

Archaeological and Monumental Sites of Andalusia



THE PALATIUM MAXIMIANI. 3RD-4TH CENTURIES

Walking through this area of the city of Cordoba you will discover the remains of what was the palace of the Roman emperor Maximianus Herculeus, emperor in the 3rd century A.D. who, together with Diocletian, Constantius, Chlorus and Galerius, formed what is known as the first tetrarchy, a government of four that for a time guaranteed the integrity of the immense territory that comprised the Roman empire.

The palace was built to the north of the old amphitheatre and occupied a much larger area than can be seen today. Much of it has been used to build the current railway station and much is still hidden under Avenida de América, Avenida Vía Augusta and neighbouring streets.



↑ Aerial photograph of the Cercadilla Site in 1992.

ADDRESS AND CONTACT

📍 Avenida Vía Augusta, S/N.
14011 Córdoba (Córdoba)

✉ cercadilla.aaiicc@juntadeandalucia.es

IMPERIAL EPIGRAPH

Two complete letters and the remains of seven others are preserved, as well as two interpunctuations —one of them almost lost— in the shape of a highly stylised ivy leaf.

In the lower line, the formula *nob Caes* in plural has been used, that is to say: noble Caesars.

In the upper line, the conjunction *et* suggests that the last three letters on the left: *NTI*, are from the name of the first of these Caesars and, on the right, the *M*, the initial of the second.

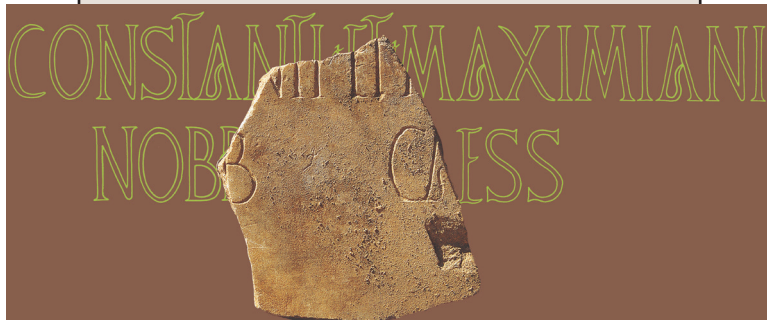
The characters mentioned are *Flavius Valerius Constantius* and *Galerius Valerius Maximianus*, better known as *Constantius Chlorus* and *Galerius*, referred to by their *cognomen* (the third of the names).

Translation: **Constantius and Maximianus / noble Caesars.**

We assume the presence in the first lines of the inscription of the Augustuses: *Diocletian Lovis* and *Maximianus Herculeus*.

The inscription is dated between 1 March 293 —the date of adoption of *Galerius* and *Constantius* as Caesars and establishment of the first Tetrarchy— and 1 May 305 — the date when, after the abdication of *Diocletian* and *Maximianus Herculeus*, they acquired the rank of Augustus and the second Tetrarchy was inaugurated—.

This epigraph was located in the northwest bathing area of the *frigidarium* of the baths, in an abandoned sedimentary level of this 5th century building.



Junta de Andalucía
Consejería de Cultura y Patrimonio Histórico

AGENCIA ANDALUZA DE INSTITUCIONES CULTURALES



The palace that was built on what had previously been a suburban villa is a closed construction, facing the northwest corner of the city and communicated with it via a single **span preceded by four columns** **14**. It consisted of two distinct parts, one of a military nature, which occupied an area of more than 25,000 m², and the other of a strictly palatial nature. The buildings in the palace area were arranged radially around a semicircular **cryptoportico** **1**, 180 metres in width, whose upper corridor was colonnaded. At each end there were two architecturally identical **poly-lobed rooms** — with three semicircular apses at the head and another two on one side—. They may have been used to receive the public officials associated with the palace. Both are preserved in situ, the northern one **6** in the archaeological area currently open to the public and the southern one **7**, between the Avenida de América and the railway station. The most emblematic building of all those built, the one that stood out for its size, height and, above all, its rank and category, was the **great reception hall** **2**, which, located on the central axis of the whole complex, was the throne room where the emperor received people in audience.

