INTRODUCTION: WHY THE HOUSEHOLD?

T HE HOUSEHOLD HAS BEEN A UNIT OF PRIME IMPORTANCE IN SOCIAL investigation to a wide range of disciplines for nearly half a century. It has also been the focus of a fruitful interdisciplinary dialogue. Archaeology shares many interests with this discussion, and the many theoretical and practical justifications for the significance of household in the related social disciplines are also highly relevant to archaeology.

Household is not one thing but many: a social group; the network of tasks, roles, responsibilities, and relationships (internal and external) that this group encompasses; and the materiality, spatiality, and temporality through which it exists and is defined. It is a location of action, a collection of actors, a pattern of social, economic, and ritual activity, and a system of social relations, economic arrangements, cultural meanings, and moral and emotional patterns. Households also incorporate transitional processes: continuity and changes of membership, partnerships, repertoire of activities and material dimensions, shifts in intra– and interhousehold social relationships, and constant interactions between changes in their organisation and changes in the broader society.

Households are enduring social formations. They occur diachronically, cross-culturally, and at various societal levels. As it has been succinctly put in anthropology, "most people in most societies at most times live in households" (Kunstadter 1984: 300). They also have wider social and cultural boundaries and may pervade, transcend, or indeed encompass other units and formations such as families, kinship groups, or co-residential groups. In many anthropological,

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historical, and sociological case studies households comprise complex and shift-
ing socioeconomic and ritual groups, whose members may not be kin-related
and may not all reside in the same architectural unit (e.g., Bourdieu 1996;
Burton et al. 2002; Carter 1984; Hammel and Laslett 1974; Lévi-Strauss 1987:
160, 178–80; Segalen 1986: 14–17; Solien de Gonzalez 1969). In this sense
households can be of wider analytical applicability and comparative utility.

Household's many dimensions and levels of analysis give it the potential for
a dynamic theoretical and analytical interface of a host of mutually transformed
themes, issues, and domains (e.g., Ilcan and Phillips 1998; Netting et al. 1984a;
Small and Tannenbaum 1999). For example, household is particularly crucial
for the study of economic systems, modes of production, division of labour,
and distribution, and a most interesting field for addressing the question of the
relationship between production and distribution and between moral econ-
omy and political economy. Equally, the studies of gender, kinship, class, race,
ethnicity, and inequality all provide further conditions for the understanding
of households, as this is where many of these differences or inequalities are
realised, as are those of inheritance and property patterns, social networks, and
reproductive strategies. As a site with great intensity of social relations, prac-
tices, choices, and decisions, household is a critical place for studying social
action and for addressing notions topical in contemporary social archaeology
and anthropology: social identity, memory, power, position, and complexity.
For the same reasons, practice and agency theories, widely debated in archae-
ology, also have special pertinence to household.

Household is also a strategic site for observing and understanding social and
cultural variation, and beyond that, some of the factors and processes which
produce it. Households may vary considerably in form – size, structure, and
spatial dimension; in the ways in which they organise themselves and their
daily lives across and within cultures and through time; in belief systems; in
the kinds of options and choices they exploit; and in the extent to which they
'plan' their activities in the short term and the long term (Anderson et al.
1994: 11–15). The character and forms of household interact closely with the
cultural principles and socioeconomic processes of the society within which
households exist and cannot be fully understood outside of them. Charting
and understanding this variability is an essential step in any understanding of
social dynamics. This holds for all social studies, but is particularly true for
prehistoric studies, in which there is a tendency to provide overall accounts of
long-term structural changes, behaviour, or 'evolution', often through a major
focus on larger spatial and temporal scales. An awareness of the varying realities
of the household can promote an attempt to move beyond the big models for
change and towards different scales of interpretation.

Understanding households is important for archaeology. Archaeology
can tackle issues of interest to anthropologists, historians, sociologists, and

economists, still focusing on its own materialist concerns and retaining its
privilege of witnessing the long-term sequence of events. In fact, archaeol-
ogy, with the materiality and historical depth of its data, is in a favourable
position to study households and to make important and influential contri-
butions to wider social research. It can expand considerably the knowledge
of the diversity and multidimensionality of social units, both synchronically
and diachronically; provide insights into social configurations, rules, and ideals
that may no longer exist; and add a historical perspective to transformations
of households and wider transformations. A central argument of this book
is that a social archaeological approach to household is particularly crucial to
an interpretative theory of social organisation as a dialectical, historical, and
dynamic process. In this way the household can also serve as a common frame
of reference, a point of dialogue between archaeology and its related disciplines.

