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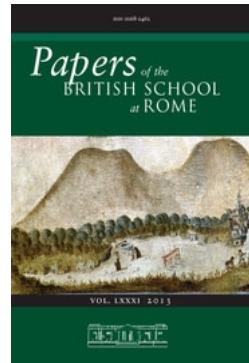
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The conditions of domestic life in Pompeii in AD 79: a case-study of Houses 11 and 12, Insula 9, Region I

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THE CONDITIONS OF DOMESTIC LIFE IN POMPEII IN AD 79: A CASE-STUDY OF HOUSES 11 AND 12, INSULA 9, REGION I¹

INTRODUCTION

Despite continuous attempts to reconstruct and present Pompeii as it stood in AD 79, very little is known about its physical and social condition in the final years before the eruption of Vesuvius. Traditionally it has been accepted that a serious earthquake in AD 62 had severe consequences for the society and economy of Pompeii. However, whilst much archaeological evidence has been brought forward to demonstrate the extent of damage caused by this earthquake, the evidence for the actual condition of the town in AD 79, seventeen years after this earthquake, is conflicting. On the one hand there are some examples of houses which had been abandoned and left to disintegrate, of houses in a poor state of repair, of houses which had been transformed into commercial units. On the other hand, there is evidence of active repair and restoration occurring to greater or lesser degrees in almost all houses and several public buildings (Dobbins, 1994: 634), and of lively commercial activity. This paradox has created many different theories about the social and economic condition of the town. For example, Maiuri (1942) interpreted the process of restoration as an acceleration of the social revolution in Pompeii: the noble classes were unable to find the funds to rebuild their properties and therefore were forced to sell parts of their houses to merchants and artisans who opened new commercial outlets and shops. This is an interpretation frequently echoed by scholars of Pompeii (for example, Jasheński (1979: 170), La Torre (1988: 76), Castiglione Morelli del Franco and Vitale (1989: 214)), but it has been criticized for being based on anecdotal rather than statistical evidence (Wallace-Hadrill, 1994: 123). Andreau (1973: 372ff.) instead used comparative evidence from other earthquakes to claim that the years after AD 62 would have been ones of confusion and long-term disruption rather than of stimulated economic activity. Allison has taken this interpretation a step further to suggest that there was a huge social and economic upheaval and that Pompeii was slowly being abandoned to the mercy of squatters: the consequences of the earthquake ‘caused many householders to abandon their houses and some of their possessions to such opportunists, long before those who chose to stay behind became aware of the horrors which were to erupt’ (1992: 54). In direct contrast, Richardson has emphasized that restoration was still in full swing in AD 79 and that the inhabitants of the houses were only making do with makeshift circumstances while waiting for their fortunes to improve (1988: 310), whilst De

¹ Thanks are due to the *Soprintendenza di Pompei* for permissions to carry out the initial archival research and the later excavations upon which this paper is based. I am particularly grateful to Professor Michael Fulford and Professor Andrew Wallace-Hadrill for allowing me to draw upon evidence from the British School at Rome/University of Reading excavations at Pompeii conducted in 1995 and 1996.

Simone (1995) has claimed that the emergence of a distinct commercial class need not have created a class conflict nor supplanted the old property-owners.

This conflict in both the evidence for and the interpretation of the final state of the town is created by two factors. Firstly, it is now becoming clear that the whole period before the final eruption of Vesuvius is likely to have been one of continuing seismic disturbances, as demonstrated by contributions in a recent publication, *Archäologie und Seismologie* (1995). In particular, the papers by Nappo and De Simone report new evidence from recent excavations in Region I of the town, which suggests that there were at least another two serious earthquakes in the period AD 62–79, the last of which was probably only months before the eruption of AD 79 and which would have had important socio-economic effects for the town. Seen in this light, much of the apparently contradictory evidence of ongoing restoration and disturbance can be directly related to the aftermath of a recent disaster rather than to changed socio-economic circumstances after the earthquake of AD 62. Secondly, the archaeological material available for study is partial. The long history and tradition of excavation has, until recently, been little more than treasure hunting concerned with uncovering as much of the site as quickly as possible in order to find the most elaborate houses, public buildings, wall-decorations, and so on. This means that much of the evidence which could reveal the actual state of the houses has not been recorded in the excavation reports: there is not always a full record of all household artefacts; particular areas within a house may be omitted completely from the reports; and recorded evidence for the structural condition of individual walls or rooms within a house at the time of the excavation is rare and arbitrary. It is thus remarkably difficult to reconstruct an individual building in the town in all its aspects. The studies which exist, such as the elaborate German *Häuser in Pompeji* series, tend to concentrate mainly on the chronological development and documentation of the standing structure of various public buildings and houses, and thus to date there has been no controlled study of a single house which has specifically examined the complex relationship between the damage caused by the ongoing seismic activity between AD 62 and AD 79 and the nature of attempts made to recover from this damage.

This situation is now beginning to change rapidly, and this paper arises from one of a series of ongoing projects which are concerned with understanding the urban history and development of Pompeii. One of the aims of the collaborative project of the British School at Rome, the Soprintendenza di Pompei, the University of Reading, and the Università di Suor Orsola Benincasa Napoli, is to address the question of the condition of the town in AD 79 through a study of both the architecture and artefactual evidence in two connected houses, I.9.11 and I.9.12 (respectively named by Della Corte (1958) as the Lupanar di Amarantus and the Casa di Q. Mestrius Maximus) (Figs 1 and 2). These houses are located in the southeast part of the city, near the amphitheatre, and can be considered as one single domestic unit since they are connected by two adjoining doors. Both houses are in a poor condition today, with few remains of wall decoration and pavements, but before work started in 1995 it was unclear whether this was the result of 40 years exposure to the elements, or whether the houses had been in this condition in AD 79. The 1995 season of work therefore aimed to establish the condition of the two houses through a

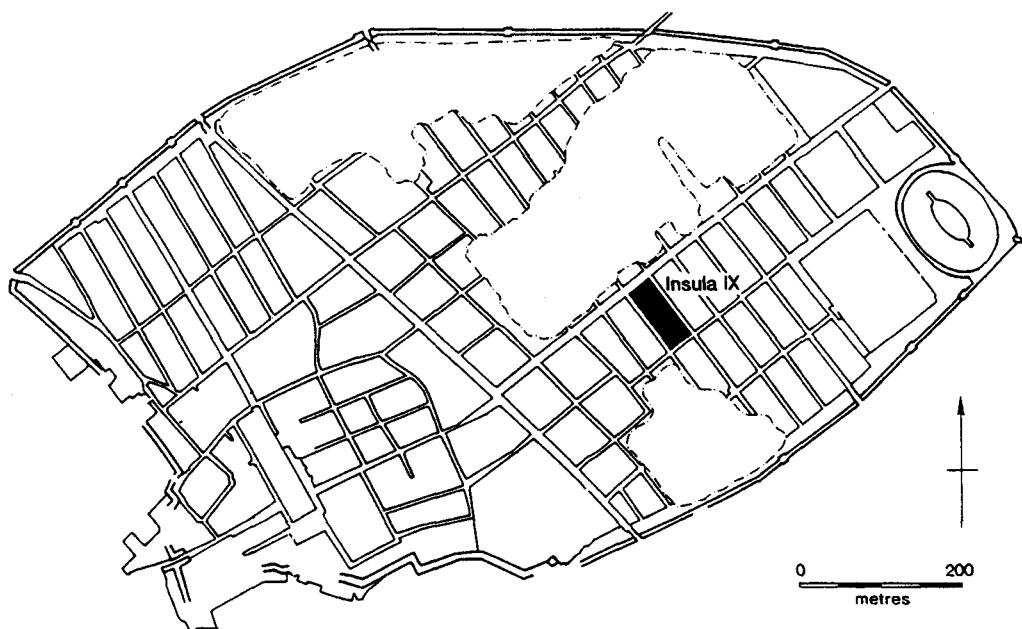


FIG. 1. The position of Insula 9, Region I, in the general plan of Pompeii.

study of the archival material and the standing structures, and through targeted stratigraphic excavation. This paper offers a specific interpretation of the final condition and of the use of domestic space in these two houses in AD 79. It will firstly examine the types and extent of the evidence offered by the houses and review both the earliest excavations which took place in the 1950s and those conducted in 1995. This will be used to discuss the extent to which it is possible to reconstruct the physical state of the houses and the contradictions which exist in the evidence. The paper will examine the extent of restoration and transformation, whether the houses were inhabited in AD 79, the organization of domestic activities, and the implications which this study has for our general understanding of domestic space in Pompeii in AD 79.

