extremely old materials which suggested a pre-Roman settling (today fully proved) integrated later into a fortified enclosure of a bigger size and fully Roman chronology (1st and 2nd century A.D.). Other testimonies, very scarce, have been pointed out as of possible later Roman or Early Middle Age settlements.

Present research has confirmed its foundation during the Iron Age followed by a short occupation during the beginning of the Roman Empire.

Among the buildings which have been found in the excavation we can highlight a big hut and two thermal buildings or proto-historic rustic saunas.

El Picón de La Coroza
(Tapia de Casariego)

The first news related to the existence of a settlement in the area of La Coroza was given by José Manuel González, who studied the mound of Picón in July 1968. The card of his personal register, looked up by courtesy of its trustee Diógenes García, gathers the remarks of that visit in which together with a rough description, a few sketches drawn over the perpendicular axis of the site were made. They show the internal structure in several balconies, in different levels, oriented eastwards and starting from a superior platform or acropolis and the arrangement of the perimeter moats with a more important development on the southern and western sides, where we can find up to three with their corresponding outer moat.

Picón is a small promontory over the coastal level and about 1,100 m away from the coastline. In spite of its modest height, 80 m above sea level, it enjoys a visual dominion favoured by the regularity and evenness of its environment which gives it a leading role in the landscape.

In 2001 the settlement underwent a small intervention in order to avoid damages caused by the works foreseen in the area. The result was the identification of a stratigraphic sequence: some ceramic works of indigenous production which can be assigned to an indefinite moment of the Second Iron Age appeared under the soil layer. Under these deposits there is a wall whose disposition adapts to the perimeter of the hill fort's crown, ending at the slope which delimits this higher platform. Associated to the age of foundation and use of the wall it was found a bronze axe which, because of its possible ternary nature with a high presence of lead, takes the probable foundation of the enclosure to the end of the Final Bronze Age. Other hillforts in the region such as Chao Samartín or Taramundi have been dated in the same age, which can be around the 8th century B.C.

Os Castros de Taramundi
(Taramundi)

The area of Os Castros was recognized as a fortified village in 1969 by José Manuel González who registered it with the name "El Castro". The site is located in the very capital of the council. It is one of the biggest hillforts catalogued in the interior lands of the Navia-Eo, with an area of around 2 Ha.

In 1992 a short archaeological intervention takes place directed by Elías Carrocera Fernández with the aim to identify the remains found during the construction works of the road which surrounds it. From 2000 on there are several archaeological summer campaigns within the frame of the Navia-Eo Basin Archaeological Plan.

Over the discovered area, there is a dense structure of constructions immersed in a complex stratigraphy with ruin and desertion episodes, repair and refilling, which form a dense archaeological space, of long duration, whose time sequence seems to go from the end of Bronze Age or Initial Iron until Late Roman Time. Amongst the constructions found, short sections of the defensive system can be identified, as well as about ten buildings, one of them an indigenous sauna.

The significant introduction of Roman materials can be confirmed from the middle of the 1st century A.D. at the same time as the generalization of Hispanic productions which are going to monopolize the supply to these northern territories from Flavian Time on.

The end of the occupation of the village cannot be precised yet, although it is almost certain that it was inhabited during most of the 2nd century.

The Permanent Exhibition
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Before the hillforts. Recent prehistory

There is evidence of human presence in the interior lands of the valley of the Navia from Neolithic times on. Its arrival was some 6,000 years ago, when all over the west of Europe new ways of life which explored rudimentary kinds of agriculture and stockbreeding became widespread. In a short time, hunting and collection as essential strategies for survival would be given up. This means that the arrival of man to these midlands of the valley of the Navia is a relatively modern phenomenon with regards to the occupation of the coastal strip, where the testimonies of human presence go back to 300,000 years ago.

The factors which had to meet so that this pioneer colonization could take place were of a varied nature and include climatic, edaphological and cultural conditions. The increase in temperature and humidity stated from approximately 7,000 years ago, the conformation of fertile soils or the application of economic innovations related to the exploitation of the land which, had been experienced previously with success in other European regions, came together so that human groups could risk entering these territories and became their first users.

These Neolithic communities had an economy fundamentally based on stockbreeding; this needed wide lands of pasture and the consequence was a progressive deforestation of the environment. This was possible with the development of new tools such as the polished axe (1), which would become the most representative tool of this period of our prehistory.

In a landscape of lower mountain like this, it is possible that those primitive settlements had a seasonal character, limited to the periods in which both the meteorological conditions and the exploitation of the own resources were more favourable. The seasonal migration between the coastal and the interior region was also favoured by an orography which enabled –until today– the north-south itineraries. The principal mountain ranges of the region, stretch with a stepped profile between 1,200 and 500 m, from the foothill of the Cantabrian Mountains to the coastal level. The progressive erosion of these mountain ranges, whose origin goes back to the Hercynian Age, has generated wide peak lines and soft topography which have helped an easy transit from the interior lands to the coast from prehistoric times. There was another circumstance that contributed to consolidate these mountain spaces into preferential itineraries, since thanks to their accessibility, they provided safety to these travelling routes through mountains which together with a favourable visibility, allowed long journeys to people and animals without the risks inherent to the movement through forests or wading rivers.

These landscapes of peaks offer the most abundant testimonies of a colonization that proves to be fully established along the Neolithic (4300-2500 B.C.). This happens in the whole Asturian region and, of course, in its western mountains. Nevertheless, these evidences are, in our case and in spite of their relative abundance, limited in their diversity since they correspond exclusively to funerary manifestations.

These are graves in the shape of artificial mounds built by bringing earth and stones which keep the bodies of the deceased or their remains under the tumular mass, in holes excavated in the soil or in stone chambers within. They appear on the outside as a semisphere which originally could reach several meters of height. Often there are holes and trenches excavated for centuries -generally in its central zone- by those who have been seduced by the ancestral tradition which says that they hold fabulous treasures inside.

Undoubtedly, the tumulus -usual denomination for this type of Neolithic architecture- besides serving as a funeral deposit was provided with another type of values which justify their privileged geographical situation and the monumentality of the work. Both factors come together to provide them with a great visibility which turned them from the moment of their construction into powerful landscape milestones and they surely had certain value as territorial signals. Such a quality can be checked today as many of these tumuli meet the current council boundaries.

