



Juan Antonio Sánchez Muñoz
Editor (English text) & translation of quotes: Vincent Morales Garoffolo
architect, independent researcher
kauharquitectos@gmail.com

The Alcaicería of Granada (Spain): From a silk trade center to a post-touristic shopping-scape¹

Abstract:

The Alcaicería of Granada is a contemporary post-touristic *shopping-scape* with deep roots in history. In the Medieval Arab world, the term *al-qaysāriyya* described a commercial institution for the silk trade as well as an architectonic typology. In Al-Andalus, the typology was a cluster of shops located in the center of the main cities. After the Reconquest, these structures were maintained and alcaicerías were even built, as commercial spaces, in America and the Philippines. The decline of the silk trade provoked their disappearance, with the exception of Granada's. The chronicle of the Alcaicería of Granada begins with a "transaction document" (1460), continues with its reconstruction in Alhambresque style (1843) and its conversion into a theme market for handcrafts (1940), to its recent restoration (2002). Today, the mimetic atmosphere full of souvenirs, among just a few local crafts, is a commercial urban scenario that mixes reality and fiction for tourists.

Keywords: Alcaicería. Granada. Shopping Structures. Post-tourism. Silk Trade

¹ Editor (English text) & translation of quotes: Vincent Morales Garoffolo



Cover picture: A post-touristic *shopping-scape* in a mimetic Alhambresque atmosphere. Photo: Alcaicería of Granada, January 2013, JASM

1 Introduction

This communication shows some preliminary notes about the evolution of the Alcaicería of Granada, Spain, a case study of one of the precursors of themed modern shopping centers and malls. Today, the Alcaicería of Granada is a shopping area located in the city centre of Granada, next to the Cathedral and plaza Bib-Rambla. It has 27 shops dedicated mainly to souvenirs. The shops are distributed along four narrow, pedestrian streets (1,5 meters wide) and a little plaza², with access through seven gates. It is a public space, the gates are always open. The Alcaicería has a total area of 4,860 m². There are documents that mention this commercial space of the city since the 15th Century (1460) when it was devoted to the trade of silk. However, the existing structure is a 19th Century (1843-45) reconstruction.

² Calles Alcaicería, Ermita, Paños, pasaje Ermita and plaza de la Seda. The limits are: plaza Bib-rambla, calles Libreros, Oficinas, Tintes and Zacatín.

2 A postcard from Granada



FIG. 1: The blurred myth of Granada. Photo: Valeriano López, from his art project "El cuento de la Alhambra", 2006

Granada is a city in Andalusia, in the South of Spain. It is located at the foot of the Sierra Nevada mountains and the beginning of the fertile plain fields of La Vega where three rivers, the Beiro, the Darro and the Genil meet. The Alhambra, which is the most visited monument in Spain (more than 2.200.000 visitors in 2013)³, is located in Granada. Thus, the city is one of the most popular tourist destinations of Spain and Europe.

The roots of the relation between Granada and *tourism*⁴ –or the early travelers– started in the Middle Ages when it was widely described in documents of medieval Arabs geographers and travelers. The representation of Granada done by Piri Reis in his first world map (1513) is a prime example of this interest in the city, even though there is no proof that he actually visited the city (Espigares, 2013). Christian travelers also depicted the city in their writings, such as Caballero de Ghillebert de Lannoy, who visited Granada in 1407 (Antelo, 1989). The number of visitors grew progressively over

³ Data from the Patronato de la Alhambra website: <http://www.alhambra-patronato.es/index.php/Balance-2012/1279/0/>

⁴ Here I use the concept tourism in broad terms to describe the attraction that a place inspires and the subsequent travels to that place, even though the tourist phenomena, especially mass tourism, is a notion that arises in the late 19th and mainly 20th centuries.

the centuries, reaching a high point in the 19th Century when it became a very popular destination among Romantic travelers. Since, visits have not stopped growing, to the point of the exponential growth experienced throughout the 20th Century with the advent of mass tourism, which continues to date if we look at data of the first decade of the 21st Century, numbers that show millions of visitors every year to the Alhambra.

The list of renown travelers to Granada and their literary descriptions or drawings of its sites is almost endless⁵. Once the city was conquered by the Catholic Monarchs in 1492, interest in it grew ever more: Jerónimo Münzer visited in 1494, followed shortly by Señor de Montigny, Antonio de Lalaing, Jorge de Ehingen, Andrea Navagiero, Sobieski, Diego de Cuelbis, Villuga, etc. During the 16th and 17th Centuries visitors came from France: Señor de Moroony, Bertaut and Martin; England: William Lithgow, Willoughby, Howell and Ellin Veryard; or Germany: the Elector Palatine Frederick II, Welsch; or Flanders: Anton Van den Wyngaerde, Joris Hoefnagel. The list is even longer in the 18th Century, travelers from Spain like Perez Bayer, Ponz and Conde de Maule; Germany: Adam Ebert (Aulus Apronius), Wolfgang Bayer and Carl Christopher Plüer; England: Christopher Hervey, Richard Twis, Henry Swinburne, Joseph Townsend and John Talbot Dillon; and France: Etienne Silhouette, Jean Francois Peyron and Nicolas Massias. The 19th Century was probably the peak point of this curiosity, as Granada became a center of a pilgrimage for writers and painters: George Borrow, Washington Irving, Gautier, Chateaubriand, David Roberts, Dumas, Giraud, Desbarrelees,... All these centuries of descriptions, engravings, drawings, paintings, novels, etc., have created a strong image of the city, a mix of reality and fiction that has ended up constructing an evoking tale about Granada: "the myth of Granada" (Calatrava, 2007). The person who visits Granada is touched by the fantasy of being in an exotic oriental city within Western Europe. In recent years, that spirit has gone beyond the romantic notion of the place to be individually experienced, like the old-fashioned travelers fascinated by the monuments and other remains did, by also including a massive, collective experience with a strong presence in the daily life of the city. This essay is framed within the context of the coexistence of both these realities: the romantic and the collective tourist gaze (Urry, 1990) upon the city. The Alcaicería participates of both these illusions. Moreover, I would like to finish this introduction with a specific aspect of this place: the theme of the 'silk trade' adds extra, more fanciful connotations to the Alcaicería. The silk trade theme generates a certain fascination with a legendary past, by actually placing it, with historical accuracy or not, within the "geographies" of ancient commercial routes and even