However, archaeology's contribution to this interdisciplinary problemati-
sation has been limited, despite the proliferation of archaeological works on
houses and households in recent decades and the increasing concerns with
interdisciplinarity. It is largely through a collection of theories, frames of
research, methods, and case studies that one can approach the household
archaeologically. And although all of them have produced useful insights, many
can be criticised for their social models. Useful research extends from economic
systems and strategies (e.g., Feinman 2000; Halstead and O'Shea 1989; Mar-
cus and Stanish 2005) to the symbolism and ideology surrounding architecture
(e.g., Parker Pearson and Richards 1994a; Richards 2004; Watkins 2005), and
from a focus on material culture (e.g., DeMarrais et al. 2005; Hodder 2005a)
to debates on memory, identity, and social agency (e.g., Barrett 2001; Bradley
2002; Diaz-Andreu et al. 2005; Dobres and Robb 2000), all of which, in turn,
might apply to both intra- and interhousehold levels. The important contri-
butions of much of this research have developed in ways which have yet to
be fully integrated into the analysis of households. Conversely, the issue of
household has yet to be fully included into archaeology's theoretical and inter-
pretative practice. At the same time, many archaeological debates have moved
onto other analytical scales: of the individual or the person on the one hand, or
of anonymous and much larger collectives on the other, variously but vaguely
labelled community or society.

It has sometimes been argued within archaeology that the household is
elusive, its identification an unfeasible task; that archaeology does not recover
households; and that the concepts and notions involved in household have little
application to the material world familiar to the archaeologist (see discussion in
Alexander 1999: 80–82 and Souvatzi 2007a). I argue, instead, that the problem
is not with the archaeological data but rather with the kinds of questions we ask
of them or with an inadequate conceptualisation of household. The elusiveness
of the household and the supposed inability of the archaeological data to stand

up to the requirements of a 'proper' understanding of household dynamics, compared to the data available in anthropology and the social sciences, or even in historical archaeology, should no longer be an excuse. We should focus on the considerable data we already have, a substantial corpus of which comes from everyday life contexts, instead of constantly referring to what we lack. Besides, the household is as elusive for archaeology as it is for its related disciplines (e.g., see Allison 1999: 2–3; Burton et al. 2002: 66; Nevett 1999: 6–12; and Segalen 1986: 27, 110 for the biases that may be involved in historical records, interviews, iconographic evidence, and so on). Although we may not be able to determine the finer points of the definition of households or their composition, households as activity groups, as collectivities, and as enduring social formations have material components that can be traced over the remarkable time and space scales available to archaeology. It is precisely the materiality, spatiality, temporality, historicity, and specificity of households that connect them to key social phenomena, that create links between household organisation and patterns in the archaeological data, and that therefore make them particularly appropriate analytical units for archaeology.

AIMS AND STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

This work focuses on the spatial and material patterning of the remains of household activities and daily practices and attempts to tie this to an interpretation of household and wider social organisation, using empirical data from Neolithic Greece. The preliminary framework of thought, concerns, and questions above define the aims and arguments that follow.

A main concern is with issues of theories and practice and their articulation into an integrated approach to household as process in archaeology. Chapters 1 and 2 focus on the conceptual and social definition of household, for it is in this area that we can recognise the multiplicity of factors which make up its diversity and dynamics. Questions relate to the nature of appropriate theories and methods, the recognition of sociocultural variability, and the evaluation of disciplinary contributions. Because I feel that archaeological approaches to household still have much to reflect upon before they can capture its social dynamics, I begin this book (Chapter 1), perhaps unorthodoxly, by presenting the main points of the discussion not in archaeology but in the social sciences, in which the dialectics of both household and research have been established and a comprehensive framework has been constructed. This review can be valuable as both a reference point and a starting point for new ways of thinking. Chapter 2 discusses critically the situation in our discipline and offers an alternative framework for interpretation. I argue that the goal of capturing the social dynamics of household in archaeology is achievable, provided we bridge two divides: an internal one between various archaeological approaches, and

an external one between archaeology and its related disciplines. We should not be isolated from wider social theory, but neither should we apply such theory when clearly inappropriate.

