From megaron to oikos at Zagora
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INTRODUCTION
For a long time, the megaron, an elongated building with or without an internal sequence of rooms preceded by a porch, was the dominant form of building in the Greek world (Fagerström 1988a; Werner 1993; Mazarakis Ainian 1997a). In the Early Iron Age (c. 1100–700 BC), especially its earlier part, the megaron apparently served at times both as a religious and ceremonial building or ‘temple’, and as a habitation (Mazarakis Ainian 1988; 1997a; Coucouzeli 1994; 1999; 2004). However, from some point in the eighth century BC, the temple and the house developed in different directions. The temple increasingly exhibited a well-defined character, based on the megaron plan, while the house evolved towards functional differentiation. Eventually, the courtyard-centred type of house or oikos was born, which was to become the characteristic type of dwelling in Greece during Classical times (Walker 1983; Jameson 1990a; 1990b; Hoepfner and Schwandner 1994; Nevett 1999).

The oikos, both as a social unit (‘household’) and as an architectural entity (‘house’), was the basic building-block of the Classical polis. The written evidence, from Homer and Hesiod to Aristotle, leaves no doubt that the interests of the oikos as a social unit were inseparable from those of the polis community, and that the integrity of the former was the precondition of the strength of the latter; indeed, oikos and polis seem to have developed in a close, though sometimes conflicting, relationship (Lacey 1968, 53; Patterson 1998, 44–69; Nevett 1999, 4–6 with further references; on the conflicting relationship between oikos and polis, see Humphreys 1978, 201–2; 1993, 1–21). The date of the formation of the oikos as an architectural unit is, however, a matter of dispute.

According to a recently advanced view (Morris 1998a), the oikos or courtyard house first appeared in central Greece in the late eighth century BC with the rise of the polis and of a more egalitarian ideology instigated by a middle class of wealthy but non-governing peasants, forming together with the governing aristocrats an elite group of agathoi. This view runs counter to a slightly earlier one, that the oikos was first adopted in the context of the fully developed polis during the later fifth century BC, as a result of an emphasis on the individual and private family life vis-à-vis the community, in the context of wider socio-political changes (Nevett 1999, 160–6, 174).

I intend first to test the above two hypotheses, and then to explore what additional information might be gleaned about the origins of the oikos from the archaeological evidence. In view of the intense debate over the ‘oriental seclusion’ of women in connection with the oikos, I shall interpret this evidence with the aid of comparative material from modern architectural and social anthropological studies of the Islamic world.

I have chosen to concentrate on Zagora, a major Early Iron Age settlement on the Aegean island of Andros, not only because it seems to be of prime importance for the question of polis formation (Coucouzeli 2004; cf. Snodgrass 1991, 8), but also because Zagora, uniquely, provides tangible evidence of the transition from the megaron to the courtyard-centred house.

Zagora is a fairly large site (6.7 ha). Even though less than a quarter has been excavated (Cambitoglou 1967; 1969; 1972; 1974; Cambitoglou et al. 1971; 1988), that sample seems to be quite representative, providing a reasonable idea of the settlement’s organisation. The vast majority of the visible remains of the houses date from Late Geometric times, i.e. the second half of the eighth century BC. By the end of the Geometric period, around 700 BC, the settlement was abandoned and never reoccupied. Here, I will focus on the two main excavated sectors, D/H and J, located respectively on the elevated plateau and on the slopes of the site (FIG. 18.1).

SECTOR D/H: THE BIRTH OF THE OIKOS
Sector D/H reveals the transition from megaron to courtyard house in the passage from its first to its second architectural phase (Cambitoglou et al. 1971, 33–6; 1988, 150–8, 160, 238, pl. 11; Cambitoglou 1981, 35 and fig. 9).

In the first phase, dating from LG I (c. 760/750–735 BC), the houses in sector D/H, with the exception of house H18–20, were of the megaron type (FIG. 18.2). Some of the megarons were narrow-fronted, with a front and a back room (e.g. H34–35), but the majority were wide-fronted, consisting of a single large room (e.g. the space later occupied by units H24–25–32). This room must have been multifunctional, combining living (sitting, working, informal dining, sleeping), reception, cooking and storage. An exceptional wide-fronted megaron during this phase was H19, most probably the local leader’s house (Cambitoglou 1967, 108; Cambitoglou et al. 1971, 30, 62; Drerup 1969, 25;
Mazarakis Ainian 1997a, 175) or, possibly, his reception hall (see below). This impressive room was furnished with a stone bench along three walls and a large central hearth made of marble. These features render H19 atypical and distinct from all the other first-phase megarons on the plateau (contra Cambitoglou et al. 1988, 79, who subsequently downgraded H19 by comparing it unduly with second-phase units showing similar features). H19 faced out onto a long yard, H21.

In a second phase, during LG II (c. 735–700 BC), the population of Zagora seems to have increased dramatically (Green 1990), and the wide-fronted
megaron-type dwellings were extended and converted into courtyard-centred houses with a number of functionally differentiated rooms or activity areas. The house H18-20 was also converted, with the addition of D26 on the other side of courtyard H17 (FIG. 18.3).

One can observe various degrees of architectural segmentation and room differentiation in the second-phase courtyard houses.

