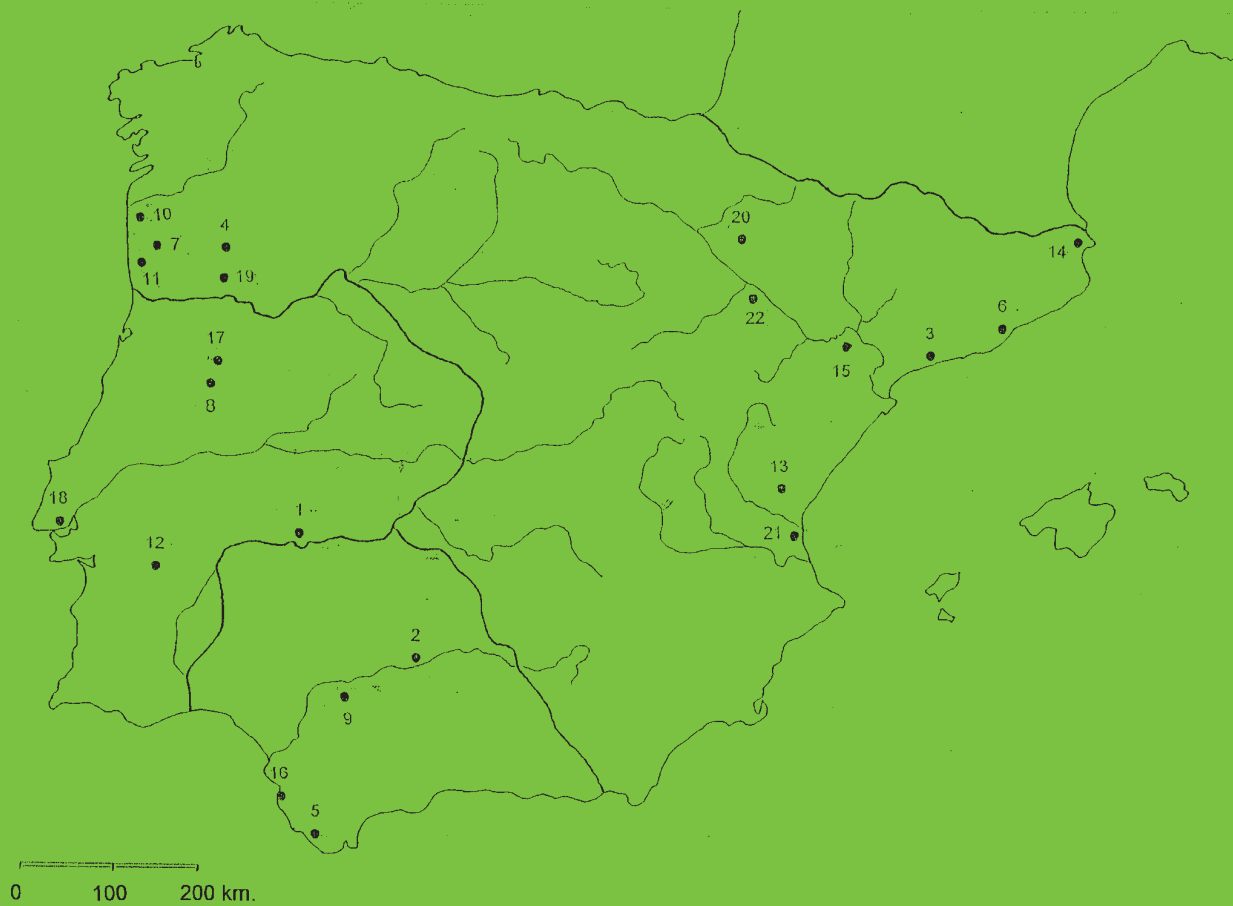


Death in Roman Iberia: Acculturation, resistance and the diversity of beliefs and practices



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Figure 1
Map of Hispania showing the provincial boundaries and sites mentioned in the text

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 Emerita Augusta | 12 Eborac |
| 2 Corduba | 13 Edeta |
| 3 Tarraco | 14 Emporiae |
| 4 Aquae Flaviae | 15 Fabara |
| 5 Baelo Claudia | 16 Gades |
| 6 Barcino | 17 Lamas de Moledo |
| 7 Bracara Augusta | 18 Felicitas Iulia Olisipo |
| 8 Cabeço das Fráguas | 19 Panoias |
| 9 Carmo | 20 Sabada |
| 10 Cidade da Âncora | 21 Valencia |
| 11 Cidade de Terroso | 22 Zaragoza (Caesaraugusta) |

1. Introduction

The conquest of the Iberian Peninsula and the introduction of Roman provincial government brought important changes to all spheres of indigenous society, including funerary beliefs and practices. Under the influence of Rome, Iberia would experience a process of cultural transformation, or Romanisation, with far-reaching consequences. However, its effects were unevenly spread. While in some areas Romanisation became deep rooted, in others its impact was only superficially felt and indigenous

cultural forms tended to persist. In parts of the North and Northwest an element of cultural resistance to Romanisation appears to have expressed itself in the survival of certain aspects of pre-Roman indigenous culture, such as language and religion.

The length of time it took to subdue the entire region, from the start of the Second Punic War in 218 to the end of the Cantabrian War in 16 B.C.E., must have contributed to the slow pace of

Romanisation in certain areas. However, after total conquest was finally achieved under Augustus, Rome was able to maintain the *pax Romana* in the region with a small military presence.¹ Until the third century C.E. there were no major threats to Roman rule. Where resistance occurred, it does not seem to have taken on the form of a conscious, aggressive response to Roman government. If that had been the case the Romans would not have been averse to use any means necessary, even brutal force, to crush any resistance.² The *pax Romana* was upheld for most of the period from the first to the fourth centuries C.E. The first two centuries, especially, were a time of unbroken peace and prosperity in the Hispaniae.³

An alternative explanation for the survival of pre-Roman cultural elements may be found in the nature of pre-Roman indigenous society. The indigenous peoples of Iberia were of varied ethnic affiliation and at different stages of development when they came into contact with Rome. The South and Southeast had been exposed to Rome for a long period of time, and before that to Greek, Phoenician and Carthaginian influence. The peoples of the South were culturally heterogeneous and more open to change. They lived in an area where different cultural elements had interacted since the earliest phases of Romanisation in the second century B.C.E. Communities of the northern regions had been influenced by the cultures of Continental Europe. In the north of the Peninsula, especially in northern Lusitania and Tarraconensis, the persistence of pre-Roman cultural features was much stronger. This region was the last to be incorporated into the Roman Empire and, contrary to Baetica or southern Lusitania, here there was little or no immigration from other areas of the Roman world until well after the conquest. The main vehicles for Romanisation in the region had

been the recruitment of auxiliary troops for the Roman army. Military service promoted Romanisation of the army recruit who, upon completion of service, received a grant of land and citizenship. Rome's attitudes toward her conquered peoples also added a contributing factor to this uneven process of change. In the religious field, for example, it allowed local cults to continue observing the same practices as before, but with indigenous deities taking on a Roman name. The religion didn't change, instead it took on some attributes that made it appear more Roman. This situation is well illustrated by the numerous inscriptions commemorating local indigenous deities in the context of Roman provincial religion. This practice occurred not only in the Hispaniae but throughout the Roman commonwealth.

