

Answers by the Granada Group (Spain) to the Questions of the Lyon Group (France)

1. HAS THERE BEEN A PROGRAMME OF HOUSE RENOVATION IN A HISTORICAL PART OF GRANADA?

Yes, in the ALBAICIN.

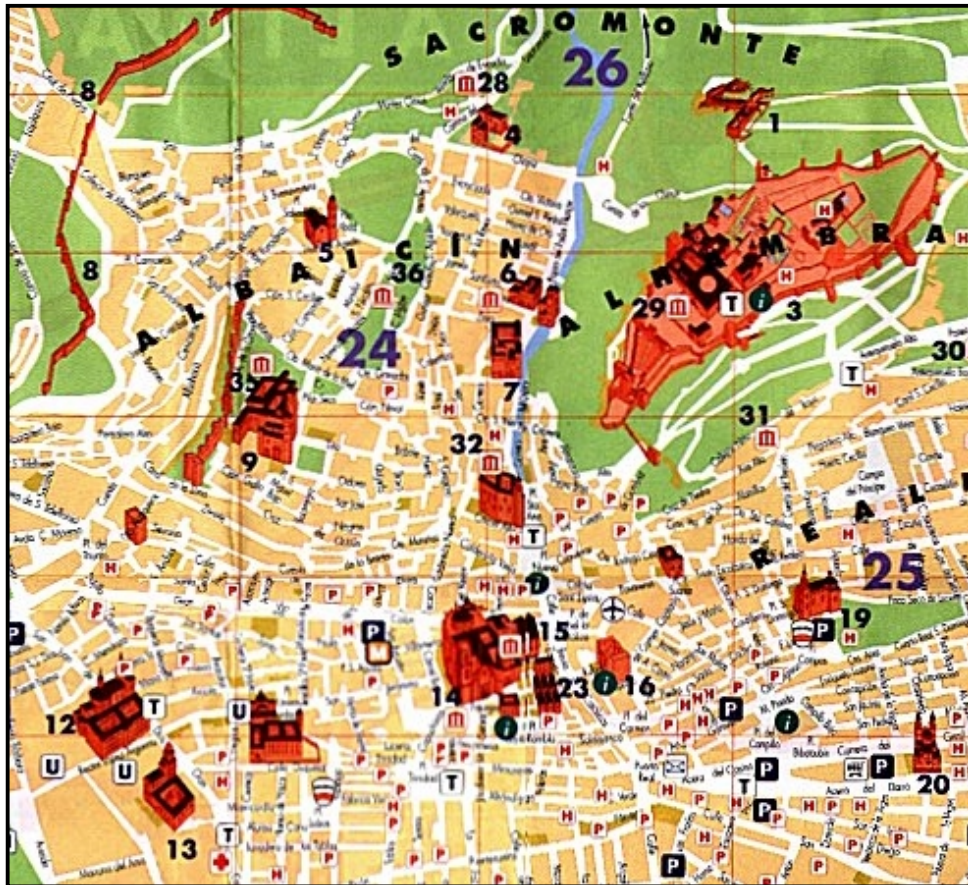


Situation

This suburb is situated on the western foothills of the Cerro of San Miguel, on the right side of the river Darro, and opposite the hill of the Alhambra.



Plan of Granada



Plan of the Albaicín

History.

If, until the end of the XIVth century, the term *Albayzín* referred exclusively to the suburb to the north of the Alcazaba Qadima, from the XVth century onwards the term has been applied to the mediaeval parts of the city: Alcazaba Qadima - the oldest-, Axares, Zenete and the Albayzín.

