Museo Castro de Chao Samartín
Grandas de Salime, Asturias

Catalogue

English version of the texts
by Antonio García Álvarez and Eva González Busch

Institutional presentations

Mr Vicente Álvarez Areces
President of the Principality of Asturias

It is with a deep democratic conception of culture that the Government of the Principality of Asturias promotes archaeological works as a necessary meeting point for research, processing, preservation and diffusion of our archaeological and cultural heritage which is not always properly valued.

The works promoted for the excavation of archaeological sites, research and conservation of cave art, fortified enclosures and other testimonies from the past, have favoured their recognition within the scientific field as well as the recent incorporation of five caves to the World Heritage. At the same time, the conditioning of these spaces in order to regulate and facilitate public visits and promote a better knowledge of our heritage has given rise to important cultural infrastructures spread all around the territory, turned into valuable elements for the economic, cultural and tourist boost of the area.

The excavations which have been taking place from 1990 onwards at Chao Samartín have revealed a hillfort of an exceptional interest. The magnificent and rigorous work developed during these years by the technical team responsible for the research has offered us a valuable archaeological deposit which demonstrates the occupation of this enclosure from Bronze Age until the 2nd century of our era.

Along with their contribution to a better understanding of the hillfort habitat, the numerous pieces recovered and the remains of the oldest Roman *villa* in Asturias make Chao Samartín a key reference of the Romanization in the northwest of the Peninsula.

The Catalogue of Castro de Chao Samartín Museum is also an exceptional work. Its authors do something which is not frequent within the field of museum facilities: they not only make a brilliantly illustrated and detailed description of the permanent exhibition of the Museum, but also incorporate, as a substantial part of its content, the theoretical reflections which encouraged the museological project, the building design and the museographic introduction. This way, they show us the steps and sequences of their reasoned and collective work which finds its adequate container in the Museum building itself: sober, modern, functional, and open to the landscape and history of its surrounding.

A key element to Navia Historical Park, the permanent exhibition of the Museum gathers pieces from Castro Samartín but also from other sites in the region, such as Os Castros, in Taramundi, or Monte Castrelo, in Pelóu. It is an essential collection in order to know the history of the first inhabitants of the region and get closer to the numerous places of cultural and tourist interest in the evocative territory of the Navia and Porcía basins.

In this significant Catalogue we present the extraordinary wealth of Chao Samartín and its Museum, genuine sample of our valuable cultural heritage, ready for everyone's enjoyment.

Ms Mercedes Álvarez González
Minister for Culture and Tourism of the Principality of Asturias

Looking after the protection, study and preservation of our cultural heritage constitutes one of the most complex tasks among those carried out by our Ministry. And it is so, due to different reasons: the great variety of agents involved, the necessary conciliation between private property and general interest and, essentially, the non-renewable nature of the goods to be protected. Within the limits of our competence mistakes are very often irreversible, whereas proper interventions go unnoticed and require continuous adaptation to changing social conditions.

Fulfilling the Law of Cultural Heritage in Asturias, passed in 2001, demands a continuous and onerous effort from the public administrations which, paradoxically, is often unobserved by citizens. ´The achievements and progress undergone by our community in the last few years haven't always been properly transmitted to our society despite the economic effort, the technicians' qualification and the projects quality. That's why the book we are presenting here is so relevant. We are certain that the information contained in the Catalogue of Chao Samartín Museum will surprise those who use it, even those familiar with Asturian history and archaeology. In order to do so, it has been tried to harmonize the rigorous scientific discourse with an attractive format and a careful graphic treatment of the pieces which make up the collection. Among them we can find some absolutely exceptional ones in the archaeological repertory of European proto-history which reveal, in a brilliant and spectacular way, the importance of a site which has become essential to understand the northwestern Iberian Peninsula.

The presentation of this Catalogue is a happy event, as it was the opening of the Museum two years ago. However, it's not a chance happening: it is the product of the continuous work which is developing within the framework of the Navia Basin Archaeological Director Plan. By means of this document the Ministry for Culture and Tourism arranges and coordinates all its archaeological interventions in the Navia-Eo territory. Its results are already obvious on the ground; now we must strive to make them well-known so that their diffusion benefits our whole society. This is the final aim of this book we are contentedly presenting today in the conviction that proper dissemination can only exist through rigorous work and sufficiently contrasted scientific discourse.

Prologue
Miguel Ángel de Blas Cortina
Professor of Prehistory

In a time when so many books spring up with the only aim of paper consumption it's a real pleasure to open one of useful content and, no doubt, of a long life.

If by definition a catalogue is a classified register which describes elements of different kind, although with a common link, then, with the required qualifications, it's one what we are offered here. The context of relation of such diverse testimonies, scattered about centuries, is clearly defined so that the connection among the different objects is not only their common origin in an exceptional hillfort but also their belonging to historical episodes properly unveiled and explained to the reader.

For these reasons this book is more than a meritorious reasoned catalogue. It is a historical exhibition: the underhand delivery of the biography of a human habitat, long-lived and fundamental for the recreation of the past in the rugged southwestern Asturian county. Moreover, all the chained archaeological facts recorded at the Chao exceed widely its boundaries to become vital information to reset the birth and life in northwestern Spain hillforts.

For decades we were used to a distorted connection among the hillforts, the real knowledge we had about them, and their advertised image. That's why Chao Samartín is very much admired.

We speak of a distorted image because we always had more appearance than certainty about hillforts. They were there but we hardly knew anything about their beginning and end. We did have Coaña but we didn't know much about it. It became a good example of a dark time, with no before or after; ambiguous ruins with few personal clues about their dwellers. So, was it pre-Roman, in that case, could we date it? Or should we understand it as a mere natives grouping

ruled by the Roman *autoritas* in Imperial times?

For decades we had no answers to basic questions related to this emblematic site and little useful information about similar habitats was available. For this reason a brief revision of the facts could be needed.

Hillforts archaeology was reduced to excavations by A. del Llano at Picu del Castro, Co. Caravia, in the first third of the 20th century. Since he was a building businessman this was a meritorious research work, properly reported and published in 1919. It offered the first understandable view of an Iron Age fortified habitat.

Twenty years later some research was undertaken on the west coast of Asturias. Between 1939 and 1942 A. García y Bellido and J. Uría Ríu excavated Coaña and Pendia hillforts. Besides homes and ordinary buildings they found some strange buildings which had slate roofs in the shape of a false cupola, finally explained as funerary chambers for the cremation of the deceased.

Without denying their proto-historical origin which some ceramics would confirm, the presence of some *terra sigillata* glasses favoured periods of full Romanization. The same arguments would apply to the Pendia hillfort, strangely located at the bottom of the valley, where certain worrying discoveries, as for instance a one-ringed palstave, were justified as curiosities from very ancient times.

