

# The Occupancy of the Amphipolis Tomb



*By Andrew Michael Chugg*

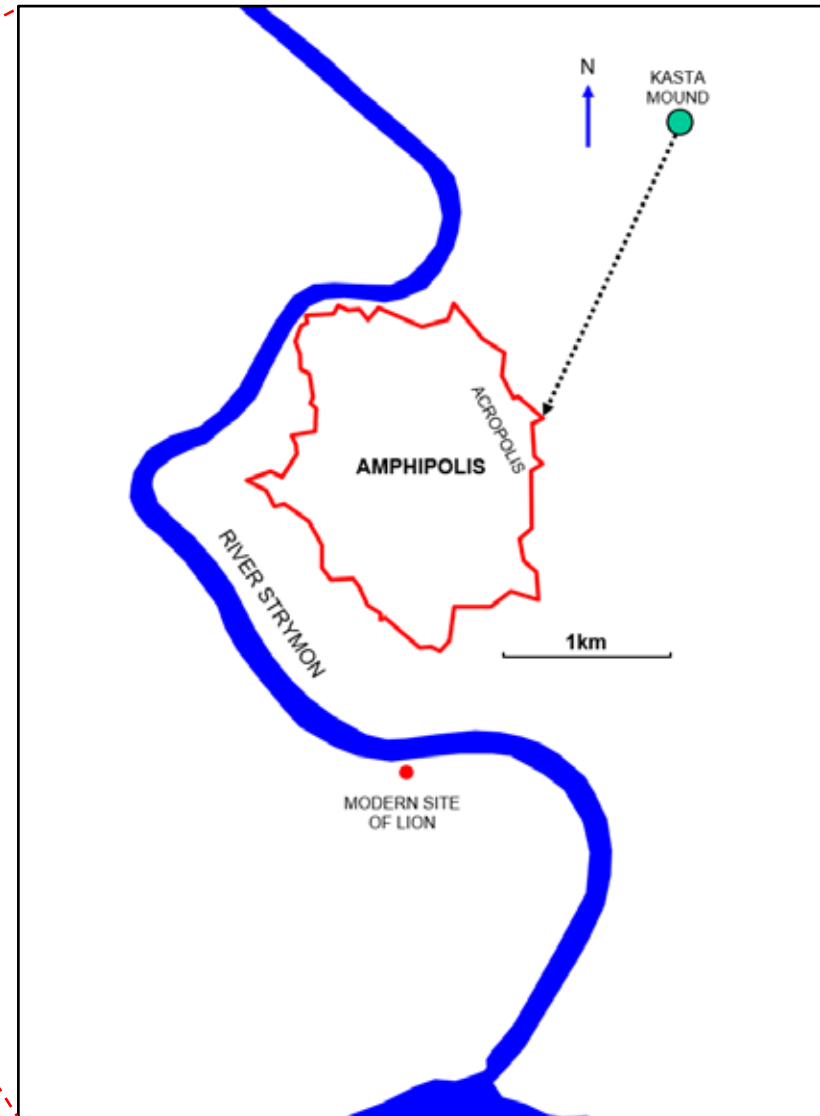


A photograph of a curved stone wall, likely part of a fortification or a large building. The wall is constructed from large, rectangular stone blocks with visible mortar joints. The top edge of the wall is crenelated, featuring a series of small, pointed battlements. The wall curves from the foreground towards the left background. The sky above is a clear, bright blue. The overall scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

# The Context

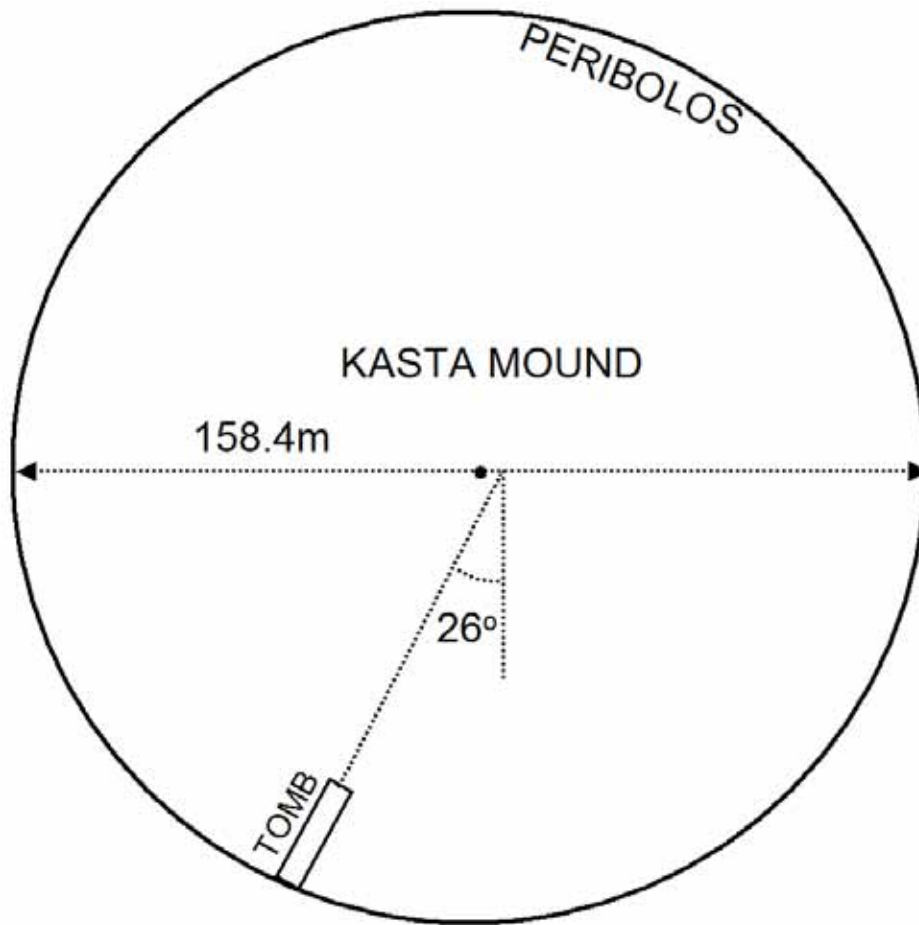
Location & Plans

# Location of the Amphipolis Tomb

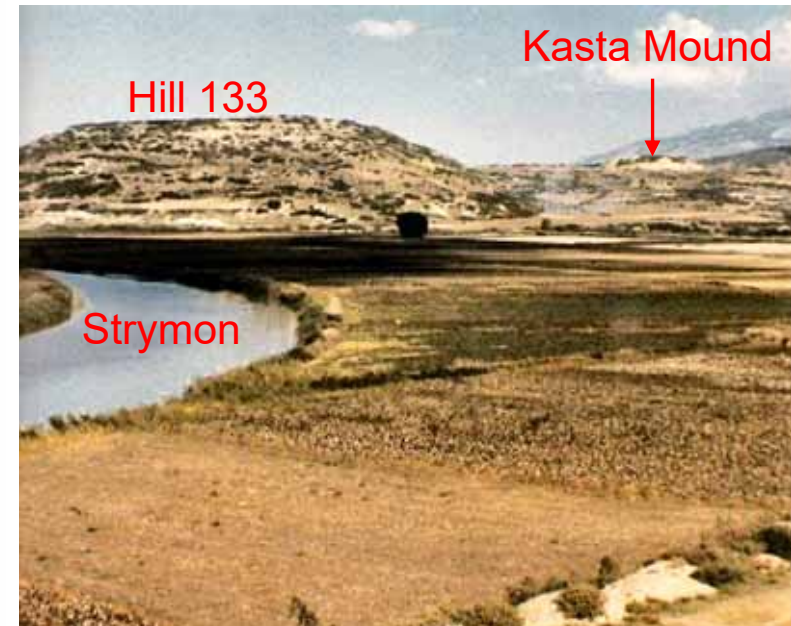




# Plan of the Kasta Mound



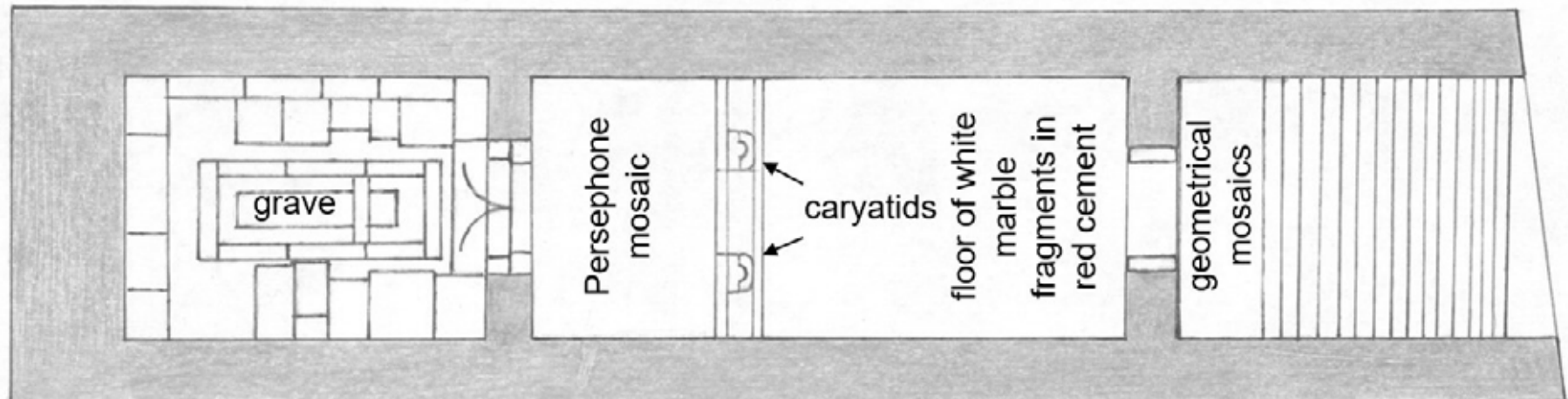
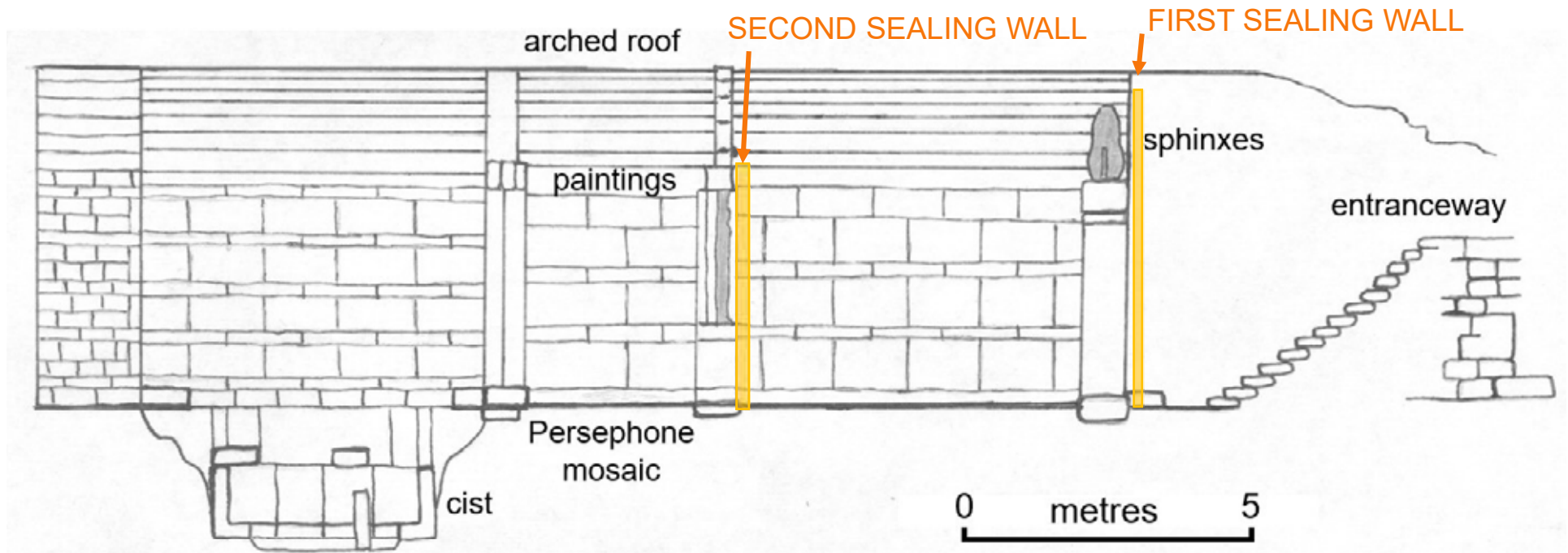
Kasta Mound viewed from Amphipolis



