The so-called quay wall north-west of Pompeii's Porta Marina

Preliminary report on a trial trench excavated in June 1998

La campagna di scavi, di cui si presentano i più importanti risultati, ha condotto sul muro di terrazzamento a N.O. di Porta Marina, conosciuto come "muro di banchina". Messo in luce negli anni '50 per una lunghezza di ca. 50 metri, questo muro è caratterizzato da una serie di blocchi di tufo forato che formano sporgenza, ed è generalmente considerato parte di una installazione portuale, mentre, in realtà, si situa più di 10 m sopra il livello del mare. Per risolvere la questione un sondaggio è stato effettuato nel giugno 1998 da una équipe dell'università di Ginevra, che ha permesso di stabilire, una volta per tutte, che il csd. "muro di banchina" non è mai servito per l'attracco di battelli. Resta tuttavia aperto il quesito circa la funzione dei blocchi forati.

A. Introduction

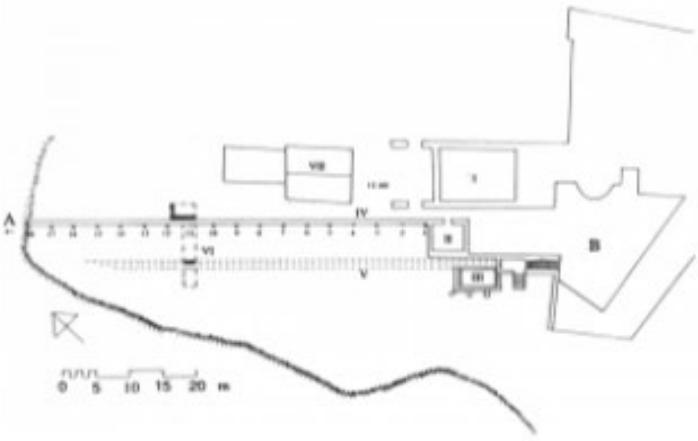
Day after day, hundreds of tourists are told by their guides, shortly before entering the city through the Porta Marina, that they have just passed next to where Pompeii's harbour once existed–below them to their left, immediately north-west of the so-called *Terme suburbane*. The sea had extended as far as the foot of the promontory on which Pompeii is built before it was pushed out by about two kilometres in the wake of the gigantic eruption of Mt Vesuvius on 24/5 August, 79, when the bay was filled with volcanic débris,. Today, as they could see for themselves, the sea was only barely visible beyond the maze of modern buildings. Yet, still according to the tourist guides, proof of the harbour's existence is still clearly visible in the shape of a long wall which runs from the height of the *natatio* of the *Terme suburbane* for over 50 m to the north-west until it disappears under the unexcavated mass of volcanic material (see fig. 1).

Of course, the guides have not invented the story they tell. The wall's interpretation as a quay wall is likely to gð back to the 1950s, when it was uncovered during clearing work carried out under the direction of Amedeo Maiuri[1], although the first published mention of it appears to be much more recent [2]. Just below its top, 17 large tufa blocks are inserted perpendicularly into the wall at fairly regular intervals of 3.30 to 3.50 m (figs. 2, 4: no. IV). They are rather roughly dressed and measure about 20 cm in width and 50 cm in height, protruding by some 65 cm beyond the face of the wall [3]. In the middle of the protruding part is a horizontal hole, c. 12 cm in diameter, its surface much more carefully smoothed than the blocks themselves (fig. 3). The similarity between these blocks and the ring stones known from several Roman harbours, such as the *emporium* on the Tiber[4], is quite striking. It is undoubtedly the reason why the conjecture that some sort of harbour once existed in this area soon became *communis opinio*[5]. Yet, what appears to have been generally (and conveniently) overlooked is the simple fact that the wall lies some 10 me-

1. View of the area north-west of the *Terme suburbane*, from the modern access ramp to the Porta Marina.

2. The so-called quay wall, from west.

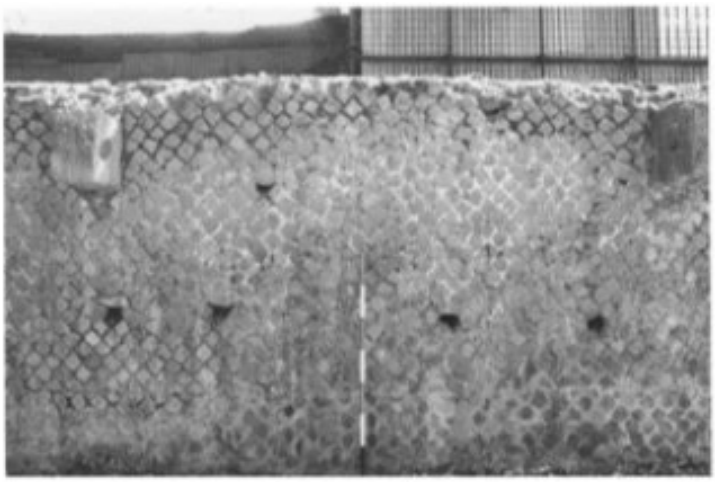
3. One of the ring stones (no. 3 on fig. 4) of the alleged quay wall. Scale *c.*1:10. (photo JPD).



