

Religion, politics and economy

[Politics](#)



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Through the analysis of archaeological evidence and sources, historians are now able to gain insight into how society functioned in Pompeii and Herculaneum. Though several factors made up these societies, this essay will only examine three; religion local politics and economy to create a picture of how society was. The citizens of Pompeii and Herculaneum were very religious and believed everything in their lives was controlled by the gods. We can see the importance placed on religion from the ten temples in the area, some of which are the Temple Of Jupiter (Capitolium) and the Temple of Apollo.

To be a 'good Roman' pietas, reverence of the gods was required and was an integral part of the persona of any respected Roman. They worshipped many gods, primarily Graeco-Roman deities such as Mars (Aries) and Venus (Aphrodite). The temples had two functions - to house images and objects associated with the god and to be a place where rituals were carried out by priests to honour the gods. They were simply built and contained a statue of the deity which stood before an altar where an offering could be made.

The Temple of Apollo on the left and the Temple of Jupiter on the right Gods were worshipped both in public and in the home. Cicero states 'The most sacred, the most hallowed place on earth is the home of each and every citizen. There are his sacred hearth and his household gods, there the very centre of his worship, religion and domestic ritual. ' Most houses had small shrines called Lararia with small statues or painted images of the Lares (household gods who protect the home and family) or other household gods such as Vesta, the goddess of the hearth and Panates, guardian of the pantry.

Some houses had images of a genius who was the spirit of the paterfamilias (master of the house). Lararium in the House of the Vetti, showing the Genius between two Lares Statuettes of Lares in House of the Golden Cupid

With the spread of the Roman Empire came new foreign religions and cults which were generally tolerated. The Egyptian cult of Isis became popular and appealed especially to the poor and oppressed thanks to the promise of immortality and rebirth. After the earthquake of 62 A.

D, the temple of Isis was rebuilt the most elaborately showing how much she was valued. Images of Isis and other Egyptian deities could also be found in homes. Dionysus, the Greek god of fertility and divine intoxication, was worshipped under the name of Bacchus. A fresco found in the Villa of the Mysteries depicts him initiating members into his secret society. The worship of Mithras that originated in Persia was also common. The Temple of Isis The imperial cult transcended all other cults and the emperor offered every citizen the opportunity of worshipping him.

Worship of the emperor was the most important as we can see through the Temple of Vespasian, the temple of Fortuna Augusta which housed a statue of Augustus and the forum which celebrated the imperial glory through triumphal arches and statues. Altar at the temple of Vespasian local politics is shown by the number of political buildings in the forum including the Comitium (voting hall), Basilica, which was originally a law court but morphed into a meeting place for businessmen and politicians, and the three government offices.

The electorate consisted of two Duumviri elected each year who has potestas (official power) and the responsibility to oversee revenues and taxation, preside over the town council and perform judicial roles in court, two Aediles elected each year who were responsible for the care of temples, streets and public buildings and the holding of games, two Duumviri Quinquennales were chosen every five years which performed the same tasks as the Duumviri in addition to revising the citizenship and council roles, and a Praefectus Iure Dicundo, who only had power in an emergency.

There were various roles that were not accompanied by official political power but were still important. Being a member of the town council (curia), which consisted of eighty to one hundred members, was one such role. The members had influence within the community and needed dignitas and respect from other members before being appointed. A Roman with political ambitions would need to be a free, wealthy man who was driven, had a reputable family or made a good name for himself, have significant dignitas and auctoritas and have connections with those in higher ranking positions.

Patrons assisted clients who sought political advancement in return for support in the election campaign. Women did not have the right to vote and weren't allowed to run for any of the political positions but despite these restrictions women could still have a large influence in society as they had "borrowed" auctoritas from the men in their family. Studies conducted by Frances Bernstein of the University of Maryland revealed that at least seventeen of the electoral notices show women who, with their husbands, were clients of candidates for office.

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On the wall of a Pompeian house, one Lollia, With her people', most probably her family, urged the election of Gaius Julius Polybius as duumvir, one of the chief magistrates. Most of the evidence for politics comes from inscriptions, graffiti and painted notices. Two thousand of these in Pompeii have been classified as electoral notices announcing support for a candidate and calling on the reader to vote for him. An example of this is " If upright living is considered any recommendation, Lucretius Fronto is well worthy of office" and Note for Lucius Popidius Sabinus; his grandmother worked hard for his last election".

The Amphitheatre at Pompeii is inscribed with a plaque stating the duumviri paid for it as a gift to the citizens and the statue of Marcus Balbus and memorial alter in the baths at Herculaneum suggest he funded the baths. The economies of Pompeii and Herculaneum were small and local, yet diverse and successful due to their prime location on the sea and as Strabo recounted surrounded by the fertile volcanic soils of Mount Vesuvius. " A mosaic discovered in the House of Scaurus with the words 'Profit is my Joy shows that they had enthusiasm formoney-making.

The economies functioned by the circulation of money through businesses such as pistrina (bakeries), cauponae/taberna (inns/taverns), thermopolia (hotfoodbars) and fullonica (laundries). Jongman stated that " agricultural production was the largest contribution to the economy. " Trade was vital to create an income and to help the diverse economy flourish. Most of Pompeian imports and exports are deciphered through pottery. The analysis of these sources show that they imported Egypt and furniture from Naples.

Evidence of exports comes from garum Jars found in France and wine amphorae in France, Spain, Germany and Africa.

Jongman (2009) argues that fullonics weren't a significant industry but contradictory to this Seneca indicates that 600 sheep died in the earthquake and 18 fullonics were discovered including the House of the Wooden Partician in Herculaneum where a clothes press was found and the Guild of fullers in the Eumachia building. The fulleries were the clothes makers and cleaners of society and they performed multiple tasks including the processing of wool and the washing, cleaning, rinsing, dyeing and brushing of cloth. The Pompeian workshop sign of M.

Vecilus Verecundus showed the process involved which included the washing of the wool in a combination of what was called fullers earth which consisted of earth, potash, carbonate of soda and urine, which was then trodden on by slaves and hung out to dry. One of the largest fullonics found was the famous Fullery of Stephanus which was installed in a dwelling on the Via dell'Abbondanza. At the entrance was a machine for pressing tunics, a basin in the atrium and a previous peristyle now containing more basins for the dyeing process.

Pots were placed outside the fullonics and on street corners to collect urine from passers by as the preferred camel urine was a luxury and costly item. In Pompeii and Herculaneum clothing represented status and keeping clothes clean was necessary to be presentable and maintain that status. Over thirty bakeries have been identified in Pompeii with ovens heated with vine branches. Bread was popular because most homes didn't have ovens

and it wasn't expensive. Bakeries grinded grain on lava stone mills which would press it into flour. The flour was then mixed with water and set on tables for kneading.

A mule or onkey turned the mill as we can see from donkey skeletons found in the mills of Herculaneum. Bread was usually sent to be sold in shops but not always as some bakeries had connecting shops and sold their own bread. An example of this is N. Popidius Priscus, who used his freedmen to run the Bakery of Modestus in which 81 loaves of bread were found from the day of the eruption. This bakery shows the economic connections between ex-slaves and the upper classes. Twenty five different pans were discovered at Sextus Patulcus Felix's shop in Herculaneum which provides evidence that a variety of cakes and breads were on offer.