

## The City of Lucena in Arab Sources

*Felipe Maíllo Salgado*

The city of Lucena, known in Arabic as Lujjāna, Lūsana, Līsana, or Alyāna, according to some is to be identified with ancient Erisana, which appears in the the *Ibéricas* of Apiano.<sup>1</sup> It is known in Hebrew sources as Alisana al-Yahūd (Lucena of the Jews), and is located on a sloping plain in the southern part of the peninsula, which is protected from the hot winds by the Sierra of Aracelí and the Hill of Hacho. The prevailing winds generally blow from the north,<sup>2</sup> and they provide it with a milder and cooler climate than that experienced during the summer months in nearby towns. Its territory is fertile and grapes and olives are still cultivated there today, as in the past.

Little is known concerning the history of Lucena, though legends exist which assume it was founded by Jews.<sup>3</sup> Despite the Roman and Gothic remains which have come to light there, the town does not undisputedly appear in history until the era of Arab rule. The historical uniqueness of the Jewish town of Lucena, under Islamic control during the Middle Ages, merits more detailed treatment than received in the very brief summary in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.

Given that the Jewish history of Lucena unfolded primarily, if not entirely, during the period of Muslim control, Arab sources mentioning the town, including texts by eastern and western Arab-

*This article was translated by Alan Paris.*

1. P. Madoz, *Diccionario Geográfico-Estadístico-Histórico de España y sus posesiones de ultramar* (Madrid, 1847), Vol. X, p. 417.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 415.
3. Refer to the legendary data found in Jewish sources collected in H. Beinart, *Los judíos en España* (Madrid, 1992), pp. 11-26.

Muslim authors, geographers, and chroniclers, were studied as the most likely sources of information for this article. I decided to examine several geographical and historical sources closely, with the aim of extracting passages mentioning Lucena or its residents, and attempted to arrange them in chronological order. On the basis of this information, I hoped to create an historical outline of the city and its people as recorded by Arab Muslim historians and geographers.

This course of research proved to be disappointing. My painstaking examination of over 50 Arab sources produced no more than a small amount of material which yielded a poor harvest of information. With the exception of al-Idrisī, Arab geographers — with whose works I was already familiar as a result of my similar research projects in the past — were found to contain no reference to the city. The oriental chroniclers likewise fail to mention the town. I was quite surprised to discover that, with rare exception, Maghrebi and Andalusian chroniclers similarly neglected Lucena. None the less, I have decided to assemble this data and synthesize it in this article.

It could easily be assumed that Lucena was of no particular significance to the Muslims, and that its demographic and economic importance must have been much more modest than some have suggested. On the other hand, one must also bear in mind that the Jewish and Christian communities were not treated as important subjects in the discourses of Muslim chroniclers and geographers during the Middle Ages.

It is well known that the Jews had been so brutally treated by the Visigoths, who eventually forced them to accept Christianity or exile, that when the Muslims invaded Spain they were received by the Jews as virtual saviours. The Jewish population co-operated with and aided the Muslims, who, due to their shortage of permanent forces, entrusted the Jews with the defence of several cities (Seville, Granada, Córdoba, and Toledo among others) while they pursued further conquests.

As a 'people of the book' the Jews enjoyed relative tolerance under the Muslims, who permitted them administrative and legal organization and the free practice of their religion.<sup>4</sup> The prosperity

4. E. Lévi-Provençal, *L'Espagne musulmane au Xe siècle. Institutions et vie*

and favour enjoyed by the Jews under the reigning emirs and caliphs halted conversion and attracted large numbers of oriental and Mediterranean Jews to the country. Many *juderías* were thus established in different cities including some like Granada which, according to Arab authors,<sup>5</sup> had a significant Jewish population, and one entirely Jewish city: Lucena.