Kasta Mound  
before 1965  
excavations



# Sectional View and Plan of the Tomb Chambers



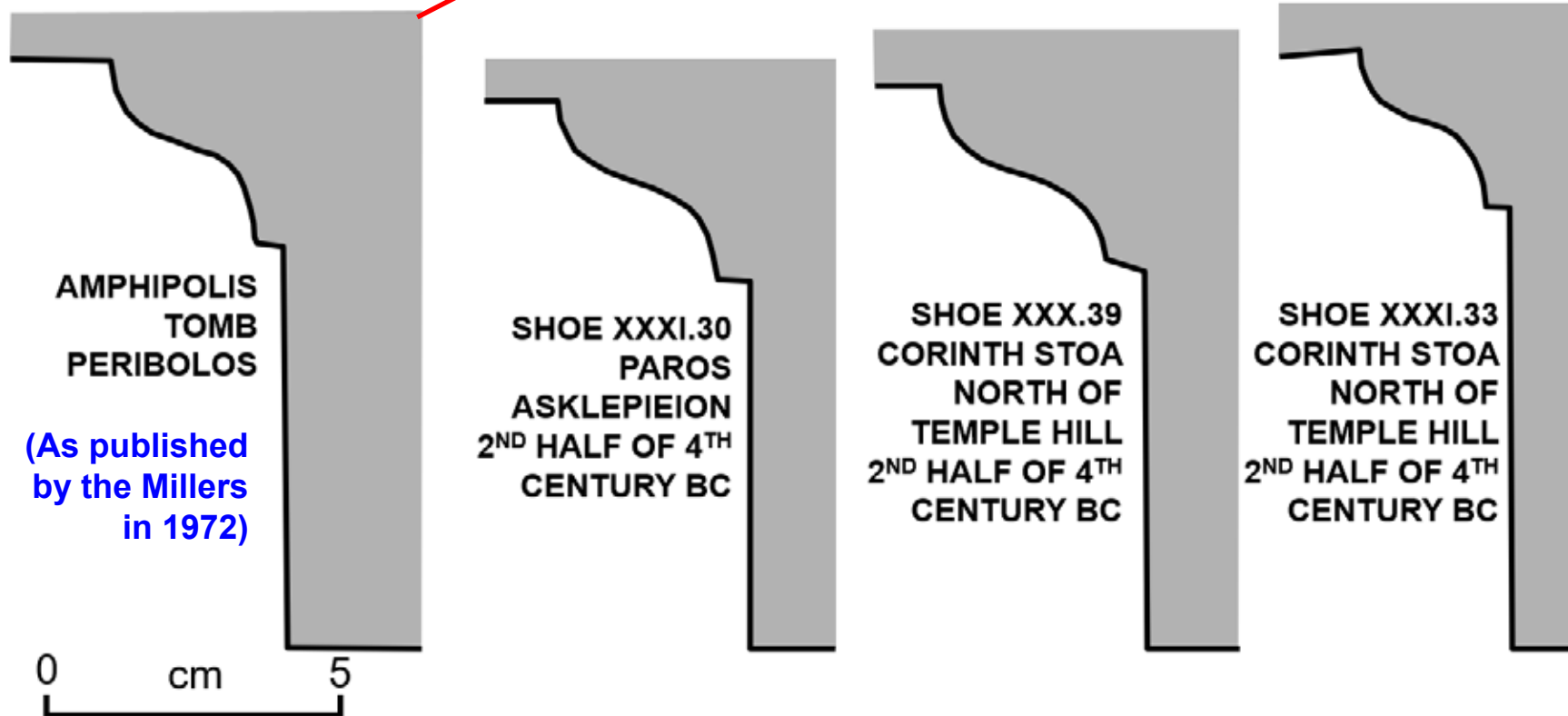




# Dating Evidence

The Last Quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> Century BC

# Dating the Geison Soffit Profile to the Late 4<sup>th</sup> Century BC





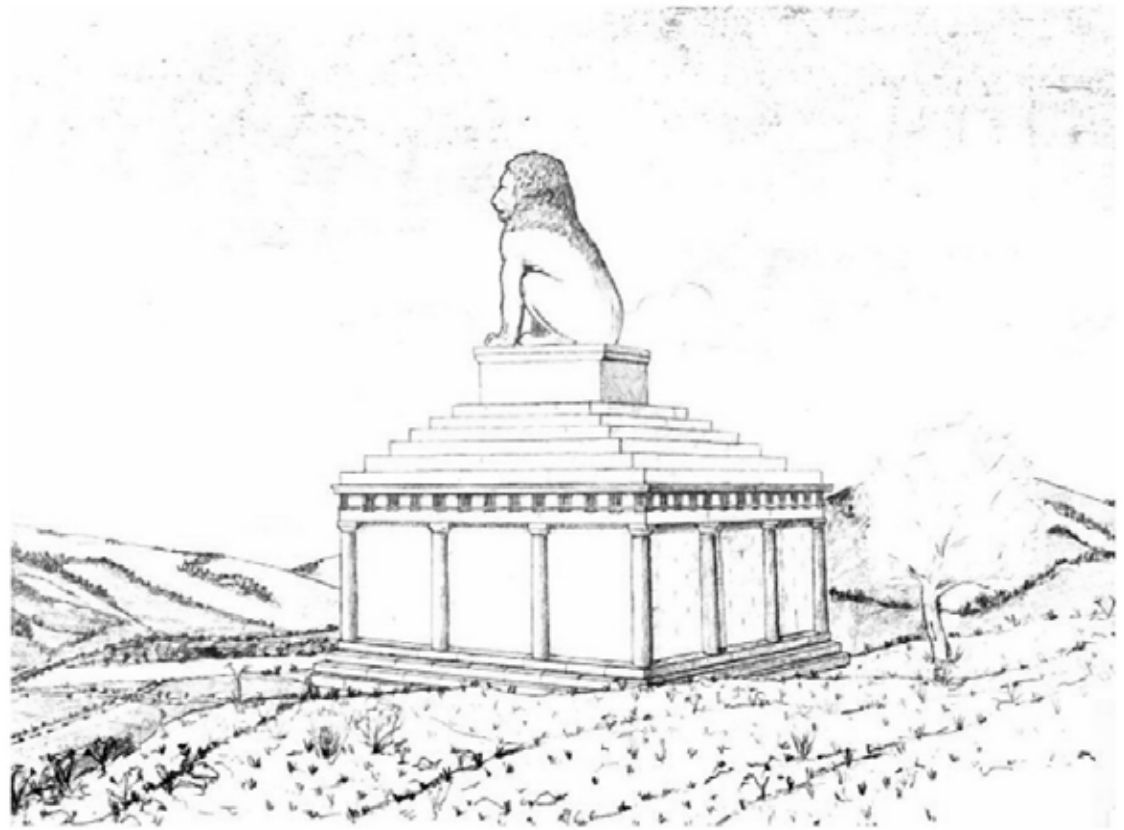
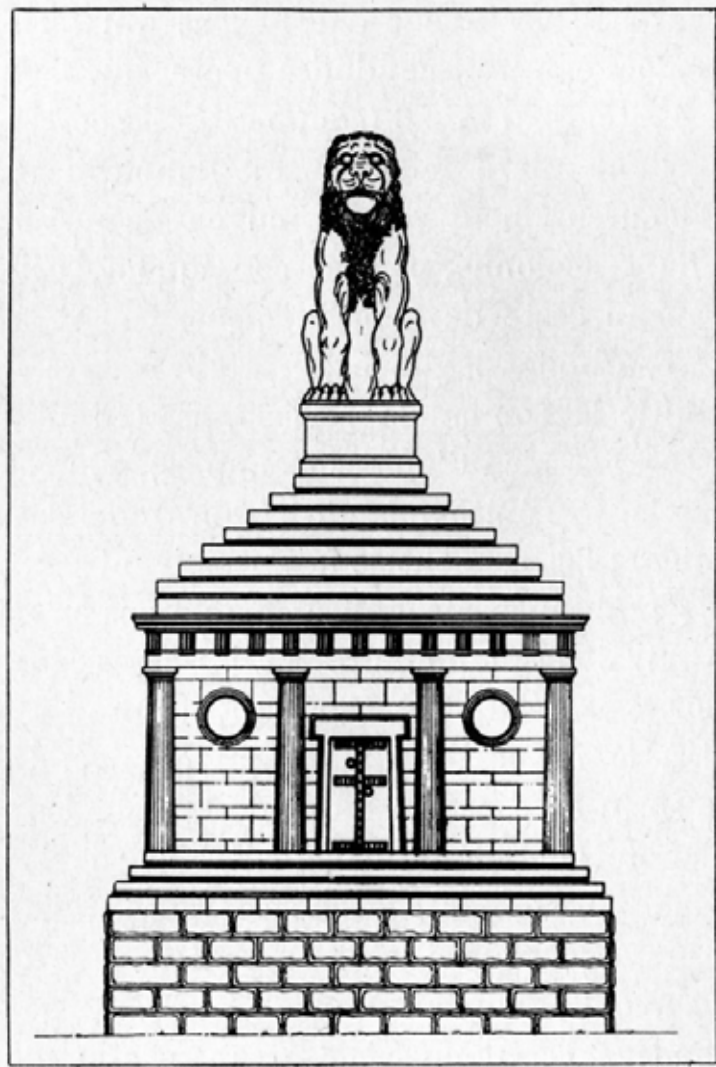
The lion of Amphipolis reconstructed in the 1930s just south of the city 5km from the Kasta Mound atop which it originally sat

- Lion was found in fragments in the ruins of a Roman dam south of Amphipolis in 1916 by British officers
- Re-erected near to the find site by Roger and Broneer
- Only realised in recent years that it originally stood atop the Kasta Mound
- May symbolise Alexander the Great who was born when the sun was in the constellation of Leo the lion





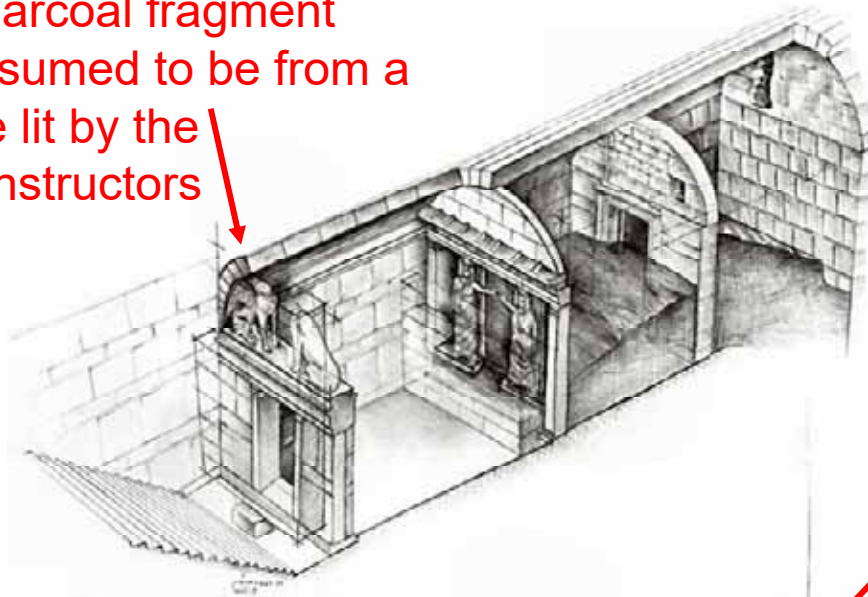
Reconstructions of the Lion Podium that stood at the peak of the  
Kasta Mound by Roger and Oscar Broneer  
Dated to the last quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC by Broneer in 1941



