

Attitudes to outsiders
in ancient greece:
who is allowed into
the household and
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The Ancient Greek household has often been described as a place that contained many boundaries, whether physical or non-physical (Antonaccio 2000: 522). What could have appeared to be a normal room may well have been forbidden to certain types of people. In our attempts to explain the notion of public and private space in ancient Greek households, we have to disregard our modern notions of our own houses and attempt to think as a contemporary. Who, in the ancient Greek world, was allowed into the household or oikos and why? How did this idea of household privacy develop and when did it start?

Was it an idea shared around all of ancient Greece, or did it differ from location to location? Indeed, how are we to define 'outsiders'? Could they have been the average neighbour, or was this concept extended to others, like extended family members, slaves and the supernatural? In this essay, I shall also attempt to explore the cultural differences between settlements and how perceptions of the outsider were perceived as well as our own modern interpretations on the notions of public and private space, relating to ancient Greek households.

The symposium (or symposion) was a social institution - a common Greek cultural practice whereby groups of males drunk diluted wine amidst entertainment. If it is true that this practice was originally forged for a man of aristocratic class who wished to cement bonds of personal allegiance by feasting and drinking with non related aristocrats at his own residence, then we can go as far back as the twelfth to tenth centuries, where buildings at Kavousi, Vronda, Lefkandi, Toumba and Nichoria are all large enough to serve as houses and host large feasts (Whitley 1991: 349, 363-4).

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These large residences attracted others or 'outsiders' to associate themselves with the owner, as they knew they could receive a lavish feast (Whitley 1991: 349-50). In Lefkandi and Toumba, the association of an aristocrat (sometimes labelled as a 'big man') with his house was so great, that he was buried within it and no-one could use the house (Whitley 1991: 350). In this sense, the 'outsiders' would have been anyone trying to occupy the house.

Forty small buildings in the early tenth century BC phase of the settlement at Nichoria were similar in that none of them had internal partitions dividing up the house, so privacy may well have been obtained by perishable items such as curtains, if indeed at all (McDonald et al. 1983: 18). Larger structures had wider entrances, but again, there is no surviving evidence of temporary screens to uphold privacy (McDonald et al. 1983: 19-33). The larger area of this structure may have housed large groups and may also have housed elites.

The late eighth century BC building ? at the site of Oropos was another large structure and contains a large amount of feasting related finds (Mazarakis Ainian 1998: 196-8). Buildings from the mid to late 8th century BC phase at Zagora also contain many drinking related items (Cambitoglou et al. 1988: 83-4, 87-8, 96-100). The larger, possibly elite houses at these sites (such as the one at Nichoria) may well have been occupied by several families (Mazarakis Ainian 2007: 167).

Ritual areas (again, at Nichoria: McDonald et al. 1975: 141) could be easily seen by 'outsiders'; though the inhabitants owned (or cohabited) it, they

could be watched which might suggest that 'outsiders' might have joined in with ritual proceedings or no particular privacy was placed upon ritual practice. Though we might be able to see patterns emerging, we should be careful not to assume that 'Dark Age' Greeks were all doing the same. If Zagoran houses do indeed show a relation to the concept of an oikos (Coucouzeli 2007: 181), then it could conceivably mean that ancient Greek household as a unit existed before the fifth century BC.

Coucouzeli argues that the symposion attracted greater prominence among the aristocrats of Zagora (Coucouzeli 2007: 181). The growing population of Greece at the time may well have promoted competition between aristocrats to host bigger drinking parties and as a result, it may have been necessary to keep women away from the numerous male guests (Coucouzeli 2007: 181), presumably so that they were not targeted by drunk visitors. Ironically, the female house members would have been outsiders in their own home! By the seventh century BC, there was a significant shift in house architecture.

Houses were built with high walls, narrow doors and smaller windows (Morris 1999: 309). Narrow door spaces at Zagora (700) and Miletus (600) were dissimilar from houses of the ninth and eighth centuries (Morris, 1999: 309). The smaller door space would indicate that who was allowed in was tightly monitored. The oikos itself was becoming more compact (Lang 2005: 18). This could represent the presence of other occupants in the house, such as the family son and his wife living in the same house but adapting the house to fit in (Lang 2005: 18).