In Grandas de Salime the principal group of prehistoric tombs is located on the plain which dominates the central area of the council. The location of these groupings on even ground shows certain singularity with regard to the positions on the heights which are predominant in megalithic Asturias. These conditions of moderate height and open horizon make up an original spatial frame which was surely related to the potential fertility of the chosen soils. A shared characteristic is their constructive structure, different to the most conventional megalithic manifestations, in which no differentiated megalithic chambers can be recognized and whose construction is Carbon-dated (tumuli of El Canadeiro and Chao of Cerexeira) in the first half of the 4th Millennium. The first ceramics used in the region were found inside (2).

Archaeological excavations have revealed the long relevance of these monuments, which have surely been reused and enlarged from their foundation in Neolithic times until their definitive abandonment during the Bronze Age.

The prehistoric engravings at *La Xorenga* can be found in the same place; it is a group of little grooves and small pots engraved in the rock. These are very simple representations consisting of hollowed out grooves and cavities of unknown meaning which must have been associated to liturgies of ritual type. It is considered that its origin can be contemporary to the dolmens and tumuli which are common in the region. The singularity of *La Xorenga* with regards to similar tumuli sites is the repeated presence of a figurine, of lace-like shape, which has been interpreted as the schematic representation of a human figure. Nevertheless, it is possible that this variety of motives could correspond to different times in history; it has been suggested that this type of representations could be monograms of Christ related to the medieval Christianization of pagan worship places.

There is no evidence of settlements corresponding to the first stages of prehistoric metallurgy. Nevertheless, several samples of metal axes have been found; this illustrates in an excellent way the evolution of these productions from the Eneolithic until the Final Bronze Age (3/4).

One site, four looks

The events which took place from the foundation of the first fortified village at *Chao Samartín* until its conversion into funerary space, twenty centuries later, have to be understood as a part of a changing natural and political landscape which can be grouped into four wide chapters. These historical episodes integrate short and long processes shared and participated by many proto-historical western European communities.

Bronze Age

During the 2nd millennium B.C. Europe experienced a demographic growth which favoured the creation of important villages, sometimes fortified, in opposition to the dispersion of previous times. This meant a more intense exploitation of land, less mobility for individuals and the appearance of centres of power and social elites which, nevertheless, did not constitute political forms similar to those in the eastern Mediterranean. The predominance of objects made out of bronze (5) over those made of stone or copper turned the search for minerals into a fundamental concern.

In Asturias the first copper and gold metal objects appeared around 2000 B.C. in a cultural context inherited from megalithic times which maintains during centuries the burial in tumuli. In the last centuries of the period, Final Bronze, the first fortified enclosures appear, as a seed of the later fortified settlements. These were villages established in places with a wide visual range and good defensive conditions, related to ancient exchange routes.

In a rougher environment than at present, the landscape was mainly composed of heather with few trees such as hazels, alders, birches, pines and chestnut trees. Subsistence was based on agriculture and stockbreeding but with a significant development of bronze metallurgy which will favour mining and long distance trade.

Iron Age

The use of iron becomes widespread in Europe during the 1st millennium B.C. starting from its knowledge in eastern regions where it was used from the year 1500 B.C. Its expansion to the Iberian Peninsula is made by sea by the Phoenicians and across the continent by central European influences which also spread new ways of life and beliefs as that of the cremation of corpses and their deposit into urns. Both stimuli acted on a varied indigenous stratum blending even more the heterogeneous Hispanic cultural mosaic.

A first phase or First Iron Age will develop from the 7th century B.C. until the 5th century B.C. when the settlement of population in fortified places, the hillforts, becomes widespread; these will have their moment of maximum expansion in the following centuries until the Roman conquest. They were established in outstanding places –hills, capes or peninsulas– where huge moats and walls were added to their natural defensive conditions. The similar size of the hillforts and the absence of signs of personal ostentation show a society without great inequality characterized by its fragmentation into small communities.

From 500 B.C. the climate adjusts to the current pattern, although with a significant increase of rainfall which causes the expansion of birch and pine. The economic base is that of self-sufficient farming, with predominance of agricultural and cattle activity. Metallurgy completes the basic economic spectrum. (6)

Roman Times

With the submission of Cantabrians and Asturians in 19 B.C. Rome completed the conquest of the Iberian Peninsula (7). The Empire spread then from the Strait of Gibraltar up to the Rhine. In the two following centuries its dominion reached from Egypt, Arabia and Capadocia up to Great Britain shaping a territory brought together by a new political order sustained on an efficient administration, the development of the urban centres, and the discipline of a well trained professional army with highly sophisticated combat techniques.

The incorporation of the *trasmontanos* territories to the Empire meant the end of the political fragmentation which characterized the society of the Iron Age. The hillforts survive as essential nucleus of the settlement though integrated into wider territorial units –the *civitates*– which link their population to certain obligations towards the State in order to obtain the most suitable exploitation of the local resources. It is at this moment that the fracture of the social traditional

structure begins; Rome favours the emergency of aristocratic groups, families who assumed the representation of the imperial power before their communities. This integration into the economic imperial structure imposed the diversification of the productive activities amongst which gold mining acquired particular relevancy.

The first centuries of the Roman dominion developed during a warm episode, which had begun towards 100 B.C., in which warm summers and soft winters favoured the recovery of the forest and the increase of pine tree and oak.

Middle Ages

In the centuries after the fall of the Roman Empire, the political and commercial centre moves from the Mediterranean to northern Europe. The economic life undergoes a deep change: cities lose their dominance and rural life and land possession become the main source of power and prestige.

By the end of the 4th century the Roman Empire had converted to Christianism, the Germans did the same some time later. This favoured the Catholic Church and their earthly aspirations of riches and political influence. (8)

In the Iberian Peninsula, after the Battle of Covadonga, the triumph of the Christian Resistence against the Muslim dominion drove the expansion of the Asturian Kingdom southwards and established its border by the Douro banks at the beginning of the 10th century.

The population is distributed in hamlets and villages scattered around ecclesiastical centres which, with the consent of the royal authority, become the centres of the social organisation of the Asturian territory. The most characteristic economic features of the Early Middle Ages were rural life and agriculture of subsistence oriented to self-consumption. These difficult conditions of subsistence were worsened by the cold episode between 400 A.D. and 1000 A.D. which caused long periods of drought and deforestation with a slight increase of deciduous quercus.

Twenty centuries of overlapping history: the creation of historical discourse

On an archaeological site each object carries very diverse information which has to be interpreted in relation to its nature and the context where it has been found. The study and documentation of both aspects enable a real approach to the people who made them as well as the reconstruction of the processes of change and breaking off which determined the history of the place and its inhabitants.

