Protohistory
The period between the ninth century BC and the arrival of the Romans was marked by several technological breakthroughs on the Iberian Peninsula and the Balearic Islands. These were partly motivated by the convergence of Atlantic, Mediterranean and continental trade routes, which accelerated a process that had begun in the Late Bronze Age: the formation and development of the pre-Roman people groups.

The coexistence of the native populations and technologies, combined with new exchanges and materials, gave rise to different cultures whose names in the pre-Roman period have come down to us in classical sources. The social and territorial organisation of these peoples, including their urban planning structures, beliefs and material culture, evidence unique characteristics but also reveal shared and comparable traits in terms of the social phenomena that inspired their activities. All of this can be seen in the three exhibition modules distributed between Galleries 10 to 17.

New Times, New Exchanges

This section explains how new technologies, more travel and increasingly vigorous trade created the need for a standard weighing system and led to the use of sets of weights complemented by different types of scales.

One of the measures introduced to regulate trade relations and gain the trust of potential customers was the use of standardised containers for oil, wine and perfume, all of which were regarded as precious commodities. Raw metals were turned into ingots, which might take the form of iron ploughshares or pre-weighed silver cake-ingots that could be divided into fractions.

Languages and Writing: A New Form of Communication

Writing, which had emerged as a counting system in the Middle East and Crete, subsequently evolved into a system of commercial, legislative and ritual communication. On the Iberian Peninsula, where the people spoke Iberian and Celtic languages, this major cultural breakthrough was manifested on lead, bronze, stone and pottery surfaces and in a variety of scripts known
collectively as «Palaeo-Hispanic»: Tartessian or Southwestern; Southeastern or Meridional Iberian; Graeco-Iberian; and Levantine Iberian and its Celtiberian derivatives. All of these writing systems were the result of the fusion and evolution of the Phoenician and Greek alphabets.

Controlling Fire and Water to Improve Technology

The ability to control natural elements such as fire, water and air led to considerable improvements in the technology applied to raw materials like bronze, lead, iron, steel, gold, silver and clay, with important consequences for society.

The Bronze Tradition and the Addition of Lead

Bronze became more resistant as copper and tin were combined with other minerals such as lead and, to a lesser extent, antimony and nickel. This not only hardened the bronze but permitted the manufacture of mass-produced objects that were used by people from every walk of life.
All kinds of luxury and ritual objects were made, such as thymiateria, jugs and braziers, as well as ornamental accessories for both men and women and defensive weapons.

Another novelty was the use of colour as a decorative system in techniques such as damascened inlays.

Lead became important in its own right. It was transported in mould-cast ingots to be used for making objects such as weights and writing surfaces in the form of plaques.

**A New Metal: Iron**

Iron acquired such importance that this cultural period was named after it. It became indispensable for new weapons and tools, like the ones in the display case, which made it possible to exploit farmland more intensively and improve quarrying techniques.

The hardness of the metal was achieved by means of a complex process that consisted in joining sheets of iron and steel (iron + carbon), obtained by controlling the smelting temperature. Sometimes iron weapons were decorated with silver damascening or given a magnetite finish.
Gold and Silver: Luxury and Technology

The section dedicated to the new techniques imported by the Phoenicians and applied to precious metals shows how, from the seventh century BC, soldering and bezel setting were used to make delicate hollow jewellery out of sheet gold profusely decorated with granulation and filigree. Colour was added in the form of vitreous paste, enamel or semi-precious stones.

Meanwhile, silver cupellation – a technique that involved melting the unrefined ore to separate the silver from the accompanying raw metals – was increasingly used instead of gold to make vessels and other types of jewellery.

Pottery: Innovation and Assimilation

The pottery produced by the Phoenicians and other Semitic and Hellenistic cultures was soon copied and mass-produced thanks to the introduction of the potter’s wheel. This specialised type of manufacture created the need for more elaborate and complex kilns situated at some distance from the dwellings, with clear repercussions for urban planning. Initially, the new pottery coexisted alongside both hand-built and mould-cast objects, and even used the same decorative techniques as the former.
The formation of the Pre-Roman People Groups

The development of the societies that settled on the Iberian Peninsula and its islands during the Early Iron Age can be traced back to a common origin: improved climate conditions, which favoured the emergence of an agriculture-based economy, and, above all, the presence of Mediterranean, Phoenician and Greek merchants and colonists. Their cultural influence would mark the local peoples for centuries.

The people of inland Iberia: between innovation and tradition

The incipient existence of a transportation network facilitated greater contact between the peoples in the coastal areas and those living in the Ebro river valley and Central Plateau. Trade intensified thanks to farming, livestock and mining surpluses, while the control of these commodities led to growing social differentiation and the rise of an elite class who owned luxury objects, some of which are truly outstanding, like the ones shown in the display case dedicated to this theme.

