The Water

The water is essential for human life: from the remotest times it has been considered vital for both sustenance and for the birth and development of civilisations. It was not long before man discovered its importance and beneficial properties: its ability to protect from diseases, as well as its healing and preventive properties. Multiple magical virtues were attributed to water, and it was even considered a true gift of the gods. Numerous myths and legends, considering the miraculous healing of the soul and body, were attributed to its mysterious powers. Man has always searched for health and wellness in water, which, throughout history, has often been loaded with symbolic and cultural values.

The Origin of the name “Spa”

Standard belief has it that the origin of the spa dates back to the Roman era, when troopers of their legions fatigued by wars, would take to rejuvenation, relaxation and treatment of sore wounds through water. Hot, natural spring water was considered to be the best cure for wounds and tired muscles. The legionnaires, hence, started building baths around naturally found hot water springs or hot water wells. These baths were popularly called 'aquae', while the treatments undertaken at these aquae were known as 'Sanus per Aquam' - of that SPA is taken into account to be an acronym - which means health by or through water. Others believe that spa is an ellipsis of the Latin phrase 'Sanitas per Aquas', meaning the same. The Belgian city Spa, which rose to fame in the 14th century in this context, thus got its name, since a thermal spring having curative and thermal properties was discovered there.

Another accepted credence is that the word spa springs from the Walloon (the dialect of the people of Wallonia in south Belgium) word espa that means fountain. Alternatively, the origin of the word can conjointly be attributed to the Latin word 'spagere', which means to scatter, sprinkle or moisten.
History of the Spa
Since very early times many different cultures have enjoyed the benefits of soaking in hot water. Following is a summary of how the spa bath has developed into what we use today.

The most ancient populations like the Egyptians, Phoenicians, Hebrews and Israelites were used to immersing themselves in cold and hot water, and, of course, baths and ablutions were prescribed by religious laws in Oriental cultures. In the Pre-Hellenic civilization of the Aegean great use was made of baths. The buildings of Knossos, Festus and Tirinto, contain different types of bath chambers. In Italy, the Etruscans, facilitated by living in an area rich in springs, were one of the first to use water for healing purposes. A little for cleaning, a little for keeping themselves healthy and beautiful, they equipped the springs with thermal facilities, though never reaching the architectural perfection and splendor of the Romans. The baths, perfusions of healing water, were usually accompanied and enlivened by the sound of musical instruments.

The Greeks

Nevertheless, it was the Greeks, attracted by the strange phenomena of thermal springs that attempted to classify them and study their properties and effects on man. Herodotus was the first to establish the precise methods of balneotherapeutic practices, but it was Hippocrates, the most celebrated physician of antiquity, who dedicated a large section to the therapeutic properties of thermal water in his work “De aere, aquis at loci”. He analysed its chemical and organoleptic features, described the hygienic problems of using baths in various diseases and, in general, the effects of hot and cold baths on the human body. It is widely known that as
early as the 5th century BC the beneficial properties of the sulphurous springs were already known, especially for healing skin diseases and for relieving muscular and joint pain. In the Homeric poems and in Hesiod continuous references are made to the use of baths. After the difficulties encountered in battle or long journeys, heroes welcomed the coolness or wellness of a long restorative bath. Early Greek baths were constructed near naturally occurring hot springs or volcanoes, dating back to 500 B.C. Social gatherings often centered around these mineral and thermal baths. Some of Greece's famous philosophers wrote of the benefits of hydrotherapy, including Hippocrates and Plato. The ancient Greeks believed in the therapeutic benefits of hot bath and mineral waters. They even indulged in the practice in bathing in the ocean for medicinal uses. Although largely reserved for the wealthy class, the concept soon came out to the public in the form of public baths whereupon they rapidly became worship centers for resident deities.