THE EXCAVATIONS OF THE 1950s

The available evidence for the earliest excavations of Insula 9, Region I, comes from many sources. The original records have not been published, but can be consulted in the archives of the Soprintendenza di Pompei. They are to be found in several different forms: handwritten notebooks (*Quaderni*); handwritten *Giornali degli Scavi*; typed-up copies of some months of the *Giornali*; and the handwritten Inventories. The *Quaderni* and *Giornali* usually cover different periods, but sometimes overlap. Some of the *Giornali* appear to have been lost. These written records are supplemented by evidence from the photographic archives of the Soprintendenza di

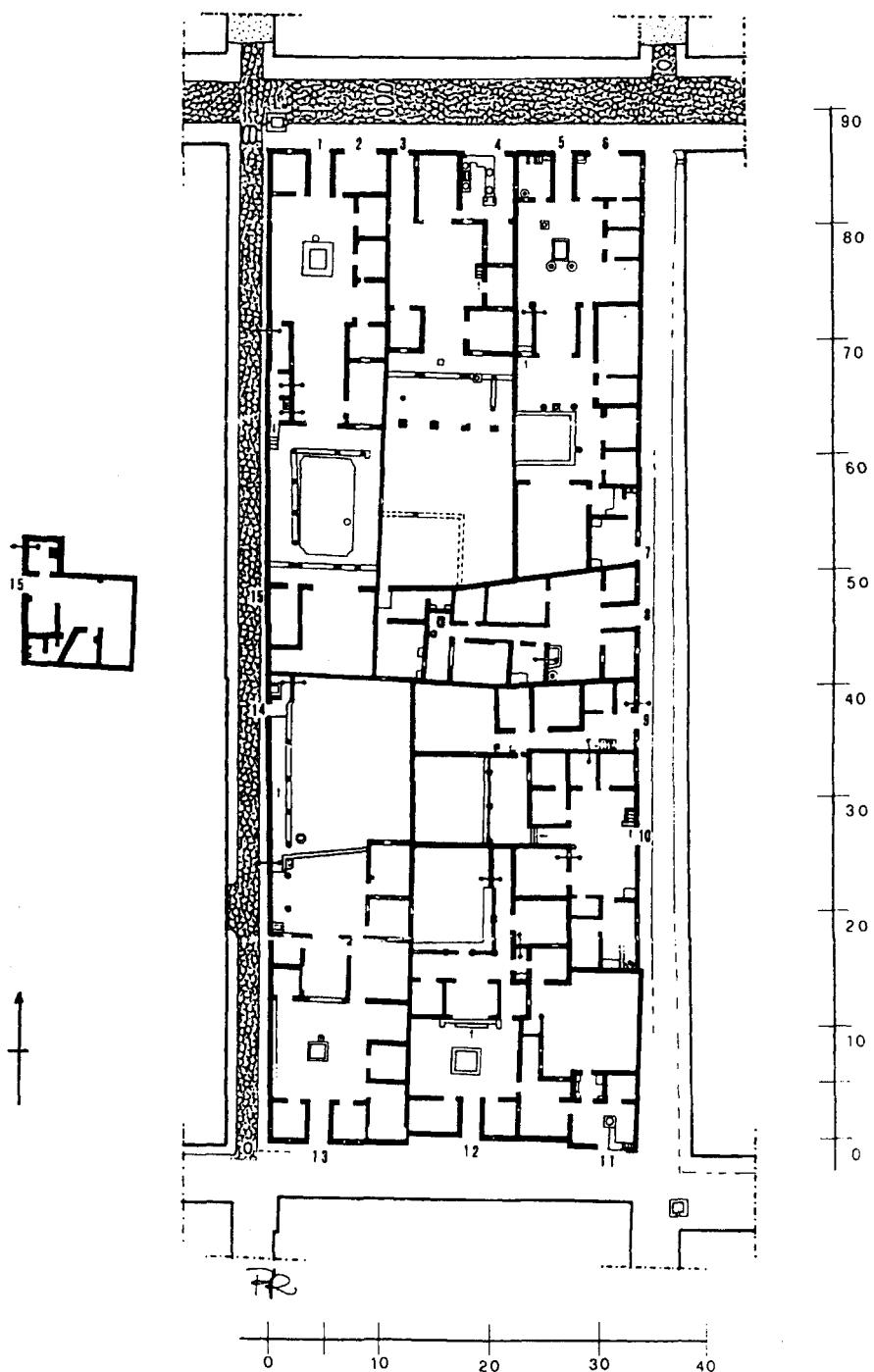


FIG. 2. Plan of Insula 9, Region I.

Pompeii which help to reveal the condition of the various houses at the time of their excavation and before their structures were altered by both restoration work and general weathering. They also give evidence of groups of artefacts which are only partially recorded in the excavation reports. In addition it is possible to study many of the artefacts which were found within the two houses as they are kept in the storerooms of the Soprintendenza di Pompei. Many of the inscriptions, found, for example, on amphorae in the two houses, have been published by Della Corte (1958) and later in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (1970).

The first excavations in Insula 9, Region I, took place in the area of its north façade, along the Via dell'Abbondanza, in the period between November 1912 and June 1914. In late 1940 the southwest façade of Insula 9 was partially uncovered during the excavations in the neighbouring Insula 8, but excavations did not start properly in Insula 9 until the 1950s. Some restoration took place during 1950 to protect and secure the north façade along the Via dell'Abbondanza (which had been left unprotected since 1914), and to further clear and define the western perimeter wall of the Insula. Systematic excavation of Insula 9 began on 5 May 1951, again always clearing material from south to north. The first house to be properly excavated was I.9.13 (Casa di Cerere), and it was during these excavations, in August 1951, that the peristyle of I.9.12 (Casa di Q. Mestrius Maximus), to the east of I.9.13, was first profiled in the upper levels (Fig. 3). However, the excavations in houses 11 and 12 did not start properly until September 1952, after every other part of Insula 9 had been excavated.

The excavations in this area began, with on average 30–40 men every day, in the upper levels of lapilli to the north of house 12 and gradually worked to the south and east. Undisturbed lapilli were removed from the garden (*viridarium*) (8), and it was noted that this area had traces of white plaster on its north wall. The excavation reports claim that there were no traces of any planting here, but there were two piles of stones (including three pieces of two marble basins), some tiles, and an unspecified number of amphorae which were recorded as six separate groups.² Along the west side of the garden there were the remains of a narrow pent roof, and in the east wall there was an aedicule which contained a small bust of Bacchus and two marble boxes. In the small corridor area to the northeast of the garden there was a pile of slaked lime, with several stacked amphorae and tiles. This area had by far the largest group of artefacts: in the portico there was a glass bottle which had lost its neck; by the entrance to the tablinum a bronze ovoid bucket which had been restored in antiquity; in the southwest corner of the portico, on the pavement, there was a small bronze ovoid amphora decorated with concentric circles in relief and female masks adorning the two-ribbed handles, a bronze cylindrical box decorated by three areas of leaves in relief, a bronze footrest with three feline feet decorated with stylized palms, a bronze tripod for lamps with three feline feet, two bronze elliptical trays, a

² Sixteen of these amphorae have inscriptions recorded in *CIL* (10273, 10328, 10334, 10362, 10399, 10404, 10407, 10413–16, 10424, 10442, 10450, 10456, 10476, amongst which were identified eleven Mau VIII/Dressel 10, one Mau XII/Dressel 2–4, one Mau XIII/Dressel 4, and one Mau XLII/Dressel 12).

