

THE CLASSIC ROMAN HOUSE:

FORM & FUNCTION

By

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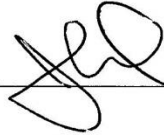
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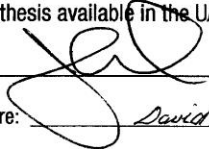
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## The Classic Roman House: Form & Function

### *Abstract*

How did the Roman house function and what indicators of the activities taking place in it are left behind for archaeologists to interpret today? This paper explores this question through an analysis of both architectural and material remains from aristocratic Roman homes, applying contemporary theory regarding the impact of culture on architectural forms. The results of this research suggest that the home was the center of many aspects of Roman social life, from birth to death, and that, for a Roman, the interrelationships of these aspects of daily life were reflected in the architecture and material remains of their homes.

### *Introduction*

The iconic Italian *atrium*-style home is defined by a large, public, central room with flanking rooms or wings and smaller, private areas for the Roman families who lived in it. The *atrium*-style home not only functioned as a domicile but also as a center for business negotiations and private entertainment for both the family and their clients. The evolution of the Roman patron-client relationship can be seen in the development of the *atrium*-style house throughout Roman and Etruscan history and was closely linked to developing economic systems on the Italian peninsula. Homeowners reinforced their social status through the location, decoration and accessibility of their homes. As status was crucial for relationships with clients, it was important that patrons impress clients with every aspect of the home, from the experience of entering the home to enjoying the evening meal with their patron and finally enjoying a walk through the peristyle with a friendly discussion about topics such as Roman elegy.

Via descriptions of the architectural characteristics of these homes, an analysis of the use of the home in the social context of ancient Rome and Pompeii, and reference to contemporary theories on how culture plays a defining role in the forms of domestic structures, I will discuss how a typical aristocratic Roman home would have been experienced by a visitor or client and also by the family and slaves living and working within it, including the *paterfamilias* or owner.

*The Development of the Atrium House – From the Etruscans to the Romans*

The Etruscans, precursors to the Romans in central Italy, may be credited with the development of the *atrium*-style house and the social framework enabled through it. The *atrium* house developed in Italy from single room huts made of wattle-and-daub construction in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE (Figure 1).<sup>1</sup> Archaeological remains of such dwellings have been found: foundations and post-holes at the Etruscan sites of San Giovenale, Tarquinia, and Veii as well as on the Palatine Hill in Rome.<sup>2</sup> These single room huts were typically ovoid in shape compared to the rectangular-shaped houses that would follow.<sup>3</sup> Early Etruscan huts eventually evolved into quadrilateral homes with tufa foundations of one or more rooms in the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE.<sup>4</sup> These homes boasted overhanging thatched roofs supported by outer walls and pillars in the middle of the room.<sup>5</sup> The interiors of these ‘long-houses’ could be subdivided into several rooms by transverse walls.<sup>6</sup> These quadrilateral structures eventually developed into an *atrium*-like structure and the peristyle-type of home so characteristic of Roman urban living (Figure 2).

The *atrium*-style home familiar to Etrusco-Roman scholars developed out of the addition of rooms to the simple ‘longhouse’ structure during the Etruscan Archaic Period (575-480 BCE) at sites like Marzabotto, Acquarossa and Veii.<sup>7</sup> These houses consisted of a large central room with a porch on the front and rooms added onto the left and right flanks, which would eventually

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<sup>1</sup> Boëthius, Axel, *Etruscan and Early Roman Architecture*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992) pp. 34, 75; Haynes, Sybille, *Etruscan Civilization: A Cultural History*, (LA: Getty Publications, 2005) pp. 5-6; Waites, Margaret C., "The Form of the Early Etruscan and Roman House," *Classical Philology* 9.2 (1914) pp. 114.

<sup>2</sup> Haynes, *Etruscan Civilization: A Cultural History*, 5.

<sup>3</sup> Boëthius, *Etruscan and Early Roman Architecture*, 34, 64, 90-92; Prayon, Friedhelm, "Architecture", in *ETRUSCAN Life and Afterlife*, edited by Larissa Bonfante, 174-201, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1986) pp. 189.

<sup>4</sup> Prayon, "Architecture", 190.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid; Haynes, *Etruscan Civilization: A Cultural History* 73-74.

