

The Economics and Social Conceptions of Religiosity and Divine Patronage:
Painted *Lararia* and Depictions of Vesta in Pompeii's *Pistrina*
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The genesis of this paper arose from an apparent paradox. Recently, social historians have focused upon the Roman *domus* as an intersection of public and private realms wherein class structure, social relationships, and displays of socio-economic and political power governed one's use, access to, and visibility of rooms within the house (Clarke 1991, Wallace-Hadrill 1994, Hales 2003, Leach 2004). Within these ambiguous and transgressive areas, one element appeared to retain a relative sense of privacy and family: the *lararium*, or household shrine. Yet, the presence of household shrines in industry-oriented buildings at Pompeii intrudes into this context of private domestic worship. Such shrines are found in numerous Pompeian businesses, such as *pistrina*, *cauponae*, and *thermopolia*, and often retain no visible or tangible connection to a domestic structure. If *lararia* embodied the traditional schema of Roman, or at least Romanized, household religion, how can one reconcile their presence and use outside an exclusively domestic context?

The unique and frequent appearance of the goddess Vesta in the iconography of painted *lararia* found in Pompeian bakeries raises more questions. From the extant painted *lararia* excavated from Pompeii's *pistrina*, Vesta appears repeatedly. Yet, her image is strikingly absent from domestic settings, areas where one would expect her presence. Thus, this paper investigates the puzzles: the presence of *lararia* in bakeries, the overwhelming prominence of Vesta in their painted imagery, how these elements reflect social and religious changes of the early Augustan principate, and what they reveal about the civic roles and motivations of the bakers of Pompeii.

The conclusions that arise are as equally diverse, expansive, and complicated as the topics of examination. These shrines and their painted decoration developed an iconographic *koine* that entailed specific numinous powers and extended these powers beyond the confines of either *domus* or *pistrina*. Cognizant of this flexibility, *pistores* incorporated *lararia* and their painted decoration into the very midst of their work environment. Such actions addressed the bakers' anxieties about processes of production, economic exchange, and industry-related competition and, as a result, conveyed the promise of success in all three areas.

Furthermore, the keen emphasis on the iconography of Vesta illustrates the end product of a process whereby the *pistores* of Pompeii deliberately adopted the goddess as their patron deity. This decision was influenced by the religious revitalization of the Augustan principate, specifically the pointed emphasis on the goddess Vestal; the general benefits her patronage would confer; and the economic disruption and instability of Pompeii after the earthquake of 62 C.E. In the final two decades of Pompeii's existence, *pistores* increasingly included the goddess in their shrines and in other images evocative of the *pistores* participation in the community. These actions, situated in the post-earthquake era of reconstruction and economic uncertainty, recalled and drew upon the benefits and guarantees of Vesta that had been articulated so prominently during the Augustan principate. Thus, the *pistores* sought to channel Vesta's inherent qualities of stability and prosperity through her patronage, their bakeries, and their bread to restore their weakened community. As a result, the *pistores'* actions conveyed their personal conceptions as to their own role in the community: they represented the mortal counterparts of Vesta and constituted the hearths of their community.