

Ibn Ruṣhd al-Ḥafīd (Averroes) and his exile to Lucena: Jewish ancestry, genealogy and forced conversion*

Ibn Ruṣhd al-Ḥafīd (Averroes) y su exilio a Lucena: orígenes judíos, genealogía y conversión forzosa

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The accusation of Jewish ancestry formulated against Ibn Ruṣhd al-Ḥafīd (Averroes) when he was exiled to Lucena is analyzed taking into account similar accusations made against other Andalusis during the Almoravid and Almohad periods, as well as Muslim representations of the Jews in which these were often depicted as agents of foreign heresies. The influence of the context of suspicion and anxiety created by the forced conversion of the Jews in the early Almohad period in such accusations is also dealt with.

Key words: Ibn Ruṣhd al-Ḥafīd (Averroes). Almoravid and Almohad periods. Muslim representations of the Jews. Forced conversion.

La acusación de orígenes judíos formulada contra Ibn Ruṣhd al-Ḥafīd (Averroes) cuando fue exilado a Lucena es analizada teniendo en cuenta acusaciones similares formuladas contra otros andalusíes durante los periodos almorávide y almohade, así como las representaciones islámicas de los judíos en las que estos a menudo son descritos como agentes de herejías foráneas. También se analiza la influencia del contexto de sospecha y ansiedad creado por la conversión forzosa de los judíos que tuvo lugar en la primera época almohade en la formulación de esas acusaciones.

Palabras clave: Ibn Ruṣhd al-Ḥafīd (Averroes). Periodos almorávide y almohade. Representaciones islámicas de los judíos. Conversión forzosa.

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Ibn Rushd al-Ḥafīd (Averroes) and more generally those who engaged in the study of the rational sciences were persecuted towards the end of the reign of al-Manṣūr (r. 580/1184-595/1198) after having previously enjoyed the favour and support of this Almohad caliph¹. As an outcome of that persecution, Ibn Rushd was exiled to Lucena². The other scholars persecuted at the same time such as Abū Jaʿfar al-Dahabī, the *faqīh* Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm judge of Baġġāna, Abū Rabīʿ al-Kafīf, and the poet and *ḥāfiẓ* Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Jarāwī are not known to have suffered the same destiny.

Lucena is a town situated some sixty km south of Cordoba and was famous in al-Andalus for its abundant Jewish population, being called Lucena of the Jews. Within the walls of the town only Jews were said to live, while non Jews inhabited the outskirts³. Such a description is the mirror image of Marrakech, the Almoravid and later the Almohad capital: as it was a town newly founded by Muslims (the Almoravids) and with no pre-Islamic population, non-Muslims were forbidden to live inside, so that Jews settled outside its walls⁴. Averroes' exile to Lucena was explicitly linked to the rumour of his alleged Jewish ancestry and his lack of an Arab (or Berber) tribal *nisba*. In the words of the Almohad historian Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik al-Marrākushī (d. 702/1302), after his disgrace, *umira Abū l-Walīd bi-suknā al-Yussāna li-qawli man qāla innahu yunsabu fī Banī Isrāʾīl wa-innahu lā yuʿrafu lahu nasab fī qabāʾil al-Andalus*⁵.

¹ The most informed and detailed treatment of this episode in Averroes' life is that by Fricaud, "Le problème de la disgrâce d'Averroès", pp. 155-189.

² Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik al-Marrākushī, *al-Dhayl wa-l-Takmila*, pp. 21-31, number 51, p. 26. According to another source Averroes was sent to prison: Ibn ʿIdhārī, *al-Bayān al-mughrib*, p. 226; transl. A. Huici Miranda, p. 200. Before either prison or exile – perhaps both took place –, Averroes had to endure standing up in the mosque and being cursed and physically abused. An analysis of the sources in Ben Sharīfā, *Ibn Rushd al-ḥafīd*.

³ Maíllo, "The City of Lucena in Arab sources". See also Peláez del Rosal (ed.), *Los judíos y Lucena: historia, pensamiento y poesía*. By Averroes' times, the town of Lucena and its Jewish population had suffered from Almohad persecution as lamented by Abraham ibn Ezra in one of his poems (see the Spanish translation by Sáenz-Badillos, *Literatura hebrea en la España Medieval*, p. 150) and as noted by Maíllo.

⁴ Deverdun, *Marrakech des origines à 1912*; Gottreich, *The Mellah of Marrakesh: Jewish and Muslim space in Morocco's Red City*. Jews were also forbidden to enter Timbuctu: Hirschberg, "The problem of the judaized Berbers", p. 332. On the rationale behind the prohibition for non-Muslims to live in towns newly founded by Muslims see Ward, "A fragment from an unknown work by al-Ṭabarī".

⁵ Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik al-Marrākushī, *al-Dhayl wa-l-Takmila*, VI, 21-31, number 51, p. 26.

Dominique Urvoy, on the basis of this text, pointed that Averroes' confinement to Lucena was doubly abasing: it assimilated him to the inhabitants of the Jewish town and marked such inhabitants as dwelling in a mean place, so that they were bound to receive the philosopher with hostility⁶. The same aim of humiliating someone with Jewish ancestry may have been behind another exile to Lucena that took place in Almohad times, that of Abū l-Qāsim Ibn Ḥassān al-Kalbī (d. 626/1229), a descendant of Yemeni Arabs who worked as tax collector for the Almohads⁷, although in his case there is no explicit statement about him being a Jew.

