



An Idea Arrives in Europe.
The Gardens of la Alhambra

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Design with Nature.

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The Gardens of la Alhambra

1. An idea arrives in Europe?
2. Heights and drops. Climate and topography
3. Gardens, ornaments, inside / out
4. “Like an orbit of water”
5. Nature and architecture

“Spain, as a nation, is immersed in a bitter social and political debate about its so-called *historical memory*. The 1936-1939 civil war has overshadowed other dimensions of the social memory, and mixed it with a review of the Spanish historical narrative. [...] The *Oral Memory of the Alhambra* project [...] breaks freed from that debate, by trying to link social memory and heritage site to a larger time-scale than the civil war and its aftermath. To achieve this, great efforts have been made to take into account the social memory concept as a cultural construct distinct from the *historical narrative* [...]. Social memory, on the other hand, reaches conceptually further than ideology, in a Marxian sense, or collective conscience, in a Durkheimian one. Hence, the mere presence of memory questions many a priori interpretations, making it a key instrument of the post-modern and post-colonial project.”

José Antonio González Alcantud, “Social Memory of a World Heritage Site: the Alhambra of Granada”

1. *An idea arrives in Europe?*

Deep Iberian, Roman, and North African roots of la Alhambra

- Jordi Juan Tresserras et al
- Excavation of the Hippolytus' House in Alcalá de Henares (3rd-4th centuries)
- Garden shows Iberian native plants like the saw palmetto (*Chamaerops humilis L.*)
- It also holds foreign taxa, like the Cedar (*Cedrus sp.*), which aligns with the presence of other North African and Pompeiian constructive elements.



Greenery occupies a central place in Early Islamic culture and society.

Rawdiya / garden poem: probably of Persian origin. A key poetic form in the Abbasid world 8th-10th century. Early Muslims everywhere cultivated earthly gardens because they gave glimpses of the heavenly garden to come.

Coolness of the shade, heaviness of the perfume, music of the running water, lushness of the foliage. All the features of the artificially contrived environment which contrasted so strongly with the arid natural world.

9th century: the genre arrives in Spain. By the 11th century, it blooms and gardens become a ubiquitous Arabigo-Andalus poetic theme

(Adapted from Watson, *Agricultural Innovation in the Early Islamic World*)

Unknown painter, *Madonna on a Crescent Moon in Hortus Conclusus* (15th-century)



Meister des Frankfurter, *Paradiesgärtlein* (1410)

Locus amoenus, hortus conclusus

“Hortus conclusus, soror mea sponsa, hortus conclusus, fons signatus”

[An enclosed garden, my sister wife, closed water spring, sealed fountain]

Song of Songs (4, 12)

“Qui fu innocente l'umana radice;
qui primavera è sempre ed ogne frutto;
nettare è questo di che ciascun dice”

[Here was the root of mankind innocent;
Here it was always spring and every fruit;
This is the nectar of which someone speaks]

Dante Alighieri, “Purgatorio” (XXVIII, 141-144)

“El prado que vos digo avié otra bondat:
por calor nin por frío non perdié su beltat,
siempre estava verde en su entegretat,
non perdié la verdure por nulla tempestat”

[The garden of which I was telling you has another source of goodness:
with neither heat nor cold would its beauty be lost,
it was always green in its totality,
it did not lose its greenery with any tempest]

Gonzalo de Berceo, *Los Milagros de Nuestra Señora* (11a-d)

2. Heights and drops. Climate and topography

CLIMATE MATTERS

Physical—environmental facts and bodily realities

Figurative—signs to produce art (especially architecture and poetry)

. Common climate: lesser rainfall, constant sociocultural storms, incessant flow of peoples and architectural inquiries and practices

. Granada, 9th through 14th century: from Sawwar ben Hamdum to Samuel Ibn Nagrela to Ibn Nasr to Muhammad XII / Boabdil, series of points in history with many points of architectural development that reflect physical and figurative climates in Granada, and the growth of various societies.

Water becomes central to architecture

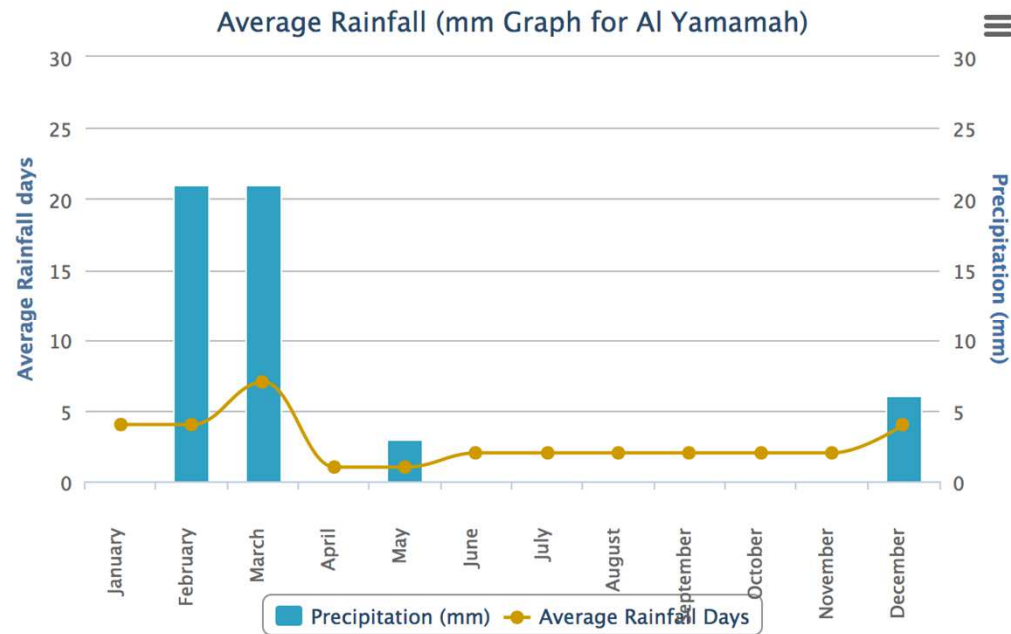
. Umayyad Córdoba (Madinat al-Zahra gardens) and Nasrid Granada (Generalife gardens): despite the destruction of the Madinat, **centrality of water remains as a heritage learned and preserved as an Andalusí trait**

Rainfall in Al Yamamah, Saudi Arabia

[Indexical meaning: Luis José García Pulido, *El territorio de La Alhambra*]