The creation of *coloniae* and *municipia* was instrumental to the Romanisation of indigenous society. This process of cultural transformation must have accelerated after the widespread granting of the *ius Latii* to Iberian communities by Vespasian (69-79). Urban centres became important vehicles for the spread of Roman culture where the provincial élite adopted *romanitas* and advertised it in their personal names, language and dress. The widespread use of Latin was instrumental in this process of acculturation. Strabo remarks that the Turdetanians, "...particularly those that live about the Baetis (Guadalquivir), have completely changed over to the Roman mode of life, not even remembering their own language any more." They had adopted *romanitas* so thoroughly that by his time most had become Latin Citizens.⁴ In due course distinctions between indigenous and Roman appeared less marked.

The main promoters of cultural change were the local resident élites, descendants of settlers from Rome and Italy, and free born Romanised

indigenous aristocrats, also known as the *togati*.⁵ While the former were especially influential in the *coloniae* founded by Rome, *togati* who met the wealth requirement filled the magistracies in the *municipia*. The Roman system allowed the provincial élite access to a political career, even at the highest levels of government.⁶ This process of social change and adoption of *Romanitas* can be traced in their gradual change of personal names from indigenous to Roman. In Iberia, their access to power was especially evident during the period of Flavian and Antonine rule (69-192), as was for North Africa and Syria during the Severan dynasty (193-235). At the forefront of Romanisation were numerous other wealthy provincials, adopting *Romanitas* and displaying its new aesthetics in their houses and tombs.

2. The Romanisation of Funerary Beliefs and Practices

Cremation burial was the most common form of funerary rite practised by the indigenous peoples of pre-Roman Iberia. After cremation on a funerary pyre the remains were usually deposited in a ceramic urn accompanied by funerary offerings. In some instances the cremated remains of the deceased were left buried *in situ*, that is, in the place where the ritual of cremation had taken place (Berrocal-Rangel 1992, Bravo 1994, Fabião 1998, Martín 1999, Pérez 1990, Silva & Gomes 1994). In areas of the south and southeast where Phoenician or Greek trading colonies had been established, inhumation was the main or only form of burial rite throughout the same period (Almagro 1955, Jones 1984, Sanchez 1992).

The Romans introduced a set of practices that reflected the beliefs of a new society where individuals advertised their new socio-political

(citizenship and administrative offices) and economic status. Even in death that social message was transmitted in the choice of their funerary monuments and epitaphs. Some of the changes were also related to Roman religious belief and law. Roman religion considered the dead as potentially dangerous (*res funesta*) which, together with practical issues of sanitation, forced the law to require burial of the dead away from the living. In Rome, the Law of the Twelve Tables, written in the fifth century B.C.E., forbade cremation and burial within the city walls. These had to take place outside the city's *pomerium*,⁷ a practice that was generally enforced until the Late Empire. Fear of defilement of the sacred burial grounds resulting from urban development must have also been one of the reasons behind this practice. The necropolis was thus a sacred place protected by law. Necropoleis were also places charged with ritual symbolism. They formed an intermediate boundary between the world of the living and that of the dead, where the last rituals of separation between the two worlds were performed.

During the Iron II period in the southwest of the Peninsula, the practice had been to locate the necropolis outside the

¹ From Augustus to Nero there were three legions stationed in Hispania Tarraconensis. By the time of Vespasian the force was reduced to a single legion, the VII Gemina stationed at Legio.

² As was the case with the Jewish rebellions of 66-73 in Judaea, 115-7 in Cyrenaica and Egypt, and again in 132-5 in Judaea.

³ The *pax Romana* in the Hispaniae was briefly broken towards the end of the 2nd century C.E., by raiding Mauri from Africa. However, their incursions into the Peninsula only seem to have affected southern Baetica.

⁴ Strabo, *Geography* 3.2.15.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ The Emperor Trajan (98-117) born 18th September 53 in Italica. Hadrian (117-138) was born in Rome but his father, a cousin of Trajan, was also a resident of Italica. Marcus Aurelius (161-180), was born in Rome, but his family was from the town of Ucubi, near Corduba. C. Scarre 1995, pp. 90-118.

⁷ The *pomerium* was the sacred boundary of a city. It was uncultivated and no constructions of any kind, including burials, could take place there. If a city expanded the *pomerium* was defined anew by the augurs.

settlement, at some distance towards the west (Berrocal-Rangel 1992). This practice may hint at a possible identification of the world of the dead with the setting sun. The tradition of cremation and burial at a distance from the settlement finds continuity in the Roman practice of burial outside settlements. There were, however, some exceptions to this custom. In the north-west of the Peninsula, in the territory of the Gallaeci, evidence for pre-Roman burial practices was found in some “castro” settlements, called *castellum* by the Romans (Hawkes 1984, Silva 1986, Silva & Gomes 1994). At the settlements of Cividade da Âncora, Caminha, and Cividade de Terroso, Póvoa do Varzim, Portugal, cremation burials in cinerary urns were found within the domestic space of the household, inside and outside the houses. The latter appears to be later in date and, at least at

levels of socio-political organisation where status was probably related to age and military achievement, rather than personal wealth (Berrocal-Rangel 1992: 292). This contrasts well with Late Republican and Imperial Roman society where differences in status tended to be related to personal wealth, and usually displayed in the rituals of death and tomb architecture.

