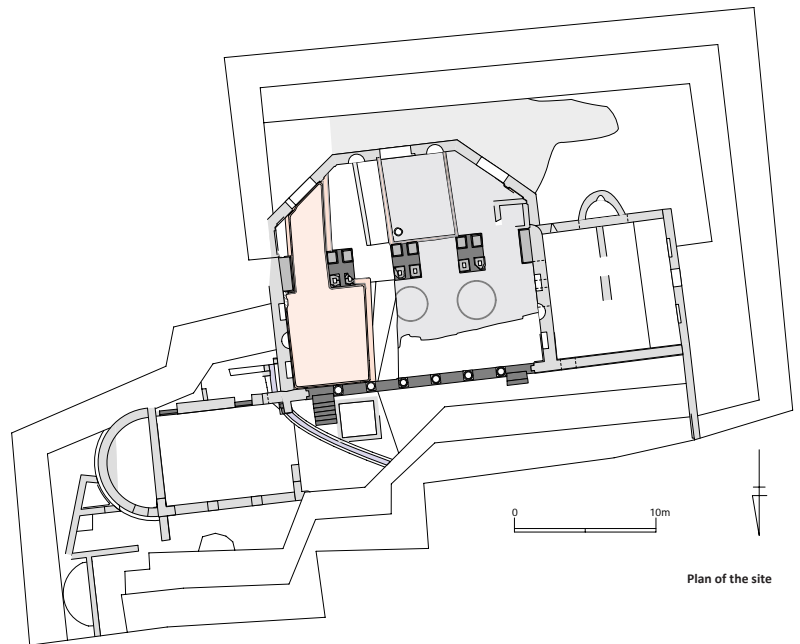


An Archaeological Excavation of a Roman Site in the Southern Part of Italy

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This archaeological site is located about 20km east to Naples, and at the northern foot of Mt. Vesuvius (area of Starza della Regina, city of Somma Vesuviana, Province of Napoli, region of Campania, Italy). We, Scientific Team of the University of Tokyo for Roman Studies in Somma Vesuviana, started the excavation in 2002 after some preliminary researches in this site in 2001. And we have revealed a part of huge roman architecture in the area excavated of about 1,200m² until 2007. Our major aim of this excavation is to reconstruct the natural and cultural environmental changes for suffering the damage of volcanic eruptions and to reveal the processes of their restoring from these damages.

According to the monumentality of this building it is supposed to be located in the center of this architectural complex in this site. In the middle of the excavated area we found a grand room. This room is divided in two parts by a huge sequence of arches which runs in the direction of E-W. And each arch is sustained by a composite pilaster with four pilasters of local black stones. At southern end of this room we found a wall decorated with wall paintings and polychrome plaster relieves. And in the center of this wall a grand door decorated with pilasters and a gable is located. These decorations represent some musical instruments and some objects for festivity related with Dionysus. At the east and west ends of this room there are walls decorated with plaster. They remain about 6m high from the ancient pavement. On each wall we found three niches made at 3m high from the bottom. In 2003 we found a marble statue located in one of those niches, which is called "Peplophoros", because it figure a woman who wear in ancient Greek garment called "peplos". On the other side, beneath the eastern wall we found some fragments of another marble statue that represents "Dionysus" which is one of Greek Gods. As for the northern end of this room, the marble columns with Corinthian capitals lined along with the north opening of this room. The main axis in the direction of N-S of this architecture runs in the center of this room. And it seems that Mt. Vesuvius might be situated southward in this axis. Northern part to the marble columns is divided from this room, and goes down with a stair of about



2m high. These two areas with different pavement levels are communicated with each other by small steps which are located east and west end of this stair. In front of this stair there might be a portico and some rooms which might lie along this portico. In fact we found some rooms in the lower part. One of these rooms was excavated completely. It is rectangular, and in the east end of this room an apse was built. In this apse all the surface of the cupola and the wall is decorated with wall paintings by colored plaster. Behind this apse a small room is connected. All walls surrounding this small room are decorated by wall paintings. The condition of these paintings is not good, but on one wall we found a painting of two women wearing in long skirt, and facing each other. Behind of this small room another room with apse was discovered. This room is a little smaller than that one mentioned above, but wall paintings remain well on the all surface in the apse, and we found a monochrome mosaic pavement conserved very well. On the other hand, in western opposite side of this lower area, nevertheless we can see an arch implanted on the wall; it seems that an apse might not be constructed behind the wall.

According to archaeological observations, this building was originally constructed in the middle of 2nd century AD, and functionally changed of time, and finally the major part of the building was buried with the volcanic ash and flood of rocks and mud caused by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 472 AD. After this disaster this site was abandoned and was not restored any more. Furthermore it was completely covered by the volcanic materials of the following eruptions of Mt. Vesuvius until present altitude.