⁵ All the references are from: Gallego y Burin (1928). *El turismo en Granada*

within the narrative of the first travels that connected the Eastern and Western worlds. (Fig. 1)

3 What is an Alcaiceria? The origin

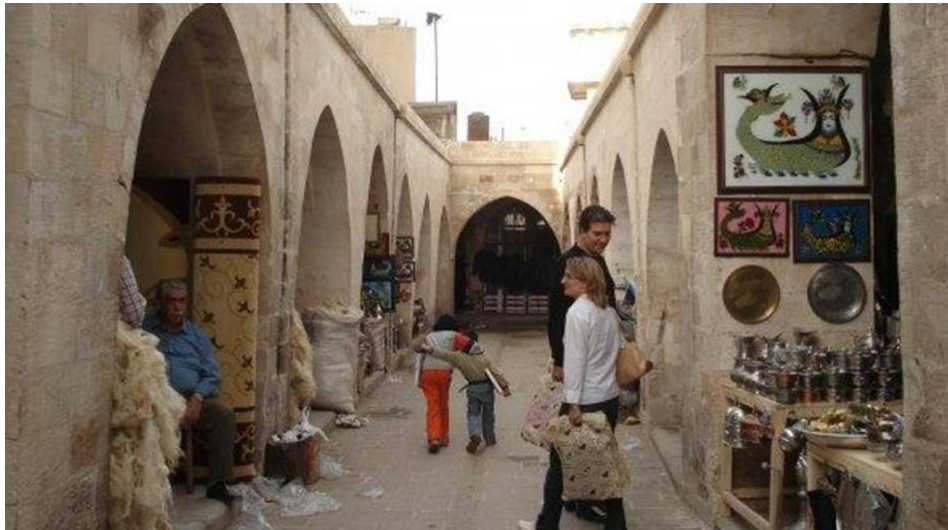


FIG. 2: An ancient typology with just a few examples that still stand. Kayseriyye in Mardin, Turkey

The Spanish word *alcaicería* derives from the Medieval Arab word *Ḳaysāriyya*. The Encyclopedia of Islam defines it as: "*Ḳaysāriyya* (also *ḳayṣāriyya*), plur. *ḳayāsīr*, the name of a large system of public buildings laid out in the form of cloisters with shops, workshops, warehouses and frequently also living-rooms" (Streck, 1913-1936). In the same article, about the origin of the word the author says "the word *kaysāriya* is certainly of Greek origin: 'καίσαρεια αγορά' 'imperial', an abbreviation for 'ἡ καίσαρεια αγορά' 'the imperial market'; and continues "as H. Thiersch has shown, not only is the plan of the mosque (...) to be traced to the old quadrangular court (...) of the agora, but also the *kaysāriya*, which was used on the one hand as a warehouse for goods (whence developed the market-place) and on the other hand, without any doubt, usually also as lodgings. The expression 'ἡ καίσαρεια αγορά' recalls the fact that the oldest of these public buildings were imperial". Pedro Chalmeta has noted that "their souks [of Medieval Islamic cities] are a legacy from the ancient Hellenistic-Byzantine culture, which is also the case with the traits of another

eminently commercial building, the *qaysāriya*, which is a derivation of models from Antioque" (Chalmeta, 1973). According to this the case of Granada is very similar: the mosque stood on the grounds of the Cathedral and the alcaicería was next to it.

The same article of the Encyclopedia says that "the word (...) was originally used only in those districts which, like Syria, Palestine and parts of North Africa had been under (imperial) Byzantine rule. The idea was only transferred later to other lands, especially to Spain and the east". Also according to the Encyclopedia of Islam, loan words are *alcaicería* (*cayceria*, *caeceria*) in Spain and *alçaçarias* in Portugal. The author compiles the use of the word in the Medieval Islamic World marking the subtle differences in meaning depending on its location—although always related with commerce and textiles— and how its use was extended through time. Some examples mentioned are in Cairo, Beirut, Damascus, Aleppo, Mosul, al-Salamiyya, Irbil, Baghdad, Isfahan, Algiers and Fez. He also notes the spread of its use in Spain. "In Spain it was, as in Morocco, the centre for trade in luxury articles and cloth". Specifically, in the first edition of the Encyclopedia he describes the following: "In Granada in Spain the Alcaicería is that quarter of the town where raw silk is sold". Raw silk was as well appreciated as other luxury articles and cloth, and the trade of both products demanded a strict control by the monarchs. This theory makes sense if we take into account that the production of silk was introduced into Europe from China via the Byzantine Empire: "by the sixth century, silk production was established in the Byzantine Empire. According to Byzantine sources, the silk worms had been smuggled from the Middle East by monks—probably Nestorian Christians—who hid them in their staffs"⁶ (Waugh, 2001).