The building of Roman funerary monuments obeyed to a plan, with special consideration given to the location of tombs in the necropolis. Because tombs were monuments of commemoration and remembrance, they were located along the *viae* leading out of the cities and rural settlements. However, tombs were not only places of burial, but could also convey a message to the living. In their role of message transmitters they also performed a

THE ROMANS INTRODUCED A SET OF PRACTICES THAT REFLECTED THE BELIEFS OF A NEW SOCIETY WHERE INDIVIDUALS ADVERTISED THEIR NEW SOCIO-POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STATUS. EVEN IN DEATH THAT SOCIAL MESSAGE WAS TRANSMITTED IN THE CHOICE OF THEIR FUNERARY MONUMENTS AND EPITAPHS

Cividade de Terroso, it was in use for some time after the Roman conquest of the region. Burial within the settlement, in close association with the domestic living space, contrasts strongly with the Roman practice of cremation and burial away from the settlement. If this form of burial continued for a period of time after the Roman conquest of the region, an element of cultural resistance to Romanisation is suggested. Except in areas that had been in contact with the Phoenicio-Punic world, such as the communities of the Upper Guadalquivir, few items of prestige were found in burials of Iron II period. Aside from some foreign luxury ceramics, jewellery and horse harness fittings, most graves were generally simple, unimpressive and similar to each other. This apparent egalitarian approach to death probably reflects low

social function, advertising the social status of deceased persons and their families. This was especially evident in the monumentality of some Roman funerary constructions.

Religious belief was undoubtedly instrumental in determining type of burial rite. From the second century B.C.E., in areas of the Iberian Peninsula directly under Roman control, three main religious traditions coexisted with each other: indigenous, Roman and Oriental. The latter had been present in areas of Phoenicio-Punic settlement since the early centuries of the first millennium B.C.E.

Roman attitudes to death were not homogenous. There was diversity of beliefs concerning death and the beyond. Even in the city of Rome, and

Italy, there was considerable variation. Rome inherited a collection of religious and funerary beliefs from other Mediterranean peoples who had been assimilated into her Empire. The Romans of the Late Republic placed their dead ancestors in the realm of the divine. Their spirits, grouped together and undifferentiated from each other, could be helpful to their living descendants if propitiated in the correct manner, or dangerous if abandoned by their kin. The *Lemures* and *Larvae* represented them in this latter capacity. The souls of the dead were identified as *Manes*, and from the time of Augustus onward funerary inscriptions refer to the deceased as *Dis Manibus*, sometimes with *Sacrum* added. Because of the potentially dangerous nature of the dead, proper burial rites were performed and the *Manes* propitiated with offerings of food and drink. They were thought to reside somewhere below ground in the vicinity of the tomb. Many believed that Somnus, the sleep of death, claimed the spirits of people, or that they were taken by the Parcae (the three Fates) into the subterranean kingdom of Pluto and Proserpina. Others even thought the spirit of the dead departed to the hemispheres and dwelled in the realm of the celestial bodies. In the Peninsula, from the first century C.E. onward, Oriental religions had also an impact on the funerary beliefs of certain sections of the population. This diversity of beliefs is well illustrated in the funerary iconography of Roman Iberia during the first two centuries C.E.

In the Roman Hispaniae, cremation was the most common form of burial rite practised until the later part of the second century C.E. The body of the deceased person would be taken to the necropolis and burnt on a pyre (*rogus*), at the place of cremation (*ustrinum*). The cremated bones would then be collected, sometimes washed with wine, and placed in a cinerary urn. *Busta* also

occur in some cemetery sites. In this form of burial the cremated remains were left *in situ*, that is, buried in the place where the cremation took place. These practices have been found throughout Roman Iberia. At Emporiae, on the Mediterranean coast of Tarraconensis, cremation burials occur from the earliest phase of Roman occupation, during the second century B.C.E. (Almagro 1955). The Republican necropolis, located to the south of the settlement, contains graves with cinerary urns and grave goods. Round mud-brick enclosures surrounding groups of graves probably indicate family groups. Some graves were equipped with stone platforms, probably the bases of statues or *arae*. During the first two centuries of Roman rule, the mixed Iberian, Greek⁸ and Roman inhabitants of the city were buried here, all practicing the same type of burial. The Early Imperial cemeteries were located to the south and west of the city. As during the Republic, the dead were cremated in *ustrina* and deposited in cinerary urns covered with lids. These were then buried in simple graves covered with loose stones or in stone-lined cists. Funerary goods such as fine table wares, food, jewellery, cosmetic boxes, oil lamps, and glass phials, are frequently recovered. The grave was then filled and marked by a stele, sometimes a superstructure of a monumental size. Cluster analysis of the graves in the necropolis at Emporiae identified groups of graves and different areas of burial according to economic factors rather than ethnicity (Jones 1988). This conforms well with a society where wealth was the key factor in promoting the social status of individuals. Some wealthier graves may have belonged to a family with dependants buried nearby. The necropolis at the coastal town of Baelo Claudia provides a good

⁸ Before the Roman conquest of the city, its Greek inhabitants had practised mostly inhumation while cremation was the burial rite of the indigenous sector of the population.

