

Food and Status: You Are What You Eat

(and how)

Arch0770

**Food and Drink, back in
the day**



Breakfast (*ientaculum*);
lunch (*prandium*, from which
post-prandial);
dinner (*cena*)

‘Rise: already the baker is selling breakfasts to the
children and roosters crow everywhere with the
first light of day’ (Martial 14.223)



Breakfast (*ientaculum*);
lunch (*prandium*,
from which
post-prandial);
dinner (*cena*)

popina = Roman snack bar



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Tripartite structure to evening meals, the *cenae*.

- ***gustum, gustatio or promulsis*** (appetizer): raw or cooked vegetables; salads, mushrooms, fish, oysters, shellfish, dormice; egg dishes
‘from soup to nuts’ for us, in Latin ‘ab ovo usque ad mala’ (from the egg to the apples’)
- ***mensa prima*** (‘first table’)
caput cenae (‘head of the dinne’r; chief dish): dishes varied in number from 2 to 7
meats, game, fish: accompanied by wine
- ***mensa secunda*** (second table): dessert: fruit and sweet confections,
though could have salted dishes, cheese, sausages (savory zing to end of meal)

Martial (late 1st century AD poet):

‘The eighth hour provides time for the sleek gymnasia, and the ninth bids us to sink down on cushions which have been piled high’ (exercise, then eat...)