4. Sketch plan of the area to the north-west of the Porta Marina. Drawing by Eliane Brigger.
A: Location of modern car park for the Archaeological Service.
B: *Terme suburbane*.
I: *natatio*; II: storeroom or stables; III: cistern; IV: so-called quay wall (with ring stones numbered 1-18); V: channel; VI: trial trench excavated 15-25 June, 1999; VII: modern sheds.

5. Face of so-called quay wall, between ring stones 3 and 5 (with the broken-off stone no. 4 in the middle). To the right original wall in very neat *opus quasi-reticulatum* with large putlog holes at *c*.1.30 m above the present ground. To the left, repair work with the first of a series of putlog holes at about 90–100 cm above the present ground.

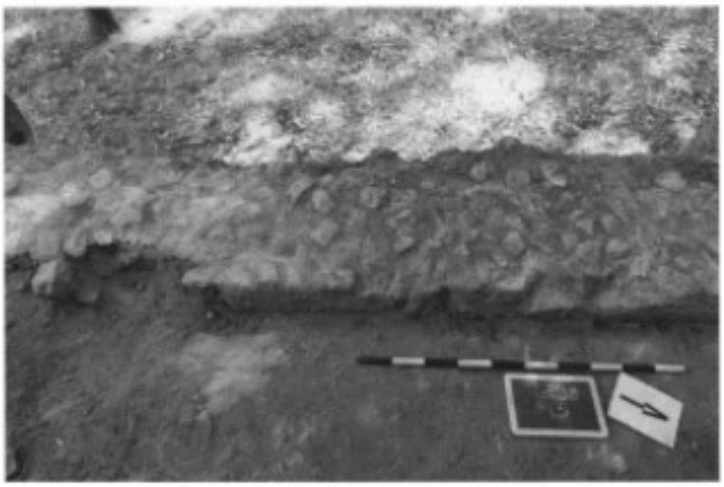
tres above sea level[6] — which is difficult to reconcile with the proposed interpretation. Admittedly, the sea level has been subject to considerable changes along the Tyrrhenian coast since antiquity, but it is highly unlikely that Pompeii has risen by some ten metres in the course of the last 2000 years. Indeed, all evidence available points in the opposite direction, and recent submarine discoveries made off the coast near Torre del Greco suggest that the sea level was between four and five metres lower in Roman times than it is now[7], which makes it even less likely that the wall in question ever served to moor boats.



6. Face of so-called quay wall, between ring stones 6 and 7.

7. Face of so-called quay wall, between ring stones 11 and 12. To the left, earlier wall in *opus incertum*, to the right repair work in *opus quasi-reticulatum*.

