

SIT TIBI TERRA LEVIS: DEATH IN ROMAN TIMES AND LATE ANTIQUITY 25 BC-700 AD

This room describes Roman funerary rituals in Ibiza from the beginning of the Early Imperial Period (25 BC) to the end of Late Antiquity (700 AD).

FUNERARY RITES

According to Roman custom, when death was imminent relations and close friends would gather around the dying person's bed to comfort him. The nearest relative present would give him a last kiss to catch the soul, which the Romans believed left the body with a person's final breath, and close his eyes (*oculos premere*). Afterwards, everyone present called upon the dead by name (*conclamare*) and lamented him. The next step was to lift the body off the bed and place it on the ground (*deponere*), where they washed and anointed it with perfume. Various magical and religious objects were then placed beside the corpse to protect the deceased on his journey to the afterlife. Once the body had been placed in its tomb, the mourners held funeral banquets (*silicernium* or *refrigerium*) and poured libations of wine (*vinum repersum*) or water (*circumpotatio*).

Funerary epitaphs on stone slabs or blocks were essential for preserving the memory of the dead, although few have been discovered at Puig des Molins. Modern excavations have revealed that some disappeared during the early Middle Ages, when the largest pieces were broken up and reused in Hispano-Arabic constructions.

EARLY IMPERIAL PERIOD (25 BC-150 AD)

Burial and cremation continued to coexist during this period. Burial offerings were Romanised and consisted almost exclusively of items imported from Italy (*terra sigillata* ware, thin-walled vases, pear-shaped unguentaria, initially made of clay and later of blown glass, etc.). Meanwhile, the frequent presence of one or more coins in graves to pay Charon for safe passage across the River Styx indicates that Roman beliefs about the underworld had begun to take hold.

Cremation was the most common funerary practice. The body was placed on a pyre inside a coffin. Relatives, clients and acquaintances of the deceased placed objects which he had found pleasing in life inside the coffin. They opened and closed his eyes one last time, gave him a farewell kiss, and a relative lit the funeral pyre, decorated with flowers and perfume unguentaria. When the flames had died out, the embers were extinguished with wine and the remaining bone fragments were gathered and stored in an urn which, in some cases, was placed inside one of the old Punic hypogea. However, the remains were more commonly buried in simple holes dug in the ground.

Punic hypogea were also reused for burial interments. In such cases, the entrance shaft was partially or completely excavated and the new remains placed inside, but the original burial chamber was rarely opened or disturbed.

MIDDLE IMPERIAL PERIOD (150-300 AD)

This stage was characterised by the exclusive practice of burial interments, as cremations ceased to be performed in most of the empire's territories from the mid-second century AD. We do not know exactly what triggered such a profound, widespread transformation of funerary practices, although nothing suggests that it was the product of a significant change in religious beliefs. The only type of burial site from this period found at Puig des Molins is the pit grave, whose sides were usually lined with stone slabs or thin walls of stone held together by clay or mortar. Three or more flat stone slabs were placed on top of the grave, and it was always aligned with the north-south axis.

The urban cemetery from this period only occupies the area from the lower slope of the hill to the plain below, and burial offerings are limited to a single piece of pottery or glass and a few objects for personal use or adornment. There are also a few cases of young children who were buried inside amphorae, which in turn were placed in a pit dug in the ground and an exceptional case of two children inside a lead coffin.

LATE IMPERIAL PERIOD AND LATE ANTIQUITY (300-700 AD)

Pit grave burials are the only type of interment documented during this period. They continued to be dug in the northern part of the site, where graves overlay the ruins of old Punic pottery workshops and houses from the third century AD. The only significant difference from the preceding period is the orientation of the tombs, which were invariably positioned east-west. Bodies were arranged so that the feet were at the east end and the head at the west, facing the rising sun. This change, which occurred in virtually every corner of the Roman Empire, is attributed to the increasingly powerful influence of eastern beliefs related to sun worship on Roman society. There is no evidence of Christian burials until well into the fifth century AD.

The pit graves, dug slightly larger than the corpses, were simple holes in the ground, pits delimited by a row of stones, or more elaborate trenches lined with flat stone slabs, generally of undressed local limestone. The tombs were covered with several flat slabs. Amphorae continued to be used for infant burials, although the number of documented cases is very low. It is a remarkable piece of column which was partially emptied to turn it into a child's coffin.