# Carbon dating of the tomb chambers

Charcoal fragment

Assumed to be from a  
fire lit by the  
constructors

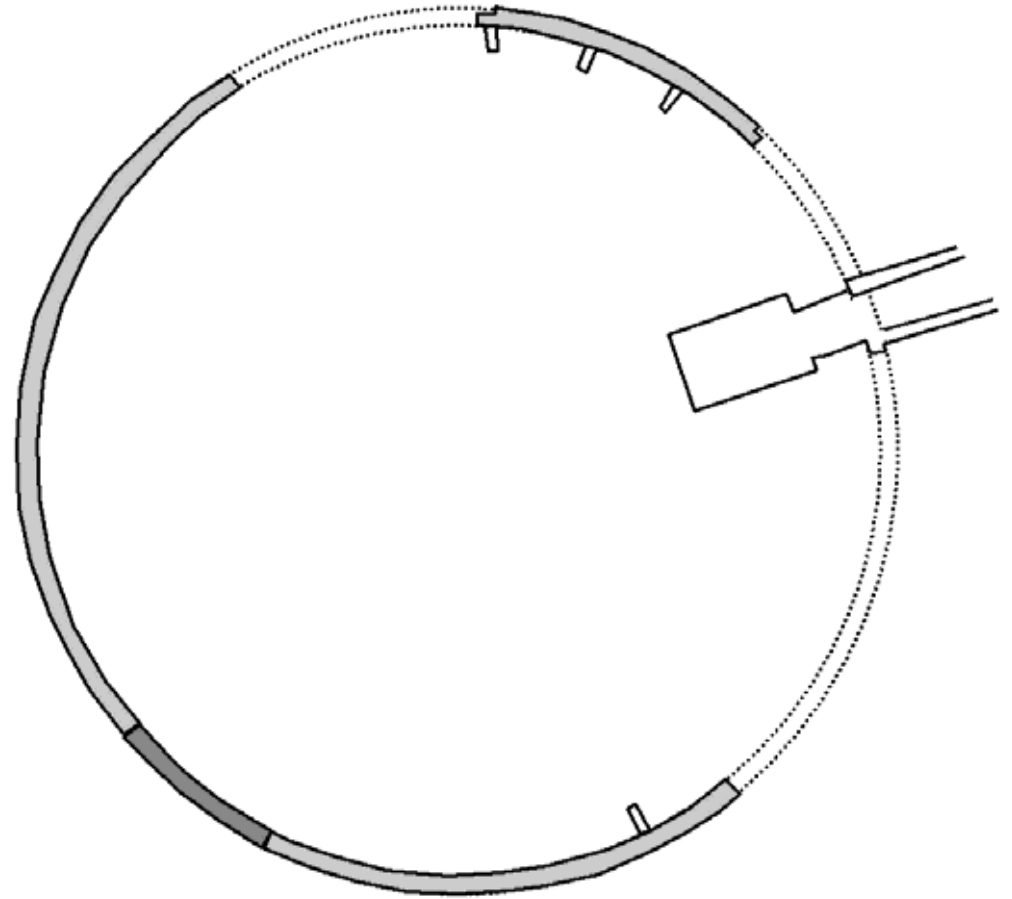


About 80% of the probability is  
in the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup>  
century BC consistent with the  
constructors having burnt logs  
in the last quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup>  
century BC from a tree that  
died decades earlier





The Heroon tomb at Archontiko – its circumference is 158.5m, almost exactly equal to the diameter of the Amphipolis Tomb



Dated to the reign of Antigonos Gonatus in about the second quarter of the third century BC from potsherds

# The Inscriptions

When a Name is not an Identification



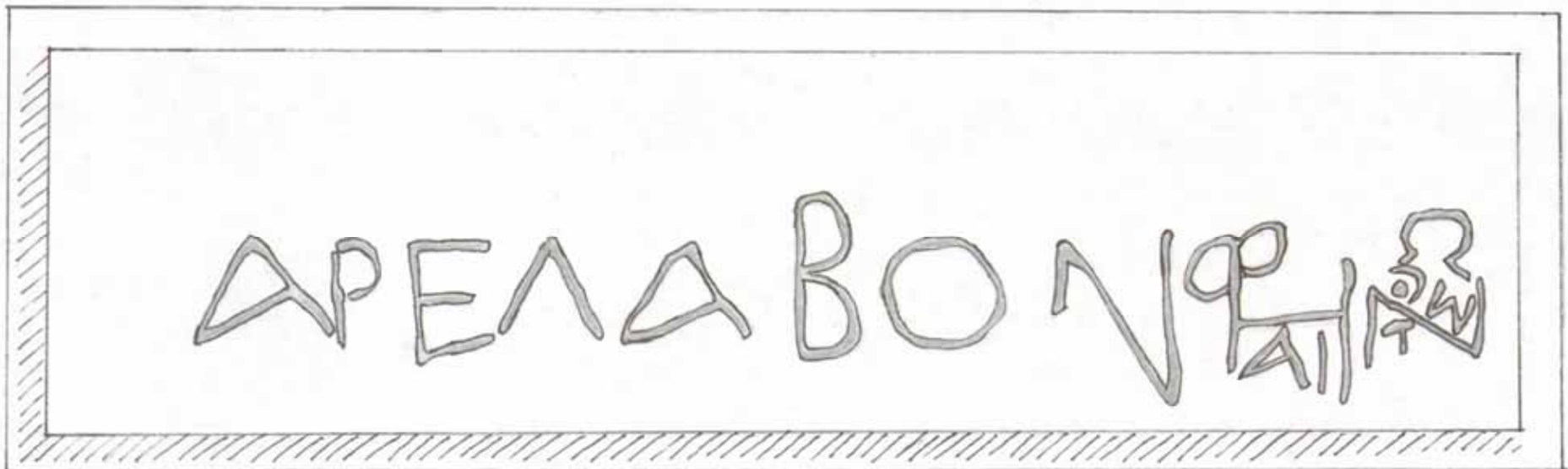


# The APEΛABON Inscription Blocks and the Hephaestion Hypothesis



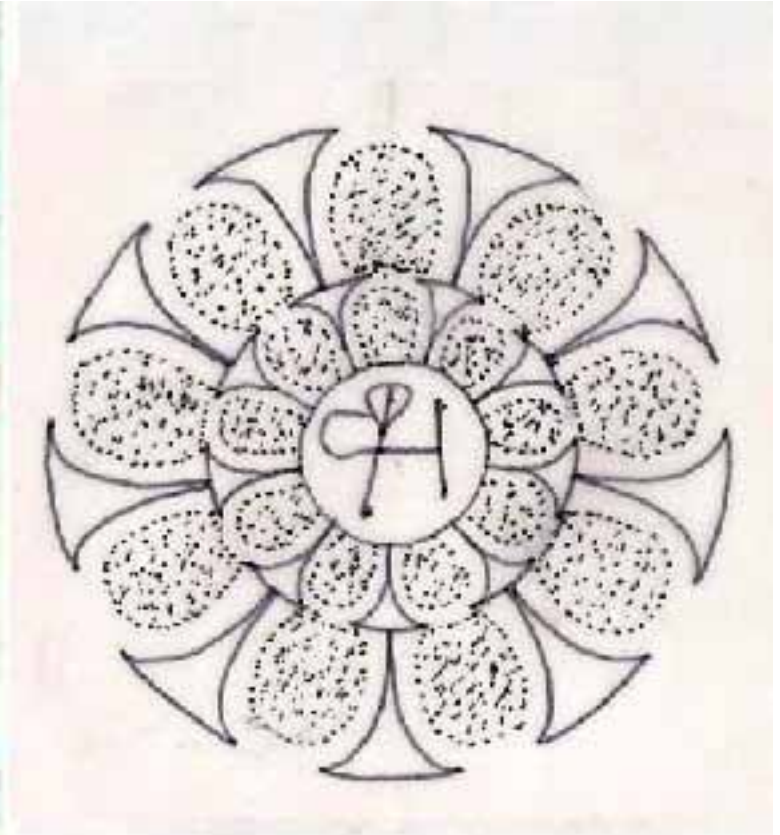
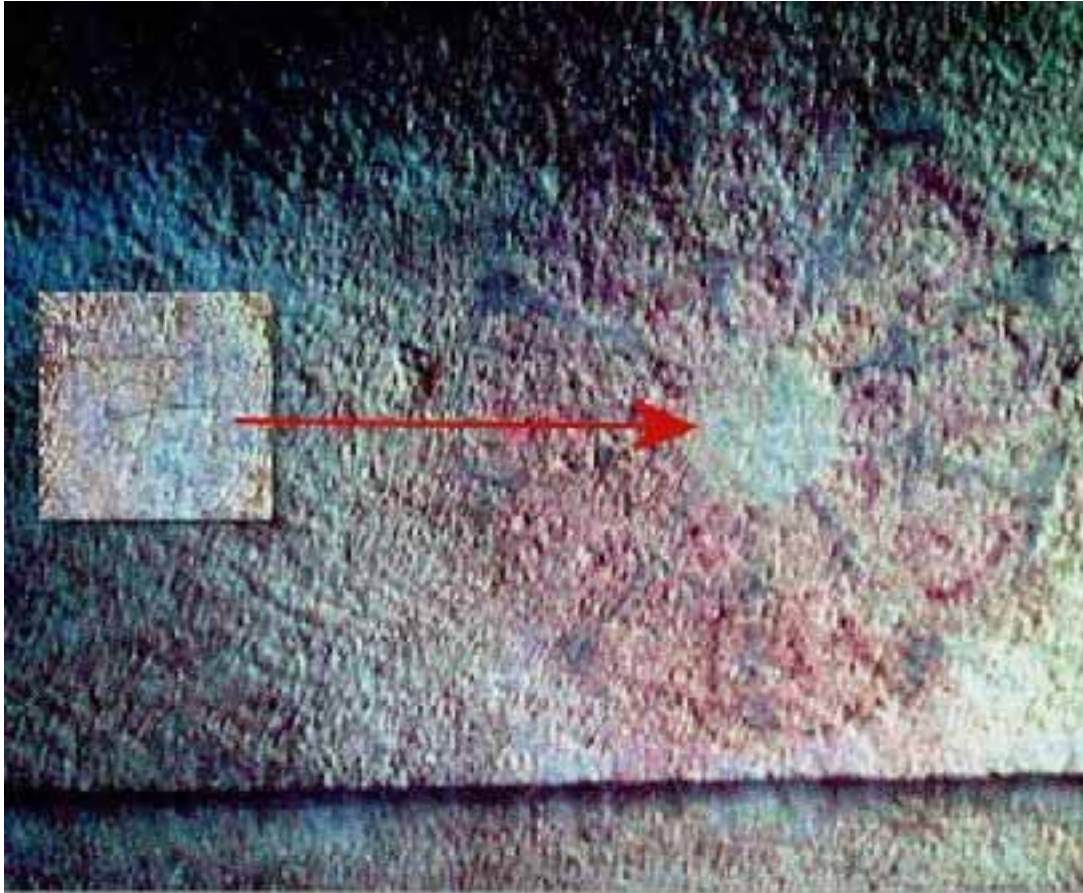
# The Archaeologists' Diagrams of the Inscriptions

