

The Great Tumulus of Vergina and the Pella mosaics

ERASMUS + AMOR

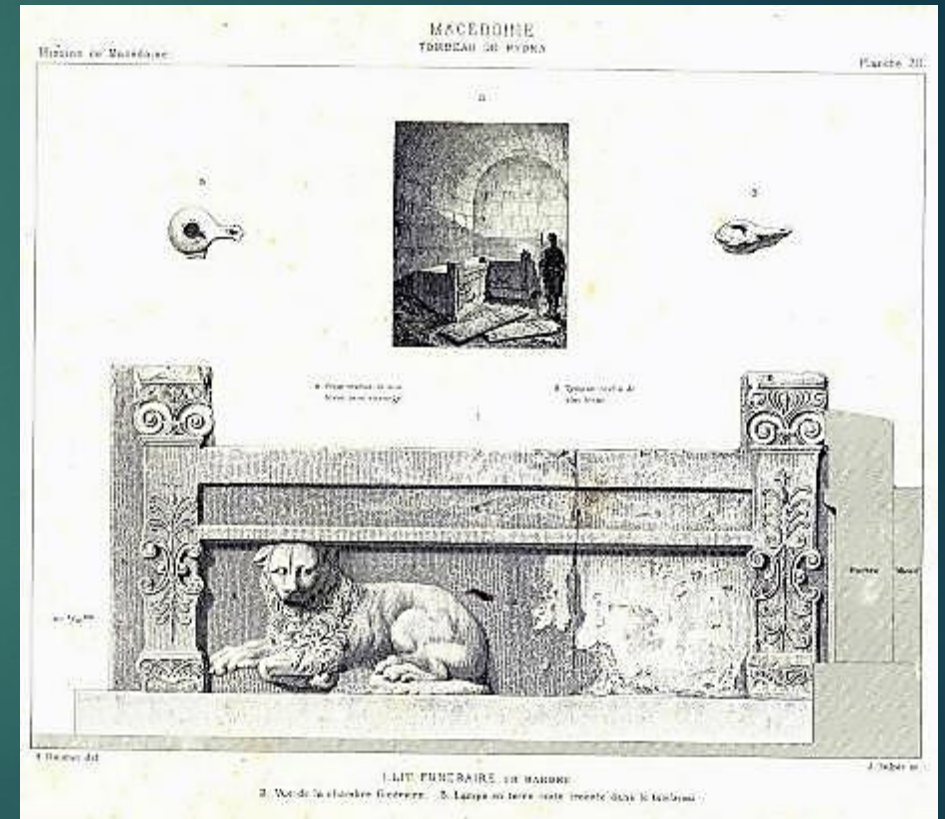
ANCIENT HERITAGE MEETS MODERN RESEARCHERS

