

West meets East: At the Borders of the *Oikoumenē* and Beyond

Lecture 5 – The Graeco-Bactrian Kings

CLAH6007

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Greeks in Bactria – The Aftermath of Alexander

- Population of those that survived the two rebellions / failed exoduses to the west.
- Potentially very small number of Greeks that remained of those settled in Bactria by the Persians (and not massacred by Alexander).
- Those Greeks that remained most likely concentrated in the Oxus valley (Amu Darya = Oxus River).
- Absence of involvement of Bactrian-Sogdian satrap in conflict between Eumenes and Antigonos the One-Eyed.



Seleucus Nicator in Central Asia

- Between 308 to 305 BC Seleucus was able to take control of Babylonia and then extend into central Asia.

“But when Nicanor, the general in Media, gathered about him from Media and Persia and the neighbouring lands more than ten thousand foot soldiers and about seven thousand horse, Seleucus set out at full speed to oppose the enemy... When night came and the army of Nicanor was keeping a... negligent guard, Seleucus fell on them suddenly, causing great confusion and panic... most of the soldiers went over to Seleucus...” – **Diodorus Siculus 19.92.**

“In this way Seleucus became king of Babylonia. He also acquired the kingdom of Media, slaying with his own hand in battle Nicanor whom Antigonus had left as satrap of that country. He afterward waged many wars with Macedonians and barbarians... [After Antigonus’ death] he acquired Mesopotamia, Armenia, ‘Seleucid’ Cappadocia, Persis, Parthia, Bactria, Arabia, Tapouria, Sogdia, Arachosia, Hyrcania, and other adjacent peoples that had been subdued by Alexander, as far as the river Indus...” – **Appian Syr. 55.**

Indigenous Reassertion

- Weakening of central authority since Alexander.
- Presence of indigenous dynasts seen from coin issues – Sophytos and Wakhshuvar.
- Wakhshuvar coins – gold staters of Macedonian style and fabric – image Persian (satrapal) tiara and name *Vhšvr* in Aramaic.
- Potentially Alexander's father in law Oxyartes.



Seleucid Colonisation in Central Asia

- The years 294-281 a major phase in Seleucid intervention in central Asia.
- Antiochus I sent by his father, with his wife Stratonice, to manage the Upper Satrapies.
- Graeco-Macedonian colonies abandoned, neglected or destroyed since Alexander's death are refounded and renamed.
- Survey and excavation of nearly 40 early Seleucid sites in Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – most notably Aï Khanoum.

“Margiana [Turkmenistan] is similar to this country [Aria], although its plain is surrounded by deserts. Admiring its fertility, Antiochus Soter enclosed a circuit of fifteen hundred stadia with a wall and founded a city Antiocheia.” – **Strabo *Geog.* 11.10.2.**

“He [Seleucus] built cities throughout the entire length of his dominions and named sixteen of them Antioch after his father, five Laodicea after his mother, nine after himself, and four after his wives, that is, three Apamea and one Stratonicea... To others he gave names from Greece or Macedonia, or from his own exploits, or in honour of Alexander... in India Alexandropolis; among the Scythians an Alexandria Eschate...” – **Appian *Syr.* 57.**

Break-Away Kingdom

Evidence for Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek Kings

- Very little textual evidence of the Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek kings, only seven of them are mentioned – Diodotus I and II, Euthydemus I, Demetrius [I or II?], Eucratides the Great, Apollodotus I and Meander I.
- Western literary references include - Justin 41.4-6; *PME* 47; Polybius *Histories* 10.49, 11.39; Strabo 11.9.2-3, 11.11.1-2, 15.1.3; Aelian *On Animals* 15.8.
- Coin finds of about 40 kings and 2 queens.

Revolt of Bactria

- Beginning around 250 BC see start of a process leading to an independent kingdom.
- Diodotus I – name of Antiochus II.
- Diodotus II – Adopts title *Basileus* for himself and for his father Posthumously.

“At the same period [as Arsaces], also, Theodotus [Diodotus], governor of the thousand cities of Bactria revolted, and assumed the title of King.” – **Justin 41.4.**



The Usurper Usurped

- Enthymemes I seizes the throne from Diodotus II.
- Failure of Diodotus' Parthian Policy?

“One Arsaces, a man of uncertain origin, but of undisputed bravery, happened to arise at this time... invaded Parthia...Not long after, too, he made himself master of Hyrcania [northern Iran, SW Turkmenistan], and thus, invested with authority over two nations, raised a large army, through fear of Seleucus and Theodotus [Diodotus], king of the Bactrians. But being soon relieved of his fears by the death of Theodotus, he made peace and an alliance with his son, who was also named Theodotus ...”
– **Justin 41.4.**



Image from Holt (1999).