The article in the Encyclopedia concludes that "in general, it appears that in modern times the use of the word *Kaysariyya* as market-place and suchlike has to a great extent given way to newer words like *khān*, *wakāla*, *funduk* and *bezestān*" and refers that "for the economic functioning, see *sūk*" (souk in English). From other authors, we should also include in this list related words like *jān* and *Kārwanserāy*. The fact is that all of these words refer to commercial structures. Among all of them, it is widely accepted that the alcaicería was devoted to the trade of textiles: "There exists a kind of trade that has a special tendency to wall itself within a well guarded building, with strong doors, (...) I am referring to textiles and their market place, the *qaysāriyya* or *alcaicería*" (Chalmeta, 1973) "the importance of this commerce in cloths (...) [is such that] it is the only one that posses not only its own building (perhaps it is best to

⁶ Waugh, Daniel C. (2001). Silk: Silk Road Seattle Project. Simpson Center for the Humanities at the University of Washington <http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/exhibit/trade/trade.html> /

speak in terms of quarter or 'alcazaba') but also with a name of its own: the *qaysariyya*" (Chalmeta, 1969)

By taking all of this into account we can conclude that, in the Medieval Arab world, an *alcaicería* (*al-qaysāriyya*) specified a commercial institution which belonged to the monarchs, dedicated to the cloth trade—in some specific cases silk, be it manufactured or raw— and the architectonic commercial typology created for that trade. The *alcaicerías* were created for a specific program to comply with a legal regime, in order to collect taxes and control the trade. Its shape followed an urban scheme, similar to the bazaars of the Middle East.

As far as this research is concerned, I have found that only two examples of these ancient spaces with similar names still exist with a commercial use: the Alcaicería in Granada, Spain and the Kayseriyye (Bezestan) in Mardin, Turkey. (Fig. 2)

4 Alcaicerías in Al-Andalus and Christian Spain: the architectural typology

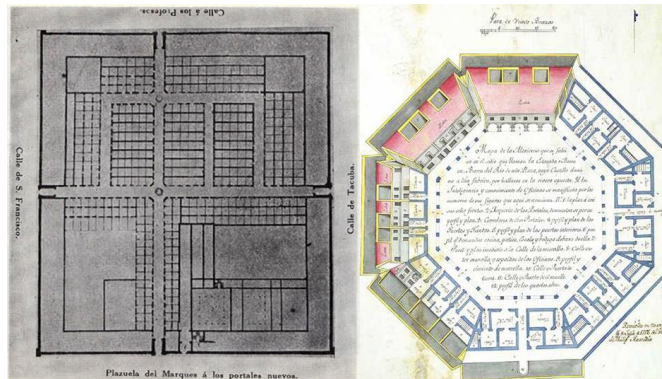


FIG. 3: The spreading of the alcaicerías. Left: México city, 1617; right: San Fernando, Philippines, 1756

In Al-Andalus, the typology was a cluster of shops joined up with other administrative facilities located in the centre of the main Moorish Iberian cities—Córdoba, Toledo, Seville, Granada, Malaga, Velez Malaga, Almeria, Valencia and Palma de Mallorca (Balbas, 1949). They were permanent structures, configuring an enclosed merchandising area with limited opening hours, following different layouts: a simple street, a single patio, a patio with arcades or a complex of narrow streets and tiny shops. In all cases, they were clearly delimited with monitored gates with a strict

control of their use: "on public streets (...) the transit of horsemen through the alcaicerías is forbidden"⁷ (Ibn Ábd Al_Rauf)

After the Christian Reconquest (1492), the Catholic Monarchs maintained and promoted these structures, placing them under the control of the Monarchy.

The typology was embraced to such an extent that it leaped to the New World. There were plans for their construction in America. One was built Mexico City at the beginning of the 17th Century, "in imitation of the one in Granada (...) a drawn plan was commissioned to Andrés de la Concha (...) of which Sebastián Zamorano became the author of the second version, which was the final one (...) in 1617" (Baez, 1977). It was also known as "overseas market". Today there is no trace of it. There were also commercial spaces called alcaicerías in Filipinas: San Fernando, 1756; and San José en Manila, Tomás Sanz, 1783). This fact supports the idea of the alcaicería as an architectonic typology, a precursor of our modern shopping malls. (Fig. 3)

The decline of the silk trade led to the progressive disappearance of the alcaicerías in Spain (18th Century). In 1726, the Diccionario de Autoridades defines alcaicería as: "separate place or quarter, which is closed off at night, in which there exist a variety of shops where of all silk products, nothing but raw silk is sold: and even though in former times textiles were manufactured and woven, nowadays they are no longer made and they are solely dedicated to the trade of silk. There remains one in the city of Toledo and another in Granada, and its only inhabitants are those who at night guard the shops"⁸. In the end, the only surviving example is the one in Granada, which by then hosted other businesses.

So much so that the modern definitions of alcaiceria always refer to Granada: RAE: "alcaicería (from spa. arb. *alqaysariyya* from lat. *Caesarëa*, due to the erection of these buildings as an imperial privilege). 1. f. In Granada an other locations of its ancient kingdom, customhouse or public building where silk gatherers sell their goods to pay the right to taxes established by the Moorish monarchs. 2. Place or quarter with shops in which raw silk and other goods are sold".