A minimally segmented and differentiated use of domestic space was arrived at by reducing the size of the original megaron (D8), so that the latter was now used only as a kitchen/living/reception room, and by creating two new rooms, a storeroom (D27) and probably a stable (D7), opening onto the interior courtyard (D6). The aim here was obviously to eliminate from the main habitation area anything that was not directly related to the life of the inhabitants. One may compare those Islamic courtyard houses where the minimal requirements are one room for human use and another for storage (Thoumin 1932, 25; Aurenche 1981,
In at least three cases, the architectural segmentation and functional specialisation of rooms or activity areas was slightly more advanced. The old megaron was internally subdivided by a partition wall into two little spaces at the back and a transverse hall across the front (H24–25–32; H26–27; D9 on the parallel of D10–11) and, to judge from the finds within the fully excavated units, would now have served as a kitchen/store, and perhaps as a secondary sleeping/living area. Furthermore, the house was extended by the addition, at the other end of the courtyard (H33; H34; D17), of one or two rooms (H40–41; H42; D16, D20), which, on the basis of the finds within the excavated units, appear to have constituted the living/reception area of the house, accommodating activities such as sitting, working, dining, sleeping and entertaining. It is noteworthy that in the Islamic world living rooms are used by the family for dining and sleeping in the absence of specialised family dining rooms and bedrooms (Hansen 1961, 35, 42; Lane 1973, 186; Petherbridge 1978, 199; Aurenche 1981, 216; Khatib-Chahidi 1981, 120; Kramer 1982a, 102–4; Küçükerman 1988, 63, 81, 141, 143). Thus, in these three cases, there is evidence of a desire to separate the mainly utilitarian areas from the less utilitarian and formal domestic areas; the house centred upon courtyard H17 seems to be another such instance.

This view of the functional differentiation is slightly different from that of the excavators, who envisage the old megaron reused exclusively as a storeroom (Cambitoglou 1981, 35; Cambitoglou et al. 1988, 128, 154–8, 238). However, in the old megarons H24–25–32 and H26–27, only H25 and H26 appear to have served as storerooms, while in the front part of H27 and within H32 there is evidence of food-processing and cooking activities from kitchen wares (chitra, plates, drinking vessels, jugs, oinochoe, stands), pounders and pumice (in H32), remains of shell, bone, iron ‘slag’ and charcoal from a fire (within H27 — where perhaps an older hearth was still in use), as well as evidence of female presence (a spindle–whorl in H32 and clay beads in H25: Cambitoglou et al. 1988, 109–11, 120–1). Green (1990, 45) favours a wider reuse of these megarons during the second phase as a sleeping area, at least for the household slaves. One may further suggest their use as a sleeping/living place either for a widowed mother in a household comprising a nuclear family, as in some courtyard houses in Muslim countries, where the kitchen may be thus used (Kramer 1982a, 104, 119), or for a new conjugal couple (with or without unmarried offspring) within a patrilocial extended family, on the parallel of some Islamic houses where a new nuclear family may be accommodated in a room partitioned off from the rest of the bridegroom’s father’s original single-room house (Lutfiya 1966, 29; Zahra 1982, 78–9; cf. also Gallant 1991, 21, who interprets the subdivision of some of the houses on the Zagora plateau as the result of such a residence pattern); H24 is a particularly likely candidate for such use. These megarons in their new function may therefore best be designated as ‘kitchens/stores/living rooms’ (cf. Kramer 1982a, 119). On the other hand, it is highly likely that units H40–41 and H42, which the excavators rightly identified as general living rooms (Cambitoglou et al. 1988, 115–16, 155, 157, 238), doubled as guest-receiving rooms, given the presence of a large marble hearth within H41 and the amount of serving, pouring and drinking vessels as well as mixing-bowls (kraters) found within all these units, implying formal dining and wine-drinking; the absence of pithoi is also notable (Cambitoglou et al. 1988, 113–16, 127, 158). H40–41 and H42 possibly housed a new conjugal couple within the parents’ home, one or both of whom lived in the old dwelling, i.e. the megarons H24–25–32 and H26–27; this may also have been the original function of the reception room in the Tunisian house known as sakiţa or skifa (Lutfiya 1966, 29; Zahra 1982, 78–9; Revault 1984, 27; Hakim 1986, 126–7). The house centred upon courtyard D17 may have comprised two living/reception rooms, D16 and D20 (cf. Kramer 1982a, 102–3, 114–15, 119). Indeed, D16, which was identified initially as a general-purpose room and later as a small reception room (Cambitoglou et al. 1971, 41; 1988, 158), could have served the dual purpose of living/reception room. Finally, in the house centred on courtyard H17, which is likely to have exhibited this type of domestic segmentation, H18–20 would have formed the kitchen/store/living room and D26 the living/reception room. The basic distinction in these courtyard houses between kitchen/store and living/reception room(s) recalls that in some courtyard houses in the Islamic world (Aurenche 1981, 214–15; Kramer 1982a, 90–104, 111, 116; Aurenche and Desforges 1983, 153–7).

A similar or slightly greater degree of spatial segmentation and room differentiation seems to have been achieved in D1–5 in a contrary manner to the one described above: the old megaron (D5) remained undivided, serving presumably both less utilitarian and formal purposes, i.e. as a living/reception room; while two new rooms were built across the courtyard (D2) to form the purely utilitarian, service area, one (D1) apparently serving as a kitchen/storeroom (Cambitoglou et al. 1988, 71–3), the other (D3) perhaps as a general-purpose storeroom, i.e. a lumber or utility room (Cambitoglou et al. 1971, 13–15; for the functional differentiation of storerooms, see Kramer 1982a, 105, 116). Moreover, a third room of unknown, but probably less or non-utilitarian function, possibly a bedroom, seems to have been created, exceptionally, on an upper floor (above D3: Cambitoglou et al. 1971, 13–15). The Islamic world provides examples of this kind of specialisation of domestic space (e.g. Aurenche and Desforges 1983, 152–7).

In a single, exceptional case, however, that of the leader’s house, the segmentation of architectural space and the functional specialisation of rooms were taken a
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step further. The old megaron (H19) remained as such and seems to have been used for utilitarian purposes, as a kitchen/store, and probably also partly as a living room; while already existing rooms, which had previously belonged to two neighbouring megarons lying to the west and east — probably owned by the same kin group or family, as suggested by a similar practice in the Islamic world (Petherbridge 1978, 168) — were incorporated into a new house centred upon courtyard H21, providing a less utilitarian area for sitting, working, informal dining and sleeping (H28, perhaps forming a suite with H29), and a formal area, i.e. a reception and formal dining area (H22, probably a suite with H23; Cambitoglou et al. 1988, 96, 154, 158)\(^1\).