2018-2020

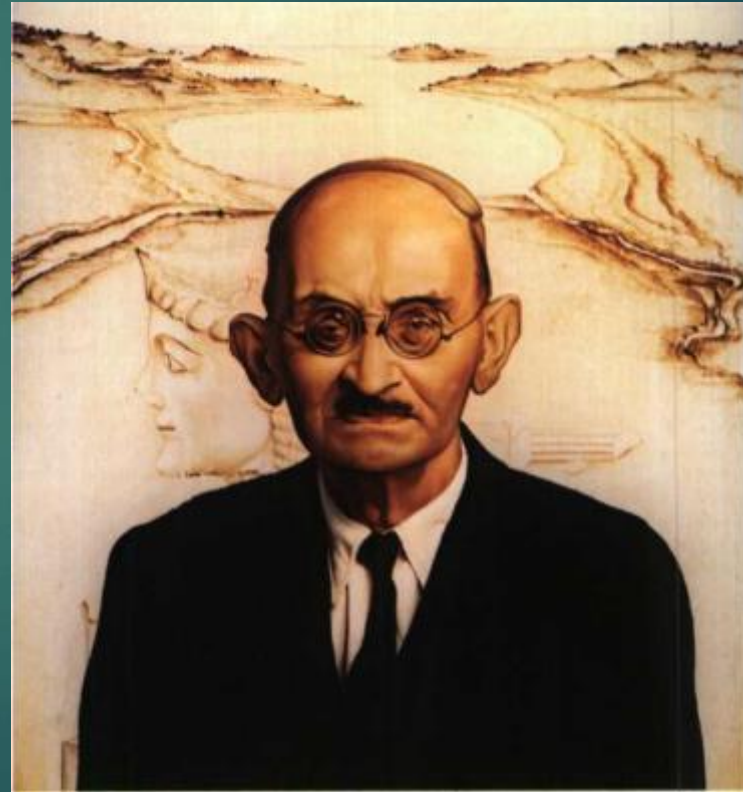
2nd GENERAL LYCEUM OF THESSALONIKI

The excavation at Vergina

- The first who located the site and “The Great Tumulus” of Vergina were the French H.Daumet and L. Heuzey during their “Mission Archeologique de Macedoine” in the middle of the 19th century. They also started excavation works at the Palace and they unearthed a Macedonian tomb close to the village of Palatitsia. Certain finds are transferred to the Museum of Louvre.



- In 1938-1940 K. Rhomaios, Prof. of Classical Archeology in the University of Thessaloniki excavated a large tomb and the Palace.



- ▶ In 1951, Manolis Andronikos, Curator of Antiquities for that area, started a systematic investigation of the cemetery around the “Tumulus”
- ▶ In 1976, now as a professor of classical archeology, initiated the systematic excavation of “The Great Tumulus”.
- ▶ The fragments of grave stelae scattered in the fill and a piece of information from Plutarch led the excavator to the conclusion that Vergina was the ancient Aigae, the capital of the ancient Macedonians, a Greek tribe of Dorian origin who resided in Northern Greece.





Aigai- Vergina

Aigai- Vergina

- ▶ In the 10th – 8th c. BC the Macedonians came from the area of Pindos through the valley of Haliacmon to the site of today's Vergina. According to Herodotus, in the mid-7th century BC, Perdiccas, a Dorian from Argos in Peloponnese, became king of Macedon and established the Temenid dynasty, which, according to legend, were true descendants of Hercules and, therefore, were no different from the kings in Iliad, who were similarly blood descendants of Zeus
- ▶ The name Makednoi or Macedonians means the “tall ones” or “the highlanders” according to Herodotus.



- ▶ To the south of river Haliacmon , they built their first city, “Aigai”, the land with many goats.
- ▶ Isolated and safe in their self-sufficiency, they did not follow the economic, social and political developments that took place in the south and led to democracy. On the contrary, up until the 4th c. BC, they preserved the traditional regime of monarchy.

Aigai- Vergina



- ▶ In the tribe of the Macedonians, all institutions, customs and traditions typical of the Homeric society managed to survive. Philip II will, however, adopt several ideas and institutions from democracy, which he will integrate with old traditions to create the new political model, the ideological foundation of the Hellenistic World states.
- ▶ In the first half of the 4th century BC, all kinds of political and military developments force the king of Macedon and his family to stay more in Pella, the port to the north of the Thermaic Gulf that is rapidly growing into a city. However, Aigai continue to be the traditional centre, the land where kings choose to build their palaces and bury their dead, the place that hosts all major sacred ceremonies and city feasts of the kingdom.