<sup>7</sup> Boëthius, *Etruscan and Early Roman Architecture*, 75, 77; Prayon, "Architecture", 190.

become the *cubicula* and *alae* in Roman house plans. They were made of clay, wood and ashlar walls of tufa.<sup>8</sup> These additional rooms may have served as bedrooms, kitchens, storage rooms or workrooms and could function dynamically within the home.<sup>9</sup> Aristocratic homes of this style also received additional layers of elegance at this time: tile roofs, gabled and lavishly-decorated flat roofs, *vousoir* arches, coffered ceilings, and roofs supported by columns of Doric, Aeolic, and Tuscan types.<sup>10</sup> The interiors of these homes were of wood or stone and mud brick, and could have been plastered and painted.<sup>11</sup>

Early examples of the *atrium*-style house are the *atrium testudinatum* and the *atrium displuviatum*.<sup>12</sup> The *atrium testudinatum* is characterized by a large central room without a roof aperture for lighting or collecting rainwater, while the *atrium displuviatum* is characterized by a large central room with a central roof opening and an outward-sloping roof to allow rainwater to be diverted onto the street.<sup>13</sup> The *atrium tuscanicum* was the result of the progression of the *testudinatum* and *displuviatum* styles, with a large central room having a large central inward-sloping opening in the roof, a *compluvium*, which allowed for the collection of water into a central pool, or *impluvium*, replacing the need for courtyard wells.<sup>14</sup> Early evidence for this type of *compluvium-impluvium* structure comes from Roselle and dates to the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE.<sup>15</sup> Some of these homes would have had roofs covered in terra cotta plaques, which would have added to the overall decoration of elite homes in a society with a rapidly developing

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<sup>8</sup> Boëthius, *Etruscan and Early Roman Architecture*, 75, 77; Prayon, "Architecture", 174, 190.

<sup>9</sup> Prayon, "Architecture", 190.

<sup>10</sup> Boëthius, *Etruscan and Early Roman Architecture*, 80-86.

<sup>11</sup> Prayon, "Architecture", 190.

<sup>12</sup> Waites, "The Form of the Early Etruscan and Roman House," 114.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Boëthius, *Etruscan and Early Roman Architecture*, 89; Waites, "The Form of the Early Etruscan and Roman House," 114.

<sup>15</sup> Haynes, *Etruscan Civilization: A Cultural History*, 86.

and stratified social framework.<sup>16</sup> These homes were in use during the Republican and Imperial periods of Roman history.

*Functions, Fixtures, Architecture and Artifacts – How did the Home Work?*

The Romans were aware of the social functions of their homes. It has been suggested that visitors could discern the personality of an owner through the decorative and architectural elements within the home.<sup>17</sup> The determining of social space by rank is a critical characteristic of Roman domestic architecture, according to the dictates of which bedrooms (*cubicula*), dining rooms (*triclinia*), libraries, basilicas, galleries and private baths would have been open only to invited guests.<sup>18</sup> Public spaces within a home would have included vestibules, peristyles and *atria*. Without a need to impress clients, the average Roman citizen would have had no need for vestibules, *tablina*, or *atria* in his home. He would have performed his duties (*ambiundo*), including the morning *salutatio*, in the home of his patron.<sup>19</sup> Common, utilitarian domestic structures would also have lacked these more public elements.<sup>20</sup> The Roman house was often the setting of public life, within which public figures received dependents and friends and conducted their public business (*negotium*).<sup>21</sup> A man's clientele was his power base and the home was the locus of this power base, the place where important interactions took place.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Prayon, "Architecture", 190.

<sup>17</sup> While this honors thesis will focus on architecture and material remains, I will make mention of decorative wall styles. A full study of Roman wall frescoes is outside of the scope of this paper, and will not be covered in-depth here. There are several available texts on the subject of Roman wall paintings available, including Hales and Wallace-Hadrill. Wallace-Hadrill, Andrew, *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1994) pp. 3.

<sup>18</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum*, 10-11.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 11-12.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 11.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*.

For the purpose of this essay, a patron-client relationship will be defined as a vertical interdependency of a group or individuals based on an unequal distribution of resources between them.<sup>23</sup> Naturally, this suggests the existence of a defined aristocratic group which controls access to necessary resources with a lower class that is subservient to them. The adoption of a patron-client relationship model in ancient Roman society can be linked to the existence of a market-economy in which the patron benefits from unequal and sometimes non-comparable reciprocities.<sup>24</sup> In ancient Rome, the client was obligated to follow the direction of the patron, assisting in agricultural production and distribution and political canvassing, while also attending symposia, or performing daily tasks inside the patron's home.<sup>25</sup> This form of social structure allowed a Roman patron to obtain strong bargaining positions and to maintain his business affairs while performing public duties and attending to his social life. Correspondingly, this system also allowed the client to gain access to favors from the patron in the form of settling disputes, financial aid during periods of illness or for ceremonial expenses, food in lean times, etc.<sup>26</sup>

Three groups would have used the Roman house – the owner's family, his servants, and his friends or clients – and the public and private nature of areas within the house distinguished between outsiders and insiders within these three groups.<sup>27</sup> The owner's family and slaves would have been considered insiders, and to them access would have been granted to every area of the

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<sup>23</sup> Keith, Kathryn, "The Spatial Patterns of Everyday Life in Old Babylonian Neighborhoods", in *The Social Construction of Ancient Cities*, edited by Monica L. Smith, 56-80, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2003), pp. 58-60; Michie, Barry H., "The Transformation of Agrarian Patron-Client Relations: Illustrations from India," *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1981), pp. 21.

