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The Greek house as a space: on the history of the interior of antiquity

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the history of the Greek interior as a way of expressing the attitude of the ancient Greeks to the world around them. The ancient Greek word *oikos* refers to three interrelated, but different concepts: family, family property and home. *Oikos* was the main unit of society in most Greek city-states. The central part in the home of the Greeks, like other peoples of antiquity, was occupied by a hearth. Fire was a symbol of both the tribal and the neighboring community, symbolising the centre of the universe. In the archaic period, one- or two-room houses became multi-room. The separation of personal and official structures was the reform of the archaic period. The courtyard was the venue for various ritual events; it also provided natural light for often small houses. The houses of the Greeks were divided into the male part (andron) and the female part (gunaikon); however, the functioning of these parts cannot be called completely unambiguous. Living rooms in the classical era had wall paintings and mosaics as decoration. Bathrooms were also equipped. They usually communicated with kitchens. The walls were plastered, the floors were adobe. The furniture in Greek houses was not rich; it was simple, but comfortable.

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Keywords

Ancient Greece, history of antiquity, history of everyday life, history of the dwelling, history of the interior.

Introduction

As modern scholars note, studies of the Greek houses are quite numerous [Barletta, 2011, 625]. At the same time, despite the relatively large amount of archaeological data left from Ancient Greece, information about residential buildings is not so great. As L. Nevett notes in his monograph on Greek houses, "our knowledge of the household and how it functioned is relatively poor, and many questions remain unresolved" [Nevett, 2001, 4].

It is important to understand that among the Greeks, the specific concept of "house" was synonymous with "household", economy and family. The ancient Greek word *oikos* refers to three related but different concepts: family, family property, and home. Its meaning changes even in texts, which can lead to confusion.

Oikos was the basic unit of society in most of the Greek city-states. In Attica, oikos, in the context of families, denoted a line of descent from father to son, from generation to generation. Aristotle, in his "Politics", used the term to refer to everyone who lives in a given house, including the head of the family, his immediate family, and his slaves. In a large household, oikos also included agricultural land and slaves for field work. Interestingly, it was believed that the head of the house is the one who lives in it, and not the one who built it. Thus, Aristotle pointed out that the master himself is not always the only and best judge of what he does: "In some cases, not only the master is the only and best judge, precisely where people who do not know the art understand the matter; for example, a house is known not only by the one who built it, but the one who uses it, will judge it even better, i.e. householder" (Politics III 6, 1282 a) [Aristotle, 2016, 159]. At the same time, the construction of houses was revered as an art, so Socrates says to Charmides: "And if you ask me about building, what, according to my opinion, it does business, being the knowledge of how to build, I will answer that it builds houses; and in the same way I will answer about other art "(Charmides 156 d-e) [cit. ex: Puchkov, 2008, 531].

However, already in antiquity, architecture was also a matter of folk, family: "Is it not from here, not from the ancient "anyone who wishes" that the tradition of independent folk construction of residential buildings comes, is not a simple person the author of objects built simply from the standpoint of common sense, without any artistry and planning whimsicality?" [Puchkov, 2008, 593].

Hearth in the Greek houses

The central part in the Greek houses, like that of other peoples of antiquity, was occupied by a hearth. Rectangular houses with a hearth in the middle arose in the Balkan Neolithic, that is, at the beginning of the 4th century BC. Historians have identified the hearth as the center of female activity in ancient Greek houses, associated with food preparation. At the same time, there are indications that hearths could be arranged in different parts of the house. "The hearth had to keep warm all the time. It was impossible to allow it to fade away either day or night, for this signified misfortune, death, interruption of the peaceful course of life. But on the first day of the new year, a special ceremony of renewing the fire was performed in all the hearths of the settlement" [Bondarenko, 2016, 62]. As in other ancient societies, old coals were raked out and extinguished, and a new fire was mined in an ancient way – by friction, on a communal hearth. Fire was a symbol of both tribal and neighboring community, symbolizing the center of the universe – and the city, quarter, house.

For Greece, the fundamental focus was the universal "fire of Hestia", burning in Delphi, "the navel of the earth"; the Pythagorean Philolaus called it "the mother and altar of the gods", "the center of the universe" [Pavlenko, 1997: 39-42]. Thus, the hearth in the house was a symbol and embodiment of the world hearth, the center of the earth.