Physical—temperatures and rainfall compared through seasons (time) and regions (space)

Average Rainfall for Al Yamamah, Saudi Arabia



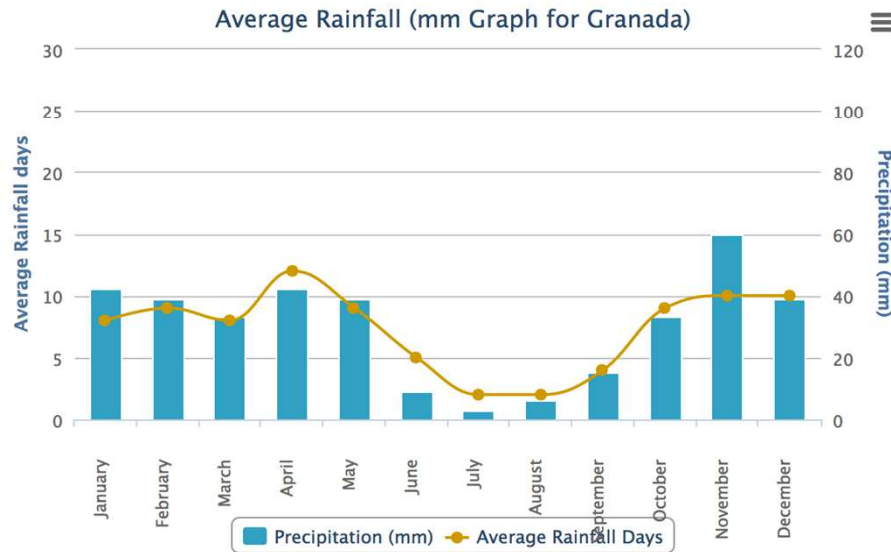
Note: The data for charts above are taken from year 2000 to 2012.

Rainfall in Granada and Toledo, Spain

[Indexical meaning: Luis José García Pulido, *El territorio de La Alhambra*]

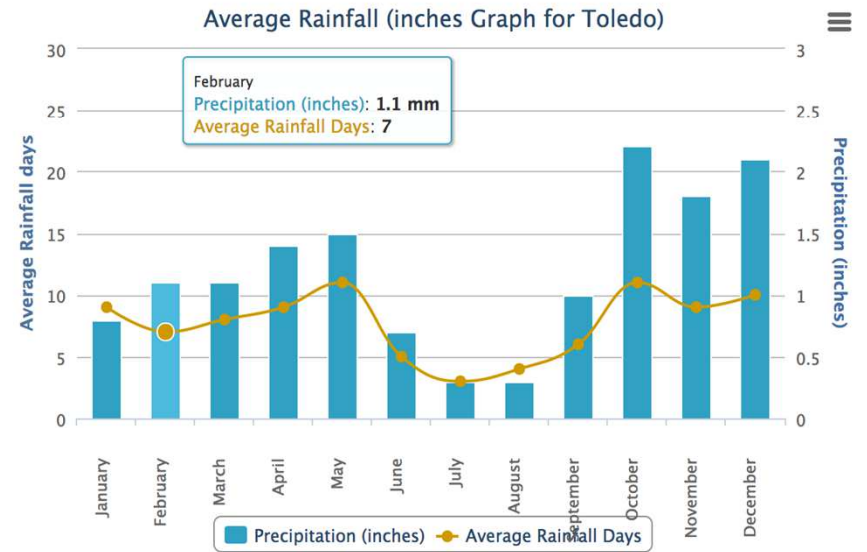
Physical—temperatures and rainfall compared through seasons (time) and regions (space)

Average Rainfall for Granada, Spain



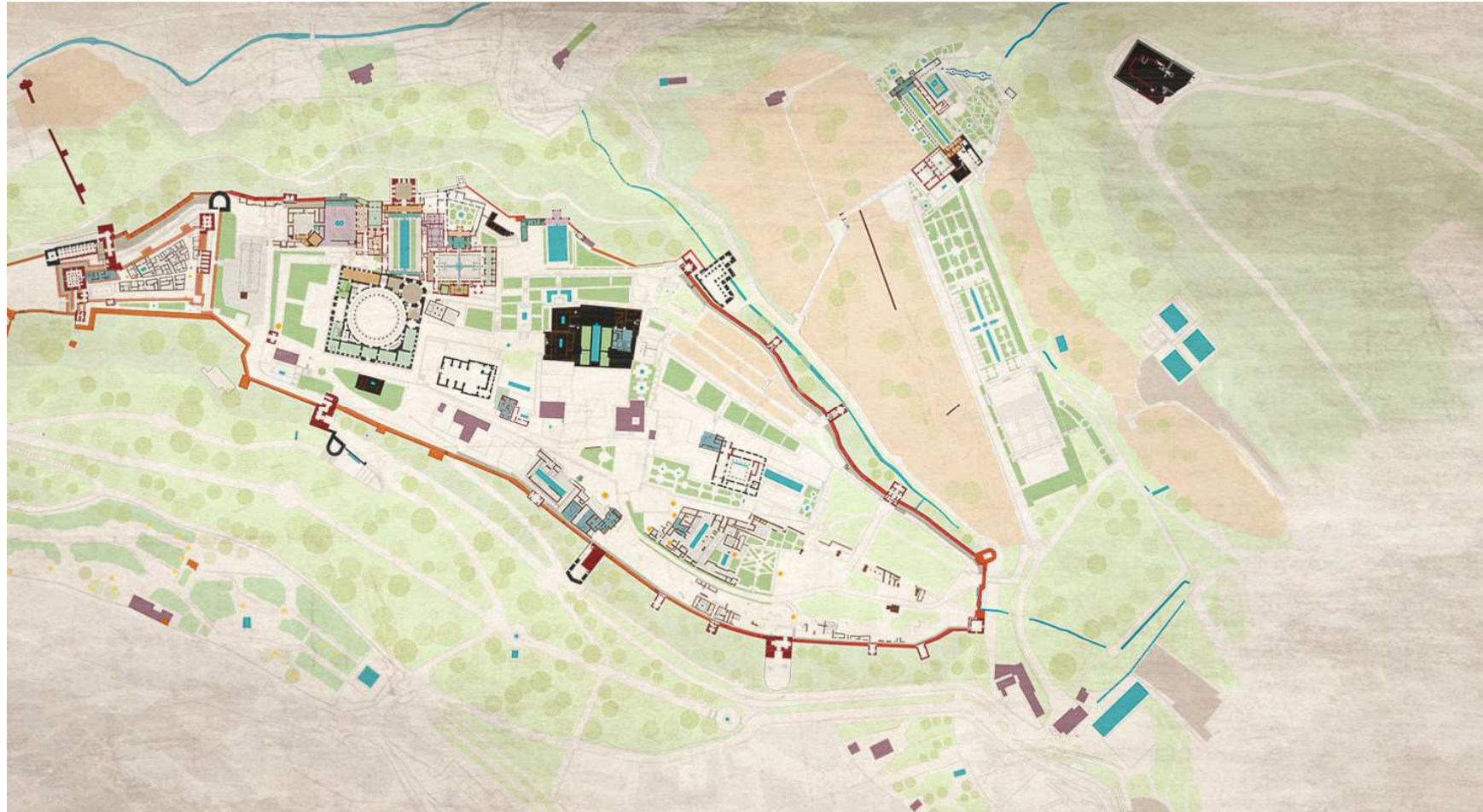
Note: The data for charts above are taken from year 2000 to 2012.