From a modern perspective, one might assume that the son would move out of the home and thus become an 'outsider'; it may well have been common for extended family to stay in the same home. The larger structure of four room houses in (mid eighth century BC) Kastanas (Macedonia) could implicate extended relatives sleeping in the same area as the family (Lang 2005: 24). As house structures changed from a linear perspective to a radial one (Lang 2005: 26), single entrance houses would have required a different access system as it was impossible to walk in a line to get to the desired room.

A transitional room with a similar use like that of a modern day hallway was used to allow access to different parts of the building (Lang 2005: 26). This would have made the house less 'private' as visitors that were invited in would have been able to see into more rooms, yet as rooms now had separate access, they became more private as they were not on the walk-through path of linear houses. Linear houses made the visitor enter the 'family sphere' straight away, whereas this new transitional area was defined as 'neutral', such as a court (Lang 2005: 29).

Lang also argues that houses without courtyards would have forced the inhabitants to do domestic work outside and thus opening them up to public view (Lang 2005: 29), but what was stopping the inhabitants from doing these tasks - surely it depended on the nature of the task? Whatever the case, courtyards allowed the inhabitants to work in them and not come across 'outsiders' on the street. Who they came into contact with was controlled more and more.

Classical Greece was a time of varied experimentation with the lay-outs of the oikos. No where are our sources for sixth, fifth and fourth centuries BC housing more apparent than in Athens (in comparison with the rest of Greece). The general threat of being cuckolded might explain why Athenian men were keen to keep their female inhabitants away from ' outsiders' who could violate their sanctity (like Euphiletos - Lys. 1. 8). Violation of the marriage drew the public eye upon that household (Patterson 1998: 108).

Some households may have had closer relations with their neighbours to the extent that neighbourly men might have been counted in the family (Similar the modern day concept of ' Uncles' in the loose sense - Small 1991: 339).

The family was in constant flux, with new members being added, for example babies, in-laws and new slaves (Goldberg 2002: 157). The situation regarding females crossing boundaries was perceived a lot differently in Sparta. The Spartan family existed solely to produce healthy babies for the state.

All men were effectively brothers, as they had trained together in the agoge (Pomeroy 1998: 48). Every older man treated younger boys as if they were their own. The women however, exercised outdoors. Though marriage to a male was a secretive affair, there was no attempt to hide Spartan females in the confines of the oikos from ' outsiders' (Pomeroy 1998: 50). Because men were either away at the syssitia or on campaign and the boys were at the agoge, effectively the Spartan female ran the home.

Drunken helots were also brought into the syssitia to be made fun of, hence showing a healthy disregard for ' outsiders' (Pomeroy 1998: 49). Protection

of one's female assets was a demonstration to the community (Cohen 1989: 6). Athenian male paranoia was also reflected in drama with Aristophanes making husbands suspect their wives of cheating when they had exited the *oikos* (Thes. 414, 519, 783). Though the subject matter was undoubtedly mocked up, it must have reflected a certain amount of contemporary behaviour.

Theoprastus rabidly insults a woman for talking to men, as if she has brought shame on her house (Characters, 28). In Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, the proboulos blames the men for allowing themselves to be cuckolded by tradesmen coming into their homes (404-419; Goldberg 2002: 155). In response, the women go on a sex strike and from there the females take over the Acropolis, shutting the males out. The women turn the public sphere into their own private home; the Acropolis becomes their house with which the males try to storm via spear and by phallus (Foley 1982: 7).

Though the situation imagined by Aristophanes was ridiculous in its day, the irony of the situation might show the extent to which female influence outside the home was viewed, though there is no way to know how far reality matched dramatisation in this case (Cohen 1989: 7). Athenian women became more visible to 'outsiders' during the festival of Adonia. Women engaged in revelry on their own rooftops (Aristophanes *Lys.* 387-96), but this was okay, since they were in their home and thus deemed safe, despite being visible to the surrounding community (Morgan 2010: 25-6).

