



A I G A I

THE ROYAL METROPOLIS
OF THE MACEDONIANS





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ANGELIKI KOTTARIDI



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John S. Latsis
Public Benefit Foundation

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IN NOVEMBER OF 1977, the archaeological spade of Manolis Andronicos met History. The discovery of the tombs of Philip II and Alexander IV, son of Alexander the Great and Roxane, and the many valuable finds that came to light thereafter, impressed the most significant scholars as well as global public opinion, and opened new roads in the scientific investigation of the archaeology and history of Macedonia.

Thirty-five years of research and study have brought to light many royal burial monuments, sanctuaries with royal votive offerings, magnificent city walls, masterpieces of art and finally the palace of Philip II, one of the most important buildings in the Hellenic world. They all testify to the historic significance of Aigai, the first city of the Macedonians, the frontier Hellenic tribe that brought the Greek language, education and culture to the ends of the ancient world, and played a catalytic role in the evolution of global history.

Birthplace of kings and starting point of history, Aigai was the place where in 336 BC, Philip II was assassinated and his son Alexander was proclaimed king. It was also the place from which, two years later, the young king began his long journey to becoming Alexander the Great, victorious commander of an army.

Included on UNESCO's list of World Cultural Heritage Sites, Aigai has justifiably enjoyed the special protection of the State. The Ministry of Culture and Sports draws up programmes for its conservation, investigation and enhancement, such as building the unique Museum-Mausoleum shelter that protects the burial group of Philip II, the immense task of conservation and restoration of the palace, but also the creation of a new museum core, the construction of which has just begun.

One has only to spend a few hours in Aigai to feel the awe of Greek history. Likewise, one has only to study this new book, to examine details of the finds in the excellent photographs, and immerse one's self in the authoritative scholarly text, in order to feel the emotion recalled by the certainty of a unique past and its uninterrupted continuity up to the present time.

Today, when yet another adventure burdens the Greek world, the memories that we are imbued with and that rally us together are doubly precious. Doubly precious is also the publication contributed by the John S. Latsis Public Benefit Foundation, which having continued for some 15 years to address both experts and the public at large, has now become a tradition. Another valued Greek tradition.

PANOS PANAGIOTOPOULOS
Minister of Culture and Sports



THE MUSEUM CYCLE, the publishing initiative of the John S. Latsis Public Benefit Foundation, annually examines and highlights moments from the complex story of Greek culture, with consistency and respect for the subject being treated. To date, the series has visited more or less known archaeological sites, each of which has its own history and contribution to shaping the unique cultural mosaic that unfolds in our country. Through the present volume, we are fulfilling a genuine obligation by presenting Aigai, the ancient royal metropolis of the Macedonians.

In Aigai, visitors expect to see masterpieces that testify clearly to the wealth and magnitude of the kingdom that bordered on a large part of the then known world. What they do not, however, expect is that, upon entering the Museum, they are embarking on a voyage that will enrapture their senses. From the very first moment, the highly atmospheric structure embraces the visitor in a familiar darkness, which is broken selectively to shed light on gold cinerary larnakes and wreaths, elaborate symbols of power and brilliant symposium vessels: superb treasures that co-exist in absolute harmony. As the visitor proceeds, he is further initiated into the culture of the ancient Macedonians, charmed by the masterful painting in the tombs and imbued with feelings of awe and emotion when contemplating the gold-decorated panoply that accompanied king Philip II of Macedonia.

Aigai is a place that radiates optimism. The first and most obvious reason is that, leaving the tumulus-museum, the visitor emerges once more into the light of day after becoming acquainted with the idea of eternity, perhaps for the first time. The second, deeper reason is that one can perceive the innate extroversion of our race, and admire the achievements of the people in antiquity who carried the torch of Hellenic civilisation to the ends of the earth, but also those of today's people who, day by day, through their persistence and absolute sense of responsibility, have created a nucleus of culture, study and acclaim, the like of which can be found nowhere else. If this site was fortunate enough in the past to have had its excavation directed by Manolis Andronicos, an archaeologist of global repute, it is likewise fortunate today in having Mrs Angeliki Kottaridi as its director, a scholar with a clear vision: to make Aigai a model site on which history meets the present. I would like to thank her warmly and to congratulate her for the excellent book she has written. I would also like to thank those in charge at the Ministry of Culture and Sports and all its central and regional services, who contributed decisively to this book. Thanks are also addressed to all the employees of the Museum and archaeological site of Aigai and, of course, to each individual contributor who worked on this book.

MARIANNA J. LATSIS



FOR THE ANCIENTS, forgetting the past (*lethe*) was the state of the dead, and memory the only way to transcend death. Personal memory, collective memory and historical memory are necessary elements in one's self-perception, but also in the creation of a group, and constitute the foundation for the identity of individuals, of nations and ultimately of humanity as a whole. Free of the subjectivity of narrations, the testimony of monuments is the most direct means of contact with the past. In studying and interpreting the works of human civilisation, archaeology has proved to be not only the pre-eminent science of memory, but also a critical factor in understanding the course of humankind and the historical developments that have shaped the present.

The archaeology of Macedonia offers a very characteristic example. The history of the ancient Macedonians, based as it is on the descriptions of enemies and political adversaries like Demosthenes or Polybius, became a preferred object of distortion and falsification in dealing with contemporary geopolitical expediencies. The archaeologist's spade was required which, over the past fifty years, has been tirelessly investigating the Macedonian land in order to rectify the picture. The finds from Aigai – the city that after a succession of disasters fell into oblivion under the dust of centuries – have not only given back to the royal metropolis its name and identity, they have also enabled us to re-write the history of Macedonia, and more: the discoveries at Aigai document, in the most enthralling way, the astonishing evolution of the Macedonians, a conservative tribe with archaic structures which, under the inspired leadership of Philip II and Alexander the Great, became a radical instrument that changed the history of the world. The new ideas and trends that defined the course of the Hellenistic world over time were generated in the environment of Philip II and left priceless traces in the soil of Aigai.

Thus, the initiative of the John S. Latsis Public Benefit Foundation takes on special significance, as this book provides the opportunity – 30 years after the fascinating first publication of Manolis Andronicos' discovery of the royal treasures – to present for the first time, to the public and experts alike, all the finds of Aigai, old and new and all the exciting discoveries of the last decade, from the magnificent new finds revealed during the enormous task of restoring the palace, to the royal tombs that have come to light just this year. These finds consolidate the picture, confirming the initial identification, while at the same time paving the way for an overall re-assessment of the Macedonians' contribution to Greece and to civilisation.

ANGELIKI KOTTARIDI



I. THE “RESURRECTION” OF THE MACEDONIAN METROPOLIS

“Will we be succeeded by other researchers on the site who want to complete our work? Will they want to search through confusing debris for foundations buried beneath the ground? We very much hope so, but cannot be certain. However, if some hope yet remains of our penetrating the mystery that envelops the history, institutions and even the topography of Macedonia, if there is still some hope that we will be able to rescue from deep oblivion the ancient monuments of a people who played a significant role in the world, we are convinced that the solution to these difficulties lies hidden under the hills of Palatitsa. Whatever may be the name of this unknown city, the significance of its ruins for Macedonia will be like those of Pompeii. Some distinction will remain for us, because we were the first to draw the attention of travellers and scholars to this spot.”

LÉON HEUZEY, 1876

A century and a half after this question was formulated by Léon Heuzey, the pioneering excavator of Aigai, it can be said that his hopes have been realised, and that after long and persistent investigation, the ancient Macedonian Metropolis, having regained its name, has begun at last to take the place it deserves on the world’s archaeological map..



1. The discovery, the works, the people and the landmark dates



1861: Excavation on the east side of the palace by Léon Heuzey and architect Henri Daumet. Discovery of a Macedonian tomb near Palatitsia. Some of the finds are taken to the Louvre Museum.

1922: The refugee village of Vergina is established west of the ancient city. The ancient ruins of the palace of Aigai are used as a quarry for materials to build this new village.

1937-1940: Konstantinos Rhomaïos, professor of archaeology at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH), resumes excavation of the palace and discovers a Macedonian tomb.

1949-1960: Manolis Andronicos, as curator of antiquities, investigates the Cemetery of the Tumuli. With the collaboration of AUTH and the Ephorate of Antiquities, professors M. Andronicos and George Bakalakis, with the ephor of antiquities Ch. Makaronas, continue excavating the palace.

1961-1962: Rescue excavation by the ephor of antiquities Ph. Petas along the provincial road that crosses the ancient necropolis.

1961-1970: The excavation of the palace is completed. British historian N.G.L. Hammond formulates the hypothesis that the ancient city between Vergina and Palatitsia is Aigai, (pronounced Eh-YEH).

1976: Manolis Andronicos begins excavating the Great Tumulus.

1977-1991: The Regular Excavation of Vergina proceeds, directed by Manolis Andronicos under the auspices of the AUTH and the Archaeological Society. The monuments and the finds are conserved by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture.

- 1977: The spade of Manolis Andronicos meets history in the Great Tumulus of Aigai. The tomb of Philip II and its treasures are brought to light. The media arouse the interest of world public opinion by describing the discovery as the find of the century. A page is turned in the study of ancient Greek art and history.
- 1978: Discovery of the unlooted tomb of Alexander IV. Exhibition of the treasures in the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki by the ephor of antiquities Katerina Rhomiopoulou. Fotis Zachariou's team begins conservation work on the wall paintings.
- 1980-1986: Discovery of the theatre, the sanctuaries of Eukleia and Cybele, and three Macedonian tombs; excavations on the Acropolis and on city buildings. The first actions are taken to consolidate the organic materials and the ivory shield is conserved by a team of conservators under the supervision of G. Petkousis.
- 1987-1990: Discovery of the tomb of Queen Eurydice, excavation of the queens' burial plot and the northwest section of the city.

Detail of the painted board that decorated the backrest on the burial throne of queen Eurydice (344/3 BC).

- 1992: Death of Manolis Andronicos.
- 1992-2013: The regular AUTH excavation continues under the direction of S. Drougos and Ch. Paliadeli in the sanctuaries of Eukleia and Cybele, on the acropolis and on the east wall, and is completed in the region of the Bella tumulus group.
- 1991-2013 on: Activity by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and the 17th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities (EPCA) in the vicinity of Aigai
- 1991-2009: The 17th EPCA intensifies its surveys and excavations throughout the Aigai region. More than a thousand graves are excavated; new settlements, farmhouses, cemeteries, roads, sanctuaries and fortifications are identified; the history and layout of the city are becoming clearer (A. Kottaridi).
- 1993-1996: Discovery of the royal burial group of the Temenids.
 - 2003-2004: Discovery of the northwest gate and the earlier phases of the city wall.
 - 2004-2009: Discovery of the archaic necropolis of Aigai.
- 1991-1993: The protective shelter is built over the royal burial plot of Philip II (Direction of Restoration of Ancient Monuments, under Iordanis Dimakopoulos).
- 1994-1998: The 17th EPCA conservation laboratory is set up in Vergina. Systematic documentation and conservation of the monuments and finds from the burial plot of Philip II (project financed by the 2nd European Community Support Framework [ECSF], under A. Kottaridi).
- 1996: Inclusion of Aigai on the UNESCO list of World Cultural Heritage Sites.
- 1997: Re-assembling the gold and ivory couches found in the tomb of Philip II (A. Kottaridi, Ch. Bokoros, M. Tilio-poulou).
- 1997: First phase of the exhibition of treasures in the protective shelter of the royal tombs. Gold caskets (*larnakes*) and wreaths are returned from Thessaloniki to Aigai (Exhibition organised by A. Kottaridi).
- 1998: All the remaining treasures from the royal tombs are returned from Thessaloniki to Aigai.
- 2003: Second phase and completion of the exhibition of the treasures (3rd ECSF project, under A. Kottaridi).
- 2007-2009: Work commences on the conservation of the palace of Aigai (3rd ECSF project, under A. Kottaridi).
- 2009: Drafting of a master plan for the protection, unification and enhancement of the archaeological site of Aigai (A. Kottaridi)
- 2010-2014: Second conservation phase at the palace of Aigai (National Strategic Reference Project [NSRF], under A. Kottaridi; supervision: O. Felekidou, M. Gogou).
- 2011-2014: Protection and enhancement of the Temenid royal burial group and of the Cemetery of the Tumuli (NSRF project, under A. Kottaridi, supervision: I. Graikos, A. Sotiropoulou).
- 2012-2013: Discovery of six new royal tombs in the Temenid group.
- 2013: Construction begins on the main museum building of the multicentre museum of Aigai.

ON PAGES. 22-23: *Museum of Aigai: The protective shelter on the burial plot of Philip II.*



1989: Excavation of the queens' burial plot, Manolis Andronicos, Angeliki Kottaridi.

Aigai, the royal necropolis of the Macedonians in spring.









2. The multcentred museum and the idea of a holistic approach

Aigai (pronounced Eh-YEH) was the Metropolis of the Macedonians, a frontier Hellenic tribe who, isolated in their self-sufficiency, preserved their archaic structures and institutions but, at the critical moment, would become the instrument and vehicle for developments that would transform the ancient world, setting their seal forever on the course of history. A city made up of separate settlements and never unified, Aigai retained the old-time spatial model of an open, organically evolving entity, the origins of which have faded into myth; at the same time it became a dynamic centre, the mould in which the radical ideas and forms that became the hallmark of the Hellenistic world were initially generated and acquired substance.

In the conviction that this dialectic between the conservative-“traditional” and the radical-“modern” is the quintessence of the Macedonian contribution to civilisation, we believe that this must be the main ideological and aesthetic principle governing every effort to organise, revive and enhance Aigai, the forgotten royal seat which the archaeologist’s spade has gradually reclaimed, centimetre by centimetre, from the oblivion of the centuries.

By acknowledging this, and taking into account the need for protection and the particularities of the monuments and town planning model of the ancient city with its buildings dispersed over a broad stretch of land, we proceeded to adopt a new, holistic and dynamic approach to the relationship between the archaeological site and the museum through the proposal to create the multiform, multidynamic, flexible and constantly evolving Multicentred Museum of Aigai. With sections scattered across the geographical area, it will embrace and include the entire archaeological site and, with the help of technology, will extend it into the transcendental world of virtual reality and the Internet.

The first of these sections is the existing protective shelter over Philip II’s burial plot including the permanent exhibition of the treasures. The next will be the shelters over the royal tombs in burial plots B and C and the Heuzey-Bella group, but also the palace itself which is currently being restored.

The entrance and nucleus of this Museum complex will be the main museum building now being constructed to the west of Vergina on a lot of 140,000 sq. metres (14 hectares) on which part of one of the settlements of the ancient city is also located. This building contains a large area for temporary thematic exhibitions that will draw from the reserves of finds and will focus on various aspects of the life, culture and history of the Macedonian Metropolis. It also has two large atria, one of which will constitute the sanctuaries section and house the permanent exhibition of sculptures; while in the other, the upper floor of the palace’s façade will be recreated.

The building will also house service areas, providing information and recreation for visitors, as well as spaces for educational programmes and for the conservation, storage, documentation and study of finds from the excavations at Aigai. A full network of digital media and applications will also be housed here, since the building will host the digital Internet museum “Alexander the Great: From Aigai to the World”. In this way, the museum building will be not only the starting point for a visit to the archaeological site of Aigai, but also the imaginary gateway to the global world of Alexander the Great.

Museum of Aigai: The gold-decorated panoply of Philip II.



The main features of the dynamic, pioneering Multicentre Museum of Aigai will be the unique co-existence of movable objects and monuments on their original site, their direct link with known historical persons and the alternating thematic exhibitions that will provide the opportunity to present a large part of the material and to keep the museum active. Its aims are to familiarise the public with the process of discovery and protection, to encourage their participation by volunteering for activities that do not require a high degree of specialisation, but offer the excitement of participation and the conditions for identification, to broaden the educational process by providing activities in experimental archaeology and of course to ensure the constant active presence of the museum on the Internet.

*Museum of Aigai:
Remains of objects from Philip II's funeral pyre.*

ON PAGES 28-29:
Museum of Aigai: The section on Philip II.

3. The protective shelter over the royal tombs in the Philip II group and the exhibition of the treasures. The ideological basis of the museological-museographical approach

Gazing into the vast future with awe, in which the only certainty is the inevitability of their own biological end, human beings seek refuge in the search for knowledge of the past. To be better able to bear the brevity of their own existence in the perpetuity of time, they are obliged to immerse themselves in their roots. By searching for the beginning, they hope to recognise Eternal Reason. As bearer of the indelible collective memory that has stamped his instincts, with the biological sequence of all his ancestors inscribed in his DNA, the modern traveller to the sites of ruins, where memory is condensed into matter, hopes to touch the essence of being, if only momentarily. Through the endless alternation of the fleeting with the eternal, he hopes to become aware of the unbroken continuity, and through awareness of the incessantly repeated death of the individual, he aspires to feel and touch the immortality of the species. Odysseus had to ask the dead to find out how he should proceed among the living. The Initiates knew that the road to immortality is through the fountain of Mnemosyne.

To speak of the past, the ancients resorted to myth which was as real to them as history is to us. Through the genealogies of the gods and the cycles of heroes, they determined the seasons, structured time, named Reason, interpreted the beginning and narrated the evolution of the species. The poets who praised the deeds of earlier heroes called upon the Muse to sing memory. It is hardly accidental that the Muses were the daughters of Mnemosyne (Memory).

Today, the temple of Memory is the Museum. The place of myth has been appropriated, among other things, by archaeology, a science that searches in the soil for traces of earlier people, classifies eras and objects in time and strives to interpret the beginnings.

The moment of discovery – the opening of the grave when contemporary light pushes aside the ancient shade and everything in it is half-lost and half-found, suffused with the bittersweet scent of soil and of time – is the privilege of the archaeologist, an instantaneous experience that cannot be preserved or repeated. Anyone who experiences this unique and unprecedented joy must not only try to read the forgotten message, or to share the Sisyphian task of halting and reversing the ravages of time, but above all he or she must become the rational intermediary between those who have departed and those who are here now and, by sustaining memory, communicate ancient knowledge to the many.

In order to preserve the royal tombs of Aigai – and the splendid wall paintings of the rape of Persephone and the royal hunt, unique original works by major artists of classical antiquity that have come down to us – an enormous protective subterranean shelter was built, with electronic systems for controlling the atmosphere to ensure the necessary constant humidity and temperature in the tomb area. From the outside, the shelter looks like an ancient grave tumulus, since it is covered with soil.

Under the shelter, which incorporates the structures of the royal burial group of Philip II (group A) – three Macedonian tombs and one cist-grave – together with the foundations of the *heroon* (above ground), there are four adjoining polygonal halls,



These silver vessels, including a large vase with a handle, a bowl, and several smaller pieces, are arranged on tiered pedestals. The display is illuminated by spotlights, highlighting the intricate details and craftsmanship of the artifacts. A small plaque is visible on the right side of the case.





with a total area of some 1200 sq. metres. Here an original and fairly daring experiment was attempted which, judging from the reactions and the numbers of visitors, appears to have succeeded. This “Museum” was built around the monuments and became a museum quite different from all the rest, a Museum-Mausoleum dedicated to the memory of specific individuals. Because visitors who descend to the underground royal crypt of Aigai will, for the first and only time on Helladic soil, find themselves looking at the familiar and eponymous faces of people whose life and work are known from history books, their attitudes and expectations are different from what they would have been going into any other museum.

The treasures are exhibited where they were found, beside the tombs that contained them; but of course nothing remains as it was then. The contemporary tumulus-shelter continues to mark the site and protect the tombs, recalling the exterior of the Great Tumulus, but quite a lot smaller. In essence, however, it revokes its own function, since it was designed to make the monuments accessible to the public, whereas the ancient mound concealed and isolated the resting places of the dead, separating them from the living by the bulk of the soil.

Death transmutes. Whatever “died” and was buried, having followed the deceased to his or her grave, and whatever the earth preserved in its bosom for centuries may some day be brought back to light, but it will never again be what it was. The “resurrected” weapons, decorations, beds, goblets and pitchers will no longer serve anyone’s practical needs. Things, no longer functional, but nevertheless useful, high on their pedestals, become monuments, fragments of memory, ideas rather than material objects and find a place in the Museum. Without their owners, they become the property of all; when exhibited they are both accessible and inaccessible, people of the present are forbidden to touch them, since they are precious witnesses to the touch of those who have been dead for centuries.

Excavation removes an object from its context. Serving the utopian dream of “eternal” preservation, modern technology is mobilised to stop the natural process of decay. The ancient object is conserved, “restored” and exhibited to the public entirely alienated from its primary function. The way it is exhibited should respect its form and nature, but it cannot help expressing the aesthetics of modern man to whose ideological needs it is addressed.

Guided by these thoughts in exhibiting the treasures from the royal tombs of Aigai, austere, plain and timelessly geometric forms are combined with modern, neutral materials – metal, crystal, dull aluminium, synthetic glass – that meet the strictest specifications. The best that modern international technology has to offer in the museographic field has been utilised to ensure the best possible conditions for protecting and preserving the finds, without losing the atmospheric environment required by this exhibition, since it is addressed to both reason and emotion.

Playing with the modern Greek expression “the archaeologist’s spade brought to light...” we regarded as axiomatic the idea that death, the past, soil and oblivion are shade and the absence of colour, while life and memory are light and colour. So the museum structures have been painted in the beige tones of mist, the dark gray of empty space, the gray-brown of soil and the navy blue of night, and then concealed in the dark. A world of shadows has thus been created in which the ancient objects dominate, bright and warm, which after death were brought back to a new life, and where, apart from the monuments, the only colour is purple, suggesting the blood of the royal dead who, like the heroes in an ancient tragedy, haunt the place.

With the help of the functional museum structures, the space was divided into sections and the element of surprise was created that accompanies the visitors’ steps, arousing their interest. The darkness that reigns generates awe, and turns voices into whispers, imposing the atmosphere of the land of the dead through which the visitor wanders, unwinding the skein of memory.

Austere and plain, almost minimalist, but strongly atmospheric, the exhibition of the Treasures from the Royal Tombs of Aigai imposes a scenario that unfolds in space through the sequence of the individual sections. Visitors who descend into the depths of the tumulus-Museum find themselves in the dark. They are shocked to see, as though in a dream, the image of the Great Tumulus, which no longer exists, but through this three-dimensional model, they acquire an overall impression of the site and the monuments. The first section of the exhibition is dedicated to the Macedonians who were buried in the shadow of the royal tomb. Immediately after them are the ruins of the Macedonian tomb with the free-standing columns (tomb IV), a monument built in the 3rd century BC at the edge of the Great Tumulus to receive the remains of one of the Successors.

Along the way is the *heroon*, a monument dedicated to the cult of the eminent dead, and the only building in the group above ground. Beside it is the cist-grave (grave I) of one of Philip II's seven wives, probably that of Nicesipolis of Pherai. The space is dominated by the wonderful paintings that decorate the walls of the tomb, preparing the visitor to proceed into the heart of the exhibition which is dedicated to Philip II, the brilliant leader who changed the course of Hellenism. Here, near his tomb, among the elaborate weapons, the symbols of power, the vessels and remains of the funeral ceremony, the gold caskets and wreaths, the splendid symposium vessels and precious gold and ivory couches, is the dominant trophy of memory: the "resurrected", gold-ornamented panoply of the Macedonian king, very probably what he was wearing when he was proclaimed leader of all the Greeks, marking the shape of his absence with the brilliance of gold and ivory.

The next section is dedicated to Alexander IV, son of Alexander the Great and Roxane, who found rest in the shadow of his glorious grandfather. The exhibition closes as it began, with a row of grave stelai of Macedonians from Aigai, and the picture of Manolis Andronicos, to whose memory this section of the multcentred museum of Aigai is dedicated.

4. The major restoration works

In 2007, work began on conserving, restoring and enhancing the palace of Aigai. The entire half-buried monument was brought to light once more, and the greater part of it excavated systematically (foundation beds, flooring supports, surrounding area, etc.). It has also been scrupulously documented by detailed drawings and the analytic recording of hundreds of scattered architectural members, as well as the structures preserved *in situ*, using 3D laser scanning and thousands of photographs and aerial photographs, with the result that it is one of the best documented of all ancient buildings. Studies were drawn up for conservation and re-constitution; geological, soil and static studies, and studies of construction materials and mortars. Most of the floors and architectural members have already been conserved and the restoration of the walls has begun. By 2015, the conservation and restoration of the west, south and southeast wing is expected to have been completed. Our goal is, by 2020, to have restored the north and northeast wing and a significant part of the peristyle as well, so that Macedon will once again acquire its own "Parthenon".



Museum of Aigai: Views of the exhibition.







ON PAGES 34-35 : *Museum of Aigai: The weaponry of Philip II.*

ON PAGES 36-37 : *The case in which the symbols of power are exhibited, together with various bronze vessels found in Philip II's tomb.*











Bronze pendant. The addition of the horse makes this Protogeometric jewel unique (9th cent. BC).

II. THE PEOPLE AND THE SITE

1. The Macedonians

*To Zeus, who delights in thunderbolts, Thyia bore two sons, Magnes and Macedon who rejoices in horses
They inhabited the land around Pieria and Olympus.*

(HESIOD, The Catalogues of Women, 3)

In this poetic way, Hesiod, a Boeotian living at the end of the 8th century BC, defined the tribal identity and connections of the Macedonians and placed them in an actual geographical location, obviously echoing the knowledge and views of his audience.