Average Rainfall for Toledo, Spain

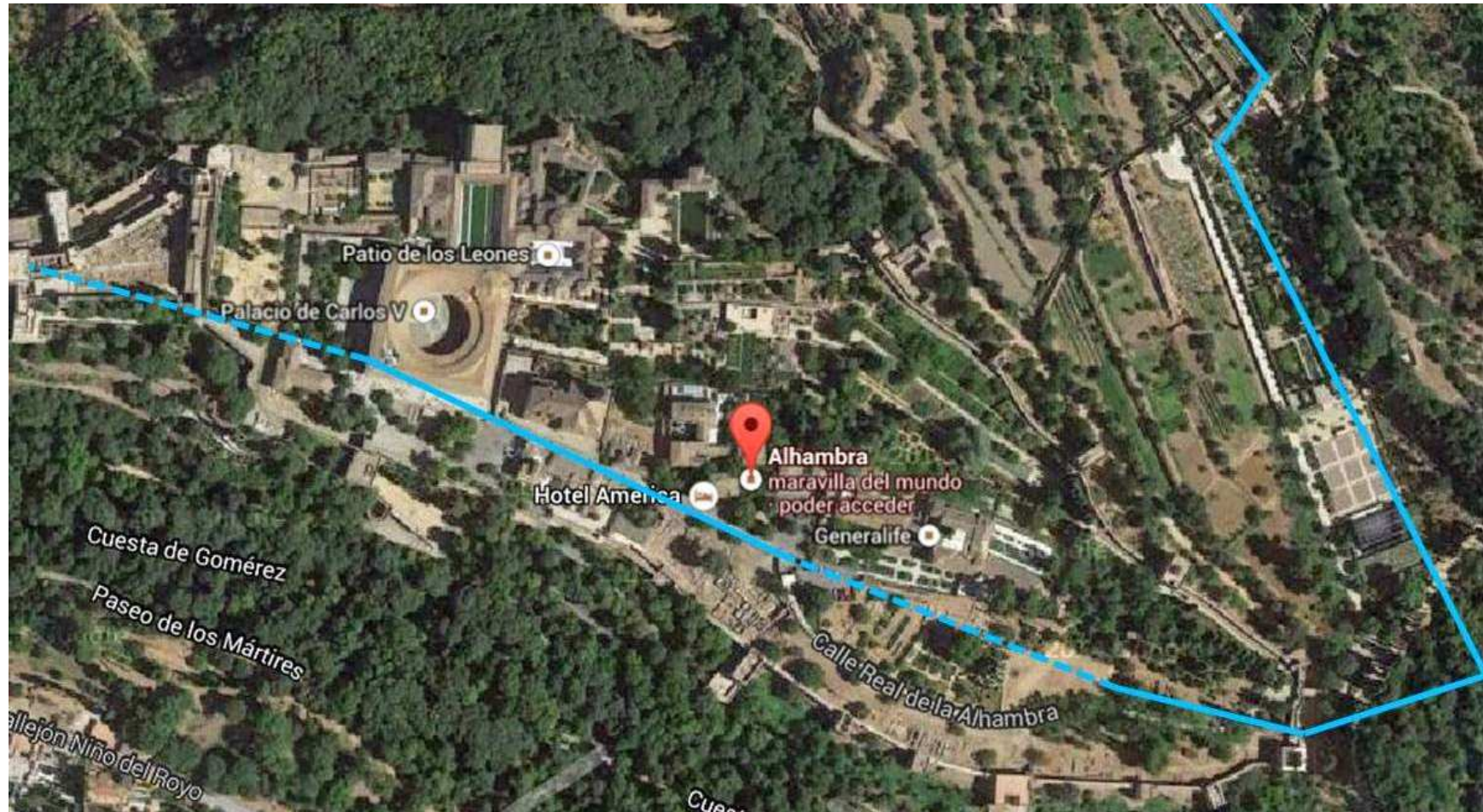


Note: The data for charts above are taken from year 2000 to 2012.

General layout of la Alhambra



General layout (aerial)



Acequia Real /Royal ditch General layout (path)



