely due to exposure to the elements.

An extraordinary series of paintings were found in the house of a wealthy widow known as Julia Felix. Although some are now badly defaced, they depict some of the activities that supposedly went on in the Forum during the day. 'They are not of course strictly realistic ... a Pompeian street scene in the mind's eye of a Pompeian painter.'¹⁸

There are images of iron mongers, shoe makers, women negotiating for the sale of cloth, a man buying a metal pan, a baker selling loaves, a green grocer with a collection of figs for sale, a food vendor with a brazier selling snacks and drinks, beggars, hucksters and school students having their lessons.

The very ordinariness of most of the objects found in Pompeii and Herculaneum is what makes them so valuable to historians in building up a picture of daily life in the 1st century AD: pots on a kitchen stove and other curious kitchen utensils; wooden furniture such as a cradle and a clothes press; household shrines; matting and ropes; a fisherman's net; scorched cloth; horses' harnesses; as well as medical instruments: all of which help us to recapture the sights and sounds of Pompeian and Herculaneum life.

TABLE 5.2 Examples of everyday objects excavated at Pompeii and Herculaneum

<p>Household objects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cradle (H) • Tripod (P) • Bronze kitchen utensils (P) • Bronze heaters (P) (H) • Lamps (P) (H) • Brazier (H) • Three-legged table (P) • Day couch (P) • Bell for calling servants (H) • Bronze handles (H) <p>Food</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 81 carbonised loaves of bread (P) • Eggs and fish on a table (P) • Carbonised eggs (H) • Bread, cakes, fruit on a table (H) • Beans and grains on a counter (H) • Jar full of nuts under a counter (H) 	<p>Commerce</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wine and olive presses (P) • Amphorae (H) • Cart packed with wine jars (P) • Lava millstones (P) • <i>Dolia</i> (P) (H) • Bronze scales (P) • Glass jars (H) <p>Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gig for transportation of people (P) • Boat (H) • Woven cord: horses; 'sandals' (H) <p>Entertainment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gladiator's helmet (P) • Pair of dice (H) • Black and white backgammon pieces (H) <p>Medicine</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surgical instruments: needles, probes, gynaecological forceps, catheters, pincers, scalpels and scissors (P)
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FIGURE 5.15 A carbonised bed from Herculaneum



FIGURE 5.16 A carbonised cradle from Herculaneum

A COMMENT ON ...

The use of timber and carbonised remains from Herculaneum

In Herculaneum, the extreme temperatures of the first two surges carbonised objects made of wood. Not only did many houses in Herculaneum retain their timber upper storeys, staircases and balconies, but pieces of timber furniture survived in a carbonised form.

1 In the 1980s, archaeologist Stephan Mols studied about 40 pieces of wholly or partially preserved wooden furniture from Herculaneum, and in his book *Wooden Furniture in Herculaneum* (English version, 1999) discussed these pieces of furniture in terms of their form, function and the techniques employed to make them. He discovered that silver fir was used for everyday objects such as beds, while hardwoods such as beech and box were used for carved or turned furniture.

dendrochronology the study of tree-ring growth in ancient wood or charcoal samples and the matching of them with dated sequences

2 During the 1990s, Peter Ian Kuniholm studied carbonised specimens of timbers from Pompeii and Herculaneum, including 42 specimens found stacked in a carpenter's shop in Herculaneum, some showing signs of use and reuse. By means of the science of **dendrochronology**, he was able to establish the dates when wooden objects were made, when a building was constructed and that some of the large timbers used in Herculaneum were imported from southern Germany.

Pompeii is a household name; yet in many ways Herculaneum is even more extraordinary as a testimony to ancient life. The significantly different character of its destruction, buried to a depth of up to 25 metres by a succession of pyroclastic surges and flows, means that here we can recover many things largely unknown at Pompeii: upper floors, even to two levels; wooden structures including beams, doors and flimsy partitions; wooden objects, cupboards, shrines, screens, beds, even a cradle.

SOURCE 5.5 Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, Director of the British School at Rome, *The Herculaneum Conservation Project*

ACTIVITY 5.4

- 1 Discuss the following topic: The discovery of everyday objects is worth far more to a historian than the discovery of a hoard of silver or gold.
- 2 How has the science of dendrochronology helped archaeologists and historians in interpreting the past?

Human, animal and plant remains

Human remains include:

disarticulated refers to the coming apart at the joints

- human skeletal remains from the beach at Herculaneum, studied by the classical archaeologist and anthropologist Dr Sara Bisel
- **disarticulated** bones, and plaster and resin casts from Pompeii studied by Dr Estelle Lazer, forensic archaeologist.

The human skeletons excavated so far from Herculaneum, as well as the disarticulated bones, plaster and resin casts from Pompeii, are a valuable source of information about the victims. They reveal such things as:

- sex and age
- appearance
- average height of men and women
- general health
- specific medical problems
- evidence of surgery

- population affinities
- probable occupations and social status
- cause of death and possible mental state at the time.

The skeletons of Herculaneum

Up until the discovery of skeletons on the beach of the small ancient harbour of Herculaneum in 1982, very few human remains had been found in the town compared with the number of corpses found in Pompeii. As more skeletons emerged throughout that year in a row of chambers built into the retaining wall of the harbour, the previous hypothesis that there had been time for a mass exodus of Herculaneum's population became less likely.

The skeletons of Herculaneum have been preserved in good condition because of the 20-metre thick layer of moist volcanic material that accumulated over the town. As the bodies of the inhabitants decayed, the material compressed about the bones, preventing oxygen from causing further deterioration, and eventually solidified to the consistency of rock. However, as Dr Sara Bisel explained, 'with exposure came quick deterioration',¹⁹ and she had to work quickly to prevent it. She washed each bone separately and allowed it to dry for several days, before dipping it in an acrylic-plaster mixture and leaving it to harden before reconstructing the skeleton. Her study of 139 skeletons (51 males, 49 females and 39 children) followed two anthropological methods:

1 measurement and observation of the bones

She examined the long bones of the legs to ascertain height; the state of the pelvis of the women to tell their ages and if they had had children; facial bones for appearance; the upper shafts of the humeri and thoracic vertebrae to tell if the person worked harder than usual; the state of all bones for level of nourishment; and the teeth for an indication of the age of children and whether there was sugar in the diet, as well as general nourishment.

2 a biochemical analysis

She carried out a chemical analysis to find evidence of lead poisoning and the presence of calcium, phosphorous, magnesium, zinc and strontium. Bones with high levels of zinc indicate the consumption of animal protein, while those high in strontium indicate the consumption of vegetable protein and seafood.

See some of the results of Sara Bisel's investigations in Chapter 6.

Bones and casts from Pompeii

Very few intact skeletons have been found in Pompeii because many were destroyed during the early years of excavation. Others were removed, some so carelessly stored in the Pompeian bathhouses that the bones became disarticulated and mixed. According to Estelle Lazer, from

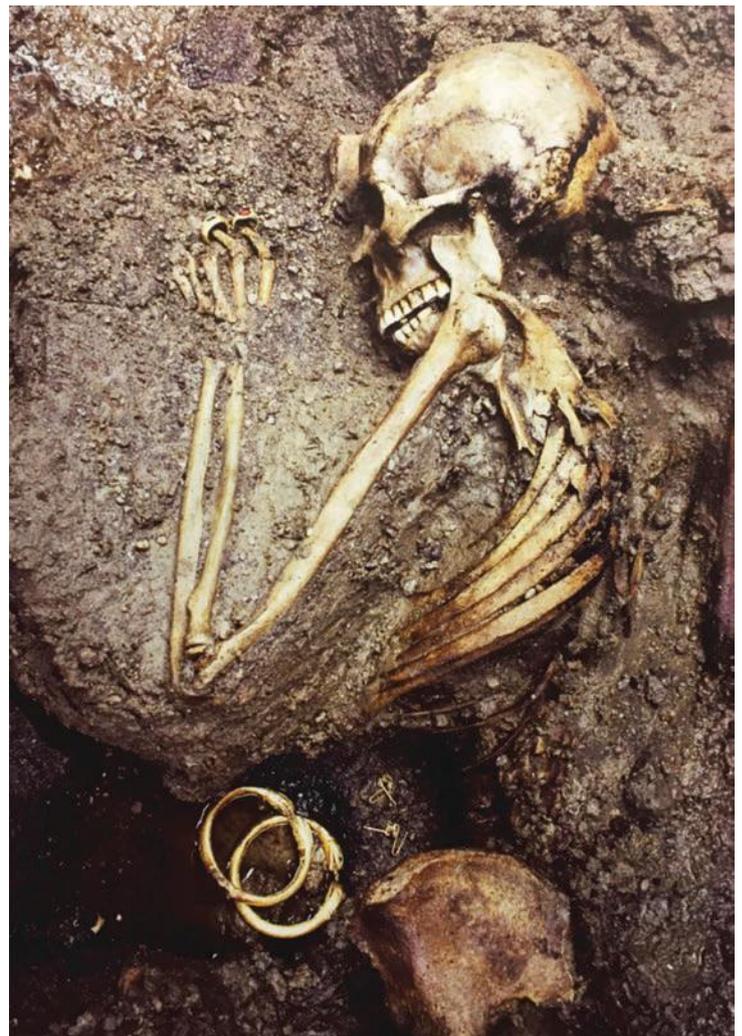


FIGURE 5.17 A skeleton from Herculaneum

Sydney University, it is difficult to estimate the number of skeletons from the remaining collection of bones, but she suggests there would be no more than 500, with approximately equal numbers of men and women. There are few bones of children, as their small bones were often missed in the excavations. In her detailed study of the Pompeian skeletal remains, Estelle Lazer incorporated modern technology such as the use of scans and x-rays. She concentrated on the skulls and teeth, and pelvic, leg and arm bones from 300 individuals.

In Pompeii, unlike in Herculaneum, corpses were covered in a deep layer of fine ash and pumice, which did not completely seal the bodies from the deteriorating effect of oxygen. They decayed, leaving cavities in the hardened ash that archaeologists, since the time of Fiorelli, have filled with liquid plaster to form casts of the bodies as they were at the moment of death, including clothes, shoes, facial expressions and desperate gestures. In 1994 Estelle Lazer upgraded the Fiorellian method by using translucent epoxy resin instead of plaster, which allowed the bones and objects on or beside the body to be seen. See Chapter 6 for her conclusions about the population of Pompeii and Chapter 12 for scientific work done on the epoxy resin cast of the 'Lady of Oplontis' and work still being done on x-raying the entire skeletons within the plaster casts.

The available casts have a great potential as a research resource which has not yet been exploited. Unlike the bones, the casts contain evidence of the whole person ... The actual bones still exist within the casts.

SOURCE 5.6 E. Lazer, 'The People of Pompeii', in J. P. Descoudres (ed.), *Pompeii Revisited*, p. 41



FIGURE 5.18 Skeletons from Herculaneum

Animal remains

These include horses and mules (still in their stables in the Villa of Pisanella at Boscoreale, and seven donkeys/mules tethered in the stables of a bakery in Pompeii), dogs (some still chained up at the entrances to houses) and a goat in a cellar. Recently, a find of the bones of a monkey came as a big surprise to archaeologists. It is believed that this animal may have belonged to a troupe of foreign performers.

Plant remains and the work of Dr Wilhelmina Jashemski

Dr Wilhelmina Jashemski carried out extensive studies into soil contours; root cavities of large ornamental trees, vines and fruit trees; carbonised plant remains (27 species alone were discovered in the carbonised hay found at Oplontis) and pollen. She identified 184 different plant varieties in the area of Vesuvius and these discoveries enabled her to build a profile of plant life at the time of the eruption. By supplementing these with evidence from frescoes and literary references, archaeologists have been able to gain a clearer picture of produce and ornamental gardens in Pompeii, as well as many of the timbers used in doors and furniture.

Some of these discoveries, such as the presence of vineyards and olive trees in Pompeii, has thrown a different light on its economy and the relationship between town and countryside. Evidence suggested that at least 10% of Pompeii was used for the cultivation of crops.

Dr Jashemski revealed that there had once been a large commercial vineyard near the Pompeian Amphitheatre. Approximately 2014 vine-root holes and cavities of their supporting stakes were plaster cast in this large area, which today has been replanted with vines. Also, archaeologists have been able to recreate some of the gardens in the finer residences of the city.



FIGURE 5.19 A cast of a dog in his death throes



FIGURE 5.20 The remains of what was a donkey from the stables of a bakery in Pompeii



FIGURE 5.21 Carbonised seeds

Refer to Chapter 13 for information on the organic finds (including human faeces and kitchen waste) found in the ancient network of sewers and drains discovered during work done by the Herculaneum Conservation Project in that town.

ACTIVITY 5.5

- 1 Describe the specialist roles of Sara Bisel and Estelle Lazer and what these roles brought to their study of the human remains found at Herculaneum and Pompeii.
- 2 Summarise the contribution of Dr Jashemski to the reconstruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum.

5.2 The literary sources

Apart from Pliny the Younger's unique eyewitness account of the eruption of Vesuvius and his own experiences revealed in his *Letters to Tacitus* (see Chapter 2), many of the early and contemporary texts, while containing useful information, have a particular focus of enquiry. For example:

- 1 Strabo's *Geography*, written in 19 AD, was based on his own travels and research from the great Alexandrian Library. He provided information on Vesuvius in its dormant phase, a description of the Sarno valley and the port of Pompeii.
- 2 Vitruvius's *Of Architecture*, written in the 1st century AD, provides information of relevance to a study of the appearance of Greek and Roman houses; the activities that he believed took place in the various rooms – although these did not always correspond to the archaeological evidence; comments on the

construction of public buildings such as the acoustics of theatres, how a basilica should be constructed, the features and dimensions of Roman *fora*, the heating of public baths and the process of painting.

The ancient who inaugurated the use of wall decorations at first imitated the variegated appearance and arrangement of marbled stuccoes ... Later on, they began to imitate the shapes of buildings, the protruding reliefs of columns and pediments. Tragic, comic and satirical scenic backgrounds were painted in open spaces such as *exedrae*, due to the enormous wall space ...

SOURCE 5.7 Vitruvius, *Of Architecture*, VII, 5.1

- 3 Seneca's *Naturales Quaestiones*, written in the 1st century AD, spoke of the natural features of Campania and the question of earthquakes.

The thread of my proposed work, and the concurrence of the disaster at the time, requires that we discuss the causes of these earthquakes.

SOURCE 5.8 Seneca, *Natural Questions*, Bk VI, Vol. VII

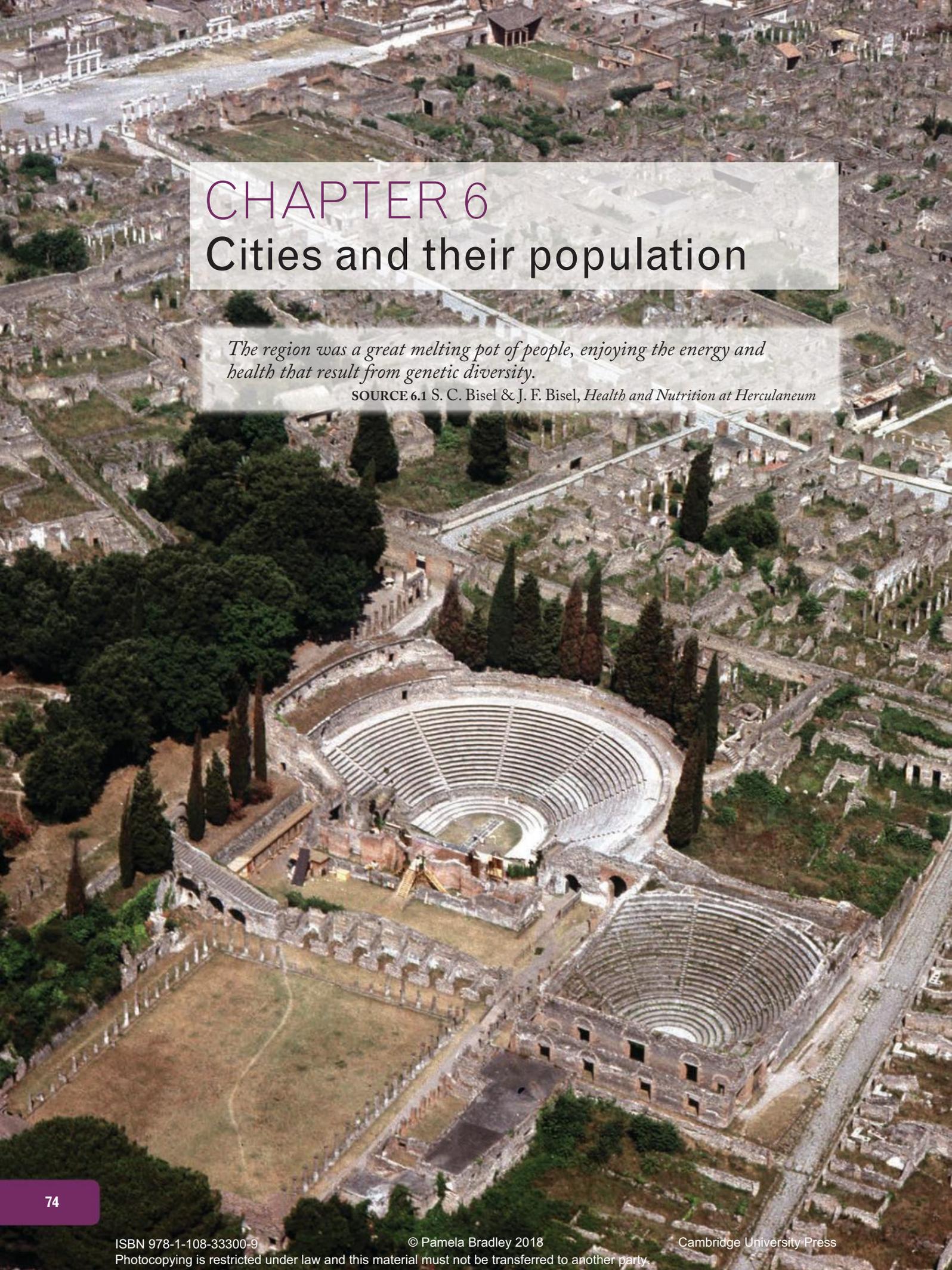
- 4 Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*, written in the 1st century AD, refers to:
- the attributes and produce of Campania: varieties of grapes in the region, varieties of local wines and their effect on the drinker and details of the olive industry
 - varieties of fish and medicinal plants
 - the processes used by the **fullers (fullones)** in the textile industry, one of Pompeii's most important businesses
 - various building materials and processes involved in creating mosaic floors
 - the gardens of Pompeii and the invention of *nemora tonsilia* or 'barbered groves'
 - the making of pigments for wall paintings
 - the names of some of the original Greek and Roman artists and descriptions of their works, from which many of the paintings in Pompeii and Herculaneum were copied.

fullers (fullones) those who made, washed and dyed cloth

Historians have to supplement these with the inscriptions and graffiti from the monuments of Pompeii and Herculaneum, as well other literary sources which throw a light on some specific events. For example, Cicero, who had a villa in the area, commented on the political activities in Pompeii when it became a Roman colony in 80 BC, and Tacitus described a riot between the Pompeians and their neighbours, the Nucerians, in the Roman Amphitheatre in 59 AD.

ACTIVITY 5.6

In an extended piece of writing, explain the problems faced by historians in building up a picture of Pompeii and Herculaneum from the surviving archaeological remains, even as abundant as they appear to be.



CHAPTER 6

Cities and their population

The region was a great melting pot of people, enjoying the energy and health that result from genetic diversity.

SOURCE 6.1 S. C. Bisel & J. F. Bisel, *Health and Nutrition at Herculaneum*

Up until recently, Pompeii and Herculaneum were known only to archaeologists as they were just prior to the eruption, although the literary sources spoke of pre-Roman occupation and the various population groups that once inhabited the towns: Oscans, Etruscans, Greek colonists and Samnites (see Chapter 12).

In the late 20th century, new material evidence for the history of occupation and the city's layout came to light as archaeologists began to probe deeper below the 79 AD level at Pompeii; but, as is often the way with more modern excavation, the picture of pre-Roman Pompeii 'remains a tantalising series of contradictory glimpses into a settlement whose appearance changes every time archaeologists start to dig down.'¹

6.1 The urban layout and public facilities

Long before the Roman period in Campania, the Greek-influenced Italic people known as the Samnites had a major influence on the early layout and building in Pompeii. It is believed that under their control, Pompeii expanded and took on a recognisable urban configuration: a Greek-like geometric grid of roads and two walls with towers.

The towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum were relatively compact towns, the former covering an area of approximately 66 hectares, although only two-thirds have been excavated. The area of Herculaneum is much harder to estimate, since only about four blocks have been completely unearthed. Some scholars have suggested it was a third of the size of Pompeii, others say it would have been no more than 12 hectares.

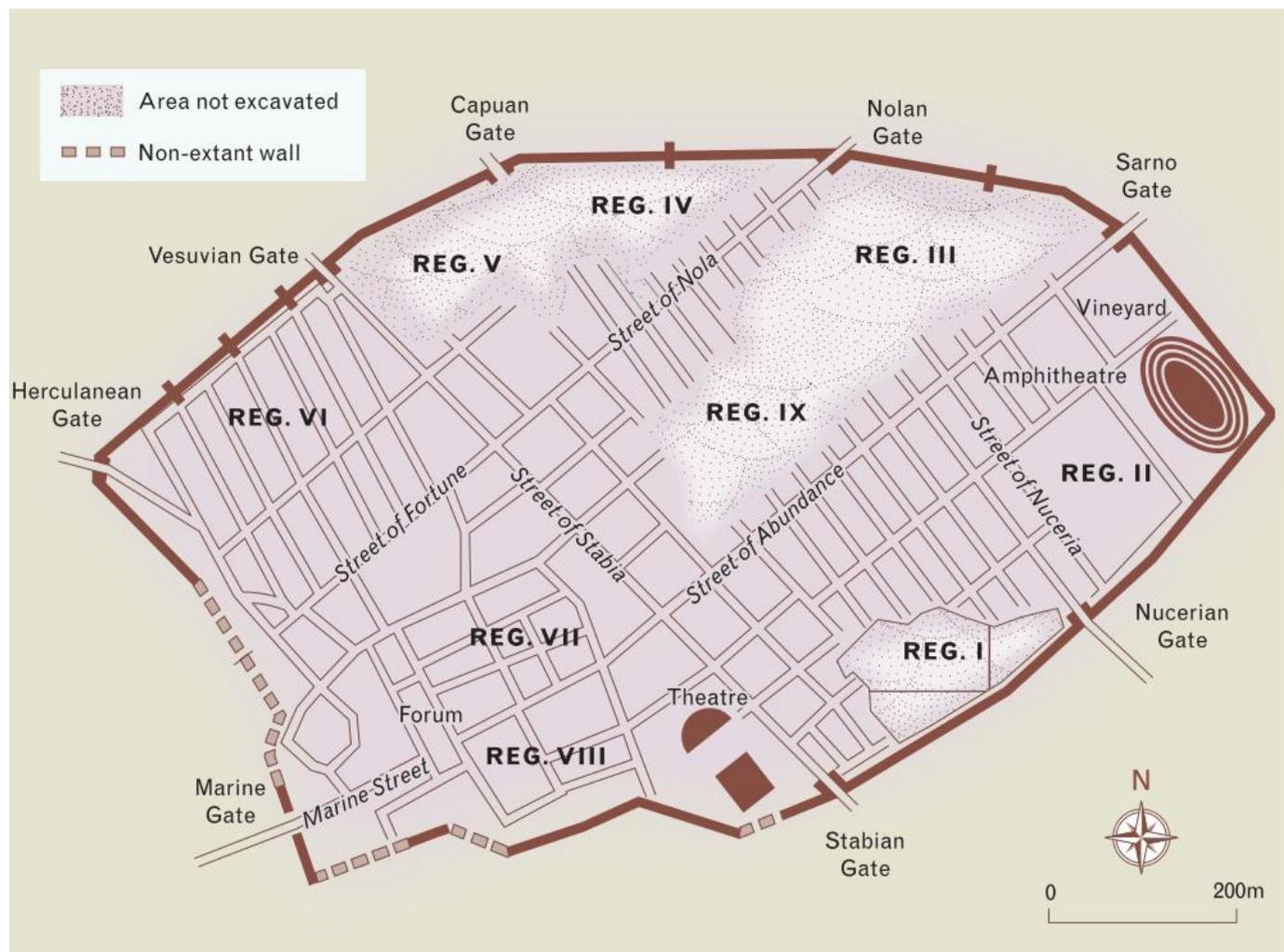


FIGURE 6.1 A plan of Pompeii



FIGURE 6.2 Pompeii today from the air

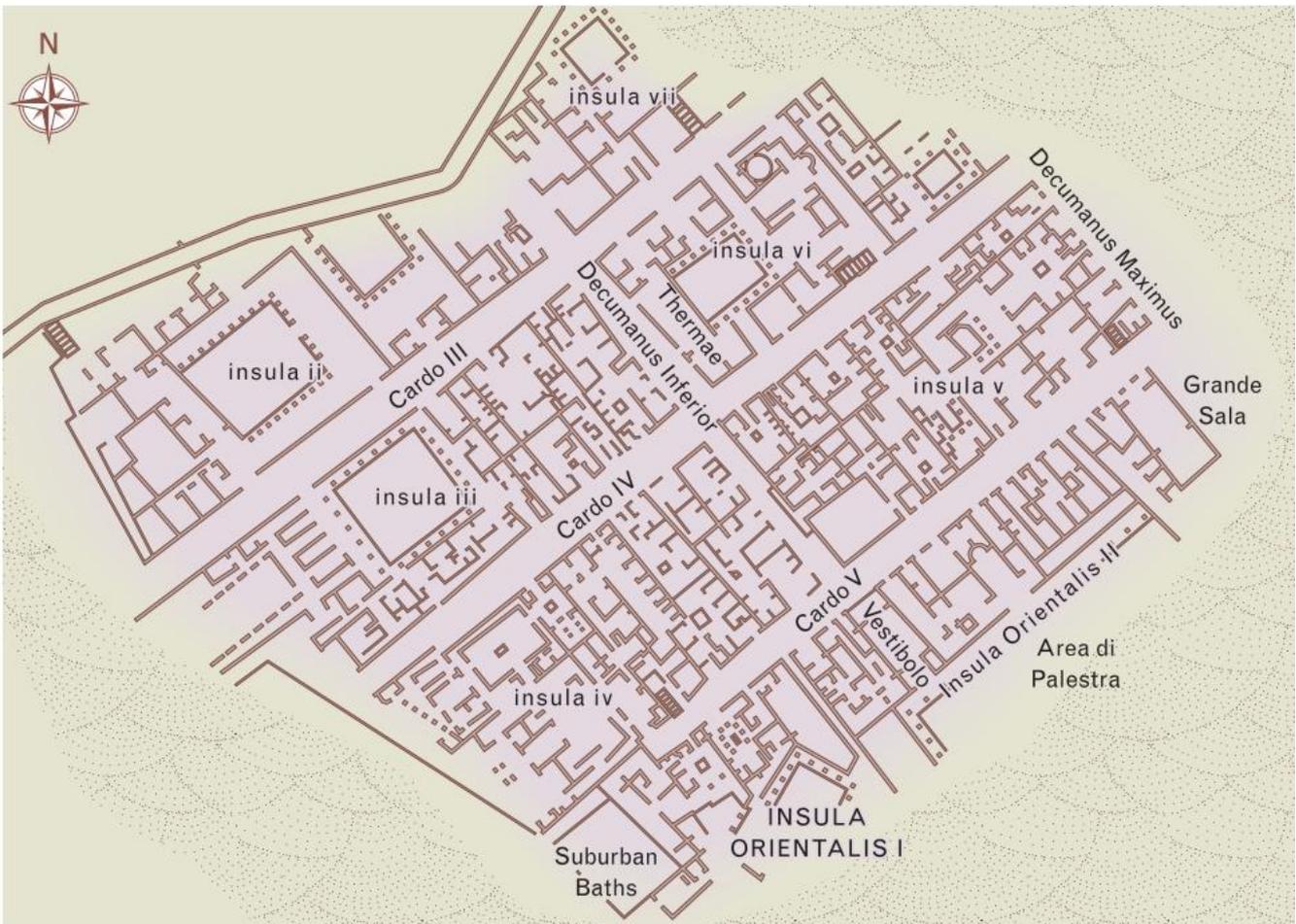


FIGURE 6.3 Plan of Herculaneum

Walls, gates and streets

Both towns had walls, although the historian Sisenna recorded that Herculaneum's wall was modest. Pompeii, on the other hand, was enclosed by a 3.2-km wall that tended to follow the most defensive line of the natural landscape with access via seven, possibly eight gates. The Capua Gate is still unexcavated. They seem to have been focused on other towns in the Campanian region. The Marine Gate (Porta Marina), through which most tourists enter the town today, led to the Bay of Naples and consisted of two entrances: one for people on foot and another larger entrance for animals and carts.

The oldest entrance is believed to have been the Stabian Gate to the south, comprising a narrow, single-arched passage flanked by ramparts descending to an outer moat, while the Nolan Gate in the north was the most formidable. However, as military defence became less important, gates became more complex and, during the 1st century AD, large stretches of wall were knocked down altogether to facilitate the construction of houses.



FIGURE 6.4 The Marine Gate of Pompeii. The blocks of the old Samnite wall can be seen in the lower part of the photo

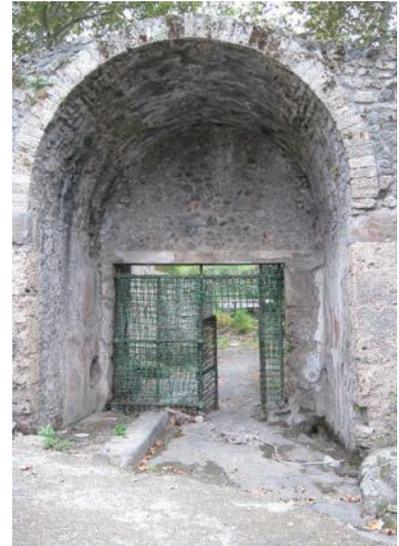


FIGURE 6.5 The Stabian Gate

Streets came in many shapes and sizes, from major thoroughfares to unpaved back lanes. They were laid out on a grid system, the main axial roads (*decumani*) crossed by minor roads (*cardini*) creating blocks (*insulae*) about 35 metres by 90 metres.

At its full dimensions, Pompeii's main road – the Street of Abundance or *Via dell'Abbondanza* – was 8.5 metres wide and 900 metres long, running from the Forum in the west of the city to the Sarno Gate in the east, close to the Amphitheatre. It was lined with some of the best-preserved buildings in Pompeii.



FIGURE 6.6 The Herculaneum Gate in 2004

TABLE 6.1 Features of the Via dell'Abbondanza

- Access to the Forum
- Two public buildings at its intersection with the Forum: the Eumachia Building and the Comitium
- A large public bath complex, the Stabian Baths
- A major crossroad with Via Stabiana
- Connecting crossroads leading to the Triangular Forum, theatres, *palaestra* and Amphitheatre
- A variety of elite residences, houses, apartments, shops and workshops
- One of the earliest properties excavated in Pompeii, the Estate of Julia Felix
- One of the city entrances, the Sarno Gate
- Agricultural areas including vineyards.

Other roads varied between 3.5 and 4.5 metres wide, but most were not wide enough to allow for two vehicles to pass each other.



FIGURE 6.7 The Via dell'Abbondanza today (minus the hordes of tourists)

A COMMENT ON ...

Names of streets, gates and addresses

Modern tourists navigate their way through Pompeii's gates and streets using a series of modern names such as the Marine Gate and Street of Abundance (Via dell'Abbondanza, named after a figure of the goddess of abundance carved into a fountain), but 'we have almost no idea what these streets were called in the Roman world'² or if indeed they were named at all in the way we do it today. There appears to have been 'no system of using street names and house numbers to give an address. Instead, people seemed to use local landmarks.'³ It was Fiorelli who gave each block and each house a number for convenience.

The major streets were paved in blocks of volcanic stone, and many of those leading to the Forum in Pompeii have deep ruts attesting to the volume of wheeled traffic in the area. Vehicles for the transportation of goods were quite solid, judging from the remains of one in the Villa Regina in Boscoreale. They generally had two wheels and were pulled by oxen or mules. Japanese archaeologists who studied the Pompeian wheel ruts concluded that some of the ‘stepping stones’ in certain streets were higher than in others and were intended as a traffic control system, by restricting wheeled vehicles in these streets, particularly in the area around the Forum and theatres.



FIGURE 6.8 A streetscape in Pompeii



FIGURE 6.9 A streetscape in Herculaneum



FIGURE 6.10 Wheel ruts worn into a street in Pompeii

Apart from the grid pattern of streets dividing the urban area into blocks, the first impression of Pompeii – and to a lesser extent Herculaneum – is of an ‘interlocking jigsaw of large, medium and smaller houses’.⁴ However, analysis of the urban structure of Pompeii has revealed a more complex reality. Land use within Pompeii was not exclusively urban. It included cultivated areas and open spaces where **polyculture** was practised: fruit trees, vines and vegetables grown together. The remains of several commercial vineyards and a large orchard have been found.

polyculture growing many crops together

A confused jumble of shops, workshops, crafts, residential and horticultural plots and houses across the whole city, with no real attempt at commercial segregation or concentration beyond the tendency of shops to line the main roads and horticulture to cluster on the margins.

SOURCE 6.2 A. Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum*, pp. 65–6



FIGURE 6.11 A replanted ancient vineyard inside Pompeii

ACTIVITY 6.1

- 1 Explain why it is not possible to adequately compare Pompeii and Herculaneum.
- 2 List the major difference in the appearance of the streetscapes of Pompeii and Herculaneum.
- 3 What do the deep wheel ruts and higher than usual 'crossing stones' in some Pompeian streets reveal about life in the city?
- 4 How does Figure 6.11 support the view that the urban structure of Pompeii has revealed a more complex reality than previously thought?

Public amenities

Street drainage

Most of the main roads – such as the Decumanus Maximus – in Herculaneum had well-constructed high footpaths, and in Pompeii raised stone blocks provided pedestrian crossings designed to protect the inhabitants from the filth in the streets and particularly from getting their feet wet.

Stepping down onto the road surface ... most likely involved treading into a smelly mixture of animal dung (each horse producing up to 10 kilos a day), rotting vegetables and human excrement.

SOURCE 6.3 Mary Beard, *The Fires of Vesuvius: Pompeii, Lost and Found*, p. 56

When it rains, the streets [in Pompeii] turn into torrents. For the city is built on land which slopes in places quite steeply ... It was the function of the streets to collect rainwater and channel it out of the city through the walls ... the streets in other words doubled as water channels as well as refuse dumps. One thing that can be said in favour of this arrangement is that the occasional downpour and the rush of water that it caused, must have helped flush away all that decaying rubbish.

SOURCE 6.4 Mary Beard, *The Fires of Vesuvius: Pompeii Lost and Found*, p. 57

However, Herculaneum had no need of raised crossings as the town had an excellent drainage system, with subterranean sewers that flowed beneath several roads that ran on a north–south axis in the city. A large tunnel measuring 3.6 metres high and 86 metres long that ran under *Cardo V* Street along an entire city block was linked to chutes that flowed from the latrines and kitchens of the homes above. (See Chapter 13.)



FIGURE 6.12 Drainage channels in a footpath in Pompeii

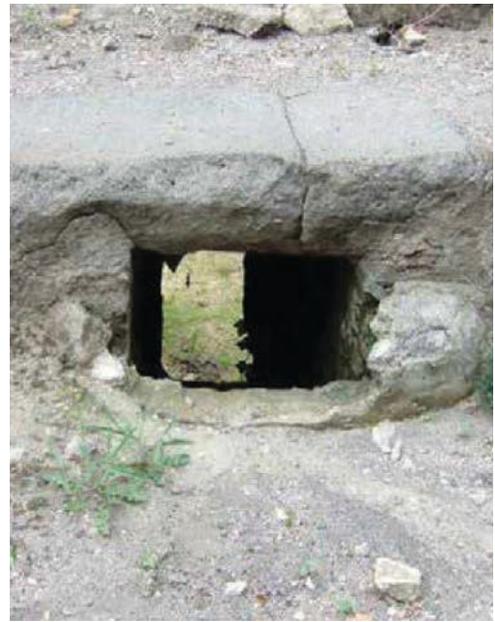


FIGURE 6.13 A drainage hole under the pavement in a street in Pompeii



FIGURE 6.14 A subterranean sewer in Herculaneum

Water supply

The water for public (fountains and bath complexes) and private needs (well-to-do houses) came via the Pompeian branch of the great Augustan **aqueduct** – the *Aqua Augusta* – from the springs of Acquaro 26 km away. The aqueduct reached Pompeii at its highest point near the Vesuvian Gate.

aqueduct a structure that carries water from a distance

Somewhere out there ... high in the pine-forested mountains of the Appenninus, the aqueduct captured the springs of the Serinus and bore the waters westwards – channelled it along sinuous underground passages, carried it over ravines on top of tiered arcades, forced it across valleys through massive siphons all the way down to the plains of Campania ...

SOURCE 6.5 Robert Harris, *Pompeii* (2003), p. 8

A COMMENT ON ...

The Aqua Augusta: a testament to Roman engineering

- The Aqua Augusta, built between 30–20 BC on orders from the Emperor Augustus, was one of the longest, most complex and costliest aqueduct systems in the Roman world.
- It covered a distance of 140 km and, during its construction, the engineers faced many difficulties: 2-km tunnels through mountains, ground movements nearer the coast and the need to maintain 'a mean drop along her entire length of just two inches every one hundred yards'.⁵
- It was unique in that it was a network (matrix) that supplied water to a whole region, rather than to just a particular city. It had 10 branches and serviced the Campanian cities of Nola, Acerre, Atella, Naples, Puteoli, Baiae, Cumae, the Roman naval base of Misenum, Pompeii, Herculaneum and Stabiae. Several sub-branches provided water to a number of sumptuous villas belonging to the elite.
- Its main coastal terminus was the enormous reservoir known as the Piscina Mirabilis at the naval base at Misenum, one of the largest reservoirs on an aqueduct known in the Roman Empire.
- The branch leading to Pompeii emptied into a huge cistern near the Vesuvian Gate known as the *castellum aquae*, from where it was redistributed throughout the town.



FIGURE 6.15 The Piscina Mirabilis at Misenum, which has survived almost intact to this day

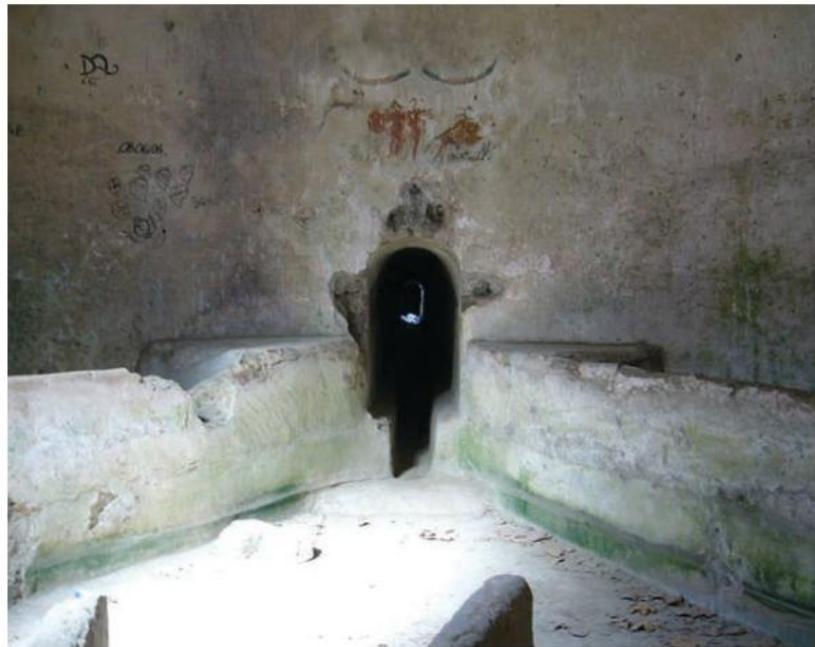


FIGURE 6.16 The spur from the Aqua Augusta entering the *castellum aquae* in Pompeii

Once the water reached the Pompeian cistern, it passed through three large lead mains that ran under the footpaths. Branching off the main lines, smaller pipes fed the water into 14 distribution structures in the shape of towers, usually built near crossroads. The water was forced up into lead tanks within these water towers, reducing the pressure in the pipelines.

An elaborate system of variously shaped pipes (*fistulae*) supplied the public baths, latrines and the 42 or more public fountains that were usually no more than 70 to 80 metres apart. The water flowed day and night through decorative spouts, providing for those who could not afford to have water connected to their homes.



FIGURE 6.17 A water tower in Pompeii



FIGURE 6.18 Terracotta pipes in Pompeii

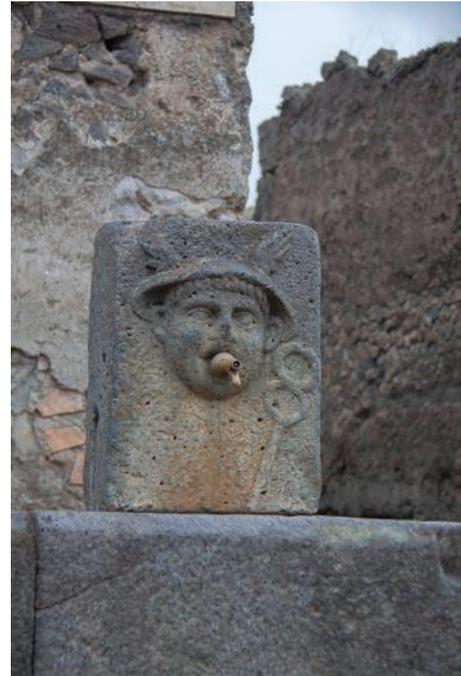


FIGURE 6.19 A public fountain in Pompeii

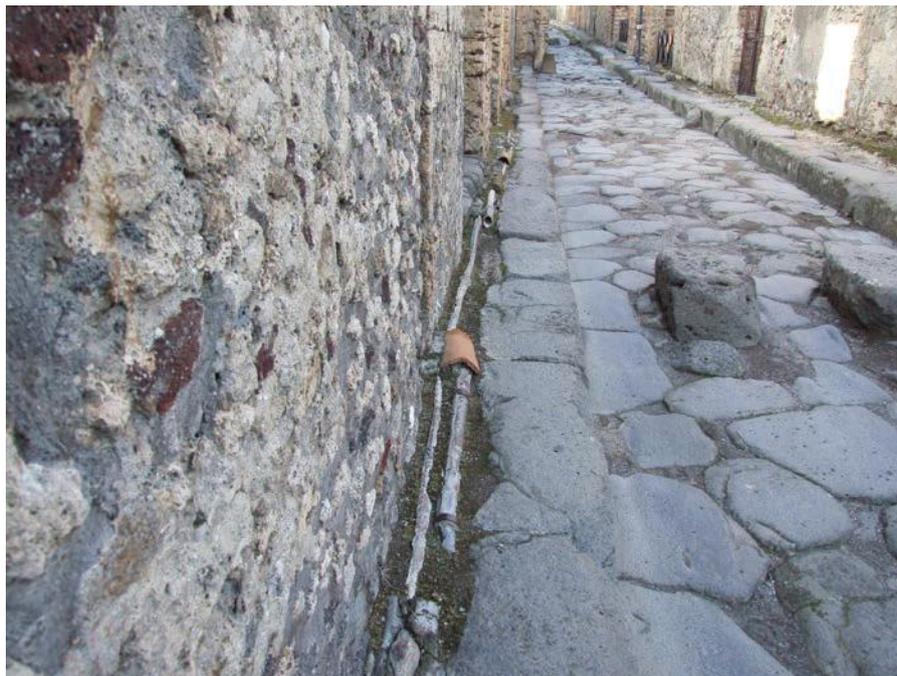


FIGURE 6.20 Lead pipes in Pompeii

Public latrines (*foricae*)

The water supply also served the needs of the public latrines located wherever people congregated (such as the Forum, near the Amphitheatre). Most were not pleasant places and even those multi-seaters (catering for as many as 20–30 people at a time) like the one provided for people conducting business in Forum – reconstructed to look clean and sunny – would have posed serious health risks to the users. Some incorporated into the various bath complexes were probably better. ‘The latrines annexed to the thermal baths in Pompeii preserve a certain aesthetic dignity’ and some ‘even came to assume the form of a monument’.⁶



FIGURE 6.21 A public latrine

ACTIVITY 6.2

- 1 Explain what Sources 6.2 and 6.3 says about the use of Pompeii's streets.
- 2 Draw a diagram illustrating the main features of Pompeii's domestic and public water supply.

The Pompeian Forum

Public buildings associated with administration, religion and commerce were clustered in or around the Forum, which was the chief meeting and trading place in the town. In Pompeii, the Forum was located close to where the main roads from Naples, Nola and Stabiae met.

The Pompeian Forum – a rectangular paved area 40 metres wide and 150 metres long – was, in the 1st century AD, surrounded by a double-colonnaded portico in white limestone, featuring standing and equestrian statues honouring the emperor and imperial family as well as local dignitaries. The bases of 41 standing and 16 equestrian statues are all that remain.

Vitruvius, in his treatise on architecture, directed that Roman fora should be built with columns widely spaced to make the transaction of business more convenient, with moneychangers' stalls under the porticoes and galleries upstairs. Strange as it may seem to modern visitors who admire the white marble and tufa, the Forum buildings were once roofed in red terracotta tiles and were brightly coloured, as were the statues that surrounded them. Unlike modern city dwellers, who deplore the defacing of public buildings, the Pompeian people covered the Forum walls, particularly those of the Basilica, with painted notices ‘in vivid colours and large letters, the better to draw attention’.⁷

Large rectangular blocks, fitted solidly in the ground, barred access to wheeled traffic. There is also evidence that the area could be closed off by grilled gates during certain events. On any day of the week, but particularly market day, the Forum and surrounding streets would have been filled with the lively bustle of shopkeepers and stall-holders, merchants, moneychangers, customers, teachers and students, people wishing to pick up news or hear the latest gossip, as well as those attending the law courts or holding political office.

Unfortunately, the Forum of Herculaneum is still buried under the town of Resina/Ercolino and the main artery leading to it has only been uncovered for a short section of its length.

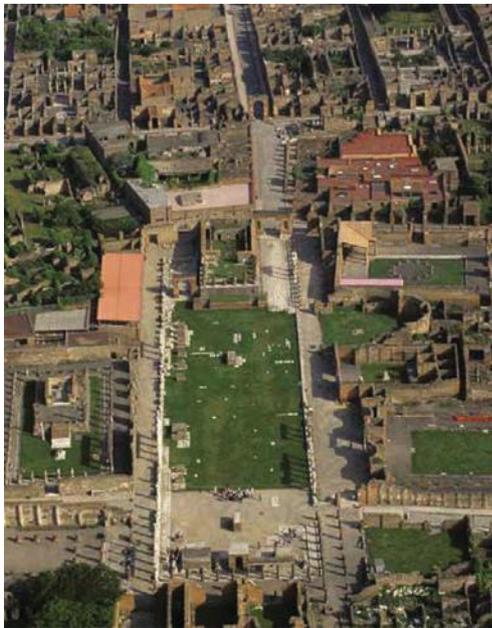


FIGURE 6.22 An aerial view of the Forum



FIGURE 6.23 Remains of the colonnade around the Forum

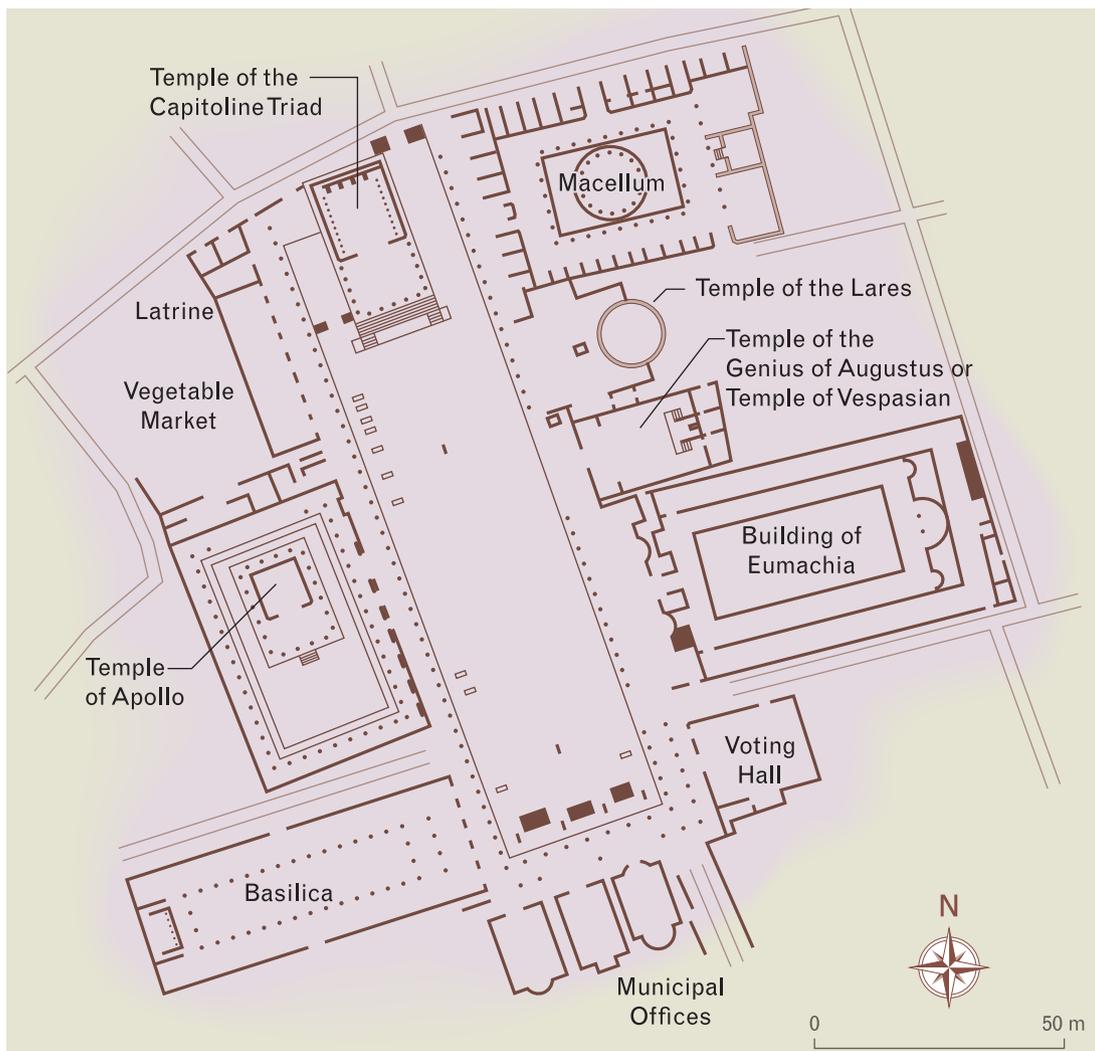


FIGURE 6.24 Plan of the Pompeian forum



FIGURE 6.25 Blocks fitted into the ground to prevent access to wheeled traffic



FIGURE 6.26 A mosaic of a wheeled cart

ACTIVITY 6.3

- 1 How important was the Forum in the lives of the inhabitants of Pompeii and Herculaneum?
- 2 Use Figure 6.24 to identify the chief buildings in the Forum of Pompeii and see if you can correlate them with the remains shown in Figure 6.22.
- 3 Imagine you are a first-time visitor to Pompeii. Write a letter home to a friend in your home town, describing what you have seen as you wandered the streets.

6.2 Population

Size

Although it is extremely difficult to estimate the population size of ancient towns, some authors insist on giving definitive figures, such as ‘20 000 of which 8 000 were slaves ... and 4 200 were adults’.⁸ In the 19th century, the director of the site, Giuseppe Fiorelli, estimated a figure of 12 000 for Pompeii, and since his day the figures have fluctuated, with some modern scholars tending towards a lower estimate of 6 400–6 700. The figure most often quoted is 8 000–10 000 and this ‘may not be unrealistic’ based on the 800 houses so far excavated and the fact that ‘at least on average, the Pompeian familia must have been considerably larger than the modern household based on the nuclear family’.⁹ It is even harder to estimate the population of Herculaneum. Five thousand has been suggested, apparently based on the seating capacity of the theatre.

If the total numbers are hard to gauge, it is a bigger task to repopulate the ancient towns, to ‘track down ancient Pompeians and put them back into their houses, bars and brothels’ since ‘an awful lot of people have ended up in the wrong place. Or more generally, there is a large gap between “our” ancient city and the city destroyed in 79 AD.’¹⁰

Oscans a local Italic group living in scattered groups in Campania, believed by Strabo to have been the founders of Pompeii and Herculaneum

Samnites Italic groups originally from the mountains of southern Italy who conquered Campania

Type, appearance and health

Campania, always open to external influences, was a melting pot of people with a mix of cultures: an **Oscan/Samnite** root onto which was grafted Greek (Hellenic) and Roman, as well as foreign traders, craftsmen and slaves from the Hellenistic East such as Egyptians, Syrians, Jews and others from the far-flung Roman Empire. The skulls of the skeletons of Herculaneum, studied by Dr Sara Bisel, confirmed a widely diverse genetic inheritance.