Types of houses in ancient Greece

Houses in ancient Greece were of several different types. It is clear that many of the earliest houses were simple, two rooms, with an open porch or "pronaos" over which a low pediment rose. This form is believed to have contributed to temple architecture [Mukhin, 2013].

Personal, private houses, unlike the more explored palaces, were small and clustered together.

Research from the Minoan period shows that "the houses were mostly small and crowded, with little open space between them, and the streets were narrow, unpaved and so uneven that wheeled vehicles could not pass" [Rider, 2014, 142]. The previously known oval and round houses were no longer used in Crete during the Minoan period, with the exception of funerary structures. The houses had several floors, they were divided into rooms. The rectangular walls at the base were made of rubble, and at the top they were built of sun-baked bricks. The floors could be just earthen; in other cases, they were plastered out of slabs [Rider, 2014, 143].

Thus, excavations at Palaikastro revealed that the streets were from 1.4 to 2.5 m wide, surrounded by houses that faced the street in rows, often with a ladder at the front door. The walls diverged at different angles. One of the houses in Palaikastro is a typical megaron, a rectangular dwelling with a hearth in the middle. Megaron is a room of 1.5 square meters; four columns surround a square unpaved space, which probably contained a hearth; a lantern was burning upstairs, illuminating the whole space. To the north between this room and the street was another room that could only be entered from the megaron; the central room itself could only be entered from the side of the courtyard, through two doors with stone jambs [Rider, 2014, 144-145]. At the same excavations, the remains of roofs were preserved: it was clay tiles laid on slats that formed the ceiling, and water tightness was achieved by laying algae – this is still done in simple buildings in Crete.

In the Archaic period, one- and two-room houses became multi-room: starting from the early Iron Age, rooms were located one after another, thus creating a radial environment [Ault, Nevett, 2011, 17-18]. As a rule, at least one more back room was built, often separated by a courtyard. In addition, there were changes in society, which were reflected in home improvement. So, in the second half of the 8th century, as historians testify, a new type of houses was formed in Zagora: each house had a small courtyard and three rooms of different sizes: a large room "grew" from the former central room of the house.

At the beginning of the Iron Age (tenth to eighth centuries BC) most houses consisted of one room, sometimes with a porch, and all household activities had to take place either in this room or in an open space outside the house. But from the end of the eighth century BC. the household "turns" inwards, towards the peristyle, and away from the public space.

In Zagora, one-room houses from the middle of the 8th century were transformed into patio houses within a generation. The yard had a private, open area for domestic work, eliminating the need for members of the household to use public space. The new style houses had more than one room, usually two or three, which apparently were used for different ranges of functions: in some cases, the rooms had increased storage space. The advent of the autonomous patio can be seen as evidence of the power's strategy to think of the home as a semi-autonomous subsystem. Each resident was assigned the status of head of an independent household. The closed form of the house around the yard suggests a more strictly defined concept of the private sphere and a desire to assert control over the space used by the household, while the increase in storage space may reflect a greater emphasis on the ideal of self-sufficiency [Westgate, 2007, 232-233].

The reform of the archaic period was the separation of personal and official buildings. The house for the gods required a new architecture, however, it also came out of a simple house: "a residential building served as the initial form for the formation of a sacred structure and was initially used entirely for these ritual purposes" [Puchkov, 2008, 609]. Indeed, in the ancient house there is an altar and there is a hearth – the fundamental parts of the temple. And the temple, thus, is a continuation of the house, that is, the house, the dwelling of God, which was noticed by P.Ya. Chaadaev: "the most beautiful Greek temple is nothing more than a house: with the pleasant sensations delivered to you by graceful

proportion, the idea is necessarily connected that it was created for someone's dwelling ... The Greeks really had to build dwellings for their gods" [Chaadaev, 1991, 636 -637]. The source of such an understanding of the temple was the fundamental anthropomorphism of the Greek gods: "the house of a deity <...>, due to the corporality and human nature of this deity, should have been a prototype of a human dwelling, of course, having more perfect forms than the dwelling of a commoner. The Greek deity is a real person, albeit omnipotent and gigantic, and he also needs space for life, his own "divine" gestural space, just like a mortal" [Puchkov, 2008, 748].