The academic authority of García y Bellido, his articles in specialized and widely spread journals, the quality of his graphics on the Coaña settlement and their presence in more general works helped towards the wide knowledge of the Asturian archaeological enclave. However, all that came to darken the reality of the facts: what had been spread was the result of just two or three campaigns and a short nominal register, just what could be expected at the beginning of a finally interrupted research work.

Two decades later the first surveys were started at San Chuís hillfort, Co. Allande. They were progressively increased to exhume buildings and walls, all of it surrounded by five deep moats. Unfortunately nothing was published about those works and their achievements and nowadays we only know recent fragments of it. In the same decade, the sixties, Mohías hillfort, Co. Coaña, was excavated and divulged. However, no novelty was added to what was already known about the nearby Coaña hillfort. In any case the Roman influence prevailed and Carbon 14, for the first time for a hillfort in Asturias, dated it to the Early Middle Ages. To sum up, neither what had been done at San Chuís nor what had been found out at Mohías allowed to guess the genesis and evolution of such habitats, their articulation with their territory and their socio-political role in it.

The next chapter in this brief list of events happens in 1978, when some sectors of Larón hillfort are excavated. It is located in the southern slope of the Sierra de Rañadoiro strategically over the river Ibias valley. Some years before, the discovery of two palstaves, typical of the Final Bronze created expectations of a long sequence which allowed to relate palstaves and hillforts. Although the excavation was planned with totally novel criteria for that time, it wasn't successful, and due to different reasons it didn't go on. The report concluded and Iron Age generic occupation soon absorbed by the Roman presence linked with the nearby gold mining at La Muracal and the discovery of a tombstone dedicated to Lucio Valerio Postumo.

Except for Caravia hillfort all the research had been limited to the west of the River Nalón, whose 5000 km2 basin drains half of the Asturian territory. In the last two decades of the 20th century works focused on the fortified settlements scattered around this basin.

Therefore, hillforts were not found exclusively in the west of Asturias, or mainly in the counties bordering Galicia. The east and centre of the region, where powerful limestone massifs can often be found, were known as the habitat of hunter-gatherers. A great number of caves with early Palaeolithic deposits and paintings proved that reality. Cave paintings at El Pindal were known since 1908, and some years later, other outstanding caves as Peña de Candamo or El Buxu, Cangas de Onís., were to be added. In more recent decades the extraordinary caves of Tito Bustillo, Llonín, and La Covaciella would join the group.

For this reason, in a time when little attention was paid to archaeological matters, such caves attracted the miserly human resources as well as the material ones. Under these circumstances it might be thought that hillforts didn't exist or deserved any consideration.

However, this feeling didn´t reflect the real situation; the case of Caravia, already mentioned, refuted it. Besides, José Manuel González would start publicizing so many unknown hillforts in the centre of the region from 1952 onwards. These were initially published in the journal Archivum, Oviedo University, where he would also publish "Catalogación de los castros asturianos" in 1968: a surprising account according to the great number of sites provided.

Finally, the break of this paralyzed outlook would take place in the last decades of the 20th century, a time when extended excavations of different continuity were first carried out at la Campa Torres, Gijón, Villaviciosa, later on, and lately Llagú, near Oviedo. This research would provide an overall outlook of the first stable concentrated settlement in central Asturias.

Not everything was gained without tension and controversy, legitimate in some cases; vain and opportunistic others, fostered by economic or private interests. The quarry affaire, advancing towards Llagú hillfort, favoured absurd confrontations, whereas similar circumstances in the same Oviedo county were tenaciously hushed up. At last all the information obtained, although by different criteria, became the first possibility to explain the appearance of hillforts to the east of the River Nalón and their different evolution. For example, those in the estuary of Villaviciosa, abandoned in the Middle Iron Age, and the subsequent appearance of new settlements; or La Campa Torres, reactivated by the push of latinization.

Although this introduction might seem pointless, its only aim is to specify the general outlook at the time when research at the Chao Samartín was to start. As it often happens, behind this great successful project, there are years of struggle; at ten years' battle fought by its determined director so that this project wouldn't be abandoned.

In the end the achievements leave no room for doubts and the Chao, and what we know about it so far, becomes a fundamental reference to understand different aspects of our northwestern proto-history: its development and the change undergone from the 1st century A.D. on, and also the extinction of the ancient settlements.

Our historical synopsis starts back in the 8th and 7th centuries B.C. when a 2400 m2 enclosure is known to have been active. It is surrounded by a ditch, a wall, and a palisade; an appealing fort on the top of a hill with only one building inside and some metal discoveries which don't match a strictly domestic field. Among these a great bronze disk of unknown use. Such a singular place could be regarded as an acropolis since, apparently, political as well as religious power would have converged there.

From its very beginning the capital status of the Chao in its area can't be put aside. The surrounding fertile grounds might have provided good farming output as well as pasture for the cattle, whereas the nearby Atlantic forest supplied it with hunting and vegetables picking.

Material prosperity, strategic location on one of the basic routes between the ocean

and Galicia inner lands, and clear handicraft activity, would turn this hillfort into a trading and meeting centre; in conclusion, a centre of control and authority over a vast dominion.

During the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D., the Chao undergoes a deep transformation under the Roman rule. The ancient settlement, maybe the polis Ocela which Ptolemy quoted in his *Geographique Hyphegesis* in the 2nd century A.D., is seen by its researchers as the capital of an important mining district; this would explain the regular presence of a Roman military contingent, and the building of a great *domus* with stuccoed and embellished walls, including mythological paintings seldom found in this area. The remains of columns of Tuscan capital and base are also new regarding the *villae* in most of the Cantabrian region.

Decrease in gold production might gradually have detracted importance from the ancient enclosure. However, the surprising discovery of jewels and coins in public grounds, or the amazing collapse in one go of large walls, or the abundance of household goods under the ruins, favours the idea of a violent break, a devastating earthquake. This argument wouldn't be extravagant at all according to the proved seismic activity in the zone

We know little about life in the Chao after this incident which took place in the 2nd half of the 2nd century A.D.. Whatever happened, the place didn't fall into oblivion since a Christian necropolis occupied the ruined *domus* between the 8th and 10th century. There is also evidence of this use in the 13th and 14th centuries.

Destruction and abandonment, but not oblivion. Otherwise, how could we explain the appearance of this necropolis? Christian cemeteries aren't settled in arbitrary places; they match a nearby village, and as churches do, they become a centre for emotive memory and communication with ancestors. It's a sacred place for worshiping. In short, it's a major centre for the living.