## ΑΡΕΛΑΒΟΝ + ΗΦΑΙΣΤΙΩΝ monogram





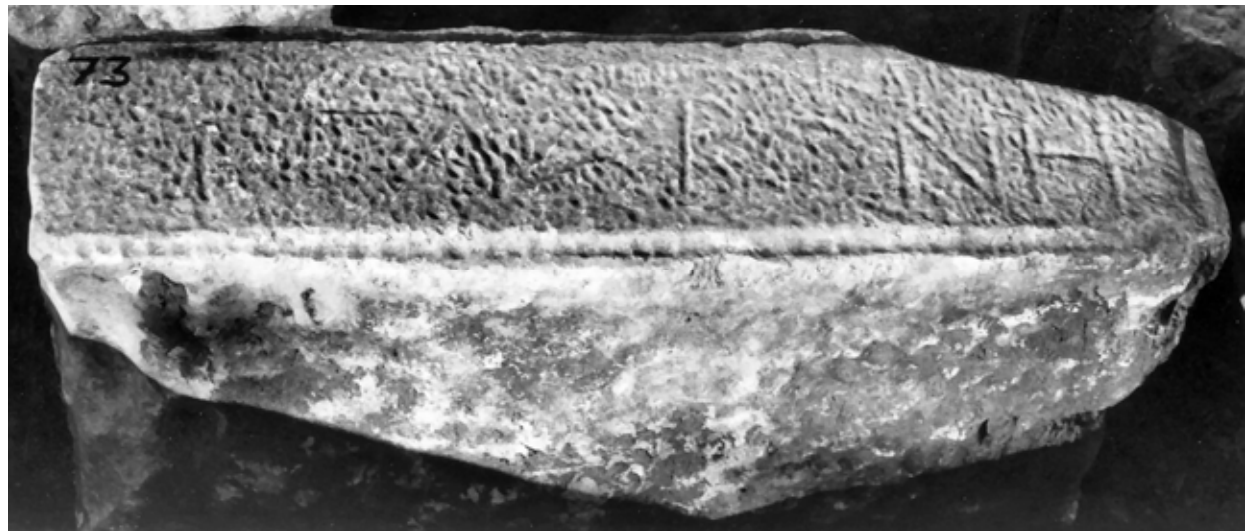
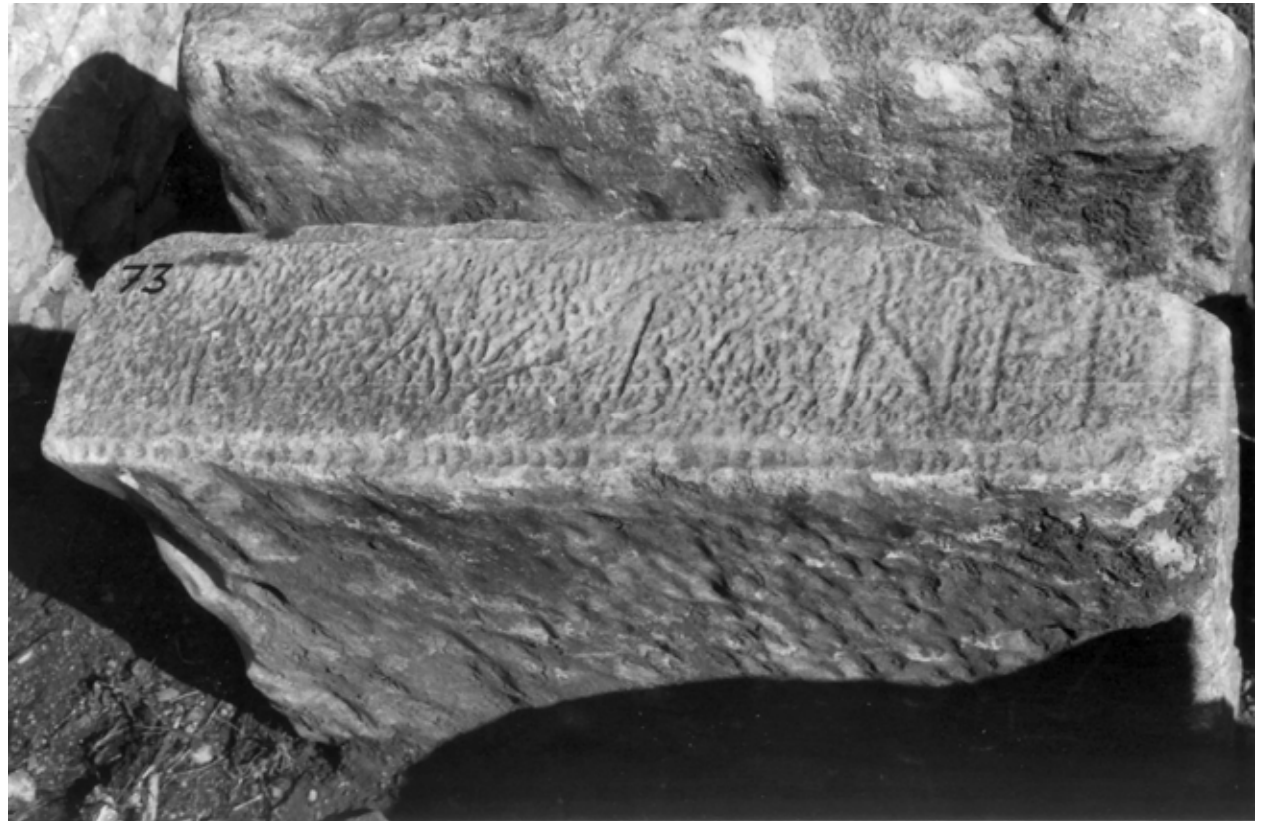
The scratches in the rosette above the mosaic in the Amphipolis Tomb: eta-phi-lunate-sigma?



Images of the first  
APEΛABON block  
taken in ~1970 by  
the Millers

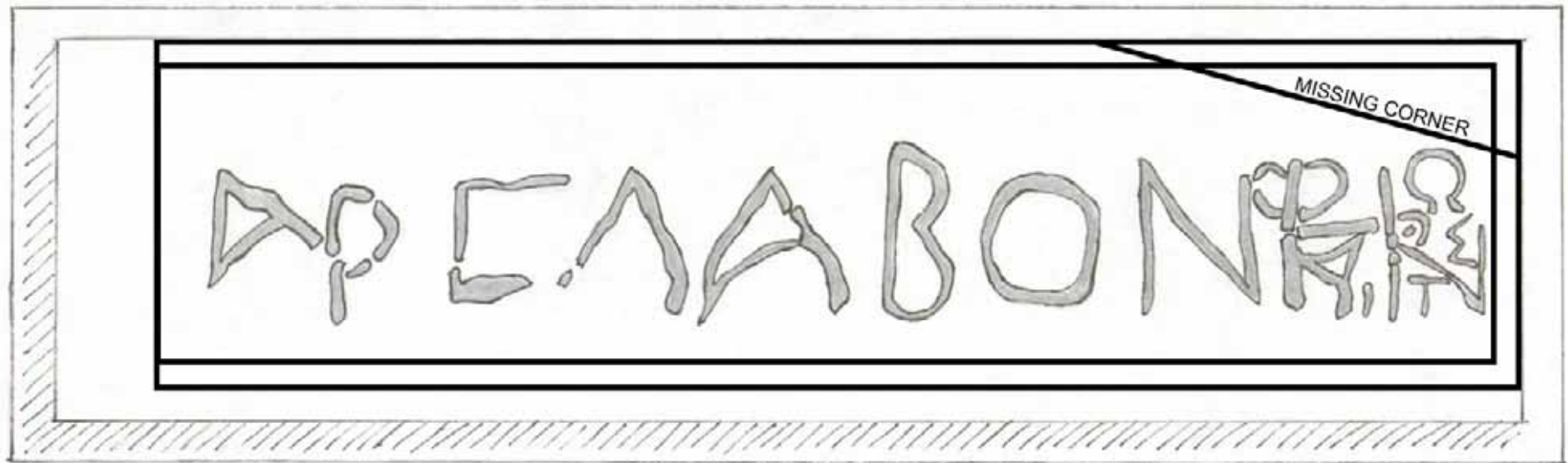
Courtesy of the  
American School of  
Classical Studies at  
Athens

Block was removed  
from the peribolos  
by the Romans &  
used to build a dam  
across the Strymon  
south of Amphipolis





True locations of the edges of the APEΛABON  
Block relative to its inscription



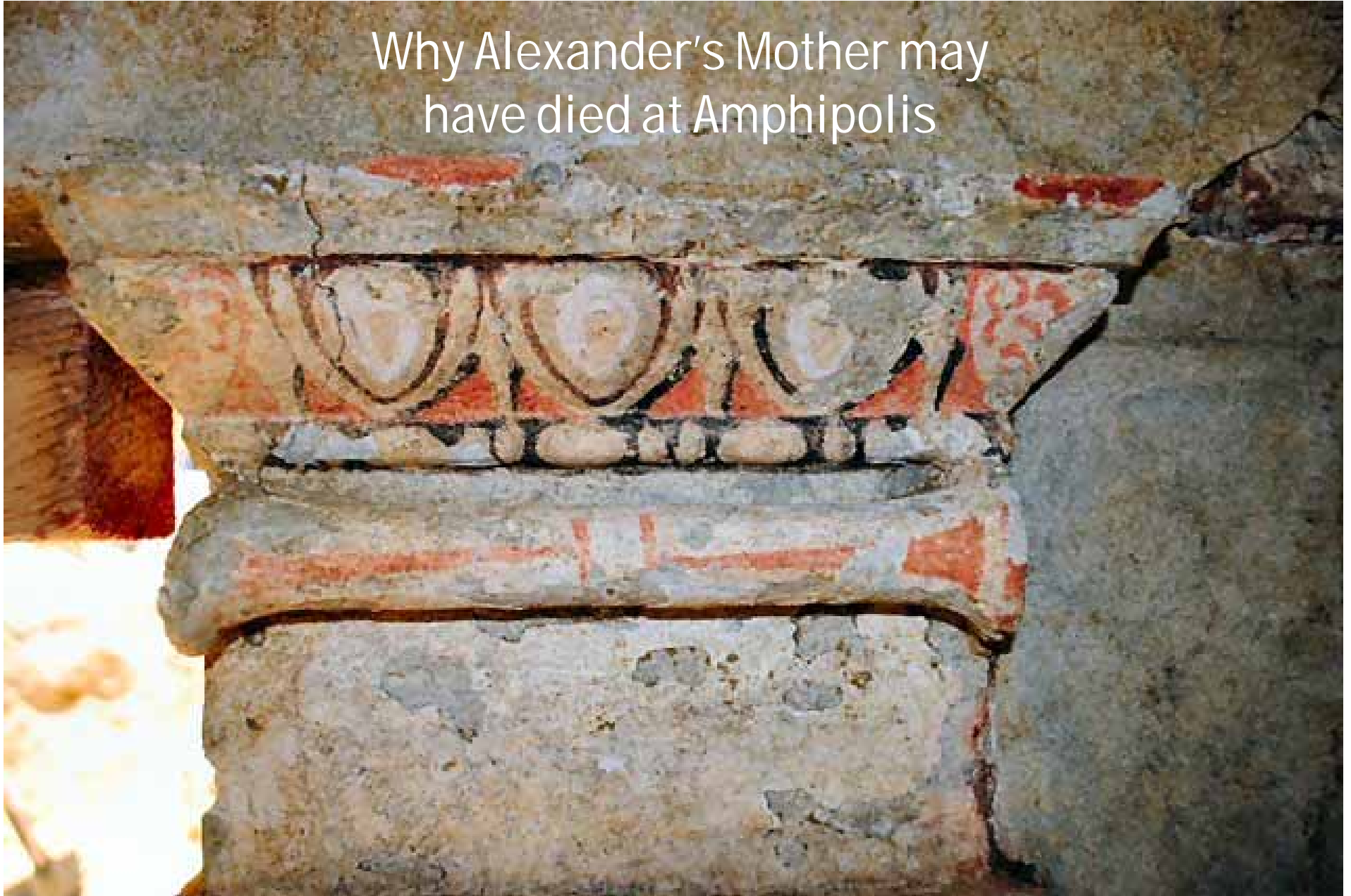
Reconstruction of the inscription to read  
ΠΑΡΕΛΑΒΟΝ + ΗΦΑΙΣΤΙΩΝ Monogram  
meaning “Received by/for Hephaistion”



