

## Research in Roman Archeology and Kakenhi

Masanori Aoyagi

Project Professor of the Tokyo University of the Arts, Director of the Yamanashi Prefectural Museum of Art, Member of the Japan Academy



When researching Western culture, an important matter influencing such research is seeing research sites in person through study abroad programs and research trips. In my case, I went to Italy to study when I was 24 years old, where I was instructed by Professor Giovanni Becatti of the University of Rome. After three years when I was about to return to Japan, Professor Becatti advised me on two ways to continue researching in Japan where there is no specialized library on Greek and Roman archeology. First, even if concerning a narrow range, I should submit reviews of new research in my field of study to academic journals in Europe and the United States. Through this process I would be able to continue my research without falling behind academic trends to any great extent. Second, even if on a small scale, I should persevere in my fieldwork and publish in Europe and the United States primary source materials from research sites. By doing so I would be able to acquire related information, and it would be possible to continue participating in the leading research circles of Europe and the United States even while based in Japan.

I did initially try writing reviews after returning to Japan. However, while I could make use of more than 600 academic journals in the specialized library I used in Rome, less than 30 titles were available in Japan. I therefore engaged in research for about 40 years centering on fieldwork.

While studying in Italy, I frequently visited the Pompeii ruins and became acquainted with the person in charge of the archaeological site and the head of the archaeological department. I applied for permission to make an excavation survey in the name of the Faculty of Letters of the University of Tokyo. Despite being a university unknown in Greek and Roman archaeological circles, permission was immediately granted with me as survey chief. The first survey took place in the summer of 1974 and lasted about five months. It was undertaken with a small team of three persons including myself, and research expenses were covered by a research grant from a foundation and other sources. A report of four surveys, “La casa della

nave Europa a Pompei,” found some favor in a review published in a Pompeii research journal, and this finally brought acceptance by Greek and Roman archaeological circles in Europe and the United States.

I, however, became painfully aware of the limits of depending on private research grants. Fortunately, the University of Tokyo was undertaking many foreign surveys at that time, and I was able to ask about fund raising methods. The unanimous view was that Kakenhi was the most efficient source of funds. Following this advice, I have depended on Kakenhi since then and have been able to continue excavation surveys. An excavation survey that began in 1979 of the remains of a Roman villa on the southern coast of Sicily took seven years. Until then, Sicilian archaeology centered on the Greek period or the Greek culture of the Roman period. Through our research, interest spread in Roman culture itself.

As the Sicilian survey was reaching an end, I began to think about excavation surveys in central Italy. At that time, there were no archaeologists researching the southern half of the Italian peninsula as a whole to carry out comparative research based on excavation surveys. After examining candidate sites, I settled on a Roman seaside villa along the Tyrrhenian Sea outside the town of Tarquinia about 120 kilometers north of Rome. There was a good chance that these ruins were the location of Quintiana recorded in ancient texts and that we would be able to prove this was the case. The research team brought together for the Sicilian excavation survey was enlarged. A regular team of more than 20 members lived and worked together, joined by 10 local workers, to undertake excavation surveys of more than three months for over a period of 10 years from 1992.

While we continue to catalog artifacts in detail, I believe this survey also helped to spread awareness of the importance of researching Roman culture in the Tarquinia area, where such research had stagnated due to it being the center of Etruscan culture.

In parallel to excavation surveys, Studies for the Conservation and Recreation of Objective Cultural Resources (Grant-in-Aid for Specially Promoted Research [COE]) were begun in 1999. One of their objectives was to create a compilation of images of Pompeii mural paintings. Mural paintings of the entire western section of the ruins were recorded in a database and were published as reference material. This compilation has become a basic reference in the research of Pompeii mural paintings. Furthermore, research of the Restoration of Cultural and Natural Environment of the Area Covered by

Volcanic Eruptions (Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research on Priority Areas) was begun in 2004. As part of this research, the excavation survey of the remains of a Roman villa is continuing at Somma Vesuviana. This survey has continued for more than 15 seasons. Differing from the accepted view of Mediterranean trade in Late Antiquity, we are beginning to verify that such trade was quite stable. Having become aware of the importance of disaster archaeology in Japan through this research, I would like to work toward the wider establishment of this research field.

As discussed above, Kakenhi has served as a research platform for my life of research and has been the source of its driving force. While this may be a given for my life centered on the research method of excavation surveys, I want to convey the importance of Kakenhi to young researchers in the humanities and to emphasize the importance of field science.