Who Did It? A CSI Case at Pompeii

Who commissioned the small Sanctuary of Augustus on the east side of the forum in Pompeii? No crime was committed, but in this lecture the methods of crime scene investigators are self-consciously employed to address this mystery. The dedicatory inscription that once accompanied the sanctuary has not survived. Therefore, no definitive answer can be given. That condition, however, should not prevent us from investigating this cold case. A key piece of evidence is the well-preserved sculptured altar still standing within the sanctuary. Critical clues are hidden in plain sight on the altar. This presentation investigates the issue of who had the motivation, the means and the opportunity to build the sanctuary, and it concludes by identifying the likely suspect. Along the way we deal with related themes: the donation of public buildings by private citizens (acts of generosity and self promotion); architecture; various Pompeian personalities; and Roman ritual.