

# The late-antique villa at Noheda (Villar de Domingo García) near Cuenca and its mosaics

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Because the discovery of the mosaic at Noheda has aroused great expectations, not to mention constant demands for information, we offer here a concise preview,<sup>1</sup> without going into too many details about the architecture, decorative stones, iconography, coins, ceramics or animal bones, all of which will be presented in the definitive report<sup>2</sup> and which will generally be indispensable for understanding and interpreting the site.

The archaeological site has been known for some time<sup>3</sup> as the figural mosaic was first documented in the 1980s when farming improvements were taking place,<sup>4</sup> but it was not before the end of 2005 that the first archaeological assessment took place. This prompted the Junta de Comunidades de Castilla–La Mancha to assume responsibility for and funding of the investigation.<sup>5</sup>

While the figural mosaic in the tri-apsidal (triconch) room is the most famous discovery, work done on the settlement has revealed a small number of structures belonging to a *pars rustica*, as well as a section of the *pars urbana*, including rooms of the baths and different rooms of the main residence, among them the extremely large triconch itself with its complex layout.

The Roman villa lies in the interior of the Iberian peninsula close to the ancient cities of Segóbriga, Ercávica and Valeria, and just 17 km north of Cuenca. Situated 500 m

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1 A monograph on the mosaic is about to appear: M. A. Valero Tévar, *Los mosaicos de la villa romana de Noheda (Villar de Domingo García–Cuenca)*. Contexto arqueológico y análisis interpretativo (Exma. Diputación Provincial de Cuenca, 2013).

2 In the meantime the material is available in my doctoral thesis, *La villa romana de Noheda (Cuenca)*. (Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2013), directed by R. Rubio Rivera.

3 J. Larrañaga Mendia, *Guía de Cuenca* (Diputación Provincial de Cuenca 1966) 438; J. M. Abascal Palazón, *Vías de comunicación romanas de la provincia de Guadalajara* (Diputación Provincial de Guadalajara 1982) 68; S. Palomero Plaza, *Las vías romanas de la provincia de Cuenca* (Diputación Provincial de Cuenca 1987) 169.

4 J. L. Lledó Sandoval, *El mosaico de Noheda (Cuenca): su descubrimiento* (Diputación Provincial de Cuenca 2007); id., *El mosaico romano de Noheda: historia personal de un alumbramiento* (Madrid 2010); M. Á. Valero Tévar, “La villa romana de Noheda: avance de los primeros resultados,” *Informes sobre Patrimonio* 1 (Consejería de Educación, Ciencia y Cultura; Junta de Comunidades de Castilla–La Mancha 2010) 5.

5 It was included within the regional program of “Excavaciones sistemáticas”. Our thanks go to the Dirección General de Cultura de la Consejería de Educación, Cultura y Deporte of the same Junta for the institutional and financial support given to us during these years, support which has been vital for the maintenance and development of a proper research project and which has already led to numerous publications and conference papers (cf. M. Á. Valero Tévar, “Los mosaicos de la villa romana de Noheda (Villar de Domingo García, Cuenca),” *Actas XII Colloquium int. AIEMA (Venecia 2012)* forthcoming; “El triclinium de la villa tardoantigua de Noheda: edilicia y ornamentación,” *Actas del Convegno int. La villa restaurata e i nuovi studi sull’edilizia residenziale tardoantica (Piazza Armerina 2012)*. Various agreements and projects endorsed by the Diputación Provincial de Cuenca and the Junta Comunidades de Castilla–La Mancha have facilitated the development of the research. We have also counted constantly on the involvement and hospitality of the pueblo of Villar de Domingo García, as well as that of the Diputación Provincial de Cuenca.