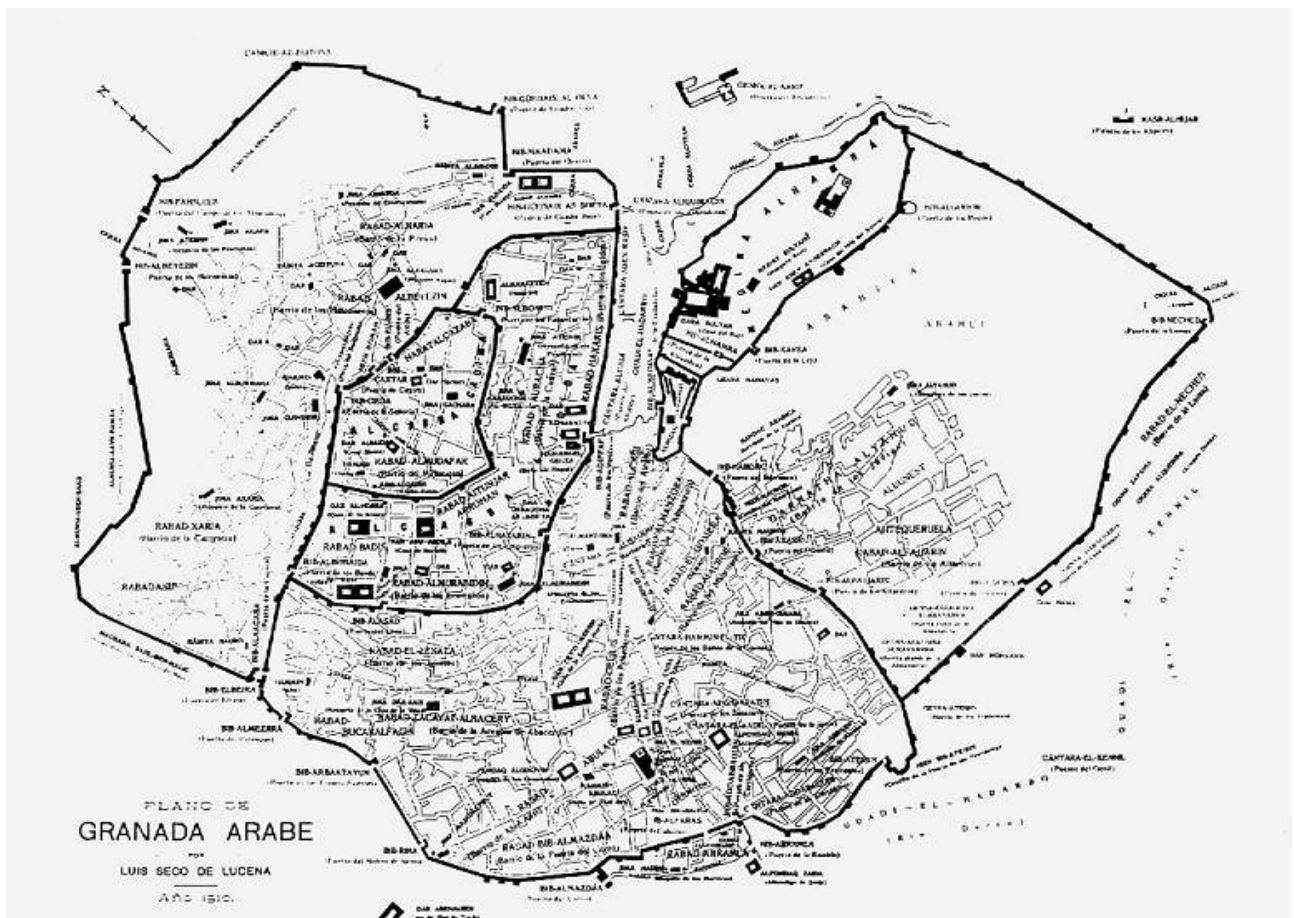
The origin of the term *Albayzín* is much disputed; for some it alludes to the inhabitants: the Spanish muslims who, coming from Baeza, occupied the area after the fall of their city into the hands of the Christians in 1227; for others, the term comes from *Rabad-al-Bayyazín*, which means suburb of the falconers, or suburb on a hill or on a slope.

However, there is no doubt that the site is the origin of the city of Granada, its oldest area of human settlement, as has been revealed by the archaeological digs at the side of the Arab walls of the XIth century, revealing part of the Iberian and Roman walls, as well as remnants of these two cultures. The remnant of the Iberian wall here, of irregular blocks of stone, is considered to be the oldest monument in Granada, dating from the beginning of the third century before Christ.

About the middle of the eighth century, the area was populated by Arabs. The construction of the first fortress, which was later to receive the name Alcazaba Qadima o Vieja, was attributed to the governor of Elvira, (the Arab name for the area) Asad Ben Abd al Rahman al-Xaybani.

The fortress was almost completely dismantled, owing to the struggles in the second half of the ninth century, between Arabs, Mozarabs and Muladies, only being consolidated with the arrival of the Zirí dynasty in the eleventh century.

The alcazaba Qadima was the centre of political power until the twelfth century, when the founder of the Nazarí dynasty, Alhamar, decided to move his seat to the Alhambra hill. Despite the move of the court, the area continued to be very important economically, enjoying political and administrative independence, and becoming, in the fourteenth century an important and powerful area within the kingdom of the Nazarí, and a centre of continual revolts against the ruling power.



