READING GREEK VASES

Repetition and symmetry are the fundamental aesthetic principles underlying the shape and decoration of ancient Athenian vases. This book is the first comprehensive study of the role of repetition beyond its aesthetic value, as part of a code that conveys meaning to the viewer. Relying on the theoretical background provided by information theory and narratology, Ann Steiner uncovers the different kinds of meaning that painters created through the use of repetition. Using the reading of painted verbal inscriptions as a springboard, she demonstrates how repetition of imagery in multiple fields of a vase can create narration, paradigm, exploration of perceptual and ideological point of view, and parody. Steiner shows how the results of repetition on Archaic Athenian vases reiterate the activities of the elite symposion and the broader cultural values of elite Athenians. She provides an entirely new way to read ancient Athenian vases.

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For Richard and Sarah
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This project has taken a long time, and there is likewise a very long list of people who have helped me complete it. The semantic meaning of repetition caught my attention as a compelling topic in the fall of 1988, when I participated in a seminar at Bryn Mawr College on theoretical approaches to the study of imagery on Athenian vases. This experience changed my perspective forever, and I am especially grateful to Gloria Ferrari for providing it. John Oakley kindly invited me to present a paper at a symposium in Athens in 1994 that became Chapter 2 of this monograph; this experience made me aware of broad international interest in my subject and was therefore a decisive moment as well. To Alan Shapiro I give special thanks for his encouragement to submit the manuscript to Cambridge. Jenifer Neils read sections of various drafts, and I have very much appreciated her enthusiastic support for the project. Penny Small was a great help to me in the early stages of my work.

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To consult images of vases that are not illustrated in the figures here, readers may rely on the full references to Beazley (ABV, ARV², Addenda², Para) provided in the Endnotes. For unattributed vases, at least one reference to a published photo is provided.

Inscriptions on pottery are provided as close to their actual appearance as possible, with spelling uncorrected and letters upper-case. Spacing replicates the original as closely as possible. Heta appears as h. The following standard epigraphical symbols are used, after Immerwahr (1990):

\[ a \] dot under letter: the letter, if taken by itself, is uncertain, usually incompletely preserved.

\[ [] \] letters lost in original and restored.

\[ .[.\] \] dot outside bracket: an indeterminate trace of a letter. Dot inside bracket: a lost letter assumed to have stood in the original, if the number of lost letters is known.

\[ [- -], [- - -] \] hyphens in bracket: an indeterminate number of letters lost.

\{\} letters omitted in original and restored.

( ) letter misshapen or misunderstood by the writer of the inscription. Also endings supplied by editor.

\{ \} letters added in error in the original and to be deleted.

| \ line-break in the original.