<sup>24</sup> Michie, "The Transformation of Agrarian Patron-Client Relations", 21-23.

<sup>25</sup> Michie, "The Transformation of Agrarian Patron-Client Relations", 26; Petronius, *Satyrica*.

<sup>26</sup> Aldrete, Gregory S. *Daily life in The Roman city: Rome, Pompeii, and Ostia*. Westport, CT: The Greenwood, 2004, pp. 44; Michie, "The Transformation of Agrarian Patron-Client Relations", 30, 35.

<sup>27</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, 38.

house to which a person of their status would normally have had access.<sup>28</sup> Friends would have been considered outsiders and further delineated as either *amici* or *clientes*.<sup>29</sup> Relative rankings within these two groups would have determined access to either grand or humble rooms, and thereby helped channel the flow of insiders and outsiders within the house.<sup>30</sup>

As a visitor approached the home, he would naturally have seen its exterior facade first. The facade of the house allowed the owner to illustrate the physical, visual boundary of the house, while not reinforcing the conceptual limits of his influence throughout the larger community.<sup>31</sup> The facades of individual houses in Rome and Pompeii were separated by shops flanking the front door, receding into the house and giving way to the entrance of the *domus* behind it.<sup>32</sup> The shops, which may have been owned by the *paterfamilias* and operated by his clients, were places where the public and private mixed and status divisions between patrons and clients were blurred.<sup>33</sup> This is important to note since a *paterfamilias*, if seeking to extend his power throughout the community, needed to be recognized as a man of the people and among the people, not separate from them. Such a blurring of the lines, however, would change drastically upon entering the *domus*.

Alongside walls covered with stucco, red paint, and perhaps some graffiti, the door was the only method of entrance into the house. The door would have been the only place for exterior self-promotion by the owner and may have been painted and adorned with his unique family insignia.<sup>34</sup> A home may have had a fixed seat or bench located outside or just inside the

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 38-39.

<sup>31</sup> Hales, Shelley. *The Roman House and Social Identity*, Cambridge, England: Cambridge UP, 2003, pp. 103.

<sup>32</sup> Hales, *The Roman House and Social Identity*, 103.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 104.

doorway, perhaps in an adjoining room, providing an area for the clients of the homeowner to wait to address the patron and participate in the morning *salutatio*.<sup>35</sup> From inside, the entrance would have appeared much more grand and impressive. For instance, the *fauces* would likely have been decorated with miniature stucco sculptures of grand, columned portals, giving the impression of an upper level.<sup>36</sup> The *fauces* connected the entrance to the *atrium* of the home and generally took the form of a high, narrow corridor with an upward sloping floor. They were thus highly restrictive and easily policed areas.<sup>37</sup> Excavations have shown that this area of the home often featured mosaics, sometimes illustrating guard dogs, which faced and tilted toward the visitor, providing entertainment to the visitor and a warning to unwelcome guests.<sup>38</sup>

The entranceway into the house was a crucial space for communication between homeowner and visitor (Figure 2). When the doors of the home were open, they allowed the visitor or passerby a thoroughly planned view of the *domus*. The central axis viewpoint would have suggested to the visitor, as he stood in the doorway, that the entire house had been arranged around where he stood. Before peristyles, the *tablinum* was likely the most central point in the house for the patron and his clients. Early in the development of the Roman home, this room may have served as the master bedroom. As the *domus* evolved, however, the *tablinum* became more of an office closely connected to the family history of the *paterfamilias* and acting as a repository for family records and memories.<sup>39</sup> Examples would include marble busts seen throughout the museums of modern Rome. The axial view of the visitor would have passed over the *impluvium*, the large central pool in the *atrium*, to the *tablinum* and possibly beyond to the

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<sup>35</sup> Allison, Penelope Mary. *Pompeian Households: An Analysis of the Material Culture*. Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, University of California, Los Angeles, 2004, pp. 65.