The site

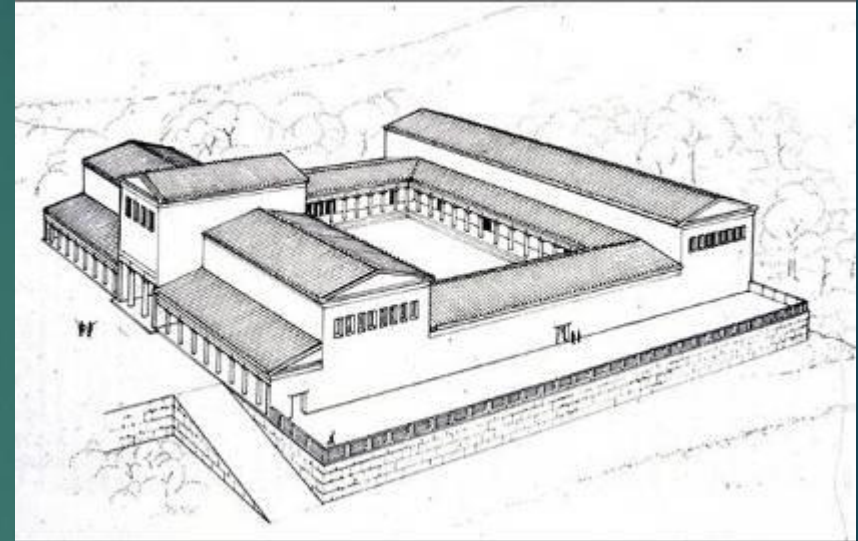
The site

- The **city- walls** and the Acropolis: it is certain that the city has been wall – surrounded since the mid-5th century BC. Philip II reconstructed the walls.



- ▶ **The Palace:** Constructed during the reign of Philip II (359-336 π.Χ.), the palace of Aigai is three times the size of Parthenon and was visible from the whole Macedonian basin.
- ▶ **The Theater:** was founded in the mid-4th century BC, on the large terrace where the Palace was built. The orchestra, has a diameter of 28.40m. and in the centre of it the stone foundation of the “thymele”, the altar of Dionysus, remains intact. Only the first row seats and the stage were made of stone.

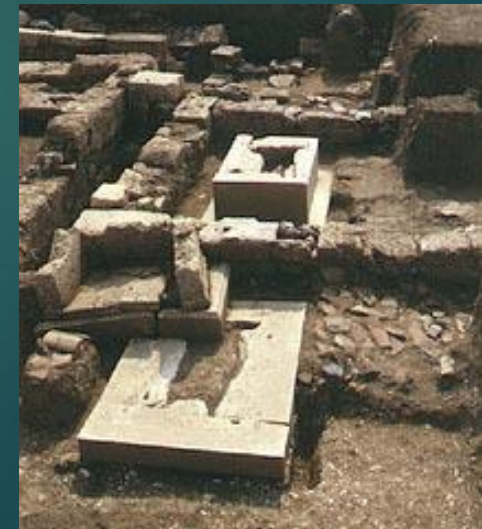
The site



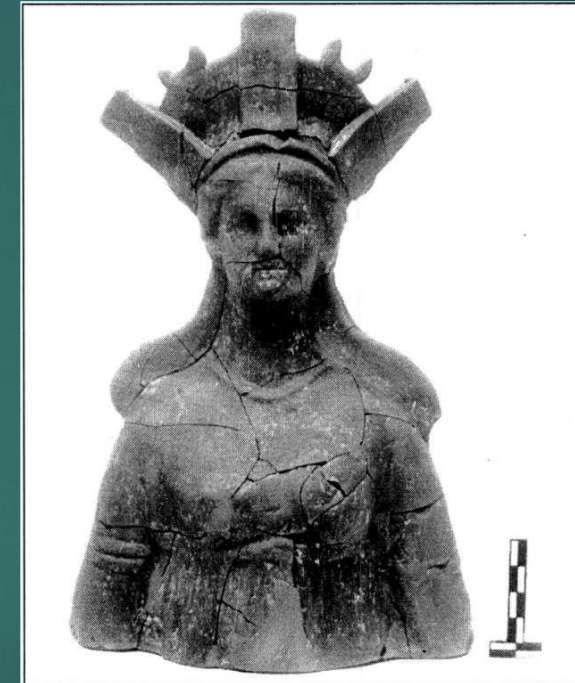
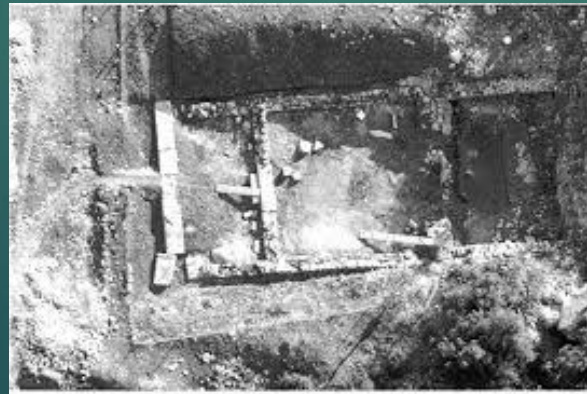