Cena = dinner

Convivium (convivia) =
dinner party
private banquet

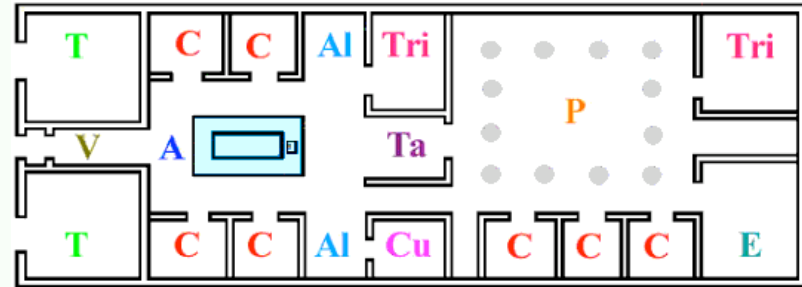
Triclinium

tri- klinai (3 couches)
'T' and 'U' form



Domus =
house

T = Tabernae
P = Peristyle
Tri = Triclinium



Garden triclinia



Getty Villa, Malibu



Decoration; tableware



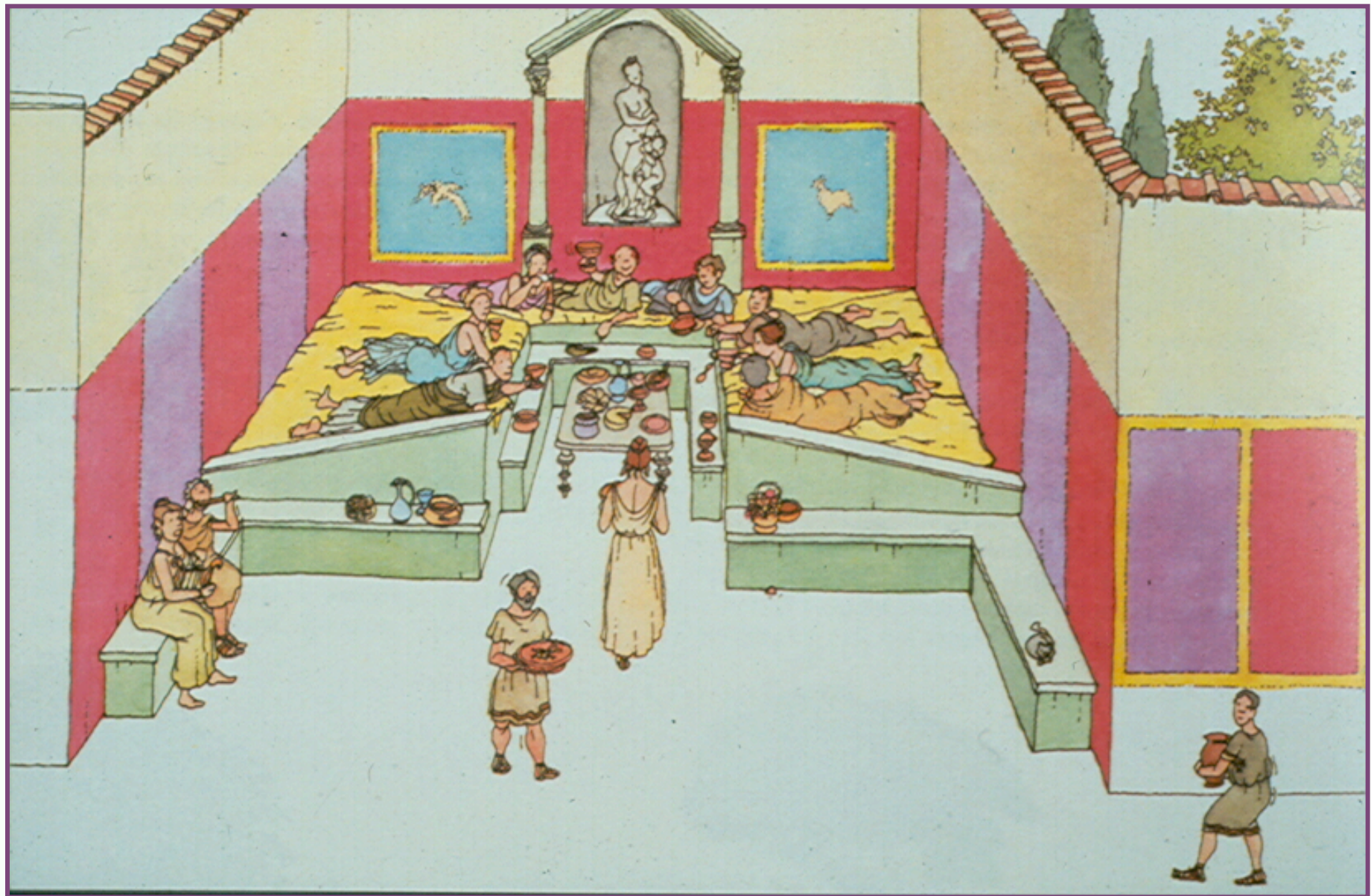
**The 'Unswept Floor'
mosaic**



Silver plate



Check out: http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/banq/hd_banq.htm