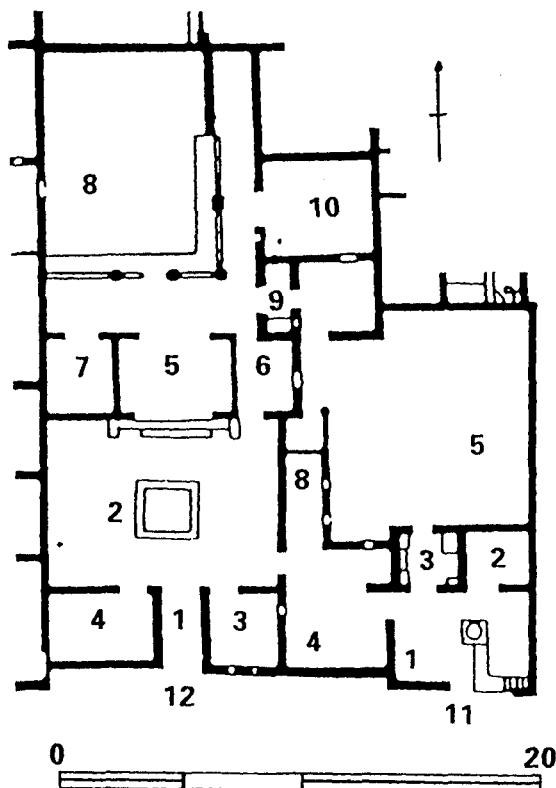


FIG. 3. Plan of Houses 11 and 12, Insula 9, Region I.

small bronze elliptical tray, a bronze patera with handle finished in a feline head, a bronze jug which lacked its handle, a broken bronze mirror with ornamental handle, an alabaster bottle, a square glass bottle with a wide mouth, and a terracotta lamp. In direct contrast, excavation during the same period in room 10 revealed both a mixed fill and broken walls, which suggests that this room had already been disturbed by previous excavators. This may explain the small quantity of finds within it, despite the elaborate Fourth Style decoration which adorns its walls: there was only a bronze patera with an ornamental handle, and a bronze ovoid bucket which had lost its iron handle. Excavations worked their way south where more internal walls were outlined. During this period the eastern perimeter wall of house 11 was also profiled and internal walls were outlined in the northeast sector of the two houses. Work was suspended on 8 November 1952.

Work restarted on 20 December 1952 with 30 men in house 12 removing mixed material from the upper levels of the area to the south of the garden (8). In house 11 uncontaminated lapilli were removed from area 5 and it was noted that no structures at all were found here. During February 1953 the kitchen (9) was excavated, revealing the presence of abundant ashes on the masonry podium and a painted

serpent on the east wall, which no longer survives. However, there was no record of any artefacts at all in this area. In room 6 of house 12 the very poor decoration was noted, along with the fact that it contained a group of amphorae, which had been lined up along both the east and west wall. Several of these had inscribed labels painted in black ink, and these may have been recorded in *CIL* amongst a group attributed to house 12 with no specific find-spot.³ The material excavated from the tablinum (5) was disturbed and the condition of this area of the house when it was first excavated was ruinous: the west wall of this room and south wall of room 7 had collapsed almost completely. The Fourth Style decoration on the surviving east wall, however, was in good condition, leading to the conclusion already given in the excavation reports that the damage had occurred during the eruption rather than before this event. However, the *Giornali* state that there was some rubble on the floor which was there before the eruption, and do not mention any evidence for a roof. Artefacts uncovered in this area consist of (in the southeast corner on the pavement) a terracotta lamp, two bronze coins, and a rectangular bronze signet ring bearing the inscription 'Q. MESTR' MAX IM I'; (in the northeast corner) a bronze coin, and two ornamental plaques made of bone; and (along the west wall) several amphorae. Room 7 is neglected in the excavation reports. It was noted only that the decoration was already in an extremely deteriorated state at the time of excavation, and that nothing interesting was found here except for some sort of podium. This podium is now no longer visible, and in fact the room has the appearance of not having been excavated completely.

The atrium (2) of house 12 was excavated during February and March 1953. Both the *Giornali* and an excavation photograph record the surprising number of amphorae found in this area, although in the *Giornali* the discovery of these vessels is noted without greater comment than the fact that several had inscriptions. The impluvium was full of empty amphorae lying on their sides, and there was another large group of upright, and therefore presumably full, amphorae in the northwest corner of the area (Fig. 4).⁴ To the north of the atrium, west of the entrance to the tablinum, there was also a bronze lamp, three terracotta lamps, a bronze handle and a small bronze mask (both probably from a piece of furniture), and close by in the northwest corner there was also a marble male torso of a statue. There is no reported evidence of a roof, and the excavation photograph also reveals the bad condition of the wall decoration, which consisted of a high rustic socle. There were two steps up to the tablinum and a marble threshold into this area.

Excavations were reported only briefly throughout March 1953 in the *Giornali*, and there were then no further reports until May and June 1953 when it was noted in the *Quaderni* that work in houses 11 and 12 had finished. These notes for May and June are extremely brief and hardly any finds were noted, which appears to indicate

³ *CIL* 10285, 10323, 10350, 10353, 10354, 10357, 10358, 10361, 10370, 10377, 10395, 10417, 10435, 10437, 10440, 10453.

⁴ These amphorae were of many different forms and dimensions, and several with inscriptions are recorded in *CIL* (in the atrium, 10438, 10439, 10401, 10472 = eight types Mau VIII/Dressel 10, and in the impluvium 10455, 10420 = one type Mau VIII/Dressel 10 and one Mau XII/Dressel 2–4).

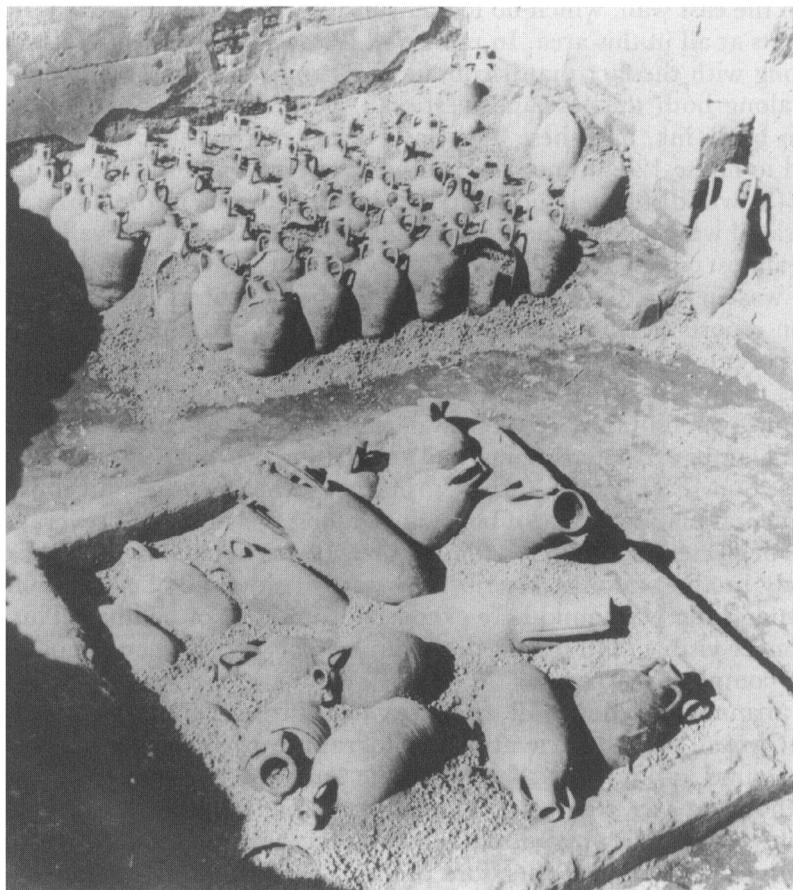


FIG. 4. Excavation photograph of the atrium of I.9.12 taken in 1952, showing amphorae stacked in the northwest corner and lying in the impluvium. (*Photograph courtesy of the Soprintendenza Archeologica di Pompei (neg. no. 1601)*)