The settlements were organised around a relatively egalitarian structure made up of adjoining rectangular dwellings or free-standing circular huts. Most of the population followed the old traditions, carrying out different types of productive activities in the home, as shown in another display case and a video, but the larger dimensions and contents of certain dwellings confirm the existence of more powerful families.

The necropolises offer proof of the belief in the afterlife, while the grave goods that accompany the ashes of the deceased, especially in the Ebro Valley and the eastern Central Plateau, evidence the existence of important figures.

We know that the visibility of religious rituals grew because of our knowledge of the places where they were conducted and of the altars, both fixed and portable, and other objects used in such ceremonies, like the ones shown in the display case dedicated to this theme.
Phoenician colonisation

Experienced merchants and mariners, the Phoenicians came in search of the silver produced in the mines of Huelva and western Seville and the tin that could be obtained in northern Portugal. The audiovisual explains the different types of ships and routes used by these seafaring people.

Thymiaterion from Calaceite
The Phoenicians brought important novelties such as the potter’s wheel and introduced new products from the eastern Mediterranean, such as large alabaster vases from Egypt. Phoenician craftsmen who settled in the coastal cities passed on their sophisticated techniques for making gold and silver objects, as well as delicate pottery decorated with paint or red slip. They also brought a writing system and new building methods. Cremation became a widespread funerary ritual, eastern iconography was introduced, and the new religion was assimilated and adapted to traditional beliefs.
Phoenician settlements were usually established on islands close to the mainland, like Gadir (Cádiz), or on hilltops overlooking the coast, such as Tosca-nos where the pieces in the display case come from. These settlements produced luxury objects that found their way further inland thanks to trade with the indigenous communities. The commodities were transported via some of the routes that had been in use since the Bronze Age and also via new ones created to facilitate the exploitation of natural resources. During the course of the seventh century BC the Phoenicians extended their trade along both the Atlantic seaboard and the Mediterranean coast from Murcia to the Gulf of Lion. In exchange for metals and agricultural or livestock products, the locals obtained novel commodities which, as prestige objects, were reserved for the elite of each social group.

**Tartessus**

Mentioned by Greek authors, Tartessus can be defined as the geographical area spreading across the Guadalquivir and Guadiana valleys and southern Portugal where, between the eighth and sixth centuries BC, a new culture emerged that combined elements of the indigenous tradition with new ones derived from contact with the Phoenicians and the Greeks of Phocaea.

This was a revolutionary period in the strictest sense of the word, because the indigenous peoples rapidly adopted and efficiently applied all the technological knowledge that the Phoenicians passed on to them, while also reorganising the territory and establishing new mechanisms of power. The Tartessian economy was based on agriculture and intensive mining, particularly of silver and tin, to satisfy the demand of the Phoenician colonists. Palaces and shrines inspired by eastern Mediterranean models were founded, such as the shrine of El Carambolo, and a new religious sensibility with more complex cultural forms emerged: greater importance was attached to the visibility of necropolises, while Tartessian deities seemed to adopt traits borrowed from those of the eastern colonists. One of the most important finds is the Aliseda Hoard, which comprises the grave goods of two aristocrats.
Initially, the Greeks only knew of the coastal zones and called all the peoples who lived there Iberians. Gradually, however, they learned of the existence of other peoples, and of their different relations and names, and the Romans ended up calling the entire peninsula and adjacent islands Hispania. The maps drawn up by the authors of Antiquity reflect these changes in the knowledge of the territory.

The exhibition, divided into six units, summarises the characteristics of these peoples, their interrelations between them and their gradual dissolution during the struggle with the Romans and the period known as «Romanisation».

**Territory and identity**

The pottery produced during this period is one of the identifying traits of the pre-Roman peoples and tells us a great detail about their relations and kinships. The arrival of products and ideas from the eastern and central Mediterranean, and from central Europe, led to the introduction of new techniques and aesthetics and to the imitation of luxury objects for everyday purposes. The spread of weapons and adornments, both originals and replicas, suggests the existence of a network of routes for transporting goods and livestock, and some of these routes would subsequently be used by invading armies.

There are several display cases dedicated to the pottery produced by the different cultures of the Iberian Peninsula and its islands. They also contain a selection of weapons from different locations along the transportation routes.

**The Iberian peoples**

Iberian is the name given to a wide variety of peoples who lived in the eastern and southern regions of the Iberian Peninsula between the sixth century BC and the Roman conquest. Their formation was heavily influenced
by the Phoenician colonists, especially in the south and southeast, and later by the presence of Greeks on the northeast and east coasts, giving rise to a culture with distinctly Mediterranean characteristics.

