

## PART II - CLOISTERS AND COURTYARDS: FUNCTIONS AND FORMS

Antonio Perla de las Parras and Victoria Soto Caba

*The Jardines de crucero: a possible study scenario for the gardens of Toledo*

Magdalena Merlos

*Variations around one constant: The cloister typology in the cultural landscape of Aranjuez*



## THE JARDINES DE CRUCERO: A POSSIBLE STUDY SCENARIO FOR THE GARDENS OF TOLEDO

Antonio Perla de las Parras and Victoria Soto Caba<sup>36</sup>

Addressing the issue of the *Jardines de Crucero* or “cross-shaped” gardens is complex. Research is in its early stages, even though it has been many years since the Marquis de la Vega Inclán intuitively worked out the design of a cross-shaped garden in the so-called Courtyard of Trade (*Patio de la Contratación*) of Seville's *Alcazar*, a garden which, years later (in 1973), was to be given shape by the architect Rafael Manzano. Although from the outset it was thought that this was an *Almohad* garden, subsequent research has shown that this is really a design dating from the time of the Christian occupation. Nevertheless, the fact is that it can testify to continuity in the concepts of a cross-shaped, sunken or recess garden (Vigil-Escalera 1992).

It was Torres Balbás in 1958 who described, possibly for the first time, the structure of the courtyards' cross-shaped gardens: “a rectangular space with paths or walkways along their natural lines, tracing out the form of a cross”, with another walkway or pavement along the inner side of the courtyard walls, thus “marking out four square beds for plants and flowers between these and the arms of the cross”<sup>37</sup>. From then, a long period elapsed until the recent work by lecturers at the University of Granada, Tito Rojo and Casares Porcel, on Hispano-Muslim gardens, which defined their different types<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> Antonio Perla de las Parras, Art Historian, Professor at Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia. [aperla@geo.uned.es](mailto:aperla@geo.uned.es); Victoria Soto Caba, Art Historian, Professor at Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia. [vsoto@geo.uned.es](mailto:vsoto@geo.uned.es)

<sup>37</sup> TORRES BALBÁS, Leopoldo: “Pacios de crucero”, *Crónica de la España Musulmana*, 6, in *Obra Dispersa*, recopilada por Manuel Calamar, vol. I, Madrid, Instituto de España, 1983. The article on El Patio de Crucero is dated 1958.

<sup>38</sup> TITO ROJO, José y CASARES PORCEL, Manuel: *El jardín hispanomusulmán: Los jardines de al-Andalus y su herencia*, Editorial Universidad de Granada, Granada, 2011. They devote an extensive section of the first chapter to defining each of the models of sunken garden and its variations.

Despite the importance of this project, the adoption of terminology and the exact definition of the models of cross-shaped garden are still pending, as well as the agreement to decide whether we should call these generically “cross-shaped” gardens or, more accurately, use the term of *sunken* garden. In any case, to try to keep a fairly clear definition, we shall start from the principle of the garden termed as *cross-shaped* – a sunken garden – on the basis of a series of walkways that enabled people to walk above the quadrants of vegetation located on a lower level, and a number of lower galleries around their perimeter, which protected visitors from inclement weather. This basic scheme, dating from the ninth century, from ancient Iran and modern Iraq, was reported as the cross-shaped garden (*jardín de crucero*), according to different scholars, geographies and contexts of Muslim civilization.

The study of the still few examples documented in Spain (mainly based on archaeological studies in the Alcázar of Seville), reveals to us the presence, in some, of that side corridor, separated from the planted area by arches. So, we have a model that enables us to walk along with the treetops in view, and the flutter of birds, also providing us with the chance to walk round the lower levels and look at some of the smaller-sized plants.

The layout of the upper walkways – which in some cases have water-channels running along them – where two paths cross, produce a courtyard or garden in the shape of a cross: we suspect that this may be the origin of the lines reproduced in many of the convent cloisters in Toledo. Our aim is to reveal the evidence that tells us of the existence of those gardens which Toledo’s Taifa may well have had and which reveal clear signs of a correlation with those known and documented up till now. We shall concentrate our exhibition, therefore, on four of the examples we consider to be typical in the city:

## Gardens of the Almunia of al-Mamun ibn Di l-Nun (1043-1075)

The building, which is inaccurately known as the Palace of Galiana, is the *almunia* (or country house) of the king of the Taifa of Toledo, al-Ma'mun ibn Di l-Nun (1043-1075), also mentioned by the various names of *al-Munya al Mansura*, *Royal Almunia* or *King's Orchard*.

