

The Necropolis of Vergina:



BEYOND THE GREAT TUMULI

By Charlotte Kerslake

The Burial Clusters:



Cist Tombs of the 6th Century BC, Cluster of the Temenids. <https://www.aigai.gr/en/explore/nekropolis/sistada/timenidon/aiges/vergina>

The Eternal Palace of Philip:

Buried in 336BC, Philip's Tomb is one of the grander sites within the Necropolis, wreathed with golden oak in his sarcophagus, with inlaid images of himself and Alexander depicted in Hunting Scenes, it is a testament to heroism and kingship.

The Chamber itself is inlaid with ivory and gold fit for any king, or perhaps Heracles himself, which his line is supposed to be descended from. An adjacent antechamber also holds the remains of Philip's Thracian wife, Meda whom is buried alongside him.

Surprisingly, a cist grave alongside the wife's grave is said to be another wife of the illustrious King Philip Nikissipoli, unfortunately plundered., even more interesting is the wall

painting depicting the abduction of Persephone with Hades depicted, showing a small peek at the underworld.

Cluster of the Queens:

The cluster consists of four pits dating from 530-460BC, three large stone-built cist graves 430-330 BC, along with a few pits.

Only one of the pit graves was actually intact, which has the remains of the richest female burial of the era in Macedonia known as "Lady of Aigai" whom was buried around the 500BC and probably was the wife of Amyntas I.

The next burial is the wife of Alexander I, 498-454 BC was buried in the time of Persian wars, in the same cluster the mother of Philip II, Eurydice, was buried in the earliest example of a Macedonian Tomb.

Within Eurydice's Tomb was an impressive throne of the queen with paintings that depict the quadriga ridden by Hades and Persephone

which is taken to mean that she was seen as Persephone in the Courts rather than an actual Queen, and she has been granted after-death status within the Elysian Fields.

The most recent tomb of the group (beginning of the 3rd century BC) is an elegant Macedonian tomb with an Ionic column décor, and a marble throne inside, likely belonging to Thessaloniki, daughter of Philip II

Temenid Cluster:

Containing the two earliest tombs from around 570-550 BC and 550-330 B, around the time of the Homeric Epics with two early funeral pyresthe with remains of burnt material and cremated with shurds of clay pots with fragments of bronze vessels, melted bronze helmets, silver-inlays mentioned in the Homeric epics.



Bella and Heuvey Cluster. Marble Bed. 2nd Century BC. <https://www.aigai.gr/en/explore/nekropolis/sistada/timenidon/>

Compartments of the Necropolis:

- THE ROYAL BURIAL CLUSTER OF PHILIP II
- CLUSTER OF THE QUEENS
- CLUSTER OF THE TEMENIDS
- ARCHAIC NECROPOLIS
- CLASSICAL NECROPOLIS
- CEMETARY OF THE TUMULI
- HEUZEY AND BELLA CLUSTERS

(THE LAST TWO NOT COVERED SINCE IT'S TO DO WITH THE GREATUMULI, MENTIONED IN ANOTHER POSTER.)

Classical and Archaic Necropolis:

The tombs in the Archaic part of the Necropolis date to the beginning of the 6th Century BC up to the beginning of the 5th Century BC.

Most of them are pits varying in size, small and dense clusters which probably represent family tombs of clusters. Each covered by a Tumuli and a plain stone peribolos.

Grave Finds include clay pots and figures likely imported from the Anatolian Trade Network, which

attest to the relationship between Macedonia and the Med.

By the time the Classical section of the Necropolis is started in the 5th Century BC the clusters become denser and surround the core of the Archaic Necropolis, expanding well into the 4th Century BC and towards the North-West side, where in 336BC the Tomb of Philip II is built.

Key Finds:

26 terracotta 'xoana' clay heads depicting Demeter, Kore, and two Demons.

Found in Queen's Cluster.

HOMERIC EPIC SWORDS, WITH IVORY AND SILVER INLAY CLOSE TO THE DESCRIPTION MENTIONED IN HOMER'S ODYSSEY AND ILLIAD.

Found in the Temenid Cluster

CLAY POTS AND FIGURINES, LIKELY IMPORTED FROM THE WIDER TRADE NETWORK ON THE MEDITERRANEAN.

Found in the Archaic Cemetery.



<https://www.aigai.gr/en/explore/nekropolis/sistada/timenidon/aiges/vergina>

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/artifact?name=Vergina&object=Site>

<https://www.archaeology.wiki/blog/2013/03/21/new-finds-at-aigai/>

Strab. 9.2

Hom. Il. 8.167

Hom. Od. 5.7

