

Introduction

IN THE SUMMER of 1832, the youngest son of Ferdinand VII of Spain (r. 1808 and 1813–33), the *infante* Francisco de Paula, and his wife Luisa Carlota, made a visit to Granada, and, following hasty efforts to rehabilitate some of the dilapidated precincts, they were lavishly celebrated in the palaces of the Alhambra on the Sabika hill overlooking the city (Figure I.1).¹ It was almost precisely 340 years since the Catholic Monarchs Isabel of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon (r. 1474–1516) had taken possession of the Alhambra on 1 January 1492 as a sign of the final defeat of the Nasrids (r. 636–897/1237–1492), the last Muslim dynasty in Iberia. More immediately, it was nearly two decades since Napoleon had been forced to withdraw from Spain and Ferdinand VII was restored to the throne in 1813. For the French troops, the Alhambra had been little more than a barracks, and an explosion of their munitions had done great damage to the site, adding injury to the insult of the occupation. The festivities for Francisco de Paula and Luisa Carlota represented a reassertion of the centuries-old claims of royal patrimony, and a reaffirmation of the legitimacy of the Spanish dynasty and its political control over the whole of the national territory. And even now, in democratic Spain, each year on 1 January, the city of Granada continues to celebrate the *toma*, that is, the taking of the Alhambra, a site of memory of national identity, still defined in part against the shadow of the Islamic past of al-Andalus, or medieval Muslim Iberia.²

In the same year, 1832, American writer Washington Irving (1783–1859) published *The Tales of the Alhambra* simultaneously in England, France and the United States.³ Irving had resided in the Alhambra in the spring of 1829 and he recorded both his impressions and his fantasies in his tales of a place that he found to be ‘imbued with a feeling for the historical and poetical, so inseparably intertwined in the annals of romantic Spain’.⁴ The book is still on sale in the Alhambra and throughout Granada in editions in many languages, as an enduring expression of the Orientalising imagination. Taken together, the visit of the royal family and the publication of *The Tales* in 1832 – an embodiment of real sovereign power and its oblique reflection in romanticised fiction – mark the character



Figure I.1 Alhambra and the city of Granada, view from the Generalife (photograph: Olga Bush)

of what might be called the modern Alhambra, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1984 that now attracts over 8,000 visitors daily.⁵

Irving was not wrong in saying that the historical and poetical – and one may add the aesthetic and commercial – have been intertwined in the modern Alhambra. Among the many visiting artists who drew the palaces as early as the 1770s, the British architect Owen Jones (1809–74) is the pre-eminent figure at that crux. In contrast to the Orientalist artists of the Romantic period, who rendered palatial ruins to evoke the aura of the exotic past, Jones executed scrupulous on-site studies of the architecture and its decoration in 1834 and again in 1837. His historical appreciation of the Alhambra was reflected through his widely disseminated publications of 1842–45 and 1856.⁶ On the other hand, Jones' experimentation with materials and modes for reproducing historical architecture and the practical application of his colour theory led to his design of the 'Alhambra Court' in the Crystal Palace in Sydenham, England in 1854, which made him a leading contributor to the fabrication of Alhambresque simulacra. The Alhambra became a major point of reference for Orientalist architecture in the United States, Europe – and even Egypt! – from palaces, hotels and banks to granaries and railway stations, movie theatres and synagogues.

The thrust of contemporary scholarship, dating back to the foundational work of Leopoldo Torres Balbás (1888–1960) during his tenure as preservation architect of the Alhambra from 1923 until

1936, has been to strip away the poetical, in Irving's sense – always a projection deeply inflected by European colonialism – and to restore a clearer view and better understanding of the historical Alhambra. In the briefest of outlines, this is what is known about its development. The first Muslim dynasty in Iberia, the Umayyads (r. 92–423/711–1031), had their seat of power in Córdoba, but built a fortress on the Sabika hill in Granada, as one of many defensive strongholds in their widespread dominions. The Umayyad fortress was known as *al-qal'a al-hamrā'* or the red castle (*al-Hamrā'* or the Red) already in the third/ninth century, referring to the colour of the clay used in its constructions. After the breakup of the Umayyad caliphate into petty kingdoms during the *mulūk al-tawā'if* or *taifa* period (423–79/1031–86), the fortress was enlarged by the local Zīrid dynasty (r. 403–83/1013–90). It was the Nasrids, however, who created the palatial city that came to occupy the entire crown of the Sabika hill, measuring 740 m × 220 m, an architectural complex whose majestic silhouette stands out against the backdrop of the mountains of the Sierra Nevada (Figures I.2–I.4). First, they erected a new fortress (*al-qaṣaba*) on the foundations of the earlier fortifications at the west end of the escarpment. The royal *madīna*, or city, then extended eastward, comprising buildings for the court administration, palaces with courtyards, pools and gardens, a congregational



Figure I.2 Alhambra, general view from the Mirador de San Nicolás, Albayzín (photograph: Olga Bush)

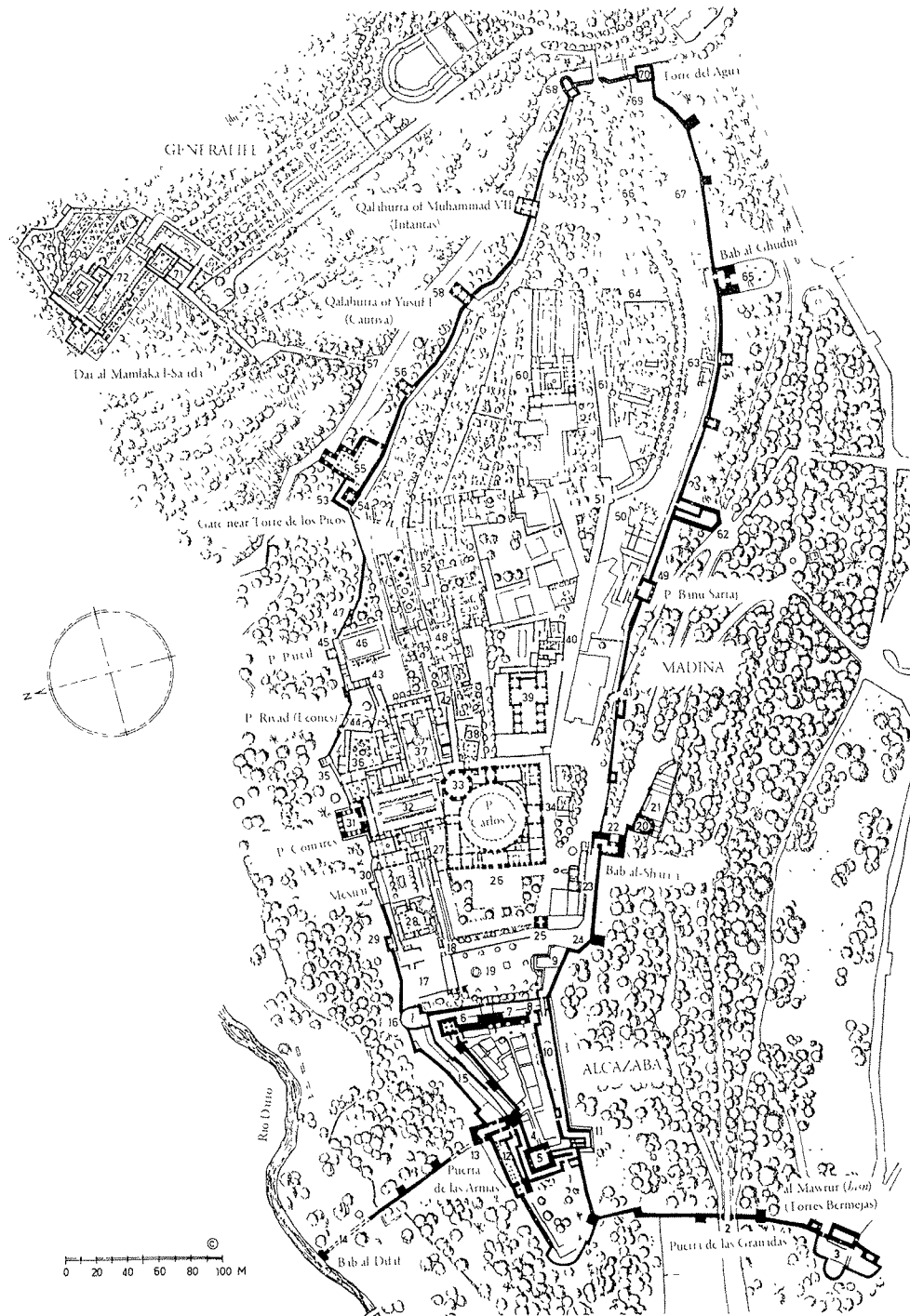


Figure I.3 The fortress and madina of the Alhambra, and the Generalife, general plan (after Antonio Fernández-Puertas, *The Alhambra*)

- 1 West entrance to the Alcazaba through the barbican wall
- 2 Puerta de las Granadas (Renaissance entrance)
- 3 *Mawrit-miya* (Torres Bermejas)
- 4 *Al-Mawrit*
- 5 Torre de la Vela
- 6 Torre del Homenaje
- 7 Torre Quebrada
- 8 Torre del Adarguero
- 9 Remains of two Nasrid towers
- 10 Jardín de los Adarves
- 11 Torre de la Polvora
- 12 *Challencas* (stables)
- 13 Puerta de las Armas
- 14 Bab al-Ditaf
- 15 Entrance to the *madina* between the Puerta de las Armas and the Bab al-Lahuna
- 16 Bab al-Lahuna
- 17 Esplanade in front of the Nasrid royal palace (known as the Palacio de Comares)
- 18 Street of the *madina* leading E
- 19 Large underground water cistern built in 1494
- 20 Fifteenth-century Nasrid bastion
- 21 Renaissance fountain of Carlos V
- 22 Bab al-Shari'a (Puerta de la Esplanada)
- 23 and 24 Access to the royal *madina* from the Bab al-Shari'a
- 25 Puerta del Vano
- 26 Esplanade in front of the W façade of the Palacio de Carlos V
- 27 Direct entrance to the Mexuar from the medieval street that borders the palaces
- 28 First patio of the Nasrid royal palace (Second Mexuar)
- 29 Nasrid tower, known as the Torre de Muhammad
- 30 Torre de Machuca (Bahw al-Nasr)
- 31 Torre de Comares, containing the Salón de Comares
- 32 Patio de Comares
- 33 Chapel of the Palacio de Carlos V
- 34 Excavated Nasrid houses facing the S façade of the Palacio de Carlos V
- 35 Torre de Abū l-Yūshuf Nasr (Pinar de la Reina)
- 36 Patio de Lindaraja
- 37 Patio de los Leones, in the Palacio del Rivad
- 38 Rawda (royal pantheon)
- 39 Church of Santa María Site of the Mosque of Muhammad III
- 40 A *hammam* and house of the time of Muhammad III
- 41 Puerta de los Carros (a Renaissance entrance)
- 42 *Qubba* of the time of Isma'il I (named the Rawda)
- 43 Nasrid houses in the Partal
- 44 Excavated public fountain and Nasrid buildings, and the entrance to an underground escape corridor
- 45 Palacio del Partal
- 46 Pool of the Partal
- 47 Oratorio del Partal
- 48 Upper arch of the Palacio del Partal
- 49 Palacio de los Banu Sarraj (Abencerrages)
- 50 A Nasrid *hammam* and a prison
- 51 An excavated Nasrid house
- 52 Palacio de los Condes de Tendilla
- 53 Gate near the Torre de los Picos that connected the *madina* with the Generalife
- 54 Torre de los Picos
- 55 Fifteenth-century Nasrid bastion
- 56 Torre del Cadi
- 57 Medieval royal entrance to the Generalife
- 58 Qal'ahra Nueva of Yusuf I (Torre de la Cautiva)
- 59 Qal'ahra Nueva of Muhammad VII (Torre de las Infantas)
- 60 Convento de San Francisco (a Nasrid palace of Muhammad II)
- 61 Industrial borough, with tannery
- 62 Torre de las Cabezas
- 63 Excavated Nasrid houses
- 64 Highest point of the Sabika hill
- 65 Bab al-Ghudur (Puerta de las Albercas)
- 66 Industrial borough, with excavated kilns for ceramics, glass etc.
- 67 Excavated remains
- 68 Fifteenth-century Nasrid bastion
- 69 Aqueduct bringing water to the *madina* by a canal
- 70 Torre del Agua
- 71 Lower entrance patio of the Dar al-Mamlaka l-Sa'ida in the Generalife
- 72 Dar al-Mamlaka l-Sa'ida, the Nasrid palace in the Generalife

Figure I.4 Key to Figure I.3 (after Antonio Fernández-Puertas, *The Alhambra*)

mosque, oratories, baths, a royal cemetery and, at the east end of the hilltop, the industrial zone that encompassed the royal workshops for the production of luxury goods for the consumption of the court. Two main streets running in the east-west direction and secondary streets between them provided communications among the different parts of the Alhambra. A complex irrigation system supplied the water necessary for the daily functions of the city, including the cultivation of orchards. The palatial city was enclosed by a curtain wall with both upper and lower sentry walks that reached to the fortress on the west, forming a well-integrated defensive system. In fact, the Nasrid Alhambra was never taken by storm. The numerous, massive towers and gates overlook the steep slopes of the hill, the city of Granada and the surrounding landscape.

The Nasrid Alhambra developed gradually over the course of the two and a half centuries of the dynasty's reign, serving as the centre of its military and political power in the kingdom of Granada.⁷ The architectural projects initiated by the first sultans

were modified or altogether replaced by their successors. The dating and attribution of patronage of some buildings, or particular precincts within them, remain an issue for ongoing research. Consensus supports the following summary of major extant constructions, often commonly identified by their post-Nasrid names: the Partal Palace dating to the reign of Muhammad III (r. 701–8/1302–9); the Palace of Comares, originating under Ismāʿil I (r. 713–25/1314–25) and subsequently enlarged and modified under Yūsuf I (r. 733–55/1333–54) and Muḥammad V (r. 755–60/1354–9, 763–93/1362–91); the Palace of the *Riyād*, or Palace of the Garden, now called the Palace of the Lions, built by Muḥammad V; the tower-palaces of the *Qalahurra* of Yūsuf I, popularly known as the Tower of the Captive, and the *Qalahurra* of Muḥammad VII, now called the Tower of the Princesses, erected by Yūsuf I and Muḥammad VII (r. 794–810/1392–1408), respectively. The Palace of Comares and the Palace of the Lions are the most famous palaces in the Alhambra complex, owing to their size, state of preservation and continuous conservation efforts. Other constructions, such as the Palace of the Abencerrajes, the Palace of the ex-Convent of San Francisco, the Palace of Secano, the Palace of Yūsuf III and two residences situated west of it, are known today mainly through their archaeological vestiges.⁸ The present-day UNESCO site also includes the Palace of Generalife, known under the name *jinān al-ʿarīf* (Garden of the Architect) when it was built during the reign of Muḥammad II (r. 671–701/1273–1302) as a summer retreat on the Santa Elena hill, across a deep ravine from the Sabika hill and the Alhambra (Figure I.5). The Generalife was altered under Muḥammad III and then renovated by Ismāʿil I, during whose reign it came to be called *dār al-mamlaka al-saʿīda* (The Felicitous House of the Kingdom). Further up the Santa Elena hill, above the Generalife, there once stood the palaces of Alijares and *dār al-ʿArūsa*, demolished in post-Nasrid times, with only scant remains visible today.

The foregoing survey represents the fruits of the work of a long and distinguished array of modern scholars, all of whom have confronted the same intractable dilemma.⁹ There are virtually no available archival documents concerning the design and construction of the Alhambra, nor the court life of the Nasrid administrative, religious and cultural centre. Whether such texts were carried off by the Nasrids when they left Granada and the Iberian Peninsula in 1492, or were destroyed over the centuries when the Alhambra, the Generalife and all other properties of the Nasrid royal family in Granada and elsewhere became part of the patrimony of the Catholic Monarchs and their successors, cannot be determined. The one vital exception is a first-hand account of a ceremonial in the Alhambra in 764/1362, at the outset of the second reign of Muḥammad V; it has received important scholarly attention and will figure in the



Figure I.5 Generalife, seen in the middle ground, a view from the fortress of the Alhambra (photograph: Olga Bush)

conclusion of this book. But the absence of other documents produced by the Nasrid court is an obstacle at every scholarly turn, and has oriented all research to date towards the extant material evidence of the architecture itself.

That orientation is beset with its own problems arising from the current state of the material evidence. The passage of more than five centuries has made for inevitable deterioration in the architecture, in large measure a result of neglect. The Alhambra never became a primary royal residence nor the capital city of the newly consolidated realms of Castile and Aragon (or later, of Spain). It remained, rather, a property in a far-off provincial city administered by governors appointed by the Royal Chancery for centuries. By the time of Washington Irving, the palaces were home to squatters – Irving himself among them – whom the Romantic painters habitually included in their depictions as an element of local colour for the sake of picturesque effect. The visit of Francisco de Paula and Luisa Carlota was a truly unusual sign of royal attention, but also, the over-painting of architectural elements for their reception was a perilous step in a history of faulty restoration.

Furthermore, it needs be recalled that starting in 1492 the Alhambra was occupied by a hostile, Christian power, intent on converting the site into a commemoration of its own triumph and a symbol of the defeat of Islam in Iberia – what Spanish historiography continues to view as the *Reconquista* and the inauguration of the modern nation. Hence, there was also deliberate destruction in the Nasrid Alhambra. The most notable example was the obliteration of a substantial portion of the royal *madīna* to make room for the Renaissance palace built for Charles V (r. 1516–56). Although the project, begun in 1533, was abandoned unfinished in 1637, the Palace of Charles V is the largest standing structure in the Alhambra, and the prior Nasrid buildings and roadways on its site are buried beneath its gigantic footprint (Figure I.6). At present, the very popularity of the Alhambra as a tourist destination discourages extensive excavations.

Despite the many instances of destruction, neglect and alteration of the buildings, the Alhambra presents what is perhaps the best-preserved medieval Muslim palatial city anywhere and, certainly, the outstanding example of Nasrid palatial and military architecture. The material evidence available for study is abundant and impressive. Measurements of standing structures have yielded important insights into the principles of architectural design, and the decorative vocabulary has been documented. Archaeological investigations have clarified the chronology of how the urban fabric of the Alhambra developed. Expanded technical analyses have aided in the dating of particular structures, and in the conservation of buildings and architectural decoration. Comparative research in architectural history has established the typology of its buildings – their reception halls and courtyards with pools and vegetation – within the tradition of the medieval palatial architecture of the Muslim courts of al-Andalus and the Maghrib.

Yet in their strict focus on the material evidence, those various approaches, each a valuable effort to strip away the poetical in

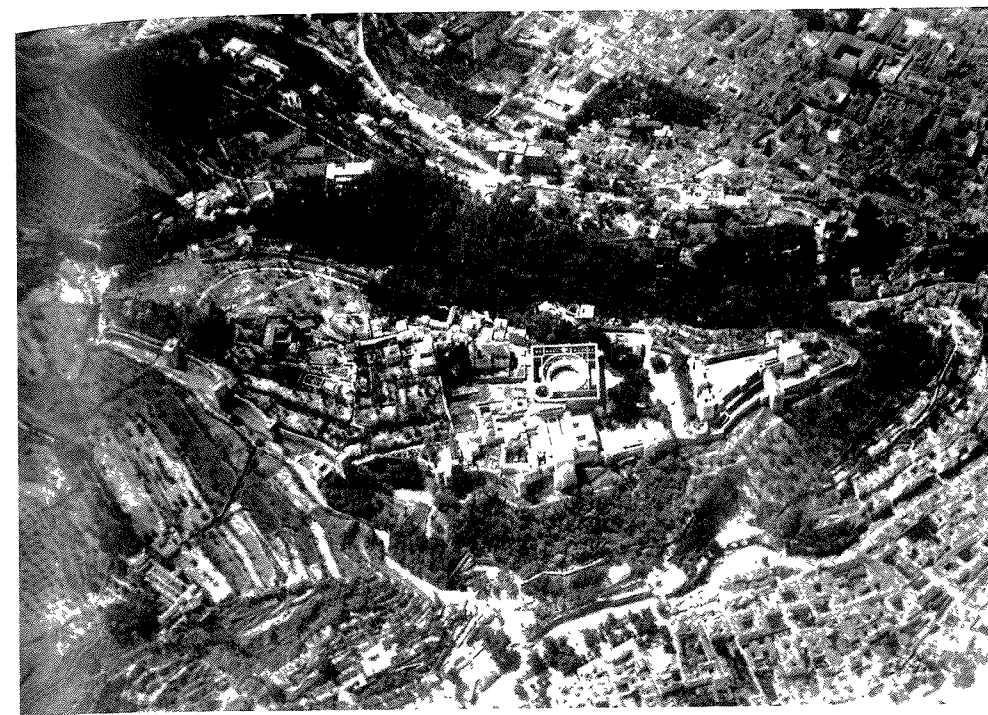


Figure I.6 *Alhambra, aerial view* (photograph: Archivo de la Alhambra)

search of the historical, have largely reduced the Alhambra to a set of empty rooms. Even a cursory view of court life during the medieval and early modern periods anywhere, especially in Muslim polities, will suffice to indicate that palaces were the setting for the performance of elaborate ceremonials in which the social construction of power was framed by, but by no means limited to, architecture. It could not have been otherwise in the Nasrid Alhambra. Like the archival documents, the pertinent material evidence is absent – no luxury objects remain in situ – but it is no mere poetical fantasy to say that the architectural spaces of the Alhambra would have been fully furnished and full of life in Nasrid times. In fact, luxury furnishings attributed to the Nasrid production are now located only a few steps away from the empty palaces; divorced from their original setting, they are on display in the glass cases of the Museum of the Alhambra.

The poetical, as a name for that fullness, may be valuably entwined again with the historical, if not in the way that Irving understood the terms, by what, in other contexts, has been called a spatial turn. Initiated by cultural geographers, and later adopted and further developed in art history and the study of material culture, such work has approached architecture as a setting for social constructions, mediated by the objects it contains and the movement of people that

unfolds within it. These scholars have come to speak of spatiality, rather than space, as a scene of reciprocal relations.¹⁰ Architecture informs lived experience and at the same time it is informed by that experience, which is to say, by the reception and activities of the beholders, grounded in their social, cultural and historical context.

In the field of Islamic art and architectural history, the theoretical premises of such reciprocal interaction between architecture, objects and beholders have long since been developed by Oleg Grabar in his conceptualisation of the role of ornament as a crucial mediator of the aesthetic experience. Grabar developed his thesis in *The Mediation of Ornament* primarily through separate studies of three modes of decoration — writing, geometry and vegetal motifs.¹¹ In the Alhambra, the three modes typically appear together in the same architectural space, and frequently overlap. As the present study will demonstrate, each mode, in turn, serves as a mediator for the others. This further elaboration of the *interrelationships* of ornament has two corollaries that orient the whole of the book ahead. First, a careful reading of the epigraphy, and especially the numerous poetic inscriptions so characteristic of the Alhambra, serves to emphasise that this interrelationship itself was a self-conscious key to design. In this book, special attention is given to poetic epigraphy as an explicit expression of aesthetic principles in the verses composed by the accomplished court poets and illustrious Nasrid viziers, Ibn al-Jayyāb (673–750/1274–1349), Ibn al-Khaṭīb (713–77/1313–75) and Ibn Zamrak (734–96/1333–93). And, second, such integration is not limited to the three modes of architectural decoration, but rather extends to the reciprocal relations between architecture and the other artistic media that comprised the aesthetic experience of the Alhambra. A single book could hardly take up all of these aspects, so here the focus will be limited to three major components and their multidirectional mediations: architecture, poetic texts, and textiles — the first, always the centre of Alhambra studies; the second, much undervalued; and the third, textiles, almost always left entirely out of account.

The absence of archival documents, compounded by the absence of furnishings in situ, present this approach with much the same obstacles as all others. This book seeks to resolve this difficulty through comparative discussions of better-documented ceremonial life at other medieval courts and analysis of pertinent luxury objects ascribed to Nasrid workshops among the holdings of the Museum of the Alhambra and other collections worldwide. In this latter regard, it is worth stating here at the outset that adducing those examples is not intended as an argument that would locate a particular object in a specific space in the Alhambra. But the extant objects — disseminated as gifts and commercial exports by the Nasrids or appropriated by their Christian conquerors — illustrate the aesthetic principles underlying the coherent interrelationships between different media,

which I will refer to as *inter-medial* design. The study of furnishings suggests a different model of the Alhambra, that is, of a multimedia built environment.

