

The miniature vessels of Insula VI.1 Pompeii. New evidence for neighbourhood cults

H.E.M. Cool – David G. Griffiths

This paper describes the miniature votive ceramic vessels found during the excavations in Insula VI.1 Pompeii. It reviews the dating evidence for the types emerging from stratigraphic excavations more widely within the city which augment the data presented by Grasso. It is suggested that the small handled cups (calice) and the lid-like vessels (coperchi) were used in different rituals. The use of the latter in ceremonies around the well at the tip of VI.1 are described and it is suggested that they may not have functioned as vessels. This area was to become a formal cross-roads shrine (compitum), but the votive deposition uncovered shows that the area was already a focus of a neighbourhood cult prior to the establishment of the Roman colonia.

Introduction

In papers in FOLD&R and elsewhere¹, Lara Anniboletti documented a hitherto unsuspected aspect of religious behaviour in Pompeii centring on niches and house-front shrines, and dating to the second and first century BC. The recent completion of outline phasing for the excavations in *Insula* VI.1 carried out by the Anglo-American Project in Pompeii (AAPP) has enabled the miniature ceramic vessels found during the excavations to be put into context. These vessels have been shown to occur widely at Pompeii, forming part of both domestic and more public ritual acts². Domestic use in VI.1 can also be seen but of special interest is the additional evidence they provide for public use and neighbourhood shrines that complements Anniboletti's work. The full study of the miniature vessels will form part of the report on the small finds and vessel glass from the *Insula* as a whole which one of us (HEMC) is writing. As the publication of that volume is still some time in the future, it has been thought appropriate to present a summary of the information here in advance of full publication.

The paper is in three parts. The first part gives a brief account of the *insula* and the excavations in it. The progress of the post-excavation work is outlined as this provides important background against which to evaluate the results presented here. The second part summarises the miniature vessel assemblage found in *Insula* VI.1 and sets it against the wider background of the use of these vessels in Pompeii. The third part explores the contextual evidence within the *insula* in more detail, and considers the use of the little vessels both within domestic and neighbourhood religious ceremonies.

Insula VI.1

The *insula* lies immediately inside the Porta Ercolano (see figs. 1 and 2), and was one of the earliest parts of Pompeii to be uncovered by the Bourbon excavators in 1770-71 and 1783-9³. The length of time since the original excavation with the inevitable damage caused by being exposed to the atmosphere for over two centuries, not to mention the bomb damage in 1943⁴, made it an ideal choice for conducting sub-surface excavations. The AAPP started in 1995 and concluded twelve years later in 2006. Some areas could

¹ ANNIBOLETTI 2007; 2008; 2010, 2011.

² GRASSO 2004.

³ FIORELLI 1860: Vol. 1 Part 1 236-57, Vol. 1 Part 2 18-46.

⁴ GARCIA y GARCIA 2006: 66.



Fig. 1. Insula VI.1 looking along the Via Consolare to the Porta Ercolana. The fountain and well are in the foreground and the Vicolo Narciso is to the right. (Photo: Mike Baxter).

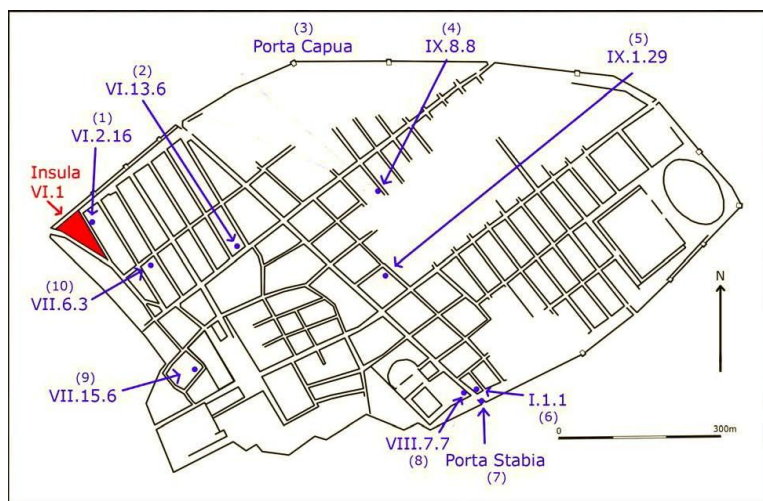


Fig. 2. The location of Insula VI.1 and the other Pompeian properties mentioned in the text. (Numbers in brackets are the location numbers used in the text).

know, the expensive and time-consuming part is not the excavation itself, but rather the post-excavation work. The problems with the record quality will be touched upon as appropriate in what follows, but the issue of post-excavation resources has limited some aspects of our work.

The post-excavation work survives on the goodwill of a small team of specialists, and consequently progress is slow as it has to be fitted into their commitments elsewhere. Despite that, the final publications are starting to appear. The first was the volume on all of the coins from the *Insula* published in 2013, and this provides a summary stratigraphic narrative of many of the properties⁵. The report on the excavations in the Casa del Chirurgo is about to go press and more background to the excavations can be found there⁷. The major area where the lack of resources impinges is on the study of the pottery. Pottery processing associated with the VI.1 work was a two stage process. First it was bulk-sorted and quantified in broad ware categories. Then there was full specialist recording of the diagnostic sherds, and this stage has only been completed for the Casa del Chirurgo. The bulk sorting elsewhere is complete for the two southern bars, the *Triclinium* and parts of the Shrine, and the Inn. Bulk sorting of the pottery from the rest of the properties was

not be excavated either because there were surviving eruption level floors, or because of safety considerations, but by 2006 the sub-surface of most of the *insula* had been explored.

The *insula* can be divided into a number of properties as outlined in fig. 3. These reflect the situation at the time of the eruption. The excavations showed that the use of the various spaces had changed over time, and in some cases the final use of a space in AD 79 was a very recent phenomenon⁵. The AAPP dug the *insula* as a total of 219 separate trenches called Archaeological Areas (AA). It was not unusual for the same physical area to be dug over more than one year. When that happened the normal procedure was for the area to be assigned a new AA number, so the total number of discrete trenches was somewhat smaller. The quantity of material recovered and the information it provides about the development of a single *insula* is currently unmatched anywhere else in Pompeii. This presents unrivalled opportunities, tempered somewhat by problems which it is appropriate to outline briefly.

The excavations had been financed and run as a training summer school for students. Given the workforce, there are occasions when the quality of the records is not all that could be desired, but in general a basic narrative can be extracted and in some cases it is detailed and extremely useful. The major problems revolve around the field school funding model having no built-in method of funding the work to bring the results to publication. As anyone involved with publishing excavations will

⁵ For interim reports see JONES, ROBINSON 2004, 2005a, b., but note that not all of the relevant areas had been dug when these were written.

⁶ HOBBS 2013, 68-75.

⁷ ANDERSON, ROBINSON forthcoming.