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Lucena does not appear in Arab or Jewish sources until the ninth century. The first reference to the town is from a *responsum* (a reply to a legal or religious question) issued by R. Natronay, *gaon* of Sura in Babylonia in 853, who wrote that Lucena (Alisāna) is 'a city of many Jews' with 'no Gentile in its midst'.<sup>6</sup>

Another reference to the city attributed to the ninth century is found in the great compendium of the Maghrebi Ibn 'Idhāri al-Marrākushī who, in *Al-Bayān al-Muğrib*, completed at the beginning of the fourteenth century, traces the history of the lands of the Muslim West up to the period from the seventh to the thirteenth century, and tells us of the famous Christian commander Ibn Ḥafsūn and of the emir al-Mundhir (information presumably taken from the *Muqtabis* of Ibn Ḥayyān). He states that in the year 274/887, 'al-Mundhir sent 'Abd Allah b. Muḥammad b. Muḍar and the *fatā* Abdūn with the cavalry towards Lucena (Lujjāna) [in the *cora*] of Cabra, where they encountered an armed group of supporters of Ibn Ḥafsūn; they clashed and fought until they had annihilated them'.<sup>7</sup>

*sociale* (Paris, 1932), pp. 37-9; N. Roth, 'The Jews and the Muslim Conquest of Spain', *Jewish Social Studies*, 38 (1976), 145-58.

5. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad ar-Rāzi notes: 'The *casillo* [sic] of Granada which is called *villa* of the Jews, and this is the most ancient *villa* in the district of Elvira and the Jews inhabit it'. See P. de Gayangos, 'Memoria sobre la autenticidad de la crónica denominada del moro Rasis', *Memorias de la Real Academia de la Historia*, 8 (1852), 37.
6. Y. Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, trans. L. Schoffman (Philadelphia, 1978), Vol. I, p. 23; H. Beinart, *Andalucía y sus Judíos* (Córdoba, 1986); *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. XI, p. 550.
7. Ibn 'Idhāri, *Al-Bayān al-Muğrib*, ed. G.S. Colin and E. Lévi-Provençal (Leiden, 1981), Vol. II, p. 115.

This short and ambiguous passage does not tell us if the Jews of Lucena participated in this battle. A reference to Lucena found in another text quoted below provides information concerning the nature of this armed contingent, without doubt made up of other peoples who marauded in areas bordering on the city.

Ibn Ḥayyān (377/987-469/1076), in his famous work *Al-Muqtabis*, writes about the well-known commander: 'Umar b. Ḥafsūn, at the end of the year 277 (890-891), quartered in the fortress of Poley which he selected, fortified, and reinforced, conducted incursions to the castles of the *cora* of Cabra, the city of Lucena (Lisāna) — a place of Jews subject to head tax — and other cities and castles of the same *alfoz* of Cordoba'.<sup>8</sup> This verifies that Ibn Ḥafsūn attacked Muslims and Jews with the same enthusiasm, making them victims of his razzias. Though some in the region took his side, the people of Lucena remained faithful to the emir of Córdoba.

In the same work, this author provides us with more information concerning the city in the tenth century, during the rule of Khalif al-Ḥakām II. Minimal as it is, this information is of greater interest to us: 'At this time [I Jumādā 363=28 January 973] a license was granted to the Jew al-Ḥajjaḡ b. Mutawakkil over the *qusāma*<sup>9</sup> of his people, the Jews of Lucena (al-Yusāna).'<sup>10</sup> This is a reference to the appointment of some kind of official to the *judería*, responsible for dividing the possessions of the deceased among the heirs. The position was important enough to be granted by the caliph himself, perhaps for the benefits it provided.

The most extensive references to Lucena and its inhabitants encountered in an Arab source come from 'Abd Allāh, the last Zirid king of Granada (465/1073-439/1090) in his memoirs, a work

8. Ibn Ḥayyān, *Al-Muqtabis III*, ed. I. al-'Arabi (Casablanca, 1411/1990), pp. 115-16.

9. He was appointed *qassām*, (in charge of inheritance), and also was to deal with questions of unclaimed inheritance; see E. Fagnan, *Additions aux dictionnaires Arabes*, 142; R. Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires Arabes*, Vol. II, 346 b); this would give him the right to keep part of the above-mentioned property.

10. Ibn Ḥayyān, *Al-Muqtabis VI*, ed. 'Abd ar-Rahmān' Al al-Ḥayyi (Beirut, 1965; 2nd. edn. 1983), p. 149.

entitled *At-Tibyān 'an al-ḥāditha al-kā'ina bi-dawlat Banī Zīrī fī Garnāṭa* (Account of the events which occurred in the Banū Zīrī state of Granada), a narrative in the first person which recounts events during his reign — after first relating to his predecessors.