One further methodological issue needs be articulated clearly in broad strokes. Irving's error, characteristic of the nineteenth century, was not the effort to reimagine the Alhambra as a living environment, but rather the imposition of the cultural predilections of his own times onto its architectural spaces. It is above all the anachronistic Romantic Alhambra — which is also the colonial Orientalist Alhambra — that modern scholarship has sought to sweep away in its pursuit of history. Unfortunately, the names and biographies of Nasrid architects and artisans are unknown today, and, likewise, no information is available on the transmission of theoretical or practical knowledge, such as craftsmen's manuals, in the Nasrid royal workshops. Yet it is still possible to historicise the poetical by turning to the intellectual currents of the medieval Muslim world that are known to have reached al-Andalus and would therefore have helped to shape the aesthetic principles of the designers of the Alhambra and the aesthetic experience of the beholder in Nasrid times. The areas of interest are boundless; this book focuses on three main topics: optics, poetics and court ceremonial. These topics open a broad multidisciplinary approach that engages developments in the fields of conservation, literary criticism and psychology of visual perception, in addition to art history, in order to provide a variegated and flexible theoretical framework. The spatial turn moves discussion in the direction of cultural studies.

The organisation of the book might be outlined in two different sets of terms. First, as the subtitle reads, the opening chapter concentrates on architecture alone, poetic inscriptions are added to the analysis of architecture in Chapters 2 and 3, and textile furnishings in Chapter 4. The fifth and final chapter pursues the analysis of the one extant account of a Nasrid ceremonial in the Alhambra, mentioned above, which integrated all three media. Alternatively, the book follows the path of the optical theory discussed in Chapter 1 that formulates vision as a process leading from perception to cognition across the necessary bridge of the imagination. In this light, Chapter 1 emphasises perception and the concluding chapter cognition. Among the stages of vision, it is imagination that has received the least attention in the study of the Alhambra, and so the middle chapters are all devoted to elaborating on its workings as they are documented in the poetic inscriptions. Rather than offering an overview of all the buildings in the Alhambra, the discussion proceeds through studies of specific architectural spaces, selected because they have received relatively little attention or because they are sites of unresolved controversies and enigmas.

Chapter 1 centres on the uses of colour in the design of the Alhambra and on the visual effect that colour combinations would

have made on the Nasrid beholder. Today the architecture of the Alhambra appears mostly devoid of colour. As a result, scholarship has concentrated on the material evidence of the geometry that underlies the elevation of buildings as well as their decoration. The recent work of conservators, however, demonstrates that the interior spaces of the Alhambra in Nasrid times were vibrantly coloured from floor to ceiling and in all of their diverse materials: stucco, wood, marble, glass and ceramics. This focus offers the occasion to work back through nineteenth-century restoration, particularly in the controversial space of the baths of the Palace of Comares, to the historical Alhambra and to re-establish the balance between colour and geometry in the original design. This renewed understanding is grounded in the widely disseminated optical theory of the medieval Muslim scientist Ibn al-Haytham (c. 354–432/965–1040). His optical principles concerning perception help to explain the aesthetics of the Alhambra, and he lays out the fundamental trajectory from visual perception through imagination to cognition that informs the book as a whole. An examination of the *muqarnas* vault in the Hall of the Abencerrajes in the Palace of the Lions and the dadoes of ceramic tile mosaics in the Palace of Comares serves to illustrate the optical relationship between a static geometry and the kinetic effects of colour in accordance with the work of Ibn al-Haytham. That relationship is supported by the experimental findings of the contemporary psychology of visual perception. It will have ongoing repercussions in the subsequent chapters as the relationship is enacted by the beholder in the interplay of movement and arrest, and also in the combination of the permanent and the transitory in the construction of ceremonial space.

Chapter 2 opens the discussion of poetic epigraphy, concentrating on the relatively little-studied Sala de la Barca, a threshold space that precedes the audience hall in the Palace of Comares. It is necessary to begin by setting the poetic inscriptions within the broader decorative programme, including its other epigraphic modes, namely, Qur'anic and formulaic inscriptions. Questioning the understanding of inscribed poetry as literal descriptions of the architecture, José Miguel Puerta Vilchez has contributed greatly to its interpretation from the perspective of semiotics.¹² The present study further contests the earlier inclination towards mimetic reading. Poetry is distinctive amongst the epigraphic modes in its emphatic and self-conscious use of *figurative* language, which both exemplifies and also often reflects upon the transformative force of the imagination.

Following a historical outline of the use of poetry in inscriptions on architecture and luxury objects within a comparative Mediterranean context, this chapter concentrates on a frequent, but unremarked, poetic figure: the trope of prosopopoeia, which creates the fiction that an otherwise inanimate object is speaking in the first-person voice. The understanding of the imaginative function of

prosopopoeia is aided by contemporary literary theory, and is introduced here through the analysis of a paradigmatic example inscribed on one of the 'Alhambra vases'. The choice of this ceramic object also adds a further dimension to the inter-medial approach of the book. The use of the first-person voice in the poetic inscriptions in the Sala de la Barca, and many other precincts, allows the architecture to speak, figuratively, for itself, and to address the beholder directly. In this manner, the inscribed verses served explicitly as a guide to the beholder's experience. Here, the effect is to arrest the ceremonial movement through the space of the Palace of Comares and to urge a contemplative pause in which the imagination comes to heighten an awareness and understanding of power in the audience hall.

Chapter 3 broadens the scope of the relevant poetic figures, taking as a point of departure an explicit reference in the poetic epigraphy in the *Qalaturra* of Yūsuf I to some of the most important tropes in the tradition of medieval Arabic *badī'* poetics. What one gathers from these tropes as they are employed in the poetic inscriptions is the emphasis on interrelationship, conceived in varied forms. This small tower-palace is little known to the general public, since it is usually closed to visitors, and its architecture and decoration have also received little scholarly attention, hence the need to begin with an examination of its architectural features and the history of its partial destruction and restoration. As in the preceding chapter, the architectural analysis follows the movement of the Nasrid beholder, which here is from the exterior into the interior. The main hall is the chief site of the decoration: it illustrates the characteristic layering of decorative modes (vegetal, geometric and epigraphic) upon a single grid, and also a separate and extensive programme of poetic inscriptions. Composed by Ibn al-Jayyāb, the four main interlinked poems have been largely dismissed by scholars as redundant with regard to their content, offering nothing more than a straightforward mimetic representation of the decoration. This chapter argues otherwise, holding that the self-reflexive enumeration and deployment of typical *badī'* tropes articulates the complex relationship between the integrated decorative elements, as well as the overall structure and function of the hybrid tower-palace.

Chapter 4 pursues the aesthetic principle of overlapping interrelationships between architecture, poetic texts and textiles. A historical overview of the tradition of inscribing verses on Islamic luxury textiles leads to a neglected point of intersection in the cultural production of al-Andalus. A specific type of Nasrid textile and also a certain, ingenious Andalusī poetic genre were both designated by the same term, *muwashshah*. More than a lexical peculiarity, the shared term indicates that this type of striped cloth and this type of dialogic poetry – and more generally, textiles and poetic texts – were recognised in Andalusī culture to have common constitutive features and a shared aesthetic value. A group of striped luxury textiles are

here identified as *muwashshahāt* (pl. of *muwashshah*), and a related group of textiles, referred to by scholars as the 'Alhambra silks', is then compared with the decoration of the Façade of Comares in the Cuarto Dorado of the Palace of Comares.

While decorative motifs shared by textiles and stucco decoration have been identified, the importance of stylistic affinities across different media has not been thoroughly examined. Ibn al-Haytham's articulation of the value of harmony in the perception of beauty provides the grounds to look beyond visual resemblances. If, as he argues, the harmony between elements is more important than the beauty of the elements in themselves, then his optics lays the foundations for an integrated approach to the design of an architectural space. In this light, transitory furnishings, like textiles, contribute to the harmonious coherence of the spatial design of the permanent architectural structures. The movement of bodies through space is another aspect of this analysis, leading to the proposal of the concept of 'textile architecture' to discuss the use of textiles to serve the architectural functions of temporarily obstructing sight lines or controlling movement. The peculiar configuration of the Cuarto Dorado, with its monumental façade looming over a small patio, may be illuminated by consideration of that role of textile furnishings.

Chapter 5 is devoted to the study of the only extant text of a Nasrid beholder's experience of the Alhambra: the first-hand account of the celebration of the *mawlid al-nabī*, the commemoration of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, on 12 Rabī' II 764 (30 December 1362), authored by Ibn al-Khaṭīb. The text is well known and has served scholars in the tasks of architectural history – the historical reconstruction and even restoration of spaces, and their dating – though some of these issues remain in doubt. Discussion of earlier and contemporary celebrations of the *mawlid al-nabī* in the Muslim East and North Africa provides helpful historical comparisons, bringing to the fore the role of processions in court ceremonies. The interplay between mobility and stasis so crucial to the aesthetic experience of the Alhambra, as seen in the preceding chapters, is embodied in the *mawlid* ceremony by the juxtaposition of the transitional space and transitory structure of an enormous royal tent – the grandest form of luxury textiles and the clearest example of textile architecture – and the permanent buildings. The same issues recur in the poems recited as part of the celebration, which, much as is the case of poetic inscriptions, give voice both to the aesthetic principles of the ceremony and to the expression of power. Thus, Ibn al-Khaṭīb's text offers a contemporary testimony of the self-conscious integration of architecture, poetry and textiles in the construction of ceremonial space in the Alhambra.

In sum, proceeding through a series of case studies, the present book seeks to bring attention to undervalued historical resources – modes

of knowledge (optics and poetics), alternative forms of documentation (inscriptions), and dispersed luxury objects (ceramics, textiles) – that might enable us to re-imagine the architectural spaces of the Alhambra as the living environment of Nasrid times. It is my further hope that the theoretical framework and the corresponding methods of inquiry will also prove suggestive for the study of other architectural monuments from the medieval Muslim world and beyond.

Notes

1. For an account of the reception for Francisco de Paula and Luisa Carlota in the Alhambra in 1832, see Juan Manuel Barrios Rozúa, *Alhambra romántica: Los comienzos de la restauración arquitectónica en España* (Granada: Universidad de Granada/Patronato de la Alhambra y Generalife, 2016), pp. 53–8.
2. On the concept of sites of memory, see Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*', trans. Marc Roudebush, *Representations* 26 (1989): 7–24.
3. In its first editions, the book was titled *The Alhambra: A Series of Tales and Sketches of the Moors and Spaniards* (London, Philadelphia, Paris: Colburn & Bentley, Carey & Lea, Galignani, 1832).
4. Washington Irving, *The Tales of the Alhambra* (Leon: Editorial Everest, 1974), p. 33.
5. According to María del Mar Villafranca, the director of the Alhambra from 2004 to 2015, the year 2014 was 'the best tourist year in the history of the Alhambra', during which 2.4 million people visited the site, with a record of 9, 329 visitors on 1 May 2014. See at: <http://www.thelocal.es/20150112/alhambra-visitor-numbers-hit-record-high>, last accessed 30 August 2016.
6. See especially, Owen Jones and Jules Goury, *Plans, Elevations, Sections and Details of the Alhambra. From drawings taken on the spot in 1834 by the late M. Jules Goury and in 1834 and 1837 by Owen Jones Archt. With complete translation of the Arabic inscriptions and an historical notice of the Kings of Granada from the conquest of that city by the Arabs to the expulsion of the Moors, by Mr. Pasqual de Gayangos* (London, 1842–45); as well as Owen Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament* (London, 1856).
7. Among the monographs on the history of the Nasrid Sultanate, see María Jesús Viguera Molins (ed.), *Historia de España Menéndez Pidal*, vol. VIII: 4, *El reino nazarí de Granada (1232–1492)*. Sociedad, vida y cultura (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 2000); Rachel Arié, *L'Espagne musulmane au temps des Nasrides (1232–1492)* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1973); Ahmad Mukhtār al-'Abbādī, *El reino de Granada en la época de Muhammad V* (Madrid: Publicaciones del Instituto de Estudios Islámicos en Madrid, 1973); and Leonard Patrick Harvey, *Islamic Spain, 1250 to 1500* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), which still remain the most comprehensive and complete in their analyses of the primary sources.
8. In her overview of alterations suffered by the Alhambra in the post-Nasrid period, D. Fairchild Ruggles notes that the Sabika hilltop was not fully excavated before it was converted into a parking lot for the

- visitors several decades ago. The loss is significant, since partial archaeological vestiges give evidence of an Islamic palace that once stood on the site. See D. Fairchild Ruggles, 'Inventing the Alhambra', in David Roxburgh (ed.), *Envisioning Islamic Art and Architecture: Essays in Honor of Renata Holod* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), p. 4.
9. Works of scholarship will be cited in the context of the discussions to which they are directly pertinent. Three principal works stand out, however, and need be cited here: Oleg Grabar, *The Alhambra* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978); Antonio Orihuela Uzal, *Casas y palacios nazaríes: siglos XIII–XIV* (Barcelona: Lunewerg, 1995); and Antonio Fernández-Puertas, *The Alhambra* (London: Saqi, 1997). The research agenda set by Grabar has been pursued by a generation of scholars; for a valuable review of recent contributions on the historiography on the Alhambra, see Lara Eggleton, 'History in the Making: The Ornament of the Alhambra and the Past-facing Present', *Journal of Art Historiography* 6 (2012): 1–29.
 10. For theoretical articulations of the 'spatial turn', see, for example, Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift (eds), *Thinking Space* (New York: Routledge, 2000); Luke Lavan, Ellen Swift and Toon Putzeys (eds), *Objects in Context, Objects in Use. Material Spatiality in Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Barney Warf and Santa Arias (eds), *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2009); Joseph Maran, Carsten Juwig, Hermann Schwengel and Ulrich Thaler (eds), *Constructing Power: Architecture, Ideology and Social Practice* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2009). The list of critical studies oriented by the 'spatial turn' in the context of Christian polities is immense, and is now growing with regard to Muslim courts, though comparisons in the interconnected medieval and Renaissance world call for more attention. For a succinct summary of contributions to the study of space in cultural studies and cultural geography, and for viable directions to which they point for medievalists, see Gerald B. Guest, 'Space', *Medieval Art History Today: Critical Terms*, special issue, *Studies in Iconography* 33 (2012): 219–30.
 11. Oleg Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), is a pervasive influence on the whole conception of the present study.
 12. José Miguel Puerta Vilchez' specific contributions to the study of the epigraphy of the Alhambra will be acknowledged throughout the book. Among his many works, Puerta Vilchez, *Leer la Alhambra: Guía visual del Monumento a través de sus inscripciones* (Granada: Patronato de la Alhambra/Edilux, 2010), is an invaluable source for the present study, providing all the texts in Arabic of the entire epigraphic corpus of the Alhambra, and, in addition, Spanish translations and some transliterations, as well as a photographic survey of the texts' precise locations and an interpretive analysis of the inscriptions in the Alhambra. In all of the subsequent chapters, the Arabic texts of the inscriptions in the Alhambra under discussion follow Puerta Vilchez and refer to page numbers in *Leer la Alhambra*; the complete Arabic texts of the poems that are central to this book are also included in the Appendix. All English translations of the inscriptions, and of all other texts cited, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

CHAPTER ONE

Colour, Design and Medieval Optics

How can anyone speak of *coloris*? . . . How can we name a pleasure that eludes all assignation? The defenders of paintings' dignity as a liberal art have amply deplored this lack since the Renaissance: the emotion that overcomes the viewer – who is ravished by the charms of *coloris*, dazzled by the shimmering ornaments of the vision before him – always show up as a turbulence in ability to express it. Surprised, arrested, seduced, the individual is further dispossessed of the powers of speech; his ruin involves the crumbling of all discursive modes, the sudden failing of language.

Jacqueline Lichtenstein, *The Eloquence of Color*¹

I

A contemporary visitor to the Alhambra palaces sees the interiors of halls and the spacious arcaded courtyards mostly devoid of colour (Figures 1.1 and 1.2). Yet, originally, the visual experience of the Nasrid beholder would have been entirely different. The Nasrid Alhambra shimmered with vibrant colours: doors, ceilings and great expanses of the walls were vividly painted, and floors and lower parts of the walls were decorated with polychrome ceramic tiles. Depending on the intensity and direction, the light reflected in and refracted from the various coloured surfaces of the architectural decoration – carved stucco and wood, ceramic tile mosaics, glass and even carved marble – animated the spaces of the palaces. In sum, the impact of colour was crucial to the aesthetic experience everywhere in the Alhambra, so its study, undertaken by conservators but largely overlooked by art historians, is indispensable.

The general absence of colour in the current state of the Alhambra's preservation creates conditions that have long favoured scholarly attention to geometry, culminating in the work of Antonio Fernández-Puertas.² He demonstrated that the plans, elevations and architectural decoration of all precincts were conceived and executed as an integrated whole, unified by their proportional ratios. His findings will be fundamental to the considerations of proportionality in

CHAPTER FOUR

'Textile Architecture' in the Cuarto Dorado

I left Sīstān with merchants of fine robes.
The robe I bore was spun within my heart
And woven in my soul. A silken robe,
Composed of words that eloquence designed.
Farrukhī Sistānī (fourth/eleventh century)¹

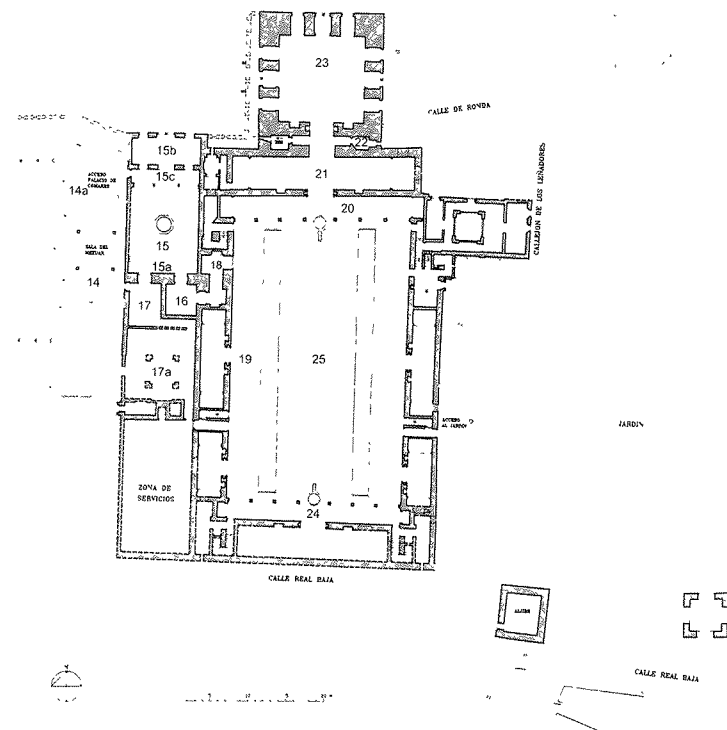
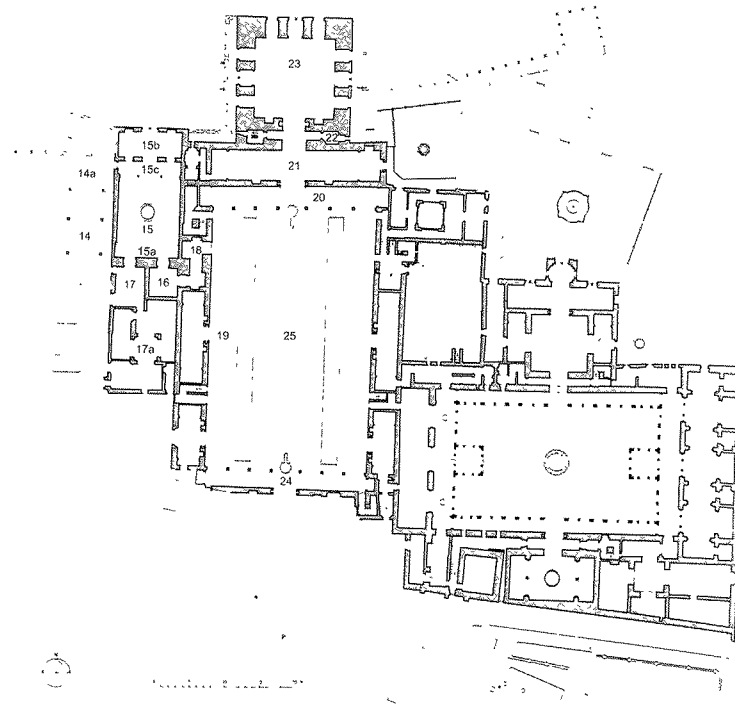
I

The present-day visitor gains access to the courtyard now called the Court of Comares through the *mishwār*, or council chamber, and the adjoining space that was originally a small patio (Figures 4.1–4.3: nos 14 and 14a, respectively; hereafter, 'no.' refers to a space in Figures 4.1–4.3). Between the two, there stands a small precinct built during the reign of Yūsuf I and altered under the patronage of his son and successor, Muḥammad V, whose north–south orientation marks a clear division between the east and west areas of the palatial complex. Known as the Cuarto Dorado (the Golden Room), the very name of the precinct attests to the history of alterations in the Alhambra (no. 15, nos 15a–c; and Figure 4.4). Even before a miniscule patio north of the *mishwār* was incorporated into the space of the *mishwār* proper in the sixteenth century (no. 14a),² the hall on the north side of the Cuarto Dorado (no. 15b) was outfitted with a heavily painted and gilded ceiling, executed in 1499,³ which gave rise to the modern name of both the hall and the precinct as a whole. The hall is an oblong room with three doorways that serve as entrances and three windows on the opposite north wall, aligned axially with the doors and with the three-arch arcade of the portico in front. In the light of the absence of alcoves on the short east and west walls of this room, it has been suggested that the Cuarto Dorado might have served as a waiting room for visitors.⁴

Proceeding along the longitudinal axis of the precinct from that hall, one comes to a contiguous portico (no. 15c) followed by a small adjacent patio (no. 15) enclosed on the three remaining sides and paved with marble slabs. The patio includes a small central marble

water basin with a jet. Alterations to the second floor above the hall of the Cuarto Dorado that took place in the post-Nasrid period, as well as to the rooms adjoining the patio on the east and west sides, preclude us from knowing the original elevation and decoration of the precinct, except for the south side where the patio is bounded by an elaborately decorated wall, known as the Façade of Comares (no. 15a).⁵ Two spaces beyond the south wall are accessed through twin doorways. Angel C. López López and Antonio Orihuela Uzal have proposed that south of the doorway to the west stood a small room that led to a *qubba* housing the royal treasury (nos 17 and 17a).⁶ Later this area was partially destroyed, and it now survives in a greatly altered form.⁷ The doorway to the east leads to a small room (no. 16) reserved for guards from which one exits to the east through a passage that changes its axis three times (no. 18), protecting access to the Court of Comares and the Hall of Comares beyond (nos 19 and 23, respectively). This passageway, with its two successive dog-legs, makes the precinct of the Cuarto Dorado a threshold space between the administrative quarters of the *mishwār* and the adjoining area west of it comprising the 'formal quarters' of the Palace of Comares.⁸

The Façade of Comares could not fail to have captured the attention of the Nasrid beholder, as it has that of today's tourists and of modern scholars alike (Figure 4.5). Grabar speaks for the consensus of researchers when he observes that the façade is 'too large, too formal to be a mere passageway, compositionally unbalanced in relationship to the small court which precedes it'.⁹ The impression that this elaborately decorated façade was literally out of place has been so glaring that García Gómez proposed that it would have originally served as the principal façade of the Palace of Comares, which would have stood on the south side of the Court of Comares. The Façade of Comares was moved, he contended, to its current place in the patio of the Cuarto Dorado at the time of the erection of the new imperial palace for Charles V, which occasioned the destruction of the south end of the Palace of Comares.¹⁰ This daring hypothesis has been proven to be erroneous by archaeological and historical evidence analysed first by Fernández-Puertas, and then by Darío Cabanelas and Vílchez Vílchez, and has been put to rest.¹¹ The Façade of Comares stands in its original location, although the patio of the Cuarto Dorado and especially its west and east walls have undergone numerous alterations, starting in the sixteenth century and continuing through to the end of the nineteenth century. Although the observations of nineteenth-century travellers, to which I will return in due course, give clear indication that the precinct was not always as it now stands, the striking, enigmatic effect of the façade must be attributed to the original architectural design and calls for some explanation.



