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BRONZE-AGE VASES FROM ZAKRO

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[PLATE XII.]

IN describing the recent excavations at Zakro (*Annual of the British School at Athens*, vii. p. 121 ff.) I stated that the pottery found there could not be fully published yet. Pending the resumption of its study, however, three vases of exceptional excellence, which were copied in Candia by Monsieur E. Gilliéron, may be made known. One of these (No. 1) was found in fragments in the principal house (A) of the Lower Town (*ibid.* p. 129 ff.), which yielded also the hoard of sealings published in the previous issue of this *Journal*. The precise findspot was the doorway between the rooms 3 and 5 (v. plan, *ibid.* p. 131), which I believe to have contained a stairway of two flights leading to an upper level or storey. These rooms were full of collapsed ruin, among which the fragments of this vase were dispersed. I offered a special reward, and had all sherds dug out of this house minutely examined; but about a third of the vase was not recovered. Part of a second vase (lip and neck) of precisely similar character came from the same rubbish. The other two vases (Nos. 2, 3) figured in the accompanying Plate (XII.) were built up from fragments found in the Λάκκος (Pit I.) on the western spur (*ibid.* p. 126) among countless sherds of Bronze-Age pottery of the best Cnossian period.

(1) This vase stands 13½ in. high, and is of a pinkish-yellow clay, very pure and perfectly levigated. The buff slip has been carefully polished after the firing, which was a little unequal in operation, causing the painted decoration to vary from a pale madder red to a much duskier tint. The slip is hard, but the pigment is not lustrous. The vase has no foot or flattened base and must have stood in a ring-rest; it is not pierced at the bottom, like the common 'filler' vases. The form is new among 'Mycenaean' forms, but may be traced through my vase No. 3 to a type of vessel common among 'kitchen' ware of Mycenaean period. So far as I know its graceful outlines were not exactly repeated by any later potters.¹

¹ Mr. R. C. Bosanquet, in alluding to this vase in his annual Report on Archaeology in Greece (*J.H.S.* xxi. p. 339), compared a Keftiu form temp. Dynasty xviii. If he was thinking of the slender vase which is figured

with the Keftiu tribute in the Rekhmara tomb, the parallel is not very close, for that vase has a foot and no visible handle. The lip, neck, and upper part of the body, however, correspond to my vase well enough.

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The decorative scheme has one obvious peculiarity, viz. the realism with which part of its constituents are treated. A Mediterranean shell is here depicted in so natural a form that there can be no doubt the vase painter had recourse to a model in nature. Hitherto we have known shells in ceramic decoration of the Mycenaean period, only in such more or less stylized and conventional treatments as are shown in Fig. 1. The *algae* also on this vase are presented as they live and sway in their native element. Nevertheless the scene is not such a realistic glimpse below sea as is suggested by the Flying-fish panel at Phylakopi (*B.S.A.* iv. Pl. 3) or the Fish fresco at Cnossos (not yet published); for the stars or suns, with rays divided by circlets, which occupy the most prominent position on the vase, are purely conventional ornament. That these are stylized presentations of celestial bodies, and not of sea-stars, may be assumed; for the artist, who drew the shells and *algae* from life, would hardly have rested content with such unreal starfishes.

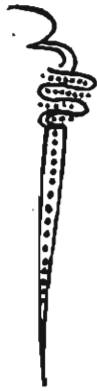


FIG. 1a.—CONVENTIONAL TREATMENT OF A SHELL ON AN IALYSUS VASE.

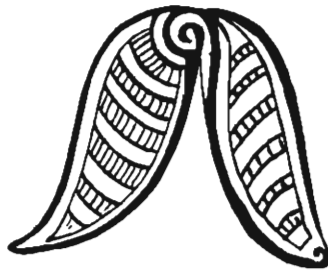


FIG. 1b.—CONVENTIONAL TREATMENT OF A SHELL (BIVALVE?) ON A CNOSSIAN VASE (*B.S.A.* vi. p. 74, Fig. 16).

Realism, however, in connection with the work of primitive artists, is a relative term, as we shall see presently. The aspiration towards it here is unmistakable, but the success is not so complete that one can be quite sure of the species or genus of the object represented. This shell is not a *Murex*, but is possibly of the *Purpura* family. It is less like specimens of either family, however, than it is like the common triton forms of the Mediterranean.

