

0.- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

State Party: Spain

State, Province or Region: Autonomous Community of Andalusia. Province of Cordoba

Name of the property: Caliphate City of Medina Azahara

Geographical coordinates:

UTM format x: 335760, and: 4294800, Time Zone: 30, Hemisphere: North

DMS-formate: 37 ° 53 '9.2 "N, 4 ° 52' 3.7" W

Textual description of the proposed boundaries:

The proposed boundaries the property coincide with the boundaries of the city, marked by its walled perimeter, and so it is the boundary of the city wall that delimits the property. Although the wall has barely been excavated along its entire length, we know about its extension and layout thanks to a combination of different studies of microtopography, orthophotographies and geophysical surveys.

As for the buffer zone, two of the instruments for the protection of the property, the declaration as a Property of Cultural Interest and the Special Protection Plan have been used to define its boundaries. These are complementary tools, which partly coincide: the outer perimeter of the overlapping boundaries has been chosen to delimit the buffer zone.

In the southern section, in the sector closest to the property, the boundary coincides with the A-431 Córdoba to Palma del Río road; at the farther ends the boundary coincides with the Irrigation Canal of the Guadalquivir River; the small extension in the South-east area coincides with the route of an ancient road which has been partially lost.

In the North-east, the boundaries coincide basically with the CO-3402 main road, from Cordoba to the outlying district of Santa María de Trassierra, although part of the route goes beyond this road, to include the Santa Ana Quarries Albaida and the site of Turruñuelos.

On the north-western flank, the buffer zone is delimited following the line of the highest visible peaks above Medina Azahara and the west flank includes the al-Rummaniyya site and extends to the peaks immediately above it.

An A4 size plan of the proposed area for inscription, showing the boundaries of the property and the buffer zone:

Criteria for which the property has been proposed for inscription:

Criterion III. It provides unique, or at least exceptional, testimony of a cultural tradition or a living or lost civilization

Criterion IV. It is an eminently representative example of a type of construction or architectural/technological/landscape ensemble which illustrates one or several significant periods of human history

Proposal for declaration of Exceptional Universal Value for the “Caliphate City of Medina Azahara”:

a) Brief summary

The archaeological site of Medina Azahara corresponds to a newly-established city built in the mid-10th century by the western Umayyad dynasty as the seat of the Caliphate of Cordoba. The city flourished for a short while but was then destroyed, and it remained undiscovered until its recovery in the early twentieth century.

The most important value of the site is that it shows us a complete urban complex including the infrastructures, buildings, decoration and objects of daily use, and so allows us to gain in-depth knowledge about the material culture of a disappeared civilization at the zenith of its splendour. In addition, the exceptional preservation of the surrounding land has enabled us to conserve the landscape features which influenced the choice of building it here in the first place, as well as some traces of its impact on the land.

The universal cultural value of the site is enhanced by its uniqueness: it is the only surviving example of this kind of city in Europe and, from that historical period, in the whole of Islamic culture. The fact that the site was hidden for almost a millennium has meant that has not been rebuilt or altered in that time. The recovery process through its excavation, protection and conservation has continued for a century, promoted by public institutions. Official promotion, first by the state and later by the regional autonomous community, has guaranteed the ownership of the site, ensured the highest level of protection, and has led to the creation of

a specific institution to manage the site, the Archaeological Complex of Medina Azahara, which provides it with suitable facilities and personnel.

b) Justification of the criteria

Criterion III. The ruins of the Caliphate city of Medina Azahara provide exceptional testimony of the lost Andalusian-Islamic civilization and is a unique example of most flourishing era, which occurred more than a millennium ago.

Criterion IV. The Caliphate city of Medina Azahara is an eminently representative example of urban life, the technology of urban infrastructure, architecture, decoration and adaptation of the landscape, and illustrates a significant period in the 10th century when, in the far western end of Moslem-dominated territory, the Umayyad Caliphate of Cordoba was proclaimed.

c) Declaration of integrity

The boundaries of the site include the entire area of the Caliphate city and its buffer zone preserves the close links of the landscape with its natural environment, the remains of the main infrastructures of roads and canals radiating from the city, the quarries from which the building materials were extracted and notable rural buildings, known as *munya* (palatial country houses).