Closing the loop, the first walled enclosure of the Final Bronze might have been sacred: a small slate cista containing a human skull had been placed next to the main entrance. It probably symbolized an alliance with the protective ancestors. According to Martínez Marina in his unpublished *Diccionario Geográfico de Asturias*, the hidden past of the Chao could still be sensed at the beginning of the 19th century. However, it remained anonymous till the 20th century, when the *amateur* José Lombardía Zardaín (1913-2004) suspected the historical background of the Chao promontory. He was able to foresee ditches and walls where others only saw fields and vegetable gardens. His biography is very uncommon: a teenager emigrant to Mexico, a republican soldier in the Spanish Civil War, condemned to death, commuted to prison, a true survivor with many different jobs till he finally became a taxi driver. This fact allowed him to drive around his home land, Allande, and the nearby counties, satisfying his curiosity for the remains of the past. He didn't lack information since he had read a lot in prison and through these readings he had discovered his liking to archaeology and Prehistory. Obermaier, but particularly Lopez Cuevillas, García y Bellido, and Juan Uría, helped him discover Galician proto-history and the appealing world of hillforts.

Lombardía also discovered the significant San Chuís hillfort, Allande. He used to inform and sometimes accompany Oviedo University teacher J. M. González in his explorations through western Asturias, so he told him his suspicions of the buried shapes at the Chao Samartín. González would visit the place on 15th June, 1967, registering it as a proto-historical village fortified in his "Catálogación….".

This recording, and inevitably risk when archaeological sites are published, would decide José María Naveiras Escanlar, well-known in Grandas as "Pepe del Ferreiro" and José Manuel Villamea, to a first survey at the Chao, which lead to a partial unearthing of a stone hut where they found some good quality Roman ceramics.

It was September, 1977. J. M. González had died in July. Although they didn't know each other, González and "Pepe del Ferreiro" as well as the late-lamented José Luís Maya and myself, had briefly met on 19th September, 1971. Looking for some help after our car breakdown when exploring Salime grounds, we were headed for a repair shop. There, a very interesting conversation about the decomposition of the rural world started, while the owner was trying to mend our car. At the same time we could notice different traditional objects around us. We didn't know anything about "el Ferreiro" then, his great rare personality; his passion and tenacity which would lead to the creation of the extraordinary "Museo Etnográfico de Grandas de Salime"

Coming back to the Chao, aware of his important discovery, José Naveiras decided to report some staff at Oviedo University, following Emilio Marcos Vallaure's advice at the "Museo de Bellas Artes de Asturias". This is how we visited the Chao with "el Ferreiro" the following winter. At that meeting *in situ* we agreed to bury what he had unearthed, without insisting really much on its punishable illegality, and promised to start the research once we had the necessary human team as well as appropriate resources.

Finally, in 1990, we could keep our promise. From then on, excavation campaigns have been following one another, directed by E. Carrocera till 1994 and Angel Villa Valdés from 1995 up to now; this second stage with intense campaigns all through the summer and part of the autumn.

It would be at this second stage when something new became very clear: the Roman trace was obvious, but it had been printed on a very ancient society; the settlement was already 8 centuries old when Romans arrived.

A meticulous planning of the excavations, based on an ordered basic questions questionnaire, allowed starting to establish the story which we have been telling. These research works explained the different stages in the growth of the proto-urban agglomeration, and why its defences were modified. At the same time, different areas of handicraft activity were identified, separating public from private spaces and local typical features from external ones. The same logical dissection was minutely applied to the Grandas laboratory: a place for work and learning very much admired by those of us who had the fortune to know it from its very beginning.

The magnitude of the material evidence and information recovered was exceptionally significant. This site demanded continuous attention and a specific, tailor-made field in order to continue its exploitation. The museum was a great achievement as well: devised not only as a mere archaeological exhibition or ordered store of local antiquities, but as a space of permanent work, research and knowledge generation; as a support to the excavations, and a way to teach its history as well as research procedures to those interested.

Happy ending, then? The answer is not so simple: the Chao is a fundamental archaeological spot nowadays, with a twenty-two-century biography and rare parallels in this part of the world. The expressiveness of the restored ruins, the corridors which visitors follow in order to get a clarifying approach to the different recovered zones, and the beautiful surrounding landscape, constitute a major attractive. The Chao hillfort and the Museo Etnográfico de Grandas are the county's essential assets before visitors and routine is a threat to be avoided: what has been achieved mustn't be regarded as the final objective but as an essential stage to be continued and improved.

Difficulty doesn't lie in temporary support, but in the persistence of a work which, despite the initial obstacles and mistrust, can only be considered as a model. Indisputable result of a hard struggle by an exemplary archaeologist: Angel Villa Valdés, whose ability and daring have astonished us all these years.

This magnificent catalogue clamours for that special recognition and, first of all, for continuity with no interferences: it is essential that roles in the management of the *res publica* should be played according to proven ability and merit.

Museo Castro de Chao Samartín
Project and Permanent Exhibition

Chao Samartín is located in the southwestern end of the Principality of Asturias, close to Castro, Co. Grandas de Salime.

It was recognized as a hillfort in 1967 by José Manuel González, though the existence of some ancient fortifications in that area had already been published in the geographical dictionaries written in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The archaeological excavations began in 1990 as a consequence of the finding, years ago, of important ceramic material of the Roman age, not frequent until then on other sites of the region. From this moment onwards research went on without interruption, as a part of the Navia Basin Archaeological Director Plan, under guidance and sponsorship of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Principality of Asturias.

The Museo del Castro de Chao Samartín gathers the results of these years of research. It was opened on April 28th, 2007.

On the Navia-Eo Archaeological Plan, Navia Historical Park and the creation of the Museum Castro de Chao Samartín
Ángel Villa Valdés
Director of the Navia-Eo Archaeological Plan

The hillforts of the Navia valley are the most popular group of archaeological sites in the open air in Asturias. Their investigation developed at the same time as Archaeology became a science and the news about excavations follow from the 19th century on.The first report about the archaeological interventions at *El Castelón* in Coaña is published in 1878, written by José María Flórez, in which the results of the exploration are described with surprisingly modern criteria for that time. Nevertheless, it will be from the middle of the 20th century, after the Spanish Civil War, when some of these settlements became scientifically famous so that they were known all through Europe.

This happened thanks to the investigations of Antonio García y Bellido, who together with the Asturian scholar Juan Uría Ríu, began in 1939 the excavations at Coaña hillfort spreading them in successive years to Pendia Hillfort, Boal. The international recognition of García y Bellido and his immense scientific work gave to these sites a great diffusion amongst European archaeologists; the extraordinary drawings of the Spanish researcher contributed to this result. His recreations, called by him *anaparátasis*, reflected the image of Coaña Hillfort as a paradigm of the Iron Age fortified village.

During the second half of the century there were many interventions at these and other hillforts of the area in which, together with recognized archaeologists such as Francisco Jordá there were amateur investigators who faced their excavations with different intensity and fortune. Unfortunately, the information obtained during these campaigns did not increase significantly the knowledge of hillforts although they helped to maintain the ruins exhumed and therefore exposed to an unavoidable degradation.