Although the book has a considerable theory and methodology element, this serves to set the background for the empirical analysis that forms my main arguments. The major task is to investigate the issues outlined above by bringing together all lines of archaeological evidence available. I intend to demonstrate that by employing a bottom–up viewpoint, and by focusing attention on socio-culturally specific issues and intrasite variability, we gain invaluable insights into the patterns of household activity, ideology, and morphology and into the use of space within a settlement, and from these we can develop a new approach to understanding past societies. Such an approach is particularly appropriate for contexts such as Neolithic Greece, whose architectural and material data not only are rich and complex, but also are derived almost in their entirety from houses and settlements. This important characteristic associates Greece with many other parts of the prehistoric world in which households are key units of analysis, such as central and eastern Europe and the Near and Middle East.

Yet, in Greek Neolithic research, as generally in wider prehistoric research, the recognition of the fundamental social significance of household has not come easily. To date, there has been little systematic effort to look to the contents of houses with the aim of moving beyond generalisations and towards interpretations of Neolithic life. I aim specifically at such integration at the household level. Attempts to use extensive study of the internal layout of settlements as a basis for examining social, economic, and ideological organisation rely on analysis of primary data, unpublished and published, recent and older, from the more extensively excavated sites. Chapter 3 provides a brief outline of Neolithic Greece to set in context the case studies in Chapters 4 to 7. The sites on which I concentrate in Chapters 4 and 5, Nea Nikomedeia, Sesklo, and Dimini, are among the most famous of the Greek Neolithic and also figure prominently in syntheses of the European Neolithic or of aspects of it (e.g., Bailey 2000; 2005; Chapman and Gaydarska 2006; Whittle 1996). Earlier interpretations of these sites have been left largely unchallenged. I also provide an account of my analysis of the ceramic material from Dimini (Chapter 5), as its production, distribution, and use are closely linked to household economy and ideology.

In Chapter 4, I examine the evidence from the earlier Neolithic settlements of Nea Nikomedeia and Sesklo and compare this with the widely held belief that the complexity of later Neolithic societies was preceded by a long and relatively uniform period of idealised simplicity and homogeneity. Attention focuses on the distinction between the ideal and the real both at the theoretical and at the methodological level.

Chapter 5 constitutes an important methodological stage in the attempt to understand past societies from the bottom up, providing a detailed case study in household organisation. It examines the remains of household practices from Late Neolithic Dimini and integrates these with the notion of meaningfully and purposefully structured spaces – both residential and communal. A central theme here is the conceptual and analytical separation of social complexity from inequality and hierarchy. This also involves consideration of the notions of reciprocity and antagonism, independence and interdependence, and social differentiation and integration.

Chapters 6 and 7 bring other important sites of the Greek Neolithic world into a comparative synthesis which illustrates the need to shift away from the preoccupation with the big picture and towards a consideration of the entire range of variation – spatial and temporal – underneath it. In Chapter 6, attention is directed to the recognition of difference and patterning, as seen in, among other things, household activities and ideologies, the examination of patterns of similarities and differences, and their articulation and meaning. In Chapter 7, I try to pull all the evidence together to offer concrete examples of what goes on underneath the general tendencies of the Neolithic sequence. I take a diachronic perspective on continuities and changes and their range and character. This means little in terms of a chance to account for a uniform 'household evolution'. I argue instead that courses of progression are so fluid, ambiguous, and context-specific that it is impossible to enclose them into uniform and predictive models. Discussion includes the means, media, and mechanisms through which changes occurred or continuities were maintained, and what might have been their stimuli and consequences.

In focusing on the household, I have not intended to suggest a hierarchy of levels; rather to point out that any socioeconomic discourse constructed in the absence of these multifaceted, dynamic social units is not only complacent, but bound to prove unconvincing. In each of the data chapters (4–7), as well as in Chapters 1 and 2, there is an attempt to link the large scale with individual variation and choice. It is hoped that the analysis of such evidence will highlight a new meaning for the patterns and interpretations concerning the large scale.

