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CAT. 9. MARBLE RELIEF

SPAIN, CORDOBA; 2ND HALF OF 10TH CENTURY

The Spanish Umayyad dynasty, descended from the Syrian Umayyad caliphs, remained truer to the styles of Antiquity than the Abbasid caliphs in Baghdad.

The Spanish Umayyads reached their zenith in the 10th century, when Cordoba and the palace city of Madinat al-Zahra were decorated magnificently. Innumerable capitals and reliefs like this one were created in a style that clearly originated in Antiquity yet heralded a new idiom.

The tendency was the same throughout the Islamic world. The acanthus and vines of Antiquity were stylized and denaturalized, and symmetry

triumphed at the expense of natural growth. This relief shows an incipient arabesque (section 5) that in time would be further developed.