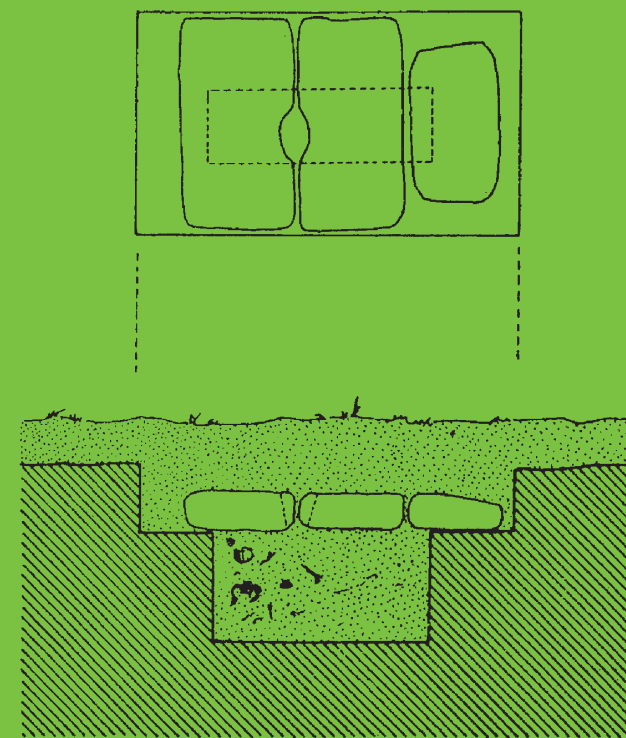
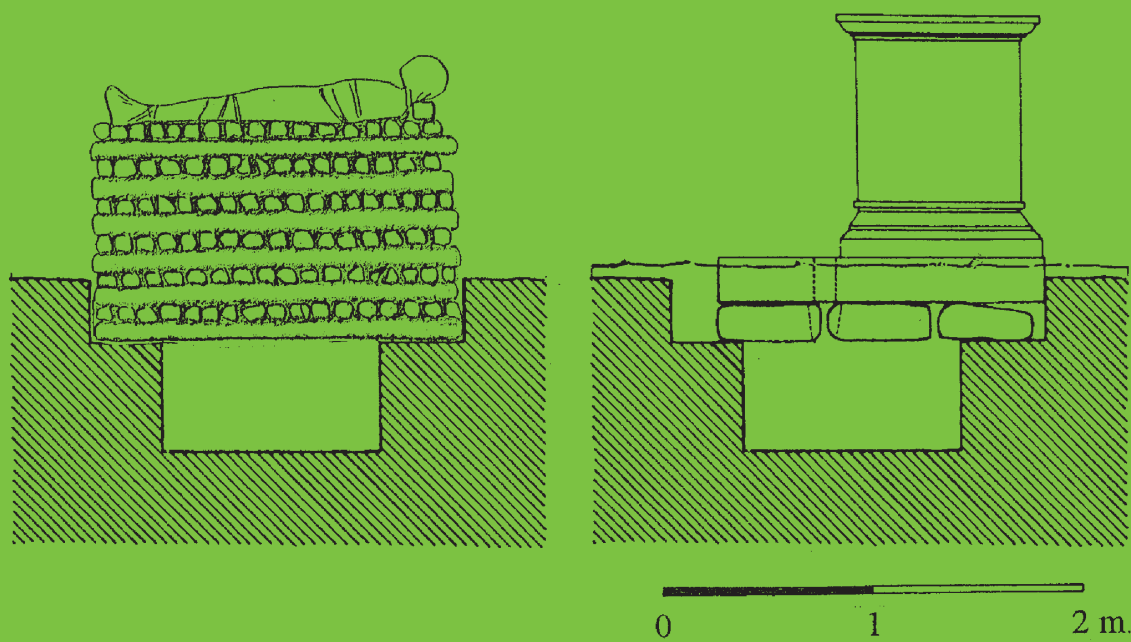


Figure 2
Reconstruction of an "in bustum" burial as practised in the Roman necropolis of Carmo. Notice the channel - used to pour libations - cut through the slabs covering the tomb

Adapted from G.E. Bonsor (1931) and M. Bendala Galàn (1976)

illustration of some of the funerary practices of Romanised Iberia. Situated east of Gades, the city was a trade and fish-processing centre,⁹ and had received the important status of *municipium civium Romanorum* probably from Claudius (41-54). It also had a large temple dedicated to Isis next to the *capitolium*, in the forum (Sillieres 1995: 31, 86-88, 96-102). It had two large necropoleis (Sillieres 1995: 189-202), one outside the eastern gate on the road to Carteia, and another located west in the direction of Gades. Cremation was the main form of funerary practice until the second century C.E., although some inhumations also took place. The west necropolis was located c. 300 m. from the west gate and had been in use since the principate of Augustus. It contained mostly cremations in cinerary urns, accompanied by the usual offerings. Coins were also found in some of the urns. These represented the coin placed with the corpse, often inside the mouth, as payment to Charon for the boat journey across the Styx, to the subterranean kingdom of Pluto and Proserpina. The east necropolis starts immediately outside the east gate of the

city, and contains a high density of graves. They consist mostly of cremation burials in cinerary urns of ceramic, stone or glass inside a lead container, accompanied by offerings. Grave types consisted of simple burials into the ground marked by a stone stele, or into a stone-lined cist covered by a rectangular platform to hold a statue or stele. Some were covered by *cupae*, a type of burial marker very common in Iberia and the western provinces of North Africa (Sillieres 1995: 194). Another type consists of a larger tomb enclosure, surrounded by walls and divided into two compartments, one for the *ustrinum*, the other for the urns and offerings. A number of monumental tombs were also found, in the form of large enclosures with *arae*, or tower monuments. Some had been placed in a conspicuously prominent position in the necropolis. One of the largest tower tombs is located only c. 35 m. from the east wall. Some inhumations were also found in this cemetery. They were placed in stone boxes, or covered by *tegulae*. In one was found a coin of Claudius, but the majority date from the second half of the third century. Inhumation had, however, been a long

TOMBS WERE NOT ONLY PLACES OF BURIAL, BUT COULD ALSO CONVEY A MESSAGE TO THE LIVING. IN THEIR ROLE OF MESSAGE TRANSMITTERS THEY ALSO PERFORMED A SOCIAL FUNCTION, ADVERTISING THE SOCIAL STATUS OF DECEASED PERSONS AND THEIR FAMILIES. THIS WAS ESPECIALLY EVIDENT IN THE MONUMENTALITY OF SOME ROMAN FUNERARY CONSTRUCTIONS

established tradition in the south of the Peninsula before the arrival of Roman practices. In towns like Gades (Cadiz), the influence of Eastern cultural traditions was very strong. Inhumation was the burial rite practised by the Phoenician inhabitants of that city from the fifth to the late third centuries B.C.E.¹⁰ Even after the incorporation of the city into the province of Hispania Ulterior, Roman burial practices seem to have had little impact on the Gaditani until the end of the Republican period (Sánchez 1992: 271-275). The type of burial and artefacts found suggest that, before the Romanisation of practices, Egyptian influence on funerary beliefs was strong.¹¹ As in Egypt, it seems that the Gaditani attributed great importance to the preservation of the body, and were not averse to displaying wealth and status in their tombs. Cremation burials

make their appearance at Roman Gades during the late first century B.C.E., and follow the same practices of other Roman settlements in Iberia. It should be noted, however that cremation burials make their first appearance in the city not with Roman annexation in the late third century B.C.E., but much later. In Gades, the transitional period from the Republic to the Empire marks a time of great demographic increase in the history of the city. At a time of high population density cremation may have

⁹Strabo, Geography 3.1.8.

¹⁰In fact, cremation burials were practised at Gades between the 7th and the 6th centuries B.C.E. See R.C.Sanches 1992, pp. 270-1. They may indicate indigenous, not Gaditani, burial practices.

