



# HERACLES TO ALEXANDER THE GREAT

Treasures from the Royal Capital of Macedon,  
a Hellenic Kingdom in the Age of Democracy

*A collaboration between*  
the Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford  
and the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Tourism,  
17th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities

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# Contents

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A Hellenic Kingdom in the Age of Democracy

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Back cover illustration: A celestial or solar symbol  
became the emblem of Macedonian royal power  
Frontispiece: Back of the marble throne and eternal  
seat of the Queen Mother Eurydice

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# 8 Queens, princesses and high priestesses: the role of women at the Macedonian court

Angeliki Kottaridi

The Greek tribes of historical times are, in essence, patriarchal communities, and this also holds true for the Macedonians. Within the framework of this patriarchal structure the primary role of the woman, obedient as a daughter to her father and as a wife to her husband, is to give birth to legitimate heirs for her husband, thereby ensuring the continuity of his *oikos* (house) and the smooth transition of inherited wealth.

Hidden in the shadow of the women's quarters, excluded from the learning process, outcasts from the forefront of history, but nevertheless the main actresses in birth and death, ancient women are only named as mythical archetypes or as exceptions. This goes primarily for Athens, the democracy of rationalism, which condemned its women to deep silence. Yet it was apparently not always the case for Macedonia, which remains close to the Homeric traditions, whereby a woman could be a queen in her own realm (fig. 81).

Daughters in Macedonia grew up in their father's house and learnt from the older women all the tasks related to the running of the household. Education was for them an unnecessary luxury, something that, at least in earlier times, appears to have also applied to members of the royal family. For instance, even the powerful Queen Eurydice took up education later in life, being already the mother of adolescents, and celebrated this significant privilege by setting up a dedication in honour of the Muses.

Childhood officially came to an end for Macedonian girls at the age of 14. They were now considered ready to fulfil their roles as wives, with their fathers deciding on their future husbands, whom they then had to accompany to his household. Marriage and childbirth, which they often paid for with their own lives, were their most important moments. Between these they spent their days at home with much work and little entertainment, with poorer women also helping out in farming activities, even in animal husbandry when the household was short of manpower. In any case, their duties were multiple and crucial for everyday survival: women were responsible for the processing and the storage of foodstuffs, daily cooking, the grinding of cereals and the kneading and



Fig. 81 A woman looking at herself in a mirror (Cat. no. 420)

baking of bread – activities which, according to Herodotus, were undertaken in earlier times even by women of the royal family (8.137.2): ‘Now the king’s wife cooked their food for them, for in old times the ruling houses among men, and not the common people alone, were lacking in wealth.’

Women looked after the house, the babies, the children, the old men, the physically unfit as well as the dead who, like the gods, also wished to receive their offerings. They wove and spun the wool, they dyed the thread, they embroidered and knitted, they made clothes and bed sheets, rugs and carpets, sacks and bags. Like Helen, queen of Sparta in the *Odyssey*, the spinning of wool was for Macedonian queens their daily activity, marking their life and death. The Macedonian ladies took their spinning wheels with them to the grave, like the ladies of archaic Crete on the tombstones of Prinias; while Alexander the Great does not forget to praise the textiles of the women of his family (fig. 82).

Queens, ladies and ordinary Macedonian women, girls and wives spent hours in front of the loom weaving, spinning, plying, inch by inch, their own labours and desires, hours of joy and despair, making pretty clothes and dowry goods to adorn houses and warm hearts. Precious and humble, unadorned and gold-woven, a colourful, handmade universe of thread and dreams, now lost forever. Only a few traces have survived, which with their finesse and precision still amaze us. The unexpected gold-woven cloth from the *larnax* of Meda, allows us to dream of the beauty of these textiles that we will never be able to admire fully.