The excavators identified H19 as a general living room and H28 as a storeroom (at least in part) during LG II (Cambitoglou et al. 1988, 87–8, 96, 103–4, 154, 157–8). However, usage of H19 as kitchen/store is supported by the evidence of kitchen wares, food-processing and cooking activities, as well as storage facilities in the form of storage vessels and twelve ‘pithos emplacements’ on its bench (Cambitoglou et al. 1971, 47–8; 1988, 79–84). The spindle-whorls and the loom-weight found within H19 can be just as indicative of a kitchen as of a living room (cf. Kramer 1982a, 100, 105). Given that its large built hearth was still in use, H19 may have encompassed a secondary function as a living room (perhaps as the sleeping quarters of a resident widow — cf. above), in which case it would be best designated as ‘kitchen/store/living room’. In contrast to H19, H28 contained very few storage vessels, the remaining finds indicating a living room: cups, *kotyle*, plate, *hydria*, stone counter, pounders, spindle-whorl (Cambitoglou et al. 1988, 101, 103). The absence of a hearth in H28 does not oppose the identification of this unit as a living room, since portable braziers could have been used instead (e.g. Kramer 1982a, 104; cf. Parisinou and Tsakirgis in this volume), while the bench can be a common attribute of living rooms in both ancient and traditional domestic architecture (e.g. Aurenche 1981, 216; Kucukkerman 1988, 142–8).

Thus, we witness in the house centred upon courtyard H21 a deliberate intention to separate the more-or-less utilitarian domestic areas from the non-utilitarian and formal reception areas. This represents the maximum extension of the trend towards increasing segmentation of the domestic environment and increasing differentiation of rooms or activity areas attested in sector D/H.

I suggest that all the courtyard houses in sector D/H at Zagora could be identified as predecessors of the Classical oikos (contra Nevett 1999, 158–61 and this volume, p. 9), with which they exhibit two essential similarities. First, they display the high degree of privacy and the centripetal plan of the later oikos; their rooms opened, sometimes via a porch comparable to the *prostas*, onto a central, almost completely enclosed court accessible via a single entrance, which could at times be quite narrow or indirect, set at a corner, or even screened, so as to obstruct vision into the house from the street (Cambitoglou et al. 1988, 157; see also Cambitoglou 1981, fig. 13; the apparently more ‘open’ character of courtyard H21 may be due to the likely public function of the leader’s house). Secondly, they show a segmentation of domestic space, which would have permitted a separation between the different activity areas of the house on either side of the court; at least one of these courtyard houses would even have allowed segregation of the purely domestic, family areas from areas that could serve for the entertaining of visitors, as in the Classical oikos.

These basic similarities in spatial organisation suggest that similar social pressures were acting to shape the house as a private environment — a high priority of the Classical oikos — and to separate the sexes in their various activities and, more specifically, to segregate the women of the household from non-kin male guests entering the house: an important principle underlying the spatial organisation of the Classical oikos, as recent archaeological studies have convincingly demonstrated. Indeed, Jameson and Nevett have argued, contrary to common belief and what the literary sources imply about the architecture of the Classical oikos, that there is no clear archaeological evidence of a strict division between men’s and women’s quarters, *androitis* and *gynaikomitis*, and therefore of a segregation between men and women *per se*; rather, the evidence points to a more flexible and complex division, where both gender and kinship were important, between a men’s room for entertaining unrelated male guests, the *androon*, identifiable with the *androitis*, and the remainder of the house, the family area, habitually used by the women and identifiable with the *gynaikomitis*, where male visitors were not admitted (Jameson 1990a, 100, 104; 1990b, 172, 186–92; Nevett 1994; 1995; 1999, 71–2, 155; for a useful overview, see Cahill 2002, 148–53, 180).

Such views are strongly supported by the evidence relating to the Islamic courtyard house. The fundamental division between the public, male-receiving quarters and the private, family section of the house, the inviolable domain of the women of the household, is frequently emphasised in the literature on Islamic domestic architecture, as opposed to simpler and rarer references to segregation between male and female quarters (e.g. Hansen 1961, 27–32; Petherbridge 1978, 184, 196, 198–9; Khatib-Chahidi 1981, 120; [notes continued].

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\(^{1}\) It is not certain whether H29 and H23 were incorporated into house H19-21-22-28 during this phase or had their northern doorways blocked (Cambitoglou et al. 1988, 95, 100, 104, 155, 158 and n. 21). According to the excavators, H23 seems ‘to run in parallel with H22’ and to have served as a reception room (Cambitoglou et al. 1988, 100). H29, which is unexcavated, could have been an additional living (or sleeping) room (cf. Kramer 1982a, 119).
Shalaby 1986, 76; Oliver 1997, 1453–5, 1458, 1460; as opposed to Delaval 1974, 254; Al-Shahi 1986, 26), although the same author may use both descriptions of the same house (e.g. Petherbridge 1978, 198–9; Kramer 1982a, 102–4; Fethi and Roaf 1986, 41). This duality in the manner of description may explain the ‘conflict’ between the literary and the archaeological evidence with respect to the ancient Greek oikos.

With reference to the Islamic courtyard house, it is worth noting that when only family members are present there is freedom of movement between the family/female part of the house and the male reception (or guest) room, and that the separation of the sexes is ‘activated’ only when an unrelated male visits or when male guests are entertained in the reception room, in which case the women leave their work in the courtyard and retire to the family rooms; however, even then, the women may return to the courtyard after the men have entered the reception room and closed the door behind them (Pakhouri 1972, 18; Al-Shahi 1986, 26).