In Homeric times, bathing was primarily used for cleansing and hygienic purposes. By the time of Hippocrates (460 - 370 BC), bathing was considered more than a simple hygienic measure; it was healthy and beneficial for most diseases. Hippocrates proposed the hypothesis that the cause of all diseases lay in an imbalance of the bodily fluids. To regain the balance a change of habits and environment was advised, which included bathing, perspiration, walking, and massages. The baths were often combined with gymnastics and education, the precursors of the gymnasium.

The Greek cities had private and public baths, accessible on payment and attended by dawdlers and pleasure-seekers that spent entire days there. The facilities were very simple: they consisted of an area allocated to a hot bath with a slave who poured water and another chamber for unction and massage.

**Baths and Bathing**

Hot bathing was considered an extremely healthy and refreshing experience antiquity. Athenaeus wrote at the end of the 2nd century, reports with admiration that Homer's Heroes were all familiar with bathing, as well as with the use of olive oil for the treatment of their body. The history of bathing in ancient Greece begins from the place of the so called *Gymnasium*. By incorporating full washing bathing facilities into its regular program, Gymnasium created the social and architectural context for one of the earliest forms of communal bathing in ancient society and exerted a formative influence in the subsequent development of baths.
Bathing installations in the Gymnasium

In ancient Gymnasium the *loutron*, was the only space related to washing and bathing. It was an open space, where bathing took place with the use of cold water, through elevated basins or simple shower arrangements. From the second half of the 6th century and on the representations of washing and bathing of men and women become enough frequent on vase paintings. Some of these can indeed be recognized as depictions of scenes of bathing in the palaestra.

The use of bathing installations in the palaestra was for the athletes and those that visited the Gymnasium. By the 5th century however public baths were developed in urban center and in sanctuaries, the so called Valaneia.

Even if dating is difficult to be precise, roofed bathing installations in ancient Greece were developed early in the Gymnasium. The recognition of baths inside the palaestra is relatively easy during the Hellenistic period. Through the excavations a system for supplying water has come to light, often connected with raised basins or bathtubs manufactured from limestone or marble. According to Vitruvius baths were placed in a protected position in one of the corners of the building. Despite the fact that hot water could remove the oil, the dust or the mud from the bodies of the athletes more easily, no mechanisms of hot water supply have come to light through the excavations in ancient Greek Gymnasia until the Classical Period. On the contrary spaces that were heated with simple means existed in many cases, such as places with portable braziers, where massage with oils probably took place. During the Hellenistic period the renovation of Gymnasia to include facilities for hot bathing spread across the eastern Mediterranean.
The Greek baths.

Construction and Architecture of most Ancient Greek baths

Most ancient baths were simple manufactures constructed of mud brick with a limited use of baked brick, limestone and stucco. The plan of Greek bath shows a simplicity and functionalism, whether for practical cleaning or for ritualistic purposes, it is characterized by rectangular or irregularly shaped units clustered around one or more circular chambers. From the beginning until the latest years, Greek public baths were shaped with no strict succession of their spaces, as well as with no strict corresponding use of these spaces. The complex ground plan of baths, based on the beginnings of the alternation of temperature, constitutes an invention and a development which belongs to the Roman Period. In Greek baths only the dome, the tholos, corresponded to certain bathing operations. This round booth, constituted the characteristic architectural element of ancient Greek baths, enclosing the greatest possible space within the smallest perimeter, giving a sense of unity and organization to the plan. The circular rooms were reserved primarily for hot bathing. In the older establishments they were heated by the steams of the hot water or by braziers or by simpler forms of floor heating in the later ones. Usually individual basins for absolute immersion or half bathtubs, the so called pyeloï, were placed side by side along the wall of a rectangular room or around the periphery of a circular one. The hip baths were made like individual niches, or booths, carved into the rock, or were built up from brick or mortar. The covered sides protected the bather against being splashed with water from his neighbors. The heating systems of Greek baths were extremely simple until the 1st century B.C. A mechanical method of heating the bathing room did not exist in the majority of the early examples. The steam from the hot bathwater or the heat from a charcoal brazier would be sufficient enough in order to heat the low, small and without windows spaces for bathing purposes. Another way of heating was with the use of a dual purpose stove that boiled the water and heated the adjacent chamber either by direct convection or by a simple method of circulating the hot gases behind the wall. The baths of the mid-4th century in Olympia used a furnace boiler which was located in the outdoor service area, between the two rectangular bathing halls. The furnace was stocked from the outside, while the boiler embedded in the thickness of the wall, supplied hot water directly to the new bathing unit which contained the hip baths.