Aegae actually never became an extended town. Most people lived in the small settlements and villages surrounding the fortified city. The women of Aegae, as those of other Macedonian cities and settlements, retained a close relationship with nature, as often happens with traditional agro-pastoral

Fig. 82. Alexander the Great praised the textiles of the women of his generation – this fine gold thread and purple piece of textile comes from the tomb of Philip II

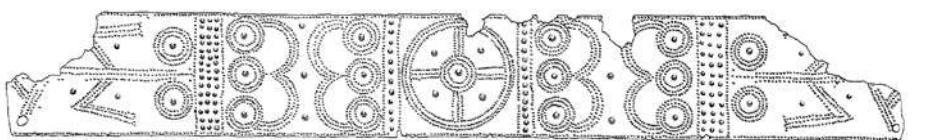


Fig. 83. Dionysus – detail from a finely painted red-figure lekythos (Cat. no. 261)



communities. Girls and old women, maidens and wives went to the countryside in order to wash clothes in the streams, bring water, gather greenery and bulbs, berries and wild fruits, flowers and branches to make wreaths for festivals and celebrations, and to collect herbs for making remedies and poisons. Knowledge of the mystical substances of plants, akin to medicine and witchcraft, traditionally belonged to women.

Public life, war and the exercise of power, athletics and education in letters and the arts were the privilege of men. In the Macedonians’ official festivals, contests and banquets the presence of women was limited. However, there were a few exceptions. The festivals in honour of Demeter and her daughter Persephone were traditionally part of their realm. The same goes for the worship of Dionysus (fig. 83), with maenads fervently dancing in the forest, urging the earth to produce honey and milk, and wild women crowned by snakes and shredding their prey to pieces with their own bare hands. This vivid account of Euripides in his *Bacchae* resonates with the women of Aegae and their performances in the neighbouring Pierian mountains – rituals led by the queen herself, deeply rooted in the people’s faith.



It is a well-known fact that Olympias, the mother of Alexander the Great, was a fervent and passionate follower of Bacchus. As suggested by the story regarding the dragon lying down beside the queen, but also by findings from the sanctuaries at Aegae, snakes had a prominent position in the religious life of the Macedonian metropolis and in the 'secret' realm of its women.

The archetypal relationship of virgin-woman-queen-priestess with the sacred dragon-guardian of knowledge – guardian of paradise, the embodiment of autochthony – is deeply embedded in ancient belief systems and rituals. It travels through the myth of the wise goddess-witch, Medea, and haunts the divine secret of the suffering Dionysus Zagreus. Hidden behind the shield of Athena Parthenos, it emerges tangible and unexpectedly vivid in the rituals of Macedon, connecting this frontier kingdom to the heart of the Aegean world.

*When Argaeos was king of the Macedonians and Galauros was king of the Taulantii, the latter campaigned against Macedon. Argaeos, who had few soldiers, ordered the Macedonian virgins to present themselves from Mount Ereboia as the enemy advanced. They accordingly did so: and then many virgins came down from the mountain and made an appearance, brandishing their thyrsuses instead of spears and with wreaths concealing their faces. Galauros, thinking from afar that the virgins were men, was intimidated and ordered a retreat: the Taulantii fled, throwing away their arms and equipment. Argaeos, having thus obtained victory without battle, erected a temple to Bacchus Pseudanor and ordered the virgins, who were before called Kladones [branch-bearers] by the Macedonians, to be called Mimallones, because they imitated the men.*

(Polyainos, Strategems in War 4.1.1)

Fig. 84 'Solar symbols' on the bronze diadem found with the burial of an Early Iron Age lady (Cat. no. 127)



Fig. 85 Wheel-shaped disc (Cat. no. 141)

Historical event or not, this narrative hints at the distinctiveness and determination of Macedonian women. It also recalls an attitude often found in regions under Dorian influence, such as Sparta. After all, if we are to believe Herodotus, Macedonians were closely related or were one and the same as the Dorians.

In democratic Athens, the *basilinna*, wife of the elected *archon basileus* (responsible for religious affairs and sacred law) had the privilege to play the leading part in the rites of the Sacred Marriage (*Hieros Gamos*), which was of paramount importance for the city and a crucial ritual for the life of any ancient community. At the centre of almost all mystical and public festivals, the Sacred Marriage was performed at many sites across Greece, from Samothrace to Eleusis and from Samos to Knossos. It would almost certainly have been performed in the kingdom of Macedonia, where the old customs are kept alive more than anywhere else. Again, most of our evidence is centred on Olympias and her sacred marriage with Zeus, the fruit of which, according to an apocryphal tradition, was Alexander. Yet, Olympias is nothing but the culmination of a long tradition. Religious performance is the realm where aristocratic ladies, and especially the queens of Macedon, played an important role.