reclining; slave service

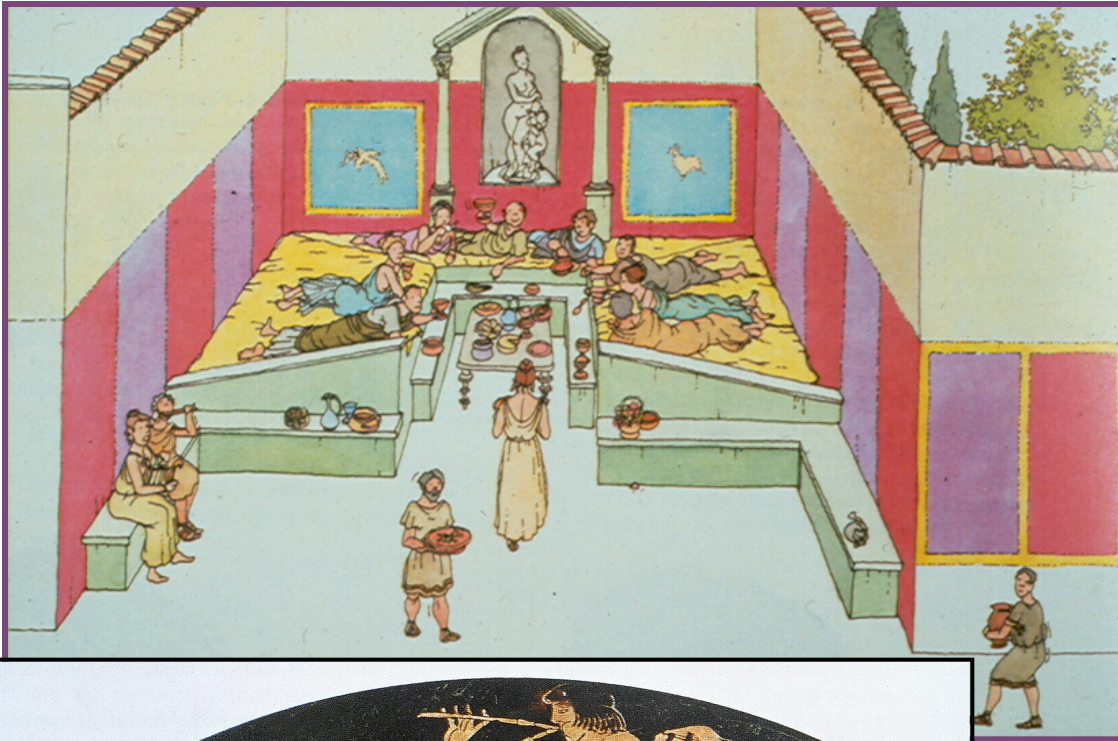


Symposium vs. Convivium

Really, Paetus, I advise you, as something which I regard as relevant to happiness, to spend time in honest, pleasant and friendly company. Nothing becomes life better, or is more in harmony with its happy living. I am not thinking of physical pleasure, but of community of life and habit and of mental recreation, of which familiar conversation is the most effective agent; and conversation is at its most agreeable at dinner-parties. In this respect our countrymen are wiser than the Greeks. They use words meaning literally 'co-drinkings' or 'co-dinings' (symposia, syndeipna), but we say 'co-livings' (convivia) because at dinner parties more than anywhere else life is lived in company' (Cicero, in a letter to a friend)

'taking meat without the company of a friend is like the life of a lion or a wolf' (Seneca)

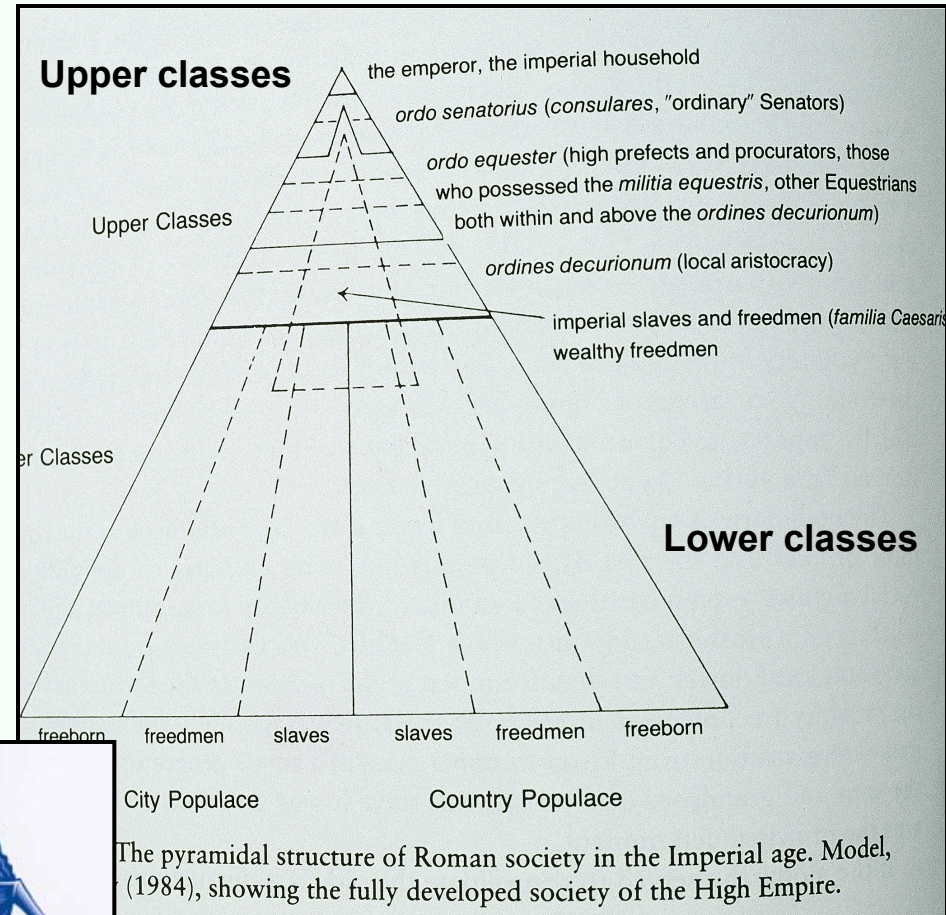
Convivium vs. Symposium



The pyramidal structure of Roman society

Patron/client
patronus/clients

Social mobility
up/down social ladder



like U.S.?

