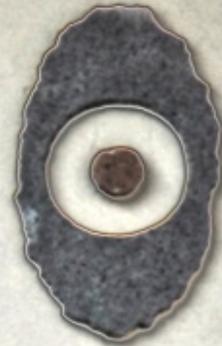


MIICEN



P U E R T O D E L A C R U Z

ARQUEOLÓGICO





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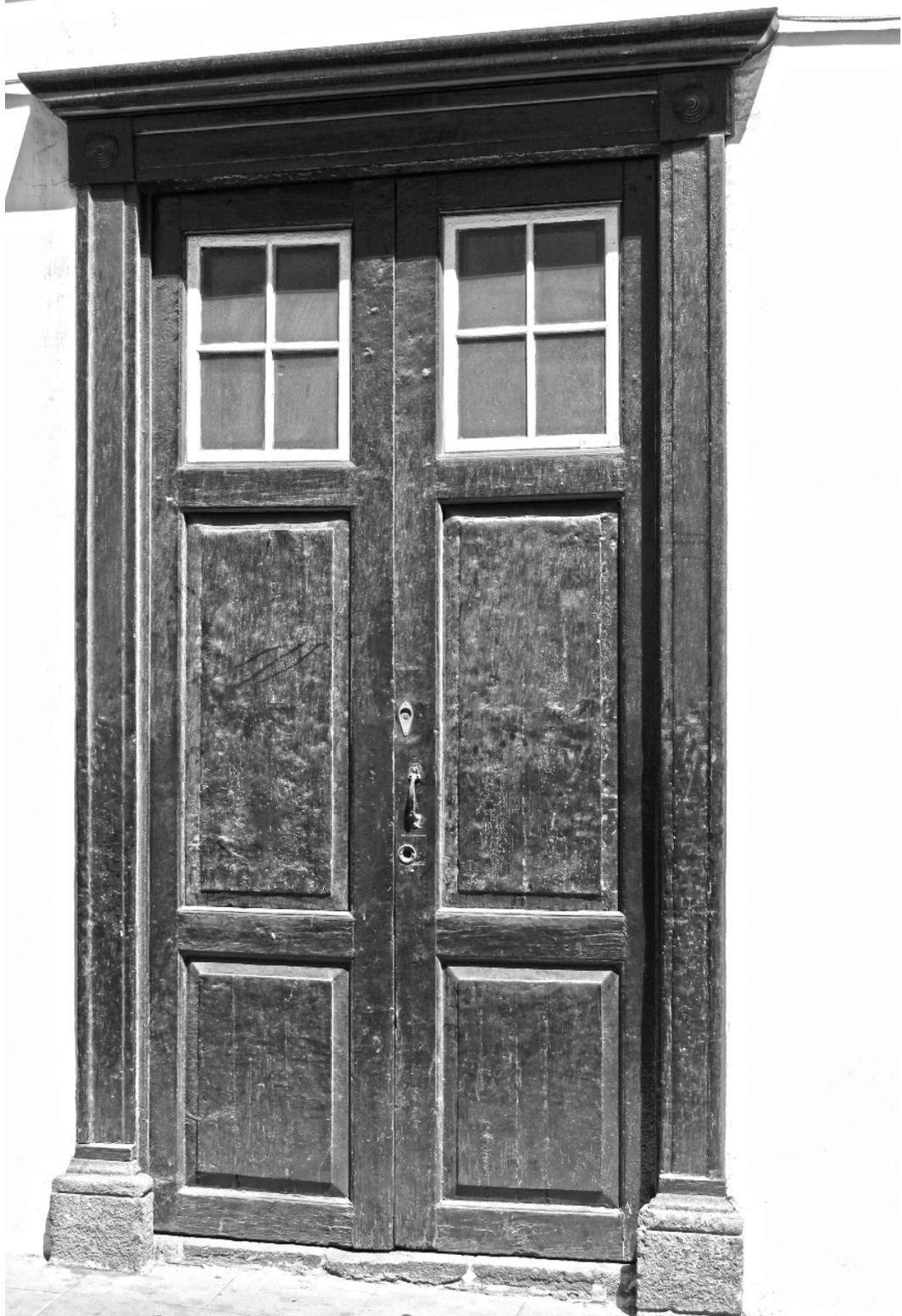


//Nowadays, Puerto de la Cruz museum of Archaeology  
is one of the town's leading cultural attractions//

## Past and present

On the 29th of May, 1991, this Museum first opened its doors to the public. Although this museum is not as old as the others, its history goes back to the 1950's when it was linked to a long-standing institution of this town; the "Canary Island Institute of Hispanic Studies", and especially with one of the two museums that the Institute opened in 1953 as a support for its cultural activities; the "Luis Diego Cuscoy" Hall of Canary Island Archaeology. This museum remained open to the public until 1958 and became a major attraction for both the local population and for visiting tourists. It did an important job of protecting and disseminating our ancestral heritage.





