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I have read and understood the relevant sections concerning plagiarism in the UCLA Student Code of Conduct handbook. This paper is my own work and has in no way violated UCLA's Code of Conduct.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized, overlapping loops and strokes, likely representing the names of the students mentioned above.

## Women in the Greek Symposium



The symposiums were parties held by Athenians around the time of Solon's reforms.

*In addition to being* While they are theorized to have been some form of aristocratic bonding in the face of political changes that threatened their power, they were, like most events in antiquity, male-dominated.

However, I will be pulling from the kylix shown above to question the role of women in Greek symposiums and society as a whole. *most of what we can still read about, anyway.*

The above image depicts artwork on the surface of a kylix, where a woman seems to be preparing to flick her kylix, a practice discussed in lecture as a game played at symposiums. This seems to imply that women would also possibly participate in the festivities of the symposium, a far cry from their traditional role as a provider of music and sex.

With the assumption that symposiums offered an environment in which aristocrats could enjoy the extent of their power, it seems strange to think that women would be allowed to revel in that power as well. However, we know for a fact that the Greeks held reverence for female figures to some degree, evident by the array of goddesses present in the Greek pantheon. In fact, these goddesses proved vital to the heroic tales of Homeric epic, which played an undeniable role

*which are, I'll note, strenuously differentiated from actual women.*



but the Spartans weren't pounding wine at symposia.

in shaping the Greeks' perception of power in the first place<sup>1</sup>. In addition, records show that the

Athenians' contemporaries, the Spartans, elevated women to positions of authority to some extent. With the men off at battle, the women had to assume some responsibility on the

homefront<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, with evidence from myth and reality in mind, we know that the idea of

women in power was not completely foreign to the Greeks) okay, but to a large degree we're dealing with

The symposiums also seemed to have been a place where participants established a sense of equality with one another. However, looking at Solon's reforms against women, they were clearly not viewed as equals. (Perhaps another explanation of the kylix is that women held their own symposiums, where they could engage in similar activities.) Logically, aristocratic women could have had the same motivations as men: creating a forum for discourse, entertainment, and bonding in the face of an uncertain future. In this scenario, it would seem that women would be

acting out against the social norms that bound them, rejecting their role as vessels for male

entertainment. If the symposiums were truly meant to promote a sense of equality, it is likely that

the proposed female symposiums acted as a sort of refuge, where women could go to feel a sense

of equality that was absent from Athenian society.

At the end of the day, (this is just an image with no context.) Factual evidence, such as the

Athenians' noted disdain for the Spartans' liberal attitude towards women<sup>3</sup>, and their obvious

exclusion from Athenian political institutions, makes it clear that women had nowhere near as

much power as men. (However, the origins of this kylix speak to some complexities of this

societal relationship that are yet to be discovered.) fine

What about the possibility that the vessel women, with exposed public hair is as the cup for the

<sup>1</sup> McInerney 2018: 100.

<sup>2</sup> McInerney 2018: 141.

<sup>3</sup> McInerney 2018: 142.

use 'Ibid.'

enjoyment at a male viewer/wine drinker? You seem to use a two-pronged approach to the evidence (over) →

for a possible "women's symposium," Homeric goddesses, and the relative personal autonomy of Spartan women. While these are ideas one ~~can't take too seriously~~ sensible they are both flawed.

- 1) a female object of religious veneration would not have been the same in the Greek mind as an actual woman, making moral society.
- 2) The Spartans' negative attitude towards luxury and leisure makes any kind of symposium in their culture very unlikely, and this does not mean that the Athenians would have imported their ideas about women.

In short, by splitting the evidence into "myth" and "reality," you ignore the fact that when it comes to this issue there are at least two different versions of reality: an Athenian, and a Spartan.

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