8. Northernmost part of so-called quay wall, seen from south.



9. Top of so-called quay wall, after cleaning (between ring stones 6 and 7 on fig. 4).

10. Top of so-called quay wall, after cleaning: on top of ring stone 6.

11. Parallel undulations in the ground in front of the so-called quay wall.

12. Trial trench (see fig. 4: no. VI) at the end of the campaign, seen from south-west.

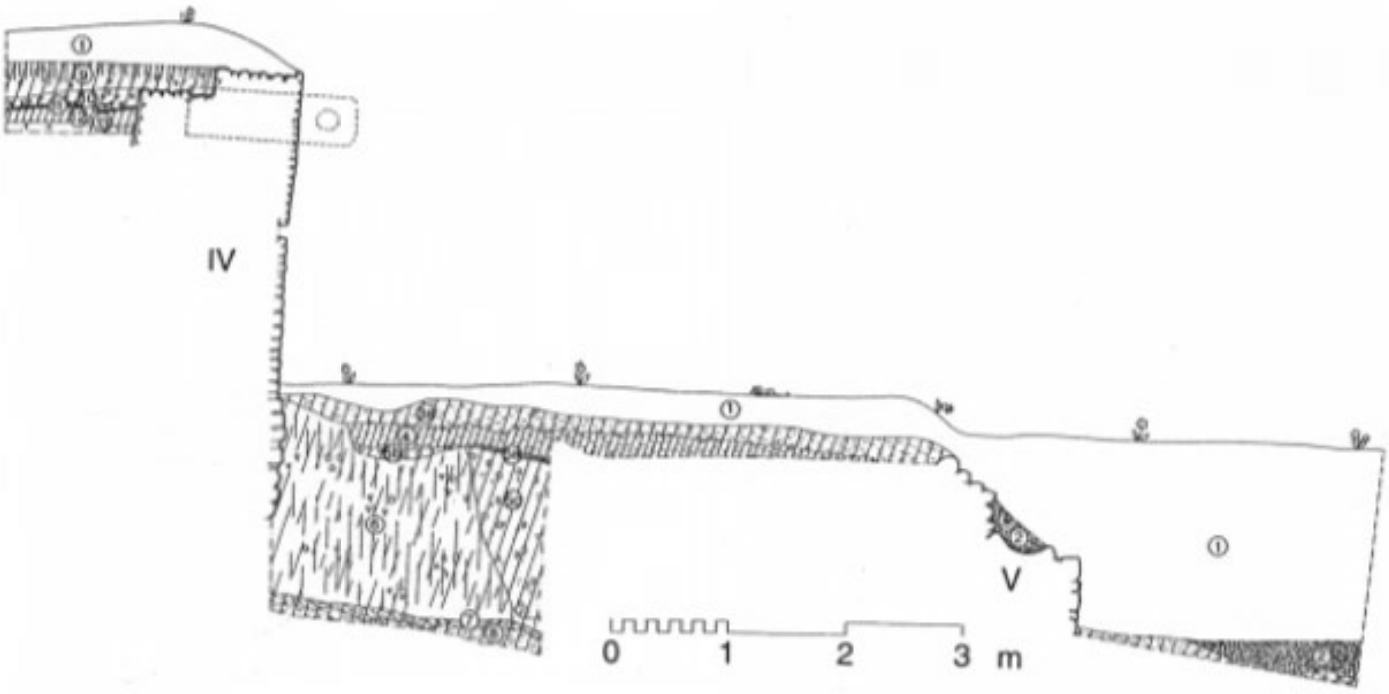
Still, the similarity of its pierced blocks with ring stones that were undeniably used to attach ships remains intriguing, as does the mention by Hans Eschebach of a series of perpendicular grooves cut into the bedrock in front of the so-called quay wall used as rails to pull boats on land[8].

The most expedient method to solve the riddle seemed to excavate a small trial trench perpendicular to the wall. Permission was sought and obtained from the Superintendent, Dr Piero Guzzo, and a brief excavation campaign carried out with a small team from the University of Geneva between 15 and 25 June[9].

The campaign proceeded in two stages: the first consisted of the cleaning of the wall and of the area in front of it, while in the second a trial trench was excavated across the wall (VI on fig. 4).

B. Cleaning of the wall and the terrace in front of it

(I) The cleaning of its face soon made clear that the wall has a much more complex history than had hitherto been realized. Further investigation, study, and excavation are needed to fully understand it, especially as regards its



13. Trial trench: stratigraphic section (south-eastern baulk). Drawing by Eliane Brigger. 1: Post-1950 deposit (mixed soil with much volcanic material and modern rubbish). 2: Compact layer of white lapilli (remains of AD 79 deposit). 3 (a and b): Uppermost ancient layer (compact, sandy soil containing clay nodules; some pottery fragments, no modern intrusions). 4: Dark mixed soil, somewhat clayey, containing only few artefacts. 5a: Very dark, compact lens, containing disintegrated mortar. 5b: Lens, same composition as 5c. 5c: Pit or backfill: mixed, clayey soil matrix with numerous plaster fragments (painted and unpainted), stones, bits of mortar, pottery fragments, charcoal, animal bones. Possibly earthquake débris. 6: Mixed soil containing some humus, few stones; some artefacts, mainly pottery, no plaster fragments. Dense and homogenous. 7. Very compact, clayey soil. Homogenous and without any inclusions. 8. Sandy, fairly compact soil containing some pottery fragments; 9. Dark topsoil, compacted; much pottery and animal bone; IV: so-called quay wall with position of ring stone no. 10 indicated in dotted line (cf. fig. 4); V: channel and retaining wall (cf. fig. 4).