¹¹The Phoenician homeland in the eastern Mediterranean had been in contact with the Nile valley since at least the 4th millennium B.C.E., as finds of Lebanese cedar in Naqada II period Egyptian tombs demonstrate. The area later to be identified with Phoenicia had also been under direct Egyptian control during the second half of the late 2nd millennium B.C.E.

had a practical function, perhaps also explaining why the graves of the poor were simple pits, containing only the mixed remains of the funerary pyre buried without an urn.¹² This type of burial demonstrates little evidence for a belief in an existence beyond death, being primarily concerned with the practicalities demanded by hygiene. However, the absence from the necropolis of certain typical Roman artefacts, such as *fibulae* and *terra sigillata*,¹³ seems to indicate the survival of the Oriental character of Gades, well into the Roman Imperial period. The city may even have been a focus of immigration from the eastern Mediterranean. The Gaditani start practising inhumation once again from the early second century onward. In their practice of cremation and the location of necropoleis outside settlements, the Roman and Romanised

ROMAN ATTITUDES TO DEATH WERE NOT HOMOGENOUS. THERE WAS DIVERSITY OF BELIEFS CONCERNING DEATH AND THE BEYOND

population of the Iberian Peninsula continued some of the burial practices of the preceding period. It is interesting to note the resemblance between some of the simplest forms of Roman period burial and Iron II period graves. Some changes were introduced, but these had more to do with religious practice and the socio-political structure of Roman provincial society in the Hispaniae. The late adoption of cremation by the population of Gades may represent an increased phase of Romanisation related to the provincial reforms taking place during the principate of Augustus.

3. Funerary Monuments as Symbols of Social Status and Romanitas

The hierarchical nature of Roman society was also reflected in death. In the new socio-political order established by Rome, free-birth and wealth, mostly derived from land ownership, gave some provincials access to a political carrier that started in their home cities. In accordance with the value of their property they filled places in the local senate, the *ordo decurionum*, or in other civil and religious magistracies. Wealth was important since some of those offices required a *summa honoraria*, or entrance fee. Besides this, elite families also found themselves competing with each other to win the esteem of their local community. They enhanced their social prestige through the provision of funds for building projects, religious festivals,

public entertainment, free doles of grain and oil for the public baths and games. In Roman society this was expected from persons of high socio-economic status, who were, through their actions, also showing loyalty to the Emperor and State. However, social promotion wasn't only the preserve of the old aristocracy; anyone who was free born and wealthy had a chance to rise socially. In this climate of social mobility, even the sons of freedmen could reach as high as the grade of decurion.

During the Early Empire the ruling power made use of political propaganda to promote the new political system of Imperial rule. A new ideology of state and ruler was promoted by Augustus after his victory at Actium (31 B.C.E.), and continued after his death by subsequent rulers. It associated the *princeps* with Rome and the Capitoline Triad, and promoted his eventual

divinisation. This ideology was inspired by the Hellenistic monarchies that Rome had replaced in the Near East. It was developed by the Julio-Claudians, reaching a climax under the Antonines during the second century C.E. In Iberia, urban planning was instrumental in this process of political propaganda during the transitional period from indigenous to Roman rule. At Tarraco, the provincial capital of Tarraconensis, the architectural development of the two *fora* makes this fact particularly apparent (Keay 1997). Public buildings and architectural displays (statutes, altars, decorative elements and inscriptions), conveyed symbols of the new power, and of the possibility for the local elite to participate in the new religious and political order. Augustus also made use of epigraphy as a means of political

IN THEIR PRACTICE OF CREMATION AND THE LOCATION OF NECROPOLEIS OUTSIDE SETTLEMENTS, THE ROMAN AND ROMANISED POPULATION OF THE IBERIAN PENINSULA CONTINUED SOME OF THE BURIAL PRACTICES OF THE PRECEDING PERIOD

propaganda and the provincial elite followed the practice. They used commemorative epigraphs on the monuments which they financed to announce their socio-political role in the administration of their *urbs*, province and Empire. This practice of architectural displays of wealth and status was also continued in the design of their funerary monuments. The new socio-political ideology of Empire was thus also perpetuated in death.¹⁴

Since the monumentality of funerary monuments advertised the social standing of the individual or family it commemorated, it became common practice to place them along the roads

leading into the cities. In Hispania Tarraconensis, this tradition is exemplified by two large funerary monuments discovered in the necropolis of Edeta (Llíria), in Valencia, Spain (Gascó 1995). Both tombs were built alongside a street 4,50 m. wide, leading into the gates of the city. Only the foundations and lower portions of the walls survive, together with scattered fragments of architectural decoration (*ibid.*: 198). The walls of both monuments were built of *opus quadratum* and *opus caementicium*. One of the tombs, measuring at its base 5,75 x 4,10 m., seems to have had the form of an arch, originally supporting an upper structure with a commemorative inscription. Comparative studies with Italian examples identify it as a type of tomb characteristic of wealthy freedmen, *liberti*, in use from the Late

Republic (*ibid.*: 205-6). An epigraph inscribed on *tabula ansata* was discovered near the W wall of this tomb. It reads: P CLODIVS / IVTYCHVS / SIBIT CLODIAE / NATALI VXORI / CRISSIMAE. In accordance with Roman tradition it identifies a man by his *praenomen*, *nomen*, and *cognomen* and a woman by her *nomen* and *cognomen*. The man's name could indicate the status of *libertus*, which would agree well with this type of monument. The social mobility of *liberti* was restricted by their previous slave status. They were barred from political office, but if wealthy enough they could buy a position in the Imperial Cult, and

¹² This situation contrasts with that of Rome where the urban poor were simply buried, without cremation, into communal grave pits called *puticuli*.

¹³ *Terra sigillata* has only been rarely found in the settlement ruins of the city of Gades. R.C. Sanchez 1992, p. 277.

¹⁴ In the case of important people, the ceremonies of the *funus*, the funerary rites performed between death and burial, were also an opportunity for elaborate displays of social position, political achievements and personal wealth. See J.M.C. Toynbee 1996, pp. 43-64.

became a *sevir Augustalis*.¹⁵ Freedmen of the Emperor (*liberti Augusti*), for example, were often employed in the Imperial civil service. They enjoyed high status and some were very rich. One is immediately reminded of the lines in Petronius referring to the burial arrangements for Trimalchio, the wealthy *libertus*.¹⁶ As with Trimalchio, this particular monument probably seeks to display the wealth of someone who also had social ambitions. The style of the epigraph dates it to the first century C.E. The second tomb measures 6,10 x 5,10 m. at its base, and consists of a podium originally supporting a towered structure similar to other examples found in Tarraconensis, the western provinces of North Africa, Syria, and elsewhere. Another funerary monumental structure from Hispania

this was the face of the tomb seen by all of those travelling to and from Colonia Triumphalis Tarraco.