Zeus was “the father of gods and men”, so it is the name of their mother Thyia that provides an interesting key to the identity of her sons. Daughter of Deucalion and Pyrrha, and sister of Hellen, the eponymous ancestor of all Greeks, Thyia belonged to the first generation after the mythic flood. Her name, which is a cognate of the verb *thyo*, is a direct link with the act of sacrifice (*thysia*). Thyia was the archetypal high priestess of Dionysos, and it was in her honour that the maenads were also called Thyiades. According to tradition, the hieratic activity of Thyia and the Thyiades was concentrated in Delphi, but it recalls in a very characteristic way the special link between the women of Macedon, especially the members of the royal family, with the god of ecstasy.

The close blood relationship of Thyia with the man who gave his name to the Hellenes declares her sons’ connection to Hellenism, while the brotherhood of Magnes and Macedon reveals the special link between the two eponymous tribes.

The Magnesians were to give their name to eastern Thessaly. The Macedonians, in the period of Hesiod, were already located in Pieria and Olympus. The root *mac-*, from which is derived the epithet *macedon* or *macednos*, means “long, tall” (e.g. Homer’s *macedne aigeiros*, tall poplar tree), and associates the homonymous clan with the mountainous highlands which its members appear to ascend and descend easily, while the epithet *hippocharmis* (rejoices in horses) indicates the Macedonians’ close relationship with horses, auguring the decisive activity of the Macedonian cavalry over the ages.

Early in the 5th cent. BC, Hellanicus (FrGrHist 4 no. 74) believed the mythical founder of the race to have been Macedon, son of Aiolos, and thus grandson of Hellen, while Herodotus (I.56.10), less poetic, insists on identifying the Macedonians with the Dorians. “...*the Hellenes were a very well-travelled race...in the time of Dorus son of Hellen, they were in the territory... known as Histaeiotis. They were then sent away from Histaeiotis by the Cadmeans and settled on Mount Pindus where they were called Macedonians. Next they moved to Dryopis and from Dryopis they finally reached the Peloponnese where they were called Dorians.*” These references are extremely valuable and leave no doubt as to the origin of the Macedonians.



Early in the last millennium BC, and perhaps even earlier, the Macedonians, pre-eminent stock-breeders, were settled in the mountainous and semi-mountainous regions of Olympus and the neighbouring mountains that Herodotus called Macedonian Mount and are today known as the Pieria range. From there they gradually spread to the fertile plains of Pieria, Emathia and Bottiaeis and, under the strong leadership of Alexander I (496-454 BC) and later Philip II (359-336 BC), extended their sovereignty over the entire region which took from them the name Macedonia.

Enjoying the self-sufficiency ensured by their abundant flocks, forests and fertile valleys, without ports and islands, without the need to resort to trade, the Macedonians, like other frontier northern and northwestern Hellenic tribes – Molossians, Orestians, Eordoi, Elimioties etc. – remained outside the economic, social and political developments taking place in the south that led to democracy, and until the 4th century BC retained institutions, customs and traditions that were reminiscent of society in the Homeric epics.

Organised on the basis of the archaic system of tribes and clans, they recognised the king as their absolute leader, whose power was based on his blood line. The basic feature of the Macedonians, like the Spartans, would continue to be the kingdom until their existence as an independent state ended. Following the ancient model, the king was the head of his people. The name Karanos (from the word *kara*, i.e. head) of a mythical royal progenitor, meant precisely “the head” and may possibly have been the traditional characteristic title of the Macedonian king.



Handmade clay vases of the Protogeometric period from the necropolis of Aigai: oinochoe (wine pitcher) with a double spout and kantharos with button-like decoration on the handles (10th-8th cent. BC).



◀ *Dionysos, a member of his retinue and Aphrodite. Detail of squat lekythos decorated by the “painter of the Initiates”, from the tomb of queen Eurydice (mid-4th cent. BC).*





*Handmade clay vessels of the Protogeometric period from the necropolis of Aigai:
oinochoai with raised spout and kantharoi (9th-8th cent. BC)*





Wheel-made vessels (amphoriskos and skyphos) with typical Protogeometric decoration (9th-8th cent. BC).



*Bronze and iron swords from Aigai and the land of Macedon
(14th-4th cent. BC).*



2. Macedonian Land (*Macedonis*)

“After reaching the city of Therme, Xerxes had his troops bivouac there. The camp spread out all along the coast from Therma and Mygdonia to the Loudias and Aliakmon, two rivers whose waters join together and form the boundary between Bottiaeis and Macedonis.”

(HERODOTUS VII, 127)

Describing the mass of the Persian army, Herodotus, who had seen the place himself, gives us valuable information about the site. The ending *-is, -idos* on a geographical term indicates, in the author’s idiolect, the place to which someone belongs, the birthplace of the clan of the same name. Bottiaeis, the land of the Bottiaians, in which Pella is located, extended north of the rivers and of the Thermaic Gulf. To the south was Macedonis with the narrow plain of Emathia, verdant hills, dense forests, abundant fields and fertile plateau on the mountain of the Pierides Muses, and southeastern Vermion. Here, in the highlands of western Pieria, protected against the north winds, above the narrow valley of the Aliakmon that flows between the two mountains, in the vast ruins in which wealthy archaic ladies sleep in eternity wearing strings of bronze loops around their ankles and amber necklaces around their neck, on the site still guarded by dead warriors holding their sword tightly to their chest, was obviously the location of Lebaea, the ancient centre of the Macedonians.

Macedon: The Aliakmon flows between the Pierian mountains and Mt Vermion.



It takes a person following the old paths less than four hours to walk downhill to the plain, the site selected by the Macedonians to build their first city, Aigai. But the view enjoyed by ancient wayfarers looking out from the acropolis of Aigai was very different from that of today. Then, the Thermaic Gulf penetrated deeply into the Macedonian basin, and sea water covered a very large part of today's plain. In the vicinity of Pella, there was a deepwater port and a small island. The Aliakmon flowed northward and merged with the Loudias, creating a frontier that was difficult to cross. Marshy expanses made the south shore of the Thermaic Gulf inaccessible to ships, and a dense forest of age-old trees and wild animals covered the greater part of the Emathia plain. As old timers remember, the dense forest still covered the plain south of the Aliakmon until 1937, when the trees were cut down so that arable land could be distributed among the refugees.

The shortest route for anyone wishing to travel by land from the east or north to southern Greece was to ford the Axios River and traverse Bottiaieis and, by crossing the Loudias and Aliakmon rivers, to arrive in the land of Aigai. From there, taking the mountain road across Pieria, passing through Lebarea, one could swiftly and safely arrive in Ellasson and Thessaly or head west to Aiane, Elimeia and Epirus. Prehistoric settlements document the antiquity of the road through the Pierian mountains, and the density of structures from all ages, its long use over time and the six fortresses that guard it bear witness to its strategic significance. The most recent finds from the excavations of mountainous "Macedonis", refuting the prejudice that regards mountain settlements as isolated and backward, speak eloquently of contacts, relations and exchanges between the Macedonians of the mountain and the major centres of southern Greece, proving that this was a basic axis of land communication from north to south, and was used in 480 BC by the army of Xerxes.

It is not at all accidental that the Macedonians selected precisely the point at which this very ancient road meets the one coming from the coast of the Thermaic Gulf, and from the neighbouring ports of Pydna and Methone, on which to build their first city, the city which, with its back to the ancestral mountain and its front well guarded by the Aliakmon, was to be the starting point for the expansion, the birthplace of the most glorious royal dynasty, the city that has gradually emerged from the asphodel meadows of oblivion and has once again regained its name: Aigai.

Macedon: The highlands on which Lebarea was situated, the ancient Macedonian centre.





*Macedon: Detail of a Mycenaean sword with spiral decoration.
Heads of a spear and javelin from the late Bronze Age.
Bronze jewel in the shape of a griffin.*



Black-figure Attic vases (kylix and skyphos) from a cemetery in the region of ancient Lebaea: on the latter, decorated by the "Haemon painter", Dionysos is flanked by a satyr and a dancing maenad (first quarter of the 5th cent. BC).





Macedon: Marble head of triform Hecate (2nd cent. AD).



Macedon: Clay figurine of a goddess enthroned (early 5th cent. BC).



Silver Ω -type earrings, snakehead finial on a silver chain and gold pendant in the form of a lion, grave gifts from the region of ancient Lebaea (5th cent. BC).



Stone mould for making gold jewellery with typical Mycenaean motifs (sacred knot, double axe) from Aigai.

3. Aigai-Aegeai, the first city of Macedon

The oldest known structure in the region of Aigai is on the plain, a tumulus from the early Bronze Age (3rd millennium BC). At the end of the Bronze Age, following the more general trend, the settlement moved towards the foothills of the mountain to the west of today's Vergina. A unique monument of its kind, the striking cemetery of the early Iron Age, as well as a number of settlements and cemeteries from the same period dotted around the landscape, bear witness to the dense habitation of the region which, starting early in the last millennium BC, was a very significant centre.

The ridge of the Pieria mountains to the south, the Aliakmon to the west and north and the Askordos River to the east demarcate the historical site of Aigai, the Macedonian Metropolis. Surface research and excavations over this enormous area, which exceeds 65,000,000 sq metres (6500 hectares), have shown that Aigeai, as indicated by its plural name – as is also the case in all the old Hellenic centres with plural names whose origins are lost in myth: Athens, Thebes, Mycenae, Amyklai, Pherai, etc – has an “open” town plan with settlements large and small scattered around the central core, the city.

The centre of a city whose archaic structures recall the society of the Homeric epics, Aigai remained to the end a city *'kata komas'*, an agglomeration of loosely connected settlements, without a strictly predetermined plan; the site provides the image of a society based on an aristocratic clan structure held together by the royal presence and power.

With an area of some 800,000 sq. metres (80 hectares), the walled city was built in the middle of the land called Aigai. Here, on the slope that extends between today's villages of Vergina and Palatitsia, in addition to the walled acropolis and sanctuaries, were the palaces and tombs of the kings.

The word Aigeai originated from the same root as *aiga* (which in ancient Greek means “goat”) and designates “the place with many flocks”. The name likewise reveals that the economy of the city was based on animal husbandry. The forest with its abundant game and ample wood for building ships, which became the main venture of the king's external policy, but also the neighbouring river that functioned as a water highway for the transportation of timber, offering at the same time rich fishing grounds, supplemented the city's wealth and ensured its prosperity. The unchecked spread of the necropolis on the plain suggests that agriculture probably did not play a primary role, although together with viticulture and arboriculture, for which this hilly region offers ideal conditions to this day, it ensured self-sufficiency of produce.

Even though the ancient Macedonian capital, with its old-time economic structures that were mainly based on the ownership and possession of the land, never became a significant craft or export centre, precisely because of the more general prosperity of its inhabitants, and especially the presence here of the extended royal court, it presented a very interesting market for products and services of distinction up to the Hellenistic period.

ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES: *Bronze figure-eight clasps (10th-7th cent. BC).*







Clay oil bottles (alabastra) from the sub-Mycenaean years (11th cent. BC) from Aigai.



Clay wheel-made amphoriskos with Protogeometric decoration and a handmade kantharos.





Typical bronze pendants (9th-8th cent. BC).



Tiny bronze figurine of courting birds (7th cent. BC).



4. Life in Aigai

According to the mythical archetype of the hero, a boar hunt marked the rites of passage into adulthood for every Macedonian youth who, to be considered a real man, had to kill a wild boar. Hunting and war were a man's chief activities, a dog and a horse his inseparable companions, flocks and land his fortune. With the exception of the very wealthy, the inhabitants of Aigai looked after their flocks, vineyards and fields themselves. In a society with so many needs, there were of course artisans of all types, both local and foreign, builders, masons, carpenters, potters, metalworkers and tanners, but also artists, sculptors, painters, goldsmiths and carvers who have left us marvellous examples of their art.

Physical exercise was especially popular and not only among young people, since the small bottles containing oil for bodies and the strigils – special instruments used to scrape oil, sweat and dust off the body after exercise – were basic, timeless accessories found in every house. Equally popular activities appear to have been music, song and dance. Indeed it was at a dance of armed men that the young king Alexander II was assassinated. In the deep-shaded forest and flowering meadows of the Muses' mountain, the melancholy song of the flute was heard, the whistling of the syrinx played by lonely herdsmen cut through the heavy silence, and the orgiastic rhythms of the bagpipe, drums and rattles of the Dionysian retinue (*thiasos*) alternated with the sober voice of the Apollonian lyre. The kings of Aigai also provided for feasts and festivals with music contests and athletic games, in which young athletes would compete and show off their nude beauty and the dexterity of their bodies, as an outlet for their vigour and, all together, they celebrated with song and dance.

As in all the rest of Greece, the symposium that usually followed the common meal was for men the quintessence of social life and an essential component of every public or private feast. The royal palace, the rooms and areas of sanctuaries where people gathered, the best rooms in houses, courtyards, gardens and groves became venues for symposia, for which the most expensive and luxurious furnishings and vessels of every household were intended. Homer frequently describes the preparations for a symposium: a bath with water heated in a bronze cauldron (*lebes*), massage with oil, clean clothes and then the enjoyment of the wine, but also the music, poetry recital and discussion between the table companions.

In the epic period, from the 10th to the 7th century BC, the symposia of the Macedonians were fairly plain. Vessels were clay, usually local, handmade and undecorated – small *amphorae* and *hydriae* for carrying wine and water, the characteristic pitchers with the high spout (*opisthotmitoi prochoi*) for serving, very large goblets, *skyphoi* with the characteristic handles, and *kantharoi*, the favourite of Dionysus and the Macedonians, in all their variations. There were also cups with long handles for drawing liquids that resemble their wooden models and recall similar vessels that were used over time by nomad stockbreeders; there were also clay soup tureens and bowls. Together with the local ware, there were also imported products, wheel-made *skyphoi* and *amphoriskoi*, decorated with concentric circles that introduced the Macedonians to the fashion of the Geometric period.

In the archaic period, the symposium took on its “classical” form: after the meal, the table companions washed, were perfumed and wreathed and then reclined on couches to enjoy the wine which was always mixed with water in a ratio determined by the host, to control the timing and degree of intoxication. Then the Temenids arrived in Aigai, together with the new trend

Adymos: Detail from the scene on the grave stele of Cleonymos (second half of the 4th cent. BC).



The crowning and inscription on the grave stele of Cleonymos (second half of the 4th cent. BC).

in symposium vessels. Alongside the traditional *opisthotmitoi prochoi* (neck-cut jugs) and *kantharoi*, large and small black-figure column kraters appeared, as well as various cups – *kotyles*, *skyphoi* and *kylikes* – large and small, from Corinth, eastern Ionia, the islands and Athens, as well as from workshops in the colonies on the Thermaic Gulf.

The degree to which products from different commercial centres penetrated the market of Aigai fluctuated to reflect the more general historical developments that also dictated trends in fashion. However, alongside the imported symposium vessels, there were always locally produced imitations, as well as local creations with the characteristic gray finish and shapes like the elegant small cauldrons (*dinoi*) with their reel-shaped handles that were obviously imitations of metal originals. Bronze vessels such as cauldrons, jugs, pans and bowls (*levites*, *hydriae*, *lekanes* and *phialai* of all types) were, from then on, the most essential components of a family's valuable household effects. Metal and clay products from local workshops are distinguished for their geometric austerity, the functional purity of their forms and the non-existent or minimal decoration, trends that constituted the characteristic feature of Macedonian art over time until the late classical period.

Having to confront harsher and more difficult weather conditions, the Greeks of the north in their daily lives, must have been a long way from the picture of heroic nudity to which we have become accustomed in representations of myth. The Macedonians usually wore a belted *chiton*, that is a simple woollen tunic, usually with sleeves, that reached to about the knees. Their customary outer garment was the *chlamys*, a fairly heavy short woollen cape that was pinned on the chest or shoulder. Leather boots or high sandals and a kind of leather or felt cap, the famous Macedonian *kausia*, completed an outfit suitable for walking, working or hunting in the cold, while herdsmen and field workers were happy to wear heavy overcoats and hats of simple unprocessed sheepskin that ensured them protection, albeit without elegance.

The small iron knife that was also used as a razor was the most basic item of male equipment. Apart from the pins that secured their clothing, their sole piece of jewellery was a ring, usually iron or bronze, that was also used as a seal. But their real source of pride, and every man's jewel, was his weaponry, expensive and precious objects that could save his honour and his life and were sometimes truly worth a fortune.

Grave monuments have preserved for us the names of some inhabitants of Aigai: Adymos, Peukolaos, Cleonymos, Pierion, Drykalos, Antigonos, Alketas, Erebaios, Philotas, Dimainetos and Dimitrios. They all lived and worked in Aigai, fought wherever duty called them and returned to rest in the sacred earth of the ancestral city.



The boar hunt: Life-size marble group, probably a votive offering in the Gymnasium of Aigai. (340-30 BC).



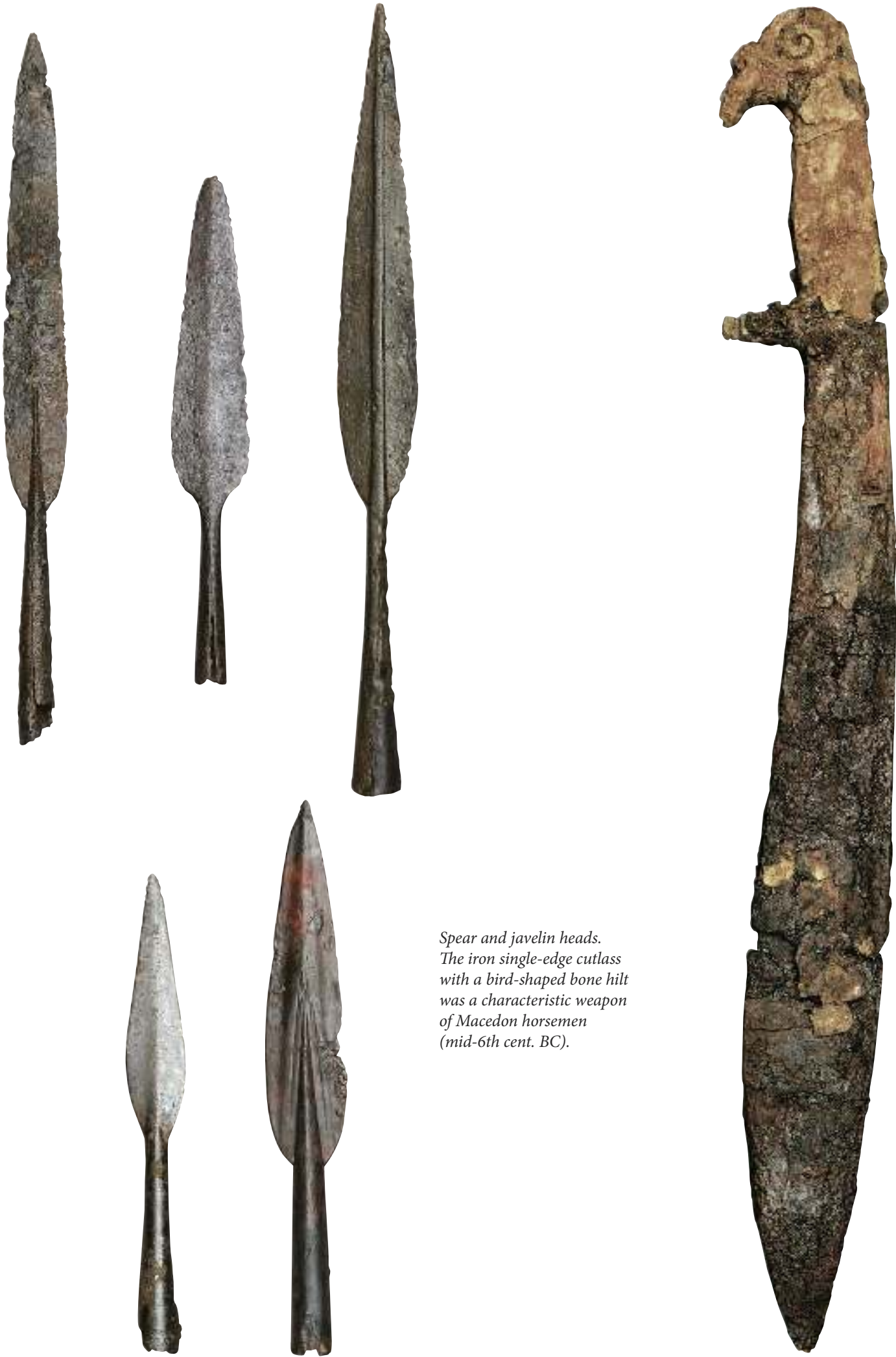


The stele of Antigonos 340-30 BC. Accompanied by his dog and servant, the young Antigonos expresses the aristocratic ideal of the “handsome and virtuous” man which inspired the young Macedonian companions. The work of a very skilled sculptor, it shows that local marble was used in the region by artists who had assimilated the teachings of Praxiteles’ art.





Bronze helmet of a Macedon horseman (mid-6th cent. BC).



*Spear and javelin heads.
The iron single-edge cutlass
with a bird-shaped bone hilt
was a characteristic weapon
of Macedon horsemen
(mid-6th cent. BC).*



Iron single-edge cutlass; the butt-spike, bronze connecting tube and iron head of a sarissa, the famous Macedonian pike, that could be as long as six metres (4th cent. BC).





*Iron heads of spears and
javelins (6th-4th cent. BC).*



Bronze and iron strigils, the scrapers used by athletes to remove oil, dust and sweat from their bodies after exercise. (4th cent. AD)



Corinthian aryballoi, globular oil and scent bottles of the archaic period (6th cent. BC).



Figurine of the god Pan playing a syrinx. Found in the burial plot of the queens (340-30 BC).



Two clay ink-wells (4th and 3rd cent. BC).



Stippled and red-figure small lethythia, the characteristic oil and scent containers of the classical period, found in the necropolis of Aigai (5th and 4th cent. BC).



Wheel-made Protogeometric skyphos with the typical decoration of concentric circles.



The handmade clay bowl and handmade pitcher with the high spout are two of the most characteristic vessels of the early Iron Age (10th-7th cent. BC).



These handmade kantharoi with their large size and highlighted handles are typical vessels of the early Iron Age.





Imported from the coast of the Thermaic Gulf to Aigai, these two black-figure kraters with typical decorative motifs –an octopus, wildcats flanking an aquatic bird and a grazing goat– indicate the richness of Macedonian banquets in the 6th cent. BC.



*Trefoil clay oinochoai in three variations
(Attic, Corinthian, regular size or miniature)
were an especially popular imported product
in the Aigai market throughout the 6th cent. BC.*





The elegant skyphos with the lion and shallow kylix with heraldic sphinxes – two drinking-cups of the archaic period – testify to the relations of Aigai with Ionian centres (6th cent. BC).





Corinthian cups (kotyles) with their simple decoration: plain dark kantharoi and deep Ionian kylikes were popular wine-cups at banquets in Aigai in the 6th cent. BC.





The lebes was used to mix wine and water and kantharoi were timeless wine cups. Their only ornamentation was their pure form and a light burnishing. They were the most common banqueting vessels produced locally in the 6th cent. BC.







The large bronze krater with the superb relief masks at the base of the handles was a typical product of Macedonian metalwork of the 4th cent. BC. Vessels like this testify to the luxury of Macedonian symposia in its heyday (340-30 BC).



The dressage of a horse that decorates the large red-figure skyphos reveals the habits and preferences of the Macedonian customers of an Athenian vase-painter (440-20 BC).



*A reclining reveller enjoys the presence of the female flute-player while being served by a young wine-bearer.
Symposium scene on a red-figure Attic oinochoe of the late classical period that was found in the necropolis of Aigai (340-30 BC).*



The scent bottle with the sophisticated shape, the tiny pitcher and two cups – a kotyle and kalyx on which is written the word ΥΓΕΙΑ (health)– were common vessels in a household's symposium ware in the 4th cent. BC.

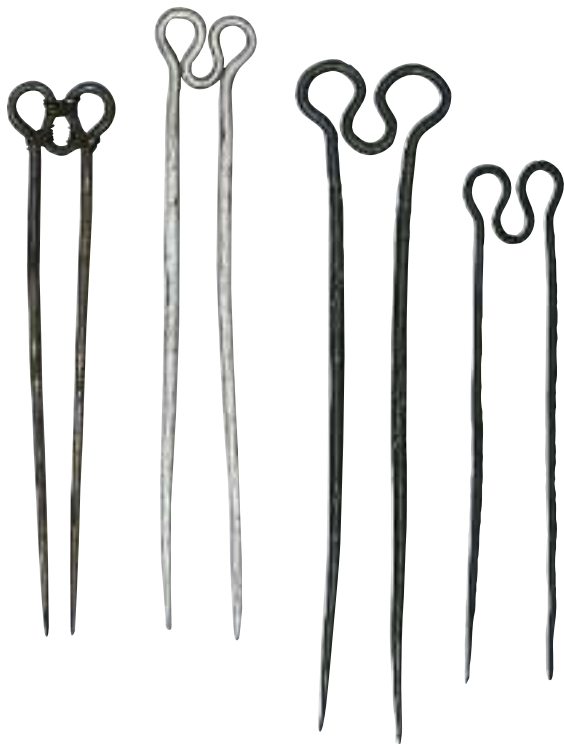


Especially popular in Aigai in the early Hellenistic period were bronze kantharoi, as well as large bronze bowls (last quarter of the 4th cent. BC).





The double silver pins that were used to pin cloaks were the only jewels, other than rings, found in men's graves (6th-5th cent. BC).



Adymos on the grave stele of Cleonymos is wearing a short tunic (chiton), heavy mantle (chlamys) with a wide, coloured border, high leather shoes and a broad-brimmed hat (second half of the 4th cent. BC.).



