

THE HOUR OF DEATH: PUNIC BURIALS 525-25 BC

This room charts the evolution of Punic burials in Ibiza during the Early Period (525-425 BC), the Middle Period (425-300 BC), when the site achieved its greatest splendour, and the Late Period (300-25 BC).

EARLY PUNIC PERIOD (525-425 BC)

In the second half of the sixth century BC, new people—this time, Punic—began to arrive at Ibiza and mingle with the existing Phoenician population. This led to changes in funerary rites, such as the introduction of burial interments, a greater quantity and variety of grave goods, and the appearance of a new type of grave: the hypogeum.

A hypogeum is an underground tomb carved out of the rock consisting of a rectangular entrance pit of varying depth (between two and three metres) and a square burial chamber. The opening that led from the shaft to the chamber was sealed with a large stone slab and the pit itself was entirely filled with earth.

Punic grave goods were much more copious and varied than their Phoenician counterparts. They typically included headdresses and personal ornaments (bead necklaces and other pieces of jewellery), objects of magical or religious significance (ostrich eggs, terracotta items, amulets, scarabs, etc.), and pottery containers for liquids (milk, wine and water) and solid substances (fish, fowl, small mammals, fruit and pulses), which were placed next to the body.

The hypogea at 10-12 Calle León date from this period and must have belonged to a group of new Punic settlers who were buried in this novel way near the Phoenician necropolis. Hypogea from the early fifth century BC have also been found in the northwest and southeast areas, confirming the expansion of the necropolis during this period. In addition to hypogea, rectangular pit graves carved out of the rock face and with steps at the sides to support the stone slab lids were also used for burial purposes and have yielded similarly copious and varied grave goods.

Cremation interments in pit graves and small holes in the ground persisted during this period but with variations in the funeral procedure and the introduction of some of the grave goods typically found in burial interments, which indicates that the autochthonous funerary customs gradually evolved towards Punic forms.

MIDDLE PUNIC PERIOD (425-300 BC)

During the second half of the fifth century and the first quarter of the fourth century BC, the island population grew as new waves of Punic settlers arrived. Meanwhile, social changes led to a democratisation of access to the afterlife, which meant that every citizen now had the right to a grave.

As a direct consequence of this, the necropolis experienced considerable growth and gradually spread over the entire north slope of the Puig des Molins hill, eventually occupying a surface area of more than five hectares. The original cemetery was systematically occupied by new Punic graves, which were either superimposed on or broke up the old Phoenician tombs. It is estimated that more than 2,000 hypogea were created during this period alone.

Until the second half of the fourth century BC, two different types of burial interments continued to coexist: the collective hypogea (although chambers containing a single burial, or at least a single sarcophagus, have been found), and individual pit graves with or without a sarcophagus.

In the late fifth and early fourth centuries BC, cremation interments were much less frequent. They took the form of cremations *in situ* or secondary burials in which the ashes were placed in individual trench graves or in urns, either two-handled jars of the Eb. 64 type or "urns with ear-shaped handles", which have been found in abundance throughout the Iberian world.

LATE PUNIC PERIOD (300-25 BC)

By the late fourth century BC hypogea were no longer being built and the existing ones were reused during this period as pantheons and ossuaries. They continued to contain terracotta pieces, vitreous paste vases and amulets, although to a lesser extent. By contrast, individual trench graves became increasingly common, sometimes carved out of the rock but more often than not dug in the ground. Burial remained the habitual form of interment, although several cremation interments from this period have been found. During the third century BC, fewer burial offerings were deposited in graves and usually consisted of no more than the odd pottery object associated with libation rites or the anointing of the corpse.

In the final quarter of the second century and the early first century BC, the progressive assimilation of the Roman state structure gave rise to a series of changes in Punic-Ebusitan society. Hypogea continued to be reused during this period, albeit to a much a lesser extent, but most corpses were simply enshrouded and placed in coffins. The most common burial interments were pit graves dug in flat areas at the foot of the hill. In the case of infant burials, amphorae were used as coffins or the corpses were placed in trench graves, accompanied by an object of personal adornment or a symbolic element for protection. Cremation was becoming popular again but remained a minority practice in comparison with inhumation burials. As in the previous period, the cremated bones were placed in pottery containers or funerary urns, which were then buried in holes in the ground or, occasionally, deposited in the chambers of existing hypogea.

In the second and first centuries BC, grave offerings were very sparse but they included: imported Campanian ware, Ebusitan ware coated with engobe and Hellenistic unguentaria. Bead necklaces, amulets and the odd coin are occasionally found, but many interments are characterised by the total absence of grave goods. While this is a clear indication that funerary rites were changing, it probably also points to the impoverishment of Ebusitan society.