The tomb of L. Aemilius Lupus, at Fabara (Zaragoza), constitutes another example of the monumental elite tomb tradition in eastern Tarraconensis (Cancela 1993: 242-4), dating to the principate of Tajan (98-117). The mausoleum of the Atilii at Sadaba (Zaragoza), also belongs to this group. It was dedicated by Atilia Festa for herself, her grandfather C. Atilius and father L. Atilius (*ibid*: 246-7). Dated to the second half of the first century, it consisted of a large altar (*ara*) within an enclosure. It had a niched facade with epigraphs naming occupants, and decorated with a medusa head, *patera* for libations, and an eagle and wreaths

THESE MONUMENTS WERE CONSPICUOUS IN THEIR DISPLAY OF WEALTH AND STATUS, AND A STATEMENT TO THE SOCIAL ACHIEVEMENTS OF THEIR OCCUPANTS

Tarraconensis is the Torre de los Escipiones, located c. 6 km. north east of Tarraco. Built on the side of the *via Augusta* connecting that city with Barcino, the building consists of a towered structure built on three levels, the lowest of which forms a podium which supports the whole edifice. Its construction probably dates to the first century C.E. (Cancela 1993: 250; Toynbee 1996: 165-6). The wall facing the side of the road presents the only decoration, consisting of a shallow niche on the top section, and two large standing Attis figures, the companion of Cybele, on the central section. The positioning of the decoration on the side of the road was significant, since

symbolising the apotheosis of the spirit triumphing over death. At Carmo, in Baetica, a large mausoleum was carved into the bedrock and planned like a luxurious *domus* (Bendala-Galán 1976: 73-79). The patio, surrounded by a double portico, contained the *ustrinum* for the cremation of bodies located at the centre of it. The burial chamber was carved into the bedrock. It was built in the first century, probably for the family of Lucius Servilius Pollio. An epigraph reading SERVILIAE L.F. / P. MARI / MATER D.¹⁷, was found carved on the pedestal of a statue. A great subterranean mausoleum, similar to the many hypogea found at Carmo, was discovered at Baelo Claudia, in the western cemetery (Sellieres 1995: 189). As already mentioned, large towered tomb structures were also found at Baelo Claudia (*ibid.*: 195-6). These monuments all had in common their scale, expensive decoration and prominent location in the necropolis. They were conspicuous in their display of wealth and status, and a statement to

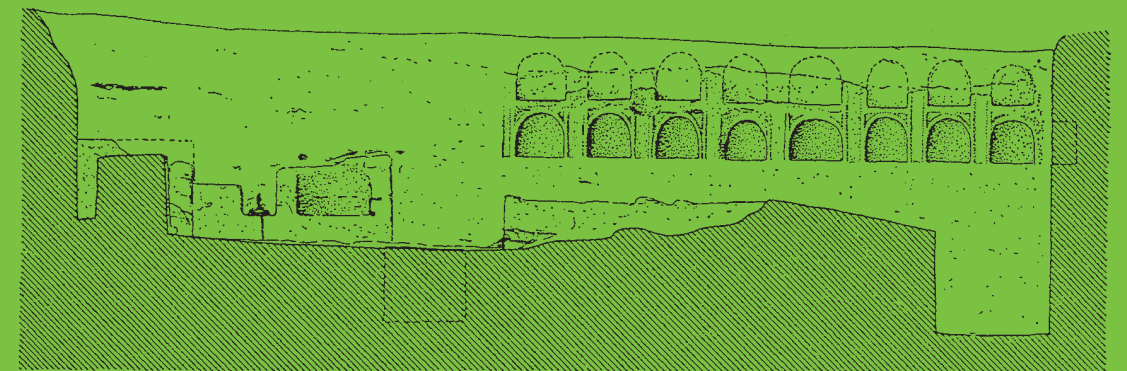


Figure 3
Plan and south section of the Columbarium-Trichinium Tomb in the Roman necropolis of Carmo.

- A Entrance
- B Altar
- C Food preparation area
- D Trichinium
- E Loculi for cinerary urns

Adapted from M. Bendala Galán (1976)

¹⁵ Freedmen could become one of the six annual *seviri Augustales* of their towns, forming part of a *collegium* which promoted the Imperial Cult of the Emperor and State. They are mentioned in inscriptions in the South and Southeast during the first century C.E. They had to contribute the *summa honoraria* of 500 *denarii*, and during their term in office finance public banquets, games, altars, and other kinds of gifts. S.J. Keay 1988, pp. 77-78.

¹⁶ *Petronius, Satiricon* 71.5-8

¹⁷ *Serviliae Lucii filiae, Pollia (?), Prisca (?), Postumia (?) Mari Mater dedicavit.* Bendala-Galán 1976, p. 76..

the social achievements of their occupants. They were built by the rich landowners who resided in the cities, to proclaim their position in the social structure of the province. In that role they were also transmitting a message to the living concerning the social status of the living members of the family to whom the monument belonged.

As high status funerary rites were an expensive affair, individuals of poorer means sometimes become members of a *collegium funeraticium*, or funerary college. Upon admission into the club members had to pay an enrolment fee, followed by subsequent periodic contributions towards the college. When a member died, the college then

inscription is also interesting because it clearly reveals the presence of oriental cults in one of the more Romanised areas of Lusitania.

