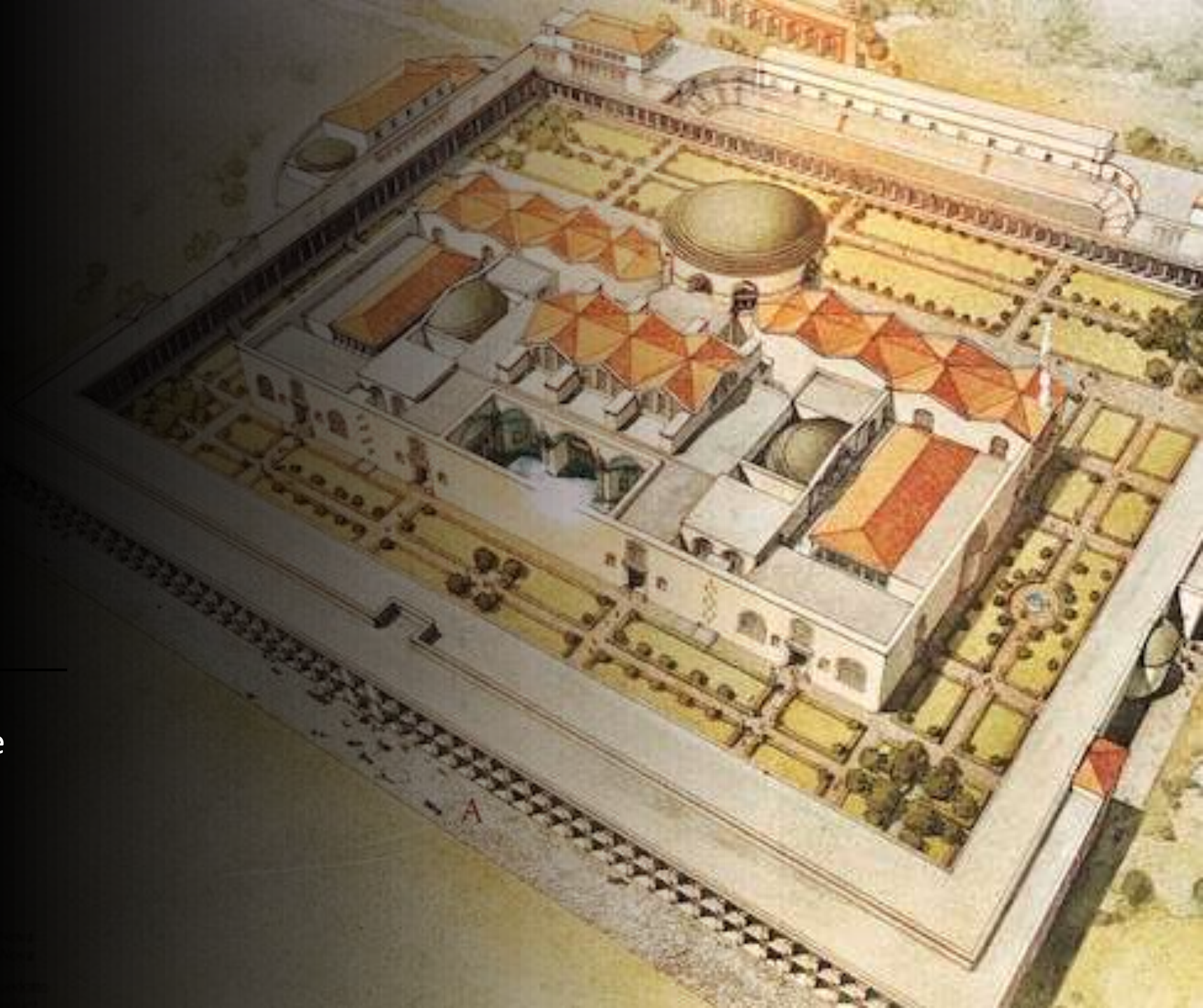




# Bathing in Antiquity

