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Excerpt

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## PART II.



## GREEK POTTERY.

## CHAPTER VII.

Glazed vases continued—Ornaments—Their nature and use—The Mæander—Chequered bands—The fret or herring-bone—Annulets—Egg and tongue ornament—Scales or feathers—The helix—Antefixal ornament—Wreaths—Petals—Vine branches—Acanthus leaves—Flowers—Arrangement—Sources from which the vase-painters copied—Inscriptions—Form of the letters—Position—Dialects—Orthography—Different kinds of inscriptions: painted inscriptions; names of figures and objects.—Addresses—Artists' names—Potters' names—Laudatory inscriptions—Unintelligible inscriptions—Memoranda.

SUBORDINATE to the subjects in point of archæological interest, but intimately interwoven with them, are the ornaments which helped to relieve and embellish the representations on pictures, and, so to speak, to frame them. Numerous vases, indeed, are decorated with ornaments only, whilst many smaller ones are entirely black, from which circumstance they were nicknamed "Libyes" or "Moors." The ware of Nola is richest in vases of this class; and amphoræ, hydriæ, stamnoi, cylices, phialæ, pyxides, and lamps, of this unornamented description, are

found in the Campanian sepulchres. Others have only the simplest kind of ornaments, consisting of plain bands or zones passing round their body and feet. A very common decoration is two bands or zones concentric to the axis of the foot of the vase. This is, however, found only on the black vases of the best period. Other vases, both of the earliest and later classes, are painted with ornaments, consisting of wreaths of laurel, myrtle, or ivy, *helices*, egg and tongue borders, mæanders, waves or the cymation moulding, chequers, guilloche, spirals, dentals, and petals. These are artistically disposed upon them according to certain rules of great symmetry and taste; and that the artist prided himself upon his talent in this way is certain, from some vase-painters having attached their names to vases only decorated with ornaments. On the whole, there is a poverty in the variety of ornaments employed, very different from the fruitful caprices of the Teutonic races, amongst whom, from religious motives, ornaments were often employed in preference to representations of the human form. It is on the earliest vases that ornament is most employed: as the art develops itself, it is gradually lessened, till at the best period it almost disappears. But on the later efforts of the potters it again rises like a noxious weed diminishing the intent of, and ultimately superseding the subjects. It must be borne in mind that originally the ornament was either the normal mode of representing certain things extraneous to the subject, or a symbol introduced into it. Hence in the arrangement of ornaments different principles were called into play. The wreaths and bands of artificial ornaments or *helices*, appear for instance to be

imitations of the crowns and fillets which it was the custom of the Greeks to tie round the vase at festive entertainments, whilst the *helix* at the handles seems to have represented the flowers attached to that part of the vase. Mæanders, ovolos, and astragals, on the other hand, were either architectural adaptations to the vase or accompaniments of subjects originally selected from the different members of buildings, such as the pediments, metopes, and friezes. Other ornaments were conventional, or symbols to denote particular conditions or places, which originally they defined, and were subsequently retained from habit. Thus the cymation or wave moulding, represented the sea or marine compositions, the mæander a river on the land, and a fleurette (fig. 30) the carpet of nature on which the figures walked. The ornaments, indeed, exhibit great monotony, and are repetitions of a type not diversified like the arabesque; but they are distinguished by an airy lightness and an extreme simplicity which harmonise exquisitely with the human forms with which they are associated. They are well adapted to the shape and colour of the vases, and afford great relief to the subject depicted. We will now proceed to consider them in detail.

The mæander ornament differs very considerably on the various vases on which it is found. On the early fawn-coloured ones it predominates generally in the simplest forms like those depicted in figures 1, 2.

The pattern (fig. 3), indeed, a more complex variety, sometimes occurs. It occupies the most prominent places of the vases, as the neck, body, handles, and other parts.

On those with yellow grounds, in the rare instances in

which it appears, it is employed for bands round the neck (fig. 4) ; whilst on vases of a more advanced style of art it reappears in a more complete and connected form, intermingled with flowers, and represents the ground upon which the animals walk (fig 5).

At the foot of the amphoræ with black figures, the ornament appears in the form represented in fig. 5. This type is finally superseded by one resembling that represented by fig. 3. On the early vases with yellow grounds, it consists of three, four, or five mæanders, with a flower at the end, treated in a very conventional style, generally as a square with diagonals, sometimes with pellets in the sections (fig. 7), while at other times it resembles a quadrangular fort (fig. 6). On some of the late Apulian vases, on which this style of ornament first appears, the flower is treated as a cross on a black background, bearing some resemblance to a Maltese cross (fig. 8). In the last style of all it appears as a square divided at right angles, with pellets, and is probably intended for a flower with four spots (fig 7).