Bronze triple double axes, placed on top of wooden poles, are associated with sacrificial rituals and recall almost-forgotten archetypes of the Aegean world (fig. 86). Diadems with solar symbols, pendants and amulets of various shapes and forms 'words' of a lost symbolic language (fig. 84), four-spoked wheels, likely precursors of the magical apparatus that Pindar calls *ιώγα τετράκυαμον* (*iynx torquilla*), necessary for love spells (fig. 85) and the tiny bronze objects, something between a cauldron and a pendant, which may have contained residues of remedies and herbs are found in the graves of rich women of the Early Iron Age (1000–700 BC) (fig. 87). They bear witness to the fact that the aristocratic ladies and queens of Aegae had, until the seventh century BC, a power greater than that of their husbands: the privilege and commitment to communicate with the supernatural for the benefit of their people.

This tradition was followed by the Temenid women, as witnessed by the hieratic sceptre, adorned with ivory and amber, of the 'Lady of Aegae', which was found to the right of her body in a similar position to that of spears in the tombs of warriors. Placed inside a leather or wooden gilded casket, the iron spits that accompanied her to Hades, testify that the queen – wife of Amyntas I and perhaps mother of Alexander I – who died in her thirties early in the fifth century BC – along with the men of her family shared the privilege of partaking in the sacred dinners that followed the sacrifices to the gods. Next to the spits there was an iron model of a four-wheeled cart drawn by two wooden gold-covered animals – mules or oxen – recalling the story of the priestess of Argos whose sons, Kleobes and Biton, as an outward sign of respect and devotion pulled the cart the entire way so that their mother would not arrive late in the sacred procession. With their benevolent act the two brothers earned the bittersweet gift of the gods and died peacefully in their sleep. A symbolic object, the miniature cart (fig. 88) found in the tomb suggests that, as a high-priestess,



Fig. 86 Triple double axes – a symbol of authority (Cat. nos. 128–29, 274–75, 309)



Fig. 87 Early Iron Age pendants – these tiny objects may have contained residues of remedies and herbs (Cat. nos. top [from left to right]: 136, 131, 134, 135; bottom [from left to right]: 138, 133, 130, 139, 132)



Fig. 88 Iron model of a four-wheeled cart originally covered with gold foil – a symbolic object suggesting that the Lady of Aegae, with whom it was buried, was also a high-priestess (Cat. no. 203)



Fig. 89 Silver *omphalos phiale* from the Lady of Aegae – this type of vessel was preferred for making libations to the gods (Cat. no. 201)



Fig. 90 (above) Handle from a frying-pan shaped bowl in the form of a nude man (*kouros*) with upraised arms (Cat. no. 215)

Fig. 91 (right) Lifesize male and female clay heads – part of an enigmatic ritual, 26 lifesize clay heads were thrown into the tomb of a Queen underlining her special relationship with the world of gods and demons (Cat. nos. 176, 173)



the queen of Macedon, like the aristocratic ladies of neighbouring tribes whose graves held similar objects, had the right to appear in public and take part in ritual processions and ceremonies in honour of the gods, in which she officiated.

An inscribed silver gilt bowl (*omphalos phiale*), the preferred vessel for making libations to the gods (fig. 89), and the many other similar bronze bowls found in the tombs of the queens lend further weight to this hypothesis. A *patera*, a 'frying-pan' type of bowl, an official libation vessel similar to that used by the Macedonian king, was found in the tomb of one of the wives of Alexander I (fig. 90). Its elaborate handle depicts one of the few Macedonian *kouroi* that have come to light. In the same tomb more than 26 clay heads of wooden statues (*xoana*) were found – remains of an enigmatic ritual: they suggest a special relationship of the queen with the world of gods and demons and underline her connection to the Great Goddess (fig. 91).

The religious function of the queen, a tradition which derives from the remote heroic past, was renewed in the sacraments of the mystical cults that in classical times gained ardent devotees among the Macedonian court: Eurydice carries the god-bearing name of the wife of Orpheus, the first *mystes* (the initiated one) – and the symbolism of images on her funeral throne bears witness to her special relationship with the lady of the underworld (fig. 92). Her daughter-in-law, Olympias, initiated into the mysteries of the Great Gods of Samothrace, is well known for her devotion to



Fig. 92 The back of the marble throne from the tomb of Eurydice showing the divine couple of the underworld, Hades and Persephone



Dionysus – the Mysteries' god par excellence – and was also a high-priestess of the enigmatic 'agadistic' rituals – perhaps the mystic rituals of the royal family of the Argead Macedonians. These mystic rituals have probably been similar to those performed by the ancient family of Eumolpides in Attica or the aristocrats of Andania in Messenia. In the Hellenistic world, this tradition would reach a peak with the Ptolemaic queens of Egypt: the Arsinoes, Berenices and Cleopatras, who, apart from being high-priestesses, were also declared goddesses themselves.