The *almunias* were areas given over to horticultural farming with a twofold purpose of farm and leisure area, and were thus located just outside the town. Usually they were structured around a tower whose function seems to have been more for representation than defense, and surrounded by their own walls (Ramos Ramos 1998: 51-75). The *almunia* of al-Mamun is located on the high plains of Toledo, near the train station. For a long time it was mistakenly believed that they were the mythical and literary Palaces of Galiana<sup>39</sup>, maintaining an interpretation that could have been documented in the early seventeenth century, when Salazar Mendoza referred to "some old houses with a pond for a courtyard, which the ignorant would call the Palaces of Galiana" (Salazar y Mendoza 1603: 248).

In fact, even today in the inventories and protection plans, the buildings are listed as such. The confusion with the palaces of al-Mukarran is also corroborated by a certain ambivalence in the identification of the two. This adds to the interpretation of the descriptions that tell us of the palaces of Galiana and their adornment on the occasion of the festivities to celebrate the circumcision of the grandson of al-Mamun, passed down through a whole series of texts by *Andalus* authors, such as the writer Al-Idrisi (1100-1165 or 1166), on whom the thirteenth century historian and editor, Ibn Said al Maghribi, bases himself. He, in turn, draws his inspiration from the works of al-Hiyari (Andalusian writer

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<sup>39</sup> As mentioned, for instance, by TORRES BALBÁS, L.: *Ciudades hispano-musulmanas*, t. I, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Hispanic-Arabic Institute of Culture, Madrid, 1971, p. 146 and by PAVON MALDONADO, Basilio: *Tratado de arquitectura Hispano-Musulmana*, Madrid, CSIC, 1990, p. 102.

straddling the eleventh and the twelfth century and a contemporary of al-Mamun)<sup>40</sup>.

The confusion over the identification of the *Almunia* and the palaces is no anecdote, as it responds to a lack of in-depth study of both. Traditionally, the chronicles have come to accept that continuing attempts throughout the twelfth century to recover or capture the city of Toledo, first by the Almoravids and later by the Almohads, kept the high meadow or *Vega Alta* as a place where troops were gathered, with the subsequent occupation of the Royal *Almunia*: an invasion that led to its progressive deterioration, up to its total destruction in 1212, in the pre-battle of Naves de Tolosa (in this case due to its occupation by the Christian troops). After the supposed total destruction of Islamic buildings, it has been interpreted that the today's vestiges of the Royal *Almunia* were the work of reconstruction done around 1394 by Alvar Pérez de Guzman and Beatriz Silva, in a style similar to the previous design, hence its description of *Mudejar*.

Then came the deterioration and abandonment of centuries, reflected in engravings which delighted in the romantic view of its ruins and the photographic images captured in the late nineteenth century by Laurent, or at the beginning of the twentieth century by Toledo-born Pedro Román Martínez and Casiano Alguacil, or the photographers of the House of Rodriguez.

In the 1960s, Alejandro Fernández de Araoz and Carmen Marañón, the owners, tackled the restoration of this damaged and battered area. These efforts were unhurried and done unconventionally, as far as the relationship between owners and project management was concerned. The works were handled by Fernando Chueca Goitia who, along with the historian, Gomez Moreno, decided on the work to be done as they progressed.

As far as we know, and on the basis of individual reports we have, no plans were drawn up as such, nor was there any report. Often

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<sup>40</sup> On the same issue, see Vid. DELGADO VALERO, Clara: *Toledo islámico: ciudad, arte e historia*, Toledo, Zocodover, 1987 and an aspect studied by Clara Delgado, "Noticias sobre Toledo suministradas por los geógrafos musulmanes" in *En la España Medieval*, Volume V, Madrid, Editorial de la Universidad Complutense, 1986.

Gómez Moreno worked intuitively, and work went ahead on that basis. So it was, we are told, that one day he said that on the esplanade opposite the tower of the *Almunia*, there must have been a sunken garden (no doubt a deduction after reading some texts, such as the ones we have quoted by Salazar de Mendoza). A vital review of the building leads us to the need to rethink and carefully study the history of the whole complex, separating what was built by Chueca Goitia from the remains preserved. The relatively recent restoration of the *al fresco* wainscoting<sup>41</sup> has drawn our attention to certain aspects that incline us to rethink the accepted chronologies of the destruction and reconstruction of the *Almunia*.