On the basis of Ibn Ḥassān al-Kalbī's case, the information given by Ibn 'Abd al-Malik al-Marrākushī regarding Averroes' alleged Jewish origins, as well as his lack of a tribal *nisba* and his exile to Lucena does not necessarily imply that all these elements were dependent on each other. Ibn Ḥassān al-Kalbī had a tribal *nisba* well attested in al-Andalus⁸, and still through his exile to Lucena he may have been suggested to be of Jewish ancestry. On the other hand, someone may not have a tribal *nisba* and that does not necessarily transform him into the descendant of a Jew. The famous Cordoban scholar Muḥammad b. Waḍḍāḥ b. Bazī' (d. 287/900) who lacked such a *nisba*⁹ was known to be the descendant of a prisoner of war probably from Oviedo. His contemporary Baqī b. Makhlad (d. 276/889) also lacked an Arabic tribal *nisba* and no suggestion was ever made of him being of Jewish descent. This was so even though Baqī b. Makhlad was also accused of heretical deviation like Averroes¹⁰. As Steve Wasserstrom showed in a study published in 1995 in which he dealt with Muslim representations of the Jews¹¹, these were often depicted as secret agents of foreign heresies. The trend to ascribe to Muslim sectarians Jewish lineages is described by Wasserstrom as the

⁶ Urvoy, *Averroès. Les ambitions d'un intellectuel musulman*, p. 180 (Spanish transl. by D. Serrano, Madrid, Alianza Editorial, 1998).

⁷ Lirola Delgado, "Ibn Ḥassān al-Kalbī, Abū l-Qāsim", pp. 313-4, n° 559.

⁸ Terés, "Linajes árabes en al-Andalus según la *Yamhara* de Ibn Ḥazm".

⁹ He was called al-Umawī because his ancestor was an Umayyad client (*mawlā*). See on him Fierro, "Ibn Waḍḍāḥ, Abū 'Abd Allāh", pp. 545-58, n° 1294.

¹⁰ Documentación, "Ibn Majlad, Baqī", pp. 68-72, n° 756 with bibliography.

¹¹ Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew. The problem of symbiosis in early Islam*. See also Nettler, "Islamic archetypes of the Jews: then and now", pp. 63-73; Taji-Farouki, "Thinking on the Jews", pp. 318-367, and Brann, "Imágenes de judíos en la literatura hispano-árabe", pp. 71-100.

“sustained and often ingenious efforts by Muslim scholars to derive ‘Islamic’ heresies from what were represented as actual Jewish figures, who were then equipped with the rudiments of a biography. It would be difficult to find a Muslim heresy that was not at one time or another traced back to a Jewish originator. Thus, to cite only a few, the ghulat deification of ‘Ali was assigned to ‘Abd Allah b. Saba’; the origination of Isma‘ilism was ascribed to Maymun al-Qaddah; the Fatimids were said to have been further inspired by Ya‘qub ibn Killis; the idea of the ‘Created Qur’an’ was ascribed to Labid; and the heretic Jahm b. Safwan was said to have been taught by Aban b. Maymun, who was taught by Talut b. A‘sam ‘the Jew who bewitched Muhammad.’

A more generalizing, and inverted, variation on the *ad hominem* proposition were the traditions that read ‘The X [a heretical group] are the Jews of this *umma*’ The Jews are the paradigm in this case of the religious community gone astray. They are thus held to be model for the various subversions of Islam, an accusation frequently made of the Rafida, the Murji‘a, and the *mushabbiha*.’¹²

Wasserstrom’s examples are of real or alleged Jews presented as engaging in the religious subversion of Islam, an association that made it easy to condemn all those who for different reasons were considered to join in the same effort as having been Jewish¹³. Jewish ancestry could also be merely adduced as a term of abuse, as happened even with some members of the Umayyad family¹⁴. The Jews had a lowly status and an accusation of Jewish origin may have been thought an effective way to denigrate an opponent¹⁵. Non-Arab, especially Jewish blood, was usually considered to be of particularly degraded status in the kinship system¹⁶.

The same kind of associations can also be documented in the Islamic West. In one of the many stories told about the Cordoban scholar Ibn Waḍḍāḥ, he was warned that his son was learning suspect theological doctrines from a Jew, although it is not clear whether the teacher is called so because he was really a Jew or just because he was a heretic¹⁷. The same doubt has been voiced in the case of the author of the refutation against the Qur’ān that was the target of Ibn

¹² Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jews*, pp. 157-8.

¹³ Not that they were necessarily marked that way. For example, none of the famous freethinkers of early Islam was said to be of Jewish descent: Stroumsa, *Freethinkers of Medieval Islam*.

¹⁴ “Muhammad said: ‘you are only a Jew from the Jews of Sepphoris’”, pp. 31-41.

¹⁵ Ward, “Muhammad said: ‘you are only a Jew from the Jews of Sepphoris’”, p. 42.

¹⁶ Crone, *Roman, provincial and Islamic law*, p. 67 and ss.

¹⁷ Fierro, “Religious beliefs and practices in al-Andalus in the third/ninth century”, pp. 21-2.