- **Sanctuary of Eucleia:** Directly beneath the complex of the Aigai palace and theatre, the sanctuary of Eucleia was founded in the 4th century BC. The sanctuary complex comprises the foundations of two temples, one altar, one arcade (stoa) and one peripheral building. The archaeological excavations here unearthed royal dedications to the goddess, the most typical one being the dedication by the mother of Phillip II, Eurydice.

The site

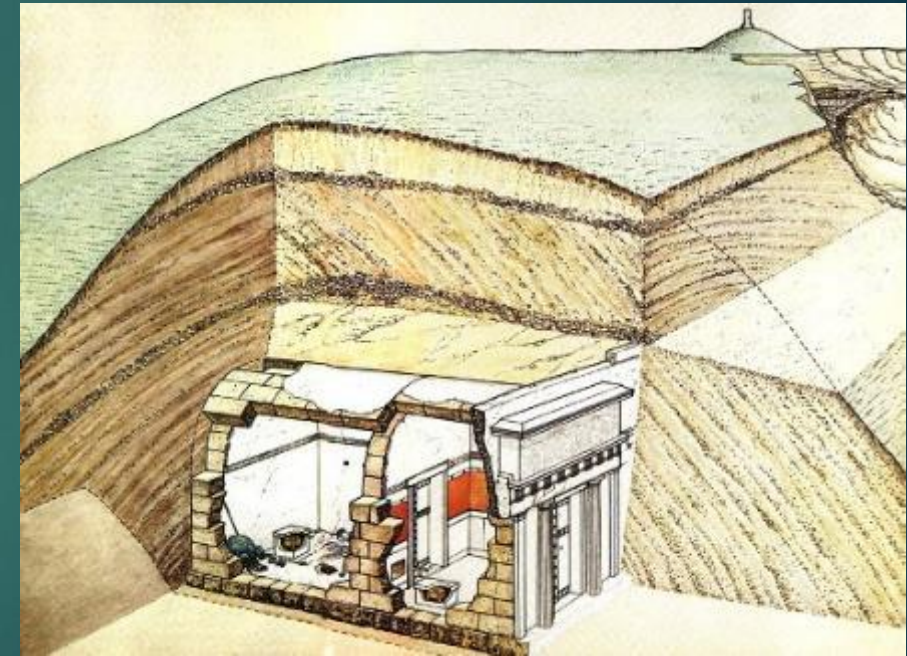


- The **sanctuary of Kybele** or the Mother of Gods: is a valuable source of information on worship in Aigai. The sanctuary was founded in the centre of the ancient city and had the form of a large building of the ancient house type with spacious rooms structured around a central court.



The Necropolis

- ▶ The ancient cemeteries of the Macedonian capital lie beyond the built area that is intended for the living, namely outside the city.
- ▶ The Cemetery of the Tumuli: Between the villages of Vergina and Palatitsia more than 500 burial tumuli constitute the core of the archaeological site of Aigae. The earliest tumuli date to the 11th c. BC, while the main use of this part of the necropolis dates to the Early Iron Age (10th-7th c. BC) but there are also burials from the 4th and 3rd c. BC.







The Royal Tombs of the Great Tumulus

- In the Great Tumulus 4 tombs and a shrine have been found.



Tomb of Persephone (Tomb I)

- ▶ Next to Philip's tomb is the oldest and smallest tomb, an unfortunately plundered, cist grave. The only wall painting in the tomb pictures the Abduction of Persephone by the God of the Underworld, the silent Demeter and the three unprejudiced Fates with Hermes, the Guide of Souls and a nymph witnessing the event. The person buried in the tomb was another distinctive member of Philip's II family.

