



UNIONE EUROPEA



REPUBBLICA ITALIANA



REGIONE AUTONOMA DE SARDIGNA  
REGIONE AUTONOMA DELLA SARDEGNA

# Necropolis of Is Pirixeddus

Patrimonio culturale  
**SARDEGNA** Virtual Archaeology



## ■ The funeral ritual

The Punic burial ritual has been verified at the necropolis of Sant'Antioco, ancient *Sulky*. The Punic burial ritual comprised various phases. The deceased were first washed and rubbed with ointments and perfumed oils, then dressed with jewellery and amulets that had belonged to them in life, and were accompanied by what was necessary for them to care for their body. The remains were wrapped in a linen sheet or dressed in a tunic as in tradition from the Near East, and then placed in the burial chamber on wooden beds sometimes raised from the floor and with handles to the side to grip when the body was being transferred and to allow the passage of ropes used to lower the deceased as far as the entrance to the tomb. The body could then be placed on the floor or left to rest on the wooden bed with the ends lying on bricks or stone blocks. In other cases, the body was placed in boxes or in previous wooden, sculpted and painted sarcophaguses (fig. 1). Over the millennia, the acidity of the tufa rock land in Sant'Antioco has corroded most of the organic remains, but the dig returned, for example, the copper or bronze clasps used to hold together the various parts of the funeral beds or boxes, together with residues of clay that covered the corners of the sarcophaguses. In another very fortunate case, during the dig of tomb no. 11, a large portion of sculpted wooden sarcophagus in the shape of a winged female was recovered. The body was locked inside and dressed in an elegant feather-covered dress, still showing traces of paint (fig. 2). Once the coffin was in place, the burial items were placed around it: pottery including jugs with wide brims, pitchers with lobed brims, amphorae, cups, plates and various other forms, both Punic and imported (Attica pottery or Etruscan bucchero pottery) or imitations. These were the standard items in the burial ritual, together with precious amulets and masks (figs. 3-4). The items were arranged in the environment and also placed on the shelves in the niches made in the walls of the burial chamber, where, in some cases, there is still trace of the use of oil lamps burning. Over time, the Phoenician pottery became rarer, and left room for Greek ware that reached the point of monopolising the pottery collections used in burials.

Once the funeral ritual was over, the entrance to the tomb was sealed with a heavy slab of stone at the exit, or sometimes by a pile of stones or a wall made from sun-baked bricks.



**Fig. 1** - Reconstruction of a deposition into an underground chamber on a wooden litter, with the typical accompanying objects (photo by Unicity S.p.A.)





**Fig. 2** - The remains of the wooden sarcophagus discovered inside the hypogeum grave 11 (from BERNARDINI 2010, table II, 2).



**Fig. 3** - Punic burial items from the *Sulky necropolis*. Municipal Archaeological Museum "F. Barreca" (photo by M. Murgia).



**Fig. 4** - Various elements of the funerary goods: amulets, masks, jewellery and ointment-holders in polychrome glass paste, scarabs. Municipal Archaeological Museum "F. Barreca" (photo by M. Murgia).

## ■ Credits

Deepening card edited by Dr. Cinzia Olianas

## ■ Bibliographic abbreviations

- BARTOLONI 2007 P. BARTOLONI, *Il museo archeologico comunale "F. Barreca" di Sant'Antioco*, Sassari 2007.
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