Very few Aegean objects have been found which show anything like even this degree of realism in the treatment of marine motives. The great bulk of the pottery with marine decoration, known to us, comes from two sites, Ialysus and Mycenae; and its motives are already stylized and conventional. The same must be said of the cuttle motive on Mycenae gold work. The main exceptions to this stylism, outside Crete, are supplied by (1) the Phylakopi Flying-fish fresco, (2) certain fine fragments of pottery with cuttle

decoration found in a streetway of the Second Town on the same site and *identical in fabric, glaze, and pigment with this Zakro vase*, (3) certain stone vases, e.g. from Mycenae and from Erment in Upper Egypt, which show cuttles in low relief. It is worth notice that among this small number of naturalistic representations of marine objects, some are almost certainly of Cretan origin, and all may well be so. (1) The Flying-fish fresco is put down as the work of a Cnossian artist by all who have seen both it and the Fish fresco of Cnossos. (2) The Phylakopi cuttle sherds in question are not Melian, and are almost as certainly Cretan as the 'Kamares' sherds which have been found in numbers on the same site. (3) An Upper Egypt Mycenaean vase must be held to have come from Crete more probably than from anywhere else, in view of the intimate connection between these two countries proved by the Cnossian excavations. It has been observed already that the Tell el Amarna 'Aegean' sherds correspond as a whole much more closely to ceramic types of Cnossian provenance than to any others found in the Aegean.

In Crete itself evidences of naturalistic treatment of marine motives are beginning to show themselves as unmistakably as the evidences of that naturalistic treatment of human, animal, or vegetable motives, which have already converted several scholars to the belief that the more realistic products of high art found elsewhere in the Aegean area are of Cretan origin.² We have, for example, from Cnossos a wonderful triton-shell vase in marble, the exact replica of a natural shell, and the nautilus ornament of the 'Draught-board'; a painting of fish, almost as true to life as the fish in the Punt scenes at Der el Bahari; that rudely but faithfully represented cuttle-fish which is carved in relief on the 'standard weight' (*B.S.A.* vii. p. 42, Fig. 12); many fragments of fine ceramic paintings of cuttles and *algae* (parts of a very fine cuttle vase were found in the Dictaeon Cave); and fragments of stone vases with relief decoration of cuttles. And now comes this Zakro vase.

We shall not long want, I am convinced, for more evidence on this matter. Meanwhile I put forward tentatively the suggestion that the Aegean naturalistic school of marine decoration was a Cretan, and probably in the first instance a Cnossian, school; and that it was the parent of the drier and more conventional school of Mycenae and Ialysus, which hitherto we have regarded as typical. In ceramics this school caused marine motives to be treated with the same skill and success with which geometric and vegetable motives were already being treated by the makers of the finer Cnossian vases, notably those from whose splendid fragments Mr. J. H. Marshall deduced the Cretan origin of certain vases found at Vaphio.³

(2) This vase stands 8 in. in height. The clay is both pinker and more

² E.g. the Vaphio goblets, and the Mycenae dagger blades and 'siege' vase, according to M. Edmond Pottier (*Revue de Paris*, March 1902, p. 175) and even more objects according to

M. Zahn (*Jahrbuch*, 1901, Anz. p. 23).

³ In a paper read before the British School at Athens in the spring of 1901, but not yet printed.

coarsely levigated than that of No. 1.; but it is pure enough. The floor of the vase is pierced for straining, as in the case of most vases of its form. It is of a typical Bronze-Age Cretan shape, characteristic of the Lower Town at Zakro (v. *B.S.A.* vii. p. 132, Fig. 43. *d.*) and of the Gournia settlement, and developed originally from the Kamares 'hole-mouth' vases. The metallic appearance of the handles usually associated with this shape also speaks to a Kamares tradition. There is nothing worthy of special remark in so much of the decoration as was laid upon this vase before the firing. After that process a floral design was painted in white upon the glaze. The applied pigment was apparently not fired, glazed, or varnished, for it may now be removed with the lightest touch of the finger.

It is the singularity and beauty of this super-decoration that makes the vase worth special notice. The plant, represented here with more than Egyptian,



FIG. 2.—*NYMPHAEA CAERULEA* SAVIGN.

and almost Japanese, freedom is, as eminent botanists, Professor S. H. Vines and Dr. M. T. Masters, agree, a water-lily. The first named authority decided at once against *Nelumbium* and also against *Nymphaea Lotus* L., on the ground that the flowers of the latter do not project above but rest on the surface of the water; but in favour of *Nymphaea stellata* Willd. (*N. Caerulea* Savign.), whose blooms stand high above the surface (Fig. 2). Dr. Masters laid stress on the same point; and their conclusion finds itself in agreement with the contention of the author of the *Grammar of the Lotus*, who showed conclusively that the familiar 'lotus' of Egyptian designs was not *Nelumbium speciosum* Willd. (no longer found in the lower Nile lands) or indeed any true lotus, but *Nymphaea caerulea* Savign. Professor Vines

rightly adds a protest against archaeologists' carelessness in the use of the term Lotus, which, with a sacred association, should be confined to the rarely represented *Nelumbium speciosum*, Willd.