<sup>36</sup> Hales, *The Roman House and Social Identity*, 105.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 108-109.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 110-11.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 107.

peristyle and garden shrine, or *lararium*.<sup>40</sup> The symmetry of the house was designed to make a social impression on the visitor, who would be welcomed into the *atrium* as a morning reception area.<sup>41</sup>

At this point it is necessary to distinguish between public and private areas within a Roman home. Public and private spaces were not absolutes in a Roman house. Rather, they represent an increase in privilege, to which some areas were more private than others.<sup>42</sup> For instance, the *triclinium* was more private than reception areas, but, when compared to the *cubiculum*, was more public.<sup>43</sup> Naturally, access to areas that were more private was granted to privileged guests, those who had an intimate relationship with the owner or patron. The regal feel of a house would have been proportional to the number of public and private spaces it contained and the volume, disposition, shape and decoration of its rooms. Consequently, the largest room of a house would have served as an index for the house as a whole and elite structures with large reception areas would have been considered more regal than common domestic structures with enclosed reception areas.<sup>44</sup>

Quasi-public areas of elite domestic architecture aspired to the regal and divine scale of public buildings.<sup>45</sup> There is perhaps no better example of this kind of emulation than the use of the Greek column in Roman households. In the Greek world the column was only used in public architecture, but it is often seen in Roman domestic settings. Scholars have suggested that heavy use of the column in the peristyles and *atria* of certain areas of Roman homes was meant to

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 112-113.

<sup>41</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum, 44-45.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 17-33.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 20.

imply prestige.<sup>46</sup> As we have seen, the Romans did not necessarily distinguish between places of business and leisure in their homes. As a result, business and other types of public activities would necessarily have taken place in the more public rooms clustered around the main entrance of the house, the *atrium*, the *tablinum*, or the *triclinium*. Incidentally, these were also the rooms most associated with male social activity within the home.<sup>47</sup>

After entering the home, the first room a visitor would enter was the *atrium*. The *atrium* was a large court or hall, accessed from the street with an opening to the sky at the center of the roof (*compluvium*), allowing rainwater to feed a catchment pool in the floor (*impluvium*) and allowing the interior of the house to be lit naturally.<sup>48</sup> Other prominent features of *atria* were *lararia*, household shrines, and *aediculae*, small shrines, of household deities built into the wall.<sup>49</sup> *Atria* would have been furnished with wooden cupboards or chests with upright doors, holding primarily utilitarian items, providing room for bulk storage in *amphorae* or weaving implements such as looms.<sup>50</sup> Small niches may have been carved into the walls around the room, and may have contained lamps for lighting the home at night or small statuary pieces.<sup>51</sup>

It is important to remember that once the patron had finished with his morning reception of clients, he would have left the home to spend the remainder of the working day in the forum, visiting the baths, or attending races at the circus. During this period, the *atrium* of the house would have acted as a service area, serving primarily utilitarian functions around which all of the

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 20-22.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 47; Hales, *The Roman House and Social Identity*, 45.

<sup>48</sup> Allison, *Pompeian Households: An Analysis of the Material Culture*, 67.

<sup>49</sup> The *Lares* and *Penates* were household deities worshipped for protection and fortune to maintain the pantry. These deities would have the primary deities to occupy these small niches in the wall. Ibid, 67-69.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 69.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 48.

other members of the household revolved.<sup>52</sup> Because of this, this area of the house would have remained largely unfurnished to facilitate the circulation of guests and the members of the household, perhaps containing only a few pieces of movable display furniture for special occasions.<sup>53</sup> It may have been the case that the *atria* in the homes of non-elites were used exclusively for cottage industry and other utilitarian purposes, judging from archaeological finds of objects such as horse-bridles or leather working implements in such *atria*.<sup>54</sup>

The impact of entering the home was central to the development of social ties and the experience of the home. The view from the front entryway would have provided an axial view of the *tablinum*, the office space of the *paterfamilias* and location of his family records. When the owner stood in the *atrium* he would have seen the *tablinum*, the peristyle and the extent of his home, effectively an overall view of his domain, his personal forum. For wealthy Roman citizens this view would have bolstered their conception of their personal power within the community.<sup>55</sup> The *tablinum*, a large room at the rear of the *atrium*, was originally the master's bedroom and later the record room serving as the owner's study and business quarters. It would have been decorated with elaborate paneled wall paintings and wooden cupboards holding tablets which recorded family history and other personal and business documents.<sup>56</sup> This room may have also featured views of the peristyle or *hortus*, the household garden, beyond and contained movable wooden screens and folding doors that could partition areas of the house during symposia or

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 70.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Berry, Joanne. "Household artefacts: towards a re-interpretation of Roman domestic space", in Domestic Space in the Roman World: Pompeii and Beyond, edited by Ray Laurence and Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, 183-195. Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series Number Twenty-Two: Portsmouth, RI, 1997, pp. 194.

<sup>55</sup> Hales, The Roman House and Social Identity, 45.

