

ULLASTRET

EASY READING GUIDE



Easy reading guide
Museu d'Arqueologia de Catalunya (MAC)

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The landscape of Ullastret in the Iberian period

In 1947 archaeological excavations and research began in Ullastret and the surrounding area.

This led to the discovery of several **sites** from the Iberian period.

These include the fortified settlements of **Puig de Sant Andreu** and **Illa d'en Reixac** in Ullastret, and the **necropolis** of **Puig de Serra**, in Serra de Daró.

Studies and excavations confirm that the landscape and vegetation in Iberian times were very different from those of today.

Between these sites and the Llabià mountain range there was a lake that changed in size over time. We know that it was one of the largest in the Baix Empordà. The lake was artificially drained in 1885.

The landscape was much clearer than it is today, with willow, poplar, elm and tamarisk forests around the lake and along the rivers.

A **site** is a place where the remains of ancient peoples are found.

A **necropolis** is a cemetery from a prehistoric or very ancient period.



Typical Mediterranean vegetation could be found on higher lands, with forests of holm oaks, cork oaks, oaks and white pines. In the lower part of the forest there were smaller plants, such as heather and arbutus. Spruce and chestnut trees also grew in some areas.



Formation of Iberian culture

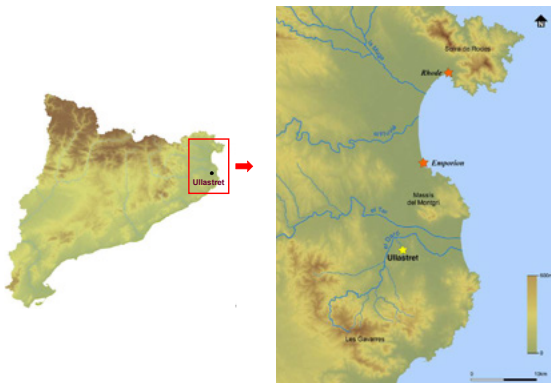
Iberian culture in Catalonia had already existed since the first half of the 6TH century **BC**.

It emerged from the mixture of two cultural influences on the indigenous peoples of the peninsula at the end of the Bronze Age, some 3,000 years ago.

The first influence came from Central Europe, across the Pyrenees, from 1100 B.C.

The second was the arrival of the **colonising peoples** of the Mediterranean, such as the Phoenicians and Greeks, from the 7TH century BC onwards.

Iberian culture developed along the Mediterranean coast, from the south of France (Languedoc) to Andalusia, and had different characteristics depending on the area. These differences depended on the indigenous population and the influence of colonising groups: the Greeks had more influence in the north, and the Phoenicians or Punics in the south.



The abbreviation **BC** means 'before Christ'. Years with this abbreviation indicate dates before the first year of our era. Thus, for example, 2,524 years have passed between 500 BC and the present day.

Colonising peoples come from elsewhere to settle in a territory.

Different tribes lived in Iberian territory.

We know their names from Greek and Roman texts.

In the Empordà, where the Iberian settlement of Ullastret is located, lived the **Indiketas** tribe.

This area was influenced by Greek culture due to the proximity of the Greek colonies of Emporion (today's Empúries) and Rhode (today's Roses).

The two Iberian settlements of Puig de Sant Andreu and Illa d'en Reixac formed a single community: the Iberian city of Ullastret and were occupied from the late 7TH century BC or early 6TH century BC until the beginning of the 2ND century BC.

Puig de Sant Andreu is one of the largest settlements in the Catalan Iberian territory. Illa d'en Reixac was smaller. The necropolis of Puig de Serra was found near Illa d'en Reixac, which must have been related to this settlement.



Iberian culture and society

Each Iberian region had its own characteristics, but some were common throughout the territory:

- **Economy:** based on agriculture and livestock farming.
- **Trade:** trade and commerce were important activities. The first coins appeared towards the end of the period.
- **Funeral rituals:** the deceased were cremated, i.e. their bodies were burned.
- **Writing:** they created their own writing system.
- **Technology:** they worked with iron, pottery and stone.
- **Urban development:** settlements were built on high ground and fortified.
- **Social structure:** society was organised into social classes and different types of work.



Large houses were discovered during excavations at Puig de Sant Andreu, with many valuable domestic objects. This shows that there were aristocratic families who had money and power.

Cult sites and ritual-related items have also been found, proving that priests were present.