The deposits settled at Chao Samartín set up a long archaeological sequence in which, for the first time in Asturias, key events can be recognized to understand the origin and later consolidation of the fortified landscape which characterizes the regional proto-history. In a word, to outline the domestic and ecological scenario which the peoples of the primitive Asturias knew and in which they would burst into History.

Bronze Age (8th – 7th century B.C.)

About 800 B.C. a settlement demarcated by monumental enclosure works was established at Chao Samartín. They surrounded the esplanade at the top of the site, a narrow band of approximately 80 m of length and 30 m of width. In the centre there was a big hut, built opposite to the rock which dominates the place. A pyre was burned at the foot of this rock.

The group was demarcated by a strong palisade towards the west completed in the southern and eastern part with a wall preceded by a pit, at least in this latter flank. The palisade was placed over the cliff which overlooks the valley, and stretched on a double line of supports up to the north end of the enclosure with the only interruption of a corridor between the big hut and the rock.

The structure of the building was supported on thick wooden posts hold up directly on the rock and stuck into masonry walls. Two central supports carried the roof which covered a surface of 12,50 m x 4,40 m. In the funerary apparel (2-19), mainly metalwork based on copper, there are handles of a *sítula* (13), remains of a cauldron and of a big disc made of metal sheets (19). The group cannot be given at the moment any interpretation of industrial or domestic character, suggesting rather, a ceremonial purpose, an environment of ritual character which the segregation and isolation of the construction seem to affirm. This interpretation should be extended to the group of the acropolis, as for instance, the funeral deposit made in front of the door of the enclosure reveals: a space of approximately 3,5 m open to the south at the place where a path which goes to the big hut begins.

In that place, at the foot of the fortifications and close to the entrance, a human skull was found inside a small urn of stone; this find can be considered a singular fact in the context of the hillfort culture in the northwest, both for the lack of documents related to the funeral rites in these communities and for the originality of the group. The niche where it had to fit, was excavated in a soil of heavy ground and then it had been covered with a slab, leaving a hollow of approximately 250 x 200 x 330 mm. A flagstone cover closed the stone burial with a cranial vault as its only content. The study of the preserved bones indicates that it was a woman of about 15 years of age and that, it was almost certain that the original deposit was only the cranium.

Under these circumstances it is assumed that this singular liturgy had a complex intention which, beyond its burial aspect, had to answer the wish to custody a relic of extraordinary importance for the community: because of the status of the individual, or because of the meaning of the ceremony to which, undoubtedly it was associated, or maybe related to the establishment of the enclosure.

Though segregated physically and monumentally, the acropolis was not an isolated enclosure, but a part of a settlement whose only testimonies are today some holes and pits, remains of contemporary structures of the ceremonial complex.

Taking into account the dates obtained in the different sectors excavated in the acropolis it is possible to conclude that the foundation of the fortified enclosure took place between 801 and 778 B.C. and it was used until its destruction between 761 and 679 B.C.

Iron Age (6th to 1st century B.C.)

From the 6th to the 1st century B.C. Chao Samartín increased remarkably its natural defensive conditions. The settlement spread in the shelter of fortifications which had been reconfigured several times; they protected the settlement and offered shelter to people and their belongings, expressing with their magnificent dimensions the power of the community in opposition to neighbours and potential aggressors. A wide and deep moat protected the most vulnerable side of the village. Its efficiency was improved with the construction of a wall which was, on the internal slope, more than 13 m high from the base of the moat.

The sauna and the house for the assembly could be found behind the gate of the village, integrated within the urban structure and enjoying a dominant position over the access. The first one is a small building of rectangular ground plan and apse-headed. It shows a frequent model in pre-Roman hillforts of the Navia basin whose origin goes back to the beginning of the 4th century B.C. It was used for steam baths and was probably

a scenario for rites linked with aquatic deities which favoured fertility, health and vigour: as for example Nabia, goddess documented in about 20 inscriptions distributed all over the west of the Peninsula, from Extremadura up to Galicia.

The second was a construction of elliptical ground plan and with a bigger surface than the rest; its excavation reveals that its use has not been of a domestic or residential kind. This big hut is a type of building found at all the excavated hillforts of the Navia valley which have a certain extension. These have wide spaces interpreted, because of their monumental conception, as a community place for celebration and meeting.

The huts form a structure adjusted to the fortifications and are characterized by their simple ground plan -circular or quadrangular with bevelled edges- a surface of less than 20 m^2 and vegetable cover. They have only one room, without walls to divide it: the beds were distributed around a central fireplace on the ground. Conceived as place of shelter and rest, daily life developed mainly outside.

During the Iron Age, Chao Samartín houses a rural community which had to get access to all the resources they could in order to guarantee the survival of the group. This demanded to keep control over the immediate environment: water, forests, pastures or cultivation lands, violently when it was necessary. In this context, social unity is a fundamental factor for the subsistence of its inhabitants.

The economy of the hillforts was orientated to self-sufficiency. Amongst the handmade activities, metallurgy is generously testified in the settlement by, at least, three recognized zones of work. Metallurgical products reveal the transformation of copper, silver and gold, as well as the appearance of the first iron objects (32). Undoubtedly, the skill of the hillfort craftsmen with metal craftworks was favoured by the proximity and abundance of mineral deposits, some of which had been worked for centuries before them. Proof of these works are several melting furnaces installed in sheltered areas protected by the wall and huts as well as the moulds and crucibles used during the melting process (33-34,36). The range of metal items includes products for exchange and transformation, such as blooms of melted silver or copper, tools, and jewels with a beautiful finish.

As for ceramic elements (22-28,30-31) there is a contrast between the use of refined paste of good quality and others which are rougher, more porous and fragile. They offer a great formal diversity with predominance of the globular and bell-shaped forms, generally of flat bottom, though there are documents that state the existence of pieces with high stem (27). The smooth forms show surfaces worked with a palette knife or burnished; this finish is also found in the decorated types where stamped motives predominate with SSS sequences, circles, geometric patterns, springs and oblique segments which alternate with waves, grooves, simple burnishes or arranged in oblique net patterns and ropelike designs. There are also jars frequently decorated with small hills which reproduce the nails and clinches of metal receptacles (30).

Roman times (1st to 2nd century A.D.)

Roman presence is noticed from the first decades of the 1st century A.D. linked to the arrival of military forces at the settlement. The control and beginning of exploitation of the new conquered territories demanded the participation of the Roman army, which besides being skilful in battles, knew how to direct the massive benefit of the gold mines, construct the road links and guarantee the safety of the extracted metal.

