



MUSEO
DO CASTRO
DE VILADONGA



ROOM 2

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XUNTA
DE GALICIA

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ENGLISH

DISPLAY CABINET

1 BRONZE WORK

The tradition of little bronze craftsmen was fairly common in ancient times, and there were even travelling bronze and pot makers. In the castro and Galaico-Roman material culture to which the Castro de Viladonga belongs, **instruments and tools** made of bronze for doing different jobs and for domestic use represent a very important group, possibly due to the fact that their manufacture did not require very complex infrastructures. The techniques employed were: **casting**, using wax for objects of quality and size, or in **moulds** for simpler objects; **beating or hammering** for sheets of metal and wire; and to a lesser degree **die-casting**.

Bronze was the most commonly used metal alloy in the Galaico-Roman era; it is made up of copper, tin and sometimes also lead and other metals.

To make metal objects which did not contain iron they used clay or stone vessels, called **crisoles** (crucibles) where the different metals for the alloy were melted. The molten metal was poured into moulds from which the objects were produced in their final shape. Finishing off the pieces sometimes required work with the hammer or polishing of the surfaces.

DISPLAY CABINET2

1 IRONWORK

In the castro and the Galaico-Roman world it was very common to find metalwork of many different types and very many people involved in it. Miners, goldsmiths, blacksmiths and bronze workers must have been important members of society; signs of metal workshops or forges have been documented in some sites and are supposed to have been present in others. Iron, due to its high melting point (1,540°C) could not be melted. However, on heating the mineral to some 1,150°C in a charcoal oven a spongy mass was obtained with a high iron content and quite a lot of dross; through hammering the dross was eliminated and the metal mass became more compact.

To obtain metal sheets and bars used for making objects the metal was subjected to **forging**: heating, cooling and hammering the iron until the right shape was obtained. This process also gave the iron hardness and resistance.

The objects on display here are mostly work tools used for different tasks and some of them have shapes and functions which still exist to this day.

2

In the Castro de Viladonga there also appear, although much less frequently, remains of weapons, especially **arrow or spearheads, daggers, knives and ferrules**.

DISPLAY CABINET 3- GLASS. PERISHABLE MATERIALS

1 THE GLASS

In the 1st century AD a new technique in glass manufacture became widespread, **glass blowing**, at first using moulds. This allowed large scale production and cost reduction for glass pieces. These stopped being a luxury item and reached all corners of the empire and all social levels. This explains its presence in sites like Viladonga, where some of the glass is imported but others were possibly produced in the north west peninsular region.

Glass vessels were very varied: there are **bottles, jugs, glasses, goblets, bowls, ampoules** for perfumes and ointments, objects for illumination and other shapes for various uses, as well as examples of glass objects recycled as game counters.

2

Common glass, **blue-green** in colour and air blown was first produced in the 1st century AD and became more common than luxury glass pieces.

3

Ribbed bowls appeared at the time of Augustus and continued to be used until the 2nd century AD. The wall of the goblet was decorated with nerves or projections in relief which imitate models made of metal.

4

At the end of the 2nd century and the beginning of the 3rd century AD the glass is **yellowy green** or **clear**. The mixture is of worse quality with bubbles of air and other imperfections.

5

Goblets with “**round stones**” are typical of the 4th century AD. The decoration consists of drops of glass usually in a different colour applied to the outer surface of the goblet while it is still hot.

6

PERISHABLE MATERIALS

Inhabitants of castros like Viladonga, as well as pottery, glass or metal vessels also used others made of perishable materials such as **wooden bowls and jugs**, many types of **wicker baskets, bags or sacks of skin or leather**, ...we know about the use of these elements of which no archaeological remains exist, from written sources from Roman times, as well as the archaeological presence of certain tools used for working with these materials.

DISPLAY CABINET 4

1

CASTRO POTTERY.

Pottery is by far the most common archaeological element among the finds in the castro. Many fragments have appeared in a great variety of shapes, types and decorations.

Some of these ceramic pieces were made by hand although the majority were cast on the wheel.