Antiochus III Takes to the Field

- Antiochus marches east to put down revolts in Hyrcania, Parthia, and Bactria.
- Antiochus defeats Euthydemus' 10,000 strong cavalry force in initial engagement; the latter retreats to Bactra – **Polybius 10.49.**

“For Euthydemus himself was a native of Magnesia, and he now, in defending himself to Teleas, said that Antiochus was not justified in attempting to deprive him of his kingdom, as he himself had never revolted against the king, but after others had revolted he had possessed himself of the throne of Bactria by destroying their descendants.” – **Polybius 11.34.**

“...entreating Antiochus not to grudge him the name and state of king, because if he did not yield to this request, neither of them would be safe; for considerable hordes of Nomads were approaching, and this was not only a grave danger to both of them, but if they consented to admit them, the country would certainly relapse into barbarism... Euthydemus sent off his son Demetrius to ratify the agreement... [Antiochus] promised to give him one of his daughters in marriage and next gave permission to his father to style himself king. After making a written treaty concerning other points and entering into a sworn alliance, Antiochus took his departure, serving out generous rations of corn to his troops and adding to his own the elephants belonging to Euthydemus.” - **Polybius 11.34.**

Antiochus and the Maurya

- First Seleucid ruler to come to border of Mauryan kingdom since Seleucus I.
- Antiochus III renews the earlier family alliance with the Mauryan Empire.

“Crossing the Caucasus [in fact the Hindu Kush] he descended into India and renewed his alliance with Sophagasenus the Indian king. Here he procured more elephants, raising their number to a total force of one hundred and fifty, and provisioned his army once more on the spot. He himself broke camp with his troops, leaving behind Androstenes of Cyzicus to bring back the treasure which the king [Sophagasenus] had agreed to give him.” – **Polybius 11.34.11-12.**

The Barbarian Threat

- Sogdiana achieved its independence from the Bactria by the late third century and early decades of the second century BC.
- Possible Sogdian imitations from period of Antiochus III's siege of Bactra.
- Imitations diverging in engraving style, weight standard, and capability with the Greek language.



Euthydemus I - Nude Herakles resting on lionskin draped over rock, holding club on knee



Sogdian imitation of a coin of Euthydemus with Aramaic script

Consolidation of Power

- Demetrius son of Euthdemus may be made co-ruler.
- Extension of dominion into Sogdiana, Ferghana and Tarim basin?

“In short, Apollodorus says that Bactria is the ornament of Aria as a whole; and, more than that, they extended their empire even as far as the Seres and the Phryni.” – **Strabo *Geography* 11.11.1.**



Bactria: The Land of a Thousand Cities

Locating Bactria in the Sources

“The Oxus crosses Bactria” – **Polybius 10.48.4.**

“...the Sacae and the Sogdiani are separated from one another by the Jaxartes River, and the Sogdiani and the Bactriani by the Oxus River...” – **Strabo Geog. 11.8.8.**

“Bactria occupies the side opposite the Hindu Kush... and is bordered by the Oxus. Sogdiana lies beyond...” – **Pliny NH 6.18.47.**

“The Sogdians are bordered in the west by... a part of Scythia... and in the north as well. In the east by the Saka along the bend in the Jaxartes... and in the east and south and again in the west by Bactria along part of the Oxus.” – **Ptolemy Geog. 6.12.1.**



The Wealth of Bactria

“Some parts of Bactria lie along Aria to the north, but the greater part stretches beyond (Aria) to the east. It is an extensive country, and produces everything except oil. The Greeks who occasioned its revolt became so powerful by means of the fertility and advantages of the country, that they became masters of Ariana and India, according to Apollodorus of Artamita.” – **Strabo *Geog.* 11.11.1.**

“...although Bactria, at least, lies close to the pass that leads over to India, still they enjoy such a happy lot that they must be a very long way off from the uninhabitable part of the earth...And further, the River Oxus, which divides Bactria from Sogdiana, is so easily navigable, they say, that the Indian merchandise packed over the mountains to it is easily brought down to the Hyrcanian Sea [Caspian Sea], and thence, on the rivers, to the successive regions beyond as far as the Pontus [Black Sea].” (2.1.14-15).