- 14 *Mishwā*
- 14a Originally, a small patio of the *mishwā*
- 15 Patio of the Cuarto Dorado
- 15a Façade of Comares
- 15b Cuarto Dorado
- 15c Portico of the Cuarto Dorado.
- 16 Vestibule behind the east door of the Façade of Comares
- 17 Vestibule behind the west door of the Façade of Comares.
- 17a Possibly the treasury.
- 18 Dog-leg entrance to the Court of Comares
- 19 Court of Comares.
- 20 North portico of the Court of Comares.
- 21 Sala de la Barca.
- 22 Oratory
- 23 Hall of Comares.
- 24 South portico of the Court of Comares.
- 25 Pool

Figure 4.1 (facing page, upper) Palace of Comares and Palace of the Lions, ground floor, plan, Alhambra (after Orihuela Uzal, *Casas y palacios*, with added numbering of spaces)

Figure 4.2 (facing page, lower) Palace of Comares, ground floor, hypothesis of the original plan (after Orihuela Uzal, *Casas y palacios*, with added numbering of spaces)

Figure 4.3 (above) Key to Figures 4.1 and 4.2

Grabar's remark goes beyond description to aesthetic judgement – too large, unbalanced – and like any such judgement, begs a question about the implied standards. One may well suspect that it is once again the post-Nasrid name, designating the wall as a façade, that informs his and others' perspective. The simple fact of being a wall pierced by doorways that fronts on a space under the open sky would seem to support the designation, which is then reinforced, from the point of view of Western art history, by the monumentality of the decoration. The impression is magnified by the current state of the east and west walls of the patio, devoid of decoration and flush with the sides of the south wall, such that its surface is not framed laterally by open space, as would be the case with the façade of a free-standing building. The puzzle for scholars is why a façade so grand in a precinct so small? But to put the matter in this way is to set the discussion strictly in architectural terms. One might pose an alternative question, if not a façade, to what may the south wall be likened? How else might it be contextualised so that its aesthetic principles might be understood, rather than impugned?

Grabar is instructive in a different sense, in that he formulates the main thrust of his observation – again, generally held – in the idiom of proportionality. Whether too large (to be a proper façade) or not,

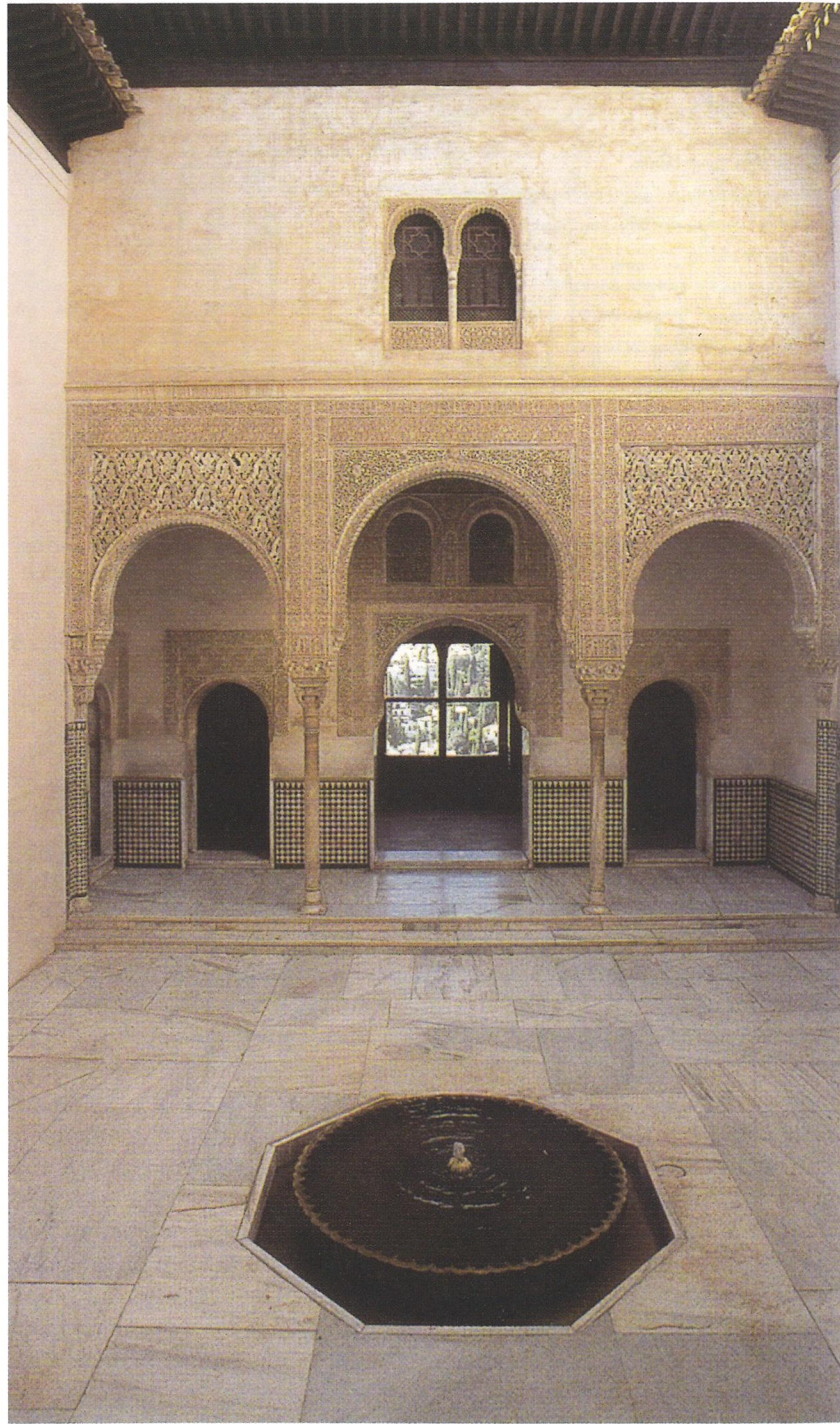


Figure 4.4 *Patio of the Cuarto Dorado precinct with the portico on the north side, Palace of Comares, Alhambra (photograph: Olga Bush)*



Figure 4.5 *Patio of the Cuarto Dorado precinct with the Façade of Comares on the south side, Palace of Comares, Alhambra (Werner Forman Archive/Bridgeman Images)*

balanced or unbalanced, the remark refers the study of the Cuarto Dorado to optical considerations. The approach to the enigma of the so-called Façade of Comares, then, may be grounded once again in the work of Ibn al-Haytham. In an analysis of calligraphy, for example, Ibn al-Haytham asserted that: 'Writing also is not beautiful unless its letters are proportionate in respect of their shapes, magnitudes, positions, and order. And the same is true of all visible objects which are combinations of various parts.'¹² He further explains that the 'completion and perfection [of beauty] is due only to the proportionality and harmony that may obtain between the particular properties'.¹³ Andalusī poet and literary theorist Ḥazim al-Qarṭajannī (607–83/1211–85) makes a similar point for poetry, whose harmony, he believed, was achieved through the proportional relationship of its constituent elements.¹⁴ In these terms, no matter how beautiful the Façade of Comares may be deemed with respect to the elegance and intricacy of its design, its beauty would still be imperfect from the point of view of the beholder in the relatively small space of the adjoining patio due to its disproportionate size. The balance of beauty might have been restored, however, by reinforcing the optical effects of harmony (greater harmony compensating for lesser proportionality). The present chapter will be dedicated primarily to studying that harmony, which might have been achieved not by the architecture alone, but through the coordinated, inter-medial relationship between the architectural decoration and luxury textiles that would have been hung in the space, contributing to an integrated aesthetic experience of the precinct.

To underline the harmonious relations between media is not to set aside the importance of proportionality in the design of architecture and its decoration. Following Fernández-Puertas' analysis of the proportional design of other buildings in the Alhambra, as illustrated with respect to the plan of the *Qal'ahurra* of Yūsuf I in Chapter 3, it is possible to demonstrate the proportional design of the elevation of the Façade of Comares (Figure 4.6). Taking the width of the door as a basic unit, measured by a length of string (AB), and swinging the string, pegged at point B, one can mark point C on the right upright of the door. Then, unpegging and letting out the string, the builders could stretch its length to connect point A to point C, which corresponds to the hypotenuse (AC) of an isosceles right triangle (ABC) and is equal to the square root of 2 of the original unit (AB), or the width of the door. If the string AC is now pegged at the initial point at the lower left corner (A), and swung to the left upright of the door to mark point D, a triangle DAB is drawn, whose hypotenuse (DB) measures square root of 3. Setting the peg back at the lower right corner (B) and stretching the string again to measure the new hypotenuse (DB), it can be swung to the right upright to mark point E, or the height of the doorway (EB). Continuing the procedure of alternating the point at which one end of the string is pegged (now, point

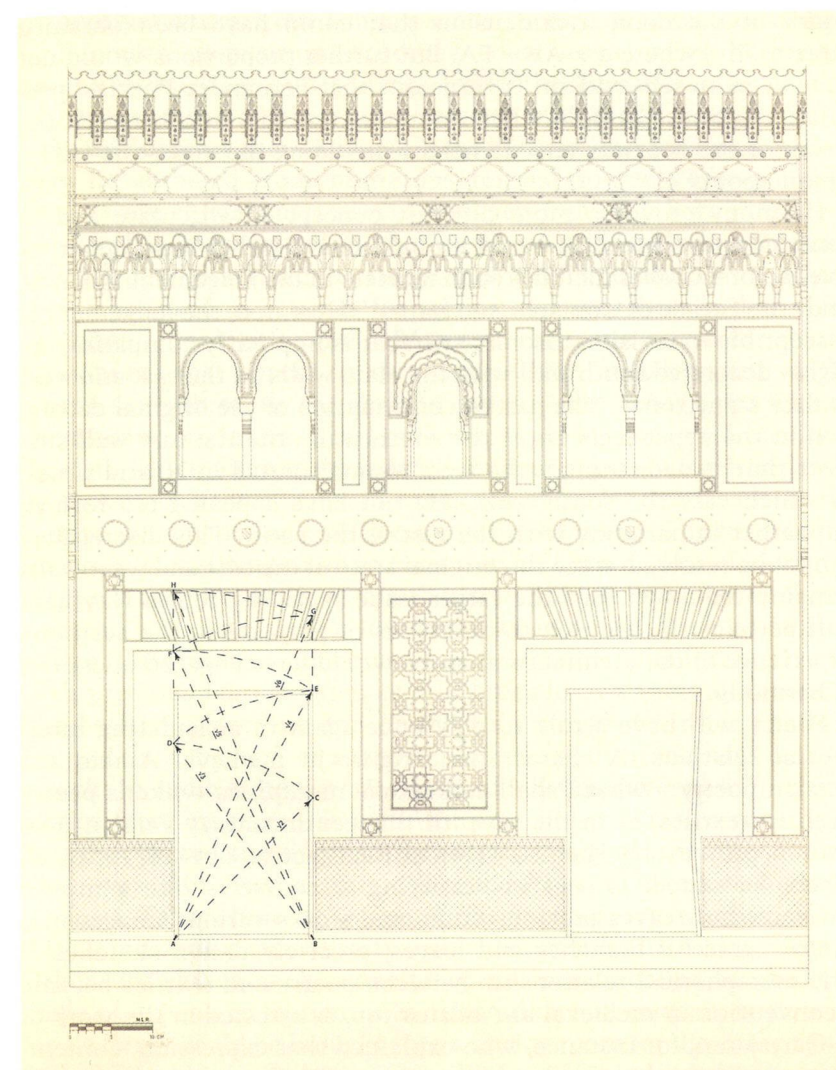


Figure 4.6 Façade of Comares, Palace of Comares, Alhambra (after drawing by M. López Reche, Archivo de la Alhambra, with added construction of geometric measurements)

A again) and letting out a greater length to point E, the hypotenuse (EA) of the next triangle ABE will measure the square root of 4 – as Euclidean geometry would have predicted – and that length would mark point F on the vertical line extending the left upright of the door, hence, providing the measurement for the height of the *alfiz* of ceramic tile mosaic that frames the door.¹⁵

The demonstration may at first appear superfluous, since the square root of 4 is equal to 2, which means the height of the door with its *alfiz* of ceramic tile mosaic simply measures double the

width of the door, a dimension that could have been obtained more easily, where $2 \times AB = FA$. But further proportions would not have been so self-evident. It turns out that Fernández-Puertas' postulate continues to hold when one measures the ratio between the width of the doorway and its height including the voussoirs ($AH = \text{square root of } 6$).

Harmony proves a more difficult concept to articulate and to demonstrate, since it is based on qualitative rather than quantitative factors. Grabar includes such matters in his judgement when he finds the Façade of Comares 'too formal'. Here, too, the judgement is susceptible to revision insofar as Grabar is implicitly comparing the highly decorated south wall with the plain walls on the east and west as they stand today. The partial continuation of the original decoration in the upper registers of the south wall onto the east wall suggests that the adjoining walls were also decorated in Nasrid times, in which case the south wall may not have appeared too formal, but rather in harmony with the rest of the patio. This discrepancy cannot be resolved, since the original state of the east and west walls remains unknown. But the larger issue raised by Ibn al-Haytham still pertains. In addition to questions of proportion, the aesthetic experience of the architectural space would have engaged questions of harmony.

Poetry will have a role to play once again in articulating inter-medial relations. A characteristic figure in medieval Arabic and Persian poetry – what I shall call *textile metaphors* – likens poetry itself to textiles, as in the seventh/thirteenth-century Persian treatise on prosody by Shams-i Qays al-Rāzī (active 601–28/1204–30), where he stated: 'a poet in versifying discourse is like a master weaver who weaves precious stuffs and works various images into them – graceful branches and leaves, precisely drawn sketches'.¹⁶ The metaphorical relationship between poetry and textiles became a convention in medieval al-Andalus too, as attested in the work of al-Qarṭajannī, for instance, who explained that expression, content, composition and style should come together in a poem's 'beautiful brocade' (*ḥusn dībāj*).¹⁷ The inter-medial analogy embodied in textile metaphors would have helped to prepare the beholder to find a metaphorical likeness between architecture and textiles as well.

Effective metaphors depend on the understanding of their literal reference, and so the discussion here begins with some study of the history of luxury textiles and the close examination of some extant Nasrid examples. Implicit throughout and explicit at times is the premise stated already in the introduction: the empty architectural spaces of the Alhambra of today are entirely misleading; they would have been fully and richly furnished in Nasrid times. Luxury textiles would have made up a large part of that furnishing; or, in Lisa Golombek's cogent terms, the Alhambra would have formed part of the 'draped universe of Islam'.¹⁸ In her recent comprehensive study

of luxury textiles from Islamic lands, Louise W. Mackie furthers Golombek's proposition. Studying court dress, robes of honour and furnishings in court settings across the Muslim world, Mackie argues for an overarching 'textile aesthetic' in the Islamic arts.¹⁹

Some sense of that universe, especially in the medieval period, may be gathered from numerous textual sources. For example, Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahānī (284–356/897–967), who was born in Isfahan, but lived in many cities in the Muslim world, including Baghdad and Aleppo, described textile furnishings and spaces in which they were used as settings for stories and anecdotes in his *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (*Book of Songs*).²⁰ Many of the same terms for textile furnishings that appear in this compilation are also used in the fourth–seventh/tenth–thirteenth-century texts among the Geniza documents, originally stored in the Ben Ezra Synagogue of old Cairo (Fustāt), which often include detailed descriptions of cloth and even its monetary value.²¹ Several examples of bridal trousseaus in the Geniza documents will suffice to make the point. The furnishings for a *majlis*, a sitting room or reception hall of a middle-class home, included the *martabah*, a sofa that consisted of one or several sections; it was made with a low platform in wood, brick or mortar, with a filled mattress for comfort and elevation, which was covered with precious fabrics, often of silk brocade. A variety of cushions and bolsters placed on top of the sofa provided further comfort. Frequently a *misnad*, or support, a textile with filling, was used as a back. In addition to a *martabah*, side divans covered with costly fabrics were employed as well. Carpets and mattresses of varying heights covered the floor. In the sitting room of a wealthy house there was also often a seat, called *majlis*, which was sometimes made of Tabarī brocade – one of the most costly textiles at the time – indicating special status; sometimes it had a back as well.²² Other furnishings, such as one-piece mattresses, called *firāsh*, often made of expensive Iberian or Sicilian silks, and *maṭrah*, both used for sleeping, could be brought into a sitting room for day-time use.²³ Different cushions, bolsters and pillows enhanced comfort as well as providing additional seating. One may extrapolate from this documentary evidence from prosperous households of medieval Cairo to imagine the textile furnishings of the precincts in the Alhambra, for which no such documentation or archaeological evidence is available. A chief feature of those textile furnishings is their portability. One need not conjecture that textiles were permanently affixed to architecture to propose that textile furnishings could have been brought nonetheless into a precinct on particular occasions, especially those linked to a court ceremonial. Not only would the textiles have further enriched the permanent decoration of a precinct, but also, and more importantly, they would have altered the beholder's experience of the space defined by its architectural plan and elevation.

The paucity of documentary information not only touches upon the place of textiles in the Alhambra, but it extends more generally to textile production in the Nasrid kingdom. Medieval historians, such as al-Ḥimyarī, al-Maqqarī and al-Dimashqī, mention Almería and Málaga as important Andalusī textile centres, recounting that the silk cloaks (*al-ḥulal al-mawshīya*) made there were known for 'marvellous pictures (*ṣūra*) ... with the names of the Caliphs and others (inscribed) upon them',²⁴ and Ibn Hawqal noted that the products of the royal workshops of al-Andalus were exported to Egypt, Khurasan and elsewhere by the end of the fourth/tenth century.²⁵ Royal control of commerce in raw silk, silk cloth and silks embellished with gold and silver threads during the Nasrid and post-Nasrid periods has been attested for Granada,²⁶ where the much restored royal silk market, *al-qayṣariyya* (adapted as *alcaicería* in Spanish) still stands in the city below the Sabika hill and the Alhambra.²⁷ It has yet to be determined if there was a royal textile workshop within the palatial city itself.

María Judith Feliciano obviates the documentary problem to some extent by referring textile production in medieval Iberia to the context in which many cultural expressions of the Muslim courts were appropriated and adapted by Christian rulers.²⁸ Arts, literature and even customs and rituals crossed the porous borders of the Iberian Peninsula through commerce, booty, ambassadorial gifts, and contacts with itinerant craftsmen, poets, scientists and others journeying in search of knowledge and employment.²⁹ Feliciano prefers to speak of 'Andalusī textiles', rather than associate objects with particular Muslim dynasties (e.g., the Nasrids) or even to distinguish between Muslim and Christian textile production, where documentary sources are scarce and dating is in doubt.³⁰ The point is well taken and may be extended. Much of what remains of Andalusī textiles, nearly all of silk, have either been preserved only as fragments or have survived precisely because they have been refashioned for use by Christian patrons into garments – attire for royal family and nobility, Church vestments for the clergy, burial shrouds, pillows and coffin covers – as well as furnishings for the Church, such as altar cloths and mantles for sacred sculpture.³¹ The trajectory of the extant textiles thus bears witness to the political history of the Iberian Peninsula, indeed, it is almost an allegorical representation of that history: an Islamic luxury object cut to pieces and dispersed, only to reappear, if at all, converted for Church service.

In what follows, I shall concentrate attention on textiles whose attribution to the Nasrids appears to be secure. Where matters are less certain, one may well look to other Muslim courts for insight. For example, the administration of the royal mint (*sikka*) is as little documented as the *ṭirāz* (royal textile workshop) under the Nasrids,

though both would have been involved in the production of brocade, a textile made of silk and gold or silver wrapped threads. The close connection is attested at the 'Abbasid court of al-Ma'mūn b. Hārūn al-Rashīd, where the highest-ranking court official, his vizier, Ja'far al-Barmakī, oversaw both the *sikka* and the *ṭirāz*.³² Historians writing about the Fatimid dynasty, which ruled from its capital in Cairo between the fourth/tenth century and sixth/twelfth century, have also recorded a close link between the two institutions, noting not only that the gold-wrapped thread for *ṭirāz* textiles was produced under the supervision of the mint, but also that the *sikka* and the *ṭirāz* alike produced goods – cloth and coins – upon which the caliph's name was inscribed.³³

Similarly, in the absence of accounts of the function of luxury textiles in Nasrid court ceremonials, one may turn to Aḥmad ibn al-Rashīd Ibn al-Zubayr, the fifth/eleventh-century author of the *Kitāb al-Hadāyā wa al-Tuḥaf* (*Book of Gifts and Rarities*), to infer something of the value and diversity of such objects among the Nasrids. The author records the following inventory of 'Stores for Upholstery and Furnishings' at the Fatimid court in Cairo:

In the furnishings treasury (*khizānat al-farsh*) were found four thousand bundles of Khusruwani cloth [woven] with gold [thread]. Each bundle (*rizmāh*) contained a complete set of furnishings (*farsh*) for a sitting hall (*majlis*) with its carpets, wall hangings (*ta'ālīq*), and the rest of its furnishings [all] woven (*mansūjah*) from the same yarn (*fī khayṭ wāḥid*).³⁴

I will return to the implications of the reference to *complete sets of furnishings*, and focus here on the sheer abundance and the use of gold thread (i.e., for brocade), which gives a sense of the wealth invested in textiles.

The *Kitāb al-Hadāyā* gives another noteworthy account of the deployment of textiles in the construction of ceremonial space in the course of the reception of Byzantine ambassadors at the court of the 'Abbasid caliph al-Muqtadir (r. 295–320/908–32) in 304/917. The envoys were initially brought to the Public Hall (Dār al-Āmmah), where they were seated in the portico, and then, en route to al-Muqtadir's audience hall, they were ushered through the numerous passageways, vestibules, enclosures, courtyards and other precincts of no less than fourteen palaces. The anonymous author states that these passageways and courtyards were embellished with no less than 38,000 draperies (*sutūr*), in addition to 22,000 floor furnishings of carpets and runners (*nikhākh*), which left the envoys 'bewildered and confused', even before arriving at the audience hall, 'tired and breathless'.³⁵ The author hastened to clarify that the textiles were brought from the royal furnishings treasury especially for the occasion and were additional to the customary furnishings of

private rooms and sitting halls.³⁶ Whether or not the numbers are to be taken at face value, the keynote is clearly abundance, and one is to understand that the textiles are intended as a display of the ruler's wealth and power.

The characterisation of the psychological (and even physical) impact is of the greatest interest in this account as a preliminary response to the question of disproportion. It is not a by-product, but the intent of the display to leave the beholder 'bewildered and confused'. Understanding, or what Ibn al-Haytham refers to as cognition, is by no means the beginning of the experience of the beholder, where the object at hand is 'too large' or otherwise too abundant. Where the initial stage of perception is so overwhelming, the move towards cognition is confused; a guide is needed to enhance the imagination as a bridge to understanding.

Poetry could and did perform that bridging. A *qaṣīda* composed by Ibn al-Khaṭīb dedicated to the Hafsīd sultan Abū Ḥammū Mūsā II (r. 760–91/1359–89) offers a case in point that at once brings discussion to the Nasrid sphere and sets the production of Andalusī textiles in its broader trans-Mediterranean context. The poem was recited by a Nasrid envoy on the occasion of the Nasrid embassy to the Hafsids on behalf of Muḥammad V in 776/1374,³⁷ in keeping with the ceremonial practice, common throughout the medieval Islamic world, of enhancing the quality and prestige of gifts with accompanying verses, performed or inscribed.³⁸ In the course of his panegyric, the value of poetry itself – one of the gifts – is extolled by likening it to luxury textiles in the following textile metaphor: 'This poetry is [like] the textiles of Yemen, the older they are, the more one is attached to them and the more one seeks them out.'³⁹ Gifts incite counter-gifts, and the success of the embassy depends on their perceived value. The Nasrid emissary refers simultaneously to the poet's verses, the textiles and other gifts of Muḥammad V, and, ultimately, through them all, to Muḥammad V himself, when he recites: 'Their renown is great, wherever one finds them in distant lands, their qualities stand forth and their designs become all the finer.'⁴⁰

Such textile metaphors are inscribed on the walls of the Alhambra, providing a direct link to architecture. Ibn al-Khaṭīb himself contributed the following verse, inscribed in the niche on the west side of the entrance arch to the Hall of Ambassadors, 'My *dībāj* skilful fingers embroidered (*raqamat*)'; and Ibn Zamrak wrote these verses as part of an extended poem inscribed in the Hall of Two Sisters: 'With what vestments of brocade (*ḥula min washī*) you honoured it! / They make one forget the textiles of Yemen'⁴¹ (Figures 1.19 and 4.7). Much as in the *Qalahurra* of Yūsuf I, the poem is inscribed in a band of stucco decoration around the perimeter of the room above the dadoes of ceramic tile mosaics. Situated slightly below eye level, the verses occupy alternating elongated and circular car-touches and are plainly legible. Here the textile metaphor speaks



Figure 4.7 Roundel with Ibn Zamrak's verses, north wall, interior, Hall of Two Sisters, Palace of the Lions, Alhambra (photograph: Olga Bush)

of its own unsurpassed beauty: the *muqarnas* vault, the arches, the polished marble, and the carved stucco decoration that covers the walls and extends to the *muqarnas* squinches and arches that fill the transition zone and carry upward the octagonal vault above. The analogy to *dībāj* is meant to describe and praise the architectural decoration – each medium is related to beauty in the same way, even if the beauty of the two media is different, to recall the discussion of metaphor in Chapter 3 – but at the same time the verses extol the value of textiles as an art and so reinforce the textile aesthetic of the Nasrid court.