a significant change both in the care of excavation and of the reporting of the excavation in this period in contrast to the earlier season of work. The imprint of the front door to house 12 was discovered in this period, whilst in house 11 it was noted that all the structures can be dated to after AD 62 on the grounds of the building technique and the lack of plaster on the walls. A group of amphorae was removed from the northwest corner of the garden area (5).⁵ It was also noted in the excavation reports that there were the remains of a narrow pent roof running along the west wall of the garden, and that there was no evidence of wall-plaster in any part of this area. All the excavations in house 11 took place in undisturbed lapilli, except in the area of

⁵ Amongst these one (identified as a Mau XLII/Dressel 12) had an inscription and is recorded in *CIL* (10345). Another unprovenanced amphorae recorded in *CIL* (10317 = Mau V/Dressel 29) probably came from this area too.

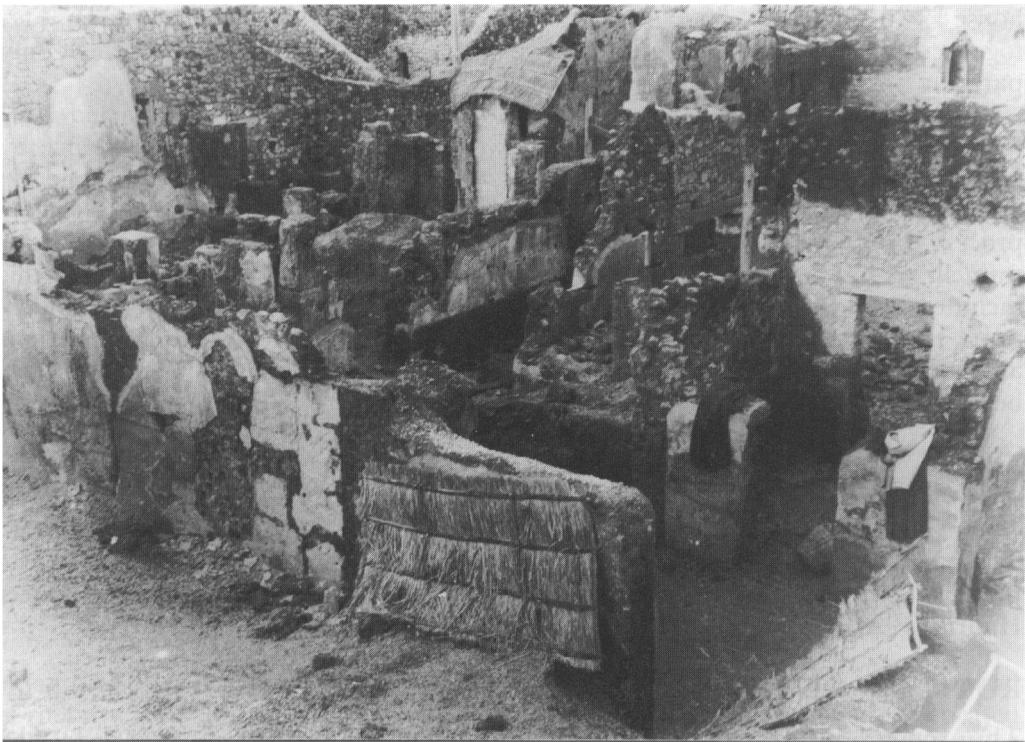


FIG. 5. Excavation photograph of the *caupona* (1) of I.9.11 taken in 1953. (*Photograph courtesy of the Soprintendenza Archeologica di Pompei (neg. no. 1602)*)

the *caupona* (1) which contained mixed material. One amphora is recorded in *CIL* from the *caupona*,⁶ and another from the area to the west of it,⁷ but neither of these is mentioned in the excavation reports. A photograph taken during the excavations of 1953 also appears to show the sales counter in a bad state of repair (Fig. 5). Unfortunately the excavation reports have virtually nothing to say about this area of house 11, and a register of artefacts from 1954 simply records that a lidless bronze cylindrical box decorated with concentric circles in relief and a triangular iron tripod were uncovered in the southwest corner of this area. Work was suspended on 16 June 1953 before the excavations had been finished, leaving the impression that the excavators abandoned the work here in favour of more interesting houses.

As can be seen, the quality of these records is variable: several areas of the houses are not mentioned at all: in house 11 these include the kitchen (3), the latrine (5C — see below, Fig. 9), rooms 4 and 8, and room 2; in house 12 the neglected areas are rooms 3 and 4. Those areas of which the notes make only brief mention are room 7 and the *fauces* (1) in house 12, and the *caupona* (1) of house 11. Of all these areas, room 4 in

⁶ *CIL* 10322 = Mau VIII/Dressel 10.

⁷ *CIL* 10359 = Mau X.

house 12 appeared to have been completely unexcavated, whilst room 7 in house 12, together with the garden area (5) and the corridor (8) in house 11, had been only partially excavated.⁸

In view of the selective nature of the archival material, the 1995 and 1996 seasons of excavation aimed to complement these existing sources of evidence by completing the exposure of some of the unexcavated areas within houses 11 and 12, and by providing a stratigraphic record of the volcanic deposit in order to assess the process and effects of the eruption and the nature of any disturbances, such as tunnelling, which might have altered the archaeological record. In particular, this included the excavation of room 4, which offered a unique opportunity to understand the formation of the archaeological record at Pompeii. Further excavations also included the final clearance of area 5A, garden area 5B, and latrine 5C (see below, Fig. 9, for area details).

THE EXCAVATIONS OF 1995 AND 1996

The results reported in this section are derived from the interim reports on the project (DeLaine, Fulford, and Wallace-Hadrill, 1995; Fulford and Wallace-Hadrill, 1996).

ROOM 4

This room appeared to have been left almost completely untouched by the excavators of 1952/3 since the highest levels of volcanic material reached virtually to the top of the walls (Fig. 6). However, excavation revealed disturbance of this fill in the upper levels which must have taken place in the 1950s: the roots of a large fig tree had penetrated into the northeast corner of the room and disturbed the fill, and a number of disarticulated human bones, representing at least two individuals, were scattered through the upper fill of the western half of the room, material which the excavators may have dumped over the external wall of the room during excavations in the adjacent house or street. In addition a breakthrough from the *fauces* into the southeast corner of the room with clear evidence of a disturbance of the fill up to 2.0 m along the south wall of the room may be evidence of tunneller-activity any time from the aftermath of the eruption in AD 79 to the 1950s. In addition, except for a few contiguous, large fragments of roofing tile lying on the surface of the fill in the southwest corner, no evidence was found for a tiled roof over the room. If this had ever existed, it had been removed during previous excavations. Other finds in the room included a few blocks of Sarno limestone which may have fallen from the surrounding walls, and in the lower levels of the fill many fragments of wall-plaster with lath and reed impressions on their back surface. Nevertheless there were not

⁸ Excavated artefacts which were given no specific provenance within the two houses consist of a base of a *sigillata* jar with a circular stamp 'SMF' repeated twice; a glass cylindrical unguent bottle; a circular bronze bell; a bronze ornament for furniture in the form of a Satyr mask; four terracotta lamps; a small terracotta amphora; a bronze nail and two bronze studs; an iron axe; three coins; and various bronze fragments.