In the middle of the eighties investigations were taken again, under guidance and sponsorship of the Government of the Principality of Asturias. There was the possibility of incorporating Coaña into the National Plan of Archaeological Parks which was beginning at that time promoted by the Ministry of Culture of Spain. Nevertheless, this was not possible, since the state authorities rejected Coaña, accepting Campa de Torres, Gijón, instead. This decision motivated the Principality of Asturias to assume the creation of a second archaeological park, centred in Coaña, where investigation, conservation and diffusion of the principal sites of that area were to take place.

Since then and for a decade the Principality of Asturias assigned important amounts to the development of the project; this lead to the inauguration of the Didactic Room at Coaña hillfort in 1993, provided with exhibition room, projection room, stores, cafeteria and parking. Nevertheless, and in spite of the budgetary effort, the results were not very satisfactory, as there was no real project to define the legal identity of the park, the area of implementation, the objectives and its management type; this derived into a disorganized development of the actions, mainly in the archaeological excavations, which did not lead neither to the improvement of the conservation state of the ruins nor to an adequate setting for visitors. The lack of interest of most of the municipalities worsened this process which ended in many cases with the desertion of the archaeological remains.

Faced with this situation, the Council of Culture of the Principality of Asturias requested in 1997 a director plan to be drawn up which should establish the priorities of archaeological intervention in western Asturias in the following aspects: conservation, research and diffusion.

The document was named Navia Basin Archaeological Director Plan although, the area of action spread eastwards including also the riverside councils of the rivers Porcía and Eo. As a whole, an area of almost 1,600 Km^2, which included seventeen municipalities, in a territory which spreads from coastal levels up to 1,300 m of altitude. A diverse landscape, sometimes abrupt, on which hundreds of archaeological remains are distributed. A varied collection constituted by Palaeolithic sites, some with cave art, a wide range of megaliths, mining sites of Roman times and, mainly, fortified proto-historical villages.

In the selection of targets, initially seventeen archaeological sites, preference was given to conservation and conditioning of the most exposed ruins, proposing to adapt other places which met the requirements included in the Letter of Cultural Tourism adopted by the ICOMOS in 1976 and managed by the Ministry of Culture for the definition of archaeological parks. In synthesis, the aspects considered were juridical questions related to the property and range of protection, the state of conservation, the monumentality of the archaeological remains as essential support for the understanding of the remains and its main components, the degree of scientific, educational or historical interest, the quality of the environment of the sites and the negative effects which tourist promotion could originate on the sites and their surroundings.

Other aspects to be considered in our case, due to the short amount of the budget, were the depopulation, the isolation of the sites and the local incomprehension. It is necessary to make clear that the counties of the west of Asturias have suffered a secular neglect with regard to the central area of the region, a discrimination that is still suffered today in essential questions. Although it is true that this backwardness helped to the conservation of traditional forms which had disappeared in a good part of Asturias and moderated the catastrophic effects which intensive mechanization of the rural environment causes on the archaeological patrimony in more dynamic regions, the administrative attention to these goods and the investment of resources in its study and conservation also provoked confusion, and sometimes opposition within the local population which relegated in their access to numerous basic services, thought that in their environment there were needs which required more urgent attention.

At the same time, the historical heritage and particularly, the archaeological sites which had been until then a complementary aspect to the tourist offer in Asturias, oriented basically to

the exploitation of environment and landscape, saw that suddenly the thin balance between its marginal character and the tourist pressure had been broken. The enthusiasm with which Asturias was submitting to the adventure of tourism, especially of rural tourism, caused a dangerous unbalance of the situation. The flow of visitors which approached the region was increasing although orientated towards scattered destinations: Coaña Hillfort received more than 50,000 visitors a year, the Ethnographic Museum at Grandas de Salime 23,000, and Taramundi, with no official recount, received several tens of thousands of tourists.

Therefore, another objective was to establish (taking archaeological resources as milestones) itineraries which were attractive and easy to reach for the visitors so that this could give boost to those attractive sites which had no connection although they were only at one hour's driving distance one from the others.

Taking into account these factors, an action programme was designed in which, independently from the archaeological remains, their abundance, or scientific importance (in some cases extraordinary), practical and urgency criteria were given priority (e.g., European funds, collaboration agreements with the councils or actions from other public administrations) following international recommendations for conservation and promotion of archaeological sites. In this sense, the Director Plan expressed its refusal to generalised archaeological excavations, except for those where the basic means for a study, consolidation and publication of the work were guaranteed. Isolated interventions were applied to the rest of the cases, usually very modest, which improved the preservation condition as well as the understanding of their most significative points. The essential condition was a maintenance agreement shared with the local entities, either private or public. The characteristics of the local archaeological heritage with easy recognizable monuments and beautiful landscapes allowed foreseeing visible results in the short term.

This was a project supported by joint responsibility and subsidiariness of interventions, which pretended to favour the indefinite incorporation of new resources to the existing cultural offer of the council, without asking for a substantial increase of investments, and involving gradually the highest number of people and institutions in the protection, conservation and promotion of the archaeological heritage.

The social response was very positive and the majority of town councils agreed with the objectives proposed within the Director Plan. One year later, in 1998, once the Navia-Porcía Development Centre (which was to manage the funds form the PRODER Programme assigned to the area) had been constituted, nine of the councils came to an agreement on an investment plan which assumed all the objectives and strategies of the Director Plan; all this would be developed within the frame of a new promotional form: River Navia Historical Park.

River Navia Historical Park, which is at present managed by a foundation, includes the councils of Boal, Coaña, El Franco, Grandas de Salime, Illano, Navia, Pesoz, Tapia de Casariego and Villayón and was created with the aim to make the region a highlighted tourist destination. The central axes of the park are the preservation and valuation of natural and cultural resources. With this purpose arrangements were made for the different archaeological sites, such as conditioning works and sign posting, as well as the construction of a visitors centre in the surroundings of Chao Samartín.

The project for the building was commissioned by the Council of Culture of the Principality of Asturias to the architects Joaquín Menéndez and Pablo Gamonal who, in collaboration with the archaeological team, elaborated a document which described how the building should be endowed with enough premises to include an exhibition hall and services for the visitors, a warehouse, a laboratory and offices to hold the archaeological activity developed within the Navia Basin Archaeological Plan. The work was done with the funds of a second PRODER Programme and inaugurated in April 2007.

Thanks to the advance of the archaeological investigations sponsored by the Council of Culture of the Principality of Asturias there was an increase of new facilities. The perseverance of the institutional support made possible to verify the extraordinary abundance and historical importance of sites such as Chao Samartín and recover for the Asturian hillforts the renown they had had long ago within the proto-historical Spanish archaeology. Ten research works developed within the last decade and about one hundred titles published in scientific and divulging works prove the vitality of the project.