This development of a *Nymphaea* motive in the hands of an Aegean artist is interesting. In all probability he took it originally from Egyptian art, for *Nymphaea stellata* does not grow in arid Crete, and probably never did. Nor were the Aegean craftsmen nearly so prone to invent motives as to adopt and modify them. The Zakro painter's impulse came from such

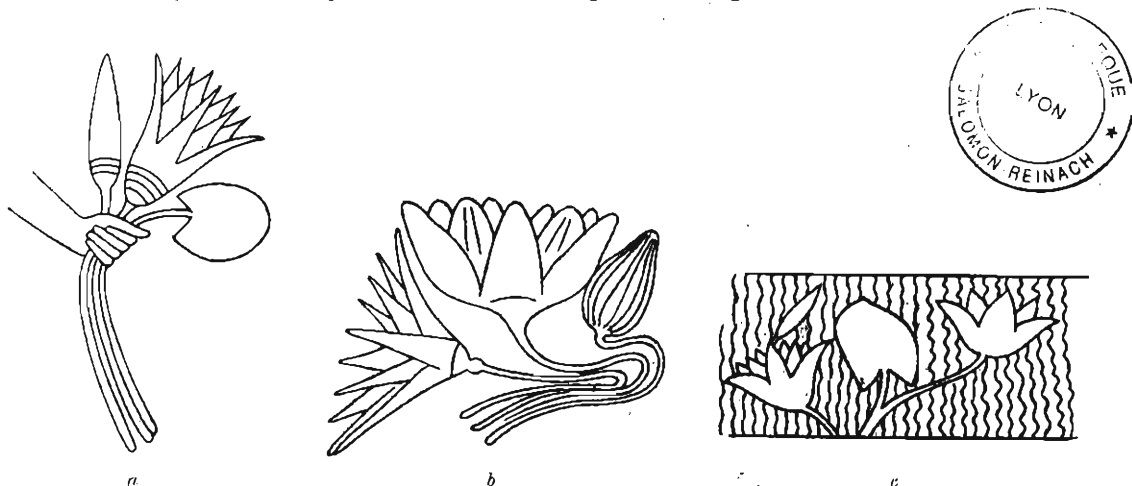


FIG. 3.—NYMPHAEA MOTIVES IN EGYPTIAN ART.

motives as I show in Fig. 3, or that which is introduced into the western central panel of the Tell el Amarna pavement. Having got the design, he wished to refer it to something in nature, but, knowing in all probability nothing of the plant from which it had originally been derived, took some field flower, perhaps a *marguerite* or corn-flower (*Centaurea Cyanus* L.) as the nearest in his experience, and modified the uncongenial stiffness of his model by introducing curves into its stems and disorder into its blooms. The original *Nymphaea*, however, has a stiff and rigid growth; and, therefore, his Aegean instinct for naturalism has led our artist not to but away from nature. The general result is a medley of realism and convention in about the same proportions as were observed in the design of the marine painter of vase No. 1. Convention has made the Zakro painter not only introduce purely formal lilies of the ordinary, 'Mycenaean' type, but retain sufficient characteristics of *Nymphaea* from his Egyptian model (e.g. the long stems, the heart-shaped leaf on the left, the conical buds, and the stiff tripartite calix) for the identity of his model to be obvious. Realism, on the other hand, has led him to confound his hieratic model with a living model, and produce a plant form which never was on land or water, but grows in far more life-like fashion than the more faithful Egyptian representations of *Nymphaea*. One could hardly have a better demonstration both of the tendency which dis-

tinguished this Aegean art, especially in Crete, from the elder and parent art of Egypt, and of the limitations of a derived art from which it was by no means free.

(3) This vase stands, as restored, $7\frac{1}{4}$ in. in height. In material and fabric it is much nearer No. 1. than No. 2. The clay is levigated equally finely, but of a pinker hue. The body of the vase is overlaid with a yellow slip; but the neck is plastered with the thick creamy wash, rendered familiar by some of the finer Kamares vases (cf. *J.H.S.* xxi. Plate vi. *a*). This wash alone would indicate the Cretan origin of the vase. The body decoration of conventional white lilies on a red ground is painted on the upper part only and in large pear-shaped lozenges—a disposition not uncommon on fine vases of the good Cnossian period in Crete. The vase has no further peculiarity worth discussion. I publish it because of the excellence of workmanship and design, which raises it above its class.

D. G. HOGARTH.

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BRONZE-AGE VASES

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FROM ZAKRO, CRETE.