This means that the block was shortened by 1 letter-width (11cm) from about 4 feet to 3.67 feet BEFORE it was incorporated in the peribolos  
Therefore it was rough-cut for an abandoned monument to Hephaistion using 4 x 2 x 1 foot blocks and the Kasta Mound was NOT that monument



Why Alexander's Mother may  
have died at Amphipolis



# Events surrounding the Death of Olympias

- Surrendered to Cassander at Pydna – Spring 216BC – on condition her life was spared
- Cassander next sent an advance guard towards Pella and Amphipolis
- Monimus surrendered Pella, but Aristonous refused to surrender at Amphipolis
- Cassander had Olympias write a note instructing Aristonous to surrender
- Aristonous surrendered, but Cassander had him slain by the kin of a man he had killed
- Cassander put Olympias on trial & the kin of her victims testified, so she was condemned
- Cassander sent troops to the palace to kill her, but they refused to slay Alexander's mother
- Cassander sent her victims' kin who stoned her (Pausanias) or stabbed her (Justin)
- Alexander IV and his mother Roxane were kept at Amphipolis for the next six years



*Medal from Abukir AD225-250  
inscribed ΟΛΥΜΠΙΑΔΟΣ*

*Cassandre et Olympias by  
Jean-Joseph Taillasson 1799*



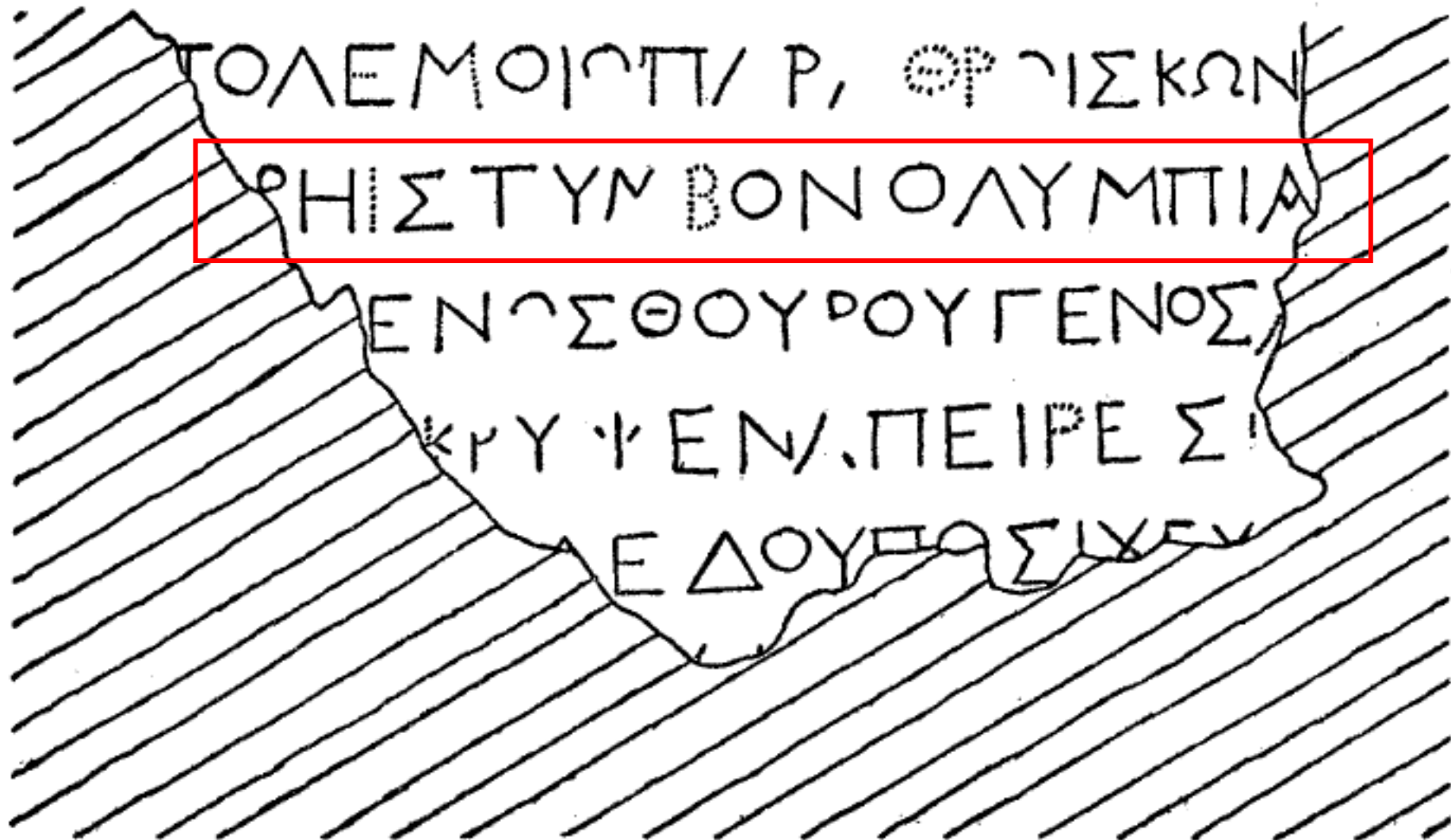


The Makriyalos inscription from ~2<sup>nd</sup> century BC

...PHIS**TYMBONOLYMPIA**...

**NOT** reconstructable without ASSUMPTIONS

Edson reconstructed it to suggest the tomb of Olympias lay near Pydna  
on the stated assumption that she had died at Pvdna



A photograph of a large, rectangular marble sarcophagus in an ancient tomb. The sarcophagus is made of light-colored marble and features a central panel with a faint relief of a seated figure. Above the sarcophagus, a statue of a figure in a long, flowing robe is visible, partially obscured by a metal support pole. The background shows the interior of the tomb with stone walls and other architectural elements.

# The Decoration of the Amphipolis Tomb

And its Iconography





## A Pair of Sphinxes 2m Tall Guarded the Entranceway to the Tomb Chambers

They had been mutilated by decapitation, smashing of their wings and hacking off of their breasts, but the head of one and some wing fragments were found in the sand fill of the last chamber

Their closest parallel is a pair of sphinxes found in 1850 at the Memphite Serapeum in Egypt by Mariette. The style, posture and even the hairstyle are the same. I have proposed that the Serapeum Greek sphinxes were part of the decoration of the first tomb of Alexander the Great carved during the reign of Ptolemy Soter.



# The Association of Sphinxes with the Principal Queen of Macedon

*Apollodorus 3.5.8: Laius was buried by Damasistratus, king of Plataea, and Creon, son of Menoeceus, succeeded to the kingdom. In his reign a heavy calamity befell Thebes. For Hera sent the Sphinx, whose mother was Echidna and her father Typhon.*

Sphinxes support the arms of the throne of an unknown late 4<sup>th</sup> century BC queen found in an uncompleted tomb at Aegae



The king of Macedon frequently associated himself with Zeus, so it is natural that his principal queen should have seen herself as an earthly counterpart of Hera, mistress of sphinxes

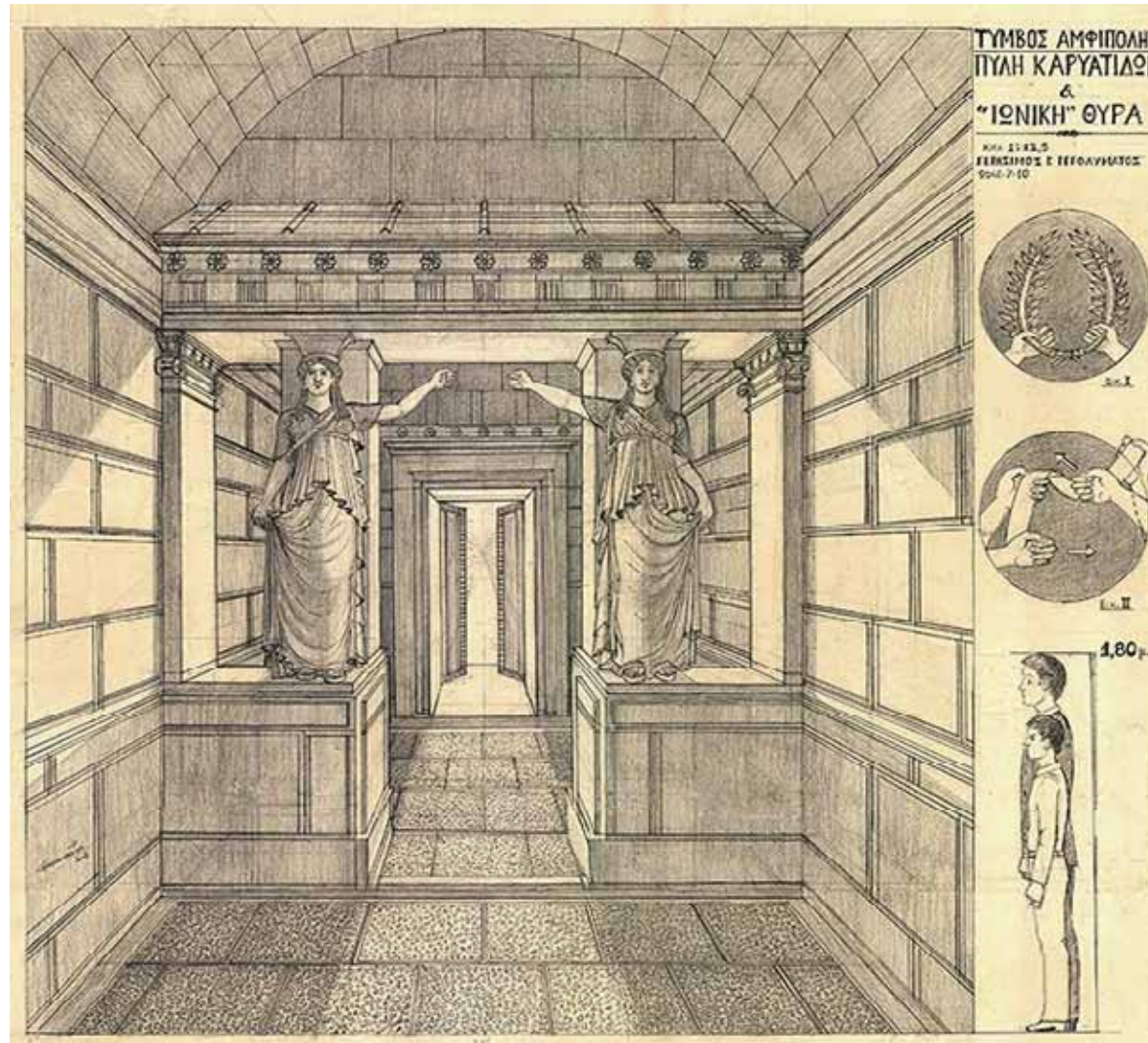


Sphinxes decorated the side panels of the throne of Alexander's grandmother Eurydice found in her tomb at Aegae



# Caryatids or Klodones: baskets on their heads & holding a snake?

*Plutarch: Olympias and her Klodones (priestesses of Dionysus) participated in Orphic rites and Dionysiac orgies using serpents that would often rear their heads out of the μυστικῶν λίκνων (mystical winnowing-baskets)*