<sup>56</sup> Allison, Pompeian Households: An Analysis of the Material Culture, 80-82; Hales, The Roman House and Social Identity, 128, 130, 146, 151; McKay, Houses, Villas, and Palaces in the Roman World, 33-34.

banqueting activities.<sup>57</sup> It would have been the location for the morning *salutatio* from clients, parasites and aides, and would have allowed the patron to remind his clients of their humble place in society via the architectural illustration of his own personal power.<sup>58</sup>

From the *tablinum*, a guest of the *paterfamilias* may have been invited into one of the home's *triclinia* for dinner (*cena*) or a glass of Falernian wine. A medium to large, narrow room at a corner of the *atrium* and facing onto the peristyle, the *triclinium* would traditionally have contained three elaborate dining couches. It would have been decorated with mosaics on the pavement and paintings on the walls.<sup>59</sup> Some homes may have had an open-air dining room, or summer *triclinium*, as the Romans had a great appreciation of air and light exposure. There might also have been here a distinct *lucundissimum murmur*, the sound of water circulating within the house, possibly from the *impluvium* or a fountain in the adjacent peristyle.<sup>60</sup> *Triclinia* may also have boasted the filthiest floors in the home, as suggested by mosaics by the Pergamene artist Sosos, and the fact that at the banquet of Trimalchio in Petronius' *Satyricon* the guests are not provided with plates.<sup>61</sup>

Following dinner, the *dominus* and his guests may have taken a walk in the peristyle to aid digestion and allow for discussion of anything from business to politics to philosophy. This would have allowed them an escape from the stresses of daily life, and enabled them to pursue *otium*, relaxation and pleasure.<sup>62</sup> Hellenic influence in the second century BCE resulted in

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<sup>57</sup> McKay, *Houses, Villas, and Palaces in the Roman World*, 34.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Allison, *Pompeian Households: An Analysis of the Material Culture*, 78; Hales, *The Roman House and Social Identity*, 87, 106, 113, 155-6; McKay, *Houses, Villas, and Palaces in the Roman World*, 142.

<sup>60</sup> Allison, *Pompeian Households: An Analysis of the Material Culture*, 21; McKay, *Houses, Villas, and Palaces in the Roman World*, 44.

<sup>61</sup> McKay, *Houses, Villas, and Palaces in the Roman World*, 142; Petronius, *The Satyricon*.

<sup>62</sup> Dickman, Jens-Arne. "The peristyle and the transformation of domestic space in hellenistic Pompeii", in *Domestic Space in the Roman World: Pompeii and Beyond*, edited by Ray Laurence and Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, 121-136. *Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series Number Twenty-Two*: Portsmouth, RI,

smaller backyard *horti* being replaced by larger peristyles, important additions for larger, more aristocratic home.<sup>63</sup> This large, paved, open-air area of the home was a hybrid of Greek and Roman culture, and brought the garden into the home. It gave a feeling of the outdoors to visitors and boasted real plantings, fountains, colonnaded areas, and family shrines. It provided an impression of public space within the home while still retaining the privacy required by the *paterfamilias* for more intimate negotiations between himself and his clients or friends.<sup>64</sup>

Peristyles could have served exclusively as decorative elements of the home, as true agricultural *horti*, or as painted landscapes.<sup>65</sup> In most cases this area of the home would have contained a cistern mouth feeding water into ornamental pools, fountains, or statue bases.<sup>66</sup> Other distinctive features of this area would have been outdoor stairways to the upper levels of the home, hearths, large *dolia* or *amphorae* for storage, marble sculpture or furniture, or even ladders or sticks for picking fruit from trees.<sup>67</sup> *Exedra*, areas used for writing and philosophical discussion with parallels in Greek gymnasia and *palaestra*, may have been adjoined to or built into the peristyle by the wealthiest of Roman aristocrats.<sup>68</sup>

Kitchens, placed at the rear of the home, were considered the realm of slaves and therefore were kept out of the public eye and away from the entrance.<sup>69</sup> Areas of the house designated specifically for the activities of slaves, including the kitchen and latrine, were often

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1997, pp. 125; George, Michele. "Elements of the peristyle in Campanian *atria*," *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, Vol. 11 (1998): pp. 84; McKay, *Houses, Villas, and Palaces in the Roman World*, 35.

<sup>63</sup> Dickmann, "The peristyle and the transformation of domestic space in hellenistic Pompeii", 127; Hales, *The Roman House and Social Identity*, 99.

<sup>64</sup> George, "Elements of the peristyle in the Campanian *atria*", 95; Hales, *The Roman House and Social Identity*, 131; McKay, *Houses, Villas, and Palaces in the Roman World*, 46.

<sup>65</sup> Hales, *The Roman House and Social Identity*, 153.

<sup>66</sup> Allison, *Pompeian Households: An Analysis of the Material Culture*, 84; George, "Elements of the peristyle in the Campanian *atria*", 93.