The Project

The architectural project
Joaquín García Menéndez
and Pablo Gamonal Lombardero
Architects

Our intervention at the Chao Samartín Museum began in 1999 and the definitive boost was given at the end of 2002. It was then when we were commissioned to the project of a building whose name wasn't decided yet (Interpretation Centre, Gate Building, etc) but we, and especially Angel Villa, the promoter of the project, had very clear what it was: a museum.

Those more than two years of site planning proceedings, registration of the plot and funding search, helped us to know very well the environment, the place and the site, which impressed us from the very first moment, though at that time the excavation was only a small portion of what we can admire at present.

The selected plot is placed at half height of a hill (as Romans suggested) over a beautiful landscape, in the south of the Chao Samartín with an excellent aerial view of it. From this place almost the whole ground plan of the hillfort can be seen and that was a point we wanted to take advantage of.

This high position allowed us to have an almost continuous visual contact with the site and conclude the tour of the museum making the visitor know the history and pieces of the hillfort through the exhibition, ending on the second floor at a great window which overlooks the site.

The high position on the hill made us widen the access to the plot where there was only a track. The museum has a small parking for coaches and cars (not more than forty) which tries to hide behind the building in small stone benches hidden by stone walls, avoiding important digging works and minimizing this way the visual impact which these elements make.

We thought and projected a long building stuck to the ground following the contour lines, with not much depth, and divided into two benches with a slight height difference between them. This way, we got a building which is not very aggressive but looks smart and is a clear reference in the valley.

The access to the building starts from the parking, following an external path which faces the hillfort and where some little "boxes" used as complements of the museum (shop, cafeteria or warehouse) are located. The entrance hall, which is at the same time centre of control and information, is placed in a double height space without divisions which overlooks the different rooms to be visited.

The circuit is very simple and is thought in such a way that there are no crossings in the circulation. There are two levels: the first, slightly over the vestibule, is the exhibition hall, has an overhead lighting so as to make the most of the exhibition surface; it is preceded by a small projection room and followed by a room which was originally

thought to show real size reproductions. The second level, overlooks the inside of the whole building and gives a different angle of sight of the exhibition; from there, through a large window, there is a magnificent sight of the landscape and a direct view of the Chao Samartín so as to improve its understanding. Finally, connected to the building but independent, there is the research wing, with its independent access and parking and which has all the necessary for the archaeologists to perform their work (offices, laboratory, warehouses, etc).

As for the image of the museum, we understood that a new building, far from any other which could influence it, should have a contemporary image and character, but without too much contrast with the environment or with the traditional architecture of the area.

This traditional architecture is made with slate and forms great mass walls and faces made out of stone. It has not very big openings due to the extreme climate and simple and cubic shapes predominate.

So the solution we offer follows this direction. Simple and cubic shapes, big stone faces almost blind and made out of slate of the region which get mixed with white volumes of even finish. This way we get a double interplay of volumes and textures.

Those parts which look at the valley and are used only for leisure are made of slate, being the finish rough and dark, and those for the work of the archaeologists, the ones at the back, are smooth and clear. All of it gets unified by a singular woodwork that surpasses the limits of the building as if wanting to look permanently over the landscape.

This combination of materials allows us to have a building with sober shapes and materials but combined and finished in order to make a unit which identifies with its use as a public facility, but without being as outstanding in aesthetics or volumetry that could cause an impact on the valley or on the site.

The museograhic project
Enric Franch
DPC

The archaeological site:
an exceptional starting point

The project Castro de Chao Samartín Museum means a particularly happy opportunity. The starting point meets exceptional conditions and extraordinary potential. Even the design problems which it creates are ideal. From different points of view this work, once finished, might become a guide reference. The proposal excels in quality, scientific interest and finds. The amount of historical information achieved and its quality is beyond all doubt. Solely the set of Roman ceramic recovered justifies its extraordinary importance.

The working process

This is the first positive aspect of the project. It begins with the design, through a continuous dialogue between the scientific and technical teams, suggesting different solutions, discussing ideas, drawing up outlines. All this information is contrasted and enriched until finally the general proposal which will shape the museum is specified.

All this joint process allows us to face the problems and contradictions which usually arise in this kind of facilities, in an overall, deep way. Thus, we can see the project in relation to similar museums and interpretation centres, as well as their different features and uses in Spain and Europe.

Finally, it is precisely this process what has allowed us to discover the great potentiality of the situation, making clear all its strong points through the combined work of designers and scientists. Some of these points have already been included in the project while others need a more complex process before being incorporated.

Anyway, the whole work carried out offers, in our opinion a solid base for this new facility to start and avoids becoming just an entertainment space, immediate, without a serious content, therefore ephemeral and useless for the future.

The Chao Samartín: a magical place

Another strong point of the project is its physical territory: the Chao is surrounded by an exceptional landscape. Located in the southwestern end of the Principality of Asturias, its relation with the Navia basin provides it with outstanding natural conditions which favour the relation visitor-museum.

This place is perceived in a very special way by those coming from urban centres: the valley, the chao, and the hills around them, shape an almost magic scenery. It communicates remoteness, isolation and mystery. However, despite his isolated image we can sense the traces of continued human presence, working and transforming the environment: cultivation areas often abandoned, pastures among the forests, half-torn down buildings; all of it among scattered villages. The traveller perceives an almost empty environment. In the forest we can find oak, ash and hazel nut tree. Sometimes beech and in the highest places some birch.

From central Asturias the place is seen as a crossroads, a frontier bordering Galicia and León. A frontier which can be noticed in language as well.

The size and organization of this territory favour the relation with its inhabitants. Even the lonely can't avoid contact and communication with others in Grandas.

As we approach Grandas from the coast, we feel like we are approaching the past. From modern times we travel to Roman times, crossing the traditional rural world: the hillforts, the tumuli, the paths, the mining cuttings and the water channels for their exploitation. All of it is almost lost, but we can notice hints of it, we just have to pay attention and we will get impressed.

The road access to Grandas de Salime, both from the coast and from the interior, plays an active role in the museum project. Not only from a scientific and archaeological point of view, but also as a means to prepare the visitor to experience the museum. In this sense, the journey to Grandas and the Chao Samartín has to do with discovery and initiation and it is in the museum and the hillfort where everything becomes clear and specific. The presence of primitive societies, the magical world, the Roman world and the importance of the hillfort, the mining and the gold, in connection with the empire, and also the correlation of it all with modern world. Since it is a slow winding road, all this is acquired very slowly, as we travel we just get fragments. This wouldn't be possible if it had a fast, modern access.

In our opinion this particular relation among scenery, time and visitor, this sort of preparation for the museum and the sight is fundamental. This landscape is a strong point which must be used and promoted.

In order to do so, future visitors should be provided with some previous information about the museum, light but powerful, as proof of its exceptional nature. The museum and the site can't be completely understood without their territory. After coming out of the museum, visitors should study, research, and start activities all over the historical and geographical context of the site.