Host:

B4

Guest of Honor:

A1

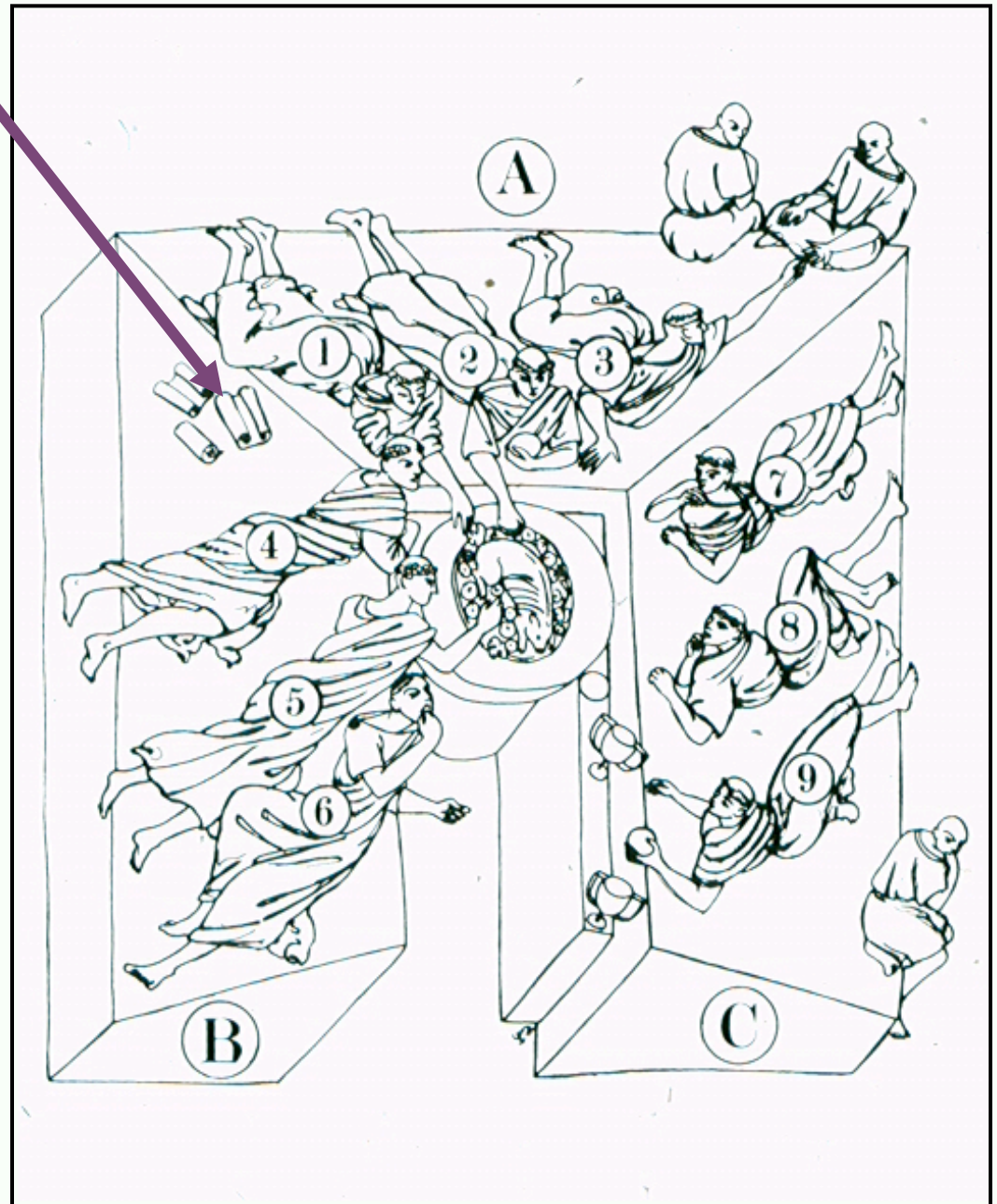
‘power corner’

