

THE GOLDEN DISCOVERY

Charming caskets

On November 17, when the major objects had been removed, Andronikos entered the tomb once more with a workman to re-examine the rubble. He turned to the remains of what had been the wooden trestle or table which had held the armor in front of the large Sarcophagus.

With the aid of his powerful torch he suddenly spotted a minute ivory head, barely an inch high. It was an extremely naturalistic portrait carving of a woman. Then he found another, also of a woman.

After that, he searched really thoroughly, in increasing excitement — and was rewarded by three more inch-high ivory heads, all of men. The last he picked up was of a man with a thick curly beard and heavily lidded eyes — a face he felt convinced he had seen before on a well-known medallion which carries what is possibly a portrait of Philip. He began to feel he might echo the words of Schliemann finding the old death mask at Mycenae — "I have looked upon the face of Agamemnon." Was he gazing upon the face of Philip? More was the head of the young man with a full mouth and a prominent nose that of the youthful Alexander — who was only 20 when his father was buried in 336 BC?

Andronikos now believes that these five heads represent Philip, his son Alexander, his parents Amyntas and Eurydice, and his first wife Olympias, the mother of Alexander. He is convinced that the first two are of Philip

and Alexander. "The other three I'm not absolutely sure about," he says, "but the head of one of the women is so like Alexander that I think it could only be his mother."

The other two he didn't recognise. Then he remembered that a couple of years earlier, at Olympia in southern Greece, King Philip had dedicated a building called the Philippien. There was he knew, a description of that building as it survived in the second century AD (500 years later) by the Greek traveller and geographer Pausanias — and according to Pausanias it contained three statues of ivory and gold portraying Philip, Alexander and Philip's father Amyntas. (These chryselephantine — gold and ivory — statues often enormous, were very common in Greek art, but have not survived.) Pausanias goes on to say that other statues of Philip's wife Olympias and mother Eurydice, had since the Philippien was built, been taken from it and put in the temple of Hera (Juno) nearby.

"We have a group of five portraits here, and," says Andronikos, "five in Olympia made of ivory and gold. These heads I have found were, I believe, also part of small statues or reliefs. I'm not sure which probably they were on the wooden structure as a decoration. They were also probably of gold and ivory. Although I have found only the heads, I can see parts of the bodies in the remains on the floor."

"I asked myself, 'who could be the owner of something



RIGHT — A one inch ivory found in the tomb of Vergina. Is it the same face that is on the Tarsos medallion (left), believed to be of Philip II.



Professor Manolis Andronikos discovered a 2300-year old tomb at Vergina in Greece. In front of him was a marble sarcophagus. In one corner was variety of silver and other vessels, in another a collection of magnificent bronze objects and a royal diadem of gold. In this final instalment Susan Raven reports about the discovery.



The larger gold casket of the Vergina tomb ... inside, a skull, bones and a royal wreath of oak leaves.

that was decorated with this particular group? As far as I can judge, it has to be either Philip or Alexander — but Alexander died in Babylon, and his body was taken to Egypt."

A week after he discovered the five tiny heads, he felt able to say to the 1000-strong audience of archaeologists, journalists, politicians and other dignitaries who had come to Salonika for his press conference. "On the basis of the archaeological evidence so far, I believe I have the right to say that this is the tomb of Philip." (The second sarcophagus would contain the bones of his last wife Cleopatra.)

Others disagree, they point out that the tomb was not,

compared with other unlooted tombs found in Macedonia, particularly rich. And certainly the beautiful museum of antiquities in Salonika can already show a wealth of gold and silver finds from other tombs — there are at least half a dozen exquisite golden wreaths with oak or myrtle leaves trampled and several pairs of magnificent bronze greaves, for instance, as fine as those found at Vergina and there other doubts about the likely dates of the contents.

Andronikos is still careful to say that it is what he calls a working hypothesis. "If next spring I find evidence against the hypothesis, I shall be the first to say so. Even now I am not absolutely sure."

All the same he is positive that the Great Tumulus holds still more archaeological treasures. "There is, I believe, another tomb to be found there the tomb that the big mound was made to cover. I believe it will be found in the direct centre of the mound. That is the tomb I was searching for in the first place."

"According to my hypothesis, that tomb was built later than the one I found, it was probably built of marble, judging from the pieces of marble we found as we dug. And it could probably be the tomb of Antigonos Gonatas, the Macedonian king who fought King Pyrrhus."

Who was Philip II?

Philip II, father of Alexander the Great, was himself a brilliant statesman and soldier.

In 359 B.C. he came to the throne of Macedonia, a region in northern Greece about the size of Wales, and welded his scattered tribesmen into a ruthlessly efficient army.

He conquered the whole of Greece, and was preparing to invade Asia Minor to attack the Persian empire when he was murdered in 336 B.C.

Instead, it was to be Alexander who seized the Near and Middle East, Egypt and the known world as far as the Punjab. Macedonia's eventual fate was conquest by Rome in the second century BC.

Philip had several wives and mistresses. Most important was Olympias, mother of Alexander. His last wife, Cleopatra, is said to have borne him another son, and it was believed that Olympias arranged for Philip's murder and then that of Cleopatra, and her son in order to safeguard Alexander's future.