The work of both Dr Sara Bisel and Dr Estelle Lazer at Pompeii revealed that the population of both towns was generally well-nourished and in good health and, in many ways, similar to the present-day population of the area in terms of height: average for men 167–169 cm, and women 154–155 cm.

Bisel also found evidence:

- to support the idea of low birth rate: a mean of 1.69 children per woman, which she believes was due to the practice of abortion and contraception, mentioned frequently in the literary sources.
- that their lifespan was found to be longer than previously expected and the incidence of age-related diseases (arthritis and a post-menopausal condition that resulted in obesity and the growth of facial hair), not unlike people today in the area. Other bodies showed evidence of past injuries that had received medical treatment.
- that the mean number of tooth loss and decay in both sexes in Herculaneum was low, probably due to the heavy consumption of seafood, containing fluorides, and the fact that sugar was not in use, while honey, used as a sweetener, was expensive.

However, in Pompeii, Lazer discovered that many skulls showed signs of serious dental problems: caries, gum disease, early tooth loss and thick deposits of calcified plaque. Worn and decayed teeth, however, tell historians nothing about a person's status. According to Suetonius, even the Emperor Augustus had bad teeth, 'small, few and decayed'.¹¹ Badly worn teeth tell historians more about the people's staple food: Pompeians ate bread made from flour impregnated with tiny fragments from lava millstones.

TABLE 6.2 Some examples of Sara Bisel's original findings

- A 46-year-old male, 174 cm tall, from the upper class judging by signs of good nutrition, well-developed muscles which did not appear to be from overwork but possibly from sports such as hurling the javelin or discus, someone with time to exercise.
- A 46-year-old matron, 157.2 cm tall, with gold jewellery beside the body. Her heavy robust bones indicated good nourishment. She probably gave birth to 2–3 babies. She had a bad overbite which would have marred her beauty and dental problems would have led to infections and abscesses.
- An 8-year-old girl of average height possibly from the upper class, with a gold ring set with stone and glass beads. Her considerable tooth decay indicated that perhaps she had been given a lot of honey-laden desserts.
- A 14-year-old female slave, 155.9 cm tall, holding a baby. She appeared to have been 'pretty' but did a lot of running up and down stairs or hills; her teeth revealed that at a young age she didn't receive the right nourishment or that she was seriously ill.
- A 24-year-old pregnant woman, 150 cm tall, with a 7-month-old foetus. It appeared to have been her first pregnancy. Her bones indicated that she didn't have to work very hard and her teeth were perfectly healthy. She was well-nourished and free of infections.
- A 16-year-old male, 173 cm tall who appeared to have been a fisherman. He was healthy, with a well-developed musculature of the upper body, perhaps indicating that he did a lot of rowing. The wear pattern on his teeth show some 'industrial' use of his teeth such as holding a bobbin cord used to repair nets.
- A 37-year-old male soldier found with a bronze military belt and sword, 174.5 cm tall. His bones showed that he was big, tough, well-exercised and nourished. There was evidence of some form of trauma: stab wound in the left leg and teeth missing but not from decay. Evidence from his knees indicate that he spent a career on horseback.
- A 48-year-old female, either a slave or from the lower class, possibly a prostitute, 155.3 cm tall. Her pelvic abnormality is similar to that found in modern prostitutes. She had light bones with some degenerative arthritis.
- A 49-year-old male labourer, 170.7 cm tall, possibly a horse handler, carter or construction worker. Evidence shows that he used his hands in heavy work and that he suffered a number of accidents such as a blow to the skull, a fracture to his right radius and a crushed right foot. The foot injury occurred in late childhood, somewhere between 10–12 years of age.

A COMMENT ON ...

The possible presence of lead in skeletons

Initially, Bisel discovered high lead levels in a number of skeletons, some with levels high enough to cause poisoning and even brain damage. She suggested that these levels were due to the use of lead in drinking cups, plates and cooking pots, lead water pipes, and from red pigment of paint, as well as the use of lead to whiten a woman's skin, treat bleeding and promote healing of ulcers and superficial wounds, and even as a remedy for headache and arthritis. The most common use of lead was as a sweetening agent for sour wine. However, in later studies she did not find evidence of substantial lead poisoning. It should be remembered that all these findings came from only a small percentage of the population.

Unfortunately, some of Bisel's original conclusions were problematic. She originally based her analysis on the assumption that girls normally married between 12 and 24, whereas B. D. Shaw in *The Age of Roman Girls at Marriage* thinks it more likely to have been in late teens, and by using the evidence to create a profile for each skeleton, she may have ignored other explanations for the condition of the bones. Also, recent work has been done on DNA, which has been used for identifying genetic disorders, as well as diseases that leave no mark on the bone.

ACTIVITY 6.4

Use the information in this chapter to draw a mind map summarising the conclusions made about the population of Pompeii and Herculaneum by Dr Estelle Lazer and Dr Sara Bisel.

Groups within society

The population within Roman society was divided into three broad categories:

- freeborn (*ingenui*)
- freedmen and freedwomen (*libertus* and *liberta*)
- slaves (*servi*).

Freeborn

Those born free ranged from:

- 1 the elite (generally large land-owning families)
- 2 the *plebs media* – those who were rich, but outside the elite
- 3 the *plebs humilus* – the humblest freeborn.

Many of those in groups 2 and 3 were engaged in some form of commerce, but even the elite were concerned with selling the agricultural produce of their country estates and renting parts of their town houses to small businessmen. Women in this group were 'psychologically and socially emancipated over all'¹² and some were independently rich.

The male members of the upper level of Pompeian and Herculanean society had a network of social ties with friends, clients and dependants, both freeborn and freed, whom they advised, and whose interests they looked after both publicly and privately. As prospective candidates for office, members of the elite depended on these groups for political support. The number of people who sought them out as **patron** in their houses during the morning **salutatio** enhanced their social standing.

patron a wealthy citizen who looked after the interests of poorer clients in return for their support, usually political

salutatio a morning ceremony during which clients attended on their patron

Freedmen and freedwomen

The number of freed slaves increased in Roman society during the 1st century AD, with many becoming wealthy and influential even within the imperial household.

In Pompeii, the bulk of freedmen and women were associated with crafts, trade and commerce. The small shops, workshops, bars and taverns built into the façades of many dignified residences were often run by the freed dependants of the owner of the house. For example, the freed slaves of Aulus Umbricius Scaurus, who was the dominant manufacturer of fish sauce in Pompeii, ran his business for him.

Wives of freedmen helped their husbands in businesses such as bakeries; others ran their own enterprises such as brothels and inns and became quite wealthy.

The wax tablets of Herculaneum tell of Poppaea Note, a freedwoman of Priscus who had slaves of her own, and an inscription of Naevoleia Tyche, a well-off freedwoman of Lucius who had freedmen and freedwomen of her own.

The luxury of houses owned by many freedmen, such as the brothers Vettii, rivalled those of the Pompeian elite. According to Wallace-Hadrill, wealthy freedmen ‘imitated the cultural language of the nobility in order to establish their membership in that society’.¹³ Cicero and Pliny the Elder criticised the tendency of the rich, successful freedman ‘to ape the aristocracy’¹⁴ but blamed the elite and their excesses for setting the example for the lower orders.

A freedman or freedwoman was free in all ways, but tended to remain tied to his or her former master and patron in a relationship of gratitude and loyalty, performing services for him.

Epitaphs in the necropolis reveal that patrons often paid for the graves of deserving freedmen or freedwomen within their household. Also, freedmen and women often paid for their own graves as well as those of freeborn. They had a strong need to show their newfound status. An example of an honoured freedwoman is the inscription on a tomb monument on the Herculaneum Gate road.

Naevoleia Tyche, freedwoman of Lucius Naevoleius, for herself and for Gaius Munatius Faustus, member of the Brotherhood of Augustus and suburban official, to whom on account of his distinguished services to the city council, with the approval of the people, granted a seat of double width (*bisellum*). This monument Naevoleia Tyche built in her lifetime also for the freedmen and freedwomen of herself and of Gaius Munatius Faustus.

SOURCE 6.6 Original translation by A. Mau, 1907, in F.W. Kelsey, *Pompeii: Its Life and Art*, pp. 422–3

Slaves

It appears from the existing documentary evidence from Campanian towns that a large proportion of the population of Pompeii and Herculaneum was likely to have been of servile origin, creating an obvious ethnic diversity in the relatively small total number.

Slavery played a significant role in Roman society. Slaves, through capture and auction or as the offspring of a slave mother, belonged solely to their master. Large numbers were employed in upper-class households as washers, oven-stokers, servers, cooks, entertainers, nurses, tutors, clerks and secretaries, and on agricultural estates tending vines, picking grapes, ploughing, harvesting, hay-making and herding. From the evidence of a prison cell and stocks found in the Villa of Agrippa Postumus at Boscotrecase, those on estates, predominantly men, tended to be treated more harshly.

Within the slave population there was an obvious social hierarchy. In the urban household, there was a great difference in status between a server or oven-stoker, for example, and a dispensator, who controlled his master’s funds, or the *cellarius*, who controlled the food supplies. Male slaves with an education were highly privileged. A female slave was not permitted to marry, and if she had any offspring, they followed – according to Roman law – the condition of their mother and so belonged to her owner.



FIGURE 6.27 A fresco of slaves (foreground) at a Pompeian banquet

Slaves could be **manumitted** by their masters, or could save up enough money themselves to buy their liberty, although in that case they had to pay a freedom tax equal to 5% of their assessed valuation. They were then permitted to assume their master's name.

manumitted refers to the granting of freedom to a slave

Recent evidence found by archaeologist Professor Antonio De Simone suggests that there might have been an upwardly mobile caste of former female slaves, who instead of being freed were kept as lovers by their masters. He found the remains of a couple sheltering from the eruption in a building near Pompeii. On the woman's arm was a bracelet in the form of a serpent with diamond eyes inscribed with '*Dominus ancillae suae*' or 'from the Master to his slave girl', suggesting a gift, an idea that is entirely new.

The boundaries between slave, manumitted slave and freeborn were often exceedingly fluid as one of the dossiers that made up the Herculaneum Wax Tablets reveals.

A COMMENT ON ...

A court case involving the household of Gaius Petronius Stephanus

- Gaius Petronius Stephanus was a rich freeborn inhabitant of Herculaneum who married a freedwoman named Calactoria Themis.
- A slave woman within his household named Vitalis was freed by Petronius and adopted his name as Petronia Vitalis. As a freedwoman, she gave birth to a daughter called Justa, although the father was never named, and the mother and daughter remained within the household for 10 years. Petronius and Calactoria brought the child up as their own.
- When the couple had children themselves there was considerable disharmony within the family and Petronia Vitalis decided to leave and set up her own household, but her former master and his wife refused to give up her child.

- Petronia Vitalis did very well for herself and when she had enough money, she brought a suit against the couple. She was granted custody of her daughter but had to pay her former master for the girl's upkeep. Over the years she amassed a considerable fortune.
- When she died, followed soon after by her former master, the widow Calactoria brought a suit to recover Justa and all the property she inherited from her mother on the dubious grounds that Vitalis had still been a slave when she gave birth.
- Because no substantiating documents existed on either side, the case, which went to Rome several times, was still on-going when Vesuvius erupted.

Women

Evidence from both written and archaeological sources suggests a strong female influence in Pompeii and Herculaneum. The paintings, inscriptions and graffiti – though interpretative – suggest that many women were held in high esteem.

Although it is not known how many females could read and write, it is believed that upper-class girls were educated in the home, probably by a slave tutor. The frescoes showing women with pen and tablet or with a book in their hands suggest that literacy was a mark of status and that such an accomplishment might have made a woman more desirable as a marriage partner.

According to Pliny the Younger, his third wife Calpurnia was 'highly intelligent and a careful housewife'.¹⁵ He believed that her devotion to him gave her an interest in literature.

She keeps copies of my books to read again and again and even learn by heart ... If I am doing a reading, she sits behind a curtain nearby and greedily drinks in every word of appreciation. She has even set my verses to music and sings them to the accompaniment of her lyre.

SOURCE 6.7 Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, IV 19

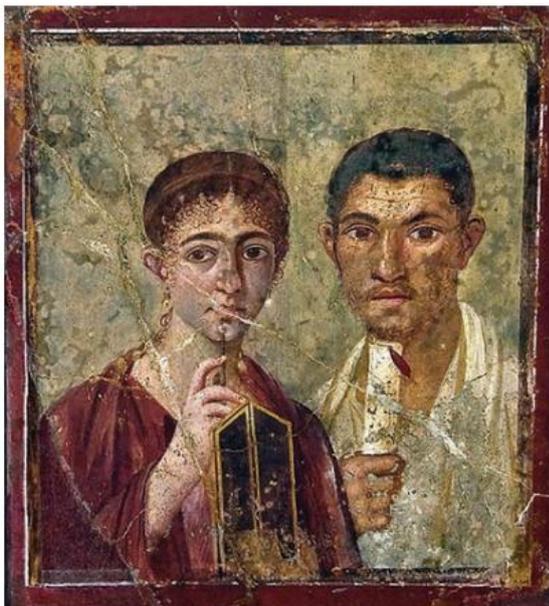


FIGURE 6.28 A Pompeian man holding a scroll and a woman holding a pen and writing tablet



FIGURE 6.29 A fresco of a Pompeian woman with pen and writing tablet

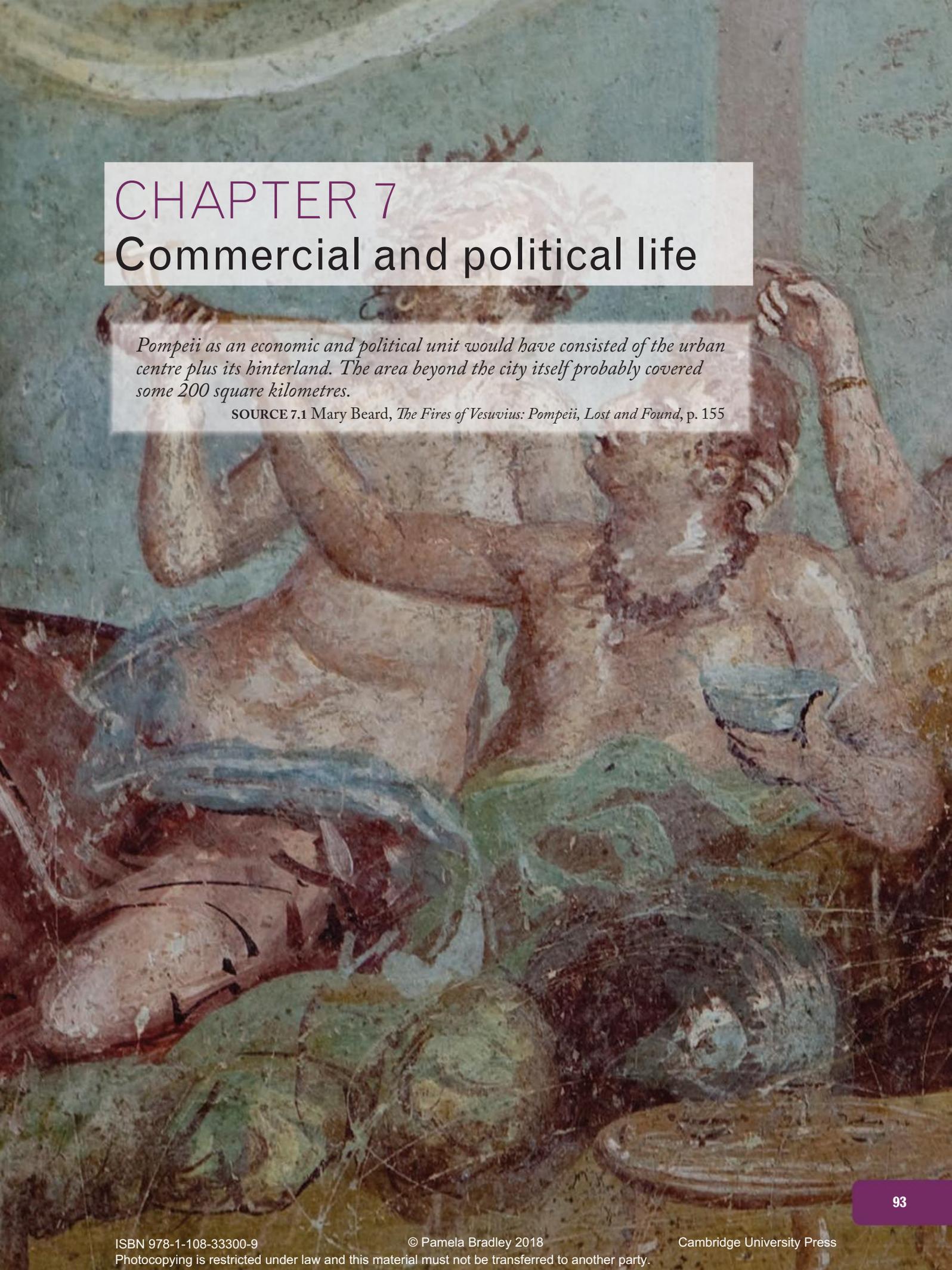
Some prominent women were influential and successful businesswomen; others played a prominent role in public life as state priestesses responsible for the construction and dedication of public buildings (Eumachia and Mamia). Despite being unable to vote, women – even prostitutes – showed an active interest in political matters, some actively supporting the males in their own families as candidates for political office (see Chapter 7).

Women could inherit a share of their father's estate and could make a will on the same basis as a brother, although they could not freely dispose of their inheritance. They could also own property in their own right and carry out business transactions. For example, the Herculaneum Tablets record a business deal between the freedwoman Poppaea Note, who borrowed money from Dicitia Margaris. As security for the loan Poppaea temporarily transferred ownership of two of her slaves to her creditor.

Often individually, and in partnership with their husbands, women could run shops and engage in crafts and trades and earn profits.

ACTIVITY 6.5

- 1 Describe how the elite and the *plebs media* differ with regard to their wealth.
- 2 Examine the institution of *salutatio*.
- 3 List the obligations and benefits that came with being manumitted.
- 4 Summarise the significance of epitaphs in helping historians understand the status of a freedman or woman.
- 5 Explain why it was likely that a large percentage of the population in Pompeii were of a 'servile' origin.
- 6 Study Figure 6.27 and identify tasks being carried out by household slaves.
- 7 To what extent were there boundaries between freeborn, freedmen/women and slave in Roman society?
- 8 Despite Pliny the Younger's supposed esteem for his third wife, how does he still reveal a certain patronising attitude towards her?
- 9 Describe women's rights with regard to property.



CHAPTER 7

Commercial and political life

Pompeii as an economic and political unit would have consisted of the urban centre plus its hinterland. The area beyond the city itself probably covered some 200 square kilometres.

SOURCE 7.1 Mary Beard, *The Fires of Vesuvius: Pompeii, Lost and Found*, p. 155

7.1 Commercial life

Unlike the quieter fishing/resort town of Herculaneum, Pompeii appears from the evidence to have been a bustling commercial centre in the years before its destruction; a place where ‘trade served as a leveller’¹ in society, and where making a profit and accumulating wealth were regarded as being favoured by the gods. Some of this evidence includes:

- the high number – about 600 so far excavated – of privately owned shops, workshops, bars and inns
- the city-controlled markets around the Forum
- trade signs depicting various manufacturing processes and service industries
- the epigraphic evidence of the number of guilds of tradesmen and retailers
- images of Mercury, the patron god of commerce, financial gain, messages/communication, travellers, boundaries, luck, trickery and thieves, displayed everywhere to gain blessings: on a sign outside a shop, on a sales counter, as part of a set of scales or on the wall of a workshop
- the 20 or so maritime warehouses containing objects characteristic of a port area and buildings lined with wine jars
- paintings of cargo boats on the Sarno and porters carrying products to be loaded onto the vessels
- inscriptions on walls and floors of houses and workshops paying tribute to the pursuit of profit: ‘Profit is Joy’ found in the mosaic entrance way of the house of two wealthy men, Siricus and Numerianus; ‘Welcome Gain’ inscribed around the *impluvium* in the house of a carpenter; and ‘Here Dwells Happiness’ scrawled on the wall of a bakery.



FIGURE 7.1 An image of Mercury on a water fountain

ACTIVITY 7.1

Explain why images of Mercury were found all over Pompeii.

Industries based on agriculture and fishing

The economic base of all Vesuvian towns, employment, trade, manufacture and profit was largely based on agricultural production and fishing.

1 Agriculture was the most respectable way of earning a living and those with large landholdings enjoyed great status. The numerous medium-sized farmsteads and villas associated with a farm or vineyard (*villa rusticae*) that dotted the Sarno Plain – about 150 properties discovered so far – as well as the market gardens (*horti*) within the walls of Pompeii provided the raw materials (wine, olive oil, cereals, fruit, vegetables, meat and wool) for much of the retail and industrial workforce.

2 The fishing fleets that plied the coastline of the Bay of Naples provided the much-valued crustaceans, molluscs and fish, the latter also used for making the **garum** or fish sauce for which Pompeii was renowned and which was a source of great wealth.

These resources also spawned a host of other industries such as pottery, since terracotta and ceramic containers (**dolia** and **amphorae**) were needed for storage, and trade in wine, oil and garum.

garum a fish sauce used as a condiment in cuisine around the Mediterranean

dolia (singular: *dolium*) large globular earthenware jars with a wide mouth

amphorae two-handled earthenware vessels for liquids



FIGURE 7.2 A *dolium*



FIGURE 7.3 Amphorae

Wine and oil production

Wine and oil were the principal sources of income for the people in the Vesuvian area. Generally, the profitable cultivation of both vineyards and olive groves could only be undertaken by wealthy landowners because of the cost of the long wait between planting and the first harvest, and the cost of wine and olive presses.

Wealthy Romans and Pompeians like the banker Caecilius Jucundus annexed country farms and added elaborate residential quarters for them to stay in when visiting. Although these villas, like the Villa of Pisanella at Boscoreale, were luxurious, their primary focus was agricultural production (vineyards, olives and rearing of livestock) with professional facilities set aside for the treatment and conservation of produce:

- a threshing floor
- a barn for storage of fodder
- a large room containing presses for the production of wine and oil (*torcularium*)
- cellars or courtyards with terracotta jars buried into the floor for storage
- stables and tool sheds
- cramped quarters for labourers and slaves.

Wine production

Generally, wine doesn't appear to have been stored in large quantities in taverns and bars, but brought in from the countryside when needed. These country villas had rooms (*torcularia*) for pressing the grapes and for fermentation (*cellae vinariae*). The **torcular** or press 'consisted of a solid wooden crossbar fixed at one end and pushed downwards by means of a winch with an arm lever'.²

torcular wine press

Districts with a mild climate store their wine in jars and bury them completely or partially in the ground thus protecting them from the weather ... Spaces must be left between jars to prevent anything likely to affect the wine from passing from one to the other, as the wine very soon becomes tainted.



FIGURE 7.4 A wine press from the Villa of Mysteries

SOURCE 7.2 Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, XIV, pp. 33–4



FIGURE 7.5 Embedded *dolia* in the courtyard of a villa at Boscoreale

asses (pl. of *as*) copper coins in everyday use

The villas of Boscoreale – Villa of Pisanella and Villa Regina – possessed huge storage capacities. The former had an internal courtyard of 120 *dolia* that could hold up to 50 000 litres, while the latter had 18 *dolia* holding 10 000 litres. The wine was transported to town in large leather wineskins (*cullei*), then decanted into amphorae or *dolia* for storage and serving in the numerous taverns and bars.

A wide variety of wines were produced in the Vesuvian area. A sign on a Herculaneum wine bar, inviting patrons to ‘Come to the Sign of the Bowls’, advertised half a dozen types of wine and their vintages. Another tavern advertisement confirms that there was a wide range of wines sold in Pompeii: ‘... drink here for just one *as*; for two **asses** you can drink better, and for four have some really good Falernian wine’.³

From Pliny’s *Natural History*, and evidence from labelled wine jars, it seems the two most famous local wines were Vesuvinum and Pompeianum, but judging from a scrawl on the wall of a Pompeian bar, the quality of wine varied considerably.

As to the wines of Pompeii, they have arrived at their full perfection in ten years, after which they gain nothing by age: they are found also to be productive of headache, which often lasts so long as the sixth hour of the next day.

SOURCE 7.3 Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, XVI, 70

Inn-keeper of the devil, die drowned in your own piss-wine. You sell the inferior stuff but you keep for yourself, you swine, the good bottles.

SOURCE 7.4 M. Brion, *Pompeii and Herculaneum: The Glory and the Grief*, p. 132

Vineyards were not restricted just to the countryside. There were commercial vineyards within the city of Pompeii itself: one close to the Amphitheatre with a room set up for wine pressing and a shed with embedded *dolia*, each of which could fill 40 amphorae. Evidence of smaller vineyards was found in the open space attached to the House of the Ship Europa, as well as adjoining the Inns of Euxinus and of the Gladiators, where the grapes were pressed on the premises.

Oil production

The same estates that produced wine also produced oil; the Villa of Pisanella kept enough storage jars for 5910 litres of oil.



FIGURE 7.6 A wine shop in Herculaneum

Pliny describes, in his *Natural History*, the best time to gather the olives for the most pleasant taste.

The gathering of the olive follows that of the grape, and there is even a greater degree of skill required in preparing oil than in making wine; for the very same olives will frequently give quite different results. The first oil of all, produced from the raw olive before it has begun to ripen, is considered preferable to all the others in flavour; in this kind, too, the first droppings of the press are the most esteemed, diminishing gradually in goodness and value ... The riper the berry, the more greasy the juice, and the less agreeable the taste. To obtain a result both abundant and of excellent flavour, the best time to gather it is when the berry is just on the point of turning black.

SOURCE 7.5 Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, XV, 2

Most of the pressing was done on the estates even though oil presses were found in Pompeian houses and in the Forum granary. Cato, in his *On Agriculture*, recorded that Pompeian presses built from lava stone were the best. Because ‘the cause of oil is warmth’,⁴ presses and store rooms had to be warmed by large fires.

Trapeta were for the first pressing, to separate flesh from pip so that the oil did not get a bitter taste. A *trapetum* consisted of a circular basin with two mill wheels joined by a wooden beam that revolved on an iron spindle fixed into the sides of a basin. The second pressing was done with the same press as for grapes (*torcular*). ‘The first oil from the press is the richest, and the quality diminishes with each successive pressing ... age imparts an unpleasant taste to oil and after a year it is old.’⁵

Within Pompeii, oil workshops retailed oil and it is believed that there may have been an olive market in the Forum. Oil was used:

- for cooking, particularly in the hot food bars which provided a service to those who had limited cooking facilities in their homes
- for lighting
- in public baths and gymnasia for rubbing into bodies, a practice disapproved of by Pliny the Elder which he blamed on the Greeks.
- as the chief ingredient in the manufacture of perfume, which Pliny said was ‘the most pointless of all luxuries’.⁶

trapeta olive presses used for the first pressing



FIGURE 7.7 An olive press

It is one of the properties of oil to impart warmth to the body, and to protect it against the action of cold; while at the same time it promotes coolness in the head when heated. The Greeks, those parents of all vices, have abused it by making it minister to luxury, and employing it commonly in the gymnasium.

SOURCE 7.6 Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, XV, 19

Although Pompeians produced their own wine and oil, they imported other varieties from Spain, Sicily and Crete. However, it is not known with any certainty yet just how extensive their exports were to other parts of the Roman Empire. The occasional Pompeian amphora, tile or pottery container has turned up beyond Italy, but some scholars believe their export trade was minimal.

In the past, it was believed that the red slip clay vessels found in Pompeii came from other parts of Italy or much further afield, but an Australian researcher, Jaye Mackenzie-Clark, attached to Macquarie University, has investigated the chemical composition of the clay and matched it to the clay found in the Bay of Naples area. She has confirmed that pottery was a thriving local industry and is challenging previously held assumptions that most pottery was imported from the east. Her work may throw more light on Pompeii's overseas wine and oil trade.

ACTIVITY 7.2

- 1 Why was the commercial cultivation of vines and olives predominantly an activity associated with the wealthy classes?
- 2 Describe how and where grapes and olives were:
 - pressed
 - stored
 - retailed.
- 3 List other industries essential to the wine and olive growers.

Textile and associated industries

Wool was the basis of one of the most important industries in Pompeii: the washing and dyeing of wool and the manufacture of cloth. A painted sign over the Pompeian workshop of M. Vecilius Verecundus, an eminent mill owner and cloth merchant, showed the various processes involved in cloth manufacture:

- The raw wool was first degreased by boiling in leaden boilers.
- Once carded, it was taken to the spinners and weavers, either in private homes or in workshops.
- The cloth was next dyed, often in bright colours such as purple or saffron.
- The finished product was distributed to cloth merchants.

Associated with the manufacture of cloth was the production of felt to make slippers, hats, blankets and cloaks. It was impregnated with heated vinegar, creating a matted effect, and then pushed and pressed until it reached the right consistency. Four felt workshops have been identified in Pompeii.

A significant business connected to the manufacture of textiles was the laundering, bleaching and re-colouring of clothes usually carried out in *fullonicae* or laundries, 18 of which were scattered throughout Pompeii. Four of these, like the Fullery of Stephanus, were large. Some occupied the rooms of private houses (possibly rented) and were identified by a number of interconnected basins or tanks with built-in steps for washing and rinsing.

Workers trod the cloth in a mixture of fuller's earth, potash, carbonate of soda and urine (because of its ammonia content). Although camel urine was the most prized, laundries usually had to make do with human urine and male passers-by were urged to supply their urine by filling the jugs hanging outside. There were special areas set aside for urine collection, and during the reign of Vespasian a tax was levied on urine.

The fullers then rinsed, dried and brushed the cloth. Lucius Veranius Hypsaeus dried his fabric on brick pillars between the Corinthian columns of a large *atrium*, while another fuller, Stephanus, hung the wet clothes over canes on the upper floor and in the courtyard. Once dried, the cloth was bleached with sulphur and then dyed.

ACTIVITY 7.3

- 1 List the material evidence of the textile and laundry businesses that survived in Pompeii.
- 2 Explain the importance of urine in the fulling trade.

The milling and baking of bread

Bread was a basic foodstuff for the inhabitants of Vesuvian towns. The 30 or so bakeries (*pistrina*) that have been identified in Pompeii saved the householders from buying the grain, milling it into flour themselves and baking their own bread. Some bakeries were involved in the whole process of production: milling, baking and selling the bread. Others simply baked the bread from ready prepared flour and dispatched it to small shops and stalls in the surrounding streets. Nowhere in the city was very far away from a bread outlet, although there seemed to be a cluster of seven bakeries within 100 metres north-east of the Forum.

Mills, one of the most common sites today in Pompeii, were composed of three parts: a fixed conical block, a masonry base for collecting the flour, and a hollow cylinder, into which was inserted a pole, turned by mules or donkeys. The brick ovens were heated by burning vine faggots and, once hot enough, they were cleaned out in readiness for baking the small round loaves of bread.

Pompeian bakeries produced 10 different kinds of bread, but, because of the poor quality of the flour, it was very hard, and due to the lack of yeast it deteriorated quickly. These loaves were marked off in eight sections for easy breaking. In the bakery of N. Popidius Priscus, a member of a prominent Pompeian family, 81 loaves of bread were recovered, still in the oven where they had been placed on the morning of the eruption.



FIGURE 7.10 A loaf of carbonised bread



FIGURE 7.8 The remains of a bakery



FIGURE 7.9 A tank in the Laundry of Stephanus

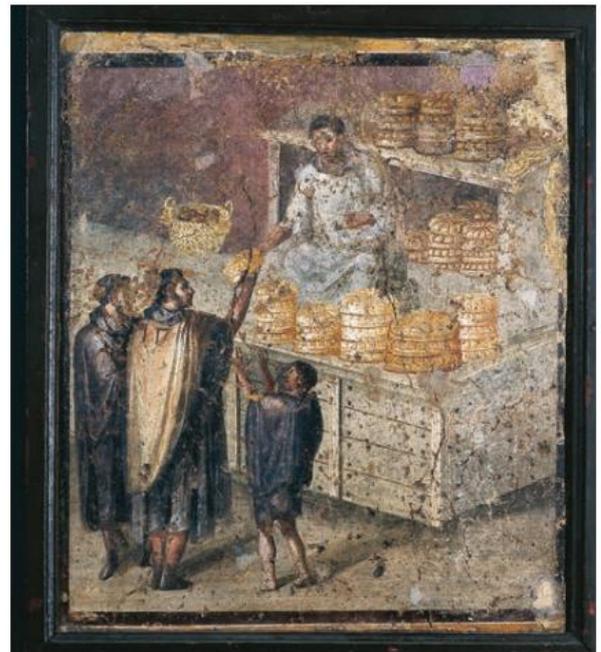


FIGURE 7.11 A fresco of a bread stall in Pompeii

One of the largest bakeries in Pompeii was part of a two-storey residence known as the House of the Chaste Lovers, located on the Via dell'Abbondanza. This was one of the few buildings in Pompeii to retain its upper story, and gained its name from a fresco depicting two couples reclining on dining couches during a banquet, one couple in a gentle embrace.

The bakery had:

- four flour mills
- a dough preparation area
- a huge brick oven
- a bread shop
- two rooms used as stables, one of which could be entered by a side door in an alley off the main thoroughfare
- the owner had seven animals: identified as horses, mules and donkeys. The skeletons of two were found in one 'stable' apparently trying to escape at the time of the eruption; the other five were tethered in the second stable, where their skeletons remain to this day.
- an 'oversized and richly decorated dining room with a large window looking onto garden'⁷ which indicates that it may have been used as a place where people came to eat, although entry would have been either past the flour mills or the stables.



FIGURE 7.12 Skeletons of the bakery animals



FIGURE 7.13 Part of the fresco on the wall in the large dining area adjacent to the bakery

The manufacture of garum

Pompeii was renowned for its garum, a fish sauce that was one of the main condiments used for flavouring Roman cuisine. According to Pliny, 'no other liquid except unguents has come to be more highly valued'.⁸

Garum was a potent mix, made from the guts of fish and other parts that would normally be considered as refuse, probably gills, intestines and blood. Although it was popular with most people, some, like Seneca, hated its foul smell; and because of its stench it was probably manufactured outside the city's walls, although its smell would still have pervaded the city.

The entrails of sprats or sardines, the parts that could not be used for salting were mixed with finely chopped portions of fish and with roe and eggs and then pounded, crushed and stirred. The mixture was left in the sun or a warm room and beaten into a homogeneous pulp until it fermented. When this liquamen, as it was called, had been much reduced over a period of six weeks by evaporation, it was placed in a basket with perforated bottom through which the residue filtered slowly into a receptacle. The end product decanted into jars was the famous garum; the dregs left over were also regarded as edible and known as allec.

SOURCE 7.7 M. Ponsich & M. Tarradell, *Geoponica*, xx 46, i

There were various flavours, depending on the type and quality of the fish used and its method of preparation. Apparently, the valuable red mullet made the best garum, followed by tuna, mackerel and sardines, while anchovies were used for less refined sauces.

A product indispensable to the production of garum was salt, and the Pompeians skilfully exploited a depression near the coastal road to Herculaneum to make a salt plant. Saltwater, washed up by the high tides, entered a channel into large shallow basins where it evaporated in the sun. As its concentration increased, it was allowed to overflow into progressively concentrated pools. Eventually, the pure crystallised salt was collected with spades from the final basin.

Aulus Umbricius Scaurus was the biggest garum manufacturer and dealer in Pompeii. He is believed to have owned at least six workshops producing garum, as well as importing garum from Spain for resale in Pompeii.

Judging from the vast mansion he built with views over the sea there was certainly, 'a fortune to be made out of rotten fish'.⁹

ACTIVITY 7.4

- 1 Describe what archaeological evidence reveals about the importance of bread in the diet of Pompeians.
- 2 Use Source 7.7 to make a list of the steps in the making of garum.
- 3 Explain why wealthy seaside villa owners often established fish farming on their properties.

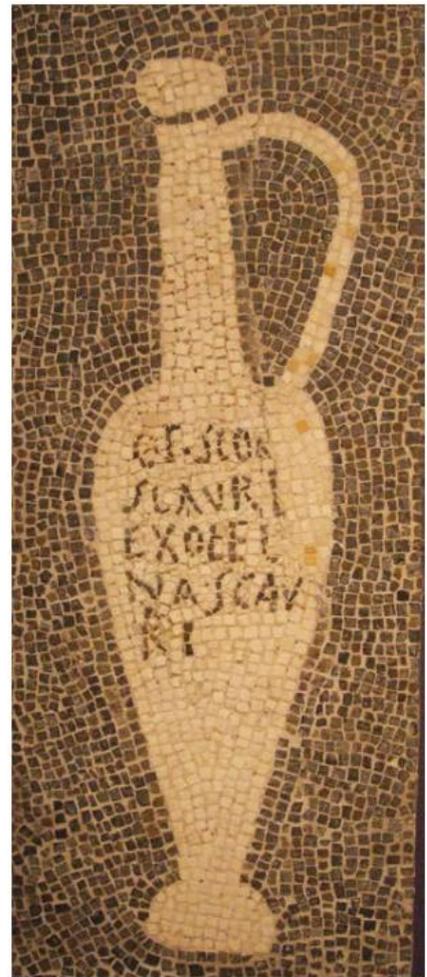


FIGURE 7.14 A mosaic of a garum jar

Other manufacturing industries

There were workshops (*officinae*), some found still with their signs advertising their trades. The evidence suggests around 50 different kinds. For example, there were:

- builders and carpenters like Diogenes, whose street sign depicted chisels, trowels, mallets and plumb lines, and surveyors, one of whom had his measuring rods, stakes and a cross for laying out straight lines sculpted on his tombstone
- potters and brick makers
- metal workers, such as coppersmiths and workers in bronze. These trades were probably carried out beyond the walls due to possible fire risks
- goldsmiths, silversmiths, gem cutters and glass makers
- architects and painters
- stone masons and workers in marble
- iron mongers and wheel-makers
- plumbers
- weavers
- perfume makers.



FIGURE 7.15 A sculpture of a metal workshop

A COMMENT ON ...

The perfume industry

It has been estimated that part of the 10% of the land within the walls of Pompeii used for horticulture was devoted to the commercial growth of flowers, possibly for the manufacture of perfume. Wilhelmina Jashemski, in her *Gardens of Pompeii*, thought that root cavities in the Garden of the Fugitives and Garden of Hercules probably represented rosebushes because of the irrigation channels. Also, fragments of terracotta perfume containers, glass perfume bottles and terracotta unguent jars were discovered in the gardens of these houses.

ACTIVITY 7.5

- 1 How do we know of the various trades present in Pompeii?
- 2 Suggest a reason why builders, carpenters and brick workers would always have been in demand in Pompeii and others areas in Campania.

Markets and shops

The markets on both sides of the Pompeian Forum were the property of the city, administered by two city magistrates who made sure that:

- the markets ran smoothly
- goods were measured and priced accurately
- quality was maintained
- city regulations were upheld. For example, traders were only permitted to bring their goods to the market at dawn or in the evening to avoid traffic congestion; no wheeled traffic was permitted in the Forum.

Despite the difficulty in confidently identifying the purpose of many of the large buildings surrounding the Forum, what follows are ‘the currently favoured guesses’.¹⁰

The **Macellum**, on the north-eastern side of the Forum, was a busy market specialising in the sale of fish and meat, and possibly fruit and vegetables. Its location was chosen so that its pedestrian traffic would not disturb the normal life of the main Forum space. It consisted of a large arcaded courtyard, with shops wedged between the marble columns of the portico on the southern side. In the centre was an unusual building: a large covered market called a *tholos* bounded by 12 columns. In its centre was a pool believed to be for live fish. Large quantities of fish scales and bones have been found in the underground channel that linked the pool with the drains, so it was probably where fishmongers cleaned, filleted and sold their catch. As well as fish for eating and making of garum, and all kinds of molluscs and crustaceans, there was a variety of meats – lamb, beef, veal, pork and poultry – for sale in the Macellum.

The Macellum also featured a beautiful panelled painting in the ‘fourth style’; a small raised temple; statues of an emperor and notable Pompeian dignitaries, probably those who had financed the building; a section that may have been used for sacrificial banquets or as an auction room; and a moneychanger’s booth.

On the other side of the Forum was a market (*olitorium*) where dried cereals and pulses were sold to individuals and bakeries. Its entrance had eight openings to facilitate the movement of customers, and in a recess to the south was a weighing table (*mensa ponderaria*), a marble slab with nine circular cavities of different capacities for inspecting and measuring the foodstuffs sold by shopkeepers. Augustus had attempted to standardise all weights and measures throughout the empire, and in Pompeii, according to an inscription on the weighing table, it was the magistrate Aulus Clodius Flaccus who carried out the changes.

Pedlars gathered in the Forum on market day and sold an array of manufactured goods such as shoes and floral garlands, while local farmers from the countryside and owners of market gardens within the city set up their stalls, in squares, under arcades and anywhere that was frequented by the inhabitants of the town, to sell their surplus agricultural and garden products.

With so much commercial activity centred on the Forum, and so many people milling around on market days, the Pompeian authorities were obliged to provide a public latrine adjacent to the granary. It was screened off by a vestibule and could accommodate 20 people at one time.

Shops (*tabernae*)

The main commercial thoroughfare in Pompeii was the road that ran from the Forum past the Amphitheatre to the Sarnian Gate. Remains of shops along this road – and others – can be recognised by the wide opening onto the street, and the long groove in the stone threshold where a wooden shutter slid back during the day.

Many had a back room or a mezzanine – accessed by internal stairs – which were the living quarters of the shopkeeper. It is quite possible

Macellum a meat, fish and vegetable market in the Pompeian Forum



FIGURE 7.16 *Mensa ponderaria*



FIGURE 7.17 A shop along the Via dell'Abbondanza

that the premises of a cloth merchant, a gem-cutter or perfume vendor might be adjacent to a greengrocer, a garum seller, a wine and hot food bar or a rag-and-bone vendor, all interspersed with entrances into grand residences in the *insula* behind. Shop and workshop owners advertised their businesses with painted trade signs or paintings on the outside of the walls.

About 200 public eating and drinking places have been identified in Pompeii, which seems a large number for the domestic population of the city; but of course they would also have catered for visiting sailors and traders and those who came in from the rural areas during the week. Some were simply fast-food snack bars known today as *thermopolia*, and recognised by the marble-covered counter in which large *dolia* were encased, display racks for wine amphorae decanted into jugs for serving and a small stove for cooking hot meals. It



FIGURE 7.18 A *thermopolium* or fast food bar



FIGURE 7.19 *Dolia* under a counter

has been suggested that some might have served as a type of ‘grocery store’ and that the *dolia* embedded in the counter perhaps contained dry goods, some of which were sold as snacks. In most of these places, food was taken away or eaten standing up.

One of the largest found in Herculaneum, opposite the *palaestra*, had two spacious entrances.

Wine bars and taverns (*cauponae*) were scattered throughout both towns, but in Pompeii they were more densely clustered near the entrance gates and around the Amphitheatre. Some had a room or rooms at the back with benches for customers. In others, there were couches for wealthier clients to recline on while eating and drinking.

It seems that many Pompeians were heavy drinkers. Two graffiti declared ‘Cheers! We drink like wineskins’¹¹ and ‘Suavis demands full wine-jars, please, and his thirst is enormous’.¹² However, most people drank their wine diluted; they mixed it with water and added other ingredients such as honey, milk, ashes, lime, almonds and sea water to enhance its flavour. They also sweetened sour wine with a ‘sweet-tasting lead acetate syrup made by boiling the dregs of wine in lead-lined copper pans for several days’.¹³ A particular favourite with Pompeians was hot wine.

One of the better-known establishments was that of a woman named Asellina, who employed foreign waitresses called Smyrna, Maria and Aegle (some believe they were prostitutes). Sums showing customers' debts were scrawled on the inside walls of her inn, while political slogans, painted on the outside walls, revealed her interest in the forthcoming elections.

ACTIVITY 7.6

- 1 List the evidence that the building known as the Macellum in the Forum once held a fish market.
- 2 Explain the importance of each of the following:
 - the *olitorium*
 - the *mensa ponderaria*
 - *thermopolia*.
- 3 How did archaeologists identify the presence of ancient shops along the Via dell'Abbondanza?
- 4 Where might you expect a large number of bars and taverns to cluster? Why?

Service industries

Hotels

Visiting traders could find a bed for the night in one of the many hotels close to the port or within the city. A building named the Hostel of the Muses, after one of its dazzling paintings, was discovered on the bank of the ancient course of the Sarno, from where it would have had a view over the sea. Because of its unusual features – a small jetty, banqueting areas consisting of at least eight rooms, brilliant frescoes in the dining rooms and an exceptionally large kitchen, which could feed at least 50 guests, it is believed that it was a hotel for wealthy traders.

Another hotel near the Forum could sleep 50 people four to a room, while the two hotels just inside the Herculaneum and Stabian Gates had dining rooms, bedrooms, stables, a water trough and a garage shed for wagons. It appears that the owners also provided for their guests' entertainment with upstairs rooms accessed by a side door for the discreet entry of local women.

Brothels and prostitution

Because moral values were set by men, prostitution was seen as a normal part of their everyday sex life and there was no stigma attached to them visiting a brothel or a tavern.

A tavern girl from Syria ... an artist with her sinuous hips, keeping time to the castanet – after a few drinks she dances seduction in the smoky tavern, elbows flashing to the shrill of the flute.

SOURCE 7.8 *Appendix Vergiliana Copa*, 1–8, trans. H. R. Fairclough

Of course, wealthy men had no need to visit a brothel. They could invite a prostitute to their homes, use one of their household slaves or visit the home of a high-class courtesan, skilled in the art of lovemaking.

However, despite the acceptance of prostitution, those who engaged in sex for payment were stigmatised. One of the names given to them was *lupa* or 'she-wolf'. Others provided their services in the back streets; in fact, the word 'fornicate' comes from the Latin word *fornix* meaning 'arch'. Sometimes, taverns functioned as brothels and there is no doubt about the occupation of a woman called Hedone ('pleasure' in Greek) who ran one, but we know nothing of other women who slept with men to make a bit of extra money on the side.

The three criteria often used for identifying brothels, once believed to cluster in one area of the city, were a masonry bed in a small room, sexual graffiti and the presence of erotic paintings, but Thomas McGinn, in *The Economy of Prostitution in the Roman World*, questions the reliability of these criteria and suggests that prostitution was not limited to particular locations but was an integral part of Pompeian life and that we need much more evidence to understand prostitution as an economic enterprise. 'It seems that sex for money was almost as diffused through the town as eating, drinking or sleeping.'¹⁴

lupanar a brothel

No brothel has been identified in Herculaneum, and despite the amount of archaeological material in Pompeii relating to this occupation, only one building, so far excavated, appears to have been exclusively used as a brothel (**lupanar**). This large, two-storey corner building (refer to Figure 5.4) comprised 10 rooms, five running off a corridor on the ground floor with a latrine at the end, and five more upstairs with a separate entrance. Its walls are still covered in erotic paintings showing couples in various positions, but it is believed that these were used simply to stimulate the men, rather than advertise the various services provided.

Prostitutes were predominantly foreigners, judging by the names in the graffiti, and most of their customers came from the lower classes. The cost varied from between 16 *asses* to as little as two *asses*, or the price of a loaf of bread or jug of wine. They were supposed to be registered with the *aediles* and 23 April each year was set aside as a holiday for them.

A COMMENT ON...

Priapic art in Pompeii

- A visitor to the site of Pompeii is usually surprised to find phalluses depicted everywhere: carved into street paving stones; above bread ovens; decorating walls; moulded into terracotta plaques; above the entrances to houses; in mosaic floors; on scales and lamps; and phalluses with bells and wings. There are paintings everywhere with a Priapus theme, the most famous at the entrance of the House of the Vettii where the god Priapus, divine protector of the household, is weighing his huge phallus against a bag of money.
- These were not, as some earlier archaeologists believed, indicators of the presence of brothels, directions to brothels or an obsession with sex.
- The modern explanation is that they are a symbol of good luck; an optimistic expression of a desire for plenty, power and prosperity.

ACTIVITY 7.7

Describe the Pompeian attitude towards:

- prostitution
- graffiti
- priapic and erotic art.

Port activities

The port of Pompeii was less than a kilometre from the centre of the city. The remains of 20 warehouses have been excavated. They contained weights for anchoring boats and fishing gear, as well as amphorae and a statue of Neptune, god of the sea, to whom departing sailors made sacrifices.

The port was a trans-shipment point for local and foreign goods. Once the ships were unloaded, the goods were transferred to barges for the journey up the Sarno River to inland towns such as Nuceria, and onto wagons for the short trip into Pompeii.

Two notable Pompeian business people

Apart from the wealthy garum manufacturer Aulus Umbricius Scaurus, there were two others who had high business profiles:

- 1 Lucius Caecilius Jucundus
- 2 Julia Felix

Lucius Caecilius Jucundus

The Basilica (see Figure 7.21), fronting onto the Forum, is believed to have been not only the law court, but an exchange where businessmen or speculators met clients and signed contracts.

One man who would have probably frequented the Basilica was the wealthy Lucius Caecilius Jucundus, the son of a freedman, who appears to have made his wealth by:

- conducting auctions
- lending money to merchants
- renting and selling land, properties, businesses and slaves
- collecting local taxes on behalf of the city.

We know this from the 150 wax tablets found in his Pompeian house. They were records of Jucundus's various transactions between 27–62 AD, although most focused on the years 52–58 AD. These have proved extremely valuable in understanding financial dealings in Pompeii, particularly what was being bought and sold. Jucundus is often referred to today as an ancient banker, but he does not fit our modern understanding of the word.

He was a characteristically Roman combination of auctioneer, middleman and money lender. He was ... profiting from both sides of the auction process – not only charging commission to the sellers, but also lending money at interest to the buyers to enable them to finance their purchases.

SOURCE 7.9 Mary Beard, *The Fires of Vesuvius: Pompeii Lost and Found*, p. 177

Most of the entries in the wax tablets were receipts for rents and loans, and apart from a few payments over 20 000 sesterces, the average amount he was paid was around 4500 sesterces. These transactions, however, were not his only source of wealth. According to some of the documents, he was involved in tax collection for the city, such as market taxes from stall holders and from those who rented public grazing lands. He took a profit for himself out of this activity.

If he was indeed the owner of the Villa of Pisanella at Boscoreale as well as his house in Pompeii, then he was also the owner of the hoard of more than 100 pieces of beautiful silverware, as well as gold coins and jewels found in a chest hidden at the villa at Boscoreale. These finds confirm his great wealth.



FIGURE 7.20 A bust of Caecilius Jucundus



FIGURE 7.21 The Basilica in the Pompeian Forum

Julia Felix

Julia Felix – the cognomen meaning ‘fortunate one’ – was a wealthy widow, property owner and businesswoman. She inherited her landholdings and money from her family (believed to have been freedmen) and owned a magnificent estate in Pompeii that took up a whole *insula*. Her large estate had suffered damage during the earthquake of 62 AD and sometime later she transformed parts of her home into privately-run commercial baths for prestige clients, shops, taverns and mezzanine lodgings and upper floor apartments, advertising them for rent to Pompeian residents who had lost their homes and businesses.

In the property of Julia Felix, daughter of Spurius, elegant thermal baths for refined people, shop with lodgings above and apartments on the first floor to let for five years from 1st August until 1st August of the sixth year. The contract may be renewed by mutual agreement after five years have passed.

SOURCE 7.10 CIL, IV 1136

ACTIVITY 7.8

- 1 Explain why we know about the commercial activities of Lucius Caecilius Jucundus.
- 2 Account for how he made and spent his money.
- 3 Suggest what Source 7.10 tell us about the business acumen of Julia Felix.

7.2 Local politics

Like all provincial towns, Pompeii and Herculaneum were self-governing in local matters, but subject to imperial decrees from Rome, although the emperor rarely interfered except where the empire's security and local order were threatened. The inhabitants did not rail against any such interference when it occurred and constantly demonstrated their loyalty to the imperial family by constructing dedicatory statues, shrines, arches and buildings to them.

We must always remember that many of the confident claims of modern scholars about how local government worked in Pompeii are drawn not from evidence found in, or about, the town itself, but from documents that refer to other – albeit similar – communities.

SOURCE 7.11 Mary Beard, *The Fires of Vesuvius: Pompeii Lost and Discovered*, p. 237

There are many gaps in our knowledge of the day-to-day details of political life, such as exactly how and where government business was conducted on a daily basis, and exactly how the annual city elections were held. It is likely that it was all much more informal than in larger cities, although we do know from the election slogans painted on the walls throughout the city that political activity was intense, leading up to the elections in March of each year. Competition among those eligible to hold office was apparently quite fierce, although it is doubtful, as Cicero wrote, that it was harder to gain a seat in the City Council of Pompeii than in the Roman Senate.

Organisation of local government

A Board of Four (*quattuorviri*) was the **executive** arm of the government which comprised two **duoviri** (sing. *duumvir*) and two *aediles*.