“But in Bactria... all this trouble has been rendered quite unnecessary by the indulgent benignity of the climate, and after the seed is in, the owner has no occasion to return to the field till the time has come for getting in the harvest. In those parts the natural dryness of the soil prevents noxious weeds from springing up, and, aided by the night dews alone, the soil supplies its nutriment to the grain.”
Pliny *NH* 28.50.186.

“...whether in the Babylon of Ninus [Nineveh] and Semiramis, or in **Bactra**, or Susa, or **Palibothra** [Pataliputra], or in some other famous and wealthy city...” – **Dio Chrysostum 12.10.**

A Thousand Cities

- Achaemenid Bactria had populations of sedentary farmers using sophisticated irrigation for agriculture.
- Did the Greeks radically change the landscape?

“Apollodorus, who wrote *The Parthica*... [says] that Eucratidas, at any rate, held a thousand cities as his subjects. Those other writers, however, say that merely the tribes between the Hydaspes and the Hypanis were nine in number, and that they had five thousand cities...” – **Strabo *Geog.* 15.1.3.**

“...the most powerful dominion of Bactria, peopled with a thousand cities...” – **Justin 41.1.**

- Eastern Bactria – series of small forts – usually occupying c. 1-1.5 ha (e.g. Arab Kakul, Kurgan Tepe).
- Bactra (Balkh) - Fluted column with Corinthian capital and Ionic capital found at eastern wall in remains of “lower town” (Tepe Zargaran).
- Iron Gates (Derbent) and at Payon Kurgan evidence of Greek settlement at entrance to Sogdiana – latter site reveals new settlement.
- Alexandria-of-the-Oxus? - Kampyr Tepe – Greek period citadel – presence of pottery, ostraka and coins – name Pardagvi derived from *pandokheion* (hostel or refuge for travellers)?

Termez

- No obvious identification with any Greek city from the literary sources.
- Ancient Termez – citadel area - Graeco-Bactrian ceramics found at bottom of two trenches in 1980s.
- Parallel of ceramics with Aï Khanum.
- Greek wall enclosed smaller area than later the later citadel – probably place as watch point for river crossing.
- Remains of Graeco-Buddhist capital from a column – Kushan period.
- Cultic complex may date back to Hellenistic period.



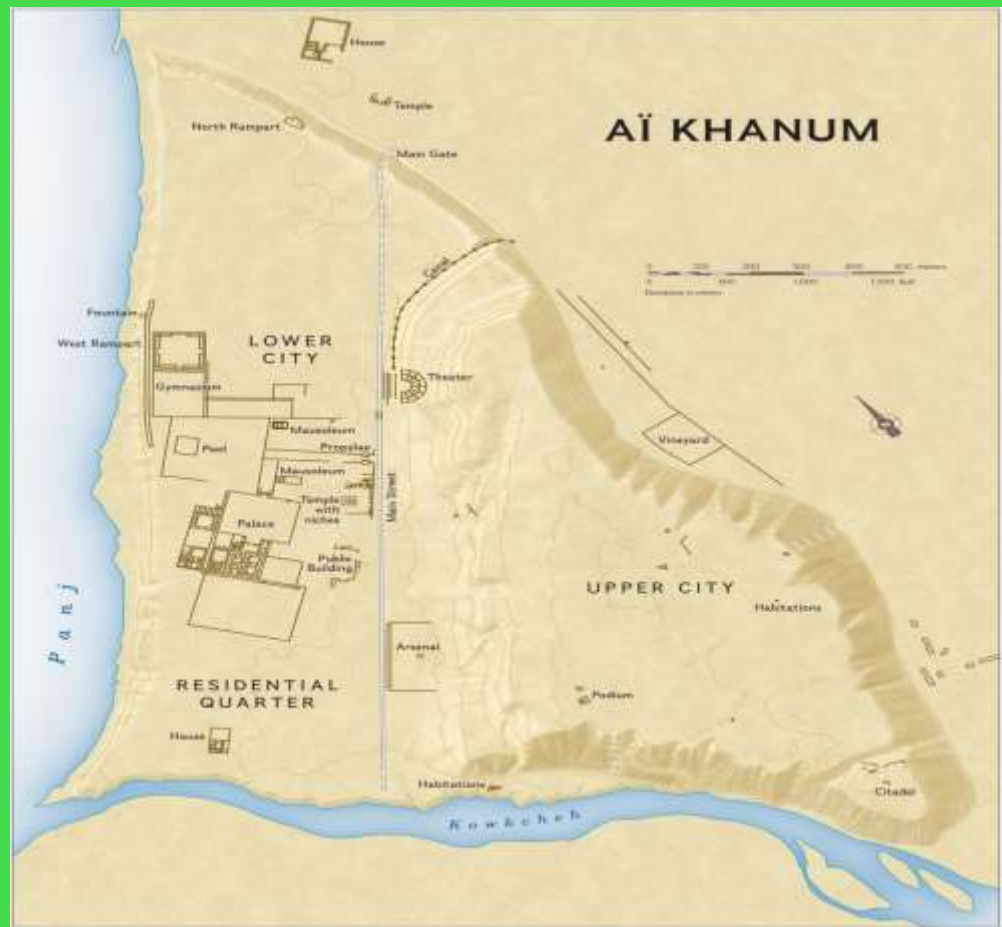
Islamic town, Graeco-Buddhist Corinthian type capital.