O.M. Freidenberg found a complete correspondence between the content and form of the temple and the ordinary Greek house: "The construction and arrangement of the house (up to utensils and furniture) correspond to those of the temple. In the courtyard of every house there is an altar. And in the house, as in a temple, there is a division into common rooms and into those where access is not available to everyone <...>. Sacred tables and elevations with curtains and veils, sacred seats, fences, gates, sacred vessels, axes, knives, sieves, baskets, pots, dishes, glasses and bowls, jugs and vases find their complete parallel in the kitchen utensils forgotten by every family, in agricultural and handicraft tools, in tableware and "tea" utensils, in vessels for wine and water, in tables and boxes, chairs and benches, in front gardens and gates, in curtains and canopies, in the linen of people, not only living, but and dead, and later in tablecloths, napkins, towels, sheets, etc." [Freudenberg, 1998, 176].

Materials for building houses

Houses were built using walls of sun-dried mud bricks or timber frame filled with fibrous material such as straw or seaweed covered with clay or gypsum on a stone base that protected the most vulnerable elements from moisture. Because clay is a short-lived and lightweight material, houses were easy to break down and just as easy to build. Roofs were often thatched with cornices that hung over water-permeable walls. Many large houses were built of stone and plastered. The roofs of large houses were tiled. Houses excavated in the southwestern part of the Athenian Agora had mud-brick walls supported by stone plinths and tiled roofs, while the floors were adobe. For lighting, small windows under the roofs served.

Building features

As the excavations at Olynthus and Galia show, the street plans in the classical city were rectilinear, and consequently the houses were of regular shape and size [Cahill, 2002]. By contrast, houses in Athens vary considerably in size and shape. In various Greek cities, the material culture, of course, was very different and depended on the ethnic composition, beliefs, and goals of the policy [Morgan, 2006].

The dwellings of the Athenians crowded into narrow, crooked streets. As Plutarch notes in the biography of Publius Valerius Publicola, "leaving the house, one had to knock on the door so as not to hurt the passerby" [Puchkov, 2005, 35]. City houses were adjacent to each other with walls; their facade was from the courtyard, they stood with their "backs" to the street. Shops were sometimes located in the rooms of a city house that had access to the street.

Greek houses from the 5th to the 3rd century BC, as a rule, were built around an open courtyard, in which there was a portico on at least one side [Morgan, 2010]. Many houses were built around a wide corridor that ran the entire length of the house and opened on one side to a small courtyard. In larger houses, there is a large courtyard, furnished with rooms around. The courtyard was the venue for various ritual activities; it also provided natural light for often small houses [Yesoyan, 2015]. This is how a modern researcher describes Greek housing: "Entering from the street (without knocking), a

person along a narrow dark corridor got into a sunny open courtyard surrounded by a colonnade, there was an altar to Zeus the Homely and Greek everyday life passed" [Puchkov, 2005, 35].

Greek house

The Greek house did not "present" itself from the outside; its facade, as a rule, did not go out onto the street. The focus, the "pearl core" of the Greek house were the interiors and the courtyard, the peristyle. The courtyard was paved with stone or marble slabs; in such a house there were no windows, and the rooms received light from the courtyard through the doors. A house with a patio and similar lighting is a typical southern dwelling, the interiors of which are closely connected with the open sky. "Instead of a round sphere, the peristyle gives only a fragment of the sky, instead of the whole nature surrounding the peripteros, only a fragment of it in the form of a garden between the colonnades. These fragments evoke in the viewer the image of real nature outside the city, unlimited and unformed, which from this receives a special attraction for a person ... In this sense, one can associate the peristyle with an idyllic craving for nature, so characteristic of the Hellenistic era ..." [Brunov, 1935, 164].

In the peristyle, the space of nature and home was connected, the boundaries between the home garden and the natural environment were dissolved: "The infinite space of the sky silently "descended" into the rectangle of the courtyard surrounded by a colonnade, and then, as it were, "dived" under a canopy into a dark and narrow gallery. From here, it "spread" into all the rooms located along the perimeter of the peristyle and facing it with their entrances" [Polyakov, Krasovsky, 2017, 11].

At first, the peristyle also housed a home garden: "The rich Greeks decorated the garden with flowers, fruit trees and statues that turned the peristyle into a kind of Elisius (the ancient Greek version of "paradise"). Flowering plants, trees and shrubs with lush crowns, which protected the yard from the scorching sun, were in special demand" [Polyakov, Krasovsky, 2017, 20].

