

Transitional Friends: Dogs, Choes, and the Iconography of Attachment

Contemporary perspectives on dogs in Greek thought have generally concentrated on their negative symbolic meaning. This is because *kuon* and cognates are occasionally used pejoratively in Homeric epic (see Franco 2014). This paper offers a different facet of the history of the human-dog relationship. I argue that the ways Greeks represented their relationships with dogs suggests something more nuanced and intimate: an interwoven partnership and shared history. More than just irrational animals, bloodthirsty scavengers, or less-than-human, dogs were rather so important and ubiquitous in daily life that they played a key role in how wider relationships were generally articulated. This paper sets out to show that dogs actively influenced Greek thinking about society and the articulation of wider human/human and human/animal relationships.

To this end, I will offer an iconographic survey of encounters between small and fluffy Melitan dogs and Athenian boys on Athenian miniature red-figure wine-jugs (*choes*) manufactured between 425-375 BCE for the Anthesteria festivities. Inspired by Donna Haraway's notion that, "dogs and people figure a universe" (Haraway 2003: 21), I ask what it was about this breed that made it an especially popular and beloved household dog and explore how interactions between boys and Melitans play out on the historically-specific *choes*. In particular, I will direct the focus to the body language and gesture of the dogs to show that they were rendered in nuanced and expressive ways. I propose that the iconography positions the dog not just as a symbol but as a cherished friend in a mutually constitutive relationship. Through this case study, I hope to start a conversation about how dogs played important but often overlooked roles in the social and personal lives of Athenians, and influenced the ways they navigated and expressed their close and complex relationships with animals.

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