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METHODS OF APPROACH AND RESEARCH
IN ANCIENT GREEK AND ROMAN SCULPTURE

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A MAN, A GOD, A HERO: THE GREEK KOUROS

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When Leonardos 1895 gave the Homeric name *kouros* to archaic statues of nude, standing, beardless males, he chose well, since this generic term does not hinder in any way attempts to name the individual figures; thus it has become standard usage. The identification with the god Apollo, usual until then despite some doubts about it being apposite, has been mostly rejected¹. There is, of course, no ancient Greek name for the kouros.

Kouros are so familiar to us that it seems redundant to talk about them. Nevertheless, there are still some issues worth discussing. The type may be represented by the intact preserved grave kouros Figs. 1a-b, a slightly over life-size Attic masterpiece from the end of the 7th century BC.² He stands, the arms along the sides, hands fisted; the left leg is advanced yet this does not represent walking, as sometimes assumed, since both feet are planted firmly on the ground and there is no change in the pelvic region, which for an organically structured figure as the kouros would be necessary while striding. Instead, the body rests squarely on both feet. There is no motion, not even a potential one. The advancing of one leg is a visual formula for an independent stand, for the discovery, as it were, of the law of gravity in art; I shall come back to this quality.

Although the title of this article refers to the polyvalence of the kouros I cannot dispense with commenting on the origins of this sculptural type. To trace them it will be necessary to look further back. An example of the standing man theme in Geometric sculpture is the spear swinger leading a horse, an Argive small bronze of outstanding quality from Olympia, about 750-740 BC, which was attached to the ring-handle of a cauldron³. The figure is formally distinguished by a sharp demarcation of the individual parts, which remain independent, so that there results an order of an aggregate nature, a noetic order.

A belt marks the joint between the upper and lower part of the body. The torso has no value as such; it is the active limbs that are important. This peculiarity recurs in the figures of 8th century vase paintings. Moreover, the action of the figure, the brandishing of the spear and the leading of the horse, takes place only in the limb actually involved, which is not coordinated with any other part of the body. The feet are aligned in the same plane, the legs are parallel, with the knees

1. By DUCAT 1976, 242sq.; STEWART 1986 and others; but cf. RIDGWAY 1993, 74f. The literature on kouros is so vast one can hardly cite, much less discuss every single opinion that has been put forward. Cf. BUSCHOR 1950; KARUSOS 1961; RICHTER 1970; ZINSERLING 1975; DUCAT 1976; D'ONOFRIO 1982; eadem 2000; HURWIT 1985, 191-202, 253-59; FLOREN 1987, 86sq.; STEWART 1990, 109-10; idem 1997, 86sq.; STEUERNAGEL 1991;

METZLER 1992; ROLLEY 1994, 160-174; SOURVINOU-INWOOD 1995, 221sq.; FEHR 1996; KYRIELEIS 1996; HIMMELMANN 1996; STÄHLI 1999; FERRARI 2002, 112sq.

2. RICHTER 1970, no. 1.

3. KUNZE 1961, 146sq, pls. 60-61; MAASS 1978, 102 no. 316; CROISSANT 1992, 76 pls. 25-26 figs. 16, 18; ROLLEY 1994, 102 fig. 86.

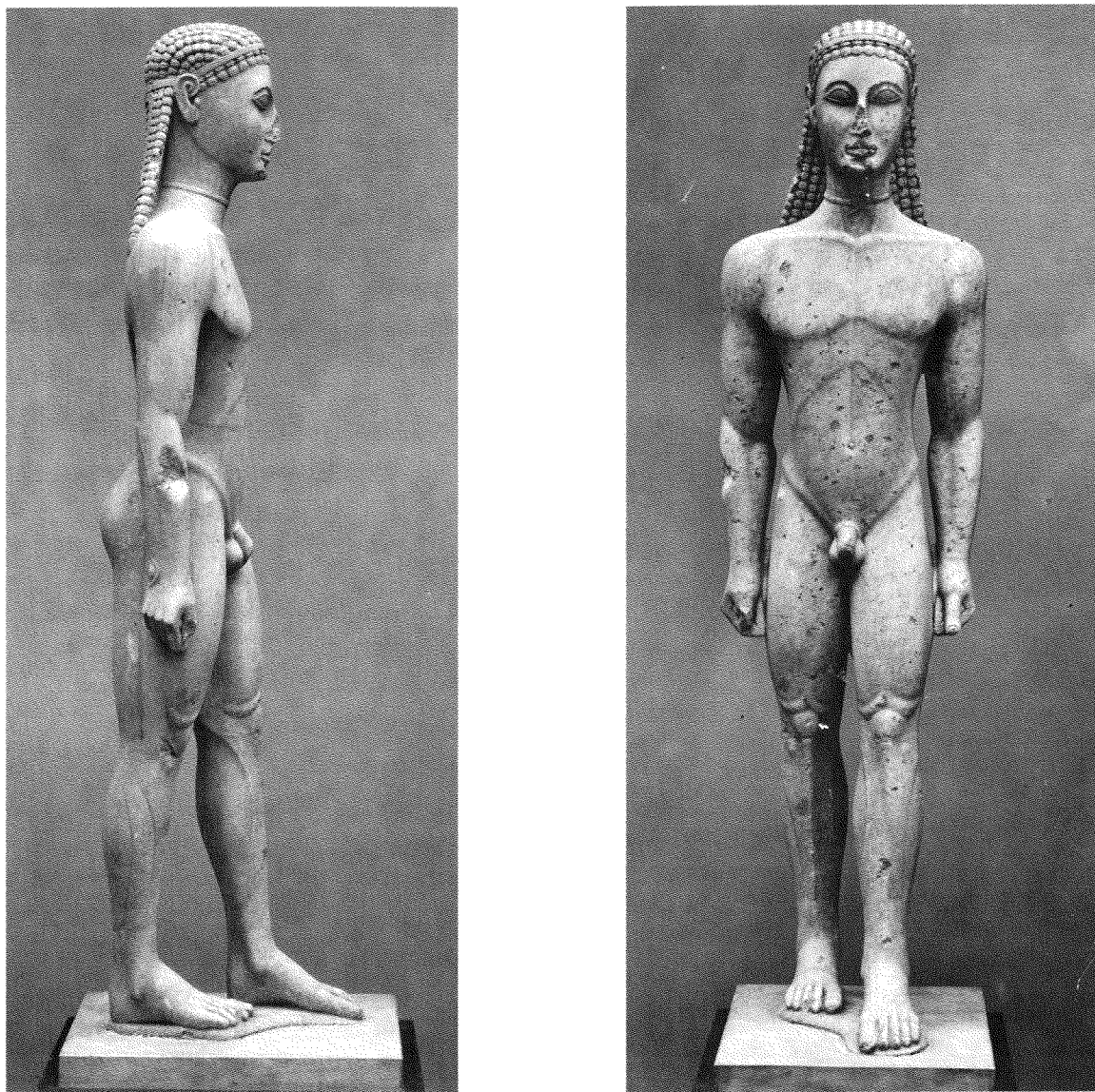


Fig. 1a. b. Kouros. H. 1,94 m. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 32. 11. 1.