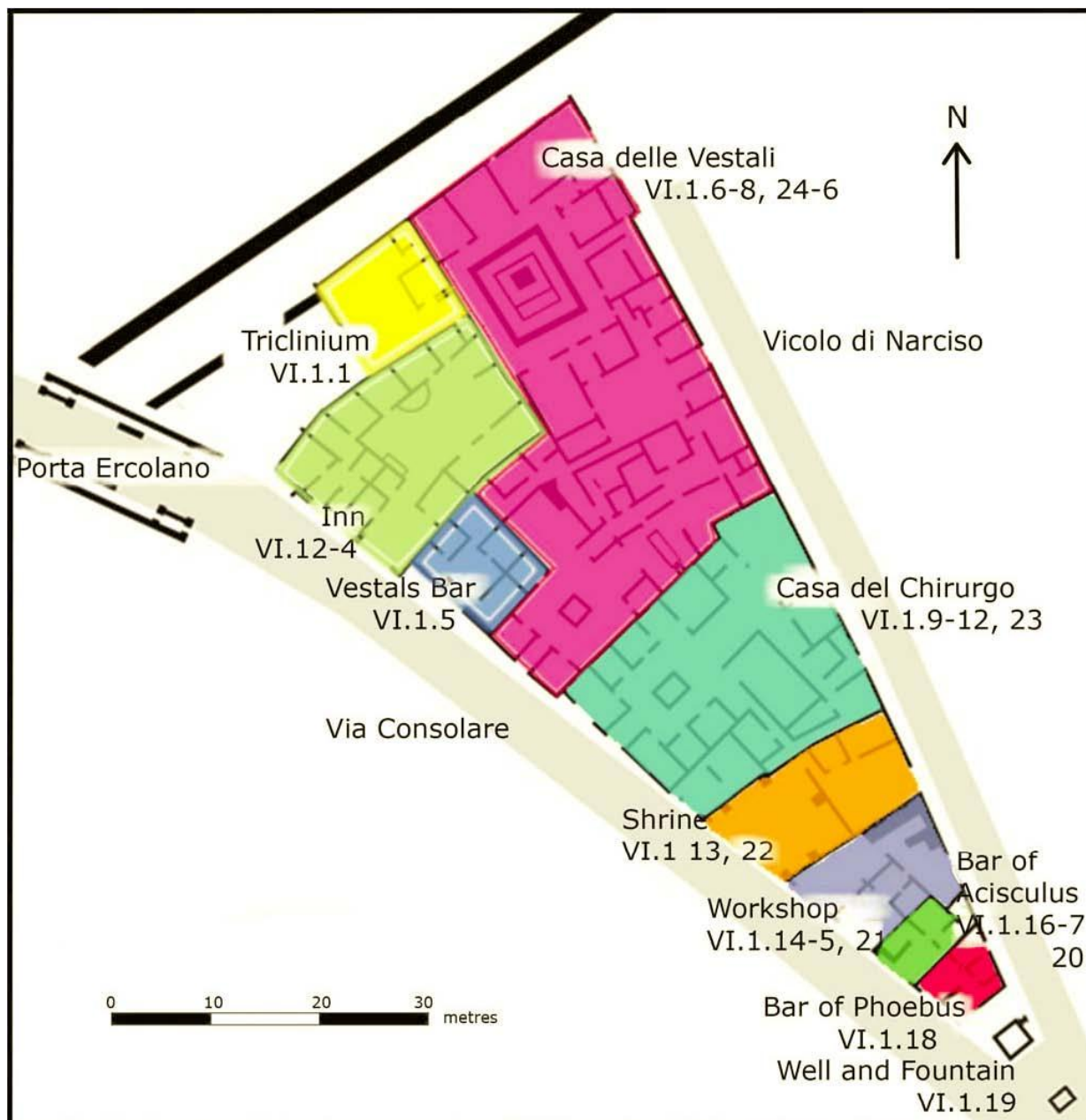


Fig. 3. The properties in Insula VI.1 at the time of the eruption in AD 79.

much less systematic and tons of pottery remain unsorted. This has direct consequences for the subject of this paper.

Miniature ceramic vessels occupy a liminal position within archaeological processing and specialisms. Within the AAPP context the vessels were sometimes bagged with the pottery and were sometimes singled out as ‘special’ finds, packaged and stored separately. Within the VI.1 specialist context it was decided that there would be a joint study by both the small finds (HEMC) and pottery (DG) specialists. In 2010 a concerted effort was made to inspect all of the bulk sorted pottery from the Inn, the *Triclinium*, the Casa del Chirurgo, the Shrine, the southern Bars and the Well area and to extract certain classes of pottery from it, including the miniature vessels⁸. The pottery from the areas of the Shrine and the Inn that had not been bulk sorted were also reviewed by the authors in 2011 and the relevant classes extracted. Fig. 4 shows the areas where the pottery has been inspected and the data gathered. It is highly likely that more examples of these

⁸ The ceramic unguent bottles were also extracted so that they could form part of a comparative study alongside those of glass and alabaster see COOL forthcoming. The lamps are the subject of a separate study – GRIFFITHS in press and forthcoming.

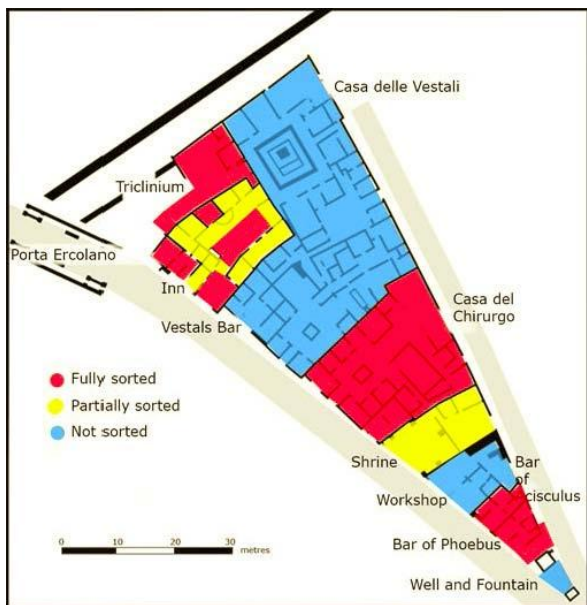


Fig. 4. The state of the pottery work in the insula. Fully sorted area areas are those where the pottery has been completely bulk sorted. Partially sorted are those areas where there is a mixture of bulk sorted and unsorted pottery where the authors have extracted miniature vessels. Not sorted are the areas where there the only miniature vessels are those which were isolated as small finds at the time of the excavation. See text for full explanation.

little vessels are present in the pottery from other areas which has not yet been bulk sorted. We also know that there are some examples which were treated as special finds which we could not locate. So, though the number of miniature vessels considered here is not inconsiderable, it has to be remembered that it is not the complete assemblage from the *Insula*. As it is unlikely that there will be any work on the unsorted pottery from the excavations in the foreseeable future, it seems to us useful to present the results from the data we have now, especially as VI.1 has produced an otherwise uncommon form of these vessels in substantial numbers.

Miniature ceramic vessels in Insula VI.1 and in Pompeii

We have located 56 miniature ceramic vessels amongst the finds from the VI.1 excavations though this is clearly not the total recovered. Among what may be termed the known unknowns are small two-handled cups (*calici*) found whilst excavating Room 4 of the Casa delle Vestali, and recognised as being part of a ritual deposit at the time of excavation. The work there took place in 1995, the first year of the excavations. We were unable to locate these in the store. They were noted in the article published in 2004 charting the development of the *insula* which refers to the pit containing ‘numerous small incense cups’⁹. The SU sheet for the feature states that three were found. These have been included in the figures presented below. They are the only examples known from the Casa delle Vestali because this is a property where the pottery has not been bulk sorted, and so falls into the category of unknown unknowns as outlined in the previous section.

Miniature vessels in Pompeii as a whole have been the subject of a very useful study by Grasso¹⁰. Certain groups were not available to her¹¹, but the nearly twelve hundred vessels she catalogued give a good indication of which forms were generally common and which ones rare. Table 1 summarises the Grasso *corpus* and provides the figures for the VI.1 assemblage classified in the same way. As can be seen, the VI.1 assemblage shows an interesting difference to the Grasso pattern in that *calici* which were ubiquitous in her study, were not the commonest found here. The reasons for this will be explored in the final section.