The Macedonians, like the other Hellenic tribes of the historical period, were a patriarchal society, in which the role of the female was to give birth to her husband's lawful descendants, thus ensuring the continuity of his house. However, in the old-fashioned kingdom of Macedon, which was closer to the customs of the Homeric age, a woman could be queen in her own world more so than in democratic Athens.

Education appears to have been regarded as an unnecessary luxury for Macedonian women. Queen Eurydice was educated when she was a mature woman, and in fact celebrated this special privilege with a votive offering to the Muses. At 14, childhood ended and young girls were then considered ready to follow the husband selected by their father. Marriage and childbirth, the latter of which not infrequently cost them their lives, were their top moments. In between, their days were spent in the home, where they had many duties that were critical to daily survival: women were responsible for looking after children, the elderly and infirm, but also the dead who, like the gods, required offerings; for preparing and preserving foods, for cooking every day, for grinding cereals and, of course, for making and baking bread, tasks from which, at least in the earliest years, not even the women of the royal family were exempted.

Women spun wool, dyed yarn, wove, embroidered and sewed, made clothing and bedding. For both beautiful Helen and Macedonian queens, spinning wool was a daily task typical of their presence both in life and in death. The aristocratic ladies of Aigai took their distaffs to the grave with them, like those of archaic Crete depicted on the grave stelai of Prinia. Alexander the Great himself did not fail to praise the handwoven textiles produced by the women of his family.

Queens, gentlewomen and ordinary women of the people, married women and maidens alike, spent endless hours going back and forth to the loom, weaving, spinning and embroidering their pains and desires, their joys and sorrows, stitch by stitch. An entire multicoloured world, valuable and humble, plain and woven with gold thread, the works of their hands made of thread and dreams, have been lost forever. The unexpected gold-embroidered fabric from the larnax of Meda alone allows us to dream of beauty we shall never see.

Aigai never became a large city and most of its people always lived in hamlets and villages outside the town. So the women of Aigai maintained a close relationship with nature. Females young and old, maidens and married women, would go outside to wash their clothes in the streams, to carry water, to gather vegetables and fruit, flowers and branches for festive wreaths, and herbs for medicines and poisons. Because knowledge of the secret essence of plants, somewhere between medicine and magic, traditionally belonged to women, as did so much other knowledge.

The presence of women was probably limited at official Macedonian feasts, contests and symposia. There were, however, exceptions. The rituals of Demeter and Persephone were traditionally women's prerogative. The same was true of the cult of Dionysos. The images described so vividly by Euripides in his *Bacchae*, with the divinely-inspired maenads dancing in the forest and making the land flow with milk and honey, and these wild females wreathed with snakes who tear live prey to pieces with their bare hands were inspired by the women of Aigai and their activities on nearby Mount Pieria, rituals deeply rooted in the faith of the people, in which the Queen herself always played a leading role.

It is known that Olympias was a most fanatic and dedicated devotee of Bacchus, and snakes, as indicated by the description of her pet dragon, as well as by finds from the sanctuaries of Aigai, indeed have a special place in the cult of the Macedonian metropolis and in the mystical world of its women.

The so-called "madonna" of Aigai. Detail from the grave stele of a woman (second half of the 4th cent. BC).

ON PAGES 86-87 AND 89: *Details of the gold and purple fabric in which the bones of Meda were wrapped.*







“When Argaios was king of the Macedonians and Galauros king of the Taulantians, the Taulantians mounted a campaign against the Macedonians. Argaios, who had but few soldiers, commanded the Macedonian maidens to appear from the mountains of Ereboia when the enemy phalanx was approaching. Thus, as the enemy drew near, many maidens descended from the mountain and appeared, waving thyrsoi instead of spears, with wreaths shading their faces. Seeing them from a distance, Galauros thought the maidens were men, became frightened and signalled retreat. The Taulantians took to their heels, throwing down their weapons and leaving them behind. Argaios, who won a victory without a battle, established the sanctuary of Dionysus Pseudanor [False man] and designated the maidens whom the Macedonians of old called Klodones, as Mimalones, since they imitated men.”

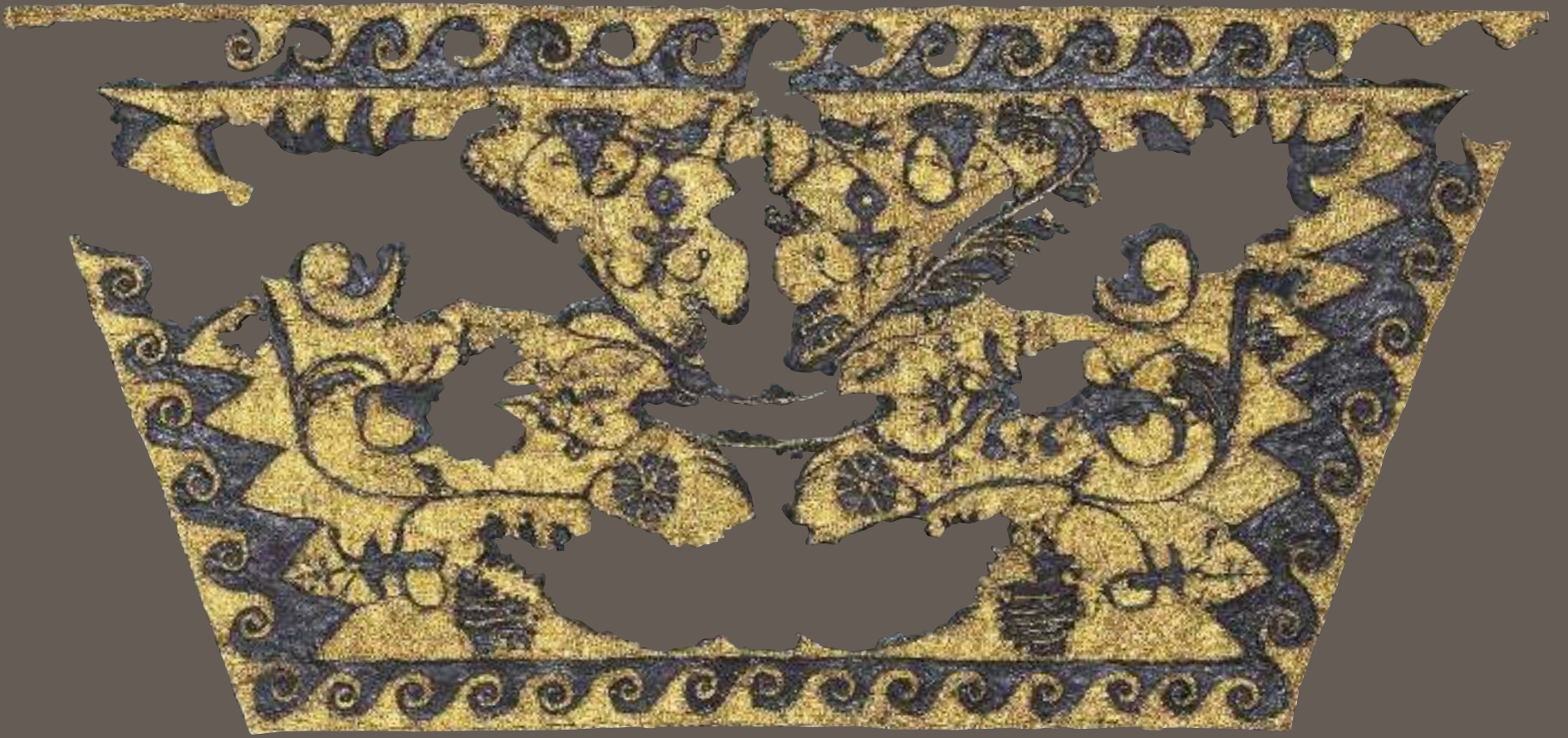
(POLYAINOS, 4.1.1)

Whether or not this is a historical fact, the narration reveals the dynamic nature of the women of Macedonia who remind us of Spartan women. Besides, if we believe Herodotus, the Macedonians were closely related to, if not identical with, the Dorians.

The abundant finds from the vast cemetery of the tumuli at Aigai have given us a fairly complete picture of women's dress in the first three centuries of the last millennium BC. Jewellery, almost always of bronze, an alloy of copper and tin with a warm yellowish colour that looks rather like gold, is fairly rich and heavy with characteristic geometric forms. Simpler and more restrained than the contemporary jewels of the Balkans and the Italian peninsula, the Macedonian jewellery of the early Iron Age finds its closest parallels in Epirus, the Peloponnese and Dorian Crete. The main garment in that period was the thick wool *peplos*, a simple garment that was attached at the shoulders by plain pins large enough to be used as mortal weapons, or by heavy bronze fibulae. The latter, bow-shaped in the beginning, later became 8-shaped, incorporating concentric circles, the favourite motif of the early Geometric period. Heavy many-spiralled bracelets adorned the arms, rings were simple hoops often decorated with eight-shaped spirals; there were typical medallions, collars of thick twisted wire and necklaces with cornelian and heavy bronze beads that adorned the neck and cleavage.

The unique and rare gold jewels of the time were spirals (*sphikotires*) of fine wire, that held in place locks of hair falling down the back and shoulders. The delicate bow-shaped and eight-shaped clasps that were found around the head of the wealthiest deceased women show that gentlewomen wore elaborate head coverings, something like the traditional *katsoulia*, which was worn until the first half of the 20th century by the Greek women of Macedonia south of the Aliakmon. Multiple bronze spirals were attached to these early Iron Age head coverings with large bronze buttons, and fell like ringlets of fair hair, framing faces with their warm golden glow. Deeply-belted (*vathyzostes*) like the women in the epic, the maidens of Aigai tied their waists tightly with leather belts lavishly decorated with bronze buttons and large bosses. One queen-priestess also wore a high bronze diadem adorned with solar symbols.

Owing to the characteristic conservatism of Macedonian society, the eight-shaped clasps and necklaces with heavy bronze geometric beads would continue to be used until the late 6th century BC, but in the archaic period, the fashion began to change, with shapes and forms developing and new materials gaining ground. The small, elegant, gold, silver or bronze bow-clasps that are found on shoulders and arms show that the fine Ionian sleeved dresses (*chitones*) were becoming increasingly popular, and the traditional woollen *peplos* that was affixed to the shoulders by small silver fibulae became less thick. Frequently these two garments were worn together, with the *peplos* on top, but the customary coat was the *himation*, a large rectangular piece of fabric that was wrapped around the entire body and could even cover the head.



Jewellery, always a favourite, became more elaborate and less voluminous. Earrings appeared in Aigai in the 7th cent. BC and rapidly became popular. Strips of precious gold with simple embossed or extremely elaborate filigree and granulated decoration, were addressed to the ladies of the court. More common and much simpler were the Ω-shaped earrings, initially with snakehead finials and later with lotus buds, usually silver and more rarely gold. There were also boat-shaped earrings in silver or bronze, as well as plain silver hoops. Pendants, usually gold, were tiny and in the shape of an amphoriskos, pyramid or acorn. Necklaces have beads of gold, amber, glass paste, ivory and bronze. Single-spiral silver and gold bracelets end in snakeheads, as do the multiple silver chains that are fastened to the dress over the breast. Rings, simple gold hoops in the archaic period, would acquire bezels with incuse scenes in classical times and were made of gold, silver, bronze and even iron, and became personal seals like those used by men.

In contrast to the women of the people, whose jewellery was meagre and fairly simple, queens and aristocratic ladies would descend into Hades walking on golden soles, dressed in purple and gold from head to foot. Silver, but especially gold, was the material, granulation and elaborate filigree the techniques used on the jewellery favoured by the ladies of the royal court of Aigai. Nor was there any lack of unusual materials, as testified by the heavy iron fibulae of one 6th-cent. BC queen, and the elaborately worked amber necklace of another. But despite the variety of materials typical of the jewellery of Aigai, it is the spirit of austerity and restrained stylisation that characterises the other products of Macedonian metallurgy at that time.

Despite the fact that not one mirror has yet been found, other evidence indicates that the women of Aigai were quite coquettish. The main item used in the care of their hair and body was olive oil, and indeed from the reign of Perdikkas II (454-413 BC) on, queens preferred to buy the oil of Athens that was available on the market from winners of the Panathenaic games, as can be seen by the Panathenaic prize-amphorae that have been found in their graves, and on the funeral pyre of Eurydice, and were initially filled with olive oil. Also on the list of beauty products were assorted pomades and ointments, perfumes and aromatic oils from Corinth, eastern Ionia, Rhodes, Egypt and Phoenicia, in lavish perfume flasks that competed in value with their precious content. The iron unguent vessel (*exaleiptron*) with the elaborate bronze tripod base belonged to the “Lady of Aigai”, the enormous *alabastra*, the egg-shell marble vessels and ostrich eggs –exotic models for elegant red-figure squat *lekythoi*– testify that the royal toiletries of Macedon lacked nothing in sophisticated luxury compared to Mycenae. Even make-up was known to the ladies of Aigai: tiny tweezers, delicate, elaborate instruments, toiletries boxes (*pyxides*) and compacts containing lead white as facial make-up were a typical part of the female toilet and became a indication of gender after death.

The ordinary women of Aigai – with names like Prino, Vereno, Fila, Dimeno, Kleio and Ermione – come back to life through the half-effaced images on their graves, and the lament for one of them can be heard to this day:

«...Δάκρυσι μυρομένη, μεμνημένη σου οὐ διαλείπω, μητρὸς τῆς γλυκερῆς πλείον ἐγὼ σε ποθῶ»

[... “I keep remembering you and weeping and, even more than your sweet mother, I long for you...”]



Clay figurine of a woman wrapped in her cloak (himation). From a grave in the queens' burial plot (340-30 BC).



*Clay bust of Persephone. The goddess enthroned. Persephone and Dionysos-Hades on a couch.
All three figurines were found in a grave in the queens' burial plot (340-30 BC).*





*Divine couple in love from a grave
in the queens' burial plot (340-30 BC).*



Peplos-clad figurine from a grave in the queen's burial plot (340-30 BC).

Clay figurine of the Mother of the gods. The enthroned goddess is holding a lion cub on her lap (mid-4th cent. BC).



Lekythio in the form of Attis, the young Phrygian youth loved by the Mother of the gods (mid-4th cent. BC).

Seated in her sanctuary, which is indicated by the presence of the xoano (ancient wooden idol), Aphrodite is looking in the mirror at the moment when Eros brings her the box containing her precious jewels. The scene decorating the squat lekythos reflects the surroundings in which its content (scented oil) was used (mid-4th cent. BC).



Clay figurine of Aphrodite reclining (third quarter of the 4th cent. BC).



Two bronze tweezers (8th-7th cent. BC).



Bronze spatula, probably a beauty accessory (late Hellenistic period).

Bronze pyxis cover from a grave in the queens' burial plot. Pyxides were used as containers for cosmetics or jewellery. Circa 430 BC.



Gold ring. On the bezel, a young woman looks into the mirror. Late 5th cent. BC



ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES:
Dionysos, young and beardless, is enjoying the orgiastic dance of the maenads and satyrs who are whirling around beating drums and waving thyrsi. Attic red-figure krater (mid-4th cent. BC)







Scent bottles in the shape of an amphoriskos and a Corinthian alabastron. 6th cent. BC.



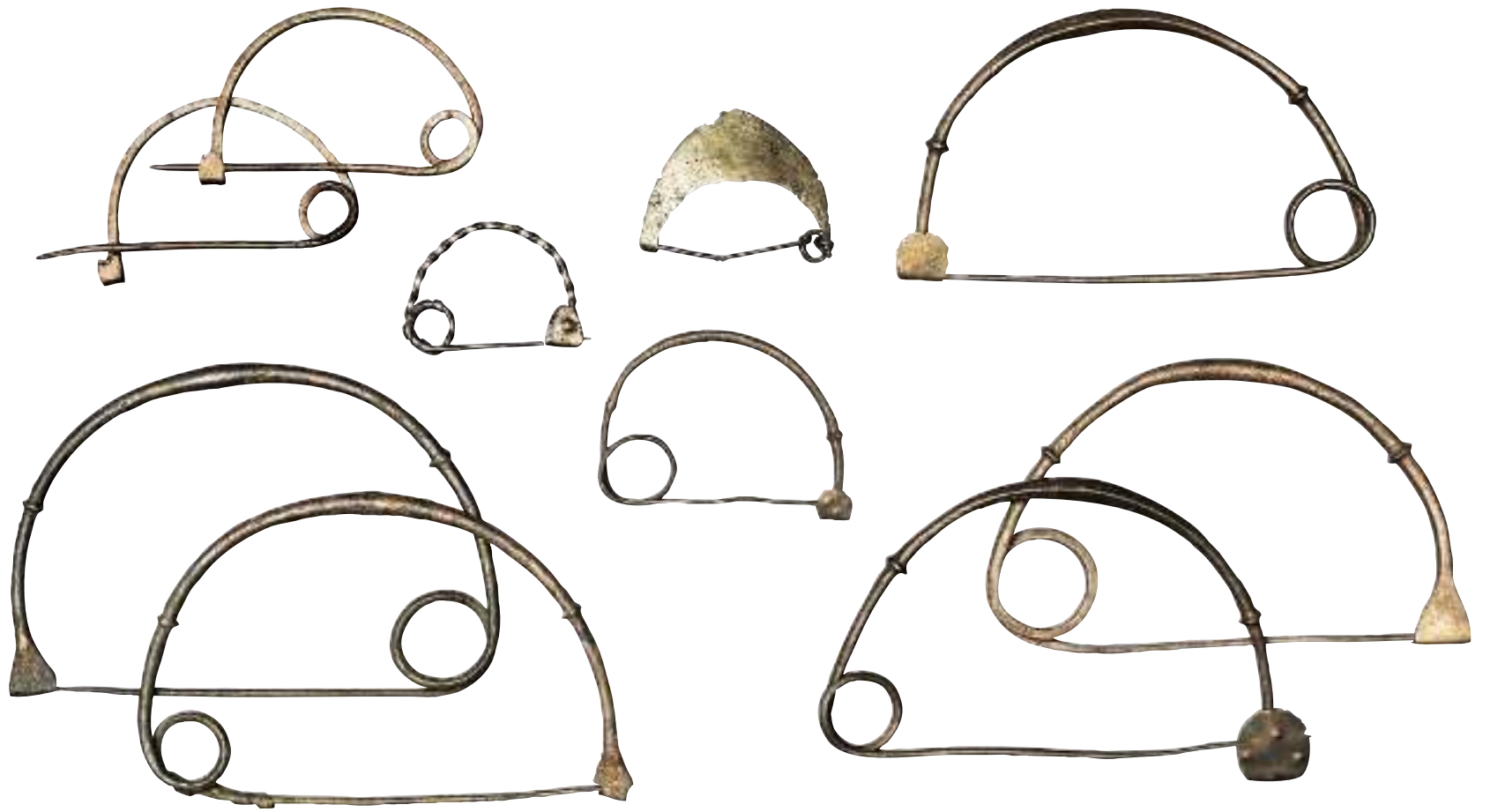
Scent bottle in the shape of a miniature Panathenaic prize-amphora (third quarter of the 4th cent. BC).



*Clay red-figure alabastron
(late 5th- early 4th cent. BC)
and a red-figure squat lekythos
(mid-4th cent. BC).*



Three red-figure askoi (scent bottles from the second and third quarter of the 4th cent. BC).



Ancient bronze safety pins (10th-9th cent. BC).



Long bronze pins (9th-7th cent. BC).





Bronze figure-eight clasps (9th-8th cent. BC) from the necropolis of Aigai and one bronze figure-eight clasp from the vicinity of ancient Lebæa. Late 6th cent. BC



The jewellery found in the burial of an Aigai lady from the Protogeometric period: bronze spiral hair decorations attached to buttons, figure-eight clasps, a necklace, a pendant, a spiral bracelet, rings, a belt and a bronze charm.





Single and multiple-spiral bronze bracelets (10th-8th cent. BC).





Necklaces with beads of cornelian, a semi-precious stone with magic properties (9th-8th cent. BC) and a necklace of bronze beads (mid-6th cent. BC).

Bronze bosses from the decoration on a belt (9th-8th cent. BC).





*Bronze bow fibulae and rings with spiral decoration
(9th-7th cent. BC).*

Bronze buckle from a belt and clothing accessory (9th cent. BC).



Four bronze bow fibulae (4th cent. BC).





Clay bust of a goddess and a glass scent bottle from the tomb of the "Lady of Aigai" (early 5th cent. BC).

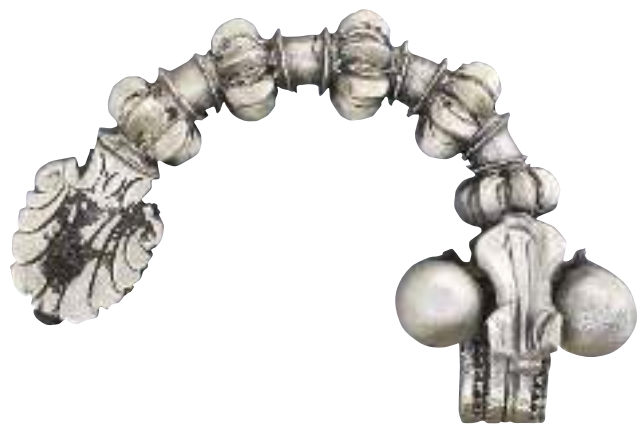


Gold earrings (7th cent. BC).



Gold pendant in the shape of an amphoriskos from a grave in the queens' burial plot (540-30 BC) and a gold clasp with lionhead finials from a grave in the queens' burial plot (440-30 BC).





Silver fibulae with snakeheads (5th cent. BC).



Silver pins decorated with rosettes and lotus buds (6th-4th cent. BC).



Silver earrings and bracelets with snakehead finials (6th-5th cent. BC).



ON PAGE 112: *The grave stele of the “madonna”. Detached and distant, the serious young women in the gold and purple attire standing on the right appears to be bidding farewell to another, older woman who is seated under a window. In the world of gravestones, daily life takes on monumentality and passes into the realm of the transcendent.*

ON PAGE 113: *The stele of Diminno, daughter of Cleandros and wife of Hermon. The dead woman, a respected hostess, is seated on a chair that resembles a throne, and is attended by her young servant girl. (Early Hellenistic period).*



ΑΙΜΗΝΝ ΚΑΕΑΝΔΡΟΥ ΤΤΑΤΗ
ΕΙΜ ΤΥΝΗ





*Grave stelai of children from the necropolis of Aigai.
On the stele of Herakleides, son of Philon, can be
discerned a puppy playing with the little boy.
On the stele of Philotas, son of Kleio and Alketas,
a children's toy cart is depicted (early Hellenistic period).*

Children learn by playing. This axiom defined the lives of children at Aigai, whose toys followed them to the grave, but also into the images that represent these prematurely dead children on their tombstones. Tiny pitchers with a spout resembling a nipple were used as baby bottles for more than 10 centuries. Full of milk, water and honey or tisane, mothers used them to feed their babies' hunger or relieve their pains. Small boys dressed in short tunics and cloaks, little boots and caps are depicted frequently with puppies, their favourite comrades at play. Little girls, adorned with jewellery and clothing like that of their mothers, appear to have been taught coquetry in the cradle.

We know very little about the education of children in Macedonia before the time of Philip II. Children of the wealthier citizens were taught their first lessons and the necessary discipline by private tutors. What is certain is that childhood ended officially at the age of 14. Now officially young men, the sons of the Companions entered the service of the king as "royal boys" (*vasilikoi paides*) and were initiated into the secrets and arts of war and hunting, trained in various sports and, together with the sons of the leader, attended the teachings of wise scholars and philosophers. From the time of Philip II, it appears that there was a gymnasium at Aigai, and the relationship of the Macedonian court with philosophers and scholars was an old story that started from the period of Pindar and continued until Plato's time. The most famous example of education in the best years was the school of Aristotle in neighbouring Mieza, at which all the Macedonian youths, together with the young Alexander, studied; the generation that was to change the world.



Marble head of a child from Aigai. Part of a life-size statue, it is an extremely interesting example of the sculpture of the late classical-early Hellenistic period from the heart of Macedonia.



Clay figurine of two wreathed boys with a puppy between them and the clay figurine of a comic actor. (340-30 BC).



Clay figurine of a nursing mother (kourotrophos) and a feline from a child's grave (last quarter of the 4th cent. BC).





*Clay baby's bottles. On the "nipples" can be seen traces of tooth marks
(8th-3rd cent. BC).*



No houses have been found in Aigai from the Early Iron Age (10th-7th cent. BC), although such early dwellings have been found in a neighbouring mountainous settlement that give us some notion of what they were like, assuming that houses, like graves, would have been richer in Aigai, and perhaps more comfortable. With walls built of stone and mud bricks, their roofs must have been made of wood, reeds and branches insulated with clay and straw. Whether large or small, with one or more rooms, the fireplace was in the centre, above which must have been some kind of opening in the ceiling, a smoke-hole through which, as we learn from Herodotus' story about Perdiccas I, light entered and smoke left. As the centuries passed, the forms of the houses became more regular, to which the use of large clay tiles contributed, which are believed to have been devised in Corinth in the 7th cent. BC.

In the classical period, houses with one or two floors in the centre of the city, but also in the surrounding settlements, consisted of more spaces organised around the inner courtyard, in which was a small stone altar for household worship. In good weather, the family spent much of its of time there. The large "everyday" room, the so-called *oikos*, in which the fireplace and loom were located, was another pole in the life of the house. The *pitheonas*, the storeroom with the *pithoi* or large clay storage jars, was likewise of vital importance, because in them were stored cereals, olives, oil, wine, salted goods, and all the other household supplies. And, of course, there was also the *andron*, the men's quarters, where banquets were held.