Chequered panels, disposed either horizontally or vertically, are extensively used on the fawn-coloured vases, and on those with yellow grounds (fig. 10, 11). They also appear on the vase of Capua, already cited, on vases with black figures, and on the shoulders of *lecythi*<sup>1</sup> (fig. 12).

The fret or herring-bone (fig. 13) is of common occurrence on vases of the oldest style, disposed in horizontal or vertical bands, either in a single or triple line. It occurs rarely on vases of the style called Phœnician, and still more so on vases with black figures. A remarkable employment

<sup>1</sup> See V. L. ii. xlix. l. 61.

of this ornament occurs on the early *hydriæ* with black figures, on which it is used as a boundary to the picture, and being knotted at the points of union, forms a reticulated pattern (fig. 29).

On the earlier vases bands of annulets (fig. 14) occur, as on the foot of a vase in the British Museum.<sup>1</sup> This ornament does not appear on vases of the later styles.

Egg and tongue (fig. 15) ornaments are employed on vases of all periods. On the earlier ones they are much elongated, and principally appear on the shoulder of the vase. They are never placed below the handles, but are sometimes found at the place of insertion. On the *hydria*, or water vase, this ornament occurs between the frieze and body, its position on vases of a later style, where it sometimes divides the subjects. It is introduced with graceful effect at the lip. This ornament is of the Ionic order.

Another ornament imitated overlapping scales or feathers like the *opus pavonaceum* in tile work. It occurs only on vases of the early Doric style. Many examples occur on vases found at Nola.<sup>2</sup>

The development of the *helix* or ornament of the antefixæ is very remarkable; on early vases of the intermediate style between the Phœnician and early Greek, it assumes the shape of a mere bud (fig. 16). On the cups with small figures it develops itself (fig. 17) from the handle on a single stem either with the petals closed or detached, and curling upon a spiral stem, like the leaf of a creeping plant. On the oldest vases, when it is employed in a bud, it sometimes assumes an abnormal appearance.

<sup>1</sup> No. 2559.

<sup>2</sup> B. M. 397.

The *helix* is also extensively employed as a frieze or scroll on many hydriæ and vases both of the earlier and later styles. When it appears alone it resembles the leaf of an aquatic plant, with seven petals ; but in combination, it follows the scroll (fig. 18), like the leaf of a creeping plant, the points of which are either in one direction, or half of them one way and half the other (fig. 19), or alternately upright and pendent. This ornament is often intermingled with spurs and other portions of plants. On the earlier vases with red figures it forms a rich ornament when intermingled with other emblems—being then often disposed in red bands, on which it is coloured black. Sometimes it is seen as a frieze, with a kind of flower like the hyacinth interposed, in which it represents as it were the foliage to the flower (fig. 20), often treated in this way. On the neck of the later Nolan amphoræ, and on vases of the fine style with red figures, this ornament (fig. 21) becomes more floral and picturesque, and fills up the whole space of the neck. The accompanying form of the leaf (fig. 22), which is seen in a wreath or collar of a vase of Etruscan style, bears so much resemblance to the antefixal ornament that it may be an early development of it. On the neck of some of the late *crateres* with red figures it is elegantly disposed in an oblique manner (fig. 23). It continued in use till the latest period of the fictile art—but on the vases of the style of the Basilicata and St. Agata dei Goti, it has more petals, becomes more splay, and the spiral tendrils are often altogether omitted (fig. 31). It is profusely employed, and generally in combination with the flower.

One of the earliest ornaments on the vases is a com-

posite form of the antefixal ornament<sup>1</sup> called *helices*, intermingled with flowers. A very old arrangement is to place the flower and leaf alternately (fig. 24), by making an ornament, each part of which has a leaf at one end and flower at the other, so as to convey the idea of a double row of leaves and alternate flowers united by a broad band.

On the early Bacchic amphoræ with black figures this is the prevalent and most important ornament; arranged generally, however, as a double wreath, the antefixal ornaments inversely to each other, and also the flowers, which are connected by a twisted cord or chain. On a vase made by Nicosthenes, this ornament assumes with its flowers a remarkable shape.

This *helix* or antefixal ornament is the same as that which appears in the Doric entablatures, but the ovolo, or egg and tongue, belongs to the Ionic order. Both are found united upon early vases with red figures. The combinations of *helices* and flowers at the handles of the Bacchic amphoræ will give an idea of the elegant appearance of this ornament.