The *duoviri* (the 'two men') were the most senior officials in the city. *Duoviri*:

- administered the electoral rolls
- were responsible for criminal and civil cases such as murder, robberies, misuse of public funds and inappropriate behaviour during elections. They could only give the death penalty to foreigners and slaves, and in civil cases they were limited to law suits whose value did not exceed 15 000 sesterces or defamatory trials whose limit was 10 000 sesterces
- made judgements about electoral candidates without the required qualifications and unworthy members of the city council (*decurions*).

Every five years they were elected as **quinquennial duoviri** to take the census and control morality.

Election to the position of **aedile** allowed a man to stand for the higher office and the possibility of future entry into the Council. *Aediles*:

- administered sacred and public buildings
- maintained roads and sewerage systems
- regulated markets
- maintained public order
- sponsored spectacles and theatre.

The City Council (*ordo decurionum*) was the **legislative** arm of the government.

- It was composed of 100 members (*decurions*) chosen from ex-magistrates.
- Membership on this council was for life and only became available with the death or disgrace of a member.
- Every five years the list of *decurions* was revised.

executive referring to the branch of government that implements the laws

duoviri the two most senior city officials in Pompeii

quinquennial duoviri officials elected every five years to carry out the census and control morality

aediles two senior administrators, who controlled town infrastructure, markets and public order

legislative referring to the branch of government that makes the laws

- The City Council debated and voted on issues affecting the administration of the city and advised the Board of Four.
The People's Assembly was only convened for the election of magistrates.
- It is believed that the city was divided into voting precincts and the members voted as individuals or as part of a guild.
- Voting was by ballot: perhaps by a tablet placed in an urn.
- The candidates for the magistracies (*duoviri* and *aediles*) had to receive an absolute majority of the voting precincts.

Aulus Clodius Flaccus, son of Aulus, of the Menenia voting group, three times chief magistrate, once in the special fifth year ...

SOURCE 7.12 Cited in C. Amery & B. Curren, *Lost World of Pompeii*, p. 58

Buildings associated with formal government

One of these buildings has been designated as the Curia Chamber, a lavishly decorated space where the City Council is believed to have met. Another adjacent roofless building has been suggested as the Comitium, a place used for the People's Assembly, and for town meetings where citizens could question the members of the government.

The evidence for heavy gates suggests that some meetings might have been quite boisterous. It may also have been used on polling day. On the other side of the so-called Curia Chamber was a small building labelled the Tabularium (archives) where all the government business was recorded and filed, including tax records, and next door were believed to have been the offices of the magistrates.

The Basilica, one of the finest buildings in the towns with its long, two-storied central hall flanked on either side by a colonnaded aisle and raised podium at the far end, has often been cited as the seat of the judiciary and law courts. Although the raised tribunal podium may have been where the magistrate, as judge, sat above the lawyers, witnesses, plaintiffs and defendants, to think of it as a 'permanently designated courtroom and nothing else, would be to exaggerate the time spent in legal business in the town.'¹⁵ Besides, there is evidence that disputes might have been dealt with more informally elsewhere.

The Basilica was possibly also a business centre, but whatever its various purposes, the graffiti – often of an angry or abusive nature – scrawled on its outer walls indicates that large numbers of people gathered or idled around it.

Election fever

About half of the electoral manifestos and propaganda discovered in Pompeii relate to the election of March 79 AD. Earlier slogans were whitewashed over to make advertising room for the next group of candidates.

Eligibility to vote and stand for office

While freeborn male citizens were permitted to vote – although some, like actors, were considered unworthy – it should be remembered that the total voting population of Pompeii would have been small, perhaps no more than 2500 with maybe an extra 5000 eligible voters from the local rural areas.

Ex-slaves were eligible to vote but, no matter how wealthy they were, they could not stand for office, and women, despite incredible wealth or influence, could neither vote nor stand for office. It appears, however, from the thousands of electoral notices painted on the walls that most people, including women, were politically aware and enthusiastic. Also, because most people in the city knew each other, those who supported the candidates were in some form of 'personal' relationship with them.

When it came to eligibility for office, however, not just any citizen was permitted to become a candidate for one of the four magistracies (*duoviri* and *aediles*). Two essential requirements were:

- 1 reputation
- 2 wealth.

What voters were interested in was the personal integrity and prestige of the candidate. Electoral manifestos usually included some references to these qualities: ‘Worthy of the Republic’, ‘Most worthy’, ‘Most upright’, ‘Excellent’, ‘Virtuous’, ‘Lives a reserved life’.

Also, only men of wealth could become candidates for the highest offices because they were not paid, and were expected to make generous cash contributions to the public funds – around 10 000 sesterces – and benefactions in the forms of sponsoring spectacular shows and games in honour of a particular god, dedicating buildings or statues, and renovating public buildings that needed it.

Status came at a price. To put it another way, when Pompeian voters were choosing between different candidates for office, they were choosing between competing benefactors. Old money counted for more than recently acquired wealth.

SOURCE 7.13 Mary Beard, *The Fires of Vesuvius: Pompeii Lost and Discovered*, p. 198

Prior to an election, a candidate wore a white toga in public to identify himself and employed a slave to whisper his name to all with whom he came in contact.

However, candidates did not:

- write the manifestos themselves or sign them; this was done by family, friends, dependants or even particular trade guilds
- make electoral promises about tax cuts, road maintenance or a building program
- boast about what they did in the past. (Refer to Figure 5.6, an election slogan in Pompeii.)

Support for candidates

Those who promoted a particular candidate usually employed a sign writer to paint their advertisements on walls outside houses, both inside and outside bars and taverns and even on public buildings. These election posters usually followed a standard form which has been described as ‘declamatory rather than persuasive’: for example, ‘Vesonius Primus urges the election of Gnaeus Helvius as *aedile*, a man worthy of public office’.¹⁶

They could be ‘signed’ by:

- individuals (family members, neighbours and clients). Even grandmothers were recruited to support a family member: ‘Vote for Lucius Popidius Sabinus, his grandmother worked hard for his last election and is pleased with the results.’¹⁷
- groups, including trade corporations or guilds.

For example, in one election, the pastry vendors backed Trebius Valente as *aedile*; the muleteers wanted to elect C. Julius Polybius as *duumvir* and the fruit merchants urged people to vote for M. Enium Sabinum as *aedile*. The fullones asked for votes for Olconius Priscus as *aedile*, and the goldsmiths supported the candidature of Caius Cuspius Pansa for *aedile*.

Judging by one graffito, teachers and students joined in the campaigning: ‘Teacher Sema with his boys, recommends Julius Simplex for the job’,¹⁸ and Asellina, a female innkeeper and a group of women supporters who called themselves ‘Asellinae’, had an electoral slogan painted on the wall of her inn urging customers to vote for Caio Lolio Fusco as *aedile*.

However, when C. Julius Polybius was running for office, a manifesto signed by two prostitutes, Zmyrina and Cuculla, appeared on a wall; he was furious and demanded that it be removed.

Unsuitable supporters in election advertisements

- Because election posters did not list the failings or weaknesses of the various candidates and did not try to dissuade voters from casting their vote against a particular individual, the question should be asked: Was there another way of presenting a negative view?
- Cambridge Professor of Classical Studies, Mary Beard, in *The Fires of Vesuvius*, suggests that negative propaganda may have been delivered by adding unsuitable supporters for a candidate such as the 'late drinkers', 'the pick-pockets', 'runaway slaves', 'the idlers', even perhaps the two prostitutes Zmyrina and Cuculla, who signed their names in support of the candidate Caius Julius Polybius, who took such offence over it that he had the manifesto painted over.
- Could such unsuitable supporters have been added as a mischievous joke, or were they meant to indicate some form of disapproval?

Not everyone, however, was always happy with the chosen *duoviri*, and just as with modern cartoonists and voters, Pompeian graffitists drew caricatures and gave advice on how to run the city: 'Here's my advice, share out the common chest, For in our coffers piles of money rests.'¹⁹

As in all political systems, there would have been a degree of corruption. The narrator in Petronius's novel of the freedman Trimalchio gives a fictitious (although realistic-sounding) account of such a case.

No one gives a damn about the way we're hit by the grain situation. To hell with the aediles! They're in with the bakers – you be nice to me and I'll be nice to you. So, the little man suffers ... this place is going down like a calf's tail.

SOURCE 7.14 Petronius, *Satyricon*



FIGURE 7.22 A painting of notable Pompeians depicted as equestrian statues

ACTIVITY 7.9

- 1 Use Source 7.11 to explain why there are gaps in our knowledge of day-to-day politics of Pompeii and Herculaneum.
- 2 In what ways did the expectations and treatment of Pompeian electoral candidates differ from our own?
- 3 To what extent does Source 7.14 show that in many ways people's attitudes to politicians have not really changed so much over time?

The price of holding office

Inscriptions in the Forum provide evidence of the dedications that local identities and magistrates were expected to make to the city. We know of the benefactions of Halconius Rufus, the most powerful Pompeian known to historians (mentioned in Table 7.1) and Aulus Clodius Flaccus, mentioned in Source 7.15; we know that Vibius Popidius paid for a colonnade; Lucius Sepunius Sandilianus and

Marcus Epidianus paid for a sundial in the precinct of the Temple of Apollo; the *decurions* dedicated statues to C. Cuspius Pansa and Q. Sallustius; and both the city and private individuals dedicated buildings to the Emperor Augustus.

Despite the fact that the Forum in Herculaneum has not been unearthed, we know of the benefactions of three leading citizens: Lucius Aeneas Mammianus Rufus, who funded the building of the theatre, Marcus Calatorius, whose bronze statue stood in the theatre among those of emperors and empresses, and Marcus Nonius Balbus, to whom 10 statues were dedicated around the town at important sites (see Table 7.1)

Aulus Clodius Flaccus ... provided in his first term during the Festival of Apollo in the Forum: a procession of bulls, bull goaders, sidekicks, platform fighters (three pairs), boxing in groups and pairs, shows with all the musicians and all the pantomimes, and especially Plyades at the cost of 10 000 sesterces paid to the city in return for his office.

SOURCE 7.15 Cited in C. Amery & B. Curren, *The Lost World of Pompeii*, p. 58

TABLE 7.1 Two prominent public figures

Marcus Holconius Rufus (Pompeii)	Marcus Nonius Balbus (Herculaneum)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He came from an old family, the Holconii, one of the four wealthiest families in Pompeii who dominated political office for generations. • His family was extremely wealthy. Rufus is supposed to have earned his fortune by operating a clay pit and brickworks along with his family's nationwide wine empire. Pliny referred to Holconian wine as a local speciality. • He was five times elected as <i>duumvir</i> and twice <i>quinquennial</i>. • According to the inscriptions, he funded the renovation of the Temple of Apollo, and in a much larger improvement project, he and his brother at their own expense built a covered gallery, the boxes and auditorium of the Large Theatre. • He was also the patron of Pompeii and, as such, was an intermediary between Pompeii and the Emperor Augustus. In this semi-official role, he intervened with the powers in Rome on behalf of Pompeii. • He was awarded an honorary position as military tribune by Augustus on recommendations by the Pompeian community. • A life-size marble statue of Holconius Rufus (now in the Naples Archaeological Museum) once stood at the crossroads of the Via dell'Abbondanza outside the Stabian Baths. Despite never being in the military, Rufus was dressed in the <i>cuirass</i> (breastplate) of Mars, one of Augustus's divine protectors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marcus Nonius Balbus came from the richest and most influential family in Herculaneum. • He had been Roman governor of Crete and Cyrenaica (a Roman possession in North Africa). • He was a patron of Herculaneum. • At least 10 statues of him were erected at important sites around the town. • He and his son, Marcus junior, were depicted in magnificent marble equestrian statues that flanked the entrance to the Herculaneum basilica, and the portrait statues of the rest of his family – mother Viciria, wife Volasennia and two daughters probably named Nonia the Elder and Nonia the Younger – stood inside. • From the evidence, it is believed that the family owned the large house on the seaward side of the town, the House of the Relief of Telephus, which was connected by a staircase and two ramps to the magnificent Suburban Baths. • Also, a statue placed in a sacred area adjacent to the baths indicates that Balbus was the donor of the baths. He was also responsible for other public works.



FIGURE 7.23 Statue of Holconius Rufus, now in the national Archaeological Museum in Naples



FIGURE 7.24 An equestrian statue of Marcus Nonius Balbus

The impact of others on public life

It seems that other groups outside the male elite were honoured publicly in Pompeii and these included a number of prominent women.

One such group, with the institutional structure to make some sort of public impact (dedications and benefactions), were the *Augustales*, an organisation of wealthy, powerful freedmen who, as their name implies, were in some way involved in the imperial cult: the worship of Augustus and subsequent emperors, although they were not a priesthood in the narrow sense of the term. They paid a membership fee to the treasury to join and are known to have sponsored banquets and buildings.

Two influential women in Pompeii were:

- 1 Eumachia
- 2 Mamia.

Eumachia was a woman of great standing in Pompeii despite her humble origin. She inherited a considerable fortune from her father, Lucius Eumachius, who made money from his brickworks. To increase her social status, she married into one of Pompeii's oldest and wealthiest families, the Numistrii Frontones. Her new social position allowed her to assume the important public office of Priestess of Venus, as well as matron of an imperial cult of Concordia Augustus, dedicated to the deified emperor.

She became the patroness of the guild of fullers, one of the most influential in Pompeii, and provided the guild with a large and beautiful building in the Forum – the Building of Eumachia with a dedication on its façade in the name of herself and her son Marcus Numistrius Fronto. It is possible that her son was running for the public office of *duumvir* at the time, and the benefaction was perhaps intended to help him gain public support for his election.

Eumachia, daughter of Lucius, public priestess [of Venus], built the hall, the covered gallery and the portico in her name and that of her son M. Numistrius Fronto at her own expense: she herself dedicated it to concordia and to Pietas Augusta.

SOURCE 7.16 From the facade of the Building of Eumachia in the Forum of Pompeii

In response to her generosity, and symbolic of her influence and social status, the fullers built a statue depicting her in the veiled form of a priestess with an inscription on the statue's pedestal. It was placed in the building she constructed. There is a replica of the original statue at the back of the building.

Mamia, daughter of Publius Mamius, was another highly regarded woman, a priestess who dedicated a building in the Forum, the Temple of the Lares, and who, by a decree from the town council, was given a gravesite for her very impressive tomb near the Herculaneum Gate.

Mamia, daughter of Publius, a public priestess [built this] to the genius [of the colony and Augustus] on her own land at [her own] expense.

SOURCE 7.17 CIL, X 816

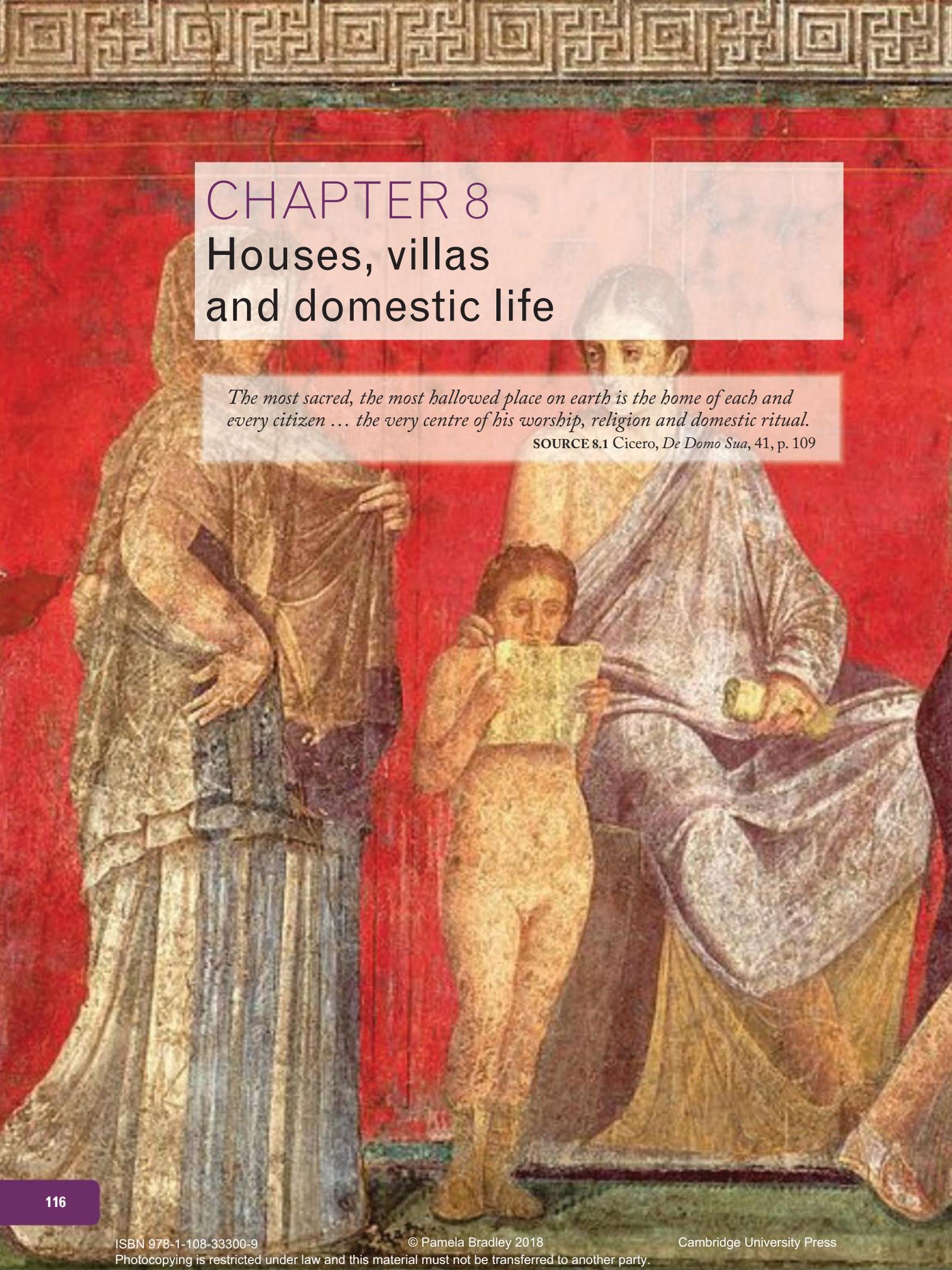
Despite the wealth and influence of some women in Pompeii such as Eumachia and Mamia, who held the public office of priestesses, it was not the same as having the formal power of an elected *duumvir* or city councillor.

ACTIVITY 7.10

- 1 List some of the major benefactions to Pompeii and Herculaneum of:
 - Clodius Flaccus
 - Holconius Rufus
 - Nonius Balbus.
- 2 Describe the two significant roles held by Eumachia.
- 3 Explain what Source 7.16 indicates about Eumachia's possible motivations for dedicating the building in the Forum named after her.



FIGURE 7.25 Statue of Eumachia dedicated by the Pompeian fullers' guild



CHAPTER 8

Houses, villas and domestic life

The most sacred, the most hallowed place on earth is the home of each and every citizen ... the very centre of his worship, religion and domestic ritual.

SOURCE 8.1 Cicero, *De Domo Sua*, 41, p. 109

8.1 Urban housing

There is a large body of evidence for housing of various types in Pompeii and Herculaneum in the 1st century AD.

Andrew Wallace-Hadrill has categorised the Pompeian **domus** into four categories on the basis of size, domestic and commercial function, architectural elements and decoration:

- 1 the largest houses designed 'for hospitality and large-scale admission of visitors'¹ with separate space for slaves. They often had two *atria*, large ornamental gardens – some with two peristyles – and were the most richly decorated.
- 2 the average Pompeian house with between eight and 13 rooms, most having an integrated workshop or shop, a fairly symmetrical plan and common architectural features such as a decorated **atrium**, **tablinum** and **peristyle**.
- 3 larger workshop residences of two to seven rooms on the ground floor, some with an *atrium* and even richly decorated.
- 4 shops and workshops with one or two-roomed residences behind or above (*pergulae* – upper floor).

However, there were other forms of accommodation, such as the large multi-layered properties all facing the sea, organised 'along Vitruvius's principles but vertically rather than horizontally'², houses that did not look inward but rather made the most of the view.

There were others such as:

- middle-class upper-floor apartments (*cenacula*) that were once part of a large house
- small, one-roomed flats for poorer people
- rows of terraced houses in the south-east corner of the city near the Pompeian Amphitheatre, possibly a planned development for an influx of displaced people after the war against Hannibal in the 3rd century BC. They were built in a row, all the same size and design, and each with a small central garden court.
- a flimsy '**jerry-built**' house, constructed in Herculaneum in response to growing population and lack of space, which amazingly survived the eruption with its furnishings intact and some of the red paint still on its walls. It appears to have been crudely constructed with a wooden skeleton made up of square frames filled with stones and mortar. The House of the Trellis – as it is called, for its style of construction – was built as a two-family residence, one on the ground floor and the other on the first floor. Its facade was narrow, a mere 7 metres wide, with two entrances, one leading to a staircase. The two families shared a cistern for water and a small courtyard, which provided ventilation and light.

domus private urban house
atrium (pl. *atria*) decorated central hall of a Roman house
tablinum (pl. *tablina*) decorated reception area off the *atrium*
peristyle inner courtyard surrounded by colonnades

jerry-built shoddily and cheaply built

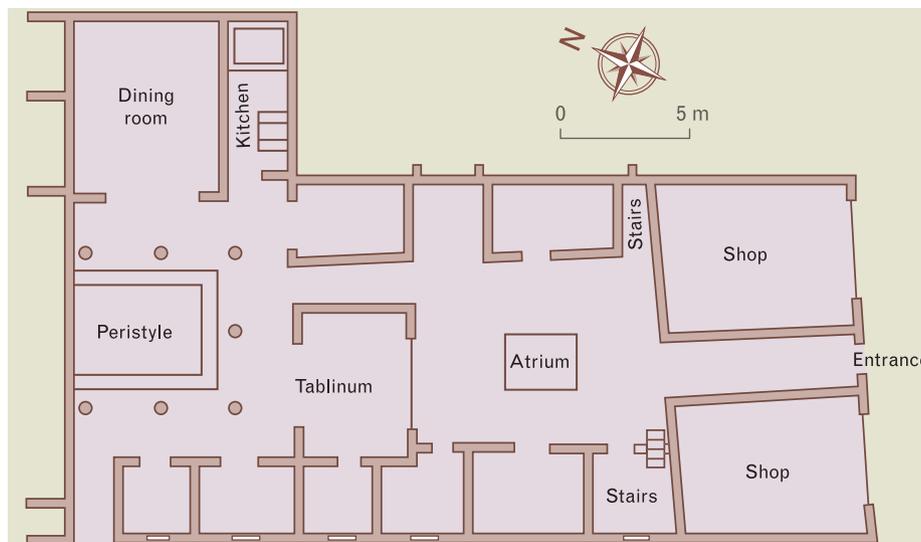


FIGURE 8.1 Plan of an average well-to-do Pompeian's house

In any *insula* in Pompeii and Herculaneum, there was a mix of grandiose houses, small workshop houses, fast food bars with accommodation and taverns.

In Insula 10 in Pompeii, the approximately 17 000-square-metre House of Menander owned by the elite Poppeii family – one of the largest, most impressive and most complex in the division of its rooms – was flanked on one side by an eating bar with a back room linked to a three-roomed dwelling, and on the other by a fullery (laundry) with a back room. In Insula 15, the House of the Vettii, one of the most luxurious houses in Pompeii, is located in a back street opposite a bar, its facade lined with shops. There was no distinction between rich and poor when it came to location, no elite or working class neighbourhoods.



FIGURE 8.2 An artistic representation of a Pompeian house

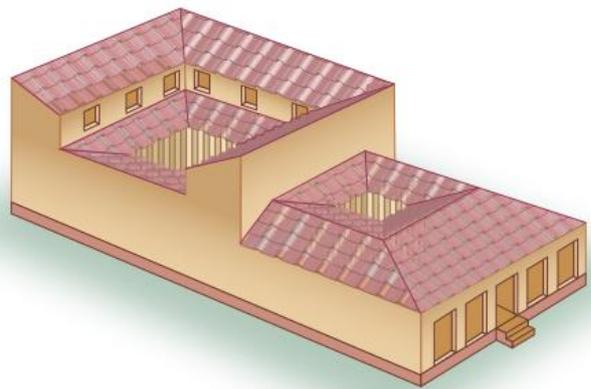


FIGURE 8.3 An artistic representation of a Pompeian house



FIGURE 8.4 The House of the Trellis in Herculaneum



FIGURE 8.5 Stairs leading to the upper floor (living quarters) in a Herculaneum house

A COMMENT ON...

Factors to consider when studying urban housing

- There has been a tendency to oversimplify everything when it comes to understanding housing.
- It is difficult to know for certain the use of particular houses, especially larger ones, at the time of the eruption, or to know if one family or several occupied them.
- We can't base room use on modern conceptions of clearly demarcated space for various activities, e.g. separate spaces for children, and since most of the houses in Pompeii lost their upper storeys it is hard to know to what use they were put.
- Clues left by artefacts and furniture seem to indicate that many rooms were multipurpose, with different activities carried out in the same room at different times of the day.
- Although a large percentage of the houses in Pompeii and Herculaneum had architectural elements in common, each had its own particular features and, with time, the variations became more obvious. They reflected urban topography, growth in population, changes in economics, one or several earthquakes, the fashion of the day and personal whims.

ACTIVITY 8.1

Explain why a first-time visitor to Pompeii in the 1st century AD would be unlikely to recognise the homes of many of its wealthy citizens.

Features of a domus

Wallace-Hadrill's first two categories (Figures 8.1 and 8.2) include all the elements that are commonly associated with houses in Pompeii and Herculaneum.

The exterior

Houses opened directly onto the raised pavements of busy streets and because they were built to face inward, their facades were rather austere. The red tiled roofs were usually flat or gently sloping and there were few windows on the street side. The entrance, even of a grandiose house, was often located between shops or workshops with no indication of the rich decoration or elegance beyond. Most doors were made of wood, although there were a few monumental doorways flanked by brick and stucco half-columns, probably designed to impress the passers-by rather than to keep out unwanted visitors.



FIGURE 8.6 Facade of the House of the Wooden Partition in Herculaneum



FIGURE 8.7 The entrance to the House of the Great Portal in Herculaneum



FIGURE 8.8 Mosaic of a symbolic guard dog



FIGURE 8.9 A wall painting from the House of the Vetti

The interior

The interior of the house of a well-to-do Pompeian was meant to be seen. His home was part of his public image and a place where some, at least, of his business was conducted, so all public spaces in the house were designed and decorated to impress the visitor with the owner's wealth and status, which were indicated by certain architectural and decorative features.

Once visitors entered the narrow corridor off the street (*fauces* – 'throat') and entrance hall (*vestibulum*), they were offered a vista into the residence through the soaring, splendidly decorated *atrium*. According to Vitruvius, 'buildings having magnificent interiors' should also have 'elegant entrance courts to correspond: for there will be no propriety in the spectacle of an elegant interior approached by a low, mean entrance'.³

In some houses, the front door led directly into the vestibule, on the side of which was a small room for the doorkeeper (*ostiarius*) and possibly his dog. Figure 8.8 depicts a mosaic of a chained, snarling guard dog at the entrance of the House of the Tragic Poet with the words *Cave Canem*, 'Beware of the Dog'.

The entrance corridors and vestibules were usually beautifully painted, for this was where the owner's clients waited for an audience to discuss business or political matters.

It is hard to believe that the *atrium* houses of the well-to-do once blazed with colour. The favoured interior colours were red, black, white and yellow, although blues, greens and oranges were used as well. Paintings were predominantly in the fourth style in the years prior to the eruption. These vivid paintings could be found not only in a vestibule, but also in the *atrium* and *tablinum*. 'The decoration of Pompeian houses has kept scholars busy for centuries, figuring out the chronology, the aesthetic and functional choices made, and the meaning of the myths on the walls.'⁴

This had led scholars to ask the following questions:

- 1 Where did members of the family eat?
- 2 Where did they sleep?

- 3 Where did they wash?
- 4 How much privacy did individuals have?
- 5 How many people lived within a household?

Atria

In the earliest houses, *atria* had no opening in the roof and were the centre of domestic activity focused on a hearth. The name ‘*atrium*’ is believed to come from ‘*ater*’ meaning ‘dark black’ because of the smoke-blackened walls. However, with the development of the *atrium* with **impluvium** and **compluvium**, sunlight shone into the room and the shallow pool below collected water from the roof gutters. This was stored in a cistern underneath the *impluvium*.

Recent work on these *atrium* houses has revealed that this space was not just a place for the flow of visitors attending to the master of the house, or as a sacred space with family shrine dedicated to the household deities, wax masks of the family’s ancestors and portrait busts of the owner, but served many purposes at different times of the day. Domestic objects found in *atria* such as glass and pottery jars, buckets, loom weights and wall fixtures – remains of shelves and cupboards – indicate that *atria* were storage areas and would have been scenes of domestic activities such as water collection by slaves and the weaving of cloth by female members of the family.

As well as being decorated with brilliant paintings and decorative architectural pieces, the floors were often covered in black-and-white mosaics in geometrical patterns, and the ceilings – although few have survived in Pompeii – probably featured painted and decorated stucco and massive wooden beams in oak or beech, which in the more gracious homes may have been gilded and inlaid.

It is generally thought that furniture was minimal in Pompeii – built-in furniture, a cupboard, a bolted chest, a marble table, some chairs, moveable couches and screens – but it is possible that the minimalist view of Pompeian houses was the result of the removal of pieces by later looters. A stairway often led from the *atrium* to the rooms on the upper level of the house, although sometimes the upper levels were reached by external stairs.

Often when a household became overcrowded, a second *atrium* might be added – if space was available – to provide for the activities of the family as opposed to the public activities carried out in the main *atrium* and *tablinum*. The House of the Faun and the House of the Vettii at Pompeii had two *atria*: one large, one smaller.

impluvium shallow central pool in the *atrium* for collection of water

compluvium square roof aperture above the *impluvium*



FIGURE 8.10 View of the small *atrium* of the House of Menander

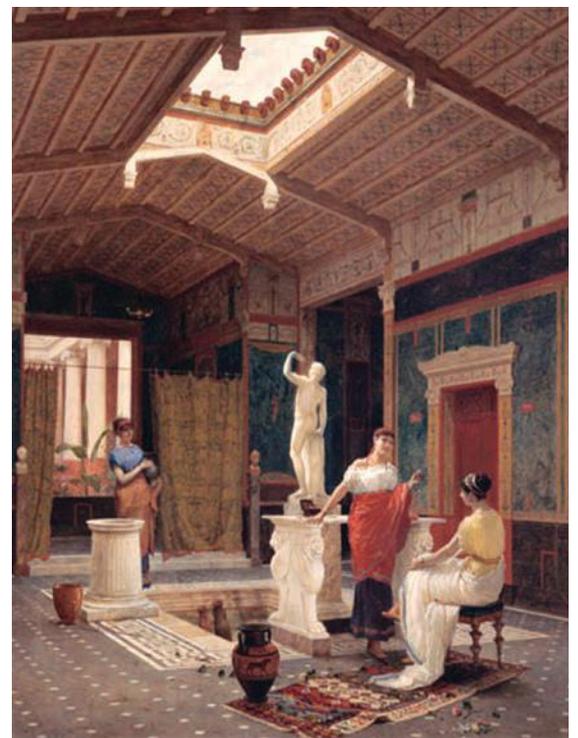


FIGURE 8.11 An oil painting of a Roman *atrium* by Luigi Bazzani, 1882



FIGURE 8.12 A cylindrical well adjacent to an *impluvium* giving access to an underground cistern



FIGURE 8.13 The *atrium* of the House of the Samnite in Herculaneum, with a Greek-inspired loggia

Tablinia

At the end of the *atrium*, on the same axis as the vestibule, was the *tablinum* or main reception room where the owner conducted daily business and where the family and commercial documents were held. It was probably in the *tablinum* that the *solium* or high-backed chair for the *paterfamilias* would be found, with a wooden or bronze bench footrest.

This room was open to the *atrium* and was usually the most richly decorated space in the house. In some homes, it was still used as a dining room, study and bedroom for the master and could be closed off with curtains or wooden partitions for privacy. In the elegant but modest House of the Wooden Partition in Herculaneum, one of these has survived: a double door with three beautifully decorated panels.

There was a tendency in the 1st century AD to open up the *tablinum* or even replace it with magnificent audience rooms and to focus on the peristyle rather than the *atrium*. In some houses the *atrium* disappeared altogether, replaced with a multiplicity of reception rooms – five in the House of Menander – suitably decorated to indicate their public nature.

In the basic house, there were usually two ‘wings’ at the far corners of the *atrium*. These were originally to let light in from side windows and were probably used for a variety of purposes, but particularly as a work space for the master’s clerks and secretaries.

ACTIVITY 8.2

- 1 If you could be transported back to the early 1st century AD, what would be your first surprise when you entered a Roman *domus*?
- 2 Make a list of all the features of the *atrium* of the House of Menander in Figure 8.10.
- 3 How do the *atria* in Figures 8.10 and 8.13 differ?
- 4 Clarify the significance of the *tablinum* in an upper-class *domus*.

Peristyles

In most houses, the peristyle – a colonnaded portico or large cloistered area overlooking a garden – replaced the original kitchen garden (*hortus*) where vegetables and fruits were cultivated and even wine and oil produced for the family. It was the favoured way to expand the house and bring more light into it, as well as to provide a cool place of contemplation. Some of the grander houses had two or even more peristyles: the Pompeian House of the Citharist had three.

Peristyles began to be incorporated into houses in the 2nd century BC with the Roman adoption of the **Hellenistic** taste for colonnades and porticoes. About the same time ‘Greek horticultural experts began arriving in Italy to create pleasure gardens’,⁵ particularly water gardens.

To those who were initiates of Bacchus (Dionysus), god of nature as well as wine, a garden was the earthly form of the promised afterlife, one of the reasons for the profusion of statues of the god scattered around the garden and the Dionysiac masks and reliefs on peristyle walls, which might also be painted with murals of fruits, trees, flowers, birds and animals.

According to Vitruvius⁶, the garden was an essential feature for the homes of people holding public office and there appears to be evidence of many of the finer houses transforming kitchen gardens into ornamental gardens with sacred groves and covered walkways; ornamental beds of flowers (violets, roses and hyacinths) and medicinal herbs; trees (narcissus, bay, acanthus, ivy, oleander, myrtle, box, yew and juniper); and cypress clipped into a variety of shapes. However, this was not always the case: the House of Pansa and the estate of Julia Felix also contained large produce gardens.

While modest houses had one fountain, more luxurious residences had many: the House of the Vettii had 14 interconnected fountains in the peristyle. After the earthquake, the House of Octavius Quartio, also called the House of Loreio Tiburtino – a medium-sized *atrium* house – was renovated extensively and featured waterworks of all kinds: spouting jets, gushing waterfalls, channels and pools.

Hellenistic referring to the mix of Greek and Eastern cultural elements that emerged in the centuries after the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC



FIGURE 8.14 The renovated peristyle in the House of the Vettii



FIGURE 8.15 The gardens and waterworks in the House of Octavius Quartio (Loreio Tiburtino)



FIGURE 8.16 A garden in a seaside mansion in Herculaneum



FIGURE 8.17 A painted garden scene

In those houses without a peristyle, due to lack of space, a room next to a small garden might be decorated with elements from nature. Even in the cramped residences of the tradesmen and shopkeepers, the owner's love of nature might be expressed in a garden painting on a back wall, a pergola covered in vines, a small vegetable garden or even a low masonry wall built around an *impluvium* and filled with soil where plants might grow.

Triclinia

A separate dining room or *triclinium* ('three couches') was introduced for formal dining to some of the grander houses, after the Roman adoption of the Greek practice of reclining while dining. It was usually located off the *atrium* or looking onto the peristyle. Some couches were built in, and the stone bench was covered with mattresses and colourful cushions. Others were more elegant, curved wooden pieces, and many might have been removable couches. Most *triclinia* were fairly small, with just enough space for three couches – each of which ideally held three people – as well as the small, low wooden, bronze or marble table (*mensa*) placed in front of the couches and the larger serving table.

Some larger residences had two dining rooms: one for summer, adjacent to the garden, and one for winter, usually next to the *tablinum*. Where a second storey had been added, it became the custom to take meals on the upper floor overlooking the garden

The House of the Golden Bracelet contained one of the most striking dining rooms – faced in white marble around a striking water installation. One of the best-preserved summer dining rooms was found in Herculaneum in the House of the Mosaic of Neptune and Amphitrite (see Figure 8.19). Here the



FIGURE 8.18 A masonry *triclinia* in the House of the Cryptoporticus

owner had compensated for lack of a peristyle with a *nymphaeum* decorated with multicoloured mosaics depicting festoons of fruit, flowers, peacocks and deer.



FIGURE 8.19 A summer dining room in the House of Neptune and Amphitrite in Herculaneum with *nymphaeum*



FIGURE 8.20 Detail of the *nymphaeum* in Figure 8.19

However, many houses did not have a *triclinium*. It is likely that the prevalence of this type of formal dining was exaggerated and that day-to-day meals, particularly the evening meals, were eaten in various locations within the house. Also, many Pompeians chose to eat out.

The eating habits of ordinary Pompeians were a very far cry from the image of Roman dining in modern movies, or even from the image of dining displayed on the walls of Pompeii itself.

SOURCE 8.2 Mary Beard, *The Fires of Vesuvius: Pompeii Lost and Found*, p. 225

ACTIVITY 8.3

- 1 Justify why you think the peristyle might have been the most enjoyable space in a *domus*.
- 2 Make a list of all the natural and made-made features that might be found in a peristyle.
- 3 Provide evidence that even poorer inhabitants of Pompeii and Herculaneum had a love of nature.
- 4 Explain what a *triclinium* was and where it might have been located within the *domus*.
- 5 Explain why many houses did not have a separate *triclinium*.

Cubicula

Smaller rooms called *cubicula* may have had many uses (e.g. storage), but are generally thought to have been rooms for sleeping. They could be located at different parts of the house, but were usually adjacent to the main reception area or secondary *atrium* if there was one. Many of these were windowless, but richly decorated, often with erotic scenes. In some houses, there was a suite of rooms – bedroom and reception rooms – for the master of the house overlooking the garden or the sea, with an antechamber for the master's personal slave. According to Michael Grant, 'the position of the beds was often indicated by a special configuration of the floor mosaic and by a lower vaulted ceiling forming a sort of a niche'.⁷ Beds often ranged from the simple – a stone podium covered with mattress and cushions – to the sumptuous – a wooden version, with base of wooden cross pieces, strips of cloth or leather and decorated with bronze, silver or ivory.

Service areas

The urban house was 'a curious mix of gracious and ungracious living'.⁸ The service areas of the house – for tasks such as cooking, washing and the private living and sleeping quarters of the slaves – were often marginalised and accessed down long, dark, narrow corridors. In some houses, like the House of the Vettii,

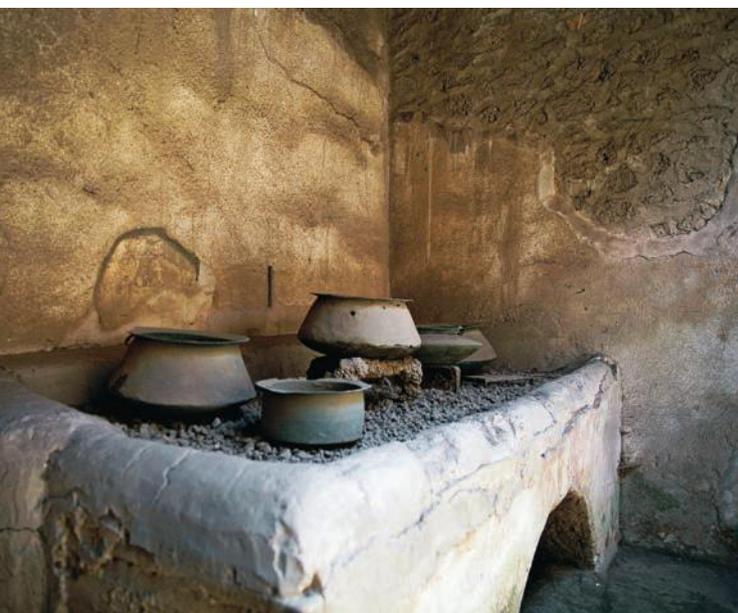


FIGURE 8.21 A pokey kitchen in an average *domus*

the service area, entered from the side of the *atrium*, had its own courtyard leading to the kitchen, lavatories and an assortment of store rooms and small sleeping rooms. In more modest houses, where space did not allow marginalisation of these quarters, the decoration, or lack of it, served the same purpose.

The kitchen (*culina*) in most houses was quite pokey, often only large enough for one or two slaves. It contained a stone hearth with podium and a recess for firewood or charcoal. Some had a small brick oven, running water and a sink. As there were no chimneys, with smoke simply escaping through a hole in the roof, they would have been badly ventilated, with fires a constant problem.

The latrine – rather unhygienically – was directly adjacent to or opened off the kitchen. Its paved floor sloped towards a pit covered with a wooden seat with a hole in it. In better homes, piped water flushed the

toilet; in others, kitchen overflow did the job. Waste from upstairs rooms ran through pipes to be discharged through the latrine into the sewerage system, or a trench underneath the streets. Both kitchen and human waste were disposed down the latrine. See pp. 80–84 in Chapter 6 for city water supply.

Public latrines may have compensated for any shortage of domestic facilities, although it seems that there was a city-wide lack of toilets judging by the graffiti urging people not to defecate in the streets. Domestic bathing facilities were limited also, although some of the more luxurious houses incorporated a bathing area that, on a small scale, reproduced the architectural elements of the public baths.

Cooling, heating and lighting the house

Many poorer families, in their cramped accommodation, probably suffered from the stifling summer heat, but wealthier families designed their homes, especially those overlooking the sea, with terraces to catch the summer sea breezes, and with roofed loggias and covered porticoes for shade. There were airy rooms adjacent to the gardens with their trees, fountains, fishponds and grottoes, vaulted underground rooms, and marble and travertine floors.

The strong, cold north-easterly winds and rains of winter required more careful planning for those lucky enough to face the sea. For example, in finer houses there were opaque windows of crystallised gypsum or sulphate of lime and crude glass in the form of thin plate, 4–6 mm thick, inserted in a bronze or wooden frame that turned on a pivot. Wooden partitions and shutters, curtains or nets were also used to protect and warm the house. Winter dining rooms were often painted with a black background, which would have absorbed any heat in the house. The charcoal-burning braziers probably filled the house with smoke in the winter months.

Artificial lighting was always inadequate, even in the grandest houses, especially when rooms were shuttered against the rain and winds. In the public areas of the house, natural light entered via the *compluvium*, windows and peristyle or courtyard, but service areas were stuffy and darker.

There was a variety of artificial lighting, including oil lamps, lanterns and candles. The most common form was the terracotta, bronze or even glass lamp filled with oil, with a wick and handle. Some had two or more necks for greater light and many were decorated with images of gods, gladiatorial contests and erotic subjects.

The wealthy were always searching for unique and elaborate forms. Lanterns with semi-transparent sides of horn or bladder and candles made of animal fat rolled around a twisted wick were widely used. Important and valuable elements in domestic furnishing were the lamp supports, sometimes in the form

of bronze statues known as ‘torchers’, and bronze candelabra, some with four wicks for use at banquets. In the House of the Wooden Partition in Herculaneum, bronze lamp supports took the form of a ship’s figurehead.

Smoke and the smell of oil must have permeated the house at all times, and the evidence – references to eye troubles – suggests that many people may have suffered eye strain due to the poor light. ‘A lamp consisting of a single candle gives only one hundredth as much light as a 60-watt bulb.’⁹



FIGURE 8.22 An unusual lamp used in Pompeii

Security

The fact that the main entrance opened directly onto the busy streets appears to have made house owners security conscious. Not only did the main doors have a bronze lock with an L-shaped keyhole, but there is evidence that in some houses there was a bolt on the inner side of the door fitted into holes in the door jambs with a possible diagonal bar fitted into a cavity in the floor for added protection. Occasionally, it appears, an iron grating was fixed across the *compluvium* to prevent thieves gaining access via the roof.

ACTIVITY 8.4

- 1 Explain in a paragraph what was meant by the statement: an urban house ‘was a curious mix of gracious and ungracious living’.
- 2 Provide examples of some of the more ‘ungracious’ features even in the homes of the well-to-do households.
- 3 Describe how the wealthy coped with the sweltering heat of Campanian summers and the winds and rains of winter.
- 4 Suggest two reasons for the possibility of eye problems among the inhabitants of Pompeii and Herculaneum.

8.2 Villas

The remains of about 100 villas have been discovered, some only a few hundred metres apart, scattered across the Sarno Plain. On the maritime hillside at Stabiae, 5 km south of Pompeii where Pliny the Elder’s friend Pomponianus lived, excavators have unearthed at least 12 villas. On the other side of Pompeii at Boscoreale and Boscotrecase were some of the more palatial residences: Villa of Pisanella, the Villa of Publius Fannius Synistor and one believed to belong to Agrippa Postumus (the grandson of the Emperor Augustus).

Villas varied in scale, architectural features and luxury, and unlike urban houses they did not look inward but were designed to take in the view over the sea or rolling countryside.

Villas built for relaxation and leisure (*otium*)

These villas were often built on different levels with terraces and **belvederes**, a subterranean portico (*cryptoporticus*), expansive gardens, groves, grottoes, water displays, thermal baths and large swimming pools, and decorated with marble floors, outstanding wall paintings, and bronze and marble statues.

belvedere a structure built to obtain a fine view

The villa ... is at one with the landscape: it is laid out in such a way that without going out of it the inhabitants could enjoy at any time of the day an infinitely varying spectacle of light and shade upon the natural surroundings of the house, and upon the sea as far as the horizon.

SOURCE 8.3 Marcel Brion, *Pompeii and Herculaneum*, p. 151

The Villa of the Papyri

The Villa of the Papyri, on the coastal outskirts of Herculaneum, was the epitome of a villa built for leisure. It is believed to have belonged to the Pisones, a notable Roman aristocratic family who loved to surround themselves with the most refined friends, philosophers and men of letters. This maritime villa, sheltered from the north winds by the woods of Vesuvius and cooled by the sea breezes in the heat of summer, 'remains one of the greatest testaments to the cultural level reached by the Romans during the Hellenistic age'.¹⁰

It had no buildings to obstruct its view, and below it was a large garden descending to the little port that must have served the obligatory landing place from the sea; above it ran the public coast road that led to the city's decuman, and it must have commanded all the freedom and breadth of vista that its fortunate position could offer.

SOURCE 8.4 A. Maiuri, *Ercolano*, 1932

The villa had the dimensions of an imperial residence; it has been estimated at 33 565 square metres (245 by 137 metres). A colonnade of 36 columns circled the peristyle, and a continuous portico allowed the owners and their guests to walk around the extensive gardens, filled with statuary and fountains – supplied by a system of hydraulic pipes – without ever once leaving the protection of the portico. A terrace overlooking the sea ran the entire length of the villa and a circular belvedere, giving a 360-degree view, was paved with one of the finest mosaics ever discovered.

A total of 87 marble and bronze sculptures from the Greek archaic period (7th–6th centuries BC) – some originals, others superb copies – were found in the garden and rooms of the villa. The sculptures included gods, nymphs, famous orators and philosophers, athletes and forest animals (refer to Figures 8.23–8.26). It also contained the largest papyrus library ever found: 1800 rolls, almost entirely the writings of Epicurean philosophers and more specifically the work of Philodemus of Gadara. Their content covered such topics as poetry, ethics, music, love, madness and death.



FIGURE 8.23 An artistic reconstruction of the Villa of the Papyri



FIGURE 8.24 A sculpture of a fawn



FIGURE 8.25 A sculpted head of Seneca the philosopher



FIGURE 8.26 A drunken satyr

A COMMENT ON...

A Roman villa recreated

- The Getty Villa in California, an educational centre and museum dedicated to the study of the arts and cultures of ancient Greece, Rome and Etruria, is a recreation of the ancient Villa of the Papyri at Herculaneum.
- However, because the Villa of the Papyri remains predominantly unexcavated, the Getty recreation was based on the original plan of the villa, as well as on architectural and landscaping elements from other Roman villas in the towns of Vesuvius: Pompeii, Herculaneum and Stabiae.
- Gardens and colonnades are integral to the setting, just as they were in the Hellenistic and early imperial period.
- The Getty Villa offers a taste of life in the 1st century AD.

The Villa of Mysteries and the Villa of Diomedes

These two Pompeian suburban villas, outside the walls of Pompeii – not constrained by the spatial limitations of the more luxurious houses within the city – were built on several levels, with terraces, extensive porticoes and gardens, pools and fish ponds, providing the ideal lifestyle of outdoor/indoor living. Both villas also had their own bath suites with a succession of cold, tepid and hot baths.

The *tablinum* and *triclinium* in the Villa of Mysteries were painted in life-size figures, including the famous and controversial continuous fresco that appears to show an initiation rite into the Dionysiac mysteries, although it ‘is all completely baffling, and no amount of modern scholarship has ever managed to unravel the meaning, or at least, not wholly convincingly.’¹¹ The Villa of Mysteries was renovated and re-opened to the public in 2010. (See Chapter 10 for an analysis of these paintings.)



FIGURE 8.27 A view of the Getty Villa



FIGURE 8.28 The suburban Villa of the Mysteries

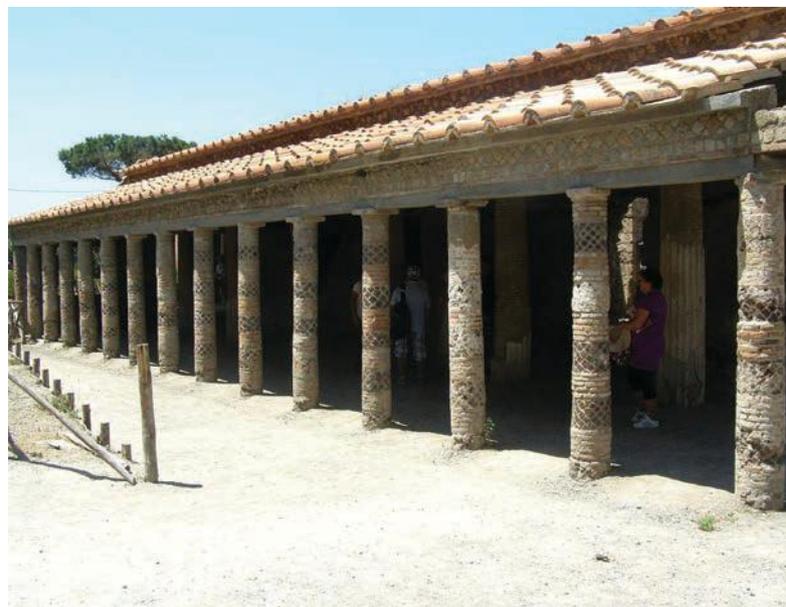


FIGURE 8.29 A part of the restored villa



FIGURE 8.30 Fresco of part of the 'mysteries'

Working villas (*rusticae*)

Many wealthy Romans and Pompeians bought country farms and added elaborate residential quarters, combining luxury with agricultural production. These villas included:

- professional facilities set aside for the treatment and conservation of produce
- a threshing floor
- a barn for storage of fodder
- a large room containing presses for the production of wine and oil (*torcularium*)
- cellars or courtyards with terracotta jars buried into the floor for storage
- stables
- tool sheds
- cramped quarters for labourers and slaves.

Unfortunately, most of these villas have only been partially excavated – some unofficially by landowners. In most cases the site was filled in following the excavation.

Two of the most famous of these working villas are the Villa of Publius Fannius Synistor and the Villa of Pisanella, both at Boscoreale. Nothing remains of the former with the exception of two of its spectacular rooms now reconstructed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Naples National Museum. The Villa of Pisanella appears to have been a little more rustic, although its owner certainly wasn't, judging by the rich hoard of silverware, jewels and coins found hidden in a well in the *torcularium*. The centre of the house was a large kitchen from which a door led to a heated bath – a sign of luxury – in close proximity to the stables.

ACTIVITY 8.5

- 1 Describe how villas varied according to their primary function.
- 2 In what way did they differ from town houses?
- 3 How were leisure villas 'at one with the landscape'?
- 4 Imagine you are a guest staying at the Villa of the Papyri. Write a letter or a journal entry describing the appearance of this famous villa.
- 5 Research the Villa of Publius Fannius Synistor at Boscoreale. Describe its appearance, its art and the Metropolitan Museum's Cubiculum Reconstruction.

8.3 Domestic life

The home was the centre of family life, business and political dealings, as well as personal religion.

The household included all those people who came under the control of the **paterfamilias**, including slaves. His power (*patria potestas*) over his children began several days after their birth when the midwife announced the baby was healthy and fit for rearing. It was placed at his feet and he had the choice of picking up the child, a gesture indicating that he or she was now part of the family, or not accepting it, in which case the child was put outside the circle of the family. His control of his children continued while he lived, no matter whether they were adults or not, and both sons and daughters required his permission to marry. He kept control of his daughter's finances even after her marriage, and if she was divorced, her dowry was returned to him. On the death of her father, a girl or woman was put under the guardianship of another male.

paterfamilias the male head of a Roman household

Daily activities of a wealthy male and female

What follows is based on what is believed to have been the 'usual' activities of members of the upper classes in Rome. It is likely that all Romans, and certainly the provincial Pompeians, did not follow this daily pattern rigidly.