Philip II's example is clear proof that the Temenids could have more than one wife at the same time. The practice of polygamy was probably followed to secure the fertility and the succession of the royal house, while simultaneously serving the aims of internal and external politics: to ratify alliances and treaties and to obtain the friendship of powerful and potentially dangerous neighbours. The male children of royal wives probably had, according to their age and abilities, an equal chance of becoming kings. Yet it is likely that there was a hierarchy among the wives, since one of them, probably the mother of the successor, would execute the duties of high-priestess. It seems that these outstanding women of the royal family were buried in a particular cluster: the queens' cluster found in a prominent place above the necropolis of Aegae, next to the north-western city gate. The rest – for example the two wives of Philip II, Nikesipolis, the mother of Thessalonice, who probably died in childbirth in the middle of the fourth century BC, and the Thracian Princess Meda, who followed her husband to the funeral pyre in 336 BC – were buried in the same cluster or even in the same grave as their husbands.

Apart from their religious duties, the daughters and sisters of the Temenids also had a role in public life, being an excellent means of establishing alliances and relations that served military and political purposes. The marriage of Stratonice, daughter of Alexander I, to Seuthes I of Thrace relieved her brother, Perdiccas II – and hence Macedonia – from the threat of conquest by Sitalces, king of the Odrysians. The Successors had an eye on the sisters of Alexander the Great, Thessalonice and Cleopatra, knowing that marriage to one of them would legitimate their claim to the throne.

Mothers and wives, daughters and sisters, bearers of the precious royal seed and carriers of the sacred royal blood of a dynasty descending from the gods – Temenid women, like the ancient mythical queens, were fully aware of their descent and value and did not limit themselves to a passive role. While in golden age Athens intellectuals debated the relationship of children to their mothers and Aeschylus' judges acquitted Orestes of his matricide – since in the Athenian democracy the son was related to his father, while the mother, 'foreigner to a foreigner', was simply a receptacle for hiding the seed until the fruit became ripe – in the kingdom of Macedon the arcane acceptance of the close relationship between mother and child was never called into dispute. Indicative is the fact that the son of Gygaia, sister of Alexander I, and the Persian official Boubaris, was named after his Macedonian grandfather, Amyntas. It is not accidental that the deep and complex relationship between Alexander

the Great and his mother, Olympias, is the most impressive and characteristic example of the interdependence and mutual influence of mother and son that one finds throughout the history of ancient Greece.

Ambitious royal women were well aware that the ascent of their sons to the throne would solidify their own positions. When a king was under-age, the mother could hope that real power would end up in her own hands. With the exception of Olympias, who governed for a short period of time in the name of her grandchild, the most successful achiever in this respect was Queen Eurydice, widow of Amyntas III and mother of three kings; she succeeded in securing power for her underage sons, trying at the same time to wield power herself. Her granddaughter, Thessalonice, and even her great-grandchild, Eurydice, made similar attempts, the latter losing, however, to Olympias.

It is worth remarking that these women set up dedications in their own name followed by their father's, rather than their husband's, name: 'Eurydice daughter of Sirras' or 'Queen Thessalonice daughter of Philip'.

With royal blood in their veins, Temenid women became symbols and bearers of power in the eyes of others. Having knowledge of their value and capabilities, they asserted their participation in the share of power and in the promotion of royal ideology. And while this was exceptional during the classical period, in the following centuries it became the norm. Pure-blooded Macedonians, the Arsinoes, Berenices and Cleopatras of the Hellenistic world, had a leading role on the stage of history. Their example was to be followed by others: the Greek Queen Thalassia, after the death of her husband, Hyspaosines, became regent for her underage son, reigning in the remote kingdom of the Characene in the Persian Gulf.