FIG. 6. Room 4, I.9.12, condition before the excavation of 1995.

enough of these fragments to constitute a proper ceiling, and if there was any kind of roof it was likely to have been very flimsy. The walls of the room were decorated with plain white plaster. On the floor of the northern side of the room the articulated remains of a mule were excavated, which was probably tethered, given the discovery of two iron rings close to its head. Next to the back legs of the mule, there was the skeleton of a dog. The mule was slumped against a rectangular, wooden trough or manger which was built against the north wall of the room, the imprints of whose supports had been preserved as voids in the volcanic ash. Further voids to the northeast revealed parts of the door to the room, which had been open at the time of the eruption. Here there were also the broken remains of the lower half of an amphora, which may have contained water for the animals, and the semicircular remains of a wooden bowl (Fig. 7). The palynological evidence from this room indicates a wide range of grasses and wayside plants, as well as cereals, olives and walnuts, all of which probably represented fodder, bedding and dung.

atrium 2 (figs 3 and 4)

In 1996 the atrium was still partly filled with lapilli. The excavation along the western side of this area revealed a group of broken amphorae which had been partially excavated and then left *in situ* in the 1950s (Fig. 4), which explains their fragmentary condition. These consisted of more than 30 Cretan wine amphorae,⁹ although there was also a Dressel 5 and two Dressel 2–4 types which were full of lime mortar. At the foot of these there was a pile of blue pigment. In the northwest corner of the atrium there were two dressed blocks of Sarno limestone and a pile of

⁹ Mostly Cretan I but at least two Cretan IIIs.

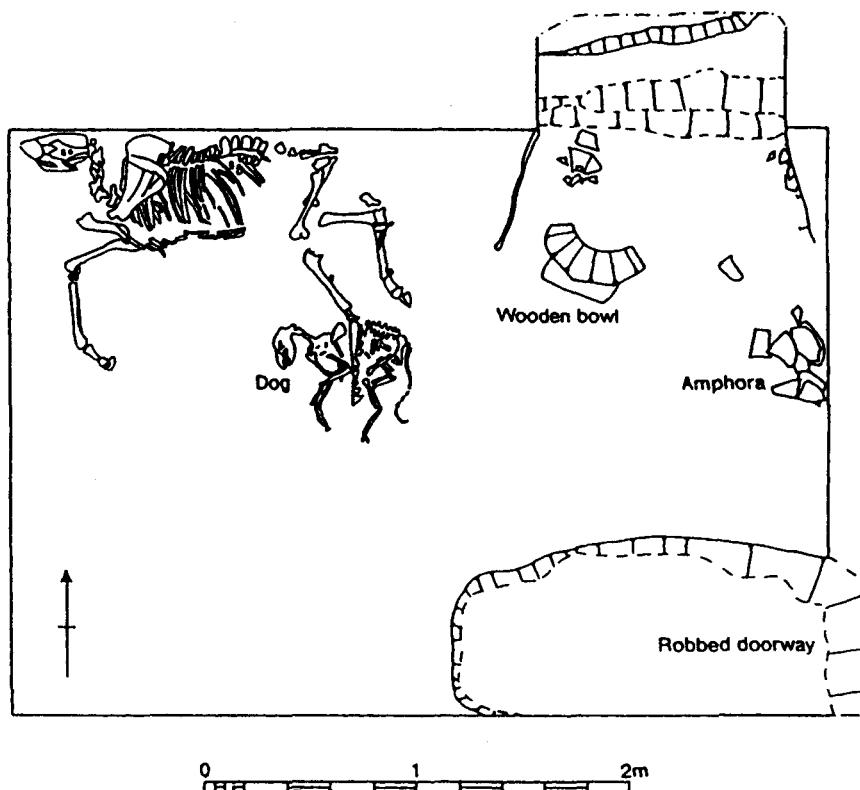


FIG. 7. Room 4, I.9.12, after the 1995 excavation: condition in AD 79.

fragments of plain wall-plaster, whilst in the southwest corner there were the remains of a Dressel 2–4 amphora filled with *cocciopesto* and an upturned dolium. The surface of the atrium was covered with patches of brown clayey soil which sealed a layer of broken plain and painted wall-plaster. The ‘impluvium’ was discovered to have no internal floor surface to channel water to a cistern beneath nor drains to take the water away, but was filled with this same brown soil. Palynological assessment of the soils and sediments from this area suggests that weeds may have been growing along the western side of the atrium, indicating that the area would have been damp and somewhat unkempt.

AREA 5A (FIGS 8 AND 9)

Although it had been partially excavated, none of the early excavation reports specifically mention work in this area. The final clearance of lapilli from this area in 1995 revealed a low wall on the east and south sides, which enclosed a small tiled rectangular area overlying a cistern. From this area there is a doorway into house 12 and access into the garden (5B). By the entrance to the garden area there was a small rectangular, plaster-lined basin and a well, but the decorated terracotta puteal was



FIG. 8. Excavation photograph of garden 5 in I.9.11 taken in 1953, showing the large numbers of amphorae found in this area. (*Photograph courtesy of the Soprintendenza Archeologica di Pompei (neg. no. 1600)*)

found out of place at the end of the paved area. On the north, east and south walls there were low rubble benches covered in white plaster. An excavation photograph from 1953 shows a number of amphorae leaning against the walls in this area, but none of these remained in 1995 or can be identified among those recorded in *CIL*.

GARDEN AREA 5B (FIG. 9)

This area had already been almost completely cleared in the excavations of the 1950s, but in 1995 there still remained two large mounds of unexcavated lapilli which covered a number of visible amphorae. Removal of these lapilli in the southeast corner revealed a number of carefully stacked amphorae, positioned upside down, and therefore empty, probably in two tiers. Most of these were in one piece, and consisted of local Campanian Dressel 2–4 wine amphorae. However, there was also an extremely rare Gazan vessel, a small number of Cretan vessels and two Aegean amphorae. Other artefacts recovered from this area are a large mortarium, a marble sundial, and a heavily sooted frying-pan with a broken handle. In contrast, the amphorae removed from the southwest corner were mainly Aegean and Cretan vessels with Greek *dipinti*. There were only a few local Dressel 2–4, and in

