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EARTHENWARE BOWL, COVERED WITH A WHITE SLIP AND PAINTED IN A BROWN AND RED SLIP UNDER A TRANSPARENT GLAZE

EASTERN IRAN, NISHAPUR OR SAMARKAND; 10TH CENTURY

H: 10; DIAM: 27 CM

“He who believes in a reward [from God] is generous with gifts,” reads the Arab saying on this bowl. It is difficult to read the phrase, which begins with the four dots, because the exceedingly elegant *Kufi* calligraphy is interwoven and knotted and also embellished with a variety of palmettes.

Pottery of this type was made under the Samanids, who were Persians and made much of reviving the use of the Persian language, so we might wonder who these calligraphic masterpieces in Arabic were made for. The inscriptions are different from and more difficult to read than the ones found on bowls painted in blue known from Abbasid Iraq.

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