To the *paterfamilias*, the daily visit of associates, clients and dependants (*salutatio*) was vital for business and any political ambitions he may have had. They arrived in the early morning after a frugal breakfast (*jentaculum*) of milk, water, a piece of bread and cheese, taken at sunrise. Some came in litters carried by slaves, others on foot, wearing the heavy white woollen toga, folded and draped over the left arm (a garment reserved for outdoors and formal situations as opposed to the shin-length woollen tunic worn while relaxing at home). A man's personal slave, if he had one, would probably have spent the previous evening preparing his toga. The slave doorkeeper ushered them into the imposing vestibule and *atrium* and the master's accountant (*dispensator*) and secretary or clerk (*notarius*) were in attendance to keep a record of proceedings.

According to Vitruvius, the houses of patrons reflected their social position, whereas 'men of everyday fortune' did not need houses 'built in the grand style, because such men are more apt to discharge their social obligations by visiting others than by having others visit them'.¹²

With the end of the morning rituals, many of those who attended might accompany their patron to the forum and other public buildings to conduct business, listen to court cases, attend political meetings, carry out financial transactions and widen his network, continuing to contribute to his standing as an important citizen.

The main domestic tasks for a well-to-do woman were attending to her children, perhaps spinning and weaving, and supervising the household's staff of slaves such as the cooks, bakers, carvers and servers. She had her own attendants to help with her personal needs, and had no need to feed or look after a

newborn baby as there were slaves to suckle and take care of the child once it was weaned. These nurses were usually chosen for their health and refinement and were an important part of the household, often being manumitted later.

The wealthy male may have returned home for lunch (*prandium*), taken about midday, which was a reasonably modest meal of cold meats, eggs, vegetables, bread and leftovers from the previous evening's dinner. However, not all Pompeians and Herculaneans ate at home. Some out of necessity, others out of preference, frequented the numerous hot food bars. In the afternoon, the men generally attended the public bathing complexes. As well as enjoying the benefits of the warm, hot and cold baths, the men could indulge in a range of therapies such as massage, take a stroll in the gardens, listen to music and poetry recitals, read in the library, conduct business and receive invitations to dinner parties.

They returned home for the evening meal (*cena*) or to prepare to attend a special dinner party.

This was the main meal of the day and could begin about four o'clock in the afternoon. The records indicate that this meal in well-to-do homes was divided into three phases:

- 1 A first course (*gustation*) that consisted of tasty dishes to whet the appetite. This might include eggs, vegetables, olives and sausages accompanied by honeyed wine.
- 2 The main course (*mensae primae* or *fercula* – 'dishes that are carried') which probably comprised several courses of fish, shellfish, poultry, stuffed roasts of meat (pork, lamb, kid and wild boar) and vegetables. Wine was served with these courses.
- 3 Dessert (*mensae secundae*) included fresh and dried fruit, nuts, cheeses and cakes. These might have been accompanied by salty dishes such as snails, oysters and olives so that guests present would drink copious amounts of wine after the meal.

The remains of many of these foods have been found in excavations in Pompeii and Herculaneum by the Anglo-American Project team and the Herculaneum Conservation Project team.

A realistic account of the food favoured by Romans can be found in the 500 or so recipes in a cook book by Apicus (*On Cooking*). The Romans liked their food sweet (addition of honey) and spicy. The popularity of fish sauce is evidence of their love of food with a strong flavour. Apicus's recipes used imported spices such as pepper, ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg and cloves, as well as native herbs like oregano, coriander, mint, aniseed and fennel, and he made his own *garum* from the much-prized red mullet.

Dinner parties and banquets

Dinner parties and banquets were a part of the ritual that bound a patron to his large network of clients and 'an essential tool of social and political control'.¹³

The banquet was not merely a meal but rather a calculated spectacle of display that was intended to demonstrate the host's wealth, status, and sophistication to his guests, preferably outdoing at the same time the lavish banquets of his elite friends and colleagues.

SOURCE 8.5 Katharine Raff, 'The Roman Banquet', in *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*

These occasions gave the wealthy man an opportunity to display his collection of silver and glassware and to boast of the skills of his cook. A good cook 'cost the price of a horse ... though he was still only worth a third as much as an expensive fish'.¹⁴

An influential slave within the household was the *vocator*, who sent out the invitations and arranged the seating. Women, unlike their Greek counterparts, joined their husbands at dinner parties. Couches, as we have seen, held three people each, but the seating was not ad hoc – it followed a strict etiquette. If any guest was unhappy with his placement, the master could always blame the *vocator*.

The diners, wearing fine white togas, reclined obliquely facing the low table, supporting their left elbow on a cushion.

As the Romans did not use forks – although knives and spoons were used occasionally – a slave known as the scissor cut up the food before the male food servers (*ministri*) placed it on the table. Guests held a plate in their left hand and ate with their right. Young, handsome male wine waiters, one to each guest, kept the wine flowing during the meal, according to etiquette.

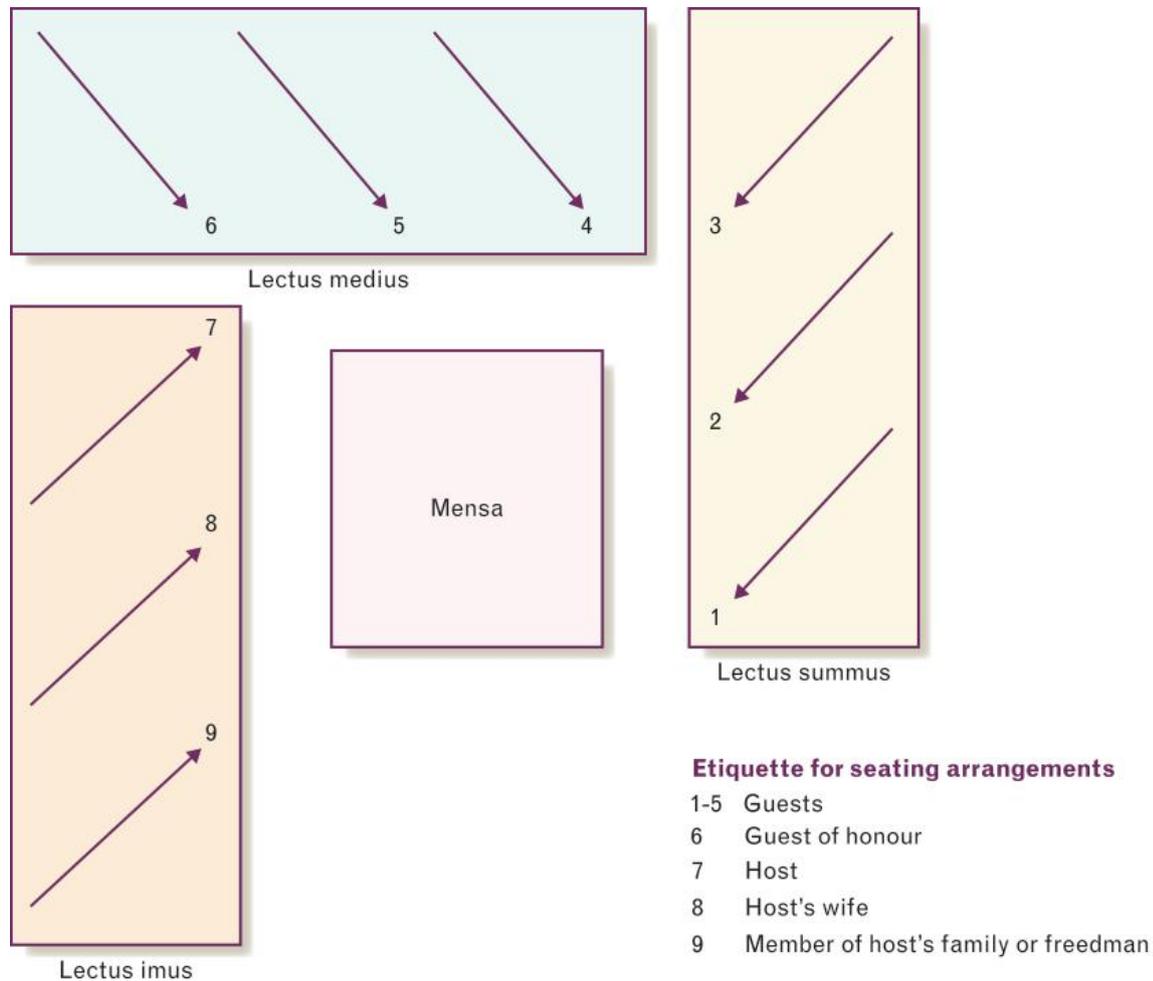


FIGURE 8.31 Seating arrangement at a banquet

Evidence from the black painted walls of the winter dining room of the House of the Moralists suggests there may have been a code of behaviour expected by some of the more refined hosts at these banquets.

Don't cast lustful glances, or make eyes at another man's wife. Don't be coarse in conversation. Restrain yourself from getting angry or using offensive language. If you can't, go back to your own house.

SOURCE 8.6 R. Kebric, *Roman People*, p. 168

Apart from animated conversation, these dinner parties were enlivened by a variety of entertainment provided sometimes by the guests themselves – called upon for a poetry recitation or song – and by household and professional entertainers: readers, dancers, acrobats, jugglers, actors and poets.

After-dinner drinking was often heavy and dinner parties could last well into the evening so that the return home in the pitch dark could be full of dangers.

Those who did not want to run the risk of having an accident or an unpleasant encounter with other revellers and drunks who had stayed late at the taverns ‘would be accompanied by a servant with a torch ... those who had no one to accompany them had to make do with a candle and make their way with a little fear’.¹⁵

An outrageous banquet was satirised in Petronius’s *Satyricon*. His character, the wealthy freedman Trimalchio, depicted as ‘stupid, greedy, gluttonous and extremely pretentious’¹⁶ threw a feast that included honeyed dormice, sows’ wombs and cakes stuffed with live thrushes. The ‘convenient’ form of Epicureanism, or living life to the full identified at Pompeii, may have gone too far on occasion, leading to over-indulgence, although it is doubtful that dinner parties were ever as extravagant as Trimalchio’s.

The house as a sacred space

In the words of the great Roman orator Cicero, each citizen’s home was a sacred space as ‘it was the centre of his worship, religion and domestic ritual’.¹⁷ The *paterfamilias*, as chief priest, conducted all family ceremonies, and all religious observances in the home were associated with the:

- household gods or *lares* (protectors of the household), *penates* (protectors of the stores) and *genius* (generating force) of the *paterfamilias*, and other special guardians
- sacred hearth (Vesta)
- ancestors
- rites of passage such as births, marriages and deaths.

The household altar (sing. *lararium*, pl. *lararia*) where offerings and prayers were offered was usually set in the *atrium*, near the front door in more affluent homes, but in smaller houses the *lararium* was often located near the hearth either in the kitchen or near a place of central fire. However, a house might have several small *lararia* in bedrooms or outdoors. (See Chapter 10 for private religion.)

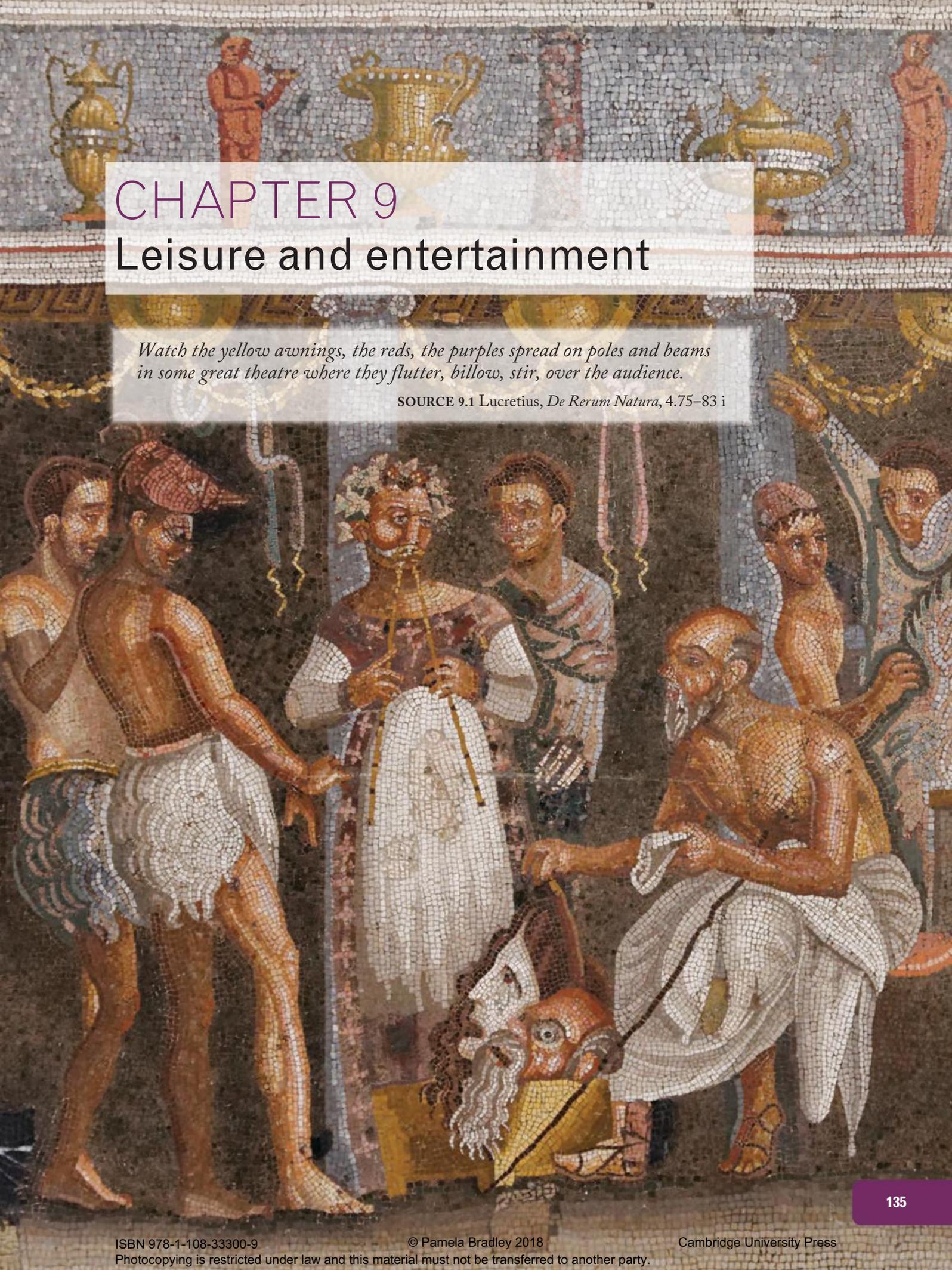


FIGURE 8.32 A household shrine

ACTIVITY 8.6

Imagine you are an influential slave within a well-to-do household. Describe, in several pages of writing, your master’s usual daily activities including:

- morning worship and meetings with clients
- various meals
- his visits to the forum
- hosting banquets.



CHAPTER 9

Leisure and entertainment

*Watch the yellow awnings, the reds, the purples spread on poles and beams
in some great theatre where they flutter, billow, stir, over the audience.*

SOURCE 9.1 Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, 4.75–83 i

9.1 A passion for pleasure

It appears that ‘pleasure came easily’¹ to the people of Pompeii and Herculaneum, judging by the number of graffiti relating to gambling, drinking, sex, celebrity gladiators and actors, as well as the number of buildings associated with sport, entertainment and relaxation.

Perhaps the popularity of Epicureanism and the worship of Dionysus/Bacchus, both prevalent in Campania, encouraged the inhabitants to seek happiness and release from the cares of the world. Also, the Roman adage, borrowed from the Greeks – a sound mind in a sound body (*mens sana in corpore sano*) – contributed to their passion for physical exercise and the baths. Their addiction to the theatre and the bloodthirsty spectacles in the amphitheatre were made possible by the large number of days in the Roman calendar set aside for religious festivals and civic holidays, as well as the financial backing of magistrates and the generosity of those aspiring to political office.

Visiting the baths

For the people in all Roman towns, a visit to the municipal or privately-owned *thermae* was a social occasion as well as an ‘opportunity to satisfy not only the wellbeing of the body, but also of the spirit’.² Archaeologists have identified four bath complexes in Pompeii: the Stabian Baths (the oldest were under repair at the time of the eruption), the Forum Baths (fully functioning), the Central Baths (still under construction at the time of the eruption) and the Sarno Baths. There was also the small privately-run bath of Julia Felix. In Herculaneum, two have been discovered: the Suburban and Forum Baths. The Suburban Baths are the best preserved of any of the baths in either city.

Layout, decor and heating of bath complexes

Generally, the bath areas were divided into sections for men and women. If there were no separate areas, males and females attended at different hours. However, in some places there was mixed bathing until the time of Hadrian, despite criticisms from writers at its inappropriateness.

Although the decor of each complex may have differed, most were vaulted, the walls and ceilings covered in elegant **stucco** work and the floors in mosaic, often with a marine theme. In most Roman towns, baths were the most elaborate pieces of architecture.

stucco a type of plaster used for decoration

The bathing elements were usually identical, including a:

- vestibule, often in the form of an exercise yard with portico
- *apodyterium* or changing and waiting room with benches and small niches or shelves for storing clothes
- *frigidarium* or room with a circular cold bath
- *tepidarium* or warm room used as a transition space so bathers’ bodies could adjust to the temperature changes. Sometimes off the *tepidarium* was a *laconicum* or sweating room, heated by a brazier
- *caldarium* or hot room with a rectangular heated bath (*alverus*) at one end and a large circular basin (*labrum*) for cold-water ablutions between sessions in the hot bath at the other. The *alverus* was lined in marble with steps for sitting and could usually hold about 10 people at one time.

The washbasin in the *caldarium* in particular should be built beneath the window so that those standing around it will not obscure the light by casting shadows. The alcoves for the washroom should be made spacious enough so that once the first comers have taken their place, the rest of the bathers stand around comfortably and watch.

SOURCE 9.2 Vitruvius, *De Architectura*, 5.10.1, 2, 4

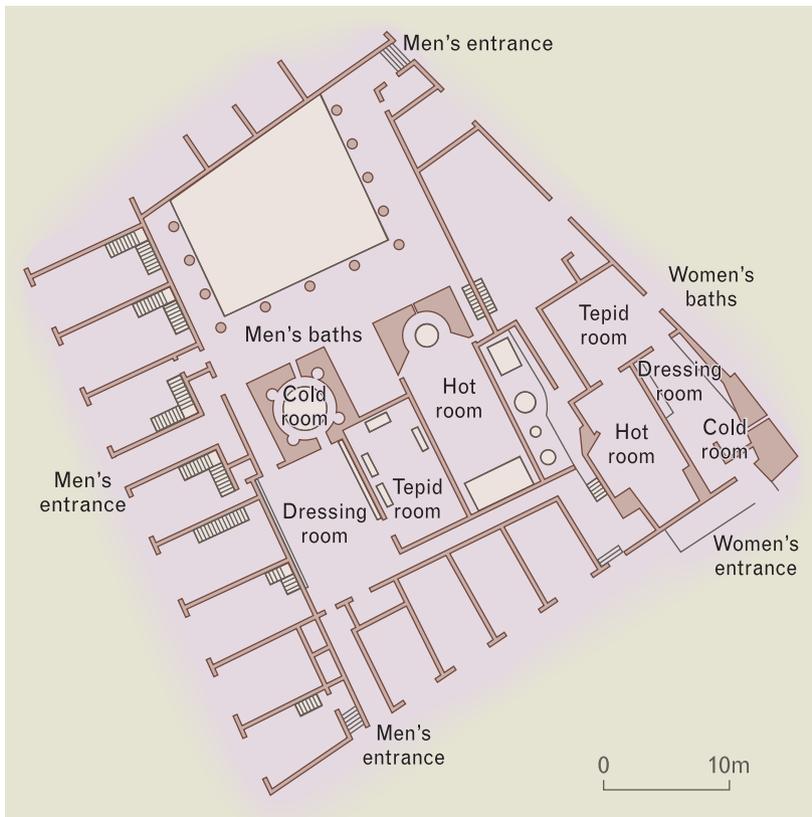


FIGURE 9.1 Plan of the Forum Baths in Pompeii



FIGURE 9.2 The waiting room for men in the Forum Baths in Herculaneum, with a basin for washing hands



FIGURE 9.3 Stucco decoration in the *tepidarium* in the Forum Baths in Pompeii

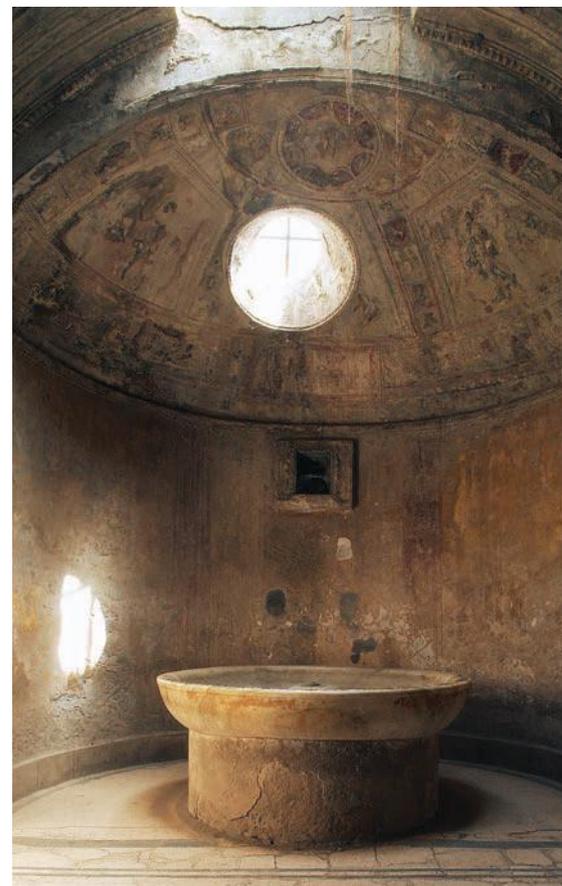


FIGURE 9.4 The fountain at the far end of the men's *caldarium* in the Forum Baths in Pompeii

The ultimate in luxury

The Suburban Baths in Herculaneum, supposedly financed by Marcus Nonius Balbus, was an elegant and graceful complex facing the sea that would not have been out of place among the magnificent buildings of Rome. It featured an 'architecturally notable vestibule'³ that contained four red columns, a fountain and a marble bust of Apollo. The valve that turns the fountain on still works as it did 2000 years ago. The combined waiting room/*frigidarium* was 'one of the great finds of archaeology'.⁴ It features walls

bas-relief sculpture that projects only slightly from the background

of varied-coloured marbles, framed white stucco panels containing **bas-reliefs** of naked warriors in various poses, winged cupids and a red spiral stucco frieze running around the room.

The heating system was provided by a charcoal-burning furnace located at the back of the *caldarium*, between the men's and women's sections. Hot air circulated under the marble floor which was raised about 70 to 90 cm on brick pillars, and through air ducts built behind the walls. To prevent the bathers suffering the nuisance of cold condensation dropping onto them, the ceiling had grooves in the plaster which collected and channelled the condensation down the walls.



FIGURE 9.5 The vestibule of the Suburban Baths in Herculaneum

First of all, choose as a warm space as possible, that is, one facing away from the north wind and the north-east wind, the *caldaria* and *tepidaria* will have light from the west in wintertime, or, if the nature of the site prevents this, at least from the south. As the most common time for bathing is generally from midday to evening, care should also be taken that the men's and women's *caldaria* are connected and within the same area. In this way, it will be possible for them to both share a common furnace for the tubs. ... This is how to make a suspended floor of the *caldaria*. First the floor is laid with one and one and one-half foot tiles that incline towards the furnace ... In this way, the flames will circulate more freely under the suspended floor. On top of this, pairs of 8 inch-tiles should be placed so that two-foot tiles can be placed over them. The piers should be two feet high: and over them place the two-foot tile which will hold up the pavement. ...

SOURCE 9.3 Vitruvius, *De Architectura*, 5.10.1, 2, 4

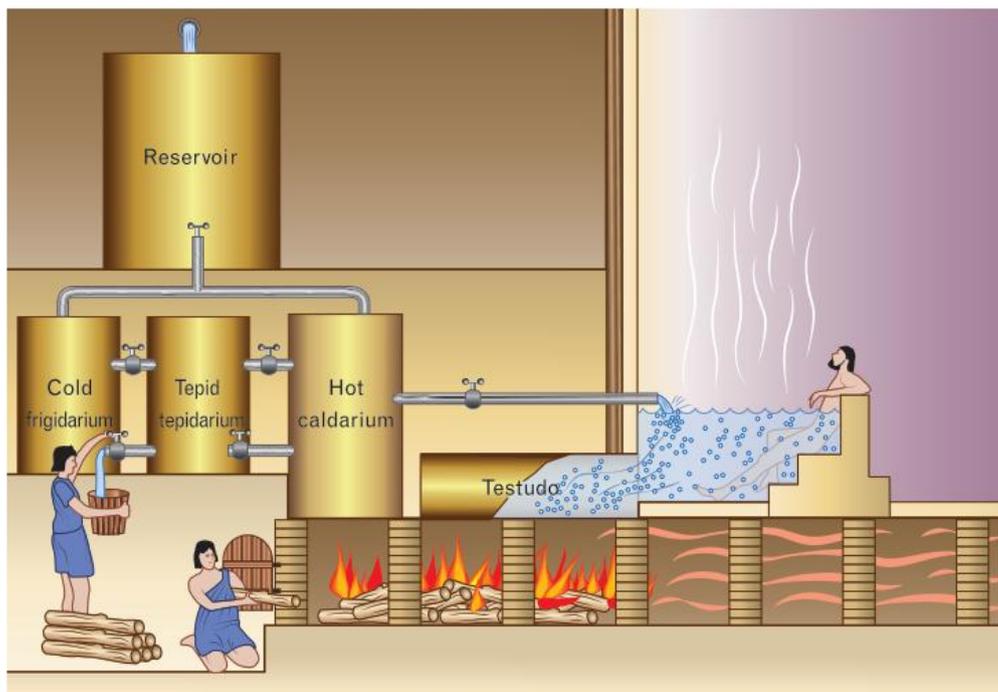


FIGURE 9.6 Heating system in the *thermae*

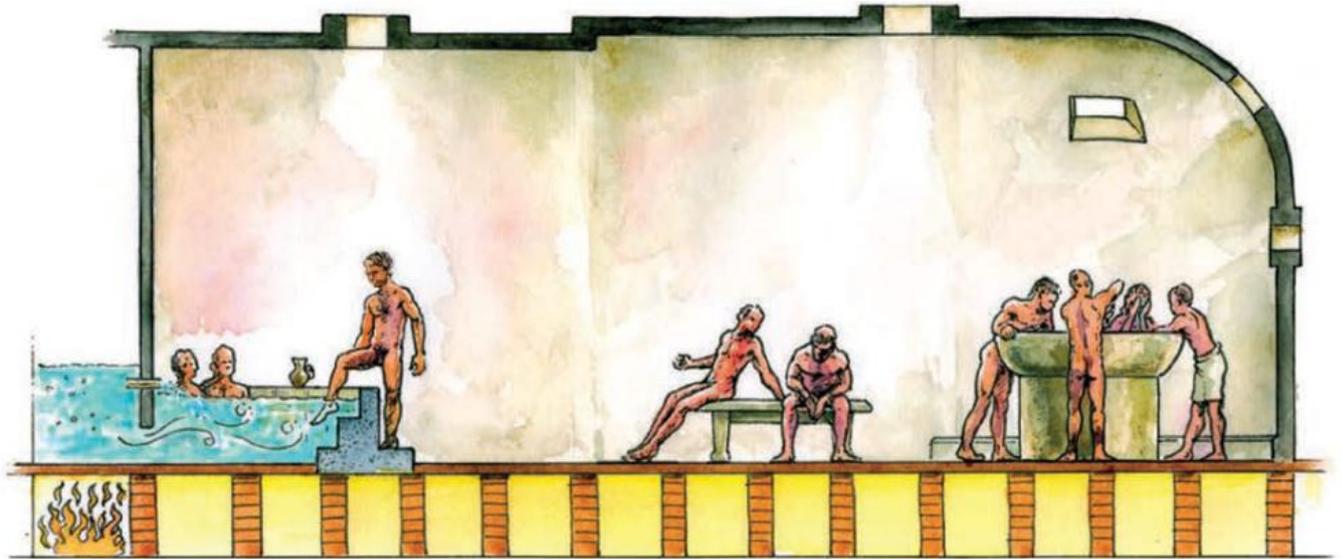


FIGURE 9.7 Activities in a *caldarium*

A COMMENT ON ...

A question of hygiene

- From a modern perspective, these baths, without the benefit of chlorine and frequent change of water, would have been incredibly unhygienic: pools seething with bacteria.
- In fact, Celsus, a Roman medical writer, advised people not to go to the baths with a fresh wound because it normally led to gangrene.
- Also, it is believed that in the latrines associated with the baths people shared a sponge which they rinsed out after use.

Activities at the baths

The baths opened at midday after the furnaces had been lit, and an afternoon visit became a daily routine for many people. From the discovery of hundreds of lamps in the Forum Baths and Stabian Baths, it appears that the complexes stayed open at night for those unable to make it during the day. They were bustling, lively places, as Seneca, who lived adjacent to a bath complex in Rome, described (see Source 9.4).

Slaves usually accompanied their owners to the baths. Some men, according to Juvenal's *Satires*, took a 'mob of rowdy retainers', like 'that show-off Tongilius', who was 'such a bore at the baths' with his 'outsized oil flask of rhinoceros horn'.⁵ Slaves carried their master's or mistress' oil, soda and **strigil** for cleaning and massage. Soap, which Pliny the Elder said was 'an invention of the Gauls',⁶ was not in general use. The slaves may have helped their master and mistress disrobe in the change room where clothes and valuables were placed in small cupboards. 'Women wore a two-piece or more modest costume (*balnearis vestus*), men wore leather trunks or bathed naked.'⁷ Often, before taking to the baths, people engaged in exercise, one popular form with men being a game called bladder-ball (*pila*), which was played with inflated animal bladders painted green. Both males and females indulged in massages and used perfume liberally.

strigil a curved bronze or bone scraper for cleaning

After a relaxing and invigorating session in the baths, visitors might enjoy a light snack, read a book in the library or stroll among the gardens in conversation with friends or business acquaintances.

Here I am surrounded by all kinds of noise (my lodgings overlook a bathhouse). Conjure up in your imagination all the sounds that make one hate one's ears. I hear grunts of musclemen exercising and jerking those heavy weights around; they are working hard, or pretending to. I hear their sharp hissing as they release their pent breath. If there happens to be a lazy fellow content with a simple massage I hear the slap of hand on shoulder; you can hear whether it's hitting a flat or hollow. If a ballplayer comes up and starts calling out his score, I'm done for. Add to this the racket of a cocky bastard, a thief caught in the act, and a fellow who likes the sound of his own voice in the bath, plus those who plunge into the pool with a huge splash of water. Besides those who just have loud voices, imagine the skinny armpit-hair plucker, whose cries are shrill so as to draw people's attention and who never stops except when he's doing his job and making someone else shriek for him. Now add the mingled cries of the drink pedlar and the sellers of sausages, pastries and hot fare, each hawking his own wares with his own particular peal.

SOURCE 9.4 Seneca, *Epistles*, vol. iv, 1–65

ACTIVITY 9.1

- 1 What was the only fully functioning public bath complex in Pompeii at the time of the eruption?
- 2 Explain why the Suburban Baths in Herculaneum would not be 'out of place among the magnificent buildings of Rome'.
- 3 List the essential features of a bath complex.
- 4 Describe how Figures 9.6 and 9.7 conform to Vitruvius' descriptions in Sources 9.2 and 9.3.
- 5 Make a list of the various activities the inhabitants of Pompeii and Herculaneum might engage in during a visit to the baths.
- 6 Identify the other groups of people, apart from clients and their slaves, that might be found in a bath complex according to Seneca in Source 9.4.

9.2 Attending the theatre

Although the people of Pompeii were not as addicted to the theatre as much as to the bloody gladiatorial spectacles, theatrical performances of all kinds from traditional tragedy and comedy to pantomime were extremely popular. Evidence of this can be seen in the theatre complexes at Pompeii and Herculaneum, the number of theatrical motifs used in the decoration of well-to-do houses and the graffiti written by fans about local and visiting actors.

Theatre design and decoration

Two theatres, essentially Greek in design, have come to light in Pompeii.

- 1 The larger of the two is believed to be older than any theatre in Rome and was probably built at a time when the Greek influence in Campania was still strong. During the Augustan Age, it was renovated and embellished in marble by the architect Marcus Artorius Primus. He also increased its seating capacity to 5000 to allow more people to enjoy the popular entertainment for which it was used. The horseshoe-shaped **cavea** was divided into three horizontal areas: the section nearest the stage (*ima cavea*) was reserved for authorities and important visitors, and the highest section (*summa cavea*) appears to have been occupied by women. Up until the time of Augustus, women had sat with the men. Other members of the public were seated in the *media cavea*. The **proscenium**, which provided the backdrop for

cavea seating section or auditorium of a theatre or amphitheatre

proscenium stage

the performance, was ornamented with columns and statues and connected by three doors to an area behind, possibly the actors' change rooms.

- 2 The small covered theatre or Odeon was built later (early 1st century BC) and had 'the stamp of the late Hellenistic architectural tradition'.⁸ Its construction was instigated by two local magistrates who had been followers of Sulla and had settled in Pompeii when it became a Roman colony. Because it was to be used for more serious performances such as concerts, lectures and poetry recitals, its features – roof, steep *cavea* and size – made it acoustically perfect.

Adjacent to both theatres was a spacious foyer (*quadriporticus*) where spectators could stroll between performances.



FIGURE 9.8 The large Pompeian theatre



FIGURE 9.9 The Odeon in Pompeii

The theatre of Herculaneum, which could hold about 2500 people, was one of the little town's most impressive buildings. When first discovered it was in perfect condition, but the earliest 'excavators' used it as a quarry for marble. Today, it is still buried and can only be viewed through dimly lit winding tunnels.

Unlike the Pompeian Greek-style theatres built into the hillside, it was free-standing with a two-storey facade of arches and pillars. On the top of the theatre stood gilded equestrian statues and larger-than-life bronzes of emperors and other influential individuals. Its *proscenium* was decorated with red and yellow porphyry columns with cornices of green serpentine and niches for statuary. Two boxes at either end of the orchestra were reserved for the very highest officials like Nonius Balbus. At one end of the theatre was a portico, which allowed spectators to have a view over the countryside during intervals.

Performances

Theatrical performances were organised for religious festivities, often to celebrate the dedication of a monument or achievement. Magistrates tendered out the staging of the performance to an **impresario** who may have advertised the occasion with or without a **velarium** and **sparsiones**. The *velarium* was a coloured awning sometimes stretched across the auditorium to provide light shade, and *sparsiones* were water sprays, from a tank located at the highest point in the theatre, to cool the audience. Spectators had to bring their own cushions for the long performance.

Entry was free to all, but admission could be gained to the theatre only by having a small piece of bone or ivory as a token which indicated where the holder was to sit. Some of these were 'in the form of fish, birds, skulls or theatre masks'.⁹ Those with the image of a bird (a dove or pigeon) indicated the highest seats against the wall.

impresario an artistic organiser
velarium awning
sparsione perfume or water showers, used in the theatre

All classes attended the theatre, although there is some doubt about slaves. If slaves were not permitted to attend in the 1st century AD, they certainly seem to have been in the days of Plautus, a Roman comic poet who lived c. 254–184 BC. In a play, he comments on the noise made by women and babies brought to the theatres by their slave nurses: ‘Tell the wet nurses to take care of the babies at home and not bring them to the theatre bleating like sheep. Let the matrons be silent as they look on and laugh, and let them keep their shrieks and chatter for home.’¹⁰ Of course these lines could have been merely to entertain rather than to portray fact.

However, with or without babies, theatres were certainly noisy. Audiences, particularly at performances of comic farces and mimes, were excitable, sometimes raucous and often impatient.

Actors

Despite actors having a low social status, legally designated ‘*infamis*’ (disgraceful), they were popular. For example, an actor of the late 1st century BC, Norbanus Sorex, was recognised by a bronze portrait found in the Temple of Isis, and, judging by the graffiti, many actors appear to have acquired large fan clubs, like the much acclaimed Actius and Paris. The fans of Actius Anicetus called themselves Actiani Anicetiani and left graffiti about their regret at his leaving the city. By far the most popular, though, was Lucius Domitius Paris, who was called ‘Paris, pearl of the stage’ and ‘Paris the sweet darling’.¹¹ He was a favourite of the theatre-loving Emperor Nero, and a graffito mentions ‘Comrades of the Paris Club’.¹²

Although there were generally no female actors (males played female roles), women did seem to take part in mimes and pantomimes and there is a graffito of an actress called *Histrionica Rotica* (*Erotica*), perhaps a name indicative of what she did on stage.

Tragedies and comedies

By the 1st century AD, it was probably only the upper classes in Pompeii and Herculaneum who appreciated the traditional Greek-style tragedies and comedies. It seems that performances were infrequent and put on solely for special groups.

During such performances, wigs and masks (that amplified the voice) were worn and use was made of all the traditional devices for effect and surprise: a curtain with painted scenes and figures, which was raised vertically from the ground; the machine for use in plays that featured gods and supernatural forces; trapdoors and the various methods of making thunder, lightning, rain and smoke, which signalled the appearance of divine apparitions.

Oscan farces, mime and pantomime

farce a light humorous play

Most popular with the majority of people were the Oscan **farces** (*Atellanae*) that originated in the Campanian town of Atella, and mime and pantomime, introduced in the 1st century BC.

- 1 The *Atellanae*, with their bawdy characters – Pappas the old fool, Maccus the glutton, Buccho the hunchback, Dossenus the crafty one – plus their crude dialogue, bordering on the obscene, attracted a huge following in the towns of Vesuvius. The audience loved these humble characters and the unexpected situations in which they found themselves: Pappas standing for office, Maccus becoming a banker and Buccho as a general or gladiator.
- 2 Ancient mimes were not silent as we might expect. They were extremely popular, depending for effect on short amusing plots, ludicrous actions and obscene gestures. The actors did not wear masks, as in traditional theatre, performed barefoot and wore striking clothes. Women appeared on stage and often did some form of a striptease in response to the audience.
- 3 Pantomime was not what we think of as pantomime either. It was based loosely on tragic, mythological themes, with male and female singers and musicians accompanying one star actor who took all the parts. There were no words spoken, but to help the audience recognise the characters’ ages and status, the actor wore wigs and different-coloured clothes.



FIGURE 9.10 A mosaic of theatrical masks



FIGURE 9.11 Actors preparing for a performance

ACTIVITY 9.2

- 1 List the evidence which suggests that theatre performances were extremely popular in Pompeii.
- 2 Analyse the surviving evidence for the existence of a theatre in Herculaneum.
- 3 Examine the difference between the features and uses of the Large theatre and the Odeon in Pompeii.
- 4 Compare the major differences between Oscan farces, pantomime and mime performances.
- 5 Describe the type of theatrical performance the actors were preparing for in Figure 9.11. Give reasons for your answer.

9.3 Training at the *palaestra*

Every Roman town had its open-air sports ground or *palaestra*.

- 1 The Pompeian *palaestra*, opposite the Amphitheatre, was a 107- by 141-metre rectangle with shade trees, surrounded by a portico on three sides and enclosed by a wall. In the centre was a large swimming pool.
- 2 The *palaestra* in Herculaneum occupied a whole block with a street frontage of approximately 110 metres and depth of 70 metres with a swimming pool in the shape of a cross about 50 metres in length with its cross arm about 30 metres.

Like its Pompeian counterpart, trees surrounded this *palaestra*, and the field itself outside the pool was large enough for practising all the traditional sports of athletics, wrestling, javelin and discus throwing.

Its main entrance was spacious and imposing, somewhat like the columned interior of a temple with a niche that probably held a magnificent statue of Hercules, patron of the town. Joseph Deiss suggests that sacrifices were made in this room prior to any competition. Adjacent to this were other rooms with wall paintings, one of a young bronzed athlete lying on a couch with a beautiful woman.

It is likely that the sports grounds of both Pompeii and Herculaneum featured a statue to Hygeia, goddess of health, as well as statues of young men with the ideal male body.



FIGURE 9.12 The *palaestra* in Pompeii



FIGURE 9.13 The runners, from the Villa of the Papyri

In order to promote physical excellence, virtue and loyalty to the state, Augustus formed associations of young people who competed in athletic competitions or Youth Games (*Ludi Iuventus*) before their elders. The local unit in Pompeii was known as *Iuventus Pompeiana* and is believed to have comprised young men and women aged from 11 to 17.

9.4 Spectacles at the Amphitheatre

Evidence – apart from the well-preserved Amphitheatre – for the gladiatorial contests and wild animal hunts held in Pompeii is in the form of:

- numerous graffiti
- wall paintings and reliefs in public and private buildings
- various forms of ceramic art such as terracotta statues
- gladiatorial equipment.

Paintings of ***munera gladiatoria*** in private homes became widespread during the reign of Nero, but unfortunately many of these have disappeared and are only known ‘from the descriptions made by the archaeologists who discovered them [Fiorelli and Sogliano] and from the drawings made at the time of the excavations’.¹³

munera gladiatoria
gladiatorial games

Buildings in Pompeii associated with gladiatorial contests

The Amphitheatre

This venue, built c.70 BC at the expense of the *duoviri quinquennali*, C. Quinctius Valgus and Marcus Porcius, could hold 20 000 people. Its seating capacity suggests that people from the towns and countryside around Pompeii regularly attended the performances.

It was built in the south-east of the city, which was less congested, and to make use of an embankment that ran along the back of the city wall. Its outer facade featured a series of blind arches. Access to the highest levels (*summa cavea*) was via two double and two single stairways.

As with the theatre, this was where the women were seated on the orders of Augustus. A covered gallery on the western side led to the middle sections (*media cavea*).

The *ima cavea*, reserved for city authorities and distinguished guests, was divided from the rest of the *cavea* by a barrier 80 cm high. The stone tiers in this area were larger and shallower to allow for the **bisellia** of the elite who were protected from the activities in the arena by a parapet 2.18 metres high.

bisellia (singular: *bisellium*)
a portable seat of honour, a chair of state

Access to the arena was through two paved vaulted tunnels, which allowed entry to carts carrying equipment, and since, unlike most amphitheatres, it did not have a subterranean area, four spaces at the end of each of the two entrance corridors were probably used for gladiators and wild animals.

As in the theatre, a *velarium* was provided. Part of the system by which the awning was anchored can still be seen at the top of the back wall. Also, *sparsiones*, which according to Seneca fell in droplets from perforated pipes surrounding the outside perimeter of the amphitheatre, helped mitigate the smells from wild animals and the crowds.



FIGURE 9.14 The exterior of the Amphitheatre



FIGURE 9.15 The interior of the Amphitheatre



FIGURE 9.16 The *cavea* of the Amphitheatre. Notice the separate seats at the front for prominent individuals



FIGURE 9.17 The tunnels providing access to the Amphitheatre

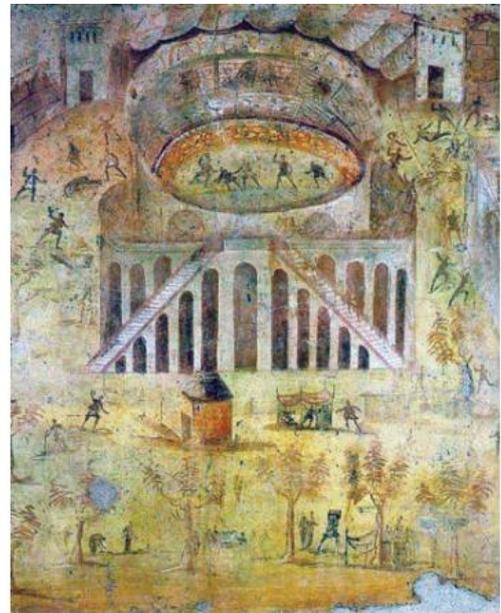


FIGURE 9.18 A fresco of the riot in the Pompeian Amphitheatre in 59 AD

A COMMENT ON ...

The 59 AD riot at the Pompeian Amphitheatre

Although the government in Rome rarely interfered in the affairs of Pompeii, it was forced to do so in 59 AD when rioting broke out in the Amphitheatre between Pompeians and a group of visiting Nucerians.

Tacitus describes the riot as having originated in 'a trifling incident at a gladiatorial show'. There was an exchange of abuse 'characteristic of these disorderly country towns', followed by stone throwing and 'then swords were drawn'. Local militia had to subdue the combatants but many people were wounded or killed. The Nucerians appealed to Rome for justice and Nero 'instructed the senate to investigate the affair'. Pompeii was debarred from holding any similar gathering for 10 years.¹⁴

The barracks, *quadriporticus* and *schola armaturium*

The barracks dated from the time of Augustus to 62 AD. This building appears to have been originally a private home converted to hold the members of the *familiae gladiatoriae*, possibly between 15 and 20 men.

The *quadriporticus* (originally associated with the theatres) was adapted for gladiatorial accommodation in Nero's reign, possibly due to destruction of the original barracks during the earthquake, or perhaps because of increased numbers of gladiators.

The *schola armaturium* was believed to have been a depository of gladiatorial armour, although it is also thought to have been a school for the 'Pompeian Youth' (*Iuventus Pompeiana*).



FIGURE 9.19 The *quadriporticus*

Gladiators

Gladiators were predominantly slaves, prisoners-of-war, freedmen and criminals condemned to death, but there are references to free men in the inscriptions: six free men to 20 slaves appeared on one occasion in the arena. Despite the lack of archaeological information, some of the literary sources also mention women fighting in the arena: ‘The same year witnessed gladiatorial displays on no less magnificent scale than before, but exceeding all precedent in the number of distinguished women and senators disgracing themselves in the arena.’¹⁵

However, there is no evidence from Pompeii and these instances should not be considered the norm. Gladiators, like anyone who made their living performing in public, were regarded as socially inferior, but unlike actors there was also the brutality and stench of death associated with gladiators.

TABLE 9.1 A summary of the different categories of gladiators and their equipment

Most gladiators fought bare-chested and wore a loincloth tied to a belt.	
<i>Thratex</i> or Thracian	Arm band on right arm; two high leggings decorated to the knee; short sword, either curved or angled; helmet topped with a tall crest decorated with the head of a griffin and feathers
<i>Hoplomachus</i>	Leggings; horizontal bandages over thighs; helmet with upturned brim and feathers; small round shield and straight sword
<i>Murmillio</i>	Right arm protected by an armband; left leg protected by short laced leggings; helmet with visor and angular crest decorated with horsehair or feathers; curved, rectangular shield 1 metre high in wood covered with leather; and the only weapon, a short sword (<i>gladius</i>)
<i>Secutor</i>	Heavy gear – metal leggings; long, rectangular shield; small, round helmet with nothing projecting and only holes for eyes; sword
<i>Retiarius</i>	Net, trident and short sword; armband on the left, not right arm, to successfully manoeuvre the net; a rectangular bronze plate of 12–13 cm tied to his left shoulder to protect bare head
Others	<i>Eques</i> fought on horseback with lance and small round shield; <i>Provocator</i> carried a kind of cuirass to protect his chest; <i>Essedarius</i> fought on top of a cart
<i>Venatores</i> and <i>bestiarii</i> fought against wild beasts	Short tunics; wooden spits or poles with iron tips and leather whips; sometimes a cap-shaped helmet and small, straight sword

A COMMENT ON ...

Things about gladiators that we really do not know

- How and where did they actually live in Pompeii?
- How many were there residing permanently in Pompeii at any one time?
- What did their living and training conditions entail?
- Were most simply part of privately-owned groups passing through?



FIGURE 9.20 A gladiatorial graffito



FIGURE 9.21 A *murmillio* fighting in the Roman arena

editore munerum the magistrate in charge of organising and paying for the gladiatorial games

edicta munerum program of a gladiatorial spectacle

pompa a solemn procession

lanista an agent for or owner of a company of gladiators

the games' participants through the Forum. He presented bulls and toreros, boxers and three pairs of *pontarii* (a type of gladiator who fought on a platform) and staged theatrical productions with clowns and mimes. In his second term in office, he held a *pompa* in the forum with bulls and toreros and boxers. There was a day of contests between 30 pairs of wrestlers and 40 pairs of gladiators in the Amphitheatre, as well as bullfights and a hunt with wild boars and bears.

The *editore* had to employ the services of an agent (**lanista**), who sold or rented his gladiators for the spectacle.

The going price for a gladiator depended on his success in the arena. Despite the wealth of many of these agents, it was regarded as a shameful career as the *lanista* was 'considered a vendor of human flesh'.¹⁷ From the surviving inscriptions, it appears that the most famous agent active in Pompeii during the time of Claudius and Nero was Numerius Festinus Ampliatus, whose company of gladiators seems to have gained a great reputation not only in Pompeii but in areas further afield. Sometimes a *lanista* not only ran his own *ludus* (school), but was able to successfully negotiate for the performance of well-known gladiators from one of the imperial schools in Rome such as the Iuliani or Neroniani. An agent's job was not easy, as he had to be able to provide large numbers of gladiators, constantly recruit and train new members to replace those who died or retired, and deal with city authorities.

Staging a spectacle (*munerum*)

A games' sponsor, called **editore munerum**, was expected to fully or partly finance the production. The surviving programs advertising the spectacles (**edicta munerum**) record the names of nine public officials in the last years of Pompeii who took on this responsibility. Possibly the most famous was Cn. Alleius Nigidius Maius, described as 'prince of the games'¹⁶ on account of the lavish nature of the spectacles he presented. Another was A. Clodius Flaccus, who was a member of the local aristocracy and the owner of vineyards in the vicinity of Vesuvius. He was an *editore* three times. In his first term as chief magistrate c. 20 BC, during the feast of Apollo, he organised a **pompa** of all

The magistrate sponsoring the games advertised an upcoming spectacle by painting on walls and by the distribution of pamphlets sold on the street. These programs included:

- the name of the magistrate and his official position
- the reason for the spectacle
- the number of gladiators
- other events such as beast hunts
- the date (usually held over one day, sometimes four, in spring)
- the provision of a *velarium* and *sparsiones*.

Twenty pairs of gladiators of Decimus Lucretius Satrius Valens, perpetual flamen [priest] of Nero Caesar, son of Augustus, and ten pairs of gladiators of his son, Decimus Lucretius Valens, will fight at Pompeii from April 8–14. Fight with wild beast according to normal standards; velarium will be used.

SOURCE 9.5 CIL IV 3884

For the feast of Apollo, (A. Clodius Flaccus provided) a day of contests between thirty pairs of wrestlers and forty pairs of gladiators in the Amphitheatre. A hunt with wild boars and bears and bull fights.

SOURCE 9.6 Part of the epitaph of A. Clodius Flaccus

Usually the names of the gladiators were not included unless someone had reached such a height of popularity that he would add prestige to the sponsor and increase turnout, such as ‘Felix will fight against bears’.¹⁸

Since the spectacles lasted from dawn till dusk, the authorities gave permission for itinerant pedlars to set up food and drink stalls beneath the portico. A tavern nearby also appears to have done a roaring trade. As there are no remains of toilets in the Amphitheatre, spectators probably used the latrines in the nearby *palaestra*, judging by the number of gladiatorial graffiti. Others must have attempted to relieve themselves in the open as there are many warnings throughout the city against this behaviour.

The spectacle began with a *pompa* and all the participants dressed in ornate garments. The morning session was often devoted to animal hunts (*venationes*), although these were not mandatory at every spectacle. The *venatores* and *bestiarii* would fight against wild exotic animals or animal would be pitted against animal. These savage contests in which beasts tore each other to pieces probably served to increase the bloodlust of the spectators.

The gladiators warmed up in front of the crowd and then subjected themselves to a weapons check. There was great interest in the contest if one of the gladiators was freeborn or involved in his first fight (designated *tiro* or T in the graffiti). Death – except in the case of criminals – was not necessarily the desired outcome from these contests, either for the bulk of the population who had their favourites, or for the *lanista* who had spent vast sums of money on recruiting and training his men. Although it was entirely up to the sponsoring magistrate or emperor to grant mercy (*missum*, shown as M in some of the graffiti), they usually took notice of the wishes of the spectators.

The audience would indicate their reaction to the fight by either raising their index finger or waving a handkerchief for the loser to be spared, or give the thumbs down sign. Losers were often left to fight another day according to the graffiti that showed the number of fights and wins of each gladiator, but there were special events when the magistrate would refuse to spare any of the defeated gladiators. The agent was prepared for the death of his men with a ‘reserve bench’ to take over, but the presiding magistrate had to pay the agent for those he chose not to spare.

The victorious gladiators (shown as *vicit* or V in the graffiti) received a palm branch and a predetermined amount of money. Proven gladiators might be given a *rudis* or a wooden sword to mark the end of a successful career in the arena, with some going on to become instructors or even a *lanista*.