Ḥazm¹⁸. In Umayyad propaganda against the Fatimids during their rule in Ifrīqiya, the Fatimid imam-caliph is called a Jew¹⁹. A Jewish origin was often attributed to Berbers, either tribes²⁰ or individuals, such as Ṭarīf, the alleged founder of the religion of the Barghawāṭa, who was said to have been a Jew²¹. The Cordoban poet Ibn Shuhayd al-Ashjaʿī (382/992-426/1035) attacked a Berber vizier of the Hammudid caliphs calling him ape²² and sodomite, and assimilating him to the Jews²³. The Zirid emir ʿAbd Allāh stated that the characteristics of the Jews were avarice, meanness, stinginess, deception and treachery because they are governed by the planet Saturn.²⁴

In the sixth/twelfth century and in contexts related to both the Almoravids and the Almohads, a number of scholars were said to have Jewish origins, and in some of these cases there were also accusations of religious deviation or political dissent. Thus, Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ (476/1083-544/1149), known for having opposed the Almohads and for having supported the Almoravids against them, was said to have been Jewish because he never left his house on Saturday as if he was secretly practising Judaism²⁵. The famous Banū Zuhr, who served as doctors to both the Almoravids and the Almohads, were also said to have had Jewish

¹⁸ See the different views on this issue in Fierro, “Ibn Ḥazm et le *zindīq* juif”, pp. 81-90 (English translation in Adang, Fierro and Schmidtke (ed.), *Ibn Hazm of Cordoba*).

¹⁹ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabas*, vol. V, pp. 221/247 and 237/263. See also Rius, *La alquibla en al-Andalus y al-Magrib al-Aqsā*, p. 299 where the Fatimids are connected to the Median Jewish tribe of the Banū Qurayza.

²⁰ Basset, *Essai sur la littérature des Berbères*, p. 247; Hirschberg, “The problem of the judaized Berbers” (quoted in note 4), with bibliography.

²¹ Talbi, “Hérésies, acculturation et nationalisme des berbères Barghawāṭa,” p. 84. The information is found in the geographical works by al-Bakrī (5th/11th century) and in the *Kitāb al-istībsār* attributed to Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi al-Ḥafīd, while Ibn Khaldun denies this Jewish connection: Iskander, “Devout Heretics: the Barghawata in Maghribi Historiography”, p. 46.

²² For the association between apes and Jews see Rubin, “Apes, Pigs, and Islamic Identity”.

²³ Velázquez Basanta, “Ibn Ayyūb al-Lamāʿī, Abū Ÿaʿfar”, pp. 472-7, n° 360. Negative views on the Jews are also found in Ibn Quzmān’s (d. 554/1160) *Dīwān*, pp. 73-77.

²⁴ ʿAbd Allāh b. Buluggīn, *al-Tibyān*, pp. 181-2. On the association of Jews with Saturn see Gómez Aranda, “The connections between Muslims and Jews in the field of science in the Middle Ages”, p. 241-2.

²⁵ Serrano Ruano, “ʿIyāḍ, Abū l-Faḍl”, pp. 404-434, n° 1479, p. 413; Gómez Rivas, “Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ (d. 544/1149)”, pp. 323-38. Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, according to a late source (Ibn Farḥūn), was also said to have been poisoned by a Jew, perhaps as a way to exonerate him from the accusation of crypto-Judaism?

ancestry: according to this view, Zuhr was a Jew from Játiva who converted in the fourth/tenth century²⁶. According to Leo Africanus, the philosopher Ibn Bājja (d. 533/1139) was also said to have been of Jewish origins²⁷. Another scholar, trained under the Almohads whom he served as secretary, passing later to the service of the Hafsiids in Tunisia, was accused of being a Jew. This scholar, Ibn ‘Amīra (d. 658/1260), had the Arab tribal *nisba* al-Makhzūmī (Quraysh)²⁸. Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik al-Marrākushī records in his biography included in *al-Dhayl wa-l-takmila* how such genealogy – that he had seen written by Ibn ‘Amīra himself – was denied by some, mentioning specifically the doctor from Shāṭiba called Abū Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Ḥājī who stated that Ibn ‘Amīra’s grandfather or father was an abandoned child (*laqīṭ*) who had been taken in by the Banū ‘Amīra – a Berber lineage settled in Al-cira²⁹ – and that their origin was Jewish.³⁰

Of Ibn ‘Amīra’s contemporary, the poet Ibn Sahl (d. 643/1245 or 649/1251), it was firmly established that he was of Jewish ancestry, as reflected in his *nisba* al-Isrā’īlī³¹. In fact, he was a former Jew himself and a convert to Islam. His attachment to his previous religion and his dubious allegiance to Islam were revealed – according to some – in

²⁶ de Gayangos, *The History of the Mohammedan dynasties in Spain*, pp. 336-7, note 36, referring to Ibn al-Khaṭīb’s *Ihāta* (the passage does not appear in the extant editions), states that the oldest known member of the family, Muḥammad b. Marwān b. Zuhr (d. 422/1030), was the grandson of a Jew who converted to Islam. Roth, “Jewish and Muslim Physicians of ‘Alī ibn Tashufīn”, p. 84 and note 3 refers to Gayangos and Ibn Abī ‘Uṣaybi‘a, but the latter does not mention any Jewish ancestry. He states that Muḥammad b. Marwān b. Zuhr was a jurist in Seville learned in *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*: Ibn Abī ‘Uṣaybi‘a (d. 668/1270), *‘Uyūn al-anbā’ fī tabaqāt al-aṭibbā’*, pp. 85/86. For other sources on him with no mention of any Jewish ancestry see *Prosopografía de los ulemas de al-Andalus* ID 10516 http://www.eea.csic.es/pua/personaje/consulta_persona.php?id=10516 (consulted 28 December 2015).