At Carmo, the funerary *ara* of Quietus, a young man aged twenty-three, also indicates that his burial expenses and *ara* were paid by the members (*sodales*) of another *collegium funeraticium* (Bendala-Galán 1976: 82). Near the monument of Quietus, was also found a *columbarium* of large dimensions (*ibid.*: 81-82). It consisted of a rock-cut chamber measuring 10,30 x 6,35 m., originally containing 48 *loculi* for the burial of cinerary urns, and a *triclinium* for funerary banquets. Too large to be a family mausoleum, it must have

THE POPULARITY OF FUNERARY GUILDS SHOWS THAT BURIAL, TRADITIONALLY A FAMILY DUTY, COULD ALSO BE DONE BY AN ASSOCIATION

gave the relatives of the deceased money to cover the expenses of the funeral or, in their absence, the college members would make the necessary arrangements for the funeral. Individuals with common socio-economic interests to protect, such as gladiators or *liberti*, tended to form this type of funerary guild. Many examples existed throughout the Hispaniae. One such case was that of T. Callaeus Marcianus, a young man from Eborac Liberalitas Iulia, in Lusitania. The inscription on his funerary *ara* names him, deceased at the age of twenty, and the individuals responsible for the dedication of the funerary monument. They were Cassia Marcella and the *amici Nemesiaci*, members of a funerary college (Encarnação 1990: 243-246). In the second century C.E., the college had paid a *funeraticium* of two *sestercii* to the heirs of the deceased for the expenses involved in the funerary rituals and erection of the *ara*. It seems that in Liberalitas Iulia, these *amici Nemesiaci* formed a *collegium iuvenum Nemesiorum*, under the protection of the Greek/Oriental goddess Nemesis. The

belonged to an association. Columbaria were usually owned by members of the various *collegia funeraticia* affiliated to the cult of a particular deity. They were in use in many parts of Iberia and the Roman commonwealth. In Egypt, for example, references to religious associations are found in several papyri dated to the second and third centuries, under the designation of *sunodoi* (sing. *sunodos*), meaning associations (Frankfurter 1998: 72-73). Some of these also had a funerary role. From the town of Kysis, in the Kharga oasis, documentary evidence dated to the late third century also reveals the existence of funerary colleges (*nekrotophoi*). The popularity of funerary guilds shows that burial, traditionally a family's duty, could also be done by an association.¹⁸

Persons who didn't belong to a *collegium funeraticium* could opt for a different type of monument. Funerary monuments in the form of *ara* were popular with this group of people. Three fragments from the area of Valencia, in Spain, are of special interest because of their iconography

(Salvador 1995). They are all fragments of *arae* with *pubvini*, decorated on their anterior faces with flowers and dolphins. One of the monuments also has a laurel wreath (*ibid.*: 212-3), while another exhibits a cinerary urn instead (*ibid.*: 214). They date to the first two centuries C.E. Their iconography is representative of Roman beliefs concerning death. The dolphin, a common motif in other contexts,¹⁹ may here symbolise the journey of the dead into the Islands of the Blessed Dead in the middle of the Ocean, beyond the Pillars of Hercules. The wreath, symbol of the Triumph awarded by the Senate of Rome to victorious generals, represents here the triumph over death. It was used in funerary iconography in

sample, from Southeast Tarraconensis, seems typical of others from the other Hispaniae. The epigraphs identify deceased individuals of slave and freed status. The majority of the dedicants of the monuments were of similar status. Only three were of free status (*ibid.*: 228-9). The slaves could have paid for these funerary dedications with funds from their work allowance, the *peculium*.

4. The Influence of Oriental Mystery Cults

Religions of eastern Mediterranean origin also made an impact on the funerary beliefs and practices of Roman Iberia.

IN REMOTE COUNTRY AREAS INDIGENOUS RELIGIOUS BELIEFS SEEM TO HAVE PREVAILED WELL AFTER THE ROMAN CONQUEST. ROMAN COLONIAL ATTITUDES TO INDIGENOUS CULTURES WERE IN PART RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS SITUATION

Rome from the time of the Flavians, and has also been found at Emerita Augusta, Felicitas Iulia Olisipo, Barbate (Cadiz), Gades and Mulva (Seville).

For persons of modest economic resources, of slave, *libertus* or free status, the most common funerary monument was a stone stele with a simple epigraph. They occur throughout the Peninsula during the first and second centuries C.E., and are well illustrated in a series of stelae found in the area of Valencia (Fernandez 1998). This

Syrian and Egyptian cults had already been present in areas of Phoenicio-Punic settlement, but the Romans were responsible for the introduction of several others. Some of them would achieve great popularity. Their spread throughout the Hispaniae followed in the footsteps of Roman settlers, administrators, the army, and persons from the Eastern Mediterranean, such as slaves and *liberti*. Oriental Mystery Cults offered individuals the promise of resurrection and immortality, and were for that reason very popular amongst different social groups. Their mystic nature made them especially attractive to the educated élite, while for many devotion to a particular deity and the drama of religious spectacle made them very appealing. Individuals were initiated into the mysteries of the cult through a series of rituals. Once a devotee entered the inner circle of initiates, immortality beyond death was usually guaranteed. Some Oriental religions would eventually influence the change from cremation to inhumation. References to deities of eastern origin

¹⁸ Evidence for the activities of funerary colleges was also found in Alexandria, Egypt, in the el-Gabbari necropolis. At this site, large ex-family tombs had been bought by funerary guilds and transformed into communal tombs with numerous *loculi* for inhumations, over two hundred in one case, and *columbaria* for cinerary urns. In some of the tombs the walls were found covered with a grid design in red paint marking the space for new *loculi*. The name *Anoubatos* (Anubis, the patron god of embalmers), was written in the spaces, probably referring to the funerary guild who owned the *loculi*. See J. Empereur (1998), *Alexandria Rediscovered*. British Museum Press, pp. 175-211.

¹⁹ Also common in the architectural decoration of *termae*, *balnea*, *villae* and *domus*, it often appears in connection with maritime activities, such as naval victories, the mythology of Venus and Eros, etc. For representations on coins see F.C. Tristán (1998), *The Iberian and early Roman coinage of Hispania Ulterior Baetica*, in S. Keay (ed.), pp. 147-170, & pl. on p. 146.

are found throughout the Peninsula, the most popular being Isis, Serapis, Magna Mater (Cybele), Attis, Mithras and Dionysus. Christianity, another Oriental Mystery Cult, would later replace and take on the role of many of these faiths. While popular amongst the urban population, references to them can also be found in remote rural settings (Fortes & Páez 1996). A cult centre dedicated to Serapis²⁰ was found at Panoias, c. 7 km. from Vila Real (Portugal), in what was Northwest Tarraconensis. Inscriptions dedicated between the late second and early third centuries C.E. by the senator Gaius C. Calpurnius Rufinus²¹ names Serapis as the supreme god while a deity of the

IN DEATH AS IN LIFE THE NEW WAYS OF ROMANITAS WERE DISPLAYED THROUGH THE USE OF EPIGRAPHY AND ARCHITECTURE

underworld. His cult was intimately related to the more popular cult of Isis.²² Themes related to the religious beliefs of these cults are often found in the iconographic decoration, and furnishings of the funerary monuments of the landed aristocracy (Alcázar 1993). Representations of Attis, consort of Cybele, were a popular theme. Their cult originated in the provinces of Asia Minor and Syria,²³ and was intimately related to the beliefs and practices of some funerary colleges. A large underground structure dedicated to their cult was found in the necropolis at Carmo (Bendala-Galán 1976: 49-66). It consisted of a large court and rooms leading from it, including an underground triclinium and burial chamber with *loculi* for the cinerary urns of the Galli, the priest of Attis and Cybele. Aside from its funerary function, this building also seems to have been a place of ritual initiation for members of the cult.

