

[Home](#) [Books reviewed](#) Anderson, Glaire. The Islamic Villa in Early Medieval Iberia (McKenna)

[Back to topics](#)

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Anderson, Glaire D. *The Islamic Villa in Early Medieval Iberia: Architecture and Umayyad Córdoba*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013. 258 pp; 16 color and 82 b&w il 978-1-4094-4943-0.

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Dr. Glaire Anderson has written the first book-length study of the aristocratic suburban Córdoba. Known in Arabic as *munya* (plural *munān* or *munyāt*), these sites comprise a *hasan*) and extensive gardens (*janān wāsi‘a*), according to a well-known definition by (d. 1076). Modern scholars have understood these estates solely as sites of recreation a heavily on later poetic allusions to the *munya*. Anderson, however, contends that the *m* layered expression of Umayyad caliphal identity (r. 756-1031 C.E.), playing an integra patronage, and self-expression. She equally stresses that these Spanish villas should be cross-cultural history of the villa in the Mediterranean.

Anderson expertly draws upon a supporting arsenal of archaeological, artifactual, and dual argument. Her introductory chapter summarizes the Umayyads’ ancestral connect for examining architectural and dynastic parallels between the two phases of the famil; first section also foregrounds the culturally loaded historiography of the villa within th history. Jacob Burckhardt’s nineteenth-century theory that villa culture vanished with t and reappeared centuries later in Renaissance Italy, for example, leaves little room for estates outside of “Western” architecture as part of a continuous development. Andersc scholars such as James Ackermann and Oleg Grabar to correct this value-based assum geographical and temporal specificity.

Chapter 2 covers the social landscape in which *munya* patronage occurred. Anderson e *munya* system through textual sources, beginning with the story of a *munya* built by ‘A and renovating an existing estate, perhaps of Late Roman construction, it was named “ ruler’s grandfather’s caliphal residences in Syria near the city of the same name. She a related conversation by focusing on those *munya* patrons from another major court fac among them high-ranking courtesans who bore princes, upon whom the ruler bestowed in his struggle to maintain court loyalty alongside the aspiring free aristocracy. Her soc further conversation about gender, power, and identity in Umayyad al-Andalus.

The third chapter is the most art-historical in scope. Using archaeological evidence, A of a *munya* identified on textual and epigraphic evidence as al-Rummāniyya, the late 1 ex-slave of caliph al-Hakam II. She connects the plan of this *munya* to Madīnat al-Zah

suburban caliphal city and to Roman villas on the Iberian Peninsula and in North Africa. Anderson's argument for a broader history of villa culture. However, her sharp analysis of ivory objects is more important than the history of the *munya* produced at Madīnat al-Zahrā's important lens through which to view the role of the *munya*. Decorated with depictions of sovereigns, and scenes of courtly activities such as hunting and playing music, Anders' ivory boxes, pyxides, and other small containers as representations of *munya* culture it is likely that these objects were used. She shows how *munya* and the portable luxury objects acted as markers of social status, although the *munya* was visible to a broader audience.

Chapters 4 and 5 illustrate how various aspects of *munya* culture contribute to its symbol as well as Umayyad dynastic identity and legitimacy. To diverge from interpretations of it as merely courtly recreation and relaxation, Anderson explains how these estates acted as workshop producers that supplied on-site lavish banquets and sent surpluses to the surrounding regions. Drawing on texts from Umayyad Córdoba and elsewhere in the Islamic world, namely 'Abbasid Baghdad, she argues that Andalusī Umayyads subscribed to broader ideals of courtly refinement through choice of materials and plants for cultivation. Anderson further argues that the *munya* was also a principal medium for diplomatic presentations, in which the Umayyad caliphate portrayed its own identity and negotiated power and caliphal legitimacy with their Mediterranean neighbors (the Byzantines and the Ottonians). Within the Iberian Peninsula, her concluding section anticipates how the *munya* reflected the rise of aristocratic urban elites, namely al-Mansur and the 'Amirid regency, which would eventually become the caliphate in 1031 C.E.

One difficulty of Anderson's topic is that no extant villas exist in Córdoba. While she draws on archaeological evidence and textual sources into her sharp argument, she must rely on fragmentary evidence such as water systems, architectural ornament excavated along the Guadalquivir River. She does not address the uncertainty of identifications of named sites made by earlier scholars or the possibility of sources that many estates existed along the Guadalquivir River but in the absence of archaeological information, a comparative approach takes over: caliphal patronage is assumed if there is evidence of a program or plan to Madīnat al-Zahrā'. Even though this rationale is extremely common, it broadens rather than collapses the discussion on those involved in caliphal patronage, and the various factors on which arguments hinge.

The contributions of Anderson's book are numerous. She compiles archaeological evidence uncovered from the 1980s through 2009, creating the most comprehensive source of published information on this architectural type yet. For the many non-Spanish-speaking specialists of Islamic art, this book in English is also significant because much of this archaeological evidence has been published only in Spanish language specialist publications. Her revisionist argument for a broader development of villas across culturally-minded trends within the field of art history, particularly among those influenced by the Mediterranean Sea. The greatest importance of Anderson's volume, however, lies in the insights generated by her interdisciplinary approach, wherein bringing together medieval Arab history related to civic and caliphal life, agricultural production, and architecture alongside the study of objects produced contemporaneously and spatial interpretation of archaeological remains.

Note: Chapter numbers are listed differently in the introduction and the Table of Contents. This does not detract from the reader's comprehension of the text, of course, although this is laid out in the Table of Contents.