Rosettes on the gold larnax of Philip II



Rosettes on the entablature above the Caryatids





A Priestess supporting a 4<sup>th</sup> century BC statue of Dionysus that survives in two Roman copies is a close match for the Amphipolis Caryatids



Metropolitan Museum New York



Hermitage



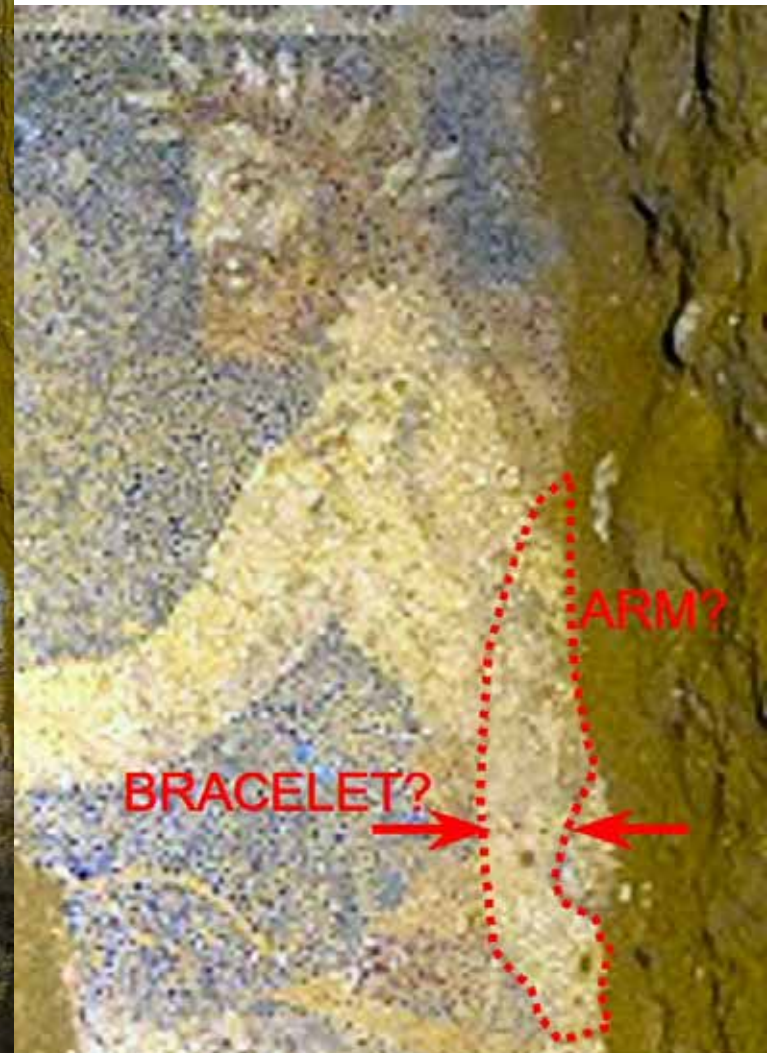


### Mosaic Partially Unearthed

I wrote in The Greek Reporter 15/10/14

- 1) 2nd arm must be a 2nd person, a woman since there is a bracelet
- 2) It must depict the Abduction of Persephone

Confirmed in a Press Release 16/10/14





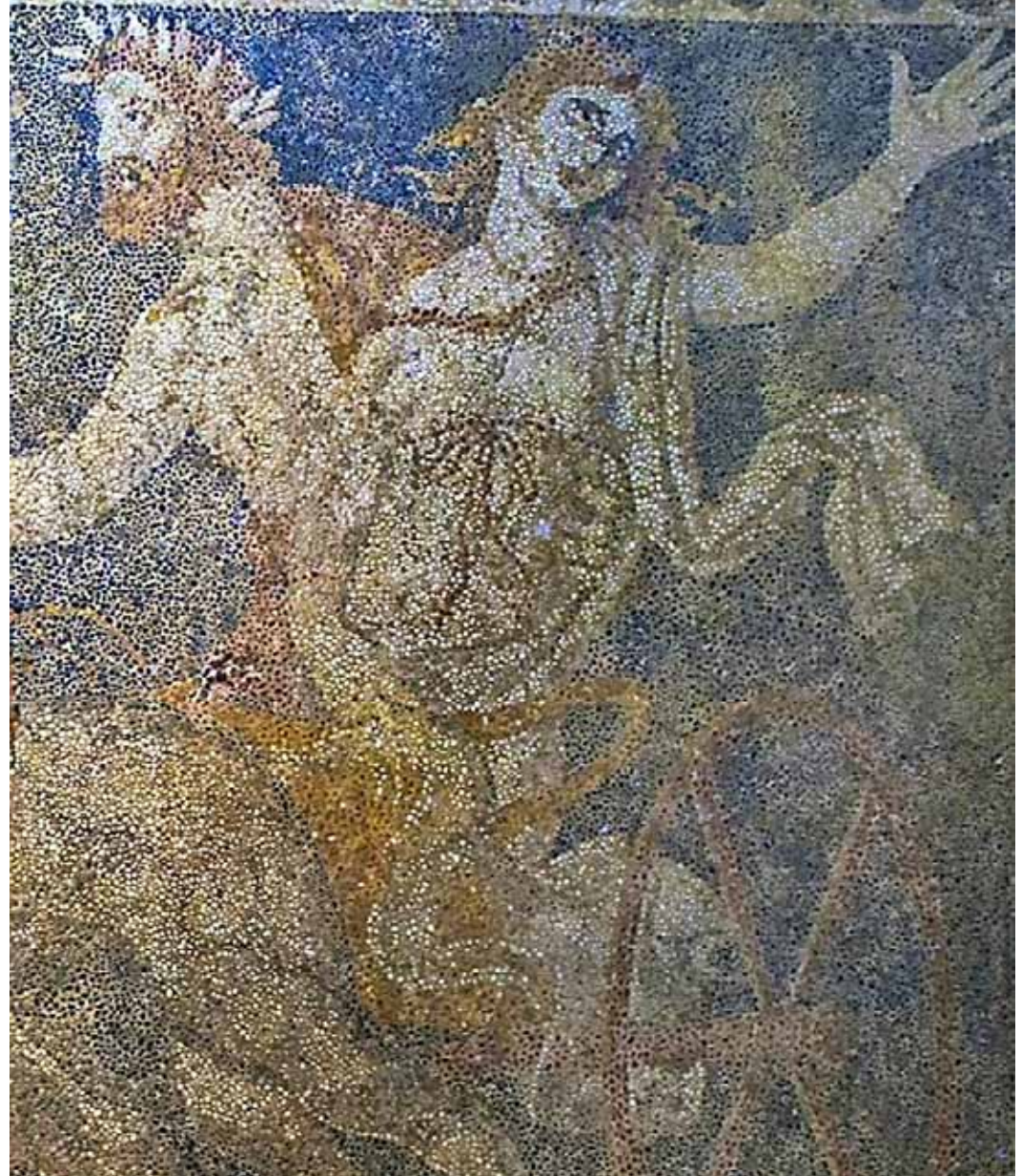
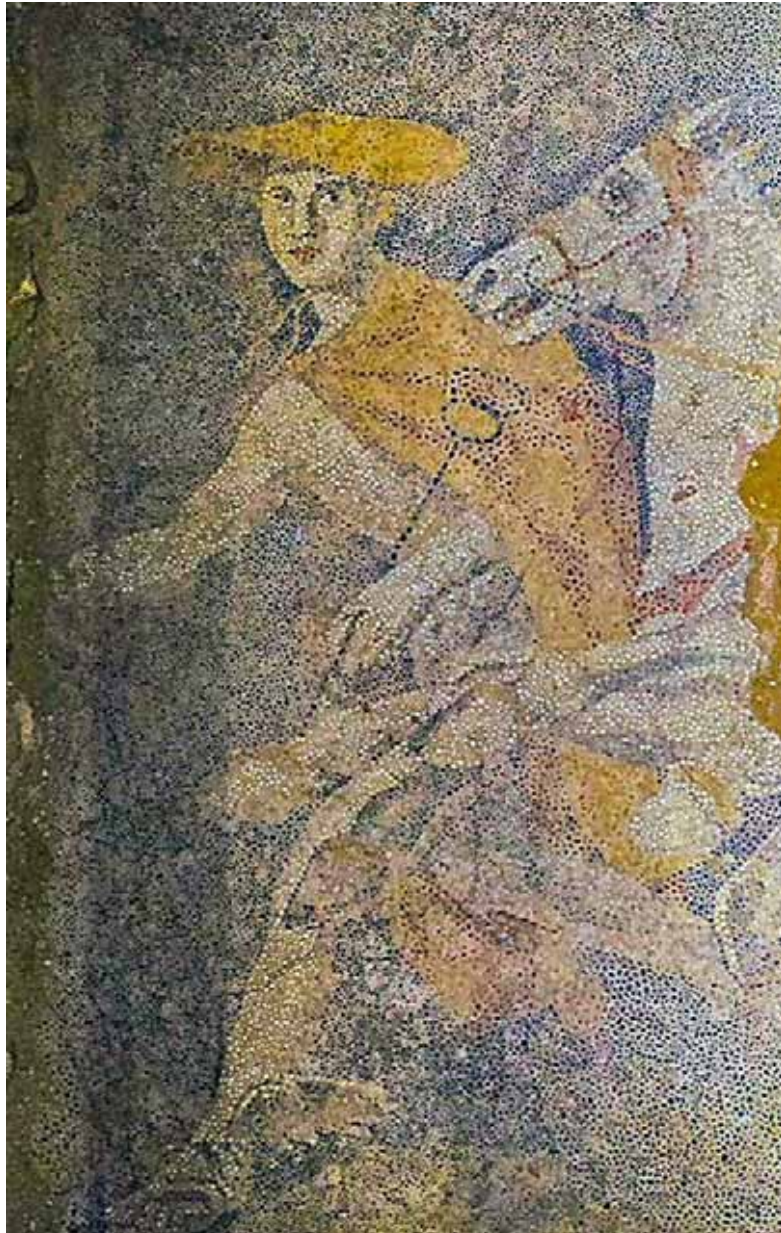
The pebble mosaic depicting the Abduction of Persephone from the floor of the second chamber in the Amphipolis tomb.





# Details of Hermes, Hades and Persephone

Is there a human-divine duality? Are they real people too?







