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## COMBINING LIFE AND WORK The Social Structure of Pompeian *Cauponae*

Scholarly interest in the retail industry for food and drink at Pompeii has mainly been aimed at defining the archaeological criteria for identifying these establishments, their types and distribution throughout the city. Seldom has discussion focused on the relationship between *cauponae* and the complexes in which they were embedded. A wide exploration of these spatial arrangements offers an excellent opportunity for understanding the social aspects of both *cauponae* themselves and the larger structures to which they belonged. The analysis of their private environment in particular creates new data for reaching the life of non-elite society and at the same time examining the impressive adaptability of space in Pompeian houses. It is generally agreed that in a late phase of the city's development a number of private houses were totally converted into inns, restaurants or even brothels. While it is certain that several *cauponae* represent secondary uses of the existing buildings this does not always coincide with the complete loss of domestic function or their relocation *in toto* to the upper floors. The evidence shows that commercial and domestic purposes could intersect at several levels.

Many complexes show an effort to choose the best solution for integrating commercial activities within the domestic character of the existing structures. One effective choice, for example, was to concentrate the whole area designed for food preparation in the front of the building, both for customers and for domestic needs (figs.1-2).

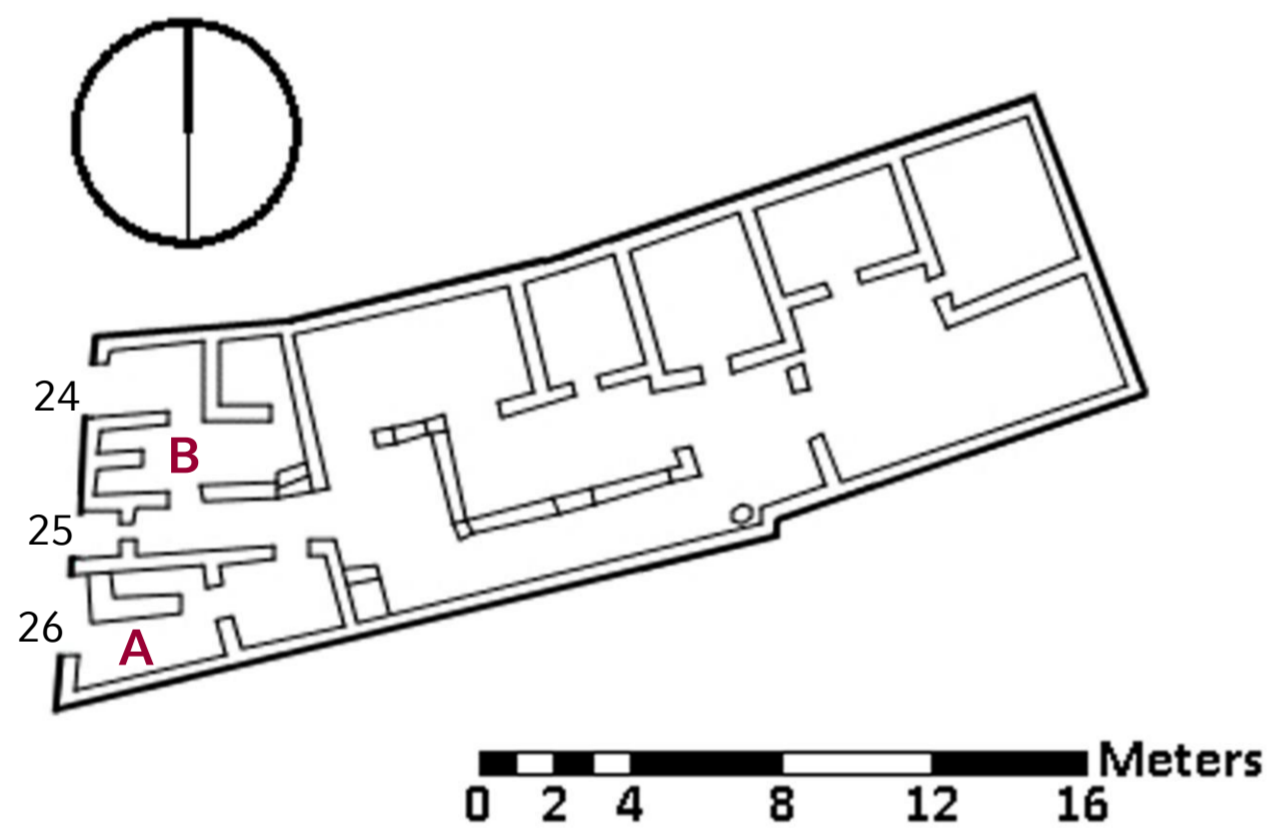


Fig.1: Pompeii, VII.2.24-26. Plan with indication of counter room (A) and kitchen (B)