Despite his subjectivity (the work is an apologia in his favour directed at the Almoravids), 'Abd Allah provides us with clear information concerning our subject. He writes:

During this interregnum there were other deals and events which were indicative that my situation was going to change, and presaged my fall from power. The first was the rebellion of the inhabitants of Lucena (al-Yussāna), caused by a small and truly insignificant pretext which I shall relate.

This is what happened: When I ordered the construction of the wall adjoining the Alhambra ('al-Ḥamrā), due to events so notorious that they need not be mentioned, we had the good fortune that the bricklayers found a pot full of gold. Advised of this, I found in this pot 3,000 Ja'farid *meticales*. This delighted me and seemed to me to be a good omen for the realization of my plans (so the world laughs at us, as it did at our forefathers before us!). 'The construction will emerge from the foundations', I said to myself.

Likewise, from those foundations, in another era, arose the house of the Jew Abū-al-Rabī', treasurer of the government of my grandfather (may God have mercy upon him!); I understood that these were riches which he had buried. Ibn al-Marra then advised me concerning this matter: 'Send to find his son, so that he might reveal to you the location of the remaining treasures'. Thus, I wrote to him, asking him to come and visit me, under the pretext of another matter. He was the son-in-law of Ibn Maymūn, who I had installed as *alamin* to the Jews of Lucena, and for whom I had done many other favours in order to honour him; a clever man who had attracted foreigners to the city so as to keep his coreligionists as loyal subjects. In any case, this Ibn Maymūn smelled a rat, became alarmed, and prevented his son-in-law from coming to see me. For his part, the son-in-law also developed suspicions and fears that I would subject him to torture in order to determine the location of his father's riches.

Prior to this, on leaving Aledo, I had to impose payment of a considerable quantity of gold upon the inhabitants of Lucena as an exceptional donation (*taqwiya*), not required by customary law (*'āda*), but which I ordered as if it was correct and normal. For this reason, they distanced themselves from me, and Ibn Maymūn now found a way to instil vice in them and move them to rebellion. They in fact adopted this position, rising up in arms. Ibn Maymūn told them: 'Strive, oh congregation of the children of Israel, to defend your possessions'. His attitude made him more hateful to me, for prior to this, he had committed another crime, murdering the intendant of my personal patrimony (*'āmil 'a lā mustajlas*), Ibn Abī Lawlā, in order to gain greater authority and make me hostile.

Seeing the rebellion in Lucena, and having no other remedy but to try to solve the problem without violence, I appointed Mu'ammal to take care of the matter, and he left on his mission. Following his departure, I considered the position and understood that we would be faced with one of two possible situations: either phony obedience or a real rebellion, and that in either case it would be necessary to send an army to apply pressure on them and make them fearful, forcing them to understand the magnitude of their crime. As a result, I myself went out in pursuit of Mu'ammal, with troops mobilized for this purpose; however, I encountered Mu'ammal on his return, and he dissuaded me from carrying out my plan saying: 'I have taken care of the matter with Ibn Maymūn. Your expedition will only increase the deviation of these people, who may request the assistance of an army from Ibn 'Abbād. The fact that Ibn 'Abbād is now in Córdoba makes this even more likely. In that event, it will be impossible to take the town by siege or by assault'.

I knew that at this moment Ibn 'Abbād would ignore them, and would be unlikely to assist them openly; that this was all idle talk of people and things in which Ibn Maymūn gloried and which made him seem pleasing to the people of Lucena. Notwithstanding, I accepted Mu'ammal's advice and returned to encamp near my capital, saying to myself: 'It is all the same if I stay here or go there. What I wanted was to frighten them, and this we have achieved'. Then, I asked Mu'ammal to relate

to me what had happened. 'Ibn Maymūn, chief (*z'a'im*) of Lucena' — he answered — 'enumerated to me the things which had displeased him, such as calling on his son-in-law, and the high tax which you have imposed upon them, together with the other tributes which you oblige them to pay. I have promised them some official letters relieving them of such obligations, and promised Ibn Maymūn respect for his personal property'. I consented to this proposal and ordered the documents to be composed and sent, and this restored calm.