# HALL I

Where the subtly highlight backed clay objects take on a life of their own

Among Tenerife`s prehistoric cultural manifestations the materialistic remains are without a doubt the main source of information in order to get to know the way of life its inhabitants. These times witnesses created by our ancestors represent a live-like expression of their community, the heritage that allows a better comprehension and in most cases the only document that allows us to have any knowledge about them. Together with the stone objects, bones, shells, leather, wood or fibers, the ceramic stands out due to the variety of types produced, its abundance, and its resistance through time and for the immense amount of information which is obtained from them, even analyzing small fragments.

**// All these factors have contributed to classify it like one of the most important source of document for the reconstruction of the past //**



We know that our ancestors manufactured their receptacles, ornaments and ceramic amulets, but ... with what, how and for what reason? Some basic questions that we have, so far, been able to answer in this exhibition. We will see, starting from the raw clay – the prime material used in pottery - a progressive course of each and every step used to transform this raw clay into collars, burial urns, a Guatimac or a gunache vase, also termed "gánigo".

Through its own interpretation and with help of a set of imaginary hands, which give life to the clay, this museum takes us on a fascinating journey through some aspects of everyday life, the magic and the death of the Guanche population.



## HALL II

### "Clay and fire"

What is clay?

From a chemical point of view, clay is made up of two components that Mother Nature offers in abundance: clay minerals and sand. Technologically, we can define clay as a solid, inorganic, natural and non-metallic substance that, when water is added to it, turns into a paste that can be moulded when cold and which hardens irreversibly when heated with fire.

**//Clay, the raw material of ceramics, is our starting point for finding out what the Guanches used and how they created jars and other ceramic objects.//**

Where does it come from?

The deposits of potter's clay on the Island have been formed by a complex erosive process of the volcanic materials they are composed of. The action of sudden changes in temperature, rain, wind and, in some areas, ice, lead to a continuous degradation of the rock, breaking it down into tiny fragments. These will then be carried by water or wind and deposited elsewhere, far from their place of origin, where they undergo profound changes over a period of hundreds of thousands, or even millions of years, giving rise to clay pits or quarries, traditionally known here on Tenerife as "barreros" (mud pits)

The Mud Pits

When the terrain is eroded, the mud pits are left exposed, and they are easily recognised by the fact that not much vegetation grows on them and the surface has a characteristic cracked appearance. Some of our best-known clay pits, like Chiviaya, Igueste de Candelaria, or Anochesa, in Guimar, have been used from Guanche times, right up to the present day.



## Potter's clay

Unfortunately, even today, we know very few of the details of how the clay was extracted and prepared by the Guanches, or how they made their ceramics. Reconstructing the process of making Guanche ceramics requires the support we have been given from the Traditional Pottery Of Tenerife, as we know for certain that its origins lie in the primitive ways of making pottery. That is why the traditional terms for describing the different steps in pottery are used to explain the process.

# P R O C E S S E S

**1** **C o l l e c t i n g**  
The Guanches probably got their supplies of clay from flash floods and run-offs where water and rain erodes the surface, exposing the clay below. The clay could have been collected by using some tough, hard instrument, like a stick or a stone, to break up compact deposits.

**4** **M i x i n g**  
The clean clay powder is then mixed with water to moisten it, and it is protected from direct sunlight and drafts by covering the moistened clay with leather skins or matting. The Guanches left the clay like this for a while,

**2** **D r y i n g**  
Once the virgin clay had been collected the Guanches would carry it back to where they lived (maybe in a leather pack or a basket). So far, archaeologists have found no special areas that could have been used as a potter's workshop, like those found in other cultures, so it is assumed that pottery was made almost anywhere in the settlement. Once in the settlement, the clay was spread out on the ground for the sun to evaporate off the moisture it contained.

**3** **C r u s h i n g a n d c l e a n i n g**  
The next step was to crush, or grind, the clay with a heavy object like a wooden stake or a stone, until it was ground down almost to powder, so that it could be cleaned of any impurities it contained – weeds or large stones – as the Guanches knew from experience that the smaller stones play an important role; they facilitate water evaporation and prevent the sudden bangs caused when the clay contracts when fired. Technically, these small stones are known as 'degreasants'.