To the north of that room are the **thermal baths** **3** exclusively for private use, which would be enjoyed only by the emperor and by those of his utmost confidence. The two banquet rooms — **triclinium** and **stibadium** **4** — and the imperial apartments **9**, used for the retirement and rest of the owner of the palace, can also be considered private.

Next to the banquet halls are two other **basilica rooms** **5**, possibly used for administrative purposes by the government officials of *Hispania*. The water that supplied this imposing architectural complex must have entered through the building identified as **nymphaeus** **8**.

The Tetrarchy (293-305 A.D.) formed by *Diocletian*, *Maximianus*, *Constantius Chlorus* and *Galerius* brought about a major transformation of the politics, administration and army of the Roman Empire. One of the first actions of these tetrarchs was to decentralise the imperial headquarters from Rome to the peripheral areas. The Cordoba palace must therefore have been

Maximianus' seat at the western end of their dominions, with which his effective control over the Western Roman Empire was established.

From the 6th century at the latest, while the thermal zone **3** was being dismantled, part of the old palace **5 6 8** would be reused as a centre of Christian worship and around it would be located a large Christian cemetery which would remain in use during the Moorish domination of the city, becoming one of the most important Mozarabic cemeteries of al-Andalus. Around this Christian centre there was a large neighbourhood was built during the emirate period, whose definitive expansion took place in the mid-10th century, at the time of the proclamation of the Caliphate of Córdoba. This suburb was arranged in the form of perpendicular streets, squares and walls and was home to souks, baths **13**, mosques **10** and, of course, private dwellings. All the houses, from the most humble to the most important, were built round a central courtyard, around which there were other outbuildings —lounges, bedrooms, storerooms, pantries, latrines, stables, etc—. The neighbourhood and the necropolis would be abandoned

during the 11th century at the time of the Cordovan civil war.

In the 12th century, reusing the head of the old palace **nymphaeum** **8**, a farmstead was built, used for the production of oil and the manufacture of ceramics. From this time on there is no evidence of occupation of this area, which would be used as a vegetable garden until the 19th century when it was occupied as an industrial and railway area.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS ADAPTED FOR VISITORS

Avda. Vía Augusta, s/n.:

- North section of the Roman Palace.
- Christian worship centre and associated necropolis.
- Caliphate houses.

Avda. de América:

- South polylobed room and south end of the cryptoportico of the Roman Palace.

Bus Station car parks:

- Two 10th century houses, with two courtyards, one with a well and the other with a small swimming pool **11**.
- Caliphate mosque qibla wall with an octagonal

mirhab and a Roman funeral altar forming part of its foundation **10**.

- Roman aqueduct and aqueduct of Al-Haken II, the second of the Cordovan caliphs **12**.

Next to the Cordoba RTVA headquarters, at Avda. de América s/n.:

- Large swimming pool belonging to the tetrarchic palace complex. Relocated from its original position.

Playground in Avda. de los Aguijones:

- Pool used to decorate and refresh the patio of a 10th century house. Relocated from its original position.

C/ Al-Andalus, in the basement of Hostal Maximiano:

- Remains of the central courtyard of a large 10th-century house belonging, in all probability, to some of the most important families of the Caliphate court.

C/ Antonio Gaudí, 1. Edificio América:

- Emirate baths used in Caliphate period **13**.

Plot at the junction of Avda. de América with Bulevar de Hernán Ruiz. Future Hotel Mezquita Center:

- Foundations of the Imperial Palace entrance door **14**.
- Structures related to a waterwheel. XI century.
- Section of the aqueduct commissioned by Caliph Al-Haken II.

Bulevar de Hernán Ruiz. Edificio Acueducto:

- Modern section of aqueduct built on the former caliphate aqueduct commissioned by Al-Haken II.

Cordoba Archaeological Museum. C/ Jerónimo Páez, 7:

- Furniture materials from Cercadilla in the permanent exhibition..

Diocesan Museum of Cordoba. C/ Torrijos, 1:

- Model of Maximianus' Imperial Palace.

↓ Section of the cryptoportico.