The Iberian groups created small states and developed a social hierarchy based on the control of land and its resources and trade. They also developed new settlement patterns, as can be seen from the scale models on display, comprising primary centres that evolved into administrative capitals surrounded by a network of secondary centres dedicated to agriculture, mining, trade or defence. This process gave rise to the creation of transportation routes, systems of weights and measures, a writing system and ultimately coinage. Pieces such as the cart wheel from Toya shed light on the hierar-
chical structure of the Iberian societies because these objects were commissioned by princes or noblemen, or were buried in monumental graves.

The complex social organisation is also manifested in Iberian religious practices. Chapels associated with domestic or family worship have been found at Castellet de Bernabé and El Puntal dels Llops, while other places have yielded infant burials beneath the floors of dwellings and animal sacrifices related to the founding of the site.

The necropolises were located near the settlements. After the body was cremated, the remains were placed in an urn and deposited inside the grave. A significant characteristic of Iberian necropolises is the introduction of sculptures to mark and adorn the graves of high-ranking people. Occasionally, the sculpture itself was the receptacle for the cremated remains, as in the case of the Lady of Baza. Other tombs, like the Pozo Moro monument, were extremely complex.

The rituals and ceremonies conducted in temples and shrines were accompanied by stone and bronze sculptures—like those at the shrines of Despeñaperros and Cerro de los Santos—which the faithful offered to the deity in exchange for favours.

The Celtic peoples

The pre-Roman peoples of Indo-European origin—the Pre-Celts and Celts—occupied the central, northern and western Iberian Peninsula, receiving central European and Atlantic influences from the northeast and Mediterranean influences from the east and south.
In general, these groups had an internal hierarchy with clear distinctions between farmers, livestock breeders and craftsmen, and as early as the fourth century BC they developed specialised tools and a wide variety of battle gear. They liked to adorn themselves with elaborate accessories made out of metal, although some of these were undoubtedly reserved for the elite. The use of gold was confined almost exclusively to the northwest, while silver was the predominant raw material in the remaining territories, in part due to their natural resources and in part to their traditions.

The Celtic peoples shared a common ideological base but with material differences shaped by their exposure to one set of influences or another. This can be clearly seen in the display cases dedicated to the implements and adornments used by the different social classes: weapons belonging to warriors; symbols of the elite, such as fibulas, torcs and diadems; clothing accessories; and implements for different productive activities.

The funerary rituals are reflected in a large display case and two recreations of cremation necropolis structures showing their internal organisation and different types of grave goods.
The Punic peoples

In the sixth century BC, Carthage acquired increasing importance in the western Mediterranean, and trading colonies like Gadir (Cádiz), Baria (Villaricos) and Ebusus (Ibiza) became part of the Punic world.

The scale model of the latter colony shows the remains associated with the ancient topography, beneath modern-day Ibiza.

The display cases exhibit archaeological materials from two important necropolises: Puig des Molins (Ibiza) and Villaricos (Almeria). Both sites reveal that inhumation, usually in long trenches or hypogea, became a widespread funerary practice during the Punic period. Stone stelae, like the sphinx/siren at Villaricos, were often erected to mark the burial site.

Another aspect of Punic religious practices are the shrines that were originally dedicated to Astarte, the Phoenician goddess who protected seafarers, but were rededicated in the sixth century BC to Tanit, the new Carthaginian deity with similar attributes to her predecessor.
The Talayotic culture

The Talayotic culture emerged on the islands of Mallorca and Menorca during the first millennium BC. Its megalithic architecture made of large stones can be divided into three types of construction: *talayots* or stepped structures, *navetas* or naviform structures, and *taulas* or T-shaped stone monuments. The most important megaliths are the navetas used as collective graves, like Des Tudons (Menorca), and shrines like the taulas at Torralba d’en Salord (Menorca) and Son Corró (Costitx, Mallorca). The latter *taula* remained in use from the fifth century BC until the Roman conquest and has yielded two bulls’ heads and one calf’s head, symbolising deities, as well as other types of offerings.

From Iberia to Hispania

Until the second half of the third century BC, the Mediterranean peoples who came to the land they called Iberia confined their activities to founding
colonies or settlements and maintaining contact with the local elites who controlled the economic resources. However, from that point on, first the Carthaginians and then the Romans sought not only to establish a permanent presence but also to claim control of mining and agricultural resources, and they were prepared to fight to achieve their goal. Rome waged war for two hundred years, finally gaining complete control of Hispania.

Galleries 16 and 17 are dedicated to this final period of the pre-Roman peoples of the peninsula and islands who fought both armies, Carthaginian and Roman, but also joined them as mercenaries. Later on, fighting for one band or another, they also participated in the Roman Republic’s civil wars on Iberian soil.

This complex process of social change is explained by the fact that as one conquest followed another, Roman customs gradually impregnated those of the indigenous peoples through education, legislation and even new forms of dress, tableware and food, as exemplified by the sculptural group from Azaila and Monument B from Osuna.