relations with the small (and as yet only partially cleared) building at its south-eastern end (no. II on fig. 4). However, it is already clear that the wall has three distinct sections (cp. fig. 2). Proceeding from right when facing it, i.e. from the south-east, to left, the first is about 15 m long and has a very neat reticulate facing that comes close to proper *opus reticulatum* (fig. 5). Its putlog holes are placed at *c.*1,30 m above the present ground level. They are of triangular shape and constructed with some care, each provided with a small limestone or tufa slab to form a solid top. This first section ends in a break that runs in a zigzag from just after ring stone 4 at the top of the wall to its foot somewhere between ring stones 4 and 5 (fig. 5). From this line to a point between ring stones 11 and 12 the wall differs quite clearly from the first construction, despite its very similar facing in *opus quasi-reticulatum* (fig. 6). To start with, it has a distinct horizontal joint at a height of about 50 cm above the present ground level, indicating that it was raised in two stages. Furthermore, the putlog holes, placed roughly 40 cm above this line, are at a lower height than those of the previous section, and their construction is much less careful; some are of triangular, others of almost circular shape. Between ring stones 11 and 12, the central section partly abuts against and partly overlaps the end of a wall built in *opus incertum* (fig. 7) which runs from here for a length of slightly over 20 m to the north-west before disappearing under the hill of unexcavated volcanic material on top of which the car park for the Archaeological Superintendency has recently been built (fig. 8). The putlog holes are of roughly square shape and placed at a level of less than 70 cm above the present ground.

At this stage it is not possible to be sure whether the three sections correspond with three or with only two phases. It is conceivable that the original wall was partly in *opus incertum*, partly in *opus quasi-reticulatum*, and that only the central part represents a later repair. What seems certain is that the central portion of the wall collapsed at some stage, most likely under the weight of the uphill terraces, and had to be rebuilt.

(II) The cleaning of the wall's top proved even more rewarding and revealed, to start with, that the wall's thickness does not exceed 75 cm (see fig. 9). Even more of a surprise was the discovery that the ring stones project not only outwards, in front of the wall, but also, and possibly by as much, behind (fig. 10). Yet, the most important revelation is that they had been added to the wall at some stage, having not been part of the original construction. Clearly, the wall had been completed before breaches were cut into its top to accommodate the blocks. Once the

14. Channel at the western end of the trial trench, seen from the west.

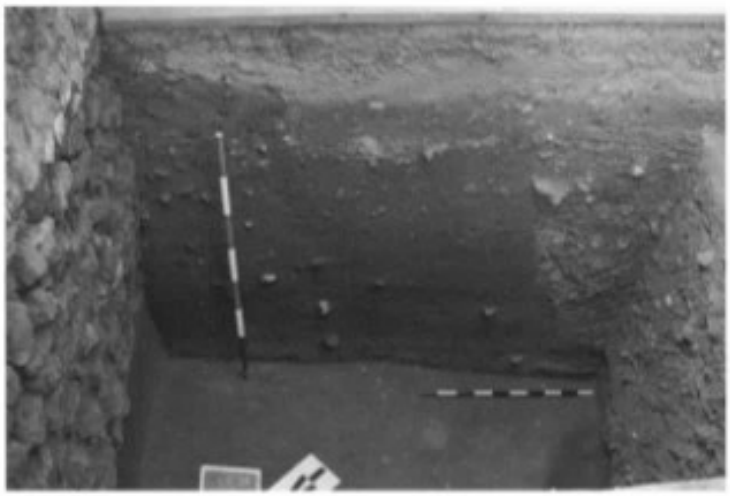
blocks had been inserted, with their heads projecting on either side, the facing of the wall was restored and the remaining gaps filled with rubble. Whatever the function of the wall and its pierced blocks might have been, the fact that the latter were not an integral part of the former already raises serious doubts as to its interpretation as a quay wall—since this interpretation rests entirely on the assumption that the blocks served as mooring rings.

(III) These doubts became even stronger as the cleaning of the terrace in front of the wall failed to reveal any trace of bedrock. This operation also made clear that the line traced on Eschebach's plan to the south-west of the terrace wall, and parallel to it (no. IV on fig. 4), was in fact not a wall but a channel. Cleaning of the ground below it brought to light a number of curious parallel undulations, still partly covered by a thin layer of lapilli from the 79 eruption that the original excavation of the area had not entirely removed (fig. 11). Without a doubt, these are the *parallele Rinnen* which Eschebach had believed to be cut into the bedrock[10]. At this stage and without further excavation, any interpretation of these undulations remains speculative. If they are really ancient (and not simply the result of the machinery used during the clearing of the area in the 1950s), they could well be what they look like: garden beds.