The majority of the population were peasants and shepherds, and some were also artisans.



Pre-Iberian period

(650 to 550 BC)

In this period, humans abandoned the caves and grouped together in open-air villages.

Settlements in this area consisted of circular huts, with part of the base on the rock, built of wood, branches and mud.

In other parts of Catalonia, such as the Lleida area, stone was already being used to build houses.

During the pre-Iberian period, the Empordà area was settled by colonial peoples who came from other places, such as the Phoenicians, Greeks and Etruscans.

They were interested in trading with indigenous peoples. They mainly traded agricultural products and minerals.

As a result of these contacts, around 600 BC, the Greeks founded the colony of Emporion. They first settled on the island of Sant Martí d'Empúries. This first settlement was called Palaiapolis.

Early Iberian Period

(550 to 450 BC)

Few settlements from this period are known in Catalonia, but they include the two in Ullastret.

Excavations have revealed its evolution from the pre-Iberian period to the beginning of **Romanisation**.

During this period, settlements were still located on the plains, but began to be established on higher ground.

In the Empordà, the first rectangular houses with stone walls and adobe (a mixture of mud and straw) were built under the influence of the Mediterranean colonies.

Romanisation is the process by which the culture of an indigenous place adapts to Roman culture.



The first of its walls was built on the Puig de Sant Andreu.
The Puig de Serra necropolis was first used
in the latter half of this period.

At this stage, the wheel was used to make pottery.
Pottery was often decorated with painted designs,
known as Iberian painted pottery.
Iron was also worked.



Full Iberian Period

(450 to 200 BC)

Living conditions improved during this period, resulting in population growth.

New settlements were built on high ground, most of them fortified.

As graves with weapons have also been found, we can assume that this was a violent period with clashes between villages.

However, no weapons have been found in the only necropolis in the Empordà, at Puig de Serra.

Objects from different areas of the Mediterranean, especially ceramics, have been found in Iberian settlements. Therefore, we can say that trade relations with the colonial peoples increased at this time.

The Greek influence was becoming more and more important in the Indiketa area due to the proximity of Emporion and the founding of the Greek colony of Rhode, which became the town of Roses.

Iberian culture had different characteristics in each region. In the Indiketa area, painted Iberian ceramics were replaced by ceramics decorated with white paint or indiketa.

Ullastret also produced pottery known as Catalan or Emporitan coast pottery, which lasted until Roman times.

From the 6TH century BC onwards, many products from the Italian peninsula reached the Iberian settlements of Catalonia. This highlights how important Italy was in the Mediterranean. At the end of this period, the Iberians became involved in the struggles between the Romans and the Carthaginians, who wanted to control the Mediterranean.

In 218 BC, the Romans arrived in Emporion.



Late Iberian or Ibero-Roman period (200 BC)

With the arrival of the Romans in Empúries, the process of Romanisation of the Iberian culture began, which was fully effective from the 1st century BC. One example of this was the change in the way of living and working, which included abandoning Iberian settlements.

They were not immediately abandoned. Some of them, such as the Castell de Palamós, were even extended. But the indigenous people began to adapt to the new Roman way of life.

Changes were rapid in the Empordà, under the influence of Emporion: the settlements of Puig de Sant Andreu and Illa d'en Reixac were abandoned in the early 2nd century BC.

The buildings were not destroyed, suggesting that the population left for economic reasons.



Later coins from the Roman period have been found at Puig de Sant Andreu. This shows that the site was still visited after it was abandoned, perhaps for worship in the temples.



Trade

Emporion acted as an intermediary in trade exchanges between the indigenous peoples and the colonial peoples of the Mediterranean. Proof of these exchanges are the Greek, Punic or Italic peninsula products found in Iberian settlements.

These products were mainly foodstuffs, such as wine and oil. Amphorae, i.e. earthenware vessels, used to transport them have been preserved. Luxury items such as crockery, tumblers, jewellery and textiles were also exchanged.

In return, the indigenous peoples offered surplus grain and raw materials such as metals, furs, salt, honey and sometimes slaves.

The indigenous villages also traded with each other. Pottery made in workshops in Ullastret has been found in and around the Indiketa area. In turn, Ullastret must have received cereals from the inland villages and redistributed them to the colonial towns.

Amphorae often had a stamp, a mark, indicating who made them, where they came from or who owned them.

