



Inv. no. 26/1995

CAT. 7. CUP WITH MOLDED DECORATION

EGYPT, SYRIA, OR IRAQ; 8TH-9TH CENTURY

The most distinctive ornament on this fairly simple cup is a frieze of palmettes with almond-shaped bosses hovering between them.

The palmette is an ancient motif in the Middle East and around the Mediterranean. Its basic form consists of a number of leaves that make up a fan, which is symmetrical over a center axis, often supported by a spiral on each side. Palmettes are naturally found in many variants.

Whole fan-shaped palmettes are actually quite rare in the Islamic period, and one could say that each palmette on this cup consists of two half palmettes.

The half palmette became very popular among Muslim artists and was found in innumerable variations. It could also be stylized to form imaginary leaf shapes.