On this basis, we might speculate that the courtyard houses in sector D/H could have functioned as forerunners of the Classical oikos in the following way. The spatial segregation of the sexes would have been quite effectively realised in the more segmented and functionally differentiated leader’s house centred upon courtyard H21. Here, social occasions could have been completely separated from domestic activities, thanks to the provision of a formal reception room, H22, which (perhaps together with H23) could well have played the role of an early andron.

In the other houses, centred upon courtyards D2, D6, D17, H17, H33 and H43, which present a smaller number of specialised rooms, the segregation of the sexes could have operated on formal occasions, when unrelated men were visiting, by the differential use of the kitchen/living/reception room or the living/reception room. In those Islamic courtyard houses showing a similar low specialisation of activity areas, because they are too small to afford the luxury of a special room for formal occasions, the living or family room (usually called the harim) doubles as the ‘best’ room, and one of its formal functions is the reception and entertaining of non-kin male guests; the male visitors are quickly ushered through the courtyard on their way to the living room and during their visit the women of the household usually wait in the kitchen or courtyard until the male guests leave the living room (Fathy 1973, 48–9, 58; Ayoub 1980–81, 8, 14–15; Lane 1973, 178, 186; Kramer 1982a, 102–4, 111; Aurenche and Desforges 1983, 153–7; Rifai et al. 1988; pers. comm. from Dr Carel Bertram and the Jordanian architect Rana Dahdaleh). It is also worth noting that not all Classical or Hellenistic oikoi were large enough and functionally so highly differentiated as to possess a formal dining and reception room or andron, implying that a differential use was made of one of their rooms (such as the general living room) by the two sexes, whenever needed (e.g. Nevett 1999, 76, 87, 95, 120, 138, 151). In the Classical town of Olynthos only a third of the excavated houses had an andron and, according to the excavators, when a proper andron was lacking, the best room of the house must have also served for symposia (Robinson and Graham 1938, 170; cf. also Cahill 2002, 180, 186, and Lynch in this volume). Thus (contra Nevett 1999, 76, 157, 160, 174), segregation (more particularly, of female family members from male outsiders) in smaller, spatially less segmented and therefore functionally less differentiated courtyard houses on certain formal occasions need not be doubted nor, consequently, the applicability of the concept of the oikos to such houses, especially those conceived as part of planned settlements implying the allocation of urban plots to oikoi as social units. Moreover, even a reception room or andron does not necessarily have to be assumed to have been used only by the men of the household for entertaining male guests or symposia. Like the reception/guest room of the Islamic courtyard house, it could also have been used on social occasions such as life-cycle ceremonies and feasts involving the whole family (Khatib-Chahidi 1981, 122; Zahra 1982, 116–17; cf. Jameson 1990b, 190 and n. 26; Cahill 2002, 97), and by women receiving their own female guests, when the men were absent (cf. Hansen 1961, 27–32, 168; Lane 1973, 500, 503; Khatib-Chahidi 1981, 122; Al-Shahi 1986, 30); it is perhaps not coincidental that some andrones at Olynthos yielded artefacts associated with female activity such as were found throughout the rest of the house (Nevett 1999, 71).

It is interesting to note that units H40–41 and H42, by their isolated position next to their houses’ entrances, and particularly H40–41 by their respective arrangement into anteroom and main room, are reminiscent of some later andrones, where the anteroom provided the andron with additional privacy (especially at Kolophon, House IV, room IV i, Holland 1944, pl. XI; and at Olynthos, Hoepfner and Schwandner 1994, figs. 61, 306). When male guests were not present, the anteroom H40 could have been used in a manner similar to the foyer of the living/reception room in some Islamic courtyard houses, which may double as a place for sitting, dining and working (weaving, spinning: Kramer 1982a, 105); this is consistent with the finds within room H40: loom-weights, krater, kotyle, sklyphos (Cambitoglou et al. 1988, 113).

As far as the composition of these oikoi as ‘households’ is concerned, this may have differed with stages in their developmental cycle; like the Classical oikos, whilst basically nuclear most of the time, an oikos at Zagora could have passed through a shorter extended-household phase. The Islamic world also offers

2 The orthodox view of the ancient Greek oikos as essentially static and always containing a nuclear family has been challenged by Gallant (1991, 11–30). For the social anthropological definitions of the conjugal or nuclear family and the extended family, see Murdock 1949, 1–2, 23–4, 32–4, 41.
examples of houses composed of nuclear or extended families according to the developmental cycle of the domestic groups that inhabit them (e.g. Antoun 1972, 50–2; Fakhouri 1972, 57; Kramer 1982a, 114–15, 117; Talib 1984, 55).

SECTOR J: THE ADVENT OF THE FULLY-FLEDGED OIKOS

In contrast to sector D/H, in sector J, on the slopes (FIG. 18.1), there are no megarons. The three houses with complete plans centred respectively on courtyards J16, J6 and J7 (FIG. 18.3)3 were clearly conceived and built as courtyard houses, after older structures were destroyed (Green 1990, 42, 44), apparently simultaneously with the second architectural phase on the plateau. Moreover, the largest and most complex house, centred on courtyard J6, shows an extreme segmentation and specialisation of domestic space, not found in any of the courtyard houses on the plateau; significantly, it bears many striking similarities with Classical and Hellenistic oikoi.

This house was accessed from the south via a single entrance, which opened onto a narrow passageway (J3) and, to judge from the wall stomp protruding into it (southward projection of wall J4E beyond its junction with J4S), must have been screened to protect the interior from view. The passageway led to a small inner courtyard (J6) forming with it an L-shaped arrangement. This scheme is also found in many Classical or Hellenistic oikoi at Priene (Houses 2, 3, 8, 9, 15, 16, 19, 27d, 28: Wiegand and Schrader 1984, pl. XXII; Hoepfner and Schwandner 1994, fig. 186), Delos (Daux 1969, fig. 1; Lavas 1974, figs. 5, 19), Athens, Thasos and Hieraklea Minoa (Nevett 1999, figs. 19, 21–2 and 48 respectively). Further, the passageway was flanked on one side by two utilitarian, secondary rooms (J4 and J5), which are identifiable respectively as a storeroom and as a store/workroom, and exactly this sort of layout is found again in two of the Prienian examples cited above (Houses 9 and 16).

