



Rhythms of urban life in Imperial era Rome

Everyday Life in Athens and Rome (HPHP4020)

Keeping track of time

- Civil day 24 hours
 - *horologium* = hour counter, and water clock (*horologium ex aqua*).
 - Variability due to latitude and seasonality
 - First hour of the (natural) day – winter solstice 7.33 to 8.17 am – summer solstice 4.27 to 5.42 am.
 - Twelfth hour of the (natural) day - winter solstice 3.42 to 4.27 pm – summer solstice 6.17 to 7.33 pm.

“...the exact hour I cannot tell you, it’s easier to get philosophers to agree than clocks...” – **Seneca**
Apocolocyntosis 2.





Up at the crack of dawn

- “Sleeping in” often met with censure.
- Light breakfast, light wash.
- Bed-room usually sparsely adorned.
 - Couch (*cubile*)
 - Chest (*arca*)
 - Chamber pot (*lasanum*)

“One cannot live for schoolmasters in the morning... I am awakened by the laughter of the passing crowd; and all Rome is at my bed-side.” – **Martial**
Epigrams 12.57.

Morning business

- Day labouring
 - Transport, builders, unloaders of cargo, warehouse workers (*horraerii*).
- Crafting, baking, vending.
- Atrium of the domus opened up for *salutatio*.
- Public business
 - Trails usually from dawn until the fourth hour (c.9-10 am).



Tomb of the Haterii,
Vatican Museum.

“...if someone has contracted to build an insula, he should certainly not rush the work by gathering *fabri* from all over the place and bringing in large numbers of day labourers...” – ***Digest*** 45.1.137.3.



[Syrus]: You know that colonnade near the meat market, down that way?

[Demea] of course I do.

[S]: Go strait up the street past it. Then there's a turning point going downhill; go strait down and you'll see a temple on this side and next to it an ally –

[D] Which one?

[S] Where there is a big fig-tree.

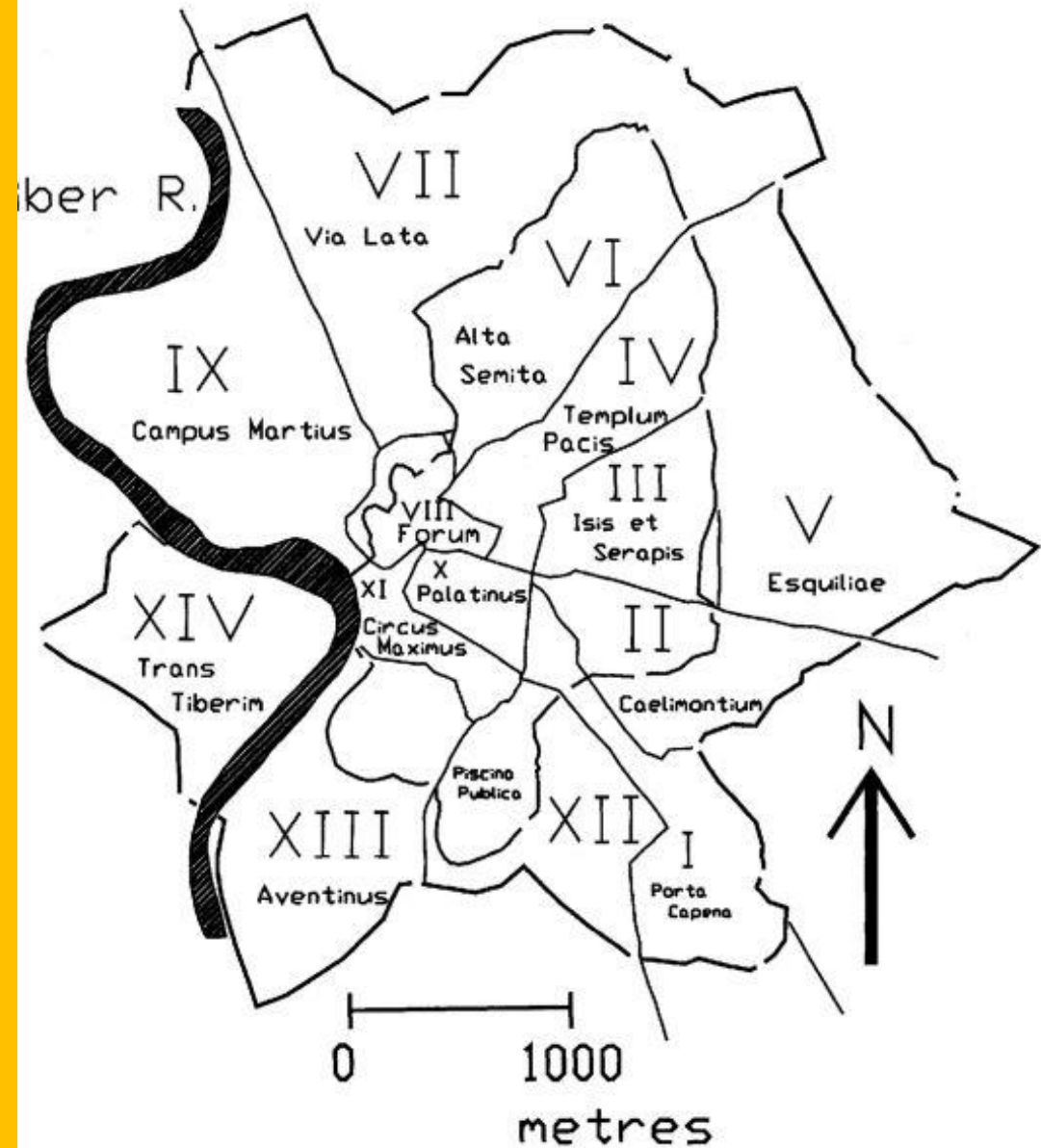
[D] I know.

[S] Go on through it.

[D] That ally hasn't got a way through.

[S] So it hasn't. What a fool I am...

- Terence *Adelphoe* 573 ff.



Needing the loo

- No obligation to connect private house to public sewer – *curatores vivarium publicarum* (**Digest 43.32.2**).
 - Throwing waste from windows.
 - “If it is alleged that a freeman has been killed by a blow from anything

Herculaneum (on the exterior wall of a house)

‘Apollinaris, the doctor of the emperor Titus, crapped well here.’



Early to mid-afternoon

- Finish work around noon-ish (eat light lunch).
- Bathing and “sporting activities”
 - 8th hour (*ca.* 1.30-2.30 pm).
- Major *thermae* and many dozens (later hundreds) of *balneae*.



Early evening

- Evening *cena* starting around the 9th to 10th hours (*ca.* 3-5 pm).
- Cost money to burn oil for light after dark.