The emancipation of the women of the Hellenistic royal houses is a well-known fact. Their behaviour set an example not only for the aristocracy but also for people across their realms. Ideas rooted in the arcane beliefs of Macedonian society blossomed and yielded rich fruits by finding a fertile ground in the new world opened up by the conquests of Alexander the Great. In the open-minded societies of the Hellenistic world women obtained more rights and more power over themselves.

#### FASHION AT AEGAE AND THE ROYAL COURT OF MACEDON

The rich finds from the cemeteries of Olympus, Pieria and mountainous Makedonis and especially from the vast tumuli cemetery at Aegae help to give us a complete picture of women's attire in the Macedonian kingdom during the first three centuries of the first millennium BC (1000–700 BC) (fig. 93). The



Fig. 93 Steatite mould for making jewellery (Cat. no. 363)

jewels made almost always of bronze – an alloy of copper whose yellow colour was reminiscent of gold – were quite rich and heavy, decorated with characteristic geometrical shapes. Similar, though simpler and more restrained than the jewellery found in the Balkans and the Italian peninsula, this jewellery finds its best parallels in Epirus, the Peloponnese and Doric Crete.

The dominant dress is the thick, woollen *peplos*, a plain dress fastened over the shoulder with simple pins so long that they could have easily been used as lethal weapons or heavy bronze brooches (*fibulae*). These brooches, originally bow-shaped (fig. 94), later acquire a figure-of-eight shape, incorporating the motif of concentric circles, cherished especially during the geometric period (900–700 BC) (fig. 95). Heavy bronze bracelets with one or more spirals adorned the arms (fig. 97); simple bronze rings, often decorated with figure-of-eight spirals, adorned the fingers (fig. 96); distinctive pendants, torques (collars) from thick bronze-twisted wire (fig. 98) and necklaces of cornelian (fig. 100), and heavy bronze beads (fig. 99) decorated the neck and décolleté.

The only gold jewellery during this time was the hair-ring made of thin wire, used to tie the curl that fell over the shoulders and back (fig. 102). The fine bow-shaped and figure-of-eight brooches found in the area of the head of the richest dead suggest that noble women wore intricate head coverings which, with the help of large bronze buttons, kept in place the bronze *fistulae* or *syringes* – coil-shaped ornaments that, like locks of blonde hair, framed the face with a warm golden shine. 'Deep girded', like the women of the Homeric



Fig. 94 Bow-shaped brooches used to fasten the heavy woollen *peplos* over the shoulder (Cat. nos. 343–47)



epics, the ladies of Aegae fastened around their waists impressive leather belts decorated with a series of small buttons and large shield-shaped ornaments (*omphalia*) (fig. 103), while a queen and high-priestess wore a tall bronze diadem decorated with solar symbols.

Thanks to the conservatism of Macedonian society, figure-of-eight brooches and necklaces made up of heavy bronze geometric beads continued to be produced until the end of the sixth century BC. Yet even in archaic times fashion was changing, along with forms, shapes and materials. The small, elegant, gold, silver and bronze bow-shaped brooches (figs. 105–106) often found on the shoulders and arms of buried females suggest that the thinly woven sleeved ionic tunic become increasingly popular, while the traditional woollen *peplos*, a heavy body-length garment fastened on the shoulders with small silver pins setting the arms free, became finer (fig. 106). Often both garments are worn together; one above the other. The most common coat was the *himation*, a large rectangular piece of fabric made of wool or linen, which covered the entire body and could even cover the head.

Jewellery, always cherished, became with time more elaborate and less bulky. Earrings appear at Aegae and soon become very popular. Expensive golden earrings with embossed decoration and elaborate ones decorated with filigree and

Fig. 95 (above) Figure-of-eight brooches (Cat. nos. 283, 306, 312, 349–52)

Fig. 96 (below) Finger ring with figure-of-eight decoration (Cat. no. 294)



Fig. 97 Heavy bronze bracelets with one or more spirals adorned the arms of the Early Iron Age ladies (Cat. nos. 272, 286, 300, 316, 356–61)





Fig. 98 Bronze collar (torque) (Cat. no. 291)



Fig. 100 Two cornelian necklaces that accompanied an Early Iron Age lady to the underworld (Cat. no. 277)



Fig. 99 Bronze necklace – despite its archaic date the beads allude to the Geometric period underlining the conservatism that prevailed in the Macedonian court (Cat. no. 403)