None the less, Ibn Maymūn continued to worry me because of the rebellious stand which he had openly taken and because I realized that the truce was only temporary; that he would never be truly loyal to me, and that he would soon return to his bad habits; but later I received favourable innuendoes from the Jews, who he had kept in the dark. I promised to favour them and through the repeated interventions of Ibn Siqī, succeeded in achieving my aim. The capture of Ibn Maymūn was relatively easy due to his lack of allies and the fact that he did not suspect that he could be captured. I also availed myself of the good offices of Ibn al-Marra and of the physician (*al-hakīm*) Abu-l-'Abbas; this was something for which Mu'ammal, who I prescinded, did not forgive me. In summary, when the Jewish notables came to the capital, as was the custom, I ordered that Ibn Maymūn and his son be taken [prisoner], with the compliance of the sheikhs, and that, from that day on, there would be no chief (*z'a'im*) among them, but rather that they would all be *alamines*. As this suited them, they thanked me, very satisfied, and I wrote to the inhabitants of Lucena concerning the advantages this would bring them. With these measures the situation calmed down and remained stable until the moment when all was lost.<sup>11</sup>

Later on in his memoirs, 'Abd Allāh again refers to the town and its inhabitants: 'When Lucena rose up against me, as I mentioned

11. 'Abd Allāh, *Tibyan*, ed. E. Lévi-Provençal, *Al-Andalus*, Vol. IV (1936-38), 93-5; trans. E. Lévi-Provençal and E. García Gómez, *El siglo XI en P' persona* (Madrid, 1980), pp. 237-40.

above, Ibn al-Aḥmar formed agreements with its inhabitants, making them promises and ordering them to hold their ground until they saw how the matter would end'.<sup>12</sup> He also writes about the actions of the Lucena Jews when the emir of the Muslims, Yūsuf b. Tāshufin, invited them to submit to him:

Immediately the emir sent messages for Lucena — which was the first of my states to submit to him — and to all the castles of the eastern area, and the above-mentioned Nu'mān, who had long intrigued among them. These letters stated: 'In continuation, I tell you that "the truth has appeared and falsehood vanished and become non-existent" [XVII, 83]. Moreover, if you do not submit to me "prepare yourselves for a war against you by Allah and His Messenger"' [II, 279]. When one of these letters arrived at a castle of that region, it was subjected under the act, and the garrison rose up to expel the *caid* who sent it. In this manner, all the castles were breaking away from my authority, one by one, like a broken necklace.<sup>13</sup>

Later, according to the anonymous Andalusian author of *Al-Hulal al Mawshīyya fī dhikr al-akhbār al-marrakūshiya* (The embroidered tunics in the report of the news of Marrakush) — a motley patchwork narrative completed in the year 783/1381-2, which summarizes the events in the Almoravid Empire — in the year 495 (25 October 1101–14 October 1102), Yūsuf b. Tāshufin, visiting the peninsula for the fourth time,

travelled via the city of Lucena (al-Yusāna), a very powerful city, whose walls were the highest of all and which was inhabited exclusively by Jews. The reason for passing via this place was that one of the *alfaqūes* of Córdoba found a book written by Ibn Masarra, the *montagnard*<sup>14</sup> of Córdoba, in which a tradition dating back to the Prophet is mentioned, according to

12. *Ibid.*, translation, p. 255.

13. *Ibid.*, translation, p. 262.

14. Cordoban ascetic and philosopher (269/883-319/931) known as al-Jabali, 'the montagnard'. See M. Asín Palacios, *Abenmasarra y su escuela* (Madrid, 1914), pp. 29-40.



which the Jews undertook to convert to Islam if by the fifth century of the Hegira [eleventh century of the Christian era] their own prophet had not arrived as they expected. This was because it was found in the Tora that God said to Moses: 'The prophet, the messenger whose name is Muḥammad, through him will undoubtedly appear justice and continuous light until the time arrives'. The Jews believed that it would be one of their own people and that he would not come until the beginning of the fifth / eleventh century, and if not, that it would be him [Muḥammad].

The Cordoban *alfaqū* quoted brought the case before the emir of the Muslims, who passed through the city in order to see what could be done. It is said that he took out a quantity of money for that purpose, and that the kadi Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Ḥamdīn b. at-Taglibī gained Yūsuf's agreement to their demand to be left [in peace].<sup>15</sup>

Finally, the last reference to Lucena encountered in the sources consulted comes from the work *Kitāb Nuzhat al-mushtāq fī Ikhtirāq al-āfāq* (Guidebook for one who yearns to traverse the horizons) of the famous geographer al-Idrisī, who finished writing this work in 548/1154. There he writes:

Between the south and the west lies Lucena (al-Yusāna), which is the city of the Jews. It has a suburb which is inhabited by Muslims and some Jews — where the *aljama* mosque is located — but it is not walled. The city [on the other hand] is fortified with an impregnable wall. It is surrounded on all sides by a very deep moat and some canals whose abundant water fills the moat.