After the military victory, the organization of the conquered territories demanded the consolidation of regional power centres - Chao Samartín was one of them -which had peripheral control and militarized stations, as for example Monte Castrelo de Pelóu. With the influence of the army (58, 60-69), the centenary hillfort will experience its conversion into a relevant administrative centre, in which troops will act as effective agents for the introduction of the new culture.

Substantial changes take place then in the appearance of the settlement. Though certain traditional features survive, the military and domestic architecture change and internal movement is reorganized to be adapted to the new tastes and functions. These changes do also reach domestic life with the renovation of the household goods and trends in the personal ornament.

The settlement of military men required to renew the defensive system. They adapted the old indigenous fortifications to advanced military functions paying particular attention to the original gate of the hillfort which was provided with guard forces and reinforcements along the wall. The eastern flank, most vulnerable for its accessible topography, was reinforced by a partial new excavation of the old moat and the opening of a new trench to compose a double moat (*fossa duplex*). The north flank is also updated with a trench before the renovated old wall and preceded by a vast glacis.

The reorganization of the urban space configures a building structure, with canalization of superficial waters and streets of impeccable pavements, conceived to provide perfect conditions of hygiene and comfort to the inhabitants. The pre-Roman hut evolves towards buildings of quadrangular floor plan divided into several rooms and with a second floor. In some cases the previous architectural structures are changed, and in others new constructions are built. The military trace can be seen in some buildings which reproduce constructive patterns inspired in military architecture as for instance the pavilions for the troop (*contubernia*).

The place which was occupied before by the big communal hut maintained its condition of meeting place and was transformed into a great rectangular paved building which was used as a square. It had two long benches on a pavement of well squared slabs of slate. This space, a rustic version of the urban *forum*, offered a suitable area for the market, the community celebration and other public ceremonies, a scenario which agreed with the administrative function of the settlement which can also be seen in other contemporary hillforts, as for example Coaña.

The installation of a residence of lordly appearance (*domus*) during the 1st century A.D. meant the break with the secular hillfort organization of the hamlet and the irruption of technologies and construction materials not known until then. This building ignores the local architectural tradition and is conceived as a residence of a person with a high military position. Its monumental shape modified radically the appearance of the village giving a boost to the renovation of domestic architecture of the indigenous elites who shared the old site of the hillfort. A new way of life begins and the house adds to its residential nature that of magnificent representation of power. The introduction of the *domus* is first of all the monumentalization of the Roman control, the superposition of the state administration which is imposed on the head or the most representative unit of the indigenous community: the hillfort.

The building had two heights, rooms of quadrangular floor plan structured around corridors and a columnated *atrium* of Tuscan order. Irregular masonry amalgamated with mortar, concrete pavements and plastered walls were used for its construction, with common use of ceramic pieces, columns and granite stonework. *Latericium,* which was, together with concrete, the preponderant material in Roman architecture, is widely represented in its standardized models: bricks, tiles and pipes (103-105) generously used in the heating of the main rooms.

With the arrival of Rome new uses will be generalized, such as board games (124-127), writing (121-123) or money, with

predominance of the mints of the Ebro valley and countermarked coins that reflect the unequivocal military environment which propitiated their circulation (44,59,120).

At the beginning of the 2nd century A.D. Chao Samartín was a prosperous village. The military character of the first hillfort-Roman stage led, from Flavian times, to a time of peace and stability when moats are neglected and walls, lost their military function, are used to supply raw materials for repairs in the settlement. A new urban structure was created, constituted by more complex domestic units made up incorporating independent and common buildings to the private spaces. Their appearance reveals, beyond a mere urban readjustment, a deep transformation of the order of the community, an environment in which signs proliferate which confirm the consolidation of socially privileged groups. Local elites promoted by Rome are strengthened to practise the intermediation between the state and the indigenous communities, whose relations of dependence and subordination had to adapt suddenly to the requirements of a government whose last aim was the ideal exploitation of the territory.

The basic administrative unit of this organization was the *civitas*, juridical figure which made use of places with secular tradition of centrality, as in the case of the hillforts at Chao Samartín, San Chuis or La Campa Torres, in order to offer the adequate scenario to practise power in its judicial, fiscal and military aspect. Such a choice fell on centres where other functions, practised probably from ancient times, came together; these centres can be identified with those mentioned in the sources of that time, such as La Campa Torres with *Noega* or Chao Samartín with *Ocela* (128).

In contrast with the supposed Roman foundation of Asturian hillforts, the confirmation of their high antiquity, rather than devaluate the significance of the Roman influence, emphasizes the vigour and efficiency of its drive amongst the indigenous communities. It is true that Romanization acquires singular features in these territories which separate it from what happened in other Iberian areas but not more, or to the same extent, than the characteristics of these pre-Roman societies diverged.

Even from an archaeological perspective, the defence of a transformation as deep or deeper of pre-Roman northern groups in opposition to others of more conventional Romanization could be justified. The described social changes, the adoption of the epigraphic use, monetarization of the exchanges, the general substitution of the ceramic household goods or the religious syncretism, constitute milestones of singular importance which state the progressive adaptation to Roman values and certify the definitive and irreversible disintegration of the old hillfort life.

During the last quarter of the 2nd century A.D. an earthquake devastated the village. It was not the first time the place suffered a disaster of this kind –stratigraphies associated to the defences of the Iron Age can prove it– nevertheless, on this occasion ruin came at a time of unstoppable decline in the occupation of the hillforts, precipitating this way the definitive fall of Chao Samartín as a stable settlement.

Household goods

The study of the objects recovered in the domestic environments of the hillfort is a key aspect to approach the community which inhabited it during the first centuries A.D. In other regions of the Iberian Peninsula the study of the ancient societies, contemporary with those of our hillfort people, has some very useful support, here non-existent, in order to study the economic, technical and ideological environment where they lived. In this context, the most insignificant evidences of everyday activity are, because of their stratigraphic position and special relation with other objects, indispensable to finish such an incomplete puzzle.

Fortunately for researchers, the sudden and violent destruction of the village fixed in an ill-fated moment the end of the occupation: the accumulated objects are not the remainders of a gradual and selective desertion, but the real expression of all that because of loss or fragmentation was not recovered after the catastrophe.

