

INSCRIPTIONS IN THEIR SPATIAL CONTEXTS IN ROMAN ITALY

The study of inscriptions has traditionally been conducted by either philologists or archaeologists asking usually different questions concerning content, location or type of monument. But combining these two data sets has been rare until recently. The project *Inscriptions in their Spatial Contexts in Roman Italy* (2011-2013), funded by the University of Helsinki (Finland) and directed by Dr Kalle Korhonen, aimed at uniting the expertise of philologists and archaeologists to study two types of texts from Roman Italy: stamped lead pipes in the countryside around Rome and wall inscriptions in the façades of Pompeian city blocks.

Lead pipes were used to conduct pressurized water in the cities – most famously Rome – and in the countryside. They were stamped with maker’s marks and/or with names in the genitive which are most commonly interpreted as owners of the water rights. Contextualizing lead pipes has been tried in the cities: in Rome the results are fairly meagre (DE KLEIJN 2001; NOREÑA 2006), but in Pompeii it has become apparent that pressurized water was used mostly in luxurious water displays (JANSEN 2002). The countryside around

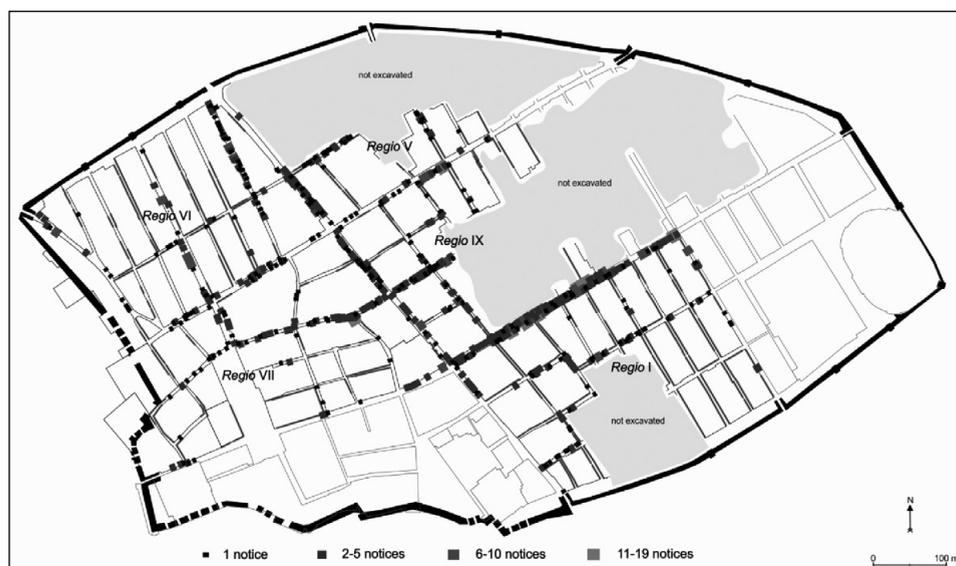


Fig. 1 – The distribution of electoral notices in Pompeii. Walls without doors are indicated with thicker line (Map: E.-M. Viitanen).

Rome afforded some 300 sites with lead pipes ranging from production sites to luxury villas. Most of the pipes were stamped and new information concerning stamping practice could be gained.

The second data set consists of Pompeian electoral *programmata* painted and graffiti usually scratched on the façades of the city blocks. Their contents have been used to study various aspects of the town's inhabitants and their activities (for example MOURITSEN 1988; MILNOR 2014). The texts were contextualized in five of the modern regions in Pompeii (I, V, VI, VII, IX) where most of the city blocks have been excavated and where there is information for evaluating the activities of the streetscape as well as for identifying the types of housing units (Fig. 1). The *programmata* were usually painted on the façades of large and very large private houses along the busiest traffic routes of Pompeii. Comparison with the inscribed graffiti shows that the same locations were preferred. The distribution follows closely the pattern of street activity. The collection of names on the façades probably displayed the social and political connections of the house owner. Analysis of notices for different offices and from different periods reveals that different strategies were used: some were aimed at advertising locally, others aimed at city-wide distribution. Contextualisation shows that painting of the notices was far from a random or ritualized activity: the locations were chosen with careful deliberation and intent for maximum visibility and effect.

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