²⁷ Dunlop, “Ibn Bājdja”. Reference: EI-Contributors 25 december 2015, quoting Leo Africanus, *De viris quibusdam illustribus apud Arabes*, c. 15, in J. A. Fabricius, *Bibliotheca Graeca*, t. xiii, 279.

²⁸ Velázquez Basanta, “Ibn ‘Amīra, Abū l-Muṭarrif”, pp. 107-16, n° 291, p. 108.

²⁹ B. Sharīfa, *Abū l-Muṭarrif Aḥmad b. ‘Amīra al-Makhzūmī, ḥayātuhu wa-āthāruhu*, pp. 33-9.

³⁰ In a later period, the jurist and Sufi Aḥmad Zarrūq (d. 899/1493) was called a Jew as an insult for breaking with the Qadiriyya Sufi order: Kugle, *Rebel between Spirit and Law*, 2006, p. 24.

³¹ David Wasserstein has shown how the appellation *al-isrā’īlī* is used with names of Jews and also of converts from Judaism (*al-yahūdī* is reserved for actual Jews): “What’s in a Name? ‘Abd Allāh b. Ishāq b. al-Shanā’a al-Muslimānī al-Isrā’īlī and Conversion to Islam in Medieval Cordoba”.

many of his verses in which he played with ambiguity of meaning and other resources, something widely commented upon, but which does not seem to have put his life in danger³². The scholar ‘Umar al-Sakūnī complained in his book *Laḥn al-‘awāmm* that in Seville lived the poet Ibrāhīm b. Sahl al-Yahūdī – the appellation ‘al-Yahūdī’ implied that in al-Sakūnī’s view Ibn Sahl was not a convert but a Jew – who filled his poetry with Koranic verses changing their meaning without anybody forcing him to stop such behaviour, this lack of action against him being one of the reasons for the loss of Seville to Christian hands³³. Taking into account this case, the fact that the *nisba*-s al-Isrā’īlī or al-Yahūdī are not mentioned for Ibn ‘Amīra may indicate that in his case – as in those of Qādī ‘Iyād, the Banū Zuhr and Ibn Bājjā – Jewish ancestry was being used as a term of abuse, not as reflecting a real situation.

The forced conversion of the Jews that had taken place at the beginning of the Almohad period under the first caliph ‘Abd al-Mu’min (r. 527/1133-558/1163)³⁴ gives us the context for understanding why those suspected of being against Almohad ‘orthodoxy’ – whatever it was at any given moment – could be accused of being Jewish. Forced conversions almost inevitably give rise to suspicions about the faith of those obliged to convert as well as tensions between the old and the new converts when the latter try to find a place in the society into which they had been incorporated *en masse*, tensions that are often formulated in genealogical terms. This is well known for the case of the forced conversion of Jews in Christian Spain with the connected phenomena of the statutes of ‘limpieza de sangre’ and the accusation of crypto-Judaism attached to dissidents or critics of normative religion³⁵. In the Maghrebi case, decades after the forced conversion, under the Almohad caliph Abū Yūsuf Ya’qūb al-Manṣūr (r. 580/1184-595/1198), those Jews who had converted to Islam in the Almohad way were obliged to dress in a dis-

³² López y López, “Ibn Sahl al-Isrā’īlī, Abū Ishāq”, pp. 105-117, n° 1058, p. 107. For some of the criticism made against him in this domain see Velázquez Basanta, “Ibn ‘Isā al-Ḥimyarī, Abū ‘Abd Allāh”, pp. 260-4, n° 2198; Garulo, “Una epístola de Ibn Sahl de Sevilla (s. XIII)”, pp. 292-302; Schippers, “Humorous approach of the divine in the poetry of al-Andalus. The case of Ibn Sahl”, pp. 119-35.

³³ Muhammad b. Khalīl al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *Arba’ūna mas’ala fī uṣūl al-dīn*, p. 16.

³⁴ The most recent studies on this issue are Fierro, “A Muslim land without Jews or Christians”, pp. 231-47, and Mohamed, “Encore sur le statut des *ḍimmī*-s sous les Almohades”, pp. 65-87.

³⁵ Nirenberg, “Mass Conversion and Genealogical Mentalities: Jews and Christians in Fifteenth-Century Spain”.

tinctive, humiliating way reminiscent of the regulations included in the Pact of ‘Umar³⁶. They were no longer Jews from a legal point of view, but ‘new (Almohad) Muslims’ whose sincerity was doubted. In an often quoted passage, the Almohad historian ‘Abd al-Wāhid al-Marrākushī (d. after 621/1224) explained that had the caliph Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb been sure about their faith, he would have let them intermarry with the old Muslims and mix with them in all normal affairs of life. Had he been sure of their infidelity, he would have killed the men and enslaved their children, giving their properties as booty to the Muslims. The problem was precisely that he did not know what their true nature or status was³⁷. The Jewish author Ibn ‘Aqnīn, who himself had been forced to convert, recorded in his *Tibb al-nufūs* the sufferings and discrimination to which the converts were subject, being forbidden to own slaves, to take part in some legal acts, to marry ‘old Muslims’ and so on. His following statement is very telling: “The more it appears that we obey them as to everything they tell us, and incline after their Law, the more they oppress and enslave us.”³⁸ On the part of the Jews, the conviction existed that the forced converts continued to be the sons of Israel.³⁹