The Jews live within the city and do not allow Muslims to enter. Its people [the Jews] are decidedly wealthy and fortunate, wealthier than all the other Jews of Muslim lands. The Jews there are on guard and well equipped against the

15. *Al-Ḥulal al-Mawshīyya fī dhikr al-akhbār al-marrākushiyya*, ed. I.S. Allouche (Rabat, 1936), pp. 65-6; trans. in A. Huici, *Al-Ḥulal al-Mawshīyya* (Tetuan, 1951), pp. 93-4.

exploits of their adversaries.<sup>16</sup>

These are the only references to Lucena and its inhabitants encountered in Arab sources. Having presented them in chronological order and in context, we will now summarize them, filling in the gaps whenever possible with other data and information encountered in additional sources and in documented studies.

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Both Arab and Jewish sources and testimonies going back to the ninth century show that Lucena's population was predominantly Jewish as, for example, stated by R. Natronay, *gaon* of Sura, and Ibn Ḥayyān. Only its suburbs included some Muslim population. It is also known that the town or, more correctly, *medina*, was surrounded by strong fortifications. If we accept what the Zirid Granadan king 'Abd Allāh writes, these were so strong that it was impossible to take the town by attack. We also know from a *responsum* of R. Isaac Alfasi, that in places other than Lucena, the Jews had farms and large estates, at least in the ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries, as would later be the case in Andalusia under Castilian rule.<sup>17</sup> This leads us to believe that the *alfoz* of Lucena was, likewise, largely in Jewish hands. Al-Idrīsī states that these Jews were wealthier than all the other Jews in Muslim lands.

The merchants of Lucena dealt in manufactured and agricultural products of the city, which they sold to other cities of al-Andalus (Granada, Seville, and Toledo). There was also trade via the port of Pechina with other Mediterranean lands, Egypt in particular. This would appear to have been the primary source of its wealth.

Some of the most powerful families took pride in their lineage. One of these, Ibn Dāwūd, traced his ancestry as far back as King David. Some of the families claimed that their ancestors had arrived at the Iberian Peninsula following the destruction of the First

16. Al-Idrīsī, *Niḥat al-Mushtāq*, partly trans. and ed. R. Dozy and M.J. De Goeje under the title: *Description de l'Afrique et de l'Espagne* (Leiden, 1866, repr. 1968), p. 205.

17. Baer, *A History of the Jews*, Vol. I, p. 383, n. 11.

Temple.<sup>18</sup> The lineage of the Lucentians, particularly in comparison with that of many other Jews, is clearly venerable, and there is no doubt that in the ninth century Lucena must have been one of the most important *juderías* of al-Andalus, serving as a spiritual centre for Iberian Jewry until the tenth century.

The outstanding figure of the ninth century is, perhaps, the sage Eleazar b. Samuel, born at the beginning of that century and a resident of Lucena. He was consulted on a variety of topics in the law by *juderías* throughout the peninsula, to which he replied in *responsa* characterized by depth and erudition. He maintained contact with R. Natronay and R. Paltoy, *geonim* of the Babylonian academies of Sura and Pumbedita respectively.

When Córdoba took precedence over Lucena in the tenth century, Lucena still had its famous *yeshiva*, regarded as one of the most important centres of Judaism at the time and certainly the most important one in Iberia,<sup>19</sup> as well as teachers of great renown to whom students came from North Africa and France as well as the Iberian Peninsula.<sup>20</sup>

After the fall of the caliphate, Córdoba declined as a result of civil wars as well as geopolitical factors; on account of the new organization of peninsular Islamic territory in different kingdoms, the Cordoban cultural sphere collapsed. Lucena then arose once again as a centre of Jewish learning. Moreover, being as it was an impregnable, exclusively Jewish city — which presumably controlled its *alfoz* — and situated in an out-of-the-way place in the *taifas* of the Kingdom of Granada, it could now enjoy greater autonomy. The king of Seville, al-Mu'taḍid, who wanted to do away with

