

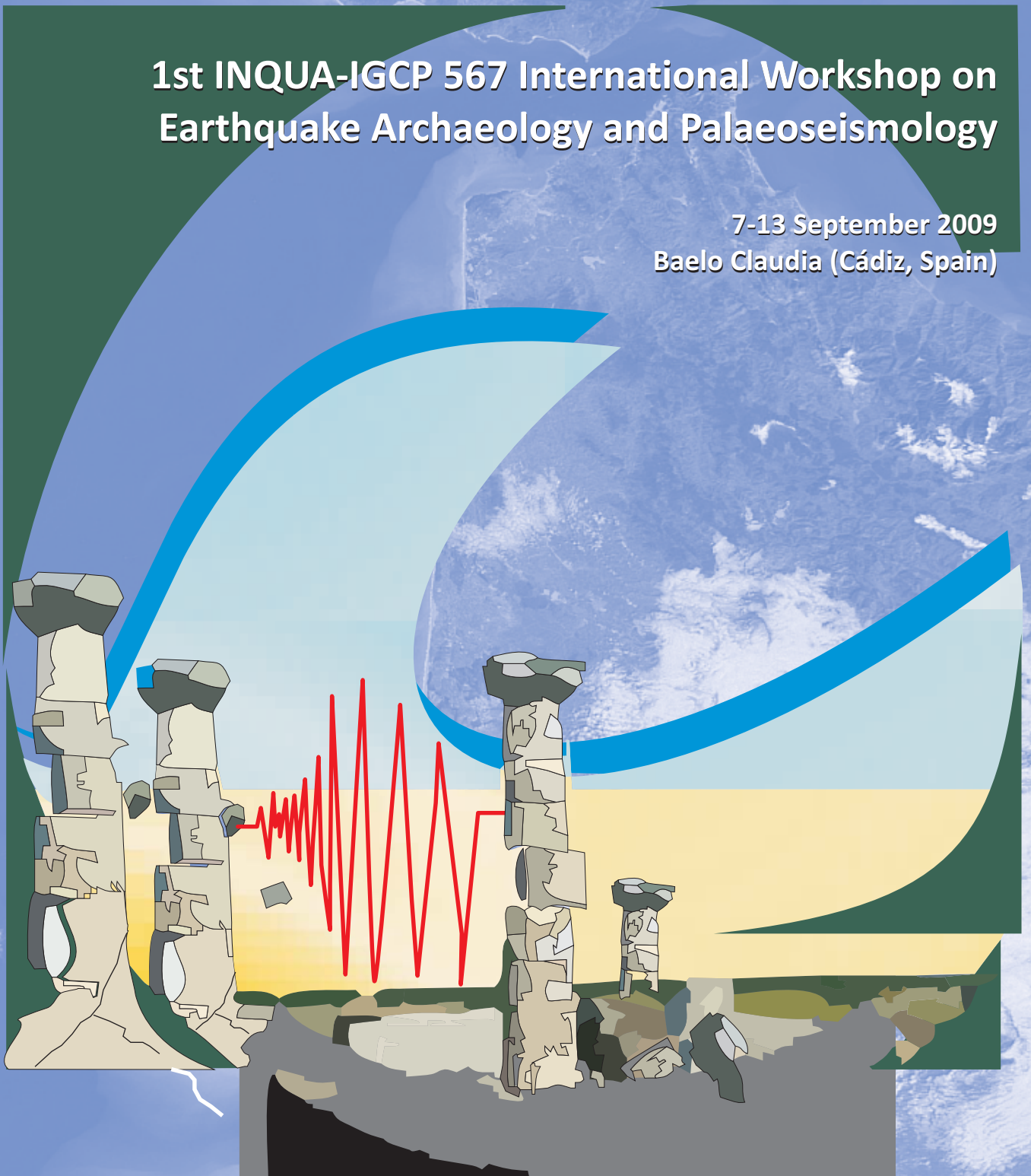
Archaeoseismology and Palaeoseismology in the Alpine-Himalayan Collisional Zone

Editors

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GEOARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF THE DESTRUCTION AND ABANDONMENT OF A FORTIFIED VILLAGE IN ASTURIAS IN THE 2ND CENTURY AD: CHAO SAMARTÍN (GRANDAS DE SALIME, ASTURIAS, SPAIN)

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Abstract: Chao Samartín's origin as a human settlement goes back to the Bronze Age and was definitively abandoned at the end of the 2nd century A.D. In the proposed communication we will present the arguments of geological, orographical and archaeological kind which allow us to consider, for the first time in the geographical and cultural area of the peninsular northwestern proto-history, a disaster of seismic origin as the reason for the destruction and later abandonment of a human settlement. It is, at the same time, the most ancient evidence in this region of a seismic activity which has been reactivated in the last decades.

Key words: Hillfort, Iron Age, Roman settlement, Earthquake.

INTRODUCTION

The ruins of Chao Samartín are located in Castro (Fig.1 and 2), a village about 6 km from Grandas de Salime, capital of the council (Prov. of Asturias, Spain).

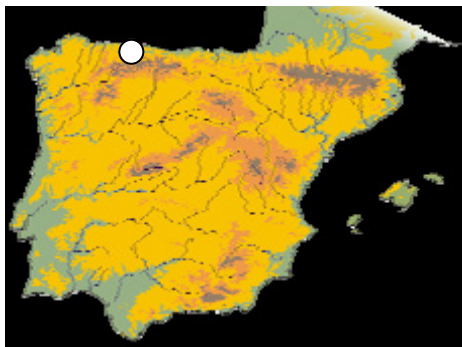


Fig. 1: Chao Samartin location

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



Fig. 2: Chao Samartín, an aerial view

During the Iron Age the defences, as a consequence of successive destructions, 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 bigger size for community services.

In Roman times (1st to 2nd century AD) it gets the status of administrative centre, probably the capital of the *civitas Ocela*. 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.

AN EARTHQUAKE REASON FOR THE LATER ABANDONMENT OF SETTLEMENT?

The context which characterizes this episode becomes particularly significant because of the generalized collapse of the buildings and the abundance of goods trapped under the debris (Fig.3). An exceptional richness in a cultural atmosphere – late Iron Age and early Romanization – in which household goods are scarce and not very diverse.



Fig. 3: Wall collapsed on the square

The stratigraphic sequence (Fig. 4) formed against the indigenous walls reveals that the same massive collapse took place on several occasions during the centuries previous to the Roman conquest which Augustus completed in 19 BC. Its effects can also be traced in the wide range of fossilized mural pathologies on the walls which set up the net of indigenous constructions in the settlement during the Iron Age (Fig. 5).

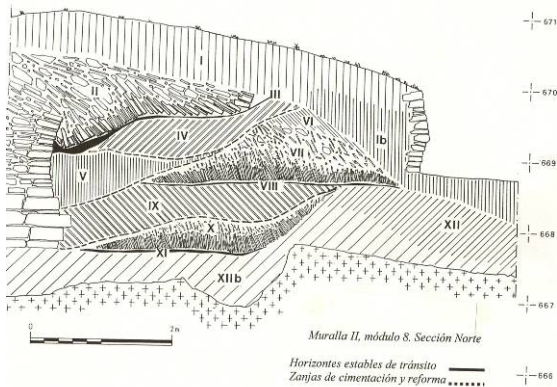


Fig. 4: Sucesive massive collapse of indigenous walls

The site lies on an area of well-known seismic activity as consequence of the reverse fault located at a depth of 15 km in the area delimited by the towns of Triacastela, Becerreá and Sarria, in the province of Lugo.



Fig. 5: The last roman wall is fall down on the ditch

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