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THE POMPEII ARTIFACT LIFE HISTORY PROJECT: THE SUMMER 2013 FIELD SEASON

Stahl Field Report 2013

Archaeological Research Facility, UC Berkeley
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The Stahl Fund provided substantial financial support for the second field season of the Pompeii Artifact Life History Project (PALHIP), carried out at Pompeii (Napoli), Italy, between June 17 and July 27, 2013. The PALHIP team consisted of three persons: the author of this report as project director, and two assistants, Caroline Cheung, a graduate student in the University of California, Berkeley Graduate Group in Ancient History and Mediterranean Archaeology, and Gina Tibbott, a graduate student in the Temple University Department of Anthropology. (fig. 1) PALHIP is a long-term research project aimed at documenting aspects of the acquisition, use, curation, and discard of portable material culture in the Roman town of Pompeii during the terminal period of its occupation (roughly the decade prior to the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79) with a view to elucidating patterns of artifact life history in the Roman world. The general approach involves the detailed characterization of selected sets of materials recovered in particularly informative contexts by past excavation projects at Pompeii.

The first field season of PALHIP, which also received substantial financial support from the Stahl Fund, took place during June-July, 2012. A three-person team (the author, Cheung, and Elizabeth Niespolo, a graduate student in the Department of Geological Sciences at California State University, Long Beach) initiated the documentation of the artifact assemblage from the Villa Regina a Boscoreale (henceforth Villa Regina), a modest farmhouse located 1.3 km to the northeast of Pompeii that was excavated in its entirety down to the AD 79 level during the period 1979-1983 under the direction of Stefano De Caro. (fig. 2) The team employed this first phase of the project to develop the set of the methods that PALHIP would utilize in subsequent seasons. The author presented a paper on the first season's results at the biannual meeting of the *Rei Cretariae Romanae Fautores* (the international organization of scholars of Roman pottery), held in Catania, Italy, in September, 2012, with a proceedings article forthcoming in the 2013 volume of this organization's journal, *Acta Rei Cretariae Romanae Fautorum*. In addition, the author, Cheung, and Niespolo presented a report on the season's results at the annual meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America, held in Seattle, Washington, in January, 2013.

During the 2013 field season the PALHIP team completed the documentation of the artifact assemblage from the Villa Regina. This involved the analysis of artifacts both on display and in storage at the Antiquarium di Boscoreale, a museum/storage facility adjacent to the Villa Regina site, and in storage at the Casa di Bacco, the main artifact storage facility inside the excavated area of Pompeii. PALHIP is a paperless project, with all recording in the field carried out using a MacBook

Pro laptop and two third generation iPads linked via a portable wireless router. The artifacts documented included pottery (tablewares, utilitarian wares, cookwares, and transport amphoras), terracotta oil lamps, glass vessels, vessels in bronze, and implements in stone, bone, ivory, bronze, and iron. Each was subject to measurement of its dimensions, weighing, and examination under both visible and UV light (fig. 3) with a view to observing its manufacturing (and, when present, repair) technique (fig. 4), as well as various kinds of use alteration, including cracking/breakage, chipping, abrasion, and deposition of soot, ash, calcium carbonate, and vessel contents. (fig. 5) Working photographs of each artifact were produced using the digital cameras incorporated in the two iPads and high-quality photographs were produced using a Nikon D5100 digital SLR camera. In addition, a Dino-Lite digital microscope (purchased with funds provided by the ARF's Braun Endowment) was employed to produce photomicrographs of each artifact's fabric/body. Our verbal observations, working photographs, and photomicrographs were entered in a database in *FilemakerPro 12* drawn up for the detailed characterization of individual artifacts. (fig. 6) At the conclusion of the evaluation of the Villa Regina assemblage the database contained records for 138 different artifacts. The analysis of our results should prove to be of considerable interest for the use of portable material culture in a rural context in the immediate environs of the town. Of particular importance should be the evaluation of the large set of objects recovered on the floor and on a set of wooden shelves (reconstructed by means of plaster casts) attached to the wall of Room 8, a general purpose storeroom, and the evaluation of a set of materials recovered in provisional discard in a large ash layer deposited on the floor of Room 2, a kitchen.

During the latter part of the season the team initiated the second stage of the project, which involves the analysis of sets of materials recovered in the *Insula dei Casti Amanti* excavations. This project, in progress since 1987 under the direction of Antonio Varone, involves the excavation of a large portion of an entire block (*Regio IX, Insula 12*) inside the town of Pompeii and portions of the streets that define the block's east and west sides. We completed the initial documentation of several refuse deposits recovered in two soundings carried out in 1994 in the detritus accumulated on the surface of the unpaved thoroughfare that defines the block's western boundary. This work involved the classification and quantification by number of fragments and weight of substantial sets of materials that included artifacts in ceramic, glass, stone, bone, iron, and bronze, along with significant amounts of animal bone and small amounts of shell. (fig. 7) We recorded our data in a second database in *Filemaker Pro 12* drawn up specifically for the recording of deposits. In the 2014 field season we plan to record estimated vessels represented (EVRep) and estimated vessel equivalents (EVE) data for these same deposits, thereby obtaining a more nuanced representation of the condition of the materials that they contain. Somewhat surprisingly, this marks the first time that researchers have carried out the detailed documentation of carefully excavated refuse deposits from a street surface at Pompeii, and our evaluation of our results should provide interesting new insights into refuse discard practices in the town.

