

CALIPHAL QURTUBA: ORIGEN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE Umayyad CAPITAL OF AL-ANDALUS

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In 1929, when Rafael Castejón, one of the pioneer archeologists in Cordoba, took on the task of creating an urban image of tenth-century Cordoba to mark the celebration of the thousand-year anniversary of the proclamation of the Caliphate, he explained the limitations and difficulties of his attempt by recalling the pessimism with which Amador de los Ríos undertook the same challenge thirty years before, a task he would find impossible.¹ Almost simultaneously Évariste Lévi-Provençal, the chief Arab scholar of his time, would begin his great work on Muslim Spain in which the pervasive role of the city of Cordoba would lead him to say that in many ways the history of 8th to 11th centuries Muslim Spain was the history of its capital.² These are the pioneers who laid the groundwork for understanding the «Caliphate of Cordoba» and their work, the basis for all 20th century research, changed the way caliphal Cordoba was understood as different phases of the city's Muslim history took shape.

Thus, the stage was dominated by scholars and researchers until the last quarter of the 20th century who delved individually into different aspects of the city's Islamic past. This phase is characterized by attempts to interpret the messages taken from Arab texts as scholars and researchers tried to place the scarce archeological findings that they managed to control in a city experiencing increased urban development and a growing population.

The last decades of the 20th century marked a time of transition in which the creation of the University of Cordoba (1972), the transfer of authority over cultural heritage material to the Autonomous Community of Andalusia (1984) and a new General Plan for Urban Management (1986) coincide with the reactivation of urban activity that would once again

¹ Rafael Castejón (1929). «Córdoba califal», *Boletín de la Real Academia de Córdoba*, 25, pp. 254-339; Rodrigo Amador de los Ríos (1895). «Apuntes para la historia monumental de Córdoba durante la dominación musulmana», *Revista de España*, 10, June, p. 402.

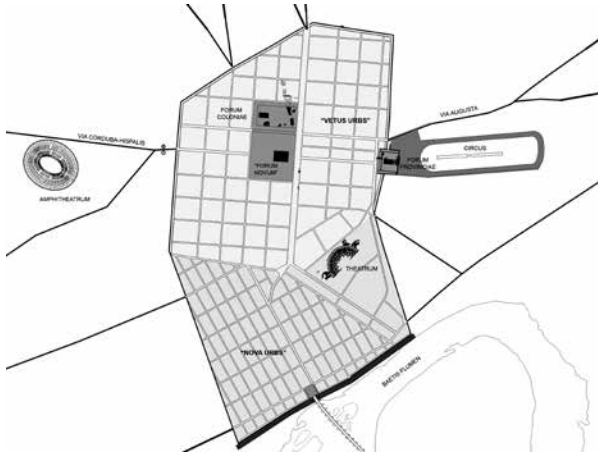
² Évariste Lévi-Provençal (1944). *Histoire de l'Espagne musulmane. I. De la conquête a la chute du califat de Cordoue (710-1031)*. El Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale.

have a strong impact on the remains of the city's past, especially on its Islamic remains as a result of their vulnerability, if state Cultural Heritage (1985) and regional (1991) laws failed to create effective mechanisms for management and protection.

We must wait until the approval of a new General Plan for Urban Management in 2001 and the implementation of global research programs, such as the current program developed by Urban Municipal Management (Gerencia Municipal de Urbanismo, GMU) and the University of Cordoba between 2002 and 2011, to begin improving urban archeological management in Cordoba, which translated into a substantial increase in the amount and quality of available archeological information. This stage presents a number of contrasts. Many advances have been made in establishing preventative protection measures and the management of archeological processes linked to urban activity. Many vestiges of the city's past were also preserved but they are of yet inaccessible and, judging by the pace followed with the Roman temple, the caliphal baths or the Alcázar, we are still years away from these sites' musealization and promotion. In short, we have had two decades of feverish activity, in which much research was conducted on sites, especially on the sites that were in danger of disappearing, but it will still take decades just to begin to process all the information.

As the capital of one of the richest and most highly-romanized provinces, Corduba Colonia Patricia reached considerable development after the Augustan refounding³ (Map 1), adapting its urban features to the profound political, economic, social and ideological changes at work from the 4th century onward. This city with classical roots, which passed through the filter of Christianity from the 4th to 7th centuries, became the capital of Al-Andalus in 717. With the arrival of 'Abd al-Rahman I and the restoration of the «Umayyad legitimacy» in the western part of the Islamic world in 756, Qurtuba would embark upon a new and transcendental urban development founded on three pillars. First, the continuity of certain «constants» inherited from Roman and Christian predecessors, upon which the implementation of certain Eastern urban models and architectural would be imposed. These two factors of continuity and change, complex and evolving over the centuries, would be surpassed by the third essential and definitive factor: the unstoppable process of Islamization in all areas, including urban topography, the specific subject of our analysis.

³ For more information on Roman Cordoba, see Xavier Dupré i Raventós (ed.) (2004). *Las capitales provinciales de Hispania. I. Colonia Patricia Corduba*. Roma: L'Erma di Bretschneider; Juan F. Murillo (2008). *Colonia Patricia Corduba hasta la dinastía flavia. Imagen urbana de una capital provincial*, in Ricardo González Villaescusa (ed.). *Simulacra Romae II: Rome, les capitales de province (capita prouinciarum) et la création d'un espace commun européen: une approche archéologique*. Reims: Société archéologique champenoise, pp. 71-94; and Desiderio Vaquerizo Gil and Juan F. Murillo Redondo (2010). *Ciudad y suburbia en Corduba. Una visión diacrónica (siglos II a. C.-VII d. C.)*, in Desiderio Vaquerizo Gil (ed.). *Las áreas suburbanas en la ciudad histórica: topografía, usos, función*. Cordoba: Universidad de Córdoba, pp. 455-522.



Map I. Reconstruction of the Corduba Colonia Patricia *forma urbis* in the late first century BC.

Source: Collaboration agreement between Urban Municipal Management (GMU) and the University of Cordoba (GMU-UCO).