Tomb I





The Tomb of the Philip II (Tomb II)

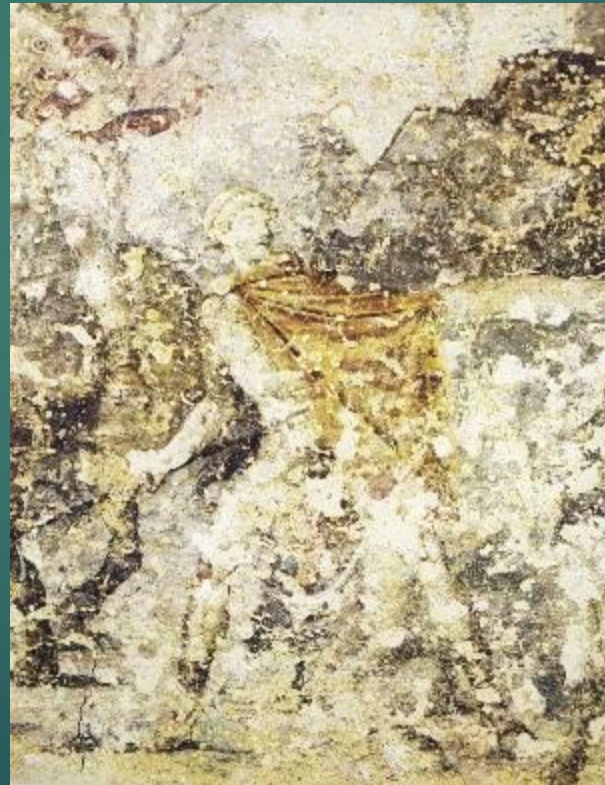
Tomb II

- It has two vaulted chambers connected by a marble door and a Doric façade, a marble door and Doric half-columns, a Doric entablature (architrave and the band of triglyphs and metopes) and an extensive frieze in place of the pediment.



- ▶ A large multi-figured painted composition, depicting a hunt for lions extends over the surface of the frieze wall. It is one of the very few ancient large scale paintings that survived.

Tomb II



- The chamber contained the main and the richest burial with the gold larnax, stored in a marble sarcophagus, a gold and ivory couch with relief decoration, the weapons of a dead man and a large number of silver and bronze vessels.