There is no doubt from the graffiti about the celebrity status of many who became favourites with the crowds, admired for their courage and adored by women, even by upper-class matrons. Two who boasted about their prowess with women and competed against each other in egotistical scribbles were the Thracian, Celadus, and the *retiarius*, Cresces, the former describing himself as ‘heartthrob of the girls’,¹⁹ while Cresces went further and bragged about being the ‘doctor to night-time girls, morning girls and all the rest’.²⁰

9.5 Gambling

Gambling, associated with drinking, was a passion in Pompeii and Herculaneum, as elsewhere in the Roman world. ‘Set out the wine and dice. To hell with him who cares for the morrow.’²¹

astragals bones from the feet of sheep with different configurations and values

Games of chance with dice, **astragals** and a type of chess board and pawns appear to have been played in any number of

establishments: taverns, small wine bars and, from evidence provided by a fresco, among the sausages, onions and other foodstuffs hanging from the ceiling of a shop. Paintings in a tavern owned by one Salvius showed two men arguing over a game of dice, accompanied by comic-strip-type wording: ‘I’ve won.’ ‘It’s not a three. It’s a two.’ ‘You criminal! Three! I’ve won!’ ‘Ortus, you foul-mouthed cheat.’ Eventually Salvius is forced to throw them out: ‘Out you go. Fight outside!’²²

Men also gambled on gladiatorial contests and cockfights, the latter very popular in both ancient Greece and Rome. The cocks were carefully bred and trained. They were fed on onions and garlic which was supposed to make them stronger and often they had metal claws attached to their spurs.

ACTIVITY 9.3

- Outline where the following would sit at a gladiatorial spectacle.
 - women
 - male spectators
 - public officials.
- Describe the differences in equipment of a:
 - murmillio*
 - retiarius*
 - bestiarius*.
- Give the titles and describe the duties of the two most important men involved in staging gladiatorial spectacles.
- Explain how the advertisements for upcoming games in Sources 9.5 and 9.6 differ in the information they provide for the public.
- How reliable do you think the egoistical graffiti of particular gladiators might be?



FIGURE 9.22 A mosaic of a cockfight from the House of the Faun

ACTIVITY 9.4

An extended piece of writing

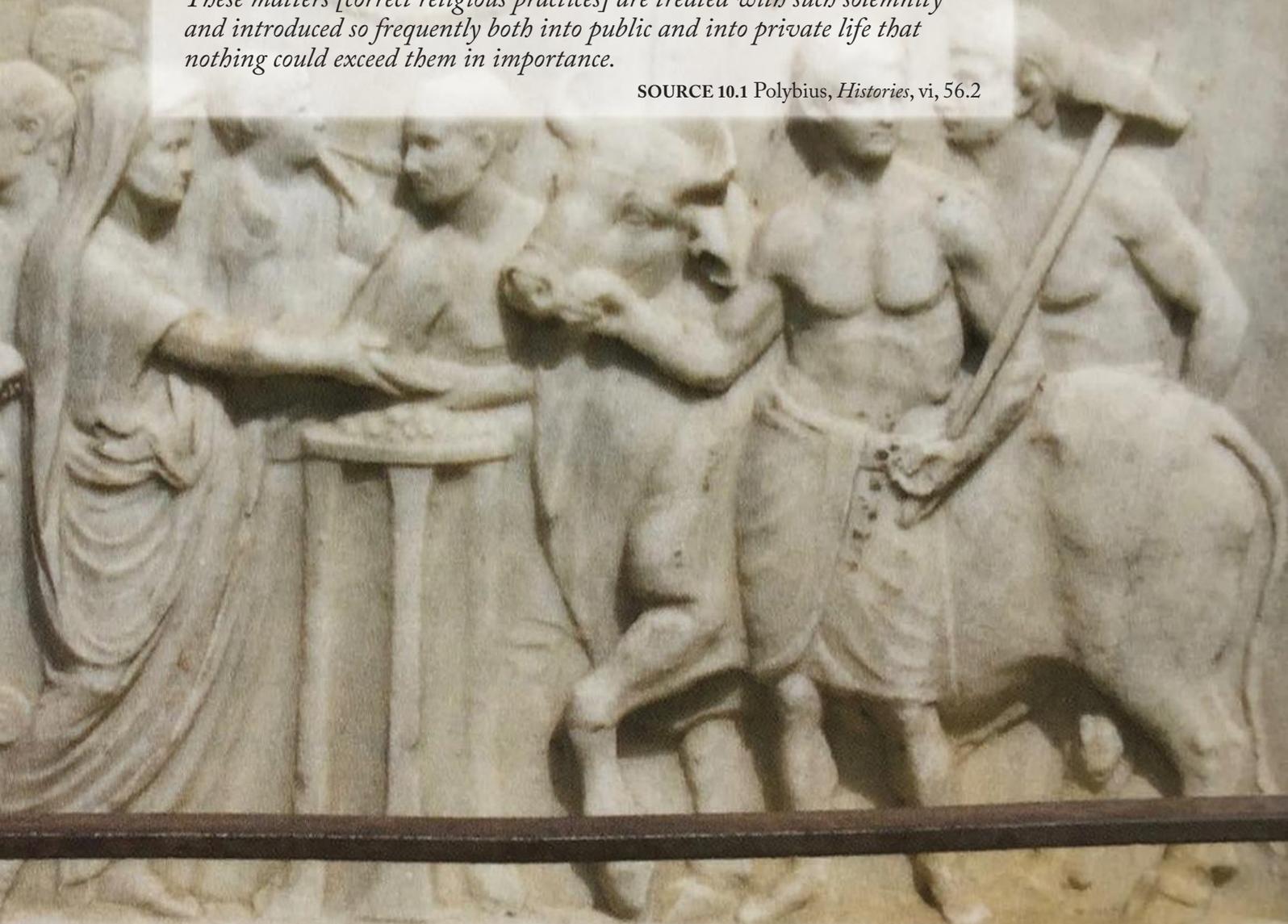
Using the abundance of archaeological sources (including epigraphy and graffiti), assess the statement that Pompeian society valued and participated enthusiastically in leisure and entertainment.

CHAPTER 10

Religion and death

These matters [correct religious practices] are treated with such solemnity and introduced so frequently both into public and into private life that nothing could exceed them in importance.

SOURCE 10.1 Polybius, *Histories*, vi, 56.2



Roman religion was greatly influenced by the Greeks of Campania from the 6th century BC, when various Greek gods were adopted and adapted to suit Roman needs at particular times. As the Romans came more and more in contact with the Hellenistic civilisations from the 2nd century BC, eastern cults were introduced to Pompeii. Then, with the advent of the imperial age, another religious element was added: the cult of the emperors, by which Augustus, his family and successors were integrated into religious practices as a means of securing loyalty and unifying the empire.

10.1 Official religion

‘The most characteristic feature of Roman religion was its essentially political orientation.’¹

Priestly offices were political appointments, and each citizen had a political duty to scrupulously carry out the correct rituals to the gods (sacrifice and prayer) to ensure prosperity, good luck and protection for the state and its people.

Although no temples have been excavated at Herculaneum, those at Pompeii reflect the degree to which religion was integrated into social and political life.

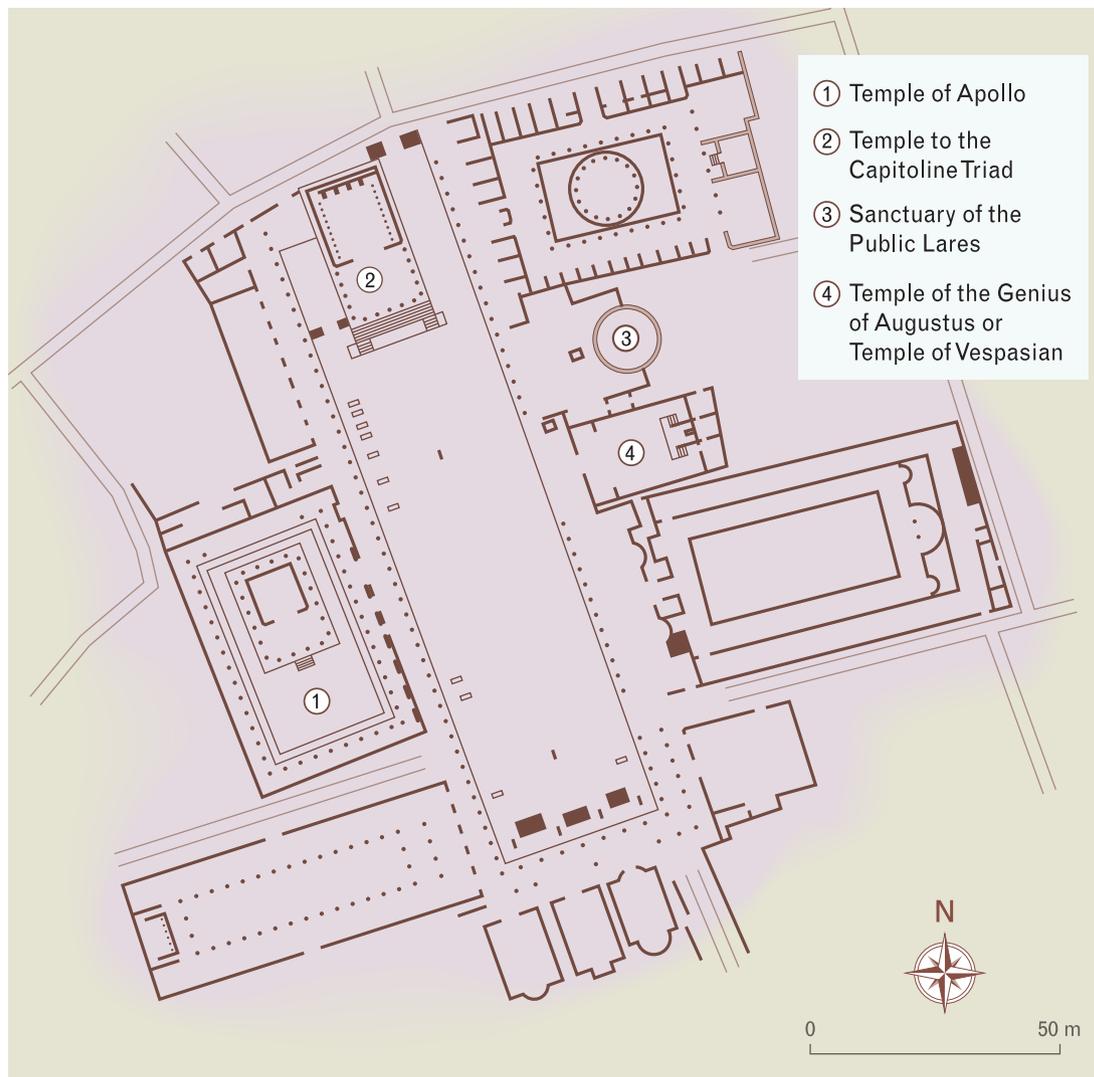


FIGURE 10.1 Plan of temples around the Pompeian Forum

The Capitoline Triad

The triad of gods – Jupiter (protector of the state), Juno (protector of women) and Minerva (patron of craftsmen) – was identified with the Greek Zeus, Hera and Athena. A temple dedicated to the triad dominated the Pompeian Forum and games were held in their honour on the first day of September every year.

Their temple was modelled on the Capitulum in Rome – although smaller – and was the symbol of Rome's power in Pompeii from the time it became a Roman colony (80 BC). The temple stood on a podium 3 metres high with columns supporting a gabled pediment. Statues of the three deities shared a single **cella** in a colonnaded hall and the massive temple base held sacrificial equipment and the town's public treasures. Unfortunately, like many structures in Pompeii, it was extensively damaged during the earthquake of 62 AD and any subsequent seismic activity, but work in the Forum over the past decade has shown that it was repaired and in working order when the eruption occurred.

cella an enclosed inner room in a temple



FIGURE 10.2 Remains of the Temple of the Capitoline Triad

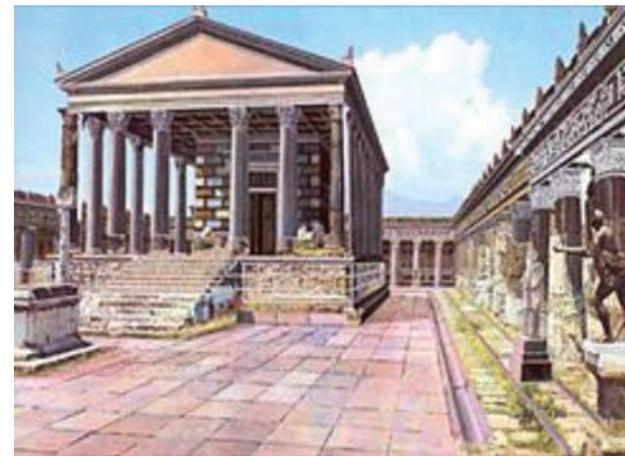


FIGURE 10.3 A reconstruction of the Temple of the Capitoline Triad

Hercules, Apollo, Venus and Mercury

- 1 Hercules (the Greek Herakles) was worshipped from a very early date in Herculaneum where he was regarded as the town's founder, and at Pompeii, where his cult was popular with sailors and traders because of his legendary journeys. Michael Grant believes that interest in his mythological exploits became fashionable during the 1st century AD because emperors, notably Nero, liked to be regarded as reincarnations of Hercules. Although there are no existing temples to Hercules, there are images and statues of him: in Pompeii, an image in the Triangular Forum and statuette in the Temple of Isis, and in Herculaneum images in houses, a wine bar and near a public fountain, and a statue in the peristyle of the House of the Deer.
- 2 It is believed that the worship of the Greek oracular god Apollo was introduced into Pompeii during the 6th century BC from Cumae, the leading Greek city on the Bay of Naples. During the 2nd century BC, the god's sanctuary on the western side of what became the Forum was replaced with a temple built according to Hellenistic models, although the dais, reached by a central flight of stairs, was an Italic element. Other changes were made at the time of Augustus, who adopted Apollo as his patron and associated this brilliant god of light with his new 'Golden Age'. Also, the lyre-playing Emperor Nero enthusiastically embraced Apollo as god of music.
- 3 Venus, the Roman equivalent of the Greek Aphrodite, goddess of love, was worshipped in pre-Roman days as a nature goddess, Venus Fisica, believed to have been born from the waters. For this reason, she is often depicted nude, reclining in a seashell, accompanied by nereids (water nymphs), dolphins and cherubs, or even leaning on a rudder. Sailors sought her protection and her temple stood on a terrace looking out to sea.



FIGURE 10.4 Venus in a seashell from the House of Venus in Pompeii

With the establishment of Pompeii as a Roman colony in 80 BC, Venus became the patron goddess of the city and, as such, was expected to bring wellbeing and success in everything to the community. Her image, in various forms, was endlessly repeated in houses, taverns and shops around the city. It appears that all classes of people worshipped her in one way or another.

She was urged, via graffiti, to support candidates for office:

‘Vote for me and the Venus of Pompeii will bring success to everything you undertake.’² Also, she was propitiated to get rid of a rival and to grant success in love. However, she was just as readily blamed when things did not turn out as expected. One graffitist wrote on the Basilica that he wanted to ‘cripple the loins of the goddess’ and ‘smash her head in with [a] club’.³ In an ironic twist, the temple to Venus, protector of Pompeii, was one of the most severely damaged buildings in the city.

The imperial cult

The cult of the emperor’s genius was first introduced at the time of Augustus as a form of homage, and a new religious college of 21 part-time priests called Augustales, predominantly recruited from freedmen, was set up to supervise the cult. These associations were formed in cities throughout Italy, including Pompeii and Herculaneum. Excavations at Herculaneum have brought to light the magnificent Collegium Augustalium, headquarters of these cult priests.

Close by the temple to the Capitoline Triad were several buildings that, during the 1st century AD, became linked with the imperial regime:

- As a public representation of the *lares* worshipped in the home, the *Lares Publici* were protectors of the crossroads (*compita*). They became linked to the emperor himself and in the Pompeian Temple of the Lares was the statue of the genius of Augustus alongside 10 young dancers representing the *lares*.
- The Temple of the Genius of Augustus, sometimes referred to as the Temple of Vespasian, was originally dedicated to the goddess **Fortuna**, but in 3 BC the epithet ‘Augusta’ was added, associating the new imperial regime with the deity of good fortune. It was erected by the *duumvir* Marcus Tullius at his own expense on his own land in honour of Augustus, perhaps to repay an imperial favour. It contained a statue to Fortuna Augusta and statues of the imperial family, revealing the link between religion and politics. A white marble altar in the remains of this building depicts the sacrifice of a bull.
- Another private building in the Forum linked to the cult of the imperial family was the Edifice of Eumachia, sponsored by the priestess of the same name to celebrate the Julian clan to which Augustus belonged.

Fortuna goddess of fortune and personification of luck
flamens specialised priests to a particular god or gods

Public ritual

Part of the ritual carried out by the **flamens** and Augustales on behalf of the population was the sacrificial banquet.

The offering of an animal (*sacrificium*) to the god was done according to strict ritual from which there was no deviation. The presiding priest, with head veiled, exhorted those present to be absolutely silent and initiated the ritual slaughter by coating the sacrificial knife and head of the animal with salted flour or *mola salsa*. In Rome, this was a mixture prepared by the Vestal Virgins. The killing followed precise rules.

- The entrails, dedicated to the god, were burned and offered up, and the rest of the flesh was divided among the participants according to status.
- Priests and magistrates sat apart from the public and were given the superior cuts of meat.
- The inferior cuts were handed out in order of precedence, with some participants receiving only a tiny portion of the sacrificial animal.



FIGURE 10.5 White marble altar in the Temple of the Genius of Augustus (Temple of Vespasian)

ACTIVITY 10.1

- 1 What was meant by the Capitoline Triad in Pompeii?
- 2 Explain the purpose of the imperial cult.
- 3 Name the buildings in the Forum dedicated to the imperial family.
- 4 Explain the popularity of Hercules and Apollo in the 1st century AD.
- 5 Suggest reasons why the image of Venus was endlessly depicted throughout Pompeii.
- 6 Describe a sacrificial banquet from the perspective of an officiating *flamen*.

10.2 The mystery cults

The cults of the Hellenistic world (those areas that incorporated a mix of Greek and Eastern culture ruled by the successors of Alexander the Great) were introduced to Italy with Rome's conquest of Greece, Macedon, Egypt and the East in the 2nd century BC. They were brought back by merchants, soldiers and slaves and included the Dionysian, Eleusinian and Orphic mysteries, and the cults of Cybele, Isis and Mithras.

Because official Roman religious practices tended to be impersonal and the 'decrees of Fate and Fortune' oppressive,⁴ those seeking a more emotional involvement with a god were attracted to these cults, which promised their devotees happiness, salvation and resurrection through initiation.

The two most popular foreign cults in Pompeii and Herculaneum were of Isis and Dionysus/Bacchus. It appears that, at first, they were popular with women and the lower classes of slaves and freedmen, but eventually became far more widespread throughout society, judging by the motifs, objects and paintings associated with both cults found in private homes.

The cult of Isis

The Egyptian influence was strong in Pompeii because of:

- 1 trade contacts between the great Hellenistic city of Alexandria and the ports on the Bay of Naples
- 2 the annexation of Egypt as an imperial province under Augustus.



FIGURE 10.6 The remains of the Temple of Isis



FIGURE 10.7 A fresco of the priests of Isis

ureaus sacred Egyptian cobra worn on the forehead of pharaohs

sistrum a sacred rattle

It is not known whether the worship of Isis came directly from Egypt or via the Hellenistic East, but Louise Zarmati in *Women and Eros* suggests that it came with foreign women. Since prostitutes, many of whom were foreign slaves, worshipped the goddess, this seems probable.

Although the cult was open to men and had a professional body of priests, the inscriptions indicate that approximately one-third of worshippers were women. The cult soon spread among the elite with some, like Julia Felix, incorporating shrines dedicated to the goddess into their gardens with statuettes and paintings of Egyptian deities. There was a chapel (*sacrum*) dedicated to Isis, Serapis (a Hellenistic god with the attributes of Osiris) and Anubis in the House of the Gilded Cupids.

In the Roman world, Isis offered happiness, salvation and consolation from suffering, while her husband Osiris/Serapis promised resurrection and Anubis, sometimes integrated with Mercury, guided the soul to the next life.

The cult complex, which was surrounded by high walls to maintain the secrecy of the ceremonies, included the temple on its podium, a shrine giving access to a subterranean cistern holding holy Nile water, an initiation and banquet hall, a repository for equipment and remains of sacrifices, and lodgings for the priests.

The ritual

There were two daily services in the Temple of Isis, which appears to have been open all day, unlike other sanctuaries.

Evidence for these rites comes from the high-quality wall paintings that once adorned its walls. They featured Egyptian-style landscapes, exotic beasts, scenes from Egyptian and Greek mythology and the priests

performing their duties. Priests, priestesses and initiates wore white linen robes, sandals of papyrus and headbands featuring the Egyptian **ureaus**, while ceremonies were accompanied by burning of incense, chanting and music.

Before sunrise, the worshippers gathered in front of the temple where the image of the goddess was presented to them to the accompaniment of the **sistrum**. The participants remained in prayer until the sun rose, when they uttered an invocation for its daily rebirth. At 2.30 in the afternoon, water supposedly from the Nile was consecrated and sprinkled around by the priest as a symbol of life.

During the year there were two major festivals in honour of the goddess:

- 1 The 'Navigation of Isis' on 5 March, during which a procession of priests, priestesses and worshippers carried a small boat to the seashore, purified it with water and sulphur, and prayed for the protection of all sailors.

- 2 The 'Isia' between 13 and 16 November commemorated the discovery of Osiris's body. It is believed that this was when the secret initiations took place during which the participants experienced a rebirth, committing themselves to leading purer lives.

The outstanding paintings, decorations and furniture found in the Temple of Isis in Pompeii, and the fact that it was one of the first public buildings to have been totally restored after the earthquake, point to the significance of the cult.



FIGURE 10.8 Cult building and altar in the precinct of Isis

The cult of Dionysus/Bacchus

This cult, centred on Dionysus, Greek god of wine and fertility, swept through Greece in the 6th century BC, and 300 years later became enormously popular in southern Italy as the cult of Bacchus. It offered 'an escape from worldly reality into mystic communion with the god and the promise of a blessed life after death'.⁵

Originally, the cult was attended only by women on three days of the year, but it was supposedly transformed by a Campanian priestess named Annia Paculla who admitted men and extended the celebration of the rites to five times a month.

The intoxicating effect of wine and trance-inducing techniques, such as ecstatic dancing to pipes, drums and with clashing cymbals, were believed to liberate the initiate to return to a more natural state of being. Because the cult was a celebration of everything that was outside societal restraints, it was not surprising that many of its original devotees were women and others on the margins of society: slaves, foreigners, even outlaws, for all were regarded as equal within the cult.

SOURCE 10.2 P. Bradley, *Cultural Treasures of the Ancient World*, p. 225

According to the official version of Roman historian, Livy, the cult spread 'like a contagious disease'⁶ and while under the influence of wine, the worshippers supposedly committed all kinds of debaucheries.

Men, apparently out of their wits, would utter prophecies with frenzied bodily convulsions: matrons attired as Bacchantes, with their hair dishevelled and carrying blazing torches, would run down to the Tiber, plunge their torches in and bring them out still alight ...

SOURCE 10.3 Livy, *Rome and the Mediterranean*, xxxix, 8, 13

The Roman Senate, believing that the secret and excessive nature of the **Bacchanalia** was a threat to public order and provided opportunities for political conspiracy, issued a decree in 186 BC authorising senators to suppress Bacchic societies. However, the cult continued to flourish in Campania and there is ample evidence of its popularity in Pompeii and Herculaneum.

Bacchanalia the Latin name for the rites of Bacchus

While some worshippers appear to have had a deep and serious attachment to the god, most in Pompeii seem to have been more light-hearted in their attitude. The cult, 'at its least exacting level, tended to succumb



FIGURE 10.9 Scenes from the Villa of Mysteries

an entire architectural background. They appear to depict rituals associated with the cult of Dionysus/Bacchus, perhaps an initiation undertaken by the mistress of the villa herself. The 35-square-metre room in which the paintings were found is believed to have been part of the private quarters of the owners of the villa.

to mere sensuality, with the afterlife pictured as a sexy debauch; and many were the drinking and dining clubs that assumed the exalted patronage of Bacchus'.⁷

Dionysus/Bacchus, identified in wall paintings with vine leaves in his hair and carrying a staff tipped with a pine cone, was often accompanied by satyrs, creatures in Greek legends that were half-man, half beast, lazy and lascivious. The older ones were called Sileni, the younger Satyrisci. They were often shown playing a lyre or pipe.

In the Villa of Mysteries just outside Pompeii, owned by the urbane Istacidi family, is possibly the best group of paintings that have survived from the ancient world. These enigmatic and much debated series of frescoes feature 29 life-sized figures painted against

A COMMENT ON ...

A possible interpretation of an initiation into the mysteries of Dionysus

- Like the initiatory rites they seem to depict, the exact meaning of the frescoes has remained a mystery since only those who were initiated knew their secrets and any interpretations are only guesswork.
- It appears that a young girl is about to be initiated into the mysteries of Dionysus in preparation for her marriage and her transition into the next phase of her life, an important rite of passage. The human marriage is linked to the sacred marriage of Dionysus and Ariadne, who by her marriage to the god was endowed with eternal life. Various features of Dionysiac initiation are appropriate to a wedding: the 'flagellation imparting fertility, and the revelation of the phallus'.
- Most initiations followed a similar pattern: separation, purification, instruction, revelation, ordeal, eating a special meal and the donning of a special garment. Many of these are found in the fresco cycle.
- There seem to be three parts to these frescoes:
 - 1 The girl crosses the threshold and preparations begin. A young nude boy wearing actor's boots reads from a scroll (possibly the liturgy of the ritual). The girl in a different garment carries an offering tray of ceremonial cake and a priestess removes the covering from the basket while another attendant pours water into a basin in which the priestess is about to dip a laurel sprig (purification).

- 2 The bride then passes into the mythical realm of the god where a young male satyr is playing a pan flute and a nymph suckles a goat. The girl is about to enter a new psychological state of mind necessary for the rebirth. All the elements of the initiation are there. The sacred contents in a basket; the divine couple with Dionysus draped over the lap of Ariadne; the divination of the future as the young satyr stares into a bowl; the mask (perhaps a symbol of throwing off the old mask in preparation for the new) and the winged flagellator (the ordeal).
- 3 The climax of the rite is shown in the agony on the face of the initiate and the lash across her back; a dancing **maenad** with celebratory cymbals and the offer of the thyrsus, the symbolic rod of Dionysus topped with a pine cone, symbol of completion of the ordeal. The girl is then seen preparing for her divine marriage with the god who will ensure her fertility as an actual wife and the final transition from girl into matronhood in the form of an older woman in the marriage bed looking back in serenity.

maenad a female follower of Dionysus

Adapted from S. A. E. Seaford, 'The Mysteries of Dionysus at Pompeii' in *Pegasus: Classical Essays from the University of Exeter*

ACTIVITY 10.2

- 1 Describe how foreign cults were introduced into Campania.
- 2 Explain why so many people in the Roman world were attracted to the mystery cults of the East.
- 3 Describe what appears to be happening in Figure 10.9.
- 4 List the particular groups in society that were attracted to the cult of Dionysus/Bacchus.
- 5 Provide evidence that some people had a deep and serious attachment to the cult while others had a more light-hearted attitude.

10.3 Private worship and observances

Thousands of images and shrines to a variety of gods and goddesses were found all around the city: at crossroads, in shops and in homes.

Household guardians

- 1 *Lares*, protectors of the household, were originally protectors of the farm and its boundaries. They were usually depicted as a pair of dancing youths in short country-style tunics, holding a drinking horn of plenty in one hand and a dish or wine bucket in the other.
- 2 *Penates* was a name derived, according to Cicero, from *penus*, which meant a store of food of any kind. They were supposed to reside in the recesses of the house (*penitus*).
- 3 *Genius* was the generating force or spirit of the head of the house.
- 4 Vesta was the goddess of hearths and altars, to whom the end of every prayer and sacrifice was addressed.
- 5 Bacchus and Mercury (god of money and patron of commerce) were sometimes added to the altar.
- 6 A snake (Agothodemon), shown rearing its head or wrapped around an altar, protected the hearth and brought fertility.



FIGURE 10.10 A *lar*



FIGURE 10.11 A wall niche found in a street

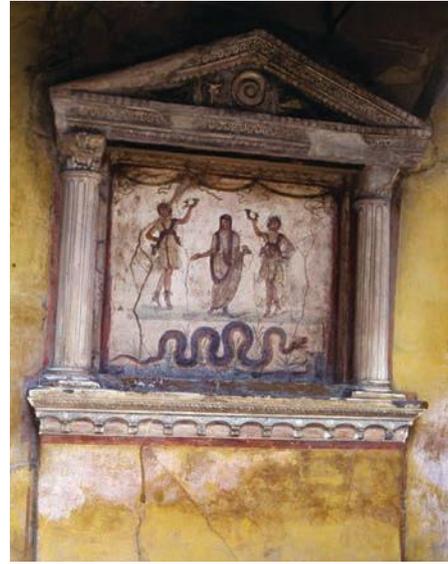


FIGURE 10.12 An *aedicule* from the House of the Vettii

Household altars (*lararia*)

Every home, and some shops, had a *lararium*, a shrine to the *lares*. These took several forms:

- A wall niche found in poorer homes with painted back wall and figurines.
- An *aedicule*, a three-dimensional miniature temple set on a podium, lined with marble or painted stucco with statuettes. These were found in richer homes.
- A wall painted to look like an *aedicule* with the household gods also painted.

Household worship and offerings

Each day, and on special monthly celebrations, the *paterfamilias*, as chief priest, would gather with his family and slaves to make offerings of a wreath or portion of a meal to the *lares* and say prayers for the protection and prosperity of all within the household. Crumbs dropped on the floor were also left as an offering, and on important occasions a lamb might be sacrificed.

Honouring the ancestors, rites of passage and amulets

The souls of the dead were believed to live on after death in a world of malevolent and benevolent forces. A family's ancestors, represented by wax masks (*maiores*), were kept in the house. They were honoured on every family occasion as protectors of the family's lineage, and they were worn at family funerals as a link between the living and the dead.

Also, there were family ceremonies associated with all rites of passage, such as birth, marriage and death.

- A sacrifice of incense and cake was made at the family shrine when a newborn was accepted into the family by the *paterfamilias*. On the eighth day after birth, he or she was named in a ceremony (*lustratio*) 'when any pollution associated with the birth was cleansed away'.⁸ Relatives, friends and clients of the master crowded into the *atrium* to congratulate the parents and wish the child good fortune.
- When a girl was to be married, omens and sacrifices were taken, and on the day of her marriage her father offered a banquet, after which she was taken in a torchlit procession to her husband's house, during which the virility of the groom was lauded by his friends and 'walnuts were thrown over the couple to wish them fertility'.⁹ Once across the threshold of her future home, the bride made an offering of water and fire.

- A rite called *conclamatio* marked the death of a member of the family. Gathered relatives invoked the deceased's name out loud. Usually the body was prepared (washed, oiled and preserved) by the women; a coin was placed under the tongue to pay Charon the ferryman, who bore the soul to the next life; and the body laid out in the *atrium* for visitors to show their respect.

The Pompeians and Herculaneans also propitiated the gods for good luck and fertility using a variety of amulets, depicted as objects or paintings. For example:

- the *mani pantee*, a votive hand – usually in bronze – with thumb, index and middle finger raised in a sign of benediction and an image of the Eastern god, Sabatius, seated in the palm with other symbols of deities: snake, toad and beetle
- snakes, regarded as bringers of peace and prosperity
- the erect phallus, symbol of virility and fertility, found everywhere in houses as decorative bas-reliefs and even on lamps and children's rattles. The purpose of a Priapus – god of fertility and abundance – just inside the entrance of the house of the wealthy Vettii brothers, with its enormous phallus weighed against a bag of money on a pair of scales, was to ward off the evil eye and bring prosperity to the owners.



FIGURE 10.13 A wall in a shop painted to resemble an *aedicule*

ACTIVITY 10.3

- 1 List the evidence throughout Pompeii and Herculaneum of the importance of private – as opposed to public – worship to the inhabitants.
- 2 Identify the household guardians in Figure 10.12.
- 3 List all the ways members of a household propitiated the gods on a daily basis and on special occasions.



FIGURE 10.14 A mosaic of a skeleton

necropolis 'city of the dead'
or cemetery

10.4 Death and burial

Despite their enjoyment of life, Pompeians were constantly reminded of the brevity of life and the reality of death as they left and entered the city along routes lined with memorials to the dead. However, most people probably had no clear concept of life after death, except perhaps for those deeply involved in the mystery/salvation cults. Graffiti urged people to live life to the full because nothing lasts forever, and even guests at banquets were confronted with reminders of death. Skeletons and skulls were common images in dining areas and engraved on drinking cups. At Trimalchio's banquet in Petronius's *Satyricon*, a slave brings in a silver-jointed skeleton and after it is thrown about the table, Trimalchio makes a pompous speech about the shortness of life: 'Man's life, alas is but a span, So, let us live while we can. We'll be like this when dead!'¹⁰

Necropolises

There were a number of necropolises outside the walls of Pompeii. They were positioned close to the city gates, stretching out along the roads, looking like suburbs. The two most impressive were those outside the Nucernian and Herculaneum Gates, the latter with shops and villas interspersed between the tombs. Evidence from the benches and gardens for resting, and the amount of graffiti, suggests that there

was a high frequency of visitors to these cemeteries, which were not exclusively for one particular social class.

By the 1st century AD, most people were cremated, the ashes preserved in terracotta or even glass urns, and incorporated into the structure of the tomb or buried at its foot.



FIGURE 10.15 The necropolis outside the Nucernian Gate

No internment was permitted within the city walls, and legally there was supposed to be a belt of approximately 30 metres left free around the city's perimeter. Because the town controlled the land outside the city gates, only the town council could grant permission to build a tomb there. However, the most important individuals who had held high public offices were sometimes given permission to build their tomb within this space and their funerals and tomb were paid for from public funds.

Tombs rarely belonged to an individual, and a popular type had niches in its facade for the urns of all members of the household, be they immediate family members, slave, freedman or freedwoman. It was up to the *paterfamilias* to make sure that anyone who died in his family received the proper burial rites to prevent them living on in the next life as malevolent entities.

For this reason, those without families or who were too poor often belonged to a funeral club, to which they paid a fee while alive. This ensured they would be cremated and their ashes interred in a mausoleum with others in the same club. In this way, they would not be forgotten.

Tombs varied from the plainest brick chamber with flat roof to the most elaborate monument with sculptured decoration. Tombs for the elite might resemble temples and altars, some comprised a series of rooms and others featured columns and semicircular benches.

- 1 The tomb of the Istacidii family, owners of the Villa of Mysteries, comprised a large funerary chamber or podium surmounted by a circular temple with statues of the most prominent family members set up between columns. These types of important tombs were known as *exedra* tombs.
- 2 In front of it was the *schola* tomb of the priestess of Venus, Mamia, daughter of Publius, whose place of burial was given by decree of the *decurions*. These *schola* tombs consisted of a semi-circular stone bench with inscriptions placed in large letters on the bench's back rest.
- 3 The tomb belonging to the Augustale (priest) Caio Calventio Quieto sat on a stepped pyramid surrounded by an enclosure.
- 4 The monumental tomb of the priestess Eumachia and her family is the most impressive in Pompeii. It sat on its own terrace with marble statues of Amazons, mythical female warriors, and had a large seating area.
- 5 Many tombs were of a simpler altar type.
- 6 There were large communal tombs for poorer members of the city.
- 7 The ashes of the very poor might simply be buried directly into the soil.



FIGURE 10.16 The semicircular seat tomb of the priestess Mamia and the remains of the funerary temple of the tomb of the Istacidii family



FIGURE 10.17 The tomb of Eumachia

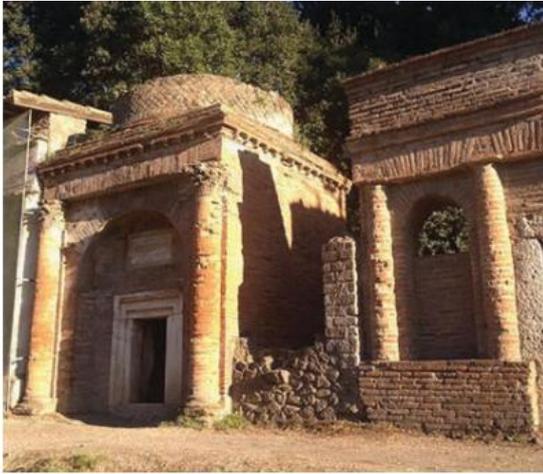


FIGURE 10.18 Brick chamber tombs



FIGURE 10.19 The tomb of an Augustale depicting a sacred seat (*bisellium*) awarded to him

libations drinks poured out as offerings

Families visited the tombs on the anniversary of a loved one's death or on other significant occasions. They might eat a meal there and pour **libations** through the special pipes built into the tomb to lead to the urn.

Tombs provided an opportunity to remind passers-by of the achievements and social status of the deceased. Some were decorated with bas-reliefs that recalled the deceased's occupations and contributions to Pompeian society. For example, the tomb of the famous garum manufacturer Umbricius Scaurus featured a decorative scheme inspired by the games held in the amphitheatre for which he was probably a sponsor. The tomb of the Augustale, mentioned above, featured the sacred state seat (*bisellium*) awarded to him.

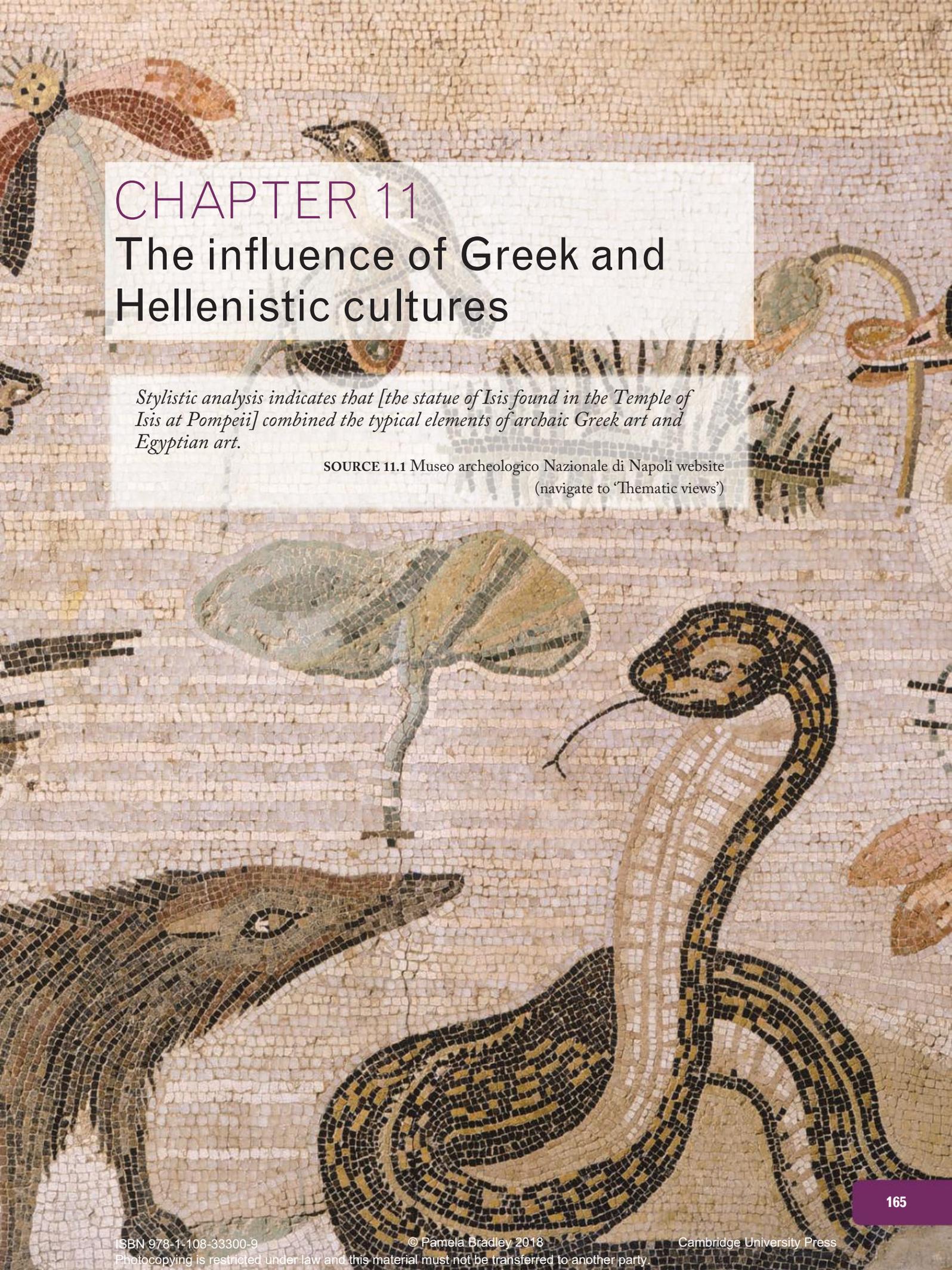
Although the inscriptions in the cemeteries provide information about the upper levels of society, freedmen, freedwomen and slaves, it must be remembered that people only inscribed what they considered important and what they wanted other people to read.

Naevoleia Tyche, freedwoman of Lucius Naevoleius, for herself and for Gaius Munatius Faustus, member of the Brotherhood of Augustus and suburban official, to whom on account of his distinguished services the city council, with the approval of the people, granted a seat of double width (*bisellium*). This monument Naevoleia Tyche built in her lifetime also for the freedmen and freedwomen of herself and of Gaius Munatius Faustus.

SOURCE 10.4 F.W. Kelsey, *Pompeii: Its Life and Art*, pp. 422–3

ACTIVITY 10.4

- 1 Identify the usual methods used by the Romans in the 1st century AD of disposing of their dead.
- 2 Explain why the Pompeians built their tombs outside the city.
- 3 Suggest the effects you think the necropolises, stretched along the main routes in and out of the city, might have had on passers-by.
- 4 Describe the purpose of the size and style of the tombs and their accompanying epitaphs.
- 5 What happened to those who were too poor to afford a tomb of any description?
- 6 Use the archaeological sources mentioned in this chapter to assess (in an extended piece of writing) the significance of public and private religion in the lives of the inhabitants of Pompeii and Herculaneum.



CHAPTER 11

The influence of Greek and Hellenistic cultures

Stylistic analysis indicates that [the statue of Isis found in the Temple of Isis at Pompeii] combined the typical elements of archaic Greek art and Egyptian art.

SOURCE 11.1 Museo archeologico Nazionale di Napoli website
(navigate to 'Thematic views')



FIGURE 11.1 A map of Magna Graecia ('greater Greece')

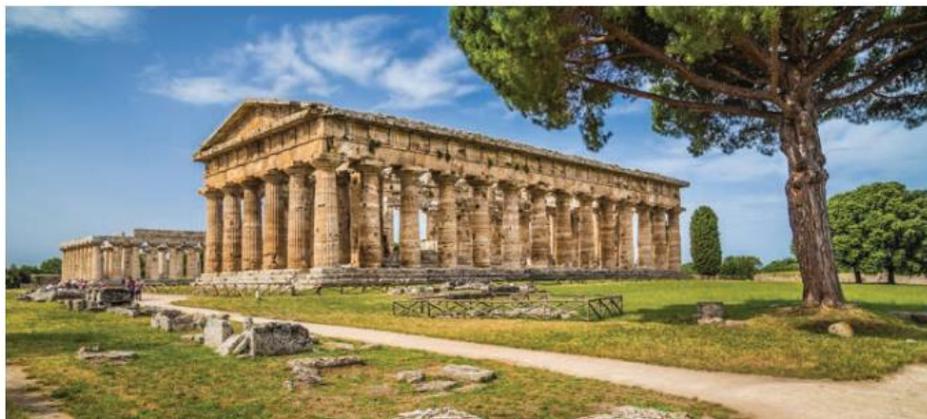


FIGURE 11.2 Well-preserved Greek temples at Paestum (Campania) built between 600–450 BC

ACTIVITY 11.1

Check the definition of 'Hellenistic'.

Since many of the Hellenic and Hellenistic influences on Pompeii and Herculaneum have already been mentioned throughout this study, you will need to refer back to Chapters 5–10 to note additional details for the impact of the Eastern cultures on architecture, art, entertainment, leisure and religion mentioned on the next page.

Pompeii and Herculaneum were heavily influenced by the Greek (Hellenic) and Hellenistic cultures of the eastern Mediterranean, including Egypt.

- 1 Greek influences came directly from the Greek colonies established in southern Italy and Sicily. In the 8th–7th centuries BC, due to shortage of land, overpopulation, the search for new commercial outlets and ports, and political conflicts within their city-states, Greeks began to settle in southern Italy (including Campania) and Sicily. The Romans referred to this area as *Magna Graecia* ('Greater Greece') since it was so densely inhabited by the Greeks.
- 2 Hellenistic influences came through Rome's conquest of, and trade with, the Hellenistic kingdoms of Egypt and the East from the 2nd century BC. These Hellenistic kingdoms were established by the successors of Alexander the Great. Trade between Campania and the Egyptian port city of Alexandria played a large part in this influence, as did Alexandrian craftsmen, other foreign workers and even foreign slaves who settled in Pompeii and Herculaneum.

The Roman admiration of classic Greek culture and infatuation with the exotic nature of the Hellenistic cultures was reflected predominantly in:

- architecture, both public and private
- art, such as frescoes, mosaics and decorative objects such as silverware
- the attitude of a 'sound mind in a sound body'
- religion, both the adaptations of the Greek pantheon and the mystery cults from Greece, Egypt and the further east.

11.1 Private architecture and decoration

Hellenisation of Roman lifestyle and the advent of 'Asian luxuria' introduced architectural innovations into private houses. These included:

- High vestibules, wide atria and peristyles with colonnades, and porticoes.
- Columns: the columns in the Houses of the Vetti and the Faun in Pompeii, and in the House of Telephus and the Samnite House in Herculaneum replicated the three orders of Greek columns: Ionic, Doric and Corinthian.
- Paintings: the original wall painting style (incrustation style) originated in Alexandria. Later styles featured Greek architectural motifs and copies of Greek mythological paintings such as the *Sacrifice of Iphigenia* in the House of the Tragic Poet. August Mau wrote that 'the development of ancient wall decoration came ... in the hands of the Greek masters.'¹
- Mosaics: it was in Hellenistic Greece and Macedonia that mosaic floors first became fashionable. They were composed initially of pebbles in contrasting colours, followed by the use of highly brilliant small pieces of glass paste, shell, enamels, marble and terracotta known as *tesserae*. Many houses in Pompeii and Herculaneum featured mosaic floors, wall friezes, decorated fountains, pools and columns (see House of the Faun below).
- Other decorative elements featured Hellenic motifs: for example, the statuary from the Hellenistic-style Villa of the Papyri and the magnificently embossed silverware found in the Villa of Pisanella, the House of Menander and, more recently, at a complex at Morigene not far from Pompeii (see p. 65).
- Garden landscapes were introduced from Greece, as were scenes painted on walls such as in the Villa of Oplontis and the Villa of Mysteries.

Much of the silverware found in the Menander and Boscoreale hoards was embossed in elaborate, yet delicate mythological, landscape and vegetal motifs, and it seems to reflect the influence of the great Hellenistic centres of Pergamon and Alexandria ... two of the Morigene cups are decorated with what appears to be Egyptian motifs.

SOURCE 11.2 P. Bradley, *Cultural treasures of the Ancient World*, pp. 220–30



FIGURE 11.3 Red painted Greek columns used in a colonnade in Herculaneum



FIGURE 11.4 A painting of the *Sacrifice of Iphigenia*



FIGURE 11.5 A mosaic of Plato's Academy in the villa of T. Siminius Stephanus in Pompeii



FIGURE 11.6 A bronze statue of the Greek god Hermes from the Villa of the Papyri

ACTIVITY 11.2

- 1 Define *Magna Graecia*.
- 2 What were the three orders of Greek columns?
- 3 Research:
 - the three orders of Greek columns and identify the order depicted in Figure 11.3
 - the myth of the sacrifice of Iphigenia, as depicted in the House of the Tragic Poet in Figure 11.4.
 - Plato and his circle, as depicted in Figure 11.5
- 4 Who was the Greek god Hermes? With which Pompeian god was he identified?
- 5 Identify what Source 11.2 reveals about much of the silverware found in Campania.

A profile of the House of the Faun

Many of the grand residences and villas in the vicinity of Vesuvius, in their size and sumptuousness, evoked the magnificence of oriental Hellenistic palaces, and none more so than the House of the Faun in Pompeii and the Villa of the Papyri in Herculaneum.

The House of the Faun – named after a bronze statue of a dancing faun found in the *impluvium* – was built in two stages during the early and late 2nd century BC over an earlier structure. Covering 3000 square metres, it is the largest house in Pompeii, and in its final form, it occupied an entire *insula*, had two entrances, two *atria*, two peristyles, possibly four *triclinia*, a two-roomed bath-suite and was filled with examples of all three orders of Greek columns.

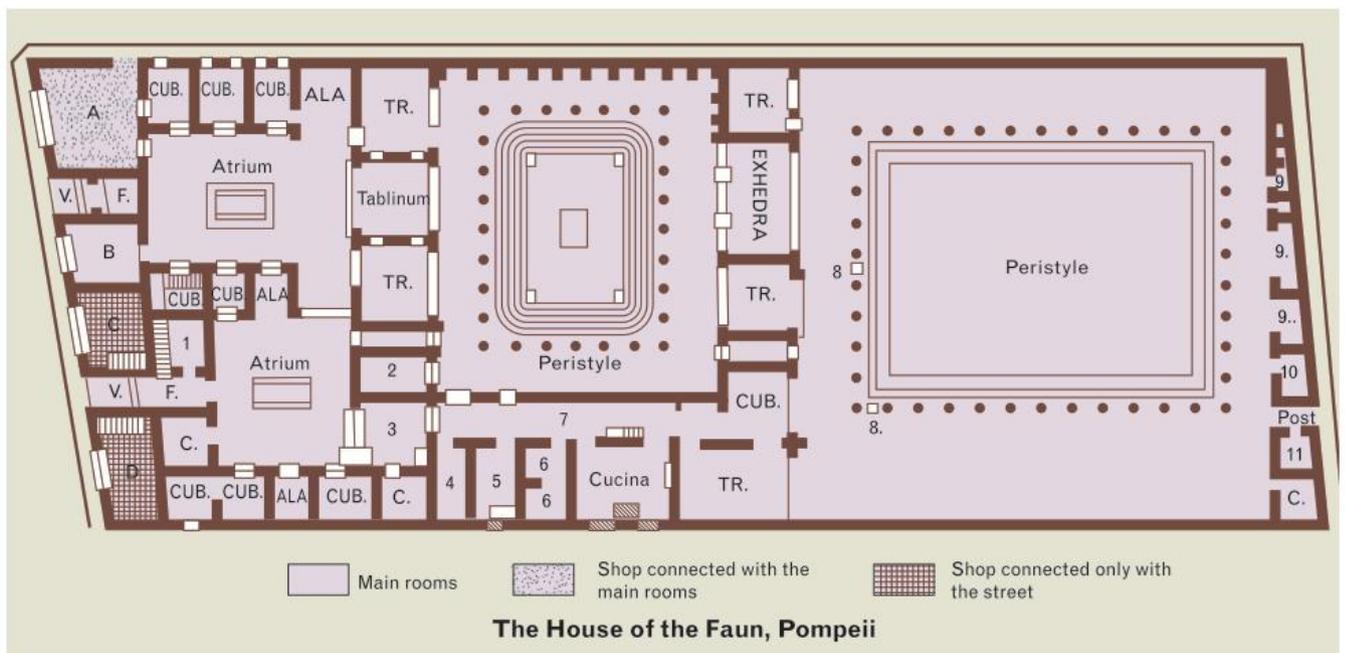


FIGURE 11.7 A plan of the House of the Faun



FIGURE 11.8 Looking through what remains of the *atrium* with *impluvium* and a **replica** of the bronze statue of the dancing faun, the original of which is in the National Archaeological Museum in Naples

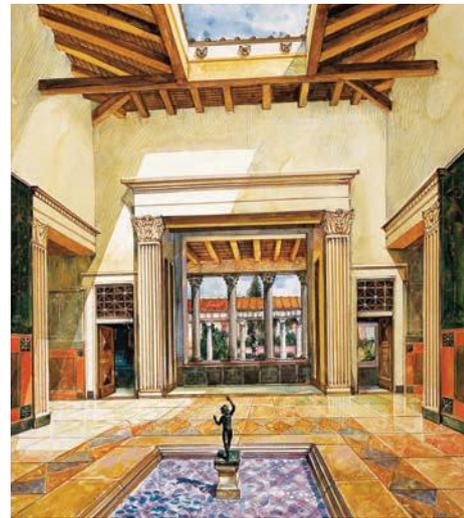


FIGURE 11.9 An artistic rendering of the *atrium* of the House of the Faun

replica in terms of archaeology is a copy of an original artefact

Mosaics in the House of the Faun

Luxurious mosaic panels, recalling the colourful world of Dionysus, the Greek theatre and themes from the Nile delta, adorned a number of rooms. These were the work of the skilled Alexandrian craftsmen active in Italy between the end of the 2nd and 1st centuries BC.