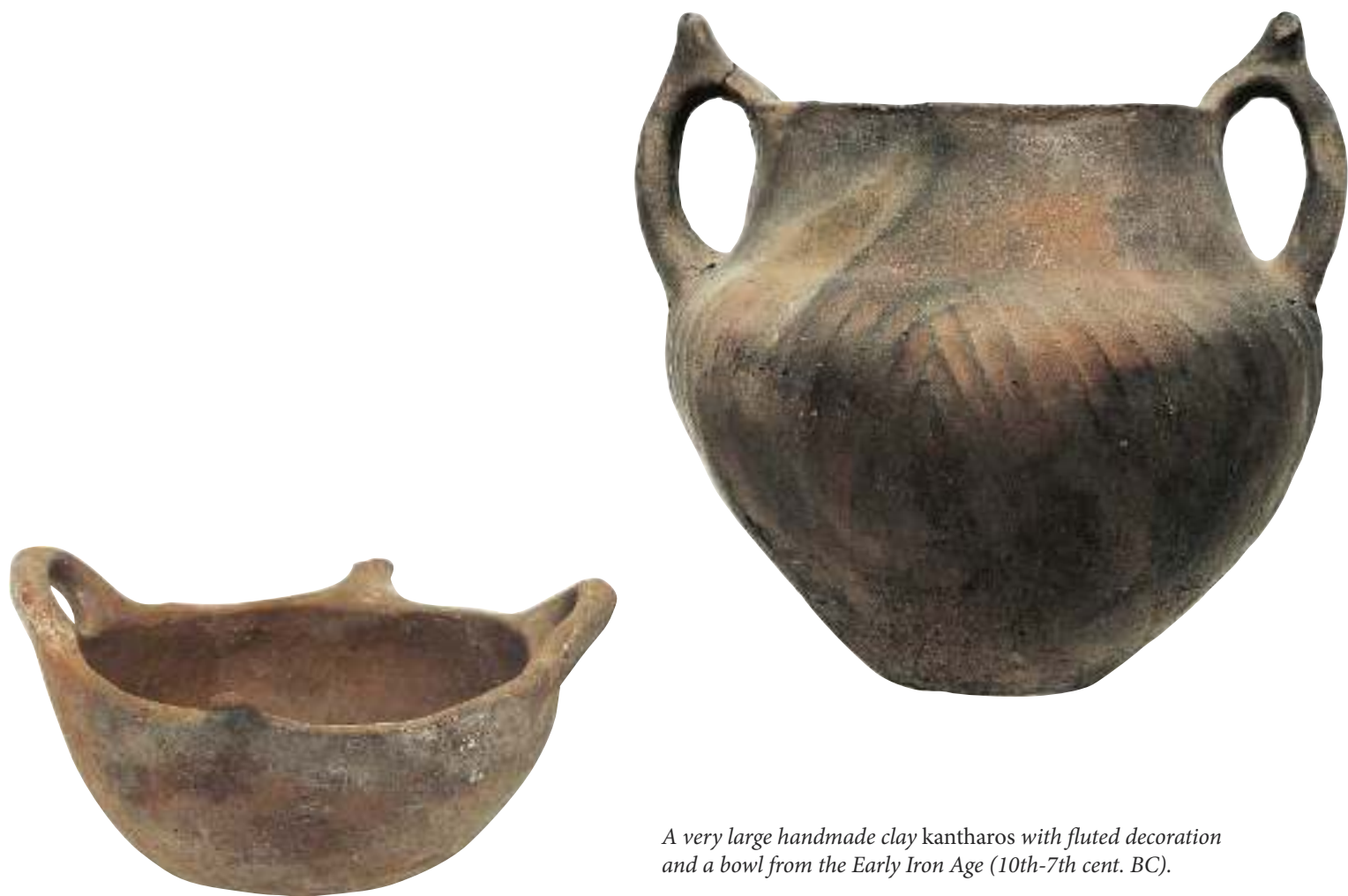


Handmade clay "amphora" with a triple handle (9th-8th cent. BC).

Heavy wooden doors with iron locks isolated the house from the outside world, protecting the household microcosm from curious eyes and intruders. There were probably windows with wooden shutters decorated with studs and bronze pins in the rooms on the upper floor. A special feature of some houses in Aigai built in the early Hellenistic period was the balcony that faced the plain and offered a splendid view, a feature in imitation of the palace balcony.

During these years, houses were fairly comfortable and spacious – the area of the ground floor of a house excavated on the east side of the city exceeds 400 metres – and some attention was paid to their decoration. Walls whose superstructure was made of mud bricks and timber hitches were covered with white or coloured plaster; there were rooms with pebble floors, and courtyards were paved with stones or pieces of ceramic tile. Despite the fact that no fountain has yet been unearthed, it is known that, at that period, the city was supplied with water from mountain springs channelled through clay pipes.

In addition to the wooden furniture, clothing and bedclothes that have been lost without a trace, houses had a loom, clay storage jars and *amphorae* of all types, cooking pots and bowls large and small; the necessities of the household also included various tools – handmills, grinders, hammers, sickles, saws, knives and others – and of course the crockery required for daily meals, as well as festive symposium ware. According to the fashion of the times and each family's budget, these vessels were either clay (local or imported from Corinth and Athens), bronze or even silver. Wooden vessels must also have been required in the houses and stockyards of Aigai, while goatskin bags (*askia*) and flasks of leather, baskets and panniers of wicker and straw, would have served household needs and for sporting objects



A very large handmade clay kantharos with fluted decoration and a bowl from the Early Iron Age (10th-7th cent. BC).



Plain clay lamps were timeless accessories in every household (5th-2nd cent. BC). Equally necessary were the amphorae. On the left is an amphora from the tomb of the “Lady of Aigai” with a red digamma F on its neck, the first letter of the word Foinos, (wine), which may refer to its contents; on the right is an amphora from the antechamber of Philip II’s tomb.





Iron keys from Aigai (4th cent. BC – 1st cent. AD).

Black-glazed plates and shallow drinking cups of various types, with or without handles. During the classical period, there were Attic and local skyphidia in every house in Aigai.





5. The necropolis of Aigai. Burial customs, beliefs about the afterlife and royal tombs

With an area that exceeds 2,000,000 sq. metres (200 hectares), the vast necropolis of Aigai, where the kings of the Macedonians were buried, is spread out over the plain north of the city. In its core, 540 tumuli have been preserved, which constituted the main cemetery in the early Iron Age (11th-7th cent. BC). In the archaic period, the necropolis expanded southwards; in the 5th and 4th cent. BC it headed eastward up to the ravine that separated it from the city, but mainly to the west and northwest where Philip II was buried in 336 BC. At the time of Alexander the Great, the expansion trend was eastwards, crossing over the initial cemetery of the tumuli. The horizontal expansion of the necropolis was the rule, and its almost unrestricted growth, to the detriment of farming, is indicative of the bonds of devotion felt by the living for the dead, and confirm the continuity of the population.

The graves, more than 2,500 of which have been investigated to date, both pit-type and more rarely cist-graves, are oriented radially towards the centre of the tumulus in the early Iron Age, and later were organised along the axes of the horizon in rows and clusters to form groups which must have been related to families and clans.



Floral ornaments (opposite page) and relief griffin (above) from the decoration on the burial throne of queen Eurydice.

According to the ancient custom, which survived in Aigai until the Roman period, circular mounds of soil, the size of which varied to reflect the influence of the deceased, surrounded by stone enclosures marked the site of graves. The use of grave monuments and gravestones with reliefs or inscriptions was established in the 5th century, and in exceptional cases, such as the group of Philip II's burial plot, splendid monuments were erected beside the tumulus on the ground level with sculptures and reliefs similar to those found in Attica.

Over time, the customary burial practice was interment. The dead took with them whatever they were wearing and whatever was most characteristic of them: clothing, jewellery, weapons, and the typical, essential vessels for the funeral ceremony: scent bottles (*myrodocheia*) and unguent boxes (*exaleiptra*), and even goblets and pitchers to quench the eternal thirst in Hades, to which other symposium vessels were frequently added. There were also objects related to religious beliefs and social symbolism – a coin for Charon, figurines, replicas of carriages, etc.

Wealth is obvious especially in the grave goods of the royal burial plots and in the graves of the Companions. Regarding jewellery, however, it is worth pointing out that in the use of gold sheets, but also weapons and metal vessels, costly objects and consequently symbols of prestige, a certain Doric austerity can be observed which differentiates them from similar groups found in regions beyond the borders of the Macedonian Kingdom (Trebeniste, etc.).



Grave stelai from the late classical-early Hellenistic years. One depicts a couple's emotional farewell in front of their young children; on the other is the farewell to a young horseman by his father (the right side of the seated figure with the himation has not been well preserved).

Grave stele of a young Macedon. In the necropolis of Aigai, the echo of Attic sculpture of the golden age is combined with more provincial features on the stele (430-420 BC).



Painted grave stelai of the early Hellenistic period from the necropolis of Aigai.





ΠΑΡΑΜΟΝΟΣ ΜΕΝΑΝΔΡΟΥ



Painted grave stelai of the early Hellenistic period from the necropolis of Aigai; inscriptions and decorative motifs.





Vessels containing oil and myrrh to anoint the dead:
Corinthian aryballois (6th cent. BC), a Corinthian and a local unguent vessel
(exaleiptron) (6th-4th cent. BC), red-figure and stippled lekythia (4th cent. BC),
black-glazed askos (last quarter of the 4th cent. BC).





Relief frieze with a chariot race scene. The representation is very similar to the painted frieze that decorates the walls of the antechamber of Alexander IV. It probably depicts funeral games (last quarter of the 4th cent. BC).

The systematic investigation of the archaic and classical necropolis over the past twenty years provides a measure of comparison and reliable criteria by which to recognise the royal burial plots, which are differentiated from the overall picture on the following points: a) in the persistence and usage over time of this particular site for up to three centuries, b) in the magnitude and luxury of the burial monuments, but also their grave goods which, despite the fact that most of the tombs have been robbed, nevertheless impress us with their variety, quality and quantity, and are deserving of the designation “treasures”; c). in the presence of vessels used to wash the dead, that were also symbols of power, and d) the custom of cremation.

The model of the distinguished royal burial plots of Aigai finds a parallel in the archaic necropolises of Aiiane, Archontiko and probably also that of Sindos, reflecting the organisation of the tribal kingdoms of the era that recall the image of the small “kingdoms” of the Homeric epic. In the royal burial plots in Aigai – so far three have been found, the “Temenid burial plot”, the “queens’ burial plot” and “Philip II’s burial plot” – the archaeological spade encountered Homer. Like Patroclus, the dead Temenids were cremated, together with their rich grave gifts, on magnificent pyres, and the queens of Aigai descended into Hades wrapped in gold and purple. There were also funeral games, *ta athla*, which continued to be held until the late 4th century BC and inspired the chariot race on the painted frieze in the antechamber of the tomb of Alexander IV (310 BC), but also the relief frieze on a marble monument found in the region of Aigai.

In the “Temenid burial plot”, 18 graves have so far been found (5 pit graves, 8 monumental cist-graves, three Macedonian and two hypostyle tombs) dating from the early 6th to the late 4th cent. BC. Around and beside the two earliest graves (570-550 BC) and 550-530 BC) were found the remains of two older known funeral pyres of Aigai: pieces of clay and bronze



pots, half-melted helmets, silver-studded swords, bent blades, symbolic objects, spears and javelins, even parts of a horse's bridle, objects purified by the flames, testify to the continuity of a custom that associates the Macedonians of the archaic period closely with the epic world.

The bones of Philip III Arrhidaeus (323-317 BC) and his wife Eurydice were very probably placed in the group's central Macedonian tomb with the unusually deep antechamber that dates to the late 4th cent. BC. It is possible that in the neighbouring parallel tomb, the excavation of which has just begun, the remains of Eurydice's mother – Kyna or Kyane, a daughter of Philip II – may have been buried which, according to Diodorus, Cassander removed to Aigai together with those of the royal couple who were executed by Olympias. Despite the fact that the occupants of the other graves cannot easily be identified before the investigation has been completed, it is clear that the two splendid hypostyle tombs of the 5th cent. BC must have belonged to highly significant representatives of the dynasty.

ON PAGE 132: *Small gold disks depicting a wild animal on which a bird is perched. The disks were sewn onto the funeral garment of a queen from the archaic period (540-530 BC).*

ON PAGE 133: *Small gold disks with the emblematic star of the Temenids from the royal burial plot (5th cent. BC).*





Strips of sheet gold and small gold disks with rosettes from the decoration on the garments of the royal dead (6th-5th cent. BC). Gold disks with the emblematic star from the queens' burial plot and that of the Temenids (5th-4th cent. BC).







Band of sheet gold with rosettes from the decoration on the funeral garment of a queen of the archaic period. (540-30 BC).



Two gold objects from a queen's tomb (second half of the 5th cent. BC).



Gold funeral plaque with the inscription "Philiste greets Persephone".

On a conspicuous site beside the west gate of the city, the “queens’ burial plot” was found, in which only the most important women of the royal family were buried. Nine graves have been found: four enormous pit-graves (AI 540/30 BC, AII c. 500 BC, AIII c. 480 BC and AIV 470/460 BC) among which was the unlooted grave of the “Lady of Aigai”, the wealthiest of the period to have been found in Macedonia, three monumental cist-graves (KI c. 430 BC, K2 c. 440 BC, and K3 350-30 BC), the Macedonian tomb of queen Eurydice, mother of three kings (344/43 BC) and the Macedonian tomb with the Ionic façade that stands beside it and may very likely belong to Eurydice’s granddaughter, queen Thessaloniki who died in 298 BC.

The burial plot of Philip II, following the tragic fate of the dynasty, is limited to two generations, starting from cist-grave I (c. 350 BC) which very likely belongs to Nicesipolis, wife of the king and mother of Thessaloniki, continuing with the tomb of Philip II (336 BC) and ending with that of Alexander IV (c. 310 BC), son of Alexander the Great, and the last Temenid, who was murdered by Cassander before coming of age. The lack of permanence here is offset by the wealth of the grave goods that offer an unexpected picture of royal magnificence and brilliance.

By honouring its dead member, the family declared its social status, and the funeral of the leader, a public ceremony in which all participated, an act with great political impact, provided emotional support for the ideological structure of power and became a tangible symbol of the status quo, a collective declaration of loyalty and acceptance of the system. This attitude was expressed by the legendary funerals of epic heroes, and it is not accidental that over time one of the demands of democracy was that funeral expenses be limited and funeral ceremonies simplified. However, in the kingdom of Macedon, the ancestral funeral customs never had to be limited. On the contrary, at its height during the years of Philip II and Alexander the Great, the old burial customs, fed by ambition, power and wealth, would take on new prestige, acquiring ideological support based on the teachings of Plato and on Pythagorean and Orphic beliefs.



*Clay bust of the Mistress of the Underworld.
Early 4th cent. BC.*

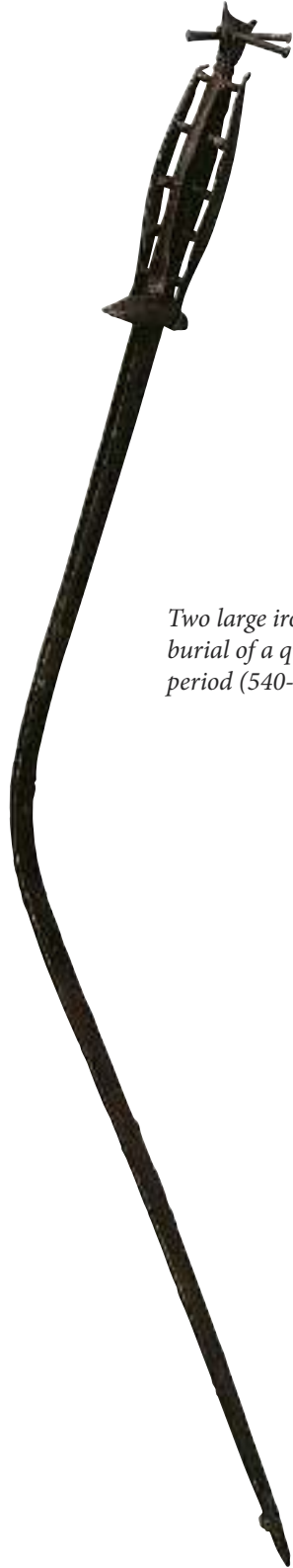


Bronze cinerary cauldron containing the cremated bones of a dead man wrapped in cloth and some grave gifts. Found in the Temenid burial plot (540-30 BC).

The bronze cauldron with the iron tripod used to heat water for the funeral bath of the "Lady of Aigai" (early 5th cent. BC).



The bronze cauldron with the iron tripod used to heat water for the funeral bath of Philip II (336 BC).



Two large iron fibulae from the burial of a queen in the Archaic period (540-530 BC).



Swords and javelin heads from Temenid funeral pyres. The bent weapon was rendered ritually dead to follow its owner into the Underworld (late 6th-early 5th cent. BC).



Plain and looped pins from the Temenid burial plot.





Griffins maul a deer. From the decoration on the burial throne of queen Eurydice, 344/3 BC.

Views of the afterlife in the Macedonian court, expressed in the effort to create a monumental resting place for the dead, led in the 5th cent. BC to experiments of hypostyle buildings with Ionic columns and stone steps. One of these tombs in fact presents an extremely interesting interior layout, with semi-columns and quarter-columns that punctuate the walls giving the impression of a surrounding colonnade. These efforts concluded in the 4th cent. in the “Macedonian” tomb. Following Plato’s exhortation (*Laws* 947 d-e) regarding the burial of leaders of the ideal republic, the subterranean resting place of the eminent deceased became a vaulted, usually two-chamber building with a monumental façade that recalls both palace and temple. It is obviously no coincidence that most – a total of 14 – of the oldest and most significant Macedonian graves have been found in the royal necropolis of Aigai.

One of the first, if not the first, monument of its kind was built by Philip II for his mother, queen Eurydice, the woman who handled power like a man. Inside a splendid underground chamber, where everything was made for eternity, and the gate to Hades existed as an architectural reference, the cremated bones of the dead woman, wrapped in purple fabric and well protected in a marble larnax, were to rest forever on a splendid throne, in the arms of Persephone.

With the tomb of Philip II, the ideal form of the leader’s eternal resting place became entrenched. The companions who returned bearing gold from the Orient would imitate it. In the years that followed, vaulted tombs, more or less monumental, but always a symbol of prestige and wealth, became a fashion that was lost at the end of the Hellenistic period, together with the Macedonian kingdom.

The custom of cremation came to Aigai in the archaic period, very probably together with the Temenids. The prerogative of the king and his male relatives, it was extended in the 5th century to their queens, and gradually to the companions. In the years of Philip II (359-336 BC), it found ever more champions among the lower strata, until, after the expedition of Alexander, it would become the rule for Macedonians all over the world. Like the heroes of Homer, Macedonian kings were cremated together with rich offerings. At once sacred and polluting, the remains of the funeral pyre were thrown onto the grave. Grave and pyre alike were then covered, as in the *Iliad* (23, 255-257), by a tumulus.

The remains of the pyre were found in the soil covering the tomb of Eurydice. Among the abundant offerings were pieces of at least three Panathenaic prize-amphorae dating the event to 344/343 BC, hundreds of iron nails and the bronze accessories from an elaborately decorated door bear witness to the fact that the queen’s funeral pyre was an entire wooden house. The same was found over the tomb of Philip II. An enormous pile of half-burnt bricks, ashes, charcoal and hundreds of burnt objects covered the entire vault abundantly. Its presence, which provided the decisive evidence of the deceased’s identity, after ruling out the possibility of it being Philip III Arrhidaeus, gives us a picture of the most splendid funeral pyre ever seen in Greece.

The tomb of queen Eurydice 344/3 BC.



► Detail from the façade-scenery in the tomb chamber of queen Eurydice, 344/3 BC.

Here, too, the pyre had the form of a monumental wooden building, similar perhaps to the tomb. In it, reclining on a gold and ivory couch, wearing his panoply, with a gold crown of oak on his head, the king was delivered to the flames. With him were rich offerings, dogs that had accompanied him on the hunt, horses, but also one of his youngest wives, the Thracian princess Meda who, according to the custom of her homeland, followed her husband to Hades. In the environment of the dynasty descended from Heracles, together with the Macedonian tomb, the idea was generated of a funeral pyre in the form of a monumental building. This idea that started in Aigai was to reach its zenith in Babylon with the legendary pyre of Hephaestion, and also had imitations in the cenotaph of king Nicocreon in distant Salamis on Cyprus.

Magnificent funeral pyres, with the flaunting of wealth that accompanied them, underscored and proclaimed the social status of the eminent deceased. However, beyond the external conditions, the deeper meaning hidden behind every funeral ceremony should be sought in the faith that defines the relationship of man with the supernatural, and in the field of myth which, making the incomprehensible an icon, endeavours to relieve the terror of the inescapable end. The dead person is purified in the flames, and becomes a sacrificial offering to the Lord and Mistress of Hades. The mythical archetype of cremation was the burning of Heracles which signalled for him the end of his earthly existence and the beginning of a new life in which, accompanied in eternity by Hebe, eternal youth, he would feast at the symposia of the Immortals. The hero who is regarded as the first initiate was the founding father of the Temenids, so the kings of the Macedonians did whatever was possible to recall their relationship with “ancestral” Heracles.

Pots and cauldrons (*chytres* and *levites*), *kraters*, water jugs (*hydriae*) and chests (*larnakes*) were the favourite cinerary urns of the Macedonians. These objects played a significant role in the myths of the Mysteries that were particularly widespread in Macedonia. In the *larnax*, “the mystic chest” was hidden the power of life, the sacred snake, the phallus, the newborn offspring, the beautiful boy whom Persephone guarded and loved. Initiates greeted “the fearful Persephone” from the gold sheets on which her name is written as the Mistress of Hades. The person thus “saved” returns to the bosom of the goddess, “a baby goat that choked on milk”. Purified by the sacred pyre, the dead heroes could begin their “new life” in the land of the Blessed, in the Elysian fields of asphodel.



The “dancers” of the Elysian fields (PAGE 142), sphinxes, griffins and lions mauling a deer from the decoration on the burial throne of queen Eurydice, 344/3 BC.





Part of the burnt iron shield and burnt bridle from the offerings on the funeral pyre of Philip II.





The partially-melted gold acorns that had come from the wreath inside the gold larnax, but were found thrown onto the tomb together with the residue of the funeral pyre, prove that the deceased was cremated on the spot, thereby ruling out any relation with Philip Arrhidaeus, whose bones were moved by Cassander to Aigai from some other place. In this way, the dead man in the unplundered royal tomb was necessarily identified as Philip II.



The half-melted lionhead knockers from the doors of the wooden funeral houses in which the bodies of Eurydice and Philip II were cremated.

The façade of the tomb of Philip II, 336 BC.

ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES:

*The gold oak wreath that was found inside the gold larnax of Philip II.
In the centre can be discerned the damages from the funeral pyre.*











◀ *The gold diadem of Meda. The funeral pyre caused obvious damage to the flowers with the blue glass paste.*



The gold cinerary larnax of Meda.

The gold cinerary larnax of Philip II.





The silver cinerary hydria with the gold oak wreath of Alexander IV, 310 BC.



III. AIGAI AND THE TEMENIDS

1. From myth to history

In the mid-7th century BC, when the old order was collapsing in southern Greece, a Dorian from Argos named Perdiccas became king of the Macedonians and established the dynasty of the Temenids (Herodotus VIII,137) which was to rule for 350 years and would give world history two of its most exciting heroes, Philip II and Alexander the Great.

Offspring of the family of Temenos, descendants by blood of Heracles and of Zeus himself, these leaders, through their legend, continued the heroic tradition of the kings of the Homeric epic who were generated and cherished by Zeus. With them, the Macedonians made the transition from prehistory to history, in which individuals acquired names and deeds a specific form.

The Macedonian king – commander in war, first in battle and first in hunting, guarantor of law and order in peacetime, bearer of divine blessing, sacred and inviolable person – was the father and master of his subjects, When he died, his people were orphaned. For life to continue normally and to prevent chaos from reigning, his successor had to be proclaimed immediately: the man from the royal family who had the qualifications and unanimous approval of the Macedonians “under arms”. The new leader’s first act was to bury his predecessor with heroic honours.

The names of the Temenids declare most eloquently the virtues that the Macedonian king ought to possess. He had to be as clever as a partridge (*pérdix*), the smartest of the birds, hence the name of the dynasty’s founder Perdiccas; he had to be as swift (*argós*) as the wind *Argaios*, and “resemble the wind” *Aeropos*; he should likewise be a good horseman, such as *Philip* (“he who loves horses”), he must have strength (*alke*) from which is *Alketas*; he must be a leader (*archegos*) like *Archelaos*; but above all he must defend his people (*amyna*), as shown in the name *Amyntas*, and protect them (*alexomai*) as in that of *Alexander*. The glorious results of the actions and political designs of their fathers are frequently declared by the names of the royal daughters, such Alexander I’s daughter, *Stratoniki*, “victory against the army”, and Philip II’s three daughters: *Cleopatra* “the glory of the homeland”, *Thessaloniki* “victory against the Thessalians” and *Europa*.

As human being and symbolic persona, the king essentially had no personal life. The *basilikos potos*, the leader’s symposium, became the central event in the social and political life of the state and, over time, the seat of royalty became the centre of religious, political, military and cultural authority. In other words, the functions of the civic agora (public meeting place) and the sacred acropolis of the democratic city-states were merged in the royal palace, in which the luxury and brilliance of the royal presence proved to be a necessary factor in the prestige of the state, as was the case with the palaces of epic heroes, with whom the Macedonian king, as a genuine successor of Heracles – at least in the eyes of his people – continued to be identified.