Houses that doubled up as shops, workshops and stores would have seen regular mingling of working females and 'outsiders'; the 'House of Simon'

saw customers coming into the house (Thompson and Wycherley 1972: 173-85). It is possible that women working in these environments may have gotten used to strangers coming in and thus ignored them (Goldberg 2002: 155-6). It seems that women of lower classes did not bother with shying away as they did not have any 'status' to protect. 'Outsiders' were also deemed to be of the supernatural variety.

The festival of Anthesteria required doors to be painted with pitch to ward off ghosts (Morgan 2010: 24). For the birth of a child, a nurse often invoked Artemis into the Athenian household to make sure of a safe birth (Euripides Hippolytus 166-8). In this case, supernatural 'outsiders' were welcomed in and then returned again to their temple. Occasions such as births and deaths when the oikos became polluted required it to shut itself off from the community (Theophrastus Characters 16. 9). Though the oikos became more private in this period, its marking out meant that it became highly visible to the community (Morgan 2010: 27-8).

After a baby was born, the household in which the birth took place needed an allotted period of separation until it became unpolluted and re-entered the community (Morgan 2010: 30-1). The reliance on contemporary men's writings upon gender ideals has led many archaeologists to assume that each house had its own female quarters and a 'male-only' room, the andron (Goldberg 2002: 142, also see Pomeroy 1998: 14). The purpose of the andron was to receive outsiders into the household and it was often placed near an entrance (Antonaccio 2000: 526).

Because the receiving of guests for feasting, symposiums and for business was a special occasion, Antonaccio's claim that it was a highly ritualised area makes sense (2000: 526-7), the andron was not often used - when an outsider was given the honour of being hosted in the oikos, the andron would seem to be the obvious room to use (much like the modern day dining room would be used); although on a more informal basis, we hear of storerooms being used to house visitors (Goldberg 2002: 144). Jameson claims that the room would have been used by house owners to talk about politics and forge deals in private (1990: 190).

However, this is contradicted by Jameson's previous statement that the windows into the andron were a lot larger than normal (Jameson 1990: 189), which would give the impression that the house owner wanted the room to be seen. In a dense urban city like Athens, rooms located near the street would have had smaller windows (Goldberg 2002: 144). However private the andron was supposed to be, the symposion and banqueting was held in it (Informally, men did eat elsewhere, such as in the courtyard or upstairs - Antonaccio 2000: 526-7).

The guests were invited into home where they were privileged to have eaten amongst their social equals (Cooper and Morris 1990: 79). Indeed, the lavish Athenian symposion was probably the preserve of wealthier citizens, mainly aristocrats; art and literature related to the symposion indicates that it was wealthy citizens taking part. The prosperity that fifth century Athens enjoyed post Persian Wars must have reflected in the symposion (Vickers 1990: 106). Poorer citizens who had access to an andron may have used it receive guests and dine in moderation.

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Andrones in the classical period could have accommodated up to eleven guests, reclining at their couches; so the symposium was focused upon a tight-knit group (Bergquist 1990: 37). In contrast with the masculine aspect of the room, there is evidence that females were present in the andron at the same time as the symposium (Nevett 1999: 19). Given that the symposium was an event where guests were entertained, the suggestion that these women were flute-players, courtesans and prostitutes seems to fit the bill (Nevett 1999: 19).

So though the inhabitant females were not allowed in that room whilst males were present, 'outsider' women were. The only real explanation for this is that it was in keeping with the ritual and entertaining element of the symposium. Outside of the symposium, it seems that prostitutes were tolerated a lot less, especially given Hipparete's reaction to leave Alcibiades for bringing prostitutes home on what we assume to be a non ritual basis (Foxhall 1989: 38)! Not everything in Athens fits neatly together though. Not all citizens had an andron.

Out of a group of three excavated houses upon the Areopagus hill in Athens from the fourth century BC, only one of the houses has a room which can be identified as an andron (Goldberg 2002: 152). In the 'Industrial district', houses C and D might not have had andrones (Nevett 1995: 14-5). It is equally feasible that a house may have had an andron at one point in time, but not at another. However, when it is said that certain houses did not have andrones, it is entirely possible that there may well have been an andron but not with the features we come to associate with it.

