

THE VOTIVE STATUES OF THE ATHENIAN ACROPOLIS

During the period between Solon's reforms and the end of the Peloponnesian War, worshippers dedicated hundreds of statues to Athena on the Acropolis, Athens' primary sanctuary. Some of these statues were Archaic marble korai, works of the greatest significance for the study of Greek art; all are documents of Athenian history. *The Votive Statues of the Athenian Acropolis* brings together all of the evidence for statue dedications on the Acropolis in the sixth and fifth centuries BC, including inscribed statue bases that preserve information about the dedicators and the evidence for lost bronze sculptures. Placing the korai and other statues from the Acropolis within the original votive contexts, Catherine Keesling questions the standard interpretation of the korai as generic, anonymous votaries, while shedding new light upon the origins and significance of Greek portraiture. Her study clarifies the role that monumental votive dedications played in the social and political life of Athens in the Archaic and Classical periods.

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OF THE ATHENIAN
ACROPOLIS

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TO THE MEMORY OF STUART A. KEESLING
AND MARION K. VAREY TUCKER

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PREFACE

The human body made Greek sculptors famous. The creation of naturalistic human figures in marble and bronze during the Classical period of ca. 480–323 B.C. – the “Greek Revolution” in Ernst Gombrich’s terms – has been seen as the Greeks’ defining contribution to the Western art tradition, yet the first large-scale human representations in Greek sculpture date back to the Archaic period of ca. 600–480 B.C. Archaic statues present a marked stylistic contrast to their Classical descendants. The male kouros and female kore statue types in marble, stylistically analogous to one another, seem irreconcilably alien to what follows them: both are stiff, rigid, frontal, hieratic, and abstracted when compared with the products of the Classical period. When it comes to sculptural style, the Persian Wars of 490 and 480–479 B.C. take on the character of a fault line dividing products that seem to have little in common beyond their attempt to represent the human figure.

By the end of the Classical period in the late fourth century, a second major stylistic development in the history of human representation had also taken place: the invention of physiognomic or “true” portraiture, involving the creation of individual likenesses in freestanding sculpture. Though such portraits may only have become popular in the fourth century, there are reasons to think that the first physiognomic portraits in Greek sculpture date to the fifth, and that at least some of them were made in Athens. By the end of the fourth century, the functions of portrait statues were various, as were the contexts in which these portraits were displayed, and physiognomic portraits seem to have become the norm. From the point of view of style, physiognomic portraits represent a step in a different direction from both Archaic statue types and the idealism otherwise typical of the High Classical style in Greek sculpture.

What freestanding human figures made by Greek sculptors in both the Archaic and the Classical periods have in common is their predominant function as votive offerings dedicated to the gods. The invention of the Classical style in Greek sculpture took place within this preexisting context; physiognomic portrait statues, even if we cannot be sure they were first created to serve as votive offerings, were a common form of monument on the Athenian Acropolis by the middle of the fourth century. Mounting a statue on a base inscribed with its dedicator’s name and displaying it in the open air of a Greek sanctuary turned it into an *anathema*, a permanent and visible reminder of the dedicator. Votive statue dedications were

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geographically universal, spanning the entire Graeco-Roman world, and even non-Greeks from the Pharaohs of Egypt to the emperors of Rome set up statues in Greek sanctuaries. The practice of dedicating statues to the gods in this way begins at an ill-defined point early in the Archaic period; what is certain is that it endured as long as pagan religion did, although the statue as an *anathema* seems to have enjoyed its greatest popularity in the Archaic and Classical periods. In a large civic or Panhellenic sanctuary during the sixth and fifth centuries, hundreds of votive statues stood within the temenos at any one time.

This continuous religious function lacks a clear resonance in much of the scholarship on Greek sculpture. Consequently, this study of statues dedicated on the Athenian Acropolis seeks to resituate Greek sculpture of the Archaic and Classical periods within the practice of votive religion. The study extends from the beginnings of statue dedications on the Acropolis early in the sixth century through the beginning of the fourth century, but in it I stress manifestations of continuity in votive practice rather than changes in sculptural style. No one doubts that the year 480 B.C. (or thereabouts) marks a dramatic stylistic shift in Greek sculpture, a point after which (for whatever reason) there was no going back to the kouroi and korai characteristic of the Archaic Greek sanctuaries. However, here I argue that the milestones in the history of the Acropolis dedications are not the ones that students of Greek sculpture have come to take for granted, and that in turn the ways in which sculptures were used as votive offerings on the Acropolis should inform our understanding of how and why Greek sculpture developed stylistically in the way that it did.