One of the first descriptions of the Greek house, as well as the theory of home economics, is given by the Greek writer Xenophon in his Domostroy: "Of course, I found it necessary, first of all, to show her the principle of building a house. There are no moldings in it, Socrates, but the rooms are built just in such a way as to serve as the most convenient containers for the objects that will be in them, so that each room itself called to itself what suits it. The bedroom, located in a safe place, invited the most expensive bedspreads and household items, dry parts of the building - bread, cool - wine, bright works and things that require light. The decoration of living rooms, I pointed out to her, is to keep them cool in summer and warm in winter. Yes, and the whole house as a whole, I pointed out to her, the facade is open to the south, so it is quite clear that in winter it is well lit by the sun, and in summer - in the shade" [Xenophon, 1935, 284]. Thus, the house is not only a dwelling, but also a storehouse, and a place for handicraft or agricultural work. Rooms on the ground floor included a kitchen and pantries, possibly an animal pen and a latrine. Vitruvius also testifies that around the peristyle there were rooms where the mistress of the house, along with the slaves, was engaged in needlework, as well as dining rooms, bedrooms, rooms for slaves (Book VI, chapter VII, 2) [Vitruvius, 2006, 122]. The plane of the walls of the Greek house was covered with murals and frescoes [Brunov, 1935; Polyakov and Krasovsky, 2017].

Significant indications regarding the space-planning decision of the ancient Greek house were also left by Homer [see: Polyakov and Krasovsky, 2016]. As the researcher notes, "Homer paid much attention to the arrangement and functional purpose of the prodomos (canopy), conveyed the general nature of the compositional solution and the decorative design of its interior space. No less detailed are the descriptions of the "feast chamber" (andron, megaron), in which the owner of the house received and treated his guests. It has been established that wooden partitions were widely used in the structural

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scheme of a residential building, which helped to divide its internal space into residential and utility rooms. It is confirmed that the covering of the house ("lintel", etc.) was also made of wood, often of valuable species (cedar, etc.). Only the outer enclosing walls were made of stone. Particular emphasis is placed on the description of bedrooms and pantries, weapons arsenals, as well as garden plots and water sources on the territory of the house and beyond. Quite accurately, the poet depicted the features of the arrangement of wooden and stone furniture that formed the interiors of courtyards, dining rooms and bedrooms" [Polyakov, 2015, 296-297].

Oikos included a family with slaves; the whole house was turned inward, to the central courtyard, and turned to the street with blank walls. Usually the family consisted of several children and slaves: the slaves served, cared for the children, and did needlework. Wealthier citizens had workshops at home where slaves worked, and they also had slave musicians and dancers [Blavatsky, 1973, 97].

The construction of two-story houses was quite common: this made it possible to reduce the building area and accommodate more compactly. If the second floors were equal in size to the first, they could contain dozens of rooms; as is known, the second floors could hang over the first ones, and this technique was so common that, as a result, already at the end of the 6th century, it was banned in Athens [The universal history of architecture, 1973, 151-152]. The second floors were reached by wooden stairs inside the house, which were most often located near one of the walls of the courtyard [ibid., 151].

According to the written evidence of Athenian sources, the houses of the Greeks were divided into a male part (andron) and a female part (gunaikon); however, the functioning of these parts is not yet entirely clear. Xenophon writes in his "Domestic tyranny": "the female half is separated from the male half by a door with a bolt so that it cannot be taken out of the house, which should not be, and so that the servants do not produce children without our knowledge" [Xenophon, 1935, 284]. Despite indications of "male" feasts-symposiums, mixed companies at feasts are often seen on ceramic paintings: it is possible that these women were hetairas or courtesans, but this indication does not solve the problem of dividing the house into "male" and "female" spaces. There are indications that the female part could be located upstairs (in particular, in the Odyssey), but Aristophanes mentions that the spouses spent time together upstairs [Nevett, 2001, 18-19]. Perhaps the "female" and "male" parts are more correctly considered as private and public spaces. Private areas were restricted to the family, while public areas (andron) were open to visitors, but not to women from the family. Roman authors testified to this: for example, the history of Cornelius Nepos wrote in the 1st century BC: "In Greece, it's completely different: women are not allowed to feast at all, only to feasts of close relatives, and they sit only in the inner part of the house, called gyneconitis, where no one has access except those who are closely related to them ..."[cit. ex: Zubov, Petrovsky, 1940, 137-138].