The principal living quarters were apparently on the north side, arranged in two architectural blocks. The western block opened directly off the passageway (J3) and seems to have presented the following functional organisation of rooms: first, a kitchen (J8), directly off the kitchen, to the west, a living room (for family dining, sitting and working) with a bench and a central hearth (J12), both rooms together being comparable in function to the ‘occus unit’ of the Olynthian house (Mylonas 1946; Robinson 1946, 183–206) or to the ‘oikos’ room at Piraeus, Ammtonpos and Kassoite (Hoepfner and Schwandner 1994, 146–50, figs. 31, 139, 306; Nevett 1999, 103–6, fig. 30).

To the north of the kitchen, there is a distinctive three-room suite or ‘pastas’ complex, comprising two little rooms at the back (J10 and J11) and a transverse hall across the front (J9). This kind of complex is familiar from Classical and Hellenistic oikoi (Krause 1977). It is also found in traditional Greek vernacular architecture, with the back chambers invariably used as bedrooms or as a combination of bedroom and storeroom via the placing of a wooden elevated bed or paitari over the storage area (Vassileiadis 1955, 17–18; Tzakou 1976, 113, 119; personal observation on the island of Donoussa). The two back rooms J10 and J11 yielded evidence of storage (pithos fragments, special cavities in their benches), while J11 also contained loom-weights, which may have been stored there. They are also comparable to the ‘Nebenräumen’ at Piraeus, Ammtonpos and Kassoite (Hoepfner and Schwandner 1994, figs. 20, 31, 136, 306) and to equivalent rooms in some Delian houses tentatively identified as bedrooms (Chamonard 1922–24, 179–80; cf. Daux 1969). They could therefore have served as thalamoi (cf. the thalamos, i.e. the internal room or bedroom/storeroom in Xenophon, Oikonomikos ix 3, and the thalamus and amphithalamus, or cubicula, forming part of the gynaikonitis in the Greek house described in Vitruvius, De Architectura vi 7 2; see Pomeroy 1994, 154–5, 292–3, with further references; 1997, 28–9, 58). The long, narrow room J9 has a high stone pedestal in the south-west angle, on which a fineware vase stood, and seems to have had a less utilitarian function. The whole complex served most likely as sleeping quarters and for light storage (if, for example, dry goods, clothing, spare bedding, etc.; for such storage rooms, see Kramer 1982a, 105).

The eastern block, adjacent to the western block but substantially recessed, had a separate entrance onto the inner courtyard (J6). This block comprised two units (J21–22), quite probably serving non-utilitarian and formal purposes as the house’s reception/guest area; the organisation of these units into an anteroom, for

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3 For preliminary reports, including the designation of these three houses, see Cambitoglou 1972, 262–4; Cambitoglou et al. 1988, 133–7. Further information on the date and function of the units in sector J was provided by Dr P. J. Callaghan in an oral communication (9.3.1987).

4 According to Dr P. J. Callaghan, J4 was a storeroom, from its storage benches and neighbouring ‘nest of stones’, similar to that found within the storeroom H26 (Cambitoglou et al. 1988, 134 and n. 17); J5 would have been a store/workroom, especially since, among several other large pots, it contained an amphora, which had been broken and its sherds distributed into two groups in preparation for mending (Cambitoglou et al. 1988, 135, pls. 244–5).

5 The interpretation of J8 as a kitchen is due to Dr P. J. Callaghan, and is based on the discovery within this unit of a series of ‘unpainted and utilitarian vases’ (including an amphora and a chytra), which had been placed all along the walls. See also Cambitoglou et al. 1988, 136.

6 This is Dr P. J. Callaghan’s interpretation of J12, given the presence of a hearth, a bench without any surface cavities, and a pile of skewphoi inserted one into the other and turned upside-down in the vicinity of the hearth.

7 According to Dr P. J. Callaghan, who also informs me that there were neither storage cavities nor vases on the bench in J22.
greater privacy, and a main room is reminiscent of many Classical andrones.

These two architectural blocks, apparently representing the domestic quarters and the formal area of the house, are juxtaposed but independently accessed, suggesting a desire to separate domestic activities from formal ones. Similar arrangements of rooms are found in Classical or Hellenistic oikoi at Piraeus, Kassope, Olynthos and Halieis (e.g. Hoepfner and Schwandner 1994, figs. 31, 62, 306; Nevett 1999, 100–1, fig. 27).

Fig. 18.3. Zagora, the second-phase courtyard houses in sectors D/H and J.
Moreover, the placement of the main range of rooms in the house’s northern half, so as to benefit from a southerly orientation, ‘relegating’ the service areas to the southern half, recalls the principle governing the orientation of the Classical oikos (Xenophon, Memorabilia iii 8 8–10; Oikonomikos ix 4; Pseudo-Aristotle, Oikonomika, i 13 4 a 25–34; Pomeroy 1994, 154–5, 293–5 with further references).