slightly bent: 'soft-kneed' such figures have been called in a groundbreaking article on geometric sculpture⁴; this is true also of the vase paintings of this time. In other words, a standing figure appears in Geometric art as if it were not able to stand firm. It fits then that the statuettes often 'hover', as it were, on top of a cauldron's ring-handle.

This 'off-the-ground' attitude recurs in freestanding Geometric sculptures, which consequently have no base. The small bronzes, be they human figures or animals, stand on a plaque with

4. KUNZE 1930, 151.

openwork patterns or a design underneath - usually a linear motif, sometimes a figured theme -, and these take away from the plaque the character of a base⁵.

A well-known Cretan small bronze from Delphi, of about 640 BC⁶, is the earliest kouros that is intact preserved; being of excellent quality it shows indeed the new formal achievement. Compared with the geometric spear swinger (n. 3), the body of the Delphi statuette has gained in substance, and its parts are coordinated, having interdependent proportions. There results a whole, which is more than the sum of its parts, namely an organism. The new order of the archaic figure is an organic one. The frontal posture and quadrilateral structure are new as well; Geometric figures, hovering 'off-the-ground', do not have distinctive views.

The plaque on which archaic small bronzes stand has no designs underneath (this peculiarity disappears for ever) and thus assumes a similar character to the statue base created at this time: a separate block, to which a statue is permanently fixed⁷. Gravity, being realised in the distinctive way a kouros stands, as stated above, is further confirmed through the base that fixes the statue on the ground. The statue is now freestanding in the sense that it really stands on its own. Accordingly, in vase paintings the figures are no longer placed one on top of the other, as could be the case until the mid-7th century⁸. Instead they now all stand on the ground line. The discovery of the law of gravity in art is a momentous event of far-reaching consequences.

The creation of the kouros is a panhellenic achievement, accomplished in the leading regional schools of sculpture. Moreover, all over Greece the kouros is a widely popular theme from the mid-7th century until about 490 BC. Funerary kouros occur indeed in far greater numbers in Attica, but this is only because here the new concern with personalizing the *sema* leads to inscribed sculpture, while elsewhere inscribed *semata* without an image of the dead mostly sufficed⁹.

When sculptors in the mid 7th century create the new archaic order, as stated above, they at first refrain from representing movement in the freestanding sculptures; this is evident in the kouros, in the korai, seated figures and so on. Figures in motion, such as the spear swingers, disappear. Not until the Late Archaic period, from about 530, do sculptors concern themselves with action. Then, even the kouros show a new kinetic energy in their lively arms and springy legs as for instance Aristodikos, a slightly over life-size Attic grave kouros of about 500 BC. (Fig. 2)¹⁰.

A peculiarity of a different kind is what Rhomaios aptly termed "latent movement" (λανθάνουσα κίνηση)¹¹. He discovered it by taking measurements on pieces like the Sounion kouros, an Attic colossal offering of about 590 BC.¹² The "latent movement" consists in slight deviations from mathematical frontality, which occur already in Early Archaic sculpture (setting it apart from

5. E.g. a bronze horse (WALTER-KARYDI 1980, pl. 2, 3-4).

6. RICHTER 1970, 26 figs. 14-16; ROLLEY 1994, 136 fig. 113.

7. The plaque of the Delphi kouros has two holes, which show that it was attached to a base from a different material.

8. E.g. in a prothesis scene on an Attic krater, WALTER-KARYDI 1980, pl. 2, 5.

9. Cf. WALTER-KARYDI 1999, 307.

10. KARUSOS 1961.

11. 1951, 101sq.; idem in: KARUSOS 1961, 7-10. Rhomaios' notion led KLEEMANN 1984 into taking further measurements of archaic sculptures. Cf. KYRIELEIS 1996, 26sq.

12. RICHTER 1970, no. 2; ROLLEY 1994, 165f. fig. 143; KISSAS 2000, 81, B1 fig. 62; KALTSAS 2002, no. 17.

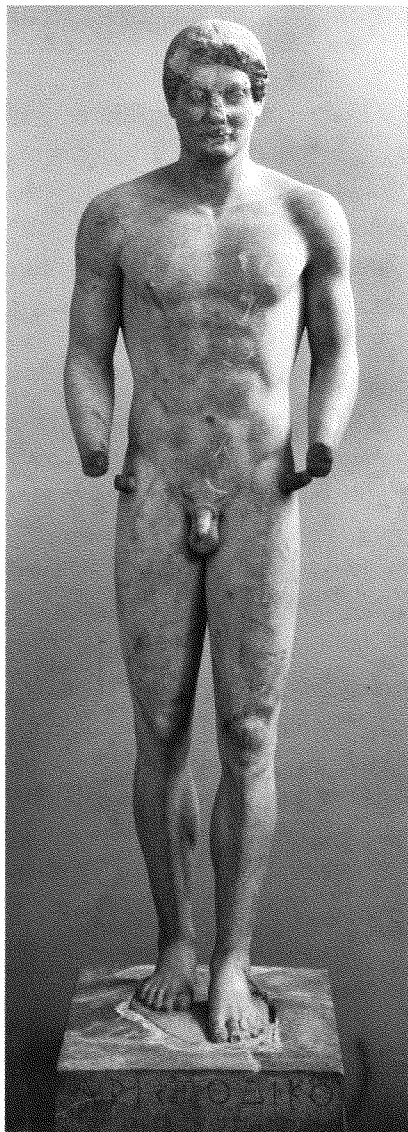


Fig. 2. Grave kouros of Aristodikos.
H. 1,95 m. Athens, Nat. Mus. 3938.