As the initially revolutionary Almohad movement sought adaptation to the Sunni local tradition, the Almohads’ concern about the outcome of their early policy of forced conversion provoked not only anxiety but also embarrassment. This led to narratives seeking to ensure that the forced converts were accepted as Muslims, and also at portraying Jews in a good light⁴⁰, as the following examples indicate. In the ‘Mem-

³⁶ Bennison, “Almohad *tawhīd* and its implications for religious difference,” and Fierro, “Conversion, ancestry and universal religion: the case of the Almohads in the Islamic West (sixth/twelfth-seventh/thirteenth centuries)”.

³⁷ ‘Abd al-Wāhid al-Marrākushī (d. after 621/1224), *Kitāb al-mu‘jib fī talkhīṣ akhbār al-Maghrib*, p. 380-1. Maimonides, Ibn ‘Aqnīn and Joseph ben Yehuda are examples of converted Jews who practiced Islam externally and were educated and socialized as Almohad Muslims.

³⁸ Hirschberg, *A History of the Jews in North Africa*, pp. 196, 201-2, 356. In his *Tibb al-nufūs*, Ibn ‘Aqnīn reports that under the Almohad caliph al-Mansūr Muslims were ordered to report Jewish converts who still observed Judaism which the common people did, while the elites refused. I wish to thank the anonymous reviewer for this reference taken from Toby, *Le-Rosh Yosef. Text and studies in Judaism dedicated to Yosef Qafih*, p. 329 (Hebrew) and discussed in Friedman, *Maimonides, the Yemenite Messiah and apostasy* (Hebrew), pp. 34-35, 67.

³⁹ Martínez Delgado, “Ibn Danān, Ṣeadyah”, pp. 47-54, n° 428, p. 52.

⁴⁰ For the portrayal of Jews in al-Andalus see Adang, *Islam frente al judaísmo. La polémica de Ibn Ḥazm de Córdoba*; Brann, *Power in the portrayal. Representations of Jews and Muslims in eleventh- and twelfth century Islamic Spain*.

oirs' by al-Baydhaq – a text written in order to prove ‘Abd al-Mu’min’s rights of succession as leader of the movement after the Mahdī Ibn Tūmart’s death in 524/1130, and also as a legitimate caliph⁴¹ – Ibn Tūmart is alleged to have witnessed in Tunis how a Jew who had converted to Islam was denied Muslim burial. Ibn Tūmart openly stated that such behaviour was wrong⁴², thus reflecting the position of those Almohads who were for integration and equality disregarding doubts about the true belief of those who had been forced to convert. Under the third Almohad caliph al-Manṣūr, his secretary Ibn ‘Ayyāsh al-Burshānī (d. 618/1221) wrote a document for a Jew in which he described the man as someone endowed with piety and nobility (*al-birr wa-l-karāma*)⁴³. The caliph required from Ibn ‘Ayyāsh to find support for such a description of a Jew who was after all an unbeliever (*kāfir*) in the Prophet’s Tradition (*sunna*). Ibn ‘Ayyāsh did manage to find a hadith that allegedly supported the part on nobility (*karāma*), but failed with piety. It was the caliph himself – putting Ibn ‘Ayyāsh to shame – who quoted a Koranic verse that confirmed also the part on piety (Koran 60:8)⁴⁴. The Banū Ṭāhir al-Qaysī were an important family from Murcia, and one of its members, Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ṭāhir al-Qaysī (d. 574/1178), was Averroes’ friend and also a supporter of the Almohads⁴⁵. His contemporary al-Ḍabbī (d. 599/1203) included in the biography he devoted to his ancestor Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir b. Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir al-Qaysī al-Tudmīrī (336/947-378/988) a miraculous story about a pious Muslim who lived

⁴¹ Fierro, “The Almohads and the Fatimids,” in Craig (ed.), *Ismaili and Fatimid Studies in Honor of Paul E. Walker*, p. 165.

⁴² Al-Baydhaq’s memoirs in *Documents inédits d’histoire almohade*, p. 50 (French transl., pp. 75-6).

⁴³ Note that *taqwā* is not employed in this story, the Koranic term for the discussion of the relationship between nobility and piety according to the famous Qur’ānic verse 49:13 (“...Surely the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most godfearing of you...” in the translation of Arberry).

⁴⁴ Velázquez Basanta, “Ibn ‘Ayyāsh al-Burshānī: poeta almeriense de época almohade”, Velázquez Basanta, “De nuevo sobre Ibn ‘Ayyāsh de Purchena, gran canciller del imperio almohade”, pp. 89-132; Velázquez Basanta, “Ibn ‘Ayyāsh al-Burshānī, Abū ‘Abd Allāh”, pp. 462-8, n° 356. The anecdote is found in Ibn al-Khaṭīb (d. 776/1374), *al-Iḥāṭa fī akhbār Gharnāṭa*, II, 482-487 and in Ibn Simāk (8th/14th-9th/15th centuries), *al-Zaharāt al-manthūra fī nukat al-akhbār al-ma’thūra*, pp. 133-4, n° 88.