These parallelisms in spatial syntax between the house centred on courtyard J6 and a great range of Classical and Hellenistic oikoi suggest that similar patterns of domestic social relationships prevailed in both cases, and justify us in identifying this house as a fully-fledged oikos. Furthermore, one could propose that this extremely segmented and functionally differentiated house presents a restrictive type of layout allowing a marked segregation between male visitors and the women of the household, and a strict seclusion of the female inhabitants from the outside world. This is implied by the way the house is divided into two clearly distinct sections, a ‘public’/reception area in the eastern block, primarily the men’s domain prefiguring the andronitis, and a ‘private’/family area in the western block, essentially the women’s domain prefiguring the gynaikonitis. It is also indicated particularly by the ‘closed’ nature of the western block and its hierarchical internal organisation, where access to the innermost chambers (J9–11) was increasingly restricted, revealing a deliberate attempt to locate them far away from the entrance and keep them as private as possible (cf. Nevett 1999, 94–5, 100–6, 123–4, 164, for a similar interpretation of Classical courtyard houses presenting analogous patterns of spatial segmentation). It is plausible that the complex of rooms J9–11 in the western block was used as a sleeping area by the women of the household, while the suite of rooms J21–22 forming the eastern block doubled as the sleeping area of the household’s owner and often also of his wife (cf. the sleeping arrangements in the gynaikonitis and the andronitis described in Xenophon, Oikonomikos ix 5–7 and Lysias i, discussed, respectively, by Pomeroy 1994, 292 and Morgan 1982, 117). However, access to the western block might not necessarily have been restricted to the women of the household, and the husband could have taken his dinners in the living room (J12) with his wife and family (cf. Pomeroy 1997, 31).

PLANNING, IDEOLOGY AND THE ARISTOCRATIC ORIGINS OF THE OIKOS

Two natural questions arise from the above:

i. Why did the ‘architects’ not demolish the old megaron-type houses on the plateau, but pain-stakingly convert them into courtyard-type houses during LG II, whereas on the slopes they built afresh, improvising on the new house design, thereby attaining a much greater segmentation and specialisation of space, which brings us so much closer to the layout of later, Classical and Hellenistic oikoi?

ii. What kind of people introduced the oikos type of house at Zagora?

In answer to (i), I have already shown in a separate paper (Coucouzeli 2006) that the series of megarons belonging to the first architectural phase in sector D/H at Zagora formed part of a grid plan (FIG. 18.4.), which would have been established fairly early in LG I, c. 760/750 BC. This grid plan suggests the allocation of urban land plots to noble families, who would have formed a cohesive, internally egalitarian group of aristocrats around a higher chief or ‘king’ standing as first among equals. The aristocrats or aristoi/agathoi residing on the plateau would have distinguished themselves from the ‘commoners’ or kakoi constituting the demos and living on the slopes of the settlement.8 The evidence of social stratification and of central-authority hierarchy, in combination with that of urbanisation, makes it likely that the aristocracy at Zagora operated in the context of a nascent polis.

During LG II, c. 735–700 BC, which coincides with the second architectural phase in sector D/H, a new architectural programme aimed to create a series of courtyard houses by extending some of the old megarons. The rigid framework of the grid plan would have imposed definite constraints upon the architects fashioning the new type of house, in contrast with sector J, where they were able to work on a tabula rasa, on the site of older houses demolished to make way for the new experiment in house design. In fact, it seems that the Zagora grid plan was considered sacred and that the architects were obliged not to violate it in readapting the old megarons. As I argue elsewhere, the sacred character of the grid may lie in an ideology according to which the aristoi purported to mediate between the gods and the demos (Coucouzeli 2006).

As for (ii), the combined evidence of planning and social stratification at Zagora points to an aristocratic origin for the oikos within the framework of the rising polis of the late eighth century. This is further supported by research showing a strong correlation between social complexity and the specialised, segmented use of domestic architectural space (Kent 1990b).

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8 All the evidence at Zagora seems to suggest a basic social division such as the one usually envisaged by the historians of early Greece (e.g. Forrest 1966, 45–58; Murray 1980, 38–68; Finley 1981a, 83), i.e. between a narrow group of aristocrats (agathoi) and the multitude of commoners (kakoi). This differs from the social distinction proposed for eighth-century Greece by Morris (1987, 94–5; 1995a) between a wider elite group of agathoi comprising governing aristocrats and non-governing wealthy peasants, and a non-elite group, the poor or kakoi.
Fig. 18.4. Zagora, the grid plan in sector D/H.
I suggest that the *oikos* was introduced at Zagora by the aristocrats themselves, to provide: (a) an appropriate locus, free from utilitarian functions, for the reception and entertaining of male guests; and (b) greater privacy and a more effective segregation of the women of the household from unrelated male visitors and, by extension, from the outside world.

The introduction of the *oikos* probably rested on two basic social and ethical requirements, present already in the eighth century in the extremely competitive Greek aristocracy: (a) the receiving, feasting and entertaining of male guests, or *symposium* (Murray 1944; Tandy 1997, 142–9); and (b) the guarding of the women of the household from interaction with male outsiders within the domestic environment and the protection of their sexual purity, guaranteeing the birth of legitimate sons and ensuring the perpetuation of the family line and thus its honour, status and influence. The head of such a household would have been an *agathos*, endowed with *arete*, a wealthy, generous, successful and strong man, able to offer his guests a high standard of hospitality, physically to protect the women of his household and to provide the right conditions for their sexual segregation by rendering it unnecessary for them to do any outdoor work in order to contribute to the family’s revenue. He would thus have resembled the Homeric nobles, whose primary aim was the maintenance of their honour or *time*, and for whom being *agathos*, full of *arete*, constituted the highest commendation bestowed upon them by society. The ways through which these *agathoi* could exhibit *arete* and acquire *time* were: prowess in the defence of their *oikos* and success at war; the display of wealth, generosity and hospitality at feasts or *dastes*; and participation in councils or *boulai* (Adkins 1960, 63; Lacey 1968, 38–9; Finley 1979a, 113–26; Murray 1980, 49–55; Tandy 1997, 142–4 with further references; Donlan 1999, 23). One might suggest another component: the virtue, or *arete*, of their womenfolk as defined in Homer, i.e. moral integrity (chastity, prudence, fidelity etc.), besides skill in housekeeping and weaving (Adkins 1960, 30–7; cf. also Finley 1979a, 128–30; Starr 1992, 24, 38).