Currency

The first coins were brought to the northern Mediterranean by the Greeks.

In Catalonia, the first coins were produced in Emporion in the 4TH century BC, and shortly afterwards the cities of Emporion and Rhode began to produce drachmas, the silver coins of ancient Greece.

The oldest coins found in Ullastret are drachmas from Emporion and one from Rhode.

Ullastret was abandoned in the early 2ND century BC when there were still few coins in the local Iberian settlements. For this reason, few coins have been found.



Spiritual life. Beliefs

We only know about the cults and beliefs of the Iberian peoples through archaeological discoveries.

We have little information on the Iberian deities because the Iberian peoples quickly adopted the Greek and Roman gods.

Representations of two deities have been found in Ullastret: terracotta sculptures of Demeter, the Greek goddess of agriculture, and terracotta figurines of the Egyptian god Bes, who protected pregnant women and children.

We believe that Iberian deities were worshipped on top of Puig de Sant Andreu, where the remains of at least two temples have been found.



Terracotta **votive offerings**

have been also be found representing faces,
ointment vessels, small containers with faces
and **andirons** in the shape of horse and ram heads.



Votive offerings are offerings made to the gods to give thanks for something good.



Ointment vessels are containers for storing ointments, creams and oils.



Andirons are terracotta supports that are placed on the hearth or in the fireplace to hold the firewood.

The cult of the skull

Skull worship was practised at Puig de Sant Andreu and Illa d'en Reixac.

Excavations have uncovered:

- Human skulls with nails driven through them.
- Pieces of skulls and jaws related to rituals.

These discoveries have been made in different parts of the sites:

- Inside a **silo**.
- On a street in Illa d'en Reixac.
- In a large building dedicated to rituals, along with other offerings such as animal remains, pottery, an iron sword and human remains.

A **silo** is a dry place where wheat is stored.



Spiritual life. The funeral ritual

Iberian funeral rituals always included the cremation of both young and adult bodies.

After being burned, the human remains were often washed, shredded and stored in an urn.

This urn was placed in a small grave dug in the ground, with offerings to the deceased and personal belongings (jewellery, clothes, etc.).

Necropolises were close to the settlements.

One of the Ullastret necropolises is located at Puig de Serra, in Serra de Daró, about 400 metres from the settlement of Illa d'en Reixac. This necropolis was in use from the 5TH century BC until the middle of the 4TH century BC.

Newborns or infants only a few months old were not cremated, but buried inside the house or in places prepared for this purpose. In some cases they may have been sacrificed.



Urban planning and architecture

Typical Iberian settlements were located on high ground, making them easy to defend, and they were also well fortified. These settlements are called **oppida**.

Building settlements on these elevated areas that the streets and houses had an irregular layout as they had to adapt to the slopes of the terrain.

However, whenever possible, they tried to make straight streets criss-crossed perpendicularly, as in Illa d'en Reixac.

This settlement was built on top of an earlier pre-Iberian settlement, which consisted of circular huts, built with branches and mud on natural rock.

Similar constructions were also found at Puig de Sant Andreu.



The Iberian city of Ullastret was a great centre of power, where political, military and religious decisions of the community were taken. It also provided services to the population, such as protection from danger, food storage and making sure they had water to drink.

Within the villages, houses were lined up along the streets to form islands or blocks. Iberian houses were simple, rectangular, with one or two rooms, stone foundation walls and adobe elevations. The roofs were almost flat (they had very little slope for drainage), supported by wooden poles and covered with branches and mud.

Inside, the house was divided into different areas for different tasks:

- rest
- cooking
- storage
- craft activities

Every house had at least one fireplace with a smoke vent on the roof. There was a often stone or mud bench attached to a wall. Some houses had an upper floor.

In Puig de Sant Andreu, two houses of about 800 square metres each, with several rooms, have been excavated.

They undoubtedly belonged to wealthy families.

Cisterns have also been found within the settlement, which are large tanks for storing rainwater for human consumption. These cisterns were dug into the ground and covered with stone and lime mortar to make them watertight.

Other communal elements were the silos, deposits for preserving cereals, which were also dug out of the ground.

Puig de Sant Andreu and Illa d'en Reixac were protected by a wall, which was built in several stages.



The first wall of Puig de Sant Andreu was built in the late 6TH century BC or early 5TH century BC and is the oldest Iberian wall in Catalonia.