# M O D E L I N G P R O C E S S E S

**5** **M o d e l i n g**  
Modeling itself was done by using two different procedures, although the two procedures were combined to make a single piece in most cases. One procedure was to hollow out and stretch a lump of clay into the desired shape. The other procedure would be to build a piece up by adding successive cylinders, or sausages, of clay to a base that had been prepared beforehand.

**8** **F i n i s h i n g**  
The finishing of Guanche pottery was done to differing degrees, although all finishing has a double purpose. On the one hand, it covers the porous surface of the pot, making it as impermeable as it needs to be; depending on what it is going to be used for; while, on the other hand, it enhances the pot's appearance by making it even all over.

**6** **L i f t i n g**  
To build up the sides, the piece is stretched upwards until the walls are as thick or as fine as the potter wants them to be. This can be done either entirely by hand, or with the aid of a tool.

**9** **D e c o r a t i o n**  
Typically, Guanche pottery has very little decoration, with what little there is concentrated around the lip and the outer rim, and less frequently on the sides. There are exceptions to this rule, such as a few bowls and plates that are decorated on the inside. The techniques used for decorating pottery were very simple, consisting of making impressions, cuts or fluting in the clay with sharpened pieces of bone, small pieces of wood, or just their fingers and nails. This is how Guanche potters drew lined, dotted, spiral-shaped or solid designs on their work.

**7** **M a k i n g b a s e s**  
The roundest or pointed bases that most Guanche pots have, were made by working the inside first, leaving the outside with a flat base until the last moment, when this would be gradually removed to leave the desired shape.

**10** **A d d i n g h a n d l e s ,  
s p o u t s , e t c .**  
Handles, spouts or embossing was made from the fresh clay paste, either by pressing a piece of clay to the wall and then molding this into shape, or by first shaping the handle, spout, etc. and then pressing it onto the pot.

**//All Guanche pottery, like the pottery of all the Canary Islands, was made entirely by hand, without a wheel, but with the aid of primitive tools like sticks, pebbles and skins. //**





## P R O C E S S E S

## 11 D r y i n g

Once a pot had been finished, it would be dried. This was done to eliminate all the water that had been added to the clay to make the paste for modeling. This moisture was evaporated off. In order to prevent the pot from cracking during this stage and from breaking when the clay was cooked later on, drying had to be done slowly, avoiding direct sunlight and drafts.

## 12 K n e a d i n g

The aim of all these tasks was to make a homogenous paste for kneading. Depending on how much clay was going to be worked at any one time, the Guanches would knead the clay with their hands or their feet. They would stir and squeeze the clay to eliminate all the tiny air bubbles in it, turning it into a paste that was ready for modeling.

//The baking process was made of three stages: pre-heating, baking and cooling. The aim of all three steps was to avoid sudden changes in the temperature that could crack or shatter the pottery.//



# P R O C E S S E S

## 13 B a k i n g

The pottery making process was concluded by baking the pot, known on the Island as “cooking”. This is a vital link, as it will determine the success or failure of the entire process. Raw clay is so fragile that one cannot really talk of a solid piece of tough ceramics; in other words a pot that can be used; until it comes out of the fire.

///It is believed that the cooking process used by the Guanches was direct baking, in open-air fires, although the possibility that they dug shallow pits or used small caves as kilns has not been ruled out. ///

### Setting fire

The baking process started with the preparation of the site and with the collection of enough wood from the surrounding area. The wood was used to prepare a bed on which the unfired pots were carefully placed. These were then covered with another layer of wood.

### Lighting the fire

The kiln was pre-heated by lighting small bundles of twigs, adding larger and larger twigs and branches as these catch light. This way the fire is gradually brought alight and built up to the temperature needed for baking the clay (between 700 and 800°C). When the pottery is almost baked, then no more fuel is added to the fire.

### Pottery at last

The baking process is concluded with the gradual cooling of the kiln. The Guanches probably knew when the pots were ‘cooked’ by their colour, or by the typical ‘metallic’ ring of baked clay. Cooling was the final step in making the pottery. The chain is completed when the Guanche potter removed the fruit of his work from the cinders, having breathed new life into the clay. These pots then became an integral part of their everyday life.



# HALL III

## “Pots“

### The ceramic figure Ajuar Guanche

The Pueblo Guanche manufactured ganigos or recipients of clay which they used in activities related to the transportation, storage and preparation of their food consumption: store butter, milk, water or other foods .... These recipients are characterized, in general, by their spherical, ovoid, ellipsoidal or cylindrical forms; the bases are curved, pointed or flat; some were made with handles and were especially noted for the sobriety of its decoration.