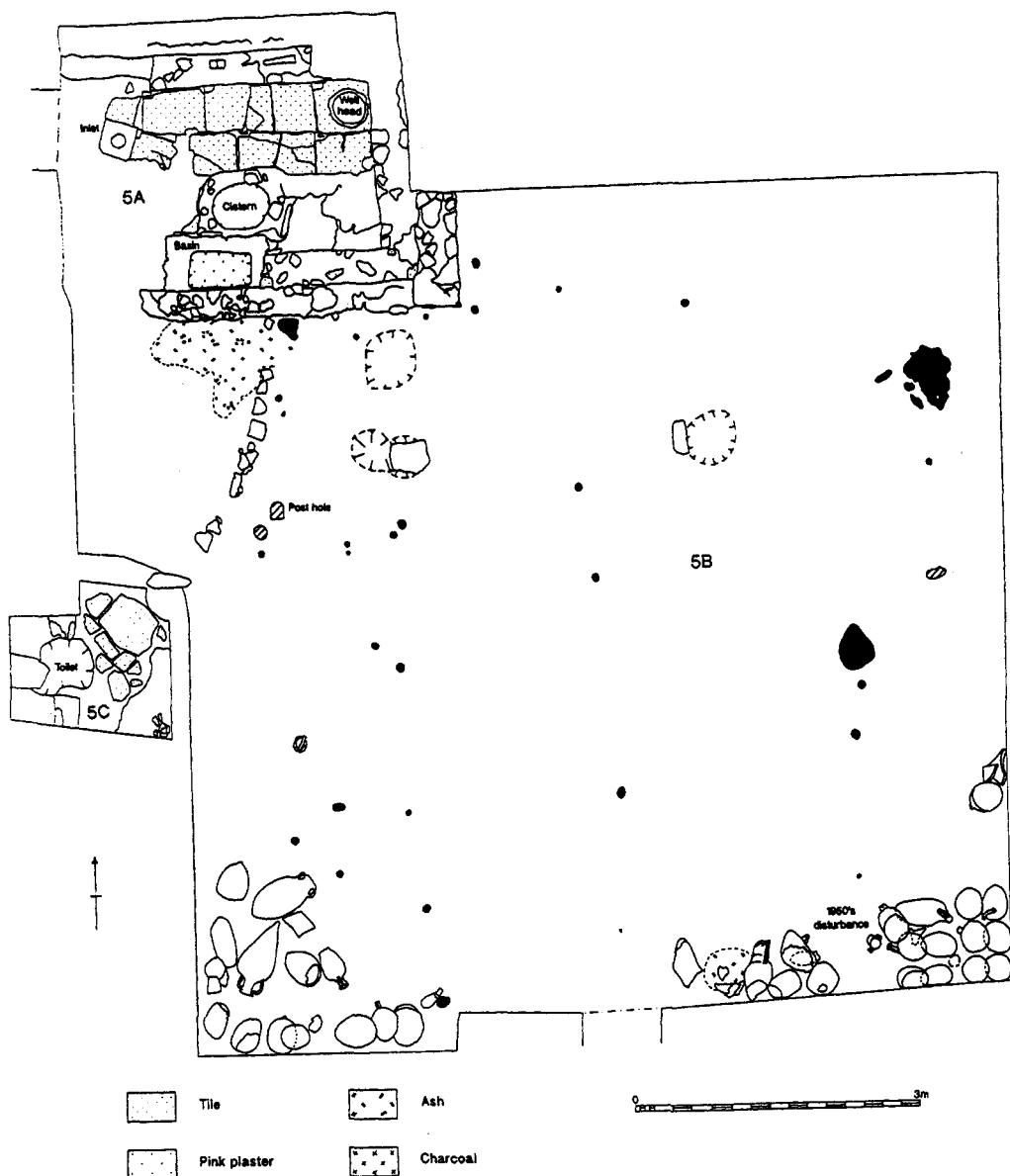


FIG. 9. Post-excavation plan of garden 5, I.9.11; condition in AD 79.

general the amphorae here were less well preserved and some were lying on their sides. There was also a rare small amphora with a *dipinto*, a small jug and a broken bowl of Italian *sigillata*. Amongst all the excavated amphorae, fifteen had inscriptions. There were also a number of dressed blocks of Sarno limestone lying on the ground in this garden along with fragments of roofing tile, and more blocks piled on each other in the north and northeast corner of the area. At least two of these blocks

were embedded into the ground, as is also revealed by the excavation photo from 1953, and were thus features of the garden in AD 79. The removal of the lapilli and the Sarno blocks revealed the surface of the garden: a number of root-voids filled with lapilli were discovered running in two, possibly three, parallel lines, indicating the presence of small trees or shrubs, and perhaps vines. It is clear from the presence of columns embedded in the south and west walls that this area was at one stage a peristyle connected to house 12: this was later blocked up and excavations below the AD 79 level in 1995 revealed that the garden was deliberately created in this area by the importation of soil from outside. Analysis of the pollen assemblage in this area suggests that the garden was unkempt or had even been abandoned, and there was some evidence of bracken spores dispersed through the garden.

LATRINE 5C (FIG. 9)

A pathway was excavated which led from the previously described tiled area in the northwest corner to the latrine and on towards the *caupona* area of house 11; the discovery of this path explains the narrow pent roof which was discovered during the early excavations here (see above). The latrine was evidently a late addition to the houses, indicated by its insertion between the columns of an earlier peristyle and by the threshold which was laid after the creation of the garden. The latrine was cleared of enough lapilli to demonstrate that it was still functioning at the time of the eruption.

THE QUALITY OF THE AVAILABLE EVIDENCE

Since the excavation reports from the 1950s are not consistent accounts of the processes of excavation, and several areas are either completely ignored or only partially reported, it is necessary to question the extent to which the information they give can be relied upon as a full and accurate account of the condition of the houses at the time of excavation. In particular this has important implications for the interpretation of the artefactual material in the houses. Houses 11 and 12 as a whole are in fact somewhat unusual, since the quantity of excavated artefacts is much lower than the number found in the other houses of Insula 9. All the houses of the Insula were excavated during the period 1951 to 1954 and, by the standards of the *Giornali*, all except houses 11 and 12 have full excavation reports and apparently more or less complete domestic assemblages. Most of the excavations of houses 11 and 12 took place in pure volcanic material, which means post-eruption salvaging cannot be used to explain the small number of artefacts in the majority of areas in the houses. Therefore, given that the quality of the excavation reports for these two houses deteriorated in the last months of excavation, and that certain areas were simply ignored, there is a possibility that not all the artefacts found during this period were recorded: this particularly affects our knowledge of the condition of the *caupona* (1) and associated rooms 2, 3, 4, and 8, for which there is hardly any evidence at all. Alternatively, it could mean that the excavators were simply not finding anything, which would also explain why certain parts of the houses were left unexcavated. It is therefore possible that the small number of recorded artefacts in these houses actually represents more or less the number found by the excavators.

In this light it is particularly striking that there are no reported common-ware vessels other than amphorae inside the two houses. Whilst the earliest excavations of Pompeii were notorious for neglecting certain categories of material, and particularly the common-wares which were not considered valuable unless they displayed inscriptions (Annecchino, 1977: 105; Pucci, 1977: 9 n. 4), by the time of the excavation of houses 11 and 12 it is unusual for an entire class of artefact to have been systematically and completely neglected, even if it was not diligently recorded. Thus in other houses which have poor excavation reports, such as I.7.1 (Casa di Paquius Proculus), which was excavated in the early 1920s and for which there is simply a list of inventoried artefacts for most of the rooms, common-wares still form a small, if underrepresented, category.

The excavations of 1995 and 1996 confirmed the lack of common-ware vessels in houses 11 and 12: apart from the large number of amphorae recovered, the only other vessels were a terracotta frying-pan and a small jug. It therefore seems likely that it was the paucity of archaeological evidence rather than the carelessness of recording alone which explains both the small number of reported artefacts in the two houses and their cursory treatment in the excavation reports. Despite this, the defective nature of the excavation reports complicates the interpretation of the functioning of certain areas within the houses and therefore the artefactual evidence needs to be put into a wider context with a combined study of the archival material, the existing standing structures, and the excavation results from the 1995 and 1996 seasons of work. All these sources of evidence in fact produce a fairly extensive corpus of material from which both the processes of post-eruption disturbance and the physical condition of the two houses can be examined, and they thus form the framework for the interpretation of the artefacts.

CONDITION OF THE HOUSES IN AD 79

The two houses can be divided into four main areas, each of which reveals conflicting evidence of restorations and disturbances: in house 12, the atrium (2) and associated rooms, and the garden (8) and associated rooms; in house 11, the garden area (5) and the *caupona* (1).

ATRIUM (2) AND ASSOCIATED AREAS IN HOUSE 12

The excavation of the atrium and *fauces* took place in uncontaminated lapilli, but in direct contrast room 4 demonstrated much evidence of disturbance: the walls had been broken and the fill disturbed, which can be attributed to the actions of tunnellers attempting to salvage valuable things from the buried house. This is a common phenomenon at Pompeii, noted by the excavators of the city since the start of systematic excavations of the site at the beginning of the nineteenth century (Zevi, 1981: 14), and it demonstrates that the tops of the buildings of the town were probably still visible above the volcanic deposits after the eruption of AD 79. Apart from this, there is other evidence of disturbance in room 4, which probably occurred during and immediately after the first excavations of the two houses in the 1950s: the upper levels have been left exposed and foreign elements have been introduced into

the top of the room, such as the human bones and the tree. This emphasizes the fact that the other partially unexcavated areas of the two houses are also likely to have been disturbed to a certain extent, and in particular the garden area (5). The lower levels of material in room 4 were undisturbed, however, allowing a reconstruction of the physical condition of this room along with the atrium and *fauces*. There is no available information for the excavation of room 3.