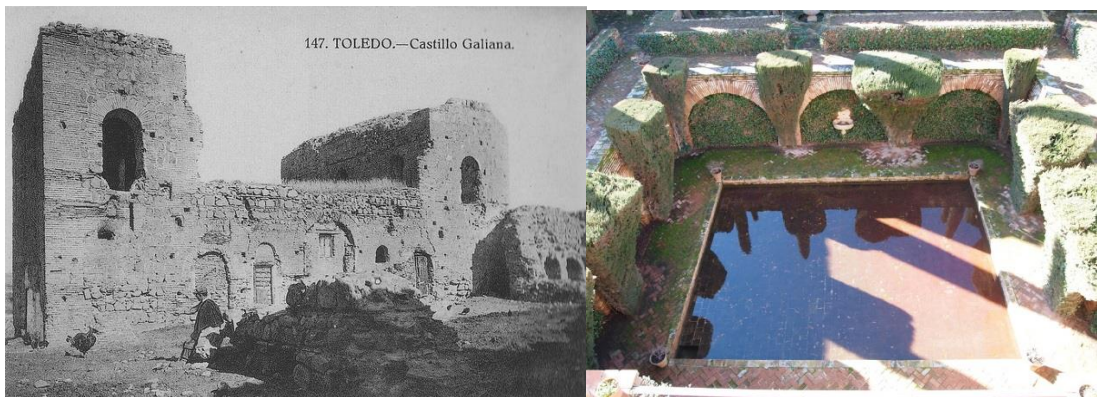


Fig. 1. The Royal Almunia in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the garden area covered. Photograph by Grafos.

Fig. 2. The garden in present days, after excavation. Photograph by Victoria Soto Caba.

Similarly, the comparison between the images of early last century, with an esplanade in the place that has come to be taken up by today's sunken garden, led us to think of an imaginative approach taken by the architect, which certainly contributed to it not being greatly considered by historians. The reality seems to contradict us, however, and careful analysis shows that, indeed, Gómez Moreno was right when he said that there must have been a sunken garden (Figs. 1 and 2). The semi-circular brick arches, which form the perimeter, must have appeared in the excavation, probably broken

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<sup>41</sup> Carried out under the supervision of Carmen Rallo, by Carolina Peña Bardasano and Antonio Perla in 2011.

at the top, which shows a reconstruction with mortar which is different from the rest of the style.

The wall which blocks off the arches is also likely to be the result of the intervention of Chueca, although we cannot be absolutely sure about this at this moment. The truth is that this wall is not attached to the arches but superimposed, leaving a gap between the two. On the sides facing east to west there are two internal corridors that indicate, at least partially, that behind the arches there is a gallery. This same evidence is manifest in the slanting space behind the arches on the west side, where the staircase leading down to the pool was built i.e. what we have is exactly that model of sunken garden which Navarro Palazón called a *pool-courtyard* (*patio-alberca*) and which Tito Rojo and Manuel Casares refer to, classifying it as “Type 3.4.1” (Tito Rojo and Casares Porcel 2011: 102-104).



Fig. 3. The excavated garden with the original access to the underground on the right tower.

Although we cannot attest to exactly what remains were found of the *Almunia*, and whether they were, in fact, as we see them today,



what is certain is that all the evidence points to that lower perimeter gallery, which would be accessed through the vaulted area to the right, on the north face, and which would extend beneath the room located at the southeast end of the tower (Fig. 3). In this room, the wooden floor has a trap door that reveals the steps leading down to the lower level gallery of the garden (now a kind of basement warehouse). The wall that blocks off and separates the alcove of the room shows evidence of being superimposed on top of remains of colored plasterwork that appears to be related to the paintings of the wainscoting on the upper section.

Although on the main floor of the garden the palatial buildings opposite the tower were destroyed, virtually at foundation level the general pattern is quite clear, with the path that runs along level with the crowns of the fruit trees, possibly planted in the narrow strip left for vegetation.