The focus on the Acropolis does not imply that this civic sanctuary is more important or worthy of study than the Panhellenic sanctuaries at Delphi, Olympia, and Delos. It is not the cult of Athena on the Acropolis that justifies collecting and interpreting the remains of votive statue dedications found in her sanctuary, but more practical considerations. The Persian sack of the Acropolis in 480 B.C. and the major building operations that followed resulted in the preservation of hundreds of marble statues cleared away and buried in pits, including the series of over 50 examples of the female kore type. Although at least one other Archaic sanctuary, the Ptoön in Boiotia, has preserved a comparable number of votive statues, the Acropolis alone provides the evidence that completes the picture, namely a series of approximately 300 inscribed stone bases for votive statues. The combination of thorough publications of this material, in particular A. E. Raubitschek's 1949 catalog, *Dedications from the Athenian Akropolis* (which I refer to in this book as *DAA*), and its accessibility in the museums of Athens make it possible to rebuild on paper what the Persian invaders destroyed.

The continuation of the Acropolis evidence from the Archaic period into the Classical period is important for the purposes of this study, though the balance

of the available evidence shifts from the archaeological for the sixth century to the epigraphical and literary for the fifth. The fifth-century archaeological evidence consists almost entirely of stone bases for lost, large-scale bronze statues, and for this reason it has not been extensively compared with the preserved marble sculptures of the Archaic period. The preservation of Athenian literary works and inscriptions of other genres from the Classical period provides prosopographical data that make possible the identification of some individuals who dedicated statues during the fifth century. An additional source of evidence is the *Periegesis* of Pausanias, who saw and described several fifth-century votive statues on the Acropolis that have not survived. Few of the extant sculptures found on the Acropolis can be matched with extant inscribed bases, but another form of archaeological evidence makes it possible to conduct this sculptural study even without benefit of statues. Plinth cavities and foot cuttings on the tops of the inscribed bases provide evidence for the types of sculptures dedicated during both the Archaic and Classical periods and can be used to reconstruct the appearance and even the identities of lost statues. The extant marble statues, large-scale bronzes, and small bronze statuettes from the Acropolis and other sanctuaries help to set realistic parameters for such archaeological reconstructions.

Looking at statues as offerings dedicated to the gods produces immediate consequences for our understanding of Archaic and Classical sculpture. Statue bases tell us more about the contexts within which Greek sculpture was viewed than any other source. Votive statues and the dedicatory inscriptions on their bases have to be “read” together: statues displayed as votive offerings in sanctuaries were seldom meant to be viewed without an accompanying epigraphical text that named the dedicator and sometimes, though not always, expanded upon the circumstances surrounding the gift. Students of Greek literature and epigraphy have recently begun to assess the implications of such interactions between visual representations and texts for the interpretation of the texts. This study moves in the inverse direction, from texts to statues, presenting in Part I (Chapters 1–4) the results of reading dedicatory texts before looking at the statues, precisely because statue bases and the texts inscribed upon them call into question some prevailing interpretations of Greek sculpture.

Parts II and III of this book are organized around two identities we know were represented by votive statues, divine and human, rather than by sculptural type. Within the votive context of a single sanctuary, the use of statue types as an organizing principle can be misleading because it encourages us to believe that statue types were synonymous with identities. In Greek sculpture of the Archaic period, the same statue types were used to represent different identities, and the idea of multivalence survived even in the Classical period. The style and iconography of representations of the same subject dedicated in the same sanctuary evolved over time, with the result that the ancient viewer would have seen the same identity represented by different statue types.

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Votive statues dedicated on the Acropolis in the sixth and fifth centuries relied upon not only their iconography but also the iconography of context to unlock their meaning. Contemporary visitors to the sanctuary had a distinct advantage over us when it comes to understanding context. If we are to address the practice of dedicating votive statues in Greek sanctuaries, we need to consider the full range of evidence available from the Acropolis – not only the extant marble statues, but also the inscribed statue bases. The very continuity of votive statue dedications on the Athenian Acropolis and in other Greek sanctuaries ultimately calls into question the importance of stylistic developments such as the creation of the Classical style in Greek sculpture or the invention of physiognomic portraiture for understanding Greek sculpture.

This book intends to provide not a catalog of votive statues and statue bases from the Athenian Acropolis, but rather a synthetic discussion of the evidence for votive statue dedications there and the broader significance of this evidence. Throughout the book, even in the sections dealing with inscriptions, I have made special efforts to encourage readers who are interested in Greek sculpture but who do not have any knowledge of ancient Greek. In defining the material discussed herein, I have supplemented Raubitschek's catalog of inscribed statue bases in *DAA* with examples found since 1949 and included in *IG I³* (*Inscriptiones Atticae Euclidis Anno Anteriores*), fasc. II, edited by D. M. Lewis and L. H. Jeffery (Berlin/New York 1994). For the sake of coherence, I refer to inscribed statue bases from the Acropolis by their *DAA* numbers rather than their *IG I³* numbers, but I urge readers interested in the texts of the inscriptions to refer to *IG I³* for important corrections, new readings, and supplementary bibliography.

I refer to ancient authors and their works, as well as some standard epigraphical and historical reference works, by using the abbreviations listed in the third edition of *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, eds. S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth (Oxford 1996). The abbreviations for journal titles have been taken from *American Journal of Archaeology* 104 (2000): 3–24. The frequent book and chapter citations of the text of Pausanias refer to the English translation by J. G. Frazer, *Pausanias's Description of Greece* (London 1898). All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

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