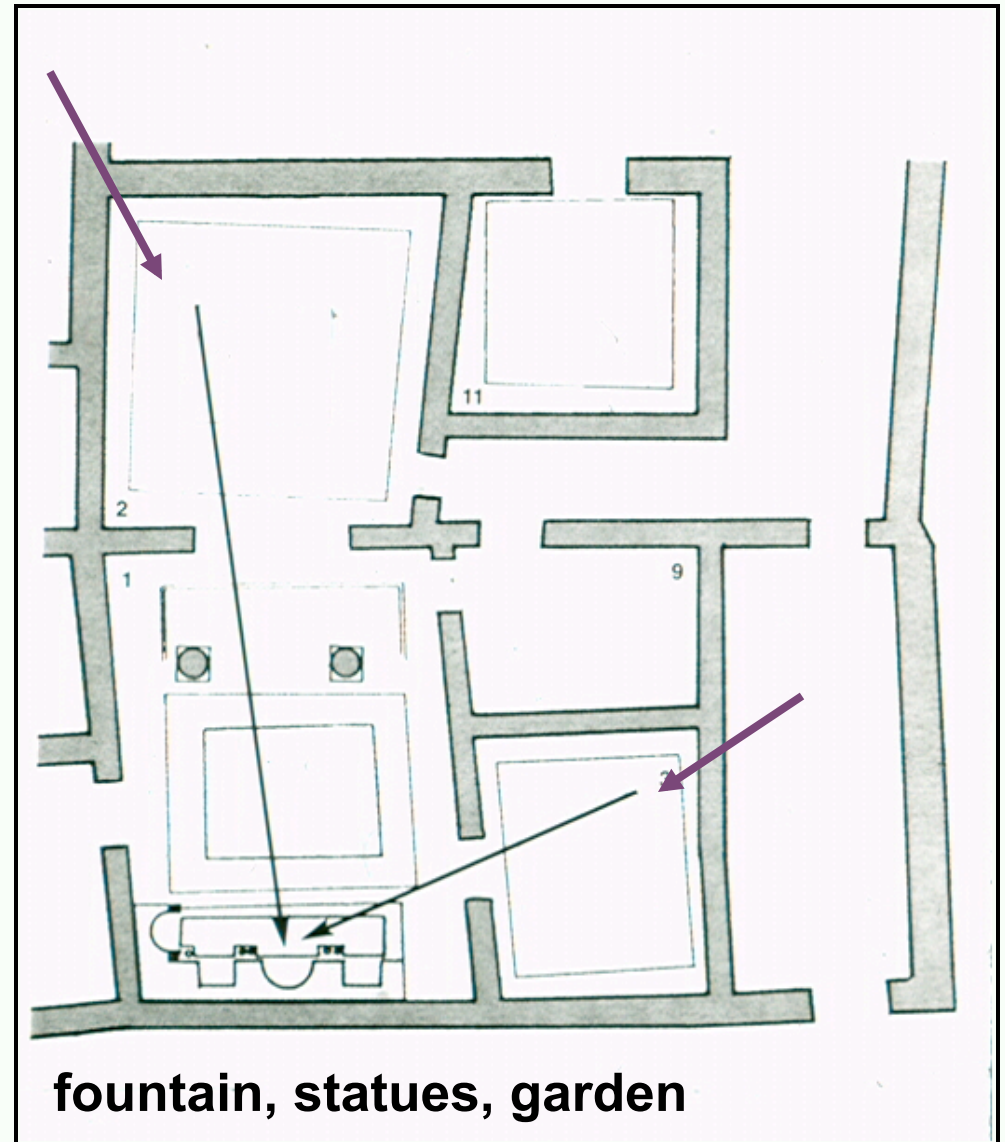
A = lectus medius

B = lectus imus

C = lectus summus

low, middle, high

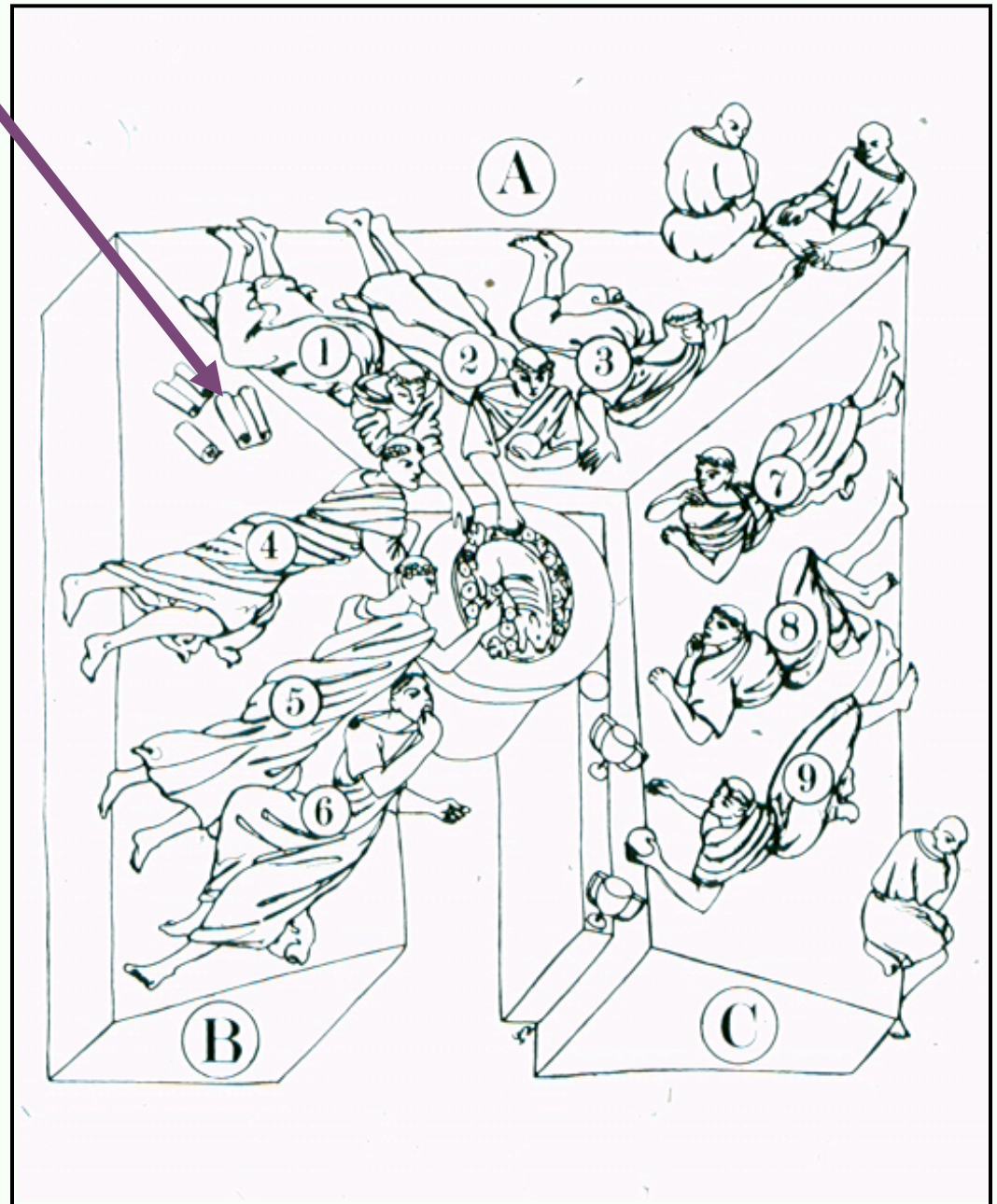




**Good view from
'power corners'
(marked by arrows)**

Seating plan

It is ridiculous for our cooks and waiters to be greatly concerned about what they shall bring in first, or what second or middle or last, if those who are invited to the feast are fed at places randomly determined: that arrangement fails to give to age, or rank, or other distinction, the position that suits it; it does no honor to the outstanding man.
(Plutarch, *Table Talk* 616B)