Here are plans of the Arab City of Granada

Demographically very dense, its inhabitants were artisans, manufacturers and aristocrats, who, despite the move of the court continued to live there.

The change in the importance of the suburb was produced after the Christian conquest of the area, in 1492. Living conditions got worse and worse, with the increase in taxes, the prohibition of buying land in the fertile valleys outside the city proper, and the aggressive politics of Cardinal Cisneros. All of these factors combined to produce many uprisings, and the beginning of *acculturalisation* and repression, building churches on land left by demolishing mosques, and the enforcement of the Inquisition.

From the reign of Felipe II - the second half of the sixteenth century -, with the rebellion of the Arabs (1568-1570) and their consequent expulsion, the area was progressively abandoned, and a period of decadence began, which was even more pronounced in the twentieth century- after a short period of restoration by the Romantics- in which demolition, speculation and immigration became the bases for the deterioration of the area.

Activities:

In recent years there has been great interest shown by the relevant authorities in trying to re-establish the features of the area, declared to be **Patrimony of Humanity by UNESCO on December 15, 1994.**

The importance of the historical area lies in its cultural value; illustrated in its undoubted capacity to evoke and interpret the past, and as a support of creative activities in the present and the future.

Today, the chief problems of the area lie: in arresting both its progressive abandonment and the losses of items of patrimonial value; in the establishment and increase of a fixed population; and in the allocation of urban functions which will contribute to the area becoming a valuable and vital part of the city.

The city council, aware of the existing possibilities, has initiated several programmes for the revitalisation of the historical part of the city, particularly the Albaicín. These are:

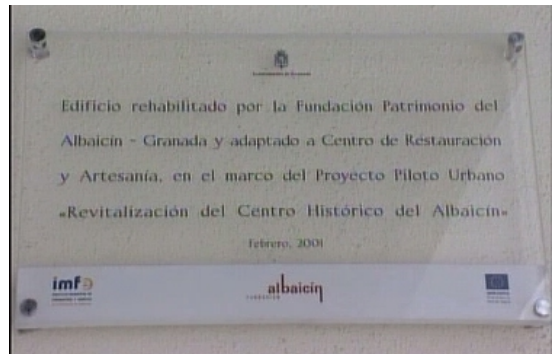
- a) **Urban pilot project**
- b) **PLAN ELVIRA-GOMEREZ.**
- c) **Others programs**

a) URBAN PILOT PROJECT

This is managed by the *Albaicín* Foundation and receives a grant of some thousand million pesetas (6.000.000 EUROS) to finance projects so varied as the construction of a parking station, the creation of a green belt to unite la *Puerta de MONAITA* with the *Arco de LAS PESAS*, and a school of craft or the establishment of the site of the university department of Restoration.

Programmes

- **Help for private initiatives:** the foundation has made about 20 grants for projects directed at the revitalisation of the area, ranging from art workshops to boutique hotels, restaurants, and other tourist orientated activities.



- **Parque de la Muralla:** this is a corridor between *Puerta de Monaita* and the *Arco de las Pesas*. The damp course below and the archaeological investigation have already been completed, and the funds have been expropriated.



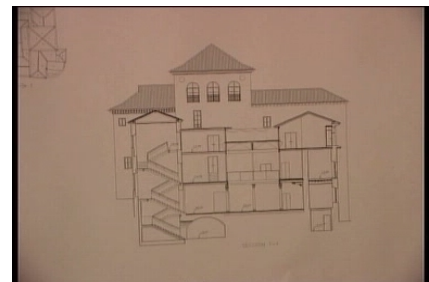
- **Parking del Huerto de Carlos y Zoco de Artesanía del Albaicín:** These are both under way, and are expected to be completed by the end of the year.



- **Craft School, Convent of Saint Inés:** This school is now working at full capacity to train future craftspersons and restorers for our cultural patrimony.



- **Rehabilitation of the Casa del Almirante:** This will be the home of the department of Restoration of the University of Granada, which is collaborating in the project. They have done the archaeological excavations and the work is underway.



- **Rehabilitation of the Aljibe del Rey:** Here the Centre of Interpretation and Studies of Water will be based. The reservoir, built in the eleventh century, has a capacity of more than 300 cubic metres of water, and, with those of *Las Tomasas*, *San Miguel Bajo* y *Trillo*, is one of the most important reservoirs of Muslim in Granada. Restoration work is already in progress in the building where the reservoir is, in which are conserved elements built between the twelfth and the seventeenth centuries.

b) PLAN ELVIRA-GOMEREZ.