What we call 'monumentality' in Early Greek art consists in the coordination of the body parts' proportions as well as in the axial ties of the figure to the ground, that is, the new gravity; both qualities have nothing to do with the scale of a piece. Moreover, large size is not an archaic inno-

the Near Eastern and Egyptian one where frontality reigns uncontested). The "latent movement" lends a figure a certain animation, an open-minded outlook, as it were, keeping it from being a hermetic image. Moreover, it reveals a potential for change. In fact, kouros not only have different proportions in the various regional schools, but also show in the course of time a stylistic change, which is evident in a comparison of, for instance, the kouros Figs. 1a-b and Aristodikos (Fig. 2), while the type remains the same.

There is a fundamental difference of visual language between the kouros and the Geometric figures. In the intervening years, however, quite a bit has happened formally, which cannot be discussed here; enough to say that from the beginning of the 7th century there occur attempts at indicating the standing pose with one leg advanced in vessel-attachments, such as the statuettes on a cauldron's rim (Fig. 3)¹³, which hold the ring-handle instead of 'hovering' on top of it, like the Geometric attachments (human figures or horses) did. The handle-holders reveal the new trend to gravity that will be fully realised by the mid-7th century.

This, however, does not mean that there was a continuous 'development' from the Geometric figures to the kouros. The creation of the kouros is a sculptural event marking the beginning of a new age in art.

In order to grasp the impact of this new beginning, some phenomena in the art of the middle 7th century should be noted, for instance the fact that the creation of the kouros is part of the creation of 'monumental' sculpture as a whole. Early Greek 'monumentality', as has often been pointed out, is not limited to large-scale sculpture but realised also in small formats, as is the case with the Delphi kouros (n. 6). The term derives, after all, from Roman *monumentum*; there is no corresponding word in Early Greece.

13. KARUSU 1981, figs. 43a-b. To the handle-holders cf. HURWIT 1985, 194.

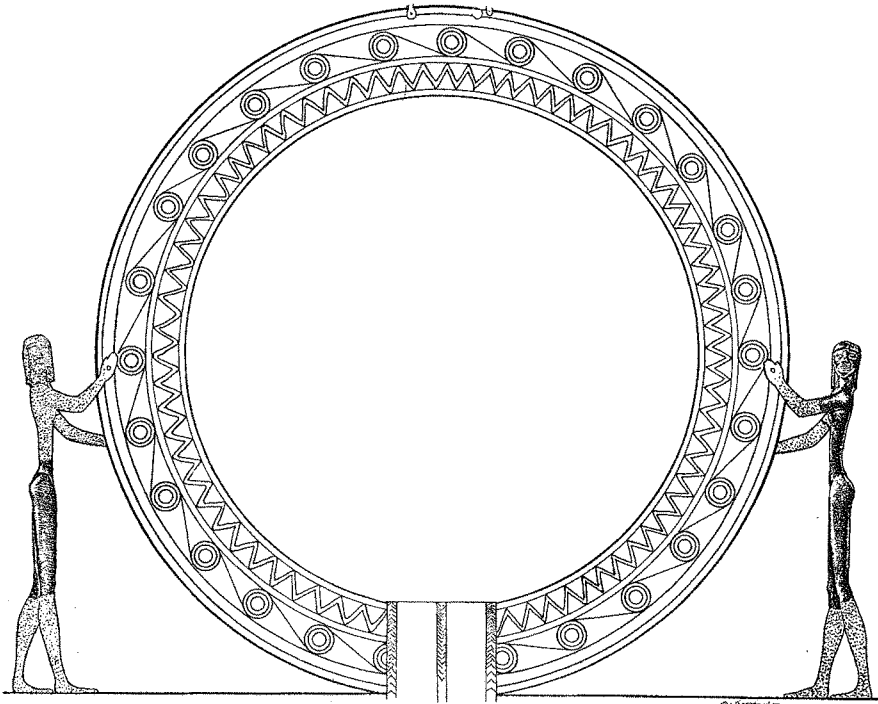


Fig. 3. Handle holders (reconstruction; bronze statuettes from the Akropolis).

vation; it does occur in Geometric art. Many of the bronze tripods that are the most splendid votive offerings in the sanctuaries of the 8th century reach a height of 4 m or more¹⁴. These huge masterpieces must have been a compelling sight, shimmering in the sunlight, without being dwarfed by any large-scale stone architecture or sculpture. They are not 'monumental' in the sense explained above, yet they do have colossal size. New in the archaic age is, however, that it is the human figure that becomes a main theme in large-scale statuary. The Greeks themselves realised this: Theopompus (Athen. VI 231f) states that in ancient times the Delphi sanctuary was adorned with bronze offerings, which were not statues but cauldrons and tripods.

New is also that in the mid-7th century stone becomes a chief sculpture material, one linked indeed with the large format. Its semantics is durability¹⁵. Creating stone statues means meeting an actual need for permanence. The Cycladic islands, rich in marble as they are, lead the production and Naxos stands out. The roughly 9 m high marble Apollo the Naxians dedicated on Delos about 600 BC.¹⁶ is a masterly feat of artistic and technical skill in the new material.

14. MAASS 1978, 77. Cf. KYRIELEIS 1996, 101-103.

15. Cf. KYRIELEIS 1996, 88.

16. KOKKOROU-ALEWRAS 1995, K 18 pls. 22-23 figs. 35-

36. GRUBEN 1997, 267-87 fig. 3 (reconstruction), figs. 4-10; GIULIANI 2005.

Another innovation is that the sculptures bear now inscriptions. In order to realize the impact of this novelty, we have to consider that in the centuries of Geometric art an oral way of life prevailed¹⁷. Even when the alphabet became widespread in Greece, this did not change at once; the new technology in itself was not enough. Literacy was introduced only gradually to the various communication fields, following a mentality shift. Thus, while graffiti on vases occur already in the 8th century, it is not until the beginning of the 7th that vase painters' signatures and votive inscriptions appear. The vase painter or the votary signing his name makes a statement, 'it is me, and no one else is quite the same'. Such inscriptions mark the emergence of the individual, a crucial event in the history of Greek mentality, on which much has been written.