Some men may well have had the exclusive use of another room in the house (Goldberg 2002: 152). The Fli?? gelhofhaus, located on the Pnyx did have an andron yet the unusual arrangement of the house presented another oddity. It may indicate that the family was not of aristocratic class and they were not able to spend money on the adornments that rich Athenians could. Alternatively, they could have been metics who were not accustomed to Athenian cultural traditions (Goldberg 2002: 155). Outside of Athens (but in Attica), we can see the type of housing in more rural areas.

Thorikos, a fifth/fourth century BC mining community had a large slave population. Unlike Athens however, some houses had more than one street entrance (Nevett 2005: 85, Figs. 6. 1d, f, g), thus limiting the control the household had on 'outsiders'. Room sizes were larger as well (Nevett 2005: 88); this combined with the previous points suggests that households were more open to the community. Likewise, houses at Ano Voula (late fifth to mid fourth century BC) had two outside doors for more than one phase of occupation (Nevett 2005: 90).

The positioning of these doorway allowed the maximum amount of light to enter (Nevett 2005: 92-3), thus benefitting outside to in viewing. Another difference was the apparent absence of the andron in deme settlements (Nevett 2005: 92-3), which suggests that formalised hosting of visitors was unpopular. If deme citizens were more open to the wider community, then perhaps they did not feel the need to make a fuss over an 'outsider' coming in. What can we say about housing from other classical Greek towns?

There seems to have been some variation, yet also some similarities with Athenian oikos. Most houses at Halieis (NE Peloponnese) had a classical prothyron entry which 'sunk' into the entrance, providing a sheltered entry (Ault 2000: 485-6) and thus limiting visual contact from outside to in. Some houses in Hellenistic Crete had large living rooms which opened up onto the street directly (Westgate 2007: 447), thus potentially allowing easy access in to 'outsiders'. The town of Olynthus in northern Greece had some differences with Athenian household practices.

The Olynthian andron was entered via an anteroom, unlike the Athenian version which could be accessed via the courtyard; it also had much larger windows, allowing great visual access, but it was located next to the street (Cahill 2002: 80, 192). Richly decorated houses appeared to have more open room plans with rooms accessible from most places (see Fig. 1). On the contrary, less decorated houses (A11, A13) had more restricted access (Cahill 2002: 191 despite Nevett 1999: 72). Kitchens, however, were located on the sides furthest away from the street (Cahill 2002: 192, plates 1, 2).

Hellenistic Delos seems to have not favoured the andron. Seventy-seven per cent of the housing, including some of the wealthiest, did not have andrones, but preferred multi-use rooms (Tri?? mper 2007: 330). Simple houses had their most lavish rooms tucked away at the back of the house, while 'richer' houses had their most lavish rooms connecting to the court (Tri?? mper 2007: 331). Thus the priority in Delos seems to have been immediate access to the most decorated rooms. There is also evidence for upper floors in Delos (Tri?? mper 2007: 334).

From the upper floor of a neighbouring house, this may well have allowed neighbours being able to look upon the courtyards of their neighbours. Latrines, which were common in Delos households, were placed next to entrances where they could have been used by visitors and inhabitants (Tri?? mper 2007: 334). Trying to analyse how ancient Greeks viewed outsiders requires us to consider mostly the time period and the circumstances of the house inhabitants, but we need to be careful about categorising different social practices as common place in ancient Greece.

In the Greece of the early first millennia BC, there seems to have been a lot less focus on deterring outsiders from property. Rather, elite citizens appeared to have been keen to attract fellow aristocrats to their residences to gain their favour. In archaic Greece, there appears to have been a move to make homes more private; spatial changes occurred as families grew and needed to house more members.

Wealthy classical Athenians were keen to keep adulterers out but welcome in divine aid whereas poorer Athenians relied on outsiders for business.

Members of rural demes were more receptive of outsiders as they lived in a smaller, intimate community whilst other Aegean settlements displayed different mentalities: Spartans were keen to promote their superiority to outsiders whilst wealthy Delians were keen to show off their lavish rooms.

We can count ourselves as outsiders looking in on another culture (Foxhall 1989: 22)!