Finally, we have to be very careful with the way we act on the access scenery, in a broad sense, to the museum and site. Avoiding absurd conservationism, we must pay attention to new interventions. All the landscape's communicative strength which we have pointed

out disappears when we run into any incoherent detail, a street lamp or a road sign, which tries to imitate a falsely original or traditional model, ending up as a topic banal proposal.

We can't describe the experiences offered by the journey, but fortunately, once we are at the museum we can perceive it all together. First from the terrace, then from the large window on the first floor, we get an overall view of the surrounding scenery. From here, on the hill where the ruins lie, among little narrow valleys, facing the horizon and the mountains, we can imagine the little isolated ground of the site connected with the greatest ancient empire. It's hard to find such a small place, so far away, so local, and at the same time, so universal.

The location of the site

Both the location and the state of the site are exceptional. Fortunately for the project the Chao Samartín archaeological site is above all, a place of archaeological, scientific, and historical research work. This determines the way to intervene in it. In our opinion the site must be totally integrated into the museum. Both can only be understood as an only thing. The question is to make possible this technical, communicative and formal integration.

We could say visits to the sight arise the same problems as visits to a factory or any other production centre. This could be understood as a *boutade*, but it offers, in our opinion, several advantages. On one hand, we avoid regarding the site as "the real village it was", as it is an irrecoverable situation and impossible to reproduce again: many archaeologists and agents have had this dream. On the other hand, it helps us clarify our priorities. Firstly, to solve technical problems as safety, protection, auxiliary spaces, stores. Secondly, we need to develop a relation between scientific procedures and the site and its permanent exhibition. Finally, a little space for the entrance, reception, and control of visitors and workers.

Lastly, we might think that the site is not a workplace, or that this is not its main condition. Then it can be covered, abandoned or become a different thing: a monument, a public garden, a school, or a theme park. Each case will need a different solution and it will be the public, the customers and the market which impose the rules of the game.

The building

Although the archaeological project was commissioned when the museum was conceptually little defined, the architect's work is another strong point. The building is a modern work, strictly speaking, formally abstract, avoiding stereotypes and populist models. It is perceived as a long rectangular prism, perfectly integrated on the slope of the mountain. We think the location of the museum overlooking the remains of the settlement, is a very good decision. It's thrilling to see the ruins left by those who lived in this place for so many years in contrast with the almost empty present environment.

The museum as a centre of archaeological work

The previous existence of an archaeological research team permanently located in Grandas de Salime is also a strong point for the museum and reinforces several aspects. It guarantees the contact of the museum with Grandas' daily life, favouring its integration; ensures a deep knowledge of the site, the finds and the collection; makes the continuity of the centre easier; guarantees the level of scientific development and creates activities, products and services derived from the experiences and knowledge acquired.

From work and research, the museum can spread, coming into contact with institutions, experts and professionals; joining projects, exchanging experiences. This way, it grows and evolves from the inside, from the daily research work, getting a better contact with Grandas and the nearby villages on one hand, and with the scientific communities in Asturias and all over the world on the other. This question is essential for the development of the archaeological work in progress.

The design project and the visual communication of the museum

The project is planned as a whole, trying to solve the difficulties arisen from bringing together the museum discourse and the exhibition, and taking into account future needs regarding use and management. Moreover, it attempts to define an institutional image according to the museum identity, which overcomes the challenges presented by this kind of facilities.

The starting point of the project was the need to interpret and communicate the historical meaning of the site and its finds. It was also important to understand the museum as something alive whose fundamental aim was the archaeological research and the study of the past in the area and in Asturias. The main material to do so was the gathered knowledge, all the objects stored and the real territory where the research team works, comprising the site and its surroundings. The central idea which bases the project is to present the collection suitably in order to get all its expressive and communicative potential, avoiding tales and speeches about the local history. What was intended was the creation of an objective base, the organizational structure of the exhibition and communication which allowed an interpretation of the objects presented, producing all the possible speeches about them and their context.

The starting point of all the presentation and communication process is very simple. It's about selecting objects and proposing relations. With this aim the design focus on a system to present the site, the most significant places and the selected materials, in a way which creates significant connections amongst them. These connections are the base to articulate speeches on the objects in its centre and relate images of the site with the materials presented and with the written interpretation we can gather from them. The connections guaranteed by the system are (Scheme 1):

In the collection exhibition:
First plane
- Site-four settlements
- Settlement-places-objects

Second plane
- Place-technical representation
- Object-use

In the global context:
- Museum-site-territory

The system of presentation is understood as a means to watch, enjoy and know the objects of the exhibition, being able to build our past from them. Eventually it is also an instrument to produce complementary discourses, critical or alternative extensions, or different conceptual criteria. It must guarantee the necessary information to understand and improve the connection site-museum-territory.

In order to move our proposal forward we had to solve a previous question: it was necessary to present the site and the most representative points of each settlement on the same plane of reality in the exhibition. The representations of territory, places and marks had to relate to the exhibited objects reduced to a mere shape. On one hand we tried to put some distance between object and visitor. On the other, we decided to use black and white photographs, remembering Bernd and Hilla Becher's works on industrial buildings and spots. We intended to photograph the site, placing the camera always at the same distance and facing the centre of the area to be pictured. However we realized we didn't have much time and had to use existing photographs. Once again, the material gathered by the archaeological team was essential. Each photograph of the territory was accompanied by a technical representation to scale and the same position with regard to north.

The exhibition arranges and relates objects, representations and texts according to a system based on two axes: synchronic and diachronic (Scheme 2). The first one connects the site significant places to their correspondent objects and the written interpretation suggested. The second one arranges the previous units and presents them one after the other. This is how the four overlapping settlements are presented. Each one matches a different period of time: Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman times and Middle Ages developing precise issues for each case. Carefully selected objects coincide with the junctions of the axes.

Every vertical triptych, place, object and interpretation works as a basic unit in the exhibition. Each unit allows the visitor to go from the museum interior to the site and the territory. The unity is the nucleus to propose different itineraries and discourses.

Another important question was the selection of the most suitable materials among those available and the choice of the most significant spots on the site for each case. We had to find a balance amongst the number of pieces, their meaning and the space available. We chose white for the presentation background and ordered the pieces so that their shape could be seen perfectly, one by one, both in natural and electrical light. The pieces had to be suspended in the air, with no interferences. We had to notice every little detail of the objects. They had been carefully restored and appropriate supports were built for each case. At present, once the work is finished, we don't know if we have been radical and strict enough to take the project to its logical conclusion; maybe the time available and the building size played a dirty trick on us.

The organizational system created by the project allows arranging all the basic information of the museum discourses whatever their support is. The common structure guarantees effectiveness, favours the economy of the expressive resources, and increases the centre's institutional image.