The decoration of the whole of this area of the house is very simple, consisting of a low red socle in the atrium and room 4, which suggests that, even if it were once a formal reception area, it had ceased to be so by the final phase of the houses. There was building material in the atrium in the form of a pile of pozzolana, amphorae filled with pozzolana and *cocciopesto*, a pile of blue pigment, and two dressed Sarno stone blocks, which may indicate that repairs or building-work were intended. It appears, however, that these restorations had been abandoned since the whole west side of the atrium seems to have been somewhat overgrown. The dominant feature of the atrium area was the presence of two large groups of amphorae, one of which was within the impluvium (Fig. 4), and of the mule in the adjoining room (4), a room which would otherwise traditionally be interpreted as a cubiculum. It would seem that a beast of burden was kept purposely to transport the large quantity of amphorae, and this implies that there was a large turnover of amphorae within the houses, which necessitated the permanent presence of a mule. This leads to the conclusion that one of the main activities taking place within the houses was of a predominantly commercial character. The storage of amphorae in the atrium seriously limits the space available for other domestic activities, and this is also reflected by the very small number of artefacts found in the whole area: in the atrium the only other finds were four lamps, part of a marble statue and a couple of bronze fittings from a piece of furniture; in room 4 the only artefacts related directly to the presence of the mule were a wooden bowl and trough, and the bottom of an amphora. It therefore appears that this area of houses 11 and 12 was reserved for commercial use.

PERISTYLE (8) AND ASSOCIATED ROOMS IN HOUSE 12

The peristyle (8) was covered with undisturbed material, but the other parts of this area showed quite extensive disruption. The disturbance to the tablinum (5) and room 7, where whole walls had collapsed, can probably be explained by the violence of the eruption of AD 79; but room 10 had been disturbed by previous excavators, who had broken several of the walls, and this may account for the lack of artefacts in this room (consisting of only a bronze patera and a broken bronze bucket). Some structural repairs and alterations had obviously been completed in this area in the period before AD 79, since the south entrance to the tablinum (5) had been narrowed with brick and block quoins, and rooms 5 and 10 had both been decorated in elaborate Fourth Style wall painting. It is interesting that this area of house 12 is the only part of the whole two houses which was in any sense elaborately decorated and that in both rooms 5 and 10 this decoration was in good condition in AD 79, in contrast to the rest of the decoration in the houses which was in a poor condition. It is difficult to know whether redecoration was planned for the rest of the house, or whether these two areas alone were intended to be decorated. There was evidence of

building materials here, consisting of piles of stones and tiles in the peristyle (8), pozzolana and terracotta fragments in room 6, and rubble on the pavement of the tablinum (5), which might indicate that building activity was at least planned, if not actively taking place, in AD 79.

However, this interpretation is complicated by two factors. Firstly, there is no evidence of tools or equipment which could be used in building-work, and, secondly, this is the only area of the two houses which had more than a token number of domestic artefacts (that is, artefacts other than amphorae), which therefore suggests that building-work could not be the dominant activity in this part of the house. Most of these objects were found in the undisturbed lapilli in the portico of the peristyle (8); they consist of a small bronze amphora, three bronze trays, a bronze jug, a bronze mirror, a bronze footrest, a small bronze box, a bronze patera, a bronze bucket, a bronze tripod for lamps, a couple of small glass bottles, an alabaster bottle and a terracotta lamp. This group contains all the artefacts in the houses which could be interpreted as being for personal use, most of the bronze vessels in the houses, and the only artefacts in the whole of the two houses that could have been used for food consumption. The position of these objects in the portico can be interpreted as indicating storage rather than use, and it thus seems that most domestic artefacts were being stored together away from other activities taking place within the two houses. It is in fact fairly normal to find evidence of cupboards in the porticoes of peristyles which might contain various household objects (Allison, 1992), although normally large number of artefacts are also found in other areas of a house, such as in the atria and cubicula: to find almost all the domestic assemblage of a household in one spot is thus very unusual.

It may be that this area was the main residential area, although the presence of large groups of amphorae in both the peristyle (8) and room 7 suggests that the commercial function of the houses was not kept completely separate. The number of bronze objects found here is interesting, since metal is a reusable material and therefore valuable, and this stands in direct contrast with the small number of vessels for food consumption. It is therefore also significant that in the associated kitchen (9) there were no artefacts at all which could be related to either food preparation or consumption, despite the fact that there was ash on the hearth, which suggests that some kind of cooking had taken place shortly before the eruption. A statistical comparison with houses in Insula 7, Region I demonstrates that artefacts related to cooking and eating on average form one-third of the total assemblage of finds in each individual household, and can be distributed in almost all areas of the house. This therefore must be one of the main criteria for establishing whether a house is functioning as a normal domestic unit in AD 79, and the lack of kitchen vessels and equipment in house 12 would therefore seem to imply that there was no full-scale domestic inhabitation of the houses. It is therefore contradictory to find so many bronze artefacts which would normally suggest occupation of a house.

GARDEN (5) IN HOUSE 11

The most complicated area to understand is the garden area (5) of house 11, since radical changes had already occurred in this area before AD 62. Firstly a peristyle was

created, and this was later transformed into a garden with soil being specifically imported for this reason, which implies that it was planned to satisfy a particular need or plan. At present it is impossible to say when exactly this development occurred, that is, whether it can be dated to after AD 62. The discovery of worked limestone blocks in the garden may mean that further repairs or structural changes were planned, although in AD 79 almost the entire area of the garden (5B) was being used to store amphorae. This underlines the commercial use of the houses, already seen in house 12, and the relationship between the two houses. The excavation photograph also appears to show some sort of rubble over the whole area of the garden, which appears to be in a somewhat chaotic state, whilst palynological analysis suggests that the garden was unkempt and may have been overgrown. This implies that, despite the presence of plant and tree roots, at least in the immediate period before the eruption the garden (5) was not being actively cultivated, and also that any other activity taking place here in AD 79 was being disrupted. This contradicts the evidence of commercial activity given by the large numbers of amphorae, although in fact these amphorae are stored upside-down and therefore empty.

CAUPONA 1 IN HOUSE 11

The presence of a *caupona* would appear to be connected to the storage of so many amphorae inside the two houses, and the commercial activity which seems to have been taking place in AD 79. If traditional dating criteria for building materials are to be trusted, there are repairs of the front façade and the southeast corner of the *caupona* after AD 62 which suggest that this establishment existed at least from this period, if not before. However, there are problems with the interpretation of this area in AD 79 since the available evidence for the condition of the *caupona* (1) in AD 79 is extremely poor: there is barely any mention in the excavation reports, only two recorded inscriptions, on amphorae, in *CIL*, and an excavation photograph (Fig. 5). The photograph shows the *caupona* in a bad state of repair, and in particular the serving counter is ruinous. However, given the fact that this area is virtually omitted from the excavation reports, it is difficult to know whether the condition of the *caupona* is that of AD 79 or whether it had been disturbed at a later date. The only clue in the reports is that the material excavated from the area was mixed, which does indeed suggest at least some post-eruption disturbance and might also explain the paucity of finds from this area (which consisted of the two amphorae, a bronze box and an iron tripod).