The city remained hidden from the time of its destruction at the beginning of the 11th century up until the beginning of its recovery at the beginning of the 20th century, amid pastureland which was used for grazing cattle, and for this reason the ruins have been well preserved. In addition, 90% of the area remains unexcavated, which offers an exceptional opportunity for research. As far as the excavated part of the *Qasr* (Fortress) is concerned, the continuous work of prospecting and conservation has brought to light a well preserved set of structures with walls reaching several meters in height.

d) Declaration of authenticity

The site fulfils the conditions of authenticity in the different areas: materials, design and location. As far as the authenticity of the materials is concerned, it has already been emphasized that most of the site remained unchanged and hidden by a protective layer of earth. As far as the excavated areas are concerned, consolidation work has been necessary due to the fragile nature of the materials, and this has developed over the years into a policy of 'minimum intervention' that guarantees the stability of the structures, protects them against the elements and conserves the structures which have been found during the excavation. As part of this minimal intervention, any new additions have been clearly differentiated from

the originals, although an attempt has been made to harmonize with them. Identifying the original position of the different materials originally used in the construction of the city has greatly facilitated this work.

As for the authenticity of the design, the archaeological work has been similar to that carried out on other sites, such as the preservation of the traces of missing elements, such as walls whose stones have been plundered right down to the very foundations, or pavements or panels that have left a mark where they were originally positioned. But the specific problem at Medina Azahara derives from the masses of decorative stone fragments which were scattered around as a result of the plundering of the masonry walls. The piecing-together of this puzzle is of enormous value, as this was one of the greatest periods of Islamic art. However, it requires the replacement of the stone walls which were taken away during the pillaging, to serve as a support for the decorative panelling to be reconstructed – a task which, due to its size and complexity, must be done *in situ*.

The authenticity of the site is guaranteed by the conservation of the natural environment, which has not changed since the destruction of the city, except for some recent development. In addition, the buildings which have been recovered coincide with the many historical sources, and this, together with the epigraphic evidence and the research work carried out over more than a century with the help of some of the most renowned specialists, dispels any doubts we may have about the authenticity of the site.

e) Management and systems for protecting the property

The fact that the ‘Caliphate City of Medina Azahara’ and its buffer zone have been protected almost continuously by the Administration since 1911, together with the fact that it has had its own management body since 1985, have meant that the site has a general framework of protection and management that guarantees the future maintenance of its Exceptional Universal Value:

As regards protection:

- Nearly all the property is publicly owned.
- The legal protection of Medina Azahara and its surroundings is at the maximum level afforded by the Law of Spanish Historical Heritage: a ‘Property of Cultural Interest’, under the category ‘Archaeological Site’.
- The Special Plan for the Protection of Medina Azahara was approved in 1998, pro-

viding an urban planning law that regulated the boundaries of the protected area and established the possible land uses for each defined category.

- Different government and legal departments ensure strict compliance with the articles of this law, and thus avoid any potential threats.

As regards management:

- The institutional framework is set by the existence, since 1985, of a specific institution that manages the property and the buffer zone: the Archaeological Ensemble of Medina Azahara (CAMA, in Spanish). This institution has an organizational structure composed of a facultative management and three areas: Administration, Conservation and Research/Publicity.
- With regard to management plans, there are two basic instruments which have been developed and implemented to different degrees (the programmes of the Special Protection Plan and Master Plan), which provide a solid basis for reflection and for planning the strategic guidelines to guarantee that Medina Azahara continues to be protected and appreciated.

The expected long-term results in this area are to consolidate and add more human and budgetary resources to the current management system: consolidating the existence of a public institution, with its technical expertise, as the main instrument for managing the property, providing it with greater functional autonomy and encouraging greater participation and coordination with other agencies and interested parties.

Another essential aim to ensure the preservation of the site as an Exceptional Universal Value is to update and finally approve the Operational Plan for Medina Azahara, thus bringing it into line with the needs and obligations expected if it is recognized as a World Heritage site.

Name and contact information of the institution or official local body:

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