As a result of this dialectical interaction we find an urban reality in the second half of the tenth century completely different from that which preceded it. The «Caliphate of Cordoba» surpassed all contemporary European and most Islamic urban centers in scale, constituting a megalopolis comparable only to Baghdad's Abbasid Caliphate. The splendor of the Caliphate of Cordoba, celebrated in song and dreamt of by Andalusian poets, was not just the work of a generation (that of 'Abd al-Rahman III) but the result of a highly complex historical process in which a number of factors came into play: a millennium-old urban trajectory, the strength of Islam in shaping the urban landscape and sociability, the Umayyad conception of power implemented by the first independent emir and transformed, under parameters taken from the Abbasid enemy, by 'Abd al-Rahman II to later be «revolutionized» by the first caliph who, aware of the system's limitations and pressed by the social-economic changes taking place in al-Andalus, by the weakening of the more theoretic than real figure of the Abbasid Caliphate and by the Christian pressure on borders and the Fatamid threat in north Africa, to strengthen his power through an ideological legitimization based on the caliphate dignity to overcome traditional Umayyad tools: military strength and the subsequent ability to collect taxes.⁴

FROM THE ROMAN COLONIA PATRICIA TO CHRISTIAN CORDUBA

The Corduba conquered by Mughith in 711 was characterized by a physical space delimited by the walled perimeter of the old Roman city with a vibrant and transforming urban fabric as a result of a secular historical dynamic that led to the dissolution of the

⁴ For the activities of Umayyad Cordovans, in addition to the classic works of Évariste Lévi-Provençal, the review made by Eduardo Manzano (2006) is essential. *Conquistadores, emires y califas: los omeyas y la formación de al-Andalus*. Barcelona: Crítica. A very thought-provoking reinterpretation of the «revolution» caused by 'Abd al-Rahman III in 929 was developed by María Isabel Fierro Bello (2010). *Abderramán III y el califato omeya de Córdoba*. Donostia-San Sebastián: Nerea.

roads network, the abandonment and/or transformation of public spaces and buildings including the cemetery inside the old *pomerium*, all in line with the classical city's process of evolution that dated to the 3rd century. Recent archaeological research has also been able to compare suburban areas, especially the western *suburbium*, with the abandonment and dismantling of the amphitheater and construction of the Cercadilla architectural complex in the early 4th century.⁵

This *suburbium occidentali* would already be under the process of Christianization in the mid-4th century, as evidenced by the transformation of the Cercadilla complex into the residence of Bishop Osio, the construction of a cultural center, most likely martial, in the area of the dismantled amphitheater and in the progressive Christianization of the funerary spaces. However, within the walled city this process would barely be archaeologically noticeable until the end of the 5th century, basing the transition on a new model of urban space that reveals the dismantling of the road network to create a new urban reality.

On the one hand, the northern half of the city would become sparsely populated (the same area where the main monuments and centers of power were located), with large undeveloped areas owing to a lack of cohesive planning, possibly intended for orchards or landfills and even sporadically used for burials. We also find, within the scope of this *vetus urbs*, the phenomena of unstable occupation of old buildings, both public and private, evidence of changes in the social and economic relationships of the urban population. On the other end of the spectrum is what happened in the southern region of the city; here new buildings and public spaces, power centers and homes of the local aristocracy were concentrated in a clear move toward emerging strategic factors: the river, its port, and the bridge.

Although documentation is still scarce and fragmented, archaeological research over the last decade begins to sketch the basic lines of what would be the new center of political and religious power for a millennium. The oldest item found to date is the *castellum*, a fortified complex with versatile uses that would personify the city's governmental civil authority, as evidenced by its dimensions, its size and the inevitable use and annulment of the old wall, which would be projected as a fortified stronghold towards the river, flanking the approach to the bridge at its most unguarded point.⁶

On the other hand, the excavations made at the Visitor Reception Center site have unearthed a large building that adjoins the southern wall of the city, with a large atrium open to the street at the plaza in front of the bridge's gate and connected by a courtyard that opened onto large areas paved with *opus signinum* floors. This monumental building dates from the late 5th or early 6th century, and has been historically proven to have been linked

⁵ See Desiderio Vaquerizo Gil and Juan F. Murillo Redondo (eds.) (2010). *El Anfiteatro romano de Córdoba y su entorno urbano (ss. I-XIII d. C.)*. Córdoba: Universidad de Córdoba.

⁶ See Alberto León and Juan F. Murillo (2009). «El complejo civil tardoantiguo de Córdoba y su continuidad en el Alcázar Omeya», *Madridrer Mitteilungen*, 50, pp. 399-432.

to the Corduba bishop's complex at its San Vicente headquarters. We still have yet to determine whether the bishop's complex necessitated the use of the *kardo maximus* of the *nova urbs*, although it most likely did, establishing traffic from the upper part of the city to the bridge gate across the two lateral *kardines* that crossed the enclosure and formed the western and eastern fronts of the subsequent Umayyad Great Mosque, leading to the old and already much transformed Roman square, with porticos dismantled in the 5th century, the western span of the original triple-arched door walled over from approximately the 6th century and the façade of the Late Antiquity building dominating its eastern side.⁷ The entire complex would define an urban image reflected in the power of the bishop, the true master of the city during the almost two centuries between the fall of Rome's provincial government in Baetica and the definitive conquest of Corduba by Liuvigild in 585.

THE ARAB CONQUEST AND THE BEGINNING OF ISLAMIZATION

We have established Cordoba's gradual transformation between the fourth and seventh centuries within parameters from which some deterioration and even crisis could be understood; however, they are merely the reflection of profound economic, social and political transformations from which emerged a different city that maintained similar functions as its predecessor in a world that was more rural and much less interconnected than in previous centuries. This process would be cut short by the defeat and collapse of the Visigoth state in 711 and the subsequent Muslim conquest.⁸

Just six years later, in 717, governor al-Hurr arrives with detailed instructions from the caliph for establishing Cordoba as the capital of al-Andalus and laying the foundations for the administrative management of new territories incorporated into Islam. Eduardo Manzano has attempted to justify this choice of Cordoba over Seville for the administrative capital as a result of differences surrounding the conquest of both cities (covenant against conquest) and the resulting availability of spoils to be had in Cordoba,⁹ responds more to

⁷ See Juan F. Murillo, Alberto León Muñoz, Elena Castro, M.^a Teresa Casal, Raimundo Ortiz and Antonio J. González (2010). La transición de la civitas clásica a la madina islámica a través de las transformaciones operadas en las áreas suburbanas, in *Desiderio Vaquerizo Gil and Juan F. Murillo Redondo (eds.). El Anfiteatro romano de Córdoba y su entorno urbano (ss. I-XIII d. C.). Op. Cit.*, note 5, pp. 503-547 (see pp. 521-524 and figure 247).

