

Skeleton from Greek mystery tomb to be identified next month

January 19 2015



The site where archaeologists have unearthed a funeral mound dating from the time of Alexander the Great in Amphipolis, northern Greece pictured on November 22, 2014

Bones from at least five people, including a baby and an elderly woman, were identified in a massive tomb in Greece dating back to the era of Alexander the Great, the culture ministry said Monday.

"A minimum number of five people have been identified from bone

remains, four of whom were buried and one of whom was burned," the ministry said in a statement.

"The dead are a woman, two middle-aged men and a newborn" and a fifth person whose sex could not be verified, it said.

The woman was estimated to be aged over 60, and the two men between 35 and 45 years old, officials said. No other details were immediately available on the baby and the fifth person.

The excavation of the tomb in Amphipolis, northern Greece—the largest ever unearthed in the country—made global headlines this summer amid speculation that a member of Alexander the Great's entourage had been buried there.

The ministry had originally thought that a single skeleton lay in the tomb, but on Monday said that out of 550 [bone](#) fragments found, 157 had been matched to specific bodies so far.

Other bones were those of animals, including a horse.

The tomb, measuring 500 metres (1,640 feet) in circumference and dug into a 30-metre hill—was found to contain sculptures of sphinxes and caryatids, intricate mosaics and coins featuring the face of Alexander the Great.



Picture provided by the Greek Ministry of Culture on November 12, 2014 shows a grave found in the tomb dating to the Alexander the Great era (356-323 BC) at the ancient Amphipolis archaeological site in the northern region of Macedonia

Before the announcements, it was thought that the tomb could contain Alexander's Bactrian wife Roxana, the king's mother Olympias, or one of his generals.

The tomb's location was known in antiquity, and it is believed to have been repeatedly looted following the conquest of the ancient Macedonian kingdom by Rome in the second century BC.

Few relics were found, and the culture ministry confirmed on Monday that even the grave inside the tomb had been searched.

"The condition in which the bones were found indicates that they had been disturbed," it said.

In December, the ministry dismissed as "unfounded" claims on Greek websites that the bones were those of a 54-year-old woman, and is therefore likely to be Olympias.

Historians say it is also highly unlikely to have been Alexander himself, who conquered the Persian empire and much of the known world before his death at the age of 32 in 323 BC.

Additional research will determine whether the dead were related, the ministry said.

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Citation: Skeleton from Greek mystery tomb to be identified next month (2015, January 19) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-01-skeleton-greek-mystery-tomb-month.html>

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