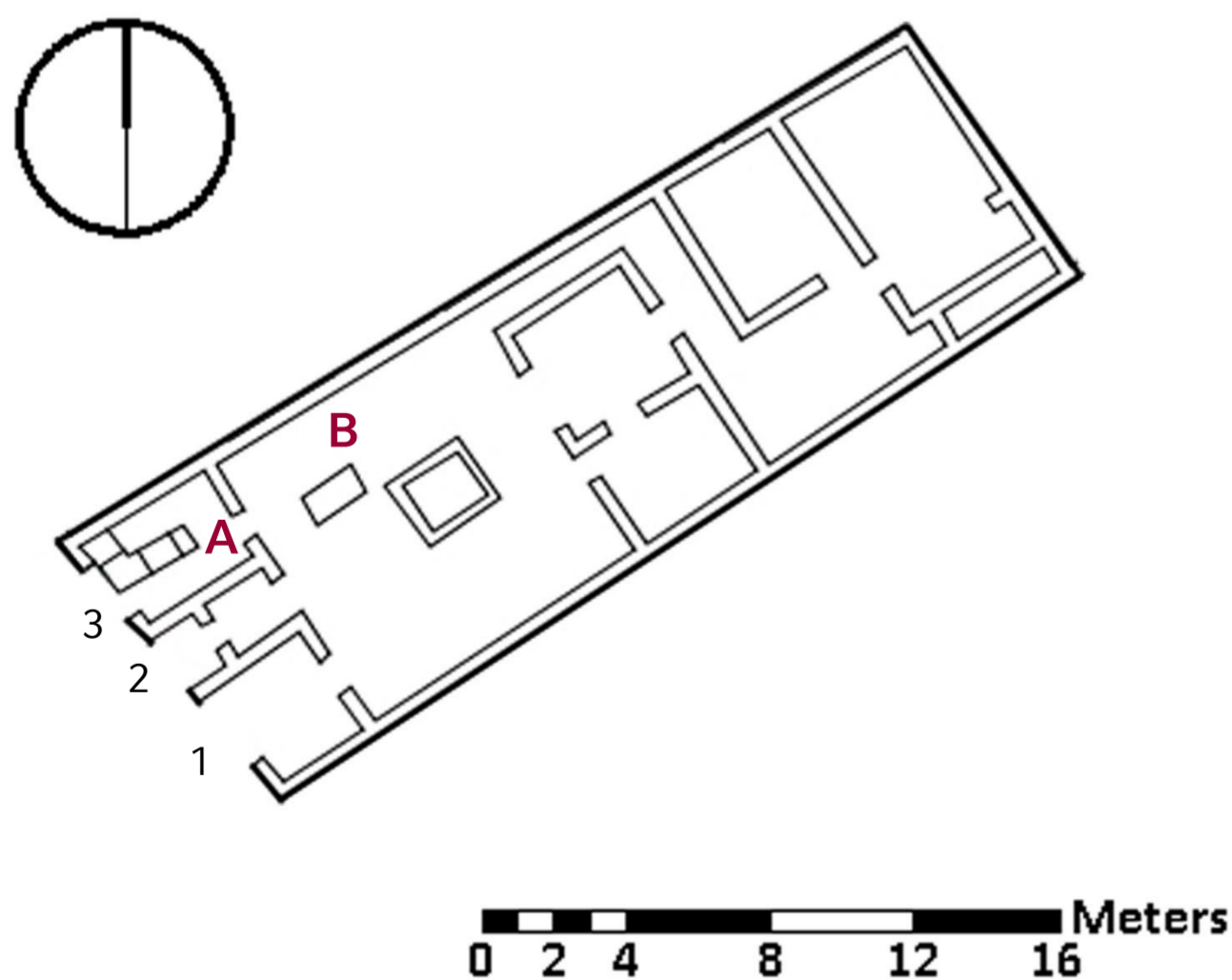
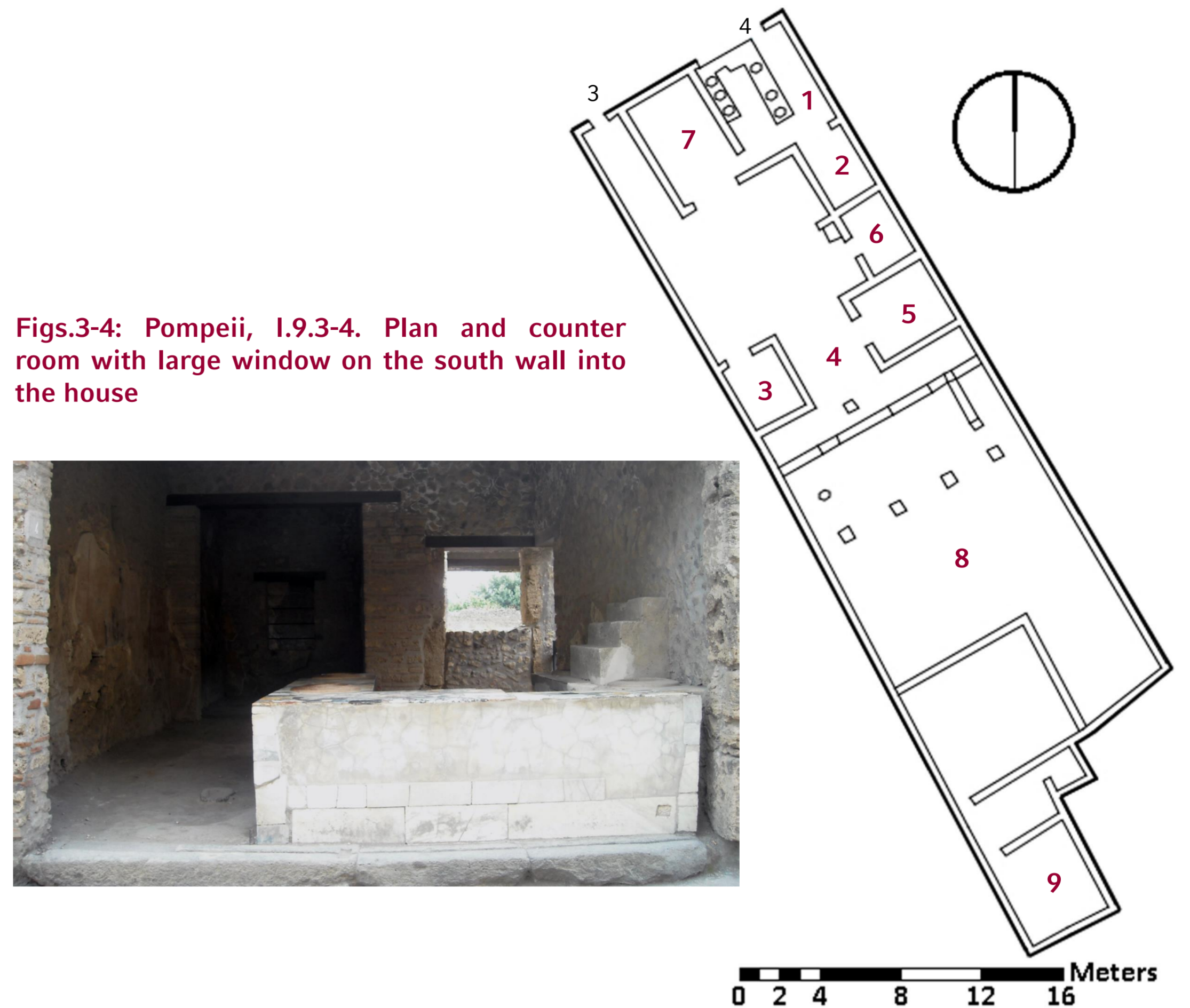