- At the threshold between the entrance vestibule and the *atrium* was an emblem with a rich festoon of flowers and fruit adorned by two Greek tragic masks with long curly wigs.
- The next room featured a double emblem depicting a cat capturing a partridge and Nilotic ducks with lotus flowers in their beaks.
- In a dining room was an emblem depicting Dionysus as a child riding a tiger, in the centre of a vegetable frame with Greek theatrical masks and wigs.
- In a 'bedroom' was an erotic emblem depicting a Greek satyr and a nymph.
- On the threshold of the *exedra* was the large magnificent mosaic of an exotic Nile scene filled with ducks and lotus flowers, snakes, crocodiles and a hippopotamus, influenced by the famous Alexandrian Nile mosaic.



FIGURE 11.10 A Greek tragic mask



FIGURE 11.11 Dionysus as child riding a tiger



FIGURE 11.12 Mosaic scenes of the Nile River

It [the Alexander Mosaic] is one of the great masterpieces of ancient art, a work whose beauty conjures up something of the astonishing achievement of artists otherwise known to as mere names, listed in Books 34 and 35 of Pliny's *Natural History*. The so-called Alexander Mosaic from Pompeii offers unique proof of the quality of an art only traces of which survive.

SOURCE 11.3 Ada Cohen, *The Alexander Mosaic: Stories of Victory and Defeat*, p. 1

The Alexander Mosaic

Apart from the dazzling mosaics featured in Figures 11.10–11.12, it was the unique decoration of the exedra floor for which this house was, and is, most renowned: the Alexander Mosaic. This is the most celebrated mosaic to have survived from antiquity.

A COMMENT ON...

The Alexander Mosaic

- The mosaic was probably produced towards the end of the 2nd century BC, copied from a 4th-century Greek painting. Pliny the Elder, the Roman natural historian who recorded the Roman practice of copying from Greek masterpieces, says, 'Philozenus of Eretria painted a picture for king Kassander which must be considered inferior to none; it contained the Battle of Alexander against Darius.'²
- The monumental mosaic, measuring 5.82 by 3.13 metres, is composed of over a million and a half *tesserae*, no more than 4 mm each in size. Its incredible detail and subtle gradations of the basic colours of white, red, yellow and black were made possible by the shape and minute size of the *tesserae*.
- It was discovered in 1831, having survived the destructive 1st-century earthquake and eruption, although there is a part of it missing. It was removed to the National Archaeological Museum in Naples, where it is displayed today with the other stunning mosaics from the same villa.
- In 2005, a replica of the Alexander Mosaic was installed in its original location in the House of the Faun. It took a team of nine from the International Centre for the Study and Teaching of Mosaics in Ravenna, Italy, 22 months to make.
- It is difficult to 'read' the Alexander Mosaic, although its effect on the viewer is one charged with emotion. There have been any number of interpretations over the years. It has generally been regarded as a depiction of Alexander of Macedon defeating Darius III, the Persian king, at the Battle

of Issus, a confrontation that assured Alexander's conquest of Asia, and his entry into the rich delta region of Egypt. However, it could just as easily be a composite of historical battles or symbolic of the end of the Persian Empire or of an ancient landscape devastated by war. Its various images as well as its background and foreground have been endlessly analysed in book-length studies. Ada Cohen believes that the mosaic 'built on a long and venerable tradition of battle imagery, which in the Greek world had a tendency to refer to historical occurrences without depicting them in any specificity.'³



FIGURE 11.13 The Alexander Mosaic



FIGURE 11.14 Close-up of King Alexander of Macedon



FIGURE 11.15 Close-up of King Darius III of Persia

ACTIVITY 11.3

- 1 Explain why the House of the Faun has been described as evoking 'the magnificence of an oriental palace'.
- 2 Identify what a faun is in Greek mythology.
- 3 What were the predominant themes of the mosaics in the House of the Faun?
- 4 Describe the significance of the Alexander Mosaic, according to Source 11.3.

11.2 Influences on public architecture and religion

TABLE 11.1 More Hellenic and Hellenistic influences

Public architecture	Religion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The geometric grid of Pompeii is believed to have been laid out by the Greek architect, Hippodamus. • the Doric Temple in the Triangular Forum • the Greek-like <i>stoa</i> or colonnaded portico of the Forum • the Pompeian theatres, where traditional Greek tragedies and comedies were occasionally performed • the <i>palaestra</i> (Greek <i>gymnasia</i>), which featured copies of Greek-style statues of young athletes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptations of the Greek pantheon of gods were worshipped both publicly and privately in Pompeii and Herculaneum. For example, Jupiter/Zeus; Juno/Hera; Minerva/Athena; Mercury/Hermes; Venus/Aphrodite, Bacchus/Dionysus and the semi-divine hero Hercules/Herakles • The Greek god Apollo became the patron god of Augustus, Venus the patron goddess of Pompeii and Hercules, the Greek hero, became the patron, and namesake, of Herculaneum. • The mystery cults of Dionysus/Bacchus, introduced from Greece, and the cult of Isis, originating in Egypt, were also worshipped both publicly and privately as they offered a more emotional bond with the gods.
<p>Epicureanism – originally a school of philosophy founded by Epicurus in the 4th century BC based on a belief that ‘pleasure’ was the greatest good – became one of the predominant and popular Hellenistic schools of thought in Campania. Also, Greek and Eastern slaves were employed on estates, in households and taverns, and many prostitutes came from the Hellenistic East.</p>	



FIGURE 11.16 The remains of the Greek Doric Temple in Pompeii



FIGURE 11.17 Statue of Isis from the Temple of Isis in Pompeii (National Archaeological Museum, Naples)

PART SUMMARY

THE NATURE AND RANGE OF SOURCES

- 1** Architecture
 - Private and public structures – many destroyed and unrecorded.
 - Some early interpretations based on inaccurate assumptions.
- 2** Formal inscriptions
 - Inscribed on bronze, marble and stone.
 - Civic charters, dedications provide evidence of the form of government, and the political and wealthy elite.
 - Epitaphs can indicate social classes and contribution to the community.
- 3** Wall writings
 - An extensive archive of electoral slogans, gladiatorial programs, rental and sale notices, as well as a wide range of graffiti.
 - These reveal city events, great and small, and very human activities.
- 4** Wax tablets and rolls of papyri
 - Tablets reveal business and legal activities.
 - Rolls of papyri reveal something of the Epicurean philosophy.
- 5** Decorative arts
 - Frescoes, mosaics, decorative household and garden objects.
 - New questions asked of these objects are showing that decoration of houses was more complex than previously thought.
- 6** Popular painting and everyday objects
 - These everyday objects, once disregarded, are now providing historians with a valuable picture of daily life and an understanding of the plurality of room use.
- 7** Human, animal and plant remains
 - Whole skeletons from Herculaneum.
 - Disarticulated bones and plaster and resin casts from Pompeii.
 - Reveal sex, age, health, appearance, genetic diversity, probable occupations, status and cause of death.
 - Skeletons and casts of animals.
 - Plant remains include root cavities, carbonised seeds and pollen.
- 8** Literary sources
 - Pliny the Younger's *Letters*, scientific and historical sources for the eruption.
 - Some are specific, such as Vitruvius' *De Architectura* and Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*.
 - Most are fragmentary.

CITIES AND THEIR POPULATION

1 Urban layout and facilities

- Walls and gates
- Grid systems of roads – *decumani* and *cardini*
- Paved roads, well-made footpaths, raised pedestrian crossings in Pompeii
- Good drainage system in Herculaneum
- Public water supply – cistern, lead main pipes, water towers, elaborate network of pipes, public fountains and latrines
- A jigsaw of various sized houses, workshops, shops, taverns and cultivated areas
- Forum in Pompeii – administrative, commercial and religious centre – a paved rectangular area, colonnades, statues, formal inscriptions and public buildings: temples, markets, a basilica (law courts and business transactions) and shrines associated with imperial cult.

2 Population and social structure

- No definitive figures for total population
- Campania – a melting pot of cultures, diverse genetic background
- Work of Estelle Lazer and Sara Bisel, based on a small sample, reveal a generally well-nourished and healthy population. Some incidence of age-related diseases and dental problems
- Structure of society – freeborn (*ingenui*), freed slaves (*libertus* and *liberta*) and slaves.
- Wealthy freeborn had a network of friends, clients and dependents. Some freedmen and women were very wealthy. Boundaries between freeborn, freed slave and slave were somewhat fluid.
- Archaeological sources suggest a strong female influence in Pompeii and Herculaneum: active in economic and religious life and took an interest in politics
- Two prominent male members of society: Marcus Holconius Rufus (Pompeii) and Marcus Nonius Balbus (Herculaneum).

COMMERCIAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

1 The commercial nature of the cities was based on agricultural production and fishing – wool, olive oil, wine, grain, vegetables, fruit, fish and crustaceans.

- City markets – Macellum: fish, meat and vegetables; Olitorium: granary; Eumachia building: possible wool and cloth; itinerant traders and pedlars all over the city on market day, particularly around the Forum.
- *Villa rusticae*: estates that produced wine and oil, e.g. the Villa of Pisanella at Boscoreale.
- Garum manufacture – fish sauce for flavouring food.
- Workshops (*officinae*) – washing and dyeing of wool and laundries, bakeries, tanneries, perfume, pottery, wheelwrights, ironmongers, goldsmiths, silversmiths and carpenters. The importance of craft guilds.
- Shops (*tabernae*) – numerous shops for selling foodstuffs as well as hot food snack bars (*thermopolia*), and numerous wine bars and taverns (*cuponae*).

2 Politics

- Intense political interest and competition for office indicated by the 2500 political manifestos.
- Eligibility for high office: men of honour, virtue and uprightness, as well as an expectation to make generous contributions to the city.
- The executive comprised a Board of Four (*quattuoviri*) or two pairs of officials: *duoviri* and *aediles*; every five years the magistrates (*quinquennial duoviri*) conducted the census.

- *Duoviri* administered the city (roads, markets, sewerage, the maintenance of order and sponsorship of spectacles and theatre) as well as being responsible for criminal and civil cases.
- City Council (*ordo decurionum*) made up of 100 former magistrates (*decurions*) who held their position for life. Debated on issues affecting the city and gave instructions to Board of Four.
- Election fever took hold of the city every March with each candidate's supporters writing slogans and manifestos on city walls.
- Women played a major role in influencing voters.

HOUSES, VILLAS AND DOMESTIC LIFE

1 Types of urban housing

- Small and medium-sized *taberna* (workshop) houses
- Average-sized (8–13 rooms) *atrium* houses
- Grandiose *atrium* houses designed for large numbers of visitors
- Terraced houses
- Apartments of various sizes in *insula* houses.

2 Architectural spaces and features of *atrium* houses

- Looked inward, opened directly onto street
- *Fauces* and *vestibulum*; *atrium*; *tablinum*; peristyle and garden; *triclinium*, *cubiculum* and marginal areas (kitchen, latrine and slaves' quarters)
- Mosaic floors, wall paintings (frescoes), decorative pieces in gardens, minimal furniture, water supply and water features, lighting, heating and security.

3 Types of villas

- Villa of *otium* (relaxation and leisure) – best example is the Villa of the Papyri at western end of Herculaneum and the magnificent suburban villas just outside Pompeii: Villa of Diomedes and the Villa of Mysteries
- Villa *rusticae* (a working estate combined with an elegant living area) – best examples are Villa of Pisanella, Villa of Fannius Synistor and Villa Regina at Boscoreale.

4 Architectural spaces and features of villas

- Villa of *otium* – often built on different levels with terraces, subterranean porticoes, belvederes, water displays, extensive gardens, thermal baths, swimming pools, marble floors, outstanding wall paintings, bronze and marble statues
- Villa *rusticae* – luxurious residences for owners and area for agricultural production (*torcularium*, stables and storage) and slaves.

5 Domestic life

- The home was the centre of family life, personal religion, business and political dealings
- Roman *familia* – a legal and social unit of wife, children (married and unmarried), slaves and freedmen and freedwomen
- *Pater potestas* – power of *paterfamilias*, *dominus* (master) of his slaves
- Importance of patron–client relationships – morning *salutatio* as a tool of social and political control and business dealing
- Duties of household slaves, nurse, *pedagogue* (teacher), cook, *dispensator*, *vocator*, personal attendants etc.
- Food and etiquette at dinner parties and banquets – a way of further networking
- Religious observances – daily prayers and sacrifices at altar (*lararium*) and hearth (Vesta).

LEISURE AND ENTERTAINMENT

1 *Thermae* (municipal bath complexes)

- Décor – vaulted roofs, mosaic floor, painted stucco
- Bathing elements – vestibule, changing rooms, cold bath, warm bath, hot bath and sweating room
- Under-floor heating system
- Men and women attended
- Other activities at the bath complexes – massage, gymnastics, sport, snacks, reading, poetry recitation and social interaction.

2 Theatres (two in Pompeii and one still underground in Herculaneum)

- Large theatre in Pompeii seated 5000, popular theatre – traditional drama, Oscan farces (*Atellanae*), mime and pantomime
- Small covered Odeon seated 1300 – recitals and lectures
- The magnificent theatre of Herculaneum – held about 2500
- Theatres were tiered with three seating areas – *ima cavea*, *media cavea* and *summa cavea*.
- Sponsors, impresarios advertised programs with or without *velarium* (awnings) and *sparsiones* (perfume showers)
- Actors – low social status but popular, many with large fan clubs.

3 *Palaestra* (open-air sports ground)

- Large *palaestra* in Pompeii – 107- by 141-metre rectangle, portico on three sides, shade trees and swimming pool
- Herculaneum *palaestra* – occupied a whole frontage
- Traditional sports: athletics, wrestling, javelin and discus throwing
- Youth games

4 Amphitheatre and gladiatorial games

- The great Amphitheatre in Pompeii seated 20000
- Spectacles held from dawn to dusk
- Gladiatorial contests and wild animal hunts
- *Editores munerum* (games' sponsors), *lanista* (owner of the gladiators), *edicta muneria* (program), variety of gladiators – infamy but celebrity status.

5 Gambling

- A passion in Pompeii and Herculaneum
- Games of dice, astragals (bones) carried out in taverns and small wine bars
- Betting on gladiatorial contests and cock fights.

RELIGION AND DEATH

1 Official cults

- Greek gods adopted and adapted over time
- The worship of the Capitoline Triad – Jupiter, Juno, Minerva and Hercules, Apollo and Venus
- Imperial cult – *Lares Publici*, the *genius* of the emperor, Fortuna Augusta
- Priests (*flamens* and Augustales) – correct rituals to the gods
- Impersonal religion.

2 Mystery cults – imported from Hellenistic East

- The cult of Isis (Egypt) and cult of Dionysus/Bacchus (Greece)
- Originally popular with women and lower classes but spread through society
- Emotional appeal – more personal involvement through initiation and salvation.

3 Private worship and ceremonies

- *Lararia* (household altars) – *lares* (household protectors), *penates* (protectors of the stores), *genius* (generating force of *paterfamilias*)
- Vesta – sacred hearth
- Worship of ancestors – wax masks kept within the house
- Rites of passage ceremonies.

4 Death, funerals and tombs

- *Paterfamilias* carried out correct death rituals in the home for members of his family, as well as his slaves and freedmen and freedwomen
- Essential to maintain connection between the living and the dead (ancestors' masks)
- Cremation and burial outside the city boundary
- Tombs rarely for individuals – family tombs varied in style: *schola*, monumental, altar, simple chamber and niche tombs
- Tombs a chance to remind people of a deceased's achievements and status
- Burial clubs to provide financial help for the poor and those without family to be buried properly.

THE INFLUENCE OF GREEK AND HELLENISTIC CULTURES

1 Origin of influences

- Hellenic Greek – predominantly from Magna Graecia
- Hellenistic from cultural contact with the post-Alexander kingdoms of Macedon, Egypt (particularly Alexandria) and the East through trade, foreign craftsmen and slaves.

2 General influences in private and public architecture and decoration

- Private: three orders of Greek columns; peristyles; colonnades, porticoes; large gardens and garden paintings, frescoes with Greek mythological themes, copies of Greek statuary and mosaics with Greek theatrical and Nilotic themes. Particular example: the grandiose House of the Faun with its unique Alexander Mosaic
- Public: Greek-style grid plan of Pompeii, Doric temple, Greek-like *stoa* in Forum; theatres; *palaestra/gymnasia* (Greek and Hellenistic idea of a 'sound mind in a sound body').

3 Religion and philosophy

- Adaptations of the Greek pantheon of gods were worshipped both publicly and privately in Pompeii and Herculaneum.
- The mystery cults of Dionysus/Bacchus, introduced from Greece, and the cult of Isis, originating in Egypt, were also worshipped both publicly and privately as they offered a more emotional bond with the gods.
- Greek Epicurean philosophy seems to have been popular in Campania.

Historical concepts and skills

All chapter activities address the following important concepts and skills that students are expected to master throughout the course:

Concepts

- continuity
- causation
- perspectives
- significance

Skills

- understanding and use of historical terms
- historical interpretation
- historical investigation and research
- explanation and communication

As you review the chapter, make sure you can identify where examples of each of these concepts and skills may have been called for.

Part review questions

Key terms and names

Use the following terms in a sentence for each to show that you understand what they mean:

- manumission
- *torcular*
- *thermopolia*
- *lupanar*
- strigil
- *bisellia*
- *lararium*
- *tesserae*

Historical concepts

Continuity and change

- 1 Explain the factors which contributed to changes in Pompeian housing over time.
- 2 Describe the changes which occurred in religion and worship over time.

Significance

- 1 Explain the significance of the *thermae* in the everyday lives of the inhabitants of Pompeii and Herculaneum.
- 2 Suggest the significant contributions the production of wine and oil made to the local Vesuvian economy.

- 3 Explain the significance of Mercury and the *lares* in the everyday lives of the people.

Perspective

Explain how each of the following regarded the cult of Dionysus and the Bacchanalia.

- Women in general
- The historian, Livy
- The Roman Senate
- The owner of the Villa of Mysteries

Historical skills

Analysing sources

- 1 List the factors needed to be taken into consideration when trying to 'read' the architecture of private structures.
- 2 How reliable are epitaphs as a source for the lives of different groups within society?
- 3 Explain why it is difficult to interpret the priapic and erotic art as an indicator of the presence of brothels in Pompeii.
- 4 Just how reliable would the egoistic scribblings of successful gladiators be in regard to the claims of their prowess with women?
- 5 In your own words, evaluate what the following sources tell us about politics in Pompeii.
 - 'Aulus Clodius Flaccus, son of Aulus, of the Menia voting group, three times chief magistrate, once in the special fifth year ...'
 - 'The fullones ask for votes for Olconius Piscus as aedile'.

Research and interpretation

- 1 Identify the purpose of the rich decorations in certain rooms in average and well-to-do homes.
- 2 Analyse the impact the Hellenic and Hellenistic cultures had on life in Pompeii and Herculaneum.

Explanation and communication

- 1 Explain why Professor Andrew Wallace-Hadrill believes that 'trade served as a leveller in Pompeian society'.
- 2 Assess the role of women in commercial and political life in Pompeii.

PART 3

Reconstructing and conserving the past

CHAPTERS



Chapter 12 Changing archaeological methods and interpretations



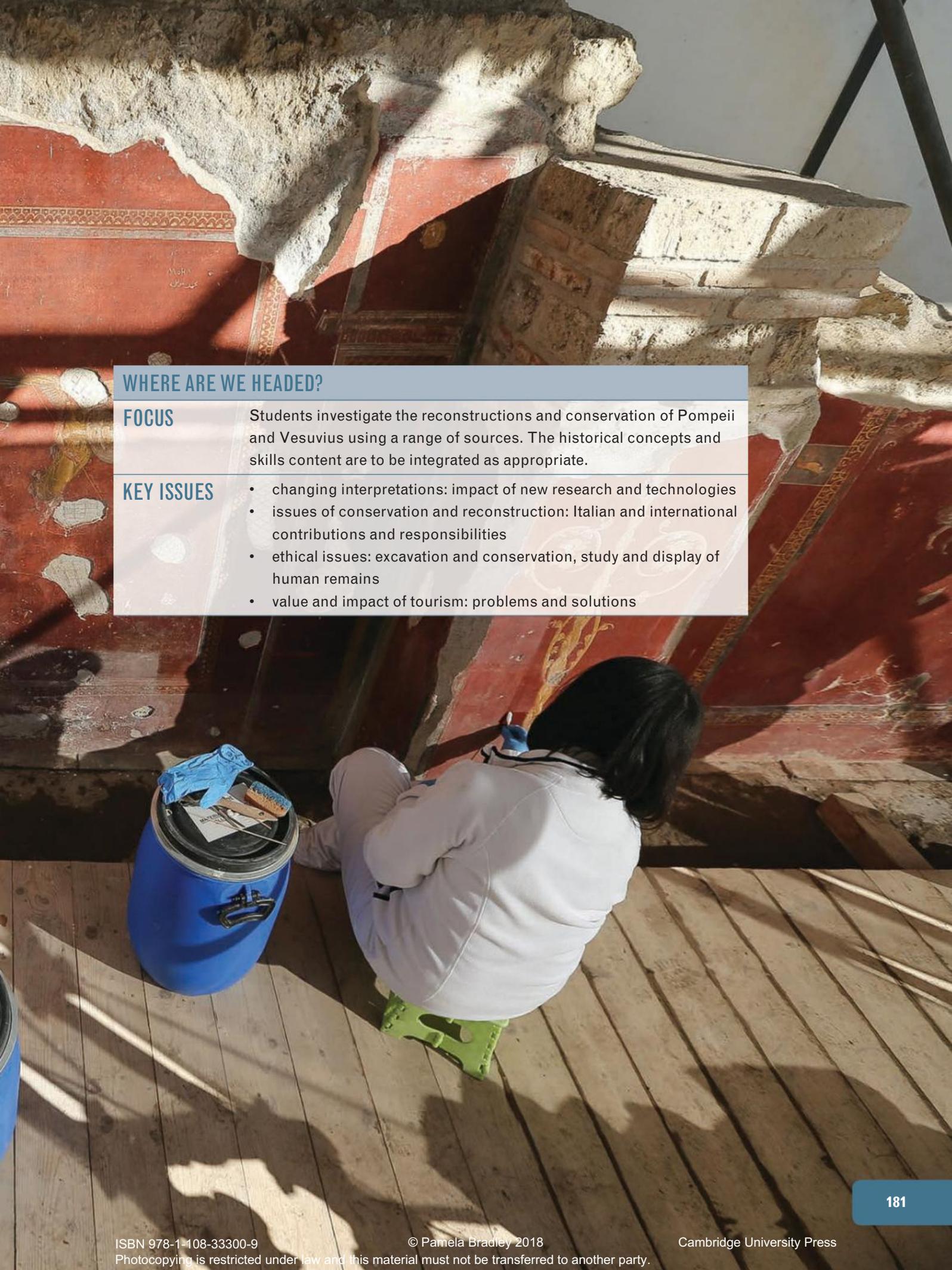
Chapter 13 A model of conservation-based archaeology at Herculaneum



Chapter 14 A dying site and the Great Pompeii Project



Chapter 15 Issues of mass tourism and display of human remains



WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

FOCUS

Students investigate the reconstructions and conservation of Pompeii and Vesuvius using a range of sources. The historical concepts and skills content are to be integrated as appropriate.

KEY ISSUES

- changing interpretations: impact of new research and technologies
- issues of conservation and reconstruction: Italian and international contributions and responsibilities
- ethical issues: excavation and conservation, study and display of human remains
- value and impact of tourism: problems and solutions

CHAPTER 12

Changing archaeological methods and interpretations

Our picture of Pompeii has changed over the years according to the questions people have chosen to ask of the evidence available to them and the issues they have chosen to analyse through new archaeological exploration.

SOURCE 12.1 Alison E. Cooley, *Pompeii*, p. 11



12.1 The 'new' archaeology

On his retirement in the early 1960s, Amedeo Maiuri realised that Pompeii was in a bad way, commenting that 'what is left to do is a complex, laborious and arduous, slow, and costly work of preservation, protection and restoration'.¹ Was he foreseeing the problems that the sites would face in the next half century?

Those archaeologists who followed Maiuri came to realise that because of the size of the site with its kilometres of streets, hundreds of roofless buildings and thousands of walls that had not been documented properly – if at all – they needed to suspend all large-scale open-air excavations. Their focus needed to be on:

- 1 preserving the fragile, finite and non-renewable resources already excavated.
- 2 documenting the masses of wall paintings and incised inscriptions that had not already disappeared. Many had never been documented properly, and a significant proportion were fading rapidly.
- 3 utilising a more selective sampling approach and careful probing beneath areas already exposed.
- 4 using non-invasive methods and building conservation archaeological projects from the first assessment.
- 5 remembering they had a responsibility to the public.

However, the first real metamorphosis in archaeology occurred when it 'transformed itself into a science'.²

The natural approach for an archaeologist who is about to undertake research on a site is to begin with a desk-based assessment, gaining knowledge from past documentation, maps and discoveries. In addition, understanding of the site is increased by modern (and often non-destructive) scientific techniques such as geoarchaeological core sampling, aerial photography, ground-penetrating radar, magnetic gradiometry, electrical resistivity surveys etc., that contribute additional help to understanding the layout of a site.

SOURCE 12.2 Domenico Camardo, *Archaeological and Conservation at Herculaneum from the Maiuri Campaign to the HCP*

ACTIVITY 12.1

- 1 Explain why the archaeologists who followed Amadeo Maiuri decide to suspend all large-scale open-air excavation at Pompeii.
- 2 Examine what is meant by 'the real metamorphosis in archaeology was when it transformed itself into science'.

Specialists and new technology

Much of archaeology is now carried out in the laboratory as well as on-site, and specialists in a wide variety of fields are constantly adding to our understanding of the material and human remains. These include:

- surveyors, architects, artists, photographers and urban designers involved in measuring, photographing, drawing plans and cross-sections, making impressions and analysing paintings, mosaics and the urban fabric of life
- chemical and physical scientists who study the composition of glass, ceramics, metal, mortar, plaster and pigments as well as organic ingredients

- anthropologists, **osteologists**, geneticists, forensic archaeologists and DNA experts who study the composition and diversity of populations, and the nature of diseases and nutrition, and reveal what the bones tell us

osteologists those who study the skeleton and its parts

- seismologists, volcanologists and geologists responsible for understanding earth movements, the phases of the eruption of Vesuvius as well as seismic and eruptive effects on buildings and people
- mechanical scientists and water experts who study the circulation of surface waters, collection and drainage systems
- botanists, zoologists and agricultural scientists, as well as dendrochronologists who study the natural environment, species of flora and fauna and their uses, the type of timbers used and the age of wooden remains
- historians who study the written sources to discover the social, economic and cultural life of the Romans
- computer scientists and program developers who facilitate the documentation, storage and analysis of information; draw plans and maps; and create digital models
- conservators and curators who safeguard the material and epigraphic remains to ensure they are available for the future.

Computers have played an invaluable part in recording, storing and comparing photographs, plans, maps and tens of thousands of finds. They provide instant, permanent access to virtually limitless amounts of information.

For example:

- A map of the town, the geology of the area and the plans of every building and street can be drawn and examined in detail on a computer screen.



FIGURE 12.1 A surveyor at Pompeii



FIGURE 12.2 The work of an osteologist



FIGURE 12.3 The use of iPads



FIGURE 12.4 The use of computers in restoration. © Leslie Rainer/Herculaneum Project, Getty Conservation Institute.

- If the foundations of a house are all that have been found, the computer can build up an image of what the house might have once looked like.
- They can store and compare detailed records of thousands of finds down to the tiniest fragment of pottery or a coin.
- High-resolution digital cameras and sophisticated computer technology such as the computer software known as **AutoCAD**, or computer-aided design, can create three-dimensional models, which has led to a fast-paced digital revolution in recent years.
- The use of iPads introduced by the Pompeii Archaeological Research Project: Porta Stabia in 2010 has speeded up the completion of forms, and are used for technical drawings, stratigraphic diagrams and excavation notes. They allow the rapid dissemination of information between experts in the field.

AutoCAD a software application for computer-aided design (CAD) and drafting that supports both 2D and 3D formats

Other technology includes:

- Infra-red photography and digital multi-spectral imaging, which allows the extraction of information the human eye fails to capture with its receptors for red, green and blue, has been used to reveal the writing on the carbonised scrolls found at the Villa of the Papyri, without damaging the scrolls.
- Medical imaging: X-rays and CT scans have been used to carry out non-invasive work on the fragile casts of Pompeii, especially to elicit new information from some of the epoxy resin casts of bodies.
- 3D laser reconstructions have been used on Pompeii's Forum.
- The techniques of forensic medicine have helped determine how people died, and how healthy they were at the time of death.
- Microscopy can determine the point of origin of building materials used in the cities.
- The techniques of dendrochronology have been used to establish dates when wooden objects were made and where the timber came from.
- DNA testing has been used to determine sex and hereditary illnesses of victims.

In 2017, CAT scans revealed that two bodies from Pompeii, originally found in the early 20th century and believed to be two women embracing each other, turned out to be men. When DNA analysis proved that they were not relations (neither brothers nor father and son), it was suggested they could have been gay lovers comforting each other during the eruption.



FIGURE 12.5 MRI scan of a resin cast (The Lady of Oplontis)



FIGURE 12.6 A scan of a child victim from Pompeii

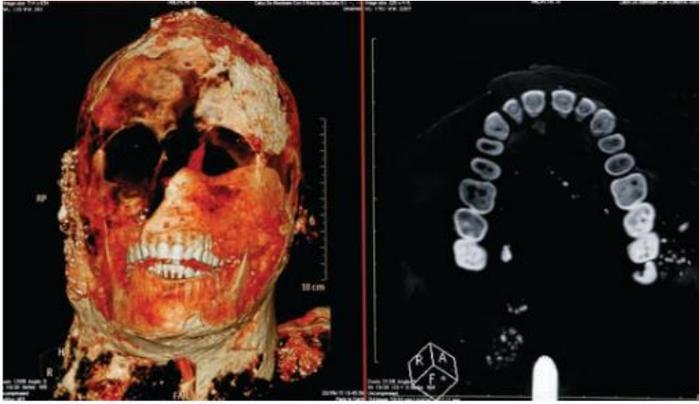


FIGURE 12.7 A scan of a skull



FIGURE 12.8 Examining a Pompeian cast with a laser

The use of anthropological and DNA research always reveals more. It is a fundamental instrument for scientific knowledge because it gives us certainty in the archaeological field in what would otherwise be only hypothesis.

SOURCE 12.3 Massimo Osanna, *History in the Headlines*, uploaded 23 September 2015

Archaeologists, no longer cloistered in academia, work as individuals in order to discover and distinguish themselves through the publications of their findings. They have moved into the world of resource management and into the political arena where they have a bearing on the integrity of their profession. With increasing specialisation and dependence on public funds, there are now ‘additional voices that have legitimate claims on what is being done to and with the archaeological record.’²³ Also, by working alongside those involved in conservation, they are gaining new types of archaeological information that would not have been accessible from a traditional campaign alone.

Today, archaeology is in the midst of a second metamorphosis. ... it is now being reshaped by external social, cultural and political forces. But it is still a work in progress.

SOURCE 12.4 E. Pye, *Caring for the Past: Issues in Conservation for Archaeology and Museums*, p. 11

ACTIVITY 12.2

- 1 Evaluate what Figures 12.3 and 12.4 reveal about the ‘new’ archaeology.
- 2 List the benefits the following brought to archaeology:
 - CT scans
 - DNA studies.
- 3 Use the text and Source 12.4 to suggest who the ‘additional voices’ with an interest in the archaeological record might belong to.

12.2 Reshaping the past

With the use of science, technology and specialist multidisciplinary teams from all over the world, an increased emphasis on documentation and new information gained from re-examinations of former excavated sites, new interpretations are being made. As well, the very richness of the Vesuvian area is

continuing to turn up new results. All of these things have allowed old views once based on subjective impression and ‘uncontrolled conjecture’⁴, and the story of the sites, to be challenged by:

- questioning widely-held concepts about Roman life
- asking different questions about the material finds: ‘There appears to be virtually no limit to the number of questions that could be asked of our archaeological evidence’⁵
- shifting ‘away from the old certainties of “fact” and “truth” towards multiple and varied interpretations’⁶
- recognising the ways in which the views of the past were affected by contemporary politics and ideologies
- accepting that while we try to make sense of the past, it is never possible ‘to know the past’.⁷

The past is shaped and re-shaped in the present, just as musicians interpret and re-interpret musical scores, and actors endlessly re-interpret Shakespeare’s plays. Different interpretations bring out different meanings.

SOURCE 12.5 E. Pye, *Caring for the Past*, p. 11

A COMMENT ON...

Science and new views on the eruption and fate of its victims

The contributions of volcanologist Haraldur Sigurdsson, Italian forensic archaeologist Giuseppe Mastrolorenzo, forensic anthropologist Dr Sara Bisel, physical anthropologist and archaeologist Dr Estelle Lazer and Italian archaeologists Luigi Capasso, E. de Carolis and G. Patricelli revealed:

- that the fates of Pompeii and Herculaneum were more similar than previously thought: that they were both devastated by pyroclastic surges and flows, unlike earlier views that Pompeii was buried by pumice and ash and Herculaneum by mud slides.
- that in the initial phase of the eruption, most of those who died did so because they stayed in their homes and were buried when the roofs collapsed under the weight of pumice.
- that most of the victims in the Vesuvian area, however, were overwhelmed during the second phase and died as a result of asphyxiation and ‘thermal shock’ while trying to escape.

Science and new views on diet and health

- More careful scientific analysis of seeds, microscopic traces of spices, eggshells and pig’s bones found in already-excavated houses, and the organic remains found in latrines, sewers (see Chapter 13 for remains from Herculaneum), cesspits and rubbish dumps such as the one at Porta Stabia are throwing more light on the variety of foods people ate, ‘beyond bread, fruit and cheese’.⁸ The percentage of seafood in their diets has been gauged by the testing of collagen in the bones of many skeletons indicating that it might have been as high as 60% of food intake. These studies have also allowed scholars to reinterpret earlier beliefs in the meagre average Pompeian diet on one hand and the luxury and excess of Roman banquets mentioned in the literary sources on the other, to present a picture of a more varied and healthy diet.
- The work of forensic anthropologists Dr Sara Bisel and Dr Estelle Lazer in their studies of skeletons revealed that the population were generally well-nourished and in good health, possibly due to a diet rich in seafood, low in sugar and high in fibre, and were taller than the inhabitants of modern Naples.

ACTIVITY 12.3

- 1 Describe the ways in which archaeology has challenged and reshaped the stories of Pompeii and Herculaneum.
- 2 List the categories of scientists who contributed to new interpretations of:
 - the nature and impact of the eruption of Vesuvius
 - the diet and health of the inhabitants of Pompeii and Herculaneum.

Contributions of documentation and long-term investigative projects to a new understanding of Pompeii

By aiming to fill the gaps left by inadequate recording of the original excavations, by carrying out archival research and analysis of the existing remains, as well as probing below the 79 AD level, archaeologists began to ask new questions and interpret the remains differently.

Documentation projects

- 1 Between 1978–86, the German Archaeological Institute set up the Houses in Pompeii Project to investigate and salvage architectural features, mosaics and wall paintings – ‘at least on paper’⁹ – of two houses first excavated in 1830 but left to decay: the House of the Ancient Hunt and the House of the Coloured Capitals, which had never been recorded.
- 2 In the early 1980s, the Neapolis Project, an independent Italian research institute, originally sponsored by IBM Italia and Fiat Engineering, was set up after the 1980 earthquake to create a series of interlinked electronic databases of all archival documents and archaeological remains.
- 3 In 1988, the Pompeian Forum Project, led by Professor John Dobbins of the University of Virginia – and including classical archaeologists, a specialist in Roman architecture, an urban architectural historian, an urban designer, engineers and computer specialists – produced more accurate plans and elevations of the surviving remains of the Pompeian Forum. These were supplemented by large-format black-and-white photographs of archival quality, and computer models which were used to stimulate discussions about Pompeian urbanism among scholars, and to use the Forum data to study the Pompeian response to the earthquake of 62 AD.
- 4 In 2004, the Archaeological Superintendency of Pompeii inaugurated the Via dell’Abbondanza Project to create a record of the facades of the main thoroughfare of Pompeii before they decayed. Using state-of-the-art surveying, photographic and computer equipment, it created photomosaics of the total 900-metre length of the Via dell’Abbondanza, providing a valuable digital archive for archaeologists, historians and conservators in the future.
- 5 Between 2004–10, Professor Rebecca Benefiel of the Washington and Lee University, USA, documented Pompeii’s graffiti by studying their spatial and social context. This study has provided a new understanding of the graffiti. Benefiel believes it was a respected form of writing; often interactive; sometimes found inside elite dwellings; it was acceptable for visitors to carve their opinions about the city into its walls; a way for people to display their cleverness; and it was much more common for Pompeians to express goodwill than abuse.¹⁰
- 6 In 2010, the Swedish Pompeii project, run by staff and students of Sweden’s Lund University and the Institute of Science and Technology in Pisa, Italy, produced ‘a computer graphic movie about the House of Caecilius Jucundus, using original finds, small objects and wall decorations found in his house and on an understanding of the whole surrounding city block’.¹¹



FIGURE 12.9 Part of the photomosaic from the Via dell'Abbondanza Project



FIGURE 12.10 A virtual reconstruction of part of the House of Caecilius Jucundus

However, despite all the documentation work carried out over the last 40 years or so, one of the problems for the future in the information age, according to Alexander Stille, is technological obsolescence and the prospect of 'fading words and images in odd-looking, out-of-date gizmos'¹² that depend on hardware and software that are no longer available. This will lead to questions in the future about how much and what kind of information to record and store.

ACTIVITY 12.4

Discuss what Alexander Stille suggests is a future problem facing both the storage of earlier archives and new documentation of the Vesuvian sites.

Long-term investigations of already excavated sites in Pompeii

For more than a hundred years, the excavators at Pompeii chose to excavate only to the level of 79 AD, restricting the city to a single-layer site and generating a false picture of its pre-Roman history. However, in the 1990s several international, multidisciplinary groups were given an already-excavated *insula* – rather than a single house – to study its evolution through limited stratigraphic excavation below the 79 AD floor levels and they began to ask questions such as:

- What was the city's origin?
- Who occupied or influenced it?
- How did it develop?
- How was the area within its early walls utilised?
- What historical events impacted it?
- How did it change when it came under Roman control?

TABLE 12.1 A summary of long-term, international and multidisciplinary projects in and around Pompeii

Name of project	Details
The Insula of Menander Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A British-led initiative comprising a three-stage analysis and documentation of a whole city block known as the Insula of Menander that comprised the grand House of Menander, other houses and shop spaces. • The project's aim was to redress the deficiencies in the earlier records of the <i>insula</i> prepared by Amedeo Maiuri between 1927 and 1933, which were 'hasty and bound to the year 79 AD'¹³ with little left in the way of documentation. Out of a total of 492 pages in Maiuri's original record of the house, only three pages were devoted to the identification of the different construction phases of the house. • The project was divided into three stages: Stage I of the project examined the architecture and structural history, Stage II studied the interior decoration and Stage III examined the loose finds.
The British School in Rome Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This was initiated in 1994 and led by Andrew Wallace-Hadrill in conjunction with the Department of Archaeology of the University of Reading and several Italian organisations. • Its aim was to take a single block of houses of 3000 square metres, excavated 50 years before, yet never published, and to see what could be now discovered about the history and life of the city. • The investigation revealed that Pompeii was not a city frozen in time at 79 AD. For example, new research into the Beautiful House of the Impluvium showed that it went back to the 2nd century BC, that during the 1st century BC it was remodelled with a new <i>atrium</i>, and its floors raised and paved with mosaics, and in the mid-1st century AD, possibly after the earthquake, the house was being transformed yet again, although much of the conversion work was unfinished when Vesuvius erupted.

TABLE 12.1 (Continued)

Name of project	Details
The Anglo-American Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Led by the University of Bradford, this project began investigating Insula VI-I in 1994, continuing until 2006. At the time of the eruption, the <i>insula</i> was a mixture of properties: the large House of the Vestals, the House of the Surgeon, workshops, four bars, an inn and upstairs apartments.• By the end of the 20th century the AAP field team had identified the earliest houses on the site, the appearance of the first commercial structures and the expansion of the House of the Vestals that included the first lavish displays of decoration, provision of water at the time of the Augustan aqueduct, the adjustments to the house's water supply as a result of the damage done by the earthquake and the addition of reception rooms, a grand staircase and redecoration just prior to the eruption.

By applying rigorous modern scientific archaeological techniques, we are asking new questions of the data collected, and the work is leading to new insights into Pompeian life ... These records will be used by future generations of archaeologists, who in turn, will challenge our story of the site and our methodology.

SOURCE 12.6 Archaeological Institute of America, *Archaeology's Interactive Dig*, 2004

These excavations prove that the city of Pompeii is still alive and that we must preserve it as it continues to provide us with material to research.

SOURCE 12.7 Massimo Osanna, cited in *The Telegraph*, 7 April 2017



FIGURE 12.11 An archaeologist working in an already-excavated *insula*



FIGURE 12.12 Digging below the 79 AD level

A COMMENT ON...

New thoughts on Pompeii below the 79 AD level

Long-term investigative projects, delving below the 79 AD level, have now revealed that rather than Pompeii being a one-layered town, 'frozen in time', it was an old settlement centuries before the Romans came on the scene. There is virtually nowhere in the city where traces of at least 6th century BC occupation cannot be found.

Mary Beard has described this interest in pre-Roman Pompeii 'as one of the boom industries of current archaeology'¹⁴, but interpreting the site in terms of these questions has not been an easy task since archaeologists were only working in small spaces below the eruption level.

By 79 AD, 'Pompeii had strictly speaking been a "Roman" town for less than 200 years.'¹⁵

ACTIVITY 12.5

- 1 Use Table 12.1 and Figures 12.11 – 12.12 to explain how the long-term investigative projects starting in the 1980s differed from earlier excavations.
- 2 List the projects' discoveries.
- 3 Use Sources 12.6 and 12.7 to explain their significance for the future.
- 4 Research evidence in Pompeii of Samnite influence from the 5th century to 80 BC when Pompeii became a Roman colony.

Continuing debate over the impact of the earthquake of 62 AD

For the last 50 years, debate has continued among modern scholars about the traditional 1940's interpretation by Amedeo Maiuri that after the earthquake of 62 AD, Pompeii suffered financial and economic decline during which the Forum was a builder's yard and that there was a so-called abandonment of Pompeii by the upper classes. According to Maiuri, due to the depressed economic conditions, the elite classes left the city and retreated to their country estates, leaving their houses to be occupied by the lower classes, who divided them up into smaller residences, workshops, shops, taverns and hot food bars. He described these new occupants as 'a motley crowd of enriched merchants, second-hand dealers, bakers, fullers, decayed patricians and thrusting industrialists dabbling in politics.'¹⁶

Questions raised by archaeologists since Maiuri about the 17 years prior to the eruption

- Was there just one devastating earthquake in 62 AD or a series of tremors leading up to the eruption?
- What was the real extent of the earthquake damage?
- What was the effect on town life?
- To what extent did the town recover before the eruption 17 years later?
- How many buildings were repaired before the eruption?
- Were there some that were never repaired?
- Were some repaired, then damaged in subsequent tremors and quakes?
- Was there a lack of funds for repair or were the city's authorities dysfunctional at this stage?
- Did many of the traditional aristocracy, who left the city for one of their other family properties, never return?

- Did the earthquake lead to the decline in some of Pompeii's more elegant houses as they were hastily converted into laundries, bakeries, inns, other commercial enterprises and rental apartments?
- Was there a change in the social structure of Pompeii?

TABLE 12.2 A number of modern interpretations of the archaeological record

1992	Archaeologist Penelope Allison saw the number of buildings that were still unrepaired in 79 AD and the incorporation of shops and workshops into some of the upper-class houses as confirmation of Maiuri's interpretation of economic decline and social upheaval.
1996	John Dobbins of The Pompeian Forum Project disproved the idea that the Forum was a builder's yard after the earthquake. He found evidence of 'urban renewal, a comprehensive and ambitious plan for the eastern side of the Forum, a design that involved blocking streets, linking facades, upgrading building materials and emphasizing the more prominent NE and SE entrances'. ¹⁷
1997	Roger Ling of the Insula of Menander Project believed that in the post-earthquake era, the owners of the House of Menander, rather than abandoning the town, levelled much of the house for rebuilding and 'were actively completing a large redecoration program at the time of the eruption'. ¹⁸
2003	<p>Alison Cooley, historian, said that though the Forum was not in a perfect state at the time of the eruption, it had been extensively repaired and that there were stockpiles of building material ready for use. She suggests that some of the repair work being undertaken at the time in the Forum may simply have been urban renewal, which would have taken place irrespective of the earthquake. Others have suggested that the damage may have been caused by tremors that occurred in the lead-up to the eruption rather than in 62 AD.</p> <p>Cooley's opposition to Maiuri's view regarding the conversion of 'patrician' houses into smaller houses and workshops, and occupation by lower-class 'squatters' due to the earthquake, is based on at least three pieces of evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the placement of artefacts, e.g. amphorae in the <i>impluvium</i> of a large house might indicate a more complex pattern of room usage rather than evidence of lower-class occupants • the rise of a freedman class and more social mobility in Roman society saw new families climbing the social ladder • the conversions of large houses cannot be dated exactly, and the upper-class owners may have been deliberately exploiting their urban property to extend their economic interests • repair work may have just been a renovation, not repair of earthquake damage.
2008	<p>Mary Beard, historian, believed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that there is no doubt that by 79 AD 'some public buildings were in ruins, some still building sites ... others very much back in business' such as the Temple of Isis¹⁹ • there was no breakdown in civic institutions at that time • that the possibility of post-eruption looting of marble from a restored Forum may have complicated any interpretation of its condition prior to the eruption.

ACTIVITY 12.6

- 1 Analyse Amadeo Maiuri's interpretation of post-earthquake Pompei.
- 2 List the evidence in Table 12.2 to refute this.

Investigative projects within the Vesuvian countryside

In 2006 an international team led by John R. Clarke and Michael L. Thomas of the University of Texas began a long-term investigation at the ancient site of Oplontis, 5 km west of Pompeii: the Villas of Oplontis Project. This focused on the study of two villas to see how they had changed over time and what they could reveal about the complex social structure of Roman Italy and the lives of its inhabitants. Photography and computer reconstruction have played a large part in the Oplontis Project at the Villa of Poppaea, creating a fully navigable 3D reconstruction.

The Oplontis Project is dedicated to applying the broadest range of modern archaeological techniques available today... many collaborators have brought their specialized skills to bear to taking the study and publication to new levels. These specialists include paleobotanists, chemists, geoarchaeologists, hydrologists, paleographers, and forensic anthropologists ... A further innovation will be our accurate, interactive 3-D models, allowing users to explore actual and reconstructed states of the buildings. The model links to our comprehensive database, containing a full range of documentation.

SOURCE 12.8 The Oplontis Project



FIGURE 12.13 The Villa of Poppaea at Oplontis

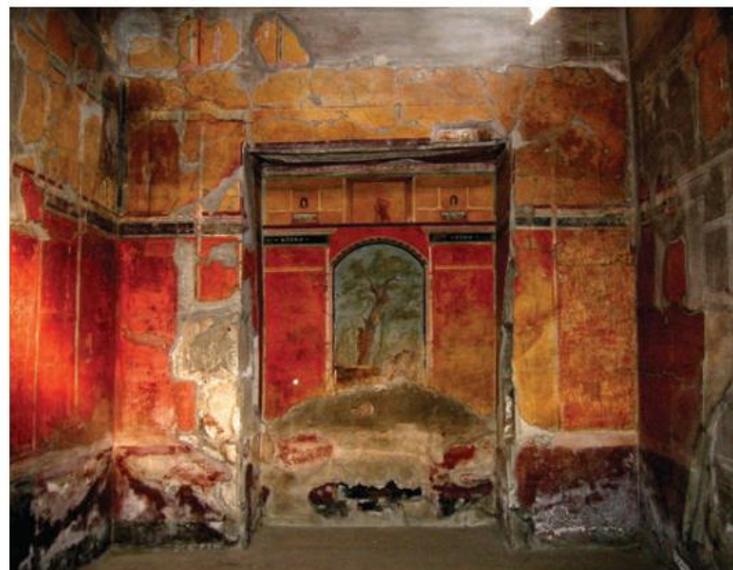


FIGURE 12.14 The caldarium of the Villa of Oplontis

In 2006, the German Archaeological Institute of Berlin collected data from the Sarno River plain. They took nearly 2000 core samples that revealed the topography and geology before 79 AD and gathered data on more than 150 Roman farms, throwing more light on land division, networks of ancient roads and agricultural production.

In 2007, excavation was started at Pollena Trocchia on the northern flank of Vesuvius at a site previously used as a Mafia rubbish dump. This is referred to as the Apolline Project, and after the most recent excavation campaign in 2011, a villa and bathhouse slowly emerged from the rubbish. It has led to some challenging new theories, such as the surprising fact that the volcano's northern slope may have been re-inhabited soon after the eruption.



FIGURE 12.15 A Roman villa discovered under the Mafia's garbage dump in the town of Pollena Trocchia on the northern slope of Mt Vesuvius

ACTIVITY 12.7

- 1 Use Source 12.8 to show how the Oplontis Project reflects the 'new' methodologies in archaeology.
- 2 Consider the challenging new theory the Apolline Project has suggested.

It is obvious that the richness of the Vesuvian sites, even those previously excavated, will continue to turn up new results that change the way we think about Roman life in the area. In the past 30 years, new forms of technology and research have allowed scholars to challenge many of the interpretations of earlier times, and as new methodologies are introduced to these sites, there is no doubt that more and more questions will be asked and new interpretations of the material remains formulated. However, despite the increase in information, not everyone comes up with the same interpretations and many debates rage on.

CHAPTER 13

A model of conservation-based archaeology at Herculaneum

Today, archaeology is in the midst of a second metamorphosis. After having transformed itself internally into a science, it is now being reshaped by external social, cultural and political forces. But it is still a work in progress.

SOURCE 13.1 E. Pye, caring for the past: issues in conservation for archaeology and museums, p. 11

13.1 A legacy of the past

From 1927–61, Amadeo Maiuri, using the latest techniques, carried out an ahead-of-his-time experiment in Herculaneum that involved simultaneous excavation and ‘restoration’. He was anxious to turn Herculaneum into a living museum, to tell a good story – though not always accurately – for the tourists, motivated by the need to maintain his high profile and to secure more funds for his ongoing work. Most of what we see today was re-created by him.

His process involved a massive concentration of effort on the excavation of a particular house with consolidation of urgent cases, followed by craftsmen who took care of the restorations, ‘furnishing’ the houses/shops, replanting gardens and setting up display cases with artefacts found within or around the building. Sometimes he left parts of the external walls open to give tourists a better view into the house or shop.

However, this process was carried out in a hurry, taking no more than two years before each building was opened to the public, while Maiuri moved on to the next one. Maiuri ‘assumed that the true challenge lay in exposing more to the sunshine, not in conserving it’.¹

According to Domenico Camardo, this allowed him ‘to create an almost ideal Roman city with his displays’.² Unfortunately, this led to theft of artefacts by tourists, so that the display cases had to eventually be removed and the finds sent into storage.

Despite Maiuri’s best intentions, Wallace-Hadrill says ‘what we see is not a town preserved by the eruption, but fragments painstakingly pieced together, stabilized, reinforced and restored by Maiuri’.³

A COMMENT ON ...

Restoration

Restoration refers to ‘any process which contributes to enhancing the visual or functional understanding of an object or building. It is intended to aid in the interpretation of objects’.⁴ However, it has the potential to be controversial – even close to faking – if it is taken too far and introduces new materials into the restoration process and is based on one person’s subjective view.

After Maiuri, the last major archaeological campaigns in the town were the:

- 1 excavations around the ancient shoreline in 1980 when more than 300 skeletons were discovered
- 2 excavations carried out in a corner of the Villa of the Papyri in the 1990s, which were permitted since it was discovered that parts of it were still in remarkable condition. Excavation at that time revealed two previously lower floors along the south-west-facing terrace, complete with frescoes.

Unfortunately, this campaign coincided with a failure of the authorities to maintain those areas already excavated in the town during the time of Maiuri, with the result that the excavation ceased and two-thirds of Herculaneum had to be closed to the public.



FIGURE 13.1 An example of Maiuri’s re-creation

ACTIVITY 13.1

Use the comment on restoration, Figure 13.1 and the perspectives of Domenico Camardo and Andrew Wallace-Hadrill to explain the legacy of Amadeo Maiuri in Herculaneum.

A crisis: its cause and effects

By the beginning of the 21st century, Herculaneum was in an acute state of crisis and was described at the time as ‘the worst example of archaeological conservation in a non-war-torn country’.⁵

The major causes of this crisis seem to have been:

- 1 the ‘uncontrolled ambition of the excavations of the 1930s’⁶
- 2 the failure to later use the profits of tourism to maintain the sites
- 3 a bureaucracy caught up in legislation dealing with corruption that made the whole maintenance system difficult to operate.