<sup>67</sup> Allison, *Pompeian Households: An Analysis of the Material Culture*, 86-87.

<sup>68</sup> Dickmann, "The peristyle and the transformation of domestic space in hellenistic Pompeii", 125.

<sup>69</sup> Hales, *The Roman House and Social Identity*, 103.

well separated from the main house.<sup>70</sup> Slaves working in these areas of the home would have been required to fetch water from the *impluvium* or the peristyle pools for use in cooking, cleaning, and flushing toilets, if piped-in water was unavailable for sinks or basins.<sup>71</sup> The walls of these rooms would often have been covered in plain plaster, or may have had *lararia* painted onto or carved into the walls.<sup>72</sup> Fixtures in these kitchens would have included hearths and cupboards containing cooking pots and eating utensils; latrines would have held either bench latrines or chamber pots.<sup>73</sup>

Latrines are also frequently found in kitchens, typically without any separating walls or devices.<sup>74</sup> While many luxury houses in Pompeii had built-in latrines, houses in Rome generally did not. Defecation and urination would have taken place in chamber pots within the home, public latrines built alongside public baths, or in specially cut *dolia* on street corners.<sup>75</sup> Slaves would have been expected to remove the contents of the latrines daily, loading the human waste with the city's night soil, while the urine collected from the *dolia* would have been sold to fullers for cleaning woolen togas.<sup>76</sup>

Finally, after a particularly raucous evening of drinking and discussion followed by a walk in the peristyle, a family guest may have been offered a bed in one of the many *cubicula* within the house. *Cubicula* were private rooms, usually located on either side of the *atrium*, ranging in size from nothing more than niches to moderately sized rooms depending on the

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 124.

<sup>71</sup> Allison, Pompeian Households: An Analysis of the Material Culture, 100; Hales, The Roman House and Social Identity, 125.

<sup>72</sup> Allison, Pompeian Households: An Analysis of the Material Culture, 100, 102; Hales, The Roman House and Social Identity, 124.

<sup>73</sup> Allison, Pompeian Households: An Analysis of the Material Culture, 99-101.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 99; Juvenal, *Satires*, 3.268 ff.

<sup>75</sup> Robinson, O. F. Ancient Rome: city planning and administration. New York, NY: Routledge, 1996, pp. 120-121.

<sup>76</sup> Robinson, Ancient Rome: city planning and administration, 121-122.

opulence of the home.<sup>77</sup> *Cubicula* may have been decorated with paintings as elegant as those in the *atrium*, or as plainly as the kitchen and latrine, depending on the intended use of the room.<sup>78</sup> Archaeology generally provides few clues to the function of individual *cubicula*, and these rooms may have served as variously as bedrooms, workrooms, or areas for more private types of entertainment.<sup>79</sup> A *cubiculum* may have had cupboards for storage, bedding, large or small chests, and other personal or utilitarian objects.<sup>80</sup> As there is scant archaeological evidence to suggest that these rooms were used for any type of communal event, it is thus likely they were used for more private activities.

### *Conclusion - The Role of the Home in Society and Economics*

The *atrium*-style house provided the Romans with a space not only to entertain guests but also to manage business with clients. This was an important necessity: Roman society was heavily stratified and thus required large areas to facilitate interactions between members of a variety of different social strata.<sup>81</sup> As we have seen, wealthy Romans often chose to use their homes to impress their clients and further advance their own social goals through favors.<sup>82</sup> Homes were an index of the wealth and status of their inhabitants, and a home's decoration and architectural style allowed its owner to engage in social communication on a variety of levels.<sup>83</sup>

The ins and outs of the patron client relationship in ancient Rome are well documented: authors working in a variety of genres have covered this aspect of Roman life, among these

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<sup>77</sup> Allison, *Pompeian Households: An Analysis of the Material Culture*, 71; Hales, *The Roman House and Social Identity*, 28, 127.

<sup>78</sup> Hales, *The Roman House and Social Identity*, 124, 128-130.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, 127.

<sup>80</sup> Allison, *Pompeian Households: An Analysis of the Material Culture*, 71-76.

<sup>81</sup> Kent, Susan. "Activity areas and architecture: an interdisciplinary view of the relationship between use of space and domestic built environments", in *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space: An Interdisciplinary Cross-cultural Study*, edited by Susan Kent, 1-8, (Cambridge, England: Cambridge UP, 1990) pp. 3.