Royal Ditch topographic layout



Royal ditch around the mountain



Royal ditch through the forest



Royal ditch, forest, and path



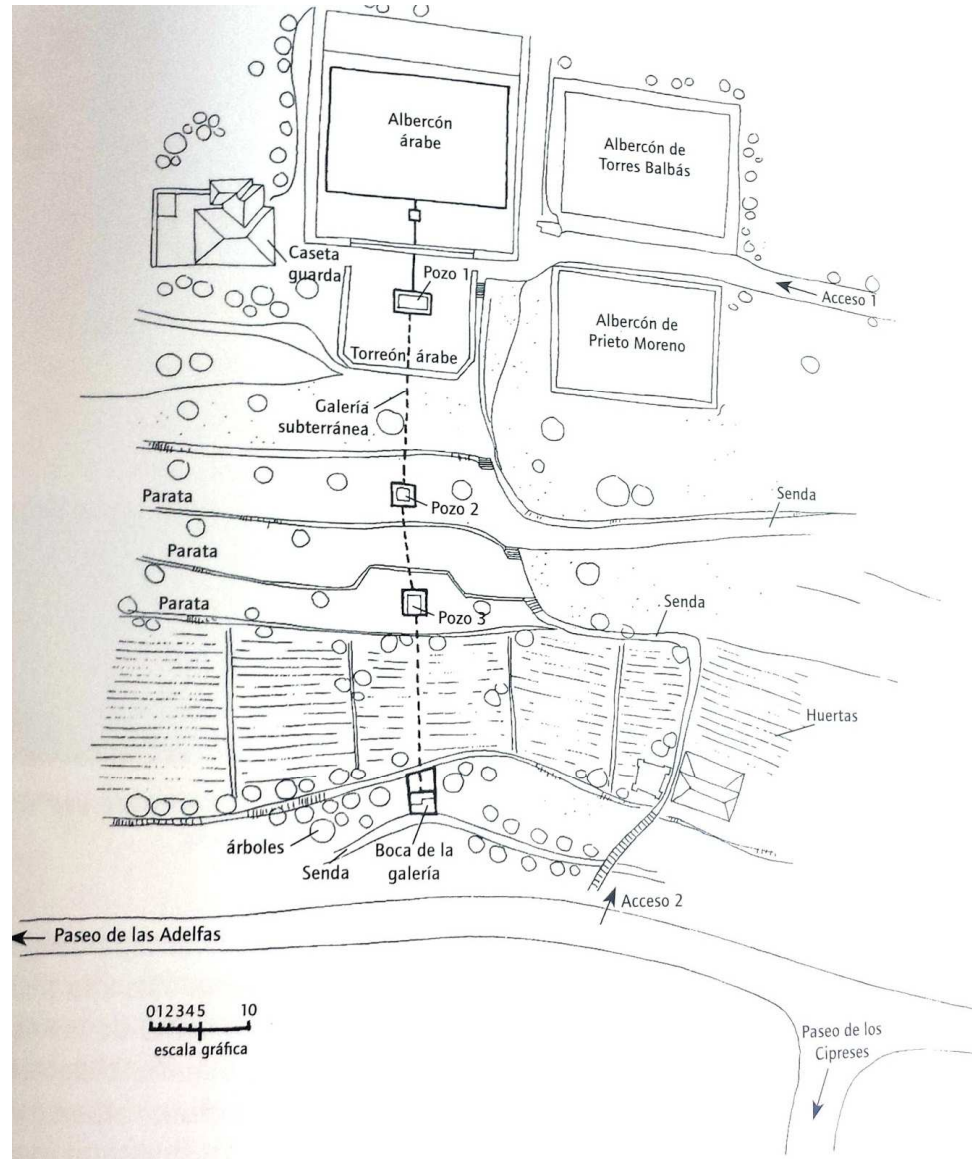
Royal ditch
through the *quejigal* (gall oak) forest



Royal Ditch at the *Silla del moro* / Moor's Chair



Albercones / Reservoirs



3. Gardens and ornaments, inside / out

Inside / Out

- . Natural landscapes populate the entire referential universe of La Alhambra
- . Outside, in the flowing of water and the symbiosis of water and gardens, which hold functional and stylistic values
- . Inside, in the architectural design, which includes
 - . Walls, windows, doors, support units, passages
 - . Ornamentation, especially in the walls
- . Following the flow of water in and through the gardens, springing from earth's soil and from the gesso of the walls, we are going to connect the various platforms of representation of natural landscapes in La Alhambra.

Garden inside, garden outside



Basic inside unit / outside echoed inside



Complex composition unit inside / out



Outside garden, moving in



“Severed from its relationship to structure and to the function of certain spaces, palatial ornament was emptied of its meaning in relation to the larger architectural programme and demoted to a relic, a fetish, a sculptural souvenir, or a memory of a whole object”

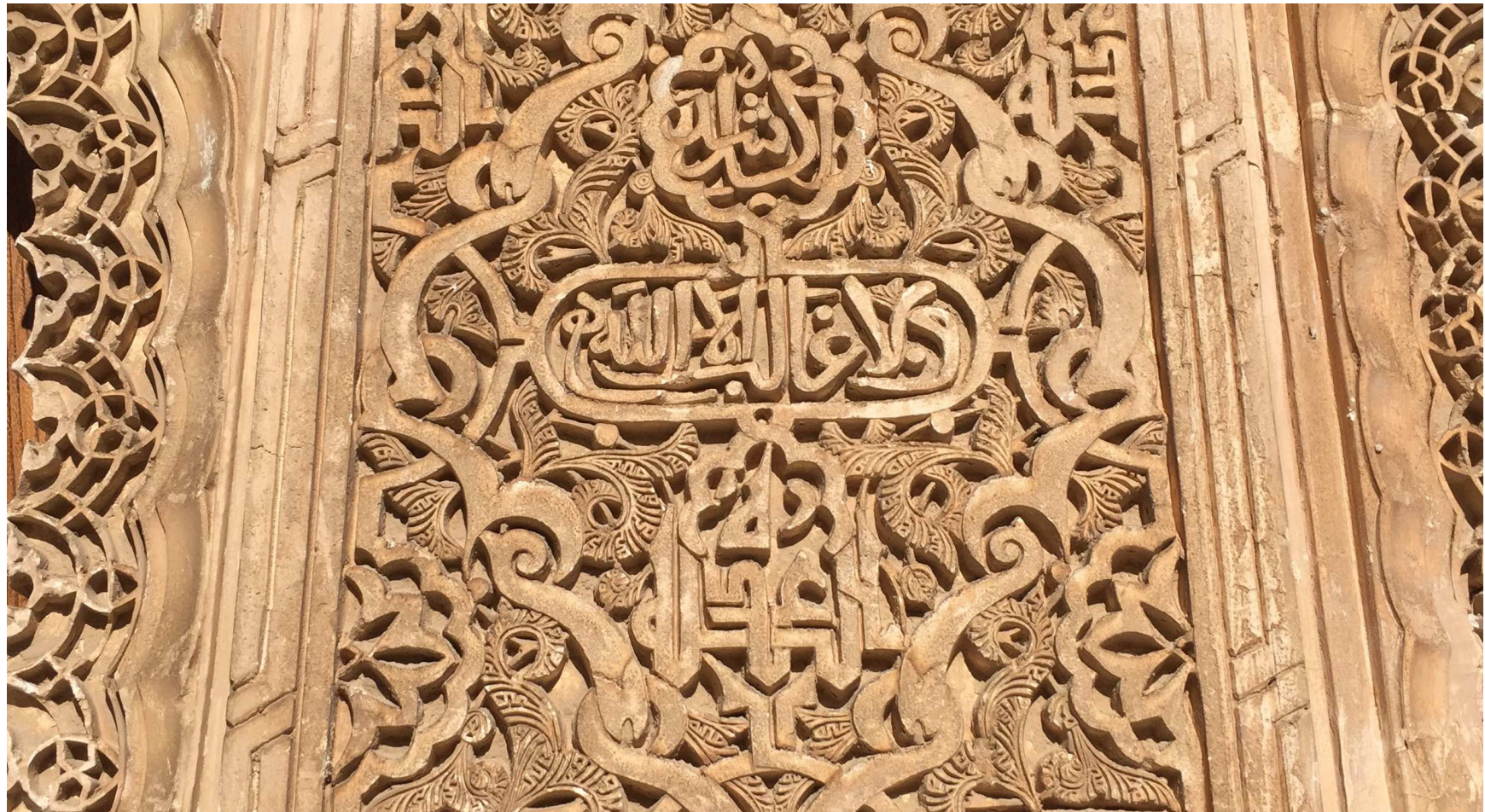
Laura Eggleton, “History in the Making [...],” (20)