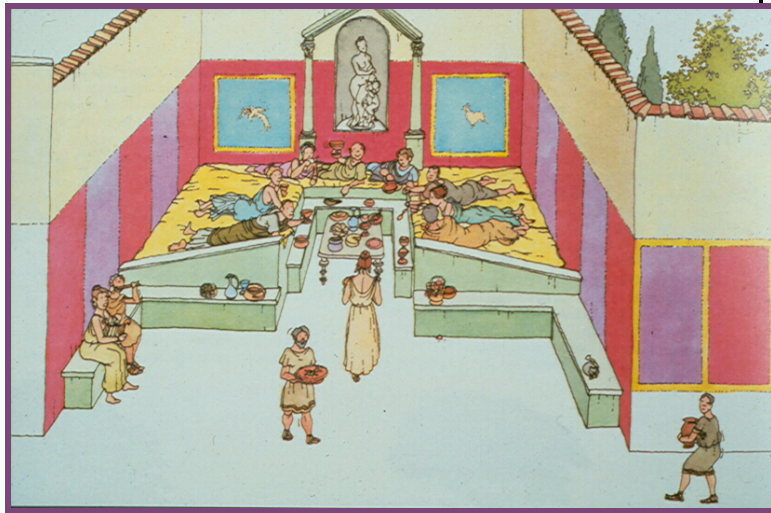


caput cene!



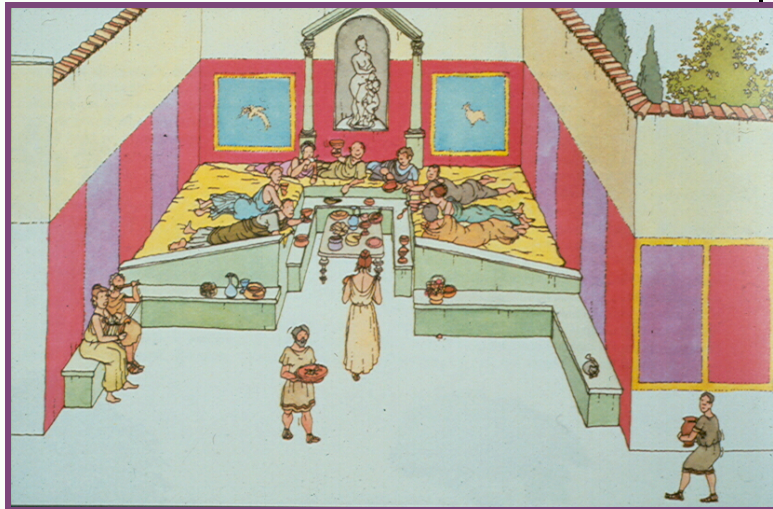
Invited:
guests
‘human furniture’

Not invited,
but brought:
‘umbrae’ (shadows)