The mosaic also works as a portrait of the Macedonian Royal Family at a time just before the assassination of Philip in 336BC: the last time Philip, Alexander and Olympias could all have been portrayed together

Ivory from the Prince's Tomb at Aegae  
Possible portrait of Philip and Olympias as a god and goddess with Alexander as Pan



Alexander wearing a petasos out hunting with Hephaestion wielding a double-headed axe, an attribute of Hephaistos, god of fire  
Gnosis mosaic, Pella

Alexander aged about 18 from the Acropolis in Athens







A winged Nike blows a trumpet standing  
in a prow next to a tripod brazier

Nike,  
sacrificial bull  
and tripod  
brazier on an  
Attic red  
figure jar



Nike of  
Samothrace

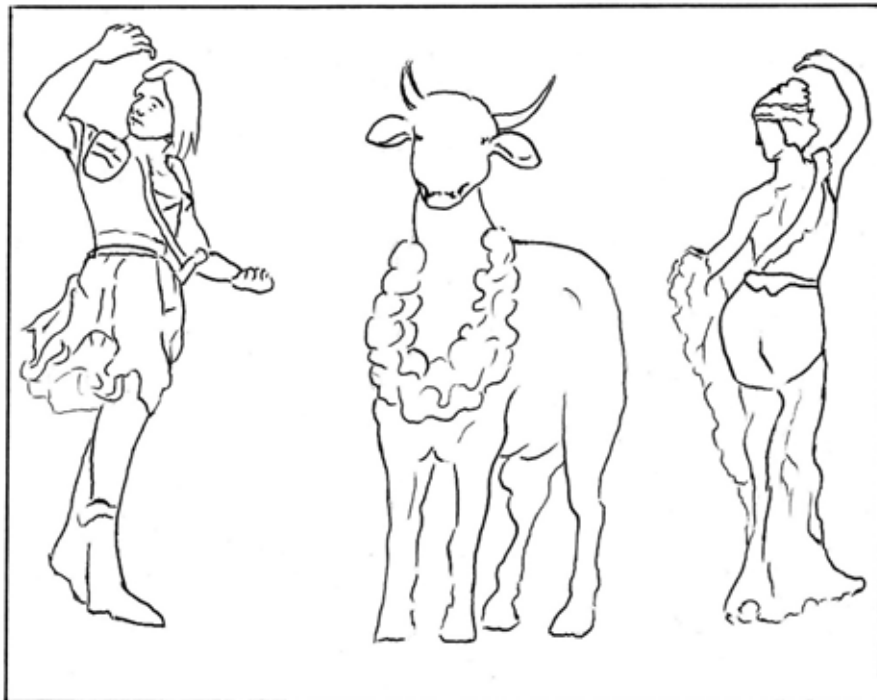


Tetradrachm of  
Demetrius Poliorcetes





A man and a woman  
dancing either side of a  
bull wreathed for sacrifice



Plutarch, Alexander 2.1 writes:  
*We are told that Philip, after  
being initiated into the mysteries  
at Samothrace at the same time  
as Olympias, he himself still  
being a youth and she an  
orphan child, fell in love with her  
and betrothed himself to her at  
once with the consent of her  
brother, Arymbas.*



A fragment of an ancient Greek marble inscription, likely from the 4th century BC. The fragment is rectangular with irregular edges and features a relief carving of a leaf pattern, possibly laurel or olive leaves, arranged in a grid-like fashion. The text is inscribed in a single line of ancient Greek script.

# The Desecrated Skeletons

**Κάσανδρον...τήν τε γὰρ Ὀλυμπιάδα φονεύσαντα ἄταφον ῥῖψαι**

(Cassander... murdered Olympias and cast her out graveless)

Diodorus 17.118.2

# Parts of Four Skeletons and a few fragments of cremated bones excavated from the fill of the grave slot in the Cist Tomb

550 bones and fragments of bones were recovered of which 157 have been firmly assigned to 5 individuals  
Of these 9 fragments were cremated







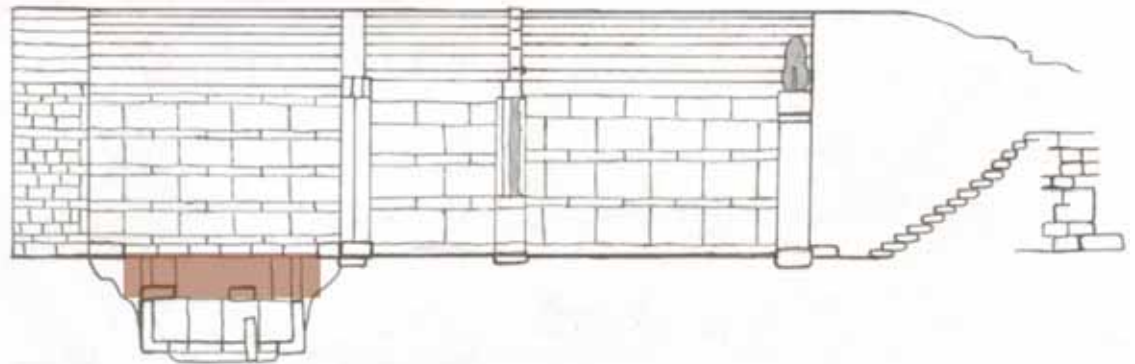
## Nine tiny fragments of cremated bone

Only a small fraction of a complete cremation  
Where did the rest go?

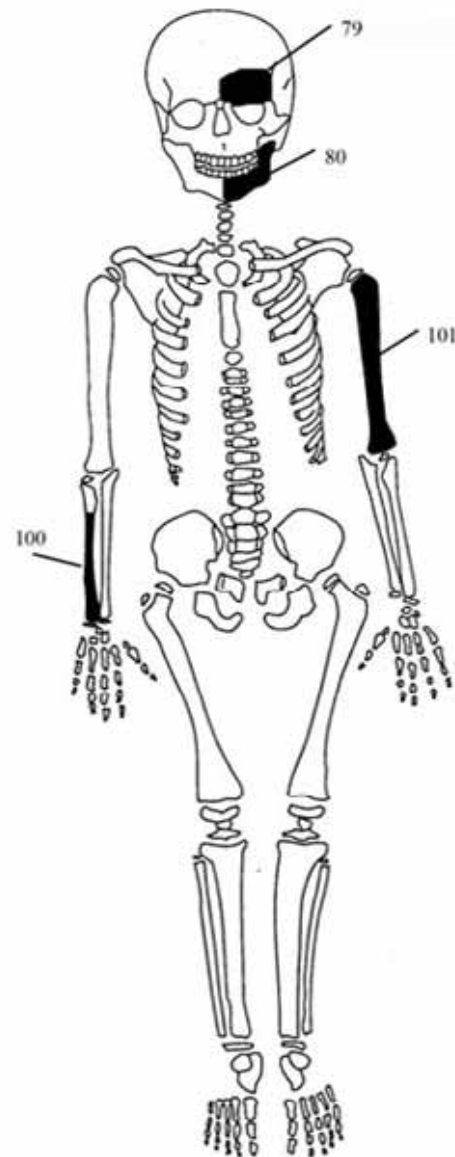
Alternatively, these are stray fragments from  
the grave fill above the cist tomb

The Kasta Mound was built in a cemetery area  
that had been used for centuries

One stray cremated fragment per cubic metre  
of fill would suffice to account for these  
fragments without the difficulty of explaining  
where the rest went