18. See E. Ashtor, *The Jews of Moslem Spain* (Philadelphia, 1973), Vol. I, p. 309, and Vol. II, p. 143; Beinart, *Los Judíos en España*, pp. 11-25. As already indicated by C. Carrete Parrondo, some of the Hispanic Jewish communities, not only the Lucentians, for a variety of motives, claimed that their presence in Spain dated back to a period long before Jesus of Nazareth. As part of this desperate attempt, various falsifications were brought up relating to the Jews of ancient Jerusalem, and sepulchral stones were invoked, whose disputed authenticity suggested the existence of Jewish communities in Hispania since the Solomonic period. 'Apuntes para la historia judía de Lucena', in *Los Judíos de Lucena* (Córdoba, 1988), pp. 23-4.

19. See Beinart, *Los Judíos en España*, Vol II, pp. 60-61.

20. See Ashtor, *The Jews of Moslem Spain*, pp. 135, 308, 384.

this autonomy in 1053, was well aware of the impenetrability of Lucena.<sup>21</sup>

Some rich and educated Jews, experts in politics and in civil administration, were gaining influence at the court of the ruler. They eventually had not only the government of the Jewish communities in their hands but the government of the entire kingdom. There is no need to recall here the case of the viziers Samuel b. Nagrella and his son Joseph, Jews who enjoyed incomparable power during this period (having achieved greater preponderance and privileges than those obtained by Ḥasday b. Shaprūt during the period of the caliph 'Abd ar-Rahmān III). Other Lucentians, such as Abū al-Rabī', treasurer during the reign of Bādīs b. Hābūs (429/1048-465/1073) and Ibn Maymūn, commander (*za'im*) of Lucena, to mention only those appearing in our texts, also held important positions in the kingdom.

These leaders appear to have been landowners who even owned entire villages. The Jewish masses earned a living as farmers, craftsmen, and professionals.<sup>22</sup> Others, as has already been noted, were occupied in trade, and some were involved in the slave traffic, including castration, then exporting the slaves to parts of the Islamic world where they were highly valued, above all as domestic servants.

There seems little doubt that Lucena's Jews were involved in this activity. The geographer al-Muqaddasī, in his work *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm* (The best division for knowing the provinces), informs us that 'the *saqāliba* (slaves), whose country is located beyond Khawarizm, are brought from al-Andalus where they are castrated and then sent to Egypt (. . .) the *saqāliba* are taken to a city inhabited by Jews, located beyond Pechina, in order to be castrated.'<sup>23</sup>

We know from our information that the city was wealthy and flourished in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. This led to the

21. Joseph b. Nagrella informs us of this in a prologue to one of the war poems of his father Samuel, vizier of the Granadan Zīrid. See F. Díaz Esteban, 'Relaciones entre los judíos de Córdoba y los de Lucena', in *Los Judíos de Lucena*, ed. J. Peláez del Rosal (Córdoba, 1988), p. 34.

22. See Baer, *A History of the Jews*, Vol. I, p. 28.

23. Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, partly trans. and ed. Ch. Pellat under the title: *Description de l'Occident musulman au IV<sup>e</sup> = X<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Argel, 1950); text, p. 56; trans., p. 57.

apogee of rabbinical studies (starting in the tenth century) which were encouraged thanks to the aid of the true director of Granadan politics, the vizier Samuel b. Nagrella. He also wrote biblical and talmudic commentaries which occupy a privileged place in Hebrew literature.<sup>24</sup> (Years later, in 1066, when the anti-Jewish revolt erupted in Granada, in the course of which one of his sons, the vizier Joseph b. Nagrella perished, his other son, Abū Nasr Azariah and his late son's widow found refuge in Lucena).<sup>25</sup>

Thus the rabbinical academy of Lucena, directed by talmudists of the stature of Isaac b. Judah b. Gayyat, who would be succeeded by Isaac Alfasi, followed in turn by Joseph b. Migāsh, became the main centre of rabbinic learning in the peninsula,<sup>26</sup> reaching the height of its splendour in the second half of the eleventh century. This, of course, did not halt the cultivation of poetry and other branches of literature in the city.