Name	Pompeii	VI.1
<i>Balsamari</i>	1	-
<i>Bicchieri</i>	1	-
<i>Boccali</i>	3	-
<i>Brocche</i>	4	1
<i>Calici</i>	943	20
<i>Coperchi</i>	75	38
<i>Coppette</i>	41	-
<i>Lucerne</i>	2	-
<i>Olle</i>	18	-
<i>Piatti</i>	110	(*)
<i>Skyphoi</i>	1	-
Total	1199	59

Table 1: Types of miniature vessels present from Pompeii (Source GRASSO 2004) and Insula VI.1. (*see discussion of coperchi for two possibly aberrant piatti).

⁹ JONES, ROBINSON 2004: 110, fig. 4.

¹⁰ GRASSO 2004.

¹¹ GRASSO 2004: 13.

Three different fabrics were used for the VI.1 miniature vessels. V01 is a fine, well-sorted, pale yellow fabric, very similar to Fabric U02 of the unguent bottle series. It has sparse red and very sparse lime and mica inclusions. (Munsell: 10YR 7/4 very pale brown). V02 is a coarse, gritty, well-sorted, pale brown fabric. It has common black vitreous inclusions (c.2 mm sub-rounded) and quartz inclusions. White and mica inclusions are sparse. (Munsell: 10YR 6/4 light yellowish brown to 10YR 7/4 very pale brown). This fabric is similar to that used for second to first century BC wheel-made coarse lamps. V03 is a very coarse, sandy, illsorted, brown to red-brown fabric. It has abundant black vitreous and quartz inclusions, common red inclusions and sparse mica inclusions (Munsell: 5YR 4/4 reddish brown). Grasso also identified three fabrics amongst her *corpus* with a similar division between two well-sorted ones and a much coarser third one used especially for the *coperchi* as here¹²

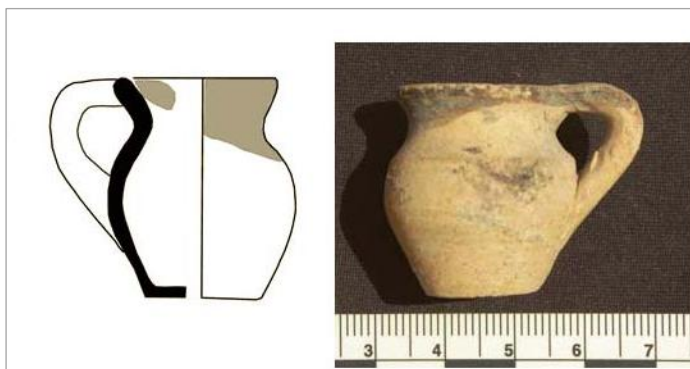


Fig. 5. The jug / brocca no. 1763. (Drawing and photograph authors).

Jugs – Brocche

A single example of a jug of Grasso type BROC₁I (**1763**)¹³ was recovered from the Workshop (fig. 5). It is of Fabric V001 and has slip applied to the top of the handle and around the rim, both internally and externally. It has a deliberately made hole in the base as though it has been ritually 'killed'. In the larger *corpus* there were only two examples, unfortunately both without any provenance. Grasso suggested a sixth to fifth century date based on parallels with those from Paestum¹⁴. For her slightly squatter and wider-mouthed BROC₁II there was a small amount of *comparanda* for a late second into first century BC date. Excavations within the Casa dei Capitelli Colorati (VII.6.3, fig. 2 location 11) have produced two little jugs. One, a BROC₁II¹⁵, came from a small group of miniature vessels in a context dated to the end of the second century and beginning of the first century BC supporting Grasso's suggested date. The other is a BROC₁I though without apparently any slip¹⁶. The exhibition catalogue in which it was published does not provide any details of the context it was found in. **1763** came from a subfloor of the phase that followed the use of the large tanks in the area¹⁷, and so has a deposition date of the mid to late first century BC. Given the dating of the of the BROC₁II jugs, Grasso's *comparanda* for the BROC₁I type may not be relevant for the use of the type at Pompeii and a second to first century BC date may be more appropriate.

Double-handled stemmed cups – Calici

Of the 17 stemmed cups found in VI.1 and located in 2010/11 the majority fall within the carinated Grasso Type CAL₁I¹⁸, whilst four have the more out-splayed mouths of Grasso Type CAL₁II¹⁹ (fig. 6). In the former, Fabric V002 predominates but there are also three examples of Fabric V001 (**1759**, **1772-3**) and two of a hybrid between Fabrics V001 and V002 (**1761**, **1764**). Three of the Type Cal₁II are also of Fabric V002 with only a single example of Fabric V001 (**1774**). There are three fragmentary examples (**1772**, **1774**, **1778**), but otherwise the vessels are complete or only slightly chipped. Only five of them show definite signs of burning (**1761-2**, **1764**, **1779**).

Grasso noted that the Type CAL₁I was already in use by the end of the third century within Pompeii and could point to seven which were found in contexts such as cupboards, which showed they were clearly sometimes still used at the time of the eruption. The CAL₁II type was dated to the end of the third century and the second century as she found no examples from later contexts. Since Grasso's work there have been reports of many more *calici* from stratigraphic excavations within Pompeii. The final publication of the excava-

¹² GRASSO 2004: 19-20.

¹³ Numbers in **bold** are the reference numbers used for the pieces in the small finds and vessel glass volume.

¹⁴ GRASSO 2004: 23.

¹⁵ RIBERA *et al.* 2007: 214 nos. C.A. B3.2326.38.

¹⁶ RIBERA *et al.* 2007: 214 nos. C.A. B3.2304.152.

¹⁷ JONES, ROBINSON 2005a: 271.

¹⁸ GRASSO 2004: 23-8. Insula VI.1 examples – SF ID 1759-62, 1764, 1772-3, 1775-9.

¹⁹ GRASSO 2004: 28-30. Insula VI.1 examples – SF ID 1756-7, 1765, 1774.



Fig. 6. Double-handled cups / calici. (Scale 1:1. Drawing and photograph authors).

tions in the vicinity of the area traditionally called the Porta Capua but known from them now not to be a gate, illustrates 12 examples which are a mixture of Types CAL₁I and II²⁰ (fig. 2 location 3). Of those which can be assigned to contexts, examples of each were associated with the building of the city walls, an example of a CAL₁I was found in a post-eruption level and an example of a CAL₁II

came from the eruption level itself. Interestingly none were recorded as coming from the extensive rubbish deposits outside of the walls which these excavations uncovered, suggesting that such vessels might not have been considered appropriate for casual disposal there. Many of the other new examples are currently only known from interim reports, and the details are frequently not precise enough to assign them to any of Grasso's detailed types. They do, though, usefully augment the rather sparse contextual information that was available to her.

The earliest may well be what appears to be a Grasso Type CAL₁I found within the house of M. Epidio Sabinio (IX.1.29, fig. 2 location 5). Combining information given in two separate papers²¹ it can be shown that it came from a surface (U.S. 22) which was cut for the pit of a votive deposit. The pit contained pottery dating to between the end of the fifth and the early decades of the fourth century BC. This could suggest a date of at least the fourth century for the deposition of the cup.

An early to mid-third century BC use is attested by the group of 29 cups associated with a shrine of that date at the Porta Stabia in the area that was to become Room 3 of I.1.1 (fig. 2, location 6)²². There they were found deposited during ritual acts carried out within it, and as part of a deliberate deposit marking the end of the life of the structures after it had been destroyed by fire. Also deposited within the third century BC are the five examples plus additional fragments from VII.15.6 (fig. 2, location 10). These were found mixed with the bones of small birds in a lens of burning that formed part of features cut into natural. This could be interpreted as a foundation deposit for the third century BC building which occupied the space. A similar deposit was also noted in a similar chronological position elsewhere in the same trench²³.