Tomb II





Tomb II

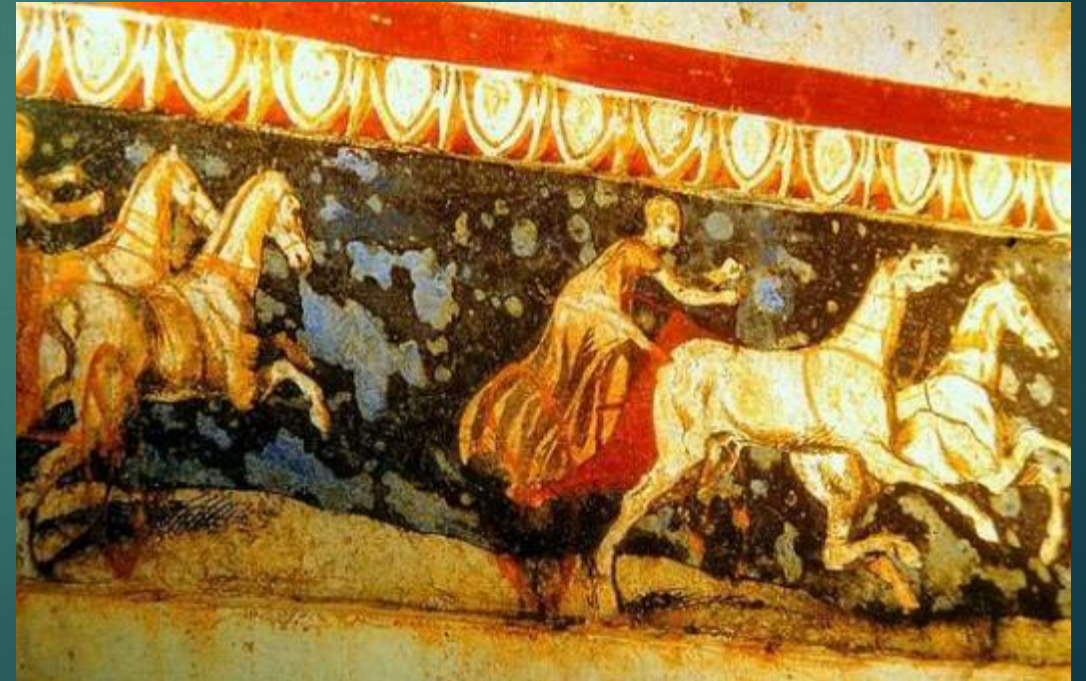
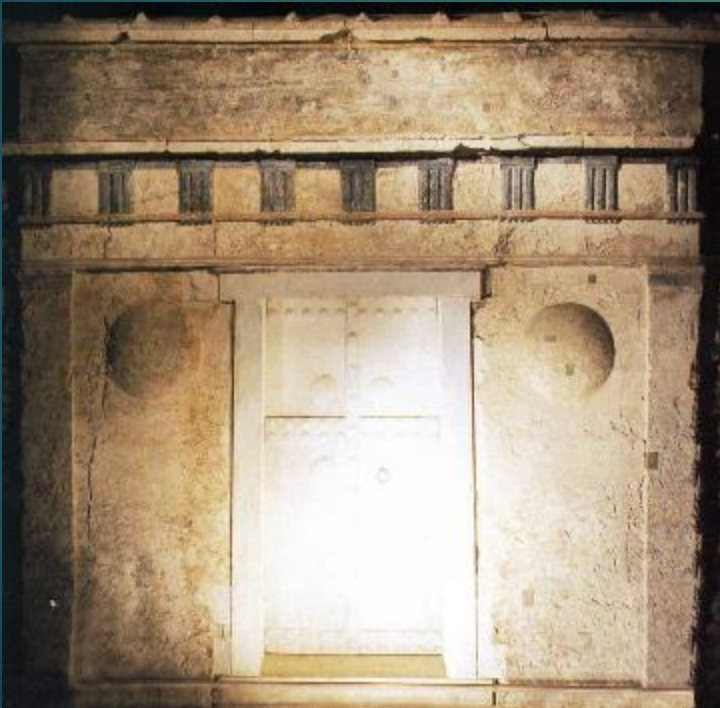
- ▶ The “antechamber” contained the burial of a young woman in a golden larnax placed in a marble sarcophagus. There was also a golden and ivory couch and items connected with the burial rites such as ceramic vessels.
- ▶ The man in the chamber is identified as Philip II who was murdered and the woman as his last wife Cleopatra.



Tomb of the prince (Tomb III)

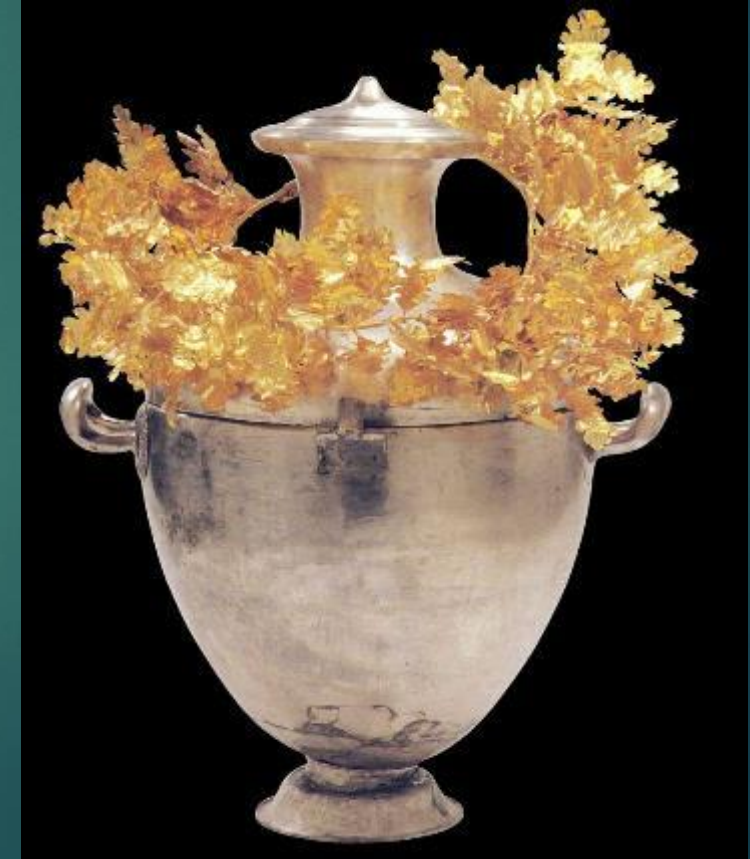
- ▶ To the north of Philip's tomb lays a Macedonian tomb with 2 chambers, a marble door and a decorated façade with painted frieze that is now lost. On the walls of the antechamber there is a frieze with a painted depiction of a chariot race.