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THE HOUSEHOLD IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

T HIS CHAPTER LOOKS AT THE CONCEPT OF 'HOUSEHOLD' AS IT IS WIDELY understood and approached in the social sciences, focusing attention on the recognition of household's multiple but interdependent facets and analytical levels. It aims to show the richness and dynamics of the subject, drawing on the breadth of household studies – theoretical and empirical – in our related disciplines, particularly anthropology, sociology and history. The concepts of 'household', 'family'/'kinship', 'co-residence', 'house', and 'domestic group', often taking the same name in the archaeological literature, are categorically different, whereas uniformity, predictability, and fixity barely correspond to household organisation at all. The problematisation outlined here is a starting point for what follows in the rest of the book.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF 'HOUSEHOLD' AS AN ANALYTICAL CONCEPT

Like households themselves, household studies have not been shaped outside history; they have grown out of earlier approaches and earlier research agendas. A brief consideration of this history is important to an understanding of the reasons for the emergence of household as an analytical concept and of its significance in social analysis.

Research on domestic institutions and social groupings originated in the nineteenth century under scholars such as Morgan, Bachofen, LePlay, McLennan, Maine, and Engels and was further developed in the first half of this

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century by Malinowski, Murdock, Lowie, Fortes, and others. However, until as late as the 1960s, the household was not a realised category in social analysis. Earlier discussion had almost entirely revolved around kinship systems, family history, descent groups, marriage customs, hereditary patterns, and rules of residence in order to build models of social and political structures and cultural evolution. These categories were supposed to be at once universally recognised, linked together in a cross-culturally valid fashion, and resistant to historical change. Their relationships were accounted for largely through classificatory schemes, genealogies, and terminological analysis, whereas kinship, economics, and politics were perceived as discrete analytical domains with fixed boundaries (see Parkin and Stone 2004 for a full review of earlier kinship studies). Fortes's (1958) classic separation between the 'politico-jural' and the 'domestic' domains maintained that the former is constituted by the social principles of kinship and the political and economic spheres, whereas the latter includes the family, conceptualised as a site of nurture, sustenance, and psychological and emotive considerations and as marginal to social, economic, and political organisation. The household was viewed as a residual of such rules and structures and as being just as resistant to change (Netting et al. 1984b; Roberts 1991). In addition, any variability was regarded as an exception or deviation from the normative ideal (Carter 1984: 73). For example, the ideal normality that was sought in the nuclear family as a universal social institution masked the diverse reality and the plurality of cultures and promoted a treatment of other forms as 'pathological'. True, the role of economic cooperation in social grouping as well as of inequalities based on gender had been stressed at an early stage (Engels 1972), the more flexible concept of the 'domestic group' had already appeared (Fortes 1958; Goody 1958), and cultural variation had been noted. However, research remained largely attached to classificatory approaches, offering increasingly abstract and formalist models regarding associations of subsistence systems, labour organisation, kinship forms, locality, and societal types.

It was in this context that the household emerged as a more significant analytical concept in the 1960s, the result of increasing dissatisfaction with the normative, ahistorical character of the earlier approaches, the concomitant recognition of the dynamics and variability of social units, and the profound criticism of the evolutionism, functionalism, structuralism, and structural–functionalism that had been employed up until then (e.g., Netting et al. 1984b; Roberts 1991; Wilk and Netting 1984; Yanagisako 1979). This epistemological shift contributed to the full revelation of the diversity, multidimensionality, and historical specificity of household and to a view of it as a process rather than a norm (cf. Hammel 1972), constructed and realised through everyday practices and relationships.