Globular shaped pieces are the most common, with one or more handles, the edges face outwards and the feet are not enhanced; the walls show signs of having been smoothed, sometimes with a spatula and sometimes very polished, giving the sensation of having varnish.

There are large and medium sized **cooking pots, small pans** more or less globular in shape, **jugs and bowls**, a variety of different types of **handles**, fragments of **draining boards**, etc.

2

USE

The use to which these vessels were put was very varied and it is important to bear in mind that they went hand in hand with wicker, wood and leather vessels: the large pieces were for keeping grain or for holding liquids; others were for varied use within the home and the smallest were for eating and drinking. There also appeared roasting pans (or drainers or cheese drainers) with holes in the sides and bottom.

3

DECORATION

There are a great number of **decorative** themes in common in castro art: incisions in the form of oblique, horizontal or vertical parallel lines, or forming triangles, as well as engraving in the form of fish bones, wavy lines, s shaped lines, or intertwined figures as well as applications in the form of small handles or strings and other ornamental devices.

DISPLAY CABINET 5

1

COMMON ROMAN POTTERY

The so-called common Roman pottery was used mainly in the home, in other words for cooking and table ware, but it was also used for funerals, ceremonies and decoration.

This pottery was largely made in the different provinces of the Empire, using purely Roman models but also using shapes and decorations which were derived from local tradition.

2

In **table ware** the characteristic “**thin sided**” goblets stand out, which here come from the workshop of Melgar de Tera in Zamora and were used for drinking. Common, but very peculiar, is the decoration pressed at the wheel or “a la barbotina” (a sort of liquid clay) forming little handles or ivy leaves.

3

Other pieces such as **plates, dishes and jugs** are of local or regional production and imitate those produced in far off workshops; this pottery is generally reddish or orange in tone and it is always produced on the wheel.

4

Kitchen ware was used for the preparation of food, for storing solid and liquid food and for other similar uses: **large earthenware containers, amphoras, medium size cooking pots, small cooking pots with lids, roasting pans or cheese making pans etc.**

Some of the pieces, small jugs, bowls or goblets often have on the bottom or on the sides some little incisions or marks made after firing: these are the **grafitos** or little signs that usually show the ownership or use of the piece in question, whether it is an individual type (like the one which bears the name *Nantius*) or whether it is from a larger family or group.

DISPLAY CABINET 6

1

TERRA SIGILLATA

One of the most remarkable and characteristic materials to be found in a site from the Roman era is **terra sigillata**, fine pottery of red varnish made in the mould and used fundamentally as tableware and which sometimes has the stamp of the workshop that made it: the **sigillum** or printed stamp that decorates these pieces.

It always appears in less quantity than common Roman pottery as it is indicative of a certain luxury or social position, especially when it appears in castros. Here it is usually very fragmented and has lost its varnish due to the acidity and humidity of the Galician soil.

In this castro two types of *terra sigillata* have been found: one imported from the south of Gaul (1st century AD), very scarce, and the other made in Spain (1st century AD onwards), which is more common and with very varied decoration.

The late Spanish *terra sigillata*, clearer and with worse quality varnish and poorly conserved, is relatively common in Viladonga indicating once again that this castro had its main occupation in the late Roman period.

Other pieces of pottery imitate both in shape and decoration the late printed *terra sigillata* from other parts of the Empire, but were probably made in the north west and survived a long time even until after the 5th century AD.

Sometimes *sigillata* pottery has writing or incisions which usually indicate ownership with symbols, letters or names.

DISPLAY CASE A

Various activities and trades related to the habitat, to the exploitation of natural resources, to war, etc., were carried out in the castro.

Different stone tools and utensils were used for these trades, such as weights, mallets, grindstones, smoothing tools and others that could serve as eventual weapons, although the most common use was in building, mining, tanning and weaving, in the manufacture and repair of other tools, various domestic chores, etc.

DISPLAY CASE B

Pitcher of castreña tradition for storing cereals and other foods or liquids.

DISPLAY CASE D

Large containers (pitchers, dolia ...) to contain liquids, cereals and other foods.

Flat bottom amphorae are a typical production of the inland Galician-Roman settlements, while large pivot or spiked amphorae are more abundant on the coastal area.