⁷ Text from the Risála (obligations) of the wāli al-sūq (guard of the souk). Loc. cit.; pp. 111 IBN ÁBD AL-RAUF, Ahmad. Excerpt from Chalmeta, Pedro (1973)

⁸ Diccionario de autoridades (1726), pp. 175-176. On-line: <http://ntlle.rae.es/ntlle/SrvltGUILoginNtlle> Quote from Torres Balbás, L. (1949).

5 A chronicle of the Alcaicería of Granada



FIG. 4: Archeological remains, Alcaicería of Granada. Left: "Transaction Document" 1460 (Repositorio Institucional de la Universidad de Granada) Right: shaft and capital, 1333-1354 (Museo de la Alhambra, photo: www.museosdeandalucia.es)

The Alcaicería of Granada has its origin in the medieval Al-Andalus. The oldest reference is a "transaction document"⁹ dated 1460. Antonio Malpica suggests that the Alcaicería was built around the middle of the 14th Century, during the Nasrid period: "Over the years of the reigns of Yusuf I (1333-1354) and Muhammad V (1354-1359/1362-1391) (...) we have to take into account the hypothesis of the existence of urban interventions around the area of the main mosque. Yusuf I founded the Madrasa Yusufiyya in 1349 (Cabanelas 1988). The silk market of the alcaicería has to be ascribed to this period" (Malpica, 1994). There is no information on what the Alcaicería was like before the Reconquest (1492): "of Granada's alcaicería, there are no known Arab descriptions" (Garzón C., 2004). (Fig. 4)

⁹ "Peritación y compraventa de dos tiendas en la Alcaicería, una en el Aymun y la otra en la Atarbea de los Lineros" Repositorio Institucional de la Universidad de Granada <http://hdl.handle.net/10481/20714>

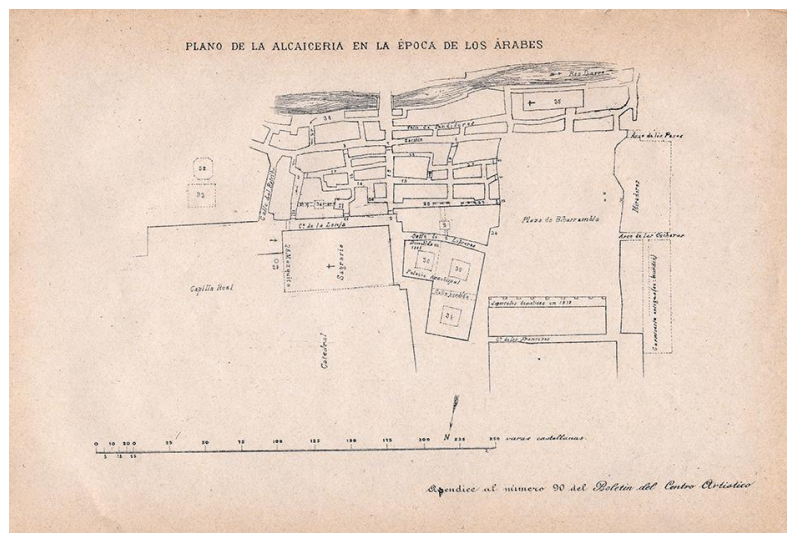


FIG. 5: The Alcaicería of Granada in the time of the Arabs, 1890. Indalecio Ventura Sabatel, Boletín del Centro Artístico de Granada, V, año 1890. Courtesy of Carlos Sánchez Gómez

After the Reconquest, the Alcaicería of Granada was placed under the control of the monarchy, within a jurisdictional status controlled by The Alhambra (from 1492 to 1868). It was a period during which it underwent little changes until in 1843 a fire devastated the area. There is plenty of information and a complete study about this time¹⁰. According to Torres Balbás: "Up until 1843 [In Granada there remained] almost intact the general layout of the Arab alcaicería" (Balbás, 1949). That same year, shortly after the fire, plans for its reconstruction were undertaken. In 1890, Indalecio Ventura published an article –in two parts– about the Alcaicería, containing for the first time a historiography of the place. Along with the first article he published a drawing depicting the hypothetical layout of what would have been the Alcaicería in the time of the Moors. (Fig. 5)

One of the first travelers in the Christian era described: " walking along calle Zacatín, before reaching the square [Bib-rambla], to the right, through a small gate one enters a place called Alcaicería, which is an enclosed quarter between two gates with many narrow alleys; there are shops everywhere run by *moriscos* [muslims who converted to Christianity] and an infinite amount of goods in multiple shapes and varied nature. It is similar to our haberdasheries or our Rialto [in Venice]. Because, truth be told, there

¹⁰ For more information: Garzón Cardenete, José Luis (2004), op. cit. and Garzón Pareja, Manuel (1972) Una dependencia de la Alhambra: La Alcaicería: Cuadernos de la Alhambra 8, pp. 65-76

is an endless amount of things there, especially a large quantity of needlework" (Navagiero, Andrea 1526).