The courtyard house would have created the ideal physical setting for fulfilment of these requirements to a much higher standard than a single-roomed house or megaron. Various social anthropological and architectural studies show that the Islamic courtyard house is designed to satisfy similar social and ethical demands (Lutfiyya 1966, 160 and n. 36; Dodd 1973, 41–6; Delaval 1974, 254; Beck and Keddie 1978, 10, 22; Pastner 1978, 438; Petherbridge 1978, 195, 198; Rosen 1978, 563, 568–9; Vieille 1978, 452–4, 464; Youssef 1978, 76–8; Khatib-Chahidi 1981, 114; Zahra 1982, 101–5, 115–17; Al-Azzawi 1986, 55; Al-Shahi 1986, 26–30; Noor 1986, 61; Hakim 1986, 96; Hirschfeld 1995, 290). These demands are met to a lower standard in single-roomed dwellings, by using curtains or screens or, worse, by relegating the women to the space outside the house (Petherbridge 1978, 198; Aurecne 1981, 213; Wright 1981, 142; Aurecne and Desfarges 1983, 173; Rifai et al. 1988, *passim*; Hirschfeld 1995, 132; Rana Dahdaleh, pers. comm.). Such studies also show that there is a direct correlation between the economic status, honour and standing of a man, on the one hand, and his standard of hospitality, on the other, as expressed, in part, by the owning of a courtyard house which is large enough to allow for a special room for entertaining guests (Antoun 1972, 106; Petherbridge 1978, 198; Aurecne 1981, 214, 276; Khatib-Chahidi 1981, 115; Al-Shahi 1986, 29–30; Shami 1989, 470–1). Furthermore, the practice of women’s seclusion in courtyard houses from non-kin males and, by extension, from the outside world, symbolises high breeding, respectability and honour for the women involved, and adds to the esteem of the males of the household (who are responsible for them and who must be able to exhibit sufficient bravery in their protection: Zahra 1982, 115, 117); it is associated with high social and economic status (only the wealthy being able to keep their womenfolk non-working at home); and it increases with the growth of social stratification, centralised government and urbanisation, being therefore stricter in towns (Hansen 1961, 175, 177; Mernissi 1975, 84; Al-Sayyid Marsot 1978, 263, 265; Beck and Keddie 1978, 7–8, 22; Cosar 1978, 132–3; Mahler 1978, 107–8; Nath 1978, 174; Pastner 1978, 439–40; Peters 1978, 336–7; Petherbridge 1978, 196; Khatib-Chahidi 1981, 115; Jeffrey 1979, 24; Zahra 1982, 116–17; Chowdhury 1992). Lower-class women in towns or rural women are not so secluded, given that they have to engage in the same economic tasks as the men (Hansen 1961, 175, 177; Lutfiyya 1966, 150–1; Al-Sayyid Marsot 1978, 270; Beck 1978, 370; Beck and Keddie 1978, 8; Mahler 1978, 110; Peters 1978, 312, 336–9). It is also worth noting that the strictness of female seclusion in Muslim countries also depends on the women’s age: older, especially post-menopausal, women tend to be less subject to the constraints imposed by *purdah* (e.g. they dine together with the men and guests: Chatty 1978, 401; Morsy 1978, 608; Pastner 1978, 439). These parallels from Islamic society suggest that the traditional model of all ancient Greek women being in isolation from the outside world, never or seldom leaving the ‘women’s quarter’ of the *oikos* (e.g. Flacelière 1965, 55; Padel 1983, 8; Tyrell 1984, 45), is too generalised. Instead, they lend support to more recent studies challenging the concept of oriental-style seclusion of ancient Greek women and maintaining that female seclusion was more of an ideal, which is likely to have applied only to the women of well-to-do families and to have been emphasised by the elite literary sources (Pomeroy 1975, 70–80; 1994, 206–7; 1997, 21, 168, 176; Walker 1983, 81–2; Cohen 1989; 1991, 148–63; Just 1989, 105–25; Patterson 1998, 39, 42, 125–6; Nevett 1999, 15–17; Lewis 2002, 135–8, 173–5). Interestingly, the view has been put forward that the value of female sexual purity and seclusion in the Muslim world traces
its origins in ancient Greek and Roman–Byzantine
times, having simply been spread further by Islam
(Hansen 1961, 166; Al-Sayyid Marzot 1978, 262; Beck

To return to Zagora, it is possible that possession of
a locus for symposia was originally, during the first
architectural phase on the Zagora plateau, the
prerogative of the higher chief. Indeed, the internal
arrangement of H19, with its II-shaped bench and
imposing central hearth, as well as the first-phase finds
recovered from this unit (floor 2: kraters, skyphoi, cup,
kantharos, kotyle, open vessel, jug: Cambitoglou et al.
1988, 84), make it likely that this megaron served as
the higher chief’s reception room or guest-house, rather
than as a single-roomed self-contained dwelling. If so,
the living quarters of the leading family could have been
located in H28–29 and H22–23, which were later
amalgamated together with H19 into a house centred
upon courtyard H21; the twelve ‘pithos emplacements’
on the bench of H19 could then belong to the second
architectural phase, when the room would have changed
function (see above).

If indeed H19, in its initial phase, served as the higher
chief’s reception room with a public character, it would
have functioned as a community reception hall and
political centre, where all the local chiefs would have met
to feast and socialise, and assemble in council (cf. Tandy
1997, 144–5). It could also have been used for receiving
visitors from other communities, thus substantiating the
view that the megaron of the ‘king’ in early Greece was
functionally the predecessor of the town hall or
prytaneion in the later Greek poleis (Gernet 1976, 382–
401; Vernant 1983; Jameson 1990a, 105–6; cf. also
Drrerup 1969, 125). During the second architectural
phase on the plateau, the idea of a separate room for
entertaining guests, as free as possible from other
functions, would have spread to the other aristocratic
households; similarly, in some Arab communities, the
madafa or mudhif, the leader’s guest-house serving as
a political and judicial centre and as a community reception
room, became a characteristic of the aristocracy (Lutfiya
1966, 21–2; Antoun 1972, 16–17, 36–7, 106; Petherbridge
1978, 198; Al-Shahi 1986, 30; Shami 1989, 470–1;
Hirschfeld 1995, 206–11, 259). In fact, in its size, internal
features, orientation and plan (including its courtyard)
H19 bears a striking resemblance to a specific example
of the Palestinian madafa (Hirschfeld 1995, fig. 159),
which opened onto a south-facing courtyard and had
large stone benches along its three walls and a hearth at
the centre; its ‘guiding architectural principle was the
creation of a space in which all the occupants would sit
around a focal point’ (Hirschfeld 1995, 207; for a possible
archaeological parallel from Turkmenistan, see Aurenche
1981, 282).