Use at the end of the third century and during the second century BC is shown by those associated with the niche and altar house-front shrines identified by Annibolletti²⁴. Examples were found in the foundation deposits that marked the erection of the altar at IX.8.8 (fig. 2, location 4)²⁵. These must have post-dated 217-5 BC because of the coin of that date which was present in one of the deposits. At VI.2, 16-21 (fig. 2, location 1) another cup was found within the stone casket that received offerings and which also contained coins showing deposition continued until the beginning of the first century BC²⁶. An example of a CAL₁II came from the small group of miniature vessels found in the Casa dei Capitelli Colorati (VII.6.3, fig. 2, location 11) that included the small jug noted in the previous section²⁷. This is dated to the end of the second and beginning of the first century BC.

Their continued use into the Imperial period is demonstrated at the Porta Stabia (fig. 2, location 7). There a niche and altar shrine very similar to the ones found on the house fronts has been excavated. Over time, with the raising of the street level, the altar was gradually submerged and votive deposits were noted in the levelling fill. A miniature cup formed part of these, and the rim fragment of a glass plate was found close

²⁰ ETANI 2010: 113 fig. 149 nos. 2-13.

²¹ GALLO 2009: 50 fig. 8; GALLO 2008: 325 fn. 28.

²² ELLIS *et al.* 2012: 3-4.

²³ ANNIBOLETTI *et al.* 2007: 10.

²⁴ ANNIBOLETTI 2007: 2008.

²⁵ ANNIBOLETTI 2008: 217.

²⁶ ANNIBOLETTI 2008: 209.

²⁷ RIBERA *et al.* 2007: 114, 144, 214 no. B3.2323.39.

to it. One of the publications that describes this notes that the glass vessel was blown, and so this must indicate an Augustan or later date²⁸.

Finally two first century AD occurrences can be noted which join the examples noted by Grasso as showing there was continuous use throughout the life of the city. Three were found in the large pit dug probably in the first century AD for a large cistern in Room of VIII.7.7 (fig. 2, location 8)²⁹. The context suggests these could be foundation deposits. A referee of this paper has very kindly told us that, on the south wall immediately to the left of the entrance, they had observed a niche which is currently obscured by the iron stairs. They are of the opinion that this could well confirm the presence of a votive deposit. The two others from VII.6.3 (fig. 2, location 11) were probably not deposited with ritual intent³⁰. They were from the fill of a cistern that went out of use due to changes following the earthquake of AD 62. It was filled with pottery dating to the first half of the first century AD, and there seems no reason why these two complete cups should be regarded as residual. Their publication includes good scale drawings which indicate that one is a CAL₁I and the other a CAL₂II suggesting that both types continued in use, and that the CAL₂II varieties were not restricted to the third and second centuries BC. Another cup that was deposited in a pit dug after the earthquake was found in the Casa di Marcus Terentius Eudoxus (VI.13.6; fig. 2, location 2)³¹. In this case though, the date range of the material in the fill was wide and the piece cannot be taken as indicating continued use.

The chronological distribution of the examples from the VI.1 excavations, which is considered in more length below, shows a possible start in the late third century BC and then a strong second century BC presence. Some were also found in contexts belonging to the later first century BC and first century AD. It is only the ones in the earlier part of the range which seem likely to have been used with ritual intent.

'Lids' – Coperchi

These are discs of clay with a conical profile and central ridge which, on the ones from *Insula* VI.1, often have finger depressions on the upper face around the top. Thirty-six were found, all made of Fabric V003 which is a coarser fabric than used for the little jug and the *calici*. Visually as a whole they stand apart from the other examples dealt with so far.

Unlike the *calici* which are common at many other sites, Grasso noted that it was very difficult to find parallels for *coperchi* in southern Italy³². She cited ones from votive deposits at Cupra Marittima (Marche)³³ and Roccagloriosa (Salerno)³⁴. The resemblance to the Pompeii examples is not close in either case. Those from the Cupra Marittima have cylindrical terminals with a concavity centrally providing a ring terminal, whilst those from Roccagloriosa have solid cylindrical terminals, and indeed

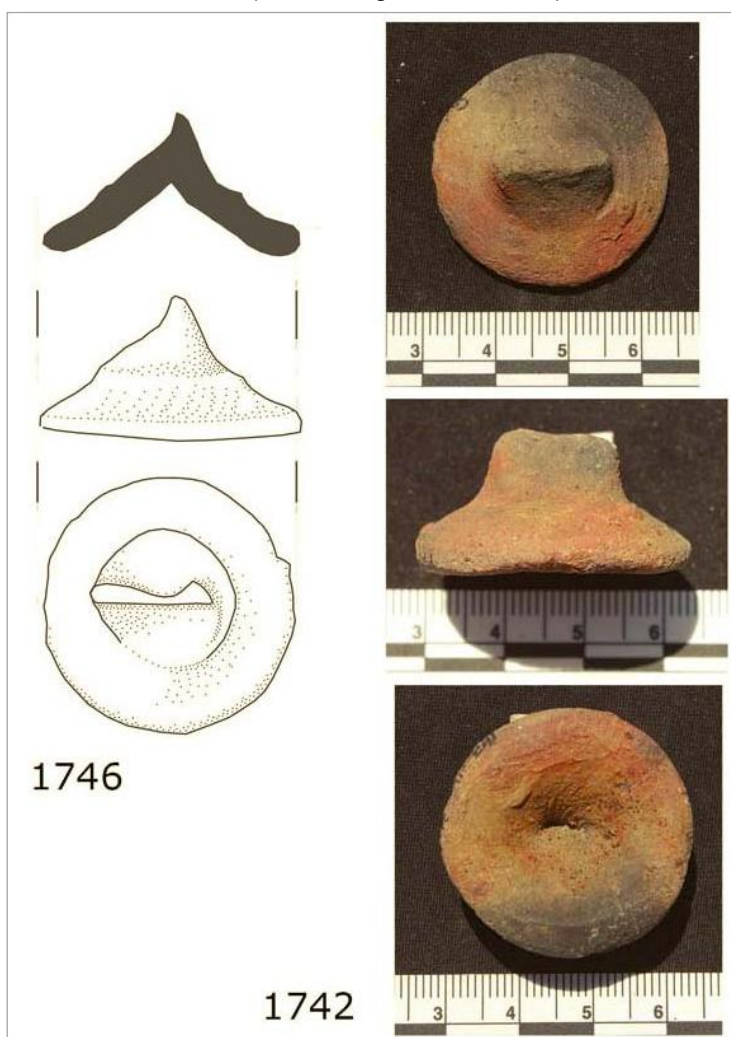


Fig. 7. Lids / coperchi. (Scale 1:1. Drawing and photograph authors).

²⁸ ELLIS, DEVORE 2006: 13; 2008: 319.

²⁹ DEVORE, ELLIS 2008: 7.

³⁰ Del CARMEN ALONSO *et al.*, 2013, fig. 31 nos. 121-2; CASTILLO 2014: 121, fig. 23 nos. 4-5.

³¹ LIPIZIGER, LOCCARDI 2009: 143 CM01 tav. XXXVIII.3.

³² GRASSO 2004: 32.

³³ BALDELLI 1997: 170 nos. 120-9.

³⁴ FRACCHIA 1990: 132-3 nos. V149-56, fig. 122.

were illustrated with this terminal pointing down, making them resemble small stemmed cups which perhaps they were. At present *coperchi* seem to be limited to Pompeii.