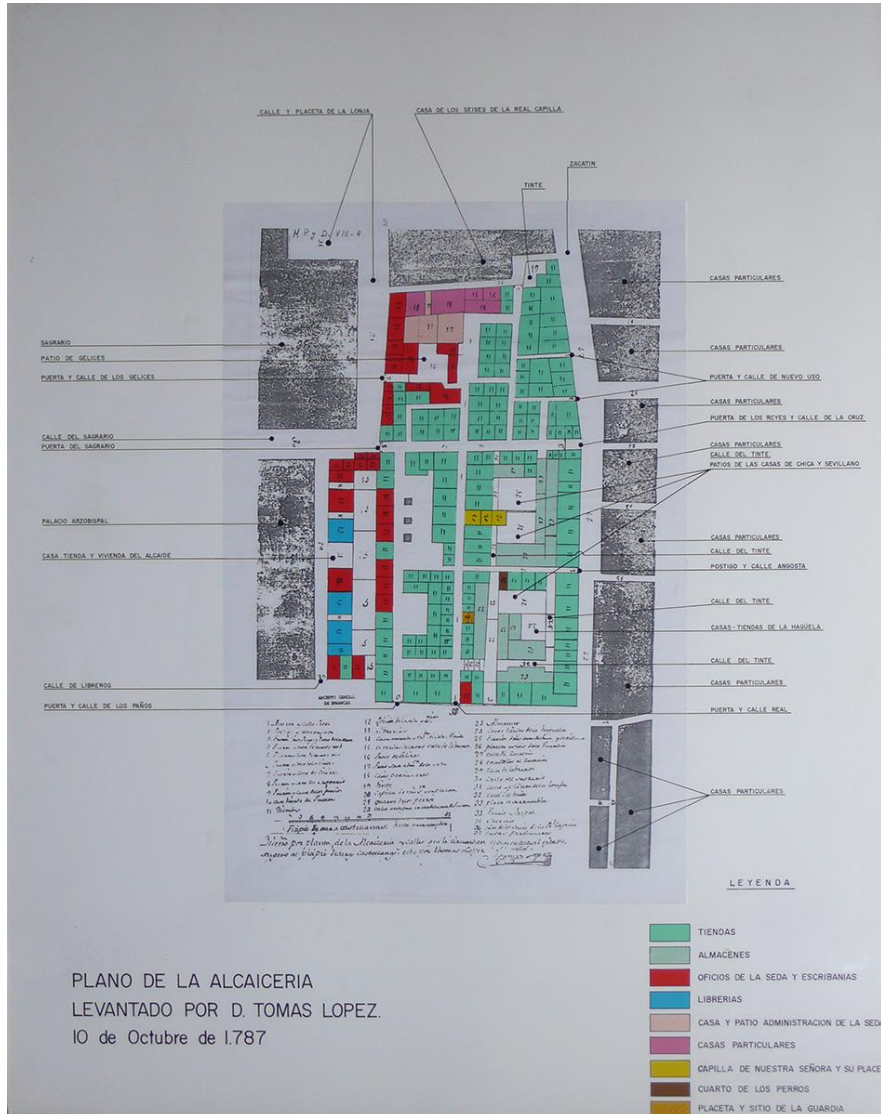


FIG. 6: The Alcaicería of Granada in 1787. Colored photocopy by uses of the Plano de Tomás López. Archivo Municipal de Granada (original plan in Archivo General de Simancas). Photo courtesy of CSG

Three centuries later, the traveler Alexandre Laborde said: "The alcaicería is nothing other than a large building with no ornaments, which occupies a considerable area, which, in times of the moors served as bazaar or as quarter for slaves. Nowadays there are many merchants and close to 200 shops" (Laborde, 1809).

In general, the boundaries of the Alcaicería prior to the fire of 1843 coincide with those of its modern perimeter, except some detailed street realignments carried out over the centuries¹¹. The Alcaicería is limited by calles Tinte, Oficios (before called de la Lonja), Libreros, Zacatín and plaza Bibarrambla. The precincts always had gates: 9 in the 16th century (considering the number in the Arab layout), 10 in the 17th century and 7 between the 18th century and 1843, which are the ones existing to date. The interior was subject to a progressive process of densification: the buildings occupied streets and grew in height. A first interior plaza is mentioned in the area (plaza de los Gelizes), a second one being the long gone plazuela de la Ermita (mid 17th Century). The layout was divided in two functional zones: one, to the west, dedicated to the shops and the other, to the east, dedicated to administrative services. Besides the shops, there was a Mihrab (prayer room) for the Arab merchants, a shrine (Santo Cristo del Rescate), the Silk Customhouse, the house of the administrator, a room for guard dogs and the guard's quarters. The customhouse and the house of the governor were situated in the perimeter, connecting the complex with the city. The Silk Customhouse was taken away from the Alcaicería in 1797 (Garzón, M. 1972) and the building it occupied was demolished at the end of the 19th Century. "The building [Silk customhouse] dated from the mid 14th century, although it had been greatly renewed during the 16th Century (...) It was not damaged by the fire (...) The building lost its purpose (...) At the end of the 19th Century it was in dire state which led to its final demolition to enable the widening of Calle Tinte" (Barrios, 2001). The shrine was also demolished at the end of the 19th Century. "The shrine was situated in the placeta de la Ermita (...). It was very small, until 1743, in which its extension took place (...) The fire completely destroyed [it]. (...) The shrine was rebuilt following the design of the architect José Contreras (...) By 1857 it had been turned into a storage room for old furniture (...) In 1817 the chapel was auctioned (...) Five years later the small square and the lot where the shrine once stood were occupied by new buildings that helped give a sense of total regularity to the streets" (Barrios, 2001) (Fig. 6)

In the period preceding its reconstruction, complementary to the study of the Alcaicería as an urban piece, other interesting aspects directly linked with the Alcaicería can be pointed out. I would like to briefly put them forth as sketches for

¹¹ Specially the alignments of calle Zacatín and Plaza Bibarrambla

future development. In the first place, there is the relationship it had with the territory around the city, given that the importance of Nasrid Kingdom of Granada in the silk trade. This was due to the fact that its domain was one of the major centers of production for the raw material needed to make silk, that is: the breeding of silk worms and the generalized cultivation of mulberry trees was widespread, which must have produced a significant impact on the landscape of Granada. And secondly, the silk trade centered around the Alcaicería placed Granada at the head of commercial routes that linked the city with Valencia, Barcelona, Montpellier, Genoa, etc. Thus, the so called *ruta de la seda granadina* (silk road of Granada) came into being, an itinerary that laid the grounds for what later became the routes followed by travelers and tourists for centuries to come.

