K

Note: many words appear in this glossary with a Latinised spelling. They will therefore be found under C rather than K

Kalos name. Some Athenian vases of the 6th and 5th centuries B.C. have the word kalos (‘handsome’) or much less frequently its feminine form kale (‘beautiful’) written on them, usually in association with a name. The same kind of inscription or graffito is also sometimes found on other objects, even coins. It seems clear that the intention of the message was to express admiration for the person concerned. The survival of these inscriptions in quite large numbers is perhaps evidence for the general acceptability of at least a certain degree of male homosexuality at Athens. Kalos names may also be of archaeological importance in cases where it may be possible to identify the person admired. If he is a historical character, and if it can be assumed that he would have been most admired when he was in his teens, it may be possible to date the vase or other object on which the inscription is found to within a few years.

Kernos or kerchnos. A dish or base to which cup-shaped receptacles are fixed, perhaps to receive offerings. It is particularly associated with the cult of Demeter.

Kidaris, see Tiara.

Kithara, see Lyre.

Kore. ‘Girl, maiden’ (plural korai), a word in general use in ancient Greek. It was also a title of Persephone the daughter of the goddess Demeter. Modern writers use it like its masculine equivalent kouros to describe a type of statue which was made, principally at Athens, during the archaic period. The kore type of statue shows a draped female figure, usually with hands held at the side of the body, standing stiffly with one leg slightly advanced. The korai provide an interesting body of material for the study of the treatment of drapery in archaic Greek sculpture.

Kouros. ‘Lad, young man’ (plural kouroi), the masculine equivalent of kore. Modern writers use it to describe a type of statue which was made in Greece during the archaic period, perhaps copying Egyptian models. The kouros figure represents a nude young man standing with one leg slightly to the fore, usually with both hands held by the sides. Some are life size or a little larger, others are smaller, and the range goes down to small statuettes. Some kouroi may have been intended to represent the god Apollo, others may have been intended as funerary monuments representing a dead man. Their general resemblance to one another allows detailed comparisons of stylistic features to be made, and it seems clear that over the century and a half that figures of this kind were made, there was a steady evolution of the treatment of anatomical forms by Greek sculptors.

Kriophoros. ‘Ram bearer’, a title sometimes applied to Hermes, and used to describe statues which show him or some other figure bearing a ram upon his shoulders. The Greek Kriophoros type reappears in early Christian art when it is used to represent Christ as the Good Shepherd.

Kritios Boy. A late kouros statue found on the Acropolis of Athens in the 19th century. It is unfortunate that the circumstances of its discovery are not fully documented, because if we knew whether it was associated with debris of the Persian sack of 480 B.C., we would be able to date it a little before 480 B.C. This would be very helpful in dating the later stages of the kouros series of statues. As it is, we can only say that we believe that it was made in the 480s or the 470s B.C. Its modern name was given to it because it was supposed that it possessed some features in common with the statue group of Harmodius and Aristogeiton the Tyrannicides, made by Kritios and Nesiotes in 479 B.C. and known to use from copies of the Roman period.

Kyrbasia, see Tiara.