⁸ The Arab conquest of 711 has been the subject of fierce historiographical controversy that has not always been limited to the field of science, as evidenced by Eduardo Manzano and M.^a Antonia Martínez Núñez, so the interested reader should be very critical when faced with the extensive literature on the subject; see Eduardo Manzano (2011). «Algunas reflexiones sobre el 711», *Awraq*, 3, pp. 3-20; and M.^a Antonia Martínez Núñez (2011). «¿Por qué llegaron los árabes a la Península Ibérica?: las causas de la conquista musulmana del 711», *Awraq*, 3, pp. 21-36. As an introduction, we again direct readers to the work of Eduardo Manzano (2006). *Conquistadores, emires y califas: los omeyyas y la formación de al-Andalus. Op. Cit.*, note 4, pp. 29-186, that can be completed, in certain aspects, with the work of Pedro Chalmeta (1994). *Invasión e islamización: la sumisión de Hispania y la formación de al-Andalus*. Madrid: Mapfre.

⁹ This interpretation is too simplistic, as they could have chosen one of the other two significant mainland cities (Toledo and Merida) for the same reason, and failed to mention that clear Artobás «collaborators» who held great riches were in Cordoba, who years later granted the Syrian al-Sumayl the rich *Uqdat al-Zaytun* estate. See Eduardo Manzano (2006). *Conquistadores, emires y califas: los omeyyas y la formación de al-Andalus. Op. Cit.*, note 4, pp. 71-72 and 112.

a successful geostrategic vision that expresses the clear will of Damascus to consolidate the conquest and ensure the collection of taxes and communications from Cordoba, where the bridge, repaired in 720 by the express command of ‘Umar II, will be key.

Urban life in Cordoba will continue without pause after the conquest, as any pause beyond the logical readapting to new needs would have been documented by archaeological research. A perfect example is the urban morphology within the inherited walled town that was adapted into Qurtuba’s medina, where in 711 we would find ourselves in the middle of a transformation process that would start with the road layout of the Augustan Roman city¹⁰ and would end with the layout reflected in Cordoba’s first map in 1811, the *Plano de los franceses* (French map), so we have enough information not only to determine Cordoba’s transformations over the 19th and early-20th centuries but also enough information to determine most of the transformations that occurred from the 14th century onward.

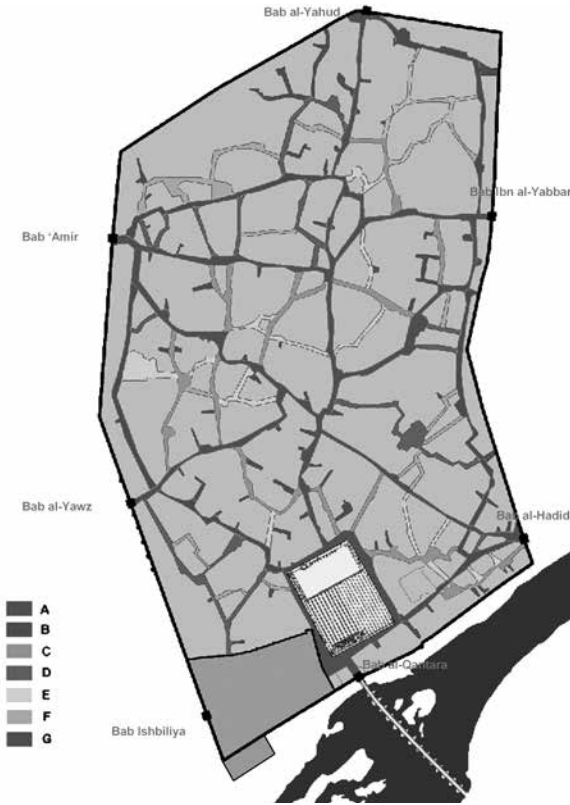
The *Plano de los franceses* (Map 2) shows that most of the gates of the Roman colony were still used in the Cordoba medina even into the early 19th century, gates that Manuel Ocaña has demonstrated were also in use during the Islamic period.¹¹ From these gates, the *Plano de los franceses* allows for a hierarchical analysis of the road and a process of deconstruction based on the diachronic approach provided by the recent archaeological research. As an example, we can verify how the latest road hierarchy,¹² the parapet walkways, which establish a process of saturation and densification of the area,¹³ were particularly frequent in the southern sector, in the vicinity of the mosque, where more than thirty can be counted today. By contrast, their scarcity in the northernmost sector is significant, precisely in an area that would be sparsely populated after the Christian conquest, with gardens, yards and other rural spaces which were not developed until much later, defining a privileged area for installing nobles and, later, monasteries. This peculiarity could indicate some special features in the occupation of this sector, precisely the farthest from the center of power based in the southern part of the city, sparsely population and with the consequent lack of quality housing that would make it an unattractive place to settle to the first Muslims who arrived with Mughith, who would initially obtain suitable homes in other, more populous sectors.

¹⁰ See Juan F. Murillo (2008). Colonia Patricia Corduba hasta la dinastía flavia. Imagen urbana de una capital provincial. *Op. Cit.*, note 3, figure 4.

¹¹ Manuel Ocaña (1935). «Las puertas de la medina de Córdoba», *Al-Andalus*, III, pp. 143-151.

¹² See Juan F. Murillo, María Dolores Ruiz, Silvia Carmona and Maudilio Moreno-Almenara (2009). La manzana de San Pablo-Orive en el contexto de la evolución histórico-urbanística de la ciudad de Córdoba, in Francisco Gómez Díaz, Antonio Luis Ampliato Briones, Maudilio Moreno Almenara, Juan Francisco Murillo, Dolores Ruiz Lara, Silvia Carmona and Rafael García Castejón. *Orive. La clave del espacio público en el centro histórico de Córdoba*. Cordoba: Ediciones de La Posada, pp. 45-135 (see figure 48 and pp. 101-103).

¹³ The formulation of this concept, applied to the Andalusian cities, has been developed by Julio Navarro Palazón and Pedro Jiménez Castillo (2003). On the Islamic city and its evolution see Sebastián F. Ramallo Asensio and Ana María Muñoz Amilibia. *Estudios de arqueología dedicados a la profesora Ana María Muñoz Amilibia*. Murcia: Universidad de Murcia, pp. 319-381.



Map 2. Location of the Qurtuba's Medina gates and the hierarchy of the road system based on the 1811 map, digitally corrected and adjusted to current maps.

Source: GMU-UCO Agreement.