History and habits of the baths in ancient Greece

Bathing was a practice familiar to the Greeks of both sexes from the earliest times, both in fresh water and salt. Thus, Nausicaa, daughter of Alcinous, king of Phaeacia, goes out with her attendants to wash her clothes; and after the task is done she bathes herself in the river (Od.vi. 58 Od., 65). Odysseus, who is conducted to the same spot, strips and takes a bath, while Nausicaa and her servants stand aside. Warm springs were also resorted to for the purpose of bathing. The Ἡρϊκλεια λουτρϊ shown by Hephaestus or Athena to Heracles are celebrated by the poets. Pindar speaks of the hot baths of the nymphs, and Homer (Il.xxii. 149) celebrates one of the streams of the Scamander for its warm temperature. Bathing in rivers or
ORIGIN OF SPA

the sea (ψυχρολουτεῖν) was always common for the young. Not to know how to read and to swim were proverbial marks of the ignoramus. A plunge in the Eurotas always sufficed for the Lacedaemonians (Schol. on Thuc. ii. 36). There appears to have been a swimming-bath (κολυμβήθρα) at Athens in the time of Plato (Rep. 453D).

The artificial warm bath was taken in a vessel called sexes from the earliest times, both in fresh water and salt. Thus, Nausicaa, daughter of Alcinous, king of Phaeacia, goes out with her attendants to wash her clothes; and after presents (Od. iv. 128) it was of silver. It would appear from the description of the bath administered to Odysseus in the palace of Circe, that this vessel did not contain water itself, but was only used for the bather to sit in while the warm water was poured over him, which was heated in a large caldron or tripod, under which the fire was placed, and when sufficiently warmed was taken out in other vessels and poured over the head and shoulders of the person who sat in the ἀσίμινθος. Where cleanliness merely was the object sought, cold bathing was adopted, which was considered as most bracing to the nerves; but after violent bodily exertion or fatigue warm water was made use of, in order to refresh the body and relax the over-tension of the muscles. Hesiod (Op. 754) protests against men elaborately cleaning (φαιδρύνεθαι) their bodies with effeminate baths Op., i.e. those of high temperature, which shows that this luxury had begun in his day; and in Homer’s time constant indulgence in the warm bath was considered as a mark of luxury and effeminacy (Od. viii. 249). The use of the warm bath was preceded by bathing in cold water (Il. x. 576). The later custom of plunging into cold water after the warm bath mentioned by Aristides (vol. i. Orat. 2, Sacr. Serm. p. 515), who wrote in the second century of our era, was no doubt borrowed from the Romans.

After bathing both sexes anointed themselves with oil, in order that the skin might not be left harsh and rough, especially after warm water. The use of precious unguents (μύρα) was unknown at that early period. In the heroic ages, as well as in later times, refreshments were usually taken after the bath (Od. vi. 97).

At Athens the frequent use of the public baths was regarded by strict moralists in the time of Socrates and Demosthenes as a mark of luxury and effeminacy; thus it is a sign of demoralization on the part of a ship’s crew. Accordingly Phocion was said to have never bathed in a public bath, and Socrates to have made use of it very seldom. It was, however, only the warm baths to which objection was made, and which in ancient times were not allowed to be built within the city (Athen. i. 18 b); for the Greeks did not at all approve of people being dirty; only cleanliness, they thought, should be attained by the use of cold water.