García Gómez understands both Ibn al-Khaṭīb's *dībāj* and Ibn Zamrak's *washī* as references to brocade,⁴² but there is much ambiguity concerning nomenclature in Arabic for textiles in general and for Andalusī textiles in particular. Some pre-Nasrid textual sources preserve medieval designations for luxury silks made in al-Andalus, but the precise meaning and specific characteristics associated with terms such as *ibrīsam*, *khazz*, *qazz*, *ḥarīr*, *siqlātūn* and *fākhrir*, compiled by R. B. Serjeant, have been lost.⁴³ Of these terms, only one, *siqlātūn* (derived from Latin and thence from Greek), has carried over as a loan word in Castilian as *ciclatón*, defined either as a medieval garment in the form of a tunic or the silk and gold cloth from which such garments were fashioned. Serjeant states that *dībāj* appears as well in early Castilian texts as *dibeth*. The situation is complicated further by additional terms that refer to one, but

not all, of the particular features of a given silk-cloth type. Hence, *shiqqa* is used for a silk with a *ṭirāz* (i.e., a band with inscriptions), and *sutūr mukallala* for silk curtains with vertical bands. As for the term *washī* as used in medieval texts, it refers to richly coloured textiles, with or without gold thread, sometimes to brocades, and also to striped or variegated cloth.⁴⁴ In any case, none of these Arabic terms have been firmly attached to extant Andalusī textiles. Germán Navarro Espinach has culled an additional fifteen terms for silk textiles from various textual sources written in Castile and León in the period between 1190 and 1340.⁴⁵ But once again, valuable as that lexicon may be, none of the extant medieval silk textiles of Andalusī manufacture used by the Christian elite has been identified by these terms in medieval texts.

Ibn al-Khaṭīb's use of the root *r-q-m* in his verse inscription points to a still more fundamental ambiguity, or rather lexical richness, at the heart of textile metaphors. Both García Gómez and Puerta Vilchez interpret *raqamat* in the inscription in the entrance arch to the Hall of Ambassadors as a reference to embroidery; Arabic *r-q-m* is the etymological root of Spanish *recamar*, to embroider.⁴⁶ But the same Arabic root has a primary meaning of 'to write, to dot a book', and drawing upon that sense, María Jesús Rubiera Mata translates *raqūmun* as 'inscriptions' when it appears in the last of Ibn al-Jayyāb's poems inscribed in the *Qalahurra* of Yūsuf I: 'Its walls – in them there are *raqūmun* that disarm the most eloquent' (poem 4, verse 3).⁴⁷ Yet another meaning of the root is 'to stripe a textile' and also 'to weave something in long strips'.⁴⁸ In sum, the root *r-q-m* refers simultaneously to writing and putting stripes on a cloth, such that writing on silk, embroidery and striped silk may be designated as *raqama*, *raqamāt*, *raqm*, respectively, and a *ṭirāz*, in the sense of a band with inscriptions, can also be called *marqūm*.⁴⁹ When Ibn al-Khaṭīb titles his historical work *Raqm al-hulal fī nazm al-duwal* (*The Ornamentation of the Garments: On the Organisation of the States*),⁵⁰ he begins with a *tajnīs* or play on words that invokes both a textual and a textile meaning for *raqm*. His textile metaphor establishes a further analogy in which the ornamentation of a textile is to the organisation of the state as the writing of poetry is to the writing of history. Hence, the reading of Ibn al-Khaṭīb's title suggests that the worthiness and might of the state lies in its organisation, just as the value of a garment lies in its ornamentation. Textile metaphors rely not only on the crossover terminology that unites textiles and poetry – in Greek and Latin as much as Persian and Arabic⁵¹ – but also on the analogy between ornamentation and organisation.

3

The relationship between ornamentation, especially when understood in more inclusive terms as 'markings' (*r-q-m*), and organisation,

seen as a modular structure of alternating units, is exemplified in the closely interrelated terms *muwashshah*, a designation recorded in textual sources where it is applied to a certain kind of striped or 'figured' Andalusī silk textile, and *muwashshah*, an innovative form of Andalusī poetry.⁵² The textile sense of the term has been met in the title of al-Washshā's *Kitāb al-Muwashshā*, discussed in Chapter 2; the term was also used in several instances in contemporary 'Abbasid texts in connection with sumptuous robes made of striped textiles from Yemen.⁵³ Ibn al-Jayyāb's poetic inscriptions in the *Qalahurra* of Yūsuf I may be cited as testimony of the literary meaning. In the fourth and final poem in the itinerary there (the southwest corner), following the verse noted above for its use of *raqūmun*, one reads in reference to the decoration that is the 'the markings' of the walls of the *qubba*: 'They surprise; and each part equals another part in proportion [and/or prestige] (*nisba*), and so it is a *muwashshah* and a literary work (*muṣannaf*).'⁵⁴ By connecting *muwashshah* to *muṣannaf*, the immediate context would tend to cast the former as a kind of literary work. The proportional relationship between them would then be of a specific form to a general type or, in poetic terms, a synecdoche, the part that can stand for the whole. The initial aesthetic experience of the architecture and its decoration is surprise, which only begins to resolve itself as the beholder organises perception by means of the comparison with poetry, enabling a judgement of quantity (*nisba* as proportion) and quality (*nisba* as prestige). But the literary context is incomplete. Following so closely after *raqūmun*, with its notable overlap of textile and textual meanings, the poem keeps the further relationship between both architecture and poetry, on the one hand, and textiles with both of these, on the other, before the beholder's eye.

Muwashshah in its textile sense seems to have its etymological source in *wishāh*, a girdle or sash woven and embroidered in alternating colours.⁵⁵ It appears that the *wishāh* was worn on the body either between the shoulder and flanks or around the waist, and in either case lent itself to erotic connotations. For instance, in a poem written by al-Mu'tamid (432–87/1040–95), the 'Abbasid ruler of Seville during the *taifa* period, the poet wishes to kiss the part of his beloved's body between the *wishāh* and the necklace,⁵⁶ while in verses by another poet, the lover's arms form the *wishāh* around his beloved's waist.⁵⁷ Al-Mu'tamid's court poet Ibn 'Ammār (422–76/1031–84) identified the ruler's beloved wife I'timād as 'the one who has a *wishāh*', which extends the erotic implications to a sign of distinction among the ruler's wives and concubines.⁵⁸ And, indeed, as early as an account of Khusrau's defeat at al-Madā'in (Ctesiphon), there is mention of the booty taken by the Muslims to 'Umar that suggests that Khusrau's sashes (*awshiḥatahū*) could have been used as royal insignia.⁵⁹

While one looks in vain for a full *wishāh* among extant Andalusī textiles, it had been recorded as an article of female attire by an Andalusī author in the eighth/fourteenth century.⁶⁰ Such sashes, embellished with stripes of various colours and precious stones, may be found in the sculptural and pictorial depictions of female patrons and saints in the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century art of Spain, attesting well to Feliciano's point concerning the trans-Iberian context.⁶¹ One such statue is of particular significance. The polychromed wooden effigy executed by Felipe Vigarny (c. 1475–1542) of Queen Isabel I of Castile (1451–1504) that stands in the Royal Chapel adjoining the Cathedral of Granada (both buildings constructed by the Christian Monarchs on the foundations of the demolished congregational Great Mosque of Granada), shows the queen attired in a splendid gown girdled by a striped sash, an Andalusī textile (Figure 4.8). According to textual sources, the striped Andalusī sash appears to have been a particular favourite of the queen and her entourage, who had some 105 at their disposal.⁶² The inventory of Gonzalo de Baeza detailing daily expenditures by Isabel I lists countless textile items. The enumeration for 13 August 1489, which included purchases of black velvet, *grana*, *pañó*, black and purple damask, and black and purple *londres* – all for specified items of clothing – is typical not only for the quantity and variety of textiles, but also for the clear evidence of commercial and cultural contacts with the textile centres of al-Andalus.⁶³ In fact, this document begins with a reference to a payment for 'certain cloth and silks that her Majesty commanded to give to Abraham de Mora, messenger from the King of Granada, in order for him to dress himself and two other Moors'.⁶⁴ The sculpture gives visual confirmation of the court documents penned by Baeza and of the abiding presence of Islamic art on the very monument of its obliteration.

The stripes on Isabel I's *wishāh* further identify the sash as an Andalusī textile of the *muwashshah* type. The direction of stripes on the girdle demonstrate that the sash would have been cut from a cloth whose width would have corresponded to that of the loom. Following early medieval historians, al-Maqqarī mentions that '*muwashshah* robes' (*ḥulal muwashshah*) were made in the important Andalusī textile centres of Almería and Málaga. He underscores that the cloaks of this type were 'precious', their prices 'run into thousands', and that both cities exported these robes to Muslim and Christian lands.⁶⁵ Specific reference was made to a chasuble of 'striped Granada cloth' in an inventory dating to 1339 and preserved in the Cathedral of Sigüenza, in Spain,⁶⁶ though the garment itself is lost, and no other extant textiles have ever been attached to that designation – Isabel I's sculpted sash notwithstanding. As a textile term, *muwashshah* has remained an empty category, and as a result, the *markings* that might have characterised this 'figured' cloth, as Serjeant puts it, have yet to be established.



Figure 4.8 Effigy of Isabel I of Castile in Prayer, 1520–2, polychromed wood, Felipe Vigarny. Capilla Real, Cathedral of Granada, Granada (Capilla Real, Granada, Spain/Bridgeman Images)

Al-Maqqarī had noted that the Andalusī *ḥulal muwashshah* were often inscribed with a *ṭirāz*,⁶⁷ but the relationship between the textiles and inscribed verses dates back at least to the *Kitāb al-Muwashshah*. Al-Washshā' gives examples of verses inscribed in a *ṭirāz* of gold thread on a *wishāh*, such as: 'I love him just as much whether he does (me) right or wrong, for him I condemn my heart to whatever he asks of me, even when the pleasure of finding him happy does not overtake me, even if the days of his anger do not pass.'⁶⁸ The

popularity of sashes inscribed with poetic inscriptions endured well beyond the Reconquista of al-Andalus, both in Iberia and elsewhere. There are, for example, many silk sashes or girdles embellished with both gold-wrapped thread and short amorous expressions made in Spain during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,⁶⁹ including simple inscriptions in Spanish, such as: 'Constant shall remain my love', and longer, rhymed verses, such as: 'Of your beautiful garden – I am a jealous gardener'.⁷⁰

It is against this background that the term *muwashshah* emerged as the name for a new form of poetry that originated in medieval al-Andalus in the fifth/eleventh century.⁷¹ The themes of the *muwashshahāt* (pl. of *muwashshah*) poems are generally love (*ghazal*), panegyric (*madīh*) and wine (*khamr*), often combined in a single poem.⁷² It is the theme of love or a lover's lament that constitutes the literary link between the *muwashshahāt* poems and the poetic inscriptions on *wushuh* (pl. of *wishāh*). This Andalusī genre is distinguished from the *qaṣīda* in its strophic structure and use of polyrhyme, as well as in its performance – sung, not recited.

The strophic organisation of the *muwashshah* calls for further comment. *Muwashshahāt* were composed of five strophes or *aghṣān* (sing. *guṣn* or 'branch'), and the rhyme within each strophe is uniform, but changes from one strophe to another. The strophes alternate with a set of isolated, single verses or *asmāt* (sing. *simt* or 'strands for stringing pearls'), which differ in their contents, but are unified by a common rhyme.⁷³ Metaphorically speaking, the strophes are the pearls joined together by the strands of isolated verses, forming a distinctive, alternating profile:

[a] (single verse)
 BBB (strophe)
 a
 CCC
 a
 DDD
 a
 EEE
 a
 FFF
 a⁷⁴

There may or may not be a *simt* preceding the first strophe, but there is always a strand visible after the final strophe, where it is called the *kharja*, and it is the key to the new poetic form, in fact, its generative element. As Ibn Sana' al-Mulk (550–608/1155–1211) declared in *Dār al-ṭirāz fī 'amal al-muwashshahāt* ('The House of the *ṭirāz* in the craft of the *muwashshahāt*'), his treatise on the *muwashshah* written after the Andalusī poetic form had travelled east: 'The

kharja is the spice of the *muwashshah*, its salt and sugar, its musk and amber. It is the close of the *muwashshah*; it must, therefore, be beautiful; it is its seal; nay, it is the beginning, although it is at the end. What I mean by saying it is the beginning is that the composition of the poem must begin with it.'⁷⁵

The *kharja* may be written in classical Arabic, as is obligatory for the rest of the *muwashshah*, but it may also be composed in vernacular Romance, or even in a mixture of vernacular Romance and Arabic.⁷⁶ The bilingual code switching is further heightened by a gender distinction. María Rosa Menocal points out that the formal poetic language and the formal code of the preceding single verses or 'strands' and strophes 'embody the equally formal courtly laments of a male speaker', whereas the *kharja* 'set off by its use of a much more casual code, is often spoken by a woman who does not use traditional formal expressions to convey her sentiments'.⁷⁷ Menocal argues nevertheless for the unity of this hybrid poetic genre.⁷⁸ The wide range of discontinuities (language, gender and voice) and continuities (rhyme and rhythmic patterns) are conjoined in the *muwashshah* in the service of expressing the same sentiment – the lament of unrequited love. Menocal further highlights that the *muwashshah* is a poem 'talking about itself and about literature and language at least as much as it is about its external subject'.⁷⁹ I would add that by dividing the voice between the poetic speakers of *muwashshah* and *kharja*, the genre is also talking to itself, staging an inner conversation. The balance of continuity and discontinuity, the dialogic voicing and the self-reflexivity of the form make the *muwashshah* a model for a theory of inter-medial study. More concretely, consideration of the organisation of *muwashshahāt*, that is, the poems, can reorient the study of *muwashshah* textiles.

4

'Striped cloth' is too narrow a descriptor to convey a full understanding of the *markings* of the *muwashshah* textiles, which should rather be considered as an organisation of alternating, proportional bands, relating to each other through a balance of similarity and difference, or in short, harmoniously. The category is by no means empty. The first type is exemplified by a silk fragment sewn from two smaller pieces, preserved in the collection of the Textile Museum in Washington (TM 84.29) (Figure 4.9). Measuring 75 cm × 138 cm in its current state,⁸⁰ it is the largest textile in a group of silk fragments of identical decorative design that have been preserved in other collections.⁸¹ Scholars generally agree on the date and place of manufacture of the textile, attributing it to late eighth/fourteenth- or early ninth/fifteenth-century Nasrid al-Andalus.⁸² As with many other examples of luxury textiles made during the Nasrid period, the Textile Museum fragment is woven using the lampas technique,⁸³



Figure 4.9 Textile fragment, late eighth–ninth /fourteenth–fifteenth century. Textile Museum, Washington, DC (TM 84.29) (photograph: Textile Museum, Washington, DC)

which is characterised by a double structure that consists of a ground – satin, in this case – and a pattern.⁸⁴

The width and structure of any given textile was determined by the type of loom employed in its fabrication, and it is known that different types of vertical and horizontal looms were employed during the Nasrid period.⁸⁵ The striped design of the Textile Museum fragment is such that it would appear to have been woven horizontally on the loom, as can be readily appreciated, for instance, in the epigraphic bands. A horizontal orientation would make the inscription more legible. The width of the cloth made it possible to turn the textile

vertically, allowing for its new purpose.⁸⁶ The asymmetrical interruption of the design at the edges of its current state gives evidence of that alteration, and in its present shape, the Textile Museum fragment appears to have been cut for re-use as a garment, perhaps a chasuble⁸⁷; two other large fragments belonging to the same group were cut to form part of a different ecclesiastical vestment, a stole.⁸⁸ In its original horizontal orientation, the Textile Museum fragment and the others in its group would be a type deemed by medieval sources as best used for furnishing: *khazz raqm*,⁸⁹ usually understood as striped silk. However, the textual sense of *raqm* is suggestive for the role of inscriptions in further specifying the textile type. Al-Washshā' records numerous examples in the *Kitāb al-Muwashshah* of furnishings – wall and bed curtains, carpets, cushions and pillows inscribed in gold and silver brocade with 'short, selected poems, curious refrains, graceful phrases'⁹⁰ – that stand as distant precursors to this *muwashshah* type of Andalusī textiles. In the Nasrid period, Ibn al-Jayyab's *diwān* indicates that he composed poems for inscription on luxury textiles – no longer extant – to be made in the royal *tirāz*, one of which was intended explicitly for a curtain.⁹¹

The decorative composition of the Textile Museum fragment consists of two alternating bands embellished with epigraphy and foliate motifs, and a narrow border of geometric interlace between the two main bands. The vibrant red and green colours serve as a foil for epigraphy and foliate elements woven in white thread. The epigraphic bands, which are substantially narrower than the foliate ones, are executed in *naskhi* script, and in this unique example, the fragment is large enough to preserve a poetic text in its entirety: 'I am for pleasure. Welcome. For pleasure am I. And he who beholds me sees joy and delight.'⁹² The implied erotic content would have been wholly out of keeping with the re-use of the textile as a Church vestment – what would the faithful have said, if they could have read the poem? But in its original use as a furnishing, the poetic inscription is much like the *kharija* part of a literary *muwashshah*, both in its easy-going frankness and the direct address, and so would have been acceptable, especially in the private setting of a home. Moreover, the shifting subjectivity of the prosopopoeia gives voice to the furnishing – and those in contact with it – in offering sensual pleasure, while at the same time bidding welcome to the aesthetic delights of the arts of poetry and textiles.

A second type of *muwashshah* textile 'of more than average width' may be identified by adducing an example from the collection of the Museo Diocesano-Catedralicio in Burgos: a large silk garment (87 cm × 140 cm) sewn from several fragments of cloth into a pluvial (Figure 4.10).⁹³ The vestment was made for the Constables of Castile, don Pedro Fernández de Velasco and doña Mencía de Mendoza and is preserved in their chapel in the cathedral of Burgos.⁹⁴ Its silk cloth has been attributed to the same Nasrid



Figure 4.10 Pluvial, eighth–ninth/fourteenth–fifteenth century. Museo Diocesano-Catedralicio, Burgos (photograph: Edilesa, Burgos, Spain)

production and to the same period (late eighth/fourteenth or early ninth/fifteenth century) as the Textile Museum fragment on the basis of the Andalusī *thuluth* script of its epigraphic bands.⁹⁵ Similar fragments are found in many museum collections,⁹⁶ hence the Burgos textile, too, stands for a type.

Like the Textile Museum fragment, the Burgos textile is woven in the lampas technique in a weft-faced tabby pattern on a satin ground, with silk used for warp and weft.⁹⁷ The cloth was woven horizontally on the loom,⁹⁸ an orientation that would have rendered the inscription more legible: ‘*izz li-mawlānā al-sultān*’ (‘Glory to Our Lord the Sultan’), a phrase repeated as often as four times per band and also found frequently in the architectural decoration of the Alhambra. The cloth was sufficiently wide to allow it to be reoriented vertically,

and once again, in its use as a Church vestment, the legibility of the inscription was no longer at issue.

The epigraphic or *tirāz* band alternates with another band nearly half its width, embellished with a horizontally-oriented pattern that consists of a rhomboid grid formed by tendrils executed in yellow thread, and filled with foliate elements in yellow, white, green and blue colours on a red ground. The two bands are separated by another, narrower band or border of red and yellow interlace on a green ground. Not merely striped, then, but more like the structure of strophes and single verses in the poetic *muwashshahāt*, the Burgos textile is organised in alternating bands of different, but proportional measurements and diverse motifs unified by the recurring inscription, as though by a monorhyme single verse or ‘strand’. The elongated cursive script in white silk stands out in contrast to the dark blue ground of the *tirāz* band, with the spaces between the letters filled with foliate motifs in red and yellow. The optical effect of the juxtaposed vibrant colours emphasises further the figure–ground relationship in the design and the double-weave technique in the material structure of the lampas. This textured effect – to the eye and to the touch alike – is similar to that produced by the superimposed geometric, floral and epigraphic grids in the stucco decoration of the walls exemplified in the *Qalahurra* of Yūsuf I and employed more generally in the architectural decoration in the Alhambra. As the walls surprise, and yet are enriched through their imaginative likening to poetry and textiles, the *muwashshah* textiles, too, surprise, but enter into lively and harmonious conversation with poetry and architecture.

5

A third and last type of *muwashshah* textiles provides a key to the understanding of the enigmatic Façade of Comares in the Cuarto Dorado and precinct as a whole. The type is represented by two large silk textiles, one preserved in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (MMA 29.22) and attributed to Nasrid production of the second half of the eighth /fourteenth century; the other in the Hispanic Society of America, New York (No. H921), of later and more uncertain date (Figures 4.11 and 4.12). (I will refer to them hereafter as the Met textile and the Hispanic Society textile, respectively.) Each has the general characteristics of the textile *muwashshah*: Andalusī production, alternating bands of diverse decorative motifs, including inscriptions, and designed for furnishings, not garments. This last point was only implied in the case of the Burgos pluvial and the Textile Museum fragment from their current state in the form of church vestments; but the Met textile and the Hispanic Society textile give clear evidence of the original dimensions: 102 cm × 36.3 cm and 237.5 cm × 152.3 cm, respectively.⁹⁹



Figure 4.11 Textile fragment, second half of the eighth/fourteenth century. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (MMA 29.22) (photograph: courtesy of Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)

Since the Hispanic Society textile preserves chequerboard headings and warp ends or fringes on its short sides, as well as both of its selvages on the long, vertical sides (the Met Textile has only one), its original width on the loom is definitive; it is often called a panel or hanging by scholars.¹⁰⁰

The two *muwashshah* textiles share important similarities in colour, composition and decorative vocabulary, and so may be seen to form part of a generic type. I will concentrate on the Met textile, whose design Cristina Partearroyo declares to be 'one of the most frequently employed and subsequently most widely distributed [of the Andalusī production]'.¹⁰¹ It has stronger visual affinities to the Façade of Comares than does the Hispanic Society textile. Other scholars have noted the evidence of a textile aesthetic in the general resemblance between stucco decoration in the Alhambra and Andalusī textiles, although a detailed comparison is still wanting.¹⁰²

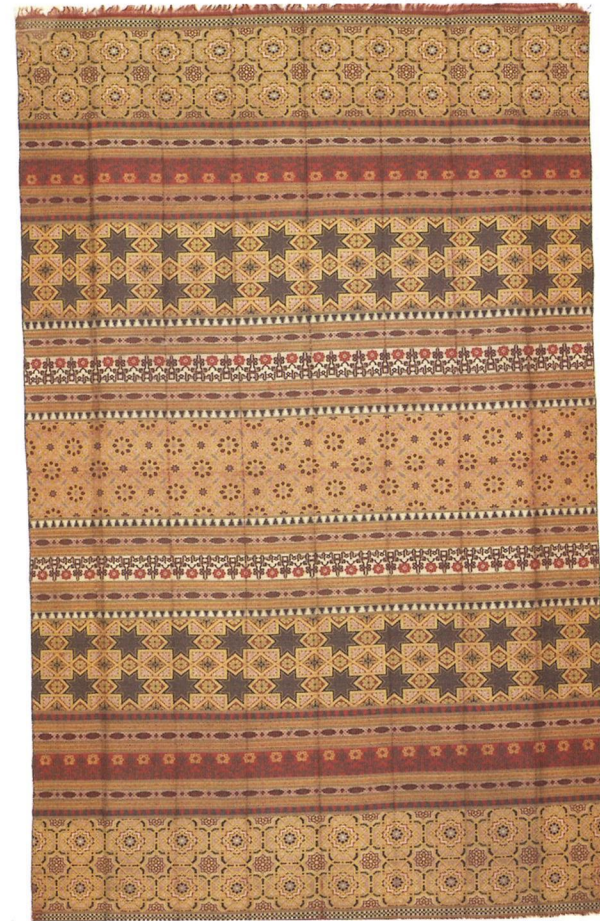


Figure 4.12 Textile panel, eighth–ninth/fourteenth–fifteenth century. Hispanic Society of America, New York (No. H921) (photograph: courtesy of Hispanic Society of America, New York)

Mackie goes as far as to assert in her discussion of Nasrid silks and their affinities with architectural decoration that: 'The primacy of the textile aesthetic in the Alhambra [decoration] has no known parallel.'¹⁰³ But the careful inventory of similar decorative motifs in both media is only a first, though necessary, step leading from *textile metaphors* to *textile architecture* – that is, in this case, from the visual harmony between the decoration of the Façade of Comares and a *muwashshah* of the Met textile type to a recognition of architectural forms enacting textile functions in the Façade of Comares as well as textile furnishings performing architectural functions in the court ceremonial of the Cuarto Dorado precinct.