Ceramics

Ceramics are with a great difference the most common material in the register. The use of earthenware containers is documented in Asturias from Neolithic times, more than 3,000 years before the foundation of the first fortified settlements. Nevertheless, its generalised use would have to wait till the consolidation of stable habitats where the use of fragile and heavy containers which were gradually adapted to different forms and functions became feasible. Evidently, ceramics were not the only material used in the fabrication of containers but the perishable condition of those which were made out of wood or leather have made their preservation impossible. In this sense, it is surprising to acknowledge the survival of Roman models extinguished many centuries before amongst the more common forms of traditional pottery from western Asturias (29, 139).
The study of ceramics is an essential tool in archaeological research for many reasons. In the first place, it is a good chronological indicator because of its different forms across time. This diversity allows detecting with certain accuracy the extent of the commercial circuits in which the community is inscribed or, on the contrary, revealing its inclination to isolation and autarchy.

The quality and abundance of samples can indicate the existence of social differences between neighbours which live in spaces of similar aspect and dimensions, and show the function of the room where they come from.

Sometimes, it is also used as a support for writing, revealing the name of the user or writing down political agreements amongst peoples, as it happens in the cup of Chao Samartín (128) where it can be seen that it is a donation of the *(B) UROFLAVIENSES* to the inhabitants of *OCELA*, name of the settlement in Roman times.

Terra sigillata

More than one century ago J. M. Flórez, discovered some flashy ceramic pieces covered with shiny red red-gloss and delicately decorated whilst excavating the El Castelón de Coaña ruins. Amongst others, there was an almost complete bowl decorated with a motive called *navtilvs*. This bowl became the most flashy piece of those which were known in Asturias and, therefore, it was one of the scarce containers of this group shown at the Museo Arqueológico de Asturias. In spite of its early discovery these ceramics were not paid any attention in our region.

Today the scene has changed and the *terra sigillata* is one of the most interesting Early Roman Empire materials for archaeological research. It is a kind of ceramics of exclusive use at the table, considered by many as the luxury ware of that time. Its denomination, which means "sealed clay", derives from the presence of stamps of different shapes on some of the pieces; these forms can be, in *planta pedis* (in the shape of a foot), in *tabula ansata*, rectangular mark with ends rounded or divided into two parts. The name of the potter who made the piece appears in most of the occasions inscribed within these stamps, though it is not clear today why only some of the pieces are marked and not all of them. It is possible that, in the way which some authors state, what the marks pretend to show are batches of products, because the kilns where they were fired were used by several ceramists at the same time and in this way each of them was able to recognize his production after firing. Marks were usually on the base although sometimes they can be found amongst the motives which decorate the ceramic piece.

The *terra sigillata* is also characterized by the varnish which covers the pieces. It is reddish or

orange and presents different tones depending on the time and the production place. Amongst the *sigillata* two subgroups have been defined: smooth pieces, made with winding machine, and the decorated ones which are made with moulds. Another important characteristic of this ceramics is the standardization of production. The different kinds of plates, bowls, jars and ceramic glasses are repeated through time, undergoing gradual changes in their morphology which have helped in the elaboration of very accurate chronologies.

The first pieces of this ceramics were made in the second half of the 1st century B.C. at the Italian Peninsula. Later on it began to be imitated in the potteries of Galia, such as Bram, Montans or La Graufesenque, being this last one perhaps the most important of all the production centres; researchers consider that several millions of containers could be fired in its kilns yearly. The potteries of Montans (Tarn) and La Graufesenque (Millau) are very interesting for research in Asturias since they will supply the hillfort settlements in a first moment. Some time later, in the second half of the 1st century, new production centres will appear, this time in Hispania, where two of them stand out: the pottery complex of *Tritivm Magallvm*, near Tricio (La Rioja), and the potteries of Andújar, Jaén. *Sigillata* was also made in the North of Africa, more precisely in Cartago. African *terra sigillata* competed with the Hispanic one although its distribution is basically Mediterranean; there is no evidence of it in any Asturian hillfort at present time.

Terra sigillata is common in the Romanized hillforts of the Navia basin as for instance, El Castelón de Coaña and Pendia, Co.Boal; La Escrita, Co. Boal; or Chao Samartín, Co. Grandas de Salime. The last one stands out amongst the others because of the great amount of pieces and the quality of the ceramics found. It has provided more than a thousand pieces from which almost two hundred are of southern Galian production (76-80,87,123), made predominantly at the potteries of Montans and secondly at La Graufesenque. The only fragments of *terra sigillata marmorata* known in Asturias have been found at this hillfort, a variety of the southern Galian *sigillata* whose decoration imitates the iridescences of marble (77). The pieces of Hispanic origin made at Tricio (7,81-86,88,99-101,140-146,159,161) can be also counted by hundreds. At present, the number of potter marks is over fifty, in contrast with the scarcity of *sigilli* from the rest of excavations at Asturian hillforts, from which less than half a dozen has been published.

There is a representation of an important amount of southern Galian forms in the *terra sigillata* collection of Chao Samartín; most of them not known in the region. There is also a wide representation of Hispanic shapes, some of them common and others which are not so usual. The represented southern Galian forms are: Ritterling 1, 8, 9, 12y 13; Dragendorff 15/17, 16, 18, 19, 24/25, 27, 29b, 29c, 30, 35, 36, 37a y 40; Hermet 7; Curle 11, y Knorr 78. The Hispanic ones recognized so far are: Dechelette 67, Hispánica 2,14 y 22; Ritterling 8 y 13; y Dragendorff 15/17, 17, 24/25, 27, 29, 29/ 37, 30, 35, 36, 37a, 37b, 39, 44, y 46.

Southern Galian wares followed different routes depending on their origin. Those of Montans were taken from the pottery to *Bvrdigala* harbour, the ancient Bordeaux, from where they were distributed by sea to the different villages of the Cantabrian coast in order to be redistributed towards the interior settlements. The vessels would arrive at the Navia and Eo estuaries where the goods, following the valleys, reached the higher lands and hillforts such as Chao Samartín, where these kind of products are more represented even than in more relevant urban nucleus such as *Lvcvs Avgusti*, present Lugo where there is almost no representation of Montans materials.

The ceramics produced in La Graufesenque reached Chao Samartín from cities such as *Legio* (León) or *Lucvs Avgusti* (Lugo) through the Ebro valley, coming surely from the capital of the province, *Tarraco*, where they had arrived by sea from the Mediterranean harbour *Narbo* (Narbonne). The Hispanic productions from Tricio followed the same itinerary from Riojan lands some decades later.

As a conclusion, it can be said that the generalised presence in the region of *terra sigillata* begins at the end of Tiberius' reign, as some Montans pieces found at Chao Samartín prove. This production centre seems to have supplied Asturian hillforts with ceramics in a greater proportion than La Graufensenque. These began to be commercialized in the region shortly after, during Claudius' reign, diminishing their presence until their disappearance in Vespasianus' time, surely displaced by the competitiveness of Hispanic potters.