The head of Heracles. Decoration on a silver amphoriskos from the tomb of Philip II.

And as happened in myth and traditional religious ritual, even in democratic Athens in the case of the dignitary with the title “Basileus” (king) and his wife “Basilinna” (queen), the sacred authority of the king was to some degree shared with the queen since, as proved by the finds of Aigai, the noblewomen and queens of the Macedonians had played a leading role in religious ritual from prehistoric times. Mounted on top of wooden poles, triple bronze double axes allude directly to the ritual of sacrifice and recall half-forgotten archetypes of the Aegean world. Among the objects found in the graves of wealthy women of the early Iron Age were: diadems with solar symbols, pendants and amulets of all types, condensed phonemes of a lost symbolic language, wheels with four spokes – probably the predecessors of the pre-eminent magic charms that Pindar called “four-spoked wrynecks” [because of the squealing noise made by the birds of that name] and necessary for the magic of love – and tiny bronze vessels, somewhere between a pot and a pendant, which does not rule out their containing distillations of medicines and herbs. These objects testify to the fact that, until the 7th century BC, the noblewomen and queens of Aigai, to a much higher degree than their husbands, had the great privilege and at the same time serious duty of communicating with the transcendental world for the good of their people.

Temenid women continued this tradition, as proved by the hieratic sceptre decorated with ivory and amber that was found in the tomb of the richly-gifted “Lady of Aigai”, together with iron skewers and an iron replica of a four-wheel carriage, which inform us that the queen shared with the men of her family the privilege of participating in sacred meals and that she too had the right to appear publicly and to take part in sacred processions and prayers in honour of the gods whose religious rites she performed. Pointing in the same direction is the queen’s gold-decorated inscribed, embossed silver phiale, as well as the dozens of embossed bronze phialai, the pre-eminent libation vessels, that were found in all tombs of the queen’s group.

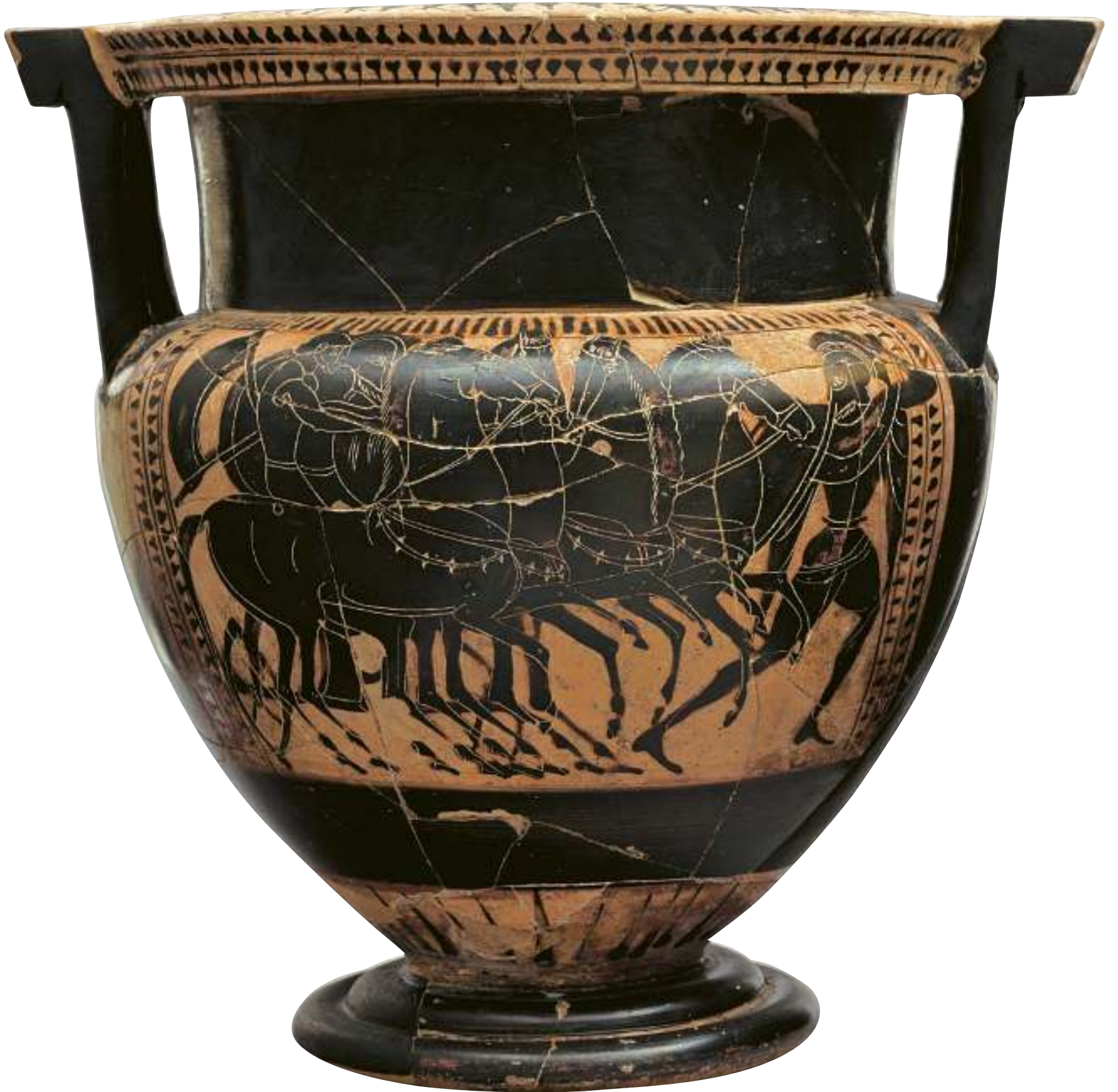
The queen’s hieratic function, a tradition dating back to the remote heroic past, was to be rebaptised in the waters of the mystic beliefs that were winning ardent devotees in the Macedonian court during the classical period. Eurydice bore the name of Orpheus’ wife and the symbolism of the images on her funeral throne bears witness to her special relationship with the Mistress of Hades. Olympias, initiated into the mysteries of the Great Gods, is known for her dedication to Dionysos. In the Hellenistic world, this tradition was to culminate in Arsinoës, Berenices and Cleopatras who were no longer confined to the role of high priestess, but were themselves proclaimed goddesses.

Temenid women – mothers and spouses, sisters and daughters, containers of the precious royal seed, bearers and continuers of the holy bloodline of the divinely-generated dynasty – like the ancient queens of myth, were in the eyes of others symbols and bearers of power; but they themselves too, with full awareness of the value of their capabilities, claimed participation in dispensing power and producing ideology. And if this was the exception in the classical period, in the centuries to follow it would become the rule. It is not, of course, accidental that these women, like men, were referred to or signed with the name of their father rather than that of their husband, e.g. «Ευρυδικα Σίρρα» or «Θεσσαλονίκη Φιλίππου βασίλισσαν» (Eurydice daughter of Sirra, and queen Thessaloniki daughter of Philip).

Black-figure Attic kylikes (6th cent. BC).



Attic black-figure krater decorated with a battle scene (third quarter of the 6th cent. BC).



Silver-studded sword, cutlass, dagger, heads of spears and javelins, weapons that were burned in the funeral pyre of a Temenid, circa mid-6th cent. BC.





Bronze diadem with hieratic symbols, bronze finial head of a wooden sceptre, a bronze charm: accessories of priestess-queens in the early Iron Age (10th-8th cent. BC).





Four bronze pendants, a bronze finial from a staff and two tiny cauldron-shaped objects. The latter, which hung from the belt, may have contained potions (9th-8th cent. BC).





Triple bronze double axes. Hanging from a wooden sceptre, these objects declared the hieratic office of their owner, a priestess. (10th-8th cent. BC)



Small bronze jug and bronze scent bottle (second half of the 6th cent. BC).





Iron replica of a four-wheeled cart from the tomb of the "Lady of Aigai" (early 5th cent. BC).





Bronze libation bowls (6th-5th cent. BC).



*Silver gilt libation bowl
of the "Lady of Aigai".*





Feline hunting a deer, clay figurine of local craftsmanship (540-30 BC).



Head of Herakles, enthroned goddess, pot-bellied daemon from whose head springs a similar creature (parody of the birth of Athena): figurines of the East Ionian type (560-30 BC).





Enthroned goddess, kouros clad in a long himation, kore and pot-bellied daemon from whose head springs a monkey: figurines of the East Ionian type (540-530 BC).





Gold sheet from the decoration on the clothing of a queen of Aigai .

2. A royal seat in the age of Democracy

With the guidance of the Temenids, the Macedonians consolidated their position and extended their sovereignty by subjugating or driving out local populations. Aigai, the seat of the kings, was inextricably associated with the fate of the dynasty, and went through a period of prosperity that can be traced chiefly through the finds in the necropolis, since our knowledge of the city itself, a very small percentage of which has been excavated to date, is still limited. What is certain is that there was no rationally-organised town plan with regular city blocks and vertical road axes. It would appear that the city of Aigai developed freely on the slope north of the acropolis on low successive terraces with buildings on diverging axes and empty spaces in between.

In 513 BC, Darius the Great King of Persia invaded Europe. Amyntas I with clever political handling managed not only to retain the autonomy of his state, but even to extend his dominions for the first time beyond the Axios River, into the region of Anthemoun. Some royal match-making appears to have facilitated the approach and, as indicated by her strange dress, the gold-covered “Lady of Aigai”, consort of king Amyntas, was a princess from Asia Minor. She came from Lydia to Aigai as a bride, bringing refined manners with her and perhaps also the myth of the Garden of Midas. She died there early in the 5th century BC in the fourth decade of her life. Her daughter, princess Gygaea – who took the name of the sacred lake of Sardis, and of the mother-goddess of Lydian kings – as the wife of Bubares, son of Megabazus, conqueror of Thrace, in turn assisted the political designs of her brother Alexander I (496-454 BC) during the invasion of Xerxes; and when the war was over found herself in Asia Minor where the Persian king gave her son Amyntas the Carian city of Alabanda.

At the beginning of the 5th century, the *Hellandikes* (chief judges) of the Olympic Games accepted the legend of the dynasty of the Temenids as a historical fact. The youthful crown prince Alexander excelled at the Olympic Games and in 479 BC, now king, once more made his presence felt in the south in an extremely impressive way, by dedicating a gold statue of himself in the sanctuary at Delphi (Herodotus 8.121) Among the statues of generals and the votive offerings of cities, the image of king Alexander is not only the most valuable, but because of its material, it is also the most closely related to that of Apollo himself. On the monumental eight-drachma coin of Alexander I (495-452 BC), a young horseman, probably the king himself, personifies the absolute model of the nobleman, and the famous poets Pindar (Fr. 120, 121 Snell) and Bacchylides (Fr.20 B Snell) praise his bravery and greatness as a descendant of Heracles, to whose charm even Herodotus yielded by relating his success in the common struggle against the Persians (5, 18-21).

Under the leadership of Alexander I, who dominated Aigai in the first half of the 5th cent. BC, the kingdom expanded into the entire area occupied by Macedonia today and the related, but until then independent, tribal kingdoms of the region become “allies and subjects” of the Temenid ruler.

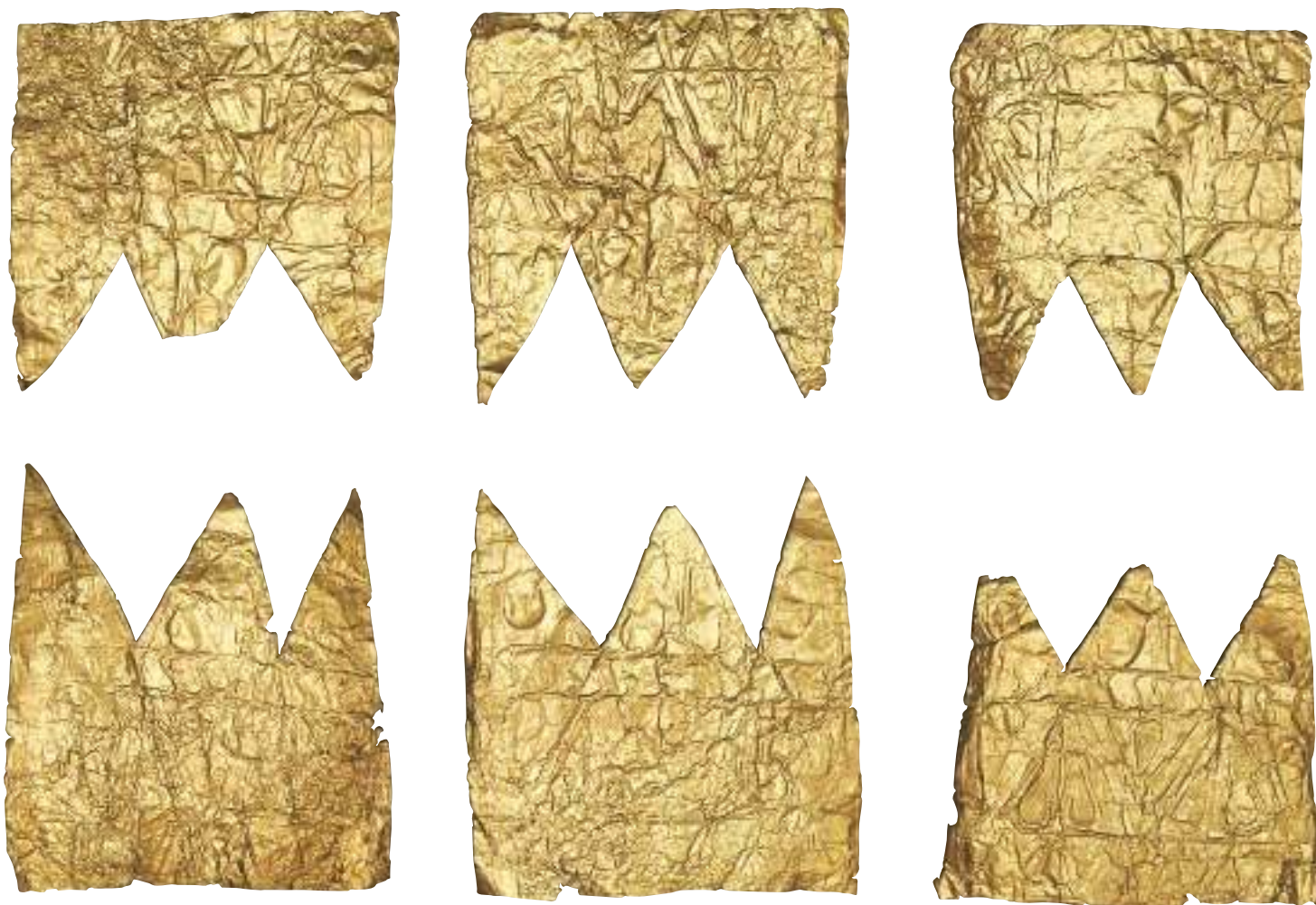
“In the desire to expand his kingdom, Perdiccas asked the Pythia at Delphi who replied: “The glorious Temenids have under their rule a kingdom with fertile land given to them by Zeus, the lord of the aegis. But go quickly to the land of Bottiaeis with the many flocks and, when you see white goats with shining horns sleeping, offer a sacrifice on the soil of that land to the thrice-blessed gods and build a city and state.” (Diodorus, 17.16.1.1). The oracle reported by Diodorus well after the era of Perdiccas I (7th cent. BC) may very probably be related to the activity of Alexander I at Delphi and declares the indissoluble

connection of the Temenids with Aigai, which was then the centre of the most significant Hellenic state of the north, reflecting at the same time the incorporation of Bottiaeis (the region north of the Aliakmon River), into the Macedonian kingdom.

Life in the city of Aigai reached an unprecedented level of sophistication and luxury. The 26 clay heads from wooden statues (*xoana*) that were used at a queen's funeral in about 480 BC give us a picture of the local artistic output on the threshold of the new era. The resonance of east Ionian influences is still recognisable in the female faces, despite their unusual linear austerity, but the unexpectedly realistic features of the clay demons, the moulds for which were shaped by the same hand that created those of the korai, prefigured a development that would require a century and a half to come to fruition. On the contrary, the conservative forms of the bronze kouros used as the handle of a large bowl, and another on a typical libation vessel from the same grave, take us back to a tradition that draws from the sources of the Geometric age.

There are just a few known traces of buildings from this period, which have been lost under more recent construction phases. Architectural terracottas, relief palmette antefixes, painted simas, but also the impressive hypostyle tombs with Ionic columns give a faint impression of lost luxury. In the northwest corner of the city, beside the burial plot of the queens, the remains of a large late archaic building with a rectangular floor plan and oblong interior spaces surprise us with their sturdiness: with a thickness of one metre on the inside walls and two metres on the long outside wall, this building very probably had two storeys and effectively dominated the area.

Sheet gold decoration on the clothing of the "Lady of Aigai".



The gold jewellery of the "Lady of Aigai" : a diadem with embossed mythical scenes, a triple spiral hair decoration attached to beads, earrings, pendant, necklace, fibulae, pins and the gold finials on a multiple silver necklace.





Gold pendant, earring and pin of the "Lady of Aigai".

ON PAGE 173: *Fibulae of the "Lady of Aigai".*







Gorgons pursue Perseus and Theseus wrestles with the Minotaur (above); the blinding of Polyphemos (below); scenes from the gold diadem of the "Lady of Aigai".



The gold sheet that decorated the belt of the "Lady of Aigai".





*Gold disks with gorgoneia from
the decoration on the funeral
garment of a queen of Aigai (c. 470 BC).*





The bronze hydria of the "Lady of Aigai".



Clay figurine of an ithyphallic satyr and a red-figure Attic pelike by Hermonax with a representation of Poseidon pursuing Aethra, from the queens' burial plot (c. 470 BC).





Amber necklace and bronze bowl (lekane) from the burial of a queen of Aigai (c. 470 BC).





PAGES 178-183: *Clay heads of Kore from the burial of a queen, c. 480 BC.*





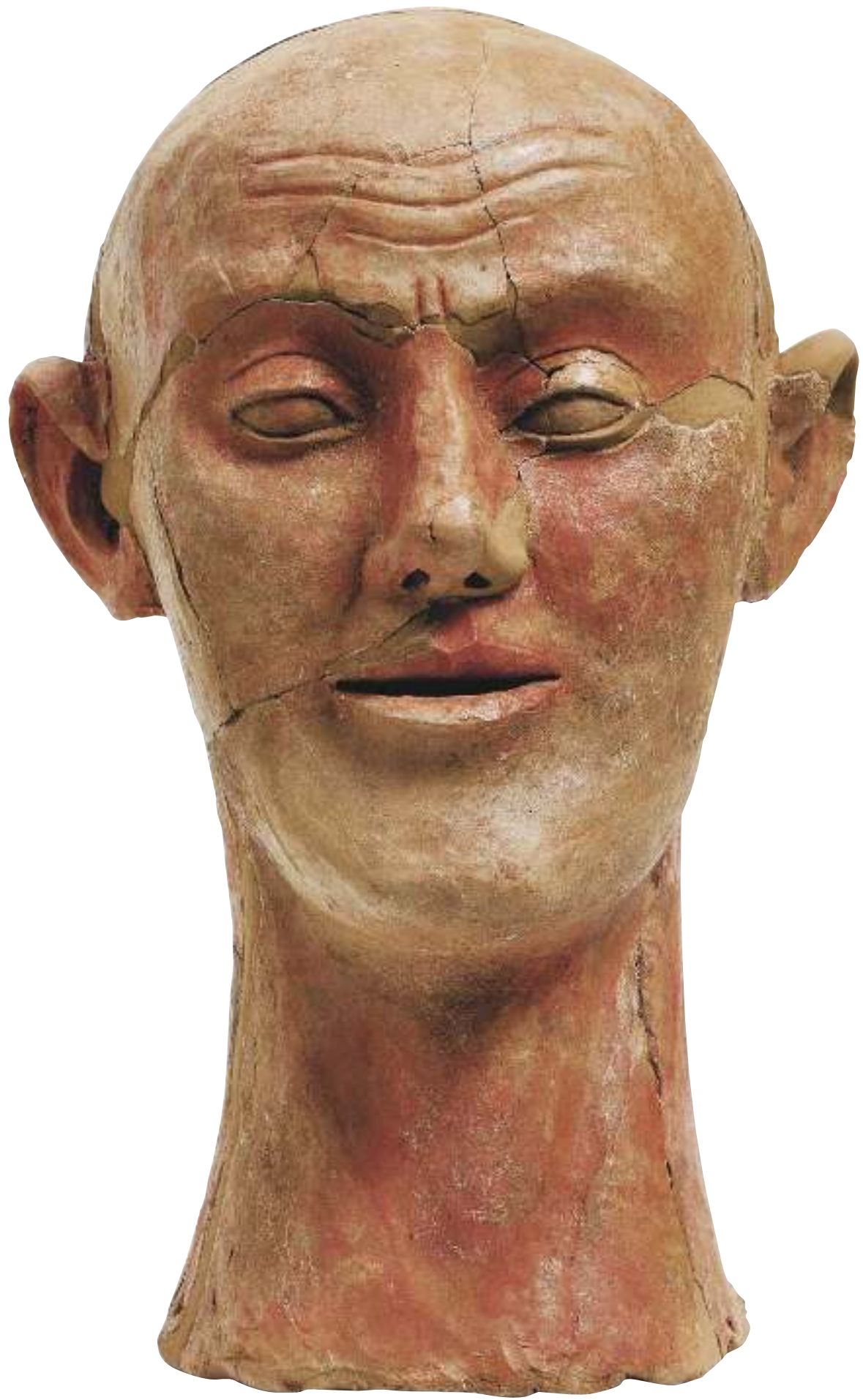








Clay heads of daemons from the burial of a queen, c. 480 BC.





*Clay head of a goddess from the
burial of a queen, c. 480 BC.*







Clay heads of Kore from the burial of a queen, c. 480 BC.



Antefix and architectural terracotta (5th cent. BC).





Bronze handle of a libation vessel (patera) in the form of a kouros, from a grave in the queens' burial plot, c. 480 BC.

In mid-century, Perdiccas II (452-413 BC) ascended to the throne. In addition to his other enemies, he also had to deal with the expansionism of Athens. And whereas the king did whatever he could to avoid the mortal embrace of the superpower to the south, in Aigai, where among other famous men, Hippocrates would be his guest, anything Attic was fashionable. Reliefs and painted grave steilai now made their appearance in the necropolis of the Temenid capital and white Attic lekythoi introduced the Macedonians to the products of painting, an art that would soon become their favourite.

During the reign of Perdiccas II, the city of Aigai was surrounded by a wall built of dressed local stone, with poros cornerstones from the distant quarries of Vermion as well. One part of it has been excavated on the northwest corner of the city, over the outer wall of a large late archaic building. Traces can be discerned of what was probably a tower, and the northwest gate was near the queens' burial group. In the maelstrom of the Peloponnesian War, striving to save his kingdom from entanglements with the warring superpowers, Perdiccas II (452-413 BC) sought help from the mythical founder of the line. The bearded image of Heracles stamped on the king's coins and an inscribed bronze tripod, a prize from the Heraion of Argos that was awarded to Perdiccas or some other family member and placed as an heirloom in the tomb of Philip II, tell us that the old myth of the Peloponnesian origin of the Temenids, reactivated in response to the new needs, could still ensure politically useful contacts and alliances with the Peloponnesian city of Argos.

At the end of the 5th century Archelaos (413-399 BC), a man of genius and far-sightedness, decided to "modernise" his state, opening it up to the artistic and intellectual quests of the times. And while life in the collapsing republic of Athens was becoming increasingly insecure, the court of Aigai was proving to be a hospitable refuge for intellectuals and artists who found in the person of the Temenid king an ardent patron of the arts. The new palace of Archelaos was to be decorated by Zeuxis, the most important painter of the era. Personalities such as the epic poet Choerilos, the poet Timotheos and the tragic poet Agathon, host of Plato's *Symposium*, graced life in the Macedonian city with their presence. There must have been a theatre already there, in which guest artists could present their works.

The Macedonian king invited Socrates, who instead drank hemlock in Athens. Euripides, on the contrary, accepted the invitation and the title of "Companion" of the king and spent the last years of his life there. As a return favour, in 408 BC the dramatic poet presented the tragedy *Archelaos*. Thus did the Athenian people learn about the myth of the Temenids. The heroic adventures in the distant north of the mythical Archelaos, son of king Temenos of Argos, were brought to life on the stage of the theatre of Dionysos, like those of the most famous heroes of Greek myth. According to Euripides, it was Archelaos, founder of the dynasty, who obeyed the Delphic oracle, followed a she-goat and became the founder and settler of Aigai (Hyginos *Fabulae* CCXIX 143-144).

After the 1960s, the view prevailed among scholars that it was Archelaos who transferred the capital of the kingdom to Pella. But this view has not been verified by either the testimony of the written sources or archaeological finds. On the contrary in fact, the ever-precise Thucydides (2.100.1-3) who enumerates the reforms of Archelaos, reports nothing of the kind. In his *Archelaos*, Euripides emphasised the king's connection with the ancestral dynastic centre of the Temenids, as did the king himself, by placing the head of a she-goat, the unmistakable symbol of the city, on his coins.

