Greek symposia were integral to the social structure of Ancient Greece, serving as focal points for the exchange of ideas and entertainment. These gatherings were typically attended by men and were central to the political, social, and cultural life of the Greek world. The symposium was an extension of the ancient Greek household, where meals were communal and participation in conversation, music, and poetry was expected. However, women were not allowed to attend symposia, only professional entertainers called hetairai were permitted. This practice was rooted in the preservation of social order and the protection of moral values.

The symposium was central to the education and socialization of men, providing them with opportunities for learning, socializing, and setting the stage for political and social actions. The symposium was unique to Greco-Roman cultures, and unlike the Etruscan and Roman worlds, the symposium in Ancient Greece focused primarily on men. Women were considered a part of the symposium only in the role of entertainers, and hetairai were the only women permitted at such events.

The symposium was not only a social function but also a political and cultural institution. It was a setting where decisions were made, and discussions about important matters took place. Women were not present as equals in these discussions, their roles were distinctly different. While the hetairai were expected to pursue relationships in a manner that was not considered suitable for respectable women, the role of estate management was not a feature of their training or performance.

Throughout history, the symposium has been studied extensively, with many scholars exploring the role of women and their influence in Ancient Greece. The symposium was a complex institution with a multifaceted role in the lives of Greek men, and its influence continues to be felt in modern times through its lasting impact on the way we think about gender, society, and civic action.