The effects of this negligence, summarised by Andrew Wallace-Hadrill included:

- collapsed roofs and broken tiles
- crumbling masonry
- disintegrating mosaic floors
- carbonised timber reduced to dust due to not being stabilised before being covered with protective fibreglass, creating a microclimate that caused the wood to crumble
- pools of water on marble floors
- rising damp on plastered walls
- fading frescoes with leached salts bubbling to the wall surfaces and flaking paint
- rampant growth of vegetation
- infestations of pigeons nesting in the ancient structures, and surfaces everywhere smeared with their droppings.

What particularly dismayed Wallace-Hadrill was the state of disrepair of two major landmark buildings: the House of the Bicentenary (first excavated in 1938) and the House of the Mosaic Atrium.

The former, he said in an interview to the London *Times* in 2004, ‘has hundreds of tiles missing from its roof. When it rains, water just cascades through it into the entrance hall. It makes me weep ...’.⁷ Also, the steel roof Maiuri had erected over a glassed-in loggia of the House of the Mosaic Atrium had collapsed, covering the floor with rubble.

Even the ‘new’ excavations of the 1990s, at the Villa of the Papyri, had been left exposed to the elements.



FIGURE 13.2 The corner of the Villa of the Papyri left exposed to the elements

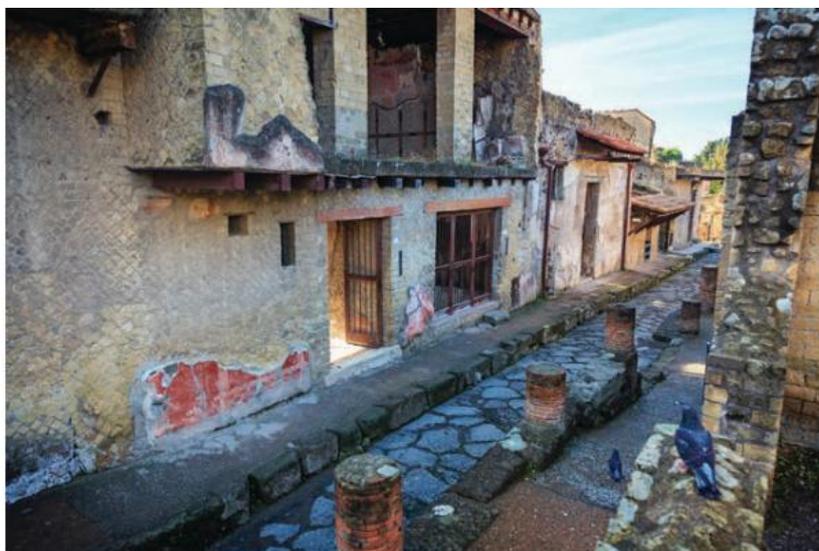


FIGURE 13.3 A street in Herculaneum



FIGURE 13.4 The effect of water pooling on floors



FIGURE 13.5 Destruction by pigeon droppings

A COMMENT ON ...

Pigeons in Herculaneum in the early 21st century

- Large numbers of pigeons at Herculaneum had nested in most secluded corners of the site over the years and their acidic excreta had a corrosive effect on floors and wall decorations. They also caused irreparable damage by pecking at the carbonised wooden beams, doors and window frames.
- Herculaneum – unlike neighbouring Pompeii, which was free of pigeons – attracted them because it lies within modern-day Ercolano, a populous suburb of Naples.
- Over the coming years, the authorities had to trial various ways to eradicate the birds such as removing their nests and installing nets, but were finally forced to use predatory falcons to discourage the birds from nesting in the area. Falcons were regularly brought to the site in order to simulate their permanent presence, a technique known as ‘territorial deterrence’.

ACTIVITY 13.2

Examine Figures 13.2–13.5 carefully and list the features of destruction that can be seen in each.

Fortunately, help was on its way and things began to slowly change in Herculaneum, when in 2000 the Packard Humanities Institute, a US philanthropic organisation led by the visionary David Packard, made a long-term commitment to Herculaneum by announcing its plans to give \$10 million a year for 10 years (\$100 million) to conserve the site.

A COMMENT ON ...

Conservation

Conservation is regarded as 'the action of safeguarding the objects and structures which comprise the material remains of the past to ensure those remains are available to use and enjoy today and in the future'.⁸ It is a cautious, collaborative task that involves assessing the:

- object's materials, rate of deterioration, original context and use
- causes of deterioration
- risks inherent in the use of various treatments
- procedures that will remedy existing damage and/or prevent future changes.

International codes and standards of conservation

Because careless conservation and restoration can cause damage, distortion or even destruction, they are now carried out according to codes of practice outlined in numerous international documents such as the Venice Charter, the Charter for the Protection and Management of Archaeological Heritage and the Council of Europe. The following are some of the principles of conservation noted in these charters:

- Responsibility for the object or structure should begin from the moment it is removed from its burial environment (on-site conservation) and continue through all the post-excavation stages.
- No treatment or technique should be used that will endanger the true nature of the object or impede further treatment and information retrieval in the future.
- Where possible, only the minimum amount of intervention should take place to secure a satisfactory result.
- Only those techniques that current research shows will alter the object the least and that can be reversed most easily and completely (principle of reversibility) should be used.
- All intervention should be detectable and clearly documented.

13.2 The Herculaneum Conservation Project (HCP)

In 2001, the Herculaneum Conservation Project was initiated to halt the serious decay and focus on conservation that could be maintained on a sustainable basis for the future. It was a public/private partnership involving the Packard Humanities Institute, the Special Superintendency for the Archaeological Heritage of Naples and Pompeii – a decentralised body of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities – and the British School at Rome. From time to time there was collaboration with other partners such as the Getty Conservation Institute and the local heritage authority in Ercolano.

From the beginning, it was decided that the practice of the HCP would be to focus on urgent site-wide interventions and repairs. To carry out its aims, there would have to be a specific set of procedures put in place before any real practical work began.

These included the need to:

- find a team of experts who would analyse the initial problems, facilitate prompt intervention in case of emergencies, research and experiment with solutions
- have 'a level of autonomy that freed it from state bureaucracy'⁹ and its endless red tape
- evolve a formula for future long-term maintenance of the site.

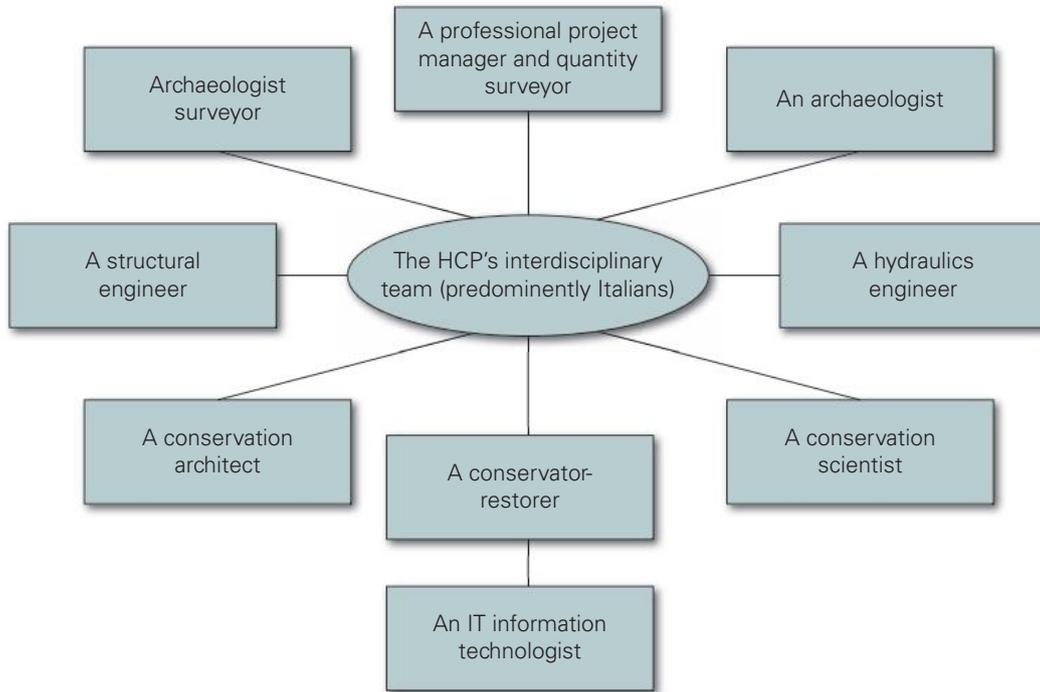


FIGURE 13.6 Diagram of the interdisciplinary HCP team

A COMMENT ON ...

The role of archaeologists and conservators in a conservation-based project

- Unlike in the past, the archaeologist does not lead the team; he/she is only part of the team who contributes to conservation decisions.
- He/she is necessary for an understanding of the site's features, knowledge of the historical importance of a find and features that help 'read' a structure correctly.
- In a project such as the HCP, the term 'conservators' does not just apply to those who restore decorative surfaces (frescoes and mosaics) but also to conservation architects and engineers who 'study the best way to guarantee structural stability and water management'.
- The benefits to the archaeologists in this holistic approach is that he/she gains greater understanding of the big picture such as overall decorative features, the analysis of building techniques and often gains more archaeological knowledge than would have been accessible in the past.

Based on remarks by Domenico Camardo (HCP archaeologist) in *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites*, 2007, vol. 8

The daily issues that come up on-site, whether during excavation or conservation, are dealt with by the archaeologist, the conservation architect and the conservator-restorer, and where necessary by the structural engineer, the expert in humidity and water, the chemist and geologist.

SOURCE 13.2 D. Camardo, *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites*, 2007, vol. 8, p. 209

ACTIVITY 13.3

- 1 Choose three important principles that modern-day conservators should follow. Explain why.
- 2 How is the archaeologist's role in a conservation-based approach to a site different to what it once was, and what benefits does he/she derive from such an approach?
- 3 Describe the main aim of the Herculaneum Conservation Project.



FIGURE 13.7 Run-off water collected in Herculaneum's ancient sea front

The water and rising damp eroded masonry, weakened foundations, waterlogged ancient timbers, brought salts out of the walls, destroying fragile wall paintings, and saturated the Suburban baths complex, causing deterioration of the vaulted roof of the *tepidarium*.

Initial steps in conservation

The members of the team realised from the outset that the problems were far greater than they had anticipated. The most urgent of these were:

- dealing with the water problem
- cleaning away decades of rubble
- stabilising (making safer) crumbling buildings and repairing/replacing roofing
- researching the degree and conditions of decay of decorative surfaces.

Dealing with the water problem

Rain and groundwater issues face most archaeological sites today, but in the case of Herculaneum this was made worse by a number of factors.

- 1 Herculaneum, a seaside town, was built on a sloping spur at the base of Mt Vesuvius and comprised a number of levels.
- 2 The ancient site was about 20 metres below the level of the modern town of Ercolano, formerly Resina.
- 3 The drainage system in the modern town did not function effectively, leading to a steady seepage into the ancient town below.

Every time it rained, the water pooled in low-lying areas and flooded the area that had once been the ancient sea front.

Because Herculaneum once had an efficient system of water drainage based on under-street sewers, a decision was made for resolving the site's present water problem by attempting to bring the ancient network back into operation. This involved:

- excavating the ancient sewers, which were approximately 2 metres beneath the city, and re-opening the conduits that drained the individual houses, shops and *insulae* above.
- clearing the area of the original sea front by digging down to the 79 AD level and drilling through the mass of volcanic material to the present shoreline several hundred metres further away.
- laying a network of drainage pipes both above and below ground level in the town and through the volcanic material to the Bay of Naples to drain the water away from the site.

Early records showed that some of the sewers had been penetrated in 1949 and by using remote sensing the team were able to locate their presence and estimate their size under **Cardo** III, Cardo IV and Cardo V – see Table 13.1.

cardo a street running north–south in a Roman town

TABLE 13.1 Sewers investigated

Cardo III, the first sewer explored	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This narrow sewer (60 cm wide and around a metre high) – just big enough to crawl through – ran straight for 200 metres. • When the road made a sharp turn, and descended to the beach level, the water plummeted down a vertical shaft to the foreshore. • Apart from the houses that lined the cardo, this sewer would have served the Forum Baths.
Cardo IV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archaeologists working on the nearby House of the Mosaic Atrium discovered the drainage channel for a latrine that led under the road surface, confirming the presence of a sewer which remote sensing revealed had about the same dimensions to the one under Cardo III.
Cardo V provided archaeologists with their greatest surprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This was a much larger tunnel than the others, constructed of masonry with a cement floor. • It was up to 3.6 metres in height and ran the entire length of a city block: the <i>Insula Orientalis</i>, a distance of 85 metres. • It had no exit as it was blocked by an enormous collection of organic waste 1.3 metres deep that had to be cleared, then collected to be analysed before any pipes could be laid. • It proved to be a monumental task to excavate. • Chutes from the latrines and kitchens above emptied into it, their sides encrusted with organic matter. • A side branch served the pool of the town's <i>palaestra</i> (a large exercise area).

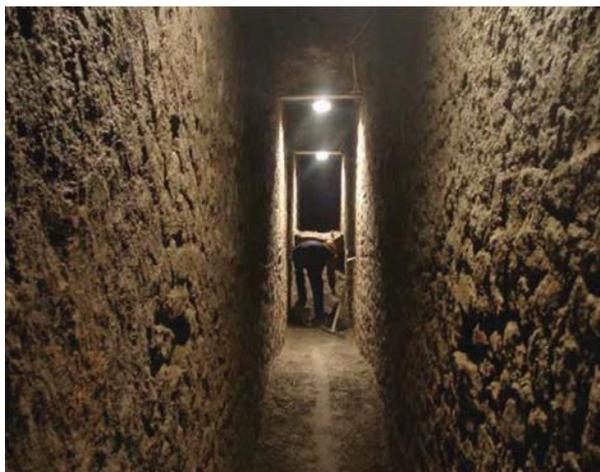


FIGURE 13.8 A sewer in Herculaneum



FIGURE 13.9 Working in a sewer

Surprises from the sewers

The work undertaken by the HCP in dealing with the water problem has not only preserved the material remains for future research, but 'has generated a whole series of archaeological results that arguably would never have emerged without the focus given to the conservation priorities'.¹⁰ For example, within the *Insula Orientalis*, above the large sewer, the conservationists discovered a second-storey latrine, the first to have ever been found at that height.

The large sewer in *Cardo V*, 'instead of draining into the sea, was more like a giant septic tank that collected human waste, food scraps and discarded objects'.¹¹ Archaeologists recovered:

- 750 sacks of excrement, the largest deposit of organic matter ever found in the Roman world
- 'remains of food items such as egg shell fragments, poppy and fig seeds, olive pits, fish bones and scales, pig, sheep and bird bones, with particular emphasis on chicken bones. More exotic offerings were represented by sea urchin spines and shells'¹² and even the remains of weevils once found in flour
- remains of rodents and insects that inhabited the sewers
- items such as broken pottery, bronze objects such as jugs, coins, a lamp, bone pins, necklace beads and a gold ring.

Studying this waste and linking it to the inhabitants or workers in the buildings above is allowing us to learn more about their lives, the types of food people ate and the work they did. This is even more unusual because it emerged from a conservation project.

SOURCE 13.3 Archaeology news network online

The opportunity to study the city 'from below' has allowed a whole series of building phases of the *domus* above to be confirmed simply by studying the position and construction technique of their waste outlets.

SOURCE 13.4 Domenico Camardo, 'Archaeological Conservation at Herculaneum: from the Maiuri campaign to the HCP', *Conservation and Management of Archeological Sites*, 2007, vol. 8, pp. 205–14

ACTIVITY 13.4

- 1 Review the decision made by conservators in Herculaneum to deal with the water problem.
- 2 Explain the importance of the study of human waste in understanding life in Herculaneum.
- 3 Identify the benefits for archaeologists which came out of tracing the ancient sewers of Herculaneum.

Discoveries on the beach front

The drainage conservation work down by the ancient harbour also generated a whole series of surprising archaeological results. As the conservation team cleared the area in front of the boat sheds down to the original black sand beach, they found that:

- the natural tufa bedrock of the ancient shoreline had been quarried in pre-Roman times
- in the period before 79 AD, the ancient shoreline had been affected by 'bradyseism', a phenomenon that occurs in seismic areas along coastlines where the sea appears to retreat and encroach
- the encroachment of the sea had affected the stunning Suburban Baths by eroding the tufa building material and forcing the ancient town authorities to block many of the large windows to prevent the sea from entering

- the magnificent House of the Relief of Telephus – thought to have been owned by Marcus Nonius Balbus – had a previously unknown extra floor that the owners had filled in and buried to protect the house’s seafront from the encroaching sea. This was discovered when a small trial trench was excavated near the base of the house for a structural assessment by engineers to see if the weight of the new protective roof they were constructing would be a problem
- the timbers and carved wooden panels that once formed the roof and ceiling of the lavishly decorated House of the Relief of Telephus had been perfectly preserved.

An ancient timber Roman roof

After 2000 years of lying four storeys below their original position, hidden under layers of hardened volcanic material, were 250 pieces of timber, including massive wooden beams 7 metres long, smaller timbers and rafters lying on top of roof tiles. Their position indicated that the roof had been torn off, flipped over and pounded into the black beach sands upside down by the pyroclastic blast that ended Herculaneum’s existence.

Carpentry marks were visible on many of the pieces and the joints were beautifully preserved. Despite the monumental size and weight of the timbers, not one nail was used and only a few iron clamps were recovered. The shape and angle of the roof joints indicate that it was probably a pitched roof supported by trusses.

SOURCE 13.5 Mario Notomista, ‘What lies Beneath: Raising the Roof’, *World Archaeology Magazine* Issue 42, August/September 2010

Also found were wooden panels, carved in ornate shapes and still with remnants of their original pigments – red, blue, white, black and touches of gold leaf – believed to come from the 9-metre-high ceiling of the villa’s dining room on the top floor. This so-called ‘Marble Room’ contained over 36 different varieties of marble from all over the Mediterranean on its floor and walls.

It is believed that the combination of being embedded in wet sand and then covered in an airtight layer of hardened volcanic material provided a unique method of protecting the timbers.

Before the timbers were removed, the remains of the roof were laser scanned to allow a 3D model to be made. Only then were the timbers lifted, placed in protective conditions and carefully monitored to ensure no further deterioration occurred.

Finally, painstaking work, carried out by HCP archaeologists, led by Domenico Camardo and Ascanio D’Andrea, ‘virtually’ reassembled the 250 timbers of the roof and reconstructed the elaborately decorated ceiling panels. According to Wallace-Hadrill, it was ‘the first-ever full reconstruction of the timberwork of a Roman roof’.¹³



FIGURE 13.10 The remains of the charred roof of the House of the Relief of Telephus found during conservation work



FIGURE 13.11 Remains of wooden ceiling panels from the House of the Relief of Telephus



FIGURE 13.12 Protective roofing, stabilisation and exposure of lower level of the House of the Relief of Telephus in Herculaneum

ACTIVITY 13.5

- 1 Discuss what the conservation work revealed about the previously unknown impact of centuries of seismic activity (before the 79 AD eruption) on the sea front and buildings of Herculaneum.
- 2 How significant was the discovery of the roof and ceiling timbers of the House of the Relief of Telephus?

Stabilisation of buildings

Much of the structure of Herculaneum's most famous buildings had to be stabilised in some way, both inside and outside.

Also, a steep escarpment that divides the ancient site and the modern town of Ercolano (originally the village of Resina) also needed to be stabilised. Many of the buildings that once made up the heart of the old village centre virtually overhung the archaeological site along the Decumanus Maximus. This posed a threat to those clearing rubble and carrying out conservation work in the northern corner where the ancient Basilica of Herculaneum, still only partially exposed, was located.



FIGURE 13.13 Stabilisation of the interior of the House of the Mosaic Atrium

Due to collaboration between the Superintendency and Comune of Ercolano, and the enthusiastic support of the town's mayor, a dozen or so of the decaying Resina houses were demolished, not only making work at the site safer but allowing greater knowledge of the layout of the Basilica Noniana, as well as leading to another surprising discovery.

As the conservation team was cleaning up around the area, they discovered what looked like a lock of red hair and a painted eye protruding from the volcanic material. It was a unique 2000-year-old statue head, in a remarkable state of preservation that still retained the original surface paint. It was dubbed 'the Amazon Head'.

decumanus an east–west oriented road in a Roman city



FIGURE 13.14 Decumanus Maximus overlooked by the dangerous escarpment that divides the modern and ancient towns



FIGURE 13.15 A complex stabilisation project on the Decumanus Maximus

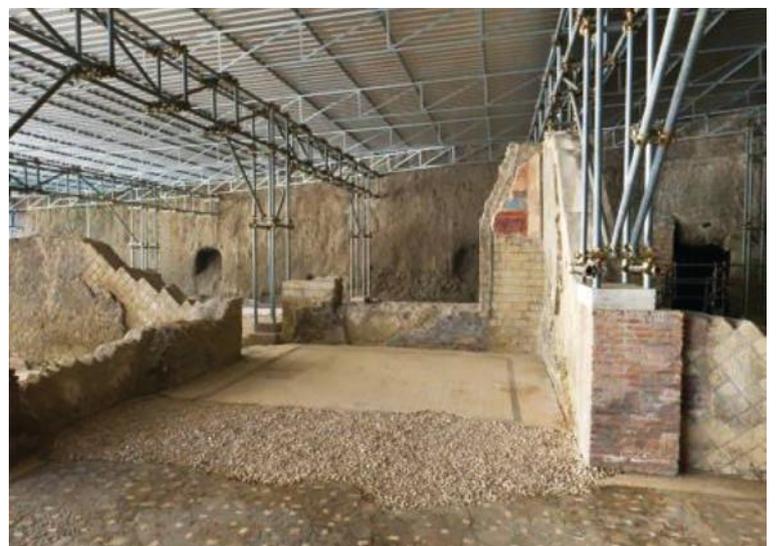


FIGURE 13.16 Stabilisation and protection of the Villa of the Papyri

Conservation of the decorative surfaces

In 2008, the Getty Conservation Institute began a collaboration with the Herculaneum Conservation Project to stabilise and restore, with non-invasive techniques, the badly damaged decorative surfaces.

For the first three years the members of the GCI carried out:

- site investigation
- scientific analyses
- conservation trials, all of which improved the understanding of the deterioration on the site and contributed to improved methods in coping with these.

A COMMENT ON ...

Disastrous earlier methods of restoration of frescoes

- Between the 1930s to 1970s, archaeologists applied layers of paraffin wax to the surface of frescoes to prevent the paint from cracking. It acted as a kind of glue that held the images together.
- However, it speeded up the disintegration of the frescoes because the wax bonded with the paint and when water became trapped behind the walls and tried to escape, it pushed the paint off the walls.
- Art restorers from the Getty Museum experimented with laser techniques to restore frescoes, employing a non-invasive approach to stripping away the wax.

The next phase of the GCI's work involved conserving the architectural surfaces of the tablinum of the House of the Bicentenary, and the first phase of environmental monitoring. This was completed by 2016.

This work included stabilizing the wall paintings – injection grouting detached plaster, consolidating powdering pigment, and re-adhering flaking paint – as well as removing cement fills applied in previous interventions which were damaging the surrounding original Roman plaster.

SOURCE 13.6 GCI News, *Conservation Perspectives*, 2016



When the Superintendency and the HCP finished the structural stabilisation of the House of the Bicentenary, the Getty team's next task was to:

- complete the conservation treatment
- implement 'passive measures to mitigate fluctuations of temperature, humidity and solar radiation on the wall paintings'.¹⁴
- conserve the mosaic flooring.

FIGURE 13.17 The Getty Conservation Institute's team working on frescoes. Getty.ed, © J. Paul Getty Trust / Francesca Piqué.



FIGURE 13.18 Repairing frescoes in the so-called College of the Augustales



FIGURE 13.19 Repairing a mosaic in the House of Neptune and Amphitrite

Debate over the future of the Villa of the Papyri

To dig or not to dig at the Villa of the Papyri has been the source of a certain amount of debate since the villa was rediscovered in 1986.

In 2004, after the birth of the Herculaneum Conservation Project, a group of scholars, chiefly associated with the Friends of Herculaneum Society (FHS), an Oxford-based charity, predominantly interested in finding the Villas' library in the lower levels of the structure, called for renewed excavation of the Villa. This call was led by Professor Robert Fowler, one of the trustees of the Society (see Table 13.2).

TABLE 13.2 Two sides of the debate over renewed excavation of the Villa of the Papyri

Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, Director of the British School at Rome and the HCP	Robert Fowler, Bristol University and Trustee of FHS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Villa of the Papyri is of an exceptional nature, but despite its importance, it would be scandalous to expose it to the daylight now, before we can guarantee that it would be saved for the future. • There is no urgency to dig at this point. 'The question is always whether it is more urgent to dig one particular site rather than another.' • 'It is one thing to bring an ancient site "back to life" by excavation, but to keep this delicate "reborn" patient alive is a massive challenge'. <p>Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, 'The Villa of the Papyri: Search for it now or leave it safe for future generations?' cited in <i>theartsnewspaper.com</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Villa is of unique historical importance. The chances are very high that much remains to be found in the newly identified and totally unexplored levels. The potential is staggering. • Eventually the villa could be put beyond reach by seismic activity or a collapse of economic power. • We owe it to the world to dig. <p>Robert Fowler, 'To dig or not to dig', <i>Herculaneum Archaeology</i>, Issue 1, 2004</p>

David Packard agrees with Wallace-Hadrill at the moment, and wants money devoted to preserving what has already been found rather than further excavations, but says 'when the Italian authorities are ready, my US foundation will pay for it ... for the present, conservation is the sensible priority.'¹⁵

However, in 2007, some limited excavation by the Superintendency did take place at the Villa, as part of its aim of returning this archaeological area to a manageable state. A room on a lower level of the Villa was more fully excavated, revealing stucco decorations that showed the room was being redecorated at the time of the eruption.

By 2012 there were still 2800 square metres left to be excavated of the villa. Any decision for further excavation would require a detailed feasibility study due to:

- the cost
- the fact that any decision is a political one since it would involve excavation under inhabited areas
- landowners in modern Ercolano are hostile to any extension of excavations as they do not want to surrender their properties.

ACTIVITY 13.6

- 1 Describe the benefits the HCP gained by building a bridge with the local community and how might this ensure that the site's value will be properly appreciated and safeguarded in the future.
- 2 Draw a diagram illustrating the activities carried out by the Getty Institute during their participation in the HCP.
- 3 Give your opinion over attempts to renew excavation at the Villa of the Papyri.

After the first decade

By the end of the first decade of work, the following were achieved by the HCP:

- The escarpment that looms over the ancient site had been consolidated.
- All the streets were re-opened to the public.
- All but a handful of buildings had been stabilised.
- Inadequate existing roofing was repaired or replaced.
- The original water drainage network was re-established, providing an outlet for water that threatened the site.
- 20th-century concrete lintels were reinforced.
- Wall paintings and mosaics were consolidated, and a monitoring system introduced.
- The archaeological area around the Villa of the Papyri was returned to a manageable state.
- The shoreline was restored with walkways so that tourists could stroll along the ancient beach, and see replicas of the skeletons in the boatsheds, still in their last agonised poses.

All of these were achieved by focusing on 'regular, unglamorous maintenance, cooperation with the state ministry and implementing low-cost, sustainable, practical solutions.'¹⁶

Praise by UNESCO

Although the HCP had still not solved every problem, in 2012 the Director of UNESCO was praising Herculaneum as 'a model whose best practices surely can be replicated in other similar vast archaeological areas across the world', most particularly at Pompeii.¹⁷

ACTIVITY 13.7

- 1 Refer to the wonderful and informative interactive website of Herculaneum Panoramas (images by Brian Donovan) and at your leisure navigate through many of the buildings and streets in the town which show the work done by the Herculaneum Conservation Project over time. This website provides the opportunity to see 360° views of the site and shows how the town has not only been conserved and safeguarded, but has also been made tourist-friendly.
- 2 Make notes as you 'move around' the town.
- 3 In an extended piece of writing, assess how successful you consider this project has been in fulfilling the international codes and safeguards of conservation.

CHAPTER 14

A dying site and the Great Pompeii Project

Just when Pompeii was being rediscovered, it began to die its second death.

SOURCE 14.1 Henri de Saint-Blanquat, 'The Second Death of Pompeii',
Science et Avenir, no. 469, 1986



14.1 A dying city: forces of destruction

In November 2010, as Herculaneum was being celebrated for its conservation turnaround, the world was outraged to hear – and then see the ‘shocking’ images on television – of the partial collapse of the 80-square-metre Schola Armaturarum Juventus Pompeiani (often referred to as the House of the Gladiators) on Pompeii’s main thoroughfare after several days of heavy rains.

Later that month, huge sections of a garden wall around the House of the Moralist (one of Pompeii’s best-known houses) collapsed on two separate occasions. Further alarm was raised in December 2010 when an ancient shop and the house of the Small Lupanar were reduced to a heap of mortar, and a column in the courtyard of the House of Loreio Tiburtino also collapsed.

These disasters led to international and Italian media hysteria, like the Turin *La Stampa*’s ‘Italy’s Shame’ and a political blame game regarding site management and the country’s inability to care for its cultural heritage. For example, Milan’s *Corriere Della Sera* newspaper described Pompeii’s condition as a ‘symbol of all the sloppiness and inefficiencies of a country that has lost its good sense and has not managed to recover it’.¹

To those in the know, however, these collapses would not have come as any great surprise. In 1986, Henri de Saint-Blanquat declared that Pompeii was ‘an archaeological disaster of the first order’² and by the mid-1990s, conditions had deteriorated so much that only about 14% of the excavated site was open to the public. There had been already 15 major catastrophes since 2008. The collapse of the building known as the Schola Armaturarum was, in fact, the third calamity it had suffered over the years and it was already in a weakened state.



FIGURE 14.1 The collapse of the Schola Armaturarum



FIGURE 14.2 Another view of the collapse of the Schola Armaturarum



FIGURE 14.3 Guards at Pompeii attempting to secure the site of the collapsed Schola Armaturarum



FIGURE 14.4 A street in crisis 2010–2011

The Via dell'Abbondanza is particularly prone to disaster because little of the north side of the street has been excavated apart from the façades of the buildings or one or two rooms, making the buildings highly vulnerable to the massive pressure exerted by the land mass behind. Heavy rains make matters worse.

SOURCE 14.2 Inside story online

Collapses happen all the time over this fragile site. Most fail to catch the attention of the press because they are not on one of the major thoroughfares along which tourists walk, or in one of the most frequently visited houses. Collapses are only the most dramatic form of damage.

SOURCE 14.3 Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, 'The 21st-century Fall of Pompeii', *The Art Newspaper* December 2010

A COMMENT ON ...

Pompeian masonry

- Much of the masonry of Pompeii was composed 'of rubble stonework which is highly vulnerable'. A building would typically have two walls of 'roughly-placed stones of volcanic tuff, with a core of smaller stones set in a lime-mortar grout'.
- This form of construction had a longish life if it was kept dry, but once water infiltrated the walls and it suffered 'alternate wetting and drying', the stones began 'to chip and flake', 'the mortar to decay' and the whole wall 'to lose cohesion'.

From *Scientific American*, 21 September 2017

Although the heavy rains in the area were certainly a factor in the collapses of 2010, the conditions that caused the collapses were widespread within the site. Past Superintendent of Pompeii, Pietro Giovanni Guzzo said the collapses merely 'drew attention to the state of neglect that has dragged on for years',³ and according to Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, 'what happens in Pompeii is writ larger and more catastrophic than in most places because of its sheer size and its complexity'.⁴

ACTIVITY 14.1

- 1 Describe in your own words what Source 14.2 and the comment on Pompeian masonry says about the vulnerability of the buildings, particularly along the Via dell'Abbondanza.
- 2 How does Source 14.3 explain the outrage expressed in the Italian press over the 2010 collapse?
- 3 Think about how often the inhabitants of Pompeii might have needed to repair their houses and shops and consider the question: Is everything meant to last forever?

Problems pre-2010

Since it was first excavated in the 18th century, for 200 years, Pompeii had been subjected to a whole range of destructive forces, both natural and **anthropogenic**, some unavoidable, others preventable. Pompeii's death was slow and sure; 'it did not occur in one blow'.⁵

anthropogenic originating in human activity

Despite sudden catastrophes, such as the allied bombing in 1943 and the 6.9 earthquake and its 90 aftershocks that rocked southern Italy, including Campania, on 23 November 1980 – causing columns, sections of walls and some upper storeys to crash to the ground – most of the destruction in Pompeii began the moment the site was excavated, exposed and neglected.

Natural enemies of the ruins

As soon as the excavated remains were exposed to the elements, changes began to occur, especially in those areas that were originally meant to be interiors.

Light faded the brilliant colours of the frescoes while carbonised objects deteriorated quickly. The strong sunlight in Campania and the ozone, created in large quantities in the highly polluted conditions of the area in the 20th century, speeded up the fading and bleaching of paintings and the breakdown of organic materials, while airborne substances such as gritty particles, carbon particles, oil droplets and bacterial and mould spores have caused untold damage.

In 1957, Karl Schefold carried out an inventory of all existing wall decorations and discovered that almost a third of them had faded completely. Twenty years later, J-P. Descoudres and Kay Francis found that of Schefold's original inventory of wall paintings, one out of every two that he had recognised as reconstructable was lost forever.

However, water – especially the winter rains – was the greatest threat to the site.

The fall in level from the northern to the southern side of the town is considerable ... in heavy rainstorms, therefore, the north-south streets become, in effect, raging torrents, since they are currently de facto the major drainage system ... the unexcavated parts of the site [embankments] which are of course at a much higher level than the excavated and conserved structures. These structures are then de-stabilised over time by this water flow.

SOURCE 14.4 UNESCO, Report of the Joint World Heritage Centre/COMOS Reactive Monitoring Mission to Pompeii 2013, p. 17

As at Herculaneum, water penetrated inadequate roofing and ran down exposed walls where the high calcium content of wall paintings dissolved, allowing soluble salts to come to the surface, injuring the paintings. Water also pooled on mosaic floors, causing damp to rise up the walls, and **acid rain** caused the discolouration, abrasion and corrosion of surfaces.

acid rain rain that is highly acidic (due to pollution), that is, it has elevated levels of hydrogen ions

Weeds and parasitic plants grew over many of the ruins, particularly those houses closed to the public, and in enclosed areas of bare soil such as peristyles and gardens. More than 30 varieties of weeds and brambles have been identified in Pompeii, including acanthus, wild carrot, fennel, fig, valerian and ivy. These penetrated plaster inner walls and clung tenaciously to outer walls, destroying the ancient stonework. Attempts to remove them caused the walls to crack, break away and crumble, allowing damp to enter.

Roots undermined the foundations of houses, destabilised walls, and buckled and loosened mosaic floors. As soon as a small piece of mosaic lifted from the floor, the damp encouraged the growth of weeds, algae and lichens. Thousands of square metres of mosaic floors have disintegrated under their attack. There were also infestations of fungi and algae in areas of poor drainage, and weeds clogged gutters and sewers. Insects and birds also weakened structures.



FIGURE 14.5 A faded fresco



FIGURE 14.6 A damaged mosaic



FIGURE 14.7 Moss and weeds in a back street of Pompeii



FIGURE 14.8 Rampant ivy clinging to walls

Many of these natural causes of destruction were exacerbated by other factors that came into play, and by the fact that the site is a large and complex one.

There is no single root cause to be found. Rather the failures that are evident in the system are the result of a combination of factors operating together ... most of the problems are the result of different actors operating at crossed purposes and often without realizing the consequences of their actions.

SOURCE 14.5 'Illuminating the dark side of Vesuvius', *Cultural Heritage and Human Development: Problems, Plans and Progress*

ACTIVITY 14.2

- 1 Explain how Campania's famous sunlight and dense population contributed to Pompeii's problems.
- 2 List the two factors mentioned in Source 14.4 that explains the water threat to the site.
- 3 Identify how the rampant growth of vines, weeds and roots affected Pompeii's stonework and mosaics.

Damaging restoration techniques

Archaeologists of the past contributed to the decay due to inadequate attempts at restoration and conservation, but Pompeii is not alone in this. At almost all archaeological sites around the world, archaeologists have inadvertently made mistakes in this regard often because restorers didn't have the benefit of our modern scientific knowledge. However, there were occasions when the authorities gave lucrative contracts under duress to local mafia firms that had no knowledge of restoration.

Some of these damaging restoration techniques include:

- 1 The replacement of lintels over doors and windows with softwood instead of seasoned hardwood resulting in rotting, mould and the infestation of termites.
- 2 The use of iron armatures in reinforced concrete used for repairs in the mid-20th century which rusted, split open the concrete and caused the collapse of both restored and ancient structures.
- 3 The use of modern mortar and plaster to protect ancient stone work. These contain more salts than ancient materials, setting up a reaction between the modern and ancient layers that cause cracks to develop, allowing water, vegetation and fungi to penetrate.
- 4 The application of paraffin wax and, even more recently, Paraloid B72 varnish on decorated walls, which sealed moisture within and prevented the plaster from breathing, further weakening the walls.
- 5 Repeated applications of wax over the years oxidised and darkened the pigments in the paint, and many frescoes turned a yellowish colour, altering their original appearance.
- 6 The use of Perspex cases that were meant to protect frescoes and graffiti created a humidity and dirt trap.

Some mistakes were notorious:

In the House of Meleager, in the north-west of the city, the roof timbers for a room 5 m by 11 m, designed to support the weight of over 5 tons of tiles, were erected with no triangular sections to give it strength. In spite of attempts to reinforce the roof with steel, the structure collapsed.

SOURCE 14.6 Henri de Saint-Blanquat, 'The second death of Pompeii', *Science et Avenir*, no. 469, 1986



FIGURE 14.9 A damaged and discoloured fresco from the Villa of the Mysteries with dark encrustations

ACTIVITY 14.3

Discuss the following paradox: Pompeii was preserved in the process of being destroyed. Is the reverse true now, that in the process of preserving Pompeii, it has been destroyed?

Poor site security and the impact of tourism

Looting and vandalism were always a problem at Pompeii. According to an Italian preservationist group, between 1975 and 2000 nearly 600 items were stolen from the sites. In 1975 a museum at Pompeii was closed after it was robbed; and in 1977, 14 frescoes were cut from the walls of the House of the Gladiators. In 1990, a storeroom was robbed at Herculaneum with more than 250 artefacts taken, and in a later robbery frescoes were cut from the walls of the House of the Chaste Lovers. Fortunately, these were recovered some time later.

It is likely that these cases were an ‘inside job’, possibly involving associates of the Neapolitan Mafia (the Camorra) who took a keen interest in the sites, infiltrating the ranks of the site guards. When the superintendent of Pompeii, Pietro Giovanni Guzzo, took a stand against the Mafia, several unfortunate incidents occurred. In 1997, the heads were cut from several Pompeian plaster casts; in July 2000, the guards at Pompeii went on strike and locked out 12 000 tourists, and in September the same year a fire was set near the House of Iphigenia. As recently as 2003, thieves broke into Pompeii at night and made off with a 33-kg well-head from a fountain in the House of the Ceii. It was the second major theft that year.

According to a UNESCO report, staffing numbers and qualifications were a continuing problem. Only 23 guards were on-site at any one time and they were far from vigilant, often seen gathering in groups of three and four, lounging in the shade. Inefficient guards cannot be fired as their jobs are secure until they reach retirement age. Also, security cameras were often out of action.

Many tourists in the past were also responsible for a certain degree of vandalism and behaviour that should have been picked up by security guards: climbing over barriers to get into forbidden areas to amuse themselves or for a better photo shot; collecting fragments of marble and pottery as souvenirs; dumping rubbish that attracts vermin and carelessly discarding cigarette butts, as well as damaging walls with their own graffiti.

There is a vast crowd of tourists. Among the buildings stands a private house, not open to the public, where in the atrium, or inner courtyard, the stone columns are still standing. It is impossible to keep an eye on everyone. Some of the tourists find their way into the courtyard, and, by way of a game, start to push against the columns. Eventually they succeed in knocking them down.

SOURCE 14.7 Henri de Saint-Blanquat, ‘The Second Death of Pompeii’, *Science et Avenir*, No. 469, 1986

Of course, there are other inadvertent forms of behaviour that many tourists are unaware of:

- the wearing down of street pavements, and in some cases exposing lead pipes, which eventually crack and break up
- hot, humid breath and camera flashes that cause further deterioration to already faded wall paintings
- resting on ancient masonry, as well as backpacks and bodies brushing against walls, columns and frescoes, causing perspiration and body oils to react with the ancient surfaces.

See Chapter 15 for a discussion on the broader issues of the impact, benefits and future of modern tourism.



FIGURE 14.10 Summer visitors to Pompeii



FIGURE 14.11 Discarded rubbish

ACTIVITY 14.4

In your own words, describe the negative impact that the local mafia (Camorra) and tourists have had on Pompeii.

Lack of maintenance and management problems

Pompeii had no overall maintenance program for half a century. It appeared to have been carried out on an ad hoc basis and, at the time of the collapses in 2010, there were only five designated, qualified maintenance workers for the entire site. According to Andrea Carandini, archaeologist and consultant in the Cultural Ministry, 'We're stunned when some walls fall down. But these are ruins not systematically maintained, so the miracle is that so few of them collapse.'⁶



FIGURE 14.12 Modern graffiti

Like most of the buildings in Pompeii, the stunning Villa of Mysteries was in desperate need of conservation: its famous paintings were crumbling, due to previous and haphazard attempts at restoration; mosaics had been damaged by the thousands of tourists tramping through the villa; and a joist holding up the protective covering over the house's peristyle had collapsed.

Some of the lack of maintenance problems were due to the divided authority between a superintendent and 'city manager'; a lack of funding and a skilled workforce; cultural bureaucracy and red tape: delays, due to worker disputes; outsourcing to contractors, who often overcharged the state on everything; and general corruption.

There was no constant monitoring of the site, no efficient drainage system, the site was littered with ungainly construction projects that squandered millions of euros but were never completed or maintained, and those houses and streets most at risk were closed to the public.

Other management shortcomings included:

- no requirement for checking in visitors' large bags and backpacks
- not enough security guards
- bogus guides and parking attendants
- packs of stray dogs that plagued visitors
- lack of adequate educational information and proper signage.

However, during Guzzo's period as Superintendent from 1995 to 2008, there were some improvements due to a change in the distribution of admission money whereby he had more in his budget, and



FIGURE 14.13 A soil slide



FIGURE 14.14 A neglected footpath



FIGURE 14.15 Column damage



FIGURE 14.16 A neglected street



FIGURE 14.17 Stray dogs in Pompeii

to a new decision to allow the Superintendent to seek private investment to improve maintenance and conservation efforts. He also cleared the area around the Forum of the numerous dogs, and provided visitors with maps with their entrance fee. Even so, by 2006 still only 16 monuments, houses and villas could be viewed.

Unfortunately, at the end of Guzzo's tenure as Superintendent, the Italian government appointed special commissioners under emergency legislation to administer Pompeii, and within one year, three superintendents followed in quick succession due to dodgy practices.

A COMMENT ON ...

Exploitation of the site for commercial purposes

- The increased ticket sales of 20 million euros annually was not used in preservation but in facilities to boost visitor numbers such as advertising campaigns, live performances in the restored Amphitheatre and elaborate multimedia simulations in some of the restored houses.
- An emergency fund set up in 2008 to shore up ancient buildings was spent on lights, dressing rooms, a sound system and a new stage at Pompeii's ancient theatre. 'Rather than creating a state-of-the-art concert venue as officials claimed, the work actually harmed the historical integrity of the site'.⁷
- In 2008, a Regional Heritage Councillor for Campania, Claudio Velardi, a political ally of the Prime Minister, told the media he would support fewer tourists and allow Pompeii to be used by companies like Google and Microsoft for private functions, and he would open it to film studios like Pixar or Warner Brothers to shoot films on the site 'for an astronomical fee'. He wanted to cap the number of visitors so that it would be easier 'to allow businessmen within the ruins to make money and hold events without being hampered by cultural fuddy-duddies'.⁸
- Though his idea was not accepted, Pompeii was already opened for private functions and performances and pre-election dinners for local politicians. Also, other companies have provided funds for projects that offer branding opportunities.

ACTIVITY 14.5

- 1 Draw a mind map showing examples of poor site management and maintenance pre-2010.
- 2 Debate the following:
 - The Pompeii authorities should or should not be able to utilise the archaeological site for concerts, private functions and filming.

The situation in the immediate post-2010 years

Even after the shocking collapses of 2010, there seemed to be little urgency to address the problems of neglect and misgovernment, and not much was done about the Schola Armaturarum except to block off the site and that section of the Via dell'Abbondanza.

In 2011–12 there was a call for the resignation of the Culture Minister, and in the following year, military police launched a criminal investigation after an independent study showed that the latest collapses were not caused by rain, but by negligence. Nine individuals appointed to rescue the Pompeii ruins were questioned, and a number placed under arrest for corruption.

These included:

- 1 Marcello Fiori, appointed special commissioner for excavations in 2009, whose administration was called into question, and who faced allegations that contracts for the restoration of the main Amphitheatre – with new seating and portable buildings for actors – were inflated by 400%.
- 2 Luigi D'Amora, the Director of Restoration at the time, on suspicion of fraud associated with refurbishment of the Large Theatre

- 3 a representative of the company that carried out the work, placed under house arrest on suspicion of corrupting a public official
- 4 the official who supposedly oversaw the waterproofing of the House of the Gladiators
- 5 the Head of Technical Services
- 6 a number of engineers and an architect.

Despite the recruitment of 22 new technical staff to strengthen the maintenance and management of the site, a UNESCO delegation ‘was reportedly shocked by the fact that, of the 22 new members of staff, only one was an archaeologist and architect’.⁹

From time to time there were demands from some quarters to completely privatise the site. However, these were dismissed as monstrous, with fears that Pompeii would become a theme park. Rather, the international community was urged to make even more efforts than in the past to protect the site.

ACTIVITY 14.6

Comment on the pros and cons of completely privatising control of archaeological sites like Pompeii.

14.2 The Great Pompeii Project

Years of mismanagement and corruption prompted the European Union to intervene in Pompeii on the initiative of the Italian government, who could not afford on its own to fund the emergency procedures necessary to save the ancient site.

The Great Pompeii Project was launched by the European Commission in March 2012, with a December 2015 deadline to complete an intervention program of maintenance, conservation and restoration. The project was pledged 105 million euros (78 million from the EU and 27 million from the Italian government) to carry out its aims and hopefully draw lessons from Herculaneum, although the greater size of Pompeii made comparisons with the Herculaneum Conservation Project difficult.

Objectives and plans

The Great Pompeii Project is a maintenance-based approach to restore the conditions of conservation consistent with the Guidelines for Conservation of the Archaeological Heritage of the Council for Cultural and Landscape Assets.

SOURCE 14.8 The Great Pompeii Project website

Five plans for the Great Pompeii Project

- 1 Plan for knowledge gathering: involved survey, investigation and diagnostic activities to identify critical needs and intervention priorities.
- 2 Plan for works in advanced project phases: involved the implementation of 39 projects already drawn up.
- 3 Plan for the use and improvement of services and communication: for visitors and promotion of the site.
- 4 Security plan: to extend the video-surveillance system and technical installations.
- 5 Plan for technological reinforcement and capacity building: involved the adjustment of technological instruments and equipment used for monitoring of the site and structures.

The main areas of intervention were to include:

- reduction of the hydrogeological risk by securing the unexcavated embankments
- securing the *insulae*
- consolidation and restoration of masonry
- consolidation and restoration of decorated surfaces
- protecting buildings from weather exposure, with a consequent increase of areas that can be visited
- strengthening of the video-surveillance system.

ACTIVITY 14.7

- 1 Examine the Italian response to the outrage and blame game after the collapses of 2010.
- 2 What do you think the local Mafia's reaction might have been to the offer of massive financial help to Pompeii from the EU?
- 3 In your own words, describe in half a page the chief areas of focus for the Great Pompeii Project.

Optimism, frustration, criticisms and success: March 2012–December 2015

The EU stipulation that the allocated funds must be spent by the end of 2015 put pressure on the Pompeian officials and, as had always been the case, projects got bogged down in endless bureaucratic squabbles and delays, and in the checks and balances needed to prevent contracts falling into the hands of the local mafia.

For example, the Casina del Aquila could not be opened as a restaurant because of contractual disputes, and the same was true of the museum that should have been located in the Antiquarium. There was also the ongoing impact of legal actions which prevented the conservation of some buildings. The Schola Armaturarum and portion of the Via dell'Abbondanza were still blocked off because it was regarded as a 'crime scene'. The authorities were urged to do as much as possible to speed up the resolution of these legal issues.

Although Massimo Osanna, the new head of the Superintendency, was confident that the Great Pompeii Project could 'fix the city', he stated that 'people need to give the project time to get up to speed, after which any controversy will hopefully be put to rest.'¹⁰ Architect Maura Anamaria said 'you cannot satisfy everyone's demands' as there 'are too many sites open and each one is complex'.¹¹

Perhaps they were thinking of the length of time needed to excavate, protect and conserve the *insula* containing the House of the Chaste Lovers and the House of the Painters at Work, which had already been underway off and on for over 24 years when the Great Pompeii Project was initiated. The House of the Chaste Lovers was opened temporarily in 2010 to a select group of guests, who were able to wander along walkways amid a forest of scaffolding and watch archaeologists at work. However, it was closed again after only eight months to allow experts to carry out restoration efforts. The structure is still closed and ongoing work is not likely to be completed until 2020.



FIGURE 14.18 Original protection of the House of the Chaste Lovers



FIGURE 14.19 A new incarnation of the restored House of Chaste Lovers and the House of Painters at Work when opened briefly (for eight months) in 2010

Although a longer time frame would be preferable, criticism of the pace of progress is unfair. High-quality archaeological conservation of an open-air site as vast as Pompeii inevitably has long lead times and plans for using the money are already well underway.

SOURCE 14.9 Massimo Osanna, cited in Declan Butler's 'Rescue of Decaying Pompeii Inspired by Sister City', *Scientific American*, 27 March 2014

In January 2013, Giovanni Puglisi, the frustrated president of the Italian National Commission for UNESCO, said, 'The funds are there. The work sites have to open. Enough of playing around with bureaucracy',¹² and by June, he issued an ultimatum that if preservation and restoration efforts failed to deliver substantial progress over the next two years, Pompeii could be placed on 'The World Heritage in Danger' list.

One good-news story at this time, however, was the year-long attempt between 2013–14 to restore the wall, floor decorations and structural integrity of one of the most famous of Pompeii's houses, the Villa of Mysteries.

A COMMENT ON ...

Saving a unique property: the Villa of Mysteries

- In 2013, the Director of Restoration on the villa announced that 'we are looking at every single surface to analyse the materials used, both ancient and modern, and to research the causes of the deterioration, as only then can we restore the villa properly.'¹³
- The restoration team used lasers for very precise cleaning of the layer of black crust that covered the frescoes. This process – a form of vaporisation – is known as photoblation. It is less time-consuming than more traditional methods, even where the frescoes are very degraded, and does not affect the layer underneath. The restorers used thermal imaging to assess the degree of decay in the walls and the paintings, and a drone to provide the first comprehensive overall view of the outer protective cover and to detect accumulated moisture.

Adapted from 'Saving the Villa of the Mysteries' in *Archaeology*, Feb. 2014

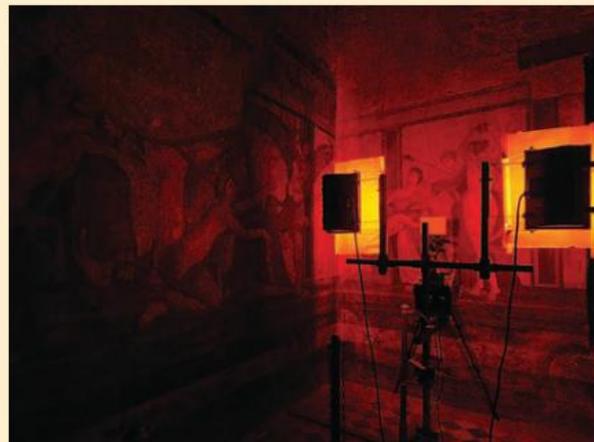


FIGURE 14.20 Restorers using lasers on frescoes in the Villa of Mysteries, 2014

As a result of the warning from UNESCO, the following year's monitoring mission by the joint World Heritage Centre and International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) found that the authorities in Pompeii had made some progress. They had added further professional staff: 23 archaeologists and eight architects, and had commenced on the first part of the important drainage scheme in Regions III and IX.

A COMMENT ON ...

The Project's drainage plan

- The GPP's long-term water plan was to drain Regions III and IX (the worst affected areas) by making use of the Conte Sarno Channel, first built in the 16th century. This 2.2-metre channel, predominantly underground, ran across Pompeii from east to west, reaching a depth of 16 metres under the Forum.
- The scheme would include a network of drains to be laid along the lines of the ancient streets and fed into the Sarno Channel.
- The plan was estimated to be complete by 2015.
- There was no further plan to drain other Regions within the time constraints of the Great Pompeii Project. They would be carefully monitored, and if work was considered necessary, a similar scheme to that already adopted would have to be considered in the future.