This has a total investment of 2.527 millions pesetas, (15.187.575 Euros) (of which the European Union by way of the European Bank of Investment has allotted 1.112 millions - 6.683.255 Euros-) in work in this zone which includes one of the most degraded sections of the lower part of the Albaicín. As well as financial support for the renovation of buildings or the construction of new storeys, the plan includes investment in urban furniture, in signposts and in the underground placement of cables.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN

- **Area of rehabilitation.**

Limits: *Calle Elvira, Cuesta de Alharaca, Plaza de San Miguel Bajo, Cruz de Quilos, Calle del Aljibe, Barrio de San Pedro, Cuesta de Chapiz, Dardo, Plaza Nueva, La Churra y Cuesta de Gomez.*



- **Agreements with owners.**

The relocation of families for a period of 5-10 years, in exchange for the rehabilitation of the building.

Also in exchange for the rehabilitation of the building, the surrender of houses for 5 years, to allow them to be rented at a reduced price (500pts/m²) to couples younger than 35, or to families of three or more.

- **Urban habitat.**

- Rehabilitation of buildings and homes with institutional help to the owners.
- Requisition of homes or building sites by sale or expropriation.
- Construction of new homes in empty urban land.
- Urgent rehabilitation of buildings of great patrimonial value.
- Improvement in public transport
- Creation of parking areas for residents.
- Improvements in infrastructure (gas, cables, telecommunication).
- System of concealed rubbish collection.
- Improvements to and renovation of houses in poor condition

- **Population.**

- Maintenance of the current population, and the attraction of newcomers.
- Education of the residents so that they identify with the culture of the area and its way of life.
- "Easy" loans for the rehabilitation of houses and homes.
- Legal advice for contracts, etc.
- Convince the residents to maintain their buildings, and encourage them to get interested in the fact that they live in a site which has been declared patrimony of the world, and in its conservation.

- **Economic development**

- Support for existing businesses.
- Facilities for the creation of new businesses.
- Promotion of commerce within the area.
- Promotion of workshops and businesses which offer local quality products local food, etc. to attract tourists.
- Creation of a training centre in renovation and restoration of the patrimony.

c) OTHERS PROGRAMS

The council tries to involve the owners of businesses in the historical part of the city in the restoration of everything within it, inviting them to substitute posters and nameplates more in keeping with the ambience of the zone; in renovations, to use materials authorised by the Institute of Renovation, to give homogeneity; to use wood, Arab tiles, traditional locks; to get rid of antennae, air-conditioners, and ugly signs.

There are two other European programmes which provide money. The Locally Operated Programme (POL), and the Urban Plan.

- The POL has finances of 900 millions de pesetas (5.409.109 Euros) for various activities around the river *Darro*; the rehabilitation of the *Palace of the Cordovas*, the renovation of its gardens, and a new treatment for the space between the bridge of the *Chirimías* and the *fountain of the Avellanos*, where the work is done in very close cooperation with the Association of the Alhambra.



- The urban plan has more than 2.500 millions pesetas (15.325.303 Euros) for the improvement of the urban environment, and economic development and social integration in areas where the population is decreasing.

With funds from the urban plan of the European Union, a project to decrease "visual contamination" has been undertaken (ninety per cent of buildings in the historical part of the city have a strong, and bad, visual impact) with means to avoid the installation of new elements which disturb the landscape and the suppression of all types of illuminations and posters. To encourage this, there is help and advice available for the embellishment of facades and commercial establishments.

2. WHICH ESTABLISHMENTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PROGRAMMES? ON WHICH AUTHORITIES DO THEY DEPEND?

a) State government of Andalucía (*Consejería de Obras Públicas*), Granada City Council, (*Delegaciones de O. Públicas y Asuntos Sociales*).

b) Financial organisations: European Union (European Bank of Investments), *Fondos Feder*, state government of Andalucía, the Granada city council, and inhabitants of the area who have solicited "easy" loans.

c) The organs which have been created are: the Albayzín foundation, Pilot Urban Project, Project of Urban Renovation *Eje Elvira-Gomez*, Locally Operated Project (POL), and the Municipal Institute of Rehabilitation.