In sculpture the earliest known inscribed piece is a Boeotian small bronze of about 670 from Thebes, probably the Apollo Ismenios' sanctuary¹⁸. According to the epigram, a certain Mantiklos dedicated from his tithe the statuette to Apollo, praying to the far-darter god of the silver bow for a gracious reward. The inscription gives the votary's name; this becomes a rule in the archaic age. While Geometric figures are anonymous, understandably so in the oral way of life, the archaic ones forfeit anonymity, indeed forever, thanks to the durability of writing. Inscribed sculpture steps beside poetry or even in its place as a guarantee of memory and honor.

With these remarks I tried to put the creation of the kouros type in relation to other phenomena of the time, to the formal innovations as well as related ones in other fields, in an attempt to follow the mentality shift of the Greeks in these years. I opted for this approach, since the kouros' creation is in itself an anthropological event. A different approach would be to enter into the argument, whether or not the kouros is an adoption of the Egyptian statue type of a standing, straight-armed, clenched-fisted male advancing the left leg, as for instance the funerary statues of Ranofer, a chief priest in Memphis in the 5th dynasty (2563-2423 BC)¹⁹. There is a vast literature on the subject, pointing out some motive similarities or, on the other hand, the fundamental disparities between Egyptian statues and the Greek kouros.

Let us now turn to my actual subject: whom does a kouros represent? Not an easy question; it is well known that this sculpture type is polyvalent. A kouros can be a cult image in a temple, a votive offering in a sanctuary or an agora and, finally, a grave statue. As Stewart succinctly puts it (1990, 109), a kouros is "a man for all situations".

In the case of the grave kouros, the answer is easy: it is a substitute for the dead, whose name is never missing from the inscription. Such statues are aptly called 'name-portraits'²⁰, meaning that their portrait character consists not in individual features but rather in the inscribed person's name. This marks the beginning of portrait sculpture in Greece – provided, of course, we do not accept the notion that likeness to the depicted person is indispensable to his portrait statue.

17. For recent comments on the first appearance of inscribed sculptures cf. WALTER-KARYDI 1999.
18. LIMC II (1984) s.v. Apollo no. 40 (O. PALAGIA with previous bibliography); ROLLEY 1994, 129 fig. 109; WALTER-KARYDI 1999, 297-98 pl. 4, 1-2.

19. LANGE 1955, pls. 61-65.

20. KARUSOS 1961, 33 (E. BUSCHOR). Cf. DUCAT 1976, 240; D'ONOFRIO 1982, 135-38; HIMMELMANN 1996, 31.

Instead, it is the intention to represent a certain individual, intention quite adequately met by stating his name, which justifies calling such statues portraits.

Grave kouroi hold no attributes and are not characterized in any way (Figs. 1. 2). Both, attributes and distinctive traits occur instead on the grave steles. On these the deceased appears standing in profile to the right, with left leg advanced, same as the freestanding kouros, but is often marked as an athlete by holding a spear or a discus²¹ or even by having a boxer's face with a slightly aquiline, that is deformed nose and swollen ear²². He is, however, never represented in action; in this the stele image is similar to the grave kouros. When the discus-bearer and the boxer raise a hand – the hand with the discus and a hand with the boxer's thongs –, this gesture is only a forceful suggestion of the athletes' discipline. The dead may also appear, for instance, as a warrior²³, being distinguished through the armour from the nude athletes, or as an elegant citizen, wearing a himation and holding a flower²⁴. Such characterization, it should be noted, does not represent biographical data of the dead but the essential masculine qualities of the time. This fits to the individual physiognomy of the deceased not being rendered in the 'name portraits'. In the inscription too his biography is of no interest. Neither the grave epigrams nor any other statue inscription refer to biographical details. It is, by the way, not a coincidence that biography as literary genre does not exist at this time.

Giving a name to the votive kouroi proves more problematic; they may be a god, a hero or a mortal. Nor does the inscription always help. Most difficult to identify are those without attributes, while, for instance, the bearers of a sacrificial animal, a type often encountered in Eastern Greece²⁵, are of course substitutes of the votaries with their offering. The inscription on a calf bearer from the Apollo sanctuary at Claros states explicitly the kouros ensures the votary's memory: [...] dedicated me [...], me being his *mnema*²⁶.

Another example of a votive kouros substituting a mortal is the early victor statue. That in the Early and High Archaic age the victor statue was a kouros, shows for instance Pausanias' account (8, 40. 1) about the victor statue of Arrachion, a three-time Olympic victor (572, 568 and 564 BC), in Phigalia²⁷. The earliest epigraphically attested statue of an Olympic victor, certainly a kouros, is one whose inscribed bronze plaque of the base was found in a sanctuary near

21. Spear-holder, about 550: KALTSAS 2002, no. 53. Discus-bearer, about 560: RICHTER 1961, no. 25; KALTSAS 2002, no. 55; new fragment: WILLEMSSEN 1970, 28-29 pl. 11,3.

22. RICHTER 1961, no. 31 fig. 93; KARUSOS 1961, 44 A1; SCHMALTZ 1983, 167 pl. 2, 2.

23. E.g. Aristion stele, about 510: RICHTER 1961, no. 67; KALTSAS 2002, no. 100.

24. RICHTER 1961, no. 57 figs. 138-140; on the subject cf. WALTER-KARYDI 2002, 69f.

25. E.g. the slightly over life size figure from Didyma, of about 540 (TUCHELT 1970, K16 pls. 11, 2. 4; 18; 19, 1);

another of these years, found 1995 in the Apollo sanctuary at Claros, is over 2 m high (GENIÈRE 1998, 241 pl. XII, 2; PÉCASSE in: DEWAILLY, PÉCASSE, VERGER 2004, 41-47, no. 4 pls. VI, 1. 4; VII, 1. 3).

26. HOLTZMANN 1993, 810f. figs. 7-8; DEWAILLY, VERGER 13-20; PÉCASSE op. cit. 33-41 no. 3 pls. IV, 1; V, 1. 3. Inscription: LEJEUNE, DUBOIS 1998, 1142-1145 fig. 1 (I cannot follow their translation of *MNEMA QN AYTQN*: «en souvenir des siens»).