During the academic year following PALHIP's first field season (2012-2013), Cody Gaynor, a UC Berkeley undergraduate student working with the author under the auspices of the Undergraduate Research Apprenticeship Program (URAP), produced three-dimensional models of several of the vessels in the Villa Regina assemblage from profile drawings by means of *AutoCad*, permitting us to calculate the surface area, volume, capacity, and (by combining volume and weight data) specific gravity of these items. (fig. 8) During this same academic year and the current academic year, Miguel Amador-Iñiguez, another UC Berkeley undergraduate working with the author under the auspices of URAP, is employing the software package *Harris Matrix Composer* to create production step diagrams recording the sequence of operations involved in the manufacture of many of the artifacts

that we have documented in the Villa Regina assemblage. (fig. 9)

The author would like to thank the following individuals for their generous assistance in the organizing and conduct of the 2012 and 2013 PALHIP field seasons: Michael Anderson, Ria Berg, Massimo Betello, Alberto Boccia, Michele Borgongino, Domenico Buzziello, Stefano De Caro, Giuseppe Di Martino, Steven Ellis, Renato Miele, Luisa Pagano, the late Luigi Petraccone, Luigi Sansone, Annamaria Sodo, Ambra Spinelli, Grete Stefani, and Antonio Varone.



Figure 1. PALHIP 2013 field season team. From left: Gina Tibbott, J. Theodore Peña, Caroline Cheung



Figure 2. View of Villa Regina farmhouse.

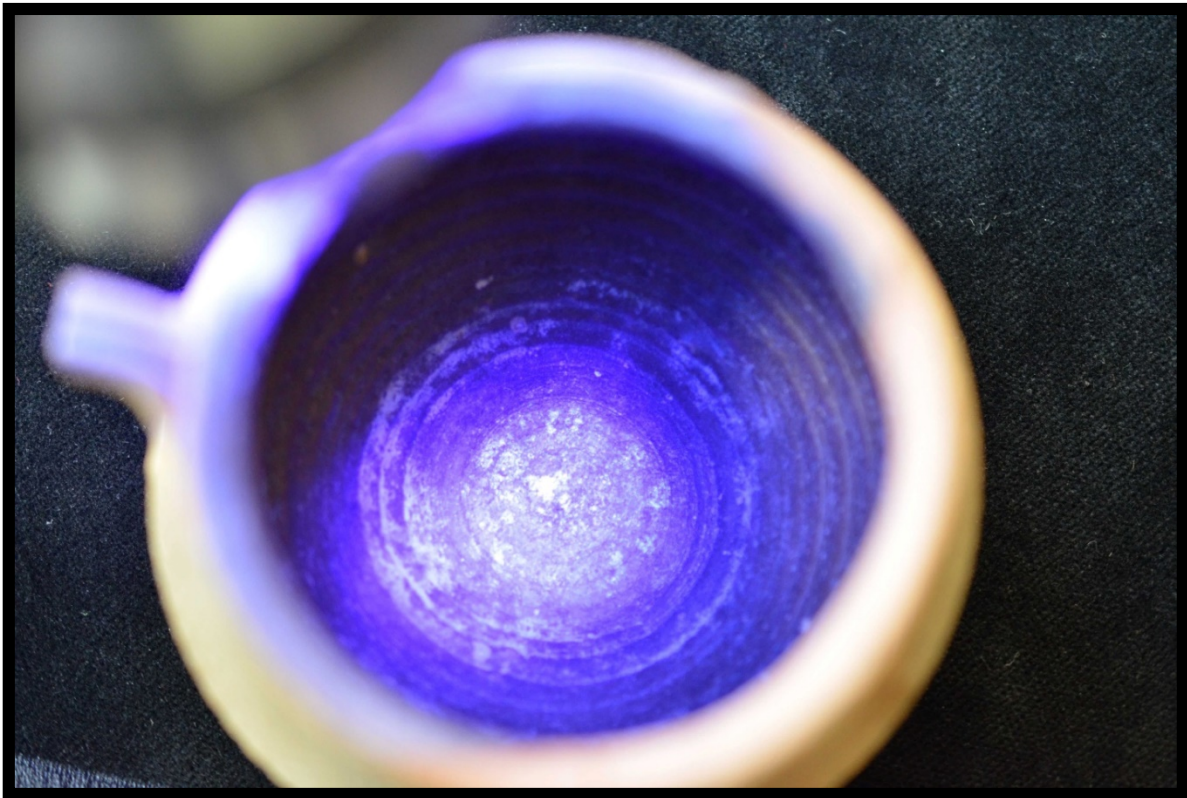


Figure 3. Interior of ceramic vessel from Villa Regina under UV light



Figure 4. Rim of bronze bucket with iron handle from Villa Regina showing deliberate modification and damage.