### Preparing the Food

Among ganigos and the heat of the fire, the Guanche women were responsible for the cooking washing, shelling and kneading, roasting, boiling or stewing, they were daily tasks for which they required more containers. The main characteristics of these pots should be: not too heavy to be handled with ease; small or tall, a rather wide mouth to remove what was inside; and of course, heat resistant.

### Forms and applications

It is more than likely that different types of ganigos which are presented by Guanches obey specific uses. Although, analysis of functionality have not been carried out yet they have been linked to specific benefits through the study of different forms and sizes, comparing them also with similar pieces of traditional pottery created for a particular purpose, and ultimately simply exercising com-

**//They used pots and pans in which they prepared their meals, made of mud and they called them - ganigos.//**



# P O T S

## The Table is laid

The oval or spherical bowls, plates and small recipients would have been the Guanche equivalent of the trays, plates, basins and cups that make up our crockery or table wear. When food was prepared and eaten in groups – the family or with the whole community – it was eaten from the same pots it was made in, because that custom of several people sharing a single recipient was maintained on Tenerife up until very recent times, although the possibility of the Guanches serving food

## The larder is full

The Guanche people raised livestock (goats and sheep), farmed, collected products from the land and fished for food. Maintaining a good supply of these products, either raw, cooked or processed, meant that food was available at all times, especially when there were shortages. Storing and conserving food, therefore, were fundamental activities. The use of large or small pots of different types, depending on what had to be stored, could have solved the problems caused by storing food products in wooden recipients, baskets or the smell of skins, which, although they are lighter and easier to car-

## Serving

The tasks of collecting, preparing, cooking and eating always require food to be passed from one recipient to another, so small bowls or pots could have been used to make this task easier. These may have been made specifically for the purpose, or they may have used the recipients that were best suited to the task, from those that made up the general inside another, larger recipient, with one hand. Sometimes, especially with liquids, these recipients would have a handle or a spout to make it easier to pour the liq-



# P O T S

Other uses: unguents, poultices...

Herbs, bark, roots, seeds, berries and many other products, just as they are found in Nature, or prepared in infusions, unguents and poultices, were probably used by the Guanches for medicinal purposes if we consider that this kind of product has always been used for curing some conditions, and continue to be used, on the island. Heat resistant pots of different sizes, closed for infusions and open ones for unguents and poultices, could have been used for this purpose.

Among herdsmen and pots

The Guanches were herdsmen who supported this activity with collecting and farming. The system used consisted of keeping their livestock in a state of semi-freedom, based on the essential seasonal migration from the coast up to the mountains – vertical migration in search of new pastures.

The herdsman's gear

Although it is true that the specific use and the shape of different pots is closely related, sometimes out of necessity, the same pot can be used for very different purposes. This is the case of the gear used by the Guanche herdsmen, which was carefully kept in what were known as hideouts. The hideout is one of the archaeological manifestations that is truly representative of the seasonal migration from the coast up to the mountains, undertaken in the dry season.

Although they are to be found on other islands of the Canary Archipelago, these hideouts are both more abundant and in a better state of conservation on Tenerife.



## P O T S

Due to the fact that camps along the migratory route were temporary, Guanche herdsmen had to limit what they took with them to what was strictly necessary. Excessively fragile objects, and ones that were uncomfortable to carry along steep or difficult paths, were left concealed in a hideout from one year to the next.

A typical hideout would be on the edge of a lava flow on flat ground; a small hollow in the ground, with a single opening, generally covered with one or more stones. Inside, the herdsmen carefully hid some of their belongings.

There would be used for milking, holding milk, cheese, etc., to carry water and for preparing and eating food. Other objects would occasionally be hidden along with these pots, such as mill stones, obsidian or basalt tools, shepherd's crooks or spears.

//These hideouts would conceal pots, a single one, upside down usually, or between 2 and 6, one on top of another.//



# HALL IV

## “AMPHORAE”

“The most striking and uncommy on forms of Guanche pottery include what are known as amphorae or amphoroldes.”

The characteristics of these pots are:



Their large size

Their large capacity

The peculiarity of their elongated forms

They have pointed bases, with a bulge at the tip

They are finely decorated, with a few exceptions.

They almost always have flat, band-shaped handles half way up their sides.



Historically, from the beginning of time and practically up to the present day, records have shown that this sort of recipient was designed for carrying liquids. There is no objective reason to think they were used for any other purpose in the Guanche civilization. They may have been used for storing water or milk as well, or even for some semi-solid product like lard made from goats or sheep.