The baths (βαλανεῖα) were either public (δημόσια, δημοσιεύοντα) or private (ἴδια, ἱδιωτικά). The former were the property of the state, but the latter were built by private individuals. Such private baths are mentioned by Plutarch (Demetr. 24). Baths of this kind were probably mostly intended for the exclusive use of the persons to whom they belonged (Ps. Xen. Rep. Ath. ii. 10.) There appears to have been a small, almost nominal, charge for the use of the public baths. Thus, in the inscription of Andania (i. 107), the price is fixed at two chalki=1/4 obol.
We know very little of the baths of the Athenians during the republican period; for the account of Lucian in his Hippias relates to baths constructed after the Roman model. On ancient vases on which persons are represented bathing we seldom find anything corresponding to a modern bath in which persons can stand or sit; but there is always a round or oval basin (λουτήρ or λουτήριον), resting on a stand (ὑπόστατον), by the side of which those who are bathing are represented standing undressed and washing themselves.

But besides the basins (λουτήρες and λουτήρια) there were also vessels for bathing, large enough for persons to sit in, which, as stated above, are called: ἀσάμινθοι by Homer and πύελοι or μϊκτραι by the later Greeks. The λουτήρ thus, as we shall see, corresponded to the Roman labrum; the πύελος to the solium or alveus.

**Ancient Bath Vessels in Thesprotia**

In the baths there was also a kind of sudorific or vapour bath called πυρία or πυριατήριον, which is mentioned as early as the time of Herodotus (iv. 75). Among the chambers of the Greek bathing establishment was the ἀλειπτήριον, Lat. unctorium. Lucian (Hipp.p. 73) speaks of the ἀποδυτήριον with its ἵματιοφυλακοῦντες (capsarii); but as they seem to be unknown to Aristotle, they were probably introduced from Rome. Hence Aristotle tells us that those who stole clothes from the baths were punishable with death. As the baths most frequently adjoined the gymnasia and palaestra, one of the rooms of these latter buildings served the purpose of undressing-room (Ps. Xen. Rep. Ath.ii. 10). About these rooms the τριβαλλοί used to loaf, looking out for an invitation. We hear of wrestling and playing the cottabus, besides a great deal of conversation going on in the baths. To sing there was considered the part of a boor (Theophr. Char.4).

Either the bath or simple anointing of the body generally formed part of the business of dressing for dinner. It was generally taken shortly before the δεῖπνον, or principal meal of the day. Epictetus (Diss. i. 1, 29) mentions noon as the hour, while voluptuaries bathed repeatedly. It was the practice to take first a warm or vapour, and afterwards a cold bath, though in the time of Homer the cold bath appears to have been taken first and the warm afterwards. The cold water was usually poured on the back or shoulders of the bathers by the βαλανεύσ or his assistants, who are called παραχύται. The vessel from which the water was poured was called ὅδρια; there is mention also of the ὁρύταινα, which must have been much smaller. Bathing establishments for women existed among the Greeks, whether belonging to the state or maintained by private enterprise. We learn from Varro (L. L. ix. 68) that the earliest Greek balneum in Rome contained a department for women.
Roulez (Choix de Vases peints du Musée de Leyde, pl. xix. 1) gives us a vase painting of a bath in a palaestra, where two shower baths descend on men from spouts shaped like panthers’ heads; and Panofka (Bilder antiken Lebens, pl. xviii. 9) shows us a bath for women similarly arranged, while an unpublished vase painting in the Louvre represents a κολυμβήθρα, or swimming-bath for women.
The persons who bathed probably brought with them strigils, oil, and towels, or had them carried by a slave. The strigil, which was called by the Greeks στλεγγίς or ξύστρα, was usually made of iron, but sometimes also of other materials. Pollux says (x. 181), “The cloth which is worn by women round their loins when taking the bath, or by the men who bathe them, is called ὄα λουτρίς.” The Greeks also used different materials for cleansing or washing themselves in the bath, to which the general name of ῥύμα was given, and which were supplied by the βαλανεύσ. This ῥύμα usually consisted of lye made of lime or wood-ashes (κονία), of nitrum, and of fuller's earth (γῆ κιμωλία, Ran. 710 and Schol.; Plato Rep.iv. 430A).