al-Tawriq / ATAURIQUE

- . Ornamental unit, used at times in Spanish as *ataurique*, derived from the Arabic *al-tawriq*, means flora, leaves, or foliage.
- . Critical intertextual bridge with Almoravid and Almohad art, it was redefined during the 13th and 14th centuries (the Nasrid period in Andalusian history) to include rings and small circles, stems and small leaves that overlapped with the shape of a crescent moon, as well as leaves of diverse and, at times, exaggerated curvature, with some peppercorns, or lobed palmettes or pine cones, and single or double leaves of palms pointing up or down.
- . This almost musical *fantasia* of design showed that the architects of the Nasrid Palaces of La Alhambra established, in a kind of parodic way, their own authentic style integrating landscape and architecture, turning Islamic architecture inside/out.

Palms, or climbing wisterias?

Patio de los Arrayanes / Myrtle Courtyard
(Comares Palace)



LOTUS FLOWER

. Mariam Rosser-Owen: the incorporation of the lotus flower respond to a drive of sultan Muhammad V who, in his second reign, displayed a deep personal awareness of the current cultural developments in the Mediterranean, especially those moved around by virtue of the substantive trade taking place with Mamluk peoples.

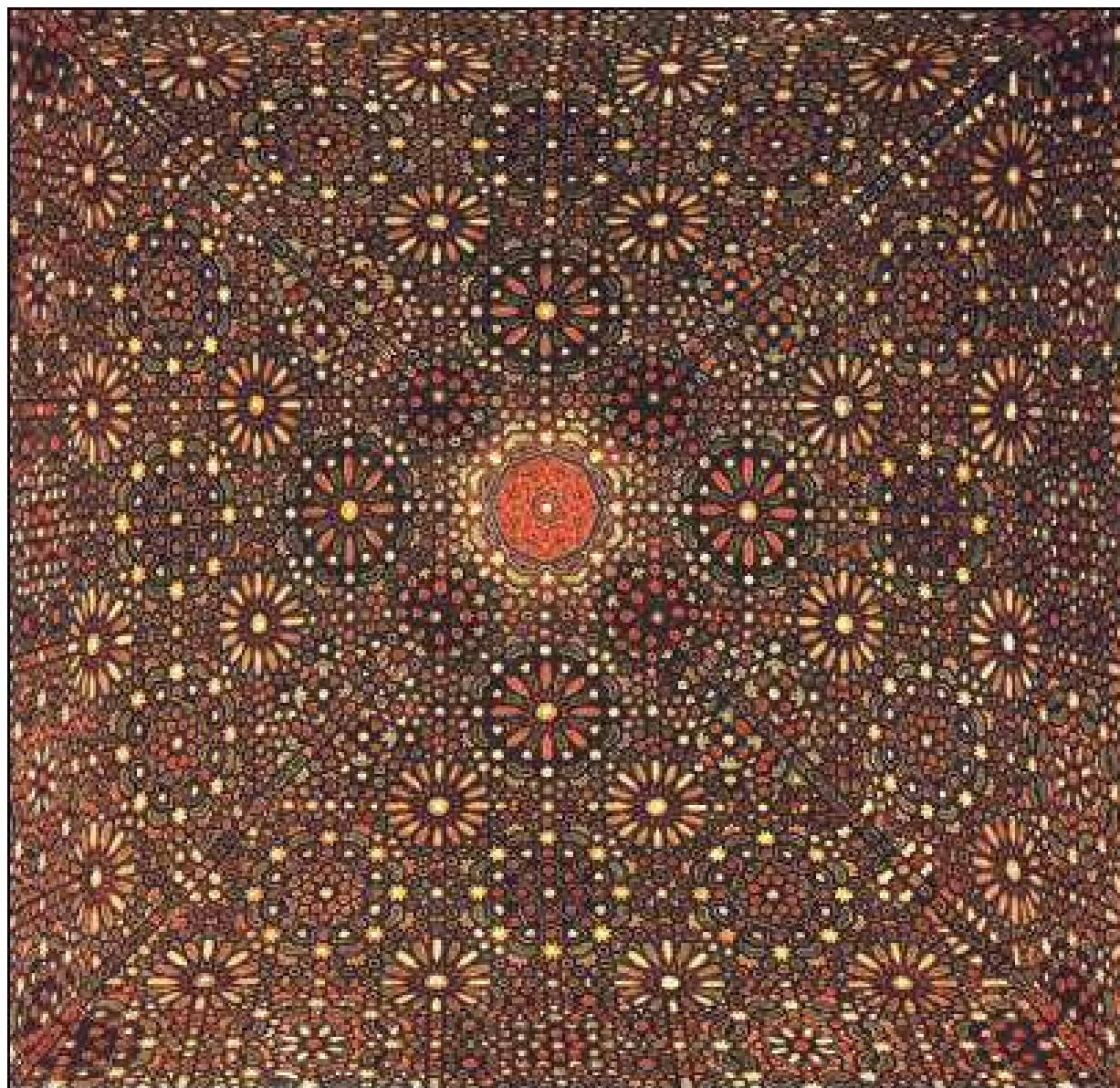
. The lotus flower, found in the woodwork of the Lions Palace and most particularly in the ceiling beams of the four galleries framing the patio, is originally a Chinese motif incorporated in the design repertoire of Andalusí / Nasrid architectural theories and practices as a result of the Mongol conquests of Iran and Iraq in the second half of the 13th century, and transferred via Mamluk luxury goods in Egypt and Syria during the 14th (59-60).



