

Chao Samartín

(Castro, Grandas de Salime)

The ruins of Chao Samartín are located in Castro, a village about 6 km from Grandas de Salime, capital of the council.

The existence of old fortifications in that place was written down by Martínez Marina and later by Méndez Villedor for the work Asturias by Fermín y Canella. In 1967 José Manuel González incorporates it to the catalogue of Asturian hillforts. The archaeological excavations began in 1990 as a consequence of the revision of the materials from the hillfort kept by José María Naveiras at the Museo Etnográfico de Grandas de Salime. From 1995 the research campaigns follow on regularly.

Chao Samartín's origin as a human settlement goes back to the Bronze Age when, around 800 B.C., a first fortified township of ritual character was established on its top plain and destroyed in the middle of the 7th century B.C.

During the Iron Age the defences were renewed several times in order to give protection to a village in which, from the 6th century B.C. on, the most characteristic features of the hillfort habitat are present: ditches, module walls, huts of simple ground plan for domestic use or of a bigger size for community services. At that time the first sauna was also built and there is evidence of metallurgical mills related to the transformation of gold, silver and bronze.

In Roman times (1st to 2nd century A.D.) it gets the status of administrative centre, probably the capital of the *civitas Ocela*, and a luxurious *domus* is built and used as a residence for local aristocratic groups. At the end of the 2nd century A.D. it is definitively abandoned due to an earthquake.

In times of the Asturian Monarchy, a necropolis was placed on the ruins of the Roman village and prolonged the funerary use of the Chao Samartín until the end of the Middle Ages.