A light and elegant arrangement of the helix is displayed on the necks of certain lecythi.<sup>2</sup>

The flower intermingled with these ornaments has been supposed by some writers to be that of the clematis cirrosa,<sup>3</sup> to which plant some varieties of the form of the antefixal ornament have also been referred.

On some of the Bacchic amphoræ of the later style the flowers are more elegantly turned, and their shape

<sup>1</sup> Various ideas have been put forth with regard to this ornament. See *Annali*, 1843, pp. 380, 384.

<sup>2</sup> For a vase entirely ornamented with

*helices*, see *V. L.* ii. 41.

<sup>3</sup> Hogg, *Trans. Roy. Soc. Lit.*, New Series, ii. p. 179, and foll.

approaches to its appearance on the red vases, the antefixal ornament having a trefoil.

A very common ornament of the necks of amphoræ and other vases is a wreath of interlaced flowers and buds (fig. 28). Such wreaths often occur on vases of the old style or that called Egyptian.

On vases of the transition style the flower gradually becomes more like a bud and less enclosed. The manner in which it appears mixed up with the antefixal ornament has been shown in the preceding examples. This ornament is seen on the shoulders of the amphoræ called Tyrrhenian, and on the feet of the Bacchic ones with the points turned up. On the later vases it entirely disappears. It is uncertain what flower it is intended to represent. Some persons take it to be the hyacinth.

Ivy wreaths (fig. 25) appear on some of the pale vases of the Etruscan style, and on some of the fine vases from Athens; and on the necks of some of the *lecythi* with black figures. Sometimes the leaves only are seen, intermixed with the helix ornament.

On the *hydriæ*, or water vases, the boundary lines of the pictures are sometimes formed by upright festoons of ivy wreaths (fig. 26), which are also seen arranged vertically round the lips, and undulating with the contours of the handles of the so-called Tyrrhenian amphoræ; relieving by their light and graceful contrast the sombre monotony of the body of the vase.

On the necks of the *calpides*, and later vases of the fine red ware, this ornament becomes more graceful and the stems of the foliage more entwined (fig. 27), while flowers or berries are introduced.



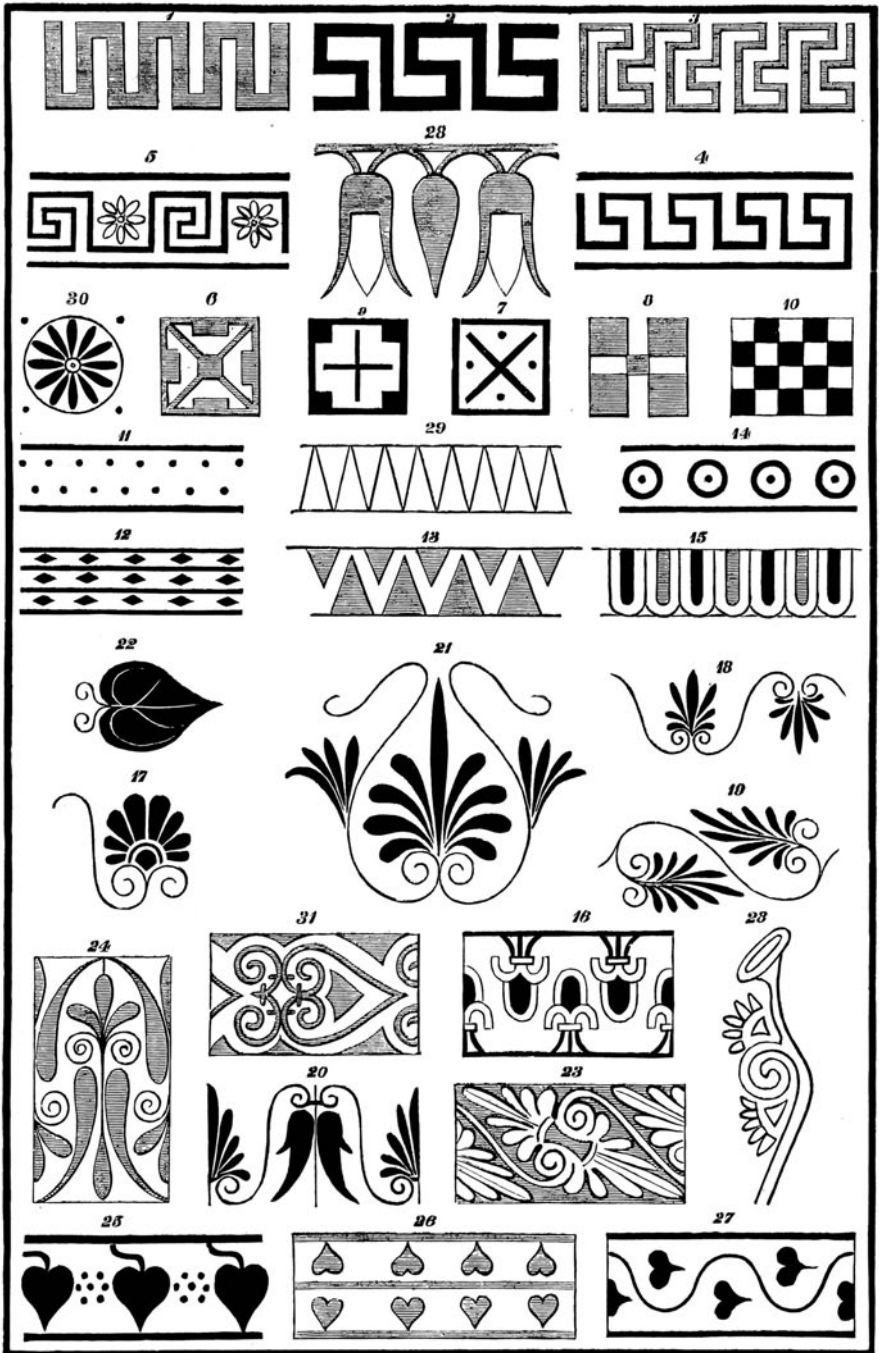
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ORNAMENTS OF VASES.