Among the Greeks a person was always bathed at birth, marriage, and after death; whence it is said of the Dardanians, an Illyrian people, that they bathe only thrice in their lives—at birth, marriage, and after death. The water in which the bride was bathed at Athens was taken from the fountain of Callirrhoë, which was called from the time of Pisistratus Ενεάκρουνος (eneacrounos). The natural warm springs (θερμὰ or Ἡρϊκλεια λουτρϊ) were not only esteemed as sacred to Heracles, but also considered highly medicinal. The hot springs of Aedepsus in Euboea were famed for their healing properties, as also was a cold spring, which flowed for a time (Athen. iii. 73). In later times it became a great resort for pleasure as well as health, especially in the spring.

**Edipsos thermal springs, north Euboea, Greece**

The thermal springs of North Euboea are located near the city of Edipsos. Edipsos has been well known for the healing attributes of its thermal waters since ancient times, as Strabo, Pausanias, Aristotle and others recognised and described this. The famous Edipsos baths have been developed along the shoreline in a slightly inclined surface, while a short distance to the west lays Telethrio Mountain and Edipsos plain. According to the local population, these springs are said to be effective in curing diseases such as rheumatoid and inflammatory arthritis, degenerative arthritis, spondylo-arthritis, myalgia, neuralgia, lumbago, neuritis, backaches, tendonitis, vessel diseases, diseases of the endocrine cycle and post-traumatic inflammation.

**Therma thermal springs, in the island of Ikaria Greece**

Today there are vestiges that still remain of Greek hydrotherapy, The Ancient Spa of Therma in Ikaria: The island of Ikaria has an abundance of the highly therapeutic radio-energized springs. They are regarded as the best in the world. Historically Therma in Ikaria has been a very popular place particularly for hydrotherapy ever since the 4th century BC.
There are basically 3 main therapeutic springs in Therma. The hot springs have curative properties and can heal a variety of illness like rheumatism, arthrology, arthritis, neuralgia as well as infertility.

Therma derives its name from the prehistoric town of Thermae. In the past, the residents of Thermae were popularly referred to as "Asclipians" after the name of "Asclipios" who happened to be the god of medicine. There is the "Xalasmena Therma" which is located in close proximity to the Therma town where even today one can see the vestiges of the ancient spa.

In the past, it used to be a seaside town innovatively built on a small cape and was one of the most popular spas. The remains of wrecked marble bathtubs along with a pre-historic aqueduct that have been unearthed from this area bear ample testimony of the place’s popularity in the ancient times.
The Romans

In 25 B.C. the Romans expanded on the use of mineral and thermal baths as social experiences. They constructed the first large-scale spa to be used by hundreds of bathers. Elaborate aqueduct systems carried mineral waters to private stone tubs, steam rooms and public bathing areas. The largest of all Roman baths was the Diocletian. It was completed in A.D. 305 and covered an area of 130,000 sq. yards! Many of these spa resorts were destroyed during the fall of the Roman Empire.

Most have probably heard of the proverbial "Roman Bath Tub", basically, a large tub in the newer and more expensive homes. Though, this term is not without its history.

Taking the lead from the Greeks, Romans embraced bathing as a regular regiment for health. However, Romans considered the baths more important than the gymnastics alone. Besides cleansing, exercises, socializing, relaxation, and worship, medical treatment was also applied extensively. Now as opposed to the Greeks who used Spas as a practice following intense Gymnastics, the Roman Spas also had a medicinal emphasis and were used largely as recuperation centers for the wounded military soldiers. However, recuperative also included therapeutic centers for the healthy soldiers as well. Water applications to the ailing body were
a general practice among the physicians in the ancient world. Spa treatment consisted of application of water to afflicted parts of the body, immersion of the whole body in the water (especially for rheumatic and urogenital diseases), and drinking excessive quantities of water.