Common ceramics

The knowledge about common Roman ceramics at Chao Samartín and the surrounding area is at that moment enough to establish a preliminary typological systematization of the finds and make a draft of the general features of their evolution. The research efforts over the last five years as well as the exceptional circumstances which the register at the site provides have contributed to this purpose.

This way the existence of a diachrony whose two generic phases can be included *grosso modo* within the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D. respectively could be outlined. After the process of conquest and complete occupation of the territory there is a first episode, which coincides in general with the first century and is characterized by the coexistence of two clearly differentiated pottery traditions. The indigenous household goods, which continued the pre-Roman customs, are not exclusive and begin to live with foreign genuinely Roman products. There is evidence of the introduction of certain appliances that are foreign to the traditional repertoire, and are, definitively, one more material expression of the technological, ideological and social changes which underlie. Amongst them there are products as classical as ceramic mortars (97), thin glasses (75, 89, 149 y 150), amphorae (98) or oil lamps (74, 92 and 93).

These productions end up in this marginal region coming from production centres located in very different and distant places. This arrival is explained by the demand generated by new inhabitants and, most of all, because of the frequent presence of military units which needed constant supply and for whose maintenance the intervention of the state in the organization of commerce was essential. At that moment the regional pottery doesn't have enough capacity to satisfy the new demand, so external markets become necessary.

Imported products are reduced to a small group of ceramic categories which have diverse origin. A group from the cismontan Asturian area stands up amongst the groups with a wider representation; this is the case of the thin ceramic glasses made at the Melgar de Tera pottery (Zamora) (75), whose presence, at the end of the 1st century A.D., reaches certain importance. Later on, although present, their significance is smaller compared to other kind of glasses from Lugo. The small, so called facetted jars are also supposed to have an Asturian origin (90).

Portuguese pottery is also confirmed. More precisely, there is a small representation of products made at Méridas' potteries: some thin pieces (89) and maybe some samples of chandelier of the kind derived from Dressel 3, of Andújar type. The validity of those potteries in Mérida, which continues until the 1st century A.D., agrees perfectly with the referred moment of increase in external demand at Chao Samartín.

Following with the pieces of southern Hispanic origin, there are some samples which can be related to the Baetica area, as in the case of some amphora fragments and maybe of some Cordovan chandeliers (92).

The region of the upper Ebro is revealed as a probable origin for some pieces as certain thin

walled glasses (150) and some mortars (97) whose fabrication tries to imitate the Italian prototype.

Outside the Iberian Peninsula we can confirm, at least, products from Galia and the Italic Peninsula. Amongst the first, besides the abundant pieces in *terra sigillata* from the Montans and La Graufesenque potteries, two amphorae for the transport of wine which can be assigned to the Gauloise 2 and (98) Gauloise 4. The pieces with probable or certain Italic filiation are more abundant. This is the case of some of the chandeliers that compose the small recovered collection, where there are pieces of scrolls as a Dressel I B with Pegasus decoration (93), 2 fragments of the disc forms Dressel 19 and 20, or a sample of open groove of the Loeschke X type (74). To these chandeliers we can add certain glazed fragments of possible *skyphoi* or some remains of several Central-italic mortars of the form Dramont D2, some of them with the potter's mark.

As far as regional contemporary ware is concerned, it is characterized by the strong influence of the traditional component, the low grade of standardization and the apparent undefined function of many pieces. Nevertheless, at the end of the century, within the Flavian dynasty, some of the typologies which will be successful in later times will be defined. This is the case, if we want to mention paradigmatic examples, of the two-handled platters (153) or the one-handled large cups (138 and 152), the glazed pots with stamped decoration (115), the pots with concave edges (165) or the glazed jar with ribs (171). These archetypical morphologies will live together with other forms exclusive to this time such as some characteristic pots decorated with printed strips (112) or others with elegant burnished finish with vertical or slightly concave edges. This way, we see the first samples of a synthesis pottery, where particular characteristic features of the autochthonous tradition get unified with other innovative characteristics brought by the conquerors.

This synthesis will become established definitively during the late 2nd century A.D. At that time, external manufactured objects lose their importance and the radical differences between both production groups fade away. The fusion of both traditions creates a series of regional ceramics of outstanding personality whose distribution frame seems to be centred at Lugo's *conventus*. Certain glazed pieces (155) illustrate this fusion in a particular expressive way. They combine the innovative characteristics such as the use of red glaze or stamped decorations of small arches and palm leaves which remind of those of contemporary *sigillatas*, with others such as burnished finish, reductive firing, spherical forms or the very decorative technique.

The installation of a powerful pottery industry in the capital, *Lucus Augusti*, Lugo, in the last quarter of the 1st century A.D. favoured the development of this process. At this moment a phenomenon begins, common with other surrounding regions but for some chronological nuances, where the production of ceramics has a tendency to become regional. Pottery spreads out, beginning the creation of production groups exclusive to the different areas; they are normally placed at the capitals of the *conventus* or their surroundings. The logical consequence of this dynamics is a severe reduction of imports, which are reduced to *terra sigillata* from Riojan potteries, isolated rare pieces or singular materials. The objective of these regional industries is to satisfy local demand, adapting to tastes and habits and the regional idiosyncrasy.

The consequence of these transformations will be the configuration, during the late 2nd century A.D., of defined regional ceramics, in opposition to what had happened during the 1st century A.D., because of the formal standardization and the higher level of functional specialization of the artefacts. There are concrete solutions which go from the recreation of Roman types with technical features of the regional industry, to the renovation of models of traditional kind, with many intermediate solutions. Amongst the first ones genuinely classical types stand out such as the jars with three-lobe mouth (154), angled section bowls and platters (151), or the ovoid ceramic glasses (148), imitation of the thin walls in the ware of that time. With regard to morphologies of a more indigenous character or mixed, we have to mention, for instance, the final success of types such as two-handled platters (153), one-handled mugs (138 and 152) or big jars with ribs.

Glass

Glass ware rushes into Asturian hillforts through Romanization, with materials produced in foreign peninsular factories, as well as minority products of Gallic and Italic origin. Some isolated finds at the sites of Arancedo, Co. El Franco, Castelón de Coaña and San Chuis, Co. Allande, made think that this kind of material did not exist in everyday life in the hillforts. But the discovery of the exceptional collection of glass pieces at Chao Samartín or the interesting set found at Castiello de Llagú, Co. Oviedo, and other examples from Campa de Torres, Co. Gijón, and Os Castros, Co. Taramundi, proved the assimilation of glass together with other materials of Roman type.

