

THE IMAGERY OF THE ATHENIAN SYMPOSIUM

The late sixth and early fifth centuries BC were a dynamic time in the history of the symposium, and hundreds of vase paintings from this period show people engaged in sympotic activities. Most scholars have understood these images as illustrations of contemporary Athenian practices, but such an interpretation cannot account for the enormous variety of settings, costumes, and participants in the images, nor is it easily reconciled with recent methodological developments in the study of vase painting. Noting the close link between the symposium and the *polis* in ancient thought, this book approaches the images not as documents of contemporary sympotic practice but as vehicles for exploring what it meant to be a Greek community. It argues that many of the images depict imagined ancestral symposia and that they thus shed new light on how the Athenians envisioned the history of the symposium and its importance to their city.

Kathryn Topper is Assistant Professor of Classics at the University of Washington. She has held fellowships from the Center for Hellenic Studies, the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, and the American School of Classical Studies at Athens. Her articles have appeared in the *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, the *American Journal of Archaeology*, and *Hesperia*.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-01102-1 - The Imagery of the Athenian Symposium
Kathryn Topper
Frontmatter
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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City
Cambridge University Press
32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013–2473, USA
www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107011021

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First published 2012

Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Topper, Kathryn, 1978–
The imagery of the Athenian symposium / Kathryn Topper.
pages cm
Based on the author’s thesis (doctoral – Harvard University, 2007) under title: Symposium
and its past in Athenian vase painting, ca. 530–450 B.C.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-107-01102-1 (hardback)
1. Vase-painting, Greek – Greece – Athens. 2. Symposium (Classical Greek drinking party) in
art. 3. Art and society – Greece – Athens. I. Title.
NK4645.T67 2012
738.3’8209385–dc23 2012016092

ISBN 978-1-107-01102-1 Hardback

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book has benefited from the advice and generosity of many people, and it is a pleasure to acknowledge them here. My greatest debt is to Gloria Ferrari Pinney, who supported the project from its earliest stages, providing feedback on drafts and discussing ideas with me over the course of several years; thanks are hardly adequate. A second person whose influence is difficult to measure is Guy Hedreen, who commented on portions of the manuscript and shared his own work-in-progress with me, and whose input has more than once changed the course of my thinking. At Harvard University, where the book originated as a dissertation, I thank the Department of the Classics and especially my readers, Albert Henrichs and Gregory Nagy. I have been exceptionally fortunate at the University of Washington to find colleagues who make it a pleasure to come to work each day, and I am grateful to all of them for their advice and support. I wish in particular to thank Alain Gowing, who helped secure funds for the illustrations, and Douglas Machle, who processed payments to a number of museums.

I carried out the early research for this project at the libraries of Harvard University, the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, and Bryn Mawr College, and I thank the librarians at each of those institutions, as well as those at the University of Washington, for their assistance. My research in Athens between 2003 and 2005 was supported by fellowships from Harvard University, the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, and the Samuel H. Kress Foundation; more recently, the Kress Foundation and the Department of Classics at the University of



Washington generously granted funds to cover the illustration program. For advice about acquiring photographs or for answering questions about specific objects, I thank Carla Antonaccio, Ioanna Damanaki, John Fappas, Hallie Franks, Melissa Haynes, Jenifer Neils, Victoria Sabetai, Tyler Jo Smith, and the staff at the Harvard University Center for Hellenic Studies.

At Cambridge University Press, I am grateful to Beatrice Rehl, Amanda Smith, and Isabella Vitti for their help in seeing the project through to completion. Thanks are also due to the anonymous readers, especially one reader whose comments made me think more broadly about certain implications of my arguments. An early version of Chapters 1 and 2 appeared in the *American Journal of Archaeology* (113.1) as “Primitive Life and the Construction of the Sympotic Past in Athenian Vase Painting,” and I thank the journal for the permission to print a revised version of that text here. For her role in the copyediting and production process, I thank Peggy Rote at Aptara, Inc.

Everyone who has undertaken a project of this size knows that there are people who were instrumental to its completion but whose influence is difficult to describe concisely. These are people who have at various times offered friendship, humor, and encouragement, and who occasionally change the way one sees the world. I end, then, by thanking Ruby Blondell, Melissa Haynes, Deborah Kamen, Sarah Levin-Richardson, David Petrain, Laurialan Reitzammer, Laurie Sweet, Jarrett Welsh, and my family.