White lekythos by the "painter of Women" from a grave in the queens' burial plot, c. 430 BC. (AND ON FOLLOWING PAGES)









*Three white lekythoi by the "painter of Women" and his followers
from a grave in the queens' burial plot, c. 430 BC.*



Very large alabaster scent bottle, marble unguent vessel .and two marble lekythoi from a grave in the queens' burial plot, c. 430 BC.





Ostrich-egg scent bottles, red-figure lekythio with a beauty-care scene and a red-figure askos from a grave in the queen's burial plot, c. 430 BC.







Gold sheet with a battle scene, most likely from the decoration on a shield, and a bronze gorgoneion, probably from a cuirass. Both were found in a plundered grave in the royal Temnid burial plot (430-20 BC).

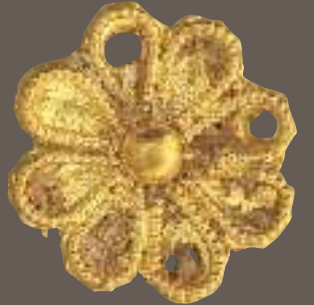
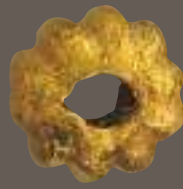
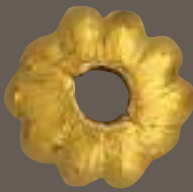




*Palmette antefixes from buildings in Aigai
(last quarter of the 5th cent. BC).*

◀ *Bronze tripod. According to the inscription on the rim,
it was a prize at the Heraean Games in Argos. Made
in the 5th cent. BC, but found in the tomb of Philip II.*





In the turbulent era that followed the assassination of Archelaos, his successor Amyntas III (393-369 BC), in order to deal with the intolerable pressure brought to bear by the various enemies who were invading from all sides, was increasingly obliged to live in Pella, a city which, boasting the most important port on the north coast of the Thermaic Gulf, was growing rapidly. It is very possible that Amyntas III was the first king to build a palace in Pella, the memory of which was preserved until the reign of Justinian in the toponym "Amyntas' palaces" (Palatitsia). Aigai, however, the last bastion of defence, continued to be the heart of the kingdom, and the widow of Amyntas III, the dynamic Eurydice, who managed to secure the throne for her sons and power for herself, left here not only her tomb and the evidence of her activity which is discernible on successive inscriptions, but also her marble image.

Despite the rapid growth of Pella, in which the royal family spent a large part of their daily life, Aigai retained its full symbolic value until the departure of Alexander the Great and, being always the ancestral dynastic centre of the Temnids, was the place in which all the traditional ceremonies took place, as well as political events of enormous historical significance.

Notwithstanding all his conscientious military and diplomatic efforts, Amyntas was unable to reinforce the position of his state and, when he died in 369 BC, he left the kingdom so weakened that his successor, Alexander II, was obliged to hand over his younger brother Philip as a hostage to Thebes, the major power of the era. Two years later, Alexander II was murdered and, although one counter-claimant to the throne was ready to support a Theban invasion, Amyntas' widow, the dynamic Eurydice took action and succeeded, with a bold move, by winning the support of the Athenian commander Iphicrates, in securing the throne for her 13-year-old son Perdiccas and power for herself.

The first half of the 4th century BC was a difficult time for the kingdom and for Aigai. The more general slump left its mark on city life. Grave gifts were now restricted to the absolutely necessary: very few weapons – one or two javelins or spears – a minimum of jewellery, usually bronze or silver and the required clay pottery, preferably local imitations of the corresponding Attic ware. However, despite the difficulties, the cultural development initiated by Archelaos did not stop. In the person of young Perdiccas, Plato saw the last hope of achieving his ideal of an enlightened prince, and sent his pupil Euphraios to the Macedonian court to become the king's tutor and mentor. Perdiccas proved to be a worthy pupil of Platonic ideas, but the historical circumstances prevented the experiment from being completed: in 360 BC, the young philosopher-king was killed in battle with the Illyrians together with 4,000 Macedonians, the flower of the army, which was literally decimated.

Taking advantage of this disaster, the Athenians tried to impose Argaios as a counter-claimant to the throne. He hastened to Aigai to be acknowledged as king. But the inhabitants of the city remained loyal to their dynasty, and Philip, the dead king's younger brother, routed Argaios and ascended to the throne of a state that was teetering precariously on the brink of dissolution.

Elements of gold jewellery from a grave in the queens' burial plot (c. 430 BC).

Double rosette and parts of a gold wreath with myrtle blossoms from the tomb of queen Eurydice. (344/3 BC).



Two Attic red-figure skyphoi and a local one with black glaze (first half of the 4th cent. BC).



Large Attic squat lekythos by the "painter of the Initiates" from the tomb of queen Eurydice (mid-4th cent. BC).

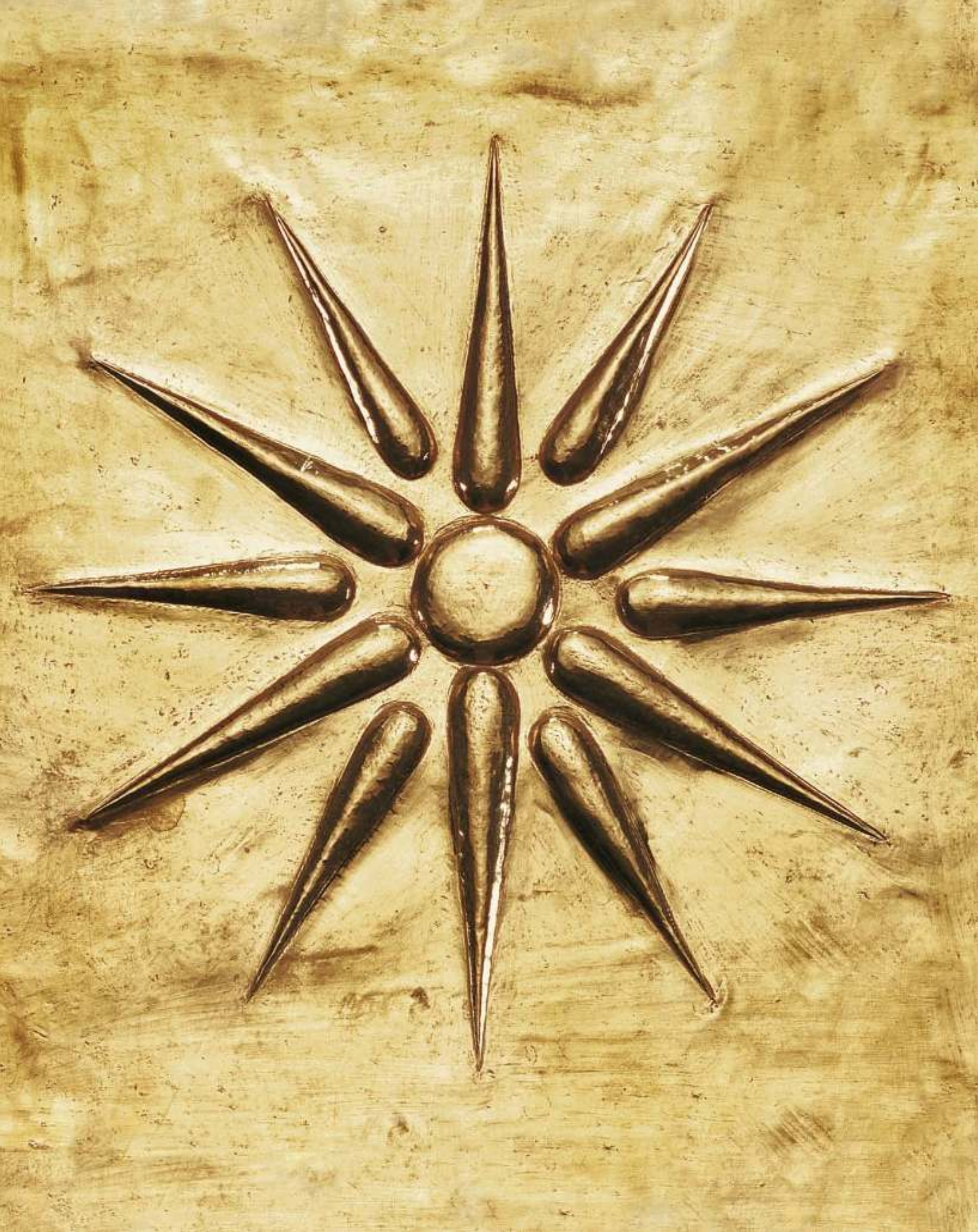






The head of the statue of queen Eurydice.

The statue of queen Eurydice. Slightly larger than life-size, it was the queen's votive offering in the sanctuary of the goddess Eukleia (third quarter of the 4th cent. BC).



3. Philip II and the golden age of Aigai

The first half of the 4th century BC was an extremely difficult period, not only for Macedonia, but for Greece as a whole, because after the Peloponnesian War, cities kept fighting amongst themselves, thereby inflicting great sufferings on their population, while democracy proved incapable of containing the damage. In Athens, which had experienced collapse, some voices were slowly beginning to debate the potentialities of Democracy, even before the execution of Socrates. During the period of his pupils, discussions about the ideal form of governance became widespread. After Plato tried unsuccessfully to implement his theoretical model of the ideal state and enlightened leader in Syracuse, the elderly Athenian politician Isocrates sought a way out of Greece's sufferings in the person of Philip II, the dynamic Macedonian ruler, calling on him in 346 BC as a genuine descendant of Heracles to bring unity and peace to the Greeks and Greek law and civilisation to the barbarians.

A man of genius, an exceptional commander and excellent diplomat, Philip who became king at the age of 24, would succeed by reforming the army, the economy and the society. He not only dealt with the extreme pressure exerted by his enemies and rescued the exhausted state he had inherited from dissolution, he not only increased dramatically the territory and resources of his kingdom, making Macedonia the primary power of its age, he also changed the flow of history, uniting the permanently quarrelling Greeks for the first time under his strong authority and preparing for the expedition to the East.

Philip had grown up in the house of Epameinontas, in which he had an opportunity to be educated, to meet significant public figures of the age, and to be initiated into the philosophy of Pythagoras (Diodorus 16,2), who was a friend of Plato's and participant in his ideas and those of his disciples (see Speusippus, *Socratic Letters*, 30.12, R. Herscher, *Epistolgr. Graeci*). He was certainly also well aware of the views and ideas germinating among the intelligentsia. Isocrates' invitation was obviously well received by Philip, who never missed an opportunity to emphasise his divine lineage. So he created in Samothrace a panhellenic centre of a mystic cult, consolidated his presence at Delphi and finally, as the elected leader and commander of all Greeks, left his indelible trace in Olympia.

In his ceaseless military and political struggles for sovereignty, Philip did not use the old myth merely to legitimise his own political ambitions, as cities always did, but to show himself as a person distinguished by blood, chosen as an initiate, enlightened and victorious. In this way, he became the hero and at the same time the creator of a new myth, his own, and mobilised the cream of the Greek intelligentsia, philosophers, poets, actors, sculptors, painters and architects, to give flesh and bones to his vision. The king and his environment, the wellspring of power, became the centre for producing ideology and knowledge which also determined the use of urban space and the new trends in art. The environment of the Macedonian king became for art and culture what the Athens of Pericles had been a century earlier, and the conservative kingdom under the enlightened leadership of himself and his son was to evolve into a radical instrument that would change the ancient world.

Just a few decades ago, the above paragraph might have been regarded as expressing a daring, even seditious viewpoint in the theoretical discussion between historians and political scientists. Now, however, owing to the brilliant finds from Aigai, and putting aside the expediencies and prejudices of centuries past, even the greatest sceptic can now verify these views.

The emblematic star of the Temenids on the cover of Meda's gold larnax.

Philip II. The most strikingly realistic portrait is from the large frieze with the hunt scene on the gold and ivory couch in the chamber of the king's tomb.





The silver-gilt hieratic diadem of Philip II.



◀ *Bronze torch from the tomb of Philip II. In Doric Sparta, the torchbearer who accompanied the king everywhere was the visible symbol of his power.*

The bronze patera from the tomb of Philip II.



Bronze oinochoe from the tomb of Philip II. It was found together with the bronze patera that resembles a frying pan. Both were used as libation vessels.





Gold gorgoneion from the cuirass found on the threshold to the antechamber of Philip II's tomb.



The gold-decorated pectoral and gold elements from the fastening of the cuirass that was found in the panoply on the threshold of Philip II's tomb chamber.







◀ *Portrait of Philip II.*

The gold sheet that decorated the gorytos (Thraco-Skythian quiver that holds a bow as well as arrows), most likely either a gift or booty, found on the threshold of the chamber of Philip II's tomb.

ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES: *Scenes from the fall of a city, probably Troy, from the decoration on the gorytos.*





Taking part in the discussion of political systems, Xenophon (*Ieron*, 11) has the poet Simeonides telling the tyrant Ieron: “...and first of all the palace: do you imagine that an elaborately decorated and very costly building will give you greater glory and honour than an entire city surrounded by walls and battlements, equipped with temples, colonnades and public services, harbours and markets?”

In his desire to modernise his kingdom and create a state capable of meeting the needs of the times, but also to expand it, Philip took care not only to organise the cities in his kingdom more democratically, by allocating jurisdictions and introducing institutions, structures and political offices that would make them self-sufficient and functional, he also built new ones, establishing cultural networks. It was very probably Philip who initiated the inspired plan to extend Pella, which was to become the brilliant new capital of the Macedonians; but first of all, he looked after the ancestral home of the kingdom, Aigai, the city whose loyal and law-abiding inhabitants had secured him the throne (Diodorus, 16.2)

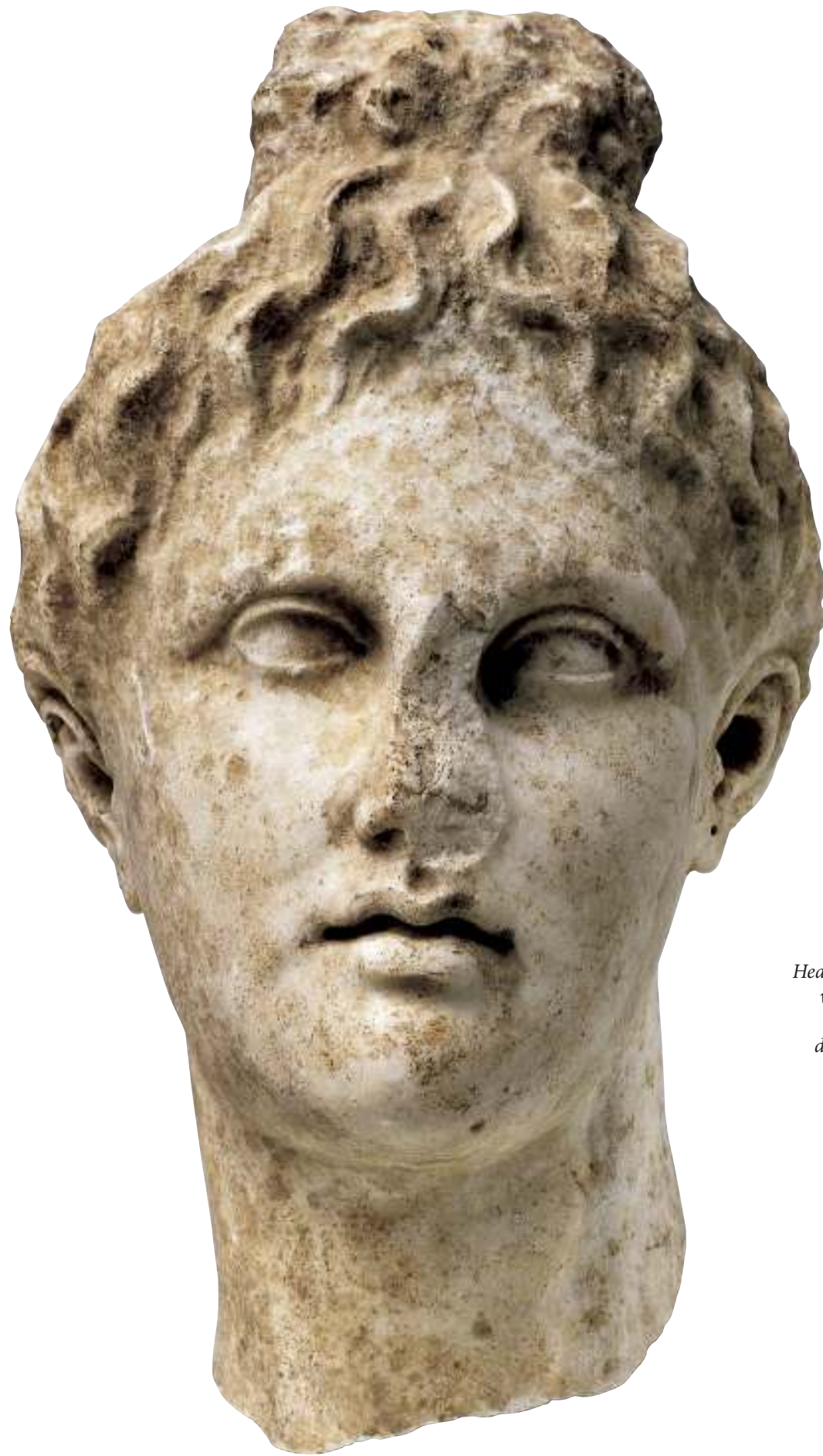
Philip's first concern was to rebuild the fortification with particular grandeur. The new wall, with a width of three metres, was reinforced by towers at regular intervals. Built of stone up to a significant height, its facades were constructed with well-dressed poros limestone blocks. The costly poros stone that was used for the palace and other public buildings as well was brought to Aigai from the quarries of Vermion, some 10-20 km away. Its use over such a large area entailed an enormous expenditure of resources and equipment, which was not dictated so much by practical needs as by the intention to give the old royal city a form worthy of its prestige and significance. On the east, where the carriageways from Pydna and Methone reached the city, a magnificent entrance was built with stout, round towers and an internal courtyard that must have impressed the visitor. There was also a smaller gate on the northwest corner over the corresponding gate in the older wall. On the high hills to the south was the fortified Acropolis.

In addition to the wall, new buildings were constructed both in the city and outside it. On a spacious site west of the city, the sanctuary of Eukleia was created with a two-column Doric temple, a small stoa, a large altar and a small, closed peristyle that consisted solely of a courtyard and stoa that almost touched the city wall. The picture is completed by the pedestals on which stood royal votive offerings, including one in particular bearing the name of queen Eurydice: ΕΥΡΥΔΙΚΑ ΣΙΡΡΑ ΕΥΚΛΑΕΙΑ (“Eurydice, daughter of Sirra [erected this statue] to Eukleia”) which also identifies the divinity worshipped. Among the finds in a deposit were: the magnificent statue of the Queen herself, the marble head of a youth reminiscent of the figure of Hephaestion, the head of a young woman, another pedestal with a votive inscription by Eurydice and an enormous marble snake.

Opposite the sanctuary of Eukleia, outside the city wall and among the houses of Vergina, a small part of a very important building has been excavated. Luxurious and carefully built, with walls of poros stone and floors paved with pebbles, with spacious rooms laid out in a row and a stoa that was partitioned in a second phase, this building, which opens on the west into an enormous courtyard with structures that look like pedestals, is certainly a public building, most likely the gymnasium of Aigai, since the marble group of a boar hunt was found in the vicinity. Probably a votive offering to Heracles the Huntsman, protector of young hunters, perhaps to commemorate a successful hunt that marked its donor's coming of age, this group which dates to the third quarter of the 4th cent. BC is an exceptionally interesting sculpture that would have been highly appropriate in the context of a Macedonian gymnasium.

Head of a youth. Hephaestion (?). Found in a deposit in the sanctuary of Eukleia (330-20 BC).





*Head of a goddess (Artemis?)
with the characteristically
dressed hair. Found in a
deposit in the sanctuary of
Eukleia (340-20 BC).*

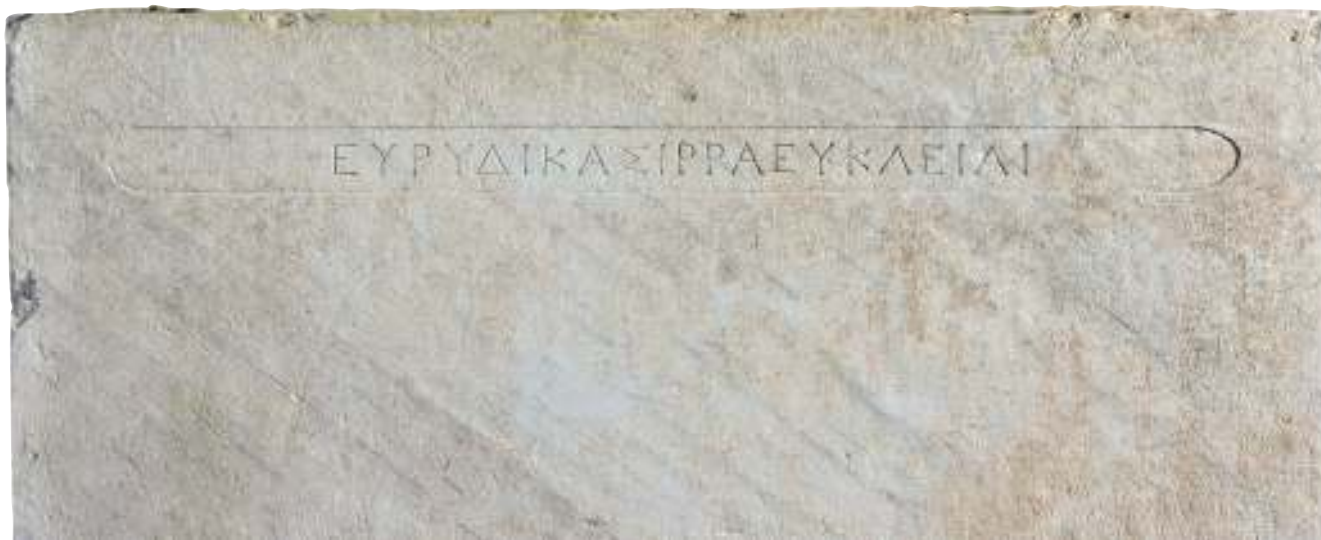


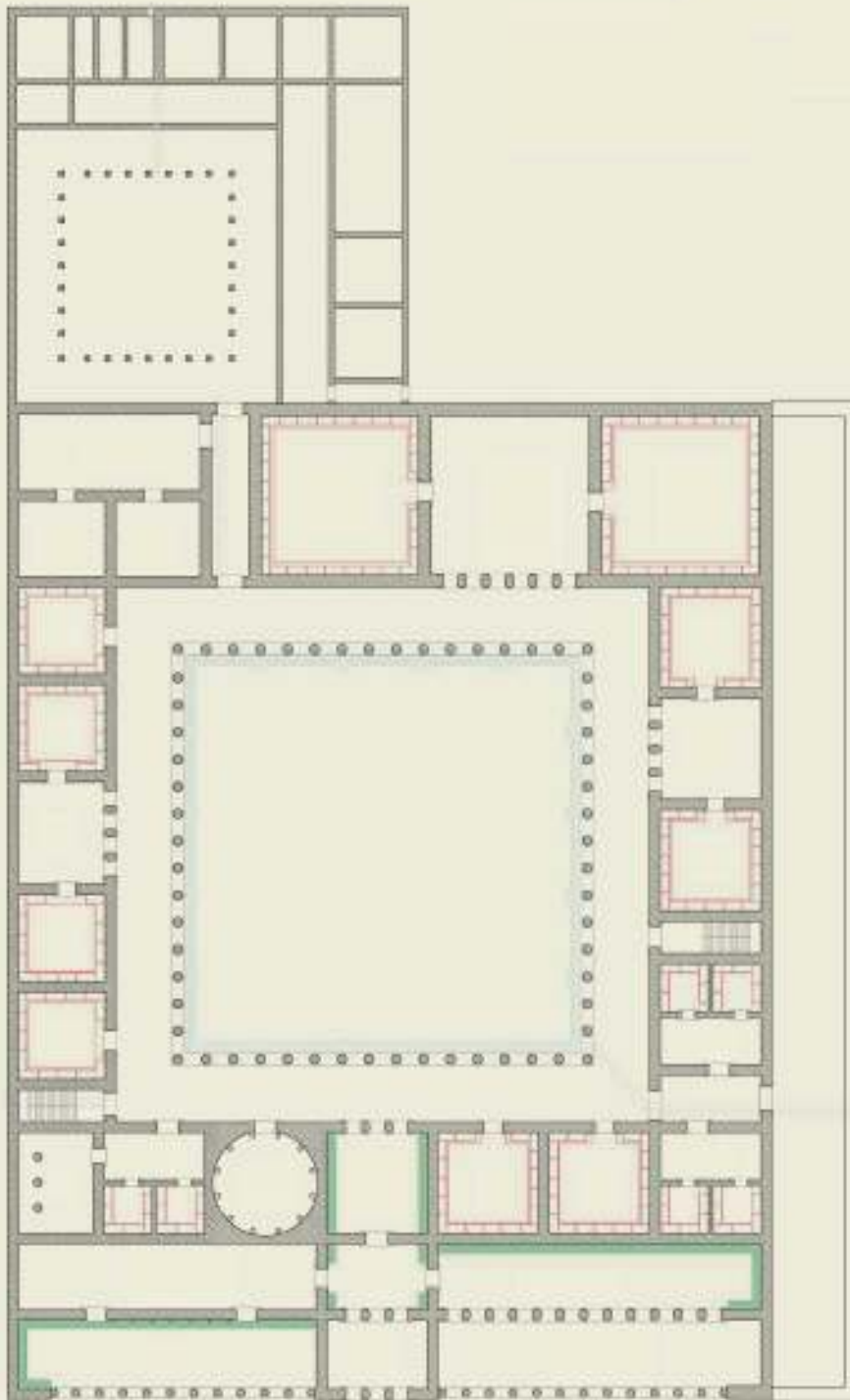
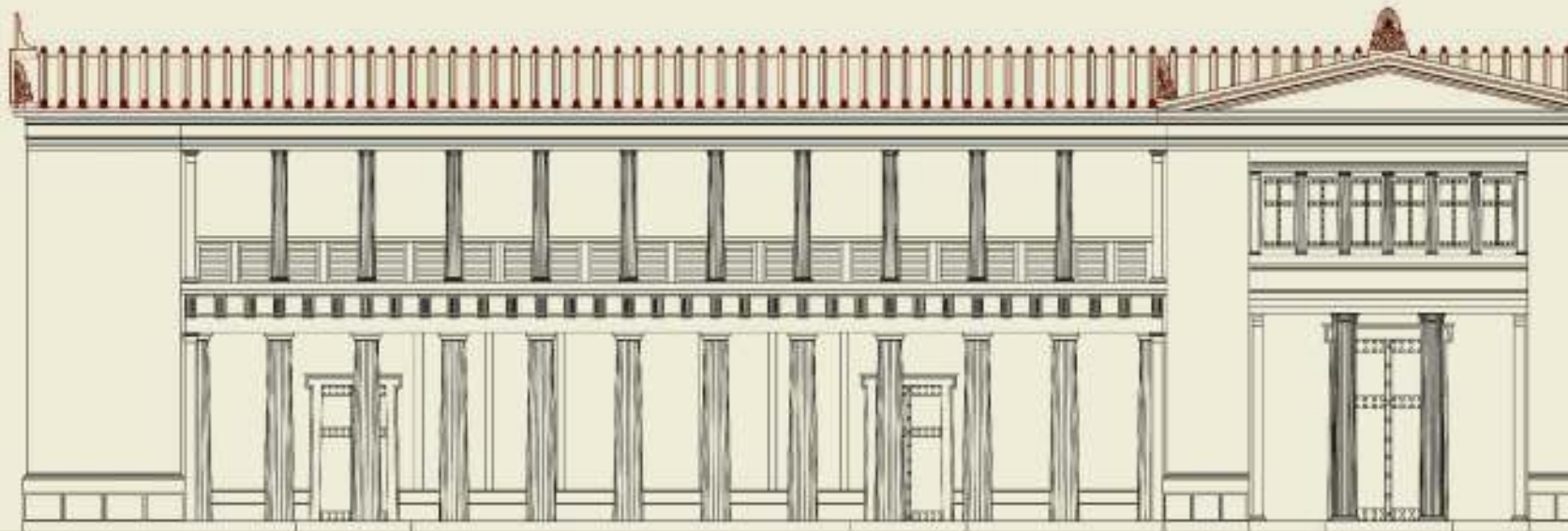
Part of a relief marble frieze with floral ornaments (third quarter of the 4th cent. BC).