Fig. 101 Amber necklace – amber arrived from the Po valley in Italy

granulation were destined for ladies of the court (figs. 116–17). More common and much simpler were the omega-shaped earrings (fig. 108), ending originally with snake heads and later with lotus buds, usually silver and rarely in gold. There are also silver and bronze boat-shaped earrings (fig. 107), and plain silver rings. Twin gold and silver pins also became popular during the archaic and classical periods (fig. 109). Pendants, often in gold, were tiny and shaped like an *amphoriskos*, pyramid (fig. 114) or an acorn. Necklaces consisted of beads of gold (fig. 118), amber (fig. 101), glass, ivory and bronze (fig. 99). Silver and gold bracelets with one spiral only end up in snake-heads (fig. 110), as do several silver chains which were attached to the dress around the breasts (fig. 111). Finger-rings, in archaic times plain gold, from the classical period onwards acquired hollow bezels and were made of gold, silver, bronze and even iron; these finger-rings would have served as the signature of the bearer (fig. 81), similar to men's signet rings. Gold strips and ornaments adorned the clothes of aristocratic ladies (figs. 125–26).

In contrast to the commoners, whose ornaments were few and plain, royal and noble women descended to Hades bedecked in gold from head to toe (figs. 112–124), draped in purple, wearing shoes with gilded soles. Silver, and especially gold, was the material, granulation and filigree were the main techniques cherished by the ladies of the court. Yet stranger and more exquisite materials are also recorded. A queen who died shortly after the middle of the sixth century BC was buried with heavy iron dress pins that are best described as weapons rather than as pieces of jewellery (figs. 127–28); the intricately worked amber necklace that belonged to one of the wives of Alexander I is unique in the Greek world and may have been made in the Po valley or somewhere to the south in Italy.

Despite this wealth of materials, the jewellery at Aegae is characterised by a certain frugality and reserved standardization. This tendency is not limited to jewellery but can also be observed in other products of the Macedonian metalworking tradition at this time. The use of metals, especially the more precious ones, is always a good indicator of a state's economic situation and stability. It is certainly not accidental that Macedonian metalworking reached a peak during the reign of Philip II and Alexander the Great (360–323 BC), when Macedonian goldwork, in particular, flourished beyond measure. The talented goldsmiths were great artists who made every effort to meet the needs of the court, and with a unique dexterity enriched traditional forms and produced new elaborate designs. Similarly, with advanced technological knowledge, smiths created new alloys and used materials such as painted glass and precious stones in order to achieve a balanced polychromy with persuasively naturalistic figures, subdued to the harmony of geometry.

A superb example of their craftsmanship, the diadem of Meda adorned with flowers, bees and birds is one of the most remarkable pieces of ancient Greek jewellery to have come down to us, despite having endured the funeral pyre. The golden wreaths with their naturalistic forms are a characteristic product of the royal workshop. The golden oak wreath that followed Philip into the flames



Fig. 102 Gold rings for tying locks of hair over the shoulders (Cat. no. 278)



Fig. 103 Bronze *omphalia* (belt ornaments) (Cat. no. 302)



Fig. 105 Gold brooch ending in lion heads (Cat. no. 225)



Fig. 104 Silver bow-shaped *fibulae* (brooches) (Cat. no. 416)



Fig. 106 Silver pins  
(Cat. nos. 411, 422, 424)



Fig. 107 Pair of gold earrings (Cat. no. 405)



Fig. 110 Silver snake-headed bracelets (Cat. no. 421)



Fig. 108 Silver omega-shaped  
earrings ending in snake-heads  
(Cat. no. 413)



Fig. 111 Gold chains attached to the  
dress around the breasts (Cat. no. 224)

Fig. 109 Silver twin pins  
(Cat. nos. 407-10)



Figs. 112–124: jewellery found with the Lady of Aegae – the flesh perished together with the textiles, the wood, and the leather, but the gold jewellery and strips remained intact



Fig. 114 Pyramid-shaped pendant lavishly decorated with granulation and a tiny narcissus at the apex (Cat. no. 332)



Fig. 112 Gold syringes (coil-shaped hair ornaments) – like locks of blonde hair framed the face of the Lady of Aegae (Cat. no. 329)



Fig. 113 Elegant gold bow-shaped brooches – often found near the shoulders and arms of buried women, they suggest that thinly woven sleeved ionic tunics became increasingly popular (Cat. no. 333)