27. On victor statues see HERRMANN 1988; RAUSA 1994; KRUMEICH 1997, 89sq. 200sq.; HIMMELMANN 2001, 58-61; MANN 2001, 49sq.; LEHMANN 2004.

Francavilla Marittima in southern Italy. The inscription, dated to the first half of the 6th or even the late 7th century BC, states that Kleombrotos, son of Dexilaos, is dedicating after his victory in Olympia a statue equal to him in size and robustness, since he had vowed to offer to the goddess a tenth of his victor's prize²⁸. The text spells out that Kleombrotos saw the kouros he dedicated as a worthy portrait of himself.

In the later 6th century some victor kouroi have attributes referring to their discipline – since, contrary to the grave kouroi, the votive ones may be given attributes. For instance, a small bronze from the Acropolis, a masterpiece of the years about 500 BC, was holding jumping weights (now lost), indicating that he is a jumper²⁹.

Victor kouroi are of course 'name portraits' too, the victor's name being always given in the inscription; if this is lost, then a victor kouros cannot be distinguished from the other votive ones in a sanctuary.

A votive kouros holding a bow is, as a rule, Apollo, be it the colossal marble figure on Delos, near the Naxians' oikos and towering over it (n. 16), or a small bronze, like a Naxian one of about 530 BC, dedicated, according to the inscription, by Deinagoras to the far-darter god as a tithe³⁰. In the left hand of the statuette was as usual the bow, now lost, but the right holds an aryballos, an athlete's attribute. This might mean that Deinagoras offered the bronze to the god having distinguished himself in athletics.

A kouros without attributes can also be Apollo as shows, for instance, Diodorus' account of the god's statue made by the mid-6th-century sculptors Theodoros and Telekles in Samos³¹. Apollo statues as kouroi appear in red-figure vase-paintings as on an amphora of about 440 where a heroine, probably Cassandra, fleeing from a warrior seeks refuge at the ancient statue of the god³². Among the votive kouroi without attributes it is certainly not easy to distinguish Apollo figures. Still, sometimes it is possible through the inscriptions, as in the case of an over life-size kouros and a slightly under life-size kore in the Claros sanctuary, of about 560-550 B.C. According to the statues' inscriptions a certain Timonax, son of Theodoros having been a priest for the first time, dedicated the kouros to Apollo, the kore to Artemis³³. Obviously, the kouros embodies Apollo and the kore stands for the god's sister. The kore, it should be noted, stood near the Artemis altar; the original position of the kouros is not known.

28. EBERT 1972, 251-55 fig. 32 pl. 14: 1st half 6th c.; GUARDUCCI 1967, 110 no. 3: end of 7th - early 6th c.; HANSEN 1983, 394: 600-550?; DUBOIS 2002, 23sq.: end of 7th c. - Translation after EBERT.

29. RICHTER 1970, no. 162; ROLLEY 1994, 286f. 329 fig. 291; KALTSAS 2004, 192 no. 81.

30. HANSEN 1983, 405; KOKKOROU-ALEWRAS 1995, K 38 fig. 40 pl. 30.

31. Diodor I, 98. 5-10; *LIMC* II (1984) s.v. Apollo 7 (W. LAMBRINUDAKIS).

32. *ARV*² 1010, 4: Dwarf painter; LAMBRINUDAKIS op. cit. Apollo 5. Cf. too the scene on a Nolan amphora by the Berlin painter (*ARV*² 203, 101; LAMBRINUDAKIS op. cit. Apollo 6).

33. Kouros (found 1995): GENIÈRE 1998, 241 pl. XII, 2; PÉCASSE in: DEWAILLY, PÉCASSE, VERGER 2004, 47-55 no. 5 pls. VIII, 1; IX, 1; X, 1. 2. Kore: HOLTZMANN 1993, 811-815 figs. 9. 10; GENIÈRE 1998, 242-43 pl. V; PÉCASSE op. cit. 25-33 no. 2 pls. II, 1. 4; III, 1. 2. Inscriptions: LEJEUNE, DUBOIS 1998, 1145sq., B, C.

An example of votive kouroi representing mythical persons is the over life-size Argive pair dedicated in Delphi, ca 580 BC³⁴. The inscription on the two plinths is too badly preserved for giving clues to the pair's identity; nevertheless, the traditional identification with the brothers Cleobis and Biton that has been recently challenged still seems the most plausible one. According to Herodotus (I, 31), the brothers yoked themselves to the cart, as there were no oxen at hand, and drew it so their mother might arrive on time at the Hera festival in Argos. The gods' reward was to give them the most beautiful death and the Argives had statues of them set up in Delphi. It is unusual that both figures are wearing boots, but then characterizing features such as these are occasionally found on votive kouroi.

The colossal votive kouroi are the most problematic to identify. Over life size is certainly frequent for the grave kouroi, but it is rare among the votive ones substituting votaries, and these can hardly be colossal. What do then the colossi in the sanctuaries represent?

The 'Eastern Colossus', ca. 4.80 m high, dedicated by Isches, son of Rhesis, of about 580 B. C., in the Heraion of Samos, has been called an ancestor hero³⁵. Of about the same size was the early 6th-century 'Southern Colossus' in this sanctuary³⁶; another, of about 550-540 BC, was 3,5 m high³⁷. Perhaps, such kouroi should rather be considered as gods, especially Apollo³⁸. This seems obvious for the colossal kouroi from the Apollo sanctuaries at Didyma³⁹, Delos⁴⁰ and Delphi⁴¹, but might be true also elsewhere, since it was indeed not unusual to set up statues of gods other than the main deity in the sanctuary. Still the issue remains ultimately unresolved.

Since identifying a votive kouros proves often difficult or even impossible Himmelmann suggested that some of them are nameless *agálmata* (gifts delighting the gods)⁴². While Kyrieleis rightly argued that the kouroi can never be ideal images (*Idealbilder*) embodying abstract ideas and values⁴³, the notion of nameless *agálmata*, though hard to reconcile with the personal character so pronounced in the kouroi, is yet worth considering.

Be that as it may, these iconographic difficulties force us to consider why kouroi may embody men, as well as gods and heroes. The question leads to the features, which are common to all kouroi, independently from the names of individual exemplars: nudity, beauty and 'youth'.

Let us at first turn to nudity⁴⁴. It may come as a surprise that I consider the kouroi the first nude male figures in Greek art. To explain this, a look further back is again necessary.