⁴⁵ Puig Montada, “Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Ṭāhir. Addenda a ‘Averroes, vida y persecución de un filósofo’”, pp. 181-6; Martín Castellanos-Forcada, “Ibn Ṭāhir al-Qaysī, Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān (nieto)”, pp. 461-3, n° 1235.

in Mecca and who dreamt twice about being together with a Jew in the Day of Judgement. Wondering how that Jew who served the sultan of Egypt could have reached salvation, the pious Muslim decided to visit the Jew to learn if he could have been saved for any good action he might have performed. The Jew eventually remembered a good action he had done only for God's sake. Relieved, the pious Muslim told him the dream he had had and the Jew, astonished, converted to Islam⁴⁶. Almohad historical works include in their narratives about the revolt of the Arrabal in Cordoba during the emirate of the Umayyad emir al-Ḥakam I (r. 180/796-206/822) the story of how the Muslim scholar Ṭālūt was saved thanks to the good action of his Jewish neighbour, a story originating in Ibn al-Qūṭīyya (d. 367/977), but which was amplified by later authors.⁴⁷

These are all stories that aim at proving that Jews could be good, noble and pious, that if they converted they could have a place in a Muslim polity, that conversion should be the outcome of conviction and not of coercion, and that a Jew who converted to Islam had to be treated equally with the rest of the believers. As mentioned, these and other narratives are to be understood within the context of suspicion and anxiety on the part of 'old' Muslims towards the new Muslims caused by the forced conversion, while such suspicion and anxiety provided on the other hand the context in which political and religious opponents of the Almohads or those believed for different reasons to have deviated from strict allegiance to their ideological or political programme were discredited with accusations of Jewish ancestry or suggestion of such ancestry by confinement to Lucena.

Let us now turn to the lack of Arabic *nisba* in the case of the Banū Rushd. Ibn 'Abd al-Malik al-Marrākushī – the scholar who in the entry devoted to Averroes registered the rumour that the Banū Rushd had Jewish ancestry⁴⁸ – provided also data about their genealogy in the entries

⁴⁶ al-Dabbī, *Kitāb bughyat al-multamis fī ta'rīkh rijāl ahl al-Andalus*, n° 154; Pocklington, "Ibn Ṭāhir al-Qaysī, Abū 'Abd Allāh", pp. 409-14, n° 2382.

⁴⁷ 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī (581-post 621/1185-post 1224), *al-Mu'jib* 5, pp. 16-17; Ibn 'Abd al-Malik, *al-Dhayl wa-l-takmila*, IV, 150-152; Ibn Sa'īd (610-685/1213-1286), *al-Mugrib*, p. 43. An analysis of this anecdote in Molina, "Ṭālūt y el judío. Análisis de la evolución historiográfica de un relato", pp. 533-557, who points out that, in al-Dhahabī's rendition of the story, the Jew also eventually converted to Islam. See also Wasserstein, "A Man Who Never Was: Ṭālūt and The Jew Again", pp. 563-574.

⁴⁸ See above note 5.

he devoted to other members of Averroes' family in the same biographical dictionary. This information was recently analyzed by Delfina Serrano⁴⁹. She points out that in the case of Averroes' grandfather (Ibn Rushd al-Jadd) what we find is a short *nasab* (genealogical chain): Abū l-Walīd Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Aḥmad b. Rushd al-Qurṭubī (d. 520/1126). In the case of Ibn Rushd al-Jadd's father (who was alive in 482/1089) we find a long *nasab*: Aḥmad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Rushd. According to this *nasab* and taking into account what has been established about the generational reproduction for al-Andalus, the first Rushd for whom we have information must have lived in the first half of the 4th/10th century. Serrano concludes regarding the short *nasab*: "The reader is thus led to think that this scholar [Ibn Rushd al-Jadd, d. 520/1126] was the first member of his family to have gained public relevance and that his ancestors' conversion to Islam might have been relatively recent' (early fifth/eleventh century?)."⁵⁰ Regarding the long *nasab* she states that "[it] projects the genealogy of the Banu Rushd about one century and a half backwards, to the end of ninth or beginning of the tenth century, when the majority of the indigenous population of al-Andalus converted to Islam."⁵¹ Ibn 'Abd al-Malik al-Marrākushī would have recorded both *nasab*-s, Serrano concludes, because he wanted to rebuke the rumour that Averroes had Jewish ancestors and instead of making an explicit refutation of such accusation he opted for a 'more subtle strategy' consisting in mentioning a "then unknown [sic]" early member of the family and fabricating for them a genealogy that – according to her – "undermined the claim that the Banu Rushd were Jews with no affiliation with any of the Arab-Muslim lineages of al-Andalus and who had converted to Islam late enough to be remembered during Averroes' lifetime, all this posing an unexpected threat to Averroes' social and religious standing".⁵²

⁴⁹ Serrano, "Explicit cruelty, implicit compassion: Judaism, forced conversions and the genealogy of the Banū Rushd", pp. 217-33. She refers to a future Ph.D. Thesis on the Banū Rushd's lack of *nisba*, but to my knowledge it has not yet been written.

⁵⁰ Serrano, "Explicit cruelty, implicit compassion," p. 227.