This analysis requires a prefatory caveat. No textiles have ever been discovered in situ in the Alhambra, nor are there any documents that link extant textiles to particular precincts. The material

evidence is scant, but intriguing. The remains of silk threads have been discovered on nails in the *mishwār* oratory and in the lateral room that flanks the Hall of Two Sisters on the east side, both of which are interiors with profuse architectural decoration.¹⁰⁴ In consequence, the supposition of some scholars that large-scale textiles would have been used as wall hangings only in spaces where the main wall expanse remained plain – such as the rooms on the upper floor of the Palace of Comares and Palace of the Lions – must be rejected.¹⁰⁵ Textiles were not only a supplement where decorative elements were lacking in the architecture, they could also be present along with the rich decoration of the walls. As the poetic inscriptions in the *Qalahurra* of Yūsuf I suggest, the crucial issue is Ibn al-Jayyāb's *mujannas*, that is, the *relatedness* of the media.

The absence of nails and silk threads in other precincts, including the Cuarto Dorado, is not definitive proof that textile furnishings were not used in those spaces. Ropes were also used to hang textiles from permanent architectural members (columns, for instance), and the rugs and other textile furnishings that would have been moved in and out of architectural spaces, according to their use on different occasions, would have left no permanent trace. The construction of ceremonial space through a combination of permanent architecture and transient textiles is a singularly important aspect of the Alhambra in Nasrid times to be examined at length in the final chapter.

The discussion that follows here is not intended as a proof that the Met textile, or others in its group, were used in the Cuarto Dorado – though this seems likely enough. Rather, its stylistic affinities to the Façade of Comares are presented as an illustration of harmony in the beholders' experience of the *complete and perfect beauty* – in Ibn al-Haytham's terms – of the Cuarto Dorado and indeed all spaces in the Alhambra. To reiterate, then, the purpose is, first, to establish detailed links between the Façade of Comares and the Met textile (as an heuristic, rather than an historical example). The second step in the discussion moves from the harmonious visual relationship between textiles and architectural decoration to the argument for the textile function of a principal feature of the Façade of Comares. Finally, that approach will be reversed in a conjecture about the use of furnishings like the Met textile to perform architectural functions in the Cuarto Dorado.

The examination begins with a closer look at the south wall of the Cuarto Dorado, or Façade of Comares, with its decoration in carved stucco and wood, and dadoes of ceramic tile mosaic (Figure 4.13). A preliminary sketch, to be revisited in detail, will help to situate the evidence of deterioration and restoration that Fernández-Puertas was able to establish, largely on the basis of nineteenth-century prints, including those by British artists John Frederick Lewis (1833–34), Owen Jones (1842) and I. Taylor (1853), in addition to late nineteenth- early twentieth-century photographs.¹⁰⁶ The overall

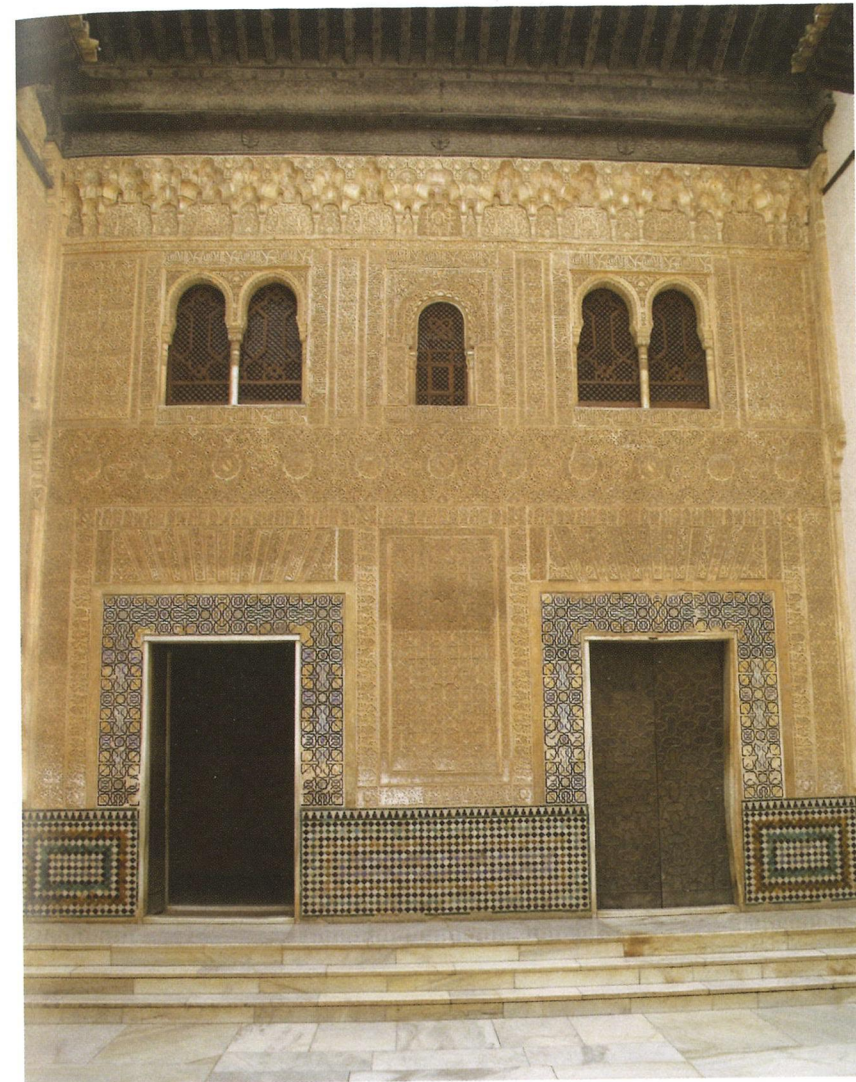


Figure 4.13 Façade of Comares, Palace of Comares, Alhambra (photograph: Olga Bush)

decorative schema, characteristic of wall elevations throughout the Alhambra, presents a grid within which rectangular shapes are arranged vertically and horizontally (Figure 4.14; hereafter, 'no.' refers to an element in Figure 4.14). A wide band of decoration (no. 14) running the width of the entire façade marks the division of the elevation into two storeys, with two doorways on the first floor and arcaded double-light windows directly above them. A smaller central window on the second floor, together with the carved stucco panel below it (no. 1), mark the vertical axis of the symmetrical composition of the façade.

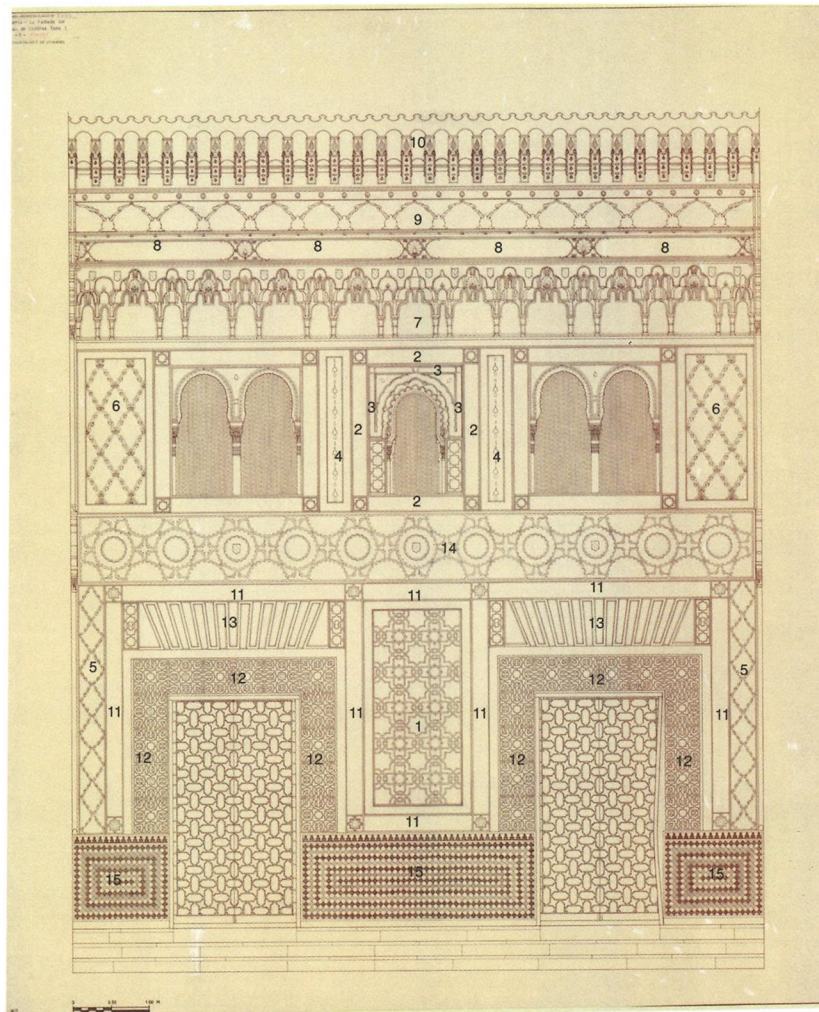


Figure 4.14 Façade of Comares, Palace of Comares, Alhambra (after drawing by M. López Reche, Archivo de la Alhambra, with added numbers for decorative areas)

Lewis' print shows the damaged and altered areas most clearly (Figure 4.15). On the upper part of the façade, balconies replaced the two double-light windows and the original plasterwork framing the perimeter of these openings was lost. The lower part also suffered heavy damage: approximately two-thirds of the carved plasterwork between the two doorways was lost, leaving a wall of exposed bricks, and the ceramic tile revetments that originally formed an *alfiz* around both doorways were largely lost as well. The dadoes of the ceramic tile mosaic disappeared altogether. Finally, the original door on the east side of the façade had been filled in with bricks. Another print by Lewis records the damage to the plasterwork in the area to



Figure 4.15 Façade of Comares, Palace of Comares, Alhambra, John Frederick Lewis, lithograph, 1835 (private collection, Stapleton Collection/Bridgeman Images)

the left of the east side balcony, where an opening was cut in the wall to provide access to a wooden gallery on the upper floor of the patio (Figure 4.16). Both of Lewis' prints demonstrate that the rest of the carved plasterwork in the upper part of the façade remained intact, including the area around the central window.

The consolidation and restoration of the plasterwork and the dadoes of ceramic tiles was begun by Rafael Contreras no later than

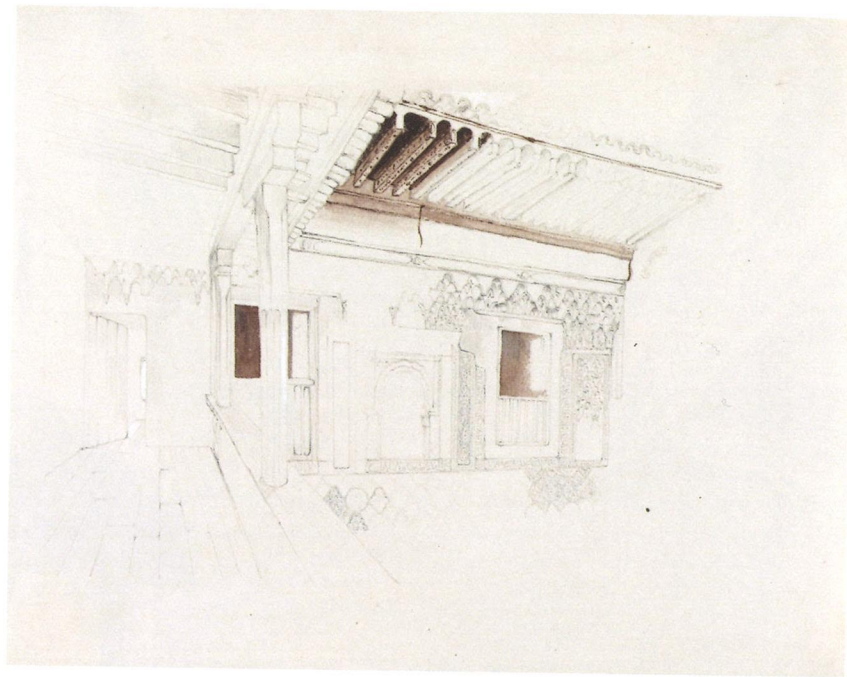


Figure 4.16 *Cuarto Dorado precinct, Alhambra, John Frederick Lewis, drawing, 1833–4, Victoria and Albert Museum, London (photograph: courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum, London)*

1875 and was completed by his son, Mariano Contreras by 1892.¹⁰⁷ A photograph of the façade taken by J. Laurent some time before 1875 records the initial stage of the restoration work. By then the bricks had been removed from the doorway on the east, and the walls both between and flanking the two doorways had been plastered (Figure 4.17). The photograph also shows that a much larger expanse of the central panel of carved stucco between the doorways had been preserved than appeared in Lewis' print.

Fernández-Puertas has determined that the following elements of the upper part of the elevation are the result of restoration work: segments of the epigraphic band that forms a frame around the perimeter of the two double-light windows; areas in the long rectangular panel of carved plaster flanking the double-light window on the east; and, most likely, an area of the *muqarnas* cornice above this panel. The original plasterwork and the *alfiz* of ceramic tiles around both doorways were preserved to a level slightly below the doors' lintel, and when the Contreras replicated the design for the missing, vertical portions of the frame, they did so in stucco, making visible the distinction between restoration and original.¹⁰⁸ They also covered the remaining expanses of the lower walls with simple dados of square ceramic tiles rotated 45 degrees to create an overall rhomboid pattern.¹⁰⁹

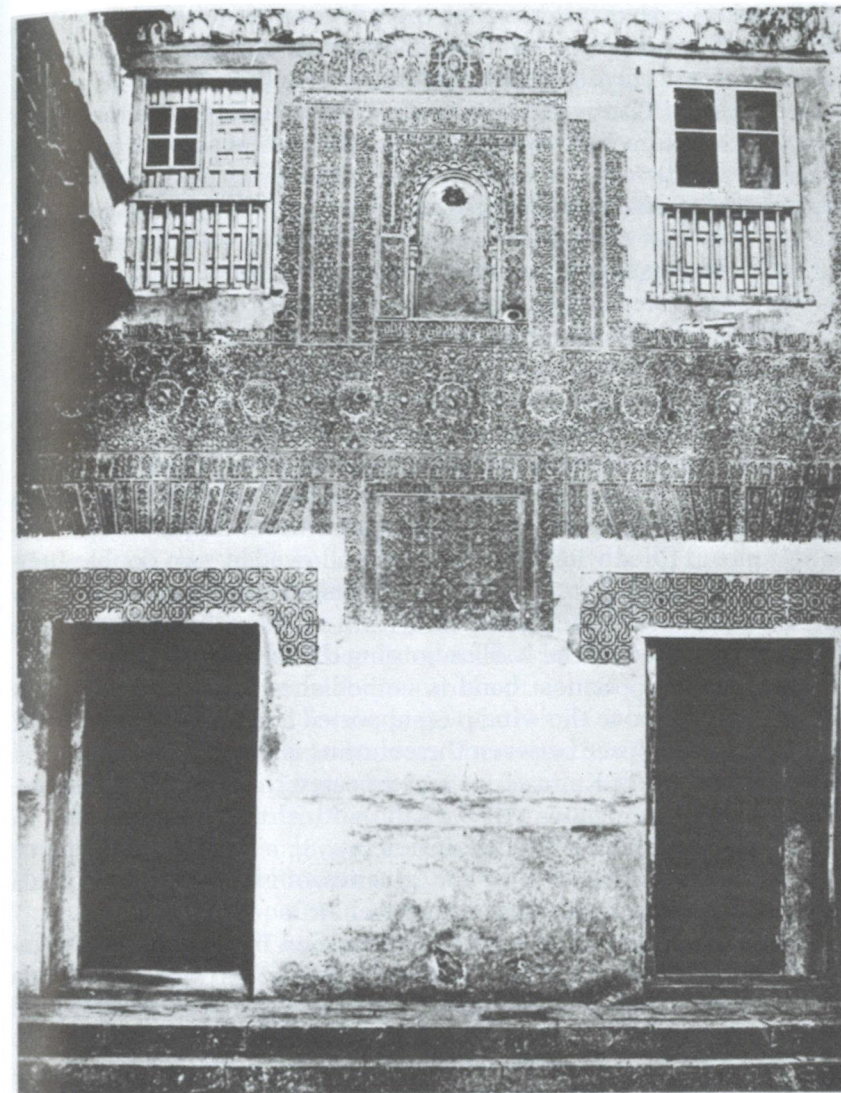


Figure 4.17 *Façade of Comares, Palace of Comares, Alhambra, J. Laurent, photograph before 1875 (photograph: Archivo de la Alhambra)*

With a clearer view of the original stylistic features of the Façade of Comares in mind, it is now possible to pursue an analysis in conjunction with *muwashshah* textiles, such as the Met textile. The reading of the architectural decoration as a textile metaphor proceeds from the fundamental feature of all *muwashshah* types, namely, the overall organisation of the decorative composition into a pattern of alternating bands (Figure 4.14). Starting with the first storey, band one includes the doors, each framed by its own wide *alfiz* of ceramic tile mosaic with interlace (no. 12), and the central panel

of carved stucco (no. 1) between them. A common *alfiz* (no. 11), in which Kufic inscriptions in carved stucco repeat the Nasrid motto, surmounts and surrounds the elements of the first storey, forming a coherent unit. The extensions of the elongated letters *lam* and *alif* in the inscription join to minute polylobed arches above and form an arcade, while the voussoirs of the lintel above the doors (no. 13), carved with foliate motifs, visually extend the height of the doorways. The lower part of the wall is embellished with the dadoes of ceramic tile mosaics (no. 15) made by the Contreras.

The second area is the narrow, central band (no. 14) that indicates the division of the elevation into two storeys. It is decorated with large polylobed medallions filled with radiating stars and foliate elements, three of which (including the one in the middle) contain the Nasrid shield.

The third band corresponds to the elevation of the upper storey. The central window is located on the central vertical axis and is aligned with the central stucco panel below. It is flanked by narrow panels (no. 4) filled with foliate motifs, followed by two double-light windows, flanked in turn by larger rectangular panels (no. 6) decorated with foliate elements and set within a lozenge grid that extends from the windows to the walls adjoining the façade.

The fourth, uppermost band is embellished with the *muqarnas* cornice (no. 7) above the windows supported by a minute colonnade. The arcade-like space between the columns is filled with the Nasrid motto, executed in Kufic script and repeated throughout this space. The cornice is then crowned by a band with elongated cartouches in carved wood with a poetic inscription (no. 8), a band with an arcade formed by foliations (no. 9), and a series of richly carved corbels (no. 10) that support the projecting eave.

The elements of the elevation are unified by proportional relations, as has already been demonstrated. The proportionality extends to smaller decorative elements as well. For example, the rhomboid grids in the lateral panels in the first and third horizontal bands (nos 5 and 6) are proportionally scaled, where the ratio of the heights of their units (the individual lozenge shapes) is equal to the ratio of their widths. But it is not proportionality alone that unifies the design. Rather, harmonious relationships also prevail between decorative elements in different bands. The shared form of the rhomboid grids filled with arabesques in these panels is as important to the unifying impact of the design as the proportional relation between them. The similar placement of each panel at the sides of their respective horizontal bands adds to that harmony by framing the elevation on the two floors. Again, the *muqarnas*-like profile of the arcade in the *alfiz* of the lower elevation (no. 11) echoes the projecting *muqarnas* cornice (no. 7) above the second storey, a congruity further strengthened by the use of Kufic inscriptions in both of these elements.

The size of the Met textile, the delicacy of the thin weave of the silk and the fine state of preservation together suggest that it would have served as a curtain or wall hanging (Figure 4.11). In that vertical orientation, scholars concur in reading the bands of the textile from top to bottom as they appear in the figure, on the basis of what is already an implicit (sometimes explicit) comparison with architectural decoration in the Alhambra. The alternation of dominant and subordinate bands in the Met textile, distinguished by the scale of the decorative elements and the colours employed, offers a striking visual resemblance to the predominance of bands one and three of the Façade of Comares, which stand out for the openings of doors and windows.

The first and third areas of the Met textile, then, are almost identical in design, being composed of a series of bands of merlons, interlace, and the repeated inscription *al-ghibṭa* (beatitude), and cartouches filled with *naskhi* inscriptions that read *al-yumn wa'l-iqbāl* (happiness and prosperity). It is the particularities of the Kufic script that have been the main basis for dating the textile to the second half of the eighth/fourteenth century, during the reign of Muḥammad V.¹¹⁰

The second and fourth bands are related by their use of geometric motifs, but distinctive in their initial optical effects. In the second band, yellow interlace forms large quatrefoils with a small white eight-pointed star at their centres. These quatrefoils are arranged in staggered rows with large eight-pointed stars with a dotted white border; the star, in turn, has three other stars inscribed within it, progressively decreasing in size. The geometric design in the fourth band is formed by yellow interlace as well, accentuated by the contrast of black eight-pointed stars inscribed within the large white eight-pointed stars. The narrow band below it presents a chequered pattern in black and white.

On closer scrutiny, the Met textile proves to be deceptive in the apparent disjuncture between its two visually more prominent bands. As seen in the discussion of the dadoes of ceramic tile mosaic in Chapter 1, differences in the use of colour deliberately mask similarities in the geometric design. The geometric pattern of bands two and four are both based on the same figure, known as the *lazo* of 8, which is 'a pattern based on an octagonal grid or radiating from an eight-pointed star'; in this case, the design is generated by an eight-pointed star.¹¹¹ The *lazo* of 8 and the large scale of the quatrefoils are made easily discernible in the decoration of the upper band, thanks to the luminous yellow of the interlace, especially as contrasted against the surrounding darker areas of red, green and black, or the light areas in white. In the lower band, the central, white eight-pointed element is on much the same scale as the central, dark eight-pointed elements in the upper band, but the relation of the colours make that main, generating element more difficult to perceive.

The characteristic decorative elements of bands two and four and the differences between them have prompted Partearroyo to remark upon the general resemblance between that the upper area and stucco panels in the Alhambra, on the one hand, and the lower area and dadoes of ceramic tile mosaic, on the other.¹¹² Both points of resemblance may be reinforced by the more specific comparison with the Façade of Comares. In the case of band four of the Met textile and band one of the Façade of Comares, it needs be recalled that the existing state of the dadoes of ceramic tile mosaic is a nineteenth-century restoration. Nevertheless, the features of band four in the Met textile share elements with the dadoes of ceramic tile mosaic as reconstructed by the Contreras and found elsewhere in the Alhambra: the placement in the lowest, horizontal band of the composition, the exclusion of vegetal motifs, the small scale of the salient elements and the reduction in the number of colours. The relation of the Met textile to the stucco carving on the Façade of Comares is more firmly grounded in extant original elements and more precise. To recall Grabar, geometry is a mode of perception, and it would enable a beholder to recognise the relation between the two media and heighten awareness of other supporting forms of congruence.¹¹³ The staggered rows of quatrefoils and eight-pointed stars in the second band of the Met textile present a design very similar in its geometric composition to that of the central carved stucco panel between the doors (Figure 4.18). The chief difference between them lies in a greater variety of foliate motifs that fill the various geometric shapes of the carved stucco panel. Since the design in both media is based on the same geometric composition (made to be clearly visible), all elements within it are proportionate to each other: namely, the quatrefoils both in the textile and on the stucco panel are twice as large as the stars. The relationship between the scale in the design of the stucco panel to that of the second band of the textile corresponds to 3.5:1, that is to say, that the pattern on the whole and all of its geometric elements in the stucco panel are 3.5 times larger than the corresponding elements in this band on the textile. Once again, these resemblances do not prove that the Met textile was designed for use in the Cuarto Dorado, but attest to the ways in which textiles could be produced and perceived in proportionate and harmonious relationship to the architectural decoration in the spaces in which they appeared. All this, incidentally, increases the likelihood that the Met textile or another *muwashshah* textile in its group was in fact deployed in that space. The historical issue cannot be resolved, but the theoretical point is nonetheless strengthened. The impression of disproportion of the Façade of Comares in relation to the patio of the Cuarto Dorado would have been countered and compensated by the harmony that united the architecture and textiles with similar decorative vocabulary and proportionate designs.



