

"Excavations in the Garden of Hippolytus at Complutum (Alcalá de Henares, Spain): preliminary results"

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This paper presents the preliminary results of the investigation done in the Late Roman Garden of Hippolytus House in the framework of the **Archaeology of Gardens in Roman Hispania** project.

Hippolytus' House was the *Schola* of a *Collegium Iuvenum*; an association formed by the new generations of the city's main families, those in whom the town/council government fell on. This centre had different areas devoted to cult, education and overall areas for leisure. The property, with landscape areas all around, was built at the beginning of the second half of the first century AD. Most of the archaeological records correspond to a great rehabilitation dated between the end of the third century and the beginning of the fourth century AD, precisely at the same time when the largest development of the city took place. The building has a central courtyard, which was probably covered, surrounded by different rooms: the north wing with the main facade and a vaulted room probably devoted to ceremonies ornamented with a Bacchic scene. It also has a thermal space with a cold water pool and an area for the *tepidarium* and the *caldarium*, a basin and an ornamental pond, as well as room devoted to the cult, among others to the cult of Diana. It also has an oriental inspiration garden object of the present research. In this garden we can find columns, water games, exotic animals such as a pelican, and a set of three *exedras* with continuous benches. All these elements shape a meeting space, such as a *teathron*, or as a summer arbour used for the council meal. Each *exedra* describes a semicircle of 4.10 m diameter. It is an adobe construction complemented with *lydion* bricks, which stamp has remained. In front of this wall a continuous bench made up of adobe and covered with lime was set up. It still has mural paintings remaining on it. Dominating the central ground, there is the mosaic made up by the master Hippolytus, a North African artist belonging to a workshop of the Anios' family.

The preliminary archaeobotanic studies of the garden, made from pollens and phytoliths, are framed in the luxury and the wish to incorporate exotic elements that is present in the whole building. In this sense, stands out the presence of foreign taxa like the cedar (*Cedrus* sp.) or the saw palmetto (*Chamaerops humilis* L.), which is the only native palm of the Iberian Peninsula. Both taxa are frequently found in northern Africa and would be in compliance with the presence of foreign constructive elements like proconsul African marble or with the action of a mosaic atelier coming from that province, or even with the potential installation of an exotic bird collection. Other trees that would apply to be planted in the garden like ornamental trees would be the lime tree, the olive tree or the elm tree. These trees don't use to appear in the archaeological sediments analysis, so probably these species lived closely related with the Hippolytus House complex. The presence of pine tree has also been documented. This tree was very appreciated in the roman gardening, as it can be observed in the wet painting in the garden's hall at Livia's House in the Primaporta (Rome).

As for bush and lianoid plants, it seems evident the presence of jasmine, of some ornamental rockrose and of ephedra, this last one either used as an exotic plant, because it is not frequently found in the peninsular landscape, or as a medicinal plant. A special mention should be for Liliaceae, taxa to which many of the ornamental bulb plants belong to. There were

also detected taxa of weed, like in the inspection of the garden of the Chaste Lovers' House in Pompeii.

Likewise, it deserves special attention the kind of Cerealia (3,9%), and the presence of remains of straw and spheroliths related to manure waste that could be associated to the fertilization of the garden.

The reed (*Phragmites*) suggests the possibility that there was some kind of pergola or framework- like the one found in the Chaste Lovers' House in Pompeii- or of vertical reed used as a support, as evidenced for a rosebush at Bracciale d'Oro's House in Pompeii.

On the other hand, the presence of pollens and Cyperaceae phytoliths, of bulrush (type *Thypha-Sparganium*), and of the aquatic type *Myriophyllum*, as well as alga remains of Chlorophyceae type (*Botryococcus*, *Gloeotrichia*), would mean that the irrigation water came from a reservoir. It could also be that these taxa grew in the garden's pond.

As for the regional landscape, there were identified forest areas, especially pine groves, beside holm-oak/oak woods, and scrub (rockrose, etc.). There were also identified crop and grass areas, which would be divided according to soils and springs of the region. The outskirts crops, glimpsed through the pollen analysis, would be integrated by cereals (type Cerealia), olive trees (*Olea*) and probably leguminous plants (Fabaceae).

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