



Al-Andalus tilework

masterpieces of craftsmanship on the walls

It's called 'alicatado' tilework, due to the main tool used for cutting the edges of the small pieces that are later put together, known as an al-qata'a or alicate in Spanish.



These tiles-azulejos in Spanish- (from the Arabic az-zula'ij,) are “waterproof ceramic pieces that are flat and rather thin made with a clay-like base and covered in glassy finish: a ceramic glaze”.



The Muslim Andalusians adapted this way of decorating their buildings, which had substituted the mosaics introduced by the Romans.



Greco-Romano mosaics = tesseras, small pieces of marble, in similar shapes which can be interchanged. However, Al-Andalus tilework is more complex, as the ceramic pieces are cut by hand into different shapes and sizes, which are then fit together.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wrQsc5c-w98>



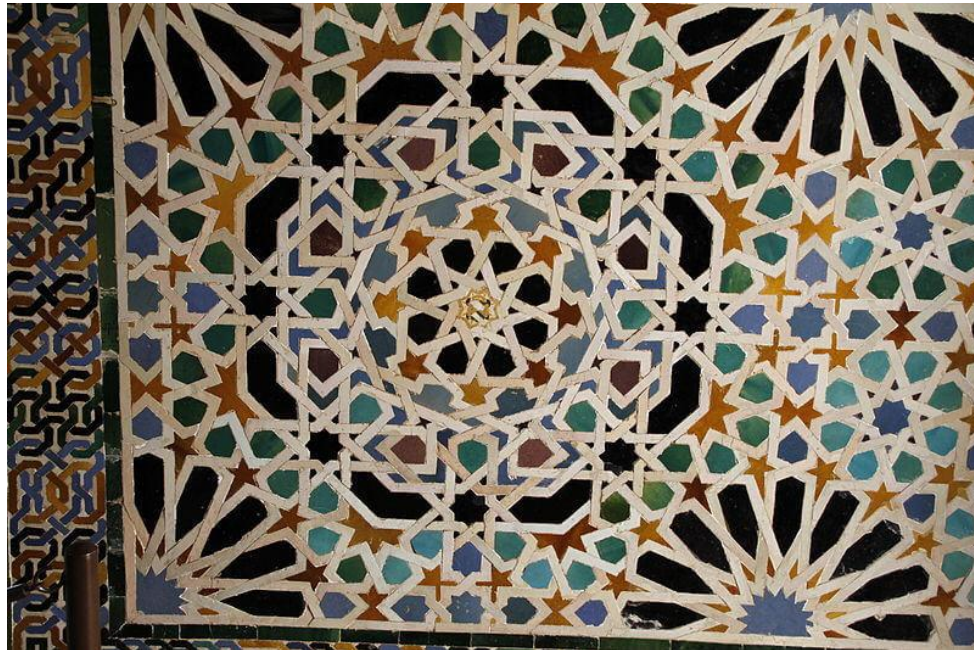
Within the nomadic past of the Andalusian Muslims, there is the tradition of decorating the inside of their jaimas (Arabic tents) with eye-catching fabrics.



In Al-Andalus, they were no longer nomads, so the walls of their houses and palaces featured colours and shapes similar to the ones they had in the desert.



The small pieces of clay and glass form geometric figures when they are joined together to create different decorative motifs.



The use of purely geometric elements to create elaborate patterns became a sophisticated form of decoration.



The attractiveness of Islamic geometric decoration lies in the logical interrelation between parts, reflecting the underlying order found in nature through abstract form, where each and every one of the parts forms an indivisible whole.