Figure 11. Tchingiz Tepe, cultic complex. Preserved remains of building A. In the background, right, the pilaster hall. General view from the west.

Aï Khanum

- Located at the confluence of the Amu Darya and Kokcha.
- Extensive defences with a citadel at southern point.
- Mud-brick walls up to 7m thick and reinforced with square towers or rectangular bastions.
- Palace and ceremonial courtyard and Propylaea.
- Greek features - *herōon*, a mausoleum, a theatre and a gymnasium.
- Lack of Hippodamian grid plan in lower town, but orthogonal streets in southern zone.



Gymnasium

- Composed of large square courtyard surrounded by buildings.
- A portico constructed in centre of each side of the courtyard.



Hermaic pillar.

- Six columns decorate entrance to the northern portico – two columns stood on the three other sides.

Theatre

- Most eastern Greek theatre in Asia.
- Built in semi-circle with rising tiers.
- Could probably seat several thousand people.
- *Loggias* located half-way up the row of seats – unusual feature in most Greek theatres.

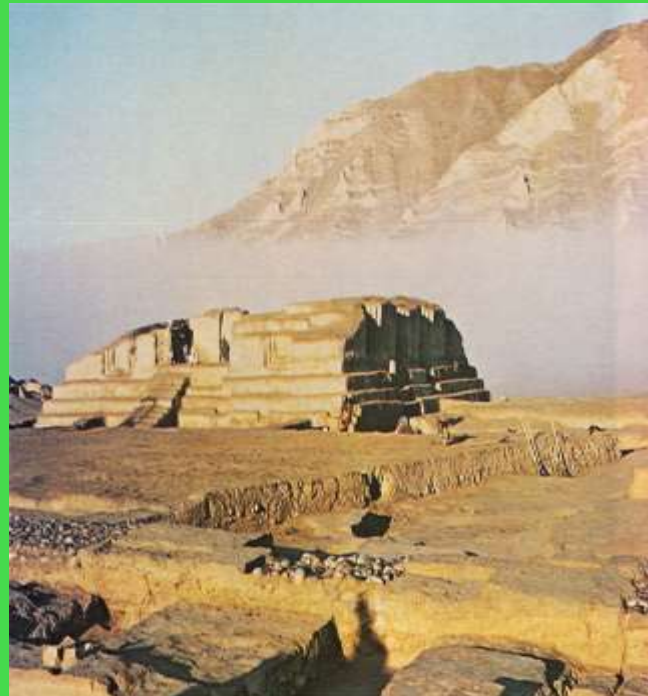


Main Temple

- Stood on platform – deep niches decorate its thick walls.
- Fragments of a cornice fallen from edge of the roof.
- Fragments of statue found (notably a sandelled foot).



Gilded silver plate with Cybele and Nike



Bronze Heracles

Palace

- Palace enclosure contains great courtyard surrounded by pillars – southern portico opens to monumental hall.



Aï Khanum, colonnade.



Aï Khanum, Corinthian capital.



Aï Khanum, winged antefix.



Aï Khanum, palace, reception rooms.
Photo © Musée Guimet

- Treasury found on west side.
- Northwest corner private apartments

The Sarcophagus of Kineas

- Funerary chapel in lower town – underneath lay sarcophagus of Kineas.
- Greek inscription discovered in the porch, which records the visit of a certain Clearchos.
- A copy of the 150 maxims of wisdom, ascribed to the Seven Sages of Greece.

“As a child, learn good manners, as a young man, learn to control your passions, in middle age, be just, in old age, give good advice, then die without regrets.”

“These wise sayings of the illustrious men of old have been consecrated at the Sacred Pytho. There, Clearchos transcribed them carefully, and he displayed them so that they shine far away in the sacred precinct of Kineas.”



Inscribed base of stele

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