



Household Interests: Property, Marriage Strategies, and Family Dynamics in Ancient Athens (Princeton Legacy Library)

Cheryl Anne Cox

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Household Interests is one of the first books to explore in-depth the nature of the Greek household (*oikos*) in classical Athens. Whereas the *oikos* traditionally has been defined as the household of the nuclear family in Greece, Cheryl Anne Cox reveals it as a much more fluid structure, taking care to distinguish between the concepts of "household" and "family." The legal basis of the typical elite household emerges as Cox describes marriage patterns or strategies among the families represented in Attic orations and funerary inscriptions: property interests were a strong motivating force, with the elite marrying within their kin, primarily through paternal lines in which property was transferred. The author ultimately shows that the household was not limited to "family" or kinspeople. Friends, neighbors, concubines or prostitutes, and slaves also shared in property interests and all could have a profound influence on the household.

After first examining marriage patterns, Cox turns to inter-family relationships. Using anthropological sources and historical studies of European societies, she shows how property interest shaped often conflicted relations between parents and their children and among brothers, and yet it encouraged male charity toward sisters. Cox next considers how property transfer through adoption, guardianship, and remarriage, and the intervention of friends, concubines, and slaves, all contributed to expanding the boundaries of the household beyond kin.

Originally published in 1998.

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