**‘convivia, where anger lies
in ambush, to take
advantage of the
merriment’ (Martial)**

**‘friendships bought with
meals are not the real
thing’ (Martial)**





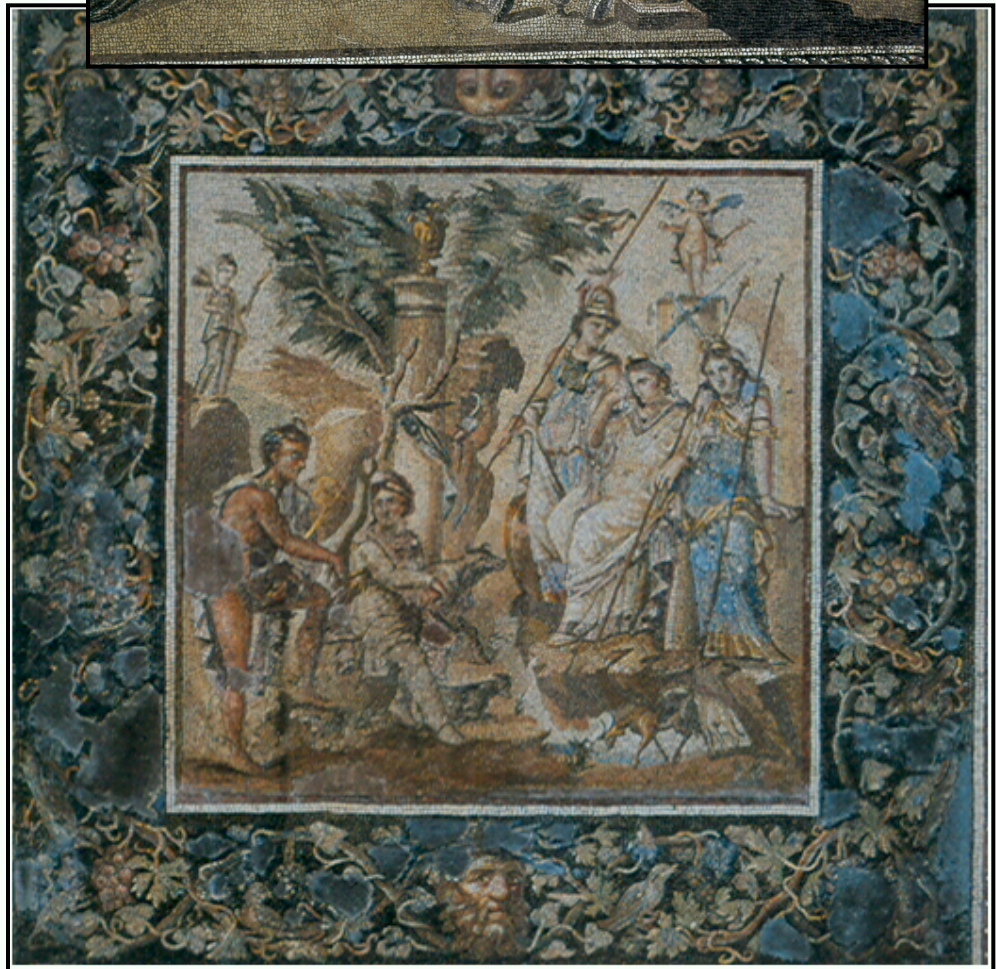
Scenes of the arena, the 'games'

Mosaic,
North Africa



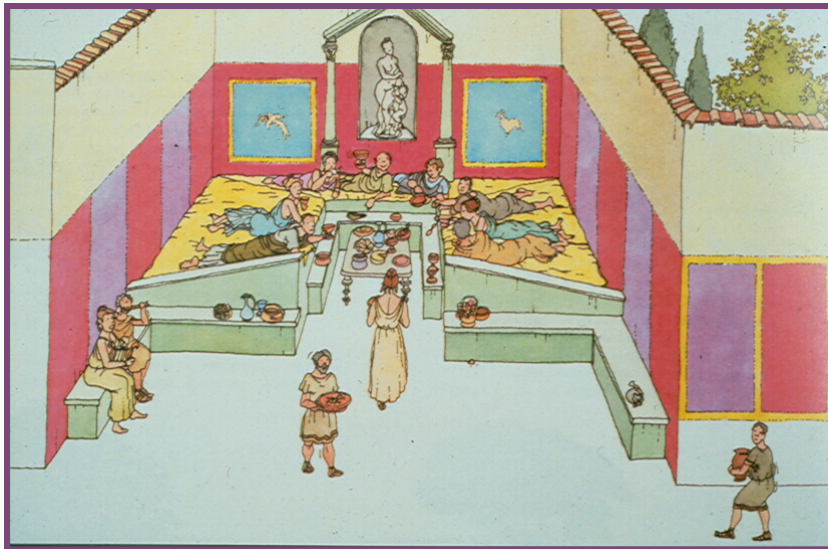


Herakles and Dionysos
Paris, Judging Goddesses





- **Cooking**
- **Food serving**
sputa (spit outs)
wine slaves
- **Supervisory**
vocator: inviter
- **Other services**
comfort, sex



slave services



...a crowd of standing slaves... their slightest murmur is repressed by the rod; they pay a huge penalty for the slightest breach of silence; all night long they have to stand around, hungry and dumb... (Seneca)

‘the server of wine has to dress like a woman and to restle with his advancing years; he can’t get away from his boyhood but is continually dragged back to it. His body hair is plucked away, and he is kept beardless; he is forced to keep awake all night, dividing his time between his master’s drunkenness and his lust (Seneca)



Any upside?

Analecta = leftovers

Observers of humiliation

Surveillance by vocator: conviviarum censura

Watch for 'bad behavior' : maiestas

Downside: fear, vulnerability, punishment, death



Saturnalia: role reversal; social transformation

