

MUSEO
DO CASTRO
DE VILADONGA



ROOM 3



DISPLAY CABINET 1-CLOTH AND CLOTHING

1 CLOTH

The finding of a comb, loom weights, of *fusaiolas* or spindle weights, and of needles in this castro show the existence of domestic and craft work of weaving and spinning.

The iron **comb** was used for untangling textile fibres, probably linen or wool, after their washing and drying.

Fusaiolas or spindle weights are circular in shape with a hole down the middle that acted as counterweights and helped the turning movement of the spindle when spinning. They could be made of slate or pottery; some were highly decorated, in some cases so much so that there exists a doubt as to whether they are decorative pendants.

Weights were used to tauten the warp threads. This was rudimentary in fashion and with vertical warp.

The bronze **needles** are of different types. Some with the eye at one end were used for sowing leather, linen, wool, skin or other material and others, more remarkable with the eye in the central third and decorated could also have other uses.

2 CLOTHES

In the clothing which was worn in the Castro de Viladonga a series of elements that have not been preserved were used, such as cloth, skins and other accessories made from perishable material. Other items that have survived as archaeological material fulfilled a practical function in the garment as a whole but also served as personal decoration and as such could have a certain symbolic and social characteristic: these are brooches, belt buckles, pins, buttons and varied accessories etc.

Brooches are fasteners generally made of bronze and used to hold clothing together. All of them have in common the presence of a needle and a bow shape, sometimes incorporating a spring. In the Castro of Viladonga we have found within the variety known in castro and Galaico-Roman culture the long cross piece types, the so called “transmontana”, the double curved one, the “santa Lucia” and “Aucissa” and those in the shape of omega. The latter are the ones which appear more frequently, precisely because they were the latest type of brooches of Galaico-roman production.

Belt buckles, with the characteristic and well known circular style are made of bronze or iron. **Tahali swordbelt fasteners** are bronze pieces in the shape of a hook, decorated with triangles, incisions and other geometrical figures and belong to some type of armour or defensive clothing.

Also related to clothing there appear buttons and other bronze items in a variety of shapes and decorations.

DISPLAY CABINET 2

1

ADORNMENTS

In Galician Roman goldwork, specially in the castro and rural environment elements of clearly pre-Roman tradition have survived and at the height of the Empire, bracelets, pendant earrings and other jewels were made. These items appear in archaeological settings of the Galician Roman era, even later on, so they can be considered as residual elements or elements of religious or symbolic nature.

So far in Viladonga two identical **torque-bracelets** have appeared and come from the same goldsmith workshop. One of these is kept in this museum while the other is in the Provincial Museum in Lugo.

In the castro acropolis there also appeared a late Roman **gold pendant earring**, kidney shaped with its hanging chain above the ear.

Rings are made of jet, bronze, iron and gold and have many different shapes and sizes.

Pins and hairpins usually made of bronze were used by women and were decorated.

Necklace beads or doas were used for making this type of adornment. They could have a warding or protective value, as in the case of the so called eye beads. They are of different colours and materials, blue and yellow vitreous material, jet, green malachite , natural amber , bronze, lead ... They could vary in shape: cylindrical or tubular, rectangular, square, lobed-shaped, bi-lobed-shaped, oval, cube-shaped and bi-conical.

Other pieces which are related to personal adornment are a possible **mirror** with its decorated handle and a series of **bronze** items for civilian and military wear or for other uses.

2

In various archaeological excavations there have appeared two pieces for attaching horse reins and bits. They are made of moulded bronze and on the other side show two cats (panthers) facing each other but with their head turned backwards. From their shape, type and subject matter these pieces clearly date from the late Roman world with influences of the eastern Mediterranean as in other objects found in this castro.

DISPLAY CABINET 3 MONETARY SYSTEM

1

Different types of coins have been catalogued at the Castro de Viladonga. They are : **ases**, and ***semises*** made of bronze, silver denarii, silver and bronze antoninians, gold **aureos**, and bronze ***folles and centenionales*** . The latter were coins of little value which used to be put aside during periods of insecurity, but also simply in order to save money and they sometimes turn up stored in clay pots forming **little money stores** or deliberate money stores.

The range of coins which have been found at the castro comprise a wide chronological variety from the 1st century BC to the 5th century AD as well as wide ranging images and apart from a few exceptions are of little monetary value.

Coinage was the easiest and most direct way for authority to transmit its messages to society and for this reason the elements and themes engraved on the fronts and backs of coins were chosen with great care.

On their obverse side coins carried the effgies of emperors or members of their families and their realism meant that sometimes they were as good as portraits; they include the clothes, helmets and hairstyles characteristic of each period and always accompanied by a reference to the name of the person and his rank.

On the reverse side of the coin there are often gods, heroes, allegorical motifs, military or war references, imperial pageants etc., as well as marks showing where the coin was minted.

