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ATAURIQUE.



Ataurique is a decorative technique characteristic of Caliphate art in Cordoba, based on stylised leafage motifs. Leafage decoration in al-Andalus was used as ornamentation on architectural elements such as walls, jambs, capitals, friezes and the voussoirs of arches (Puerta Vílchez, 2013). It was also used in ceramics, textiles, metals and polychrome woodwork.

However, the evolution of leafage ornamentation is most evident on ivory. Leafage forms cover the entire area as the central theme (Gregorio & Robledo, 1995). In smaller and more delicate ivory pieces, they may be almost completely covered with acanthus leaves, palmettes, flowers, pineapples, pomegranates, dates and other figures.

The Pyxis of Zamora is an excellent example of Caliphate ivory work, with the application of *ataurique* on ivory. The use of these leafage forms had a profound symbolism and depended on the piece being carved. At any event, the *ataurique* transcended the merely ornamental, becoming an excellent icon of expression of the political, religious and cultural power of Caliphate art.

The surface of the Pyxis of Zamora is carved in an ordered geometric structure and decorated with significant elements, ringed leaves, acanthus palmettes and small flowers interspersed with gazelles and birds, including peacocks which, in the symbolism of medieval art, represented pride (Castejón & Martínez de Arizala, 1976). It is worth noting that, for the first time, animals appear in Cordoban ivory artwork (Galán & Galindo, 2005).

Their decorations seem to follow the decorative line of Medina Azahara. The four-petal flowers, which have been interpreted as jasmine or perhaps orange blossom, are characteristic of the Caliphate court carver Khalaf (Galán & Galindo, 2005). Although the Pyxis of Zamora is not signed by this carver and cannot thus be attributed to him, other pyxides, such as the one in the *Hispanic Society* in New York and the small box in Fitero (Navarre), are ivory works signed by Khalaf and have a similar style and characteristics (Puerta Vílchez, 2013).

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