Ancient mass graves discovered in Greece
14 April 2016

They were discovered during excavations at an ancient cemetery on Athens’ seaside outskirts, on the construction site of the new National Library of Greece and National Opera.

Archaeologists found the teeth of the men to be in good condition, indicating they were young and healthy.

This boosts the theory that they could have been followers of Cylon, a nobleman whose failed coup in the 7th century BC is detailed in the accounts of ancient historians Herodotus and Thucydides.

Cylon, a former Olympic champion, sought to rule Athens as a tyrant. But Athenians opposed the coup attempt and he and his supporters were forced to seek refuge in the Acropolis, the citadel that is today the Greek capital’s biggest tourist attraction.

The conspirators eventually surrendered after winning guarantees that their lives would be spared.

But Megacles, of the powerful Alcmaeonid clan, had the men massacred—an act condemned as sacrilegious by the city authorities.

Historians say this dramatic chapter in the story of ancient Athens showed the aristocracy’s resistance to the political transformation that would eventually herald in 2,500 years of Athenian democracy.

© 2016 AFP