34. FLOREN 1987, 205 n. 6; ROLLEY 1994, 168-170 fig. 146; JACQUEMIN (1999, nos. 071-72) refers to the suggestion, the statues represent the Dioskouroi.

35. KYRIELEIS 1996, 98.

36. Ibid. 4 pl. 31. FREYER-SCHAUENBURG 1974, pls. 16,29A. 17,29C. 18,30. 34. 19,32B.

37. FREYER-SCHAUENBURG 1974, pls. 30-33, 47A-B.

38. As HIMMELMANN (1996, 38) suggested.

39. TUCHELT 1970, K1-5 pl. 9. K7 pl. 12, 1. K9bis pl. 14-15. K10 pl. 12, 2. K11 pl. 12, 3-4.

40. Delos A333: ROLLEY 1994, 146 fig. 127; KOKKOROU-ALEWRAS 1995, K 7 pl. 14. Delos A4052: KOKKOROU-ALEWRAS 1995, K 12a pl. 18.

41. Delphi 2278: RICHTER 1970, no. 105 fig. 335.

42. 1996, 38.

43. 1996, 97.

44. HIMMELMANN 1990 (with previous bibliography); idem 2000, 296-305; STEWART 1990, 105sq.; idem 1997, 24sq. (with previous bibliography); SOURVINOU-INWOOD 1995, 235sq.; HÖLSCHER 1998, 30-38.

There has been much discussion about nudity in geometric art, but nobody has doubted that nudity was a theme in this art. Yet scholars did notice that, for instance, in the *prothesis* of the dead on Attic vase paintings of the mid-8th century clothing is seldom depicted⁴⁵. The same is true of bronze or terracotta figures of these years. This shows no carelessness or a lack of interest in the rendering of clothing, it being something accidental, as has been surmised, but reveals a principle of geometric art. Nudity cannot be a theme in this art since the surface of a piece is actually not connected to the substantial body it is a part of⁴⁶. This is evident in the indifference towards rendering not only the clothing of human figures but also the hide or pelt of animals, the birds' feathers and so on. Instead, there appear on every available surface the non-representational patterns that occur on all artefacts of this age, or even figured images (examples: n. 46). The first attempts of linking the surface to the substantial body of a figure occur in the end of the 8th and the first half of the 7th century, but it is in the archaic age that this is fully realised. Consequently, it is only in this age that nudity becomes an iconographic issue. The *kouroi* are indeed the first nude male figures in Greek art.

By the way, the fact that some pieces from the second half of the 7th century are wearing belts⁴⁷ does not detract from their nudity since the belt is not "an abbreviated rendering of clothing" as has occasionally been assumed. The belt marks the joint between upper and lower body, just as it does on Geometric figures. It is, however, not a relic from old times but belongs to the crystalline clarity, the geometry of the body in Early Archaic sculpture. In the beginning of the 6th century, when the statues acquire a new corporeal quality, there is no longer need to demarcate the upper from the lower body and the belt disappears.

Nudity in art is of course a polyvalent quality. As regards the *kouroi*, their nudity may be linked to that of athletes but cannot be simply equated with it⁴⁸. Nudity as a concrete athletic trait occurs for instance in the gravestone images of the deceased as an athlete carrying a discus, a spear or the like (p. 31). The nudity of freestanding *kouroi* is, however, much more comprehensive. If it seems to free the male body from all accidental features in order to bring it out as such, the underlying notion is that the body is not considered, as in other historical periods, an external shell, but an entity inseparably linked to what we call inner qualities.

Such qualities are indeed assigned to the *kouroi*. For instance, according to the grave epigram the passer-by can recognize the manliness of the dead spearman Xenokles by looking at his grave *kouros*⁴⁹. Courage is attributed to it as a visible characteristic, identical with its physical presence.

45. E.g. on the well known amphora in Athens, Nat. Mus. 804: HIMMELMANN 1990, 30 fig. 1; idem 2000, 298 fig. 23; WALTER-KARYDI 1991, 526 pl. XX, 1. Cf. STEWART 1997, 38sq. fig. 25.

46. WALTER-KARYDI 1991.

47. E.g. Cretan: the Delphi bronze (n. 6), a half life size *sphyrelaton* from Palaikastro (FLOREN 1987, 137 n. 73); Cycladic: KOKKOROU-ALEWRAS 1995, K 6 pl. 11, life size (Delos A 334), K 7 pl. 14, over life size (Delos A

333), K 11 pl. 17, over life size (Thera 307), K 13 pl. 19, over life size (Thera 310), the Naxian Apollo (n. 16).

48. As was pointed out by HIMMELMANN 1990, 34-35 and STEWART 1997, 244 (ibid. 239: bibliography on athletic nudity).

49. KARUSOS 1961, 61 A9; HANSEN 1983, 19; KISSAS 2000, A4 fig. 7. Cf. HIMMELMANN 1996, 31; ROBERTSON 2003.

The Xenokles' kouros, a mid-6th century Attic piece, is lost, but it surely had no traits of a warrior, no armour, same as is the case with Kroisos who, after the epigram, fell in battle, in the foremost ranks, and yet his kouros, an Attic piece of about 530 BC, follows the usual pattern⁵⁰. It is only the gravestone images that may show the dead as a warrior.

According to the epigrams then, a viewer can grasp by looking at the grave kouros the courage of the deceased, his athletic skill, his level-headedness as a citizen (*sophrosyne*) and other such praiseworthy qualities⁵¹. (These, it should be noted, are not character traits of the person to whom the epigram refers but represent collective values of the time; biographical facts or individual qualities are, I repeat, never mentioned).

So nudity is chosen for the kouros, the most frequent sculptural type of the archaic age, not because it has as such an extolling function, as has occasionally been assumed, but because the notion to put physical and 'inner' merits on a level prevails.

The same applies to the quality of beauty. The inscriptions of victor statues celebrate the victor's achievement as well as his beauty. The Aiginetan Theognetos is called "no less skilled in the athletic contest than he was handsome to look at"⁵². Epinician odes proclaim that the victor, "handsome to behold, cast no shame on his beauty in action" (Pindar, Ol. 8, 19), that he is "handsome in looks and with deeds to match" (Pindar, Nem. 3, 20). Archaic grave epigrams praise the dead as *kalos*⁵³, a word referring both to bodily beauty and to worthiness.