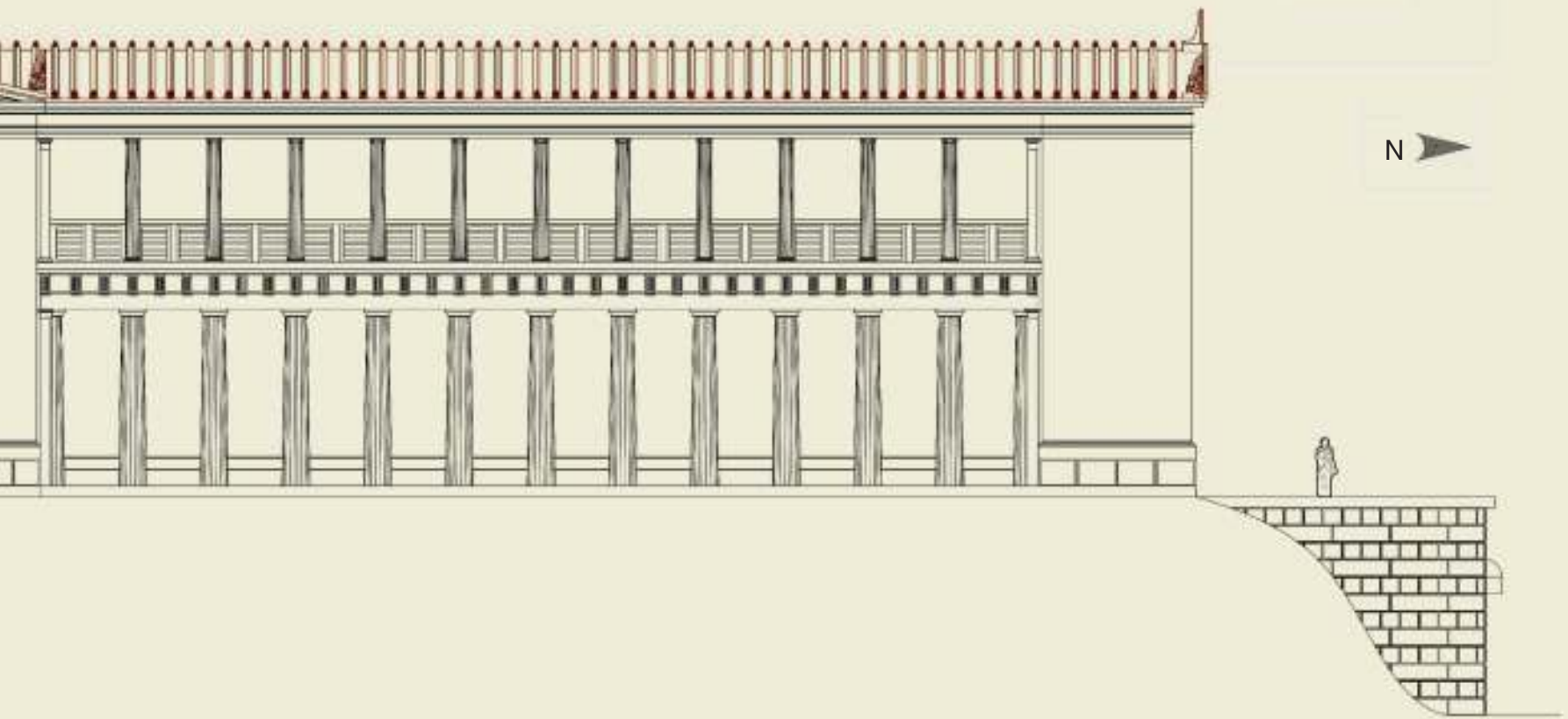
Leg of a marble table (second half of the 4th cent. BC).



Marble plaque from the base of queen Eurydice's votive offering to the goddess Eukleia bearing the inscription "Ευρυδικα Σιρρα Ευκλειαι», i.e. Eurydice (daughter of) Sirra (dedicates this) to Eukleia.







Façade, ground plan and palmette antefix from the palace of Philip II at Aigai (350-40 BC).







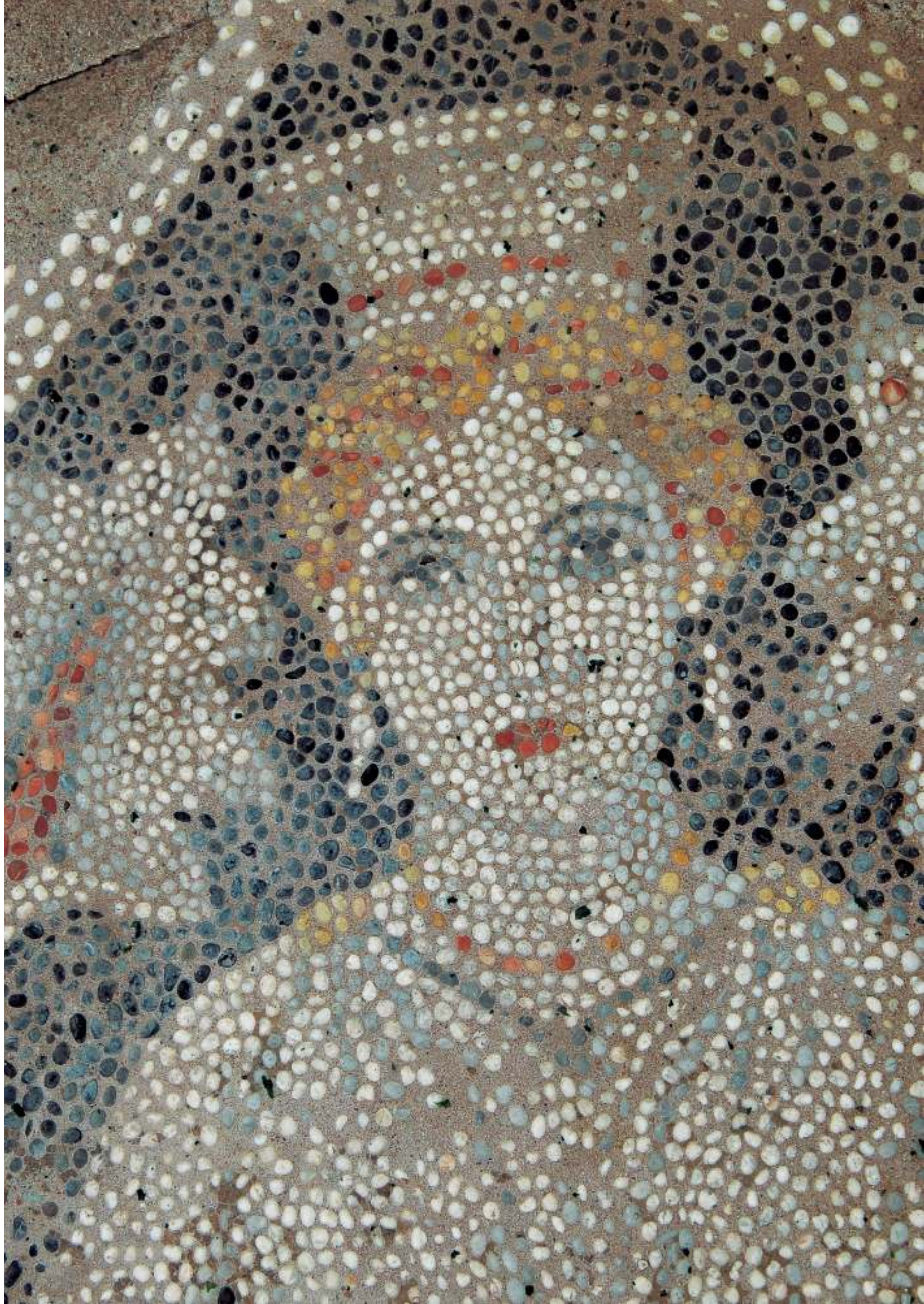
The tripartite complex in the south wing of the Aigai palace: the banqueting halls (andrones) with the mosaic floors and the bases of double Ionic pilasters on their antechamber.

ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES: *Palace of Aigai. The mosaic floors of andron E with the maiden-flowers and plant motifs.*









Just above the sanctuary of Eukleia is the theatre, the cavea of which reached the massive retaining wall of the palace. Today only the foundations of the *skene* and the first row of stone seats have been preserved. Despite the various viewpoints that have been expressed, nothing has been found so far to rule out the possibility that it was made entirely of stone, since it is known that the monuments of Aigai functioned for centuries as the best quarry in Emathia.

On an enormous artificial plateau south of the theatre stands the palace which, with an area of 1.25 hectares, was the largest and, together with the Parthenon, most significant building in classical Greece. A monumental two-storey gateway (*propylon*) and two splendid stoas, the first fully developed two-storey stoas in Greek architecture, made up the impressive façade of the building which, like temples, faces east. Benches for at least 120 seated persons underscore the extroversion of the stoas; the one on the south was where laws and decrees were made public and judicial authority was dispensed, while the northern one was probably intended for philosophical lessons and discussions.

Walking through the monumental gateway, one entered a large square antechamber and then the enormous colonnaded heart of the building. With 16 columns on each side, the peristyle represented the geometric and numerical quintessence of the concept of a square and appears to have been designed to function as an Agora, since the generation that changed the world could gather together in the courtyard, which could seat at least 3,500 selected Macedonians. All around were symposium halls, to the east the sacred circular *tholos* and the archives (B), recalling the idea of the Prytaneion, and to the west, at the centre of the striking tripartite complex (M1, M2, M3) was probably the throne room, a space lighted by the morning sun that entered through its multi-column opening. Essentially hidden behind the volume of the great eastern peristyle, the smaller western one was designed from the outset to house auxiliary uses (baths, cookhouses, storerooms, etc).

On an elevated but not isolated site accessible from all sides and unguarded, a city landmark and focal point of public space, with its colonnades open to the public who would arrive and walk up just one step before entering, the royal palace of Philip II in Aigai was certainly not designed to house the king's private family life, but rather those activities that were essential to the exercise of his multi-level public authority. We are surprised by the "democratic" nature of the structure, and by the systematic absence of any exclusivity or even isolation and protection, features that are normally characteristic of palatial architecture outside Macedonia.

A plain, functional building, but at the same time monumental and imposing, the palace of Aigai is characterised by the luxury of its materials, the inventiveness and perfection of its execution, the unexpected achievements of technology that can be found on all levels, and at the same time, the geometric purity of form that created a product of unrivalled serenity, elegance and harmony in which everything is subordinated to the charm of moderation. Combining innovative with traditional elements in an exceptionally inventive way, the brilliant architect, perhaps Pytheos from Asia Minor, created a building that lends substance to the divine harmony of Pythagorean thought, using as a basic cohesive factor the ratio of the "Golden Mean", the "Divine Proportion", a building designed to be the tangible spatial expression of the idea of enlightened leadership.

False window in the tomb of queen Eurydice (344/3 BC).



The old city was adorned with walls and battlements, sanctuaries and temples and, alongside the brand new theatre, the place for the citizens' collective participation and spiritual catharsis, stood the palace, the architectural manifesto of the new age that was just dawning. The absolute identity of the axes on all these buildings, as well as their chronological and construction correlations, reveal that they were all part of the same plan and were carried out within the context of a large-scale building programme, the purpose of which was to modernise, rationalise and upgrade the image of the city as a whole. In addition, behind this planning there was a clear ideological viewpoint linking the centre of political and religious power with the centre of art and culture. Philip II, an enlightened ruler on the Platonic model, initiated in Aigai the tradition that was to set its seal on the royal cities of the Hellenistic world.

One of the most intelligent and capable politicians of all times, Philip II attached great significance to persuasion and to the victories he was able to win on the diplomatic level. Seen in this light, the court feasts and symposia held by the generous king succeeded in impressing friends, as well as the foes who never missed an opportunity to accuse him of being an unbridled drunk, even a barbarian. But the finds from the royal tombs and the palace of Aigai refute such polemics categorically, offering an unexpectedly full and lively picture of the royal environment, in which luxury was combined harmoniously with elegance and wealth with high aesthetics.

The *andrones* or men's quarters that occupy a large part of Philip II's royal palace in Aigai were the most luxurious, elegant and certainly the most spacious banqueting halls that existed anywhere at that time. Organised into three-part groups with antechambers, the largest of which opened out onto the peristyle, they created distinct entities within the building and were another innovation devised by the architect of Aigai. This new layout of symposium spaces, which obviously reflected essential functional needs, found immediate imitators and became the fashion throughout the Hellenistic world, creating a point of reference for civilised behaviour on the private and public level alike.

In the 16 *andrones*, it is calculated that there was room for at least 224 couches, which means that Philip could host a symposium for more than 450 guests simultaneously, an unprecedented number in Greece, given that it was exceeded only by the legendary feasts of Alexander the Great and his successors, the future kings of the world.

Floors of inlaid marble and wonderful mosaics, such as that of the rape of Europa, which very probably reflected Philip's intention to appear as the ruler of Europe on the eve of his expedition to Asia, or the mosaic with the flowers and maiden-flowers, bronze-decorated wooden doors, walls with brightly coloured stucco, decorated with selected paintings, valuable furniture and vessels, purple and gold bedclothes and curtains provided the setting for the royal banquets.

Couches richly decorated with inlays of glass and gold and with ivory reliefs were found in the tomb of Philip II, masterpieces by the greatest artists of the era, allow us to imagine the brilliance and luxury of the furnishings in the royal *andrones*.

Doric frieze from the tomb of Philip II, 336 BC.



Doric frieze with triglyphs and metopes from the peristyle of the palace (350-340 BC).





A particularly elegant lantern found in the tomb of Philip II and bronze lampstand.



The bronze vessel (kados) that contained the sponge with which the body of the dead king was washed. Found in the tomb of Philip II.

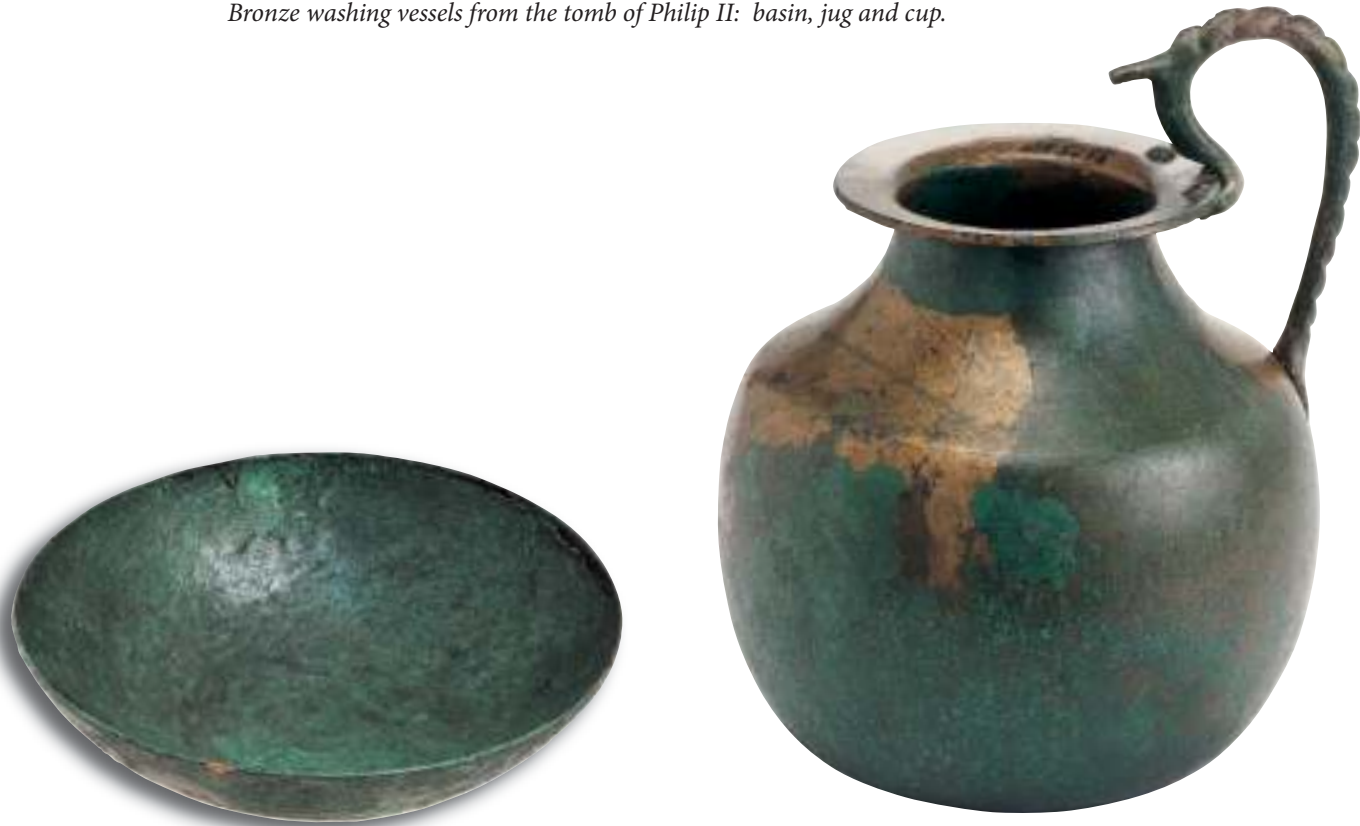


Large bronze bowl (lekane) from the tomb of Philip II.





Bronze washing vessels from the tomb of Philip II: basin, jug and cup.





*Marble plate and enormous alabaster scent bottle
from the tomb of queen Eurydice (344/3 BC).*



Inebriated satyr. Boss of exceptional quality from the silver kalyx found in the tomb of Philip II.

ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES:
Silver symposium vessels from the tomb of Philip II.







The rest of the household furnishings were of similar quality and value. Regarding the symposium vessels that were distinguished for their exceptional quality, silver was used unstintingly: here austerity and purity of form were combined with grace of detail in a set of dishes of unrivalled elegance and harmony, in which, again, everything is subordinated to the charm of moderation.

Notwithstanding the Athenians' accusation that the Macedonians consumed wine intemperately, all the royal symposium vessels, especially the goblets, are much smaller than those used at Athenian symposia. The tendency to reduce sizes, but also the use of new forms and shapes that can be observed first in the royal furnishings and would eventually become universally fashionable, does not rule out the possibility that it signified changes in the banqueting procedure and in the "ceremony" of drinking wine, which became more complex and sophisticated, with a strong tendency to refinement that can be confirmed for the first time in the court of Philip II, and became established in the years of Alexander the Great, lending the tone to the Hellenistic banquet, and reflecting the more general improvement in the standard of living.

The written sources report the generosity of a host who, instead of calculating in advance, as was customary, the amount of wine to be placed in the *krater*, thus controlling the cost of the banquet, gave his guests the opportunity to decide for themselves how much wine they wished to drink and with what proportion of water, by placing the required amounts of both on each person's table. This appears to have been the case at the royal symposia of both Philip and Alexander: selected wine from the cellar was placed on each person's table, and accompanied separately by fresh cool water in silver bottles and pitchers. With them came the honey, myrrh, spices and seasonings of aromatic fruit and flowers, materials essential to the royal cocktail, which was mixed in a silver bucket according to the rules of wine-tasting and the wishes of the drinking companion, then strained and, with an elegant ladle, poured into cups.

In this way the enjoyment of the wine became a real ritual, a process of high specialisation addressed to the refined palate of a wine connoisseur, who knew how to enjoy the choice flavour of the wine, accompanied by the harmony of music, the beauty of great art, and the fascination of high philosophy. And let us not forget that the symposia of Philip II and Alexander the Great were distinguished not only for the wealth, luxury and abundance of their vessels, drinks and food, but also for the participation in them of the best musicians, actors, poets, artists, intellectuals and philosophers of the age; and of course, there was no lack of beautiful, witty courtesans.

The use of metals, especially precious metals, is always the best barometer of the more general economic status and stability of a state. So it is hardly surprising that in the heyday of Philip II and Alexander the Great, Macedonian metalwork, especially the goldsmith's art witnessed an amazing and unprecedented prosperity. Exceptional goldsmiths, truly great artists who hastened to meet the needs of the court and the companions, enriched the old forms and created new ones with unrivalled craftsmanship. Armed with advanced technical knowledge, they created new alloys and mobilised materials like coloured glass and precious stones to achieve a muted polychromy and to recreate natural forms convincingly, always subject to the harmony of geometry.

An excellent example of their art, decorated with blossoms, bees and birds, is the superb diadem of Meda; which despite passing through the flames of the funeral pyre, continues to be the most beautiful classical Greek jewel that we know of. Characteristic products of the royal workshop were the gold wreaths in a strongly naturalistic mood. An archetypal example is the gold oak wreath that followed Philip into the pyre, very probably the same one he was wearing at the moment of his 'triumph', and underscores his close relations with his descendants who also wore oak wreaths, and with Zeus himself. Meda's absolutely charming myrtle wreath captured the freshest moment of spring among its sprigs and flowers.

Head of a satyr from the decoration on a silver jug from the tomb of Philip II.

Silver jug and two silver amphoriskoi from the tomb of Philip II.









Two silver kalykes from the tomb of Philip II (Details of decoration on pages 252-253).



◀ *The god Pan as a beardless youth, from the decoration on the smaller amphoriskos.*









Silver kados, vessel for mixing wine and water, from the tomb of Philip II.



Silver ladle for drawing wine, gold-decorated strainer and silver spoon, perhaps for honey; vessels essential to the symposium that were found in the tomb of Philip II.



Two small, very elegant kantharoi from the tomb of Philip II continue the traditional Macedonian shape that dates back centuries into the distant past.





Rosettes and lotus blossoms adorn the handles of silver kantharoi.



The small silver jug supplemented the symposium service in the tomb of the king.



Large, slightly compressed, silver bowl from the tomb of Philip II.

Silver bowl (gavatha) from the tomb of Philip II.





Silver cups of the Attic type from the tomb of Philip II.



ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES: *The gold diadem of Meda. Spiral tendrils, little acanthus leaves, lacey palmettes, lilies, single and multiple daisies, bees, a tiny bird, blue glass paste and gold lace make up one of the most charming and valuable jewels to have been preserved from the ancient world.*









► *Double gold fibula with chain from the tomb of Philip II.*



Attic black-glaze oinochoe and red-figure askos from the tomb of Philip II.







The gold myrtle wreath of Meda.



Corresponding to the achievements of the goldsmiths were those of the weapon-makers whose critical duty it was to equip Philip's army, the most efficient war machine of the time, as well as the warrior-king himself and his son. The panoplies and arms that have been found in his tomb are representative of the weaponry of the entire army and bear witness to the exceptionally advanced technological level of their manufacturers who, in at least one case, succeeded in creating stainless steel. Beyond that, the ironclad suit of armour found in the tomb chamber, a wonderful achievement by a weapon-maker who was also an artist – perhaps the famous Theophilos, who made the iron helmet worn by Alexander at the battle of Gaugamela – is not only an extraordinary work of art, but at the same time a jewel of unique brilliance, and a true ideological manifesto.

