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FRITWARE DISH, PAINTED IN BLUE, BLACK, AND REDDISH BROWN
UNDER A TRANSPARENT GLAZE

SYRIA, RAQQA; BEGINNING OF 13TH CENTURY

H: 8; DIAM: 29.5 CM

At around the same time as Persian potters from Kashan, their Syrian colleagues also began to decorate their wares with the underglaze technique. Although they rarely possessed the same technical perfection as the Persians, much of the Syrians' pottery did display amazing compositional freedom and self-assurance. This is reflected in the way that the body of the centaur on the dish is balanced elegantly by its own tail, which ends in a menacing animal head.

Centaur are not common in Islamic art, but there were many references to Classical culture specifically in the province of Jazira – northern Iraq and Syria and southeastern Anatolia.

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