Figure 4.18 Façade of Comares, detail, central panel of carved stucco, Palace of Comares, Alhambra (photograph: Olga Bush)

The complete absence of the original colours on the stucco panels of the Façade of Comares greatly diminishes the perception of relatedness to the Met textile or other extant *muwashshah* textiles, of course, but, originally, the polychromy there was surely as brilliant as elsewhere in the architectural decoration of the Alhambra. Colour would have been applied to optimise visual effects, whether to emphasise congruence or, as in the Met textile, to mask the perception of similarities, thereby demanding a more sustained contemplation to discover relatedness. As may be recalled, al-Haytham emphasised that the 'painted designs and decorations of a wall [*nuqūsh wa tazayīn*]' require concentration and contemplation, the crucial faculties in the cognitive process.¹¹⁴

If, as may well be supposed, colour was used on the Façade of Comares, as in the *Qalahurra* of Yūsuf I, such that gold was

used for the motifs on the surface of the plane to reflect light and stand out against the darker colours of the elements carved at greater depth and other background areas, then the architectural decoration would have corresponded all the more closely to the Met textile.

The various points of affinity between *muwashshah* textiles and architectural decoration in their shared decorative vocabulary, the proportional and harmonious interrelationships between alternating bands, and almost certainly the use of colour, point to an integrated aesthetic in the Cuarto Dorado and elsewhere in the Alhambra. Generally speaking, in comparison with Western medieval architecture or that of other periods and places, Nasrid buildings are characterised by structures in which the tectonic order is reduced to the elevation of walls and varied, often complex vaulting. Consequently, the decoration of architectural surfaces, especially the stucco panels and the dadoes of ceramic tile mosaics affixed to walls, is largely independent of the underlying weight-bearing and decorative architectural members. With the minimal recessions and projections of carved elements in stucco panels typical of the walls of the Alhambra, the sculptural effect of the decoration of the Façade of Comares is negligible when seen from a short distance. At closer range, however, it appears as a finely-textured surface, and would have seemed even more so with its original colour intact. From a greater distance, this large expanse displays virtually no relief. The flat, highly coloured wall would have greatly resembled a wall hanging; the links between textiles and textile-like architectural surfaces would have been patent.

6

Textile metaphors visible in the resemblance between textiles and architectural decoration point further to a crossover in the functions of these two media. The central panel of carved stucco between the twin doors of the Façade of Comares is a case in point. Its function as textile architecture depends upon the larger context of the Cuarto Dorado as a ceremonial space, which requires a reading of the epigraphic programme on the façade. Characteristically for the Alhambra, the programme includes repetitions of the Nasrid motto, Qur'ānic, votive and formulaic inscriptions in medallions and stars, cartouches and bands, and overlaying geometric and floral forms, and also a poem composed by Ibn Zamrak and inscribed on a wooden frieze just below the eaves.¹¹⁵

If the monumentality of the Façade of Comares in its small precinct has been a puzzle, the unusual architectural feature of the twin doors has been an enigma within the enigma. Scholars have resolved the issue through an interpretation of the inscriptions. The poem, along with other textual sources, has provided a key to the dating.

Ibn Zamrak names Muḥammad V as the reigning sultan and gives his *laqab*, or honorific title, *al-ghanī bi-llāh* (He who is content through the help of God), which the sultan took only after his military campaigns of Jaén, Úbeda and Baeza from September to November of 769/1367.¹¹⁶ Ibn al-Khaṭīb records in the *Ihāṭa* that a long *qaṣīda* by Ibn Zamrak referring to Muḥammad V's victory in Algeciras in 771/1369 was recited during the celebration of the *mawlid* in the Alhambra after '[Muḥammad V] finished the famous works on his doorway'.¹¹⁷ Some verses from the *qaṣīda* are inscribed in the north and south galleries of the Court of Comares. Drawing on this information and other historical facts, such as Muḥammad V's attack on the town of Osuna three days before the *mawlid* of 771/1369 and Ibn al-Khaṭīb's escape to Morocco in 774/1372, Fernández-Puertas concludes that the inauguration of the Façade of Comares took place during the *mawlid* of 772/1370.¹¹⁸ The Façade of the Comares would have been built between 769/1367 and 772/1370 – a dating that has been generally accepted.

The elucidation of the Façade's function has derived primarily from the 'Throne verse' (Qur'ān 2:255), inscribed over the central single-light window of the second storey, which concludes: 'His Throne comprises the heavens and the earth; preserving them oppresses Him not; He is All-high, the All-glorious' (Figure 4.19). As with the inscriptions of verses from *sūrah* 67, *al-Mulk* ('Dominion') in the cupola of the Hall of Comares, generally seen as corroboration of its function as a royal audience hall, James Dickie and Fernández-Puertas have taken the inscription of the 'Throne verse' on the Façade of Comares as evidence that the sultan held public audiences in the patio of the Cuarto Dorado.¹¹⁹ Much as has been discussed with respect to *sūrah* 67, inscriptions of the 'Throne verse' are a commonplace in Islamic architecture dating back to the epigraphy in the Great Mosque of Damascus (87/705) and continuing to be employed throughout the Muslim world up to the fourteenth/twentieth century in mosques, mausoleums, madrasas, city gates and cenotaphs. Yet among the more than one hundred and fifty examples compiled by Erica Cruikshank Dodd and Shereen Khairallah, the 'Throne verse' appears only twice in palaces, both in Cairo and dated 901/1496 and 1028/1619, respectively.¹²⁰ Given the rarity of the use of the 'Throne verse' in palatial settings, its inscription here in the Cuarto Dorado is noteworthy, as Dickie and Fernández-Puertas have argued. They further support their proposal that the throne stood in the patio of the Cuarto Dorado (at least on specific occasions) by pointing to the raised platform immediately preceding the façade that is reached by three steps from the marble pavement of the patio, in addition to the magnificence of the Façade of Comares itself.

These scholars' interpretation is reinforced by the presence of Ibn Zamrak's poem in the cartouches of the wooden frieze, which

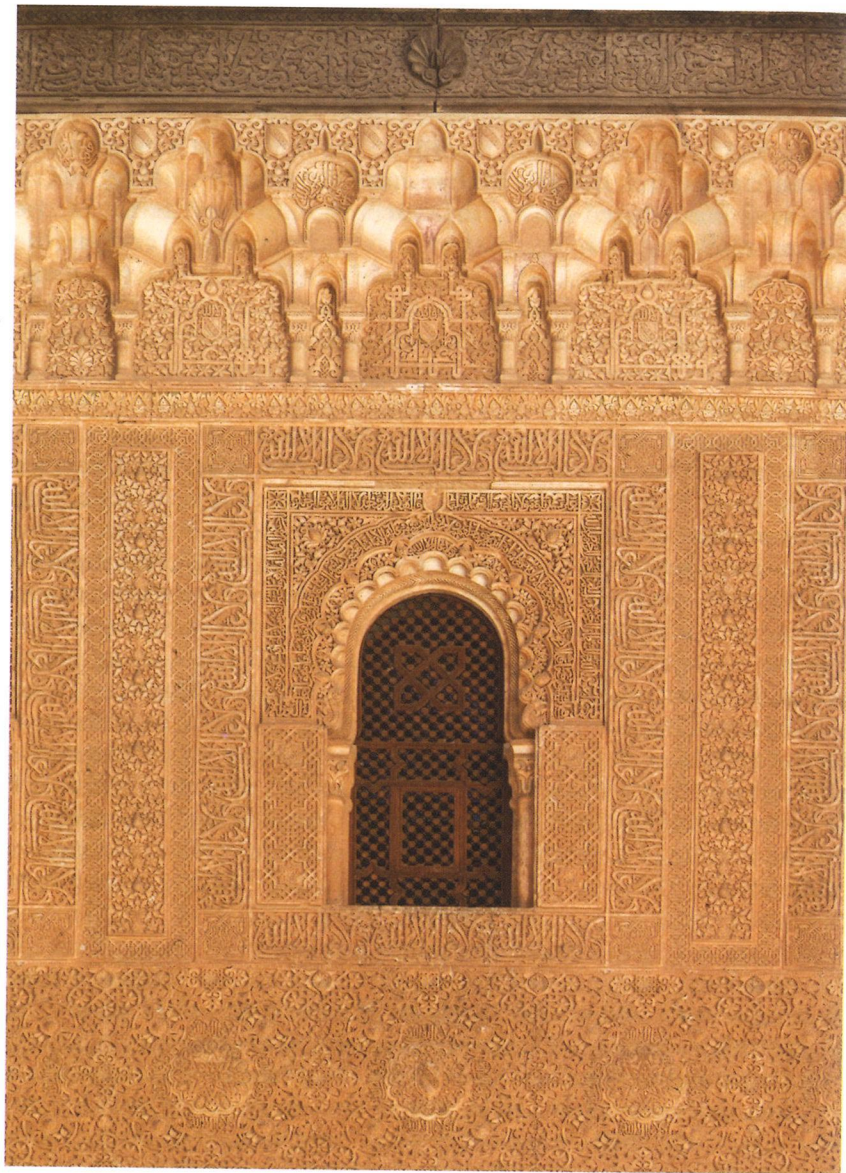


Figure 4.19 Façade of Comares, detail, central window, Palace of Comares, Alhambra (photograph: Olga Bush)

commemorates a new dawn for the Nasrids with Muḥammad V's return to the throne in 1362, and his successful military campaigns in Jaén, Úbeda, Baeza and Algeciras.¹²¹

My position is that of a crown (*tāj*) and my door (*bāb*) is a bifurcation (*mafriq*);
Al-Maghrib (the West) thinks that in me is *al-Mashriq* (the East).

He who is content through the help of God (*al-ghani bi-llāh*)
 commanded me to open the entry
 To the victory that already had been announced.
 And I expect its apparition [to give it an entrance],
 Like the horizon that introduces the dawn.
 May God embellish his works
 Like the beauty of his bearing and his character.¹²²

In its position under the eaves 9.2 m above the ground, and in cartouches 1.86 cm long, Ibn Zamrak's poem would have been illegible to the Nasrid beholder and it remains so today. The wooden frieze, now altogether devoid of colour, would have been painted originally with the background in red, floral motifs in gold leaf and epigraphy in white.¹²³ The illegibility would have been somewhat ameliorated when the original polychromy was intact, since, as seen in the *Qalaturra* of Yūsuf I, colour could be used to accentuate epigraphy. Nonetheless, here is a case quite unlike the uses of poetic inscriptions studied in previous chapters, where the texts of the poems on the niches of the Sala de la Barca and on the walls of the *Qalaturra* of Yūsuf I appeared at eye-level or slightly below and so could be easily read. Ibn Zamrak's poem under the eaves of the Façade of Comares can hardly be said to have had a direct impact on the experience of the beholder, as argued in the other cases. The underlying question addressed there still obtains nonetheless: why particular inscriptions in particular places?

The inscription of verses from *sūrah* 67 in a wooden frieze just below the cupola around the perimeter of the Hall of Comares sheds some light on the issue of legibility. The present state of preservation makes it impossible to read the text from the floor, but even when the original white pigment applied to the calligraphy helped to highlight the letters, it is unlikely that, at a height of some 12 m, the text would have been legible to the Nasrid beholder. It may have been common knowledge that it was a passage from *sūrah* 67 that adorned the wooden frieze; and in that case, cultivated Muslim beholders would have recognised the contents of the text, even if they could not read it. Whether or not beholders were aware of the contents of the inscriptions high above their heads, scholars have generally agreed that the reference in the text to the superimposition of the seven heavens is intentionally correlated to the architectural decoration of the cupola of the Hall of Comares with its seven rows of radiating stars.¹²⁴ In sum, even in this case where the beholder could not read the Qur'ānic text, the selection of this particular passage and its inscription in this particular place not only form a conscious part of the coherent design, but also provide a commentary or interpretive pathway to the understanding of the architectural decoration.

Since Ibn Zamrak's poem inscribed on the Façade of Comares is an example of prosopopoeia, the function of address, if no less virtual, is inherent in the text. It needs be emphasised that the poem refers to Muḥammad V *in the third-person* by way of his newly-won *laqab*; it speaks about the sultan, who is clearly the crown of his realm, but not in his voice. The speaking *I* is the wall on which the poem is inscribed. García Gómez must have understood Ibn Zamrak's poem in that way when he translated *mafriq* into Spanish as '*frente*' (forehead, brow): 'I am a crown on the brow of my door',¹²⁵ where the *I* likening itself to a crown is the highest band of the elevation. While agreeing with García Gómez' translation, Puerta Vilchez points out that the literal meaning of *mafriq* is 'bifurcation'.¹²⁶ Darío Cabanelas Rodríguez and Fernández-Puertas suggest that literal meaning of *mafriq* as a mimetic description of the two doorways below.¹²⁷ Yet, as seen in the use of prosopopoeia in the poetic inscriptions in the Sala de la Barca and the tropes of *badī'* poetry in the *Qalahurra* of Yūsuf I, mimetic representation may contribute to, but does not exhaust, the interpretive possibilities opened by poetic inscriptions. So, reiterating that in the case of the Façade of Comares, Ibn Zamrak's poetic inscriptions speak for the design, one might look to another bifurcation explicit in the verses: the antithesis or *muṭabbaq* enunciated as the rivalry between *al-Maghrib* and *al-Mashriq*, Muslim West and Muslim East, dating back to the Umayyad caliphate in Córdoba in the fourth/tenth century.¹²⁸ Speaking for itself, the façade claims to settle the matter inasmuch as those in the West can find 'in me', that is, in the resplendent architectural decoration, the best of what was once available only in the East.

Prosopopoeia tends to incorporate other tropes, like antithesis, in a complex figure of speech that bridges oppositions. In that sense, as it has been argued above, prosopopoeia is the threshold trope, and here in the Façade of Comares, as in the Sala de la Barca, it is also the trope of thresholds and, it may be added, doorways. The architectural analogue of the poetic bridging of the prosopopoeia is the ingenious arrangement of the *alfiz*. Viewed in isolation, either door might be said to have its own wide *alfiz* of ceramic tile mosaic decorated with interlace and bearing the repeated Nasrid motto in Kufic script (Figure 4.14, no. 12), as would be the more common design, whereby a door, standing alone, is given special emphasis in the decoration of an elevation. But here in the Cuarto Dorado, the unusual structure of the twin doors called for an unusual artistic solution: the *alfiz* (Figure 4.14, no. 11) over each doorway extends downward and frames the central panel of carved stucco. What may appear as an opposition between the opening to the east and the opening to the west on the south wall is mediated subtly by the double *alfiz* to become a unified entryway – the door, *bāb*, of the poetic inscription is in the singular.

To put this otherwise, the bifurcated entry that may startle initially serves rather as an elaborate frame for the *in-between* space, which is the equivalent of an architectural caesura, or *mughassan*, in the language of *badī'* poetics in the *Qalahurra* of Yūsuf I. The prominence of this in-between space, and of the carved stucco panel that occupies it, is heightened by a peculiarity in the design. In his discussions of the proportional relations in the composition of the Façade of Comares, Fernández-Puertas suggested that the location of the doors on the plane of the wall was dictated by the dimensions of the central stucco panel (Figures 4.13, 4.14 no. 1, and 4.18), rather than the reverse, as might have been expected.¹²⁹ The poetic inscriptions, then, may help to articulate what the design of the façade represents to the beholder at eye-level. It is the stucco panel that generates the geometric design of the largest band of the decorative composition of the Façade of Comares. And it is precisely there, against the *backdrop* of that architectural caesura, that, according to Dickie and Fernández-Puertas, the throne was placed for royal audiences in the Cuarto Dorado.

Even if the hypothesis is accepted that the Cuarto Dorado was a site of royal receptions of some sort, it would remain possible that the sultan was not enthroned in front of the façade, but that he sat instead behind the single window on the central axis on the second floor. Such a 'window of appearance' is familiar since Roman times and common in the Islamic world, and, in fact, forms part of the court ceremony in a different precinct of the Alhambra to be studied in detail in the next chapter. The small size of the patio in the Cuarto Dorado would seem to speak against that conjecture, however, since the 'window of appearance' is usually a feature of a ceremonial setting in which the ruler appears before a multitude.

An inter-medial approach offers another line of inquiry and the proposal of a different kind of evidence. In the light of the compositional and decorative correlations between the Façade of Comares and Nasrid textiles, when taken as a backdrop to the throne, the central stucco panel may be seen to take up a function commonly assigned to textiles when they are used as a 'cloth of honour'.

That textile function is widely attested in European medieval and Renaissance depictions of both the Virgin Mary and enthroned kings. Among many examples, *Madonna and Child Enthroned* (Rucellai Madonna), a tempera-on-panel painting by Duccio di Buoninsegna (active 1278–1318), commissioned in 1285 for the new Church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence, the 'cloth of honour' is depicted as a sumptuous textile of vibrant colours with a pseudo-Kufic *tirāz* border (Figures 4.20 and 4.21). The painting is of special interest in that the all-over pattern of stars and quatrefoils suggests that an Andalusī textile had served as a model. Many such luxury textiles, silks especially, were imported extensively from al-Andalus to Italy in the thirteenth century.¹³⁰



Figure 4.20 Duccio di Buoninsegna, *Madonna and Child Enthroned* (Rucellai Madonna), tempera-on-panel, commissioned in 1285 for the new Church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence/Bridgeman Images)

Visual parallels in the arts of the Muslim West are wanting, but the high value of textiles in the Islamic world is certain, and there is much textual evidence documenting the related representation of honour (or prestige, *nisba*) through textiles in the tradition of the bestowal of *khil'a*, or the robe of honour. When Farrukhī Sīstānī made use of a textile metaphor in the verses cited at the start of this chapter, likening his poetry to a silken robe 'spun within my heart/And woven in my soul', historical sources indicate that he composed this text as part of his larger work to be presented to the Amīr of Chaghanian, in Khurasan, in the hope of gaining a position as a court poet.¹³¹ So when he extends the metaphor to say

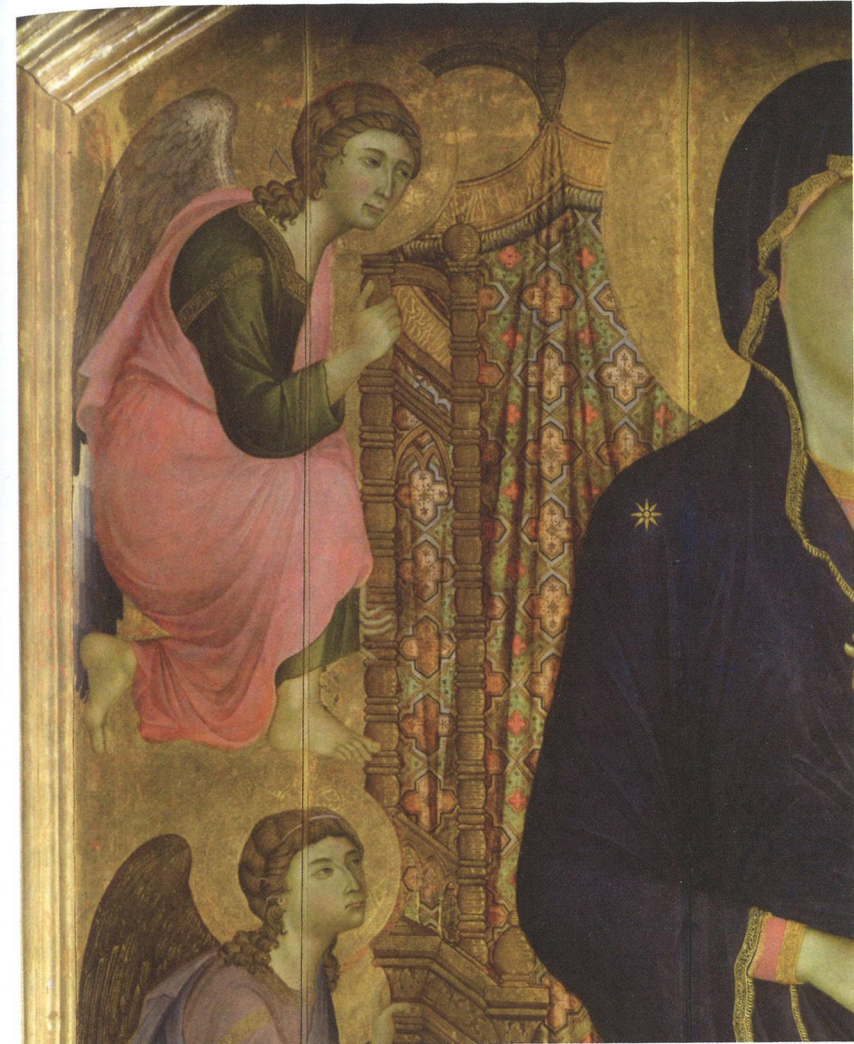


Figure 4.21 Detail, Duccio di Buoninsegna, *Madonna and Child Enthroned* (Rucellai Madonna), tempera-on-panel, commissioned in 1285 for the new Church of Santa Maria Novella, Florence (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence/Bridgeman Images)

that 'Your hand and heart gave this [robe] its shape and colour and design. / And at its head you wrote the praises of / Abu Muzaffar, Shah of Chaghanian,'¹³² then he refers at once to his poem and to a *khil'a* bearing the ruler's *tirāz*. The poet's metaphorical textile is to be exchanged, he hopes, for the literal robe of honour. Visual evidence of the granting of honour or the related use of the cloth of honour is lacking in the Muslim West, but as Duccio's *Madonna and Child Enthroned* and later Italian and Spanish paintings also show, Andalusī textiles were not used simply for adornment,

but could serve to distinguish a space of special prestige within a ritual setting, such as the place of a throne. Since the Western painterly tradition yields plentiful evidence for the status and meaning of Islamic textiles at European courts, these depictions may also serve for a better understanding of the use of these textiles in architectural spaces in the Islamic world. As the account of the Byzantine envoy to the 'Abbasid court cited earlier makes clear, European envoys to medieval Muslim and Byzantine courts brought back gifts of luxury textiles with testimonies about their function in ceremonial settings. The availability of these textiles and the first-hand knowledge of their use and potential significations aided in shaping the palatial and ceremonial spaces of European courts. Western depictions of Andalusī textiles, therefore, provide supplementary visual evidence of the arrangements and function of textiles at the Nasrid court, such as the use of a 'cloth of honour' as a backdrop to a throne. That pictorial evidence supports the suggestion that the central stucco panel in the Façade of Comares is a case of an architectural element taking on a textile function.

The crossover between media may be articulated by reference to the term *ṣadr*, literally 'front' or 'front part', in such expressions as *ṣadr al-dār* ('the one who occupies the highest position in the house') and *makānat al-ṣadr* ('first place, precedence, priority'), and so a word commonly used to refer to a leader or commander. Shelomo Dov Goitein's studies of the Geniza documents attest clearly to both an architectural and a textile meaning of the term. He cites texts in which *ṣadr* indicates a wall opposite the main entrance of a room, constituting 'its most prestigious side'.¹³³ On the other hand, among the various documents detailing textile furnishings,¹³⁴ he finds a description of a trousseau of a wealthy bride, dated to 511/1117, that lists eight Bahnasī curtains and another single Wasitī curtain, which is designated as a *ṣadr*.¹³⁵ Goitein observes with regard to the Wasitī curtain that *ṣadr* should be understood not simply as a single piece, but rather as a *central* piece, intended for the embellishment of the wall opposite the entrance of the hall or hung as a divider in front of it.¹³⁶ In other documents, a *ṣadr* curtain is listed together with its 'sidepieces', forming an ensemble of textiles,¹³⁷ most likely intended for use in a sitting hall (*majlis*). Goitein also likened the textile *ṣadr* in Muslim settings to the 'cloth of honour'.¹³⁸ Consequently, much like *tirāz*, *raqm* and *muwashshah*, the term *ṣadr* may serve as a switch-point between media, in this case, architecture and textiles.¹³⁹

The central stucco panel of the south wall of the patio of the Cuarto Dorado (Figures 4.13 and 4.18) is a *ṣadr* in its twofold meaning. It is an element of the architectural decoration made to look like a luxury textile in itself within an overall design that makes the wall as a whole into a visual metaphor for *muwashshah*

textiles. And it is designed to function like a textile, an architectural cloth of honour that provides a visual backdrop to distinguish the part of the wall opposite the entryway of the petitioners seeking audience with the sultan.

7

I close this study of the Cuarto Dorado with a further proposal – only a conjecture, in the absence of documentary or archaeological evidence, and yet a logical extension of the links between textiles and architecture. The theoretical premise remains that the value attached to proportionality – long since established by Fernández-Puertas – would have been linked to harmony, according to Ibn al-Haytham's optics, in the design of architectural space in the Alhambra.