As stated above, in 1843, the Alcaicería was devastated by a fire. The architects Jose Contreras—then in charge of the maintenance of La Alhambra, along with Salvador Amador, Juan Pugnaire and Baltasar Romero directed the project for the reconstruction, sponsored by the *Comisión de Ornato* (Beautification Commission). They came up with an ideal Alcaicería: a regular layout with ornamentations in a prominent Alhambresque style. The new Alcaicería seems to be a direct application of Owen Jones' scientific laws about the use of ornament and color. Jones had visited La Alhambra in 1834 and 1837 and Salvador Amador knew of his work "the architect Salvador Amador, who collaborates in the work to rebuild the burnt souk, was subscribed to the color lithographs of the Englishman, the intense color of which has been attempted to be imitated in Granada's Alcaicería" (Barrios, 2005). The project was developed in two main phases, corresponding with its historic western and eastern areas: in the lower western part the team of architects, accompanied the ornamental discourse with subtle alignments and enlargements of the streets, following the precepts of the hygienist criteria of the period. The upper-eastern area was designed by the municipal architect Juan Monserrat y Vergés, who along with more street realignments applied a simpler architectural language. This process of renewal did not escape controversy, especially among the owners of the plots who were made to follow the Alhambresque design¹². This design includes a general plan and a façade-type, which later incorporated a detail with the ornamental design for the eaves. The general layout of the renewed Alcaicería is a hybrid of the former quasi regular plan resulting from centuries of use, and the rectilinear new design. The façades were conceived as modular units to be applied to each shop, generating a

¹² Reedificación de las tiendas y almacenes de la Alcaicería. 1843-1845 [ES.18087.AMGR /C.00003.01.29] and Proyecto de alineación de la Alcaicería. 1881-188 [ES.18087.AMGR /C.01109.008] (Archivo Histórico Municipal de Granada)

completely regular and new street front. In the project, the façade unit is shown in a watercolor that includes all the constructive elements and decorative details: columns, capitals, arches, friezes, cornices and eaves—in two separate designs—carpentry work and lattices. Every element appears to be a schematic copy of existing examples in the Alhambra. The color design for the eave –signed by all the architects except Contreras– is a watercolor using four colors: black for the background, green for the upper frieze, and red, white and blue for the *laciería* [geometric interlacing lines] design. "The façade had even less to do with the original (...) all the façades showed a symmetric composition with neo-Nasrid ornamentation, which even though schematic is still striking (...) The design falls within the criteria of academia, but is wrapped in an exotic layer of plaster which was to be painted following the inspiration of the colors that remain in the Sala de la Barca [of the Alhambra]" (Barrios, 2005).

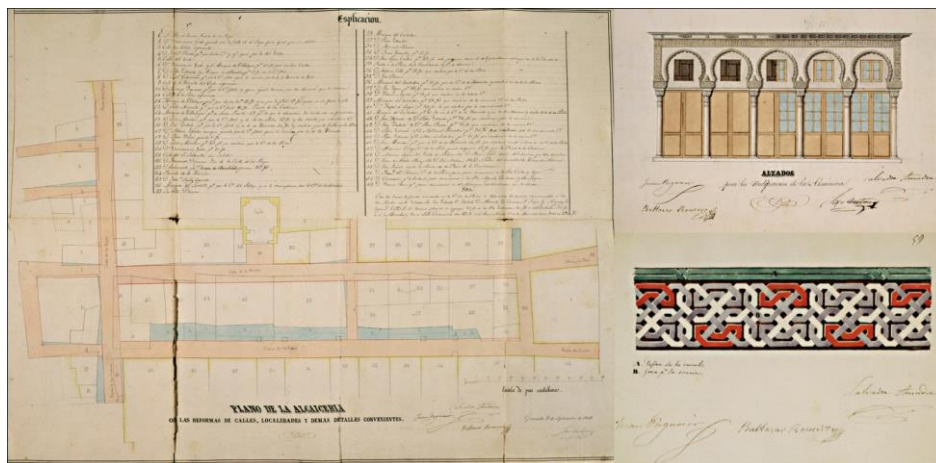


FIG. 7: The Alhambresque reconstruction after 1843. Plan, elevation and detail. Archivo Municipal de Granada, courtesy of CSG

"I thus hand over the plans with the agreed detailing. The streets have been fixed to eight feet wide [2,23 meters],(...), aligning them all in order to erase the endless errors one perceives, both in their narrowness and angledness (...) The arabesque depictions shown on with the sketch is the general decor that has been opted for to replace the tasteless and derelict ones that now exist in most places, in the belief that this kind of architecture best suits the place, because of its oriental origin and

because it has been part of our national heritage ever since the glorious conquest of the Catholic Monarchs over the Arabs" (Contreras, 1843)¹³ (Fig. 7)

Although the project was fully carried out, the operation did not have real commercial success in its period. This work is an early example of a modern retail area coetaneous with some *passages couverts* in Paris; and the renovation, going from a medieval layout to an example of academic architecture, laid out the framework for its future evolution.