Lotus flower (*Nelumbo nucifera*)



Monochromed
Wooden
Lotus Heights
*Patio de los
leones / Lions*
Courtyard
(Palace of
Lions)



Polychromed Wooden Lotus Fantasia.

Salón del embajador / Hall of Ambassadors (Comares Palace)

4. “Like and orbit of water”

Symbolic dimensions of water and nature:
ablutions, *agua bendita* (blessed water),
relax, meditation, the garden as a place to
'take refuge and hide even from oneself'
(Michel de Certeau)

Hold the water.
Albercones / Reservoirs



Water descending a staircase.
Escalera del agua / Water Staircase
(Generalife Palace)



Water moves through the planes.
Patio de la Acequia / Ditch Courtyard
(Generalife Palace)



Still water—mirror, mirror.
Patio de los Arrayanes / Myrtle Courtyard
(Comares Palace)



Stoned bush.

Patio de los arrayanes / Myrtle Courtyard
(Comares Palace)



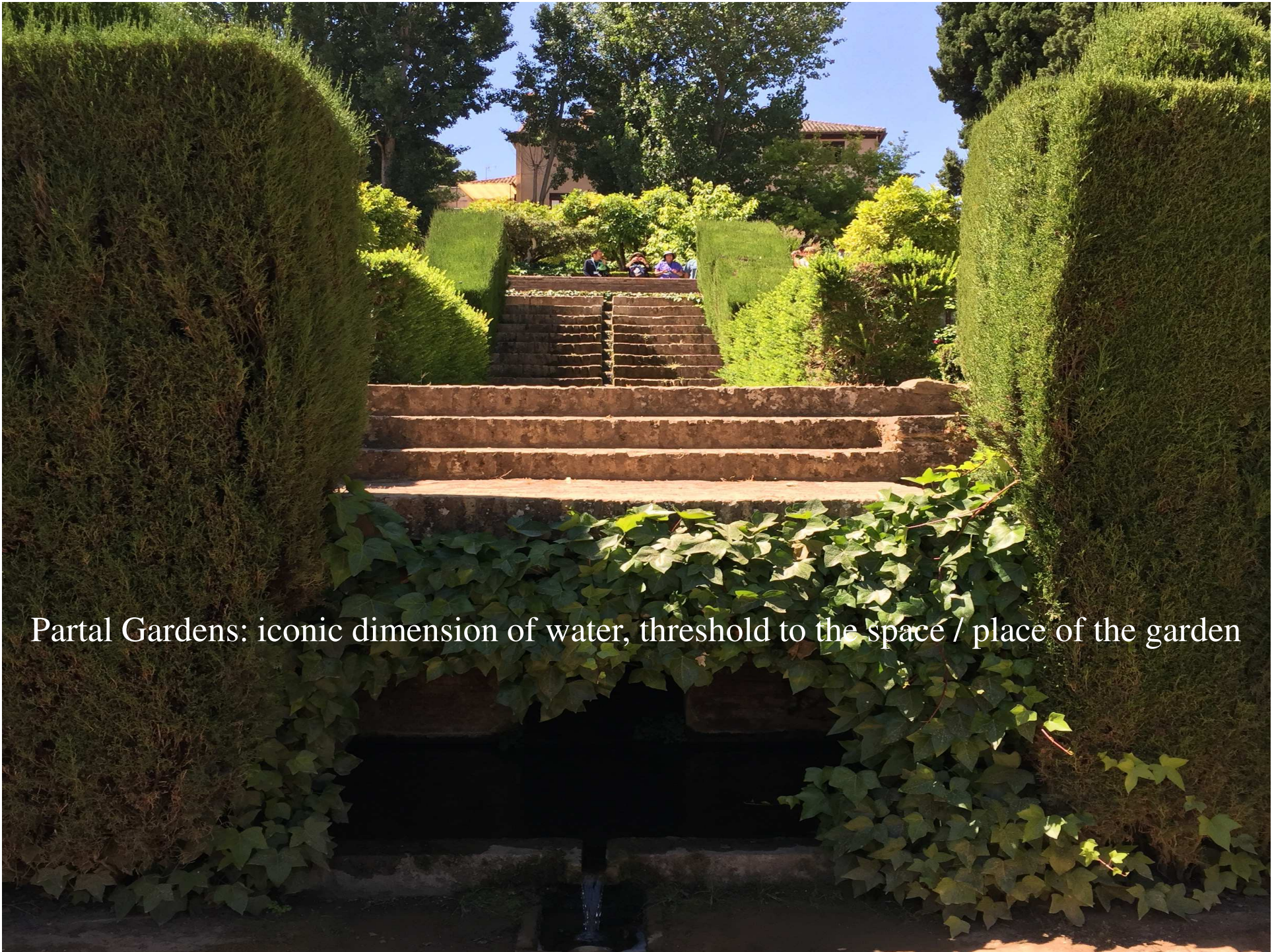
5. The Gardens of la Alhambra

Nature and architecture in la Alhambra

- . Nature transcends time, space, and by virtue of its transformation due to water temperature changes (gas, liquid, solid) and landscape changes, it becomes not merely an indexical sign of representation, but a symbolic and iconic unit associated with climate both literal / physical and figurative (e.g. in social hierarchies, in spiritual meaning)
- . Architecture not only represents / imitates nature; it actually encompasses it, embraces it, holds it, it is held by it



Acequia Real: ditching the entrance to la Alhambra



Partal Gardens: iconic dimension of water, threshold to the space / place of the garden



Shallow basin fountains in the Lions Palace: water as engine of life cycle



Myrtle courtyard, liquid stone



Murmur in the Golden Room:
water as intimate mystery

“The architectural and ornamental elements of the Palace of the Lions have mimetic qualities, which are reflected in the verses of Ibn al-Khatib found throughout the court [...]. The juxtaposition of verse, structure, and ornament came to allegorically represent gardens in literary and philosophic writing, which must be more fully addressed and contemplated”

Cynthia Robinson, “Marginal Ornament” (20)

Divine geometries
Patio de los leones / Lions Courtyard
(Palace of Lions)



Poem on the basin of the Fountain of Lions Ibn Zamrak (1333-1393)

May The One who granted the imam Mohammed
with the beautiful ideas to decorate his mansions be blessed.
For, are there not in this garden wonders
that God has made incomparable in their beauty,
and a sculpture of pearls with transparent light,
the borders of which are trimmed with seed pearl?
Melted silver flows through the pearls,
to which it resembles in its pure dawn beauty.
Apparently, water and marble seem to be one,
without letting us know which of them is flowing.
Don't you see how the water spills on the basin,
but its spouts hide it immediately?
It is a lover whose eyelids are brimming over with tears,
tears that it hides from fear of a betrayer.