<sup>82</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum*, 5.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

Cicero, Juvenal, Petronius, and Vitruvius.<sup>84</sup> In addition, the social framework created by the patron-client relationship appears as the central theme in plays by early Roman writers such as Terence (2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE).<sup>85</sup>

Only the wealthiest of Roman and Pompeian citizens would have lived in *atrium* homes similar to those described above, with influential senators and politicians living in even more extravagant housing. Common Roman people would have resided in cramped quarters within the city, either in smaller *atrium*-style homes or in high-rise apartments located in *insulae* throughout the city.<sup>86</sup> Merchant and subsistence facilities were often part of these homes and many average Romans may have lived and worked out of their *tabernae*, or shops.<sup>87</sup> Qualified slaves, freedmen and clients would have been grouped around influential families, while artisans were likely slaves bound into patron-client relationships.<sup>88</sup> This relationship of the average Roman to the aristocratic class is evidenced through the remains of ordinary business quarters alongside *atrium* and peristyle houses.<sup>89</sup> Aristocratic Romans who were not involved in procuring their own food might have owned villas outside of town, and may have used those villas as weekend or holiday residences and as a source of income. Cicero speaks at length about the many villas which he owned in the countryside surrounding Rome and throughout the provinces.<sup>90</sup> Unfortunately, today, many of the urban homes of both influential and average Romans have either been built over or have succumbed to the elements and other site creation factors.

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<sup>84</sup> Cicero, *Letters*; Juvenal, *Satires*; Petronius, *The Satyricon*; Vitruvius, *De Architectura*.

<sup>85</sup> Terence, *The Eunuch*.

<sup>86</sup> Aldrete, *Daily life in The Roman city*, 78.

<sup>87</sup> Keith, "The Spatial Patterns of Everyday Life in Old Babylonian Neighborhoods", 64; Boëthius, *Etruscan and Early Roman Architecture*, 75.

<sup>88</sup> Boëthius, *Etruscan and Early Roman Architecture*, 33.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, 75.

<sup>90</sup> Cicero, *Letters*.

The home was the location of many aspects of Roman social life. Early Roman homes were centers of domestic religion with *lararia* located throughout the house and especially in the *atrium*.<sup>91</sup> With the integration of the peristyle, the home became a larger religious unit, having the ability to house spiritual and familial reminders and tokens in niches throughout the house and garden area. The home was where Roman citizens were born and educated, where they interacted with guests and slaves, where they attended weddings and celebrations, and finally where they died. Each room within the home was designed to serve one or many purposes along this continuum.

The *fauces* set the stage for the patron-client relationship, providing the *paterfamilias* the opportunity to inform visitors of his status. The *atrium*, a large centrally-located area for clients to await their patron was built and decorated for those purposes. The *tablinum*, serving as the *dominus*' private business quarters and historical repository, functioned almost like a household forum containing reminders of *negotium*, politics and business favors which were associated with the city forum. The peristyle, an open-air area for relaxation and physical and mental exercise reflects the Roman desire for *otium* and more private encounters. The kitchen and latrine, small cramped areas where a self-respecting Roman would tread only of necessity, were the realm of the disenfranchised and indebted. *Cubicula* were non-distinct rooms which served a multitude of utilitarian purposes in the home, providing (among other things) sleeping quarters, storage areas for daily household activities, and privacy for childbirth, symposia or banquets.

### *Directions for Future Research*

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<sup>91</sup> George, "Elements of the peristyle in the Campanian *atria*", 83.

Future research on the topic of the role that architecture plays in Roman social structure should be focused on the role of villas in the context of Roman urban life. Such investigation would provide valuable information on the role of the villa in the production of food and wealth for aristocratic Romans. It would also allow additional insight into the impact of slave labor at these country homes, and it would possibly permit scholars to determine whether slaves located in an industrial or productive setting differed in their treatment by their masters compared to those operating everyday within the *atrium*-style homes of Rome and Pompeii. An examination of the architecture and material remains of Nero's *Domus Aurea*, Tiberius' villa at Sperlonga, or Hadrian's villa at Tivoli could also prove useful in this endeavor.

Additionally, a better overall understanding of how social networks develop could provide insight into why the patron-client relationship operated as well as it did in Roman society. Does Roman social networking and an integration of slaves into their daily lives have a reflection in their tolerance for foreign religions and willingness to provide citizenship to conquered peoples during the Republican or Imperial Periods? These are interesting questions that could be discussed with a more thorough understanding of how social networks are created and manipulated by societies at large.