15. So-called quay wall with trial trench at its foot, seen from the west. The joint between the original *opus incertum* wall and the *quasi-reticulatum* repair is clearly visible. The latter rests on the original foundations of the wall.

C. The Trial Trench

Final proof that the terrace wall was not built as a quay wall, nor ever served as such, was provided by a trial trench laid out across the wall between ring stones 11 and 12, close to the joint between its northern section in *opus incertum* and the central repair with *opus quasi-reticulatum* facing (see fig. 4: no. VI and fig. 12). The 1.60 m-wide trench was excavated in two distinct sections. The main one, over a length of 9 m, was extended across the little terrace below the wall to the foot of the steep hillside formed by the unexcavated volcanic deposits that border the site to the north and west. A smaller second section, 2,50 m long, aimed at exposing the wall's inner face; it was decided to widen it by 1,40 m, to an overall size of 3 x 2,50 m, in the last days of the campaign.



16. Trial trench at the foot of the so-called quay wall, at the end of the campaign; seen from north-east. To the left, the foundations of the so-called quay wall, set into a deep, homogenous deposit of dark soil; to the right, clear, almost vertical cut into this deposit, filled with mixed soil containing many inclusions.

17. Eastern extension at the end of the campaign, seen from south: top of so-called quay wall to the left, with the repair patch clearly visible to cover the insertion of ring stone 11. Parallel to the inner face, thinner earlier wall, probably from a building standing at the edge of the terrace. To the right, remains of *coccio-pesto* floor in the foreground, perpendicular wall with plaster rendering at the back.

(i) Main (western) part

Work started with the removal of the loose deposit, a mixture of topsoil, volcanic material, and rubbish, that had accumulated since the area had first been cleared in the 1950's (level 1 on fig. 13). Underneath it were still a few pockets of compacted lapilli from the 79 eruption. These were also removed (nos. 2 on fig. 13), so that, at the end of this first stage, the level as it had existed on the morning of the 24th August, 79 was exposed over the entire lenght of the trench (top of levels 3a and 3b). It forms a fairly flat, 5,60 m-wide terrace bordered by a rather flimsily-built, partly collapsed retaining wall that runs parallel to the so-called quay wall. Along its foot lies a shallow channel made of concrete which rests on a solid wall in *opus incertum*. Its top seems to have been lined by square rubble stones set diagonally into a cement matrix (in a way reminiscent of a reticulate wall facing), but only the imprints in the concrete have survived (fig. 14). Clearly, the channel is the same as that found just beneath the modern surface during the cleaning operation further south (see above). It seems likely that it led to the cistern below the *Terme suburbane* (no. III on fig. 4), but what kind of water it was carrying, and where from, remains unclear.

In this, the westernmost part of the trench, further digging had to be abandoned because of the unstable condition of the surrounding terrain.

East of the channel, however, work continued. First, the uppermost ancient layers were removed over the remaining lenght of the trench to a depth of 50 cm (levels 3 and part of 4 on fig. 13), but as it became increasingly likely that the deposits were much deeper than anticipated, efforts were soon concentrated on the area at the very foot of the so-called quay wall. Although here, too, excavation had to stop before bedrock was reached, the main aim of the campaign could be achieved. Down to a depth of over two metres none of the deposits encountered showed any feature characteristic of subaquatic sedimentation, thus confirming that the interpretation of this area as a former harbour or canal must be dismissed.

Exposing the foundations of the so-called quay wall revealed that they belong to its first phase, built in *opus incertum*, and that the repair work with its *quasi-reticulatum* facing rests on them (fig. 15). The foundations are built of rubble set in cement, the individual stones slightly larger than those used for the wall itself. They have been packed so tightly against the walls of the foundation trench that the latter has left no trace in the stratigraphic section (see fig. 16). Just over one metre deep, it was dug into a massive deposit of mixed soil (no. 6 on fig. 14) which contained few stones, some animal bone, and a good number of pottery fragments. Among the datable pieces several go back to the 4th and even 6th centuries; none appears to postdate the very beginning of the 1st cent. BC,[11] thus providing a *terminus post quem* of about 100 BC for the first phase of the so-called quay wall. The origin and function of the over 1,50 m-deep deposit remains to be explored; at this stage, it looks likely to be contemporaneous with, and retained by, the terrace wall supporting the shallow channel mentioned above. Equally unclear is the nature of the sharp cut into this deposit that can be clearly seen at a distance of 1,60 m from the wall: whether part of a backfill or a dump, its clayey soil matrix contains large amounts of building débris (such as bits of mortar, stones, and plaster fragments) and household refuse (pottery fragments and animal bone, but also glass fragments and charcoal). Most of this material appears to be of early Imperial date, with the most recent pieces possibly as late as Neronian[12]. It therefore looks as if this material was deposited here in the aftermath of the AD 62-earthquake.