# HALL V

## “CLAY AND MAGIC”

Surrounded by a Mother Nature that was inexplicable to them, the Guanches were overawed by the immense power that made the stars turn in the sky above them, bringing them day and night, the gift of rain, or the desolation of drought, the misery of hunger, or the delights of abundance, life, or death ...

To explain how they fitted into this universe of enigmatic and uncontrollable forces, the Guanches, like so many other pre-historic societies, resorted to a whole world of rites, taboos, myths and legends that gave to their magic – religious beliefs.

Religion enabled our ancestors to explain in practical terms, not only how they fitted into this amazing and powerful world, and their physical and spiritual relations with it, but also their social and economic organization.

The different orders of their everyday lives (work, sexuality, social events) were governed by religion, and their funeral rites allow us to see how the dead were considered as an image of the living. Death was merely a metaphor for life.

“The sacred and the everyday aspects, life and death, all formed part of a single world, with no divisions among them, for the Guanche population”



## Clay jewellery

Every day domestic objects could be given a different meaning, depending on the context they were used in. This ambivalence of meanings can be clearly seen in the necklaces of clay beads, elements of personal adornment used in everyday life, but which were mainly found in burial trousseaus.

## Shell jewellery?

As with clay ones, beads made from mollusc shells raise the same questions. As can be seen from the discovery of 541 of these beads – at a single site and with no other associated archaeological material – on Ladera de Martianez (Puerto de la Cruz); an important cliff area that encloses several cultural sites, such as the Cueva de las Cazoletas cave. There is one singular piece that deserves special mention, known locally as the “joyerito” (the little jewel). This is a work formed by two large limpet shell (*patella candoi crenata*), making a recipient with a lid, holding 70 small beads made from different kinds of mollusc shell. This was found in the town of Quinta Roja (Santa Ursula), along with other Guanche remains of different materials and for different purposes, although most were household articles.

“Were they simple ornaments?

Did they indicate the sex, age of social status of the dead

person? Did they have a ritual or magical meaning?”



# The Guatimac

We have barely received images and representations of the Guanche religions concepts. Baring this in mind, the small clay figure known as Guatimac has become an exception in the islands prehistory. Found in the year 1885 in a crack of a cave in Barranco de Herques.

It was wrapped in a piece of lead-er. This figure of human traits has a whole in its neck area used to be hung around a neck. Maybe it was around a Guanarteme's (King) neck? What does it symbolize? Is it an idol, divine representation, genius or foregather? Is it a lucky charm? The interpretation is still open.



## HALL VI

“Recreation of a Guanche burial cave”

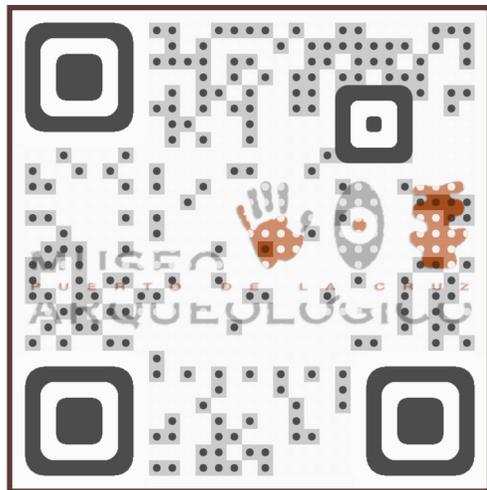
Pots and death: a long journey into the afterlife

A natural cave was the site chosen by the Guanches for burying their dead, both individually and collectively. Cavities in lava flows, hollows in the sides of gorges, or any other crevice that would hold a body, could be transformed into a funeral site, protected from the outside world by a dry-stone wall. Depending on their social status, the bodies of the dead would be subjected to one of several possible processes of conservation (mummification), or they were left exactly as they were in the burial site (inhumation). In either case, they were always protected from the floor of the cave, either by a bed of plants, lain on stones, or on top of several layers of different soil. A kind of trousseau was often left with the dead person, which varied remarkably in variety and wealth from one burial to another. The purpose of the trousseau was to provide the deceased with everything he would need on the long journey into the afterlife. There would be skins used as shrouds, obsidian knives, bone punches, food offerings and outstanding pottery items: necklace beads and pots. All these were everyday objects that symbolized the transformation of death into a metaphor for life itself.

**“This way the dead would always remain among the living for the Guanches.”**







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## OPENING TIMES

Monday : Closed  
 Tuesday - Saturday  
 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.  
 5 p.m. - 9 p.m.  
 Sunday  
 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Puerto de la Cruz  
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