2

MAP
Map showing the mints where the coins found at the Castro de Viladonga come from. There are coins from Hispania, quite a few mints in Rome, others from the north of Italy, from London, the German town of Trier and Lyons. It is also worth noting the presence of coins minted in the eastern part of the Roman Empire, from present day Greece, Turkey and Syria.

DISPLAY CABINET 4

1

DAILY LIFE AT THE CASTRO

Daily life at the Castro de Viladonga can be reconstructed using as a base remains found during excavations, ancient literary sources and even with certain qualifications, on parallels with traditional rural communities in the surrounding area. The population of the castro is estimated to have reached a maximum of between 300 and 350 people. Its dwellings and other annexed constructions were laid out in groups, thus allowing for streets, for people, animals and other forms of transport to use.

Society was organized around the family unit and undoubtedly around a hierarchy. There existed relationships with other neighbouring towns and settlements.

Work was shared out but not in a strict fashion: women were in charge of domestic tasks, looking after the family, the animals and also harvesting fruit. They grew, ground and stored millet (short-grained), wheat and barley (from which they made a type of beer), as well as acorns and other fruits gathered in the countryside and in the woods.

Men devoted themselves to **hunting**, mining and metalwork, certain crafts, trade, and going to war etc. Hunting played and important part and just as with the livestock full use was made of it. They used the skins, the meat, the bladder, the horns, the bones etc.

2

Along with this subsistence **economy** , to a great extent self sufficient, it is also important to mention mining and metalwork, which have left us with many pieces and objects such as tools for handicraft use, tools for handicraft and domestic use made of differing materials (iron, bronze, gold, lead...) The existence of objects of external origin: “fine sided” pottery, *terra sigillata*, glassware, some bronzes, jewels...lead us to suppose to the existence of commerce based on barter or the use of the Roman monetary system.

Leisure also had its place in the life of the castro: excavations have brought to light two games boards made of slate stone (the game of *latrunculus* or “little bandits” similar to draughts). The counters or *calculi* for the game have also been found. In the Roman world and also in *Gallaecia* , there existed a great following for games of chance and games of intelligence (tabas, playing dice, draughts...) as born out by literary sources, inscriptions and archaeological remains of the time.

Nothing is known about the **language** as they were a people who hardly wrote anything, although we have samples of letters and words written on pottery and other pieces. We can suppose that originally a native language was used which was later substituted by Latin in its common or vulgar form while keeping pre-Roman features and names.

3

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FOLKLORE

Just as in nearly every archaeological site, Castro de Viladonga has a series of **tales** and **legends** relating to its early settlers, their customs and “wealth”.

References to the “moors” as mythical and imaginary people (that have nothing to do with the Arabs of the Reconquest nor with any other historical people) are very common in castros such as Viladonga, as well as references to hidden treasure, gold and pitch beams, tunnels and underground passages etc

All of this makes reference to aspects which were considered mysterious precisely because they were unknown or different from Gallician, Christian and traditional culture.

Sometimes these legends do reflect real aspects of the Castro. For example the existence of water courses under the ground, of caves and even of archaeological relationships between different sites, as happens in the case of Castro de Viladonga and Villa de Doncide or with small castros situated around them.

DISPLAY CASE C

Some historical sources, such as inscriptions, provide data to outline an overview of beliefs and religion in Galician-Roman culture. There is a religious substratum of local cults and decisive contributions from the classical Roman pantheon, which coexist with two other important events: the cult of the emperor and, in the later period, the arrival of Christianity.

In this castro we do not yet have reliable elements to reconstruct its religious pantheon, but its context and nearby findings (such as the altar to the gods of the roads -Lares Viales- from Arcos, Pol) do not make it different from the rest of Gallaecia.

Although the amulets could be related to some belief or religion, no votive altars or remains with a clear religious purpose have been found in Viladonga so far. In any case, the importance of the elements of nature (such as the sun, the moon, the waters, the trees...) are put in relation to the beliefs of the inhabitants of the castros, and some of their divinities were associated with them.

On the other hand, we still do not know their funeral rituals, although due to the late chronology of the castro and its archaeological-historical context, we must assume the existence of one or more necropolis, located outside the walls, which can be solved with future prospecting and excavations in the surroundings.

In ancient cultures, the use of amulets was widespread, such as those related to the phallus cult. The Romans made it a symbol of the fertile power of nature and a defender against the evil eye, as well as an “exvoto” or offering. It was sculpted and drawn on objects intended for personal use or on household utensils, and they were made in different shapes and materials: leather, metal, clay or stone, like those seen here. They would have a very diverse significance; prophylactic, protective or simply allusive.

Some materials, such as antenna daggers, can be considered residual or even votive, or to be used precisely as an amulet due to their small size, as the one shown here.

GOLD MINING

1

The material of the rich castreño goldsmithing was obtained with artisanal extraction techniques such as that of the “Aureanas” of the river sandbanks.

2

RUINA MONTIUM

Under the Roman administration, gold mining underwent major changes: large scale exploitation techniques were developed for primary (on rocks) and secondary (on sediments and alluviums) deposits, documented in various places in Galicia, especially in the eastern part.