All told, Lucena and its community, like other Jewish communities in al-Andalus, developed in an Islamic world, in a world in which absolutism, tyranny, and arbitrariness were the main characteristics of political practice with regard to the 'peoples of the book', Jews and Christians. Thus, it was often the case that the more careless and lax the morals and religion of the governing became, the greater the liberty and autonomy which these communities enjoyed.

During the time of 'Abd Allāh, last Zirid Granadan king, we know that Lucena was in open rebellion against its sovereign and that the commander (*za'im*) of the city, Ibn Maymūn, had even dared to kill the intendant of the dominions of the emir, had hired mercenary troops, and appears to have concluded treaties with the king of the *taifa* of Seville. From the protection of his impregnable fortifications, the demands of the Jewish leader of Lucena included

24. J.L. Lacave, *Judéias y sinagogas españolas* (Madrid, 1992), p. 339.

25. See Ashtor, *The Jews of Moslem Spain*, Vol. II, pp. 192-3. Plans were made there for Abū Nasr to become Nagid or spiritual leader of the Jewish communities of al-Andalus, as successor of his grandfather and his father. Moshe b. 'Ezra tells us that he died at the age of 20, and that he was buried at Lucena. See 'Yishaq ibn Gayyat, poeta de Lucena', in *Los Judios de Lucena* (Córdoba, 1988), p. 106.

26. See Lacave, *Judéias y sinagogas*, p. 340.

the cancellation of exceptional taxes (to which the ruler of Granada had previously subjected them), and other tributes. His requests were satisfied through official missives (*sukūk*); 'Abd Allāh, unable to capture the city, did not wish the situation to deteriorate even further. Meanwhile, al-Mu'tamid, king of Seville, was in the nearby city of Córdoba, while an Arab notable named Ibn al-Aḥmar — presumed ancestor of the Nasrids of Granada — was inciting the Lucentians to continue their rebellion against their master.

Pacification was eventually re-established through an agreement between the notables of Lucena (tired of the oppression of Ibn Maymūn) and the ruler of Granada, thus making it possible to depose and capture the Jewish leader; The position of *za'im* was abolished and power which had so far been in the hands of one man was divided among the Jewish notables of Lucena, known as *alamines*.

It appears that the situation continued thus until the arrival of the Almoravids, which put an end to the *taifas* and the splendour of Lucena. In 1090, Granada was in effect conquered and its sovereign dethroned; even earlier, the Lucentians, glorying in realism and pragmatism, had submitted to the Almoravid emir when he threatened to subject them, thus making Lucena the first place in the kingdom of Granada to recognize the sovereignty of Yūsuf b. Tāshufin.

Before long the religious intransigency of the Almoravids provoked the exodus of many Jews from Granada and other places to the Christian kingdoms in the northern part of the peninsula. The city of Lucena served as a refuge for some of them (we know that the grammarian Jonah b. Janāh and the poets Yehuda Ha-Levi and Joseph b. Sahl were, at some point in their lives, in Lucena).<sup>27</sup> At the end of his reign, in 1102, the emir of the Muslims, according to the anonymous author of *Al-Ḥulal al-Mawshiyya*, wished to force the community of Lucena to convert to Islam, but the intervention of a well known kadi — who made him see the illegality of this from the point of view of the *sha'ari 'a* or Muslim law — and the payment of a large sum of money, put an end to this plan.

During the rule of 'Ali b. Yūsuf, powerful Almoravid intransigence was on the decline and the Jews began to occupy positions at

27. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. XI, p. 550.

the court in Seville, while Lucena remained as the nucleus of rabbinic learning. Many court Jews had aligned themselves with the prior regime and were obliged to flee. The Granadan Isaac b. 'Ezra fled to Christian Toledo where he remained for a time, later returned to al-Andalus, and died in 1121 in Lucena,<sup>28</sup> an indication that the city continued to be a relatively secure place. This appears to have held true for the rest of the Almoravid period, namely until the middle of the twelfth century.

The Almoravid decline was accompanied by territorial disintegration and terrible anarchy. At this time, and simultaneously with the first Almohad interventions in the peninsula in 1145, a messianic episode occurred. A Jew named Moshe ad-Dar'i arrived in Lucena from Morocco, proclaiming for all of al-Andalus and in Fez that the Messiah had been revealed. However the awaited Messiah did not appear and the presumed prophet departed for the Holy Land where he died.<sup>29</sup> This episode was no more than a prelude to the great disaster to come: the Almohad conquest of al-Andalus.

