

Hello Patrick,

Sorry for the delay but life has been hectic. I hope you are well and having fun with your trips in the past. I had fun gathering these up and I actually learned quite a lot. Archaeology in Macedonia always has something new and exciting to offer. What I'm sending you today is mainly about burial customs.

So to begin with, I looked at the book Vergina: the Royal Tombs (9789602131282): Manolis Andronicus.

[Manolis Andronicos](#) was the archaeologist who excavated the royal tombs at Aigai the first capital of Macedonia. He had also studied the classics and in his books he comments on connections to the Homeric poems.

The first mention is the similarity of Philip's funeral to the funerals described by Homer. In Book 23 of the Iliad the burial of Patroclus is described. A huge pyre with the body of the dead person in the middle is built (Hercules was also burned in the same way) and four horses were sacrificed.

and heaped up the wood, and made a pyre of an hundred feet this way and that, [165] and on the topmost part thereof they set the dead man, their hearts sorrow-laden,

Andronicos at the time he wrote the book only suspected the horses' sacrifice, later research has proven him right. The horses burned harnesses are displayed in the Museum of Aigai www.aigai.gr.

Lately further excavations have proven that it was not an imitation on behalf of Alexander but an ancient custom, since similar evidence has been found in the funeral pyres of 5th century Macedonian kings.
<https://www.aigai.gr/en/explore/nekropolis/sistada/timenidon/aiges/vergina>

Next came the meticulous gathering of the bones of Patroclus that were covered with a precious cloth. There is even mention of a burial mound, that according to Achilles' instructions would be small at first –so that he too might be buried there- and then raised to the heavens:

and with weeping they gathered up the white bones of their gentle comrade into a golden urn, and wrapped them in a double layer of fat, and placing the urn in the hut they covered it with a soft linen cloth.

And in Hector's burial

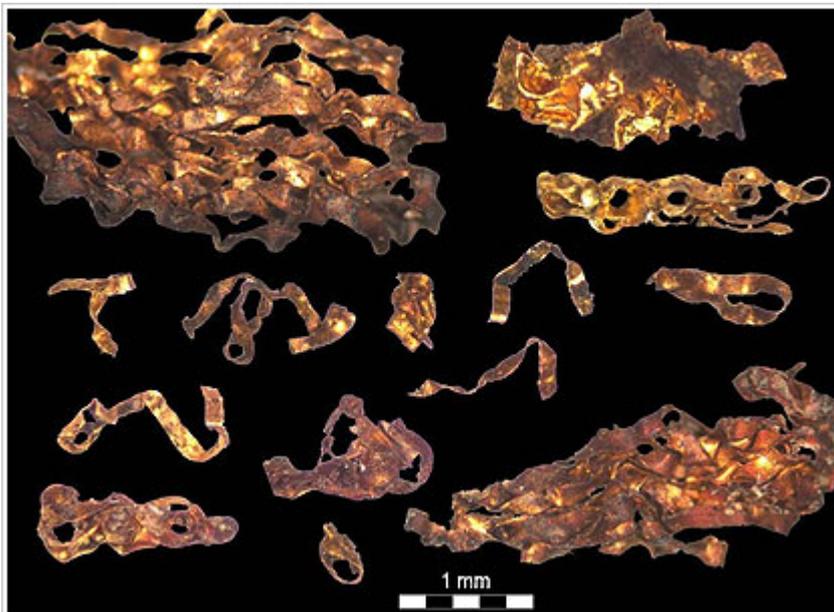
καὶ τὰ γε χρυσεῖην ἐς λάρνακα θῆκαν ἐλόντες
πορφυρέοις πέπλοισι καλύψαντες μαλακοῖσιν.

The bones they took and placed in a golden urn (it should have said larnax=a chest), covering them over with soft purple robes,

Philip's bones were carefully gathered, cleaned and placed in a golden larnax. There is a precious cloth that covered the bones in the second larnax, that of one of Philip's wives.



In recent times further fragments of purple and gold cloth have been found covering bones within burial vessels.



This particular cloth came from an unmarked burial at Aigai from the time of Alexander the Great. It is thought to be Hercules the illegitimate son of Alexander that Cassander had buried in an unmarked grave. Even he, the usurper, did not dare withhold the honors due.

Another significant similarity is the “τυμβος” barrow the Achaeans built over the tomb of Patroclus.



This is the reconstructed barrow over Philip’s and Alexander’s (IV) tombs. It is hollow and the Museum of the tombs is housed inside.

What is important to note is that this is not the unique barrow. There are at least 3 or four such clusters of barrows housing the graves of the royal dynasty. The Museums site has all the information.

So the barrow is not an imitation. It is a Macedonian custom. It reminds one of the burial customs of Mycenae. Whether that is a survival of the older Homeric/Mycenaean form (after all the Temenids claimed to be Argives) or a similarity due to the similarity in political organization I can’t tell.

We can only be sure about one thing. That the Homeric burial customs that once (in 1977) Andronikos thought could be an imitation on the part of Alexander where very much part of the Macedonians’ traditions.

Hope I shed some light.

I will get back when I have gathered some more material. If you have questions just PM.

Best regards, Dimitra