### **Water tower and well of the Convent of Concepción Francisca**

It was the domination of water that enabled Toledo to represent for posterity the place where some of the most beautiful gardens in the Hispano-Muslim world grew and prospered, along with those of the Madinat al-Zahra and the Alhambra. From the Taifa period, Toledo was an orchard of palaces and gardens as evidenced by its chroniclers. Al-Hiyari, providing the basis of many descriptions when he mentioned the large number of pomegranate trees in the city; the importance of farming, compared to other cities; and the various different types of grafting used - facts which were to be reinforced by Muslim texts well into the late Middle Ages<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>42</sup> The Granada geographer, Ibn Sai al-Magribi, (last third of the thirteenth century), on writing on Toledo states "al-Hiyari has described it at great length, mentioning the greatness of its defences and the trees that surround it everywhere. Through the *Puerta de la Sagra* one can see the pomegranates with flowers almost the size of a pomegranate. Many different types of grafts and crops are used which exceed those of other cities...". Ismael Imad-ab-Din-al-Ayubi, an Arabian prince, historian and geographer, born in Damascus in 1273 and better known as Abulfeda, in turn points out that "Toledo is surrounded everywhere by groves of trees and appears to turn into pomegranate flowers at the enormity of pomegranates it contains, without forgetting other types of fruit trees", quoted by VILLAR GARRIDO, A. and J. (1997), *Viajeros por la Historia. Extranjeros en Castilla-La Mancha*, Toledo, Publications Section, Department of Education, p. 34.

Al-Ma'mun was responsible for buildings that were mythologized by poets and polygraphs of successive centuries; constructions where gardens and water, as an essential element of landscaped areas, took on a leading role and set the tone of the city's green spaces.

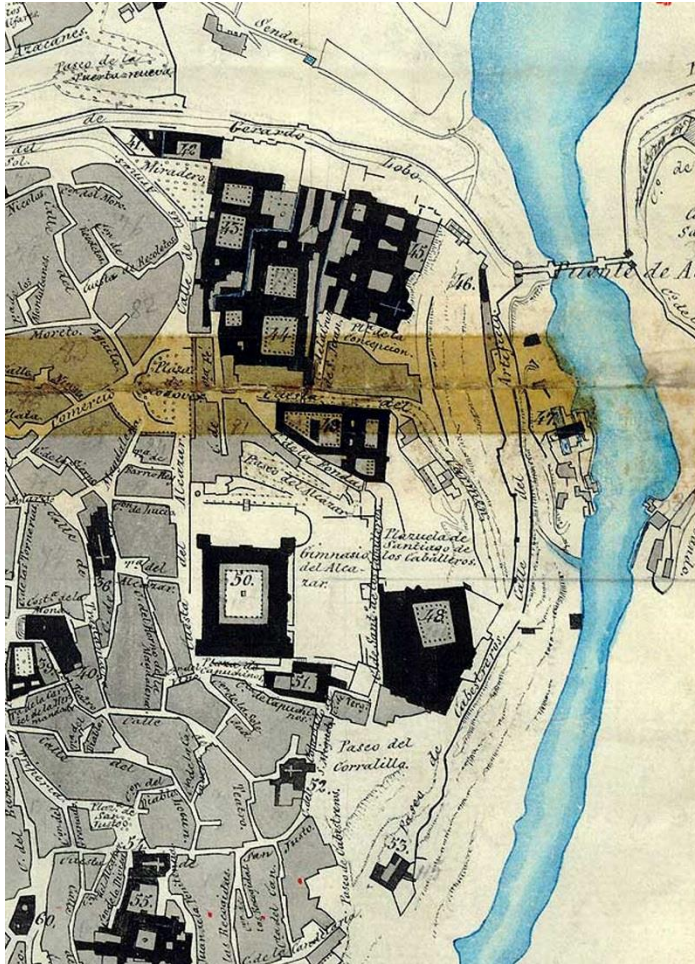


Fig. 4. Detail of Toledo's plan, 1879, covering the area occupied by al-Mukarram, the Alcázar in the southern area and the convents of Santa Fe and Concepción Francisca in the northern area. Centro Nacional de Información Geográfica.

The first, and perhaps, most important of all these buildings was the al-Mukarran *alcazar*, or fortress-palace, located in the northeast corner and highest part of the town; a fortified Moorish citadel, in turn within the walls of the city itself, constituting an official, military and residential district which came to be called *al-Hizam* (the girdle) (Fig. 4). The alcazar of al-Mukarran was where the mythical palaces of Galiana were actually to be found: a series of pavilions and halls between gardens on terraces facing north to

south, like the structures superimposed upon them. The succession of stepped terraces was obviously the best formula, given the steep and rugged terrain of the area, and the best solution for the location of the gardens.

