

STEVEN L. TUCK

Scheduling Spectacle: Factors Contributing to the Dates of Pompeian *Munera**

I. THE SPECTACLE SCHEDULE AND ITS MEANING

The graffiti and dipinti found on the walls at Pompeii provide us a unique opportunity to study epigraphical sources that are richer, more varied and more casual than the typical inscriptions found on stone across the Roman world. This parietal material at Pompeii falls into two categories, graffiti, scratched on both interior and exterior walls of public as well as private spaces, and *pictae*, painted messages found exclusively on the exteriors of buildings along public streets in the city. Designed to reach the literate public, *pictae* were larger than graffiti and in many cases demonstrably the work of professionals, who were hired to paint the announcements in red on walls along major streets, often at night¹. The *pictae* include advertisements of which the most important types are the *programmata*, endorsements for candidates in the local elections, and the *edicta munerum*, the painted announcements of upcoming spectacles and games, which are the unique and critical source for this study². The *edicta munerum*, although now almost completely faded away, were found on walls in the region of the amphitheater both in and outside the city. Notable among locations is the exterior of tombs in the Porta Nocera necropolis a short walk from the amphitheater and near an extramural crossroads³.

A number of recent authors have found these *edicta* a rich source for discussions on a variety of topics including political sponsorship of games⁴, *munera* in the context of leisure activities at Pompeii⁵ and the organization and social structure of games⁶. The only comment in these recent works on the principles behind the dates of the games concludes

that “spring (from March to June) was preferred for the weather”⁷. In fact, the 39 dated games, 24 advertising games at Pompeii and 15 at surrounding communities, fill the calendar from January to December. The dates and gaps in this data display patterns worthy of further analysis as they reveal the priorities that drove the scheduling of games. In this article the political, agricultural, religious and practical factors contributing to the dates of games advertised at Pompeii are explored and I attempt to determine if the pattern of games as it exists results from causality, correspondence or coincidence in its avoidance of other major events. Most notable among the conclusions perhaps is the extent to which Pompeii avoided conflict with the major spectacle entertainments and markets and fairs in Rome, suggesting that the organizers were aware of the possibility of audience overlap and that the games in local communities around the Bay of Naples strove to avoid conflict with major games in Rome either because audiences from Rome traveled to these games or, as may be more likely, that the populations in coastal Campania traveled to Rome for the major *ludi* there. These conclusions lead us to consider the possibility that spectacle games, notably in the Circus Maximus, may have drawn audience from the communities along the Bay of Naples over 200 kilometers away. Additionally, we can conclude that the periodic fairs and markets in Rome and elsewhere in Italy drew consumers from a wide area in Italy, possibly from a major portion of the peninsula.

II. THE EVIDENCE FOR POMPEIAN MUNERA

These *edicta* provide a wealth of data

on *munera* and their formulaic nature makes restoring some elements of even fragmentary *pictae* possible. The standard elements include the patron of the games (*editor muneris*) listed first generally in the largest letters and in the genitive, followed by the actual spectacle promised—whether gladiatorial, prisoner executions, athletics and/or *venationes* in many cases detailing the extent of games through listing the number of pairs of combatants (*gladiatorum paria*), the additional embellishments of the games including use of awnings and distributed gifts—*sparsiones*, infrequently the occasion of the show (*causa muneris*) if it was unusual, for example in honor of the emperor (*munera pro salute imperatoris* CIL IV 7989) or the inauguration of paintings (CIL IV 1177) or an altar (CIL IV 1180), and in some cases the days of the month on which games were held⁸. This final element allows us to create a calendar of games, the focus of this study. These *edicta* are collected in CIL IV and its updates and supplements as well as more recent journals and periodic literature and analytical studies⁹. An example of the *edicta munerum* containing all of the basic elements is CIL IV 9979:

*ven(atorum) et glad(iatorum)
par(ia) XX / M. Tulli pugn(abunt)
Pom(peis) (a) pr(idie) Non(as)
Novembres / (ad) VII Idus
Nov(embers)*

Twenty pairs of animal fighters and gladiators of Marcus Tullius will fight at Pompeii from 4 November to 7 November

A more developed version yet displaying the same formulaic structure is CIL IV 3884:

D(ecimi) Lucreti / Satri Valen-