Both proportionality and harmony have been noted in the design of a single textile, like the Burgos pluvial or the Met textile. The same elements would have governed the interrelationship between and deployment of complete sets of furnishings, such as mentioned in the *Kitāb al-Hadāyā* and the Geniza documents.¹⁴⁰ There is evidence of immense loom lengths for medieval Muslim textile production: Ja'far ibn 'Ali al-Dimaṣḥqī comments that silk cloth with gold brocade, that is, *dībāj*, was most suitable for the manufacture of furnishings, especially wall hangings, at the length of 200 *shibr* or 42 m.¹⁴¹ Assuming that there was a certain uniformity of weave, colour and even design in a single loom length of cloth, that manufacturing capacity would have facilitated the creation of highly coherent, if not identical, ensembles. Numerous textile fragments, identical or nearly identical to the Met textile in dimensions as well as design, have been preserved in various collections.¹⁴² There are many fragments either identical or similar in design to the Hispanic Society textile, but considerably smaller, as well.¹⁴³ It is likely that examples in both groups of textiles were made for complete sets of furnishings, possibly cut from the same cloth. The affinities between the Met and Hispanic Society textiles are strong with regard to composition, colours and decorative motifs. They share the interlace of quatrefoils and stars, cartouches with *naskhi* epigraphy, knotted Kufic epigraphy (both types containing the same inscriptions), merlons in alternating colours, and, finally, a band with interlace and large eight-pointed stars. If examples from both groups of textiles were used in the same space, they would have constituted a coherent set, too. Thus, even when not cut, literally, from the same cloth, sets of furnishings would have been *perfect* – still in Ibn al-Haytham's sense – if they exhibited proportional and harmonious designs. Such perfect sets of furnishings would have been on hand in the Nasrid Alhambra, including the Cuarto Dorado.

A further step in this line of thinking would be to propose that the resemblances between the design of textiles and architectural decoration, such as *muwashshah* textiles of the Met textile type and the design of the south wall of the Cuarto Dorado, were more than a metaphor. Textiles in harmony with each other, and also in harmony with the decoration of the walls, could have been brought into the Cuarto Dorado, particularly for court ceremonies like the audience before the sultan, seated on his throne against his architectural version of a cloth of honour. Departing from that further conjecture, I offer a hypothetical reconstruction: not only were there architectural elements that functioned like textiles, but also large-scale textiles would have had architectural functions, controlling movement and sight lines in the Cuarto Dorado.

The conjecture may be set within the context of a firmly established understanding of another, minor puzzle in the architecture of the south wall of the patio. The secondary axes of symmetry running through the centre of each of the twin doorways were displaced by some 7.5 cm further from the central vertical axis of the wall.¹⁴⁴ Far from an error in design, the displacement was a correction of an error of sight, such as already described by Vitruvius in his *De Architectura*, by which the doorways would have appeared as flattened, owing precisely to the apparent disproportion of the decoration of the Façade of Comares with respect to the length of the patio.¹⁴⁵

A second error of sight, described by Ibn al-Haytham but heretofore undetected by scholars, would have impinged upon the ceremonial protocol in the Cuarto Dorado, were it to have appeared unfurnished, as it is today, on the occasion of royal audiences. I refer to the blurry distortions of peripheral vision.¹⁴⁶ The main entrance to the patio, facing its architectural *şadr*, would have been on the central axis of the patio. Petitioners would have made their approach to the throne by leaving the central doorway of the hall on the north side, the Cuarto Dorado proper, which, as noted, probably served as a waiting room,¹⁴⁷ and then passing under the central arch of the portico. The only way for petitioners to gain access to that hall would have been through the small patio that once stood north of the *mishwār* – not through the *mishwār* proper, as visitors do today¹⁴⁸ – entering the Cuarto Dorado precinct by stepping directly under the arcade of the portico from a door on the west side (Figure 4.22). (Petitioners would not have used either of the twin doors in the south wall, since that would have meant either entering from the treasury or past the guards, and, in any event, passing behind the back of the enthroned sultan!) On that itinerary, also followed by today's tourists, the *şadr*, throne and sultan would all have been visible, obliquely and with the attendant distortions of the corresponding error of sight, from the moment the petitioners stepped into the first

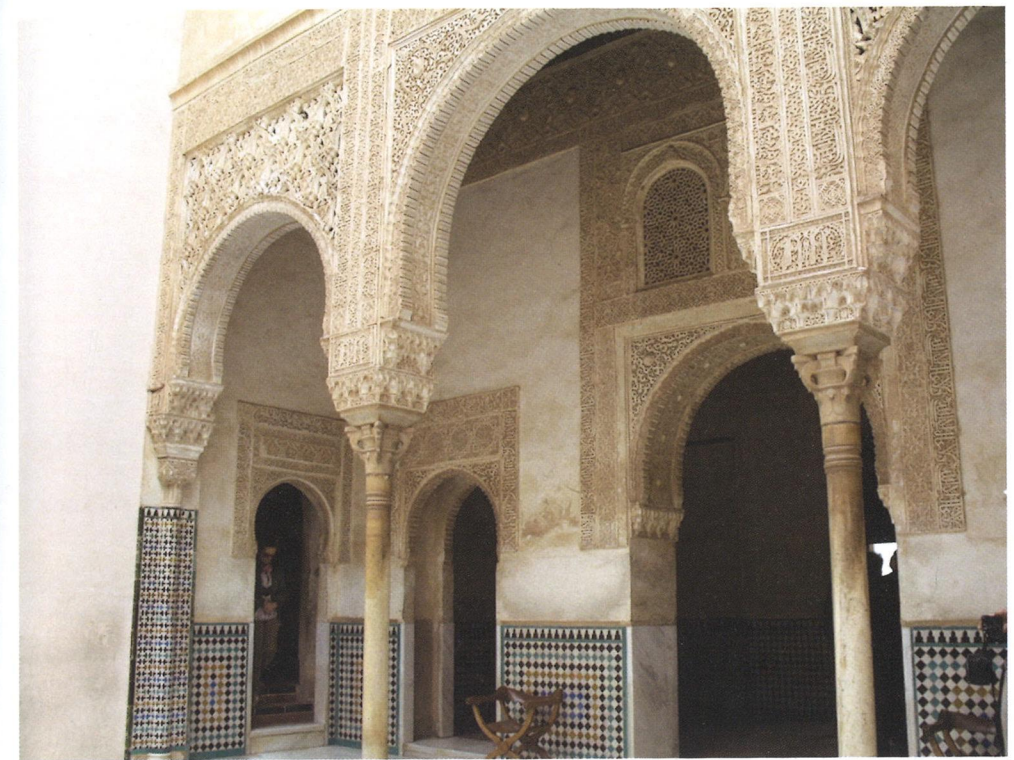


Figure 4.22 Patio of the Cuarto Dorado precinct, north side, with the entrance on the west end from the patio of the *mishwār*, Palace of Comares, Alhambra (photograph: Olga Bush)

lateral bay of the portico, nearest the *mishwār*. Neither optics nor court protocol would have allowed for petitioners to have such an initial view – distorting and so diminishing, just where ceremonial sets out to establish and represent power through forms of visual exaltation.

Where the permanent architecture of columns and bays would have created an error of sight interfering with the ceremonial approach to the throne, the transitory architecture of textiles in the form of large curtains might well have been employed to control sight lines and direct the movement of the petitioners. It seems likely that curtains would have been hung between the columns of the portico, as seen already in the mosaics of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna (500–25). Visual evidence from the nearby court of Alfonso X of Castile and León (r. 1252–84) illustrates a related arrangement, with the king enthroned within an arcaded portico embellished with sumptuous curtains (Figure 4.23).¹⁴⁹ Similarly, in his *Rusūm dār al-khilāfa* (*The Rules and Regulations of the Abbasid Court*), Hilāl al-Şābi' (359–448/969–1056) gives an account of a court audience in a courtyard where al-Ṭā'i' (r. 363–81/974–91),



Figure 4.23 King Alfonso X, Cantigas de Santa María, *El Códice Rico*, fol. 5r, vellum, 1275–1300, Biblioteca Monasterio del Escorial, Madrid (Biblioteca Monasterio del Escorial, Madrid, Spain/Bridgeman Images)

the enthroned caliph, was seated behind a curtain hung 'on the middle columns' and the 'ropes were connected to all the columns in the courtyard' in order 'to prevent commotion, inconvenience, mingling, and overcrowding, and to enable the caliph to see and recognise from afar whoever is admitted. This contributes to the dignity of the audience and makes it more awe-inspiring.¹⁵⁰ Dating back at least to the time of the Umayyads of Syria, who employed a 'master of the curtain' (*ṣāhib al-sitr*) at court, the use of curtains as a spatial and ceremonial device that concealed the ruler from the beholder's gaze has persisted into the modern period.¹⁵¹ A photograph of an audience held by the Qajar ruler, Nāsir al-Dīn Shāh (1846–96) at Gulistan Palace in Tehran, shows an enormous curtain opened over the portico to reveal the throne, and so gives much later evidence of the combination of textiles and architectural elements recorded by Hilāl al-Ṣābi' (Figure 4.24).

If the hypothesis of the Façade of Comares as a backdrop for the throne in royal audiences is admitted, then the precinct of the Cuarto Dorado might well be inserted into that long historical trajectory, not only as a site where architectural decoration resembles textiles and textiles join architectural decoration in the creation of a harmonious space, but also where architectural decoration took on textile functions and textiles functioned like architecture. In both of

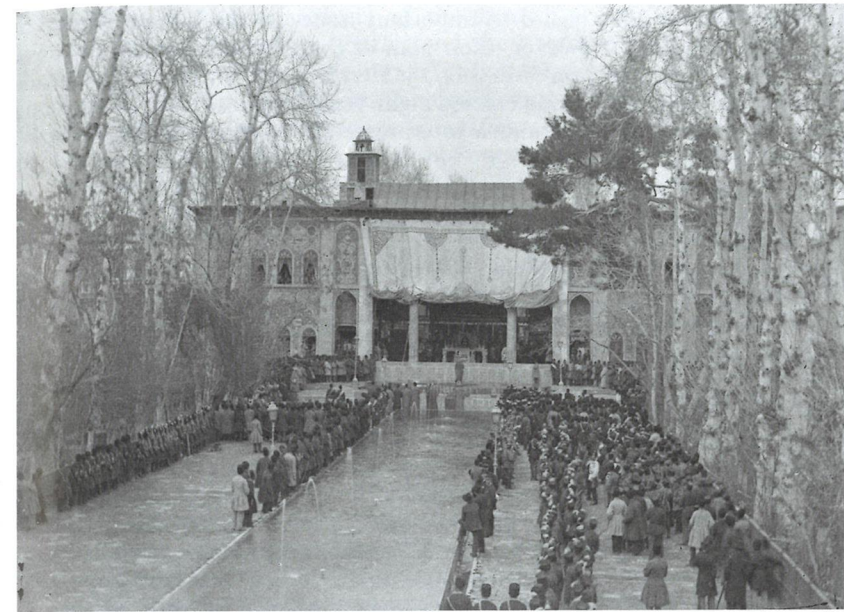


Figure 4.24 Audience by Nāsir al-Dīn Shāh at Gulistan Palace Complex, Tehran, Iran, late nineteenth century (Myron Bement Smith Collection: Antoin Sevruguin Photographs. Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. Gift of Katherine Dennis Smith, 1973–1985, FSA A.4 2.12.GN.51.04)

these latter senses, a new, hybrid inter-medial term may be in order: *textile architecture*.

Notes

1. Quoted in Jerome W. Clinton, 'Image and Metaphor: Textiles in Persian Poetry', in Carol Bier (ed.), *Woven from the Soul, Spun from the Heart. Textile Arts of Safavid and Qajar Iran (16th–19th Centuries)* (Washington: The Textile Museum, 1987), p. 8.
2. The patio was incorporated into the *mishwār*, as seen in the plan made around 1530 by Pedro Machuca. See Antonio Fernández-Puertas, *La fachada del Palacio de Comares* (Granada: Patronato de la Alhambra, 1980), p. 11; Angel C. López López and Antonio Orihuela Uzal, 'Una nueva interpretación del texto de Ibn al-Jatīb sobre la Alhambra en 1362', *Cuadernos de la Alhambra*, 26 (1990), p. 144.
3. Bermúdez Pareja, 'Crónica de la Alhambra'; Puerta Vílchez, *Leer la Alhambra*, p. 64.
4. Orihuela Uzal, *Casas y palacios*, p. 86.
5. On the work of the Contreras in this precinct, especially on the courtyard, see Orihuela Uzal, 'La conservación de alicatados', pp. 137–41.
6. On the basis of the findings of their archaeological excavations in the large area that precedes the *mishwār* and their reading anew of a historical text, López López and Orihuela Uzal have proposed new

- hypotheses with regard to important issues in the historiography of the Alhambra. However, their plan of the Alhambra as they believe it would have appeared in 764/1362 erroneously includes the Façade of Comares, which was erected eight years later. See López López and Orihuela Uzal, 'Una nueva interpretación del texto de Ibn al-Jaṭīb', pp. 124–5.
7. Ibid., pp. 120–5.
 8. Fernández-Puertas, *La fachada*, pp. 16–18.
 9. Grabar, *The Alhambra*, p. 57.
 10. García Gómez' proposition was based solely on the examination of historical documents written in the 1530s when work was already well underway on the palace built for Charles V. See García Gómez, *Foco de antigua luz*, pp. 177–210.
 11. The principal discussion of the Cuarto Dorado precinct is Fernández-Puertas, *La fachada*. In addition, see Carlos Vélchez Vélchez, 'Sobre la supuesta fachada meridional del Palacio de Comares', *Cuadernos de Arte de la Universidad de Granada* 22 (1986): 9–21; and also the following studies by Darío Cabanelas Rodríguez: 'Fachada de Comares y la llamada "Puerta de la Casa Real" en la Alhambra', *Cuadernos de la Alhambra* 27 (1991): 103–18; 'Dos tesis aparentemente innovadoras en la historia de la Alhambra', *Boletín de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de Granada* 2 (1991): 37–48; 'Cronología de edificaciones de Muhammad V en la Alhambra', in *Realidad y símbolo de Granada* (Bilbao: Banco Bilbao Vizcaya, 1992), pp. 189–202.
 12. Ibn al-Haytham, *The Optics*, I, p. 205.
 13. Ibid. On Ibn al-Haytham's concepts of harmony (*i'tilāf*) and proportional relations (*tanāsub*), see Puerta Vélchez, *Historia del pensamiento estético árabe*, pp. 707–11.
 14. See *ibid.*, pp. 401–6.
 15. The demonstration is hampered by the fact that Fernández-Puertas did not publish the measurements of the Façade of Comares, and he points out that there is a slight variance between the measurements of the width of the two doors in the drawing to scale by M. López Reche that he published (reproduced here as Figure 4.6).
 16. Quoted in Clinton, 'Image and Metaphor', p. 10.
 17. See Puerta Vélchez, *Historia del pensamiento estético árabe*, pp. 391–2.
 18. See Lisa Golombek, 'The Draped Universe of Islam', in Priscilla P. Soucek (ed.), *Content and Context of Visual Art in the Islamic World* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988), pp. 25–50. For an overview of Islamic textiles, see Patricia Baker, *Islamic Textiles* (London: British Museum Press, 1995).
 19. Louise W. Mackie, *Symbols of Power: Luxury Textiles from Islamic Lands, 7th–21st Century* (Cleveland, OH: Cleveland Museum of Art, 2015), pp. 18–34, as well as relevant discussions in chapters dedicated to particular chronological periods and dynasties. In her use of the expression 'textile aesthetic', Mackie follows Fernández-Puertas, *The Alhambra*, pp. 89–90; Purificación Marinetto Sánchez, 'El uso de tejido y su decoración en los palacios de la Alhambra', in Amparo López Redondo and Purificación Marinetto Sánchez (eds), *A la luz de la seda. Catálogo de la colección de tejidos nazaríes del Museo Lázaro Galdiano y el Museo de la Alhambra* (Madrid and Granada: Museo Lázaro Galdiano, Museo de la Alhambra and TF Editores, 2012), pp. 25–30.

20. For a sustained analysis of the furnishings mentioned in *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, including textiles and their terminology, see Elisa Mesa Fernández, *El lenguaje de la indumentaria. Tejidos y vestiduras en el Kitāb al-Aghānī de Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahānī* (Madrid: Concejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2008), pp. 143–88. See also the comprehensive work of R. B. Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles. Materials for a History up to the Mongol Conquest* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1972).
21. Shelomo Dov Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, vol. 4: *Daily Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 105–50, 297–309, 328–31. See also, Yedida K. Stillman, 'Textiles and Patterns Come to Life through the Cairo Geniza', in Muḥammad 'Abbās Muḥammad Salīm (ed.), *Islamische Textilkunst des Mittelalters: Aktuelle Probleme* (Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 1997), pp. 35–54.
22. Stillman indicates that nearly half of the silk furnishings listed in the bridal trousseau lists were made of Tabarī silk, which was heavy and so suitable for furnishings, in 'Textiles and Patterns', p. 41.
23. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 4, pp. 107–10; Stillman, 'Textiles and Patterns', p. 41.
24. Al-Maqqarī, *Analectes sur l'histoire et la littérature des arabes en Espagne*, ed. R. Dozy and others (Leiden, 1855–61), vol. 2, p. 148, and vol. 1, p. 95, cited in Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles*, pp. 169, 172.
25. For historical sources on textile production in al-Andalus, see Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles*, pp. 165–76, esp. pp. 165, 172.
26. For an examination of historical documents that pertain to silk markets under royal control in Granada, Málaga and Almería and their administration during the Nasrid and post-Nasrid periods, see, for instance, Leopoldo Torres Balbás, 'Alcaicerías', *Al-Andalus* 14 (1949): 431–41; José Enrique López de Coca Castañer, 'La seda en el reino de Granada (siglos XV y XVI)', in *España y Portugal en las rutas de la seda* (Barcelona: Universidad de Barcelona, 1996), pp. 33–57. Among studies on the silk market in Granada, see Manuel Garzón Pareja, 'Una dependencia de la Alhambra: la alcaicería', *Cuadernos de la Alhambra* 8 (1972): 65–76; Esther Galera Mendoza and Rafael López Guzmán, *Arquitectura, mercado y ciudad: Granada a mediados del siglo XVI* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2003), pp. 73–88.
27. Restorations directed by José Contreras took place after the silk market was severely damaged in a fire on 20 July 1843.
28. See María Judith Feliciano, 'Muslim Shrouds for Christian Kings? A Reassessment of Andalusī Textiles in Thirteenth-Century Castilian Life and Ritual', in Cynthia Robinson and Leyla Rouhi (eds), *Under the Influence: Questioning the Comparative in Medieval Castile* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 101–32.
29. See, for instance, Dodds et al., *The Arts of Intimacy*.
30. Feliciano, 'Muslim Shrouds'. Feliciano's proposition appears to be independently seconded by Spanish scholars. Many textiles are attributed to Andalusī manufacture in the catalogue that accompanied an exhibition of medieval textiles from the Monasterio de las Huelgas (Burgos): *Vestiduras ricas. El Monasterio de las Huelgas y su época 1170–1340, del 15 de marzo al 19 de junio de 2005, Palacio Real de Madrid* (Madrid: Patrimonio Nacional, 2005).

31. For numerous examples of such re-use of textiles made during the pre-Nasrid and Nasrid periods, see Florence Lewis May, *Silk Textiles of Spain* (New York: Hispanic Society of America, 1957); Feliciano, 'Muslim Shrouds'; and *Vestiduras ricas*.
32. Yedida K. Stillman and Paula Sanders, 'Tirāz', *El2*, vol. 10, pp. 534–8.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibn al-Zubayr, *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, p. 237. In her notes to this passage al-Qaddūmī highlights that the phrase *fi kḥayt wāhid* (literally, 'of the same yarn') can be understood as 'a uniform set of furnishings from the same fabric', see pp. 396–7.
35. Ibid., pp. 150–3.
36. Ibid., p. 151.
37. The mission was recorded by the historian of the Hafsīd dynasty Abū Zakariya' Yahyā Ibn Khaldūn (d. 781/1379). See *Histoire des Beni Abd el-Wad rois de Tlemcen jusqu'au règne d'Abou Hammou Mousa II par Abou Zakaria Yahia Ibn Khaldoun*, ed. and trans. Alfred Bel (Algiers: Imprimerie Orientale Pierre Fontana, 1903), vol. 1, p. 370.
38. On inscribed poetry and poetic recitations in the context of gift exchange, see Bush, 'Poetic Inscriptions and Gift Exchange'.
39. These verses are taken from a *qaṣīda* in Ibn Khaldūn, *Histoire des Beni Abd el-Wad*, vol. 1, p. 370.
40. Ibid.
41. Puerta Vílchez, *Leer la Alhambra*, pp. 120, 231–4.
42. García Gómez, *Poemas árabes*, p. 45.
43. Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles*, pp. 165–76.
44. In all but one of the examples found in Ibn al-Zubayr, *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, al-Qaddūmī interprets the term as richly coloured cloth, and once as a richly coloured cloth with gold embroidery. Serjeant cites numerous textual sources that refer to this term in *Islamic Textiles*, indices, pp. 262–3. He prefers to translate it generally as a 'figured silk', and, with regard to the textile production of Yemen, as 'variegated' and/or embroidered silk, but he does not give a more precise definition.
45. Germán Navarro Espinach, 'El comercio de telas entre Oriente y Occidente (1190–1340)', in *Vestiduras ricas*, pp. 89–106.
46. García Gómez, *Poemas árabes*, p. 45; Puerta Vílchez, *Leer la Alhambra*, p. 120.
47. María Jesús Rubiera Mata, *Ibn al-Yayyāb. El otro poeta de la Alhambra* (Granada: Patronato de la Alhambra y Generalife, 1994), p. 114. For the complete text of this poem in Arabic and my translation into English, see Appendix.
48. Ibn al-Zubayr, *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, p. 374, n. 4.
49. The alternative meanings, such as 'striped' or 'inscribed', of the adjective or adjectival phrase based on this root, were noted by Serjeant with regard to a description of an early Umayyad carpet as '*firāsh marqūm maṭmum*', early Umayyad silks (*kḥazz raqm*) and the textiles of al-Andalus. See Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles*, pp. 65, 67, 168, 172, respectively. Edward William Lane noted that *raqm* is related to a striped cloth or garment termed '*washī*'. See Edward William Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (London: Williams & Norgate, 2003), pt. 3, pp. 1138–9.
50. Knysh, 'Ibn al-Khaṭīb', p. 370, n. 7. Among recent studies on Ibn al-Khaṭīb's literary oeuvre, see Celia del Moral and Fernando Velázquez

- Bazanta (eds), *Ibn al-Jaṭīb y su tiempo* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2012).
51. English *text* derives from Latin *textus*, from *texere*, to weave, related to Greek *tekhnē*, 'art, skill, craft, method, system'. Persian *taraz*, 'adornment' or 'embellishment', and in its corresponding verb form meaning both 'to weave' and 'to compose poetry', cross into Arabic as a loan word, *tirāz*. Arabic *taraza*, whose meanings in its Form II include 'to embroider' and 'to embellish a story', can mean both to compose poetry and to weave. The original meaning of *tirāz*, 'embroidery' or 'decorative work', in the early centuries of Islam was later extended to include a robe of honour, embellished with a *tirāz*, and thence by metonymy, to the ruler's workshop where such fabrics and garments were produced. See Stillman and Sanders, 'Tirāz', p. 534. Nasser Rabat has proposed that, in reference to inscriptions on architecture, the term *tirāz* was borrowed from textiles, and that the use of this term in the context of architecture should be dated to the Fatimid period, sometime between the fourth/tenth and sixth/twelfth century. See Nasser Rabat, 'Tirāz, 3', *El2* (Leiden: Brill), vol. 10, p. 538. Meisami has noted, however, that this term was used already in a poem by 'Unṣurī (d. after 422/1031–32) describing the fifth/eleventh-century Ghaznavid palace and its epigraphy. 'Unṣurī compares the *tirāz* on the walls with the *tirāz* of the kings' robes. This early example of such a use of the term in Persian poetry, she argues, was not likely to have been a borrowing from the Fatimids. See Julie Scott Meisami, 'Palaces and Paradises: Palace Description in Medieval Persian Poetry', in Oleg Grabar and Cynthia Robinson (eds), *Islamic Art and Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 2001), p. 27 and n. 22.
52. My preliminary ideas about conceptual and aesthetic links between this Andalusī poetic genre and several types of Andalusī luxury textiles appeared in Olga Bush, 'A Poem is a Robe and a Castle: Inscribing Verses on Textiles and Architecture in the Alhambra', in *Textiles as Cultural Expressions: Proceedings of the 11th Biennial Symposium of the Textile Society of America*, Honolulu, Hawai'i, 2008, available at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu>.
53. Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles*, pp. 14, 126, 212. Mesa Fernández notes that the term is also mentioned in one account in the *Kitāb al-Aghānī*; see *El lenguaje de la indumentaria*, pp. 125–6.
54. See Appendix.
55. Tova Rosen, 'The Muwashshah', in María Rosa Menocal, Raymond P. Scheindlin and Michael Sells (eds), *The Literature of al-Andalus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 165–89.
56. Pérès, *Esplendor de Al-Andalus*, p. 404. The observation that the term appears in eleventh-century poetry was made by Joaquina Albarracín de Martínez, *Vestido y adorno de la mujer musulmana de Yebala (Marruecos)* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1964), p. 57.
57. Pérès, *Esplendor de Al-Andalus*, p. 405.
58. Ibid., p. 404.
59. See Ibn al-Zubayr, *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, p. 170.
60. Along with other garments of female dress, the term *al-wishāh*, as a belt encrusted with pearls, appears in a dictionary, titled *Lisān al-ʿarab*, by Ibn Manẓur (d. 711/1311); see Mona R. Bastawi, 'Vestidos femeninos en el *Lisān al-ʿarab* de Ibn Manẓur', in Manuela Marín (ed.),