These gardens were structured to adapt to the land, broken down into successive units of cross-shaped courtyards and gardens – following the Moorish tradition and certainly that of the Caliphs – which overcame the difficulty of some very steep slopes, which had to be reinforced by walls, thus becoming a kind of hanging or “raised” gardens. These terraced gardens required a solid tectonic system – assisted in many cases by the very walls of the al-Hizam – and a hydraulic scheme which would water the plants and make it possible to install pools, ponds and fountains, as we know from written sources.

It would not be at all farfetched to present these gardens as a formula of transition or evolution between the Caliphate and Nazrid style of gardening. In many ways, we believe that the succession of courtyards and gardens of the Alhambra and the Generalife, on mountainous terrain and within a walled enclosure, similar to the situation of Toledo itself, found a clear model in the work by al-Mamun on the palaces of al-Mukarran or Galiana.

The loss of the city did not mean the palaces were abandoned, however, and evidence remains of how they were used by successive kings to become an important center of cultural exchange<sup>43</sup>. The commentary on the old Toledo *Alcazar* appears in the account of the voyage of a Moroccan ambassador, who mentions how even in the late seventeenth century there were “remnants of the Kasbah, where kings had formerly lived; those who lived after the last conquest of this city, constructed new buildings there” (Villar Garrido 1997: 133). There is no lack of references but, as we know, the old al-Mukarran citadel had been transformed completely, shared out among different religious orders and their

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<sup>43</sup> José María TORROJA MENÉNDEZ described how King Alphonse X accommodated the Jewish, Muslim and Christian scholars of the School of Translators in the Galiana palace, *El Sistema Del Mundo Desde la Antigüedad Hasta Alfonso X el Sabio*, Instituto de España, 1980, p. 176.

convents, who settled in and gradually transfigured their settings, although among them remained (and still remain) fragments of that past<sup>44</sup>, such as the orientation of their architecture and the configuration of their terraced gardens.

So, with the convent of Concepción Francisca, whose origin and foundations have been written about *ad nauseam* over more than a century and a half<sup>45</sup>, with information not always sufficiently referenced, we see a construction superimposed upon what was once the convent of San Francisco, founded in turn on top of part of the Palaces of Galiana.

Despite great strides being made, many questions remain, to reveal more accurately the changes in each of the areas that formed the palace, namely: the citadel, the Franciscan convent, the Convent of Santa Fe, the Convent of San Pedro de las Dueñas and the Convent of la Concepción.

On vestiges of the past in the form of terraced gardens, we recently mentioned Concepción Francisca<sup>46</sup>, however we must not omit a mention of aspects of the little studied hydraulic systems that made the construction of palaces and gardens at the top of the city possible. In the space between the retaining wall of the terrace, which is the site of today's Museum of Santa Cruz, and the buildings known as the *Casa de los Demandaderos* (*House of Claimants*) and the Chapel of St. Jerome (really *Chapel of the Fountain or Fountains*), there are two sets of arches that once led somewhere but

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<sup>44</sup> The most recent work on the Convent of las Comendadoras de Santiago revealed some of the structures of the Islamic *aula régula* and brought a new interpretation of some of the existing work, as is the case of the Chapel of Belén, interpreted as the superimposing of a Muslim prayer room. Cfr. MONZÓN MOYA, Fabiola and MARTÍN MORALES, Concepción: "El antiguo convento de Santa Fe de Toledo", *Bienes Culturales, Revista del Instituto del Patrimonio Histórico Español*, Department of Fine Art and Cultural Heritage, nº 6, Madrid, 2006, pp.53-76; and CALVO CAPILLA, Susana: "La Capilla de Belén del Convento de Santa Fe de Toledo: ¿Un oratorio musulmán? Mit. 8", *Madrid Miteilungen*, nº 43, 2002, pp.353-375

<sup>45</sup> "Where the Convent of Sta. Fé now stretches out its high gallery, and the Hospital of Santa Cruz its magnificent wings, and the Church of la Concepción raises its hand-carved pails, there stood the traditional palace which was handed down by the Goths to the Muslim princes, and then by them in turn to the victors of Castile; ...that small space sums up the most vital events of the history of Toledo over many centuries..." in PARCERISA, F.J. y QUADRADO, J.M.: *Recuerdos y bellezas de España. Castilla La Nueva*, Madrid, 1848-1853, Vol. II Toledo (1853) [Facsimile Ed., Zocodover, Toledo, 1981], p.276

<sup>46</sup> At the International Colloquium held at Evora University, cfr. SOTO CABA, V. and PERLA DE LAS PARRAS, A.: "Vulnerable images: Toledo, the arid city and its hidden gardens" in DUARTE RODRIGUES, Ana [coord.], *Gardens and tourism. For and beyond economic profit*, CHAIA/CIUHCT, 2015, pp. 27-46 .

which, at some unspecified time, were blocked up. We think that the first arch, on entry, corresponds to an old water mine (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. Mine in the Santa Cruz wall at the convent of Concepción Francisca. Photograph by Victoria Soto Caba.