Tomb III



- In the chamber, a young man was buried. The richness of the objects found in the tomb show that he was a member of the royal family. Some historians, such as N. Hammond, suggest that he was Alexander IV, the son of Alexander the Great and Roxane.

Tomb III



Tomb IV

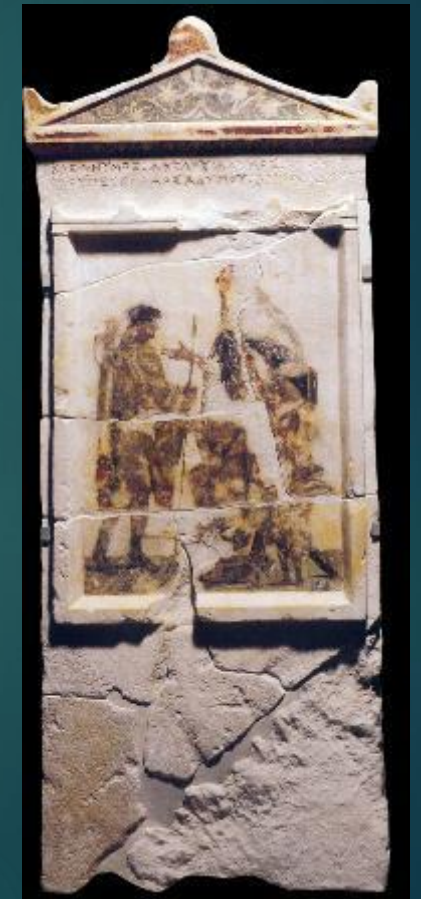
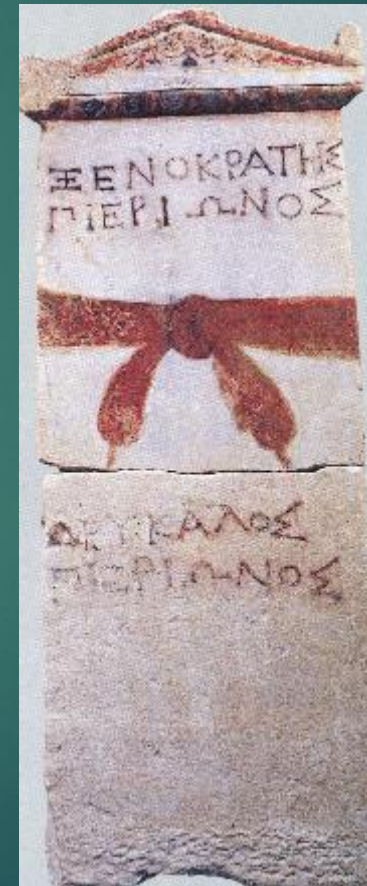
- ▶ The most recent tomb of the Great Tumulus is very badly saved. It is unique, because four columns form a narrow portico in front of its front wall. It is dated in the early 3rd century.

Tomb IV



The Heroon

- ▶ Next to the “Tomb of Persephone” (Tomb I) lay the remains of the foundations of a building that was above the ground. According to Andronikos, it was a heroon, that is a shrine dedicated to the worship of the dead.