Fig. 115 Gold twin pin (Cat. no. 335)



Fig. 116 Pair of intricately worked gold earrings (Cat. no. 330)



Fig. 117 The blossoming narcissus flower and the two close buds decorating the earrings of the Lady of Aegae (Cat. no. 330)



Fig. 118 Gold necklace adorning the lady's décolleté (Cat. no. 331)



Fig. 119 Gold terminals for securing a silver chain and a pair of cones decorated with filigree (Cat. no. 339)

*Jewellery found with the Lady of Aegae*



Fig. 120 Large gold pins with impressive heads (Cat. no. 334)



Fig. 121 Detail showing the blossoming flower crowning the head of the pin (Cat. no. 334)



Fig. 123 A broad rectangular strip with repoussé triangles and drop-shaped motifs – it was found at the centre of the garment just below the waist of the Lady of Aegae (Cat. no. 337)

Fig. 122 A silver and gold tubular object, perhaps a distaff (Cat. no. 412)



Fig. 124 Gold strips once adorning the overgarment (*epiblema*) (Cat. no. 337)



Fig. 125 A gold disc (dress attachment) decorated with a Medusa head – found in the burial of an early Queen (Cat. no. 218); gold roundels with embossed wild animals (Cat. no. 181)



Fig. 126 Various gold ornaments once stitched onto the funeral dress of the deceased (Cat. no. 251)





Fig. 127 Long bronze pins  
(Cat. no. 354)



Fig. 128 Silver pin crowned with  
a rosette (Cat. no. 183)

of the pyre, perhaps the same that he was wearing in the hour of his 'triumph' when he was assassinated in the autumn of 336 BC, underlines the close relationship of the king and of his successors, who also wore similar wreaths with Zeus himself. Of similar quality is the charming myrtle wreath of Philip's wife Meda captured in its small branches the most blossoming moment of spring (fig. 129).

Despite the fact that in the tombs we have not yet found a single mirror, the women of Aegae were most likely vain and took great care of their appearance. Olive oil played a dominant role in hair and body care. Queens from the time of Perdiccas II onwards bought the sacred oil of the goddess Athena that was sold at the market by the winners of the Panathenaic games in Athens, as suggested by the Panathenaic *amphoras* found in their tombs and in the funeral pyre of Eurydice. Along with oil, women used various ointments and creams and of course perfumes and aromatic oils from Corinth, eastern Ionia, Rhodes, Egypt and Phoenicia, often stored inside elaborate containers, the beauty of which vied with that of their contents. An iron *exaleiptron*, a container with bronze legs found in the tomb of the Lady of Aegae (fig. 130), large *alabastra* (fig. 132), egg-shell marble toiletry vessels (fig. 133) and ostrich eggs (fig. 52) – exotic prototypes of the elegant red-figure squat *lekythoi* (fig. 135–36) – suggest that personal hygiene and body care at the Macedonian court matched, in elaboration and luxury, that of Mycenae almost a millennium earlier. Even make-up was not unknown to the ladies at Aegae: minute ear-picks and tweezers, fine and elegant utensils and more importantly *pyxides* (fig. 134), cosmetic vessels containing white lead powder for whitening the skin, constitute the typical accoutrements of female toiletry and became, after death, along with jewellery, a good indicator for the archaeologist as to the sex of the deceased, especially useful at Aegae, where soil conditions hardly ever allow the preservation of skeletal remains.



Fig. 129 The golden myrtle  
wreath of Queen Meda  
(Cat. no. 263)



Fig. 130 Iron cosmetics container (*exaleiptron*) with an ornate bronze tripod base (Cat. no. 202)



Fig. 131 Clay perfume containers (*plemochoe* and *exaleiptron*) (Cat. nos. 194, 377)



Fig. 132 Two large marble alabaster (Cat. nos. 236, 259)



Fig. 133 A group of two tall marble *lekythoi* (aromatic-oil containers) and a marble perfume container (Cat. nos. 233–35)



Fig. 134 Bronze *pyxis* (container) with lid (Cat. no. 226)



Fig. 135 Attic red-figure squat *lekythos* (Cat. no. 397)



Fig. 136 Clay Attic red figure *lekythos* showing a woman at her toilet, and clay perfume vessel (*askos*) decorated with griffins (Cat. nos. 241-42)