Grasso catalogued 75 examples, most of which did not retain any indication of where they had been found. She also drew attention to another apparently found near the Temple of Apollo. From the scanty contextual evidence available to her, she suggested they were in use during the third and second centuries BC. Since then, apart from the ones from VI.1, only two other occurrences seem to have been reported. Examples were present mixed with charcoal and *calici* in the layer that formed part of the foundation deposits that marked the erection of the altar at IX.8.8 (fig. 2, location 4)³⁵. As already noted, the ritual that resulted in these deposits must have taken place after 217-215 BC. Another is recorded from the Casa dei Capitelli Colorati (VII.6.3; fig. 2, location 11) though without any contextual details³⁶.

Within the VI.1 assemblage, one (1726) came from a subfloor layer in the central part of the Inn belonging to the pre-Sullan Phase 5.1 which indicates a second century BC date. Four others (1742-5) came from a construction trench fill for the south wall of the Bar of Phoebus. The building of the Workshop and southern bars complex is put no later than the early first century BC. As will be discussed below there is a noticeable concentration of these objects in the southern tip of the *insula*, and the possibility that these examples were re-deposited in the foundation trench cannot be excluded. The date of the wall thus merely provides a *terminus ante quem* for their use.

Although given the name lids, it is far from clear that this was what they were used for. In the Casa di Ganimede (VII.13.4; fig. 2, location 9) a *coperchio* was found in the same deposit as a *calice*³⁷. The two types were also clearly used in the same ritual that consecrated the area of the house front altar at IX.8.8. Given that the cups and the lids are always made in different fabrics, it seems unlikely that they were used as a set. As is clear from the discussion of the *calici* in the previous section, there are now many contexts in Pompeii where they have been recovered from primary contexts where their original use can be understood. With the exception of the IX.8.8 altar foundation layer, the *coperchi* are always absent. Some of the miniature vessels from VI.1 are in primary votive contexts, and again the two main types represented do not occur together in them. The difference in the numbers of cups and lids would also point to the fact that they were not commonly used together. All in all, it would seem likely that *coperchi* were generally considered appropriate for different rituals than the *calici* were.

In addition to what might be termed the typical *coperchi*, there are also two small conical plate-like vessels (1781-2) both in Fabric V003 from the Casa del Chirurgo. They are irregular vessels and do not fit happily into Grasso's categories though their small irregular flattened bases have similarities with her PIAT₁I category³⁸ which she suggested might have been used like *coperchi*. Certainly the use of the same fabric here links these two vessels to the *coperchi*, and so they have been treated as a variant of them. Neither were found in usefully dated contexts.

The use of miniature vessels within Insula VI.1

Having set out the types present within the *insula* against the background of the wider use of the miniature vessels in Pompeii, it is possible to explore in more detail how they were being used within the area of VI.1.

It is clear that there were at least two foundation deposits which included *calici* made prior to the erections of building. These are the sort of deposits often found in small pits accompanied by burnt offerings, that are being increasingly recognised at Pompeii such as the one found at VIII.15.6 noted in the previous section. One of the VI.1 deposits was found in 1995. It consisted of a large pit dug prior to the building of the Casa delle Vestali (fig. 8, location 2). The area was positioned in what would become the rear range of the *atrium* (Room 4, AA3). This is a group which we were unable to locate in the store. A photograph of two of the vessels suggests they might have had slightly flaring bodies. The deposit also contained burnt food offerings consisting of neo-natal pigs, bread, figs, grapes and hazelnuts³⁹. This was in an area whose later stratigraphy was destroyed by one of the 1943 bombs, but it clearly predated the building of the Casa delle Vestali and so a later third century date can be suggested⁴⁰.

The second foundation deposit was found in the area that was to become the Shrine in the final stage of the life of the city, and was the earliest feature found in the AA 310/320 area. It consisted of a small pit

³⁵ ANNIBOLETTI 2008: 217.

³⁶ RIBERA *et al.* 2007: 214 no. CA B3.2344.1.

³⁷ ESCHEBACH 1982: 282.

³⁸ GRASSO 2004: 40.

³⁹ CIARALDI, RICHARDSON 2000: 79-80.

⁴⁰ JONES, ROBINSON 2004: 109.

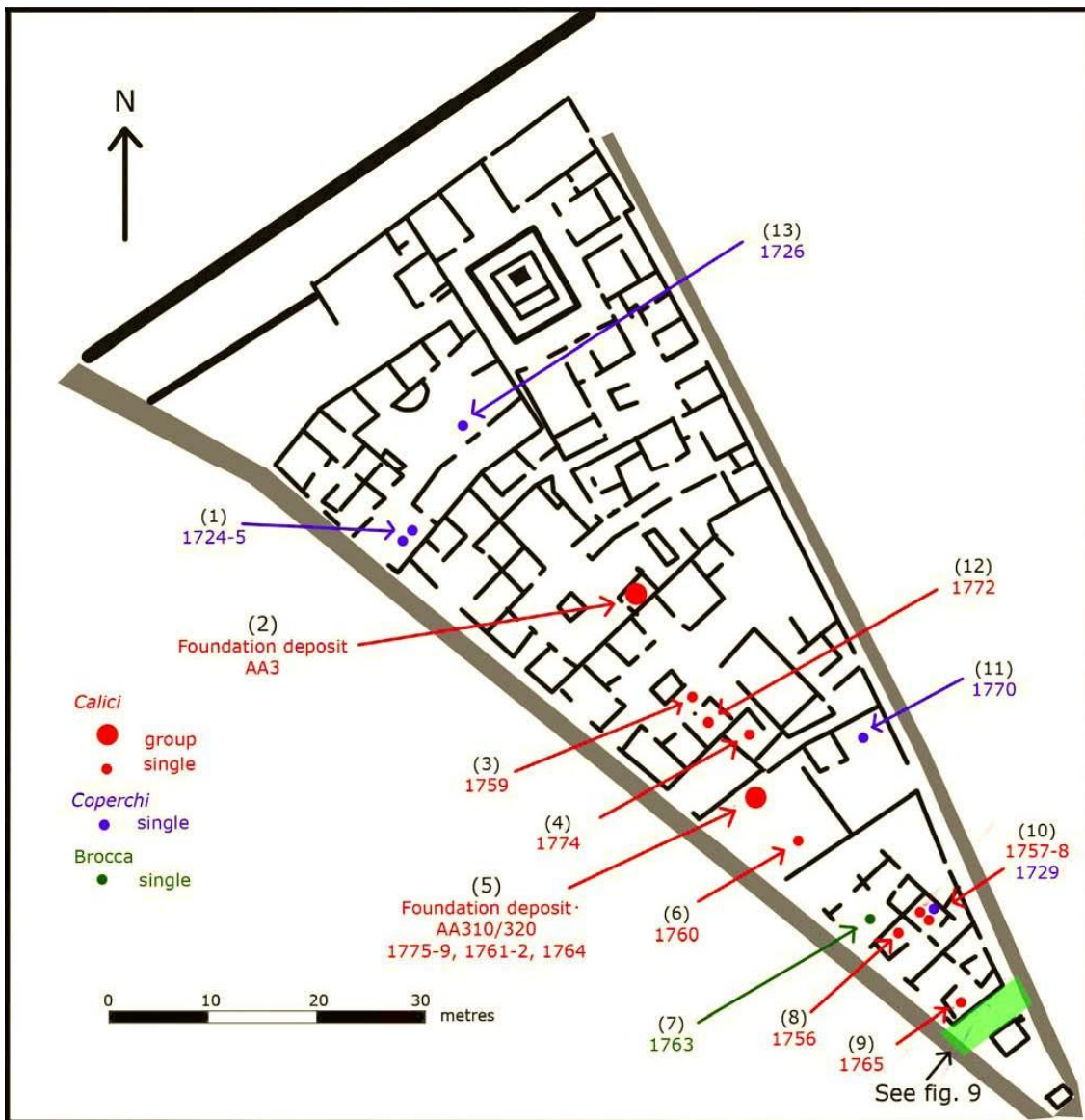


Fig. 8. Distribution of the stratified miniature vessels in Insula VI.1.