Andron was the compositional core of the house: this is the hall in which men's meetings and feasts, symposiums took place. For better illumination, this privileged part of the house was located in the south-eastern part of the courtyard, and windows were cut through in its southern wall; from the windows the host could see guests or clients [Jameson, 1990]. In terms of plan, the andron was rectangular or square, with an area of no more than 25 square meters. This hall was decorated especially luxuriously, as it was the place of reception of the most important guests. The floor was covered with a pebble mosaic; drainage grooves were arranged in it – obviously, it was washed abundantly after feasts. There were frescoes on the walls. The hall was surrounded on three sides by a low stone platform, on which the guests sat or lay; the number of lodges was usually odd [Polyakov, Krasovsky, 2017, 12-14]. The Greeks ate with their hands and left the leftovers on the floor. Lighting in the evening was achieved by clay oil lamps; there were no candles [Puchkov, 2005, 35].

Wealthy houses could also have guest bedrooms. Vitruvius testifies to this: "On the right and on the left, there are chambers with separate doors, with cozy dining rooms and bedrooms, in order to receive visiting guests not in the peristyles, but in these living rooms ... Family people, while visiting, did not feel like they were in a foreign land, thanks to the freedom to live separately in these drawing rooms..." (Book VI, VII, 4) [Vitruvius, 2006, 122].

The women's part was usually in the back of the house or on the second floor. The *gynaikeion* included the spouses' bedroom, the daughters' quarters, and women's craft rooms [Nevett, 2007].

Living rooms in the classical era had wall paintings and mosaics as decoration. The walls were divided by horizontal seams and painted in three colors in different variations (usually white, yellow, red, and blue). The floors in the common and reception rooms were mosaic, while in the simpler rooms they were adobe, impregnated with lime mortar and painted with yellow paint, as Olynth's excavations confirm [Polyakov, Krasovsky, 2017, 15].

Here are some examples of houses with interesting interior details. "House of the Trident" on Delos, 2nd century BC, included a beautiful mosaic in the peristyle, where a dolphin wraps around an anchor. The marble peristyle of this house consists of 12 Doric columns. The walls of the main rooms are painted with frescoes imitating precious stone masonry, decorative belts, and architectural ornaments. The floors of the main rooms are made in light colors [Polyakov, Krasovsky, 2017, 15-16]. The "House of Masks" on the same island occupied a whole block (39x45 m), included two peristyles and many rooms decorated with frescoes and mosaics; because of the nature of the mosaics, there is reason to believe that such a large house could serve as a hotel or boarding house for actors [The universal history of architecture, 1973, 326].

The houses of ancient Greece had a heating system. The central room with a hearth, an area of 25-27 square meters, was supplemented by a narrow shaft in the role of a chimney through which the smoke went up. In this room, in the "kitchen", it was warmest of all, and here the family gathered by the hearth. In inclement weather, portable braziers were used for heating: earthenware vessels with two handles filled with red-hot coal.

The bathrooms were also equipped; comfortable baths, in particular, are equipped in the houses of Olynthus. Bathrooms were usually connected to kitchens; the walls were plastered, the floors were adobe. The baths resembled terracotta or stone chairs, they were buried in the floor and placed in the corner of the room. Hot air entered the bathroom through the ceramic pipes of their firebox under the floor. Often, the houses had both sewerage and water supply [Polyakov, Krasovsky, 2017, 18-20].

The furniture in Greek houses was not rich, simple, but comfortable. Chairs featured curved legs and backs; there was a footstool next to the chair. There were pillows on the seats, often bedspreads on the backs. The owner of the house sat on a chair with the highest back [Garin, Razinkov, Chernyshev, 2005].

Beds (*wedges*) rested on high legs; the low headboard was decorated with reliefs. Another version of the bed was more like a modern sofa and had a headboard on three sides. The beds were covered with carpets and pillows; at night they covered themselves with blankets or skins. It was customary not only to sleep on beds, but also to reclining, reading or writing something. Wealthy houses also had beds in the form of wooden frames on low legs, where the base was made of braided braid or leather strips, and the mattress was stuffed with wool [The universal history of architecture, 1973, 341].