Soon after, the troubled ups and downs that marked the first decades of Islamic establishment in Cordoba, together with the displacement of the majority of the Christian population to outside the Medina wall, would lead to the possible installation in this northern area of agnatic groups whose impact we can trace in urban toponymy, in line with a similar process that is widely known in Muslim cities.¹⁴ This is clear from giving the names of two Arab figures from the first third of the eighth century, 'Abd al-Yabbar b. Al Jattab and 'Amir b. Umar al-Qurasi, to a cemetery (*maqbara* 'Amir al-Qurasi) and the two northern-most gates of the western and eastern Medina borders, known as *bab* Ibn 'Abd al-Yabbar and *bab* 'Amir, in addition to the fact that the neighborhood between this last gate and the *bab* al-Yahud was named after the Berber group known as the *banu* Zayyali. Along these lines we should also mention the location of large urban homes in this upper part of the Medina, far from the busy *bab* al-Qantara and the Great Mosque, which belonged to the Cordovan elite later in the 9th century.

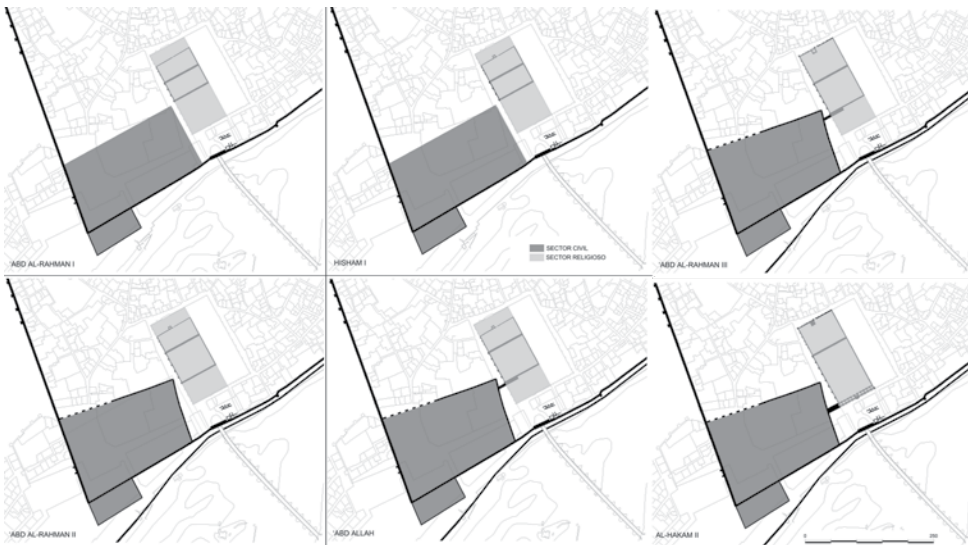
¹⁴ Hypothesis already posed by Manuel Ación Almansa and Antonio Vallejo Triano (1998). *Urbanismo y Estado islámico. De Córdoba a Qurtuba-Madinat al-Zahra*, in *Patrice Cressier, Mercedes García-Arenal and Mohamed Méouak. Genèse de la ville islamique en al-Andalus et au Maghreb occidental*. Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC), pp. 107-136.

QURTUBA, HEAD OF THE NEO-UMAYYAD STATE OF AL-ANDALUS

After the period of caliph-dependent governors, characterized by the absence of urban planning and lack of clear guidelines on the linking of Cordoba and its territory, a substantial change in the configuration of the new Muslim city will be marked by the accession to power of ‘Abd al-Rahman I in 756. ‘Abd al-Rahman I would leave a permanent mark on the future of Qurtuba with a building program that would be developed through a three-pronged approach that could be qualified as dynastic, given the project’s longevity and the involvement of his heirs. The first of these Umayyad stone symbols would be the Great Mosque, constructed on part of the ancient San Vicente church complex and prototype for all buildings constructed in al-Andalus after the model of the Great Umayyad Mosque of Damascus.

The prestige of the founder and the Maliki code of not permitting more than one mosque in each city contributed to its conversion into a dynastic building (Map 3), to which successive emirs and caliphs will add (minaret, ablution rooms with corresponding water supply, *sabat*, *al-mimbar*...) and expand to quadruple its surface, but without ever losing the typological characteristics imposed in 786.¹⁵

Map 3. Hypothesis on the evolution of the southwestern angle of the Qurtuba medina between ‘Abd al-Rahman I and al-Hakam II.



Source: GMU-UCO Agreement.

¹⁵ For the different aspects related to Cordoba’s Great Mosque see the still-valuable studies on the subject by Félix Hernández, Manuel Ocaña, Leopoldo Torres-Balbás and Christian Ewert, complemented by the more recent works of P. Ivory. For the refashioning and further growth of the former Cordovan church into the Mosque and its relationships with civil affairs represented by the Alcázar, see Alberto Leon and Juan F. Murillo (2009). «El complejo civil tardoantiguo de Córdoba y su continuidad en el Alcázar Omeya», *Op.Cit.*, note 6, pp. 416-419 and fig. 5.

As a counterpoint to this sacred center, 'Abd al-Rahman I would undertake the creation of the basic administrative infrastructure, centralized at the Alcázar. Located in the southwestern corner of the medina and in the immediate vicinity of the Great Mosque, it would integrate the Late Antiquity *castellum* and, if we trust in Arabic tradition itself, the Visigoth royal residence. The parallel with Damascus again becomes evident¹⁶ and the subsequent involvement of al-Hakam I, who reinforced the Alcázar's outer defenses, and 'Abd al-Rahman II, who would undertake a thorough reform of the Qasr al-Umara framed within the broader context of his administrative reform and mainly within the increase in representation needs, which would lead to the physical segregation of certain state agencies, such as the Dar al-Sikka or Dar al-Tiraz, which would then settle in suburban areas outside the city. The role of the Cordoba Alcázar as representation and image of Umayyad political power would be bolstered by the repair of the *rasif* or paved road along the river in 827, works absolutely necessary as a complement to the in-depth restoration of the bridge undertaken decades ago by Hisham I.

With both initiatives, in the final years of his reign the «Emigrant» would give Qurtuba an urban image that would be a feature of subsequent developments, establishing a set «center» in which, according to explicit Umayyad ideology, politics and religion, the figure of the emir is embodied. In parallel, the emerging apparatus of the state and the role reserved for the Friday prayer in the Great Mosque will serve as a counterpoint, as factors of integration, to the by then patent urban segmentation derived from the permanence and new determination of suburban areas. Precisely in the planning of that space would 'Abd al-Rahman I develop the third part of his plan outside the walls with the founding of the al-Rusafa *almunia*, or farm estate, transplanting to Cordoba an agricultural model that, although based on local Roman infrastructures, reproduces a Syrian model with clear Umayyad connotations, as we shall see.