Over the same structure other interrelations are possible. Each of them allows specifying different discourses in the future. The visitors can follow their own way or have a guided visit. The museum has planned a system of printed guides with different levels of information (Scheme 3).

The image of the centre must highlight its identity. The organizational system designed for the objects and the information as well as the graphic elements (brand, logo, signs) make it possible. In our opinion the project guarantees the institutional visual communication.

All the experience and knowledge acquired through this work suggests the creation of a working team which comprised scientific work, management, design and visual communication in order to consolidate the museum. An important step would be to incorporate the basic components of the centre in an only body. It's essential that the site, the museum and the territory be perceived as a whole. Another objective would be to consolidate the museum image in order to develop future products and services, solid, effective and consistent.

Finally, we would like to insist on a fundamental question for the future of the museum: the project must spread all its potentiality from its own values, with its own instruments and means. It would be a mistake to confront other projects which could develop in the area. Each case needs its own space. If the wrong way is taken, everybody will lose. Tourist industry can benefit from the museum, mainly if it is a good museum, but if the museum is diluted into a tourist developing plan, if its only aim is to satisfy weekend tourism then it will be of no use for the Asturian society. The major function of a cultural institution like this is to build and strengthen the deep base on which the knowledge and patrimony of the whole society stands. This is only possible from the ambition and passion of those who with the instruments provided by facilities such as Castro de Chao Samartín Museum look for the truth through well done work.

The museological project
Susana Hevia González
Museo Castro de Chao Samartín

Castro de Chao Samartín Museum opened its doors to the public on April 28th, 2007. The inauguration of the facilities meant a substantial improvement in the tourism offer of the region and the inevitable reorganization in the traditional tourist circuits which had their principal, or perhaps only destination, in the Museo Etnográfico de Grandas de Salime. Nevertheless, if in any area its opening supposed a significant progress, this was in archaeological research. From its creation, the project of the Museum was understood as an indispensable support for the archaeological labour developed by the Principality of Asturias in the west of the region within the framework of the Navia Basin Archaeological Director Plan, today called Navia-Eo Archaeological Plan.

Chao Samartín was already recognized at that time as a relevant site in the field of proto-historical Spanish archaeology. It also had a consolidated tradition as an archaeological resource open for visitors. Besides, it could continue growing with the support of advertising and promotion, having sufficient coverage of personnel to maintain the well-established guided service, which was from the beginning, the only kind of visit allowed.

Both circumstances, scientific recognition and tourist potential, were considered to be key factors in the draft of the project. Regarded as sides of the same coin, exhibition and research could, lead to a better use of the facilities and orientate its management from self-sufficiency towards sustainability if they were organized in the appropriate way. With this purpose, the building was conceived as one of the head centres or "door" for the reception of visitors at Navia Historical Park (project for tourist development of several councils). But in addition, and most of all, as a working centre where the varied archaeological finds obtained in the diverse interventions of the Navia-Eo Archaeological Plan could arise a general interest for the site, including that of scientific and academic institutions by means of custody, conservation and adequate diffusion.

As a guarantee for its success, the initiative had the advantage of taking place in a territory in which the archaeological work had managed to stop being something exotic which was taking away the financing from other sectors, and was accepted as a usual activity able to favour the development of the area.

The building of the Museum expresses in an eloquent way the confluence of factors which argued about the opportunity of the project. After having valued different possibilities, a plot for the construction is selected: at middle height, and about 200 m southwards from Chao Samartín Hillfort. This choice supposed an unusual bet on infrastructures associated to an archaeological resource; juxtaposition or insertion in the very site are normally preferred for these.

The opening of the centre has confirmed the good choice of the location, and that *Menéndez & Gamonal* make the most of their architectural design. Without developing big heights, the facilities adapt to the topographic peculiarities of the ground and are constructed in several volumes inspired in traditional construction types and materials of the area. The result is a modern architecture which turns into a milestone in the landscape without bringing a big distortion to the surroundings.

Its high position allows, as well, a privileged contemplation of Chao Samartín, which is also possible from the interior of the premises, thanks to the correct decision of providing it with large windows. In this sense, the building constitutes

an excellent viewpoint from which the look on the site helps to get a spatial understanding of the settlement, which would not be reached with the perspectives of a conventional visit.

On the outside, a deliberate contrast of finishes and heights indicates the existence of two differentiated areas which join in the same space as constitutive elements of the only reality: an archaeological centre for research and work as well as a public area which offers services, information and exposes the results to visitors.

The Museum and the archaeological research

Once inaugurated, the Museum begins to receive the finds originated in the excavations programmed in the Navia-Eo area. From the first moment on, its funds include a considerable amount of material and documentation: the result of years of archaeological interventions in diverse sites, especially the campaigns carried out at Chao Samartín.

The reception of materials implied not only to guarantee a suitable custody, but also imposed the commitment to establish the necessary instruments for record, inventory, graphical documentation, conservation, restoration, research and diffusion.

Complying with these obligations was only possible if the appropriate equipment and specialized professionals were available. To give response to these needs the architectural project defines a sector of work which includes an office for restoration and classification of materials, an area of delineation and topography, offices, library, warehouse and room for multiple uses. These facilities will allow the centralization of the department and laboratory of the Navia-Eo Archaeological Plan in one head office which, designed specifically for this purpose, allows the optimization of working areas which were until then scattered in different buildings assigned by the city council.

The fact that personnel and infrastructure are brought together means as well a significant progress in formative work, which has always been one of the most outstanding characteristics of Chao Samartín. In the same way, it provides the basis to diversification of activities which, if well structured, could contribute to the support of the project. In this sense, the Museum has already showed its competence as a scenario for holding summer courses and university master courses; moreover, it has opened successfully its facilities to initiatives of archaeological work diffusion undertaken together with cultural associations and education centres. The annual student collaboration programmes have improved substantially. The participants have access in to the whole process in the same place, from the excavation and field work on an archaeological site, up to the valuation and presentation of results, taking part in all the phases of the archaeological discipline.

As a working and training centre, the Museum becomes more than a container of objects and turns into an entity which generates and processes a remarkable volume of information. The inventory, analysis and restoration of the materials contribute in a decisive way to update the research in process. Another consequence, result of this labour, is the creation of a wide fund of materials able to supply pieces, put into their context and in stable conservation conditions, both to the own permanent exhibition at Chao Samartín and to other museums which could need them for their projects.

The Museum and its public dimension

The informative task which has to go together with archaeological research, and of which this catalogue is a good example, shows its most ludic and visual side at the museum permanent exhibition. Meant to be accessible for an heterogeneous public, it rejects the restrictive language of the already large number of scientific publications on Chao Samartín and the fortified villages in western Asturias, favouring an eminently didactic approach.