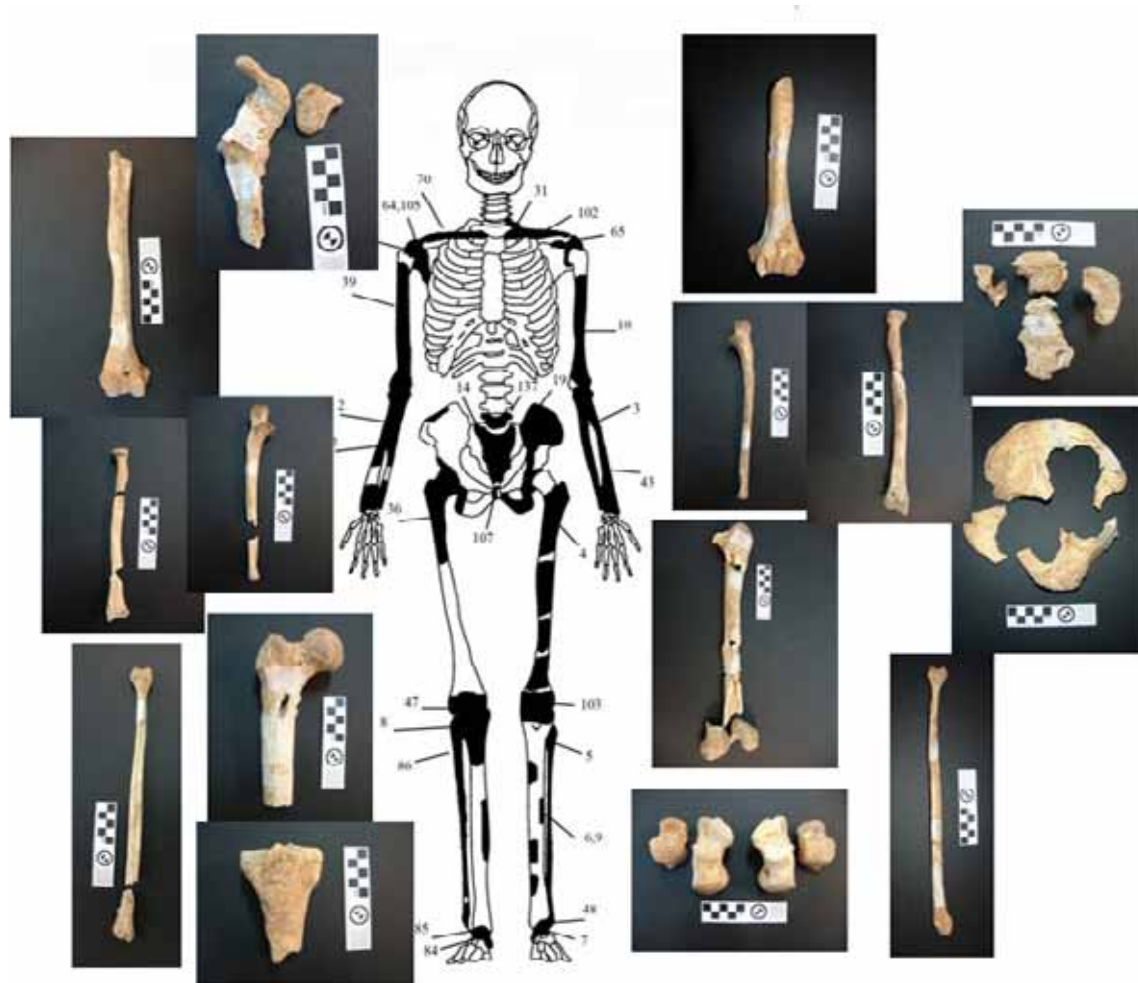


# A Neonatal Infant

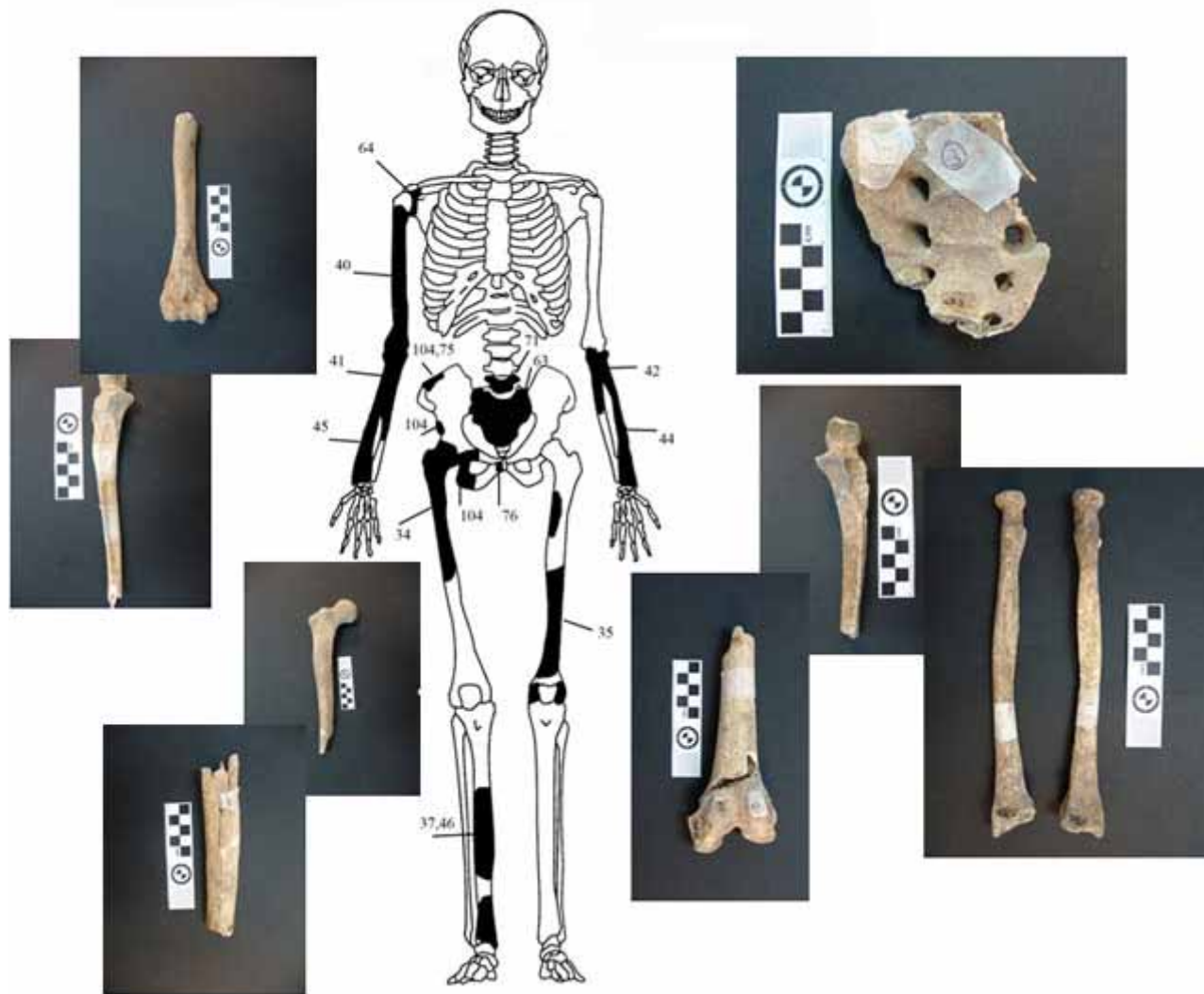




# Male 1 circa 35-40 with sword cuts to bones

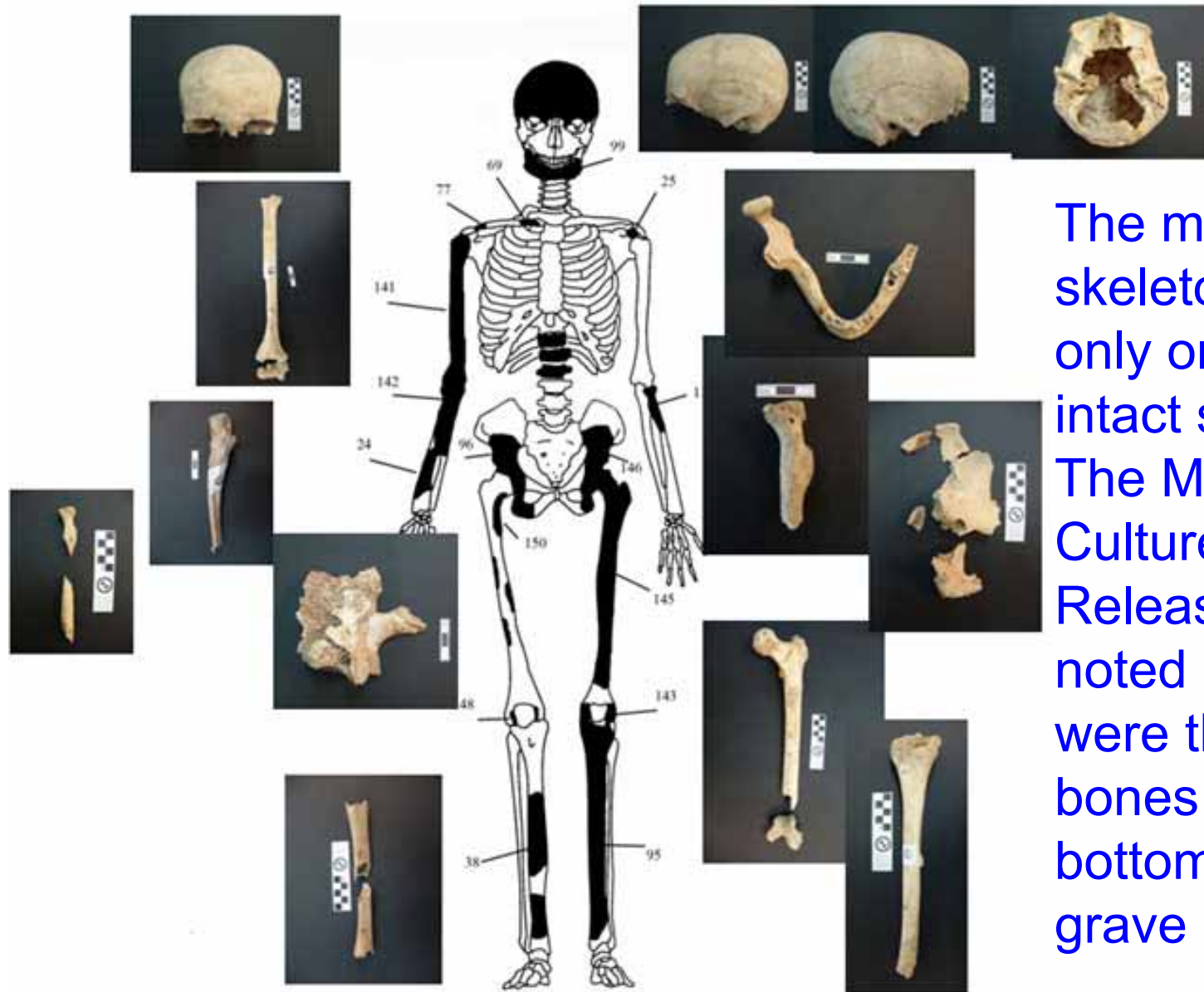


## Male 2 circa 40-45 years old





# Female aged 60+ years at death



The most complete skeleton and the only one with an intact skull.

The Ministry of Culture Press Release 19/1/15 noted also that hers were the main bones found in the bottom metre of the grave

# Who desecrated and sealed the Amphipolis Tomb?



The marble doors of the final chamber were smashed with a ram by the desecrators  
Fragments were excavated suspended in the fill used to seal the tomb  
So the desecrators and the sealers must have been the same people  
This could have been Cassander after he murdered Alexander IV and Roxane at Amphipolis in 310BC  
This is supported by an articulated hand dug out of the grave, which suggests cartilage/tendon survived on some bones at the time of desecration, but cartilage is unlikely to last more than a century in a damp tomb





## Conclusions

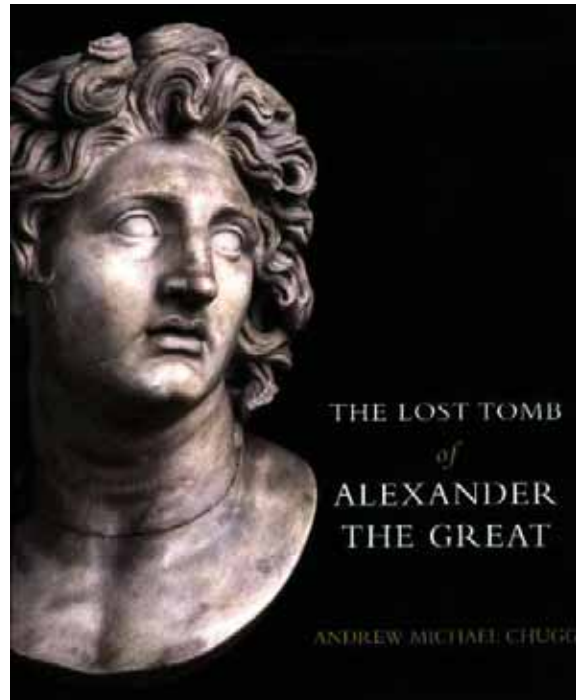
- Dating evidence: Lion, Geison Soffits, Pebble Mosaic, flooring, coins minted under Cassander, carbon date of charcoal fragment...
  - All consistent with the last quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC
- Peribolos blocks crudely inscribed with [Π]ΑΡΕΛΑΒΟΝ + Hephaistion monogram
  - Missing Π means the blocks were shortened to be used in the Peribolos
  - Therefore the Amphipolis Tomb is not the abandoned tomb of Hephaistion
  - Occupant is somebody very important who died at Amphipolis c. 323-310BC
- Sphinxes were symbols of the principal queen of Macedon
- The caryatids are Klodones, priestesses of Dionysus associated particularly with Alexander's mother, Olympias
- Painting in the 2nd chamber depicts the Mysteries of Samothrace at which Olympias first met Philip II
- The mosaic depicts the occupant in the guise of Persephone being carried into the Underworld – Hermes resembles Alexander, Hades Philip II
- Olympias probably died at Amphipolis and her grandson Alexander IV and daughter-in-law Roxane were held in the city for the next 6 years
- The most complete skeleton excavated in Cist Tomb fill belonged to a 60+ year old woman, consistent with Olympias
- The occupant of the Amphipolis Tomb is Olympias at high probability
- The tomb may have been desecrated and sealed by Cassander after he murdered Roxane and Alexander IV in 310BC

# Recommendations

- Isotopic investigation of the bones and the surviving tooth of the 60+ woman
  - Especially strontium ratios to determine the woman's childhood home (tooth enamel) and residency in the last decade of her life (bones)
- Publication of full information on the excavation results
  - Dimensions of discoveries, e.g. inscribed blocks
  - Locations of coin finds
  - Carbon dating of rootlets in the sandy sealing fill
  - All photos of bone excavation process
- An early attempt to extract DNA profiles from the uncremated bones and the root of the elderly woman's tooth before remaining traces of intact DNA decay further



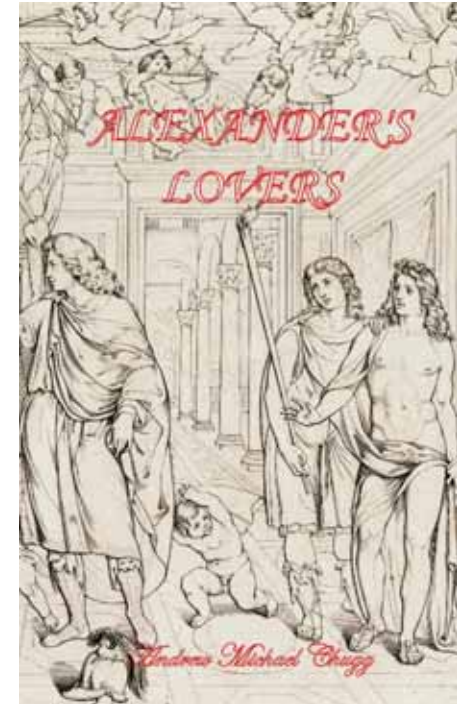
## Books



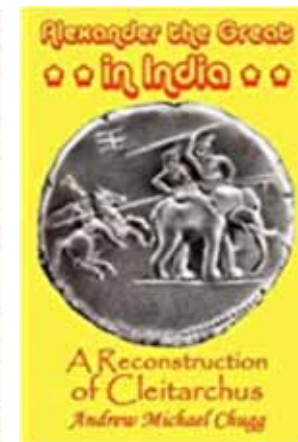
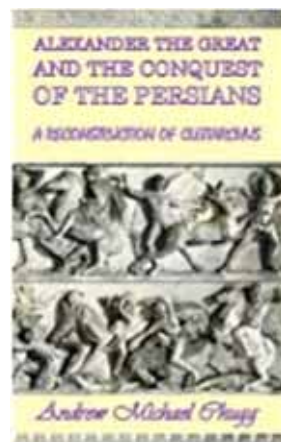
### THE QUEST FOR THE TOMB OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT



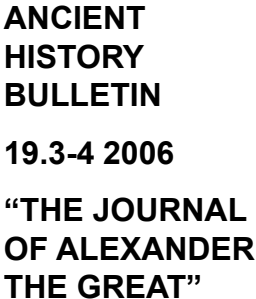
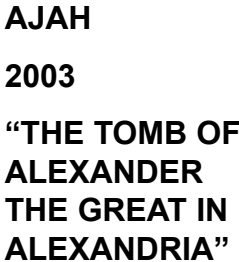
*Andrew Michael Chugg*



See: [www.alexanderstomb.com](http://www.alexanderstomb.com)



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# Documentarles

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