The cult of Dionysus also had many followers. Representations of participants in the *thiasos* of the god were a common feature of funerary

iconography. Dionysus was a god of mystic ecstasy and granted his followers eternal life, perhaps because of the legend that related his temporary descent into the underworld.

5. The Persistence of Indigenous Cultural Elements

In the north of the Peninsula, especially in northern Lusitania and Tarraconensis, the persistence of indigenous cultural features was much stronger. This region was the last to be incorporated into the Roman Empire and, unlike Baetica or southern Lusitania, it saw little or no

immigration from other areas of the Roman world until well after the conquest. A survey study of around nine hundred personal names reveals the persistence of indigenous names not only in the countryside, but also in cities such as Bracara Augusta and Aquae Flaviae, during the first two centuries C.E. (Curchin 1991).

In remote country areas indigenous religious beliefs seem to have prevailed well after the Roman conquest. Roman colonial attitudes to indigenous cultures were in part responsible for this situation. Roman religion did not attempt to obliterate local gods and religious practices, as long as these posed no threat to the established political order. An attempt was simply made to identify indigenous gods with Roman deities of an approximate nature. The Romanisation of religious beliefs occurred through a process of religious syncretism between indigenous and Roman (including Oriental deities). This situation is well illustrated by the two rock inscriptions found at Lamas de Moledo (Castro Daire), and Cabeço das Fráguas

(Sabugal), in northern Portugal. The language of the text inscribed onto the rock face appears to be Lusitanian written in the Latin alphabet. The inscriptions commemorate the sacrificial offerings of animals made to indigenous gods. The inscription at Lamas de Moledo names two men, Rufinus and Tirus, who may have been cultic officials for the named native deities one of whom was here associated with Jupiter, under the name of Jovea Caelobricus (Tovar 1985). Also numerous are the funerary epigraphs naming indigenous deities connected with the realm of the dead (Alarcão 1988, Cerrillo & Cruz 1993, Herrero *et al.* 1992: 354 Jimeno 1992: 344, Moreira & Encarnação 1988).

An interesting case of the survival of a pre-Roman indigenous burial practice was that found at Cividade de Terroso (*see section 2*), where what appears to be Roman period burials (of indigenes) were recovered from within the settlement. It seems that here, in an area remote from the centres of power, old habits were dying hard. However, the survival of this old custom may contain an element of conscious resistance to the cultural practices and values of the new political power, Rome. The persistence of this funerary tradition may have had particular significance in a time of armed conflict with Rome, and finds expression in the theory proposed by Arthur Saxe, and later tested and developed by Lynne Goldstein.²⁴ It explains how access to valuable, restricted resources, and claims to territorial rights by corporate groups in times of crises, are legitimised through descent from the ancestors buried in formal burial areas. This practice directly associates the dead with the group and their inherited territorial rights. In this way claims may be ritualised through the establishment of a relationship by lineal descent from the ancestors. In an increasingly changing world where the socio-political structure of indigenous

society was being affected by the new order established by Rome, the continued presence of the dead within the domestic space of the settlement reinforced the connection between communities and their ancestral lands. In this domestic cult of the dead, probably officiated by the head of the household, we find nonetheless, some parallels with Roman religion in the form of the domestic cult of the ancestors officiated by the *pater familiae*.

6. Conclusion - Diversity in Romanitas

The incorporation of Iberia into the Roman world contributed to the Romanisation of indigenous religious beliefs and funerary practices. In their practice of cremation and the location of necropoleis outside settlements, the Roman population of Hispania continued some of the burial practices of the preceding period. Yet Roman attitudes towards death were not homogenous. The Romans introduced into the region a collection of beliefs concerning death which they, in turn, had inherited from peoples assimilated into their Empire. This diversity is reflected in the variety of funerary monuments found throughout the Peninsula. The new socio-political

²⁰ An hybrid Hellenistic god embodying the qualities of Osiris and Apis, Serapis was sometimes associated with Jupiter, Dionysus, Aesculapius and Helios. His cult originated in Memphis, Egypt, under Ptolemy I who associated the worship of the god with the monarchy. In Egypt, his great national festival, the Serapia, is documented as late as 315 C.E.

²¹ The senator Gaius C. Calpurnius Rufinus was originally from Perge in Panphilia where there was a great Serapeum dedicated to the cult of the god. *Fortes & Páez 1996, p. 177.*

²² Isis was the wife-sister of Osiris, one of the funerary Egyptian gods now identified with Serapis. In Roman Egypt her festivals, the Amesysia and Isia, are attested in a number of papyri. Aside from her funerary role, the Roman Isis was a family deity.

²³ They become particularly popular after Claudius (41-54) lifts some of the restrictions that had earlier been imposed on their cult. Roman citizens were forbidden to enrol as priests (Galli) because they had to be castrated.

²⁴ For a brief description of Saxe's "Hypothesis 8", and Goldstein's subsequent work on it see *R.Chapman et al. 1981, pp. 53-81, and M.P.Pearson 1999, pp. 29-30 and 137-139.*

ideology introduced by Rome, especially during the principate of Augustus, also determined changes in the rituals of death. In death as in life the new ways of *Romanitas* were displayed through the use of epigraphy and architecture. Cemeteries and tomb design followed the principles of the new Imperial ideology. However, the most radical change in burial practices occurred during the Late Empire, with the widespread adoption of inhumation burial. From the end of the second century C.E., it gradually replaced cremation as the main funerary rite of the inhabitants of the Peninsula, becoming increasingly common during the course of the third century. Whereas the reasons for this transformation were undoubtedly diverse, they certainly included the religious beliefs of the élite (Antoninus Pius (138-161) was inhumed), the widespread adoption of Mystery Cults, and the spread of other religious beliefs and practices, including Christianity. This later set of transformations was but one of many chapters in the process of Romanisation.

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