measuring 0.55 by 0.42 m cut into natural (fig. 8, location 5). It contained a deposit of *calici*, with charcoal and charred bone also being noted in the fill. It has been shown that the first major occupation here occurred in the late second to early first century BC⁴¹, and so this deposit may be placed in the late second century BC. Unfortunately the records of this deposit are somewhat confused. It was partially dug in 2003 as pit cut 310.099 and fill 310.306. The excavation was completed in 2004 when the cut was named 320.096 and the fill 320.087. In 2003 the SU sheet records that there were five votive cups in the pit, while that for 2004 said it contained ‘12 (?) small votive / incense cups’. There are no drawings or photographs of the feature in 2003. The drawing in 2004 marks the position of five cups, and there is a photograph that shows the fill during excavation with five vessels again present. Five cups with the 2003 context number (1775-9) and three cups with the 2004 fill number (1761-2, 1764) were found in the stores in 2010. We can be sure, therefore, that at least eight were deposited, all of the CAL₁ type⁴².

⁴¹ HOBBS 2013: 74.

⁴² Why the 2004 records suggest 12 is puzzling as the vessels are complete and it cannot be fragments that were being counted. It is possible that the 2004 cups were recognised as a special find and removed for safe keeping, but in that case one would have hoped that all of them would have been kept together. During the excavations there was a propensity for finds regarded as special in some way to be removed from the normal finds processing system so that they could be photographed, displayed to visitors etc. The possibility that somewhere in the store there was an additional box of cups that eluded our search in 2010 cannot be entirely excluded. We are grateful to Dr Robyn Veal for confirming that none were removed from the site in association with environmental sampling. Indeed there is no evidence that the fill was subject to environmental sampling in

Four of the extant cups show clear signs of burning (**1761-1**, **1764**, **1779**). Interestingly three of these are among the ones found in 2004. The extant photograph also appears to show burning on the five pictured which might indeed suggest more were excavated than have been located. It will be appreciated that the way the deposit was excavated and recorded means that it is impossible to reconstruct how the vessels were placed in the pit or what they were associated with. The evidence that some were burnt and others not, may indicate a group was involved in a part of the ritual that didn't require the material in them to be burnt. As has already been noted, only five of the 17 cups found within VI.1 showed obvious signs of burning. This deposit suggests that being burnt was not an essential part of all the rituals they were involved in. This should probably make us cautious about ruling out a primary ritual use when groups are found in deposits but are not burnt and are not accompanied by burnt remains⁴³.

The other *calici* from the excavations were all found as single examples. Two were from second century BC contexts. One (**1760**) was from a levelling deposit in the Shrine area that would have been contemporary with the pit just discussed (fig. 8, location 6). Another (**1759**) was part of the Phase 3.1 levelling prior to the building of the Casa delle Chirurgo in the early second century BC (fig. 8, location 3). In neither case were they accompanied by any other materials that would obviously suggest a deliberate ritual placement, but their inclusion in levelling deposits prior to major building events, does raise the possibility that these were not just casual rubbish inclusions.

Two (**1756-7**) were also found separately within the levelling deposits in the northern part of the Bar of Acisculus (fig. 8, location 10). The coin series in these ends with issues of the early first century BC and it would be logical to associate the deposits with site preparation prior to the building of the bar early in the first century BC. Both of the layers from which the *calici* came also included impasto and bucchero pottery. Impasto can be broadly dated to the ninth to sixth century BC and bucchero to the seventh to fifth century BC. Both of these wares are normally absent from the VI.1 pottery assemblage. These levelling layers in general also had the greatest concentration of fusiform ceramic unguent bottles amongst the sorted pottery from the excavations. There are good indications here, therefore, that this levelling material may have been brought onto site and included material that was earlier than the second century BC.

The other three stratified examples all came from late first century BC or early first century AD contexts. A complete example was found within an early first century AD surface in the Bar of Acisculus (**1758** - fig. 8, location 10), and two fragmentary examples were incorporated into the Phase 5 flooring of the Casa del Chirurgo dated to the end of the first century BC (**1772**, **1774** – fig. 8, locations 4 and 12). Given that fragmentary *calici* were rare in the VI.1 assemblage as a whole, the fact that those from the *opus signinum* flooring in the Casa del Chirurgo were merely pieces would suggest that here the fragments were just seen as useful material to use in the floor along with other chunks of pottery.

The VI.1 excavations can make a useful contribution to our understanding of the enigmatic *coperchi*. As can be seen from Table 2 these vessels were overwhelmingly recovered from the southern part of the *insula* with a great concentration around the Well area⁴⁴. It is clear that primary deposition of *coperchi* was being carried out there. The records for the excavations in the area are sometimes somewhat muddled, and so first those from the areas where the stratigraphy is better understood will be considered before the Well area assemblage is discussed.

<i>Plot</i>	<i>Coperchio</i>	<i>Calice</i>	<i>Brocca</i>	<i>Total</i>
Inn	4	-	-	4
Casa delle Vestali*	-	3	-	3
Casa del Chirurgo	2	4	-	6
Shrine	2	9	-	11
Workshop*	-	-	1	1
Bar Ascisculus	2	3	-	5
Bar Phoebus	1	1	-	2
Well & Fountain	27	-	-	27
Total	38	20	1	59

Table 2: Distribution of the miniature vessels within the *insula* (NB the areas marked * have not had their pottery sorted and additional ones could well be found if this was ever to be done).

either year, which is unfortunate as it means that the animal and vegetable matter which would have been used in the sacrificial rites will remain unknown, although clearly present given the scanty descriptions of the site records.

⁴³ See, for example, ELLIS, DEVORE 2010: 3.

⁴⁴ Here the word 'Well' will be capitalised when what is being referred to is the entire area of the southern tip of the *insula*. When the word 'well' (without capital letter) is used, it refers to the structure of the well itself.

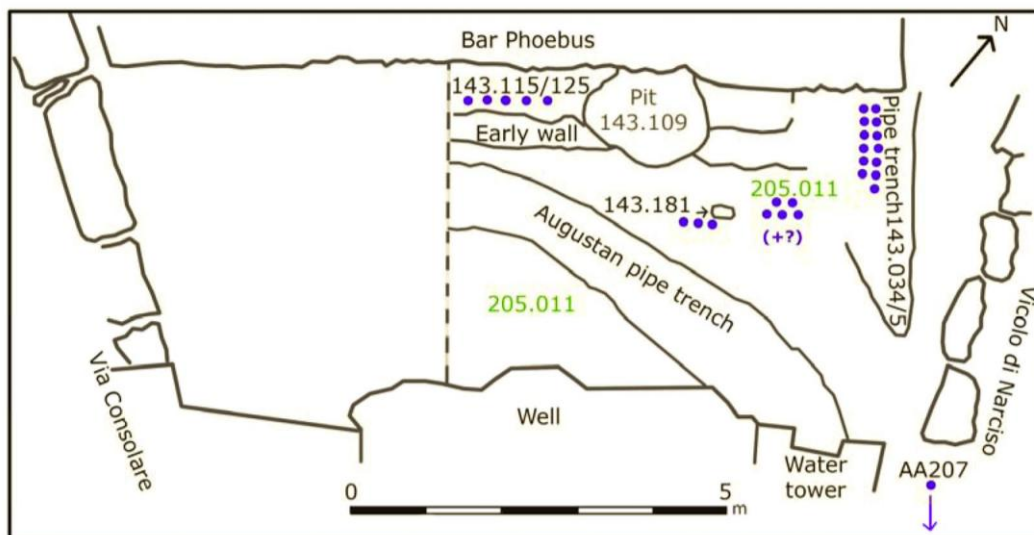


Fig. 9. Distribution of the coperchi in AA143/205. Each blue dot represents one example. (The number of examples from 205.011 is uncertain, see text).