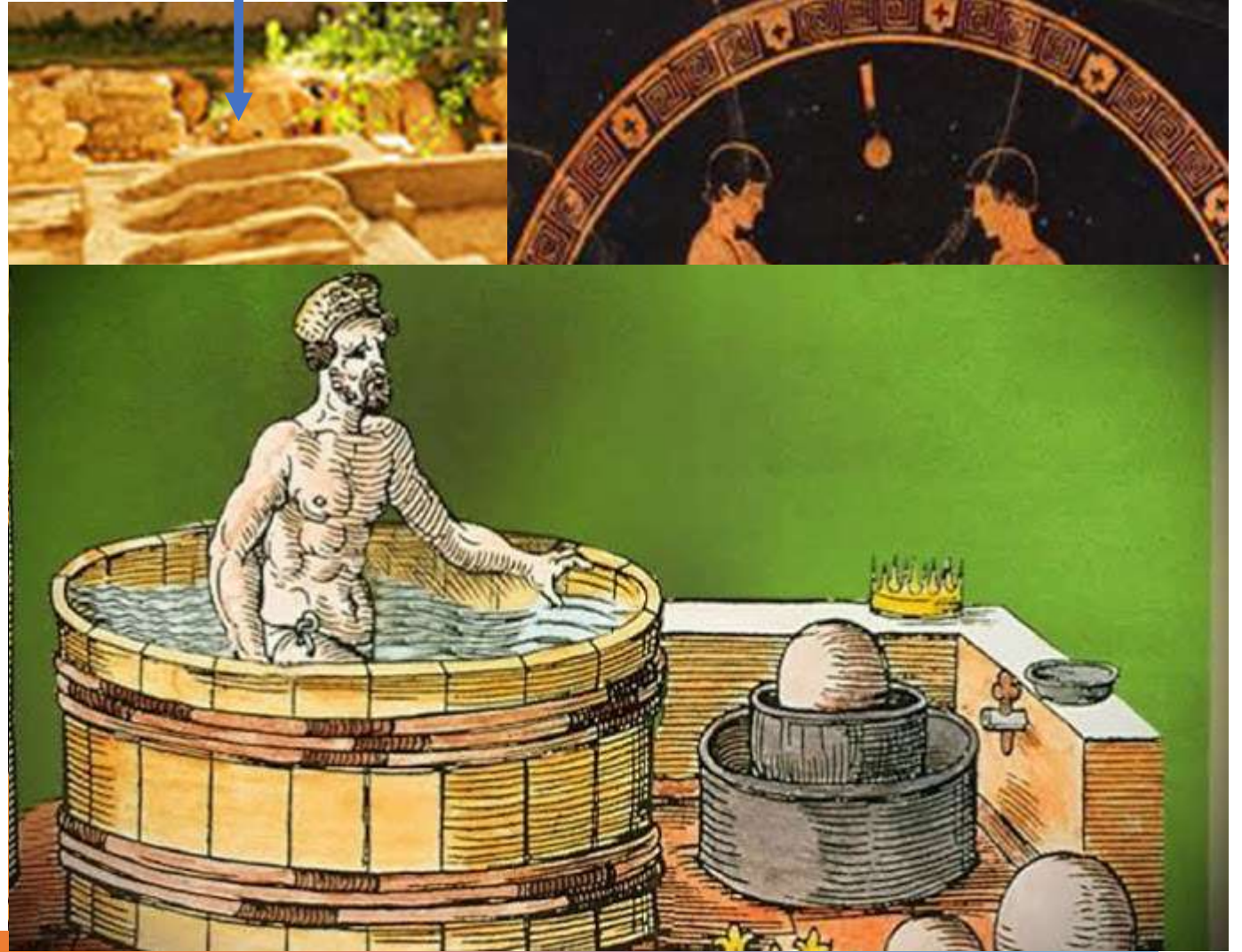
Everyday Life in Athens and Rome  
(HHP4020)