The conquest stretched from 1145 to 1170. During this period and in the preceding years, when Almoravid decadence was manifest, many cities and territories were *de facto* independent or autonomous. This must have been the case of Lucena, in view of its stout fortifications. Once the Almohads had taken control — imbued as they were with a greater intransigence than the Almoravids — the unconditional conversion of Jews and Christians to Islam was demanded. As a result, in so far as the Jews were concerned, religious practice was prohibited and synagogues and rabbinic academies were closed. This is hardly surprising: in theory, there were now only Muslims in al-Andalus.

The result of this situation was massive Jewish emigration; sometimes, as in the case of the family of the celebrated Cordoban Maimonides, towards North Africa and later to the East; in the vast majority of cases, towards the kingdoms of Castile, Aragon, and Navarra, or to Provence. In al-Andalus Jews were, after a time, permitted to return to their faith, but the Jewish communities had already been dismantled. There was some emigration of Lucentian

28. Baer, *History of the Jews*, Vol. I, p. 60.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

Jews to Navarra, where they were known for their culture and refinement. Nevertheless, in the fifteenth century old family customs were preserved, the community was governed by the laws of the *aljama* of Lucena, and its members were proud of their origin. 'In one of the *ketubbot* (marriage contracts), discovered in recent years at Tudela, the members of two of its most notable families are said to have been married in accordance with the ordinances — *taqqanot* — of the holy community of Lucena.'<sup>30</sup>

The *judería* of Lucena could never recover following this trauma. When the Castilians took the city in 1240, nothing was said concerning the Jews. The Christian chroniclers barely mention the conquest of the city, with the exception of Rodrigo Ximenez de Rada. In his work *De Rebus Hispaniae*, he tells of Ferdinand III, quartered in Córdoba during that year. Before the arrival of that king,

many castles of the Saracens, which had long suffered the attacks of the Christians and internal struggles, submitted to the king's power through an agreement as they wished for peace in their lands. At that time cities and castles were handed over to him, and he installed Christians there, as I have stated, and received tribute from the Arabs, and the names of these are as follows: Ecija, Almodovar, Luque, Lucena, Estepa, and Setefilla, and many others whose names are too numerous to mention.<sup>31</sup>

The archbishop of Toledo mentions the town again, telling us that the king gave the bishop of Córdoba 'some rents as a privilege, and in addition, granted him Lucena'.<sup>32</sup>

The failure of any Christian chronicler to refer to anything Jewish clearly indicates something about Lucena in the thirteenth

30. J.L. Lacave, 'Un interesante documento hebreo de Tudela', *Exile and Diaspora*, Vol. II (Jerusalem, 1991), pp. 17-34; Lacave, *Juderías y sinagogas*, p. 362.

31. R. Ximinius de Rada, *Opera*, Textos Medievales, Vol. 22 (repr. facsimile of the 1793 edn.) (Valencia, 1968), p. 207; trans. J. Fernandez Valverde, *Historia de los hechos de España* (Madrid, 1989), p. 353.

32. *Ibid.*; text, p. 206; trans., p. 351.



century. If the city once had a Jewish population, Jews no longer constituted its sole or the majority of its inhabitants. After scrutinizing several Christian medieval narrative sources, as well as documentary sources, I sincerely doubt whether the *judería* was still to be found at Lucena in the Later Middle Ages.<sup>33</sup> I believe that the *judería* disappeared in the twelfth century, during the Almohad period. Even if there were Jews in the city later on, we cannot on that basis assume that the former *judería* still existed.<sup>34</sup>

33. Proof adduced by Lacave (*Juderías y sinagogas* [Madrid, 1992], pp. 362-6) in favour of a Jewish population during this period is very weak and proves nothing.
34. The documentation concerning various individuals condemned by the Tribunal of the Inquisition, inhabitants of Lucena accused of Judaizing, has been preserved, especially in the Archivo General de Simancas; this is not sufficient proof that for part of the twelfth century, until the implementation of said tribunal in 1482, any Jewish community existed there. 'The explanation may be found in the mobility demonstrated by judeoconversos and Judaizers during the final third of the fifteenth century in the Córdoba bishopric, and in general, throughout Andalusia'; see Carrete, 'Los Judíos', p. 27.