The second century BC date of the ones from the Inn (**1726**, fig. 9, location 13) and the construction trench of the Bar of Phoebus (**1742-5**, fig. 9, 143.115) have already been noted (fig. 9). Another second century BC or earlier date is indicated by **1729** which was found in the same levelling deposits in the northern part of the Bar of Acisculus that produced the two *calici* (fig. 8, location 10). Indeed, **1729** and the cup **1757** were found in the same context. Given the suggested re-deposition from elsewhere, this association has to be regarded with caution, but it might indicate that wherever this material was derived from, rituals using both vessel types were being practiced there as in the case of the altar dedication outside of the house at IX.8.8.

Two *coperchi* (**1724-5**, fig. 8, location 1) were found in the fill of a tank which had been active in the pre-Sullan phase of the Inn area. The filling of these is associated with the levelling of the site after the destruction of 89 BC but this could have occurred as late as the Augustan period as it is clear the area lay derelict for decades. One (**1770**, fig. 8, location 11) was also included in the subfloor of a mid-first century AD floor in the rear part of the shrine. An additional four (**1724**, **1731-2**, **1771**) were found from the area of the *insula* to the north of the southern tip, but all were from either unphased or modern contexts.

None of these contexts are similar to the deliberate foundation deposits of *calici* in the Casa delle Vestali and the Shrine with the associated burnt remains of food and drink, though the presence of four in a wall construction trench might hint at deliberate ritual deposition. This latter deposit is in the vicinity of the Well area, and in that area the contexts of the *coperchi* make it very clear that there was deliberate ritual deposition.

The focus of this activity was in the area to the north of the well and the later water tower associated with the piped water supply that made the public well redundant in the Augustan period. The AAPP dug this area in two separate campaigns, as AA143 in 2001 and the eastern side again in 2002 as AA205. As ever there are some problems with linking the upper and lower stratigraphy when the same area was dug over two years. The area to the south was dug, but the pottery from this area has never been sorted. There is thus the possibility that when this is done more *coperchi* will be found from this area. It can be noted that though some of the deliberately placed examples from the area were recognised as being distinctive when they were excavated, by far the majority have been recovered from the bulk sorting of the pottery, i.e. material that was not separated out as a special find. That the area of deposition did extend to the south is suggested by the recovery of **1733** from a cleaning layer within AA207 which was a narrow L-shaped trench that ran from the corner of the fountain across the Vicolo Narciso and onto the sidewalk of *Insula* VI.2

The well is thought to have been dug during the second half of the second century BC⁴⁵ and the boundary of the public space to the north would have been defined at the latest in the early first century BC when the southern wall of the Bar of Phoebus was built. There was a small amount of evidence for an earlier wall on the site of the Bar of Phoebus wall, so the area may have been bounded before then. Another *coperchio* (**1728**) was found in what appeared to be a construction trench for the early stretch of wall (fig. 9, context 143.125). The area where the four from the Bar of Phoebus wall construction trench were found (fig. 9 context 143.115) was precisely where this apparently earlier fill was. Whether or not those in the con-

⁴⁵ JONES, ROBINSON 2005a: 270.

struction trench fill of the Bar of Phoebus wall were disturbed from the earlier fill, or deliberately replaced there, or indeed whether the two recorded fills actually relate to the same event, the concentration of five at this point does suggest deliberate placement. It seems reasonable to regard them as in origin a foundation deposit.

Around the well there was a build-up of compacted surfaces that in 2002 was given a single context number (205.011). The *coperchi* were recognised for what they were by the site supervisor and the notebook records 'about 20' being 'compacted into' the surface. The end of season report refers to 'an estimated 30 votive objects'. There is no indication in the records of whether this activity took place at the same time or was associated with different surfaces within the single context number. Currently five have been located from this context (1737-41). Given the discrepancy between this number, and the numbers recorded at the time of excavation, it might be suspected that, as with the foundation deposit from the Shrine, more remain to be found in the store. The end of season report notes that 205.011 had contained large amounts of charcoal and some evidence of food waste, which might also relate to ritual activity.

In 2001, a differentiation had been made between two different hard packed surfaces around the well and a number of post-holes are described as cutting the second. In one of these one complete and two incomplete *coperchi* were found (1734-6, fig. 9, context 143.181). There was, unfortunately, no description of the fill but it is possible that we are looking at the sort of little pit often dug to receive ritual offerings⁴⁶.

The largest group of 13 (1730, 1746-69) was recovered from the pipe trench of the water supply that ran down the east side of the space to the water tower (fig. 9, context 143.034-5). The piped water system has been stated to have been introduced after the building of the Serino branch of the Campanian Aqueduct around 27BC⁴⁷, though it may be noted that a recent survey preferred to say it was introduced at 'a still unknown time'⁴⁸. An Augustan date seems generally accepted. The pipe trench cuts through the 205.011 area of deposition and at the time of excavation it was thought that the *coperchi* had slumped into it. There is no evidence for how the *coperchi* were placed in this pipe trench⁴⁹. It is interesting to note that no *coperchi* were identified during the excavation of the other water pipe trench that crosses the area diagonally (see fig. 9), nor have any been identified during the pottery processing subsequently. This might argue for the deliberate (re)placement of those in the fill of the eastern pipe trench, as casual re-deposition would surely not have been so concentrated.

Several different types of deliberate deposition can thus be seen from these records. This includes pressed into an open surface, placed in a little pit, used as a possible foundation deposit for a wall, and/or very possibly deliberately re-deposited when disturbed. The pieces themselves often appear burnt but were not observed to be directly associated with other burnt material, though the presence of charcoal in surface 205.011 was noted. It would appear that the Well area was a focus for the deposition of these items within the second and first century BC. The available information does not allow us to say for how long the practice continued, but it would appear that it did not relate to a single event.

The focus of deposition in a public place has parallels with the public placement of the niche and altar shrines by the doors of certain buildings, and indeed *coperchi* were used in the dedication ceremonies of just such an altar. Anniboletti⁵⁰ has associated these with the veneration of the *Lares Viales*, the spirits of the roads, and suggested that the niche and altar combinations were a focus of very local veneration for the households that surrounded them. The religious foci for the wider neighbourhood were the shrines at crossroads, the *compiti*⁵¹. Dionysius of Halicarnassus describes the rites at the crossroads in Rome which involved each household bringing a honey cake for sacrifice, and the sacrifices being made by slaves rather than free citizens⁵². He attributes the establishment of this custom to King Tullius but notes that he had himself observed the festivals in Rome i.e. within the final quarter of the first century BC.

The Well area was the location of just such a crossroad shrine. Mazois illustrated it as a painting on the side of the well housing showing the magistrates responsible for the ceremonies with an image representing the spirit. Below is a stucco-decorated altar which now, denuded of its decoration, remains as an unprepossessing block⁵³. The view shown in fig. 1 is looking directly at the wall of the well where Mazois showed the painting of magistrates and image. The repair patching that can be seen on it is all that now remains of the image. Some of the niche and altar shrines appear to go out of use early in the first century BC, plausibly to be associated with the fact that Pompeii became a Roman *colonia*. It has been suggested

⁴⁶ ANNIBOLETTI 2008: 4.

⁴⁷ JONES, ROBINSON 2005b: 697.

⁴⁸ JANSEN 2007: 259.

⁴⁹ A single SU number covers the whole sequence of the original cutting of the trench, the placing of the pipe and its burial, the cut to remove the pipe after the AD 62 earthquake, and the backfill. There is no detailed drawn record.