# Bathing in the Greek world

“Hiero was indignant at the fraud... [he] requested Archimedes would undertake to give it his attention... [Archimedes] **by chance went to a bath, and being in the vessel, perceived that, as his body became immersed, the water ran out of the vessel...** [he] leapt out of the vessel in joy, and, returning home naked... εὕρηκα (I have found it). – **Vitruvius 9.10.**

Baths at Gela (Sicily), ca. 4th BC



# Early bathing in Italy



- Gymnasia/Palaestra in “Hellenised” parts of Italy (e.g., Campania).
  - Republican period: Pompeii – Region VIII, Stabian Baths, Forum Baths
- Thermo-mineral springs of Baiae (Naples a volcanic region).
- Rustic *caldarium* seen in rural houses/villas in Campania and Latium:
  - circular chamber covered by a dome (located next to kitchen).
- Vitruvius credits Sergius Orata (early-1st century BC) with development of sweat-baths and the hypocaust.
  - But note, primitive form of under-floor heating found at Gela, *ca.* 310-280 BC.

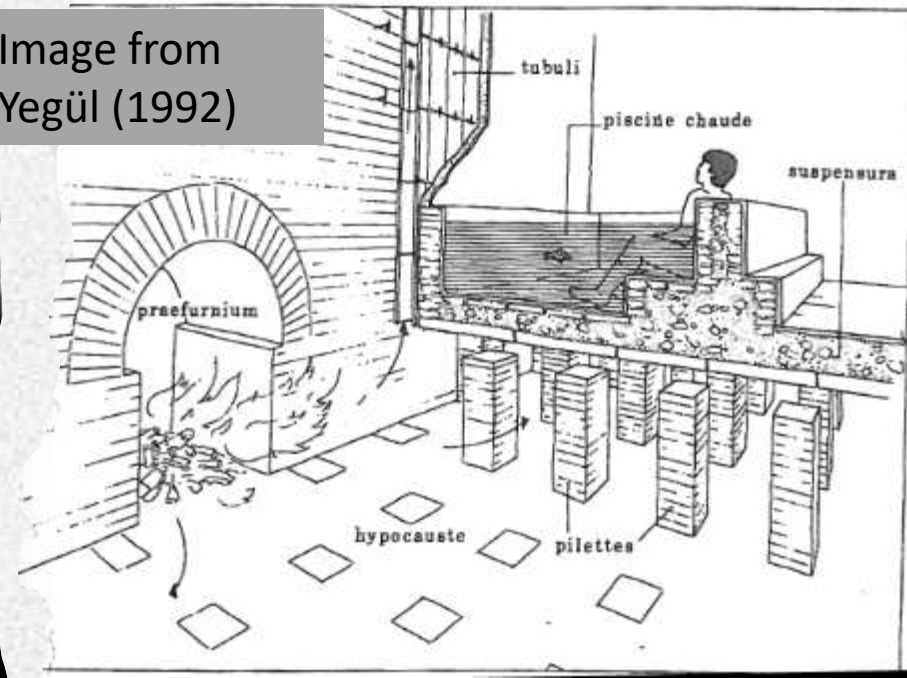
# Hypocaust

- Floor of room is supported by short pillars with spaces in-between.
- This space if filled with hot gasses from a furnace.
- Terracotta pipes for circulation of air.