⁵¹ She is following here Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period*, although his results do not point to 'the majority of the population', but just to that part of the population that would eventually be converted to Islam. On this reminder see Alwyn Harrison, "Behind the curve: Bulliet and conversion to Islam in al-Andalus revisited", pp. 35-51.

⁵² Serrano, "Explicit cruelty, implicit compassion," p. 229.

However, the longer *nasab* does not undermine the claim that the Banū Rushd were Jews, it only projects a century back the conversion of the eponym of the family, the man called Rushd who appears at the end of the *nasab*. This Rushd is a non Arab both in the short and the long *nasab*, the extension of the *nasab* being irrelevant for the ethnic and/or religious adscription of the oldest known ancestor. That he converted in the fifth/eleventh century or in the fourth/tenth century has no bearing whatsoever on the possibility of his having been a Jew. The long *nasab* of the Banū Rushd cannot be understood as any ‘subtle’ attempt by Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik al-Marrākushī to show ‘compassion’ for the ‘cruelty’ of the accusation. Moreover, and putting this case into a more general framework, controversial genealogical claims were openly debated in Islamic societies as proven by so many examples, especially satirical poetry⁵³. For al-Andalus specifically there are the cases of so many dynasties and also individuals such as Ibn Ḥazm and al-Bunnāhī⁵⁴. Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik al-Marrākushī’s shortening or elongating *nasab*-s in entries devoted to members of the same family can be explained in a simple way, one that fully belongs to the craft of the authors of biographical dictionaries (*tabaqāt*). In fact, there are many examples of similar procedures being followed in *tabaqāt* works when recording biographies of members of the same family, i.e., recording in some of them *nasab*-s longer or more complete than those that appear in some other biographies. To give some examples taken from Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik al-Marrākushī’s *al-Dhayl wa-l-Takmila*:

– Ṣadaqa b. Aḥmad b. Lubb was a scholar who died in 380/990 and whose biography is recorded by Ibn al-Faraḍī⁵⁵. His descendant Aḥmad b. Aḥmad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Ṣadaqa al-Sulamī (d. 559/1141) is recorded

⁵³ Szombathy, *The roots of Arabic genealogy. A study in historical anthropology*; Powers, *Law, Society, and Culture in the Maghrib, 1300-1500*, pp. 167-205 (a debate in North Africa regarding a man’s alleged Sharifian ancestry).

⁵⁴ For the case of Ibn Tūmart and the Mu’minids see Fierro, “Las genealogías de ‘Abd al-Mu’min, primer califa almohade”, pp. 77-108. For the case of Ibn Ḥazm – who claimed Persian ancestry while his ancestors belonged to the indigenous population of Iberia- see Fierro, “El conde Casio, los Banu Qasī y los linajes godos en al-Andalus”, p. 187. On the case of al-Bunnāhī, whose Arab genealogy was considered suspect, see Calero Secall, “El proceso de Ibn al-Jaṭīb”.

⁵⁵ *Prosopografía de los ulemas de al-Andalus*, ID 3988 http://www.eea.csic.es/pua/personaje/consulta_personaje.php?id=3988 (consulted 28 December 2015).

by Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik al-Marrākushī without noting the full *nasab* of his ancestor Ṣadaqa.⁵⁶

– Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Aḥmad b. Rabīʿ b. Aḥmad b. Rabīʿ (d. 549/1109) had a descendant called Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Rabīʿ (d. 616/1120) in whose biography Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik al-Marrākushī again does not quote the full *nasab*.⁵⁷

Similar patterns can be detected in the recording of the *nasab*-s of the members of families who have entries in the same work such as the Banū Ghālīb al-Sharrāt, the Banū Ḥamdīn and the Banū l-Ṭaylasān.

The reasons for acting in this way are obvious: if a *nasab* is recorded fully in the entry devoted to a member of the family, why repeat it again in other entries of members of the same family recorded in the same work? Often – but not always – the author of the biographical dictionary tells the reader that if he wants to know the more complete *nasab* he should look for it in such and such entry: an example is to be found in the entry devoted by Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik al-Marrākushī to ʿAbd al-Malik b. Muḥammad b. Marwān b. Zuhr al-Iyādī al-Ishbīlī al-Dānī (d. 471/1078) where it is said *wa-qad taqaddama rafʿ nasabihi fi rasm ibnihi Zuhr*⁵⁸. Unfortunately, the biography Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik al-Marrākushī devoted to Zuhr b. ʿAbd al-Malik b. Muḥammad b. Marwān b. Zuhr al-Iyādī has not been preserved.⁵⁹

Moreover, in the case of the biographical dictionary by Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik al-Marrākushī, the kind of work he is writing has to be taken into account: the title is *al-Dhayl wa-l-Takmila li-kitabay al-Mawṣūl wa-l-Ṣila*, i.e., it is a supplement (*dhayl*) and a complement (*takmila*), a work supplementing and completing previous works: those by Ibn Bashkuwāl (d. 578/1183) and Ibn al-Faraḍī (d. 403/1013). Now, Ibn Bashkuwāl had included a biography of Ibn Rushd al-Jadd (Averroes' grandfather) in his *Kitāb al-Ṣila*, and Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik al-Marrākushī completed his predecessor's information on Ibn Rushd al-Ḥafīd's an-

⁵⁶ Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik al-Marrākushī, *al-Dhayl wa-l-Takmila*, I/1, p. 26, n° 5.