Fig. 6. Possibly an *aljibe* located near the above mentioned mine. Photograph by Victoria Soto Caba.

These galleries of different lengths, which search out veins of water which flow directly, or which collect the water from small streams into sinks or runoff reservoirs – known also as water towers and which in the Islamic world were known as *qanats* – were common in Toledo, as we know from written and surveying<sup>47</sup> documentation and, in fact, a good number of them have been preserved to this day, locked within the courtyards of some of Toledo's houses (Gutierrez Arias 2014).

The second arch in the Courtyard of the Demanderos has an architectural structure which is different to the previous one, as it is surrounded by a brick factory. In this case we do not believe that it

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<sup>47</sup> See, for instance, HURTADO DE TOLEDO, Luis: *Memorial de algunas cosas notables que tiene la Imperial Ciudad de Toledo* (1576), re-published in *Relaciones histórico-geográficas-estadísticas de los pueblos de España hechas por iniciativa de Felipe II*, vol. III, Madrid, 1963. Also available for consultation are the plans of the 19th century Geographical and Statistical Institute and, among them, the General Plan of Toledo, which dates back to 1901, IGE, 452073, sheet 11.

is the entrance to another mine but rather a well that may have been fed by the water from the previous mine (Fig. 6). In terms of its construction, it has great similarities with the well-known public wells of the city of Granada from the twelfth (as in the case of the Well of San Miguel) and thirteenth centuries. We believe, therefore, that it is quite possible that both buildings were destined to collect water, and were part of the water system belonging to al-Mukarram's palaces and gardens of Galiana.

### **Courtyard of el Moral in the Convent of Santo Domingo el Real**

As with a number of convents in Toledo, the history of the Convent of Santo Domingo El Real has evolved through the appearance and amalgamation of various different architectural and urban phenomena which are a result of the acquisition of heterogeneous properties that have led to anarchic architectural forms, and have earned Toledo the title of a small-scale, disorderly city. In the view of Sixto Parro, this was simply an old building whose design lacked a uniform plan, and he noted that when spotting it from the meadow, one could see no more than a group of houses lacking any unity or beauty (Parro 1857: 137). Amador de los Rios mentioned the possibility that in the place where the convent stood a "none too ordinary building" had existed, dating from the tenth century (Amador de los Ríos 1905: 67). We assume he refers to the west area, where the courtyard of el Moral is located. We do not know what this scholar based his claim upon, although in view of some of the remains we find, this does not seem unreasonable.

Without going into areas of the convent, and therefore into each of their present histories, or the terraced gardens that unfold upon the walls of the city on its north face, we would like to draw attention to the traces of the Courtyard or Patio of el Moral.

Beyond the claims of Amador de los Rios as to its origin, the courtyard of el Moral is taken to be a work of the fifteenth century,

transformed in the early sixteenth century when, in 1507, the works of one of its builders' groups<sup>48</sup> was begun.

