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CAT. 29. CERAMIC BOWL WITH LUSTER DECORATION

IRAN, KASHAN; FEBRUARY-MARCH 1204

When Muslim artists depicted animals right into the 12th-13th century, they often denaturalized them by replacing fur with vegetal ornamentation or geometrical elements.

In a way, the famed potter Abu Zayd from Kashan followed this tradition when he decorated this bowl in 1204. The contours of the two figures are clearly shown, as are their heads, hands, and one of the man's boots. The rest of their bodies consist of little curlicues and larger, scrolling arabesques.

One could choose to view these ornaments as the textiles' patterns, but if so, then the patterns do not follow the cut of the garments.

The background is also dissolved into little curlicues, a large arabesque, and a few small birds.