When studying Roman glass ware it has to be taken into account how difficult the precise identification of forms is, having only fragments, since there are no complete pieces or sections; but in spite of it, a variety of forms and techniques can be stated. This way, it is possible to recognize bowls made with the moulding technique, and a variety of glasses, jars, pots, ointment jars, and other forms, manufactured with the free cane blowing technique or blowing in a mould.

The bowls with rib pattern (94) elaborated in monochrome glass or mosaic glass (*Isings* form *3*) are a common find, though minoritary in this and other Asturian hillforts. Elaborated by means of the moulding technique, they were pieces of good quality and high price, fundamentally those made in mosaic glass, and therefore reserved to a small luxury market.

The cane blowing technique, used from the middle of the 1st century A.D. on, allowed an easier and faster production of containers than with other already known techniques and the creation of a great variety of forms. Glass ware, which was restricted until then for the use of the elite of society, turned into material of common and daily use; it is necessary to distinguish, however, between a common and numerous production and a more select one of unique pieces. The irruption of glass products into the material culture of the hillfort, in the 1st century A.D., takes place in this context of generalization of glass ware. This kind of ordinary ware is widely represented amongst the hundreds of fragments of glass containers of Chao Samartín, with a major proportion of blown glass of bluish green colour. This is the natural colour of the glass and it is produced by the presence of iron oxides in the sand with which it is made, and is typical of ordinary productions. In this group there are very frequent samples of bottles or jars of prismatic body (*Isings 50* and *Isings 62* forms), obtained by the mould blowing technique which stamps embossed motives on the base (95). Also elaborated in bluish green glass blown to the air, there are an ointment jar and an aryballos (*Isings* form *61*), jars related to personal hygiene (137), as well as a glass (*Isings* form *12*) in bluer glass. On the other hand, it is frequent to find thin and colourless glass, belonging to glasses, jars and other containers made with the free-blowing technique and frequently decorated with thin lines engraved in cold.

As examples of productions of quality blown glass, we can indicate a small fragment of double glass elaborated with two superposed layers of glass in translucent cobalt blue and opaque white, as well as the fragment of an exceptional troncoconical glass in colourless glass decorated with deep embossed facetted motifs (Isings form 21).

It is not infrequent to document small pieces of personal adornment or beads of a glass necklace (53). Together with coloured glass pieces –monochrome beads and polychrome

eye beads–, the beads of colourless glass decorated with a gold sheet (*gold band*) stand out for their singularity. We can point out the find of pieces for board games (*calculi or latrunculi*) elaborated with glass of several colours (124).

Metals

Metal pieces are present in the household goods of hillforts from the most ancient occupation horizons. It is true that over their long occupation we can see significant changes in the variety of objects, in their formal aspect or in their components, which inform us about the technological evolution of the time, the skill with which the local craftsmen could adapt to the trends of each moment, and of the exchange networks which allowed the access to exotic products.

With the establishment of Roman life the set of instruments and household goods made of bronze diversifies enormously and incorporates exotic objects into traditional domestic life. We have to add new types to the pre-Roman fíbulae, fundamentally of "Omega type" (73,133), hooped earrings are replaced by earrings with hook suspension (135) and pins for the hair (131) and rings (72,132) become frequent. Bronze is also the material preferred for the manufacture of surgical instruments and dressing-table sets (177), ornamental elements (136) and precision tools such as compasses (108) and weights (45).

During the Roman period iron instruments get widely spread, especially amongst household goods and working tools (50,181,182). In many cases, elements like nails, bolts, hooks, hinges (109), keys or locks (129) are the only testimony of carpentry work and ornamentation of the hillfort buildings.

Hillfort craftsmen did silver and gold work inheriting the skills and technologies of their predecessors, who mastered the hammering typical of Eneolithic times and dominated from Final Bronze the manufacture of heavy pieces obtained by means of the lost wax procedure. During the 2nd Iron Age this ancient tradition of the Atlantic area received technological contribution from the Mediterranean, based basically on the use of welding which made it possible to create complex pieces from diverse light elements, on which multicoloured ornamental designs were applied. Filigree and granulate were joined this way in the local technological tradition of lost wax and stamping, to create a lucky synthesis, a typical style for the silver and gold work in the northwestern hillforts.

In spite of the generous presence of metal elements made out of copper at the site which were used with ornamental character (fíbulae, pins, rings) or instruments (needles, probes, spatulas, scissors or weights), there is no evidence to illustrate whether they were locally made. This is not the case of gold and silver whose metallurgical manipulation (46-48) is widely documented during the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D.

Chao Samartín has provided abundant testimonies (51,54,55) of an activity which, initiated during the Iron Age, was extended under Roman control as a consequence of the role of capital which the settlement played over the surrounding territory, the *civitas Ocela*, rich in gold mines which were intensely exploited during the first two centuries of A.D. Because of its condition of *caput civitatis*, Chao Samartín would have turned into a final destination of the metal for its last touch before it was sent to the administrative capital of the *conventus*.

Besides the industrial elements mentioned, at Chao Samartín there are others, not for strict metallurgical use, which were surely essential in the exchange and for assaying precious metals, as the touchstone (134) or a set of small weights of bronze (45).

Murals

Mural painting at Chao Samartín is a consequence of the Roman introduction in the settlement, hillfort context which is its more defining characteristic and the one which brings more singularity.

We can distinguish three stages in the pictorial production at the hillfort; the first and last seem to correspond with episodes of military reinforcement of the fortification in the settlement. The earliest and fundamental, takes place in Emperor Claudius' time with the construction and original decoration of the *domus*. Plaster and painting works had to be entrusted to foreign ambulant workers, probably of Italic origin, whose passage through the Peninsula can be traced in the Ebro valley. Abundant parallels can be documented there, especially in decorative motives.

Though mural painting did not enjoy the distinction of a work of art, there were values such as singularity and genuineness which were very appreciated, therefore the painter made an effort to guarantee exclusivity to his customers as far as possible. In order to do so, the craftsmen workshops used to travel with albums, which worked as catalogues, where both decorative motives and composition of structures were gathered. The final work combined different elements which were chosen, most of the times, by the owner under the advice of the craftsman.