In Rome, there were primarily three types of baths. There were baths at home (balnea), private baths (balnea privata), and public baths (balnea publica) that were run by the state. With the advent of the aqueducts, the concept of the "public bath" exploded to glorious edifices (thermae) with a capacity for thousands of people. The consumption of water leaped during this period, from roughly 12 liters to 1400 liters of water per person per day, mainly for bathing. The practice was so engrained that the Roman legions, during their long occupations in foreign lands, built their own baths at mineral and thermal springs in the newly conquered lands. Examples are found all over Europe.

Although as everyone knows, the therapeutic and hygienic practices of the Roman public bath slowly lost ground to the social and gatherings of ill repute as the Roman morality went on the decline in the later years. The fall of the Roman Empire resulted in a huge decrease in the recognition of the thermal springs concept all over the globe. All existing spas fell prey to the cyclic order of being discovered, forgotten, and then being rediscovered. But though spas and hot water treatments have been out and in of vogue since man initial stumbled over the concept, water as a healing liquid never lost its sheen.

Decline of the Roman Empire, middle ages and the Byzantines.

Following the demise of the Roman Empire and the turbulent barbaric invasions, the ancient and sumptuous thermal facilities began to be deserted, also due to the spread of a Christian culture that was contrary to forms of nudity and promiscuity. Nevertheless, the bath was still accepted as a simple cleaning process. But the profound change in living conditions, alongside the general impoverishment of the populations and with the ruin of the aqueducts, led to the desertion and progressive ruin of the thermal baths. On the other hand, the ancient social and hedonistic value of the bath was banished during the Middle Ages, from the medical point of view the mechanisms of the power of the various types of water were investigated, by studying the relevant specific effects: sulphurous water, for example, was recommended for skin diseases, while the salsobromoiodic water was recommended for female sterility. In the High Middle Ages, although the habit of bathing was not entirely lost, any places suitable for this purpose were built only for the benefit of the upper classes. But with the revival of city life, starting from the 11th century, bathing facilities began to be built again in a number of German, Spanish and French cities. In Italy, many of these facilities were restored or renewed close to thermal springs already exploited in the past (Bagni di Lucca, Viterbo, Acqui, etc.) ; there are many testimonies of real instances which allow sick people to heal themselves at the Baths of Bormio and Baja ; news of refurbishment and reconstruction at Abano. In Acqui, Piedmont, from the 15th century there is news of a “mud factory” which, at the time, was rebuilt by the Town Hall.
A sure contribution to the spread of the use of baths again in the Western World was the resumption of internal and regular relations with the East because, in these areas, the thermal tradition never died out, but rather was kept alive thanks to the lavish generosity of a number of Byzantine emperors such as Justinian. Refined examples of this kind remain in Spain but above all in Sicily as in Sciacca and Acireale.

The 19th and 20th Centuries in Europe

Bath, England, has been a popular spa destination since the Romans founded Britain’s only hot water springs. The main spring bubbles out almost one million liters of 49 degree water each day! Scientific studies have revealed over 40 different minerals in the water, surprisingly including a slightly radioactive background reading! The Belgian town of Spa was named after its hot wells and baths, renowned throughout Europe in the 14th century, and still in existance today. Spa has been frequented as a watering-place since as early as the 14th century. The oldest known mineral bath still in operation today is in Merano, Italy where there is evidence of organised use of the spring dating back 5000 years. In Ireland, soaking in a tub with seaweed has been popular since Edwardian times for its health benefits. It is now experiencing resurgence in popularity.