In the articulation of this periurban space in Qurtuba, where the Umayyad emirs developed their critical Islamization work (Map 4), the suburbs, especially suburban areas intended for residential use, originally occupied by Mozarabs and later the growing mass of Muslim converts, played a major role alongside *almunias* and cemeteries. These suburbs first developed spontaneously, localized near the main gates of the city and which would create the Saqunda, Sabular and *balat* Mughith suburbs from populated areas before the conquest and where the first Muslims received homes and property, initiating urban de-

¹⁶ See Thierry Bianquis (2000). Damas, in Jean-Claude Garcin, Jean-Luc Audaud and Sylvie Denoix. *Grandes villes méditerranéennes du monde musulman médiéval*. Roma: École française de Rome, pp. 37-55. For the Cordoba Alcázar the synthesis of Leopoldo Torres-Balbás (1990) continues to be essential reading. Arte hispano-musulmán hasta la caída del Califato de Córdoba, in Ramón Menéndez Pidal. *Historia de España*, vol. v. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, pp. 331-788, updated by Alberto J. Montejo, José Antonio Garriguet Mata and Ana María Zamorano Arenas (1999). El Alcázar Andalusi de Córdoba y su entorno urbano, in *Córdoba en la Historia. La construcción de la urbe*. Cordoba, Barcelona: Ayuntamiento de Córdoba, Fundación «la Caixa», pp. 163-172; and by Alberto León and Juan F. Murillo (2009). «El complejo civil tardoantiguo de Córdoba y su continuidad en el Alcázar Omeya», *Op. Cit.*, note 6.

velopment alongside those strictly Mozarab areas built around the suburban Christian basilicas of Three Saints, Saint Acisclus or Saint Zoilus.

Map 4. Qurtuba in the 9th century.



Source: GMU-UCO Agreement.

The destruction of Saqunda as a result of the rebellion of its people against al-Hakam I in 818 cut short the formation of what was Qurtuba's main suburb, and other suburban focal points emerged that would become receptors for the city's growing population and clear examples of Islamization throughout the ninth century.

During the initial approach to the configuration and developmental process of the Madinat Qurtuba suburbs in 1997 attention was called to the certain prior existence of a «center of attraction» at the origin of every suburb, as was clear in the case of the *rabad* al-Rusafa in relation to 'Abd al-Rahman I's *almunia* or the case of the *balat* Mughith in relation to the property of the same name.¹⁷ In further revision and development of the approach presented in that text, published in 2004, we demonstrated how 'Abd al-Rahman I launched a process in Qurtuba by founding al-Rusafa on an existing site that from that moment forward would be characteristic of the Umayyad period: an *almunia*, located at

¹⁷ Juan F. Murillo, M.^a del Camino Fuertes and Dolores Luna (1999). Aproximación al análisis de los espacios domésticos en la Córdoba andalusí, in *Córdoba en la Historia. La construcción de la urbe*. Op. Cit., pp. 129-154.

some distance from the medina, would act as a focus for the formation of a suburb and its associated cemetery in the vicinity of the *almunia* and along the road that connects it to the city.¹⁸ The same pattern was repeated with heir Hisham I when he founded the Dar al-Mulk *almunia* on land near Saqunda, with his grandson al-Hakam I and his concubine Ayab, who founded another *almunia* on the left bank of the river downstream from Cordoba, and with the emir 'Abd Allah when he founded the al-Na'ura *almunia* west of Cordoba on the right bank of the Guadalquivir, well connected to the city via a number of roads.

During a second stage that spans the first quarter of 9th century people within or close to the emir's family added mosques, cemeteries, baths and other health centers to these early focal points that served as catalysts for the emergence of new suburbs. They are all invariably located in the wide area that extends west of the medina and highlight two phenomena that are two sides of the same coin: urban progress and the Islamization of Cordoba. The list starts with the Mut'a mosque and cemetery and the 'Ayab mosque, named after wives of al-Hakam I. The resources for building an *almunia* that bore her name were also attributed to 'Ayab. This *almunia* was established as a *waqf* or pious foundation to maintain the nearby *rabad* al-Marda leprosarium. During the reign of 'Abd al-Rahman II the Mu'ammara cemetery and mosque were constructed in addition to the Tarub, al-Sifa' and Fajr mosques, all named after wives of the emir. 'Abd al-Rahman II also constructed the *masyid* Masrur, built at the request of this important court figure. Finally, we must mention the Umm Salama cemetery, founded by one of the wives of Muhammad Amir north of the capital.

Productive agricultural function was essential and integral to the very definition of Cordoba's *almunia*, losing ground against the residential and strictly leisure and recreational uses developed in the *almunia*'s gardens, palaces, halls or pavilions as the land on which they were located was swallowed by the frantic urban development which Qurtuba experienced in the second half of the 10th century. However, the model would continue into this third stage with only a change in scale, so that, the suburbs occupying much of the periurban space between Qurtuba and Madinat al-Zahra, another urban ring of similar characteristics will be developed in which foundations from the early 10th century will endure, for example al-Na'ura and other newly established suburbs like al-Rumaniyya to the west of Madinat al-Zahra.

This process that we have summarized is clearly defined in the northwestern periurban quadrant by al-Rusafa, founded by and favorite residence of 'Abd al-Rahman I, set on a large Roman-Visigoth property that already had a refined water system in the mid-1st century A.D. This system, comprising at least two catchments in the area now known as El Patriarca, small aqueducts, cisterns and a secondary pipeline network stretching to

¹⁸ Juan F. Murillo, Elena Castro del Río and M.^a Teresa Casal (2004). «Madinat Qurtuba. Aproximación al proceso de formación de la ciudad emiral y califal a partir de la información arqueológica», *Cuadernos de Madinat al-Zahra*, 5, pp. 257-290.

the neighboring area of El Tablero Alto, remained in use until the present, with logical modifications and renovations made to some of its elements.¹⁹

It would be the pre-existence of this water system, undoubtedly one of the most complex of any other known around Qurtuba before that time, which would explain the choice of the first Umayyad emir. Without the system it would have been impossible to meet the needs of both the gardens and orchards and the estates, pleasure pavilions and the documented *hammam* (bath) that existed at time of ‘Abd al-Rahman I. The system’s «line of rigidity», located in the upper part of what is today the Huerta de la Arruzafa, at an elevation of about 170 m, permitted the irrigation of a large, close to 50 hectares area, without ruling out that this system was complemented by another existing system immediately to the east, in the Tablero area, where structures that date to the 9th and 10th centuries have recently been documented.