The exhibited collection consists of more than 400 pieces, most of them from Chao Samartín. It is complemented with contributions of different sites: Monte Castrelo de Pelóu and Canadeiro I, Co. Grandas de Salime; Os Castros, Co. Taramundi; El Picón, Co. Tapia de Casariego and El Castro de Pendia, Co. Boal, all of them included in the Navia-Eo Archaeological Plan. Moreover, a small but significant number of objects from Grandas de Salime Council, donated by their owners, were added to the collection. In the same collaboration dynamics, the Museo Arqueológico de Asturias has provided the Museum with one of its pieces, required to illustrate one of the inscriptions of the exhibition. Replicas have been shown when the original pieces were in other institutions or to guarantee optimal preservation conditions.

With this material base an exemplary discourse is developed, to show the public the results of the research about the origin and evolution of Chao Samartín and hillfort culture in the west of the region. The direction to follow in the circuit, the initial project established the upper floor as the final point, had to be modified in order to adapt the chronological-sequential structure of the information to the rooms of the building and to the museographic solution designed by *DPC. Enrich Franch*. After this restructuring, the visitors access to an unidirectional tour, which starts at the museum reception, continues on the first floor and ends on the ground floor.

The visit starts with a brief audiovisual approach to the history of the discovery and the research on the site. On the first floor, the inscription: *Before hillforts. Recent prehistory* provides a vision of the key elements which form the archaeological landscape of the council, from its colonization, about 6,000 years ago, until the appearance of the first hillforts.

The large window on the building's façade illustrates the relationship between the Museum and the site. From this viewpoint, visitors have an almost aerial view of the settlement, which enables a topographic and spatial understanding, explained through an interactive method.

The research done until today has enabled to document a long period occupation of the settlement: following the conventional historical division, it starts in the Final Bronze Age, consolidates and develops during the Iron Age and Roman times and culminates in the Early Middle Ages. Under the inscription: *One site, four looks. 20 centuries of overlapping history*, again on the ground floor, the general characteristics of the four periods are shown, with references to other contemporary events in other parts of the world, developed around an object which is particularly representative of the material culture of the each period.

Most of the collection exhibited gathers under the title *Reconstruction of a story, objects of the site*. The pieces become the thread of a chronologically organized discourse which reveals the actual state of knowledge about the history of Chao Samartín. At the same time, the objects act as a means to explain the mechanisms which have led the discourse construction, organising around them an information structured in three levels: data obtained from the site excavation, testimony given by the objects themselves and interpretation from the combination of the studies undertaken.

An interpretative sequential discourse as the one described is only feasible if we have a previous historic-archaeological reflection. Presenting it in a didactic way, using the informative and visual potential of images and objects, helps avoiding the inclusion of long texts, but requires the availability of comprehensive graphic records and a collection of pieces which has to be complete, studied, and in a state of preservation which guarantees an adequate exhibition. These conditions, frequently missing in other archaeological exhibitions, are present here.

Castro de Chao Samartín Museum is an exhibition which far from renouncing the display of objects, shows an outstanding collection of pieces. This approach, unlike the present museographic trend of displaying a reduced number of selected artefacts using settings as an interpretation means, was from the very beginning a factor which the museological project didn't want to give up.

If private deposits are excluded, all the objects were obtained from definite stratigraphic contexts. This fact confers the museum a high importance as an archaeological document and it is intended that visitors realize this during their visit. The archaeological remains are integrated in the exhibition, not only for their intrinsic value, their originality or aesthetic reasons, but also for being instruments for research. They illustrate the process, from their extraction to the development of historical discourse. The proximity of the site, repeatedly present in the museographic design and favoured by the architecture of the building, evokes in a constant and effective way the origin and first context of the objects.

Diversity, preservation state and quantitative relevance of the collection constitute an outstanding informative source which emphasizes, without the need of textual or graphic support, the continual occupation of Chao Samartín and the succession of events which occurred during this period.

The Permanent Exhibition
The archaeological sites

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 Valledor 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.

Tumular monument of Canadeiro I
(Xestoselo, Grandas de Salime)

It was recognized in 1989 during the elaboration of an archaeological inventory of the council of Grandas de Salime as a part of a necropolis which gathers six tumular structures.

For years it was the object of a gradual dismantling which lead to the loss of a significant part of the tumular mass. Facing this situation the Council of the Principality of Asturias began (within the frame of Navia Basin Archaeological Plan) a project for excavation and later arrangement for its interpretation and visit.

The excavation revealed a structure with no orthostatic chamber, constituted by earthworks enlarged at least on one occasion and accumulated on a ceremonial platform in which the funerary pits were excavated. The register of the material contributed with some ceramic pieces and allowed the processing of several organic samples which date the monument´s construction to the first half of the 4th millennium.

Monte Castrelo de Pelóu
(Grandas de Salime)

The site was catalogued by José Manuel González in 1973, calling the spot then *La Pica el Castro*, although it is also known in the neighbourhood as *Monte Castrelo* or *Prida del Castro*. Nevertheless, the later scarce bibliographical references have always called the place with the generic name of *El Castro de Pelóu*.

The excavations began in the autumn of 2003 with a first campaign of archaeological soundings which have continued up to now.

The proximity of several mines, the size of the defences and mainly the application of mining techniques in the excavation of the ditches, favoured its inclusion in the group of the called *castros mineros* (mining hillforts): settlements believed to be of Roman origin created to accommodate specialised labour force.

Nevertheless, nowadays a long sequence of occupation has been proved going back to the second Iron Age, when powerful fortresses protected a group of huts and a hillfort sauna. It had episodes of re-fortification during the 1st century A.D. and the first half of the 4th century, in both cases with a strong military character.

There is an inscription which belongs to the Early Imperial Roman time with the name of up to 50 individuals; it has been interpreted as a *tabula censualis*, a kind of census of those who, assigned to the territory of the *civitas Ocela* (probably with capital at the Chao Samartín) had to tribute in the area of influence of the *castelum* of Pelóu.

El Castro de Pendia
(Boal)

The story of the research in this small hillfort is directly related to the Castelón de Coaña, since they were excavated at the same time at the beginning of the 40s by Antonio García y Bellido and Juan Uría Ríu. Nevertheless, the first news about the existence of an old settlement in a place near Pendia come from Bernardo Acevedo y Huelves who makes in 1898 a first description of the ruins with some superficial references to some of the buildings and to the fortifications which protected them. Up to 1941, when Antonio García y Bellido and Juan Uría excavate in the settlement, there are other interventions but slightly documented. The works spread all over the settlement although with unequal intensity.

In 1999, the excavations start again as a part of the Navia Basin Archaeological Plan so as to consolidate the ruin step by step and begin again the excavation of the structures.

The foundation of the settlement has been an open fight amongst researchers as the register of the early excavations included some

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
Catalogue

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.

Museo Castro de Chao Samartín
Grandas de Salime, Asturias

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