- Tejer y vestir de la Antigüedad al Islam* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2001), p. 251.
61. For the depiction of women's dress during this period, see the examples in *Vestiduras ricas* and also Ruth Matilda Anderson, *Hispanic Costume 1480-1530* (New York: Hispanic Society, 1979), pp. 218-21.
 62. Ibid.
 63. Gonzalo de Baeza, *Cuentas de Gonzalo de Baeza, tesorero de Isabel la Católica*, ed. Antonio de la Torre and E. A. de la Torre, vol. 1: 1477-1491 (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1957), p. 268.
 64. Ibid.
 65. Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles*, pp. 169, 172. For further references to these cities as centres of textile production in medieval textual sources, see Susana Calvo, 'El arte de los reinos taifas: tradición y ruptura', *Anales de Historia del Arte*, Volumen Extraordinario 2 (2011), p. 86 and n. 54.
 66. May, *Silk Textiles*, p. 192.
 67. Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles*, p. 169.
 68. al-Washshā' (Garulo), pp. 269-70.
 69. For examples of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sashes inscribed with verses in Spanish and French, see *La Seda en la indumentaria, siglos XVI-XIX, Colección Rocamora, Exposición, Colegio del Arte Mayor de la Seda 23 septiembre-23 octubre* (Barcelona: Palacio de Comillas, 1959), catalogue numbers 215-16, 569-89, pls XXXIX and LVII. The sashes formed part of the Rocamora collection at the time of their exhibition and publication. For inscribed sashes outside of Iberia, see Deborah L. Krohn, 'Belt or Girdle with a Woven Love Poem', in Andrea Bayer (ed.), *Art and Love in Renaissance Italy* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2008), pp. 128-9; Narta Ajmar-Wollheim, '"The Spirit is Ready, but the Flesh is Tired": Erotic Objects and Marriage in Early Modern Italy', in Sara F. Matthews-Grieco (ed.), *Erotic Cultures of Renaissance Italy* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 141-69.
 70. *La Seda en la indumentaria*, p. 92. The complexity increases in several of the nineteenth-century sashes, where a hemistich appears on both obverse and reverse sides. See *La Seda en la indumentaria*, pl. LVII.
 71. For concise, but illuminating introductions to this much studied genre, see María Rosa Menocal, 'The Newest "Discovery": the Muwashshahāt', in María Rosa Menocal, *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History: A Forgotten Heritage* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), pp. 71-114; Rosen, 'The Muwashshah'. For more sustained discussions, see Alan Jones and Richard Hitchcock (eds), *Studies on the Muwashshahāt and the Kharja* (Ithaca, NY: Ithaca Press Reading for the Board of the Faculty of Oriental Studies, Oxford University, 1991); Otto Zwartjes, *Love Songs from al-Andalus: History, Structure and Meaning of the Kharja* (Leiden: Brill, 1997). For a discussion of the relationship of this genre to Provencal poetry, see Robinson, *In Praise of Song*, pp. 273-300.
 72. Rosen, 'The Muwashshah', p. 169.
 73. Ibid., p. 167.
 74. For the basic rhyme scheme, see Zwartjes, *Love Songs*, pp. 28-9.
 75. Cited in G. J. H. Van Gelder, *Beyond the Line. Classical Arabic Literary Critics on the Coherence and Unity of the Poem* (Leiden: Brill, 1982),

- p. 144. In explaining his title, Ibn Sanā' al-Mulk also suggests a close relationship between the *ṭirāz* workshop and the *Dīwān al-Inshā'* or a royal *scriptorium*: 'No other title I found more comprehensive, perfect, beautiful and adequate, nor more appropriate for the idea, than *Dār al-ṭirāz*. In the *ṭirāz* they make, in effect, the multi-coloured cloth of silk, and those with gold, in the fashion of antique [cloth] and the modern ones, the precious and the rare ones, and this book has to be like the *ṭirāz*, or, at least, the house contiguous [to that of the *ṭirāz*]. So I wrote this expression as the title of this book, as an insignia and as an incitement'; cited in Emilio García Gómez, 'Estudio del "Dār at-ṭirāz", preceptiva egipcia de la muwashshah', *Al-Andalus* 27 (1962), pp. 62-3.
76. For an example with a bilingual *kharja*, see Zwartjes, *Love Songs*, pp. 28-9.
 77. Menocal, 'The Newest "Discovery"', p. 99.
 78. In keeping with Menocal's arguments, Rosen's considerations of the linguistic hybridity of the *muwashshah*, its use in secular and religious settings, and its popular-vernacular features led her to the interesting observation that this poetic form 'exemplifies a pluralistic cultural politics that allowed for difference and plurality, clashes and juxtapositions' ('The Muwashshah', p. 166). Jewish poets of medieval al-Andalus also composed *muwashshahāt* in Hebrew, borrowing directly from Arabic poetics. For an example by Yehuda Halevi with a hybrid *kharja*, see Peter Cole (ed. and trans.), *The Dream of the Poem: Hebrew Poetry from Muslim and Christian Spain, 950-1492* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 147 and 441n.
 79. Menocal, 'The Newest "Discovery"', pp. 100-1.
 80. The examination of this fragment shows that all its sides and edges are cut, precluding any determination of its original dimensions. I am grateful to Sumru Belger Krody, Senior Curator at the George Washington University Museum and the Textile Museum, who provided me with the museum's records of the object's report.
 81. These fragments are found in many collections, among them: the Textile Museum, Washington, DC (TM 84.6); Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris (inv. 14627); Victoria and Albert Museum, London (acc. no. 821-1894). The fragment from the Victoria and Albert Museum was published in Cyril Bunt, *Hispano-Moorish Fabrics* (Leigh-on-Sea: F. Lewis, 1966), fig. 24. Two fragments in the David Collection in Copenhagen (2/1989), which are sewn together into one piece measuring 36 cm × 53 cm, were published in Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan Bloom, *Cosmophilia: Islamic Art from the David Collection, Copenhagen* (Boston, MA: Charles S. and Isabella V. McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, 2006), p. 189.
 82. Textile Museum object report. See Cristina Partearroyo [Lacaba], 'Los tejidos nazaríes', in Jesús Bermúdez López (ed.), *Arte islámico en Granada. Propuesta para un Museo de la Alhambra, 1 de abril-30 de septiembre de 1995, Palacio de Carlos V, la Alhambra* (Granada: Junta de Andalucía, Consejería de Cultura/Patronato de La Alhambra y Generalife/Comares Editorial, 1995), pp. 117-31.
 83. Textile Museum object report.
 84. According to the Centre International d'Étude des Textiles Anciens, the definition of 'lampas' is as follows: 'Term used exclusively for figured textiles in which a pattern, composed of weft floats bound

by a binding warp, is added to a ground fabric formed by a main warp and a main weft. The ground may be tabby, twill, satin, damask ... etc. The weft threads forming the pattern may be main, pattern, or brocading wefts; they float at the face as required by pattern, and are bound by the ends of the binding warp in a binding ordinarily tabby or twill and which is supplementary to the ground weave.' This definition is cited in John Becker, *Pattern and Loom. A Practical Study of the Development of Weaving Techniques in China, Western Asia and Europe* (Copenhagen: Rhodos International, 1987), p. 146.

85. See Partearroyo [Lacaba], 'Los tejidos nazaries'.
86. For the discussion of the re-use of Andalusí luxury textiles by the Church and the court as burial shrouds, see Feliciano, 'Muslim Shrouds'. May's research brought to light many church inventories and other historical documents, and her discussion of particular textile examples remains valuable; see May, *Silk Textiles*. Annabelle Simon-Cahn has interpreted the cosmological motifs on the cloth woven in Almería in the twelfth century and later refashioned into the Chasuble of St. Thomas Becket, and she proposed that it could have originally served as a tent cloth or a canopy. See Annabelle Simon-Cahn, 'The Fermo Chasuble of St. Thomas Becket', *Muqarnas* 10 (1993): 1-5. Andalusí textiles of large dimensions produced in the sixth-seventh/twelfth-thirteenth centuries, which may have originally served as furnishings but were later re-used as church vestments and burial shrouds, can be found in major museums. See, for instance, a coffin cover of María de Almenar, made of silk and gold brocade during the Almohad period, c. 600/1200, and measuring 225 cm × 175 cm, as discussed in Concha Herrero Carretero, 'Coffin Cover of María de Almenar', in Jerrilynn D. Dodds (ed.), *Al-Andalus. The Art of Islamic Spain* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992), pp. 324-5.
87. I wish to thank Louise W. Mackie, Curator of Textiles and Islamic Art at the Cleveland Museum of Art, for communicating this information to me.
88. I am grateful to Cristina Partearroyo [Lacaba] of the Instituto Valencia Don Juan in Madrid for bringing these fragments to my attention and proposing that their shape indicates their re-use as parts of a stole. A stole is an ecclesiastical vestment consisting of a long band, usually made of silk, that is worn around the neck by priests and bishops.
89. Al-Jāhiz, *Al-Tabaṣṣur bi al-Tijārah*, cited in Ibn al-Zubayr, *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, p. 374, n. 4.
90. Al-Washshā' (Garulo), pp. 259-60.
91. For texts, see Rubiera Mata, *Ibn al-Yayyāb*, pp. 118-19. See also Rubiera Mata, *La arquitectura en la literatura árabe*, p. 89; García Gómez, *Cinco poetas*, pp. 210-11.
92. Carry Welch, *Calligraphy in the Arts of the Muslim World* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), p. 73.
93. May remarked on the width in *Silk Textiles*, p. 193, and she also observed that several of these fragments were re-used in chasubles: one housed in the City Art Museum in St. Louis, and another in the Church of San Sebastián at Antequera, province of Málaga in Spain.
94. Manuel Valdez Fernández, 'Clientes y promotores en la asimilación de modelos andalusíes en la edad media', *El legado de al-Andalus*.

El arte andalusi en los reinos de León y Castilla durante la Edad Media. Simposio Internacional (Valladolid: Fundación del Patrimonio Histórico de Castilla y León, 2007), pp. 19-42.

95. Cristina Partearroyo [Lacaba], 'Pluvial', in Jerrilynn D. Dodds (ed.), *Al-Andalus. The Art of Islamic Spain* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992), p. 336. See also Dorothy Shepherd, 'The Hispano-Islamic Textiles in the Cooper Union Collection', *Chronicle of the Museum for the Arts of Decoration of the Cooper Union* 1(10) (1943): p. 392; May, *Silk Textiles*, pp. 193-4.
96. Several fragments in this group are housed in the Cooper Hewitt Museum, New York; Victoria and Albert Museum, London, No. 1105-1900; Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence, inv. No. 141; and the Instituto Valencia de Don Juan, Madrid. A number of other fragments, similar to the one discussed above, but with a difference in the proportions of the cursive script and some floral elements, could be designated as a subgroup. For an example, see a fragment in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (acc. No. 18.31), published in Olga Bush, 'Textile Fragment [cat. No. 48]', Maryam D. Ekhtiar, Priscilla P. Soucek, Sheila R. Canby and Navina Najat Haidar (eds), *Masterpieces from the Department of Islamic Art in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 81-2. For other fragments in this subgroup and collections in which they are housed see Arié, *L'Espagne musulmane*, pl. XI; Isabelle Errera, *Catalogue d'étoffes anciennes et modernes* (Brussels: Musées Royaux des Arts Décoratifs de Bruxelles, 1927), No. 77; May, *Silk Textiles*, fig. 126.
97. It is not the purpose of this study to investigate weaving techniques used in the production of luxury silks during the Nasrid period. The information pertaining to the structure of the textile in question is surmised from the analysis of an identical fragment in the Victoria and Albert Museum (No. 1105-1900), published in *The Arts of Islam Hayward Gallery 8 April-4 July 1976* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1976), p. 81. For technical analysis of Andalusí textiles, see the essays in *Tejidos hispanomusulmanes*, special volume, *Bienes Culturales, Revista del Instituto del Patrimonio Histórico Español* 5 (2005).
98. Partearroyo [Lacaba], 'Pluvial', p. 336.
99. For the Met textile, see, for instance, May, *Silk Textiles*, pp. 169, 199; Cristina Partearroyo [Lacaba], 'Textile Fragment', in Jerrilynn D. Dodds (ed.), *Al-Andalus. The Art of Islamic Spain* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992), p. 335; Cristina Partearroyo [Lacaba], 'Seda nazari', in Ibn Jaldun, *El Mediterráneo en el siglo XIV. Auge y declive de los imperios. Exposición en el Real Alcázar de Sevilla, mayo-septiembre 2006*, exhibition catalogue (Fundación José Manuel Lara and Fundación El Legado Andalusí, 2006), pp. 160-1; Olga Bush, 'Textile Fragment [cat. No. 49]', in Maryam D. Ekhtiar, Priscilla P. Soucek, Sheila R. Canby and Navina Najat Haidar (eds), *Masterpieces from the Department of Islamic Art in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 82-3. The Hispanic Society textile has been considered in such publications as Mitchell A. Coddington, Mencia Figueroa Villota, John O'Neil and Patrick Lenaghan (eds), *The Hispanic Society of America. Tesoros* (New York: Hispanic

- Society of America, 2000), pp. 145–6; Florence Lewis May, 'Textiles', in *The Hispanic Society of America. Handbook* (New York, 1938), p. 278; May, *Silk Textiles*, pp. 193–201; Adèle Coulin Weibel, *Two Thousand Years of Textiles: The Figured Textiles of Europe and the Near East* (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1952), No. 90; Ecker, *Caliphs and Kings*, pp. 47–9, 139. This textile has been dated by scholars from as early as the beginning of the ninth/fifteenth century to as late as the eleventh/seventeenth century, and, consequently, its place of manufacture has been ascribed to both al-Andalus and Morocco.
100. Mackie, *Symbols of Power*, p. 198.
 101. Partearroyo [Lacaba], 'Textile Fragment', p. 335.
 102. For the identification of some of the decorative 'motifs shared by textiles and the decoration of the Alhambra, see May, *Silk Textiles*, pp. 118–70. Similar identifications made in other studies include: Shepherd, 'The Hispano-Islamic Textiles', p. 389; Antonio Fernández-Puertas, 'Un paño decorativo de la Torre de las Damas', *Cuadernos de la Alhambra* 9 (1973): 37–52; Anne E. Wardwell, 'A Fifteenth-Century Silk Curtain from Muslim Spain', *Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 70(2) (1983): 58–72; Partearroyo [Lacaba], 'Los tejidos nazaries'; Partearroyo [Lacaba], 'Textile Fragment'.
 103. Mackie, *Symbols of Power*, p. 197.
 104. Fernández-Puertas, *The Alhambra*, p. 90.
 105. Ibid., p. 104; Partearroyo [Lacaba], 'Los tejidos nazaries', p. 126.
 106. Fernández-Puertas, *La fachada*, pp. 34–41, and pls I–XIIIa, XXIVa, XXIVb and XXVa. See also Bermúdez Pareja, 'Crónica de la Alhambra', pp. 99–105 and pls X–XIV.
 107. See Fernández-Puertas, *La fachada*, pp. 34–41; Serrano Espinosa, 'The Contreras Family'.
 108. Fernández-Puertas, *La fachada*, pp. 34–41.
 109. Orihuela Uzal, 'La conservación de alicatados', p. 140.
 110. Partearroyo [Lacaba] cites Fernández-Puertas' dating in her 'Textile Fragment'.
 111. For a brief overview of the *lazo* of 8 pattern, see Fernández-Puertas, *The Alhambra*, pp. 94–6; for the geometric construction of the pattern and a variety of decorative schemes based on it, see pp. 332–49. For the discussion of the construction of the *lazo* ('knot') patterns in the Muslim East, for which tools were employed similar to those used in al-Andalus, see Necipoğlu, *The Topkapı Scroll*, pp. 91–110.
 112. Partearroyo [Lacaba], 'Textile Fragment'.
 113. Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament*.
 114. Ibn al-Haytham, *The Optics*, I, p. 208.
 115. For the text and locations of all inscriptions on the Façade of Comares, see Puerta Vélchez, *Leer la Alhambra*, pp. 69–75.
 116. Ibn al-Khatib, *al-Iḥāṭa fī akhbār ḡharnāṭa* (Cairo, 1901), vol. 1, p. 37, cited in Fernández-Puertas, *La fachada*, p. 26. n. 3. Fernández-Puertas indicated that between 761/1359 and 764/1362 Muḥammad V was referred to as *al-Maklū* ('the Dethroned'). See Fernández-Puertas, *The Alhambra*, p. 253.
 117. Ibn al-Khatib, *al-Iḥāṭa*, vol. 2, p. 230, cited and discussed in Fernández-Puertas, *La fachada*, p. 27.
 118. Fernández-Puertas, *La fachada*, pp. 26–30.

119. James Dickie, 'The Palaces of the Alhambra', in Jerrilynn D. Dodds (ed.), *Al-Andalus. The Art of Islamic Spain* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992), p. 136; Fernández-Puertas, *La fachada*, p. 16.
120. Dodd and Khairallah, *The Image of the Word*, vol. 2, pp. 9–19.
121. For the complete Arabic text of this brief poem, see Appendix. For the various translations into Spanish and analysis, see Puerta Vélchez, *Leer la Alhambra*, pp. 70–1; Darío Cabanelas Rodríguez and Antonio Fernández-Puertas, 'Inscripciones poéticas del Patal y de la Fachada de Comares', *Cuadernos de la Alhambra* 10–11 (1974/5): 159–64; García Gómez, *Poemas árabes*, pp. 73–4, 91–2; A. R. Nykl, 'Inscripciones árabes de la Alhambra y del Generalife', *Al-Andalus* 4 (1936–39), p. 178.
122. In my translation here, I follow closely the reading of Cabanelas Rodríguez and Fernández-Puertas, 'Inscripciones poéticas', p. 161. As elsewhere, my intention here is to provide a literal rendering of the poem.
123. Puerta Vélchez, *Leer la Alhambra*, p. 71.
124. See, for example, Cabanelas Rodríguez, *El techo del Salón de Comares*, pp. 81–90.
125. García Gómez, *Poemas árabes*, p. 92. García Gómez underlines his interpretation of the word *mafriq* as 'brow' in his commentary, pp. 73–4.
126. Puerta Vélchez, *Leer la Alhambra*, p. 71. On the term *mafriq* in the context of the Alhambra, see also Emilio Lafuente Alcántara, *Inscripciones árabes de Granada* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2000), pp. 154–5; Antonio Almagro Cárdenas, *Estudio sobre las inscripciones árabes de Granada* (Granada, 1879), p. 23; Nykl, 'Inscripciones árabes', p. 178.
127. Cabanelas Rodríguez and Fernández-Puertas, 'Inscripciones poéticas', pp. 159–64.
128. Puerta Vélchez, *Leer la Alhambra*, p. 71.
129. Fernández-Puertas, *La fachada*, p. 34.
130. For a discussion of Islamic textiles in European painting, see, for instance, Rosamund E. Mack, *Bazaar to Piazza, Islamic Trade and Italian Art, 1300–1600* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). Mack emphasises the significance of this particular work for Italian *trecento* painting, due to its commission for the new and important church in Florence and for the size of the painted panel (178 in. × 114 in.); see *ibid.*, pp. 56–8.
131. Quoted in Clinton, 'Image and Metaphor', p. 8.
132. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
133. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 4, p. 107.
134. *Ibid.*, pp. 328–31.
135. *Ibid.*, p. 120.
136. *Ibid.*
137. *Ibid.*
138. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
139. To add to the inter-medial possibilities, *ṣadr* can also refer to the first hemistich of a verse in Arabic poetry.
140. See n. 31 above and Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 4, p. 120.
141. Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles*, p. 201.
142. This group includes the Textile Museum, Washington, 84.11 (102 cm × 38 cm); Museo Lázaro Galdiano, Madrid, 1694 (103.5 cm × 41 cm);

- Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid, 65.434 (103.5 cm × 41 cm); and the Detroit Institute of Arts, 43.34 (101 cm × 20 cm). See, respectively, Louise W. Mackie, 'Increase the Prestige: Islamic Textiles', *Arts of Asia* 26(1) (1996), p. 85; Amparo López Redondo, *Los Reyes Católicos y Granada* (Granada, 2004), p. 287; María Teresa Sánchez Trujillano, 'Catálogo de los tejidos medievales del M. A. N. II', *Boletín del M. A. N.* 4 (1986), pp. 102, 109; Weibel, *Two Thousand Years of Textiles*, No. 91. Many smaller fragments comprise an extensive group as well, including the following: Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid, Nos 65.421 and 65.422; Kunstgewerbe Museum, Berlin, No. 62.105; the Textile Museum, Washington, No. 84.21; Cooper Hewitt Museum, New York, No. 1902-1-303.
143. This group includes: Cooper Hewitt Museum, New York, No. 1902-1-304 (63.5 cm × 35 cm); Musée Cluny, Paris, No. 12350 (132.5 cm × 103.0 cm); Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence, No. 90 (87.5 × 33 cm); and the Textile Museum, Washington, No. 84.1 (69 cm × 60 cm). See, for instance, May, *Silk Textiles*, fig. 41; Jean-Paul Roux (ed.), *L'Islam dans les collections nationales. 2 mai-22 août, 1977*, exhibition catalogue (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1977), No. 110; Bunt, *Hispano-Moorish Fabrics*, fig. 39; Stefano Carboni and Carlo Maria Suriano (eds), *La seta islamica: temi ed influenze culturali* (Florence: Museo Nazionale de Bargello, 1999), p. 20; Shepherd, 'The Hispano-Islamic Textiles', pp. 392-3; Weibel, *Two Thousand Years of Textiles*, pl. 37, No. 131. Weibel noted that in the example in the Textile Museum, Washington (No. 84.1), a metal compound is contained in the fragment, which makes it differ from the others made entirely of silk thread. On the other hand, some of the fragments are identical. The Bargello fragment, for example, has been matched with two fragments in other collections: one in the Museo d'Artes Decoratives, Barcelona, the other in Abegg Stiftung, Riggisberg. See Carboni and Suriano, *La seta islamica*, p. 71.
144. Pérez Gómez et al., 'La búsqueda y materialización de la belleza', pp. 411-16.
145. Vitruvius, *De Architectura*, as discussed in *ibid.*
146. Ibn al-Haytham, *The Optics*, I, pp. 269-70, 296-7. Livingstone corroborates Ibn al-Haytham's optical theory on this point. She explains that the central vision with its high acuity is employed in the analysis of detailed objects and surfaces, while the peripheral vision with its low acuity is used by human eyes to organise the visual field, identify large areas or objects, and direct our central vision to the next object to be scrutinised in the overall visual field. In her analysis of several paintings, she demonstrates that when the central vision is scrutinising a particular area of a painting, there will be a 'loss of precise spatial information' through the peripheral vision that perceives other areas. See Livingstone, *Vision and Art*, pp. 68-83.
147. Orihuela Uzal, *Casas y palacios nazaríes*, p. 84.
148. This approach to the Cuarto Dorado was first proposed by Orihuela Uzal, *Casas y palacios nazaríes*, plan 12, pp. 85-6.
149. Goitein cites other examples of manuscript paintings in which a figural composition is framed within an arcade embellished with curtains, including 'The Wedding Banquet' in the manuscript of the *Maqāmāt* (*The Assemblies*) of al-Ḥarīrī in the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg (MS S. 23, p. 205), Baghdad (Iraq), c. 622-31/1225-35;

- and 'Preparing Medicine from Honey' in the *De Materia Medica* of Dioscorides, Baghdad (Iraq), 621/1224, in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (acc. No. 57.51.21). See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 4, p. 381, n. 70.
150. Hilāl al-Ṣābi', *Rusūm dār al-khilāfa* (*The Rules and Regulations of the Abbasid Court*), trans. Elie A. Salem (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1977), pp. 64-6.
151. Paula Sanders, 'Marāsim', *El2*, vol. 6, p. 519. A similar office will be discussed in the following chapter.