This large property, the *munyat* al-Rusafa, was well-connected to Qurtuba via several Roman roads that ran to the city’s open gates on the north and west sides of the medina. Flanked by cemeteries, *villae* and built alongside two aqueducts, the Roman origin of these roads is unquestionable. Villages that sprung up along these roads in the 9th century would eventually form in the 10th century what Arab sources refer to as the *rabad* al-Rusafa. We are beginning to discover the topographical extent and diachronic evolution as well as the urban characteristics of this suburb as a result of excavations made in the area since the early nineties.

Existing archaeological research suggests that the area of this suburb with an earlier occupation was located next to Arroyo del Moro road, at the eastern end of al-Rusafa. Here, emirate artifacts from the second half of the 9th century and early 10th century have been found on land where a large Roman *fundus* survived until the Islamic era, when it was transformed into another production unit like an *almunia* of which several rooms have been excavated at the intersection of Calle Teruel and Avenida Brillante. A suburban area developed across this entire area up to the nearby road linking the northern part of al-Rusafah with the *bab* al-Yahud, opened in the northern part of the medina border. At certain points the existence of a pre-emirate phase prior to the area’s peak reached in the mid-10th century is evidenced, when the aforementioned rooms of the *almunia* would be absorbed by the suburban area, from which time the various suburbs begin to coalesce and the strict boundaries between them became largely blurred. An extensive cemetery that dates to the Islamic period, most likely associated with al-Rusafa, would also be established on this site.

Another area with a potentially pre-caliphate occupation is in the southwestern part of al-Rusafa. However, unlike that observed in the eastern end, here we have no evidence of Late Antique Roman or prior presence, and the first Islamic occupation is linked to an

¹⁹ Regarding what is expressed here in relation to al-Rufasa, see Juan F. Murillo (2009). «La almunia de al-Rusafa en Córdoba», *Madridrer Mitteilungen*, 50, pp. 449-482.

industrial area dedicated to pottery production, with many furnaces and other facilities, which were in use from the end of the 9th or beginning of the 10th century. Another *almunia* located immediately east of the pottery area, next to the fork in the road that connected the western part of al-Rusafa with Madinat Qurtuba's western gates, would show a similar timeline. This *almunia* underwent a major renovation in the mid-10th century, coinciding here with the area's development and involving the construction of a new building or, more likely, in the restoration of an existing one, as evidenced by the study of many decorative architectural artifacts that have been recovered. Around the same time, or shortly thereafter, the intensification in the development experienced in the western sector of al-Rusafa took place next to the *almunia* and on both sides of the old road, which was still being paved in the late-10th and early-11th centuries.

A final stage of urbanization we find to the west of the industrial area, at the point of maximum expansion of the suburb of al-Rusafa and opposite the eastern flank of Turruñuelos. This is a residential neighborhood that emerged completely *ex novo* and with a careful plan that contrasts with that observed in the rest of the suburb.²⁰ Its advanced date is supported both by the evolved character of the ceramic artifacts uncovered and the fact that the Aqua Augusta was used for the removal of wastewater, very uncommon at the time and explicable only by the loss of its earlier use after it was converted to supply water to Madinat al-Zahra.

Both its position on the western edge of al-Rusafa, at a point beyond which there has been no evidence of urbanized areas, such as its late date, clearly *amiri*, and the characteristics of the urban route and the residential typology itself could point to its identification with those houses inhabited by Berber troops serving the *amiries* whose attack and looting in 1009 by Cordovan followers of Muhammad ibn Hisham 'Abd al-Yabbar al-Mahdi gave rise to the bloody confrontation that ended the Umayyad Caliphate. The verification of this hypothesis is subject to continuing archaeological research in this sector of the suburb and its direct connection with Turruñuelos via the Puente de los Nogales road remains essential. This immense and enigmatic archaeological site that, although its interpretation at present remains open, should perhaps be placed in relation to the military needs of the Al-Andalus state, if not as the site of Fahs al-Suradiq, as has been suggested,²¹ perhaps as arsenals, weapons factories or other compounds that served a military purpose.

Evidence from ongoing excavations at the Huerta de Santa Isabel, three kilometers west of the city walls and immediately south of Turruñuelos, may point to a conclusion

²⁰ See Juan F. Murillo, F. Castillo, Elena Castro del Río, M.^a Teresa Casal and Teresa Dortez (2010). La *almunia* y el arrabal de al-Rusafa en el Yanib al-Garbi de Madinat Qurtuba, in *Desiderio Vaquerizo Gil and Juan F. Murillo (eds.) El Anfiteatro romano de Córdoba y su entorno urbano (ss. I-XIII d. C.)*. *Op. Cit.*, note 5, pp. 565-614.

²¹ Manuel Ación Almansa and Antonio Vallejo Triano (1998). Urbanismo y Estado islámico. De Córdoba a Qurtuba-Madinat al-Zahra, *Op. Cit.*, note 14, p. 126.

along these lines. Here we have documented an Early Imperial Roman villa that has been linked to a necropolis that includes graves for incinerated remains dating from the second century and other burial sites with obvious late-antiquity grave goods. A hydraulic system forms part of the *fundus* from which two small aqueducts and a number of large hydraulic deposits have been located, of which the largest, at least 70 × 10 m, underwent several repairs that kept it in use until the Caliphate period. The fact that most of this site has not yet been excavated makes these extremely tentative conclusions, especially with regard to the large Roman property.

Four large buildings have been excavated that provide clearer evidence of the area's Islamic past. Two of these buildings, identified as buildings 3 and 4, date to the Emirate period, while the other two are dated as early-Caliphate, particularly building 1, located next to the road that links it to Turruñuelos, just 600 m to the north. A great *qanat*, whose catchment is located in the grounds of the estate, could have been used for its water supply. The exceptional characteristics of the building's large rectangular courtyard, paved in a detailed cobblestone design, and the narrowness and evenness of the gallery that open to the courtyard suggest a stable and auxiliary quarters, while the obvious relationship with Turruñuelos recalls the certainly problematic text by al-Maqqari about horse breeding and weapons factories set up by al-Mansur at his al-Amiriyya *almunia*.