Poetic waters
*Fuente de los
leones /*
Fountain of
Lions
(Palace of
Lions)

B FUENTE DE LOS LEONES

En el Jardín Feliz el agua posee un protagonismo estético y simbólico especial organizado desde y en confluencia con la Fuente de los Leones. El agua relaciona los principales espacios del palacio en perpetuo movimiento: brota en el centro de las *qubbas* norte y sur (de Dos Hermanas y Abencerrajes) y de los surtidores que hay en el centro de cada uno de los templetos oriental y occidental, así como de los pórticos de las salas de los Reyes y Mocarabes, donde mana de nuevos surtidores. A través de los cuatro canales que atraviesan el patio y lo

dividen en cuatro parterres, las aguas se reúnen en la Fuente provenientes de los cuatro puntos cardinales, y brotan en el centro mismo del palacio, siendo expulsadas, además, por las bocas de los doce leones en todas direcciones. Aunque la mayor parte de los andenes y del patio estuvieron solados de mármol blanco, algunos árboles frutales y plantas ornamentales hubieron de dar vida al patio, como afirmaba Antonio Lalain en 1501, quien, además de la citada solería, vio allí seis naranjos.



La Fuente de los Leones tiene esculpido en su borde un poema de 12 versos compuesto por Ibn Zamrak en honor de Muḥammad V. Seis de sus versos (dos de ellos con leves cambios) pertenecieron a la casida madre de 146 versos (al-Macqari, *Azhār* II: 69-70; Naḥī: VII: 188-195), de la que se extrajo el poema de la Sala de Dos Hermanas; en dicha casida se describe, entre otras cosas, la Dār al-mulk (Casa Regia) de Muḥammad V, y fue recitada en el banquete de circuncisión de su hijo el emir 'Abd Allāh. El comienzo del poe-

ma y los versos en que se alude al curso del agua y a los leones fueron añadidos expresamente para la fuente. Más tarde, Yūsuf III, nieto de Muḥammad V y sobrino del citado emir, al presentar el poema en el *Diwān* (p. 129) que compiló de Ibn Zamrak, subrayó la simbología del conjunto escultórico: "Dijo [Ibn Zamrak] y fue grabado en el pilón de mármol levantado allí sobre los leones, que fueron puestos como alegoría del valor (*bā's*) y generosidad (*yūd*) que quien los puso -Dios le conceda su favor- reúne".

مَعَانِي زَاكِنَتْ بِالْحَسَمَالِ الْمَعَانِيَا
1 كِبَارَكَ مِنْ أَعْطَى الْإِيمَانَ مُحَمَّدًا
أَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يُلْقَى لَهَا الْحَسْنَ بَدَائِعًا
2 وَالْأَفْهَامَ الرَّؤُوسِ فِيهِ بَدَائِعًا
لُحَلِي بِمَرْفُوعِ الْجَمَانِ التَّرَاجِيَا
3 وَمَتَحَوَّرَةً مِنْ لُؤْلُؤِ شَفَى نُورَهَا
عَدَا مِثْلَهَا فِي الْحَسَنِ أَيْتِيسَ صَافِيَا
4 يَدْرُوبُ لِحَيْضٍ سَالٍ بَيْنَ جَوَاهِرِ
لَسَلَّمَ نَدْرًا يَا مِنْهُمَا كَانَ جَارِيَا
5 وَلَا كَيْتَهَا سَدَدَتْ عَلَيْهِ الْمَجَارِيَا
وَحَظَّصَ ذَلِكَ الدَّمْعُ إِذْ خَافَ وَاهِيَا
6 أَلَمْ تَسْرُ أَنْ الْمَاءَ يَجْرِي بِصَفْحِيهَا
كَيْفَ لِحَيْضٍ مُجِيبٍ فَاصٌّ بِالْذَّمْعِ جَفْنِيهَا
7 وَحَلَّ هِيَ فِي التَّحْقِيقِ غَيْرَ عَمَانِيَا
8 وَقَدْ أَهْتَبَتْ كُلَّ الْخَلِيفَةِ إِذْ عَدَدَتْ
9 فَيَسْمَنْ رَأَى الْأَسَادَ وَهِيَ رَوَائِيسُ
10 وَيَا وَارِثَ الْأَنْصَارِ لِأَعْنِ كِلَالِيَا
عَلَيْكَ سَلَامٌ اللَّهُ فَاسَلَّمْ مُخَلَّدًا
12 تُجَلِّدُ أَعْيَادًا وَيُجَلِّسِي أَعَادِيْسَا

- 1 ¡Bendito sea Aquel que dio al imán Muḥammad ideas que embellecen sus mansiones!
- 2 ¿No hay en este jardín (rawd) maravillas que Dios no quiso que semejantes hullara la hermosura?
- 3 Tallada [la fuente] de perlas, de alifana luz (nūr) engalanada toda ella está por el aljófar (yūmān) derramado.
- 4 Líquida plata entre joyas fluyente, con la belleza de éstas, blanca y transparente.
- 5 Tan semejante lo que fluye es a lo inerte que no sabemos cuál de ambos discurre.
- 6 ¿No ves que el agua por su taza corre pero ésta le cierra (saddat 'alay-hi) su cauce, igual que un amante cuyas lágrimas van a desbordarse y que por temor al delator las retiene?
- 7 Y es que en verdad [la fuente] no es sino una nube de la que manan canales hacia los leones, lo mismo que la mano del califa dones hacia los leones de la guerra (usd al-yihād) mana.
- 8 ¡Oh tú que ves a los leones agazapados, pues el respeto que te tienen les impide agredir!
- 9 ¡Oh tú que de los Anšār por línea directa hereditaste un sublime legado que a las firmes montañas menospreciadas repitanse tus celebraciones y tus enemigos abátanse.
- 10 La paz de Dios sea contigo, vive por siempre, repitanse tus celebraciones y tus enemigos abátanse.