Another important point is that academic interaction started soon after the household appeared as a new analytical category. At its heart was the

epistemological and analytical status of the concept (e.g., Bender 1967; Rapp 1979; Wilk 1991; Yanagisako 1979). For example, the fact that the household occurs across cultures and societies might lead to a focus on its universal properties, reifying the socioculturally specific household forms, endangering the identification of variation, and leading the research again to normative and stabilising approaches. Thus, concepts, perspectives, and approaches have been subjected to criticism, resulting in significant refinements and clarifications and generating an impressive number of studies. Household research has been influenced and greatly benefited by the impact of Marxist-feminist and feminist critiques from the 1970s onwards. Household studies and gender studies have continuously informed each other, and, despite certain tensions between them, it has been in a context of constant interaction and mutual transformation of research questions, agendas, and approaches that a reconceptualisation both of household and of gender as processes has been achieved (Morgan 1999). This was followed, from the mid-1990s onwards, by the revitalisation of kinship and the reconceptualisation of it as a process – that is, a way of 'becoming kin', through human agency and everyday practices which may have little or nothing to do with the Eurocentric and 'biologised' conceptions of kinship or the idealism and formalism of earlier studies (Carsten 1997, 2000; Schweitzer 2000; Stone 2004a, 2004b; Yanagisako and Delaney 1995). Indeed, to paraphrase Carsten (2000: 19), the discussion of kinship in contemporary anthropology in many ways seems to replicate an analogous discussion of household (and of gender) in earlier decades which questioned its 'natural' basis and revealed its social and political character.

Thus, discussions of household reflect growing interdisciplinary interests as well as increasing awareness of the fluidity and permeability of analytical domains in general. The important implications of co-relating the various converging themes and directions can be seen in numerous works (e.g., see Anderson et al. 1994 on household and economy; Chant 1997 on household and gender; Fraad et al. 1994 and McKie et al. 1999 on household, class, gender, and power; Kabeer 1991 on household production, distribution, and gender; also, Cheal 1989 on moral and political economy; Han 2004 on kinship and production; Komter 2005 and Sykes 2005 on social solidarity, gift exchange, power, and status; Yanagisako and Collier 1987 and Stone 2005 on kinship, gender, and reproduction). The following discussion draws on this recent development of thought and elaborates on key issues, turning points, and reasons critical to a view of household as process.

DEFINING HOUSEHOLD

Household has been a difficult concept to tackle. Households are not fixed and monolithic entities; they are shifting and fluid organising principles, whose boundaries are not clear-cut. Some of the factors affecting household

boundaries across space and through time include the disparities between cultural ideals and actual practice; rules and conceptions about who can belong to a household (e.g., Burton et al. 2002); forms and roles of organisation of production, resource allocation, labour participation, decision-making, and bargaining strategies (e.g., Chant 2002); changing inheritance, kinship, marriage, and sexuality patterns (e.g., Segalen 1986). Definitional complexity also has to do with household's polysemy, its implication of multiple but different concepts such as family, co-residence, and domestic group, as well as with household's familiarity to everyone. This 'empirical, felt knowledge' could pose biases to household's study and understanding. Yanagisako (1979: 200) timely outlined the problem:

> the dilemmas we encounter in cross-cultural comparisons of . . . households stem not from our want of unambiguous, formal definitions of these units, but from the conviction that we can construct a precise, reduced definition for what are inherently complex, multifunctional institutions imbued with a diverse array of cultural principles and meanings.

However, although a unitary concept of this diverse and contradictory social entity is inappropriate, a concern with definitions is fundamental to an understanding of household as a process. Indeed, it has been one of the main factors contributing to a sense of fluidity and flux in household studies. Rather than trying *a priori* to delineate household boundaries, the challenge is, following Hammel (1984: 31; also Wilk 1991), to construct a flexible analytical notion of household which can accommodate the diversity of household forms and local conceptions of household, as well as different research questions and dimensions, and which would permit observations and comparisons. In searching for an appropriate approach, two main methods were employed. First, because the term 'household' appears to gloss a variety of social forms, it has been considered essential to refine the concept. Second, because the morphology of the household is socioculturally specific and unpredictable, emphasis was placed primarily on the role or activity of household rather than on its formal classifications.

Extensive household research has shown that the activities consistently associated with the household consist minimally of production, consumption/distribution, and reproduction; several scholars also include transmission (e.g., Wilk and Netting 1984: 5). The view of household as an activity group moves away from formalism and pre-given definitions and towards a focus on the actions and interactions of people through household co-membership and cooperation in a set of practices. This is not to say that all households cross-culturally and diachronically perform the entire set of the above activities or that these cannot take place outside the household. Similarly, there are other activities that sometimes are carried out in the household and other times are not.