

The late-antique eruption of Vesuvius in A.D. 472 and its impact from the Bay of Naples to Aeclanum

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The eruption of A.D. 79 has long dominated archaeological discourse on Vesuvius. Other eruptions, both earlier and later, have received less attention but are no less valuable from an archaeological point of view.¹ Those eruptions deposited distinctive volcanic materials often easily identifiable in the stratigraphic record, thereby providing dated *termini ante quos*, which can in turn offer a snapshot of life around the volcano in different periods. The eruption of A.D. 79 provides just such an horizon for 1st-c. A.D. Campania; the earlier 'Avellino pumices eruption' does the same for the Bronze Age.² By tracking the volcanic deposits that can be tied to such events, the situation on the ground prior to the eruptions can be examined, as can the ways in which communities and landscapes reacted to, and recovered from, them.

Fascination with the destructive power of these eruptions has tended to generate 'disaster narratives',³ which often overshadow accurate assessment of the damage wrought and the less negative outcomes brought about, such as economic stimulus and structural changes.⁴ Wider research in Campania has now demonstrated the degree to which at least some of the region bounced back after A.D. 79.⁵ Not every city suffered the same fate as Pompeii. Neapolis and Nola survived and continued to prosper, and in their territories, on the N flanks of the volcano, new, larger villas sprouted up.⁶ Farther inland, the eruption of A.D. 79 had little impact. Minor eruptions in A.D. 172, 203, 222 and 303, events that volcanologists have only recently been able to identify, seem not to have caused widespread disruption. But the same was not true of a massive 5th-c. eruption of Vesuvius, conventionally dated to 6 November, A.D. 472. The effects of this 'Pollena eruption' were felt, so the 6th-c. chronicler Marcellinus Comes tells us, across Europe and as far away as

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- 1 For a 3-volume collection of written sources on Vesuvian eruptions, see G. P. Ricciardi, *Diario del Monte Vesuvio. Venti secoli di immagini e cronache di un vulcano nella città* (Torre del Greco 2009).
 - 2 C. Albore Livadie, "A first Pompeii: the Early Bronze Age village of Nola-Croce del Papa (Palma Campania phase)," *Antiquity* 76.294 (2002) 941-42; id., "Nola, une Pompéi du Bronze ancien 1800-1700 environ avant J.-C.," in D. Garcia (éd.), *L'Âge du Bronze en Méditerranée. Recherches récentes* (Paris 2011) 65-82; J. Sevink, M. J. van Bergen, J. van der Plicht *et al.*, "Robust date for the Bronze Age Avellino eruption (Somma-Vesuvius): 3945 ± 10 calBP (1995 ± 10 calBC)," *Quaternary Science Reviews* 30 (2011) 1035-46.
 - 3 P. Roberts, *Life and death in Pompeii and Herculaneum* (London 2013).
 - 4 J. Grattan, "Volcanic eruptions and archaeology: cultural catastrophe or stimulus?," *Quaternary Int.* 151 (2006) 10-11; id. and R. Torrence (edd.), *Living under the shadow: the cultural impacts of volcanic eruptions* (Walnut Creek CA 2007).
 - 5 G. Soricelli, "La regione vesuviana dopo l'eruzione del 79 d.C.," *Athenaeum* 85 (1997) 139-54; id., "La regione vesuviana tra secondo e sesto secolo d.C.," in E. Lo Cascio and A. Storchi Marino (edd.), *Modalità insediative e strutture agrarie nell'Italia meridionale di età romana* (Bari 2001) 455-72; S. L. Tuck, "Harbors of refuge: post-Vesuvian population shifts in Italian harbor communities," forthcoming in an *Analecta Romana Instituti Danici Supplement*.
 - 6 G. F. De Simone, *The dark side of Vesuvius: landscape change and the Roman economy* (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Oxford 2014).