Head and butt-spike of a sarissa (pike). Spear and javelin heads from the tomb of Philip II.





Four swords from the tomb of Philip II. The two burnt ones were found in the residue of the funeral pyre, the other two, which retain traces of scabbards with ivory and gold decoration, belonged to two of the panoplies that were placed in the tomb.



The iron helmet of Philip II with the head of Athena.



Philip II's pectoral reinforced with sheet iron.

And whereas it is obvious that the form of the royal panoply remained deliberately within the classical tradition, its elaborate manufacture and ornamentation exceeded anything created earlier: the lions on the cuirass and shield bar (*ochanon*), ancient symbols of power, together with Heracles' club, a primitive weapon and amulet that defeated monsters, become witnesses to the presence of the great progenitor. The Battle with the Amazons, one of the main themes chosen by cities to adorn metopes and friezes on the temples with which they celebrated their great victory against the Persians, appeared as a device on the shield of the leader to whom Athena sent four *Nikes* (Victories), that are imprinted on the gold sheets inside the shield, holding the ribbons in their hands that will crown the Victor. For him, the goddess herself left Mt Olympus to be enthroned on his helmet, but also as a gold icon on his cuirass to stand by her brother's descendant, as she did for any hero, then and now, who protected and defended Hellas. Surely the fact that the small gold Athena on Philip's cuirass is a replica of her most famous image, that of Phidias' chryselephantine statue in the Parthenon, can hardly be accidental.

Although it may never be proved with certainty, I have a strong feeling that this armour, on which the most basic themes of panhellenic myth coexist in a harmonious composition, must have been what Philip was wearing at the meeting in Corinth when he was elected leader of all the Greeks and commander in the war against the Persians.



Nike (Victory) from the gold sheets that decorate the inside of the gold and ivory shield.



Silver gilt plaque with heraldic lions from the decoration on the inside of Philip II's gold and ivory shield.





The small gold image of Athena on Philip II's iron-clad cuirass recalls Phidias' statue of Athena Parthenos.

The gold-decorated panoply, perhaps the one Philip II was wearing when he was elected leader of all Hellenes and commander-in-chief in the war against the Persians.



The gold and ivory shield of Philip II. In the centre is Achilles defeating the Amazon queen Penthesileia.

ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES: *On the backrest of queen Eurydice's burial throne is a four-horse chariot carrying the gods of the underworld, Hades and Persephone.*









Details from the painted decoration on the burial throne of queen Eurydice.

The paintings and murals that decorated Philip's palace have unfortunately been lost forever, but we are somewhat compensated for this loss by the wall paintings in the royal tombs, brilliant specimens of great painting, unique and precious witnesses to the preferred art of the Greeks. On the throne that was to become the eternal seat of queen Eurydice, in an image bathed in Elysian light, the gods of Hades are presented with an otherworldly serenity and magnificence in an unexpected composition that depicts the inevitability of human destiny. Even more radical, and full of tragic intensity and passion is the manner chosen by the artist to express the pain of death in the tomb of the young royal spouse. Here the semi-nude Kore, Hades' quarry, becomes the supreme symbol of divine and human passion: her mother rendered in stone with her pain – although a goddess, she is unable to save her own child – is an image of subjugation to the ineluctable law, and the three white-clad Fates, daughters of Necessity, on this one occasion, lend substance to the mystic myth of Platonic destiny.

Witness to the passion but also to the promise of salvation for the initiates and chosen ones, the presence of Persephone in the tombs of the two royal women testifies to the heroic dimension acquired by passage to the other side for the members of the royal family. Even though in these wall paintings the artist – who may well have been the famous Nicomachos – exhausts all the expressive capabilities provided to him by the traditional technique of the outline, in the large wall painting of the royal hunt, all the achievements of illusionist painting are splendidly revealed in which the paintbrush was able to create a convincing artistic reality many centuries before the European Renaissance.

The dominant value here is colour which, remaining in the earth-colour palette, shapes the figures and landscape in an avant-garde way for the period, and acquires value as a narrative element. Light falls from the left and illuminates the scene consistently, and it is essentially the movement of the bodies that creates the third dimension. The extremely thoughtful composition is based on the use of diagonals and develops organically, creating individual scenes; then it becomes denser at the point of the dramatic climax, where the artist pulls out his trump card using trees to separate the individual episodes and spears to guide the viewer's eye. In the centre of the picture is young Alexander, crowned and galloping alone, the next king. On the right the action is culminating: two young hunters have cornered the lion. King Philip, the only bearded person in the scene, is leaping over the quarry on his horse, holding his gold spear, like another Heracles, ready to inflict a fatal wound on the regal animal. The lion turns his head, hunter and hunted look each other in the eye, united in the picture forever and sharing the same inevitable fate...

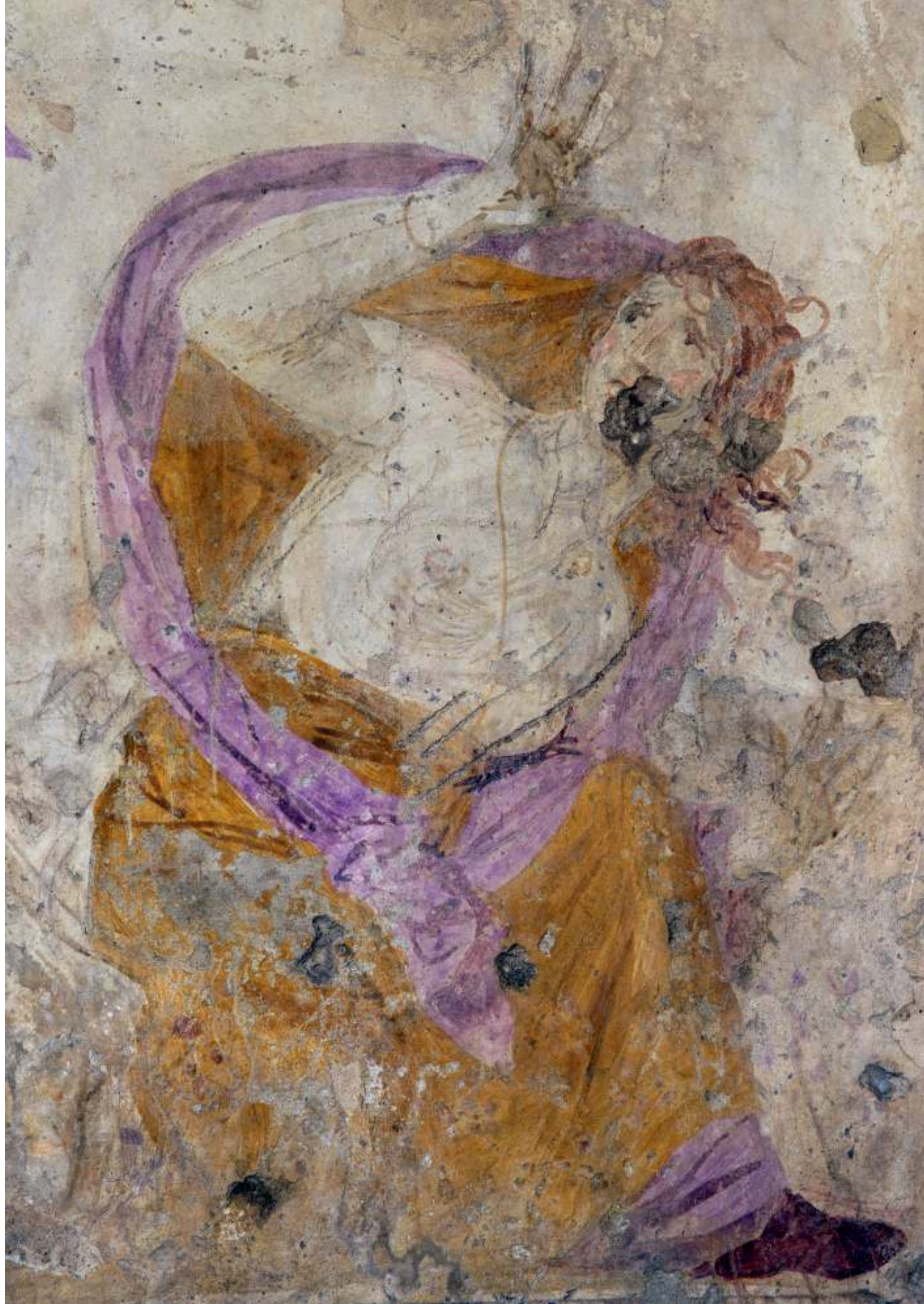






ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES: *The rape of Persephone by Hades. Hermes is driving the four-horse chariot, and one of Kore's friends watches the scene, terrified. Wall painting in the tomb of one of Philip II's wives (c. 350 BC).*





Demeter, seated desolately, watches the abduction of her daughter (kore), Persephone.
ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES: *Hermes, Demeter.*











Two of the three Fates are painted on the north wall of the tomb in which the rape of Persephone is depicted.







The wall painting with the royal hunt from the façade of Philip II's tomb (336 BC).





◀ *Alexander, crowned, gallops toward the centre of the picture.*

*The bearded figure of Philip on horseback rushes toward the lion,
ready to plunge his gold spear into this regal animal.
At the last moment, the eyes of the hunter and hunted meet.*

The superb gold and ivory couches that were found in the tomb of Philip II are as unique as the wall paintings. They are amazing examples of the flourishing art in the court of Aigai and provide a very valuable picture of the legendary art of the ivory-carvers who were always the most distinguished sculptors.

One of the most impressive couches ever made is that of Meda, which was found in the antechamber of the tomb, a work which, due to the complexity of its structure would have justly won the description “richly wrought”. Its particularity lies in the fact that it is decorated entirely and on all sides with gold and ivory, which is rare, because the back of the couch usually touched the walls and was therefore decorated in a less lavish manner.

Volute impostes and inlays with delicately-worked golden Erotes playing with love charms, maenads, satyrs and dancing revellers, Nikes on four-horse chariots and maiden-flowers, together with glass and gold palmettes decorated the legs. On all four sides of the couch, on the drum between the posts that leaned back on a gilded plank there were relief friezes with griffins mauling their victims on the two narrow sides and depictions of battles on the two long ones. The figures were sculpted almost in the round with their clothed parts made of wood, gilded or painted, and their naked parts of ivory. Greeks in cloaks are fighting with non-Greeks clad in *anaxyrides* (trousers worn by eastern nations), long-sleeved shirts and the characteristic headwear that closes, covering the chin. Many of the weapons, or parts of weapons, are made of ivory, as are almost all the horses. Even though the ivory figures of the warriors and their horses are badly eroded, they still show the touch of a significant artist who must have been among the masters of the age.

Gold Erotes holding magic love charms. Detail from the decoration on the legs of Meda's gold and ivory couch.





Meda's gold and ivory couch. The frieze depicts a battle between Greeks and barbarians.





Philip's couch, placed on a marble sacrophagus in which lay the gold larnax containing his bones, was decorated with ivory, glass and gold only on the front. On the back and sides there were gilded reliefs and paintings worked on wood. On the legs we found a standardised system with tiles, ivory reliefs and inlays of glass and gold. The gold sheets that were found behind the tiles of the pilasters were decorated with somewhat hastily-carved Nikes putting up trophies.

The low reliefs in ivory that decorate the upper cross-bar of the couch are also of exceptional quality. In a sanctuary defined by two herms, gods and demigods – including Aphrodite with Eros, Dionysos and Silenus, a Muse playing the *kithara* and some female figures dancing – are enjoying the delights of music and discussion. In stark contrast to the serenity and immobility of the gods, we have the passion and movement of human beings on the wide frieze directly below.

Here, on a gilded plank used as a background, there are 14 male figures on foot and on horseback. Rendered in fairly high relief, they are hunting animals which, having been made of wood, left very few traces. The hunters were clad in short tunics, cloaks and boots and, as indicated by the manner in which the upper part of all heads was cut, were also wearing hats that looked like broad berets, the typical Macedonian *kausies*. Ten of the 14 heads have been preserved in very good condition; they were created with absolute precision, care and attention by the hand of a very gifted artist. Absolutely monumental, despite their microscopic size, these little heads are undoubtedly among the most exciting studies of the human figure that we know from ancient art.

The artist has made an obvious, conscious effort to give each face specific individualised features, far removed from general idealised types, while at the same time preserving the stylistic unity of the figures that bears the stamp of the artist's own individuality. Philip, his young heir Alexander and a dozen or so relatives and companions of the king – the Macedonians whose actions marked world history and laid the foundation for the states of the vast Hellenistic world – are engaged in a royal hunt. The theme is the same as the one painted on the tomb façade, but what is most important of all is that, on this couch we find the image of Philip himself, in a portrait of exceptional inspiration and power that can justly be included among the masterpieces of world art.

In the summer of 336 BC, the oracle given to the king said: “The bull has been wreathed, there is a sacrificial priest; it will die”. Without considering this sombre omen, the elected leader of the Greeks celebrated his omnipotence in Aigai. The procession headed toward to the theatre, accompanied by statues of the 12 gods plus his own, the thirteenth. Philip, having placed his image among those of the gods, followed wearing a gold wreath on his head, dressed in white, alone and unarmed. Before arriving in the orchestra, he met his fate. Stabbed by an assassin's blade, he fell dead before the eyes of the horrified spectators, colouring the soil red with his blood.

We can imagine what the statue of the king in that fateful procession would have looked like. Not an idealised representation, but a true portrait with the scars of time and battles imprinted on his face. Philip, who had built a state out of chaos and strength out of weakness, who harnessed cities to his chariot and succeeded in doing what, until then, had been impossible, that is being elected leader of the Greeks, was a truly exceptional man and he knew it. Unique and irreplaceable, he was the model, the ideal, and did not have to lose himself in idealisation. Thus, in the court of the Macedonian king, alongside many other achievements, the realistic portrait was born.

Heads of warriors from the frieze on Meda's couch.

Behind the glass plaques that decorate the legs of Meda's couch, gold revellers dance and sing.

Like that of the great tragic heroes, the personal drama of Philip II ended in a theatrical scene. Alexander was proclaimed king of the Macedonians and took care to bury the leader of the Greeks at Aigai with unprecedented honours. As commander-in-chief and representative of all Greeks, in the spring of 334 BC, with feasts and sacrifices to the gods, Alexander would set out from Aigai on the great expedition that would lend a new dimension to the old confrontation between west and east. However, in the end, through his political act as world ruler, removing the conflict, he was to pave the way for the most creative synthesis and co-existence of civilisations that the world had ever known.

Thus it was that in Aigai, in the orchestra where olive trees, oaks, wild roses, wheat and asphodels now dance in the wind, the destiny of the world was changed forever.



*Section of the frieze with the scene of the royal hunt from the gold and ivory couch of Philip II.
The youngest of the hunters is wearing a gold chiton (tunic) and chlamys (cloak).*

ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES

ON PAGES 302-303 : *Dionysos and Silenos at the assembly of the gods, from the narrow frieze on Philip II's gold and ivory couch.*

ON PAGE 304 : *A Muse playing the kithara and a herm, from the assembly of the gods on the narrow frieze of Philip II's couch.
Hunters from Philip II's couch.*















Portrait of a young hunter from Philip II's couch.

◀ *The portrait of Alexander from Philip II's couch.*



Portraits of two hunters from Philip II's couch.



ON PAGES 310-311: *The gold wreath worn by Philip II when his body was consigned to the funeral pyre.*
ON PAGES 312-313: *Portrait of Philip II.*









IV. AIGAI IN THE YEARS OF THE SUCCESSORS

In 323 BC Alexander the Great died in Babylon. The Macedonians decided to embalm his body, bring it back and bury it in the royal necropolis in Aigai, as dictated by the ancient Temenid custom. But Alexander was destined never to return to the land of his fathers. The body of this young god would become the cornerstone of the Ptolemaic kingdom of Egypt and through his brilliant temple he would bless Alexandria until the ancient world came to an end.

In Aigai, alongside the tomb of his grandfather, Alexander IV (323-310 BC), son of Alexander the Great, would also find a resting place. This child-king, who had barely reached puberty, paid for the ambition of the usurper Cassander with his life. And it was the assassin himself who, observing the formalities and obeying the unwritten law, brought the body of the last Temenid to Aigai and buried it, pulling the wool over the Macedonians' eyes.

Together with Alexander's son, Cassander also murdered his widow Roxane, the most beautiful woman in Asia who, while still a girl, won the heart of the conqueror and the crown. We should also look for her tomb in the royal necropolis of Aigai, for the same reasons. After having Olympias put to death and assuming power in Macedonia, Cassander also took care to bury with honours in Aigai the bones of Philip III Arrhidaeus (323-317 BC), the mentally impaired son of Philip II, his wife Eurydice and mother-in-law Kyna or Kynane. To them probably belong the "twin" Macedonian tombs in the Temenid group.

The last offspring of the Temenids to be buried under the soil of Aigai appears to have been queen Thessaloniki – daughter of Philip and Nicesipolis of Pherai, and Alexander the Great's half-sister – whose marriage to Cassander legalised his presence on the throne of Macedonia. To this tragic woman, the last member of her line, perhaps belongs the Ionic tomb with the beautiful marble throne that was built just after 300 BC in the queen's group, beside the tomb of queen Eurydice.

Dionysos and his companion.



The gold oak wreath of Alexander IV (310 BC).

- *Relief from the decoration on the gold and ivory couch of Alexander IV (310 BC).
A young flute-playing satyr is leading Dionysos and his companion to revellery.*

ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES: *Eastern sprouting daemons from the decoration on the legs of Alexander IV's gold and ivory couch.*











The Dionysian scene on the frieze of Alexander IV's couch.

Decorative elements on the legs of Alexander IV's couch.



ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES: *Silver vessels from the tomb of Alexander IV.*







Silver patera, vessel for sacred libations, from the tomb of Alexander IV.







Silver oinochoe from the tomb of Alexander IV.



Silver kadoi from the tomb of Alexander IV.



Detail of the kados from the tomb of Alexander IV.



Two silver kalykes from the tomb of Alexander IV.





Silver cup and silver kantharos from the tomb of Alexander IV.



Two silver "salt-sellers" from the tomb of Alexander IV.





Silver cups without handles and a silver cup of the Attic type of kylix from the tomb of Alexander IV.





Silver fish-plate, two silver plates from the tomb of Alexander IV.





Silver strainer from the tomb of Alexander IV.



Silver ladle and two silver scent-bottles from the tomb of Alexander IV.



Silver bowl and silver-plated bronze cauldron from the tomb of Alexander IV.





The gold-decorated pectoral and gold-plated bronze greaves of Alexander IV.





*Gold decorated spearheads,
the butt-spike of a gilded
pike and a silver-plated iron
lampstand from the tomb
of Alexander IV.*



Scenes from the frieze with the chariot race in the antechamber of Alexander IV's tomb.







Necropolis of Aigai. Queens' burial plot: Inside the tomb is the marble funeral throne of queen Thessaloniki (early 3rd cent. BC).

In the shadow of the royal drama, Aigai prospered, and the echo of royal luxury was felt in the daily life of its inhabitants. But it was not to last. Cassander, who had taken care to supplant the Teminids in every way, by seizing power and murdering Alexander IV, the legal occupant of the throne before he even came of age, appears to have had no real reason to show favour to the city that was traditionally the home of the fallen dynasty. Even though in the years of Cassander's rule (305-297 BC), there was a great deal of construction activity in the kingdom of Macedonia, in Aigai such activity was limited and did not substantially change the existing picture.

In the early Hellenistic period, the sanctuary of the Mother of the Gods, which appears to have been built earlier on a site inside the city, was rebuilt. It is a square *ekatompedon* – each side is 100 feet (about 32 metres) wide – a building organised around a courtyard, with undressed stone foundation blocks, brick walls and earthen floors. With no sign of monumental layout, it was not easily distinguishable from a house. However cult vessels such as small altars, censers etc., the head of a statue slightly smaller than life size, the abundant figurines of the Mother and other gods, but also of bulls and snakes, and above all the black-glaze *kantharos* with the inscription ΜΗΤΡΙ ΘΕΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΣΥΝΤΕΛΕΙΑΙ (Mother of the gods and company) testify to the presence of worshippers of the Mother of the gods at Aigai.

The early decades of the 3rd cent. BC were marked by the bitter rivalry between the kings of Macedonia, Dimitrios Poliorcetes (the Beseiger) and his son Antigonos Gonatas, and those who coveted their throne, the most significant of whom was Pyrrhus, king of Epirus. After the defeat of the Macedonians in 276/5 BC, Aigai suffered greatly: (Plutarch, *Pyrrhus* 26.11-13) *“After the battle [with Antigonos Gonatas], Pyrrhus occupied the cities. He also took Aigai and treated the people harshly, he even left in the city a garrison of Gauls from among the mercenaries who had fought with him. The Gauls, a race of insatiable greed, dug up the tombs of the kings who had been buried there, seized their treasures and even cast away the bones of the dead in contempt.”*

The excavation finds show that the brutal plundering and offense against the dead, unheard of among the Greeks and regarded as a great abomination toward the dead, did not stop at kings, but extended to almost all the graves in the necropolis that promised plunder, and whose position was betrayed by grave markers. Antigonos Gonatas succeeded in recapturing his cities and helped the citizens of Aigai to propitiate the dead. To ensure the eternal protection of the tombs of Alexander the Great's father and son, which had escaped desecration through sheer luck, he decided to devote effort and money to concealing them under an enormous mound, the Large Tumulus of Aigai. Thus, seeking legalisation of his power from the shades of the Temenids, who continued to live in the memory of the Macedonians, synonymous with days of glory and greatness, Antigonos carried out Alexander's wish to have a magnificent pyramid built over the tomb of his father in a way that was most appropriate for the local tradition.

But despite the ministrations of Antigonos Gonatas, the city never really recovered. Lacking a key position on the geopolitical map of the new world, Aigai was gradually relegated to the sidelines, even though the ruling Antigonids –whose capital was Pella, now a large cosmopolitan city– never stopped coming to the old capital to celebrate traditional feasts and ceremonies. While there they would arrange to make minor changes in the palace's auxiliary peristyle, or build new temples in the sanctuaries, such as the small temple in the sanctuary of Eukleia, in the cella of which were found *in situ* the bases of two cult statues and an offerings table; its walls had been repaired, wherever necessary.

Together with dozens of others, the grave stele of Cleonymos was found broken into many fragments in the soil covering the Great Tumulus that was built after the depredations of the Gauls by Antigonos Gonatas to protect the tombs of Philip II and Alexander IV from future damage.

ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES: *Ivory head of a woman and a bearded man from the frieze on the gold and ivory couch in the tomb with the free-standing columns that was found at the edge of the Great Tumulus of Aigai (early 3rd cent. BC).*







Bronze jug and patera, libation vessels from the grave of a companion (early Hellenistic period).



Bronze kados. Its tin plating would have made it shine like silver. (early Hellenistic period).





*Bronze kantharos, strainer and ladle
from the same group as the kados
and jug (early Hellenistic period).*



*Silver spoon
(early Hellenistic period).*



Silver kalyx. The head of Dionysos with golden hair decorates its interior (early Hellenistic period).





Small bronze lamp with a little dolphin on the handle and a bronze sea-monster from the decoration on a wooden pyxis (Hellenistic period).



Two clay kantharoi (Hellenistic period).



Marble head of a youth from Aigai (Hellenistic period).



Terracotta head of the Mother of the gods (3rd cent. BC).



Stone burial throne. The backrest is painted on the wall.



Cybele enthroned and a bull. Clay figurines from the sanctuary of the Mother of the gods (3rd cent. BC).





ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES (354-355): *Wall painting on the façade of a Macedonian tomb (3rd cent. BC). Female figure crowns a victorious warrior.*
ON PAGE 356: *Alexander the Great is seated, watching the scene.*
ON PAGE 357: *Stone burial couch (3rd cent. BC).*









V. THE DUST OF CENTURIES

After the defeat of Perseus, the last Macedonian king, by the Romans in 168 BC, both the old capital and the new one were razed to the ground. The walls were levelled, the palace, theatre and other buildings were burned and demolished. The destruction was total and extended not only to all the villages and settlements of Aigai, but also to the settlements of Pieria. Nevertheless, life continued. Houses were built on top of ruins, frequently using architectural members as construction material; some sanctuaries were repaired haphazardly and continued to be used, but the palace, the centre and symbol of the now overthrown power of the Macedonian kings, and the nearby theatre would remain ruins forever.

In the first century AD, the terrifying landslide of an overlying slope signalled the sudden and definitive end of the city of Aigai. The inhabitants built a new settlement on the plain northeast of the old necropolis. An early Christian basilica with a baptismal font suggests that this was the administrative centre of the region, but the name of Aigai ceased to exist. The homeland of the Temenids was thus consigned to oblivion, leaving only the memory of the palace to haunt the medieval name of the little village of Palatitsia (little palaces) and the Great Tumulus that guarded its precious secret for centuries.



Clay scent bottles, 2nd cent. BC.



Clay kantharos, 2nd cent. BC.



Bronze plaque depicting a rider killing his enemy; found in a settlement of Aigai. Imperial years.



Clay pyxis from the destruction layer of Aigai (2nd cent. BC).



Clay vessels from an early Christian grave in the Aigai region.





PREVIOUS PAGES: *The boar hunt and Alexander from the wall painting in Philip II's tomb.*

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