At the bottom of the trench, the removal of a thin, but very compact layer of clayey soil that yielded not a single artefact (no. 7 on fig. 14) exposed the surface of a dark layer which slopes gently westwards (no. 8). Only the very top of this layer could be excavated before work was interrupted for both lack of time and fear for the safety of the excavators. It yielded animal bone and pottery fragments in large numbers, all datable pieces suggesting that we had reached the 6th-century topsoil.

(ii) Eastern part

The small extension of the trial trench on the upper terrace behind the wall aimed mainly at exposing the eastern end of ring stone no. 11. However, already the removal of the AD 79 topsoil made clear that the plan might be more difficult to realize than had been anticipated: it revealed the presence of a second wall, parallel to the main wall, at a distance of just 20 cm, which prevented access to the latter's inner face. The function of this second wall, built of rubble and with a plaster lining on the eastern side, remains unknown. It is unlikely to be a predecessor of the so-called quay wall, as its width amounts to no more than 40 cm. Rather, it might have belonged to a building erected at the very edge of the terrace, to which a wall running E/W might also have belonged which came to light in

the northern extension of the trench. Only its southern face was exposed, with its plaster rendering still bearing some remains of a painted decoration. Further south, a partly preserved pavement of *cocciopesto* was discovered at a depth of *c.*80 cm (no. 13 on fig. 4), at which level work had to be interrupted (see fig. 17). This floor was covered with a soil deposit of about 15 cm depth, full of pottery fragments and animal bone, which was sealed by a thin, but most distinct layer of ash and charcoal, on top of which rested a layer composed mainly of building débris, such as bits of mortar, stones, and fragments of painted plaster. A detailed study of this material is still wanting, but according to a first preliminary examination the most recent datable objects belong to the middle of the 1st century. The charcoal layer, which in the stratigraphic section presents a small, yet very conspicuous fracture, could therefore well be the result of a fire caused by the earthquake that destroyed much of Pompeii on 5 February, 62. This would provide a *terminus post quem* for the abandonment of the building to which the two plastered wall belong, and as it seems unlikely that ring stone 11 could have been inserted into the terrace wall before the parallel wall behind it was demolished (see fig. 17), the same *terminus* could well also apply to the addition of the ring stones.

D. Conclusions

The result of this very brief excavation campaign may thus be summed up as follows:

1. The so-called quay wall is certainly not a quay wall, *quod erat demonstrandum*. There is no evidence for the existence of a harbour or waterway of any kind at its foot.

2. The wall, over 58 m long, was erected around 100 BC, i.e. at the time of the Social War in which Pompeii took an active part, after having restored and strengthened its city wall. It is conceivable that the wall's original function was defensive.

3. At some point in time, the central part of the wall collapsed. There is little evidence to suggest when this happened, but the *opus quasi-reticulatum* facing of the repaired stretch provides an argument in favour of a dating still to the 1st cent. BC rather than later.

4. In a last phase, possibly after the AD 62-earthquake, 18 large rectangular blocks measuring *c.*25 x 40 x 150 cm were inserted into the upper part of the wall, projecting on either side. Each block has a horizontal hole with a diameter of *c.*12 cm pierced through its external end. The function of these ring stones remains a mystery.

6. Contrary to what had generally been assumed, the terrace above the wall had been occupied by buildings. They appear to have been abandoned at a late stage, possibly in the aftermath of the 62 earthquake.

7. The terrace at the foot of the so-called quay wall is not bordered by a simple retaining wall as had hitherto been believed, but by a shallow channel. Its likely function was to feed the cistern situated below the *Terme suburbane*.

Jean-Paul Descœudres

Notes

[1] My thanks to Dr Luciana Jacobelli for providing me with this information.

[2] As far as I can see, the first published mention of the wall and its ring stones is by C. Malandrino, *Oplontis* (1977) 18 n. 15 («Un gomito del Sarno ... , o una sua derivazione fluviale, lambiva il pomerio occidentale della città di Pompei. Si spiegano, in tal modo, sia i grossi anelli di pietra in quella parte del muro pomeriale, a cui attraccavano i natanti, sia la ripidità della rampa di «Porta Marina» ...»), followed by A. Hoffmann in: F. Zevi (ed.), *Pompei 79* (1979) 97 («Una serie di caratteristiche pietre anulari sporgenti, lungo la pendice occidentale del colle della città, sembra assicurare l'esistenza in questo punto di un lungo molo d'attracco...»).