Recently the kouroi have been considered as sexually desirable statues, asking, as it were, for a sensually caressing glance⁵⁴. However, this aspect is never addressed in funerary or votive epigrams. Moreover, on the kouroi themselves the archaic awareness of corporeality is visually expressed in a way transcending eroticism. There are sculptures from other art periods showing indeed in the forms – which constitute, after all, the decisive evidence – a provocative sensuality; this is not the case with the kouroi, bodies without blemish though they are. Besides, the prevailing notion in this age that a beautiful body and admirable inner qualities belong together, the *kalos* having both, excludes creating blank sexuality in sculpture.

Another celebrated quality is youth. In the base epigram of a mid 6th century Attic grave stele, now lost, passers-by are exhorted to lament Tettichos, a brave man (*ándra agathón*), who fell in battle, thus sacrificing his youth (*nearán hében*)⁵⁵. Tettichos is called a man but the emphasis lying

50. RICHTER 1970, no. 136; KARUSOS 1961, 63 II A 18; HANSEN 1983, 27; KISSAS 2000, 54-55, A20 figs. 28-30; KALTSAS 2002, no. 69. RIDGWAY 1993, 68, misreads the hair on top of the skull as a cap that Greek warriors often wore under their helmets.

51. The deceased is called *agathos* and *sophron*, e. g. in epigrams on a column base and on a column, both bearing kouroi, now lost (HANSEN 1983, 34. 36; KISSAS 2000, 51, A 18 figs. 23-26; 79, A 47 fig. 61).

52. Epigram from Theognetos' victor statue: AP XVI 2.

EBERT 1972, no. 12 ("Simonides"). Theognetos' victory having taken place about 476 or 474 his statue was not a kouros, but such praise was surely found in archaic victor statues inscriptions too.

53. Epigram on the base of the now lost Kleoitias' stele: KARUSOS 1961, 67 C2: about 500; HANSEN 1983, 68; KISSAS 2000, 249 C4.

54. See above all STEWART 1997.

55. KARUSOS 1961, 67, C 1; HANSEN 1983, 13; KISSAS 2000, 44-45 A 11 fig. 13.

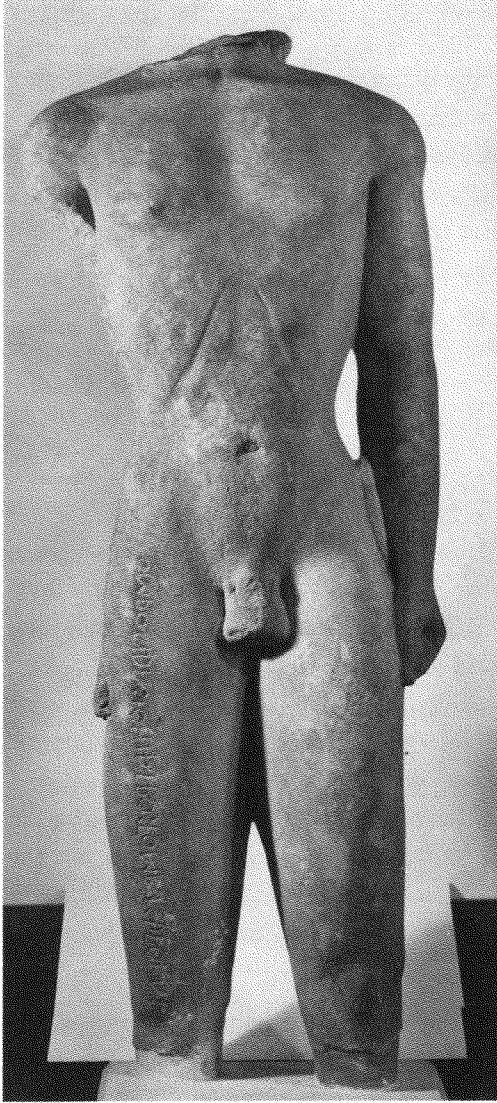


Fig. 4. Grave kouros of Sombrotidas. Preserved h. 1,19 m. Syracuse, Nat. Mus.

on his youthfulness when he died is part of the praise for him. The same applies to the epigrams on the 5th century Athenian state tombs declaring that the fallen warriors lost their radiant youth (*hébe*) for their hometown⁵⁶. The Athenian army was, however, made up of men between twenty and forty years of age, while *hébe* is the term for the age before attaining manhood, that is in Athens, fourteen or sixteen. Referring to the *hébe* of the war dead in the epigrams is by no means an indication of their age⁵⁷. In the *Iliad* it is said of a mighty warrior (13, 484), “he also has the flower of youth (*hébes ánthos*), which is the greatest strength” and in archaic lyric poetry the radiant *hebe* of the warrior is invariably emphasized. Male youth means vigour rather than a particular age.

Does a kouros in fact represent a youth? There is, of course, another sculptural type that may be used as grave statue of a man who died at an advanced age: the seated male wearing a himation⁵⁸. Nevertheless, the grave kouros does not compellingly imply that the dead was a youth; for instance, the grave statue of Sombrotidas from Megara Hyblaea, a physician according to the inscription, who cannot have been so very young when he died, is a kouros (Fig. 4)⁵⁹. Moreover, the kouroi, as everybody knows, have no features indicating a specific age. Even the rule that beardlessness denotes youth in archaic art is not a rigid one⁶⁰. Tettichos appeared most probably as a warrior on his gravestone, and warriors are as a rule bearded on the stele images. Yet the epigram celebrates the bearded Tettichos’ *hebe*.

56. HANSEN 1983, 4: about 458 or 457. Cf. *ibid.* 6 etc. For SOURVINOU-INWOOD 1995, 261-62, the kouroi stand for males of two age bands, “pre-ephebic and ephebic” teenagers and young men of 20-30; she places Kroisos in the second group. For a concrete youthfulness of kouroi see too e.g. STÄHLI 1999, 98-99. *Contra* BUSCHOR

1960, 88-89; D’ ONOFRIO 1982, 163-64; STEWART 1990, 109. Cf. KARUSOS 1961, 27sq.