(Ibn Zamrak, para Muḥammad V, metro "tawīl", rima "iyā")

v. 5: 2º hemistiquio: el diván y la casida madre dan lam adri ("no sé"), aunque en el mármol se grabó lam nadri ("no sabemos");

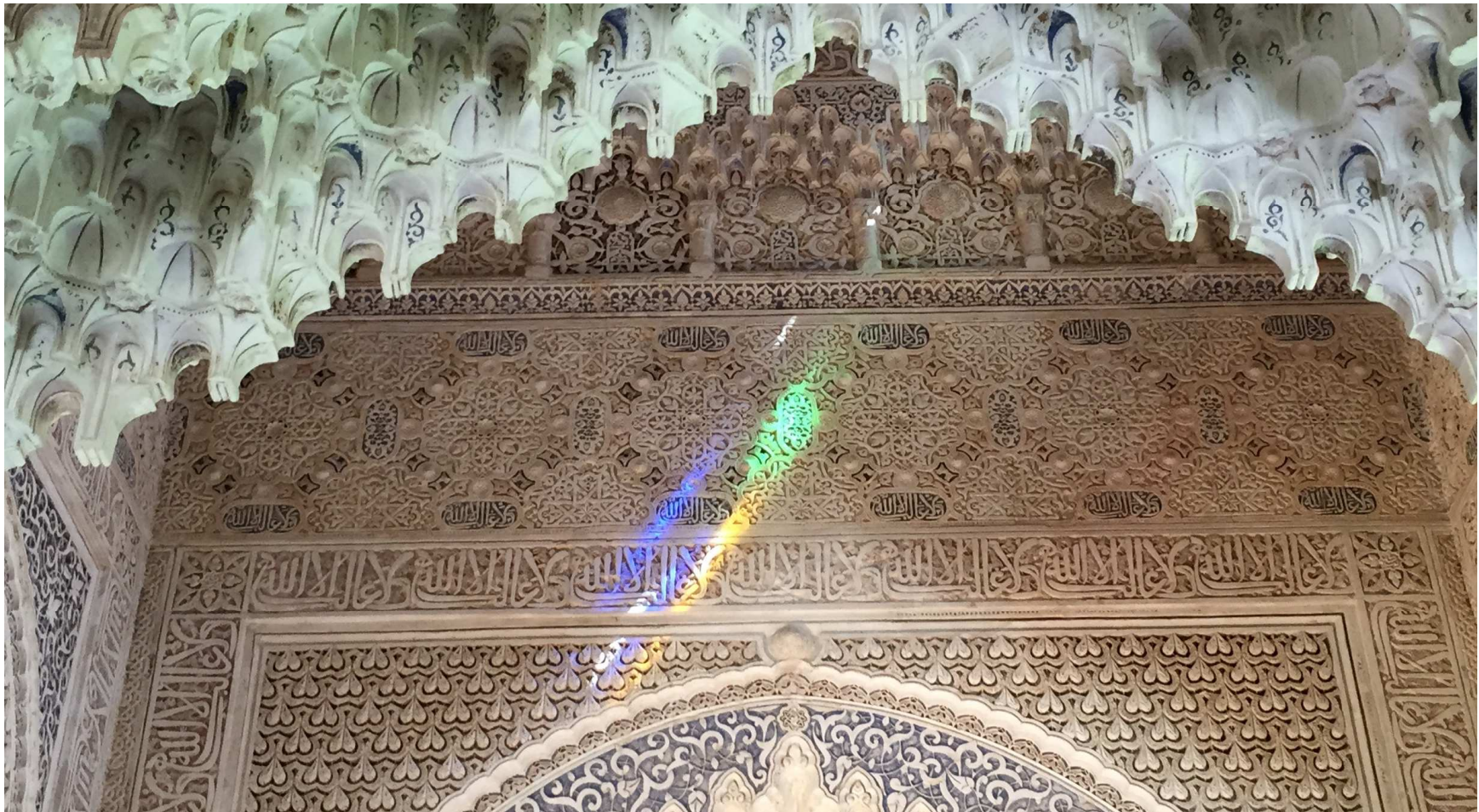
v. 6: sólo en este verso ofrece el Diwān de Ibn Zamrak una variante destacable respecto a las lecturas anteriores y que parece corresponderse con lo realmente esculpido en la fuente: el verbo saddat (ceerrar, taponar) en lugar de maddat, baddat, inbarat, etc., que leyeron los diversos estudiosos.

Mighty gaze

Mirador de Lindaraxa / Lindraxa outlook (Palace of Lions)

- . Fairchild D. Ruggles: deeply encoded system of interconnected roles of structure, ornament, and inscriptions.
- . The multiple *miradores* or viewing spaces found in the Nasrid Palaces must be understood as a part of whole ‘system of looking,’ which according to her “did not simply offer views” but, in fact, “demanded the very act of vision”
- . This system includes the design of windows as a kind of perforated frame, through which a subject-object relationship was established, and in which the ruler who observed the surrounding landscape “was made the commander of the vista or, in effect, its creator”
- . In Lindaraxa, to be precise, she argues that architectural decoration, composed of geometric and ornamental vegetation, serves to “visually dematerialize the barrier between ruler and dominion” through the play of light and shadow over the carved plaster

Colored garden
Mirador de Lindaraxa / Lindraxa outlook
(Palace of Lions)



Hybrid forest

Mirador de Lindaraxa / Lindraxa outlook
(Palace of Lions)





Hybrid
waters
*Fuente de
Lindaraxa*
/ Lindraxa
fountain
(Palace of
Lions)



Poem on the basin of the Fountain of Lindaraxa
Ibn Zamrak (1333-1393)

I reach the highest degree of beauty
and my being astounds worldly men.
No one ever saw greatest space than mine
as much in the East as in the West,
no king, Christian or Arab, owned before,
a fountain quite like me.
I am like an orbit of water that to men
appears radiant and does not hide;
a great sea, enclosed by shorelines,
of superlatively beautiful chosen marble.
My water is melted pearls, which through ice
you see glide (hold that as a great marvel),
And, by virtue of its diaphanous water, through it
I do not disappear from you, not even a second.

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