However, post-eruption disturbance does not usually include a systematic removal of all finds. For example, in the *caupona* at I.8.1, which had been widely disturbed by previous excavators, there was still a large lamp, a bronze bucket, part of a set of scales, a terracotta amphora and small dolium, a terracotta bowl, a bronze *casseruola*, two glass jars and the fragments of four bottles, and a glass bowl. It would also be unusual for the excavators to ignore completely a group of associated finds such as those often found in *cauponae*, since these usually attract comment in other *cauponae* excavated around this period. Artefactual evidence from other *cauponae* in Pompeii demonstrates that functioning shops of this type had varied combinations of

artefacts — for example, a serving vessel such as a *casseruola* or deep saucepan, jugs or bottles, a limited number of storage vessels such as amphorae or dolia. In the *caupona* at I.8.8 there were many lamps, a *terra sigillata* cup, a bronze bell, a small terracotta amphora and several terracotta jugs. In the *caupona* of Euxinus (I.11.10-11), Jashefski emphasized (1979: 167) that there was not only a masonry *thermopolium* bank with two large dolia embedded in it, but also a fire-bed made from a roof tile which demonstrated evidence of the ashes from the last fire, and an ante-room with evidence of shelving. Thus whilst drinking vessels may not be present, serving and storage vessels appear to have been necessary for the functioning of a *caupona*. Thus the complete absence of any reported artefacts of this type from the *caupona* (1) of house 11 appears to suggest that this area was not functioning in AD 79. Equally, however, the abandonment of an area does not imply a thorough removal of all artefacts. It is therefore possible that some of the building material found within the houses was intended for the reconstruction of the *caupona* (1) and that it had been cleared as preparation for this work. Given the large numbers of amphorae and the presence of a mule in the houses it is likely that the restoration of the shop area may well have been given priority over other necessary repairs caused by the ongoing seismic activity.

THE INSCRIPTIONS

Some of the inscriptions appear to relate to the owner or occupant of the houses. To the west of the façade of house 11 there was a painted electoral inscription (known only from Della Corte's transcription) — AMARANTUS POMPEIANUS ROG(AT) — which was used by Della Corte to give a name to the owner of the house (1965: 340). Whilst attributions such as these, which are based purely on electoral programmata, have been treated with extreme scepticism (Mouritsen, 1988), in this case Della Corte appears to have been right. During the excavations in 1995 two Aegean amphorae were discovered in the garden (5): one had a clear *dipinto* on its neck — SEX POMPEI AMARANTI; the second had 'SEX POMP' painted on its belly. Thus it would seem that there is a direct relationship between the contents of the houses and its occupier, that is, the person responsible for both the assemblage of household artefacts and the building-work. The evidence discussed in this paper demonstrates that houses 11 and 12 functioned together as a unit, and therefore it is likely that this whole unit was run (if not actually owned) by a Sextus Pompeius Amarantus.¹⁰

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

It can be seen from the above discussion that the evidence available for the reconstruction of the condition of houses 11 and 12 is contradictory. The mule

¹⁰ The discovery of the rectangular bronze signet ring bearing the inscription 'Q. MESTR' MAX IM I' in the tablinum of house 12 was used by Della Corte to name this house (1965: 340): it is unclear, however, how this ring relates to the inscriptions naming Sextus Pompeius Amarantus, particularly considering the clear connection between the two houses.

and the large number of amphorae imply current commercial activity, whereas the rubble strewn across the garden (5) and the ruinous state of the *caupona* suggest abandon; the ashes on the hearth of the kitchen (9) imply habitation, but this is denied by the lack of cooking vessels and shortage of eating-related vessels, and again the problem of occupation is highlighted by the presence of a fair number of bronze artefacts which stand in direct contrast to the complete absence of common-wares; the building material implies that repairs and/or structural changes were planned and that the houses had not yet achieved their final intended form, but the absence of tools suggests that this work was not taking place in AD 79.

These contradictions start to make some sense when seen in the context of ongoing seismic activity and, more importantly, the likelihood of another earthquake only months, even weeks, before the final destruction of Pompeii. In an examination of houses in Region I, Nappo has claimed that another major earthquake can be identified from the evidence of interrupted redecorations and building-work, and by radical changes of room function (Nappo, 1995: 53-4). Both of these processes can be seen in the available evidence from Insula 9, houses 11 and 12, although this evidence can actually be divided into three broad phases, which reflect the initial earthquake of AD 62, the ongoing seismic activity, and another major earthquake shortly before the final eruption of AD 79.

Firstly, some of the evidence may relate directly to reactions to the earthquake of AD 62: walls were repaired and rebuilt all over the two houses, the entrance to the tablinum from the atrium was narrowed, the *caupona* was either built or substantially restructured in this period; in addition, the redecoration of two rooms of house 12 was finished. Given the evidence of root-voids, it is likely that trees and maybe vines were planted in the garden (5). The wide evidence of building material suggests that further restorations, architectural changes, and redecorations were intended, and in fact the decoration of many areas of the two houses was still in a fairly deteriorated condition in AD 79.

At some point after AD 62, however, this building-work was interrupted or postponed. Whilst there is wide evidence of building materials, no tools were found in either of the houses. Only in two areas (the tablinum (5) and room 10) was the restoration and redecoration finished, and other areas were left incomplete. It appears that the use of both houses as a warehouse for wine amphorae dates from this period, given that amphorae were stored all over the houses, even in the rooms where the redecoration had been completed, and in the garden (5) (preventing the cultivation of this area). The presence of a mule in house 12 is directly connected to the necessity to transport the amphorae, and thus also dates from this period. The consequences of this are drastic changes in room function. In particular, the atrium of house 12 and garden areas of both houses, both usually considered to be reception areas, were given over almost completely to storage, whilst in house 12, room 4, which is nominally a cubiculum, was transformed into a stable. The purpose for which the tablinum (5) was redecorated was no longer considered important. Commercial activity thus took precedence over standards of habitation, although it is likely that house 12 at least continued to be a residence given the large number of finely decorated bronze vessels and fragments of statues which were still to be found in AD 79.

The third phase can be dated to the period immediately before the eruption of AD 79. Most areas of the two houses were still given over to storage, yet the commercial activity being carried out had been seriously inhibited by further damage to the houses: in particular the serving counter of the *caupona* (1) was in a ruinous condition and there was rubble strewn across the garden (5) of house 11. Both suggest that the houses were not functioning normally as a commercial outlet/warehouse. In addition, there were no cooking/eating vessels to indicate normal habitation in the houses and it appears that both the atrium of house 12 and the garden of house 11 were partially overgrown. In AD 79, therefore, full-scale habitation in the houses is extremely unlikely, given the nature of both the artefactual and the structural evidence, although the discovery of ashes on the hearth of the kitchen-bank in room 9 of house 12, and the large number of bronze vessels found in house 12 during the excavations, demonstrates that neither house had been completely abandoned by AD 79. The ashes and the mule, in particular, suggest that the disruption of the two houses was a fairly recent occurrence, and their continued presence implies that the condition in AD 79 of houses 11 and 12 was temporary and would have been rectified. The fact that the *caupona* (1) had been completely cleared of artefacts suggests that reconstruction was indeed planned. However, the intended final form of the houses, that is, whether the houses would have been used as a purely commercial unit, or whether they would eventually have been inhabited again, remains unclear.

In the light of the examination of houses 11 and 12 of Insula 9, Region I, it is necessary to emphasize that there was a complexity of individual variants in both the structural and artefactual organization of the houses of Pompeii (Wallace-Hadrill, 1994: 150). Individual responses to the destruction and chaos caused by another earthquake shortly before AD 79 would have depended on many factors, such as availability of building materials and/or economic ability to undertake repairs, the possibility of moving to other properties outside Pompeii or the necessity of making do with what was left. Houses 11 and 12 demonstrate the need to examine each house in Pompeii individually and to assess carefully the relationship between the domestic architecture and the household artefacts. A controlled examination of all the available evidence for the condition of a Pompeian house in AD 79 demonstrates the wealth of this information: it is possible to identify those areas which have been disturbed and those which have not, and to assess the processes of excavation which necessarily affect the interpretation of a house. From this it is possible to establish the extent to which the physical condition of a house can be reconstructed and the areas which remain difficult to understand, and it is at this point that the interpretation of the final condition of the house can start.

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