

Recent discoveries in the caliphal city

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Madinat al-Zahra was founded in 936 CE near Córdoba (Spain) as the capital of the Umayyad caliphate. Abandoned already in the early 11th century, the city is today one of the most important archaeological sites of the Islamic culture in the Western Mediterranean region and since 2018 a World Heritage site. The German Archaeological Institute and the Junta de Andalucía are currently conducting a joint five year project that focuses on the investigation of the so called Plaza de Armas. The 115 m wide and 150 m long plaza was located in front of the palace gate. In 2017 a great portico was documented which constituted the façade of the caliphal palace. This year, an administrative complex was discovered on the opposite side of the plaza, including a reception hall constructed on a platform. The hall appears to have been designed according to Abbasid prototypes and highlights the Abbasid influence on the architecture of Madinat al-Zahra. A large scale geomagnetic survey has furthermore revealed detailed information on the design of the palace garden. In the lecture, Felix Arnold will present the results of the recent excavations and present an overview of the development of Madinat al-Zahra over time.

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