Figure 5. Ceramic cook pot from Villa Regina (inverted) showing ash on the underside of base and soot on wall and rim.

FileMaker Pro File Edit View Insert Format Records Scripts Window Help

Records 327 398 Total (Sorted) Show All New Record Delete Record Find Sort

Layout: Table View As: Preview

BASIC INFORMATION GRAPHICS MEASUREMENTS MANUFACTURE CONDITION TEXTS ANALYSES

POMPEII ARTIFACT LIFE HISTORY PROJECT (PALHIP) UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY -- SANP OBJECT DATABASE

DATABASE ENTRY NUMBER PALHIP NUMBER

Object

Date Compiler(s)

Update(s)

Inventario number Scheda Buffetti Other id number(s)

Publication number(s)

Provenience Context

Storage

Material Class number Class name

Form Form number

Alternative form number(s)

Assumed Function

Figure 6. Front tab of database used to record information for individual artifact



Figure 7. Bronze objects from refuse deposit on street to west of *Insula dei Casti Amanti*.



Figure 8. Three dimensional model of ceramic vessel from Villa Regina

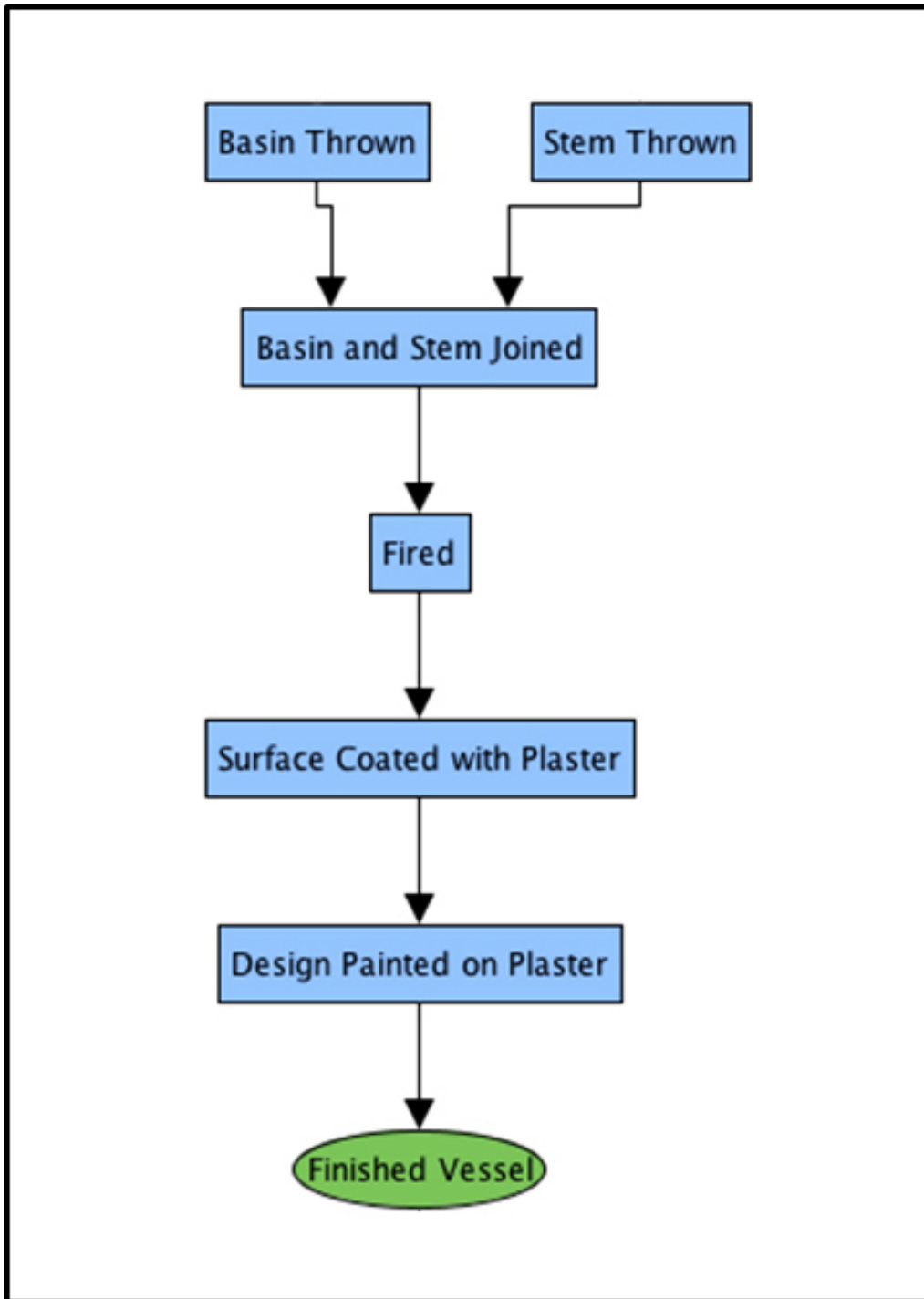


Figure 9. Production step diagram for ceramic vessel