However, there were some reservations in this report:

- 1 The GPP still did not have an effective operating and risk management plan.
- 2 Nor had anything been done about the 'buffer zone' around Pompeii – considered necessary by the terms of the GPP to protect the setting of the site with 'regard to the visual links between it and Vesuvius'¹⁴ – which would need the agreement of the local municipalities.
- 3 Of the 13 'Houses in Peril' at the start of the Project, 10 were still closed to the public, either in various stages of restoration or yet to begin; two were partially opened to the public, and only one was fully open to the public with a permanent guard. The Schola Armaturarum and a section of the Via dell'Abbondanza were still closed off.
- 4 Of 12 other properties inspected by the commission, nine were being secured, two were opened to the public and one – The House of the Tragic Poet – was partially opened.

In 2014, the commission report announced a considerable improvement in the state of conservation, although some buildings were still at risk, and only 21 million of the allocated EU funding had been used in three years. As a result, the European Commissioner for Regional Policy warned Pompeii that it would lose the rest of Europe's portion of the funding if it did not complete the designated work by the 31 December 2015 deadline. UNESCO urged the Italian government to seek an extension. At the last moment, the GPP was handed



FIGURE 14.21 The extensive work on the restoration of the House of the Tragic Poet

a reprieve in the form of a two-year extension to December 2017, but with an important proviso that all future works must be contracted and started before December 2015.

The threat to withdraw their funding sent the authorities at Pompeii into a flurry of activity, and it became Massimo Osanna's ambition to continue transforming Pompeii from 'a chronic disaster into a peerless showcase' by 2017.¹⁵

The UNESCO Report of 2015 said that the Pompeian authorities had made excellent progress, and by the end of that year, in a great team effort and keeping to the timeline, they had opened dozens of construction sites and unveiled six more restored buildings to the public: the Fullonica of Stephanus; the House of the Cryptoporticus; the House of Paquius Proculus; the House Sacerodus Amandus; the House of Fabius Amandeo and the House of the Ephebe.



FIGURE 14.22 Restored vaulted corridor (Cryptoporticus)



FIGURE 14.23 Restored frescoes from the House of the Cryptoporticus



FIGURE 14.24 Restored laundry (*fullonica*) of Stephanus

A COMMENT ON ...

Whistleblowers

It was reported in the Italian media in 2016 that to avoid any likely crime or questionable activities in Pompeii during the following conservation programming period, a whistleblower website had been set up, and there was 'an army of spies recruited to work among the ruins' to keep an eye out 'for dodgy dealings involving routine criminals' as well as the local Camorra Mafia.¹⁶

ACTIVITY 14.8

- 1 Explain why the Superintendent of Pompeii in Source 14.9 thinks that the time frame originally given by the EU to spend the allocated funds was far too narrow and the early criticisms unfair.
- 2 Why do you think the granting of the extension of the project to the end of 2017 came with the proviso that all planned future work had to be contracted and started before the end of 2015?
- 3 Describe the major long-term conservation project implemented in this first phase of the Great Pompeii Project.
- 4 Look at Figures 14.20 and 14.21 and explain what this indicates about the extent and nature of the restoration program
- 5 Log on to the *Cities of Vesuvius* Interactive Textbook and access the Pompeii eruption. Note images of the House of the Cryptoporticus before restoration and then check against Figures 14.22 – 14.23. Write an opinion piece on what you think about the restoration project.

A showcase for the world

Much greater strides were achieved between 2016 and 2017.

- 1 By early 2017, a further 22 million had been spent, most of Pompeii had been secured and 30 more houses had been opened to the public. By 2018, the entire 105-million-euro plan will have been completed.
- 2 Osanna announced that the big building project for 2017 would be Regions I, II and III around the Amphitheatre – which were in a better state than the rest of the site.
- 3 Tourism had increased to 3.3 million a year.
- 4 It was announced that the House of the Chaste Lovers and other structures (the House of the Painters at Work) in the same *insula* would be opened between 11–14 February 2017 to the public to coincide with Valentine's Day, then closed again for further restoration, which was expected to be completed by 2020.
- 5 The entire area of Pompeii now features tourist-friendly walkways, wi-fi coverage and 3 km of pathways for those with disabilities. There are now new routes that can be followed around the site.
- 6 The ruins are enhanced by LED lighting, providing a modern night-time pathway with visual and auditory effects including voices from people of the past. Night-time visits, several times a week, were resumed in July 2017.
- 7 A new plan with work lasting another 2.5 years was introduced to complete projects such as the House of the Chaste Lovers (2020) and to implement the strategic plan for the buffer zone around the archaeological park, which includes Pompeii, Herculaneum, Stabiae and Oplontis. This will make the areas more accessible, promote tourism and bring about an economic recovery to the area.

ACTIVITY 14.9

- 1 Take a two-hour, 6-km walk around Pompeii via Virtual Treadmill Tours YouTube video (uploaded in May 2017), called *Ruins of Pompeii*, which will reveal some of the features of the restored Pompeii.
 - It is not accompanied by any explanations except the occasional inadequate labelling; it was taken prior to the daily onslaught of tourists (so is not a realistic experience); is accompanied by rather repetitive music, and features a temporary artistic exhibition of 30 modern giant bronze sculptures by Igor Mitoraj, placed at strategic locations within the site.
 - However, it is a useful walk to take as you enter the site via the Marine Gate and make your way up the slope to the Forum, wind your way through wide and narrow streets as far as the theatres, Amphitheatre and the necropolis outside the Nucерian Gate; take a peek inside some of the restored houses, note the amount of open space, and the restoration and maintenance work still in progress in some areas.
- 2 Make a note of what you see on your walk, what you wonder, what surprises you and how you feel about this restored site.
- 3 Record your honest impressions.

The question is: has Pompeii been brought back from the dead as claimed by many media outlets, or not? Unfortunately, not everything can be saved for the future, since conservation can only be carried out at considerable cost and compromise, and this raises the following questions:

- 1 Are 'some objects intended to deteriorate'?¹⁷
- 2 Is 'change an inevitable consequence of using the objects and structures that make up a cultural heritage'?¹⁸
- 3 Is 'it inappropriate, as well as impossible, to restore to a pristine state'?¹⁹
- 4 Does conservation and restoration simply offer 'a highly distorted, fragmentary version of the past'?²⁰

CHAPTER 15

Issues of mass tourism and display of human remains

The dead bodies of Pompeii have always been one of the most powerful images and attractions of a ruined city.

SOURCE 15.1 Mary Beard, *The Fires of Vesuvius: Pompeii Lost and Found*, p. 5



15.1 The impact of mass heritage tourism in the 21st century

By 2017, approximately 3.8 million tourists visited the cities of Vesuvius annually, and of those, almost 3.3 million crowded into Pompeii. These sites are not alone in the increase in visitor numbers; cultural heritage tourism is one of the fastest growing branches of tourism around the world, and especially at those sites that are on the World Heritage List.

World Heritage Sites are landmarks or areas that have been officially recognised by UNESCO on the basis of having cultural, historical, scientific or some other form of significance. They are regarded as being important to the collective interests of humanity and are legally protected by international treaties. ‘The very reasons why a property is chosen for inscription on the World Heritage List are also the reasons why millions of tourists flock to these sites year after year.’¹

Cultural heritage tourism is a branch of tourism which involves ‘travelling to experience places, artifacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past’.²

In 1999, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) issued the International Cultural Tourism Charter, in which it stated that ‘tourism appears to be the phenomenon likely to exert a most significant influence on Man’s environment in general and on sites and monuments in particular’.³ The following source outlines Principles 2 and 3 of that charter.

Principle 2: The relationship between heritage places and tourism is dynamic and may involve conflicting values. It should be managed in a sustainable way for present and future generations.

Principle 3: Conservation and Tourism Planning for Heritage Places should ensure that the Visitor Experience would be worthwhile, satisfying and enjoyable.

SOURCE 15.2 International Cultural Tourism Charter, ICOMOS, 1999

stakeholders individuals, groups or organisations who may affect or be affected by a decision, activity, or outcome of something such as a project

In 2011, UNESCO implemented the World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Program, which involved a new approach for a coordinated and cooperative framework for tourism and site management. This was to ‘foster increased awareness and a balanced participation of all **stakeholders**’.⁴

ACTIVITY 15.1

- 1 Explain why people around the world flock to World Heritage Sites.
- 2 In your own words, explain what is meant by ‘the relationship between heritage places and tourism may involve conflicting values’.
- 3 Discuss the main aim of the World Sustainable Tourism Program.

Heritage tourism in the Vesuvian archaeological sites

The modern phenomenon of mass heritage tourism at Pompeii has led to descriptions such as: swarms, flocks and hordes encroaching on and trampling through the site; ‘gaggles of tourists herded through at speed’⁵; tourists whizzing through a house in 30 seconds, endless queues in ‘must see’ properties; groups of ‘indifferent school children armed with clipboards’⁶; ‘coach parties bussed from Rome with aching feet and dwindling interest’⁷ and cruise ship tourists descending on the site for a 45–60 minute tour of the same old itinerary.

TABLE 15.1 Statistical data on visitor flows to Vesuvian archaeological sites

Year	Pompeii	Herculaneum	Oplontis	Boscoreale	Stabia	Total
2000	2 165 739	237 013	38 032	6 571		2 447 355
2001	2 255 365	249 364	36 944	8 942		2 550 615
2002	2 224 668	258 177	39 309	9 283		2 531 437
2003	2 112 412	281 676	43 045	13 350		2 450 483
2004	2 287 580	288 813	44 964	15 277		2 636 634
2005	2 370 940	284 129	47 600	14 214		2 716 885
2006	2 569 872	295 517	49 449	9 856		2 924 694
2007	2 571 725	301 786	47 351	10 975		2 588 472
2008	2 253 633	264 036	30 422	9 605	30 776	2 588 472
2009	2 087 559	292 936	40 209	8 188	32 951	2 461 843
2010	2 319 668	298 310	41 749	11 431	33 941	2 705 099
2011	2 352 189	307 941	41 718	8 544	32 669	2 743 061
2012	2 336 188	310 072	40 201	8 836	33 445	2 728 242
2013	2 443 325	356 562	45 891	8 160	33 521	2 887 459
2014	2 668 178	382 805	50 563	10 437	40 807	3 152 790
2015	2 978 884	410 069	54 104	9 254	52 861	3 505 172
2016	3 209 089	437 107	54 403	8 965	60 239	3 769 803

Twenty years ago, there was a dramatic growth in visitor numbers at Pompeii, exceeding its carrying capacity and putting pressure on the site, while other archaeological sites in the Vesuvian area were not included in the traditional tourist itineraries. Even though alternative itineraries were promoted ‘as a viable strategy to spread demand over space and time’,⁸ it appeared that many tourists were not interested in visiting other attractions, and some had not even heard of Herculaneum as it was never included in package tours.

Fast forward to 2013, and nothing much had changed. In the aftermath of a successful exhibition at the British Museum called *Life and Death in Pompeii and Herculaneum* that inspired interest in travelling to Pompeii, Mary Beard felt the need to promote the attributes of, and benefits gained by, a visit to Herculaneum, Oplontis and Stabiae.

The buried city of Pompeii always grabs the headlines – and the tourist hordes. ... Those who long to enjoy a glimpse of Ancient Roman life in relative peace and quiet, and without the jostling of fellow visitors, should plan a visit to one of the less well-known ‘Vesuvian sites’. None is quite as extensive as Pompeii itself, but they spring some memorable surprises and are not too difficult to reach by public transport. If you’re lucky, you may have one or two of these places almost to yourself.

SOURCE 15.3 Mary Beard, ‘Ancient Italy: Alternatives to Pompeii’

Changes in the nature of tourism and its impact on Pompeii

Campania today is just as attractive as a destination to the modern visitor as it was to the 18th- and 19th-century travellers on the 'Grand Tour'. The difference is that there is nothing really leisurely about the itineraries of most modern tourists, on cheap package deals, who feel the need to 'see' as much as possible in a limited time. This applies particularly to those who arrive in Naples on a cruise ship and from where there are any number of stunning locations to explore. If cruise visitors wish to visit Pompeii (no land excursions to Herculaneum or other ancient sites are offered), they can join one of the following set itineraries:

- Mt Vesuvius and Pompeii day trip from Naples
- Pompeii half-day trip from Naples
- Naples city and Pompeii half-day sightseeing tour.

The tour buses arrive in Pompeii *en masse* and the groups, due to their limited visiting time, follow the 'must-see' routes, in the process of which there is increased wear and tear on the ruins.

Even though the number of visitors are up compared to 10–15 years ago, the nature of mass cruise ship tourism, with its brief onshore excursions, has adversely affected the local economy and possibly also visitor experiences.



FIGURE 15.1 Crowds of tourists in Pompeii

It is almost impossible to cover all the attractions and get a sense of the whole site within the ambit of a single day, yet this is what the tourist industry and tourists expect to occur. Most tourists find the excavated city far bigger than they expected and the images presented fail to conform to the preconceived image of antiquity derived from knowledge of the Roman empire.

SOURCE 15.4 Ray Laurence, *Excavations and Tourists*, p. 12

Even to the present day, the question of the tourist capacity of Pompeii, and ways to deal with the ever-increasing visitor numbers, is still debated. Methods suggested to deal with this problem include:

- capping daily numbers
- limiting group sizes
- implementing a quota or permit system
- increasing fees
- reducing promotion of ‘must see’ properties
- restricting visiting hours
- redirecting itineraries within Pompeii; getting guides to promote different and less well-known parts of the site
- developing thematic routes
- diverting visitors to other archaeological sites with their untapped potential
- promoting alternative archaeological sites on the internet via articles, social media and YouTube
- liaising with local travel agents for more varied package deals
- developing infrastructure, such as better transport to less well-known sites.

If the heavy tourist traffic at Pompeii is not addressed, and barring another volcanic eruption, it is likely that ‘the well-meaning tourist will surely destroy it bit by bit’.⁹

The problem is that tourism is a two-edged sword. It has both positive and negative impacts.

TABLE 15.2 Positive and negative impacts of tourism

Positive impact	Negative impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides much needed revenue in the form of entry fees that can be channelled directly into conservation. • Helps the public – through education – become more aware of the value of heritage sites. • Can contribute to the local economy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Causes physical damage (see Chapter 14). • Increases costs of infrastructure development to provide tourist amenities. • Affects the visitor experience (overcrowding). • Causes (sometimes) an antagonistic relationship between tourism and conservation.

The paradox is that while we need visitors, and more especially their money, to finance conservation and research projects at Pompeii, it is the visitors who are speeding up the decay.

SOURCE 15.5 Herculaneum Conservation Project

While it is not enjoyable pushing through and jostling with the crowds, as well as joining endless queues, ‘at the heart of any understanding of Pompeii and its archaeology must be the demands of the tourist’.¹⁰ As such, there is an urgent need to develop a strategy for sustainable tourism to make the visitor experience ‘worthwhile, satisfying and enjoyable’.¹¹

ACTIVITY 15.2

- 1 List the percentage of the total number of tourists visiting the Vesuvian archaeological sites who chose to go to Pompeii in 2000, 2010 and 2016 and examine why this is significant.
- 2 Explain what Source 15.3 reveals about the benefits of visiting Herculaneum.
- 3 Would Figures 15.1 and Source 15.4 influence any decision you might make about a future visit to Pompeii?
- 4 Examine why promoting alternative itineraries probably makes little difference to the visitor numbers at Pompeii.
- 5 How are cruise visitors contributing to the wear and tear on Pompeii's ruins?
- 6 Look at the list of suggested methods to deal with tourist pressure on Pompeii. Which do you think might be the most viable in the near future? Explain why you chose these.
- 7 If increased tourism contributes to the local economy, why are the people of the Vesuvian and Bay of Naples area concerned about the future of their jobs?
- 8 Examine why authorities, guide books and tourist guides should stop labelling certain Pompeian buildings as 'must see' properties.

Visitor experiences

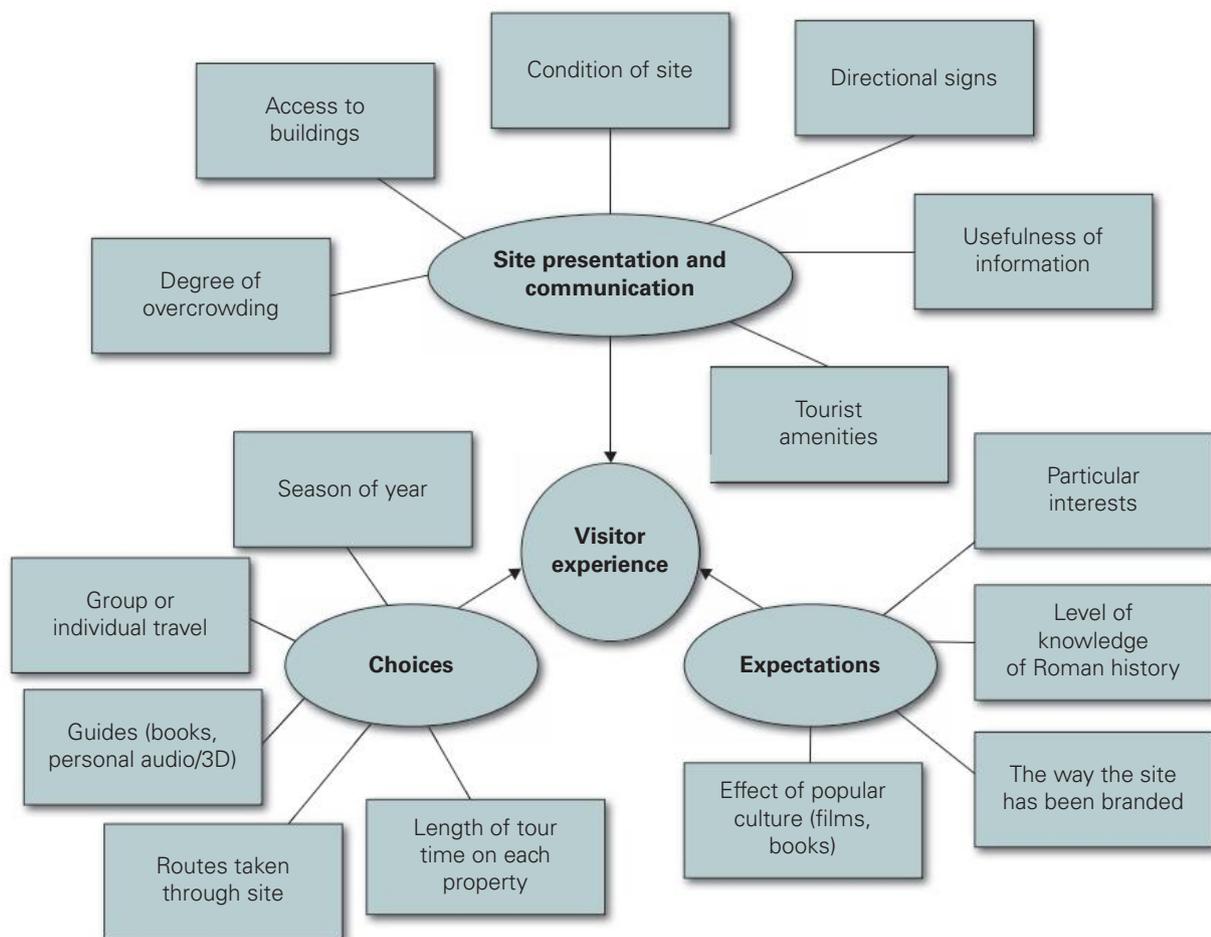


FIGURE 15.2 Diagram of factors affecting visitor experiences at Pompeii

We've all seen images of the haunting frescoes on the living-room walls of the villas of Pompeii's grandees, the statues of Dionysus and the Satyr or the goddess Isis that were found in the town, images of the baker's shop, the pub or the brothel. What we find instead is a fully functioning Autogrill: the company that has a monopoly on Italy's autostrada service stations runs a very useful, and I imagine extremely profitable, cafeteria bang in the middle of the site. And besides that, acres of crumbling, anonymous ruins, which we are barred from exploring by chains. There is also a fairly useful bookshop, but no museum to exhibit at least some of the site's most important relics, and only a handful of houses where the magnificent condition they were in at the time of the eruption can be appreciated.

SOURCE 15.6 Impression from a first-time tourist, Popham, 'Ashes to Ashes: Neglect Takes its Toll on Pompeii's Roman Ruins', *The Independent*, 3 July 2010

During an investigation carried out by Alia Wallace in 2011 called *Steps Towards Reconciling Conservation and Tourism in an Ancient City*, she conducted a number of interviews with tourists at Pompeii. It seemed that many were expecting some sort of wow factor from their visit. One told her, 'I think I was expecting to be in awe more than I was, I mean it was fascinating and really, really interesting, but I don't think I was blown away as I was probably expecting.'¹² Another interviewee did not think that the authorities had got the balance right between an 'on-going archaeological dig and a tourist attraction ... It did seem like it wasn't really cared for that much.'¹³

Other things Wallace found that affected visitor experiences were the size of most of the tour groups – about thirty people in each, that guide books lacked vital details and many audio-guides were out of date. Information presentations about various buildings focused more on technical details – okay for those interested in archaeology – and many assumed that most visitors had some knowledge of Roman history and mythology. Another tourist interviewed by Wallace commented, 'I just wish the audio guide went into the stories behind it, as well as the basics. The gist of what the places were used for.'¹⁴

SOURCE 15.7 Adapted from Alia Wallace, 'Presenting Pompeii: Steps Towards Reconciling Conservation and Tourism in an Ancient City', *Papers from the Institute of Archaeology*, 22 (2013), pp. 115–36

ACTIVITY 15.3

- 1 Do you think it is up to the individual to do his/her own research before visiting an archeological site?
- 2 Should visitors realise there will always be a certain degree of decay at archaeological sites?
- 3 Use Figure 15.2 to explain what factors can affect a visitor's positive or negative experience at Pompeii.

In recent years, it appears that visitor experiences at Pompeii have improved due to:

- the number of houses now opened to the public
- the extensive restoration work achieved under the auspices of the Great Pompeii Project
- the provisions of walkways, better signage and visitor information
- better site protection by security personnel
- an innovative way of 'seeing' the ruins that will help engage the visitor with the history and value of this unique archaeological site.

A COMMENT ON ...

A small-group 3D virtual reality tour

It is now possible for visitors to immerse themselves in a three-hour time-travel experience via special 3D virtual reality headsets as they wander about the site of Pompeii, as part of a small group led by a professional and licensed guide.

As these private tours move from one point of interest to the next, the guide gives a detailed and interesting explanation of the present site, the history and excavation, society and daily life of the people, after which the visitor can enjoy a two- to six-minute, 360° historical recreation of that site before moving on to the next. Audio commentary in the headsets – available in six languages – enhances the experience as the colours, sounds, people and places come to life.

Tourists can witness a sacred religious ceremony; the bustle of everyday commercial life along the Via dell'Abbondanza and the markets in the Forum; visit a shop, a bakery and a fast food stall; watch the Pompeians as they enjoy the pleasures of the Baths, the gladiatorial games, the theatre and the brothel; walk through one of the best homes in the city and marvel at its splendour; and witness the destruction of the city as Mount Vesuvius erupts.

ACTIVITY 15.4

- 1 Explain how important it is that the ancient world engages the imagination of tourists.
- 2 Write an imaginative account comparing your first visit to Pompeii in 2010 and a recent one in 2017.

15.2 The treatment and display of human remains

It is only fairly recently that **ethics** and archaeology have begun to collide, and today there is virtually no aspect of archaeology that is not guided by codes laid down in worldwide charters. Some issues, however, have become more politicised than others, such as the excavation, treatment and display of human remains.

It should be remembered that attitudes about what is right and wrong vary between cultures and change over time.

The modern issues relating to human remains arose predominantly through the concerns of indigenous peoples such as the Native Americans, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and other groups for

whom it is taboo to disturb the dead, and has evoked impassioned debate over the years. However, it is not only the pressure exerted by these particular groups that has brought about a re-evaluation of the treatment of human remains. 'Standards are products of their time and changing values mean that every generation of archaeologists inevitably regards its predecessors as crude and insensitive.'¹⁵

ethics a system of moral principles by which human actions can be judged as good or bad

Also, we live in an age of excessive political correctness and there are numerous minority activist groups around the world with vehement opinions and agendas on these matters.

Although, today, human remains are generally treated with respect as per the Code of Ethics for Museums, some people (including scholars) believe that all excavation of human remains should be stopped and that it is unethical to display those that have already been excavated.

These attitudes have a particular bearing on Pompeii and Herculaneum as:

- these ancient towns are possibly the foremost mortuary sites in the world for a study of a human culture and the impacts of a disaster
- the surviving skeletons and casts 'are unparalleled in the Roman archaeological record'¹⁶ as Romans were generally cremated
- the millions of tourists who come to see the bodies of the Pompeian victims are chief stakeholders in what happens in these sites today.

ACTIVITY 15.5

Topics for class discussion

- 1 The difficulties in drawing up ethical guidelines for the treatment and display of human remains.
- 2 The role played by stakeholders in ethical decision making.
- 3 The pressure by minority groups and radical activists to influence those decisions that will negatively affect the general population.

Past and present treatment of human remains from Pompeii and Herculaneum

There is no doubt that in the early days, excavators and treasure hunters showed little regard for human remains.

At Pompeii, skeletal remains were often destroyed in the rush to discover precious finds, while others were taken away as souvenirs. The English writer George Bulwer-Lytton is supposed to have kept a Pompeian skull on his desk that gave him inspiration for the villain in his novel *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1843).

Some of the early Pompeian watercolourists recorded the deliberate positioning of skeletons in tableaux to impress visitors to the site. Although these might have appeared grisly to those who saw them at the time, and evoked responses such as 'how dreadful are the thoughts that such a sight suggests',¹⁷ they would not have seemed particularly outrageous. Even in the Victorian era, a notable scholar presented regular Egyptian 'mumming unwrappings' to London's elite.

In the 20th century, Amedeo Maiuri, in his attempt to attract tourists to Herculaneum, used a skeleton of a young boy to completely stage a tableau in what he called 'the room of the weaving girl' attached to the House of Neptune and Amphitrite.



FIGURE 15.3 A watercolour of a staged tableau

The number of bones removed or smashed in the early days of excavation at Pompeii is not known. Some skeletons were piled carelessly in bathhouses during the later excavations where the bones became disarticulated and separated, making it almost impossible to study a whole skeleton, and museum collections of human remains were left in dark dusty basements for long periods of time.

Estelle Lazer recorded her discovery of the cache of bones in the Sarno Baths in her monograph, *Resurrecting Pompeii*.

Treatment today

The modern techniques for handling human remains can be seen in the painstaking restoration of Pompeii's degrading plaster casts. Unfortunately, many of the original plaster casts (only about 100, despite the approximately 1150 victims found) are now degenerating and teams of restorers in the laboratory at the Pompeii Archaeological Site spent a year in the careful and delicate work of repairing and preserving at least 86 of these casts. Some of these were being readied for a 2015 exhibition. Some restorers admitted to having been emotionally affected as they handled the casts.



FIGURE 15.4 Stefano Vanacore, director of the laboratory at Pompeii, carrying the remains of a child in his arms.



FIGURE 15.5 The degrading casts being prepared for treatment



FIGURE 15.6 Repairing damaged casts

ACTIVITY 15.6

Write a short opinion piece on Figures 15.4, 15.5 and 15.6.

15.3 Science versus cultural sensitivity

Since there is a generally-held belief that the public should have access to the stories human remains tell, their study has always been an integral part of archaeology. The following extracts reveal the importance of scientific studies in this area.

Human skeletons are indispensable for archaeological research. Ancient diets, disease pathologies, genetic patterns and environmental adaptations are but a few research areas that osteo-archaeological remains can illuminate.

SOURCE 15.8 R. Ford, in E. L. Green (ed.), *Ethics and Archaeology*, p. 139

Archaeologists and anthropologists have long considered archaeological human remains an important source of information about both biological and cultural aspects of prior human populations. Data derived from human populations of all ethnic and socioeconomic groups are critical to our understanding of many aspects of modern human biology as well as to the field of forensics.

SOURCE 15.9 A. Cheek & B. Keel, in E. L. Green (ed.), *Ethics and Archaeology*, p. 195

The study of human remains provides one of the most direct and insightful sources of information on different cultural approaches to death, burial practices and belief systems, including ideas about the afterlife.

SOURCE 15.10 From the British Museum's *Policy on Studying Human Remains*

In regards to the human remains of Pompeii and Herculaneum, the science has provided valuable information that ranges from health and diet, appearance, diseases, livelihoods, demographics, quality of life and the nature of the eruption.

These scientists believe that the potential value of the remains has yet to be realised, and that future scientists may need to check present interpretations, inaccuracies and bias when new techniques become available. They believe they have an ethical obligation to continue their quest for further knowledge, while abiding by the ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums that identifies human remains as a special class of 'sensitive materials' requiring a higher level of respect. They also believe that they owe it to the people of Pompeii and Herculaneum to present as true a picture of them as possible.

Today, however, the 'authority of science over the dead is not absolute'.¹⁸ Despite scientists' abilities to conduct a wide range of sophisticated and non-invasive tests, some people are questioning whether it is 'ethical to jeopardise the physical characteristics of bone for potential future analysis on elements that have not necessarily survived in the sample'.¹⁹

Modern archaeologists, conservators and curators do not operate in a vacuum any longer and must pay due regard to the sacred, spiritual and metaphysical beliefs of those cultures with which they come in contact.

The interests of the scientists and their rights of enquiry do not necessarily override the wishes of living relatives, direct descendants or 'cultural' descendants. As a result, many human remains have been repatriated from museums and universities around the world to their places of origin for reburial, but it is generally agreed that where human bones are of great antiquity (pre-1000), and where ethnic connections 'are lost in the mists of time', custody favours the scientist rather than any cultural group.

Even though the modern inhabitants of Campania have no direct cultural link with those annihilated in 79 AD, and the human remains are well over 1900 years-old, there have been some demands for the reburial of the remains from Pompeii and Herculaneum. These demands are based on the fact that proper burial rites were essential for a Roman to rest in peace in the afterlife. If this suggestion was ever taken seriously, it would pose questions such as: Would they be cremated or buried? Would they be interred in a modern cemetery or in one of the necropolises outside the ruins of Pompeii?

The question of custodianship of human remains seems to lie along a continuum, with direct descendants and cultural descendants at one end and museums as custodians of the general public at the other.

Where the custodianship of human remains is in the hands of museums and universities, storage should conform to sound conservation practices that protect the remains against physical deterioration: wrapped in acid-free paper, placed in protective containers with environmental controls, as well as being guarded against theft or malicious use.

ACTIVITY 15.7

- 1 Make a list of reasons why scientists have an ethical obligation to study human remains.
- 2 Suggest the two ethical provisos that should be put on any future scientific research into human remains.
- 3 Do you support the demands by some that the human remains being studied and displayed in Pompeii and Herculaneum should be given the respect of a proper burial for religious or cultural reasons?

Display of human remains in museums

Fortunately, great care and respect is now shown to human bodies from the moment they are removed from a site, to the initial analysis and the decisions made about the best ways to preserve them for the future. However, since the turn of the 21st century, most focus seems to have been on the ethics associated with displaying them to the public.

Judging by the numbers of people who flock to museums around the world where preserved human remains are displayed, it seems that most people are, for whatever reason, fascinated by displays of preserved bodies.

Is this fascination to do with the fact that they:

- provide a more direct and immediate link to the past
- allow us to see their humanity
- make us aware of our own mortality?

Or – although most people would not like to admit it – is it just some form of morbid voyeurism? Today, most museums follow the specific guidelines mentioned in the *Code of Ethics for Museums*.

Human remains, and materials of sacred significance must be displayed in a manner consistent with professional standards and, where known, taking into account the interests and beliefs of members of the community, ethnic or religious groups from whom the objects originated. They must be presented with great tact and respect for the feelings of human dignity held by all people.

SOURCE 15.11 *Code of Ethics for Museums*, 2004, p. 9

This Code of Ethics does not ban displays of human remains, but requires that every effort should be made to avoid giving offence. For example:

- 'No ethnic identification should be affixed if it is demeaning, or if no useful purpose is served.'²⁰
- The sensitivities of certain religious groups such as Jews and Muslims, who object to being in close proximity to human remains, should be taken into account, as should the interests of children.
- They should be positioned in an area away from the main exhibition with clear notices to ensure that no one enters a room displaying human remains without adequate warning.

Also, careful attention should be given to the context in which they are displayed and the number of viewers allowed at any one time.

Even where all these things are taken into account, there are still those who believe that these types of displays are disrespectful and there has been an increase in pressure from vocal minorities to hide away all human remains. Some curators have become oversensitive, and despite the popularity of their displays, are beginning to change their policies and store human remains away from the general public.

This is not driven by public demand, but professional insecurity. Unfortunately, it will penalise the millions of people who enjoy learning from the display of human remains. It will also impact detrimentally on the research environment, making it more difficult to study this important material.

SOURCE 15.12 Dr T. Jenkins, 'Contesting Human Remains in Museum Collections', 2010

The open-air museums of Pompeii and Herculaneum

Many people would agree that one of the most fascinating and moving aspects of a visit to Pompeii today is the chance to see the poignant plaster casts of the victims displayed in a number of locations. They 'have always been one of the most powerful images'²¹ of the site, and even the plaster casts of animals are evocative.

Is the popularity of the displays of casts due to the factors already mentioned on p. 241, or could it be that they remind us of the current threats of the same sort of thing happening again, since another eruption is long overdue? Does their fate resonate with us in the modern world as we are bombarded almost daily with horrifying images on TV of people suffering during natural catastrophes?

The source below suggests further reasons why these casts might appeal to visitors.

Voyeurism, pathos and ghoulish prurience certainly all contribute to the appeal of these casts. ... But ghoulishness is not the whole story: For the impact of these victims (whether fully cast in plaster or not) comes also from the sense of immediate contact with the ancient world they offer, the human narratives they allow us to reconstruct, as well as the choices, decisions and hopes of real people with whom we can empathise across the millennia.

SOURCE 15.13 Mary Beard, *The Fires of Vesuvius: Pompeii Lost and Found*, p. 7

Although these casts reveal more than anything else the full horror of those fateful 18 hours in August 79 AD, they are intended to help the general public understand Fiorelli's unique contribution to archaeology and the tragic deaths of the inhabitants of the city.

Despite the evidence of the pain and suffering experienced – which hopefully might cause people to reflect – and the fact that the casts contain the remains of bones, generally they do not offend, although they can certainly disturb.



FIGURE 15.7 Unacceptable storage/display of cast

It is a disturbing sight to encounter these bodies tormented with suffering, anguish and fear, and petrified by suffocation in their appalling postures, each of which reveals the pangs of an agony individually lived through, the horror of a death swift or slow as the case varied, but inexorable.

SOURCE 15.14 M. Brion, *Pompeii and Herculaneum: The Glory and the Grief*, p. 35

Many of the casts were once displayed in the Pompeian Museum which was closed in 1975 when thieves broke in and looted it, after which they were stored, less than adequately, in the Olitorium. Many of them are now in the Naples Archaeological Museum, while others are displayed at various sites around Pompeii. Thirteen casts of fugitives who sought shelter in a fruit orchard, the Garden of the Fugitives – still one of the most popular sites in Pompeii – are now safely and more sensitively displayed in a specially-built structure with large viewing windows.



FIGURE 15.8 A victim temporarily stored in the Forum Olitorium



FIGURE 15.9 The new Garden of the Fugitives display

The skeletons from the Herculaneum beach and boatsheds presented more of a problem for those involved in excavation. Sara Bisel wondered if the bones should be re-articulated and displayed in an appropriate display in the Naples Museum. However, while the aim of a museum is to provide a fascinating exhibition, skeletal remains should only be displayed when furthering the public's understanding of the activities of archaeologists. In the opinion of Richard I. Ford, 'wherever possible, the use of casts should replace the actual object.'²²

Replicas were cast so that the skeletons could be studied and stored appropriately. A number of skeletons unearthed within chamber 10 are on display at the Naples Museum and other replicas are now in the Herculaneum boatsheds.



FIGURE 15.10 A more recent cast display case



FIGURE 15.11 Replicas of skeletons from Herculaneum boat chambers

ACTIVITY 15.8

- 1 List the three requirements mentioned in the Code of Ethics for Museums that must be adhered to when displaying human remains.
- 2 Discuss the benefits of displaying human remains respectfully in museums.
- 3 Explain why hiding away human remains could be detrimental, according to Dr T. Jenkins in Source 15.12.

'Stolen from Death: The Casts, the Photography'

In 2015, a six-month exhibition called *Pompeii and Europe 1748–1943* was opened simultaneously in the National Archaeological Museum and in the ruins of Pompeii. Its purpose was to recount the fascination and inspiration that the archaeological site of Pompeii created in the European imagination, from the start of excavations in 1748 to its dramatic bombing in 1943. It was created by Massimo Osanna and Adele Lage, sponsored by the Special Superintendent's Office for Pompeii, Herculaneum and Stabia, the general directorate of the Great Pompeii Project and the Naples Museum.

The exhibit session at Pompeii was called 'Stolen from Death: The Casts, the Photography' and its aim was to bear witness to the final moments in the lives of the Pompeian victims of the eruption. It featured 20 restored casts exhibited in a temporary wooden, pyramid-shaped installation in the Amphitheatre.



FIGURE 15.12 A display of 20 restored Pompeian casts

My sojourn to the archaeological site, during the summer of 2015, revealed patrons unperturbed by advertisements for their special exhibit, *Stolen from Death*. Throughout the park, larger than life posters depicted the writhing bodies of those who died in the eruption of 79 AD. In their palpable anticipation to reach the 'main event,' I witnessed tourists captivated by the plaster casts found throughout the ruins ... There was no reprieve from the glorification of suffering when wandering through the city ... Patrons, corralled by metal railings leading directly inside, were forced to enter the structure. Recessed into the floor, visitors walked around nearly twenty casts, the centerpiece: a family huddled together in fear. The parents and two children clung to each other, forever frozen awaiting their horrific fate ... Their pain and fear are etched into eternity. Visitors could not tear themselves away, enthralled by the history of destruction set before them.

SOURCE 15.15 Aubrey Catrone, *A Morbid Fascination: Should Human Remains Still be on Display*, posted March 2016, Art Crime blogspot

Pompeii and Herculaneum have not suffered any real ethical controversy over their display of human remains. However, since the whole question of ethics is ongoing, it is hard to know just what new sets of guidelines will be applied to Pompeii and Herculaneum in the future.

ACTIVITY 15.9

- 1 Study Figure 15.12 carefully and write a half page on what you think of this artistic display.
- 2 Read Source 15.15 and find the words and phrases used by the author to present a negative view of:
 - the people who attended the exhibition
 - the selection of the centrepiece of the display.
- 3 What information is not presented by the author for anyone really wanting to know about the exhibition.
- 4 Discuss the statement that displays of human remains like those at Pompeii 'feed' our modern fascination with death and destruction.
- 5 In an extended piece of writing, explain the reasons why the display of human remains on the site of Pompeii has not been a major issue even though the question has evoked impassioned debate in other parts of the world.

PART 3 REVIEW

PART SUMMARY

CHANGING ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODS AND INTERPRETATIONS

- 1 The new archaeology
- 2 Transformation into a science
 - Specialists
 - New technology – the use of computers, medical imaging, laser scanning, 3D reconstructions, DNA research
- 3 Reshaping the past
 - Questioning widely held concepts
 - Asking different questions
 - Shifting away from old certainties
 - New interpretations
- 4 Documentation programs between 1980s – 2010
- 5 Long-term investigation projects
 - Asking questions of already excavated sites
 - New thoughts on Pompeii below the 79 AD level
- 6 Continuing debate over impact of earthquake of 62 AD and new interpretations
- 7 Investigative projects in Vesuvian countryside – the Oplontis and Apolline Projects

A MODEL OF CONSERVATION-BASED ARCHAEOLOGY AT HERCULANEUM

- 1 Maiuri's legacy in Herculaneum
- 2 A crisis – its cause and effects
 - Uncontrolled ambition of early excavations, failure to use funds to maintain the sites and bureaucratic mess
 - Water problems and rising damp, collapsing roofs, crumbling masonry, fading frescoes, infestations of pigeons
- 3 Help on the way – 2000 Packard Humanities Institute – \$100 million for conservation
- 4 The Herculaneum Conservation Program
 - Conservation interventions, autonomy and long-term maintenance
 - Role of archaeologists, conservators, engineers and hydrologists in conservation-based project
 - Initial steps in conservation: water problem, decades of rubble removal, stabilising crumbling buildings, researching decay of decorative surfaces
- 5 Water problem – sewers, unexpected archaeological discoveries on beach front – an ancient timber roof
- 6 Stabilisation of buildings, collaboration with local authorities and new discoveries
- 7 Collaboration of Getty Institute to stabilise and restore badly damaged frescoes and set up environmental monitoring
- 8 Debate over the future of the Villa of the Papyri as call to renew excavations refused
- 9 First decade of achievements and praise from UNESCO – a model of best practices that could be used elsewhere.

A DYING SITE AND THE GREAT POMPEII PROJECT

- 1 The collapse of the Schola Armaturarum and other buildings in Pompeii in 2010 that became a turning point in the management of the site.
- 2 Forces of destruction prior to 2010
 - Natural enemies of the site – sunlight, winter rains, unchecked vegetation, insects and birds
 - Former damaging restoration techniques
 - Inadequate site security and the impact of tourism
 - Management problems – lack of funds and regular maintenance, corruption, exploitation and incompetence
- 3 The name, shame and blame game – legal actions
- 4 Intervention by European Commission in 2012 and the launch of the Great Pompeii Project
 - Deadline to spend European funds by 2015
 - A five-part plan to deal with issues
 - Criticisms at delays – threats by UNESCO to add Pompeii to the heritage ‘at risk’ list, and EU to withdraw remainder of money if substantial progress not made by end of 2015
 - A reprieve given to the Great Pompeii Project and an extension until the end of 2017 spurred on the work
 - UNESCO Report – excellent progress – ‘a chronic disaster transformed into a peerless showcase’
 - Great strides made in 2016–17
 - Media claimed Pompeii brought back from the dead – only the future will tell

ISSUES OF MASS TOURISM AND DISPLAY OF HUMAN REMAINS

- 1 The impact of mass heritage tourism in the 21st century
 - By 2017 – 3.8 million visitors to Vesuvian area, of which 3.3 million to Pompeii
 - The growth of cultural heritage tourism – travelling to experience places, artefacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past
 - The impact of cruise tourism and its impact on Pompeii and the local area
 - Need to find strategies for sustainable tourism to cope with excessive foot traffic in Pompeii – some controversial – and improve visitor experiences
- 2 Treatment and display of human remains
 - A question of ethics – what is regarded as right and wrong varies between cultures and changes over time
 - Ethical guidelines laid down in worldwide codes and charters – significance for scientific study and museum displays in light of cultural sensitivity
 - Early and later treatment of human remains in Pompeii and Herculaneum
 - Different attitudes with regard to benefits of display of human remains
 - The Code of Ethics for Museums is generally respected and makes no demands to ban displays but excessive political correctness and activists are pressuring museum curators to withdraw human remains
 - Effects on Pompeii – as yet no real controversy, although authorities have tried to show respect in the display of plaster casts
 - Ethical issues are an ongoing debate

Historical concepts and skills

All chapter activities address the following important concepts and skills that students are expected to master throughout the course:

Concepts

- continuity
- causation
- perspectives
- significance

Skills

- understanding and use of historical terms
- historical interpretation
- historical investigation and research
- explanation and communication

As you review the chapters, make sure you can identify where examples of each of these concepts and skills may have been called for.

Part review questions

Key terms and names

Use the following terms in a sentence for each to show that you understand what they mean:

- autoCad
- *cardo*
- anthropogenic
- stakeholder
- ethics

Historical concepts

Continuity and change

- 1 List the changes that have occurred in:
 - archaeology since the late 20th century
 - Pompeii as a result of the Great Pompeii Project
 - the nature and impact of tourism in the Vesuvian area since the beginning of the 21st century
 - attitudes regarding the display of human remains.

Causation

- 1 List the factors which caused the collapse of the Schola Armaturarum and other buildings in Pompeii in 2010.
- 2 Describe what previous restoration actions and mistakes caused damage to buildings and wall

decorations in Pompeii and Herculaneum over the years.

Significance

- 1 List the the significance of the Via dell'Abbondanza Documentation Project in 2004.
- 2 Describe the most significant principles that modern-day conservators should follow.
- 3 Describe the significance of the following discoveries under the auspices of the Herculaneum Conservation Project.
 - 750 sacks of human waste in the sewers
 - the roof and ceiling timbers from the House of the Relief of Telephus.
- 4 Examine the significance of the intervention of the European Commission in the Pompeian crisis in 2012.
- 5 Discuss the significance of the:
 - 1999 International Cultural Tourism Charter
 - 2011 World Heritage Sustainable Program
 - 2004 ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums.

Perspective

- 1 Describe the perspectives of:
 - the various archaeologists who worked at Pompeii with regard to the effects of the earthquake in 62 AD.
 - Andrew Wallace-Hadrill and Robert Fowler with regard to demands for renewed excavation at the Villa of the Papyri in 2004
 - Mary Beard about the collapse of buildings in Pompeii and the popularity of the plaster casts
 - Massimo Osanna and Maura Anamaria on the delays in implementing the Great Pompeii Project.

Historical skills

Analysing sources

- 1 Define the following statements:
 - 'Today archaeology is in the midst of a second metamorphosis ... it is now being reshaped by external social, cultural and political forces.' (E. Pye, *Caring for the Past*)
 - 'Conservation and restoration simply offer a highly distorted and fragmentary version of the past' (A. Stille, *The Future of the Past*)

- 'The relationship between heritage places and tourism is dynamic and may involve conflicting values.' (International Cultural Tourism Charter, 1999)
- 'At the heart of any understanding of Pompeii and its archaeology must be the demands of the tourist.' (Ray Laurence, Institute of Archaeology, University of Birmingham)
- 'No ethnic identification should be affixed if it is demeaning, or if no useful purpose is served.' (R. Ford, *Ethics and the Museum Archaeologist*)

Interpretation

- 1 To what extent has corruption been a serious problem in Pompeii over the years?
- 2 How did the Herculaneum Conservation Project fulfil the international codes and safeguards of conservation?

Explanation and communication

In an extended piece of writing, explain the ethical dilemma facing those in custodianship of human remains today and why the displays of Pompeian casts have so far escaped the ethical controversy faced by other museums.

Glossary

- acid rain** rain that is highly acidic (due to pollution), that is, it has elevated levels of hydrogen ions
- aedile** two senior administrators, who controlled town infrastructure, markets and public order
- amphorae** two-handled earthenware vessels for liquids
- anthropogenic** originating in human activity
- antiquarium** a repository for objects from the past
- antiquities** objects remaining from ancient times
- aqueduct** a structure that carries water from a distance
- archive** a place where records are kept
- asses** (pl. of *as*) copper coins in everyday use
- astragals** bones from the feet of sheep with different configurations and values
- atrium** (pl. *atria*) decorated central hall of a Roman house
- AutoCAD** a software application for computer-aided design (CAD) and drafting that supports both 2D and 3D formats
- Bacchanalia** the Latin name for the rites of Bacchus
- bas-relief** sculpture that projects only slightly from the background
- belvedere** a structure built to obtain a fine view
- bisellia** (singular: *bisellium*) a portable seat of honour, a chair of state
- caldera** a type of volcanic crater formed when a volcano collapses into itself, usually triggered by the emptying of the magma chamber beneath the volcano
- carbonise** to reduce or convert a carbon-containing substance to carbon, as by partial burning
- cardo** a street running north–south in a Roman town
- cavea** seating section or auditorium of a theatre or amphitheatre
- cella** an enclosed inner room in a temple
- compluvium** square roof aperture above the *impluvium*
- conjecture** an opinion or conclusion formed on the basis of incomplete information
- context** an event in time which has been preserved in the archaeological record
- decumanus** an east–west oriented road in a Roman city
- dendrochronology** the study of tree-ring growth in ancient wood or charcoal samples and the matching of them with dated sequences
- disarticulated** refers to coming apart at the joints
- dolia** (singular: *dolium*) large globular earthenware jars with a wide mouth
- domus** private urban house
- duoviri** the two most senior city officials in Pompeii
- edicta munerum** program of a gladiatorial spectacle
- editore munerum** the magistrate in charge of organising and paying for the gladiatorial games
- Epicurean** referring to a form of philosophy that taught the highest good in life is pleasure
- epigraphic** referring to inscriptions engraved on clay, stone and metal
- estuary** the lower part of a river where its currents meet the tides of the sea
- ethics** a system of moral principles by which human actions can be judged as good or bad
- executive** referring to the branch of government that implements the laws
- farce** a light humorous play
- Fascist government** a form of government that features dictatorial power and radical nationalism, suppression of opposition and control of all affairs of the nation
- felix** fortunate, happy
- flamens** specialised priests to a particular god or gods
- Fortuna** goddess of fortune and personification of luck

frescoes wall paintings done while the plaster is still wet

fullers (fullones) those who made, washed and dyed cloth

garum a fish sauce used as a condiment in cuisine around the Mediterranean

Hellenistic referring to the mix of Greek and Eastern cultural elements that emerged in the centuries after the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC

herms statues in the form of pillars with the head of the god Hermes

imperial cult a cult to the worship of the emperor

impluvium shallow central pool in the *atrium* for collection of water

impresario an artistic organiser

insulae (singular: *insula*) town blocks isolated by four streets

jerry-built shoddily and cheaply built

lanista an agent for or owner of a company of gladiators

legislative referring to the branch of government that makes the laws

libations drinks poured out as offerings

lupanar a brothel

maenad a female follower of Dionysus

magma a mixture of molten or semi-molten rock that is found beneath the surface of the earth

manumitted refers to the granting of freedom to a slave

Macellum a meat, fish and vegetable market in the Pompeian Forum

megalography larger-than-life figures extending all over the wall

mosaics pictures or decorations made from tiny pieces of stone or glass

munera gladiatoria gladiatorial games

naturalist or natural historian a person who studies any category of natural objects or organisms, usually via observation

necropolis 'city of the dead' or cemetery

nymphaeum a grotto, usually with a fountain, dedicated to the nymphs

Oscans a local Italic group living in scattered groups in Campania, believed by Strabo to have been the founders of Pompeii and Herculaneum

osteologists those who study the skeleton and its parts

palaestra sportsground with an open courtyard dedicated to athletics and training

papyri ancient documents written on material made from the papyrus plant

paterfamilias the male head of a Roman household

patron a wealthy citizen who looked after the interests of poorer clients in return for their support, usually political

peristyle inner courtyard surrounded by colonnades

phreatomagmatic explosions explosions that extrude both magmatic gases and steam

polyculture growing many crops together

pompa a solemn procession

primary source something made or written at the time being investigated

proscenium stage

provenance the place of origin or ownership of an artefact

pumice a very light and porous volcanic rock

pyroclastic relating to or consisting of burning volcanic material

quinquennial duoviri officials elected every five years to carry out the census and control morality

replica in terms of archaeology is a copy of an original artefact

salutatio a morning ceremony during which clients attended on their patron

Samnites Italic groups originally from the mountains of southern Italy who conquered Campania

seismic related to earthquakes or other vibrations of the earth

sesterces bronze coins used for everyday transactions

sistrum a sacred rattle
sparsione perfume or water showers, used in the theatre
stakeholders individuals, groups or organisations who may affect or be affected by a decision, activity or outcome of something such as a project
stratigraphic digging observing and recording the sequence of layers within an excavation
strigil a curved bronze or bone scraper for cleaning
stucco a type of plaster used for decoration
subjective impressions based on personal feelings or prejudice
tablinum (pl. *tablina*) decorated reception area off the *atrium*
torcular wine press
trapeta olive presses used for the first pressing
tufa stone formed from compacted volcanic ash
ureaus sacred Egyptian cobra worn on the forehead of pharaohs
velarium awning

End notes

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- 4 August Mau, *Pompeii: Its Life and Art*, p. xx
- 5 J. Winckelmann, p. 147
- 6 W. Lepmann, *Pompeii in Fact and Fiction*, p. 144
- 7 C. Amery and B. Curren, *The Lost World of Pompeii*, p. 37
- 8 August Mau, *Pompeii: Its Life and Art*, p. xx
- 9 J-P. Descoedres et al., *Pompeii Revisited*, p. 44
- 10 Alison E. Cooley, *Pompeii*, p. 96
- 11 R. Etienne, *Pompeii: The Day a City Died*, p. 40
- 12 A. Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum*, p. 183
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 182
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 123

Notes for Chapter 4

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- 2 R. Etienne, *Pompeii: The Day a City Died*, p. 41
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 64
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 165
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- 6 Laurence Goldstein, *Centennial Review* (1979) 23, p. 229
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- 6 E. Catarella & L. Jacobelli, *A Day in Pompeii: Daily Life, Culture and Society*, p. 39
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- 14 Ibid., p. 145
- 15 Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, IV, 5:1

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- 14 M. Beard, *The Fires of Vesuvius: Pompeii Lost and Discovered*, p. 237
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- 2 E. Cantarella & L. Jacobelli, *A Day in Pompeii*, p. 81
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