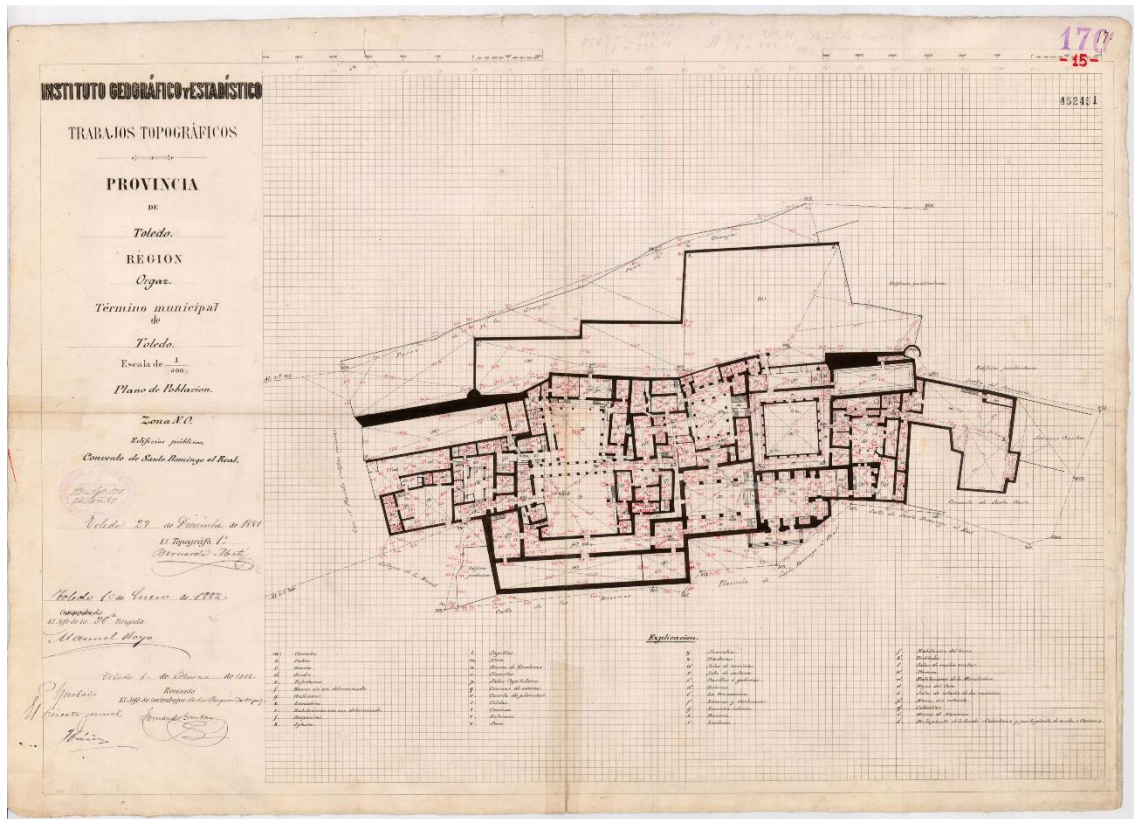


Fig. 7. Convent of Santo Domingo el Real, Cartografía de Ibáñez Ibero, 1881. Centro Nacional de Información Geográfica.

For the construction of this part of the convent several pre-existing houses were demolished. Looking at the plans, it appears that their final form was the result of adaptation to a pre-existing path and a number of buildings, to accommodate a number of sections which attempted to create the form of a rectangle - but without success (Fig. 7).

The corridor that divided the courtyard into two in the seventeenth century (on March 5th 1615 the stonework for the underground passage was contracted for the project by Juan Bautista Monegro), finally set out this great space by visually dividing it into two courtyards, thus lending it a more regular shape without diminishing its grandeur as a whole. The renting out of a part of the

<sup>48</sup> Santo Domingo el Real Archive, Toledo, (ASDRT), Documents nr 360 and 361.

Convent to the Cadastre, or Land Registry, produced the traumatic division we see today, blocking off the arcades of the corridor gallery and creating a view of a closed courtyard (the Cadastre courtyard). But curiously this image, coupled with the short notes indicated, are what lead us to ponder over the possible existence of an earlier courtyard, indeed, of a possible sunken garden. For the time being, we do not have any more documentary evidence that witnesses or contradicts this, but this could initially be the key to the more rectangular form of this section, as opposed to the one to the north. Our attention is caught by the existence of this raised corridor that closes off the courtyard to the north side and leads to the garden via a central staircase.



Fig. 8. Patio del Moral, Convent of Santo Domingo el Real. Photograph in Fray Luis Gomara, *Los Dominicos y el arte*, 1925.

When looking at old photographs in search of answers which pre-date the most recent works, in the breastplate of the gallery we have observed that the style of construction corresponds to the techniques of the tenth or eleventh centuries (Fig. 8). We know that this is not a definitive dating scheme, and may vary in accuracy, however we



cannot fail to point out that this is consistent with the assessment of Amador de los Rios.

Moreover, in the layout of the garden we see a cross-shaped structure of several paths with flower beds on each side, although in the photographs of the first third of the last century<sup>49</sup> what we see is a floor completely covered with stone slabs, but with a network of fruit trees whose crowns are level with passers-by through the raised gallery on the north side.

### **Cloister of the Imperial Monastery of San Clemente**

Finally, we bring in the seventeenth century notes in the last works undertaken to restore the main or Processional Cloister of the Imperial Convent of San Clemente. As in the previous case, these are not definitive conclusions, since the findings and interpretation of some remains that have been complex are still being drafted.