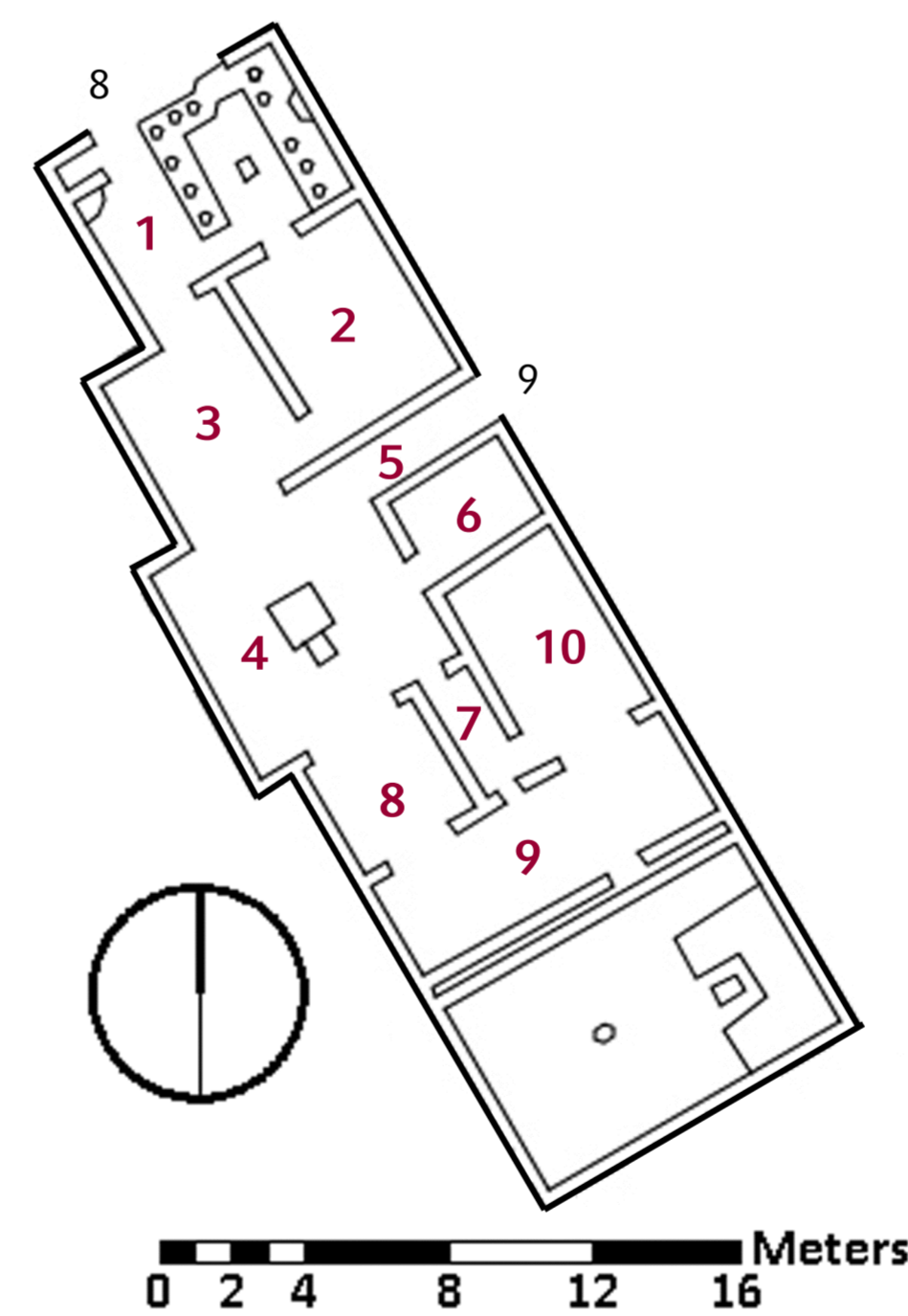
Fig.2: Pompeii, I.4.1-3. Plan with indication of counter room (A) and hearth (B)