Finally, it is worth mentioning that Odysseus’ house
was centred on a court (‘well-fenced with a wall and
cornice’, with ‘well-protected’ double gates),
architecturally segmented and functionally differen-
tiated (‘buildings on buildings’), and included facilities
for men’s feasting (Odyssey xvii 264–71; Jameson 1990a,
108–9). In the Homeric poems it is the function of
feasting which distinguishes the houses of the aristocrats
(Murray 1983a, 1983b): within Odysseus’ house ‘many
men are feasting’ (Odyssey xvii 269–71); Telemachos
tells the suitors: ‘leave my halls and prepare other feasts,
eating your own belongings, going in turn from house
to house’ (Odyssey ii 139–40); he himself ‘feasts at equal
feasts . . . for all invite him’ (Odyssey xi 185–7).

THE SPREAD OF THE OIKOS TO THE NON-
ARISTOCRATS

The idea of a spatially and architecturally segmented
and functionally differentiated courtyard house or oikos,
which would have contained a locus for the reception
and entertaining of male guests while simultaneously
inhibiting contact between non-kin guests (i.e. the
‘outside world’) and the women of the household, would
have spread quickly from the aristocrats on the plateau
at Zagora to the non-aristocrats or commoners
occupying the slopes, or rather to the prosperous
‘middle group’ among them, who apparently inhabited
sector J.9 This ‘middle group’, arguably part of the kakoi
of the literal evidence, would have endeavoured to
imitate the values and behaviour of the agathoi in order
to acquire status within the community (see, e.g., Starr
1992, 23–4, 32, 36; Donlan 1999, 37, 63–4), thus
adopting similar patterns of domestic social relationships to the aristocrats. Some seem to have
espoused even stricter norms with respect to women
than the aristocrats themselves, as suggested by the
complex design of the house centred upon courtyard
J6 (above), revealing the full potential of the oikos as an
architectural unit.

Ethnographic parallels support this hypothesis. In the
Islamic world the principle of women’s segregation
constitutes an ideal for upwardly mobile, middle-class,
non-elite families. Since the men of these families are
not rich enough to engage in conspicuous consumption,
they strive to consolidate their precarious new social
position by withdrawing their womenfolk from the family
workforce and confining them within the homestead,
seeking to emulate the traditional customs of the elite;
the same better-off families also tend to adhere more
closely to traditional elite behaviour by exercising stricter

9 Contrast the complex, multi-room, clearly better-off houses
in sector J with the single-room houses in sectors E and F
near the fortification wall, which must have been occupied by
poorer commoners (cf. Cambitoglou 1981, fig. 6; Cambitoglou
et al. 1988, 138–46, 156, 160, 239). It should also be noted
that, from the point of view of the finds, the houses in sector D/H
(Cambitoglou 1972, 262).
control over women than the elite themselves, many of whom have started adopting a more relaxed attitude (Al-Sayyid Marsot 1978, 270; Beck 1978, 369; Beck and Keddie 1978, 8–10; Maher 1978, 108–9; Chowdhury 1992; cf. also Hansen 1961, 169). One can also point out in this respect the trend whereby the madafa or mudhif (see above), which initially was a prerogative of the community leaders, was subsequently adopted by any family aspiring to good status, serving as a reception/living room or exclusively as a reception room (Pakhouri 1972, 18; Fathy 1973, 48–9; Ayoub 1980–81, 8, 14–15; Aurencche 1981, 213; Al-Shahi 1986, 30).

CONCLUSIONS

Zagora appears to present the earliest known examples of Greek courtyard-centred houses or oikoi, dating from LG II (c. 735–700 BC). This calls for a revision of the recently advanced view that the concept of the oikos as an architectural unit originated only in the later fifth century BC.

The evidence from Zagora also slightly alters the other recent view, according to which the courtyard house or oikos emerged in the late eighth century as a result of the rise of a more egalitarian, ‘middling’ ideology within the early polis. It shows that the courtyard house is likely to have been introduced at Zagora by a group of aristocrats (aristoi or agathoi) in the context of the nascent polis. Their intention would have been to substitute an earlier house-type, the megaron, with a new house design, which was better suited to meeting two basic social and ethical needs: (a) to provide space within the domestic sphere for the aristocratic activity par excellence, the male feasting or symposium, which constituted an increasingly important means of status-enhancement among the competitive aristocratic oikoi; and (b) to segregate the female members of the household from male outsiders, in order to preserve their honour and that of the aristocratic oikos, and thus to increase the aristocrats’ own esteem and social standing.

Aspiring to imitate the code of ethics and lifestyle of the aristocrats so as to achieve status within the community, the non-aristocrats or ‘commoners’ (kakoi) or, more specifically, the more prosperous ‘middle’ group among them, would also have adopted the courtyard house. Some would have pushed this trend even further by opting to live in houses whose spatial organisation provided yet greater segregation of the women, thus fully exploiting the potential of the oikos as an architectural unit. Zagora further shows, therefore, that the new concept of housing, like the new idea of the polis, stood a better chance of developing in the hands of the demos, and especially of its more ambitious, upwardly mobile ‘middle’ section, than within the inflexible and formal world of the aristocracy.

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