We believe there is a fair amount of evidence which points to the possible existence of a sunken garden, displaced by today's layout of the cloister, whose final form appears to be the result of adapting the structures of an early fifteenth century cloister to a Renaissance classicist form by the hand of Nicolás de Vergara, conducted between the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Again, as in the previous case, a Toledo convent is the result of an amalgam of diverse properties. The fact that this was the first convent founded in the city makes it more complex to interpret, without it being fully clarified whether this dates from the first or second half of the twelfth century. What we do see clearly is the existence of earlier urban structures which we believe are still present in some of its areas.

We know of the presence of a Roman well of considerable size, for public use, discovered in the west bay of the cloister. In a straight line, east to west, following the slope and just below the refectory, we come across a well with running water which flows only a few

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<sup>49</sup> Moral Cloisters. Rodríguez Collection. Provincial Historic Archive of Toledo (APHT).

meters below the parapet. In principle, this would be nothing unusual but the surprising thing is that we find ourselves at a height of just five meters below the highest point of the city, located right at the head end of the church.

The uneven configuration of the convent, with considerable differences in height, made it necessary to stagger the construction in the monastery, or the construction which it was built upon, using a system repeated since ancient times in many old buildings of the city, involving the formation of chambers or galleries with barrel vaults which, in turn, made best use of the spaces created.



Fig. 9. Cloister of Processions of the Imperial Convent of San Clemente, staircases to the underground gallery. Photograph by Victoria Soto Caba.

In the case of San Clemente, we know that the refectory was built upon a series of brick-built barrel vaults, with no formwork, and which authors such as Balbina Martínez Caviro date from around the eleventh or twelfth centuries (Martínez Caviro 1990: 73). The existence of vaults with no formwork is fairly well documented on the Iberian Peninsula in the Nazrid era, although examples of the

Umayyad and Emirate periods are also known (Hernández Giménez 1975 and Almagro 2001: 147-170).

In sections reproduced in the book, *Architectures of Toledo*, the gallery under the refectory appears, as does the bay where the Roman well is to be found<sup>50</sup>, but not the other galleries in the main cloister, beneath the nave and the north corridor, or the vaulted space on the right of the altar, opposite the Chapter House. In effect, in the gallery on the north side, attached to the balustrade, there is a staircase that must have been opened relatively recently, because in the 1882 plan, this does not figure nor, of course, does the fairly recent construction, as well as the fact that this makes an irregular break in the openings on the lower floor (Fig. 9).



Fig. 10. Arches of the underground gallery closed by a support wall. Photograph by Victoria Soto Caba.

The staircase leads to a lower gallery, which runs in the same direction as the main gallery and which, in principle, is entered from

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<sup>50</sup> VV. AA.: *Arquitecturas de Toledo*, Castilla-La Mancha Regional Government Publications Department, 1991, 2 vols

the rooms beneath the centerline, through a passage in the wall—today sealed off. Just below the line of the arch that closes off the cloister, a series of masonry arches coincide with the columns which support the arches of the cloister floor. The arches of the lower floor are of a substantial thickness and clearly have been blocked up by a rubble-mound, undoubtedly to support earth movement (Fig. 10). It is not known at what point this occurred but we think that the blocking off appears to be concealing the identity of a garden which, like cross-shaped or simply sunken gardens, this lower level was reached through these arches.

The scheme would be very similar to that of the sunken gardens in the cross-shaped courtyard within the *Patio de la Montería* (Hunting Courtyard) of the Alcázar of Seville. Two of the arches correspond with skylights which are open at the top, literally glued to the arcade, with an obvious function of lighting that seems to us particularly similar to that of the skylights that we see in the so-called *Baños de Doña María* (Baths of Doña María), the garden's lower pool, originally Almohad, in the Patio de la Monterí of Seville's Alcazar.

It is difficult, nevertheless, to draw conclusions, given probable scenarios that require a very complex effort to confirm i.e. a far-reaching archaeological analysis. All we should remember is that we are allowing ourselves to be carried away by stereotypical conventions, without pausing to reflect upon their real correspondence with the tangible evidence of the past. Toledo, long before revealing to us that brown, arid image that eventually became a symbol of its identity, was sung about by Hispano-Muslim poets, for its orchards, trees and gardens. The witnesses of that past still, therefore, await a study which is capable of looking must deeper.

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