Once the developed area near al-Rusafa was defined, we are left with a large space that archaeological evidence can only place as an undeveloped area, although it was clearly in use and enclosed by a fence with outer buttresses,²² in which the vast *almunia* of 'Abd al-Rahman I may have been located. Its center could have possibly been in the vicinity of the present Huerta de la Arruzafa, where the important hydraulic system constructed during the Roman Imperial era is still in use. Gardens and orchards that would have needed to be irrigated would have been placed below this system's «line of rigidity» along with most of the estate's residences and services, including a *hammam* that was already in use during the last third of the 8th century.

Worth noting is the building documented by geophysical research conducted in 2005, which shows the presence of an isolated, roughly 50 m square building with a large wall equipped with outer buttresses that encloses a residential area with several rooms arranged in galleries around a large courtyard. Yet to be excavated, there is little we can add to this first appreciation, as we've yet to discover evidence of its building, details of its floor plan and its general age. However, typological characteristics like those revealed through magnetograms are surprising and highly suggestive, given the obvious

²² This fence, with a characteristic 9th-century construction, has been located in a couple of points of its path. Unlike other *almunias* located on the western outskirts of Qurtuba, al-Rusafa would not disappear due to 10th-century urban development, another piece of evidence of the *almunias*' special consideration among the Umayyad Cordovans.

similarity it has with the series of Umayyad buildings in Syria and Jordan, generically known under the name of the *desert castles*, a vague and at the same time misleading term because it conceals these building's true purposes: they served as the main residence on an extensive property that was used for both pleasure and as a get-away by the owners, caliphs and other members of the Umayyad family, as well as the operation of an irrigated agricultural area.

Although the comparison with well-known buildings in the east like Kirbat Miniah, Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi or Qasr Jarana is clear, perhaps the greatest similarity, both in layout and size, is with az-Zaytuna, a building located a short distance from ancient Sergiopolis, the city that changed its name to Resafa Hisham when the caliph Hisham (724-743) set up residence here; his grandson, the future 'Abd al-Rahman I, spent long periods in Resafa Hisham. Years later 'Abd al-Rahman I established his main residence in the vicinity of his new capital, the old Corduba, on a large existing Roman-Visigoth property, which he named al-Rusafa, a powerful name charged with new Western Umayyad symbolism and a clear nod to the Syrian Rusafa and his grandfather with which he establishes the legitimate dynastic line. It is possible that within this dynastic discourse transferring an architectural typology purely identified with his native Syria, and more specifically with the Resafa Hisham with which he grew up, to al-Andalus makes perfect sense.

Returning to Qurtuba suburban topography, we should note how this sector, straddling the *glacis* of the mountains and the quaternary plain, would much like the right bank of the Guadalquivir be particularly appreciated by the Cordovan aristocracy as a place to establish recreational homes, benefiting from the water supply which provided river water and groundwater through springs and catchments. Thus, the example set by the «Emigrant» with his al-Rusafa residence was followed by a long list of prominent figures. Ja'far al-Mushafi or Muhammad Ibn 'Abi Amir, when he served al-Hakam II, chose to locate to this suburb, and the proliferation of palaces and *almunias* gave a peculiar aspect to this sprawling suburb, where cemeteries and homes concentrated along the roads alternated with extensive gardens and orchards irrigated by numerous water wells and mountain streams, in some cases channeled to cross these properties.

FROM MADINAT QURTUBA TO THE URBAN AGGLOMERATION OF MADINAT QURTUBA-MADINAT AL-ZAHRA-MADINAT AL-ZAHIRA

When 'Abd al-Rahman II died in 852, Qurtuba had already taken a decisive step in its configuration as a Muslim metropolis as a result of the Emir completing many of the processes began by his great grandfather a century before, designed to strengthen the dynasty's power, organize an effective administrative apparatus and transform the capital into a fully Islamized space. However, contradictions within Andalusian society lead to revolts known as the first *fitna*, revolts that questioned the reforms that were being implemented as well as demonstrating the weaknesses of the neo-Umayyad state. It

required the efforts of two generations to recover and establish a unified state, possible only when a change in the traditional system of succession within the ruling Umayyad family enabled the young ‘Abd al-Rahman III to succeed his grandfather ‘Abd Allah and develop a policy that sought a symbolic direct link with the dynasty’s founder to rally his supporters, subdue the rebels and recreate the entire Umayyad political superstructure from a new approach, adapting it both to the new situation within al-Andalus and the growing hostility of the Christian kingdoms and the changes taking place in the rest of Islam, especially in the North Africa, with the new Fatimid Caliphate’s expansive policy.

Qurtuba’s large urban shift corresponds to the 10th century, principally during the reign of ‘Abd al-Rahman III, the first caliph of al-Andalus. At this time, most of Cordoba’s immediate vicinity would become densely urbanized space in a way that breaks entirely from the concept of a city that had prevailed during Antiquity (Map 5). The medina, while preserving its religious and political functions, ends up becoming another part of an agglomeration in line with the great cities of the Islamic East despite the symbolism of the conserved walls. The transformation is complete from the first decades of the 10th century, and we can now speak of an urban development that, planned and promoted in part by the Andalusian State, radically changes the face of Qurtuba. Thus, the excavations in the areas known as Naranjal de Almagro and Fontanar de Cabanos, together with the roads that connected Qurtuba first with al-Na’ura and later with Madinat al-Zahra, allow us to follow their gradual conversion into large *almunias* that were already in use in the ninth century.²³ This transformation goes hand in hand with the gradual conversion to Islam of the majority of Cordoba’s population, initially attached to large agricultural properties of Visigoth origin and now transformed into a salaried proletariat that demanded neighborhood mosques, baths and cemeteries to meet the needs of their new faith.²⁴ Several generations later these suburbs, with polynuclear and to some extent autonomous development, definitively convert the land originally occupied by orchards and farmland into an essentially urbanized area.

²³ The al-Na’ura *almunia*, founded by the Emir ‘Abd Allah at the end of 9th century and linked by Felix Hernandez to the findings uncovered at Cortijo de El Alcaide, became the semi-official residence of ‘Abd al-Rahman III before his definitive installation at Madinat al-Zahra, until then playing a similar role that al-Rusafa had with ‘Abd al-Rahman I.

