

# Rural Pompeii: Vineyards and Leisure

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From at least the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC until the catastrophe of AD 79, the hinterland of Pompeii was covered by a dense network of small and medium-sized *villae rusticae*. Mainly, grapes were grown here and processed into wine on the spot.<sup>1</sup> Many property owners within the city seem also to have adopted this branch of production: since the detailed studies by Wilhemina Jashemski between the 1960s and 1980s, it is generally accepted by scholars that viticulture and market gardening were part of the intra-moenia economy of Pompeii.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, so far no detailed studies exist which would contextualise the inner-city commercial plantings with the other intra-moenia economic activities of Pompeii, or relate them to the extra-moenia agricultural production.

The vineyards and market gardens are, with few exceptions, located in the eastern part of Pompeii and thanks to the excavations by Jashemski we have a very precise idea of their appearance in AD 79.<sup>3</sup> In many of them, minor architectural structures associated with the agricultural plots suggest that wine was not only grown on these properties but also consumed there. In particular, masonry triclinia have been found in about the half of the vineyards and market gardens so far excavated.<sup>4</sup> These are common features at Pompeii, in the public, private and commercial sectors, and are commonly interpreted as equipment for more luxurious (outdoor) banqueting.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, vineyards and market gardens equipped with masonry triclinia are part of the food and drink outlets distributed all over the city.<sup>6</sup> However, no detailed studies on these economic spaces exist.<sup>7</sup>

The so-called “Inn of the gladiators” (I 20, 1–3) may show as an example the overall concept presented to the potential clientele of the open-air taverns:<sup>8</sup> Wall decor plays a minor role, statuettes and images may adorn open-air *lararia* and a statue of a Gladiator and Priapos appears close to the masonry triclinium. Thus, the open-air taverns are effectively dominated by the colours of nature, the plantings and vines with their tendrils hanging down from the pergola shading the masonry triclinia.<sup>9</sup> Everything seems rural and rustic (fig. 1).

Together with this, the characteristics of the amphitheatre district in which the open-air taverns are situated, should be noted. The area between the Sarnus and the Nuceria Gates has a very different urban morphology, different views and different amenities, compared with the city quarters close to the Vesuvian, the Stabian or the Herculaneum Gate. There are few large dwellings and fewer shops and workshops.<sup>10</sup> The streets are unpaved and could be blocked to traffic.<sup>11</sup> The street frontages are characterised by high enclosure-walls very different from the typical Pompeian street facades.<sup>12</sup> There are several large trees on private and on public ground.<sup>13</sup> In consequence, in AD 79 the amphitheatre district – and there is some evidence for the existence of more large outdoor areas to the North of Via dell’Abbondanza<sup>14</sup> – seems the reflection of a (not well studied)



Fig. 1: Pompeii, replanted vineyard II 5, 1–4, seen from the Vicolo dell’Anfiteatro. On the left of the picture, in the shadow, the remains of a masonry triclinium. The small door to the right of it is leading to a *cella vinaria*.

process that made of Pompeii a “greener city”, with plenty of landscape and rural fabric inside the city walls.

One objective of my research is therefore to investigate in more detail the chronology of the open-air taverns. At present both the factors behind the change and the timing of this conversion of the former small plots for housing into larger areas dedicated to urban agriculture and into open-air taverns are far from clear.<sup>15</sup>

The above observations prompt the following key questions to be addressed by future research: How should banqueting in open-air taverns in the amphitheatre district be interpreted in the context of the *convivium*- and the food and drink retail culture of Pompeii? Are the open-air taverns in fact something in between, or something rather different? Considering their particular environment, climatic seasonality is obviously an important issue, but seasonal changes in social behaviour should also be considered.<sup>16</sup>

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Vogel et al. 2016 with former bibliography.

<sup>2</sup> Jashemski 1979; Jashemski 1993; cf. the many photographs taken during the excavations, accessible on <<http://www.pompeiiinpictures.org/>> (18.01.2021). For example: viticulture and market gardening are mentioned, but only very briefly, in the recent book on the Economy of Pompeii, cf. Flohr – Wilson 2016, 14.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the maps in Monteix 2016, 218 fig. 7.2; Poehler 2017a (N. B.: vineyard and market garden III 7, 6.7 is missing on this map).

<sup>4</sup> Masonry triclinia had been found in 5 of the 10 vineyards and in 12 of the 26 market gardens. The vineyards and gardens without triclinia maybe weren't indeed commercial garden restaurants but simply cultivated areas or they were equipped with ephemeral constructions in wood, not preserved, as suggested by find-spots, cf. the one in vineyard I 20, 5 [Jashemski 1993, 68; photographs cf. <<http://www.pompeiiinpictures.org/R1/1%2020%2005%20p2.htm>> (18.01.2021)].

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Soprano 1950; Calabrò 2021; Costa 2021; Dunkelbarger 2021; for their interpretation in inns and *cauponae* cf. for example Neudecker 2012, 104.

<sup>6</sup> On bars and restaurants at Pompeii cf. Kieburg 2014; Ruiz de Arbulo – Gris 2017; Ellis 2018, all with former bibliography; for their distribution over the city cf. Monteix 2016, 218 fig. 7.2.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. definition “economic spaces” infra Haug.

<sup>8</sup> Maiuri 1959, 83–87; Nappo 1988; Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana (ed.), PPM II (Roma 1990), 1060–1070.

<sup>9</sup> A suitable literary transposition is the poem “Copa” contained in the Appendix Vergiliana, cf. Jashemski 1979, 172–178.

<sup>10</sup> Viitanen et al. 2013, fig. 2 (doorways). 4 (houses); Monteix 2016, 218 fig. 7.2; Poehler 2017a.

<sup>11</sup> Poehler 2017b, 181 fig. 3.1 (street surfaces). 6.7 (blocked streets).

<sup>12</sup> Helg 2018, 96–117.

<sup>13</sup> Maiuri 1939, 194f. (plane trees in the Palestra Grande); Jashemski 1993, 21–105. 246 f. for the single find spots in Regio I and II; Ciarallo 2009.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Anniboletti et al. 2009.

<sup>15</sup> On the so called “case a schiera” and the reorganisation of the Amphitheatre district from circa 70 BC onwards cf. among others: Maiuri 1939, 214; Hoffmann 1979, 111–114; Nappo 1988; Guzzo 2007, 136–144. 177–179; Anniboletti et al. 2009, 7–10; Venner 2020.

<sup>16</sup> On seasonality and urban economy cf. Hawkins 2016, 32–65.

### Image Credits

Fig. 1: by the author.

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