After decades of decadence, in 1940, the municipality, taking into consideration the growing importance of tourism, decided to promote the Alcaicería as a theme market for handcrafts. This decision was sponsored by the major Gallego y Burin¹⁴: "the municipality is in the process of writing up the budget for the year 1940. This year the budget is of 8.030.000 pesetas (...) The first items have been issued (...) setting the course for the opening of the Alcaicería as a bazaar for the Hispanic-Moroccan arts and crafts industry" (Juste, 1978). This project was included in a wider plan of renewal of the city: "a culturalist and scenic strategy with an understanding of Granada itself as a great work of architecture" (Juste, 1978). A major part of this urban renewal was carried out in the environs of the Cathedral in plaza Bib-rambla, plaza de las Pasiegas, plaza of the archbishop's palace, and around the Capilla Real. In this context the Alcaicería was totally revamped: cleaned, repaved and relit and set to be used for a completely new purpose: tourism.

The success of the idea came early with the opening of the first shop in 1941: *Miguel Mariscal. Arte granadino. Cueros repujados y policromados a mano. Incrustaciones estilo árabe* (Miguel Mariscal. Art from Granada. Engraved leather and handmade polychrome. Arab style incrustations): "Miguel Mariscal (...) bought house number 5 on the street that joins Sagrario with Zacatín (...) in the lower premises he opened a workshop open to the public, so that the passerby can see how the work is done" (Garzón C., 2004) Today the same family has several shops in the area as well as the on line shop www.alcaiceria.com. Progressively Granada's local arts and crafts (pottery, carved leatherwork, tinwork, fabrics,...) tradition has been displaced by new products, in part by standard Spanish souvenirs (postcards, flamenco dolls and bullfighters, mugs, T-shirts,...) but lately specially by products from India, Morocco, etc, that recall the idea of an Arab souk. (Fig. 8)

¹³ Memoria que elevó a S.M. el arquitecto de la Alhambra, D. José Contreras (9-IX-1843). [Al final figura la aprobación en la siguiente forma: Palacio 31 de diciembre de 1843-Aprobado-Silvela] [ES.18087.AMGR /C.00003.01.29]

¹⁴ For a complete study of this period: Juste, Julio (1978) *La Granada de Gallego y Burín*



FIG. 8: Postcards from the Alcaicería. Left: 1905; right: circa 1970's

At this point, I would like also to introduce briefly the idea of the heritage protection for this historical area in order to understand the last period of this chronicle (1980-2012). In the 1980's, all the buildings belonging to the Alcaicería were included in the catalogue of listed building (master plan: PGOU Granada 1985). In the latest master plan (PGOU 2001) they are listed as A2 (Full protection). In 2002, the Alcaicería complex, as an entire unit, is listed in the catalogue of urban spaces (Catálogo de Espacios Urbanos- art. 5.1.4. Plan Especial Centro-July 2002) under the category: "continuity of spaces for exchange: Alcaicería y Zacatín". This Plan Especial del Centro also includes the graphic information in the card "UA U-9-Alcaicería", and called for the realization of a project for the area (Plan Especial Recinto Alcaicería). In 2007, this project was carried by the architect Carlos Sánchez Gómez. Construction finished in 2012, including restoration work within the buildings and the renewal of the public space. Before this last restoration, the Alcaicería was highly deteriorated, most of the buildings were in quasi ruinous state. The renewal consisted in: the elimination of all added elements (aerial cables, air conditioning machines, finishings, drain pipes); the layout of new utilities (sewage, water, electricity, telecommunications and natural gas); new paving and new lighting fixtures –both based on old pictures before the 1940's; the restoration of the buildings, mainly their roofs, façades and the restoration of gates to the Alcaicería. In the project the importance of the 19th century Alhambresque architecture was underlined: the arches, capitals and columns

were restored and the original coloring returned to the eaves –in the areas where there were remains. Moreover, a series of codes and ordinances were established in order to regulate future construction as well as uses and activities carried out on the premises. This last episode means a step further in the consideration of this space as heritage asset, but the Alcaicería still has yet to reach its full significance. For some people, the Alcaicería is still associated with a nineteenth pastiche from a derogatory point of view. To the point that the complex does not appear as a listed site of the Catálogo de Patrimonio Inmueble de Andalucía nor in the Guía Digital del Patrimonio Cultural de Andalucía¹⁵ and its protection Nivel 2 in the municipal masterplan is for "buildings of great architectural significance, although not to the degree of BIC (Bien de Interés Cultural: category of the Spanish law for a heritage asset) or elements of specific value of the C.G.P.H.A. (Cátalogo General del Patrimonio Histórico Andaluz: The Heritage List for Andalucía)"¹⁶ I think it is worth having a serious debate as to the inclusion of the Alcaicería in these lists.

6 The Alcaicería today: a post-touristic shopping scape

Nowadays the mimetic recently restored Alhambresque atmosphere, full of cheap, trashy souvenirs among a few genuine, rare handcrafts, is a contemporary scenario that mixes reality and fiction, memory and eidetic representation. This place participates of the contemporary post-tourism phenomenon (Urry, 1990) in which consumption habits accompanied by the fakery of the place lead the way of the urban experience.