²⁴ See Juan F. Murillo, Elena Castro del Río and M.^a Teresa Casal (2004). «Madinat Qurtuba. Aproximación al proceso de formación de la ciudad emiral y califal a partir de la información arqueológica», *Op. Cit.*, note 18. In the tenth century another «external» demographic development would join his «internal» process as a result of short and medium-distance migrations around the capital.

state buildings, etc. Current archaeological work permits an idea on a macro-spatial scale to understand the image that could previously only be drawn from written sources, as well as a meso and micro-spatial analysis of the suburbs that presents a refined urban organization with a hierarchical layout of regular streets which in some cases have a sewage disposal system, large and paved open spaces that could be understood to be suburban souks or markets, multi-storied houses that were always organized around a central courtyard, as well as mosques and cemeteries.

Beyond these suburbs, and in some cases enclosed within their boundaries as a result of urban growth, we continue to find an increasing number of *almunias*, in some cases, like al-Rusafa and al-Na'ura, authentic periurban «alcázares» belonging to the ruler and used for generations. Others, like al-Rumaniyya, came about through the initiative of a high official at court, such as the case with the treasurer Durri, although in this case the *almunia* also ended up in the hands of the Caliph.²⁵

The genesis of many of these new Caliphal suburbs must have been very different to that seen before. First, this massive urbanization affects former large periurban estates, so that far from finding multiple individual acts carried out over a more or less long period of time and area, as seen in the previous stages, we are now facing a process led by what, in current terms and assuming the risk of the obvious anachronism, we call «promoters», responsible for land division, road opening, provision of community infrastructure and even building construction. Although literary sources do not explicitly mention this issue, we can interpret some references. Of these, the most significant is that by Ibn Hayyan in relation to Hisham II's opposition in the attempt of his *hajib*, Ja'far al-Mushafi, to build a new neighborhood on the site of the destroyed suburb of Saqunda.

Though unsuccessful, this attempt illustrates the participation of Cordovan elites, including members of the royal family, in the flourishing real estate business in a capital city where housing demand seems to have been intense during the second half of the 10th century. Consequently, it is possible that subdivisions and housing construction by senior dignitaries were translated into more urban uniformity and certain buildings standardization, many of which would be for rent.

THE AMIRI EPILOGUE. MADINAT AL-ZAHIRA AND THE NEW EXPANSION TOWARDS THE EAST

A later stage of the urban growth experimented by Cordoba's urban agglomeration would be determined, after Ibn Abi Amir (better known by al-Mansur)²⁶ usurped power after the death of Caliph al-Hakam II and the minority support for his son Hisham II, by the

²⁵ Ibn Hayyan provides a detailed description and the best definition possible of these *almunias*. See Juan F. Murillo (2009). «La almunia de al-Rusafa en Córdoba», *Op. Cit.*, note 19, p. 455.

²⁶ For more on the figure of al-Mansur and his historic significance within Andalusian history, see Laura Bariani (2003). *Almanzor*. Donostia-San Sebastián: Nerea; and Xavier Ballestín (2004). *Al-Mansur y la dawla 'amiriya: una dinámica de poder y legitimidad en el occidente musulmán medieval*. Barcelona: Edicions Universitat de Barcelona.

construction of the new city of Madinat al-Zahira to the east of Qurtuba.²⁷ This new court residence would stimulate the urbanization of the vacant land located between Cordoba's eastern-most suburbs and the Amiri city, generating a fleeting focal point in whose shadow the elite residences connected to al-Mansur's regime would develop.

Al-Zahira would play a similar role as 'Abd al-Rahman III's palatial city in the process of affirming the aspirations to power of the Amiri dictator and his descendants against the legitimacy of the Umayyad Caliph still represented by Hisham II, confined first in the Madinat al-Zahra and then in the Alcázar of Cordoba (palace). While the first would weaken in the final years of the 10th century until being looting and destroyed during the *fitna* in the first third of the next century, al-Mansur would develop an intense building activity in old Qurtuba that would have an impact on principal Umayyad symbols with the twofold purpose of emulating them as well as establishing measures of control over a potentially hostile population. We must understand the Great Mosque's expansion within these parameters, which almost doubles in size compared to the Umayyad period, keeping its essence but at the same time introducing a new ideological discourse. Continuing along these lines the refortification of the Alcázar, the second Umayyad dynasty icon, can be understood, which served to isolate the young Caliph, possibly accompanied by a restoration of different sectors of the medina wall and by the control of the head of the bridge through a fortified gate.

After the death of Almanzor in 1002, Qurtuba was a huge urban agglomeration that extended along a ten-kilometer long northeast-southwest axis parallel to the right bank of the Guadalquivir that occupied an over 5,000 ha area. Its comparison with the main cities of the time, from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean, can only be compared with Baghdad, the still flourishing capital of the Abbasid Caliphate, the rest, including Fatimid Cairo, came nowhere close.²⁸

This city, with its impressive physical presence even in the twenty-first century and its growing strength as a cultural landmark of a global but diverse humanity, must be kept alive, and for that to be possible we need to redouble our efforts to conserve Cordoba's legacy, preserving the Cordoba today in perfect harmony with «other Cordobas», those that came before and those that will come after. We also must discover a little more about Cordoba each day through historical research in which archeology is called upon to continue playing an essential role.

²⁷ Unlike Madinat al-Zahra, the location of al-Zahira remains open to debate, although all historical and archaeological evidence point to Arenal meander area, where a recent fluvial geomorphology study conducted by the CSIC (Spanish National Research Council) for the City of Cordoba has allowed for the reconstruction of the Guadalquivir's back to the year 1000 and the delimitation of the land on which the Amiri city was most likely located.

²⁸ See the corresponding sections in Jean-Claude Garcin, Jean-Luc Arnaud and Sylvie Denoix (2000). *Grandes villes méditerranéennes du monde musulman médiéval*. Op. Cit., note 16.

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ABSTRACT

The splendor of the Caliphate of Cordoba, celebrated in song and dreamt of by Andalusian poets, was not just the work of a generation (that of 'Abd al-Rahman III) but the result of a highly complex historical process in which a number of factors came into play: a millennium-old urban trajectory, the strength of Islam in shaping the urban landscape and sociability, the Umayyad conception of power implemented by the first independent emir and transformed, under parameters taken from the Abbasid enemy, by 'Abd al-Rahman II to later be «revolutionized» by the first caliph who, aware of the system's limitations and pressed by the social-economic changes taking place in al-Andalus, by the weakening of the more theoretic than real figure of the Abbasid Caliphate and by the Christian pressure on borders and the Fatamid threat in north Africa, to strengthen his power through an ideological legitimization based on the caliphate dignity to overcome traditional Umayyad tools: military strength and the subsequent ability to collect taxes.

KEYWORDS

Cordoba, al-Andalus, Islamization, urban planning, architecture, archeology.