The Tumulus

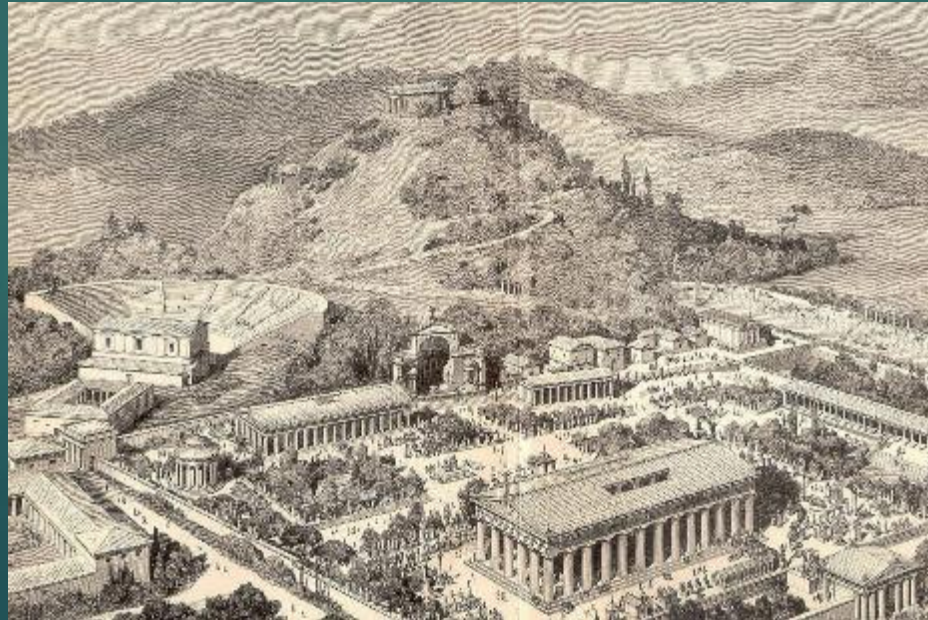
- ▶ It was not constructed in order to cover a group of contemporaneous tombs but to conceal older monuments which had been plundered or had remained inviolate following an act of great devastation at the cemetery of Aigae.
- ▶ The devastation, according to Andronikos, was caused by the Gallic mercenaries of Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, after the defeat of Antigonos Gonatas, king of Macedon in 274/273 BC.
- ▶ Antigonos after his return to the old capital built the Tumulus in order to repair the damage caused by the Gauls, gathering above the Royal Tombs the fragments of the destroyed grave monuments.

Pella



City of ancient Pella

- ▶ The city is thought to be founded either by Archelaus the 1st or by Amyntas the 3rd , between 413BC and 399BC. Then Pella became the capital city of the Macedonian kingdom. Up to the time, it was conquered by the Romans who stole all of its riches which were transported to Rome. Thereafter it had been destroyed by an earthquake and then it was reconstructed later on.







Important personalities which are fused with Pella

- ▶ The latest historical reference that we have for Pella is by the historian Herodotus , who refers to the Persian Campaigns , and by Thucydides , in relation to Macedonian expansion and the war against Sitalces , the king of the Thracians. According to Xenophon , in the beginning of the 4th century BC , Pella was the largest city of the Macedonian kingdom. It attracted big artists of the period, for instance Zeuxis, who was invited by Archelaus to decorate it. Pella reached its highest point in history during the rule of king Philip the 2nd.

Pella's mosaics

Mosaics

- ▶ During the flourishing of Pella, a significant number of mosaics was created, and were found mainly in two houses, the “House of Dionysos” and the “House of the Abduction of Helen”. Their depictions belong to two categories:
 - I. Those with simply a geometric decoration covering the entire surface of the floor.
 - II. Those with representative subjects, such as hunts, Amazonomachy (battles of the Amazons)



- ▶ In those mosaics innovative materials such as semi precious stones and glass tesserae were used for the detail.







Sources:

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- ▶ **Pella:** <http://history-of-macedonia.com/2009/08/06/pella/>
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