All the paintings in the *domus* seem to be elaborated in just one phase, but it is evident that there were damages which had to be patched up. This work could have been made even by another workshop, or by different workers of the same one, as it can be deduced from of the low technical quality in the execution of the affected decorative motives. The earliest decoration of some of the constructions which were renovated in the hillfort at that time is carried out at the same time. Other buildings will be decorated in a third stage, in Flavian time, but on this occasion it will not be the same workshop the one which carries out the works, though it is possible that it could have been directed by someone who had learned there. The new decorations are characterized by a simple composition which does not need of great manual skill and shows a lower quality both in the execution and the materials. For the structure of the composition they have a wide range present in the *domus*, and as for materials, all pigments used derive from iron oxides, present in the surroundings.

From the point of view of the techniques, the general lines described by the authors of ancient times are followed, but with different versions which are due to factors such as economic means or climatological conditions.

Plaster consists of a mortar of lime and sand which is applied in several layers, generally between three and four, which have different thickness and a chosen granulometry; there is no degradation in the grain size but an anarchic disposition in all its thickness. The first of the layers sticks fast to the irregular surface of the wall without any problem, making the use of any fastening system unnecessary. Between the *trullisatio* and the *directions* five different fixing systems were used, nails, *latericium*, incisions, basket work and prints, which provide the necessary superficial irregularity to guarantee the union of the successive layers.

The pictorial technique used is *fresco* with retouches in *secco*. The first one is used for painting backgrounds and big fields, whereas the details and figurative motives are executed in *secco*. Both the general fitting of the composition and the location and orientation of details, are done before colour application. This outline carved with drypoint has three versions: by hand, with compasses and with ruler. Another method used is the painted outlines, which also delimited the general lines of the composition and the sketch of figures, but which was made on the already coloured backgrounds.

The pigment is applied with a brush on the still humid plaster so that during the drying process, the water, whilst evaporating, pushes the calcium hydroxide to the surface, making it contact the carbon dioxide of the air and creating calcium carbonate, which crystallizes catching the pigment in its interior. The decorations are completed with a paintbrush dissolving the pigments in lime water.

The colour spectrum is very rich and is especially relevant in the case of the *domus*, where very prized pigments such as cinnabar red, Egyptian blue, or black, are used without consideration. The use of Mezzotints is also very frequent in this house, creating a wider range of colour than that found in the rest of the village, where the colours were those of lime, coal, and derivatives of iron, creating white, black, yellow, burgundy and green.

On the walls of the *domus* there are a great variety of colours: white, black, yellow, ochre, three types of red, pink, orange, purple, blue, at least two types of green and brown. White colour was obtained from calcite formed in the carbonation process of calcium hydroxide. Two types of black have been identified, coal (ilmenite) and iron oxides. The yellow colours are ochre yellow based on iron oxides with different degree of hydration and thickness. There are at least three types of red: vermilion, carmine and burgundy. In the first two cases, they are hematites and the degree of grinding determines the tonality. Vermilion red is obtained from cinnabar. Pink was obtained adding calcite to the hematites. Orange is the colour of minium (red lead). Purple was obtained mixing coal black with some red earth. Blue is Egyptian blue (calcium silicate). Green comes from some earth composed of iron silicates. Brown is a mixture of coal black with red iron oxide.

When we talk about composition structures there is a great disparity between the material gathered in the *domus* and that of the settlement. In general, we can emphasize that Roman painting tripartite structure is adopted, with imitations of granite in the low part and alternation of broad and narrow panels in the intermediate zone. The same simple scheme which dominates the range of the hillfort with the only ornament of strips and fillet decoration.

In the domus, we find a varied sample of Roman painting (107) of Pompeian style III and IV, always in relation to Strocka's "nebenzimmer". Here, this tripartite structure is enriched with a great variety of friezes and seams, triple fillets or strips framing broad panels which contain figured decoration pictures in their interior or outside. The areas between panels have chandelier or vegetal decoration and the upper part ends with decorative friezes or plaster mouldings (106).

Middle Ages (8th – 10th century A.D.)

Alter a long hiatus with no occupation or use of the place, from the 8th century on, coinciding with the beginning of the Asturian Monarchy, a systematic pillaging of the settlement ruins can be observed as well as the following development of a funerary space surrounding the *domus* ruins, the most outstanding structure from Roman times. Although burials are registered till the end of the Middle Ages, the necropolis reaches its maximum area in the 9th and 10th centuries (188-189).

This was a time of territorial reorganization, distinguished by a dispersed rural habitat, developed under the protection of new powers over a landscape where the ancient ruins could still be seen. A period of population movements, promoted by monarchs, monasteries, and some families.

The new centres of power can be seen around churches. They are located close to the ruins, sometimes over the very settlement ruins, in places which had traditionally played a centralising role for the community. For this reason, the choice of Chao Samartín as a suitable place is not remarkable. The intense building activity suggested by the ruins pillaging from the 8th century on, and its consolidation as funerary space in the following centuries seem to prove this.

Future research works will have to confirm if such facts may be linked to the building of a church over the Roman ruins, and whether this happening can be interpreted as the revitalization of the old habitat regaining its county capital condition. This could be recognized by F. J. Martínez Marina in his "Diccionario..." in the late 18th century.

In any case, the recovery of the ancient site as a sacred ground reveals the survival of a mythological interpretation of the place which is still alive fifteen hundred years after its establishment as a ceremonial enclosure by the end of the Bronze Age. That's the reason for the survival of hillforts through toponymy and tradition or the long-lasting liturgical covering of those settlements undertaken by the Catholic Church. This happened all over the northwest: for that very reason it was a hillfort where Teodomiro, Bishop of Iria Flavia, located the find of the tomb of Apostle St. James in the year 829.

Chao Samartín shows arguments which diminish, at least as an exclusive factor, the importance of the defensive features in the choice of the hillforts placement. Undoubtedly, its outstanding position and magnificent walls and ditches shape a stage which have traditionally disguised other circumstances, sometimes of an immaterial nature and therefore, controversial interpretation. Anyway, what is noticed in this place is how different ideological determinants choose the same stage through history: *témenos* in the Bronze Age, a fortified settlement in the Iron Age, and a necropolis (maybe with a temple) in the Early Middle Ages. This sacred condition is also clear even in the transit to Modern Age when the last child corpses are carelessly buried, and some witch-like desecrations take place, as for instance, some goat kids carefully buried in *cista*.

This is not an exceptional case. There are a large number of hillforts in Asturias which were paradoxically revitalized by the Catholic Church from the Early Middle Ages, by building churches, setting cemeteries and giving Christian saints' names to them. Many of these were registered by researcher José Manuel González who recorded the first inventory of Asturian hillforts.