⁵⁰ ANNIBOLETTI 2008: 219-21.

⁵¹ BAKKER 1994: 118-33; VAN ANDRINGA 2001.

⁵² Dionysius of Halicarnassus IV.14.3-4.

⁵³ MAZOIS 1824: 37 fig. II 2; VAN ANDRINGA 2001: 48; BAKKER 1994 126 no. 06 with other references. The Mazois painting can be seen at <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k106986n/f111.image>.

that as part of this new order, the Roman institution of crossroad shrines with their local magistrates was instituted⁵⁴, with the earlier neighbourhood shrines going out of use.

The deposition of the *coperchi* in the Well area argues that this was a focus of ritual before Pompeii became a Roman *colonia*. Then the focus of veneration may have been the spirits that looked after the water supply. Public wells do not appear to have been at all common within Pompeii. At the last count only nine have been found⁵⁵. The area would have been an obvious focus and meeting place for the neighbourhood. Anniboletti has made the attractive suggestion that, after the neighbourhood festivals at the crossroads were over, local households dispersed to their own particular niche and altar shrines. So we can imagine the small procession going back up the Vicolo di Narciso to the shrine outside the door of VI.2.16 (fig. 2, location 1) to continue the festivities.

Not all the niche and altar shrines went out of use in the earlier part of the first century BC. At IX.8.8 it was possible to trace the development through to the end of the life of the city when a shrine to *Salus-Fortuna* was in existence. In the Well area of VI.1 the *lacunae* in our knowledge of the stratigraphy do not allow the continuous development to be documented as has been so elegantly done for IX.8.8, but it seems very likely that here we have a refocusing of an existing public area of veneration as a more formal crossroads shrine. This could have come about at the time when the well was infilled, presumably when it was no longer required because of the arrival of the piped water supply. Precisely when this happened is unknown, but presumably it was during the Augustan period. The well was emptied in January 1906 when it was recognised that the pottery in the fill indicated it had already gone out of use prior to the eruption⁵⁶, but to our knowledge this material has never been studied. In Mazois's drawing the wall painting that formed part of the cross-roads shrine is painted on the side of the well housing. The moment when the fountain was inaugurated, and the well infilled, would have been a good point at which to inaugurate the shrine as well.

A curious feature is the number of *coperchi* found within the eastern trench for the piped water supply. These could be casual re-deposited inclusions because the trench cut through the original area of deposition but, as already discussed, this did not appear to be happening elsewhere in the small area. The possibility that when they were disturbed by the digging, they were recognised as ritual objects should be considered. The concentration very possibly relates to the need to dispose of them carefully and where better than the trench where the water would now be conducted, very possibly still considered to be under the care of the spirit who had watched over the water supply in the well? Unfortunately records do not allow the formation processes in this trench to be interrogated, but it is an idea that future excavators should keep in mind if they encounter miniature vessels in apparently residual contexts. The active biographies of these objects may not have ceased with their initial deposition if later building work uncovered them.

It is probably of some significance that the two largest groups of *coperchi* with known provenance, these from the Well area of VI.1 and those in the foundation deposit that marked the erection of the niche and altar shrine at IX.8.8, are both associated with small scale, neighbourhood cults. In this they differ from the *calici* which were obviously viewed as appropriate for a wider range of cult activities including domestic offerings, building foundation offerings and offerings within larger cult centres⁵⁷. The apparent absence of any *calici* associated with the rites surrounding the well is striking given their widespread presence in the rest of the *insula* (see figs. 8 and 9). The use of the *calici* appears to be part of a widespread cultural practice in the last centuries of the first millennium BC in southern Italy. The use of the *coperchi*, by contrast, could very well reflect local practice within Pompeian neighbourhood cults originating in the century or so prior to city becoming a Roman *colonia*.

Quite how they were used remains a mystery. They are not ideally shaped to be recipients of material destined to be burnt offerings as the *calici* are. They are only very rarely found with *calici* and so the traditional designation as lids seems inappropriate. What one of us (HEMC) has observed whilst cataloguing them is that the ridges on one face (top as illustrated in fig. 7) form good handles for grasping them between the thumb and forefinger, and one tends to hold them more naturally with the disc in a vertical position. If you hold one in each hand and strike them together, a not unpleasing noise can be produced. Are they perhaps not miniature vessels at all but rather 'musical' instruments like small cymbals or clappers designed to create noise in a little procession?

The role of percussion instruments in religious ceremonies is well attested⁵⁸. Cymbals were normally a pair of copper alloy domed discs linked by a chain between 50 and 110mm in diameter⁵⁹. Clappers could take various forms and be made of other materials. There are various ways that cymbals can be played, but within the Roman world the normal mode was for them to be held vertically one in each hand and clashed

⁵⁴ VAN ANDRINGA 2001: 72.

⁵⁵ ELLIS *et al.* 2011: 3 fn. 11 for references.

⁵⁶ NSc. 1910: 270. We are grateful to Michael Anderson for providing this reference.

⁵⁷ GRASSO 2004: 43-70, and the new finds summarised in the second section of this paper.

⁵⁸ WARDLE 1981: 330-41 provides a good overview of the types of cymbals and clappers in use in the Greek and Roman worlds

⁵⁹ See for example, CIARALLO, DE CAROLIS 1999, 268 nos. 348-9.

directly together⁶⁰. This way of using them can be seen in a number of pictorial representations in Pompeii itself and other Campanian sites. Perhaps the clearest representations are in the reproductions of a group of street musicians depicting a scene from a play by Menander known from both a mosaic within the Villa of Cicero, Pompeii and from a wall painting at Stabiae⁶¹. The association between female dancers and the use of clappers to provide rhythm for their dance is very well attested. Again the images show an instrument held in both hands and clashed together⁶². The ecstatic dancer from fresco in the House of the Mysteries shows this well. She is shown in the act of clashing two discs held in a vertical position above her head⁶³. These might either be domed cymbals or flat clappers.

The fact that the *coperchi* are most naturally held in the same position that cymbals were held in, and were associated with religious rites where percussion instruments might well be expected, suggests that their identification as a form of musical instrument might not be far-fetched. If we speculate further, the association of female dancers with percussion instruments of this broad type may point to who may have used *coperchi*. In most societies and over most periods the task of drawing and carrying water has fallen on women and girls. It is extremely likely that women and girls were the ones who would use the well and later the fountain as part of their daily chores. It has already been suggested that the rituals in the Well area were in honour of the spirit that provided the water. Perhaps it was women who held the rites in this area at first. The change to becoming a formal cross-roads shrine could have marked a rupture with what had gone on previously. As can be seen from the Mazois drawing, that is overseen by *male* magistrates.

This perhaps is a speculation too far, but it is to be hoped that future excavation in Pompeii will bring more *coperchi* to light in contexts which can help interpret them. In the meantime we hope we have shown that detailed inspection of the contexts and associations of even the humblest artefact type can lead to new insights into the lives of the people we study.

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H.E.M. Cool

Barbican Research Associates Ltd.
NOTTINGHAM, U.K.
E-mail: hilary@coolarchaeology.com

David G. Griffiths

School of Archaeology and Ancient History
University of Leicester
LEICESTER, U.K.
E-mail: david.griffiths1973@gmail.com

⁶⁰ WARDLE 1981: 333.

⁶¹ ROBERTS 2013: 189-90, figs. 223-4. The Villa of Cicero is also known as the Villa of Diomedes and lies to the north of the Porta Ercolano.

⁶² WARDLE 1981, 337-8.

⁶³ This may be seen in many publications, but the large scale image in ROBERTS 2013: fig. 240 shows the dancer very clearly.

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