Around 1800 interest in the bathing began to be in vogue again, and attempts to further analyse the mineral benefits. However, the motivation was largely medicinal again. Doctors were convinced that for each disease there was an appropriate medicinal spring, which could be discovered through chemical analysis of the waters. Two main protagonists of the methodical application of hydrotherapy are Vincent Priessnitz, a peasant farmer in Gräfenberg, a German speaking town that is now part of the Czech Republic, who, in around 1829, revived it, popularizing it once more and Fr. Sebastian Kneipp, a Bavarian priest, further developed the principles of balneotherapy (medici

Throughout Europe and the Americas the public Spas were on the rise. They were integral parts of gentilian life. Every spa resort had its own theatre, casino, and promenades besides the bathing buildings. In Germany, Austria, and Belgium much importance was attached to ostentation. Grand hotels arose with casinos and dancing establishments surrounding the spa resorts. The spa resorts became not only a meeting center for the elite but also a place of creativity for painters, writers, and composers. The baths were again crowded. Baden Baden (Germany) became the most glamorous resort in continental Europe. It was the place to see and to be seen. However, in Britain use of the spa declined. The English spa resorts were run
by amateurs, and the medical hydrology was poorly organised. The resorts aimed more at pleasure, rather than medical treatment, and were exploited by estate developers with commercial interests. Competition from seaside and foreign resorts, and an economic depression in the 1930s led to a further decline. Eventually, spa therapy was excluded from the National Health Service, which meant that many spa resorts in Britain closed down. With innovations in the medical science, allopathy took over nearly every alternative branch of medication and wellbeing in the early 20th century. Dispensaries and public hospitals started to be viewed as an alternate to natural healing processes. This threw the prevailing spas out of drugs as they got reworked into vacationing hubs, losing their original purpose and catering solely to the rich. Alternative spas responded by concentrating on the beauty business giving an amalgam of fitness and beauty in glorified saloons called day spas.

The second half of the Twentieth century brought a further development in hydrotherapy. After two World Wars, changes to the social fabric and to the political aspects of the various nations, the popularity of the thermal baths again decreased. The destruction of the baths reduced to ruins, the difficulty of revival, the progress of chemistry and pharmacology have radically changed the way of taking "baths". Elitist hydrotherapy has given way to a social form of hydrotherapy, open to a decidedly larger public, with the addition of thermal cures in the therapeutic program of the national health system. No longer fashion, no longer elegance and ostentation of one’s “status”, but the right to care for all. Until the end of the last century the thermal facilities experienced a period of evolution and transformation, which have led them to a healthy identity crisis. The early years of the IIle millennium have brought Italian hydrotherapy back into the limelight; water has regained the importance due to it in the therapeutic experience of the physician, through studies of hydrology, pharmacology and biochemistry. Scientific rigour together with thermal intervention has assumed a preventive, therapeutic and rehabilitative significance in numerous human pathologies. The concept of cure is joined to the concept of wellness, with an extraordinary flourish of parallel and complementary activities. Consequently, thermal facilities have reconverted and welcome numerous visitors each year. However, the firm point is, and remains, the effectiveness of the treatment using mineral water. Crenotherapy is strictly part of medicine; continuous progress in the medical field, in pharmacology and surgery, does not blur the value of prevention and thermal care.
Greek spa today

Greece is one of the few countries in the world, along with Morocco and India, to be gifted with natural resources such as plants and herbs that cure. Kozani, in North of Greece, is known for saffron cultivation, the only such place in all of Europe. Greece is the country of olive oil, of wheat and wine, the Mediterranean trilogy, each of them with a tremendous lot of applications in cosmetics. Greece is the country where chamomile, sage, lavender, and mint grow in abundance. Among all the wonders of Greek nature are the springs, thermal waters and the sea itself, the Mediterranean. Euripides once wrote a piece about the curing virtues of thermal and sea waters. Spring waters in Greece have been around since highest antiquity and many were considered sacred and gave way to construction of temples, like in Delphi, the Castalia spring and in Vravrona. Since the spa is the temple of the 21st century, it is only natural that thalassotherapy complexes and thermal spas are built today in exceptionally gifted places. The Thermae Sylla of Aedipsos and Loutraki Municipal Thermal Spa, are two striking examples of the best use that Greece can make of its natural resources.
Bathtub in Thieve

Bathtub in ancient Crete
Representation of ancient baths from pottery
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Ancient baths in Thessaloniki in ancient Agora

Woman cleaning himself in public baths
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