Fiesole in Italy

Image from  
Yegül (1992)

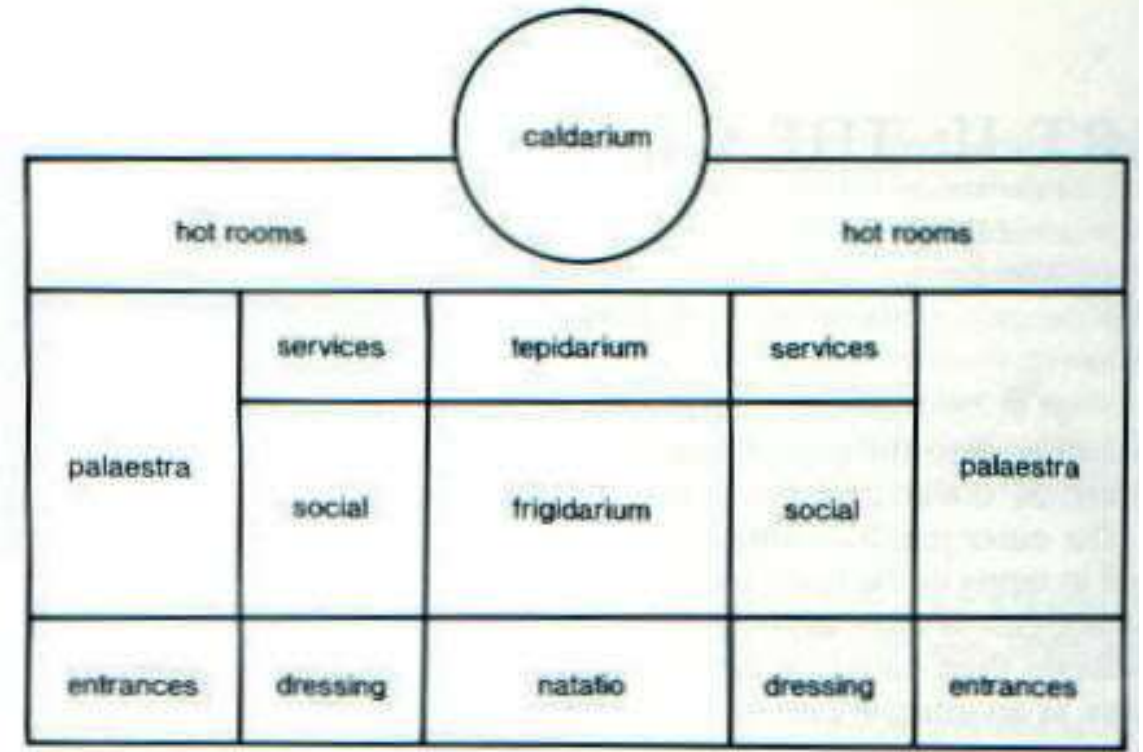


“[Today], we think ourselves poor and mean if our walls are not resplendent with large and costly mirrors; if our marbles from Alexandria are not set off by mosaics of Numidian stone; ... if our vaulted callings are not buried in glass [mosaic]; if our swimming pools are not lined with Thasian marble, once a rare and wonderful sight in any temple; ... and finally if our water is not poured from silver spigots...” – **Seneca *Letters* 86.**

- 170 small baths (*balneae*) in Agrippa's census of 33 BC and 856 by late antique period in Rome (*Notitia Urbis Regionum*).
- *thermae*: large public baths generally owned by the imperial or municipal authorities.
- Some small baths may be associated with particular groups?



- Common features of Imperial era baths in Rome (Nero to Constantine).
  - Internalised palaestrae.
  - Placement of the bath complex in a vast expanse of parks, gardens and promenades girdled by a ring of meeting halls lecture rooms, libraries, *exedrae*.
  - Special room in the Baths of Trajan for displaying public documents.





“...a multitude of noises surround me, since I live directly above a bath... the **body-builders exercise and strain...** When one of the clientele relaxes to a **cheap rub-down**, I hear the noise of hands as they strike the shoulders... if a **ball player comes along** and begins to count the score, I’m finished. Add to this the aggressive loud-mouth, the thief who’s been caught, the person who likes to hear himself sing in the baths, and bathers who love to make big splashes when they jump into the pool... **hair pluckers... vendors of sausages, pastries... hawking their wares.**” – Seneca *Letters* 56.1-2.