[3] Nos. 2, 4, and 11 on the sketch plan fig. 4 are only partly preserved: the inserted part of the block is all that remains, as the projecting portion with the hole has broken off. That belonging to block no. 4 lies at the foot of the wall, the remains of the other two seem to have been removed. The wall has not been excavated beyond ringstone no. 17, but a small borehole dug at a distance of 3,30 m north of no 17 revealed the presence of a further block (18 on fig. 4).

[4] See, e.g., E. Nash, *Bildlexikon zur Topographie des antiken Rom*, I (1961) 380–2 figs. 462–6 s.v. Emporium.

[5] See, e.g., A. and M. De Vos, *Pompei, Ercolano, Stabia. Guide archeologiche Laterza* 13 (1982) 21: «Probabilmente si trattava ... di un porto interno o canale collegato con il vero e proprio porto marino ...»; L. Richardson, jr., *Pompeii. An Architectural History* (1988) 32: « ... canal recently discovered in the area outside and north of the Porta Marina»). More cautiously, S. De Caro in: F. Zevi (ed.), *Pompeii* (1992) 39: «... non è perciò impossibile pensare che un braccio del fiume, o un canale, abbiano lambito lo stesso piede della collina di Pompei, come sembra mostrare un apprestamento con grossi anelli di pietra confitti in un muraglione presso le terme suburbane di Porta Marina» and L. Jacobelli, *Le pitture erotiche delle Terme Suburbane di Pompei* (1995) 13: «Si potrebbe forse ipotizzare in quest'area la presenza di un canale di collegamento con il mare».

[6] According to H. Eschebach's plan, first published in 1970 at the scale of 1:1000 (*Die städtebauliche Entwicklung des antiken Pompeji. RM Ergh.* 17), the terrace above the wall is situated at 12,60 m above sea level. Eschebach's levels are based on those indicated on the 1:400 plans by G. Tascone, published in 1885; J. Müller-Trollius has kept them in the revised and up-dated version of Eschebach's plan, published in 1993 (in: L. Eschebach [ed.], *Gebäudeverzeichnis und Stadtplan der antiken Stadt Pompeji*). These levels seem to tally reasonably well with those produced by very different means for the contour map published by H. B. Van der Poel, *Corpus Topographicum Pompeianum, III: The RICA Maps of Pompeii* (1984) folio III. The RICA map is based on an aerial survey, its sea levels obtained by means of a plotter using figures published by the Italian government (see H. B. Van der Poel [ed.], *Corpus Topographicum Pompeianum, IIIA: The Insulae of Regions I–V* [1986] p. xix). On the RICA map, too, the height of the terrace above the wall is given as 12,60 m above sea level, while the foot of the wall—only the eastern end of which is indicated—coincides roughly with the 10 m-

line (note, however, the printing errors on the map, such as 18,70 and 17,50 for 8,70 and 7,50 respectively, in the depression below the wall).

On the contour map published in: *Neapolis. Progetto-sistema per la valorizzazione integrale delle risorse ambientali e artistiche dell'area vesuviana, III: planimetria della città antica di Pompei* (1994) pl. 15 (folio F10B4C), the wall is not indicated at all. The figures indicating the levels are distinctly lower than those of the two plans just mentioned: 11,58 m (instead of 12,60 m) for the terrace above the wall, 6,74 m (instead of 7,20 m) for the lowest point in the depression to the west.

Slightly lower still are the levels indicated on the Carta d'Italia, folio 185 III SO of 1909, according to which a trigonometric point located in the Direzione vecchia (VI 17,27) is situated at 40,0 m above sea level. This point has been used by B. F. Weber for the plan of the necropolis in front of the Herculaneum Gate: s. V. KOCKEL, *Die Grabbauten vor dem Herkulaner Tor in Pompeji* (1983) 212. It appears to be 1,60 m lower than the figures given by Tascone: the height of the street pavement in front of the Herculaneum Gate is given as 39.90 m on Eschebach's plan, as 38,30 m on Weber's (KOCKEL op. cit. opp. p. 212). Several unsuccessful attempts were made to locate this fixed point and to check its reliabilty. My thanks to Florian Seiler and to Professor Satochi Sakai for offering their help and advice, and for confirming that the point no longer exists. According to Professor Sakai, Tascone's figures are more trustworthy than those given on the Carta d'Italia. However, even if the latter should prove correct, the so-called quay wall would still stand well over 8 metres above sea level.