We can easily anticipate our visit to the Alcaicería, "the anticipation is constructed and sustained through a variety of non touristic-practices" (URRY, 1990); we can navigate through Google, Panoramio, Flickr, YouTube,... If we check the website of La Alhambra there is a chapter about routes in the city linked with the historical site. The "Route: The Alhambra: Territory, space and city. Artistic and functional standards in Nasrid culture"¹⁷ includes as the ending point the Alcaicería, the short description being: "The Alcaicería. Located in the environs of the Cathedral, the current Alcaicería of Granada is dedicated to shops with souvenirs for tourists, where Granada-style

¹⁵ Last search: 13 may 2013 / <http://www.iaph.es/web/canales/conoce-el-patrimonio/guia-digital/index.html> / <http://www.iaph.es/patrimonio-inmueble-andalucia/>

¹⁶ PGOU Granada 2001 - Artículo 11.2.9.- Nivel 2. Protección integral

¹⁷ For more info: <http://www.alhambra-patronato.es/index.php/La-Alhambra-territorio-espacio-y-ciudad-Patronos-artistic/406/0/> and for the interactive plan: <http://www.alhambra-patronato.es/index.php/Itinerarios-interactivos/928/0/>

crafts are sold: painted ceramics also known as fajalauza, wood with incrustations known as taracea, or lamps with colored glass".



FIG. 9: Collection of products from www.alcaiceria.com (categories: bazar oriental / oriental bazaar; bordados / embroidery ; fajalauza / painted ceramics ; regalos y souvenirs / gifts and souvenirs; taracea / wood with incrustations)

There is a collection of videos (from YouTube): an anonymous walk of a tourist, a professional guided visit recorded by a tourist but uploaded by a company that offers touristic services¹⁸, an edited video with explanations of the history of the place and with some music recorded in the area –improvisation with a Hang– by Producciones G. Burgos or another by a tourist (Guillermo Bosca, uploaded 22/09/2008)¹⁹. This last one is described in YouTube: "Much in accord with my visit to Tunis, I was marveled by the similarities with that souk right smack in the center of town next to the cathedral" and in the video we can hear these comments: "Look! Arab heritage... Watch out for your purse... This is exactly like a souk in Tunis, identical... just that here I am not afraid...[laughs]... The goods are sold by the same people, look... everything must come from there.... Adela, look! Look at this apron with flamenco frills! Look!...".

¹⁸ CICERONE, Cultura y Ocio SL is an enterprise of tourist services constituted by tourist guides, ready to reveal all the attractiveness of the city

¹⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5DIOYDF4x0c>

This kind behavior is typical of post-tourist culture. "It has recently been argued that some visitors, known as post-tourists, almost delight in the inauthenticity of the normal tourist experience (...) They know there is no authentic tourist experience, that there are merely a series of games or texts that can be played" (Urry, 1990) "The idea of post-tourist (...) suggests that tourism might be viewed by some at least as a 'game' and there really are no simply 'authentic' touristic experiences" (Urry, 1990).

The Alcaicería has therefore become a thematic shopping area, and its existence today could not be understood, much less survive without tourism. Tourists render the space as it is today, every time one of them shops or strolls through it, he or she is giving it its contemporary full meaning. Parallel to this, those who provide tourist services complete this urban commercial scenario meaning; vendors and guides reproduce those objects and their tales for the tourist gaze. Could the Alcaicería be devoted to other kinds of products? (Fig. 9)

The place itself, as a typology, would probably support other commercial activities in other economic, social and temporal conditions. However, currently and especially since the reconstruction of the 19th century, its environment has been produced, marketed, circulated and consumed as a postmodern scenario based in a nostalgic attraction of "heritage" but renewed, clean and ready for the consumption. "[Malls] are conspicuous for cleanliness, and newness, with no space for untidy litter, the old, the shabby or the worn. Malls have to exude up-to-datedness and fashionability which is why they have to be regularly refurbished. They attract their share of 'post-shoppers', people who play at being consumers in complex, self-conscious mockery" (Urry, 1990)

This year is the celebration of the Milenio del Reino de Granada (the founding moment of the Kingdom of Granada being in 1013); in this context the organization of the Milenio created a series of events between 2011-2013 called "Alcaicerías del Milenio", an itinerary outdoors temporary market in the center of the cities of Jaén, Almería, Córdoba, Málaga, Cádiz and Granada. The first two have already taken place (Jaén, September 23-25, 2011, Almería, September 16-18, 2011). Briefly, these events were a showcase for all sorts of handcrafts, with music, street performances... where you could also eat, drink and shop. A consumer product wrapped with flavors of Al-andalus—historical explanations, decorations, costumed people, aromas, music, etc—The organization used literally the term "alcaicerías" and used it as a brand name. Ironically, the result lacked historical accuracy, since it ended up being more similar to the reproduction of an ancient *sūk* than an evocation of the old *kaysariyya*. The name and the typology it evokes was used as stereotype from the past, and suddenly the place "alcaicería" was turned into a pop image. This anecdote about the theme is also

connected with Urry's text: "Everything is a copy, or a text upon a text, where what is fake can often seem more real than the real" (Urry, 1990).

I would like to finish this paper with an imaginary example that I have been researching but I have not yet found. I fantasize that somewhere in the world there is a modern shopping mall called Alcaicería that could serve to complete the chronicle, a space that would be a copy (of Granada's recently restored 19th century Alcaicería) of the copy (of Granada's Medieval Silk Market) of another copy (of the ancient Byzantine imperial market places), "each of which seems more real than the original" (Urry, 1990) but always ready for commerce and shopping to take place.

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