⁵⁷ Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik al-Marrākushī, *al-Dhayl wa-l-Takmila*, I/1, p. 194, n° 265 and 203, n° 277.

⁵⁸ Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik al-Marrākushī, *al-Dhayl wa-l-Takmila*, V/1, 37 (90).

⁵⁹ B. Sharīfa, “Banū Zuhr: nazarāt fī taʾrīkh usrat andalusīyya”, pp. 9-27; Ismāʿīl, “Los Avenzoar o Banū Zuhr de Sevilla: el legado de la medicina”, pp. 69-76; Kuhne, “El ‘por menor’ en la historiografía [Los ‘nuevos fragmentos’ en *al-Bayān al-mugrib* y la caída de los Banū Zuhr]”, pp. 155-71; Álvarez Millán, “Ibn Zuhr, Abū l-ʿAlāʾ Zuhr”, pp. 340-50, n° 1458.

cestors by adding an entry on Ibn Rushd al-Jadd's father where he recorded the long *nasab* of the family. This – as we have seen – is a standard procedure that does not depart from what the same author does in other cases.

In the famous encounter between Averroes and the Almohad caliph Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf (r. 558/1163-580/1184) that led to his charging the young Cordoban scholar with commenting and paraphrasing Aristotle's *oeuvre*, the Almohad caliph is said to have inquired about his family⁶⁰. Such inquiries were a normal procedure to ensure that people admitted into the court and especially into the close entourage of the caliph deserved to be there in terms of nobility and merit⁶¹. We do not know what Averroes answered, but there are grounds to believe that he would have given the longest possible *nasab*, as its antiquity would prove his inherited merit (*ḥasab*), while not having any qualms about the lack of genealogy (*nasab*), that is, of any tribal *nisba* in his family: to be an 'old' family was what counted for him, 'old' in his view being synonymous with 'good'. This can be deduced from what Ibn Khaldūn tells us regarding Averroes' position on non-genealogical nobility (*ḥasab*)⁶². According to Ibn Khaldūn, Averroes mentioned *al-ḥasab* in his commentary to Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, saying that it belonged to the ancient settlers in a town, without considering that a 'house' (*bayt*) possessed an original nobility through group feeling based on genealogy (*ʿaṣabiyya*) – to which of course also personal qualities could be added. Ibn Khaldūn did not agree with him, wondering how a long residence might help anyone to gain prestige if he does not belong to a group that makes him feared and causes others to obey him. For Averroes, *al-ḥasab* depends exclusively on the number of forefathers, whereas for Ibn Khaldūn prestige lasts at best four generations. Ibn Khaldūn thinks

⁶⁰ ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, *al-Muʿjib*, pp. 353-4, where Averroes states that the caliph *saʿalanī ʿan ismī wa-sm abī wa-nasabī*; before, mention is made of his 'house' and his lineage (*baytī wa-salafī*). The encounter and its dating have been analyzed by Morata, "La presentación de Averroes en la corte almohade", pp. 101-122.

⁶¹ Marlow, *Hierarchy and egalitarianism in Islamic thought*, pp. 102-3.

⁶² On this concept see Marlow, *Hierarchy and egalitarianism in Islamic thought*, index. She translates it as 'inherited merit', adding that it is often understood as 'a store of merit inherited by a man as a result of the deeds of his forefathers, but one which could either increase or decrease by his own actions' (p. 5, note 20). It can also be translated as social esteem or prestige. On the latter see Hurler, Rivoal and Sidéra, "Entre affirmation de statut et désir de reconnaissance. Introduction au prestige", pp. 9-21.

that this erroneous view was due to the fact that Averroes grew up in a region and period in which people had lost the experience of group feeling and were not familiar with the conditions governing it, this being the reason Averroes did not take it into consideration⁶³. Behind this divergence of opinions there is of course the crucial role played by *'aṣabiyya* – group solidarity heavily dependent on and expressed through genealogy – in Ibn Khaldūn's conceptions, and the Islamic debate on the relationship between ethnic and social egalitarianism, on what constitutes nobility, and how social esteem and prestige are created and preserved.

As noted by D. Serrano, we shall never know if the Banū Rushd had Jewish ancestors unless new sources bring new data to the fore. When the accusation of Jewish ancestry made against them is analyzed in the chronological context in which it took place and is put together with similar accusations made against contemporary scholars it allows us to complete our picture of how the Almohad establishment or parts of it treated some of those who belonged to their elites who at a certain moment were suspected of ideological deviation or political disaffection: they could be discredited through the accusation of having Jewish ancestry in the hope that this would throw upon them all the negative connotations that Jewishness was associated with, increased especially because of the anxiety caused by the crypto-Judaism engendered as a result of the early Almohads' forced conversion. It is important, however, to note that there was no lack of attempts at putting both Jews and converted Jews under a better light. Almohadism was a path that included a number of lanes and to do it justice it cannot be reduced to just one of them.

⁶³ Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, pp. 103-107. Note that before dealing with Averroes' views Ibn Khaldūn devotes some passages to the loss of group feeling on the part of the Israelites, who nevertheless still insist on reminding others of their noble ancestry. See also Zakaria Rhani, "The genealogy of power and the power of genealogy in Morocco: history, imaginary and politics", pp. 37-51, note 1, and Stroumsa, "Between acculturation and conversion in Islamic Spain. The case of the Banu Hasday", pp. 9-36.

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