[7] See C. GOLSER *et al.* in: C. ALBORE LIVADIE–F. WIDEMANN (eds.), *Volcanologie et Archéologie. PACT* 15 (1990) 183–95. For the gulf of Sarno the difference is about the same: the sea level in the 1st cent. AD must have been at least four metres below the present one according to C. ALBORE LIVADIE *et al.* ibid. 253.

[8] In: H. ESCHEBACH–L. ESCHEBACH, *Pompeji vom 7. Jahrhundert v. Chr. bis 79 n. Chr.* (1995) 84 fig. 36; p. 95: «Vor der pompejanischen Kaimauer liegt eine Gleitebene, deren parallele Rinnen in den anstehenden Tuff eingegraben sind».

[9] We are most grateful to Dr Piero Guzzo and to his collaborators, especially Drs Antonio D'Ambrosio and Antonio Varone, for their permission, encouragement, and continuous assistance. Our warmest thanks to Dr Luciana Jacobelli who most generously shared her knowledge of this area and offered invaluable help both in the archives and in the field. Thanks are also due to the *Faculté des Lettres* of the University of Geneva and its dean, Prof. Charles Méla, for granting the necessary funds, and to the *Commission des taxes fixes* which assisted with the travel expenses of the undergraduate students. Last but not least my thanks to the enthusiastic team which included Eliane Brigger (field director), Viviane Siffert (photographer), Gabrielle Schneebeli, Marc-Antoine Claivaz, Samuel Crettenand, Thomas Morard, and David Wavelet.

Unless otherwise indicated, all photographs are by Viviane Siffert.

[10] On his sketch published in *Pompeji* (1995) 84 fig. 36, the *Gleitebene für Schiffe* is indicated exactly at the place where these undulations in the ground can be seen. On the same sketch, the pierced blocks (*Ringsteine*) are drawn in the wrong place: instead of protruding from the terrace wall they have been drawn along the little channel in front of it.

[11] I am much indebted to Tommaso Wenner for his advice on the dating of the various pottery finds. These finds remain to be catalogued and studied in detail, but a preliminary study campaign carried out between 8 and 12 November with Patrizia Birchler Emery and Eliane Brigger, both from the University of Geneva, allowed a first assessment to be made on which the following notes are based.

[12] It is noteworthy that all of of the painted plaster fragments seem to stem from either Second or Third-Style decorations; none can be attributed with certainty to a Fourth-Style painting.

Variazioni di proprietà nell'insula VI,9: indagine nella Casa del Centauro (VI, 9, 3-5 e 10-12)

A partire dal 1996, la Soprintendenza Archeologica di Pompei ha promosso una campagna di schedatura delle strutture murarie degli edifici della città, volta in primo luogo a documentarne lo stato di conservazione e le esigenze di interventi di restauro.

Quale strumento di lavoro è stata elaborata una scheda in grado di contenere tutte le informazioni pertinenti a ogni singola parete analizzata, la cui struttura si richiama, con alcune sensibili variazioni, a quella della scheda di Unità Stratigrafica Muraria pubblicata nel 1988 dall'Istituto Centrale del Catalogo e della Documentazione del Ministero per i Beni Culturali. I dati in essa raccolti definiscono differenti sezioni, in grado innanzitutto di permettere l'identificazione della parete descritta (posizione, orientamento, misure) e di fornire informazioni sul suo stato di conservazione. Una serie di voci illustra invece la morfologia della parete attraverso la descrizione della tecnica edilizia in cui essa venne realizzata, il materiale e il tipo di legante impiegati, le caratteristiche strutturali delle aperture eventualmente presenti e il tipo di decorazione che la proteggeva e ornava; una sezione è stata infine riservata alla determinazione della cronologia della parete sulla base della stratigrafia verticale o di significativi elementi morfologici e decorativi. La scheda di parete rappresenta la base analitica dalla quale dipendono altri strumenti di documentazione via via più sintentici, quali la scheda di Ambiente, quella di *Domus* e infine quella di *Insula*. Attraverso un sistema che potremmo definire "a scatole cinesi", si può quindi passare agevolmente dall'analisi alla sintesi o viceversa, senza che alcun dato possa andare perduto o essere trascurato.

Questa prima campagna di catalogazione ha interessato buona parte della *Regio VI*, una delle prime aree della città ad essere stata riportata alla luce e che più di ogni altra ha subito sia i danni provocati dal bombardamento dell'estate del 1943 sia quelli del terremoto del 1980. In particolare, il lavoro di chi scrive queste brevi note ha avuto per oggetto l'*insula* VI,9.