### Appendix 1

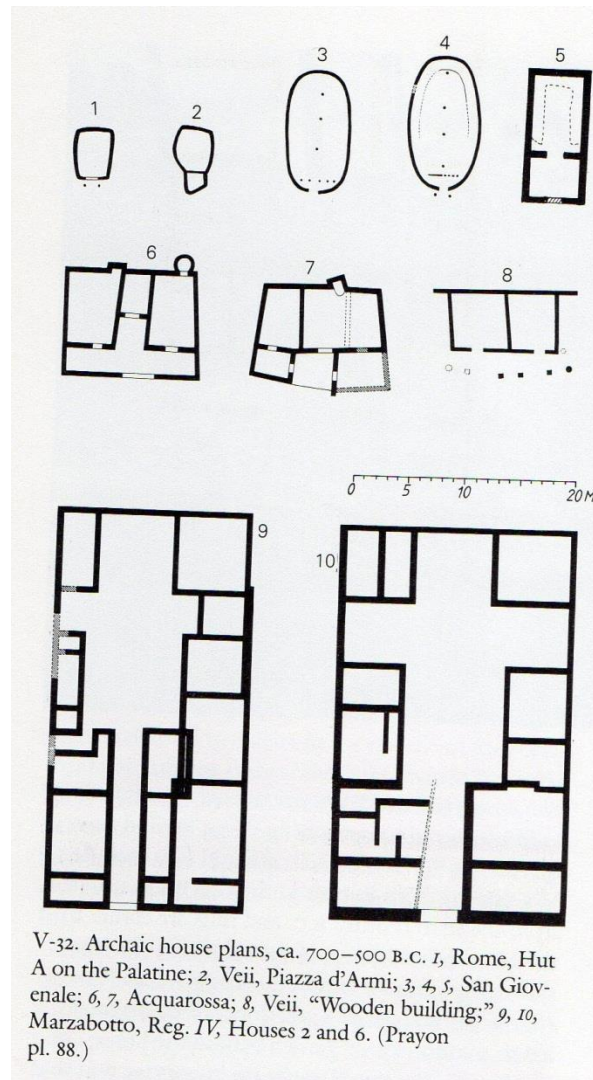


Figure 1. The development of Etruscan houses.

*Source:* Prayon, Friedhelm, “Architecture”, in ETRUSCAN Life and Afterlife, edited by Larissa Bonfante, 174-201, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1986) pp. 192 (Figure V-32).

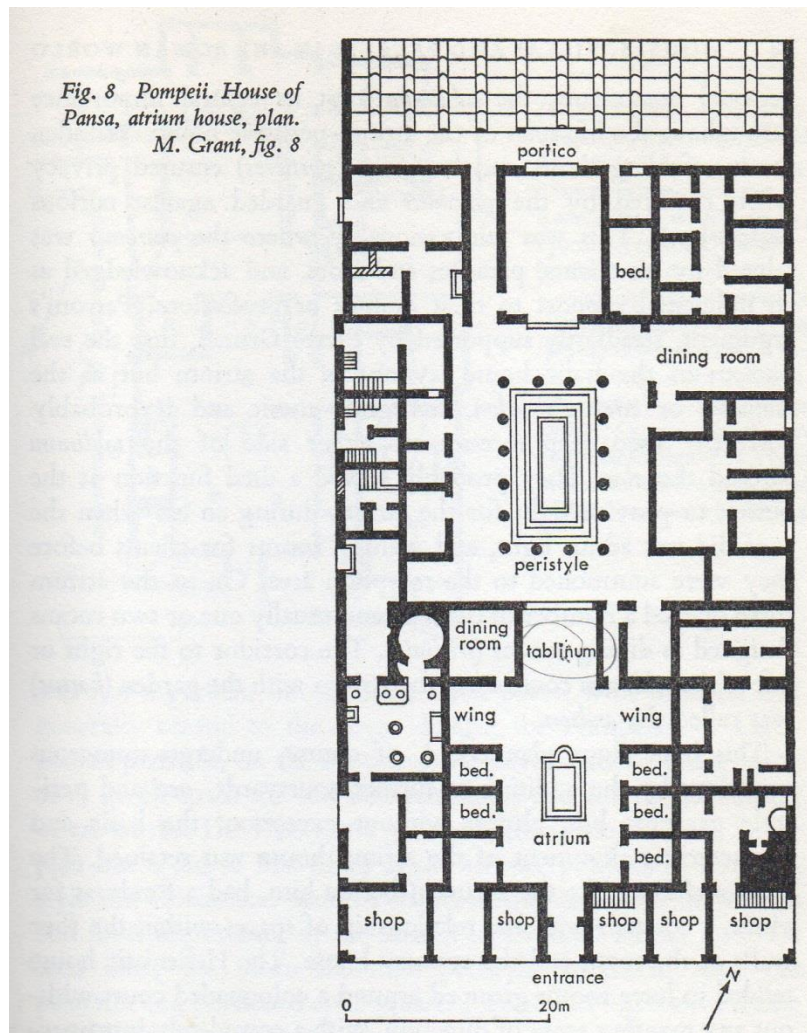


Figure 2. Typical *atrium* house with peristyle.

Source: McKay, Alexander Gordon. *Houses, Villas, and Palaces in the Roman World*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1975, pp. 33 (Figure 8).

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