3. OPINIONS ABOUT THE RESULTS OF THE INICIATIVES.

Note: statements extracted from the local daily newspaper, Diario Ideal, of 23 July 2001.

Those responsible for some of the models:

- **Sr. Moratalla** (city mayor) speaking at a meeting in Brussels with technicians of the European Union, showed his satisfaction for the high grade of execution of both programmes (the Urban Pilot Project and the *Plan Elvira-Gomerez*) showing himself to be decidedly in favour of the recuperation and revitalisation of the historic centre of the city. He explained that these are not projects in isolation, rather connected to one another.

- **Sr. Ruiz Dávila** (Adviser in Urban Planning) at the same meeting emphasised that the local council did not see these activities as a method of increasing the population within the city rather than in satellite towns outside, but as an influence of economic development and a dynamic element in encouraging tourism.

The inhabitants of the area:

- **D. Andrés Martínez Molina**, 61, was one of the first to solicit aid from the European Union for the rehabilitation of ancient buildings, and, today, his house is one where the ancient aspects have been retained, with many traditional features, while the renovations have made the house fit for human occupation, and very comfortable for those who live in it. Since his experience, many others have followed his example, but there are those who do not believe that the council will give anything for nothing, and still others who think that the government should renovate their homes without their having to give anything in return.

D. Andrés sees everything very clearly. "This area could be renovated and maintained as it is. All it needs is close collaboration between the council and the owner. I made the sacrifice and here is the result. Everyone else could do the same, thus avoiding the degradation of the area which could eventually lead to its disappearance".

Note: Margaret Craig interviewed a very small cross-section of the population of the Albaycín, asking them what they felt about the renovations going on, and how they affected them. These are the responses.

- María, 70

Born in the Albaycín, and still living in the same house.

"I was born here, I live here, and I hope to die here. It's a really beautiful place. Of course there are changes... Can you tell me somewhere where there aren't? You have to move with the times. I've seen a lot - good and bad. Now I love to go up and down in the microbus, although at times there are too many tourists".

- Carlos, 38

Was born in the Albaycín and lives in the same house.

"It's a fantastic place to live. It has the advantage of being very close to a big city, with everything you need, at the same time away from all the noise and pollution. I don't feel in any danger moving around here".

- Joaquín, 34

Lives in the Albaycín, and studies it as a sociologist.

"There have been many changes, which have been good for the area, but they take a long time to implement. This is normal in an old zone with very narrow streets, little more than paths, where access is difficult for builders' trucks and materials. Traditionally, the owners were simple, poor people, and young people, who, with little financial power were able to rent houses in very poor condition very cheaply. This has changed as the yuppies and foreigners have bought at relatively high prices and moved in. They change the houses because they want to have all the modern conveniences, at times with little respect for the ambience. There is a lot of robbery and burglary. There is a gang of Algerians who tend to steal from other Arabs. I don't feel threatened living here".

- Marie-Carmen, 32

Was born in the abbey in *Sacromonte* where her father worked. Later on, the family moved to the *Cuesta de Chapiz*. She now lives in a village about 20 minutes drive from Granada

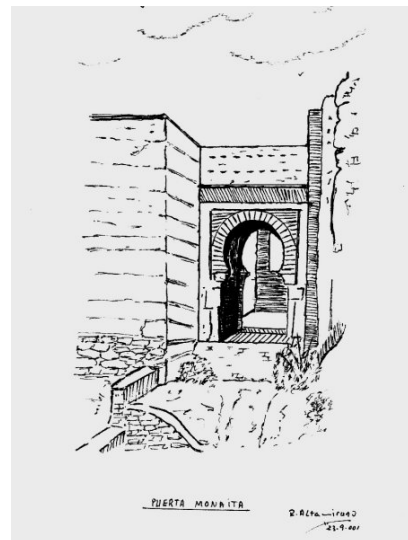
"No-body could live there (in the Albaycín) now. It's completely changed. You need a special pass just to drive up to your own house. It's full of Arabs. What a pity! They have robbed us of our very own home".