The wall now visible is from the early 4TH century BC, although some parts were rebuilt in the 3RD century BC. The wall is triangular and it has several defensive towers.

The wall of the Illa d'en Reixac settlement is being studied, but it is similar to the 4TH century BC wall of Puig de Sant Andreu.



Language and writing

Language is one of the least known aspects of Iberian culture. Its origin is not entirely clear.

Iberian writing originated in the south-east of the peninsula in the 6TH century BC and spread along the Mediterranean coast until it reached Catalonia a century later.

The Iberian language has 29 signs that combine letters and syllables. Although we know what it sounds like, we still don't understand what it says.

This writing system was used from the south of France to the Guadalquivir valley, with variations depending on the region and the influence of other languages.

The Iberians wrote on pottery, lead plates and stone, using tools with pointed ends.

		k	g	b	t	d				
a	𐤀	𐤁	𐤂	𐤃	𐤄	𐤅	s	𐤆	𐤇	𐤈
e	𐤉	𐤊	𐤋	𐤌	𐤍	𐤎	𐤏	𐤐	r	𐤑
l	𐤒	𐤓	𐤔	𐤕	𐤖	𐤗	m	𐤘	n	𐤙
o	𐤚	𐤛	𐤜	𐤝	𐤞	𐤟	𐤠	𐤡	?	𐤢
u	𐤣	𐤤	𐤥	𐤦	𐤧	𐤨	𐤩	𐤪		

Most of the inscriptions at Ullastret are on pottery, especially on vessels from the 4TH century BC. However, there are also texts on lead, on loom weights and on an animal-shaped vessel, which is the oldest inscription at the site.

Inscriptions in Greek and Phoenician have also been found on amphorae.



Agriculture

Tools



Most Iberians were engaged in agriculture. In ancient times, the Empordà and Lleida were the two major cereal-producing areas.

Agricultural tools found correspond to developed agriculture, such as the plough, for example, which was used on large areas to open furrows in the earth and turn it over, or the hoe.



Cereals



Remains of charred seeds
have been found in Ullastret
that demonstrate the importance of cereal crops,
especially barley.
The Iberians also grew wheat and millet.



Vegetables, vines and olive trees



The Iberians knew some legumes, such as lentils, peas and broad beans. They also cultivated vineyards to produce grapes and olive trees for oil.



Transport and storage



The Iberians stored grain in silos or amphorae, which they also used for transport.

Two types of mills were used to grind the grain: the to-and-fro, which were very old and known since the Neolithic period, and rotary mills, which were first used in Ullastret in the 4TH century BC.



Livestock farming

Livestock farming was the second most important activity after agriculture.

Bones of sheep and goats have been found, as well as pigs, bulls and cows, and, to a lesser extent, horses and dogs.

In addition to serving as food, animals provided raw materials such as wool, hides and bones. These materials were used to make tools, ornaments, knife handles, etc.



Hunting, fishing and gathering

Hunting



Hunting was a complementary economic activity. The Iberians hunted mainly rabbits and wild boar, but also deer, of which only the horns have been found.



Fishing



The Iberians fished, above all, for eels,
sea bream and sea bass.

Bronze hooks and stone weights for nets
have been found in the excavations.



Gathering



The Iberians also gathered wild fruits and plants, and molluscs from the sea, rivers and lakes.



Craftsmanship

In Iberian society, craftsmen made objects for sale or for the use of the community. Their most important works include metallurgy, pottery, weaving and stonework.

Metallurgy



The Iberians worked iron and bronze, as evidenced by the furnaces and waste materials found. These metals were used to make agricultural tools, weapons, ornaments, surgical implements and personal objects.

The minerals used came from the Gavarres and the Pyrenees. They also recast and recycled unused metal objects to make new ones.

Ceramics



The Iberians made many ceramic products thanks to the use of the potter's wheel and nearby clay deposits.

However, they still made cooking vessels by hand because it was more flexible and better able to withstand temperature changes.

Textiles



The Iberians used wool and plant fibres to produce textiles. Whorls, which were used as counterweights for spinning, and loom weights have been found. The looms used were vertical.



Stone working



The construction of walls and other public works, such as cisterns or cobbled streets, shows that there were groups of stonemasons who worked for the community and exploited the nearby quarries. Stone was also used to make tools, such as mills, vessels and moulds.



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explains, questions, surprises and excites.



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