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CAT. 36. INHABITED SCROLLWORK

INDIA, MUGHAL OR DECCAN; C. 1600

Scrollwork of various kinds is based on the ornaments of Antiquity and was a firmly established part of the vocabulary of Islamic art from the beginning.

This is also true of a motif like “inhabited scrollwork,” in which animals or putti were found among the vines’ foliage in Antiquity.

A vine like this one was based directly on drawings from 15th-century Iran, when Chinese motifs were combined with arabesques or other vegetation.

Here we see a flamboyant phoenix, a dragon, and a *qilin* (one-horned mythical creature) in combat, along with a lion-like beast. Birds sit amidst the vines, which also sprout lotuses and the heads of dragons, various felines, birds, and deer, through which the vines continue.