Wool and linen, and a little later silk, as well as animal skins and reed rugs were used as materials for the bed. The stuffing of mattresses and pillows consisted of materials such as wool, feathers, dry leaves, straw or hay. Although there were bed frames, there were no springs yet, so comfort depended on the thickness of the mattress, and it was not uncommon practice to have multiple mattresses per bed.

The huge difference between our idea of a comfortable bed and that of the Greeks is how it was made. Sheets were not regularly used in classical Greece. Bedspreads, cloaks and animal skins were placed directly on the mattress, and the person lying down at night wrapped himself in one of them, and covered himself with others on top for additional warmth. In addition, since couches-beds were used not only for sleeping, but also for reclining meals, pillows were of particular importance. Pillows and bedspreads in the images are seen mainly on the thrones and couches. Images of simpler chairs have also been preserved: a backless chair (difros), a folding chair (difros okladias), and a lounge chair (klismos) [Richter, 1965].

Low tables stood at the boxes, they were round or rectangular. Clothes and shoes, books were stored in chests decorated with metal lining or inlay. Decorative vases with paintings played a special role in the interior. They were floor or smaller: small ones could be placed in niches, on shelves, hung on metal hooks. There could be incense burners in the rooms. In the interior of the richest houses there were also marble statues. Clay or metal lamps were hung or placed on stands.

Conclusion

The interior of the Greek dwelling developed over time: from the first small houses built around the hearth to multi-room two-story mansions in the peristyle, with natural insolation and aeration of the premises. During the Archaic period, one-two-room houses became multi-room: from the early Iron Age, rooms were located one after another, thus creating a radial peristyle courtyard environment. The reform of the archaic period was the separation of personal and official buildings. The house for the gods required new architecture, however, italso came out of a simple house. The courtyard was the venue for various ritual activities; it also provided natural light for the often small houses. According to the written evidence of Athenian sources, the houses of the Greeks were divided into a male part (andron) and a female part (gunaikon); however, the functioning of these parts cannot be called completely unambiguous. Living rooms in the classical era had wall paintings and mosaics as decoration. The bathrooms were also equipped; comfortable baths, in particular, are equipped in the houses of Olynthus. Bathrooms were usually connected to kitchens; the walls were plastered, the floors were adobe. The furniture in Greek houses was not rich, simple, but comfortable. Wool and linen, and a little later silk, as well as animal skins and reed rugs were used as materials for the bed.

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Греческий дом как космос: к истории интерьера античности

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Аннотация

Статья посвящена истории греческого интерьера как способа выражения отношения древнего грека к окружающему миру. Древнегреческое слово oikos относится к трем взаимосвязанным, но различным понятиям: семья, собственность семьи и дом. Oikos был основной ячейкой общества в большинстве греческих городов-государств. Центральную часть в жилище греков, как и у других народов древности, занимал очаг. Огонь был символом как родовой, так и соседской общности, символизируя центр мироздания – и города, квартала, дома. В архаический период одно-двух комнатные дома стали многокомнатными: начиная с раннего железного века, комнаты располагались одна за другой, создавая таким образом радиальное окружение дворика-перистиля. Реформой архаического периода стало разделение личного и официального строений. Дом для богов требовал новой архитектуры, однако и он вышел из простого дома. Внутренний двор был местом проведения различных ритуальных мероприятий; он также обеспечивал естественное освещение для часто небольших домов. По письменным свидетельствам афинских источников, дома греков делились на мужскую часть (andron) и женскую (gunaikon); однако функционирование этих частей нельзя назвать вполне однозначным. Жилые комнаты в классическую эпоху в качестве декора имели стенные росписи и мозаики. Ванные комнаты были также оборудованы; удобные ванны, в частности, оборудованы в домах Олинфа. Ванные обычно сообщались с кухнями; стены были оштукатурены, полы – глинобитные. Меблировка в греческих домах была небогатой, простой, но удобной. В качестве материалов для кровати использовались шерсть, и лен, и немного позже шелк, а также шкуры животных и тростниковые коврики.

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Ключевые слова

Древняя Греция, история античности, история повседневности, история жилища, история интерьера.

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