57. Cf. LORAUX 1975, 20-21 and *passim*.

58. This type occurs less frequently by far than the kouros. Cf. SCHMALTZ 1983, 164 n. 395.

59. RICHTER 1970, no. 134; ROLLEY 1994, 298 fig. 304.

It may be said then that the kouroi, being marked by neither age nor illness, do correspond to the notion of youth in poetry as the age of the highest vigour, the prime of life. Their immaculate body's radiant bloom cannot be fixed at a certain age but is rather a charisma.

To such a notion of youth seems to match the 'archaic smile'. This emerged in the early 6th century, about the same time with the new corporeality in sculptures mentioned above. The faces of two late 7th century Attic kouroi, the one recently found in the Kerameikos (Fig. 5)⁶¹ and the well known one Figs. 1a,b, are not 'smiling'; they look, as it were, demonic in the crystalline clarity, the geometry of their organic structure. Instead, the 'archaic smile' is pronounced on the Attic grave kouros from Volomandra, about 560 BC (Fig. 6)⁶².

This facial expression has nothing to do with cheerfulness arising from a particular situation or with cheerfulness at all, since archaic faces, just as they are unmarked by age, illness or individual features, do not register emotional states. Moreover, the 'smile', only found in High and Late Archaic figures (early 6th century to about 490 BC), appears in all faces of this time, be they cult images, votive or funerary sculptures, be they male or female, even mourners, wounded and dying warriors, or mythical creatures such as sphinxes (Fig. 7)⁶³ and centaurs⁶⁴. In other words, this 'smile' is a visual formula, independent of theme and function of a piece. It can only reveal an anthropological quality that is valid in this particular age and no other and might be called the distinctive vitality of these figures.

A final question is, why the kouros, the most frequent statue type in the archaic age, was created just at the time when artists began to devise iconographic features and attributes, which, in

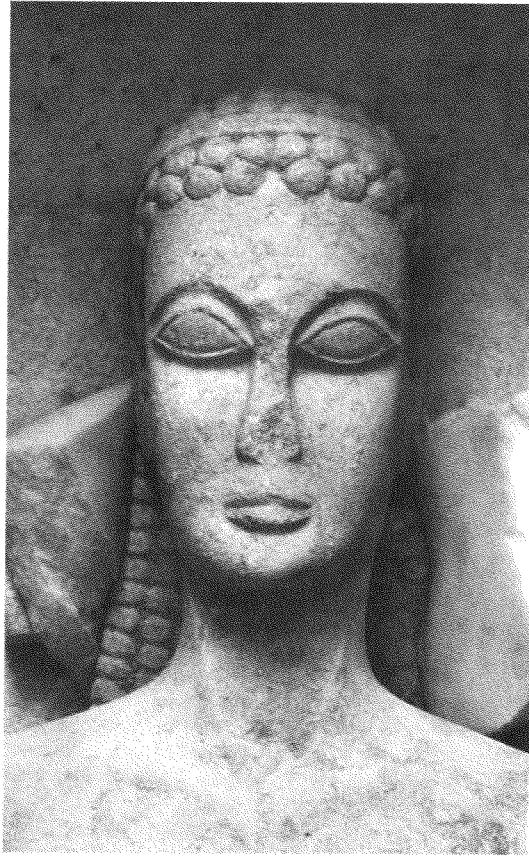


Fig. 5. Head of the grave kouros from the Sacred Gate. Preserved h. 1,45 m. Kerameikos Mus.

60. Incidentally, BRINKMANN 2003, 47 stresses that there are no examples of kouroi with a painted moustache or sideburns.

61. NIEMEIER 2002, 23sq. Figs. 19. 20. 22. 24. 26-29. 51-56. The left arm was found later and joined to the torso: *JHS AR* for 2003/4, 6 fig. 9 (J. WHITLEY).

62. RICHTER 1970, no. 63; KALTSAS 2002, no. 47.

63. About 560 B.C. SCHRADER 1939, no. 71 pl. 165 (W. H. SCHUCHHARDT); BRUSKARI 1974, pl. 48f.

64. E.g. the bronze statuette in Princeton (PADGETT 2003, 158sq. no. 24).



Fig. 6. Grave kouros from Volomandra, head. Preserved h. (kouros) 1,79 m. Athens, Nat. Mus. 1906.



Fig. 7. Votive Sphinx, from the Acropolis, head. H (sphinx) 0,73 m. Akropolis Mus. 630.

the 6th century, usually make themes and persons recognizable – the man with a lion skin and a club is Herakles and so on. Is it not surprising that kouroi, distinguished solely by their powerful presence, should embody gods, heroes and mortal men alike?

To answer that question we have to consider another early Greek particularity. Let us recall how Xenophanes of Colophon (6th century BC) distanced himself from his contemporaries' beliefs and scoffed that the gods should look just like them and speak the same language⁶⁵. Xenophanes was of course a loner; what he fights against is exactly that, which distinguishes the mentality of his age. Moreover, the belief that mortals and gods have the same body does not only mean that the gods were thought to be anthropomorphic but equally that mortals were considered to look like gods. Indeed, adjectives like *θεοείκελος* (=godlike) are applied not only to Homeric heroes but also to the bridegroom, a citizen of Lesbos, Sappho celebrates in an epithalamion (2 D, 1). Such praise fits the kouroi too, since no body of a mortal man, be he an athlete or a bodybuilder, can be so perfect as they are.

65. Cf. VERNANT 1989, 13sq.; idem 1990, 236.

Moreover, in an age, when there is no contrast between body and soul, there is also no opposition between the human body and the divine sphere transcending the corporeal, even though the gods are of course immortal while human beings are ephemeral, even though the human body is subjected to the limitations and incompleteness of mortality – something the Greeks are acutely aware of – while the sublime body of the gods is not exposed to a constant decay. Accordingly, all qualities admired in a man and equated with his body are present in a heightened form in the gods. The beauty, manliness, level-headedness and the like, which are attributed to the kouros substituting a deceased or a victor, apply all the more to the kouros embodying a god. Thus, the identical representation of man, god and hero in the kouroi does not seem at all strange to contemporaries. In other words, the kouroi, devoid as they are of all iconographic features, do establish for the first time an essential iconographic rule in Greek art, that is, the close visual concurrence in the rendering of gods, heroes and mortals.

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ABBREVIATIONS

The abbreviations follow the guidelines of the German Archaeological Institute, s. *Archäologischer Anzeiger* 1997, 611-628.

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