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ICONOGRAPHY on the Pyxis of Zamora.



The Pyxis of Zamora is the first example in Andalusian ivory artwork of animals carved on its surface (Galán & Galindo, 2005a). Among the ornamental animal figures that can be found, interspersed with other leafage elements common to the *ataurique* technique, are peacocks, gazelles and other small birds.

This type of theme in the decoration, with soft and delicate motifs, finds a certain parallel in other gifts to Subh, mother of the heir Hixam II and favourite of al-Hakam II, as well as in other gifts to female recipients. Peaceful ornaments, very different from the gifts addressed to men, which present an iconography with hunting or fighting scenes and fierce and violent animals such as lions, hawks, eagles or cheetahs (Galán & Galindo, 2005b; Aranda, 2010).

These pieces became true emblems of sovereignty and the motifs that decorated them conveyed messages associated with power. Ivory pieces with leafage ornamentation were primarily intended for women of the court, symbolising fertility and the continuation of the dynastic line of the Caliph.

The motifs featuring wild animals, sometimes in combat, attacking, or chasing prey, were primarily linked to male power, carrying messages that directly referred to the exercise of government (Monteira Arias, 2018; Silva Santa-Cruz, 2014). They embodied a visual and symbolic metaphor of the Caliph's authority, with an explicit political nature, which graphically expressed the dominating force and power of the sovereign, as well as his struggle against everything that represented evil (Silva Santa-Cruz, 2014).

The most outstanding figure on the pyxis, due to its size and sophisticated representation, is that of the peacock. In the central part of the pyxis, in vertical symmetry, there are two pairs of peacocks, front and back of the cylindrical structure, with erect crests and long tails, facing each other sweetly and surrounded by "trees of life", stems and plant motifs that seem to symbolise a lush orchard or earthly paradise.

The peacock is one of the most widely represented birds in Eastern and Western art and, given its tranquil character, it has been associated with women. This figurative element has been found on everyday objects for personal use, such as combs, pots, and jewellery (Canillas del Rey, 2021). The peacock was also a common animal in the gardens of Medina Azahara, as well as in Cordoban Muslim art (Galán & Galindo, 2011).

Other animals, such as gazelles and deer, prevalent in decorative objects such as chests, pots, combs and textiles, also in symmetrical compositions, were associated with beauty, purity and the natural environment of the Islamic paradise.

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