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On the late *celebæ*, or craters with columnar handles of the style of the *Basilicata*, the whole neck of the vases is often occupied by an ivy wreath in black upon a red ground, having as many flowers or berries as leaves.

The feet of the early vases, and of most of the *hydriæ* and *amphoræ*, are ornamented with the representation of petals of flowers in black upon a red ground. In some instances this ornament is doubled.

Vine branches appear only on the later vases. Such an ornament will be seen on an *ascos* of pale yellow clay with brown figures, in the British Museum.

In the same class of vases acanthus leaves are found grouped in a floral style, with antefixal ornaments at their sides. In the centre generally appears a full-faced head either of Aphrodite or Victory.

On these vases the floral ornaments become more elegant and architectural. The accompanying example (fig. 28), will show how the convolvulus was represented at this period. Sometimes there appears a small low flower rising from the earth—probably the asphodel. On some vases the floral ornaments assume the form of the architectural scroll, and are imitated from friezes or other members.

## GROUPING OF ORNAMENTS.

Nor is the manner in which these ornaments are grouped on the early vases less instructive. The *hydriæ* constantly has its frieze, or upper picture, surmounted by the egg and tongue ornament.<sup>1</sup> The picture on the body is separated by a band,<sup>2</sup> mæander,<sup>3</sup> single or double<sup>4</sup> chequer,<sup>5</sup> or net;<sup>6</sup> the sides are banded by ivy wreaths,<sup>7</sup> or bands of the *helix*;<sup>8</sup> while the lower zone has interlaced buds,<sup>9</sup> the *helix*,<sup>10</sup> or a frieze of animals,<sup>11</sup> about  $1\frac{3}{4}$  in. broad; all which, however, are wanting in some examples.<sup>12</sup> The bases are always decorated with petals,<sup>13</sup> and the rest of the body is generally black; yet some *hydriæ* have red lips,<sup>14</sup> and others the feet either half or entirely red.<sup>15</sup> The inner half of the handle, and sometimes the whole, is generally red, while at the place of insertion of the long handle is a modelled head.

The old *craters*, with columnar handles, have the floral ornament round the lip, the ovolo ornament round the edges, and the ivy leaves at the sides, which in the later vases of the style of St. Agata dei Goti occupy almost the whole of the neck.

On the *craters*, or the so called *oxybapha*, the lips are

<sup>1</sup> B. M., 454.<sup>2</sup> B. M., 485.<sup>3</sup> B. M., 468.<sup>4</sup> B. M., 476.<sup>5</sup> B. M., 486.<sup>6</sup> B. M., 467.<sup>7</sup> B. M., 486.<sup>8</sup> B. M., 487.<sup>9</sup> B. M., 464.<sup>10</sup> B. M., 468.<sup>11</sup> B. M., 485.<sup>12</sup> B. M., 458.<sup>13</sup> B. M., 468.<sup>14</sup> B. M., 480.<sup>15</sup> B. M., 470.