Vocabulary

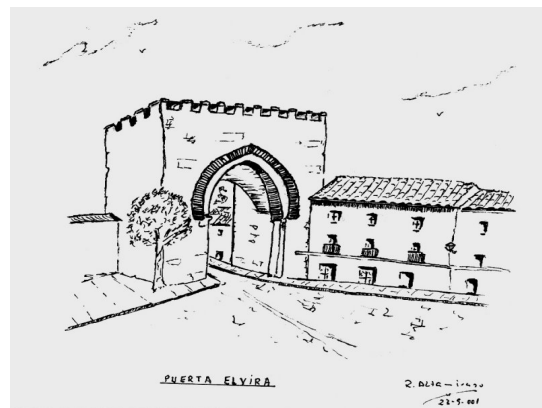
Reino Nazarí.- Founded by **Muhammad Yusúf Ahmad Nasr**; the reigning dynasty in Granada from 1232 to 1492. The last king **Boabdil** surrendered the city to the *Reyes Católicos*.

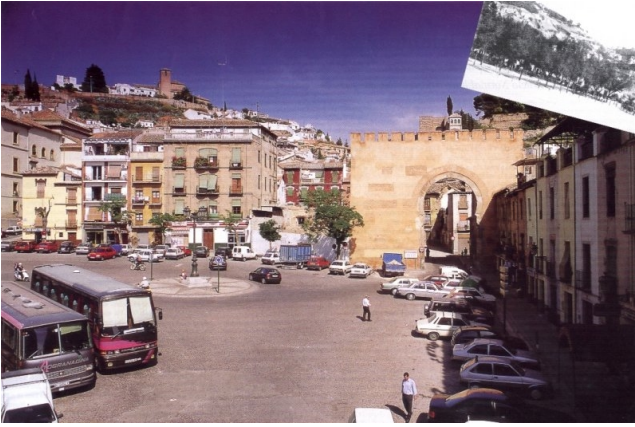
Reino Zirí.- Dynasty of origin berber which ruled Granada in the eleventh century.

Puerta de Monaita.- Opening in a section of the wall called the *Alcazaba Qadima*, leading down to and uniting with the *Puerta Elvira*. Dates from the eleventh century. It has a double horseshoe arch through which one passes into an intermediate patio, which is a novelty in this type of gate. The base is constructed of blocks of stone, and the upper part and the arches of smooth small blocks of sandstone.



Puerta Elvira.- This is one of the gates which enclose the *Alcazaba Qadima*, significant among the others for its value as a monument. It was one of the best and most important entries to the city, which had eighteen gates. Through this gate one entered both the *Alcazaba* of the *Albayzín* and the *Medina* (zone of the actual Cathedral).

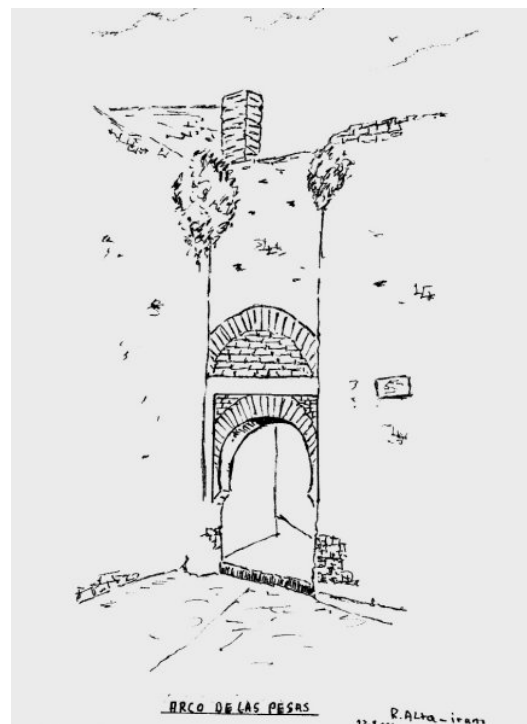




Although it is cited in the ninth century by **Ahmed Ben Ira**, the current gate dates from the eleventh century. Its name refers to what was the route to *Medina Elvira*.

The gate opens in the centre of a barbican with protective towers, pointed battlements and horseshoe arches over an open defensive space, behind which was a patio with two other arched sections which communicated with the *Alcazaba* and the street of *Elvira*.

Arco de las Pesas.- It was called this - the arch of the weights because, and they can still be seen, it was here that were suspended weights which had been confiscated for being defective. It dates from the eleventh century, -*almorávide*- with a curved floor plan, roofed with steeply arched domes. The entrance arch is a pointed horseshoe, with another semicircular arch above, for unloading, and above this a brick lintel.



Zenete.- Name given to a section of the area in which a tribe of the same name, guards of the *Zirian* kings, settled.

Alcazaba.- Fortified space within which is, apart from a palace, a living space for people, rather like a small village.

Aljibe.- Reservoir.

Translation: Margaret Craig