

Abstract for 2009 FIEC

a) Contributor's name and complete address:

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b) Preferred panel: Any of the following

3. Cultural Encounters and Fusions in the Roman Empire,
12. Social and Political Dimensions of Kinship: Family, Neighborhood, City
or 18. Open Topics

c) Title of paper:

"Pompeii and her Neighbors: ancient graffiti and civic identity"

d) Length of paper:

20 minutes

e) Outline of content:

Were it not for Tacitus' *Annales* (14.17), the scandalous riot that broke out in the amphitheater of Pompeii in 59 AD might not be as well known as it is to students of antiquity. This fascinating anecdote, pitting the Pompeians against their neighbors, the residents of nearby Nuceria, is perhaps one of the most sensational examples of ancient civic tensions from the Roman world. Yet, even without this historical footnote, a civic rivalry between the two cities might eventually have been detected through several ancient graffiti in Pompeii that position the two cities opposite each other.

This paper delves into the question of ancient civic relations and explores how issues of local identity and civic pride play out among popular communication vis-à-vis the wall-inscriptions of ancient Pompeii. The rise and fall of friendly relations between Pompeii and Nuceria looms large among messages on the city's walls, but texts scratched into the wall plaster detail active civic dynamics with other neighbors as well. Puteoli bears greater prestige after garnering honors from Nero, a group of girls from Stabiae earn an unsavory reputation, and greetings meet the residents of numerous communities, including that of tiny Pithecusa. Perhaps the greatest surprise is the number of neighboring cities that are named on the city's walls: fourteen, nearly every community *in* the region of Campania.

Although we are often able to study the relationship between an individual city and the capital, little evidence exists for understanding an ancient city within its regional context. The fortunate preservation of Pompeii, however, provides a wealth of material for reconstructing one ancient city's relationships with her neighbors. It also offers a perspective onto how extensive and colorful regional dynamics might be.