

## Photo Identification for Handout 2

### Images of Zillij

- 21941 Zillij in Casablanca
- 21942 Intricate example of zillij from Casablanca
- 21945 Elaborate zillij from Casablanca
- 21953 Intricate zillij
- 22543 An example of zillij
- 22595 A street-side fountain in Fez covered with zillij
- 24033 An artisan repairing old zillij on a mosque wall in Fez
- 23998 Moroccan man sitting in front of a mosque wall
- 23991 Zillij and Arabic calligraphy
- 22125 An example of zillij
- 22140 Zillij on a mosque
- 22142 An intricate example of zillij

## **Handout 1**

### **Marvelous Moroccan Mosaics**

What is zillij?

Morocco! The very name fascinates the Western world, conjuring up mysterious images. For years, American and European writers, artists, moviemakers, and travelers have promoted its fantasy and unique aspects. It is a country of contrasts in landscape and culture. Its landscape offers both hardship and beauty, and its culture is both the old and the modern, hand in hand. It is a country of unusual sights and experiences, and of great artistry, all of which attract people to Morocco.

Among its unique traditional crafts is the mosaic tile work called zillij. It is used to decorate sidewalk planters, buildings, floors, houses of worship, restaurants, and homes. You can find zillij just about anywhere in Morocco. The craft of making this tile is in such demand worldwide that artisans flock to Fez, one of Morocco's largest cities, to work in shops to learn the craft.

Most of the people in Morocco are Muslims, meaning that they follow the religion of Islam. Islam is a religion with a very rich geometric art. Because the Islamic religion discourages artists from painting people, animals, and other real-world objects, Islamic artists have been creating magnificent tessellating patterns in their tile work for centuries. The famous Dutch tessellation artist, M.C. Escher (1898-1972), was inspired by Islamic tiling designs. He altered geometric tessellating shapes to make birds, reptiles, fish, and people.

Perhaps you have seen tiled floors and kitchens, but they are not as beautiful as the zillij tile work found all over Morocco!