Elsewhere, the implementation of retail activity coincided with large-scale adaptations and with the owners' interests in the residential character of their dwelling. The front part of property I.9.3-4 seems to have been linked to the commercial business (figs.3-4): counter room (1), backroom (2), dining room for customers (7), storage space (3), small room (6) from which the innkeeper could control his affairs. At the same time, the house maintained its domestic function and the residential character was reinforced, as indicated by the redecoration in room 5.



Figs.3-4: Pompeii, I.9.3-4. Plan and counter room with large window on the south wall into the house

Interference with the residential sphere was greater in smaller units or when the shop was the main access to the property and its centre. Sometimes even buildings in which main access and counter room coincide seem to perform residential functions as well. The availability of different entrances was a determining factor in the shop's impact on the internal traffic of the house. In I.8.8-9 a remodelling in the first half of the first century C.E. resulted in both the construction of a counter and the redecoration of the whole property with lavish wall paintings (figs.5-6). There are no reasons to assume that the whole complex lost its domestic character. The customers' area could have easily been isolated from the back of the house, which was reached by a side entrance and was used for residential purposes, as confirmed by its sumptuous decoration and by the discovery of some items for personal body care.



Figs.5-6: Pompeii, I.8.8. Plan and entrance looking into rear room (left) and atrium (right)

All but one *cauponae* were located in small- and medium-size properties, *tabernae*, shop-apartments or *domus*. We do not know the legal statuses of their inhabitants. The point, however, is not who they were, but how they lived. Evidence suggests that the people working in these shops often lived in the place where they worked. Many complexes were too small to combine the retail activity with the presence of representative rooms. On the other hand, the medium-size structures provided the chance for a successful integration of living and working. This possibility was eagerly exploited, often sacrificing the space around the front hall while, in the back, trying to keep up with the standards of residential life in the largest and richest houses.

